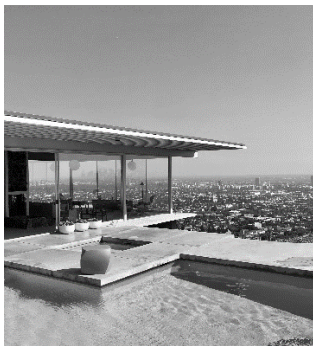


LOS ANGELES CITYWIDE HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

Context: Architecture and Engineering

Sub-Context: L.A. Modernism, 1919-1980



Prepared for:

City of Los Angeles
Department of City Planning
Office of Historic Resources



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PREFACE

The “L.A. Modernism” sub-context is a component of Los Angeles’ citywide historic context statement and provides guidance to field surveyors and others in identifying and evaluating potential historic resources relating to styles of Modern architecture. Refer to www.HistoricPlacesLA.org for information on designated resources associated with this context as well as those identified through SurveyLA and other surveys.

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THEME INTRODUCTION

Modernism is an extraordinarily broad term that is used to define an array of architectural styles and city planning principles that were conceived in the early twentieth century, honed after World War I, and became a dominant force in American architecture after World War II. The tenets of Modernism are broad and diverse, but in the most general sense the movement eschewed past traditions and called for a more progressive approach to design that reflected the new conditions of twentieth century American life.¹ Most Modern architects believed that these conditions were befitting of a fresh interpretation that embraced innovation and change, and did not look back to historical sources for inspiration.

There are a number of common threads that bind together the various permutations of Modern architecture that emerged throughout the twentieth century. In all of its forms, Modernism is characteristically exploratory – it eschews historical precedents and charts a new path forward, embraces experimentation and free expression of the new, incorporates technology and innovation to maximize efficiency and improve the lives of everyday people, and prioritizes function over form.

¹ Derived from Alan Hess, “Everyday Modernisms: Diversity, Creativity and Ideas in L.A. Architecture, 1940-1990,” prepared May 2013 for the Los Angeles Conservancy.

Los Angeles is exceptional with respect to the breadth and depth of its Modern architecture, and is home to one of the largest and most varied collections of Modernism in the nation. Modernism, it has been said, is part of Los Angeles's DNA.² The city's strong relationship to the Modern architectural tradition is the result of several factors. Los Angeles was a relatively young city in search of its own character and architectural identity at the same time Modernism was coming of age. Southern California has historically been seen as a harbinger of the avant-garde, and as a place where people could come and reinvent themselves. As a focal point of the Arts and Crafts tradition, which similarly rejected past traditions in favor of new and regionally appropriate approaches to architecture, Southern California had already secured its reputation as a place that marched to the beat of its own aesthetic drum. The link between buildings and nature, espoused by the Arts and Crafts movement, had become a part of local culture, and dovetailed with many of the essential principles underlying Modernist design.

Over the course of the twentieth century, Modernism's fundamental principles were interpreted in different ways, at different periods, and by different architects. This resulted in the development of an array of architectural styles that bear distinctive physical characteristics, but all fall under the larger umbrella of Modernism. This sub-context addresses the myriad architectural styles that broke from precedent and are associated with Los Angeles Modernism. It is divided into the following three themes, which are arranged chronologically and chart the progression and evolution of Modernism over time. These themes provide guidance for evaluating individual building and historic districts that are significant as excellent examples of their respective architectural styles.

- Prewar Modernism, 1919-1945
- Related Responses to Modernism, 1924-1970
- Postwar Modernism, 1946-1975

The **Prewar Modernism, 1919-1945** theme addresses extant resources that represent the earliest period of Modern architecture, which is generally defined as the period between World War I and World War II. It was during this time that Modernism was introduced to Los Angeles and its environs. Resources associated with this theme consist almost entirely of custom-designed, single-family houses, many of which represent bold architectural experiments and were designed by influential early Modern architects. By eschewing the past and intrepidly experimenting with new forms, methods, and materials, albeit in different ways, these architects laid the groundwork for Los Angeles's Modern architectural movement. This theme is divided into two sub-themes: Early Modernism and International Style.

The **Related Responses to Modernism, 1924-1970** theme addresses extant resources that represented an alternative, more mainstream interpretation of how modernity should look. Instead of breaking entirely with the past and developing radically new approaches to architecture – as did Early Modernism and the International Style – the architectural styles associated with this theme were hybrids between established architectural traditions and modern methods, materials, and forms. These styles took historical forms and motifs, played freely and eclectically with them, and reinterpreted them to better

² Ibid.

reflect the conditions of twentieth century American life. This theme is divided into five sub-themes: Art Deco, Streamline Moderne, PWA Moderne, Late Moderne, and Hollywood Regency.

The **Postwar Modernism, 1946-1975** theme addresses extant resources that are associated with the proliferation of Modernism after World War II. It was during this time that Modernism, which had previously been sidelined as a fringe movement, was thrust into the spotlight and became an integral component of mainstream culture as American society witnessed an unprecedented wave of prosperity, optimism, and growth after the war. This theme addresses the various architectural styles that are associated with this period in the history of Modernism. It is divided into five sub-themes: Corporate International, Mid-Century Modernism, New Formalism, A-Frame Buildings, and Googie. The “Late-Modern” theme is included under the larger umbrella of postwar Modernism but merits its own discussion and is addressed in a separate, standalone document.³

Evaluation Considerations:

The various themes associated with the Los Angeles Modernism sub-context may overlap with other citywide historic context statement themes as follows:⁴

- Modern residential buildings that are excellent examples of a multi-family residential property type may also be evaluated within the “Residential Development and Suburbanization” context, under the “Multi-Family Residential” theme.
- Concentrations of Modern houses (historic districts) that exemplify post-World War II residential development patterns may also be evaluated within the “Residential Development and Suburbanization” context.
- Commercial examples of Modern architectural styles may also be evaluated under themes within the “Commercial Development” context.
- Institutional examples of Modern architectural styles may also be evaluated under themes within the “Public and Private Institutional Development” context.
- Modern houses that are associated with significant people in the entertainment industry may also be evaluated within “The Entertainment Industry” context, under the “Residential Properties Associated with the Entertainment Industry” theme.
- Modern buildings that employ innovative engineering methods, such as hill houses, may also be evaluated within the “Engineering” sub-context of the “Architecture and Engineering” context.
- Post WWII Modern landscapes are discussed in the “Designed Landscapes” theme of the “Cultural Landscapes” context.

Note on Designated and Identified Properties:

The narrative references and illustrates numerous examples of properties designed in architectural styles associated with L.A. Modernism. Many of these properties are designated under local, state, and/or federal programs and are indicated as such throughout the text. Properties referenced that are not designated have been identified through SurveyLA and other historic resources surveys.

³ See the “Late-Modern” historic context, published separately.

⁴ Specific related context and themes are noted throughout the narrative.

THEME: PRE-WAR MODERNISM, 1919-1945

Los Angeles was home to some of the nation's earliest and most intrepid experiments in Modern architecture that took place in the early decades of the twentieth century. This theme addresses extant resources that are associated with this formative period of Modernism, which is generally defined as the period prior to World War II. Since Modernism fell outside the realm of mainstream culture and was seen as a fringe movement in its early years, the pool of extant resources associated with this theme is relatively small, and many have already been designated as L.A. Historic-Cultural Monuments and, in some cases, are also listed in the National and California Registers. Most of the resources associated with this theme consist of custom-designed, single-family houses that reflect the innovative spirit of several notable maverick architects who experimented with new forms, methods, and materials and laid the foundation for Los Angeles's rich Modern architectural heritage.

Historical Overview

Origins of Modern Architecture

Modern architecture in Los Angeles is rooted in both European and American precedents. Developing independently of one another around the turn-of-the-twentieth century, both eventually converged in Southern California, and sowed the seeds for what became a rich and unparalleled Modern tradition.

The origins of Modern architecture are somewhat oblique but are generally traced to Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, at the height of the Industrial Revolution. Industrialization made available new building materials such as iron, steel, and sheet glass, and allowed architects to experiment with new building forms and construction methods. This resulted in bold and innovative architectural statements such as Joseph Perry's Crystal Palace (1851), a massive exhibition hall in London that was constructed entirely of glass and cast iron and was unlike any structure the world had ever seen.⁵ Buildings such as these, which showcased the possibilities afforded by technology and generated interest in designing with a progressive mindset, are widely regarded as antecedents to the Modern architectural movement. By this time, some architects had also grown weary of Europe's tradition of revivalist architecture and what they saw as the stylistic excesses of earlier eras.⁶



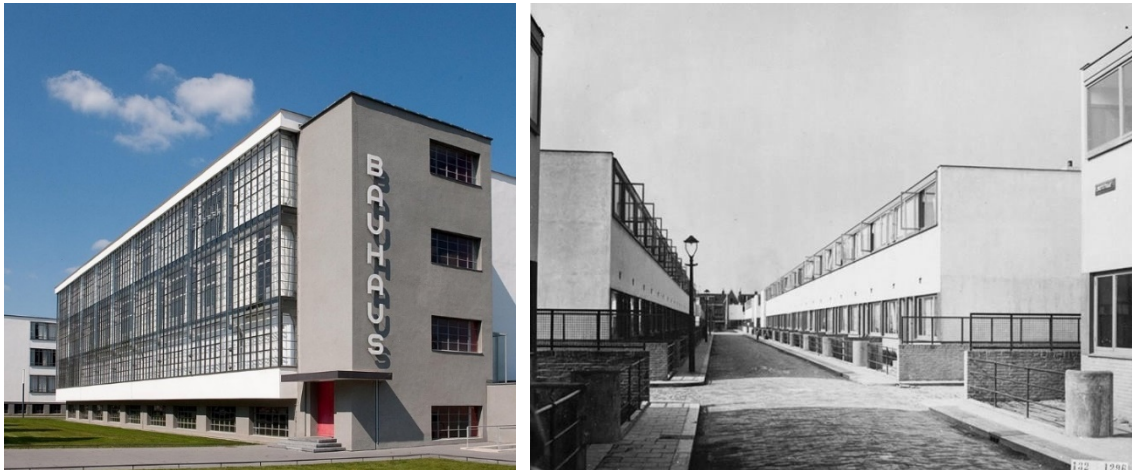
*Postcard view of Joseph Perry's Crystal Palace in Hyde Park, London.
(Wikimedia Commons).*

⁵ Astradur Eysteinsoson and Vivian Liska, eds., *Modernism Volume 1* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 2007), 474.

⁶ Natalie W. Shivers, "Architecture: A New Creative Medium," in *LA's Early Moderns: Art/Architecture/Photography* (Los Angeles: Balcony Press, 2003), 132.

By the early twentieth century, the desire to transform architecture by applying these new materials and technologies had coalesced into several discrete, yet conceptually related architectural movements. Collectively known as European Modernism, these movements included Constructivism in Russia, Futurism in Italy, the Bauhaus school in Germany, and the De Stijl movement in the Netherlands.⁷ Though they developed somewhat independently of one another, these movements were all grounded in the same fundamental principles: building forms should be simplified, ornament and excess should be eliminated, functionality should take precedent over aesthetics, and material and technological innovations should be utilized to their fullest potential. Most of these movements also had aspirational social justice goals and set out to improve the lives of the common man through quality design.⁸

These unorthodox – and by some accounts, radical – ideas about design were espoused by some of the era’s most progressive architects including Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius (Germany), Le Corbusier (France), J.J.P. Oud (the Netherlands), and Marcel Breuer (Hungary), each of whom wielded tremendous influence on the future of architecture. These architects experimented with new materials and methods to create functional buildings for the masses, free of excess and historic imitations. By the 1920s, these experiments had coalesced into a discernible style that embodied progressive values and resoundingly rejected traditional building modes and architectural conventions. It was not until several years later, in 1932, that this new and radically modern idiom was codified as the International Style.



Examples of European Modernism, Walter Gropius’s Bauhaus Building, Dessau, Germany, 1925 (left); J.J. Oud’s Kiefthoek Worker Housing, Rotterdam, Netherlands, 1925-1930 (right). They embody the rigid, and highly functional aesthetic of the International style (UNESCO; Wikimedia Commons).

The International Style was characterized by an austere aesthetic and taut, unornamented exterior surfaces indicative of the Machine Age. Those working in the style embraced modular design, expressed structural systems and material palettes, and methods of prefabrication as they developed an idiom that shunned past traditions and instead championed the virtues of functionality, rationality, and economy.⁹

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Tom Wolfe, *From Bauhaus to Our House* (New York: Picador, 1981), 12-13.

⁹ “City of Riverside Modernism Context Statement,” prepared by Christopher A. Joseph & Associates for the City of Riverside, November 3, 2009.

Similar ideas about design were being explored by architects in the United States at the same time that Modernism was taking root in Europe. In the decades following the Civil War, American society underwent a dramatic transformation due to rapid industrialization, the development of an increasingly robust national transportation network, and an urban population boom. By the end of the nineteenth century the once-agrarian nation had been transformed into an industrial and economic powerhouse, and many architects aspired to develop a distinctively American style of architecture that more clearly reflected the current conditions of American life. Similar to their European counterparts, these architects looked not to the past, but rather explored ways to apply modern materials and methods.

The American school of Modernism was conceived by a group of forward-thinking, functionalist-driven architects who were known collectively as the Chicago School, so named because they were based in Chicago. Architects associated with the Chicago School were among the first to promote the new technology of steel frame construction in commercial design, and developed a unique idiom in tandem with parallel developments that were taking place in Europe at the time. One of the architects most closely associated with the Chicago School, William LeBaron Jenney, earned international acclaim in 1885 when he designed the world's first skyscraper, a ten-story edifice known as the Home Insurance Center, in Chicago's central business district.¹⁰ The building's verticality was made possible by steel, a relatively new and untested material that Jenney was able to meld into a structural frame.¹¹ Jenney's skillful application of structural steel was a pivotal moment in the evolution of American architecture. It marked a sharp deviation from architectural norms and showcased how new materials could be applied.



William LeBaron Jenney's Home Insurance Building in Chicago (1885, demolished 1931) gave rise to the forward-thinking Chicago School and utilized what was then the new technology of steel-frame construction (Library of Congress).

¹⁰ Susan O'Connor Davis, *Chicago's Historic Hyde Park* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 48.

¹¹ Ibid.

However, the Chicago School architect who arguably had the greatest impact on the development of the American school of Modernism was Louis Sullivan, of the firm Adler and Sullivan. Often referred to as the “father of Modernism” in the United States, Sullivan deviated from the Beaux Arts tradition in search of a more authentic and distinctively American style of architecture, free of historical references.¹² Sullivan’s work integrated plain geometries with ornamentation in wood, stone, and terra cotta that often incorporated forms and motifs from the natural environment. It also eliminated all unnecessary ornament, and instead emphasized abstract forms and geometric simplicity. Sullivan’s aesthetic is typically associated with the early skyscrapers of Chicago and the American Midwest, and in due time its distinctive appearance became synonymous with the visual character of urban central business districts.



Adler and Sullivan’s Wainwright Building, St. Louis (1891). Its geometric simplicity (left) and judicious use of organic ornament (middle, right) were emblems of a distinctively American brand of architecture (Library of Congress).

Sullivan’s transformative approach to architecture, and the infamous edict that he coined to describe it – “form follows function” – had an indelible effect on the development of American Modernism. Two of the architects also considered to be among the earliest pioneers of American Modernism, Irving J. Gill and Frank Lloyd Wright, both worked as draftsmen in Adler and Sullivan’s office before launching their own successful careers. Both men would eventually arrive in Southern California, and would make immeasurable contributions to developing a brand of Modernism that was uniquely suited to the region.

Frank Lloyd Wright played a pivotal role in the early development of an American architectural Modernism. After a (characteristically) bitter falling out with Sullivan, Wright went into business for himself, and developed a new architectural vocabulary known as the Prairie style. Conceived while Wright was living near Chicago, the Prairie style drew inspiration from the broad, flat planes of the

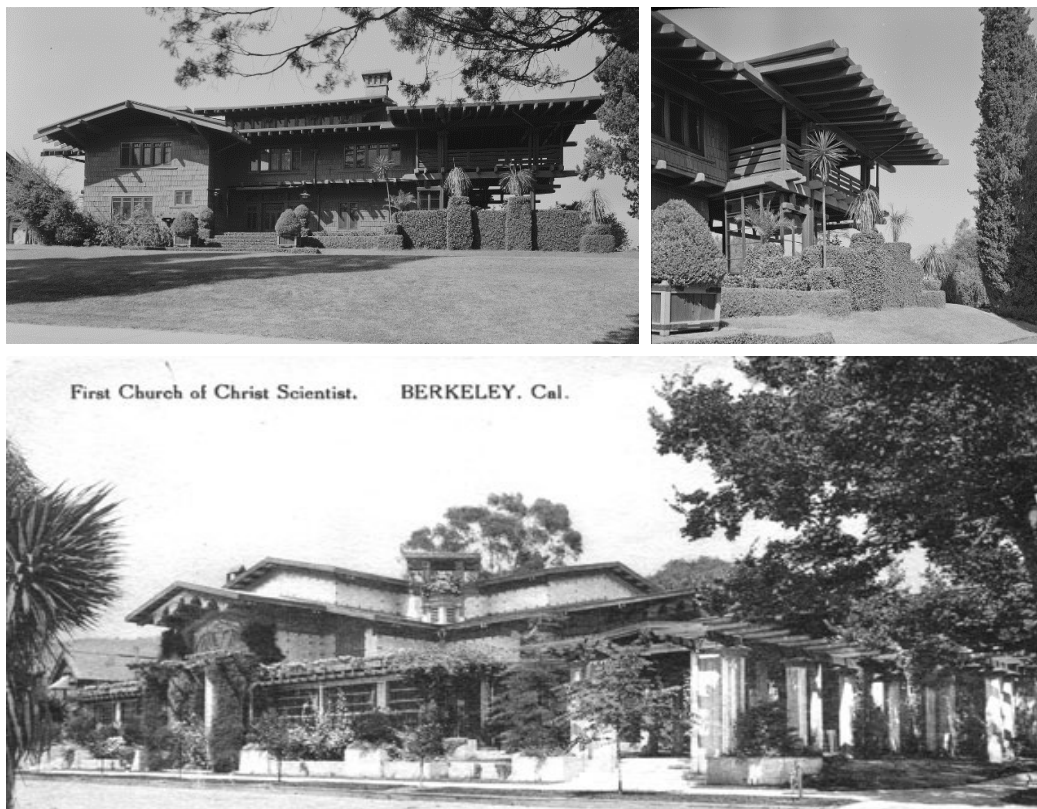
¹² James R. Abbott, “Louis Sullivan, Architectural Modernism, and the Creation of Democratic Space,” *The American Sociologist* 31:1 (Spring 2000): 62-85.

American Midwest. Common characteristics of the Prairie style included horizontal lines, flat or hipped roofs with wide eaves, pleasing proportions, and a restrained use of ornament.¹³

Origins of Modernism in Southern California

The Prairie style marked one of the first successful attempts to develop a uniquely American idiom, and its ascent is commonly regarded as a precipice in American architectural history that inspired architects to draw upon and incorporate references to American culture. However, its geographic reach was mostly limited to the American Midwest. Though it was occasionally applied in and around Los Angeles, the style never had an especially profound nor transformative effect on the region's built environment.

However, at the same time that the Prairie style was being popularized elsewhere, architects in California – and particularly Southern California – were experimenting with new ideas of their own. By the early twentieth century, the same intrepid spirit that had driven the work of Sullivan, Wright, and others had become manifest in California's architectural landscape. There were several reasons for this. Still a relatively unpopulated and undeveloped state that lacked a strong architectural identity, California, at this time, was seen as a blank slate where new approaches to design could be tested. Its temperate climate also inspired architects to design in a manner that was harmonious with the natural



Greene and Greene's Gamble House in Pasadena (1908, top), and Bernard Maybeck's First Church of Christ, Scientist in Berkeley (1910, bottom) are notable examples of the Craftsman style (Calisphere; Berkeley Architectural Heritage Assn).

¹³ Virginia McAlester and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 439-451.

environment and fostered an integral relationship between buildings and nature. As a center of the American Arts and Crafts movement, it was no stranger to harboring innovative architectural ideas.

Architects associated with the Arts and Crafts movement, including Charles and Henry Greene in Southern California and Bernard Maybeck in the San Francisco Bay area, are among the earliest pioneers in this regard. The Craftsman style buildings that they designed earned acclaim precisely because they broke from convention and introduced an idiom that put many of these new ideas to the test.¹⁴ The pioneering work of Greene and Greene, Maybeck, and others working in the Arts and Crafts tradition solidified California's reputation as a hotbed for fresh and innovative thought, and as a place where things could be, and were, done differently.¹⁵ These architects also inspired others to more scrupulously evaluate the spatial and functional relationships between buildings and nature, and to develop an architectural idiom that was appropriately suited to California's mild climate and natural landscape. Some of the earliest experiments in Southern California Modernism encouraged other architects to develop a new dialect of architecture that was appropriately suited to the region, its history, its climate, and its natural attributes. Chief among them was Irving Gill, who is widely regarded as California's "first and preeminent architect of the Modernist era," though he was little known for much of his career.¹⁶ Employed as a draftsman in the office of Adler and Sullivan in Chicago, Gill moved to San Diego in 1893 for health reasons and found work as an architect.¹⁷ His characteristically chaste approach to design reflected his intrigue with California's missions, Craftsman bungalows, and other architectural forms that were unique to Southern California. Irving Gill developed a dialect of architecture unique to Southern California and went on to experiment with innovative construction methods, and became particularly well known for his pioneering work with structural concrete.¹⁸



Notable examples of Irving Gill's work: La Jolla Woman's Club, San Diego (1914, left) and Horatio West Court, Santa Monica (1919, right), (Library of Congress).

¹⁴ Kevin Starr, *Material Dreams: Southern California Through the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 188.

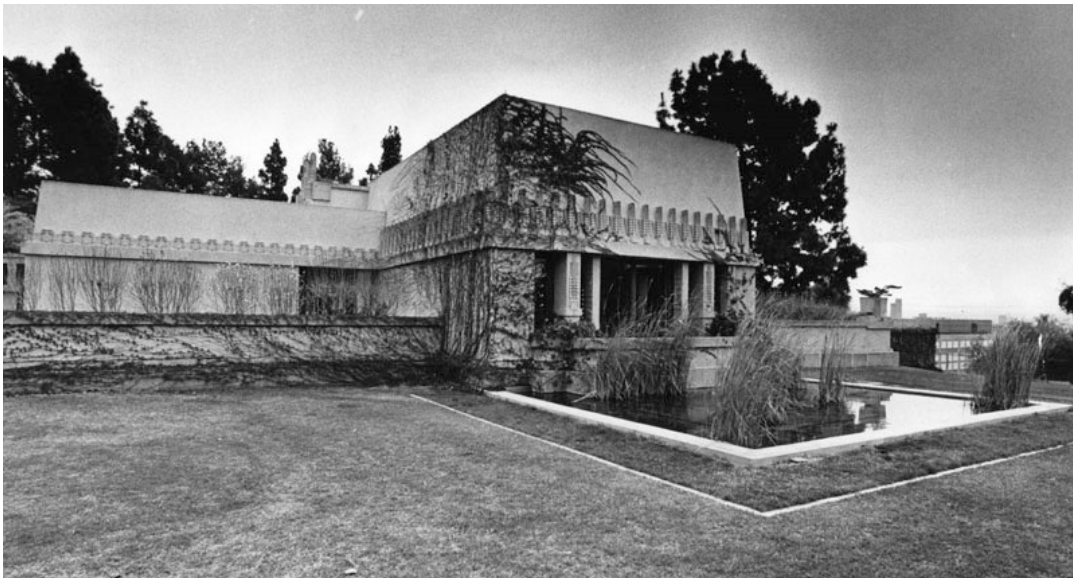
¹⁵ For more information see the "Arts and Crafts Movement" theme of the "Architecture and Engineering" historic context.

¹⁶ Marvin Rand, *Irving Gill: Architect, 1870-1936* (Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2006), front cover.

¹⁷ Esther McCoy, *Five California Architects* (Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls, 1975), 59.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 75-79.

In 1916, Frank Lloyd Wright came to work in Los Angeles to design a house and arts complex for oil heiress and iconoclast Aline Barnsdall, whom he had known in Chicago.¹⁹ Inspired by the region's climate and landscape, and fearing that he was becoming typecast as the architect of Prairie houses, Wright set out to develop a new architectural vocabulary that was uniquely suited to the region, much like Gill had been doing since the turn-of-the-twentieth century. Though his tenure in Los Angeles was quite brief, Wright contributed immeasurably to the development of a regional dialect of Modernism. While in Los Angeles, he introduced a radically different approach to domestic architecture that incorporated stark façades, geometric forms, and pre-Columbian motifs, and employed an innovative structural technique comprising stacked concrete blocks known as "textile block" construction.²⁰ His aesthetic aimed to strike a "harmonious relationship between the structure, occupant, and the natural landscape."²¹ The complex designed for Barnsdall includes the Hollyhock House, characterized by stark planes and pre-Columbian forms which marked a sharp deviation from established architectural modes (4800 Hollywood Boulevard, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monuments No. 12, 33, and 34, listed in the National Register, and UNESCO World Heritage Site).



Hollyhock House, 4800 Hollywood Boulevard, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monuments No. 12, 33, and 34, listed in the National Register, and UNESCO World Heritage Site (Los Angeles Public Library)

Wright's work marked a major departure from, and a staunch rejection of Classicism and other revivalist idioms that were popular at the time. His contributions to Los Angeles architecture influenced a slew of other architects with whom he worked and mentored, including his son Frank Lloyd Wright, Jr. (known professionally as Lloyd Wright). Trained as an architect and a landscape architect, the younger Wright earned acclaim in his own right, and was known for designing buildings characterized by "bold, soaring forms; unusual colors and materials; careful siting; and, of course, integrated landscapes."²²

¹⁹ Charles Lockwood, "Searching Out Wright's Imprint in Los Angeles," *New York Times*, December 2, 1984.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Los Angeles Conservancy, "Frank Lloyd Wright," accessed December 2018.

²² Los Angeles Conservancy, "Lloyd Wright," accessed December 2018.

The earliest examples of Modern architecture in Los Angeles were designed by architects who were bred, born, and trained in the United States, and thus reflected an American interpretation of modernity. However, in the 1920s the nation was introduced to the stark, taut, machine-like aesthetic of the International Style when several influential figures in European Modernism emigrated to the United



Richard Neutra's Lovell Health House, 1929, 4616 Dundee Drive, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 123, listed in the National Register (Los Angeles Public Library)

States. Two architects in particular are credited with introducing the International Style to Southern California: R.M. (Rudolph Michael) Schindler and Richard Neutra, both Austrian émigrés who arrived in Los Angeles by way of Chicago. Though their architectural careers would chart different courses, and their relationship devolved into bitter rivalry and mutual disdain, both Schindler and Neutra introduced the region to a clean, austere, and deliberately neutral approach to design, rooted in the tenets of European Modernism and evoking the aesthetic of the International Style.²³ Both experimented with new and innovative approaches to architecture that balanced this aesthetic with local conditions. And both are regarded as master architects who played a highly influential role in defining what Modern architecture in Southern California should be – what it might look like, and how it might shape one's life.

The contributions of European Modernists such as Schindler and Neutra dovetailed with those of Irving Gill, Frank Lloyd Wright, Lloyd Wright, and other American architects who had been attempting to create a new dialect of architecture. This blend of domestic and international innovation laid a strong foundation for a brand of Modernism that was uniquely suited to the milieu of Southern California.

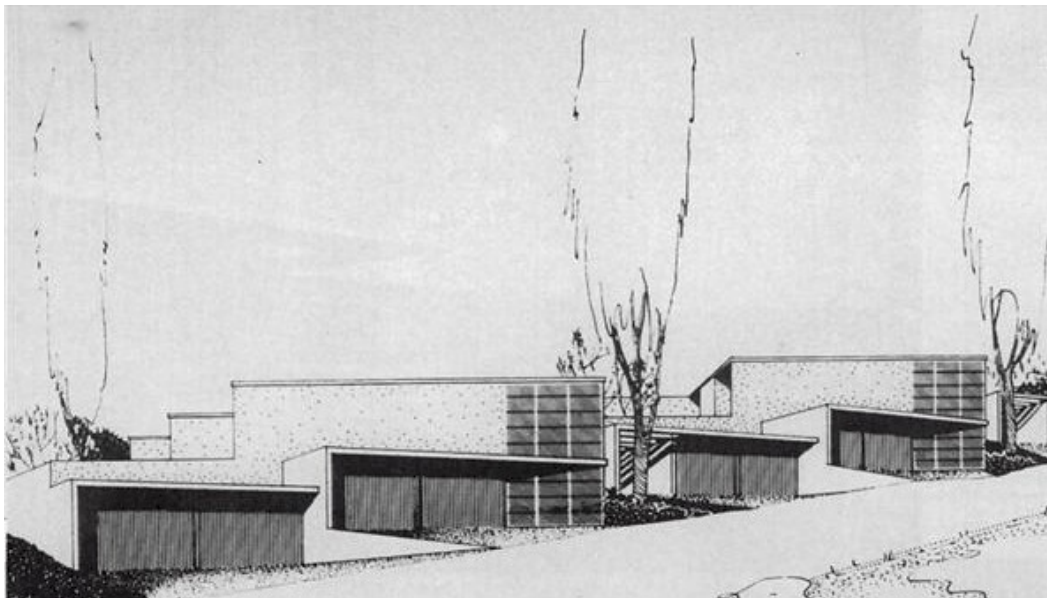


Rudolph Schindler's Kings Road House, 1922, West Hollywood, listed in the National Register (Schindler Lab)

²³ Esther McCoy, "Letters Between R.M. Schindler and Richard Neutra," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 33:3 (October 1974): 219-224.

Collectively, Gill, both Wrights, Schindler, and Neutra are often referred to as the “first generation” of Southern California Modernists because their bodies of work were so groundbreaking, forward-reaching, and unprecedented. They introduced new approaches to form, function, and aesthetics that deviated far from established norms and culminated in bold, intrepid architectural statements that were unlike anything the Southern California region had ever seen. Their contributions captured the attention of a handful of younger architects, many of whom were their mentees. These protégés took the fundamental principles that defined the work of their forebears – simplicity, integrity, minimalism, structural expressionism, lack of ornamentation, and references to nature – and found ways to hone and adapt them, incorporating their own ideas in the process. Four architects in particular fit this bill, and were dubbed by architectural historian Esther McCoy as the “second generation” of early Modernists: J.R. Davidson, Harwell Hamilton Harris, Gregory Ain, and Raphael Soriano.²⁴

Davidson, Harris, Ain, and Soriano all made notable contributions to the early development of Los Angeles Modernism by building upon the foundation that had been laid by their predecessors, albeit in different ways. Davidson was conversant in many idioms and designed buildings that were warm, fluid, and well-planned; Harris set out to design buildings that exhibited a keen sensitivity to site, setting, and landscape; Ain experimented with new and inexpensive modular materials to lower the cost associated with Modern architecture and make it available to the masses; and Soriano embraced and finessed the sleek, machine-like International Style aesthetic associated with Neutra’s early work.²⁵ These “second generation” Modernists made many of their most notable strides during the 1930s and 1940s.



*Rendering of Gregory Ain’s Avenel Cooperative Housing complex, 1948,
2839-2849 Avenel Street, listed in the National Register (Los Angeles Public Library)*

²⁴ Joseph Giovannini, “A Chronicle of California Architecture,” *New York Times*, June 21, 1984. The lives and careers of these architects are chronicled in Esther McCoy, *The Second Generation* (Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith, 1984).

²⁵ Michael Locke and Vincent Brook, *Silver Lake Bohemia: A History* (Charleston: The History Press, 2016), 32-42.

With time, these early Modernists came to be tremendously influential, and their trailblazing work encouraged future generations of architects to set aside the status quo and critically consider how architecture could, and should function. However, at the time their work tended to be misunderstood, and it fell so far outside the parameters of mainstream architecture that their ideas were largely seen as a fringe movement and were never implemented on a broad scale. Prior to World War II, when these early Modern architects introduced and honed their unconventional ideas, architects and the public expressed a strong preference for the more placid Period Revival styles that were familiar to most and offensive to few. Those with more modern sensibilities sometimes turned to the Art Deco or Moderne styles (discussed later), which incorporated some modern methods and materials but did not push the envelope nearly as far as did Early American Modernism or the International Style.

Modernists' realm of experimentation at this time was essentially limited to custom-designed, single-family houses designed for an affluent and avant-garde clientele. Modernism was also sometimes applied to other properties including multi-family housing, restaurants, stores, and offices. It was not until after World War II that the principles underpinning Modernism would be applied on a mass scale.

The Pre-War Modernism theme is divided into the following two sub-themes: Early Modernism, 1919-1945 and International Style, 1927-1945. Some of the previously referenced historical background is discussed again in the two sub-themes in order for each to be read discretely.

SUBTHEME: Early Modernism, 1919-1945

Some examples of Modern architecture in Los Angeles that were constructed prior to World War II exhibit clear influence from the Bauhaus, de Stijl, and other schools of European Modernism. However, others lacked European Modernism's crisp, clean lines and machine-like aesthetic, and instead represented a somewhat eclectic array of architectural experiments that were bound together only by a common desire to create a regionally appropriate architecture, free of references to the past. "Early Modernism" is the term used to collectively describe these divergent, yet conceptually related early experiments that are devoid of clear European influence. It refers not to any one particular architectural style, but is rather a blanket term that encompasses the collection of buildings that were firmly rooted in the principles of Modernism and were constructed in the decades prior to World War II.

Modernism's advent in Los Angeles occurred organically and cannot be attributed to a single date or event. However, most accounts of local architectural history concur that the movement to create a new Modern architecture for Southern California began at the turn-of-the-twentieth century with the career of Irving J. Gill (1870-1936). According to architect and historian Natalie Shivers, it was Gill who introduced the themes upon which local Modern movement was rooted: specifically, his emphasis was on "healthful design; the merging of indoor and outdoor living; the ingenious use of industrial technologies; a passionate belief in the morality of architecture and its ability to do social good."²⁶

Born in New York, Gill did not attend college, nor did he possess any formal training or licensure in architecture. He was introduced to design after securing a job as a draftsman in the office of Adler and Sullivan in Chicago.²⁷ It was here that Gill first learned about new construction techniques such as the steel frame, and was profoundly influenced by Sullivan's functionalist, ahistorical aesthetic. Inspired by Sullivan, as well as by the sleek aesthetic of the Machine Age and the honesty of the Arts and Crafts movement, Gill aspired to create an architectural idiom that drew upon the natural surroundings and cultural heritage of a locale; when possible, he used innovative material palettes and building systems.

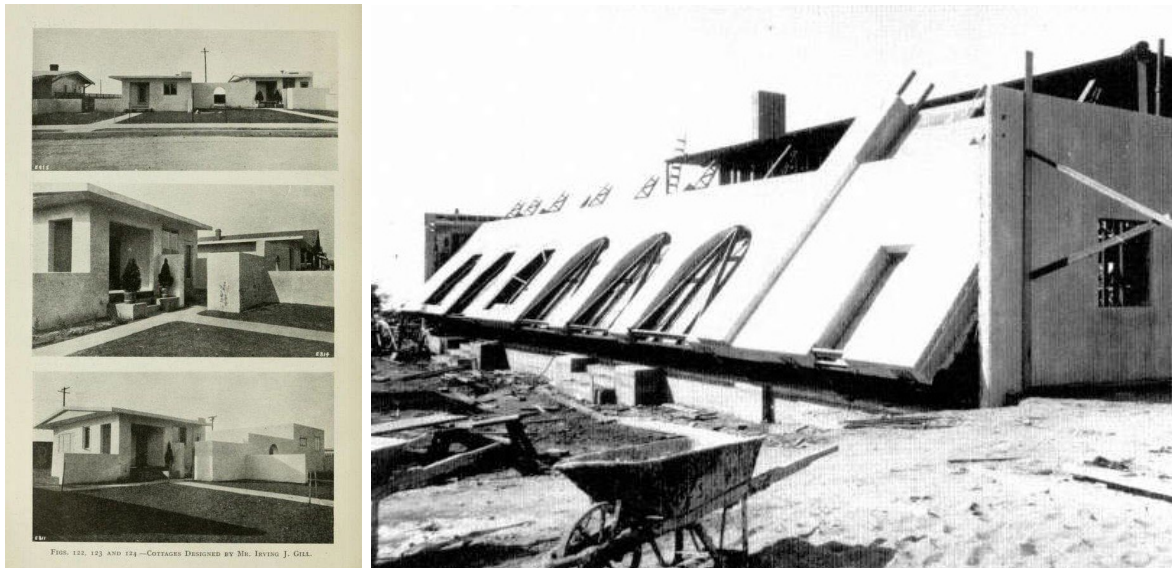
In 1893, Gill moved to San Diego for health reasons. Once his condition improved, he opened an architectural practice of his own and was able to put some of his unconventional ideas to the test. In San Diego, he was inspired by the architecture of the California missions, as well as the bungalows that had come to be associated with Southern California's Arts and Crafts movement.²⁸ His designs took the simplest architectural forms that were present in the missions – the arch, arcade, and masonry block – and augmented them with a heightened sense of material and craft. By the early 1900s, he also began to dabble in structural concrete and specifically with "tilt-up" concrete construction, an innovative approach to building that had been developed by Robert H. Aiken. In 1912, Gill founded the Concrete

²⁶ Shivers, "Architecture: A New Creative Medium," 124.

²⁷ McCoy, *Five California Architects*, 59.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 61.

Building and Investment Company and acquired the patent rights to Aiken's method.²⁹ In 1913 he was commissioned to design the La Jolla Woman's Club in La Jolla, which was California's first tilt-up building.



Examples of Irving Gill's structural concrete include small workers' cottages in Torrance (1913, left), and the La Jolla Woman's Club in San Diego (1914, right) (Architectural Drawings Collection, UC Santa Barbara).

Gill's work is most closely associated with the San Diego region. However, by the 1910s he began to live and work primarily in Los Angeles County. It was also during this time that Gill honed the distinctive aesthetic for which he is best known comprising flat roofs without eaves, a unity of materials, white or near-white exterior and interior walls, cubic massing, casement windows with transoms, and plentiful arches in the spirit of the California missions. Some of his most notable commissions in the Los Angeles area include a Pacific Electric Railroad Depot in Etiwanda (1912, extant); multiple projects in Torrance, including worker housing and an arched concrete railway bridge (1913, extant); and Horatio West Court, a bungalow court near the ocean in Santa Monica (1919, extant). In 1916 Gill designed what is often regarded as his most architecturally significant commission: a single-family house in West Hollywood for patent medicine magnate Walter L. Dodge (demolished 1970). For the Dodge House, Gill departed radically from the past and designed a reinforced concrete residence that blended elements of Mission and Modern design, had simple cubist massing, and lacked any surface ornament. It represented a stark and "revolutionary vision of what a modern Southern California house could, and would be."³⁰

²⁹ Paul J. Karlstrom, ed., *On the Edge of America: California Modernist Art, 1900-1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 149.

³⁰ Jeffrey Head, "Dodge House in West Hollywood," *Los Angeles Times*, July 16, 2011.



Irving Gill's Walter L. Dodge House, 1916 (not extant), West Hollywood (Library of Congress)

In the mid-1910s, Gill was joined by an equally visionary – and much more braggadocious – figure in the early development of Los Angeles Modernism: Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959). Wright was beckoned to California in 1916 to design an arts and theater complex near Hollywood for oil heiress, arts patron, and iconoclast Aline Barnsdall. Like Gill, with whom he worked while at Adler and Sullivan, Wright was intrigued by the idea of developing a new, regionally appropriate architecture for Southern California that took advantage of its mild climate and incorporated motifs that paid homage to its history and culture. The Barnsdall commission, with its freethinking client, provided a perfect opportunity for Wright to develop and hone his vision. Wright induced two other architects – his son, Lloyd Wright, and assistant R.M. Schindler – to come to Los Angeles and oversee the project's day-to-day management.

Construction of the Barnsdall arts complex commenced in 1919 and continued through 1921. The completed project consisted of the main residence known as the Hollyhock House (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 12), two artist studios known as Residence A (Historic Cultural-Monument No. 33) and Residence B (demolished 1948), and several ancillary buildings and landscape features. Though Wright was involved in the design of all of these structures in some capacity, it is the Hollyhock House that best exemplified his vision of how a regional architecture for Southern California should look. Constructed of concrete – which, at the time, was regarded as an unconventional residential building material – the house was oriented around a complex system of split levels and terraces, featured sloped exterior walls, and was accentuated by stylized ornament that took the form of a hollyhock, Barnsdall's favorite flower. The house's design references pre-Columbian architectural forms, and its integrated gardens, terraces, courtyards, and patios reflect Wright's belief that buildings should harmonize with the natural environment. Wright referred to the style of the house as "California Romanza," an adaption of a musical term meaning "freedom to make one's own form."³¹

³¹ Ada Louise Huxtable, *Frank Lloyd Wright: A Life* (New York: Penguin Group, 2004).



Hollyhock House shortly after its completion, 1921, 4800 Hollywood Boulevard, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monuments No. 12, 33, and 34, listed in the National Register, and UNESCO World Heritage Site. (Photographs by Julius Shulman, Wikimedia Commons).

The Hollyhock House presaged four other residences that Wright designed in and around Los Angeles during the 1920s. Known collectively as the “textile block houses,” these commissions were so named because of the innovative and highly unusual construction method that Wright utilized as part of their design. Specifically, he constructed these houses using precast concrete blocks, which were embossed with organic motifs and reinforced by steel rods. Concrete blocks were selected in part because they challenged Wright to design attractive structures using undesirable materials – he once referred to them as “the cheapest thing in the building world” and “the gutter rat” of architecture – and also because their modularity was seen as a way to simplify construction.³² Three of Wright’s textile block houses are located in Los Angeles proper: the Storer House in Hollywood (1923, 8161 Hollywood Boulevard, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 96), the Freeman House, also in Hollywood (1923, 1962 Glencoe Way, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 247); and the Ennis House in Los Feliz (1924, 2607 Glendower Avenue, Historic-Cultural Monument No. 149). The fourth, known as both the Millard House and La Miniatura, because of its more diminutive scale, (1923) is located in Pasadena. All four textile block houses are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Frank Lloyd Wright’s Storer House (left) and Freeman House (right) (Los Angeles Public Library)

³² Karen Cilento, “Frank Lloyd Wright’s Textile Houses,” *ArchDaily*, September 14, 2010, accessed December 2018.

Wright's textile block houses are best interpreted as reflecting his quest to shape an indigenous regional architecture for Southern California. Their response to the landscape, application of pre-Columbian motifs that are entirely devoid of European precedent, and their imposing appearance were unlike anything the region had ever seen before. As a result, these buildings painted a sharp contrast with the Period Revival idioms that dominated the architectural landscape of Southern California at the time.

Mired in personal scandal, and notorious for feuding incessantly with his clients and colleagues, Wright vacated his Los Angeles studio and returned to his native Wisconsin in 1923.³³ While his interlude in Los Angeles was relatively brief, the influence that he wielded over the region and its architectural identity was profound. Wright's innovative approach to construction, and his aspiration to harmonize buildings and the natural environment, influenced a coterie of other architects who similarly sought to transcend convention and develop an architecture that was uniquely suited to Southern California.

Chief among Wright's protégés was his eldest son, Lloyd Wright (1890-1978). While his reputation has often been eclipsed by that of his legendary father – “even architectural magazines tended to confuse him with his father at times” – the younger Wright was a highly accomplished architect in his own right.³⁴ Born and reared in the American Midwest, Lloyd Wright was immersed in the work of his father from an early age and pursued a career in architecture – a vocational path that he almost certainly seemed destined for. He moved west to San Diego in 1911 to work with the renowned Olmsted Brothers on the landscape design for the Panama-California Exposition, and while there he was introduced to, and subsequently worked for, Irving Gill. Wright, like Gill, later relocated to the Los Angeles area. In 1916 he opened his own practice in Los Angeles, initially finding work as a set designer for Paramount Studios and by supervising his father's Southern California commissions, most notably the Hollyhock House.

By the early 1920s, Lloyd Wright had built a formidable architectural practice and was designing buildings of his own, many of which were located in the Hollywood and Los Feliz neighborhoods and almost all of which consisted of custom-designed, single-family houses. His style “was in some ways similar to that of his father, but it was distinguished by individual characteristics as well.”³⁵ Many of his earliest independent designs, for instance, similarly utilized the technique of building houses of concrete block, but compared to the work of his father Lloyd Wright's textile block houses tended to be more cube-like in form and focused on the blocks' value as applied



*The Sowden House, 5121 Franklin Avenue,
L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 762
(HistoricPlacesLA)*

³³ Christopher Hawthorne, “Frank Lloyd Wright at 150: Why His Los Angeles Houses Deserve a Closer Look,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 8, 2017.

³⁴ Paul Goldberger, “Lloyd Wright, Architect, Dies at 88; Was Son of Renowned Designer,” *New York Times*, June 3, 1978.

³⁵ Ibid.

ornament, rather than as a construction material. His distinctive approach to the textile block system is manifest in the design of the Henry Bollman House in Hollywood (1922, 1530-1534 North Ogden Drive, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 235), which pre-dated the first of his father's textile block houses by a year; the John Sowden House in Los Feliz (1926, 5121 Franklin Avenue, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 762); and his personal house and studio in what is now West Hollywood (1928, listed in the National Register). The "slip-form" method of concrete construction that he utilized in the design of the Martha Taggart House (1922, 2150 Live Oak Drive, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 521) and the Oasis Hotel in Palm Springs (1923) further exemplified his technological prowess and his penchant for eschewing structural norms.³⁶

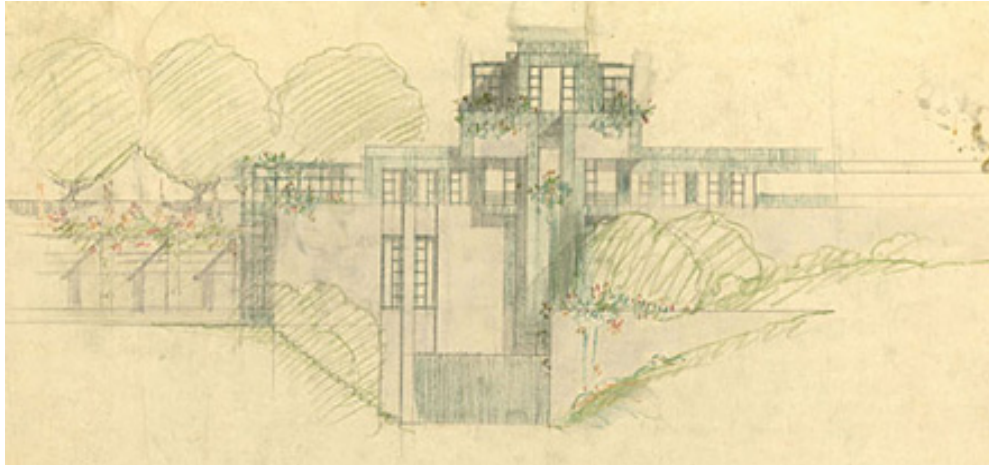


The Taggart House, 2150 Live Oak Drive, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 521 (HistoricPlacesLA)

Like his father, Lloyd Wright was driven by his freethinking and exploratory spirit, not by architectural conventions, and as a result his body of work took on an eclectic character that proved difficult to classify with respect to style. As his career progressed, he became increasingly known for his experimentation with Expressionist design, in which he blended modern architectural principles and construction methods with cryptic, often inscrutable indigenous design motifs. Many of his commissions took on theatrical qualities – a result of his prior experience in Hollywood set design – and were often characterized by bold geometries and soaring forms, eclectic materials, and unusual color palettes. He also demonstrated a keen awareness of the spatial relationship between building and site, and the buildings that he designed were almost always sensitively incorporated into their natural surroundings.

Lloyd Wright's career in the Los Angeles area carried on into the postwar period, his designs becoming increasingly Expressionistic. What is widely regarded as his most renowned postwar commission was for the design of the Wayfarer's Chapel in Palos Verdes (1946-1951, listed in the National Register), a glass-and-redwood basilica that features dramatic geometric forms and incorporates the surrounding natural landscape into its design.

³⁶ Thomas S. Hines, *Architecture of the Sun: Los Angeles Modernism, 1900-1970* (New York: Rizzoli, 2010), 19-21.



Rendering of Lloyd Wright's Samuel-Navarro Residence in Los Feliz (2255 Verde Oak Drive, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 130), ca. 1926. Notable features include concrete walls, oxidized copper accents, geometric motifs, and integration with the natural environment (UCLA Libraries).

R.M. Schindler (1887-1953) was another acolyte (and later bitter rival) of Frank Lloyd Wright who is regarded as “one of the seminal master architects in Southern California.”³⁷ Unlike both Wrights and Irving Gill, all of whom were born and trained in the United States, Schindler was from Vienna and studied architecture under the tutelage of European Modernists Otto Wagner and Adolf Loos. In 1914, Schindler moved to the United States and initially settled in Chicago; he hoped to secure a job in the office of Frank Lloyd Wright, whose work he had long admired. In 1918, Schindler joined Wright’s studio, and in 1920 he was summoned to Los Angeles to supervise the construction of the Hollyhock House while Wright was working abroad. In this role, he worked with aptitude and demonstrated a commitment to meeting the needs of his notoriously idiosyncratic client, so much so that it was him – and not Wright – whom Barnsdall hired to design a handful of other buildings and structures on the site.

Enamored with, and inspired by the region’s natural beauty and mild climate, Schindler elected to stay in Los Angeles and open his own architectural practice. Though he studied under, and worked for, some of the most seminal figures in European and American Modernism earlier in his career, Schindler charted his own path forward and “developed a style at once distinctly modern and uniquely responsive to local cultural, technological, and climatic conditions.”³⁸ His independent commissions reflected his constant experimentation with new materials, spatial compositions, and construction techniques.

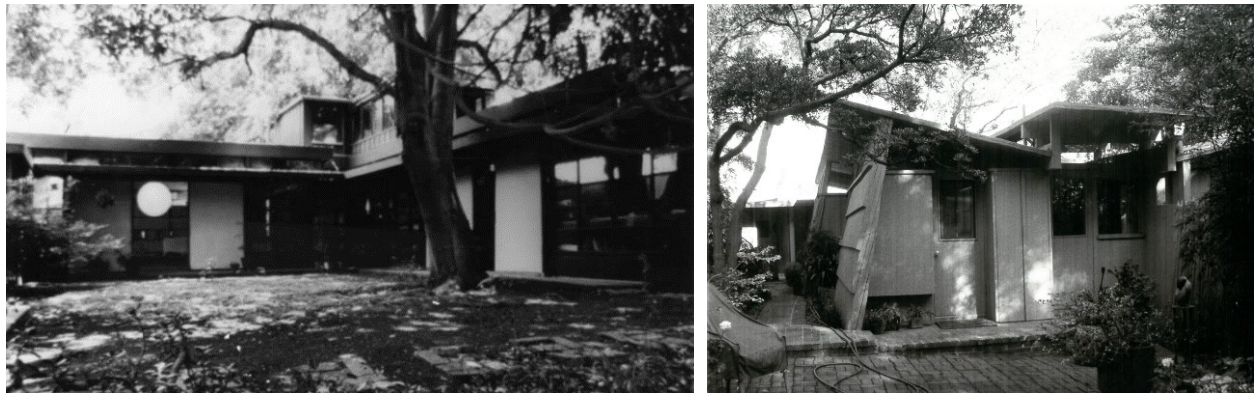
These characteristics are exceptionally well executed in one of Schindler’s earliest – and, by many accounts, his finest – independent commissions, a dwelling that he designed for himself, wife Pauline, and friends Marian and Clyde Chase in West Hollywood. The Kings Road House (1922) was designed as a cooperative live-work space, and comprised two interlocking “L” volumes to accommodate the two couples. The house featured an open plan and lacked traditional rooms and partitions; its construction

³⁷ Los Angeles Conservancy, “R. M. Schindler,” accessed December 2018.

³⁸ Ibid.

made novel use of unconventional building materials including tilt-up concrete walls and sliding glass panels, and its orientation created a seamless transition between indoor and outdoor spaces.³⁹

Schindler went on to design some 450 projects over the course of his career, about 150 of which were completed, and almost all of which were located in Los Angeles.⁴⁰ Through these projects he was able to further hone his vision of what an authentic Southern California architecture could, and should look like. Perhaps more than any other early Modernist, Schindler was truly a maverick whose work lacked any identifiable precedent and evinced a remarkable degree of ingenuity. British architectural critic Reyner Banham once remarked that Schindler designed houses “as if there had never been houses before.”⁴¹ The buildings he designed were strikingly individual and reflected his dedication to meeting the needs of each client. These also exhibited a sense of spatial complexity that reflected his intrigue with, and awareness of, space as the principal element belying good design. Schindler’s devotion to “space as defining architecture remained vital and remarkably consistent throughout his professional career.”⁴²



Notable examples of Schindler’s single-family dwellings include his own house and studio in West Hollywood (left), 1922 (Los Angeles Public Library) and the Kallis Residence (right), 1946, 3580 North Multiview Drive (Office of Historic Resources)

The majority of Schindler’s built projects consisted of custom-designed, single-family houses that were commissioned by progressive clients. These houses were generally located in historically bohemian areas of the city such as Silver Lake, Los Feliz, Hollywood, and, to a lesser extent, Westwood, Brentwood, and Pacific Palisades; often, they were sited on steep hillside lots that were affordable to his clients and provided him with the perfect opportunity to test new structural and material concepts. An advocate of the idea that high design need not be limited to custom dwellings, he also designed a lesser number of small and mid-scale multi-family properties including the Sachs Apartments (1926, 1807-1809 N Edgecliffe Drive, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1118) and the Bubeshko Apartments (1938-41, 2036-2048 Griffith Park Boulevard, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 831), both in Silver Lake; the DeKeyser Duplex in Hollywood (1935, 1911 N Highland Avenue); and the Laurelwood Apartments in Studio City (1949, 11837-11841 W laurelwood Drive, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 228).

³⁹ Shivers, “Architecture: A New Creative Medium,” 145; McCoy, *Five California Architects*, 156-160.

⁴⁰ Online Archive of California, “Finding Aid for the R.M. (Rudolph M.) Schindler Papers, 1904-1954,” accessed December, 2018.

⁴¹ Mary Banham, et al., eds., *A Critic Writes: Essays by Reyner Banham* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

⁴² Jin-Ho Park, “R.M. Schindler’s Theory of Space Architecture and its Theoretical Application to His Space Development of 1945,” *The Journal of Architecture* 11:1 (2006): 37-54.

Schindler also designed one ecclesiastical building: the Bethlehem Baptist Church in South Los Angeles (1944, 4901 S Compton Avenue, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 968).



The Bethlehem Baptist Church, 4901 S Compton Avenue, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 968 (Getty Research Institute)

In 1925, Viennese architect Richard Neutra (1892-1970) moved to Los Angeles, largely at the behest of his collaborator and friend, R.M. Schindler. Between the 1920s and 1960s, he designed an array of significant buildings that were pivotal in defining Modern architecture, both in Southern California and around the world. Most of Neutra's earlier commissions in and around Los Angeles were expressions of his European roots and evinced the International Style, "noted for their white stucco walls, ribbon windows, flat roofs, and orthogonal geometry."⁴³ However, as Neutra's career progressed his vocabulary evolved. By the mid-1940s, finding fertile soil in Southern California's experimental climate, he often designed with more varied materials, and replaced geometric forms with "a more extended and broken silhouette...and a looser version of the structurally oriented aesthetic" that defined his work.⁴⁴ His commissions, by this time, often broke from rigid orthodoxy, and took on a more eclectic character that represented a blending of his personal idiosyncrasies and the desire to create a truly regional idiom.

Neutra is not the only early Modernist whose body of work often toed the line between European Modernism and more eclectic, regionally inspired iterations of the Modern movement. Schindler and others whose work typically defied simple classification sometimes designed buildings that more closely resembled the International Style, typically in response to the needs and desires of a particular client.

Similarly, many of the younger architects who studied under their maverick forebears – known collectively as the "second generation" of Early Modernists – produced bodies of work that drew upon

⁴³ Fred Bernstein, "When Modern Married Money," *New York Times*, February 3, 2002.

⁴⁴ Arthur Drexler and Thomas S. Hines, *The Architecture of Richard Neutra: From International Style to California Modern* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1982), 21.

multiple influences and idioms and are best described as eclectic. In particular, the early work of architect Harwell Hamilton Harris (1903-1990) captures the exploratory spirit of the Modern movement. Initially, Harris had pursued a career in sculpture, but after visiting the Hollyhock House and being introduced to the innovative work of Frank Lloyd Wright he decided to switch gears and work toward a career in architecture. He apprenticed with Richard Neutra, working with the master architect first at his temporary studio in Hollywood and later at his VDL Research House in Silver Lake. Generally, though, Harris's work more closely aligned with the work of Schindler and Wright, rather than that of Neutra. Even more so than Schindler and Wright, however, Harris looked to the local traditions of Greene and Greene as well as Japanese art and design to create his own brand of "organic" architecture.

Harris's popularity rested largely on his ability to "accommodate the exigencies of the site, clients, and banks, and to achieve an architecture that was modern without seeming doctrinaire."⁴⁵ His personal residence was a testament to this edict. The Fellowship Park House in Silver Lake (1936) demonstrated Harris's penchant for organic architecture and designing buildings that were harmonious with the surrounding natural environment. Its redwood posts were a nod to nature, and sliding screens of glass, cloth, and insect netting helped to blur the lines between indoor and outdoor spaces. The house was also cantilevered from a hillside so that it appeared to "float in the foliage" surrounding it.⁴⁶ Harris shunned the machine-made imagery of the International Style in favor of more conventional forms and natural materials such as wood framing, low-pitched hipped roofs, stucco cladding, and wood siding.

Early experiments in Modernism that were introduced by these pioneering architects introduced new ideas about forms, materials, and composition. These ideas had an indelible impact on Los Angeles' architectural identity and laid a strong foundation for its rich tradition of innovation. They dovetailed – and often overlapped with – the International Style, which explored the same set of key issues but more deliberately incorporated the stark, austere, Machine-age aesthetic tied to European Modernism.

⁴⁵ Shivers, "Architecture: A New Creative Medium," 170.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

ELIGIBILITY STANDARDS FOR EARLY MODERNISM, 1919-1945

Summary Statement of Significance:	Resources evaluated under this sub-theme are significant in the area of Architecture as excellent examples of Early Modernism and exhibit quality of design through distinctive features. Associated resources reflect architects' desire to introduce new, regional styles that drew inspiration from the context, climate, and natural environment. They tend to be freer in form and often incorporate organic motifs, characteristics that distinguish these resources from the machine-like aesthetic of the International Style. Early Modernism is almost always expressed in the form of custom single-family residences, though there are also a few examples of multi-family dwellings. Examples of Early Modernism are very rare in Los Angeles; many are designated as L.A. Historic-Cultural Monuments and/or are listed in the National Register and the California Register.		
Period of Significance:	1919-1945		
Period of Significance Justification:	Maverick architects such as Irving Gill had been experimenting with new forms and materials in Southern California since the early twentieth century, but the earliest extant example of Early Modernism in Los Angeles is Frank Lloyd Wright's Hollyhock House (1919-1921). The period of significance for this theme begins in 1919, when construction of the Hollyhock House was initiated, and ends in 1945, when Modernism had come of age and became more closely associated with mainstream culture.		
Geographical Location(s):	Sparsely concentrated, with most examples in the Silver Lake, Los Feliz, Hollywood, and Brentwood-Pacific Palisades areas. A few others can be found in Westwood, the Wilshire area, and in the hillside communities of the San Fernando Valley.		
Area(s) of Significance:	Architecture		
Criterion:	NR: C	CR: 3	Local: 3
Associated Property Types:	Residential – Single-Family Residence Residential – Multi-Family Residence		
Property Type Description:	Examples of Early Modernism in Los Angeles are almost always expressed in the form of single-family houses and small- and mid-scale multi-family residences. Resources that are associated with this sub-theme are notable for not fitting neatly into a stylistic category; rather, their designs reflect		

the innovative and experimental whims of a small group of maverick architects who were seeking to develop a new architectural idiom for Southern California that embraced the use of new materials and technologies. Characteristics that are common to Early Modern resources include horizontal massing, geometric or cubist volumes, the experimental use of materials, and horizontal bands of windows, though these qualities may manifest in different ways, and to different degrees, for each resource.

Property Type Significance: See Summary Statement of Significance above.

Eligibility Standards:

- Exhibits quality of design through distinctive features
- Retains the essential character-defining features of Early Modernism from the period of significance
- Was constructed during the period of significance

Character-Defining / Associative Features:

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
- Horizontal orientation
- Geometric volumes, often intersecting at angles
- Experimental use of materials (such as concrete, gunite, textile block, redwood)
- Windows arranged in bands, often terminating at corners
- Casement windows, metal or wood sash

Integrity Considerations:

- Should retain integrity of Design, Materials, Workmanship, and Feeling from the period of significance
- Retains sufficient integrity to convey significance
- Original garage doors may have been replaced
- Original use may have changed
- Setting may have changed (surrounding buildings and land uses)
- Some windows and doors may be replaced, as long as openings have not been altered and original fenestration patterns have not been disrupted
- Decorative elements may be added to originally sparse facades
- Security features such as screen doors and bars at windows may be added
- Paint may be applied to surfaces (wood) that might have originally been unpainted

SUBTHEME: International Style, 1928-1966

Other examples of Modern architecture in Los Angeles that were constructed prior to World War II embody the stark, austere, and machine-like aesthetic associated with European Modernism. While this aesthetic initially lacked a formal name, it was eventually coined the “International Style.” Buildings that are designed in the International Style exhibit clear European influence and embody a number of common architectural characteristics that have come to define this idiom. Conceptually they share much in common with those associated with the Early Modernism sub-theme – specifically, the International Style and parallel trends in local Modernism all aspired to create a new, honest mode of architecture, free of historic imitation and superfluous ornament. However, International Style buildings are defined by a clear and identifiable aesthetic, whereas those associated with Early Modernism tend to be more exploratory, are freer with respect to form and materials, and are more eclectic in their composition.

The International Style encompasses two broad and discrete periods of history. Prior to World War II, the style was generally seen as a fringe movement and was applied sparsely, mostly to custom-designed single-family houses. In the postwar period, the style had become more widely accepted by the American public and emerged as a preferred idiom for commercial, institutional, and civic buildings. This sub-theme addresses International Style buildings that were constructed prior to World War II and are associated with the early history of Modernism in Los Angeles. The style’s evolution after World War II is discussed in the Postwar Modernism/Corporate International theme.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, a number of European architects experimented with developing new modes of architecture that embodied qualities of honesty, clarity, and simplicity, and celebrated and utilized new materials and technologies to their fullest potential. Chief among this group of maverick architects was Walter Gropius of Germany, who founded the Bauhaus School in 1919. The prevailing goal of the Bauhaus was to end the isolation of each of the arts from one another by training artists and craftsmen together in cooperative workshops, with an emphasis on reducing architecture and the arts to their most basic elements and purest forms.⁴⁷ Some of Europe’s most celebrated fine artists and craftspeople were recruited to the Bauhaus: Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, Gunta Stolzl, Josef Albers, Laszlo Mahohly-Nagy, Marcel Breuer, and Mies van der Rohe. The school earned international acclaim through a series of influential exhibitions and publications that promoted its core values.

Other, parallel schools of design were exploring many of the same fundamental ideas as the Bauhaus at about the same time. The De Stijl movement in the Netherlands developed a set of stylistic principles oriented around the notions of austerity, clarity, and order, perhaps expressed most clearly through the work of architect J.J.P. Oud. Upon moving to France in 1917, Swiss architect Charles-Edouard Jeanneret (known professionally as Le Corbusier) was influenced by the tenets of Rationalism and Cubism, and was introduced to the mechanics and merits of reinforced concrete by architect Auguste Perret.⁴⁸ In the 1920s, Le Corbusier developed a set of architectural principles that dictated his technique and also

⁴⁷ Hasan-Uddin Khan, *International Style: Modernist Architecture from 1925-1965* (Köln, Germany: Taschen, 2009), 19.

⁴⁸ Louise Campbell, “Perret vs. Le Corbusier: Building for Art in the 1920s,” *Kunst Og Kultur* 4 (2014): 206-215.

became a manifesto of the Modern architectural movement. Known as the Le Corbusier's Five Points of Architecture, these principles codified many of the principal ideas about honesty, clarity, and chasteness in architecture that European Modernists had been developing for years. Le Corbusier's five points include: (1) the reinforced concrete column, or *piloti*, in lieu of a supporting wall; (2) an open floor plan, which was made possible by the absence of large supporting walls; (3) gardens atop flat roofs; (4) the horizontal or ribbon window, which cuts a building's façade along its entire length; and (5) composition of the freed façade, which was made possible by a building's concrete skeleton frame.⁴⁹ These principles, seen in the Villa Savoye by Swiss architects Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, make it one of the most iconic examples of the International style.



Villa Savoye, Poissy, France, 1928-1931 (Valueyou, Wikipedia)

While they were all essentially working toward the same fundamental goals, these architects practiced somewhat independently of one another and were associated with different schools of design. However, by the early 1920s the lines between these parallel movements had blurred, and from this amalgamation of ideas emerged a new approach to architecture that pushed the envelope so far that it was unlike anything the world had ever seen. Buildings designed in this new style were notable because they “were decidedly – and elegantly – plain. They were perfectly rectilinear and free from any and all ornamentation. They used steel and reinforced concrete: new materials,” they bore no reference to past architectural trends, and they utilized and celebrated new materials and technologies to their fullest.⁵⁰

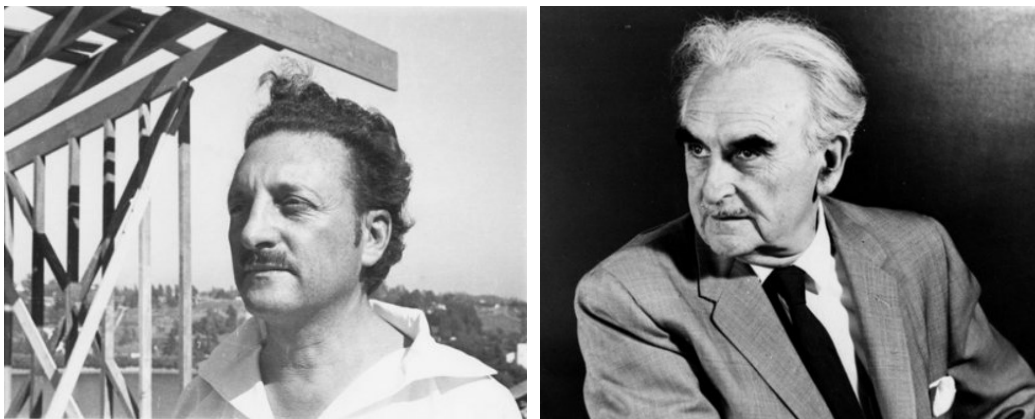
⁴⁹ Bernard Leupen, et al., *Design and Analysis* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1997), 51.

⁵⁰ Beau Perego, “How Chicago Sparked the International Style of Architecture in America,” *Architectural Digest*, March 17, 2017.

The term “internationalism” with respect to architecture was first used by Gropius in a seminal text entitled *Internationale Architektur*, which he edited for the Bauhaus School in 1925. This volume, which covered a wide range of current designs, characterized the new, modern aesthetic that was being promoted by the Bauhaus and other schools as “international and unbounded by place or culture.”⁵¹ By emphasizing a neutral, functional aesthetic that lacked any overt references to history or place, this emerging style was seen as a universal style that could be applied, quite literally, anywhere in the world.

These trends in European Modernism were imported to the United States beginning in the 1920s, when a number of highly influential architects associated with the Modern architectural movement left their home countries and repatriated in several major cities across the nation. Luminaries Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer, both of Germany, moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts to teach at Harvard University; Mies van der Rohe and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, also of Germany, settled in Chicago; and William Lescaze of Switzerland established a practice in New York City.⁵² The United States, which had emerged as an industrial powerhouse and a beacon of progress, was fertile ground for these architects to adapt, disseminate, and implement their progressive ideas relating to form, space, materiality, and technology.

As these émigré architects made their mark on the American architectural environment, the principles underpinning European Modernism were transported to myriad cities across the nation. This was true of Los Angeles and the Southern California region, which were first introduced to the doctrine of European Modernism upon the arrival of two highly influential Viennese architects: R.M. Schindler, who arrived in Los Angeles in 1920, and Richard Neutra, who arrived in 1925. While their careers charted varied and eclectic courses, and their bodies of work often did not fit squarely into a well-defined stylistic category, both Schindler and Neutra designed many buildings that exhibited clear European influence and its stark, austere, and characteristically chaste aesthetic. Prior to arriving in the United States, Schindler and Neutra had both studied under European Modernist Adolph Loos; both had also been introduced to, and were profusely inspired by the work of American architect Frank Lloyd Wright.



*R.M. Schindler (left) and Richard Neutra (right), both of Austria
(UC Santa Barbara Art Design & Architecture Museum; Los Angeles Public Library).*

⁵¹ Khan, *International Style*, 11.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 24.

Richard Neutra (1892-1970) is widely considered to be the architect most closely associated with European Modernism in Los Angeles. At the behest of his friend and colleague, fellow Viennese architect R.M. Schindler, Neutra came to Los Angeles in 1925, and initially lived with Schindler and his family in Schindler's Kings Road House in West Hollywood. Neutra's early commissions embodied the design principles that were associated with European Modernism, and were considered at the time to be a radical departure from convention because of their stark, utilitarian appearance. The Jardinette Apartments, now the Marathon Apartments, in Hollywood (5128 Marathon Street, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 390), completed in 1928, was Neutra's first commission in the United States and clearly espoused his European sensibilities. The 40-plus unit building was constructed of reinforced concrete (which, at the time, was an unconventional residential building material) and was notable for its unusual "box-like forms, flat roofs, [and] unbroken horizontal windows alternating with plain, banded spandrels extended to form [cantilevered] balconies."⁵³ These cantilevers enhanced the connection between man and nature by allowing the building "to thrust and dissolve into the skyline," and this building's utilitarian appearance rendered it distinct from the myriad Period Revival and Art Deco style apartment houses that peppered the landscape of Los Angeles at the time.⁵⁴



The Jardinette Apartments, 5128 Marathon Street, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 390 (Calisphere).

Neutra's second commission in Los Angeles, when completed in 1929, became an instantly recognizable example of what later became known as the International Style: a single-family residence in the Los Feliz neighborhood for physician and naturopath Philip Lovell. Known as the Lovell Health House (4616 Dundee Drive, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 123), it is widely regarded as one of Neutra's foremost contributions to the Modernist movement, and has been lauded by some architectural historians as among the most, or perhaps the most important example of the International Style in Southern California. Notable features of the Lovell Health House that render it an excellent example of the International Style include its flat roof, asymmetry and spatial complexity, stark white walls,

⁵³ "The Richard and Dion Neutra VDL Research House I and II," accessed December 2018.

⁵⁴ Marni Epstein-Mervis, "Remembering Richard Neutra's First U.S. Commission," *Curbed*, April 25, 2014.

expansive bands of modular window assemblies, and complete lack of ornament or overt references to time, space, or place. Its chaste, ascetic appearance underscored the International Style's – and the Modernist movement's – emphasis on industrial production, the machine age, and new technologies. Most of the structural components of the house were prefabricated and were then transported to the site for installation. The house is also notable for embodying a number of technological “firsts” as part of its design: it is purported to be the first example of a residential building in the United States to be constructed on a steel structural frame – a technique that, to date, had only been applied to skyscrapers – and is one of the first examples of a building to be sheathed in gunite.⁵⁵



*Richard Neutra in front of the Lovell Health House, 4616 Dundee Drive, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 123
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

Though it had been developing for years, the new, modern idiom that was evocative of the machine age and was championed by Neutra and other European émigrés was not formally coined the “International Style” until 1932. That year, historian and critic Henry-Russell Hitchcock and architect Philip Johnson curated an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York that illustrated the essential characteristics of the emergent style through a carefully curated selection of photographs, drawings, and scale models. It explored such issues as how technology could be used to render architecture more pragmatic and efficient, and how industrial products could be used to “democratize” architecture and create a higher standard of living for the common man, not just those with means. The exhibition was accompanied by a catalogue entitled *The International Style: Architecture Since 1922*, a treatise that documented “the morphological and compositional elements of the new style” and gave it exposure.⁵⁶

The International Style, as described by Hitchcock and Johnson, was defined by three essential principles: “the emphasis of volume over mass, the regularity and standardization of elements, and the

⁵⁵ Docomomo US, “Lovell Health House,” accessed Dec. 2018.

⁵⁶ Gili Merin, “Modern Architecture International Exposition/Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock,” *ArchDaily*, August. 2, 2013.

avoidance of ornament.”⁵⁷ These three fundamental principles were manifest in all of the buildings on display at the exhibition, and were expressed through a number of common characteristics. Instead of heavy load-bearing walls, they had lightweight structural skeletons that allowed for more open and flexible interior spaces. Windows were arranged in horizontal bands and often wrapped around building corners, which provided ample natural light and also allowed them to be placed in a way that supported and complemented the building’s interior function – a technique that was often not possible with older methods of construction. Roofs were flat. Exterior walls were finished in a single treatment – typically smooth white stucco – which “maintained the spirit of the building as a smoothly sheathed volume.”⁵⁸



*A model of the Villa Savoye, on display at the 1932 MoMA exhibition
(The Museum of Modern Art, New York)*

For the sake of posterity, Hitchcock and Johnson only invited architects whose bodies of work fit squarely into their aesthetic parameters to participate in the exhibition, and omitted parallel – more expressionistic – developments in architecture. Notably, the work of Richard Neutra was featured at the exhibition but R.M. Schindler, whose work charted a more eclectic course, was excluded, a point of contention between the two Los Angeles architects.⁵⁹ Frank Lloyd Wright was also invited to participate but withdrew his name, incredulous at the idea of being compared to his “inferior” peers.⁶⁰

The exhibition played an instrumental role in promoting and legitimizing the International Style. It also thrust the participants and their bodies of work into the international spotlight and, in many cases, was a boon to their careers. This was certainly true for Neutra, whose architectural practice thrived subsequent to the exhibition. In 1933, he designed his own house and studio, the Van Der Leeuw (VDL) Research House in Silver Lake, which was nearly all destroyed by fire in 1963, but was rebuilt and

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ McAlester and McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 618.

⁵⁹ Merin, “Modern Architecture International Exposition.”

⁶⁰ Ibid.

completed by Neutra and his son, Dion in 1966 (VDL Research House II, 2300 Silver Lake Boulevard, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 640). Prior to World War II he designed a number of custom residences and small- and mid-scale multi-family properties across Los Angeles, many of which espoused the aesthetic principles of the International Style to some extent. Notable examples of his residential commissions at this time include the Kun House at 7960 Fareholm Drive in Hollywood, 1936 (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1006), the Ward-Berger House at 3156 North Lake Hollywood Drive in the Hollywood Hills, 1939 (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1014), and a sprawling, aluminum and glass estate in Northridge for film director Josef Von Sternberg, 1935 (demolished 1971). He also designed a collection of apartment buildings in the Westwood community in the late 1930s and early 1940s that are clear expressions of how the tenets of the International Style could be adapted to other types of residential properties. The Landfair Apartments at 10940-10954 Ophir Drive, the Strathmore Apartments at 11005-11013 Strathmore Drive, the Kelton Apartments at 644-648 Kelton Avenue, and the Elkay Apartments at 638-642 Kelton Avenue are locally designated (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monuments Nos. 320, 351, 365, and 368 respectively).



*Left: Kun House , 7960 Fareholm Drive, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1006 (Calisphere);
Right: Landfair Apartments, 10940-10954 Ophir Drive, City Histori-Cultural Monument No. 320 (Calisphere).*

Neutra is the architect most closely associated with the genesis and early development of the International Style in Los Angeles, but he was no by means the only architect who was working in this idiom. R.M. Schindler and Harwell Hamilton Harris, whose eclectic bodies of work generally fell outside the parameters of any given architectural style, designed a number of houses in Los Angeles that are unequivocally evocative of the International Style. The Sachs Apartments built in 1927 at 1826 Lucile Avenue (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1118) and the Oliver House built in 1934 at 2236 Micheltorena Street, the Mackey Apartments built in 1936 at 1137-1141 S Cochran Avenue (Contributor to the Miracle Mile Historic Preservation Overlay Zone), and the Fitzpatrick-Leland House built in 1936 at 8078 Woodrow Wilson Drive, all of which were designed by Schindler, are “elegant, spare, asymmetrical Modernist forms rendered in glass, steel, and white stucco.”⁶¹ Harris employed a similar vocabulary in his design for the personal residence of California *Arts and Architecture* magazine editor John Entenza built

⁶¹ Society of Architectural Historians Southern California Chapter, “Richard Neutra (1892-1970),” accessed December 2018.



*John Entenza House by Harwell Hamilton Harris,
475 N Mesa Road (HistoricPlacesLA)*



*Margaret and Harry Hay Residence, 3132 N Oakcrest Drive,
L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 981 (HistoricPlacesLA)*

in 1937 at 475 Mesa Road in Pacific Palisades, and for the Alexander Residence built in 1940 at 2265 Micheltorena Street in Silver Lake.

Two apprentices of Neutra were also highly influential in adapting the International Style to the climate and landscape of Los Angeles: Gregory Ain (1908-1988) and Raphael Soriano (1904-1988). Ain was born in Pittsburgh to Russian immigrant parents but was raised in Los Angeles. He was deeply inspired by the trailblazing work of early Southern California Modernists Schindler and Neutra, and worked in Neutra's office between 1930 and 1935 before opening his own practice.⁶² He was also just as much an activist as he was an architect, and dedicated his career to create quality architecture that was affordable to all, a mission that shared much in common with the social objectives of the Bauhaus and other European schools of Modernism. Toward that end Ain's designs were deliberately simple, and he often used prefabricated components and seemingly ordinary materials and construction techniques to keep costs low. Earlier examples of

his work were characterized by features including open floor plans, cantilevered balconies with glass walls, clerestory ribbon windows, and chaste, unornamented façades. The International Style is also manifest in Ain's design of the Margaret and Harry Hay Residence at 3132 Oakcrest Drive (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 981).

Soriano was also deeply influenced by the work of Schindler and particularly that of Neutra, which is evident through his work. Originally from the Greek island of Rhodes, Soriano immigrated to the United States in 1924 and worked briefly with Schindler and Neutra in the early 1930s. In 1936, Soriano designed the Lipetz House at 1843 Dillon Street (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 967), which was his first independent commission and, by some accounts, his most famous. Its design made use of prefabricated materials and exuded a sleek, machined aesthetic. As Soriano's career progressed, he earned acclaim for pioneering the use of industrial materials, especially prefabricated aluminum and steel, in residential design. This dovetailed with the core values of the International Style: honesty, efficiency, economy, and pragmatism, and cemented his legacy as a pioneer of the style. Other notable works of Soriano's in Los Angeles include the Ross House built in 1938 at 2123 Valentine Street (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 964), the Meyers House completed in 1939 at 1607 Angelus Avenue in Silver Lake, and the Glen Lukens

⁶² Hines, *Architecture of the Sun*, 432-433.

Home and Studio built in 1940 at 3421-3425 W 27th Street in West Adams (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 866).

Generally, early examples of the International Style in Los Angeles were expressed in the form of individual single-family residences and small and mid-scale multi-family residences. However, on occasion the style was skillfully applied to other types of properties, demonstrating that it was, indeed, a universal style that could be adapted to suit virtually any use, in any location, for any client.

In 1937, renowned Swiss/New York City Modernist William Lescaze designed CBS Columbia Square at

6101-6125 Sunset Boulevard (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 947), a complex comprising of three International style office and studio buildings that served as the West Coast headquarters of television and radio behemoth Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS).⁶³ Lescaze's application of the International Style was a deliberate attempt to paint CBS as a progressive company that was at the forefront of innovation in the entertainment business. Several miles to the west, in the Westwood community, Neutra took the tenets of the International Style and scaled them to an institutional campus. Emerson Junior High School, built in 1938, at 1650 Selby Avenue (listed in the California Register) embodied a new and radically different approach to public school design and was notable for its steel-framed structure, wide expanses of plate glass, and "large, 15-foot glass and steel sliding doors that open to extend the spaces to the outside."⁶⁴



*Glen Lukens Home and Studio, 3421-3425 W 27th Street,
L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 866,
(Los Angeles Conservancy)*



Emerson Junior High School, 1650 Selby Avenue, Listed in the California Register (Los Angeles Public Library)

⁶³ Los Angeles Conservancy, "CBS Columbia Square," accessed December 2018.

⁶⁴ The Living New Deal, "Emerson Middle School – Los Angeles, CA," accessed December 2018. The property was determined eligible for the National Register through the Section 106 review process, and is, therefore, listed in the California Register of Historical Resources.

On occasion, architects would attempt to “soften” the rigid austerity of the International Style by blending it together with other, more familiar architectural styles that resonated with a broader cross-section of the general public. Such was true of CBS Columbia Square, whose composition is irrefutably evocative of the International Style but also includes some subtle, Streamline Moderne elements.⁶⁵ The original Felix Chevrolet showroom in Downtown Los Angeles (1931), designed by William Richards, blends together elements of the International and Art Deco styles to create a building whose aesthetic is sufficiently modern but does not deviate so far from convention as to shy away potential customers.



Left: CBS Columbia Square, 6101-6125 Sunset Boulevard, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 947 (Los Angeles Public Library); Right: Felix Chevrolet, 1201 S Grand Avenue (HistoricPlacesLA)

The International Style was by and large a rarity in pre-World War II Los Angeles as Period Revival styles continued to proliferate in the largely conservative atmosphere of Southern California. At this time, the style was almost exclusively used by a small group of forward-thinking architects who were designing for an equally progressive clientele. Overall, though, its stark, ascetic appearance was seen as something of an anomaly in the architectural world, and was not applied on a large scale. However, by developing and honing a brand of International Style architecture that was suited to the contextual and climatic conditions of Los Angeles, Neutra, Schindler, Harris, Ain, Soriano, and others laid the groundwork for the style’s proliferation after World War II, at which time it emerged as the dominant approach for commercial and institutional architecture, and became a ubiquitous part of the urban environment. This subsequent, corporate adaptation of the International Style shares many of the same fundamental qualities as earlier examples of the International Style, but is generally considered to constitute its own discrete movement. Extant buildings that are associated with the ascent of Corporate Modernism are addressed later in this document in the Postwar Modernism/Corporate International theme/sub-theme.

Modernism took on a life of its own in the post-World War II period, but even after the war Neutra and others associated with the genesis of Los Angeles Modernism continued to design residences and other buildings in the International Style well into the 1960s. However, as the Modern architectural movement evolved during this time, so too did these architects’ approach to the International Style and its application; the work of Neutra in particular underwent a notable shift at this time as his later commissions tended to be more exploratory and less doctrinaire. The VDL Research House II, which was

⁶⁵ Los Angeles Conservancy, “CBS Columbia Square,” accessed December 2018.

a reconstruction of the original VDL Research House, paints a particularly vivid picture of how Neutra's work evolved over the course of his career. While Neutra and son Dion retained many of the quintessential characteristics of the building's original International Style aesthetic, they "reworked the original design to add varied volumes, balconies, and reflecting rooftop pools that further reduced the barrier between interior and exterior" and made ample use of new advances in materiality and construction technology.⁶⁶ VDL Research House II was Neutra's last commission in Los Angeles.

⁶⁶ Los Angeles Conservancy, "VDL Research House II," accessed December 2018.

ELIGIBILITY STANDARDS FOR INTERNATIONAL STYLE, 1928-1966

Summary Statement of Significance:	Resources evaluated under this sub-theme are significant in the area of Architecture as excellent examples of the International Style and exhibit quality of design through distinctive features. The International Style was introduced to Los Angeles in the 1920s and drew heavily upon the tenets of European Modernism. Most identified examples are custom-designed, single-family residences; a few multi-family residential, commercial, and institutional properties may also be evaluated under this theme. With few exceptions, they were designed by one or more of the seminal architects associated with early Los Angeles Modernism: Richard Neutra, Gregory Ain, Raphael Soriano, and to a lesser extent, R.M. Schindler and Harwell Hamilton Harris (whose work tended to be freer in form but sometimes embraced the tenets of the International Style). Examples of pre-World War II International Style buildings are rare in Los Angeles since the style was associated with what was then a fringe movement. The International Style became the dominant mode of commercial, civic, and institutional buildings after World War II; resources associated with this later adaptation of the style are addressed separately in the Postwar Modernism/Corporate International theme/sub-theme.		
Period of Significance:	1928-1966		
Period of Significance Justification:	The International Style was introduced to Los Angeles upon the arrival of Viennese architects R.M. Schindler and Richard Neutra in the 1920s. The period of significance begins in 1928, which is when the first known example of the International Style (the Jardinette Apartments) was constructed, and ends in 1966, when Richard and Dion Neutra completed the reconstruction of their VDL Research House – a seminal example of the International Style in Los Angeles.		
Geographic Location(s):	Sparsely citywide, with concentrations in Silver Lake, Los Feliz, Hollywood, Bel Air-Beverly Crest, and the hillside communities of the south San Fernando Valley.		
Area(s) of Significance:	Architecture		
Criterion:	NR: C	CR: 3	Local: 3
Associated Property Types:	Residential – Single-Family Residence Residential – Multi-Family Residence Commercial Institutional		

Property Type Description:	Early examples of the International Style in Los Angeles are most often expressed in the form of single-family residences. Less often, the style was also applied to multi-family residential, commercial, and institutional properties. Common characteristics of International Style buildings include horizontal massing, geometric volumes, flat roofs, ribbon windows, and stucco facades that are devoid of ornament. Together these features produce a stark aesthetic that evokes the machine age and emphasizes the virtues of honesty and rationality.
Property Type Significance:	See Summary Statement of Significance above.
Eligibility Standards:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Exhibits quality of design through distinctive features▪ Is an excellent example of the International Style▪ Was constructed during the period of significance
Character-Defining/Associative Features:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance▪ Horizontal orientation▪ Emphasis on simple, geometric volumes▪ Smooth wall surfaces, such as stucco▪ Flat or nearly flat roofs▪ Windows arranged in bands, often terminating at corners▪ Flush-mounted windows, with no trim▪ Casement windows, often steel▪ Overall absence of ornamentation
Integrity Considerations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Should retain integrity of Design, Materials, Workmanship, and Feeling from the period of significance▪ Retains sufficient integrity to convey significance▪ Original use may have changed▪ Setting may have changed (surrounding buildings and land uses)▪ Some windows and doors may have been replaced, as long as openings have not been altered and original fenestration patterns have not been disrupted

THEME: RELATED RESPONSES TO MODERNISM, 1924-1970

The work of Wright, Schindler, Neutra, and other early Modernists prior to World War II was by all accounts trailblazing, but it also proved to be too radical to resonate strongly with a broad cross section of the general public at this time. Modernism's bold forms, experimental material palettes, unusual construction methods, and lack of overt references to history were unfamiliar to the average American, and were generally seen as something that was associated with bohemian culture and the avant-garde.

At the same time that these Modern experiments were underway, another parallel movement was afoot to create a new architectural vocabulary that was "modern" and better reflected the realities of twentieth century American life. This movement shared many of the same fundamental goals as those expressed by early Modernists, but approached the issue of modernity in a manner that on the whole was more familiar, less jarring, and thus more palatable to the general public. It did so by taking established modes of architecture and playing freely with them, rather than breaking entirely from the past. From this movement emerged a mélange of loosely related architectural styles that proliferated in Los Angeles during the interwar years: Art Deco, Streamline Moderne, PWA (or Classical) Moderne, Late Moderne, and Hollywood Regency. These styles all worked toward the same prevailing goal of visually expressing modernity, and are collectively referred to as the "Related Responses to Modernism."

This theme addresses extant resources that are associated with these related responses to Modernism, most of which peaked in popularity during the late 1920s and the World War II era.⁶⁷ Resources associated with this theme are expressed through many property types and can be found across the city.

Historical Overview

The United States was in an enviable position after World War I. It emerged from the war a rich, powerful, and prosperous nation and entered into a period of sustained economic growth and cultural dynamism that is retrospectively known as the "Roaring Twenties." During this time, more Americans resided in cities than on farms for the first time in history, the nation's total wealth more than doubled in the period between 1920 and 1929, and the economy witnessed swift and steady growth. The average annual income of households increased, and unemployment never rose above the natural rate of about four percent.⁶⁸ The nation had its first real taste of being a global superpower.

Steady economic growth, coupled with more liberal access to credit, meant that Americans had more expandable income to direct toward consumer goods. It was in the 1920s that the United States became a bastion of consumer culture as Americans, for the first time, spent less on essentials and purchased mass-produced commodities such as washing machines, vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, ready-to-wear clothing, processed foods, cigarettes, cosmetics, and electric phonographs. Media culture abounded,

⁶⁷ The Late Moderne and Hollywood Regency styles continued to be popular into the post-World War II period.

⁶⁸ The Balance, "What Was the Economy Like in the 1920s?" accessed December 2018.

and by 1930 a majority of American households had purchased a radio.⁶⁹ People ate out more, attended more professional sports events and other recreational activities, and patronized chain stores that satiated their appetite for mass-produced, fashion forward goods. Jazz music and dance fads such as the Charleston thrived, and the “flapper” redefined what it meant for women to dress and act fashionably.⁷⁰ This period also witnessed many notable advances in transportation technology. By the 1920s, the assembly line and other mass-production techniques honed by industrialist Henry Ford allowed for auto companies to manufacture cars in mass quantities, which reduced costs and suddenly made it possible for even those of modest means to afford a car of their own. What had historically been seen as a luxury item, available only to the well-to-do, was now an indicator of upward mobility and a palpable expression of freedom and adventure. Nationwide, the number of registered vehicles “jumped from 8 million vehicles in 1920 to 23 million in 1930.”⁷¹ The 1920s was also a formative decade with respect to air travel and ocean liners, as aviation became a business and improvements were made to large vessels to make them faster and more comfortable. These myriad advancements in transportation invoked a sense of excitement among Americans about the notions of modernity, technology, motion, and speed.

The mass production of cars also dramatically changed the relationship between people and cities. No longer tethered by the fixed routes of electric streetcars, motorists could venture far outside of established urban cores, and the construction of expansive road and highway systems literally pushed cities outward and facilitated patterns of suburban sprawl. Banks, theaters, department stores, and other types of properties that had historically been concentrated in central business districts could now – and often did – expand to more peripheral settings that were reachable by car. Houses, businesses, and other common building types were reworked to accommodate cars, and entirely new types of properties such as service stations, garages, and drive-ins were explicitly designed with the car in mind.



Heavy traffic on Main Street in Downtown Los Angeles, ca. 1920 (Los Angeles Public Library)

⁶⁹ Richard Carr and Bradley W. Hart, *The Global 1920s: Politics, Economics and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 67.

⁷⁰ University of Minnesota, “Jazz: Dictator of Fashion,” accessed December 2018.

⁷¹ William H. Young and Nancy H. Young, *The Great Depression in America: A Cultural Encyclopedia, Volume 2* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 559.

Perhaps nowhere else did these trends play out as strongly as they did in Los Angeles. By the 1920s the city, which had long been typecast as a sleepy pueblo and as the “other,” less cosmopolitan sister of San Francisco, had unequivocally come of age. It had swiftly industrialized by this time as many companies, attracted to Los Angeles’s open-shop environment and historically acrimonious relationship with labor unions, opened manufacturing plants and produced a wide variety of goods ranging from “glass, garments, furniture, metals, cars, canned fruit,” and tires.⁷² The discovery of several large, lucrative oil fields in the nearby communities of Huntington Beach, Santa Fe Springs, Carson, and Signal Hill swiftly transformed Southern California into one of the world’s leading suppliers of petroleum.⁷³ Motion picture production had matured into a thriving business. By the late 1920s, Hollywood emerged as the entertainment capital of the world, and the visual setting of Los Angeles had become the public face of the movies. Between 1920 and 1929, the city’s population doubled, and the total number of registered vehicles in Los Angeles County grew eightfold. Los Angeles was “the most automobilized city in the nation” by decade’s end.⁷⁴



Hollywood film premiere (left) and oil fields in Signal Hill (right), circa 1930 (Los Angeles Public Library)

Together, these factors created the perfect environment for architects to explore new idioms that celebrated and embraced modernity. Classically derived idioms, which had guided American architecture for generations, were seen by some architects as far too retrospective and outmoded for a society that was in the thick of political, economic, and technological advancement. They aspired to give physical form to the innovations and advancements that were taking place at this time.

Two notable design competitions provided forward-thinking architects with a perfect opportunity to explore new mediums. In 1919, the State of Nebraska held a competition for the design of a new state capitol building in Lincoln, and “intentionally did not prescribe an architectural style nor divulge the names of the three architectural jurors evaluating the designs” to encourage freedom of expression.⁷⁵

⁷² Kevin Starr, *Material Dreams: Southern California Through the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 94.

⁷³ California Department of Conservation, “Fact Sheet: Los Angeles Oil Production History,” accessed December 2018.

⁷⁴ Starr, *Material Dreams*, 94.

⁷⁵ Society of Architectural Historians, “Nebraska State Capitol,” accessed December 2018.

Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue of New York, a well-known ecclesiastical architect who had also designed the original buildings at San Diego's Balboa Park, won the competition. Though his career had largely revolved around his deft application of the Gothic Revival and Spanish Colonial Revival styles, Goodhue felt "impelled to produce something quite unlike the usual" in the case of the Nebraska commission.⁷⁶ His winning entry was loosely rooted in Neoclassical convention, but also experimented with building mass and ornamentation in new and visually striking ways. Specifically, Goodhue stripped the capitol of elements such as columns, pediments, domes, and other traditional ornament and replaced them with stylistic elements that were more geometric, abstract, and exotic. Most notably, he also incorporated a steel-framed, modern 400-foot office tower into the building that had a commanding vertical presence and appeared to jut into the sky – qualities that would soon come to characterize the Art Deco style.

The second notable design competition was held in 1922. That year, the *Chicago Tribune* and its publisher, Colonel Robert R. McCormick, invited architects to design "the world's most beautiful office building" to serve as the new headquarters for his burgeoning media empire.⁷⁷ The competition drew submissions from some 260 architects that embodied a dizzying array of styles and collectively paint a vivid picture of how architects at the time perceived the look of the modern age. What is widely considered to be the most highly influential submission came from Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen. The skyscraper that Saarinen proposed was notable in that it did not make overt references to any historical architectural style, and was stripped of superfluous details. Rather, his building was oriented around the concept of verticality and was defined by "its fluent vertical lines, its rhythmic setbacks faintly suggestive of a medieval tower, and the softening effect of its ornament and sculpture."⁷⁸ Its stepped configuration also provided an effective and aesthetically pleasing solution to newly enacted zoning laws.



*Renderings of the Nebraska State Capitol
(Nebraska Capitol Commission)*

Saarinen's design came in second place, losing out to a more traditional Gothic Revival style edifice designed by architects John Mead Howells and Raymond Hood of New York. Yet many observers staunchly believed that Saarinen's pared down, soaring setback tower was the most appropriate entry and should have handily won the competition. Louis Sullivan was especially effusive in his praise of Saarinen's submission, professing that it represented the future stylistic direction of the Chicago School.⁷⁹ Fellow

⁷⁶ Nebraska Capitol Commission (1919-1935), Nebraska Capitol Commission Minutes, accessed via Nebraska Capitol Collections.

⁷⁷ Ron Grossman, "Leaving Tribune Tower: 'The World's Most Beautiful Office Building,'" *Chicago Tribune*, June 2, 2018.

⁷⁸ Marcus Whiffen and Frederick Koeper, *American Architecture*, vol. 2: 1860-1976 (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), 13.

⁷⁹ "The First Tribune Competition Still Influences Architects," *Chicago Tribune*, February 21, 1993.



*Saarinen's design for the
Chicago Tribune Tower
(Library of Congress)*

Chicago architects Thomas Tallmadge and Irving Kane Pond expressed similar sentiments, declaring that Saarinen's design was free of the "stranglehold of conventional forms" and (accurately) predicting that it would have a profound influence on American skyscraper design.⁸⁰

Saarinen's never-built design for the Tribune Tower presaged the rise of an aesthetic and architectural movement that became known, many years later, as Art Deco. Many of Saarinen's essential ideas about form, massing, composition, and space dovetailed with those of a contingency of architects, artists, artisans, and designers, mostly in France, who had been dabbling in a new aesthetic that embraced progress and modernity as early as the 1910s. With the advent of large-scale manufacturing, these artists and designers expressed an interest in enhancing the appearance of everything from buildings, to decorative arts, to mass-produced functional objects through the application of technology and machine-age production methods.⁸¹ The aesthetic that developed marked a deliberate break with the past in an effort to embrace the virtues of machine-age technology and the modern era.

These ideas were eventually thrust into the international spotlight in 1925, when the International Exposition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts was hosted in Paris.⁸² The exposition was conceived by the French government to showcase new and emerging trends in the decorative arts and was intended, first and foremost, to be a celebration of modernity, not of historical styles. Exhibitors were required to fit within these parameters: "works admitted to the exhibition must be those of modern inspiration of genuine originality, executed by artists, artisans, manufacturers, model makers, and publishers, in keeping with the demands of modern decoration and industrial art."⁸³

The exposition's prevailing aesthetic was one defined by simple, clean shapes; elements that were geometric or stylized from representational forms; and rich ornamental treatment, generally making abundant use of new, machine-made repetitive decorations. This aesthetic was promoted, and perceived as something closely associated with sophistication, cosmopolitanism, and the cultural elite. While it lacked a formal name at the time of the exposition, it was retrospectively coined "Art Deco" by art historian Bevis Hillier in 1968.⁸⁴ It is sometimes also referred to as "Zigzag Moderne." With respect to architecture, Art Deco was typically expressed through a cadre of common characteristics including a strong vertical emphasis, stepped building façades, and the abundant application of highly stylized, geometric ornament that added a sense of exoticism and visual drama. By the late 1920s, Art Deco had

⁸⁰ Katherine Solomonson, *The Chicago Tribune Tower Competition: Skyscraper Design and Cultural Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 175.

⁸¹ New York Public Library, "Art Deco: A Research Guide," accessed December 2018.

⁸² Suzanne Tarbell Cooper, et al., *Images of America: Los Angeles Art Deco* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2005), 7.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Eric Myers, "Art Deco: Still Not Forgiven for Being Fun," *New York Times*, August 27, 1995.

emerged as the dominant idiom for skyscrapers and other variants of commercial architecture in the United States. Its visual vocabulary was manifest in some of the nation's most iconic buildings from this era, notably the Chrysler Building (1930) and the Empire State Building (1931) in New York City.



Promotional materials from the 1925 International Exposition of Modern and Decorative Arts in Paris. The exposition provided a platform on which the Art Deco style could be popularized (Wikimedia Commons).

With its flourishing economy, glamorous public image, and reputation for encouraging and fostering architectural innovation, Los Angeles in the 1920s offered fertile ground for the Art Deco movement to thrive. Art Deco's bold, angular, glitzy aesthetic was applied to department stores, theaters, office buildings, business blocks, and civic buildings in the central business district and along many of the wide, axial boulevards that had begun to dramatically reshape Los Angeles's commercial landscapes.

However, the zenith of Art Deco, both in Los Angeles and elsewhere, was cut abruptly short by the Great Depression. As the nation's economy spiraled into freefall, construction budgets fizzled, and more and more Americans personally experienced the devastating consequences of the impending economic depression, the exuberance of the Art Deco style was criticized as frivolous and poorly suited to the dire social and economic realities of American life. Architects responded by dabbling in new idioms that explored many of the same ideas that defined the crux of the Art Deco style – specifically, they sought to create a fresh, modern approach to design – but expressed these ideas in ways that were more appropriately austere for the times.⁸⁵ By the early 1930s, the visual vocabulary of the Art Deco style had morphed into a related, yet more tempered family of architectural styles that are collectively referred to as Moderne. The Moderne styles were both a reaction to, and an evolution of the Art Deco aesthetic, and replaced the latter's excess ornament with the clean lines associated with machine-age engineering.

One of the most common and visually identifiable variants of the Moderne school was directly influenced by the excitement of speed and transportation technology that seized the nation at this time. Inspired by the machine age, as well as scientific advances in aerodynamics (the way air moved around

⁸⁵ Ibid.

objects) and ballistics (the study of how projectiles move in flight), it emulated the form of trains, planes, and ships and took on a sleek, machine-like quality. Like Art Deco, it was an aesthetic that was adaptable and made its way into architecture, art, furniture, and an array of mass-produced products including clocks, radios, telephones, stoves, and automobiles. Initially, many of the architects and industrial designers who worked in this new idiom referred to it simply as the “smart style,” but as the style gained credence it became known as Streamline Moderne.⁸⁶ With respect to architecture, Streamline Moderne was typically expressed through features such as flat roofs, curving forms, smooth wall surfaces, and an emphasis on horizontal lines. Sharp, acute angles were replaced by graceful curves, rounded corners, and other aerodynamic forms that emulated objects in motion.

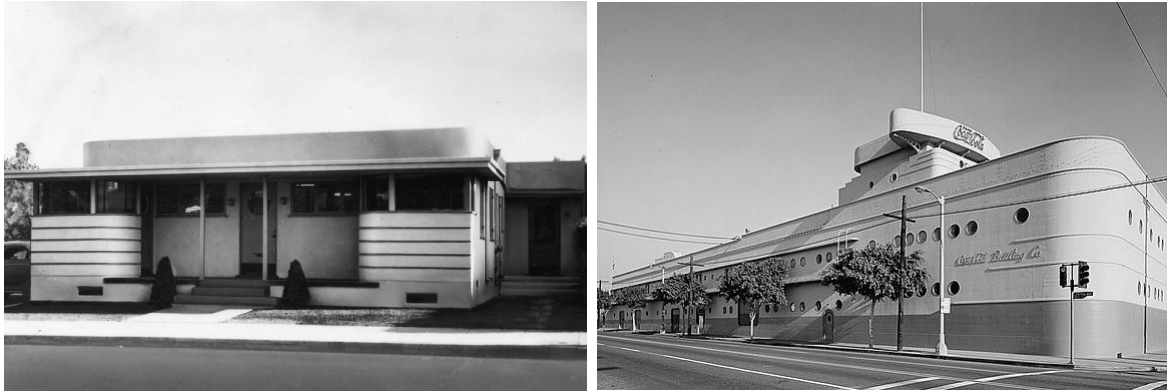


The Pan-Pacific Auditorium, built 1935 and destroyed by fire 1989 (Los Angeles Public Library)

The Streamline Moderne style’s sleek, curvilinear forms were also chock full of subtle social commentary. By tapping into and celebrating those aspects of American society that were considered to be new and exciting – efficiency, mass production, technology, transportation, and speed – it “distracted attention from the ravages of the Great Depression,” and helped to paint an optimistic picture of the nation and its future at a time when the (disenchanted) American public needed it the most.⁸⁷ Yet the style’s prevailing emphasis on efficiency and its elimination of superfluous ornament also demonstrated sensitivity to the dire state of the nation’s economy at this time and the toll it took on Americans’ quality of life. The style struck a cautious chord of optimism without appearing ostentatious or effete.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.



Left: The Streamline Moderne style expressed as a single-family house (Los Angeles Public Library); Right: Coca Cola Building, 1200-1334 S Central Avenue, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 138 (Library of Congress)

Streamline Moderne and its visual interpretation of the future was well suited to commercial and residential properties. It was less commonly applied by institutional entities that wanted to assert their stability amid the Great Depression and evince a sense of endurance, solvency, and order. A separate but similar interpretation of the Moderne movement, referred to both as PWA Moderne and Classical Moderne, emerged in the early 1930s to fill this stylistic void. It shared with the Streamline Moderne a common desire to appear fresh, new, and modern, but relied more heavily on conservative and classical elements toward this end. The style incorporated “new inventions and new methods of construction, and yet...be on guard lest [it] be led astray into fields removed from long established laws of composition” – that is, it struck a balance between tradition and innovation that appeared fresh and new, yet was rooted in familiar visual references.⁸⁸ The basic laws enumerating Beaux Arts composition were respected, but simple rectangular volumes and smooth surfaces took the place of the traditional base/shaft/capital configuration; excess historical ornament was removed and replaced with abstract, geometric (often Art Deco) motifs; elaborate Classical columns were replaced with fluted or reeded pilasters; and strong vertical elements were often utilized to provide buildings with a sense of verticality – a deviation from their Beaux Arts style counterparts, most of which were capped by heavy cornices.⁸⁹

The PWA Moderne style emerged as the public face of civic architecture in the thick of the Depression era. Its overarching sense of monumentality was appropriately suited to the perception of civic institutions at this time, “reflecting the country’s economic hardships, yet symbolizing solidity, solvency, and optimism.”⁹⁰ It was familiar enough to provide the public with a visual sense of reassurance, but also incorporated enough modern methods and materials to paint a rosy vision of the future. While the name “PWA Moderne” references the fact that this was the style of choice by the “alphabet agencies” associated with the New Deal, its stoic, monumental aesthetic was in fact applied by virtually all levels of government. It was also a favorite choice among large banks that were trying to regain the public’s trust.

⁸⁸ David Gebhard and Harriette Von Breton, *Los Angeles in the '30s: 1931-1941* (Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls, 1975), 75.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Susan Vaughn, “Buildings Still Sport Streamline Legacy,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 9, 1992.

World War II effectively marked the end of both the Streamline Moderne and PWA Moderne styles. Moratoria enforced during the wartime years prevented architects from designing new buildings in these styles, and during this interlude they had the opportunity to explore new modes of architectural expression. By 1946, when the nation emerged from the war, it had been years since either style had made a mark on the built environment, and as a result they were largely seen as outmoded and evocative of a previous era that most Americans wished to put behind them. Bringing about an end to styles that were popular during the Depression signified that this sordid



Los Angeles Federal Building and Courthouse, 312 North Spring Street, listed in the National Register (Los Angeles Public Library)

chapter of American history was over. Also by this time, the International Style and other, more doctrinaire interpretations of Modernism had firmly taken root as the preferred idioms. Architectural historian David Gebhard remarked that after World War II, this family of styles “no longer embodied the image of the moment. The new image of the here-and-now machine, the metal-and-glass rectangular box hovering on stilts over its urban or suburban site, came to express the modernity of the moment.”⁹¹

However, the fundamental tenets of the Moderne movement did not disappear overnight. In the years immediately after the war, many architects were dabbling in the application of Modernism and specifically the International Style, but also relied on tried-and-true aesthetic principles and used them as a crutch while they were honing and perfecting new Modern idioms. Stylistically this blending of old and new manifested in the form of a hybrid style that is known as Late Moderne. It utilized the Classically-derived geometries, heavy massing, and judicious application of ornament that had strongly characterized earlier iterations of the Moderne movement, but in lieu of rounded corners and sweeping, aerodynamic curves were the planar volumes and chaste surfaces of the International Style. The Late Moderne style remained popular through the 1950s, but gradually fell out of favor as Americans became increasingly familiar with, and showed a preference for, “purer” interpretations of Modern architecture.

⁹¹ David Gebhard, *The National Trust Guide to Art Deco in America* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1996), 14.



Notable Los Angeles examples of the Late Moderne style: the Times-Mirror Building, 145 S Spring Street, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1174 (left) and the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 West Temple Street (right). Both display aesthetic influences from the Moderne movement and the International Style (USC Digital Libraries; Los Angeles Public Library).

At roughly the same time that the Art Deco and Moderne styles were introduced, peaked, and fell from grace, another, loosely associated style made its mark on the architectural landscape of Southern California. The Hollywood Regency style (also sometimes known as Regency Moderne) debuted in the 1930s and quickly became an architectural style closely associated with the Hollywood elite and the chic, glamorous public face of the entertainment industry. While it was a movement apart from the Art Deco and Moderne styles that were popular at the same time, the Hollywood Regency style was rooted in the same fundamental principles as its Deco and Moderne cousins. Like these other idioms, the Hollywood Regency style aspired to evince an overarching sense of newness. It did so by sampling, reinterpreting, and amalgamating elements of established architectural styles, and “updating” them by introducing new forms, materials, and details that were evocative of the modern age.⁹² The style evinced a sense of confidence and sophistication, and its aesthetic quickly became synonymous with the sprawling, lavish estates of movie stars. It was also an enduring style, remaining popular into the 1960s.

For all their popularity, these related responses to Modernism were often chided, quite vocally, by architects and others who aligned themselves with the International Style and other, domestic interpretations of Modernism. These critics often charged that this family of styles represented a vain and frivolous attempt to appear Modern through the profligate application of ornament and other superficial means. Eminent planner, historian, and writer Frederick Gutheim lamented in 1940 that the Moderne movement “has not produced one architectural masterpiece,” and that the buildings that emerged from this movement were “half-modern,” at best.⁹³ In the eyes of Gutheim and others, these

⁹² John Chase, *Glitter Stucco and Dumpster Diving* (New York: Verso, 2004), 105.

⁹³ Gebhard and Von Breton, *Los Angeles in the '30s*, 75.

related responses to Modernism did not delve deeply enough into the philosophical principles that they saw essential to understanding the requisite elements of good design and effective architecture.

But in fact, the architects who were working in these related responses to Modernism were all working toward the same overarching goal as architects such as Wright, Schindler, and Neutra: to develop fresh, new architectural vocabularies that represented modernity, progress, and twentieth century life. This family of styles just approached this goal in a different way: rather than completely eschewing all precedent and developing entirely new idioms, the Art Deco and Moderne schools, in essence, took existing architectural forms and “modernized” them, a strategy that was oriented toward a fairly typical, middle-class audience. Consequently, these related responses resonated more strongly with, and were embraced by a larger cross-section of, the American public during the Depression and World War II eras.

The Related Responses to Modernism theme is divided into the following five sub-themes: Art Deco, 1925-1938; Streamline Moderne, 1935-1945; PWA Moderne, 1929-1948; Late Moderne, 1937-1960; and Hollywood Regency/Late Hollywood Regency, 1931-1970. Some of the previously referenced historical background information is discussed again in the following sub-themes, so that each sub-theme can be read discretely.

SUBTHEME: Art Deco, 1925-1938

Of the various related responses to Modernism, Art Deco was among the shortest lived, its zenith cut short by the onset of the Great Depression. It was also the most lavish and resplendent of this family of architectural styles. Its gilded, glitzy aesthetic left an indelible imprint on the built environments of cities across the nation, and particularly in Los Angeles, between the mid-1920s and mid-1930s.

The advent of the style that eventually became known as Art Deco is generally traced to the International Exposition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts, which was held in Paris in 1925 and marked the style's formal debut to an international audience. But even prior to the exposition, a cadre of American architects were designing buildings that broke from the orthodoxy of the Beaux Arts tradition and exhibited influence from such works as Bertram Goodhue's Nebraska State Capitol (1922-32) and Eliel Saarinen's never-constructed design for the Chicago Tribune Tower (1922). The very earliest examples of the Art Deco style tended to amalgamate elements of these influential commissions – and especially Saarinen's – with features associated with the Gothic Revival style. Traditional elements associated with the latter such as elaborate cornices and heavy ornamentation were replaced with the clean lines, abstract motifs, and prevailing sense of verticality that rendered Saarinen's submission so influential and enraptured architects across the nation. Both the American Radiator Building in New York City (1924) and the Pacific Telephone Building in San Francisco (1924-25) were landmark buildings based on Saarinen's design and were early examples of the Art Deco style in the United States.⁹⁴ Notably, the former was designed by Howells and Hood, architects of the winning entry of the Tribune competition.

This new dialect of architecture was also taking root in Los Angeles, which was amid a period of unprecedented growth at the same time these ideas about modernity were beginning to coalesce into an identifiable movement. Buildings such as the Elks Lodge No. 99, also known as the Plark Plaza Hotel, at 603-607 Park View Street (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 267) built in 1924 by Curlett and Beelman, and the Transportation Building at 122-130 East 7th Street in Central City built in 1924 by Walker and Eisen, both pre-date the Paris exposition by a year but exhibit clear Art Deco influences. Stepped building volumes, uninterrupted vertical



The Elks Lodge No. 99, Park Plaza Hotel, 603-607 Park View Street, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 267 (Los Angeles Public Library)

⁹⁴ Whiffen and Koeper, *American Architecture: 1860-1976*, 13; Therese Poletti, *Art Deco San Francisco: The Architecture of Timothy Pflueger* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), 63.

expanses, the elimination of superfluous ornament and overt Classical references, and the application of geometric and exotic motifs in their place infused some modern flair into an architectural program that was largely rooted in the past. Buildings such as these were notable for deviating from the rigid historicism that dominated Los Angeles's architectural vocabulary at this time. Similar to their counterparts in New York, San Francisco, and other major cities, these buildings reflected a hybrid between the crisp, clean lines of Art Deco and the monumentality of the Gothic Revival style.



*Transportation Building, 122-130 East 7th Street
(HistoricPlacesLA).*

What was taking root in cities across the United States dovetailed with similar ideas about modernity and design that were being honed in Europe, and specifically in France. Disillusioned by the commercial failure of the Art Nouveau movement, and concerned that German and Austrian advances in design could threaten its primacy in the realm of luxury goods, French artists, artisans, and designers began exploring new expressive modes in the 1910s that evinced a sense of luxury and opulence. Their work eventually matured into a new visual vocabulary that incorporated sumptuous and expensive materials, stylized and exotic motifs (most of which were machine-made), and techniques such as faience and lacquering. This aesthetic was successful in capturing the spirit of modernity and, as its progenitors had hoped, it became a visual icon of luxury and sophistication.⁹⁵ By the early 1920s it had come of age as a mature style that was manifest in architecture, interior design, and the applied and decorative arts.

In 1925, French leaders hosted the International Exposition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts to bring these ideas together and broadcast this new visual vocabulary to the world. The exposition was a resounding success, attracting some 16 million visitors during its seven-month run, and is widely considered to represent the “coming of age” of the Art Deco movement. On exhibit was an enormous range of artistic and architectural products including furniture, metalwork, glassware, jewelry, paintings, carpets, and common household items ranging from clocks and radios to ashtrays and toasters.⁹⁶ These products were displayed in a collection of sleek, stylized pavilions that embodied the prevailing aesthetic of the exposition and demonstrated, quite profoundly, how it could be modulated into architecture.

Organizers of the exposition decreed that it was open to all who wished to participate, so long as (1) the product on exhibit was of an artistic nature, and (2) it exhibited modern tendencies and did not emulate or reference historical styles.⁹⁷ Twenty nations participated in the exposition, but the United States was not among them; though invited, then-Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover declined, noting that the

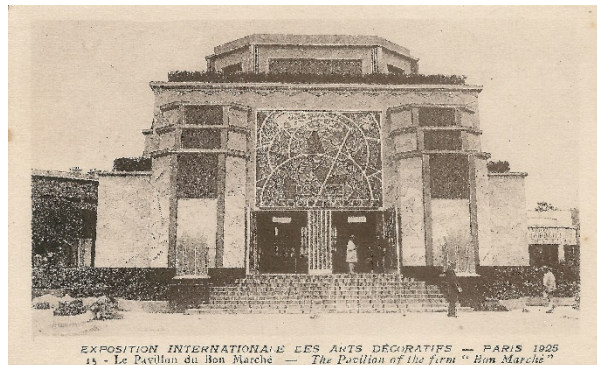
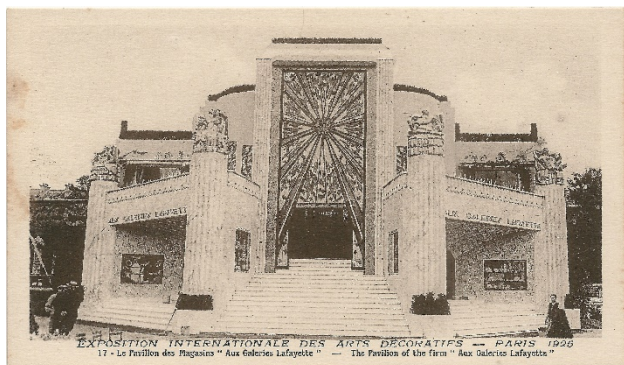
⁹⁵ The Metropolitan Museum of Art, “French Art Deco,” June 2010, accessed December 2018.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Cooper, et al., *Images of America: Los Angeles Art Deco*, 7.

movement had just began to take root in the United States (whereas it had matured in Europe), and as a result the nation had not yet honed a sufficiently artistic viewpoint to put on display to an international audience.⁹⁸ Nonetheless, many American artists, artisans, architects, and designers attended the exposition and were introduced to the sleek, modern aesthetic that would later become known as Art Deco.⁹⁹ The exhibition also generated much excitement and publicity about the Art Deco style and familiarized the public with its aesthetic.

With respect to architecture, the Art Deco style was expressed through a common set of characteristics that represented a balance of industrial technology and artistic sensibilities. Buildings designed in the style exhibited a strong vertical orientation, appearing as if they were jutting freely up into the sky. They were often composed of multiple stepped volumes, which augmented this prevailing sense of verticality and also added a dimension of visual and spatial complexity. Exterior walls were clad with terra cotta, cast stone, or another smooth material and expressed minimal depth or projection; ornament, sculpture, and other details were applied abstractly and in low relief. Classical elements like columns were stripped down to their most rudimentary forms by fluting, reeding, and other reductive methods. Buildings were often polychromatic, an effect that was achieved through means such as the use of faience and the application of hued metals. Façades were replete with abstract, eye-catching geometric



Postcard views of the Art Deco style pavilions at the International Exposition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts. Held in Paris in 1925, the exposition played a pivotal role in popularizing the Art Deco style (Wikimedia Commons).

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ As previously mentioned, the term "Art Deco" was not coined until the 1960s.

motifs that exploited the decorative value of mass-produced products and provided buildings with a glitzy appearance. Ornament was applied superficially to exterior walls and acted as a decorative “skin.”

By the time the exposition ended in October 1925, the Art Deco style had ascended in popularity in the United States, and examples of the style could be found in abundance in the American urban environment. Its tasteful blend of modern aesthetics, fine craftsmanship, and sumptuous materials emerged as a bold, evocative symbol of modernity, and its keen ability to exploit the decorative qualities of mass-produced, machine made materials was a testament to the virtues of American ingenuity.

Los Angeles is home to a rich collection of Art Deco architecture, largely because the city “was booming just as Art Deco emerged, and they suited each other – both looked toward the future.”¹⁰⁰ In the mid and late 1920s, when the Art Deco style peaked in popularity, Los Angeles was in an enviable economic and cultural position but was still a relatively young city, eager to establish its own sense of architectural identity and assert itself as a bastion of modernity and progress. Art Deco was embraced as an appropriate visual vocabulary for Los Angeles because it evinced a sense of excitement and painted a fresh, fast-paced, and optimistic picture that reflected Angelenos’ collective sense of self. The rise of the Hollywood entertainment industry at this time also helped to legitimize the style’s theatrical qualities. However, because of the onset of the Depression the style’s zenith was relatively short lived, and thus it is somewhat rare compared to others associated with the Related Responses to Modernism theme.

The vertical forms, crisp clean lines, and geometric patterns that characterized the Art Deco style could be adapted to a variety of building types, but in Los Angeles (and elsewhere) Art Deco was predominantly a commercial idiom. By the late 1920s, the style had supplanted the Beaux Arts, Italian Renaissance Revival, and other historicist styles as the preferred idiom for office towers, skyscrapers, and other tall, monumental buildings throughout the Downtown commercial core. Masterfully executed examples of the style were generally constructed in and around the central business district, infusing the Downtown streetscape with an aura of modernity and sophistication. Office buildings such as the Title Guarantee and Trust Building (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 278) by John and Donald Parkinson, the Garfield Building (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 121) by Claud Beelman, the Sun Realty Company Building (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 985) also by Claud Beelman, and the William Fox Building by S. Tilden Norton are all excellent, representative examples of how the Art Deco aesthetic reshaped the Downtown commercial landscape at this time. These buildings featured spires, towers, and other appurtenances that accentuated their verticality, and were awash in dynamic ornament and geometric motifs. Their unabashed opulence visually expressed a fresh, new approach to commercial design that reflect the optimistic spirit that defined Los Angeles in the 1920s.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.



Los Angeles Art Deco high-rise office buildings: The Sun Realty Company Building at 629 South Hill Street (left), the William Fox Building at 608 South Hill Street (middle), and the Title Guarantee and Trust Building at 401-411 West 5th Street (right). (HistoricPlacesLA, Los Angeles Public Library, HistoricPlacesLA)

The former Richfield Tower/Richfield Oil Company Building at the intersection of Fifth and Flower streets (1929, demolished 1969) is widely considered to have been one of Los Angeles's most iconic and influential examples of Art Deco commercial architecture. Designed by Stiles O. Clements, it was constructed as the headquarters of the Atlantic Richfield Company (now known as ARCO), which had grown into one of the largest and most lucrative oil enterprises in the world amid the oil boom that fueled the economic growth of Los Angeles. Its graceful setbacks, black-and-gold terra cotta façade, uninterrupted vertical spans, elaborate ornament, and 130-foot, neon-emblazoned oil derrick tower rendered it among the city's clearest and most evocative expressions of the Art Deco style "and served as a monument to petroleum."¹⁰¹ Its extraordinary sense of verticality – enhanced by the tower – also made it one of the most visually recognizable elements of the Los Angeles skyline and signified the importance of oil as a linchpin of the local economy. As the Richfield company continued to prosper, it eventually outgrew its iconic headquarters. It was demolished in 1969 – to the chagrin of many – and was subsequently replaced with a duo of high-rise, corporate office towers known as ARCO Plaza.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Scott Harrison, "A Beloved L.A. Tower – and the Winged 'Army' That Stood Guard – is Gone But Not Forgotten," *Los Angeles Times*, June 13, 2016.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*



Richfield Tower, 555 South Flower Street, demolished 1969 (Calisphere; Los Angeles Public Library)

Many of the most exuberant examples of the Art Deco style in Los Angeles were originally constructed as department stores. The style's modern sensibilities and association with modernity and elegance lent themselves well to these types of businesses, which were always attempting to stay ahead of the curve and market themselves as chic, trendy, urbane, and in concert with the most current trends in popular culture. Reflecting the era's prevailing patterns of development, many of these department stores and haberdasheries – Harris and Frank, Alexander and Oviatt, J.W. Robinson, and the Eastern Outfitting and Columbia Outfitting companies – erected opulent, eye-catching, modern flagship stores throughout the central business district that warmly embraced the visual vocabulary of the Art Deco style.

Notable examples of this trend include the Harris and Frank Building¹⁰³ by Curlett and Beelman built in 1925, and the Eastern Columbia Building (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 294) by Claud Beelman built in 1930. These lavish structures were designed to assert their primacy in the retail market and evince a sense of sophistication that would lure in customers with deep pockets. Both are clad with colorful terra cotta, feature dramatic setbacks and vertical thrusts, and are decorated with a wealth of geometric shapes, zigzags, and stylized forms and motifs. James Oviatt, the proprietor of one of Los Angeles's most prestigious haberdasheries, attended the 1925 Paris Exposition and hired Walker and Eisen to design the company's new headquarters in this new idiom. The James Oviatt Building (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 195) was built in 1928. The lobby forecourt notably "contained over thirty tons of glass by designer Rene Lalique" – a nod to the style's emphasis on the decorative arts.¹⁰⁴ In 1934, Edward L. Mayberry remodeled the J.W. Robinson Company's Beaux Arts style flagship store (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 357) in a sleeker Art Deco medium in order to refresh the company's brand and public image.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ A contributing feature to the Hill Street Commercial Historic District identified through SurveyLA.

¹⁰⁴ Los Angeles Conservancy, "Oviatt Building," accessed December 2018.

¹⁰⁵ "Store Repeats Past History: J.W. Robinson Company Sets Expansion Record," *Los Angeles Times*, September 3, 1934.



Geometric, Art Deco-inspired details on the Oviatt Building, designed by Walker and Eisen in 1928, 617 South Olive Street (Calisphere)

While many of Los Angeles's most spectacular examples of the Art Deco style are concentrated in the Downtown central business district, others are strung along some of the major boulevards that were developing as decentralized commercial centers at this time – a reflection of the profound impact that the car yielded on the shape and character of development in Southern California. The Wilshire Boulevard corridor in particular was coming of age in the 1920s and 30s as a premiere shopping destination, and is home to a considerable number of notable Art Deco style buildings. Chief among these is Bullocks Wilshire (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 56) built in 1929, as a landmark department store designed by John and Donald Parkinson and that signified a new era of commerce that catered to the automobile and an increasingly suburban lifestyle. Considered by many to be among the finest – if not the finest – example of the Art Deco style in the city, Bullocks Wilshire is “a five-story



*Left: Harris and Frank Building, 637-639 S Hill Street, contributor to the Hill Street Commercial Historic District;
Right: The Eastern Columbia Building, 843-855 South Broadway, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 294 (HistoricPlacesLA)*

marvel clad in buff-hued terra cotta with vertical recesses and copper spandrels.”¹⁰⁶ The building’s vertical orientation is enhanced by a dramatic, “luminous verdigris-coated spire soaring 241 feet,” which rendered the building visible to the motoring public and also rendered it an instant landmark upon construction.¹⁰⁷



Left: Bullock’s Wilshire, at 3050-3070 Wilshire Boulevard, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 56 (Los Angeles Public Library); Right: E. Clem Wilson Building, 5217 Wilshire Boulevard (Los Angeles Public Library)

Other monumental examples of the Art Deco style along the Wilshire corridor include the Pellissier Building and Wiltern Theatre by Morgan, Walls and Clements (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 118), built in 1931, with its distinctive turquoise terra cotta cladding; the E. Clemson Wilson Building by Meyer and Holler built in 1929, which is capped by an ornate crown; and the Wilshire Tower Building by Gilbert Stanley Underwood built in 1929 (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 332), which is awash in zigzag motifs and has a jutting central tower.

Given the immense popularity of the Art Deco style, virtually every notable architect in Los Angeles had incorporated the style into their repertoire by the late 1920s, even those whose careers had historically been defined by their virtuosity in the Beaux Arts and Period Revival idioms. But a select few architects and architectural firms demonstrated an exceptional degree of aptitude working in the style. Claud Beelman (who had formerly partnered with Aleck Curlett), Morgan, Walls and Clements, and John and Donald Parkinson are collectively responsible for designing many of Los Angeles’s most exceptional and iconic examples of the Art Deco style. All had established themselves as remarkably successful architects in their own right by the time the Art Deco style came into vogue, but all also demonstrated an uncanny ability to adapt their repertoires to accommodate evolutions in popular culture and taste.

¹⁰⁶ Los Angeles Conservancy, “Bullock’s Wilshire/Southwestern Law School,” accessed December 2018.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.



*Pellissier Building and Wiltern Theater, 3750-3790 Wilshire Boulevard,
L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 118 (Los Angeles Public Library)*

Art Deco is often considered to be a commercial style, but as the style gained traction its aesthetic was also embraced by public and private institutions that constructed new, state-of-the-art facilities. Bold, geometric forms and sleek vertical lines connoted these institutions' largesse. However, while commercial buildings designed in the Art Deco style tended to flaunt and exploit its glitzy aesthetic qualities for all their worth, their institutional counterparts tended to apply these features in a more tempered and conservative manner. Los Angeles City Hall (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 150), built in 1926-1928, was erected just as the Art Deco style was starting to make its mark in Southern California. Its design was deliberately "to correspond to no specific previous era or style, but rather to incorporate many different elements to produce a unique hybrid."¹⁰⁸ Indeed, many of the building's architectural elements are formal in their composition and reference Classical idioms that had long defined civic design, but its tower – which is its most visible and iconic architectural element – very much references the Art Deco style. The Central Library building (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 46), built in 1926 by Bertram Goodhue features broad expanses of unadorned concrete, a skyscraper-like profile, and exotic motifs. When the County of Los Angeles built a new, twenty-story hospital building in Boyle Heights between 1927 and 1931, it elected for a building that embodied the characteristics of the Art Deco style as evidenced by its myriad setbacks and strong sense of verticality.

¹⁰⁸ Los Angeles Conservancy, "Los Angeles City Hall," accessed December 2018.



*Left: Los Angeles City Hall, 200 North Spring Street, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 150 (Los Angeles Public Library);
Right: Los Angeles County General Hospital, 1441 Eastlake Avenue & 1739 Griffin Avenue (Calisphere)*

Exotic motifs were often incorporated into the design of Art Deco buildings to augment their sense of sophistication and worldliness. In Los Angeles, these motifs often reflected the country's fascination with the exotic architecture of ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian, or pre-Columbian cultures, ignited by the discovery and excavation of King Tutankhamun's tomb in Egypt in 1923.¹⁰⁹ Elements of ancient cultures such as the ziggurat and the pyramids made their way into the building's physical form or its applied decoration. Locally influential cultures were also commonly referenced; in B. Marcus Priteca's Pantages Theatre in Hollywood (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 193), "sculpturally stylized images of Native American maidens."¹¹⁰ Other motifs reflecting the cultures romanticized by Hollywood included patterns of chevrons, zigzags, spirals, steps, flora, and animals, which were either applied as low relief panels or as three-dimensional sculpture. The union of film and architecture played an essential role in making the most exotic regions of the world visually accessible. As such, the film industry greatly contributed to the evolution of a regional dialect of the Art Deco style, and disseminated this aesthetic to a mass audience.

The Art Deco style was expressed through many high profile, monumental buildings but as architects and the public became increasingly familiar with its aesthetic, the style was adapted to a vernacular context as well. Smaller and more modest commercial buildings such as service stations and auto garages, retail stores, neighborhood theaters, mixed-use commercial blocks, and even some churches often incorporated many of the chevrons, zigzags, and other identifiable characteristics of the Art Deco style into their design. This aesthetic was also often applied to the design of apartment houses and other common types of small- and mid-scale multi-family residences, particularly in areas that witnessed a considerable wave of development between the late 1920s and early 1930s. Since the most essential characteristics associated with the Art Deco style tended to be façade treatments that could be tacked

¹⁰⁹ Gebhard, *The National Trust Guide to Art Deco in America*, 4.

¹¹⁰ Hines, *Architecture of the Sun*, 222.

onto the exterior walls of virtually any building with ease, architects and builders could easily take a somewhat standard, boxy, and unarticulated building and infuse it with Art Deco style features.



Top left and right: Art Deco style commercial properties, bottom left: Art Deco style multi-family residence, bottom right: Art Deco style public utility building (HistoricPlacesLA)

However, the extravagance of the Art Deco style rendered it impractical for mass-produced residential architecture, whose owners tended to turn more to traditional domestic idioms. Thus, very few single-family residences were designed in the Art Deco style. Rare, known examples include the Santa Monica Canyon Cedric Gibbons/Dolores del Rio Residence constructed in 1930, which was designed by Gibbons (a Hollywood art director) and architect Douglas Honnold, and a 1930 residence at 191 Hudson Avenue in Hancock Park, which was designed by Clarence J. Smale.¹¹¹ More common was for the Art Deco style to be subtly incorporated into houses whose primary style was Spanish Colonial Revival or Mission Revival. Crisp, clean lines, chevrons and zigzags, and other geometric motifs were blended together with the essential characteristics of these other styles, resulting in an aesthetic that “modernized” these historical idioms.

¹¹¹ The house is a contributing feature of the Hancock Park Historic Preservation Overlay Zone.



Left: Cedric Gibbons/Dolores del Rio Residence, 759 N Kingman Avenue; Right: 189-191 S Hudson Avenue, Hancock Park Historic Preservation Overlay Zone Contributor (HistoricPlacesLA)

The Art Deco style was unapologetically exuberant and lavish; it was a testament to the optimistic spirit and sense of prosperity that characterized the 1920s and permeated into virtually every facet of American culture. It was also a short-lived style that fell victim to unfortunate timing. Shortly after the style reached its zenith in the late 1920s, the stock market crashed and the Great Depression set in, and the bold, colorful, eclectic, and richly embellished aesthetic of the Art Deco style was generally seen as too ostentatious for a society mired in economic depression.¹¹² Those who were able to commission new buildings at this time tended to be reluctant about investing in the application of ornament or other nonessential design features. Art Deco had largely faded away from American architecture by the early 1930s. Later examples of the style tended to incorporate the complex setbacks, vertical orientation, and geometric massing associated with the style but were stripped of its more ebullient details.

In spite of its bold, eye-catching aesthetic, the Art Deco style largely faded from public memory in subsequent years. It was not until the 1960s that it was “rediscovered” when English art historian Bevis Hillier published the first major academic treatise on the style and its significance, which placed it into context and gave it credence for the first time in history. Hillier coined the term “Art Deco” in 1968, an abbreviation of the Paris exposition that had catapulted the style into fame some forty years prior.

¹¹² Kevin Starr, *The Dream Endures: California Enters the 1940s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 159.

ELIGIBILITY STANDARDS FOR ART DECO, 1925-1938

Summary Statement of Significance:	Resources evaluated under this sub-theme are significant in the area of Architecture as excellent examples of the Art Deco Style and exhibit quality of design through distinctive features. Art Deco architecture peaked in popularity in the 1920s, and continued to be applied in various contexts during the interwar period. While earlier examples of the style were lavishly ornamented, later examples tend to be more chaste and judicious in their application of applied decoration. The style is significant for representing a desire among architects to develop and hone a modern style of architecture that played freely with past traditions, rather than breaking with them entirely.		
Period of Significance:	1925-1938		
Period of Significance Justification:	Though it was not given a formal name until several decades later, the Art Deco style was formally unveiled in 1925 at the International Exposition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts in Paris. It was applied to buildings in Los Angeles at about this time and remained popular until World War II, when new construction came to a halt and Americans' taste in architecture evolved to more efficient and modern idioms. The period of significance for this theme begins in 1925, when the style was formally introduced in Paris and first began appearing in Los Angeles, and ends in 1938, by which time it had fallen out of favor with architects and the American public.		
Geographical Location(s):	Citywide, with concentrations in Downtown, Hollywood, and the Wilshire area, and along major vehicular and commercial corridors.		
Area(s) of Significance:	Architecture		
Criterion:	NR: C	CR: 3	Local: 3
Associated Property Types:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Residential – Single-Family Residence (rare) ▪ Residential – Multi-Family Residence ▪ Commercial ▪ Institutional ▪ Industrial <p>Note: Grouping of resources such as a school and hospital campuses may comprise historic districts.</p>		

Property Type Description:	<p>The Art Deco style's lavish aesthetic was best suited to commercial and institutional buildings. In commercial buildings, the style was most often expressed in the form of department stores, retail stores, theaters, and mixed-use commercial buildings; it was also applied to various public and private institutional property types including civic and other government buildings, hospitals, and occasionally churches and schools. The style was not often applied to residential buildings, therefore identified examples of Art Deco residences should be treated as rare. Residential examples of the Art Deco style are typically expressed in the form of small- and mid-scale apartment houses. Groupings of resources in the style may be evaluated as historic districts.</p>
Property Type Significance:	<p>See Summary Statement of Significance</p>
Eligibility Standards:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Was constructed during the period of significance▪ Exhibits quality of design through distinctive features▪ Is an excellent example of the style
Character-Defining/Associative Features:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Retains most of the essential character-defining features of the style from the period of significance▪ Emphasis on verticality▪ Smooth wall surfaces, such as stucco▪ Flat roof, at times with shaped parapets, vertical projections or towers, emphasizing verticality▪ Zigzags, chevrons and other stylized and geometric motifs as decorative elements on façade▪ Metal windows, often fixed sash and casement <p>For Historic Districts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Must include a majority of buildings which embody the distinctive characteristics of the Art Deco style▪ Conveys a strong visual sense of overall historic environment from the period of significance
Integrity Considerations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Should retain integrity of Design, Materials, Workmanship, and Feeling from the period of significance▪ Retains sufficient integrity to convey significance▪ Setting may have changed (surrounding buildings and land uses)▪ Original use may have changed▪ Replacement of some windows and doors may be acceptable if the openings have not been resized and original fenestration patterns have not been disrupted

- Original color palette may have been painted over or may no longer be evident

For Historic Districts:

- District as a whole should retain sufficient integrity to convey significance
- District should retain integrity of setting, particularly when associated with designed landscapes
- May include some buildings dating from outside the period of significance

SUBTHEME: Streamline Moderne, 1935-1945

The Streamline Moderne style, like the Art Deco style, aspired to appear “new” and to serve as a visual expression of modernity, technology, progress, and the future. And also like the Art Deco style, it did so in a way that utilized enough familiar visual references to resonate with the average American: specifically, the image it projected was, on the whole, “smoother, softer, and more accessible than the stringent machine aesthetic of Le Corbusier of the late-phase Bauhaus.”¹¹³ For these reasons, Streamline Moderne is generally considered to represent the next chapter of the Art Deco movement, modified and adapted to account for the sobering economic constraints of the Depression era.

By the early 1930s, as the nation was transitioning away from the optimism of the “Roaring Twenties” and into the grips of austerity that characterized life during the Great Depression, the Art Deco style had largely fallen out of favor. Art Deco’s strong visual connotation with wealth and opulence and its glitzy, highly stylized aesthetic was increasingly seen as inappropriate for a society mired in economic duress. Sheathing buildings in a mélange of costly, extravagant materials promoted an image of excess that was grossly out of touch with the way that most Americans were now resigned to living their lives.

However, there was still a strong desire among architects and designers to explore new modes of expression that looked toward and celebrated the future. They were motivated by a flurry of exciting and significant advances in technology that were conceived at the apex of America’s Machine Age (generally defined as the period between the two World Wars) “like the metal-fuselage bodied airplane, the sleek Zeppelin, the high performance automobile and the luxurious ocean liner.”¹¹⁴ Amid this period of extraordinary innovation, locomotives and ships became faster, more efficient, and more dynamic; advances in industrial technology and mass production meant that cars became available to the masses; and airplanes evolved from slow, rudimentary wood-and-fabric machines into much faster, streamlined metal biplanes that forever revolutionized military and commercial aviation. Parallel advances in science, engineering, and communication made appliances and other household devices available to the average consumer, invoking a sense of enthusiasm about the possibilities afforded by modern machines.

Industrial designers – or those who defined and shaped a consumer product’s form in advance of its mass production – were among the first to take this infatuation with the modern machine and transpose it into an identifiable visual vocabulary. These designers began dabbling in and promoting a sleek, efficient, and aerodynamic aesthetic that alluded to speed and motion and visually referenced the innovations in technology and industry that had come to enrapture American society. This new, dynamic approach to design was seen as a way to reinvigorate the economy by making consumer goods more exciting, more appealing, and more saleable.¹¹⁵ Norman Bel Geddes, an early industrial designer, played an especially important role in promoting this new, functional approach to design. In 1932, he published

¹¹³ Martin Filler, “Streamline Dreamer,” *The New York Review of Books*, November 13, 2013.

¹¹⁴ Mark J. McCourt, “When Art Deco Is Really Streamline Moderne, and What It Meant for 1930s Auto Design,” *Hemmings Daily*, May 29, 2014.

¹¹⁵ William H. Young and Nancy K. Young, *The 1930s* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002).

a seminal book, *Horizons*, which emphasized that objects should take the shape of a teardrop to reduce the amount of resistance encountered while traveling through water or air. The kinetic, aerodynamic principles undergirding Bel Geddes's aesthetic became known as "streamlining." Bel Geddes is most often credited as the "father of streamlining," but other notable industrial designers including Raymond Loewy, Henry Dreyfuss, and Russel Wright were also experimenting with similar forms at this time.¹¹⁶ Streamlining took the bold colors, sharp geometries, exotic motifs, and abundant ornament associated with Art Deco and replaced them with smooth surfaces, curved corners, and a strong emphasis on horizontal lines. It made objects appear as if airstreams could move smoothly over and under them and evinced "a fully automated world in which machines, controlled by man, were everywhere."¹¹⁷



Mossehaus, an existing building that was redesigned in 1921 by Erich Mendelsohn, presaged the Streamline Moderne movement by more than a decade and is considered to be the world's first "streamlined" building (Architectuul).

As much as Bel Geddes and his contemporaries were inspired by technology, they also took some visual cues from the pioneering work of architect Erich Mendelsohn (1887-1953), one of the first architects to incorporate smooth, graceful curves into the design of buildings. "Mendelsohn was a Modernist, as surely and absolutely as Mies [van der Rohe] or [Walter] Gropius, but he had little interest in the harsh, puritanical rigidity of the International Style" and instead embraced an aesthetic that was more lyrical, more rhythmic, and more expressive in its composition.¹¹⁸ In 1921, Mendelsohn renovated and modernized the *Mossehaus* in Berlin, an office building that also housed the printing presses of several

¹¹⁶ Douglas Adams, "Norman Bel Geddes and Streamlined Spaces," *Journal of Architectural Education* 30.1 (September 1976): 22-24.

¹¹⁷ Gebhard, *The National Trust Guide to Art Deco in America*, 9.

¹¹⁸ Paul Goldberger, "Erich Mendelsohn's Lyrical Vision," *New York Times*, October 30, 1988.

German newspapers. Mendlesohn's redesigned *Mossehaus* made use of contemporary materials including aluminum and reinforced concrete, featured modern typography in its signage, and, most notably, had a prominent, curved corner façade that gave the building a dynamic and futuristic form. It is considered to be the world's first example of streamlined architecture – even though Mendelsohn completed the building more than a full decade before the streamlining movement truly came of age.¹¹⁹

Not unlike the Art Deco movement that had enraptured the United States just a few years prior, streamlining proved to be a remarkably versatile concept that could be applied to virtually every type of consumer and commercial product on the market. Furniture, toasters, stoves, vacuum cleaners, salt and pepper shakers, lamps, and a barrage of other popular items “all borrowed forms and profiles from the designs of railway trains, ship hulls and ocean liners, airplane fuselages and [modern] coupes and sedans.”¹²⁰ The streamlined aesthetic swiftly emerged as the prevailing aesthetic of the Depression era.

The aerodynamic forms of streamlining were popularized by expositions and fairs that were held in the 1930s. They were put on full display at the “Century of Progress” World’s Fair in Chicago, which was held between 1933 and 1934 and was organized around the prevailing theme of technological innovation. Many of streamlining’s characteristic features – rounded corners, smooth exterior surfaces, horizontal planes, and speedlines – were manifest in the litany of consumer goods and transportation innovations on display.¹²¹ These features were also incorporated into the exposition’s grounds and large pavilions.



The Chicago World's Fair of 1933-34 (left) and the Texas Centennial Exposition of 1936 (right) both featured buildings with rounded corners, smooth exterior surfaces, and aerodynamic forms (Library of Congress).

¹¹⁹ Sabine Hake, *Topographies of Class: Modern Architecture and Mass Society in Weimar Berlin* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 181.

¹²⁰ Hänsel Hernández-Navarro, “Art Deco + Art Moderne (Streamline Moderne): 1920-1945,” *Circa*, January 8, 2016.

¹²¹ Joan M. Marter, ed., *The Grove Encyclopedia of American Art*, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 588.

By forging a strong visual connection between streamlined design and progress, the designers of the exposition played a critical role in promoting this aesthetic among the American public. By the mid-1930s, the streamlined aesthetic was being embraced by industrial designers, architects, and others associated with the design and dissemination of commercial goods. It came to represent American taste and values at this period of the nation's history, and become an ever-more-present facet of society.

Without a doubt, architecture was among the realms within which the concept of streamlining was expressed most profoundly. Inspired by the work of Mendelsohn and other industrial designers, architects embraced the streamlined aesthetic and incorporated its horizontal lines, rounded corners, and slick surfaces into the built environment. What emerged was a new, distinctive dialect of architecture that initially lacked a formal name but eventually became known as "Streamline Moderne." Buildings in this sleek new style were intended to be simple, pragmatic, and functional, and were conceptually rooted in three basic forms: the curve, the teardrop, and the uninterrupted horizontal line.

The ascent of Streamline Moderne architecture was by all accounts a national phenomenon, but the style's popularity was particularly pronounced in Los Angeles and other cities that were perceived as being "modern." One of the first examples of streamlined architecture to be completed in Los Angeles was also lauded as one of the nation's finest examples of the Streamline Moderne style: the Pan-Pacific Auditorium (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 183, not extant) in the Fairfax area, which was built in 1935 and designed by architects Plummer, Wurdeman and Becket. Built to house a model home exhibition, the enormous, 110,000-square-foot building was largely nondescript aside from its prominent front façade, which was dominated by four stylized towers and flagpoles that were intended to evoke upswept aircraft fins. Its distinctive, unusual design symbolized the "popular fascination with globe-shrinking speed" that gripped society at this time.¹²² The building was destroyed by fire in 1989, but its legacy still looms large.¹²³



*The Pan-Pacific Auditorium, 7600 Beverly Boulevard, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 183, destroyed by fire in 1989
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

¹²² Leon Whiteson, "The Graceful Lines of Streamline Moderne," *Los Angeles Times*, February 11, 1990.

¹²³ Michael Lev, "Fiery Finale for an Art Deco Palace Hollywood Dreams Were Made On," *Los Angeles Times*, June 4, 1989.



*The Pan-Pacific Auditorium façade sign
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

The Pan-Pacific Auditorium epitomized the Streamline Moderne style and its character-defining features. Buildings designed in the style exhibited a prevailing horizontal emphasis, and were almost always longer than they were tall. Roofs were flat, and exterior walls were clad with smooth white stucco with minimal ornament. Corners and edges were rounded, which provided these buildings with a smooth, windswept appearance and evinced the sense of an object in motion. Horizontal moldings, sill courses, mullions, and other appurtenances (“speedlines”) were often used to enhance buildings’ sense of horizontality and

further alluded to speed and motion. Windows were generally metal, lacked surrounds, and often wrapped around a building’s corners as to soften brash edges and sharp corners.

Though the Streamline Moderne style grew out of the Art Deco movement, there were also some notable differences between these two idioms. Unlike Art Deco style buildings, which derived their appearance largely from the generous application of sumptuous and expensive materials, Streamline Moderne style buildings were typified by a much simpler, more utilitarian, and more economic material palette. Exterior walls were almost always devoid of unnecessary surface treatments and profligate ornament. Instead, basic metals such as aluminum, chrome, and stainless steel were used as trim around doors and windows, and architects made use of inexpensive materials that had recently been introduced such as glass blocks and Vitrolite, a shiny, structural pigmented glass.¹²⁴ The application of these economic materials meant that more so than Art Deco, Streamline Moderne was promoted as a style and a movement that was much more democratic and accessible to those from all walks of life.

Some of Los Angeles’s finest examples of the Streamline Moderne style consist of commercial buildings that date to the mid and late 1930s. The style’s association with the commercial landscape is by all accounts a logical one as its sleek, graceful lines and visual connotation with modernity sent a message that the businesses housed within these buildings were prosperous, relevant, and abreast of the most current trends in popular culture. Popular department stores including Coulter’s Dry Goods and the May Company both elected to move their flagship stores into prominent Streamline Moderne buildings along the Miracle Mile in the 1930s. Both Coulter’s (not extant), built in 1938 and designed by Stiles Clements, and the May Company Wilshire (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 566), built in 1939 and designed by A.C. Martin, exhibited the rounded corners, smooth exterior wall surfaces, and horizontal bands of windows that so strongly characterized the style and were an overture to speed and motion. The latter also features a colossal gold-tiled cylinder at its corner that reinforces its streamlined form and beckons to passing motorists.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Hernández-Navarro, “Art Deco + Art Moderne (Streamline Moderne): 1920-1945.”

¹²⁵ Los Angeles Conservancy, “The Academy Museum of Motion Pictures/May Company Wilshire,” accessed December 2018.



Left: Coulter's Department Store, 5600 Wilshire Boulevard, demolished in 1980 (Los Angeles Public Library); Right: May Company Wilshire, 6067 Wilshire Boulevard, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 566 (Los Angeles Public Library).

However, these types of monumental buildings were more the exception than the norm. More often, Streamline Moderne's economical palette was expressed in the context of more plainspoken commercial buildings, many of which were strung along Los Angeles's expanding network of vehicular boulevards, and either catered to the needs of passing motorists or included prominent signage or other elements that were intended to attract their attention. The streamlined aesthetic was applied to everyday commercial properties such as drive-in restaurants, motor inns, neighborhood theaters, gasoline and service stations, and small shops and retail buildings. These buildings lacked the degree of articulation that rendered buildings such as the Pan Pacific Auditorium, Coulter's, and the May Company so distinctive, but clearly borrowed the essential shapes and forms of cars, trains, and objects in motion.

The Streamline Moderne style was also used to repackage older commercial buildings that had become outmoded, but whose owners lacked the financial wherewithal to build a new structure from the ground up. In an attempt to remain relevant and draw in a sufficient customer base in spite of the austere economic times, a number of businesses elected to "streamline" their existing storefronts to evince a brand image that was up-to-date and aligned with current consumer preferences.



Concept rendering for a Texaco service station, developed by Walter Dorwin Teague in 1936 (North Carolina State University)

Streamlined architecture became inextricably linked with the brand identities of several major companies between the mid-1930s and early 1940s. The Firestone Tire Company styled several of its tire and service centers in the Streamline Moderne style to align itself with the speed, precision, and efficiency of the Machine Age, one of which is located in the Miracle Mile area built in 1937 (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1020). The streamlined design of this building, with its uninterrupted horizontal lines, rounded corners, and curving canopy, exuded speed and motion and was a prototype for the company at this time.¹²⁶ Industrial designer Walter Dorwin Teague notably designed standardized gasoline stations for the Texaco company, resulting in the construction of numerous “recognizable white service stations in various sizes [one-, two-, or three-bays for TBAs (tires, batteries, and accessories)].”¹²⁷ Some of these prototypical gas stations are extant in Los Angeles today including Whittier’s Texaco Station in the Koreatown area built in 1941 and another at 1650 Silver Lake Boulevard in Silver Lake built in 1941.¹²⁸ The Gilmore Gasoline company also adapted the style to its own service stations during this period, as seen in the uninterrupted horizontal lines of the Gilmore Gasoline Service Station built in 1935 at 859 North Highland Avenue in Hollywood (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 508). Between the 1930s and 1940s, architect Wayne McAllister developed prototypical circular restaurants for several drive-in restaurant chains, all of which embraced the streamlined design.



*Left: Firestone Building, 800 South La Brea Avenue, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1020;
Right: Whittier's Texaco Station, 4450 W Beverly Boulevard (HistoricPlacesLA)*

On occasion, architects working in the Streamline Moderne style moved beyond the abstract and designed buildings that exhibited literal references to the modes of transportation by which they were inspired. Robert Derrah’s Crossroads of the World complex in the heart of Hollywood (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 134) is one particularly poignant example. Built in 1936 as a pedestrian outdoor shopping mall, the complex is composed of multiple buildings, each of which is designed in an architectural style that evokes the aesthetic of a different region of the world. These buildings are oriented around a central edifice that was designed to literally resemble “a ship sailing into Sunset Boulevard with a tall open tower (supporting a lighted globe) in its prow.”¹²⁹ Not long after, Derrah designed another notable nautical building, a bottling plant for the Coca Cola company in the industrial district to the east of Downtown in

¹²⁶ Los Angeles Conservancy, “Firestone Tire and Service Center,” accessed December 2018.

¹²⁷ Marter, *The Grove Encyclopedia of American Art*, 588.

¹²⁸ For more information, refer to the “Commercial Development and Automobile” theme of the Historic Context Statement.

¹²⁹ David Gebhard and Robert Winter, *An Architectural Guidebook to Los Angeles* (Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2003), 183.

1939 (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 138). The Coca Cola building features porthole windows, metal ship rails, rounded corners emulating the form of a ship's hull, a catwalk, and simulated rivets fashioned from wood. Its interior also ascribes to the nautical theme with mahogany decks and rails, ladders, brass fittings, and ship doors.¹³⁰

The Streamline Moderne style proved to be a rather versatile idiom. Its graceful curves, smooth walls, and characteristic bands of horizontal windows and speed lines were adapted to buildings of various contexts, types, and scales. In addition to commercial architecture, the style was commonly applied to single-family and multi-family residential buildings that were constructed between the mid 1930s and early 1940s.¹³¹ It provided a fresher, cleaner, more forward-reaching alternative to the reversionary Period Revival styles that dominated residential architecture without appearing particularly avant-garde or radical, and therefore blended into the city's established neighborhoods quite seamlessly. Many of Los Angeles's residential neighborhoods that witnessed steady development in the decade prior to World War II – most notably, those in the Silver Lake, Hollywood, and Wilshire areas – are dominated by Period Revival styles, but are periodically punctuated by a dwelling that is decidedly more contemporary and looks as if its crisp, clean lines and smooth rounded edges were produced by machine.



Crossroads of the World, 6671-6679 Sunset Boulevard, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 134 (Los Angeles Public Library)



Haven of Rest, 2432 North Hyperion Avenue, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 897 (Architectural Resources Group)

¹³⁰ Peter Y. Hong, "Built in 1930s, Bottling Plant Still Shipshape," *Los Angeles Times*, August 22, 2002.

¹³¹ Whiteson, "The Graceful Lines of Streamline Moderne,"



*Thomas Jefferson High School, 1319 E 41st street
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

It was less common for civic and institutional buildings to embody the Streamline Moderne style, as these types of public buildings tended to embrace a more formal and disciplined iteration of Moderne architecture known as PWA Moderne. Nonetheless, a handful of public and private institutions commissioned the construction of streamlined buildings. In 1937, for instance, architect John M. Cooper designed a new campus for Pepperdine College in its original location in South Los Angeles.¹³² Though the campus has since relocated, its original buildings are extant, and together they constitute one of the best concentrations of high style Streamline Moderne buildings in Los Angeles.¹³³ The streamlined aesthetic was also applied to a handful of public school campuses that were constructed or reconstructed in the Depression era including Manual Arts High School (1936, Parkinson and Parkinson) and Thomas Jefferson High School (1936, Stiles Clements), both in South Los Angeles, and the Ramona School in Hollywood (1937). Fire Station No. 1 in Lincoln Heights (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 156), replete with ribbon windows, canopies, horizontal moldings and speed lines, and stylized signage, is one of the most notable examples of the Streamline Moderne style being applied to the realm of institutional design.¹³⁴



Left: Pepperdine College, 7901 S Vermont Avenue (HistoricPlacesLA); Right: Fire Station No. 1, 2230 Pasadena Avenue, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 156 (HistoricPlacesLA)

¹³² "Structures Sill Rise for Extensive New College Here," *Los Angeles Times*, May 23, 1937.

¹³³ Pepperdine College campus was identified as a potential historic district for SurveyLA.

¹³⁴ Big Orange Landmarks, "No. 156 – Fire Station No. 1," accessed December 2018.

Many local architects dabbled in the Streamline Moderne style and incorporated its hallmark characteristics into their repertoires. Some of Los Angeles's foremost practitioners of the era including Stiles Clements, Gordon Kaufmann, Parkinson and Parkinson, and others designed Streamline Moderne buildings in addition to the myriad other architectural styles for which they had mastered. However, there was a small contingent of architects who championed the style and worked almost exclusively in it, including Milton J. Black and William Kesling.¹³⁵ Both Black and Kesling were known as residential architects, between the two of them they amassed a portfolio of Streamline Moderne style dwellings that ranged from the masterful to the mundane and included everything from custom single-family houses, to well-appointed apartment buildings, to much more modest duplexes and triplexes. The buildings that Black and Kesling designed were demonstrative of how the basic tenets underpinning streamlined architecture could be melded and adapted to a variety of residential contexts.

Examples of Black and Kesling's work are generally found in the Hollywood, Silver Lake, Los Feliz, and Wilshire neighborhoods. Notable examples include the Mauretania Apartments in Hancock Park (1936) and the Richardson Apartments in Mid-Wilshire (1940, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 847), both designed by Black; and the Skinner House (1937, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 856) in Silver Lake, which was designed by Kesling. The Mauritania, which was named after and inspired by the famous ocean liner, exhibited a number of expressive nautical elements in its design. In 1937, Kesling also designed an exceptional Streamline Moderne house for Academy Award winning actor Wallace Beery at 947 N Martel Avenue.



Left: *The Skinner House, 1530 N Easterly Terrace, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 856 (HistoricPlacesLA);*
Right: *Mauretania Apartments, 520-522 N Rossmore Avenue (HistoricPlacesLA)*

The crowning moment of the Streamline Moderne movement came in 1939-1940, when the style was selected as the prevailing architectural theme of the New York World's Fair. Tens of thousands of eager visitors attended the "World of Tomorrow" and were awed by cars, robots, and cutting-edge electronic appliances, all of which were housed in a collection of streamlined pavilions.¹³⁶ Many of these buildings

¹³⁵ Jan Goggans and Aaron DiFranco, eds., *The Pacific Region: The Greenwood Encyclopedia of American Regional Cultures* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), 29.

¹³⁶ Marter, *The Grove Encyclopedia of American Art*, 588-589.

were designed by the notable industrial designers Norman Bel Geddes, Raymond Loewy, and Walter Dorwin Teague, whose names had all but become synonymous with streamlined design.¹³⁷

The World's Fair was also Streamline Moderne's swan song. The style rapidly waned in popularity at the onset of World War II, both nationally and in Los Angeles. Building moratoria that were imposed during the war prevented the style's proliferation; the end of the war ushered in a considerable amount of prosperity and optimism, and the once-modern iterations of Moderne architecture that bore association with the austerity of the Depression era lost appeal and became increasingly seen as outmoded.¹³⁸ Americans expressed interest in more forward-reaching approaches to Modernism that were predicated on the tenets of the International Style and were more befitting of postwar life. American society no longer needed the whimsical escape from the grips of austerity that the Streamline Moderne provided.

¹³⁷ Gebhard, *The National Trust Guide to Art Deco in America*, 13.

¹³⁸ Hines, *Architecture of the Sun*, 429.

ELIGIBILITY STANDARDS FOR STREAMLINE MODERNE, 1935-1945

Summary Statement of Significance:	Resources evaluated under this sub-theme are significant in the area of Architecture as excellent examples of the Streamline Moderne styles and exhibit quality of design through distinctive features. Streamline Moderne architecture was popular between the mid-1930s and mid-1940s; the style underscored the American public's affinity for technology, progress, and modernity, and evinces a sense of motion and speed. It was applied to single-family and multi-family residences, as well as some commercial and institutional properties. On rare occasion it was applied to industrial properties.		
Period of Significance:	1935-1945		
Period of Significance Justification:	The Streamline Moderne style reached its zenith between the mid-1930s and World War II, at which point new construction came to a halt and Americans' taste in architecture evolved toward more puritanical idioms of Modern architecture. The period of significance for this theme begins in 1935, when the earliest known examples of the style were built in Los Angeles; it ends in 1945, which marks the beginning of the post-World War II era and the period by which the style had squarely fallen out of favor with the American public.		
Geographical Location(s):	Citywide; commercial and institutional examples are concentrated in Hollywood and the Wilshire area, and particularly among major vehicular and commercial corridors; residential examples are located in the Silver Lake, Hollywood, Los Feliz, and Wilshire areas and occasionally in the hillside communities of the San Fernando Valley. Industrial examples are found near Downtown and Hollywood.		
Area(s) of Significance:	Architecture		
Criterion:	NR: C	CR: 3	Local: 3
Associated Property Types:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Residential – Single-Family Residence▪ Residential – Multi-Family Residence▪ Commercial▪ Institutional▪ Industrial <p>Note: Grouping of resources such as school and hospital campuses may be evaluated as historic districts.</p>		

Property Type Description:	<p>The Streamline Moderne style was a versatile idiom that was applied to an array of property types. Some of the most iconic and architecturally distinctive examples of the style are represented in the context of commercial buildings; however, the style was often expressed in the form of custom single-family residences and small-scale multi-family residences. To a lesser extent, the style was also applied to institutional and industrial properties. Groupings of resources in the style may be evaluated as historic districts. Given Streamline Moderne's relatively brief period of popularity, examples of the style are relatively rare in Los Angeles. Many of the buildings designed in the style are attributed to notable architects of the 1930s and 1940s. Milton J. Black and William Kesling designed single-family and multi-family dwellings in the style; Stiles Clements, Robert Derrah, Parkinson and Parkinson, Wurdeman and Becket, and other notable local architects are more closely aligned with larger-scale commercial, institutional, and industrial buildings designed in the style.</p>
Property Type Significance:	<p>See Summary Statement of Significance above.</p>
Eligibility Standards:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Was constructed during the period of significance▪ Exhibits quality of design through distinctive features▪ Is an excellent example of the style
Character-Defining /Associative Features:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Retains most of the essential character-defining features of the style from the period of significance▪ Horizontal orientation▪ Rounded corners and curved surfaces, emulating a "windswept" appearance▪ Flat or nearly flat roof▪ Speedlines at wall surfaces, such as horizontal moldings and continuous sill courses▪ Smooth stucco cladding▪ Metal, often steel casement, windows▪ Unadorned wall surfaces, with minimal ornament▪ Windows "punched" into walls, with no surrounds <p>For Historic Districts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Must include a majority of building which embody the distinctive characteristics of the Streamline Moderne style▪ Conveys a strong visual sense of overall historic environment from the period of significance

Integrity Considerations:

- Should retain integrity of Location, Design, Materials, Workmanship, and Feeling from the period of significance
- Retains sufficient integrity to convey significance
- Original setting may have changed (surrounding buildings and land uses)
- Original use may have changed
- Replacement of some windows and doors may be acceptable if the openings have not been resized and original fenestration patterns have not been disrupted
- For residential properties, the addition of security features such as screen doors and bars at windows may be acceptable
- For residential properties, replacement of original garage doors may be acceptable

For Historic Districts:

- District as a whole should retain sufficient integrity to convey significance
- District should retain integrity of setting, particularly when associated with designed landscapes
- May include some buildings dating from outside the period of significance

SUBTHEME: PWA Moderne, 1929-1948

Generally speaking, and with some notable exceptions, the Streamline Moderne style was best suited to commercial and residential property types and was not applied with regularity to civic and institutional buildings. In part this was practical, and due to the fact that Streamline Moderne's distinguishing characteristics proved somewhat incongruent with the large, monumental edifices in which civic institutions tended to be housed. However, it also alluded to the fact that the style's sleek, industrial aesthetic and overt visual references to the future were not particularly well aligned with government agencies' overarching goal at the time, which was to reaffirm their authority and promote an image of stability amid the financial turmoil associated with the Great Depression.

The more visually conservative PWA Moderne style, also sometimes referred to as Classical Moderne or Stripped Classicism, emerged to fill this void. Its name is derived from the "alphabet soup" of federal assistance programs – most notably, the Public Works Administration (PWA), but also the Works Progress Administration (WPA), Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), and others – that arose as part of the New Deal and funneled federal dollars into urban capital improvements. Most of the buildings associated with these programs exhibited a common architectural vocabulary that not only exuded authority, stability, and solvency, but also effectively branded them as products of the New Deal.¹³⁹

In spite of its name, the PWA Moderne style was not just applied to buildings and infrastructure projects that were financed by federal agencies. As the 1930s progressed, and the style became more recognizable and widely accepted, it was also adapted to other types of buildings. It specifically emerged as a favorite stylistic choice among telephone companies and other utility providers and quickly attained a close visual association with telephone exchanges, water and power substations, and various other buildings for municipal infrastructure. PWA Moderne was also sometimes applied to some commercial properties, usually office buildings and financial institutions, whose occupants sought to evoke the same overarching sense of power, authority, stability, and security as the government.

Stylistically, PWA Moderne architecture struck a middle ground between the formality of the Beaux Arts tradition and the contemporary aesthetic of the Art Deco and Moderne styles. What resulted was an idiom that was equal parts familiar and new, as described by architectural historian Elizabeth McMillian:

[PWA Moderne] buildings were formal and fundamentally Classical with enough Moderne details to convey a contemporary feeling. Their characteristics include balanced and symmetrical form and classical horizontal proportions. Rather than columns, they used piers, which were occasionally fluted, but usually had no capitals or

¹³⁹ Gebhard, *The National Trust Guide to Art Deco in America*, 7-8. Refer to the "New Deal Programs" sub-context of the citywide Historic Context Statement for more information about federal public relief programs in Los Angeles.

bases. Surfaces were smooth and often sheathed in sturdy materials like stone, polished marble, granite and terrazzo with terra-cotta detail. Ornament was frequently a program of traditional-style relief sculpture. Windows were rhythmically arranged as vertical, recessed panels and, on the interiors, rich materials, relief work and murals adorned the lobbies and major spaces.¹⁴⁰

Decorative motifs that were specific to a particular region were often incorporated to infuse an element of visual interest and contextualize these buildings. Lettering was frequently incised into a building's primary façade to denote its use and occupancy, and consistent with relief programs' principal objective of putting skilled laborers and craftsmen back to work, integral sculpture, bas relief, friezes, and other artisanal elements were frequently incorporated into the building or the surrounding site.¹⁴¹

Together, these features produced an aesthetic that was grand and monumental, yet was also restrained, somber, austere, and befitting of the soured state of the economy. As such, these buildings were intended to invoke a sense of security among an American population that increasingly expressed trepidation about the nation's – and their own – future. These buildings stood as overt symbols of the government's largesse, its unwavering commitment to its citizens in times of crisis and duress, and the strength and fortitude underpinning the nation's core institutions.

Both nationally and in Los Angeles, the “stripping down” of Classicism began in the very late 1920s, several years before the PWA and other New Deal agencies were conceived. Following the Stock Market Crash of 1929, and the economic downturn that ensued and eventually devolved into the Great Depression, architects were forced to work within tighter constraints and did so by stripping buildings of unnecessary ornament and paring down their designs. Reflecting the prevailing movement away from Classicism and toward more modern idioms, they also incorporated elements of the Art Deco and Streamline Moderne styles as to render these buildings of good taste.

Some of the earliest examples of the PWA Moderne style in Los Angeles were not publically affiliated at all, but rather were privately commissioned by banks and financial institutions. One of the earliest local examples of the style was constructed in 1929 as the Southern California branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco (listed in the National Register).¹⁴² Designed by John and Donald Parkinson (Parkinson and Parkinson) and located at the southern end of Downtown's central business district, the building exudes a sense of austerity that was befitting of a Depression-era institution. The building exhibits elements of both Beaux Arts Classicism and the Art Deco movement, but does not bear a strong singular connection to either idiom; its monumental massing, balanced proportions, and fluted pilasters resemble abstracted columns were a nod to Beaux Arts, while its sense of verticality, tall and narrow fenestration channels, and incised geometric motifs are a clear reference to the Art Deco.

¹⁴⁰ Elizabeth McMillian, *Deco and Streamline Architecture in L.A.: A Moderne City Survey* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer, 2004), 188.

¹⁴¹ Gebhard and Von Breton, *Los Angeles in the '30s*, 76-77.

¹⁴² Marques Vickers, *John D. Parkinson: Eternally Elevating the Los Angeles Skyline* (Larkspur: Marquis, 2017), 38.



*Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, Los Angeles branch, 409 W Olympic Boulevard,
Listed in the National Register of Historic Places (Calisphere)*

Another notable early example of the PWA Moderne aesthetic was the Los Angeles Stock Exchange Building built in 1931 (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 205), which was also privately funded. Designed by a team comprising Parkinson and Parkinson and Samuel Lunden, the building was erected to house the operations of the Los Angeles Stock Exchange. It was designed around an “imposing, fortress-like street façade [that] rises the equivalent of five stories.”¹⁴³ Consistent with the aesthetic of the PWA Moderne style, the building also features bas relief sculpture and massive fluted pilasters that subtly reference Classicism but evoke an image that, on the whole, is modern.¹⁴⁴ Electing to design their buildings in the PWA Moderne style was a strategic move on the part of the Stock Exchange and the Federal Reserve Bank, as it demonstrated to the trepid public, clearly and overtly, that these institutions were here and that they were here to stay.

However, it was within the context of civic and institutional buildings that the PWA Moderne style shined. The amalgamation of federal programs, public work projects, financial reforms, and regulations constituting the New Deal was in place between 1933 and the early 1940s.¹⁴⁵ Through these programs the federal government invested heavily in the built environments of cities across the nation, and provided funding for myriad new institutional buildings and public works endeavors, many of which were located in Los Angeles. A number of new public buildings were constructed in Los Angeles in the mid-1930s under the auspices of these New Deal programs. Consistent with architectural trends of the era and the architectural vocabulary that came to define New Deal structures, most of the public buildings erected at the height of the Depression exhibited characteristics of the PWA Moderne style.

¹⁴³ Los Angeles Conservancy, “Los Angeles Stock Exchange Building,” accessed December 2018.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Library of Congress, “Great Depression and World War II: 1929-1945,” accessed December 2018.



*Los Angeles Stock Exchange Building, 612-618 S Spring Street,
L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 205 (Calisphere)*

The PWA Moderne style was almost always used in the design of federally funded public buildings in the 1930 and early 1940s. Post offices – including the San Pedro Branch by Louis A. Simon (1935, listed in the National Register), the Hollywood Station by Claud Beelman and Allison and Allison (1937, listed in the National Register), and the more diminutive U.S. Post Office, Market Station by John M. Cooper (1940) – tended to be excellent expressions of the style and its application to an institutional setting.¹⁴⁶ It was applied in the context of other public buildings including transportation infrastructure [such as the San Pedro Municipal Ferry Building (1941, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 146)], and military installations such as the Naval and Marine Corps Reserve Center in Elysian Park (1940, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1101).



*U.S. Post Office, Hollywood Station, 1615 N Wilcox Avenue,
Listed on the National Register of Historic Places (Calisphere)*



*U.S. Post Office, Market Station, 122 E 7th Street
(HistoricPlacesLA)*

¹⁴⁶ The Living New Deal, "New Deal Sites," accessed December 2018.

Given the era's soured economic climate, relatively few grand civic monuments were erected at the height of the Depression – the buildings and infrastructure projects financed under the New Deal tended to be smaller and neighborhood oriented – but when such monuments were erected, the PWA Moderne style was the idiom of choice. In 1940, a new U.S. Court House and Post Office was constructed in the Downtown civic center by Gilbert Stanley Underwood and Louis A. Simon (Listed in the National Register). Rising seventeen stories, the structure managed “to remain snugly within the classical tradition, albeit in an abstracted manner,” and is widely recognized as one of the city's most “convincingly carried out” PWA Moderne buildings.¹⁴⁷ Its stepped massing, prevailing sense of verticality, and integral sculptures and murals are all characteristic of the PWA Moderne movement and have rendered it an architectural icon. The building is an excellent example of how the style aimed to strike a balance between the familiar and the new and how, through architecture, it symbolized government agencies' endurance and largesse.



*U.S. Court House and Post Office, 312 N Spring Street,
Listed in the National Register of Historic Places (HistoricPlacesLA)*

Underwood and Simon are among the architects whose bodies of work are closely associated with the PWA Moderne style in Los Angeles. Both worked in tandem with federal agencies – Underwood is well known for his work with the National Park Service (NPS) and for designing a number of National Park lodges, and Simon was the Supervising Architect for the Department of the Treasury.¹⁴⁸ Both, were well versed in the design principles and aesthetic standards that were espoused by the federal government. However, many local architects, some of whom had established solid reputations prior to the Depression, also embraced the PWA Moderne aesthetic and incorporated it into their repertoire to stay abreast of current trends in architecture. Noted local architects including Claud Beelman, Stiles Clements, John and Donald Parkinson, and Allison and Allison designed buildings in the PWA Moderne style, though none of these practitioners necessarily made it a point to master this aesthetic.

¹⁴⁷ David Gebhard and Robert Winter, *An Architectural Guidebook to Los Angeles* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, (2003), 260.

¹⁴⁸ Pacific Coast Architecture Database, “Gilbert Stanley Underwood,” accessed December 2018; Pacific Coast Architecture Database, “Louis A. Simon (Architect),” accessed December 2018.

The federal government was a progenitor of the PWA Moderne style, but it was not the only branch of government to embrace its aesthetic. State and local agencies were also drawn to the style's monumentality and abstracted references to Classicism, and incorporated these stylistic elements into public buildings and infrastructure projects within their purview. In Los Angeles, the style became synonymous with the architecture of public utility buildings that were erected during the Depression era. Distributing and receiving stations, repair facilities, and other structures associated with the operations of the City's Department of Water and Power (DWP) that date to the Depression era featured monumental massing, fluted pilasters, vertical fenestration channels, and other design features that were characteristic of the PWA Moderne style. Typically, these facilities were vernacular interpretations of the style and were essentially glorified sheds, enclosing equipment and other infrastructure in a manner that was consistent with their aesthetic surroundings. Sometimes, though, these buildings were more articulated architectural statements, and on occasion architect designed. DWP Distributing Station Nos. 4 in South Los Angeles and 29 in Pacific Palisades (1935), for instance, were both designed by master architect Frederick Roehrig.¹⁴⁹



*Left: DWP Distributing Station No. 35, 10628 W Camarillo Street;
Right: Distributing Station No. 29, 15349 W Sunset Boulevard (HistoricPlacesLA)*

The PWA Moderne style is also clearly expressed in the design of public school campuses that were constructed (or, in many cases reconstructed) by the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) in the 1930s.¹⁵⁰ The school district presided over a remarkably ambitious building program in the wake of the 1933 Long Beach Earthquake, which called into question the structural stability of public buildings and resulted in a series of state-mandated building reforms that were collectively known as the Field Act. Many of the existing schools within LAUSD's jurisdiction were either rebuilt from the ground up, or were substantially remodeled and reskinned to comply with the mandates enumerated by the Field Act. Consistent with that era's prevailing trends in civic and institutional architecture, the myriad buildings and campuses that were associated with this building program exuded the formality and austerity that so strongly characterized the PWA Moderne style.

¹⁴⁹ Refer to the "Municipal Water and Power" theme for more information about DWP-related resources.

¹⁵⁰ Refer to the "Los Angeles Unified School District" theme for more information about LAUSD resources.



*Left: Leland Street School, 2120 S Leland Street (HistoricPlacesLA);
Right: David Starr Jordan High School, 2265 E 103rd Street (HistoricPlacesLA)*

PWA Moderne style schools can be found across Los Angeles, but are particularly plentiful in areas of the city that had been firmly established by the onset of World War II. Some notable examples include Susan Miller Dorsey High School in West Adams (1937, listed in the California Register) by H.L. Gogerty and C.E. Noerenberg; Hollenbeck Middle School in Boyle Heights (1936, listed in the California Register) by Alfred P. Rosenheim; Florence Nightingale Junior High School in Cypress Park (1937-39) by John C. Austin and Frederick M. Ashley; San Pedro High School (1936, listed in the California Register) by Gordon Kaufmann; and David Starr Jordan High School (1938, Listed in the California Register).¹⁵¹



San Pedro High School, 1001 W 15th Street, Listed in the California Register (Calisphere)

While it became visually synonymous with civic architecture, and its name may suggest that it was used exclusively by government agencies, the PWA Moderne style was also a popular architectural idiom among private institutions. Telephone service expanded rapidly amid the industrial furor of the Machine Age, and telephone companies often turned to the PWA Moderne style when designing offices, switching stations, and other buildings associated with their operation.¹⁵² The Pacific Telephone and

¹⁵¹ "Historic Schools of the Los Angeles Unified School District," presentation prepared by Leslie Heumann and Anne Doehne for the Los Angeles Unified School District, March 2002. These resources were listed in the California Register through the Section 106 review process and were found to be eligible for the National Register.

¹⁵² Refer to the "Telephone History and Development" theme for more information.

Telegraph Company's exchange building in Leimert Park (1939) is an excellent example of the PWA Moderne style, as is a similar exchange building in the Miracle Mile area that was commissioned by the Southern California Telephone Company (1942). Other private institutions including the Mt. Sinai Hospital Clinic (1940, S. Charles Lee) and the Vladeck Center (1940), both touchstones of Jewish culture in Boyle Heights, were housed in PWA Moderne style buildings.¹⁵³ Also in 1940, a team of architects comprising Cram and Ferguson, C. Raimond Johnson, and Samuel Lunden designed a monumental new building for the University of Southern California (USC) that was compatible in scale and materiality to its existing building stock, but "is in reality a version of the classical PWA Moderne."¹⁵⁴ Constructed to house the university's Hancock Foundation, this building is vertically oriented and symmetrically composed with an abstracted Classical base and portico, commanding piers, and integral sculpture.

Since one of the prevailing goals of the New Deal was to put unemployed and underemployed Americans back to work, many of the architects who were commissioned by institutional clients worked alongside skilled artists, artisans, and craftsmen. It was not uncommon, then, for these Depression era buildings to feature sculpture, bas relief, murals, and other types of public art installations as part of their design.¹⁵⁵ The Hancock Foundation at USC is replete with integral sculpture that protrudes outward from the face of the building and is attributed to sculptor Merrell Gage.¹⁵⁶ Gage also designed an eleven-foot-tall cylindrical pylon bearing the message "The Honorable Achieve."¹⁵⁷ Artists Helen Lundeberg and Edward Biberman incorporated murals into the design of Canoga Park High School and the Venice Post Office, respectively. Gordon Newell and Sherry Pericolas fashioned a wood carving for the Hollywood Post Office, "an affectionate, stylized portrait of a cowboy with two horses."¹⁵⁸ Many, and perhaps all of these public art pieces may also be individually significant for their artistic merits.

In Los Angeles and elsewhere, it was uncommon for the PWA Moderne style to be applied to non-institutional property types apart from banks and financial institutions, largely because the large scale commercial properties that would have been most compatible with the Moderne aesthetic were simply not constructed when the style reached its zenith. But on rare occasion, architects adapted the style to a smattering of mid-rise commercial office buildings that were constructed during the Depression era. In 1931, for instance, Edwin Bergstrom designed a five-story office building at the corner of 8th and Flower streets in Central City. Known as the Sawyer Building, it exhibits some Art Deco features, but exudes an overarching sense of restraint that is more closely aligned with the PWA Moderne style. Nearby, at the corner of 6th and Olive streets, the Pacific Mutual Building (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 398)

¹⁵³ Refer to the "Jewish History of Los Angeles" context for more information about resources related to the Jewish community.

¹⁵⁴ Gebhard and Winter, *An Architectural Guidebook to Los Angeles* (Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2003), 288.

¹⁵⁵ Refer to the "WPA, 1934-1943" theme for more information about federal public relief programs in Los Angeles.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ David Colker, "Hidden in Plain Sight: A Brief Guide to Los Angeles' Forgotten Public Artworks," *Los Angeles Times*, July 9, 1989.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.



Left: Sawyer Building, 800-816 W 8th Street (HistoricPlacesLA); Right: Pacific Mutual Building, 523 W 6th Street, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 398 (HistoricPlacesLA)

underwent an extensive renovation in 1936, resulting in the replacement of its existing Beaux Arts style façade with a new exterior skin that was “executed in a plain monumental Moderne style popular at the time.”¹⁵⁹ In 1948, architect Thomas Franklin Power designed what is one of very few known examples of a PWA Moderne style industrial building for the Jansen Shoe Company at, North Hollywood.



The Jansen Shoe Company, 10824 Burbank Boulevard (HistoricPlacesLA)

By the mid-1940s, the PWA Moderne style had started to fall out of favor. The two federal programs most closely associated with the style, the WPA and PWA, were dissolved in 1943 and 1944, respectively, as the nation transitioned into a wartime economy.¹⁶⁰ Building moratoria and restrictions imposed during the war halted new construction, and by the time that the nation emerged from the war architects and the American public had developed a taste for new forms of architectural expression that were entirely devoid of references to Classicism and other historically-derived styles. The PWA Moderne style became seen as outmoded and reminiscent of a past era.

¹⁵⁹ Los Angeles Conservancy, “PacMutual,” accessed December 2018.

¹⁶⁰ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, “History of the CCC and WPA and Other Depression-Era Programs in Region 6 of the USFWS,” accessed December 2018.

ELIGIBILITY STANDARDS FOR PWA MODERNE, 1929-1948

Summary Statement of Significance:	Resources evaluated under this sub-theme are significant in the area of Architecture as excellent examples of PWA Moderne style and exhibit quality of design through distinctive features. PWA Moderne architecture and its austere, monumental aesthetic was popular during the Great Depression. It symbolized authority, stability, and continuity at a time when the nation was mired in economic turmoil. It also represented how principles associated with Moderne design were melded together with Classical elements, and were adapted and applied to institutional and civic buildings. The style's austere aesthetic was best suited to civic architecture and banks and financial institutions, but on occasion it was applied to commercial and industrial buildings constructed in the Depression era.		
Period of Significance:	1929-1948		
Period of Significance Justification:	The PWA Moderne style was most popular in the 1930s and early 1940s, at which point new construction came to a halt and Americans' taste in architecture shifted away from the Moderne school and toward purer expressions of Modernism. The period of significance begins in 1929, when the style first began appearing in Los Angeles. Though World War II effectively brought an end to the style, a few examples were built in the very early postwar period, with the latest known example in the city dating to 1948.		
Geographical Location(s):	Civic buildings and other government buildings are located in Downtown, Hollywood, and other administrative centers; other institutional buildings are found citywide, especially in neighborhoods in central Los Angeles that were developed prior to World War II. Commercial examples are generally concentrated in the historic central business district of Downtown.		
Area(s) of Significance:	Architecture		
Criterion:	NR: C	CR: 3	Local: 3

Associated Property Types:

- Commercial
- Institutional

Note: Grouping of resources such as school and hospital campuses may comprise historic districts.

Property Type Description:

The PWA Moderne style was generally applied to institutional and civic buildings. Administration buildings, post offices, courthouses, and other federally-affiliated institutions often employed the style as it represented a national consensus about how these large-scale civic institutions should look. It was also applied to public school campuses, and receiving stations and distributing stations that were operated by the Department of Water and Power (DWP). School campuses and other properties with multiple buildings designed in the style may be evaluated as historic districts. On rare occasion the style was adapted to a commercial context and was applied to mid- to large-scale commercial offices and telephone exchange plants, though commercial examples of the PWA Moderne style are relatively rare.

Property Type Significance:

See Summary Statement of Significance above.

Eligibility Standards:

- Was constructed during the period of significance
- Exhibits quality of design through distinctive features.
- Is an excellent example of the PWA Moderne style

Character-Defining /Associative Features:

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
- Emphasis on verticality
- Flat roofs
- Formal symmetry and massing
- Smooth wall surfaces, such as stucco, marble, terrazzo, polished stone (and brick, although rare)
- Pier supports (rather than columns)
- Windows arranged in vertical recessed bays
- Stripped appearance with minimal ornamentation, including some zigzags, medallions, or plaster reliefs
- May have regional influence, exhibiting characteristics of the Spanish Colonial Revival or Mediterranean Revival style

For Historic Districts:

- Must include a majority of building which embody the distinctive characteristics of the PWA Moderne style
- Conveys a strong visual sense of overall historic environment from the period of significance

Integrity Considerations:

- Should retain integrity of Location, Design, Materials, Workmanship, and Feeling from the period of significance
- Retains sufficient integrity to convey significance
- Setting may have changed (surrounding buildings and land uses)
- Original use may have changed
- Replacement of some windows and doors may be acceptable if the openings have not been resized and original fenestration patterns have not been disrupted

For Historic Districts:

- District as a whole should retain sufficient integrity to convey significance
- District should retain integrity of setting, particularly when associated with designed landscapes
- May include some buildings dating from outside the period of significance

SUBTHEME: Late Moderne, 1937-1960

The Moderne movement, as epitomized by the stylized geometries and glitzy ornament of Art Deco, the sweeping, graceful curves Streamline Moderne, and the muted Classical forms and motifs of PWA Moderne, had unequivocally fizzled out by World War II. These were architectural styles that bore a strong visual association with the societal values and economic conditions of the Depression era, both for better and for worse. By the end of the war, architects and the American public began to gravitate away from these idioms, which were increasingly seen as outmoded and passé, and toward new modes of architectural expression that were more closely aligned with the International style.

But the Moderne movement did not simply disappear from the American architectural lexicon overnight. It took time for architects and the public to accept and fully embrace this paradigm shift from familiar Depression era architecture to the more authentic and expressive qualities underpinning postwar Modernism. And, since the imposition of building moratoria brought new construction to a halt during the wartime years, architects and designers were simply not able to experiment with new forms, styles, and motifs during this time as they otherwise would have.¹⁶¹ What resulted, then, in the very early postwar period was a hybrid of those architectural styles of the late Depression years – Streamline Moderne and PWA Moderne – and the International style that was quickly coming into vogue. The aesthetic that emerged from this stylistic melding resulted in the emergence of a distinct architectural style that is known as Late Moderne. Late Moderne is considered to be the final phase of the Moderne movement in that it “extend[ed] the Streamline Moderne idiom into the post-war era.”¹⁶²

Since the Late Moderne style was relatively short-lived and represents a continuation of existing architectural trends – as opposed to a fresh, innovative approach to design – it has historically evaded critical attention and to this day remains relatively unacknowledged. Architectural historian Paul Gleye once remarked that “almost no research has been undertaken regarding this style, and the architectural significance of [Late Moderne] buildings has remained underappreciated. Future investigations will, it is hoped, bring the postwar Moderne greater recognition as a significant architectural period.”¹⁶³

The Late Moderne style certainly carries forward elements of the Moderne school from which it emerged. Like the Streamline Moderne and PWA Moderne styles, Late Moderne style buildings exhibit a prevailing sense of horizontality. Like their predecessors, their massing tends to be heavy, and in contrast to the structural expressionism of the International style their volumes tend to be more contained as to conceal structure. Materials such as natural stone and Roman brick are often used in addition to, or sometimes in lieu of stucco to provide buildings with a sense of warmth and texture.

¹⁶¹ Memorandum for 1202 3rd Street Promenade, Santa Monica, prepared by the City of Santa Monica Planning Division for the Landmarks Commission, July 14, 2008.

¹⁶² National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for Bullock’s Pasadena, prepared by Alan Hess, Leslie Heumann. and Maggie Valentine, February 1996, Section 8, 20.

¹⁶³ Paul Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Rosebud Books, 1981), 149.

However, the Late Moderne style is also defined by characteristics that deviate from other Moderne idioms and clearly draw upon the tenets of the International style. Specifically, the rounded corners and teardrop forms evident in Streamline Moderne are replaced with rigid rectangular forms and sharp angularity. Building forms tend to be boxier than they are aerodynamic, and consist of compositions of solid rectilinear volumes that are placed in balanced contrast to one another. Exterior surfaces are either characterized by large, windowless expanses or feature continuous horizontal bands of windows.

Other common features of the Late Moderne style pertain to decorative features and the application of ornament. Buildings designed in the style adhere to a distinctive ornamental catalog comprising fins, grids, and pylons, often with holes or squared voids “punched” into them. Commercial examples of the style typically feature prominent entryways and display windows that are exaggerated in size and are surmounted by a broad, curvilinear freeform canopy or soffit. Façades are often dominated by prominently soaring pylons that were emblazoned with neon or other visually prominent signage. It was also not uncommon for building interiors to exhibit some characteristics of the Hollywood Regency style.

However, it is the bezeled window that is perhaps the most readily identifiable exterior feature of Late Moderne style buildings. The typical bezeled window consists of a horizontal band of fenestration that is prominently set within a protruding, bezel-like flange, often composed of a material and color that contrasts with the adjacent wall surface and makes the band of windows “pop out.” Often, bezels would “extend beyond the windows to wrap around corners or dive into the ground in an inverted L-shape, giving the façade a look of tautness” and emphasizing its prevailing sense of horizontality.¹⁶⁴



Bezeled windows on St. Vincent College of Nursing, 262 S Lake Street (HistoricPlacesLA)

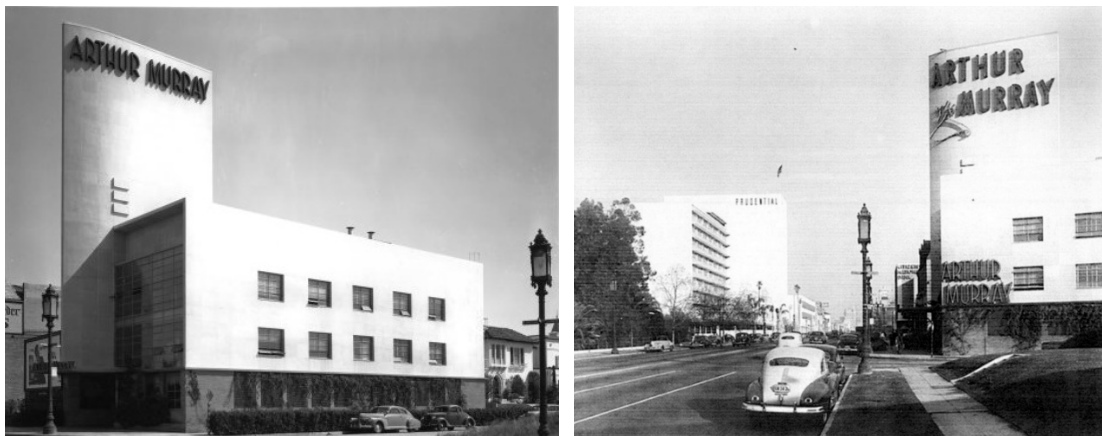
The Late Moderne style was neither particularly long-lived nor widespread in Los Angeles, but throughout the city there are several buildings that were constructed in the years just prior to, and just after, World War II that exhibit the character-defining features of the style. Similar to other iterations of Moderne architecture, the Late Moderne style was almost exclusively applied to commercial and institutional properties. There are no known examples of the style being applied to a residential building.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 149-151.

Late Moderne architecture is typically associated with the very early post-World War II period, but architects in Los Angeles and elsewhere had begun to tweak and alter the Streamline and PWA Moderne styles by the late 1930s. Architectural historians David Gebhard and Hariette Von Breton remark that:

Styling of the most elegant of commercial buildings...generally began to change by the late thirties... several architects] were anticipating post-1945 styling by eschewing the imagery of both the Streamline and Regency in favor of the neutral box, or series of boxes. This approach was evidenced in the remodeling of *Ciro's Restaurant* on Sunset Boulevard [1940]...and a row of six shops [in Beverly Hills] with individual façades like picture frames hung on the interior walls of a fashionable Beverly Hills residence.¹⁶⁵

One of the best articulated early examples of the intersection between the Moderne movement and the International style is a commercial building that was constructed in 1941 as an office and studio for dance maestro Arthur Murray. Located on the Miracle Mile, a prominent shopping district in central Los Angeles that developed beginning in the 1930s, the building was designed by Stiles Clements, who would become one of the architects most closely associated with the Late Moderne style. Clements's design for the building visually represented Murray's desire to house his eponymous dance studio in "ultramodern" quarters. Though the building features contained volumes and heavy massing that are rooted in the Moderne, its front façade is light and taut and "nearly transparent above the ground story, a precursor to the floor-to-ceiling glass curtain walls that would dominate the mid- and high-rise office buildings" erected after World War II.¹⁶⁶ The front façade also has an exceptionally large integrated pylon sign that soared high above the building's roofline – a hallmark characteristic of Late Moderne style commercial buildings. The pylon originally featured stylized signage prominently advertising Murray's studio to passersby, the lettering has since been removed.¹⁶⁷



Arthur Murray's Dance Studio, 5828 W Wilshire Boulevard (Calisphere)

¹⁶⁵ Gebhard and Von Breton, *Los Angeles in the '30s*, 49.

¹⁶⁶ Los Angeles Conservancy, "Arthur Murray Office and Studio," accessed December 2018.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.; Eric Mercado, "Time Frame: Arthur Murray's Miracle Mile Studio 70 Years Ago and Today," *Los Angeles Magazine*, May 6, 2016.

By the end of World War II, the Late Moderne style had eclipsed its predecessor, Streamline Moderne, as the dominant mode for commercial architecture in Los Angeles. The style was perhaps most often expressed in the context of department stores, which were always trying to keep abreast of trends in aesthetics and architecture to visually express their relevance and attract consumers. Notable examples include Milliron's Department Store in Westchester (1947, altered), designed by Victor Gruen and Elsie Krummeck, and a new branch store for the Broadway company on Crenshaw Boulevard near Baldwin Hills (1947), designed by Albert B. Gardner. Both of these buildings exemplify the Late Moderne's abstract volumes, overt expressions of horizontality, and varied material palettes comprising warmer and softer materials such as brick and stone. The Broadway building pays homage to the Moderne movement by its tri-level stepped circular tower and its free-form canopy with horizontal grooves, but also visually references the International style by its dearth of ornament and bands of ribbon windows.



Milliron's Department Store, 8715 S Sepulveda Boulevard (Los Angeles Public Library)

Shortly thereafter, in 1949, Stiles Clements was commissioned to design a new department store on Wilshire Boulevard for the once-popular Mullen and Bluett clothing company (not extant). The mélange of architectural elements that Clements drew for the Mullen and Bluett building resulted in what was considered by many to be a prime example of the Late Moderne style. Its Roman brick façade “was balanced with a geometric grid of plasterwork and flagstone, softened by greenery, punctuated by copper-framed windows, and topped with an integrated sign pylon.”¹⁶⁸ Other notable architectural features such as interior flagstone planters and open display windows helped bring the outdoors in and ascribed to the Modern ethos of blurring the line between indoor and outdoor spaces. After a preservation battle failed to secure protection for the building, it was unceremoniously razed in 2006.¹⁶⁹

At the time these buildings were constructed, the term Late Moderne had not yet been formally introduced into the architectural vernacular. Buildings designed in the style were often described as

¹⁶⁸ Los Angeles Conservancy, “Mullen and Bluett (demolished),” accessed December 2018.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.; Bob Pool, “A Wilshire Jewel, or Imitation?” *Los Angeles Times*, July 31, 2003.

“California Commercial” or “California Modern,” underscoring the oversized role that California – and particularly Southern California – played in perpetuating trends in the Modern architectural movement.

But department stores were certainly not the only types of commercial buildings to bridge the Moderne and Mid-Century Modern movements. Some of the largest and most prominent commercial office buildings that were commissioned in the immediate post-war era also stand out as notable, articulated examples of the Late Moderne style. In 1948, noted architect Rowland Crawford designed a multi-story addition to the Los Angeles Times complex at Spring and Second streets in Downtown (known as the Mirror Building) that complemented the property’s existing Art Deco structure, but was also unabashedly Modern in its chaste exterior walls and bands of flush-mounted metal windows. Its aesthetic paid homage to the Times’ institutional history at the site, but also looked optimistically toward the future.

Noted architects Wurdeman and Becket also utilized the Late Moderne style when they designed the first major office building Downtown after World War II between 1947 and 1949. Known as the General Petroleum Building (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 766) and located at Sixth and Flower streets, the building employs a similarly transitional aesthetic, though the application of what were then innovative design features such as long, slender vertical fins and sun shades veered it more in the direction of the International style. Nonetheless, its contained volumes, solid massing, and terra cotta cladding provide the building with a sense of weightiness and were clearly culled from the architectural catalog of the Moderne school. The building also features the bezeled windows that are so strongly associated with the Late Moderne style.



Times Mirror Building, 145 S Spring Street, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1174 (HistoricPlacesLA); Right: General Petroleum Building, 612 S Flower Street, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 766 (Los Angeles Public Library)

Reflecting the prevailing pattern of decentralization of Los Angeles after World War II, some of the more prominent examples of the Late Moderne style were located outside of the Downtown core, and were instead strung along Wilshire Boulevard and other major thoroughfares that crisscrossed the swiftly-expanding city. In 1948, architect Claud Beelman designed a new, state-of-the-art broadcasting facility on Vine Street in Hollywood for broadcasting magnate (and Cadillac franchisee) Don Lee.¹⁷⁰ Beelman, working with Herman Spackler, designed the building around two large, weighty masses, oriented around a “central recessed entranceway punctuated by dramatic, perforated vertical elements.”¹⁷¹ It is regarded as one of the city’s most spectacular examples of the Late Moderne style. The following year, in 1949 Beelman and Spackler collaborated once again, this time to perform a renovation to the existing Farmers Insurance Building at the corner of Wilshire and Rimpau boulevards in the Park Mile area. Beelman and Spackler added four stories to the existing building and extensively remodeled its façade, replacing some of its features with finishes and flourishes that were decidedly more modern. The remodeled Farmers Insurance Building perhaps drew more heavily on Classical traditions than the Don Lee Mutual Broadcast Building and other buildings designed in the Late Moderne style, but it too, is a notable example of how this transitional idiom was manifest in the era’s evolving commercial landscape.

Several miles to the south in the West Adams area, renowned architect Paul R. Williams designed a new headquarters for the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company in 1949 (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1000). The company was notable as one of the first in Los Angeles to offer life insurance to African Americans, and eventually grew into one of the largest black-owned businesses in the western United States. Williams’s design for the company’s new headquarters is an excellent example of the Late Moderne style. The building’s relative weightiness and abstracted Classical motifs reference the Moderne



*Postcard of the Don Lee Mutual Broadcast Building,
1313 Vine Street (Calisphere)*

movement, but its rectilinear volumes, angularity, and ranks of bezeled-framed windows brand it as a modern edifice. Its design “expressed solidity and permanence in a contemporary idiom,” paying homage to the company’s history while simultaneously looking ahead at an optimistic future.¹⁷² Two oil-on-canvas murals depicting the African American experience in California (titled *The Negro in California History*) are also incorporated into the lobby, carrying forward the Moderne school’s tradition of integral public art.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Randy Haberkamp, “Don Lee Mutual Broadcasting Building to Become Academy Film Archive,” accessed December 2018.

¹⁷¹ Los Angeles Conservancy, “Pickford Center for Motion Picture Study,” accessed December 2018.

¹⁷² The Paul R. Williams Project, “Golden State Mutual Photo Essay,” accessed December 2018.

¹⁷³ Los Angeles Conservancy, “Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Building,” accessed December 2018.

The style was also often pared down and applied to a more vernacular commercial context. Many of the primary commercial corridors in the San Fernando Valley, Westchester, the Crenshaw corridor, and other areas that witnessed an onslaught of development in the early postwar years feature low-slung stores that feature bezels, fins, grids, pylons, and other features that are drawn from the ornamental catalog of the Late Moderne. Several companies also embraced the aesthetic as part of their corporate brand. In 1948, Stiles Clements designed a Late Moderne style market for the Vons company on Santa Barbara Avenue in the Baldwin Hills neighborhood (not extant) that juxtaposed bezels, grids, and over-scaled pylons against large expanses of blank wall. Noted industrial designer Raymond Loewy developed a corporate prototype for Lucky markets that is best described as Late Moderne with its broad canopies and large pylons punctured by three square voids.¹⁷⁴ Extant examples are located in northern California.



Stiles Clements' design for Von's market, Santa Barbara Avenue, now Martin Luther King Boulevard (not extant), (Los Angeles Times; Getty Research Institute)



*Left: Mission Acres Methodist Episcopal Church, 15453 Rayen Street (HistoricPlacesLA)
Right: Russian Baptist Church, 2960 E 8th Street (HistoricPlacesLA)*

¹⁷⁴ National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for Bullock's Pasadena, Section 8, 19.



Left: Palms Middle School, (HistoricPlacesLA); Right: Los Angeles Boys and Girls Club (HistoricPlacesLA)

of the style and its application to the context of school campuses. Small, neighborhood-oriented churches such as the Mission Acres Methodist Episcopal Church in North Hills (1947, Harry L. Pierce), the Russian Baptist Church in Boyle Heights (1949), and the Sixth Church of Christ, Scientist in Baldwin Hills (1957) express how the style was adapted to an ecclesiastical context. The Los Angeles Boys and Girls Club in Lincoln Heights (1949) by Rowland Crawford is an excellent example of Late Moderne's prolific application of abstract volumes, bezels, and canopies. And while the North Hollywood Masonic Lodge (1951, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1078) by Robert Stacy Judd merits attention for its Mesoamerican motifs, its clean lines and solid massing are derived from the Late Moderne style and give the building a modern presence.¹⁷⁵

Late Moderne was principally a commercial and institutional idiom. However, on rare occasion it was adapted to other types of properties, typically when their owners sought to convey modernity in a conservative manner. For instance, the Tevis Morrow Residence in Pacific Palisades (1947), designed by Paul Williams, includes such features as "painted brick, a bezeled frame on the front door, horizontal lines and delicate Lucite balustrades" that draw clear influence from the Late Moderne playbook.¹⁷⁶ The Gerry Building in Central City built in 1947 (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 708), designed by Maurice Fleischman as a facility for garment manufacturers, is a very rare example of a Late Moderne style industrial building. Its rigid, boxy massing is softened by gently curving bands of steel sash windows and curvilinear concrete canopies.



*The Gerry Building, 910 S Los Angeles Street,
L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 708
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

¹⁷⁵ Los Angeles Conservancy, "North Hollywood Masonic Lodge," accessed December 2018.

¹⁷⁶ National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for Bullock's Pasadena, Section 8, 20; Alan Hess, *Forgotten Modern: California Houses, 1940-1970* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2007), 45.

As referenced above, Los Angeles-based architects who are most closely associated with the Late Moderne style include Rowland Crawford, Paul Williams, S. Charles Lee, Claud Beelman, Wurdeman and Becket, and Stiles Clements. Clements in particular was a key figure in honing and popularizing this style of architecture. Since most of these architects had well-established careers prior to this time, and many had experienced working in the related Art Deco and Streamline Moderne styles, their embrace of the Late Moderne aesthetic represented the evolution of their repertoires to keep pace with new ideas about progress and modernity and evolving aesthetic preferences in the early postwar period.

Two of Los Angeles's most monumental examples of the Late Moderne style were incidentally constructed just as the style was falling out of favor: the Los Angeles County Courthouse (1958) and the adjacent Los Angeles County Hall of Administration (1960). These side-by-side buildings were conceived as part of the 1947 Master Plan that sowed the seeds for the present-day Civic Center, though more than a decade would pass before either fully came to fruition. They were both designed by a team of highly acclaimed architects composed of Paul R. Williams, Adrian Wilson, and the firms Austin, Field and Fry and Stanton and Stockwell. Hallmark characteristics of the Late Moderne style that are expressed in both buildings include "spare detailing and smooth surfaces, strong horizontal emphasis and angular volumes, bands of windows within bezeled frames, and integrated planting beds."¹⁷⁷ They are clad in panels of ceramic veneer, which enhances these buildings' angular forms and strengthens their horizontal emphasis. Their aesthetic evinces a sense of monumentality befitting of civic buildings, and also forges an aesthetic bridge between the older buildings in the Civic Center and the more modern, International style buildings that were added to the complex further into the postwar period.



*Los Angeles County/Stanley Mosk Courthouse,
111 N Hill Street (Los Angeles Public Library)*

¹⁷⁷ Los Angeles Conservancy, "Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration/Los Angeles County Hall of Administration," accessed December 2018.

Late Moderne hit its peak in the late 1940s and early 1950s. It was thereafter eclipsed by the emergence of new modern idioms, notably the Corporate International style that was influenced by Mies Van der Rohe and the more expressive, exuberant iterations of popular Modernism that dominated the architectural scene of post-World War II Los Angeles. The style fell out of favor entirely by about 1960.

ELIGIBILITY STANDARDS FOR LATE MODERNE, 1937-1960

Summary Statement of Significance:	Resources evaluated under this sub-theme are significant in the area of Architecture as excellent examples of the Late Moderne style and exhibit quality of design through distinctive features. Late Moderne style architecture is a later iteration of the Moderne aesthetic that was popular in the period immediately before, and immediately after World War II. Its essential form, massing, and ornamental catalog incorporated elements of both the Streamline Moderne and International styles. Late Moderne architecture represents a transition between the Moderne movement and postwar Modernism. Its aesthetic was best suited to larger-scale property types including commercial buildings and civic institutions/government buildings.		
Period of Significance:	1937-1960		
Period of Significance Justification:	The Late Moderne style was popular in the years immediately before and after World War II, as Americans were seeking a new architectural idiom to reflect the current conditions of society. The period of significance for this theme begins in 1937, when the first known examples of the style were built in Los Angeles; it ends in 1960, by which point the style had firmly fallen out of favor. The last known example of the style in Los Angeles – the Los Angeles County/ Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration – was completed in 1960.		
Geographical Location(s):	Sparsely citywide, with most examples in Downtown, the Wilshire Boulevard corridor, the San Fernando Valley, Westchester, the Baldwin Hills and Crenshaw areas, and other areas that witnessed development in the years immediately before and after World War II.		
Area(s) of Significance:	Architecture		
Criterion:	NR: C	CR: 3	Local: 3
Associated Property Types:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Commercial▪ Institutional▪ Residential (rare)▪ Industrial (rare) <p>Note: Grouping of resources such as school and hospital campuses may be evaluated as historic districts.</p>		

Property Type Description:	Like other iterations of Moderne architecture, the Late Moderne style was applied almost exclusively to commercial and institutional buildings. Since the style was visually associated with modernity, it was often used in the design of department stores, banks, and other commercial ventures that wanted to project an image of progress and forward-mindedness amid the modern era. For similar reasons it was also applied to large-scale office buildings, civic buildings, and other public institutions. It was also applied to private institutions such as churches, schools, fraternal halls, and community centers. Large properties with multiple building designed in the style may be evaluated a historic districts. Residential and industrial examples of the style do exist, but are extremely rare.
Property Type Significance:	See Summary Statement of Significance above.
Eligibility Standards:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Was constructed during the period of significance▪ Exhibits quality of design through distinctive features▪ Is an excellent example of the style
Character-Defining /Associative Features:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance▪ Horizontal orientation▪ Concrete construction▪ Flat or nearly flat roof▪ Smooth stucco cladding▪ Horizontal bands of beveled windows with projecting frames▪ Metal, often steel-sash, windows▪ Unadorned wall surfaces, with minimal ornament <p>For Historic Districts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Must include a majority of building which embody the distinctive characteristics of the Late Moderne style▪ Conveys a strong visual sense of overall historic environment from the period of significance
Integrity Considerations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Should retain integrity of Location, Design, Materials, Workmanship, and Feeling from the period of significance▪ Retains sufficient integrity to convey significance▪ Setting may have changed (surrounding buildings and land uses)▪ Original use may have changed▪ Replacement of some windows and doors may be acceptable if the openings have not been resized and original fenestration patterns have not been disrupted

For Historic Districts:

- District as a whole should retain sufficient integrity to convey significance
- District should retain integrity of setting, particularly when associated with designed landscapes
- May include some buildings dating from outside the period of significance

SUBTHEMES: Hollywood Regency, 1931-1945 and Late Hollywood Regency, 1946-1970

The Hollywood Regency style, also sometimes referred to as Regency Moderne, charted a parallel course to the Art Deco and Moderne styles. It shares contextual roots with the associated Deco/Moderne movement in that it aspired to be “conservatively modern,” taking well-established architectural precedents and updating them with simple volumes, stripped-down surfaces, attenuated ornament, and other features that reflected the influence of the burgeoning Modern movement. It charted a new path forward without completely abandoning the past. However, Hollywood Regency’s visual vocabulary differed from that of its Deco/Moderne counterparts in that it drew more explicitly on Neoclassicism and thus assumed a more historicist appearance. The style, then, is perceived as something akin to a “distant cousin,” loosely derived from, yet differentiated from the Deco/Moderne.

Hollywood Regency architecture enjoyed a relatively long shelf life, remaining popular from the early 1930s until about 1970. However, its development was stymied by World War II and the abrupt halt of new construction at this time. After the war, the style was melded and adapted in new ways, relying less on Neoclassical precedent and making more explicit reference to the Modern movement that was redefining the Southern California landscape. Hollywood Regency buildings that post-date World War II are readily identifiable as such, but took on a different visual character than their pre-war antecedents.

Resources evaluated under this sub-theme fall into one of two broad categories based upon their date of construction and architectural features:

- **Hollywood Regency (1931-1945)** is used to evaluate examples of the style that were built before World War II and are associated with its early development. They rely more heavily on Neoclassical precedent and assume an appearance that is delicate, dignified, and elegant.
- **Late Hollywood Regency (1946-1970)** is used to evaluate examples of the style that were built after World War II, during its later phase of development. They represent a more expressive chapter in the style’s history. Compared to earlier examples of the style, their approach to form, proportions, and ornament tends to be more eccentric, unconventional, and exaggerated.

On a cursory level, Hollywood Regency style represented a loose attempt to revive the domestic architecture of Britain during the very early nineteenth century, and particularly during the regency and reign of George IV (1811-1820).¹⁷⁸ The original Regency style was essentially an abstracted version of Neoclassicism wherein bold, geometric Classical forms were softened by features such as stucco walls, French doors, abundant balconies and trellises, and delicate ornament. These features created an aesthetic that exuded an overarching sense of “insubstantiality and brittle elegance.”¹⁷⁹ It was not only a popular choice for architecture, but also influenced British furniture design and the decorative arts.

¹⁷⁸ City Landmark Assessment & Evaluation Report for the Vance Residence, prepared for the City of Beverly Hills Community Development Department by Jan Ostashay, 9.

¹⁷⁹ John Chase, *Glitter Stucco and Dumpster Diving* (New York: Verso, 2004), 106.

But the Hollywood Regency style was not conceived as a literal revival of pre-Victorian British architecture; it is better classified as an eclectic synthesis of loosely related early nineteenth century architectural influences. In addition to its English Regency influences, the style also made reference to the architecture of the Georgian and American Federal periods and, to a lesser extent, the French Second Empire style, both of which were popular at about the same time as the English Regency period.



The architecture of the English Regency (left) and American Federal (right) periods both played an important role in defining the aesthetic of what eventually became known as the Hollywood Regency style (Museum of London; Calisphere).

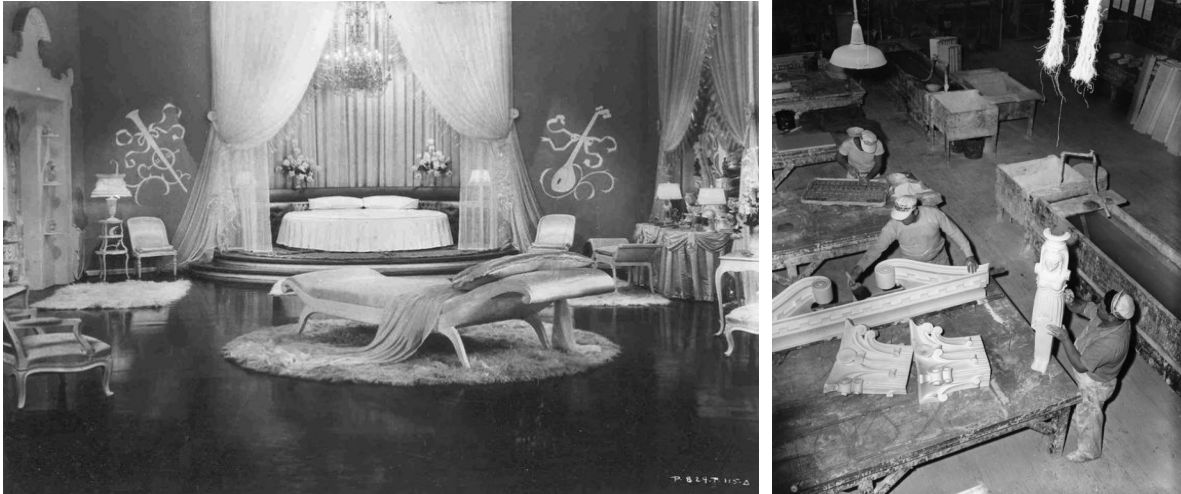
It was in the years after World War I that interest in the English Regency period was rekindled. Craftsmen, furniture makers, decorative artists, architects, and others involved in the decorative and allied arts began to revive the brittle, delicate, dignified aesthetic that had enraptured European and American society a century prior. Many factors are believed to have contributed to this phenomenon. Lenygon and Morant, esteemed British interior designers, organized a major exhibition of Regency period furniture just after World War I. Authors, playwrights, and other prominent purveyors of popular culture romanticized the period and thrust it into the public eye.¹⁸⁰ American soldiers who had served during World War I were introduced to the architecture of Britain, France, and other European countries where they were stationed. And the period after World War I was generally one in which Americans expressed a keen interest in reinterpreting aesthetic traditions of the past, often loosely and eclectically.

Reviving the Regency aesthetic was certainly a national phenomenon, but its unequivocal center of gravity was Southern California. Its ascent is closely associated with the Golden Era of Hollywood in the 1920s and 1930s, when the entertainment industry and movie stars became inextricably linked to ideals of glamour and sophistication. Due to its visual association with notions of culture, elegance, dignity, and grace, the Regency aesthetic was embraced by motion picture studios and was well suited for movie sets.¹⁸¹ Set designers took a *mélange* of influences derived from the contemporaneous English Regency, French Second Empire, and American Federal periods, attenuated them, and imaginatively combined them to create a new visual vocabulary that was steeped in tradition but was also a product of the modern era. It evinced a sense of the Regency period, but had been refreshed for the twentieth century.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ City Landmark Assessment & Evaluation Report for the Vance Residence, prepared for the City of Beverly Hills Community Development Department by Jan Ostashay, 9.

This modernized pastiche of the Regency period became visually synonymous with Hollywood movie sets and industry culture. The aesthetic was eventually dubbed “Hollywood Regency,” which both acknowledged the historical traditions within which it was rooted, but also called attention to its modern aspirations. Architectural historian John Chase remarks that it was “concocted by mixing modern and historically inspired elements with quintessential Southern California nonchalance.”¹⁸² The style treaded a balance between old and new, and in doing so it reflected an “urge to be modern while retaining the traditionalism that the film community, and the general public, was remiss to abandon.”¹⁸³



The glamorous, sumptuous aesthetic of Hollywood film sets, which often incorporated exaggerated and/or attenuated Neoclassical details (right) also influenced the Hollywood Regency Style (Los Angeles Public Library).

On its face, the Hollywood Regency style appeared somewhat similar to the American Colonial Revival style that was also rooted in the architecture of the early nineteenth century. Primary forms were favored in the configuration of buildings. Façades were symmetrically composed and were often divided into a series of flattened or gently curved bays. Walls – as opposed to roofs – were treated with emphasis, and exterior surfaces were clad with smooth plaster or sometimes a brick veneer. Prominent entranceways were set within porticos and surmounted by arched fanlights; tall, narrow window, often set within arched openings were placed in balanced harmony with other features on the façade. Decoration consisted of various Neoclassical details including columns, pediments, moldings and quoins.

But the Hollywood Regency style deviated from the American Colonial Revival movement in its eclectically detailed and unconventionally proportioned details. It was not uncommon for the vertical orientation of doors and windows to be exaggerated, for entrance porticos to be double height, for columns to appear impossibly thin, and for pediments and other Neoclassical flourishes to be either exceptionally attenuated or exceptionally exaggerated. “This architecture of glamour,” explained John Chase, “required a seemingly effortless balancing of the formal and the casual, as well as a knack for

¹⁸² Chase, *Glitter Stucco and Dumpster Diving*, 108.

¹⁸³ City Landmark Assessment & Evaluation Report for the Vance Residence, prepared for the City of Beverly Hills Community Development Department by Jan Ostashay, 9.

well-placed exaggeration and well-chosen omission.”¹⁸⁴ When executed successfully, the style exuded an aura of theatricality that was not unlike the movie sets from which it was loosely derived.

The style was also distinctive in that it took some visual cues from trends in Modern architecture, specifically the stark asceticism of the International style and the “stripped down Classicism” that was characteristic of the Moderne movement. Hollywood Regency style buildings exhibited the overarching sense of horizontality and flat or low profile roof forms that characterized the International style, and applied abstracted Classical motifs like fluting and reeding that were hallmarks of the Moderne styles.

Interior design played just as important a role in defining the Hollywood Regency style as exterior building features. “It was the decorator, as much as the architect, who helped popularize the stylistic code of the Regency as found in Southern California,” observes John Chase.¹⁸⁵ Highly acclaimed interior designers Dorothy Draper and Billy Haines were prominent exponents of the style and were known for designing lavish, sumptuous interior spaces, mostly for celebrity clients, that incorporated the dramatic, larger-than-life elements that were typical of movie sets. Their work featured the eccentric abstraction of Classically derived elements in addition to “rich textiles, sumptuously tufted seating, and dramatic elements like oversized sculptures, bold colorways, or over-the-top feminine touches.”¹⁸⁶

By the 1920s, some of the region’s most prominent architects such as Marston, Van Pelt and Maybury began to incorporate Regency inspired details into the design of large, custom Period Revival style residences.¹⁸⁷ These architects tapped into the style’s association with the notions of opulence and

glamour to visually connote a sense of wealth and status. However, it was not until the 1930s that the Hollywood Regency aesthetic came of age as a discernable style in its own right.



*Max Factor Building, 1666 N Highland Avenue,
Historic-Cultural Monument No. 593
(HistoricPlacesLA)*

The Hollywood Regency style was ideally suited to the design of large, sumptuous single-family residences. However, elements of the Hollywood Regency style was expressed in the form of a commercial property: the Max Factor Building in Hollywood (1931-35, Historic-Cultural Monument No. 593). Legendary theater architect S. Charles Lee was tasked with transforming an existing edifice into a manufacturing plant and beauty salon for cosmetics titan Max Factor. Toward this end, Lee cloaked the building in an extravagant façade that toes the line between the Art Deco and Hollywood Regency styles,

¹⁸⁴ Chase, *Glitter Stucco and Dumpster Diving*, 108.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁸⁶ “Why Hollywood Regency Remains Designers’ Favorite Style,” *Decaso*, March 2, 2018.

¹⁸⁷ Chase, *Glitter Stucco and Dumpster Diving*, 106.

“giving it delicate and sophisticated cosmetic richness with the use of white and pink marble” and delicately scaled ornament.¹⁸⁸ The building exuded a theatrical quality that drew upon Lee’s experience as one of Los Angeles’s most accomplished theater architects.

In 1935, Lee designed his own office building in the Westlake community.¹⁸⁹ Reflecting the austerity of the era in which it was built, it is far less extravagant than the Max Factor Building, but nonetheless stands out as a successful example of the Hollywood Regency style applied to a commercial context. The building strikes a careful balance between historicism and modernity through its juxtaposition of simple, rectilinear building forms against exaggerated decorative features, including an exceptionally tall and slender entablature and an over-scaled broken pediment above its primary entrance. Fluted pilasters and festooned wrought iron railings also enhance its sense of insubstantiality. This building, like many that were designed in the Hollywood Regency style, was not constructed on a blank slate from the ground up, but was rather an extensive remodel of an existing building on the site, a result of the style coming of age at the height of the Great Depression.



*Architect S. Charles Lee Office and Home,
1648 Wilshire Boulevard
(Architectural Resources Group)*

Fluted pilasters and festooned wrought iron railings also enhance its sense of insubstantiality. This building, like many that were designed in the Hollywood Regency style, was not constructed on a blank slate from the ground up, but was rather an extensive remodel of an existing building on the site, a result of the style coming of age at the height of the Great Depression.

However, it was within the context of residential architecture that the principles underpinning the Hollywood Regency style were most strongly expressed. By the mid-1930s, Hollywood Regency had emerged as one of, and by some accounts, *the* preferred idiom for the large estates that were built as the personal residences of prominent figures within the Hollywood motion picture industry. Many of these lavish estates were located in Beverly Hills, which was perceived at the time as the proverbial “bedroom” of the Hollywood elite, but others were constructed within the city limits of Los Angeles, and especially in affluent Westside neighborhoods like Brentwood, Bel Air, Beverly Crest, and Holmby Hills.

In 1935, noted architect James Dolena designed a palatial house on Carolwood Drive in the Holmby Hills neighborhood for Constance Bennett, who at the time was one of Hollywood’s most popular and highest paid film actresses.¹⁹⁰ Also in the mid-1930s, Dolena was commissioned to remodel an existing residence in the hills of Brentwood for Joan Crawford (altered), another highly distinguished actress and leading lady.¹⁹¹ The Bennett and Crawford estates exhibited some elements of French and Georgian style architecture, respectively, but their essential form, massing, proportions, relative chastity, and

¹⁸⁸ Gebhard and Winter, *An Architectural Guidebook to Los Angeles*, 179.

¹⁸⁹ Los Angeles Conservancy, “S. Charles Lee Office and Home,” accessed Dec. 2018; Maggie Valentine, *The Show Starts on the Sidewalk: An Architectural History of the Movie Theatre, Starring S. Charles Lee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 125.

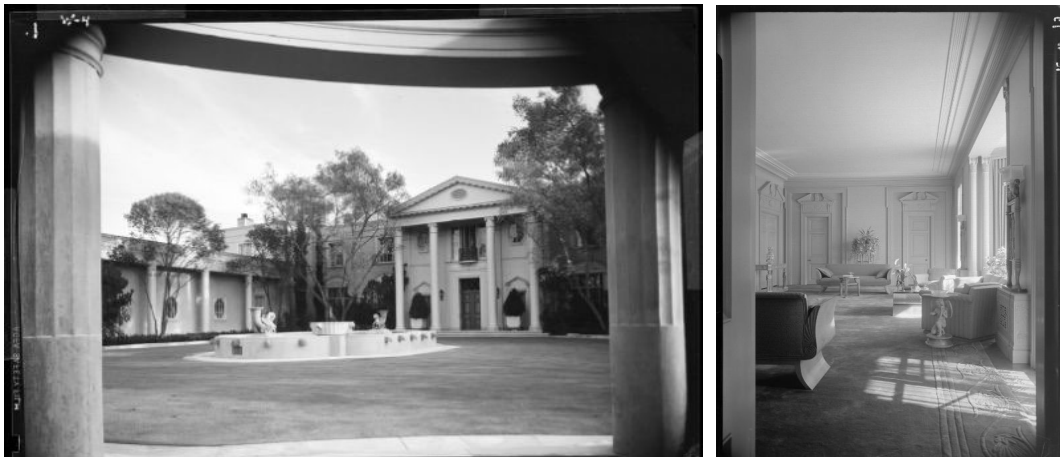
¹⁹⁰ “James Dolena (1888-1978), Architect, Interior and Furniture Designer,” accessed December 2018.

¹⁹¹ Chase, *Glitter Stucco and Dumpster Diving*, 71; Adamo DiGregorio, “From Suave to Scholcky – and Back Again,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 12, 2003.

judicious application and careful placement of Classically derived decorative details were characteristic of the refined, sophisticated aesthetic of the Hollywood Regency style. The architecture of these estates vividly depict how the style was applied in the context of large, custom single-family residences, and how it played an influential role in shaping and defining the architecture of Hollywood in its Golden Era.

Also in 1935, Dolena remodeled a house in the Hollywood Hills that was owned by legendary Hollywood director George Cukor.¹⁹² Built in 1931 and designed by Roland E. Coate, one of several renowned “architects to the stars,” the Cukor Residence was remodeled by Dolena to exhibit characteristics of the Hollywood Regency style: a delicate and balanced composition, a harmonious blend of brick veneer and wood wall cladding, and stripped-back, attenuated Neoclassical details. Interior spaces were designed by Billy Haines, who filled it with elegant décor photographs of Cukor’s Hollywood friends.¹⁹³ Cukor’s remodeled residence, in many ways, resembled the sumptuous movie sets on which he worked, and was seen as befitting of someone of his relative stature.

Dolena proved to be one of the foremost exponents of the Hollywood Regency style, notable for his uncanny ability to take an eclectic medley of early nineteenth century architectural traditions and meld them into modern masterpieces. In 1939, he designed a gargantuan, 8.4 acre, 64-room estate in Bel Air for Hilda Boldt Weber, heiress to a prominent glass company. The house, known as Casa Encantada, embodied what was described as “a modern take on Georgian architecture that evoked the grandeur of a grand English estate.”¹⁹⁴ Interior spaces were designed by T.H. Robsjohn-Gibbings, a prominent British-born furniture designer.¹⁹⁵ The house was later purchased by hotelier Conrad Hilton. It is typically regarded as one of Dolena’s finest works and as an exceptional, extant example of the Hollywood Regency style.



Casa Encantada, 10644 Bellagio Road (Calisphere)

¹⁹² Pacific Coast Architecture Database, “Cukor, George, House, Beverly Hills, CA,” accessed December 2018.

¹⁹³ Los Angeles Conservancy, “George Cukor Residence,” accessed December 2018.

¹⁹⁴ “James Dolena (1888-1978), Architect, Interior and Furniture Designer,” accessed December 2018.

¹⁹⁵ Adamo DiGregorio, “From Suave to Scholcky – and Back Again,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 12, 2003.

Other architects who are associated with the Hollywood Regency style in its early years include Roland Coate, Wallace Neff, Douglas Honnold, George Vernon Russell, and Paul R. Williams. All were highly acclaimed and accomplished architects in the years before World War II, and all had developed reputations as architects who were favored by celebrities and were known as “architects to the stars.”¹⁹⁶

While its aesthetic was inextricably linked to the allure of those associated with the entertainment industry, the Hollywood Regency style was also applied to large, custom residences that were constructed for non-celebrity clients, typically affluent individuals who wanted to evince a same visual sense of prestige and opulence through the design of their personal dwellings. These houses are typically located in affluent Westside neighborhoods. Some notable examples include the houses at 914 N Stradella Road in Bel Air (1936) by Paul Williams; 119 N Bentley Avenue in Bel Air (1937); and 333 S Beverly Glen Boulevard in Holmby Hills (1938), also by Paul Williams. Others are found peppering the streets of historically affluent neighborhoods, such as Country Club Park and Windsor Village in Mid City.



333 S Beverly Glen Boulevard (HistoricPlacesLA)

Sometimes the characteristics of the Hollywood Regency style were blended together with other popular architectural styles, in particular the Traditional Ranch idiom that was also a popular choice for custom residences at the time. The T.R. Craig Residence near West Hills (1939, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 992) and the Nellie Payton Hunt Residence in Brentwood (1940, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1063), both designed by Paul Williams, are exemplary of this marriage of styles that eventually became known as the “Regency Ranch.”¹⁹⁷ Both exhibit the elongated, rambling plans and rusticated façade treatments that are hallmarks of the Ranch house, but are overlaid by the more formal decorative elements that typify the Hollywood Regency style. The designers of multi-family residential properties sometimes tacked these same decorative elements onto the basic, box-like forms of the Minimal Traditional style to add a sense of visual interest.

¹⁹⁶ Michael Webb, “Architects to the Stars: Hollywood Legacies of Wallace Neff, James E. Dolena, Roland E. Coate and Paul Williams,” *Architectural Digest* (April 1990): 41-48.

¹⁹⁷ The Regency Ranch is considered to be a derivative of the Ranch House. For more discussion on this style and its application, refer to “The Ranch House” theme of the “Architecture and Engineering” context.



T.R. Craig Residence "Peppergate Ranch," 8431 N Pinelake Drive, Historic-Cultural Monument No. 992 (HistoricPlacesLA).

Like other architectural styles that were popular in Los Angeles during the 1930s and early 1940s, the Hollywood Regency style was abruptly cut short by World War II. The imposition of building moratoria and a prevailing ethic of directing all available time, energy, and resources toward the wartime economy essentially brought about a halt to private construction at this time.

But unlike its distant cousins, Streamline Moderne, and PWA Moderne, both of which fizzled out entirely after the war, the Hollywood Regency style was carried forward well into the postwar period. Its characteristically eclectic aesthetic meant that the style could be melded and adapted in myriad ways to account for the ascent of more expressive iterations of Modernism that were becoming the dominant modes of architecture in Southern California. In the postwar era, the Hollywood Regency style experienced a stylistic shift wherein it became more extrapolated, theatrical, and expressive in form and appearance, but continued to evince a sense of social status and resonated with the class-conscious.¹⁹⁸

This metamorphosis is generally attributed to the work of John "Jack" Elgin Woolf, an actor-turned-architect who worked almost exclusively in the Hollywood Regency and perpetuated its popularity in the postwar years. Woolf opened an architectural practice in the 1930s and was subsequently awarded a string of celebrity commissions based on his designs in the Hollywood Regency style. He tweaked and contorted the tenets of the Hollywood Regency style, focusing less on balanced and delicate proportions and instead honing in on elements that provided buildings with a flamboyant appearance. In 1942, Woolf nailed down his reputation when he completed a formal, French inspired mansion with some modern flourishes for decorator James Pendleton in Beverly Hills.¹⁹⁹ The house's strict sense of symmetry, over-scaled front doors, and Mansard roof marked the beginning of Woolf's trademark style.

Two features in particular – the Pullman door and the Mansard roof, both popularized by Woolf – emerged as indicators of the Hollywood Regency style after World War II. Woolf's Pullman doors were inspired by the Pullman car doors of the early twentieth century, which featured a squared or

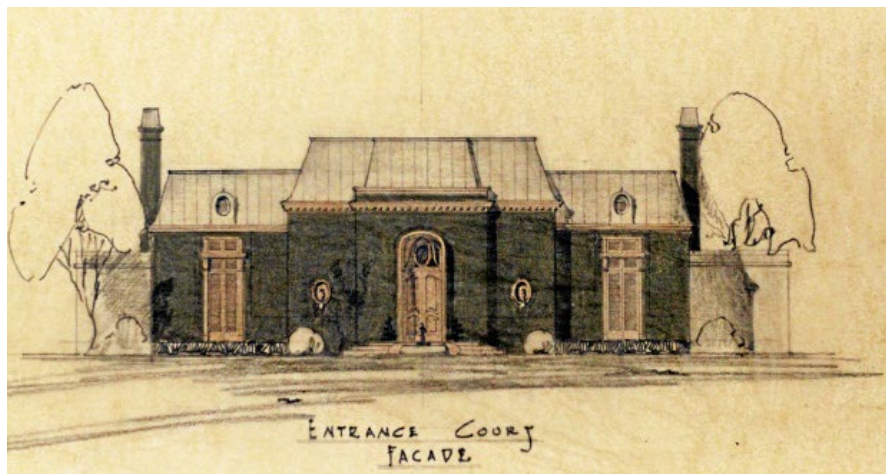
¹⁹⁸ Adamo DiGregorio and David A. Keeps, "A Grand Entrance: Take 2," *Los Angeles Times*, June 12, 2003.

¹⁹⁹ Sean K. Macpherson, "Out of the Box," *New York Times*, February 24, 2002.

segmented arch that protruded above the roofline of a car. Woolf adapted this idea to buildings by designing thin surrounds to project outwards from a door, creating a distinctive and articulated frame. The surround was often combined with a Mansard roof that “popped up over the entrance.”²⁰⁰

Symbolic of the French elegance that continued to be in vogue with the nouveau riche of Hollywood, the use of the Mansard roof visually aligned the Hollywood Regency style with the upper class.²⁰¹ It was also an efficient way to cap a house, as the Mansard needed to only span the building’s primary façade.

The Late Hollywood Regency style is also defined by a strict symmetry, influenced by Woolf, who designed residential buildings along a clear central axis that extended from the entrance, through the living room to the backyard, across a pool, and terminated in a pool house or pavilion. Other character defining features are Neoclassical elements seen in earlier iterations of the style; these include shutters and semi-circular porches, manipulated in scale and proportion and placed in “new and often manneristic relationships.”²⁰² Woolf embraced the application of ornament, which could be applied directly to the building as over-scaled lanterns or sconces, or in the form of freestanding urns or large oval niches. At first glance the drama and glamour of Woolf’s residential designs may seem frivolous and garish, “but on closer inspection one discovers that every detail has been meticulously calculated.”²⁰³



Rendering of a single-family house designed by John Elgin Woolf (Daily Breeze).

Woolf’s less conventional, more theatrical approach to the Hollywood Regency style was further codified in a studio office building that he designed and built for himself between 1946 and 1947. Located at 8450 Melrose Place in the Beverly Grove area, it boldly and unapologetically embodied the distinctive characteristics that defined his body of work and took the Hollywood Regency style in a new direction. The pioneering work of John Elgin Woolf was warmly embraced by members of the Hollywood elite. Eminent actors Errol Flynn, Ira Gershwin, Cary Grant, Elsie de Wolfe, John Wayne, Bob Hope,

²⁰⁰ Chase, *Glitter Stucco and Dumpster Diving*, 59.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 27, 110.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 54.

²⁰³ Macpherson, “Out of the Box.”

Barbara Hutton, Greta Garbo, and Rita Hayworth are just some of the many renowned celebrities that resided in houses that were custom-designed by Woolf.²⁰⁴

The Late Hollywood Regency style was also a popular choice for remodel projects, due in part to the relative ease of applying a mansard roof, over-scaled front doors, and exaggerated ornament. Existing buildings of almost any style could easily be transformed into petite palaces that stood as symbols of the glamour and allure characteristic of the Hollywood lifestyle. In 1950, Paul R. Williams remodeled an existing commercial building on Wilshire Boulevard into a new location for Perino's (not extant), an acclaimed restaurant that was the site of many a power lunch and was known for attracting a cultured clientele. Williams masterfully updated the building with a svelte Regency style aesthetic.²⁰⁵ Several years later, in 1962, Woolf extensively remodeled the Craig Ellwood-designed Case Study House No. 17 in Beverly Hills, transforming what had been a puritanical examples of the steel-and-glass International style into a much more theatrical, Mansard-roofed Regency style edifice.²⁰⁶



*Perino's restaurant, 3927 Wilshire Boulevard, not extant
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

While Woolf championed and popularized the Late Hollywood Regency style, he was not the only architect who worked in this idiom. Noted architects Jack Chernoff and Bob Ray Offenhauser are also associated with the style. Paul R. Williams, who had played a pivotal role in the development of the Hollywood Regency style in its formative years, continued to dabble in the style in the postwar era. The style was also pared down and applied to single-family houses that were privately commissioned but not necessarily architect designed, and thus assumed a more pedestrian, less theatrical appearance.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Los Angeles Conservancy, "Perino's (Demolished)," accessed December 2018.

²⁰⁶ MacPherson, "Out of the Box"; John Elgin Woolf, Master of Hollywood Regency, "Case Study House No. 17," accessed December 2018.

The Late Hollywood Regency style began to wane from favor in the mid-1960s. By this time, it had become so ubiquitous, and applied so frivolously, that it lost most of its luster as well as its association with the Hollywood mystique. The genre that had been pioneered amid the Golden Era of Hollywood and had been tastefully and elegantly refined in the postwar era had devolved into a crass and adulterated shell of its former self: “French mansard roofs on mini-malls, cinderblock apartment buildings with gangly chandeliers in faux foyers, ornamental kitsch marketed as interior décor.”²⁰⁷ The actors and sophisticates who had once embraced the Hollywood Regency aesthetic increasingly gravitated toward other idioms instead, and the style’s popularity had dwindled all but entirely by 1970.



Modest examples of custom Hollywood Regency style dwellings from the postwar period (HistoricPlacesLA)

²⁰⁷ DiGregorio and Keeps, “A Grand Entrance: Take 2.”

ELIGIBILITY STANDARDS FOR HOLLYWOOD REGENCY, 1931-1945

Summary Statement of Significance:	Resources evaluated under this sub-theme are significant in the area of Architecture as excellent examples of the Hollywood Regency style and exhibit quality of design through distinctive features. Prior to World War II, and for a few years after, Hollywood Regency was presented as a light and delicate style of architecture that gracefully blended elements of historicism with flourishes of Modernism. It evinced a sense of opulence, glamour, and grace that was popularized in films and by Hollywood's portrayal of celebrity life. As such, it was most often applied to high style, custom single-family houses and commercial buildings that catered to an affluent clientele. The style veered in the general direction of the Modern movement through its judicious application of ornament, but remained clearly and identifiably rooted in historical precedent. Resources evaluated under this sub-theme are associated with, but distinguished from the Late Hollywood Regency style, which represents the evolution of this idiom after World War II.		
Period of Significance:	1931-1945		
Period of Significance Justification:	The first phase of the Hollywood Regency style proliferated in the years before World War II. During this time the style was applied to custom single-family houses and a handful of commercial buildings, many of which were either directly associated with celebrities or bore some association with the entertainment industry. The period of significance begins in 1931, when the earliest known examples of the style were constructed. It ends in 1945, by which time the style had shifted direction and took on a different appearance.		
Geographical Location(s):	Sparsely citywide; most examples are located in affluent Westside communities including Bel Air-Beverly Crest, Brentwood-Pacific Palisades, Westwood, and Holmby Hills, and the hillside communities of the south San Fernando Valley. A few may also be found in established, historically affluent neighborhoods in central Los Angeles.		
Area(s) of Significance:	Architecture		
Criterion:	NR: C	CR: 3	Local: 3
Associated Property Types:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Residential – Single-Family Residence▪ Commercial		

Property Type Description:	Hollywood Regency was predominantly a residential style; most examples consist of large, custom-designed, single-family residences and are the work of noted architects. On occasion the style was also applied to small-scale commercial buildings, notably restaurants, retail stores, and office buildings. Since the style was associated with the upper class in its formative years and was not adapted to mass-produced housing, it is relatively rare in Los Angeles.
Property Type Significance:	See Summary Statement of Significance above.
Eligibility Standards:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Was constructed during the period of significance▪ Exhibits quality of design through distinctive features▪ Is an excellent example of the Hollywood Regency style
Character-Defining /Associative Features:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance▪ Symmetry of design▪ Mansard, hipped or gabled roofs▪ Combination of façade materials, primarily stucco with brick veneer or wood clapboard▪ Casement windows, either steel or wood sash▪ Use of Neoclassical ornament and design elements, such as double-height porches, thin columns, pediments, fluted pilasters, and balconettes with iron railings▪ Any applied ornament is stripped and simplified
Integrity Considerations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Should retain integrity of Location, Design, Materials, Workmanship, and Feeling from the period of significance▪ Retains sufficient integrity to convey significance▪ Setting may have changed (surrounding buildings and land uses)▪ Replacement of some windows and doors may be acceptable if the openings have not been resized and original fenestration patterns have not been disrupted▪ Security features, such as screen doors and bars at windows, may have been added▪ Original garage doors may have been replaced

ELIGIBILITY STANDARDS FOR LATE HOLLYWOOD REGENCY, 1946-1970

Summary Statement of Significance:	<p>Resources evaluated under this sub-theme are significant in the area of Architecture as excellent examples of the Late Hollywood Regency style and exhibit quality of design through distinctive features. Although the Hollywood Regency style had been applied to single-family houses and commercial buildings since the 1930s, it underwent a stylistic shift in the years after World War II, due primarily to the influence of architect John Elgin Woolf. Notable features that distinguish Late Hollywood Regency buildings from earlier iterations of the style include overstated central entrances, highly exaggerated ornament, and mansard roofs. Like their earlier counterparts, these buildings retained an association with the upper class and celebrity culture. Also like the earlier iteration of the style, the Late Hollywood Regency style was typically expressed in the context of sumptuous single-family houses and the occasional commercial building.</p>		
Period of Significance:	1946-1970		
Period of Significance Justification:	<p>The second phase of the Hollywood Regency style emerged in the years after World War II. Its evolution is attributed to the hiatus in private construction during the war and the pioneering contributions of architect John Elgin Woolf. The period of significance begins in 1946, which corresponds with the beginning of the postwar era and the construction of Woolf's influential office building on Melrose Place. It ends in 1970, by which time the style had fallen out of favor.</p>		
Geographical Location(s):	<p>Sparsely citywide. Most examples are located in affluent Westside communities including Bel Air, Beverly Crest, Brentwood, Pacific Palisades, Westwood, and Holmby Hills, and the hillside communities of the south San Fernando Valley. Others may be found in the upper class and upper-middle class residential tracts that were developed in the suburban communities of the San Fernando Valley after World War II.</p>		
Area(s) of Significance:	Architecture		
Criterion:	NR: C	CR: 3	Local: 3
Associated Property Types:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Residential – Single-Family Residence▪ Commercial		

Property Type Description:	Late Hollywood Regency was predominantly a residential style; most examples consist of custom-designed, single-family residences and are the work of noted architects. On occasion the style was also applied to small-scale commercial buildings, notably restaurants, retail stores, and office buildings. Since the style was predominantly associated with the upper class and upper-middle class and was never adapted to the context of mass-produced housing, examples of the Late Hollywood Regency style are relatively rare in Los Angeles.
Property Type Significance:	See Summary Statement of Significance above.
Eligibility Standards:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Was constructed during the period of significance▪ Exhibits quality of design through distinctive features▪ Is an excellent example of the Late Hollywood Regency style
Character-Defining /Associative Features:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance▪ Symmetry of design▪ Steeply-pitched mansard roofs▪ Smooth wall surfaces, primarily stucco▪ Tall, narrow windows and doors, often with arched or segmental arched openings▪ Use of Neoclassical ornament and design elements, such as double-height porches, thin columns, pediments, fluted pilasters, and balconettes with iron railings▪ Exaggerated applied ornament, such as large lanterns and sconces▪ For the National Register, property must possess exceptional importance if less than 50 years of age
Integrity Considerations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Should retain integrity of Location, Design, Materials, Workmanship, and Feeling from the period of significance▪ Retains sufficient integrity to convey significance▪ Setting may have changed (surrounding buildings and land uses)▪ Original use may have changed▪ Security features, such as screen doors and bars at windows, may have been added▪ Original garage doors may have been replaced▪ Some window replacement may be acceptable if the openings have not been resized, particularly windows associated with kitchens and bathrooms on rear and side elevations

THEME: POSTWAR MODERNISM, 1946-1975

Modernism had been firmly rooted in the architectural ethos of Southern California since the early decades of the twentieth century as evidenced by the trailblazing work of Irving Gill, Frank Lloyd Wright, and others in search of a style that was uniquely suited to the climatic and cultural conditions of the region. However, at this time these architects' bold architectural experiments fell well outside the parameters of mainstream culture, and as a result Modernism was seen as something peculiar, anomalous, and generally associated with the avant-garde. Mass society, on the other hand, continued to exhibit a strong preference for architectural styles that were familiar and rooted in precedent. In the Depression era, some architects veered in the general direction of Modernism by embracing idioms such as Art Deco and Streamline Moderne, which were perceived as somewhat forward-reaching but continued to use traditional forms and materials, leading critics to deride these styles as falsely modern.

However, attitudes toward Modernism underwent a sea change in the World War II era. During and immediately after the war, a multitude of factors – some cultural, others driven by political and economic forces – changed the manner by which American society approached modernity. Buoyed by an exceptionally robust economy and an increasing sense of optimism about the future, Americans became increasingly comfortable with eschewing the past and seeking new modes of expression that more adequately captured this sense of unbridled optimism. By the late 1940s, Modernism was very much in vogue; historicism was increasingly seen as outmoded. This newfound preference for all things modern permeated practically every aspect of society, but was expressed strongly in the realms of architecture, design, and planning and played a heavy hand in shaping the postwar urban environment.

This trend played out in every major urban area across the nation. However, Los Angeles, which was still a young and malleable city in the context of American urban development, leveraged its youth, climate, and reputation as a harbinger of nonconventional thought to emerge as a focal point of the postwar Modern movement. All eyes were on Los Angeles as its architects, engineers, and city planners took cost effective materials and new building techniques and applied them to its rapidly growing built environment in remarkably deft and innovative ways, cementing Los Angeles's reputation as a city at the cutting edge, whose identity and reputation were ensconced in the future. From this movement emerged a group of architectural styles: Corporate International, Mid-Century Modern, A-Frame, Googie, and New Formalism, which collectively convey the breadth and diversity of postwar Modernism.

This theme addresses extant resources that are associated with postwar Modernism, which encompasses the period from 1946-1975. Resources associated with this theme are expressed through numerous property types, consist of individual properties and districts, and can be found across the city.

Historical Overview

The American economy had suffered a cataclysmic fall during the Great Depression, but was reinvigorated by the onset of World War II. As Europe moved closer to war in the late 1930s, American industry began to show some signs of recovery as manufacturers produced and supplied war materials to the Allied powers.²⁰⁸ However, by and large the United States ascribed to a policy of non-interventionism at this time, vowing not to become directly involved in the mounting crises overseas.²⁰⁹

This abruptly changed on December 7, 1941. That morning, the Japanese military infamously launched a surprise attack on the United States Naval Base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, which culminated in a declaration of war against Japan. Several days later, on December 11, Germany and Italy, aligned with Japan, declared war on the United States.²¹⁰ This marked the United States' foray into World War II. It also marked the beginning of an abrupt reinvigoration of the American economy. Manufacturers, long stymied by the fiscal restraints of the Great Depression, suddenly found themselves thrust into overdrive so that they could meet the intensive demands imposed by a wartime economy. An inordinate amount of industrial production was directed toward vessels and artillery, as described herein:

After the attack, American production focused heavily on war materials and the numbers associated with American World War II production are astounding. In the four years of war after the Pearl Harbor attack, U.S. factories pumped out hundreds of thousands of machines of war, averaging a total of 49,000 aircraft each year. Tanks and machine guns also saw a massive jump in manufacturing, with over 102,000 tanks and 2.6 million machine guns produced by the end of the war.²¹¹

War production served as an economic engine nationwide, breathing new life into urban economies that had long been dormant. However, California – and specifically Los Angeles – emerged as a particular locus of industrial production during the war, due in part to its strategic location on the Pacific Coast and also to its temperate climate that was conducive to continuous, year-round industrial production. “California received 12 percent of all military contracts during the war, although the state accounted for only 5.2 percent of the country’s population in 1940.”²¹² The San Francisco Bay Area was home to myriad shipyards; Southern California became the nation’s largest center for aircraft manufacturing, sustained by industry juggernauts like Hughes, Lockheed, Douglas, Northrop, and Vultee and a network of smaller companies that supplied sub-assemblies and other components.

²⁰⁸ Wayne Cole, *America First: The Battle Against Intervention, 1940-1941* (Redditch, England: Read Books Ltd., 2016), 1-2.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.; The National WWII Museum, “Remembering Pearl Harbor: A Pearl Harbor Fact Sheet,” accessed September 2019.

²¹¹ Pearl Harbor Visitors Bureau, “After Pearl Harbor: American War Production,” accessed September 2019.

²¹² “Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973: A Context for National Register Evaluation,” prepared by the California Department of Transportation, 2011, 9.

To keep pace with the intensive demands imposed by a wartime economy, American manufacturers, out of necessity, devised innovative approaches to production that were efficient, pragmatic, and economical. Conventional methods of industrial production were augmented with – and in some cases, upended by – new techniques aimed at producing these products cheaply and en masse. Relatively new and economical materials like plastics and aluminum were incorporated into production, whenever possible, to keep production costs low and output high. Women, African Americans, and others who had traditionally been excluded from coveted positions in the industrial workforce were hired in large numbers to work in Southern California’s factories and aircraft plants as engineers, laborers, and other skilled positions that had historically been filled by white men.²¹³

In addition to rethinking methods of mass production, the wartime economy also required considerable innovation with respect to the provision of housing. Jobs were plentiful in Southern California cities at this time, but housing was not; the issue became so pressing that workers often “left their jobs because of a lack of available housing, and many workers lived in vehicles, tents, or other improvised shelter,” which resulted in high turnover and made it difficult for factories to sustain production quotas.²¹⁴ Architects, builders, planners, and others sought to address this issue by employing unconventional methods of housing the masses. Under the auspices of the federal Lanham Act, existing public housing developments in Los Angeles that had been constructed for low-income families were temporarily converted to defense housing. Additional developments like Imperial Courts (1944) and Jordan Downs (1944), both in South Los Angeles, were purpose-built as semi-permanent housing for defense workers and their families and in areas near major defense plants, additional makeshift housing projects were hastily constructed using cheap and available materials.²¹⁵



Large housing projects were quickly constructed to alleviate the immediate-term need for housing during WWII, including Wilmington Hall in Wilmington (left) and Western Terrace in San Pedro (right) (Los Angeles Public Library).

²¹³ Alan Citron, “Region Forever Changed: S. California in WWII – Sleeping Giant Awakens,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 1, 1989.

²¹⁴ Andrew Hope, “Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973: A Context for National Register Evaluation” (California Department of Transportation, 2011), 12.

²¹⁵ “Garden Apartments of Los Angeles Historic Context Statement,” prepared for the Los Angeles Conservancy by Architectural Resources Group, October 2012, 29-31.

The onset of World War II also resulted in the emigration of several of Europe's pivotal Modern architects to the United States. In 1933, the seminal Bauhaus school was forced to close under mounting political pressure from the Nazi regime, which painted its idealistic teachings as rabblousing and degenerate; by the mid and late 1930s, as the crises abroad began to metastasize into war, many of the architects affiliated with the Bauhaus and other experimental schools of architecture fled Germany and re-established themselves in the United States. Walter Gropius, founder of the Bauhaus school and a leading exponent of the International Style, moved to the United States in 1937, settling in Massachusetts upon accepting an offer to chair the architecture department at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design (GSD).²¹⁶ He was joined shortly thereafter by his protégé, Marcel Breuer, who also joined the faculty at Harvard. Also in 1937, Mies van der Rohe, the last director of the Bauhaus, arrived in the United States and settled in Chicago, where he was appointed head of the architecture school at the newly-established Armour (now Illinois) Institute of Technology (IIT). And László Moholy-Nagy of Hungary moved to Chicago to start a new design school called the New Bauhaus.²¹⁷

With the arrival of these influential architects came the fresh ideas and new perspectives that had made them internationally famous. Under the direction of Gropius, the architectural curriculum at Harvard's GSD was transformed from one that was firmly rooted in the Beaux Arts tradition to one that aligned with the progressive precepts of the International style and the Bauhaus school. Between the 1930s and 1950s, "architects, planners, teachers, and students from all over the world looked to the new GSD, with its celebrated faculty and curriculum, for the path to Modern design...[in fact,] the GSD was so successful in disseminating a new brand of modern architecture and urbanism that it is no exaggeration to say that the school transformed the physical landscape worldwide."²¹⁸ Mies exerted similar influence in Chicago, both in his directorship at IIT and through his private commissions. In these roles he honed his signature style of "skin-and-bones architecture," exemplified through his steel-and-glass buildings and defined by cubic simplicity, unfettered, free-flowing plans, and attention to detail.²¹⁹ Mies notably developed the master plan and several buildings at IIT during his tenure there (1937-1958).

²¹⁶ Jill Pearlman, "Joseph Hudnut's 'Other Modernism' at the Harvard Bauhaus," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 56:4 (Dec. 1997): 452-477.

²¹⁷ Blanche M.G. Linden, in Thomas Adam, ed., *Germany and the Americas: Culture, Politics, and History, Vol. I* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 751.

²¹⁸ Pearlman, "Joseph Hudnut's 'Other Modernism' at the Harvard Bauhaus," 452-477.

²¹⁹ Linden, in Thomas Adam, ed., *Germany and the Americas*, 751.



Mies van der Rohe designed S.R. Crown Hall at the Illinois Institute of Technology (Illinois Institute of Technology)

These factors helped to firmly sow the seeds for Modernism's meteoric ascent after World War II. Unconventional approaches to planning, design, and construction – which had been in the works since the turn-of-the-twentieth century, both domestically and abroad – became less a means of artistic expression and more an institutional necessity at the height of the war. The emigration of seminal European Modern architects planted fresh ideas in the minds of emerging professionals interested in making their mark, and rendered the United States a testing ground for many of their innovative approaches to architecture that had abruptly been cut short by a variety of sociopolitical forces abroad.

World War II came to an end in 1945. Almost immediately, the United States entered into a period characterized by broad and sustained economic growth and low unemployment – a period that many historians have effusively dubbed “The Golden Age of Capitalism.”²²⁰ Various factors came together to usher in this wave of prosperity. During the war Americans had been hard at work, but largely unable to spend their money because of wartime restrictions, and the demand for new consumer goods had become pent up. Government-issued war bonds matured, funneling yet more expendable dollars into consumers' pockets. Hordes of military veterans returned from their service abroad and set down roots, typically in a detached suburban single-family dwelling that was financed through a government-subsidized FHA (Federal Housing Administration) or VA (Veterans Affairs) loan.²²¹ Most were able to take advantage of the low-cost mortgages, educational and vocational training subsidies, and various other services that were afforded to them under the auspices of the G.I. Bill. Billions of dollars of federal money was directed toward the construction of new infrastructure projects, including a vast national network of freeways and highways.²²²

²²⁰ Michael Perman, *The Confiscation of American Prosperity: From Right-Wing Extremism and Economic Ideology to the Next Great Depression* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 17.

²²¹ Matthew Chambers, et al., “The New Deal, the GI Bill, and the Post-War Housing,” 2012 Meeting Papers 1050, Society for Economic Dynamics.

²²² U.S. Department of Transportation, “History of the Interstate Highway System,” Jun. 27, 2017, accessed September 2019.

The nation's population also increased at a staggering rate in the years immediately after the war as military veterans – predominantly young, unwed men – returned home from service, married, and started families. Between 1940 and 1970, the population of the United States increased by more than 50 percent, from about 132 million residents to a few more than 203 million.²²³ Most of this growth occurred in cities and suburbs – and not rural areas – and was especially profound in western states that had sustained the defense economy during the war. California was at the forefront of postwar population growth. Many of those who were stationed in California during the war decided to set down roots here rather than return to their home states, and the fact that the state had played such a pivotal role in the defense industry during the war had solidified the state's economy.²²⁴ The population of California increased dramatically by 88 percent between 1950 and 1970; by the early 1960s, California had surpassed New York as the nation's most populous state and was home to one of twelve Americans.²²⁵

Housing became an issue of critical importance. All of the returning veterans and young, upwardly mobile families needed roofs over their heads and were in the market to buy a house, but the supply of quality housing was in critically short supply at war's end. Housing construction had been severely hindered for many years, first by the economic tumult of the Great Depression, and then by building moratoria that had been imposed during the war. In the years immediately after the war, many young families had no choice but to double up with relatives in severely cramped quarters or find other creative means of shelter, sometimes residing in barns, garages, and even disused buses and streetcars until more permanent solutions were found.²²⁶ Surplus Quonset huts also became a popular temporary means of housing the masses. Between 1946 and 1954 the City of Los Angeles operated Rodger Young Village, a sprawling complex near Griffith Park comprising 750 surplus Quonset huts that had been converted into 1,500 residential units.²²⁷ Other local communities employed similar stopgap measures.



Rodger Young Village, erected near Griffith Park (Los Angeles Public Library)

²²³ "Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973: A Context for National Register Evaluation"

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid., 15-16.

²²⁷ Cecilia Rasmussen, "Quonset Hut Village Gave WWII Veterans a Foothold in Southland," *Los Angeles Times*, January. 26, 2003.

Faced with a mounting housing crisis that seemed to be worsening by the minute, a number of architects working in Southern California – where the shortage was particularly acute – leveraged the situation as an opportunity to demonstrate how the tenets of Modern architecture could be applied to meet the nation’s housing needs. What is arguably the single-most ambitious effort in this vein commenced in 1945 when *California Arts and Architecture* magazine, under the direction of its editor John Entenza, launched the Case Study House Program. Under the program, several of the most esteemed Modern architects of the day were recruited by the magazine to design prototypical houses that were high in quality, reasonably priced, and clearly showcased modern methods and materials. Entenza posited that the houses “would demonstrate that Modern architecture was not merely for the avant-garde, but could provide aesthetically pleasing Modern housing as a general standard.”²²⁸

Under the Case Study program, 35 prototypical designs were published in *California Arts and Architecture* between 1945 and 1966, of which 25 houses and one apartment building were constructed. The groundbreaking program waned after 1962, when Entenza sold the magazine, and came to a formal close in 1967 when the magazine ceased publication.²²⁹ While it failed to achieve its initial goals of affordability and mass production, the Case Study program was extraordinarily successful in conveying modern architecture to the American public. It also helped to popularize the modern aesthetic and provided international recognition to the architects who were selected to participate in the program.²³⁰



Left: Case Study House No. 22, 1635 N Woods Drive, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 670; Right: Case Study House No. 8, 203 N Chautauqua Boulevard, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 381 (HistoricPlacesLA)

²²⁸ Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 146.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Los Angeles Conservancy, “Case Study Houses,” accessed September 2019.

The Case Study Program was an intrepid experiment in architecture that was both enormously influential and widely publicized – more than 360,000 individuals came to tour the first six Case Study houses when they were opened for viewing – but on the whole the style associated with this program was more the exception than the norm.²³¹ Most middle-income families did not have the means to commission the high-style, architect-designed houses that defined these endeavors. Others did not relate to the progressive politics and social agendas that were woven into the fabric of these programs.



Case Study House No. 16, 1811 Bel Air Road, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1147 (Architectural Resources Group)

Rather, the typical Southern California household of the postwar era purchased a modest tract house in one of the many new subdivisions that were sprouting up en masse across the San Fernando Valley and in other areas where developable land was abundant. These housing tracts were also unequivocally modern, albeit in a different context. To meet extraordinary demand, developers and merchant builders devised new approaches to residential development that applied the mass production methods that had been honed by manufacturers during World War II. The same methods that allowed manufacturers to quickly churn out hundreds of ships and thousands of planes, tanks, and jeeps were adapted to the construction industry, permitting developers to quickly develop communities comprising hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of houses in suburban locales like Panorama City and Westchester.²³² Architect and historian Alan Hess remarks that these new approaches to community development effectively turned the single-family house into a mass produced product and “brought home ownership, backyard greenery, open plans, and neighborhood schools and shops within the reach of the average person’s pocket book – a startling accomplishment on such a widespread basis.”²³³

²³¹ Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 146. See the National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) for the “The Case Study House Program: 1945-1966” and associated National Register nomination forms for individual properties listed in the National Register under the MPDF.

²³² Hess, “Everyday Modernisms.”

²³³ *Ibid.*

The trajectory of postwar Modernism was also heavily influenced by the post-and-beam method of construction, which was popularized by a group of young architects who had studied at the USC School of Architecture in the early postwar years. These architects developed a derivative of Modern architecture that shared some similarities with the Case Study House Program, but was defined by a distinctive vocabulary that was characterized, first and foremost, by its use of wood post-and-beam construction. Other notable features include expanses of plate glass, open plans, and a blurring of lines between indoor and outdoor spaces. Later coined the USC style or Pasadena style, this derivative of Modernism was widely replicated across the Southern California region and became an integral part of the region's post-World War II architectural landscape.

Post-and-beam construction's straightforward structural system "was fairly simple to build, was relatively inexpensive, and could utilize more readily available construction skills" than the highly skilled labor that was generally required to construct steel-frame buildings.²³⁴ Buildings erected on the post-and-beam model made frequent use of expansive panels of plate glass and open plans with few interior walls, which made small buildings seem larger and leveraged California's climate by blurring the lines between indoor and outdoor spaces.

By the late 1940s, these post-and-beam construction methods, coupled with the influence of European émigrés and pioneering figures in American Modernism, had coalesced into a discrete iteration of postwar Modernism known as the Mid-Century Modern style. The Mid-Century Modern style reflected how earlier movements such as the International style, the Bauhaus, and domestic experiments in Modernism were adapted and reinterpreted to meet the needs of the American public after World War II. Defined by expressed post-and-beam construction, simple geometric forms, flat and low-pitched roofs, and simple facades that were ornamented with economical materials like brick, wood, and stone, the style gained popularity because its use of standardized, prefabricated materials permitted quick and economical construction, and also since it clearly expressed the nation's prevailing sense of prosperity.



Examples of post-and-beam construction, 17550 Prairie Avenue (left) and 9832 Canby Avenue (right), both in Northridge (HistoricPlacesLA)

²³⁴ Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 146.

The Mid-Century Modern style was the predominant architectural style of the postwar era and was successfully adapted to almost every type of property. The developers of single-family and multi-family residences, shopping centers, gas stations, government buildings, schools, churches, and industrial facilities that were constructed between the mid-1940s and mid-1970s all drew upon the stylistic catalog of the Mid-Century Modern style, often adapting them in creative ways to meet a building's specific programmatic needs. Churches, in particular, often took on expressionistic forms and featured dramatic geometric building forms and sweeping rooflines. Progressive developers like Joseph Eichler often partnered with noted Modern architects and applied the Mid-Century Modern style to entire residential subdivisions, as expressed in his Balboa Highlands development in Granada Hills (City Historic-Preservation Overlay Zone) and elsewhere in California, including Orange County and the San Francisco Bay Area.



*Congregational Church of Chatsworth, 20440 W Lassen Street
(Architectural Resources Group)*



The Mid-Century Modern style was adapted to almost every property type including custom residences. Top left: Waxman House, 3644 Buena Park Drive; top right: tract houses, Living-Conditioned Homes Residential Historic District, 18419 W Devonshire Street; bottom right: institutional buildings, USC's University Religious Center, 835 W 34th Street; bottom left: commercial properties, Angelus Funeral Home, 3875 S Crenshaw Boulevard (HistoricPlacesLA)

By the early 1950s, Modernism's straightforward aesthetic had been embraced by large corporations that sought to assert themselves as agents of modernity and progress. These corporations and their architects – many of whom worked for large, multi-disciplinary firms that became corporations themselves – took many of Modernism's prefabrication methods and incorporated them into the design of tall, austere, glass-and-steel skyscrapers that became visually synonymous with the public face of corporate America.²³⁵ What emerged was a derivative of postwar Modernism known as the Corporate International style (sometimes also called Corporate Modern), so named because it made more overt reference to the puritanical aesthetic of European Modernism. The style was popularized by buildings like the Lever House (1952, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill) and the Seagram Building (1958, Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson), both in New York. In Los Angeles, the style was manifest in large-scale commercial office towers and institutional complexes that were rendered in glass, concrete, and steel and were located within the redeveloping sections of Downtown and along the city's major boulevards.

²³⁵ Dennis P. Doordan, "William Lescaze and CBS: A Case Study in Corporate Modernism," *William Lescaze and the Rise of Modern Design in America*, special issue of *The Courier* 19:1 (1984): 43-55.



*Left: Parker Center, 150 N Los Angeles Street, not extant; Right: Union Bank Plaza, 445 S Figueroa Street
(Architectural Resources Group)*

Other derivatives of postwar Modernism that were rooted in honest, straightforward structural expression, but were more expressive in form and appearance, also materialized at this time. In 1949, architect John Lautner designed Googie's (not extant), a coffee shop on the western flank of Hollywood that was notable for its hyper-stylized, flamboyant appearance that reflected the heightened importance of the automobile and tapped into American society's infatuation with all things modern. Lautner's design spawned a dialect of Modernism that was applied en masse to roadside commercial buildings such as coffee shops, bowling alleys, car washes, gas stations, and motels. It was defined by characteristics like dramatic cantilevers and acute angles; prominent rooflines; bold shapes like starbursts, boomerangs, and tailfins; and exaggerated signs, often emblazoned with neon, that were meant to attract the attention of passing motorists. A 1952 article published in *House and Home* magazine referred to this distinctive dialect of Modernism as "Googie architecture" in reference to the Lautner-designed coffee shop that is typically credited as the first fully rendered example of the style.²³⁶



*Theme Building at Los Angeles International Airport, 201 W World Way,
L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 570 (Los Angeles Public Library)*

²³⁶ Whitney Friedlander, "Go on a SoCal Hunt for Googie Architecture," *Los Angeles Times*, September 16, 2014.

A-frame buildings also represented how some progressive-minded architects were able to take the fundamental tenants of Modernism and meld them into new idioms that were highly efficient and highly expressive. Defined as “a triangular structure with a series of rafters or trusses that are joined at the peak and descent outward to a main floor level, with no intervening walls,” A-frame buildings fit well within the Modern lexicon because they were inexpensive to construct, remarkably efficient, and incorporated the dramatic rooflines and bold geometric building forms that became a defining feature of the postwar modern movement.²³⁷ The archetypal A-frame was expressed in the form of the custom single-family house and ecclesiastical properties like churches; it also became inextricably linked to the corporate image of businesses including Der Wienerschnitzel, Whataburger, and Tastee Freez, which like Google style businesses leveraged the A-frame’s dramatic form to attract the attention of passersby.



*Left: 1335 N Shadybrook Drive; Right: Wienerschnitzel, 5135 N Laurel Canyon Boulevard
(HistoricPlacesLA)*

The sense of creativity associated with postwar Modernism also encouraged and facilitated innovations in construction, and engineering. Across Los Angeles, architects began to experiment with new construction methods that allowed them to erect new dwellings on challenging hillside lots that had previously been brushed aside as unbuildable. In many hillside communities, houses were literally hoisted up on structural stilts and were suspended over the canyons and hillsides below. John Lautner’s iconic Chemosphere House (1960, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 785) in the hills above Studio City utilized equally revolutionary technology; the house is perched atop a five-foot-wide concrete pole and is accessed by a funicular.²³⁸ The unconventional house stands as a testament to innovation, and was “built to demonstrate the effectiveness of new plastic and chemical adhesives and sealants” as applied to residential design.²³⁹

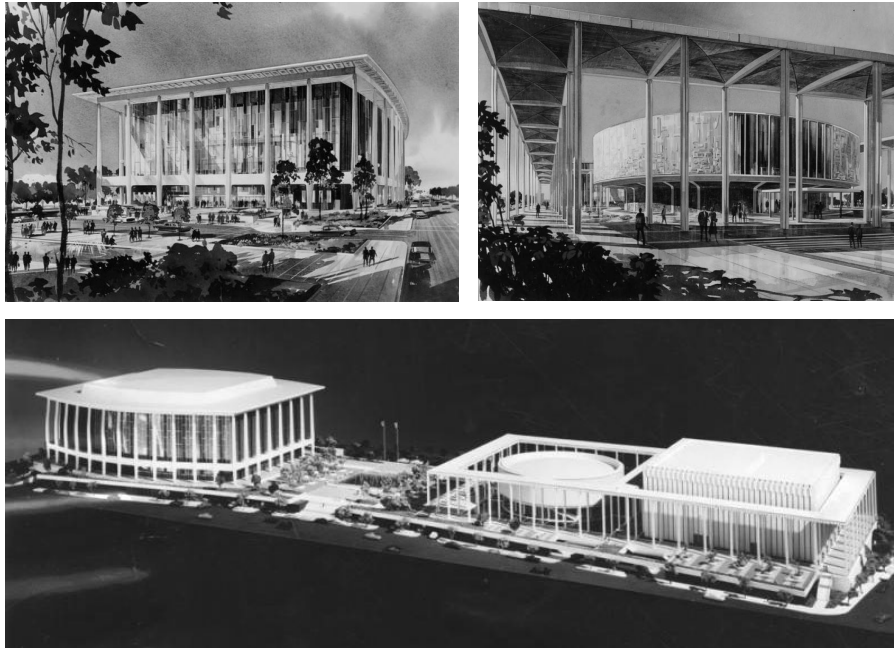
As Modernism assumed a more dominant role in architecture and the built environment, some architects began reacting against the rigid orthodoxy of the Modern movement. New iterations of Modern architecture emerged that did not reject historical precedents as staunchly as the International style had, but rather loosely embraced some of the forms, methods, and materials associated with

²³⁷ Chad Randl, *A-Frame* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004), 11.

²³⁸ “Fourth Floor Home – With Three Floors Missing,” *Popular Mechanics* 116:4 (October 1961): 165.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

Classicism and other historically inspired idioms.²⁴⁰ New Formalism emerged as one of these more reactionary takes on Modernism, though overall its aesthetic very much conveyed a sense of progress. Most popular between the 1960s and early 1970s, and developed by a contingent of architects including Edward Durell Stone and Minoru Yamasaki, the New Formalist style blended together the authenticity of Modernism with the traditionally rich materials, monumental forms, and Classical motifs typically associated with Neoclassicism and other historically derived architectural styles. The style was applied primarily to civic and institutional buildings; it not only demonstrated how Modernism was adapted to accommodate evolving tastes, but was a testament to the breadth of its aesthetic diversity.



*Renderings and model of the Music Center complex in Downtown Los Angeles
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

By the 1970s, postwar Modernism and its various derivatives had fallen flat with architects and the American public. By this time, Modernism had become so ubiquitous, and so widely replicated – often poorly – in virtually every aspect of the built environment that people eventually grew tired of the rational aesthetic and Corbusian ethos of “less is more” that had enraptured American society a generation before. By the 1960s, a group of maverick architects challenged orthodox Modernism and dabbled in alternatives to Modern architecture that treated structural and infrastructural elements through a more artistic lens, lending impetus to late Modern styles like Brutalism and High Tech/Structural Expressionism and eventually giving way to the Postmodern movement. By the early 1970s, American society was expressing a rekindled interest in familiar architectural styles that were rooted in tradition and precedent, laying the groundwork for the emergence of myriad Neo-Traditional architectural styles. Further complicating matters was that in places like Los Angeles that were prone to earthquakes, new laws governing energy, construction, seismic resistance, and fire were enacted that

²⁴⁰ Fullerton Heritage, “New Formalism,” accessed January 2018.

prohibited large expanses of plate glass and required larger and more structural members and connections. This hastened postwar Modernism's demise by rendering many of its variants obsolete.

In 1977, architectural critic Charles Jencks famously remarked that "the fact that many so-called modern architects still go around practicing a trade as it were alive can be taken as one of the great curiosities of our age...[for Modernism had already] expired finally and completely."²⁴¹

The Postwar Modernism theme is divided into the following five sub-themes: Mid-Century Modern, 1945-1975, Corporate International, 1949-1975, A-Frame Buildings, 1954-1975, Googie, 1949-1970, and New Formalism, 1960-1975. Some of the previously referenced historical background information is discussed again in the following sub-themes, so that each sub-theme can be read discretely.

²⁴¹ Paul Goldberger, "Architecture View: Modernism Reaffirms its Power," *New York Times*, November 24, 1985.

SUBTHEME: Mid-Century Modernism, 1945-1975

The term “Mid-Century Modern” is a broad classification of postwar Modernism that is used to describe an array of Modern idioms and sub-styles that were popular after World War II. These include adaptations of the International Style, the Post-and-Beam aesthetic that was made popular through the Case Study program, and the more organic and expressive iterations of Modernism that characterized the work of architects like John Lautner and Bruce Goff. As an architectural style, Mid-Century Modernism is extremely versatile; its application was lent to a diverse array of property types, from custom single-family dwellings to housing tracts, to commercial buildings and shopping centers, and to institutional and industrial campuses. Its aesthetic was applied to the upper echelons of architecture and also to the vernacular built environment, speaking to the extent of its popularity and versatility.

Many factors came together to shape the aesthetic of Mid-Century Modern style, but this variant of postwar Modernism derived much of its influence from the Case Study House Program that was sponsored by *Arts and Architecture* magazine and championed by its visionary editor, John Entenza. A champion of Modernism, Entenza saw the program as a means of showcasing how modern methods and materials could be used to build replicable, affordable housing, as described by historian Paul Gleye:

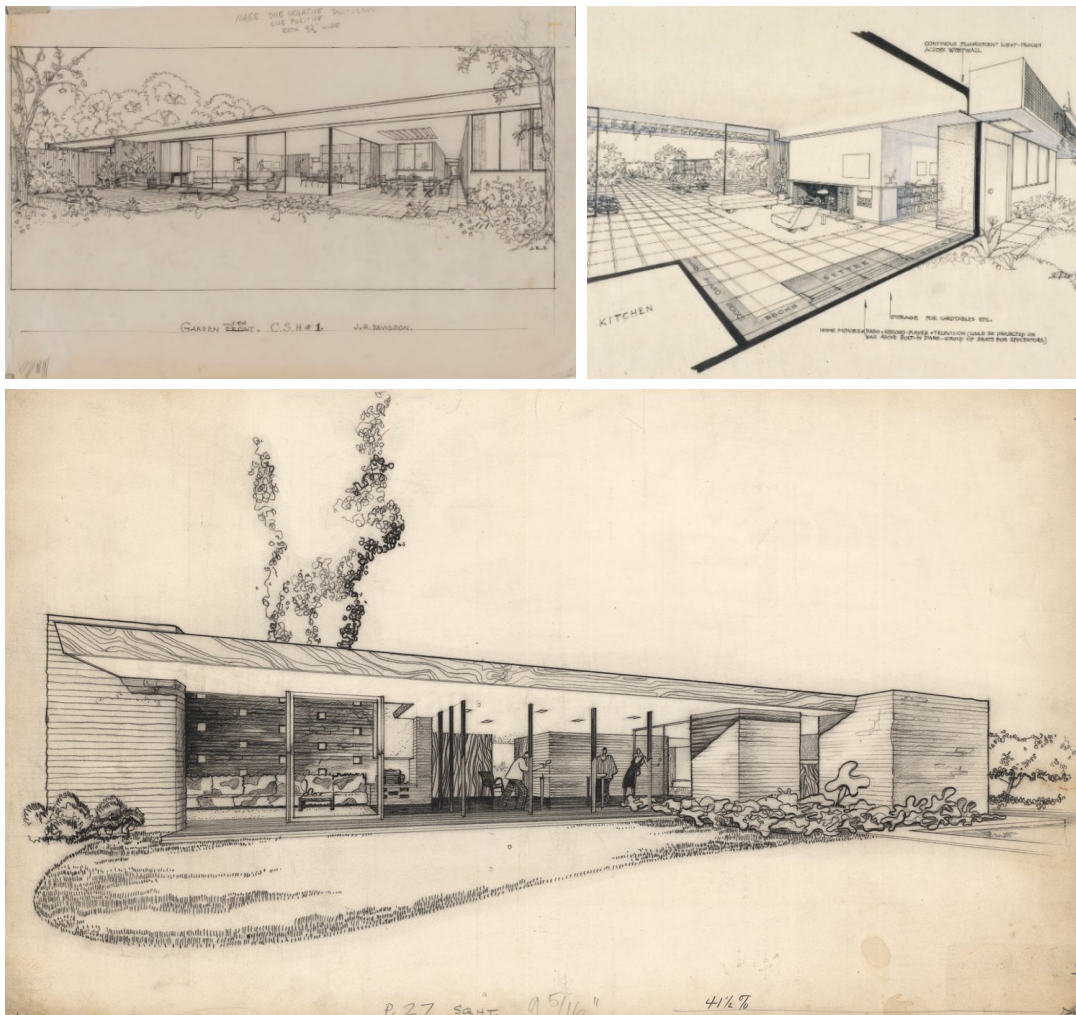
Entenza had two primary concerns when he announced, in 1945, that *Arts and Architecture* would become the client for eight nationally recognized architects to design eight houses...first, he feared that the hoped-for postwar building boom would turn away from Modern architecture and return to eclectic historical styles that had dominated the 1930s. The Case Study houses would demonstrate that Modern architecture was not merely for the avant-garde, but could provide aesthetically pleasing Modern housing as a general standard. Second, he hoped to find the best materials...to provide high quality housing at a reasonable cost.²⁴²

Between the program’s launch in 1945 and its cessation in 1966, 35 designs were published in the magazine, of which 26 were built. Though each Case Study House was a custom design that reflected the creative whims of their respective architect and responded to the unique conditions of their respective site, they all ascribed to a similar architectural vocabulary that is rooted in the program’s Modern aspirations. “Whether of wood-frame or steel-frame construction, the houses share the modern qualities of flat roofs, deep overhangs, open floor plans, extensive use of glass, indoor/outdoor flow, and concrete slab foundations.”²⁴³ Structural systems were often directly expressed, with exposed posts and beams, instead of being obscured. Many were modest in size, keeping in line with the objective of designing houses attainable to the masses; all lacked superfluous ornament and references to history.

²⁴² Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 146.

²⁴³ National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, “Case Study House Program: 1945-1966,” prepared by Peter Moruzzi, December 2012, E-1.

Together, these houses played an instrumental role in defining and disseminating a popular image of the modern American dwelling – “trim, transparent and spare, without a crown molding or a Corinthian column in sight.”²⁴⁴ Many of the structural and aesthetic innovations that were showcased in these houses became standard features in popular house design and lent impetus to a new dialect of architecture that came to be known as the Mid-Century Modern style. Among these innovations included placing emphasis on a building’s structural system; open floor plans with minimal interior walls; and the integration of indoor and outdoor spaces through the use of abundant glazing. The Case Study architects “believed that a house that directly expressed the way it was constructed, that was open in plan and filled with light and sunshine, that was put together with standardized components to be mass produced as cheaply as the family car, would set the stage for a new chapter in the American dream.”²⁴⁵



The architectural vocabulary of the Case Study House Program is depicted in these renderings of Case Study House No. 1 (top, 1945) by J.R. Davidson, and Case Study House No. 5 (bottom, 1946, not built) by Whitney Smith (Calisphere).

²⁴⁴ “The Giant, Complex Legacy of the Case Study Program,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 20, 2011.

²⁴⁵ Leon Whiteson, “Homes that Captured the Dream: Innovative Case Study Program Redefined Residential Architecture in Postwar L.A.,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 15, 1989.

Noted Modern architects who designed Case Study Houses in the City of Los Angeles include Theodore Bernardi, Julius Ralph (J.R.) Davidson, Charles and Ray Eames, Craig Ellwood, Pierre Koenig, Richard Neutra, Eero Saarinen, Raphael Soriano, Rodney Walker, and William Wurster. Others, including Edward Killingsworth, A. Quincy Jones and Frederick Emmons (Jones and Emmons), and Conrad Buff, Calvin Straub, and Donald Hensman (Buff, Straub and Hensman) designed Case Study houses in other communities, mostly in Southern California. Many of the Case Study houses in Los Angeles are extant, and most are designated as local Historic-Cultural Monuments and/or are listed in the National Register and California Register.



Left: Eames House, Studio and Grounds, 203 N Chautauqua Boulevard, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 381, National Historic Landmark and Listed in the National Register of Historic Places; Right: Bailey House, 9038 W Wonderland Park Avenue, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 669, Listed in the National Register of Historic Places (Architectural Resources Group)

Just as much as the Mid-Century Modern aesthetic derived influenced from the Case Study House Program, it was also influenced by the modern sensibilities of an emergent group of architects who graduated from the University of Southern California (USC) School of Architecture in the mid-twentieth century. Though the USC School of Architecture had existed since 1916, it rose to prominence in the postwar period under Arthur Gallion, a proponent of Modernism who served as the school's Dean between 1945 and 1964.²⁴⁶ Gallion successfully transformed the architectural curriculum at USC from one that was firmly rooted in the Beaux Arts tradition to one that was unequivocally Modern. He recruited a cadre of noted local Modern architects to teach classes at the school including Gregory Ain, Robert Alexander, Harwell Hamilton Harris, A. Quincy Jones, and Garret Eckbo, and established a Department of Industrial Design that was headed by the renowned industrial designer Raymond Loewy.²⁴⁷ Under Gallion's leadership, USC became well-known across the nation as a harbinger of innovation and creative thought, where students were actively encouraged to forge new paths forward.

²⁴⁶ "Cultural Resources of the Recent Past Historic Context Report," prepared for the City of Pasadena by Historic Resources Group and Pasadena Heritage, October 2007, 31-32.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, 32.

Working within this context, many of the architects who came out of the USC program at this time honed their own, distinct dialect of Modernism, uniquely suited to the climatic and cultural conditions of Southern California and reflective of their interest in new technology and experimental solutions. The architectural historian Esther McCoy coined the term “USC style” to describe this phenomenon.²⁴⁸ Per McCoy, the single-most defining characteristic of the USC style was its unabashed structural expression, typically conveyed in the form of wood post-and-beam construction. The post-and-beam method, which consists of beams supported by posts rather than load-bearing walls, allowed for large expanses of glass to take the place of solid exterior walls, and for floor plans to be flexible and open, rather than confined by heavy, load-bearing partitions. Other distinguishing features of the USC style include roofs of shallow pitch, wide eaves and exposed rafters, and a seamless integration between indoor and outdoor spaces. Often, buildings incorporated elements of Japanese architecture or references to California’s Arts and Crafts tradition.



The Pregerson House, 680 N Brooktree Road (HistoricPlacesLA)

Those most closely associated with the post-and-beam dialect of postwar Modernism include the architectural firms of Buff, Straub and Hensman; Ladd and Kelsey (Thorton Ladd and John Kelsey); and Smith and Williams (Whitney Smith and Wayne Williams), all graduates of USC.²⁴⁹ Other exponents of this aesthetic include Thornton Abell, Ray Kappe, Carl Maston, A. Quincy Jones, Harwell Hamilton Harris, Ed Fickett, William Krisel, and Richard Dorman.²⁵⁰

The aesthetic language and experimental precepts of the Case Study Houses and the post-and-beam/USC style wielded tremendous influence over the direction of architecture in Los Angeles beginning in the late 1940s. They “brought to wide public attention the possibilities of Modern design in domestic architecture,” influencing an entire generation of architects and lending impetus to a new and immensely popular style of architecture that has since been branded “Mid-Century Modern.”²⁵¹ Though

²⁴⁸ Deborah Howell-Ardila, “Writing our Own Program: The USC Experiment in Modern Architectural Pedagogy, 1930 to 1960” (master’s thesis, University of Southern California, December 2010), 1.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 2.

²⁵⁰ Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 147.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 146.

the Case Study houses and early post-and-beam buildings that are a direct product of the USC curriculum are best regarded as Mid-Century Modern in style, most often buildings designed in this style are more eclectic in their composition. Mid-Century Modern style buildings typically derive stylistic influence from the Case Study Houses and the post-and-beam/USC aesthetic, and also incorporate architectural elements that reflect the maturation of the International style and the various domestic experiments in Modern architecture that took root in Los Angeles in the early twentieth century.

Owing to its antecedents, the Mid-Century Modern style is exceptionally expressed and well represented in the context of custom, high-style single-family houses that were constructed in the 1950s and 60s, many of which were architect-designed. These custom dwellings are found throughout the city but are especially prevalent in more affluent hillside neighborhoods within the greater Hollywood area, Northeast Los Angeles, the Westside, and the south San Fernando Valley. Though these houses exhibit a considerable amount of variation with respect to size, scale, and composition, demonstrating the eclecticism of the Mid-Century Modern style, they are unified in their application of modern methods and materials, their relative simplicity, and their prevailing emphasis on efficiency. They exhibit a common cadre of characteristics including horizontal massing, direct expression of the structural system, flat or low-pitched roofs with overhanging eaves, simple geometric volumes, unornamented walls, and abundant glazing that blurs the line between indoors and outdoors and integrates the house with its environs. Many are located on steep hillsides or otherwise challenging sites and make use of innovations in construction technology.



Left: Serulnic House by Richard Neutra, 3947 W Markridge Road, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 740; Right: Grier House by Edward Fickett, 2690 N Hollyridge Drive, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 833 (HistoricPlacesLA)

Each house is a unique architectural statement that reflects the creative whims of its respective architect or designer, and showcases the creativity and experimentation associated with the postwar Modern movement. Some have been designated as L.A. Historic-Cultural Monuments and/or are listed in the National Register or California Register, though a considerable number are not presently designated. A sampling of the many Mid-Century Modern style houses in Los Angeles that have been

designated include El Paradiso at 11468 Dona Cecilia Drive in Studio City by Raphael Soriano (1964, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 638); the Grier House at 2690 North Hollyridge Drive in the Hollywood Hills by Edward Fickett (1954, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 833); Hillside House at 8707 St. Ives Drive, also in the Hollywood Hills, by Carl Maston (1961, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 668), and the Serulnic House at 3947 Markridge Road in Tujunga by Richard Neutra (1954, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 740). Numerous others can be found in communities across the city that witnessed postwar growth. Collectively, these houses demonstrate how the fundamental tenets of the Mid-Century Modern style were adapted in different ways, and by different architects, to create high style, custom dwellings that met the needs of individual clients.



Other notable examples of custom Mid-Century Modern houses. Top left: the Tannen House, 1230 N Chickory Lane (1962, A. Quincy Jones); top right: the Rabinowitz House, 2262 N Stradella Road (1958, J.R. Davidson); bottom right: the Johnson Residence, 10261 W Chysanthemum Lane (1949, Harwell Harris); bottom left: 9662 High Ridge Drive (1962, Chris Choate) (HistoricPlacesLA)

However, the Mid-Century Modern style was certainly not limited to custom residences. As the style began to firmly take root, a cadre of architects, captivated with Modernism's potential to enhance quality of life through good design, took the fundamental tenets of Mid-Century Modern architecture and applied them on a larger scale, incorporating features such as expressed post-and-beam construction, gently pitched roofs with wide eaves, expanses of glass, and economical materials to mass-produced housing tracts. One important example of this modulation of the Mid-Century Modern style is a housing tract that was developed by architect Gregory Ain in the Mar Vista neighborhood. Initially marketed as the Modernique Homes, and now known as the Gregory Ain Mar Vista Tract (City Historic Preservation

Overlay Zone), it comprises 52 houses that demonstrate how the features of Mid-Century Modern architecture could be made available to everyone. Advertisements for the tract “emphasized the flexible, open nature of the floorplans (which included folding doors that could turn one room into two) and the opportunities for indoor-outdoor living they provided.”²⁵² Though the houses ascribed to one of several standardized plans, which allowed them to be affordable, Ain was able to achieve a sense of individuality by altering the placement of garages and varying setbacks and entrance locations. He collaborated with landscape architect Garret Eckbo to create a lush, park-like atmosphere that tied the streets together and was intended to facilitate social interaction among residents.²⁵³ Developer Joseph Eichler had similar aspirations when he developed the Balboa Highlands neighborhood in Granada Hills (City Historic Preservation Overlay Zone) between 1962 and 1964. Eichler collaborated with noted Modern architects A. Quincy Jones and Frederick Emmons to design stylish, well-designed Mid-Century Modern houses that could be replicated throughout the tract and remained within reach of average middle-income buyers.

Another notable, coordinated effort at bringing Mid-Century Modernism to the masses commenced in 1946 when four young war veterans pooled resources, acquired 800 acres near Brentwood, and with the support of others founded a cooperative called the Mutual Housing Association (MHA, later re-named Crestwood Hills). The cooperative assembled a team of noted Southern California modernists – including architects A. Quincy Jones and Whitney Smith, landscape architect Garret Eckbo, and structural engineer Edgardo Contini – to design the new community, which became “the only successful large-scale modern housing cooperative in the West.”²⁵⁴ The design team developed a selection of more than 20 house plans that would conform to Crestwood Hills’s 350 hillside lots, all of which made use of mass-produced materials like concrete block and redwood siding to keep costs low. The designs made reference



Top and middle: The Gregory Ain/Mar Vista Tract
(HistoricPlacesLA); Bottom: Crestwood Hills development
in Brentwood (Online Archive of California)

²⁵² Los Angeles Conservancy, “Mar Vista Tract,” accessed September 2019.

²⁵³ Marc Treib and Dorotheé Imbert, *Garrett Eckbo: Modern Landscapes for Living* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 163-164.

²⁵⁴ Cory Buckner, *Crestwood Hills: The Chronicle of a Modern Utopia* (Santa Monica: Angel City Press, 2015), 7.

to the Pilot House at 735 W Rome Drive in Mt. Washington (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 717), a prototype that Jones and Smith had designed in the interim to show how well-designed houses could be built on challenging hillside lots.²⁵⁵ Over time alterations and demolition of residence has eroded the architectural cohesion of the Crestwood Hills neighborhood, but most extant, intact examples of the houses that were designed by Jones and Smith in the community's formative period of development in the early 1950s have been designated as L.A. Historic-Cultural Monuments.

Many of Los Angeles's housing developers in the 1950s and 60s took cues from these early endeavors and applied the Mid-Century Modern style to entire developments. In particular, several suburban tracts that were developed in the San Fernando Valley at this time comprise notable concentrations of modest, yet articulated Mid-Century Modern houses, showing how with a deft hand, architects could bring Modernism to the masses without compromising quality. The Living-Conditioned Homes in Northridge (1957-1959) is a tract of roughly 50 houses that were designed by noted architects Palmer and Krisel and feature distinctive Modern attributes including butterfly roofs, decorative stone and concrete block cladding, and dramatic entrances. The Blue Ribbon Tract Housing development (1953), also in Northridge, is a small neighborhood designed by Smith and Williams with Modern accoutrements like post-and-beam construction, redwood siding, and clerestory windows.



*Left: 18409 W Devonshire Street, Living-Conditioned Homes, Palmer and Krisel;
Right: 8450 N Canby Avenue, Blue Ribbon Tract Housing, Smith and Williams (HistoricPlacesLA)*

Several other notable concentrations of Mid-Century Modern tract houses are interspersed throughout the San Fernando Valley and in other postwar Los Angeles communities, though in some instances their integrity has been eroded due to alterations and infill. Such is the case with Corbin Palms (1953-1955), a tract of "contemporary modern Bermuda style homes" designed by Palmer and Krisel.²⁵⁶ While the essential architectural character of Corbin Palms remains legible, a majority of its individual buildings have been altered to the extent that the tract no longer retains cumulative integrity. However, one highly intact example of a house at 6118 Jumilla Avenue (1955) has been designated as an excellent example of the Mid-Century Modern style applied to the context of suburban tract housing (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 976).

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 51-53.

²⁵⁶ Classified Ad for Corbin Palms, *Los Angeles Times*, November 22, 1953.

These same design principles were applied to apartment houses and other types of multi-family properties that were constructed in the postwar era. Individual buildings like the Landa Apartments at 1780 N Griffith Park Boulevard in Silver Lake (1966), designed by Allyn E. Morris, and side-by-side apartment buildings on the 10500 block of National Boulevard in the Palms neighborhood (1954, 1955), designed by Ray Kappe and Carl Maston, are excellent examples of multi-family dwellings designed in the Mid-Century Modern style. The National Boulevard properties are notable for their understated elegance, with delicate post-and-beam facades comprising exposed wood structural elements, horizontal bands of windows, and vertical wood board cladding that softens their aesthetic.²⁵⁷ The style was also applied to multi-family developments of a much larger scale. The Lincoln Place Apartments in Venice (1951, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1008), designed by Wharton and Vaughn Associates, comprises 52 garden apartment buildings that are stylistically simple but include embellishments including elegant horizontal lines, wide overhanging eaves, and articulated entrance canopies that are characteristic of the Mid-Century Modern aesthetic.²⁵⁸

Multi-family residential properties, and especially larger-scale properties like Lincoln Place, demonstrate how the modern movement transcended its roots as an arm of the avant-garde and became fully integrated into mass society and popular culture. They also speak to the democratic aspirations of the modern movement, which sought to make good, quality design available to everyone.



Top: 10565 W National Boulevard, by Ray Kappe constructed in 1954; bottom: 10567 W National Boulevard, by Carl Maston constructed in 1955 (HistoricPlacesLA)



Lincoln Place Apartments, 1041 E Elkgrove Avenue, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument 1008 (HistoricPlacesLA)

²⁵⁷ "Ten Things You Should Know About Carl Maston," *Dwell*, September 2005; Los Angeles Conservancy, "Garden Apartment Building, National Boulevard Apartment Building," accessed September 2019.

²⁵⁸ Roger Vincent, "Postwar Apartment Complex in Venice Gets \$200-Million Makeover," *Los Angeles Times*, September 17, 2014.

As the Mid-Century Modern style matured and became the dominant mode of postwar architecture, its vocabulary was increasingly adapted to other types of properties. That the style made use of standardized, prefabricated materials and emphasized efficiency and economy meant that it had widespread appeal and could easily be manipulated to meet the needs of almost any client and property type. Its association with modernity was also favored by businesses that sought to visually align themselves with the latest trends, and by public and private institutions that set out to expand and modernize their facilities to keep pace with postwar growth.

It bears mention that many of the commercial properties that were constructed in the postwar period exhibit characteristics of other, loosely related derivatives of Modernism. For instance, large-scale commercial buildings and office towers were designed in the Miesian-inspired Corporate International style; roadside businesses like coffee shops, bowling alleys, car washes, and gas stations often embodied the ultra-futuristic aesthetic of the Googie style; and many banks and financial institutions, in a quest to assert themselves as stable and permanent forces, were designed in the New Formalist style. These derivatives of commercial Modernism are related to, yet distinct from the Mid-Century Modern style.²⁵⁹

With respect to commercial architecture, the Mid-Century Modern style was most often applied to lower-scale commercial property types like office complexes, shopping centers, and restaurants. Many of these commercial properties were vernacular interpretations of the style, taking elements like post-and-beam construction and applying them to otherwise simple buildings to add some visual interest. However, on occasion these commercial buildings were designed with exceptional articulation. Many of the architecturally significant commercial examples of the Mid-Century Modern style are expressed in the context of low-scale office buildings. Known examples include the Kenngott-Brossmer Design Studio at 2840 W Rowena Avenue (1968) and the Carl Maston Architectural Office at 2801 Cahuenga Boulevard (1967), both designed by Carl Maston; the Garrott Architectural Offices at 2301 N Hyperion Avenue (1949, 1963), both designed by James O. Garrott; and an office building at 11836 San Vicente Boulevard (1954) designed by John A. Lindsey. Another notable example of a Mid-Century Modern style



*11836 San Vicente Boulevard, designed by John A. Lindsey constructed 1954
(HistoricPlacesLA)*

²⁵⁹ Other derivatives of postwar Modernism are addressed in this context as separate themes.

commercial property is the Neutra Office Building at 2379 N Glendale Boulevard (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 676 and listed in the National Register), a low-slung, wood-and-glass edifice that notably served as Richard Neutra's office from 1950 until his death in 1970.

With the exception of car washes, which tended to be designed in the flamboyant Googie style to attract passing motorists, the Mid-Century Modern style was also applied to commercial properties from the postwar era that were oriented around the car and car services. Auto dealerships in particular embraced the clean lines and pragmatic aesthetic of the Mid-Century Modern style; housing these dealerships in sleek modern buildings was a rational choice, as Los Angeles's association with modernity was inextricably linked to its embrace of the car. The Don Lee Cadillac Dealership/Casa de Cadillac in Sherman Oaks (1949), designed by Randall Duell, is a significant example of the Mid-Century Modern style's application to a postwar auto showroom. Its tall, "double-height glass windows beckon passers-by to come check out a Cadillac, while the interior's polished terrazzo floor glistens in welcome and a massive vertical slab rises above the roof to announce its brand in white neon block letters."²⁶⁰ Interior spaces are oriented toward a lanai, with sliding glass doors that blur the lines between indoor and outdoor spaces. In nearby Mission Hills, Galpin Motors hired architect Richard Dorman to design a state-of-the-art auto showroom adjacent to the newly-constructed San Diego Freeway/I-405 in 1966. Known as Galpin Square, the showroom features full-height, flush-mounted metal windows set beneath a large concrete slab eave supported by a series of machined concrete posts. Interior spaces are replete with chrome trim, further cementing the showroom's brand identity as a modern enterprise.



*Don Lee Cadillac/Casa de Cadillac, 14401 W Ventura Boulevard
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

As the postwar period progressed, Mid-Century Modern became the face of public and private institutions. Union halls, fraternal organizations, women's clubs, hospitals and medical clinics, and other common institutional property types all embraced the style and incorporated it into their building programs. The style became visually synonymous with the numerous civic buildings and government facilities that were constructed in the postwar period. Police and fire stations, public school campuses, post offices, and civic administration buildings were designed with simple geometric volumes, flat roofs,

²⁶⁰ Los Angeles Conservancy, "Casa de Cadillac," accessed September 2019.

and relatively chaste exterior walls, and were often articulated with economical flourishes like decorative concrete breezeblocks. After World War II, the Los Angeles Unified School District embraced a stylistic vocabulary that was unequivocally modern: it emphasized function over form, sought to fully integrate indoor and outdoor spaces, utilized exterior (instead of interior) circulation corridors to line classroom wings, and “economized through the use of new prefabricated materials, such as plywood, glass, and steel, as well as modular design and coordination.”²⁶¹ The architecture of postwar LAUSD campuses deviated from their predecessors, which were typically designed in Period Revival or Moderne styles, and often took direct cues from the International style. Speaking to the district’s modern leanings, it was not uncommon for postwar campuses to be designed by an acclaimed modern architect. Orville Wright Middle School at 6550 West 80th Street in Westchester (1952) was designed by Sumner Spaulding and John Rex, the Nevada Avenue Elementary School in Chatsworth (1960) by Gregory Ain, and the Sven Lokrantz Special Education Center at 19451 W Wyandotte Street in Reseda (1961) by Sidney Eisenstadt. The Sven Lokrantz campus is notable for its “soaring entry canopy, a circular plan, a folded plate roofline, and clerestory windows.”²⁶²



Left: Nevada Avenue Elementary School, 22120 Chase Street; Right: Oliver Wendell Holmes Middle School, 9351 Paso Robles Avenue (HistoricPlacesLA)

The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (DWP) also incorporated the Mid-Century Modern aesthetic into its building program, using the style on new facilities that were constructed across the city to keep pace with rapid postwar growth.²⁶³ While many of these facilities, such as distributing and receiving stations, were vernacular buildings that merely incorporated elements of the style into their design, others convey a high level of craftsmanship and detail and were intentionally designed to be bold architectural statements. Examples include the DWP Crenshaw Electric Living Center at 4030 S Crenshaw Boulevard (1960) and the DWP Office Building at 1394 S Sepulveda Boulevard in Westwood (1968). These buildings both exemplify the tenets of the Mid-Century Modern style through their horizontal massing, intersecting geometric volumes, flat roofs with projecting eaves, and expanses of floor-to-ceiling glazing.

²⁶¹ “Los Angeles Unified School District Historic Context Statement, 1870 to 1969,” prepared by Sapphos Environmental, Inc. for the LAUSD Office of Environmental Health and Safety, March 2014, 81. Refer to this context statement for more information about the architecture of postwar LAUSD schools, as well as more information about the school district’s history and building program.

²⁶² “Historic Schools of the Los Angeles Unified School District,” presentation prepared for the Los Angeles Unified School District via the Getty Grant Program, March 2002.

²⁶³ Refer to the “Municipal Water and Power” theme for more information about the DWP building program.



*Department of Water and Power Crenshaw Electric Living Center,
4030 S Crenshaw Boulevard (HistoricPlacesLA)*

The Mid-Century Modern style was adapted in a particularly expressive way to churches and other ecclesiastical buildings. As the population of postwar Los Angeles grew, so too did the number of congregants attending local churches, underscoring the need for expanded facilities and more space. Church culture also evolved during this period; specifically, the church “grew beyond serving as just a space for worship into a place for community activities,” and ecclesiastical buildings featured less overt iconography as social values – as opposed to liturgy and faith – were emphasized.²⁶⁴ This, in turn, led architects and parishioners to reexamine the composition of ecclesiastical design. The large, single-room sanctuaries that had dominated religious design for generations were increasingly seen as outmoded.

Mid-Century Modernism lent itself especially well to the evolving needs of these religious institutions. Compared to the more traditional Gothic and Romanesque Revival style churches of years past, Modernism utilized materials that were much more cost efficient and readily available. Industrial materials like concrete, steel, and laminated beams were used in lieu of brick and stone, significantly reducing construction costs. These materials also proved to be very malleable in their application, allowing architects to design expressive buildings that symbolized the eminent role that churches and religious organizations played in the social fabric of postwar American life. Churches designed in the Mid-Century Modern style, then, tend to be exceptionally bold and expressive. Common characteristics include sculptural forms and geometric volumes; curved, sweeping wall surfaces; dramatic and/or unusual roof forms that enhance the building’s sculptural qualities; highly exaggerated structural expression; and economical materials like concrete, steel, glass, and breezeblock.

²⁶⁴ “Mid-Century Modern Church Survey: Religious Structures 1940-1970 in St. Louis County,” prepared by Esley Hamilton and Catie Myers, 2009-2010, 5.



Examples of Mid-Century Modern/Expressionist churches. Top left: Founder's Church of Religious Science, 3281 W 6th Street, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 727; top right: Hollywood Seventh-Day Adventist Church, 1711 N Van Ness Avenue; bottom right: Sepulveda Unitarian Universalist Society Sanctuary, 9550 N Haskell Avenue, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 975; bottom left: Congregational Church of Northridge (HistoricPlacesLA; Architectural Resources Group)

The sculptural and expressionistic tendencies of Mid-Century Modern ecclesiastical architecture are well expressed in buildings like the Sepulveda Unitarian Universalist Society Sanctuary in North Hills (1964, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 975), designed by Frank Ehrental, which is shaped in the form of an onion; the Founder's Church of Religious Science in the Koreatown area (1959, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 727), designed by Paul R. Williams, which features a distinctive and unusual elliptical plan that maximizes the building's efficiency; and the Hollywood Seventh Day-Adventist Church in Hollywood (1962), designed by Robert Burman, which has serrated facades and angled volumes that resemble fins, and is capped by a large geometric metal spire. On occasion, these expressionistic qualities were utilized in other types of buildings as well. One example is the Panorama Bank Building at 8201 N Van Nuys Boulevard (1957) designed by W.A. Sarmineto, which features an unusual and provocative concrete dome structure that is supported by two gently arched steel-and-concrete beams. Often described as resembling the appearance of a spacecraft, the building is a notable example of the Expressionistic variant of Mid-Century Modernism, and reflects Sarmineto's ethos that "art and architecture should be intertwined, looking as much like a sculpture as a building."²⁶⁵

²⁶⁵ Los Angeles Conservancy, "Panorama Bank," accessed September 2019.



Panorama Bank Building, 8201 N Van Nuys Boulevard (Architectural Resources Group)

Most architects who are associated with the Mid-Century Modern style exercised some creative license, but generally worked within the broad aesthetic parameters that defined the style. Others, however, cast a more personal stamp on the Modern movement, designing buildings that are on the fringes of mainstream Modernism. One such architect is John Lautner, who had once apprenticed under Frank Lloyd Wright and began working in Los Angeles in the 1930s. Lautner's body of work is eclectic and notoriously difficult to classify, though his buildings are generally described as broadly falling within the context of the Mid-Century Modern style. He is primarily known for designing custom residences, and made use of sculptural forms and organic elements that were undoubtedly influenced by the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. Houses designed by Lautner share some common characteristics: they tend to be located on elevated sites, are designed to facilitate an organic flow between exterior and interior spaces, and exhibit the architect's strong affinity for, and preoccupation with essential geometric forms.

Notable examples of Lautner's work are testaments to his creative prowess and ingenuity. The Chemosphere House in the Hollywood Hills (1960, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 785), "a single-story, octagonal saucer held up on the edge of a cliff by a single concrete column," is an engineering marvel that resulted from his experimentation with steel and concrete, and was built "on an essentially unbuildable site without destroying it; there was no bulldozing, no large holes dug, and no retaining walls."²⁶⁶ Lautner's Reiner-Burchill Residence (also known as Silvertop) in Silver Lake (1963), is another notable example of his distinct interpretation of Modernism. The house is capped by an enormous, re-stressed concrete roof and features a cantilevered driveway, a custom-designed mechanical living room glass door, custom automated wood louvers, and folding shades for skylights – all features that rendered the house "one of the most technically and structurally innovative houses in the world" upon its completion.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁶ Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 147.

²⁶⁷ Docomomo US, "Silvertop," accessed September 2019.



*Left: Garcia House, 7440 W Mulholland Drive; Right: Chemosphere House, 7776 W Torreyson Drive,
L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument 785 (Water and Power Associates)*

Like most derivatives of postwar Modernism, the Mid-Century Modern style began to fall out of favor by the late 1960s, and was no longer used by about 1970. By this time, the style had become outmoded, and was seen as effete and not reflective of current directions in American society.

ELIGIBILITY STANDARDS FOR MID-CENTURY MODERN, 1945-1975

**Summary Statement of
Significance:**

Resources evaluated under this sub-theme are significant in the area of Architecture as excellent examples of the Mid-Century Modern style and exhibit quality of design through distinctive features. Mid-Century Modernism is a broad classification of postwar modernism and represents one of the largest and most diverse collections of architecture in Los Angeles. The style is generally characterized by its geometric forms, smooth wall surfaces, flat or low-pitched roofs, and absence of exterior ornamentation. While some examples of the style may represent a particular influence – such as Post-and-Beam or Organic architecture – many incorporated elements of the various influences that shaped this style. It was a remarkably versatile style that was applied to almost every type of property: residential, commercial, institutional, and industrial.

Period of Significance:

1945-1975

**Period of Significance
Justification:**

Mid-Century Modernism was, in many ways, a continuation of the prewar Modernism that extended into and evolved for the duration of the postwar period. The period of significance begins in 1945, which signifies the beginning of the postwar period, and ends in the mid-1970s, by which time the style had largely fallen out of favor with architects and the American public.

Geographical Location(s):

Citywide, with concentrations in areas of the city like the San Fernando Valley, Westchester, and the Westside that experienced considerable growth and development after World War II.

Area(s) of Significance:

Architecture

Criterion:

NR: C

CR: 3

Local: 3

Associated Property Types:

- Residential – Single-Family Residence
- Residential – Multi-Family Residence
- Commercial
- Institutional
- Industrial

Note: Groupings of resources designed in the style may comprise historic districts. For residential historic districts, see: Eligibility Standards for Mid-Century Modern Residential Historic Districts, 1945-1975

Property Type Description:	Mid-Century Modern architecture is expressed in a vast array of residential, commercial, institutional, and industrial property types. The wide variety of properties that are associated with the style are a testament to its versatility and adaptability. It also underscores the immense popularity of the style in the postwar years. Groupings of resources in the style may be evaluated as historic districts.
Property Type Significance:	See Summary Statement of Significance above.
Eligibility Standards:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Exhibits quality of design through distinctive features▪ Is an excellent example of the Mid-Century Modern style▪ Was constructed during the period of significance
Character-Defining /Associative Features:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance▪ Direct expression of the structural system, often wood or steel post and beam▪ Simple geometric volumes▪ Unornamented wall surfaces▪ Flat roof, at times with wide overhanging eaves▪ Floor-to-ceiling windows, often flush-mounted metal framed▪ Horizontal massing▪ If Expressionistic: sculptural forms intersecting with geometric volumes▪ If Expressionistic: curved, sweeping wall surfaces▪ If Expressionistic: dramatic roof forms, such as butterfly, A-frame, hyperbolic paraboloid, folded plate, or barrel vault <p>For Historic Districts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Must include a majority of building which embody the distinctive characteristics of the Mid-Century Modern style▪ Conveys a strong visual sense of overall historic environment from the period of significance
Integrity Considerations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Should retain integrity of Design, Materials, Workmanship, and Feeling from the period of significance▪ Retains sufficient integrity to convey significance▪ If a district or grouping, the majority of the buildings should retain sufficient to convey their significance▪ Some windows and doors may have been replaced, as long as openings have not been altered and original fenestration patterns have not been disrupted▪ Surrounding building and land uses may have changed▪ Original use may have changed

- The painting of surfaces (wood) original unpainted may be acceptable
- Addition of decorative elements to originally sparse façades may be acceptable
- For commercial properties, storefronts modification may be acceptable unless the original storefront is no longer evident
- Modified signage may be acceptable if the signage itself was not a major character defining feature

For Historic Districts:

- Must include a majority of building which embody the distinctive characteristics of the Mid-Century Modern style
- Conveys a strong visual sense of overall historic environment from the period of significance

ELIGIBILITY STANDARDS FOR MID-CENTURY MODERN RESIDENTIAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS, 1945-1975

Summary Statement of Significance:	Resources evaluated under this theme are significant in the area of Architecture as important and distinctive concentrations of residences designed in the Mid-Century Modern style. They represent the work of noted architects who applied to style to single-family residences and whose designs could be replicated throughout entire tracts/subdivisions and, therefore, be within reach of average middle-income buyers.		
Period of Significance:	1945-1975		
Period of Significance Justification:	Mid-Century Modernism was, in many ways, a continuation of the prewar Modernism that extended into and evolved for the duration of the postwar period. The period of significance begins in 1945, which signifies the beginning of the postwar period, and ends in the mid-1970s, by which time the style had largely fallen out of favor with architects and the American public.		
Geographical Location(s):	Sparsely located in the San Fernando Valley and West Los Angeles, areas that experienced considerable growth and development after World War II.		
Area(s) of Significance:	Architecture		
Criterion:	NR: C	CR: 3	Local: 3
Associated Property Types:	Residential – Post-War Suburb (Tract/Subdivision)		
Property Type Description:	As they were developed after World War II, Mid-Century Modern neighborhoods adhere to patterns of development that are associated with post-World War II suburbanization. These patterns include residential subdivisions, which generally follow original tract/subdivision boundaries and reflect the vision of their respective developer. Each is composed of concentrations of single-family houses designed in the Mid-Century Modern style. In addition to the houses themselves, these neighborhoods are most often characterized by distinctive planning features including street patterns, setbacks, curbs, sidewalks, and landscaping.		
Property Type Significance:	See Summary Statement of Significance above.		

Eligibility Standards:

- Was developed during the period of significance
- Must include a majority of residences which embody the distinctive characteristics of the Mid-Century Modern style
- Conveys a strong visual sense of overall historic environment from the period of significance

Character-Defining /Associative Features:

- Primarily composed of one-story single-family residences
- District boundaries will typically follow the original subdivision/tract boundaries
- Garages may be attached or unattached
- Carports may be common
- Generally are designed by noted architects
- May have landscapes designed by important landscape designers
- May also be evaluated as significant within the Post-WWII Suburbanization theme
- May include one or more tracts/subdivisions platted at a similar period of time

Integrity Considerations:

- District as a whole should retain integrity of Location, Design, Setting, Materials, Workmanship, and Feeling
- District as a whole retains sufficient integrity to convey significance
- Must retain the majority of the original planning features including street patterns, landscapes, setbacks, and/or street features
- Residences with second-story or large one-story additions may be non-contributing
- The threshold of integrity for contributing properties is defined as the ability of a particular building to reflect the architectural style and form that it would have possessed at the time of construction
- An accumulation of minor alterations may render a residence non-contributing
- Original garage doors may have been replaced
- The addition of security features such as screen doors and bars at windows may be acceptable

SUBTHEME: Corporate International, 1949-1975

The Corporate International style, sometimes also referred to as Corporate Modernism or simply as Corporate architecture, is a derivative of postwar Modernism that was primarily applied to large-scale commercial office buildings and government facilities and was the dominant mode of corporate architecture between the 1950s and 1970s. The style's rise in popularity parallels the economic growth and the increasing importance of American corporations during the postwar period, and is a reflection of how these entities sought to position themselves as agents of modernity, technology, and progress.

Corporations have been a part of American society since the nineteenth century, but became increasingly large and increasingly powerful in the years after World War II. At the time, American society was amid a period of widely shared economic growth and prosperity, the public held overwhelmingly favorable views of capitalism and corporate interests, and large American corporations thrived.²⁶⁸ At this time, corporations were seen as benign agents whose interests were generally aligned with those of society at large. Though they reaped tremendous fiscal and economic benefits, corporations made available to the public quality goods and services at fair prices, provided well-paying jobs, and helped tout the merits of the capitalist ethos in the nation's crusade against communism. The Business Roundtable, a not-for-profit organization comprising prominent American business leaders, once issued the following statement related to the stewardship obligations of the American corporation:

The issue is one of defining, and achieving, responsible corporate management which fully integrates into the entire corporation planning, management, and decision-making process consideration of the impacts of all operating and policy decisions on each of the corporation's constituents. Responsibility to all these constituents in toto constitutes responsibility to society...Business and society have a symbiotic relationship: the long-term viability of the corporation depends upon its responsibility to the society of which it is a part. And the well-being of society depends upon profitable and responsible business enterprises.²⁶⁹

Flush with cash, these corporations invested heavily in the construction of new headquarters and operational facilities in the postwar years. Many of these buildings assumed a distinctive architectural vocabulary that "showcased their forward-looking attitudes and futuristic products by virtue of cutting edge innovations in modern architecture."²⁷⁰ This idiom was an adaptation of the International style whose taut wall surfaces, steel-frame construction, open floor plans, and modular forms were well suited to the design of high-rise buildings. The sense of efficiency and pragmatism conveyed by the style also dovetailed with the fundamental values underpinning corporate culture and the capitalist ethos.

²⁶⁸ Ralph Gomery and Richard Sylla, "The American Corporation," *Daedalus, Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* (Spring 2013): 102-118. See also "The Rise of Corporation and Corporate Types" theme of the "Commercial Development" context.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Jack Hanly, "Architecture as Product: 7 New Corporate Modernisms," *Architizer*, accessed January 2018.

Corporate International style architecture was defined by a distinctive catalog of features. These include simple geometries and box-shaped forms; flat roofs, with or without parapets; taut wall surfaces; steel and concrete structural systems; and glass curtain walls comprising bands of flush-mounted metal windows and spandrel panels. Ground stories were typically double-height and were set back behind slender columns or *pilotis*, making buildings appear as if they were hoisted up off the ground. Essentially all extraneous ornament was removed, which gave buildings a characteristically chaste appearance. Often, buildings also featured integral landscaped plazas or plantings that complemented the architecture and helped to soften the somewhat rigid aesthetic of the corresponding building. Together, these features resulted in “an aesthetic rationale for the stripped-down, clean-surfaced skyscrapers that became status symbols of American corporate power and progressiveness” in the postwar years.²⁷¹

To further achieve the sleek and highly polished image that large corporations and government agencies sought to express through their buildings, the style also made frequent use of technology, and particularly advances in glass curtain wall construction. The contributions of pioneering architects like Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson, both of whom designed landmark buildings rendered primarily of glass, played an outsized role in this regard.²⁷² With the curtain wall system, steel structural frames could support large expanses of glass while also providing buildings with a taut, lightweight appearance and flexible interior spaces that were conducive to the needs of office tenants.

Architects in cities across the nation incorporated some, and sometimes all of these elements into new corporate office buildings, but one building in particular – Lever House in New York City (1952) – wielded a tremendous amount of influence with respect to solidifying the aesthetic of the Corporate International style and cementing its position as a visual indicator of the success and upward mobility of corporate culture. Designed by architects Gordon Bunshaft and Natalie de Blois of the firm Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM), Lever House was notable as one of the first fully rendered glass International style office towers in the United States. The design “balances a tall, vertical volume with one that is horizontal, features open interior spaces, and attains, through engineering, visual weightlessness.”²⁷³ Its successful use of simple geometries and curtain wall construction resulted in a remarkably clean, straightforward building that was widely replicated and marked a new direction for commercial design.

The Corporate International style has often been critically painted as banal and ubiquitous. However, noted architect Robert A.M. Stern, speaking about Corporate International style buildings, remarks that “these buildings are not only great examples of modern architecture but ones which are in a special category where architects, designers and their clients collaborated to establish new paradigms for American business. They are landmarks of the history of architecture and of the history of business.”²⁷⁴

²⁷¹ Encyclopedia Britannica, “International Style Architecture,” accessed January 2018.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ SOM, “Building of the Day: Lever House,” Oct. 24, 2016, accessed September 2019.

²⁷⁴ “Saving Corporate Modernism Exhibition and Symposium at Yale School of Architecture,” *Yale News*, December 14, 2000.

In Los Angeles, key elements of the Corporate International style began appearing in as early as the 1930s. CBS Columbia Square Studios at 6121 W Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 947), designed by William Lescaze, is firmly grounded in the early International style but includes some features that would become characteristic of the Corporate International style. Specifically, the Lescaze designed complex features horizontal bands of flush metal windows and is framed by a base comprising slender rounded columns, devoid of ornament.

However, the distinctive cadre of characteristics that defined the Corporate International style would not fully come to fruition until the period after the war, with early examples appearing in the late 1940s. The Corporate International style, then, represented an evolution of the earlier International style, adapted and modified to account for technological advances and evolving public sentiment and taste.

It was not uncommon for the mid and large-scale commercial and institutional buildings that were constructed in the late 1940s to toe the line between the emerging Corporate International aesthetic and the familiar forms and motifs of the Late Moderne style. Thus, some of the earlier examples of the Corporate International style feature the stripped back, functional aesthetic and lateral bands of windows associated with the International style but also retain sense of weight and solidity that defined the Moderne school. Prudential Square in the Miracle Mile area (1949, altered), designed by Wurdeman and Becket, is demonstrative of this hybrid between past traditions and modern forms and methods. Its most dominant feature is a solid, windowless volume that was indicative of the Moderne tradition, but flanking this central volume are two ten-story office wings that are rendered primarily of glass. Architectural historian Paul Gleye comments that this building's "period of construction is indicated by the east façade, which is articulated with bezeled Moderne windows."²⁷⁵



The Prudential Square, 5779 W Wilshire Boulevard (Los Angeles Public Library)

²⁷⁵ Gleye, *The Architecture of Los Angeles*, 152.

As the style matured in subsequent years, advancements in glass curtain wall technology allowed architects to render the façades of these buildings more fully in glass. By the 1950s, the glass façade was often asserted as the entire exterior of a building. Wide, uninterrupted bands of metal windows were surmounted by parallel ribbons of opaque spandrel panels that delineated floors and provided a degree of visual interest. Screens and *brise soleil* became a more common feature on Corporate International style buildings as the curtain wall was more commonly used. These screens were often composed of anodized aluminum or similar economical materials, often tinted bronze or gold and impressed with geometric motifs, giving a subtle hint of visual interest to an otherwise-plain façade.²⁷⁶

The Corporate International style matured and flourished in Los Angeles between the 1950s and 1960s. Its strong visual connotation with modernity, technology, and progress reflected Los Angeles's newfound role as an epicenter for major corporations and increasingly large and influential government institutions. The style, in its mature form, was applied most often to mid and high-rise commercial office buildings, most of which were either concentrated Downtown or were strung along major boulevards – including Ventura, Wilshire, Century, and Santa Monica boulevards – that were swiftly evolving into important nodes of commercial activity and functioned, in a sense, as secondary downtowns. These buildings were often commissioned by corporations, financial institutions, and other major commercial interests and often housed their corporate headquarters. Shops and restaurants – or, if the building was commissioned by a financial institution, a branch bank – were sometimes located on the ground level.



As the Corporate International style matured, the appearance of buildings became more lightweight, and facades were generally rendered more fully in glass. Welton Becket's Parker Center (left, 1955, not extant) and Richard Neutra's L.A. County Hall of Records (right, 1962), both in the Civic Center, are indicative of this trend (Los Angeles Public Library).

The Corporate International style came of age at the same time that large-scale redevelopment efforts were being undertaken Downtown and elsewhere, and for this reason the style became visually synonymous with the architecture of high rise structures and the dramatic evolution of the Downtown skyline in the 1960s and '70s. Height restrictions that had been in place since the early twentieth century were finally lifted, and consequently new buildings in the Downtown financial district and

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

adjacent neighborhoods became progressively taller and more monumental in scale.²⁷⁷ The Corporate International style's clean, straightforward, and stripped down aesthetic dovetailed with the goals of the redevelopment projects taking place at this time, which sought to transform older and often downtrodden neighborhoods into clean and vibrant hubs composed predominantly of commercial uses.

For this reason, many of Los Angeles's most fully rendered and highly articulated examples of the Corporate International style are located in and around the Bunker Hill area of Downtown, the site of an extraordinarily large and ambitious redevelopment project beginning in the 1960s.²⁷⁸ Construction of the Union Bank Plaza at 445 S Figueroa Street (1966), a forty-story office tower designed by A.C. Martin and Associates, was notable as the first building to surpass Los Angeles City Hall in height.²⁷⁹ The building stood as a bold and quintessential example of the Corporate International style; it assumed a stately and monolithic appearance due to its rectilinear massing, horizontal bands of recessed windows, and fully expressed external concrete membrane. The building also has a landscaped plaza that softens its somewhat rigid aesthetic and was designed by noted Modern landscape architect Garret Eckbo. Subsequent high rise office towers that were constructed Downtown similarly embraced the Corporate International aesthetic. Notable examples include Crocker-Citizens Plaza at 611 W 6th Street by William Pereira (1967); City National Bank Building at 606 S Olive Street, by Dan Saxon Palmer (1967); Arco Plaza/City National Plaza complex at 505-555 South Flower Street, by A.C. Martin and Associates (1972); and Security Pacific Plaza at 333 S Hope Street, also by A.C. Martin and Associates (1974).



*Top Left: Security Pacific Plaza, now Bank of America Plaza, 333 S Hope Street (HistoricPlacesLA);
Bottom left: Union Bank Plaza, 445 S Figueroa Street (HistoricPlacesLA); Right: Crocker-Citizens Plaza,
611 W 6th Street (Water and Power Associates)*

²⁷⁷ Ray Hebert, "No Tall Buildings: Aesthetics, Not Quakes, Kept Lid On," *Los Angeles Times*, July, 8, 1985.

²⁷⁸ CRA-LA, "Bunker Hill Redevelopment Project Area Implementation Plan: FY 2010-January 2012," December 17, 2009.

²⁷⁹ Los Angeles Conservancy, "Union Bank Square," accessed September 2019.

The Corporate International style quite literally became the face of many major American companies, among them CBS. In 1952, noted architects Pereira and Luckman and Gin Wong designed the broadcasting juggernaut's new headquarters in the Beverly Grove area, at the intersection of Beverly Boulevard and Fairfax Avenue. The design for CBS Television City, as the headquarters was known, comprised a "stark International style design of flat-roof rectangular volumes with walls of either glass or unornamented stucco, all in dramatic black and white with red brick accents."²⁸⁰ Interior spaces were designed to be as open and flexible as possible, consisting of walls and partitions that could be moved to accommodate the needs of particular productions.²⁸¹ CBS Television City is an excellent example of the Corporate International style's application to corporate design. The sense of modernity exuded by the complex clearly signified CBS as a leading figure in the broadcasting industry.



*CBS Television City, 7800 W Beverly Boulevard, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1167
(Los Angeles Public Library)*

The Corporate International style also lent itself well to large civic buildings and complexes that were constructed after World War II. Several notable postwar additions to the Downtown civic center complex between the 1950s and 1970s are testaments to just how much the style influenced the design of large-scale civic buildings at this time. The City Health Building at 111 E 1st Street (1954), Parker Center at 150 N Los Angeles Street (1955, not extant), and the Criminal Courts Building/Clara Shortridge Foltz Criminal Justice Center at 210 W Temple Street (1972), all embodied the tenets of style and collectively express how it was applied, and how it matured, over time. The design of these buildings evinced a "definite sense of bureaucratic diligence" and monumentality befitting of governmental agencies, as the PWA Moderne style had aspired to do a generation earlier during the Depression era.²⁸²

²⁸⁰ Los Angeles Conservancy, "CBS Television City," accessed September 2019.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Los Angeles Conservancy, "Los Angeles County Hall of Records," accessed December 2017. The Civic Center was determined formally eligible for the National Register (historic district) in a 2009 as part of the Section 106 review for the Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) Regional Connector Transit Corridor project. The district, therefore, is listed in the California Register.

One particularly monumental example of the Corporate International style within the context of civic design is the 1965 Los Angeles Department of Water and Power General Office Building, John Ferraro Building, at 111 N Hope Street (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1022). Designed by the noted architectural firm of A.C. Martin and Associates, the seventeen-story building occupies an entire city block and is perched atop the uppermost axis of the Downtown civic center complex. Its structural system is emphasized through the repetition of vertical columns and horizontal concrete floor slabs, which dramatically cantilever twelve feet beyond the building and also serve as integral sunshades. Set within these cantilevers, on each floor, is a continuous band of metal windows that span the full floor height and use transparent, smoke colored glass.²⁸³ The building is a testament to the prominent role that this local utility has played in the continued development of Los Angeles, and is also demonstrative of the sense of monumentality that is strongly associated with the Corporate International style. Architectural historian Reynar Banham once effusively remarked that the DWP Building is “the only public building in the whole city that genuinely graces the scene and lifts the spirit (and sits in firm control of the whole basis of human existence in Los Angeles).”²⁸⁴



*Los Angeles Department of Water and Power General Office Building, John Ferraro Building,
111 N Hope Street, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1022 (HistoricPlacesLA)*

Some architects working in the Corporate International style broke from the rigid orthodoxy of International style architecture – which was exemplified through the glass-and-steel, Miesian box – and found creative ways to incorporate complex geometries and varied materials, thereby adding texture and visual interest to what were otherwise austere (and by some accounts, ubiquitous and boring) geometric blocks. Examples of this veer toward creativity include the Commonwealth Savings Building in North Hollywood (1961), designed by Gerald H. Bense and Associates, and a mid-rise office building at 16665 W Ventura Boulevard in Encino (1966, Howard R. Lane). The former features a series of intersecting geometric volumes that renders the building’s massing dynamic and complex; the latter

²⁸³ City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument Nomination for the Department of Water and Power/John Ferraro Building (CHC-2012-1944-HCM), November 2, 2011.

²⁸⁴ Los Angeles Conservancy, “Department of Water and Power Building,” accessed December 2017.

ascribes to the basic template of the Corporate International style box but incorporates features like rounded corners, parabolic arches, and a brick veneer, providing the building with a distinctive architectural profile.



*Left: Commonwealth Savings Building, 5077 N Lankershim Boulevard;
Right: office building at 16665 W Ventura Boulevard (HistoricPlacesLA)*

Another notable example of a creative take on the Corporate International style is the Los Angeles County Hall of Records in the Downtown civic center complex (1962). Designed by Richard Neutra and Robert Alexander, it incorporates the fundamental features of the International style – simple, box-like buildings forms, flat roofs, abundant glazing, and a dearth of ornament – but also incorporates additional decorative elements like a large decorative ceramic screen, a mosaic composed of glass tile and granite, and tall aluminum “spider legs” to add additional texture and visual interest.²⁸⁵ The building also features long, vertical louvers along its south façade as a means of providing shade. Architectural historians David Gebhard and Robert Winter remark that “its design seems confused,” but others have pointed to its unique *mélange* of features as evidence of architects Neutra and Alexander’s skill and ingenuity.²⁸⁶ In addition to being a distinctive example of Corporate International style civic architecture, the building is notable as a rare example of a realized Neutra-designed high rise building.



Los Angeles County Hall of Records, 320 W Temple Street (HistoricPlacesLA)

²⁸⁵ Los Angeles Conservancy, “Los Angeles County Hall of Records,” accessed September 2019.

²⁸⁶ Gebhard and Winter, *An Architectural Guidebook to Los Angeles*, 259.

These large, Corporate International style buildings were typically designed by large and prolific local architecture firms that had the experience and staff to take on the large-scale commissions. Like the clients who they were designing for, many of these firms became corporations. Los Angeles-based architectural firms that are most often associated with this style of architecture include Welton Becket and Associates; A.C. Martin and Associates; Pereira and Luckman; Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM); Victor Gruen and Associates; and Daniel, Mann, Johnson and Mendenhall (DMJM). Notable landscape architects of the era such as Garret Eckbo, Peter Walker, and Raymond E. Page often worked in concert with these architects to design complementary outdoor environments, creating plazas and other public spaces that eschewed formal landscape design and incorporated the aesthetic simplicity and clean lines of the Modern movement. In almost all instances, the designed landscapes are inextricably linked to the buildings with which they are associated and are evaluated as related features.²⁸⁷ Union Bank Square, (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1206) features a designed landscape by landscape architect Garret Eckbo (1965), which bears an integral relationship with the building and is an essential part of its design.



Union Bank Square, 445 S Figueroa Street, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1206 (Architectural Resources Group)

In Los Angeles and elsewhere, many architects began to express dissatisfaction with the ubiquitous aesthetic and formulaic methodology of the Corporate International style by the early 1970s. The style's modularity and cold, rigid austerity – qualities that had historically been touted for promoting a rational and efficient approach to architecture – became increasingly seen as points of frustration among a new contingent of architects who sought to infuse more innovative and expressive qualities into their work.²⁸⁸ International Style architecture, and Corporate International architecture specifically, became perceived as banal.²⁸⁹ The style swiftly fell out of favor in the mid-1970s as later iterations of Modernism and Postmodernism ascended in popularity, particularly among corporate clients.

²⁸⁷ See also the “Designed Landscapes” them of the “Cultural Landscapes” Context.

²⁸⁸ Paul Goldberger, “Why Modernist Architecture Lost Face,” *New York Times*, February 28, 1982.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

ELIGIBILITY STANDARDS FOR CORPORATE INTERNATIONAL, 1949-1975

Summary Statement of Significance:	Resources evaluated under this sub-theme are significant in the area of Architecture as excellent examples of the Corporate International style and exhibit quality of design through distinctive features. Corporate International architecture was an adaptation of the International Style that was applied to large-scale commercial towers and civic buildings in the postwar period. The style's taut wall surfaces, steel frame construction, abundance of glass, and modular forms were well suited to the design of high-rise buildings, and its underlying pragmatism dovetailed with the values held by large corporations and governmental agencies. Most Corporate International style buildings were designed by a notable and prolific local architectural firm.		
Period of Significance:	1949-1975		
Period of Significance Justification:	Corporate International style architecture first appeared in Los Angeles shortly after World War II, and became the preferred style for large commercial office towers and civic buildings in the 1950s and '60s. The period of significance for this theme begins in 1949, when the earliest known examples of the style were built, and ends in 1975, by which time the style had fallen out of favor.		
Geographical Location(s):	Citywide, with concentrations in Downtown and other, secondary nodes of corporate commercial activity including the Wilshire corridor, Century City, and West Los Angeles. Examples are found along many of Los Angeles's major commercial corridors, especially those located on the Westside and in the San Fernando Valley.		
Area(s) of Significance:	Architecture		
Criterion:	NR: C	CR: 3	Local: 3
Associated Property Types:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Commercial▪ Institutional <p>Note: Grouping of resources may designed in the style may comprise historic districts.</p>		

Property Type Description: Associated property types in Los Angeles include office buildings, corporate office complexes, and civic and other government buildings. Almost all of these buildings rise six or more stories in height; many feature an integral outdoor landscape that also espouses the tenets of Modernism and was designed by a notable landscape architect. The style is generally expressed in the design of individual buildings.

Property Type Significance: See Summary Statement of Significance above.

Eligibility Standards:

- Exhibits quality of design through distinctive features
- Is an excellent example of the Corporate International style
- Was constructed during the period of significance

Character-Defining Features/Associative Features:

- Box-shaped form
- Constructed of concrete, steel, and glass
- Flat roofs, either with flush eaves or cantilevered slabs
- Horizontal bands of flush, metal-framed windows, or curtain walls
- Lack of applied ornament
- Articulated ground story, often double-height and set back behind columns or *pilotis*
- Integral parking lot, either subterranean above grade
- Landscaped plaza or integral plantings at ground floor
- For the National Register, must possess exceptional importance if less than 50 years of age

For Historic Districts:

- Must include a majority of building which embody the distinctive characteristics of the Corporate International style
- Conveys a strong visual sense of overall historic environment from the period of significance

Integrity Considerations:

- Should retain integrity of Location, Design, Materials, Workmanship, and Feeling from the period of significance
- Retains sufficient integrity to convey significance
- Replacement of some windows and doors may be acceptable if the openings have not been resized and original fenestration patterns have not been disrupted
- Surrounding buildings and land uses may have changed
- Original use may have changed
- Modification of original signage may be acceptable if the signage itself was not a major character defining feature and new signage does not deter from the original building design

For Historic Districts:

- Must include a majority of building which embody the distinctive characteristics of the Mid-Century Modern style
- Conveys a strong visual sense of overall historic environment from the period of significance

SUBTHEME: A-Frame Buildings, 1954-1975

The term “A-frame” describes both a method of construction and an architectural style that is associated with the postwar Modern movement. A-frame buildings are demonstrative of how Modern architects and designers freely experimented with innovative construction methods and bold new building forms. They are typically expressed in the context of residential architecture, but because the characteristically expressive, jutting roofline of the A-frame draws the eye this archetype was also applied to some commercial and institutional properties, particularly those that were oriented toward passing motorists.

Architects have utilized triangular building forms since ancient times, but the A-frame and its highly expressive, geometric aesthetic are unequivocally products of the Modern architectural movement.²⁹⁰ Remarkably simple in form and easy to assemble, A-frame buildings are a clear expression of Modernism and its prevailing emphasis on producing buildings that were rational, efficient, and stripped of stylistic excess. In Los Angeles, this idiom emerged in the 1950s and peaked in popularity in the early and mid-1960s. It was most often expressed in the form of single-family residences, though as the style matured it was increasingly applied to commercial and ecclesiastical buildings as well. Large companies such as Der Wienerschnitzel embraced the A-frame and incorporated its aesthetic into their corporate brand.²⁹¹

Chad Randl, an architectural historian who has studied A-frame buildings at length and has authored a seminal text on the style, defines the A-frame as follows:

An A-frame is a triangular structure with a series of rafters or trusses that are joined at the peak and descend outward to a main floor level, with no intervening vertical walls. The rafters are covered with a roof surface that ties the frames together and usually continues to the floor... rafters are connected to either woodsill plates at the floor level or, to take full advantage of the triangle's innate strength, are bolted to floor joists to form trusses. Most have horizontal collar beams that strengthen the frame and function as floor joists for a second-level loft. These cross ties, combined with the angled roof rafters, give the A-frame its name.²⁹²

Some A-frame buildings are true-to-form examples of this definition. However, the term “A-frame” is often interpreted much more broadly to include any building whose principal volume is shaped like an equilateral triangle, and whose steeply sloping roof planes extend partway or entirely to the ground and double as load-bearing exterior walls.

²⁹⁰ Chad Randl, *A-Frame* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004), 15.

²⁹¹ David Zahniser, “First Wienerschnitzel, Symbol of L.A. Car Culture, Now a Landmark,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 3, 2013.

²⁹² Randl, *A-Frame*, 11.

In the decades prior to World War II, the A-frame and its functional, triangular form was applied primarily to basic, utilitarian structures like ice houses, pump houses, field shelters, and chicken coops. It was also a common choice for wilderness tents and other ephemeral forms of shelter. Those who erected A-frame buildings at this time typically did so because it represented a practical, cheap, and efficient means of erecting shelter – not because of its architectural or aesthetic qualities. These utilitarian buildings “were fine for temporary shelters for animals and for storing things, but they were not often lived in by choice.”²⁹³

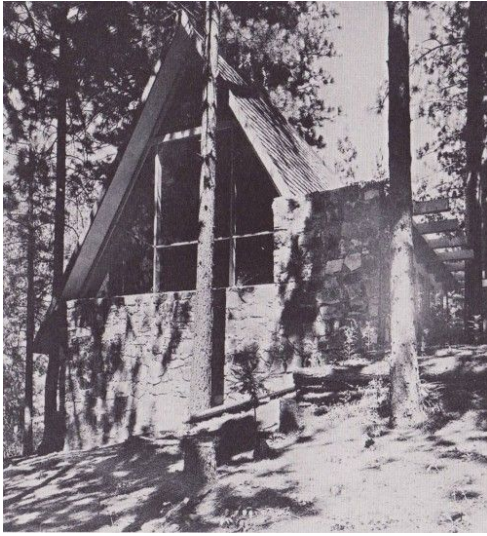
However, there was a contingent of architects, intrigued by the A-frame’s overt simplicity, who experimented with ways to adapt the idiom for human shelter and habitation. R.M. Schindler was among the first to experiment toward this end. In the 1920s Schindler drafted plans for two houses in Los Angeles that were set beneath dramatic, triangular shaped roof structures, though neither house was ever built.²⁹⁴ Some ten years later, this idea was revived when Schindler was commissioned to design a new vacation house for Gisela Bennati in Lake Arrowhead, a small, mountainous community located approximately 80 miles northeast of Los Angeles. Constructed in 1937, the Bennati Cabin was dominated by a steeply pitched gabled roof that was “so engaged in the shaping of the interior space that the traditional distinction between wall and roof disappears: the house becomes its roof.”²⁹⁵ Schindler also incorporated full, floor-to-ceiling glazing in the gable ends in an attempt to blur the line between indoors and outdoors, and to render the house fully integrated into its bucolic natural setting.

Schindler’s contemporary Lloyd Wright, who had honed a reputation for designing buildings with experimental and unusual qualities, also experimented with the simple forms of the A-frame well before it was embraced by mainstream culture. In 1945, Wright designed a storage, garage, and stable structure for noted jewelry designer George W. Headley atop the crest of a hill in Runyon Canyon, north of Hollywood. The structure was intended to be part of a larger estate that was not realized. Wright’s structure was a simple, box-like edifice that was capped by a dramatic, steep pyramidal roof that extended almost fully down to the ground. It was not cast in the traditional mold of the A-frame model, but demonstrated clear influence from the architecture of mountain cabins and other ephemeral structures whose design revolved around the primacy of their steeply-pitched roofs, which also doubled as exterior walls. Wright remodeled the structure in the mid-1960s, converting it into as residence for noted television and theater producer Alan Handley. The Headley-Handley House is listed as Historic-Cultural Monument No. 563.

²⁹³ Ibid., 24.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 24-25.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 27; David LeClerc, “The Cave and the Tent: An Introduction to Schindler’s Domestic Architecture,” *Kenchiku Bunka* 54 (1999): 107.



Left: The Gisela Bennati Cabin by R.M. Schindler in Lake Arrowhead (Calisphere); Right: Headley-Handley House by Lloyd Wright, 3003 N Runyon Canyon Road, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 563 (HistoricPlacesLA)

These buildings were nothing short of revolutionary; the Bennati Cabin in particular has been described as “essentially a postwar A-frame house, built twenty years ahead of its time.”²⁹⁶ However, like many of Schindler and Wright’s commissions, the Bennati Cabin and Headley-Handley House did not garner much attention or recognition at the time they were built. Their significance was more esoteric, drawing only the attention of a select few who were versed in architectural and structural innovation.

It was not until well into the post-World War II period – in the 1950s – that the A-frame finally shed its image as an idiom associated with tents and other ephemeral structures and evolved into a more widely accepted style for permanent buildings. Its ascent coincided with the phenomenal growth of the economy after World War II, which thrust more American families squarely into the parameters of the middle class and provided them with more expendable income. At this time there was also a growing emphasis on recreation and leisure, which encouraged many upwardly mobile American households to direct their expendable income toward a new, inexpensive vacation home away from the city.²⁹⁷ Mountain cabins and similar types of temporary accommodations were symbolic of the upward mobility and economic prosperity that so strongly characterized American society in the years after the war.

The A-frame proved well-suited to this type of building and became closely associated with the architecture of postwar vacation homes; not only did it connote an intrinsic connection to nature, but its simplicity and ease of construction also rendered it attainable to middle-class American households who elected to invest in the construction of a second home.²⁹⁸ It could easily be altered, expanded, reconfigured, or customized to accommodate a variety of tastes and household needs. Prefabricated A-frame vacation houses were prominently featured in plan books and popular magazines such as *Sunset*, *Better Homes and Gardens* and *House Beautiful*, further perpetuating the idiom’s popularity.

²⁹⁶ Randl, *A-Frame*, 27.

²⁹⁷ Chad Garrett Randl, “The Mania for A-Frames,” *Old House Journal* (July-August 2004): 72-79.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

A-frame buildings bore a strong association with recreation, leisure, and the natural environment, so given Los Angeles's urbanized character, the A-frame was never a particularly prolific architectural style in the city. However, the style's unconventional composition and geometric volumes dovetailed with the tenets of the Modern architectural movement that was swiftly reshaping the city and its built environment. Occasionally it was incorporated into the design of new single-family houses that were commissioned by progressive-minded clients and located in areas of the city, such as Brentwood, Bel Air, and the hillside communities of the San Fernando Valley that are more naturalistic in setting.



Left: 2401 Silver Ridge Avenue; Right: 4026 Elderbank Drive (HistoricPlacesLA)

On occasion these A-frame houses were architect-designed such as the Sid and Jan Stebel Residence at 1963 N Mandeville Canyon Road in Brentwood (1962, extant), which was designed by notable architect Harry Gesner. However, given their relative simplicity they were more often than not designed and constructed by contractors or even sometimes by the property owners themselves, some of whom were aided by the prefabricated kits and pattern books from which these houses were often derived.

By the early 1960s, A-frame buildings were still perceived as something of an oddity but on the whole had become more widely accepted by the American public, due largely to their promotion in architectural pattern books and popular magazines. As the A-frame became increasingly familiar, its aesthetic made its way into the design of tract housing and other types of development that were more accessible to the general public than the private, custom A-frame houses that were tucked far back in hillside neighborhoods. Seminal California developer Joseph Eichler notably incorporated the A-frame's dramatic



1335 Shadybrook Drive (Historic PlacesLA)

roofline into many of the mass-produced subdivisions that he developed in the postwar years, including the Balboa Highlands development in the Granada Hills neighborhood 1964 (listed as a City Historic-Preservation Overlay Zone). Working with noted Modern architects A. Quincy Jones and Frederick Emmons, Eichler took the building blocks of high-style Modernism and applied them to his large housing tracts as part of his quest to make good design available to the masses.²⁹⁹ Houses within the Balboa Highlands development “generally exhibit four basic models with three roofline types: flat, A-frame, or slant.”³⁰⁰ Accordingly, many of the houses in the development have primary façades that are dominated by steeply pitched triangular roofs, most of which provide ingress via an open atrium courtyard. Though these houses are not true-to-form examples of A-frame buildings, they are nonetheless predicated on the A-frame model.

Though it is a construction method and a style most closely associated with residential design, the A-frame adapted to some commercial buildings and developed a particularly strong association with roadside commerce. It is little surprise that a nexus between the A-frame and roadside businesses emerged, as the bold geometries associated with A-frame buildings lent themselves well to businesses that aspired to draw the attention of passing motorists. Even at their peak, “triangular buildings were still odd enough to attract attention,” and at a time when design restrictions were more lax, an A-frame commercial building could easily stand out as the boldest architectural statement on the block.³⁰¹



*Balboa Highlands Historic Preservation Overlay Zone,
Granada Hills (HistoricPlacesLA)*

²⁹⁹ Patricia Ward Biederman, “Community is Credited with Integration of Valley Housing,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 23, 1985.

³⁰⁰ Los Angeles Conservancy, “Balboa Highlands,” accessed September 2019.

³⁰¹ Randl, *A-Frame*, 127.

These simple and somewhat diminutive, yet distinctive A-frame buildings peppered many of Los Angeles's preeminent commercial corridors, particularly those that were located in areas of the city that experienced considerable growth after World War II. They were typically occupied by businesses that catered to the motoring public and relied upon bold, visual iconography to attract the attention of passersby such as motels, restaurants, and fast food stands. Small, independent businesses including Lee's Liquors in the Beverly Grove/Wilshire area



Lee's Liquors, 8572 W 3rd Street (HistoricPlacesLA)

(1957) applied the A-frame's steep, jutting roofs and triangular forms to the design of their buildings, presumably in an attempt to draw attention from afar. This building is demonstrative of how the A-frame eventually became more widely accepted by the general public and incorporated into the commercial vernacular.

Larger companies also relied upon the distinctive, eye-catching aesthetic of the A-frame to attract customers and serve as iconic symbols of their business. By the early 1960s, A-frame buildings had become closely associated with the brand image of two companies in particular: Whataburger, a Texas-based hamburger chain, and (Der) Wienerschnitzel, a Southern California-based fast food chain that was founded in the Wilmington community and specializes in hot dogs.³⁰² As Der Wienerschnitzel expanded in the 1960s, it adopted the A-frame as its prototype to instill a sense of brand familiarity among consumers. Founder John Galardi explained that the A-frame's quirky, triangular form "doubled the exposure of the building. It looked like a billboard lowered onto the street."³⁰³ Der Wienerschnitzel restaurants were instantly recognizable by their dramatic A-frame forms, aluminum shingled roofs, and ketchup-red and mustard-yellow color palette. Later iterations of this prototype included a drive-thru lane that transected the building's A-frame form.³⁰⁴ Other restaurant chains, including the soft-serve ice cream chain Tastee Freez, also incorporated the A-frame into its corporate design.



Der Wienerschnitzel's A-frame prototype (Wienerschnitzel)

³⁰² "A-Frame Chains and Other Eateries," accessed January 2018.

³⁰³ Randl, *A-Frame*, 134; Philip Langdon, *Orange Roofs, Golden Arches: The Architecture of American Chain Restaurants* (New York: Knopf, 1986), 97.

³⁰⁴ Randl, *A-Frame*, 134.

Extant examples of A-frame Wienerschnitzel restaurants are interspersed throughout the city and are largely found along major thoroughfares. Most, including locations in Valley Village (1968), Canoga Park (1968) and the Wilshire area (1967) continue to house Wienerschnitzel franchises.³⁰⁵ Others, including a location in Eagle Rock (1966), have changed hands but are still used as fast food eateries.³⁰⁶



Wienerschnitzel, 20925 W Sherman Way (HistoricPlacesLA)

Elements of the A-frame idiom were sometimes incorporated into the design of postwar churches. A number of theories have been posited as to why the A-frame and its emphatic roof peak resonated so strongly with churches and churchgoers at this time, some of which are symbolic and others that are more pragmatic. To some, the A-frame's triangular form stood as "a three-dimensional representation of the Holy Trinity."³⁰⁷ Others interpreted the A-frame as a modern-day take on the Gothic cathedral, boiled down to its essential characteristics of bold, vertical volumes.³⁰⁸ On a more practical level, churches needed new, larger buildings to house more congregants, and the A-frame offered a way for these churches to create dramatic, expressive spaces with limited resources. By the 1960s it was common for churches to utilize the A-frame to create soaring sanctuary spaces. Due to the somewhat difficult nature of demising interior spaces within the triangle, other functions such as parish halls, kitchens, and offices tended to be located in a wing projecting from the A-frame.³⁰⁹ Often, these churches and ecclesiastical buildings included other expressionistic characteristics that are more closely associated with the Mid-Century Modern style, though they clearly exhibited elements of the A-frame.

The Epiphany Lutheran Free Church in Canoga Park (1957), designed by architect Edward Davies, and St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church in Studio City (1964), designed by architects Jones and Emmons, are demonstrative of this trend. Though these churches are more visually aligned with the expressionistic variant of the Mid-Century Modern style, there is clear evidence of A-frame construction methods in their designs.

³⁰⁵ The Der Wienerschnitzel company was re-branded as "Wienerschnitzel" in 1977.

³⁰⁶ Now Original Tommy's World Famous Hamburgers.

³⁰⁷ Randl, *A-Frame*, 137.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 138.



Left: Epiphany Lutheran Free Church, 7769 N Topanga Canyon Boulevard (HistoricPlacesLA); Right: St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church, 3650 N Coldwater Canyon Avenue (Architectural Resources Group)

A-frame construction was also sometimes incorporated into other architectural styles that were characterized by dramatic roof forms. Specifically, this method of construction was often utilized in Tiki/Polynesian architecture, an obscure derivative of the Exotic Revival movement that had a fleeting moment of popularity in the 1950s and 1960s.³¹⁰ Tiki/Polynesian style buildings specifically incorporated the A-frame's steeply-pitched roofs that extended to the ground and also functioned as exterior walls.



Left: Canoga Island Village, 8838 Independence Avenue; Right: Stoney Point Apartments, 10445 Canoga Avenue (HistoricPlacesLA)

Like other iterations of postwar Modernism, A-frame buildings began to dwindle in popularity in the 1970s. Since this idiom had now been around for several decades, it lost some of its allure and was no longer perceived as especially unusual or expressive. *Sunset*, *House Beautiful*, and other popular magazines that had once promoted the A-frame moved on to new trends in architecture, and many of the companies that manufactured prefabricated A-frame kits went out of business. The modern

³¹⁰ See also the "Tiki/Polynesian" subtheme of the Architecture and Engineering" context.

environmental movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s took aim at new development in natural settings and, by proxy, also stymied the construction of A-frame vacation homes. Energy crises in the 1970s only exacerbated these issues, as the double-height interior spaces and thin roofs characteristic of A-frame buildings were not particularly efficient.³¹¹

³¹¹ Randl, *A-Frame*, 163-168.

ELIGIBILITY STANDARDS FOR A-FRAME BUILDINGS, 1954-1975

Summary Statement of Significance:	Resources evaluated under this sub-theme are excellent examples of the A-Frame style and type, and exhibit quality of design through distinctive features. A-frame buildings are defined by their steeply-pitched triangular roof forms that extend partway or entirely to the ground and also serve as exterior walls. They are notable for experimenting with new structural methods, and for representing postwar architects' aspiration to create an idiom that was simple, efficient, and easy to assemble. Early on, A-frame buildings were associated with vacation homes and evoked a sense of recreation and leisure. However, as the idiom became more widely accepted it was often used in the design of roadside commercial buildings and churches due to its bold geometries and expressive qualities. A-frame buildings were never constructed on a large scale; relatively few examples were built in Los Angeles. The style was most commonly applied to the design of custom single-family houses; however, as it matured its aesthetic was also incorporated into the architecture of roadside commercial properties, as its jutting roofline was a visually provocative feature that attracted passing motorists.		
Period of Significance:	1954-1975		
Period of Significance Justification:	Consistent with its rise in popularity after World War II, all known examples of A-frame buildings in Los Angeles were constructed between the 1950s and 1960s. The period of significance for this theme begins in 1954, when the first known examples of A-frame buildings were constructed in the city, and ends in 1975, by which point the style had firmly fallen out of favor among the public.		
Geographical Location(s):	Sparsely citywide. Residential examples are generally found in hillside communities such as Pacific Palisades, Brentwood, and Bel Air. Commercial and institutional examples are generally found along major vehicular corridors in the San Fernando Valley.		
Area(s) of Significance:	Architecture		
Criterion:	NR: C	CR: 3	Local: 3
Associated Property Types:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Residential – Single-Family Residence▪ Commercial▪ Institutional		

Property Type Description:	Associated property types in Los Angeles are single-family residences, and low-scale commercial buildings. Most are one story in height and the “A” comprises the main volume of the building. Elements of the A-frame construction method can also be found on some churches.
Property Type Significance:	See Summary Statement of Significance above.
Eligibility Standards:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Exhibits quality of design through distinctive features▪ Is an excellent example of the A-frame building type and style▪ Was constructed during the period of significance
Character-Defining Features/Associative Features:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance▪ One story in height▪ Triangular shape▪ Steeply sloping roof that extends all or partway to the ground on two sides▪ Deep-set eaves▪ Few vertical wall surfaces▪ Large windows or groups of windows on front or rear façades▪ For the National Register, must possess exceptional importance if less than 50 years of age
Integrity Considerations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Should retain integrity of Design, Materials, Workmanship, and Feeling from the period of significance▪ Retains sufficient integrity to convey significance▪ Setting may have changed (surrounding buildings and land uses)▪ Original use may have changed▪ Some windows and doors may have been replaced, as long as openings have not been altered and original fenestration patterns have not been disrupted▪ Signage may have been replaced

SUBTHEME: Googie, 1949-1970

The Googie style (at times referred to elsewhere in the United States as “Doo-Wop” or “Populuxe”) is a variant of postwar Modernism that is notable for its exceptionally bold, eye-catching forms and hyper-stylized appearance. First appearing in the late 1940s, the style became visually synonymous with the architecture of coffee shops, car washes, gas stations, bowling alleys, drive-in theaters, and other common types of commercial properties that either catered to the automobile or sought to draw the attention of passing motorists.³¹² The Googie style softened the rigid, machined lines of the International style by making use of organic shapes and new materials, resulting in an unpretentious variant of postwar Modernism that was manifest in the design of everyday building types.

Googie style buildings are notable for their individual architectural flourishes, but all are rooted in a cadre of common characteristics that render the style visually distinctive. Buildings designed in the Googie style are typically one-story, slung low toward the ground and surrounded by ample parking. They were capped by prominent rooflines that incorporated expressive geometric forms like the butterfly roof, zig zags and folded plates, and hyperbolic paraboloids. Façades were deliberately off-kilter and asymmetrical; exterior walls featured large plate glass windows and were clad with an eclectic mix of materials including wood, stucco, stone, and terrazzo. They often featured exaggerated design elements like boomerangs, starbursts, flying saucers, and diagrammatic parabolas and atoms – many of which made overt reference to Space Age travel and other futuristic themes.

Modern materials like stainless steel, plate glass, Formica, and plastics were often integrated into the design of Googie style buildings to enhance their distinctive, colorful character. The eye-catching forms of these buildings were often augmented by equally bold and flamboyant signage that complemented the Googie style architecture and were intended to attract the attention of passersby.

The visual vocabulary of the Googie style was influenced by, and responded to, the ascent of the car and car culture. Across the nation, and particularly in Southern California, architecture and urban design were evolving before and after World War II to account for the fact that American society was increasingly going about the activities of daily lives in cars. The architecture of shopping, entertainment, dining, banking, and other commercial uses evolved accordingly. Equally, the businesses that were required to sell or service the car itself – gas and service stations, tire stores, repair shops, car washes, and dealerships – developed their own brand of car-oriented architecture. These businesses were strung along the long vehicular arteries that had become an integral part of the postwar suburban metropolis, and increasingly they made use of bold, dynamic forms and motifs to draw the attention of passersby.³¹³

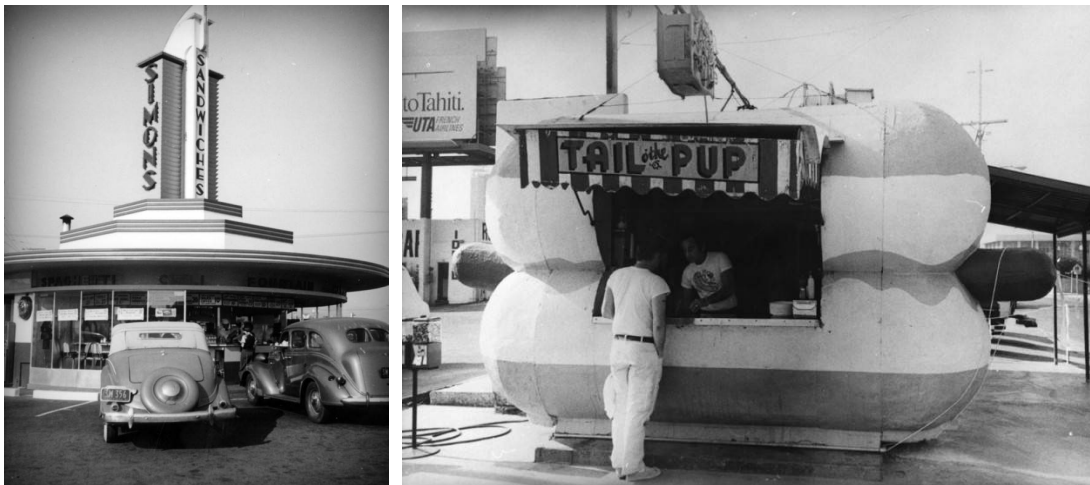
The Googie style was also influenced by American society’s intrigue with modernity, progress, and technology in the mid-twentieth century, sometimes in very overt ways. During the Atomic Age – which

³¹² Matt Novak, “Googie: Architecture of the Space Age,” *Smithsonian*, June 15, 2012, accessed January 2018.

³¹³ Alan Hess, *Googie Redux: Ultramodern Roadside Architecture* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2004), 22-25. See also the “Commercial Development and the Automobile” theme of the “Commercial Development” context.

is generally defined as the period between the 1940s and mid-1960s – the United States was asserting itself as a world leader in the areas of atomic weaponry and space travel, and Americans were increasingly captivated by, and optimistic about, the future. Themes such as rocket ships, spaceflight, and nuclear energy became increasingly salient, and their visual cues became ever-more-integrated into architecture and various other aspects of popular culture. In the 1950s, consumer goods took on a futuristic aesthetic. During this time, “manufacturers built vehicles with ornamental tailfins. Upswept roofs and parabolas cropped up on buildings. Logos incorporated starbursts and satellite shapes, while parallelograms, wings, and free-form boomerangs became the motel sign shapes *du jour*.”³¹⁴

Those working in the Googie style also drew inspiration from two broad trends in pre-World War II commercial design: the Streamline Moderne movement and Programmatic/Mimetic architecture. Like the Googie style would do a generation later, the Streamline Moderne movement of the 1930s and early 1940s took American society’s captivation with technology and progress – which was expressed through industrial design and the streamlined aesthetic of ships and airplanes – and transposed it into an architectural vocabulary. Architect and architectural historian Alan Hess remarks that Streamline Moderne’s “modern image, its affinity for the speed and sleekness of the car made it an appropriate style for a totally new building type created by the car culture,” and describes its application to commercial buildings as “a convincing dress rehearsal for the democratic technological future of the 1950s” expressed through the Googie style.³¹⁵ Programmatic or Mimetic style commercial buildings, which quite literally took the form of the product or service they represented, exhibited bold, eye catching forms and flamboyant architectural features that were very clearly intended to draw the attention of motorists passing by at high rates of speed – which was also a resonant theme of the Googie style.



The Googie style drew inspiration from earlier iterations of roadside commercial architecture including the Streamline Moderne style (left, Simon's Drive-In) and Programmatic/Mimetic design (right, Tail 'o the Pup); neither is extant (Los Angeles Public Library).

³¹⁴ Denise Ngo, “Archive Gallery: How the Space Age Influenced Design,” *Popular Science*, October 3, 2017.

³¹⁵ Alan Hess, *Googie: Fifties Coffee Shop Architecture* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1985), 19.

By the 1940s, these factors had coalesced into a distinctive architectural vocabulary that was first manifest in the design of coffee shops that were designed by the noted local architects Douglas Honnold and John Lautner. Notes Hess, the roots of the Googie style “are traceable to three Coffee Dan’s restaurants that John Lautner designed while working with Douglas Honnold during the early forties.”³¹⁶ Two Coffee Dan’s locations in Hollywood (not extant) – one near the intersection of Hollywood Boulevard and Highland Avenue, the second near Sunset Boulevard and Vine Street - were especially expressive buildings that helped to introduce the tenets of what would later become known as the Googie style. The Vine Street location of Coffee Dan’s “had an upsloping ceiling that jutted out across the sidewalk to hold the sign; with a floor to ceiling glass sheet and an angled glass entry, Lautner made the façade disappear, uniting inside and outside.”³¹⁷ These sharp angles and jutting forms were continued inside of the restaurant, further adding to its visual interest and sense of liveliness. In 1949, at the corner of Sunset Boulevard and La Brea Avenue in Hollywood, Honnold designed an equally curious coffee shop called Tiny Naylor’s (not extant), whose angular roof cantilevered out over the front of the building in dramatic fashion and resembled the form of a spaceship that touched down mid-flight. Like Coffee Dan’s, Tiny Naylor’s is generally considered to be an early and influential example of the Googie aesthetic. Hess aptly notes that “its delta wings made it as modern as the latest jet.”³¹⁸



Tiny Naylor's in Hollywood, not extant (Los Angeles Public Library)

However, one Los Angeles coffee shop in particular lent impetus and eventually its name to this distinctive idiom of commercial architecture: Googie's (not extant), which was designed by Lautner in 1949 and located at the corner of Sunset and Crescent Heights boulevards, on the western flank of Hollywood. Googie's was an especially flamboyant edifice, as described by Hess:

³¹⁶ Ibid., 64.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 67.

Googie's red-painted roof of economical steel decking ran from the rear of the lot toward the street, where it shot upward in a jagged-edged leap that broke free of the rest of the building's geometry...the entire building was restless: planes of steel, stucco, and glass were pulled apart; the roofline was propped up on rectangular fins set at an angle and cut back at the top, so that they only barely touched the roof. Diagonals ran through the design, from oblique lines in the flooring (which added kinetic direction and the illusion of width to the narrow interior) to the corrugations of the steel roof.³¹⁹

Googie's was certainly a curiosity to passersby, and its exceptionally expressive and flamboyant design captured society's captivation with the future and also the exuberance that became a hallmark characteristic of the Googie style. The building famously attracted the attention of the architecture critic Douglas Haskell, who in 1952 drove by the building, stopped the car, and took note of what he perceived as its ostentation. He coined the term "Googie" to describe this emergent style of coffee shop modern architecture in a 1952 article in *House and Home* magazine. The name stuck; the coffee shops and commercial buildings that embodied this futuristic aesthetic were thereafter described as Googie.³²⁰



Matchbook from Googie's restaurant in Hollywood (Online Archive of California)

By the 1950s, the Googie style had become the dominant mode of architecture for coffee shops and casual dining establishments. These bold, futuristic coffee shops were designed in the same architectural vein as Googie's and other early Lautner designs, and were developed along the network of boulevards that traversed the city and were becoming corridors of roadside commerce amid the rapid growth that transformed Los Angeles and its environs into a vast metropolis after World War II. Googie style coffee shops can be found throughout Los Angeles, but are largely concentrated in the San Fernando Valley, in Westside communities, and in other part of the city that experienced considerable growth during the

³¹⁹ Alan Hess, *Googie Redux*, 73.

³²⁰ Novak, "Googie: Architecture of the Space Age."

postwar period. Dinah's Family Restaurant (1957) and Pann's Coffee Shop (1957), both in the Westchester community, are excellent, intact examples of the Googie style's application to a casual dining context. Dinah's features expansive, floor-to-ceiling plate glass windows, flagstone accents, and an elliptical volume that protrudes outward and emulates the form of a space ship. Pann's is notable for its immense, hovering "tortoise shell" roof, expansive plate glass walls, and an animated neon sign that projects from the building into the sky.³²¹ Hess remarks that restaurants like Dinah's and Pann's "were places where George Jetson and Fred Flinstone could meet over a cup of coffee."³²²

As the style matured, some Los Angeles architects carved out a niche in the design of Googie style buildings. Chief among them was the firm of Armet and Davis, which was established in 1947 by architects Louis Armet and Eldon Davis. While Armet and Davis did not invent the Googie style, their eponymous firm played an instrumental role in refining, and popularizing its futuristic aesthetic and is credited with designing some 4,000 Googie style coffee shops across the United States.³²³ The quintessential Armet and Davis coffee shop is defined by undulating forms, dramatically angled roofs, wide expanses of floor-to-ceiling plate glass, and dynamic signage – all features that were intended to draw the eye and lure in the average, middle-income diner.³²⁴ Several of Los Angeles's best known, extant Googie style coffee shops were designed by Armet and Davis including Kerry's Coffee Shop (now Mel's Drive In) at 14848 W Ventura Boulevard in Sherman Oaks (1953), Romeo's Times Square Coffee Shop (now Johnie's Coffee Shop) at 6101 W Wilshire Boulevard in the Miracle Mile area (1956, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1045), and the aforementioned Pann's Coffee Shop at 6710 S La Tijera Boulevard in Westchester (1957). Johnie's Coffee Shop is often considered to be one of their finest examples of the Googie style, with distinguishing characteristics including a sharply angled roof with incandescent lighting, abundant plate glass, and bold signage with period typeface.³²⁵



Top: Dinah's Family Restaurant, 6521 S Sepulveda Boulevard;
Bottom: Pann's Coffee Shop, 6710 S La Tijera Boulevard
(HistoricPlacesLA)

³²¹ Los Angeles Conservancy, "Pann's Coffee Shop," accessed September 2019.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Valerie J. Nelson, "Eldon Davis Dies at 94; Architect Designed 'Googie' Coffee Shops," *Los Angeles Times*, April 26, 2011.

³²⁴ Los Angeles Conservancy, "Armet & Davis," accessed September 2019.

³²⁵ Los Angeles Conservancy, "Johnie's Coffee Shop," accessed September 2019.

The Googie style became inextricably linked to the public face of notable coffee shop companies in the 1950s and 60s. Armet and Davis were commissioned to design prototypes for restaurant chains including Denny's, Bob's Big Boy, and Norms that were all predicated on their signature Googie style.³²⁶ Several of these prototypical Googie restaurants are extant and, in many instances, have remained in continuous operation by their respective chain. Known examples of prototypical Denny's, with their signature heavy, hovering roofs, glazed exterior walls, and subtropical landscape plantings, are found in Sherman Oaks at 12907 Ventura Boulevard (1960), in North Hollywood at 5612 Tujunga Avenue (1967) and in West Van Nuys at 15540 Roscoe Boulevard (1967). An Armet and Davis-designed Norms restaurant in Beverly Grove at 470 N La Cienega Boulevard (1957, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1090) is notable for its dramatic diamond-shaped roofline that makes the building look like it is in motion, sleek glass walls, and monumental saw tooth pennant sign that was replicated across the Norms family of restaurants and was an important part of the company's brand.³²⁷ The La Cienega location is also notable as the longest operation location within the Norms chain.³²⁸



*Norms Coffee Shop, 470 N La Cienega Boulevard,
L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1090 (Architectural Resources Group)*

Capitalizing on the style's success with the American public, other types of companies began incorporating elements of Googie architecture into their prototypical designs. In the 1950s, commercial architect Stanley Clark Meston developed a now-infamous prototype for the McDonald's chain that featured uplifted roofs, canted plate glass façades, large neon signage donning corporate imagery, and two enormous parabolic arches that pierced the roof and extended up into the sky.³²⁹ In the 1960s, the

³²⁶ Nelson, "Eldon Davis Dies at 94."

³²⁷ Norms, "Our Brand Story," accessed September 2019.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Dirk Sutro, "Architect's Arches Got the Job Done," *Los Angeles Times*, January 5, 1989.

Safeway chain of grocery stores rolled out several prototypes that were not explicitly Googie, but incorporated elements of the style, such as paraboloid roofs, that referenced its futuristic precepts. In addition to coffee shops and casual restaurants, the Googie style was applied with regularity to the numerous new bowling alleys that were constructed in the postwar era. With its bold, geometric forms and eye-catching architectural features, the Googie style was well-suited to these bowling centers' quest "to create instant landmarks in the new suburbs and to announce a clear improvement from the dingy bowling alleys of the past."³³⁰ The typical bowling alley of the 1950s and 60s was a hulking, unarticulated box of a building that lacked much in the way of articulation, but featured exceptionally exuberant primary facades and signage that made use of the stylistic tendencies and kitschy trappings of the Googie aesthetic for all that they were worth. From the street, then, these buildings appeared as bold, dramatic edifices that beckoned in potential bowlers as they passed by on the street, and also signified the newfound role that bowling alleys played in the social fabric of suburban communities. Remarks Hess, "in many suburbs without much infrastructure, these private enterprises became the first public community centers. Besides offering bowling, the alleys were places where Boy Scout troops met in the meeting rooms, banquets were held, and the attached coffee shops were social hubs."³³¹

Once ubiquitous, Googie style bowling alleys have become increasingly rare in Los Angeles. Changes in public taste over time have led many proprietors to substantially remodel these properties, stripping them of their essential Googie style characteristics; others have been demolished to make way for new development. Most extant Googie style bowling alleys are located in areas that experienced the overwhelming majority of postwar suburban growth, including the San Fernando Valley and Westside neighborhoods. Known examples include the Mission Hills Bowl in Mission Hills (1957), designed by Martin Stern, Jr., Mar Vista Lanes in Mar Vista (1959), designed by Armet and Davis, and Woodlake Lanes in Woodland Hills (1960). All ascribe to the basic vocabulary of Googie style bowling centers in which large, utilitarian boxes are exceptionally articulated on street-facing facades with geometric motifs and other architectural features that make overt reference to the future. Others have been retained only in part. The Corbin Bowl in Tarzana (1957), has been substantially remodeled,



Top: Mission Hills Bowl, 10430 N Sepulveda Boulevard;
Bottom: Woodlake Lanes, 23130 W Ventura Boulevard
(HistoricPlacesLA)

³³⁰ Hess, *Googie Redux*, 60. See the "Post WWII Commercial Recreation" theme of the "Commercial Development" context.

³³¹ Ibid.

though its iconic neon pole sign remains; and the Holiday Bowl in the Crenshaw area of South Los Angeles (1958, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 688), designed by Armet and Davis and Helen Liu Fong, has been demolished aside from its coffee shop. The bowling alley itself was razed in 2003 for a new shopping center.³³²



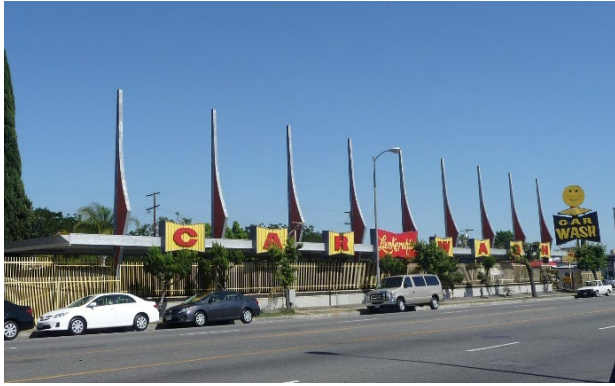
*The Holiday Bowl Coffee Shop, 3722 S Crenshaw Boulevard,
L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 688 (HistoricPlacesLA)*

The Googie style was also often expressed in the context of roadside commercial properties that explicitly catered to the car and car services, most notably car washes.³³³ Car washes that were constructed in the 1950s and 60s often exhibited characteristics of the Googie style in order “to draw drivers off of major thoroughfares for a quick clean and shine.”³³⁴ These car washes are not buildings in the conventional sense, but are rather highly articulated sheds that were principally designed to shelter the washing apparatuses, cashier booths, and waiting areas. They are typically long, horizontal structures that span the better part of a block; are punctuated by tall, angular pylons or tailfins that project far above the roof and are visible from afar; and feature exaggerated signs that are commonly emblazoned with neon and feature distinctive geometric forms that correspond to those used on the building itself. Given their relative simplicity and utilitarian function, most Googie style car washes were contractor built as opposed to architect-designed. Like other commercial property types that are associated with the style, most extant examples are located on major vehicular thoroughfares in areas of the city that witnessed a considerable amount of postwar suburban development. Examples of Googie car washes include Lankershim Car Wash in North Hollywood (1963), the Magic Minute Car Wash in South Los Angeles (1964), and the Canoga Park Hand Carwash in Canoga Park (1960).

³³² Ryan Reft, “Not Bowling Alone: How the Holiday Bowl in Crenshaw Became an Integrated Leisure Space,” *KCET*, August 22, 2013.

³³³ For more information on car washed see the “Commercial Development and the Automobile” theme of the “Commercial Development” context.

³³⁴ Los Angeles Conservancy, “Five Points Car Wash,” accessed September 2019.



Top left: Lankershim Car Wash, 6622 N Lankershim Boulevard; Top right: Magic Minute Car Wash, 1929 W Manchester Avenue; Bottom: Canoga Park Hand Carwash, 21008 W Sherman Way (HistoricPlacesLA)

Googie was, first and foremost, a commercial style that was directed at attracting the attention of consumers by tapping into their modern sensibilities, their captivation with progress and technology, and their reliance on the automobile. However, on occasion elements of the style were woven into other development contexts. A particularly notable example of this trend is the Theme Building at Los Angeles International Airport (1961, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 570), designed by Gin Wong of the firm of Pereira and Luckman, with contributions from Paul R. Williams and Welton Becket. Arguably one of Los Angeles's most recognizable examples of postwar Modern architecture, this building features a futuristic, flying saucer-shaped restaurant that is suspended from two massive crossed steel arches.

While the building's overall appearance toes the line between the Googie style and the closely related Mid-Century Modern style, its overt visual references to aeronautics and Space Age travel are unequivocally Googie in origin.

Perhaps more than any other variant of postwar Modernism, Googie was a vernacular dialect of the Modern movement that was accessible to the masses. Hess remarks that the style was not applied to custom houses for the well-to-do, but was applied to "coffee shops, gas stations, car washes,



Theme Building, Los Angeles International Airport, 201 W World Way, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 570 (HistoricPlacesLA)

banks...the average buildings of everyday life that people of that period used and lived in. And it brought the spirit of the modern age to their daily lives." However, popular as it was with the public, Googie was often chided by those in academic circles, who saw the style's aesthetic as tacky and garish, a result of Modernism and its creative aspirations run completely amok. Douglas Haskell, who had coined the term Googie in 1952, expressed ambivalence about the style and was uncomfortable with what he saw as its excesses.³³⁵ The eminent Modernist Paul Rudolph once remarked how his education at Yale University "saved" him from the gimmicky tendencies of the Googie style, casting the style and its vernacular bent as dense and uncouth. Writing in 1976, author and architectural historian Esther McCoy put it bluntly by stating that "Googie was used as a synonym for undisciplined design and sloppy workmanship."³³⁶

The Googie style had fallen out of favor by the late 1960s. By this time, the nation's architectural culture had changed. The American public was no longer as captivated by ideas like space travel and nuclear energy, and aspects of the future that had once engendered excitement among the public were now seen as mundane and effete.³³⁷ The burgeoning environmental movement, which came of age at about this time, emphasized the virtues of stewardship and responsibility and dissuaded people from engaging in the excess that was manifest in the Googie style. The style was no longer used at all after about 1970.

³³⁵ Hess, *Googie: Fifties Coffee Shop Architecture*, 61-62.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 63.

³³⁷ Novak, "Googie: Architecture of the Space Age."

ELIGIBILITY STANDARDS FOR GOOGIE, 1949-1970

Summary Statement of Significance:	Resources evaluated under this sub-theme are significant in the area of Architecture as excellent examples of the Googie style and exhibit quality of design through distinctive features. Googie style architecture featured a variety of remarkably bold and eye-catching elements that were intended to attract the attention of passing motorists, and tapped into society's fascination with modernity and progress. Its bold forms and colors became synonymous with the proliferation of Southern California car culture after World War II, and became the public face of roadside businesses like coffee shops, bowling alleys, gas stations, and motels. Googie was a distinctively commercial variant of postwar Modernism and was rarely applied to other types of properties; its aesthetic was intended to appeal to the general public and was seen as a vernacular idiom, as opposed to the more academic nature of the International style and other, more rigid variants of Modernism.		
Period of Significance:	1949-1970		
Period of Significance Justification:	Googie style architecture was popular in the years immediately following World War II. The period of significance for this theme begins in 1949, when the earliest known examples of the style were constructed, and ends in 1970, by which time the style had fallen out of favor as a choice for commercial architecture.		
Geographical Location(s):	Citywide, with concentrations along major postwar thoroughfares in the San Fernando Valley, Wilshire, and west Los Angeles.		
Area(s) of Significance:	Architecture		
Criterion:	NR: C	CR: 3	Local: 3
Associated Property Types:	▪ Commercial		
Property Type Description:	Googie is a style that was applied almost exclusively to commercial buildings that catered, either directly or indirectly, to the automobile. Most are one story in height and feature exaggerated rooflines, bold color schemes, and expressive signage.		
Property Type Significance:	See Summary Statement of Significance above.		

Eligibility Standards:

- Exhibits quality of design through distinctive features
- Is an excellent example of Googie architecture
- Was constructed during the period of significance

**Character-Defining
Features/Associative Features:**

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
- One story in height
- Building forms may display sharp angles and sweeping curves
- Dramatic rooflines taking on a variety of shapes:
 - Hyperbolic paraboloids, zig-zag folded plates, butterfly, cantilever, etc.
- Variety of materials including stucco, brick, stone, wood, lava rock, flagstone/flagcrete, terrazzo, ceramic tile
- Extensive use of glass, such as floor-to-ceiling plate glass windows
- Entry canopies, often cantilevered or suspended
- Exaggerated signs, either on pylons or attached to the roofline
- Extensive landscaping, with integrated planters and exterior lighting
- Use of exaggerated design elements such as boomerang shapes and starbursts
- For the National Register, property must possess exceptional importance if less than 50 years of age

Integrity Considerations:

- Should retain integrity of Design, Materials, Workmanship, and Feeling from the period of significance
- Retains sufficient integrity to convey significance
- Rooflines may not have been altered
- Original use may have changed
- Original signage may have been replaced
- Setting may have changed (surrounding buildings and land uses)
- Some windows and doors may have been replaced, as long as openings have not been altered and original fenestration patterns have not been disrupted
- Some landscape elements may have been altered
- Generally signs should be intact but altered signs should not disqualify a property from consideration

SUBTHEME: New Formalism, 1960-1975

New Formalism is typically regarded as the most historically-oriented of the postwar Modern styles. It broke from the minimalism and structural expressionism that were so closely associated with the postwar Modern movement and incorporated Classical forms, proportions, and motifs into its aesthetic.

By the mid-1950s, the International Style and related interpretations of Modernism had firmly asserted their role in the American architectural lexicon. Some architects, though, began expressing consternation with the rigid austerity and stringent design principles associated with these styles, which they began to criticize as banal, expressionless, and overly formulaic.³³⁸ In response, these architects incorporated some of the essential tenants of Beaux Arts Classicism into their architectural vocabulary, albeit in somewhat modified form as to complement the prevailing Modern aesthetic of the era.

What resulted was a hybrid between the aesthetic principles belying Modernism and those associated with Classicism that came to be known as New Formalism. Those who worked in this idiom were afforded a degree of expressive freedom that they could not otherwise exercise within the parameters of orthodox Modernism and the International style. That there was any common ground between these two schools of architecture seemed somewhat counterintuitive on its face, given that Modernism was rooted in the staunch rejection of past architectural traditions. However, by manipulating and stylizing essential Classical forms, materials, and motifs, architects successfully created an idiom that reaped “the advantages of the past while adapting technology and popular features of the present.”³³⁹

New Formalist style buildings are defined by their monumental scale and powerful visual presence. Their architects typically employed large volumes, rectangular massing, symmetrical façades, and full-height colonnades, often in combination with formal landscaped plazas to create designs that commanded attention. Buildings were often perched atop a podium or articulated base, which helped to reinforce this prevailing sense of monumentality. Classically derived details including arches, columns, and entablatures were frequently used, albeit in abstracted and highly stylized ways, to stress the fact that in spite of embracing and incorporating historical details, New Formalism was firmly rooted in Modern precepts. Often, these abstracted Classical architectural details were combined with geometric features and motifs that were unequivocally Modern such as honeycomb screens, shell forms, and folded plates.

Architectural historians David Gebhard and Robert Winter define New Formalism as follows:

The New Formalism (or neo-Palladianism) represents yet another 20th century effort to enjoy the advantages of the past and also the full advantages of the present. In this compromise the Miesian aesthetic of the Corporate International style returns to the Classical. Symmetry, classical proportions, arches, traditional rich materials such as

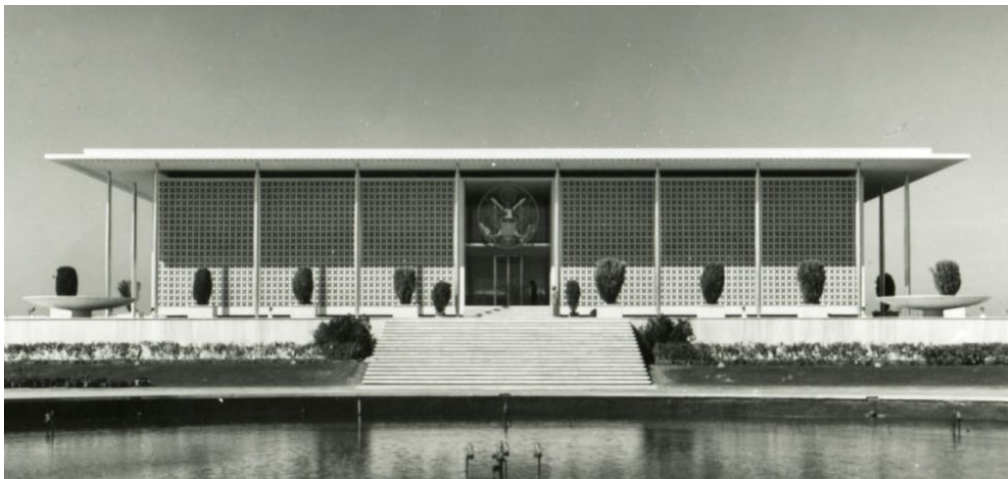
³³⁸ Utah Division of State History, “World War II/Post-War Building Styles,” accessed January 2018.

³³⁹ Docomomo Wewa, “New Formalism,” accessed January 2018.

marble and granite are now used. The form of the building often tends to be a symmetrical pavilion, set on a podium.³⁴⁰

Though formality has long been inextricably linked with American architecture and design, the roots of New Formalism within Modern architecture can be traced to the monumental classicism of civic architecture in the 1930s, particularly the fascist architecture of Italy and Germany. New Formalism was one aspect of the rebellious attitude of a new generation of architects, championed by Philip Johnson in the 1930s, as well as some of Walter Gropius's notable students including I.M. Pei and Walter Rudolf.³⁴¹ This new generation of architects, while accepting the aesthetic principles of the Modern movement and the International style, "denounced the tendency of functionalism to degenerate into sterility, and reasserted the primary value of architecture as art."³⁴²

Nationally, three notable architects are generally considered to be the progenitors of New Formalism: Philip Johnson, Minoru Yamasaki, and Edward Durell Stone.³⁴³ Of these three it was Stone whose career and body of work are arguably the most closely associated with the rise and spread of the New Formalism movement, and with the style's introduction to Los Angeles. In 1954, he designed a new embassy for the United States in New Delhi that broke from convention and is widely considered to be the world's first true-to-form New Formalist building.³⁴⁴ Stone's design embodied the essential characteristics that would come to define both his body of work and the New Formalism movement generally: set on a podium, the building exuded Classicism in its symmetry, massing, proportions, and colonnade, but did so by using modern methods and materials and by incorporating various motifs associated with traditional eastern architecture. The result was a new derivative of Modernism that was unequivocally Modern in its composition yet paid homage to the past.



Edward Durell Stone's U.S. Embassy in New Delhi (1954) is widely considered to be the first example of the New Formalist style (Docomomo).

³⁴⁰ Gebhard and Winter, *An Architectural Guidebook to Los Angeles*, 706-707.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² George S. Kyol, ed., *American Architects Directory* (New York: R.R. Bowker Co., 1962), 785.

³⁴³ Modernist L.A., "New Formalism," accessed January 2018; Docomomo Wewa, "New Formalism," accessed January 2018.

³⁴⁴ "Ten Things You Should Know About Edward Durell Stone," *Dwell* (December/January 2006), 124.

The new approach to Modern architecture, championed by Stone, marked a rather radical departure from the rigid orthodoxy of the Modern movement. It was also misunderstood and even reviled by some who felt that the incorporation of Classical elements veered too far away from the tenets of Modernism, rendering Stone something of a pariah in the area of Modern architecture. Some of the more doctrinaire Modernists “rejected his deviation from pure form through the use of historicist and romantic references and quirky surface embellishments,” though the idiom he championed had popular appeal.³⁴⁵

Stone continued to hone this aesthetic via other prominent buildings commissioned in the late 1950s, including the Stanford University Medical Center in Palo Alto (1955) and the United States pavilion at the 1958 Brussels World’s Fair (1957). He brought his brand of postwar Modernism to Southern California in the late 1950s, when in 1958 he designed a new industrial plant and office complex for the Stuart Pharmaceutical Company in Pasadena. Designed in his signature New Formalist style, the Stuart complex was lauded for its “timeless, eternal quality,” and much to the chagrin of his staunchest critics it earned accolades for the innovative quality of its design.³⁴⁶ The American Institute of Architects (AIA) selected the Stone-designed complex as one of the five best designs of that year.³⁴⁷

In Los Angeles, the New Formalist style was often expressed in the context of large-scale civic and institutional buildings that were intended to exude an overarching sense of formality. New Formalism was a choice especially befitting of academic campuses, which aimed to solidify their scholastic reputations while also promoting themselves as progressive, forward-reaching institutions. In the 1960s, as the University of Southern California (USC) entered into a period marked by swift institutional growth and the modernization of campus facilities, many of the new buildings and facilities that were constructed at its University Park campus very clearly incorporated the strict symmetry, Classical proportions, arched colonnades, and other formal elements typical of the New Formalist style.

The Olin Hall of Engineering (1963, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1054), designed by William Pereira and Associates, and the Von Kleinsmid Center (1967, L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1056), designed by Edward Durell Stone, are two exceptional examples of New Formalism on the USC campus. The architects of both buildings took various architectural features of classical origin, abstracted them, and deftly integrated them with modern building forms and methods, producing buildings that evinced the university’s modern aspirations while also paying homage to its past. These buildings also convey a visual sense of permanence and monumentality that has traditionally been associated with the USC campus and its requisite buildings.

³⁴⁵ Mary Anne Hunting, *Edward Durell Stone: Modernism’s Populist Architect* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2012), n.p.

³⁴⁶ Los Angeles Conservancy, “The Stuart Building,” accessed January 2018.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.



The Von Kleinsmid Center at the University of Southern California (1967), designed by Edward Durell Stone, is an excellent example of New Formalism's application to an institutional campus (USC Digital Libraries).

Though these buildings are both Modern at their core, they include features such as brick cladding, heavy cornices, and stylized colonnades that are reminiscent of the Classicism that had historically defined collegiate architecture. They also help to forge a strong visual connection between newer additions to campus and its older, more established buildings, many of which dated to the 1920s and embodied characteristics of the Romanesque Revival and other idioms that were steeped in precedent.

Another exceptional example of New Formalism in the context of college university architecture is the Edward T. Foley Center on the campus of Loyola Marymount University (1962). Also designed by Edward Durell Stone, the Foley Center is a dramatic, pavilion-like structure that has been described as “much like a scaled-down version of Stone’s famous design for the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi.”³⁴⁸ Its distinguishing characteristics include a projecting roof with a perforated cornice, delicate arches that support the roof structure and form a continuous colonnade around the building, and exterior walls that are clad in travertine and feature a raised grid pattern of elongated hexagons. Its prevailing sense of power and monumentality is enhanced by its setting, perched atop a podium and behind a large reflecting pool. Within the building is a massive tapestry that was custom-made for the site by the noted artist and architectural designer Millard Sheets, also an exponent of the New Formalism movement.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁸ Los Angeles Conservancy, “Edward T. Foley Center, Loyola Marymount University,” accessed September 2019.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.



Edward T. Foley Center, Loyola Marymount University, 7800 S Fordham Road (HistoricPlacesLA)

However, the institutional application of the New Formalist style is not limited to university campuses. When the Los Angeles County Music Center complex was constructed between 1964 and 1967, the firm of Welton Becket and Associates employed a similar New Formalist vocabulary in its design. All three buildings comprising the complex – the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion (1964), the Mark Taper Forum (1967), and the Ahmanson Theatre (1967) – are unequivocally modern, but exhibit classical proportions and details and rich material palettes, providing them a sense of grandeur. The use of classical forms and materials spoke to the strength and endurance of these local institutions, while also “reflecting the self-assurance of mid-century Los Angeles as it positioned itself to be the City of Tomorrow.”³⁵⁰

On Terminal Island, adjacent to the San Pedro community and the Port of Los Angeles, is another significant example of New Formalist institutional architecture: the U.S. Customs House, which was designed in 1967 by architects Austin, Field and Fry. The most prominent features is the main entrance on its primary façade, which dominated “by a symmetrical central colonnade of simple white concrete columns accented by suspended globe light fixtures. The entry is bracketed by black marble panels bearing raised outlines of the continents of the world.”³⁵¹ As such, the building very clearly demonstrates New Formalism’s penchant for melding together classical forms with modern lines and proportions, resulting in a seamless transition between established and contemporary paradigms.

Churches that were built after World War II tended to embody more expressive and organic derivatives of postwar Modernism – specifically the Mid-Century Modern style – but on occasion architects would incorporate elements of New Formalism into the design of ecclesiastical buildings. Corpus Christi Catholic Church in Pacific Palisades (1964), designed by noted firm A.C. Martin and Associates, and St. Joseph the Worker Church in Winnetka (1967), designed by Clar and Spitzer, are two examples of postwar churches that exhibit elements of Mid-Century Modernism but whose formality, symmetry, and abstracted application of classical features more closely align them with the New Formalist style. The

³⁵⁰ Los Angeles Conservancy, “Music Center of Los Angeles County,” accessed September 2019.

³⁵¹ Los Angeles Conservancy, “U.S. Custom House, Terminal Island, Port of Los Angeles,” accessed September 2019.

former features a monumental primary façade in which expansive, floor-to-ceiling glazing is divided into a modular grid; the latter features more traditional brick cladding and a dramatic entrance, which is capped by a folded plate roof and comprises full-height supports that create an abstracted colonnade.



Left: Corpus Christi Catholic Church, 880 N Toyopa Drive; Right: St. Joseph the Worker Church, 19855 W Sherman Way (HistoricPlacesLA)

Commercial architecture was another realm in which New Formalism made its mark. Between the 1960s and '70s, the style was commonly applied to banks and financial institutions. Not unlike civic and institutional entities, banks were drawn to the style because its commanding presence and monumentality fit neatly into the brand image that they were trying to sell to consumers, and exuded a sense of stability of permanence. New Formalist style bank buildings are found at various locations across Los Angeles, where major financial institutions opened new branches to serve the city's rapidly growing population. Buildings including a Lytton Savings and Loan branch (now Chase) in Canoga Park (1965), the Hughes Aircraft Employee Credit Union in Westchester (1968), and a Beverly Hills National Bank branch (now Wells Fargo) in Brentwood (1965, Richard Dorman) are all demonstrative of how the symmetrical forms, classical proportions, and rich material palettes of the New Formalist style were pared down and applied to the design of more typical, everyday commercial buildings. The Beverly Hills National Bank branch was designed by noted architect Richard Dorman. Its vaulted arches, floor-to-ceiling glazing, and stark white exterior walls add a sense of drama to an otherwise plainspoken building, rendering it a miniature version of the formal "banking temples" in which many banks were housed.



Left: Middle: Hughes Aircraft Employee Credit Union, 8131 S Barnsley Avenue; Right: Beverly Hills National Bank, 11605 W Chayote Street (HistoricPlacesLA)

For some financial institutions, the New Formalist aesthetic became inextricably linked to their brand identity and an important part of their company image. This was the case with Home Savings and Loan, a Southern California-based financial institution that was once among the largest savings and loan associations in the United States. In 1954, company president Howard Ahmanson hired the artist and architectural designer Millard Sheets to design a new branch bank in Beverly Hills. “With its colorful mosaics and stained glass windows, the building proved so popular with customers that Ahmanson hired Sheets to design over forty additional Home Savings branch offices as part of his company’s expansion plan.”³⁵² Each of the branch banks designed by Sheets incorporated unique, site-specific features and artwork, but they all ascribed to the same basic architectural vocabulary in which traditional forms and styles were reinterpreted and melded together with modern aesthetic – hallmarks of New Formalism. Sheets’ Home Savings branch banks “are generally recognized by their rectilinear forms and flat planes of natural stone that serve as a backdrop for bold integrated artwork,” which in most cases he also designed.³⁵³ Several of these branch banks are located in the City of Los Angeles.



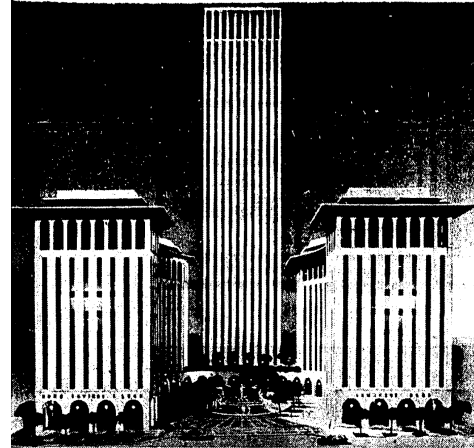
Home Savings and Loan (now Chase), Hollywood Branch (1968). Designed by Millard Sheets, this was one of more than 40 New Formalist branch banks that shaped the brand identity of Home Savings and Loan (Architectural Resources Group).

Ahmanson’s affinity for the New Formalist aesthetic extended beyond his company’s empire of branch banks. In 1967, he commissioned Edward Durell Stone to design an expansive new office complex comprising two tall, eleven-story office towers on Wilshire Boulevard in the Wilshire Center/Koreatown neighborhood. Stone proved to be a very good fit for the project as his design sensibilities were well aligned with Ahmanson’s monumental vision for the complex. Stone’s design for the Ahmanson Center (now known as Wilshire Colonnade) is widely considered to be one of the finest examples of his work

³⁵² Los Angeles Conservancy, “Millard Sheets, Architectural Designer,” accessed September 2019.

³⁵³ Ibid.

and a masterful interpretation of the New Formalist style. The complex comprises two imposing, symmetrical buildings with curved facades that together form a horseshoe shape and recall the curved colonnades in front of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.³⁵⁴ The buildings are clad in travertine and imported white pentellic marble, consistent with New Formalism's application of precious materials, and are oriented around a central plaza that is paved with Italian Carrara marble.³⁵⁵ The complex evinces a sense of grandeur that is steeped in Classical traditions but is unequivocally a product of the Modern age. The Los Angeles Times remarked that its design "bridges the gap [from the] ancient to modern era."³⁵⁶



AHMANSON CENTER—World-famous architect Edward Durrell Stone designed \$75 million Ahmanson Center, to be built on 3/00 block of Wilshire Blvd. Excavation for project is expected to commence about Aug. 1. More than 1 million square feet of floor space will be utilized in the three center buildings.

*Ahmanson Center, Wilshire Colonnade, 3701 Wilshire Boulevard
(Los Angeles Public Library; Los Angeles Times)*

Internationally-renowned architect Minoru Yamasaki also played an important role in honing and popularizing the New Formalist movement. In 1966, he was commissioned to design the Century Plaza Hotel (L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1060), the showpiece of the new Century City development that was taking shape on Los Angeles' Westside. Billed as hosting "twenty stories and one million square feet of luxury" when it opened, the building is characterized by its juxtaposition of modern materials against classically derived proportions and forms.³⁵⁷ The hotel is a bold expression of the New Formalist style, and is demonstrative of how this aesthetic was applied to a commercial context apart from financial institutions.

³⁵⁴ "Architect Stone a Self-Style 'Migrant Worker,'" *Los Angeles Times*, July 21, 1968.

³⁵⁵ Ray Hebert, "Work Will Begin on Huge Ahmanson Center," *Los Angeles Times*, June 6, 1969; "Large Italian Marble Shipment Arrives Here," *Los Angeles Times*, October 5, 1969.

³⁵⁶ "Ahmanson Center Progress," *Los Angeles Times*, February 14, 1971.

³⁵⁷ Los Angeles Conservancy, "Century Plaza Hotel," accessed January 2018.



*Century Plaza Hotel, 2025 A Avenue of the Stars,
L.A. Historic-Cultural Monument No. 1060 (Los Angeles Public Library)*

Department stores were periodic patrons of the New Formalist style. In this context, the style was most commonly applied to many of the branch department stores that were being constructed in new suburban shopping malls – a testament to these stores’ roles as anchors of their respective malls and as stalwart players in the American consumer economy. Typically, New Formalist style department stores anchor the large shopping malls that were constructed in the San Fernando Valley, the Westside, and other areas of Los Angeles that bore the brunt of postwar suburban growth. The former Broadway (now Sears) at 21851 W Victory Boulevard and May Company (now Macy’s) at 6100 N Topanga Canyon Boulevard in Canoga Park both exhibit character-defining features of the New Formalist style. Sears, designed by noted mall architect Victor Gruen, is spanned by a series of concrete columns that together form an abstracted colonnade. The May Company, designed by A.C. Martin and Associates, similarly has a colonnade main entrance, and also features a full-height bell tower that emulates the monumental carillons often found on churches.

As New Formalism became more widely accepted, the style was increasingly incorporated into the repertoires of local architects who designed in a variety of Modern idioms. Edward Durell Stone was, and continues to be known as the architect most closely associated with the style, but others including Richard Dorman, Allison and Rible, William Pereira, Dan Saxon Palmer, Arthur Froelich, and A.C. Martin also designed buildings that showcased New Formalism’s distinctive architectural vocabulary.

Like most iterations of postwar Modernism, New Formalism began to wane in popularity by the early 1970s. The style was somewhat longer lived than other more orthodox interpretations of the Modern architectural movement because it broke from the mold of conventional Modernism and reflected how historically derived architectural elements could successfully be woven into the Modern paradigm.

ELIGIBILITY STANDARDS FOR NEW FORMALISM, 1960-1975

Summary Statement of Significance:	Resources evaluated under this sub-theme are significant in the area of Architecture as excellent examples of New Formalism and exhibit quality of design through distinctive features. New Formalism emerged in reaction to the complete break from historical precedent that was associated with many iterations of postwar Modernism; it melded together the Modern vernacular with an array of classically inspired elements. New Formalist style buildings assume a sense of grandeur, order, and monumentality while continuing to espouse the fundamental principles belying the Modern movement. Most New Formalist buildings were designed by a notable architect; Edward Durell Stone is the architect most closely associated with the style and its proliferation in Los Angeles and its environs. Its monumental aesthetic was best expressed in the context of civic/institutional architecture and occasionally in the realm of commercial design.		
Period of Significance:	1960-1975		
Period of Significance Justification:	New Formalism first appeared Southern California in the late 1950s; Edward Durell Stone's Stuart Pharmaceutical Company complex in Pasadena, designed in 1958, is regarded as one of the earliest known examples of the style in the area, though the style was not represented in the City of Los Angeles until about 1960. New Formalism gained widespread popularity for use in public and private institutional buildings by the mid-1960s. The period of significance for this theme begins in 1960, when the first known examples of the style were constructed in Los Angeles, and ends in 1975, by which time the style had fallen out of favor and had been eclipsed by more contemporary modes of architecture.		
Geographical Location(s):	Citywide, with concentrations in Downtown and other, secondary nodes of corporate commercial activity including the Wilshire corridor, Century City, and West Los Angeles. Examples are found along many of Los Angeles's major commercial corridors, especially those located on the Westside and in the San Fernando Valley.		
Area(s) of Significance:	Architecture		
Criterion:	NR: C	CR: 3	Local: 3

Associated Property Types:

- Institutional
- Commercial

Note: Grouping of resources such as school and hospital campuses may comprise historic districts.

Property Type Description:

New Formalism was most often applied to mid- and large-scale commercial, civic, and institutional buildings. Associated commercial property types in Los Angeles are university buildings, banks, churches, hotels, and department stores; associated institutional property types include auditoriums, performing arts venues, and college and university campuses (which may constitute historic districts). All of these property types embraced the style because its tendency toward order and monumentality reinforced the image they were aspiring to project. Resources with multiple buildings designed in the style may be evaluated as historic districts.

Property Type Significance:

See Summary Statement of Significance above.

Eligibility Standards:

- Exhibits quality of design through distinctive features
- Is an excellent example of the New Formalist style
- Was constructed during the period of significance

**Character-Defining
Features/Associative Features:**

- Retains most of the essential character-defining features from the period of significance
- Strict symmetry and formality
- Monumental in size and appearance, often three or more stories in height
- Flat roof, often with heavy, projecting overhang
- Smooth wall surfaces
- Colonnade of stylized full-height columnar supports
- Repeating arches or rounded openings
- Large screens of perforated cast stone, or metal or concrete grilles over expanses of glass
- Integral parking lot, either subterranean or above grade
- Landscaped plazas, fountains or integral plantings at ground floor
- For the National Register must possess exceptional importance if less than 50 years of age

For Historic Districts:

- Must include a majority of building which embody the distinctive characteristics of New Formalism
- Conveys a strong visual sense of overall historic environment from the period of significance

Integrity Considerations:

- Should retain integrity of Location, Design, Materials, Workmanship, and Feeling from the period of significance
- Retains sufficient integrity to convey significance
- Setting may have changed (surrounding buildings and land uses)
- Original use may have changed
- Some windows and doors may have been replaced, as long as openings have not been altered and original fenestration patterns have not been disrupted

For Historic Districts:

- Must include a majority of building which embody the distinctive characteristics of the Mid-Century Modern style
- Conveys a strong visual sense of overall historic environment from the period of significance

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