

# Lautner

John Lautner designed this house in Palm Springs for Bob Hope, resurrecting his career in the process. The home was built and photographed in 1979



# Frey

The architectural pilgrimage to the house Albert Frey designed for Raymond Loewy in 1947 continues to this day, largely thanks to Shulman



# Williams

Stewart Williams designed Twin Palms Estate in Palm Springs for Frank Sinatra in 1947. Shulman photographed it two years later

# He changed the way we see buildings

Julius Shulman (1910-2009), who photographed and championed the works of such architectural luminaries as Richard Neutra and Oscar Niemeyer, once said that his job wasn't taking pictures, but 'selling modernism'

The legendary architectural photographer, Julius Shulman, whose images virtually defined Modernist chic, died on 15 July, aged 98. With a gift for turning buildings into icons and capturing magical moments – a rare skill in the exacting world of architectural photography – Shulman's dazzling photographs documenting the Modern movement in Palm Springs and Los Angeles, enchanted people around the world.

"Julius was the one person most profoundly responsible for elevating the public's consciousness of the beauty, functionality, and environmental friendliness of modern architecture," says Steven Nash, the executive director of Palm Springs Art Museum, adding, "He was passionate about this pursuit and worked until the last few months of his long and incredibly productive life. He was truly a remarkable man."

Palm Springs was the glamorous playground of the Hollywood elite: Frank Sinatra, Bob Hope and Lucille Ball all built houses there. The modernism that had seemed so radical in central Europe became the established expression of taste and wealth in the U.S. As Catherine McGuigan of *Newsweek* noted: "Shulman's photographs are so redolent of the era...you can practically hear the Sinatra tunes wafting in the air and the ice clinking in the cocktail glasses."

Shulman came into his profession by accident after a chance meeting in 1936 with the architect, Richard Neutra, put him on the path to becoming one of the world's most important architectural photographers. With a roster of clients that reads like a who's who of Modernism – including Neutra, Frank Lloyd Wright, John Lautner, Pierre Koenig, Eero Saarinen and Oscar Niemeyer – Shulman's mission was to build the reputation of these architects, whose vision was inspired by the spectacular landscape. His images promoted not just new approaches to home design but the whole ideal of the 1940s California lifestyle – played out in sleek, low-slung homes featuring ample glass, pools and patios.

Shulman would rearrange furniture to suit his perspective, bring props and models into the frame (usually the homes' inhabitants, rather than professional mannequins – and still a rare sight in architectural photography). He was unapologetic about such tactics, saying that he wasn't just taking pictures, he was "selling modernism": "I sell architecture better than the architect does," he once said.

The image that would seal his reputation was of Koenig's Case Study House No. 22 in the Hollywood Hills. Shot through the glass walls of the cantilevered house to the grid of twinkling lights below, it shows two elegant women in conversation. With its scenic setting, romantic sensibility and strong perspective, it seems to capture the best of modernism – which in essence was about a belief in a promising future, where problems could be solved by progress.

Shulman's other masterpiece, a 1947 picture of Neutra's Kaufmann House in Palm Springs, plays off domesticity



Shulman at home in Los Angeles in 2008. Douglas Kirkland / Corbis

against nature in similar fashion – and brought thousands of tourists to the desert. "They still come from all over the world because of that photo," said the president of The Palm Springs Modern Committee, Peter Moruzzi, to the city's newspaper *The Desert Sun*.

"The reason everyone loves these photographs is because the houses are environmentally involved," said Shulman in a recent interview in *Metropolis*, "and this was before the emphasis on what everyone now calls 'green'."

Shulman was an avid environmentalist, and spent years fighting suburban sprawl, insensitive urban renewal, and the dominance of undistinguished, developer-driven architecture. The recent upsurge in appreciation of postwar architecture and design has contributed to renewed interest in Shulman's work, culminating with the Getty Museum acquiring his archive of 260,000 negatives, prints and transparencies. "He was a true character

and joy to know," Steven Nash told *The Desert Sun*. "He always had an energetic presence and has left us an incredible legacy."

"A light has gone out in LA," said Pierluigi Serraino, who compiled *Modernism Rediscovered*, a book series published by Taschen containing Shulman's most iconic pictures, "Shulman will forever be a figure of architecture."

\* Yvonne Courtney



Top, Shulman's 1961 photograph of Chemosphere, the Malibu home designed by John Lautner. Above, the Richard Neutra-designed Kaufmann house in Palm Springs was photographed by Shulman in 1947 and again, top right, in 1949.



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Main picture, Shulman's 1960 photograph of Case Study House #22 designed by Pierre Koenig. Centre, Shamel House in Palm Springs designed in 1962 by William Cody. Above, the Edris House designed by Stewart Williams, photographed in 1954-55.