



# UNFOLD

The Newsletter of the Architecture and Design Council  
Palm Springs Art Museum  
Volume 1, Number 2  
April 2009  
Linda Clode, editor  
David Dixon, art director

## The Future of the Present: Lost Generations of Palm Springs Architects

by Patrick McGrew



There has been recent speculation in the local media regarding the next generation of architectural “greats.” Of course, without the filter of passing time it is hard to appropriately evaluate which architects, and which of their buildings, will find favor with future generations of Palm Springs citizenry. If the past can be relied upon as a predictor of what is to come, it is likely that some of today’s private residential projects will find favor with future architectural connoisseurs, while the current craze for “big box” strip malls most likely will not.

The advent of Modernism Week has reminded us once again how lucky we are to live in an area with such a wealth of significant Architecture and Design. The works of the “big five” in the local architectural pantheon—John Porter Clark, Albert Frey, William F. Cody, E. Stewart Williams and Donald Wexler—have been toured, discussed, praised, discovered and rediscovered by tourists and residents alike...and we are grateful for the lessons these illustrious careers continue to provide. But, who were the important architects that followed? With the notable exception of a few architects well-known to the world outside the Coachella Valley (Richard Neutra and Lloyd Wright immediately come to mind) the works of some important local architectural icons are rarely protected, or in some cases rarely even known. Bill Cody’s work has yet to be listed in the local registry of important protected buildings. And, while Bill Krisel (Palmer & Krisel) now has a star on the Palm Springs Walk of Fame, none of his works have yet been honored with a listing on the local registry.

Successive periods of architectural history are represented in Palm Springs, including a rare example of the Prairie Style by architects William Gray Purcell with Evera Van Bailey. And, the valley is home to a least a half-dozen Spanish Colonial Revival designs by master architect Wallace Neff, none of which are protected. We also have important Mid-century designs by Ric Harrison, Craig Ellwood, Hugh Kaptur, Kendrick Kellogg, Ed Fickett, Michael Black, C.H. Barlund and others, none of which has yet been officially recognized in the way a curatorial perspective demands. As for the future, important Los Angeles architects like Stephen Kanner and Marmol & Radziner are creating notable works here. Local architect Lance O’Donnell’s own newly-completed Platinum LEED certified residence marks a clear departure from the way architects designed in the past resulting in a project that will, no doubt, remain as notable for its innovative sustainability fifty years from now.

For a town that prides itself on its innovative architecture, it might be time to delve more deeply into our existing architecture and design heritage and let history be the judge of the strip mall designers.



Above, *The Palevsky Residence* (1968, Craig Ellwood)  
Below, *Purcell Residence* (1933, Van Bailey & Purcell)

