

ORGANIC DESERT ARCHITECTURE

Hugh
Kaptur

Palm Springs Art Museum
Architecture and Design Center,
Trina Turk Gallery

Feb. 2 – Jun. 17, 2019

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Architecture* is made possible
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Hugh Kaptur's architectural contributions to the built environment of Palm Springs cannot be underestimated. With more than 200 built projects in the area—residential, commercial, and institutional—Kaptur (b. 1931) played an extraordinary role in the city's architectural development. A visionary designer, he established his practice here in 1957 and continues to work today, with an addition to his 1971 City of Palm Springs *Fire Station No. 4* currently under construction.

While a number of Kaptur's early projects (such as the 1963 *Thomas Griffing*/later *Steve McQueen Residence* in Southridge and the 1963 *Fire Station No. 3* in north Palm Springs) utilize post-and-beam construction and are rectilinear in form, over time he developed a bold modern style that was inspired by the desert architecture of Arizona and the work of Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin West in Scottsdale. This organic, sculptural aesthetic became Kaptur's signature and is immediately recognizable in buildings—*Casa Blanca Motor Hotel* (now the *Musicland Hotel*), the *Purcell House* in the Mesa, and *Fire Station No. 4* are just a few examples—that are characterized by thick walls and deeply inset windows with protruding frames, which add interest to the facades while protecting the interiors from the intense desert heat.

In 2015 Kaptur donated his architectural archive to Palm Springs Art Museum, where it joined holdings by fellow desert modernists

Albert Frey, Donald Wexler, and E. Stewart Williams, providing a rich and invaluable resource for scholars and building owners alike. Since then **Frank Lopez**, the museum's archivist and librarian who is also serving as exhibition co-curator, has worked closely with Kaptur to catalogue the many drawings, renderings, photographs, and architectural models in the archive. Thanks to a generous grant we received last year from Palm Springs Preservation Foundation (PSPF) we have been able to digitize most of the 2-D material in the archive.

Hugh Kaptur: Organic Desert Architecture, on view at the Architecture and Design Center from February 2–June 17, 2019, traces Kaptur's career from the early 1950s to the present through a selection of buildings and building types. Focusing on a number of Kaptur's most iconic projects, the exhibition features a wealth of material from the Kaptur Collection, including sketches, architectural drawings, watercolors, models, period photographs, as well as new images commissioned from photographer Dan Chavkin. The architect's dynamic graphite renderings reveal a flair for drawing that he developed during his early work in the Styling Division at General Motors and capture the innovative spirit of Palm Springs's modern architecture.

BROOKE HODGE is Director of Architecture and Design, Palm Springs Art Museum.