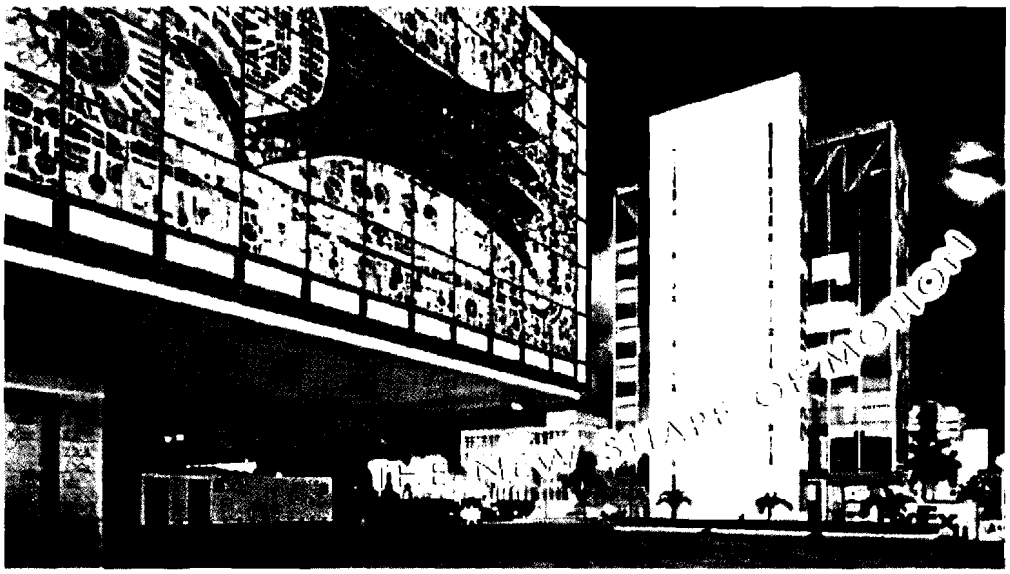
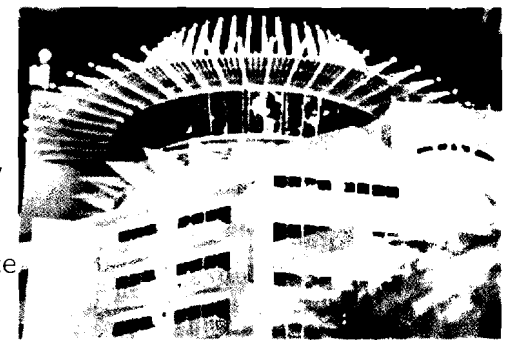
Florida History & the Arts
Summer2005



[By John O'Conner and Diane G. Smart · Photographs by Robin Hill]

Mid-Century Modern Architecture



"Mid-century modern" is a post-World War II architectural phenomenon that flourished from 1945 until 1972 in many parts of the United States. Most notably it thrived in Las Vegas, Nevada and Palm Springs, California, along Route 66 in the Southwest, in Wildwood, New Jersey, and in South Florida in Miami Beach, Hollywood and Fort Lauderdale. Its architectural vernacular reflects visual glamour, space age optimism, and the freedom of the winged automobile to race along interstate highways that were beginning to crisscross the nation. Society was open to spontaneity, portability, informality and flexibility.

As Thomas Hine, author of Populuxe (Alfred A. Knopf, 1987) writes, "Mobility was a nationa obsession and the most unlikely products took their imagery from aviation and

automobiles... People were aware that they were living in the jet age that was rapidly becoming the space age. Nothing was standing still. It was an age of speed, power and the excitement these engendered... Cities exploded outward from their centers and filled great swatches of landscape. Inside houses, walls disappeared and what had been rooms became ill-defined 'dining areas,' 'living areas.' Furniture became visually lighter and rooms were more open."

Fort Lauderdale was a post-war baby. Unlike Miami Beach, its neighbor 23 miles to the South, which had its first real boom in the Deco decade of the 30s, Lauderdale and neighboring Hollywood had their coming out parties 15 to 20 years later. As America's love affair with the auto kicked into high gear, much of Florida grabbed onto the dream of mobility. The drive-in restaurant was born, the carport came into vogue, and the place to stay became the motor-hotel. In Florida, modern architecture took its cues from International Style Modernism, but injected it with tropical style. Mid-century modern architecture became a celebration of modern life in the tropics. Instead of the post-war rectilinear box often found in northern states, that same structure in "SoFla" might be stretched into an S-shaped building with protruding "eyebrows" above the windows and then be painted shell pink. Suddenly, modern architecture had an indoor and outdoor life.

Celebrating new ways to manipulate materials, mainly steel-reinforced concrete, architects spread their wings and made the International Style fly. Staircases were pushed to the exterior of sunny Florida buildings and became plastic, able to span long stretches with very little visible support. Mid-century architects reveled in this "because we can" mentality and created works of art which completed their buildings like beautiful jewelry, - ornamentation without the ornament - enlivening the strict lines of Modernist architecture with cantilevered, space-age canopies, gull-winged rooflines and floor to-ceiling glass windows.

These buildings, from an era just before "central air" became household words, often went to great lengths to capture tropical breezes for their occupants. Igor Polevitzky's fabulous Fort Lauderdale confection, the Sea Tower (1957), is shaped like a boomerang and angled to collect the breeze from the ocean 400 feet away. It is also one of the many catwalk buildings of the area. All units open onto a long walkway and allow breezes to blow through from east to west.

Also in Lauderdale at Charles McKirahan's Coral Cove, apartments are wrapped in floor-to-ceiling jalousie windows and surrounded by catwalks, a love letter to the climate. Other buildings by McKirahan take cues from contemporary architecture in Brazil and India. The 1959 Birch Tower, a sleek white and seafoam green 17-story highrise on Lauderdale Beach is raised up on pylons, allowing the all important tail-finned automobile to drive right through unimpeded. Norman Giller's Diplomat Hotel in Hollywood, a 1957 seven-story masterpiece of jet age imagery (demolished) was counter-balanced on two concrete pilings.

On Miami Beach, Morris Lapidus, the foremost hotel architect of the period, created fantasy environments and theatrical spaces in which America's middle class, flush with expanding postwar incomes and optimism, could fulfill its desire for glamour,

relaxed luxury and leisure. His signature forms - chevrons, beanpoles, woggles or amoeba shapes, and curving walls and ceilings punctuated by cheese holes or cutouts - have become treasured icons of American postwar architectural vernacular. "These hotels are the very essence of Miami Beach's heyday - of fabulous Miami Beach," says Randall Robinson, director of the North Beach Community Development Corporation and co-author of MIMO, Miami Modern Revealed (Chronicle Press, 2004). Robinson describes the Eden Roc (Lapidus 1955) as, "the greatest expression of the ocean-liner influence on Miami Beach architecture." He raves about the giant genies supporting a woggled porte cochere of the Casablanca Hotel (Roy France, 1949). Designed to impress guests arriving by car, such elaborate porte cocheres often evolved into dramatic undulating facades. "Super schlock" some called it. To others it seemed a successful theatrical hodgepodge designed to make guests feel like stars.

Most of these structures, nearing the half-century mark, are without landmark status. Without such protection they are coming down like rain. Already, many treasures have been lost: the Algiers, (Morris Lapidus, 1953) in Miami Beach; Norman Giller's Diplomat Hotel (1957) in Hollywood, and Driftwood (1952) in Sunny Isles; Charles McKirahan's Castaways (1958) in Sunny Isles; and in Fort Lauderdale Beach, Igor Polevitsky's Gold Coast Hotel (1953) and 550 Breakers (1951). Already in March of 2005, the demolition of Morris Lapidus' Americana, the demolition of Morris Lapidus' Americana (1956) in Bal Harbour, and of the Ireland's Inn in Fort Lauderdale Beach (Charles McKirahan/George Waddey, 1964) was announced.

This is only part of the story.
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Museum of Art, Fort Lauderdale, 954.525.5500, ext. 234 or visit www.moafl.org

Miami Design Preservation League www.mdpl.org

North Beach Development Corp. www.gonorthbeach.com

Broward Trust for Historic Preservation www.bthp.org

Urban Arts Committee, Miami Beach www.mimo.us

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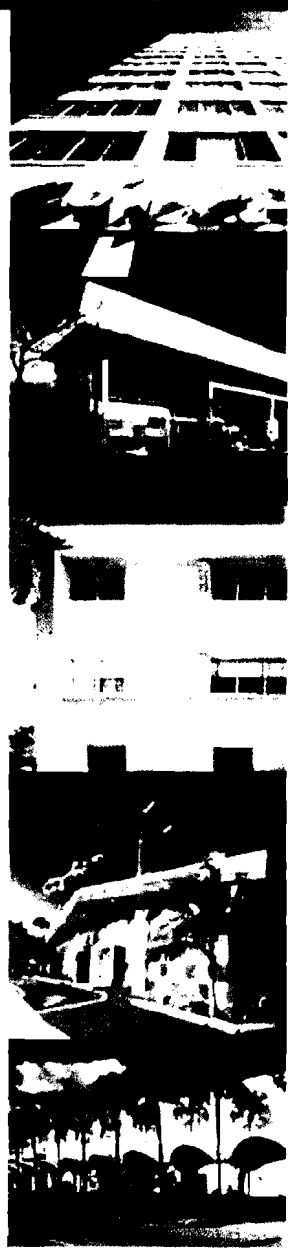
GOING, GOING, GONE?
MID-CENTURY MODERN ARCHITECTURE IN SOUTH FLORIDA
July 8 - October 16

The Museum of Art | Fort Lauderdale, the North Beach Development Corp., and the Broward Trust for Historic Preservation Inc. present a photographic journey through Broward and Miami-Dade counties featuring the work of Robin Hill, Thomas Delbeck, and Arthur Marcus, who have captured the distinctive look of dozens of outstanding South Florida structures dating back to the middle of the 20th century. The exhibition is made possible by Palm Aire Friends of the Arts and supporters of the Museum's Exhibition Fund.

Mid-Century Modern architecture, the exuberant style also known as Miami Modern or MiMo, sprang from a post World War II building boom that lasted for nearly three decades, covering the years from 1945 to 1972. "Many of these buildings were erected in the 1950s during a period of space age optimism and confidence in the future," Hill has written, "and the architects of the age reflected this in their dynamic design." A preoccupation with rhythm, speed, and the "space race" combined with new construction technologies and innovative uses of decorative concrete, aluminum, and glass to create a regional architecture that's often whimsical and playful - regional architecture that defined South Florida as a hub of postwar leisure, entertainment, and style. "I've been privileged to photograph these outstanding structures whose architects really understood the role of light and shadow in highlighting their designs."



Miami-Dade has excellent examples of both Art Deco and MiMo styles, although Mid-Century Modern is the signature architecture of Broward County. Despite being widely admired, structures in this style are seriously endangered in both counties, and many have already been demolished. This exhibition, previously shown at the Museum of Florida History in Tallahassee, pays tribute to those that remain, in hopes that they will be spared the wrecking ball of redevelopment and preserved.

The Broward Trust for Historic Preservation Inc. is a private, nonprofit corporation dedicated to identifying, preserving, restoring, and maintaining the architectural heritage of Broward County. For more information, visit www.BTHP.com . The North Beach Development Corp. seeks to promote the awareness, appreciation, and preservation of Miami Modern (MiMo) architecture. For details, visit www.mimo.us

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Like the baby boom with which it so neatly coincides, Mid-Century Modern architecture came about as an expression of hope and optimism after the end of World War II. Americans were beloved at home and abroad, the economy was expanding, and the future seemed to hold endless possibilities. A celebration was in order, and it manifested itself in both babies and buildings.

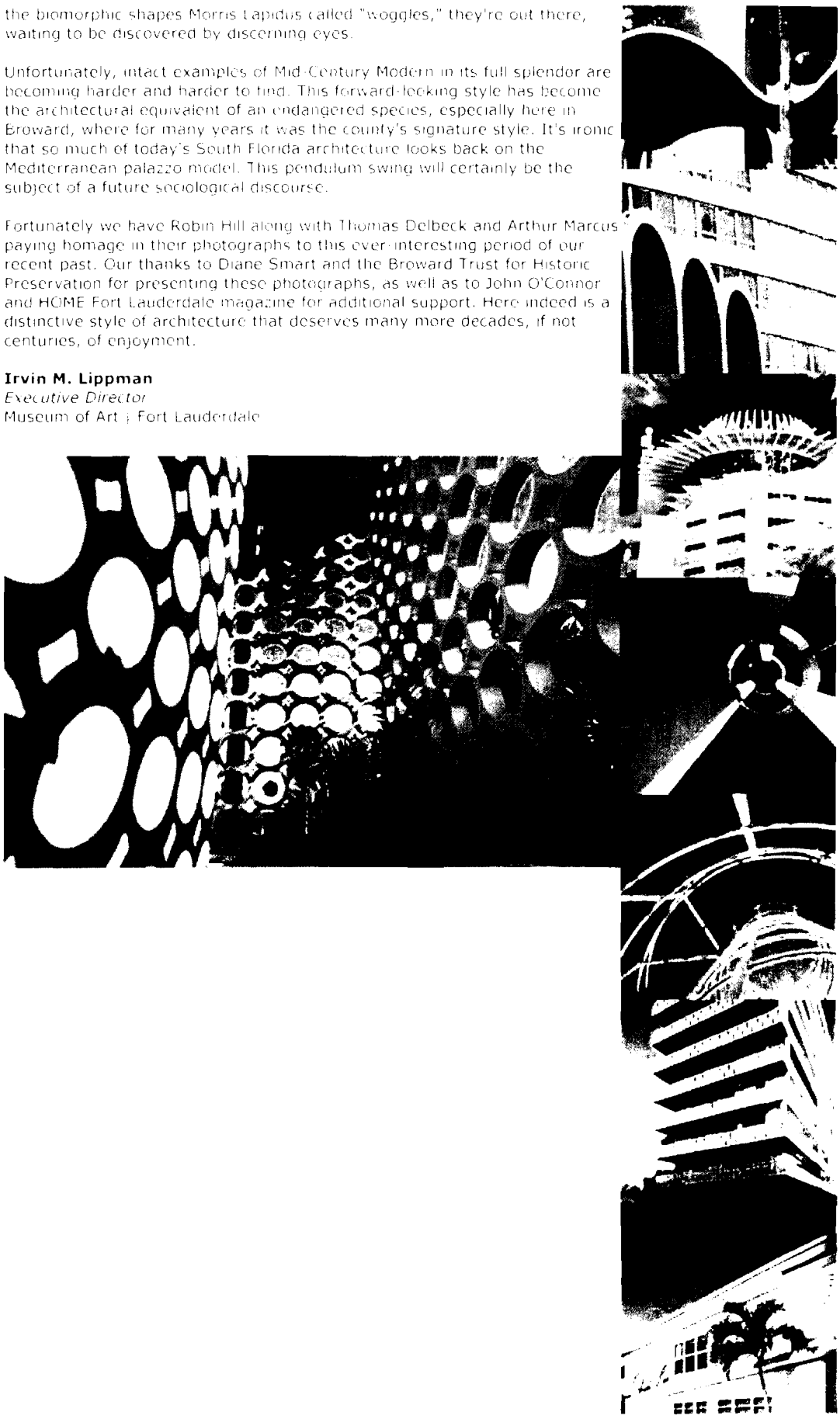
As a baby-boomer, I grew up alongside Mid-Century Modern. And as a relatively recent transplant to South Florida, I have been delighted to find myself surrounded by so much of it. In almost all but the very newest neighborhoods in Broward, Miami-Dade, and Palm Beach counties, you stand a good chance of running across an example of this exhilarating style. Whether it's architectural details as basic as jalousie windows or as flashy as

the biomorphic shapes Morris Lapidus called "woggles," they're out there, waiting to be discovered by discerning eyes.

Unfortunately, intact examples of Mid-Century Modern in its full splendor are becoming harder and harder to find. This forward-looking style has become the architectural equivalent of an endangered species, especially here in Broward, where for many years it was the county's signature style. It's ironic that so much of today's South Florida architecture looks back on the Mediterranean palazzo model. This pendulum swing will certainly be the subject of a future sociological discourse.

Fortunately we have Robin Hill along with Thomas Delbeck and Arthur Marcus paying homage in their photographs to this ever-interesting period of our recent past. Our thanks to Diane Smart and the Broward Trust for Historic Preservation for presenting these photographs, as well as to John O'Connor and HOME Fort Lauderdale magazine for additional support. Here indeed is a distinctive style of architecture that deserves many more decades, if not centuries, of enjoyment.

Irvin M. Lippman
Executive Director
Museum of Art | Fort Lauderdale



Back to Home

Living

Built to last: Mid-century modern houses of Chuck Reed Jr. still survive

JODI MAILANDER FARRELL
Knight Ridder Newspapers

Like a well-kept secret, James and Otilia String's modest house on Garfield Street in Hollywood, Fla., is tucked away, practically obscured by muscular oaks and the evergreen leaves of Jamaica caper bushes.

Lost amid aging suburban tract homes, the Strings' 45-year-old home is an unassuming monument to South Florida's heyday of indigenous architecture, when custom homes embraced the outdoors and ornamentation was left mostly to Mother Nature.

The fact that the original owner has changed little about this 2,400-square-foot house - with its long wood overhangs, bare concrete walls, clerestory windows and wood jalousie doors - since 1961 is a tribute to the home's little-known architect, Chuck Reed Jr., who punctuated Hollywood, with a smattering of single-family salutes to American mid-century modernism in the 1950s and '60s.

"It gives me a sense of time and place," says James String, 76, a land surveyor who, with his first wife Lydia, hired Reed to design the home. "It belongs. I thought when it was built that my neighbors would see it and want to build more like it, but then the builders came with their stock plans and that was that. Maybe I'm not being modest to say it's a work of art."

Reed is somewhat of a lost link in South Florida's lineage of prominent architects. He worked as a young man in the Miami office of one of the most successful pioneers of modern architecture, Igor Polevitsky, whose experimental designs of the 1940s and '50s - including the Albion and the Shelborne hotels in South Beach and the "Birdcage House," a landmark 1949 house on the Venetian Causeway almost completely enveloped in a screened enclosure - were unique sub-tropical interpretations of the Frank Lloyd Wright school of organic architecture.

Later, Reed employed a young Donald Singer, a prize-winning Fort Lauderdale architect

who went on to lead the second sweep of South Florida modernism through the 1960s, translating the appreciation of natural materials into our new air-conditioned culture and emphasizing Florida's own "natural stone" - concrete block, an element Reed also adored.

Recognition long overdue

Yet Reed, now 80, never received the recognition heaped on other architects of his time. Neither he nor his houses were ever the subject of a major newspaper article or book.

In the early '60s, a few of his homes made it into Better Homes & Garden and Southern Living. Architectural Record once came down to do a story on a house he designed in Coconut Grove, but found the place so hard to photograph - it was built around 50 rare tropical fruit trees - that the story never ran.

Reed, retired and living in North Carolina, was going about his anonymous life when a Hollywood, preservationist stumbled upon his work two years ago and launched a campaign to recognize and protect the almost dozen Reed homes still standing in Hollywood.

The hoopla has elicited a soft chuckle from the center of attention.

"It indicates that things do indeed go in a cycle, don't they?" Reed said in a phone interview from his home in Raleigh, N.C., where he lives with his wife Elaine, a ceramic sculptor.

"It was an exciting era. It's very good that sort of thing is appreciated, whether it's mine or someone else's," said Reed, who eventually admitted that yes, frankly, he did feel "overlooked" until now.

If Reed was indeed lost in the annals of Florida architecture, it was Louis Friend, a Hollywood-based general contractor who specializes in historic preservation, who found him again.

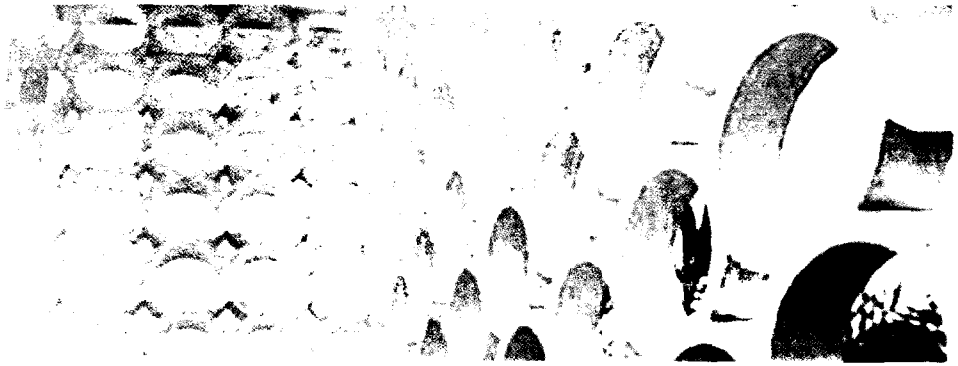
Two years ago, Friend, who is vice chairman of Hollywood's Historic Preservation Board, was putting together a panel discussion on Polevitsky. He and his architect wife Jackie, who own a design-build firm called Friendly Construction, had just purchased a 1947 Polevitsky house. When Friend called Singer to be on the panel, the Fort Lauderdale architect immediately suggested that he contact Reed, "the living link to Igor," who died in 1978.

Friend, born and raised in Hollywood, said, "Who's Reed?"

A spiritual link

Today, Friend has tracked down almost all of Reed's houses in Hollywood and introduced himself to the owners. He keeps a collection of photos, drawings and papers of Reed's work in a large plastic container under his 7-year-old daughter's bed. He wants historic designation, with all its protections, extended to all of Reed's homes so that any changes to the houses have to be approved by a city review board.

"They are beautiful houses," Friend, 40, says. "To find something that represents the ideals of architecture amid Hollywood's ubiquitous ranch 1960s stucco houses is the greatest thing. (The influential American architect) Philip Johnson said a house is a



welcome to north beach

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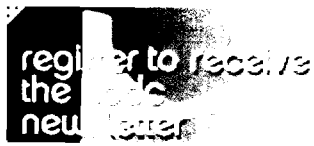

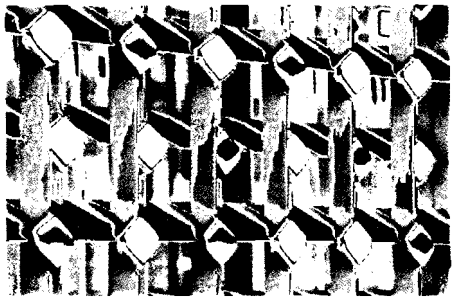

MIAMI MODERN Fifty years after its inception, Miami Modern comes into focus, spanning three decades of post-war architecture. As the city grew exponentially, Miami moved from its resort identity to a diversified economy. Industrial parks sprang up. The University of Miami was followed by other campuses, from downtown to the periphery. A small airfield became Miami International Airport.

Resort and apartment districts burgeoned. The advent of air conditioning redefined domestic life as Miami added vast suburbs and a new architectural culture adapted to the car.

As Florida became host to the Space Center at Cape Canaveral, architects parodied jet age styling, the parabaloid arch of St. Louis, but also the stone walls and cantilevers of Fallingwater. Pre-cast concrete, curtainwall skins and jalousie windows were adopted, but often coupled with lyrical and outlandish forms. A 'Post Modern' sensibility took root in Miami years before that term became fashionable.

As with Miami's "Tropical Art Deco", a term embracing a diverse legacy of the 20's and 30's, Miami Modern expands our understanding of the postwar period, now recognized as having fostered an equally eclectic regional architecture. Recent designation of the Collins Waterfront Historic District, and proposed designation of the North Beach Resort District, focus awareness on whole areas of mid-century heritage.

Allan T. Shulman
Miami 2002

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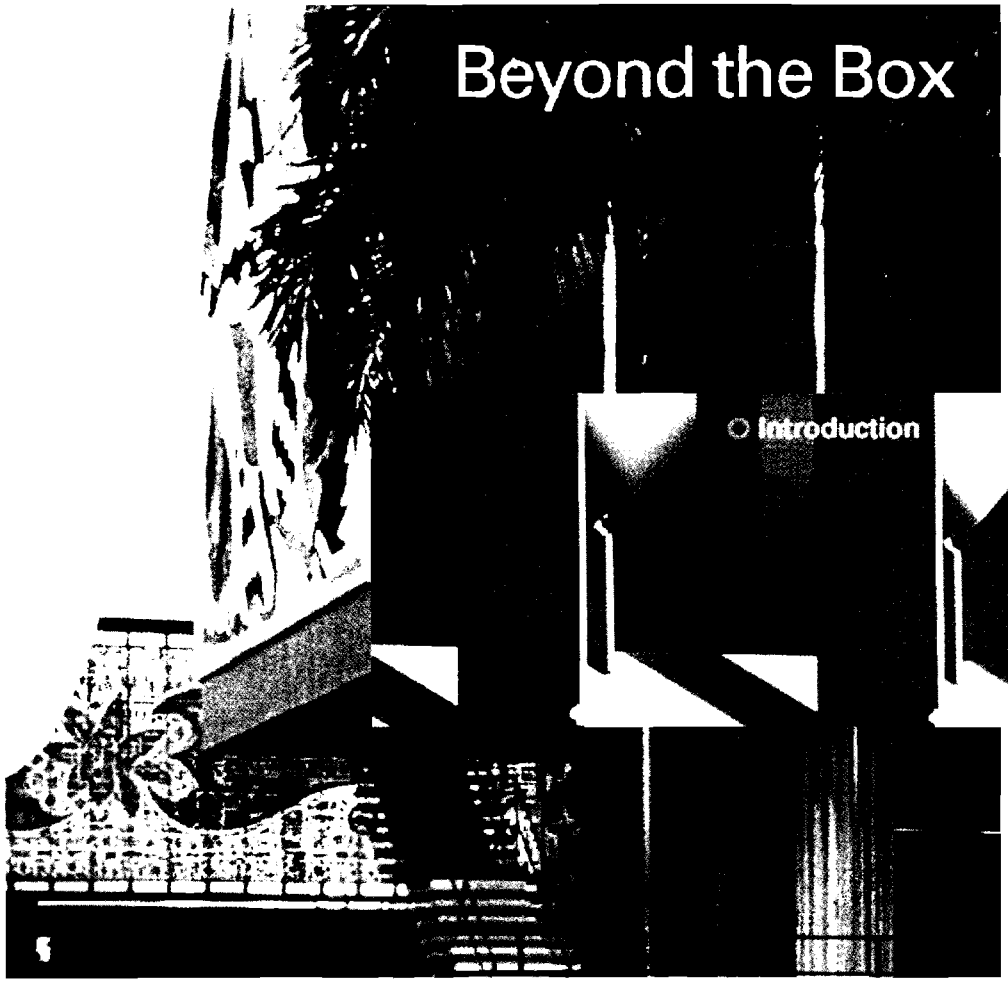

Mid Century Modern Architecture
in Miami and New York

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Miami Modern

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end notes

Mid-Century Modern Furniture & Decorating Sources

Mid-century modern is a design term applied most frequently to residential and some commercial architecture, interior design and furniture. The term is generally related to the Space Age, the International style and a sleek, cool, yet comfortable furnishings style.

Some of the big names associated with the mid-century modern era include: Rudolf Schindler, Richard Neutra, Charles and Ray Eames and Craig Ellwood.

Circa50--a fun colorful site. Great navigation for quickly moving around from one product category to another. They sell the original The original Barcelona Series from Knoll which has been granted federal trade dress protection as an icon of furniture design. Premium grade 304 bar stock stainless steel frame shaped, welded and hand-buffed to a mirror finish by expert U.S. craftsmen. Real cowhide belting straps underneath and hand-welted and hand-tufted leather cushions from a single cowhide. Not inexpensive, but it is the real thing. Circa50 sells all the famous pieces like The Noguchi Coffee Table, Eames chairs, Stark Louis Ghost chair, famous lighting and George Nelson clocks made of beech, metal and acrylic-lacquer including the ball clock. One nice feature is that the website tells you exactly what colors of each are in stock on the day you are looking. Free shipping.

Century Modern specializes in mid century furniture from the 1940s, thru the 1970s. If you are looking for a retro furniture style of Danish modern or famous lines like Herman Miller, Dunbar, Knoll, check Century Modern. The online store includes the design classics Eames, Nelson, Mies, Corbusier and Breuer. They offer new and refurbished and vintage pieces. Stock changes frequently. www.centurymodern.com

Highbrow Furniture--Classic mid-century modern furniture designs. Authorized retailer for Architectural Pottery, Cherner Chair Co., Emeco, Herman Miller for the Home, Knoll. They have a nice section of under $300 items. They carry one of my favorite items, The Starck la Boheme Stools designed by Philippe Starck. La Boheme is a collection of stools in the shape of classical vases. Each stool is based on a different aspect of the vase, with its delicate and classical appearance but offering stable and functional seating. La Boheme stools can also be used as a small end tables and are perfect for use everywhere - in the living room or kitchen or garden, on the terrace, or in a bar.

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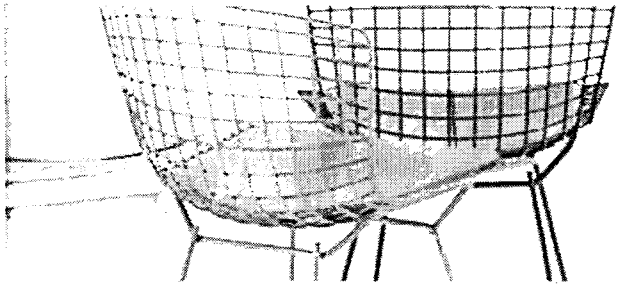

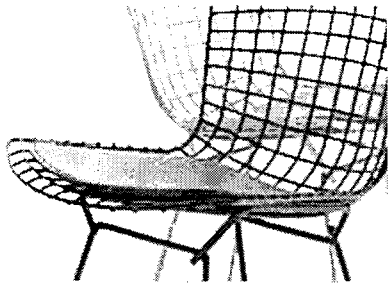

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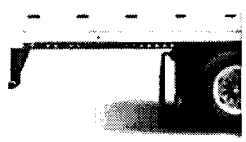
Mid-Century Modern Furniture

Mid-Century Modern specializes in the finest re-issues of modern furniture classics from Knoll, Vitra, Modernica, Cherner Chair Company, Architectural Pottery, Malm Fireplace and Daniel Donnelly.

It is our goal to bring you the best examples from the mid-century modern era. A time when new technology, combined with the sensibilities of the day, allowed for a myriad of possibilities. The result: an "honest" design philosophy that has withstood the test of time. Fifty years later, the works of these groundbreaking architects and designers, including George Nelson, Charles and Ray Eames, Mies van der Rohe, Eero Saarinen, Harry Bertoia, Jens Risom, Florence Knoll, Isamu Noguchi, Jean Prouve, and Verner Panton among others, are more popular than ever.



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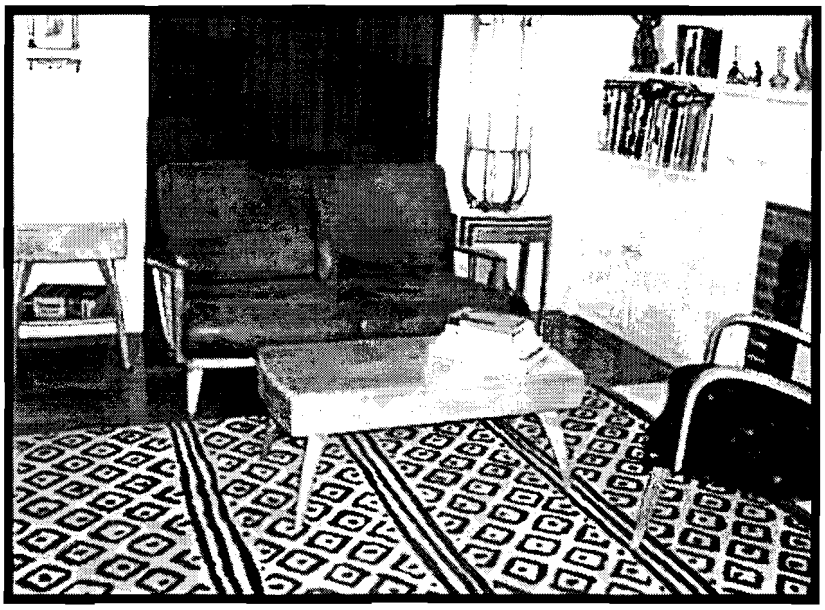

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Our company, founded in 1985, carries on the Heywood-Wakefield Modern tradition with solid wood furniture in the Mid-Century style. With antecedents in Moderne and Art Deco, roots in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s but with a decidedly contemporary look and feel, Heywood-Wakefield furniture works well with many design concepts due to its strong, solid birch wood construction, simple aerodynamic lines and light blond color. Although Heywood-Wakefield's streamline styles exhibit a strong retro look, it is perfectly suited for today's design requirements, and never looks dated or "antique".

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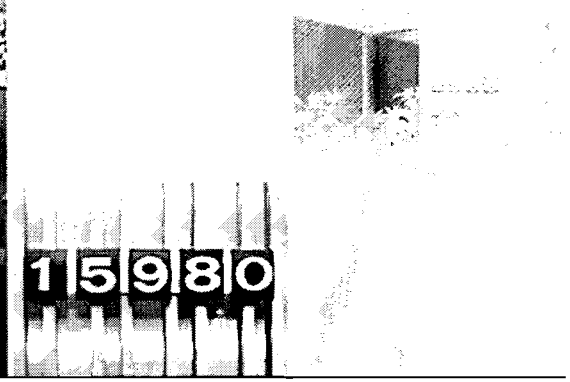

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Stunning Mid Century Modern Vacation Home - Heated Pool

Location: Wilton Manors, East Coast, Florida, USA (15 minutes from Fort Lauderdale Airport)

Accommodations: House - 2 Bedrooms + Convertible bed(s) - 2 Baths - (Sleeps 4-6)

Front View of Home and Circular Drive - Wilton Manors, Florida Vacation Rental

Stunning Mid-century Modern two Bedroom Vacation Home with Heated Pool in Fort Lauderdale/Wilton Manors.

The Bismark House is located in a quiet neighborhood just blocks from the heart of Wilton Manors, Fort Lauderdale's Island City. Built in 1958 with original terrazzo floors throughout, this newly renovated Mid-Century Modern home offers all the comforts for a fabulous vacation.

This two bedroom, two bath home is beautifully decorated with original 1950's furnishings and artwork, boasting a large living room with two couches that double as day beds (great for extra sleep space for kids), a large entrance area with a baby grand piano, a private dining room, a large screened in porch with comfortable lounging and dining area, a well designed kitchen with all new appliances and cookware, a master bedroom with bath and private courtyard entrance from pool area, and a guest bedroom adjacent to the full bath.

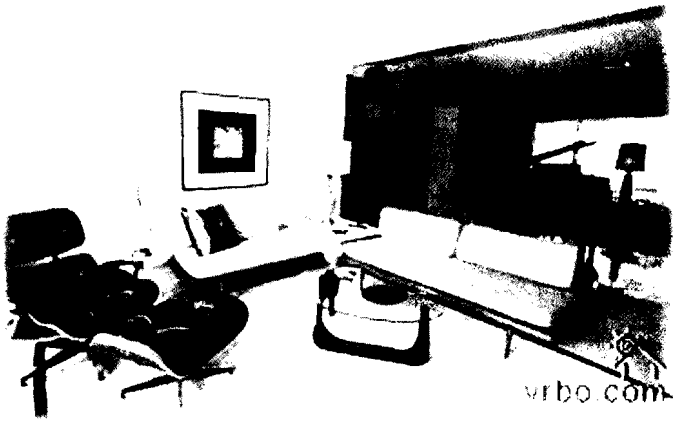
The Bismark House is surrounded by a lush tropical professionally landscaped yard with lovely accent night lighting. The house is named after the large Bismark Palm tree located in the center island of the circular paved drive. The private back yard offers an escape from it all! You may never need to leave! The house is its own little compound with a beautiful kidney shaped heated pool, a large sun-deck with chaise lounge chairs, and a separate outdoor poolside dining deck with a gas grill.

The Bismark House is located just minutes away from the white sand beaches of Fort Lauderdale and Las Olas Boulevard's excellent water front restaurants and shops. In addition you are just a five-minute walk from Wilton Drive's restaurants, shopping, nightlife and Main Street Gym.

Amenities: Phone, Air Conditioning, Cable TV, VCR, Stereo, CD Player, Full Kitchen, Microwave, Dishwasher, Refrigerator, Ice Maker, Cooking utensils provided, Linens provided, Washer, Dryer, Private Pool, Garage, Gas Grill (BBQ), No Smoking

Pet Friendly

Activities (on site or nearby): Biking, Golf, Tennis, Gym, Miniature golf, Fishing, Wildlife Viewing, Shopping, Restaurants, Museums, Sightseeing, Swimming, Snorkeling/Diving, Boating, Sailing, Waterskiing, Surfing, Windsurfing, Parasailing, Jet Skiing



Living Room and Grand Piano - Wilton Manors, Florida Vacation Rental

Rates (in US Dollars):
Credit Cards Accepted: VISA

View of Screen Porch, Heated Pool and Private Landscaped Backyard - Wilton Manors, Florida Vacation Rental

Note: Each property is individually owned or managed.

Dates available: Year Round

Before contacting us, please check for your desired dates.

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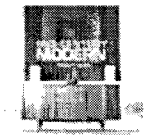
1. 
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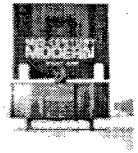
1. 
Mid-Century Modern : Interiors, Furniture, Design Details
by Bradley Quinn (**Hardcover** - July 28, 2006)
Avg. Customer Rating:
(Rate this item)

Not yet released.
List Price: ~~$29.95~~
Buy new: **$18.87**

2. 

Mid-Century Modern : Furniture of the 1950s
by Cara Greenberg (**Paperback** - September 26, 1995)
Avg. Customer Rating:
(Rate this item)
Other Editions: Hardcover | Paperback | See all (4)

Usually ships in 24 hours
List Price: ~~$25.00~~
Buy new: **$15.75**
Used & new from $14.97

Excerpt from Page 16: "*... The one successful, popularly priced exception to the dearth of modern furniture in pre-World War II ... the time. The line 16 MID-CENTURY MODERN ...*"
See more references to mid century modern in this book.

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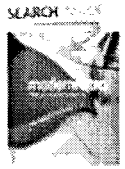
3. 

Modern Retro: Living With Mid-Century Modern Style (Compact Paperbacks)
by Neil Bingham, et al (**Paperback** - July 15, 2005)
(Rate this item)
Other Editions: Hardcover | Paperback | See all (3)

Usually ships in 24 hours
List Price: ~~$12.95~~
Buy new: **$10.62**
Used & new from $8.33

Excerpt from Page 21: "*... to make this decade appear homogeneous, sleek, and all- encompassingly modern. The labels applied to the style of the 1 950s reflect this: "The New Look," "Contemporary," "Mid-Century Modern," "The Atomic Look" are but a few. This decade's ...*"
See more references to mid century modern in this book.

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4. 

Modern Retro: Living With Mid-Century Modern Style
by Neil Bingham, et al
Avg. Customer Rating:
(Rate this item)
Other Editions: Hardcover

Usually ships within 1-2 business days

Used & new from $12.95

Excerpt from Page 21: "*... Egg chair by Arne Jacobsen could fit comfortably alongside an eighteenth-century clock, while a Victorian chair ... appear homogeneous, sleek, and all-encompassingly modern. The labels applied to the ... this: The New Look, Contemporary, Mid-Century Modern, Fifties Style, The Atomic Look, to give but a ...*"
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5. 

Handmade Modern : Mid-Century Inspired Projects for Your Home
by Todd Oldham (**Paperback** - April 1, 2005)
Avg. Customer Rating:
(Rate this item)

Usually ships in 24 hours
List Price: ~~$19.95~~
Buy new: **$12.97**

Used & new from $2.21

Excerpt from Page 118: "*... and burnt-olive dots. His sensibilities and color combinations mirror the mid-century modern textiles I'm crazy about. With just a few delicate strokes, ...*"
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