



CALIFORNIA SCHEMING

ARCHITECTS BALKED WHEN JULIUS SHULMAN ADDED PEOPLE AND ANIMALS TO HIS SHOTS OF MODERNIST HOMES. BUT HIS IMAGES ARE STILL CELEBRATED FOR THEIR POST-WAR GLAMOUR AND OPTIMISM. BY DOMINIC BRADBURY

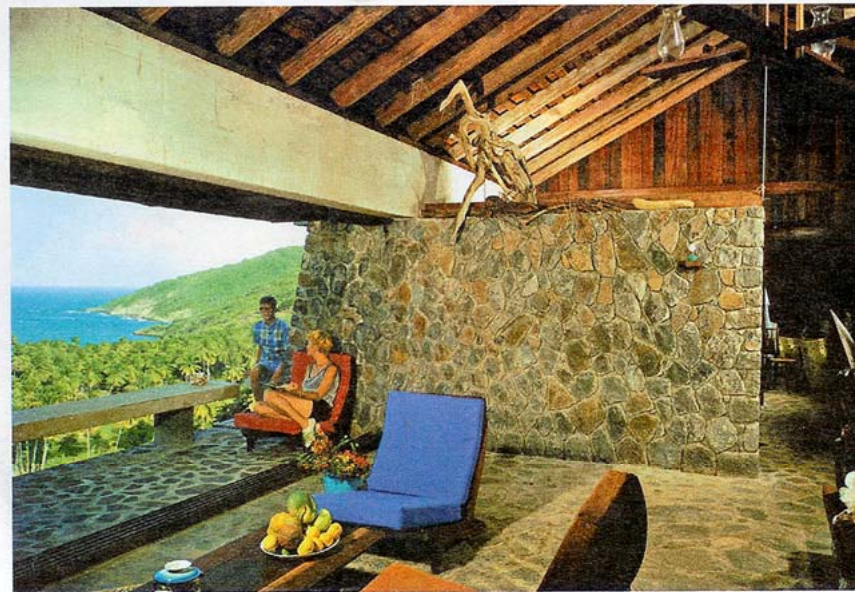
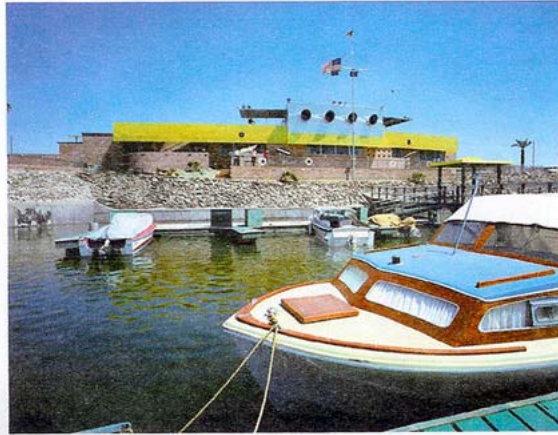
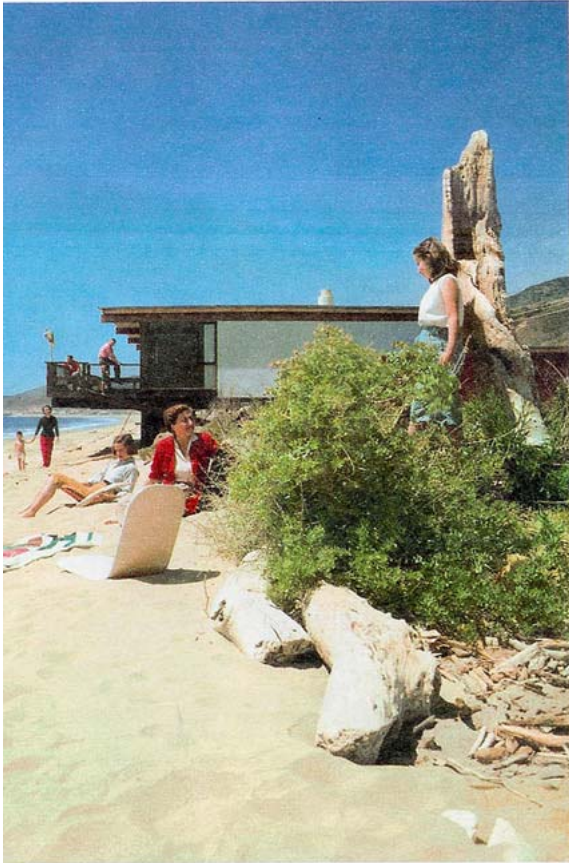
JULIUS SHULMAN CAPTURED CALIFORNIA AT ITS BEST. IT was Shulman, as much as anyone, whose photographs helped shape the idea of Californian living as a dreamlike state of architectural sophistication, peopled by beautiful families with sleek automobiles tucked under a designer car port. He has worked all over the world, but is most connected with the place that is his home and with the modernist architecture of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, which he did so much to promote, merchandise and convey through crisp, succulent images – images that made you want to step into this world of innocent, idyllic glamour.

Shulman has photographed all kinds of buildings and, at the age of 97, continues to do so. But it was his photographs of houses by the likes of Richard Neutra, Pierre Koenig, John Lautner and other hugely influential Californian modernists that spread the word about the original possibilities offered by this new kind of architecture, born in a spirit of post-war optimism. With the great resurgence of interest in all things mid-century modern – from buildings to furniture to lamps – the interest in Shulman has also taken off again.

This month, his work is celebrated in a big, beautiful book called *Julius Shulman: Modernism Rediscovered*. Its three volumes, totalling 1,000 pages and gathered in a neat slipcase, present a segment of Shulman's vast archive, which is held by the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles.

Shulman's pioneering work placed his architectural subjects within the

FEATURES



'The beauty of natural light'
Julius Shulman's photography. Left: 'Frey Residence 1, Palm Springs, Addition, 1954'. Clockwise from above: 'Roberts Residence, Malibu, 1953'; 'North Shore Yacht Club, Salton Sea, California, 1960'; 'Spring Hotel, Bequia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, 1967'

landscape – elegantly exploring the connections between interior and exterior, architecture and nature, that were so important to the Californian modernists – while also bringing these buildings alive. When he began work, in 1936, he introduced people and pets into his shots, which became dramatic moments captured in time. They were – as the book's publisher, Benedikt Taschen, suggests in his introduction – like a movie still with the building itself playing the leading part.

'I was able to perceive that it wasn't just a matter of translating an architect's work photographically,' says Shulman. 'It was about infusing something more into the pictures. It was about going beyond what architects saw in their own work, to transfigure and transcend. It was unusual to use people in architectural photography when I first began. Richard Neutra didn't like me using people in the pictures because he felt they distracted attention from his architecture. It was a short-sighted thought and finally he realised I was right.'

It was Neutra, his friend and long-time collaborator, who played a key part in his decision to become a photographer. In his mid-twenties, Shulman was drifting in and out of university in LA and Berkeley. He was taken to see Neutra's Kun House in 1936 by a mutual friend and took some shots with a hand-held Eastman camera.

'When Neutra saw the photographs he wanted to meet me,' Shulman says. 'So I was taken down to meet him on Saturday, 5 March, 1936. He said "What are you, a photographer? Have you studied architecture or

'RICHARD NEUTRA DIDN'T LIKE ME USING PEOPLE IN THE PICTURES BECAUSE HE FELT THEY DISTRACTED ATTENTION FROM HIS ARCHITECTURE'

photography?'" I had studied nothing; I had no idea what to do with my life. He asked me if I would like to do some more photography for him and that's when I became a photographer. That's how it all began.'

He remains intimately linked to the state with which he is associated, living in a Raphael Soriano-designed house and studio, built in 1950 in Los Angeles, and playfully drinking in the adulation that he receives from all quarters. As well as the new book project, there is also a documentary film being completed on Shulman's life and work, by Eric Bricker, with narration by Dustin Hoffman and contributions from admirers such as Tom Ford. And a new exhibition of his work opens in February at the Palm Springs Art Museum, celebrating his association with the desert city and its wealth of modernist gems, including Neutra's Kaufmann House, which features in some of Shulman's best-known shots.

For Shulman, taking pictures has become such a natural and instinctive process that he doesn't use a light meter and remains confident in his own finely tuned talents, even as he approaches his centenary. 'It's a blessing,' he says. 'When I see a building I look at the light and read the light and I can just tell how much exposure to make. I know nature. I'm a Boy Scout from training and I understand the beauty of natural light.' ☺

'Julius Shulman: Modernism Rediscovered' (Taschen, £200) is available to Telegraph readers for £150 plus £1.25 p&p. To order please call Telegraph Books on 0870 428 4115