

many exploding flashbulbs. "OK, ten o'clock is good," he tells a friend of the mayor of Berlin, who would like to drop in with a book to be inscribed. The likely choice is the autobiographical, 299-page *Julius Shulman: Architecture and Its Photography*, one of 11 books devoted to his work. Admirers also tote vintage prints or magazines—his photographs have appeared on more than 800 covers. If in return for his signature a visitor leaves behind a canister of peanuts or a bottle of single-malt Scotch, well, Shulman couldn't be more pleased. Unfailingly there are requests to have a photo taken with him, and he complies, enthusiastically if the one asking is an attractive woman.

"Come on, don't be shy," he says, pulling everyone in. No matter how excited the visitors are, no one is happier than Shulman. As he is fond of saying, Why not? His work has never been reprinted more often than now. He has never been more revered. He invites guests to sit in one of the studio's two Arne Jacobsen Egg chairs, which the Danish architect gave to Shulman, and stay awhile. That is, until the phone interrupts. "Excuse me," he says, picking up the receiver. "Julius Shulman."

#### > 02 > Mythmaker

**SOME PHOTOGRAPHERS ARE SYNONYMOUS** with the cities they have immortalized. Arthur Fellig, better known as Weegee, recorded the tabloid allure of New York. Henri Cartier-Bresson photographed Parisians partaking in the beau monde, biking over cobblestones and skipping across puddles. Art Shay documented Chicago neighborhoods with a joyous intimacy. In a city infamous for its absence of street life, it is appropriate that the photographer most associated with Los Angeles captured private

spaces, not public ones. From living rooms with plate glass walls and terrazzo floors to outdoor kitchens overlooking kidney-shaped pools, the photography of Julius Shulman beckoned postwar America to Los Angeles: Shed those overcoats and constraints! Sip martinis in space-age domiciles! Create paradise in your own backyard!

For magazines ranging from *Sunset* and *House & Garden* to *Architectural Record* and *Dwell*, Shulman has documented nearly 8,000 subjects over a 72-year career. His work, whether in black and white or Kodachrome color, isn't just about composition and light. It is about lifestyle. He was the first architectural photographer to plant men, women, and children like props inside buildings. From the 1950s through the '70s, editor Dan MacMasters of the Sunday *Los Angeles Times Home Magazine* fed Shulman's images of beautiful people in beautiful Malibu homes directly into the minds of housewives flipping pancakes in Monrovia. Out went Aunt Marge's wicker rocking chair; in came the Eames lounge. Forty years later those photographs would be rediscovered and repackaged to feed the imagination (or to encourage the lack of imagination) of home owners bidding on midcentury fixer-uppers from Silver Lake to Houston, Palm Springs to Portland. Julius Shulman gave L.A. its history, its best self, and then exported its mythology to the world.

#### > 01 > Briiiiiing!

**HE NO LONGER DRIVES, HE LIVES ALONE IN A CANYON, BUT** Julius Shulman is nothing if not available. All someone has to do is call. No agents or assistants or assistants to assistants to fight past. He keeps nine phones: four in his studio, three in his kitchen, two in his bedroom. He favors portables, because they enable him to place the receiver on his walker and wheel it around like a slumbering baby so he can attend to it the moment it stirs. "Julius Shulman," he answers. The voice is that of an old-timer who's giving you a tip—eager, high-pitched, gruff. "Can you speak up, please?" he might ask, or, his tone sharpening, "Wait, slow down." At 98, he remains one of the world's most sought-after photographers. On the other end of the line are graduate students or movie stars wanting to swing by and meet the master, civic leaders inviting him to their box at the Hollywood Bowl, preservation groups seeking his imprimatur to help save a building or a neighborhood, museum curators pushing a new exhibit, architects and designers craving the prestige that only his photographs can lend, magazine editors from Sydney to Stockholm looking to reproduce his images.

Sitting in his studio in Laurel Canyon, he cradles the phone as he consults a full-size desk calendar that he balances in his lap. His notations—capital letters in a shaky hand—cover the pages like so

> 03 > Country Boy

**HE IS THREE YEARS OLD, RIDING IN AN OPEN HORSE-DRAWN wagon** on a dusty Connecticut road. His mother is at the reins next to him. In the wagon ahead, his father turns back to get their attention. He points to a bluff, and on top of the bluff, a farmhouse. This is the first image Julius Shulman can recollect.

> 04 > The Close-up

**ON THE GOOD DAYS, WHEN SHULMAN DOESN'T HAVE BANDAGES** on his face from the skin cancer that anyone who spent decades photographing in the sun invariably bears, he could pass for 78. His blue eyes are narrow and sometimes watery behind oversize aviator glasses. His silver-gray hair crests over his high forehead; his white mustache is full and neatly trimmed. He has a strong square chin and a small mouth with thin lips that purse when he's annoyed. When he laughs, however, he puts his whole face into it. He throws his head back and opens his mouth so wide it can force his eyes shut. Were Shulman a character actor, he would be cast as the brewmeister leading a sing-along at Oktoberfest, a raised stein in one hand, a Frau under his wing. His body is shrinking, it is true. His five-foot-ten frame now looks more like five feet three, his arms and legs lack muscle, and when in motion he is fragile. With each passing month his steps cover less territory. But in his white guayabera shirt, his knee-length white shorts held up by red suspenders, he still radiates vitality.

> 05 > Chosen One

**WHEN SHULMAN'S FAMILY ARRIVED IN LOS ANGELES IN 1920, HIS** parents, Max and Yetta, set up a dry goods shop in Boyle Heights. The East Los Angeles neighborhood was heavily Jewish, but Japanese, Mexican, and Gypsy families also bought pickles from barrels along

Brooklyn Avenue. Nearby was Hollenbeck Park, with its lake and lovely bridge, and the imposing redbrick facade of the Breed Street shul, where Julius had his bar mitzvah. Urban life held little interest for him. He and his family had lived on a Connecticut farm until he was ten years old, and an essential part of him remained there. A Boy Scout, he would pack his rucksack with canned beans and catch the Red Car north. Passing the bungalow courts and Craftsman houses of El Sereno and Pasadena, he would head for the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains and hike up Mount Wilson. In the evening he'd unroll his blanket and study the shadows and the light.

One of five children, Julius was his mother's favorite. The hero worship he experiences today—the conviction that he is the most important person in the crowd—is nothing less than a birthright. The other kids shared rooms; he had his own. Julius's father died of tuberculosis in 1923. The other kids helped their mother run the store and didn't study beyond high school; Julius enrolled at UCLA. He planned to major in electrical engineering but within two weeks decided that it wasn't for him and spent the next seven years auditing classes at UCLA and UC Berkeley. It was by some miracle that his siblings didn't spike his Ovaltine with arsenic.

> 06 > Snapshot

**ME: "YOU WERE A RUNNER, A SWIMMER, A SKIER, A HAM RADIO** operator. You've backpacked every trail and hiked every peak in Southern California, and you can name them all. You sailed boats. You can identify every bird on your patio, every succulent in your yard. You planted redwoods as seedlings that are now 85 feet high. You became a famous architectural photographer, though you have no training in architecture or photography. Is there anything you've tried that you haven't excelled at?"

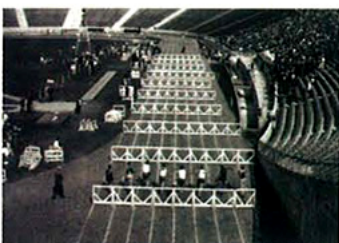
Shulman: "No."

> 07 > Significant Moments in L.A. Modernism, Part I

**1916: IRVING GILL, WHO HAD APPRENTICED FOR LOUIS SULLIVAN** alongside Frank Lloyd Wright, completes the Dodge House in West Hollywood. Stripped of the elements of L.A.'s prevailing Spanish, Craftsman, and mission styles, the building is without awnings,

# PHOTOSHOP

Julius Shulman's life in pictures



**1927**  
Shulman's shot, taken in high school, of a track meet at the L.A. Coliseum



**1934**  
A self-portrait of the not-yet artist as a young man



**1935**  
Shulman's picture of Yetta Shulman, which he called "My Mommy"

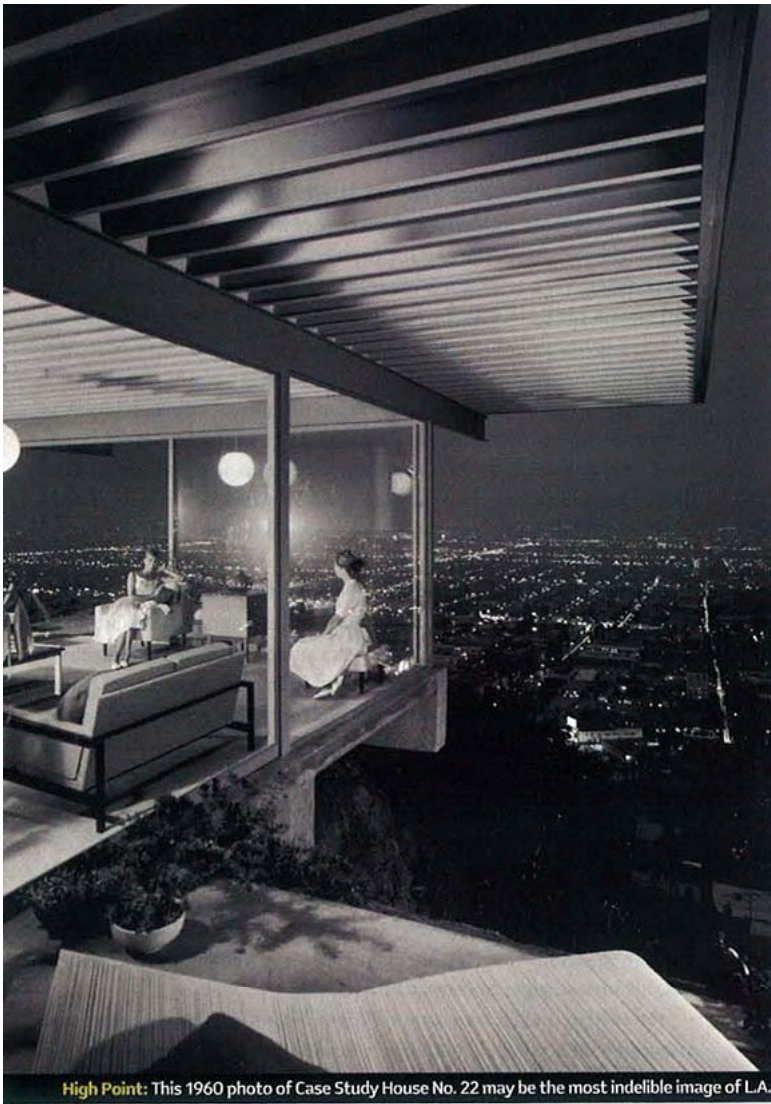


**1936**  
The first architectural photographs taken by Shulman were of the Kun House, designed by Richard Neutra



**1945**  
Shulman's late wife, Emma, helps their daughter, Judy, with her first steps

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finishes his own home-studio complex, which blurs the boundaries between indoors and out.

**1929:** A student of Wright's and well versed in Bauhaus, Schindler's friend and fellow Austrian Richard Neutra completes a house for Dr. Philip Lovell in the hills of Los Feliz. The multilevel glass-and-steel home earns Neutra a worldwide reputation.

**1934:** Albert Frey, a Swiss emigrant and a Le Corbusier disciple, builds the first of nearly 200 structures in and around his newly adopted home of Palm Springs, establishing "desert modernism" and making the city one of the great repositories for midcentury architecture.

**1937:** Greek architect Raphael Soriano wins the Prix de Rome award at the International Architecture Exhibition in Paris for his first residential commission, the Lipetz House in Silver Lake.

**1945:** John Entenza, editor of the Los Angeles-based magazine *Arts & Architecture*, initiates the Case Study House program, in which architects Pierre Koenig, Craig Ellwood, Edward Killingsworth, and Don Hensman, among others, design affordable residences across the region; 26 homes are built between 1945 and 1966.

**1946:** Construction begins on the first of Neutra disciple Gregory Ain's Park Planned Homes, a modernist development in Altadena; the next year he breaks ground on his tract of 52 homes in Mar Vista.

**1949:** John Lautner, an alumnus of Frank Lloyd Wright's school-commune Taliesin, designs Googies coffee shop at Crescent Heights and Sunset boulevards, applying elements of midcentury residential design—glass walls, open kitchen plans, rich woodwork—to a commercial building.

**1952:** In an article for *House and Home* magazine, Yale professor Douglas Haskell employs "googie" as a derogatory term to describe an architectural style that subsequent generations will lionize.

**1956:** Venice-based husband-wife team Charles and Ray Eames start selling their Lounge chair, made of three pieces of molded plywood and designed for the Herman Miller furniture company.

**1960:** Critic Esther McCoy writes *Five California Architects*, the first definitive study of Gill and Schindler.

moldings, and eaves but has large casement windows and a flat white exterior. Austere and light filled, it becomes the model for a new type of residential architecture.

**1922:** Down the street from the Dodge House, Rudolph M. Schindler—the Viennese architect who moved to Los Angeles to oversee construction of Wright's Barnsdall House in Hollywood—

**1948**

To guarantee that cars wouldn't mar his photograph of the May Company department store at Fairfax and Wilshire, Shulman asked a police officer to stop traffic



**1946**

Shulman showed how modernist homes blurred the gap between outdoors and in, as with architect Gordon Drake's own residence



**1954**

For this photograph of a Cliff May house, Shulman brought in potted plants to fill out the empty landscape



**1950**

Shulman admired Neutra and documented most of the architect's work, though their relationship was at times contentious



**1958**

The Pacific Palisades home of husband-wife design team Charles and Ray Eames

> 08 > Birth of a Notion

FOR HIS 23RD BIRTHDAY SHULMAN RECEIVED AN ACCORDION-like Kodak Vest Pocket camera. So named because it folded flat and could slip into a large coat pocket, the camera had been a favorite of soldiers in World War I. He brought his new gift on camping trips to Yosemite and the Mojave. He also began to photograph roadways, bridges, and dams, intrigued with the shapes and forms of the city growing around him. Picture taking he considered just another hobby, not much different from his fascination with ham radio. His sister Shirley was renting a room to a draftsman for Richard Neutra and introduced him to Shulman, who had given up on ever graduating from the University of California. The draftsman invited him to visit Neutra's latest project, the Kun House, above Laurel Canyon. Should make for some pretty pictures, Shulman thought. He grabbed his camera and tripod and went up for an afternoon.

The four-story house wasn't complete, but its glass walls and dramatic setting—the building was carved into virgin hillside—were inspiration enough. Shulman took six shots, black and whites, which he developed into eight-by-tens and gave to the draftsman, who shared them with Neutra. The architect liked what he saw: Unlike most architectural photographers, Shulman had shown how the building fit into the landscape. Neutra offered the 25-year-old two bucks apiece for the pictures. "It wasn't life changing," Shulman says, "because I didn't have a life to change." Neutra promised to introduce Shulman to the young architects working across the city: Schindler, Soriano, Ain, Harwell Hamilton Harris. On that day, March 5, 1936, through no particular effort, Julius Shulman became a photographer.

> 09 > The Great Communicator

JULIUS SHULMAN SAYS YES TO EVERY INVITATION TO SPEAK, whether it is from an architecture school in Vienna or the Glendale Historical Society. His preferred lectern, however, is his horseshoe-shaped desk. He settles his elbows on the arms of his office chair and clasps his hands as if in prayer. This is the first signal that an address is imminent. He can be inspirational ("You can't plan life, just let life happen. Look at me, I'm the luckiest guy in the world"), solipsistic ("I got a call yesterday from Cologne. They've been availed with requests from all over the world for my latest book. They're going to plan a book signing for me on six continents. One thing keeps building on another!"), and caustic ("That Niemeyer book Rizzoli did was horrible! It's all washed out. That photographer is an idiot").

His sentences are as deliberately framed as his images, and visitors would be well advised to know that he demands the same in return. That is because the world's greatest problem, in Shulman's estimation, is lack of communication. It leads to wars and failed marriages, to say nothing of lousy photographs. Another word of caution: Never observe that anything is "interesting." Do so and Shulman will ask you to hold on a moment. He will reach for his *Roget's 21st Century Thesaurus* and open to a page marked with a Post-it. "Interesting" is the worst word in the English language," he begins. "Do you know how many other ways you can say 'interesting' that are so much more interesting than 'interesting'? Here are a few...." Also, never inquire when he "shot" a photograph or what it is like to "shoot" a subject. "Do you see a gun in my hand?" he will ask, his index finger pointed like a barrel.

He can go on for two, maybe three hours, and no matter how many people are present, the conversation always centers around him. He will eventually tire, blinking slowly between thoughts. His short-term memory has begun to fail, but even he can be startled by the depth of his recall: not just a teacher's name but the number of the room in which the class was taught; not just the job and who commissioned it but what he ate for lunch while he was on the assignment. If you say something flirty or funny, he will give you a wink and a thumbs-up. Ask a question that confuses him or that he cannot answer, and he will dismiss it and you: "What are you asking me that for? It's not important." Lesson: Anything that Julius

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**1959**  
Populating houses with people—in this case children, at architect Robert Skinner's home—was a distinctive Shulman trait

**1965**  
The Department of Water and Power building downtown, by A.C. Martin and Associates



**1965**  
Architect Paul R. Williams in front of the LAX Theme Building



**1969**  
John Lautner's Stevens House, in the Malibu Colony, features curved concrete supports meant to echo ocean waves



**1972**  
Throughout his sixties, Shulman continued to photograph prolifically. This backyard is at the Romick Residence, designed by architect Stephen U. Gassman



Gray Matters: Shulman's second most reproduced work, Richard Neutra's Kaufmann House in Palm Springs, 1947

looking more like a girl from the old country than the new. To introduce himself, Shulman crossed the hardwood floor and popped a balloon she was holding. Like Shulman's family, Emma's had come from Russia. Whenever he visited her parents' house on Boylston Street, her uncle Morris would walk into the living room and wind the clock when he felt it was time for the young man to go home. That might explain why the couple had a seven-year courtship. They married at Hollywood's Knickerbocker Hotel in 1937. In almost all of Shulman's pictures of her, Emma is looking directly into the camera. You can see how much she loves him in her eyes.

For the next 30 years Emma ran the office, answering the phones, maintaining the files, doing the bookkeeping. Before World War II Shulman had clients coming at him from three directions: magazine editors who needed to fill their

Shulman can't remember isn't worth remembering. Oh, and should you kvetch about your own so-so day, well, good luck. "What are you complaining about?" he snaps, his raspy voice rising an octave. "Listen," he says, unclasping his hands and holding them in the air in mock surprise. His eyes widen. "The birds are singing outside. The sun is shining. You're young and healthy. Life is beautiful."

> 10 > Love and War

**WITHIN A YEAR OF MEETING NEUTRA, SHULMAN MARRIED EMMA** Romm and started his own photography business. A graduate of Belmont High School, Emma was studying to be a secretary when she and Shulman met at a dance at the Santa Monica Pier. She wore her wavy brunet hair close to her face and appeared matronly,

pages, architects who needed his images as their calling cards, and contractors who needed him to document the industrial plants they were building for Goodyear, Dow Chemical, and other manufacturers in South Los Angeles. "It wasn't just smart to have Shulman photograph your work, it was essential," says Thomas Hines, professor emeritus of architecture and design at UCLA and author of *Richard Neutra and the Search for Modern Architecture*. Late in the war Shulman was enlisted by the army to photograph surgical procedures in military hospitals in the Northwest. Emma kept the firm alive by responding to reprint requests. Notable among them were queries from New York's Museum of Modern Art, which was amassing a contemporary architecture archive. Emma provided MoMA with Shulman's images of Neutra and Schindler homes. Shulman returned to a postwar boomtown. **[ CONTINUED ON PAGE 149 ]**

**2001**  
A reunion of those involved with the famous Case Study House No. 22 photograph included the two models, Shulman, architect Pierre Koenig, and the home's owners, the Stahls



**2005**  
Shulman with Ben Stiller on the day of their infamous encounter at a Los Angeles Conservancy meeting



**2005**  
The July issue of *W* magazine featured a Steven Klein portfolio with Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt that mimicked Shulman's photograph of Case Study House No. 21



**2005**  
Shulman on the patio with his publisher and friend Benedikt Taschen

**2006**  
Walt Disney Concert Hall, one of more than 125 projects documented by Shulman and his current collaborator, Juergen Nogai

