

## Julius Shulman, Photographer of Modernist California Architecture, Dies at 98

**One of the first to include the inhabitants of homes in his pictures.**

By ANDY GRUNDBERG

Julius Shulman, a renowned architecture photographer who depicted modern houses as the ultimate expressions of modern living and helped idealize the California lifestyle in the postwar years, died Wednesday at his home in Los Angeles. He was 98.

His daughter, Judy McKee, confirmed his death.

Mr. Shulman was part of a postwar generation of commercial architecture photographers who specialized in Modernist buildings, working on assignment for architects and mass-market magazines like *Life*, *House & Garden* and *Good Housekeeping* as well as architecture publications. Among his peers were Ezra Stoller in New York and the Chicago firm of Hedrich Blessing.

Over a career of more than half a century, Mr. Shulman almost always used black-and-white film, the better to reduce his subjects to their geometric essentials. But he was also able to make the hard glass and steel surfaces of postwar Modernist architecture appear comfortable and inviting.

He largely abjured skyscrapers in favor of houses and was one of the first photographers to include the inhabitants of homes in his pictures. They lent the buildings a charming if sometimes incongruous air of domesticity.

Working mostly in California, Mr. Shulman staged his photographs as tableaux to promote the idea of casual living in a Modernist context. Carefully composed and artfully lighted, his images promoted not only new approaches to home design but also the ideal of idyllic California living — a sunny, suburban lifestyle played out in sleek, spacious, low-slung homes featuring ample glass, pools and patios.

Mr. Shulman photographed buildings by some of the era's best-known architects, including Richard Neutra, Frank Lloyd Wright, Charles and Ray Eames, Mies van der Rohe and Oscar Niemeyer. But he also photographed less exalted examples of American buildings, like gas stations, apartment buildings and shopping malls.

Although his best-known work was made from the late 1940s through the 1960s, he continued to photograph into his 90s. In recent years a new appreciation of postwar architecture and design has contributed to renewed interest in Mr. Shulman's work. In 2005 the Getty Research Institute acquired his archive of more than a quarter-million prints, negatives and transparencies.

Mr. Shulman's reputation rests in large part on his photographs of what are known as the Case Study Houses. Begun by *Arts & Architecture* magazine in 1945, the Case Study House Program enlisted eight architects, including Neutra, Eero Saarinen and the Eameses, to design prototypes for homes that would meet the needs of America's postwar housing boom. Robert Elwall, a historian of architecture photography, said 26 Case Study Houses were eventually built in Southern California, and Mr. Shulman photographed 18 of them.

One of Mr. Shulman's most widely reproduced images, a 1960 view of Pierre Koenig's Case Study House No. 22, shows two well-dressed women in seemingly casual conversation in a living room that appears to float precariously above the Los Angeles basin. The vertiginous point of view contrasts sharply with the relaxed atmosphere of the house's interior, testifying to the ability of the Modernist architect to transcend the limits of the natural world.

Mr. Shulman's other masterpiece, a 1947 picture of Neutra's Kaufmann House in Palm Springs, Calif., pits domesticity against nature in similar fashion. The image shows the architect's mostly glass house as a Cubist array of shimmering squares and rectangles, bracketed in the foreground by two glowing chaise lounges and in the background by the desert and an expanse of forbidding mountains. To the left, a woman is seen reclining beside the house's swimming pool, apparently oblivious to what seems to be imminent nightfall.

The photograph was in fact taken at dusk, but to balance the light Mr. Shulman exposed the house, pool and surrounding landscape separately. In all, the exposure took 45 minutes.

Julius Shulman was born in Brooklyn on Oct. 10, 1910, and grew up on a small farm in Connecticut before moving to Los Angeles while still a boy. He traced his interest in photography to a class he took on the subject as a high school student in Los Angeles. After graduation he briefly attended the University of California at Los Angeles and the University of California, Berkeley, and earned pocket money by selling his photographs to fellow students.

In 1936 he returned to Los Angeles, where he was enlisted by a friend to take photographs of a new, Neutra-designed house in Hollywood with his amateur Kodak Vest Pocket camera. When Neutra saw the pictures, he asked to meet the photographer and proceeded to give him his first assignments.

One was to photograph a house by Raphael Soriano, who would later be the architect of Mr. Shulman's house and studio in Los Angeles. Soon Mr. Shulman, a largely self-taught architecture photographer, graduated from

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his amateur snapshot camera to a professional-view camera.

He opened a studio in Los Angeles in 1950, by that time drawing much of his work from magazines based in New York. He remained in business full time until the late 1980s, when architectural tastes had shifted to postmodernism, a style that rebelled against Modernism's reductive forms to include decorative ornament and an often willful pastiche of historical references. Mr. Shulman regarded postmodernism with disdain, arguing that its practitioners were interested only in facades, not living spaces.

His self-proclaimed retirement did not prevent him from continuing to work, however. In 2001 he joined forces with a younger photographer, Juergen Nogai; they collaborated on the 2005 book "Malibu: A Century of Living by the Sea" (Harry N. Abrams). In 2006, Nazraeli Press published "Vest Pocket Pictures," a collection of Mr. Shulman's early amateur photographs.

Other books featuring Mr. Shulman's photographs include "Julius Shulman: Architecture and Its Photography" (Taschen); "Photographing Architecture and Interiors" (Balcony Press); "L.A. Lost and Found: An Architectural History of Los Angeles" (Hennessey and Ingalls); and "Modernism Rediscovered" (Taschen).

Mr. Shulman's first marriage, in 1937, to Emma Romm, ended with her death in 1973. They had a daughter, Ms. McKee, Mr. Shulman's only child. In 1976 he married Olga Heller; she died in 1999. Besides Ms. McKee, he is survived by a grandson.

Mr. Shulman believed his photographic mission was to capture the essence of his architectural subjects. But he was not averse to helping them present themselves in a better light. In an interview conducted for the Archives of American Art, he recalled an assignment for Good Housekeeping magazine to photograph a freshly constructed tract house. Since the house had no landscaping, Mr. Shulman improvised.

"I went to a nursery and rented some canned plants — five-

gallon cans of roses and geraniums, whatever they had in bloom — and set them up in front of the house and framed the pictures with these plants. Then we broke off a branch from a walnut tree that was growing nearby and fastened it to a light stand so we could frame the picture with an arching branch, and in the finished picture the house is perfectly landscaped."



MARISSA ROTH FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Julius Shulman in 2005.