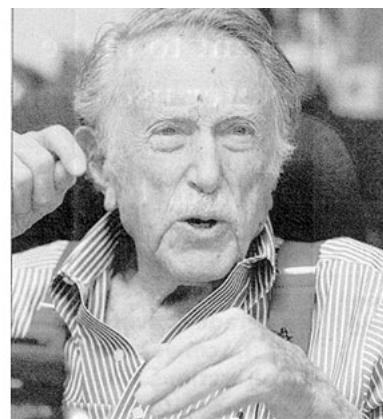


# Julius Shulman

## Photographer of Modernist Architecture

Born: 10 October, 1910, in Brooklyn, New York.

Died: 15 July, 2009, in Los Angeles, California, aged 98.



JULIUS Shulman was a renowned architecture photographer who depicted modern houses as the ultimate expressions of modern living and helped idealise the California lifestyle in the post-war years.

Shulman was part of a post-war generation of commercial architecture photographers who specialised in Modernist buildings, working on assignment for architects and mass-market magazines as well as architecture publications.

Over a career of more than half-a-century, 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 post-war Modernist architecture appear comfortable and inviting.

He largely abjured skyscrapers in favour 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, 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.

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, including petrol 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 post-war architecture and design has contributed to renewed interest in Shulman's work. In 2005 the Getty Research Institute, in California, acquired his archive of more than 250,000 prints, negatives and transparencies.

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 Programme enlisted eight architects, including Neutra, Eero Saarinen and the Eameses, to design prototypes for homes that would meet the needs of America's post-war housing boom. Robert Elwall, a historian of architecture photography, said 26 Case Study Houses were eventually built in southern California, and Shulman photographed 18 of them.

One of 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.

Shulman's other masterpiece, a 1947 picture of Neutra's Kaufmann House in Palm Springs, California, 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 longues 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 Shulman exposed the house, pool and surrounding landscape separately. In all, the exposure took 45 minutes.

Julius Shulman was born in Brooklyn, New York in 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 Shulman's house and studio in Los Angeles. Soon Shulman, a largely self-taught architecture photographer, graduated from his amateur snapshot camera to a professional model.

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 post-modernism, a style that rebelled against Modernism's reductive forms to include decorative ornament and an often willful pastiche of historical references.

Shulman regarded post-modernism 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 Shulman's early amateur photographs.

Other books featuring his photographs include *Julius Shulman: Architecture and Its Photography* (Taschen); *Photographing Architecture and Interiors* (Balcony Press); *LA Lost and Found: An Architectural History of Los Angeles* (Hennessey and Ingalls); and *Modernism Rediscovered* (Taschen).

Shulman's first marriage, in 1937, to Emma Romm, ended with her death in 1973. They had a daughter. In 1976 he married Olga Heller; she died in 1999. He is survived by his daughter and a grandson.