

# California soul

*Photographer Julius Shulman, who died in July, created legendary images of California's Modernist buildings. We salute a design icon*

As well as being stupendously talented, Julius Shulman (1910-2009) had luck on his side. In 1936 a chance meeting with pioneering architect Richard Neutra set him on the path to greatness. Using his pocket camera, he took a few shots of a new house by Neutra, who was so impressed with the results that he ordered several prints. Within a few years Shulman had been swept up by a new design movement: California Modernism had arrived, fuelled by a need for new post-war housing, and with it

the Case Study Houses program – an experimental scheme initiated by *Arts & Architecture* magazine in 1945 and intended to create affordable homes for the masses. Shulman's architectural portraits immortalised the optimism and streamlined style of 1950s America; serene, superbly lit and populated by casually beautiful people, his images turn buildings into works of art.

It's now hard to believe that only 26 Case Study Houses were built, such is the allure

with which Shulman's photographs invested them. Architects such as John Lautner, Rudolf Schindler and Pierre Koenig owe their fame partly to his camerawork (the latter's 1959 Stahl House, shot by night with the lights of LA twinkling beneath it, is the subject of Shulman's most iconic picture, above).

Though the Case Study dream of affordable Modernist homes for all never materialised – few of the houses now survive in their original state – Shulman's seductive images mean this golden era of American design will be remembered for a long time to come. There's nobody quite like Julius.



**From left** Julius Shulman at work; Pierre Koenig's iconic 1959 Stahl House; the Recreation Pavilion at the Mirman Residence, Arcadia, designed by architects Buff, Straub & Hensman in 1959

## EXPERIENCE LOS ANGELES MODERNISM!

You can visit several of the California buildings that Julius Shulman photographed. The Eames House in LA (1949), designed and lived in by Charles and Ray Eames, is open year-round ([eamesfoundation.org](http://eamesfoundation.org)). You can also book tours of the Stahl House by Pierre Koenig ([stahlhouse.com](http://stahlhouse.com)). Or go a step further and stay in one of the Palm Springs properties he documented – such as the Movie Colony Hotel, designed by Albert Frey in 1935 ([moviecolonyhotel.com](http://moviecolonyhotel.com)). The Palm Springs Modern Committee ([psmodcom.com](http://psmodcom.com)) has maps to help you find Modernist architectural sites. Closer to home, check out the books 'Julius Shulman: Modernism Rediscovered' (*Taschen*, £200) and 'Julius Shulman: Palm Springs' (Rizzoli, £30).