

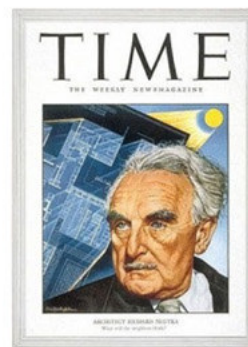
## Kronish House — Neutra Architectural Modernist Classic Saved From Wrecking Ball

**Richard Neutra (1892-1970) was one of the most important architects of the mid-century modern period.** Born and educated in Vienna, he moved to the US (California) in 1923, where he introduced his conception of mid-century modern design and philosophy — geometric structures making use of glass and flowing internal layout to create a sense of open space.

Designed by this modern master and completed in 1955, the Kronish House came very close to being demolished last summer. The estate sold in a foreclosure auction in January 2011 for \$5.8 million and was placed on the market in April for nearly \$14 million. Over the summer, unable to sell the “house,” the owner began demolition process by applying for a permit to cap the sewer line.

The property attained status as a flash point among preservationists. The architect’s aging son, Dion Neutra, launched a campaign raising funds to purchase the property, restore the home, and establish a Neutra Foundation Library. Even the LA city council attempted to intervene and save the landmark, despite a lack of existing legal restrictions.

The Kronish house is the last remaining house in Beverly Hills designed by architect Richard Neutra — one of only three Neutra



designs ever built in Beverly Hills and the only one remaining intact (one was demolished, the other completely altered). It spans almost 7,000 square feet on a nearly two-acre lot at 9439 Sunset Boulevard.

The sadly disheveled and endangered house avoided the wrecking ball with a last minute purchase by a buyer who offered up \$12.8 million for the property.

Susan Smith, the real-estate agent who helped broker the deal, said that the house was purchased in the name of a trust, and that the buyers had been looking for a property with architectural history.

“It will definitely be identifiable as a Neutra house,” wrote Ms. Smith in an email to concerned interests. “The new owner is going to preserve the house, and this will take about two years,” she added. “It will be a private home.”

Although the new owner isn’t planning on working with Richard Neutra’s son, architect Dion Neutra, “they are keeping the structure of the house,” according to Ms. Smith.

Built for Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Kronish, the home has a formal, pinwheel-shaped design. Three wings radiate from a glass-enclosed garden area visible from several rooms. The house features walls of glass and flat, smooth surfaces. The house featured fine finishes and innovative amenities.

“This is Neutra on a grand masterful scale, and akin to the Josef Von Sternberg House (demolished in 1972) in being more a “villa” with its commanding presence, unusual amenities, and fine finishes that are really only seen at this level of craft in his residential work in Italy and Germany,” says Barbara Lamprecht M. Arch., architectural historian, and restoration consultant. “The Kronish House is an exceptional work of architecture even within the Neutra canon.”

In her definitive book, *Richard Neutra: Complete Works* (Taschen 2000), Lamprecht quotes Neutra regarding his work on the Kronish House:

*convictions in a poignant paragraph: “Every major project like this takes a good deal of ‘starch’ out of me, my life-strength, but there is always deep satisfaction. ... This production would not have been possible if I had been a little more casual about what concerns you, or take it all less to heart than I did. After all and in the end, life is a lonely business for each human being even when there is a crowd around us, and an architect and a client must naturally come close and stay in mutual sympathy while a new and a little happier life can start after all the troubles and noise of building.”*