



Annual Report

NEUTRA INSTITUTE FOR SURVIVAL THROUGH DESIGN

Fiscal Year 2022-2023

A YEAR OF EDUCATION

During the 2022 fiscal year, the Neutra Institute for Survival Through Design (NISTD) made significant progress on its educational mission. The Institute's mission is to preserve and use the Neutra legacy to promote creative research and design that benefits people and the planet. Originally founded in 1962 by Richard J. Neutra, today's Institute uses its three Neutra-designed properties to educate people about preservation and how Neutra's ideas about Biorealism (see sidebar) can be used in architecture and design today.

Highlights of our educational activities for the 2022 fiscal year (April 1, 2022-March 31, 2023) are shared below.

WCAPT PRESERVATION DOCUMENTATION WORKSHOP

The Western Chapter of the Association for Preservation Technology (WACPT) held a workshop on two important documentation techniques: digital scanning and HABS photography.

Thirty young preservation professionals and graduate students attended the day-long session. Alan White, Partner, AQYER, demonstrated Lidar and Matterport scanning technology—using Reunion House as a case study.

Photographer Stephen Schafer lectured on the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), and the Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS) programs of the National Park Service. Schafer followed the presentation with hands-on break-out sessions in which participants learned how to document Reunion House in twelve key photographs. Panel discussions also featured preservation architect Peyton Hall, FAIA; Neutra scholar Barbara Lamprecht, Ph.D.; and USC graduate student Ye Hong.



Schaf Photo, 2023

NEUTRA SYMPOSIUM AT EDRA

In June, the Institute was featured at the Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA) annual conference in Greenville, South Carolina at an event entitled “How Richard J. Neutra’s Survival Through Design Foresaw Health In All Design.” The symposium presenters advocated for the insertion of Neutra’s theoretical work into the canon of behavioral design research in architectural and environmental design practice.

Panel presenters included James A. Wise, Environmental/ Design Psychologist; Neutra scholar Barbara Lamprecht, Ph.D.; and Lisa Hescong, architect and author. Attendees were primarily unaware of Neutra’s work on physiological/ experimental psychology and architecture, so the session proved eye-opening for practitioners. The NISTD continues to work with EDRA on future programming.

MICHAEL ARBIB: WHEN BRAINS MEET BUILDINGS

The Institute also hosted a hybrid program featuring author Michael Arbib, whose book, *When Brains Meet Buildings*, discusses the nexus of neuroscience and architecture. In addition to sharing contemporary examples of buildings that utilize neuroscience in their design, Arbib discussed Richard Neutra’s ideas about Biorealism and how science has advanced the architectural practice. The Institute attracted an international audience for this program via Zoom as well as a local one: the Neutra Office served as the broadcast location for the event.

FRESH BREW: SFAIA SEMINARS

Richard Neutra was also the topic of three Fresh Brew seminars conducted by the AIA San Francisco in collaboration with the Center for Architecture + Design. The series explored the connection between Neutra and Frank Lloyd Wright, Neutra’s prescient quest for architectural wellbeing, and Neutra’s architecture of social concern featuring his prefabricated community, Avion Village (1941, Richard J. Neutra). Fresh Brew is a series of morning conversations about architecture and design. Listen at [https://us4.campaign-archive.com/?e=\[UNIQID\]&u=6ace6a53f124f57350c266ec1&id=8a05418045](https://us4.campaign-archive.com/?e=[UNIQID]&u=6ace6a53f124f57350c266ec1&id=8a05418045)

WHAT IS BIOREALISM?

“Biorealism” is a term coined by Richard Neutra to capture his recognition of “the inherent and inseparable relationship between man and nature” as well as his philosophical approach to design.

By combining “bio” and “realism,” Neutra was signaling the priority he gave to respecting the constraints and possibilities human biology presents for design.

Biology doesn’t change with fashion, and he believed that it demands an evidence-based and biophilic approach to design.

Biorealism was meant to firmly separate Neutra from the other Modern architects that were his contemporaries. In our more intellectually fragmented 21st century, it takes at least four different intellectual disciplines to capture what he meant by it.

The first of these we today call “evidence-based design.” It means that science informs design decisions to ensure that they are made on the firmest possible grounds.

The second of these is neuroscience, because Neutra believed that the evidence needed for good design could be found in the basic physiology and neural functioning of humans.

The third is what is now recognized as “Biophilia,” the deep connection that our physiological and neural operations have to the natural world around us.

The fourth is captured in what today we call “sustainability.” It means that the designs we create should support us and maintain us into a future with its own new challenges, and help us preserve all that we want to about the values we find and imbue into our lived world.

Biorealism is all that!

TOURS & VISITING SCHOLARS AT REUNION HOUSE

Reunion House continues to host selected visiting scholars. Educators are invited to stay in the primary suite and to experience living in a Neutra design. Scholars during the past year have included Lisa Heshong; James Wise; and Paul Chamberlain, Professor of Design and Co-Director of Lab4Living, an Interdisciplinary Research Group, at Sheffield Hallam University in the United Kingdom.

Reunion House was also toured by professors and students, such as the Southern California Architecture class taught by Lilian Pfaff for California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. The San Francisco and Los Angeles offices of Architectural Resources Group (ARG) also visited the Neutra Office as part of their internal professional development program.



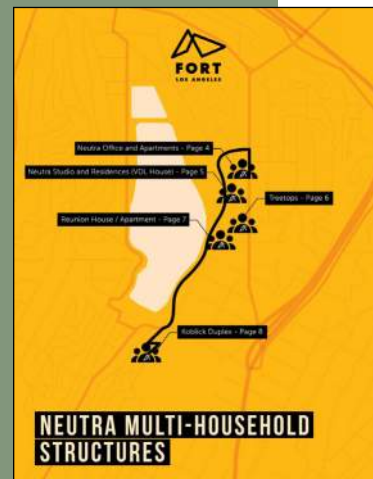
VIRTUAL APARTMENT MUSEUM QR CODE PROJECT

During the past fiscal year, the Institute made progress on its Virtual Apartment Museum project, which uses publicly accessible QR Codes to provide educational videos and virtual tours of the Institute's three properties. Matterport virtual reality tours are now available for Reunion House and the Neutra Office Building through the generous support of the Cigrang family. A 3-minute video about designing with natural light and its psychological effects and a 3-minute video on how Neutra designed the Neutra Offices for either commercial or residential use and why that issue is relevant today. The videos were created by Josh Gorrell.



FORT: LOS ANGELES TRAIL MAP OF NEUTRA-DESIGNED APARTMENTS

The Institute partnered with Friends of Residential Treasures: Los Angeles (FORT:LA) to create an online trail map of five multi-family residential buildings designed by Richard J. Neutra. FORT:LA created and posted the trail map on its website and promoted it via social media. Hundreds of people have used the trail map to visit these properties virtually or in person to learn about Richard Neutra's legacy in multi-family residential design.



MYTHBUSTING PROGRAM

Richard J. Neutra is primarily known as a master architect of Mid-Century Modern residences. However, Neutra also designed a number of innovative multi-family residential buildings that have lessons for today's major challenge in Los Angeles: the need for multi-unit housing. The Institute curated a virtual program featuring author/historian/architect Michael Webb, AIA; architect; AIA Gold Medal winner, Larry Scarpa, FAIA; and the Institute's President, Raymond Neutra, MD DrPH.



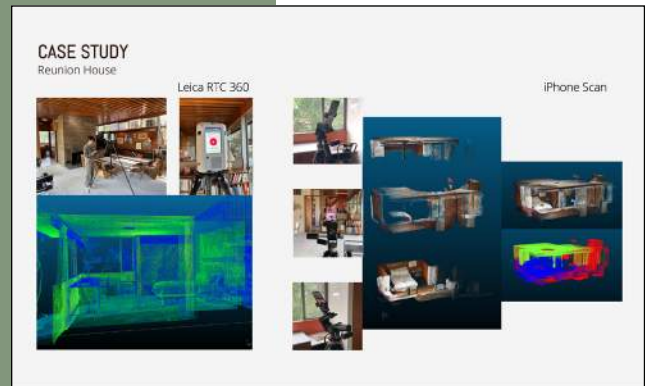
SAVE AS PODCAST

In June, Reunion House was the topic of the award-winning preservation podcast, *Save As: NextGen Heritage Conservation*. The "Every Fixture Tells a Story" episode featured the USC graduate students who used Reunion House as their semester project for the Methods and Materials class. Hosted by Trudi Sandmeier and Cindy Olnick, *Save As* has listeners all over the world. Currently, the episode ranks #1 in downloads for the entire series, with nearly 500 downloads. Listen now at <https://sites.usc.edu/saveas/2022/06/02/season-2-episode-16/>



YE HONG

As a result of her participation in the USC Methods and Materials class in 2022, USC Masters Student Ye Hong selected Reunion House as the case study for her Masters of Building Science thesis, *Scanning Using a Smart Phone for Heritage Conservation*. Over several months, Ye made site visits to Reunion House to scan the building using her smartphone and the Matterport application. Ye provided a valuable documentation project for the Institute that will help guide its future preservation efforts at Reunion House.



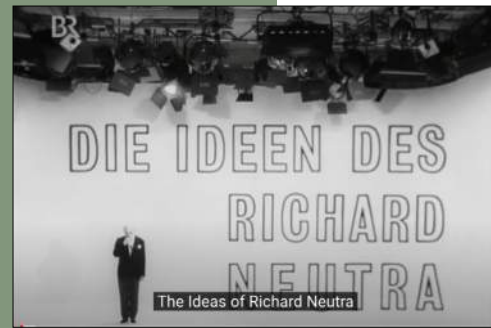
FILM SCREENING

In February, the Neutra Institute coordinated a screening of P.J. Letofsky's documentary film, *Neutra: Survival Through Design*, at the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive. The film was followed by a panel discussion on design and wellbeing with Professor Richard Jackson MD MPH; Lindsay Baker of International Living Future Institute at Berkeley Museum of Fine Art; Lisa Heschong, and Raymond Neutra.



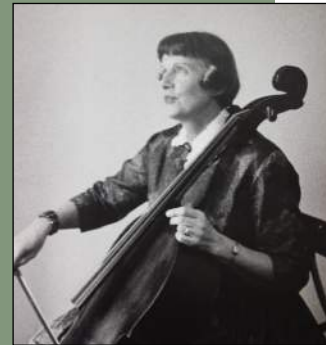
THE IDEAS OF RICHARD NEUTRA

Thanks to a generous financial gift by Russell Brown and the donated translation work of Birgit Knauf-Goedeking, the Institute was able to translate the German film: *The Ideas of Richard Neutra* into English. The film is now free to the public through the NISTD YouTube channel. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEtcadNaZ7s>



NEW ON THE PLAYLIST

The 1964 record, "Dione Neutra in an Unusual Program of Songs" featuring cello and piano solos by Dione Neutra was digitized by musician and Neutra owner, Will Thomas. It features German, Swiss and Italian folk songs and an introduction by radio personality John Nesbitt, for whom Richard J. Neutra designed a home in 1942. Listen here: <https://neutra.org/the-neutra-legacy/dione-neutra/>



THANK YOU, ROCHELLE!

In 2022, Rochelle Hayes Neutra, FNP MSN retired from the Institute's board. Rochelle served on the Executive Committee and provided essential guidance during the Institute's transition after Dion Neutra's passing. Rochelle is a clinician who works with direct patient care and advocacy for community health centers in the San Francisco Bay Area. Rochelle also served as the Medical Clinic Director at the Native American Health Center in San Francisco and conducted National Institute of Health-sponsored research at UC San Francisco and UC Berkeley.



During her tenure on the board, Rochelle spearheaded the creation of a post-occupancy evaluation project on the experimental Neutra-designed University Elementary School at UCLA in collaboration with Perkins Eastman, one of the leading architectural firms in the US with an embedded research unit. Rochelle will now focus on her work developing healthcare and housing facilities for unhoused/underserved populations.



Rochelle visiting the Casa Estudio Max Cetto, 1949, near Mexico City. Neutra & Cetto worked together in the 1930's.

The board misses her remarkable intellect, astute observations, extensive experience, and cheerful personality. The Institute is lucky to have her on its family advisory board and welcomes her future contributions.

THE PROPERTIES

As part of his estate plan, Dion Neutra, Richard Neutra's son, bequeathed ownership of three Neutra-designed properties in Silver Lake, California, to the Institute for use in furthering its mission: the Neutra Office Building (Richard Neutra, 1950), Dion Neutra/Reunion House (Richard Neutra, 1950) and Treetops Apartments (Dion Neutra, 1980).

The Institute began the process of having each of the properties evaluated to identify any deferred maintenance items or code-related deficiencies.

For the Neutra Office, the Institute engaged preservation consultants, Architectural Resources Group, to develop a historic structures report. The report guides preservation and establishes improvement priorities for the Institute's stewardship of the office space and its two office/apartments.

Repairs and upgrades at the Dion Neutra/Reunion House property included replacing the main electrical service, tree maintenance, spider leg repair, and in-kind sliding glass door repair.

At the Treetops Apartments, the Institute re-plastered the swimming pool and jacuzzi, improved the laundry facilities, sealed the roof skylights, and performed other maintenance and repair projects.

CONCLUSION:

The 2022-2023 fiscal year has been a productive one for the Neutra Institute for Survival Through Design. Educational programming using the Institute's properties has included undergraduate, graduate, and professional development courses on a wide variety of topics, from neuroscience and design to preservation best practices.

These programs have reached hundreds of students and practitioners from all over the world. The Institute looks forward to expanding its work in these areas in the coming year.



Neutra Office/Apartments



Reunion House



Treetops

NEUTRA INSTITUTE BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

- *Raymond Neutra, President*
- *Michael Gibson, Treasurer*
- *Sian Winship, Secretary*
- *James A. Wise, Member at Large*
- *Marlow Hoffman, Member at Large*



The Institute is also grateful to our many volunteers.
Visit neutra.org for the full list of volunteers.