



Annual Report
**NEUTRA INSTITUTE FOR
SURVIVAL THROUGH DESIGN**
Fiscal Year 2023-2024

OUR DUAL MISSION IN ACTION

The mission of the Neutra Institute for Survival Through Design (NISTD) 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 can be used in architecture and design today.

During the 2023 fiscal year, the Institute realized one of its primary objectives: creating a scholar in residence program at Reunion House in Silver Lake. In collaboration with the USC School of Architecture, the program offers the scholar the opportunity to live in the house rent-free for two semesters. The hope is that the program, in addition to being supportive of students pursuing their academic interests, will offer the scholar an opportunity to experience and be inspired by the architecture of Richard J. Neutra. The scholar also acts as a caretaker and occasionally as a tour guide.

As the tenure of the Institute's first Reunion House Scholar in Residence, Michael Alvarez, draws to a close, consideration of applications from a variety of graduate student candidates for 2024-5, has resulted with the selection of the USC Heritage Conservation Program's Ryan Holcomb.

In fulfillment of its mission, the Institute partnered with other educational organizations, encouraged access to historic Neutra-related archival material, convened experts in design and neuroscience, programmed the office space with a variety of educational events, added educational videos to its website, and cultivated networking opportunities among Neutra owners worldwide.

To make its website more useful for students and scholars, the Institute added educational videos, architectural renderings, travel sketches, and a free, downloadable chapter from the newly illustrated edition of *Survival Through Design*.

Reunion House was also the subject of a ground-breaking research study on perceptual psychology. Highlights of educational activities during the 2023-2024 fiscal year (April 1, 2023-March 31, 2024) appear throughout this report.



Getty Conservation Institute Conserving Modern Architecture Course

Over the summer, the Institute was delighted to partner with the prestigious Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) in their Conserving Modern Architecture course. Twenty-seven mid-career preservation professionals from 26 countries assembled in Los Angeles for the two-week in-person training component of the 18-week course.

The GCI selected Reunion House as their case study for the course. Students were divided into four groups with the intent of creating a conservation plan for four different hypothetical uses of Reunion House. Each of the groups was given access to historic materials and research related to the house. Seminars were held at the nearby Historic Neutra Office Building and Apartments with presentations and workshops by experts such as Barbara Lamprecht, PhD, Raymond Neutra, Stephen Schafer, and Alan White. Offices were used as breakout rooms for the group projects. Lectures were supplemented with a series of site visits to significant architectural sites in Southern California.

International preservation practice differs from American practice with a more holistic and nuanced approach. The Conserving Modern Architecture students offered an expansive view of the significance of Reunion House that embraced the role and family of Dion Neutra. They also acknowledged the unique setting of the Neutra Colony (Neutra Place is home to nine custom single family residences by Neutra dating between 1948 and 1962), the importance of the landscape, and encouraged the Institute to capture the living history of the former residents. The students also encouraged the Institute to think expansively about the alterations to the Reunion House under Dion's ownership. The GCI course proved to be a win-win for the Institute and the students.

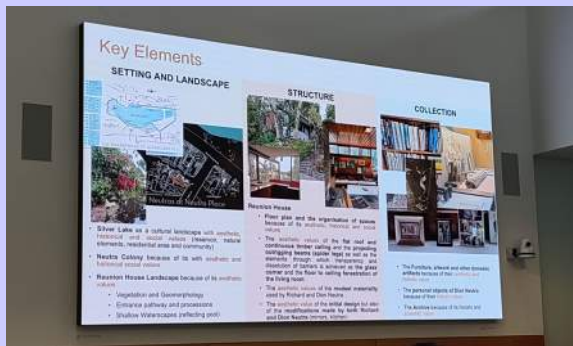


Photo taken during one of the Getty Scholar presentations



The Getty Scholars at the Getty Center

Eye-Movement Research at Reunion House

Besides preservation of the Neutra legacy in his designed and built works, the Institute seeks to reinvigorate his intellectual achievements in scholarly publications. Neutra's ideas and design philosophy, captured under the aegis of 'Biorealism', is as relevant and important today as it was when he conceived it. Perhaps more so, given the impacts of population growth, economic disparities, and ongoing climate change, which challenge how we conceive and construct our ever expanding urban environments.

Over the past year, Reunion House was used for neuroscience investigation by architect Dr. Kristine Mun and her associates, on the topic of "*Measuring Perceptual Spaciousness of Richard Neutra's Spider Leg System with Gaze Attention and EEG Analysis.*" Dr. Mun used the primary bedroom "spider leg" at Reunion House as the subject of her research. The study showed how by applying modern measurement technologies, the effectiveness of Neutra's strategies can be examined and understood in terms of advances in perceptual psychology since his time. This work has already been picked up and proposed for inclusion into lunar and planetary space settlements, where 'spaciousness' for occupants is at a premium. Raymond Neutra also shared the outcomes of this research during his plenary lecture on Richard Neutra's *Survival Through Design* at the annual meeting of ANFA in La Jolla, California in September 2023.



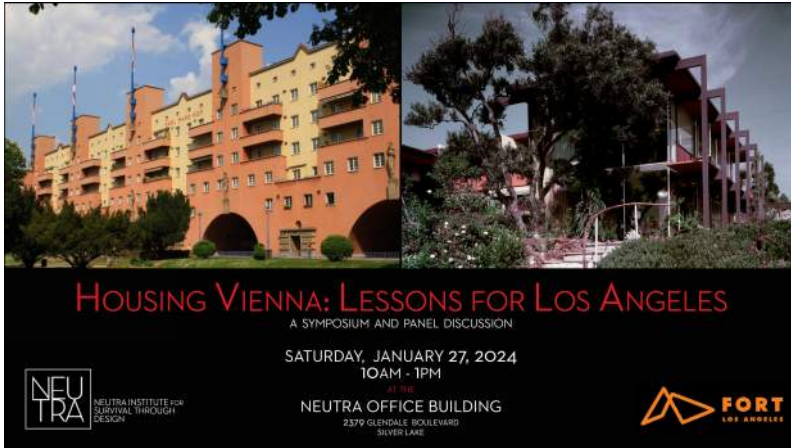
Corner window with spider-leg, Reunion House primary bedroom



Well At Work



In March, the Institute partnered with the AIA/LA to bring Esther Sternberg, PhD to the Neutra Office to discuss her new book, *Well At Work: Creating Wellbeing in Any Workspace*. Following the presentation a panel of design, public health, and building science experts offered a variety of perspectives. Panelists included Penny Herscovitch, co-founder of Padlab design studio, and Associate Professor of Spatial Experience Design at ArtCenter College of Design; Joon-Ho Choi, Ph.D., Associate Dean of Research & Creative Work and an Associate Professor of Building Science in the School of Architecture at the University of Southern California (USC); and Howard Hu, MD, MPH, ScD, the Flora L. Thornton Chair of the Department of Preventive Medicine at the Keck School of Medicine at USC. More than 80 people attended this free event. A video recording of Dr Sternberg's illustrated presentation appears under "Resources" at www.neutra.org.



Housing Vienna

In early 2024, the Institute partnered with Friends of Residential Treasures: Los Angeles (FORT:LA) and Frances Anderton for *Housing Vienna: Lessons for Los Angeles*. The free symposium brought together architects, planners, developers, city representatives, architectural and cultural historians, to discuss contemporary Vienna's approach. Participants included Beatriz Stambuk-Torres, Manager, GPLA Vienna Housing Field Study for the Global Policy Leadership Academy; John Ellis, AIA; Michael Lehrer, FAIA; Anthony Fontenot, author; Cristian Ahumada, Executive Director and CEO of Holo Communities; Prophet Walker, Co-Founder and CEO, Treehouse Co-Living; journalist Frances Anderton; and Dr. Raymond Neutra, in thoughtful discussion about the nexus of the present and the past. It was attended by more than 150 people. A video of the event can be found under "Resources" at www.neutra.org along with a video of one of the 1938 Neutra-designed Strathmore apartments prepared by filmmaker Russell Brown.



German Owners Event and the Neutra Network

In April of 2024, the Institute hosted at the Neutra Office Building, a convening of Neutra owners from a community in Frankfurt, Germany. Neutra owners from the Los Angeles area were invited to participate. The group shared their challenges and visions for maintaining and restoring their properties.

Over the past year, the Institute has also been involved in the establishment of the Neutra Owners Network, a networking and support group for stewards of Neutra properties developed by Chris Hacker and Will Thomas.



Dion Neutra Papers Donation to the University of California, Santa Barbara

Dion Neutra, an architect in his own right, worked with his father but also developed his own practice after his father passed away. Architectural plans, renderings, and other ephemera relating to Dion's solo practice were donated this year to the Architecture and Design Collection at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Through the thoughtful stewardship of Silvia Perea, the papers will be made accessible to scholars as a means of encouraging scholarship about Dion Neutra's practice.



Ryan Holcomb, 2024-25 Reunion House Scholar in Residence

Ryan C. Holcomb is entering his second year as a Master of Heritage Conservation student in USC's Graduate School of Architecture. Ryan has strong interests in sites of sensitive history and how preservation can be used as a tool for reconciliation and to affirm identity. Hailing from San Diego, he is passionate about Southern California's rich architectural tradition and is excited to contribute to the legacy of the Neutra Institute.

Support for the Dione Neutra Papers at Cal Poly Pomona



To further scholarship on the Neutra family, the Institute is donating \$20,000 over two years to support the development of conserving and making the papers of Dione Neutra more accessible to researchers at the Cal Poly Pomona College of Environmental Design. Under the leadership of Robert Alexander, the collection will be digitized. Dione Neutra was invaluable as an executive assistant to her husband in practice and mother to their children. Students of architecture and women's studies, alike, will benefit from this project. Over the past year, the collection has been augmented by the donation of family-related material from Raymond Neutra, creating the Neutra Family Collection.



Tours and 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. Reunion House and the Neutra Office Building also welcomed hundreds of visitors as part of the California Preservation Foundation's *Doors Open* event day. Through a partnership with Cal Poly Pomona's VDL House, Reunion House is now a regular part of the docent training program for VDL student docents.

Preservation & Stewardship

Last year the Institute began routine maintenance of the Neutra Office Building (Richard Neutra, 1950) as directed by the Historic Structures Report prepared in 2023 by preservation consultants, Architectural Resources Group. The report guides preservation and repair priorities for the Institute's stewardship of the office space and its two office/apartments.

The Institute has also undertaken the beginning phase of restoration of the Reunion House (Richard Neutra, 1950) exterior wood board-and-batten cladding. The clear-heart redwood siding, previously painted, is now having the paint removed and the original finish restored. The Institute engaged master craftsman Eric Lamers to repair and replace-in-kind the deteriorating spider legs at the entrance and primary bedroom window.

With historic amounts of rainfall during the past year, the Institute has battled water infiltration issues at Treetops Apartments (Dion Neutra, 1982). A complete roof replacement is imminent.



Summary

In summary, the 2023-2024 fiscal year has been a productive one for the Neutra Institute for Survival Through Design in support of the dual mission. 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.



Welcome Catherine! Thank you, Marlow!

The Institute wishes to thank Marlow Hoffman for her service as a Board Member At Large for the last several years. Marlow applied her years of communications experience to the Institute and offered much input on the evolution of the Institute website. We wish Marlow continued success in her career. With Marlow's departure, the Institute is delighted to welcome Catherine Azimi. Catherine also brings years of communications experience in the fields of preservation and architecture. From 2012 to 2017, Catherine was the House Manager of the Eames House in the Pacific Palisades monitoring conservation efforts and establishing a docent program that propelled an increase in awareness and visitors to the Eames House. The Institute looks forward to working with Catherine in the coming months.

Neutra Institute Board:

Raymond Neutra, President
Michael Gibson, Treasurer
Sian Winship, Secretary
James A. Wise, Member at Large
Catherine Azimi, Member at Large

The Institute wishes to thank the following volunteers for their time and support:

Michael Alvarez, Frances Anderton, Olivia Armandroff, John Berley, Russell Brown, Carla Fallberg, Chris Hacker, Rob Heggen, Lisa Herschong, Barbara Lamprecht, P.J.Letofsky, Marc Romeo, Noam Sargosti, Griffin Snyder, Gary & Gayle Strang, and Will Thomas

