

# DESERT MODERNISM

OUR PHYSICAL SURROUNDINGS & SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

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Visiting even a small cross-section of the many architecturally significant mid-century homes in Palm Springs and Los Angeles, exposes the wide variety within this architectural category. These homes were carefully designed and crafted at a time when new questions were being asked about how we want to live, what role the space we work in (and sleep in and eat in) plays on the work that we create, and how our physical surroundings might best influence our social interactions and facilitate our daily lives as creative beings. Different answers and approaches to these questions resulted in a wide variety of homes but you can feel the sense that creativity is being prioritized, boundaries are being pushed and the home is being asked to serve a changing role.

That role is one that must balance both the home serving as a social center and the home as a private sanctuary. The mid-century modern home needed to serve as both a hub for social gatherings, with spaces designed to accommodate parties and conversation, and a sanctuary from the harsh outside (including both environmental and social pressures). A common third aspect of the home, overlapping both the social & sanctuary, was to serve as a studio or workspace.





Both the Eames house and the Schindler house were designed specifically to accommodate and cultivate interaction between artists and designers (including the home's residents as well as visitors). Studio spaces were designed to be open and approachable and interact with the residential areas of the home. But these spaces also needed to provide adequate, functional work space and many of the details that facilitated that function are now considered highlights of modernism: large windows

letting in natural light, attractive and modular storage units that could be adjusted as projects and needs changed, open, flexible floor plans with furniture that favored function over frill.

However these homes, and many of the homes in Palm Springs & Los Angeles, balanced these very open and functional spaces with an ability to provide privacy and protection. Integrated indoor and outdoor spaces continue to serve as additional opportunities to build layers of privacy by using courtyards, plants, and other landscaping elements to shade and to protect as well as to welcome, and inspire.

Decades later, many of the homes of this period still stand as superb examples of design solving functional problems beautifully. As technology today continues to rapidly evolve and change both



how and where we work as well as how we interact socially, many of the questions designers and architects were asking 60 years ago are again relevant. Many of the answers for homeowners everywhere may already be there in the homes and buildings crafted in the in the middle of the last century throughout the American West.

