

[ANGLES ON ARCHITECTURE]

The Neutra Colony in Silver Lake

By Karen Numme and Laura Massino Smith

Ledger Contributing Writers



Los Angeles' mild climate and "anything goes" attitude has allowed for a greater sense of experimentation in design and architecture here than in other places. The Neutra Colony in Silver Lake is proof of this.

These single-family homes were all created after World War II through the early 60s, otherwise known as "Mid-Century Modern." Just prior to this, there was Spanish Colonial and Mediterranean Revival, English Tudor Revival and the French Chateausque. What Richard Neutra was designing was radically different.

Austrian born Neutra relocated to Los Angeles in the early 20s. In the 1930s he received a loan for \$3,000 to

build his residence in Silver Lake. Located at 2300 E. Silver Lake Blvd. it still stands, although it is technically the second version of what became known as the "VDL Research House II." The first house was destroyed by fire in the 60s. What currently exists is the rebuilt home of Richard Neutra and his family.

Designed largely by Dion Neutra, Neutra's son, the house is now owned by Cal Poly Pomona. The moniker "VDL" stands for Van Der Leeuw, a Dutch businessman who loaned Neutra the original \$3,000.

Neutra experimented with materials in this house, the reason for the other half of the name "Research House." On the second story, there is a copper colored glass window. This was the same material used in astronauts' helmets and prohibits ultra-violet light from penetrating. The fabrics and carpeting in that room have

never faded. Another experiment was the glass front door. Surely not shocking now, but this type of door would have been seen in an office building in the early 60s, and in fact, was designed for that purpose.

The other houses in the Neutra Colony are also located on East Silver Lake Boulevard, characterized by flat roofs, large expanses of glass and no ornamentation.

The original Neutra office is located at 2379 Glendale Blvd. The work of Dion Neutra can also be seen at 2434 Earl Street in the "Treetops."

The Neutra Colony is a time capsule of mid-20th century architecture that has become an icon of Los Angeles.

Laura Massino Smith is a Master of Architectural History-Architectural Historian and author of a series of guidebooks of Los Angeles architecture.

www.architecturetoursla.com

Karen Numme holds the title of Master of Architecture & Landscape Landscape Architecture and is a realtor with Keller Williams Realty in Los Feliz.

www.karennumme.com