century Italian photography and will provide a welcome point of departure for further scholarly inquiry and curatorial endeavors in the years to come.

DANIEL MCREYNOLDS
[Princeton University]

Publication related to the exhibition

Hawaiian Modern: The Architecture of Vladimir Ossipoff
Honolulu Academy of Art, Honolulu

Yale University School of Architecture Gallery, New Haven
2 September–24 October 2008

Deutsches Architekturmuseum, Frankfurt, Germany
7 February–10 May, 2009

Over four years in preparation, *Hawaiian Modern: The Architecture of Vladimir Ossipoff* is the first major retrospective of the architect widely considered to be the state’s preeminent visionary of regional mid-century modernism. Characterized as the dean of Hawai‘i architects, Ossipoff (1907–98) drew from local settings and materials in juxtaposition to global design trends to adapt a modernism specific to and respectful of the Hawaiian context, lifestyle, and environment. In the course of a career spanning more than sixty years, Ossipoff applied these criteria to diverse typologies with versatility. The current exhibition seeks to position Ossipoff firmly in the larger lexicon of twentieth-century modernism.

Ossipoff followed the lead of Hart Wood, Charles W. Dickey, and Claude Stiehl in seeking a style unique to the islands. Significantly, Ossipoff’s career also paralleled Hawai‘i’s transition from territory to statehood in 1959, a period characterized by the marked effort to assert the islands’ modernity and cultural uniqueness. Statehood in turn coincided with the rise of trans-Pacific air travel, the resulting influx of tourism, ongoing cultural tensions surrounding the landscape itself, and expansive economic development. Modern architecture was consciously adopted as the public face of the new state’s image.

Deeply influenced by the radical mid-century growth of Honolulu, curator Dean Sakamoto sought to present Ossipoff to a broader audience on the occasion of the centennial of the architect’s birth. Focusing on Ossipoff’s legacy as the champion of a local modernity, the exhibition’s dominant theme was his ability to harmonize with and celebrate the Hawaiian Islands’ geographic remoteness, microclimates, and landscape amidst the pressures of population explosion, rampant construction, and urbanization. Ossipoff’s work reflects Hawai‘i’s proud image as a cultural crossroads where Western modernism, East Asian traditions, and Hawaiian vernacular interact and flourish. Specifically, Ossipoff drew from craftsman, plantation, and territorial traditions, orthodox modernism, and Frank Lloyd Wright and Japanese design. Ossipoff was reluctant to verbalize his sources of influence, and the exhibition suggests myriad opportunities for additional research regarding these connections.

Grass green, dark red, and ochre walls served as a unifying backdrop for basswood models, executed by Dean Sakamoto Architects LLC, and large-format photo panels. Site plans complemented selections of thirty major works from Ossipoff’s more than eight hundred designs. Other display items included scrapbooks, magazine articles, Ossipoff watercolors and drawings, and paintings from his family’s collection. Overall, the exhibit’s aesthetic, informal atmosphere was extremely sympathetic to the architect’s own environments.

A detailed chronology of Ossipoff’s life in the entrance foyer was keyed to parallel milestones in Hawaiian history. Born in Siberia on 25 November 1907, Vladimir Nikolaevich Ossipoff soon moved to Tokyo, where his father had been appointed military attaché to the czar at the Russian embassy. Ossipoff was educated at the Tokyo Foreign School and St. Joseph’s College in Yokohama, becoming fluent in English, Japanese, and Russian. Later he often referenced traditional Japanese elements: low railings, diagonal orientation, shoji-style sliding panels, and incised handles, always with attention to proportion and an emphasis on natural materials; in 1986 he characterized the Japanese house as better suited to Hawai‘i, a theme explored in Marc Treib’s catalog essay, “Of Climate and Contour: Ossipoff’s Architecture and the Hawaiian Environment.” As a boy, he reportedly took tea with his family at Wright’s renowned Imperial Hotel. Following the 1923 Kantō earthquake, Ossipoff emigrated to California with his mother and siblings (his father died before he could join them).

Ossipoff attended Berkeley High School before entering the University of California at Berkeley’s Beaux-Arts–influenced Department of Architecture. After graduation, Ossipoff was briefly a draftsman with the San Francisco firm of Crim, Reasing, and McGinnis before sailing to Honolulu, where he would head the lumber and building department for a major sugar cane concern, Theo H. Davies and Company. He also worked in the architectural offices of Herbert Cayton and Dickey (primarily on the Immigration Station at Honolulu Harbor) and later with Stiehl and Dickey (on projects that included the Waikiki Theater and Kula Sanatorium). In 1936 he opened the office of Vladimir Ossipoff, Architect. He closed his office following the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor and took a job with Contractors Pacific Naval Air Bases, becoming involved with repairing wartime damage and expanding military installations. He reopened his office at
the end of hostilities and from 1946 also participated in the collaborative Fisk, Johnson, Ossipoff, and Preis, Associated Architects. Despite subsequent transformations, the firm remains the oldest in the state, and is now known as Ossipoff, Snyder and Rowland Architects.

Adjacent to the entrance foyer, visitors could view a short documentary, True to Form: Vladimir Ossipoff, Architect, Honolulu, fragments of which were intermittently audible throughout the exhibit. Juxtaposing personal testimonies and historical footage, the film asserts Ossipoff’s continuing influence in local architectural culture. Anecdotes flesh out his personality and design process: his daughters, Valerie and Xandra, chronicle his lifelong fear of earthquakes and violent weather; a Honolulu reporter characterizes his imposing, uncompromising, and elegant demeanor; and craftsman Leroy Akimoto alludes to his language skills and close collaboration with skilled Nisei carpenters. Recurring themes in the film help define Hawaiian modernism: integration of the environment into design; the practicality, simplicity, quality, comfort, and privacy of his spaces; and the drive to create an architectural vision specific to the Hawaiian Islands, people, and culture.

Ossipoff’s own writings were quoted to set the tone for the five thematic groupings of the exhibition, each illustrated by the clean forms, structural clarity, minimal ornament, and simple massing of Ossipoff’s buildings.

The first section, “Revealing the Site,” highlighted transparent qualities of building facades that amplify landscape features. Approaches to houses are often indirect, leading through a transitional indoor–outdoor living space. Aspects of specific sites are emphasized through plays of light and dark, visual reinforcements of important vistas, an integration of horizontal building forms into an at times challenging topography, and abstract geometries reflective of the terrain. One example, the Robert Shipman Thurston Jr. Memorial Chapel at Punahou School (1967), sits amidst the legendary Ka Punahou stream pond, whose waters flow inside to interact with the play of light from the stained glass windows. The Mary Persis Winne classroom complex (1950–55) on the same campus echoes the diagonal slope of the site.

The second section, “Hawaiian and Modern,” examined Ossipoff’s assimilation of International Style minimalism and clarity to the outdoor focus and climate of the Hawaiian lifestyle. A transitional subsection, “War on Ugliness,” offered a more critical examination, taking its title from Ossipoff’s 17 December 1964 article in the Honolulu Advertiser. He feared that air conditioning and glass skyscrapers would destroy Hawaiian architecture, lobbied the city council to support a comprehensive zoning ordinance, and was instrumental in establishing an AIA committee against ugliness. He was sympathetic to Lewis Mumford’s unheeded call of 1938 to preserve Honolulu’s ocean orientation and island setting through a sensitive and comprehensive approach to regional urbanism, the subject of Karla Britton’s catalog essay, “Honolulu: Toward a Regionalist Urbanism.”

The third section, “Darkness and Air,” focused on devices for natural ventilation, shaded interiors, and the nascent concept of sustainability. Examples include the Laupaohoe School (1952, Associated Architects), with sill vents, covered walkways, butterfly roof, and ribbon windows. Orientation to prevailing winds was further illustrated by the Liljestrand house (1952), the House Beautiful “Pace Setter Home” of 1958, still virtually intact and recently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Its irregular H-shaped plan exemplifies Ossipoff’s characteristic separation of public and private space, while a horizontally emphasized entrance façade conceals the drama of both the interior and the makai (ocean) elevation. The clients, Betty and Howard Liljestrand, were close friends of the architect and intimately involved in the design process.

The fourth section, “Native Materials, Modern Tectonics,” centered on Ossipoff’s incorporation of local materials. He favored koa and ʻōhiʻa hardwoods, bark-covered saplings, lava rock, and sandstone, used in conjunction with site-
and precast reinforced concrete. The precast elements of the IBM Building (1962), angled to prevent nesting birds, screen all four elevations and create a branded image. Other projects in this section stressed technical innovation, such as the Y-plan Diamond Head Apartments in Waikiki (1958), claimed as the country’s first fully prestressed reinforced concrete structure over six stories tall.

The final section, “Living Lānai,” focused on outdoor living. One wall offered Ossipoff’s 1977 tenet, “We have a much more casual way of being formal than you do on the mainland.” The lānai, adapted from Hawaiian vernacular, is a climate-sensitive covered porch, or veranda, integrated with the landscape. In Ossipoff’s work, the lānai is utilized as the primary living space, with broad eaves and a low profile. It appears early on in his work, as in the Boettcher House (1937), his first significant commission. The house’s symmetry and high-pitched roof reflect territorial mission. The house’s symmetry and high-pitched roof reflect territorial influence, but it also features a U-shaped lānai. The Outrigger Canoe Club in Waikiki (1963) emphasizes its dramatic ocean setting through multiple lānai. The Honolulu International Airport modernization (completed in 1978) incorporated the lānai into a large-scale commercial complex.

The exhibition catalog echoes the coloring and styling of the exhibit itself. In addition to Britton and Treib, contributors include Don J. Hibbard, Spencer Leineweber, and Victoria Sambrunaris. Treib’s essay on climate and topography examines approaches to the integration of the building with landscape and is enriched with explanations of such terms as manu (mountain) and mukai. Other essays explore precedents in the quest for a Hawaiian style and their impact on Ossipoff; the postwar collaboration of Fisk, Johnson, Ossipoff, and Preis, Associated Architects; and the lānai as an interior–exterior space.

The uniqueness of Hawai‘i is incontestable, and the challenge that Ossipoff undertook—to create a modernist approach commensurate to place—was ambitious and influential. Sakamoto’s effort to distill and synthesize Ossipoff’s prolific oeuvre in relation to his design philosophy is both accessible to a general audience and valuable as an academic contribution. Hopefully this retrospective will encourage closer examination and analysis of the contextual particularities of local Hawaiian as well as Pacific regional modernism.

_**ASTRID M. B. LIVERMAN**
Hawai‘i State Historic Preservation Division

**Publication related to the exhibition**


**Richard Rogers + Architectes**

Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris

Design Museum, London
24 April–10 August 2008

Richard Rogers has an unusually cosmopolitan background. Born in Italy of Anglo-Italian parents, he trained at the age of twenty in the Trieste office of his father’s cousin, the architect Ernesto Nathan Rogers, before attending London’s then staunchly modernist Architectural Association (1954–59). In Italy, Ernesto’s struggle to reconcile modern and historical architecture and his visionary urban schemes for more humane cities were a lifelong influence on Rogers, as were the aesthetic and ethical views of Alison and Peter Smithson in Great Britain. These two influences produced a lasting tension in Rogers’s work between New Liberty and New Brutalist sensibilities, with details of the engineered structure often expressing the various gravitational and cultural forces that inform the building. The year Rogers spent at Yale University (1961) and his travels across the United States at that time were also major factors in the architect’s formation.

This background begins the story of a long and prolific career dedicated to social change, the diverse aspects of which were all evident in the exhibition at the Pompidou, its title—Richard Rogers + Architectes—reflecting Rogers’s changing partnerships over the years (currently Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners). Rogers has given priority to the creation of an urban infrastructure that features social inclusion. While many architects share similar ideals, few have made the political commitment to them for which Rogers is known: besides his many lectures and publications, he is advisor to the mayors of both Barcelona and London, and since becoming Lord Rogers of Riverside in 1996, he is a working Labour peer in the House of Lords.

In addition to surveying forty years of work, the show afforded a stunning demonstration of just how extraordinary the exhibition spaces of this great building can be when used as they were intended. The show was staged in the nearly square South Gallery by the architect’s son Ab who removed the usual coverings of the windows on two sides of the space, thereby reconnecting interior and exterior. The plasterboard partitions that have often divided the space were also removed, in Ab Rogers’s words, “So that you could see everything and make order of it.” Indeed, upon entering the gallery viewers were immediately aware of the busy pedestrian and vehicular street life that became part of the exhibition. And the latter was, in turn, visible to passersby.

The remarkable success of Rogers and Renzo Piano’s Pompidou (1977)—including architectural acclaim, record-breaking attendance, and a revolution in museum culture—has overshadowed the gradual erosion of many of the building’s basic ideas. As Rogers explains in the excellent interview with Michèle Champenois in the otherwise bland exhibition catalog edited and in part written by the Pompidou curator Olivier Cinqualtre,