

Wisconsin. The 1911 renovation relocated his family into the studio space and provided an income-generating rental property in the old house. It became home to visiting artisans, including Rudolph Schindler, as well as the Art League, was eventually sold to Darwin Martin, inherited by his son, and sold again, until, in 1947, the Nooker family began uncovering it from a state of disrepair. It has been painstakingly restored to its condition in 1909, the last year it served Wright in his long, tumultuous career.

Despite both Cohen's and Schrenk's intention to show that the mythic figure of Wright emerged from a specific context of people, ideas, and environments, neither book convincingly demythologizes him. Part of this is due to the fact that in attempting to navigate the dearth of primary sources and verifiable details about Wright's early career, the authors have relied on Wright's own retrospective memory for assistance, as documented in his writings *An Autobiography* (1932) and *A Testament* (1957), as well as on the reverberations of these texts as they appear in countless secondary sources, without the suspicion that might attend these self-preserving projects. Relying on Wright for facts, evidence, or insight requires a comprehensive, anachronistic approach to the episodes of his career. What might have been a defined study becomes rationalized by Wright's retroactive narrative; that recursion reaffirms the overall narrative of his eventual, and therefore inevitable, success. This is mirrored in the structure of both Cohen's and Schrenk's books, which are well researched but conclude with extensive appendixes, suggesting that the central figure of Wright is not nearly as plastic as the spaces he designed. This lingering ghost can deter the interest of a new audience as much as it continues to attract Wright's reliable readers; both of these books will certainly appeal to the latter. *The Oak Park Studio* will also be particularly interesting to the historic preservation industry for its detailed descriptions of the transformations of the Home and Studio as well as Schrenk's thoughtful and transparent portrayal of the decision-making process behind the complex's preservation.

BRIGID BOYLE  
*Independent scholar*

Volker M. Welter

### **Tremaine Houses: One Family's Patronage of Domestic Architecture in Midcentury America**

Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2019, 224 pp., 1 chart, 50 color and 67 b/w illus. \$55 (cloth), ISBN 9781606066140

In architectural history, scholars too rarely attribute works of architecture to collaborations between architects and their clients. They are more likely to explain a work in terms of the architect's design proclivity or, at times, the skill of the client. Fortunately, Volker M. Welter takes a very different approach in *Tremaine Houses*, which focuses on key works of modern art and architecture while emphasizing the architectural patronage of the Tremaine family. The brothers Burton and Warren Tremaine and their wives, Emily Hall and Katherine Williams, hailed from a history of affluence. The Tremaine family holdings included the Miller Company, a light-fixture business in Meriden, Connecticut, and ranch lands near Mesa, Arizona. The trove of archival materials associated with the family and its architects, including those housed in the Art, Design & Architecture Museum of the University of California, Santa Barbara (where Welter is a professor of history of art and architecture), provides the basis for Welter's analysis of their many "country houses" and other projects. Additionally, the Tremaines, especially Burton and Emily, created important collections of modern art. Consequently, Welter explores their patronage broadly within the contexts of both art and architectural modernism.

Welter's study of the Tremaine houses demonstrates that architectural modernism cannot be uniformly identified with individuals and movements seeking societal change. The Tremaines, for example, promoted the aesthetics of modern architecture, but they also favored design that met the functional needs of their luxurious lifestyles. Their taste for architectural modernism advanced as they joined a broader community of art collectors and amassed a greater knowledge of modern art.

The Tremaines' fascination with the modern house began with Emily Hall, who, with her first husband, Baron Maximilian von Romberg, commissioned the Santa Barbara architect Luth

Maria Riggs to design Brunninghausen (1936–38), a residence in Montecito, an affluent suburb east of Santa Barbara. The couple began collecting modern art in the late 1920s with a painting by Georges Braque, later followed with works by Yasuo Kuniyoshi and Giorgio de Chirico. By 1934, Hall and von Romberg initiated their collaboration with Riggs, whose design fused the simplicity and streamlined quality of art deco—achieved in no small measure by the interiors and furniture design of Paul T. Frankl—with the simplified forms of traditional architecture and fine craftsmanship that Riggs developed in the office of Santa Barbara architect George Washington Smith, a key figure in the development of the Spanish colonial revival style.

In 1944, Warren and Katherine Tremaine also began to explore building a modern house in Montecito. Initially, they contacted Riggs, but because of wartime building restrictions she had been compelled to find employment as a designer of Hollywood movie sets. Although her availability was limited, Riggs and local landscape architect Lockwood de Forest surveyed the Tremaine property and identified what they believed to be the best location for the house. In December the Tremaines hired Richard J. Neutra to design the house, and he incorporated several of Riggs and de Forest's recommendations. Since emigrating from Vienna in the 1920s, Neutra had evolved from a practitioner of European International Style modernism into a California architect who modified his designs in response to the region's mild climate. A signature feature of Neutra's domestic architecture was its openness, both visually and physically, to the natural surroundings. At the Tremaine House, as well as at Neutra's contemporary Kaufmann House in Palm Springs (1946), the floor plan comprised two L-shaped components. Welter presents the evolution of Neutra's design, beginning with his earliest drawings. However, he omits the final floor plan, making it difficult for the interested public to grasp the architect's design in totality. Fortunately, Welter includes numerous Julius Shulman photographs, which clarify the layout of the house as constructed.

The materiality of the Tremaine House is central to its larger significance within modern and American

architecture. Neutra juxtaposed an exposed concrete frame with natural materials, including sandstone from the site, which he used to sheath the lower walls, later adding tall redwood vertical louvers to protect the glazed western façade from intense sunlight. Neutra prioritized the experience of nature in his design; the house stepped down the site, but to ensure its residents a view of the ocean, he built a large terrace elevated from the topography. In the main bedroom, the house's famous mitered corner window makes the building appear to dissolve into the natural surroundings. Welter rightly notes that the Tremaine House crystallized a new standard for integrating architecture and nature during the postwar period.

Loughtown Stud in county Kildare, Ireland, which Warren and Katherine Tremaine began building in 1960–61, dramatically contrasted with their Montecito house. Its informality more closely reflected an aspect of the Tremaines' lifestyle exhibited at the family's Bar T Ranch in Arizona, where they enjoyed a relaxed, outdoor way of life. They chose architect Cliff May to design Loughtown Stud in keeping with the California ranch house, a typology he is credited with developing. The house was designed in collaboration with local architect Donal O'Neill Flanagan. The Tremaines appreciated May's Riviera Ranch, located in Los Angeles's Brentwood neighborhood, a development of ranch houses where homesteads included horse stalls and barns. In Ireland, May employed his characteristic U-configured footprint for the house, in this case designed for two households—the Tremaines and John Alexander, manager of Loughton Stud. The entrance and communal spaces were centrally positioned, with the latter comprising a kitchen and dining room; each household's private spaces occupied wings framing a large terrace. May planned the house to be constructed in phases, but only the communal spaces and a portion of Alexander's wing were completed. As they had done with Neutra at their Montecito house, the Tremaines worked closely with May on the selection of building materials, including local masonry for wall construction. May sheathed his characteristically low-pitched roofs with redwood shingles and skylights running their full length.

In 1945, Burton Tremaine married Emily Hall, whose first marriage ended when Baron von Romberg died in an airplane crash at age twenty-seven and whose second marriage, to Adolf Spreckels Jr., heir to a sugar fortune, was short-lived. Emily was now a serious collector of modern art, having learned a great deal from local California collectors as well as from her cousin through marriage Arthur Everett "Chick" Austin Jr., who was director of the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut (to which Burton and Emily eventually donated their art collection). In 1944, she moved to New York City, where she acquired works by some of Europe's leading painters, including Piet Mondrian, Pablo Picasso, Vasily Kandinsky, and Paul Klee. Within the first three years of her marriage to Burton, the couple added thirty works to their already substantial art collection. Beginning in 1945, they commissioned works of architecture. Their ambitions were fueled by a passion for modern design and by Emily's belief in the synthesis of the arts, which she and Burton realized in various ways. These included commissioning Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer to design a beach house at Serena Beach near Montecito. Niemeyer, in turn, invited Roberto Burle Marx to design the house's landscape. The project, as represented through presentation drawings and a model, suggested the organicism of Joan Miró and Hans Arp. The Tremaines fully appreciated that Niemeyer and Marx's project offered the prospect of stepping into a work of art to enjoy, in three dimensions, its integral relationship between architecture and nature. The house needed modifications to make it habitable, including protection from Santa Barbara's foggy coastal conditions. The Tremaines realized, nonetheless, that even in its pure, unbuilt state, the architectural design they had commissioned was a significant work that would add greatly to their art collection. The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York likewise appreciated the house's aesthetic value, which it celebrated in an exhibition. The Tremaines eventually donated the drawings and the model for the house to the museum.

Emily Tremaine's belief in the synthesis of the arts took another significant form. She and Burton recognized that their interest in modern design could play

an important role in the success of their corporation, the Miller Company, where she served as director of design. The Tremaines shared the view held by the Container Corporation of America and many other American manufacturers in the postwar period: to ensure the success of their products—the fluorescent light bulb in the case of the Miller Company—they needed to modernize their corporate image. The Tremaines did this by expanding and publicizing their modern art collection while promoting the Miller Company's product through publications and advertisements illustrating its use in contemporary settings.

Emily Tremaine hired the artist Josef Albers (previously an instructor at the Bauhaus) to design the Miller Company's logo, and the Russian-born British architect Serge Chermayeff to design its stationery and some of its publications. Chermayeff developed advertisements that celebrated the artistic impact of the company's fluorescent bulbs in commercial and work environments. Burton and Emily's personal art collection—much of which became the Miller Company's collection—served as the basis for the traveling exhibition *Painting toward Architecture* (1947–52), sponsored by MoMA. The Tremaines believed the exhibition could elevate the general public's artistic sensibilities and thus indirectly improve their business. Over time the contents of the exhibition changed as the Tremaines lent some works to other exhibitions and the company added new works to the collection.

Volker Welter's *Tremaine Houses* structures the complex history of the Tremaine family and the artistic contributions of its members in a way that clarifies the family's legacy without oversimplifying it. Through his focus on the two Tremaine couples, Welter assesses the broader meanings of architectural modernism within an American context. In doing so, he establishes the family's importance as connoisseurs and collectors of modern art, as patrons of modern architecture, and as proponents of the postwar corporate taste for modernism. This is an important book on many levels, and as such, it makes invaluable contributions to the literature on American architectural modernism.

LAUREN WEISS BRICKER  
*California State Polytechnic University, Pomona*