



EXTRAORDINARY PROPERTIES

A FINE LINE

Streamlined and airy, midcentury modern homes continue to draw countless fans, finds **Ilyna Bort Caruso.**

Midcentury modern may be to architecture what rock and roll – according to singer-songwriter Neil Young – is to popular music: it can never die. Begun in the late 1930s, the modernist style took hold after World War II as new materials and building techniques allowed architects to break with the forms and methods of the past. Decades on, midcentury modern’s clean lines, open floor plans and expansive windows continue to appeal.

Architect Carib Daniel Martin renovated the midcentury modern house in Kensington, Maryland, that now serves as both his residence and office. He says he’s attracted to its simplicity and airiness and to the way homes of this era effectively “straddle two worlds: they have a modernist feel but are still connected to the more traditional idea of what a home is.” This, he believes, “is why people feel comfortable in them.” On the other side of the country, midcentury modern architects and builders left legacies in California, particularly in Palm Springs and the San Francisco Bay Area. “We are fortunate to have an inventory of homes built in the 1950s by developer Joseph Eichler, the pioneer who brought mid-century modern to the masses,” says Michael Dreyfus of Golden Gate Sotheby’s International Realty in Palo Alto. “The homes were able to deliver so much in less space. You can get three and four bedrooms in a very small footprint,” he continues, noting that buyers still like the efficiency.

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Sculptural elements, natural light and clear views of the surrounding landscape combine to make this exceptional midcentury modern house an unprecedented experience in living. Staying true to architect Eliot Noyes’s original vision, the renovations by architect Jobb Moore and builder David Prutting preserved his sophisticated approach while making the home conform to today’s standards. Natural materials such as wood and stone add warmth, and the house’s remarkable proportions are enhanced by the expansive use of glass.

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More recently, Dreyfus has noticed midcentury modern elements in new construction. “Younger buyers in Silicon Valley are more design-oriented, and there’s something about the style that’s captured people’s imaginations,” he says. Museum exhibitions trumpet the style’s culture-shaping impact, architectural walking tours sell out, and events such as Modernism Week, a biannual festival in Palm Springs, draw thousands of fans to buildings by William Krisel, Richard Neutra and Donald Wexler. Yes, *fans* – just like rock and roll. ■

New York-based writer Ilyna Bort Caruso has contributed to *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Newsday* and others.