



History of Palm Springs Modernism Week

What is now an international event began with a simple idea: to augment the two-day Modernism Show with more reasons to celebrate modernism.

The Palm Springs Modernism Show was first showcased in 2001. It followed a history of Modernism shows around the country that had begun in New York City in 1985. Soon after, the Miami Modernism Show followed in 1994, heralding the rediscovery of the city's Art Deco architecture in South Beach. That discovery helped reinvent the city as a hot and trendy destination for architecture aficionados.

Fueled most notably by national and international media, a similar pattern emerged in Palm Springs. Working with Dolphin Promotions, Jacques Caussin, who is now Board Chair of Modernism Week, started the Palm Springs Modernism Show in 2001 and it has steadily grown in stature since its inception. Now in its 9th year, the Palm Springs Modernism Show, held at the Palm Springs Convention Center, has become one of the country's premier marketplaces for national and international modernist decorative and fine arts.

The Palm Springs Art Museum began hosting its popular annual architecture symposium and home tour in 1999 which helped spark the appreciation for Palm Springs' architecture. The Museum's efforts to shine a light on the city's renowned mid-century modern architects such as E. Stewart Williams, Albert Frey, John Porter Clark, John Lautner, Don Wexler and Bill Krisel among others, continued to fan interest in the city's astonishing concentration of mid-century architecture.

The growing interest in our mid-century modern architecture resulted in wide national and international media attention. Initially, much of the media reports centered on the remarkably exacting restoration of the Kaufmann House in Palm Springs. Eventually, the media discovered the Kaufmann House was only one of hundreds important and architecturally-significant structures in Palm Springs.

While Palm Springs has long enjoyed worldwide fame as a celebrity haven and an international vacation destination, it began attracting a new tourism niche for architecture buffs. Its mid-century modern architecture squarely put Palm Springs on the map for cultural tourism as well as fun in the sun.

The confluence of these factors helped create the ideal timing and climate for a week-long celebration of modernism in Palm Springs. Thus, in 2006 the first Palm Springs Modernism Week was born to promote and celebrate the ideals and culture of modernism. Through the efforts of a steering committee of devoted community leaders comprised of the Architecture and Design Council of the Palm Springs Art Museum, the Palm Springs Modern Committee, the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, and the Palm Springs Historical Society, they planned and implemented the first Modernism

Week following the Modernism Show. It featured a week of lectures, architecture tours, films and glamorously “mod” receptions.

From its humble beginnings, Modernism Week has continued to grow exponentially from a week to ten days of events. As the variety and sophistication of events has continued to grow, a greater number of people from around the globe are drawn to join us in this celebration which has fueled a robust “mod-tourism” niche in Palm Springs. People have been known to travel from Australia and Europe to participate in Modernism Week.

Modernism Week has firmly established Palm Springs as the world’s mecca of modernism resulting in public awareness that has helped preserve the distinctive architecture which has so prominently defined Palm Springs’ unique character.

In the summer of 2009, Modernism Week grew from a steering committee to its own registered non-profit organization. Its new board of directors, working with a Modernism Week executive director, is committed to producing fun and interesting events that will inspire and engage new and longtime modernism aficionados. Check the schedule of events for a full listing of the Modernism Week events.

And we have more good news for Modernism Week 2010! We are proud to welcome two major Modernism Week Partners -- the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the California Preservation Foundation. This collaboration and affiliation with these prestigious entities will provide Modernism Week enormous validation and help extend our reach to a new following of historic preservationists, cultural resource professionals as well as fun-seeking modernists.

The 5th Annual Palm Springs Modernism Week, February 12-21, 2010 is destined to be both a milestone and a new benchmark for a stylish celebration of all things “modern.”

See you in Palm Springs!