

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

## National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (formerly 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information.

New Submission       Amended Submission

**DRAFT**

### A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Residential Architecture of John Lautner in Southern California, 1940-1994

### B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

Theme: John Lautner Residential Architecture in Southern California, 1940-1955

Theme: John Lautner Residential Architecture in Southern California, 1956-1969

Theme: John Lautner Residential Architecture in Southern California, 1970-1994

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### D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

Residential Architecture of John Lautner in Southern California, 1940-1994  
Name of Multiple Property Listing

California  
State

## Table of Contents for Written Narrative

Create a Table of Contents and list the page numbers for each of these sections in the space below.

Provide narrative explanations for each of these sections on continuation sheets. In the header of each section, cite the letter, page number, and name of the multiple property listing. Refer to *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* for additional guidance.

### **E. Statement of Historic Contexts**

(If more than one historic context is documented, present them in sequential order.)

### **Page Numbers**

Summary Statement	3
Context: Residential Architecture of John Lautner in Southern California, 1940-1994	4
Theme: John Lautner Residential Architecture in Southern California, 1940-1955	9
Theme: John Lautner Residential Architecture in Southern California, 1956-1969	14
Theme: John Lautner Residential Architecture in Southern California, 1970-1994	18

### **F. Associated Property Types**

(Provide description, significance, and registration requirements.)

26

### **G. Geographical Data**

33

### **H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

(Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.)

34

### **I. Major Bibliographical References**

(List major written works and primary location of additional documentation: State Historic Preservation Office, other State agency, Federal agency, local government, university, or other, specifying repository.)

36

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 250 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Residential Architecture of John Lautner

Name of Property

Multiple Counties, California

County and State

Section number E Page 3

### Summary Statement

This Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) addresses the residential work of seminal and visionary architect John Lautner (1911-1994) in Southern California. There are three chronological themes within this context: John Lautner Residential Architecture, 1940-1955; John Lautner Residential Architecture, 1956-1969; and John Lautner Residential Architecture, 1970-1994. The majority of Lautner's residential works are located in and around Los Angeles and span Lautner's career from his earliest commissions in Southern California after training with Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin, through the emergence of Lautner's own distinct approach to organic design and his creation of iconic works of twentieth-century modernism. Lautner was one of the twentieth century's most important architects, although he was also one of the most misunderstood. Lautner's primary interest was in the creation of space. As described by Esther McCoy, "his spaces are strong and democratic, never precious, and there is an idealism at work that conceives of man in a happy relationship with nature. There is a thoughtfulness in his work but no sense of its having been over designed to the point that spontaneity is refined out of it."<sup>1</sup>

Lautner's fascination with new shapes and structures came from his determination to humanize spaces and create what he referred to as "real" architecture: "architecture that was authentic, creative, new – yet tied to ancient and timeless ways of building; based on the needs – including emotional needs – of his clients, and the demands of the site."<sup>2</sup> He brought to architecture an expressive and adventurous use of structure, form, and materials.<sup>3</sup> Lautner's work was included in numerous exhibitions throughout his career, starting in the 1960s. Notably, he was part of the 1976 exhibition "The L.A. Twelve," which opened at the Pacific Design Center in May of that year.<sup>4</sup> The exhibition recognized twelve Los Angeles architects for their significant architectural contributions and potential, and represented "the coming together of some of the outstanding designers of the area..."<sup>5</sup> The exhibition and ensuing panel discussion were reviewed in the July 1976 issue of *L.A. Architect* and the August 1976 edition of *Architectural Record*. During his lifetime, and particularly in the latter phase of his career, Lautner's designs were criticized as foolish structures designed for the Hollywood elite. A renewed interest in his work toward the end of his life, and further exploration of Lautner's place in the twentieth century architectural landscape after his death – in particular the monograph of Lautner's work that was published shortly after his death, and the major retrospective in 2008 at the Hammer Museum at the University of California, Los Angeles – have upended that misconception.<sup>6</sup> Furthering the interest in and

<sup>1</sup> Esther McCoy, "West Coast Architects V / John Lautner," *Arts and Architecture*, August 1965.

<sup>2</sup> Dave Weinstein, "John Lautner's 'Keeping it Real' Approach to Architecture," <http://www.eichlernetwork.com/article/beyond-flash-and-fantasy> (accessed July 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Ann Philbin, Foreword in Nicholas Olsberg, ed., *Between Earth and Heaven: The Architecture of John Lautner* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2008), 6.

<sup>4</sup> The exhibition was conceived of as a student project by Charles Slert and his advisor Bernard Zimmerman in the Cal Poly Pomona Architectural Department as a means to become acquainted with important Los Angeles architects and their design philosophies. The L.A. 12 are: Roland Coate, Daniel Dworsky, Craig Ellwood, Frank Gehry, John Lautner, Jerrold Lomax, Anthony Lumsden, Leroy Miller, Cesar Pelli, James Pulliam, and Bernard Zimmerman.

<sup>5</sup> Los Angeles 12 exhibition poster.

<sup>6</sup> Frank Escher, *John Lautner: Architect* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998). *Between Earth and Heaven: The Architecture of John Lautner*, Hammer Museum, July 13 to October 12, 2008. Organized by Nicholas Olsberg and Frank Escher in conjunction with the Department of Architecture and Design at the Getty Research Institute and the John Lautner Foundation.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Residential Architecture of John Lautner

Name of Property

Multiple Counties, California

County and State

Section number E Page 4

understanding of Lautner's work was the acquisition of the Lautner archives by the Getty Research Institute in 2007.

Although he did not consider himself a Modernist, Lautner's interests aligned with the mid-century spirit of architectural experimentation; these factors led Lautner toward bold explorations of hilltop houses, soaring concrete roofs, cantilevers, and expressive double curves. His work was structurally and technologically innovative, while also reflecting Wright's Organic principles of responding to the site and the specific needs of the client. Lautner had a fertile architectural practice for over 60 years, producing some of the most iconic works in post-World War II Southern California and influencing a new generation of architects. The themes developed in this MPDF trace the progression of Lautner's work from the 1940s through his death in 1994. In the 1940s, Lautner experimented with simple shapes to achieve an organic expression, melding buildings with their surroundings with geometric floor plans and roof structures. In the mid-1950s and 1960s, Lautner's work applied the same principles to more complex geometric forms. During this period he also began experimenting with concrete construction. The final phase of his career was characterized by his mastery of concrete construction and the development of increasingly bolder, often biomorphic forms.

### **Context: Residential Architecture of John Lautner in Southern California, 1940-1994**

#### **Introduction**

John Lautner (1911-1994) is one of Southern California's most significant twentieth century architects. When Lautner arrived in Los Angeles in the late 1930s, there were essentially two architectural camps – the traditionalists, who tended to distill the Mediterranean, Anglo-Colonial, and other period revival styles into ever-simpler compositions with fairly open floor plans; and the Modernists, many of whom were European expatriates and proponents of the International Style who found the mild southern California climate ideally suited to the open floor plan, flat roof, and integration of interior and exterior space. The economies of efficiency, necessitated first by the Great Depression and then by material limitations imposed due to America's involvement in World War II, helped forge a distinctly Southern Californian aesthetic, which borrowed lightly from both architectural camps and created a distinctly regional architecture.

During this period, Los Angeles in particular had an interesting architectural climate, and is a case study in how varying ideas can inform each other. Preservationist and author Paul Gleye describes the unique circumstances in Southern California:

The story of the architectural transformation into Modernism has been told at great length, but a part of that story not so well known is the role of Southern California. The architectural exuberance of Los Angeles, which first imported the Queen Anne from the East in the 1880s and nurtured the Mission Revival and Craftsman styles in the following decades, simultaneously supported many architectural ethics. The freedom to build as one wished, particularly in the form of single-family homes which depended little on the context of the street or neighborhood, allowed revolutionary architects to flourish in the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Residential Architecture of John Lautner  
**Name of Property**

Multiple Counties, California  
**County and State**

Section number E Page 5

fringes of accepted styles. The resulting experimentation in Modern idioms would make Los Angeles a showcase of international significance in Modern architecture by the 1930s.<sup>7</sup>

California developed an identity tied to architectural experimentation, and seminal architects were drawn to the West Coast because it represented liberation from cultural, formal, and contextual constraints. During the postwar period, frequent publication of California houses in professional and shelter magazines, including *Arts and Architecture's* influential Case Study House Program, as well as in books geared for prospective builders, was influential in the rush to meet the high demand for new housing. In the decade following World War II, a new and younger contingent of “second generation” Modernist architects – the students of the founders of the movement – came to the fore in Southern California. For these young designers, modern residential architecture was already an accepted practice, rather than a break from long-held traditions. Lautner worked at the same time as these second generation Modernists, yet he does not fully fit into this category. He was one of the few students who moved beyond his teacher, taking in what Wright had to teach him and developing it into his own style.<sup>8</sup> “Of all the architects who passed through Wright’s sphere, only R.M. Schindler, Bruce Goff (who never studied or worked with Wright), and Lautner managed to drive Wright’s ideas beyond the master.”<sup>9</sup>

From Wright, Lautner acquired the sense of confidence required to push the boundaries of design and structure. Perhaps the most important quality that Lautner learned from Wright was a sense of independence when it came to architectural design. Lautner was able, unlike many other Wright students, to take what he had learned from the master and reconfigure it into his own unique design aesthetic. Echoing Wright’s ability to distinguish himself from Louis Sullivan, Lautner identified ways to make his architecture independent from Wright’s. Lautner observed, “‘how the hell could I do anything any way near as well as [Wright] did it?’ And of course, that was kind of scary. But when you had to go out on your own, which I did, I stuck my neck out and I worked from scratch with ideas. I was going to work from my own philosophy and that’s what [Wright] wanted apprentices to do...”<sup>10</sup>

Southern California architecture in the postwar decades was distinguished by a wide range of modern design philosophies. The most widely publicized of these were those that reflected the concepts of the International Style, most notably through the Case Study House Program. Lautner’s organic language of architecture, influenced by his training under Frank Lloyd Wright, shared with the Case Study architects an unapologetic emphasis on site context and a fascination with new construction technologies – many of which were borrowed from industrial design and had only recently been implemented in residential work.

The concentration of new technologies, climate, postwar population boom, and optimism made Southern California a fertile breeding ground for new architecture in the post-World War II era. Architectural and

<sup>7</sup> Paul Gleye, Julius Shulman, and Bruce Boehner, *The architecture of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Rosebud Books, 1981), 138.

<sup>8</sup> Alan Hess, *The Architecture of John Lautner* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1999), 156-157.

<sup>9</sup> Alan Hess, *The Architecture of John Lautner*, cited in Julius Shulman, Jurgen Nogai, and Richard Olsen, *Malibu: A Century of Living by the Sea* (New York: Abrams, 2005), 104.

<sup>10</sup> John Lautner and William Wesley Peters, “Talk to Fellowship,” unpublished transcript, February 19, 1989, Frank Lloyd Wright Archives, Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation. Quoted in Hess, *The Architecture of John Lautner*, 19.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Residential Architecture of John Lautner  
**Name of Property**

Multiple Counties, California  
**County and State**

Section number E Page 6

urban development, structural innovations, and highly charged academia (most prominently at the University of Southern California) responded to the gradually changing regional context. The city's mass-suburbanization and resultant sprawl was exacerbated by the construction of freeway systems and infrastructure that contributed to the creation of destination homes. Hillside construction, made possible by postwar engineering technology, made previously unbuildable lots with sweeping views accessible for the first time. More affordable land attracted clientele of limited means but big ideas.

### *Early Family History*

John Lautner was born in rural Marquette, Michigan on July 16, 1911 to John and Vida Lautner. Of Irish and German roots, Lautner once described his disposition as being halfway between a "free, wild Irishman" and a "completely mechanical German."<sup>11</sup> His mother was a painter, and his father was a professor at Northern State Teachers College.<sup>12</sup> Lautner grew up an insatiable reader and nurtured by parents "steeped in German philosophy, American Transcendental thought, and Nordic and Indian mythology, and who also shared a deep interest in art and architecture."<sup>13</sup> In his teenage years, Lautner helped his parents design, build, and furnish a Swiss chalet-style log cabin on a rocky peninsula overlooking Lake Superior. It was constructed using traditional methods and simple machinery because of its difficult, remote location. In later years, Lautner built his own projects utilizing the same hands-on approach. The house was named Midgaard, an Old Norse word meaning "midway between earth and heaven;"<sup>14</sup> it was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2012.

Lautner's school years were spent in Marquette and traveling with his parents. The family lived for one year in Boston and another in New York City when Lautner was an adolescent. He attended the Northern State Teachers College in Marquette where his father was a professor. Lautner took classes in several subjects, including astronomy, physics, and chemistry, though his favorites were his father's courses in philosophy, ethics, and anthropology, and "the only thing related to architecture that this school had," a course in the history of architecture.<sup>15</sup> In 1933, at the age of 22, Lautner graduated from the Northern State Teachers College with an A.B. degree in English.<sup>16</sup>

### *Lautner and Wright*

In 1932, Frank Lloyd Wright and his third wife, Olgivanna, established the Taliesin Fellowship program on their Taliesin Estate near Green Spring, Wisconsin. The previous year, the Wrights had circulated a prospectus to an international group of distinguished scholars, artists, and friends, announcing their plan to form a school at Taliesin to "Learn by Doing." They asserted that the fine arts "should stand at the center as inspiration grouped about architecture... (of which landscape and the decorative arts would be

<sup>11</sup> "Responsibility, Infinity, Nature: John Lautner," interview by Marlene L. Laskey, Oral History Program, University of California, Los Angeles, 1986, 1.

<sup>12</sup> Northern State Teachers College is now Northwestern University.

<sup>13</sup> Kenneth Breisch, "Review - Between Earth and Heaven: The Architecture of John Lautner," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 68, No. 3, September 2009, 407.

<sup>14</sup> Nicholas Olsberg, "Grounding: Idea of the Real," in Nicholas Olsberg, ed., *Between Heaven and Earth: The Architecture of John Lautner*, (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2008), 43.

<sup>15</sup> "Responsibility, Infinity, Nature: John Lautner," 24.

<sup>16</sup> Lautner chose this degree not because it was his major of choice, but because he had taken more English courses than any other subject.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Residential Architecture of John Lautner  
**Name of Property**

Multiple Counties, California  
**County and State**

Section number E Page 7

a division).”<sup>17</sup> Education at Taliesin would emphasize painting, sculpture, music, drama, and dance “in their places as divisions of architecture.”<sup>18</sup>

Lautner originally planned to travel abroad after finishing his education until he learned of Wright’s program at Taliesin from his mother, who strongly encouraged him to attend. The unusual curriculum of the Taliesin Fellowship program appealed to Lautner, who noted:

I had examined other professions when I was in college but it seemed to be they all got into a rut. I hated repetition of any sort, or any kind of groove. And I knew from taking drafting in high school that I’d never be a draftsman. I could never keep a pencil sharp – it was just a pain in the neck. If I went to a regular architectural school I’d fail because I wasn’t neat.<sup>19</sup>

The allure of living and learning in an artistic culture under the wing of a master architect exceeded Lautner’s desire to travel. In 1933, both Lautner and his fiancée, Mary Faustina “Marybud” Roberts, began their education at Taliesin. The education that Lautner received while at Taliesin was unique in scope. Aside from drafting, Lautner prepared meals, tended to the estate’s extensive garden, worked on cars and other farm machinery, managed livestock, and performed maintenance. “The fellowship was a community, not everyone had to be interested in becoming an architect. It was a place to study music, art, printing, weaving, furniture design, and photography. To join in philosophical conversations as well as bring in the crops, build stone walls, and fix the plumbing.”<sup>20</sup> The work at Taliesin seemed particularly fitting for Lautner. He was physically strong, and the ability to build and work with his hands as part of his architectural education was naturally appealing.

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges for any architect studying under Frank Lloyd Wright was the ability to maintain a sense of individuality in design, and resist simply becoming a “tool in his hand.”<sup>21</sup> For Lautner, it was not easy to negotiate between his desire to establish his own design sensibility and a desire to communicate his admiration for his mentor’s work. In an interview, Lautner explained how he strove to maintain an independent state of mind:

I purposely didn't copy any of Mr. Wright's drawings or even take any photographs because I was a purist. I was [an] idealist. I was going to work from my own philosophy, and that's what he wanted apprentices to do, too: that wherever they went, they would contribute to the infinite variety of nature by being individual, creating for individuals a growing, changing thing. Well practically none of them were able to do it. I mean, I am one of two or three that may have done it, you know...<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture, “History,” <http://www.taliesin.edu/history.html> (accessed May 2015).

<sup>18</sup> Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture, “History.”

<sup>19</sup> Hess, *The Architecture of John Lautner*, 13.

<sup>20</sup> Hess, *The Architecture of John Lautner*, 14.

<sup>21</sup> Hess, *The Architecture of John Lautner*, 29.

<sup>22</sup> “Responsibility, Infinity, Nature: John Lautner,” 36.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Residential Architecture of John Lautner

Name of Property

Multiple Counties, California

County and State

Section number E Page 8

From 1933 to 1939, Lautner apprenticed with Frank Lloyd Wright. During this time he served as supervisor to the architect on a variety of projects including the Johnson family residence, Wingspread (Racine, WI, 1936-39). This responsibility helped define the distinction between Wright's work and Lautner's emerging aesthetic, and provided Lautner invaluable experience in the areas of contracting and client relations. One of Lautner's first experiences supervising for Wright was for the construction of Deertrack in Marquette, Michigan, Wright's house for Abby Beecher Roberts, Lautner's mother-in-law. Deertrack was a Usonian house with a flat roof, which Lautner felt was ill suited to the northern Michigan climate. To accommodate all of his mother-in-law's desires and to remain in good standing under Wright's watchful and intensely critical eye proved to be no easy task. The experience however, was the beginning of Lautner's development of his own architectural identity. The process of overseeing construction helped develop his spatial imagination. He spent countless hours "drawing and thinking and imagining and digging"<sup>23</sup> in order to see the project realized. Despite all the challenges of that particular project - and perhaps because of them - seeing it come to fruition was a defining moment in Lautner's fledgling career.<sup>24</sup>

Lautner moved to Los Angeles, a city he famously hated, in 1938, and continued to work for Wright intermittently through the early 1940s.<sup>25</sup> Lautner worked on a number of Wright projects in Southern California including the Sturges House (Los Angeles, 1939), Eaglefeather (Malibu, 1941), Freeman House (Los Angeles, 1924), and the Mauer House (Los Angeles, 1941-1946).<sup>26</sup> By the time Lautner came to Los Angeles, he was working to establish a career and life independent of Wright. At the Sturges House, Lautner oversaw the implementation of Wright's Usonian design, but Wright played little role during construction, making only intermittent trips to make minor adjustments. This experience was critical in helping Lautner establish his own presence as a young architect in Los Angeles.

The construction of the Bell House (Los Angeles, 1941) would prove to be a pivotal point in Lautner's career. When Wright came to Los Angeles to review the construction of the Sturges House in 1939, he discovered that the design for the Bell House was too expensive for the clients. In lieu of Wright's design for the Bells, Lautner was tasked with redesigning a smaller, more affordable home for the clients. Lautner abandoned Wright's original hexagonal motif in favor of a simpler geometry. Lautner's design of the Bell House was influenced by Wright, but it marked a major step in establishing Lautner's independence from his teacher.

### Theme: John Lautner Residential Architecture in Southern California, 1940-1955

This theme examines Lautner's early work, during the period that he began an independent practice after apprenticing under Frank Lloyd Wright. Lautner's early work reflects the influence of Wright, along with Lautner's own emphasis on natural materials and the importance of site specific architecture. Lautner's work from this period represents his establishment as an architect and the early evolution of

<sup>23</sup> "Responsibility, Infinity, Nature: John Lautner," 45.

<sup>24</sup> "Responsibility, Infinity, Nature: John Lautner," 45.

<sup>25</sup> Julius Shulman, Jurgen Nogai, and Richard Olsen, *Malibu: A Century of Living by the Sea* (New York: Abrams, 2005), 104.

<sup>26</sup> Olsberg, "Grounding: Idea of the Real," 51. The Mauer House was started before the war, but when it proved too expensive for the client, Wright allowed Lautner to redesign it as his own. The Lautner-designed project was completed in 1946.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Residential Architecture of John Lautner

Name of Property

Multiple Counties, California

County and State

Section number E Page 9

his work. During the immediate postwar period, Lautner's work focused on the development of the small, single-family house. Projects from this era are characterized by Lautner's fascination with innovative roof structures that sheltered free and flexible plans that opened to the Southern California landscape.

Lautner's professional association with Wright ended in 1943.<sup>27</sup> During World War II, with non-military construction at a standstill, Lautner was forced to find jobs in the defense industry. In 1944, Lautner joined the architectural firm of Douglas Honnold. While at Honnold's firm, Lautner designed residences and commercial buildings, including two Coffee Dan's restaurants (Los Angeles, 1946).<sup>28</sup> The designs for Coffee Dan's provided the basis for Lautner's later designs for Henry's Drive-ins and Googie's restaurant.<sup>29</sup> Lautner ended his connection with Honnold in 1947 and established his own architectural practice that same year, beginning the first stage of his independent career.<sup>30</sup>

As Lautner embarked on his own career, he retained many of Wright's ideas about Organic architecture, including the seamless integration of natural elements into architectural design, and the way in which a building should emerge from, and be inspired by, the site. This organic approach to architecture would characterize Lautner's work throughout his career. In his Princeton lectures on *Modern Architecture*, published in 1931, Wright states that "the word [organic] applies to 'living' structure – a structure or concept wherein features or parts are so organized in form and substance as to be, applied to purpose, integral. Everything that 'lives' is therefore organic."<sup>31</sup> To Wright, a building that is "integral" (a building whose every part is a direct result of the process of construction for use) is a living organism. Organic architecture meant a living architecture in which every composition, element, and detail was deliberately shaped for the job it was to perform. Wright stressed the unity of building, furnishings, and environment in an "organic-entity, as contrasted with that former insensate aggregation of parts...One great thing instead of a quarrelling collection of so many little things."<sup>32</sup> Wright expressed his concept of Organic design through crystalline plan forms, the possibility of growth by asymmetrical addition, the relationship of composition to site and client, and the use of local materials.<sup>33</sup>

Lautner's approach to architecture embodied many of Wright's philosophical preoccupations, and above all, the notion of a building conceived as a "total concept." Like Wright, Lautner's work shows a strong preference for essential geometric forms – the circle and the triangle are dominant motifs in both his overall designs and his detailing – and his houses are similarly rooted in the idea of integrating the house into its location and creating an organic flow between indoor and outdoor spaces, although Lautner's work arguably took the latter concept to even greater heights. The 1940s were a period of experimentation for Lautner. Some projects expressed a strong design concept, while others focused on technological innovations and construction methods. Lautner's use of materials evolved from wood (specifically redwood) in the early years to concrete and steel in his works later in the decade; he also

<sup>27</sup> Hess, *The Architecture of John Lautner*, 27.

<sup>28</sup> Hess, *The Architecture of John Lautner*, 27.

<sup>29</sup> Alan Hess, *Googie Redux: Ultramodern Roadside Architecture* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books LLC, 2004), 70.

<sup>30</sup> Nicholas Olsberg, ed., *Between Earth and Heaven: the Architecture of John Lautner* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2008), 228.

<sup>31</sup> Frank Lloyd Wright, *Modern Architecture; Being the Kahn Lectures for 1930* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1931), 27.

<sup>32</sup> Ulrich Conrads, *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th-century Architecture*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1999), 25.

<sup>33</sup> Peter Collins, "The Biological Analogy," *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture 1750 – 1950* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Residential Architecture of John Lautner  
**Name of Property**

Multiple Counties, California  
**County and State**

Section number E Page 10

employed various structural systems during this period. Several of Lautner's residential designs of the 1940s clearly reflect Lautner's debt to Wright, while others demonstrate his exploration of independent ideas.

Despite these apparent divergent directions in Lautner's works during the 1940s, the projects share a number of commonalities. During this period, many of Lautner's residential projects included a large structural feature that emphasized its purpose and expressed the nature of the material used. Lautner also incorporated simple geometry into many of his designs – circles, triangles, and other basic geometric shapes occur in the plans and sections as part of the central design strategy. Lautner designed different roof types that not only contributed to the unique appearance of the residences, but allowed him flexibility in conceiving the indoor spaces. Wright's focus had been on geometries and the intersections of those geometries, which can also be seen in Lautner's early works. The articulation of these shapes is one of the most distinguishing elements of Lautner's residences. Lautner's creative use of roof forms was highlighted in a 1948 article in *Arts and Architecture* magazine.<sup>34</sup> The article featured renderings and in-process photographs of several Lautner projects that experimented with independent roof structures:

The idea began with an attempt to provide flexibility – to erect an ample roof and floor which could be closed with serviceable areas. These areas are conceived to be completely fluid, either permanent or to be rearranged for future use.<sup>35</sup>

At the Springer Residence (Los Angeles, 1940), Lautner designed a cruciform gable roof with a simple beam spanning the front and back walls. In order to create the slant of the roof, one of the structural walls must be higher than the other. The angled sides act as a slide, using gravity to help water flow off of the roof. At the Springer Residence, the roof span is limited by the strength of the roof joists; later houses with longer roof spans utilize a mono-pitch truss. The Springer House incorporates glass and wood, with redwood used for the roof structure and façade. The use of redwood reinforces Lautner's emphasis on natural materials.

Lautner's work from this period integrated indoor and outdoor space. While this interest was highly influenced by Lautner's association with Wright and familiarity with his mentor's concept of Organic architecture, Lautner sought to establish his own distinctive approach to connecting his residences with nature. Lautner's work during this period expanded on Wright's concept of the connection of a building to its environment by completely obscuring the boundary between interior and exterior spaces. Wright was concerned with the harmony of the building with its surroundings, while Lautner merged the building with its surrounding. The 1948 *Arts and Architecture* article continues:

As much or as little of the building under the roofs may be enclosed as desired, making an easy "inside-outside" arrangement for any orientation. The structures are also an

<sup>34</sup> "Roof Structures by John Lautner, Designer," *Arts and Architecture*, June 1948, 36-37.

<sup>35</sup> *Arts and Architecture*, June 1948, 37.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Residential Architecture of John Lautner

**Name of Property**

Multiple Counties, California

**County and State**

Section number E Page 11

attempt to make new design more tangible and understandable for builders and carpenters.<sup>36</sup>

In the 1940s, Lautner established relationships with engineers and contractors that lasted throughout his career and allowed him to experiment with form and structure. Structural engineer Edgardo Contini worked on many projects with Lautner, and was known for his reinterpretation of the basic post and beam construction, a concept that Lautner continued to develop throughout his career. Although general contractor John de la Vaux is more prominently associated with John Lautner's later designs, Lautner began working with De la Vaux early in his career.

Lautner designed his own residence (Los Angeles, 1939-1940) on a hillside in the Silver Lake neighborhood. As described in a 1941 *House Beautiful* article: "The hill itself was far from beautiful. There was a sweeping view, but not much else. Trees and rocks were lacking... To the lay mind, the prospects for building an attractive small house on such an unpromising site would have seemed hopeless. But John E. Lautner, Jr., Los Angeles architect, did not see it that way. 'To build something of the hill, rather than in spite of the hill'" was the challenge.<sup>37</sup> Lautner addressed the challenge of the hillside by creating a series of cascading spaces that take advantage of the site. He used a hexagonal shape that forms not only the roof but also the overall floor plan. The 1,200 square foot, two bedroom plan was built on a shoestring budget of \$4,500 with help from contractor and friend Paul Speer. The kitchen and dining room are several steps above the living room, but the spaces are integrated into half of a hexagon. The resulting angles create an intimate space that unifies the house with the views and the steeply-sloping site.

The Mauer House, started by Wright in 1941, but entirely redesigned and completed by Lautner in 1946, represents Lautner's experiments with the "small house." In his design for the Mauer House, Wright explored the single-family, postwar California dwelling that modeled free space, mobility, and open living. While studying under Wright, Lautner was involved in an exhibition in New York that explored Wright's concepts for the small, urban, working-class house in response to New Deal reconstruction opportunities. Wright saw the working class house and the increasingly divided structure of the burgeoning city as the two most important fields for new thinking in architecture. Wright envisioned a new form of urbanism that he labeled Broadacre City – a low-density community predicated on Jeffersonian values of anti-urbanism. Wright proposed to populate the community with a new middle-class house type, which he named the "Usonian house." His intention was to create a building envelope expressive of new ways of living. It would be accessible to all social classes, have an open floor plan that was conducive to social spaces, and challenge traditional relationships between built and open spaces. The modest Usonian house was described as "one sheltered space with a sense of freedom...suitable to growth and change...inside and out...a productive building for creative living."<sup>38</sup>

In 1946, when Wright's original design for the Mauer House proved too expensive, Wright allowed Lautner to redesign the project as his own.<sup>39</sup> Lautner adapted the project both to the site and the clients'

<sup>36</sup> *Arts and Architecture*, June 1948, 37.

<sup>37</sup> "New Angles on a Slope," *House Beautiful*, June 1941, 66.

<sup>38</sup> Olsberg, "Idea of the Real," 48.

<sup>39</sup> Hess, *The Architecture of John Lautner*, 25.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Residential Architecture of John Lautner

Name of Property

Multiple Counties, California

County and State

Section number E Page 12

needs. Lautner focused the design of the Mauer House on an angled projection out to a terrace against the horizon; he emphasized the form with a vertical wooden screen. Lautner's idea was to "beautify the basic," extending its flow toward a terrace so that it would gain a sense of spaciousness that extended beyond the dimensions of the building. The asymmetrical post and beam structures inside the Mauer House, known as plywood bents, were the innovation of structural engineer Edgardo Contini. This structural feature eliminated the need for load-bearing walls and allowed for an open plan and large expanses of glass, which are expressed in the pivoting glass doors that allow for the opening of the entire southern wall. The Mauer House was also one of several of Lautner's works from the period that utilized a prefabricated roof structure developed by Contini. In a 1944 issue of *House and Garden*, the Mauer House was introduced as the model house for California living.<sup>40</sup> Lautner and the Mauer House were included in a group exhibition of sixteen California architects at Scripps College in Claremont, California that was published in *Arts and Architecture* magazine.<sup>41</sup> The Mauer House is designated City of Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #481.

Lautner continued to experiment with form and structure throughout the 1940s, often working with Contini. Contini was involved in Lautner's design of lenticular steel trusses, which feature curved top and bottom chords, creating a profile that resembles a convex lens. These lenticular steel trusses were used in the W. F. Gantvoort House (1947, La Cañada-Flintridge), allowing for more flexibility in the floor plan and the extensive use of glazing in place of solid walls.

At the Foster Carling House (Los Angeles, 1947), Jacobsen House (Los Angeles, 1947), and Polin House (Los Angeles, 1947) Lautner employed a complex, prefabricated hexagonal roof with tripod supports at three corners adaptable to the building and the site. This roof system allowed Lautner to design a more open plan and minimize the number of load-bearing walls. This distinct structural design was advantageous for small residential projects, but could not be adapted to buildings of larger scale, in which Lautner had explored alternative structural options to maintain the flexible quality of the interior spaces that he established during the 1940s. In addition to the steel and timber materials in the roof, Lautner designed the Jacobsen House with a distinct interlocking system of concrete, glass, and rosewood surfaces. At the Polin House, three panes of glass meet at a corner, allowing a clear view of the sky. This visual continuation of materials also occurs where the floors bend into the walls. The Polin House was built on the property adjacent to the Jacobsen House, repeating similar motifs but adapted to the particular site. The roof acts as a new hilltop, allowing occupants in the space below to see the horizontal views as if from a tree house.

At the Sheats Apartments/L'Horizon (Los Angeles, 1948), Lautner continued to experiment with ways to minimize structural elements. The project was commissioned in 1948 by artist Helen Sheats and her husband, Dr. Paul Sheats, as housing for UCLA students.<sup>42</sup> Described as "one of the most unusual and beautiful luxury apartments in the country,"<sup>43</sup> the Sheats Apartments contain eight separate living units

<sup>40</sup> "Three Western Homes," *House & Garden*, March 1944, 52.

<sup>41</sup> "Sixteen Southern California architects exhibit contemporary trends in a group showing at Scripps College," *Arts and Architecture*, April 4, 1950.

<sup>42</sup> In 1961, the Sheats commissioned Lautner to design their own residence, now known as the Sheats Goldstein House, in the Beverly Crest neighborhood of Los Angeles.

<sup>43</sup> "New Apartment Structure is One of Most Unusual," *Los Angeles Times*, July 2, 1950.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Residential Architecture of John Lautner

Name of Property

Multiple Counties, California

County and State

Section number E Page 13

on a 90x90-foot hillside lot. The front façade is dominated by a massive stucco canopy separating parking from the units above, with a central stairway leading up and into the hillside complex and the landscaped central courtyard. Asymmetrically arranged shapes, from circular volumes to long, flat planes, step up the hill and around each other to form a harmonious whole.<sup>44</sup> Each apartment is centrally supported by a steel and concrete pillar - Lautner's first known built example of a mushroom column - which eliminates the need for bearing walls. As described by the *Los Angeles Times*, there are no common walls between any of the apartments, and in only two instances the floor of one unit is also the ceiling of another unit. More than one-third of the walls of each apartment are glass; however the units are sited so that no apartment is visible from any other.<sup>45</sup>

The Schaffer House (Glendale, 1949) is an excellent example of Lautner's focus on site conditions, and is considered one of Lautner's early masterpieces.<sup>46</sup> "The Schaffers had bought a small property in a grove of oaks, a piece of land that they had long used and enjoyed for picnics. Lautner carefully [sited] the house on the exact picnic spot, without displacing any trees. To help the Schaffers retain an awareness of this already familiar place, he designed the house to reveal its surroundings from within. To do this he edged the house with an envelope of glass walls and eliminated conventional room divisions within the public areas so that spaces flowed openly into each other, allowing panoramic vistas of the exterior. He also canted sections of the roof upward with angled clerestories, directing the eye up into the trees."<sup>47</sup> The Schaffer House shares important attributes with Wright's Usonian house prototype, and much of the material detailing and aesthetic is similar to that of Wright's work. However, the informal arrangement of interior spaces, the horizontal bands of glass, and the way the house opens to the surrounding oak grove are characteristic of Lautner's work from this period. Lautner was even more literal in his use of natural elements in architecture with his design for the Pearlman Cabin (Idyllwild, 1957), in which the surrounding trees were used as columns in the structure of the building.

By the close of the 1940s, Lautner had established his own identity, and he had become increasingly daring in his spatial concepts and use of materials. His work from this period shows a strong preoccupation with essential geometric forms, and it is significant for its radical expansion of both the technical and spatial vocabulary of domestic architecture. He achieved this through his use of the latest building technologies and materials, such as glue-laminated plywood beams, steel beams and sheeting, and the beginning of his exploration of the architectural possibilities of reinforced concrete. He also developed non-linear, open-plan, and multi-level layouts.

Lautner's work reflects the development of his style independent from, but influenced by, mentor Frank Lloyd Wright. Lautner's overriding design strategies tied into Wright's idea of "total concept" wherein each project was driven by a singularly important idea that defined every aspect of design. Important characteristics in Lautner's residential designs from this period include a reflection of the tenets of

<sup>44</sup> Los Angeles Conservancy, "Sheats Apartments," <https://www.laconservancy.org/locations/sheats-apartments> (accessed July 2015).

<sup>45</sup> "New Apartment Structure is One of Most Unusual."

<sup>46</sup> Frank Escher, "Continuity: Structuring Space," in Nicholas Olsberg, ed. *Between Earth and Heaven: The Architecture of John Lautner* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2008), 158.

<sup>47</sup> Tim Street-Porter and Nicolai Ouroussoff, *LA Modern* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2008), 119.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Residential Architecture of John Lautner

Name of Property

Multiple Counties, California

County and State

Section number E Page 14

Organic architecture; bold and prominent use of geometric forms; and innovative structural techniques. Lautner's residences were often sited on hillsides, which became another distinctive feature of his work.

Continuing with themes established in the 1940s, Lautner's work in the early 1950s was characterized by wood construction and simple, geometric floor plans, with a particular emphasis on primary shapes: circle, triangle, and square. Lautner's work during this period reflected the experimental climate and economy of a mobile city. Lautner firmly believed in the observation of nature as a source of learning, dwelt on the idea of permanence and solidity, and saw buildings as containers for change.<sup>48</sup> From the Harvey House (1950, Los Angeles) onward, Lautner's designs attempted to change the patterns of everyday life to make a society and culture more aware of its surroundings and their commonality.<sup>49</sup> The Harvey House was also Lautner's first opportunity to design with a larger budget and therefore realize grander themes.<sup>50</sup> For this site, defined by its curving cliff edge, Lautner employed a circular form with a mansard-like overhanging roof; the mansard roof acts as a sunshade echoing the rotation of the view.<sup>51</sup> At the Ted Tyler House (Studio City, 1953), Lautner employed the simple triangle to address a difficult site. The Tyler House is situated on small, wooded hillside lot in a canyon. The house is three-levels and triangular in plan, which provided maximum privacy, easy uphill access, and minimized the need for excavation and the construction of extensive retaining walls.<sup>52</sup>

The mid-1950s marked the end of the first phase in Lautner's career. Although this MPDF focuses on Lautner's residential work, he addressed many building types during this period, including the coffee shop that would introduce Googie architecture to the world. His designs during this period reflect Wright's influence along with Lautner's own explorations of space and form. A distinction is made between this early period and the second phase of his career, starting in 1956, when he starts to experiment in earnest with concrete structural elements.

### Theme: John Lautner Residential Architecture in Southern California, 1956-1969

This theme examines Lautner's work of the late 1950s and 1960s. By this time, Lautner was an established and well-recognized architect, known for producing custom-designed, single-family residences. Lautner's work from this period reflects his continued experimentation with geometric forms and innovative structural techniques. There are a number of key features of Lautner's work in the 1950s that distinguished him from contemporary practitioners of the International style. Lautner continued to utilize the Organic principles he learned from Wright and his own emphasis on bold geometry. Rather than restricting himself to a strict, uniform architectural language for developing his designs, as was true of many of his contemporaries, Lautner allowed himself a great deal of flexibility to appropriately address the unique qualities of each site. In discussing his philosophy, Lautner stated, "I choose not to be classified and remain instead continuously growing and changing, with basic real ideas contributing to life itself, for timeless enjoyment of spaces, which I call Real Architecture. No Beginning, No End -

<sup>48</sup> Olsberg, "Grounding: Idea of the Real," 38-64.

<sup>49</sup> Olsberg, "Grounding: Idea of the Real," 38-64.

<sup>50</sup> Street-Porter and Ouroussoff, *LA Modern*, 123.

<sup>51</sup> Street-Porter and Ouroussoff, *LA Modern*, 123.

<sup>52</sup> Gregg Sheridan, "A Triangle on Three Levels," *Los Angeles Times*, April 27, 1952.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Residential Architecture of John Lautner

Name of Property

Multiple Counties, California

County and State

Section number E Page 15

always.”<sup>53</sup> In the 1960s, Lautner continued to push the boundaries of traditional architectural design and engineering, employing increasingly bold and elaborate geometric forms, and experimenting with innovative structural techniques and combination of materials.

Lautner’s house for Mr. and Mrs. Willis Harpel (Los Angeles, 1956) represents the start of the second significant phase of Lautner’s career when he increasingly worked with a combination of materials, including wood and concrete. The house is constructed of round, reinforced concrete columns and wood beams set in a pattern of interlocking equilateral triangles. The use of columns allows for almost no load-bearing interior walls. The structural grid continues beyond the house to form a series of exterior spaces. In contrast to the use of concrete, and to retain a connection to nature, Lautner used wood structural elements and wood and stone details on the interior and exterior of the Harpel House. The Harpel House is designated City of Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #896.

This period also saw the construction of three of Lautner’s most unusual, innovative, and influential residences: the Malin House (1960, Los Angeles; also known as Chemosphere); the Garcia House (1962, Los Angeles; also known as the Rainbow House); and the Reiner House (1963, Los Angeles; also known as Silvertop).

The Leonard Malin House (1960, Los Angeles), also known as the “Chemosphere,” is an iconic design and one of Lautner’s most well-known residences. Malin, an aerospace engineer, hired Lautner to design his home after seeing the Harpel House, which is located down the hill from his own site in the Hollywood Hills. In 1961, the Chemosphere was called “the most modern home built in the world” by the *Encyclopedia Britannica*; it represented the “scientific vision of the future brought to life.”<sup>54</sup> For the Malins, Lautner was once again working with a difficult, hillside site. Due to budget constraints, Lautner decided to create a mushroom structure with a concrete column. The use of a single 30-foot column, as opposed to creating a flat terrace or using an extensive steel frame, allowed for minimal excavation and construction of retaining walls; instead, the surrounding landscape is left largely untouched. The house itself is a one-story octagon perched on top of the column. The Chemosphere’s unusual design attracted national attention from the time of its construction. In 1961, *Life* magazine described the other-worldly appearance of the house “...what imaginative citizens took to be an unearthly object was an unusual and dramatic house, seemingly perched in the sky. Unless lit up for special occasions, the saucer-shaped house has no visible means of support. Actually its only connection with the ground 30 feet below is a slim concrete pedestal.”<sup>55</sup> The Chemosphere was recognized as one of the *Los Angeles Times*’ “Top 10 Houses” in December 2008, and it is designated City of Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument 785.

The Garcia “Rainbow” House is perched on a hillside with sweeping views of the city below. Unlike the Chemosphere, which utilized a combination of wood, steel, and concrete structural elements, the Garcia House is primarily of steel construction, resting on two V-shaped steel supports. In both cases, the structure eliminated the need for load-bearing walls and yielded an open floor plan and unobstructed

<sup>53</sup> Frank Escher, “Prologue,” *John Lautner, Architect* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998).

<sup>54</sup> “AD Classics: Malin ‘Chemosphere’ Residence / John Lautner,” *ArchDaily*, <http://www.archdaily.com/64345/ad-classics-malin-chemosphere-residence-john-lautner> (accessed July 2015).

<sup>55</sup> “Sky-high House on a Pedestal,” *Life*, August 25, 1961.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Residential Architecture of John Lautner

Name of Property

Multiple Counties, California

County and State

Section number E Page 16

views of the surrounding landscape. At the Garcia House, Lautner used a more traditional rectangular plan, but capped the structure with a distinctive, arched roof of wood construction. The long span roof would become a Lautner signature, seen at the Reiner House (Silvertop) and the Elrod House (1968, Palm Springs).

Commissioned by industrialist and engineer Kenneth Reiner, Silvertop was Lautner's first major use of monolithic concrete as a sculptural as well as architectural component.<sup>56</sup> With Silvertop, Lautner ventured into merging highly sculptural arched concrete roofs with an ambitiously thin, cantilevered car ramp which successfully passed load bearing tests conducted by Reiner thanks to perfectly calculated post-tension reinforcement. The home featured a pool with an "overflowing edge," creating a seamless visual connection to the Silver Lake reservoir below. The rounded roof shapes merged with the form of the hilltop, and as a result, the house appeared airy and lightweight, yet integral to its site. At Silvertop, "Lautner united diverse elements of the site geometry into a set of individually shaped spaces that flowed together internally and fitted within the larger geometry of the plan, creating a coherent whole."<sup>57</sup>

A *Los Angeles Times* article described Silvertop as "one of the most unusual homes ever designed in Southern California and possibly the entire country."<sup>58</sup> The house features an arching concrete roof over a wall of glass opening the interior to the views. Lautner and Reiner's unique architectural and engineering approach to the site was problematic for City building officials responsible for issuing permits, as the building code had no provision for the use of prestressed concrete<sup>59</sup> and other advanced construction techniques proposed for the site. Building officials refused to grant permits, which delayed the project while special load tests were conducted. The testing proved that Lautner and his engineers were correct, and progress on the house resumed.<sup>60</sup> According to the *Los Angeles Times* "Due to the length of construction time, the house with its myriad new design features has assumed the air of a research and development project in building materials and construction techniques. It is constantly undergoing a process of design re-evaluation and when completed will be readily adaptable to many technological and equipment changes."<sup>61</sup> An ambitious entrepreneur who admired Lautner's work, Reiner devoted himself, as did Lautner, to endlessly refining Silvertop with new design features and experimentation with new building materials for the better part of the 1960s.

As Lautner's reputation continued to grow, he was increasingly approached by clients with larger budgets. These projects allowed Lautner to continue to experiment with form and structural technique. He pioneered new ways of manipulating concrete, shaping it into folded and bent forms that allowed for his open-plan, non-linear architecture. A prominent example of Lautner's experimentation with the materiality and plasticity of concrete residences is the Sheats House (1963, Los Angeles, now known as

<sup>56</sup> Los Angeles Conservancy, "Reiner-Burchill Residence (Silvertop)," <https://www.laconservancy.org/locations/reiner-burchill-residence-silvertop> (accessed July 2015).

<sup>57</sup> Nicholas Olsberg, "Building: Shaping Awareness," in Nicholas Olsberg, ed. *Between Earth and Heaven: The Architecture of John Lautner* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2008), 87.

<sup>58</sup> Frank Mulcahy, "Unusual Hilltop Home Overlooks Silver Lake," *Los Angeles Times*, August 9, 1959.

<sup>59</sup> Prestressed concrete is reinforced by steel cables instead of bars. It was widely used in constructing bridges, but there was little precedent for residential applications.

<sup>60</sup> Mulcahy, "Unusual Hilltop Home Overlooks Silver Lake."

<sup>61</sup> Mulcahy, "Unusual Hilltop Home Overlooks Silver Lake."



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Residential Architecture of John Lautner  
**Name of Property**

Multiple Counties, California  
**County and State**

Section number E Page 17

the Sheats-Goldstein House). Originally constructed for artist Helen Sheats and her husband, Dr. Paul Sheats, Lautner's clients from the L'Horizon Apartments in 1948, it has become one of Lautner's best-known works. The building occupies a steeply sloping site, and was built into the sandstone ledge of the hillside. It reflects Lautner's continued interest in Organic architecture and continued experimentation with structure and form. The Sheats House is characterized by its sloping triangular roof and retractable windows. The roof is constructed of concrete, but it is pierced by 750 skylights that permit light through in a way reminiscent of a starry night sky.

In 1968, Lautner designed a home in Palm Springs for interior designer Arthur Elrod. The Elrod House has several similarities to other Lautner projects, including a difficult, sloping site, extensive use of concrete, prominent roof form, and connection of indoor and outdoor space. In this case, however, Lautner is responding to the desert climate and landscape. The concrete roof was designed to shield the occupants from the harsh desert sun, with a wide overhang and triangular cut-outs accommodating skylights that provide indirect light to the interior. Boulders found on the site are incorporated into the design, and the original floor-to-ceiling, frameless glass zigzag wall in the living room allowed for a connection with the outdoors.

The Stevens House, also completed in 1968, is located at a beach-side site in Malibu, overlooking both the mountains and the ocean. The house is constructed of board form concrete, with the dramatic roof composed of two off-set, half-catenary curved concrete shells. At the Stevens House, Lautner again adapted the design to the specific demands of the site and setting, using the movement of the waves to create a roof design that would allow the house to be open and connected to the outdoors, while fitting on a relatively narrow residential lot. The Stevens House was published in *Architectural Record* in 1971 as one of twenty exceptional houses selected for awards of excellence and design.<sup>62</sup> It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2009, meeting the "exceptional importance" criterion consideration for properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years.

In 1969, Lautner tackled another hillside lot, this time in the Beverly Glen Canyon neighborhood of Los Angeles, producing a compact, beautifully detailed house for Douglas and Octavia Walstrom. The views were once again opened up with the extensive use of glass, although this time the main volume of the house, closely resembling a right square prism, is framed and clad in treated redwood and exposed glue laminated beams. The reinforced concrete foundations seamlessly suspend the wooden superstructure from the hillside, while the metal rooftops for the car port and the main living spaces - specified to be painted "Forest Green" - camouflage the house among the surrounding vegetation. The clients described the house as "a sculptural work of art."<sup>63</sup>

### **Theme: John Lautner Residential Architecture in Southern California, 1970-1994**

This theme examines Lautner's mature work of the 1970s through the end of his career. In the 1970s, Lautner continued to push his futuristic design style as man-made materials became more readily available and new building methods were adopted. Lautner's disdain for Los Angeles was well-known,

<sup>62</sup> "Building Types Study: Record Houses of the Year," *Architectural Record*, Mid-May, 1971.

<sup>63</sup> Barbara-Ann Campbell-Lange, *John Lautner, 1911-1994: Disappearing Space* (Köln, Germany: Taschen, 2005), 73.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Residential Architecture of John Lautner

**Name of Property**

Multiple Counties, California

**County and State**

Section number E Page 18

but he ultimately stayed to take advantage of the technological advances made possible by the military and aerospace industries, and for a clientele that was willing to take risks. These clients allowed him to continue to expand his use of concrete, which he considered a “timeless method of construction.”<sup>64</sup> Lautner was constantly refining his designs in the office and inventing details in the field. He relished the opportunity to return to previous commissions – which happened numerous times during this phase of his career – and improve on the designs in the pursuit of an evolving, living expression of architecture.

The 1970s were a time of great social change and progressive thinking. In the world of architecture, Postmodernism took hold and received considerable attention during this period and the following decades. Frank Gehry and Morphosis were just beginning to emerge as leading designers with radical new perspectives on progression. However, Lautner continued to push the boundaries within his own terms, producing works as fresh and innovative as those of his earlier days. The advances in materials, structural systems and construction methods allowed Lautner to manipulate increasingly dramatic forms into expansive spaces. The design of his projects continued to move forward and furthered the integration of houses with their natural world in a manner that had not been done before.

During this period, Lautner expanded on the concept of the integration of interior and exterior space seen in earlier works. In all of his late works, Lautner strove to “intensify the exchange between the sheltering space and the fluidity of the elements outside.”<sup>65</sup> He continued to experiment with form, and worked increasingly with biomorphic forms. In these later projects, Lautner completely integrated nature and architecture. His hillside residences were often composed of multiple terraces so that the building could respond to different portions of the site; glass enclosures were used to visually dissolve the separation between interior and exterior spaces, and he achieved a career-long goal to create a frontless, backless, wall-less house, facilitating a genuine connection with nature.

Lautner was lauded for his adoption of futuristic ideas, and his work continued to be featured in national trade publications. In 1971, Lautner became a member of the AIA’s College of Fellows.<sup>66</sup> In 1973, Lautner’s work was included in an architectural exhibition entitled “Three Worlds of Los Angeles” that traveled across Europe. According to Nicholas Olsberg, “others were starting to acknowledge that Lautner had dramatically expanded the language of architecture with the fluid volumetric geometries that had once been confined to the shaping of a hull, a barrel, a vat, or a bunker.”<sup>67</sup> Fellow Los Angeles architect Raymond Kappe suggested that Lautner’s curved forms in concrete opened architecture to “a new dimension.”<sup>68</sup>

In the early 1970s, Lautner returned to the 1968 Elrod House to replace the original glass wall that had been damaged in a sandstorm. This time, the frameless glass wall was replaced with a curving,

<sup>64</sup> Hess, *The Architecture of John Lautner*, 143.

<sup>65</sup> Olsberg, “Building: Shaping Awareness,” 117.

<sup>66</sup> In 1952, the American Institute of Architects established the College of Fellows, an honor awarded to members who have made significant contributions to the profession.

<sup>67</sup> Olsberg, “Building: Shaping Awareness,” 111-112.

<sup>68</sup> Olsberg, “Building: Shaping Awareness,” 112.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Residential Architecture of John Lautner

Name of Property

Multiple Counties, California

County and State

Section number E Page 19

retractable glass curtain wall that opens to fully reveal the living room to the outdoors. Lautner's office also designed a guest wing addition to the property, consisting of three bedrooms and a fitness room. The Elrod House was "perhaps the last example in the long line of distributed plans, starting from the Shusett House, in which Lautner radiated the zones of the building into distinctive segments that spread out from a central point."<sup>69</sup> Immortalized in film and photographs, the Elrod house is considered one of Lautner's master works, and is one of his best known.

In 1971, Lautner designed a residence overlooking the Acapulco Bay for Jeronimo Arango, a businessman in Mexico, who "provided the budget for Lautner to explore concrete's expressive, architectural, and spatial potential as never before."<sup>70</sup> Although not located in Southern California, and therefore not part of this MPDF, it is not possible to discuss Lautner's residential work from this period without including the Arango House. Arango had seen publications of the Elrod House, and wanted to build a resort home with Lautner as architect and Elrod as interior designer.<sup>71</sup> Lautner used poured-in-place concrete to create a sweeping roof over the house, which opened up the view to the sky. The house, completed in 1973 and subsequently named Marbrisa, is situated beneath the ridge of a hill in a neighborhood of large houses. A winding concrete driveway lined with walls leads to the circular entry court and front door. The top floor of the Arango house, hidden inside, houses an open air living room with a freeform edge that contours to the demands of the site and views, and an enclosed, concrete-walled kitchen wing, while the lower floor holds family bedrooms and servants' quarters. Arthur Elrod did the furniture for the original design. Concrete tables and couches were poured in place with the rest of the structure. The swimming pool, designed by Lautner, takes the place of a safety railing on the cliff-side house. Water spills over the edge into a hidden gutter, creating a clean edge that ties the pool's surface visually to the bay below. When inside the Arango House, "the bay, the thin perfect curve of the horizon itself, the peninsulas, and off-shore islands are all drawn into the space of the house."<sup>72</sup> The house was designed to be experienced from the inside, looking out.

In the mid- to late-1970s, Lautner returned to Malibu, creating two new designs inspired by the ocean. At the Shirlin and Stanley Beyer House (1975), Lautner used wood frame to create organic spaces reflecting the coastline. The design of the roofline and the interior spaces reflect a free-form design, appropriate for the ocean-side site and replacing the more traditional geometries in Lautner's earlier works. The faceted window wall facing the ocean follows a different line than the edge of the roof, emphasizing the informality and biomorphic nature of the design.

In 1976, Lautner was included in two significant architectural exhibitions: "A View of California Architecture, 1960-1976," organized by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and "The L.A. Twelve," which opened at the Pacific Design Center in May of that year.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Escher, "Continuity: Structuring Space," 104.

<sup>70</sup> Hess, *The Architecture of John Lautner*, 145. Description of Arango House largely adapted from Hess, *The Architecture of John Lautner*.

<sup>71</sup> Escher, "Continuity: Structuring Space," 136.

<sup>72</sup> Hess, *The Architecture of John Lautner*, 145.

<sup>73</sup> The exhibition was conceived of as a student project by Charles Slert and his advisor Bernard Zimmerman in the Cal Poly Pomona Architectural Department as a means to become acquainted with important Los Angeles architects and their design philosophies. The L.A. 12 are: Roland Coate, Daniel Dworsky, Craig Ellwood, Frank Gehry, John Lautner, Jerrold Lomax, Anthony Lumsden, Leroy Miller, Cesar Pelli, James Pulliam, and Bernard Zimmerman.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Residential Architecture of John Lautner  
**Name of Property**

Multiple Counties, California  
**County and State**

Section number E Page 20

In 1979, Lautner designed a Malibu residence for Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert Segel. At the Segel House, Lautner again used curvilinear concrete forms to echo the nearby ocean. The walls of the house are almost entirely concrete, which is contrasted with a curved, wooden plank roof. Lautner's use of a concrete structure created an almost monolithic form and helped create large, uninterrupted views of the Pacific Ocean. "The Segel House was set [on the beach] barely above the high water mark, on the boundary where vegetation ends and rocks and sand begin. Two segments of the same arc intersected like two thick rinds of orange peel, one placed on end and another laid at an angle against it; the collision between the two produced a highly articulated space. 'Recessing it like that,' said Lautner, 'made it so that when you are in there, you are not only secure in a cave, your orientation is forced up and down the shore.'" <sup>74</sup> Lautner saw the Segel House as a breakthrough in the feeling he was attempting to elicit in his work during this period, of simultaneous safety and expansiveness. <sup>75</sup> Lautner reflected that Joann Segel, a dance therapist, had precisely understood the idea when she told him that "one could stay on the ground and fly at the same time." <sup>76</sup>

The desert was no less an inspiration for Lautner than the ocean. The Bob and Dolores Hope House (Palm Springs, originally designed in 1973 and completed in 1979) was one of the "long and frustrating" episodes in Lautner's career. <sup>77</sup> The house was originally designed in 1973, but it wasn't completed until 1979, due to a fire, lawsuits, and redesign. Dolores Hope was taken with Lautner's design of the Elrod House, and she decided she wanted to work with the architect to design her own getaway and entertaining space in the desert. The Hope House is located in the foothills of Palm Springs, on a prominent site with expansive views of the Coachella Valley below. It was originally conceived as a biomorphic, volcanic, hyperbolic paraboloid concrete form. The residence is perhaps Lautner's most visually striking, due in part to its prominent location and its resemblance to a space ship. When Bob Hope first saw the design in 1973, he remarked "at least when they come down from Mars, they'll know where to go." <sup>78</sup> The Hope House was intended to be constructed of concrete, although cost concerns rendered the final house in steel and cement plaster. At the center of the design is an expansive courtyard with a 60-foot opening. Its organically derived spaces are organized to create an open, social area for receptions and parties, for which the house was primarily intended. The roof forms a canopy that shelters the house from the hot desert sun and creates a welcoming atmosphere. The house is more than 23,000 square feet, making it Lautner's largest commission. <sup>79</sup>

In 1972, the Sheats House (originally constructed in 1963) was acquired by James Goldstein (becoming known as the Sheats-Goldstein House), who worked closely with Lautner to gradually remodel almost every space in the house. Goldstein became somewhat of an exclusive patron to Lautner during this period, commissioning him for ongoing renovations at the house beginning in 1984 and continuing until 1994. <sup>80</sup> Goldstein was arguably one of the most important clients of the later period of Lautner's career,

<sup>74</sup> Olsberg, "Building: Shaping Awareness," 117.

<sup>75</sup> Olsberg, "Building: Shaping Awareness," 117.

<sup>76</sup> Olsberg, "Building: Shaping Awareness," 117.

<sup>77</sup> Hess, *The Architecture of John Lautner*, 147.

<sup>78</sup> "Talk to Fellowship: John Lautner and William Wesley Peters," unpublished transcript, Frank Lloyd Wright Archives, February 19, 1989. As quoted in Hess, *The Architecture of John Lautner*, 147.

<sup>79</sup> "Otherworldly Craftsmanship: Space-age architecture meets organic design in a Hollywood legend's hilltop estate," *Palm Springs Life*, May 2014.

<sup>80</sup> Lautner also designed Goldstein's office space in 1987, located in a Skidmore-Owings-Merrill designed building in the Century City area

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Residential Architecture of John Lautner

Name of Property

Multiple Counties, California

County and State

Section number E Page 21

and certainly his most important patron.<sup>81</sup> All of the changes were meant to accommodate Goldstein's lifestyle, while promoting interaction with nature. The living room was enclosed with frameless glazing, the master bedroom expanded, the entrance given a koi pond and stepping stones as a tropical reference, the stucco ceilings replaced with redwood, concrete furniture was designed for the living room and master bedroom and the skylights made operable, exemplifying the Lautner signature blurring of indoor and outdoor spaces.

The early 1980s found Lautner back at the beach, this time for Mr. and Mrs. Bud Krause (Malibu, 1982). The house was originally constructed as a speculative venture, but instead the owners decided to retain it for their own use. The Krause House is located on a densely populated beachfront site, making it difficult for Lautner to employ the free organic and undulating forms he favored during this period. Instead, the house has a rectilinear footprint with an orthogonal plan and a centrally located sculptural staircase that divides the spaces. The western façade, which faces the ocean, incorporates diagonal steel bracing to create a geometric fenestration pattern and capture the scenic views of the Pacific Ocean.

Lautner's design for Mr. and Mrs. Alden Schwimmer (Beverly Hills, 1982) resembles a castle, perched prominently on a steep hillside in Benedict Canyon. The dramatic residence was built along six stone turrets surrounded by terraces on the front and a cantilevered pool below. The expansive, curved roof and long expanses of glass bring natural light into the space and connect the interior with the surrounding hillside.

One of Lautner's last major projects was the Pacific Coast House, commissioned in 1980 and completed in 1990, again bringing him back to Malibu. Constructed for Allen Levy, the rare client with an unlimited budget, the house was a large and complicated project that took almost ten years to complete. Lautner said of the house "it looks like something from Egypt or it's just completely out of this world. I mean, it's not a stucco plaster Los Angeles box."<sup>82</sup> Levy asked Lautner for a "whole new world, private, serene, and soundproof," folding the land into a huge discrete enclosure. The house has 35-foot high, varying, curving, sloping concrete walls enclosing the entire property as living space and becoming the roof of the main house.

The final period of Lautner's career focused on large residential commissions for prominent clients. These works are characterized by Lautner's mastery of concrete construction and the development of increasingly bolder and inventive, often biomorphic, forms. Although the building forms grew more outlandish, Lautner remained consistent to the ideas of Organicism, importance of the site, and connection to the outdoors that he explored in his earlier work. As described by *New York Times* architecture critic Nicolai Ouroussoff, "[Lautner's] work is never a mere sculptural exercise; it always starts with an intimate understanding of the site, which prevents him from slipping into self-indulgence.

of Los Angeles. The Goldstein Office was designated City of Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #829.

<sup>81</sup> "James Goldstein Office – Historic-Cultural Monument Application," August 19, 2005. The Goldstein Office has been dismantled. It belongs to the John Lautner Foundation, and is on permanent loan to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

<sup>82</sup> "Responsibility, Infinity, Nature: John Lautner," interview by Marlene L. Laskey, Oral History Program, University of California, Los Angeles, 1986, 173. As quoted in Hess, *The Architecture of John Lautner*, 156.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Residential Architecture of John Lautner

**Name of Property**

Multiple Counties, California

**County and State**

Section number E Page 22

That spirit of empathy, of context, unites all great architecture. Like other great Los Angeles architects before him, Lautner... was a dreamer in a land that inspired outlandish fantasies.<sup>83</sup>

Toward the end of Lautner's life there was a renewed interest in his career, and a re-evaluation of some works that were previously derided as architectural follies for elite clients. In 1991, Lautner's work was featured in a traveling exhibition that was still on view at the time of his death: "John Lautner: Architect: Los Angeles," which was shown at the Hochschule für Angewandte Kunst in Vienna; the Harvard Graduate School of Design; and the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts in Chicago. In 1993, Lautner was awarded a Gold Medal for lifetime achievement by the Los Angeles Chapter of the AIA. During the same period, Lautner had been working with Frank Escher on a monograph of his work. The book was designed with Lautner before his death, allowing Lautner to present his work as he wished it to be.<sup>84</sup> Lautner died in Los Angeles in October 1994.

### Architectural Styles

Although Lautner did not consider himself a Modernist and did not define his work according to particular architectural styles, his work shared characteristics with twentieth century Modernist styles, including Mid-century Modernism and its sub-types Organicism and Expressionism, and Late Modernism.

#### *Mid-century Modern Architecture*

Mid-century Modern is a term used to describe the post-World War II iteration of the International Style in both commercial and residential design. The International Style – an architectural aesthetic that stressed rationality, logic, and a break with the past – emerged in Europe in the 1920s with the work of Le Corbusier in France, and Walter Gropius and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe in Germany. The United States became a stronghold of Modern architecture after the emigration of Gropius, Mies, and Marcel Breuer. Two Austrian emigrants, Richard Neutra and Rudolph Schindler, helped introduce modern architecture to Southern California in the 1920s. In 1932, the Museum of Modern Art hosted an exhibition titled simply "Modern Architecture," that featured the work of fifteen architects from around the world whose buildings shared a stark simplicity and vigorous functionalism. The term International Style was coined by Henry Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson in the exhibition catalogue.

The early impact of the International Style in the United States was primarily in the fields of residential and small-scale commercial design. The economic downturn of the Depression, followed by World War II, resulted in little architectural development during this period. It was not until the postwar period that Americans embraced Modernism, and its full impact on the architectural landscape is observed. The International Style was characterized by geometric forms, smooth wall surfaces, and an absence of exterior decoration. Mid-century Modern architecture in California represents the adaptation of these elements to the local climate and topography, and in residential design to the postwar need for efficiently-built, moderately-priced homes. Mid-century Modernism is often characterized by a clear

<sup>83</sup> Ouroussoff, "Bonding Humanity and Landscape in a Perfect Circle."

<sup>84</sup> Frank Escher, *John Lautner: Architect* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Residential Architecture of John Lautner

Name of Property

Multiple Counties, California

County and State

Section number E Page 23

expression of structure and materials, large expanses of glass, and open interior plans. It was a conscious reaction against the rigid architectural language of the International Style, which was minimalist in concept, stressed functionalism, and was devoid of regional characteristics and nonessential decorative elements.

The roots of the style can be traced to early Los Angeles Modernists like Neutra and Schindler, whose local work inspired “second generation” Modern architects like Gregory Ain, Craig Ellwood, Harwell Hamilton Harris, Pierre Koenig, Raphael Soriano, and many more. These predominantly post-war architects developed an indigenous Modernism that was born from the International Style but matured into a fundamentally regional style, fostered in part by *Art and Architecture* magazine’s pivotal Case Study Program (1945-1966). The style gained popularity because its use of standardized, prefabricated materials permitted quick and economical construction. It became the predominant architectural style in the postwar years and is represented in almost every property type, from single-family residences to commercial buildings to gas stations.

Character-defining features include:

- One or two-story configuration
- Horizontal massing (for small-scale buildings)
- Simple geometric forms
- Expressed post-and-beam construction, in wood or steel
- Flat roof or low-pitched gable roof with wide overhanging eaves and cantilevered canopies
- Unadorned wall surfaces
- Wood, plaster, brick or stone used as exterior wall panels or accent materials
- Flush-mounted metal frame fixed windows and sliding doors, and clerestory windows
- Exterior staircases, decks, patios and balconies
- Little or no exterior decorative detailing

### *Organic Architecture*

Frank Lloyd Wright first used the term “organic architecture” in an article for *Architectural Record* in August 1914.<sup>85</sup> Wright applied the word organic to “‘living’ structure – a structure or concept wherein features or parts are so organized in form and substance as to be, applied to purpose, integral. Everything that ‘lives’ is therefore organic.”<sup>86</sup> Organic architecture meant a living architecture in which every composition, element, and detail was deliberately shaped for the job it was to perform. Wright stressed the unity of building, furnishings, and environment in an “organic-entity, as contrasted with that former insensate aggregation of parts...One great thing instead of a quarrelling collection of so many little things.”<sup>87</sup> Wright expressed his concept of Organic design through crystalline plan forms, the possibility

<sup>85</sup> Adapted from “Wright – Organic Architecture,” Frank Lloyd Wright Trust, <http://www.flwright.org/ckfinder/userfiles/files/Wright-Organic-Architecture.pdf> (accessed August 2015).

<sup>86</sup> Frank Lloyd Wright, *Modern Architecture; Being the Kahn Lectures for 1930* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1931), 27.

<sup>87</sup> Ulrich Conrads, *Programs and Manifestoes on 20<sup>th</sup>-century Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1999), 25.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Residential Architecture of John Lautner

**Name of Property**

Multiple Counties, California

**County and State**

Section number E Page 24

of growth by asymmetrical addition, the relationship of composition to site and client, and the use of local materials.<sup>88</sup>

The chief concept of Organic architecture is the merging of building and nature, so that the design responds to the environment rather than imposing itself upon it. Organic architecture grew out of the site from within, employing natural shapes, complex geometries, and new building materials and technologies to unify all elements of the design – site, structure, spaces, fixtures, finishes, and furnishing - into a single harmonious unit.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Peter Collins, "The Biology of Analogy," *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture 1750-1950* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965).

<sup>89</sup> Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), 656.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Residential Architecture of John Lautner  
**Name of Property**

Multiple Counties, California  
**County and State**

Section number E Page 25

Character-defining features of Organic architecture include:

- Complex massing
- Sculptural form
- Geometric or curvilinear shapes
- Built-in furniture
- Elimination of applied ornament
- Integration of site, structure, and design
- Ornament developed as integral part of material (i.e. patterns cast in concrete)
- Materials used simply to emphasize their innate character
- Freely flowing interior space
- Sense of shelter, refuge, or protection against the elements

### *Expressionist Architecture*

Expressionist architecture is loosely based on the German Expressionist movement of the early twentieth century.<sup>90</sup> Expressionism is a rejection of the modern ideals embodied in Miesian buildings. The architecture is meant to evoke an emotional, rather than intellectual, response. Expressionism repudiated modern rationalism and emphasized abstraction of form to symbolically express subjective interpretation of inner experience. Forms were inspired by natural phenomena including caves, crystals, rocks, and other organic, non-geometric forms to produce “an architecture of motion and emotion, ambiance, radicalism, and sweeping change.”<sup>91</sup> Innovative building materials such as concrete, plastics, and laminates are often incorporated in the design to achieve the artistic forms.

Character-defining features of Expressionist architecture include:

- Distortion of form to evoke emotion
- Non-traditional structural elements
- Organic, asymmetrical design
- Use of experimental materials
- Unconventional roof designs
- Roofs as continuation of walls
- Irregularly-shaped windows
- Use of topography as design element

<sup>90</sup> Adapted from “Modern Movement: Neo-Expressionism (1955-Present),” Alaska Department of Natural Resources: Office of History & Archaeology, <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/oha/styleguide/neoexpressionism.htm> (accessed August 2015).

<sup>91</sup> Adrian Sheppard, FRAIC, “The Return of Expressionism and The Architecture of Luigi Moretti,” 1-2, [www.mcgill.ca/architecture/files/architecture/ExpressionismMoretti.pdf](http://www.mcgill.ca/architecture/files/architecture/ExpressionismMoretti.pdf) (accessed August 7, 2015).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Residential Architecture of John Lautner

**Name of Property**

Multiple Counties, California

**County and State**

Section number E Page 26

### *Late Modern Architecture*

Late Modern is a blanket term used to describe the evolution of Modern architecture from the mid-1950s through the 1970s. It is typically applied to commercial and institutional buildings, but there are residential examples that represent the style. Unlike the straightforward, functionalist simplicity of International Style and Mid-century Modernism, Late Modern buildings exhibit a more deliberate sculptural quality with bold geometric volumes, uniform surfaces such as glass skin or concrete, and a sometimes exaggerated expression of structure and systems. Late Modern architects imagined their buildings not as a simple, straightforward set of volumes, but as highly articulated sculptural forms.

Character-defining features of Late Modern architecture includes:

- Bold geometric volumes
- Large expanses of unrelieved wall surfaces
- Uniform use of cladding materials including wood, glass, concrete, or masonry veneer; wood cladding is often applied diagonally
- Exaggerated expression of structure and systems
- Hooded or deeply set windows
- Little or no applied ornament
- Horizontal massing
- Ribbon windows
- Belt courses
- Use of industrial building materials such as concrete
- Boxed, cantilevered, or tight eaves
- Flat or shed roof

### **Conclusion**

John Lautner is one of the most original and important Southern California architects of the twentieth century. During his 60-year career, he designed some of the most noteworthy and iconic residences in the region, boldly experimenting with form, materials, and construction techniques. Trained by Frank Lloyd Wright, Lautner carried with him throughout his career an interest in Organic architecture and a connection to nature balanced with the specific needs of the site and the client. At the beginning of Lautner's career, he relied primarily on wood-frame structural systems and simple geometric forms. By mid-career, he began experimenting with form and concrete construction; the use of concrete gave Lautner more flexibility and elevated the organic and sculptural quality of his designs. Material experimentation was always a defining aspect of Lautner's designs; by using advances in material development such as wood glue-laminated beams and frequent implementation of freeform concrete, Lautner was able to create otherworldly spaces while still retaining the underlying architectural philosophies that defined his practice. By the 1970s, Lautner mastered the use of concrete, skillfully manipulating it to express increasingly elaborate designs. At the time of his death in 1994, Lautner was appreciated as a master architect who made important contributions to the Southern California architectural landscape.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Residential Architecture of John Lautner

**Name of Property**

Multiple Counties, California

**County and State**

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number F Page 27

### Section F. Associated Property Types

**THEME: John Lautner Residential Architecture in Southern California, 1940-1955**

**PROPERTY TYPE DESCRIPTION: Single-family residence; Multi-family residence**

This property type identifies single- and multi-family residences constructed during the period of significance for this theme (1940-1955).

#### *Statement of Significance*

##### **Criterion: C**

Properties eligible under this theme are significant under Criterion C as excellent examples of Lautner's residential work during this period. Single- and multi-family residences designed by Lautner during this period reflect the early phase of his career, when he began an independent practice after apprenticing under Frank Lloyd Wright. Lautner's early work most directly reflects Wright's influence, along with Lautner's own emphasis on natural materials and the importance of site specific architecture. Residences constructed during this period are significant for their association with Lautner's earliest independent commissions, and the evolution of his style in the 1940s and 1950s. During the immediate postwar period, Lautner's work focused on the development of the small, single-family house, although there are notable multi-family examples from this period. Projects from this era are characterized by Lautner's fascination with innovative roof structures that sheltered free and flexible plans that opened to the Southern California landscape. Lautner's works from this period are relatively modest when compared to the scale and complexity of later projects; however, they reflect the architect's early experimentations with form and structure and development of a mature style.

#### *Character-defining Features*

Common character-defining features of Lautner's work from this period include:

- Organic, Wrightian-influenced Mid-century Modern design
- Integration of the building with its site
- Wood-frame construction combined with innovative structural technologies
- Emphasis on geometric, rectilinear, and/or angular shapes in both roof form and plan
- Encompassing roof form as primary design feature
- Open plan with central public space (living, dining, and kitchen area), typically with a central hearth as a focal point, and separate private (bedroom) wing in various configurations
- Extensive use of wood, including siding, paneling, built-in seating, and casework
- Connection of indoor and outdoor space
- Bands of windows or extensive use of glass, including glass walls

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Residential Architecture of John Lautner  
**Name of Property**

Multiple Counties, California  
**County and State**

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number F Page 28

### *Registration Requirements*

To be eligible, an individual property must:

- exemplify the tenets of the modern movement and the important characteristics of Lautner's work from this period;
- display the significant character-defining features of its style or type, or reflect the significant character-defining features of Lautner's work from this period;
- date from the period of significance;
- exhibit quality of design; and
- retain the required aspects of integrity.

Note that the description of Lautner's work and the associated character-defining features from this period apply to the major themes and predominant construction techniques seen in his work from 1940-1955. However, there may be examples that do not fit precisely into these descriptions that are eligible as excellent and unique examples of Lautner's work from this era.

**Required Aspects of Integrity:** Location, setting, design, workmanship, and materials must be strongly present.

### **Extant Examples from this Period:**

1. Lautner Residence, Los Angeles, CA (1940)
2. Springer Residence, Los Angeles, CA (1940)
3. Bell Residence, Los Angeles, CA (1941)
4. Hancock Residence, Los Angeles, CA (1945)
5. Weinstein Remodel, Los Angeles, CA (1945)
6. Mauer Residence, Los Angeles, CA (1946)
7. Eisele Guest House, Los Angeles, CA (1946)
8. Carling Residence, Los Angeles, CA (1947)
9. Gantvoort Residence, Flintridge, CA (1947)
10. Jacobsen Residence, Hollywood, CA (1947)
11. Polin Residence, Hollywood, CA (1947)
12. Sheats Apartments (L'Horizon), Los Angeles, CA (1948)
13. Dahlstrom Residence, Pasadena, CA (1949)
14. Schaffer Residence, Glendale, CA (1949)
15. Alexander Residence, Long Beach, CA (1950)
16. Foster Residence, Sherman Oaks, CA (1950)
17. Harvey Residence, Los Angeles, CA (1950)
18. Baxter-Hodiak Remodel, Los Angeles, CA (1951)
19. Lippett Remodel, Los Angeles, CA (1951)
20. Carr Residence Remodel, Los Angeles, CA (1952)
21. Howe Residence, Los Angeles, CA (1952)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Residential Architecture of John Lautner  
**Name of Property**

Multiple Counties, California  
**County and State**

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   F   Page   29  

22. Williams Residence, Hollywood, CA (1952)
23. Tyler Residence, Studio City, CA (1953)
24. Payne Addition, San Dimas, CA (1953)
25. Coneco Corporation House, Sherman Oaks, CA (1954)
26. Fischer Residence, Los Angeles, CA (1954)
27. Deutsch Residence, Hollywood, CA (1954)
28. Baldwin Residence, Silver Lake, Los Angeles, CA (1955)

### **THEME: John Lautner Residential Architecture in Southern California, 1956-1969**

### **PROPERTY TYPE DESCRIPTION: Single-family residence; Multi-family residence**

This property type identifies single- and multi-family residences constructed during the period of significance for this theme (1956-1969).

### *Statement of Significance*

#### **Criterion: C**

Properties eligible under this theme are significant under Criterion C as excellent examples of Lautner's residential work during this period. Single- and multi-family residences designed by Lautner during this period reflect the stage in Lautner's career during which he was an established and well-recognized architect, known for producing custom-designed residences. Residences from this period are significant as representations of Lautner's continued experimentation with geometric forms and innovative structural techniques in combination with the Organic principles he learned from Wright, and his own emphasis on bold geometry while pushing the boundaries of traditional architectural design and engineering.

**Criterion Consideration G.** There are some properties under this theme that are not yet 50 years of age. Criteria Consideration G addresses properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years. The National Register Criteria for Evaluation exclude properties that achieved significance within the past 50 years unless they are of exceptional importance. 50 years is a general estimate of the time needed to develop historical perspective and to evaluate significance. This consideration guards against the listing of properties of passing contemporary interest and ensures that the National Register is a list of truly historic places. The phrase "exceptional importance" does not require that the property be of national significance. It is a measure of a property's importance within the appropriate historic context, whether the scale of that context is local, state, or national.

Properties that are significant under this theme that are not yet 50 years of age may meet Criteria Consideration G. Lautner is a recognized master architect, and there is sufficient scholarship to evaluate his work from this period in the context of modernism in Southern California.

Common character-defining features of Lautner's work from this period include:

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Residential Architecture of John Lautner  
**Name of Property**

Multiple Counties, California  
**County and State**

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number F Page 30

- Organic, Wrightian-influenced Mid-century Modern design
- Integration of the building with its site
- Concrete and wood-frame construction combined with innovative structural technologies
- Geometric, rectilinear, angular, and/or circular or curvilinear shapes in both roof form and plan
- Encompassing roof form as primary design feature; during this period the roof attained a more sculptural form and became a dramatic focal point
- Open plan with central public space (living, dining, and kitchen area), typically with a central hearth as a focal point, and separate private (bedroom) wing in various configurations
- Combination of materials, including wood, concrete, stone, steel, and glass
- More pronounced integration of indoor and outdoor space
- Extensive use of glass, including glass walls

### *Registration Requirements*

To be eligible, an individual property must:

- exemplify the tenets of the modern movement and the important characteristics of Lautner's work from this period;
- display the significant character-defining features of its style or type, or reflect the significant character-defining features of Lautner's work from this period;
- date from the period of significance;
- exhibit quality of design; and
- retain the essential factors of integrity.

Note that the description of Lautner's work and the associated character-defining features from this period apply to the major themes and predominant constructions techniques seen in his work from 1956-1969. However, there may be examples that do not fit precisely into these descriptions that are eligible as excellent and unique examples of Lautner's work from this era.

**Required Aspects of Integrity:** Location, setting, design, workmanship, and materials must be strongly present.

### **Extant Examples from this Period:**

1. Harpel Residence, Los Angeles, CA (1956)
2. Johnson Residence, Laguna Beach, CA (1956)
3. Pearlman Mountain Cabin, Idyllwild, CA (1957)
4. Zahn Residence, Los Angeles, CA (1957)
5. Hatherall Residence, Sun Valley, Los Angeles, CA (1958)
6. Malin Residence (Chemosphere), Los Angeles, CA (1960)
7. Tolstoy Residence, Alta Loma, CA (1961)
8. Wolff Residence, Los Angeles, CA (1961)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Residential Architecture of John Lautner  
**Name of Property**

Multiple Counties, California  
**County and State**

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number F Page 31

9. Garcia Residence, Los Angeles, CA (1962)
10. Sheats (Goldstein) Residence, Los Angeles, CA (1963)
11. Reiner (Burchill) Residence (Silvertop), Los Angeles, CA (1963)
12. Wolff Remodel, Los Angeles, CA (1963)
13. Conrad Addition, Fullerton, CA (1964)
14. Elrod Residence, Palm Springs, CA (1968)
15. Stevens Residence, Malibu CA (1968)
16. Zimmerman Residence, Studio City, CA (1968)
17. Walstrom Residence, Los Angeles, CA (1969)
- 18.

### **THEME: John Lautner Residential Architecture in Southern California, 1970-1994**

#### **PROPERTY TYPE DESCRIPTION: Single-family residence**

This property type identifies single-family residences constructed during the period of significance for this theme (1970-1994). There are no multi-family residential projects from this period.

#### *Statement of Significance*

##### **Criterion: C**

Properties eligible under this theme are significant under Criterion C as excellent examples of Lautner's residential work during this period. During the final period in his career, Lautner expanded on the concept of the integration of interior and exterior space seen in earlier works, obscuring the line between indoor and outdoor space. Residences from this period represent Lautner's mastery of concrete construction. He continued to experiment with form, working with increasingly dramatic shapes.

Common character-defining features of Lautner's work from this period include:

- Organic-influenced Mid-century Modern and Late Modern designs
- Integration of the building with its site
- Predominantly concrete construction combined with innovative structural technologies
- Radical angular, curvilinear, and biomorphic shapes in both roof form and plan;
- Encompassing roof form as primary design feature and dramatic focal point
- Open plan with central public space (living, dining, and kitchen area), and separate private (bedroom) wing in various configurations
- Combination of materials, primarily concrete and glass
- Elimination of boundary between indoor and outdoor space
- Extensive use of glass, including glass walls



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Residential Architecture of John Lautner  
**Name of Property**

Multiple Counties, California  
**County and State**

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number F Page 32

**Criterion Consideration G.** Properties under this theme are not yet 50 years of age. Criteria Consideration G addresses properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years. The National Register Criteria for Evaluation exclude properties that achieved significance within the past 50 years unless they are of exceptional importance. 50 years is a general estimate of the time needed to develop historical perspective and to evaluate significance. This consideration guards against the listing of properties of passing contemporary interest and ensures that the National Register is a list of truly historic places. The phrase "exceptional importance" does not require that the property be of national significance. It is a measure of a property's importance within the appropriate historic context, whether the scale of that context is local, State, or national.

Properties that are significant under this theme that are not yet 50 years of age may meet Criteria Consideration G. Lautner is a recognized master architect, and there is sufficient scholarship to evaluate his work from this period in the context of modernism in Southern California.

### ***Registration Requirements***

To be eligible, an individual property must:

- exemplify the tenets of the modern movement and the important characteristics of Lautner's work from this period;
- display the significant character-defining features of its style or type, or reflect the significant character-defining features of Lautner's work from this period;
- date from the period of significance;
- exhibit quality of design; and
- retain the essential factors of integrity.

Note that the description of Lautner's work and the associated character-defining features from this period apply to the major themes and predominant constructions techniques seen in his work from 1970-1994. However, there may be examples that do not fit precisely into these descriptions that are eligible as excellent and unique examples of Lautner's work from this era.

**Required Aspects of Integrity:** Location, setting, design, workmanship, and materials must be strongly present.

### **Extant Examples from this Period:**

1. Garwood Residence, Malibu, CA (1970)
2. Familian Residence, Beverly Hills, CA (1970)
3. Busustow Cabin, Lake Almanor, CA (1970)
4. Jordan Residence, Laguna Beach, CA (1973)
5. Aldrich Remodel, Los Angeles, CA (1977)
6. Segel Residence, Malibu, CA (1979)
7. Hope Residence, Palm Springs, CA (1979)



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Residential Architecture of John Lautner  
**Name of Property**

Multiple Counties, California  
**County and State**

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Section number F Page 33

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8. Rawlins Residence, Balboa Island, CA (1980)
9. Schwimmer Residence, Beverly Hills, CA (1982)
10. Krause Residence, Malibu, CA (1982)
11. Beyer Residence, Malibu, CA (1983)
12. Boykoff Residence Remodel, Los Angeles, CA (1989)
13. Goldstein Remodel of Sheats Residence, Los Angeles, CA (1989)
14. Todd Addition to Hancock Residence, Los Angeles, CA (1989)
15. Levy Residence, Malibu, CA (1990)
16. Eicher Remodel of Carling Residence, Los Angeles, CA (1991)
17. Shearing Residence, Coronado Cays, CA (1992)
18. Friedberg-Rodman Remodel of Zahn Residence, Los Angeles, CA (1992)
19. Worchell Remodel of Bell Residence, Los Angeles, CA (in progress when Lautner died)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Residential Architecture of John Lautner  
**Name of Property**

Multiple Counties, California  
**County and State**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   G   Page   34  

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**Section G. Geographical Data**

Residential properties designed by John Lautner in Southern California, defined as Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Santa Barbara, and Ventura Counties.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Residential Architecture of John Lautner  
**Name of Property**

Multiple Counties, California  
**County and State**

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number H Page 35

### Section H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

The MPDF focuses on Lautner's residential works in Southern California, which comprise the majority of the commissions undertaken during his long and prolific career. There are three chronological themes that outline the early, middle, and late phases of Lautner's career and trace the trajectory of his experimentations with form and structure.

The development of this MPDF would not have been possible without the vision, guidance, and constant support of Karol Lautner Peterson (1938-2015). Karol, the oldest of Lautner's three daughters, was a lifetime advocate for her father's work, tirelessly working on educational and preservation efforts. She was the guiding force that created the John Lautner Foundation in 1996, and she served as its president until 2015. One of Karol's major achievements as head of the Foundation was the transfer of the John Lautner archive to the Getty Research Institute, where it will be protected and preserved for generations to come.

The discussion of Lautner's work and place in Southern California architectural history is based on existing scholarship on Lautner's career. These primarily include: Frank Escher's *John Lautner Architect* (1998); and Jean-Louis Cohen, Nicholas Olsberg and Frank Escher's *Between Earth and Heaven: The Architecture of John Lautner* (2008). Architect and Lautner expert Frank Escher was consulted in developing the list of properties to be nominated under this MPDF. Judith Lautner, treasurer, and, after Karol's death, president, of the John Lautner Foundation, provided invaluable insight into her father's work.

The MPDF was developed by students at the California State Polytechnic University, Pomona under the guidance of Professors Lauren Weiss Bricker and Luis Hoyos. With the support of the John Lautner Foundation, students Christopher Stanford and Peter Fox continued to work on the documents following the completion of their required coursework. The students' contributions include research on Lautner's career and his work on individual commissions, including primary source research at the Lautner Archives at the Getty Research Institute; site visits to the individual properties; photography of the properties for use in the individual nominations; and the compilation of the original MPDF and accompanying individual nominations. Historic Resources Group assisted the students with finalizing and submitting a revised version of the MPDF and nomination forms.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Residential Architecture of John Lautner  
**Name of Property**

Multiple Counties, California  
**County and State**

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 1 Page 36

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Residential Architecture of John Lautner  
Name of Property

Multiple Counties, California  
County and State

Section number 1 Page 37

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**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Residential Architecture of John Lautner  
**Name of Property**

Multiple Counties, California  
**County and State**

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Section number I Page 38

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