

# Traveling Exhibit

## Architecture in New Mexico: Discussion and Analysis

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"Contemporary Architecture of New Mexico I," is the first in a series of traveling architectural exhibitions jointly sponsored by the New Mexico chapter, AIA, the Division of Architecture of the University of New Mexico, the Southwest Design Council and the Roswell Museum and Art Center. The purpose of these exhibitions is to bring the current architecture of New Mexico to the attention of people throughout the state. With this basic concept in mind the display has been designed in a very simple and direct manner so that it may be shown in banks, stores, small libraries and schools in the smaller as well as the larger communities of the state.

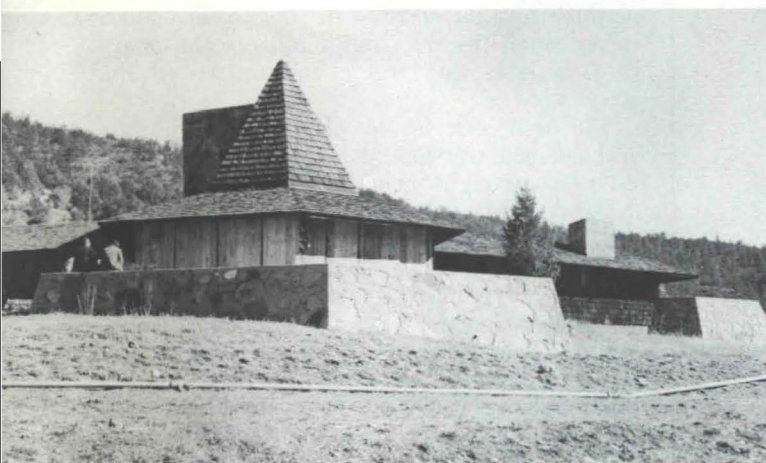
Through a series of panels, photo-murals and colored transparencies the current exhibit presents eight structures which have been designed and built from 1946 to 1958. While the basis for the jury's selection was that of quality of design, a conscious attempt was made to encompass a variety of architectural points of view. This variety both adds to, and to a certain extent, limits any overall unity in the exhibition. In the final analysis the very range of design indicates the underlying condition and state of the present architectural scene in New Mexico.

It is obvious that the current scene is in no way one of unity of purpose or point of view. Without question the architecture of our region is still in a transitional state, between a type of regional eclecticism inherited from the 1920's and 1930's, which still has its strong supporters and adherents, and the new machine architecture, which has been able to firmly entrench itself in even the smallest of our cities and towns.

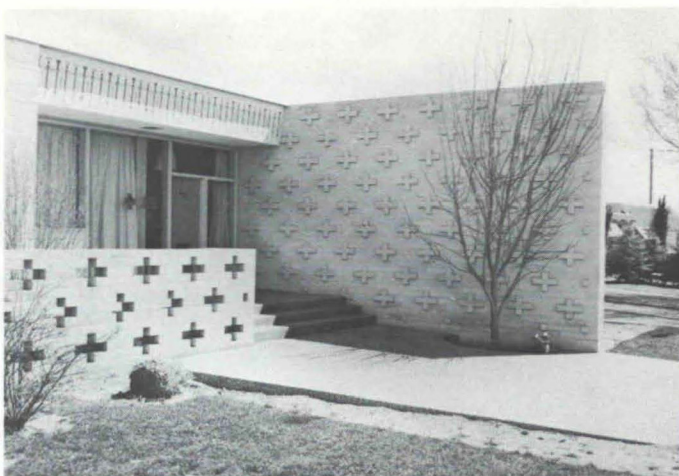
Between these two extremes lies another small but articulate group, which has sought to produce a regional architecture based upon the historical and environmental aspects of the area and on the acceptance of the machine and mass production. The latter, like many human compromises, has produced some of the best as well as some of the worst designs to be found in our state. To one degree or another at least five of the buildings in this exhibition have conscientiously attempted to develop a regional architecture for the Southwest.

The closest to the "adobe" styles of the past is the Santa Fe house for Paul Rutledge (1958), designed by Joseph Wertz. While it  
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Arnold Friedman House, Pecos  
Designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, Archi-  
tect (1946)



The Blue Cross Building, Albuquerque  
Designed by Ferguson, Stevens, Mallory  
and Pearl, Architects (1954)



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Mr. and Mrs. Stewart Rose House,  
Albuquerque  
Designed by Flatow, Moore, Bryan and  
Fairburn, Architects (1956). Photo by  
Don P. Schlegel

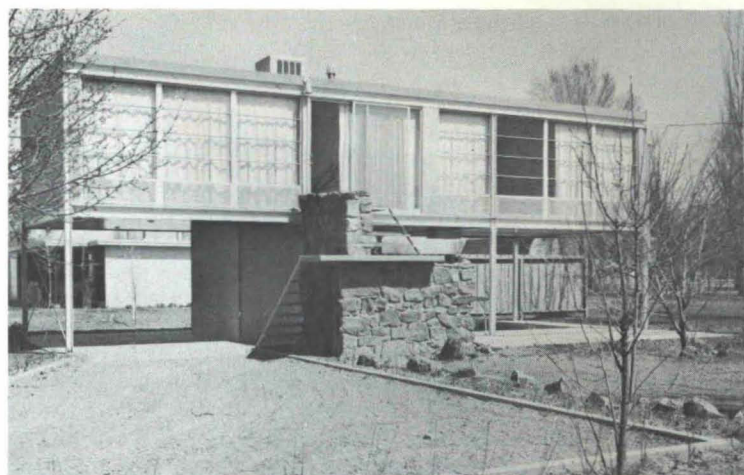


The Centerline, Inc., Santa Fe  
Designed by John Conron, Architect,  
and David Lent (1955)

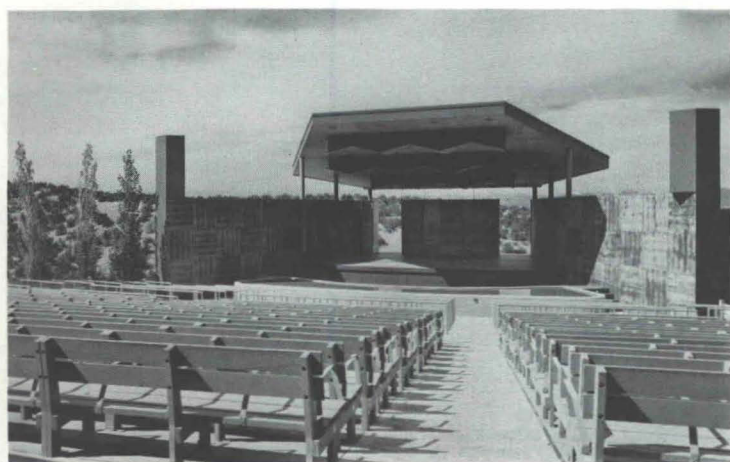




Paul Rutledge House, Santa Fe  
Designed by Joseph Wertz (1958)



Anita Carr Shear House, Albuquerque  
Designed by Anita Carr Shear (1957)



Santa Fe Opera Shed, Santa Fe  
Designed by McHugh & Hooker, &  
Bradley P. Kidder and Associates,  
Architects (1957). Photo by Tyler Dingee

The Simms Building, Albuquerque  
Designed by Flatow, Moore, Bryan and  
Fairburn, Architects (1952)  
Photo by Shulman



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is true that it shares many similarities with past architectural forms, it never the less represents one of the best integrated designs in the exhibition. The key to its success lies in the sensitive handling of forms and materials and the orientation of the house and secondary buildings around the enclosed patio. In this house the patio serves the purpose of visually uniting as well as spatially separating the various functions of the house.

Another building in which the architect has sought to develop a regional form of design is that of the Blue Cross and Surgical Services Building (1954) in Albuquerque, designed by Ferguson, Stevens, Mallory and Pearl. Certain elements of the design have been worked out quite thoroughly, especially the patterns of blocks in the entrance screen and the low parapet wall which surrounds the front terrace. Other features, such as the stylized row of Navajo-inspired human figures painted on the roof fascia over the entrance, appear to be an example of a rather forced and empty type of regional expression.

The Blue Cross Building is an excellent illustration of the possibilities of a regional architecture (especially in its use of concrete block), but at the same time it dramatically displays the many pitfalls inherent in this type of approach.

Two other structures, both located in or near Santa Fe, convey a sympathetic rapport with the land and its traditions. These are the store building for Centerline, Inc. (1955), designed by John Conron and David Lent, and the Santa Fe Opera Shed (1957), by McHugh & Hooker, & Bradley P. Kidder and Associates. Both of these buildings are fundamentally of wood and are therefore quite different in concept and feeling to the usual massiveness inherent in adobe or concrete architecture.

If either one of these buildings had been constructed at different sites, they might well have appeared completely out of place, for their post and lintel construction of wood shares many similarities to that of the West Coast. But by a sensitive handling of materials and forms which have fully taken into account their respective locales, they have been able to arrive at a solution which is as much at home with the landscape of northern New Mexico as any past architectural form.

The last of the buildings which has sought to convey a regional concept is Frank Lloyd Wright's summer house for Arnold Friedman (1946), located in the upper Pecos valley.

This house forcefully illustrates this architect's great versatility in being able to design a building which both bears his undeniable and very personal stamp, and at the same time appears to be in complete harmony with its site and surroundings. Like many of Wright's designs this building combines a classical, well organized plan with a romantic, highly informal sense of interior and exterior space. Also typical of Wright's work is the fact that the passing of time, with its process of weathering, has only enhanced the repose and harmony of the building with its environment.

The final group of buildings in this exhibition, the Albuquerque house designed by Anita Carr Shear (1957), the house for Mr. and Mrs. Stewart Rose (1956), and the Simms Building (1952), both in Albuquerque and designed by Flatow, Moore, Bryan and Fairburn, represent what could be termed an international point of view. In the case of these buildings it is obvious that the designers strongly felt that a meaningful solution must be the result of a utilization of mass production techniques of our industrial society, and only secondarily (if at all) that a structure reflect any regional characteristics.

Within the contemporary international machine tradition this group of buildings will easily hold its own with buildings constructed in other areas of the United States, South America and Europe. No one today would question the machine basis of these designs, although strong reservations might be made relating to the manner in which these products have been used. While it is certainly true that a designer may consciously ignore historical aspects of the area in which he is working, it is open to question whether they should at the same time have ignored the many environmental conditions which brought older solutions about.

The fact that in recent years machine architecture has become the accepted style throughout almost all of the western world is both a major asset and a serious limitation inherent in these buildings.

By seeking to present a cross-section of the current architecture of New Mexico, it is hoped that the present exhibition and those that are to follow will contribute in their own way to a continual reappraisal and evaluation of our architectural scene. In this way it may be possible for the lay public, as well as the architects, to discover the overall pattern of the forest from that of the individual trees which compose it. ◇