

Openhouse

Issue N°25



Obsessions: A Self Portrait

In Issue 25, we explore the fine line between passion and obsession and those who walk it. *Luis Sendino* reveals his devotion to post-war Japanese design in his Barcelona home gallery. In Igualada, the *Enrich family* embody artistic practice as a way of life. Twenty miles from Rome, *Casa Albergo* unveils the beauty hidden in surrender to the passing of time. And, in Paris, *Studio KO* and *Hugo Toro* inhabit a world where architecture and design are led by devotion.

Openhouse

Issue N°25



Obsessions: A Self Portrait

In Issue 25, we explore the fine line between passion and obsession and those who walk it. *Luis Sendino* reveals his devotion to post-war Japanese design in his Barcelona home gallery. In Igualada, the *Enrich family* embody artistic practice as a way of life. Twenty miles from Rome, *Casa Albergo* unveils the beauty hidden in surrender to the passing of time. And, in Paris, *Studio KO* and *Hugo Toro* inhabit a world where architecture and design are led by devotion.

The Liljestrand House



A Living Artifact

Driving up a long, winding road to the top of the mountain above Honolulu, one feels uncertain, almost disoriented. Tight turns are a recurrent part of the drive, and the atmosphere gets gloomier after every one of them. At a certain point, your eyes scan the area looking for a gate, but there's no sign of it. Set back from the road, you find it and continue down the driveway. You catch a rapid glimpse of what you came here to see, but it immediately disappears, just to come back into view. There it is: The Liljestrand House.

Initially, you're encountered by a modest, low-slung, wooden structure with a corrugated metal roof. The exterior entryway is tainted by shadows, and the darkness makes this brief walk intriguing. As you enter the house, the ceiling lowers and a fireplace blocks the immediate sight. After a few

Written by Patty Castellar @pattycastellar
Photographed by Sara Guerrero sara-guerrero.com
The Liljestrand House liljestrandhouse.org



more steps, you enter the living room—a grand expanse of light and air, enhanced by a soft color palette. Two sights surround you: Honolulu and the ocean beyond, and Diamond Head.

“It’s a sense of release; we call it the ‘aha’ moment,” expresses Kristi Cardoso, Executive Director of The Liljestrand Foundation. When I ask her if she still experiences this, even after countless visits, her answer is undoubtedly yes. “It’s not a static place: the weather is always changing, we’re on a mountain with trade winds and rain, and we have expansive views of the ocean, so every day is different.”

Designed by architect Vladimir Ossipoff for Howard and Betty Liljestrand, the project was completed in 1952. To this day, the Liljestrand House is alive thanks to the work of the Foundation, which was created by the Liljestrand family in 2007 to preserve the space, to share it with the public and to foster a dialogue on imaginative design. “Bob Liljestrand, the eldest of the four children, spent the last 20 years of his life living in the house, creating the Foundation, making sure it lived on, and he hired me in 2018 to build its continued existence,” reminisces Kristi.

To quote Bob Liljestrand, “Architecture is the product of the time, the place, and the people who made it.” And this house is precisely that: an artifact that embodies another era and another setting—however, it also tells a story. A story of intentionality, of thoughtful design and timeless functionality. Not only that, but it also conveys the everlasting ethos of the family who called it home.

“We have very few restrictions for visitors; people can interact with most of the furniture, sit or lay on it, and we make use of the kitchen,” comments Kristi. The space remains true to its original form, and the family is still an intrinsic part of the project. Shan Liljestrand, Howard’s grandson, currently serves as President of the Board, and the family’s longtime Personal Secretary and Estate Manager, Trudy Couillard, continues her work for the Foundation. At Liljestrand House, one doesn’t feel like a visitor but a welcomed guest. “You walk through the door and can often hear Trudy sharing anecdotes or Shan talking about his childhood with his grandparents in this home.”

From their decision to build a residence in Hawaii, to Betty’s specific requirements for it, to their work with Ossipoff in 1947 until completion in 1958... the Foundation



is a continuation of the space, its evolution through the years. What used to be a private home now functions as a public house, “yet, somehow, there’s a seamless connection and a thread that you can pull through it,” Kristi recounts.

The Liljestrand House is a true representation of Ossipoff’s practice through and through. The intense study of the location and the topography, the entry sequence, the use of natural and inexpensive materials, and the concept of indoor-outdoor living are all identifying characteristics of the Russian-born, Tokyo-raised architect. In fact, the interior and exterior transitions are inherited both from his Japanese background and his time spent in Hawaii—which was an influential and pivotal experience in his career.

Ossipoff wasn’t the only one with a multifaceted trajectory: Howard Liljestrand was originally from New York State but raised in Sichuan, China, and Betty was born in Iowa and did her master’s degree in cytology at Columbia University as the only woman in her field. These three personalities became intertwined with pre-statehood, post-World War II Hawaii—amid economic change and a large migration movement—and the result is a building that “Embodies the melting pot of events in Hawaii at the time; it’s a physical amalgamation of all of them,” Kristi says.

A mid-century Hawaiian gem, Liljestrand House is a reminder of the value of preserving touchstones from our past. Be it a song, a painting, a book or a building, these are vessels of expression from another era. Kristi notes that, “To move into the future successfully, we need to honor our past ... [We need to] treasure the objects that hold lessons that are still true today. I think if we hold on to them, we’ll be better for it.” ○



“A mid-century Hawaiian gem, Liljestrand House is a reminder of the value of preserving touchstones from our past. Be it a song, a painting, a book or a building, these are vessels of expression from another era.”



