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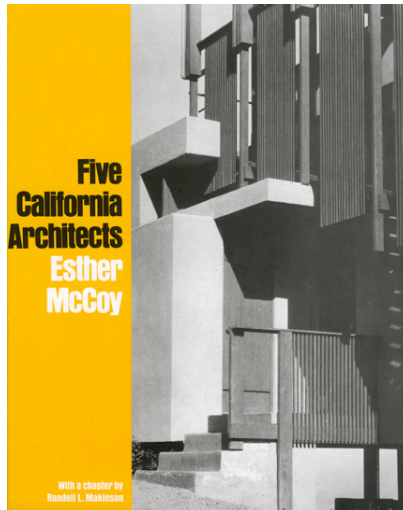
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***SYMPATHETIC SEEING:
ESTHER MCCOY AND THE HEART OF AMERICAN MODERNIST
ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN***

**MAK Center Exhibition Focuses on Unsung Champion
of West Coast Modernism**



Esther McCoy, *Five California Architects* (Santa Monica: Hennessey + Ingalls), 1987,
originally published in 1960 by Reinhold Book Corporation

September 28, 2011 – January 8, 2012

Opening Reception: Tuesday, September 27, 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

(West Hollywood) The MAK Center celebrates writer and historian Esther McCoy, the pre-eminent voice of 20th century California architecture: *Sympathetic Seeing: Esther McCoy and the Heart of American Modernist*



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Architecture and Design, the first exhibition to present the life and work of Esther McCoy (1904–1989), recognizes an American original and affirms her unassailable role as a key figure in American modernism. Co-curated by MAK Center director Kimberli Meyer and writer Susan Morgan, *Sympathetic Seeing* will be on view from September 28, 2011–January 8, 2012, with a public opening reception on Tuesday, September 27 from 7:00–9:00 p.m. The exhibition is part of Pacific Standard Time, the Getty-organized initiative that brings together more than 60 Southern California cultural institutions to explore the birth of the Los Angeles art scene.

“No one can write about architecture in Southern California without acknowledging her as the mother of us all,” declared Reyner Banham. In 1945, McCoy’s formidable career was launched with the publication of “Schindler, Space Architect.” Now, the Schindler House hosts the first Esther McCoy exhibition, a resonant homecoming, a celebration of McCoy’s work and the rich legacy of California architecture.

Esther McCoy, born in Arkansas and raised in Kansas, landed in Greenwich Village during the 1920s where she pursued her vocation as a writer and apprenticed with novelist Theodore Dreiser. In 1932, she moved to Los Angeles and wrote for literary journals, popular magazines, and progressive broadsheets. After completing a wartime stint in Douglas Aircraft’s drafting department, she went to work as a draftsman for R.M. Schindler. By 1945, McCoy’s attentive writing had turned significantly to architecture.

For more than 40 years, McCoy’s work articulated the concepts and vibrant character of West Coast modernism. Her writing appeared regularly in the *Los Angeles Times*, *Arts & Architecture*, *Zodiac*, and *Architectural Forum*. In 1960, McCoy published *Five California Architects*, her groundbreaking book that remains a seminal volume on California architecture. As Robert Winter and David Gebhard noted in *A Guide to Architecture in Southern California* (1965): “Our present awareness of Southern California architectural heritage has been due to a one-woman crusade on the part of the critic and historian, Esther McCoy.”

McCoy worked variously as an author, editorial scout, lecturer, and exhibition curator. Among her exhibitions, *Felix Candela* (1957) and *Juan O’Gorman* (1964) introduced major Mexican architects to North American audiences. Throughout *Arts & Architecture’s* legendary Case Study House program, she



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chronicled mid-century modernism as it was being created. McCoy's final essay, commissioned for the exhibition *Blueprints for Modern Living: History and Legacy of the Case Study Houses* (MOCA, Los Angeles), was published one month before her death in 1989.

Exhibition co-curators Susan Morgan and Kimberli Meyer have worked closely with the Esther McCoy papers--an invaluable primary source comprised of thousands of documents and photographs--housed at the Smithsonian Institution's Archives of American Art.

Sympathetic Seeing will highlight--through photographs, drawings, texts, videos, and audio interviews--the extraordinary range and importance of McCoy's work: starting in the 1930s and her activist journalism focusing on fair labor practices and Los Angeles slum clearances; the Arts & Architecture years and the rise of innovative domestic architecture; her campaign to save Irving Gill's 1916 Dodge House; and her always incisive stories that deliver an irresistibly compelling, first-hand view of American modernism.

The MAK Center for Art & Architecture at the Schindler House is located at 835 N. Kings Road in West Hollywood. Public hours are Wednesday through Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Regular admission is \$7/\$17 with the guidebook, *Schindler By MAK*; students and seniors, \$6/\$16 with book; free for Friends of the MAK Center and on Fridays, 4 to 6 p.m. Parking is available at the public structure at the northeast corner of Kings Road and Santa Monica Boulevard. For further information, the public may contact www.MAKcenter.org or call (323) 651-1510.

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