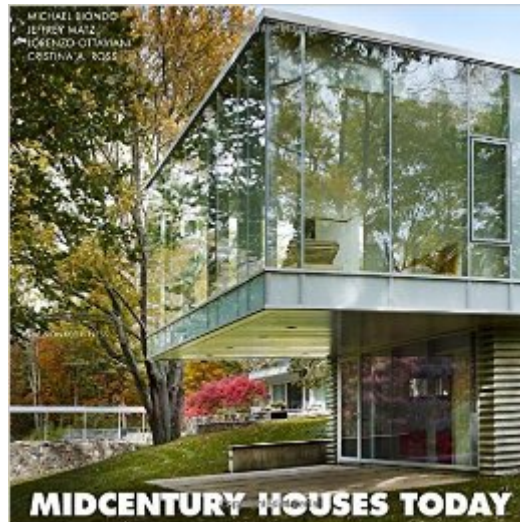


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# Midcentury Houses Today



## Synopsis

Architects Philip Johnson, Marcel Breuer, Landis Gores, Eliot Noyes, Edward Durell Stone, and others created an extraordinary collection of modern houses in New Canaan, Connecticut, in the 1940s and 1950s. The bucolic New England town "a suburb of Manhattan" became the site of fervent experimentation by some of the leading lights of the movement in the United States, the architects known as the Harvard Five, whose modern aesthetic could be traced to the Bauhaus school of design. There they promoted their core principles: simplicity, openness, and sensitivity to site and nature, and built glass, wood, steel, and fieldstone houses that established architectural modernism as the ideal of domesticity in the twentieth century. Architects Jeffrey Matz and Cristina A. Ross, photographer Michael Biondo, and graphic designer Lorenzo Ottaviani present this vanishing generation of iconic American houses as more than an issue of restoration or preservation, but as an evolving legacy that adapts to contemporary life. Selecting a representative group of sixteen houses covering the period between the 1950s and 1978, they portray each one in great detail, with floor plans, timelines, and both archival and luminous new photography "from the clean, minimalist look of the initial construction, to subsequent additions by some of the most significant architects of our time including Toshiko Mori, Roger Ferris, and Joeb Moore. Voices of the architects and builders, original owners and current occupants combine to describe how the houses are enjoyed and lived in today, and how the modernist residence is more than just a philosophy of design and construction, but also a philosophy of living.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

After several decades during which the modern architecture of the 1940s and 1950s was looked down upon by post-modernists and criticized as excessively austere, mid-century modern is enjoying a great resurgence on popularity even as the post-modern designs of Graves and others are starting to look dated. MCM, as some call it, is being recognized as having a classic, timeless, look. There's a tremendous renewed interest both in MCM architecture and MCM design overall; the furniture of great modern designers like the Eames, Breuer, Jacobsen and others are being reproduced and are influencing new designs. Contemporary architects are embracing modernism, and their designs are featured in magazines like Dwell. New Canaan, Connecticut, was the birthplace of architectural modernism in the US, and this is where the authors have focused their attention in this large, attractive book. Many of the designs here, like Philip Johnson's "Glass House" and Marcel Breuer's "Breuer House" are so iconic that they will be familiar even to those with only a passing familiarity with architecture. Most are known only to architects and students of architecture, but their influence can still be strongly seen in contemporary architecture. I'm not an architect, but I am a great fan of modernism in architecture, and I was heavily influenced by many of the design principles of mid-century modernism when working on the remodeling of my tiny 1930s tract house. Simple lines, geometric forms, natural materials used in a way that emphasizes their origins—these and other principles guided me in the design. This is a beautiful book, with many well chosen examples, that would be a fine addition to the bookshelves of anyone who appreciated the modernism that emerged in architecture in the 1940s and 50s.

Beautiful pictures of some of the best of the midcentury moderns. This book has a broad cross-section of the works many of the major contributors to the modern movement. There are great insights into the history of these homes and the evolution into their current state. It was very easy to get lost "touring" these homes through the pages of photos. They provide the highlights of the designs that made these homes classic. Wonderfully executed.

I have always enjoyed learning anything about architecture, design, and real estate. Midcentury design is a new topic for me since I lived in Europe for most of my childhood and my first interests were cathedrals and castles from multiple centuries. As an adult, I do love clean interiors with a blend or view of the outdoors. I thought this book would interest me - and I was right! First, the book is high quality in a physical sense. It has over 200 sturdy, but not excessively thick, pages. The book is a coffee table book in the sense that it is bigger than novel size, has beautiful photography, and has a wealth of information about "the houses that established architectural modernism as the

ideal of domesticity in the twentieth century."I will be honest here - I have not completely read the entire book yet. There is much history in how the town of New Canaan, CT became a center of modern houses in the mid-twentieth century. There are 91 houses today of the 118 that were originally built. The book shares how two architects, a photographer, and a graphic designer, describe 16 representative houses of those 91 from their original design to the way the house functions now. Many of the houses are in beautiful wooded areas that highlight the clean lines of their designs. I can't wait to have the time to absorb fully all the information in this beautiful book! What I have read so far, and all the pictures that I've seen, make me very eager to discover more about these beautiful homes and the designers who envisioned "architectural modernism." I do now know the term for my favorite American architectural style - midcentury.

The midcentury modern (MCM) residential architecture was controversial at the time in the late 1940s through the 1960s. In many towns, even the most architecturally significant such homes look out of place, and often have been badly renovated over the years as the style fell out of fashion. (Though it is most decidedly back in style now, with heavy coverage in *Dwell* in particular, but also dedicated MCM magazines such as *Atomic Ranch*.) In New Canaan, Connecticut, there is a critical mass of such houses, including some of the most recognizable residences in modern history (such as Phil Johnson's Glass House). This book focuses on a few of those New Canaan homes highlighting what they currently look like inside and out. Shots are shown from all seasons, and floor plans are featured as well. The book isn't quite up to Taschen standards, but is a solid coffee table book that definitely looks good.

This is one gorgeous book! It is a large book and contains 240 pages of the most spectacular photography, perfectly capturing the mood and feel of these 16 amazing midcentury masterpiece houses. There are beautiful photos on almost every page. The images truly capture the way the architecture reflects nature as well as how the design of these houses works with the landscape and becomes part of it. The layouts of each is well illustrated and described so you can get a good feel for the layout of each. The architects of this era were truly way ahead of their time and the ones covered in this book are fine examples of this important period of the 40's and 50's. This is the best book I have seen on the subject and anyone interested in architecture, art, design or just love to look at beautiful houses would surely love this book. If you are building or remodeling you will be inspired. I love this book and would highly recommend it.

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