

# Space

## Aspen Modern

From Bauhaus to Ban, the legacy of Aspen's midcentury modernists lives on in the architecture of today... and of tomorrow.

BY AMIEE WHITE BEAZLEY

Buckminster Fuller's iconic geodesic dome being used as a pool cover at the Aspen Meadows, 1955.

PHOTO COURTESY ASPEN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

CONTINUED...





"If you build, build modern."

—WALTER GROPIUS, BAUHAUS FOUNDER



...CONTINUED

WHEN WALTER PAEPCKE first laid eyes on Aspen in the mid 1940s at the tail end of "The Quiet Years," there was little left in town beyond the rundown wood and brick Victorian buildings lining the streets. Influenced by friends like Bauhaus master Herbert Bayer and Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius, Paepcke soon became convinced he must propel Aspen into the modern age of design. At an Aspen town meeting on Aug. 29, 1945, Gropius urged the community to "restore the best of the old, but if you build, build modern."

Build modern Paepcke did, often by bringing in the best minds of the day, such as Bayer for buildings at The Aspen Institute and Eero Saarinen for the original Aspen Music Tent in 1949. Other well-known modernists were also attracted to Aspen early on, including Buckminster Fuller with his temporary geodesic dome in 1952 and Harry Weese, who designed the now-raised Given Institute in 1973.

The flurry of modernist activity in the midcentury defined the aesthetic of Aspen and distinguished it from other mountain towns in the world, says Amy Simon, City of Aspen historic preservation officer. Simon's department recently created a website dedicated to Aspen's modernist legacy, [aspenmod.com](http://aspenmod.com), "a guide and celebration of mid-20th-century architecture in Aspen."

The site showcases many midcentury-modern buildings in Aspen, including the Wrightian movement (influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright) seen in buildings like the Bidwell Building and the original Pitkin County Library on Main Street designed by Frederic "Fritz" Benedict, a Taliesin graduate.

There is a direct bridge from Aspen's early modernists to today's most important architects and landmark buildings.

In fact, a young protégé of Fritz Benedict's, CONTINUED...



Clockwise from top left: A Wrightian home (architect unknown); the Bauhaus style Paepcke Auditorium designed by Herbert Bayer; the Wrightian former library designed by Herbert Bayer and Fritz Benedict; a Bauhaus home designed by Herbert Bayer; the Modernist Given Institute designed by Harry Teese.

GIVEN INSTITUTE PHOTO COURTESY OF COLORADO PRESERVATION, INC. BY GREG WATTS. ALL OTHER PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE CITY OF ASPEN



SMART. STEADFAST. SUCCESSFUL.



Current Board President of  
Aspen Public Radio

Sponsor APR coverage of the  
McCloskey Speaker Series

Two-term President of the  
Aspen Board of Realtors

Former Realtor of the Year

Aspen Institute Society of Fellows

Former President of Aspen Valley  
Ski/Snowboard Club

Former Chairman of the Financial  
Advisory Board for Pitkin County

Over \$625 Million in Sales

*Let me be your real estate connection to our community!*

*Penney Carruth*



Aspen  
Snowmass

**Sotheby's**  
INTERNATIONAL REALTY

**Penney Carruth**

970.379.9133

Penney.Carruth@sir.com

**PenneyCarruth.com**





...CONTINUED architect Harry Teague, took up the modernists' reins to pursue a 21st-century aesthetic, designing Harris Concert Hall, the new Benedict Music Tent and, more recently, the Aspen Music Festival and School campus it shares with Aspen Country Day School on Castle Creek.

But perhaps the building our founding Aspen modernists would be most proud of is the new Aspen Art Museum. In 2014 Japanese architect Shigeru Ban created a landmark building, winning The Pritzker Architecture Prize and receiving a 2017 Institute Honor Award given by the American Institute of Architects in the process. The Jury Citation for the Pritzker Prize specifically mentioned Ban's "knowledge of structure and appreciation for such masters as Mies van der Rohe and Frei Otto"—Bauhaus masters both.

Today, a new generation of young designers, such as Collin Frank, an associate

architect at David Johnston Architects, are drawn to Aspen because of its modernist design legacy.

"I've always had a fascination with midcentury modern and architects of the Bauhaus movement whose rejection of art nouveau and new classicism created a new form and style," says Frank, who notes the centennial anniversary of the Bauhaus movement will be in 2019.

"The story of design in Aspen is very interesting," he says. "We know we can't rest in history forever. Even if we wanted to, that would be in direct opposition with the ideals and legacy left to us by Paepcke, Bayer, Benedict and the Aspen Institute. Aspen is supposed to be modern, it's supposed to be innovative, it's supposed to be moving forward. We don't get to ride on the laurels of our beautiful Victorian buildings. Instead we must give them respect by giving them juxtaposition, not homogenization." ■

Clockwise from top: The Bucksbaum Campus designed by Harry Teague; the Aspen Art Museum designed by Shigeru Ban; a home in the works by David Johnston Architects (design and project manager: Collin Frank).