

UNCOMMON MODERN

SALT LAKE

Project Introduction

UNCOMMON MODERN SALT LAKE is a project to inventory, categorize, and exhibit modernist architecture in the Salt Lake Valley. Similar “Uncommon Modern” projects have been completed in Houston and Philadelphia. The project will be carried out in two phases: a crowd-sourced inventory of modern buildings (ca. 1945-1970) and a rotating exhibition. Ultimately, the project objective is to educate the public about the place modernism occupies in Salt Lake’s built environment. To this end, targeting a large swath of the general population as participants and an audience will involve people outside of the preservation and architecture communities as a means of strengthening the importance of the recent past in our communities.

Phase 1: Inventory

The project will be kicked off at a February 9 event, at which the organizers will present a project outline, submission expectations, and a brief primer on modern architecture. Contributors will be asked to photograph examples of everyday modern architecture in Salt Lake County, with a focus on commercial buildings built ca. 1945-1970, as well as rare examples of residential modernism. Anyone with a smartphone or digital camera can participate in the inventory phase by uploading photos to a Google Drive site. The curators of the site will then certify the photo, add any known information (i.e. date-of-construction, historical name, architect, etc.) and tag its location in Google Maps. Keeping track of gaps in the survey area, the curators may direct volunteers to areas in Salt Lake County that have not been fully investigated. The inventory phase is expected to take at least six months. The curators will use Facebook as a means of communicating updates about the program and promoting interest in the project. This phase will be completed once the research area have been sufficiently covered.

Once the inventory is complete the curators will organize a team to sift through the photographs and categorize the buildings in a way that is accessible to the public, rather than in formal architectural terms.

Phase 2: Exhibition

Once sufficient data has been collected during the inventory phase, the project will shift to the creation of an exhibition and publication. Professional photographers will document a sampling of buildings from each category, and these high quality images will become the exhibition. Photographers will be given due credit for all images, independent of size or position in the exhibition. The curators will also prepare narrative descriptions of the building categories and a broad narrative of modernism in Salt Lake based on the inventory findings. Other representation of the buildings may become part of the exhibit (architectural

models, measured drawings, etc.). Curators will also give a presentation of the findings at the initial exhibition. The exhibition would then rotate to various venues in Salt Lake County and similar presentations would be given to accompany it. Exhibition venues have not been determined, but a partner such as the Salt Lake County Library System would be ideal.

A publication will be released concurrently with the exhibition to present the project in book form. This book may be published by one of the project sponsors. The format of the publication will presumably be similar to *Houston: Uncommon Modern*, curated by Delaney Harris-Finch and Anna Mod and published through AIA Houston.

Volunteer Opportunities

- Photographing and contributing to the inventory.
- Spreading the word about the project by distributing takeaway postcards to local businesses.
- Public outreach to potential exhibition venues, identifying sites that would have a positive impact on a large and diverse audience.
- Help in designing and publishing a project book.
- Social media manager, providing project updates through the Facebook page.
- More opportunities are sure to arise as the project progresses.