

PAUL RUDOLPH: THE PERSONAL LABORATORY

OCTOBER 4 — DECEMBER 30
OPENING RECEPTION: OCTOBER 4, 6 - 8PM

PAUL RUDOLPH HERITAGE FOUNDATION
at THE MODULIGHTOR BUILDING
246 EAST 58TH STREET
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10022

The Paul Rudolph Heritage Foundation is pleased to present *Paul Rudolph: The Personal Laboratory*, an exhibition of drawings, sketches, photographs, and artifacts which explore how Rudolph's residences—designed by himself, for himself—served as his laboratories for the spatially compelling spaces that he developed throughout his career.

Using an ever-expanding palette of experimental & lustrous materials, Rudolph designed dynamic and challenging homes for clients—courageously dramatic in their forms, organization and spaces. These visually rich explorations, of a series of architectural-spatial themes, reached their most adventurous frontiers in two projects where he was both architect and client: the Modulightor Building; and his luminous, multi-layered home-office, the “Quadruplex” on Beekman Place, both in New York City.

By taking on his solutions for others, and pushing/extending them beyond conventional boundaries, Rudolph was consciously experimenting on himself. In these personal environments—reserved for him and a few collaborators—Rudolph explored a full range of materials to create affecting, “psychological spaces.” Unhampered by clients, Rudolph resided as a means to design.

Rudolph curated the spaces constantly, to fit his changing needs and to accommodate a collection of objects—including masks, textiles, weapons, votive objects, vintage machine parts, and archaic hardware. Constantly re-imagining the spaces around him, Rudolph drew—and kept drawing—leaving a wealth of sketches that trace the evolving states of projects that were constantly in flux. With a disregard for any alleged hierarchy of architectural materials, he investigated “not only those things which one can make with one's own hands, but those things which

can be made by machines, and organizational aspects of how they came into being.” Assembled into baroque compositions, Rudolph found affinity in the layered density of Sir John Soane's House-Museum in London and the urban spaces of Europe that were built up over successive generations. These items informed Rudolph's design, and turned Beekman Place (and later the Modulightor Building) into a garden and laboratory for material experimentation.

Implicit in Rudolph's ever-transforming attitude towards his own dwellings is a complex understanding of the relationship between the home and the city. In 1992 Rudolph wrote, “Urban Design is remodeling, adding, subtracting, reworking, relating, and reforming three-dimensional spaces for human activity.” That formulation is synonymous to the instructions Rudolph gave builders (who often modeled potential alterations, full-size, with foam-core boards)—and it is not difficult to understand how the complex hive of reflections, transparencies, focal points, and vistas, achieved in his homes, was an analog to his long-held desire for engaging and dynamic urban spaces.

The forms and spaces that Paul Rudolph created & mastered, in his own homes and buildings, extended—as themes and variations—throughout his career: an ever-increasing oeuvre that continued to grow until his passing in the late nineteen-nineties. They provided an architectural vocabulary that enriched his final large projects in Asia, and fed Rudolph's unending quest to find spiritual, economical, social—and formally compelling—solutions for urbanism.

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PAUL RUDOLPH (B. OCTOBER 23, 1918, ELKTON, KENTUCKY – D. AUGUST 8, 1997, NEW YORK, NY)

was a prominent & prolific American architect, known for creative designs, boldly expressive forms, dramatic and complex spaces, and innovative use of materials.

During the post WWII period, when Modern architecture became formulaic and dull—architects were mainly “thinking *inside* the box”—Rudolph’s work was full of dynamism: strikingly sculptural in his handling of form, and dramatic in his shaping of space and use of light. A highly productive and practical architect, he worked on hundreds of projects across a half-century career, and completed a great variety of commissions: educational buildings, homes, churches, corporate centers, laboratories, government centers, and skyscrapers. Moreover, his interest in design was comprehensive: embracing urban planning, and the design of exhibitions, interiors, furniture, and lighting.

The son of a preacher, his father’s itinerant vocation allowed young Rudolph to see architecture across different parts of the South—and a key early experience was visiting a house designed by Wright, whose mastery of space fascinated him. Studying architecture at Auburn University, he then attended the Harvard Graduate School of Design (under Walter Gropius, former director of the Bauhaus). He left to serve in WWII as a Naval officer, engaged in the repair of battle-damaged vessels; and later returned to Harvard, receiving his degree in 1947. He came to professional prominence in Sarasota, Florida, designing residential projects renown for fresh layouts, clarity of structure, and a strikingly modern look. With a rising profile—in part due to being widely published, stimulated by his compellingly beautiful perspective architecture drawings (for which he became famous)—he gained more varied and ambitious

commissions for schools, churches, government, and corporate clients.

Rudolph’s prime period is generally considered to be the 1950’s - 60’s. During this time he became one of the country’s most famous and successful architects. He’s considered the embodiment the heroically individual-artist-genius architect, during that “Mid-Century Modern” era. But Rudolph’s career extended further—over a half-century—with projects all across the US. As Chair of Yale University’s Department of Architecture (1958-1965), he made a significant impact on architectural education, making Yale the most exciting and intellectually stimulating place to study. While there, he also designed one of the 20th Century’s truly most iconic buildings: the Yale Art & Architecture Building. With shifts in the social-political culture, and the advent of Postmodernism, by the 70’s Rudolph largely fell out-of-fashion in the US—but he continued to be appreciated in Asia, engaging in significant commissions during the last decade-and-a-half of his career: in Singapore, Jakarta, Japan— and, most notably, Hong Kong. There, he completed the double skyscraper towers of the Lippo Centre (a.k.a. The Bond Centre).

Rudolph was the subject of an Academy Award-nominated documentary: *Spaces: The Architecture of Paul Rudolph* (1983)—and, in recent years, there’s a revived interest in him among a new generation of architects and scholars. Fresh research has commenced on his extensive oeuvre, and this acknowledgment of Rudolph’s importance is shown through books, articles, seminars, and exhibits.