

Breuer House Preservation Project 2023



The Cape Cod Modern House Trust has a limited window of opportunity to purchase and preserve Marcel Breuer's own Wellfleet house.



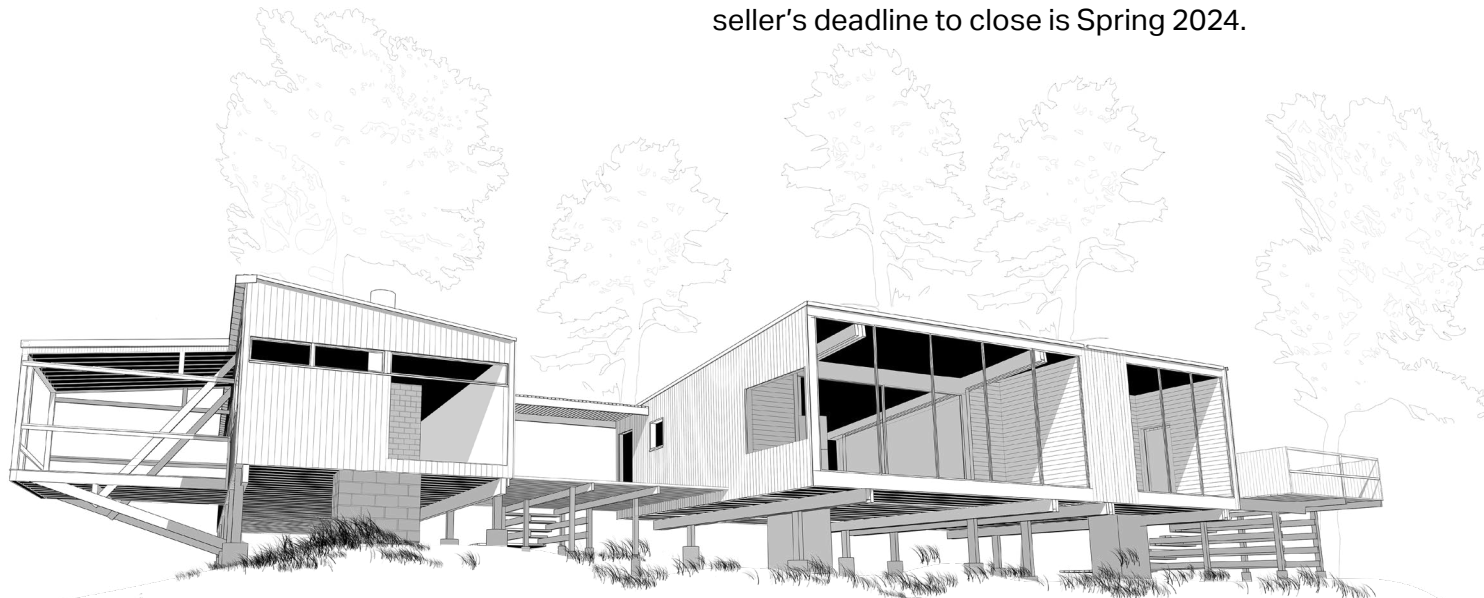
Though in disrepair, the house is entirely original and the acquisition would include Breuer's irreplaceable collection of art, furniture, books and photographs which will be archived and made available to scholars and the public.

The pristine 4.2 acre site is surrounded by protected Park land, and abuts three kettle ponds and the headwaters of the Herring River.

Our success will prevent the demolition of the house and the dispersal of its contents.

Breuer is one the 20th-century's most important designers, and his house is without a doubt the most significant modernist house on the Cape.

We are now raising \$1.4 million dollars to save this cultural touchstone, and to reimagine it as a place for study, creativity and public access. The seller's deadline to close is Spring 2024.



Who Was Marcel Breuer?

At age 18 Breuer left Hungary to enter the Bauhaus as its youngest student, and later became the most famous graduate of the revolutionary design school. By age 25 he was the Master of the furniture workshop, gaining international acclaim for his pioneering use of bent tubular steel for lightweight, elegant, and affordable furniture. His Cesca chair (#B33) is one of the world's most reproduced chair designs. After practicing in Europe he partnered with Bauhaus founder Walter Gropius in London, then at Harvard University where Breuer became the indispensable mentor to the great generation of American modern architects including IM Pei, Eliot Noyes, Paul Rudolph, Phillip Johnson, and many others.

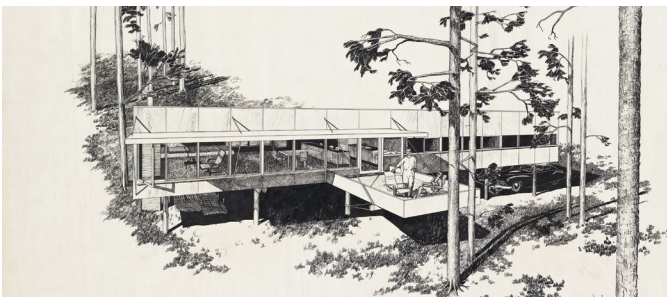
Though he built many large projects like the Whitney Museum in New York and the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, Breuer continued to take commissions for houses both large and small, creating an influential idiom of wood and fieldstone modernism that suited the informal lifestyles of his American clients. Scores of books have been written about Breuer's work, many in the last decade, some coinciding with the centennial of the Bauhaus in 2019. The original Whitney Museum was for a time re-named the Met Breuer in acknowledgment of his enduring importance.



A Brief History

In the early 1940s Breuer drove to Wellfleet with his family to visit his friend architect Serge Chermayeff, who had recently settled on the beautiful and remote Slough Pond. Inspired by the landscape, Breuer soon bought 24 acres (later selling almost 20 acres to the Park) just across the sand road, and planned a colony of experimental modern houses for various artists and designers in his circle.

Inspired by rustic New England cabins and oyster houses, Breuer conceived what was to become one of his two main house types. The *long-house* is an extended wooden box elevated on posts with a gently pitched shed roof and suspended screen porch. In 1948 Breuer started construction of his own house and a slightly different version on Long Pond for his close friend Gyorgy Kepes. From its hilltop site the suspended porch hangs over a steep drop, commanding a view of three ponds, as Breuer wrote "like a camera on a tripod".



The House and Contents

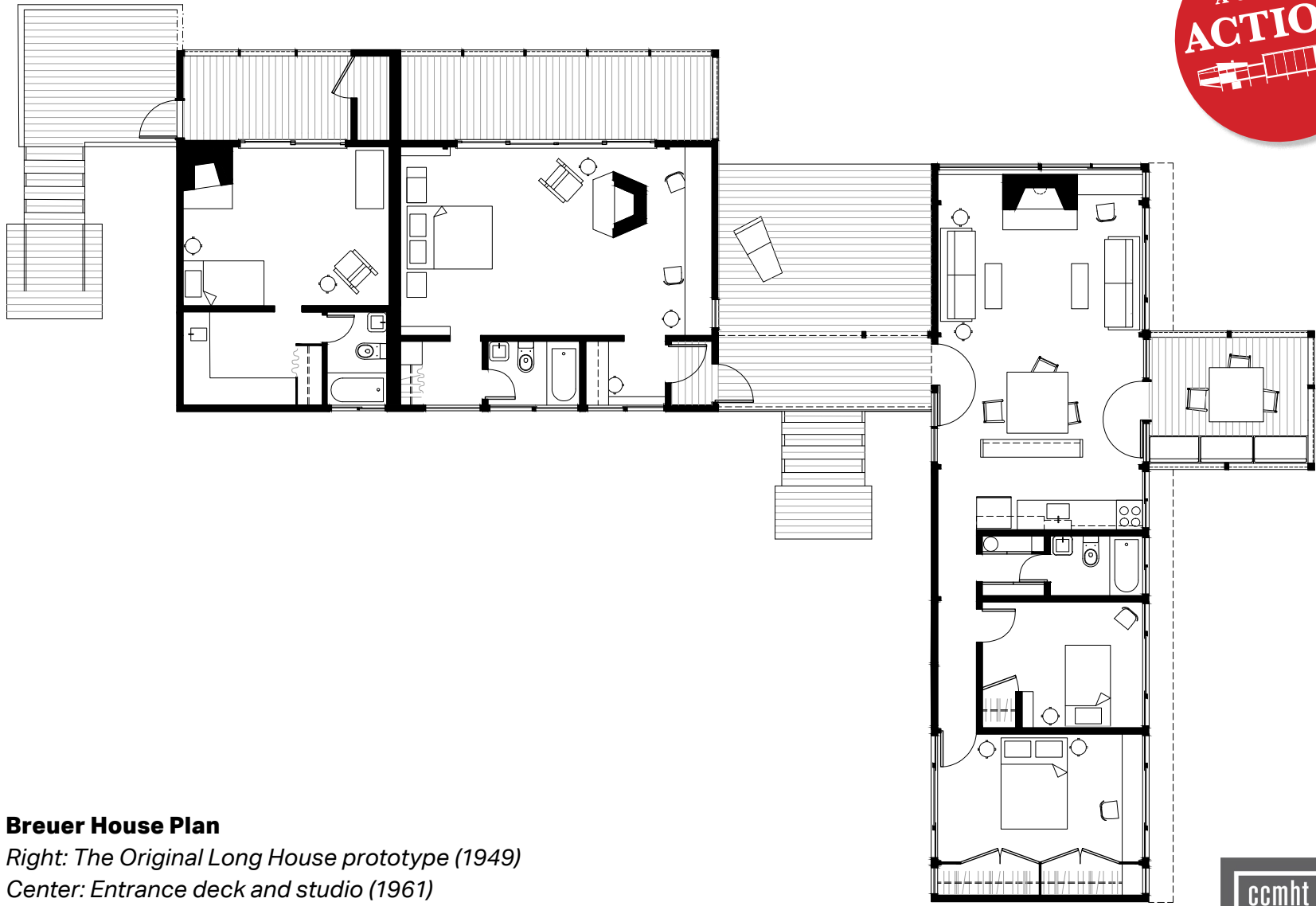
With a total budget of under \$5,000, Breuer's original house was very basic and pragmatic. There was no electricity, the siding was ribbed plywood, framing and plywood subfloor were exposed on the interior, and furniture consisted of a picnic table, cinder block side tables and mattresses on the floor. Over the years Breuer used the house as a laboratory for new ideas. The walls were painted and re-painted in different primary colors to achieve various effects and over time he added ebony-stained oak floors, Birch plywood ceilings, Homasote wall finishes, and a suspended slat ceiling on the porch. In 1961 he added a large studio for art making, music and gatherings, and in 1968 added a small apartment with a darkroom and separate entrance for his son, Tom.

The house's contents include examples of Breuer's iconic manufactured furniture, as well as one-of-a-kind tables, couches, and hand woven wool rugs made specifically for the house. There are over 200 books on art and design, many inscribed to Breuer by the authors. The art collection includes works by Calder, Bauhaus alumni Klee, Schawinsky, and Herbert Bayer, and bronze sculptures by Costantino Nivola. Beside the driveway is a stone slab made by sculptor Masayuki Nagare, which Breuer brought back from a visit to Japan. Under the stone lay the ashes of Marcel and his wife Connie Breuer, Connie's sister, and her husband.



Taken together the house and contents are a cultural treasure of international importance.





Breuer House Plan

Right: The Original Long House prototype (1949)

Center: Entrance deck and studio (1961)

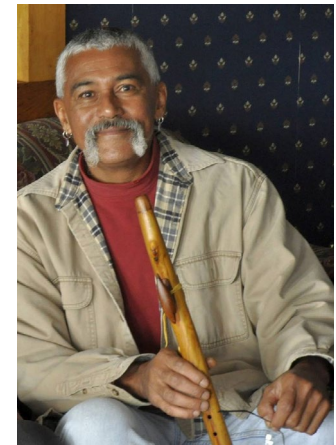
Left: Apartment with darkroom (1968)



The Artistic Community

The house was a vibrant hub of an artistic community that included Bauhaus luminaries as well as local creators. Many of the most influential artists and designers of the 20th century were frequent house guests. The Saarinen family, Florence Knoll, Alexander Calder, Saul Steinberg, Xanti Schawinsky, Bernard Rudovsky, and many others were part of this colony of designers and thinkers who inhabited the Wellfleet woods in the summers of the mid-20th century. Like many other expatriates, Breuer came to consider the Wellfleet woods his spiritual home.

One of our main goals is to once again make the house a busy nexus of creative and academic collaboration.



About CCMHT

Mission

The Cape Cod Modern House Trust (CCMHT) was founded to collect, **archive**, and share documentation of the Outer Cape's exceptional modern architecture, **restore** a group of important, endangered modern houses, and **relaunch** those houses as platforms for new creative work.

Restorations

Since 2008 CCMHT has partnered with the Cape Cod National Seashore to prevent the demolition of four, Park-owned modern houses that were slated for demolition. The Trust leased these four abandoned houses from the Park, restored them and achieved recognition for all four on the National Register of Historic Places. The houses have been carefully restored, re-contextualized with local art and furniture from the era and are opened to the public through open houses, seasonal by-weekly tours and house-stays.

Partnerships

CCMHT has partnered with:

Cape Cod National Seashore.

Nauset High School's architecture program. We offer two paid internships every year in which students gain skills in the restoration of modern houses. We also grant two annual scholarships for graduating seniors.

Wellfleet's Community Preservation Committee has been our primary funder for restorations. All grants must be approved in Town Meeting. The fact that we have been successful in all three of our requests for support proves the community's strong interest in our work.

The Breuer House would be the first building the Trust would own, and would therefore not depend on future lease negotiations with the Park. As with our other projects, we will fully and accurately restore the house, secure National Register protection and archive its contents.



Programmatic Plans for the Breuer House

Work-study fellowships

Once restored the Breuer House will allow us to expand the range of our programming. The three separate apartments will be an ideal home for an annual, semester-long fellowship which will allow three student/scholars to get hands-on experience in the preservation of modern buildings, restoration and conservation of the natural environment, and the archiving of primary source materials. Faculty on sabbatical current students and post docs will be selected from regional universities that offer graduate degrees in these fields. The Naked Archive, a short piece on our film/video page, illustrates a similar, though shorter, residency we hosted in 2022 which focused on the books in the Breuer and Chermayeff houses.

Partnerships

CCMHT has partnered with:

Docomomo (international modernism preservation org) through tours, symposiums and fundraising.

Harvard's Graduate School of Design and Wentworth Institute on multiple semester-long projects where students came and documented our restored houses.

Annual tour and lunch with **MIT's Art/Culture/Technology** graduate students where we visit our restored houses as well as the Kepes house designed by Breuer.

Provincetown Art Association and Museum hosted the original exhibit in 2006, which led to the founding of CCMHT (co-curated by Peter McMahon).

Archives

We have collected and archived a great deal of material concerning the Outer Cape's mid-20th century modernists in the form of digitized drawings and letters, oral histories and artifacts that have been made available to students and scholars. These have led to many exhibits, books and films on the subject. Our book, *Cape Cod Modern* (now in its fifth printing) is recognized as the definitive text on the subject and CCMHT is the only non-profit primarily devoted to preserving this legacy.

Artist Residency

Since 2010 we have also hosted an annual artist residency in which a curator is selected, who in turn selects the other artists to live, work, and collaborate within the houses. In 2020 our curator was the poet Asiya Wadud, who invited three other Brooklyn-based artists (two dancers and a painter). In 2021 we invited Paula Peters, a Wampanoag tribal leader, who selected eight Native artists representing four states and four different tribes. In 2023 our curator will be Mexican-American writer Mónica de la Torre.



Why Donate?

Since the house is modest in size, un-insulated, and in disrepair, most buyers would be interested in the land, and not the house. Breuer's Geller House on Long Island was demolished in 2022 so the neighbors could build a tennis court and the same happened to a modern house near the Breuer House two years ago. In fact, the Outer Cape has been losing about one modernist house per year since 2016. If the house goes on the open market, a new owner could remove the house after a 12-month historic delay period, and build 3,600sf of new construction, without need of a variance.

This would mean the loss of an irreplaceable piece of our heritage and impact the scale of the surroundings.

We have secured the option to buy, but the seller wants to close by spring 2024, so we have a very brief window to secure the funding or lose this iconic house forever.

Although, we will also explore funding from all sources- government agencies, local, statewide and national funders, we will need our individual donors to strongly support this 'once in a lifetime' project.



What the House Needs

The house has had many years of deferred maintenance but it is structurally sound. It needs a new roof, siding work, a new well, septic and mechanical system upgrades, removal/ replacement of some interior and exterior finishes and site work.

One advantage to the house's neglected state is that it is completely intact and original, without loss of critical features through remodeling.

Purchase of the house and land requires we raise approximately \$1,400,000 with \$1,000,000 balance of the purchase covered by a mortgage. We hope to fund the actual restoration through Historic Tax Credits as well as applying for \$200,000 in Community Preservation Act funding from the Town of Wellfleet. We will also explore funding from all sources- government agencies, local, statewide and national funders.



Budget	
purchase of property	2,000,000
Survey, appraisal, closing costs	60,000
Restoration	234,000
New outbuildings and archiving	32,000
Campaign costs	65,000
Total Amount to be raised	2,391,000

Timeline

April '23	July '23	December '23	April '24	April '25
Private fundraising	Public fundraising	Closing	Begin Restoration	Restoration Completed



Will you help us save this iconic home?

Please consider being a part of preserving the Breuer house, archives, and site permanently for scholars, students and the public to experience.

CCMHT is a 501c3 tax-exempt organization thus all donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

Ways to donate:

1. Give on our website ccmht.org
2. Send a check to:

Cape Cod Modern House Trust
PO Box 1191
S. Wellfleet MA 02663

3. Donate via Donor Advised Funds or private charitable foundation.
4. Refer us to a foundation that might be interested.

Questions, please contact:

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Founding Director
774 722 4944
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Thank you for your consideration.

Peter McMahon, CCMHT Founding Director
Jenny Monick, CCMHT Board President

