

Richard Neutra: Travel Drawings

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Louis Stern Fine Arts is pleased to present *Richard Neutra: Travel Drawings*. Richard Neutra (1892 – 1970) is best known as an icon in the world of architecture, whose notable residential and commercial projects exemplified the functional principles and minimalist aesthetics of the mid-century modern movement. Neutra's designs were distinguished by their thoughtful attention to the needs of his clients, with each structure carefully tailored to optimize the usability and comfort of the space. The lively drawings on display in the exhibition, executed during the architect's numerous travels throughout the 1950s and 1960s, manifest the same empathetic and curious spirit that characterized Neutra's approach to architectural design.

Neutra traveled widely throughout Europe, Asia, and the Americas in his capacity as an architect and consultant, maintaining a consistent practice of producing "graphic notes" of his journeys. An eager and lifelong learner, he utilized drawing as a means to understand the architectural styles and traditions he encountered around the world. The cloisters of the Wat Po Buddhist temple complex in Bangkok, the vaulted ceilings of the Strasbourg Cathedral in France, and the wood beams and tatami mats of a traditional Japanese house in Kyoto are deftly and economically realized in a series of energetic charcoal and pastel strokes. Neutra's expressive lines and bird's-eye perspectives are reminiscent of the work of fellow Austrian artist Egon Schiele, while his bold, confident hand and cinematic concern with the interiors and inhabitants of everyday locations echo those of Edward Hopper.

"Perhaps the world I have seen was an unreal one," Neutra mused in his 1962 autobiography. Indeed, these drawings are not merely faithful recordings of the natural world or the built environment, but rather vivacious, colorful interpretations of the experience of taking them in. The unseen observer plays an important role in these works, shaping them through an inquisitive, personal lens. Just as they served Neutra as a form of communication that transcended language barriers, these drawings, in turn, offer a profound window into the perspective and interior life of their celebrated maker.

Born in Vienna, Austria, Richard Neutra is primarily known for his Southern California-based architectural practice. He was mentored by Adolph Loos and was inspired to come to the United States after being exposed to the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. After moving to the U.S., Neutra worked with Wright as well as Rudolph Schindler. His American breakthrough came with the Lovell Health House in 1927-1929, and he was subsequently featured in the Museum of Modern Art's traveling survey of Modern Architecture in 1932. Neutra continued to design groundbreaking modernist homes of steel and glass around Southern California and its environs. He returned to Europe toward the end of his life, where he designed several of his late projects.