



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: September 10, 2009 REPORT NO. HRB-09-060

ATTENTION: Historical Resources Board
Agenda of September 24, 2009

SUBJECT: **ITEM #5 –The Robert O. Peterson/Russell Forester Residence**

APPLICANT: Jeffrey and Marcy Krinsk, property owners
Represented by Jaye Furlonger, consultant

LOCATION: 567 Gage Lane, Peninsula Community, Council District 2

DESCRIPTION: Review the California Register Nomination for 567 Gage Lane

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Recommend to the Office of Historic Preservation the listing of The Robert O. Peterson/Russell Forester Residence at 567 Gage Lane to the California Register of Historical Resources.

BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board pursuant to the Office of Historic Preservation requirement that the local jurisdiction be provided 90 days to review and comment on the nomination. The property is being nominated to the California Register under Criterion 3 for representing the work of a noted master architect and for possessing high artistic value. The site and building are not listed on the San Diego Register and have not been previously reviewed by the HRB.



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ANALYSIS

A California Register of Historical Resources Nomination Report was prepared by Jaye Furlonger, the consultant on behalf of the property owners, Jeffrey and Marcy Krinsk, which concludes that the resource is significant under Criterion 3. Staff concurs with the determination that the resource is significant under Criterion 3, as follows:

CRITERION 3 - Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region or method of construction or represents the work of a master or possesses high artistic values

The residence was constructed in 1965 by Russell Forester for Robert Peterson, the founder of the fast-food restaurant chain Jack in the Box. Located on a 1.69 acre lot, the approximately 12,000 sq. ft. of living space hosts a compound of buildings. While Forester was renowned for designing in the International Style, this particular property was designed more in keeping with the Organic Geometric architecture sub-style with Post and Beam construction. The architecture, which used natural materials, responds to the site and the surrounding environment to create a harmonious union. The irregular footprint and the placement of the separate buildings also respond to the site by being sensitive to the site's natural features and plants. The wide expanse of glass used throughout the building blur the line between indoor and outdoor living.

Built of post and beam construction with painted wood elements, the house is generally constructed as several connected glass cubes that conform to the site in a one story plan. There are four asymmetrical wings on the main house connected by a glassed central corridor. The public rooms are located to the north while the private rooms are located to the south. The buildings have a low-pitched hipped roof with enclosed overhanging eaves with the exception of the dining room and entry foyer which have a mansard roof. The roof was originally sheathed with wood shake shingles, which were replaced more recently with copper shingles. The house rests on a raised foundation and is surrounded by a wrap-around catwalk. The front entrance is access via a raised gable roof walkway.

Typical fenestration on the main public areas, master suite and corridors consists of massive floor to ceiling panels of tempered glass. Full height glazed wood doors open to exterior wrap-around redwood decks and catwalks. Vertical wood siding is used on some secondary facades. The primary walls of the bedroom wing and the detached bedroom/ laundry building and the new pool house are constructed of banks of fixed vertical glass panels set into heavy wooden frames. Glazed single and double wood doors are designed in a manner consistent with the fixed panels to blend in seamlessly with dominant fenestration pattern. Beneath the eaves and above the glazed walls and doors is a ribbon of transom windows.

Other buildings within the compound include the previously mentioned detached bedroom/laundry room building, a multi-car garage, guard house, floating tea house and a gardening shed. Both the garage and the guard house were constructed on concrete brick. In the 1980s a pool house, a lap pool and a tennis court were added to the property.

The landscaping surrounding the house and auxiliary buildings features a collection of exotic trees and plants as well as several Forester-designed reflecting ponds beneath the elevated front

entrance. A large koi pond at the northeast corner of the property features approximately 200 fish. In 1967, a Japanese style island tea house was constructed at the center of the pond. In the 1980s, Robert Peterson replaced the original swimming pool at the front of the house with several naturalistic ponds and a cascading stream.

While the majority of the house is intact, there have been several alterations to the house over the years. The wood shingles were replaced with copper shingles, the solid front doors were replaced with single light French doors, the original pool was removed and replaced with several ponds, a pool house was added, and the kitchen was expanded slightly under the existing roof line. Overall, the integrity of the property has been maintained and the modifications do not have a negative impact.

Historic Context:

While not yet 50 years old, the California Register of Historical Resources does not require a specific age determination. In conjunction with the *San Diego Modernism Historic Context Statement*, which was adopted by the Office of Historic Preservation, the property was evaluated for its significance and integrity. Built in 1965, the property is within the general period of significance of 1935 to 1970. The house was constructed in the International Style with Post and Beam construction and Asian/Organic Geometric architectural influences.

In the 1930s, modernist structures were not common in the US. Both Irving Gill and Rudolph Schindler promoted modernism in San Diego prior to this date. The designs were stripped of nearly all ornamentation and vernacular associations. The design was intended to have universal appeal and became known as the International Style. Over the years the style evolved and began to feature large patios, indoor-outdoor living spaces, free flowing open floor plans, an abundance of glass and the use of simple, economical building materials. The context statement regards Post and Beam Modernist buildings as representation of a rare sub-style. In Modernist era post and beam buildings, solid load bearing walls are replaced with structural framing consisting of load-bearing wood or steel columns. This structural support system allows for the characteristic placement of floor to ceiling glass walls along the perimeter. Due to the transparent nature of these structures, contextual relationship and landscape setting are of extreme importance to the overall design. Buildings are typically rectilinear with open, grid-like floor plans based on consistent modules or beam lengths. Other character defining features of Modern era post and beam structures include horizontal massing, repetitive façade geometry, the minimal use of solid load bearing walls, direct expression of the structural system and the absence of applied ornamentation.

The Organic Geometric architecture was a design philosophy that created a visual relationship between the built environment and nature. The design was intended to create a seamless relationship between the indoor and the outdoor spaces. The philosophy revolved around the ideas of Frank Lloyd Wright who originally incorporated organic principals into his designs. The style was used to take advantage of any views and landscape features and was typically integrated into the surroundings.

Russell Forester:

Forester (1920-2002) was at the height of his architectural career when he began designing the Peterson Residence in 1964. He was well regarded as a commercial and residential designer by the 1950s. He is considered to have introduced the International Style to adventurous post-WWII consumers with his innovative designs for Peterson's original Jack in the Box drive-thru hamburger stands, the first of which was located on El Cajon Blvd.

Born in 1920 in Idaho, Forester moved to La Jolla when he was 5 years old. After graduation from La Jolla High School in 1938, Forester served in the Army Corps of Engineers and worked as a draftsman under Lloyd Ruocco. In 1948, he opened his first architectural office. By 1950 he began the formal training to become a licensed architect. He developed an affinity for the new International style while attending the Institute of Design in Chicago and studying under Mies Van Der Rohe. While he was not licensed until 1960, he designed several Modernist structures within San Diego including his own residence on Hillside Drive in La Jolla in 1952. After a 28 year career, during which he received a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects (FAIA) designation, he retired in 1976. After his retirement, Forester devoted his time to artistic endeavors becoming a well-known artist.

His philosophy used designs and materials that were suitable for the San Diego climate. He was one of the first San Diego architects to promote Mies Van Der Rohe's use of glass and steel construction in commercial and residential buildings. The first Jack in the Box restaurant in 1951 introduced a stripped down version to the city.

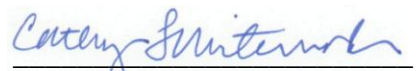
Since his death many of his designs have been demolished or seriously altered. One extant residence has been designated on the local register, the Dr. Harold C. and Frieda Daum Urey/Russell Forester House at 7890 Torrey Lane in La Jolla, in 2002 during which time he was declared a Master Architect on the San Diego Register.

CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted, it is recommended that the Historical Resources Board forward a positive recommendation for the Robert O. Peterson/Russell Forester Residence to the Office of Historic Preservation for listing on the California Register of Historical Places. If listed on the California Register, this resource would be eligible for listing on the San Diego Register.



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Senior Planner



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Principal Planner/HRB Liaison

jb/cw

Attachment: Applicant's California Register of Historical Resources Nomination Report under separate cover