



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

## Report to the Historical Resources Board

DATE ISSUED: April 8, 2021 REPORT NO. HRB-21-028

HEARING DATE: April 22, 2021

SUBJECT: **ITEM #3 – Munk, Walter and Judith, House**

APPLICANT: IS Architecture

LOCATION: 9530 La Jolla Shores Drive, 92037, La Jolla Community, Council District 1  
APN 344-050-15-00

DESCRIPTION: Review and make a recommendation on the National Register Nomination of the Munk, Walter and Judith, House located at 9530 La Jolla Shores Drive

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Recommend that the Historical Resources Board forward a positive recommendation for the Munk, Walter and Judith, House to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places for its significance at the local level under Criterion A in the areas of Science and Education, and under Criterion C in the areas of Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Art, per the nomination.

### BACKGROUND

This item is being brought before the Historical Resources Board pursuant to a request from the State Office of Historic Preservation to review and comment on this National Register nomination. The Munk, Walter and Judith, House is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C at the local level of significance. It is being nominated under Criterion A in the area of Community Planning/Development for its association with residential development related to the Scripps Estates Associates subdivision, in the areas of Science and Education for its association with scientific and academic advancements, including the work of Dr. Walter H. Munk, and in the area of Social History for its contributions to the development of Scripps, UCSD, and the La Jolla community. It is being nominated under Criterion C in the areas of Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Art as an excellent example of the Organic-Geometric and Post-and-Beam subsets of the Modern style, and as a work of regionally prominent artist and architectural designer Judith Munk. The subject property is not currently listed on the San Diego Register.

### ANALYSIS

A National Register of Historic Places Nomination Report was prepared IS Architecture, which concludes that the resource is significant under National Register Criteria A and C, and staff concurs.

The property includes two contributing buildings, one contributing site (the landscape), one contributing structure (the pool), eight contributing objects (sculptures), one noncontributing structure (the Folly), and four noncontributing objects (sculptures). The noncontributing structure and objects were built after the 1953-1971 period of significance.

*NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERION A - Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.*

The National Register Nomination Report finds the property to be eligible under Criterion A at the local level of significance in the areas of Community Planning, Science, Education, and Social History.

In the area of Community Planning, the property is identified as significant for its association with residential development related to the Scripps Estates Associates (SEA) subdivision. The SEA subdivision came about because Dr. Roger Revelle, then-Director of the Scripps Institute, recognized the need to break away from the custom in La Jolla at the time of prohibiting Jewish people from buying land or even renting housing. He thought it was important to allow Jewish staff members of Scripps to become homeowners in the community. Walter Munk was involved in the purchase of the land for the subdivision and its planning. Both Walter and Judith were among the original 19 SEA members who purchased lots in 1952. The early residents of the subdivision became very close-knit due to both their shared passion for oceanography, and the limited number of choices for housing due to the restrictive covenants in place elsewhere in La Jolla.

Staff finds that the SEA subdivision's significance to Community Planning would be better represented by a district encompassing more than one parcel in the SEA subdivision, rather than by a single parcel. This is because the significance lies in the establishment of the subdivision to create a community that could include Jewish staff members, and this parcel does not represent the creation of the subdivision better than the other parcels do. Therefore, staff disagrees with this determination of the property's significance at the local level.

The Nomination Report also identifies the property as significant in the area of Social History. However, as discussed above in relation to Community Planning, staff finds that the SEA subdivision's association with the social history of La Jolla would be better represented by a district. Additionally, based on the information provided, staff finds that the connection between the property's contributing resources and the social life and development of UCSD, Scripps and La Jolla is best captured by its significance in the area of Education, discussed below.

The Nomination Report identifies the property to be significant in the areas of Science and Education for its association with scientific and academic advancements, including the work of Dr. Walter H. Munk, and contribution to the social history of Scripps, UCSD, and the La Jolla community. Staff supports this determination of significance. First, the Munk, Walter and Judith, House is significant in the area of Science due to Dr. Munk's significant contributions to the field of oceanography during the years (1953-2019) that he used the property as his residence and office. His home office was in the front entry, which he preferred to a more secluded space. His scientific achievements that occurred during the property's period of significance include the Project MOHOLE drilling endeavor, and groundbreaking work in understanding wave behavior, surf forecasting, and ocean acoustics.

Secondly, the property is significant in the area of Education for its association with Walter and Judith Munk. Both Walter and Judith played important roles in the development of Scripps, and the establishment and development of UCSD and the Institute for Geophysics and Planetary Physics

(IGPP). Walter Munk helped to lobby the University of California to create UCSD, was the founding director of IGPP, and chaired the UCSD faculty senate during the Vietnam War. Judith Munk contributed to the design of several UCSD buildings. The property is also significant in the area of Education for its role as a salon, meeting space and event space for UCSD staff and students, prospective students, and visiting researchers, as well as cultural and political figures. Historical accounts show that Judith and Walter nurtured a welcoming, open-door environment at the house, allowing it to serve as a social hub of the UCSD community. Some of the events hosted on the property included graduations, gatherings of the JASON Defense Advisory Panel, Office of Naval Research meetings, Citizens Coordinate for Century 3 events, Scripps prospective student evenings, and arts events such as plays and concerts.

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERION C - *Embodies distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.*

The National Register Nomination Report finds the property to be eligible under Criterion C at the local level of significance in the areas of Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Art.

Construction on the property began in 1953, with the construction of a small, concrete block house in which the Munks lived until the main house was completed, and which was subsequently used as a guest house. The main house was constructed in 1953-1954 in the Post and Beam style. Both buildings, as well as additions to the main house constructed in 1959-1961, 1971, and 1985, were designed by Judith Munk. Munk also designed the landscape and made the sculptures found throughout the landscape.

The main house is a split-level single-family house that is set back from and below the street level due to the slope of the parcel down from the street into Sumner Canyon. The overall form is an irregular shape that is wide to the street, with asymmetrical elevations. The roof is flat except for the 1971 addition, which was built on top of the garage and features a shed roof. The building is primarily clad in vertical wood board-and-batten siding, floor-to-ceiling wood frame windows, and concrete block. In many areas, the floor-to-ceiling windows are separated by wood posts that support exposed wood beams and deep eaves above.

The house's primary façade faces east, towards La Jolla Shores Drive. The descent from street level to the house's east (front) garden patio is made by a marble staircase that splits into two curved sections on its upper half. The brick east garden patio provides access to the house's main entrance, which consists of a pair of large wood doors with small inset panels. To the south, the east garden patio connects with the house's semi-enclosed garage, as well as a metal spiral staircase providing access to 1971 addition above. To the north, the patio connects with an inground pool built in 1965.

The rear (west) elevation faces towards Sumner Canyon and Scripps Coastal Reserve and features floor-to-ceiling glass along its entire upper level. The cellar level is clad in concrete block and features arched openings. The lower level extends out from the upper level and is topped by a brick patio area.

The landscape, which was designed by Judith Munk, is included in the nomination as a contributing site. Throughout both the east and west garden areas, there are several sculptures made by Judith

Munk. The eight terra cotta sculptures made by Munk during the 1953-1971 period of significance are included in the nomination as contributing objects.

Modifications to the property include several additions dated to 1985. These are the installation of the exterior metal spiral staircase, the completion of a north-facing porch on the roof, and the expansion of the interior entry/office area outwards to the west (rear). The original exterior wall of the entry/office area became an interior wall, and the vines on it were kept. Also in 1985, an area for outdoor performances and presentations called the Folly was built in the west garden. Due to its date of construction, the Folly is a noncontributing resource. Finally, four of Judith Munk's sculptures on the property were done after the period of significance and are therefore also noncontributing.

The subject resource embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Post and Beam substyle of the Modernist style, including floor-to-ceiling glass, direct expression of the structural system, flat roof with deep overhangs, horizontal massing, minimal use of solid load-bearing walls, repetitive façade geometry, and strong interior/exterior connections. The designed cultural landscape also embodies distinctive characteristics of Modern landscape architecture through its emphasis on indoor/outdoor connections, outdoor "rooms" or living spaces, and privacy from the public right of way. Another aspect of Judith Munk's architectural and landscape designs was the use of salvaged materials.

The Nomination Report identifies the site's buildings as embodying distinctive characteristics of the Organic Geometric substyle of Modern Architecture. However, staff finds that the property is better identified as an example of Post and Beam architecture rather than Organic Geometric due to its extensive floor-to-ceiling glazing, and its lack of complex roof forms and sharp angular massing.

#### CONCLUSION

Based on the information submitted, it is recommended that the Historical Resources Board forward a positive recommendation for the Munk, Walter and Judith, House to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places for its significance at the local level under Criterion A in the areas of Science and Education, and under Criterion C in the areas of Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Art, per the nomination.



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Development Services Department

GT/ss

Attachment(s):

1. Applicant's National Register of Historic Places Nomination Report under separate cover