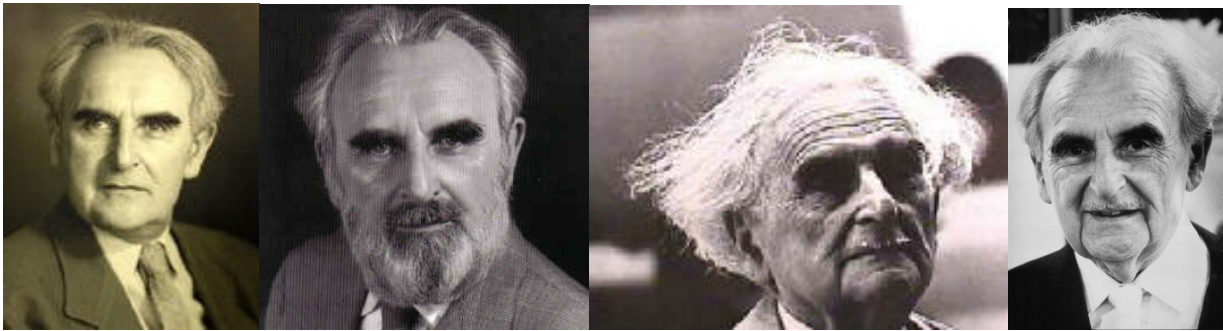


*(from [usmodernist.org](http://usmodernist.org) website)*



## **RICHARD JOSEF NEUTRA (1892-1970)**

Richard Neutra was born in Vienna, Austria, into a wealthy Jewish family. He attended the Sophiengymnasium in Vienna until 1910, then he studied under Adolf Loos and Otto Wagner at the Vienna University of Technology from 1910 to 1918. In 1912 he undertook a study trip to Italy and the Balkans with Ernst Ludwig Freud (son of Sigmund Freud). Neutra studied at the University of Zurich and worked briefly for landscape architect Gustav Ammann. In 1921 he worked as City Architect in the Planning Department of Luckenwalde, an industrial town in Germany. He also worked briefly for architect Erich Mendelsohn in Berlin. In 1922, Neutra married Dione Niedermann, the daughter of an architect, and they moved to the US in 1923. At the funeral of Louis Sullivan, Neutra met Frank Lloyd Wright, who hired him in 1924 to work at Taliesin in Wisconsin while Wright was in Japan. Work ran out in 1925 and Neutra left Taliesin to work in California with Rudolf Schindler.

Among many projects, Schindler and Neutra collaborated on an entry for the 1927 League of Nations Competition; in the same year they formed a design firm with planner Carol Aronovici called the Architectural Group for Industry and Commerce (AGIC). Neutra and Schindler and their wives were very close; they shared space in Schindler's house on Kings Road in Los Angeles from February 1925 until the Neutras left to tour Europe in May 1930.

The breakup of Neutra and Schindler is often accorded to Neutra "stealing" client Phillip Lovell for the Lovell Health House. According to Neutra's son Raymond, it was not that simple. Schindler was busy with projects like the Wolff House on Catalina Island and the unbuilt Transparent House for Aline Barnsdall. Phillip Lovell was grumpy about an earlier 1924 Schindler cabin that collapsed in the snow during its first winter. Schindler was also having an affair with Harriet Freeman, Lovell's sister-in-law (who Lovell intensely disliked) and Lovell didn't want the architect of his Health house under her influence. Schindler was just as happy not to put up with Lovell, and the project shifted to Neutra. The hostility began in late 1930 when Schindler heard from friends

that Neutra was not crediting him about the League of Nations project. It got worse when Schindler was rejected from the Philip Johnson's MOMA International Style exhibition in New York which Neutra brought to LA for the 1932 Olympics. Neutra and Schindler ended their partnership and co-residency and rarely interacted after that. When Neutra had a heart attack in 1953, he found himself in the same hospital room as Schindler. They made peace before Schindler died there of cancer. The hostility was mostly on Schindler's side and Neutra was happy to have the reconciliation.

Novelist and philosopher Ayn Rand based character Howard Roark in *The Fountainhead* partially on Neutra. She was the second owner of Neutra's Von Sternberg House.

Between 1927 and 1969, Neutra designed more than 300 houses in California and elsewhere. In 1949, *Time Magazine* featured Neutra on its cover and ranked him second only to Frank Lloyd Wright in American architecture. After that, Neutra had all the work he could ever want. Neutra hired many young architects who went on to independent success including Gregory Ain, Harwell Hamilton Harris, and Raphael Soriano.

Architect Robert Evans Alexander joined Neutra and the firm became Neutra and Alexander from 1949-1959. They agreed that Neutra would still design residential commissions on his own while larger commercial and institutional commissions would be handled as Neutra and Alexander. Alexander was actively involved in many multi-housing projects but only two single-family houses during that period: the Hall House and the Governor's house on Guam. They broke up in 1959 over disagreements on large-scale jobs.

Neutra visited the NCSU School of Design as a guest lecturer twice, the first time in 1950 and again on December 13, 1957. He led the class in writing a letter to Frank Lloyd Wright: "Certainly today all serious architectural students are aware of your tremendous contribution to both the fiber and spirit of the art, and almost all are in sympathy with the means you have used in giving your ideas form, even though our own incipient philosophies and forms may be directed in many different ways. With these thoughts in mind, we would like to join with Mr. Neutra in sending you heartfelt greetings at this Christmas season. With respectful wishes -- [Signed by 14 students.]"

In 1965, Neutra formally partnered with architect and son Dion Neutra as Richard and Dion Neutra and Associates. In 1966, he moved back to Vienna, Austria. He died in Germany in 1970 while in the middle of an argument with a client, according to grandson Justin, who later made a short film about Neutra. In 1977 Neutra was awarded the AIA Gold Medal.