

Architect William F. Cody's quirky, cool Palm Springs designs are celebrated at A+D Museum

By LIESL BRADNER JUN 30, 2016 | 5:29 PM



Detail of Julius Shulman photo of the Palm Springs Bath House, part of "Fast Forward: The Architecture of William F. Cody" at the Architecture and Design Museum in Los Angeles. (Julius Shulman)

During Palm Springs' heyday in the 1950s and '60s, odds were likely that you'd pass by or walk into a restaurant, hotel or country club designed by architect William F. Cody.

Unfortunately many of Cody's Midcentury Modern designs have gone the way of the wrecking ball. That includes his quirky Googie-style Huddle's Springs Restaurant, as well as the Palm Springs Spa Hotel's canopy-covered walkway with an oculus allowing light to fall through.

"It was almost like celestial heavens coming down into the spa," said Jo Lauria, organizing curator and interim executive director at the Architecture and Design Museum in L.A.

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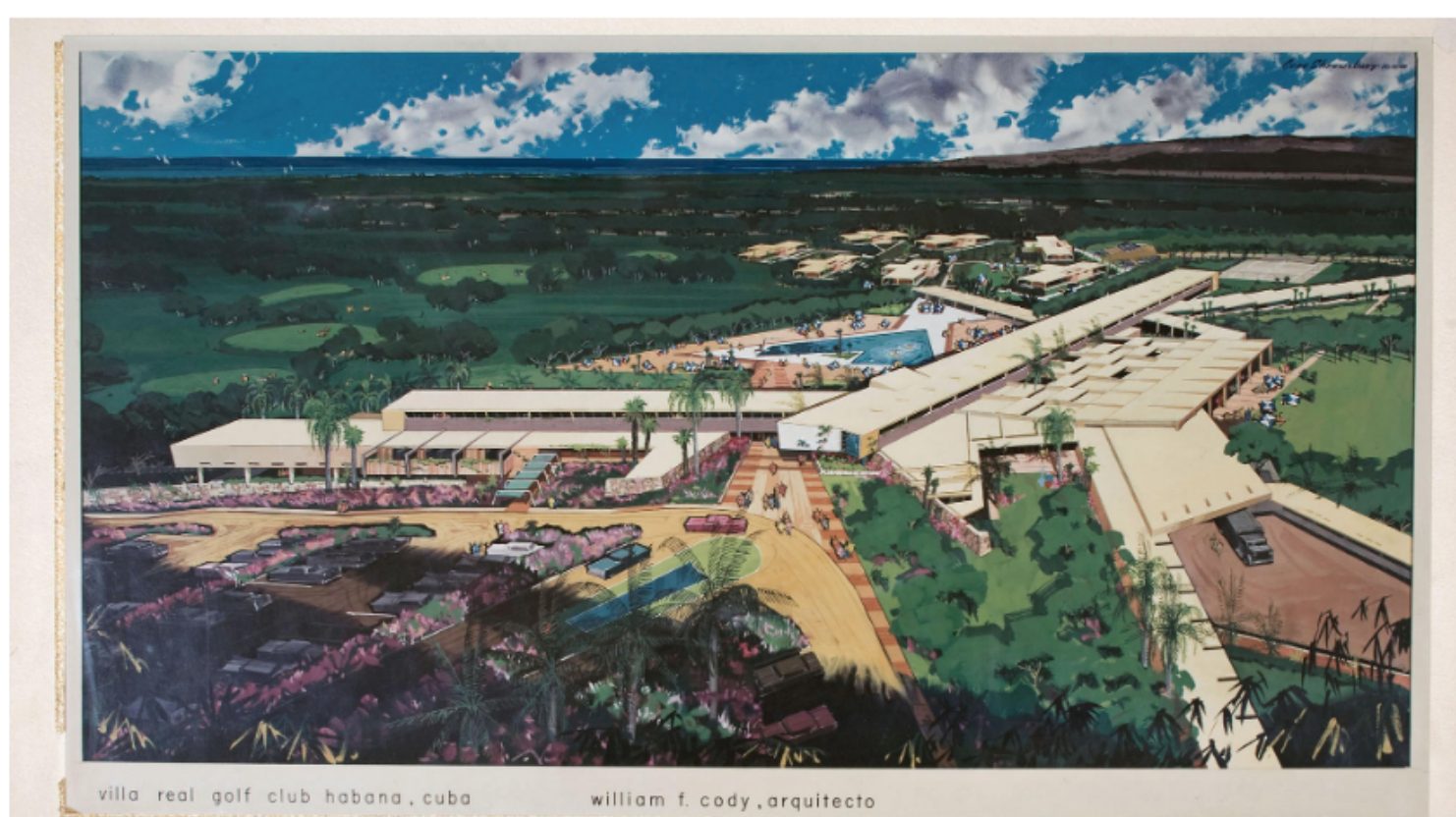
William F. Cody's walkway at the Palm Springs Spa Hotel, the oculus in the canopy letting light stream down to the sculpture and water below. (Julius Shulman)



William F. Cody's Huddle's Springs Restaurant in Palm Springs, demolished in the 1990s. (Erwin Lang)

Marking Cody's 100th birthday this year, A+D is celebrating his contribution to architecture with the exhibition "Fast Forward: The Architecture of William F. Cody," open from July 10 to Sept. 25.

Color renderings and photos of long-lost structures will be on display along with a 33-foot wall featuring a visual timeline bordered with Cody's doodles, drawings and lettering.



Rendering for the William F. Cody design for the Villa Real Golf Club in Cuba. (Architecture and Design Museum)

The Ohio-born USC graduate began his career working as a draftsman for Cliff May, considered by many to be the father of the California ranch home. A commission to design the Del Marcos Hotel brought Cody to Palm Springs in 1946, and he lived there until his death in 1978.

Cody's desert modernism can still be seen at the Palm Springs library and St. Theresa Catholic Church, but he might be better remembered for projects that more fully expressed the desert lifestyle.

"He was the master of recreational country club design," said Lauria, noting his work on El Dorado in Rancho Mirage. (The team that curated the show also includes Emily Bills, Don Choi and Cathy Cody Nemirovsky.)

The exhibit is a collaboration with architecture students at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, where Cody's archives are housed at the Robert E. Kennedy Library.

Architecture students were tasked with making inventive interpretations of his designs. One student created a "Cody" font similar to the old comic strip typography that Cody was known to like.



An undated photo of William F. Cody, left, with an associate in Cody's L.A. office on Santa Monica Boulevard. (Architecture and Design Museum)

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UPDATES:

July 7, 1:17 p.m.: This article was updated to add names of curators involved with the exhibition.