

New Exhibit Showcases the Work of Midcentury Master William F. Cody

*The architect helped to create Palm Springs's
quintessentially modern style*

BY **ELIJAH CHILAND** JUL 10, 2016, 6:50P

Palm Springs and the cities that surround it are home to some of the finest examples of midcentury architecture in the nation, and for three decades William F. Cody was one of its greatest practitioners. A new retrospective on the career of Cody opens today at the A+D Architecture and Design Museum in the Arts District. According to the **museum's website**, it will be the first comprehensive exhibit devoted to the versatile master of modern design.

Born in Ohio, Cody graduated from USC in 1942 and began working in Palm Springs in 1945. Though he worked across the globe, from Havana to Hawaii, Cody was best known for his work in the Palm Desert. **Huddle's Springs Restaurant**, his Googie masterpiece, was sadly razed in the '90s, but many of his other commercial and residential works in the area remain. These include the striking **Del Marcos Hotel** and **St.**

Theresa's Catholic Church, Cody's modernist take on a cathedral.

Often overshadowed by other prominent midcentury architects working in Southern California, Cody's work has recently recaptured the attention of architectural critics and admirers. A **new documentary** called *Desert Maverick: The Singular Architecture of William F. Cody* debuted earlier this year and explores the life and work of the architect. The museum exhibit runs until September 25.

Fast Forward: The Architecture of William F. Cody
[Architecture and Design Museum]

'Desert Maverick' Architect William Cody, the Outsider of Palm Springs Modernism [Curbed LA]



A new documentary looks at why the architect's incredible career often gets overlooked

BY [PATRICK SISSON @FREQRESPONSE](#) MAY 4, 2016, 6:34P

The Del Marcos Hotel in Palm Springs, built in 1947

All images courtesy Leo Zahn

Leo Zahn, a commercial director and filmmaker, was attending Modernism Week in Palm Springs, a celebration of the town's unique architectural legacy, when inspiration struck. During a lecture, historian Alan Hess asked why architect William Cody, a brilliant modernist with an intriguing and esoteric body of work, wasn't as well known as his peers, such as Donald Wexler. Why didn't he have a film? Looking for a personal project, Zahn decided to answer the call. His new documentary, *Desert Maverick: The Singular Architecture of William F. Cody*, which came out earlier this year, seeks to answer the central question of why Cody, who often created stunning work, hasn't been more widely celebrated. Through interviews with critics, architects, and others, Zahn discovered Cody's strength as an architect may have weakened his legacy.



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The Del Marcos Hotel in 1947

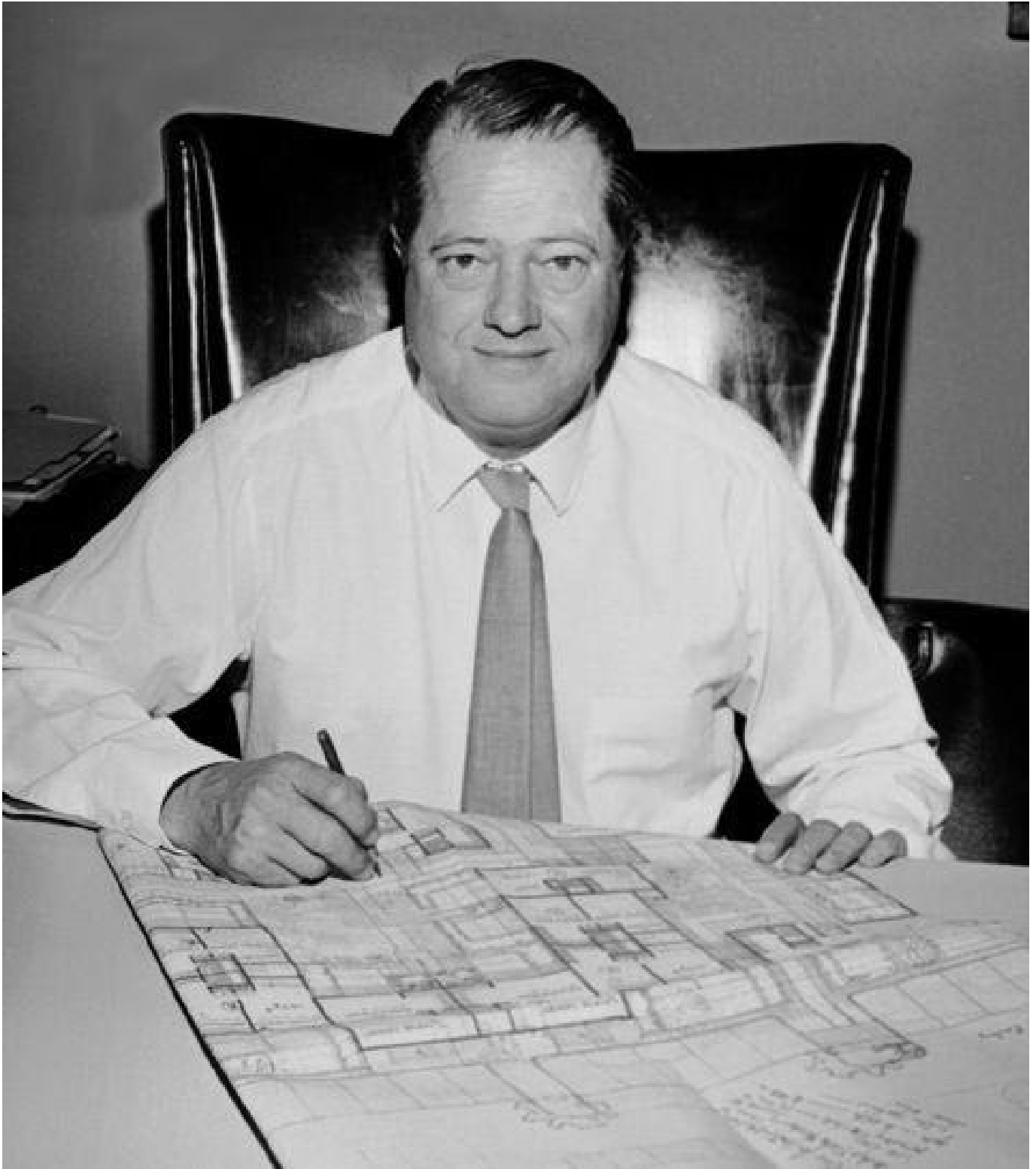
"He's not easily pigeonholed or identified with a particular style," says Zahn. "You know right away when a building is a Richard Neutra project. Cody did radical projects, curved structures that seemed the complete opposite of the 90-degree structures you find from other modernist architects. But, then a few years later, he does his take on the box. He's not

boxed in by any one style, which makes him hard to pin down."

Cody, an Ohio-born architect who graduated from USC in 1942 and began working in Palm Springs on the Desert Inn in 1945, was also seen as someone who went his own way. He didn't take a purist's perspective on design, and would take client's invitations to design whatever they want, and go as far as he possibly can. Projects such as the curvaceous St Theresa's Church, or Googie-esque Huddle's Spring restaurant, show him breaking out of the straight lines that often defined midcentury modernism. And, at a time when the cadre of Palm Springs architects would help each other, passing on jobs or collaborating on projects, Cody rarely worked with others.

Cody's eccentric projects, along with his relatively early death in 1978 at age 62, meant his work hasn't been elevated and explored like his peers. Zahn hopes his film can add Cody's name to the canon of architects with unique, inspired takes on shaping the desert landscape.

"He engaged with Palm Springs, it inspired him," Hess says in the film. "Palm Springs was his muse, in a way."



[William Cody in his office]