

For Immediate Release

Jim Olson Houses

Published by The Monacelli Press with an Introduction by Michael Webb

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Seattle, WA, September 24, 2009—On November 17, 2009, **The Monacelli Press** will release *Jim Olson Houses*, the most comprehensive collection of projects built in the last decade by the founding partner of Olson Sundberg Kundig Allen Architects as well as the most prominent heir to the legacy of the 1950's Northwest master architects. With a series of photographs documenting both exteriors and interiors at 16 residences in Washington, Oregon, California, Colorado, Georgia, Hawaii, and Hong Kong, the book represents the holistic approach that has guided Olson throughout his career. The result is a vision that delicately mixes the architectural tradition of the Pacific Northwest, the influence of the Pacific Rim, and their focuses on indigenous craft. Jim Olson's work, as seen in this new book, reveals the mastery of an architect and his subtle understanding of the world around him. The introduction to *Jim Olson Houses* is written by **Michael Webb**.



Known for his elegant residences, each of which is carefully calibrated to site and client, Olson has produced designs characterized by intangible qualities of light and space. From a Balinese-inspired retreat in Hawaii to a glass farmhouse in eastern Oregon, his luxurious houses are modern in spirit and balance a deep knowledge of architectural history with sensitivity to art and nature. Olson is fascinated by the relationship between art and architecture, and many of the houses and apartments featured in the book have been designed for major art collectors, including two grand art-filled residences on the shores of Lake Washington.

Olson's attention to proportions as well as the interplay between light, space, and mood is evident in interior spaces distinguished by a striking use of both natural and highly refined materials, masterful modulation of light, sophisticated details, and a careful balance between monumentality and intimacy. In natural settings, his homes often weave into their surroundings as if they had always been there; in urban environments, his designs create and enhance a sense of community.

In the volume, **Mimi Gates**, Former Director, Seattle Art Museum notes, "When architect Jim Olson designs a home, his distinctive aesthetic, elegant and understated, comes into play. Sensitive to his clients, many of whom are sophisticated art collectors, he creates living spaces that are comfortable and expressive, enabling the room's art to speak. Jim has an innate talent for combining art and architecture and for working with artists to incorporate their installations seamlessly into his work. I dream of the intimate room of changing light that artist James Turrell created in a Jim Olson house as it was being designed and built. Jim Olson, gracious and self-effacing, has a magic touch."

The book's introduction is authored by noted design writer Michael Webb and emphasizes context and process, both of which are vital factors in Jim Olson's work. According to Webb, "The sixteen houses and apartments featured here respond to different needs and sites, but all share a common DNA. They are product of a singular vision and collaborative process."

After the introduction, the book begins with the first house Olson ever designed and built as a sophomore in college—a diminutive waterfront cabin for his family—and includes more recent projects, among them a villa overlooking the South China Sea, which graces the book's cover. Additional houses and apartments featured include:

- An American Place (Seattle): A structure of concrete, steel, Portuguese limestone, and reclaimed red cedar, the home is sited on Lake Washington with views to the Olympic Mountains, and the design complements the owner's collection of American art from the first half of the twentieth century.
- Ocean House (Hawaii): Designed for clients who collect Southeast Asian art, this residence is composed of several clusters of rooms, recalling the layouts of Balinese temples.
- House of Light (Seattle): This minimal, glass and steel house highlights the natural beauty of the site on the edge of Lake Washington and was designed with the monumental artworks it now houses in mind (Willem de Kooning, Damien Hirst, Anselm Kiefer, Dale Chihuly).
- Desert House (California): Using natural materials like concrete, stone, stucco, and wood, this house, sited on a ridge above an arroyo, blends almost seamlessly into its earthen toned surroundings and includes features like broad overhangs that respond to the shifting environmental conditions of the desert climate.

About Michael Webb

Michael Webb writes about architecture, design, and travel. He is the author of twenty-six books, most recently *Modernist Paradise: Neimeyer House, Boyd Collection and Venice, CA: Art + Architecture in a Maverick Community*. Previous titles include: *Art/Invention/House*, *Adventurous Wine Architecture*, *Brave New Houses: Adventures in Southern California Living*, and *Modernism Reborn: Mid-Century Modern American Houses*. Webb contributes regularly to the *Architectural Review*, *Architect's Newspaper*, *Mark*, and *The Plan*, and he also writes for the *New York Times*, *Town & Country*, and *World of Interiors*. He was born and educated in England

About Jim Olson, FAIA; Principal/Owner, Olson Sundberg Kundig Allen Architects

A graduate of the University of Washington, Department of Architecture, Jim Olson established his own firm in Seattle in 1966. Since that time, the office has grown into a diverse practice with an international reputation. Olson is the recipient of the 2007 Seattle AIA Medal of Honor. He is a member of the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Architecture, has served on the boards of a number of Northwest arts organizations, and is an honorary board member for the Seattle Art Museum. Olson has lectured extensively throughout the United States and in Canada and Mexico on the relationship of art and architecture. Widely published, Olson's work has been featured in many books including *Art + Architecture: The Ebsworth Collection and Residence*, which focuses on a single project and a monograph on the firm's work, *Architecture, Art and Craft: Olson Sundberg Kundig Allen Architects*, published in 2003.



Olson Sundberg Kundig Allen Architects

Led by five partners, **Olson Sundberg Kundig Allen Architects** is an architecture studio based in Seattle, which was awarded the 2009 AIA Architecture Firm Award by the American Institute of Architects. The more than 80-person office combines the capacity of a large firm with the intensity of a small one, and its commitment to vigorous, critical design review sessions has infused its designers with a shared sense of commitment to every project and an appreciation of the technical and artistic elements involved in the realization of a building. The studio specializes in a range of projects both nationally and internationally including mixed-use buildings and complexes; academic and civic projects; museums and cultural spaces; exhibit design; places of worship; single use residential projects, often for art collectors; and interior design.

Founding partner **Jim Olson** began working in the late 1960s on projects that would explore the relationship between dwellings and the landscape they inhabit and was joined by **Rick Sundberg** in 1975 for a period of years that was marked by an increased commitment to urbanism and civic work with major projects in the Northwest. Such projects included the award-winning Pike & Virginia Building, the first contemporary structure to be built in Seattle's Pike Place Market Historic District in 50 years. In 1996, **Tom Kundig** joined Olson and Sundberg as partner, bringing a new level of creative exploration, building the international reputation of the office, and adding accolades, including Kundig's receipt of the National Design Award from the Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt in 2006. **Alan Maskin** and **Kirsten Murray** became partners in 2008, continuing the evolution of the firm and furthering its commitment to the craft of architecture through expanded work in exhibition design, interiors, and connections to urban and rural landscapes.

For additional information, visit www.oskaarchitects.com.

Book Specs

Jim Olson Houses

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Introduction: Michael Webb

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