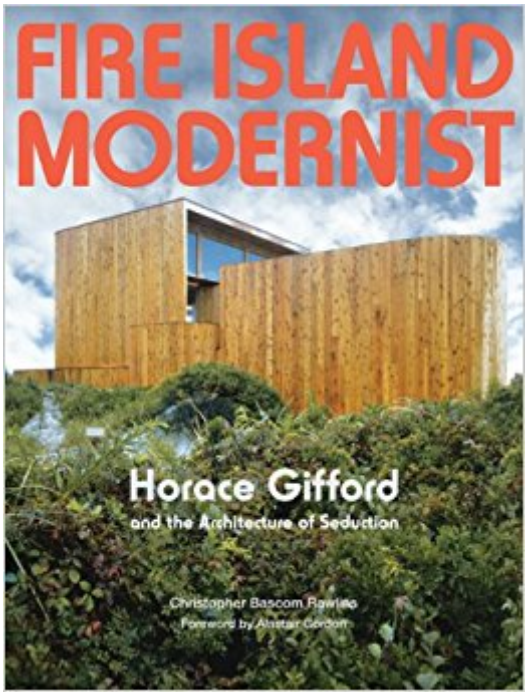
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Fire Island Modernist: Horace Gifford And The Architecture Of Seduction



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Synopsis

As the 1960s became The Sixties, architect Horace Gifford executed a remarkable series of beach houses that transformed the terrain and culture of New YorkÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Fire Island. Growing up on the beaches of Florida, Gifford forged a deep connection with coastal landscapes. Pairing this sensitivity with jazzy improvisations on modernist themes, he perfected a sustainable modernism in cedar and glass that was as attuned to natural landscapes as to our animal natures.
GiffordÃ¢â ¬â„¢s serene 1960s pavilions provided refuge from a hostile world, while his exuberant post-Stonewall, pre-AIDS masterpieces orchestrated bacchanals of liberation. Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor and Montgomery Clift once spurned Hollywood limos for the rustic charm of Fire IslandÃ¢â ¬â„¢s boardwalks. Truman Capote wrote Breakfast at TiffanyÃ¢â ¬â„¢s here. Diane von Furstenburg showed off her latest wrap dresses to an audience that included Halston, Giorgio SantÃ¢â ¬â„¢ Angelo, Calvin Klein and Geoffrey Beene. Today, such a roster evokes the aloof, gated compounds of the Hamptons or Malibu. But these celebrities lived in modestly scaled homes alongside middle-class vacationers, all with equal access to Fire IslandÃ¢â ¬â„¢s natural beauty. Blending cultural and architectural history, Fire Island Modernist ponders a fascinating era through an overlooked architect whose life, work and colorful milieu trace the operatic arc of a lost generation, and still resonate with artistic and historical import.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Rawlins book, full of gorgeous photographs drawings, illustrates Kahn’s influence on Gifford. His

understanding of servant and served spaces, and monumental form is beautifully documented.Salinger asked if we could grow-up, retain our optimism and not be considered naive. Given that Rawlin's book is as much social commentary as it is biogrpahy and architctural history, it asks questions regarding culture while explaining the cultural influences on the architect: can you understand and accept gay culture? Can you see the unique beauty of this culture? Can you see aspirations in the architecture? Can you do it while it evolves, on its own terms? Give this beautiful and thoughtful book, I remain optimistic. (Alastair Gordon Mod)Every once in a great while, there is a book that is immediately hailed as so essential one wonders not so much why it was never done before but how we managed to get by without it. If that sounds overly effusive, buy, borrow or steal Fire Island Modernist: Horace Gifford and the Architecture of Seduction and, after reading -- no, devouring it -- get back to me. (Steve Weinstein Edge)Fire Island Modernist traces 1960s gay culture throught art and architecture. (Leigh Paterson BBC NEWS)Every once in a great while, there is a book that is immediately hailed as so essential one wonders not so much why it has never done before but how we managed to get by without it. If that sounds overly effusive, buy, borrow or steal Fire Island Modernist: Horace Gifford and the Architecture of Seduction and, after reading - no devouring it - get back to me. (Steve Weinstein Edge on the Net)Horace Gifford, the designer of a series of modest but highly influential beach houses in Fire Island Pines, a small town on a spit of land some 50 miles east of New York City, was known for his irreverence... Gifford's houses... were emblematic of a time when even clients as rich as Calvin Klein were weekend minimalists (Fred Bernstein Wallpaper*)Though the thin spit of land off Long Island's coast has long been known as a summer getaway, Fire Island became a truly notable retreat when Horace Gifford brought his serene sensibility to its sandy shores in the '60s. Pictures of the Florida-born architect's modern cedar-and-glass bungalows support an engaging narrative worthy of the site's distinctively colorful heritage. (Jordan Kushins Surface Magazine)The first-ever account of the late Horace Gifford's architectural legacy on the infamous New York pleasure retreat reminds us that history is only ever what we make of it, as personal as it may be, or in this case, queer. Remembered by some for his impulsive ways, irresistible surfer looks, and porn-star appendage, Gifford's largely forgotten work reemerges as a serious voice in tune with post-war grandees like Louis Kahn and Paul Rudolph. Lovers of queer history will thank author Christopher Rawlins for detailing Gifford's beach homes on the barrier island alongside a social narrativie gilded by names like Calvin Klein, Oscar Wilde, and the Mattachine Society. As the sleepy enclave does sex, drugs, and disco, Rawlins covers all ground, from political punches to Gifford's liberated maxi-couches and make-out lofts. It's a sincere retelling which makes a courageous monument of an archive rescued from the rear of a suburban

garage. (Pierre Alexandre De Looz Pin-Up)Fire Island wouldnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t be the idyllic haven we know today if it werenÃ¢â ¬â„¢t for Horace Gifford, a young, often overlooked architect from Florida who designed 78 stunning beach houses off its boardwalks between 1961 and 1980. In Fire Island Modernist: Horace Gifford and the Architecture of Seduction (Metropolis Books), a new monograph bursting with inspiring drawings and vintage photographs, author and architect Christopher Rawlins remembers this precocious (and handsome) talent who turned the south shores of Long Island into a modernistÃ¢â ¬â„¢s dream. (Andrew Belonsky OUT Magazine)Throughout the late Ã¢â ¬â„¢60s and into the Ã¢â ¬â„¢70s, men like Mr. Gifford, Harry Bates, Earl Combs, Arthur Erickson, Andrew Geller and James McCloud Ã¢â ¬â ¢ not all of them gay Ã¢â ¬â ¢ were kept busy erecting elegant, stark structures on this austerely beautiful and fragile barrier island, houses of naturally weathering cedar, redwood pavilions set back from the boardwalk, their broad windows serving as prosceniums across which backlighted players in Speedos, or else nothing, played out a specific variant of the theater of late 20th century gay life. (Guy Trebay The New York Times, Styles Section)In those days, the Pines was seen as an Ã¢â ¬Å“untainted address,Ã¢â ¬Â• observes Christopher Rawlins in Fire Island Modernist, his new book about Horace Gifford, who designed just about one in ten houses there. Gifford was a strapping idealist, and his houses were communal, economical, and exhibitionistic: the bedrooms small, the central areas open, with everything wooden or glass (he Ã¢â ¬Å“essentially treated all surfaces like floors,Ã¢â ¬Â• Rawlins writes). (Carl Swanson New York Magazine)In "Fire Island Modernist: Horace Gifford and the Architecture of Seduction," Christopher Rawlins presents an insightful and gorgeously illustrated account of the luminous midcentury modern vacation homes that architect Horace Gifford built during the 1960s and ’70s in Fire Island’s gay enclaves. But this beautiful book, published in May by Metropolis Books and Gordon de Vries Studio, contains more than blueprints: Rawlins fluidly merges a cultural history of New York’s gay community with Gifford’s personal biography and work, showing how his seductive designs were deeply connected to the newfound freedoms he and his clients enjoyed out on the beach. (Bryan Lowder Slate)Both a cultural history and an architectural mediation, Fire Island Modernist captures the look, feel and sensation of gay society in the 1960s and ’70s that flourished on the sandy shores and shifting dunes of the 31-mile barrier island of its title... Rawlins’s clear graceful prose has just the right tone and style for his subject, and his selection of photographs, drawings, and illustrations brings Gifford’s times back to life... Photographs of handsome young men cavorting on the beach ad striking fashionable poses by the pool add to the book’s glamourous ambience. As Alistair Gordon states in his foreword, Gifford’s houses ’expressed the longings of a culture that had transformed Fire Island into a free-fire zone of social and sexual discovery. (Clifford

Pearson Architectural Record)

I met Horace Gifford at a cocktail party in New York City Sept. 1970. He came to the party with a friend of minewho was a landscape architect who anxiously introduce me to Horace, saying " now you two are going to become great friends"and we did.More than 20 years later I was introduced Christopher Rawlins at a dinner party given by two architects who thought that Christopher and I should meet since I had worked both full time and part time with Horace for twenty years and Christopher had plans to write a biography of Horace and his work.I was very taken with Christerpher's deep interest in Horace's work at The Pines on Fire Island, Walking home after dinner I knew that this young man was definitely going to write an excellent book about Horace Gifford and his work.The book Christerpher Rawlins wrote goes deeper into Horace Gifford's life, his Architecture, the history of Fire Island and life style of residents of The Pines community than I had imagined him doing. But, by doing this complicated, connecting, informative biography and history book of a particular time and placethe reading is swift and a joy of learning; and, the reader will be looking forward to a second and third reading.

As an interior designer, I notice detail. As a young man visiting Fire Island, I was struck by a number of the houses I saw, and each time I asked who had designed it, the same name came up -- Horace Gifford. Mr. Rawlins' book has captured, in a unique and complete way, a time past, a time of fond memories, coupled with a sense of loss that is very tangible. There are books about architects and books about architecture, but seldom have I read such an evocative combination of thoughtful research, which captures both the art of Mr. Gifford, and at the same time captures the color of the man, the moment, the time, and the place. Reading it, you are swept up in the dialogue, and perhaps, because I have been there, I was brushed by the breeze, smelled the cedar, and felt the sand under my feet, not to mention the visceral recollection of friends, both present and past. Anyone who cares about the richness of experience and the dynamic of living it needs to read Mr. Rawlin's book -- and to quote Thoreau ; "The world is but a canvas to our imagination."

I have had a home on Fire island for the past 35 years---and my dream, never realized, was to have it designedby Horace Gifford. His simple but elegant homes stand out for their beauty and attention to detail----and especiallyto their location. I don't think any architect had a better understanding of the beach and the particular site he wasbuilding on....as he said "The site suggests what the house wants to be as a form in space." He took full advantageof the sea, the sky, the pine tree settings

while always respecting the fragile environment---and often with a smallbuilding lot...since land on Fire Island is so limited and precious. His homes, largely of glass and cedar and oftenbuilt around interior sun decks, are really sculptures. He died much too young and never received enough acclaimfor his incredible talent. I waited so long for the beautiful volume to be published and I treasure my copy.

I have studied the Case Study House program extensively. However, I was unaware of the "East Coast" aesthetic and am therefore very thankful for this treatise on the works of Horace Gifford and the other architects who were influenced by the modernist movement. A great beginning for anyone studying Mid-Century Modern design and how specific architects were influenced and thereafter offered there own style to this architectural oeuvre. Also, this is a must for anyone interested in Fire Island and its association Gay history! HIGHLY RECOMMENDED!

I'm not one of those who believes that Gay Men are born naturally artistic. But I do believe that, behind every significant artistic movement, there is at least one Gay Man pushing things forward. For modernism as expressed in residential architecture, Horace Gifford was that man. His remaining structures ought to be protected as national treasures.

I and two friends in the 70's rented for three seasons one of Horace's house he designed. The Evans DePass house.I also had the privalege of knowing Horace on a "hello" basis. Avery nice man. And if I might add underrated for his concepts. But I think this book will bring to light how great Horace was.

I stumbled across this book on recently and ordered it not really knowing what I would be getting into. Upon its arrival, I glanced at the book and was immediatey intrigued with the photographs of not only the architecture but the decidely social setting of the houses designed by Horace Gifford. I sat down that night and read the book cover to cover. It is a fairly easy read, and Gifford's clients came to life in the writing of author Rawlins. And what lives these men lived!!!! It is amazing how the architecture created by Gifford responded so completely with the changing times of society of the 1960's and 1970's. These are not large, boring mega-mansions of today, but small incredibly powerful designs set within the site and environment, not wanting to overpower but to meld in. As an architect, I enjoyed the many photographs and drawings of the houses. As a gay man, I was entranced by the stories of the client relationships and the social history of Fire Island. Rawlins has

written a "must read" for summer vacation 2013.

This book is amazing. The history of FIP, LGBT and Horace Gifford was absolutely stunning. Spent a few hours reading every word and drooling over the interiors of these amazing homes. I have been wanting to treat myself and I sure did. Great price and same day delivery.

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