



modernism week
palm springs 2021

An Icon Rises

STORY BY DERRIK J. LANG



During this year's Modernism Week, visitors to downtown Palm Springs might catch a glimpse of a modernist masterpiece being constructed. Make that reconstructed.

The Aluminaire House Foundation announced last September that it donated the historic Aluminaire House to the Palm Springs Art Museum, where it will be part of the museum's permanent collection.

Work has begun on transforming the museum's south parking lot at the corner of West Tahquitz Way and Museum Way into

the new home of the historically significant aluminum and metal prototype residence, designed by Albert Frey and A. Lawrence Kocher in 1931.

"There will be nothing like it anywhere," says Aluminaire House Foundation, California Committee member Mark Davis. "It will be the only historic house here that will be open 24/7 for the public to view."

The Aluminaire House is considered a masterpiece of modernist design, listed by *Architectural Record* as one of the most important buildings completed worldwide in the past 125 years. After a tumultuous history in New York, the house was disassembled and placed in storage. For more than 25 years, New York architects Michael Schwarting and Frances Campani worked to protect and document Aluminaire, forming the Aluminaire House Foundation to find a suitable permanent home for the structure.

After the architects were invited by Modernism Week to make a presentation about Aluminaire, a local group of enthusiasts decided Palm Springs would be an ideal location because of Frey's connection to the area. The group formed the California Committee of the Aluminaire House Foundation to bring Aluminaire to Palm Springs, which was accomplished in 2017.

Once Aluminaire is fully reassembled later this year, the full arc of Frey's career in the U.S. — from 1931 until his death in 1998 in Palm Springs — may be experienced in the city and at the museum. (Frey bequeathed his archive of drawings, photographs, and other documents, as well as his Frey House II residence, to the museum.) With its prime location, the museum intends to professionally light it inside and out, so that no matter day or night, Aluminaire can be seen by all and recognized

as another architectural jewel enhancing Palm Springs' reputation as a center of midcentury modern architecture.

For an in-depth look, stream the film *Albert Frey, the 1931 Aluminaire House and Palm Springs — The Story* during the Modernism Week Online Experience from April 15–May 15 at modernismweek.com. The 45-minute documentary recounts Aluminaire's history, from Le Corbusier's influence to the house's Palm Springs resurrection.