

## ALBERT FREY HOUSE II AND ARCHIVES



Albert Frey (1903-1998), one of the most important modern architects of our time, lived and worked in Palm Springs since 1934. Over a long and prolific career, he produced more than 200 building designs, including such notable local landmarks as the Palm Springs City Hall and the Aerial Tramway Valley Station with John Porter Clark. Frey House II, his long-time residence is perched on the hillside at the west end of Tahquitz Canyon Way. Frey House II, architect Albert Frey's second home in Palm Springs, completed in 1964. At the time it was built, it was at the highest elevation of any residence in the city. Frey took five years to select the site and a year to measure the movement of the sun using a 10-foot pole. "I had a very careful survey made showing the contours and all the rock," Frey told an interviewer. "Then I put up some strings to see how the design would work out. We then established the levels, and then I had to fit the glass to the rock. The slope of the roof follows the slope of the terrain," he said. "The contrast between the natural rock and the high tech materials is rather exciting." After reviewing his plans, Palm Springs City Hall called the design "crazy" but finally gave its approval.

It was the second Palm Springs house that Frey designed for himself and it has become a hillside landmark. Perched part way up the San Jacinto mountain, the house looks across the expanse of the Coachella Valley. It was designed to have as little impact on the surrounding environment. Measuring only 800 square feet, the house is compact but very functional. A concrete block podium forms the base for the simple steel structure house. It has a steel-frame with large spans of glass and sheathing in painted corrugated metal. A platform, parallel to the road, projects in front of the house and acts as a deck for the pool and as a roof for the carport below. The design included a flat corrugated-aluminum roof, overhangs to block the summer sun and sliding glass doors that open the interior to the exterior. The house has many walls of glass, which showcase the astounding views. The swimming pool and small deck function as the roof of the carport.

The upper level features a dining/work table and the bathroom, while the lower level includes a sitting area, master bedroom and kitchen. Frey added an additional guest bedroom (measuring 300 square feet) in 1967. Being keenly conscious of nature, Frey choose the color of his curtains to match the yellow Encilla flowers that bloom each spring in the desert. He also painted the ceiling blue.

One of the most famous elements of the property is the incorporation of a large boulder into the design. It protrudes into the house and acts as a divider between the bedroom and living room. By incorporating the boulder in to the design, Frey acknowledged our role with nature.