

Hugh Kaptur, AIBD

Building Styles for Spec Houses in Indian Wells

Country Club, 1958

Graphite on vellum

Press Construction Company commissioned Kaptur to design several residential styles for its development in Indian Wells Country Club. He came up with three variations on a single-family house by making changes to the rooflines, building materials, and pattern and detailing of the wall at the center of the main facade. “Desert Modern” features a modified butterfly roof, “Contemporary Rustic” has a low-slung peaked roof, and “Simple Contemporary” sports a flat roof with sun flaps.

Kaptur-Lapham & Associates

Kings Point Condominiums, 1974

Shadow Mountain Drive, Palm Desert

Perspective view of complex

Watercolor on board, rendering by Purcell

Surrounded by the Santa Rosa Mountains, this condominium community has 44 two- and three-bedroom units, each with private patios, vaulted ceilings, and clerestory lighting. Kaptur’s creativity is seen in the soaring rooflines and geometric building volumes, which are similar to those of Tahquitz Plaza I completed the same year.

Hugh M. Kaptur, AIA, & Associates

Caballeros Plaza, 1980

Tahquitz Canyon Way and Avenida Caballeros,
Palm Springs

View from the northeast

Watercolor on board

Kaptur was the architect and the developer of this 28,500-square-foot office complex. He designed two adjacent buildings with massive roofs that appear to hover over the masonry block and glass structures below. This rendering shows the building facing Tahquitz Canyon Way, which features an arched entry with doors of bronze-tinted glass. The arched form echoes those at his 1967 Clubhouse at Palm Springs Municipal Golf Course. Just as Kaptur completed Caballeros Plaza, a recession hit and he was unable to lease the offices. E.F. Hutton leased a portion of one of the buildings. Kaptur sold the complex in 1985.

Hugh Kaptur, AIBD

Proposed Clubhouse, La Quinta Country Club,

early 1960s (unbuilt)

Perspective view

Watercolor on board, rendering by Siegfried Knod

Hugh M. Kaptur, AIA, & Associates

Stuart and Sherry Gimbel Residence, 2001

Rancho Mirage

View through entry colonnade toward front door

Graphite on vellum

Perspective view of the entry court and house

Graphite on vellum

Architectural model showing site plan

Mixed media

The Gimbel Residence is a sprawling, low-slung house that wraps around the pool area and landscape. The graceful colonnade that marks the entry continues around the house, providing shade and opening all the rooms to the pool and landscape.

Hugh Kaptur, AIBD

Farrah Building and Las Casuelas Restaurant, 1961

362 North Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs

Perspective drawing showing final design for main facade

Graphite on vellum

Perspective drawing showing proposed remodel of main facade

Graphite on vellum

Kaptur was commissioned to remodel the Farrah Building to incorporate the restaurant site next door. The original restaurant building was demolished and Las Casuelas reopened in the expanded Farrah Building. Kaptur proposed several designs. One featured a double-height entry and the other a bold rectangular volume running almost the entire length of the façade. The design shown above was chosen by the clients.

Kaptur and Cioffi, Architects

Proposed Parking Structure, 1986 (unbuilt)

Indian Canyon Drive and Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs

Perspective view

Watercolor on board, rendering by Purcell

Ricciardi-Kaptur & Associates

Fire Station No. 3, 1963

90 East Racquet Club Road, Palm Springs

Perspective view from the southeast, showing fire truck garage on left

Graphite on vellum

Perspective view from southeast, showing firetruck garage on right (Scheme A)

Graphite on vellum

Site and floor plan, Scheme A - B

Graphite on vellum

View of Fire Station from Racquet Club Road

Exhibition print

Photograph by Dan Chavkin, 2019

With increasing development in Palm Springs's north end, the city needed a fire station in that area. The commission was awarded to Kaptur who, at the time, was practicing as a building designer. Since the state required civic projects be given to licensed architects, Kaptur joined Robert H. Ricciardi in his office in Palm Desert. This enabled him to keep the fire station project while working toward becoming a licensed architect. Ricciardi and Kaptur each worked on their own commissions for the next four years and in 1967, when he obtained his license, Kaptur opened his own office in Palm Springs.

Fire Station No. 3 is a low, elegant post-and-beam pavilion while the garage is much more solid and heavy. Kaptur drew two design options, one with the garage on the corner of E. Racquet Club Road and Via Miraleste and the other with the office entry on the corner. The plan is an amalgam of the two schemes and reflects the building as-built, showing its siting on the corner, with the garage to the west.

Ricciardi-Kaptur & Associates

Clubhouse, Palm Springs Municipal Golf Course, 1967

1885 Golf Club Drive, Palm Springs

Sections and details

Graphite on vellum

Exterior elevations

Ink and graphite on vellum

View of main facade

Exhibition print

Photograph by Dan Chavkin, 2015

View inside courtyard

Exhibition print

Photograph by Dan Chavkin, 2015

View through arched entry

Graphite on vellum

The clubhouse's tapered stucco walls soar upward at either end of the building to mask mechanical equipment and the thin, elegant roof appears to float over the massive exposed beams. Unusual openings pierce both the walls and the courtyard ceiling while native stone-clad wings extend from the main structure. Inside, Kaptur designed two separate volumes with social areas and a kitchen on one side and locker rooms, lounges, and storage on the other. A graceful arch draws visitors from the parking area to the golf course.

Kaptur-Lapham & Associates
Casa Blanca Motor Hotel (now **Musicland Hotel**),
1970
1342 South Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs

*Exterior elevations for addition and
remodel of hotel*
Graphite on vellum

Typical ground floor plans
Graphite on vellum

View of main facade from Palm Canyon Drive
Exhibition print
Photograph by Dan Chavkin, 2014

View of southwest corner stair pavilion
Exhibition print
Photograph by Dan Chavkin, 2014

In 1969, the new owners of the Casa Blanca Motor Hotel hired Kaptur-Lapham to remodel and add on to the hotel. Parts of the existing structure were demolished and Kaptur designed new two-story buildings to house a variety of unit types and to enclose the central communal pool and spa area. The new building facades are an asymmetrical composition of unusual window openings, deeply inset and framed by protruding surrounds. This combination of blank whitewashed surfaces punctuated by sculptural openings would become one Kaptur's signatures.

Hugh M. Kaptur, AIA, & Associates
Kaptur Residence, late 1990s (unbuilt)
Andreas Canyon, Palm Springs

Views of architectural model in the landscape
Exhibition print

Architectural model
Mixed media

Kaptur owned 25 acres in Parc Andreas and designed a house for himself and his wife that he describes as "a dream." Like many of his later residential projects, the design features a central circular volume with curving wings extending into the landscape. The main roof structure would have been copper with a light tent-like form not unlike that of John Lautner's Elrod House. On the property, Kaptur also planned a lake with a swimming pond and sandy beach at one end and photographed the building model against a variety of backdrops to show what it would be like in various landscapes.

The Impala, American Motel, February 1960,
Hugh Kaptur Personal Collection

College drawing by Hugh Kaptur, ca. 1951
Exhibition print, Hugh Kaptur Personal Collection

View of Impala Lodge from the northwest, c. 1960s,
Exhibition print from color snapshot,
Photographer Hugh Kaptur, c. 1960s
Hugh Kaptur Personal Collection

Hugh M. Kaptur, AIA, & Associates
Guesthouse for Elizabeth and Mark Ostoich, 2018–
Palisades Drive, Palm Springs

Architectural model and site plan
Mixed media
Hugh Kaptur Personal Collection

Design sketch
Exhibition print
Hugh Kaptur Personal Collection

Kaptur's latest project is a guesthouse for the couple that owns the architect's Joe Pawling "Spec" House (1958; also known as the Pete Siva Residence) next door. When the couple bought the property it included the foundation of Kaptur's 1959 Leaver Residence, demolished after a fire many years later. The guesthouse, a curvy organic design, will be built of poured concrete on the Leaver Residence site.

Kaptur-Lapham & Associates
Fire Station No. 4, 1971
1300 South LaVerne Way

Planting plan
Graphite on vellum

Early perspective sketch from the southeast
Graphite on vellum

View from corner of LaVerne Way and E. Marion Way
Exhibition print
Photograph by Dan Chavkin, 2011

View of main elevation from LaVerne Way
Exhibition print
Photograph by Dan Chavkin, 2011

By 1970, the south end of Palm Springs was growing and there was need for a new fire station. Kaptur received the commission and the city asked for a residential-scale building to fit in with the neighborhood. Kaptur's design is bold and imposing and the two adjoining volumes (one for the station house and one for the garage) feature blank canted walls of poured concrete. Inspired by Mayan architecture, the building appears to rise directly from the desert floor. The roof hovers over the structure, supported by Kaptur's familiar laminated timber beams. Kaptur collaborated with landscape architect Eric Johnson on the planting plan, which included ocotillo, copper and yellow gazania, fan palms, and boulders. Kaptur's 2018 design for an addition to the station is currently under construction.

Hugh M. Kaptur, AIA, & Associates
Proposed Hotel Project, late 1970s (unbuilt)
North Indian Canyon Drive and Vista Chino

Perspective view of hotel complex
Watercolor on board, rendering by Szabo

This hotel project—featuring ziggurat-like stacked setback volumes organized around a central pool area and canopy—shows Kaptur experimenting with a massing design that he would later put forward as a proposal for a mixed-use development in downtown Palm Springs.

Hugh Kaptur, AIBD
Inn at Bermuda Dunes, 1962
Adams Street at Baracoa Drive,
Bermuda Dunes Country Club

Perspective view of entry
Graphite on vellum

Located at the golf course's 17th hole, the hotel's major feature is the lobby building's soaring entry canopy supported by a single steel beam. Like much of Kaptur's early work, the design was inspired by his time in Hawaii with the canopy and its folded roof structure resembling an outrigger canoe. The canopy design, which bears a resemblance to fellow Desert Modern architect Albert Frey's 1965 Tramway Gas Station, underscores the structural innovation of Kaptur and his peers during this important time in the architectural development of the Palm Springs area. This rendering shows the flair for drawing that undoubtedly helped Kaptur's clients visualize their finished projects.

Article with photograph of Hugh Kaptur and Larry Lapham, *Palm Springs Life*, September 1972, Exhibition print, Hugh Kaptur Personal Collection

Page from Royal Air brochure showing a project rendering by Kaptur for Wexler & Harrison architecture firm, c. 1956, Exhibition print, Hugh Kaptur Personal Collection

An article on "Theme Architecture" from *Architecture California*, featuring comments by Hugh Kaptur, September/October 1986 Exhibition print, Hugh Kaptur Personal Collection

Hugh Kaptur (center) and friends with model airplanes, c. 1941, Exhibition print from original snapshot, Photographer unknown Hugh Kaptur Personal Collection

Hugh Kaptur in his office, 1960s, Exhibition print, Photographer unknown Hugh Kaptur Personal Collection

Hugh Kaptur, AIBD

Spec House for Thomas Griffing
(later ***Steve McQueen Residence***), 1963
Southridge, Palm Springs

View of rear elevation from the pool
Exhibition print
Photograph by Dan Chavkin, 2010

Perspective view of house from the northwest
Graphite on vellum

Perspective view showing front entrance and carport
Graphite on vellum

View of main facade from southeast, showing below-grade entry
Exhibition print
Photograph by Dan Chavkin, 2010

This early project is perhaps Kaptur's best-known building in Palm Springs thanks to the actor Steve McQueen. Located in the exclusive new Southridge development, the house was commissioned as a speculative home by Thomas Griffing, a Texan who had made his fortune in drive-in movie theaters. Griffing would never live in the house and put it on the market immediately. The private hillside site and stunning views appealed to McQueen, who bought the house from its first buyer Edwin Morris in 1969 and lived there until his death in 1980. Kaptur, whose respect for the beauty of the natural landscape is apparent in every project, designed a steel post-and-beam structure that cantilevers dramatically over the cliff. The building's thin roofline, intersecting volumes, material palette of Roman brick, cypress, stucco, and glass, and its below-grade entry that is turned away from the street create a sophisticated elegance. Inside, a glamorous double-height staircase is suspended from thin floor-to-ceiling steel rods. McQueen made a number of changes to the Arthur Elrod-designed interiors to make them more masculine, including adding the well-known rope handrail.

Hugh Kaptur, AIBD

Spec House for Thomas Griffing
(later ***Steve McQueen Residence***), 1963
Southridge, Palm Springs

Exterior elevations
Graphite on vellum

Longitudinal section and details of north wing
Graphite on vellum

View of interior staircase, showing rope handrail
Exhibition print
Photograph by Dan Chavkin, 2010

View toward front door from interior staircase
Exhibition print
Photograph by Dan Chavkin, 2010

Article about Kaptur's Via Lola Spec House in
Architectural Digest, Spring 1965
Palm Springs Art Museum Library Collection

"At Home in the Desert," article about the
Robert Leaver Residence from *The Los Angeles
Examiner Pictorial Living*, March 13, 1960
Hugh Kaptur Personal Collection

Hugh M. Kaptur, AIA, & Associates
William Holden Residence, 1977
Southridge, Palm Springs

Perspective view from the north
Mural-sized exhibition print

Southern view of terrace and pool
Silver gelatin print
Photograph by Erven Jourdan, c. 1978

View looking up hillside
Silver gelatin print
Photograph by Erven Jourdan, c. 1978

Exterior elevations and longitudinal section
Graphite on vellum

View of living room
Exhibition print
Photograph by Dan Chavkin, 2010

View of master bath
Exhibition print
Photograph by Dan Chavkin, 2010

The actor William Holden, whom Kaptur often describes as his favorite client, asked for a clean, contemporary home on the lot he owned in Southridge. He wanted room to display his collection of art and ethnographic objects, a flat roof so he could look over the house and down at the valley, and views of the mountains from every room. Kaptur gave him a long, low post-and-beam house sunk into the site so that it practically disappears from the street. Massive floor-to-ceiling windows and the long north-facing covered balcony maximize the views. Like the Griffing/McQueen Residence, the house opens up to the north and cantilevers over the hillside. Its swimming pool is set in a concrete terrace balanced at the very edge of the site with a diving board-like platform for an abstract bronze sculpture.

Hugh Kaptur, AIBD
Impala Lodge (now **Triangle Inn**), 1958
555 San Lorenzo Road, Palm Springs, 1958

“Indian Modern” mask designed by Kaptur
Painted plywood
Courtesy of Stephen Boyd and Michael Green/The Triangle Inn

Exterior elevations and longitudinal sections
Graphite on vellum

View of west facade
Exhibition print
Photograph by Dan Chavkin, 2019

View of main (north) facade
Exhibition print
Photograph by Dan Chavkin, 2019

The Impala Lodge, one of Kaptur’s first completed projects in Palm Springs, was designed as an apartment-hotel for Mrs. Fern V. Laurance. Kaptur designed a striking triangulated structure, visible from the street, to house Mrs. Laurance’s living quarters as well as the Lodge’s lobby and reception area. A large panel clad in native rock wraps around the east corner of the building, providing warmth and contrast to the large expanses of glass and exposed steel. The sloping form of the freestanding stone fireplace inside echoes the form of the building itself. As exterior décor and to shield the west façade from the intense afternoon sun, Kaptur designed a series of whimsical tribal masks that floated on steel rods. Several of the masks can be seen in the drawing of Elevation 1 (at the bottom right of the sheet shown here). In keeping with the lodge theme, Kaptur also designed Hawaiian-inspired steel “spears” to adorn the San Lorenzo and Random Road facades. Two four-unit post-and-beam structures, for the tenants, face each other across a landscaped courtyard, which together with the large pool, continues the angular motifs Kaptur established with the architecture.

Kaptur-Lapham & Associates
Frank and Joy Purcell Residence, 1969
The Mesa, Palm Springs

Exterior elevations
Graphite on vellum

Site plan
Photocopy on vellum

Views of front (north) elevation
Silver gelatin prints
Photographs by Erven Jourdan, c. 1969
Hugh Kaptur Personal Collection

The first example of what would become Kaptur’s mature stylistic language, this project was inspired by the indigenous architecture of the Southwest. Asked to remodel and add a second story to the couple’s existing house in the Mesa neighborhood, Kaptur seized the opportunity to investigate more solid forms of construction. Earthy, organic, and sculptural, the Purcell Residence is a direct antecedent to Casa Blanca Motor Hotel, Fire Station No. 4, and the Smoke Tree Racquet Club Condominiums, among others. Kaptur considers this building a more authentic example of pueblo style architecture than his 1974 Tahquitz Plaza I project, which while sharing some similarities is a more contemporary version.

Hugh Kaptur, AIBD
Kauai Apartments, 1961
623 Grenfall Road, Palm Springs

Site and floor plans and exterior elevation
Graphite on vellum

View of main elevation
Exhibition print
Photograph by Dan Chavkin, 2019

Kaptur designed this project—a five-unit apartment building—for Hollywood screenwriter Frank Ryhlick and his wife. Each of the one-bedroom apartments has a private patio and came furnished with Danish Modern furniture. The complex, with its dynamic wood-clad main building housing laundry and storage facilities, is often referred to as “Tahitian Modern” in style.

Hugh M. Kaptur, AIA, & Associates
Robert and Terry Samuel Residence,
mid-1990s (unbuilt)
Paradise Valley, Arizona

Architectural model and site plan
Mixed media

Like many of his later residential projects, Kaptur proposed a building with a circular double-height space and curving wings that embrace the landscape and pool area. The copper-clad roof echoes that of the home Kaptur designed for himself in the same period.

Kaptur and Cioffi, Architects
Paul and Kay Selzer Residence, 1988
Parc Andreas, Palm Springs

Exterior elevations
Graphite on vellum

Site and floor plans, displayed on the architect’s own drafting table
Graphite and colored pencil on tracing paper overlaid on hand-colored blueprint

Architectural model
Mixed media, fabricated 2019 by Glenn R. Johnson
Scale Models
Collection Palm Springs Art Museum,
Gift of Paul Kaplan Group

In 1985 when the Selzers asked Kaptur to design a Mediterranean-inspired French Provincial home, he responded with a low-slung residence inspired by the contemporary architecture he had seen in Mexico. A series of staggered pyramidal volumes add height and interest to the low body of the house, which features Kaptur’s familiar curved walls, deep-set windows, and sculptural chimneys. The central open-beamed pyramid marks the entry while the other two are capped with skylights and their vaulted ceilings provide lofty open interior spaces. The tracing paper drawing of site and floor plans displayed on Kaptur’s drafting table shows how the architect overlaid the transparent paper on an existing drawing as he explored various design options.

Kaptur-Lapham & Associates

Tahquitz Plaza I (formerly **Best, Best & Krieger**), 1974

600–650 East Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs

Perspective view of East Tahquitz Canyon Way

Elevation

Ink on vellum

Sections and details

Graphite on vellum

Perspective view of west section of complex

Watercolor on board, rendering by Purcell

In 1972, Kaptur-Lapham & Associates were hired by the law firm Best, Best & Krieger to design a commercial building complex on a prominent Tahquitz Canyon Way site. Both the law firm and the architects planned to open offices there. Kaptur designed two structures with long low-slung masses contrasted with angular soaring central volumes. The two central elements, which appear almost as mirror images of each other yet are offset, are joined by exposed beams to create a central plaza area. Because the site was zoned with a 30-foot height limit, Kaptur was able to create a composition of varied forms with a lively roofscape. His interest in creative window openings is shown to great effect here with asymmetrical groupings of horizontal and vertical apertures animating the sculptural stucco masses.

Kaptur-Lapham & Associates's Tahquitz Plaza II opened in 1977, creating a cohesive ensemble on Tahquitz Canyon Way. By the turn of this century, the complex had fallen into disrepair and was slated for demolition. Fortunately, the city voted to designate Tahquitz Plaza a Class 1 Historic Site and a sensitive renovation by Secoy Architects in close collaboration with Kaptur followed. The complex is now called Kaptur Plaza in the architect's honor.

Kaptur-Lapham & Associates

Arno and Marjorie Thies Residence, 1972

Eldorado Country Club, Indian Wells

View of main facade

Exhibition print

Photograph by Dan Chavkin, 2019

Perspective view of main facade

Graphite on vellum

View of living room

Exhibition print

Photograph by Dan Chavkin, 2019

Kaptur designed a long elegant volume clad in slump stone that opens up to both the pool and the lush landscape and mountain views beyond. Its pyramidal roof, barely visible from the street, creates a dramatic double-height living space inside. Originally featuring a red, white, and black-themed interior by Harold Broderick, the house was recently sensitively redone by Cardella Architecture + Design.

Hugh Kaptur, AIBD

Proposed Thunderbird Village Shopping Center,

early 1960s (unbuilt)

Cathedral City

Perspective view from southeast

Graphite on vellum

This dynamic early shopping center design is very similar to the commercial building Kaptur proposed for Palm Springs Panorama, a 1,000-acre planned community in north Palm Springs.

Hugh Kaptur
Hutton's Real Estate Office, 1953
550 North Coast Highway (now N. Camino Real),
San Clemente

Perspective view
Watercolor on board

Period photograph of completed building
Silver gelatin print
Photographer unknown, c. 1952

The design of Kaptur's first built project, a real estate office for his in-laws, with its triangular fin, sloping roof structure, and canted spider-leg beams presages several of his later projects including Impala Lodge. Before focusing on practicing architecture full-time, Kaptur obtained his real estate license and sold real estate for his in-laws on the weekends.

Hugh M. Kaptur, AIA
Kaptur Court, 2016
Little Tuscany, Palm Springs

*The Three Contemporary Kaptur-designed
Homes in Kaptur Court*
Exhibition prints
Photographs by Dan Chavkin, 2019

For this new development, Bradley Lorne Homes and Palm Springs Modern Homes sought a contemporary interpretation of a midcentury Kaptur home. The architect updated one of his earliest residential designs with larger floor plans and higher ceilings. The intersecting volumes and lively rooflines are classic Kaptur.

Kaptur-Lapham & Associates
Alan Ladd Hardware (now **The Five Hundred**), 1968
500 South Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs

View of South Palm Canyon Drive elevation
Exhibition print
Photograph by Dan Chavkin, 2014

Views of interior, second floor
Silver gelatin prints
Photographs by Harold "Buzz" Waltz, c. 1969

Exterior view of main elevation
Silver gelatin print
Photograph by Harold "Buzz" Waltz, c. 1969

Night view of main elevation
Silver gelatin print
Photograph by Harold "Buzz" Waltz, c. 1969

Although Larry Lapham had developed the basic design for this project before he and Kaptur joined forces, Kaptur suggested some revisions that strengthened the project. Kaptur's contributions included exposing the beams, squaring off the arches, and canting the openings. The Alan Ladd Hardware, with interiors by Arthur Elrod and William Raiser, was a Palm Springs fixture for many years before it closed in 2002. Established by the actor Alan Ladd and local builder Bob Higgins in 1956, the glamorous hardware store sold everything from nuts and bolts to sequined screwdrivers.

Hugh Kaptur, AIBD
Spec House for Joe Pawling (also known as the **Pete Siva Residence**), 1958
Palisades Drive, Palm Springs

Interior view
Exhibition print
Photograph by Dan Chavkin, 2013

View of living room, looking to southeast
Exhibition print
Photograph by Dan Chavkin, 2013

In 1957 Palm Springs builder Joe Pawling purchased several parcels of land, and the partially built Palisades Drive, which leads up the mountain from the end of Tahquitz Road. Originally meant to be part of a much larger subdivision, the Palisades Drive parcels purchased by Pawling offer spectacular views and sit just below where architect Albert Frey would later build his iconic *Frey House II*. For this parcel, Pawling called on Kaptur to design a simple two-bedroom post-and-beam house that he would offer for sale upon completion. The house is built right up to the mountain and offers sweeping views over the city. Tribal leader Pete Siva bought the house from Pawling but only lived there for a few years. The current owners, Liz and Mark Ostoich, are working with Kaptur on a guest house for an adjacent property. It should be noted that Albert Frey worked on the house in later years, adding the pool and distinctive sunshades to the east facade.

Super Decathlon model airplane, late 1980s
Mixed media

This model plane, which can be flown using a remote control, is similar to the Citabria aerobatic plane that Kaptur once owned. It took him a year to build and, while based on a kit, he customized it with details like the wheels, the paint colors, and the miniature map that lies folded on the cockpit dashboard. As a child, Kaptur loved to build model planes and continued this hobby into adulthood. He learned to fly in the Air Force and owned, and flew, several planes over the years. He often says that building model planes is what first got him interested in architecture.

Hugh M. Kaptur, AIA, & Associates
Lindy Lou's Coffee Shop, 1977
211 East Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs

Exterior street views
Silver gelatin print
Photographs by Harold "Buzz" Waltz, c. 1978

In 1977 Kaptur remodeled this pancake house and coffee shop, giving it his organic sculptural treatment. A warm palette, curved walls and bays with a heavy textured stucco gave this Palm Springs establishment a fresh contemporary look. Sadly, the building was demolished in the 1990s.

Hugh Michael Kaptur, Architect
PowerPoint presentation by Patrick McGrew, 2010

Patrick McGrew (1941–2013) created this presentation about Kaptur's life and work for a talk he gave during the museum's Architecture and Design Council lecture series. An author and architect, McGrew was a tireless and passionate advocate for historic preservation and was the first to document and educate the public about the work of Hugh Kaptur.

Hugh M. Kaptur, AIA, & Associates
Proposal for New Downtown Project,
c. 2010 (unbuilt)
Palm Springs

Massing model and site plan
Mixed media

After plans were announced to demolish the Desert Fashion Plaza, Kaptur created a design for what he thought should replace it. His vision for the site, located across from Palm Springs Art Museum between Museum and Palm Canyon Drives, divides the land into four quadrants, each occupied by a pyramidal building to house retail, residential, and hospitality uses. The building forms echo the mountains to the west and the setbacks maximize light and views while also providing shaded pedestrian ways at street level. Kaptur's design, while sensitive to the context, was never seriously entertained.

Elevation studies for Casa Blanca Motor Hotel,
c. 1970, Exhibition print,
Hugh Kaptur Personal Collection

Casa Blanca Motor Hotel advertisement,
Palm Springs Life, September 1970, Exhibition print,
Hugh Kaptur Personal Collection

View of interior court showing pool,
Casa Blanca Motor Hotel
Photograph by Erven Jourdan, early 1970s
Hugh Kaptur Personal Collection

View of Aquarius Hotel (now Smoke Tree Racquet
Club Condominiums) from the south,
Silver gelatin print,
Photograph by Erven Jourdan, c. 1974

Press release from Bethlehem Steel Company
about Thomas Griffing Spec House (Steve McQueen
Residence), June 1964, Exhibition print
Hugh Kaptur Personal Collection

The Thomas Griffing Spec House (Steve McQueen
Residence) under construction,
unknown photographer, c. 1961–62
Hugh Kaptur Personal Collection

Kaptur-Lapham & Associates

Aquarius Hotel

(now ***Smoke Tree Racquet Club Condominiums***), 1973

1655 East Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs

View from the north of main elevations

Exhibition print

Photograph by Erven Jourdan, c. 1974

Kaptur was commissioned to design new elevations for existing site and interior floor plans for the 128-unit Aquarius Condominium-Hotel after the original project was turned down by the city. His elevations, designed not long after the completion of Casa Blanca Motor Hotel, are pueblo-inspired in style with stark sculptural massing. This photograph shows how the original off-white heavy stucco walls and unusual window and door surrounds stood out against the majestic mountain backdrop. The condominium complex, now known as Smoke Tree Racquet Club thanks to an adjacent tennis facility designed by Kaptur several years later, is now painted in a desert palette of dusty greens and browns.

Hugh M. Kaptur, AIA

Ralph and Kay Hemingway Residence, 1998 (unbuilt)

Big Horn Country Club, Palm Desert

Architectural model

Mixed media

This creative design shares many similarities with Kaptur's other residential projects of the 1990s. Organic in form, the building's three distinct circular volumes are united by a curvaceous roof structure with openings in key locations to bring light inside. The sinuous form of the house wraps around the pool and landscape.

An article on “Theme Architecture” from
Architecture California, featuring comments by
Hugh Kaptur, September/October 1986
Exhibition print, Hugh Kaptur Personal Collection

Hugh Kaptur in his office, 1960s
Exhibition print, Photographer unknown
Hugh Kaptur Personal Collection

Article with photograph of Hugh Kaptur and Larry
Lapham, *Palm Springs Life*, September 1972
Exhibition print, Hugh Kaptur Personal Collection

Hugh Kaptur (center) and friends with model
airplanes, c. 1941, Exhibition print from original
snapshot, Photographer unknown
Hugh Kaptur Personal Collection

Page from Royal Air brochure showing a project
rendering by Kaptur for Wexler & Harrison
architecture firm, c. 1956
Exhibition print, Hugh Kaptur Personal Collection

On view on lower level:

Hugh Michael Kaptur, Architect
slide show by Patrick McGrew

Hugh Kaptur
Hutton’s Real Estate Office, 1953
550 North Coast Highway (now N. Camino Real),
San Clemente

Perspective view
Colored pencil and crayon on board

Period photograph of completed building
Silver gelatin print
Photographer unknown, c. 1953

The design of Kaptur’s first built project, a real estate office for his in-laws, with its triangular fin, sloping roof structure, and canted spider-leg beams presages several of his later projects including Impala Lodge. Before focusing on practicing architecture full-time, Kaptur obtained his real estate license and sold real estate for his in-laws on the weekends.