

100 Years of Living Modern in Sarasota

Sarasota is celebrating **100 years of the Sarasota School of Architecture**, a regional movement that helped redefine modern living in Florida and establish the city as an important center of design innovation.

The Sarasota School was never an actual school. It was a loosely connected group of architects, designers, builders and patrons who believed buildings should respond to Florida's climate, light and landscape.

During its defining period, roughly **1941 to 1966**, architects including **Ralph Twitchell, Paul Rudolph, Victor Lundy, Jack West, Tim Seibert, Gene Leedy and William Rupp** created homes, churches, schools and civic buildings designed for Sarasota's subtropical setting.

Long before "indoor-outdoor living" became a familiar design phrase, they used open floor plans, walls of glass, shaded terraces, cross-ventilation and deep roof overhangs to create buildings that felt light, breathable and connected to their surroundings.

Notable examples include Paul Rudolph's **Umbrella House** in Lido Shores; Victor Lundy's **Blue Pagoda** and **Bee Ridge Presbyterian Church**; Tim Seibert's **Hiss Studio**; Jack West's **Sarasota City Hall**; and the **McCulloch Pavilion** by William Rupp and Joseph Farrell.

The **Cocoon House**, also known as the Healy Guest House, was designed by Ralph Twitchell and Paul Rudolph in 1950 on Siesta Key. Its name comes from its innovative curved roof, originally coated with a sprayed vinyl material adapted from technology used by the military to protect equipment from the weather.

The **Sarasota Art Museum** also brings this architectural history into the present through the adaptive reuse of the former Sarasota High School campus. The museum's Bistro and Thomas McGuire Hall occupy Paul Rudolph's 1959 Vocational Shops building, preserving an important Sarasota School structure while giving it a vibrant new purpose.

Together, these buildings demonstrate the movement's remarkable range while sharing a central idea: architecture should belong to its place.

That philosophy continues to influence Sarasota homes today. Open living areas, expansive windows, covered outdoor spaces and seamless connections to pools, gardens and water views remain among the features buyers value most.

To me, this architecture is part of what makes Sarasota feel like Sarasota.

The buildings are inventive, light-filled and deeply connected to their surroundings. Even those unfamiliar with the term "Sarasota School" often respond instinctively to the openness, natural light and easy transition between indoors and outdoors.

That sense of place is one of the qualities we value most when helping clients explore Sarasota's distinctive homes and neighborhoods.

MOD Weekend 2026

[Architecture Sarasota](#) will celebrate this legacy during **MOD Weekend, November 13–15, 2026**, with tours, talks and special programs exploring modern architecture and design.

MOD Weekend offers an opportunity to experience Sarasota's architectural history firsthand and see how the movement's original ideas continue to influence preservation, residential design and community planning.

One hundred years later, the Sarasota School remains a living tradition—and a reminder that the best architecture does more than look beautiful. It understands where it is and helps people live more fully within that place.

Sources and Further Reading

- [Architecture Sarasota: Sarasota School of Architecture](#)
- [Architecture Sarasota: MOD Weekend](#)
- [Sarasota Art Museum: Museum Architecture](#)
- [Paul Rudolph Institute: The Umbrella House](#)
- [Paul Rudolph Institute: The Cocoon House](#)
- [Seibert Architects: Hiss Studio](#)
- [Bee Ridge Presbyterian Church: Main Sanctuary](#)
- [The MIT Press: *The Sarasota School of Architecture, 1941–1966*](#)