

[scott ingram, artist statement - modernism/architecture II. 2007.](#)

In this exhibition I focus on two buildings, a residential structure and a commercial one, both located in Los Angeles, California. The Eames House (also known as Case Study House #8) was built in 1949 by husband and wife designers Charles and Ray Eames as their house and studio. The Firestone Store was constructed in 1958 and was used as a commercial space. What drew me to these two structures is how similar building materials and aesthetics can result in such vastly different interpretations in architecture.

Architecture, like art, has movements and periods defined by styles, characteristics, and materials. I have been particularly interested in Mid-century modern architecture that was born in California from a design competition hosted by Art & Architecture magazine. This was the Case Study program (1945-1966) initiated at the end of World War II in response to the housing boom. The challenge to major architects of the day was to design and build inexpensive and efficient modal homes.

These architects, such as Richard Neutra, Eero Saarinen, Pierre Koenig, and Charles and Ray Eames, whose house and studio appear in this exhibition, responded to the challenge by utilizing inexpensive and readily available materials that were typically reserved for commercial and industrial uses. These materials included steel, glass, and concrete and often employed I-beams and elaborate cantilevered-construction to make the most of sites that were not well-suited for building.

Both structures are constructed of concrete, steel, and glass and use I-beams as the main structural element. In the Firestone Store the I-beam creates a regular, rhythmic division of the building's façade into alternating red and white sections that draw attention to the unbroken span of the building as it sits flat on the ground. The Eames House on the other hand has interspersed the steel, concrete, and glass in a seemingly random pattern of primary colored panels and glass. The house is actually divided into two structures, the studio set back into the hill, so that the house responds to its natural environment without taking over the space.

This same relationship to space can be seen in my work. The Firestone building, which was one, long horizontal structure that commanded attention from the street, here sits flat and long on the wall much in the same way it sat on the street. The Eames House, which respected its environment and broke up its mass into two structures, here creates the same idea of depth by offsetting the constructed elements.

Both structures play with rhythm, the Eames House in a more complicated way than the Firestone building. Both buildings use color as part of their rhythmic composition. The Eames House calls to mind the design work of Gerrit Reitveld and the paintings of Piet Mondrian while the Firestone building recalls the simplified deconstruction of objects by Bart van der Leek and the minimalism of Donald Judd.

Not unlike the process an architect takes from inspiration, to design, to construction, this series of architectural drawings and painted constructions shows a similar process. However, while the architect amasses shapes and forms to create his structures, I am breaking buildings down to their most basic elements. I begin by examining the final constructed building; then I dissect it, strip it down, and minimize it to uncover its most basic shapes, elements, and forms. This is where I find the beauty in the architecture.

emily murphy – art

I then begin with very simple drawings and constructions on graph paper that capture the basic shapes of the structure and their relationship to one another—is it square or rectangular, do the roof lines meet or is there a height difference, does part of the building sit behind itself. It is with these drawings that I find the final concept for the constructed paintings. It is with the paintings that I play with materials - MDF, concrete, steel, aluminum, plexiglas - and begin to add detail back into the structure through color, line, the application of paint, and the definition of surfaces.

Without context, the final painted construction may or may not resemble the original building. The intent is not to recreate the structure, but to offer another context through which to appreciate the form.