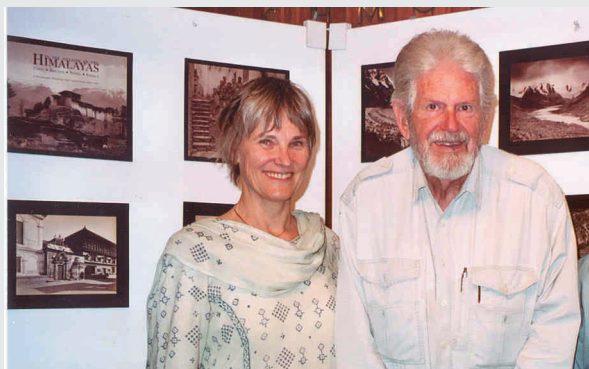


California

Los Angeles: Swiss Explorer and Architect Kurt Meyer



Kurt and Pamela Meyer at a book launch in New Delhi India (the publisher is in India), with some old photos from the book in the background

"There are two kinds of architects," Swiss-born and ETH-educated architect Kurt Meyer explains. "Some create sculptural monuments and others design to serve the needs and function of the structure." Kurt Meyer identifies with the latter. A man influenced by Le Corbusier, you detect architectural Zeitgeist. Post WWII the young architect immigrated to Pennsylvania, where he found the colonial style boring. A friend suggested new horizons in California. Meyer and his young wife journeyed Route 66 in an old Chevy, arriving in Santa Monica in 1949 with a few dollars to their name.



San Bernardino County Government building

Kurt soon joined an architectural firm. When colleagues suggested founding their own company, he became the architect-entrepreneur he is known as today. His signature buildings

include the San Bernardino County Government Center, Redlands University core buildings,

Huntington Beach City Hall, the Air Quality Control building in Diamond Bar and the Plaza de la Raza in Los Angeles. Deeply committed to his community, he was Chairman of the Los Angeles Redevelopment Agency under Mayor Tom Bradley and Chairman of the Board of the Southern California Institute of Architecture [SCI-Arc]. A Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, the Swiss architect continues to visit his creations, where occupants still praise his design.

Kurt explains that he is now in his second lifetime. As a boy in Zurich he was captivated by the Himalaya. At age 13, he was given a book for Christmas about Tibet, which he read in one night. He yearned to see the region for himself. In the 1970s, after the political climate eased, he made his first trip to "his" Himalaya. He knew he would return. Single again, one day he met Pamela Deuel, a writer. She too had toured the

Himalaya. On their second date he gave Pamela a visa application for Nepal. In 1992 Kurt sold his architectural firm; the couple traded their comfortable life style for a jeep, tent and local guide and explored the Himalayas for the next nine years in search of local folk art. Invited by friendly farmers they pitched their tent in farmyards. One village wondered if Kurt might be a deity. Sharing Kurt's yen to explore, Pamela was the ideal partner and collaborator. They took photos and published books about the artistic Tharu culture of Nepal. Kurt explains: "Art has a different purpose in the Himalaya: the meaning is in its creation. The finished product is



Pamela with a Nepali woman, both in native dress

obsolete. I call it 'art without artists.' " When you hear Kurt talk, you want to listen. During

the monsoon months, the couple went to Switzerland, England and the USA, to research and write up their findings. They collected rare photographs of the Himalaya taken around 1900 by Englishman John Claude White. Writing the story behind the images, the Meyers published the historic photos in their book: *In the Shadow of the Himalayas: Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal and Sikkim* (2005).

Today the couple lives in Los Angeles, naturally in a Kurt-Meyer design. Their beautiful home radiates flair for color. Memories from their Himalayan explora-



Kurt taking a photo of wall mural in a Nepali village

tions are mixed with Swiss cow bells. In the garden you find a Heidi fountain. Some of us may remember Kurt Meyer as an active early member of the Grindelwald Ski Club. A co-founder was Swiss astrophysicist Fritz Zwicky of Cal-Tech. The Swiss-American Club of Los Angeles was born, the pre-cursor of the Swiss American Chamber of Commerce. Kurt Meyer is truly a Swiss pioneer who has left his mark in his second Heimat.

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San Francisco: INOUT Designers Exhibit at AIA SF

The young Swiss design group INOUT, based in Lausanne, brings an exhibit of their work that (re)designs urban landscapes. INOUT designers have partnered with the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects along with swissnex San Francisco to bring this unique exhibit to the West Coast.

AIA San Francisco
130 Sutter St, Suite 600
San Francisco, CA 94104
(Thursday, November 1, 2007
5:30 pm - Vernissage)