

History of American Architecture: Eero Saarinen and His Circle
Reading List and Resources

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Dear Friend of the Center,

Thank you for joining our recent *History of American Architecture: Eero Saarinen and His Circle* lecture series. I hope you enjoyed the weekly lectures. I know I enjoyed learning more about one of my favorite architects, and the world in which he operated—and I especially enjoyed sharing what I learned with you.

The following resources will help you read and discover even more about Eero Saarinen and the other architects, designers, and thinkers I discussed in the course. I have included the books I found most useful or most beautiful as I prepared each lecture.

The list is organized by general Eero Saarinen monographs or catalogs first, followed by specific books I used for each week's case study building and associated designers. I have bolded the book titles I most strongly recommend. Some are long out of print and may be difficult or expensive to find online; all are available in Cranbrook Archives (open by appointment) or in Cranbrook Academy of Art Library (which will, hopefully, reopen to public visitors soon).

If you would like to rewatch any lectures you missed, simply email center@cranbrook.edu and we can share the link.

If you know someone who would enjoy watching the lecture series, I am happy to let you know that we can send out a recording of the event. The ticket price remains at \$75, and the link to view the lecture can be purchased by emailing center@cranbrook.edu. Your support of the Center allows us to continue to research, preserve, and share the many stories of Cranbrook with audiences around the world.

Thank you for joining me for the lecture series, and for the many kind words of encouragement along the way—as well as your helpful suggestions, insightful questions, personal reminiscences, and pronunciation guides. I always appreciate hearing from you. While I regretted not seeing you in person in De Salle Auditorium, I was thrilled the course could reach such a wide and geographically diverse audience.

Thank you again, and I hope you find this list to be of use,

Kevin Adkisson
Curator

WAYS TO LEARN MORE ABOUT CRANBROOK AND STAY IN TOUCH WITH THE CENTER

Live at Five Virtual Tours

On select Wednesdays on the Center's Facebook page ([Cranbrook Center for Collections and Research](#)), I go "Live at Five" (5:00pm EST) with a tour about Cranbrook's art, architecture, or history.

The backlog of these tours (which number over 100!) is available on Instagram or Facebook, but is most easily accessible via the Center's [YouTube channel](#). Previous topics have included many aspects of Eero Saarinen's life and work at Cranbrook.

Cranbrook Kitchen Sink Blog

Each Friday, the Center for Collections and Research publishes the [Kitchen Sink Blog](#). Authored by our curator, registrar, archivists, fellow, or Collections Interpreters, articles highlight the diverse areas of Cranbrook's rich history in art, science, education, and religion, as well as the achievements of our many artists and alumni. The blogs I write tend to be concerned with architecture, and there are many past blogs about Eero Saarinen. Simply search "Eero Saarinen" on the Kitchen Sink website and read what piques your interest!

You can [subscribe](#) to receive the blog in your inbox every Friday.

Cranbrook Archives

Cranbrook Archives, a part of Cranbrook Center for Collections and Research, is the repository for tens of thousands of documents, photographs, manuscripts, and ephemera on the history of Cranbrook, our architects and designers, and alumni. I relied on the Archives for my research into aspects of Eero Saarinen's personal life and career. You can see the Archives' [finding aids here](#), and explore close to 10,000 images from Cranbrook's past on our [digital image database](#).

In-Person Cranbrook Tours

Cranbrook's Saarinen House and Wright-designed Smith House will reopen to visitors this May. If you are in the area, consider booking a ticket for a small, staff-guided [tour](#)! Tours will continue through Thanksgiving.

And More!

We are always planning additional programming. Make sure to keep your eye out on the Center emails for our announcements of future events and lectures!

READING LIST

The Best Eero Saarinen Books

De Long, David and C. Ford Peatross, eds., *Eero Saarinen: Buildings from the Balthazar Korab Archive* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008).

Balthazar Korab was an architect and photographer for Eero Saarinen and Associates, and this book includes the best images of his works now held in Korab's archives at the Library of Congress. The images are also all online (and probably look better than in the book), but it is nice to see them in print and the essay from De Long is excellent. See the images here: <https://www.loc.gov/search/?in=&q=saarinen+korab&new=true&st=grid>

Ford, Edward R. *The Details of Modern Architecture, Volume 2: 1928-1988* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1996).

This book analyzes the construction details of buildings by both Eliel and Eero Saarinen, along with Gunnar Asplund, Richard Neutra, Alvar Aalto, Le Corbusier, Louis Kahn, and others. For Eliel, Ford analyzes the structural systems used at Cranbrook. For Eero, he examines the Case Study Houses, GM Tech Center, MIT, the Arch, Yale's hockey rink, TWA, Dulles, and John Deere. The writing makes very technical details clear and digestible, and the author produced many interesting drawings to help explain how modern architectural building systems function.

Knight, Richard, *Saarinen's Quest: A Memoir* (San Francisco: William Stout Publishers, 2008).

This wonderful book best captures what it was like to work for Eero Saarinen and Associates. In addition to being a first-hand account of the office from its photographer, the photographs of models in various stages and of office culture are invaluable to understanding the firm.

Lutz, Brian, *Eero Saarinen: Furniture for Everyman* (New York: Pointed Leaf Press, 2012).

This devilishly hard book to find is big, beautiful, and fascinating. It is focused solely on Saarinen's furniture, and goes quite in-depth into the process of designing and fabricating Saarinen's early furniture at Cranbrook and his more famous Knoll products. If you can't find a copy (I can't find one for myself!), Lutz's *Knoll* book (below) features much of the same information, if in less granular detail and with far fewer illustrations.

Merkel, Jayne, *Eero Saarinen* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2005).

This is the best biography and the best analysis of the complete works of Eero Saarinen. Merkel writes beautifully and clearly, and the text is perfectly, and lavishly, illustrated. One of the first books to market after Eero Saarinen and Associates' archives were donated to Yale, this book is fascinating to read and fills in many of the missing spots of my own lecture series. It discusses all the buildings from the firm in just the right amount of detail, and, arranged roughly chronologically by building type, has a very smooth flow. I love this book and recommend you adding it to your bookshelf!

Pelkonen, Eva-Liisa and Donald Albrecht, eds., *Eero Saarinen: Shaping the Future* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

This is my favorite Eero Saarinen book. It is sweeping and vast in scope and was (concurrent with Jayne Merkel's book) one of the first major scholarly works on Saarinen produced since the 1960s. As such, the dozen or so essays cover a lot of ground from many different angles. There are analytical essays followed by a project portfolio, and then essays covering different building types. In the back, there is a gloriously detailed chronology, interviews, and a selection of Saarinen's own writings. It is an amazing book to learn more about Saarinen, and is much more scholarly than others on this list.

Price, Cathy, *Saarinen/Swanson Reunion Proceedings* (Bloomfield Hills, Mich.: Cranbrook, 2001).

These are the annotated proceedings of the largest Eero Saarinen and Associates reunion, held at Cranbrook in August 1995. There are lots of interesting memories shared about working with the Saarinens. Copies are available in the Cranbrook Academy library, and the (much, much longer) original transcripts and written responses are held in Cranbrook Archives (available by appointment).

Saarinen, Aline B., ed., *Eero Saarinen on His Work* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968).

This beautiful book features a collection of Eero's speeches and writings (uncited, frustratingly) paired with drawings, model photographs, and Ezra Stoller's building photography. While documenting Eero's writings (which can be more easily read elsewhere), it is, to me, more fascinating as a glimpse into Aline's sense of what was important from her husband's career. It is also an award-winning piece of book art, with a widely celebrated design by Carl Purington Rollins Press.

Westbrook, Adele and Anne Yarowky, eds., *Design in America: The Cranbrook Vision 1925-1950* (New York: The Detroit Institute of Arts and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1983).

The "Cranbrook Bible," this is *the* book to get if you want to know more about Cranbrook Academy of Art in the broadest sense: a history of the community, including our architecture, followed by a history of each major artistic practice (sculpture, furniture, ceramics, textiles, metals, etc.). Eero Saarinen is given context within the larger Cranbrook circle which he matured in as a teenager, and returned to as a young architect working alongside his father and Academy students like Charles Eames, Ralph Rapson, Harry Weese, Harry Bertoina, and Florence Knoll.

Wittkopp, Gregory, ed., *Saarinen House and Garden: A Total Work of Art* (New York: Abrams, 1995).

To learn more about Cranbrook's president's residence, designed by Eliel Saarinen with textiles by Studio Loja Saarinen, designs by Pipsan Saarinen Swanson, furniture by Eero Saarinen and J. Robert F. Swanson, come on a tour of the house, or buy this excellent book.

Week One: Kleinhans Music Hall

Carter, Brian, *Kleinhans Music Hall* (Buffalo: School of Architecture and Planning, University of Buffalo, The State University of New York, 2013).

This small book is one of the few dedicated to Kleinhans, and provides cultural and community insight into the building of the concert hall.

For most of this lecture, I had to rely on the above Eero Saarinen monographs (particularly Jayne Merkel and *Shaping the Future*) as Kleinhans has not been extensively published elsewhere.

Week Two: General Motors Technical Center

Lutz, Brian, *Knoll: A Modernist Universe* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2010).

This fantastically illustrated, exhaustive history of Knoll—Hans, Florence, and the company they created—tells the transatlantic tale of this iconic Modernist furniture empire. Great biographical details and a rich history of each Knoll product line.

Sandhaus, Louise and Kat Catmur, *A Colorful Life: Gere Kavanaugh, Designer* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2019).

This is, as the title suggests, a very colorful book about one of Cranbrook's great midcentury design graduates. Kavanaugh's career in Los Angeles is the major focus of the book, but her Cranbrook and General Motors years are also featured. A really great read about a lesser-known figure, who should be better known!

Skarsgard, Susan, *Where Today Meets Tomorrow: Eero Saarinen and the General Motors Technical Center* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2019).

This excellent, beautifully designed and illustrated text traces the history of the Tech Center through the corporate archives. Following the intersecting histories of GM and the Saarinen family, it is the construction photographs and images from around the time of the complex's dedication that stand out most to me.

Twitchell, Beverly H., *Bertoia: The Metalworker* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2019).

This might be the most physically beautiful book on my list. Wonderful biographical and curatorial essays are interspersed with historic, architectural, and contemporary images of Harry Bertoia's work. There are multiple Harry Bertoia books on the market, I found this one included almost everything covered in earlier Bertoia tomes, and more.

Wilson, Ian Gabriel, *Ruth Adler Schnee: Modern Designs for Living* (Bloomfield Hills, Mich.: Cranbrook Art Museum, 2019).

This catalog chronicles of the life of Ruth Adler Schnee (who sourced the executive dining room at the Tech Center) from her youth in Germany, teenage years in Detroit, studies at RISD and Cranbrook, and long career in home retail and textile design. The bulk of the book is a full-color inventory of her printed textiles.

Week Three: Irwin J. and Xenia S. Miller House

Brooks, Bradley C., *Miller House and Garden* (New York: Assouline Publishing, 2011).

This is the museum guide to Miller House, published on the occasion of it opening as a museum through the Indianapolis Museum of Art. It is a nice, short essay, followed by wonderful color photography.

Friedman, Alice T., *Women and the Making of the Modern House: A Social and Architectural History* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers, 1998).

Although this book doesn't include the Miller House directly, Friedman presents an in-depth study of women's role as client, designer, and resident of modern architecture. This cultural study of famed architectural designs brings to life many of the issues that take place outside of the architect's drafting table and the glossy photographs of a finished building. I found this book very helpful for understanding Xenia Miller's role as patron and collaborator in the building of Miller House.

Indianapolis Museum of Art Archives

The Miller House archives have been completely digitized, and may be one of the best digital archives I have ever used. Simply search "Girard" or "Miller House" and click through so, so many beautiful things!

<http://archive.imamuseum.org/>

Kawsky, Deborah Lubera, *Alexander Girard, Architect* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2018).

The first study of Girard's Detroit house designs in Grosse Pointe, Kawsky traces the architect-designer's journey to Detroit, his efforts producing the *For Modern Living* exhibition at the DIA, and his four homes in Grosse Pointe. Well-illustrated with important, but largely forgotten, projects from Detroit's immediate post-War period.

Kiley, Dan and Jane Amidon, *Dan Kiley: The Complete Works of America's Master Landscape Architect* (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1999).

The main monograph of Kiley, written by Kiley, is a great way to see the breadth of the career of this landscape architect whose journey began (essentially) at Miller House. It is, unfortunately, rather rambling and self-aggrandizing.

Kries, Mateo and Jochen Eisenbrand, eds., *Alexander Girard: A Designer's Universe* (Weil am Rein, Germany: Vitra Design Museum, 2016).

This inspiring exhibition catalog traces Girard's career from his childhood in Florence and London, to work in New York and Detroit and finally to Santa Fe, tracing his prolific output along the way. Buy this book if you see it! You'll not regret having it (I still can't find an English language edition).

Miller, Xenia, ed., *Columbus, Indiana: A Look at Architecture* (Columbus, Indiana: Visitors Center, 1998).

This is *the* guide to the art and architecture of Columbus. Buy a copy before you go, or pick one up at the visitor's center, but make sure you have it on-hand when you visit Columbus. It is really well researched and well written, and covers all the Cummins Foundation projects, and then some. First published in 1974, I used the 1998 edition of the guidebook because of its Paul Rand cover design. There are more recent editions.

Oldham, Todd and Kiera Coffee, *Alexander Girard* (Los Angeles: AMMO Books, 2011).

With rich, full page, full color photography from Girard's archives at Vitra, this book is a joy to flip through and, if you can manage to hold it up, fascinating to read, too. Probably the most detailed book of Girard's work. The book comes in two sizes, large and huge. Incidentally, this book, which I got at Barney's Sample Sale in 2013 in TriBeCa, was my introduction to Girard.

Week Four: Trans World Airlines Flight Center

Gordon, Alastair, *Naked Airport: A Cultural History of the World's Most Revolutionary Structure* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008).

This breezy history of airports covers a lot of ground in about 300 pages: a history of aviation, airport architecture, and terminal logistics. It doesn't go satisfyingly deep into any one aspect of airport design or any one airport, but instead makes one think about the entire, global sweep of aviation architecture. I loved it.

Ringli, Kornel, *Designing TWA: Eero Saarinen's Airport Terminal in New York* (Zurich: Park Books AG, 2015)

This is a cultural history of the TWA Flight Center and focuses on the branding of the airline and press attention to the terminal more than its architectural design and construction. It is worth perusing (or owning) for the photographs alone. It also features the only oral history interviews I found with the engineers of the building, and excellent long interviews with Kevin Roche and Cesar Pelli—published in their entirety. (It is cheapest to purchase this book through the TWA Hotel gift shop than anywhere else).

Whitehead, Rob “Saarinen’s Shells: The Evolving Influence of Engineering and Construction” in Clifton Fordham, ed., *Constructing Building Enclosures: Architectural History, Technology and Poetics in the Postwar Era* (New York: Routledge, 2021).

This chapter examines Saarinen’s working relationship with Amann & Whitney, and the development of Saarinen’s thin-shell concrete construction at MIT, TWA, and Dulles. Nerdy.

Week Five: CBS Building

Archives of American Art, Aline and Eero Saarinen papers, 1906-1977.

<https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/aline-and-eero-saarinen-papers-5589>

This robust, and largely digitized, archival collection includes many of Aline Saarinen’s speeches, notes, letters, photographs, and other writings. Spend some time clicking through the collection, particularly the correspondence with Eero, and you’ll be richly rewarded:

If you don’t have time to explore on your own, the archivist have written some charming blogs, too: <https://www.aaa.si.edu/blog/2018/02/love-letters-to-michigan>

Dal Co, Francesco, *Kevin Roche* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1985).

This monograph captures Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo and Associates at a critical moment, with close to 25 years of experience as a partnership after Eero Saarinen’s death. KRJDA were, in the mid-1980s, the corporate architects of choice, and this monograph explores the firm’s work from immediately after Eero’s passing (Oakland Museum, Ford Foundation) through to the proposed mega-corporate suburban headquarters and skyscrapers of the 1980s. It also includes a long interview with Kevin Roche about his education, philosophy, and outlook on architecture.

Gallanti, Fabrizio, "Aline and the Empty Screen," *Interwoven* magazine, n.d.

<http://kvadratinterwoven.com/aline-and-the-empty-screen>

I thoroughly enjoyed this article about Aline Saarinen. While there is so much to read about Eero Saarinen online or in magazines that I've not included, considering the shameful dearth of material about Aline, I've included this article here.

Hagberg, Eva, *When Eero Met His Match: Aline Louchheim Saarinen and the Making of an Architect* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2022).

To be released this September, I eagerly await Hagberg's adaptation of her UC Berkeley doctoral thesis on Aline Saarinen into a 250-page biography. Order it now, I am certain it is going to be a fascinating read!

In the meantime, enjoy this article from *Architect* magazine by the same author:
https://www.architectmagazine.com/practice/the-untold-story-of-aline-louchheim-saarinen_o

Saarinen, Aline B. *The Proud Possessors: The Lives, Times and Tastes of Some Adventurous American Art Collectors* (New York: Random House, 1958).

Aline's most successful and popular book, it is an intriguing and joyful (if perhaps dated) read! It is the story of the development of 'taste' in American art collections from the end of the 19th century to the mid-20th century, and focuses on the prominent personalities behind the collections (including Isabella Stewart Gardner, Charles Lang Freer, Electra Havemeyer Webb, Peggy Guggenheim, and the Rockefellers). I read half and skimmed half, and enjoyed myself fully!