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Blue Haven: The Carter Williams Home

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Early Modernist Jewel:

ARCHITECT CARTER WILLIAMS' "BLUE HAVEN" IN LOVING HANDS

Many fine examples of Raleigh's well-known reputation for family friendly suburban communities are found west of center city. If you turn off Leesville Road to Rest Haven Drive, you wend your way through gently rolling topography and an enclave of handsome transitional residences. But tucked away behind a curving driveway concealed from the street is one of Raleigh's acknowledged early Modernist jewels: Blue Haven. The home, named for its distinctive Carolina Blue Stone, was constructed in 1959 by Raleigh architect F. Carter Williams as his personal residence and is considered by many to be his signature work.

Current owner Jill Maurer (there have only been three owners) opened the glass-flanked double entry doors with a cheery, "Welcome to Blue Haven." Maurer, a software entrepreneur and mother of two young boys, is an enthusiastic admirer of Modernist architecture. She has collected art and furnishings of the early Modernist period to complement the home's architecture and unique interior appointments. She is also a fan of the late Williams, noting not only his impressive architectural career, but also his many civic contributions, including serving in virtually every elective office in the North Carolina Chapter of the AIA between 1947 and 1975.

Carter Williams

Williams, a North Carolina native and 1935 graduate of what was then North Carolina State College, received an architectural degree from the University of Illinois in 1939. He returned to Raleigh and to his old alma mater as an assistant professor in the department of architecture. By 1940, Williams had established his own architectural firm, one that endured and thrived until the late 1990s. Maurer sums up his vitality: "In 2000, at age 88 Carter shot an 88 in a round of golf, came home and died at his desk where he was writing change of address cards." Quite a final act for a practicing architect who, before his retirement in 1991, had designed and overseen hundreds of projects, including schools, offices, banks, churches, hospitals, government buildings, homes and apartments. In a study called, "Post-World War II and Modern

Architecture in Raleigh, North Carolina, 1945-1965," Ruth Little concludes: "It is safe to say that Williams' elegant understated modernism had a bigger impact on Raleigh architecture than any other architect in Raleigh from 1945 to 1965."

Whole Is More Than The Sum Of The Parts

Complemented by a landscape plan by famous Raleigh landscape architect Richard Bell, winner of the Prix de Rome, Blue

Haven first appears to be a simple ranch. However, the whole is indeed more than the sum of its parts. The home's long rectilinear form — with its low-pitched overhanging roofline — is characterized by the striking color and texture of the Carolina Blue Stone. According to Maurer, the stone was obtained from a nearby quarry that had ceased operation when Williams convinced them to re-open and allow him to obtain enough of the consistently colored blue-gray stone for his residence. Bell's landscape plan made use of the site's natural rock outcroppings, curving the gravel driveway around them and interspersing native azaleas along the borders.



The aggregate parking court and plant beds, set with smooth gray stones that flank the doors of the terrazzo entryway, continue the interesting and very oriental interplay of various textures, sizes and colors of the same material. Spectacular native and Japanese maple trees turn golden in the fall, adding more texture and color to this set piece of Modern design.

Entering Blue Haven, the visitor is immediately struck by a multi-columned Blue Stone construction that creates a visual divider between the entrance hall and the great room beyond. The divider is suitable for plantings or cascading water, with the base forming part of the supporting structure of the home's lower-level fireplace. The foyer's west wall is also of Blue Stone, serving as a foil for an abstract relief painting by the late Gregory Ivy, the founder of Greensboro's Weatherspoon Art Museum.

Beyond the pleasant complexity of the entry foyer into Blue Haven's great room is the view through the room's floor-to-ceiling glass walls of the forest beyond the room. Here the distinction

The remodeled recreation room in the walk out basement retains its original terrazzo floors and is home to the second kitchen.





The dining room boasts an original, custom light fixture and built in walnut cabinetry with an integrated bar. Tongue and groove ceilings are found throughout the main floor of the house.



Vintage Florence Knoll furnishings and a Lightolier floor lamp decorate the great room which is separated from the foyer by a stone "pool" that is currently filled with plants.

walls flood the walk-out recreation room with light, and a billiard table holds pride of place at the far end of the room. A Saarinen ball chair is matched with a suitable stool, and more pieces by Florence Knoll and Noguchi have found homes in this playful room. The recreation room kitchen, drywall placed over cinderblocks, is painted a psychedelic orange. Here, Maurer has room for more work by favorite artists: paintings by three Chapel Hill artists, the late George Kachergis, Marvin Saltzman and Richard Kinnaird, lend color and abstract line. Williams' workshop occupies a space off the recreation room and has a full bath with shower that Maurer has made into a fifth bedroom.

Blue Haven is one of a distinguished group of architect-designed residences that were built in Raleigh during the post-World War II building boom. Raleigh was fortunate to have a talented cadre of Modernist architects, many drawn to the city by the School of Design in 1948. In refurbishing Blue Haven, the premier example of the work of F. Carter Williams, Jill Maurer has contributed to the preservation of one of Raleigh's most significant architectural resources: Raleigh's early Modernist residences. **MM**

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