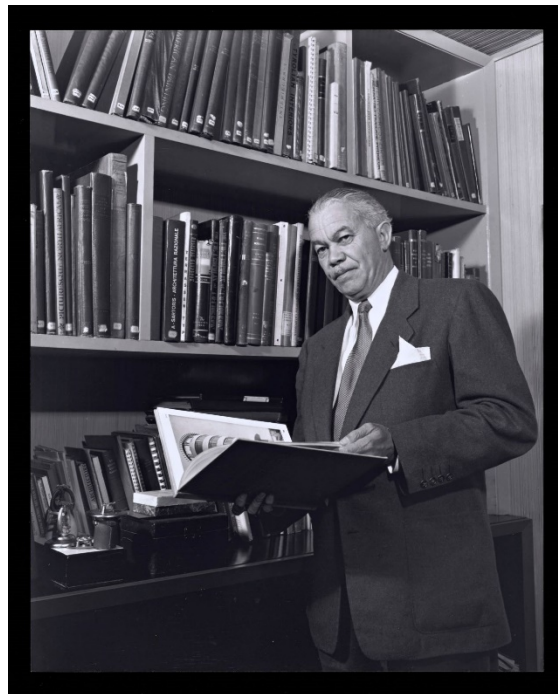




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**ARCHITECT PAUL REVERE WILLIAMS' ARCHIVE JOINTLY ACQUIRED BY USC  
SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE AND GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE**



Portrait of Paul R. Williams, photography by Julius Shulman, 1952, Gelatin Silver Print, © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10)

**LOS ANGELES** – The archive of the renowned architect Paul Revere Williams (American, 1894–1980) has been jointly acquired by the University of Southern California School of Architecture and Getty Research Institute. The archive has been meticulously cared for by Karen Elyse Hudson, Williams' granddaughter, who has published extensively on his work.

“Paul Williams led by example and instilled in his children and grandchildren the importance of excellence, an attention to detail, and above all, family. The collaboration of two such esteemed institutions, the University of Southern California (USC) and Getty Research

Institute (GRI), to preserve and further his legacy, would make our grandfather extremely proud,” said Hudson. “As the family historian, my journey has been one of awe and encouragement. Never once did I believe my work was my gift to him, for it has been, and will always be, his gift to us. To others he is often referred to as ‘the architect to the stars,’ to his grandchildren, he was simply the best grandfather ever.”

Paul Revere Williams was the most significant African American architect of the 20th century, with especially strong ties to Southern California and the city of Los Angeles. Documenting the entirety of

Williams’ career, from his early residential commissions during Los Angeles’ housing boom of the 1920s to landmark mid-century civic structures, the archive includes approximately 35,000 plans, 10,000 original drawings, blueprints and project diazotypes, hand-colored renderings, vintage photographs, correspondence, and other materials. Significantly, the plans represent the majority of Williams’ commissioned work, including projects that were never built. Although many believe that Williams’ archive was destroyed in a fire during the 1992 Los Angeles civil unrest, in truth primarily business records were lost then. Most of the extensive archive was in a different location and is in excellent condition.

“Paul Revere Williams is one of USC’s most important alumni. We are honored to accept this archive and synthesize his legacy with the forward-looking vision of the School to produce impactful design and scholarship on the historical and contemporary evolution of the modern city,” said Milton S. F. Curry, dean of the USC School of Architecture. “The work contained in this archive tells many stories. It contains the creative expressions of an architect working across many different constituencies in a socially complicated time. It also contains evidence of stunning aesthetic innovations that reimagined the space and program of public housing, hotels, and residential design and civic space. Our goal is to continue advancing the incredible legacy of Paul R. Williams, a true trailblazer in the field of architecture, and to share the archive with new and diverse audiences through publications, symposia, exhibitions, and more. Paul R. Williams was an architect who believed that architecture could advance social progress. His



Beverly Hills Hotel Addition, Beverly Hills, Paul R. Williams architect, Built 1949-50, photography by Julius Shulman, 1950, Gelatin Silver Print, © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10)

work and life as captured in this archive will quickly become an invaluable resource for like-minded students, faculty and the greater public.”

At USC, the Paul Williams Archive Initiative will be a central feature of the forthcoming USC Center for Architecture + City Design. The Center and the Initiative will extend the School’s legacy of research into the next 100 years by linking archival work on the design of cities with scholars and designers working on contemporary issues that engage architecture, conservation urbanism and social practice.

As the most significant and intact archive of an African American architect working in Southern California in the early and mid-20th century, the archive is a cornerstone for Getty’s African American Art History Initiative (AAAH), which Getty launched in 2018. It builds on and expands the scope of visual culture represented in present and incoming collections at GRI, including the Betye Saar Archive, the Johnson Publishing Company Archive, Robert Farris Thompson’s Library and Archive, and the Harry Drinkwater Photography Collection. The archive will join the GRI’s noteworthy Architectural Collections and its extensive holdings of Los Angeles-based 20<sup>th</sup>-century architects, such as Welton Becket, Pierre Koenig, John Lautner, Ray Kappe, Frank Israel, William Krisel, and Frank Gehry. At GRI, this exceptionally prestigious acquisition of 20th-century American architecture has been overseen by Maristella Casciato, senior curator of architectural collections, and LeRonn P. Brooks, associate curator for modern and contemporary collections.

“Paul Williams was a trailblazing architect whose long career helped shape Los Angeles and Southern California. His archive essentially tells the story of how the modern Southland was built,” said Getty Research Institute director Mary Miller. “Its importance as an aesthetic and educational resource cannot be overstated, and we are pleased to be working with the USC School of Architecture to preserve and share it.”

A native Angeleno, who was orphaned by the age of four, Williams contributed greatly to the cultural landscape, and design, of Los Angeles. Always acutely aware of being African American in a profession that rarely welcomed those of color, he was the first African American member of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), its first African American Fellow, and ultimately its first African American Gold Medalist.

“During a period of de jure segregation, Paul R. Williams mastered architecture, a public art form, and was as prolific as he was persistent. His legacy is therefore as much about the character of the man himself as it is the scale, variety, and ambitions within a professional practice wed to realizations of perpetual excellence,” said LeRonn P. Brooks, associate curator for modern and contemporary collections at GRI. “His career and life invite new histories to be

written by the countless scholars who will have unprecedented access to this tremendously important archive.”

Segregation often framed the context in which Williams worked. He learned to draw upside down in order to sketch for clients from across the table—for the benefit of any white clients who might have been uneasy sitting next to an African American. He toured construction sites with hands clasped behind his back because he was not sure every person would want to shake a Black man's hand. Such conditions add further resonance to the enduring significance of Williams' work.

Williams' career was prolific, spanning nearly six decades and over 3,000 projects. He was a master of Late Moderne design, known for combining long horizontal lines and sleek curving forms, yet fully versed in other architectural styles. His early work was primarily residential, designing legendary homes for leaders in business and entertainment such as Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz, Bill (Bojangles) Robinson, Frank Sinatra, the E. L. Cord and Paley families, and Cary Grant. Though his later career privileged commercial, institutional, and public building projects, residential design was a perennial element of his work.

Williams worked on a large number of national and international projects, which notably included the design and construction of the Hotel Nutibara in Medellín, Colombia. He was associate architect on the U.N. Building in Paris, and Langston Terrace in Washington, D.C., the first federally sponsored public housing in the country. However, Southern California was always his chief building ground.

“The Los Angeles cityscape is a testament to Paul R. Williams' lasting impact on Southern California and modern architecture in general. This rich, comprehensive archive is one of the most significant acquisitions of 20<sup>th</sup>-century architecture that Getty has worked on,” said Maristella Casciato, senior curator of architecture at GRI. “At Getty, the Paul Revere Williams archive is a crucial part of our array of architectural holdings, especially progressive Southern California architects.”

Many of his projects—such as The Music Corporation of America (MCA) headquarters (1939), the renovation of the Ambassador Hotel (1949), Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company Building (1949), refurbishments and additions to the Beverly Hills Hotel (1940s-1970s), the Los Angeles County Courthouse (1951), Hillside Memorial Park (1951), Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) (1960), Westwood Medical Center (1960–62), and the First African Methodist Episcopal Church (1968)—became modernist fixtures of the Los Angeles cityscape, some resonating strongly within Los Angeles' African American community: Golden State Mutual Life Insurance was the largest African American-owned insurance company in the

western United States, holding the most significant institutional collection of African American art, while the First AME Church was home to the oldest Black congregation in Los Angeles.

Williams was the chief architect for the Pueblo del Rio neighborhood, located at 52nd Street and Long Beach Avenue in South Los Angeles and built to house African American defense industry workers in 1940. This mid-century project was designed by the Southeast Housing Architects, which included Richard Neutra, Gordon Kaufman, Adrian Wilson, and the firm of Wurdeman & Becket.

Williams retired in 1973, having received numerous accolades, including the AIA's Award of Merit for the MCA Building (1939) and the NAACP's Spingarn Medal for his outstanding contributions as an architect and work with Los Angeles Black community (1953); in 2017, he was posthumously awarded USC Architecture's Distinguished Alumni Award. He passed away in 1980, at the age of 85.

Getty Research Institute and USC School of Architecture are co-owners of the archive and will work together to extend the legacy of Paul R. Williams through research and scholarship as well as exhibitions and programming. The archive will be housed at Getty, which will oversee processing and conservation of the materials, which are in excellent condition. An extensive digitization effort will take several years and will ultimately make most of the archive accessible to scholars and others.

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Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz House, Palm Springs, Paul R. Williams architect, Built 1954-55, photography by Julius Shulman, 1955, Gelatin Silver Print, © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10)

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**Getty Research Institute** is an operating program of the J. Paul Getty Trust. It serves education in the broadest sense by increasing knowledge and understanding about art and its history through advanced research. The Research Institute provides intellectual leadership through its research, exhibition, and publication programs and provides service to a wide range of scholars worldwide through residencies, fellowships, online resources, and a Research Library. The Research Library—housed in the 201,000-square-foot Research Institute building designed by Richard Meier—is one of the largest art and architecture libraries in the world. The general library collections (secondary sources) include almost 900,000 volumes of books, periodicals, and auction catalogues encompassing the history of Western art and related fields in the humanities. The Research Library's special collections include rare books, artists' journals, sketchbooks, architectural drawings and models, photographs, and archival materials.

