

# Raphael Soriano



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Born in Rhodes, Soriano brought an outsider's perspective when he arrived in Los Angeles with little grasp of English in 1924, at the age of 17. After first studying French literature and music, he graduated with an architecture degree from the University of Southern California and thereafter worked in the offices of Rudolph Schindler and Richard Neutra, and for Los Angeles County, finally starting his own practice in Los Angeles in 1936. Soriano expertly combined two of World War II's technological innovations, aluminium and plywood, with advanced construction processes. His characteristic horizontal roofs, transparent exterior walls, and open plan responded well to the postwar demand for family-friendly housing and an informal,

indoor-outdoor lifestyle that was well suited to the benign Southern Californian climate. Independent-minded and often irascible, Soriano's architectural contribution has been largely overlooked until now. An architect's architect, he tapped the burgeoning Southern California aerospace and steel industries for his architectural experiments. His advocacy of prefabricated, modular construction using a minimum of materials often alienated him from the traditional building industry and developers. Moreover, his buildings have suffered inordinate damage; although he designed 150 buildings and built 38 during his career, little more than a dozen projects remain standing. In 1953, weary of his persistent scrapes with the architecture establishment in Southern California, Soriano relocated to Tiburon, near San Francisco, where he designed and built housing for the maverick developer Joseph Eichler, as well as innovative aluminium housing and an office tower, and the IBM Research Laboratory in San Jose. This monograph provides a well-researched written account of the architect's life and oeuvre. It includes a complete biography, an in-depth examination of 30 key Soriano buildings, and a listing of complete works that documents for the first time every known project in Soriano's archive, with bibliographic references. In addition to previously unpublished original plans and drawings, this volume features approximately 160 photographs by renowned architectural photographer Julius Shulman, who was a close friend of Soriano and documented his work over a period of 40 years.

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目录:

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