

MetroABQ Real Estate Newsletter

Including Albuquerque, Rio Rancho, Corrales, Placitas, Valencia County and the East Mountains.

Where (And What) In The MetroABQ Is This?



Welcome to the Mead-Penhall House

Noted as one of the most
unique homes in the world!

Famed architect Bart Prince's creation in Altura Park was completed in 1993 for UNM Emeritus Art and Art History Professor Christopher Mead, and his wife Michele Penhall, a photographer and historian. I recently took a class at UNM focusing on three local architects--John Gaw Meem, Antoine Predock, and of course Bart Prince. Professor Mead was very gracious and invited the class to tour his home; it was an incredible opportunity to see the inside of a Bart Prince. The following photo essay is of that house tour.

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The Mead-Penhall House on Sunningdale Avenue. This is the view from the street; however, it is not the front of the house but the dining room, with stunning Mountain views. The front door is up the steps on the side, as seen in the top photo.



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In (Out) Door Space

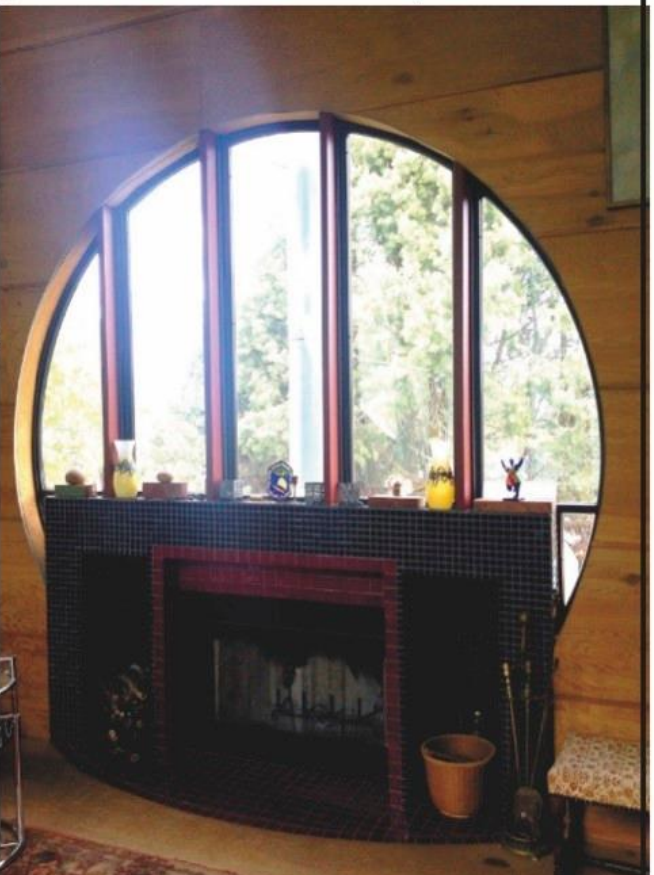
In hiring Bart Prince to design a residence on the last available lot in Altura Park, Mead and Penhall provided their list of necessities. One was that the building be created without the need of any special variances from the city. To accomplish this, Prince cited the home diagonally on the small lot, rotating it slightly off-center, which placed it on a southwest-to-northeast plane. This created a 100 feet long structure from end to end, maximizing the winter sun, and minimizing the sun and heat in summer, creating over 3000 squarefeet of interior space.

Another creative alignment detail is the small coy pond in the private east-side courtyard--it is positioned along the line of the Winter Solstice. When the sun is at its lowest arc on December 21st or 22nd--the longest night and shortest day--the sun shines directly through the upright blocks of the coy pond and alights toward the house.

According to Mead, Prince took the Mead-Penhall list of necessities and contemplated a long time before coming up with a design. When he did, Prince incorporated the interior and exterior spaces together, sometimes blending the two. There is a focus on the uninterrupted flow of space from inside to outside throughout the home, with exterior materials continuing inside, and interior rooms opening to balconies and rooftops.



On the left is the Courtyard view from Penhall's studio/office balcony, with the water feature in the foreground; on the right is the living room fireplace--notice there is no traditional chimney, only uninterrupted outside views above it.



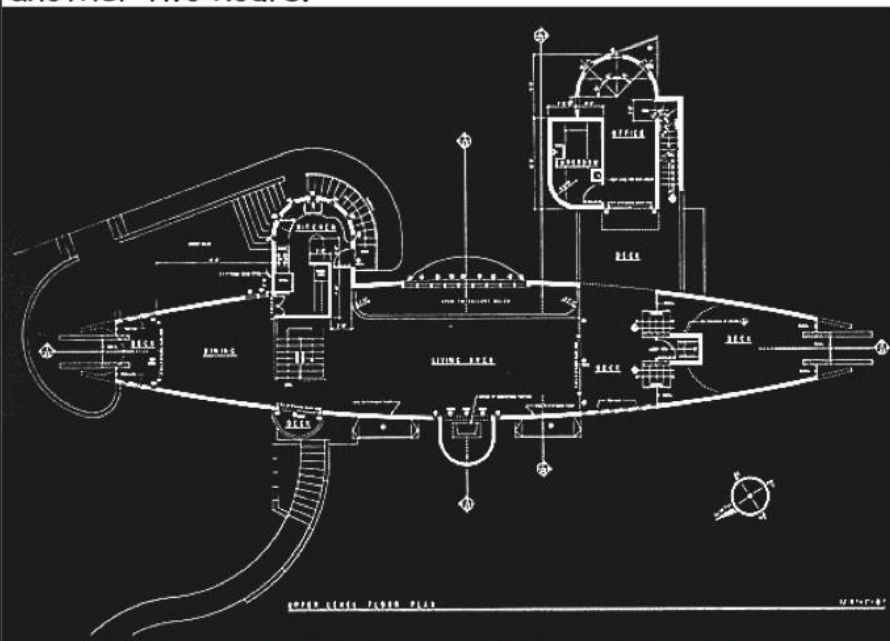


Professor Mead--who's specially-designed office/library, above, at the back of the house, is very secure and fireproof--described the hows and whys of each room. For example, the entry staircase--which seems to be floating--encourages you to naturally gravitate upstairs toward the public living spaces, guiding you away from the more private lower level bedrooms and an office. He had so much architectural information about the various aspects of the house that the tour could have easily continued another two hours.



An online architecture magazine dubbed the Mead-Penhall house the 'Cigar House' because from satellite images, it does look similar. The floorplan, below left, however, reminds me of an early-drawn spaceship.

The second-floor room at the top of the drawing is Ms. Penhall's studio/office, accessed by an interior staircase, or across an open second-floor balcony--a view from that balcony is on page two. The image above is an outdoor sitting space enclosed on one side, and that connects across that open balcony to Penhall's office on the other, creating another indoor/outdoor combination. During the tour, I wasn't always exactly sure if I was inside or outside at the Mead-Penhall house, as exemplified by the above image.



All photos and text are by Chris Lucas; Masthead photo purchased from photographer.

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Click on the photos to view the Visual Tour for each property.

