

1064

VIA ALTA, LAFAYETTE

Robert Klemmedson (1921-2010) is one of the best-known Bay Area modernists of the '50s and '60s. The longtime Orinda resident was celebrated for his Mid-Century Modern aesthetic emphasizing natural light, a connection to the surrounding land, and creative use of space.

Celebrating Light

Classic Klemmedson homes include soaring vaulted ceilings and walls of windows that showcase the surrounding natural landscape. His open floor plans ensure every room is bathed in light and eyefuls of the outdoors – oaks, grassy hillsides, dramatic vistas.

Celebrating Nature

In addition to using abundant exposed wood, picture windows and an earthy palette to emphasize the connection to nature, Klemmedson literally brought the outdoors inside. At 1064 Via Alta, he seamlessly flowed an exterior limestone wall from the entryway into the living room to create a stunning floor-to-ceiling stone wall. Limestone elements continue through the main living area and back outside to the backyard patio and pool.

Creative Use of Space

The Mid-Century Modern movement was the first to use bi-level structures. Klemmedson took split-level design a step further at 1064 Via Alta: He created two independent bedroom wings with their own brief staircases and cantilevered the primary bedroom dramatically over the living room. Other showy hallmarks of Klemmedson homes include suspended stairways, lit soffits, and Japanese inspirations. (He spent 10 years in Japan, and you can really see the influence at 14 Maybeck Twin Drive in Berkeley). And he included a bomb shelter in at least one of his 1950s homes (100 El Toyonal, Orinda).

Renaissance Man

Klemmedson graduated from UC Berkeley School of Architecture and established a private practice in Orinda in 1950. Before that, he served as a P-38 fighter pilot in the Army Air Corps during WWII. He flew 131 missions in the South Pacific and was awarded the Purple Heart and the Distinguished Flying Cross, according to his obituary. Throughout his life, he was also an avid glider pilot, sailor, and watercolorist.