



charles moore foundation

Burns House Preservation Report

Santa Monica Canyon

Summer 2026

Preservation Strategy

General → Specifics

Outside → Inside

Over the years of learning how to take care of landmark Charles Moore structures—and doing 90% of the preservation work with my own hands and back and sweat, I often return to the sensible ideas that Charles Moore, Donlyn Lyndon, William Turnbull, and Dick Whitaker outlined as they were shaping their work in the early days of MLTW.

I think about how the *general* is composed of all the *specifics*. It's Set Theory writ in stucco, glass, timber, drywall and paint.

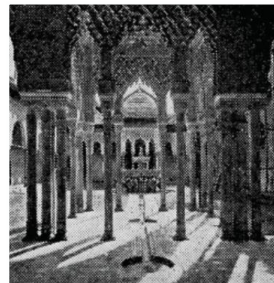
Because of the unrelenting persecutions of water and UV and the irrepressible instincts of insects and mammals to chew on the architecture we hold dear, my approach is to first tighten the *outside*, to secure the buildings' envelopes. For it makes no sense to spend time and energy and contributions on what's *inside* before the *outside* performs its protective tasks.

Kevin Keim, Director



The first, and simplest, act of possession is to establish an *inside* that is separate from the *outside*; to set apart one section of the environment as secure against the hostile, uncontrolled outside. Such are the snug houses of our Anglo-Saxon dreams, the sacred compounds of Oriental reality and the staked fortresses of the frontier.

Inside doesn't necessarily mean "indoors," it is not determined by where the fresh air is; it is determined by where the participant thinks he is. An interior court that forms part of a complex of spaces may be *inside*. The Court of the Lions at the Alhambra is a very good example of such space.

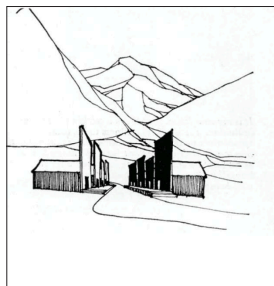


Inside is partly a function of the participant's attitude and may even be variable. The lobby of a theater is *outside* at 9:00 p.m. *Inside* may be very simple, as in a primitive hut or a Philip Johnson building, or it may have an elaborate hierarchy of development, as in the progressive stages of *inside* in an Egyptian temple, the walled cities of Peking or the Barcelona Pavilion.

Being *inside* is knowing where you are. Supermarkets have very little *inside*. *Inside* may belong more to the "outdoors" public spaces than to the rooms which surround them, as in the Place Vendôme or in the more spontaneous communality of the western silver towns, where the genuine false fronts emphatically define the space of Main Street, making a place for law and order, gunfights and bustles in the midst of the desolate and desperate wilderness.

Once the architect has established *inside*, it's his responsibility and right to select and screen the view out. It is, indeed, one of the advantages of being *inside*—being in is being selective.

Donlyn Lyndon
"Toward Making Places"
LANDSCAPE, Autumn 1962



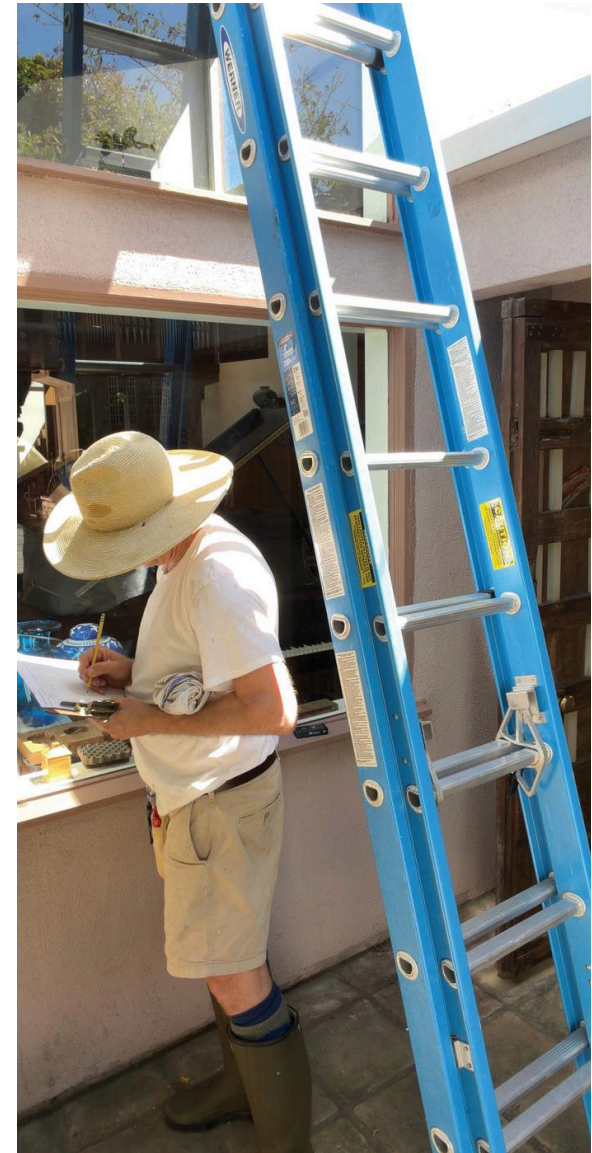
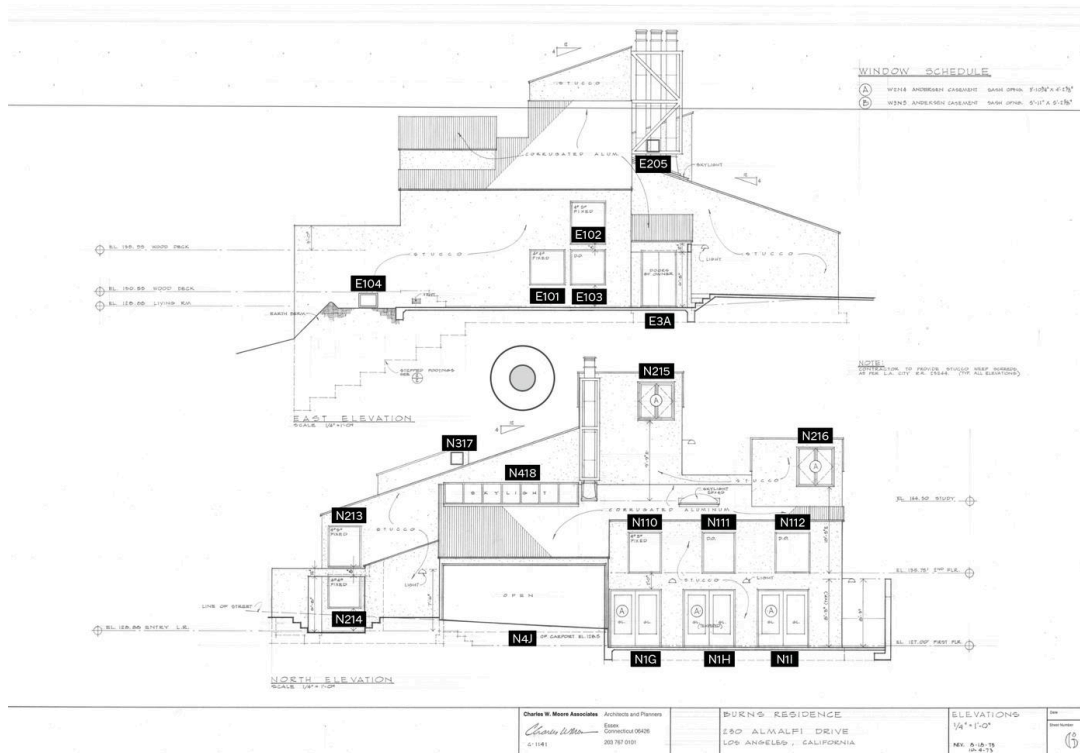
June

Assessment

My annual schedule now allows me to spend summers at the Burns House in Santa Monica Canyon so I can work on preservation projects, away from the repressive heat of Austin.

Keeping **General/Specifics** and **Outside/Inside** in mind, I have concluded the first major preservation tasks must focus on stopping active leaks and the restoration of all the windows and doors.

During June, I studied and assessed. First I built a Preservation Database from scratch, which compiles and analyzes all of the information. Second, I gave every door and window unique IDs. Third, I carefully examined every part, systematically noting rot, deformations, peeling, insect intrusion, and structural integrity.



June

Data Modeling & Case Studies

Next I entered all of the survey data into the database, which compiles building parts, structural pieces, and materials. An added benefit of the database is how it automatically creates a record to historically track the preservation projects.

I started with the *general* doors and windows, and then listed all of the *specific* parts. The Burns House has 40 windows and 25 doors.

Every part got numerically rated “preservation assignment”, based on the level of deterioration. The sum of the ratings prioritizes the preservation urgency.

After compiling all of the data, I decided to identify the individual door and window in the most urgent need of attention. I would then spend July and August restoring them as Case Studies for all of the future work.

Why did I choose to start with the most deteriorated window and door?

- ➔ To arrest active water penetration.
- ➔ Since the loft window and the music room door would require total restoration, it meant that disassembly would allow me to see how each was constructed in the field, allowing me to then make accurate as-built drawings and models.
- ➔ By starting with the most difficult cases, I would prove that we could do the work ourselves, on site.
- ➔ The work would also give me a sense of the budget and timeline for the full restoration of the windows and doors.

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SITES MATERIALS PARTS PROJECTS

Unique ID	Restoration Priority	Site	Structure	Elevation
window5	29	Burns House	Main House	E2
E205	Fixed Pane			
Width	Height			
28	28			
Parts				
part-1002 Sill (32")	Replace	3	window5	
part-1025 Stop, EXT (H, 28")	Replace	3	window5	
part-1027 Stop, EXT (V, 28")	Replace	3	window5	
part-1017 Stop, INT (H, 28")	Repaint	1	window5	
part-1018 Stop, INT (V, 28")	Repaint	1	window5	
part-1032 Pane, Single (28"x28")	Replace	3	window5	
part-1061 Jamb (28" x 3 1/2")	Replace	3	window5	
part-1061 Jamb (28" x 3 1/2")	Replace	3	window5	
part-1062 Setting Block	Add		window5	
part-1063 Glazing Point	Replace	3	window5	
part-1065 Paint (Latex)	Replace	3	window5	
part-1064 Primer (Oil Based)	Replace	3	window5	
part-1067 Glazing Tape (1/2")	Add		window5	
part-1066 Glazing Tape (3/8")	Add		window5	

June

Drawings and Design

My preservation approach is a “choreography of the familiar and surprising”. I stay true to Charles Moore’s design intent and appearance, while devising better details to improve the structure’s durability and longevity.



Replace 1/8" pane with
3/16" tempered glass.

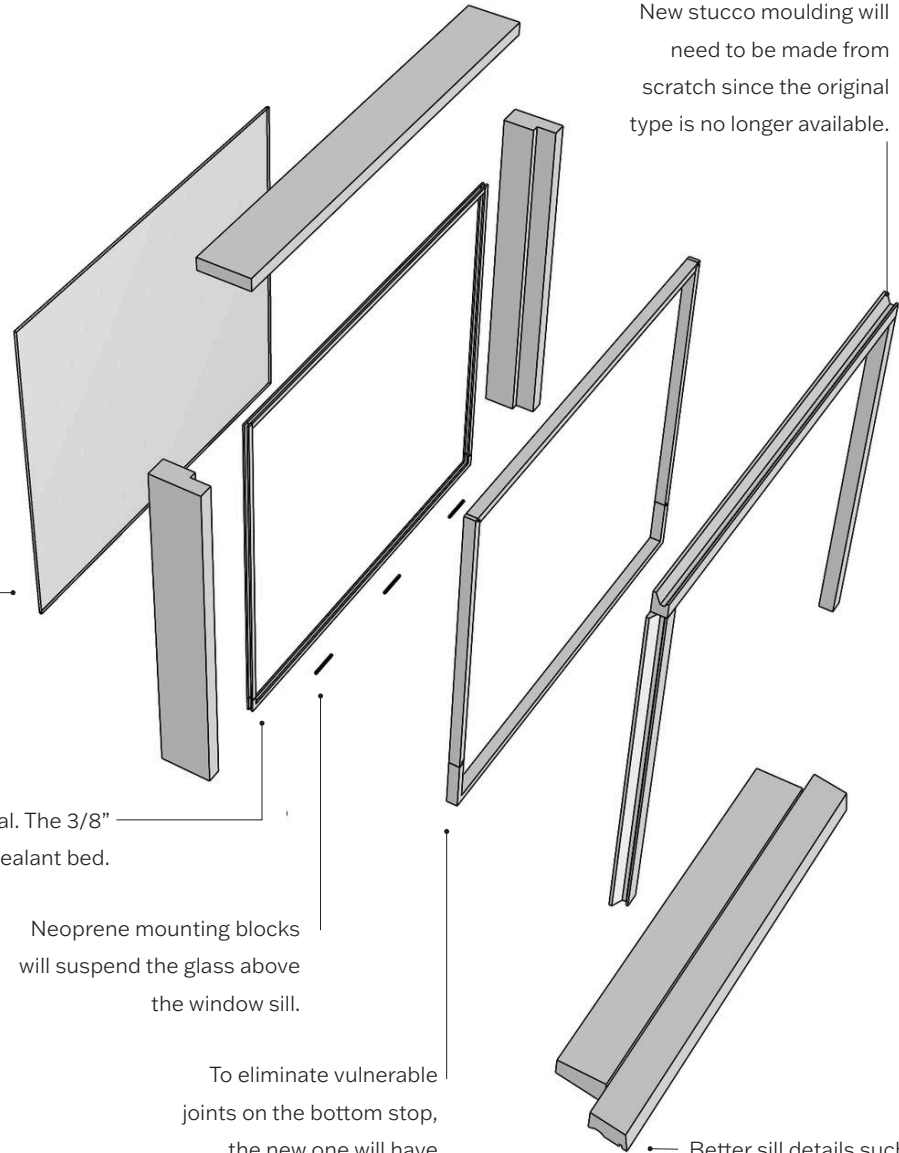
Double glazing tape on both sides will improve the seal. The 3/8" tape will sit below the 1/2" stop to create a good sealant bed.

Neoprene mounting blocks
will suspend the glass above
the window sill.

To eliminate vulnerable
joints on the bottom stop,
the new one will have
rabbeted sides.

New stucco moulding will
need to be made from
scratch since the original
type is no longer available.

Better sill details such as
wrap-around drip edges,
a raised stool, and an
underlying ice & water
membrane will protect the
wall cavity and framing.



July

Restoration Work

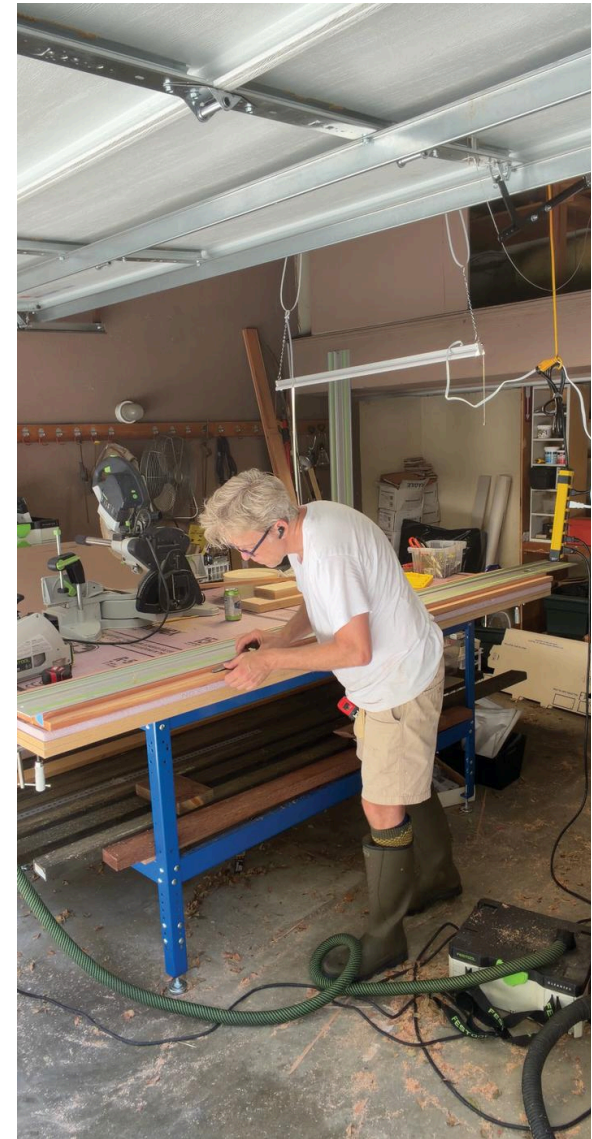
Fortunately, I was able to devote half of the 2-car garage to an on site preservation workshop. I purchased a table, visited local lumberyards to gather materials, and tooled up for the work.



Many of the original mouldings are no longer made. So I invested in a \$1,300 Festool track saw.

Having a mill reproduce the parts would start with a \$500 charge for each custom knife needed. So right from the start, the Festool essentially paid for itself, since I was able to make the new stucco mouldings and sill myself.

I also found a piece of white oak in House of Hardwood's "sale" bin for \$20. It was just big enough for me to shape a far more robust sill. (The original sill was entirely rotted through.)



July

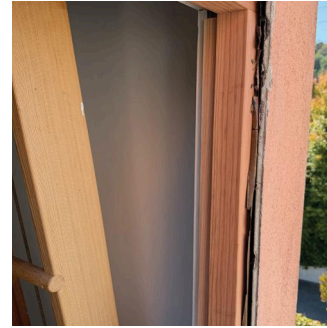
Window Restoration Work



Removal of the entire window.



Shaping the new oak sill.



Installing the jamb.



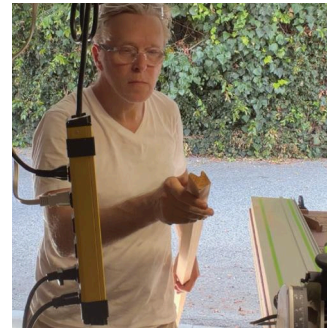
Mounting the new glass.



Joining jamb pieces.



Oil priming the parts.



Cutting new stucco moulding.



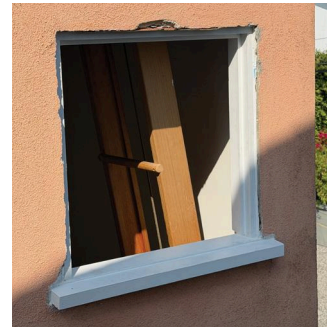
Caulking the glass perimeter.



Improved bottom stop.



Installing the sill.



Sealing all joints.



Patching the stucco.

July

Window Restored!



Before



After

July

Door Restoration Work

The glass door leading into the organ dais was in the worst shape because of exposure and standing water on an adjacent patio. So I removed the door from its hinges to better study it in the workshop and determine the best course of preservation.



The entire lower rail and the bottoms of the stiles were entirely rotten, too far gone to attempt filling. The glass stops were also beyond restoration.

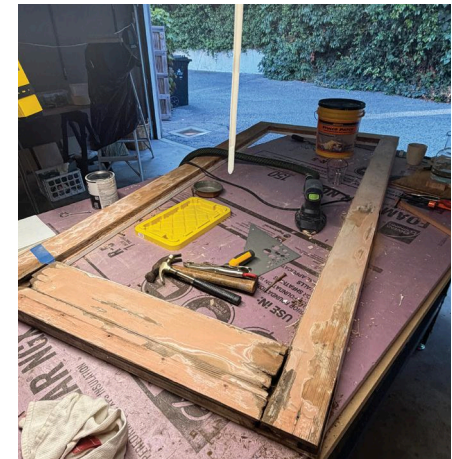
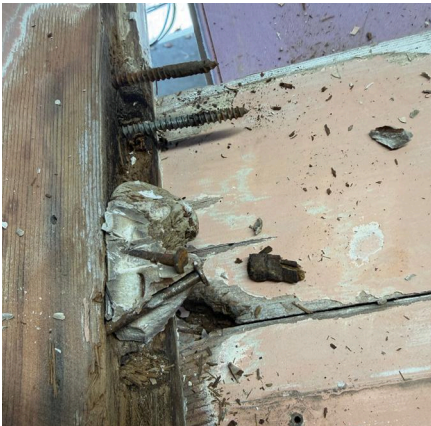
Evidently, there was an earlier restoration attempt that was poorly conceived and executed.

The best approach would be to remove the stops and carefully cut the rotten sections out of the stiles. Then entirely new bottom rail would unify and strengthen the door frame.

Work began with the removal of all of the layers of primer and paint.

Just as I started the door project, Seiji Ishiguro, a 2nd year architecture student at Rice University, arrived for a 3-week internship!

Seiji is a fantastically enthusiastic and skilled young person who would devote most of his time to the door project. He started by cleaning and honing all of our dull chisels. Since the original timber stock was more generously dimensioned, we would need to plane down the new Doug Fir rail, which would then be joined and pegged into the notched stiles.

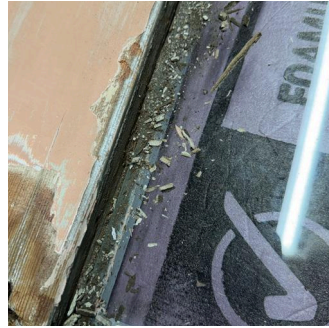


July

Restoration Work



Sanding off layers of paint.



Removing the old sealants.



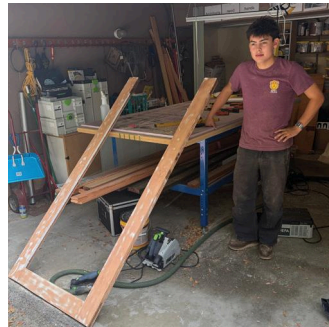
Planing and shaping the new rail.



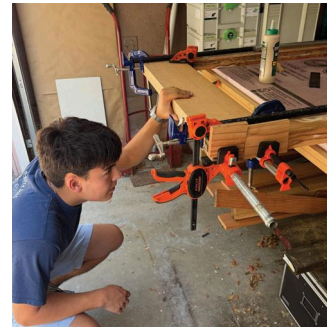
The proud craftsman.



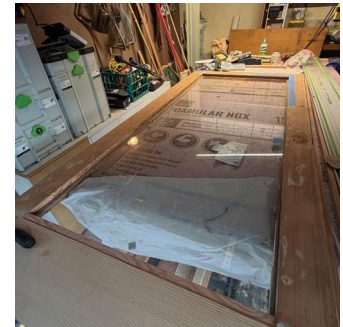
Modeling the door in Rhino.



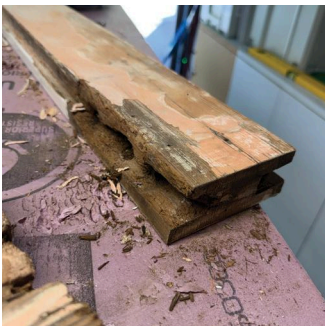
Notching out the stiles' rot.



Gluing and clamping.



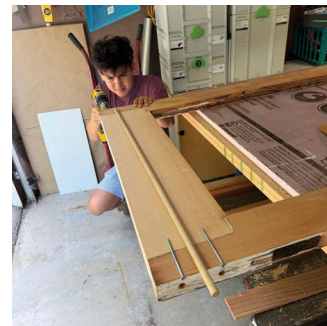
Mounting new tempered glass.



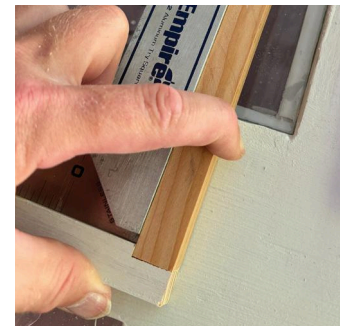
Disassembling the frame.



Honing the chisels.



Adding stainless screws.



Cutting new stops.

July

Door Restored!



Before



After

August

Staircase Restoration Work

For many years, Lee Burns coped with leaks through the outdoor staircase into the 1st floor bedroom and 2nd floor bathroom.



Last summer I began restoring some of the wall parapet caps. But with forecasters predicting torrential El Niño rains, I had to focus on finally solving all of the leaks in that entire zone.

The general problems to remedy:

- Deteriorated wall caps.
- Cracked stucco surfaces.
- Dried and flaking window sealant.
- Leaking door jamb.



August

Staircase Restoration Work



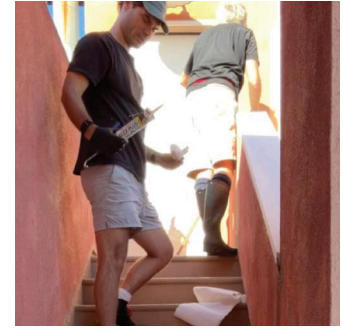
New inner plate.



New mitred wall caps.



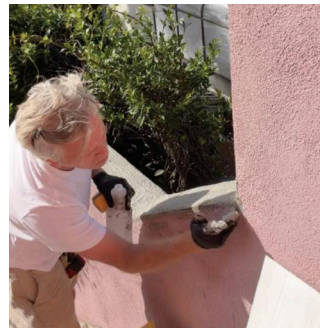
Sealing a wall cap.



Ryan Irby handling caulk.



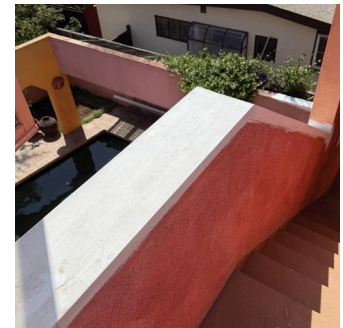
Removal of wall cap.



Patching stucco.



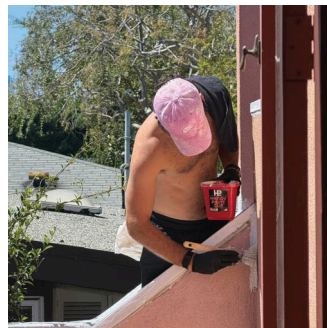
Installing new door moulding.



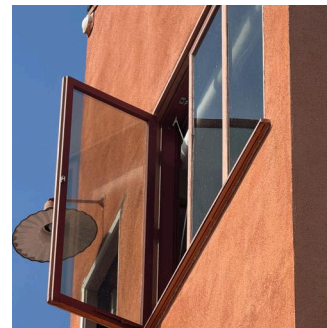
Oil priming new caps.



Repaired framing.



Intern Ryan Irby filling cracks.



Resealing window sills and jambs.



Reinstalling railings.

August

Staircase Zone Restored!



Before



After

What's Next?

Summer 2027 Window and Door Restoration

Now that we have demonstrated we can restore the windows and doors on site and with our own hand, we are planning to knock out all of them during the summer of 2027. Kevin and an intern will do most of the work, while a laborer helps with phases such as removing paint, sanding, caulking, and priming.

Budget

Materials

Glass	\$14,000
Wood	7,500
Glazing Tape	600
Sealants	500
Stucco Patch	500
Primer/Paint	500
Hardware	2,500

Tools

Scaffolding Rental	5,500
Equipment	2,000

Help

Laborer	15,000
Student Intern	2,000

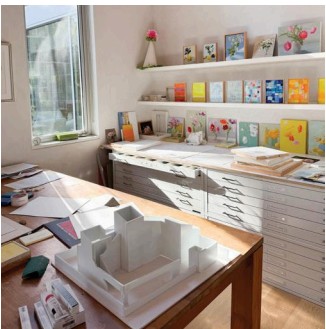
Total	\$50,600
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Tina Beebe's Colors

When we complete the windows and doors, we can repaint the entire exterior. When Charles Moore moved to Los Angeles after starting work on the Burns House, the students Buzz Yudell and Tina Beebe accompanied him. (They would establish Moore Ruble Yudell.) At Yale, Tina studied the graphic arts with the renowned teachers Herbert Matter and Josef Albers. Charles Moore asked Tina to devise the Burns House color scheme, which became an exploration of painting every exterior surface a different color, with subtle shifts of hue and value. Over decades, Lee Burns simplified the palette when he repainted. So Tina is now fully committed to resurrecting the original approach and colors for a full restoration!



Kevin built a foam core model of the house.



Tina will work on the resurrected palette in her studio in the adjacent Rustic Canyon.



Seiji matched paint chips to existing colors.



The model is next to a 1976 article about Tina's work.