

Schindler's list: Vienna influences on the Los Angeles architect

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by debra levine

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The Prequel, an art & architecture exhibit soon to open at [Schindler House](#), teases out the landmark 1922 Kings Road House's architectural influences by illuminating the debates playing out in Vienna Modernist circles when architect **Rudolf Schindler** was a student and young practitioner. Through photographs, drawings, and furniture designs, the exhibition reviews foundations laid by Otto Wagner, as well as the next generation responses to his work by Adolf Loos and Josef Hoffmann.

Here's the cast of characters:

- **R.M. Schindler** (1887–1953) worked in Vienna until 1914 when he moved to Chicago, eventually relocating to Los Angeles for Frank Lloyd Wright in the early 1920s. Schindler studied civil engineering before attending Otto Wagner's special school of architecture at the Academy of Fine Arts. Rebellious architects around 1900 created buildings based on a unity of form and function. The development of new materials and building techniques allowed Schindler to move beyond structural forces as the inspiration for architectural form. Throughout his career, however, he engaged the Viennese imperative to reconcile interior and exterior environments.
- **Otto Wagner** (1841–1918) emphasized the importance of the "utility style," which took function as its impetus, rather than historical styles. Wagner felt the architect, who balanced idealism and realism, was the epitome of the modern man.
- Architect **Adolf Loos** (1870–1933) adapted a rationalist approach to Modernism – rather than foreground design, he preferred to let human individuality dominate an environment.
- An advocate of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or total work of art, **Josef Hoffman** (1870–1956) was a key figure of the Vienna Secession who denied any hierarchical distinction between fine and applied art and sought to create beautiful, integrated environments to counteract the negative effects of industrialization.



Nothing is quite so emblematic of the European-exile story in Los Angeles than Schindler House... how fascinating to learn of its architectural origins.

[R.M. Schindler: The Prequel](#) | Schindler House, Kings Road | Sept 10 – Dec 7

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