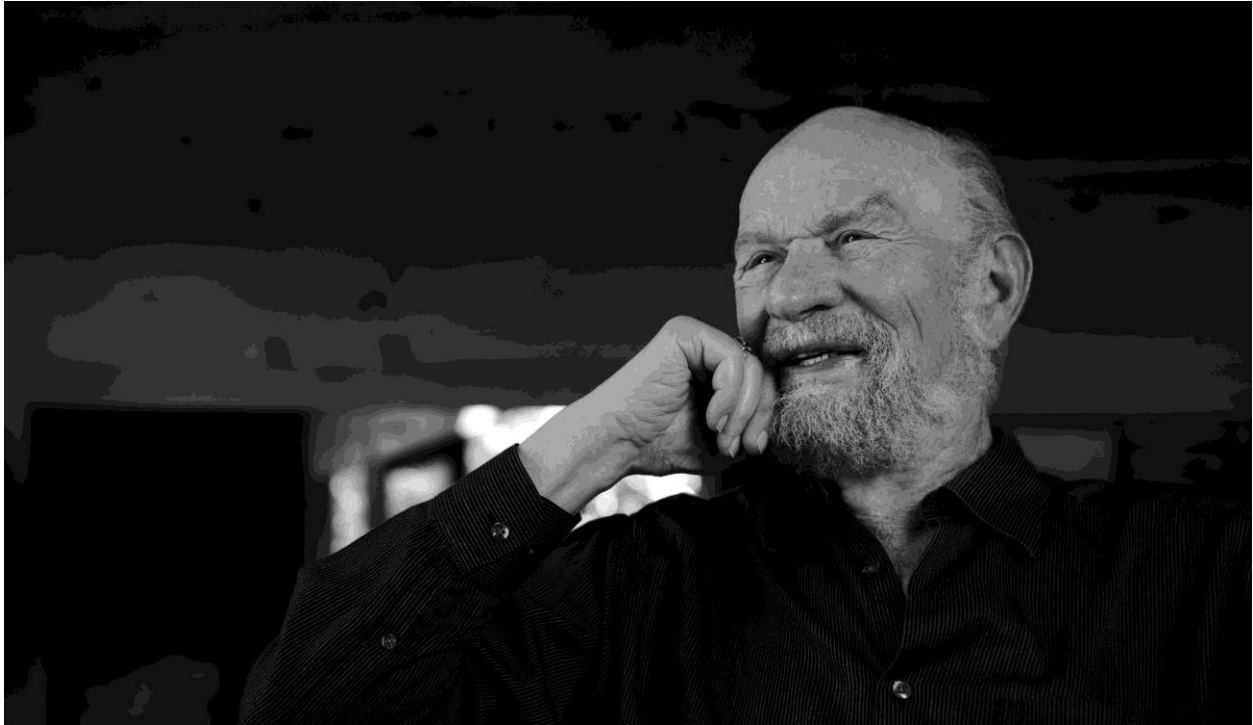


Farewell to Ray Kappe, SCI-Arc Founding Director and Architectural Giant



Ray Kappe, FAIA
1927 - 2019

Portrait by Steve Shaw

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Los Angeles, CA (November 22, 2019) – Ray Kappe FAIA, Founding Director of SCI-Arc and architectural giant, passed away on Thursday, November 21, surrounded by family and loved ones.

A world-renowned architect widely considered one of the great innovators of modern architecture, Kappe skillfully led SCI-Arc for fifteen years as founding director and chairman of the board, having the pedagogical experience and financial expertise, as well as the interpersonal skills, to enable the school's growing success and global influence.

Born in Minneapolis in 1927, Kappe graduated from UC Berkeley's architecture program with honors in 1951 and opened his own practice in 1954. Ray's interest in architectural education developed in the early 1960s while teaching in the architecture program at the University of

Southern California. In 1968 he was chosen to be founding chairman of the Architecture Program at California State Polytechnic University at Pomona, helping to found the School of Environmental Design.

In 1972, he along with Thom Mayne, Jim Stafford, Glen Small, Ahde Lahti, Bill Simonian, as well as Shelly Kappe, joined together as high-energy, committed founding faculty in the alternative educational experiment that became SCI-Arc. Fifty students, including Michael Rotondi, Dean Nota, and John Souza followed and were joined by twenty-five more from all over the US and Canada. They collectively formed what was known originally as "The New School," with Kappe later renaming it the Southern California Institute of Architecture, or SCI-Arc.

Ray's talent as a designer and entrepreneurial spirit made him an incomparable role model and mentor to his students and young faculty, to whom he generously gave support and encouragement. Kappe again served as Chairman of the Board from 1998 to 2002, and in the fall of 2001 was appointed interim director.

Since 2000, SCI-Arc has been housed in an historic, restored quarter-mile-long reinforced concrete Santa Fe Railway former freight depot building, which Kappe helped secure. Adjacent to the Los Angeles River and the Arts District, and a part of the downtown renaissance, the school has continued to grow and achieve international recognition due to and since Kappe's leadership. SCI-Arc's library was started with the Kappe's personal art and architectural book collection in 1974. Shelly Kappe continued to develop the library with book purchases and encouraged donated collections until 1987 when she retired. In the early 1990s, the library was renamed the Shelly and Ray Kappe Library as a gesture in honor of the Kappes' dedication and commitment to the school.

His buildings and projects have been recognized with numerous design awards and featured in national and international publications. Kappe's work continues to be recognized and published, especially his residential architecture, which has been described as the "apotheosis of the California Modern House." The Kappe Residence was designated a Cultural Heritage Monument by the City of Los Angeles, and was honored with the 25-Year Design Award from AIA LA, as well as the 25-Year Award from the AIA California Council. Kappe was also incredibly active in the National American Institute of Architects.

Kappe demonstrated a dedication to sustainability in his work, and in recent years had been working on a series of modular, steel-framed pre-fabricated homes, ranging from large custom houses to small affordable houses in a planned community based on a system he designed nearly fifty years ago, which was included in the AIA National Convention Tour of Sustainable Buildings and as a LEED Platinum Rating in Residential Sustainable Design as the first and only residence in the nation to attain the honor. In 2007 it was chosen one of the "Top Ten Greenest Buildings in the US" by the National American Institute of Architects, and was also recognized with the NAHB Research Center's Energy Value Housing Award.

Honored with many lifetime achievement awards for design, Kappe also received many educational awards for having founded SCI-Arc, including the American Institute of Architects, Los Angeles; AIA California Council, and the most prestigious National AIA Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture's Topaz Medallion Education Award. In 2006, Kappe was awarded the President's Lifetime Achievement in Education Award at the AIA National Convention in Los Angeles.

In the words of SCI-Arc Director and CEO Hernan Diaz Alonso:

“Ray Kappe is a quintessentially Los Angeles, California architect. A transformative figure, he and a group of outlaws decided to challenge the status quo of what was architectural education, and changed the world of architecture forever. He did it, and he did it in spades. His legacy as an architect, city planner, and educator is absolutely unparalleled.”

“It’s always difficult to measure somebody’s life, but in the case of Ray it’s easier, in the sense that while we all crave immortality in one way or another, he managed to accomplish it. With his family, his partnership with Shelly, a body of architecture of the highest level that will live on forever, and on top of that the creation of a school which embodies his singular vision for the future of architecture education—his legacy will be carried on for generations to come. SCI-Arc would not exist without Ray Kappe, and the world of architecture would not be what it is without him. His presence and gravitas has always defined the school and will continue to do so everlastingly.”

“On a personal note,” adds Diaz Alonso, “I was lucky to have known Ray’s friendship, his wisdom, and his generosity. I hesitate just short of saying ‘long live the King,’ but his is a loss that is deeply felt, and his life deserves to be celebrated.”

Former SCI-Arc Director Michael Rotondi commented, “SCI-Arc would not have been possible without Ray Kappe—his personality and character, his ideas, and most of all his visions were unique. Many of us would not have been possible without SCI-Arc... he has contributed immeasurably to all of our lives.”

In a poem written for Ray Kappe to commemorate his lasting legacy, former SCI-Arc Director Eric Owen Moss writes:

"Ray Kappe: The toughest task. Make something. From nothing. Not many do that. SCI-Arc, No, To SCI-Arc, Yes. An aspiration. Realized. Teach it. Draw it. Exhibit it. Lecture on it. Build it. Make it new. Ray Kappe: SCI-Arc. From nothing to something. History became the history he wrote."

Distinguished founding faculty and architect Thom Mayne has stated:

“Today is a truly sad day for me. There is much to be said about the profound impact Ray Kappe had on our field – but I’ll leave that to the hundreds of others he influenced who will speak of him today. For me the loss is much more personal. A confluence of circumstance brought me into Ray’s orbit when I was a very young man of 26. He invited me into the group that started SCI-Arc -- and what a group that was. All of us were engaged in finding our voices – in looking for our places in the world. And he asked us all to participate - he sought out our opinions and positions even though they often differed from his own. His gift was in his ability to tolerate – no -- to embrace deep and abiding differences between the people on his team. There seemed to be so much at stake then, the battles were often so terribly fierce. But like any gifted father figure – which in fact he was for me – he never let those details affect his unconditional positive regard for each of us. It is fair to say he had as profound an influence on shaping my own personal and professional development as any other person I’ve ever known. I don’t know who I might have been had I not known Ray, but I am quite sure that the person I am is due, in a profound way, to his influence. I love him and will miss him deeply.”

In lieu of flowers, the family invites contributions to the [Shelly and Ray Kappe Scholarship](#) Fund at SCI-Arc.

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About SCI-Arc

Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc) is dedicated to educating architects who will imagine and shape the future. It is an independent, accredited degree-granting institution offering undergraduate and graduate programs in architecture. Located in a quarter-mile-long former freight depot in the Arts District in Downtown Los Angeles, the school is distinguished by its vibrant studio culture and emphasis on process. SCI-Arc's approximately 500 students and 80 faculty members, most of whom are practicing architects, work together to reexamine assumptions, create, explore, and test the limits of architecture. SCI-Arc faculty and leadership have garnered more than 500 national and international design awards and recognitions, including Progressive Architecture awards, American Institute of Architects (AIA) awards, and the prestigious Jencks and Pritzker architecture prizes. In DesignIntelligence's 2019 US survey, SCI-Arc ranked #2 in Design Technologies, #3 Most Hired From, and was top ten among the nation's Most Admired Undergraduate Programs in Architecture. SCI-Arc is located at 960 E. 3rd Street, Los Angeles, CA 90013.