

A Niche in California

Bonura applies mid-century modern ideals to projects in Los Angeles.



Bonura often performs design/build services on high-end homes tucked away in the Hollywood Hills, but it also specializes in historic restoration projects, it says.

In the mid-1990s, Los Angeles-based Bonura Building noticed a resurgence in interest in mid-century modern architecture in Southern California. Since Bonura has specialized in mid-century modern style since its 1992 inception, President CJ Bonura says the company was "at the right place at the right time" when the trend was resurrected.

"With us being somewhat specialized since day one, and the more popular this type of architecture has become, the market has really come to us as opposed to us chasing after the market," Bonura notes. "People are a little more open to new ideas, and the market has definitely opened up here in L.A. for more modern architecture."

Bonura says this is because mid-century modern architecture originated in Southern California in the mid-1940s and was extremely popular throughout the next three decades. Richard Neutra, Rudolf Schindler and Rafael Soriano were among the architects instrumental in establishing the modernist movement there.

"It was an interesting time period," Bonura reflects. "Due to the nature of the climate here in Southern California, it really lends itself to the mid-century modern lifestyle with large glass openings, flat roofs and indoor/outdoor relationships. Those features were part of the mid-century modern surge back then, and now people are starting to recognize it again as a viable design method."

Tanager Way

Bonura often performs design/build services on high-end homes tucked away in the Hollywood Hills. For instance, its \$2 million Tanager Way project involved tearing a 3,500-square-foot building down to its foundation and rebuilding it back up to 4,000 square feet in approximately 14 months. Bonura incorporated several mid-century modern elements such as large glass openings and indoor/outdoor cohesion.

"As you come through the center courtyard – which has a water-lined feature all around – the contrast between the rather compressed entry and the expansive view beyond is very dramatic," Bonura notes. "You rise several stairs up to the house floor level and you go through frameless glass doors and then you're immediately hit with the multi-million-dollar view that looks over Los Angeles with an infinity edge pool in the foreground and the city lights in the background." The project was completed in October 2006, and the home is currently owned by "American Idol" producer Simon Fuller.

Richard Neutra

One of Bonura's most memorable projects was the restoration of the 1959 Ohara House in the Silver Lake area of Los Angeles. Richard Neutra was a famed mid-century modern architect that migrated to Southern California from Europe in the 1920s. Eight Neutra homes are located on one block, and Bonura was hired to restore one of them to its original specifications.

To achieve this, the company referred to the home's original blueprints and spec books with descriptions of the original building materials. "The good thing about this project is that it had basically been unmolested since 1959," Bonura says. "But, that's a double-edged sword. Nobody had done anything to maintain it, yet they hadn't damaged it in trying to maintain it. It was just in high disrepair.



"It hadn't even been repainted once, so we were able to see exactly the original colors, details and finishes of the house and how it was constructed." The home was built with mini-corrugated metal slashing that was no longer available, but after extensive research, Bonura was able to find the material. The original kitchen flooring was replaced with new linoleum that was cut down from 12-by-12-inch tiles to match the original nine-by-nine inch tiles and pattern.

"With some of these original mid-century modern buildings, one of the challenges can be the roof systems and the settling of the building," Bonura notes. "Because these homes have such clean, pristine lines to them, any deflection or any differentiation can be noticed. We had to meticulously go through and restraighten the whole building." The \$300,000 project began in 1999 and was completed in 2003.

James Perse

Bonura ventured into the commercial retail realm in 2003 when it was hired as the general contractor for James Perse's first store in west Hollywood. "It's more of a mix of minimalism and rustic modern," Bonura notes. "There are lots of uses of woods, usually in the floors and almost always in the ceilings. If being a retail store, there is extensive casework or cabinetry."

"The space is usually very open, light and airy, and the use of large glass windows or sliding doors provides the opportunity for an indoor/outdoor relationship."

He adds that Perse was so pleased with Bonura's work that he asked the company to build another L.A. store and two more in Malibu and Beverly Hills, Calif., as well as Perse's office and home – all of which incorporate mid-century modern architecture.

Appreciating Architecture

Bonura says the mid-century modern aesthetic benefits owners when incorporated into homes. "America is fixated on having their four-bedroom, two-and-a-half bath home with the yard and the picket fence," he notes. "Unfortunately, due to economics, that tends to minimize a lot of opportunities in the yard area and minimize amenities that can be put into the home.

"With more of an understanding and appreciation for architecture, you're allowed to build better spaces – specifically, with better volumes of light and more openings – where you can have relationships with the outside and inside. Mid-century modern is when the house is actually connected with the landscape, and I feel any setting – whether you're in Alaska or Arkansas – should address this." ■

Bonura Building
www.bonurabuilding.com
2007 projected sales: \$7 million
HQ: Los Angeles
Employees: 25
Services: Design/build
CJ Bonura, president: "People are recognizing mid-century modern architecture again as a viable design method."

Company Profile

are your customers waiting for a sign?

There are millions of American Express® Cardmembers with the potential to be your customers. Research shows that 86% of American Express Cardmembers expect to see the American Express logo displayed in or on a merchant's window or door.¹

Welcome American Express Cardmembers at your business today. Call 1-800-ACCEPT-1.



¹AB Research Associates, 11/02

Dan's Custom Metal, Inc.

Formed in Los Angeles, CA in 1995, Dan's Custom Metal Inc. has been creating custom metal pieces for furniture, lighting and architectural projects in the high-end residential, hospitality and architectural industries.

Owner Daniel Nunez, who has been creating metal pieces his entire life, knows that his clients appreciate the dedication he and his staff put into the process of making custom metal work.

Their philosophy is to use only top quality materials and is the main reason why they are highly sought after. In addition to their high level of craftsmanship and attention to detail.

One of the most knowledgeable metal workers in business today, Daniel offers a unique manufacturing experience to many different industries. With unlimited resources, he's able to create custom furniture, sculpture, architectural metalwork, lighting and commissioned pieces.

Dan's Custom Metal Inc. clientele include designers and architects in many prestigious firms nationwide, and their work can be seen in countless private residences and public spaces.

Dan and his staff of professionals welcomes the opportunity to help you with your projects.



Dan's Custom Metal Inc
Daniel F. Nunez
4178 E. Washington Blvd.,
Commerce, CA 90023
Phone: (323)-269-4312
Fax: (323)-266-2493
Email: danscustom@hotmail.com