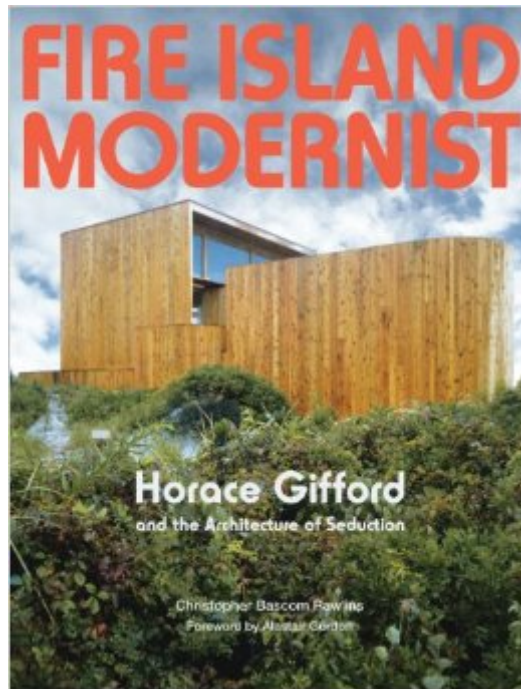


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# Fire Island Modernist: Horace Gifford And The Architecture Of Seduction



## Synopsis

As the 1960s became The Sixties, architect Horace Gifford executed a remarkable series of beach houses that transformed the terrain and culture of New York's Fire Island. Growing up on the beaches of Florida, Gifford forged a deep connection with coastal landscapes. Pairing this sensitivity with jazzy improvisations on modernist themes, he perfected a sustainable modernism in cedar and glass that was as attuned to natural landscapes as to our animal natures. Gifford's serene 1960s pavilions provided refuge from a hostile world, while his exuberant post-Stonewall, pre-AIDS masterpieces orchestrated bacchanals of liberation. Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor and Montgomery Clift once spurned Hollywood limos for the rustic charm of Fire Island's boardwalks. Truman Capote wrote *Breakfast at Tiffany's* here. Diane von Furstenberg showed off her latest wrap dresses to an audience that included Halston, Giorgio Sant'Angelo, Calvin Klein and Geoffrey Beene. Today, such a roster evokes the aloof, gated compounds of the Hamptons or Malibu. But these celebrities lived in modestly scaled homes alongside middle-class vacationers, all with equal access to Fire Island's natural beauty. Blending cultural and architectural history, *Fire Island Modernist* ponders a fascinating era through an overlooked architect whose life, work and colorful milieu trace the operatic arc of a lost generation, and still resonate with artistic and historical import.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 204 pages

Publisher: Metropolis Books/Gordon de Vries Studio; 6.1.2013 edition (May 30, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1938922093

ISBN-13: 978-1938922091

Product Dimensions: 9.4 x 1 x 12.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 3.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars See all reviews (35 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #322,635 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #136 in Books > Arts &

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## Customer Reviews

I love the way the writer integrates the history of Fire Island with the career of the architect Horace

Gifford during the Pines' most narcissistic and outrageous period. The images in this gorgeous illustrated book tell a story in themselves, they vary from powerful architectural shots to funny to archival to celebs like Calvin Klein. In all this book is so much more than an illustrated architecture book, and creates a new paradigm for the architectural genre book, which, lets be honest, can be rather dull at times, and NEVER before has gotten as sexy as this one.... hey , I would recommend you offer a Kindle version of the text so we can read this at our beach houses, in the sand, without messing up the picture book!

I stumbled across this book on recently and ordered it not really knowing what I would be getting into. Upon its arrival, I glanced at the book and was immediately intrigued with the photographs of not only the architecture but the decidedly social setting of the houses designed by Horace Gifford. I sat down that night and read the book cover to cover. It is a fairly easy read, and Gifford's clients came to life in the writing of author Rawlins. And what lives these men lived!!!! It is amazing how the architecture created by Gifford responded so completely with the changing times of society of the 1960's and 1970's. These are not large, boring mega-mansions of today, but small incredibly powerful designs set within the site and environment, not wanting to overpower but to meld in. As an architect, I enjoyed the many photographs and drawings of the houses. As a gay man, I was entranced by the stories of the client relationships and the social history of Fire Island. Rawlins has written a "must read" for summer vacation 2013.

I and two friends in the 70's rented for three seasons one of Horace's house he designed. The Evans DePass house. I also had the privilege of knowing Horace on a "hello" basis. A very nice man. And if I might add underrated for his concepts. But I think this book will bring to light how great Horace was.

I'm not one of those who believes that Gay Men are born naturally artistic. But I do believe that, behind every significant artistic movement, there is at least one Gay Man pushing things forward. For modernism as expressed in residential architecture, Horace Gifford was that man. His remaining structures ought to be protected as national treasures.

I met Horace Gifford at a cocktail party in New York City Sept. 1970. He came to the party with a friend of mine who was a landscape architect who anxiously introduce me to Horace, saying " now you two are going to become great friends" and we did. More than 20 years later I was introduced

Christopher Rawlins at a dinner party given by two architects who thought that Christopher and I should meet since I had worked both full time and part time with Horace for twenty years and Christopher had plans to write a biography of Horace and his work. I was very taken with Christopher's deep interest in Horace's work at The Pines on Fire Island. Walking home after dinner I knew that this young man was definitely going to write an excellent book about Horace Gifford and his work. The book Christopher Rawlins wrote goes deeper into Horace Gifford's life, his Architecture, the history of Fire Island and life style of residents of The Pines community than I had imagined him doing. But, by doing this complicated, connecting, informative biography and history book of a particular time and place the reading is swift and a joy of learning; and, the reader will be looking forward to a second and third reading.

As an interior designer, I notice detail. As a young man visiting Fire Island, I was struck by a number of the houses I saw, and each time I asked who had designed it, the same name came up -- Horace Gifford. Mr. Rawlins' book has captured, in a unique and complete way, a time past, a time of fond memories, coupled with a sense of loss that is very tangible. There are books about architects and books about architecture, but seldom have I read such an evocative combination of thoughtful research, which captures both the art of Mr. Gifford, and at the same time captures the color of the man, the moment, the time, and the place. Reading it, you are swept up in the dialogue, and perhaps, because I have been there, I was brushed by the breeze, smelled the cedar, and felt the sand under my feet, not to mention the visceral recollection of friends, both present and past. Anyone who cares about the richness of experience and the dynamic of living it needs to read Mr. Rawlin's book -- and to quote Thoreau ; "The world is but a canvas to our imagination."

This book is amazing. The history of FIP, LGBT and Horace Gifford was absolutely stunning. Spent a few hours reading every word and drooling over the interiors of these amazing homes. I have been wanting to treat myself and I sure did. Great price and same day delivery.

I have had a home on Fire island for the past 35 years---and my dream, never realized, was to have it designed by Horace Gifford. His simple but elegant homes stand out for their beauty and attention to detail---and especially to their location. I don't think any architect had a better understanding of the beach and the particular site he was building on....as he said "The site suggests what the house wants to be as a form in space." He took full advantage of the sea, the sky, the pine tree settings while always respecting the fragile environment---and often with a small building lot...since land on

Fire Island is so limited and precious. His homes, largely of glass and cedar and often built around interior sun decks, are really sculptures. He died much too young and never received enough acclaim for his incredible talent. I waited so long for the beautiful volume to be published and I treasure my copy.

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