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Alden B. Dow: Midwestern Modern

Diane Maddex

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Alden Dow was a midwesterner by birth, but he left a legacy national in stature.

Active from the early 1930s through the late 1970s, Dow designed some six hundred projects—often daringly modern houses and religious buildings, schools and colleges, business and civic structures, and even a new town in Texas. He changed the face of his hometown of Midland, Michigan, leaving it more than one hundred houses, offices and plants for The Dow Chemical Company, churches, banks, schools, and recreational structures. Nowhere is Dow's genius more evident than in his Home and Studio in Midland, a National Historic Landmark. *Alden B. Dow: Midwestern Modern* tells the story of both this exceptional residence and the architect who spent a half century developing his vision of a more humane way of building.

Beginning with the family—his father founded The Dow Chemical Company—and the town that encouraged him, the book traces the life and work of Alden Dow as well as the intensely personal philosophy that governed everything he did. The architect rejected the traditional concept of style and instead urged that buildings reflect their function, inspire their users, and encompass the qualities of honesty, humility, and enthusiasm. "There is never a fine thing unless it is original," he suggested, emphasizing the need for creativity and quality. Dow's influences were numerous: nature, the organic architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright (with whom he studied briefly as part of the Taliesin Fellowship), reason and practicality, the arts of Japan, the color wheel, and, always, an unfailing sense of fun and joy.

185 color, 220 black-and-white illustrations

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