

Need to Know

# 15 Interiors Every Design Lover Must See in Person

AD PRO asked architecture and design experts to name their bucket list destinations across the globe

By Elizabeth Fazzare

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If you consider yourself any kind of design aficionado, you likely keep a list of pilgrimage sites—those once- (or twice- or three times-) in-a-lifetime destinations whose beauty, history, or provenance makes them unmissable. To help broaden your scope, or perhaps validate it, AD PRO has put together a list of 15 of the most important interiors for design lovers to see. And who better to help compile that list than curators, writers, and historians themselves. Although the current coronavirus pandemic forbids much in the way of travel at the moment, join us in an armchair trip around the globe, and start dreaming of your next journey.

## United States



The Oaks at Tuskegee University. Buyenlarge

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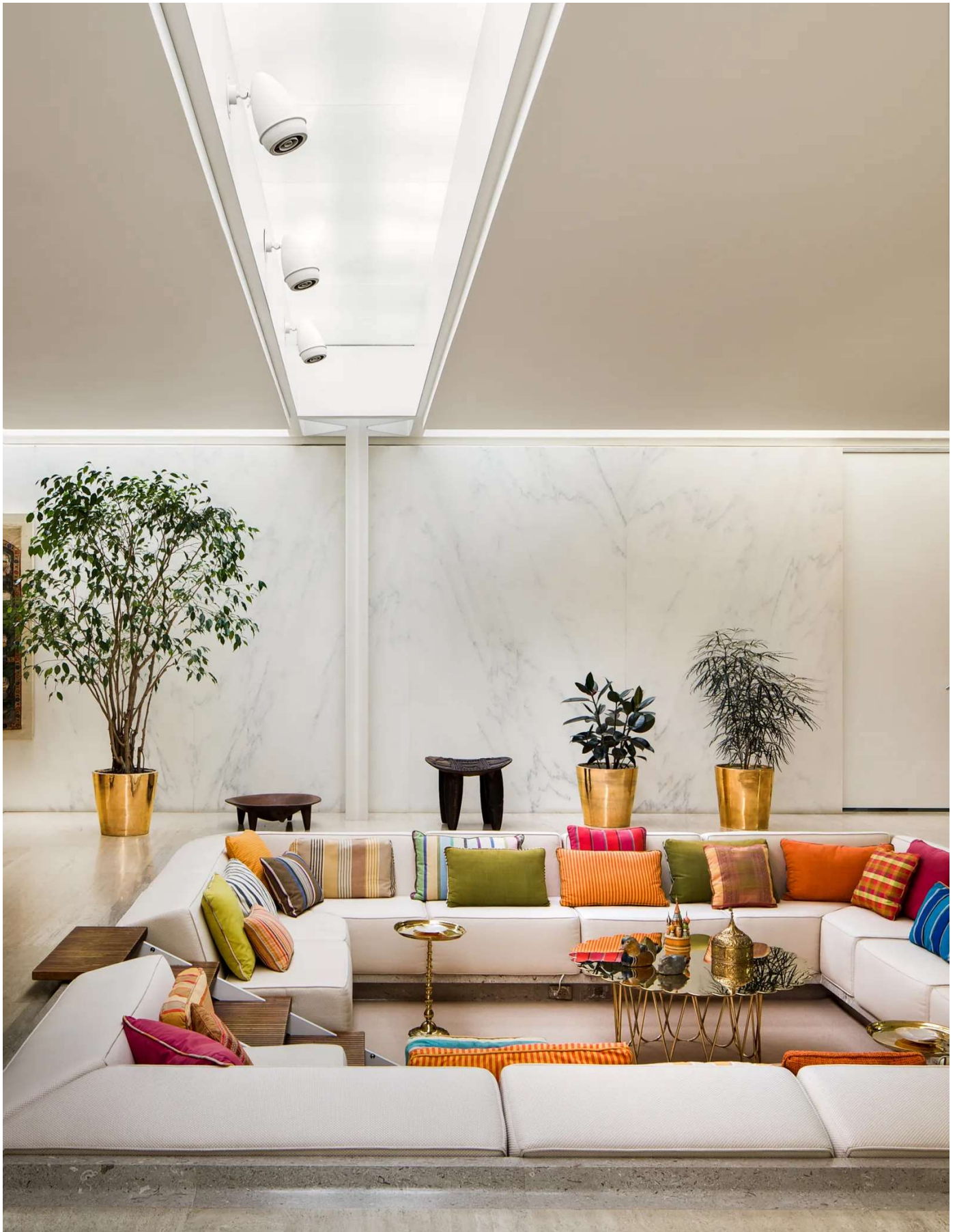
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## The Oaks at Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, Alabama

“On a shade-filled landscape overlooking the historic campus of Alabama’s Tuskegee University, there stands an elegant historic residence and architectural masterpiece called The Oaks. This handsome brick house embodies the life and aspirations of social justice leader and Tuskegee president Booker T. Washington and his wife, Margaret Washington. Constructed from 1899 to 1990, [it was] designed by architect Robert Taylor, our nation’s first accredited African American architect and designer of many Tuskegee buildings.

“The Oaks was [built] with the latest technological advances and is the first house in the county to have steam heating, electricity, and indoor plumbing. With its classic Victorian interior furnishings and ornamental friezes, this Queen Anne Revival house exemplifies the power of Washington’s and Taylor’s residential architecture as an expression of their shared creativity and ground-breaking achievement.” – Brent Leggs, executive director of the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund



The Miller House. David Lauer Photography

## Miller House, Columbus, Indiana

“Designed by Eero Saarinen as the architect and Alexander Girard as the interior designer, this generous, friendly, spacious house is where Girard not only created some of the initial furnishings, textiles, and decorations—some of which were inspired by the personal histories or interests of the members of the family—but where Girard also became a kind of interior consultant to the Millers, suggesting and advising them on new purchases for many years.” – Dr. Jochen Eisenbrand, chief curator, Vitra Design Museum



Marine Air Terminal. Peter Titmuss / Alamy Stock Photo

## Marine Air Terminal, LaGuardia Airport, Queens, New York

“The interior of the Marine Air Terminal is perhaps not so memorable for its architecture proper but for the stunning mural *Flight*, the largest of its kind commissioned by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and executed by artist James Brooks between 1938 and 1942. Brooks’s *fresco secco* mural measures an impressive 237 feet in length and 12 feet in height and in lucid colors presents a panoramic history of man’s aspiration to conquer the skies in a series of allegorical

representations, ‘developing ideas of flight before and after it actually happened,’ as the artist reminisced in a 1965 interview.

“Informed by the great Mexican muralist of the time and in particular the work of José Clemente Orozco, it is painted on the upper half of the terminal’s cylindrical rotunda. A friend of Jackson Pollock, Lee Krasner, and Philip Guston, Brooks became a major representative of the New York School of abstract expressionism in the postwar years, but like many of his peers started his career by securing important public work commissions. The Marine Air Terminal mural was painted over by the Port Authority during the McCarthy era, supposedly because of the allegedly leftist politics the work represented, but it was restored to its former glory in 1980.” — Martino Stierli, Philip Johnson chief curator of architecture and design, Museum of Modern Art



Saarinen House. Dirk Bakker, courtesy of Cranbrook Art Museum

## Saarinen House, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

“Saarinen House is Eliel Saarinen’s Art Deco masterwork and the jewel of Cranbrook’s architectural treasures. Designed in the late 1920s and located at the heart of Cranbrook Academy of Art, Saarinen House served as the home and studio of the Finnish-American designer Eliel Saarinen—Cranbrook’s first resident architect and the Art Academy’s first president and the head of the architecture department—and Loja Saarinen—the first head of the weaving department.” – Julie Fracker, director of communications at Cranbrook Academy of Art and Art Museum



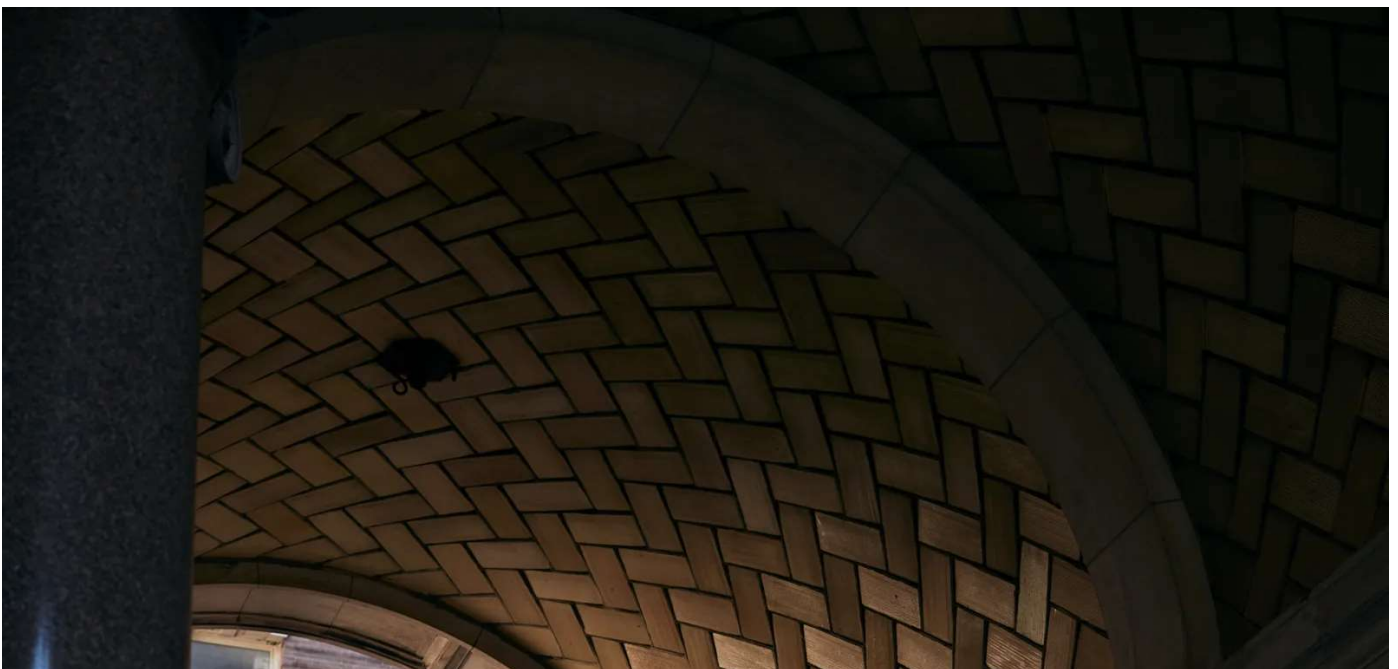


The African Meeting House. Randy Duchaine / Alamy Stock Photo

### **The African Meeting House, Boston, Massachusetts**

“The African Meeting House, circa 1806, in Boston’s Beacon Hill neighborhood is the oldest existing Black church built by Black artisans, and it conveys the story of the abolitionist movement as the embodiment of social change. The beautifully restored space is owned by the Museum of African American History, and has unique elliptic-shaped interiors, balcony, and pew seats. The interior colors are a muted soft golden yellow and white, with rich walnut wood tones on the original floors. As visitors move through this [space], they will hear creaking floorboards and see sunlight streaming inside for an unparalleled experience with our past and present.”

– Brent Leggs







The Graham Court Apartments. Frankie Alduino





A view inside the Harlem building. Frankie Alduino

## Graham Court Apartments, New York, New York

“The building that my husband and I have called home for the last decade—Graham Court Apartments in Harlem—is historically, culturally, and architecturally significant; a piece of New York City history that looks like it’s been pulled from a time capsule. Built at the turn of the 19th century—commissioned by the William Waldorf Astor, and designed by notable architecture firm Clinton and Russell—this building has seen such an incredible amount of cultural change in over 100 years of its existence.

“The building played an important part of the Harlem Renaissance. In the 21st century, there has been a second cultural upheaval of sorts, but this time in regards to the gentrification of the neighborhood—unfortunately, not unlike many original New York neighborhoods, lots of original tenants and families have been slowly pushed out.

“In regards to the grandiose architecture, the original Guastavino mosaic tiles still sit in every exterior entryway. The flooring is also hand-cut mosaic tile, and there are lights that nod to the original Tiffany fixtures. It’s a building that appears to have been pulled straight out of the turn of the century. It’s also been the backdrop for such films as *American Gangster*, *Jungle Fever*, *New Jack City*, and *Sugar Hill*.” — Dawn Roberson, executive director, Design Industries Foundation Fighting AIDS (DIFFA)



Louis Armstrong House Museum. Randy Duchaine / Alamy Stock Photo

## Louis Armstrong House Museum, Queens, New York

“Opened in 2003, the Louis Armstrong House Museum in Queens, New York, was the home of Louis Armstrong and his wife Lucille. When touring, a visitor will see an unexpected mix of styles and a futuristic interior. With exceptional integrity and authenticity, the Armstrongs’ Japanese-inspired garden, restored turquoise kitchen, and golden bathroom fixtures reveal insights into [Louis Armstrong’s] colorful mind. Best described as eclectic modernism, Armstrong’s home office exudes midcentury and the days of *Mad Men*. It’s pure luxury.” — Brent Leggs

## International



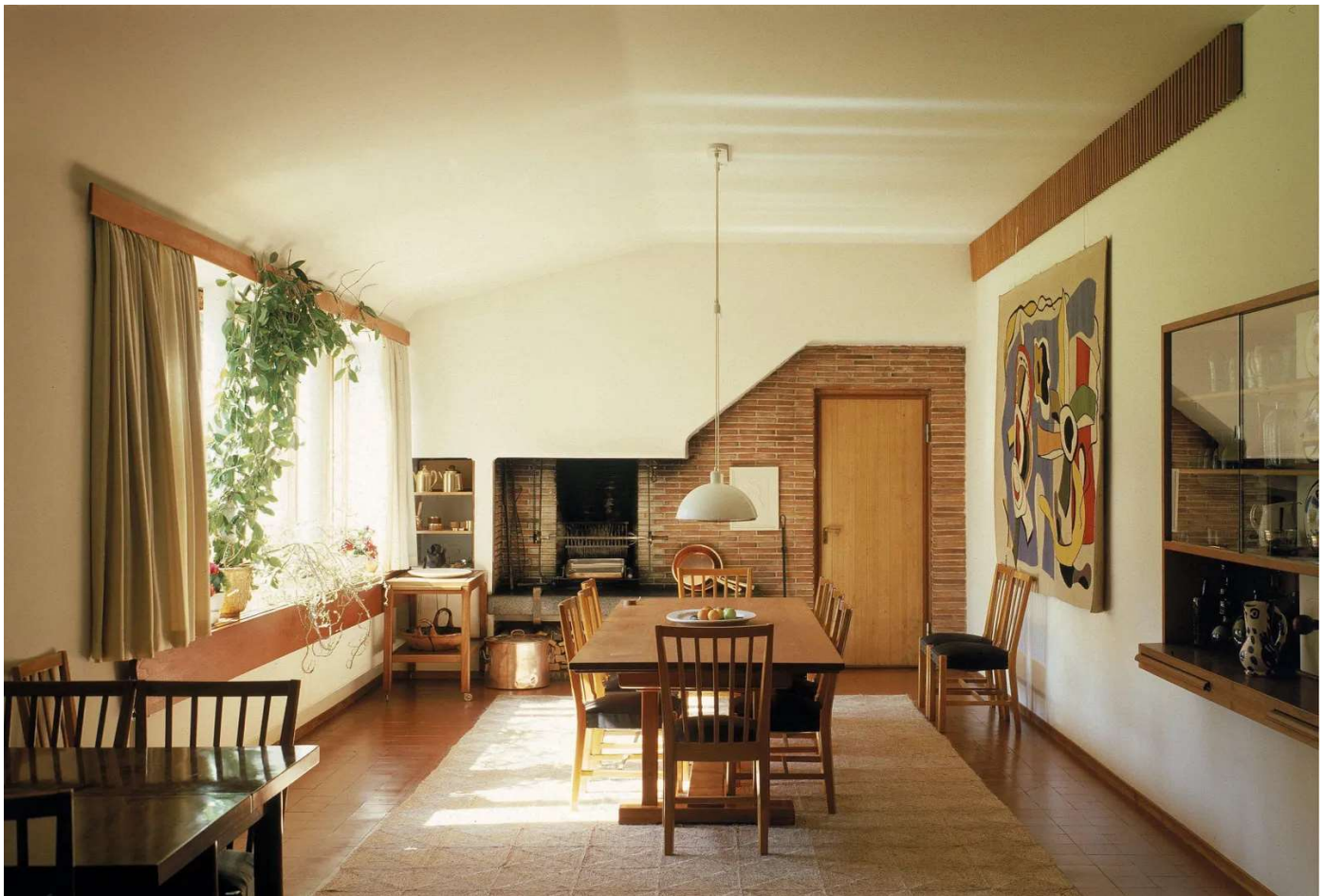
Sir John Soane Museum. View Pictures/Universal Images Group via Getty Images

## Sir John Soane Museum, London, United Kingdom

“[Photographer] Stacey Bewkes and I visited it while we were in London shooting our book *At Home in the English Countryside: Designers and Their Dogs* as so many designers—both here in the United States and across the pond—reference it as being one of their all-time most influential inspirations. It was a privilege to get to have a private tour of it and I equally fell under its spell.

“Since it’s been kept exactly as it was when Soane lived there over 180 years ago, you immediately feel like you are walking into a home, not a museum. But a home that is filled with the most extraordinary collections of sculptures, paintings, and architectural models.

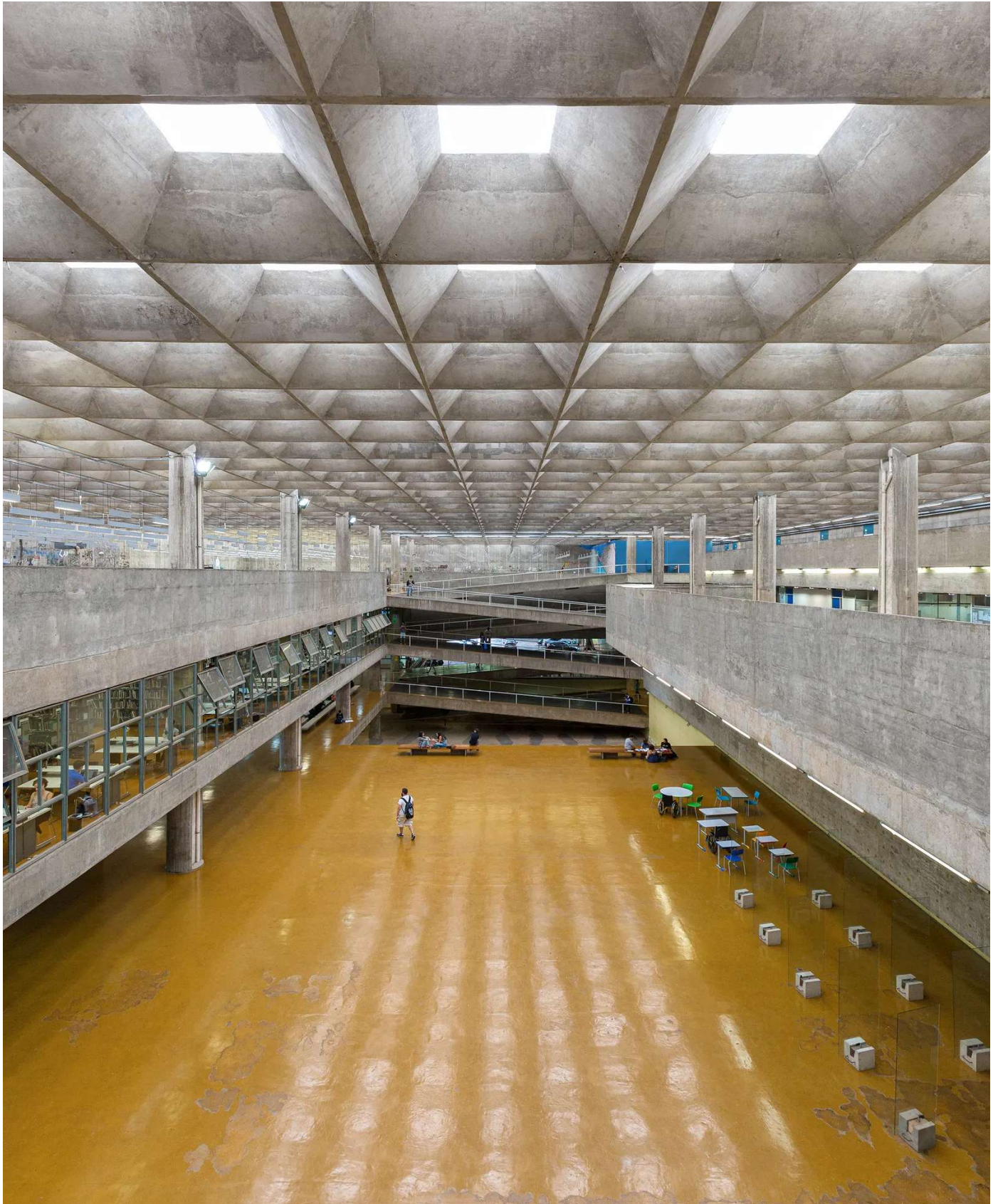
“There’s nothing fussy or precious about it; as like all great collections, they have been chosen for meaning rather than value and therefore they make the rooms feel timeless.” – Susanna Salk, design writer and host of *Quintessence At Home With*



Villa Mairea. Lehtikuva/Shutterstock

## Villa Mairea, Noormarkku, Finland

“Designed by Alvar and Aino Aalto for their friends, the Gullichsens, as a retreat and home for their art collection, Villa Mairea is one of the finest examples of Scandinavian modernism.” – Dr. Jochen Eisenbrand



Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism, Manuel Sá

## Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism, University of São Paulo (FAU-USP), São Paulo, Brazil

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“The light-filled central hall of the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism on the campus of the University of São Paulo is one of the great civic spaces of the 20th century. Built in raw, unrefined concrete between 1961 and 1969 by the Brazilian architect João Batista Vilanova Artigas, the faculty building is no doubt one of the masterpieces of the Paulista School of Architecture, with the central hall at its core. Nothing quite prepares one for the magnificent experience of openness and levitation this space holds as one strolls through the low, permeable entrance zone into the airiness and imposing solemnity of the multistory hall with its wide spans and coffered ceiling.

“The space is articulated almost exclusively in exposed concrete, only punctuated by a row of massive square pillars, a front of windows shielding the office spaces, and a pair of ramps connecting the upper floors at the front end. The roughness of the exposed concrete with the traces of the formwork visible is intentional and embodies Artigas’s aesthetics of poverty which were central to his revolutionary, Marxist beliefs.” – Martino Stierli





Casa de Vidro. Paulo Fridman/Corbis via Getty Images

## Casa de Vidro, São Paulo, Brazil

“A house and an interior by Lina Bo Bardi that presents the perfect marriage of the global and the local and showcases the nature surrounding it through expansive glass fronts.” – Dr. Jochen Eisenbrand



The Chapel at the Brion Tomb. Alessandra Pezzotta / Alamy Stock Photo

## The Chapel at the Brion Tomb, San Vito D'Altivole, Italy

“In a tiny cemetery of the rural village of San Vito d'Altivole, at the foot of the picturesque Dolomites, stands one of the most remarkable interior spaces of the 20th century. Created by the greatest Venetian architect Carlo Scarpa, the chapel of the Brion Tomb was his ultimate masterpiece, built over a period of nine years (1969–78) for the Brion couple, founders of the Milanese electronic manufacturer Brionvega. When the entire world is crowded together at the Venice Biennale, a drive through the lush wine country of the Veneto to the breathtaking chapel where the only visitors are a handful of design pilgrims, is an unparalleled experience.

“Scarpa’s vocabulary and his achievement of the essence of form were at its best in this gem. The space comes to evoke physical and emotional substance, while merging classicism with modernism. His commitment to craftsmanship, along with the combination of the materials, glass and concrete, is not only unique, but helped him to achieve this substance. The pristine Brion Tomb manifests the power of abstraction in its most magical way.” – Daniella Ohad, design historian, writer, and curator



Ernst May Haus. Fredrik von Erichsen dpa/lhe

### **Ernst May Haus, Frankfurt, Germany**

“A reconstruction of an interior of one of the thousands of terraced houses built under the direction of Ernst May in the late 1920s, early 1930s, it is home to one of the many Frankfurt kitchens designed by Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky for this housing program.” – Dr. Jochen Eisenbrand



High Great Chamber at Hardwick Hall. The National Trust Photolibrary / Alamy Stock Photo

## High Great Chamber at Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire, United Kingdom

“The High Great Chamber at Hardwick Hall is one of the most luxurious and most complete Elizabethan interiors to survive. The rich combination of architecture, plasterwork, and textiles transports you right back into a different world. The walls were designed to accommodate a set of eight tapestries of the highest caliber, woven in Brussels around 1550–65 and telling the story of Ulysses. Yet the real showstopper is the highly elaborate stucco forest above the tapestries. It features the virgin goddess Diana—alluding to Queen Elizabeth I—surrounded by animals traditionally found in European forests, paired with exotic elephants and monkeys.

“Hardwick was built by the Countess of Shrewsbury, better known as Bess of Hardwick, one of the richest and most influential contemporaries of the ‘Virgin Queen.’ The house as a whole is an incredible architectural gem, but the High Great Chamber most conspicuously reflects Bess of Hardwick’s power, wealth, and style.”  
 – Wolf Burchard, curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s British Galleries



Can Lis. Anthony Coleman-VIEW / Alamy Stock Photo

## Can Lis, Mallorca, Spain

“Designed in 1971 by Jørn Utzon, this building is a natural part of the landscape that surrounds it, made with local materials that have also been used for the simple, basic, and perfect built-in furnishings.” – Dr. Jochen Eisenbrand

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