

## **Glenbrow, an experiment in art in architecture**

Columbus lost treasure may fall to the wrecking ball

Columbus is one of the fastest growing regions in the United States. As the evidence of growth begins to surround us, more and more central Ohioans are sensing the importance of preserving natural, historic and cultural resources. These touchstones remind us of our past, connect us with nature, and anchor us with a sense of belonging. Today, on Columbus' far east side is an unprecedented opportunity to preserve and rediscover one of our most important local modern landmarks – Glenbrow.

Time and weather have certainly taken their toll upon this remarkable property, but its best days may still be ahead. With vision and determination an inspired plan has emerged to reinvigorate Glenbrow and to restore not just the home, but the spirit of its original design. One option for the restoration of the property is the creation of two new adjacent homes which will compliment the design of Glenbrow, creating a unique enclave that embraces the principles of sustainable design with nature, while preserving and enhancing this remarkable piece of architecture, its setting and cultural legacy.

Glenbrow was the product of a unique collaboration of creative minds. Built in 1940-55 Glenbrow was conceived by three young architects, Tony Smith, Theodore van Fossen, and Laurence Cuneo; together with owners Robert and Mary Gunning. Tony Smith was the principle designer of the main house, assisted by van Fossen, with furniture designed by Cuneo. Tony Smith's monograph, *Tony Smith: Architect, Painter, Sculptor* credits Glenbrow as his first built architectural project, which he completed fresh from an apprenticeship with Frank Lloyd Wright at his Taliesin Fellowship.

Tony Smith is remembered today as a seminal figure in American Art. As the title of his monograph and MOMA retrospective suggests; Smith was also a renaissance man, with mastery of many art forms, and a gift for teaching. He was a player in the New York art scene, a friend of contemporary luminaries like Jackson Pollack, Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko. Tony Smith's artwork is in the collection of major institutions around the world, including the Museum of Modern Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the National Gallery of Art. It would be difficult to overstate Tony Smith's impact upon the art world, with his own rich artistic and architectural legacies, which has also been extended by the separate contributions of two of Smith's three daughters, artists Kiki and Seton Smith, who have moved to the forefront of contemporary Art.

Theodore van Fossen collaborated with Smith in the design of the 1940 main house and is the designer of the latter Studio Tower House. Van Fossen is a remarkable architect, whose work embraced the principles and ideals of Frank Lloyd Wright's "organic architecture". Van Fossen's lengthy connection with the Gunnings and his subsequent contributions to the design of Glenbrow, add to the unique design heritage of Glenbrow. Ted van Fossen is remembered today for his design of Rush Creek Village, a community of van Fossen designed homes in the "organic" tradition located in Worthington, Ohio. Rush Creek Village was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2003.

Today Glenbrow is under imminent threat from development. Since Glenbrow's creation in 1940, Columbus has expanded dramatically and what was once an easy stretch of road is now a very heavily traveled thoroughfare. Though we can't turn back the hands of time, we can stand on principle and protect those pieces of our heritage which

continue to inform our understanding of our history. We have a limited opportunity to act to save Glenbrow, to secure its future, with a feasible plan to integrate the property with its present day surroundings and to make it economically viable, environmentally responsible, as an example of smart growth development and preservation in action. Together with your help, we can make it happen!

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