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Edward Loewenstein's Midcentury Architectural Innovation in North Carolina

by

Patrick Lee Lucas *

Edward Loewenstein's designs for a dozen modern dwellings in their suburban historical context communicate as distinctive representations of local culture. In a community where the sit-in movement, in part, originated and where civil rights struggles marked the decades of the 1950s and 1960s, Loewenstein's vernacular modern buildings stood intertwined with conventional architecture, grounded in the past. His story, one of the ability of architecture and design to resonate with issues of culture, suggests that Loewenstein expressed aspiration for change in the community. His work for Jewish and non-Jewish families alike helped to deliver that vision in houses that stood in contrast to those of their neighbors. These explorations of a localized modern dialect stand as material evidence of a progressive designer who, along with his innovative firm, championed civil rights, mentored up-and-coming designers across race and gender lines, and actively engaged in community service to numerous civil rights and other organizations.

Loewenstein, as a Jew married into a distinguished Jewish family, brought a distinctive design sensibility to Greensboro. By studying his first efforts in providing modern residences, we are able to see his impact on the community. Far from making a claim here for a "Jewish architecture," Loewenstein's early commissions demonstrate how he helped Jewish and non-Jewish clients alike

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visualize alternatives and new ideas commensurate with those written largely in the post-World War II suburbs throughout the nation. In this era, some Jews aspired to quiet dissent as they simultaneously sought a place in mainstream culture and identity.¹ Through their architecture, Jews espoused a certain cosmopolitan character rooted in the tenets of modernism. Importantly however, their modern dwellings did not contain the cold and sterile interiors of the high modernists featured in design magazines. Their residences by Loewenstein and others elsewhere stood as softer and quieter expressions of the day, safely situating this dialect not as a distinct southern Jewish identity but as one of many voices in the southern landscape whose expression helps us see and hear the social and cultural implications of Jews at home in the region.²

Although scholars have addressed various meanings of vernacular modernism in mid-twentieth century residential structures, they have largely overlooked the designs of forward-thinking architects like Loewenstein in medium-sized southern cities. Moreover, because of his social engagement, Loewenstein helped to constitute a group within a community of progressively minded individuals that helped transform Greensboro at midcentury. Loewenstein's story counters the portrayal of the Gate City as a place occupied by largely ineffectual politicians and dismal social prospects for non-whites and, at the very least, complicates our notions of the community at midcentury.³

Far from only a local phenomenon, Loewenstein's story echoes that of other designers and architects throughout the nation – professionals who struggled to redefine suburban residential design standards in the decades after World War II – with many proposing new, more contemporary styles. Despite these new alternatives, homeowners repeatedly selected linkages to the past, clinging to designs based largely on the classical revivals of the nineteenth century and the colonial buildings of the century before. However, throughout the nation some forward-thinking clients hired architects and designers to bring modernism to the suburbs. Like Loewenstein, they visually and intellectually chal-

lenged assumptions of what a house could look like and stand for in turbulent times, a design conversation of sorts in built form. With residential architecture understood as a social act resulting in sited physical and tangible products, midcentury modern residences suggested a change in ideas about politics, identity, and worldview true in Greensboro and equally valid in many sections of the United States.

Loewenstein, among others, reinterpreted the stark modernism of the two previous generations of designers and thereby brought to the American landscape a more nuanced version of the style, suited to a local context. Born in 1913, the Chicago native moved to Greensboro with his wife, Frances Stern, in 1945 following World War II Army service. Frances, a Greensboro native and stepdaughter of textile magnate Julius Cone, provided access to a large social network of contacts within and outside the Jewish community.⁴ Through this web of relations and his community engagement, Loewenstein secured design commissions that redefined architecture in Greensboro in the postwar period. With a bachelor of architecture degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1930–1935), he established a practice in Greensboro in 1946 that continued until 1952. It was then succeeded in 1953 by a flourishing partnership with Robert A. Atkinson, Jr., that continued until Loewenstein's premature death in 1970.⁵

Mentoring Beyond Boundaries of Race, Gender, and Class

Loewenstein-Atkinson produced more than 1,600 commissions, one quarter of them residential. Although Loewenstein's buildings comprise a tremendous physical legacy, the architect's other great contribution to the North Carolina built environment came in the training he gave to many architects and designers who practiced throughout the state. Notably, the firm hired the first African American architects and design professionals in Greensboro and North Carolina after World War II. William Street, Loewenstein's MIT classmate who eventually joined the faculty of North Carolina A&T in Greensboro; W. Edward Jenkins, the first licensed African American architect in Greensboro; and

Clinton E. Gravely, all of whom pursued prolific architectural careers in North Carolina and beyond, counted among the first African American professionals hired by Loewenstein's firm. Equality for Loewenstein extended beyond hiring practices. As an advocate of civil rights, the firm completed buildings for the greater good of Greensboro, including the master plan and design for twelve buildings at Bennett College, a traditionally African American women's campus. Loewenstein embraced underserved populations in the design for two YWCA buildings and a major addition to the YMCA, correcting the inequities in facilities and bringing together people from the separate black and white branches that had existed through the 1960s

Despite some fallout from Loewenstein's more liberal attitude toward race, the firm continued to receive admiration while striving for diversity because of the collective spirit of enterprise within its ranks and in creative association with design professionals outside the firm. Loewenstein also mentored hundreds of students as interns and young hires, among them Frank Harmon of North Carolina and Anne Greene of Washington, D.C., both of whom went on to design award-winning buildings and interiors throughout the United States. In the end, more than thirty architects, draftsmen, and support staff worked at the firm at its peak size in the mid-1960s. As inheritors of Loewenstein's midcentury modern aesthetic, these practitioners continued to shape architectural and design endeavors in the nation with each passing decade.⁶ Loewenstein further mentored through his teaching at the Woman's College of the University of North Carolina from 1958 through the late 1960s, where he innovated an active system of learning by taking women out of the classroom and into the field of home construction. In 1957-1958, Loewenstein offered a year-long design course, offered jointly through the Department of Art and the Department of Home Economics, which attracted twenty-three students. In studio, the students designed the house, oversaw its construction, and decorated the resulting structure, dubbed the "Commencement House" by the university's public relations office.

Edward Loewenstein, c. 1965.

(From a private collection, courtesy of Patrick Lee Lucas.)

Completed in 1958, the first house was followed by two others in 1959 and 1965, an important physical legacy that symbolized shifting gender roles in design as seen in higher education. In the news media, the *Greensboro Daily News* recognized the import of the 1958 Commencement House, as did the *Raleigh News & Observer*. The completion of the first house merited acclaim on the airwaves in one of Greensboro's first live remote broadcasts by WUNC-TV on the *Potpourri* program hosted by Nancy Downs, marking the unusual character of such an undertaking for young women. The notoriety of the Commencement

Houses spread from Greensboro to regional and national periodicals. Coverage for the first house appeared in *McCall's* (November 1958) and *Southern Appliances* (September 1958); the second in *Living for Young Homemakers* (October 1959); and the third in *Bride's* (June 1965). Each placement demonstrated the innovative projects' public relations value for the university to audiences far beyond Greensboro.

All three of these houses resulted from innovation espoused by Loewenstein, alongside the students and the various partners and collaborators who made the efforts possible: Gregory Ivy, first as chairman of the Art Department then as interior designer for the firm; Walter Moran and John Taylor, who assisted Loewenstein in studio on campus and on the job site; and Eugene Gullledge, contractor for all three structures. Notably, Gullledge fronted the money for these houses built essentially on speculation, ensuring their market success. The houses also represented the resiliency of Loewenstein and the firm to incorporate alternative approaches to the design process in a time of momentous and unpredictable change for the community and the nation. Just as these houses represented nonconformity of sorts in doing things in a different way while sitting silently in neighborhood settings, so too did students sit in as a form of silent protest in downtown Greensboro in 1960.

With a wide range of building types and scales, the commercial buildings Loewenstein produced throughout his career also reflected his belief in community and civic engagement. Shortly after moving to town, Loewenstein joined in temporary partnership with Charles Hartmann, Jr., to design the North Carolina Convalescent Hospital (1948) in response to a polio epidemic that swept the city and the resultant need for health care facilities to house those recovering from the disease. In the 1950s, the firm designed schools, hospitals, religious buildings, and public facilities, including the award-winning Woman's College Coleman Gymnasium (1952). In the more tumultuous 1960s, the firm designed the Golden Gate Shopping Center (1961) to provide an accessible store east of Elm Street for the growing populations on that edge of town. Through the Bessemer Land Company, Loewenstein and

the firm's employees still worked in traditionally African American neighborhoods in east Greensboro. Several commissions came through Cone Mills and its related institutions, including the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church (c. 1965) and a school complex near the mill. The landmark Greensboro Public Library (1964), the most lasting community building in Greensboro, anchored civic pride and the progressive spirit of the community in troubling times.⁷

Jews and Modernism in Greensboro

As the only known Jewish architect practicing in North Carolina in the middle of the twentieth century, Loewenstein's work takes on great significance in understanding life as a Jew in the South, and specifically one who practiced in a profession not heavily populated with Jews.⁸ Outside North Carolina, Jewish architects of the midcentury brought to the landscape some remarkable modern structures. Those with national or worldwide reputations such as Gordon Bunshaft, Sheldon Fox, Bertrand Goldberg, Percival Goodman, Louis Kahn, and Richard J. Neutra maintained prosperous careers in the spotlight with numerous significant commissions. All of these men, including Loewenstein, trained as modernists in architecture school and embraced tenets of the design movement in their subsequent work. They all mediated between architectural ambition and acculturation into the mainstream. Stanley Tigerman positions them, along with other Jewish architects, as outsiders who had both the liberty and the business acumen to challenge conventional notions about architecture and design, drawing parallels between Jewish history and architectural ambition. By contrast, Gavriel Rosenfeld indicates that modern buildings of the midcentury did not contain Jewish traits or features, rather markedly staying within the confines of modernism as understood throughout the nation. This view suggests that acculturation explains the behaviors of Jewish architects.⁹

Few Jewish architects practiced in the South. Even in synagogue design and construction, where one might expect to find Jewish names, non-Jewish architects prevailed. Even fewer Jewish architects in the South espoused modern design philosophies.

Thus Loewenstein's body of work stands out distinctly from his peers in the state and region. Curiously, Loewenstein designed only one synagogue, in Fayetteville, North Carolina. The Beth Israel Congregation retained Loewenstein's services, and he produced a space for the commission with a saw-toothed roof profile. Completed in 1962, the extant building shows the masterful plays of light and shadow Loewenstein envisioned.¹⁰ In Greensboro, although he was involved on the building committee of the Beth David Synagogue in 1966, he never received a significant commission for that edifice.¹¹

According to Ethel Stephens Arnett, industrialists including Moses and Ceasar Cone of Baltimore transformed the city in the last part of the nineteenth century, establishing textile plants in Greensboro.¹² By 1900, many considered Greensboro the center of the southern textile industry, with its large-scale factories producing denim, flannel, and overalls.¹³ By the mid-twentieth century, the Cone Corporation's five plants in Greensboro produced many types of cloth, and the firm had become the world's largest manufacturer of denim. Cone supplied denim for the making of Levi's jeans both before and after World War II, cementing a secure place in clothing manufacture. In Greensboro, the Cones encountered a progressive community accepting of their religious views, and they and the town "grew up together," with the Cones helping the community and the community helping the Cones.¹⁴ Eli Evans posited that "Greensboro is unique for the contribution of the Cone family. That sets it apart from other cities in the South."¹⁵ Zeigenhaft and Comhoff concur, writing that "for the past 75 years, the Jews of Greensboro have lived in a town where among the most prominent, wealthy, and visible people has been a Jewish family named Cone."¹⁶

As leaders, the Cones paved a path with their own philanthropic efforts and encouraged other Jewish families to similarly dedicate themselves to the well-being of the community. Through the Cones' administration of the cultural and social life of plant workers in their mill villages, and through the significant donations that they and other Jews made to educational and recreational pursuits, politics, and the arts, the Jews in Greensboro

formed a part of the community and did not stand apart from it.¹⁷ The Cones sat atop the social and philanthropic hierarchy in Greensboro, having formed a number of cultural institutions and supported countless others, particularly in the first half of the twentieth century. Although Jews helped shape communities throughout the region from the last decades of the nineteenth century (and in many cases, much earlier), in Greensboro the breadth of the Cone holdings and their ability to shape the municipality bore out over time architecturally in the construction of buildings that carry their name, notably the Cone Building on the Campus of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, the Moses Cone Hospital, Cone Elementary School, and the Cone Building owned by the City of Greensboro. That Loewenstein married into this powerful family suggests that he had an insider's view to the order of the community. Although he did little residential work directly for the Cones, Loewenstein's relationship with the Cone family did matter in the midcentury sociocultural politics of Greensboro.¹⁸

The Jews in Greensboro, as elsewhere in the South, represented a liberal faction within the town's mainstream groups. Marcia Horowitz characterizes Greensboro Jews as sympathetic but not overly active in civil rights for "fear that their contract with the white Gentiles might be broken" and for "fear of retribution."¹⁹ Despite this fear, many Jews noted the openness and level of comfort in the community and the ability for Jews to integrate and interweave their lives with non-Jews. Horowitz indicates that the "Jews of Greensboro knew that social acceptance rested on diminishing differences rather than highlighting them," including intermarriage to non-Jews.²⁰ Although Loewenstein did not stand out in his liberalism within this social and ethnic group, he went beyond most others in hiring and treating equally young black architects. One may assume that Bennett College leaders commissioned Loewenstein to do so many buildings as a kind of testimony to his clear stand on race, and not because of his Cone relations.²¹

Because of his contacts in the business and social spheres of the town, made possible in part through the Cone network,

Loewenstein attracted clients across ethnic and racial groups. Thus Loewenstein's design work operated both within and outside the Jewish community, much like the design solutions he offered to homeowners ranged from traditional to modern. Of his two-dozen modern residences, Loewenstein planned roughly half for Jews and half for non-Jews. In the total number of commissions, however, Jews built more modern or hybrid structures than non-Jews, with nearly 40 percent preferring something other than traditional structures, as compared to 25 percent of the non-Jewish clientele.²² These numbers reveal a predilection among Loewenstein's Jewish clients for modern structures over traditional ones — buildings that stand out more than those that fit in with neighbors. Loewenstein's designs for these structures, with their low key (or soft) approach to modernism, offered functional and practical homes that sat quietly on their lots and did not intrude in their neighborhoods. Rather than overtly demonstrate tenets of high modernism (or a more academic version of modernism), Loewenstein helped homeowners to fit in with their neighbors in a nontraditional way. Perhaps Jews modulating between acculturation and distinctiveness opted to state difference gently through the architecture of their homes, as a gesture towards cosmopolitan ways.

Reflective of the broader customs in architecture across the United States, Loewenstein's practice negotiated the needs of clients who desired both modern and traditional structures.²³ The houses he designed might be thought of as a form of conversation, with certain insecurities embedded within them about what to say and to whom. In a midcentury southern town that, like many, grappled with race and difference, Loewenstein's architectural lexicon of humanist modernism spoke a language of acceptance of new things (materials, compositions, features, furnishings) and new ideas (open planning, connecting landscape and interior). The architecture of most houses in the community spoke to conformity with tradition and obscured questions about race and class behind well-ordered, balanced, and symmetrical façades. Loewenstein's modern structures represented progressive ideas, given the choices of the day, and challenged conventions in house

building and in human identity. Just as he was devising hiring practices for his firm, he actively worked out how to reconcile the traditions of his profession with the innovations possible in the postwar era. In his buildings, he introduced a design language of the times living with and within the buildings he created. Imperfect as it was, this design language equated with the real questions confronting the community about how people encounter one another and the distinctions people draw out of their commonality.

Loewenstein's buildings in a wide range of styles, from traditional to modern to some hybrids in between, reflect viewpoints in the community about unity and diversity. These structures suggest that the families who lived in them had the same needs as their neighbors (living spaces, sleeping spaces, food preparation spaces, utility spaces), but Loewenstein organized them in different ways depending on the orientation of the family and their ability to absorb an architectural design that did not conform with the majority. Similarly, people in the community (Loewenstein among them) spoke about organizing the community and the people within it in a different way. Much like the buildings Loewenstein placed on the land, he quietly drew together whites and blacks within his drafting room and continued to challenge racial mores in the community through his civic service. He did not have a perfect language or solution to the challenges of architecture nor of segregated culture. His buildings and his leadership demonstrated an individual who was working out what it meant to be an outsider in a southern community, a Jew accepting and promoting the changes that came through civil rights.

Loewenstein's architectural story and the story of his liberal politics and identity explain one way that Jews in the South acculturated in the mid-twentieth century. As the nation reorganized after World War II, and as the suburbs provided the place for the lion's share of this expansion, this Jewish architect encountered a community filled with tradition that espoused different ways to see the world. As indicated above, his work represents an incomplete story in the sense that the buildings stand in as the material record of Loewenstein working things out. Homeowners did not record their thinking about building in traditional, modern, and

hybrid ways, thus we have to rely instead on the architecture itself to show us the differences suggested by Loewenstein and others like him around the nation. That Loewenstein was a Jewish architect practicing in the South, active in the community, and championing civil rights further makes this a story worth telling.

Cosmopolitan Residential Architecture

Although commercial commissions dominated the firm's job lists, residential commissions represent Loewenstein's greatest contribution to the emerging contemporary architectural lexicon of the Piedmont, where he created more than four hundred livable houses that mediated across three design variations. In addition to his own design work, he also supervised a team of designers who adopted a wide range of approaches. Reflective of his decades in practice, Loewenstein maneuvered through the polarized squabbles captured in the pages of architectural journals and design magazines and in the profession itself over traditional and modern structures. He designed both rather than one or the other, and his ability to manage a burgeoning career indicated a talent for work across stylistic genres.

Designing with a diverse clientele in mind, including key leaders of the Jewish community, Loewenstein communicated something distinctive in this combination of innovative and traditional buildings.²⁴ One approach spoke of an alternative vision for living, one that embraced the openness and promise of the future through modern expression, a certain cosmopolitan character standing in bold relief to the columned mansions of the past. The other and louder voice spoke to tradition: residential houses with classical and colonial revival details and features melded with the emerging ranch form. A third architectural voice, one of hybridization, blended all three approaches in the same building. This third category included buildings along suburban streets that might initially look as though they conformed to the tradition but, in fact, hid modernist wings, rooms, and details. This review of three residential commissions among Loewenstein's early modernist dwellings examines houses primarily of the first voice: the Martha and Wilbur Carter residence (1950–1951), the Eleanor and

Marion Bertling residence (1952–1955), and the architect's own house (1954). This trio of commissions reveals Loewenstein's fluid use of multiple styles, rather than the series of single-minded approaches often equated with modernism. Also apparent are the voices of Loewenstein's clients as they worked with the Jewish architect to determine the best ways for themselves and their families to live at midcentury, linked to the practice of making a home. Finally, quiet dissent emerged where clients and designers together shaped an original way of thinking that symbolized the cultural shifts of the 1950s and 1960s, the same shifts that ultimately brought four men to the Woolworth's counter in downtown Greensboro.

Loewenstein's career reflects his difficult position as a progressive architect in a city with profoundly traditional stylistic and social views. Far more than a tactic for survival, Loewenstein's gentle approach to design and his fluid boundaries among stylistic choices made him a popular and, for a time, the only architect in Greensboro to whom clients could turn without fear of being shunned for desiring one kind of house over another. Time and again, original owners, other clients, and collaborators spoke of Loewenstein's gentle mannerisms and design approaches. His effective work, reflective of a conflicted era in design and a turbulent time in society, demonstrates a keen understanding of the human condition and the ability of one designer to weave himself gently but firmly into the fabric of a community.²⁵

The Greensboro that Loewenstein encountered in the late 1940s experienced growth similar to that of other midsized cities of the postwar era, including a tremendous housing boom that wrought significant changes in city and family life. Throughout the country, veterans returning from war and countless others moved outward from the core to land at the edges of urban settlements, fashioning new social hierarchies by occupying the landscape in predominately horizontal houses on sprawling lots. The resultant neighborhoods and their attendant commercial areas provided new structures for American families and communities largely based on traditional gender roles, mobility, and compartmentalization of both class and race. The changes in-

tertwined with aspects of the race struggles of the 1960s. In a period of roughly twenty years, what people wanted in their new “dream” houses, how architects and others designed them, how designers furnished and modified them, how residents lived in them, and how homeowners paid for them dramatically shifted in this suburban milieu. As Loewenstein’s work unfolded, he responded to client needs across a wide range of budgets, site conditions, and emerging architectural opportunities in shaping a variety of houses.

The residences that Loewenstein designed, like those in other communities across the nation, stood as symbols of shifting family and community values and, particularly because of their location on the edges of cities, as places of separation from the dirty and competitive business world and from others who were different in socioeconomic class and race.²⁶ Increasingly freed from the strictures of the Victorian world of their parents and grandparents, families refashioned their houses as places of retreat to “protect and strengthen the family, shoring up the foundations of society and instilling the proper virtues needed to preserve the republic.”²⁷ For some, the suburbs and suburban residences would form the new moral center of the nation, enabling Americans to secure a bit of economic prosperity and an investment in the future, thus partly counteracting the communist threat of the cold war.²⁸

Much of what drove such powerful transformation in domestic space and place related to the quest for single-family home ownership. Many Americans maintained an optimistic view that through suburban living, one could take a rightful place among middle-class peers as engaged democratic citizens in a great nation. However, the reality of affording a free-standing, single-family home stood worlds apart from the wherewithal of many families. So, under the aegis of federal government regulation and loan subsidies, homeowners applied for assistance. The G.I. Bill and Levittown-type developments facilitated the process. Countering the ever-moving American, the suburban residence symbolized financial and political stability and permanence, rooted in the landscape as an antidote to the high mobility of its citizens.²⁹

Edward Loewenstein's clients espoused and encapsulated many of these views concerning race, class, gender, mobility, morality, and democracy. As the United States poised for political, cultural, and social leadership on the world stage, these Greensboro residents, like their counterparts throughout the nation, assumed new leverage as arbiters of shifting tastes and sensibilities regarding the American home, and they did so along different stylistic paths. Loewenstein, like other designers, helped to define the taste of his clients situated in the particular circumstances of a Piedmont textile town, bringing change to that community incrementally through both his traditional and modern design work.

Designs

Although Loewenstein had been practicing in Greensboro since 1946 and, in that time, had produced more than a dozen residences, many observers acknowledge his first major modern residential commission as the Martha and Wilbur Carter residence, built precisely at midcentury (Figure 1).³⁰ Highly visible within the Irving Park neighborhood, and on land purchased from Martha and Ceasar Cone, the visual impact of the Carter residence at a prominent location provided the community a fine example of the type of modern dwelling emerging from the drawing boards of architects practicing after World War II. The architectural context for this structure—traditional dwellings of two stories in the previously developed streetcar suburb of Irving Park—undoubtedly catapulted this house into the community's design spotlight. Despite potential notoriety because of its differences from neighboring houses, reaction in the press to Loewenstein's modernist dwelling was low-key. A reporter for the *Greensboro Record* described the house simply as "gracious, comfortable, and young" and recounted some of the details of its construction and design related to the radiant floor heating while not mentioning its departure from the more traditional design vocabulary customary in the city's suburbs.³¹

Despite such a quiet entrance in the local press, Loewenstein recognized the design importance of his first modern structure and, in 1952, directed New York architectural photographer

Joseph W. Molitor on a trip through Greensboro to make images of the Carter residence, along with the Bessemer Improvement Company and Southeastern Radio Supply buildings. Molitor's pictures were featured heavily in the firm's subsequent marketing materials.³² The Carter house later appeared in the North Carolina American Institute of Architect's publication, *Southern Architect*, in addition to being recognized by the NCAIA with a 1955 Merit Award. In the national press, *Architectural Record* editors included the house in the November 1952 issue, with additional photographs, a floor plan, and a story about the design process for the work.³³

Figure 1.

For the Carter residence, Loewenstein designed an L-shaped plan with a public wing parallel to the road and a perpendicular wing of bedrooms, opposing wings stretching into the landscape. The landscape in rear provided ample space for a large patio for outdoor living and protected the back yard from street traffic. A carport occupied the left end of the structure and provided a covered space for automobiles and sheltered the service entrance and wing of the house. The service end of the public block of the house, parallel to the street, included the carport, a maid's room, a laundry room, and storage cabinets. (Courtesy of C. Timothy Barkley Photography.)

The Carters faced the same decision as many others building a dream house at that time: should they link to the traditional past or cast it aside for a more modern vision of what a house could look like? *Architectural Record* reporters indicated indecision in the client's response to this question, and surviving correspondence in the firm archives and an oral history interview reveal that Loewenstein developed two schemes for the Carters. One was based on a building depicted in Georgia O'Keeffe's painting "White Canadian Barn II" (1932), a copy of which was in the client's art collection, where O'Keeffe depicted a long, horizontal, gable-roofed structure as the main image in the work. In an alternative scheme in preliminary sketch form, Loewenstein articulated a two-story Georgian revival dwelling, more in keeping with the other structures in Irving Park. When presented with the two designs, the Carters elected for the modern scheme. They based their decision on the lower cost of construction and their love of the open plan and of the connection with the painting that served as inspiration for the architect. Fifty years later, Wilbur Carter proudly tells the story of the painting, still in his possession, and its impact on the design of the well-loved house that he and his wife built and lived in for five decades.³⁴

East of the Carter residence in the nearby Kirkwood neighborhood, Loewenstein developed a more compact house with experimental design approaches, some based on the earlier Carter commission (Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5). As he elaborated his lexicon, he brought design features and processes introduced at Carter to greater resolution in the Eleanor and Marion Bertling commission the next year. Like the Carter residence, the Bertlings' house slipped onto the scene with little notice in the local press, despite its difference from neighboring homes. In welcoming the Bertlings to the street, nearly three dozen nearby residents signed a petition of support for the construction of a modernist dwelling, flying in the face of the unwritten restrictions from the Greensboro Planning and Zoning Department to prohibit modern structures in the Kirkwood neighborhood. It seemed that a modern dwelling that maintained a large distance from the street and a low profile on the landscape could enter a traditional neighborhood gently (Fig-

ures 6 and 7). In silently defying the development guidelines for the neighborhood, the Bertlings and Loewenstein indicated a different social order for at least part of the community based on modernism as well as an embrace of the automobile as design inspiration.

Figures 2 and 3.

Loewenstein and firm employees brought simplicity and coherency to the plan for the Bertling residence, working through design development (top) to the floor plan as built (bottom). The preliminary floor plan showed the firm's intention to organize this house around an outdoor pool. In this initial scheme, Loewenstein provided a den and guest-room suite that extended the building to the south in an ell perpendicular to the street, increasing the difference between public and private spheres within. The 3,000-square-foot final floor plan for the house included reaching ells, although Loewenstein folded the south wing into the main mass of the house and extended a north wing farther into the site, eliminating the pool and pool terrace. (Courtesy of Wilson + Lysiak.)

Figures 4 and 5.

Naturally finished materials in the building combine with light sweeping in from clerestory windows and window walls, bringing a sense of warmth and dynamism to these modernist interiors. (Courtesy of C. Timothy Barkley Photography.)

Figures 6 and 7.

The wooded lot obscures the presence of the house in the streetscape. The garage sits forward of the main mass of the building, further distancing and sheltering the home from the road and passersby. (Courtesy of Patrick Lee Lucas.)

Many of these experiments with space perception and use, storage, lighting, materials, and design philosophies took a more revolutionary form in Loewenstein's personal home of 1954 (Figures 8, 9, and 10). Ostensibly designed specifically to suit modernist sensibilities, Loewenstein also accounted for his wife's more eclectic tastes in the interiors, furnishings, and finishes. Further, as the house took form, Loewenstein's professional world changed. He took on partners and employees and began to direct their design approaches rather than undertaking the majority of the work himself. In addition, the team for this structure increased beyond the borders of the firm to include New York designer Sarah Hunter Kelly and lighting designer Thomas Kelly, an alliance based on Loewenstein's success working with these two professionals on an earlier commission, the Lloyd P. and Ann Tate residence in Pinehurst, North Carolina (1952). Loewenstein also retained the services of landscape architect John V. Townsend because the building required careful consideration of garden and adjacent spaces to expand living spaces beyond the walls of the home. Featured in the *New York Times Magazine* (June 1955), the house served as an archetype of Loewenstein's personal style and design approach. The local press noted the importance of the structure as a departure from tradition in the community. Under the title, "Architect Throws Away the Book, Builds Home for Himself," *Greensboro Daily News* reporter Barton A. Hickman emphasized the modern qualities of the structure in a detailed feature.³⁵

Echoing design efforts for houses in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Loewenstein devised three-part schemes for dividing interior space for all three structures. In one area of each structure, residents and visitors occupied main living and dining spaces and sometimes a less formal family room (and, by the early to mid-1950s, its requisite television), all spaces primarily dedicated to entertaining and all with fluid spatial relationships.

Near the public rooms, Loewenstein, like other designers, located spaces that comprised a work core (kitchen, laundry, and attendant storage) with proximate adjacencies, highly efficient places that freed matriarchs from duties and allowed them to

Figures 8 and 9.

The Loewenstein residence (rear view) offers the most compelling illustration of the multiple design voices at play: Loewenstein's modern dwelling echoing Frank Lloyd Wright's masterful landscape-building connections; Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's glass boxes; the clean-line, Bauhaus tendencies of Walter Gropius; Sarah Hunter Kelly's mixed-style approach to interiors, borrowed from Elsie de Wolfe's design philosophy of good taste; and Thomas Smith Kelly's ingenious lighting techniques to accent interior elements.(Top, courtesy of Patrick Lee Lucas; bottom, photo by David Wilson/UNCG Alumni Magazine.)

Figure 10.

Organized along a single hallway, the floor plan for the Loewenstein residence reflects the consolidation of the architect's design ideas while also illustrating public-private dichotomies and built-ins to reinforce design strategies. (Courtesy of Wilson + Lysiak.)

entertain more. As owners sought low-profile roofs, Loewenstein specified them. Minimizing traditional attics and omitting basements as well necessitated the provision for storage within rather than above or below the living spaces. In a number of commissions, this section of the house also included maids' rooms, indicating that, while progressive, the families for whom Loewenstein designed maintained order along class, if not racial lines, within their homes.

The third portion of each house, decidedly private, provided the location for bedrooms, bathrooms, and clothing storage, private areas rarely on view to visitors but places that accommodated the accumulation of material goods in postwar consumer society. All of these interior spaces made concrete ideas about separation and difference despite the confluence of room types and the fluid spatial relations within each subsection. Built-in cabinets and closets abounded in all three houses and in the service section of each public wing—a design feature expanded dramatically in future

commissions (Figures 11 and 12). Through their introduction, Loewenstein minimized the need for significant furnishings in bedrooms and related spaces.

Figures 11 and 12

The dining room built-ins provide ample storage for linen, dinnerware, and serving pieces at Bertling (left). The massive built-in cabinet fills one entire wall of the dining room and provides a colorful, glass-fronted storage system for china and a divider for the more private family room at its back. Built-in storage in the hallway leading to the guest bedroom at the architect's house (right) shows the economy of internal planning so characteristic of Loewenstein dwellings. In both floor plan and experience, the use of clothing storage works like an aural and visual barrier for private rooms. (Courtesy of Patrick Lee Lucas.)

Based on his successes in the earlier two commissions, Loewenstein designed a more extensive system of built-in cabinets throughout his own house. In the public rooms, he inserted book-

shelves as a divider between the living room and guest room wall. Somewhat uncharacteristically, he did not include built-in storage in the dining room, although he did include a "butler's pantry" adjacent to the kitchen for storage of china and silver. Loewenstein planned a kitchen, breakfast room, bar, storage closet, butler's pantry, laundry area, and maid's room in this service area. Similar to the Carter residence in size and form, these support spaces provided ease of occupation and use for the family and servants. In the private areas of the house, Loewenstein incorporated built-in cabinets and closets for storage. He also used these architectural components as space dividers and entryways to the bedrooms. In each case, the storage system and the bathrooms insulated each bedroom from the circulation spine, providing a greater degree of privacy for the residents.

Consolidating storage and built-ins within each structure permitted more flexibility in the exterior envelope. Adjacent to each home, Loewenstein shaped outdoor rooms achieved through the inclusion of landscaping features (patios, decks, pools, etc.) to provide expansive ways to live and connect the outside world with the interior. The landscaped lots, defined by wide manicured lawns and a variety of plantings, suggested a further link to individual values writ on the landscape. Because the size of residential building lots remained relatively large, Loewenstein, like others, took advantage of the opportunity to unstack the traditional two story house with its central hall and stair, opening a plethora of configurations that relied less on strict symmetry and more on fluid relationships among the spaces. Along with the open floor plans desired by many home buyers, stretching buildings along the landscape gave greater freedom to the building and expanded the spaciousness of the interior.³⁶ An expansive lawn with carefully manicured plantings accentuated the perception of spaciousness from the streets and from neighboring lots and homeowners.³⁷

Loewenstein's careful placement of each of the three houses underneath sheltering trees stood counter to the customary practice in the neighborhood of clear-cutting the building lots before house construction. At Carter, Loewenstein provided for a 15'x50'

“solar cell” room on the front of this remarkable open, one-story horizontal plan and sensitively nestled the house among a grove of mature trees already on the lot (Figures 13 and 14). He separated this space from the adjoining living room and dining room through a series of large sliding glass doors. Typical of Loewenstein’s designs, the screened room doubled the living space during temperate seasons of the year. Later enclosed with glass walls, the year-round space manifested a Loewenstein design strategy for double living spaces often stacked side by side to give the perception of spaciousness, fluidity, and flexibility in room use and furnishings.

Despite special care by the contractors and the owners, two of the mature trees at Carter did not survive long after occupation of the structure, necessitating modifications to the front of the house in 1955 and again in 1960. Under both phases of construction, the owners enclosed the screened porch with a glass wall, removed the glass roof and replaced it with roof decking to match the remainder of the low-pitched roof, and shortened the slightly curving entrance wall (Figures 15 and 16), originally designed to provide some visual separation from the street for the solar room on the front of the house.

On each exterior, overhanging eaves provided a sharp shadow line and emphasized the horizontality of the building in the landscape (Figure 17). Where neighboring buildings conquered by height and external decoration, Loewenstein’s modern structures settled horizontally into Irving Park. Rather than stacking stories, as would be done in more traditional residential forms, Loewenstein spread buildings across the landscape, taking advantage of views and site features, preserving mature trees, and linking outside to inside in sophisticated relationships throughout each scheme (Figure 18).

Although connected to previous commissions, Loewenstein clarified organization in his own house through the deployment of a long hallway to organize the private spaces along one wing. The bedrooms, in a wing to the left of the main entrance, maintained social distance from rooms for entertaining—the living room, dining room, and front hall. Complete with a door to close

Figures 13 and 14.

A mid-century view (top) of the solar room contrasts with the current-day view (bottom) to demonstrate changes made to this space over several decades: enclosing part of the glass ceiling and replacing screen panels with glass (left). (Top, courtesy of Southern Architect; bottom, courtesy of C. Timothy Barkley Photography.)

Figures 15 and 16.

As drawn, the entry point to the structure took tangible form as a hidden (or less than obvious) entrance. As originally designed by Loewenstein, the front entry sequence for visitors included negotiating an eight-foot high brick wall, passing by the solar room toward a single-leaf door. Standing at the intersection between the public and private wings of the house, the front entry offered a moment of orientation for the visitor. To the left, the visitor looked across an expansive vista with light sweeping in from the solar room at the front of the house to the window wall view at the north end of the living room toward the backyard. By contrast, the visitor's vista toward the bedroom wing, blocked by solid walls and a series of doors, indicated that this portion of the house contained family quarters not easily accessed visually or physically by others outside the family. The midcentury view (right) depicts the house shortly after construction. Within two decades of construction, the owners removed the brick wall (to the left in the view) along with making changes to the solar cell room. (Left, courtesy of Wilson + Lysiak; right, courtesy of Southern Architect.)

this wing from view, Loewenstein more completely distinguished the spatial experiences between private and public at his residence. He opened the public spaces through the inclusion of clerestory windows and large window walls to connect more completely to the outside (Figure 19). As a result, he designed a spine of light to stitch together the complex public spaces. Varying during the day and through the seasons, the light quality entering

these openings and the ability to catch a glimpse of trees and the sky outside enabled residents and visitors alike to experience ever-changing and evolving senses of the interior connected to a world beyond. Further underscoring this fluidity, Loewenstein incorporated a curved stone wall between dining room and living room that, like the front entrance wall of the Carter commission, simultaneously screened and embraced, drawing the infinite and the intimate into one world. Though visitors experienced this more open nature of the home in the public spaces, here they found no doubled living space as at Carter.

Figures 17 and 18.

Horizontal lines dominate vertical to illustrate tenets of Loewenstein – and modernist – design, looking at the carport (left) and even within the interior with its horizontal sliding glass doors set within a track (right). (Courtesy of Patrick Lee Lucas.)

Although Loewenstein and a number of lighting consultants developed more sophisticated lighting schemes in houses built later, at the Loewenstein residence the manipulation of natural light shows the experience intended by the designer for residents and visitors. Light flooded from the south façade into the solar room and then more deeply into the living and dining rooms beyond. Particularly in the winter months, this lighting strategy had

implications for passive solar heating of the bluestone floor, allowing homeowners to harness energy and reduce utility bills. The architect designed the open façade on the north side of the house and the one on the west side of the bedroom wing to link living spaces to the yard and views beyond. These fenestrations also allowed light to sweep in, although not as dramatically, as an even wash throughout the year. With the service aspects of the building on the west, and the bedroom wing on the east, Loewenstein minimized fenestrations on these façades.

Figure 19.

In the living room, Sarah Hunter Kelly worked with the Loewensteins to develop multiple seating areas furnished with streamlined upholstered pieces along with campaign-style furnishings specified by Kelly and manufactured out of state. The paper and metal lantern, one of two in the space, lends interest to the sweeping diagonal ceiling supported by the handmade flanged beams, which serve as structural supports. The fan-powered ventilation system of the fireplace, to the right, permits the location of the working firebox in a glass wall, thus freeing the view from any structural restriction. (Courtesy of C. Timothy Barkley Photography.)

The signature angles and placement of the large and clerestory windows throughout the Loewenstein house resulted from studies to mitigate the hot summer sun and take advantage of winter's warm rays as the sun's position shifts through the seasons. These studies impacted the design of the home in a myriad of ways, but it resulted in an almost forced perspective of the inside being drawn out through the resultant angled walls. With its expansive glass walls that brought the exterior landscape into the space, Loewenstein situated the public rooms to take full advantage of the landscape with the fireplace as a focal point in the house, significantly not blocking the landscape view by utilizing an underground ventilation system for the flue.

For all of his houses, Loewenstein envisioned palettes of natural local materials, including wormy chestnut vertical siding, bluestone floors, wood floors, and rose-colored brick walls. Both deployed inside and outside of the structure, these materials provided the seamlessness the clients intended between outdoors and the interior. Loewenstein exposed structural elements in his own house, taking the cue from early experimentation at Carter and Bertling.³⁸ Here the steel angled I-beams that support the living room ceiling show an architect between two worlds—embracing the machine aesthetic of high modernism but tempering that aesthetic with the careful fabrication of the I-beam, which has been split in two along a diagonal, one element reversed and welded back together to achieve the tapered shape. Like the inclusion of the I-beam, corrugated plastic sheeting on the roof of the porches at the Bertling and Loewenstein houses helped weave new materials and technologies into the scheme alongside more traditional materials (Figure 20). The translucent roof permitted light to penetrate the depth of the porch into adjacent interior spaces.

Working with lighting designer Thomas Kelly and interior designer Sarah Hunter Kelly, the design team deployed strategies for softening the modern appearance of the building by celebrating materials and finishes with light. For example, the design team supplemented the use of natural light, an important design feature throughout the home, by incorporating nearby hidden fluorescent fixtures for nighttime lighting across textile-clad

windows or as washes across stone or wood walls. Loewenstein included this typical lighting detail, first employed extensively at his residence, in nearly every residential commission over the next two decades. The design team included honey-colored wood for ceilings and walls in the public spaces; plaster walls in private and service spaces; a Carolina fieldstone wall between the living and

Figure 20.

Loewenstein specified corrugated fiberglass sheeting on the external living space adjacent to the living room at Bertling. Overhead roof planes at Loewenstein form outside "rooms." These extensions of internal living space provide easy transitions for residents and guests and link the interior and exterior experience into a seamless one. (Courtesy of C. Timothy Barkley Photography.)

dining rooms; and cork, stone, carpet, and vinyl tile floors. Sarah Hunter Kelly supplemented the warm color palette from the architectural envelope with furnishings and finishes that further emphasized a human quality throughout.

Ann Tate, who had worked with Loewenstein and the Kellys on her home in Pinehurst, North Carolina, encouraged Loewenstein to take advantage of Sarah Hunter Kelly's interiors knowledge for his own home, dropping him a note in early 1954: "I think it would be ideal if Mrs. Kelly could work with Frances," Loewenstein's wife.³⁹ From all accounts, Kelly worked with Frances Loewenstein closely as the matron of the household assembled a vision for the residence, which, after the Tate commission, represented Loewenstein's most far-reaching modern work, complete with sloping full-glass exterior walls, an open plan, and a strong formal unfolding of the building in a carefully sited landscape. One can only imagine that balancing the more modern view of the husband-architect with an eclectic approach from his wife must have been a challenge for Kelly. However, by borrowing on her design philosophy of "good taste," she achieved a relative harmony within the house's interiors, articulating a vision that accommodated family furnishings inherited from the previous generation, period antiques, and contemporary seating and case pieces that accentuated and celebrated a modern envelope.⁴⁰

Kelly's mixed approach to styles showed how the oppositional tendencies in wife and husband coexisted in the same building and echoed some of Loewenstein's own sentiments about a fluid interpretation of style. From Kelly came the mediating influences of textures and colors in the brightly patterned textiles as both upholstery and, most significantly, as curtain surfaces. When the curtains were drawn, the open landscapes of the husband slipped from view, bringing a comfort and warmth to the open plan in the relief from the bold forms of the architectural enclosure. By closing the curtain panels, one experienced a whole new layer of richness relative to surface and pattern in an already complex environment. This kind of design strategy also brought a special character to the interior and grounded the human experience of space in varied and subtle ways. Kelly's husband, Thomas Kelly, was the key to the mix, designing lighting fixtures and effects throughout the house as he had for the Tate residence. Deploying washes across the patterned textiles more boldly

accented their place as an active design element, most notably in the living room where a printed fabric used for furniture upholstery as well as at the windows featured an "image taken from a contemporary painting of Loches Cathedral in France," on "linen in dull green and charcoal, with touches of brick, on a pale blue ground."⁴¹

Along with lighting techniques designed by her husband, Kelly's palette of materials and textures and the highly sophisticated enclosing envelope visualized by Loewenstein and carried out by firm employees suggested a plural vision in the interior. At the center of decision-making stood Kelly with Frances Loewenstein, who together debated the merits of furnishing choices, artwork, and accessories, making the unusual house of the South "as appropriate as a white-columned mansion."⁴² Sarah Hunter Kelly easily juxtaposed styles across several genres, making spaces and furnishings easily livable and somehow more appealing than strictly modern or traditional spaces in contemporaneous projects, thereby bringing good taste to North Carolina in a wide-ranging and diverse approach to the house's interior.⁴³ Above all, this house represented a social web of connections, as the Kellys worked with both husband-architect and wife as well as a myriad of design professionals, craftsmen, builders, and installers.

Kelly included few furnishings made in town, instead trading that convenience for more international forms and finishes. Nowhere is that more evident than in the "campaign" style dining room suite and in the living room coffee table, rocker, and entertainment table/chair set, all based on French models from before the twentieth century. These additions to the public rooms presented the visitor to the house with an experience that bordered on the international. Alongside French antiques, the campaign furniture espoused a more modern aesthetic, fashioned of metal but softened by leather coverings, which added an additional layer of interest to an already sensory-laden space (Figure 21).⁴⁴

A Quiet Voice of Change

Echoing fellow designers in all sections of the nation, Edward Loewenstein experimented with placing both traditional and

modern houses, as well as some in between, in the suburban landscape. The first of the structures he designed in private practice on his own. But as the work increased in the community and as the firm evolved, Loewenstein and his partner, Robert Atkinson, took on a number of junior designers and draftsmen who helped carry out the design intentions of the firm. He also worked with a varied network of interior designers, lighting designers, and contractors who carried forward his vision of blending modern architecture with traditional dwellings.

Figure 21.

Sarah Hunter Kelly specified the dining room furnishings, attributed to French furniture designer Jacques Adnet. The colonial light fixture converses with the modern table and accompanying sideboard, all furnishings specified or accounted for by Kelly. Light sweeps in from the clerestory windows on the right, highlighting the fieldstone wall and providing ambience to the table at which meals are enjoyed. (Courtesy of C. Timothy Barkley Photography.)

In the three commissions reviewed here, Loewenstein included in prototypical form nearly all of the ideas that matured in his residential modern work over two decades, ideas that distin-

guished his work in the more humanist or warm strain of modernism. Thus the three houses stood like others of their ilk across the United States as an expression of cultural values. In each house, the family espoused a new design vision for home life that spoke of new relationships among family members, servants, and visitors to the American home. They traded the formal, hierarchical relationships of more traditional styles and forms for more fluid interrelationships among the people and the various spaces within the building, and they did so in a manner that remained true to a sense of southern graciousness. With these houses, Loewenstein, along with firm employees, interior designers, consultants, and contractors, spoke in a dialect that diverged from but also built on southern mores.

Looking at Loewenstein's design work in this way—as an intertwining of various strands of design—one understands the many design decisions, equally reflective of client and designer, which shape these residences. Ultimately connected to a larger design discourse about experimentation in design in the decades following World War II, Loewenstein's brand of modernism bears the marks of a second generation of young architects and designers echoing and reinterpreting the work of their European and American modernist mentors.

For all three commissions, Loewenstein first experimented with separation of public/private spaces in the overall organizational scheme. He melded an interlocking relationship of indoor and outdoor through his residential buildings. Loewenstein situated all three houses on wooded lots, with the house entrance hidden from the road. He included built-in storage to reduce the amount of furniture required on the interior and to divide space. He embraced sophisticated, multivalent strategies for natural and electric lighting in these dwellings and expanded this experimentation in future homes. Finally, he adopted a palette of materials centered in North Carolina building traditions to soften the modern structures in their immediate context. All of these ideas influenced future commissions, either by his hand or with the assistance of the various firm employees, in the production of modernist dwellings.

In his future-thinking work, Loewenstein strived for seamless stories by linking materials, light, and color; interior furnishings; building systems; exterior site relationships and landscape features; and design philosophies. In planning traditional structures, Loewenstein and his firm demonstrated agility in copying the past as an easy link for clients to fit in with their neighbors and the traditions of Greensboro. His modern dwellings, particularly, relied on large glass windows, walls, and sliding doors to provide color, texture, and visual interest in rooms largely stripped of traditional décor and finishes. Working with designers who generally mixed furniture styles rather than specifying the purity of a single style, Loewenstein provided room for inherited antiques alongside midcentury modern furnishings. Such eclecticism allowed dwellers to embrace both past and present within their environment and to both stand out and fit in with their neighbors—a quiet form of nonconformism adopted by some house owners of the midcentury. Through his more modern designs, Loewenstein both represented a dissenting voice in the design community and made manifest the nonconformist spirit of Jews and others, clients who elected to differ in their ways of life from the largely traditional neighborhoods in which they resided. Loewenstein mediated the presence of modernism in a tradition-loving community by designing hybrid houses that lived comfortably between two worlds. These hybrid houses help others to understand multiple modernisms, regional and local variations on international themes, rather than a single modernism without context, site condition, or client.

Although the community of Greensboro and the greater Piedmont region provide the site for many of Loewenstein's commissions, his local story links to the national one of midcentury suburbanization in the United States where many communities dealt with the housing boom in the decades after World War II. Everywhere, architects and designers struggled with the many options for appropriate design philosophy and practice. Loewenstein, like others, translated and reinterpreted the stark modernism of the two previous generations of designers and brought to the American landscape a more nuanced version of the

style situated intimately in the local context of a progressive community struggling for its identity in the postwar world. And just as others found themselves embroiled in political and social issues, Loewenstein's support for civil rights and community engagement placed him squarely within the framework of the community's debate about race relations, again linked to a national discourse.

In his modern residences particularly, but in houses of all three genres—modern, traditional, and hybrid—Loewenstein brought a well-grounded regional touch through the use of warm and animated materials, utilizing local brick, slate, and Carolina fieldstone. He successfully paired these materials with more progressive ones—steel, glass, and plastic—and with his designer-collaborators specified finishing touches with decorative and textured wallpapers, textile-clad windows, and furniture that crossed stylistic genres. Following his convention to separate public and private areas, an often L-shaped plan included spacious living rooms and dining rooms, along with kitchen and servant spaces, in flowing and interlocking rooms that blurred boundaries between interior and exterior. In contrast, built-in storage units closed vistas to bedrooms, lessening the amount of required freestanding furniture and linking each private space to a linear hallway that connected them all. Through the incorporation of these features, sometimes in contrast with traditional modes and styles and sometimes melded directly to these more conservative forms, Loewenstein and his clients brought an avant-garde cultural and social agenda to the Piedmont, attempting to redefine itself in the 1950s and 1960s. He created a midcentury design aesthetic that captured aspiring ideas about modernism linked inextricably to the local circumstances of his buildings and the universal struggles with modern buildings in the world beyond.

Edward Loewenstein's second-generation modernist work echoes similar philosophies and outputs of a wide number of designers in other communities across the South and throughout the United States. His buildings thus provide a sound source upon which to elaborate a story of significance that links to other work.

Importantly, he is the only architect working in the Greensboro community in the 1950s and 1960s whose individual and firm approach embraced modernism in the residential design sphere. Because nearly all his residential commissions of significance stood within Guilford County and the surrounding Piedmont, and given the well-documented history of this textiles town in civil rights literature, scrutiny of these particular cultural products provides more layers than other facets of the community's character investigated by others. Lowenstein's story enriches our understanding of a local community dealing with real issues and concerns in a time of great change and gives us a more complete reading of civil rights as understood apart from the Woolworth's counter.

Loewenstein, like others, reinterpreted the stark modernism of the previous generations of designers and brought to the American landscape a more nuanced version of the style suited to a local context. Married into the powerful textile-mill-owning Cone family, he produced buildings with social and political implications, reflective of race relations, ethnic distinction, and community values through service to others. Just a few miles from the Woolworth lunch counter where the sit-in movement originated, Loewenstein hired the first African American architects in a firm in the city, provided service to the community through his work, and utilized his position within a prominent Jewish family to present a different vision of openness and acceptance of others in a community that valued the tried and true in both design and in social conventions. His emerging design lexicon shows that same interest in physical expression. Through the work of this designer and his collaborators, architecture and design as cultural expressions served as quiet agents of change in the face of more conservative modes and models, resonating with the larger national discourse about design at midcentury.

Figures 22–29 (Opposite)

Images by Marion Bertling from a photograph album, documenting construction of his house. (From a private collection, courtesy of Patrick Lee Lucas.)

 NOTES

¹ Eli Evans posits the idea of a unique “Southern Jewish consciousness” in his overview history of Jews in the South. First published in 1973, the author weaves together storytelling, autobiography, and interpretive history to recount Jewish histories from the earliest immigrants to the present day. Eli Evans, *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South* (Chapel Hill, 1997).

² Lee Shai Weissbach's analysis of Kentucky synagogues represents the lone volume of study connecting the cultural values of architecture and Jews in the South. Centered largely on the nineteenth- and twentieth-century synagogue structures in small towns in the commonwealth, the pictorial record documents variety and significance in these structures and the architectural and cultural stories they tell. Lee Shai Weissbach, *The Synagogues of Kentucky: Architecture and History* (Lexington, KY, 2011).

³ William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York, 1980).

⁴ Like Jews in a number of cities and towns throughout the South, Jews in Greensboro figured prominently in the early history of the community. Their legacy as merchants, community organizers, textiles factory owners, and philanthropists through community foundations cannot be overestimated. According to Leonard Rogoff, Jews in North Carolina experienced an intertwined relationship with African Americans in the state as blacks supported Jewish business as outsiders. Driving the economy of many towns, Jews, including Moses Cone who settled in Greensboro, involved themselves in the tobacco and cotton mill industries. Leonard Rogoff, *Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, 2010).

⁵ During his early years of practice in the Piedmont, Loewenstein attempted to establish partnerships with two New York firms, Peter Copeland (Albany) and Telchin and Campanella Architects (New York City), and, unsuccessfully, to forge collaborations with several North Carolina State University School of Design faculty members. With Robert A. Atkinson, Jr., Loewenstein launched his most successful partnership and practiced mainly

throughout Greensboro and Guilford County. The firm also opened a series of satellite offices in Burlington, Martinsville, Danville, and Raleigh, the lattermost associated with Edward Waugh, then a faculty member at the NCSU School of Design.

⁶ John C. Taylor served as the firm's chief designer for over a decade, additionally assisting Loewenstein in his Woman's College teaching. Tom Wilson collaborated on a number of key projects in partnership with Loewenstein prior to the latter's death and today continues the firm's practice as Wilson & Lysiak.

⁷ A more abbreviated version of this biography can be found on the North Carolina Builders and Architects website, maintained by the North Carolina State University Libraries: "North Carolina Builders and Architects," accessed July 30, 2013, <http://ncarchitects.lib.ncsu.edu>.

⁸ Only two other known Jewish architects practiced in North Carolina, but both did so well before the middle of the twentieth century. Alfred S. Eichberg, a Savannah architect who designed several buildings in Wilmington, was "regarded as one of the first, if not the first, Jewish architects practicing in the Deep South." Eugene John Stern practiced only a few years, from 1908 to 1915, in Charlotte, having formed with Oliver Duke Wheeler and C. F. Galliher the firm Wheeler, Galliher, and Stern, succeeded by the firm Wheeler and Stern, before relocating to Arkansas, where he formed a firm with George R. Mann. "North Carolina Architects and Builders: A Biographical Dictionary," accessed February 18, 2013, <http://ncarchitects.lib.ncsu.edu>.

⁹ Stanley Tigerman, *The Architecture of Exile* (New York, 1988); Gavriel D. Rosenfeld, *Building After Auschwitz: Jewish Architecture and the Memory of the Holocaust* (New Haven, 2011).

¹⁰ Note and description from Gregory Ivy to Loewenstein, 1962, Loewenstein-Atkinson Architects. Transcription in Patrick Lee Lucas Papers, Walter Clinton Jackson Library Division of Special Collections, University of North Carolina, hereafter cited as Lucas Papers.

¹¹ Loewenstein-Atkinson Job List compiled in 2007 from archival records. Some believe, anecdotally, that Loewenstein may have had something to do with the addition to the Beth-David Synagogue in Greensboro, but no conclusive evidence has materialized to confirm this assertion. Lucas Papers.

¹² Ethel Stephens Arnett, *Greensboro, North Carolina: the County Seat of Guilford* (Chapel Hill, 1955), 171-174.

¹³ Gayle Hicks Fripp, *Greensboro, a Chosen Center* (Woodland Hills, CA, 1982), 59.

¹⁴ Marcia R. Horowitz, "The Jewish Community of Greensboro: Its Experience in a Progressive Southern City" (master's thesis, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1993), 61.

¹⁵ *Greensboro News and Record*, September 27, 1981.

¹⁶ Richard L. Zweigenhaft and G. William Domhoff, *Jews in the Protestant Establishment* (New York, 1982), 77.

¹⁷ The Cone family joined the Sternbergers, Sterns, Schiffmans, and others as charter members of the Greensboro Hebrew Congregation, uniting Orthodox and Reform constitu-

encies in one facility. Arnett, *Greensboro*, 139. Jews also donated money for school buildings, the major hospital in town, and civic structures, besides establishing both the Weatherspoon Art Museum and the Eastern Music Festival.

¹⁸ Loewenstein designed a house each for Ceasar Cone, Clarence Cone, and Herman Cone, as well as numerous minor projects for several additional Cone family houses. In terms of the Cone businesses, Loewenstein only received a single commission, a research building on the White Oak plant property. During construction of the Ceasar Cone house, Cone fell out with Loewenstein over whether the house should be air-conditioned. Loewenstein advocated the more forward-thinking approach—installing the system. This level of disagreement represented a rarity in client relations for Loewenstein, in that everyone else regarded Loewenstein a soft-spoken gentleman who always gave the client what he wanted. According to family tradition, Cone and Loewenstein had words over the subject and their relationship, not unusual for Cone with many of his business associates, family members, and friends. Richard and Joan Steele, interview conducted by author, September 17, 2007.

¹⁹ Horowitz, “The Jewish Community of Greensboro,” 36, 56.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 107.

²¹ Loewenstein’s mother-in-law, Laura Weill Stern Cone, descended from a distinguished Wilmington family, provided leadership and financial support to a number of progressive organizations and cases in civil rights and women’s rights, including service as a trustee to Bennett College, an African American woman’s school. No direct evidence in the firm’s or the college’s archives indicates that Mrs. Cone influenced the selection of Loewenstein as architect of record for the commissions at Bennett. “Mrs. Laura Weill Cone, 81, Dies After 2-Week Illness,” *Greensboro Daily News*, February 5, 1970.

²² In 1948 Greensboro had a total of three hundred Jewish families. Horowitz, “The Jewish Community of Greensboro.” Loewenstein designed houses for 11 percent of the Jewish population (thirty-four commissions) in contrast to less than 1 percent of the non-Jewish population at midcentury.

²³ Edward Paxton prepared a pamphlet for the Housing and Home Finance Agency in which he summarized forty-one surveys about home ownership and design in the postwar era. Published by the U.S. Department of Commerce in 1955, the pamphlet offers brilliant insight into the mindset of the homeowner at midcentury. In an overview to the surveys, Paxton reported that 42 percent preferred to build a new house rather than occupy an old one, with three quarters of the population preferring a one-story rather than multiple-story dwelling. The owners of these new houses, according to a number of the surveys, were divided in opinion about the appearance of their homes. A University of Illinois Small Homes Council Survey documented that one-third of respondents favored modern dwellings in 1945 with a slight increase to 42 percent by 1946. The 1944 *McCall’s* survey, “Architectural Home of Tomorrow,” indicated a slightly higher preference of 44 percent who wanted a modern-style home, leaving 56 percent to prefer more tradi-

tional houses. A 1948–1949 *Better Homes & Gardens* survey demonstrated the popularity of modern buildings west of the Mississippi River as 59 percent of the readers in the West Central region and 65 percent in the Pacific region indicated a preference for non-traditional dwellings. By contrast, in New England, 64 percent of homeowners preferred traditional styles (including Cape Cod and colonial). Notably, the South as a region remained unreported.

²⁴ Harry Golden suggests that a Jewish subculture flourished in the Carolinas at midcentury, with a tendency toward a slow acculturation and delicate balance in the context of communities. Edward S. Shapiro indicates the same sort of balance on the national scene, connecting Jews with the calamitous events of World War II and its aftermath as well as the civil rights movement. Arthur A. Goren reminds us that the Jews' exodus from the urban to suburban landscape in the late 1940s and early 1950s expressed the new influence of a rising Jewish middle class. Harry Golden, *Jewish Roots in the Carolinas: A Pattern of American Philo-Semitism* (Greensboro, NC, 1955), 55–56; Edward S. Shapiro, *We Are Many: Reflections on American Jewish History and Identity* (Syracuse, NY, 2005); Arthur A. Goren, *The Politics and Public Culture of American Jews* (Bloomington, IN, 1999).

²⁵ Active in the community, Loewenstein served on the boards of the Cerebral Palsy Association, the Evergreens Retirement Home, the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce, the YMCA, the Greensboro Preservation Society, the Weatherspoon Association, and the local modern art museum. He was also president of the North Carolina Architectural Foundation, editor of *Southern Architect*, a statewide publication geared to practicing architects, and president of the Greensboro Registered Architects. The latter linked him to the North Carolina American Institute of Architects and to colleagues around the state.

²⁶ John Archer, *Architecture and Suburbia: From English Villa to American Dream House, 1690–2000* (Minneapolis, MN, 2005).

²⁷ Clifford E. Clark, *The American Family Home, 1800–1960* (Chapel Hill, 1986), 238.

²⁸ This theme is addressed in Rosalyn Baxanandall and Elizabeth Ewen, *Picture Windows: How the Suburbs Happened* (New York, 2000).

²⁹ Andrew M. Shanken, *194X: Architecture, Planning, and Consumer Culture on the American Front* (Minneapolis, MN, 2009).

³⁰ Preliminary sketches of a modern house in the firm archives indicate that the 1947 James E. Hart Residence on Westridge Road predates the Carter Residence as Loewenstein's first modernist building. Hart served as a partner in the engineering firm that shared the building where Loewenstein kept his offices. Poor street and parcel numbers on Westridge, then beyond the city limits in Guilford County, prevent determining the exact location of the home that likely no longer stands. Three residences by Loewenstein or Loewenstein-Atkinson were built on the same street between 1957 and 1965. Only one survives in a radically altered form, thus preventing any further documentation about the modern

qualities of the structures other than limited resources in the firm archives for these commissions.

³¹ "Room for Living," *Greensboro Record*, January 12, 1952.

³² Loewenstein firm memo to Douglass, June 1952. A later note indicates Molitor visited Greensboro on November 16–17, 1952, and completed the photographs. Molitor photographed extensively for *Architectural Record* in the 1950s, and presumably he connected with Loewenstein in documenting the Carter residence for publication.

³³ "Residence for Mr. and Mrs. Wilbur L. Carter, Jr., Greensboro, N.C.," *Architectural Record*, November 1952, 190–192; "Residence for Mr. and Mrs. W. L. Carter, Jr., Greensboro," *Southern Architect*, March 1955, 21.

³⁴ Wilbur Carter, Jr., interview conducted by author, September 10, 2007. Cynthia deMiranda reported in e-mail correspondence with Lee Carter, November 13, 2007, that *Architectural Record* erroneously published the story. Wilbur and Martha Carter Residence, National Register of Historic Places Form #08000777, 2010.

³⁵ Barton A. Hickman, "Architect Throws Away the Book, Builds Home for Himself," *Greensboro Daily News*, May 9, 1954.

³⁶ Sandy Isenstadt observes that houses of the period across stylistic genres responded to homeowner desires for a new sense of spaciousness, one in which Americans placed a premium on big houses with large rooms, fluid floor plans, and spreading lots. Sandy Isenstadt, *The Modern American House: Spaciousness and Middle-Class Identity* (Cambridge, 2006).

³⁷ George Teyssot, ed., *The American Lawn* (New York, 1999).

³⁸ Underscored by the work of interior decorator Blair Smith, employed by Loewenstein and later a part of the Loewenstein-Atkinson firm, the architect and designer together developed a colorful furnishings scheme for the Carter Residence, reported in the *Greensboro News*, to contrast with the natural palette in the architectural enclosure. With the Carter residence, Loewenstein also designed highly colorful tile bathrooms as well as bathroom fittings (medicine cabinets, built-in toothbrush holders, toilet paper holders, and more) and hardware regularly included in the later houses. Thus colored furnishings and finishes on the interior contrasted with the natural palette of materials specified for the architectural enclosure, unifying the exterior and interior appearance.

³⁹ Loewenstein-Atkinson archives, 1954.

⁴⁰ Patrick Lee Lucas, "Sarah Hunter Kelly: Designing the House of Good Taste." *Interiors: Design, Architecture, and Culture* 1:1–2 (2010): 75–90.

⁴¹ Betty Pepis, "Modernist House Down South," *New York Times Magazine*, June 19, 1955, 40.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Jane Loewenstein Levy interview conducted by author, October 23, 2007.

⁴⁴ In spite of the wide variety of choices for homeowners, Loewenstein and his designers often simplified wall coverings and textiles to coordinate seamless interiors and embrace a new vision for design. They reduced clutter in decorative accessories, building on the postwar general trend toward clean and simple living even though, ironically, the 1950s

also represented a key decade in the explosion of consumer goods, as seen on television and in the actual suburban home. Anne Massey, *Interior Design Since 1900*, 3rd ed. (London, 2010); Karal Ann Marling, *As Seen on TV: The Visual Culture of Everyday Life in the 1950s* (Cambridge, MA, 1996).