

ICONICHOUSES.ORG

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VILLA ROTHMAYER, JOINS PRESTIGIOUS ICONIC HOUSES NETWORK

The Villa Rothmayer, designed in 1929 by Otto Rothmayer (1892-1966), has been admitted to the prestigious Iconic Houses Network of architects' houses that includes residences that have a significant meaning in modern architecture and are open to the public. This unique resource for travellers and lovers of 20th century houses, is online at www.iconichouses.org. The website lists around 150 landmark houses from the 20th century by location, together with background information on their creators and related news stories. Being part of the network means an important recognition and an important step in the international dissemination of this work by Otto Rothmayer.

The personal residence of the architect Otto Rothmayer is an important work of Prague's interwar architecture. The design of Villa Rothmayer reflects an inspiration arising from the Mediterranean style, which propagated in Czech lands Rothmayer's teacher Jože Plečnik. Adjoining the simple lengthwise rectangle of the two storey house with its winter garden and terrace is the cylindrical volume of the staircase. The house can be characterised the best as an example of ascetic Classicism with certain elements of vernacular architecture. The interiors are not very spacious; however, their connection to the veranda and picturesque garden, also designed by Rothmayer, is crucial. Today, the house is regarded, on account of its exceptional preservation, as a unique document of the intellectual background and daily life, of a leading figure of Czech modern art.

Life has become easier for fans of 20th century residential architecture with the Iconic Houses website. With its handy map interface it identifies dozens of iconic modern houses around the world – all of them open to visitors and some even accommodating overnight guests. A high number of new submissions is expected, and to deal with these the network has developed stringent selection criteria. '*We only want to list the best of the bunch,*' Drabbe says. The best include the unmissable big names like Fallingwater by Frank Lloyd Wright, the Schindler House, the Alvar Aalto House and Unesco-listed Villa Tugendhat by Mies van der Rohe, but visitors to www.iconichouses.org can also discover hidden gems, such as Mart van Schijndel's residence in Utrecht Netherlands, or other homes by famous architects where travellers can also stay overnight.

The website is the initiative of Natascha Drabbe, architectural historian and owner and curator of the Van Schijndel House, the youngest monument in the Netherlands. Finding herself in charge of an iconic home, she set out to find out about others. Her research led to the formation of the Iconic Houses Network, a group of modern house museum curators dedicated to preserving significant houses and sharing knowledge and expertise, and to the launch of the site.

The Advisory Board of the network consists of Iveta Cerna, director of Villa Tugendhat, Lynda Waggoner, director of Fallingwater and Susanna Pettersson, former director of the Alvar Aalto Foundation. *'No resource existed before to help people locate and visit these unique houses,'* says Drabbe. *'Now, if you're visiting Paris, for example, our site allows you to see that you're close to the only house Alvar Aalto built outside Finland. This information wasn't so easy to come by before.'*

By linking travel and 20th century houses, the Iconic Houses Network hopes that the new site will increase not only visitor numbers, but also the awareness of the difficulty of what Natascha Drabbe calls, *'keeping these houses alive'* in times of scarce funding, understaffing and even, sometimes, the threat of demolition. *'Experiencing the houses is the most important thing,'* she says. *'The Iconic Houses network wants to ensure that people can continue to do that.'*