

Alex Klein

*Park* serves as a video portrait of a once-forgotten municipal community center located in Northeastern Los Angeles and designed by Richard Neutra. The building is notable for the way it opens itself up to the terrain beyond while drawing in light and air through its spider legs and hand-cranked walls. This interpenetration of interior and exterior engenders a set of ideals around civic life and recreation that today seem imperiled and on the verge of obsolescence, witnessed in the rise of fortress architecture, "social media," and the widespread privatization of public space. Instead, the center is emblematic of a less-than-glamorous middle-class modernism, when architecture often engaged civil society and architects considered both the relationship of the built environment to the natural world and the needs and desires of its publics when shaping collective life. Insisting on the relevance of these energies for the present, *Park* thus draws us back to 1954, before the birth pangs of The Great Society and the ensuing culture wars, or even further back, to the ethos of Barnsdall Art Park itself, which provided one of Neutra's earliest jobs in California when he collaborated with Rudolf Schindler on the pergola and wading pool for the Hollyhock House.