

BY ROE OSBORN



Repairs progress in earnest on the Kugel/Gips house, one of a number of modern houses built on Cape Cod **(1)**. Exposed to the elements, the homes fall into disrepair quickly **(2)**. But with the help of CCMHT, the houses are being brought back better than new **(3)**.

Not Your Basic Cape

Believe it or not, Capes aren't the only type of house you can find on Cape Cod. In the 1940s, artists, architects, and members of the modernist movement went to the Cape for inexpensive and inspiring getaways. Land was cheap on the Cape then, and these creative folks began buying property in remote wooded areas and on bluffs overlooking the ocean.

They built small, simple houses on these lots, drawing on their ties to modern architecture to create functional, organic designs on a micro scale. They sited the buildings to let occupants feel one with nature with expansive windows, open plans, and large outdoor living spaces. These homes became social gathering spots for the famous people in the modernist scene who vacationed on the Cape.

In 1961, the Cape Cod National Seashore was created, and homes that fell within its boundaries had to be abandoned. Exposed to the harsh coastal environment, the lightly constructed buildings

quickly fell into disrepair. In 2007, architect Peter McMahon created the Cape Cod Modern House Trust (ccmht.org), a nonprofit organization dedicated to restoring and maintaining these buildings. The CCMHT leased its first house—the Kugel/Gips house—from Seashore in 2010 and began restoring it. The organization has since finished restoring two other houses and is working on another. McMahon curated an exhibit in 2016 at the Provincetown Museum of Art documenting these crumbling gems, and he also co-authored a book, *Cape Cod Modern*, that tells the fascinating stories behind these houses and their owners.

To raise money for the projects, the restored houses are available to stay in. The CCMHT hosts artist residencies as well, and offers programs for architecture students to visit and study the houses.

Roe Osborn is a senior editor at JLC.

Photos: 1&2, courtesy Cape Cod Modern House Trust; 3, Roe Osborn