



Frey House II

Albert Frey · Palm Springs, CA · 1964

Swiss-born architect Albert Frey, born in 1903, moved to Palm Springs in 1934, going on to produce many of the city's most essential icons, including its City Hall and Aerial Tramway station. "The sun, the pure air, and the simple forms of the desert create perfect conditions for architecture," Frey wrote in a letter to one of his former Swiss employers, Le Corbusier.

His own house, perched on a cinder block platform at the edge of a cliff above the city, is far less accessible but every bit as remarkable. The 800-ft² (74-m²) glass, steel, and concrete residence—typical of Frey's preference for simple, industrial materials—blurs the line between indoor and outdoor, man-made and natural. It was called Frey House II as it was the second house Frey built for himself in Palm Springs. The former, created in 1940, on the desert floor, was one of the first modern structures in the Coachella Valley.

Frey House II's three large glass panels, which open to a small sunken pool, are shaded by the long

overhang of a corrugated aluminum roof. Further sun protection comes from bright yellow curtains, whose color matches the desert's vivid brittlebush flowers. Frey reportedly took five years to select the site, then spent another year tracking the movement of the sun. The interior is also built around a massive boulder that divides the bedroom and the living room. Frey, who had no choice but to incorporate the rock, even installed a light switch into it. Inside these spaces, the living room is filled with built-in seating and storage, while the galley kitchen's shallow sliding fiberglass shelves allow plates to be stored standing up. Meanwhile, the bedroom, which is cantilevered over the cliff, contains what is probably one of the most remarkable desert views anywhere on earth. Author and photographer Leslie Williamson once compared the house to "a glass hang glider clinging to the side of the San Jacinto Mountains." More than half a century since it was completed, the home continues to be spectacular and welcoming.

A large, jagged, sandstone boulder dominates both the home's exterior and interior. Its rippling, rosy aluminum roof matches its color.