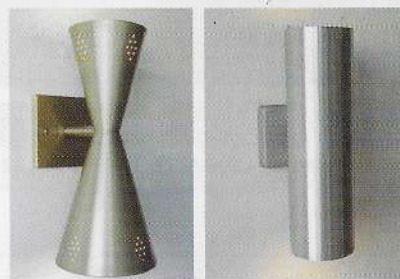
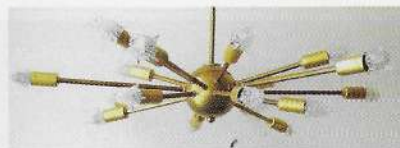


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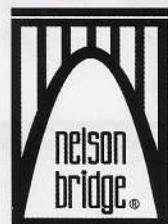


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SHELF LIFE

NOTHING BUT ARCHITECTURE

By Sandy McLendon

In 2002, Taschen introduced a coffee-table book detailing every Case Study House created through *Arts and Architecture* magazine's celebrated midcentury program of architect-designed houses. Then last year, the publisher released a ten-volume facsimile version of the first ten years of the magazine itself. But the Case Study book was introduced at \$150 and the facsimile magazine set lists for \$700. Now Taschen is offering something for thinner wallets: Elizabeth A.T. Smith's *Case Study Houses* (Taschen, hardcover, \$14.95, 96 pages, 150 illustrations in color and black and white). Smith, a former curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, where she mounted an exhibition on the Case Study Houses, says a great deal in few words. Her satisfying captions for the original *Arts and Architecture* photographs point out the major pieces of furniture in each interior and give designer and manufacturer information. While advanced modern mavens might covet the more lavish Taschen offerings, this slender volume contains more than enough information — to say nothing of eye candy — to make most of us happy.

The Municipal Art Society of New York has been offering walking tours of the city's architecture for more than half a century, giving both natives and tourists a greater appreciation

for the marvels surrounding them. For those who want to approach the idea of a walking tour on their own terms, the MAS has now published *10 Architectural Walks in Manhattan* (W.W. Norton, softcover, \$29.95, 304 pages, 200 illustrations in color and black and white). Each of the walking tours is set in a specific area of Manhattan and covers a stylistic gamut: the neo-Gothic Woolworth Building designed by Cass Gilbert in 1913 is here, and so is Dan Shannon's 24/7 Apple Store of 2007, a transparent, almost illusory addition to the plaza in front of the General Motors Building. The MAS's expertise in conducting tours is highly evident; the book provides extraordinarily precise directions on where to walk, where to look up and when to turn around. The text, by architectural tour guide



Francis Morrone and architectural historian Matthew A. Postal, is rich without being overly dense, and striking high-resolution photography by Edward A. Turan makes the volume useful to armchair travelers as well.

Four Florida Moderns: The Architecture of Alberto E. Alfonso, René González, Chad Oppenheim and Guy Peterson (W.W. Norton, hardcover, \$50, 307 pages, more than 300 illustrations in color) is a somewhat unwieldy title, but the architecture in the volume's pages is crisp and exciting, evoking '50s and '60s modernism while being completely of our own time. Known as the Florida Four, the architects have different styles. Alfonso's Nielsen Media Research Building of 2003 seems inspired by both Mies van der Rohe's buildings at the Illinois Institute of Technology and Le Corbusier's Brutalism, but the structures surround a reflecting pool that bestows a casual elegance. González's buildings have a harder, high-tech edge, with enormous flat planes of glass or mosaic that imbue structures like his 2008 Cisneros Fontenals Art Foundation with enormous presence, yet keep them related to their surroundings. Oppenheim's 2006 Ilona Bay condominium complex riffs on Paul Rudolph's piercings and projections, and Peterson's houses burst with midcentury excitement, using bold blocks of color and external steel framing. Writer Saxon Henry has crafted an appreciative, informative text, including interviews with the Florida Four, positioning them as the nucleus of a movement. Critical assessments of their work are offered by Richard Meier, Terence Riley, Warren Schwartz and the late Charles Gwathmey (visit www.modernismmagazine.com to read obituary). It isn't often that today's buildings, with their complex demands unheard-of at mid century, exhilarate, but the Florida Four manage the feat handily.

CASE STUDY HOUSES

