



architecture + design: minella house

ALLEN R. WILLIAMS | BEN KOUSH



The Minella House, a "Century Built Home" designed by Allen R. Williams in 1950, is a great example of the sturdy modern houses architects used to provide for Houston's working class in modest neighborhoods like the East End. The walls of the house are made of lightweight concrete tiles and the ceiling structure is two-foot wide reinforced concrete planks laid end to end.

Current owner Ben Koush is a young designer trained as an architectural historian. **Hampered by meager finances which made new construction impossible, but deeply interested in modernism, he sought an architecturally distinguished yet cheap postwar modern house.** Koush found it in this house which he purchased from the daughters of the original owners, Lillian and Angelo Minella, for \$112,000. Thankfully the Minella's had made only minor changes to the house over the years. The extremely rare enameled steel Youngstown kitchen cabinets, colorful ceramic bathroom tiles and fixtures, and steel-framed casement windows were all intact and in good condition. Patching, painting and the installation of central air conditioning were all the house needed.

Koush's restoration was honored in April 2005 by the Rice Design Alliance including it on its popular house tour "Modern Mode: Houston Architecture at Mid-Century," which won a Good Brick award from the Greater Houston Preservation Alliance in 2006. Recently Koush nominated the house to be listed by the City of Houston as a Protected Landmark. **It will be the first example of modern architecture in Houston to be so protected.**