Preservation Easements: A Legal Mechanism for Protecting Modern Residential Interior Architecture

The purpose of this thesis is to determine whether a preservation easement effectively preserves the architectural and historical values of a modern residential interior. Following the introduction, a general discussion about the development of modern residential interiors and preservation easements set the background for an in-depth overview of the case studies, modern residences protected with preservation easements including interior restrictions. The case studies are the Henry B. Hoover House (Henry B. Hoover, Lincoln, MA, 1937), the Ginzton House (Joseph Allen Stein, Los Altos Hills, CA, 1948) and the Conger Goodyear House (Edward Durell Stone, Westbury, LI, 1938). These case studies add depth to the broad overview, providing an opportunity to discuss the development of individual interiors, the character-defining features and spaces, the preservation easement restrictions and any subsequent rehabilitations. The case studies demonstrate preservation easements effectively protect the character-defining features and spaces of modern residential interiors, however the restrictions are arbitrary and open to interpretation if the easement-holding organization does not actively monitor the restrictions or have the expertise to recommend appropriate design solutions. Furthermore, the best approach for protecting a modern residential interior is through restrictions that blanket a character-defining space.