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# Q&A with Elayne DeLeo of Modern Atlanta

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By [Katie Leslie](#)  
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Modern Atlanta has become synonymous with its annual house tour, which showcases the city's best and coolest in sustainable, modern design. But what you may not know is what is beyond the organization's mainstay event: a lot.



Modern Atlanta

Bernard McCoy, founder of Modern Atlanta, and business partner Elayne DeLeo said they were surprised when their first home tour ran out of tickets in 2007.

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Modern Atlanta

The Florian-Hart residence designed by bldgs is one of the 13 homes on the Modern Atlanta tour June 6.

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What began just three years ago as a weekend house tour has quickly transformed into a weeklong celebration of a philosophical movement, its organizers say.

MA's "Design is Human" week runs Monday through Sunday and features a variety of events, including exhibitions at The High Museum; showroom events at places such as Room & Board; film screenings; and lectures by design leaders such as Walter E. Miller, senior vice president of John Portman & Associates, and Kai-Uwe Bergmann of Copenhagen-based firm BIG.

We chatted with Modern Atlanta's Elayne DeLeo, who co-founded the organization with Bernard McCoy, about MA's evolution.

### Q: What is Modern Atlanta really about?

A: Modern Atlanta is really an organization that is dedicated to promoting design and educating the public about the benefits of design, how it improve one's life and the environment. It's all about engaging people in discussion and deeper thought about what it really means.

The first event we did was a home tour. And we decided at that point to take it a step further and move it beyond architecture and make a multi-layered event that educates about all layers of design... architecture, communication, fashion, interior design and visual arts and social responsibility.

It's about the process.

### Q: What are some of your favorite examples of smart design in Atlanta?

A: A great example is what they've done at White Provision, which is where we are hosting our event. It's a great example of an existing structure in Atlanta that was thoughtfully remodeled and redesigned to add modern elements, while respecting the building's bones... We'd like to see more of

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that in Atlanta. There are a lot of empty buildings in Atlanta that could be looked at for new spaces.

**Q: With all of the events, lectures and movies during Modern Atlanta, what do you want people to take away?**

A: I think, in general, people tend to think of design as the aesthetics or beauty of an object, or how great a couch or chair might look. Really the beauty of design is in the function

of it and the process of how it was developed. People don't see design as something that can improve a life or improve a community or the world in general.

Design is what will get us to that place, and that is what takes us forward in life.

**Sample of Modern Atlanta events**

**Thursday:** Room & Board showroom event and screening of Charles and Ray Eames's 1977 short film, "Powers of 10," moderated by grandson Eames Demetrios. 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. at White Provision, 1170 Howell Mill Road. Free.

**Friday:** Showroom event, "Habachy Designs Within Reach: Interpretation of the New Modern," 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at DWR, 2451 Peachtree Road. Free.

**Friday:** MA'ology Paris and Fundraiser for CARE -- A celebration of French design and art from 8:30 p.m. to 11 p.m. White Provision, 1170 Howell Mill Road. \$40 in advance; \$45 at door. Students half price with ID.

**Saturday and Sunday:** Modern Atlanta Home Tour, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Two-day pass is \$35.

For a full listing of events and ticket information, visit <http://modern-atlanta.org>

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