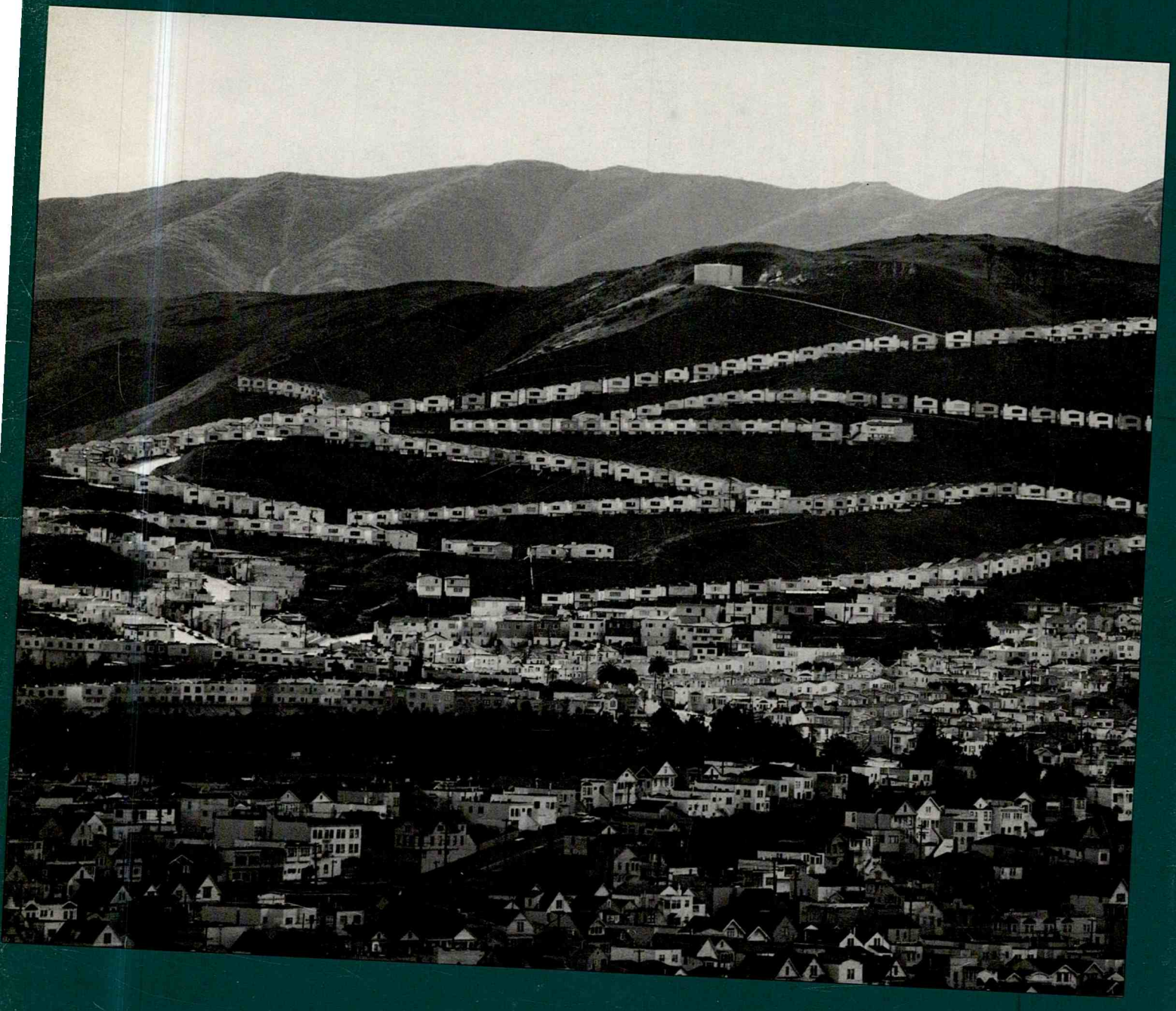
House and Home



Design Quarterly 138

Frank Gehry

Gwendolyn Wright

Lois Craig

Michael Sorkin

Editor's Notes

Planned in conjunction with the exhibition *The Architecture of Frank Gehry,* a six-part lecture series held at the Walker Art Center in the fall of 1986 addressed a number of questions dealing with changing attitudes toward housing in the late twentieth century.

Frank Gehry opened the series with a discussion of his approach to the design of houses using examples drawn from his more than twenty years of architectural practice. Gehry demonstrated how the house has served him as a primary means of experiment and exploration. He discussed the ways in which he has realized psychological and formal solutions to his clients' needs, and related these to neighborhood and cultural contexts.

As Gehry's practice has grown, so have the parameters of his commissions, and consequently the complexity of his design solutions. From the simplicity of the one-room building (the architect's "blank canvas"), to a villagelike organization of separate elements, to a "collision" of a series of tangent forms, the domestic environment has been inspirited by the works of this unique inventor who thrives on those unresolved issues that challenge accepted architectural wisdom.

In the weeks following Gehry's lecture, historians and critics examined the housing topic from diverse points of view. Three of those speakers—Gwendolyn Wright, Lois Craig and Michael Sorkin—agreed to reexamine the subject for us here.

Gwendolyn Wright, professor in the graduate school of architecture and planning at Columbia University, is the author of *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America.* In her article, "Domestic Architecture and the Cultures of Domesticity," she analyzes the relationship of architectural style to cultural change and political reality. To explore the history of housing in these terms, Wright discusses two early twentieth-century efforts to unite the goals of design and social reform. She describes the simplified geometry of progressive turn-of-the-century architecture that emerged from women's reform movements coupled with architectural innovation. However, in the 1920s, domestic architecture entered a romantic phase in which historic styles were employed to create a wide array of revivalist suburban neighborhoods. In that historicist period, as in today's, Wright contends, conservative social attitudes were a component of the search for design stability and authenticity that comes with the wholesale adoption of old forms.

Lois Craig, associate dean of the school of architecture and planning at MIT, is the author of *Suburbs: Design Quarterly 132.* Continuing her long-term investigation of the American suburb, she has written "Houses at Liberty: Picturing Suburban America" for this review of U.S. housing. In this essay she deplores the absence of community in most current depictions of domestic architecture. Craig suggests that the house may be studied from three vantage points: the long view, the close-up and the middle ground. She believes it is the middle ground, "the daily, complex, human-scale setting where . . . we go in and out of doors," that is generally missing from the visual information we receive in the architectural and popular press. It is the long and close-up views that "put the house at liberty from the day-to-day."

Michael Sorkin, architecture critic for *The Village Voice,* has written a fascinating exposition on the idea of "dwelling machines," beginning with Le Corbusier's Maison Dom-ino and its relationship to the Ville Radieuse, to today's domestic environments that are designed around and to a degree dominated by an incredible collection of electronic machines, which are at the same time oppressive and liberating.

I believe that these critics would agree: we must turn inward for viable responses to today's housing questions. Although we are endowed with all the resources needed to create appropriate housing, and our architects have provided a brilliant assortment of formal solutions, only when housing becomes a political and social priority will Americans reside in an invigorating, truly humane environment.

MSF

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(cover)
Daly City, California, ca. 1953. Photograph by Ansel Adams, courtesy of the Trustees of The Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust. All rights reserved.

Design Quarterly
138

House and Home

Frank O. Gehry

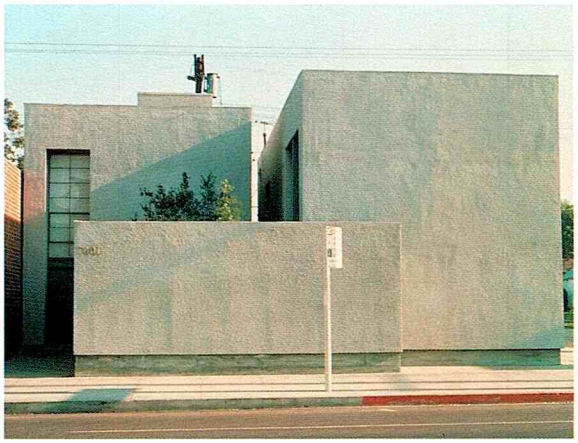
Beyond Function

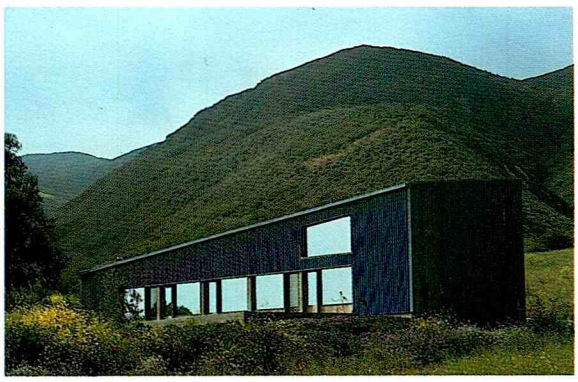
I've always been fascinated by the idea of a painter confronting a white canvas—I've never done that myself. What does an artist think about? I fantasize about it. Architecture is so cluttered with problems of function, things that the painter confronting the white canvas doesn't have to deal with, that architects hide behind a lot of those things and develop rationales based upon functional issues such as keeping the water out and the sun in or out. All those things are very important; I don't intend to demean them. But, how do we go further?

For me there was the one-room building. It was as close as I could get to that pure problem in which the functional issues are so simple that you are faced with only the formal gesture. It was the closest I could come to that fantasy of the painter's experience. I started doing very simple one room buildings. That led to trying to connect them, to making connections between differentiated objects, and that led to a whole vocabulary of connections.

In a 1964 studio-residence for the graphic designer Lou Danziger, I made two objects that are connected on a busy Los Angeles street. I was interested in the texture of plaster, in getting a texture and a color that never had to be painted. I was also interested in the idea of connection, of putting pieces together, in a way very similar to what I am still doing, twenty years later. I suppose we only have one idea in our lives.

In designing a studio for the artist Ron Davis, I became interested in the paintings in which he used perspective. I tried to use that idea to explore making a single barnlike space that would be like a found building, in the way that artists find old warehouses. The sculptural effect of the building would be a part of his work as well as a part of mine. It would sit on the landscape in an uncompromising way and deal with the terrain. Inside it would be changeable and malleable to respond to his life. We made a big space and then built what he needed inside. There is a great difference in technologies in different parts of the country. In California they





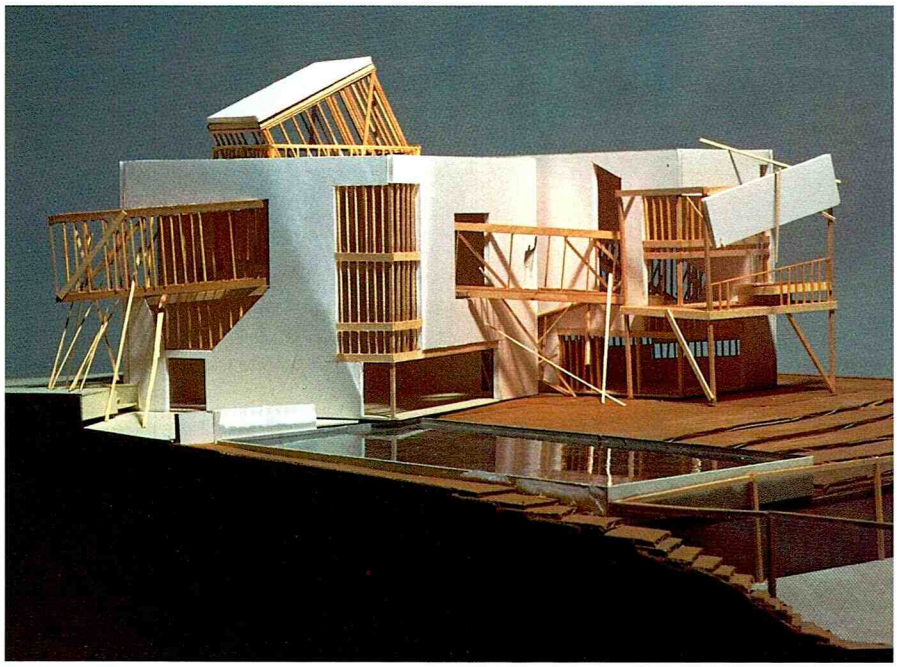
*Danziger Studio-Residence, 1964
Hollywood, California

Ron Davis Studio, 1972
Malibu, California

(opposite)
Norton House, 1983–1984
Venice, California

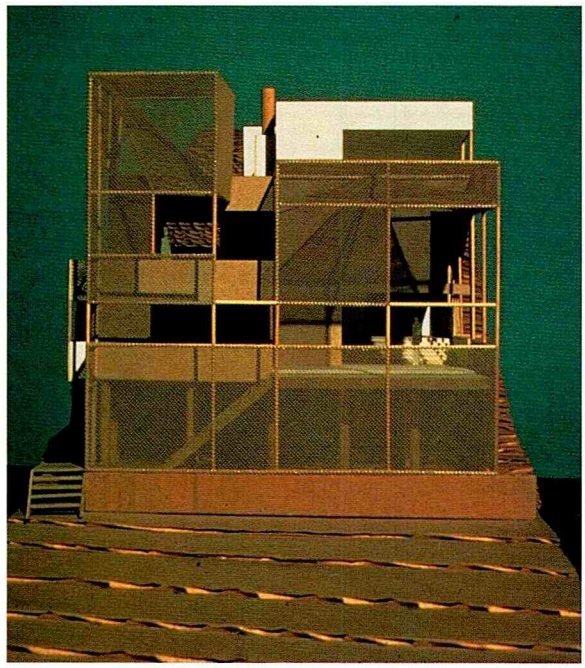
*All projects on pp. 2–11 by Frank O. Gehry and Associates Inc.

Familian House, 1978
model
Santa Monica, California



Gunther House, 1978
model
Santa Monica, California

(opposite)
Gehry House, 1977–1978
Santa Monica, California



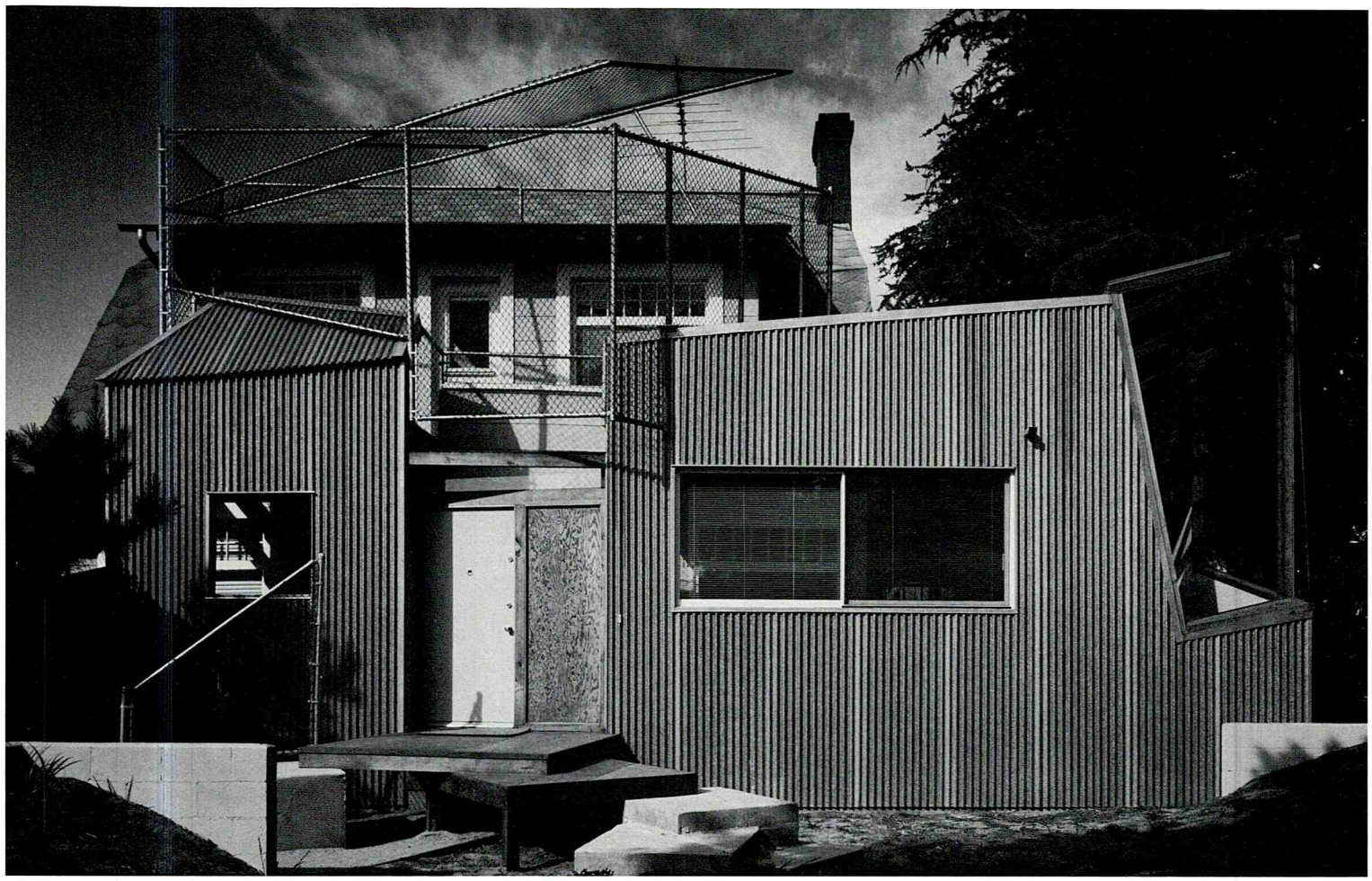
slap it all together like rough carpentry. In the Davis studio we used rough carpentry as a finish. While we worked on this, we were in some sort of dialogue with his painting and with my building.

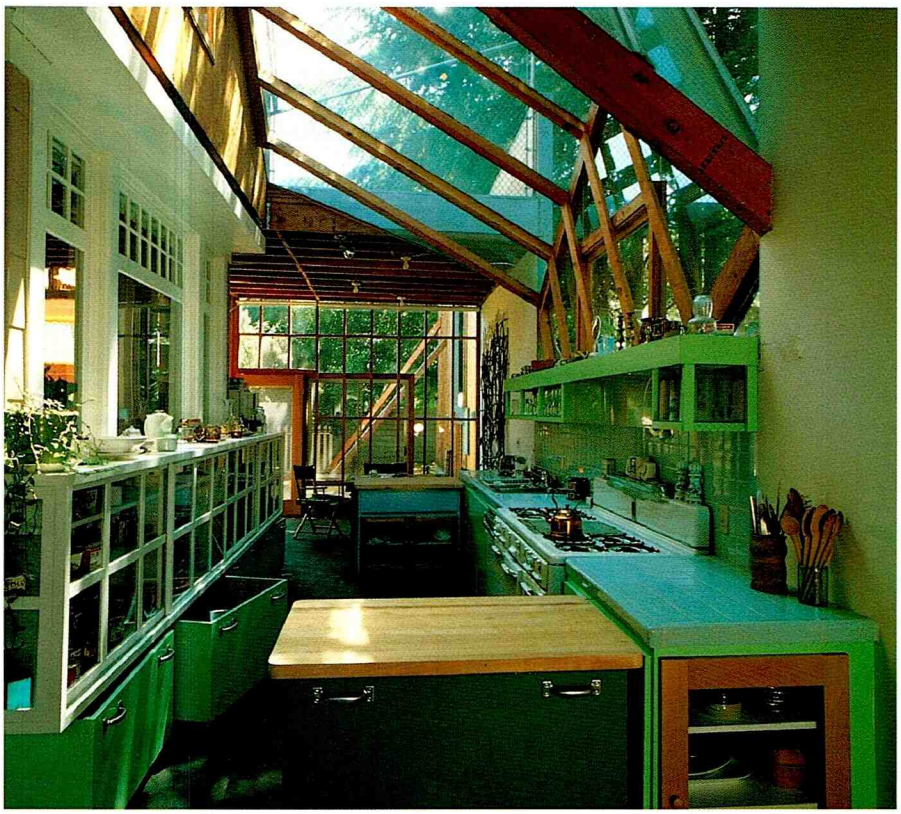
I think we all agree that buildings under construction look better than most buildings finished. So I tried to capture that in a house for an art collector. There's an immediacy about it—a kind of presence and a precipitous feeling that one finds in gestural painting—the feeling of having been made just a few minutes ago. I was trying to capture that in this unbuilt house, and in subsequent work.

I became interested in chain-link fencing not because I like it, but because I don't. The culture seems to produce it and absorb it in a mindless way, and when we proposed to use it in a way that was decorative or sculptural, people became very upset. There was a discrepancy: people may have had it around their tennis courts, around their swimming pools, or around their backyards, where it was only chain link. But if I proposed to use it as a screen in front of their houses, they were annoyed and confused.

For a beach house the client was only going to use on weekends, a big point was made about security, about having a house that could safely be unoccupied during the week. So chain link made a great deal of sense. I hung fencing in various ways and played with the shadows one could achieve, growing in part out of the Ron Davis paintings. The owner sold the plans and the lot to someone else and they called me and said they wanted to build the house exactly the way I had designed it, except for one minor change. Yes. So we didn't build that one. I always work on things in sets, like some of my artist friends who work in series. In architecture, though, it takes a longer time.

In my own house, we built a new house around an old one. I was fascinated with seeing an old house inside, keeping it intact and making it seem more important than it really was. In our neighborhood, you can't see into the houses. They have the blinds pulled and everybody is hiding from everybody. I wondered if you could make something that people could see into without losing privacy. With the kitchen window I was interested in





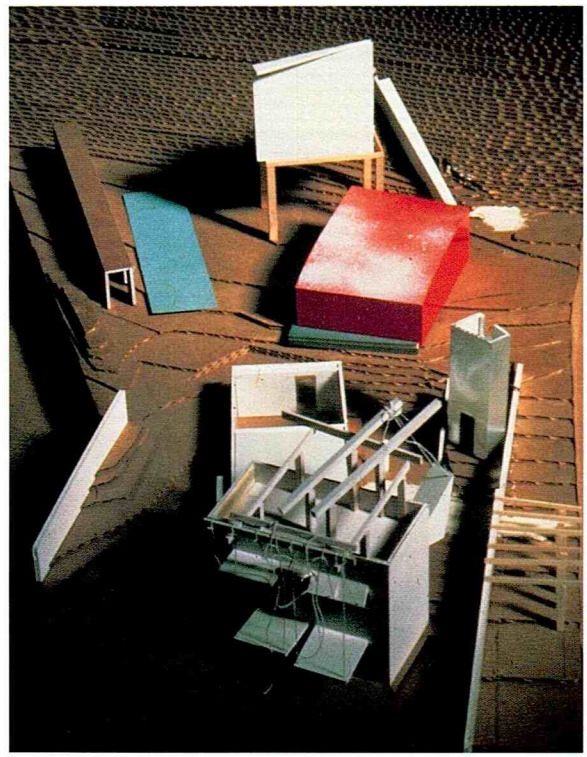
building around the house, trapping the ghost of Cubism inside. The ghost is trying to crawl out—and that's what I intended. I tried to make each window or opening a piece in itself. It all blends together, using the idea of carpentry as a given and then playing with glass in a way that suggests that the piece is turning the corner. There are reflections and pieces that look like reflections.

One window was made by taking a hammer and banging a hole and then gluing a piece of glass on it. It never leaks—all the others do. The skylights feel to me as though the house is submerged in water, in the ocean. The imagery of water and ocean keeps recurring in my work.

In the Spiller house, two separate buildings are connected with ramps and bridges. The two buildings, made of corrugated and rough wood framing, became a studio apartment in front and a tall apartment for the owner in the back. The owner had worked with Charles Eames for a number of years and she was as fastidious as the Eames office about detail. When she started building the house, she insisted on

Spiller House, 1980
Venice, California

House for a Filmmaker,
1981 model
Los Angeles, California



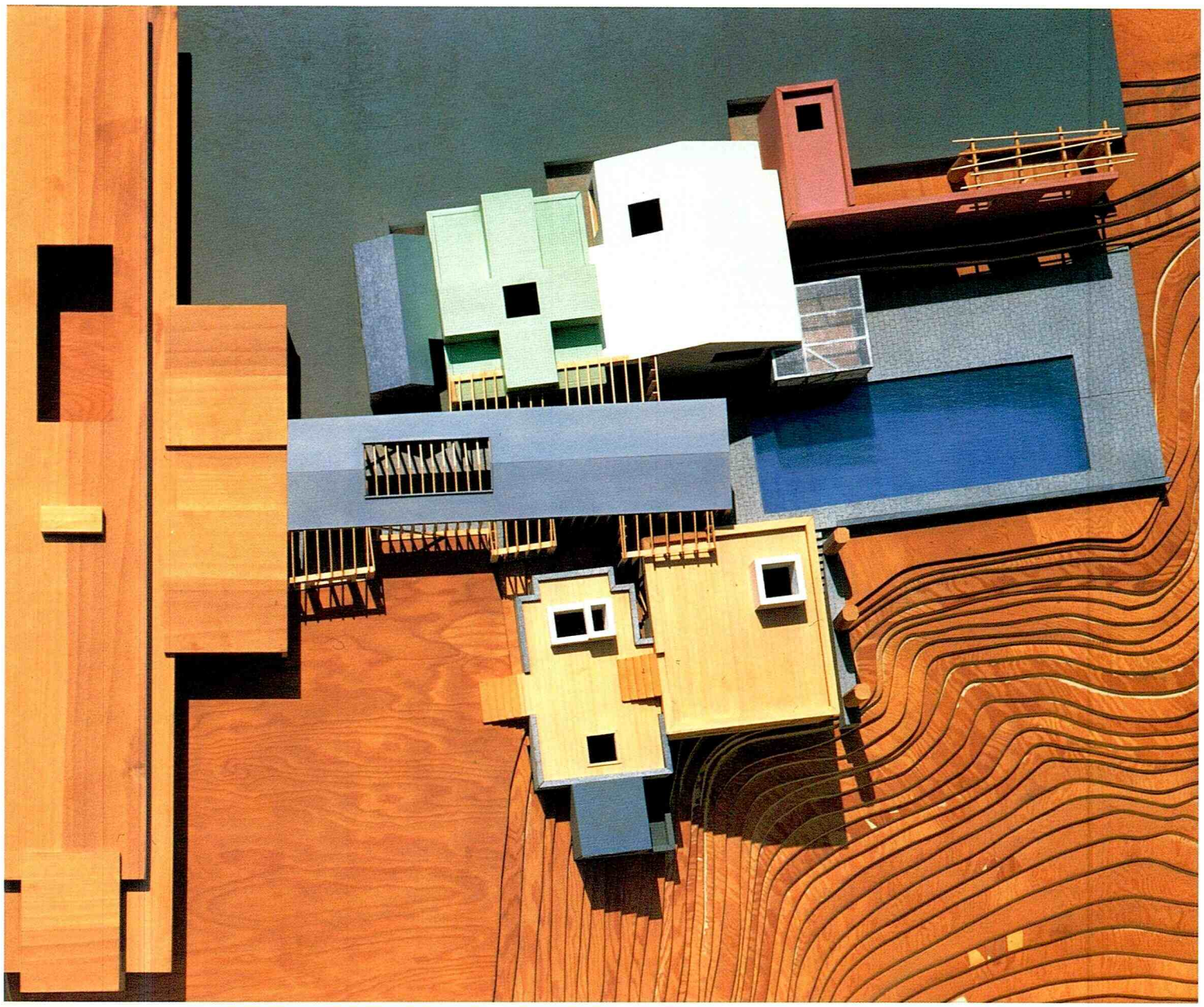
selecting all the lumber and supervising the carpenters very carefully. Some of the carpenters had worked on my other projects and knew that the framing was going to be exposed, but here we got a hybrid of finished rough framing and absolutely impeccable lumber selection.

In a project for a bachelor filmmaker, a number of separate structures made the house. It was only partially built. There is a bedroom building that has all the framework on top and a stairway. When he came home at night, he could pull up the stairway and project his movies on the screen, which is a wall of the guesthouse. The red building is a garage. Next to the pool we made a long hall. I guess this might have something to do with the painter Morandi, the idea of placing dissimilar objects next to each other. The owner asked for a house in which he would go between the rooms by going outdoors, in the spirit of a Spanish courtyard house, but of course we transformed that. It sits in a canyon with trees around it. The building in the middle is the living room; it has a glass roof and you can see all the trees. The bedroom building was made with plywood panels, like a piece of furniture.

Twenty years after I built my first house for the Steeves family it was bought by new people, the Smiths, who looked up the original architect, and after some deliberation hired us. They wanted to double its size. The neighborhood had changed considerably over time. Being an ardent contextualist, I took that idea and proposed to build separate rooms. The green cross is the kitchen and the white is a family room and there's a service porch and a bathroom and then a garden room done with wood framing. To the left of the garden room is a master bedroom and bath. It was the collision or putting together of those images that I thought of as contextual. This house was turned down by the neighborhood association because they said it didn't look like a house.

This idea became an important one for me and I kept working with it. The connections between the different parts and the way they connect—the awkwardness of it—was something important to me in this study. It was actually on this house that the fish started. [The fish has become an iconic image in Gehry's oeuvre.] I had designed a colonnade against the brick piece. I wanted to continue the colonnade in front of the green kitchen. I

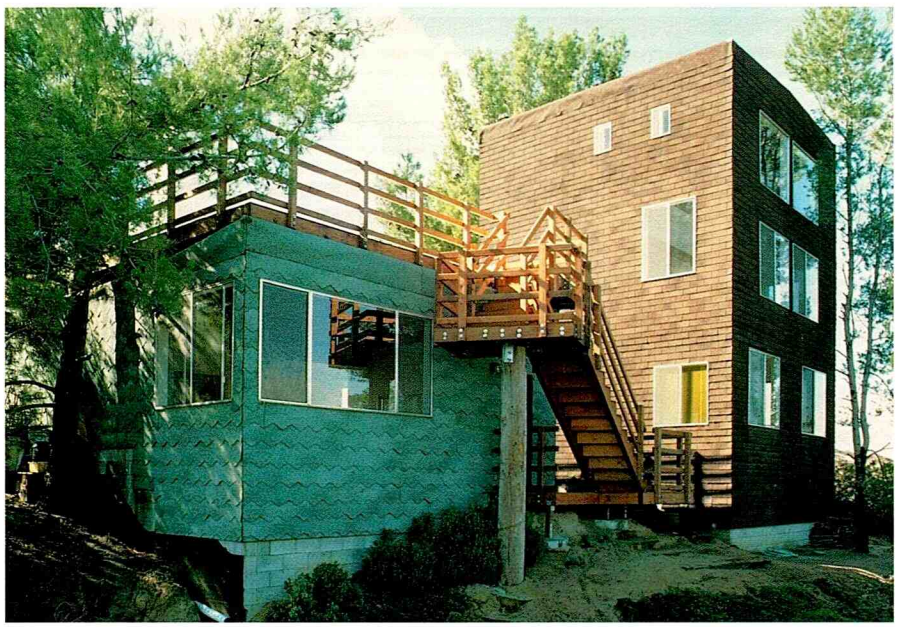
Smith House, 1981 model
Brentwood, California



had fantasized building a big eagle to immortalize a drawing I had made for the Chicago Tribune Tower Competition; I was going to build a 12-foot maquette of that. Then the idea of having a fish standing upright started and led me down the fish path. Combining these different objects and creating a courtyard tract house was an exciting possibility. The pieces were very simple, fitted together around a court, barely touching or joining, and creating a village or compound. This idea is one I've explored for tract housing and haven't had a chance to build. If I had a lot right now, this is the house I'd build for myself.

Benson House, 1981
Calabasas, California

(opposite)
Wosk Residence,
1982–1984
Beverly Hills, California



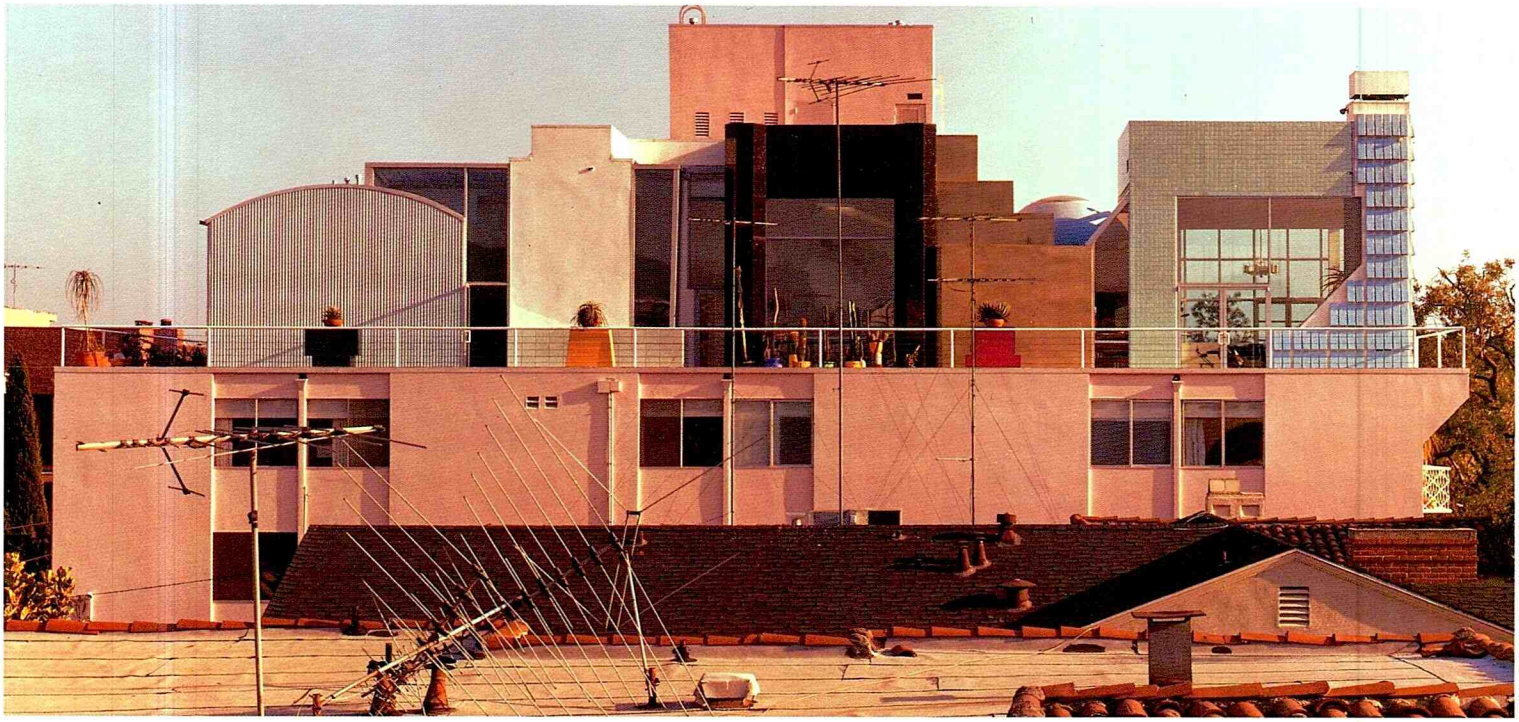
A small house I did build for the Benson family was based on that idea. The brown tower is the bedroom building; the parents are on the top and the children's rooms are below. In the blue building are the living room, dining room and kitchen. The children are to have a sort of fantasy on the roof that is a playhouse. The carports and the roof structure are still to be done. This house has a moat, a 6-foot separation between the living room and the bedrooms. You have to walk outside, which allows for great privacy and is a pleasant passage in a mild climate. There are a lot of benefits to this idea in a small house. When the grandparents come to visit, they are given the living room building, which is like a hotel. You walk up on top of the roof and back down to the entrance. It is a processional entry, and I became fascinated with the asphalt shingles . . . of course, they're fishlike. When you're in the rooms, you see parts of the other buildings as part of your own composition, and it makes the house feel larger and more private.

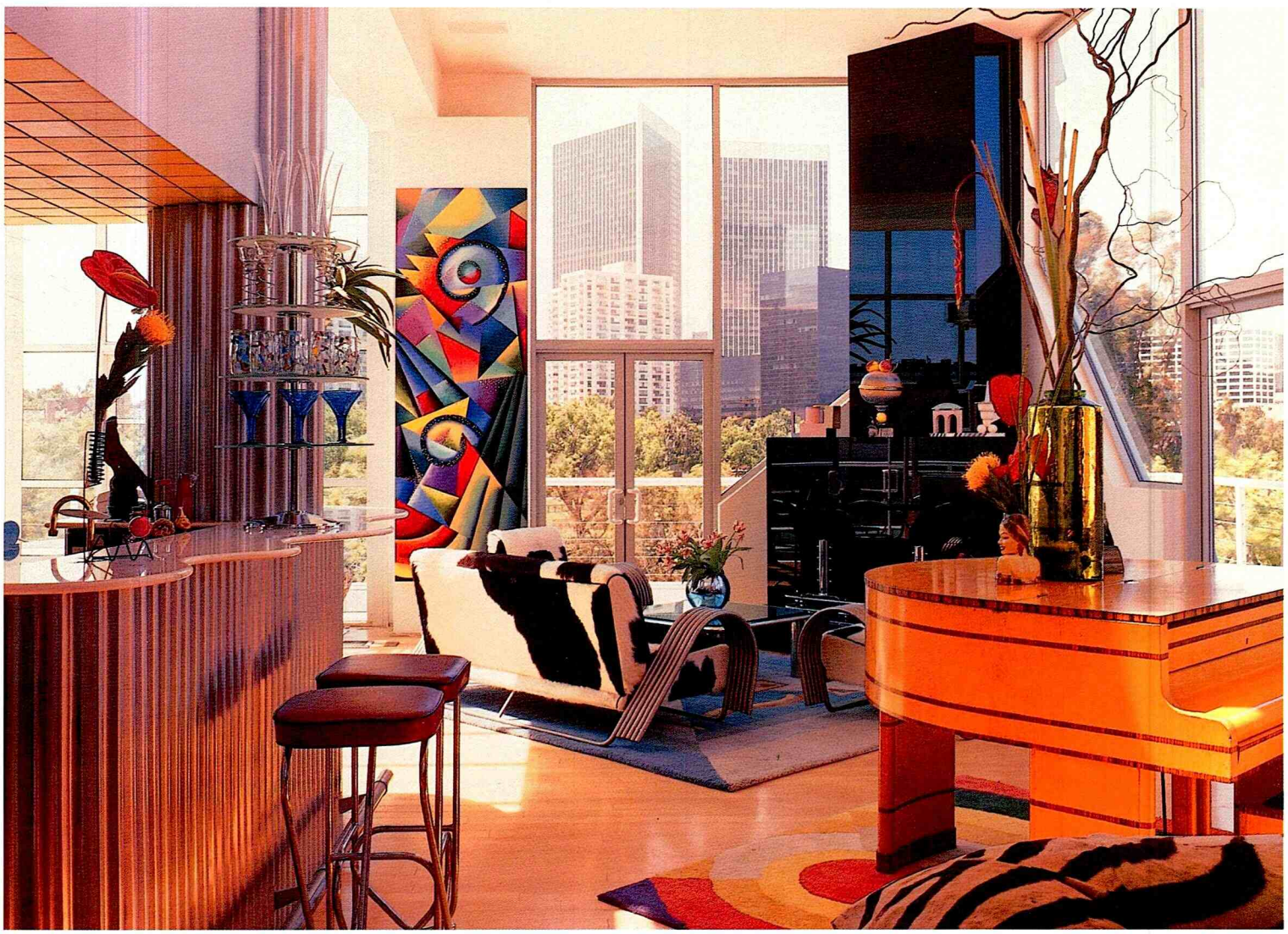
In 1982 I was asked to make a penthouse apartment in Beverly Hills. We proposed to tear off the top floor and rebuild it, because we would be able to add four or five more feet in height if we held back from the sides. It seemed that doing this would take a building that was really out of context and start to change the scale to make it more compatible with the two-story buildings around it. When I presented it to the Beverly Hills arts jury, they said they liked it better the way it was.

I carried the image of village and rooftop from Chambord, and pretended they were in the city. I think the image of that great French château has stayed in my mind over the years. The fireplace was made in sympathy with the high-rise buildings in Century City. My client, who is an artist, became very interested in tile and she started to make a lot of Art Deco-like tile. I was going to pretend that I was Gaudi too, and I made the tile fireplace. In the living room, the forms all come together creating the feeling of layering in this complex.

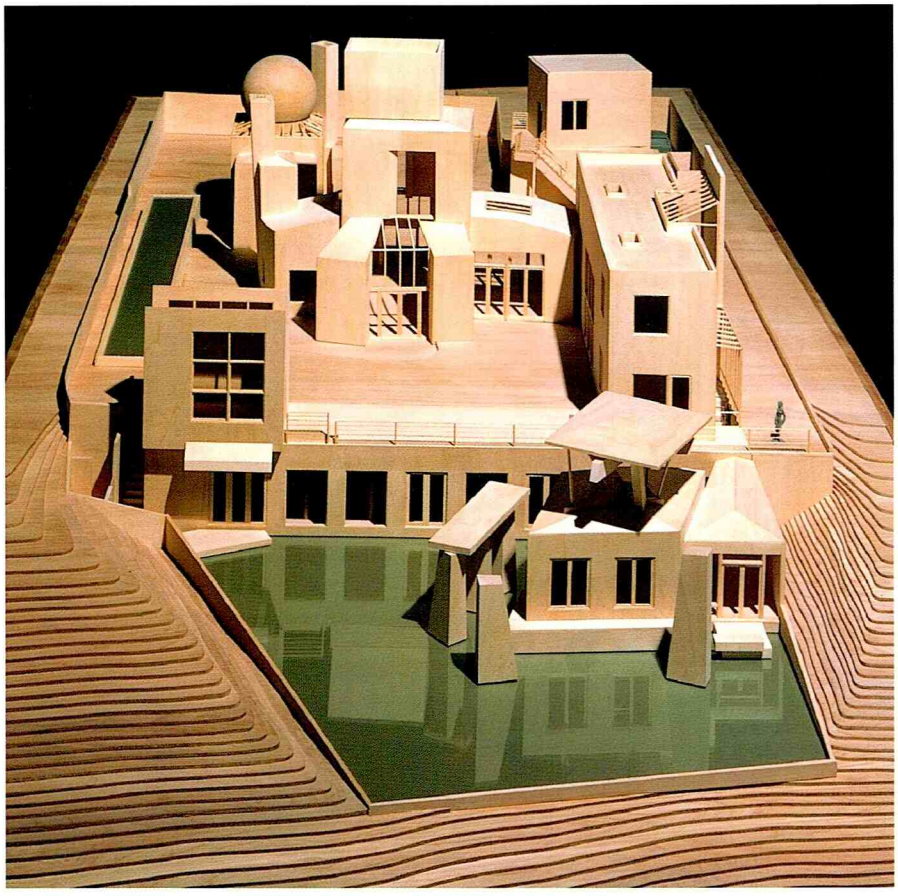
Another client, with another kind of fantasy, was a screenwriter who was a lifeguard when he was young. I picked up on that and gave him a lifeguard tower where he could write his screenplays. His wife is also an artist. She is Japanese, and I made a little shrine over her studio. I tried very hard to take in the context of Venice and deal with it, and I think my client is in the tower looking at the beach traffic (p. 2). In the house, I used the view of the roof of the building next door and incorporated it into the room. The idea was to weave the building into the texture of Venice and to utilize that texture internally as part of the house instead of trying to dismiss it, which is impossible anyway. I wanted to make a positive kind of connection. The decks are designed to be private, yet open to the ocean.

The owner of a recent house in Brentwood, California is the current ambassador to Finland. His wife is trained in architecture. She worked for me once at the period of time when I was doing a little tract house that I liked and wanted to build for myself. She came to us with the idea that we would build that tract house for her, so we began with that model. It seemed very crowded to me. The Schnabels have become very involved with the business methods of Finland and use of the sauna. I reflected on

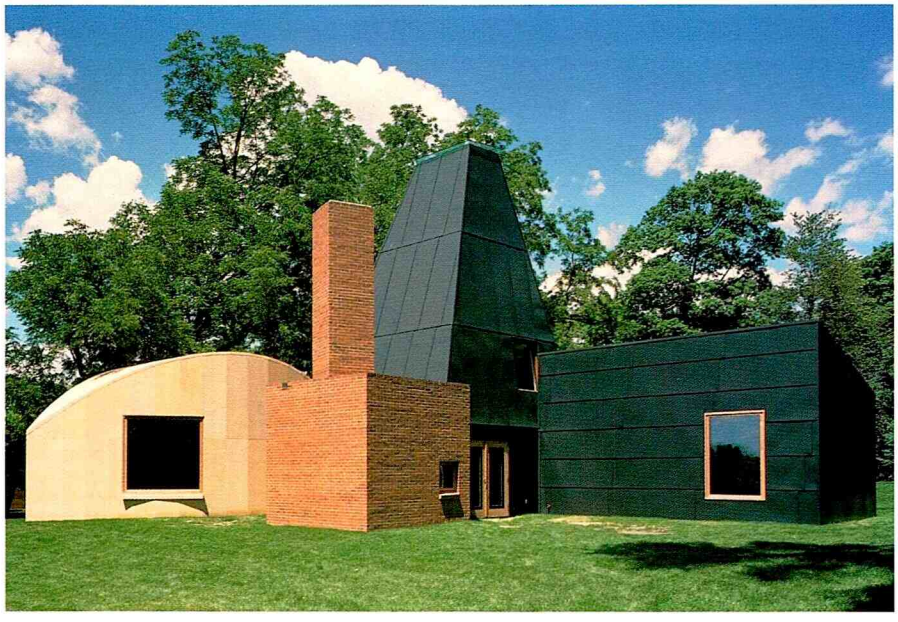




Schnabel House,
1986 model
Brentwood, California



Winton Guest House,
1983–1986
Wayzata, Minnesota

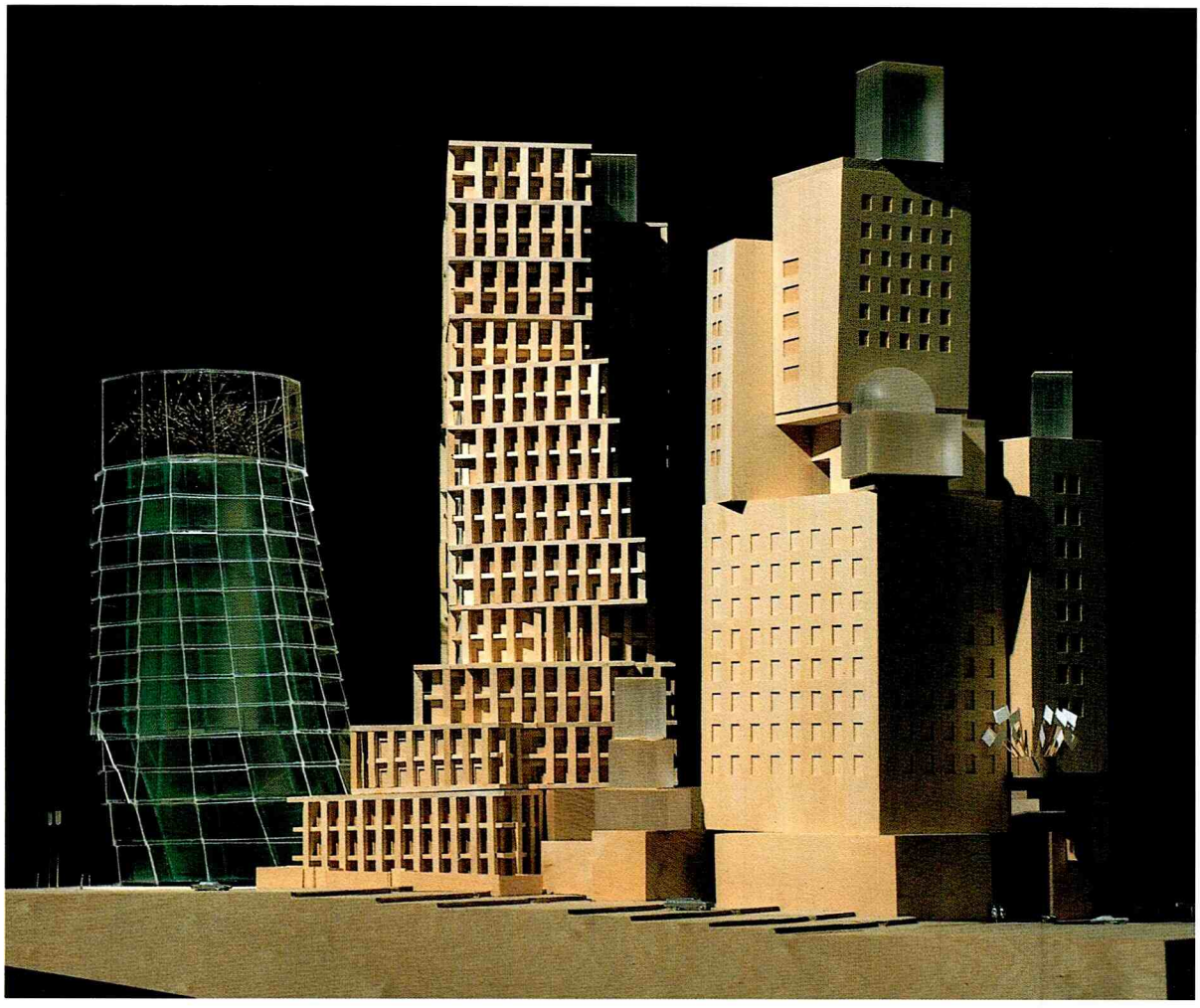


that and tried to make a place for them that would incorporate a sauna and a lake, like the one we experienced when we visited them in Finland.

The front building will be the garage and on top is the servants' quarters. The domed building is a guesthouse; Mrs. Schnabel requested a dome somewhere in this house. You enter the living room and off to the left is the kitchen, which looks out to the view, and there are bedrooms above. The main house is up on top, the master bedroom and private areas relate to the small lake. Behind it are the exercise rooms, the sauna and the bathrooms. The idea is that all these pieces will just sit in the lawn, like pavilions.

A recent guest house in Wayzata, Minnesota relates to an existing house by Philip Johnson. When first confronted with this project, I was nervous about what Mr. Johnson might think of my intrusion into his work. A long hedge divided the property and I decided to build on the other side of the hedge, to avoid intruding on the house. So we started on the east side of the hedge with a group of small rooms. Since this is a house involving children and grandchildren coming to visit, the idea of having some fantasy associated with it was interesting to the clients and to myself. Although we started with a log cabin, we wanted to try to make the buildings a little abstract so that there was something to look at from the main house. As we started making the forms more minimal, the log cabin we started with finally got drummed out of the place, appropriately. The final scheme is very small, just two bedrooms, a living room in the center and a large space with a fireplace alcove, a very tiny kitchen and a long bar and stairway to a children's loft. Originally that little roost had an observatory which also became an intrusion and we took that away. We pared it way down more and more so that in the views from the existing house you wouldn't see windows. All of the windows are on the other side, looking out into the landscape. The curved shape is covered with a local stone. We tried to get the brick of the Johnson house for the fireplace, or come close

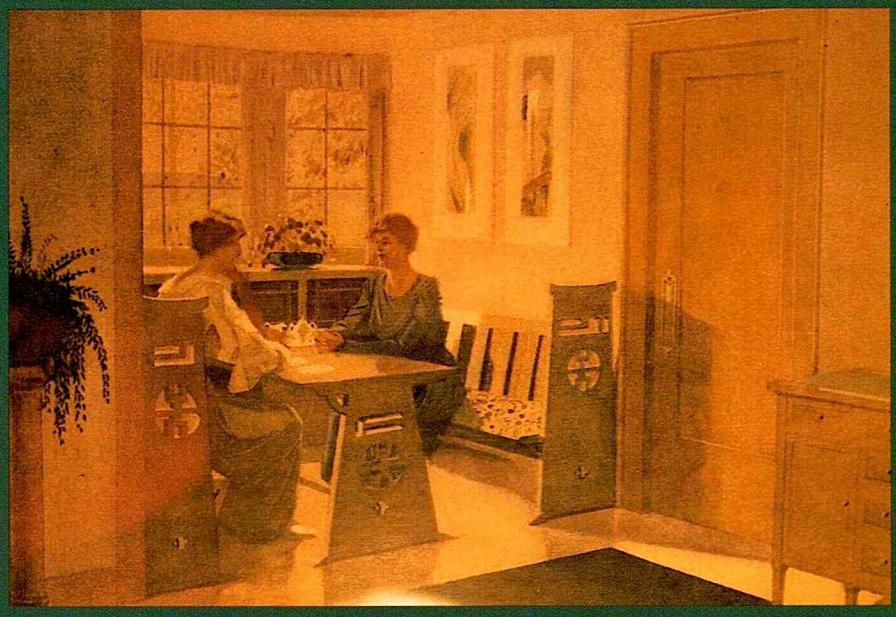
Turtle Creek Housing,
Hotel, Office Building, 1986
model
Dallas, Texas



to it. The garage building is covered with Finnply, which is a plywood I used on Loyola Law School. It's a plywood that's not very fancy, but it's a beautiful color and it holds up for at least five or six years outside.

The small loft is covered in galvanized metal and the central tower is painted black metal. There's an uncanny, inadvertent relationship between the central tower and the fireplace to the Philip Johnson studio, the little stovepipelike thing he did in New Canaan. The new Philip Johnson was creeping into my house for the Wintons, and as I was doing this, he was building a small chain-link pavilion out in New Canaan.

House extends into housing in an unbuilt project that shows where the fish and scales have gone, the indeterminate structures and all the things I've been playing with. It's housing and a hotel and office building in Turtle Creek, Dallas, for the developer Vincent Carrozza. You enter an oval courtyard for the housing. The office building is way in the back behind the housing mass, and the hotel is on the right. The study of fish scales and glass has at least crept into the fantasy of this project. Then the skin of the large building has an indeterminate quality. I don't know if it will be realized this way, but I like the idea of that form and the movement and feeling of it.



Gwendolyn Wright

Domestic Architecture and the Cultures of Domesticity

Domestic architecture, whether mass housing or the single-family house, has been, it seems, the favorite design problem of twentieth-century American architects. Here they can explore their personal visions, proposing formal innovations and, often as not, symbolic expressions about concepts like function or family. If a public dimension usually remains quite abstract, the dwellings still fit somewhere on a broad spectrum between individualistic objects and a planned community. The recurring, underlying theme of professional responsibility is inherently public as well. Each design suggests the sources from which architects should draw, the boldness or familiarity of their vision, the need to challenge or refine the reality of American society. Residential design is, consequently, a cultural statement at many overlapping levels.

By and large, professional designers seem determined to thrust domestic architecture in one of two directions. Usually they seek to have it rise above the dreary reality of most American suburbs and the anonymity of tract houses. Alternatively, it would directly challenge this disdainful stance and embrace the world around us. Ordinary materials, unpretentious forms, tight budgets, and the elusive imagery of American cities and regions (rather than European prototypes from history or the contemporary avant-garde) are not just tolerated: they become the basis for design decisions. This by no means has to suggest aesthetic conservatism. Quite recently, for example, Frank Gehry has transformed the mundane into exciting, sometimes bizarre, creations; Steven Holl has extracted the elegant proportions of simple vernacular houses; Antoine Predock has drawn from the multiple aesthetics that prevail in the Spanish and Indian cultures of the Southwest; Stanton Eckstut and Alexander Cooper's master plan for Battery Park City in New York links this development to the best of the nearby residential streetscapes, without imposing a deadening uniformity on the architects who follow the guidelines. With the exception of Battery Park City, these experiments are still

From *Better Homes,* a pamphlet of the Morgan Woodworking Company emphasizes the movement toward simplification in house interiors, ca. 1910.

primarily in the realm of individual exploration, and essentially formal in nature. Yet they show an awareness of the inevitable interconnections—and even the beneficial inspirations—that link architectural design and ordinary house building.

While we are witnessing a growing appreciation for the potentially engaging formal elements in "ordinary" American domestic settings, the social reality of housing attitudes may prove harder to grasp and respond to. Most of us would no longer insist that all Americans fit into some homogeneous pattern of character and living style, for we are too aware of differences in race, ethnicity, gender, class, family and locale. Yet we do recognize dominant traits, or at least aspirations, that unite many people in this country. How do we translate this dichotomy into the realm of residential architecture? What does it mean for an architect to respond to cultural values when they are, in fact, so contradictory?

At both a national and a local or individual level, there are two cultural aspects of American housing that often affect architectural expression. One dimension is ideological, the long-standing belief that domestic environments can affect how people live, strengthening virtuous qualities, stabilizing family life, encouraging enduring communities. The image of what is good can celebrate "traditional" ways of life or seek to introduce radical changes; likewise, the architectural image used to evoke what is good can be essentially historical or modern. The only consistent theme seems to be the desire for a surrounding community (in both a social and an architectural sense) that reaffirms one's sense of values. Yet this often flies in the face of the desire to have the fullest personal expression through one's house, to assert the prevailing cultural values of individualism and independence.

The second aspect is political and acknowledges that our domestic environments do affect how we live—at least in terms of what is widely available because it is affordable, abides by codes and zoning ordinances, and seems marketable to builders and architects. The most common kind of housing in any given historical period tends to favor certain styles, materials, and site plans; simultaneously, it can reinforce particular social patterns (for example, the isolation of the nuclear family or the separation of home and work) through design and land use preferences. Alternatives, whether cultural or architectural, seem eccentric or even suspect, to the point that it is often uneconomical or even illegal to challenge the dominant norm.

This essay describes two early twentieth-century campaigns to redirect American domestic architecture in response to both cultural and formal concerns. Professional architects, mass builders, and various social reformers all took part, and they focused on middle-class housing—how it looked and what it meant to them, separately and together. The style and even the focus of these formal programs differed somewhat. The first case emphasized changes in floor plan and site plan; the second, in facade and landscaping of the site. The first endorsed modernist simplification; the second, historicist ornament. Though both pre-date the modern movement in America, each connected design reform with specific goals of social reform.

This is not to say that non-aesthetic concerns—first an attempt to promote cultural diversity, then an effort to escape that diversity—actually generated the new design concepts. Still, the designers themselves often asserted the possibility of social change (or a halt in change, which amounts to the same thing) through their designs. And it is predominantly through such associations that non-architects, whether as the residents or as people who marketed the houses and household goods, understood the forms. There was no unanimous way to read the architecture, of course; in fact, debates about stylistic preferences became a way to discuss a variety of attitudes about home, family, and community. It is those attitudes, interacting with an autonomous exploration of formal

1. Katherine G. Busbey, *Home Life in America* (New York: Macmillan, 1910), p. 373; Mary Gay Humphries, "House Decoration and Furnishing," *The House and Home,* ed. Lyman Abbott, 2 vols. I (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896), p. 157.
2. For a more extended discussion of these writers, see my *Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873–1913* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).
3. "Apartment Hotels in New York City," *Architectural Record* 13 (January 1903), p. 90. Also see the chapter on apartments in my *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (New York: Pantheon, 1981).

A Picturesque Court of 30 Bungalows

A Community Idea for Women

By Una Nixson Hopkins

VERY few persons, particularly women, can be happy outside of a pleasant home. An apartment in a great box-like building is frequently the solution, as a house to one's self is apt to be not only lonely, but expensive as well.

In California the court apartment has solved the problem in a practical and economical way. There are twenty-four bungalows in this court, but thirty apartments—as a number of the bungalows are double. These apartments may be rented furnished or unfurnished.

The court runs at right angles with the street and is four steps above the street level. A long walk extends between the bungalows, with flowerbeds in the center. From these rise well-designed electric-light standards, so that at night the court is "as light as day."

No two bungalows are alike, although there is a general conformity of color and line. They are close enough together to afford a feeling of protection, but far enough apart to provide room for little grass plots between them, and the windows are carefully placed with the idea of affording as much privacy as possible.

The floor plans vary: some are intended for one person, others for two, while the double houses were planned for two or more persons who may wish to live under the same roof, but desire separate establishments. It is possible to make these dual apartments communicable or not. A heavy sliding door between the main partitions may be open or be closed and locked.

In each house a dining-room has been eliminated, the main room doing duty as both living-room and dining-room. Each of the living-rooms has a fireplace and a majority of them contain wall beds. Every bedroom is of fair size, with one or two good closets, and the baths are all well lighted. The large summer house situated midway between the bungalows affords a pleasant place to chat in and to sew and enjoy the air.—*Designed by Arthur S. Heineman.*

In the Summer House on the Left Tea is Served by Those Socially Inclined

One of the Twin Bungalows. Note That Each Has a Private Entrance

Plan of the Bungalow Below

Plan of the Twin Bungalow Above

Plan of the Bungalow Below

The Cement Porch Adds an Artistic Touch to This Bungalow

A Single Bungalow of Clapboards With Brick Foundation

Suburban bungalows for young families were promoted in popular women's magazines at the turn of the century.

ideas among architects, that caused certain forms to be accepted or rejected over time.

At the turn of the last century the call for aesthetic reform resounded throughout the country. Domestic architecture in particular came under scrutiny, as middle-class women echoed architects' demands for simplification. These women specifically called for homes that were more economical, less ostentatious, and easier to keep clean. The most pressing reasons for a new aesthetic, at least in their view, involved personal efficiency and community cohesiveness, as much as matters of taste.

Given women's busy schedules outside the home, the Victorian residence now seemed a hindrance. This "labyrinth of unreason with grotesque details" simply required too much effort to decorate and keep clean. One young woman, writing about housekeeping in 1896, declared that the house of the future should be designed to be cleaned with a garden hose.[1]

Some critics went one step further. They condemned the prevailing arrangement of houses on typical residential blocks. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Marion Talbot, and others argued that women had to challenge the basic pattern of isolation and individualization in American housing.[2] Rows of detached dwellings, each one striving to distinguish itself from the next, seemed an impetus to competition, rather than cooperation, among neighbors.

Working women endorsed several architectural alternatives to the prevailing mode. One was the apartment-hotel, which had become acceptable and then even fashionable in the 1880s and 1890s, and now attracted large numbers of single people, as well as young families, in major cities. In fact, as the apartment-hotel became increasingly popular, it came to be associated with the trend toward women working outside the home. This connection soon led even architects to join in the condemnation of apartment buildings. In 1903, despite the fact that many of its readers designed such structures, the *Architectural Record* branded them "the most dangerous enemy American domesticity has had to encounter."[3] Cultural fears overrode professional interests.

With similar vehemence, middle-class residential areas, and especially suburban enclaves, sought to exclude multiple dwellings through legislation and zoning measures. As today, the principal motivation was the fear that property values would suffer. But this anticipation derived as much from apprehensions about different household types as from a dislike of varied architectural scales. Cultural fears also affected economic calculations.

Some women consequently favored another approach to housing reform, one that would seem less intrusive in architectural terms. They endorsed simplified bungalows, especially those grouped together as a visual and social unit within a larger residential setting of single-family homes. One notable promoter of this solution was the architect and journalist Una Nixon Hopkins, often featured in *The House Beautiful* and *The Ladies' Home Journal.* Hopkins published some of her own designs, including a house that had been discretely modified to allow a woman to use part of it as an office or shop. She frequently showed groups of small cottages for "bachelor girls." The Heinemann brothers' Bowen Court in Pasadena won special praise for its double bungalows with connecting living room and its community building.[4] Hopkins never distinguished between work by architects, builders, and owner-builders, as long as the houses attained their characteristics through restraint, and adapted well to a variety of possible roles for women.

Architectural history often attributes the move toward greater simplification in turn-of-the-century American housing to the influence of a few talented, innovative architects of this era, notably Frank Lloyd Wright, the Greene brothers, and McKim in his more academic mode. Yet the fact is that these few individuals could not have achieved instant mass impact in the period before today's architectural stardom. Looking carefully at their careers, one recognizes that each of these men drew directly from the broad-based popular enthusiasm for a stripped-down aesthetic and an efficient plan, as endorsed by the women's movement of the time.

Wright, for example, lectured to many women's clubs and art organizations in the Chicago area. He openly acknowledged that his "golden rules for house building"—the principles of organic design, simplicity, horizontality, the open plan, natural materials, and integral furnishings—had already become "well-established principles" for the women in his audiences.[5]

Wright, too, connected his simplified prairie house with a new approach to site planning. Soon after beginning these public lectures, he conceived of the earliest and, in many ways, purest version of this house as his first model home for *The Ladies' Home Journal* in 1901. Alongside the dwelling itself Wright showed how he wanted the prairie houses grouped together, forming enclaves of similar but quite separate households. Through this pattern of houses he hoped to achieve both an elegant gridded landscape and a harmonious residential neighborhood.

In time, this ideal community would expand significantly. A decade after the "Quadruple Block Plan," Wright published his entry in the Chicago City Club's 1913 competition for a model suburb. Now he included a variety of dwelling sizes (and implicitly a range of socio-economic classes). On the outer edge, close to public transportation and commercial shops, he called for rowhouse and apartment blocks housing single men and women. Wright's scheme represented an innovative ideal, similar to that of progressive feminists, in that the competition program had not specified such diversity. Yet he pointedly isolated the single people and their housing on the periphery of the suburb, just as he protected the wealthiest families in the largest houses at the center (in a "Residence Park" with a density of four houses to the block, like his *Journal* scheme).[6]

Wright embodies several aspects of progressive-era reciprocity. In architectural terms, he gave powerful images to the women who wanted to reform family life through houses, and drew in turn from those women's preferences as he evolved his designs. In addition, one can see a cultural statement in Wright's formal predilections, echoing that of the society around him. In plan, facade, and detailing, his houses certainly became more restrained and more efficient. Equally important, while different socio-economic classes and different types of family groups generated a wide range of housing types, Wright separated these variations from one

4. See, among many examples, Hopkins's articles in *The Ladies' Home Journal* of October 1910, 15 February 1911, May 1912, and April 1913.
5. One of the earliest such speeches is "Art in the Home," read before the Home Decorating and Furnishing Department of the Central Art Association's Third Annual Congress, Chicago, May 1898, reprinted in *Arts for America* 7 (June 1898), pp. 579–588. For an elaboration of this analysis, see my essay "Architectural Practice and Social Vision in Wright's Early Designs," in *Nature in the Work of Frank Lloyd Wright,* ed. Vincent Scully (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, forthcoming 1988).
6. Alfred B. Yeomans, ed., *City Residential Land Development, Studies in Planning: Competitive Plans for Subdividing a Typical Quarter Section of Land in the Outskirts of Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1916), pp. 16–20.

another in his larger patterns of residential urban design. If his residential designs promoted certain cultural reforms, they also isolated those who advocated change from those who didn't. At each scale of residential architecture then, from the open-plan living room to the suburban neighborhood, Wright's forms responded to the middle-class culture around him.

In the 1920s, residential architecture again underwent a dramatic stylistic transformation. The minimalist facades of progressive-era houses now seemed dated, and architects and builders alike promoted a romantic historicist imagery for dwellings. Entire suburban neighborhoods went up in revival styles—English Colonial, Spanish Colonial, Mediterranean, French, and so forth—with curving streets reinforcing the idyllic quality of these residential retreats. Obviously, the popularity of historical styles had a formal rationale, not unlike that put forward in defense of the historicism of the 1970s and 1980s. The interest in ornament and irregular massing derived in part from the recent influence of Charles F.A. Voysey and Edwin Lutyens in England, and the national status of American architects like John Staub, Robert McGoodwin, George Washington Smith, or Harrie T. Lindeberg. Again one can discern a decided cultural impetus behind the new aesthetic. These designs seemed to offer both romance and stability, both individual charm and social homogeneity. Even *Architectural Forum* could describe styles in these terms: "The Norman is an architecture of towers, roof masses and picturesque compositions; history and feudalism are suggested in its whole spirit, which is strongly expressive of romance."[7] Thus historicism evoked a mythic world of romantic grandeur through its picturesque forms.

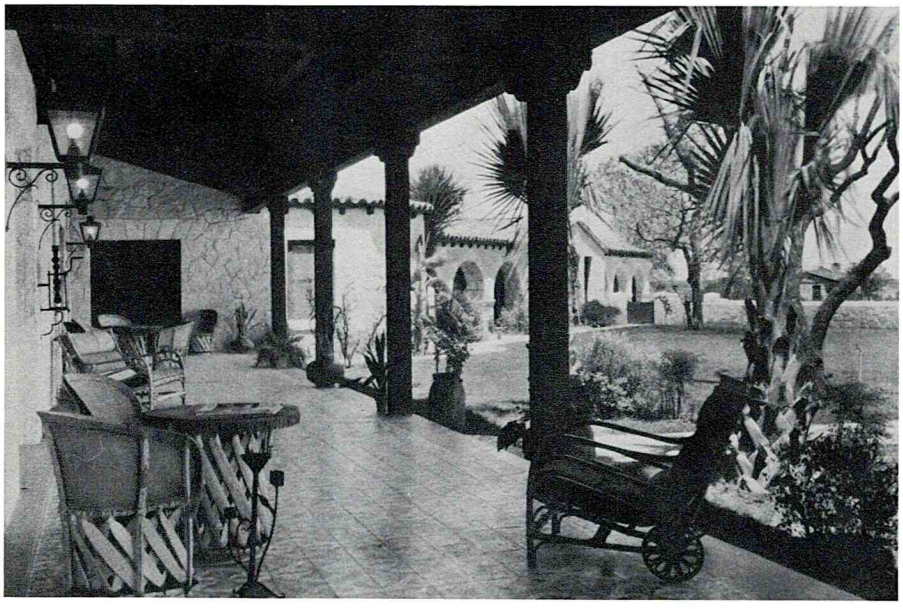
All the same, the shift from simplified geometry to stylized historical motifs requires explanation. To a certain extent the new mode signals both a more self-conscious architectural profession, showing mastery of European culture, and a more aggressive group of builders (many of whom now functioned as developers, planning entire suburbs) who were strongly attuned to the middle-class market, to the preferences and fantasies of potential home buyers. Both groups advertised their services by claiming that the right design could guarantee a family's secure position in society, declaring their cultured taste. The interconnections are clear, but we must still ask why historical styles seemed the most effective way to assuage such anxieties.

The architecture of the 1920s, by and large, looked backward toward a supposedly calmer past, rather than forward toward a more egalitarian future. So too did the larger rubric of middle-class American culture. In the country's first decade as an officially urban nation, Americans rather desperately searched for an old-fashioned kind of stability they called "normalcy." If the fast-growing cities represented ethnic diversity and industrial progress, certain citizens seemed intent upon denying that reality, lashing out against change. The Ku Klux Klan gained a foothold in cities throughout the country with promises to force blacks back to the rural South. Anti-Semitism and the Red Scare of 1919 focused on presumed disloyalties of urban immigrants from Eastern Europe. Responding to such fears, Congress severely restricted immigration to the United States, especially from the southern and eastern European countries that had sent millions of newcomers since the turn of the century. (That series of laws began in 1921, with amendments following throughout the decade; Chinese immigration had already been restricted in 1882, and Japanese in 1900.)

In the throes of urban violence and vehement legislative actions, Americans confronted racial and ethnic prejudices. Domestic architecture responded to these cultural tensions. Ethnic and religious homogeneity had, in fact, been a mainstay of early Puritan towns in New England, so it was appropriate that families and entire suburbs of the 1920s should favor historical allusions to colonial New England houses in residential design. Domestic architecture could also

7. Frank J. Forster, "Norman-English Influence in Country Houses," *Architectural Forum* 47 (March 1926), p. 139. For an overview of the topic, see Jonathan Lane, "The Period House in the Nineteen-Twenties," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 20 (December 1961), pp. 169–178. A more theoretical overview is Alan Colquhoun, "Three Kinds of Historicism," *Oppositions* 26 (Spring 1984), pp. 29–39.

A house in the
Spanish-Colonial style
near San Antonio, Texas,
ca. 1930
Harvey P. Smith, architect



provide an image that was more palatable, that of cultural diversity in a tolerant society—especially if the cultural references focused on appealing groups such as Spanish conquistadores, French nobility, and Tudor lords. Specific references to the several "original" groups that had settled colonial America nonetheless suggest an underlying xenophobia, particularly when compounded with frequent references to the "sturdy," "durable," and "natural" qualities supposedly inherent in the popular English cottage mode.

In addition, historical styles seemed a way to maintain individuality and refinement in a world dominated by industrialization. "Charm" and "distinctiveness" echoed in almost every text on domestic architecture, whether popular or professional. A historic design was "so different from the mechanical little houses that we are accustomed to in this country," declared one book of house designs. The right design could even assure upward mobility by its connotations of "judgment and an appreciation of good things."[8]

Architects did not protest this trend. Rather they insisted that good design required professional counsel in order to assure the correct proportions, the pertinent details, and a balanced synthesis of historic forms with modern conveniences. For stock plans or expensive, individual commissions, the same argument applied. The Architects' Small House Service Bureau, based in Minneapolis, with thirteen regional offices around the country, provided stock plans for a small fee; even though the plans were anonymous and cooperatively produced, the Bureau never promoted a modernist campaign for standardization, such as contemporary Europeans were waging. One pamphlet argued that "authentic" (that is, historicist) style added 10–20 percent to the value of a house. Whatever the scale of a house, authenticity seldom implied a scholarly adherence to styles, materials, or construction techniques from the past. Ruberoid thatch, sun porches, and false half-timbering produced no qualms in architects or builders.

It is perhaps most of all in the design and policies of entire residential communities that we can best see how cultural ideals affected architecture and people's lives. Most neighborhoods included a variety of historic styles by different designers—a Cotswold cottage with a Spanish hacienda on one side and a gambrel-roofed Dutch colonial homestead on the other. However some of the least expensive and the most costly imposed a single stylistic idiom over all the dwellings, in the first case to reduce costs, in the second to assure visual harmony. *The House Beautiful* praised a Provençal group of houses near Santa Barbara for balancing "a charming originality in each house with a unified picturesqueness in the combined group."[9] But even where stylistic diversity was tolerated, most residential suburbs employed a battery of zoning techniques to keep the area as socially homogeneous as possible. Not only were apartments outlawed; so, too, were all non-residential uses, houses and lots below a minimum size, and often families whose race or religion made them seem alien to the dominant WASP culture.

In other words, even as Americans embraced a residential architecture that spoke of cultural diversity, national and local laws struck out against the possibility of such diversity. The housing styles favored during the 1920s suggested stability from the past and security in the present. More than aesthetic taste was at stake. In its reading of the past and its visions of the future, this architecture denied the varied histories and contemporary disparities of American life.

Residential architecture today remains just as much a means of cultural expression, as much a way to suggest reforms or deny the need for them, as it did a half-century ago. Formalism tries to avoid this fact with the implication that only aesthetic questions relevant to architects can give true meaning to buildings. Yet if the latest trends and architectural superstars have cachet for clients, it is precisely because an intensely consumeristic culture makes them seem so desirable; the forms themselves have little to do with the mass appeal.

Housing design remains the realm where the preferences and experiences of different groups—architects, builders, and the public, with all the permutations each category encompasses—must coexist. One could read the history of twentieth-century domestic architecture in a number of ways, according to these different concerns, and each would, in its own way, be valid. Yet to fully understand the phenomenon of change, and certainly to speculate about future directions, one must look at all these aspects together.

It is all too easy for architects to deny this complexity with a doctrinaire stance about domestic architecture. Such claims, assimilating style and cultural vision, existed in the past, and they persist today, often under a veil of purely aesthetic preferences. Modernists assert that design can represent an ideal (as the progressives, too, contended), and historicists hope that it can help us escape unpleasant realities (as seemed possible in the 1920s). We now recognize that architecture alone cannot solve social problems or resolve cultural differences, but this should not lead us to deny the connection altogether. We severely limit the true scope of architecture if, in our disappointment with not being able to transform the world as we think it should be, we then withdraw from the formal and cultural complexity, the historical range and contemporary variety of what houses mean to all of us.

8. H.G. Outwater, with designs by Charles M. Noble and H.R. Shurtleff, *Designs for American Homes* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1921), pp. 44, 90.
9. Ellen Judith Gould, "Southern France in California," *The House Beautiful* (July 1922), p. 20.

Lois Craig

Houses at Liberty: Picturing Suburban America

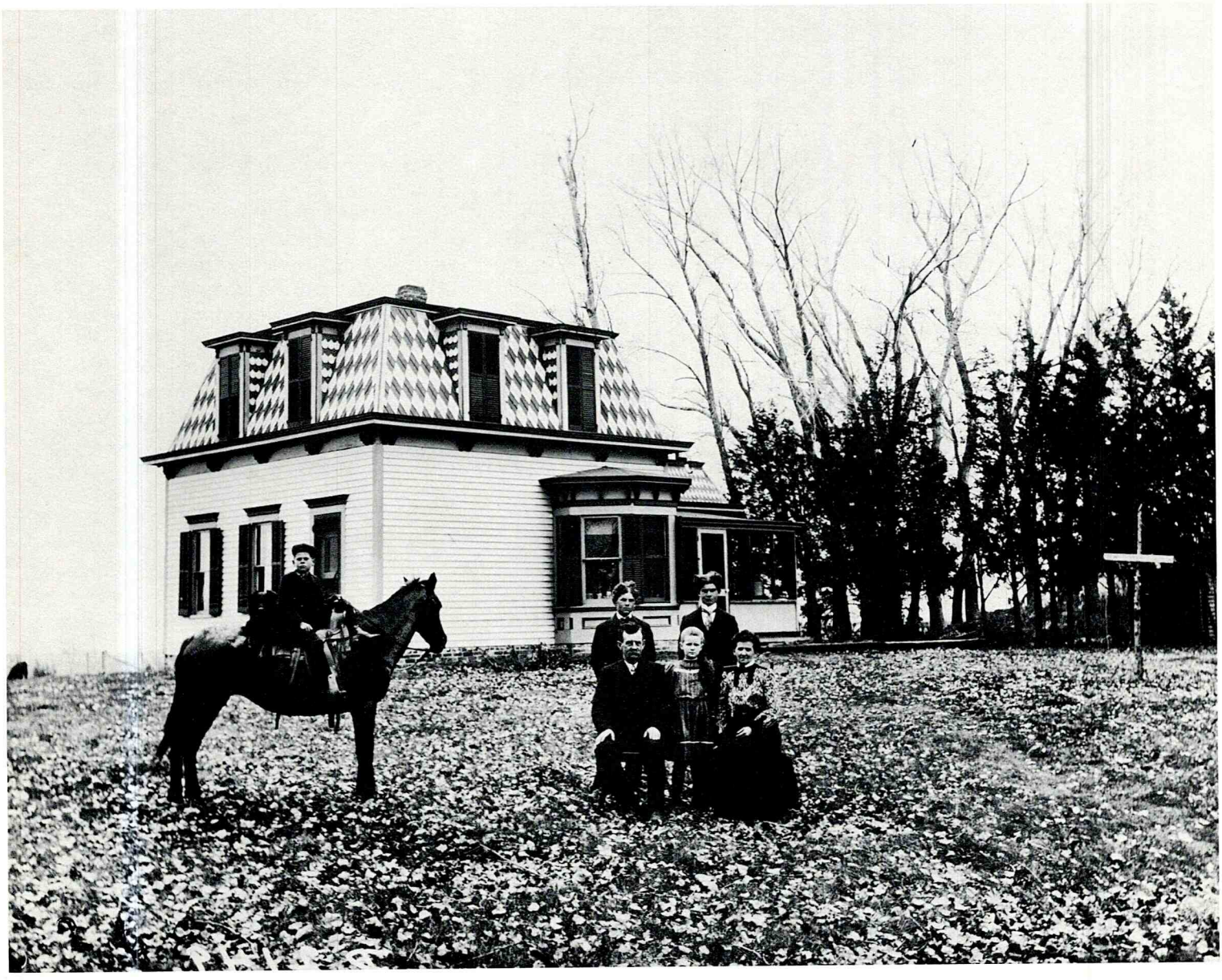
One of the most popular fables of the American experience is building a house, a home of one's own. It has been recounted in song and story, in reportage and research. It pervades advertising and legal traditions.

Its contemporary locus is the suburbs where for over four decades the majority of Americans in metropolitan areas have chosen to live. And, although we are seeing out our windshields new suburban apartment buildings and so-called "town-home condominiums," the freestanding, single-family house is still very much with us. (Even multiple units often hide out in mansionlike shells.) So how we think about how we picture the American house is not trivial.

This essay is about pictures and captions: about picturing American houses and the suburbs where these houses preponderantly exist. It is also about the pictures in the mind's eye and about missing pictures. It is about what is both inside and outside the picture frame: what constraints American houses are at liberty from—pictorially and conceptually—and what the most enlightened meaning of "houses at liberty" might be.

Exploring the discrepancies between picturing and life raises profound issues of prejudice and tolerance, which require a body of knowledge not usually associated with the design arts. Most revealing for the American context is the pioneering and now classic study of 1953, *The Nature of Prejudice* by Gordon Allport.[1] Allport made a distinction between prejudgment and prejudice. Prejudgment he defined as those thinking processes of generalization and categorization, which are necessary aids to organizing and ordering our world for practical purposes, to creating value premises. Prejudice results when one is unable to reverse and erase prejudgments in the light of new information. Tolerance, as Allport defined it, is marked by inclusivity, self-awareness, empathy, an ability to handle ambiguity, and a sense of humor. These are traits that urge us to free ourselves from rigid forms of thought.

M.W. Winchester House,
1903
Gibbon, Buffalo County,
Nebraska



Until well after World War II suburban settlement, the house and housing were absorbing topics treated favorably by the professional design magazines. Before 1945, the single house was typically identified with individual taste and wealth, with villas and suburban estates. In contrast, the impressive amount of coverage of housing ensembles was marked by professional interest in reform—in workers' housing, in "affordable" housing, and in model developments: those garden suburbs and subdivisions that arose primarily from European influences. The prevailing integration of architecture, planning and landscape design supported a concern for the cumulative impression of community.

For many reasons—the scale and speed of suburban growth after World War II being prominent—negative pictures and captions gradually took over the characterization of the suburban setting. Except for the blip of New Towns in the late 1960s, the portrayals of domestic shelter were ever more dominated by the house-as-personal castle. This detachment of architecture from community reflected both the inability of the profession to influence volume building and the increasing separation of architecture and planning.

Today one is hard put to find any treatment of the house in professional magazines except for the very pricey or house-as-theory projects of well-known architects. In other areas of publishing, however, there has recently been a flurry of domesticity as numerous books appear that deal with the ordinary house. That this may be related to larger trends in historiography is worthy of separate consideration. In another kind of retrograde upgrade, something like the phenomenon of designer jeans, the National Trust for Historic Preservation will now assist in authenticating Sears & Roebuck houses.

At the level of design, however, the idiosyncratic prevails. Hence, in part, the continuing and generalized negative view of suburbs, a view reinforced by the dearth of sympathetic or useful visual materials. No quarter is given in a typical photo essay of the 1960s, which, from gorgeous view of serene farmland to sweeping view of Los Angeles, portrayed the supposed losses accompanying suburban growth. Just such portrayals fueled both the preservation and the conservation movements. We have since learned that the acreage of farmland is stable or actually increasing and that Reyner Banham loves L.A. As Cervin Robinson has written: "In order to do justice to photographs we need experience of both photography and the world."[2]

To speculate about what's missing and why, and what might be useful to refresh the store of images for both seeing and designing, three pictorial ranges are suggested: the long view, the close-up, the middle ground.

The first two, the long view and the close-up, include a great array of visual materials provided by the media of both popular and professional culture. (Such "thinking lenses" as sociology and statistics can also yield pictures, including distorted ones.) The long view is the province of the photographer and the journalist, the planner and the critic. The close-up is especially favored by works of imagination, both popular and serious. It is also favored by the architectural community, and its public.

The middle ground is that range that takes in the daily, complex, human-scale setting where at the most prosaic level we go in and out of doors. It is also where metaphor meets reality, design meets people, and individuals reach understandings about the use and appearance of public or publicly-viewed places. There are very few compelling visual materials for this middle range.

In both the long view and the close-up, the houses are at liberty from the day-to-day in many ways. But of most concern are the consequences of their being at liberty from the middle ground. Sometimes elegantly and evocatively at liberty, as in artists' interpretations. Sometimes harmlessly at liberty. But sometimes so scandalously at liberty from context that they compound the worst kind of class prejudice and promote withdrawal into detached, self-centered life.

1. Gordon Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1954).
2. Cervin Robinson, "Architectural Photography," *Journal of Architectural Education,* Vol. XXIV, No. 2 (November 1975).

Stereotypes are understandable early attempts to deal with new phenomena. Although suburbanization has been an element of American settlement since the emergence of our towns and cities, its scale following World War II was indeed phenomenal. No wonder then that photographers went for the big and long views—and used every lens and trick in their camera bags to dramatize them. There was an inescapable visual excitement to massive overnight growth and, for the photographer on assignment, compelling visual patterns. Others wrote the captions.

In what a cultural historian calls our "hieroglyphic civilization,"[3] the camera encourages treating buildings and places as though we have seen them. Aerial views, especially, were fodder for the manipulation of architect observers who, in their zeal to condemn the new mass housing, swept into their encompassing frames graveyards, junkyards, neighborhoods from an earlier time, even an architect/developer collaboration favored at ground level by photographers and editors alike. In housing tracts, a noted architect wrote, "Impersonal, drab sameness offers stony soil and withers personal roots."[4] Earlier proponents of so-called garden subdivisions agreed.

The popular press was complicit. For a special double issue on the city in 1965, the editors of *Life* magazine asked photographer Howard Sochurek "to photograph the dynamisms of the city."[5] With some new techniques from space-age photography he captured glittering, colorful views for a photo essay titled "Sweep of Creative Power." One picture, captioned "Megalopolis is Multiplied," is a dramatic, multiple-image portrait of Minneapolis-St. Paul. It is an *inclusive* image—of city and suburbs, of people and houses innumerable. Anyone can imagine being part of it.

Immediately following this flashy photo essay is a somber essay titled "The Villains Are Greed, Indifference—and You." The two-page, black and white theme picture is a now famous photograph by Ansel Adams of a chain of tract houses looping up a hillside in Daly City (cover). The caption reads: "Marching in Indian file up the flanks of the San Bruno Mountains in California, tract houses reveal the dreary tastelessness that despoils more and more of America's natural beauty." And so the image becomes *exclusive*—us and them. Outside the magazine's pages, popular and professional wisdom went even further, depicting both residents and their houses as "ticky tacky."

In the background could be heard the drumbeat of change, proving for one thing—we thought—the loss of land with all that implied for the loss of the Jeffersonian tradition of the yeoman farmer. Proving for another—we thought—that images of ubiquitous, repetitive objects confirmed gloomy findings about conformity and alienation.

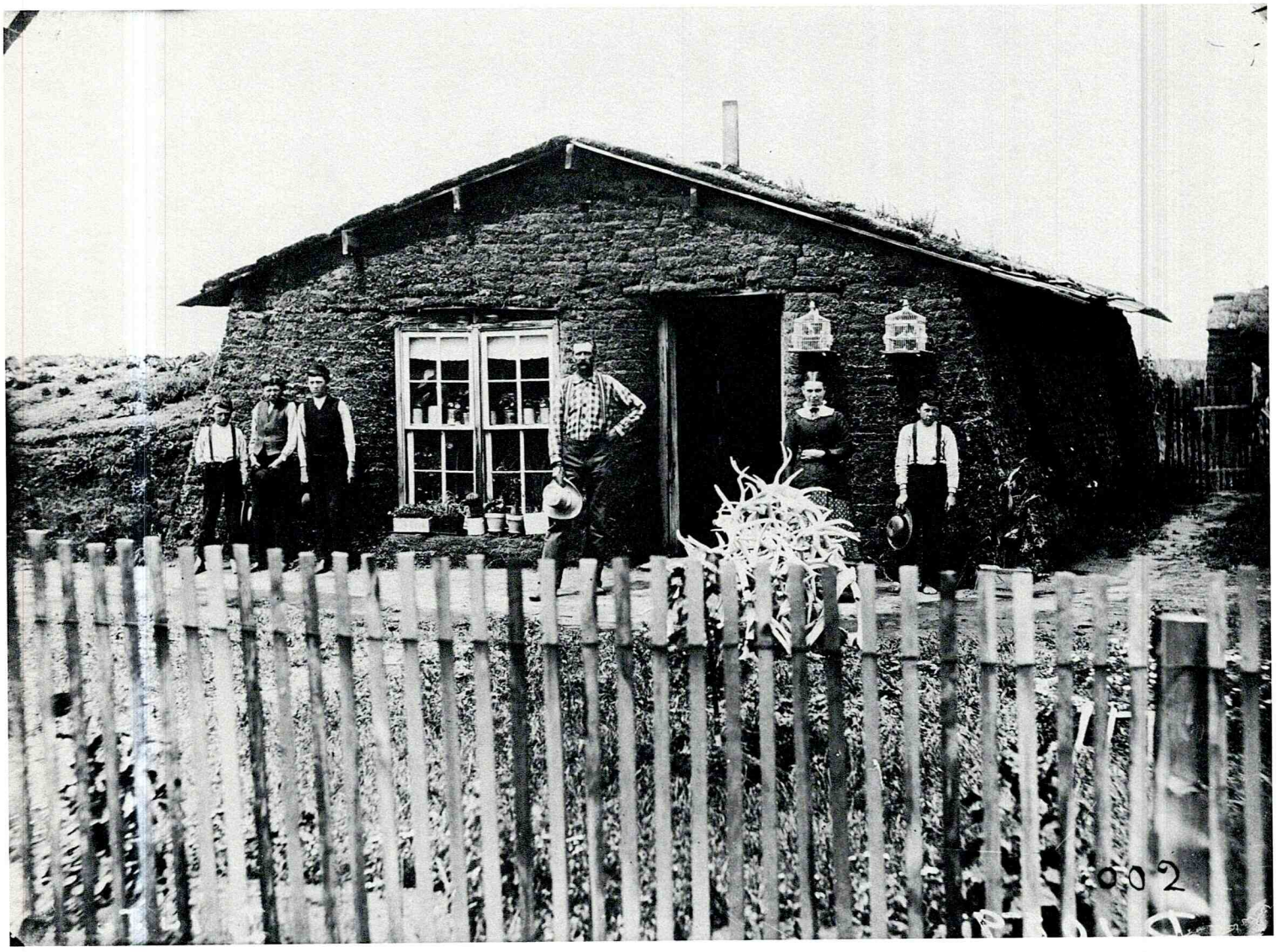
Over time the powerful Daly City image has been restated by other photographers. In a curious aberration, photographer Eve Adams identified her version, published in 1983, as "an upper-bracket housing complex."[6] None of the captions mentions the disquieting information imparted by the *National Geographic* magazine: during the 1906 San Francisco earthquake the San Andreas Fault ruptured at the edge of Daly City and a 1957 shock caused landslides and damaged housing.[7] Nor was sociological and aesthetic innuendo accompanied by information about what the houses are like close up, or what these houses and this place offer those who live there.

There are at least three reasons the zoom lens image of Daly City lives. It is a powerful picture qua picture. It captures our continuing uncertainty and unease about the pervasiveness of mass-produced objects—a subject that has eluded the sustained attention of designers. And the location is hard to get to. Somewhere in all of this may lie another reason that is hard to disentangle. Prejudice against suburbs may be generated, in part, by a perception that suburbs exclude—although another kind of exclusion is operating in the vision of them.

3. Warren Susman, quoted in Melissa Banta and Curtis M. Hinsley, *From Site to Sight: Anthropology, Photography and the Power of Imagery* (Cambridge, Mass.: Peabody Museum Press, 1986).
4. Nathaniel Owings, *The American Aesthetic* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).
5. *The U.S. City, Its Greatness Is at Stake,* Special double issue of *Life* magazine, Vol. 59, No. 26 (24 December 1965).
6. Eve Arnold, *In America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983).
7. "When the Earth Moves," *National Geographic,* Vol. 169, No. 5 (May 1986).

John Curry Sod House,
ca. 1886
West Union, Custer
County, Nebraska

J.C. Cram Sod House, 1886
Loup County, Nebraska



Of interest today is the persistence of images made of old pictures and captions in the face of changes that liberate the house from both the stereotypes and the realities of monotony. Those visually and temporally distant suburbs grew trees and people and institutions and ornament. Today if you track them down you must marvel at the elaboration of the ordinary, at the greening of old prognoses.

The close-up of the American house represents an older pictorial convention that embraces the traditional American commitment to the single family in the single house. This commitment is grounded in two important experiences—one of the land, and one of the industrial city. In a poignant congruence, pioneer settlers on the prairies and plains literally created their houses out of sod—and were proud of them, as old portraits reveal.

The realities of claiming—and settling—a vast, unmarked landscape left a legacy of fervent individualism, which has troubled many observers. De Tocqueville called our pioneering traits "habits of the heart." In a recent use, his phrase titles a disturbing study that probes the continuing American emphasis on self-realization and individual success—and the consequent failure of commitment to collective life and values.[8]

The second experience emerges from the realities of the nineteenth-century industrial city. Historian Kirk Jeffrey points out that ". . . three utopian themes—retreat, conscious design, and perfectionism—pervaded nineteenth-century writings about the family."[9] The American family of the time was bombarded with the notion that within the individual family, the private home, the singular house—within, indeed, the perfect home, the well-kept house—husbands and children could be rescued from the horrors of the industrial city and "the outside society thereby reformed and saved." And so, Jeffrey argues, extravagant expectations for the domestic realm, rhetorically fed, supported attention to careful physical design of the American house, which, along with attention to the human relationships within, could create a heaven on earth. The favored setting for this idealized home was some version of natural surroundings—in fantasy rural, but in reality suburban.

Not unrelated to such fantasy are the images of the house from the worlds of tourism and real estate promotion. Just such popular materials reveal the most obvious likings and dislikings of a society—especially when they resonate with the attitudes of more serious works of imagination.

Half a continent away from the pioneers of the plains, other settlers were discovering the gold to be found in oranges and sun-kissed real estate. Before long the pictures purveyed in postcards and movies alike lured the tourists who came and stayed and sent more postcards to their friends and families back home in grayer climes.

Today, in contrast, a postcard shop in the Soho section of New York City yields ironic, amusing and nostalgic pictures of the American house. None is intended to sell it. A sample includes: historic views of vernacular houses; photographs from the 1950s of such scenes as a Tupperware party; a Cape Cod tract house with the title "Dullsville, An American Classic, Anywhere USA;" a couple standing on oversize blueprints and fighting, this titled "Domestic Drama #4."

Out-and-out marketing images, except for elaboration, seem to change very little. From the pages of prewar government pamphlets and commercial paint samplers, to the latest real estate brochures picked up at the corner 7-Eleven store and the decking out of busy real estate offices, the house is viewed through a nostalgic filter of estates and villas. That the house-as-castle also informs reality is evident enough when a grand manor facade rises but feet away from its neighboring "manorette."

To a literary minded observer the American suburb is a land of visual oxymorons. The so-called traditional house of the future, for example, is a kind of house favored by American builders and realtors and

8. Robert N. Bellah, Richard Kadsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).
9. Kirk Jeffrey, "The Family as a Utopian Retreat from the City: The Nineteenth Century Contribution," *Soundings*, LV, 1 (Spring 1972).

Typical house and garden postcards from southern California, ca. 1935.

their buying public. The triumph of tradition-bound visions was forecast in 1849 by William H. Ranlett, an architect-builder practicing in the New York area. He wrote: "With entire confidence in the instinctive good sense of the people we shall continue making plans for 'poormen's cottages' and rich men's villas, entertaining no fears that the systems of certain philosophers who mean well but reason badly, will ever induce mankind to abandon the pure and natural delights which spring from living cottagely."[10]

Before World War II in the heyday of group residential projects and team design, the middle ground had its propagandists as government posters of the 1930s attest with their contrasts of, for example, "Life by the Square Foot vs. Life by the Acre" or playgrounds for your child in "Greenbelt or Gutter." For the New York World's Fair of 1939 Pare Lorentz and Lewis Mumford collaborated on a film that attempted a similar visual message by contrasting the worst of Pittsburgh with the best of the federal new community of Greenbelt, Maryland. The film was called *The City,* a reminder that the great design visionaries of suburban settlement—Frederick Law Olmsted, Clarence Stein and Henry Wright, Frank Lloyd Wright—did not urge abandoning the city at all, but rather remaking it to a gentler, greener, more humane shape.

But in their times, pictures of community-scale design—difficult to get under the best conditions—were not, and are not memorable. What probably best endure are the templates, the schematic representations of Riverside and Broadacres, Radburn and Greenbelt. So the lushness of today's Radburn, that internationally famous model for living in the motor age, is surprising.

That the suburban residential enclave exists most fully at this middle range is what English critic J.M. Richards implied when he insisted one must enter and move around such enclaves to experience and appreciate them.[11] For it is an environment that depends for its effect on multiple images—of groupings of plants and houses, of ground planes and sky canopy, and the modulating effects of light, of the ordering effects of portals and entries, borders and paths. The idea of garden prevails—"Annihilating all that's made to a green thought in a green shade," the poet wrote.[12]

Film and television seem to have a greater capacity than still images to capture the middle ground. They are, however, inescapably drawn to myth that can be recognized in the mini-second instant. There are, interestingly, many examples to be found of the deft use of words alone to create and fix convincing pictures of the suburban middle ground, its perils and delights. Unforgettable is the image of John Cheever's Neddy Merrill swimming eight miles of end-to-end suburban pools.[13] Walker Percy sets *The Moviegoer* in the New Orleans suburb of Gentilly where, at dawn: "The swimming pools steam like sleeping geysers."[14]

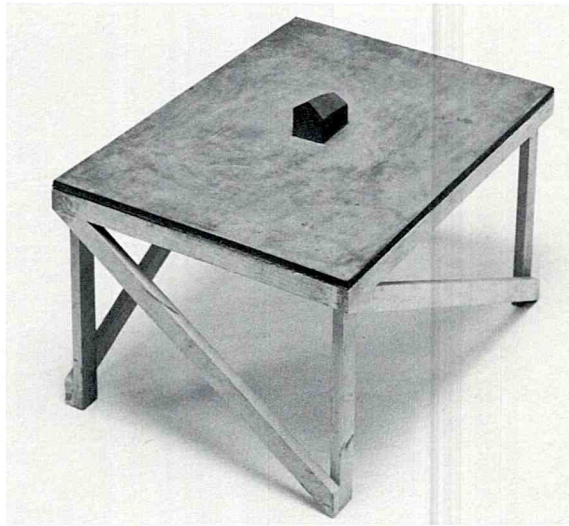
Imaginary houses from the realm of personal and collective memory inhabit the world of art—and deal with likings and dislikings, with long and close and middle, with near and far. Here houses and places are set free by imagination. But the houses are free, too, in the sense the Italian Futurist, Marinetti, intended in his 1912 polemic for "Words at Liberty:"—to discover and pose new ideas, new ways of thinking and "seeing."

Artists who look for fresh areas of style and subject matter have spoken through formal means to the issues and feelings and to the stuff of life in the post-World War II era.[15] To name a few, Roger Brown, Roy De Forest, Jennifer Bartlett, Robert Arneson, David Hockney and Richard Diebenkorn explored suburban places. H.C. Westermann, Tony Berlant, Don Baum capture the magic of domus; Joel Shapiro, the totemic miniature. Of noted photographers, Lewis Baltz offers bleak views of the suburban landscape; William Eggleston catches the odd jumble of it all; Stephen Shore its stately blandness and John Baeder its quirky forms. The Pop artists probed the sensibilities of mass production, the photo realists its physical ambience. The current interest in narrative art provides yet

10. William H. Ranlett, *The Architect, A Series of Original Designs, for Domestic and Ornamental Cottages and Villas, Connected with Landscape Gardening, Adapted to the United States,* 2 Vol. II (New York: DeWitt & Davenport, 1851. Reprint: Da Capo Press, New York, 1976).
11. J.M. Richards, *The Castles on the Ground: The Anatomy of Suburbia* (London: The Architectural Press, 1946).
12. Andrew Marvell, "The Garden," in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature,* Vol. I (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1968).
13. John Cheever "The Swimmer," *The Stories of John Cheever.* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978).
14. Walker Percy, *The Moviegoer* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961).
15. For examples, see the exhibition catalogue, *The House That Art Built,* The Art Gallery, Visual Arts Center, California State University, Fullerton, 1983.
16. Christopher W. French, Eileen Alt Powell, Howard Angione, eds., *The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1980).
17. Cynthia Ozick, "The Moral Necessity of Metaphor," *Harper's Magazine* (May 1986).

Installation view of works by Jennifer Bartlett in her one-woman exhibition at the Walker Art Center, 1985.

Joel Shapiro
Untitled 1975
cast iron, wood
Collection Walker Art Center
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edmond R. Ruben, Mr. and Mrs. Julius E. Davis, Suzanne Walker and Thomas Gilmore



another road to the suburbs. Eric Fischl, for example, trafficks in its forbidden dreams.

It is worth speculating about how art might meet life in the middle ground to articulate the suburban experience in new aesthetic terms. For example, working in very different media, Frank Gehry's architecture and David Hockney's recent "cameraworks" convey syntheses of artistic innovation with the stuff and circumstances of present time and setting. It is an aesthetic of a breaking-out-into and a drawing-into, unfolding the possibilities of both spatial and temporal movement. It is a vision marked by inclusivity, self-awareness, empathy, an ability to handle ambiguity—and a sense of humor.

Understanding the visual representations of American houses and their settings is a step toward the integration needed to tackle the visual and elusive quality of community. It is a step toward informing the training of designers and the demands of users and clients, of re-joining architecture and plan and landscape. Of embedding the house in its aesthetic and political context. Of setting houses at liberty not from reality or myth—but from stereotype and propaganda.

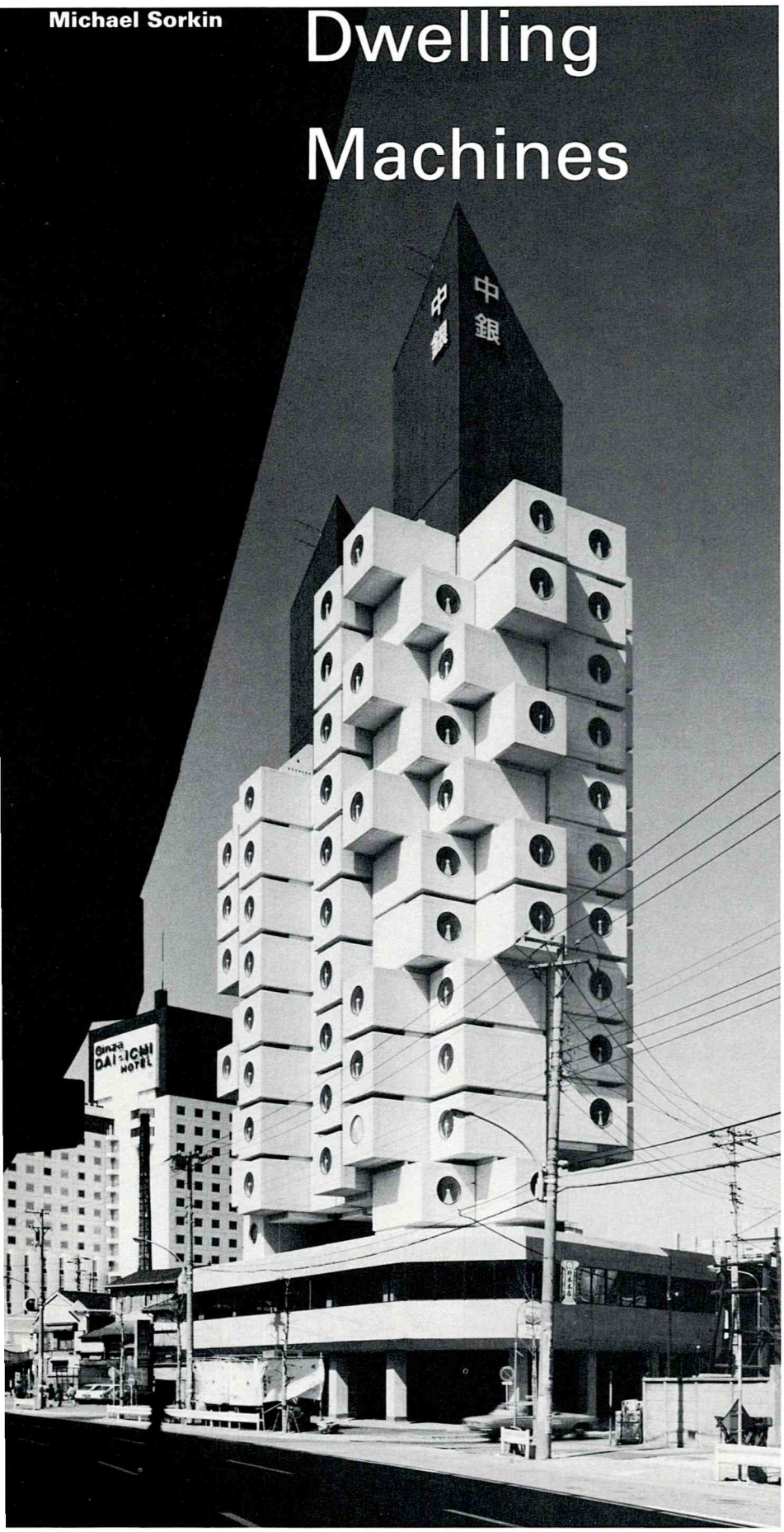
To correct for the extent to which our picture antipathies may mirror class antipathies, we must check the sources. We must try to re-see, especially distant and distantly focused images. We must compose accurate captions. As the Associated Press stylebook puts it: "Never write a caption without seeing the picture."[16]

Today the sense of the disparaging long view of the American suburb lingers, the stereotyping that is part of "being down on what you are not up on." It is compounded by what Allport called the "principle of least effort." At the other end of our spectrum of seeing, American houses are described and pictured in detail with little sense of how they do or do not connect to personal let alone collective activities and responsibilities. Indeed, they seem ever more adrift in personal and idiosyncratic visions, secrets.

Secrets are a rich source of invention and inspiration, but in the event architecture is a social art. Beyond architecture's creative secrets—and the possibly useful theories hermetic to it—its practice is accountable to society. Its metaphors must, finally, include, not exclude. Metaphors, Cynthia Ozick reminds us, are a moral necessity.[17] They emerge, not from inspiration, which is singular, but from communal memory, history—to foster empathy, to create community, to make room for the stranger.

Michael Sorkin

Dwelling Machines



One of Le Corbusier's most enduring turns of phrase was his description of the house as a *machine à habiter,* a dwelling machine. There's something vaguely shocking still about this formulation which seems, in its skeletal logic, to oppose all we hold dear about "home." In a world increasingly beset by a technology run amok, the domestic environment is a last refuge of our private humanity, unparsable aggregation of the qualities that sum us up. We trust home to be aid and comfort to individuality, not the point of entry into the alienating, mechanized uniformity of modern times.

Of course, there's another view. I recently inventoried all the appliances resident in my tenement bedroom, a population that includes television, humidifier, air conditioner, halogen lamp, telephone, answering machine, electronic clock, IBM typewriter, and indispensable boom box. Indeed, I harbor ambitions to add VCR, CD player, and dehumidifier, to name only a few of the self-evident candidates for enshrinement in the electronic pleasure dome that increasingly describes the common environment of Americans. In this consuming view of matters, technology's a benison, convenient and fun, accessory to possibility, not just a link in the chain of our enslavement to a life of horrid mediation, homogenization, reification. Home is where the state of the art is, doorway to a bright future.

The "problem" of technology, the designated cultural Janus of our age, thus finds special resonance at home. Home is not simply our present residence, it's the domicile of an entire ancestry of myth, seat of deep-rooted ideas about how we want to live. Burdened with this heavy baggage, the problem of the dwelling as an architectural issue likewise takes on special weight. After all, the house is not simply the primary totem of how we individuate within the culture, it's also a principal means of how we aggregate. While houses may not exactly invent our social relations, they certainly make them visible. Homes may be our castles but they're our cathedrals as well.

All of which is to say, we're deeply schizoid over whether our homes should be a point of entry for technology or a point of resistance. We fetishize the discrepancy, crazily dealing with it. Not long ago, I read that Steven Jobs, avatar of technology, was in the process of building himself a new and very expensive house. Jobs can certainly build any sort of house he wishes, presiding as he does over millions made from the Apple computer. His choice? A scrupulously reproduced Victorian. But it's a Victorian with a twist. It's wired to the hilt, stuffed with the latest consumer tech, fiber optics glowing behind the hand-carved wainscoting.

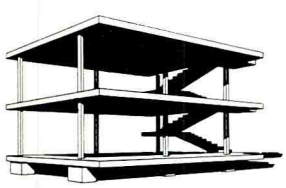
What I'd like to discuss here are some of the ways in which the forms of home have diversified since the time the world became rational, sometime during the eighteenth century when the enlightenment pulled the cord that turned on Modernism's incandescent bulb. The consequence of this irruption of tradition's dogma has been the emergence of a culture in which forms and myths have become increasingly plural. Instead of the stable hegemony of practices that characterized life in "traditional" societies, we live at a time in which stability is the by-product of diversity. To some, this is threatening—witness the longings of Postmodernism and its dream of the certainties of a uniform "classical" past. But this position only adds to the bouillabaise. Clearly, to speak of the architectural components of "home" nowadays is to summon a range of choices, many of them in nominal competition. To design is inevitably to choose.

Let's begin with Le Corbusier, a pivotal figure, self-situated between the idealistic naiveté of the nineteenth century and the rationalisms of the twentieth. Corb's first office job was chez Auguste Perret in Paris. Perret, whose offices were housed in his masterpiece, the apartment block at 25 bis rue Franklin, was the great apostle of the structural clarities of the reinforced concrete frame, a predilection not lost on Corb. When Perret handed him his first paycheck in 1908, Corb used part of it to buy a copy of Viollet le Duc's *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française,* a key text in the invention of the idea of modern architecture as a logical discipline. In the book, next to an illustration of the gothic flying buttress, Corb wrote, "Art lives by its skeleton. As Auguste Perret was telling me, grasp the skeleton and you can grasp the art."

Legend has it that the aging Corb kept two pictures on the wall of his room: the Parthenon and the Maison Dom-ino. The image of the skeleton of the Maison Dom-ino (1914) is one of modern architecture's great totems, a hymn to its rational possibilities, the building stripped bare by its builders even. Corb conceived this mass-produced house skeleton as a partial answer to the apparent need to reconstruct after the war damage then being inflicted on Flanders. It took on the Dom-ino moniker because the plan view—rectangular slab punctuated by perimeter columns—looks like a domino, elegant directional increment in that game of infinitely extendable modularity.

Looking at the image—columns, slabs, and stairs raised on a blocky proto-pilotis—one is not exactly suffused with that moist array of inchoate longings signifying home. There's no evidence of the hearth here, never mind the front door. This is because the Dom-ino project—like many other exemplars of heroic Modernism—sought to house not simply the huddled masses but architecture itself, to find cultural accommodations for the activities of designing. In his 1922 book, *Vers une architecture,* Corb juxtaposed the image of the Parthenon with that of steamships and motorcars. His point was not that we'd come a long way, rather that the Parthenon and the steamship sat in similar relationship to the zeitgeist, expressions of the physical character of the culture at its most succinct, relevant, and perfectly elaborated.

From the skeleton of the Maison Dom-ino, Corb fleshed out the form of his machines for living. In the house and studio he designed for Amédée Ozenfant in 1923, the project for the Maison Citrohan of 1921 (its name a play on the Citroën automobile), a



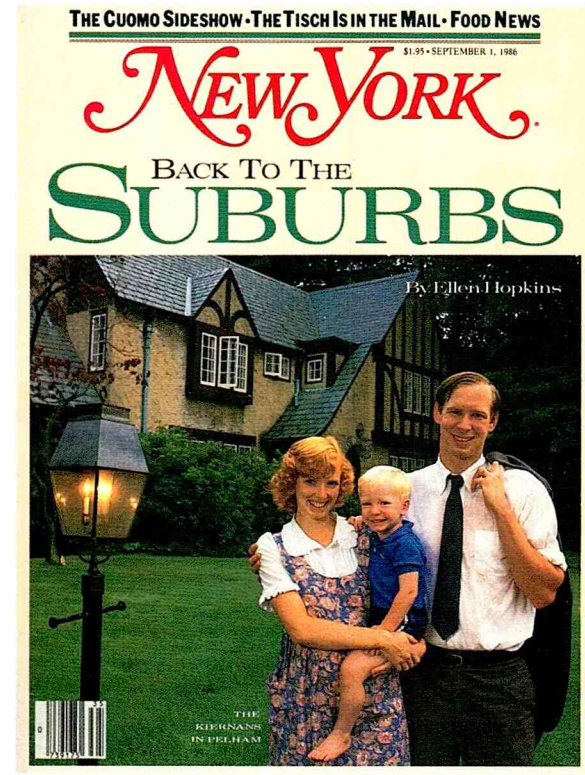
Maison Dom-ino, a 1914 concept for mass housing by Le Corbusier.

(opposite)
Nakagin Capsule Tower, 1972
Tokyo, Japan
Kisho Kurokawa and Associates, architects

version of which was executed as part of the great Weissenhofsiedlung organized by Mies at Stuttgart in 1927, and in the housing project at Pessac of 1924–1926, he established the essential parameters of the Corbusian pod. They do meet the test of economical manufacture that Corb elevates to the status of "natural law." And, these projects do accord with the modern architectural mood of the time, the flat-roofed, white-walled, strip-windowed style that was the complicit manner of the European avant-garde in the 1920s.

However, they're simply not mechanical. One often sees photos of Corb's villas foregrounded by Corb's car. That car's some sinuous, flow-lined gizmo with flared fenders, wire wheels, and bug-eye headlamps. Next to it, even Garches looks puritanical, all about Mediterranean repose and volumetric stability rather than the fast paced kinesis of the motor and jazz age. Its most literal link to the visual culture of machinery is the metal railing, endlessly described as being like a ship's. Of course, the machine metaphor is available in the accessible image of simple efficiency and directness of expression. But, at the level of function, this functionalistic architecture doesn't accomplish anything particularly new. There simply isn't much you can do—never mind for the moment those things which you might imagine, feel, or be—that you couldn't do in the immediate predecessor of these houses.

The reason for this, I think, is that the work to be accomplished by these dwelling machines was primarily social: the Corbusian house was more lubricant than motor, meant to grease the skids of the great social apparatus that Corbusier envisioned, an instrument that architecture would underlie like a skeleton, deploying its organs along rational, mechanistic lines. Concurrent with these house designs, Le Corbusier was also designing his demonically rational model cities, the Ville Contemporaine and the Voisin plan for the decimation of Paris. These schemes for "industrial" cities were true *machines à habiter.* An apt depiction of the likely character of mechanical social relations,



the quality of inhabitation in these schematically stratified environments is offered by Fritz Lang in his concurrent screen gem *Metropolis,* as graphic a presentation of a citizenry mechanized as art has offered.

This vision of the city of efficient aggregation is crucial in thinking about the question of "home" today because one of the crucial divides in our consciousness of the domestic is visible along the fault line that distinguishes house from housing. These are the poles of our dilemma over how we're to live. For those still harboring aspirations to the traditional American dream, resurgent in the forms of comfort-fascinated yuppification, the house has resumed its status as beau ideal. A recent issue of *New York* magazine featured a cover story on the waxing "return to the suburbs," where, it seems, cadres of fresh-minted yuppies are fleeing the taxing and insalubrious communalities of the city in search of the idylls of privatization that propelled their parents to like climes. Architectural collaborators in this "drang" also abound, from the egregious Stern and his kitschy suburbanism to the Florida halcyon of the much published fantasyland at Seaside. Clearly, such fetishistic longings after nostalgic individuation are, among other things, an assault on the sort of values embodied in the dwelling machines pushed by Corb in the 20s and their vast lineage.

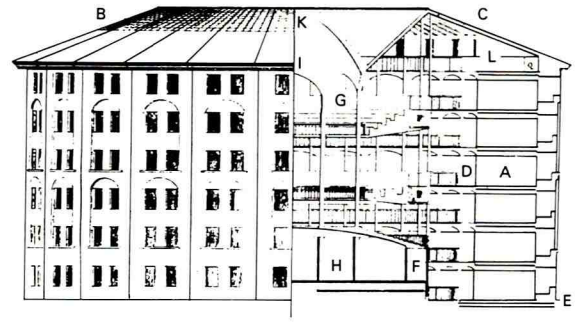
In a 1986 replay of the post-World War II phenomenon, young families once again looked to the suburbs for answers to their housing needs.

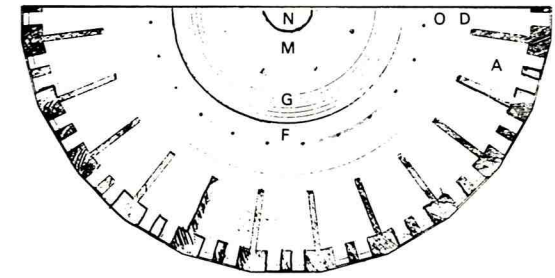
This isn't exactly fresh territory. In the revisionism of the past decade or two, modern architecture has taken heavy heat for its role in the impoverishment of modern life, whipping tendency for the undercurrent depredations of rampant bureacracy and militarism. Early Corb—theorist Corb—has been useful to this assault precisely because of the enthusiasms of his dogmatic linking of the expressively spare with the socially impoverished. His vision of the orderly green and hygienic city, a happy dream of nineteenth-century social engineering (spring though it did from a confrontation with the dark satanic cities of the industrial age, their inhabitants crushed and asphyxiated), was easily appropriated for more sinister regulatory purposes by the social engineers of the twentieth. Still, our architecture forms itself in relation to these images, even as their underlying ideological basis is torqued. Even today, though, there's that lag, that dissonance between form and content. The preferred manner of social discipline in the Reagan era, after all, is not the penal geometry of Soweto or urban renewal, it's Disneyland, the mystifying pluralism of the universally ersatz. We live in an era when the most powerful instrument of consciousness is television. We turn the channel and another image appears but the message is always the same, our relationship to it is always the same. Like it or not, this is architecture's context.

All of which is to say that a lack of clarity about the conditions of house and home should hardly be unexpected. The values of our (post) technological culture are distinguished for having overcome that old modernist conceit of "honesty" and "integrity," the idea that there was a necessary physical isomorphism between society's rational unfolding, scientifically understood, and the outward forms of its self-construction. "Home" reveals itself not in any single form but in a skein, a great system of images whose content comprises both great nominal variety and an unmistakable narrowing. In the real estate section of *The New York Times,* thousands of available domiciles are reduced to the standardized pith of a haiku: two rms, riv vu, all util incl, no fee. A reading of this yields certain conclusions. Saliently, one observes that the apartments available in Manhattan are both small and hugely expensive. Interpreting simply at the level of vulgar sociology, this pattern implies an urban precinct either dominated by a population of highly paid single persons or else of Soviet-style crowding: get out of the goddam bathroom Natasha, I've got to be at Smith Barney by nine.

One might say that these are want ads for the Ville Radieuse. The new vision, however, rescues that dour geometry via a number of improvements. First, each unit contains a television set, simultaneously sealing and globalizing it. Second, given the locational imperatives of phones, PCs, and other electronic links—which is to say, no imperatives at all—we no longer actually require any particular visual system of spatial ordering: any site will do. And, finally, we've given each building a name. Grim visions are thus forestalled by nomenclature: name it and disclaim it. In Manhattan nowadays every apartment block has a moniker, preferably one shared with a plains state, Montana, Dakota, Idaho, whatever. It's no different than TV or advertising, the relentless differentiation of an ever narrowing formula.

Let me invent a little history. There are three principal streams of architectural development in this discussion that successively collide and reconfigure themselves to form the history of the modern home and I'd like to look briefly at each. They're all related to my underlying theme here, the deformations of domesticity under the pressure of a culture increasingly rationalized according to the possibilities offered by the growth of technology. The first of the threads is the idea of the home as the manufactory of model citizens, the zone of some kind of social therapy. The second is the idea of the home as an appliance, a literal tool as much as a venue, a *machine à habiter* in the way we most generally understand the phrase. And finally, there's the idea of the





Panopticon plan, 1790
by Jeremy Bentham

A. cells
B. to C.
great annular skylight
D. cell galleries
E. entrance
F. inspection galleries
G. chapel galleries
H. inspector's lodge
I. dome of the chapel
K. skylight to dome
L. storerooms
with galleries
M. floor of the chapel
N. circular opening
in dome
O. annular wall from top
to bottom, for light,
air, and separation

home as the preserve of the personal, the terrain of our individuation. This last category isn't precisely like the other two, having a hoarier presence. What's of interest is the way in which ideas about the private are manipulated to serve in light of the other two streams.

The notion of the architecturally therapeutic is a product of the secular revolution of rationalism, the first great human potential movement. The favored model image here is Jeremy Bentham's eighteenth-century Panopticon. This all-seeing supervisory construction was only the most synoptic representative of a time when Western culture was suddenly alive to the possibility that its deviant citizens, its criminals, its mentally disturbed, its poor, might not simply be disciplined, punished, maintained, or concealed, but actually reformed via the ministrations of science. Architecture, mother art, had a special place in this scheme. The idea that a certain spatial order would translate itself into a comparable order of mind and imagination became an early and sweepingly believed item of faith that, if implicit in earlier times, was now provided with a sound ideological basis.

Central to all of this was an animating biological metaphor in which a vision of society as organism was imposed. In various visions of the body politic, health was considered a product of the relationship between individual constituent cells and the whole. The most salubrious alignment was debated with verve. In the early nineteenth century, for example, a great argument raged between the prison building societies in Boston and Philadelphia over the way in which the configuration of jail cells was to support differing theories of the therapeutic aggregation of the incarcerated community. The issue devolved to the precise degree of isolation appropriate, the extent to which privatization of the criminal individual would result in the reform of his or her malformed soul.

Clearly, in any social construction, the relationship of the individual to communality is seminal. This is how we distinguish the emergence of society from the state of nature. The history of modern architecture's social agenda is a study in the attempt to concretize, one way or another, some version of this relationship. Characteristically, the activity of housing has been overcome by the hubris of shaping. Victor Considerant, social philosopher Charles Fourier's otherwise forgettable architect, declared of his enterprise, "architecture writes history" and proceeded to design a utopian commune modeled after Versailles, appropriating the forms of monarchic hierarchy to egalitarianism's job. And why not? If everyone's a king, why not live in a palace?

This point's not exactly about style. Who's finally to say whether the Doric or the Shingle is conduit to democracy. We know that meanings attach to signifiers, after all. But it's one of architecture's favored fallacies that form invents function. At some level, this is a happy, congenial error, utopianism's delusion. Utopia, though, lapses into dystopia with ease as forms conceived as liberation are appropriated by oppressors. The line that passes from the Fourierite phalanstery to the Radiant City to the ordered Alphavilles of Ludwig Hilberseimer to Pruitt Igoe and the disciplinary excesses of urban renewal is a direct one. Each of these examples is predicated on the imposition of the routines of architectural order on other kinds of relationships.

In Western architecture's mainstream, the touchstone of a deep logic has long been geometry: Euclid has been and remains the great arbiter of architectural sense. The unspoken premise behind projects like the Radiant City and its kith is precisely the idea that life itself becomes rational to the degree that living it becomes geometrical, a kind of architectural analogue to the square meal. Like life in the cloister, there's a vision of order here that's imposed according to the strictures of some putatively higher authority. The potency of this particular set of relationships continues to amaze.

One of the most publicized series of nominally domestic projects of recent years has been Peter Eisenman's suite of numbered houses, a couple of which have actually been built. As you surely know, their main design shtick is the idea of a kind of unstoppable geometric rigor. Taking a certain array of spare architectonic elements (or phonemes in the enervated linguistic analogy that prompted the work)—columns, planes, openings, etc.—and making them dance through the application of several simple rules of transformation. What Eisenman has produced, in effect, is a crude, low mathematical machine for the production of dwellings. Although the end product of this apparatus is a fairly straightforward modernist composition, what has been supplied by the Eisenman initiative is a strategy for the mechanization of intuition, a little mental factory for cranking out totems of rigor. In the best known of these products—House Six—there's an incident that strikes me as symbolizing an important risk in the mechanical rationalization of dwelling. I refer, of course, to the literal chasm placed between the twin marital beds of the inhabitants. Of course, one might observe that this condition is endemic. But the chasm is literal: there's a hole in the floor between the beds, the result of some precious inevitability in the system that simultaneously designs and explains the house. Is this crazy or what? The point, of course, is that judged sui generis, the house is perfect, doing exactly what it sets out to do. Here's utilitarianism perverted, mannerist functionalism, if you'll tolerate the concept. Eisenman is functionalism's Fawn Hall: incredibly efficient within a designated range of activity, oblivious to all consequences at the periphery.

To me, the riskiest legacy of Modernism's two centuries or so of history is its mood of orthodoxy, a mood which the now standard critique overidentifies with its forms, as if the right angle were a recent discovery. Now, orthodoxy is hardly a fresh threat; just ask Socrates or Galileo. What makes the critique particular—and to my mind risky—is the way in which it inevitably links the sins of the modern with the sins of culture gone tech. In some ways, Modernism brought this on itself by proclaiming its love of linkage. However, what I'm trying to argue here is that there's been a species of baby-with-the-bathwaterism resulting from the fact that Modernism was never really up to its self-proclaimed vanguard role in embodying technology. Rather, the sins of Taylorized industrialism (Corb was just nuts about Frederick Taylor's *Principles of Scientific Management* (1911), the higher slaveries of militarism, industrial capitalism, and reborn totalitarianism, were allowed to tar the happy possibilites of science.

I think there's another history of modern architecture that privileges a different kind of machine for living, one consecrated to convenience and liberation rather than to the mechanization of the human subject or the schematic representation of dim theory. We have, over time, had two characteristic responses to technology and its possible places in our daily lives. One is the optimism bred of a vision of rendering the world and its secrets and pleasures both more accessible and more malleable. The other, as emblematized most searingly in the vision of Frankenstein's monster, is of technology become autonomous, taking over, running us instead of us running it. So much of our architectural production nowadays does seem to be premised on a spasm of self-primitivization, as if by aping some bygone decorative strategy, we'd somehow escape the risk of impending holocaust.

Earlier attempts at self-primitivization, in the halcyon days of the 1960s, produced a number of retrievals of the Rousseauian state of nature. The counterculture resided in an amazing variety of self-built shelters: tepees and domes, yurts and cabins, a profusion of dwellings constructed according to autonomous ideals. Poignant, sure, and vaguely ridiculous but as beautiful a vision of utopia as we've lately had.

These counterculture housing types constitute a double critique of social technology. These dwellings—and their

communal clusterings—were powerful optings out of the regimenting culture of the Protestant ethic, an act of rebellion against the uniform drear of countless recalled suburban childhoods. What continues to impress about these arrangements is not simply the utopian optimism of their sought after social relations but their linking—via an implicit theory of ecology—of social purpose with the act and scene of dwelling via a critique and reinterpretation of technology. If the counterculture and its subsequent extensions have a vital message to convey about the technological, it's that the forms of technology are not autonomous, that they can be distinguished. The phrase "appropriate technology" describes an extremely powerful concept that allows resistance to the dominating idea of a relentless Darwinian advance of scientific knowledge and its replacement by a more useful and appropriate notion of agency and responsibility.

Given the character of the times that spawned it, it's not surprising that the attitude of the counterculture toward technology was essentially adaptive and co-optational. One thinks of various images of domestication, of houses made of shingled school buses or, most seminally, of Steve Baer's Zomes, those funky geodesics fabricated from retrieved automobile shells. This strategy of appropriating "the man's technology," as Huey Newton called it, was effectively a way of turning a generation born to privilege into a homegrown version of the Third World. Those were the days, after all, when large numbers of us thought of ourselves as a bridge, tried to identify our links as stronger than the economic rationales that were the only visible affinity among the presumptive citizens of the Ville Radieuse or the suburbs.

This tribal consciousness, the backwoods equivalent to a more traditional sense of class, cemented not simply a feeling of solidarity and resistance, but helped to kindle the search for a more genuine, indigenous, human house form, unpolluted by the taint of consumerism or other coercions. Unlike Adam's pre-social house, the primitive hut of the counterculture was like the purposefully simple architecture of the Shakers or the ritual succinctness of a Dogon village. It was a domestic architecture suited to straightforward, unmediated social relations. Places like Drop City were comparable to the early projects of the Soviet Constructivists—our most bracingly modernist architectural prototype for communal living. In both instances, the vision of a harmonious egalitarian lifestyle was the most potent generator of organizational ideas. And, for both, the major formal address was to the problematic of the technological, the question of living in light of the machine. That the attitudes ultimately embodied were apparently opposite was simply a sign of the difference in times and setting.

In early revolutionary glory days in Russia, as that brief enthusiastic sun shone on a society emerging from centuries of superstition and despotism, the message of the machine and of manufacture was one of liberation and promise, the apt and consonant iconography of the triumph of a scientific world view. By the time of the even briefer countercultural efflorescence of the 60s, technology seemed to be everywhere in the hands of the oppressor. Geopolitically speaking, the dominating struggle of the times, a struggle that absorbed us all—thanks to the insistent presence of TV—was the Vietnam War. Night after night we were shown scenes of the struggle of a people against the arrogance of the culture that epitomized technology. The Vietnamese, living in the virtuous squalor of "primitive" huts and caves, those hooches torched and napalmed on a thousand broadcasts, were able, by dint of principles and will, to resist and ultimately conquer the Budweiser swilling aggressors and their air-conditioned nightmare. Clearly, the primitive was here identified with humanity and life.

But this isn't exactly my point. The activists of the counterculture in the 60s and the Constructivists in the 20s were after very similar things: the creation of a space in which people could grow equal. The instruments of

the search were also comparable: the collectivization of domestic work, communal cooking, shared child care, the autonomy of an intimate community. These are the mighty social goals of an age. The great problem of the moment, the one I'm trying to speculate about here, is that we find ourselves in a time when technology is largely disengaged from the prospect of a liberatory role. For the community of architects, surely, the agenda of the 60s still constitutes the last useful social agenda we've had. The reasons are scarcely obscure. After all, the country is led (over TV) by an *idiot mechant,* whose view of the world is bound by the technological hydra of holocaust and TV.

Earlier I proposed to discuss the contraction of the domestic environment as one of the abiding tropes of the housing question nowadays. As the countercultural examples just alluded to should suggest, this is a possibility that cuts both ways. On the one hand, we have the condition of coziness and malleability, the reassuring democracy of the small dwelling, the private ideal that has provided such a resonant symbol of individual freedom from young Abe Lincoln's log cabin down to Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian proposals to its apotheosis in Levittown, where this symbol of individualism was cut according to the exigencies of the assembly line. A distinct domicile is, indeed, something worth fighting for, no matter how close to home the struggle must be waged.

But the more sinister, narrower, dimensions of this contraction seem to dominate nowadays. The New York market with $1500 a month, 350 square foot studio apartments harbingers something even more frightening. In a passage from David Lodge's novel *Small World,* the author describes the apartment of one of his characters, a translator from Tokyo who

> . . . lives alone in a tall modern apartment block. He is able to afford this accommodation because, though well appointed, it is extremely restricted in space. In fact, he cannot actually stand up in it, and on unlocking the door, and having taken off his shoes, is obliged to crawl, rather than step inside. . . . The window cannot be opened. The room is air-conditioned, temperature controlled and soundproof. Four hundred identical cells are stacked and interlocked in this building, like a tower of eggboxes. It is a new development, an upmarket version of the 'capsule' hotels situated near the main railway termini that proved so popular with Japanese workers in recent years.

Lodge's description goes amusingly on, prompting the reader's knowing incredulity. In fact, though, a marginally less goofy version of this building actually exists, designed by Kisho Kurokawa and built in Tokyo in 1972 (p. 30). In many ways the building is not exceptional. Its lineage can be traced from Moshe Safdie's Habitat in 1967 back to the famous experiments in industrialization and prefabrication undertaken by early modernists such as Walter Gropius and Konrad Wachsmann. It was also constructed in the light of considerable interest in the American mobile home industry that, during the 60s was discovered by official architectural culture. The mobile home was, in effect, the naive realization of many of the most cherished hopes of Modernism. Factory built, standardized within its envelope yet malleable to a degree, mobile (and thus potentially global), cheap and (best of all in many ways) tacky, which simultaneously signified that it was "popular," oscillated with good social vibes, it simply needed to be tarted up and rationalized according to the atrophying precepts of *hoch* modernity.

The expression of enabling technical means is an ancient architectural bugbear. In general, as received today, it has been largely limited to the celebration of structural technologies. Even now, given the constraints of gravity and tradition, these essentially primitive expressive possibilities tend to be classicizing and limited, Mies van der Rohe being the salient example. At the Farnsworth House, there's great clarity of skeleton and enclosure, crisp steel joints and seamless glass, but the electrical conduits and plumbing

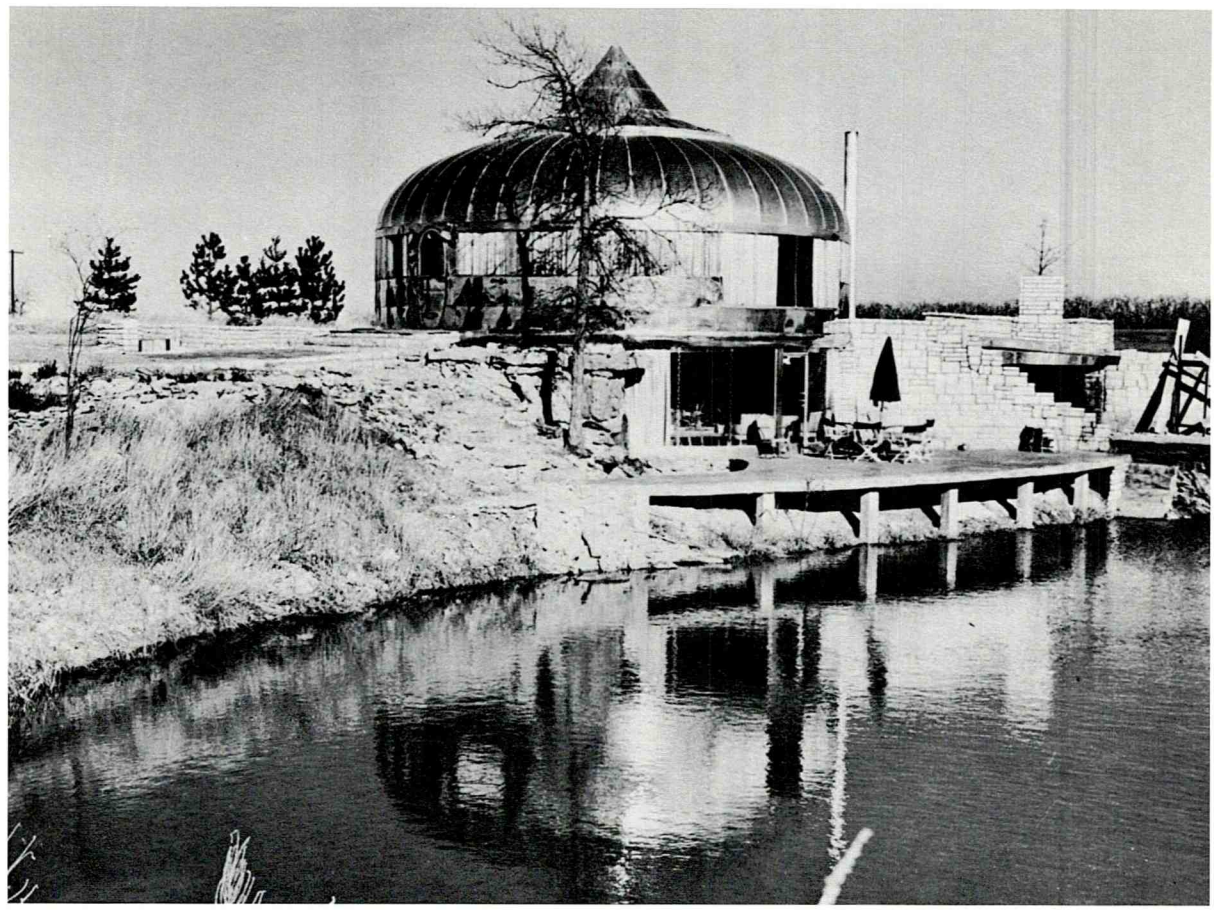
Habitat, 1967, a Montreal, Canada housing complex by Moshe Safdie.

remain invisible. In Richard Meier's houses, the effective Omega point of the research initiated by Corb with the Maison Dom-ino, the technical presence is largely totemic, wafting from a palette of standard, if artfully employed signifiers: dimensional refinement, minimalist detail, an overall smoothness of finish squeaky with precision milling, and pipe railing.

This is scarcely a fresh observation. Buckminster Fuller—that great forgotten genius of American architecture—made it visibly articulate in the late 20s (concurrent with the European research into the so-called International Style) when he designed his mighty Dymaxion houses (and, recognizing the inevitable American symbiosis, Dymaxion cars). Bucky's great vision was in recognizing that a house in the twentieth century bundled an array of systems which far exceeded the requirement for any exigencies of shelter. I quote his famous lyric (to the tune of "Home on the Range"):

> Roam home to a dome
> Where Georgian and Gothic once stood
> Now chemical bonds alone guard our blondes
> And even the plumbing looks good.

The Dymaxion houses are distinguished for the conceptual parity they offered to the full range of building systems, redeeming plumbing, lighting, electrical service, and ventilation as legitimately architectural investigations. Clearly, the Dymaxion houses were the real machines for living. Their coincident mechanical appearance was the result not of a hunt for an apt and up-to-the-minute metaphor, but of a direct fertilization of the process of design by information from the disciplines that were grappling with the same issues extra-architecturally, aeronautical design most prominently.



This Wichita House, ca. 1945, was created by joining two Dymaxion house prototypes designed by Buckminster Fuller. (Photo courtesy Buckminster Fuller Institute.)

Despite the coprolitic sexism of Bucky's hymn to the dome, his most important precursors in a new envisioning of the house as a socially supportive complex of systems were feminists like Charlotte Perkins Gilman and, more directly, Catherine Beecher, whose 1869 project for an "American Woman's Home" virtually invented the idea of a service core. As a social polemic, Beecher's linking of technical innovation with an advance in the condition of women far outstrips the looney, positivist mysticism of Fuller's enterprise or, for that matter, the blank, Taylorized dystopianism of Le Corbusier's. To me, this vision of the technical seen as at once expressive and liberating, is most bracing, the way it ought to be. Unfortunately, Fuller's legacy is most immediately visible in radomes and Airstream trailers. And, a feminist architecture, supportive of egalitarian ways of living, awaits further movement toward extinction by the American social dinosaur. Architecture, after all, doesn't make history, merely awaits its impress.

As fresh technology comes faster and faster knocking on our doors, the question of absorption becomes more and more vital. Speaking of knocking on the door, I was in Miami for the first time last year and visited a big condo development called "Williams Island." All big condo developments in Miami name themselves thus, entire of the main, a nomenclatural strategy meant to simultaneously evoke tropicality, exclusivity, and security. The latter is especially crucial in a town whose aura is so wrapped in violence, Don Johnson City. The most striking thing about Williams Island was—perhaps predictably—not the curvy condos, the ersatz Mediterranean village, or the perfect golf course, but the security system. In lieu of a key, citizens of the island are given little cards that, en route from entry to apartment, must be stuffed into a variety of orifices which control passage through a sequence of checkpoints. This, in itself, was not so remarkable. What was remarkable to me was the fact that each insertion was communicated to a central station, where a computer logged and printed out a record of each penetration. Security, in effect, was purchased at the cost of submission to Draconian, Sovietique, surveillance. Wealth chose to live in the electronic Panopticon, surrendering privacy to feel secure.

One of the historic sets of poles in the discussion of housing is the opposition between community and privacy. A more

presently arresting opposition, though, is between privacy and surveillance. To my eye, there's no act that more directly clarifies the character of today's social compact than that extended moment at the airport where one—like the Williams Island resident—is obliged to present identification, certify credit worthiness, and jump through the metal detecting hoop as one's baggage undergoes adjacent radiation. At the airport, the Panopticon of domestic tranquility is extended to encompass the globe. As the possibility of private movement is ever more vitiated, the concept of "home" is continually diminished.

Prospects for the domestic are severely hemmed, in large part by the imperatives of the culture of mass consumption, by the geography of television. TV is the ultimate machine for living, an implement for investing any set of fragments with the logic of parity. *Gong Show, Dating Game,* Biafra, Linda Evans, Nixon, Holocaust, anything with an image particular enough to be distinguished feeds the system. So too with architecture. Consider this photo caption: "Blake meets with members of the household staff, in the library. The mansion contains many fine examples of decorative arts, including antique oriental rugs and silver, handcarved mahogany lecturns, paintings of the late 1800s, a Ming Dynasty vase and a pair of Empire satinwood side tables valued at $14,000 each."

Architectural Digest? No, the quote is from a Dynasty fanzine, which features precise descriptions of the Carrington mansion: a fiction. The breakthrough here is the specificity with which the ersatz is described and represented. Similarly, in the current architectural climate, appliqué—the arts of *Erewhon*—attains the status of a science. The new living machine imprints a pre-digested memory, stripped of the resonance of the personal particular, on the pod. Where this consumer architecture and the Panopticon of social discipline meet is on the common ground of an exalted certainty. In Disneyland, the Ville Radieuse, Attica, TV, nothing can go seriously wrong. History's Nielsen rating.

Let me end with a little coda, a tithe to some new domestic architecture for which I feel some enthusiasm. The lecture series in which this diatribe figured was concurrent with a retrospective of Frank Gehry's work, surely the most stimulating architecture being built in the states today. Gehry's houses in particular confront a number of the issues I've breezed by here. Certainly, they have technology as one of their primary agendas. The physical elements in the Gehry palette have often been described as cheap, off the shelf, tacky. This misses something. These pieces—studs, ply, galvanized metal—represent precisely the technical means indigenous to most of our domestic architecture. Gehry has simply been frank. In this sense, Gehry's the Bucky Fuller of available technology, confronting the task of making the plumbing look good but doing it out of *Sweet's.*

In his own justly celebrated house, Gehry also takes on the problem of individuation in a culture bent on the exaltation of the replicable. To a piece of received architecture, he adds his own, idiosyncratic skin. Instead of finding history by excavating, via the act of simulating recall, Gehry chooses to add another stratum. He auto-historicizes, piling on his own layer, not artificially subtracting the present to fake a past that can never be more than an absence. Finally, Gehry pursues a meaningful fragmentation. Houses decompose as their elements—individual rooms and spaces—assert their own independence and separate identities. This is a powerful critique of the pod. Opposing the dumb totalitarian logic of separate but equal, Gehry substitutes a world of variation. Privileging the eccentricity of individuals, Gehry's work avoids the cozy domineering gestalt of pre-packaged certainty. Replacing the predictable uniformity of high-mod or post-mod's pastiche, Gehry offers us the truer comforts of uncertainty. I think this is inspirational. Art, after all, is our great hedge against the oppressions of a universal sure thing. And, it's the addition of our private arts that makes a house a home.

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