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The Architecture of Red Los Angeles:
Building Low-Cost Housing Communities for a Postwar Future, 1940-1960

By

Courtney Rawlings
M.A. Emory University, 2016

Advisor: Todd Cronan, Ph.D.

An abstract of
a dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract:

The Architecture of Red Los Angeles:
Building Low-Cost Housing Communities for a Postwar Future, 1940-1960
By Courtney Rawlings

This dissertation argues that "California Modern" (known today as "midcentury modern") architecture was first developed at midcentury by Los Angeles architects intent on solving the city's worsening housing crisis. By tracing the decreasing politicization and increasing aestheticization of California Modern architecture from public housing to private housing co-operatives to the renowned Case Study Program, this dissertation provides insight into why midcentury modern architecture eventually shed its progressive roots. As a whole, the story of California Modern architecture is one of continuity and change. On the one hand, California Modern architects held steadfast to their conviction that architecture had the power to alter inhabitants' behaviors and, in so doing, could engender a better, more egalitarian, and more democratically-attuned citizenry. These architects considered themselves "social scientists," if not clinicians, who used housing to conduct "education campaigns" aimed at ameliorating "warped habits and modes of living" so that individuals might participate as equals in a new postwar culture characterized by "a broadened base of participation." On the other hand, as the Cold War heated up and communitarianism became synonymous with communism, progressive architects curbed their political ambitions, moving their gaze from city and community planning to private, single-family homes. Although California Modern architects retained their "progressive" aesthetic throughout the midcentury period, their politics were tempered by a Cold War liberal program that focused political intervention on the individual.

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Acknowledgments:

Despite growing up in the San Fernando Valley neighborhood of Sherman Oaks, before heading off to university I knew very little about Los Angeles' rich architectural history. For instance, I had no idea that my childhood home was one of thousands of low-cost ranch homes whose popularity helped quell progressive alternatives to speculative housing or that J.R. Davidson's Case Study House no. 11 was just a five-minute drive away. In fact, it was not until I enrolled in Patricia Morton's modern architecture course at the University of California, Riverside that I realized Los Angeles had any architecturally significant buildings at all. And, despite her assigned visit to Charles and Henry Greene's Gamble House in Pasadena, I remained relatively ignorant about Los Angeles' architectural history until graduate school. Around the same time I began considering potential dissertation topics, Christina Crawford joined Emory's Art History Department and I enrolled in her seminar on Atlanta's public housing. Unfamiliar with my own hometown's public housing legacy, I quickly Googled the subject only to find that several of Los Angeles's housing projects were designed by well-known midcentury architects, including Richard Neutra and Paul R. Williams. It was only when I went to share my discovery with Todd Cronan, who had recruited me to graduate school and who served as my advisor, that I learned that Todd was also beginning to work on midcentury architecture in Los Angeles. With Christina working on American public housing and Todd working on midcentury Los Angeles, my choice of dissertation topic seemed to be serendipitously determined. This is all to say that I'd like to begin this acknowledgments section by thanking Todd and Christina for introducing me to a topic that has not only changed my perception of my home city but also introduced me to a host of intellectual problems that I hope to dedicate my professional life to investigating.

This charming introduction to my dissertation topic aside, Todd Cronan's guidance over the past eight years has completely reformed my thinking, and decidedly for the better. Todd introduced me to a host of ideas that fundamentally reshaped my intellectual and political outlook. As an advisor, Todd always saw the best in my developing ideas; he read every draft of every paper and spent hours hammering out the philosophical implications of whatever historical moment I was attempting to understand. Anyone familiar with Todd's work will immediately see how indebted I am to his influence.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the help of the Art History Department at Emory University, especially Christina Crawford, who introduced me to the wonders (and pitfalls) of an archival project. The friendships I made with fellow graduate students—Liz Caris, Caitlin Glosser, Rachel Patt, Catherine Barth, Annie McEwan, and Kelin Michael—not only gave me the strength to survive graduate school but made becoming an art historian seem a worthwhile endeavor. I am simply in awe of each of them. Finally, as everyone who graduates from Emory with an art history degree knows, Linnea Harwell forms the heart of the department, and I personally would have been lost without her guidance.

As always, this dissertation could not have been written without institutional support. I must thank the Henry Luce Foundation, which awarded me their American Art Dissertation Research Award, and the Huntington Library, for which I served as an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fellow. A large portion of this dissertation was written during and in the immediate aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, and I am not sure I would have completed the project were it not for the support of the Bill and Carol Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry at Emory. I would also like to voice my deep appreciation for the archivists working at the University of

Table of Contents:

Introduction:

In this dissertation, I trace the decreasing politicization and increasing aestheticization of California Modern architecture from public housing to housing co-operatives to the Case Study House Program. By locating California Modern architecture's beginnings in 1940s Los Angeles, I show how the idiom was developed to redress the city's worsening housing shortage. My aim is to consider how the city's changing housing needs transformed California Modern architecture—a shared set of qualities I define in chapter two—from a practical approach for addressing Los Angeles' housing shortage to an architectural style that, by the later 1950s, was synonymous with the "affluent society" as it was defined by John Kenneth Galbraith in 1958.[1]

Previous scholarship significantly downplays California Modern architecture's original political significance by defining it in terms of style. Recent books and exhibitions locate the movement's import in aesthetic terms and in the dissemination of "the California look."[2] By focusing on aesthetics, the literature on modern architecture in Los Angeles—David Gebhard's and Robert Winter's *A Guide to Architecture in Los Angeles & Southern California* (1965), and, currently in its second edition, Reyner Banham's *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* (1973), Gebhard's and Harriette von Breton's *L.A. in the Thirties, 1931-1941* (1975), and Paul Gleye's *The Architecture of Los Angeles* (1981)—largely reverses the movement's progressive political origins.[3] As a result, the scholarship on California Modern architecture's history has disregarded the pointed, and changing, political objectives and intentions of its

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[1] John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (1958) (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998).
[2] Wendy Kaplan, "Introduction: Living in a Modern Way," in *Living in a Modern Way: California Design 1930-1965* (Cambridge, MA., The MIT Press: 2011), 27-28.
[3] David Gebhard and Robert Winter, *A Guide to Architecture in Los Angeles & Southern California* (1965) (Santa Barbara, CA.: Peregrine Smith, 1977); Reyner Banham, *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1973); David Gebhard and Harriette von Breton *L.A. in the thirties, 1931-1941* (Layton, UT.: Peregrine Smith, 1975); and Paul Gleye *The Architecture of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles, CA.: Rosebud Books, 1981).

architects. Simply put, few writers have acknowledged the circumstances that led to California

Modern architecture shedding its earliest political associations to become a style.

The story I tell is one of continuity and change. Throughout the middle of the twentieth

century, California Modern architects held steadfast to their conviction that architecture had the

power to adjust inhabitants' behaviors and, in so doing, engender a better, more egalitarian, and

more democratically-inclined citizenry capable of resisting so-called "totalitarianism" (a term

that came into wide circulation at just this moment in American sociology). In the early 1940s,

California Modern architects such as Paul R. Williams and Richard Neutra built massive low-

cost housing complexes for Los Angeles' poor- and working-class citizens. They considered

themselves "social scientists," if not clinicians, who used housing to conduct "education

campaigns" aimed at ameliorating "warped habits and modes of living," thus enabling

individuals to participate as equals in a democratic society characterized by "a broadened base of

participation."[4] Nevertheless, the United States' changing political circumstances following

World War II—notably, the advent of the Cold War in the late-1940s and the subsequent

identification of planning and public housing with "socialism"—made it difficult, if not

impossible, for California Modern architects to continue their social democratic program.

Communitarianism itself was equated with Soviet communism, which forced California Modern

architects to curb their political ambitions, silence their public intentions, and shift their gaze

from city and community planning to the private, single-family home.

In the first two chapters of this dissertation I examine California Modern architects'

venture into public housing. Architects like Williams and Neutra considered public housing the

necessary outcome of the New Deal that, in part, aimed to save liberal capitalism from fascism

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[4] Richard Neutra, *Architecture of Social Concern in Regions of Mild Climate* (Los Angeles: Gerth Todtmann, 1948), 194-203.

by making the former more democratic. This vision was retained even after public housing was reallocated to war workers following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. As Williams and Neutra intended, their public housing projects encouraged residents to form close bonds with neighbors, which engendered solidarity campaigns for better healthcare, and the establishment of civic organizations like neighborhood libraries.

The progressive tenor of California Modern housing, though, transformed after the war. In the postwar period, housing loans subsidized by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) dramatically decreased the cost of homeownership, especially for white veterans and their families. As I explain in Chapter three, private real estate interests helped assure that only 2% of FHA loans were distributed to nonwhite people. As a result, Los Angeles underwent de facto segregation as white Los Angelinos vacated the housing projects to purchase single-family homes in racially restricted neighborhoods.[5] As this process was unfolding, the modernist experiment in housing was dealt a fatal blow when, under the threat of McCarthyite criticisms that insisted all public housing was "socialist" and therefore "anti-American," private housing developers successfully led a campaign to reduce Los Angeles's public housing stock.

But these changes did not lead California Modern architects to abandon their project, even if the Cold War made it more difficult. The third chapter of my dissertation focuses on Gregory Ain's cooperative housing projects. For a brief moment in the later 1940s, housing cooperatives functioned as an effective middle ground between public housing and private

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[5] Over the past few years, several scholars have raised concerns about the common-place assumption that racial segregation in housing is wholly the fault of American governance. In an attempt to upend the historiography, some academics are turning their attention to the undue power given to private real estate interests in the postwar period. Overall, these thinkers have largely concluded that the private real estate industry is to blame for racist housing policies that segregated cities at midcentury. For the most recent, and perhaps most succinct overview of this argument, see Preston H. Smith II, "Race and the Housing Question," *Catalyst* vol. 7 no. 1 (Spring, 2023).

homeownership. Inspired by the wartime public housing movement, Ain worked directly with several Los Angeles Communist Party members and "fellow travelers" to design cooperatively owned housing projects that challenged the dominance of private homeownership. For example, in his unrealized "Community Homes" project, Ain proposed a neighborhood program that looked like a typical suburban tract. However, Ain subtly undermined the track's usual arrangement by joining the homes' front yards to emphasize communal ownership, adding vast shared green spaces, and designing buildings set to house the cooperative's neighborhood amenities. In this way, Ain, like Neutra and Williams in their public housing projects, posed an alternative mode of organizing Los Angeles that contested the primacy of private property.

By the 1950s, the communitarian ethos that had guided California Modern design was widely derided as "totalitarian." As a result, California Modern architects abandoned progressive housing projects to focus on privately-owned, single-family homes. This marked the complete triumph of private real estate interests over the public good. To explore this transition, the final chapter of this dissertation examines the steel-frame, single-family home designs that the California Modern architects Charles Eames, Eero Saarinen, Raphael Soriano, Craig Ellwood, and Pierre Koenig produced for the magazine *Arts and Architecture*'s Case Study House program between 1949 and 1960. The Case Study homes were the architectural representation of California Modern architecture's devolution into style, a transformation impelled by their acquiescence to the principles of Cold War liberalism, a political ideology defined by an emphasis on individualism and regressive political tendencies that privileged increasing privatization. In effect, California Modern architects embraced steel because they believed the material would allow them to develop a new, radically open architecture, devoid of any particular architect's intentions. By downplaying their authorship, the Case Study architects sought to buoy

individual creativity and afford their tenants more freedom over how they organized their homes. Unlike the earlier work of Williams and Neutra, which was formulated around public housing projects, and Ain, which was formulated around the cooperative, the Case Study houses were all single-family homes, which in effect meant they endorsed, or at the very least accepted, the ideals of private property that Williams, Neutra, and Ain had challenged. The Case Study homes became the visual embodiment of nascent neoliberal market strategies, bolstered by a turn against the welfare state—the physical embodiments of the "end of ideology" proclaimed by Daniel Bell in 1960.[6]

My dissertation uncovers the intentions of California Modern architects and the political history that shaped them. California Modern architects initially desired to change the world and how Americans lived by challenging basic assumptions about private property, but by the middle of the 1950s, they had abandoned this vision in favor of a quiescent architectural style that reaffirmed American notions of individuality, whose political basis rested on the naturalization of private property. As such, my dissertation reveals California Modern architecture to be a component and reflection of the profound political transformation that engulfed the United States—and the world—in the middle of the twentieth century.

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[6] Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (1960), (London: The Free Press, 1962).

Chapter 1: Housing as Racial Uplift

> the growing chaos of our surroundings makes us wonder
> where it will lead if we fail to plan more rationally
> for our physical needs.
>
> -Telesis (San Francisco, 1940)

In the mid-twentieth century, Los Angeles architects built low-cost housing projects whose formal organization and modernist idiom reflected the still-live possibility of a more progressive—even socialist—future.[7] In 1941, Rockwell D. Hunt, the eminent California historian and University of Southern California professor of economics, noted that "to insure the largest measure of success in the metropolitan area [of Los Angeles], the self-interest principle and the incentive of private gain must be consciously geared to the social welfare idea and made progressively subsidiary to the common weal." According to Hunt and others writing and working in Los Angeles at the time, housing, the organization of neighborhoods, and community amenities needed to be carefully planned by government-appointed architects, economists, sociologists, and designers dedicated to assuring mutual social welfare.[8] By providing everyone with the minimum amenities and resources required to participate in local and national politics—housing, food, transportation, recreation, and public forums—architects argued that they would

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[7] "Progressive" here refers to the politics of the generation of social democratic- and liberal-aligned thinkers who came of age in the 1920s and 1930s. What makes the architects, designers, and others working on housing and city planning at this time "progressive" is their operating within a broadly Left-Liberal, New-Deal Order, which assumes that the government ought to minimize the disparity between the rich and poor by investing in subsidized, low-cost housing, free childcare, the protection and development of public parks, schools, and countless other public infrastructures developed and organized by experts. As Doug Rossinow rightly notes in *Visions of Progress: The Left-Liberal Tradition in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008) "left, liberal, and progressive are terms whose meanings shift and float" (1). According to Rossinow, the history of the Left-Liberal coalition is a historical one—from the 1880s-1940s—that saw plenty of cooperation and consternation between Leftists and Liberals, wherein there is no single "natural relationship between them," and wherein both are equally suitable for being described as "progressive" (3).

[8] Rockwell D. Hunt, "The Social Significance of Planning," in *Preface to a Master Plan* (Los Angeles: The Pacific Southwest Academy, 1941), 296.

bring about a more progressive, and more democratic, society.[9] "Wise planning" Hunt wrote,

demanded "the services of the ablest, most highly trained leaders, representing all the legitimate

interests in the community, co-ordinated into a harmonious unity."[10]

Hunt wrote in a context in which the New Deal made large-scale planning a central tenet

of American liberalism. Throughout the 1930s, liberal and left-wing experts allied with the

growing U.S. state to promote a novel form of scientifically-informed governance, in which

expert advice became a central feature of government planning. Architects were part and parcel

of this process. In particular, architects such as Lloyd Wright, Jr., (1890-1978), Richard Neutra,

(1892-1970), and Paul R. Williams (1894-1980) dedicated themselves to building low-cost

public housing projects in 1940s Los Angeles that they believed were indispensable to buoying

the New Deal state and ameliorating the failures of the free market. Moreover, as the U.S.

government poured more monies into public projects during World War II, Los Angeles

architects and designers—who were working in the country's second-largest war economy—

considered their expertise essential to ensuring the success of the large-scale planning efforts

being undertaken to win the war.[11]

It was during this period that both liberal and left-wing Los Angeles-based architects

developed a singular modernist form *cum* style known as "California Modern," which is today

referred to as "midcentury modernism." In their earliest iteration, discussed in this chapter,

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[9] Like many at the time, California Modern architects embraced Deweyan models of thinking about human agency. Namely, they believed that experts could use design, planning, and architecture to influence the behaviors of citizens and redirect any individual's self-interest toward serving the common good. See Mel Scott, *Cities are for People: The Los Angeles Region Plans for Living* (Los Angeles: Pacific Southwest Academy Publication XXI, 1942).

[10] Hunt, 295.

[11] Los Angeles Board of Harbor Commissioners, *Annual Report of the Board of Harbor Commissioners of the City of Los Angeles, California, Fiscal Year July 1, 1946 to June 30, 1947* (Los Angeles, 1947), 18–20.

California Modern architects proffered a viable alternative to the single-family home by constructing low-rise, superblock communities organized for cooperative use. According to progressive architects, "integrated communal projects" were necessary for a democratic society.[12] The architects and planners who first worked on behalf of the United States Housing Authority to clear slums, house the poor, and, eventually, house war workers, believed their projects foreshadowed a post-war future in which all citizens, regardless of class, would reside in new, specially planned, socially (and oftentimes racially) integrated housing communities.

The architects who developed California Modern architecture hailed from distinctive backgrounds and embraced a diversity of ideas.[13] Nonetheless, they were united by their commitment to developing flexible, economical housing projects intended to serve as models for how housing ought to be organized in the 1940s and beyond. Though they might have disagreed on various issues, every progressive, California Modern architect advocated for the integration of "employment, community, and family life" so as to create a more balanced life, and more democratic society, for all.[14] In an *Arts and Architecture* article from January 1943, for example, Neutra explained how the new city, as reflected in the development of Los Angeles, would "advance housing projects" that "excel in an *extension and continuity of communal areas, uninterrupted by rolling traffic*, safely enjoyed by children *and endowed with community buildings, day nurseries, kindergartens, and recreational facilities* for all ages."[15] For California

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[12] Richard Neutra, "Homes and Housing," in *Preface to a Master Plan* (Los Angeles: The Pacific Southwest Academy, 1941), 195.

[13] See Ehrhard Bahr, *Weimar on the Pacific: German Exile Culture in Los Angeles and the Crisis of Modernism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 148-171.

[14] Greg Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles: Planning the Twentieth Century Metropolis (Creating the North American Landscape*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 51.

[15] Richard Neutra, "Housing: A Definition," in *Arts and Architecture* (January 1943), 27. Folder 1 Channel Heights Management Conference Pamphlet 1942, Collection 1179, Box 1460, Richard Neutra Papers, University of California, Los Angeles, Department of Special Collections, Los Angles, California.

Modern architects like Neutra, the future of the city—and the nation itself—depended on reimagining the very nature of housing by centering communality and community.

This chapter focuses on the construction of Pueblo del Rio (1942) for two primary reasons. First, it was one of the first California Modern housing projects built in Los Angeles and set the precedent for later work. Primarily designed by Williams, a New Deal-era progressive and the first black architect to join the American Institute of Architects (A.I.A.), the project's formal elements helped define California Modern architecture.[16] Most important, the housing project's blending of interior and exterior space and its fluid treatment of public and private space both became hallmarks of the idiom. Second, Williams' intentions for Pueblo del Rio, his desire to use it as part of a campaign to educate black and working-class Los Angelinos for a new world, reflected the political intentions of the first California Modern architects. In Williams' mind, Pueblo del Rio provided both shelter and a model for how to live in a modern society.

California Modern architecture was always defined by its politics. The progressive architects who employed California Modern design principles not only sought to build high-quality housing for the city's poor and working classes; they also believed that the state ought to be involved in massive planning measures aimed at assuring working people's well-being. Between 1939 and 1941, as the United States inched closer to joining the war in Europe, addressing every citizen's most basic concerns regardless of race or class became a pressing *political* task. According to architects, planners, and economists, citizens whose most basic needs

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[16] The Los Angeles-born architect Paul R. Williams is best remembered as the first black architect to join the AIA and as the city's revered "Architect to the Stars," having designed lavish estates for some of Hollywood's most beloved icons including Frank Sinatra, Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz, Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, and Lon Chaney. But Williams also spent a large portion of his career designing modern, low-cost, and middle-income homes, including several public housing projects. Williams designed four housing projects during his lifetime: Langston Terrace in Washington, D.C., and Pueblo del Rio, Hacienda Village (1942), and Nickerson Gardens (1955) in Los Angeles, California.

were being met would be less likely to be enthralled by totalitarianism and therefore would be more committed to protecting democracy at home or fighting for its survival abroad. Thus, progressive architects like Williams considered their work essential to preserving American democracy.

California Modern architects also believed that their work would set the precedent for American cities of the future. The thinking was that if architects' low-cost housing communities could afford their residents a safe place to live, the ability to walk to work, spend more time with their families, and actively participate in their communities, then these same citizens would insist that housing projects become the template for city building in the postwar period. Put another way, California Modern architects assumed that New Deal-era (and later wartime) programs, like the construction of public housing projects, would continue well after the war was won. Pueblo del Rio embodied this belief and thus defined California Modern architecture not only in formal terms, but ideological ones, as well.

Los Angeles was an ideal place for California Modern architects to practice their craft. Emboldened by the Wagner-Steagall Act of 1937, which secured funds for slum clearance and the construction of low-cost housing, and the Lanham Act of 1940, which allocated money to construct defense industry housing, Los Angeles consciously invested in its postwar future more than most U.S. cities. Partially for this reason, the city's progressive architects believed they had a unique opportunity to shape the lives of their tenants, and thus U.S. democracy writ large. Architects like Williams and Neutra considered themselves "social scientists," if not clinicians, who would use housing as "education campaigns" aimed at ameliorating the slum dweller's "warped habits and modes of living" so that she might be included in the educated, "broadened

base" of the coming postwar democracy.[17] While architectural experts would make the major decisions for the time being, Williams, Neutra, and others assumed that once the new housing projects and city plans were in place, and the properly educated populous would become their own leaders and educators.[18]

The plans for building the city of the future first got off the ground in 1941 and 1942, when the Housing Authority for the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) financed the construction of nine superblock communities that comprised 3,468 apartment units that housed well over ten thousand low-income residents.[19] Each of these nine projects—and the myriad others to follow—were intended to be synecdochal of the larger city to come. Take, for example, Maynard Parker's photomontage from 1940, which displayed three of Williams's low-cost housing projects, one of his airport designs, and an image of an unfinished hotel. In the photomontage, Williams' five complexes were brought together like patchwork to create a model metropolis in which the urban swatch is at once a single entity and a collection of individual sites whose contours remain legible despite their cohesive interlock (fig. 1).

At the center of the photomontage Parker presented a scale model of Pueblo del Rio, whose construction was set to begin on November 2, 1941.[20] Parker sandwiched the model between two of Williams's other housing projects: Langston Terrace (Washington, D.C., 1935-

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[17] Of course, this assumes that decisions must be limited to the elite class until people have been properly educated. Richard Neutra, *Architecture of Social Concern in Regions of Mild Climate* (Los Angeles: Gerth Todtmann, 1948), 194-203.

[18] Hunt, 295.

[19] Don Parson, "'Houses for the Rich Were Also for the Birds:' Designing a Better World" in *Public Los Angeles: A Private City's Activist Future*, ed. Donald Craig Parson (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2019), 70.

[20] Pueblo del Rio was a cooperatively-designed housing project where Williams served as the lead architect. He designed the complex alongside Neutra, Gordon B. Kauffman, Adrian Wilson, Welton Becket, and Walter Wurderman, who were collectively known as "Southeast Housing Architects Associated." "Housing Project Starts Today," *Los Angeles Times*, June 20, 1941.

1938) and Hacienda Village (Los Angeles, 1942). The former, which Williams designed with fellow African-American architect Hilyard Robinson, was the architect's first attempt at low-cost housing. It was also the first public housing project in the District of Columbia and, crucially, was formally distinctive from the housing projects he designed for Los Angeles. In the photomontage, Langston Terrace stands out on the page, disrupting the predictable pattern of housing rows at Pueblo del Rio and Hacienda Village. The entry, center, and endpoint of Langston Terrace are each easily identifiable. The entryway, for instance, is marked by two low-rise buildings that come together to form a narrow space that separates the project from the street. These low-rise buildings are flanked by a J-shaped string of four-story apartment buildings that form a large semicircle of two-, four-, and five-story apartment buildings that surround a central greenspace. The break between the inside of Langston Terrace and its outside is made salient by the dramatic entryway. Ironically, this decisive break helped produce the project's felt monumentality, which was precisely what Williams would *deemphasize* in his later, Los Angeles-based housing projects.

When designing projects for Los Angeles, Williams refused this kind of monumentality because he began to value flexibility and reproducibility above all. As the repeatable formulations of both Pueblo del Rio and Hacienda Village suggest, by the early 1940s Williams concerned himself primarily with creating projects that could be expanded without undermining their overall sense of structure. Put another way, the simplified program and housing rows at Pueblo del Rio emphasized the projects' flexibility; it could easily be expanded ad infinitum. Therefore, when Parker placed the Langston project at Pueblo del Rio's borders, he created a definite break between the repeating low-rise buildings at Pueblo del Rio and the rest of the photomontage. Without Langston Terrace acting as a border for Pueblo del Rio, it would be

unclear if the artist were including the entirety of the latter, if it had been included only in part, or if it had been arbitrarily cut off and could continue into the page's far-reaching distance in perpetuity.

It is crucial to understand the context within which Williams worked to appreciate his architectural intentions. Williams designed each of the housing projects reproduced in the photomontage in response to the affordable housing crisis that plagued the United States after the Great Depression. The crisis was especially severe in Williams's hometown of Los Angeles. In 1937, 20% of housing in Los Angeles was deemed unfit for human habitation; 30% of domiciles had no indoor toilet; and 50% had no indoor bathtub (figs. 2, 3).[21] Conditions worsened over the course of World War II, during which hundreds of thousands of workers migrated to Los Angeles to take jobs in the thriving defense industry. In fact, between 1940 and 1946, the city's population more than doubled. This strained an already burdened housing market; by the war's end, 165,000 families were living on the streets or in temporary housing, such as tents, boats, and buses.

Restricted to a mere 5% of the city in the 1940s, the population of African-American neighborhoods grew at an exaggerated rate. As a result, black Los Angelenos faced especially dire housing conditions. In an article written for *The Nation* in 1945, Dorothy Baruch described life in the Los Angeles slums:

> In place after place children lived in windowless rooms, amid peeling plaster, rats and the flies that gathered thick around food that stood on open shelves or kitchen-bedroom tables. Ordinarily there was no bathtub; never more than a single washbowl or lavatory. Sometimes as many as forty people shared one toilet.

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[21] "*Housing Survey Covering Portions of the City of Los Angeles California. Constructed under the Supervision of the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles, California and Published by Them as a Report of Work Projects Administration Project No. 65-1-07-70*," vol. 1. April 1940. With statement dated June 6, 1939 from Housing Authority on goals of survey 1939-1940, Collection 0436: box 1, folder 1, Collection of Southern California Housing Reports and Photographs, California Social Welfare Archives, Special Collections, University of Southern California Libraries, Los Angeles, California.

> Families were separated only by sheets strung up between beds. Many of the beds were "hot," with people taking turns sleeping in them.[22]

Though African-Americans were often hit the hardest, the housing crisis harmed all Los Angelenos, especially those in the working class. A 1940 survey commissioned by HACLA revealed that 23.5% of the city's housing units were substandard, suffering from deterioration, insufficient amenities, or overcrowding.[23] In a letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Mayor Fletcher Bowron succinctly summarized the housing problem: "There is simply no place for them to live."[24]

To address the housing shortage, the U.S. Congress passed the Wagner-Steagall Housing Act of 1937. This act established the U.S. Housing Authority, which in turn propelled municipalities to set up their own local housing authorities. As a result, Los Angeles officials founded HACLA, thus inaugurating an era of experimental housing projects and city planning schemas designed to redress the housing shortage and build a more equitable city rid of "urban blight."[25] Projects like Pueblo del Rio and Hacienda Village were the outcome of this new focus on urban planning.

Housing problems continued to worsen over the course of the early 1940s, as a huge influx of war workers, including manifold African Americans, migrated to Los Angeles to build the arsenal for democracy. Between 1940 and 1944, Los Angeles's Black population more than

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[22] Dorothy W. Baruch, "Sleep Comes Hard," *The Nation*, January 27, 1945, 95-96.

[23] U.S. Works Progress Administration, *Housing Survey, City of Los Angeles*, *California* (Los Angles: Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles, 1940).

[24] Fletcher Bowron to Franklin D. Roosevelt, March 5, 1945, Folder bb(6), Box 65, BIII, s, John Anson Ford Collection. [As cited in: Don Parson, *Making a Better World: Public Housing, the Red Scare, and the Direction of Modern Los Angeles* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 230.]

[25] In a *Los Angeles Times* article entitled "Doom for Urban Blight: City Launches Drive on Slums," (October 24, 1948), the author uses "blight" and "slum" interchangeably.

doubled, exploding from 55,114 to 111,888.[26] Unsurprisingly, this population boom worsened an

already dreadful housing crisis. In a partial attempt to rectify the housing shortage, the National

Office of Production Management granted Williams's Pueblo del Rio—which he began

designing before the United States entered the war—priority status, even as it shut down most

other housing projects to save materials for the war effort.[27] Initially, though, HACLA did not

intend for Pueblo del Rio to house war workers. In fact, the organization promised the residents

whose dwellings had been cleared for the project priority consideration for residency.

Nonetheless, once the United States entered the war after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in

December 1941, HACLA snubbed the slum-cleared residents in favor of people who had

migrated to the city to work in the defense industry. Still, the demographics of the migration to

Los Angeles meant that Pueblo del Rio remained a majority-black project.

Predictably, and despite city officials' and architects' interest in solving the housing crisis

through the construction of public projects, housing progressives like Williams and Neutra faced

significant backlash from powerful real estate interests and property owners. "Housing," along

with the term modernism, became an object of derision for numerous real estate groups and

private citizens who lambasted public housing as "socialist."[28] Interest groups like the

unironically named "Committee Against Socialist Housing" (CASH) and the Small Property

Owners League routinely protested the construction and financing of public housing, deploying

slogans like "Don't Pay Somebody Else's Rent" and "All Commies, Progressives, and Socialists

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[26] Marques Augusta Vestal, "Black Housing Politics in 1940s South Los Angeles" (MA Thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 2014), 24.

[27] "Public Housing Here Unchanged: Federal Ban Won't Half Program as Priorities Have Been Approved," *Los Angeles Times*, October 11, 1941, 2.

[28] "Cities Watch LA Housing Fight" newspaper clipping [n.d.], 1951-1952[?], Folder 1 of 2 Shirley Siegal Papers: Los Angeles Citizens Housing Council 1947-1948, Box 1, Shirley Adelson Siegal Papers, Special Research Collections, Doheny Memorial Library, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, Ca.

are for Public Housing" in an attempt discredit the projects (fig. 4). But in the late-New Deal

cum World War II eras, housing advocates—or "Housers," as they were called—continued to

gain support for their public program, successfully pushing back against conservative adversaries

by arguing that housing was not only a public good but critical to sustaining the war effort and

democracy itself. Simply put, Williams, Neutra, and other California Modern architects affirmed

that victory abroad depended on welfarism at home.[29]

The prolific Houser Catherine Bauer's 1940 publication, *A Citizen's Guide to Public

Housing*, offers a useful window into the arguments progressive architects were making during

this first stage of the California Modern movement. Bauer's pamphlet urged the public to support

the war effort by investing in public housing programs. Housing, according to Bauer, was not

simply a "humanitarian question," but one related to war and the defense of democracy itself.

"Industry," she explained, "needs able efficient workers—more and more urgently in many

localities as the defense program gets underway. Sooner or later, the nation may need stalwart

defenders."[30] According to Bauer, winning the war depended on low-cost housing. Moreover,

anticipating arguments later made by liberals during the Cold War, she insisted that providing

housing to its citizens would enable the United States to prove that democracy was as effective a

system as totalitarianism. As she said, "[the United States] must prove its worthiness to survive,

as against totalitarian governments. This means its ability to use resources, its brains, and its

capacity for free choice and voluntary organization, to provide a better life for all of its

citizens."[31]

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[29] For the process by which war engendered Progressive change at home, see Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

[30] Catherine Bauer, *A Citizens Guide to Public Housing* (Poughkeepsie: Vassar College, 1940)*,* 3.

[31] Bauer, *A Citizens Guide,* 4.

Crucially, however, Bauer made clear that public housing would not fundamentally challenge the system private property. Housing projects, she claimed, "would revert to the use of the 'lowest income group'" "as soon the emergency was over," and would therefore "be withdrawn at the proper time from competition with the ordinary and legitimate private building market."[32] Bauer thus tried to have it both ways: on one hand, she insisted that housing was "in large part a public responsibility"; on the other hand, she framed private property as "legitimate."[33] In this way, Bauer attempted to reconcile a social democratic housing program premised on technocratic expertise with traditional American tenets of private property.

Bauer also defended her interest in public housing by offering an argument steeped in notions of the social good. Anticipating the later claim that welfare programs sustained a "culture of poverty," Housers like Bauer maintained that it was actually slum conditions that bred disease, infant mortality, and juvenile delinquency.[34] For the safety of their fellow Americans, and for the safety of the United States itself, she and other Housers argued that the public had an obligation to safeguard their family's and neighbors' health by improving the living conditions of the poor.[35] Thus, Bauer affirmed the California Modern belief that the well-being of one person in a community reflected and impacted the well-being of everyone else in that community.

To bolster her arguments in an era in which the United States took policy inspiration from Europe, Bauer cited European models for mass housing that proliferated in countries like the

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[32] Bauer, *A Citizens Guide*, 86.
[33] Bauer, *A Citizens Guide,* 9.
[34] On the "culture of poverty," see Oscar Lewis, *The Children of Sanchez: Autobiography of a Mexican Family* (New York: Random House, 1961) and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (Department of Labor Office of Policy Planning and Research, 1965).
[35] Bauer writes, "since the responsibilities for bad houses and run-down neighborhoods cannot be fairly pinned to any particular group…" Bauer, *A Citizens Guide*, 9.

United Kingdom and the Netherlands.[36] In pointing to these two countries, Bauer drew on a

powerful transatlantic tradition that was already informing American housing. In fact, the first

publicly-funded housing projects in the U.S. relied heavily on English and Dutch precedent: they

were usually one- and two-story apartment-like projects built in a modest, traditional style with

few flourishes (fig. 5). Countless housing advocates, including Harriet Shadd Butcher—a black

woman, friend of W.E.B. Du Bois, and advocate for all-black housing projects in Atlanta—

visited Europe to take housing tours and explore "controlled housing" projects like Asterdorp in

Amsterdam (1927) (fig. 6). Butcher evangelized Asterdorp, which she believed instilled "habits

of regularity" and a "sense of responsibility" in its dwellers, thus helping to raise "tenants to

higher standards of conduct."[37] Indeed, Asterdorp's robust managerial task force intervened in

the lives of its occupants, instructing tenants on when to bathe; providing classes on budgeting

one's finances; watching children for free while adults went to work; and teaching valuable

skills, such as shoe repair.

Williams was inspired by European architecture, as well as by Butcher and other black

housing theorists. In his writings, he similarly argued that low-cost dwellings could become the

base from which black Americans would reach "higher cultural and economic level[s]," and in

which they could develop more gainful habits to "solve [their] own problems, [to] raise [their]

own standards, [and to] *earn* [their] right to self-respect."[38] According to Williams, black

Americans could overcome race prejudice only through "individual effort."[39] Similar to other

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[36] Catherine Bauer, *Modern Housing* (Cambridge Mass.: The Riverside Press, 1934), 159-162. On the importance of European models to American public policy, see Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).
[37] From Harriet Shadd Butcher's outlining her trip visiting housing projects in Europe (1935). Atlanta University Center Archives, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta, Ga.
[38] Paul R. Williams, "I am a Negro," *The American Magazine*, July 1937, 163.
[39] "Designer for a Living," *Ebony*, February 1946, 27.

black liberals at the time, Williams endorsed the Hooverite idea that the black community would thrive when individuals "pull[ed] themselves up from their bootstraps."[40] Nevertheless, Williams considered public housing projects crucial to this effort, and in this way blended an emphasis on individual responsibility with a social democratic ethos.

Williams' approach to black uplift was inspired by his own life. In his autobiographic essay "I Am a Negro" (1937), Williams recounted his own experiences in order to emphasize that it was his individual will that enabled him to become a successful architect. He noted, for instance, that he became interested in architecture even though one of his teachers thought the idea of a "Negro architect" absurd.[41] Williams, in other words, believed that he had personally overcome the "habit of being defeated" that defined black life in the United States. He thus dedicated himself to transcending the "defeatism" that he believed negatively affected black Americans.[42] As he stated, "I owe it to myself and to my people to accept this challenge. […] White Americans have a reasonable basis for their prejudice against the Negro race, […] if that prejudice is ever to be overcome it must be through the efforts of Negroes to rise above the average cultural level of their kind."[43] One way to do so was through public architecture, which could promote good habits on a mass scale by providing for black tenants' immediate needs and encouraging new everyday practices. For example, in his Pueblo del Rio, Williams insisted that the project be located within walking distance of tenants' workplaces, which he believed would make regularly arriving to work on time quick and simple. As this suggests, habit formation was central to Williams's architectural practice because he believed it would help black tenants develop new habits which would in turn make them good citizens capable of defending

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[40] Williams, "I am a Negro," 161.
[41] Williams, "I am a Negro," 161.
[42] Williams, "I am a Negro," 161.
[43] Williams, "I am a Negro," 161.

democracy at home and abroad.

Williams's psychological diagnosis of the African-American condition—i.e., that black poverty was ultimately caused by the "habit of being defeated"—precluded an analysis of capitalist exploitation. In Williams's telling, indigence was the result of "defeatism" that could not be solved through economic redistribution. By framing black poverty in this way, Williams simultaneously reinforced dominant stereotypes of African-American inferiority and justified the capitalist system that played a crucial role in generating what he considered unfavorable behaviors. Because he rejected material analysis, Williams's solution to race-based poverty was to find a way to bring more black people into the middle- and upper classes. But, unlike contemporary conservatives, he thought the way to do so was through public housing. As this suggests, Williams embraced a peculiar political philosophy that combined a conservative social politics with a progressive faith in government-funded housing projects.

Williams's uplift ideology is evident in the architectural designs of Pueblo del Rio. The project, which was intended for a community of majority-black laborers and for which Williams was the primary architect, was defined by a series of two-story, flat-roofed apartments organized around a central greenspace and community center (fig. 7). This organization recalled the Garden City model introduced to Los Angeles by Clarence Stein (1882-1975) at Baldwin Hills Village (fig. 8), which emphasized community cooperation by stressing the importance of a shared lawn and collective amenities.[44] Like Stein's Baldwin Hills Village (1941), Williams designed Pueblo del Rio in a uniquely California Modern lexicon. The California Modern approach offered several benefits for mass housing. Most importantly, it was economical: it was minimally

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[44] Clarence Stein, *Toward New Towns for America* (Cambridge: M.I.T Press, 1966) 188-216. For more on the sources of Stein's Garden City designs, see Ebenezer Howard's *Garden Cities of To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (1898).

detailed with simple massing; its materials, such as exposed concrete, were cheap; and its multifunctional design features, including flat roofs with overhanging eaves, large windows, and open-plan apartment layouts, kept costs down. As one author wrote in an article about Pueblo del Rio, "public housing projects are designed to be operated economically, above all with a minimum of upkeep and repair work."[45] This allowed occupants to focus on their personal and professional lives—and thus, their uplift—rather than on maintaining their dwelling.

While details at Pueblo del Rio were kept to a minimum, design features such as exposed wooden beams and large, picture windows beautified the apartments, imbuing them with an especially modern character (fig. 9, 10). These sizable windows also expanded the tenants' felt or perceived living space. Richard Neutra, who worked on Pueblo del Rio and who strongly advocated for these kinds of features, referred to perceptually expansive fenestration as "space auxiliaries," which kept costs per square foot down as they dissolved rigid distinctions between interior and exterior space.[46] Indeed, Williams placed large windows at both ends of each apartment and on both stories to bring air and sunlight into the dwellings' interiors.

But such details were not only intended to make people feel like they were living in spaces larger than they actually were; they were also intended to improve tenants' health, thus creating a robust citizenry able to uplift itself and fight wars. Because many Americans associated traditional poor peoples' housing with overcrowding, fetor, and disease, public housing designers like Williams focused on providing tenants with sunlight and air, which was associated with personal and mutual health. To assure an abundance of airflow and light, Williams situated each apartment building between 50 and 60 feet apart from one another (fig.

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[45] Fred'K W. Jones, "Pueblo del Rio: Los Angeles' Most Recent Housing Project," *Architect and Engineer*, September 1942, 11.
[46] Neutra, *Architecture of Social Concern*, 194.

11). This had two benefits, one practical and one theoretical. First, it prevented overcrowding. Second, because each apartment building was capable of housing upwards of six families, it demonstrated to interested observers that superblock constructions could house many people without minimizing open space around the apartments or building high rises that would distance the buildings from California's low-rise tradition. As such, Williams promoted superblock construction as apposite to the city of the future.

The Garden City superblock at Pueblo del Rio reveals Williams's conviction that modern architecture and modern amenities must be the basis of housing in postwar Los Angeles. For the architect, housing projects were places where a person's basic and cultural needs could be satisfied. With plentiful greenspace, the verdant Pueblo del Rio afforded its residents a walkable superblock replete with multitudinous cultural and community services, including a free nursery school, countless classes, and community organizations such as dance classes, children's pottery classes, a library, athletic clubs, and a handful of other neighborhood organizations (fig. 12).[47] The project showed that even with a tight budget, in the post-war period, black and working-class people in Los Angeles could live comfortably in economical communities.[48]

For Williams, Pueblo del Rio was a site for cultural, and therefore racial, advancement. Following the young Du Bois and other Progressive Era reformers at midcentury, numerous black progressives argued that racial problems would be solved through cultural transformation.[49] Housing became one of the most important sites for intervention and thus for cultural, and more dramatically, biological, change. For instance, Williams's colleague at

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[47] Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles, Floyd C. Covington Papers.
[48] The PRW Project, "Pueblo del Rio Housing Project, Los Angeles, CA," accessed 2018, http://www.paulrwilliamsproject.org/gallery/1940s-multifamily-housing/.
[49] Touré F. Reed, *Not Alms but Opportunity: The Urban League and the Politics of Racial Uplift, 1910-1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 3.

HACLA and executive director of the Urban League, Floyd C. Convington, insisted that changing one's habits through "human engineering" could change one's biology.[50] Put another way, Covington believed that if black Americans lived in a healthy, stimulating, and community-oriented environment, their biology would evolve and they would be able to participate in politics as active democratic citizens. According to Covington and like-minded thinkers such as Williams, housing was not simply an experiment in bettering black Americans' everyday lives, but in making them literally new people.

Architectural critics considered Pueblo del Rio latent with transformative potential, portraying it as an augur for Los Angeles's prosperous future in which even the poor lived good lives. In an article from the September 1942 issue of *Architect and Engineer* innocuously titled "Pueblo del Rio: Los Angeles's Most Recent Housing Project," Fred K. Jones emphasized how the project replaced cleared, majority black slums that prevented inhabitants from living full lives.[51] The article included two full-page photographs of the site and project, titled "Before" and "After" (figs. 13 and 14). The "Before" image depicts the site prior to its being cleared for construction. The image anticipates its own future: the debris in the photograph's foreground forestalls the still-standing slum dwellings in the middle and background. The completely obliterated structure that once stood in the foreground is reduced to rubble, leaving specter-like marks in the dirt. Only one of the "slum houses" is shown in full: a small, flat-roofed structure at left. The structure is not in poor condition. In fact, like another premonition, it looks remarkably like the modern apartments about to replace it. The photograph thus communicates that Pueblo

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[50] Featured in *The Human Culture Digest*, vol. 51., no 8 (August 1943). Folder 7057 1.11 The Human Culture Digest [Two Articles Feature Floyd Covington] 1943, August; 1944 February, box 1, Floyd C. Covington Papers, University of Southern California Special Collections, University Archives Library, Los Angeles, CA.

[51] Jones, 12-13.

del Rio represents not a total break with the past, but an improvement on it: a model that will build upon the promises of the New Deal.

The "After" picture is not actually a photograph of the site, but a mislabeled image of the site's model.[52] The Pueblo del Rio model highlights the apartments' lush setting. The fifty-seven apartment buildings, which contain six to eight units with three to six bedrooms each, are surrounded by grass, trees, and other greenery. While the greenspaces are divided in a way that implies they could be private lawns, this implication is quickly shattered when one notices that the plots do not conform to any predictable pattern; instead, they spread out from the apartments in asymmetric blocks. Indeed, some plots are not connected to any single apartment. The uneven distribution of the plots mimics those typical of single-family homes that use front yards to distinguish one private lot from the next. At Pueblo del Rio, however, the plots are parceled but not individually distributed; each belongs to the entire project and equally to all the project's tenants (fig. 15). By reproducing traditional front yards in form, the design provided tenants a familiar and desirable arrangement while simultaneously undermining notions of private property—or least, undermining the idea that public housing could not adequately provide a bourgeois-like lifestyle for its tenants.

Williams's desire to distinguish Pueblo del Rio from the surrounding area by creating a cohesively designed superblock was aided by landscape architect Ralph D. Cornell (1890-1972). Specifically, Cornell surrounded the complex with trees that created "a skyline enclosure of planting" that broke up what could have been a monotonous space.[53] Trees also fostered community: practically, they offered shade from the Los Angeles sun (which provided people places to gather), while their fruit served as a shared food source. By the time the project was

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[52] Jones, 12-13.
[53] Ralph D. Cornell, "Pueblo del Rio" *Architect and Engineer*, September 1942, 21.

completed in 1942, Cornell had planted about 200 fruit trees, which meant there was a fruit tree for every two households. Furthermore, Cornell allotted each family a garden plot, which encouraged households to individually partake in the cooperative upkeep of the landscape while also lending the project agricultural and visual diversity. In short, the gardens individuated the apartments without undermining their communal character.

Cornell's garden plots also heightened the distinction between private and public which remained irrevocably in flux. Indeed, Williams and his colleagues intentionally designed Pueblo del Rio so that its residents could easily transition between private and public greenspaces. This was partially for ideological reasons. Williams believed that the connection between the private apartment and the public garden was a metaphor for the individual African-American's relationship to their group identity as "Negros." Greenspace only remained green if everyone took care of both their own plot and the space they shared with one another. In other words, the plots provided Williams with the opportunity to encourage occupants to become productive members of their community; both their specific community at Pueblo del Rio and the larger community of black Americans.

A photograph of a young woman watering her plants at the project explores this phenomenon (fig. 16). Smiling at the camera while watering the plants outside her front door, a tall tangle of dense foliage bisects the shared greenspace, separating her semi-private green area from her neighbors'. However, just as the plant-divide separates, it also connects the two apartments. For the plant-divider to survive and thrive, both tenants must tend to it. At Pueblo del Rio, it was the mutual work of "individual Negros" that would raise "the average cultural level" of the race, eventually leading to the formation of a thriving black community.[54] Again, a

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[54] Williams, "I am a Negro," 161.

conservative social politics that stressed the individual is here blended with a progressive commitment to communality.

A crucial and ongoing concern for Williams was how the transition from slum to modern housing would affect an inhabitant's behavior. He was especially anxious that the shock resulting from a working person's sudden introduction to new ways of living would be so disorienting that the individual would be unable to function as a political person. Williams's intermix of the private apartment and public space may therefore be read as an attempt to ease the transition from the single-family slum home to multifamily public housing.[55] In this, Williams was inspired by his colleague Neutra. As Neutra later argued in his *Architecture of Social Concern in Regions of Mild Climate* (1948), the shock of the new must be combined with the expected comforts of the past: "like the transplanting and repotting of plants [rehousing] must be a gently supervised training venture; otherwise, people will not easily take root."[56] Having a private garden alongside public greenspace functioned as a "carefully designed education campaign" intended to imbue residents with community-oriented habits.[57] More than any other project from the era, Pueblo del Rio embodied the conviction that melding public and private would help people accommodate to

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[55] Together, the landscape design, superblock construction, and architecture at Pueblo del Rio created a community that never eclipsed the individual or her family unit. In so doing, the project endorsed conservative ideas that placed the family at the center of social life. In fact, 64% of the units at Pueblo del Rio were reserved for families with children. Reflecting contemporary patriarchal prejudices, housing authorities across the country, including in Los Angeles, preferred "complete families," comprised of two parents with children. Though Williams was willing to experiment with "new ways of thinking," he remained dedicated to preserving the family as the nucleus around which all future experimentation would revolve. Folder 7057 11.5, Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles - Directory of Commissioners, Undated, Box 11, Floyd C. Covington Papers, University of Southern California Special Collections/University Archives Library, Los Angeles, CA. ; Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 230-232. ; Paul R. Williams, "Our New Domestic Architecture," in *New Patterns for Mid-Century Living: Report of the 22nd Annual Forum,* ed. New York Herald Tribune (New York: New York Herald Tribune, Inc., 1953), 74.

[56] Neutra, *Architecture of Social Concern*, 193-194.

[57] Neutra, *Architecture of Social Concern*, 19.

their new lives.

As this suggests, Williams was dedicated to using architecture to transform how inhabitants lived. This was a conviction that in the early 1940s was shared by most California Modern architects. Architects like Williams and Neutra desired to alter residents' habits in order to help them uplift themselves and strengthen American democracy. Moreover, their projects were designed to help prepare families for highly mechanized postwar cities that, they believed, would be defined by full employment. Put another way, progressive California Modern architects' incorporation of "collective provisions" and "facilities" at their public housing projects were intended to provide "diverse *educational and managerial means for a friendly and successful introduction* [to a new way of living] *on which genuine acceptance will always depend.*"[58] That is, California Modern architects like Williams and Neutra used design to prime residents to accept that their lives would be better if they developed the habits required to thrive in a new era. Indeed, Pueblo del Rio cannot be understood without appreciating the importance of the California Modern political project. Williams's adoption of the California Modern idiom—his introduction of flat planes, large windows, and his integration of interiors with their exterior surround—was not only an aesthetic choice but was part of a training process to prepare black Americans for the "revitalization" of once "obsolescent" American cities.[59] For Williams, housing projects were cultural training grounds wherein the habits of tomorrow—habits, of course, determined by the architect-expert themselves—would take root.

Regardless of their reformist intentions, housing projects like Pueblo del Rio were urgently needed to solve Los Angeles' housing crisis. Pueblo del Rio, in fact, was just one

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[58] Neutra, *Architecture of Social Concern*, 195.
[59] Paul R. Williams, "Tomorrow" in *Many Shades of Black*, ed. Stanton L. Wormley and Lewis H. Fenderson (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1969), 257.

housing project among many. Between 1941 and 1955, Los Angeles funded approximately thirty-three large-scale superblock projects intended for defense and low-income workers. Private developers followed suit, building an additional twenty-seven middle-income Garden City projects during the same period.[60] Just before and during the war years, architects, academics, planners, and government officials alike shared a vision of Los Angeles as a city that would deploy superblock configurations in order to establish walkable, coherent communities. Moreover, the fact that so many of these projects were designed for working-class people suggested that there was at one point in time a viable, mass, urban alternative to speculative home building and suburbanization.

The construction of low-cost housing projects following the United States' entry into World War II continued unabated and, for this reason, California Modern architects were able to continue experimenting with low-cost housing design. Where pre-war projects like Pueblo del Rio and Hacienda Village retained a familial resemblance in style and organization, war-time pressures increased demand for housing so rapidly that California Modern architects began testing new construction methods, such as the small prefab housing units at the Western Terrace housing project in San Pedro (fig. 17) or the dormitory-styled Wilmington Hall Housing Project (fig. 18). Each of these constructions proposed a novel method for housing Californians, but none were as celebrated as Neutra's Channel Heights, which was built for shipyard workers in San Pedro, California. It is to this project that we now turn.

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[60] Architectural Resources Group, Inc.: Architects, Planners, & Conservators, *Garden Apartments of Los Angeles: Historical Context Statement* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Conservancy, 2012) 79-85.

Chapter 1: Figures

Figure 1: Maynard Parker, "Project by Paul R. Williams: Photomontage: Hacienda and Pueblo del Rio Housing Projects, Airport, Zangston Terrace, Arrowhead Springs Hotel," 1940. Maynard L. Parker Photographs, The Huntington Library, Los Angeles, California.

Figure 2: "Cluttered backyards, with clotheslines and poorly made fences drawing the boundaries between neighbors," Los Angeles. From P*oor Housing Conditions in Los Angeles Scrapbook* (1938).

Figure 3: Anton Wagner, "Slums on Hewitt Street," Los Angeles (1932-33). PC 17, California Historical Society, San Francisco, California.
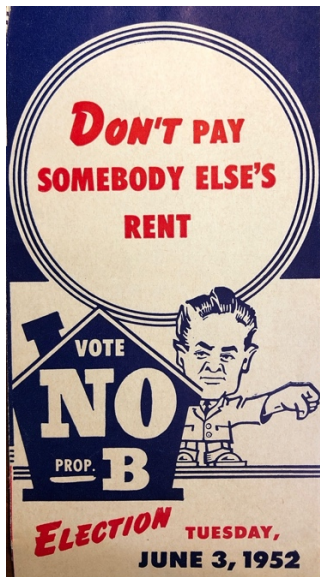
Figure 4: "Don't Pay Somebody Else's Rent," 1952, Ephemera.
Folder Los Angeles Housing Educational Fund + Los Angeles Citizens Housing Council 1949-1952, Box 1, Shirley Anderson Siegal Papers, Specialized Research Collection, Doheny Library, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California.

Figure 5: Techwood Homes, Atlanta, Georgia. Burge & Stevens; J.A. Jones & Co., architects. 1935.

Figure 6: Asterdorp in Amsterdam, Netherlands c. 1937.
Box 165, Folder 8, Charles F. Palmer papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Figure 7: Julius Shulman, "Job 6464: Pueblo del Rio (Los Angeles, Calif.)," Paul R. Williams, main architect. 1940-1941. Gelatin Silver Print. Box 89, folder 8, Julius Shulman Photography Archive, 1936-1997, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Ca. © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10).

Figure 8: Baldwin Hills Village (or The Village Green), Clarence Stein, Reginald Johnson, Robert Alexander, Fred Barlow, Jr., Lewis E. Wilson, architects. 1942. GoogleMaps (2019).

Figure 9: Wood ceiling beams at Pueblo del Rio. Los Angeles, California. Photo by author, 2019.

Figure 10: Julius Shulman, "Job 6464: Pueblo del Rio (Los Angeles, Calif.)," Paul R. Williams, main architect. 1940-1941. Gelatin Silver Print. Box 89, folder 8, Julius Shulman Photography Archive, 1936-1997, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Ca. © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10)

Figure 11: "Exterior of Finished Buildings at Project's 'Point #3,'" Housing Authority Photo Collection, Los Angeles Public Library, 1942.
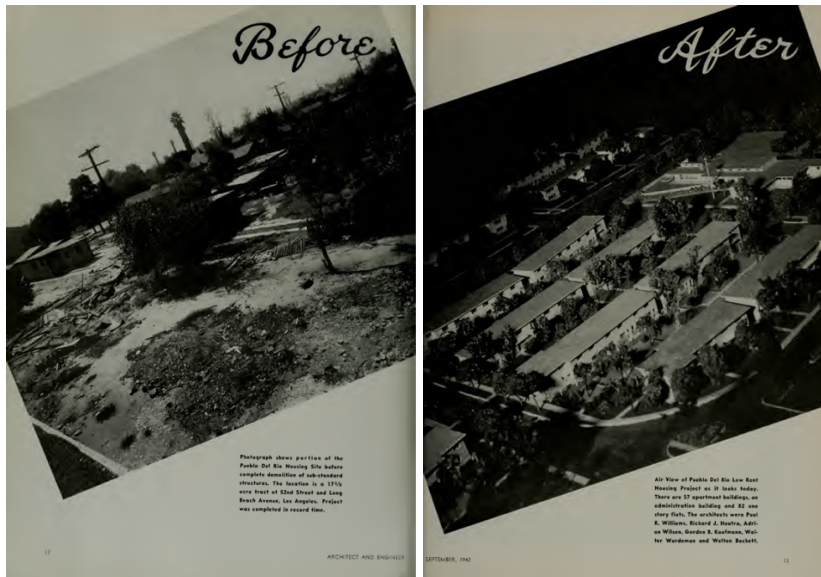
Figure 12: Julius Shulman, "Job 056: Pueblo del Rio (Los Angeles, Calif.)," Paul R. Williams, main architect. 1940-1941. Gelatin Silver Print. Box 89, folder 8, Julius Shulman Photography Archive, 1936-1997, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California. © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10)

Figures 13 and 14: "Before" and "After" of Pueblo del Rio, Los Angeles, Ca. Paul R. Williams, main architect. 1942. From: Fred'K W. Jones, "Pueblo del Rio: Los Angeles' Most Recent Housing Project," *Architect and Engineer*, September 1942.

Figure 15: Leonard Nadel, "Children Playing on Front Lawn" Pueblo del Rio, Paul R. Williams, main architect. 1942. Los Angeles, California. Housing Authority Photo Collection, Los Angeles Public Library, Los Angeles, CA.

Figure 16: Louis Clyde Stoumen, "Project's 'Garden of the Month' Contest Winner" (1942), Housing Authority Photo Collection, Los Angeles Public Library, Los Angeles, Ca.

Figure 17: Esther Mipaas, "Western Terrace Housing Units" (1945), Housing Authority Photo Collection, Los Angeles Public Library, Los Angeles, CA.

Figure 18: Esther Mipaas, "Willmington Hall Housing Project," Housing Authority Photo Collection, Los Angeles Public Library, Los Angeles, CA.

Chapter 2: Educating Citizens in a City of Superblocks

> "The designer, the planner, the architect, is most dangerously and responsibly at work on his client. Even after his fee has been paid, after he is out of sight and seemingly forgotten, this precarious character remains with his victim 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and at least as many years – twenty or thirty – as the mortgage lasts or until freedom is regained. His performance is loaded with momentous meaning. Most of his doings, often unknown even to himself, are fraught with threat or promise, with harm or benefit, with future trouble or a comfortable, wholesome rolling on of many life processes; and – if we look broadly at our harassed man-made world – with the survival of our race."

> -Richard Neutra, *Life and Human Habitat* (1955)

While HACLA reappropriated Pueblo del Rio and transformed it from a low-income housing project into emergency defense industry housing, California Modern architects, including Richard Neutra, began construction on several other housing communities for war workers and their families. Neutra's Channel Heights (1942) housing complex in San Pedro was one such project. In the short period when Williams and his team—including Neutra—completed Pueblo del Rio and Neutra began work on Channel Heights, California Modern architects had become more secure in their position. They were therefore given more leeway for architectural expression and experimentation. Heralding himself as an expert in the science of human activity, Neutra contended that every feature of his construction was responsible for producing particular effects within the tenantry. Insofar as he could determine how architecture produced specific effects, Neutra's expertise lay in his ability to mold people's habits, regardless of race, gender, or class. Empowered by the state's financial backing, California Modern architects working in Los Angeles like Neutra were optimistic about their futures despite the looming threat of war. Having rightly predicted enormous changes in American life and culture in the postwar era, architects and city planners began to act on their ideals for creating communities that harbored more

neighborly, communitarian, and democratic values. Above and beyond their aesthetic appeal or distinctive marriage of old and new materials, projects like Neutra's Chanel Heights reflected a political vision. It was not that the housing projects were constructed in a modern idiom that rendered them progressive, but rather the architects' intention to organize materials in such a way that could mold agents for progressive political ends.

By the time the United States began preparations to enter World War II, a plan to make Los Angeles a city of low-rise, low-cost superblocks designed by California Modern architects like Neutra and Paul R. Williams was already well underway (fig. 1). Publicly-funded housing projects such as Pueblo del Rio, Ramona Gardens (1941), Carmelitos Housing Projects (1940), and Harbor Hills Housing Project (1941), but also privately-funded ones like Wyverwood (1939), Dorset Village (1941), and Baldwin Hills Village (1942), together served as an architectural overture for the modernist city to come. The housing blocks, complete with community amenities, provided concrete models that architects and planners could emulate or reform. As the housing shortage persisted and the city's population continued to rise, the new stock of low-cost dwellings helped evince public sympathy for the California Modern vision of a wholly planned, neighborhood-centered, and safely traversable city.

Los Angeles soon became the United States' second largest war economy, home to the nation's aerospace industry. The resulting "population explosion," as Neutra aptly put it, exacerbated the already dire housing shortage.[61] A photo collage featuring rough-hewn, ramshackle shanties is a testament to Los Angeles's partial decay by midcentury. Surrounded by the crumbling domiciles, the bright-white and clean, art deco lines of Los Angeles's towering City Hall placed at the collage's center underlines the city's rampant inequalities (1928) (fig. 2).

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[61] Rajat Neogy and Richard Neutra, "Interview with Richard J. Neutra," *Transition* 29, vol. 6 (1967/1968), 23. (Edited by Neogy from a tape-recorded interview.)

Commissioned by HACLA and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) for their 3-volume

Housing Survey (May 1940), the collage is reproduced between a map for prospective military

bases and statistics on juvenile delinquency. "Approximately 176,000 persons, or 26 percent of

all persons in the area studied, are living in poor housing" the writers of the report explain.[62]

Well before the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, thousands of war workers flocked to the Southlands

to take up positions at new defense plants, shipyards, and armament training programs. Between

1940 and 1942 alone, California's population grew by more than 12%, with the majority of the

more than 800,000 migrants to the state settling in defense centers, the largest of which was Los

Angeles.[63] Los Angeles was rapidly becoming the country's defense production hub; by 1943 the

city received between $8.5-$11 billion in war contracts, second only to Detroit.[64] War workers in

Los Angeles built twice as many warplanes than any other city and manned the country's largest

shipyards. To encourage public support for the immediate construction of housing projects

deemed "essential to winning the war," Catherine Bauer compared the rapid surge in migration

to "the once famous *Grapes of Wrath* problem," arguing that the former made the latter "look

like a picnic."[65]

        But it was not until the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 and the United States'

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[62] Housing Survey…Los Angeles, , box 1, folder 1, Collection #0436, Collection of Sothern California Housing Reports and Photographs, California Social Welfare Archives, University of Southern California Special Collections, Los Angeles, California. Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles California, *Housing Survey Covering Portions of the City of Los Angeles, California* (Los Angeles, Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles, 1940), 82.

[63] Catherine Bauer, "War Time Housing in Defense Areas" *Architect and Engineer* (October 1942): 33.

[64] As the home of the U.S. car industry, Detroit boasted the country's largest war economy. However, Los Angeles was a close second. The amount of money brought into the city by war-time constructs has been calculated differently by different scholars. On the low-end, the number has been calculated at around $8.5 billion. Los Angeles Board of Harbor Commissioners, *Annual Report of Harbor Commissioners of the City of Los Angeles, California, Fiscal Year July 1, 1946 to June 30, 1947* (Los Angeles: 1947): 18-20. Fletcher Bowron Papers, Manuscript Collection, Huntington Library, San Dimas, California.

[65] Bauer, 33-34.

subsequent entry into World War II that housing projects garnered mass public attention. In the grips of war, the political incentive to invest in housing peaked. Newly arriving war workers needed somewhere to live, but with little affordable housing available, HACLA quickly converted eight of the nine low-cost public housing projects into housing for defense workers and their families.[66] The bulk of these projects were already located near Los Angeles's industrial hub in the city's south. But the rapid growth in naval production encouraged housing officials to include the Port of Los Angeles in San Pedro—a critical site for the United States' war effort—in their expanding purview (fig. 3).[67] It was here that Neutra constructed his Channel Heights housing project as part of a large-scale planning effort to industrialize and populate the area.

In 1943, Channel Heights was "the only permanent housing development of the federal government still under construction in the entire United States."[68] However, by this time, San Pedro was already a defense hub. Neutra's superblock design joined many other garden-styled apartments constructed in San Pedro to bolster the defense industry, including Rancho San Pedro (fig. 4), Portsmouth Homes, Harbor Hills, Wilmington Hall, Danna Strand Village, and Normont Terrace (fig. 5), as well as other temporary housing projects like Western Terrace trailer homes or the Quonset Huts nestled between the hills and oil rigs at the Port of Los Angeles (figs. 6, 7). Together, these San Pedro communities began to resemble the vision laid out in Maynard Parker's photomontage of a city comprised of interlocking yet distinct superblocks.[69] The

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[66] "Aliso Village, Los Angeles" *Architect and Engineer*, January 1943, 14.

[67] Not only was the port home to Camp Ross, which was both a central training and deployment arena and shelter to tens of thousands prisoners of war, it was also the major cargo site in the west, and as such required thousands of war workers. For these reasons, housing authorities began constructing massive housing projects around the Port of Los Angeles that took inspiration from earlier, low-income housing projects such as the recently-completed Pueblo del Rio Housing Project in the city's South.

[68] "Six Hundred Unit Permanent Housing Development in Harbor Area," *Southwest Builder and Contractor,* June 18, 1943, 10.

[69] See Chapter 1.

successful construction of these projects elated California Modern architects like Neutra, who

considered the sudden influx of federal funds a surefire indication that they would see their plans

for a new, superblock-based metropolis realized.

This vision was further buoyed by the increased respect for architecture and planning as

"social sciences" that had immediate and measurable consequences. Practicing in the second-

largest defense hub in the country, Los Angeles-based modern architects like Neutra became

crucial resources for the state. As thousands flocked to the city searching for jobs in the defense

industry, the newly institutionalized group of architectural experts employed by the state went to

work building factories, training stations, and, most important for Neutra personally, housing.

California Modern architects like Neutra believed themselves to be developing a science of

urban planning that complemented and informed the mass innovations occurring concurrently in

the defense and aerospace industries. Local and national leaders, faced with organizing a massive

war effort, began to collaborate with architects and planners in an attempt to address urban

problems such as housing.[70] Under the threat of fascism abroad, internal infrastructure issues

became a matter of national security and part of the effort to bolster democratic values at home.[71]

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[70] See: Jennifer S. Light, *From Warfare to Welfare: Defense Intellectuals and Urban Problems in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

[71] However, Neutra was not only guided by scientific commitments but also by moral "intuitions" that he considered "highly useful" and equally "deserving of broad social prestige." In this way, he distinguished himself from so-called "fact finding" bureaucrats or ethically agnostic "scientific researcher." Only "*avantegarde*" [sic] architects invested in "contemporary planning and design" and the proliferation of an "overall wholesome and stimulating environment" could advance human evolution by altering people's "mentality from which contemporary civilization may flow." "Pure and living science" wrote Neutra, "will need many generations to illuminate and fully permeate these problems. Meanwhile we must live and build for living. We shall still have to do it with art, that human faculty on which the cultures of millennia depended." But, as Neutra contended in the early 1940s, a more salubrious future could not reliably be built one single-family home at a time, but through the replanning of cities consisting of interlocking superblocks designed to develop a communitarian ethos within the population. It was through an admixture of modern science and art that Neutra effectively "planned for the unplannable," that is, for the future. Richard Neutra, *Architecture of Social Concern in Regions of Mild Climate* (Los Angeles Gerth Todtmann, 1948), 217-218.

With the government funneling millions into housing construction, it seemed there would be no shortage of community planning projects in the future. Preparing to redesign the city for the postwar era, Neutra's widely praised and highly publicized Channel Heights not only demonstrated how Neutra solved the immediate problem of housing defense workers, but also emphasized what he anticipated the future of architecture and planning to look like. The sole Los Angeles superblock community that Neutra designed alone, Channel Heights remains a cornerstone of his architectural oeuvre. The architect himself considered the housing complex a paradigm of community planning, continually citing the project in numerous publications until his death.[72]

The eight-page spread of Channel Heights photographs included in his 1948 publication *Architecture of Social Concern in Regions of Mild Climate*, for instance, reflected Neutra's satisfaction with the six-hundred-unit housing complex.[73] Written during his tenure as the Chief Architect and Consultant to the Puerto Rican government's Committee on Design and Public Works, Neutra laid out in precise terms why and how the state ought to carry out a community planning program *en masse*. The ten photographs of Channel Heights attested to earlier successes while simultaneously providing a visual touchstone for architects and government officials. Neutra wanted his colleagues and funders to appreciate what these projects could look like and how superblocks could engender community. One of the photographs, featuring a wooden pedestrian sign that reads "Bolivia Court," showcased Neutra's organization of single-story apartments into rows with extensive wood overhangs. Neutra angled the apartments at forty-five

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[72] To name a few of these titles: Richard Neutra, "Peace Can Gain From War's Forced Changes," *Pencil Points*, November 1942, 39. ; Neutra, *Social Concern*. ; Richard Neutra, "City, Neighborhood, and Village," *The Scientific Monthly*, vol. 81, no. 1 (July 1955): 31-41. ; Richard Neutra, *Life and Human Habitat* (*Mench und Wohnen*) (Stuttgart: Verlagsanstalt Alexander Koch GMxBH., 1956).
[73] Neutra, *Social Concern*, 204-211.

degrees from the pedestrian walkways, which he called "parks," to foster communitarian

sentiments. After facilely noting the photograph's contents—an "entrance court sign and park on

which dwellings face"—Neutra used the photograph as shorthand for his larger project and how

the organization of buildings could propagate neighborly communitarianism. The caption

continues, "these parks extend from the center recreational green area of the project like the

fingers of a hand" (fig. 8).[74] His design at Channel Heights demonstrated how orienting housing

away from busy streets and toward "social spaces" like a shared greenspace encouraged "the

development of a frame of mind that fits certain types of organization of *cooperative action*, of

teamwork, or of *individual resourcefulness*."[75]

As illustrated in Neutra's work for the Puerto Rican government, projects like Channel

Heights catapulted California Modern architects and city planners into public leadership

positions. Another of Neutra's appointments was to the California State Planning Board (CSPB),

which was soon renamed the Postwar Planning Agency.[76] As a board member, the architect

argued that sociologically researched and centrally planned housing blocks could prevent

neighborhoods becoming slums. He further encouraged workers to demand immediate

"governmental action on this matter," not only to protect their neighborhoods from blight but to

assure affordable housing in the future.[77] In a speech prepared for the CSPB, Neutra explained

that "especially for families with a rental capacity of $20 or less a month," the state, alongside

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[74] Neutra, *Social Concern*, 206.

[75] Neutra, *Social Concern*, 55.

[76] The latter was charged with preparing maps that identified the location of important war materials, airports, and training facilities that would, in turn, inform the location and design of future projects and determine where government-subsidized facilities such as nurseries and clinics were needed.

[77] Richard Neutra, "Housing, Defense, and Postwar Planning" (undated): 3-4. Box 176 Articles: Planning and Fabrication (PL), folder 4: Housing, Defense, and Postwar Planning, collection 1179 Richard & Dion Papers: Professional Papers, UCLA Library Department of Special Collections, University of California, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA.

the Federal Public Housing Authority, was obligated to safeguard citizens from "speculative

building" and "quick turnover" that "threaten[s]" and "damag[es]" "wholesome home culture."[78]

As he wrote,

> The important problem then remains to plan and to actually make [low-cost] rental
> projects humanly and communally attractive and gratifying! Or to introduce sound
> concepts of collaboratively protected and controlled neighborhood[s] to replace a
> fictitious mortgaged-burdened possession by a share in a small community of walking
> distances, with all recreational facilities, kinder gartens [sic], hobby shops, etc., used and
> enjoyed by all holders.[79]

In the 1940s, it was communities, not houses alone, that would bring about postwar prosperity.

While Neutra is well-known for his construction of bespoke, often lavish, single-family homes,

he was equally committed to improving the city of Los Angeles. His moral, philosophical, and

political commitments from the late-1930s to the 1940s assumed centrally planned housing

communities would become the norm thanks to ongoing state subsidies aimed at modernizing

and democratizing the built environment.

As the government continued to invest in mass housing and city planning, Neutra's and

his colleague's plans were anything but utopian. The passage of the 1940 Lanham Act hurried the

appropriation of monies from low-cost housing toward the construction of housing, schools, and

other necessary amenities for defense industry workers. And, between 1940 and 1941, Congress

raised approximately $420 million to construct defense housing as an additional $150 million

provided needed public service facilities, including schools and nursery programs.

In support of government action on housing, a group of like-minded architects, planners,

and "Housers" founded the Housing and Planning Association (HPA) on September 26, 1942.

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[78] Richard Neutra, "Homes & Housing: Habitational Problematics Region of Los Angeles" (undated): 21.
Box 176 Articles: Planning and Fabrication (PL), folder 2: Homes and Housing Problematics, Region Los
Angeles. Collection 1179 Richard & Dion Papers: Professional Papers, UCLA Library Department of
Special Collections, University of California, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California.
[79] Neutra, "Homes & Housing," 28.

The HPA maintained that both the wartime and postwar economy necessitated ongoing housing programs. The association's vice president, Catherine Bauer, helped organize the HPA's second annual state-wide conference, titled "California Must Plan Now," as an effort to promote the organization's vision. At the meeting, HPA members concluded that the government should immediately construct defense housing, pass rent control laws, and build new nursery and elementary schools at little to no cost to ordinary households.[80] For members of the association, the United States would only win the war and achieve peace with a government-subsidized housing program that would create jobs that would realize the dream of full employment, popularized during the Franklin Delano Roosevelt administration.[81]

In the early 1940s, these Rooseveltian sentiments were widespread and profoundly shaped Los Angeles's burgeoning war economy. At the height of popular interest in publicly-funded city planning initiatives, the Pacific Southwest Academy—founded in 1927 by a group of intellectuals and architectural practitioners including Neutra and Ralph D. Cornell—published *Los Angeles: Preface to a Master Plan* (1941), to outline the city's specific needs. The 303-page volume explored, in exacting detail, how the future Los Angeles should be organized. The introduction to the collection summarizes the writers' shared goals by detailing what modern cities currently lacked and how planning would address these shortcomings:

> Even in our greatest [American] city […] what we have is made up of the labor of millions each bent on his own ends. It is not the product of people working together with a program expressing the city as it ought to be or as they would have it—a structure with unity, coherence, and an emphasis on some great, worthy objective. […] The form and character of the modern city make planning imperative. Los Angeles, because of its size, rapid growth, and the serious nature of its problems should be the first to recognize this imperative. […] Eventually we will recognize that planning is not a fad, nor plaything of so-called intellectuals, but a fundamental human and social need. Every interest, whether

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[80] "California Housing Association Adopts War-Time Program," *Architect and Engineer*, October 1942, 39.
[81] "California Housing Association," 40.

economic or social, is bound up in this prime necessity of our lives.[82]

The *Master Plan* contributors addressed a diversity of topics—housing, sanitation, zoning, transportation, landscape design, and more—in order to identify and realize the "great and worthy objective" of fostering "community." Community, they concurred, was the "fundamental human and social need" currently absent from city life. The remedy was evident: centralized, government-supported city planning.

The *Master Plan* writers used the term "community" to refer to radically different scales of population, ranging from the entire nation, to the city, to a small neighborhood. The word's connotation, however, remained the same regardless of its referent. To the writers of *Master Plan*—and countless contemporary planners, economists, and intellectuals—"community" referred to any localized group that shared mutual interests, such as a country's desire for safety or a neighborhood's commitment to protecting its library. Nonetheless, the authors of *Master Plan* noted that the experience of community, or the knowledge that you shared interests with some group, was not guaranteed and would not emerge *ex nihilo*. The experience of community instead required the expert intervention of architects and planners capable of designing cities and neighborhoods in ways that made salient how individual wellbeing depended on the welfare of others.

Reiterating Neutra's CSPB talk, the *Master Plan*'s writers recognized that large-scale planning required mass public support. [83] They hoped that educative campaigns devised by

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[82] Clarence A. Dryska, "The Future of Los Angeles" in *Los Angeles: Preface to a Master Plan*, ed. George W. Robbins and L. Deming Tilton (Los Angeles: The Pacific Southwest Academy, 1941), 4-5; 7.
[83] Dryska, 6. ; Charles D. Clark, "Land Subdivision" in *Los Angeles: Preface to a Master Plan*, ed. George W. Robbins and L. Deming Tilton (Los Angeles: The Pacific Southwest Academy, 1941), 159. ; Robert M. Glendinning, "Zoning: Past, Present, and Future" in *Los Angeles: Preface to a Master Plan*, ed. George W. Robbins and L. Deming Tilton (Los Angeles: The Pacific Southwest Academy, 1941), 173-179.; Hunt, 290-295.

"highly trained leaders" like themselves would engender the population's interest in its community's general welfare. Following the lead of progressive intellectuals before them, midcentury experts considered themselves singularly capable of identifying a community's "legitimate interests." Under their expert tutelage, citizens would become aware of how centralized planning would, for instance, curb the "excessive cost of transportation" or protect an area's "economic stability" from "uncontrolled subdividing" that arbitrarily raised land prices.

Education was of central concern to the *Master Plan*'s authors. In a chapter titled "The Master Plan," city planner and HACLA-associate L. Deming Tilton averred that "the limitations of planning as they appear [in Los Angeles] and other large metropolitan areas, arise in part from our system of education, which has emphasized the importance of individual success rather than group or community welfare."[84] In Tilton's opinion, superblock communities like Pueblo del Rio offered a model for constructing "well-designed, compact, satellite communities [that] provide economical, safe, and wholesome living conditions." According to Tilton and his colleagues, the subdivisions scattered throughout Los Angeles—21,406 in total—embodied the worst aspects of the atomizing, speculative American housing market that they wished to supplant.[85] Not only were developers motivated by profit, as opposed to the people's best interests, but their unchecked profiteering threatened to delegitimize the experts upon whose opinions modernists insisted a well-planned city depended.[86] According to the *Master Plan's* writers, city planning was the "proper responsibility of government" because it was only the government, indifferent to profit motives, that could protect "the general welfare of all the people."[87]

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[84] L. Deming Tilton, "The Master Plan" in *Los Angeles: Preface to a Master Plan*, ed. George W. Robbins and L. Deming Tilton (Los Angeles: The Pacific Southwest Academy, 1941), 253. Emphasis my own.
[85] Clark, 166.
[86] Hunt, 296.
[87] Hunt, 295.; Tilton, 255.

This progressive, California Modern ethos was not confined to the *Master Plan*'s contributors. To promote a similar program in the early 1940s, Neutra, alongside other California Modern architects like Gregory Ain, Robert Alexander, John Rex, Raphael Soriano, and J.R. Davidson, as well as the city planner Simon Eisner, the landscape architect Geraldine Knight Scott, the painter Charles Kassler, the politician Harry I. Koblik, the poet and intellectual Jake Zeitlin, the playwright Arthur Miller, and the executive secretary of the Citizen's Housing Council of Los Angeles Frank Wilkinson, founded "Telesis," a cooperatively-run central planning advocacy group.[88] Together, Telesis members organized the education campaigns deemed necessary to garner popular support for large-scale projects that privileged subsidized neighborhood superblocks over speculative building.

In October 1941, the architects, planners, artists, politicians, and activists who formed Los Angeles's Telesis chapter opened their exhibition "…and now we plan" at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Part of their larger educative campaign, the exhibition emphasized the importance of centralized city planning by deploying a variety of mediums, including photographs, audio recordings, dioramas, and maps, to underscore the innumerable ways that speculative development had and would continue to destroy Southern California's once bucolic landscape. Planning, Telesis avowed, was the only way to prevent the city from deteriorating.[89]

According to the *Los Angeles Times*, "… and now we plan" helpfully "show[ed] the benefits of privacy, spaciousness, sunlight, quiet, and accessibility—which [Telesis's members]

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[88] Telesis was first begun in San Francisco in in 1939 by a group of architects and designers who had worked for the Farm Service Agency (FSA) together. The Los Angeles group was modeled after the original from San Francisco who had also designed an exhibition on planning for San Francisco at the San Francisco Art Museum. See: "Telesis," *Architectural Record*, October 1940, 69-72. And for more on the Telesis exhibition in Los Angeles see: Arthur Miller, "Now We Plan," *Los Angeles Times*, October 19, 1941, 3; 12-14. (Miller was a member of Telesis).

[89] Miller, 12.

term the desirable factors of planning—[as] contrasted with crowding, airlessness, darkness, traffic congestion and other effects of poor planning."[90] Each of the exhibit's four sections—living, working, recreation and culture, and transportation, respectively—reflected what Telesis deemed the four constitutive elements of city planning. The group concluded their exhibition by bringing each of these components together in a proposed "Planned Community" (fig. 9).[91] Drawing inspiration from the superblocks already constructed in Los Angeles by HACLA, the "one-half square mile" neighborhood imagined by Telesis would seamlessly marry "living areas, working areas, and recreational areas" alongside a "circulatory system" that "knits these areas into a well-integrated community unit properly designed" to promote a "neighborhood atmosphere conducive to the complete development of each member of the community."[92]

Telesis's Los Angeles members used their plan to argue that walkable superblocks, accompanied by extensive greenspace and amenities, was the most humane and efficient way to organize a city. According to the exhibition pamphlet:

> [Today] there is little neighborly contact, but rather a continual and often irritating consciousness of neighbors. The desirable neighborhood is one developed as a community in which the concept of home extends beyond the individual house and lot to the neighborhood; where an opportunity to participate in the life of the group leads to the development of a sense of social responsibility for the whole.[93]

Superblocks would connect neighbors to one another through a shared greenspace undivided by plotlines, where everyone's kids attended the same nearby school, and where people often met with one another at playgrounds not more than a three-minute walk from their front door or at

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[90] Miller, 12.

[91] In Miller's article concerning the *...and now we plan* exhibition, Miller refers to a "pictorial plan for a community of 30,000." However, this number is not reiterated in any of the texts written by Telesis members themselves.

[92] Telesis, *...And now we plan* (Exhibition catalogue, Los Angeles County Museum, 1941), np.

[93] Telesis, np.

the "close at hand" shopping center and community church.[94] Telesis members assumed that such meetings would inevitably create a communal rapport. In fact, members assumed that these planned neighborhoods would be "such pleasant place[s] that we should seldom be tempted to leave."[95]

Telesis's "Planned Community" provided simple, visual evidence for the terms the group's members had laid out in their exhibit and toward which each author in *Master Plan* had gestured.[96] Telesis thus used their exhibit, as well as the pamphlet and their 1942 publication *Cities are for People*, to articulate the idea that "community" was something that could be constructed and planned. Thoughtful interventions into the city, and specifically the implementation of California Modern proposals, would help city dwellers recognize that their individual wellbeing relied on the prosperity of everyone in their community. That is, the organization of housing, transportation, and recreational and cultural centers would make individuals more aware of, and therefore more responsible to, their neighbors. Communities would be forged by the fact that every citizen enjoyed:

> the basic requirements of a good life: quiet; freedom from noisy, dangerous through traffic; greenery; readily accessible schools, playgrounds, and shops; a safe place for children to play; an assurance that the neighborhood will retain its residential character without encroachment from business or industry; and, when possible, a reasonably

[94] Mel Scott, *Cities are for People: The Los Angeles Region Plans for Living* (Los Angeles: Pacific Southwest Academy, 1942), 62.

[95] Scott, 69. ; In fact, one of Telesis's chief objects was to ensure tenants more leisure time, which they believed would in turn create better more imaginative workers, a result that was all the more desirable as an explosion of war workers migrated to Los Angeles. Telesis went so far as to argue that being assured time away from one's job could protect democracy against the imminent threat of Totalitarianism abroad. According to the group, "Leisure=Opportunity" and "has a special importance in a democracy," as it is only in the pursuit of one's interests that "every citizen" can uncover "special talents, capacities, and skills" that would "improve our nation." Crucially, Telesis avowed that leisure was important not only because it improved the health and happiness of residents, but also because it supported the war effort. As Telesis member Mel Scott noted, unhappy citizens slow work down "by striking" and causing "industrial disturbances." Happy workers, living in well-planned communities in a city with a surfeit of recreational activities, would be both content and sophisticated enough to uncover how she could help defend the United States both during, and well after, the war. Scott, 76-79.

[96] Telesis's pamphlet drew heavily from *Master Plan*, directly quoting the volume a total of fifteen times.

homogenous and harmonious development of the surrounding property.[97]

In the 1940s, a city comprised of subsidized communities like the one described above was not only possible; it was backed up with government support. In fact, the CSPB, HACLA, and National Resources Planning Board, to name only a few, sponsored the "… and now we plan" exhibition.

As a Telesis member and *Master Plan* contributor, Neutra was convinced that central planning would guarantee Los Angelinos better, more dignified, and more fulfilled lives. As Telesis claimed, he was certain that thoughtful planning would generate a "completely democratic" "community of tomorrow," a "symbol of the way of living that we call American."[98] The goal, as Rockwell D. Hunt declared in his contribution to *Master Plan*, was to establish a new city with "unbounded possibilities [for] progress" that would "awaken [the individual's] social consciousness."[99] If successful, this would establish a "true democracy" wherein "equity and opportunity are vouchsafed for all."[100] Of course, this "true democracy" relied upon, and would only come about as the result of, distinguished experts' interventions into the built environment.

Neutra's Channel Heights was one such intervention. The embodiment of the California Modern values elucidated by Bauer, Telesis, and the *Master Plan*, in countless magazines, exhibitions, and books, including the Museum of Modern Art's 1945 exhibit *Built in USA, 1932-1944*, architects and their critics praised the project for its beauty, coherence, and integration

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[97] Telesis, np.
[98] Scott, 99.
[99] Hunt, 288. (Later cited at-length by Telesis in their "…and now we plan" pamphlet). ; Scott, 63.
[100] Hunt, 288.

with the landscape.[101] Later, in 1947, Southern California's AIA Chapter honored Neutra for the "forceful and dynamic architecture" of Channel Heights, which delivered "a death blow to the arguments that Federal Housing must look like a warehouse."[102]

The acclaimed housing complex featured 222 apartment buildings intended to house about 600 families. The site's steep and hilly terrain, which rose approximately 245 feet from east to west, inspired Neutra to angle each domicile to provide all tenants with views of the nearby waterways (fig. 10). The project spanned some 150-acres of the Palos Verdes peninsula and abutted the area's channels. Varying rooflines, either single-pitched or flat, further staved off any "warehouse" uniformity, as did the inclusion of four apartment types, labeled A-D-types, which were erected on the hillside at varying heights and intended for differently sized families.[103] At the same time, Neutra protected the project's visual cohesion by retaining an undeniable "family resemblance" among the structures through his use of stucco, glass, and redwood in all the complex's apartments.[104]

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[101] An incomplete list include publications such as: Neutra, "Peace Can Gain From War's Forced Changes," 39. ; Richard Neutra, "Housing a Definition," *Arts and Architecture*, January 1943. ; "Hillside Garden Community," *Interiors*, January 1943, 26-29.; "Six Hundred Unit Permanent Housing Development in Harbor Area," 8-11, 46. ; Harrison Stephens, "Thirteen Million Dollars for Housing 14,000 People: Los Angeles Completes 5 Lanham Act Projects," *Architect and Engineer* (September 1943). ; "Channel Heights Housing Project," *Architectural Forum*, (March 1944), 65-74. ; *Task* (magazine), National Planning and Housing Issue no. 5 (Spring 1944) from Collection 1179, box 1460: Clippings by Project, folder 17: Channel Heights, 1944, 1946, Neutra, Richard Papers - office records, Department of Special, University of California Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA. ; "Space and Form," *tér és forma* (1946), 73. ; "Distinguished Honor Awards: Southern California Chapter A.I.A.: Channel Heights Housing Project San Pedro, California," *Architect and Engineer* (March, 1947) ; Neutra, "City, Neighborhood, and Village," 31-41. ; Elizabeth Mock ed. *Built in USA—Since 1932* (1944) (New York: Arno Press, 1968).

[102] "Distinguished Honor Awards," 15.

[103] Specifically, he devised four different apartment types: a two-story "A-Type" comprised of four one-bedroom apartments; a two-unit, single-floor "B-Type" with two-bedroom floorplans; a two-story, two family "C-type" plan; and a two-unit, one-story, three-bedroom "D-type."

[104] Ludwig Wittgenstein popularized this phrase in his posthumously public *Philosophical Investigations* (1953). Wittgenstein used the term as I do here, to refer to how particulars can retain a robust similarity while eschewing exact sameness.

Nevertheless, Neutra distinguished the dwellings from the superblock's shared community buildings by placing the amenities structures at the center and periphery of the complex, apart from the living units, which he organized along short roadways culminating in cul-de-sacs (fig. 11, 12). He called these roadways "finger parks" that together formed a communal "palm."[105] The finger parks functioned as smaller communities within the larger project: every finger park was equipped with its own trash incinerator and small park area made of disintegrated granite, plantings, and park benches, and which oftentimes included a small play area (fig. 13).[106] Realizing the ideals proffered by Telesis and the *Master Plan*'s writers, the finger parks suggested a novel method for organizing Los Angeles, affording non-commercial thoroughfares quiet seclusion and safer streets for playing children while increasing the likelihood that tenants developed the close relationships necessary for engendering an experience of community.

As a 1943 article in *Interiors* made clear, despite the discrete finger parks, Neutra understood Channel Heights in holistic terms. "He likes to call it 'Symbiosis,'" the anonymous author remarked, "which [Neutra] translates as 'Friendly coordination of several individual organisms which live not just side by side but profitably with each other.'"[107] To further emphasize the park-like quality of the project, Neutra spread a uniform ground covering throughout the finger parks and linked each apartment building to a series of interconnecting walking paths (fig. 14). The latter not only connected each building to the next, but also allowed

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[105] Channel Heights was designed after another project Neutra had been working on called "Amnity," which was slated for construction in Compton. Following the United States' entry into the war, Amnity was abandoned in favor of Channel Heights.

[106] The length of each finger park was determined by the site's natural contours, so as not to require excessive and steep grading.

[107] "Hillside Garden Community," 27.

tenants to travel anywhere in the project by foot without crossing a thoroughfare.[108]

Neutra demarcated Channel Heights's community center (Center), nursery school, firehouse, infirmary, stores, soft drink bar, grocery store, demonstration kitchen, pharmacy, and laundry room from the private dwellings by exaggerating their modernist features: employing movable window walls with few visible supports, uninterrupted clerestory windows that seemed to uphold singlehandedly the flat and ligneous rooftops, and porches shaded by dramatic cantilevers (fig. 15). The steel and wood canopies, which extended from the community buildings and apartments, afforded tenants shade and protection from the elements while the resulting shadows provided visual interest to the otherwise barren facades.

Upending the precept that "form follows function," Neutra proposed that, "on the contrary, aesthetic appeal is something that does not merely *follow* function, where appearance is no consequence but obviously also a cause."[109] Given that he was a student of the Viennese architect Adolph Loos (1870-1933), who warned against the "degenerate" effects of applied ornament, it is no surprise that Neutra's architectural sensibility allies function with visual appeal.[110] This at least partially explains how he was able to produce such an architecturally complex and attractive project on a tight budget and in accordance with the brief laid out in the austere terms of the Lanham Act, which prohibited architects from including any "architectural embellishments" in their wartime housing designs.[111]

The Center at Channel Heights is a key example of how Neutra used the California Modern idiom and exemplifies how the method was ideally suited to the aforementioned brief.

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[108] He even installed some electrically-illuminated walking tunnels where pedestrian crossing could be especially dangerous.

[109] Richard Neutra, *Survival Through Design* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 111.

[110] Adolph Loos, "Ornament and Crime" (1908), in *Ornament and Crime: Thoughts on Design and Materials*, trans. Shaun Whiteside, 187-202 (London: Penguin Random House UK, 2019).

[111] Harry W. Porter, "The Lanham Act," *History of Education Journal* vol. 3, no. 1 (Autumn, 1951): 3.

Located just west of the garden craft building at the farthest, most southern point of the complex, Neutra divided the large Center into four interconnected wings: the assembly room, project offices, maintenance facilities, and children's nursery (fig. 16). At the same time, the roof seamlessly connected the otherwise unrelated parts of the building.

The Center's assembly room was by far the largest in the building, spanning about 40 by 72 feet.[112] Regardless, the stacked, horizontal wood planks comprising the roof dwarfed the expansive space. Topped by a relatively diminutive exposed-metal drain, the cantilevered roof spanned well past the assembly room's glass enclosure with movable walls that cast dramatic shadows throughout the day. The fenestration at once brought plentiful light into the cavernous space while denoting the assembly room's public purpose (fig. 17).[113] Glass walls, of course, inhibit privacy. To make the large space cozier, Neutra provided sliding partitions that allowed for more intimate gatherings. He placed small tables, chairs, and benches around the periphery of the room as well as a floor-to ceiling fireplace to encourage its regular use (fig. 18). It was only during the occasional town hall meeting or neighborhood dance that residents removed the cozying partitions. The flexibility of the assembly room's space is paradigmatic of Neutra's architectural practice, which in this strictly budgeted project proved critical for addressing the community's various needs.

While Neutra designed the projects' public spaces to stress accountability through observation, he ensured ample privacy within the home. The exaggerated use of glazing at the community buildings was tempered for individual dwellings. For the apartment buildings, Neutra recessed the windows and doorways by placing them under heavily shadowed, overhanging

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[112] "Distinguished Honor Awards," 16.
[113] The "glass cage" seen at the community center prefigures the architect Mies van der Rohe's better-known Farnsworth House (1945-1951) by at least 3 years.

eaves. By painting the window casings mahogany (to match the redwood paneling, loggias, or balconies that always accompanied an exterior window), Neutra intensified the window's sunken appearance. It was in these recesses that the architect varied the color scheme, adding soft yellows and muted brown-red tones to the doors, windows, and set-back exterior walls (fig. 19). Neutra's dynamic massing schema, amplified by the architect's dramatic use of shading, provided the apartments' triangular or rectangular facades with visual complexity (fig. 20, 21).

While California Modern devotees, like those who wrote the *Master Plan* or belonged to Telesis, said little about private interiors they agreed that familial and communal health required each member of a family to be personally invested in their community. To this end, windows functioned as what Neutra termed "space auxiliaries" that "supplemented the living area." Windows helped expand the living space by extending one's view out onto the apartment's lush surround. According to the architect, this not only expanded the apartment's perceived footprint, but encouraged people to find enrichment outside the home. Because Neutra insisted that "sociability is a physiological property and a necessity to man," he used "space auxiliaries" to encourage involvement in "the ever-refined development [of] communal life."[114] But it is important to stress that Neutra did not consider communal life more important than private, family life; rather, he insisted that a fulfilling community life depended on a salubrious private one, and vice versa.[115]

Neutra's interior renderings articulated the liminal space between public and private by removing the apartments' exterior walls (fig. 22). In a drawing of one of the two-story residences, Neutra demarcated the apartment's interior with a double horizontal line at left. Just right of the double line divide, which is periodically punctured by plant life, Neutra depicted a

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[114] Neutra, *Life and Human Habitat*, 251.
[115] Neutra, *Life and Human Habitat*, 251.

family of four sitting at their dining table. The viewer understands the dining area to be separate from the living area, not because of any walls or doorways, but because an area rug in the living room visually distinguishes one part of the home from the next. At the far left of the living space, which Neutra angled to be closest to the viewer, a small writing desk teeters at the interior's presumed edge. A shaded zig-zagging pattern—perhaps of grass—leads the viewer from the desk inside and out onto the apartment's exterior. This twisting line culminates just outside the apartment near an outdoor furniture set nestled between the nearby trees. Likewise, a tripartite wall located just behind the sitting family seems at first to be the rear kitchen wall but is extended well beyond the apartment's interior contours. By keeping the tripartite wall's function ambiguous, Neutra connects the family's home to its communal surround, preventing the potential alienation of the individual family that Neutra deemed endemic to people living in subdivisions.[116]

In the illustration, Neutra further muddled the distinction between interior and exterior space by including two of his now-famous Boomerang chairs (1942) both inside the apartment (at the coffee table) and outside of it (with the patio set). Made of durable and affordable materials, including plywood, steel, and plastic, the light and portable Boomerang chair was specially designed for the myriad activities hosted at Channel Heights (fig. 23). "The furniture will not be that of kings," Neutra wrote in one of his notes for a slideshow showcasing Julius Shulman's photographs of the project. Referring to one of these staged photographs that showcased the chair and his other furniture designs for the project, Neutra explained that Channel Heights would reflect the needs of a typical "worker's family."[117] In the photo, three

[116] Neutra, "Homes and Housing."
[117] "Captions List," Richard Neutra Papers, box 789, folder 4: Channel Heights Description, University of California, Los Angeles Library Department of Special Collections, Los Angeles, California.

Boomerang chairs surround a small circular coffee table topped with a tablecloth, a bowl of flowers, books, and other knick-knacks (fig. 24).[118] The chairs face a backless couch running two-thirds the length of the wall on which the couch's pillows lean.[119] A small writing desk and stool sit just beside the conversation circle near an open casement window. The placement of the furniture in the photographs emulates the configuration laid out in the rendering discussed above, but whereas in the rendering Neutra has removed a wall, here Neutra and Shulman decided to open the window and leave the door ajar to accentuate the interconnection between private interior and public exterior space.[120]

Neutra identified flexible architecture that could be quickly altered for various events or that extended the living areas outside as necessities for government-funded housing projects like Channel Heights. This stress on flexibility was evidenced in the apartments and community buildings, which were equipped with movable walls, lightweight furniture, and expansive windows. Flexibility was also integral to the dwellings' "feel." Small apartments, for instance, looked out onto large, open greenspaces, providing dwellers the experience of spaciousness while retaining a small footprint. Not only was this cost effective; it also allowed for more apartments to be built at the site and lent comfort to families moving into tight quarters.

As with Neutra's single-family homes, which always included sizeable windows and

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[118] According to comparable photographs by Shulman, Neutra sometimes substituted the Boomerang chairs with stools, which he had also designed for the project.

[119] Opposite the couch, Shulman includes a view of the storage closet and built-in console table with room for storage underneath (Neutra cleverly hid the latter behind a fabric curtain)

[120] Unfortunately, the only available images of Channel Heights' interior were photographs like these, in which everything in the frame was staged by the architect himself. Though Neutra offered furniture packages which would allow incoming tenants to imitate the home organization displayed in these photographs, few residents opted to do so not only because it was costly, but because many tenants considered Neutra's interior designs severe. One of the very first things tenants at Channel Heights organized for was changes to the downstairs cement floors, for which they demanded some covering. Henry Kraus, *In the City was a Garden* (Los Angeles: Renaissance Press, 1951), 20.

broad roof overhangs, the buildings at Channel Heights fit snugly into their environs, a fact well

demonstrated in another photograph by Shulman from a 1944 *Architectural Forum* article

written about the project (fig. 25).[121] The photograph situates the viewer opposite the project,

across one of the many channels in the area. Shulman looks out at the project from behind a large

bolder covered in foliage. In doing so, the photographer integrates the viewer and the project's

buildings into the landscape. At this low vantage point, one can just barely glimpse the

apartments located on the other side of the mossy waterway. The units are nestled between two

gently sloping hills, which Shulman used as a second frame within the photographic one. To the

right, there is a neatly stacked grouping of two-story buildings whose shallow, saltbox rooflines

are scarcely legible. And to the left, a row of flat-roofed single-story dwellings culminates in a

new series of two-story apartments that continue up the side of another hill just beyond our view.

The light cement exteriors of the buildings at right mirror the boulder in the fore's grey coloring,

while the abutting hills echo the boulder in shape. In fact, comparisons between Channel Heights

and its pastoral surroundings abound. The apartments' redwood rooflines parallel the moss and

dark brush strewn throughout the waterway, while the waterway itself reflects a portion of the

buildings above. By stressing the natural surround and deemphasizing the structures, Shulman

illustrates Neutra's intention to ally architecture and nature, in the process muddling distinctions

between interior and exterior space, private and public space, and architectural and natural

surroundings.[122]

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[121] "Channel Heights Housing Project," *Architectural Forum*, March 1944.

[122] Shulman often included water in his photographs of Neutra's private- and multi-family residences. Be it reflecting or swimming pools at his bespoke single-family homes or an actual channel in the case of Channel Heights, water exemplified Neutra's architectural intentions. Most specifically, it showcased Neutra's "total control" over his constructions' in exploring visually how he could anticipate environmental transformations that will occur in the future. Todd Cronan, "Between Culture and Biology: Schindler and Neutra at the Limits of Architecture," in *Émigré Culture in Design and Architecture*, ed. Alison J. Clarke and Elana Shapiro (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019), 210-213.

The photograph's identification of architecture with its natural surroundings reproduces Neutra's hypothesis that a person's "habitat" is formed from both architectural and natural elements. As he argued, "a habitation differs from a mere shelter and from a place of protection. It can help expand contemporary home activity [by being] endowed with flexibility of arrangement and elasticity in space-dedication, including outdoor spaces."[123] By using the word "habitation," Neutra centered his conviction that one's environs shape the individual. A person's surroundings are the *mise en scéne* that both limits and directs the agent's accumulation of "habits," whereby a person's habits are equivalent to their individuality. At this juncture, Neutra resolved to design "flexible" and "adaptable" environments that could account for the future's infinitely variable "educational and training" requirements.[124]

The educative use of architecture to form or reform someone's habits stemmed from Neutra's own education in *fin de siècle* Vienna. During this period, intellectuals began to reevaluate and experiment with "progressive" models of education.[125] This led to the establishment of several schools that instituted curricular and classroom reforms that emphasized collaboration and, most famously, "learning by doing."[126] In different ways, the schools showcased what the American philosopher John Dewey (1889-1952) considered the inexorable

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[123] Richard Neutra, "The Domestic Setting," in *The Fortieth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education: Art in American Life and Education* (Bloomington: Public School Publishing Co., 1941), np.

[124] Neutra, *Social Concern*, 56.

[125] For the idea of a North Atlantic community sharing ideas about governance and reform, see Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[126] Schools that embraced this alternative teaching method include Montessori (1907), Steiner/Waldorf (1919), and the Bauhaus (1919), among others. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (1916), (Project Gutenberg, 2008), chapter fourteen, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/852/852-h/852-h.htm#link2HCH0002.

embroilment of education with democracy.[127] Echoing Dewey, Neutra—repeating the *Master Plan* writers and Telesis—considered education a science that, if done properly, could reproduce the ideal conditions of democracy. For both Dewey and Neutra, the purpose of childhood education was to develop what the former described as "generous, outgoing, [and] assertively creative" students who would "become the citizen-subjects of the state; its defenders in war; [and] its internal guardians in peace."[128] For Neutra, the possibility for the "defenders of war" to become the "guardians of peace" required that people learn to live cooperatively with one another. Neutra conceptualized the "classroom" to include the entirety of Channel Heights. Not only would the experience of living at Channel Heights prefigure the ideal postwar citizen, but the project's success would assure California Modern architects and planners the popular support needed to continue building similar projects throughout the city.

Neutra assumed that an individual's habits are produced by both the physical and social environment. As an architect employed by the government to establish and nurture a more democratic and engaged citizenry invested in the defense of its nation, Neutra considered himself personally responsible for creating the environment that ensured proper socialization. As he affirmed, "[i]n a way a house is the successor of the womb. But after leaving the womb, social interaction starts; the 'post womb shelter expert' shelters more than an individual."[129] If the womb provided the necessities for the fetus to grow into a baby, then the built environment into which the baby is born functioned as its "successor," responsible for nurturing the child into

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[127] "The influence of Dewey's educational ideas extended beyond the US, notably among German educational reformers, and his notion of "learning by doing" found its way into the Bauhaus philosophy through Georg Kerschensteiner's concept of *Produktiver Arbeit* and the Deutscher Werbund industrial design movement." John Beck and Ryan Bishop, *Technocrats of the Imagination: Art, Technology, and the Military-Industrial Avant-Garde* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 22.

[128] Dewey, chapter seven.

[129] Richard Neutra, *Life and Shape* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962), 268-270.

adulthood. Neutra intended his design to initiate a "subverbal conversation" within the child by "speaking to all senses of the mind." Language acquisition and communication were secondary, insofar as they, according to Neutra, depended on the child's embodiment—their extension in space—for which architectural design was foundational.

In privileging the effects of the built environment, Neutra challenged the legitimacy of psychoanalysis, which was gaining significant popularity at midcentury.[130] In an interview for the journal *Transition*, the architect explained how his views on childhood development differed from those of his childhood acquaintance Sigmund Freud:

> As a young man I was often in and out of the house of Professor Sigmund Freud—you know that I am from Vienna. […] I would mention to him that I wanted to be an architect. […] I would tell him I had read William Wundt who wrote in 1868 on physiological psychology in Leipzig. Professor Freud would only smile, because to him the formative and molding influences of a human mind were primarily human relations: when you were growing up the way your dad treated you at two-and-a-half years old, and whatever else happened in your family circle, was more important than whether you grew up in the palace of a Maharajah or in a slum. This seemed his attitude and of course it is rather well expressed in his writing. I, on the other hand, could not possibly study a man if I were to subscribe to this view.[131]

Over all else, Neutra concerned himself with an environs' positive (healing) or negative (killing) effects in shaping individuals' habits. While he agreed with Freud that human relationships are fundamental to a person's development, he nevertheless insisted that any study of humanity is impossible without recognizing the primacy of humankinds' spatio-temporal embodiment.[132] Individuals and their relations to one another are molded by their surroundings *ab initio*.[133] That is, according to Neutra, an individual and her setting are co-constitutive and will necessarily

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[130] Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Sylvia Lavin, *Form Follows Libido: Architecture and Richard Neutra in a Psychoanalytic Culture* (Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press: 2005).
[131] Neogy and Neutra, 31.
[132] Neutra, "The Domestic Setting," np.
[133] Neutra, "The Domestic Setting," np.

inform how and what habits she develops. As he put it, "our space is always the interplay between our organic endowment and the stimulating circumstances surrounding us. Even if we *cease to be conscious* observers, we still richly respond. Clear consciousness is only a tiny part of our organic life."[134] One need not notice the environment's influence on us to be a product of it. In this way, Neutra simultaneously rejected Freud's dismissal of the individual's environment while embracing his notion of the subconscious.

For Neutra, "social spaces" were especially important in mass-housing ventures because they provided architects an opportunity to alter all tenants' "frame[s] of mind." As he explained:

> [A]ll the many novel things are logically linked together which it seems desirable to introduce people who thus far have had to live deprived of them or without sufficient opportunity for them. Rehousing is always an educational venture; it is like the transplanting and repotting of plants. Undertaken as a mass action, things cannot be left to work out by themselves. It must be a gently supervised training venture; otherwise, people will not take roots, and criticism of the government responsible for the entire scheme may become rampant even after initial acclaim.[135]

Neutra here affirmed that educationally effective housing projects required architectural expertise. Only architects capable of anticipating how people responded to their environment could reliably design housing projects that tenants would accept and learn from and in.[136] By equating tenants to plants, the architect countermanded individual agency and subtly asserted that architects could exist outside of—and manipulate—the natural order. In this metaphor, the garden symbolizes the architectural environment. And just as the gardener's goal is to reapproximate a natural setting, the architect's goal is to construct an environment that attends to its users' most basic biological needs.[137]

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[134] Neutra, *Life and Shape*, 240.
[135] Neutra, *Social Concern*, 192-193.
[136] Neutra rearticulated the importance of architects like himself becoming part of the state when he warned that without this expertise citizens might revolt.
[137] Neutra, *Social Concern*, 198.

For example, the Center at Channel Heights was well-equipped. Each of the distinctive areas of the building had its own bathrooms: in the assembly room, Neutra installed two large male and female bathrooms with multiple stalls, and in the corner connecting the storage area to the office he placed another set of bathrooms, one for the maintenance workers and one for the office employees.[138] Neutra's preoccupation with the restroom resulted from his desire to influence and improve dwellers' habits. "The bathroom," Neutra wrote in 1941, is where "we are taught of keeping clean."[139] Children would be most affected by Neutra's designs because, "biologically speaking," they are the "principal consumers." Having experienced the architect's intervention in the early stages of their lives, children would be imbued with the habits of cleanliness "for a lifetime."[140]

In the Center's nursery wing, the children's bathroom formed the centerpiece of Neutra's design. Located across a covered walkway that led to the assembly room, the nursery's restrooms featured a curtained window wall, tubs, and large trough sinks, all scaled to accommodate small children (fig. 26). If Neutra aimed to *re*-form adults, he could *form* children at their most "plastic stages of infancy" in the nursery.[141] Unlike adults, who Neutra was proverbially "repotting" in the hopes of restoring a dying plant to health, children offered him seeds to grow an entirely new garden. "Next to the diet and thoughts conveyed in the mother tongue to which a growing generation is exposed," he argued, "it is the physical or in other words the architectural environment of the nursery, where we play in our first years of life, the bathroom in which we are taught of keeping clean, the whole dwelling…. [that] imprints itself on early physical and

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[138] "Channel Heights Housing Project," 73
[139] Neutra, "The Domestic Setting," np. ; This was an obsession in the mid-twentieth century. See, for example, Simon Toner, "'The Paradise of the Latrine:' American Toilet-Building and the Continuities of Colonial and Postcolonial Development," *Modern American History* 2, no. 3 (November 2019): 299-320.
[140] Neutra, *Survival*, 231.
[141] Neutra, "The Domestic Setting," np.

mental habit."[142] In the design of the nursery school, Neutra would not be altering the children's habits, but crafting them. For Neutra, biological and personal individuality is occasioned by one's environment. You literally are where you live, and if you live in an architecturally sensitive environment then you'll be better able to acclimate and cope with the requirements of modern life.

Throughout Channel Heights, Neutra included several interior observation partitions that straightforwardly differentiated the manager from the managed. Managerial supervision, either of children or fellow adults, granted architectural space normative significance. In a photograph of the nursery, a woman is shown working on her typewriter at a built-in wood desk in a cordoned-off space, behind a glass partition. From this viewpoint, the woman is able to watch the small group of young children reading and talking with one another (fig. 27). Moreover, the moveable glass walls nearest the playground helped the volunteer mothers running the daycare easily watch the children from their semi-private viewing quarters. And, in the children's restroom, where there would normally be a stall door, Neutra placed the toilet and tub behind a glass partition, physically distinguishing the on-looking mothers from the young children they observed. By cordoning off the sink and mirror with an interior window, Neutra distinguished between public and private lavatory activities within the children's subconscious.

The manager's office at the grocery store, which was located across the project's campus, was similarly configured. Neutra located the manager's office above the store's floor, elevating and fitting it with a windowed wall so the manager could watch for potentially thieving customers. In both the nursery and the store, the windowed walls reinforced the observers' power over the observed, acting as a constant reminder that one could, at any time, be made

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[142] Neutra, "The Domestic Setting," np.

accountable for one's actions. This is not to say that Neutra intended to impinge on anyone's freedoms, but rather that his use of glass throughout the community buildings made implicit interpersonal hierarchies explicit and reminded users of their responsibility not only to themselves but to others in their community.

Neutra considered his project a scientific attempt to blend nature and civilization. "To the biologically minded [architect]," he wrote, "mastery of nature does not mean reckless perversion of her forms and processes, but rather the art of attuning man's ways to her order."[143] Provided this was his intention, it is imperative to assess Neutra's architecture as an attempted facsimile of the natural setting in a modern idiom. Neutra's "art," then, assumed a basic, subconscious, and subverbal world ontologically prior to the modern, everyday one experienced by ordinary people. In Neutra's telling, architects were specially attuned to the precognitive domain because of their expertise in "human reactions to physical surroundings." This proficiency is what made them uniquely capable of disentangling what Neutra described in *The Architecture of Social Concern* as the "millionfold complexity" of the "cause-and-effect relationship in natural phenomena"; architects, in short, were able to design architectural habitats that approximated "conditions closer to our natural wants."[144] Neutra insisted that because he understood how the pre-cognitive world caused certain behaviors, he could act as a "gardener" encouraging unaware "plants" (i.e., tenants) to accept and adapt to their new, more natural, and yet wholly modern setting. Neutra designed structures intended to communicate with agents on a subverbal and subconscious level by referencing environmental cues that had presumably co-evolved with humans. In the process, his designs were supposed to transform people's habits.

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[143]Neutra, *Survival*, 82.
[144] Neutra, *Social Concern*, 123. ; Neutra, *Survival*, 96-97.

If, as Neutra contended in his book for the Puerto Rican government, "rampant" "industrial technology" "victimize[d] humanity" by "flooding our physiological bearings," then it followed that the environment produced certain effects in people.[145] Moreover, having adapted to their unnatural and hostile environs, it was likely that people had no idea they were being "victimized," or, if they did, what precisely was causing their victimization. By incorporating the "physiological implications" of design into his calculus, Neutra's architectural project intended to reverse the negative effects of modernity and improve people's mental and physical health.[146] In these terms, the shape of one's environment was a matter of life or death. Neutra thought that a person's environs—over and above their race, ethnicity, or class—determined health. As he put it, there was "no escape" from the architect's influence.[147] If architecture was, as Neutra contended, the "successor of the womb," then the effects of the architect's decisions "extend from morning to evening, [and] works on us 'from cradle to grave,' from the maternity ward and infant nursery to the funeral parlor[.]"[148] If it were not built by a biologically-informed architect, the "cumulative effects" of a building's "infinitesimal stimulus" could "finally prove fatal."[149] Presuming that one's environment formed the substrate of daily life and, therefore, that architectural design could stimulate habitual qua behavioral changes in people, Neutra needed to adopt a precise, scientific competency for isolating and identifying which variables caused what effects. Having accomplished this the architect could predict how his designs triggered specific effects. For example, with the installation of observation windows, the watchful eye of store managers could prevent people from stealing or, alternatively, encourage customers to uphold

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[145] Neutra, *Survival*, viii-ix.
[146] Neutra, *Life and Human Habitat*, 17.
[147] Neutra, *Life and Shape*, 269.
[148] Neutra, *Life and Shape*, 269.
[149] Neutra, *Human Habitat*, 19-20.

standards of cleanliness. Here, the glass partition is the so-called "stimulus" that would presumably prevent tenants from acting on illegal impulses.

Neutra's theories had political consequences. His architectural commitments emerged from his contention that an agent's "experiences" are merely *ad hoc* explanations of phenomena that occurred at a sub-personal, subconscious, and precognitive level. By insisting that a scientific realm exists prior to the formulation of any person's intentions, beliefs, desires, or reasons, Neutra attributed all normative habits to visceral outside forces. He thus claimed that the contents of people's "minds" are determined by precognitive stimuli located outside of the agent and her consciousness. In reducing agency to automatic, bodily processes, an agent's ideas and opinions are drained of their moral and political significance. This is crucial because it means Neutra believed that political changes occurred on a subliminal level, independent of reasoning and immune to persuasion. For Neutra, agency exists at the level of "experience," which the architect considered to be ontologically and temporally secondary to natural, subpersonal stimuli.[150]

Neutra's conception of human agency was foundational to his project: if Neutra correctly understood how and why people adopted certain kinds of habits, then he could reform those habits through interventions into "the human habitat," i.e., the dwelling.[151] A devotee of psychologist Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920), Neutra was acutely aware of the troubling epistemic gap that fundamentally divided mind, body, and world. In Wundt's attempts to stitch that gap, the psychologist proposed that "contact points" in the physical world stimulated corresponding

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[150] Neutra was here perhaps influenced by reigning psychological theories that underlined the ignorance of the "masses." See, for instance, Daniel Bessner, *Democracy in Exile: Hans Speier and the Rise of the Defense Intellectual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018). ; Brett Gary, *The Nervous Liberals: Propaganda Anxieties from World War I to the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).
[151] Neutra, *Survival*, 23. ; See also the title of Neutra's 1956 publication *Life and Human Habitat*.

mental representations (*Vorstellung*).[152] The physical world posed a problem that the mental

realm was charged with solving. This, however, posed yet another problem: the world is known,

but not immediately. There remains a temporal gap between the stimuli ("contact points") and

the resulting mental representations. Wundt therefore concluded that our presumed familiarity

with the external world is "inferred" rather than known directly.[153]

Wundt's skepticism permeated Neutra's own theory of agency. Because both Neutra and

Wundt assumed there was no unmediated break between interior and exterior—self and world—

the world's physical role in agent formation remained opaque. To disclose the world's effects

and, as a result, determine their relative value to one's life, one required expert intervention by a

physiologically informed psychologist like Wundt (or, in Neutra's case, a "post-womb shelter

expert," i.e., an architect). As Wundt put it,

> Physiology and psychology cover, between them, the field of vital phenomena; they deal
> with the facts of life at large, and in particular with the facts of human life. Physiology is
> concerned with all those phenomena of life that present themselves to us in sense
> perception as bodily processes, and accordingly from part of that total environment which
> we name the external world. Psychology, on the other hand, seeks to give account of the
> interconnexion [sic] of processes which are evinced by our own consciousness[.] […] It
> follows, then, that physiology and psychology have many points of contact.[154]

Wundt, like Neutra, was concerned with how consciousness resulted from the inherently

divisible "total environment" comprised of both mental and physical processes that nevertheless

bear "many points of contact." To address this rift, Wundt proposed that consciousness, what he

described as "inner experience," could be uncoupled from the body and investigated in a

controlled setting. Experimental psychologists, or, in Neutra's case, modern architects, could

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[152] Neutra cites the second edition of Wilhelm Wundt's *Lehrbuch del Physiologie des Menschen (*2nd
edition) (Erlanden: Enke, 1868). Neogy and Neutra, 31.
[153] Wilhelm Wundt, *Principles of Physiological Psychology*, trans. Edward Bradford Titchener (1904)
(Blackmask Online, 2002), Introduction.
[154] Wundt, *Principles*, 1.

manage a tenant-client's experience of their exterior world—be it in a lab or in an apartment—and could therefore constitute, or reconstitute, the contents of the tenant-client's consciousness (*Inhalt*). As an architect, this perspective endowed Neutra with the ability to build environments that stimulated specific representations and thus particular habits.[155]

Neutra's Wundtian worldview meant that individual experts like himself could use architecture—and by extension city planning—to engender certain effects (habits). In brief, the idea was that thinkers allied with the California Modern ethos could alter American life by transforming central planning into a science capable of propagating a "new mode of living." California Modern progressives envisioned a "community of tomorrow" that would not only look differently and be built in a new style, but would also become an "outward and visible manifestation of our democracy" that, in turn, would breed a new, more neighborly, and civic-minded citizenry.[156]

Given the severity of consequences, it is no surprise Neutra later argued that his "physiological approach" to architecture constituted a "new humanism."[157] As a Jewish émigré

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[155] Habit formation was essential to Wundt, who was interested in how habits like 'writing with your left hand instead of your right' influenced one's consciousness. This is because Wundt's scientific theory depended on understanding representations enough to create an environment suited for probing the consciousness itself, therefore, by controlling the patient's sensations. If, for Wundt, accessing another's consciousness for scientific psychology involves creating the appropriate laboratory atmosphere that would allow the least interferences between himself and his patient's consciousness, then Neutra considered it the architect's duty to anticipate an agent's needs as she changes and grows over time. And, like at Pueblo del Rio, Neutra recognizes the importance of setting the scene for a new tenant to grow used to her environment. Distinguishing himself from Schindler, who considered architecture a "space art" defined by conceptualizing space as the architect's medium, Neutra proposed that architecture was a "space-time art" Neutra writes, "the architect [must be] sensitive enough to respond to the changing environment and *code those changes into the terms of the architectural composition from the beginning*." Neutra's conception of architecture as a space-time art further explains the image's importance in communicating his intention: because architecture shapes the agent, it functions like a natural habitat that structures and restructures the agent over time. Neutra's architecture was thus a profoundly *historical* architecture that took account not only of the past and present but the future as well. Wundt, *Principles*. ; Cronan, "Between Culture and Biology."
[156] Scott, 99.
[157] Neutra, *Life and Shape*, 231.

from Austria living in midcentury America, Neutra's universalist and cosmopolitan

commitments dismissed the then-common notion that race determined people's behaviors.[158] As

he wrote, "everywhere, it appeared to me, human beings, in mixture and in clash, held

nevertheless a common denominator beneath their biological individuality—in spite of ethnic

variety."[159] Because Neutra avowed that humanity's "traditional ritualistic behavior," or habits,

stemmed from a shared "basic underlying biological need," physical traits did not explain

variances in human behavior. Individuality, for Neutra, was occasioned by one's surroundings.

Unlike Williams, Neutra did not assume that a person's distinctive capabilities or deficiencies

preceded the influence of their environment. Individuals, or "organisms," as Neutra once put it,

"are immersed to fusion in their chemical as well as their social setting; they literally live on and

in one another. 'The isolation of the individual from his fellows is neither a biochemical or a

social fact.'"[160] In a 1962 publication dedicated to expanding upon these ideas, Neutra elucidated

his theory of agency by comparing individuality to decorating a cake:

> Biological realism is an issue below, beyond and versus the inventive game of
> superimposed artificiality which we are like to overrate. The basic "baking rules of our
> natural layer of cake:" life, the cook, adds one acquired conditioned sentiment on top of
> the other. I began to cling to this picture. […] Man everywhere appeared to be dressed up
> and decorated differently. The icing seemed varied but, after all, the cake came from the
> same bakery.[161]

Individuality, according to Neutra, was not innate but conditioned. This is not to say that people

do not experience themselves as phenomenally distinctive from others; Neutra understood that

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[158] For the centrality of Austrian intellectuals to the development of cosmopolitanism both in Austria and the North Atlantic world writ large, see Malachi Haim Hacohen, *Karl Popper—The Formative Years, 1902-1945: Politics and Philosophy in Interwar Vienna* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
[159] Neutra, *Life and Shape*, 228.
[160] Richard Neutra, *Survival*, 12.
[161] Neutra, *Life and Shape*, 231

they did. But for the architect, individual experience was not a scientific fact that existed outside of any person's mind.

The problem that remains, however, is that Neutra's theory of mind posited a fundamental gap that divorced people's experience of the world from its scientific facticity. That is, his theory entailed a constitutive dichotomy between the causes of one's experience and the interpretation of those causes.[162] This is why Neutra reduced agency to the level of experience. People inferred free will after the fact because they did not understand that their actions were automatic and reflexive responses to environmental stimuli, or, if they did, they did not understand what external stimuli produced what reactions. One unintended result of Neutra's flexible design scheme, however, was that the numerous permutations of any single building ironically capitulated any responsibility for the project's effects on users. For example, could the placement of bathrooms result in people adopting more hygienic habits. The architect's own scientific provisos prohibited a clear answer, as incalculable possible future permutations meant that no single design choice could be credited with a particular effect. But this issue was also a safeguard from attributing any future, personal responsibility to the architect. Interpretations by non-experts that did not conform to Neutra's own analysis could easily be dismissed because, as the architect repeatedly insisted, the interpreter lacked the capability of deciphering the "millionfold complexity" of the "cause-and-effect relationship in natural phenomena." As a result, it was impossible for non-experts to determine whether Neutra succeeded in creating healthy environments that prepared people for their future; there was simply no mechanism of accountability[163] In essence, Neutra's philosophical commitments shielded his projects from

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[162] Ruth Leys, *The Ascent of Affect: Genealogy and Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 210.
[163] Leys, *The Ascent of Affect*, 263.

scrutiny. Only specially attuned and trained California Modern architects like himself could produce communities that promoted cooperative modes of living, thought to protect democratic values currently under threat abroad.

In the wake of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, which demonstrated that American democracy was under attack, architects, politicians, and Housers alike considered housing projects vital to the preservation of the American way of life. For Neutra, the personal and the political were enmeshed with one another, as diagnosing and then habit-training his tenants would secure America's ability to defeat the Nazis and Japanese by creating the citizens capable of doing so. The novel forms of communal living prompted by housing projects like Channel Heights would provide needed housing near wartime worksites and create a more democratic citizenry that recognized central planning as necessary to building better, more livable communities. As Neutra put it in 1942, the "education of tenants for cooperative management appears" as something that could "plausibl[y] be achieved."[164] In fact, befitting these criteria, and according to the tenants themselves, Channel Heights was remarkably effective as a wartime housing project.

As the union organizer and activist Henry Kraus explained in a 1951 book documenting his experience living at Channel Heights, during the war a communal spirit arose within the project, even if war's exigencies meant that residents never knew if they would be "leaving tomorrow or maybe next week [at] the latest [i.e., whether they would be drafted]."[165] In particular, Kraus highlighted the diverse events and groups that the tenants cooperatively organized during his time there, including a smallpox immunization drive (resulting in the immunization of 200 children living in the community); a mimeographed weekly newspaper; a

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[72] Neutra, "Peace Can Gain," 35.
[165] Kraus, 18-22.

chess and checker club; a card club; a Red Cross knitting group; weekly film screenings; cooking

classes; dance classes; a "victory garden" club (communal food garden); a Parent-Teacher

Association; a free nursery supervised by female volunteers; an auxiliary police group with

upwards of 50 members; a Civilian Defense Organization (similar to "neighborhood watch"

groups today); community dances; a Boy Scout Troop; and a Girl Reserve.[166] In fact, when

Channel Heights was completed, it was just one of many Los Angles housing superblocks built at

midcentury where tenants founded clubs, newspapers, and other programs centered on

strengthening communal life.[167] Throughout the city, tenants of low-cost housing communities

shared housework and childcare duties and came together to oppose racism and hostile real-

estate investors. Some tenants at Channel Heights, for example, worked to mobilize their

community after a "near lynch" was attempted at a nearby housing project."[168] What the

existence of these groups confirms is that more neighborly communities could be built under the

right circumstances. Channel Heights embodied the ideal of "social Telesis" heralded by Telesis

and the writers of *Master Plan*. In fact, Kraus specifically mentions how he felt an "inescapable

responsibility" to his community at Channel Heights.[169] But the continued success of Channel

Heights depended upon the proliferation of superblock communities throughout Los Angeles. On

their own, any one superblock was an island, separated from and incongruous with the rest of the

city. Without a city of community-minded tenants living in superblocks, the odd superblock

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[166] Kraus, 79-84.
[167] You can find an extensive list of social activities and community facilities at the Floyd C. Covington Papers housed at the University of California. See: Box 11, folder 7057 11.5: Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles – Directory of Commissioners, undated, Floyd C. Covington Papers, University of Southern California Special Collections/University Archives Library, Los Angeles, California. See the section on Channel Heights.
[168] "Working together, they organized enough residents to send a letter to all community members that read: 'Should any disturbance of the peace be occasioned by social intolerance, its originators will be requested to move. Discrimination in any form constitutes sabotage of our war effort.'" Kraus, 79-80.
[169] Kraus, 84.

would become an anomaly. Neutra constructed the complex—as did Paul R. Williams and his coterie at Pueblo del Rio—with the assumption that Los Angeles, and the nation as a whole, would continue funding the California Modern program.

Projects like Channel Heights provide a salient example of California Modern architects' early political goal: to build affordable, aesthetically pleasing, and culturally fulfilling communities that instilled positive habits beneficial to the postwar future to come. Nonetheless, the project also reveals a profound lacuna in Neutra's thinking. While ethically motivated, Neutra's chief goal of designing environments that spurred the adoption of beneficial habits ignored economic disparities. Though Neutra desired to educate the masses and show them the benefits of living communally, he at no point addressed the underlying causes of poor and working-class people's material circumstances (save for his indignation toward profiteering subdividers): namely, money and the lack of it. Instead of focusing on the root economic causes of the poor's living conditions, Neutra focused on reforming the "habits" of his tenants and on helping the poor accommodate themselves to unjust material realities. If Neutra could design healthy environments for poor and working people, and as a result create healthier, happier people, then there was no reason to address the glaring disparities between the rich and poor. As this suggests, even at this very early stage in the history of California Modern architecture, the seeds for Neutra's later embrace of the single-family home as the site of political progress had been planted.[170] Regardless, for a short period in the early 1940s, California Modern architects' hypothesis proved correct: the experience of "community" could be engendered by expert architects and city planners. The issue, it turned out, was in sustaining superblock communities in the wake of postwar austerity and in the face of increasingly powerful private homebuilders,

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[170] Put another way, California Modern architects like Neutra were reformists unwilling to endorse an anti-capitalist critique that questioned the basic organization of American society.

whose unrestrained financial gains and resulting political sway eventually shattered support of

the California Modern program.[171]

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[171] Richard Neutra's Channel Heights was one of these housing projects. The widely-publicized project provided an excellent example of how California Modern architects could use the war-time emergency to help realize their city. Channel Heights was based on designs for a low-cost housing project originally intended to be constructed in the South Los Angeles city of Compton. However, by 1941, Neutra had adapted the plans for its new proposed site, this time in the hills of San Pedro. From the very beginning, Neutra considered the project, which was now designated to shipyard workers and their families, a long-term investment in a quickly growing area. The architect entitled early elevations and plans for the project "Mutual Ownership Defense Housing," indicating that, as early as 1941, Neutra knew that after the war the project would not return to the public housing stock, but would be put up for purchase by the government for any interested tenants to buy and cooperatively own. So, though publicly-funded, Channel Heights introduced a new housing paradigm that placed future responsibility for a nominally "public" project into the hands of its private tenantry.

Chapter 2: Figures
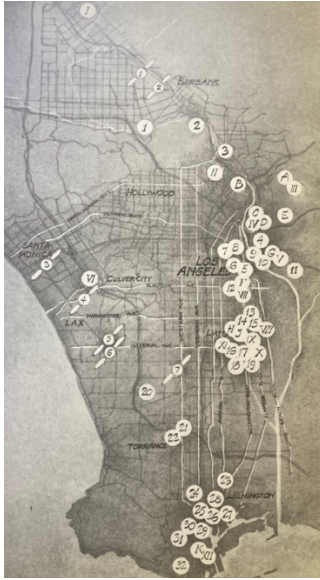
Figure 1: Federally Subsidized Housing in Los Angeles, 1937-1955, Alexander Ortenburg (mapmaker). From: Dana Cuff, *The Provisional City: Los Angeles Stories of Architecture and Urbanism* (Cambridge, The MIT Press, 2000).

Figure 2: *Housing Survey Covering Portions of the City of Los Angeles, California* (Los Angeles, Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles, 1940), np, between pages 90 and 91. See: Collection #0436, Collection of Sothern California Housing Reports and Photographs, box 1, folder 1: Housing Survey…Los Angeles, California, Social Welfare Archives, University of Southern California Special Collections, Los Angeles, California. Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles California,
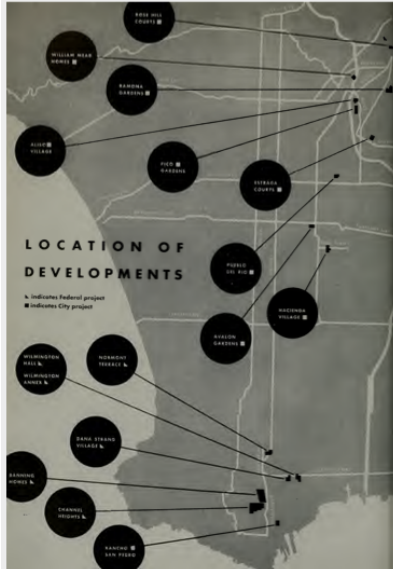
Figure 3: "Six Hundred Unit Permanent Housing Development in Harbor Area," *Southwest Builder and Contractor*, June 18, 1943, 14.

Figure 4: Rancho San Pedro Housing Project c. 1940 (San Pedro, Ca.). Louis Clyde Stoumen, photographer. Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection, Los Angeles Public Library, Los Angeles, Ca.

Figure 5: Photograph of residents in the courtyard of Normont Terrace, 1940s (San Pedro, Ca.).. Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles Photograph Collection, Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research, Los Angeles, Ca.

Figure 6: Western Terrace Housing Project c. 1944 (San Pedro, Ca.). Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection, Los Angeles Public Library, Los Angeles, Ca.

Figure 7: Quonset huts in San Pedro, 1946. Los Angeles Public Library Photo Collection, Los Angeles Public Library, Los Angeles, Ca.

Figure 8: Julius Shulman, "Job 762: Channel Heights Housing (Los Angeles, California.)," 1942-1943. Gelatin Silver Print. Box 8, folder 77, Julius Shulman Photography Archive, 1936-1997, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California. © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10).

Figure 9: Telesis, "Plan for 30,000," 1942. See: Mel Scott, *Cities are for People: The Los Angeles Region Plans for Living* (Los Angeles: Pacific Southwest Academy, 1942).

Figure 10: Julius Shulman, "Job 051: Channel Heights Housing (Los Angeles, California.)," 1942-1943. Gelatin Silver Print. Folder 71, Box 1, Julius Shulman Photography Archive, 1936-1997, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California. © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10).

Figure 11: "Plot Plan. Channel Heights Housing Development, Los Angeles. Richard J. Neutra, Architect" See: Harrison Stephens, "Thirteen Million Dollars for Housing 14,000 People: Los Angeles Completes 5 Lanham Act Projects," *Architect and Engineer*, September 1943, 16.

Figure 12: Julius Schulman, photographer. "Model #b-3," Folder 3: Channel Heights - model, Box 789, Richard and Dion Neutra papers (LSC 1179). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.
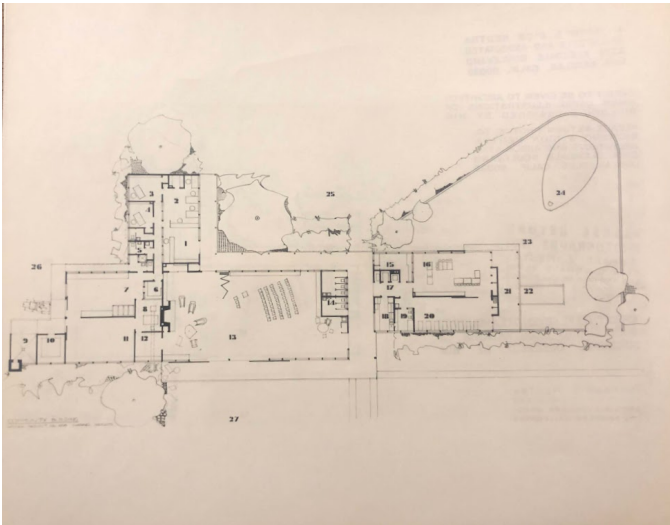
Figure 13: "Playground," Box 788, folder 6: Photographs Channel Heights (San Pedro) recent photos, Richard and Dion Neutra papers (LSC 1179). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

Figure 14: "Channel Heights Housing, 1941-1942" (San Pedro, Ca.). Richard Neutra, architect. Architectural Plans and Section, The Avery Library and The Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, Columbia University, New York, New York.

Figure 15: Julius Schulman, photographer. "Misc. (Swimming?)," Box 788, folder 4: Photographs Channel Heights (San Pedro) exterior, Richard and Dion Neutra papers (LSC 1179). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

Figure 16: "Channel Heights Admin Building FLP," Box: 789, folder 2: Channel Heights – administration – interior, Richard and Dion Neutra papers (LSC 1179). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

Figure 17: Julius Schulman, photographer. "Channel Heights [assembly room]," Oversize folder 1224: Channel Heights, Richard and Dion Neutra papers (LSC 1179). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

Figure 18: "Channel 19 admin building interior with fireplace & furniture," Box 788, folder 4: Photographs Channel Heights (San Pedro) exterior, Richard and Dion Neutra papers (LSC 1179). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

Figure 19: Fritz Block, photographer. "Exterior Photographs of Two-Story Houses Facing Parklane, Channel Heights Housing Project." Fritz Block Collection, University of Southern California. Los Angeles, California.


Figure 20: Wayne Andrew, "Channel Heights Housing," 1945-1953. Black and White Photograph. Wayne Andrew Archive, Estate of Wayne Andrew: http://www.esto.com.

Figure 21: Wayne Andrew, "Channel Heights Housing," 1944-1953. Black and White Photograph. Wayne Andrew Archive, Estate of Wayne Andrew: http://www.esto.com.
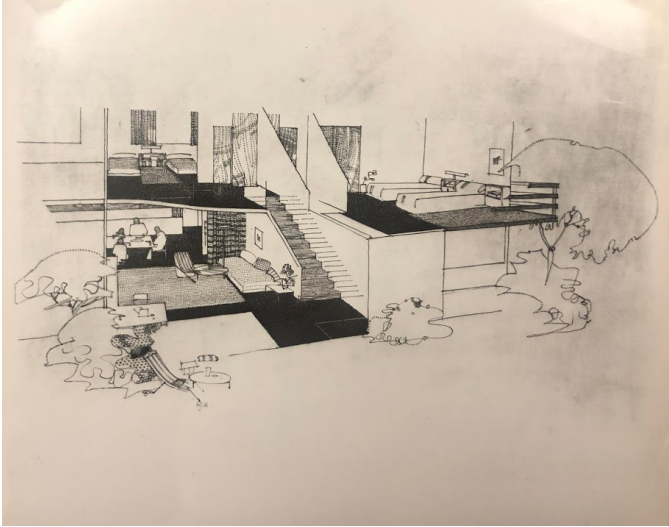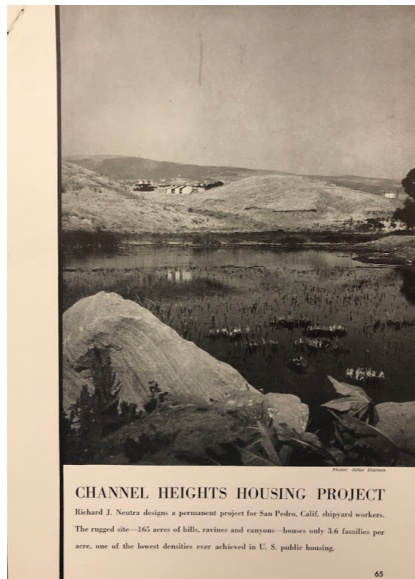
Figure 22: "Type C Section," Box 788, folder 5: Photographs Channel Heights (San Pedro) interior, Richard and Dion Neutra papers (LSC 1179). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.
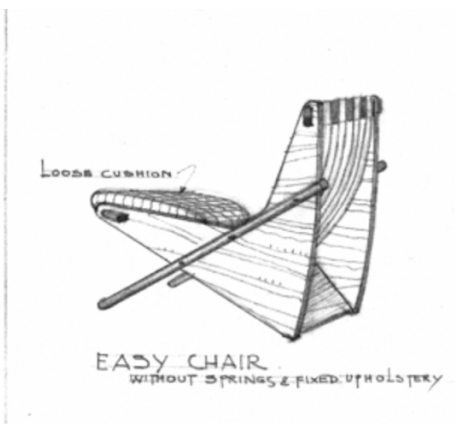
Fig 23: Richard Neutra, "Easy Chair" [Boomerang Chair], 1942.

Figure 24: Julius Schulman, photographer. "Interiors," Box 788, folder 5: Photographs Channel Heights (San Pedro) interior, Richard and Dion Neutra papers (LSC 1179). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

Figure 25: Julius Schulman, photographer. "Channel Heights Housing Project," *Architectural Forum*, March 1944, 65.

Figure 26: "Channel 21 baby's bath in nursery (Albrecht)" Box 788, folder 4: Photographs Channel Heights (San Pedro) interior, Richard and Dion Neutra papers (LSC 1179). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

Figure 27: Julius Schulman, photographer. "Channel Heights Schoolroom," box 788, folder 4: Photographs Channel Heights (San Pedro) interior, Richard and Dion Neutra papers (LSC 1179). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

Chapter Three: The Political Costs of the Cooperative Alternative

Less than a month before Vladimir Lenin led troops into Petrograd to overthrow the

Russian Republic and form the Soviet Union in November 1917, a small group of Southern

California Socialists announced that their Mohave Desert commune, Llano del Rio, had failed,

that the group would move south to Louisiana in the hopes of forming a more sustainable

socialist enclave, and that a majority of its members would be leaving for good, including a nine-

year-old Gregory Ain (1908-1989) who would return to Los Angeles with his family.[172] Like

many Californian worker cooperatives that came before it, such as The Cooperative Brotherhood

of Winters Island (1893-1929), the Altrurian Cooperative (1895-1901), and the Kaweah Colony

(1886-1892), Llano del Rio's self-sustaining mission proved untenable. Located about seventy-

five miles outside of Los Angeles, the founding members of the so-called "colony" believed they

could create a socialist island, insulated from capitalism's pervasive influence. Despite these

hopes, the project was forced to shutter.[173] Nevertheless, Llano del Rio decisively shaped Ain's

architectural approach. Specifically, Ain's housing cooperatives reflect the primary lesson he

took from Llano del Rio's collapse: that sustainable alternatives to capitalism needed to suggest,

rather than demand, communality.

To do this, Ain designed homes within a California Modern idiom that included

everything a traditional house would but with additional features aimed at reimagining domestic

life in the United States. This goal distinguishes his projects from contemporary housing

communities like Levittown. Where the latter are mere commodities, designed to maximize the

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[172] Over the next months, Llano del Rio's remaining members moved from Southern California to the Louisiana town of Vernon Parish, where leadership believed the group could more easily grow crops to sustain itself. "Llano's Louisiana Purchase," *The Western Comrade*, October 1917, 6-8.

[173] While the group initially planned on maintaining the original Mohave Desert location, it was soon abandoned.

sellers' profits, the former's political objectives make it a special kind of commodity whose

meaning is not exhausted by its exchange value. Every feature of Ain's cooperative projects

proposed a novel housing model that put pressure on the contemporary American housing

system—moving people from secluded single-family homes designed for profit to private,

single-family homes located in cooperatively owned and run communities designed for easing

the burdens of daily life. This is what distinguishes Ain's cooperatives from mere commodities:

Ain's homes are at once for the market and about the market.[174]

      Twenty-eight years after leaving Llano del Rio, Ain remained inspired by his early

childhood home. In the mid-1940s, the California Modern architect designed several cooperative

housing projects, including the Community Homes Cooperative (c. 1946-1951, unbuilt) and the

Avenel Cooperative Housing Project (1947), which updated Llano del Rio's model of communal

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[174] I will expand on this more in the chapter but for now it is worth briefly noting that, in both the Hegelian and Marxist sense, anything exchanged in a market is a commodity. The distinction I am making is between a mere commodity, or "object," and an artwork, or in this case an architectural work, which I contend is a special kind of commodity. The major difference between the two is that a mere commodity is valued by its owner for its exchange value. Therefore, the object is valued for its salability rather than its usefulness, purpose, or meaning. For example, a writing desk is valued by its owner for its ability to be sold, whether its purchaser uses the desk to write on or to barricade his bedroom is of no interest to the seller. On the other hand, an artwork is imbued with normative meanings by a producer who intends for his work to be understood or utilized in particular ways. This is why I can write a dissertation chapter aimed at understanding Gregory Ain's midcentury cooperatives; because he intended for the cooperatives to be recognized as interventions into the domestic housing market. This is not to say that all buildings are normatively inscribed. Speculatively built houses constructed for suburbs like Levittown are notably absent of architectural intent as they were designed to be sold, not, as in Ain's case, to make normative or political arguments about American domestic life. Were this chapter to be about the homes at Levittown, it would be a much different one, concerned with sociological questions like, "how much money did the average Levittowner make?" or historical ones like, "why did large-scale suburbs like Levittown explode in popularity at midcentury?" One would be confused to ask interpretive questions like "why did the Levitt's choose to include a park on this block and not the next?," and expect a meaningful answer. If there is an answer to these kinds of questions they would be necessarily be historically and sociologically framed e.g., "all midcentury suburbs included at least one park" or "mothers were more likely to move into Levittown houses if there were a park nearby." This is because the houses were not constructed to *mean* anything outside of the market. As William Levitt explained, "any fool can build homes—what counts is how many you can sell for how little." Eric Pace, "William J. Levitt, 86, Pioneer of Suburbs, Dies," *New York Times,* January 29, 1994, https://www.nytimes.com/1994/01/29/obituaries/william-j-levitt-86-pioneer-of-suburbs-dies.html?smid=url-share.

living for the modern context. Like the founders and members of Llano del Rio, Ain's

cooperative clients had straightforwardly political aims. Members joined the cooperatives hoping

to ameliorate the "usual indifference of the ordinary city dweller toward his neighbors,"

affording members "secure attractive homes" built "not for profit but for the service of its

occupants."[175] However, unlike Llano del Rio, Ain's cooperatives were located within Los

Angeles, a city governed by what Llano del Rio founder and 1911 Los Angeles mayoral

candidate, Job Harriman called "the exploiting class."[176] Situated within the city, Ain's

communities would inevitably abut speculatively built housing tracts, lavish single-family

homes, and multi-family residences owned by corrupt landlords. But in the 1940s, addressing the

cooperative's unfavorable surroundings was precisely the point, as Ain and his clients invested in

and joined these cooperatives for both practical and political reasons: to obtain comfortable and

safe housing at a reasonable cost and to propose an alternative to the exploitative housing market

which left many in a "hideous sordid struggle to keep a roof over one's head."[177]

Indeed, their cooperative vision was buoyed by New Deal and World War II era ideals

that supported centralized state planning and robust welfare programs. Having survived the

economic devastations of the Depression and the traumas of war, New Deal-era reformers, many

even card-carrying members of the Los Angeles chapter of the communist party, sought to

concretize their vision architecturally to showcase an actionable alternative to unfettered

capitalism in the hopes they could prevent the past from repeating itself. And in the context of

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[175] "Cooperation," *Monthly Labor Review* 56, no. 1 (January 1943): 95. ; Agnes D. Warbasse, *The ABC of Co-Operative Housing* (New York: The Co-Operative League, 1924) 1.

[176] Wolfe acted as a public relations manager to Job Harriman during the his 1911 bid to become Los Angeles's next mayor. Frank E. Wolfe*, California Social-Democrat*, December 2, 1911. As cited in: Daniel J. Johnson, "'No Make-believe Class Struggle:' The Socialist Municipal Campaign in Los Angeles, 1911," *Labor History* 41, no. 1, (2000): 34.

[177] Warbasse, *The ABC of Co-Operative Housing*, 12.

the 1940s, before the "Keynesian consensus," which considered "individualism and property ownership as the route to general wealth and prosperity," became hegemonic, the cooperators' political vision was far from some utopian dream. Operating in Los Angeles, which according to the FBI had "one of the largest concentrations of communists" in the nation, cooperators joined a substantive cohort of progressives that emphasized the importance of statist programs.[178] Ain's extant cooperatives are vestiges from this moment—before McCarythism evacuated leftist progressivism from liberal politics—when centralized planning and cooperative housing were widely considered viable strategies for organizing American domestic life.

While a stalwart defender of the left, what set Ain's designs apart from his contemporaries was his decision to design modern homes that combined what he considered the best parts of private homeownership with the best parts of cooperative living. For example, at Community Homes, Ain placed privately-owned single-family homes within a cooperatively run neighborhood complete with shared yards, jointly run stores, free childcare programs, and more (fig. 1). While considerably different in approach, Ain's Avenel and Community Homes cooperatives were fundamentally oriented around the twin goals of privacy and a deepening sense of neighborly connectedness. In general, the architect sought to reconcile American individualism with communitarianism in a postwar climate that emphasized the former, and in so doing disclose the quintessentially communist insight that individualization is only possible within a group.

In this way, his cooperative projects refuted some critics' belief that modern architecture posed a "threat of cultural dictatorship" based on the Miesian notion "less is more."[179] Instead,

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[178] Kim Phillips-Fein, "The History of Neoliberalism," in *Shaped by the State: Toward a New Political History of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Brent Cebul, Lily Geismer, and Mason B. Williams (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019), *357.*
[179] Elizabeth Gordon, "The Threat to the Next America," *House Beautiful*, April 1953, 130.

Ain's cooperative projects advanced what I've termed an "additive modernism," with homes that included everything typical of a moderately-priced single-family home with the addition of modern touches aimed at making daily life easier and more enjoyable, including spacious kitchens, living rooms that extend outdoors, and retractable walls to add and remove rooms at will. Having been tasked with creating cooperatives that could replace traditional housing programs, Ain first needed to assure skeptics that modern homes located in communal neighborhoods could be as comfortable as any conventional single-family home, with the added bonus of being affordable, protected from the unpredictable vacillations of a volatile housing market, and located within an amenity-rich and cooperatively-run community.[180]

In short, Ain embraced the seemingly conflicting directive to build cooperative housing projects within an industry that centered the privately-owned single-family home. In order to do this, before starting a new project's "preliminary sketches," Ain made a "list of problems to be solved." This process helped him "make the problems into advantages." "Let [the problems] contradict each other," he maintained, for "an inevitable solution comes from this."[181] Ain did not seek to eliminate these contradictions but to allow their opposition to function as a solution. One of the reasons Ain turned to California Modern design was because it allowed him to maintain his projects' inherent contradictions, which in turn encouraged audiences to reflect on and analyze his designs.[182] Ain straightforwardly addressed users by subtly repurposing

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[180] By "comfortable," I mean that the homes provided all of the amenities that a typical American at the time would expect from her home, a private backyard, room to store her belongings, sturdy construction, etc.

[181] Gregory Ain, interview by David Gebhard and Harriette Von Bretton, June 19, 1973, transcribed notes, David Gebhard Papers, Architecture & Design Collection, University Art Museum, University of California, Santa Barbara, 7; quoted in Anthony Denzer, *Gregory Ain: The Modern House as Social Commentary* (New York: Rizzoli, 2008), 67.

[182] Unlike Neutra, Ain did not fear being wrongly interpreted and misunderstood. He built homes for an audience whom he knew he could not control.

traditional architectural forms to ascribe novel meanings to them. These reformations, however, always remained practical as their discrete repurposing was meant to suggest, rather than demand, the adoption of new living patterns. And, like any suggestion, in order to be adopted, they needed to be worthwhile, functional, and easy to embrace. For instance, some of the core elements of Ain's additive modernism included hard-to-pinpoint plotlines that undermined traditional norms of home ownership to create more cohesive neighborhoods; movable walls that allowed dwellers to add or subtract rooms per their needs without increasing the cost; and open kitchens that eliminated inherited divisions between public-social and private-domestic spaces (fig. 2). Each of these features emphasized Ain's intention to illuminate an alternative political horizon, which arose dialectically between the architect and his tenants.

In so doing, Ain reversed his longtime mentor Richard Neutra's building method, which considered architecture an "educational venture" wherein dwellers are treated like students to be covertly "trained" by the architect's subtle hand.[183] Conversely, Ain's goals in no way required training residents or disguising his intentions, instead treating architecture as a means of "sheltering and ennobling some designated human activity."[184] As such, he refrained from ascribing his design's materials and forms with agential power. It is not just that Ain did not believe that he could reform his clients, but he considered the project paternalistic, politically suspect, and anti-democratic. Instead, Ain offered dwellers the opportunity to inhabit a new, more communitarian future but one that emerged from shared set of values between architect and tenant. Thus, rather than bypass accountability for his designs by imbuing materials and forms with "scientifically" verified effects, Ain took responsibility for his choices by treating his

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[183] Richard Neutra, *Architecture of Social Concern in Regions of Mild Climate* (Los Angeles, Gerth Todtmann, 1948), 192-193.
[184] Gregory Ain, "Letter to the Editor," *Arts and Architecture*, December 1964, 36.

audience as interlocutors and, when possible, including them in the design process.[185]

While Ain would later reject Neutra's material fetishism, the celebrated émigré had a profound impact on Ain's career. The two met at Rudolph Schindler's Kings Road House (1922, fig. 3) in 1928. At the time, Neutra and his family resided at the two-family home alongside Schindler and his wife Pauline. Years later, Ain credited his visits to the Kings Road House— considered one of Los Angeles' earliest and most successful experiments in cooperative living— as "the first stimulus toward my interest in architecture."[186] To Ain, the home's modernity stemmed from its thoughtful treatment of its residents. For instance, though inhabitants at Schindler's home shared housekeeping and financial responsibilities, the location of household members' private offices and bedrooms maintained individual and familial privacy. This, for Ain, was what made the Kings Road House "modern." However, as Ain recalled, when he asked Neutra what it was like to live in this modern home, the latter rebuked the young architect, explaining that the house was not modern because it was not constructed with "industrial materials."[187] At this point in Neutra's career, modern architecture equaled modern materials. In contrast, Ain rejected Neutra's definition, considering modern architecture a "social art" whereby its "aesthetic power must be derived from a social ethos."[188] This philosophical schism would forever divide the two California Modern architects.

During his years under Neutra's tutelage and (erratic) employment, Ain worked on several of his steel-and-glass designs, including the Lovell House (1929), the Van der Leeuw

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[185] To give one example, at the Community Homes Cooperative, the collective held joint meetings with the architect to help determine how the homes and neighborhood should be planned.

[186] Gregory Ain, "R.M. Schindler," *Arts and Architecture*, May 1954, 12.

[187] Thomas S. Hines *Architecture of the Sun: Los Angeles Modernism 1900-1970* (New York: Rizzoli International Inc., 2010), 432.

[188] Gregory Ain, "In Search of Theory VI," *Arts and Architecture*, January 1966, 15.

Research House (c.1932), and the William Beard House (c. 1934).[189] Neutra, in fact, sometimes

credited Ain as a "collaborator" and even paid the young architect, albeit sporadically.[190] Over

the course of their time together, Neutra introduced Ain and his other young protégés, which

included Harwell Hamilton Harris (1903-1990), to the German modernist housing philosophy

Existenzminimum. According to this program, housing for the working classes required scientific

precision, with the goal of creating as efficient a floor plan as possible and providing only for the

dweller's most basic needs. Having formed a Los Angeles chapter of the International

Congresses of Modern Architecture (CIAM), Ain and Harris used these principles to design a

group of affordable row houses, which the duo would submit to CIAM's 1930 meeting on city

planning, alongside Neutra's Lovell House and an imagined city he called "Rush City Reformed"

(fig. 4).

However, in the years following their submission, Ain's own architectural vision

matured, and he eventually came to resent *Existenzminimum* just as he did Neutra's materialism.

The young architect grew critical of Neutra equating novel materials with modern architecture,

arguing that "to use the industrial techniques for building a house would be very important if it

reduces the price, but it is certainly no moral objective in itself."[191] In Ain's opinion, Neutra's

resolute commitment to industrial materials in the 1930s inched toward the absurd when he opted

to paint large portions of the "all-metal" Beard House silver so that the house would at the very

least *appear* to be made completely of steel.[192]

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[189] Ain briefly lived at Neutra's Van der Leeuw Research House.

[190] Hines, 433.

[191] Gregory Ain, interviewed by Kathryn Smith, Los Angeles, Ca, July 27, 1977, Esther McCoy Papers, Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art, Washington DC. As cited in Denzer, *Gregory Ain*, 37.

[192] Neutra would continue this practice well into the 1960s. See, Barbara Mac Lamprecht, *Neutra: Complete Works* (Taschen: Cologne, 2015), 34.

Ain's antipathy for Neutra came to a head when the young architect discovered that their

client, Melba Beard, was "extremely unhappy with the house."[193] In an attempt to address her

issues, Ain suggested Neutra adopt a U-shaped plan in place of his centralized one. If Ain's

diagnosis was correct, the U-plan would satisfy Beard's desire to separate the house into zones,

so, for example, the sleeping quarters would be distinguished from the living area, while all

sharing a centralized outdoor space. Neutra not only rejected Ain's scheme but when he found

the young architect had continued planning an alternative design at his desk, became "livid" with

his defiant pupil.[194] "Neutra was so completely wrong," recalled Ain, "that I began to learn from

him." Indeed, Ain's bourgeoning architectural approach was diametrically opposed to Neutra's.

The disagreement spelled disaster for the duo and, rejecting any pursuit of "modernization" "for

its own sake," Ain left Neutra's practice in 1935.[195]

Ain's career took off shortly thereafter. Between 1935 and 1940, Ain completed sixty-

three commissions, with approximately 12 of these projects coming about due to Ain's affiliation

with several presumably communist groups.[196] Though the majority of his commissions were for

relatively large, single-family homes, he remained committed to designing small affordable

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[193] Denzer, *Gregory Ain*, 37.

[194] Denzer, *Gregory Ain*, 37.

[195] The entirety of the architectural historian Gwendolyn Wright's quote is worth reproducing here. Describing many modern architects' admiration for efficiency, she wrote, "saving time, saving steps, increasing output, standardizing the final product: the vocabulary of Taylorism was applied to dusting a mantelpiece, raising children, or running a factory. Modernization had become a goal for its own sake." Gwendolyn Wright, *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 155.

[196] In her book *The Second Generation* (1984), Esther McCoy explains how the House Un-American Committee would later use a person's affiliation with suspected communist groups to flag its members as suspected or confirmed communists. As she explains, "The House Un-American Activities hearing spread fear everywhere. One earned a place in McCarthy's Subversive List, not only by membership in the Communist Party but the Lawyer's Guild, Newspaper Guild, Engineers, Architects, and Chemist Federation, and dozens of others; the names of petition signers were kept on file; association with known members of such organizations was as damning as membership. […] Both Ain and I were members of the Engineers, Architects, and Chemist Federation." See Esther McCoy, *The Second Generation*, (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1984), 119.

homes, for which he won dozens of competitions, including an award from the Guggenheim Foundation to study low-cost housing design.

Only the wartime material shortage slowed Ain's breakneck pace. In 1940, Ain joined John Entenza (1905-1984)—the editor and figurehead of California's esteemed modern arts and architectural magazine *Arts & Architecture*—at Ray and Charles Eames' (1907-1978) Evans Products Company.[197] There, a cohort of architects and designers devised several molded-plywood instruments for the U.S. military, including a leg splint and glider parts. In 1944, Entenza invited the thirty-six-year-old Ain and thirty-seven-year-old Charles Eames to judge *Arts and Architecture*'s "Second Annual Competition for the Small House," hosted by U.S. Plywood. The jury consisted of several notable California Modern architects, including Sumner Spaulding, Frederick L. Langhorst, J.R. Davidson, and John L. Rex.[198] Acknowledging the growing scarcity of middle-incoming housing, the brief stipulated that entries be affordable to the "average workman," costing between $5,000-$6,000, "afford a good living," and be "buildable now."

Though the magazine describes the juror's dispute as "pleasant," it is clear Ain took issue with the group awarding Charles D. Wiley first place, calling their decision "disturbing."[199] Wiley's "lavish" design may have been the most obviously buildable—a simple rectangle with a flat roof—but Ain decried the sprawling home's choppy interior. Wiley divided the house into four "centers": one for sleeping, one for activities, one for quiet time, and a final one for "domestic" matters (fig. 5). Wiley described the latter, which included a combined kitchen and informal dining area located behind a heavy wall that both housed the home's mechanical center and hid the domestic space from public view, as "her part of the house." Despite being only

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[197] Also known as the "U.S. Plywood Company."
[198] "Arts and Architecture's Second Annual Competition for the Design of a Small House," *Arts and Architecture*, February 1945, 28.
[199] Gregory Ain, "Jury Comments," *Arts and Architecture*, February 1945, 30.

fractionally larger than the entryway, this was where, according to Wiley, cooking, eating, sewing, laundry, and childrearing would all take place. For comparison, Wiley lists no more than one activity for any of the home's other "centers." In his succinct discussion of Wiley's design, Ain bemoaned the architect's "awkward" and "haphazard" plan, which, he maintained, "few housewives would accept." Ain instead preferred the third-place entry submitted by Eduardo Fernando Catalano, which he considered "one of the most interesting new technical schemes yet proposed" (fig. 6).[200] Catalano's 3'6'' module plan was smaller than Wiley's but more visually striking. The architect considered plywood ideal for prefabrication, believing its quick construction with mass-produced parts would breathe new life into contemporary home design by replacing "out-of-date methods of construction."[201] This proposition impressed Ain, who had long considered the positive effects of marrying module plans with prefabricated units to decrease the cost of constructing homes.

It is clear from the jury's comments that Ain disagreed with the results. Nearly every other juror made pains to acknowledge Wiley's "inadequacies, extravagances, and lack of convenient facilities." But, as Eames explained, the group decided to award him first place because of his "important contribution to the conception of living space."[202] In comparison, the jury lauded Catalano's design but believed it "failed at the instruction for being 'buildable now.'"[203] To this, Ain angrily retorted that "perhaps the best judges of architectural competitions should be not architects at all, but laymen." Bemoaning his fellow judges' idealization of abstract "conceptions," which he believed blinded them to the urgent need for more practical housing

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[200] Ain, "Jury Comments," 30.
[201] Eduardo Fernando Catalano, "Arts and Architecture's Second Annual Competition for the Design of a Small House," *Arts and Architecture*, February 1945, 38.
[202] Charles Eames "Jury comments," *Arts and Architecture*, February 1945, 30.
[203] J. R. Davison, "Jury comments," *Arts and Architecture*, February 1945, 30.

solutions, Ain accused the jury of forgetting the competition's "more immediate and serious

function—to show what kind of houses can and should be built after the war to satisfy the

desperate need for homes."[204] Ain's comments highlight his disappointment with the jury's

idealism and the fact that, according to him, the jurors were too "personally" and "emotionally"

identified with architecture, treating it as a rarified art rather than as a practical solution to

immediate problems. As he explained,

> Too many modern architects, in their zeal to promulgate new and frequently valid ideas,
> withdraw from the common architectural problems of common people. But it ought to be
> clear that the more common, that is, the more prevalent, a problem is, just so much more
> important does the solution of that problem become. A preference for tomorrow's
> problem over today's is essentially an evasion of both; tomorrow's success tritely depends
> upon today's accomplishment. And today's problem was clearly and simply presented in
> the program of the competition.[205]

It was not merely Wiley's win that unmoored Ain, but the judge's reasoning. Whatever

conversation went on between the jurors revealed to Ain that his fellow architects privileged

novelty over imaginative solutions to affordability. At the same time, he lamented the jury's

reification of outmoded domestic patterns that isolated housewives in clunky and enclosed

kitchens, which he concluded, "few housewives would accept."[206]

Overall, the dispute revealed Ain's intention to part ways with the architectural

establishment, including California Modern architects whose designs he admired. By placing

their "personal aesthetic and 'idealistic'" concepts above "fundamental practical factors," Ain

worried that architects would doom the profession by alienating everyday people and thus

rendering their practice obsolete.[207] As he put it,

> Tens of thousands of families, now compelled to occupy substandard dwellings, will be
> in a position to start building as soon as priorities are lifted. For obvious practical

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[204] Ain, "Jury Comments," 29.
[205] Ain, "Jury Comments," 30.
[206] Ain, "Jury Comments," 30.
[207] Ain, "Jury Comments," 30.

reasons, they will be unable to wait for an industrially manufactured product, or for some saner kind of land subdivision which we hope will eventually appear. These first tens of thousands of houses will necessarily be built by methods not very different from those employed in the prewar houses, in subdivisions as they already exist. We hope that these houses will be good, but we know that they must be economical. […] The problem is a problem of planning, which, if not well solved now by the architects, will be badly solved later by the jerry builders.[208]

If architects turned away from common people and their problems, Ain warned, other more nefarious operators will take up the task.

It is hard to overstate Ain's prescience, for in just a few months' time, Levitt and Sons would begin constructing their well-known, speculatively-built 17,450-home suburb in Nassau County, New York (1947-1951). The company employed modern construction techniques and non-union laborers to mass-produce traditionally-styled homes, priced for middle-class earners at less than $8,000.[209] In a postwar era, that left millions of people in poorly ventilated, too-small apartments, the immense suburban tract came as a relief to young white veterans for whom the low-cost homes were available.[210] "Getting into this house was like being emancipated," chimed one so-called "Levittowner," eager to sing the suburb's praises.[211] Thanks to G.I. Bill benefits and government-insured mortgages, by 1950, the New York suburb had enticed tens of thousands of young families out of the cities and into their first homes.[212] Armed with cheap money and growing demand, by war's end, the "jerry-builders" Ain warned about increased housing starts

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[208] Ain, "Jury Comments," 29-30.
[209] In 1950, all Levittown homes costs just $7,990.
[210] "In 1945, 98 percent of American cities reported shortages of houses, and more than 90 percent reported shortages of apartments. By 1947, 6 million families were doubling up with relatives or friends." See, Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 160.
[211] "Housing: Up from the Potato Fields," *Time*, July 2, 1950.
[212] Nearly all of Levittown's 40,000 residents in 1950 were under the age of 35 and, of the 8,000 children residing there, just 900 were above the age of seven. "Housing: Up from the Potato Fields," *Time*, July 2, 1950.

by almost 10 times the war-time rate, jumping from 13,900 in 1944 to 126,500 in 1947.[213]

  With open floor plans that removed bulky walls separating the kitchen to the rest of the house, Levittown's traditional facades masked contemporary floor plans that married economy with changing notions of family life. Fewer walls cut costs and afforded stay-at-home moms a larger field of view. Having removed formal dining areas, the Levittown homes included larger kitchens attached to "activity areas," which acted as the family's dining, living, and children's play area.[214] Double-paned windows and sliding glass doors, further opened the postwar house, leading to each family's private oasis: the backyard. With few nearby attractions and with most stay-at-home mothers left without a car of their own, Levittown's single-family homes became isolated worlds unto themselves, a place where mothers could dedicate themselves completely to homemaking and childcare. Dr. Benjamin Spock's best-selling parenting book *Baby and Child Care* (1945) encouraged mothers to embrace their natural instincts and, most of all, remain flexible.[215] The flexible home, then, gave physical form to domestic practices, wherein the "working mother" was considered a "special problem" to be addressed.[216] Where new gadgets like the washing machine, electric iron, and vacuum cleaner were considered essential to her work, the goal was not to free up more of her time to pursue her own interests, but to make her labor more efficient so that she could get more done in a single day.[217] According to the new standard embodied by the Levitt & Sons homes, housewives would spend their time maintaining the family's domestic sanctuary that served as both a home and a recreational facility, marginalizing the need to leave the house. Counterintuitive though it may seem, the Levitt's

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[213] David Siskind, "Housing Starts: Background and Derivation of Estimates, 1945-1982," *Construction Review* (May/June 1982): 8.
[214] Wright, *Building the Dream*, 254.
[215] Dr. Benjamin Spock, *Baby and Child Care* (1945) (New York: Pocket Books, 1957).
[216] Spock, *Baby and Child Care*, 569-74.
[217] May, 163.

open-plan homes elaborated *Existenzminimum* principles, having been designed with such

scientific precision that the contractors were able to both cut costs and appoint the homes so

families hardly needed for anything else, save for a few nearby shops, pools, and a few public

parks for socializing young children.

This is the backdrop of Ain's attempts to gain traction in the suburban housing market. A

month before *Arts and Architecture* printed his jury comments, the thirty-six-year-old architect

began designing his solution to the problem of middle-income housing. Located in the Los

Angeles neighborhood of Altadena, Ain's Park Planned Homes marked Ain's entry into

subdivision design. Comprised of 28 identical three-bedroom, two-bathroom residences, Ain

anticipated the bourgeoning demand for single-family homes. Aside from the home being

quintessentially California Modern, what distinguishes Ain's Park Planned Homes from

suburban tracts like Levittown, was Ain's decision to foreground the neighborhood over and

against the individual house.

Partnering with the landscape architect Garrett Eckbo, Ain sought to create a park-like

atmosphere. Despite inheriting a hilly quarter-acre site that had already been subdivided, the duo

devised a program that afforded each home a singular character that simultaneously maintained

the neighborhood's coordinated wholeness.[218] By taking advantage of the area's existing slope,

Ain leveled each plot, thus allowing the resulting height differences to act as natural barriers

between homes. To maintain the unified neighborhood feel, he and Eckbo then countered the

incline by planting taller trees at the bottom of the hill and shorter ones at its peak (fig. 7). To

emphasize each home's relationship to the larger neighborhood, Ain and Eckbo designed the

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[218] Critics celebrated Ain's "radical departure in concept form speculative and real estate custom," for having uncovered a "practical solution" to housing that resists the expected "feeling of monotony." See, "28 Moderns in a Group," *American Builder*, February 1948, 94.

homes in pairs; Ain flipped every other house's plan to mirror its neighbor, while Eckbo planted

shared gardens between the dyads.

This not to say the homes lacked privacy. In fact, Ain's Park Planned Homes offered

more privacy than the traditionally modeled homes at Levittown. Where the Levitts placed

street-facing windows at the homes' front, any street-facing windows at Ain's California Modern

homes' were screened by fenced-in garden patios, thus bringing in light from both sides of the

house while closing the exterior, at least nominally, to passerby.[219]

Ain repeated this pattern at his better-known Mar Vista Tract (1948). Once again, he

collaborated with Eckbo to create a verdant, cohesive neighborhood despite it being a private

housing development with pre-determined plots organized on a gridiron. By mirroring and

rotating plans, alternating the garage's location, and adding canopies or trellises to some houses,

Ain created eight different housing types. For each house, or sometimes set of houses, he and

Eckbo introduced a new planting scheme that at once individuated and connected the homes. For

instance, in their plan for the Dusty Miller house and its neighbor, the duo echoed the mirrored

plans with a mirrored planting schema (fig. 8). Countering the facades' static 90-degree angle,

Eckbo added two diagonal rows of nine lantana dwarf bushes on either side of the shared lawn.

He used the enlivening 45-degree line of bushes to bisect the static corner separating the garage

from the front door.[220] The rows' proximity to the homes' entries foregrounded each homes'

independence, while the mirrored orientation located the homes in a planned neighborhood.

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[219] Inspired by the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and Rudolph Schindler, many California Modern architects used clerestory windows or screens to maximize privacy from the street. What Ain here does differently is include privacy screens within a larger neighborhood wherein every other house shares a greenspace.

[220] For more on how midcentury architects, specifically Rudolph Schindler, marshaled the 45 against the 90-degree angle see, Todd Cronan, *Nothing Permanent: Modern Architecture in California* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press: 2023).

Overall, by coupling the homes and linking the yards, Ain purposely blurred distinctions between

private lots. This is especially apparent in shared front yards like Miller's. In the landscape plans,

the lots are largely indistinguishable. A single swath of grass connects Miller's yard to his

neighbors as five Photinia Serrulata Nova (small-flowered trees) run in a single line from one

house to the other.[221] But this line is not evenly distributed across the yard; instead, it skews

right, placing three of the five trees closer to one house. This slight tilt of the axis helps

demarcate one lot from the next, while the use of a single line of trees seamlessly connects them.

Ain's neighborhood configurations for Park Planned Homes and Mar Vista proposed

planning schemas that were anathema to Levitt and Sons' vision of American suburbia. Insofar as

the thousands of speculatively built homes comprising Levittown could be considered a

"community," the effect was produced by proximity alone. The Levitts construed their houses as

commodities whose exchange value outstripped all other forms of concern including its

usefulness.[222] The houses were designed to provoke enough interest that a buyer felt compelled

to purchase, after that, what the owner did with the house was their own business. That is, unless

the new owner's activities affected production of the next commodity or threatened to reduce the

exchange value of nearby homes. In fact, before he sold off his lots, William Levitt was known

to drive around Levittown looking for anyone neglecting their lawn duties. If he found

someone's yard lacking, William would send gardeners to the house and bill the homeowners for

the cost.[223] William justified his and his family's financial investment in straightforwardly

capitalist terms. He told one *Time* reporter that housing middle-class families in single-family

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[221] No longer extant.

[222] For more on the economic distinction between commodities and arts works see, Nicolas Brown, "The
Work of Art in the Age of its Real Subsumption Under Capital," *Nonsite.org* (March 13, 2012).

[223] Richard Lacayo quoting William Levitt. Richard Lacayo, "Suburban Legend William Levitt," *Time*,
December 7, 1998.

homes would protect American capitalist interests against the looming threat of communism

because "no one who owns his house and lot can be a communist. He has too much to do."[224]

According to the Levitts, the single-family home, mass-produced and traditionally fashioned,

could sustain American capitalism against ideological threats, by engendering in their owners a

sense of individual duty to protect and maintain one's private property. With this in mind,

William's actions assume a new, political tenor: while he may have sent the gardeners to protect

his family's investment, the homeowner's failure to upkeep their own yards could be interpreted

as a nascent rejection of American liberal values that equated homeownership with moral

goodness.[225]

   Though the Levittown model would become the dominant housing program in the United

States by the 1950s, in the 1940s it remained one idea among many. Ain's Park Planned and Mar

Vista housing tracts envisioned an alternative housing model that included everything Levittown

did, plus a cohesive neighborhood look and added privacy. Moreover, the neighborhoods' unified

park-like atmosphere reflected New Deal and World War II era paradigms, as formulated by

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[224] Lacayo quoting William Levitt. Lacayo, "Suburban Legend."

[225] The sociologist Herbert J. Gans would likely take issue with my arguments. In his 1967 book on the New Jersey iteration of Levittown (1958), where he lived for several years, Gans asserted that only a sociological approach could determine whether cultural and architectural critics were right to condemn new projects like Levittown as breeding grounds for "a new set of Americans, as mass produced as the houses." While I am in no way making an argument about the people who moved to Levittown, I find Gans' thesis—that sociological studies are the best method for understanding Levittown's myriad effects and for determining whether those effects were "intended" or "unintended"—questionable. Though I cannot for reasons of space extrapolate fully the pitfalls of adopting a wholly sociological approach to the study of Levittown, suffice to say that one can learn plenty about a project by examining how it looks (is the architectural style traditional or modern?); its organization (are there public schools nearby?);and its economy (how much did it cost to build the homes and how much did it sell for?). But, if we assume Gans is correct, then his "objective" conclusions ought to tell us something that is unobservable about Levvitown. Unfortunately for Gans, his ultimate claims—that people moved to Levittown for a variety of reasons and that there was no standard Levittowner—amounts to nothing more than a celebration of "diversity," "pluralism," and individual rights. In the end, Gans' sociological approach produces nothing more than common sense; it hardly produces an argument. Herbert J. Gans, *The Levittowners: Ways of Life and Politics in the New Suburban Community* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), xxxvii; xlix; 369.

groups like Telesis, whereby "the concept of home extends beyond the individual house and lot to the neighborhoods" with the intention of encouraging a "basis for real neighborhood consciousness."[226] But where Ain's tract projects succeeded in visually suggesting an alternative to the emerging individualist model of suburban housing, even going so far as to hint at a new model for organizing housing tracts, they fell short of providing residents actionable tools for collectivizing neighborhood life. Despite these shortcomings, Ain's neighborhood designs caught the attention of hopeful cooperative members, whose vision for a more communitarian housing scene—now buoyed by state and local policies that sanctioned non-profit land ownership—made it possible for Ain to design projects that could protect residents from the volatile speculative housing market.[227]

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[226] Telesis, *...And now we plan* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum, 1941), np.

[227] The history of cooperative housing in the United States has been a piecemeal effort because, unlike Europe variants, it lacks sustained governmental and public support. Therefore, while several cooperatives have appeared across the U.S., including Llano del Rio or Robert Owen's cooperative project in New Harmony Indiana, the trend has failed to take root until, in the mid-century, the government began financing mutual or cooperative housing projects. However, even then, private developers took precedence. Under the Hoover administration, Better Homes in America, Inc., encouraged municipalities to support private-public partnerships that would encourage the construction of working-class housing projects that, in some cases were cooperatively run. In New York and Chicago, the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company and the Marshall Field estate developed two subsidized housing projects for black workers and their families, who, in turn, cooperatively ran the apartments. Following New York Governor Alfred E. Smith's passage of the1926 the State Housing Act, which provided tax incentives to limited-dividend companies developing low-cost housing, union organizers and activists, organized cooperative housing projects, including the Amalgamated Clothing Workers cooperative (1928). In the 1940s, unions partnered with New Dealers from the Federal Works Agency to help tenant associations purchase the defense housing communities constructed during the war and funded through the Lanham Act. With the introduction of FHA-insured loans, new legislation provided cooperators with affordable means for developing a cooperative. While the government did not go so far as to incentivize cooperative programs, postwar housing programs included provisions specifically for cooperative housing. For example, in April 1947, 1948, and 1949 the FHA updated its insurance policies with explicit reference to housing cooperatives. Notably, in April 1947, the GI bill was modified to outline how veterans could form cooperatives and secure mortgages for the construction of housing and community facilities. See Elsie Danenberg, *Get Your Own Home: The Cooperative Way* (New York: Greenberg, 1949); Gail Radford, *Modern Housing for America: Policy Struggles in the New Deal Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Kristin M. Szylvian, *The Mutual Housing Experiment: New Deal Communities for the Urban Middle Class* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2015); and Wright, *Building the Dream*, 196-200.

Ain's foray into cooperative housing began in 1946 when fifteen members of the Motion

Picture Screen Cartoon Guild approached the architect about designing a cooperative in the San

Fernando Valley neighborhood of Reseda. This group of animators was motivated by

demonstrably leftist concerns and comprised several alleged Communist Party members who

would later be blacklisted from Hollywood or called to testify in front of the House Un-

American Activities Committee (HUAC).[228] Therefore, Ain's affiliation with several leftist

organizations "made him a fitting choice for this group."[229]

Confirming the cooperatives popularity at that time, the group quickly added 265 new

members, including several celebrated artists such as the African-American performer Lena

Horne, the graphic designer and Telesis member Saul Bass, as well the ceramicists Max and Rita

Lawrence.[230] To join, participants purchased stock in Community Homes Inc., with membership

fees ranging from $750 for veterans to $1500 for non-veterans.[231] Money raised during the initial

membership drive went toward obtaining the 106-acre site, which the group eventually secured

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[228] In his book on Gregory Ain, Anthony Denzer listed some of the executive board's most notable members, which included several blacklisted cartoonists, including David Hilberman, John Hubley, Paul Julian, Lew Keller, and Bill Hurtz. The animator Charlotte Adams admitted to being a communist and would later "name names," including fellow board members Hilberman and Hubley. As Denzer insinuates, Earl Klein, a fellow board member and animator, was likely also exposed as a communist given that he abruptly retired from animation in 1946. Finally, the Los Angeles Housing Authority official Frank Wilkinson, who also joined the leadership board, was called to testify in front of the House Un-American Activities Committee. The Committee accused Wilkinson of being a communist and, as a result, fired from his position with the Housing Authority. Denzer, *Gregory Ain*, 120-121.

[229] Denzer, *Gregory Ain*, 120.

[230] Though Community Homes would never come to fruition, Max and Rita Lawrence lived at several Ain buildings including his earlier Dunsmuir Apartments, his Park Planned Homes, and at the Avenel Cooperative.

[231] However, while membership was considered in terms of stocks, the San Fernando Valley required that each individual homeowner be issued a deed for their plot. See: Mary Roche, "Group Living for Veterans," *The New York Times Magazine*, August 4, 1948, 35.

for around $350,000.[232]

Faced with designing 280 single-family homes and several community buildings, Ain worked with members to identify the large groups diverse needs. In the end, he settled on six housing types to accommodate the various income groups and family sizes. Some of the flexible one to four-bedroom plans included features like movable walls so that families could add or subtract bedrooms depending on their needs. Owners of the "Housing Type B" house, for example, could transform the 784-square-foot one-bedroom home into a two-bedroom by closing a partition dividing the living room (fig. 9). Originally, Ain planned for all of the homes including land development, building, and landscaping to cost less than $10,000.[233] Ultimately, the homes' prices ranged from $7,500 to $15,000.

Aside from jointly purchasing the land and offering several different housing types, the cooperative planned on further reducing costs through its cooperative enterprises, which, according to its Articles of Incorporation, would include a range of amenities for "feeding, transporting, maintaining and providing professional care, education, and means of communication for its members and others, and otherwise to provide for the welfare and accommodation of its members and others."[234] As a result, the 106-acre lot was intended not only to accommodate the cooperative's hundreds of single-family homes, but also its jointly-owned facilities, including a school, cooperative-run stores, a maintenance shop, and a

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[232] Elise Danenberg, author of the 1949 book *Get Your Own Home: The Cooperative Way* reported that the group paid $230,150 for the land. I've decided to use Drayton Bryant's figure, which he cited during a Senate subcommittee meeting on middle-income housing. He worked closely with several Telesis members and published the 300-page book *Rebuilding the City* (1951) with Robert Alexander. ; Drayton Bryant (witness), United States Senate, Subcommittee on Housing and Rents of the Committee on Banking and Currency, "Middle Income Housing," Washington D.C., January 18, 1950, 231.

[233] Roche, "Group Living for Veterans," 35.

[234] "Articles of Incorporation of Community Homes, Inc. A Non-Profit Corporation," March 11, 1946, Helen Gahagan Douglas Collection, Carl Albert Center, Norman, OK. As cited in Denzer, *Gregory Ain*, 124-125.

community center where residents could hold "lecture programs, especially programs on child care."[235] At the request of members, Ain located the community buildings near the neighborhood's periphery so that, according to one *New York Times Magazine* writer, they could "be shared with members of neighboring communities."[236] This was made possible because the City of Los Angeles had not yet subdivided the lot, granting Ain the privilege of laying out the streets to best suit the cooperative's purposes.

To design the massive community, Ain took inspiration from his fellow California Modern architects who had constructed superblock communities across the city, like Neutra's Channel Heights and Reginald Johnson's Baldwin Hills Village. In fact, Johnson consulted for Ain on the project, as did Los Angeles's chief city planner Simon Eisner.[237] Furthermore, Ain tapped Eckbo and his partners, the architects Joseph Johnson and Alfred Day, to assist him with the project.

Drawing from these existing communities as well as Ain's prior experience designing Park Planned Homes and the Mar Vista Tract, the architect and his coterie recognized the experiential significance of treating vegetation as the community's connective tissue. Taking inspiration from Neutra's Channel Heights project, each of the community's 280 homes backed up onto walkable finger parks, which connected each of the 18 housing blocks to one another and to the neighborhood's cooperative facilities (fig. 10). Working with an L-shaped site, the cadre added two central greens, one bifurcating the East-West axis and another, much larger green, dividing the more substantial North-South axis.

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[235] Roche, "Group Living for Veterans," 35.
[236] Roche, "Group Living for Veterans," 35.
[237] Simon Eisner's celebrated book *The Urban Pattern* (1950), which he wrote collaboratively with Arthur B. Gallion, was well-regarded by California Modern architects including Ain. Like Ain and Eckbo, Eisner was an active Telesis member. Arthur B. Gallion and Simon Eisner, *The Urban Pattern: City Planning and Design* (New York: D. Van Norstrand Company, 1950).

Together, the community's expansive green space—which included shady tree groves, a baseball field, two centralized playgrounds, finger parks with smaller play areas, and a dedicated picnic area—comprised 16 acres, or more than 15% of the community's total land area. This figure does not include each home's yards and garden areas or the road verges surrounding the community's substantial housing blocks. According to Ain, the generous greenspace, with finger parks protecting pedestrians, would not only safeguard children but create what Telesis described as a "desirable neighborhood" where "an opportunity to participate in the life of the group leads to the development of a sense of social responsibility for the whole."[238] A June 1948 blueprint of the Community Homes' "General Tree Plan" underlines these claims (fig. 11). With 79 tree varietals, the vegetation overwhelming the page works to downplay any individual home or plot as it highlights the neighborhood's unified character. Architecturally, Ain added openings in the roof lines of some homes for trees to grow through, exemplifying his goal of locating the house as part of a larger continuum from the natural world to the neighborhood (fig. 12).

Ain differentiates the community from traditional gridiron-based suburban tracts by creating a unified park-like atmosphere, organizing the streets to protect pedestrians from traffic, and, adding cooperative amenities included to improve daily life. While Ain maximized cooperative living at the level of the plan, he designed the single-family home for maximum privacy. By installing clerestory windows at the homes' street facing facades, Ain was able to bring in light from both sides of the house without forgoing privacy. Moreover, just as he did at his Park Planned Homes or Mar Vista Tract, whenever he installed eye-level windows that looked out upon a neighboring house or faced the street, Ain curtained them in trees, shrubs, or fenced-in gardens. The architect also protected family privacy by locating the home's living

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[238] "And now we plan," np.

room at the rear, which had the added benefit of expanding the living area outside, creating what Eckbo called "living gardens."[239]

Unlike at Neutra's Channel Heights apartments, where picture windows function as so-called "space auxiliaries" that visually "supplemented the living area," Ain's expansive window treatments fulfill more practical functions: bringing in light and fresh air and bridging the home's interior and exterior living areas. In a drawing of "House 'E' From Garden" Ain treats the windows as both openings and screens, by comparing the back windows to the interior partition wall dividing the living room and office (fig. 13). In the drawing, the partition wall's edge mirrors the stacked awning windows' rectangular frame. Left open, the awning windows echo how the partition wall opens into the office. The slight opening of the windows, like the gap connecting the office and living room simultaneously splits and bridges the two living spaces. Moreover, where the partition wall distinguishes labor from leisure, the window divides interior from exterior, and, because these homes are located within a cooperative, private familial space from social and communal space.

Ain designed the home's private interior and cooperative spaces as interdependent entities because one of the group's major goals was to connect occupants to services that would provide them with more time to pursue their hobbies, learn new skills, and enjoy the benefits of leisure. Telesis verbalized this sentiment a few years earlier when the group wrote that "as a full program of leisure-time activities materializes, the line between recreation and vocation will continue to dissolve. Hobbies will become serious pursuits, office and factory routine will take on new social and creative aspects, and life will become richer for every individual and every community."[240] To this end, and per the request of his clients, Ain ensured that each of the finger

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[239] Garrett Eckbo, *Landscape for Living* (1950) (Santa Monica: Hennesey + Ingalls, 2022), 135.
[240] "And now we plan," np.

parks included a smaller communal play area for young children (fig. 14). With one of their goals being to reduce the need for babysitters by having mothers take turns "watching all the preschool children of her neighborhood group," the finger parks functioned as convenient drop off locations for busy parents.[241] Ain also planned to include "two-family drying yards" between homes, so that families could share workloads. According to Ain, "a wider reliance upon cooperation will give more than economic efficiency; it will certainly assure more personal gratification to the total of participants."[242] Inspired by his time at Llano del Rio, whose community architect Alice Constance Austin imagined a garden city complete with communal kitchens and laundries "to liberate women from drudgery," Ain was devoted to increasing housewives' "personal gratification."[243]

Overall, Ain's designs exhibit a special sensitivity to domestic labor. Not only did the architect's flexible homes include sliding panels to add and subtract rooms but the homes featured open kitchens that linked the domestic workspace to the living area. The open kitchen, which looks different according to housing type, would undeniably widen housewives' field of vision, but this was not entirely Ain's goal. Though it is tempting to compare Ain's open kitchens to those at Levittown, where the open kitchens reflect the expanding purview of the stay-at-home mother to include chef, housekeeper, and primary caregiver, Community Homes' cooperative childcare and housekeeping programs point in a different direction. Ain's open kitchens, like most of his design choices, served a double function. First, the open kitchen foregrounds the housewives once cloistered labor. With her activities on view, the family can now witness her labor and engage with her while "on the job." Second, Ain's kitchen designs

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[241] Roche, "Group Living for Veterans," 35.
[242] Gregory Ain, "In Search of Theory VI," 15.
[243] Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Vintage Books, Inc.,1992), 9-10.

include barriers that reify the boundaries distinguishing the kitchen (work space) from the

home's living areas. At "House Type C," for instance, Ain replaced the kitchen door with floor-

to-ceiling cabinets (fig. 15). Located where a door would normally be and with egresses at either

side, the built-in simultaneously divides and opens the space. Experientially, this affords the

housewife a physical barrier dividing her work life from her leisure time, while still opening the

kitchen to enlarge her workspace and highlight her labor. Moreover, the permeable barrier

provides her with a mental one, whereby being a housewife is less of an identity than a vocation,

separate and distinguishable from her role as a mother and wife.

In his original drawings for the Avenel Homes Cooperative, Ain similarly planned to

radically open the kitchen. Repeating the kitchen design for Community Homes' "House Type

B," Ain planned a built-in dining room table joining the kitchen and living rooms, with three

seats located within the kitchen and three in the living area (fig. 2).[244] Moreover, Ain planned to

move some domestic tasks beyond the kitchen and into the living room by affixing a built-in

ironing board to the living room wall.[245] In doing so, the architect revealed his intention to design

Avenel's interiors for everyday life rather than for formal occasions. The ironing board could be

easily stored for visitors but would allow the housewife to inhabit more of the house while

completing her daily chores.

A few years later, Ain laid out the problem his kitchen design sought to address in simple

terms writing, "it is an accepted part of our folklore that women who spend most of their time at

home are inclined to move the furniture about when they have nothing else to do. This may make

an amusing subject for cartoons and anecdotes, but it denotes a real need for variety and change,

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[244] In the years following, several modern-day Avenel unit owners have opted to redesign the kitchens to better reflect Ain's original plan by adding a built-in dining table connecting the kitchen and living room.
[245] Roche, "Group Living for Veterans," 34.

which the flexible house fills."[246] Ain's open kitchen, built-in ironing board, and movable walls are examples of how he sought to remake the house to better reflect the housewife's daily needs. According to the architect, it would be design, not gadgets or new building materials, that would improve life for the housewife and her family. Where a few of his fellow California Modern architects sought to saturate their materials and designs with pedagogical intent that would reform tenants' lives, Ain sought to provide the tools that would improve daily life as it was actually lived. And where Levitt & Sons divested their homes of any integral structure, leaving each family the "freedom" to organize and redesign the home per their desires, Ain considered architecture itself the solution. Indeed, the Levitts' open plan and kitchen differ from Ain's flexible plan insofar as the Levitt's open, often ranch-style homes could be infinitely altered without fundamentally altering the internal structure. If the homes had been designed in a traditional Victorian manner, with walls distinguishing the kitchen, living, and dining rooms, then removing those walls would be a radical act, aimed at dramatically reformulating the home toward new purposes. Without this internal structure, *without really any structure at all*, the Levitts resist vesting their homes with any intentions that could either be upended or reified. This is what makes the Levitt homes mere commodities: they are void of any meaning outside of its capacity to make the sellers a profit. The fact that they provide for some human need is only a pleasant coincidence.

Alternatively, despite being flexible, Ain's homes are closer to artworks in being special kinds of commodities because, like artworks, they are saturated with the architect's intent and, as a result, are nearly impossible to customize without upending its intended meaning. Just as one cannot add flourishes to a Picasso and maintain its meaning, one cannot alter an Ain house

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[246] Gregory Ain, "The Flexible House Faces Reality" *Los Angeles Times*, April 1951, 4-5; 23.

without flattening or obliterating its intended significance. Every feature included in the homes was added by Ain to solve a particular problem and suggest a particular solution. If the problem is that homes are poorly designed leading to housewives compulsively reorganizing them, then home designs that afford a finite number of specific and practical alternations would become part of Ain's practice. For instance, a built-in ironing board in the living room can be opened to transform the living room into a workstation or closed to create a social space per the dwellers' needs. Flexibility, then, does not mean vacating an architectural project of intent but reforming architectural intent as a means of suggesting specific uses.

Ain's radical intentions did not fail to get noticed by the FHA who rejected some of his basic design aims, insisting that the ironing board be moved and the kitchen be closed off with a door. In the end, Ain was forced to remove the table connecting the kitchen and living room, closing it off completely and adding an according door between the kitchen and entryway. Having moved the kitchen table, ironing board, and washing machine into the now secluded domestic space, Ain was forced to expand the kitchen, thus shrinking the living space and requiring residents to fit a full-size dining table in a more narrowly conceived space.

While Ain's plans for a dramatically open kitchen were severely reduced, Ain's Avenel Homes Cooperative remain an innovative planning feat. Facing a postwar housing shortage, the project came about after several returning World War II veterans approached Ain about building them small, inexpensive homes. The architect reportedly told them that "trying to build one small house today is next to hopeless. Small builders can't get materials. Big builders won't take small jobs. But if a group of veterans pools their plans and finances they might interest a big builder and stand some chance of getting new homes."[247] Ten of these veterans took Ain's advice to heart

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[247] Reporter Mary Roche paraphrasing Gregory Ain. ; Roche, "Group Living for Veterans," 34.

and eventually approached Ain as a group, asking if he would consider designing a cooperative

housing project for them in the Silverlake neighborhood of Los Angeles. Each of the ten

founding members had fought in WWII, and like at Ain's Community Homes project, many of

them worked as unionized cartoonists and were hoping to build a home near their studios.[248]

Beyond their veteran status, the group was bound by their leftist political commitments. "Were

they activists? No," recalls Serrill Gerber, who alongside his wife Lilian and two children was

one of the cooperative's founding members. As Gerber explained, "well, I'd say everybody in the

group was what we called a left person or a left sympathizer" and "there was that commonality

among us […] The idea of a co-op suggested right away people who really believed in this kind

of togetherness—living together—instead of individualism."[249] Ain sought to embody these

sentiments in his designs for the Cooperative.

Beyond the problems faced in building any cooperative project, Ain was tasked with

building ten family-sized units on a ½ acre site. With space at a premium, he organized the

houses in two rows of five, running perpendicular to the street. Other than the ten garages that

span the length of the property, there are few clues as to what lies behind the twin plaster-and-

glass facades (fig. 16). This formulation not only assured tenants their privacy, but it afforded

Ain more space to build larger, more house-like apartments that included windows on either side

of the dwellings and expansive, private outdoor areas. Ain took advantage of the site's 6.2%

grade by placing one of the rows eight feet above the next. This had the double effect of

protecting each home's individual privacy and affording each house expansive city views from

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[248] McCoy, *The Second Generation*, 127.
[249] Gerber would later be called before HUAC, where he refused to admit whether he was a communist. As a result, his name was printed in the local paper, and promptly fired from his teaching job at Evergreen Elementary School. Daniel Hurewitz, *Bohemian Los Angeles: and the Making of Modern Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 169, 226.

their back patios (fig. 17). Ain maintained the homes' privacy by adding clerestory windows rather than larger window treatments at the apartments' entryways. By angling the homes 15 degrees from the street, Ain preserved each home's privacy from the street and their fellow cooperative members while creating an insulated neighborhood feel.[250] Moreover, Ain was able to take advantage of the site's natural grade and stagger the two housing rows, so that no house was placed directly behind the next. With these precautions, Ain could add a window wall at each homes' rear. Like at the Community Homes cooperative, Ain treated the Avenel backyards like exterior rooms. In fact, Ain with the home's interior and exterior both measuring about 960 square feet.

Though planning took place in 1946, zoning laws introduced the next year required that Ain revisit the project. According to the new ordinances each home must include at least two off-street parking spots, whereas previously Ain had planned only one per apartment. Needing to push back the apartments to make way for the enlarged garages, most of Avenel's communal space disappeared, including a shared children's play area planned for the project's rear.[251] What remained were the two open-air walkways that led residents to their front doors. Ain designed the walkways to look like streets, although without the noise or traffic, in order to give the residences the feel of single-family homes. Laying concrete sidewalks with curbs, the architect demarcated small "front yards" next to each front door and covered stoops to mimic front patios. To grant each entryway some privacy and separate the service yard from the back gardens, six-foot curved walls demarcate one entry from the next (fig. 18).

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[250] Ain may have other reasons for utilizing the 15-degree angle including "an expressive need to set the structure into motion" as Todd Cronan argues Rudolph Schindler did at many of his midcentury projects. A longtime admirer and friend of Schindler's, the architect's influence on Ain's oeuvre has yet to be fully elaborated and further research is definitely needed. Cronan, *Nothing Permanent*.

[251] The cooperative had plans to add a communal pool, and some members floated the idea of hiring a chef for shared meals, but neither plan ever came to fruition.

Mirroring the outside, Ain organized the home's interiors to feel like typical single-family homes. Where they differ, of course, is with the inclusion of additive flourishes, such as movable walls and space-saving built-ins. Avenel homeowners could remove the wall separating the living room from the first bedroom to create a 30-foot interior living area. Properly furnished, the room could easily work double duty, becoming a closed-off bedroom or study or part of the expanded living area as needed. Similarly, a movable wall dividing the two other bedrooms could be retracted depending on the family's needs. For instance, the room could be divided into two bedrooms, a combined bed and playroom, or an extra-large bedroom for the parents.

Ultimately, the homes cost about what a standard single-family home would at $10,200. But there were still some savings. Initially, each cooperative member invested $2,000 to purchase and grade the centrally-located plot, which would have otherwise been far too expensive for any one of them to purchase on their own.[252] A 1951 article covering the project celebrated the veterans' site choice, noting its proximity to necessary amenities, with a bus stop, fire station, and grocery store just one block away, a hospital within a mile, and schools just five minutes from home (fig. 19). The cooperative also benefited from being one of the nation's first projects to benefit from the FHA's Title 608 loan insurance program, whose purview insuring mortgages for multi-family homes had been expanded to included cooperatives. The title helped the group avoid worsening postwar conditions that saw the cost of building materials skyrocket. For his part, Ain opted to reduce costs by employing stud-and-stucco construction. However, the cooperative faced major setbacks after the group opted to hire a pair of novice contractors because of their like-minded political affiliations, a decision which ultimately increased costs to

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[252] Vernon DeMars, "Co-operative Housing—An Appraisal," *Progressive Architecture* 32 (February 1951): 62.

above $10,000.[253]

Meanwhile, as Avenel's founding members unpacked their bags to move in, progress on Community Homes had been stopped in its tracks. After originally praising the cooperative's innovative site plan and working closely with Ain to fine-tune the homes' floor plans, the FHA made a sudden about-face when it learned the cooperative intended to welcome minorities. Suddenly, the project's financing was in jeopardy, with the FHA informing cooperative leaders that they needed to add restrictive covenants on 260 of its 280 lots, per the local Race Restriction Board's recommendation. The cooperative refused. In defense of its minority members, the cooperative protested federal regulators, demanding that they reverse their decision because the group had served in the war. Despite the public outcry, regulators remained unmoved, and called the cooperative's attention to Regulation X, which prohibited residential integration. "There was no way to win," lamented Ain, "so we had to dissolve the co-op."[254]

When the economist and housing advocate Drayton Bryant was asked to appear in front of the United States Senate Subcommittee on Housing and Rents as an expert witness on the matter of middle-income housing, he was quick to cite Community Homes as an example of how cooperatives looking to build affordable housing have been continuously thwarted by the FHA. According to Bryant, these families made too much money to qualify for public housing but not enough to purchase or build their own homes. Bryant was quick to take issue with the rental market as well, noting how landlord vacancy protections arbitrarily drove up rents. Cooperative housing, Bryant contended, could benefit these middle-income earners. However, as he pointed out, the FHA "has almost without exception shown itself hostile to the idea." For Bryant, Community Homes was paradigmatic of the problems co-ops faced. As he explained, even after

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[253] Hurewitz, *Bohemian Los Angeles*,169.
[254] McCoy quoting Ain in, *Second Generation,* 121.

the cooperative found outside funding—a bank in Chicago agreed to finance the project—the

FHA refused to insure it:

> After continued delay on the part of FHA and one pretext after another, although with
> verbal assurance from time to time that the tract and plans would be assured, the plan of
> the cooperative to build 268 homes was completely rejected. No grounds were given,
> only that the development appeared "unstable." Two days before the cooperative received
> such notice, five speculators telephoned to say that they knew of the FHA decision and
> wanted to buy it at the fire sale.[255]

Bryant notably omited any mention of Regulation X. Instead, he insinuated that the FHA

conspired against Community Homes from the beginning. By excluding any mention of racial

integration, Bryant's concluding detail about the FHA contacting speculators before rejecting the

cooperative's plans implies that there may have been other reasons for denying the cooperative

that had less to do with race and more to do with helping private builders turn a profit.

Recent findings from Anthony Denzer confirm Bryant's suspicion and point to other,

albeit closely related, reasons for why government authorities rejected Community Homes. In

1949, several FBI informants relayed information to agents about the cooperative, claiming it

was "a Communist-dominated housing company" headed by "Communist Party members." An

informant who attended one of the planning meetings concluded that the co-op was obviously

intended to be "an inter-racial community housing Negroes, Japanese, Chinese, and persons of

Jewish extraction, patterned after Russian self-supporting communities, and that it was the

informant's opinion that Communist Party membership was a prerequisite for securing housing

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[255] It is unclear why Bryant here claims there would have been 268 homes. It is likely the number
fluctuated over the years as different sources cite different numbers. Drayton Bryant and the United States
Senate, Subcommittee on Housing and Rents of the Committee on Banking and Currency, "Middle
Income Housing," Washington D.C., January 18, 1950, 230.

at the project."[256] While there is no definitive proof that the FBI shared its findings with the

FHA, the account exhibits how Americans had begun identifying certain housing strategies with

political affiliations; interracial neighborhoods and cooperative homeownership being

commensurate with communism.

In fact, the FBI's notes on the Community Homes project are part of the Bureau's 280-

page file on Ain, which began in 1944 after the architect was seen visiting the USSR's Los

Angles consulate.[257] It is likely that Ain was visiting the consulate to acquire research materials

in anticipation of a forthcoming lecture on Soviet architecture, which also suggests that Ain took

inspiration from Soviet housing projects. In this lecture, which was for an exhibit on Soviet

architecture hosted by The Los Angeles Council of American-Soviet Friendship at the University

of California, Los Angeles, Ain lauded Soviet city planning for separating residential areas from

recreational and industrial ones.[258] Despite this rather banal observation, Ain's visit plus the

lecture was enough for federal agents to determine "that a thorough investigation of GREGORY

AIN is merited."[259] While the FBI would eventually conclude that Ain was not a Soviet spy, the

Bureau continued its investigation until Ain retreated from full-time architectural practice. After

five years working with the architects Alfred Day and Joseph Johnson, Ain abruptly dissolved

the partnership in 1952, admitting that "some jobs we were hoping to get required government

clearance and my membership in various organizations would have ruled us out, so I

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[256] Ain FBI File, untitled report, October 14, 1949, 6. As cited in: Anthony Denzer, "Gregory Ain: Under Surveillance," in *Notes from Another Los Angeles: Gregory Ain and the Construction of a Social Landscape*, ed. Anthony Fontenot (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2022), 189.
[257] Ain's file is 280 pages long. Denzer, "Gregory Ain: Under Surveillance," 182.
[258] Anthony Denzer requested Ain's FBI file and was the first to discover Ain's familiarity with soviet building styles. According to the file, Ain served as the council's secretary and served on its board. Denzer, "Gregory Ain: Under Surveillance," 182.
[259] Denzer" Gregory Ain: Under Surveillance,"182.

resigned."[260] That same year, Ain joined the University of Southern California's School of

Architecture as a faculty member alongside close friends and fellow Telesis members Garrett

Eckbo and Simon Eisner.

Ain's departure from full-time architectural practice at midcentury coincided with the

decline of left politics in Los Angeles specifically and the nation as a whole. The effort began in

1946, after the Republican Party took control of Congress for the first time in fifteen years. The

80th congress reversed many New Deal-era programs and efforts, mostly in the name of anti-

communism: it ratified the Taft-Hartley Act, which restricted the activity of labor unions; passed

the Smith-Mundt Act, which initiated an anti-communist information war; supported the

National Security Act, which established the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Security

Council, and the forerunner to the Department of Defense, all institutions that, in various ways

removed foreign policy-making from public purview; it endorsed the anti-communist Truman

Doctrine; it railed against President Harry S. Truman's "Fair Deal," which attempted to

strengthen labor unions and begin a program of universal health; and, finally, it supported

Senator Joseph McCarthy's incipient campaign against communism at home. If in the 1930s one

could be a member of the Communist Party and a citizen in good standing, this was no longer

true by the late 1940s.

The emergence of a serious anti-communist campaign forced the U.S. left underground

and emboldened an already right-leaning liberal establishment to take full command over public

discourse. Anyone even tangentially associated with left organizations or progressive politics

could be labeled "a communist," a designation that risked one's job and position in public—and

private—life. To take one example, in 1953 Avenel resident Serril Gerber was fired from his job

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[260] Ain quoted in McCoy, *The Second Generation*, 119.

as an elementary school teacher after he refused to confirm to HUAC whether or not he had been affiliated with the Communist Party. A similar fate befell Frank Wilkinson, the head of Los Angeles' Housing Authority, who in 1952 was forced from his position after he and his wife refused to share their political affiliations with the California Senate Factfinding Subcommittee on Un-American Activities, which many sardonically dubbed "little HUAC." Less than a year later, Los Angeles Police Department Chief William Parker read Wilkinson's file during one of the televised hearings of the House Special Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations.[261] These hearings were one of several tools HUAC and its subsidiaries used to intimidate detractors and publicly ostracize potential critics.

For his part, Ain was never subpoenaed by HUAC, though his name appeared in the California Legislature's "Fifth Report of the Senate Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities." In this report, the Committee reproved Ain for his involvement with "subversive" organizations such as the Independent Citizens Committee of the Arts, Sciences, and Professors; for signing a Communist Party petition; and for "persistently, viciously, and dishonestly" attacking the Fact-Finding Committee. And Ain was not alone, his name was listed alongside numerous well-known celebrities, writers, and architects including Katherine Hepburn, Langston Hughes, Albert E. Kahn, Thomas Mann, Dorothy Parker, Gregory Peck, Vincent Price, Frank Sinatra, Orson Welles, and others.[262] The FBI investigation and Committee report aside, Ain was well aware of his precarious position.

Beyond personally affecting the lives of Los Angelenos like Ain, the McCarthy-era

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[261] The transcript is available in full. See Don Parson, "Appendix A: The File of Frank Wilkinson," in *Making a Better World: Public Housing, the Red Scare, and the Direction of Modern Los Angeles* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 203-208.
[262] California Legislature, *Fifth Report of the Senate Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities* (Published by the Senate, 1949), 480; 494; 499; 517; 688.

provided legislators *carte blanche* for upholding racist housing policies, defunding public housing programs, and filling the pockets of unscrupulous builders. Though the Supreme Court outlawed restrictive covenants in 1948, the FHA did not acknowledge the landmark decision until 1950, when it publicly agreed to cease issuing mortgages to racially restricted neighborhoods. However, it was only in 1968 that the FHA stopped accepting "unwritten agreements" and ongoing "traditions" as viable reasons for maintaining a neighborhood's racial homogeneity.[263]

At the same time, the 1949 Housing Bill all but concluded the nation's public housing program, which was publicly derided as "socialist."[264] To solve Los Angeles's long-standing housing crisis, the bill's Section 608 empowered private real estate developers to quickly construct apartment units, many of which turned out to be shoddy. Gone were any government-backed efforts to support cooperative communities like Avenel. Over the next eight years, private builders secured about $5 billion worth of government loans to build "efficiency units," many of which would eventually be deemed unfit for human residency.[265] A clearer example of the decline of left-infused housing ideology and the rise of capitalist programs could hardly be imagined. In 1956, the Senate opened an investigation into the FHA for helping builders secure "excessive profits." According to the Senate's findings, the FHA had been granting builders mortgages that far exceeded the cost of construction so that developers could borrow up to 25% above their costs, which they then pocketed as profits.[266] In short, during the Red Scare, the FHA used anti-communist sentiments and racist housing policies to subsidize the private real estate

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[263] Wright, *Building the Dream*, 247-248.
[264] Despite 810,000 public housing units being promised in 1949 by 155 only 200,000 of those units had been built.
[265] Wright, *Building the Dream*, 246-247.
[266] Wright, *Building the Dream*, 246-247.

industry, in the process undermining any attempts to build cooperative housing. As for Community Homes, though Regulation X and the community's association with alleged communists may have been the pretext for denying the project, the FHA's commitment to maintaining the housing market's profit motive was the larger context in which the Community Homes decision was made.

As it turned out, Ain's prediction that architects would be excluded from solving the housing shortage proved correct, as the U.S. government opted to subsidize "jerry-building" real-estate developers rather than potentially ideologically subversive architects, no matter how subtle or seemingly innocuous their architectural innovations may have been. While there was no outward pronouncement or legal declaration that precluded modern architects from participating in the resulting housing boom, California Modern architects sensed the sea change, noting that private developers' rapid construction of tract homes across the nation—including innumerable projects in and around Los Angeles, such as the 17,500 mass-produced homes comprising Lakewood City (1950) and the 3,000 tract home project Kaiser Community Homes (1947-1952)—suggested an end to the search for housing alternatives. To survive, many California Modern architects began treating the idiom solely as a *style*, divorcing it from its roots as a method for providing affordable housing to working- and middle-class people. As I will explore in the following chapter, with the Case Study House Program, in the wake of the Red Scare, California Modern architects were all too quick to jettison affordable housing as an end in itself. Having withdrawn from political life, California Modern architects abandoned their focus on community and fixed their attention on building single-family homes that embodied Southern California's ideology of "better living."[267]

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[267] A. Quincy Jones, Frederick E. Emmons, and John L. Chapman, *Builders' Homes for Better Living* (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1957).

Chapter 3: Figures
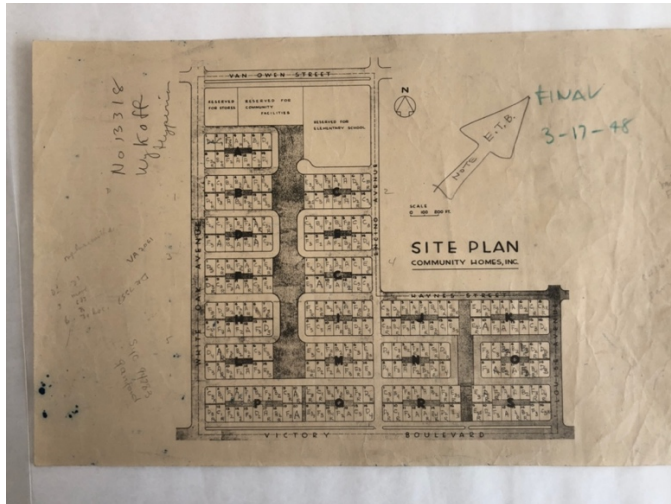
Figure 1: Gregory Ain, "Site Plan: Community Homes, Inc." (Reseda, CA), 1946-1949, unbuilt. Flat file 171 (Com #104), Gregory Ain Papers, University of California, Santa Barbara, Architecture and Design Collection at the Art, Design, & Architecture Museum, Santa Barbara, Ca.
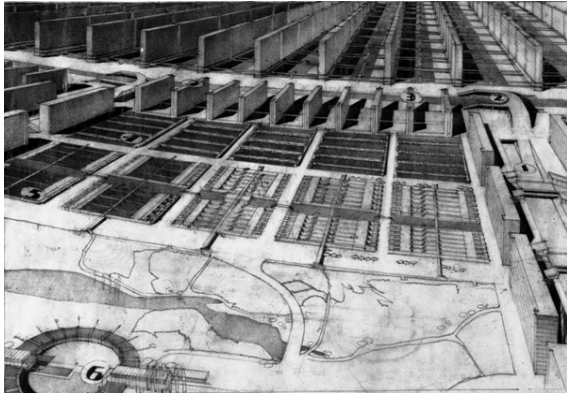

Figure 2: Gregory Ain [with Johnson and Day], "Avenel Housing Associates.," (Los Angeles, CA), 1946-1947.Flat file 23, Gregory Ain Papers, University of California, Santa Barbara, Architecture and Design Collection at the Art, Design, & Architecture Museum, Santa Barbara, Ca.
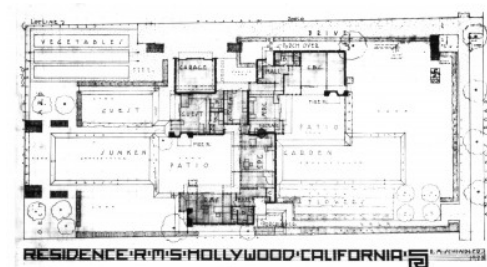
Figure 3: Rudolph Schindler, "Kings Road House (plan)," (Los Angeles, CA), 1922.

**Figure 4:** Richard Neutra, "Rush City Reformed (drawing)," c. 1928.
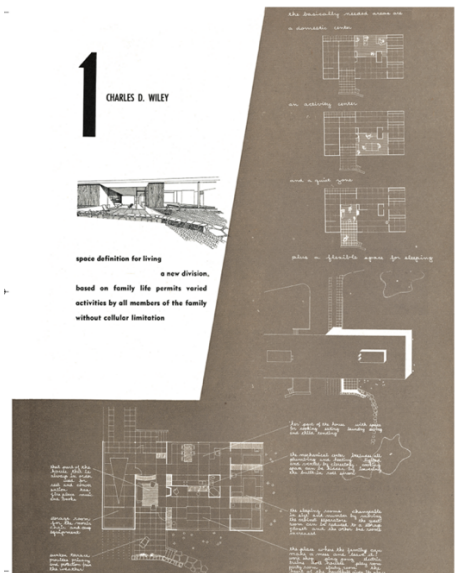
Figure 5: Charles D. Wiley's winning entry. "Arts and Architecture's Second Annual Competition for the Design of a Small House," *Arts and Architecture*, February 1945, 32.
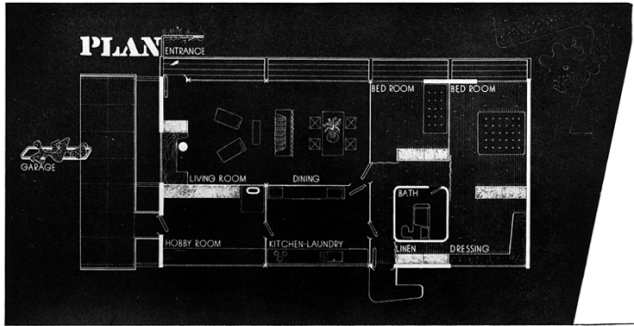
Figure 6: Eduardo Fernando Catalano's third place entry. "Arts and Architecture's Second Annual Competition for the Design of a Small House," *Arts and Architecture*, February 1945, 40.
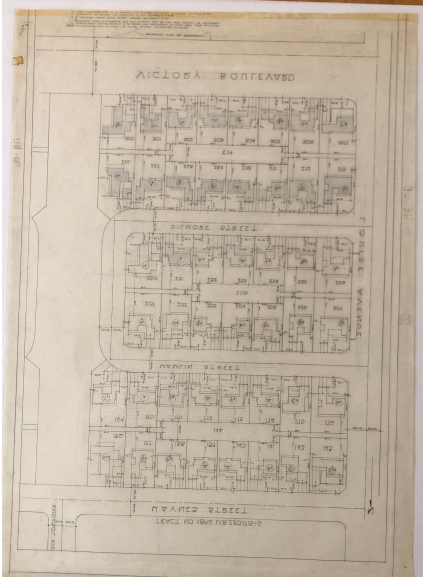

Figure 7: Gregory Ain, (Eckbo, Royston, Williams), "Park Planned Homes" (Altadena, CA), 1945-1947. Flat file 171 (Com #104), Gregory Ain Papers, University of California, Santa Barbara, Architecture and Design Collection at the Art, Design, & Architecture Museum, Santa Barbara, Ca.
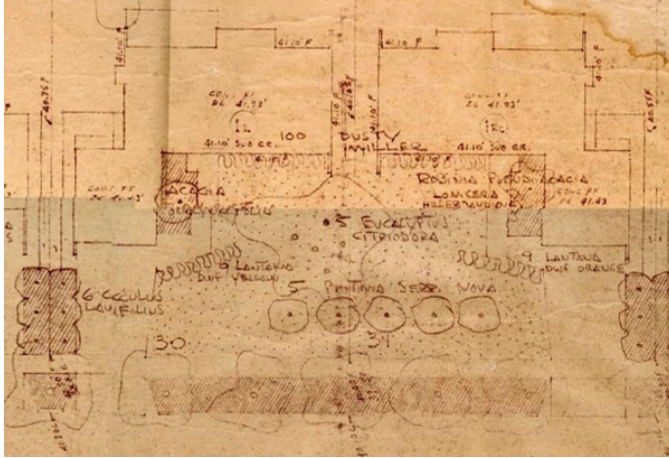
Figure 8: Planting Plan: Lots 23-42 (Detail: Dusty Miller House and neighbor), 1947-1949. Garrett Eckbo, landscape architect.
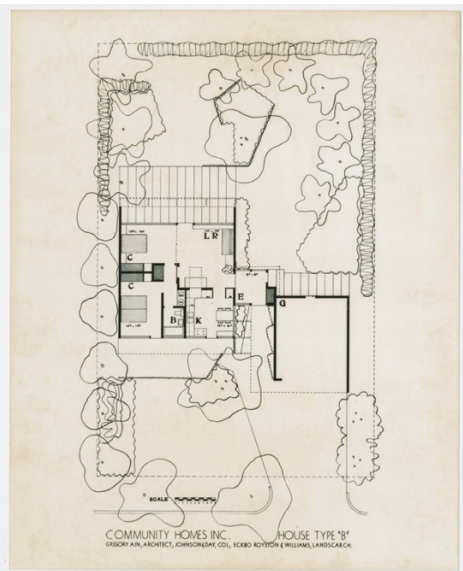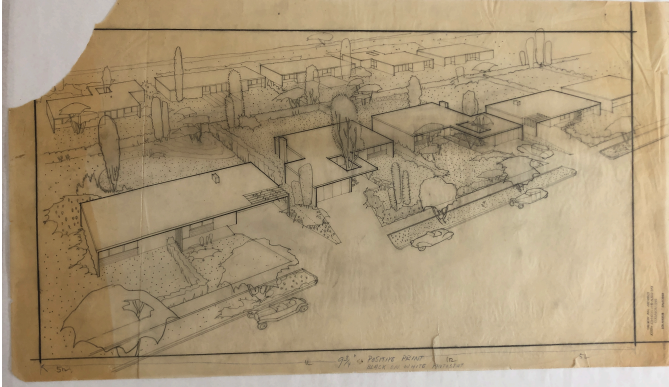

Figure 9: Gregory Ain, "Community Homes, Inc.: Plan for House Type 'B'" (Reseda, CA), 1946-1949, unbuilt. Flat file 171 (Com #104), Gregory Ain Papers, University of California, Santa Barbara, Architecture and Design Collection at the Art, Design, & Architecture Museum, Santa Barbara, Ca.

Figure 10: Finger design at Community Homes Cooperative.
Gregory Ain, "Tentative Tract Plan: Community Homes, Inc.," (Reseda, CA), 1946-1949,
unbuilt. Flat file 66, Gregory Ain Papers, University of California, Santa Barbara, Architecture
and Design Collection at the Art, Design, & Architecture Museum, Santa Barbara, Ca.
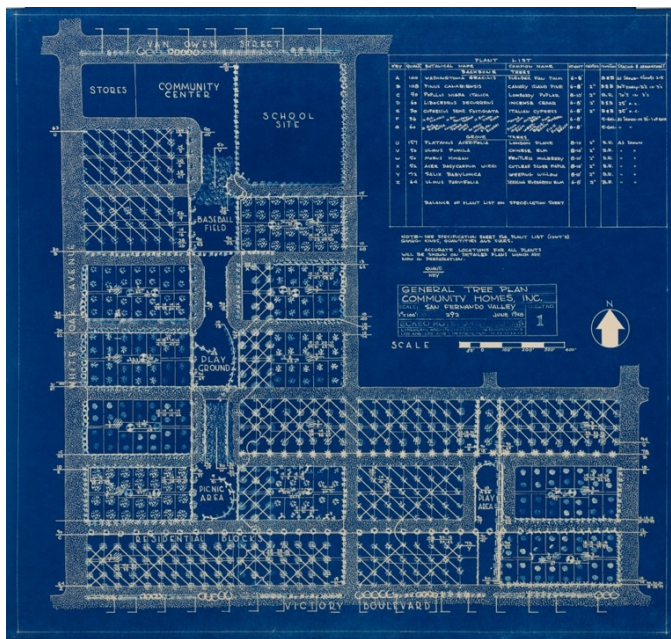
Figure 11: Gregory Ain, "Community Homes, Inc.: General Tree Plan" (Reseda, CA), 1946-
1949, unbuilt. Flat file 171 (Com #104), Gregory Ain Papers, University of California, Santa
Barbara, Architecture and Design Collection at the Art, Design, & Architecture Museum, Santa
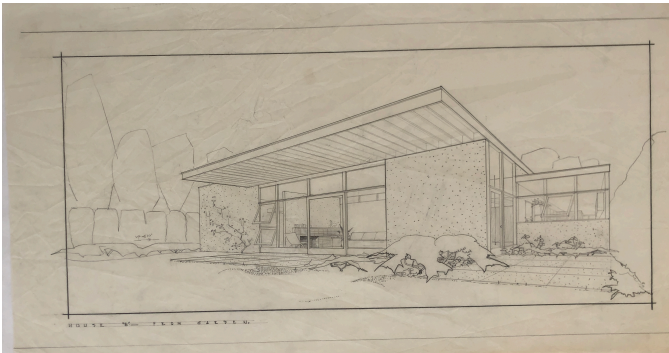Barbara, Ca.

Figure 12: Gregory Ain, "Community Homes, Inc.: Positive Print" (Reseda, CA), 1946-1949, unbuilt. Flat file 171 (Com #104), Gregory Ain Papers, University of California, Santa Barbara, Architecture and Design Collection at the Art, Design, & Architecture Museum, Santa Barbara, Ca.

Figure 13: Gregory Ain, "Community Homes, Inc.: House 'E' from Garden" (Reseda, CA), 1946-1949, unbuilt. Flat file 171 (Com #104), Gregory Ain Papers, University of California, Santa Barbara, Architecture and Design Collection at the Art, Design, & Architecture Museum, Santa Barbara, Ca.
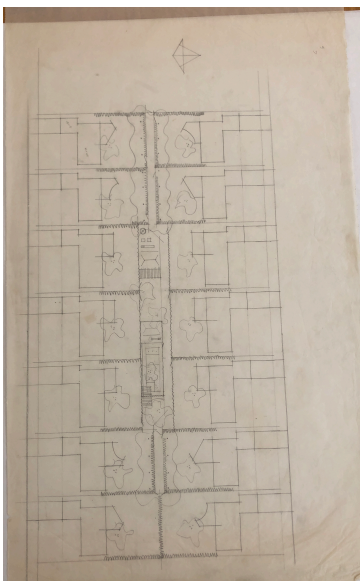
Figure 14: Gregory Ain, "Community Homes, Inc.: Finger Parks with Playground" (Reseda, CA), 1946-1949, unbuilt. Flat file 171 (Com #104), Gregory Ain Papers, University of California, Santa Barbara, Architecture and Design Collection at the Art, Design, & Architecture Museum, Santa Barbara, Ca.
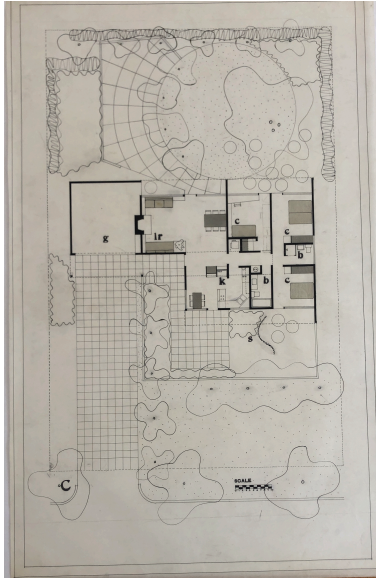

Figure 15: Gregory Ain, "Community Homes Inc., Plans for House Type 'C'" (Reseda, CA), 1946-1949, unbuilt. Flat file 171 (Com #104), Gregory Ain Papers, University of California, Santa Barbara, Architecture and Design Collection at the Art, Design, & Architecture Museum, Santa Barbara, Ca.


Figure 16: Facades of Avenel Homes as seen from Avenel St. in Los Angeles. Julius Shulman, "Job 541: Avenel Housing Association (Los Angeles, California)," 1947-1948. Gelatin Silver Print. Box 17, folder 15, Julius Shulman Photography Archive, 1936-1997, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California. © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10)

Figure 17: View of Avenel Homes from the street. Gregory Ain, Architect. Pictured with the caption: "Sloping Lot Sets Houses a Whole Floor Apart, Gives Each One a View," from "A Step-back Plan on a Hillside Site Gives Privacy to Ten Los Angeles Families," *House and Garden*, February 1951, 51.

Figure 18: Open-air walkway and entrance at Gregory Ain's Avenel Homes Cooperates. Julius Shulman, "Job 541: Avenel Housing Association (Los Angeles, California)," 1947-1948. Gelatin Silver Print. Folder 15, Box 17, Julius Shulman Photography Archive, 1936-1997, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, California. © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10).
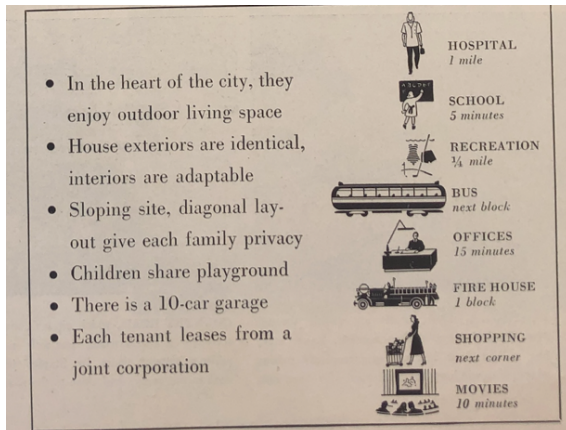
Figure 19: Animation with details regarding Avenel Homes' Silverlake site. "A Step-back Plan on a Hillside Site Gives Privacy to Ten Los Angeles Families," *House and Garden*, February 1951, 51.

Chapter 4: Freedom in Steel and Glass

> Greek temples, Roman basilicas and medieval cathedrals are significant to us as creations of a whole epoch rather than as words of individual architects. Who asks for the names of these builders? Of what significance are the fortuitous personalities of their creators? Such buildings are impersonal by their very nature. They are pure expressions of their time. Their true meaning is that they are symbols of their epoch.
>
> -Mies van der Rohe (1924)[268]

Unlike the previous chapters, which have focused on individual architects, this chapter will look at the work of Charles Eames (1907-1978), Eero Saarinen (1910-1961), Raphael Soriano (1904-1988), Craig Ellwood (1922-1992), and Pierre Koenig (1925-2004), all of whom designed steel-frame houses for the magazine *Arts and Architecture*'s Case Study House program (CSHP) between 1949 and 1960. Each of these architects embraced steel construction because they believed the "machine age" material would free architecture from handicraft.[269] Harkening back to Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's call to "free the practice of building from the control of esthetic speculators," these Case Study architects railed against self-expression. Their goal was to develop an anonymous architecture that enabled tenants to live their lives as freely and creatively as possible. By reducing the number of discrete parts required to build a home, steel promised to help architects resist the pull to individualize their designs, enabling their architecture to become "the will of an epoch translated into space."[270]

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[268] Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, "Towards a Unity," *Arts and Architecture*, April 1961, 12. The excerpt was originally published in 1924 under the title "Architecture and the Times." The piece was translated from German by Philip Johnson who reproduced it in English for the publication *Mies van der Rohe* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1947).

[269] Esther McCoy, *Case Study Houses, 1945-1962* (Second Edition), (Santa Monica: Hennessey + Ingalls, 1962), 70.

[270] Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, "Aphorism on Architecture and Form" (1923) in *Mies van der Rohe* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1947).

Importantly, the Case Study architects' objective to anonymize architecture coincided with, and was in part inspired by, post-war America's valorization of the individual (and by extension private property). Operating under the assumption that a democratic society was only possible when its citizenry was afforded the freedom to be "creative," the pared-down architecture of the CSHP assumed moral connotations.[271] In effect, the architects sought to keep unchangeable architectural elements to a minimum so as to afford residents the "freedom" to fashion their own living space. Moreover, steel afforded these architects the ability to design homes that more completely blurred distinctions between interior and exterior, a conceit that aligned the homes with nature rather than the architects' authorial intentions, and which placed them firmly in the California Modern tradition going back to 1940.

Whereas Williams, Neutra, and Ain accepted their role as ethical and political educators, by the 1950s this notion was coded as "totalitarian."[272] In the postwar period, the social democratic politics that had defined the New Deal and World War II-era United States were jettisoned in favor of what the political theorist Judith Shklar referred to as a "liberalism of fear."[273] As Marxian socialists were expelled from public and political life, they were replaced by a generation of "Cold War liberals"—people like David Riesman, John Kenneth Galbraith, Daniel Bell, Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., and others—whose beliefs and assumptions substantially differed from their social democratic peers. First, Cold War liberals endorsed a pessimistic philosophical anthropology that was wary of "mass politics" following the rise of the Third

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[271] For the notion of creativity as key to democratic practice, see Jamie Cohen-Cole, *The Open Mind: Cold War Politics and the Sciences of Human Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

[272] For the history and impact of the term and idea of totalitarianism on U.S. life, see Abbott Gleason, *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) and Benjamin L. Alpers, *Dictators, Democracy, and American Public Culture: Envisioning the Totalitarian Enemy, 1920s-1950s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

[273] Judith Shklar, "Liberalism of Fear," in *Liberalism and the Moral Life*, ed. Nancy L. Rosenblum (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989).

Reich in Germany.[274] Second, having equated the mass politics of Nazism with that of the

Communist Party in the Soviet Union, they demonized Marxian socialism as a gateway to

totalitarianism and rejected any political organization that privileged the collective over the

individual.[275] Third, Cold War liberals sought to, in the words of the political philosopher Carl

Schmitt, "secularize" politics by strengthening America's checks-and-balances systems, which

they believed would limit dangerous populist tendencies and safeguard the political sphere from

radicalism.[276] As this suggests, Cold War liberalism was a conservative liberalism that was

skeptical of large-scale projects that promised social transformation.

Cold War liberals shared a great deal with conservative critics of socialism and

communism. Together, the two groups promoted a system wherein any association with a newly

defined totalitarian system—a term that brushed aside the differences between fascism, Nazism,

and Soviet Communism—could spell personal and professional ruin. Predictably, this new

ideological hegemony affected the designs of California Modern architects. The group, which

had organized around the Los Angeles-based publication *Arts and Architecture* and which as a

whole shared an interest in solving the housing crisis, could no longer expect large-scale bids

from public entities to design public housing projects or to construct cooperatives, which were

not only difficult to finance but now risked exposing the tenants and architects as "socialists."

Moreover, as single-family homes became increasingly affordable to the city's emergent middle

classes, financial and political incentives converged to encourage many California Modern

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[274] See, for instance. Daniel Bessner, *Democracy in Exile: Hans Speier and the Rise of the Defense Intellectual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018).

[275] On this equating, see William David Jones, *The Lost Debate: German Socialist Intellectuals and Totalitarianism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999) and the works cited in footnote 272 above.

[276] Malachi Haim Hacohen, "The Jewishness of Cold War Liberalism," in *Jews, Liberalism, Antisemitism: A Global History*, ed. Abigail Green and Simon Levis Sullam (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 395-396.

architects to relinquish their earlier critiques of America's usury housing market, foreclose any demand for centralized city planning, and narrow their focus to designing single-family homes, albeit with "progressive" technology and materials.

Nonetheless, California Modern architects' retreat from low-cost housing was not cynical. While they were inevitably motivated by their fear of being associated with Marxian socialism, they were also operating in a world in which far more Los Angelenos could afford to own a single-family home.[277] To a significant degree, these California Modern architects were simply responding to the market demands of a new, more prosperous, economic reality. In the years following World War II, more Americans found themselves in well-paying union jobs that afforded them disposable incomes for the first time in their lives. This, in turn, reinforced the architects' retreat from the progressive architecture of the 1930s and 1940s, which, to a significant degree, was grounded in Depression-era economics. As Americans became richer, some California Modern architects concluded that class divisions had become, or at least were becoming, a thing of the past. They were therefore not outraged when Cold War liberal politicians joined Republicans in their efforts to reduce government spending on class-based projects like public housing. To many, such projects were atavisms in a nation in which a majority of Americans could own their own home.[278]

American intellectuals were themselves quite aware of this shift from the collective to the individual and, more specifically, believed in the supposed disintegration of class divisions. In his 1950 book *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the American Changing Character*, Harvard sociologist David Riesman, alongside co-authors and fellow professors Nathan Glazer and Reuel

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[277] That private homeownership became the norm is hardly the fault of the individual but in part a result of Red Scare-era policies that rendered the mere mention of an alternative to the housing market anti-American.

[278] Between 1940 and 1960, home ownership rates increased from 43.6% to 61.9%

Denney, eulogized the centralized power structures that had once governed American life.

Riesman argued that, at midcentury, power no longer resided in the hands of a few influential

figures, as it did at the turn of the century, but was instead dispersed among groups representing

the competing consumer, regional, and business interests of everyday Americans. Riesman

termed these entities "veto groups" and insisted that they had replaced the traditional, centralized

power structure with an "amorphous one." According to Riesman, this made it "hard to

distinguish [the] rulers from the ruled."[279] By the 1950s, Cold War liberals like Riesman

dismissed "ruling-class theories" as outdated, insofar as they no longer reflected the increasing

class harmony of the modern United States.[280]

Though Riesman's conclusions were tenuous, *The Lonely Crowd* was a best-seller.[281] And

Riesman was not alone. Over the next decade, a number of public intellectuals trumpeted the end

of class society in books like Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.'s *The Vital Center* (1949), John Kenneth

Galbraith's *The Affluent Society* (1957), and Daniel Bell's *The End of Ideology* (1960). In

different but connected ways, each of these books argued that American class divisions had

become a thing of the past and that a class-based lens was not a valuable perspective through

which to view U.S. politics.[282] Schlesinger, for instance, described modern America as

"thoroughly middle class" and thus protected from the rigid caste systems that threatened liberal

democracy elsewhere; Galbraith, for his part, insisted that "in the advanced country, increased

production is an alternative to redistribution"; while Bell reiterated Riesman's claims when he

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[279] David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (1950), (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), 187-89.
[280] Riesman, 183.
[281] "David Riesman, Sociologist Whose 'Lonely Crowd' Became a Best Seller, Dies at 92," *New York Times*, May 11, 2022, 18.
[282] Judith Stein first made this point in the opening chapter of her 2010 book, *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

argued that "being a member of the 'upper class' […] no longer means that one is a member of the ruling group."[283] By disentangling power from class, each of these authors implied that poverty was no longer a structural problem, but was instead an individual one connected to personal choice.[284]

The arguments of Cold War liberals achieved wide purchase throughout society because they coincided with the so-called "Great Compression," a period in U.S. history in which wealth was more evenly distributed between America's working, middle, and upper classes.[285] In the years following the Great Depression, the income share of America's wealthiest 10% dropped from roughly 50% in 1929 to ~35% in 1947.[286] By the 1950s, incomes were increasing on a year-over-year basis, with the average person's income rising by 10% between 1950 and 1951 alone.[287] In 1952, average incomes increased by another 5%, with people "receiving higher money incomes in 1952, than ever before."[288] Furthermore, during the 1950s union membership

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[283] Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1949), 33. John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (1958) (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 78. ; Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (1960), (London: The Free Press, 1962), 45.

[284] This belief harkened back to the Progressive Era notion that poverty was caused by competing cultural norms. However, where Progressive Era elites claimed that the poor's aberrant culture was caused by external factors like subpar housing or inadequate schooling that reinforced deviant habits, Cold War liberals considered poor people's decisions wholly individual.

[285] The Great Compression was first termed by the economic historians Claudia Goldin and Robert A. Margo in their paper "The Great Compression: The U.S. Wage Structure at Mid-Century" *Quarterly Journal of Economics,* vol. cvii (February 1992): 1-34. It has since become a cornerstone of American economic history appearing most notably as the first chapter of Stein's book *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies* and becoming the loadstone of Timothy Noah's article and book: "The Great Divergence," *Slate* April 20, 2011 (https://img.slate.com/media/3/100914_NoahT_GreatDivergence.pdf) and *The Great Divergence: America's Growing Inequality Crisis and What We Can Do About It* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2013).

[286] Noah, "The Great Divergence."

[287] U.S Department of Commerce and the Bureau of the Census, "Income of Persons Up 10 Percent in 1951," *Current Population Reports: Consumer Income* P-60, no. 10, September 26, 1952. (https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/1952/demographics/p60-10.pdf).

[288] U.S Department of Commerce and the Bureau of the Census, "Income of Persons in the United States: 1952," *Current Population Reports: Consumer Income* Series P-60, no. 14, December 31, 1953. (https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/1953/demographics/p60-014.pdf).

reached its zenith, with 35% of American workers belonging to a labor union. This meant that

over a third of American workers enjoyed paid vacations and holidays, pensions, and health

insurance.[289] Concurrently, housing starts more than tripled between 1940 and 1950, thanks to

FHA-insured mortgage loans and GI-Bill benefits that protected consumers from usury interest

rates and drastically reduced monthly mortgage payments.[290] Indeed, U.S. homeownership rates

rose from 43.6% in 1940 to 55% in 1950.[291]

The postwar housing boom, especially in Los Angeles, lent credence to, and reinforced,

the Cold War liberal approach. One 1953 *Life* article that covered move-in day at the popular

Los Angeles housing development of Lakewood encapsulates the tenor of the era. Looking down

onto one of Lakewood's recently paved suburban streets, the *Life* photographer captures an entire

neighborhood block of families busily unpacking their belongings from a slew of moving trucks

(fig. 1). "Every day, including Saturdays and Sundays, is moving day in Los Angeles," explained

the writer.[292] The burst of activity counterbalances the monotonous suburban sprawl that fills the

photograph. The excited families filling their new homes with consumer goods are unfazed by

the tracts' severity: in place of any trees, there are rows of telephone poles towering above the

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[289] Stein, 2; 15.

[290] The introduction of the 30-year mortgage decreased monthly mortgage payments. Siskind, 8.

[291] Given all these changes to American life and its economy, Riesman's assessment is not completely unfounded. Economic power had been more evenly distributed. However, this is not to say that class hierarchies had disappeared or that consumer interests had replaced economic ones. Just because the gap between the richest and poorest Americans was reduced, did not mean that workers no longer recognized themselves as belonging to class structures (if this were the case unionization would not have reached its peak at midcentury). Instead, the economic reforms formulated during Roosevelt's presidency and maintained until the untimely end of the Kennedy administration in 1963, afforded more Americans economic security and enhanced purchasing power. Whether or not the character of Americans changed as a result of these economic changes is innocuous at best and nugatory at worst. Regardless, the popularity of Riesman's conclusions are worth considering. ; United States Census Bureau, "Historical Census of Housing Tables: Homeownership," 2000 (https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/dec/coh-owner.html). ; The "Great Compression" effectively ended in 1964, when the Johnson administration lowered the marginal tax rate, which had remained above 91% since 1944, to 77%.

[292] "...And 400 New Angels Every Day," *Life*, vol. 25, no. 2, July 13, 1953, 23.

unending slew of two- and three-bedroom homes. While staged, the photograph is not altogether

misleading. Within its first month of opening, 200,000 people came to admire Lakewood's

moderately priced homes, which cost buyers between $7,575 and $9,075. And, by the time this

photograph was taken, the self-proclaimed "City of Tomorrow, Today," boasted an unmatched

17,500 homes, briefly making Lakewood "the biggest U.S. housing project."[293] As many as fifty

homes were sold per day, with a record of 107 being sold in a single hour. People wanted to live

in Lakewood.[294]

Lakewood's success, and that of the countless other developments that popped up across

Southern California over the course of the 1950s, was a direct result of postwar policies that

made it easier for ordinary Americans to purchase their first home.[295] Moreover, as was

described in the previous chapter, the U.S. government funneled millions of dollars into the

hands of developers to incentivize the construction of massive housing developments like

Lakewood. As a larger proportion of Los Angelinos became property owners, programs focused

on housing the poor became less immediately pressing. Policies aimed at supporting moderately

priced housing developments like Lakewood combined with postwar efforts to expel "socialists"

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[293] After breaking ground in February 1950, Lakewood grew at breakneck speeds, with workers completing a new home every $7^{1/2}$ minutes or some 40 to 60 houses a day. At their peak, the developers completed a record of 110 houses in a single day. With record-breaking speed, almost 8,000 homes were completed by 1951, 14,000 homes by 1952, and, by 1953, with over 70,000 residents, the developers planned to build another 3,500 homes. And no age-of-affluence tract would be complete without a centrally located shopping mall. In fact, Lakewood's mall was briefly the nation's largest, complete with 10,000 free parking spots. ; "Housing: Birth of a City," *Time*, April 17, 1950. (https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,805425,00.html)

[294] Located 25 miles south of Downtown Los Angeles, a few miles from Douglas Aircraft, and within a short driving distance from other aerospace research facilities, Lakewood was ideally located for the thousands of aircraft workers who now called Southern California home. In fact, in 1950, Lakewood's sales offices remained opened until 11 p.m. so that sales associates could greet some of the 22,000 people employed at Douglas Aircraft after their shifts.

[295] A 1952 study of the area concluded that 75% of Lakewood residents were first-time homeowners. "Suburban Pioneers," The Lakewood Story, accessed May 2023, https://www.lakewoodcity.org/About/Our-History/The-Lakewood-Story/03-Suburban-Pioneers.

from social and political life, culminated in a massive political campaign to defund Los Angeles'

public housing program. Whereas in 1949, Los Angelinos opted to increase the city's public

housing stock by 10,000 units, by 1952 local real estate developers had succeeded in

encouraging voters to reject the city's housing program. Pamphlets reading "don't pay

somebody's else rent," which argued that "public housing is pure socialism" that would "increase

taxes by hundreds of millions," struck a chord amongst Los Angelinos who, for the first time,

found themselves in comfortable homes with new and affordable gadgets like electric irons,

vacuum cleaners, television sets, and hot water heaters (fig. 2).[296]

The expansion of enormous middle-income neighborhoods, together with the widespread

acceptance of Cold War liberal sentiments, forced Los Angeles' cohort of California Modern

architects to reconsider their approach to the single-family home. *Arts and Architecture*'s CSHP,

announced in January 1945, remains the clearest example of how California Modern architects

embraced a range of postwar mores. Initially, however, the CSHP retained several of California

Modern architects' politically progressive aims. For instance, the program's announcement called

for "practical" rather than "miracle houses" that were "capable of duplication and in no sense an

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[296] For an in-depth explanation as to how and why Los Angeles residents opted to repeal the 10,000 unit public housing bid see Don Parson, "The 'Headline-Happy Public Housing War:' Public Housing and the Red Scare" in *Making a Better World: Public Housing, the Red Scare, and the Direction of Public Los Angeles (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press*, 2005). ; I've encountered several versions of the pamphlet including a text-only version from Loyola Marymount University's Dockweiler Family Papers and another with animations at the University of Southern California's Shirley Adelson Siegal Papers. Frederick C. Dockweiler, "Don't pay somebody else's rent: vote no on Proposition 'B'" (1952), CSLA-12, series 2, box 2, folder 10, Dockweiler Family Papers, Department of Archives and Special Collections, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, CA.; Frederick C. Dockweiler, "Don't pay somebody else's rent: vote no on Proposition 'B'" (June 3, 1952), box 1, folder "Los Angeles Housing Educational fund + Los Angeles Citizens Housing Council, 1949-1952," Shirley Adelson Siegal Papers, Special Research Collections, Doheny Memorial Library, University of Southern California Libraries.)

individual performance."[297] Furthermore, in the CSHP's earliest years, before the wartime

building and materials restrictions were lifted and McCarthyism began in earnest, several of the

program's architects continued to treat architecture as a "social art," with the primary goal being

to design affordable homes that expressed a communitarian program.

J.R. Davidson, who constructed the first CSH, was, like the other seven "nationally

known architects" tapped by the magazine to participate in the program—Neutra, Sumner

Spaulding, Saarinen, Eames, William Wilson Wurster, and Ralph Rapson—well acquainted with

Los Angeles' progressive housing groups, including Telesis, the California State Planning Board,

the Housing and Planning Association, and the Pacific Southwest Academy (whose members

published *Los Angeles: Preface to a Master Plan* in 1941). Indeed, Davidson was, alongside

Neutra, Spaulding, and *Arts and Architecture*'s owner and editor John Entenza, an active Telesis

member who had helped design the group's planning exhibition "…and now we plan," for the

Los Angeles County Museum of Art. As such, it is no surprise that Davidson foregrounded his

socially conscious architectural background in CSH #11 (which, somewhat confusingly, was the

name of the first built CSH).

Begun in January 1946, Davidson designed CSH #11 assuming that the New Deal order,

which centered on populist social programs and central planning, would continue unabated.

Davidson thus considered his role as an architect to build small, flexible, and affordable homes

for the "common man." One of the reasons that Davidson's house was the first to get off the

ground was because the two-bedroom, two-bath house was the smallest of the first wave of

designs. At just 1,100 square feet, CSH #11 was the only submission that did not exceed

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[297] Esther McCoy, "Arts and Architecture: Case Study Houses" in *Blueprints for Modern Living: History and Legacy of the Case Study Houses*, ed. Elizabeth A. T. Smith (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press,1989), 18. ; John Entenza (cited as "The Editor"), "Announcement: The Case Study House Program," *Arts and Architecture,* January 1945, 37-38.

government restrictions. Despite this, the latter affected the house's construction; at one point, the project was brought to a halt as there was only a limited amount of lumber available. Nevertheless, Davidson made due. In fact, such limitations were endemic in the immediate postwar period and explain why so many California Modern architects included large outdoor areas in their designs. Expansive outdoor area not only kept costs down, but expanded the living space outside.

Davidson did just that at CSH #11. Despite the required 15-foot setback, he took full advantage of the entire 70 x 100-square foot lot by opening the living room and main bedrooms to the backyard and adding 8-foot-tall sliding doors spanning a total of 36 feet (fig. 3). Davidson took pains to keep the small house as open as possible, excluding wasteful hallways and omitting interior bearing walls, which had the double effect of encouraging social life and creating a sense of spaciousness within a small footprint. Having previously worked designing maximally efficient interiors for luxury ships, cruisers, and hotels, Davidson included bespoke built-ins that reduced clutter and increased the livable footprint. The socially conscious intentions of Davidson's design were underscored by some of the novel terminology he adopted. To take one example, he dubbed the "master bedroom" the "women's bedroom," assuming (incorrectly) that the postwar woman of the house would, as she had during the war, continue working outside the

home.[298] Upon completion in July 1946, the economical, lumber-frame home proved a huge

success, with more than 55,000 people touring the house.[299]

Despite the success of CSH #11, in the CSHP's early years many of its homes remained

paper projects, including Neutra's Omega House, Whitney R. Smith's Loggia House, and Ralph

Rapson's Greenbelt House. Not only did these CSHs prove cost prohibitive, but Entenza quickly

determined that the U.S. government had no intention of utilizing its newly honed centralized

planning capabilities to solve the postwar housing crisis by, for instance, stabilizing the cost of

building materials. As the editor lamented shortly after the announcement of CSH #11's

completion,

> No doubt we were too optimistic about the recuperative powers of a national industry that had done such a miraculous war-time job. And, foolishly perhaps, we felt that the whole magnificent effort could be readjusted to the peace-time economy by general agreement of sensible and rational people who would cooperate to mesh the gears of the economic machine as quietly and efficiently as possible. This, of course, turned out to be an idiot's dream in a fool's paradise.[300]

But there was a tension evident in Entenza's statement. After downplaying his earlier conviction

that the state should continue the planned economy after the war, something he now dubbed a

"an idiot's dream," just a few lines later he complained about "restricting government orders"

that made it "impossible to attempt any but the smallest houses."

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[298] Lilian Pfaff, *J.R. Davidson: A European Contribution to California Modernism* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2019), 145.

[299] The CSHP's first home, Davidson's CSH #11 was the only one to complete a "tenancy study." What was originally going to be a regular part of the program, *Arts and Architecture* planned on having families live at the houses for a few months and then reflect on what they enjoyed about the house and what needed improvement. CSH #11's review was decidedly mixed with the family celebrating the home's airy openness and flow, while at the sometime supplying the magazine with an extensive list of much-needed fixes. Lawrence E. Mawn, the family patriarch who penned the review, complained about the casement windows rattling and leaking when it rained, about the home's flat, gutter-less roof creating deep holes in the garden after it rained, and about the wood-framed sliding doors being so difficult to move, a "woman can't budge them without giving up her feminine dignity." Lawrence E. Mawn, "Case Study House Number Eleven," *Arts and Architecture*, July 1946, 47-52.

[300] "Case Study House Number 11," *Arts and Architecture*, July 1946, 44.

Entenza's contradictory comments not only reflected his own complicated feelings toward the U.S. government; they also exemplified a contemporary schism affecting postwar American liberalism. On the one hand, liberals had long championed statist economic policies that gained widespread support during the depression and the war. On the other hand, in a post-war era increasingly defined by anti-communist paranoia, in which economic planning was associated with Bolshevism, liberals like Entenza felt it necessary to distance themselves from association with the "totalitarian threat." This was not an easy task, a fact reflected in tension-filled statements like the one mentioned above. Indeed, one must be careful to note that Entenza and his ilk did not cynically adopt a new political framework. Rather, their choice to embrace elements of Cold War liberalism reflected an often-unconscious adaptation to the times. On some level, Entenza and the California Modern architects understood that the social democracy promised to them in the first half of the 1940s was not only dying, but that any mention of its earlier health could threaten their livelihood.[301]

As a result, following Davidson's inaugural CSH #11 the CSHP's goals became increasingly opaque. In a United States where social democracy died on the vine, many of the program's original objectives—namely, to make practical homes that the "average American" could afford—appeared arbitrary and naïve.[302] In an effort to recalibrate, in 1949 Entenza announced that the CSHP would reduce the number of projects from four to just one a year.[303] Moreover, he effectively reversed his initial ban on "individual performance[s]," discarded the

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[301] For an excellent dissection of the phenomenon of social democrats transforming themselves into Cold War liberals, see Landon R.Y. Storrs, *The Second Red Scare and the Unmaking of the New Deal Left* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 146-176.

[302] Entenza, "Announcement," 38-39.

[303] Prior to 1949, the magazine presented about four CSH projects a year, most of which never made it to the planning phase. However, this number was never formalized. It was not until 1949 that *Arts and Architecture* explicitly stated a goal of one project per year.

expectation that the homes be "repeatable," and, as a result, dispensed with any notion that the architects be socially responsible actors. Instead, the CSHP's sole objective was to "considerably enliven the controversy as to what constitutes a good and realizable living arrangement for the human animal."[304]

And, with the announcement that Charles Eames would construct "Case Study House 1949" (CSH 1949), the CSHP began anew. Though one of the first eight houses initially planned for the CSHP, Eames's home was postponed until 1949 due to government restrictions on steel as well as the material's exorbitant cost in the immediate postwar period. By the time Eames began constructing his home, American liberals had undergone what Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., termed a "historical re-education" defined by "an unconditional rejection of totalitarianism and a reassertion of the individual."[305] It is therefore unsurprising that CSH 1949 was the first of the CSHP to be designed by and for actually-existing individuals, namely Eames and his wife Ray.[306] That the house was intended for the architect himself is ironic given that the program was originally conceived as a testing ground for developing affordable homes for the "average American."[307] Simply put, Eames's decision to build a house for himself reveals the growing importance of individualism to postwar American life.

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[304] "Case Study House Program: Project for 1949," *Arts and Architecture*, January 1949, 31.
[305] Schlesinger Jr., *The Vital Center*, ix.
[306] I am speaking of Charles Eames only here because that is who the magazine presented as the home's sole architect. However, in recent years more attention is being paid to Ray Eames's contribution. See, for instance, Jennifer Schuessler, "Ray Eames, Out of her Husband's Shadow," *New York Times,* May 17, 2020. (https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/15/arts/ray-charles-eames-artists.html). Moreover, several recent publications make sure to include Ray's name in the title in order to signal her and Charles' cooperative professional relationship, including Pat Kirkham, *Charles and Ray Eames: Designers of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995) and Catherine Ince, ed., *The World of Charles and Ray Eames* (New York: Rizzoli, 2015).
[307] Entenza, "Announcement," 38.

Though technically repeatable, and ultimately affordable to construct, neither repeatability nor affordability were Eames's guiding principles. Instead, his goal was to produce a "fresh," "new," and "provocative" house, whose "logical use" of steel and glass would more seamlessly "integrate spaces" and lead toward "the development of a building idiom of our time."[308] CSH 1949 was supposed to embody the postwar ethos of newness that assumed an always-evolving future. To Eames's mind, modern homes no longer needed to address the immediate needs of the "common man," but should rather become altars to the mercurial, creative, and newly affluent individual. And what materials were better than steel and glass for constructing an infinitely flexible shelter capable of evolving alongside the creative individual?

Eames lauded steel for affording more flexibility in architectural design. In fact, one of the reasons the architect was drawn to steel was because it allowed him to keep framing elements to a minimum. A house constructed with steel could be left completely open and highly fenestrated. With steel, Eames, and California Modern architects in general, could move one step closer to completely dissolving the distinctions between interior and exterior space (and thus fulfill one of California Modern architecture's earliest goals). This meant that the home could be conceived as a disinterested "container" rather than as an educative (as envisioned by the earlier work of Neutra and Williams) or politically charged (as envisioned by Ain) environment. That is, in emptying out the interior, the steel frame allowed the architect to limit how much influence he could have on future residents, which forced him to refrain from treating the house as a manifestation of his own disposition; in effect, steel appeared to make it possible to remove architectural intent from the design process altogether. As Eames put it, CSH 1949 "represents an attempt to state an idea rather than a fixed architectural pattern, and it is as an attitude toward

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[308] "Case Study House for 1949," *Arts and Architecture*, April 1949, 40.

living that we wish to present it."[309] The idea was that architects did not need to imbue their

designs with meaning or treat the interior layout as some "fixed," and therefore normative, fact.

Steel allowed California Modern architects to move closer to an architecture without architects,

which would allow residents to enjoy a more complete freedom to organize the home to their

liking, in the process transforming a disinterested container into a representation of themselves.

In fact, this desire was evinced in the December 1945 issue of *Arts and Architecture*,

which first publicized Eames's plans for what would become CSH 1949 and CSH #9, the latter

of which he designed alongside Saarinen, and both of which were intended to be on the same

lot.[310] From the beginning, these two CSHP entries stood apart from the rest. Not only did the

architects plan to utilize steel frames, but they designed both homes for actual people—CSH

1949 for Eames and his wife; CSH #9 for Entenza—whereas all the other case studies had been

designed for fictional clients as imagined by the magazine's editorial staff. Located on a shared,

one-acre lot in the Palos Verdes region of Los Angeles, with a view of the Pacific Ocean, the

plans for CSH 1949 and CSH #9 echoed California Modern architecture's earlier, egalitarian

goal of building private, single-family residences within cooperatively run communities. But

where public or cooperative housing projects stressed the importance of cooperation, Eames and

Saarinen emphasized privacy.

In the *Arts and Architecture* article announcing the projects, the writer explained that

"while the land is intended to be used communally, each house is so oriented that it has complete

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[309] John Entenza and Charles Eames, "Case Study House 1949," *Arts and Architecture*, December 1949, 27.

[310] Eames and Saarinen's personal and professional relationship began during their tenure at the Cranbrook Academy of Art. By 1940, the duo's collaboration resulted in their successfully winning The Museum of Modern Art's "Organic Design in Home Furnishings" competition. Eliot F. Noyes, *Organic Designs in Home Furnishings* (New York City: The Museum of Modern Art, 1941).

privacy."[311] An accompanying drawing that pictured CSH 1949 alongside CSH #9 showcased their simultaneous proximity and seclusion (fig. 4). In its original conception, Eames's CSH 1949 would be raised well above CSH #9 to maintain both households' privacy. As the announcement made clear, the two houses were "for people of different occupations but parallel interests. Both, however, determinedly agreed on the necessity of privacy, or the right to choose privacy from one another and anyone else."[312] Put another way, the space to be shared by the Eames and Entenza was less about embodying communality and more of a cost-saving and practical measure. Purchased by *Arts and Architecture*, the lot was already home to two CSHs, Richard Neutra's CSH #20 (1948) and Rodney Walker's CSH #18 (1948). Putting all these homes on one lot thus had the benefit of allowing the magazine to save money while making it easier for visitors for compare and contrast several CSHs at once.

Eames and Saarinen were most concerned with showcasing steel's ability to reflect the individual interests and requirements of its owner. This was made apparent in the first drawings of the homes. One drawing, for instance, excludes any architectural detail in favor of reproducing the future homeowners surrounded by their personal effects (fig. 5). Appearing on either side of a simple elevation, wherein the homes are reduced to rectilinear shapes, the objects surrounding the silhouetted homeowners take precedent: for the Eameses, an Alexander Calder mobile, art supplies, a picnic basket, a few drafting tools, a saw, writing instruments, a duct flute with music, and a record player; for Entenza, stacks of books and magazines, a record player with records, a projector, cooking supplies, and a typewriter. "These houses," the announcement proclaimed, "are not to be considered as solutions to typical living problems;" instead, the "whole solution proceeds from an attempt to use space in direct relation to the personal and

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[311] Charles Eames and Eero Saarinen, "Case Study #8 and #9," *Arts and Architecture*, December 1945, 45.
[312] Eames and Saarinen, "Case Study #8 and #9," 44.

professional needs of the individuals" who intend to live in them.[313] Eames, in the design of his own house, and Saarinen, in concert with Eames for CSH #9, effectively redirected the CSHP by foreswearing California Modern architects' initial objective to solve the housing shortage affecting the "common man," and instead focus on the "personal and professional needs of the individual."[314]

In designing a home for himself and his family, Eames's CSH 1949 balanced the call for a more anonymous architecture with the era's emphasis on individuality. As one of the first California Modern steel-and-glass designs, the Eameses' interior design practices provided educative examples of how to inhabit the "spatial containers." Photographs of the Eameses at home circulated widely in the months and years following CSH 1949's completion. Most notably, in 1958, *Life* magazine published a spread of Julius Schulman's photographs, which pictured the couple enjoying CSH 1949 nearly ten years after it opened to the public. The best-known photograph from the article shows Ray and Charles Eames sitting on low stools in their living room, engrossed in conversation (fig. 6). The photograph's vertical orientation, combined with the Eameses' low seats, emphasized the home's seventeen-foot ceilings and interior balcony, where Eames located the home's bathroom and bedrooms. But more than anything, the Shulman photograph humanizes what could otherwise be an alienating, too-open, metal-and-glass house. The interior is blanketed in personal effects, spanning from handmade tchotchkes, to store-bought items, to Eames's own furniture designs. The photograph is therefore the natural successor to the 1945 drawing of the couple surrounded by their personal items. It is also instructional, insofar as it serves as an example of how the creative individual ought to customize their steel-and-glass home.

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[313] Eames and Saarinen, "Case Study #8 and #9," 44.
[314] Eames and Saarinen, "Case Study #8 and #9," 44.

In many ways, Schulman's photographs of the Eameses at home helped normalize steel design. And though the steel-frame, single-family home never took off, these images became representative of a new post-war sensibility that privileged the creative individual over and above the collective. This in part explains why *Arts and Architecture* postponed the construction of CSH 1949 and CSH #9. Not only, as previously mentioned, was steel limited and prohibitively expensive in the immediate postwar period, but the CSHs did not suit the progressive sensibilities and expectations of liberals and leftists in 1945. It was not until the Soviet Union replaced Nazi Germany as the imminent threat to American liberalism that Eames's vision in steel and glass became legible to his fellow California Modern architects and *Arts and Architecture*'s larger readership. Once protecting individual liberties against collectivist encroachment became the overriding goal of U.S. liberals, Eames's houses-as-container, embodied in CSH 1949 and CSH #9, became suitable to the period.

Both of these CSHs deemphasized the architect's influence. In eliminating the need for bearing walls, which architects had previously used to dictate how rooms were used and for what purposes, and by allowing for more fenestration, Eames reduced his architectural presence to a few prefabricated steel joints and glass inserts. Eames's goal was straightforward: "to enclose as much space as possible within a reasonably simple construction."[315] Guided by this modest objective, Eames sought only to *demarcate* space rather than to *create* it; to locate a difference between here and there, rather than to construct a barrier between interior and exterior or, in the same spirit, between kitchen and living room.

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[315] Charles Eames and Eero Saarinen, "Case Study House: A House Designed and Built for the Magazine Arts and Architecture," *Arts and Architecture*, July 1950, 28.

In what would become a trend among the CSHP's steel-frame architects, photographs of CSH #9's and CSH 1949's steel frames served as representations of the architect's goals (figs. 7, 8). The photographer, in his image of CSH 1949's steel frame, made sure that the home's verdant surround penetrated the frame, making it difficult for the viewer to distinguish between fore-, middle-, and background. In so doing, the photographer reiterated Eames's goal of circumscribing, or "enclosing," space without transforming it into something distinct, e.g., an interior space or an exterior space. Though he enclosed it, Eames desired to keep the space as neutral as possible, thus restraining his architectural influence. As he explains, "[the steel frame] shows itself here as a natural and unaffected development of a modern building idiom—while much of its present character will be lost, some will be saved. New elements will gradually take over—the danger comes from the possibility of many new elements taking over."[316] The ambition of the architect, then, was to preserve the steel frame's simplicity; it is literally "dangerous" for the frame to become overburdened with elements that could both muddle the desired interpenetration of interior and exterior space and overexert the architect's own influence.

Like Eames and Saarinen, Raphael Soriano employed steel for his "Case Study House 1950" (CSH 1950) in an attempt to undermine his architectural intent. In fact, Soriano went much further than either Eames or Saarinen in his efforts to advance a non-intentional architecture. Dissatisfied with merely downplaying his role as an architect, Soriano sought to completely rid himself of his authorial power by modeling his own decision-making process on nature. "Nature is the finest architect," wrote Soriano, "it says what it wants to say directly and with great economy of thought. This is the secret of all creative work: to say the most with the

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[316] Charles Eames, "Case Study House for 1949: The Steel Frame," *Arts and Architecture*, March 1949, 30.

least."[317] The architect, in fact, considered steel ideal for developing a "type of architecture

which is closer to nature," because "planning with steel must be done logically and

economically" in order to avoid "costly and hazardous" mistakes.[318]

According to Soriano, steel required the architect to proceed economically, in both senses

of the word: first, steel afforded the architect the ability to simplify his structure; second, it

enforced a meticulous work ethic, lest unscrupulous mistakes drastically increase the cost. To

Soriano's mind, the necessary self-discipline required to work with steel inevitably forced the

architect to focus on the immediate facts of the matter, rather than on some preconceived notion

of what architecture could or should be. As Soriano put it,

> It is good practice to listen to the land, to the materials, and to the actual and the useful
> requirements of the client. Then the architectural problem is likely to state its own course,
> and the architect can follow with assurance. The whims and florid tricks of an architect or
> his psychic interpretations of the obscure inner depths of the client's own confused
> obscurantism—are diseases that one does not impose on any creative work. […] It is the
> architect when he succumbs to the temptation of becoming an architectonic
> psychoanalyst who is actually the patient.[319]

For Soriano, the worthwhile architect is sober-minded, pragmatic, and parsimonious. According

to him, the ideal architectural arrangement already exists and is within the architect's grasp; he

just needs to focus on the correct facts to locate it. Soriano believed that the most economic plan

would make itself apparent to architects who had familiarized themselves with their client's

needs, the site, and the materials. This is not to say that Soriano believed the architect should

interpret the materials, plot, and requirements in order to render the best design. Instead, Soriano

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[317] Raphael Soriano, "Note on Case Study House 1950," *Arts and Architecture*, January 1950, 26.
[318] Raphael Soriano, "Case Study House 1950," *Arts and Architecture*, April 1950, 37.
[319] Soriano, "Note on Case Study House 1950," 26.

rejected the psychologizing practices employed by architects who thought that they could identify the ideal design schema by casting themselves as their client's analyst.[320]

A photograph of Soriano's steel frame for CSH 1950 emphasized the architect's credo (fig. 9). Nevertheless, unlike in the Eames-Saarinen photos, in which the goal was to render the frame nearly invisible, Soriano's steel frame is treated like yet another natural element in the landscape. The twenty-four, 3½" steel columns spaced on a modular grid seemingly sprout from the ground like plants, upholding the home's substantial roof. The close crop of the image continues this visual argument by granting the steel frame a kind of monumentality—making it the photograph's largest and most prominent component—while at the same time accentuating its pronounced horizontality—the photograph was cropped so that the steel frame spans the width of the page to highlight the frame's spread across the landscape. Like a nature photographer capturing a tree in the wilderness, the photographer emphasizes the steel frame's monumentality and horizontality to underline its ability to transform shade into shelter. In this way, the photograph reiterates Soriano's arguments that the architect could mirror nature's simplicity and that steel was an ideal material for producing the "economy of thought" required to reduce the architect's impulse for "whims and florid tricks."[321]

In a follow-up article detailing Soriano's progress on CSH 1950, *Arts and Architecture* included another photo of the house, now complete with floor-to-ceiling glass inserts, four of which slid horizontally to expand the living area outside, and all set between the home's Steelbilt frames (fig. 10). Displayed with three-quarters of its curtains drawn, the interior of the home was

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[320] While one could dedicate an entire book to Soriano's conceptualization of architectural design, I do not have the space to fully elaborate his thoughts here. In brief, psychological analysis was anathema to Soriano's architectural practice because it assumed that the ideal design would reflect the client's thoughts and ideas rather than the facts of nature.

[321] Soriano, "Note on Case Study House 1950," 26.

concealed from the viewer and its connection to the hillside severed. That Soriano and *Arts and Architecture* reproduced an image of CSH 1950 with its curtains closed, creating a break between the home's interior and environment, is revealing when compared to exterior shots of Eames's CSH 1949, which underscored the home's interpenetration with its environment.

One photographic detail of CSH 1949 deemphasizes the home's glass encasing by transforming it into a mirror of the home's natural surround (fig. 11). The glass's reflection of the CSH's environs downplays any division between interior and exterior space. Conversely, the photographer of Soriano's CSH 1950 made no attempt to transform the home's glass casing into a reflective surface. Perhaps the photographer and Soriano decided to close the curtains to reduce the glass's tendency to reflect its surroundings. In fact, the curtains obscure the presence of glass altogether. The only clue to the home's fenestration is a slight discoloration caused by the sun's reflection at right, where the home's curtains have not been drawn. Not only does the glass nearly disappear where the curtains are closed, but the Steelbilt frames maintaining the floor-to-ceiling panels are partially obscured by the outermost row of steel beams upholding the home's flat roof.

Where Eames's CSH 1949 reflected nature, Soriano aimed at creating a natural architecture. Just as a tree cannot be reduced to its leaves, branches, or trunk, no single element of Soriano's CSH 1950 stands apart from the rest. In this way, Soriano's CSH 1950 fulfills the architect's goal of securing what he would later term a "oneness of concept." Which, as he put it, is "the oneness seen in nature." Expanding upon this idea in 1956, Soriano employed the tree as a metaphor, writing:

> Simply solved structures must have oneness of concept. The oneness seen in nature. In a tree, for instance, regardless of its type, one finds the branches anchored to the trunk and the leaves, though differing from tree to tree, are in their minute variances still formed on the concept of oneness. Basic structure common to one tree is common to all trees. This

quality of oneness in structure is the value for which we should strive in architecture. [...] No matter how complicated the building may be, it is our duty to translate the complexities of its structure with all of its component parts to this concept of oneness.[322]

All of the individual elements comprising CSH 1950 cohere, and though the structure is a simple one, its individual parts are difficult to parse. Photographs of CSH 1950 thus captured Soriano's success in using steel to restrain his architectural impulses, model himself after nature, and downplay his authorial role. This is not to say Soriano wanted to develop a natural-looking architecture. Rather, he sought an impersonal, unselfconscious architecture, that, like nature, is immediate, direct, and lacked authorial flourish. In 1950, Soriano's authorial absence was conceptualized as a kind of "freedom from" the educative practices of earlier California Modern architects.[323] And, while Soriano, does not directly address how he anticipates his designs will affect future tenants, his commitment to anti-intentionality tacitly supports the era's commitment to protecting individual freedoms.

It bears noting that despite the steel-frame CSH architects' collective commitment to structural simplicity, each of them incorporated color and texture into their designs. Depending on the architect and the house, color and texture were used to either heighten or downplay the home's steel structure, visually enhance the home's openness, or underscore the home's flexibility. According to one *Arts and Architecture* review of CSH 1950, for instance, "one of the highlights of the house is the evidence of close attention to the use of colors and textures."[324] Photographs of the project's completed dining room, living area, and "eating terrace," showcase Soriano's ability to incorporate seemingly incongruent materials into his "concept of oneness,"

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[322] Raphael Soriano, "Architectural Design—Transition 1935-1955," *Architect and Engineer*, May 1956, 15.

[323] The stress on "negative liberty"—"freedom from" authority—was a foundational premise of Cold War liberalism. See especially Isaiah Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty: An Inaugural Lecture Delivered Before the University of Oxford on 31 October 1958* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961).

[324] "Case Study House 1950," *Arts and Architecture*, December 1950, 35.

which at CSH 1950 include diaphanous, off-white curtains, a natural brick fireplace, Masonite

accordion doors, a short-pile area rug, and wood-paneled walls (fig. 12).

Well aware that most people would be uncomfortable in a steel-and-glass house, Soriano

minimized the interior steel columns by anchoring them to walls, or, as seen in the photograph,

to the brick fireplace. However, on the exterior of the house, the columns remained prominent.

As Esther McCoy has pointed out, "[Soriano's] habit of recessing his exterior glass four feet

emphasized the rhythm of perimeter columns. Thus steel was prominent only where visible

through glass."[325] By painting the home's steel columns black (and, apparently, in a few discrete

places "Chinese Red"), the architect transformed the steel frame from a purely structural material

into yet another textural element, becoming the connective tissue which, like an area rug, tied

each portion of the house to the next, thus helping him to achieve his desired "oneness."[326] As

such, the paint undermined viewers' traditional associations with steel, allowing the columns to

become a painterly-like feature that, like a line in a drawing, was treated as both content and

structure.

At CSH #9 and CSH 1949, Eames and Saarinen also painted their steel frames dark grey

and black. As Eames explained, "color was planned and used as a structural element." At CSH

1949, for instance, the dark grey, and later black-painted, steel expressed the material's "constant

strength" and foregrounded it as the home's "structural web" (fig. 13).[327] Still, though the black-

painted "structural web" remained constant, the panels comprising the skin were changeable.

Depending on their needs, Charles and Ray could easily switch out the translucent- or wire-glass

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[325] Esther McCoy, "Arts and Architecture Case Study Houses," *Perspecta*, vol. 15 (1975): 65.
[326] "Case Study House 1950," 35.
[327] Eames, "Case Study House for 1949," 30.

panels for solid white, blue, red, black, or earth-painted ones.[328] Similarly, save for the fixed

bathroom walls and brick fireplace, the partitions at Soriano's CSH 1950 were non-bearing,

meaning they could be rearranged or removed as needed. This anti-intentional design, Soriano

noted, was the "logic which integrated the whole body of the house."[329] By setting a new

precedent for organizing space, the dark-painted steel frames of CSH 1949, CSH #9, and CSH

1950 reinterpreted the meaning of flexibility for California Modern architects. Indeed, these

designs were incredibly influential. Over the next few years, a new generation of young steel-

frame architects would continue Eames, Saarinen, and Soriano's task of developing a neutral,

more flexible architecture, devoid of the restrictive authorial hand of the architect.

When the Korean War broke out in the summer of 1950, *Arts and Architecture's* CSHP

was forced to take a two-year hiatus.[330] It was only in 1953 that Entenza announced that the

magazine would continue the program, "barring, as usual, acts of God, of Congress and the

world situation."[331] By this time, anti-totalitarianism had become the *de facto* political ontology

of the United States, embraced by both liberals on one side and McCarthyite right-wingers on the

other. This is perhaps best represented by the fact that after Joseph Stalin died in March 1953,

U.S. officials of both political parties continued to wage an aggressive Cold War with the Soviet

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[328] Eames, "Case Study House for 1949," 30. ; As Ray Eames later commented, if they did not like the arraignment or placement of the panels they could "simply change it." As cited in Pat Kirkham, "Introducing Ray Eames (1912-1988)," *Furniture History* 12 (1990): 136.

[329] Soriano, "Case Study House 1950," 37.

[330] The Korean War is often pointed to as the moment when the Cold War—and Cold War liberalism—became the *de facto* organizers of American life. In particular, the war legitimized NSC-68, the national security planning document that reoriented the U.S. economy to fighting a long Cold War. For this reorientation, see Curt Caldwell, *NSC 68 and the Political Economy of the Early Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[331] Harry S. Truman, "Statement by the President, Truman on Korea" (June 27, 1950), Public Papers of the Presidents, Harry S. Truman, 1945-1953, Wilson Center, Digital Archive (https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/statement-president-truman-korea). ; "A New Case Study House," *Arts and Architecture*, April 1952, 32.

Union.[332] Simply put, Cold War liberals fighting to uphold what Schlesinger Jr. termed "the vital center"—an anti-totalitarian, bipartisan, free-market governance—remained vigilant. Individual freedom, it seemed, would remain under threat so long as communism remained a viable political alternative.

This was the context in which Craig Ellwood joined the CSHP. Similar to many in his generation (he was fifteen years younger than Eames and eighteen years younger than Soriano), Ellwood considered the title of "architect" self-important, restrictive, and even authoritarian, and shirked the designation in favor of the less proscriptive moniker "designer."[333] Ellwood prided himself on his engineering knowledge and work ethic. Having taken several evening classes in engineering at the University of California, Los Angeles, Ellwood made a name for himself apprenticing as a draftsman, cost estimator, and job supervisor for several California Modern architects, many of whom had ties to the CSHP, including Neutra, Soriano, Eames, and Saarinen. Celebrated for his exacting workplace ethos, the young designer opened his own practice at the age of 26, began designing homes for the CSHP at 29, and at 32 received first prize at the São Paulo International Exhibition of Architects, whose judges included Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, and Alvar Aalto.[334]

Taking inspiration from the steel-and-glass architecture of Eames, Saarinen, and Soriano, and later Mies van der Rohe, Ellwood quickly became the darling of the CSHP. All told, Ellwood designed three homes for the program: #16 (1953), #17 (1956), and #18 (1958). Intellectually, Ellwood's homes endorsed the anti-authorial intentions of his predecessors. Assuming he could

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[332] For Soviet foreign policy in the early Cold War, and potential Soviet willingness to negotiate with the United States, see Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

[333] There are legal reasons for this as well. For one, Ellwood was not a licensed architect.

[334] Esther McCoy, *Case Study Houses, 1945-1962* (Santa Monica: Hennessey + Ingalls, 1962), 81.

successfully silence the architect's authority, he attempted to create a "spiritually transcendent" architecture that was "truly meaningful."[335] That is, Ellwood sought an architecture whose "esthetic *and* economic pleasures" would be immediately understood by his contemporaries, not one that reflected the obscure whims of the architect.[336] Considering himself part of the "machine age," Ellwood argued that steel was the ideal medium for overcoming the expressionistic approach of architects he pejoratively called "craftsmen."[337]

A December 1952 photograph of Ellwood's steel frame for CSH #16 embodied the architect's ambition to advance architecture into the machine age (fig. 14). The square-steel columns comprising the frame emanate from the Palos Verdes stone fireplace at center.[338] Reproducing the rectilinear photographic frame, the steel columns form a secondary frame around the stone hearth. With the fireplace's blackened, empty mouth at the center, the photographer created a kind of portrait whereby the steel frame is born from the hearth's rough-hewn stone. By showing the stone fireplace encircled by a helix of steel columns, the photographer anticipated a major theme of Ellwood's architectural practice, wherein the architect used contrasting textural elements to bring attention to the architectural frame.

In each of his CSHs, Ellwood thematized the frame to create what Nicholas Olsberg described as an "essentially self-referential" architecture.[339] For instance, at his CSH #16, Ellwood attached the same prefabricated steel pipes that comprised the home's structural frame

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[335] Craig Ellwood, "The Machine and Architecture," *Arts and Architecture*, June 1958, 19.
[336] Ellwood, "The Machine and Architecture," 19.
[337] Ellwood, "The Machine and Architecture," 19.
[338] The square steel columns comprising the frame were a recent addition to the market as defunct rails lines were removed and their rust-resistant carbon steel was repoured into new shapes. Ellwood's experiment with the new product paid off with savings of $600 and upwards of 3,000lbs. McCoy, *Case Study Houses*, 81.
[339] Nicholas Olsberg, "Open World: California Architects and the Modern Home," in *California Design, 1930-1965: "Living in a Modern Way"* ed. Wendy Kaplan (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press 2011), 142.

to a brick privacy wall to create a jungle gym (fig. 15). Like in the aforementioned photograph of the stone fireplace surrounded by the steel frame, Ellwood's placement of the jungle gym is a study in contrasts. Ellwood does not shy away from traditional building materials, but instead treats them as decorations, insofar as he makes clear that they are non-structural and therefore unnecessary. In this way, Ellwood effectively trivialized the red-brick wall, whose function has been relegated to mere decoration and only affords structural integrity to the children's jungle gym.

Part of the reason Ellwood included decorative elements like stone and brick was to contrast these with the exposed steel structure, which he, like Eames, Saarinen, and Soriano before him, opted to paint black.[340] Ellwood believed that in heightening the contrast between the home's natural elements—i.e., the brick walk or stone fireplace—and its structural ones—i.e., the steel frame—he would be able to "provide a rhythm in the visual expression."[341] It was through this "rhythm" that Ellwood maintained he could distill a common architectural language.[342] As he explained, "form is decoration: the rhythmic interplay of mass and volume and line. Material is decoration: the rhythmic emphasis of texture and color. Depth is decoration: the rhythmic movement and delight of light and color."[343] Ellwood's work is thus a kind of musical notation wherein "form," "material," and "depth" are equivalent to tone, pitch, and timbre. Ellwood described these aspects of his design as "decoration," which suggested that, to him, the steel frame is primary, which, given Ellwood's description, would make it the staff upon which the notes are situated.

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[340] Ellwood painted the exposed columns black at CSH 1953 and CSH #17B and blue at CSH #18.
[341] Craig Ellwood, "The New Case Study House," *Arts and Architecture*, September 1954, 27.
[342] Importantly, rhythm, unlike a visual or spoken argument, can be identified immediately and requires no interpretation.
[343] "From Craig Ellwood's unpublished lectures." As cited in McCoy, *Case Study Houses*, 82.

A photograph of CSH #16's interior concretizes this claim (fig. 16). At left, a wall detail highlights how Ellwood floated the roof slab above the vertical wall panels so that there is a clear demarcation between each panel, the ceiling, and the painted steel columns. Beyond foregrounding the steel frame, the gap between the wall and ceiling reveals how the home's partitions are both decorative and incidental. Referencing CSH #18—though it applies to CSH #16 as well—Ellwood wrote that "the segregation of structure from walls provided a design flexibility not otherwise possible and set no limitation as to [the] selection of wall panel material. Metal, wood, plastic, ceramics, or glass panels may be used, each with equal ease."[344] Because the panels were self-evidently nonstructural, Ellwood presented their material and location as incidental. In doing so, he advertised his homes as embodiments of flexibility and changeability. This is why the rhythm metaphor is so important to understanding Ellwood's project: if the materials attached to the steel frame are secondary, then replacing them with any other material, color, or texture matters little to the architect, so long as the contrast between structure and decoration is maintained. Having charged himself with identifying a shared architectural language (the rhythm), the young architect discovered that it was the specific content of that language (the tone, pitch, and timbre) that rendered its structure legible. That is, he understood that the idea or vision of exchangeability was necessary to make a home's form salient.

Even the organization of the steel frame, the structure upon which the rhythm is determined, did not necessitate Ellwood's authorial hand. Devised on a module, the logic of the steel frame exists with or without the designer. Nevertheless, Ellwood did thematize the frame by leaving it exposed and painted. He did this in order to show the home's visitors that everything added to the steel frame was just that: additive. In this way, Ellwood let visitors know that they

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[344] Craig Ellwood, "Study House 18," *Arts and Architecture*, June 1958, 24.

had the freedom to alter the home, and rearrange or replace its parts, without destabilizing the structure. What mattered to him was that visitors understood that they had the power to modify the house and that the architect in no way impeded this freedom. By showing the wall panels to be non-structural, Ellwood in effect afforded tenants the *experience* of freedom. This was another of his goals: to express the possibilities of freedom through a flexible composition. Consider, for example, how one *Arts and Architecture* writer affirmed that CSH #16's gap between the roof and panels, combined with the exterior plate glass walls, produced "the impression of unrestricted space," or how at CSH #17 the aluminum-framed sliding glass doors attached to each of the bedrooms "open[ed] the rooms to the exterior thus visually extending them beyond their real limits."[345] In Ellwood's opinion, if he fostered the experience of freedom for his occupants, then he had succeeded in restraining the normative influence of the authorial hand.

Pierre Koenig, who produced Southern California's final two steel-frame CSHs, #21 (1958) and #22 (1960), shared Ellwood's goal of inspiring a feeling of freedom within residents. But where Ellwood sought to bring about this feeling through creating a rhythm with materials, Koenig focused his energies on advancing California Modern architects' ongoing effort to unify interior and exterior space. However, by the late 1950s, California Modern architects like Koenig had very different reasons for pursuing this aim. Where earlier California Modern architects sought to combine interior and exterior to encourage communal living or save costs for a small house, Koenig's goals were to engender particular experiences, such as the feeling of

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[345] Craig Ellwood, "The New Case Study House," *Arts and Architecture*, June 1953, 26. ; Ellwood, "The New Case Study House," *Arts and Architecture*, September 1954, 27.

"continuity," "lightness," and "uninterrupted space."[346] Therefore, at CSH #21, Koenig

developed new methods for intertwining interior and exterior that better reflected his aims.

Redoubling the effect of cladding the house in glass, Koenig surrounded CSH #21 with

shallow pools that simultaneously reflected the house and its environs (fig. 17). He even added

an interior water feature, which referenced the exterior pools and brought nature into the house

(fig. 18). In contrast to the sterility and stability of the exposed steel frame, the water

surrounding the house remained in a constant state of movement, either because the water was

being pumped to move around the house or because its reflective quality meant that its

appearance was ever-changing. The writers at *Arts and Architecture* celebrated Koenig for

effectively marrying the house with nature to create an "architectural whole" that promoted in

visitors an experience of "pleasure" and "serenity."[347]

Koenig's fusion of interior and exterior via waterways that reflected the steel frame more

than satisfied the *Arts and Architecture* team, who lauded the architect for bringing steel-and-

glass design to its "culmination of development." According to the magazine, Koenig's small,

1200-square-foot house elevated steel from an experimental to an established housing material.

This was in part due to the "pleasurable" mood that Koenig was able to produce at CSH #21.

With his second CSH, Koenig was charged with developing a steel-framed house that would

promote a similarly pleasurable experience. According to the brief, Koenig's CSH #22 was to be

built on a "view lot" "located on a promontory overlooking the city of Los Angeles and its

environs." The house was to "function as a shelter only. All else is subordinate to the focal

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[346] Having trained as an architect at the University of Southern California and having previously interned with Soriano, Koenig was intimately familiar with California Modern architecture and its ongoing effort to unify exterior and interior space.

[347] Pierre Koenig, "Case Study House No. 21," *Arts and Architecture*, February 1959, 19.

interest, the surrounding panorama."[348] Put another way, the brief instructed the architect to

combine interior and exterior space to such an extent that the home was secondary to its

resident's experience of seeing and enjoying their surroundings. In short, Koenig was tasked with

fulfilling the steel frame's promise of disappearing in order to produce in the resident the

experience of freedom.

To accomplish this goal Koenig incorporated techniques employed by all of the previous

steel-and-glass CSH architects. Other than the street-facing steel decking, which he used to

maintain privacy, the rest of the CSH's exterior walls were comprised of plate glass and sliding

glass doors that were supported by slender steel columns (fig. 19). Inside, partitions were

detached from the roof plane, and even substantive elements such as the kitchen cabinets and

fireplace were left freestanding (fig. 20). As a result, the expansive glazing looking out onto the

cityscape remained unobstructed, with "no major line of demarcation between one's view from

an interior position and the horizon."[349] This is part of the reason Koenig abandoned Ellwood's

panel aesthetic, which he felt would bring too much attention to the home and obstruct the views.

He did, however, continue the trend of painting the steel columns, but where most CSH

architects painted the exposed steel black, Koenig used a variety of colors, including "sagebrush,

Jamaica brown, white opal, and black," in an effort to deemphasize the columns and maximize

the feeling of "lightness in form that can only be achieved in metal."[350] Only the home's heavy

roof emphasized its steel body. Exaggerated by an oversized I-beam that expanded past the

roofline, the slightly slanted roof overhang extended out into the pool area. But, rather than bring

attention to the structure, the overhang proved necessary for preserving the views throughout the

[348] Pierre Koenig, "Project for a New Case Study House," *Arts and Architecture*, May 1959, 15.
[349] Pierre Koenig, "Report on Case Study House No. 22," *Arts and Architecture*, February 1960, 26.
[350] Pierre Koenig, "Case Study House No. 22," *Arts and Architecture*, June 1960, 21.

day. It also physically connected the home's interior and exterior, impelling a "feeling of lightness and continuity."[351]

CSH #22 received widespread praise, due in large part to Shulman's photographs of the home. Even today, the house remains a touchstone of California Modern design. And yet, Koenig's CSH #22 was the last steel-frame CSH to be constructed in Southern California.[352] In fact, just two years after Koenig completed the house, Entenza sold *Arts and Architecture*. By 1960, as Esther McCoy has argued, the single-family home had become a luxury; and by 1962, it had become clear that modern architects no longer had much influence over the housing industry. As McCoy acidly put it, by the time Entenza sold *Arts and Architecture*, "the battle for housing had been won by the developers."[353] For its part, steel never caught on.[354] While the exact reasons for this remain unclear, it is most likely that the cost, especially the cost of errors, limited the material's popularity. Moreover, California Modern architects' desire to use steel to seamlessly connect interior and exterior space was never embraced by the majority of architects, remaining mostly within the minds of those who participated in the CSHP.

But what of the architects' goal of separating themselves from their intentions in order to protect the freedoms of their tenants? Put another way, why had affording residents the *experience* of freedom become so important to their architectural project? The answer to these questions, as I hope to have shown, is inextricably tied to these architects' particular historical circumstances. In short, California Modern architects working in the late 1940s and 1950s were

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[351] Pierre Koenig, "Case Study House No. 22," 15.
[352] In 1962, the architect David Thorne completed the CSHP's final steel-framed house. However, the house was not located in Los Angeles or Southern California but in the Northern California town of San Raphael (near San Francisco).
[353] Esther McCoy, *Case Study Houses, 1945-1962*, 5.
[354] Neil Jackson, "Metal-Frame Houses of the Modern Movement in Los Angeles: Part 2: The Style that Nearly...," *Architectural History*, vol. 33, (1990).

operating in an ideological environment dominated by Cold War liberals, in which "freedom" and "creativity" were considered key values and means to develop anti-totalitarian citizens. To conform to these values, Case Study architects departed from earlier generations of California Modern architects, who insisted that the architect must exert a guiding hand in the lives of tenants, by embracing a more hands-off approach. In so doing, they abandoned the architect's commitment to education—a commitment that continuously inspired Williams, Neutra, and Ain. For the steel-frame Case Study architects, the architect could not be a teacher, because to be a teacher was, under the new liberal consensus, to be a totalitarian.

Chapter 4: Figures

Figure 1: "...And 400 New Angels Every Day," *Life* vol. 25, no. 2, July 13, 1953, 23.


Figure 2: Frederick C. Dockweiler, "Don't pay somebody else's rent: vote no on Proposition 'B'" (June 3, 1952), box 1, folder "Los Angeles Housing Educational fund + Los Angeles Citizens Housing Council, 1949-1952," Specialized Research Collection: Shirley Adelson Siegal Papers, University of Southern California Libraries.

Figure 3: J.R. Davidson, Case Study House #11. "Case Study House Number 11," *Arts and Architecture*, July 1946, 48.
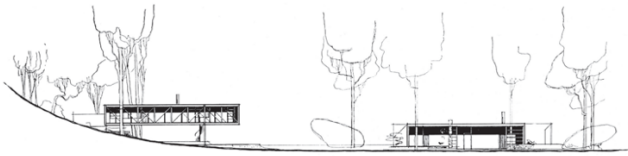

Figure 4: Rendering of Case Study Houses 1949 and #9 on a shared lot. Charles Eames and Eero Saarinen, "Case Study #8 and #9," *Arts and Architecture*, December 1945, 45.
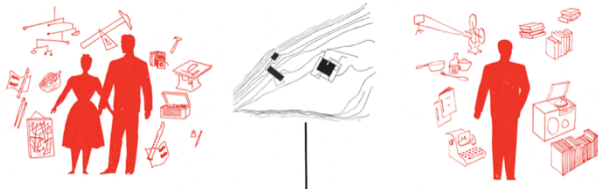

Figure 5: Drawings of Ray Eames, Charles Eames, and John Entenza alongside their belongings and renderings of Case Study House 1949 and Case Study House #9. Charles Eames and Eero Saarinen, "Case Study #8 and #9," *Arts and Architecture*, December 1945, 44.

Figure 6: Charles and Ray Eames in their living room, as photographed by Julius Shulman in 1958. Photo: J. Paul Getty Trust. Julius Shulman Photography Archive, Research Library at the Getty Research Institute. © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10).
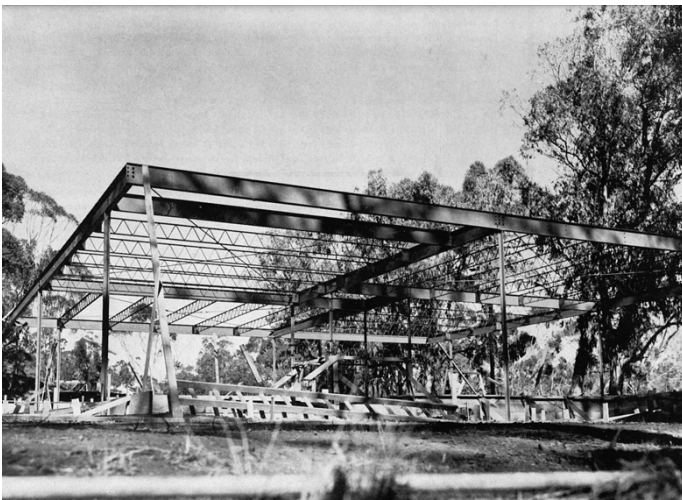
Figure 7: Photograph of Case Study House #9's steel frame. Charles Eames and Eero Saarinen, "Case STUDY HOUSE NO. 9 Under Construction," *Arts and Architecture*, January 1949, 32.
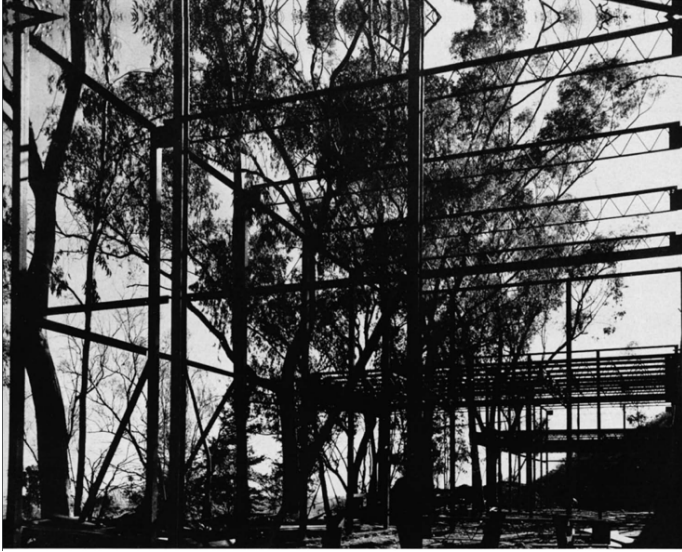
Figure 8: Photograph of Case Study House 1949's steel frame. Charles Eames, "Case Study House for 1949: The Steel Frame," *Arts and Architecture*, March 1949, 31.

Figure 9: Photograph of Case Study House 1950's steel frame. Raphael Soriano, "Case Study House 1950," *Arts and Architecture,* September 1950, 36.

Figure 10: Photograph of Case Study House 1950. Raphael Soriano, "Case Study House 1950," *Arts and Architecture*, November 1950, 31.

Figure 11: Detail of Case Study House 1949. John Entenza and Charles Eames, "Case Study House 1949" *Arts and Architecture*, December 1949, 34.

Figure 12: Detail of Case Study House 1950. Raphael Soriano, "Case Study House 1950," *Arts and Architecture*, November 1950, 33.
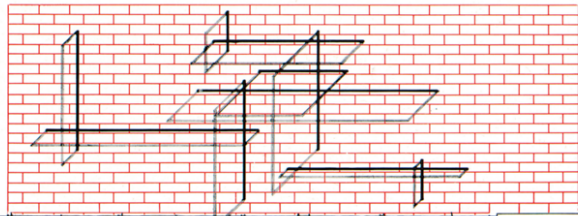
Figure 13: "Main entry of the Eames House, Pacific Palisades, California." Photograph by John Morse, June 2003.
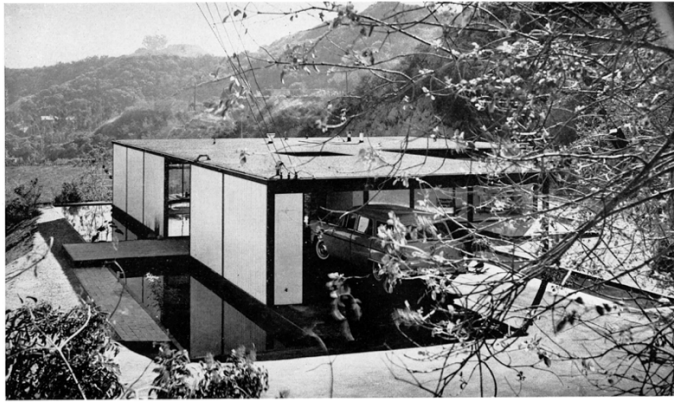

Figure 14: Photograph of Case Study House #16's steel frame and stone fireplace. Craig Ellwood, "The New Case Study House," *Arts and Architecture*, December 1952, 22.

Figure 15: Rendering of the steel-joist jungle gym at Case Study House #16. Craig Ellwood, "Case Study House," *Arts and Architecture*, February 1953, 31.

Figure 16: Photograph of the living room as seen from the den at Case Study House #16. Craig Ellwood, "The New Case Study House," *Arts and Architecture*, June 1953, 24.

Figure 17: Exterior photograph of Case Study House #21. Pierre Koenig, "Case Study House No. 21," *Arts and Architecture*, February 1959, 20.

Figure 18: Photograph of interior water feature at Case Study House #21.

Pierre Koenig, "Case Study House No. 21," *Arts and Architecture*, February 1959, 22.

Figure 19: Julius Schulman, photograph of Case Study House #22 (exterior), 1960.
Pierre Koenig, "Case Study House No. 22," *Arts and Architecture*, June 1960, 14.

Figure 20: Julius Schulman, photograph of Case Study House #22 (interior: living room), 1960.
Pierre Koenig, "Case Study House No. 22," *Arts and Architecture*, June 1960, 19.

Conclusion:

Following its July 2007 debut, the show *Mad Men* became appointment television for millions of Americans. Depicting the lives and careers of advertising executives working in the 1960s, viewers were enthralled by the show's detailed recreation of the fashion and interior design of midcentury New York. The show's success brought midcentury design back into the American zeitgeist: in 2012 the *New York Daily News* published "How to recreate 'Mad Men' style at home;" in 2014 *GQ* detailed "How to Work *Man Men*'s Mid-Century Style Into Your Own Space;" in 2015 *Curbed* endeavored to answer the question, "Why the world is obsessed with midcentury modern design?" (hint: the answer was *Mad Men*);" and, later that year, New York City's Museum of the Moving Image hosted the exhibition, "Matthew Weiner's *Mad Men*."[355] What did midcentury modern design mean to people in the 2010s? The answer is found in a 2014 interview with *Mad Men* creator Matthew Weiner for *Interior Design* magazine. When asked if he had been raised "in a midcentury environment," Weiner tellingly remarked that his "parents were bourgeois."[356] To Weiner, to be bourgeois was to be have embraced the midcentury modern aesthetic. It seems that the design style once described by the filmmaker and critic Paul Schrader as a "proletarian art" had fallen victim to an almost total embourgeoisement.[357]

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[355] Associated Press, "How to recreate 'Mad Men' style at home," *New York Daily News*, April 11, 2012, https://www.nydailynews.com/life-style/real-estate/recreate-mad-men-style-home-article-1.1060010. ; TRNK, "HomeWork With TRNK: How to Work *Mad Men*'s Mid-Century Style Into Your Own Space," *GQ*, April 10, 2014, https://www.gq.com/gallery/homework-with-trnk-mad-mens-mid-centurystyle. ; Laura Fenton, "Why the world is obsessed with midcentury modern design," *Curbed*, April 8, 2015, https://archive.curbed.com/2017/11/22/16690454/midcentury-modern-design-mad-men-eames. ; Margaret Rhodes, "Go Behind the Scenes of *Mad Men*'s Exquisite Set Design," *Wired*, March 27, 2015, https://www.wired.com/2015/03/go-behind-scenes-mad-mens-exquisite-set-design/.
[356] "Welcome to 1969: Mad Men's Award-Winning Set Design," *Interior Design*, April 25, 2014, https://interiordesign.net/projects/welcome-to-1969-mad-men-s-award-winning-set-design/.
[357] Paul Schrader, "Poetry of Ideas: The Films of Charles Eames," *Film Quarterly* vol. 23, no. 3 (Spring, 1970): 6.

Weiner had no idea, and could not have imagined, the radical potential that had directed the work of California Modern architects like Williams, Neutra, and Ain. When these architects designed their public housing projects and cooperatives, they had no interest in establishing a bourgeois aesthetic; they sought to reimagine how people lived, be it in amenity-rich, government-subsidized superblocks or cooperatively-owned neighborhoods. But while California Modern design was embraced in the Cold War, and again in the 2010s, it was endorsed without knowledge of its radical origins. This is why someone like Weiner would associate midcentury architecture and design with the bourgeoisie.[358]

Ultimately, this dissertation is an attempt to recover a lost moment when midcentury architecture was invested with transformative potential. Indeed, following Ellen Schrecker, perhaps its major intervention is to show that "McCarthyism's main impact [was] in what did not happen rather than in what did—the social reforms that were never adopted" and the "unfinished agenda of the New Deal."[359] To Schrecker, one might add that it was not only the right-wing, i.e., the McCarthyites, but also the center, i.e., the Cold War liberals, who ensured that Americans rejected the radical projects that many of them had endorsed in the 1930s and 1940s in favor of a timid politics that accepted the realities of class society, and the hegemony of private property, as inevitable.

But, of course, one must not simply blame California Modern architects for failing to achieve their intended ends. They faced enormous obstacles, from a robust real-estate lobby that ultimately ended the government's public housing programs, to a Cold War society in which

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[358] In the future, I hope to explore the other side of this narrative, namely, whether the renewed popularity of midcentury modern architecture and design in the 2010s has anything to do with the 2008 housing crisis and the rise of populist politics most associated with the 2011 Occupy Wall Street movement.
[359] Ellen Schrecker, *The Age of McCarthyism: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1994), 92-93.

communality was identified with communism, to a culture defined by an individualist ethos that associated the private single-family home with freedom. There was likely little architects like Williams, Neutra, and Ain could have done to realize their goals. The objective conditions were just not available.

Today, Los Angeles is dealing with one of the worst homelessness crises in its history. With median yearly incomes at $39,378, and the average cost of a single-family home being $1.2 million, it is virtually impossible for the ordinary Los Angelino to purchase a home.[360] It is therefore worthwhile to return to a moment in the city's history when progressive architects, buoyed by a robust welfare state, could imagine a city organized around housing the "common man." The development of California Modern architecture from public housing to the Case Study Homes, and the subsequent history of housing in Los Angeles, raises the question: can modern-day Los Angeles house its citizens without statist interventions, guided by architects whose aim is to reimagine housing for all? The historical record suggests that the answer is no.

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[360] U.S. Census Bureau, "Per capita income in past 12 months (in 2021 dollars), 2017-2021," Quick Facts: Los Angeles City, California; Santa Monica City, California; Los Angeles County, California, (2021), https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/losangelescitycalifornia,santamonicacitycalifornia,losangele scountycalifornia/BZA010221. ; "Home values in Los Angeles, CA," Realtor.com, accessed July 2023, https://www.realtor.com/realestateandhomes-search/Los-Angeles_CA/overview.

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