El SFMA, el MoMA y la codificación de la arquitectura de la región de la Bahía de San Francisco (1935-1953)

SFMA, MoMA and the Codification of Bay Region Architecture (1935-1953)

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Resumen: Este artículo investiga el desconocido programa de exposiciones de arquitectura del SFMA durante la etapa fundacional de su primera directora, Grace Morley. Su pionera difusión de la arquitectura de la Bahía como respuesta al contexto geográfico y cultural de la región ofreció a los críticos del Este una nueva perspectiva de la modernidad californiana. Análogamente, el estudio de la colaboración SFMA-MoMA durante el comisariado de Elizabeth Mock examina el conflicto de percepciones e intereses entre ambas costas conducente a la histórica exposición de 1949 Domestic Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region. Epítome de los debates de posguerra, esta culminaba un infatigable esfuerzo promocional iniciado años antes de que el conocido artículo de Lewis Mumford en The New Yorker desencadenara, en 1947, una encendida controversia acerca del “Bay Region Style.” Contrariamente a la creencia de que el SFMA reaccionó tardíamente al simposio del MoMA de 1948 organizado por Philip Johnson para rebatir a Mumford, aquella exposición fue la consecuencia de una efectiva agenda regionalista que logró exponer, educar y/o seducir a algunos de los más influyentes actores del panorama norteamericano con la idea de una Escuela de la Región de la Bahía profundamente preocupada por cuestiones sociales, políticas y ecológicas.

Palabras clave: Arquitectura de la región de San Francisco; exposiciones SFMA y MoMA; alianzas Morley-Bauer-Mock; California y la crítica del Este; conflictos culturales Costa Este-Costa Oeste.

Abstract: This paper addresses the under-recognized implications of SFMA’s early architectural exhibition program. Conceived under founding director Grace Morley, a series of pioneering events first presented Bay Area architects’ work as interdependent with the region’s rich geographical and cultural context, offering new lens through which Eastern critics prompted to re-evaluate California modernism. Among these shows, the 1949 landmark exhibition Domestic Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region would epitomize the postwar discussions upon the autonomy of American modern architecture. Correspondingly, by exploring SFMA-MoMA exchanges during Elizabeth Mock’s curatorship, this essay aims to examine the conflict of perceptions and intentions between the country’s two Coasts that brought about the 1949 show as part of a well-orchestrated campaign that had begun years before Lewis Mumford’s 1947 New Yorker piece triggered a controversy over the existence of a “Bay Region Style.” Contrary to prevailing assumptions that this exhibition was a delayed reaction to the 1948 MoMA symposium organized by Philip Johnson to refute Mumford’s arguments, it was the consequence of an effective regionalist agenda whose success was, precisely, that many influential actors in the United States were exposed, indoctrinated and/or seduced by the so-called Bay Region School’s emphasis on social, political and ecological concerns.

Keywords: Bay Region architecture; SFMA & MoMA exhibitions; Morley-Bauer-Mock connections; California and Eastern criticism; East Coast-West Coast cultural conflicts.
SFMA AND THE EARLY PROMOTION OF BAY REGION ARCHITECTURE

In 1935, when the San Francisco Museum of Art (SFMA) opened its doors, it was the only museum on the West Coast devoted solely to modern art.1 Thanks to the extraordinary talent and commitment of its founding director, Dr. Grace McCann Morley, by the mid-1940s, it had already secured its position as the country’s second museum of its kind, only surpassed by the Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA).

Grace Morley, who ran SFMA until her resignation in 1958, was a habitué of San Francisco’s most progressive groups, with which she teamed up to promote a wide-ranging collaboration between the international avant-garde scene and local movements. Morley “believed passionately in cultural democracy” and aimed to make modern art available to everyone.2 In her struggle to involve SFMA’s audiences into the many fields and intersections of contemporary creation, she presented and discussed modern art achievements through a multiplicity of media, which included design, architecture, planning, photography,3 television, and the launching of the first regular art film program at an American museum.4

Notwithstanding her reputation and professional network, Morley had to overcome a number of significant financial, geographic, and philosophical challenges, “especially as a woman working outside the East Coast art establishment.”5 Evidence of her promethean efforts to champion modernism is that, during her first years, she managed to mount dozens of exhibitions and to host a wide range of educational talks, gallery tours and modern art courses.6 Morley also maintained an active participation in several art associations and public organizations, such as the American Federation of Arts (AFA), where she was elected Vice-President. After World War II, when SFMA gained prominence and she became an expert of global influence, she dedicated herself to high-profile international programs such as the endeavor of constituting UNESCO.

Surprisingly, in the field of architecture, Morley’s far-reaching activity still remains unexplored.7 Amongst her earliest contributions, in February 1937, she produced Contemporary Landscape Architecture, a major show devoted to modern landscape design, being the first of its kind ever mounted internationally. It was assembled and curated by Morley herself, counting on the assistance of her closest architectural circles, mainly landscape architect Thomas Church and architects Ernest Born, Gardner Dailey and William Wurster, who held central positions in the event. On the occasion, she also invited experts of national and international reputation, such as Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Richard Neutra, who contributed respective essays to her exhibition catalogue. Morley’s decision to present a coherent body of local practices in landscape design responded to an intelligent strategy to align her interests with San Francisco Bay Area residents’ appreciation of the region’s dramatic natural settings and unique lifestyle.8 Similarly, her groundbreaking 1940 planning exhibition Space for Living (Figure 1), which she entrusted to Telesis,9 engaged her fellow citizens in proposals of smart urban growth relying on thoughtful land usage, natural preservation and regional integration, decades before the coining of terms like environmentalism or sustainability.

The first great architectural exhibition held at SFMA was premiered on September 30, 1938.10 It was organized under the stewardship of the Northern California chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and was timed to coincide with its local convention in October.11 The show, which was entirely devoted to Bay Area architecture and focused primarily upon single-family homes, began a series of formative architectural actions which would contribute decisively to the process of codification of Bay regionalism.12
As Morley’s priority was to make SFMA’s architectural program an educational challenge, William Wurster, chairman of the exhibition, put local architect and graphic artist Ernest Born in charge of designing the show. Bringing Morley’s vision to life, the public’s curiosity was prompted by an itinerary along the walls of SFMA’s North and West galleries, which were covered with a sequence of plywood panels laid out on a saw-tooth plan. Yet, Born had to grapple with “strenuous resistance from the AIA,” and many of the participants, as he refused to privilege any individual. Instead, he decided to present the ensemble of the forty selected works in an unprecedented “systematic, uniform” manner. Born’s enlightening and outstanding installation not only promoted for the first time a clear image of the Bay Area as a coherent architectural region, but also set an exceedingly high design standard for future shows (Figure 2).

Including this, Ernest Born put on three major architectural exhibitions at SFMA with tremendous popular and critical success. The second, Architecture Around San Francisco Bay (AASFB), came in the spring of 1941, being a prewar mirror of his third and most cited 1949 exhibition Domestic Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region (DASFBR), which would become a pivotal moment in the ideological debates on regionalism and modern architecture in America.
After an East Coast preview at the New York Architectural League, the 1941 show was mounted at SFMA to take full advantage of the AIA National Convention at nearby Yosemite National Park in May (Figure 3). Then, SFMA, along with local galleries such as Gump’s San Francisco, joined forces to undertake a busy presentations and lectures program anticipating the full-scale AASFB exhibition in June. These events were extensively promoted to secure the presence of Bay Region architects both inside and outside SFMA’s halls around the time visitors arrived in California for the conference, being enthusiastically received by both the professional press and shelter magazines.

As a leading cultural manager, Morley worked closely with architectural media, including the two most significant California-based magazines, California Arts & Architecture and Architect and Engineer. Morley’s connections also facilitated the national coverage of SFMA’s exhibitions in Architectural Forum and AFA’s Magazine of Art, which proved instrumental in the publicity of the region. Thus, it is possible to track down the beginning of various systematically organized campaigns to promote Bay Region architects since, at least, the launching of SFMA’s architecture exhibition program. From 1938 to 1941, in a series of Pencil Points articles, critic Talbot Hamlin conveyed his interest in the residential design of the Bay Region and applauded William Wurster and Gardner Dailey’s “sincere simplicity.” Mumford’s April 30, 1938 “Sky Line” piece indicates that, then, Wurster was already on his radar screen. In 1938, both Hamlin and Mumford independently agreed to the importance of the vigorous regional expressions that were “blowing” East Coast’s “metropolitan pride.” This promotion was reinforced by the August 1938 Pencil Points issue devoted to Wurster as the titular head of San Francisco Bay’s “soft” modernism.

Wurster’s recognition increased after his marriage to prominent housing expert Catherine Bauer in 1940. Soon afterwards, a consistently maintained collaboration between Life and Architectural Forum boosted his public notoriety. In 1944, Wurster was appointed...
Dean of Architecture at MIT which, along with Bauer and Morley’s continuing contacts, secured his position on the editorial boards of various architectural journals like California Arts & Architecture, as well as his regular participation in architecture competitions, award juries and academic debates, where he exerted his influence. Furthermore, his close collaboration with the ideologically diverse scholars he hired to lecture at MIT—from Robert Woods Kennedy and Vernon DeMars to Henry-Russell Hitchcock—provided many opportunities for cultural exchange and East Coast exposure for the Bay Region. In the wake of Wurster’s celebrity, a younger generation of San Francisco designers soon received increasingly growing media attention. Thus, Mario Corbett, Vernon DeMars and John Funk, among others, became the most published names of American editors who, at the end of the 1940s, were fully aware that “Bay Area architects were creating something out of the normal.”

The 1941 AIA National Convention was also a seminal event in the historiography of modern architecture in California. Lewis Mumford’s visit to San Francisco resulted in a personal tour with William and Catherine...
Wurster—the critic’s former lover and collaborator—from which emanated his fondness for Bay Region architecture. Coincidentally, the following year, Mumford would move to the Bay Area to teach at Stanford University (1942-44). Then, a number of local practitioners, such as Telesis members, recognized their fascination with Mumford’s social criticism. In his turn, Mumford would interpret their work as an inspirational source to further elaborate his arguments defending an enduring Bay Region tradition of organic responses to time and place (Figure 4).

Unlike Mumford’s first sight appreciation of the region’s architecture, Hitchcock’s early opinion of Wurster was not very high. During the 1939-40 Golden Gate International Exhibition’s run Hitchcock first visited California. Upon his return to the East Coast he wrote an essay on his findings being published in the December 1940 issue of Entenza’s recently acquired magazine and in which the Eastern critic continued his harsh post-International Style exhibition opinion of California architects, particularly biased against Schindler’s case. In his California Arts & Architecture piece Hitchcock wrote: “Wurster’s work, which has for some years been well publicized, is not exactly disappointing. It is perhaps duller than one expects and the gradual development away from a simplified traditionalism toward more overtly modern, or at least

Figure 4. Ernest Born’s presentation of the June 1941 issue of Architect and Engineer served as the Architecture Around San Francisco Bay exhibition catalogue.
original forms, seems either to have been arrested late or to have taken an unfortunate turning. Contrary to Hitchcock, after his 1941-44 recognition of Northern California modernism, all but coincidentally, Mumford recurrently praised Wurster’s environmental adaptation as exemplary of the Bay Region tradition which, in 1947, he would explicitly identify with the most eloquent, “free yet unobtrusive expression of the terrain, the climate and the life on the Coast.”

AUTONOMY AT STAKE: “WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO LEWIS MUMFORD?”

Lewis Mumford’s famous October 11, 1947, New Yorker Sky Line column labelling San Francisco Bay Area domestic architecture as “Bay Region Style” fueled a national debate after he used the term to denounce what he considered the “sterile and abstract,” “one-sided interpretation of function” of the International Style. Mumford’s controversial essay not only expressed his disaffection with the mechanical and formalist version of modernism proposed by Hitchcock and Johnson at MoMA in 1932, but also criticized their insistence on the legitimacy of the International Style principles to evaluate contemporary architecture. Mumford believed that these principles “fostered a superficial attachment to the symbolism, rather than a deep understanding of the emancipatory possibilities of technology.” Instead, he proposed the domestic architecture of California’s Bay Region, from Bernard Maybeck to William Wurster, as a model of a “native and humane form of modernism.” Mumford’s excerpt from The Sky Line provoked such an angry response from the Eastern establishment that it prompted Johnson to host a symposium at MoMA to refute his criticism.

The event took place February 11, 1948, and was alarmingly entitled “What is Happening to Modern Architecture”? Mumford’s antagonists Alfred Barr and Henry-Russel Hitchcock profited from their position as introductory speakers to aggressively undermine Mumford’s arguments and exploited the word “style” in their own interests. Barr sarcastically dubbed Mumford’s original “Bay Region Style” as “Cottage Style,” presenting it as a less serious, provincial version of the International Style. The term was also bandied about by other speakers who used it dismissively to underline that it was merely restricted to the field of residential architecture. Furthermore, as Gail Fenske has observed, instead of focusing on the main cultural implications of Mumford’s proposal, Barr and Hitchcock influenced the views of subsequent panelists, “nineteen highly opinionated colleagues,” such as Walter Gropius, George Nelson, Marcel Breuer, Peter Blake or Frederick Gutheim, who charted ancillary lines of discussion through related contemporary debates concerning monumentality, functionalism and style, which diffused the argument’s force and clarity. Hence, unfortunately, Mumford’s challenge “never received the level of debate it deserved.”

The ensuing dispute between Mumford and Hitchcock over their dissimilar understanding of “Bay Region Style” is representative of their two fundamentally opposed visions of modern architecture. Contrary to Hitchcock’s analysis based on methods of connoisseurship and from the history of art he learned at Harvard, Mumford’s interpretation of the architecture produced around San Francisco Bay emerged from a wider conceptual frame considering the built environment as interdependent with its natural surroundings and its urban and socio-cultural context. Mumford and Hitchcock’s confrontation at the 1948 symposium, Fenske explains, was so impassioned for the reason that Mumford could not accept Hitchcock’s methodology of evaluating buildings on the basis of formal criteria, whereas Hitchcock was unable to appreciate Mumford’s complex approach to architecture, which was deeply rooted in the “ecological and social orientation of Patrick Geddes.”
Fenske’s thoughtful examination of the 1948 symposium, however, overlooked Philip Johnson’s role as the ongoing debate instigator. Peter Blake’s autobiographical account No Place Like Utopia intimates that Johnson, who had taken Mumford’s comments as an attack, orchestrated carefully the event to refute Mumford’s opinions in The Sky Line. Hitchcock’s 1948 correspondence with MoMA provides corroboration of Blake’s statement. Similarly, the Breuer-Johnson communication during the planning of the symposium discussing how to rebut “Lewis Mumford’s Isms” also indicates that Johnson was stacking the deck against Mumford at the time MoMA was simultaneously preparing a retrospective of Breuer’s work. In fact, Johnson’s strategy to neutralize Mumford was twofold: first, he assigned his antagonist the role of moderator, which minimized Mumford’s possibilities of defending his arguments; secondly, upon arrival at the Museum, a number of Mumford’s opponents were given in advance Barr and Hitchcock’s written comments, evidencing Johnson’s interest in controlling how the discussion could possibly unfold.

Upon his return to MoMA after the war, Johnson’s change of mind regarding Bay Region architecture seems evident. For instance, in “Architecture in 1941,” an unpublished article written in 1942, Johnson had appreciative comments on California’s wood construction. He praised DeMars’s Farm Security Administration housing complexes and mentioned Wurster’s large-scale defense project in Vallejo as examples of site prefabrication. Yet, in 1947, within the coast-to-coast saturation of Bay Region architecture’s press coverage, Mumford’s New Yorker article must have been the straw that broke the proverbial camel’s back and therefore perceived by Johnson as a threat to the goals of his new programs at MoMA.

After the 1948 symposium, Harvard University GSD Bulletin reported the event under the sardonic title “What has Happened to Lewis Mumford?” The article, which was biased against Mumford’s “attack on the modernist” reveals the divergent stances on the issue taken by the two faculties in Cambridge. Whereas MIT backed Dean Wurster, Harvard adopted MoMA’s discourse, being summarized in the GSD review: “Mr. Mumford’s claim that the Bay Region Style was a new form of architecture is incorrect and it should be judged as a regional expression of the modern movement.”

As Pierluigi Serraino affirms, San Francisco Bay’s “romantic blend of natural beauty and cultural legitimacy,” was identified by Mumford’s followers as an oasis of national values owing no debts to European modernism. Conversely, to his adversaries, the “Bay Region Style” was merely an instrumental myth to express their overly provincial discomfort with the growing presence of foreign architecture in the United States. To compound matters, despite the fact that the national recognition of Bay Region architecture was then firmly established by articles and exhibitions, its acceptance as an articulated phenomenon was questioned by both its detractors and supporters, including its practitioners. Having reached no conclusion during the meeting, the 1948 symposium at MoMA had the dichotomous effect of pigeonholing San Francisco Bay architects into a “Style,” of which none of its protagonists agreed they were consciously a part.

The main battle lines had apparently been drawn following the 1948 symposium and the dispute between enthusiasts and opponents of Mumford’s arguments played themselves out on the pages of the most reputed architectural journals of the country, principally in Progressive Architecture. In its April 1948 post-symposium issue, Thomas Creighton published an editorial under the form of a letter to Philip Johnson expressing his support of Mumford’s criticism. Correspondingly, in December 1948 Creighton published a highly Wurster-sympathetic editorial entitled “Architecture: Not Style,” which resulted in incendiary responses speaking volumes...
about how aggressively and differently the interpretations of Mumford’s standpoint were received.55

1949, A LANDMARK SHOW

Early in 1949, making the most of the stir caused by the previous year’s symposium,56 the core group of Bay Region architects and editors, led by Ernest Born, agreed to collaborate on the organization, funding and advertising of a new major exhibition at SFMA,57 which was tellingly named Domestic Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region. The show, which garnered the support of the local AIA chapters, was on display from September 16 through November 6, 1949. All the structures exhibited, except for a small apartment building in San Francisco, were single family residences, being most of them built after the war.58 The installation design was once more entrusted to Born who provided the exhibition with the accustomed conceptual clarity and expressive dynamism (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Ernest Born’s original installation of the 1949 exhibition Domestic Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region, at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.
Upon the commotion caused by Mumford’s advocacy of “Bay Region Style” and its subsequent debates and publicity, unlike the 1938 and 1941 shows, in 1949, SFMA did publish an exhibition catalogue (Figures 6/7), which was also designed by Born. It featured seven essays validating the existence of a modern school in the Bay Region and providing evidence for its consistency as unique regional tradition dating as far back as the work of California pioneers such as Bernard Maybeck, Ernest Coxhead, Greene & Greene, Julia Morgan or John Galen Howard.

Richard Freeman prefaced the book, highlighting the leitmotif of the catalogue: local architects won international recognition for “the imaginative way in which they had met the problems of site, climate, materials and client requirements,” being the reason why Bay Region architecture was monopolizing the pages of every magazine. Wurster also contributed an evocative essay recalling the virtues of the informal California lifestyle, the freedom, audaciousness and the pleasure felt in the anonymous Bay Area houses.
Lewis Mumford’s “The Architecture of the Bay Region” was the catalogue’s most significant contribution. In his essay, Mumford reframed and clarified the ideas put across in his New Yorker column. Reemphasizing his discourse at MoMA, he celebrated the individualism of West Coast architects stating that their common ground was their sensitivity towards the environment which, again, he opposed to the “restricted and arid formulas of the so-called International Style.” Mumford called historians and critics for proper study and recognition of what he more accurately renamed as “Bay Region School,” an all-inclusive designation rectifying his former use of the word “style,” which he lamented as an “unfortunate slip.”

Quintessentially Mumford’s, his essay revealed the work of the lucid and progressive thinker he was: “The main problem of architecture today is to reconcile the universal and the regional, the mechanical and the human, the cosmopolitan and the indigenous […] Bay Region both belongs to the region and transcends the region: it embraces the machine and it transcends the machine. It does not ignore particular needs, customs, conditions, but translates them into the common form of our civilization.”

Figure 7. Ernest Born’s design for the cover of 1949 DASFBR exhibition catalogue (left) and Lewis Mumford’s essay first page (right).
Elizabeth Thompson, whose participation in the catalogue explored the historical roots of the Bay Region School, was the brains behind the exhibition’s national publicity campaign. As Architectural Record West Coast editor, Thompson had a vested interest in her close group of Bay Region architects. The intense editorial activity performed by Thomson during the months DASFBR was under preparation speaks volumes about her magazine’s effort to take advantage of the debates following MoMA’s 1948 symposium.\(^6\) Finally, Architectural Record along with Architectural Forum and Life published different monographs on individual houses in the exhibition. Paradoxically, Arts & Architecture, which until then had been actively supporting SFMA’s activities deliberately did not mention the 1949 event. Instead, in its September issue, Entenza preferred to include an article by Edgar Kaufmann revealingly named...
“What is Happening to Modern Architecture,” which tried a compromising formula. Entenza’s interest in approaching Philip Johnson’s circles might be a plausible explanation for his palpable change of editorial direction after Johnson’s return to MoMA.

A smaller version of DASFBR was planned as a touring show.67 The exhibition was circulated by the AFA which, from February 1950 to July 1951, coordinated twelve venues in the United States and Canada including, among other institutions, MIT and the Cleveland Museum of Art, before traveling to Germany.68 The existing correspondence reveals that both Leslie Cheek and Henry-Russell Hitchcock, in charge respectively of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) and Smith College Art Museum, showed an avid interest in obtaining the show. Hitchcock’s correspondence during the Smith College venue exposes some of his own ideas in respect of the exhibition, namely, that Wurster’s would have gradually evolved moving away from previous restraints. Yet, Hitchcock still spoke disapprovingly about San Francisco’s taste and expressed his doubts about the catalogue’s “inadequacies.”70 Also revealing of his undecided judgement is that immediately afterwards he planned to discuss Bay Area architecture in his course lessons.

A DECADE OF SFMA-MOMA COLLABORATIONS

The 1949 show at SFMA coincided with the culmination of nearly a decade of cooperation between the country’s two main museums, being primarily the result of a crescendo of interlocked advertising and publicity of Bay Region modernism. Grace Morley’s prominent role in the American Federation of Arts, as well as her lobbying effort to secure a Western circuit for shows coming from the East, primarily explained her close collaboration with MoMA, beginning as early as 1937.71 Morley’s familiar relationship with Alfred Barr, and later with Elizabeth Mock via her sister Catherine Bauer and brother-in-law William Wurster, facilitated a number of noteworthy traveling exhibitions borrowed from MoMA,72 which naturally fit into her architectural programs. Mock’s correspondence reveals that she was collaborating with both her sister and Grace Morley,73 at least since her arrival at MoMA in 1938.74 This unexplored triangle of intertwined personal lives and professional alliances would explain the vigorous circulation of exhibitions between the two museums during Mock’s curatorship at MoMA (1938-1946),75 which ensured the cultural exchange of progressive ideas regarding modern planning, public housing, wartime emergences and, of course, their 1940s regionalist agenda (Figure 9).76

After Catherine Bauer’s 1940 acceptance of a position as Visiting Lecturer at the University of California, Berkeley and wedding to William Wurster, the sisters’ correspondence gives documentary evidence of Elizabeth Mock’s frequent professional and personal travels to California in 1940 and 1941.77 Upon Mock’s return from the Bay Area, armed with fresh, regional perspective, she organized and/or circulated, among others, American Architecture, Regional Building in the United States, The Wooden House in America and Planning a Modern House,78 four shows where Bay Region architects figured prominently. Between 1942 and her departure in 1946,79 MoMA exhibitions under Mock had the largest audiences on both Coasts to date, being as well an international success.80 Mock focused on American architecture, presenting related topics through different approaches to house design and neighborhood planning in which the public was most interested (Figures 10/11). Her Wurster-Mumford well-informed regionalist slant was thus ideological but also the result of financial reasoning due to MoMA’s concerns in reaching wider audiences. From this viewpoint, it is enlightening to compare the coverage
of Bay Region architecture in the most significant MoMA-produced shows encompassing the 1949 exhibition during and after Mock’s curatorship: Built in USA: 1932-1944 (1944) and Built in USA: Post-war Architecture (1953).

Elizabeth Mock’s discourse was detailed in her major show Built in USA: 1932-1944. Although she aimed to educate the public in the acceptance of a wide range of different interpretations of modernism, Mock particularly stressed the importance of Northern California contributions, which, due to her sister’s guidance, were presented through cases of affordable homes for working families, urban facilities and rural community planning projects by William Wurster and Telesis members Vernon DeMars and Garret Eckbo, evidencing at MoMA the utmost concern of the Bay Region School. Anticipating Mumford’s arguments and stressing the ideas she had put forward in one of her most popular exhibitions, Regional Building in the United States (1941), Mock’s introduction to Built in USA’s accompanying catalogue insisted on the fact that, since 1932, modern architecture had entered a process of humanization. Her message was that

Figure 9. Grace Morley’s introduction to SFMA’s 1942 exhibition Western Living in the March issue of California Arts & Architecture, which was conceived as its unofficial catalogue. The show traveled to MoMA in 1943, being presented as Five California Houses.
Americans had learned to adapt the modernist idiom with local materials, natural forms and the appropriate floor plans and building solutions for living in the different climates of the country. All but coincidentally, she illustrated her point with Wurster’s work, which she presented as an example of “flexible native style which could go over into modern architecture without any serious break.”

The second Built in USA show, subtitled Post-war Architecture, was mounted in January 1953 to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of MoMA’s Architecture Department. This retrospective was curated by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Arthur Drexler under Philip Johnson’s tutelage. Unlike Mock’s exhibition, Built in USA: Post-war Architecture focused more on corporate buildings and private residences than on urban planning and public housing. Moreover, its domestic section deliberately turned its back on Bay Region architecture, which was reduced to a couple of minor examples (Figure 12), being Southern California homes mainly explained through the industrial paradigm of the Case Study House Program.
After a decade-long series of events devoted to introduce MoMA’s public to regional planning and building, Philip Johnson’s triumphant preface implicitly claimed that there was no other possible architectural present in America but an evolution from the International Style. Johnson alleged that his arguments were founded on Hitchcock’s analysis and double selection criteria: “quality and significance of the moment.”

Oddly, Wurster was not even mentioned in the catalogue despite being one of the authors most clearly identified with the major architectural debates of the time. As a first deduction, this appeared to be a logical consequence of Johnson’s interest in securing his viewpoint. However, the question was more complicated. During the preparation of Built in USA: Post-war Architecture, Hitchcock’s relation with both Catherine and William Wurster was very fluent, if not familiar as their 1951-1952 correspondence reveals.

Wurster likely declined to participate in the show as he was devoted to the task of organising UC Berkeley Architecture School—for which he commissioned Hitchcock a report on its Library. Besides, the majority of the members of the exhibition advisory committee were sympathetic to Wurster, such as Creighton, Hamlin and Mock. Wurster’s MIT faculty members Vernon DeMars, Carl Koch, and Robert Woods Kennedy had a project in

Figure 11. Pages from the March 1946 issue of Architect and Engineer featuring Grace Morley’s The House I Want program at SFMA inspired by Mock’s abovementioned If You Want to Build a House.
Indeed, except for the occasions in which the critic collaborated closely with Johnson (such as in the 1948 symposium or the 1953 show), Hitchcock’s stance vis-à-vis Wurster was ambivalent. Also, it is possible to ascertain ways through which the two Bauer sisters influenced Hitchcock’s vision of California. They planted seeds for the production of In the Nature of Materials, 1887-1941: The Buildings of Frank Lloyd Wright in conjunction with the 1940-41 MoMA exhibition Frank Lloyd Wright, American Architect. Bauer had collaborated with Hitchcock and Mumford in the 1932 MoMA show and, again, on the 1937 Modern Architecture in England book and exhibition. Hitchcock’s inevitable

Figure 12. Left: Cover of Elizabeth Mock’s 1944 Built in USA: 1932-1944 exhibition catalogue featuring John Funk’s Heckendorf House. Right: Page from Hitchcock’s and Drexler’s 1952 Built in USA: Postwar Architecture catalogue featuring Mario Corbett’s Moritz House as the only example of Bay Region’s residential architecture in the book.
mellowing as the impact of the International Style faded is evident in “The International Style Twenty Years After,” his article finally accepting Wurster’s architecture, which was published in the August 1951 issue of Architectural Record. It predicted Hitchcock’s continuum referencing to the death of the International Style in his 1965 introduction to the 1966 edition of International Style, as well as his apologetic introduction to David Gerhard’s 1971 survey on Schindler. Correspondingly, Hitchcock’s chairing the series of three Modern Architecture Symposia at Columbia University in the 1960s and inviting to it both Catherine Bauer and Elizabeth Mock—who, again, questioned the International Style’s contributions to the development of American modernism—can be interpreted as another attempt to reassess his own 1930s-1940s preconceptions.

CONCLUSIONS

Although many studies have acknowledged the historical importance of the ideological debates surrounding the 1949 exhibition Domestic Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region, no survey has yet further examined the circumstances and decisions linking the show and its strategically planned venues to West Coast architecture’s promotional campaigns that had begun more than a decade before Lewis Mumford wrote his renowned 1947 New Yorker piece raising the issue of a “Bay Region Style,” which he presented as an alternative to the International Style. As this essay tries to demonstrate, previous displays at the San Francisco Museum of Art in collaboration with popular department stores and local press, such as the 1938 and 1941 exhibitions, prove that the 1949 show mounted after the previous year’s symposium at MoMA was not an isolated event. Rather, it was another milestone in the series of well-orchestrated actions that, under the directorship of Grace Morley, had been developed by active groups of San Francisco-based architects counting on the support the American Federation of Arts, the AIA and several editorial hubs that sponsored the cause of Bay Region architecture throughout the country years before regionalism became a nexus of national debates. Leading Eastern architects, scholars and editors’ early experience to Northern California architecture through William Wurster, Catherine Bauer, Ernest Born and their Bay Region colleagues, as well as the continuum of 1940s MoMA-SFMA exchanges, and their New York Architectural League connections, approximately coincided with Mumford teaching at Stanford and with the rise and fall of the curatorship of Elizabeth Mock assisted by the connections of her sister. All these situations would coalesce into Mumford’s recognition and support of a distinctive Bay Region sensitivity which, coupling with the process of codification articulated through the combined effort of exhibitions programs, media coverage and public discussion, had the effect of establishing for San Francisco Bay’s domestic tradition a room in the pantheon of architectural history.

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Notes and References

1 The word “modern” was officially added to the Museum’s name in 1976, when it was changed to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA).


3 Such as the work of her friends Edward and Brent Wescott, Arnel Adams, Imogen Cunningham, Dorothea Lange, Minor White and many others.

4 Morley was also ahead of her time when she realized the decision of keeping SFMA open until ten in the evening on weekdays and also organized late-night events, which allowed attendance by those busy in the daytime. See Grace K. M. Morley, Artists, Musicians, and the San Francisco Museum of Art, Interview conducted by Suzanne Knis. Regional Cultural History Project, The Bancroft Library (Berkeley, CA: University of California Berkeley, 1960), 67-62.


6 Morley’s translation and perseverance were crucial in achieving all these goals in spite of SFMA’s chronic shortage of funds. Unlike MMA, it operated with a very small staff assisted by a public-spirited pool of female volunteers, largely provided by the Women’s Board. This group of dedicated women made the most of helping Morley establish SFMA’s roots in the community and to make this museum part of that “cultural climate.” See Grace K. M. Morley’s Oral History. Interview conducted by Porter McCray. Archives of American Art (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1982), unpublished.

7 For instance, Fernández Borja’s comprehensive survey of modern architecture in Northern California barely addresses SFMA’s paramount contributions to promoting Bay Region architecture during the period. Cf. Fernández Borja, No Es Colonias: Iconos de Northern California Modernismo (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2006). In Spain, more recently, Raúl Rodríguez, in an article exploring modernist debates on regionalities, has inaccurately stated that in 1949 “for the first time, the San Francisco Museum of Art organized an exhibition entirely devoted to the vernacular architecture of this city, the de-mocratically established Regional Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region.” Cf. Raúl Rodríguez García, “La oposición regionalista en EE. UU. Generación biográfica de una nueva filosofía arquitectónica,” Cuadernos de arquitectura, no. 16 (2012): 61. This assertion overlooks the magnitude of Morley’s previous archiheological shows on the topic.

8 Late in 1948, SFMA mounted a second major landscape show, just at the peak of the national debates on regionalism and style. It was titled Landscape Design and expanded its scope to include planning and social housing. A third crucial show on the topic was organized under Morley in 1957, including the work of Douglas Boyce, Thomas Church, Garden Edwards, Lawrence Halprin and Geraldine Knight Scott as some of the most significant exponents of Bay Region’s modern landscape design.

9 Telesis’ environmental research group was an informal alliance of young landscape designers and social activists. Its core group included architects: Burton Carmi, John Dowdall, Joseph McCarthy and Vernon Demeurs; planner T. J. (Jack) Keen; landscape architects – and future planners – Garden Edwards, Eowan Moir and Francis Welch; industrial designer Walter Landor; and, among other noted figures, social reformer and conservationist pioneer Dorothy Erskine, Grace Morley, William Wurster and Catherine Bauer were among their regular circle of contributors and benefactors.

10 In point of fact, the first architectural show mounted at the San Francisco Museum can be dated shortly after its foundation in 1935. However, being an assembly of existing materials on AIA licensed architects’ award-winning projects, it can be considered that the first comprehensively curated and designed architectural exhibition was the 1938 event organized by Ernest Born.

11 The Eleventh Annual Convention of the American Institute of Architects, Northern Chapter, was held in San Francisco, October 12 through October 15, 1938.

12 The term “regional” is an elusive historical, cultural construct with multiple connotations, dialectical oppositions and ideological implications. “Regionalism,” as Vincent Cannistraro’s reader on the topic explores, is now “a concept, strategy, tool, technique, attitude, ideology or habit of thought” which, regardless of its prior manifestations, collectively can be understood as a “theory that supports resistance to various forms of hegemonic, universal, or otherwise standardizing structures that would threaten local differentiation.” Vincent Cannistraro, Architectural Regionalism, Collected Writings on Place, Identity, Modernity and Tradition (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007), 20. Given the difficult use of the term, the uniqueness with which the East Bay Area architects and the East Coast bias expounded later in this paper, here, the meaning of the word “regionalism” is aligned with the comprehensive sense articulated by Lewis Mumford in his series of lectures “The South in Architecture,” which the critic defined as “an area not a matter of using the most available local material, or of copying some simple form of construction that our ancestors [and...] Regional forms are those which most closely meet the actual conditions of life and which most fully succeed in making a people feel at home in their environment; they do not merely allow the soil but they reflect the current conditions of culture in the region.” Thus, instead of stressing the theme of “resistance” commonly associated with regional positions, Mumford’s statement emphasized the idea of “construction.” Morley and her contemporaries, “there has never been a human culture that was not self-contained in both time and space [...] every regional culture necessarily has a universal side to it. It is steadily open to influences which come from other parts of the world, and from other cultures, separated from the local region in space or time or both together.” Lewis Mumford, “The South in Architecture” (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1931), 30-31. Mumford would re-elaborate this key argument in his contribution to the exhibition catalogue Domestic Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region (1935-1953), (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1931), 30-31. Mumford would re-elaborate this key argument in his contribution to the exhibition catalogue Domestic Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region (1935-1953), (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1931), 30-31. Mumford would re-elaborate this key argument in his contribution to the exhibition catalogue Domestic Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region (1935-1953), (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1931), 30-31. 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Apart from every variation of the name "Bay Region" itself, or the problematic adjective "regional," which may encapsulate an imported category created elsewhere and which may preclude understanding between different cultural geographies—perhaps, a more accurate term to define the distinct context of modern architecture in Northern California is "Bay Region School," and also "Bay Region second tradition," which implies the connections between the younger generation of Bay Area architects and the local practices established by California pioneers. Moreover, to do justice to the histography of California modernism, the vision of Bay Region School was already proposed by Lundt, Manfredi himself when he tried to correct his own "subjectivist" first attempt to name it after having used the controversial term "Bay Region Style" (see note 16).

Local and national press remarked upon the architect's groundbreaking installation whose innovative design was without parallel in the United States. Architectural Forum, for instance, laid emphasis on the simplicity and visual order accomplished by Born, whose refined proposal was exhibited as "a complete reversal of the usual practice of fitting together whatever material available might exist." "AIA Exhibit of Architecture, San Francisco," Architectural Forum 68, no. 6 (December 1938): 466. Actually, no other museum in the country, including MoMA, had as yet arisen to this challenge, being the originally and quality of Born's first proposal at SFMA only comparable to the work that, by then, George Keck produced for the New York Architectural League.

During this time in New York, from 1929 to 1936, Ernest Born was actively involved in a number of influential circles through which he and his wife Esther would contribute to the national visibility of their fellow Bay Region architects. Ernest had joined the art staff of Architectural Record (1929-34), and then served on the editorial board of Architectural Forum up until his 1936 return to San Francisco. He was also prominent in some of the New York Architectural League's initiatives. As he became one of the most valuable assets of the Bay Area, Born most likely facilitated Bay Region architects' entrée to the League shows of 1938, 1941, 1946 and possibly others.

Immediately after John Fettis's takeover, in 1948, Grace Morley became a member of the advisory board of California Arts & Architecture magazine. She also contributed a monthly column to the San Francisco-based publication San Francisco Record of influential circles through which he and his wife Esther would contribute to the national visibility of their fellow Bay Region architects. Ernest had joined the art staff of Architectural Record (1929-34), and then served on the editorial board of Architectural Forum up until his 1936 return to San Francisco. He was also prominent in some of the New York Architectural League's initiatives. As he became one of the most valuable assets of the Bay Area, Born most likely facilitated Bay Region architects' entrée to the League shows of 1938, 1941, 1946 and possibly others.

Morley was a board member of Magazine of Art, the organ of the American Federation of Art, among whose most prominent board members were Alfred Barr and Philip Johnson.

Proof of the emergence of a Bay Region modern tradition, or at least, of its articulation and earliest observers of California modernism did not mention the work of the second generation. Apart from several variations of the name "Bay Region," or the problematic adjective "regional," which may encapsulate an imported category created elsewhere and which may preclude understanding between different cultural geographies—perhaps, a more accurate term to define the distinct context of modern architecture in Northern California is "Bay Region School," and also "Bay Region second tradition," which implies the connections between the younger generation of Bay Area architects and the local practices established by California pioneers. Moreover, to do justice to the histography of California modernism, the vision of Bay Region School was already proposed by Lundt, Manfredi himself when he tried to correct his own "subjectivist" first attempt to name it after having used the controversial term "Bay Region Style" (see note 16).
that they were all wrong about Mumford (Blake, Department of Architecture and Design (1948-1950), would also admit in his autobiography the cross interests among them were thus much more complex than she related. ing MIT, Harvard and MoMA, or Wurster's employment of Hitchcock, Kennedy and DeMars and Gail Fenske did not consider either Wurster's and Bauer's institutional relationships concern “The New Empiricism-Bay Region-Axis,” of William Wurster” (PhD diss., University of New South Wales, 2006); Fenske, “Mumford, Jane Castle, “Vernacular and Modern: Lewis Mumford’s Bay Region Style and the Architecture of home –so essential amid the stress and dislocation of the depression–, the pervasive use of wood resulted in the style association with William Wurster’s second Bay Area tradition. Indeed, the prevalence of wood in the domestic imagery of San Francisco Bay, would be contemporaneously used by Alfred Barr against Lewis Mumford and William Wurster during the 1948 MoMA symposium, as later expounded upon. Lewis Mumford, “The Sky Line: Status Quo,” The New Yorker, September 17, 1947, 109. ibid., 109. Campus Architecture, Regionalism, 288. Mumford, “Status Quo,” 109. The 1947 Princeton symposium “Building for Modern Man,” which was attended by Philip Johnson himself and counted on many of the same participants he invited to MoMA the following year, most likely provided the inspiration for his 1948 “What is Happening to Modern Architecture?” discussion at MoMA. Alfred Barr annually utilized it: “It is significant, however, that when such a master of Cottage Style as William Wurster is faced with a problem of designing an office or a great project for the United Nations, he falls back upon a pretty orthodox version of the International Style.” “What is Happening to Modern Architecture? A Symposium at the Museum of Modern Art,” Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art 15, no. 2 (1948): 8. Gail Fenske, “Lewis Mumford, Henry-Russell Hitchcock, and the Bay Region Style,” in The Education of the Architect. Historiography, Urbanism, and the Growth of Architectural Knowledge, ed. Martha Pahl (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1997), 38. Rosaline H. Blitzer, “Introduction,” in The Modern Architecture Symposia, 1962-1964: A Critical Edition, eds. Rosaline H. Blitzer and Joan Gowan (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014). 2. For further analyses about how Blake, Barr, Gropius and many other East Coast observers arrived at their biased opinions and repeated mistakes about Bay Region architecture, as well as significant West Coast and international counteractions see, among others: Lane Lefkowitz and Alexander Trowar, “International Style versus Regionalism,” in Architecture of Regionalism in the Age of Globalization (London: Routledge, 2012), 112-120; Jane Castle, “Vernacular and Modern: Lewis Mumford’s Bay Region Style and the Architecture of William Wurster” (PhD diss., University of New South Wales, 2006), Fenske, “Mumford, Hitchcock, and the Bay Region Style.” 27-45, also, of particular interest is Stanford Anderson, “The New Empiricism-Bay Region-Axis,” Journal of Architectural Education 50, no. 3 (1997): 197-202. Fenske, “Mumford, Hitchcock, and the Bay Region Style,” 38. Helen Seager, “Henry-Russell Hitchcock, The Architectural Historian as Critic and Connoisseur,” Studies in the History of Art 13 (1985): 257. See also Fenske, “Mumford, Hitchcock, and the Bay Region Style,” 63. Fenske, “Mumford, Hitchcock, and the Bay Region Style,” 63. Gail Fenske did not consider either Wurster’s and Bauer’s institutional relationships concerning MoMA, Harvard and MoMA, or Wurster’s employment of Hitchcock, Kennedy and DeMars and his and Bauer’s close relationship with Barr and many other participants. The situation and the cross interests among them were thus much more complex than the reality. Peter Blake who, after meeting Philip Johnson in 1947 was appointed Curator at MOMA’s Department of Architecture and Design (1948-1950), would also add to his autobiography that they were all wrong about Mumford (Blake, No Place Like Utopia, 186). Philip Johnson, “Letter to Henry-Russell Hitchcock, January 30, 1948,” Henry-Russell Hitchcock Papers, 1939-1987, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, Johnson organized a first dinner the night before the symposium and a second private encounter right after it, inviting Mumford, Barr and Hitchcock to discuss the merits of the meeting and, the following day, its proceeding publication. Marcel Breuer, “Letter to Philip Johnson, December 30, 1947,” Marcel Breuer Papers, 1930-1986, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC. Mary Barnes, “Letter to Marcel Breuer, January 30, 1948,” Marcel Breuer Papers, 1920-1986, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC. Blake’s correspondence and discussion with Hitchcock about Johnson’s and Blake’s October 1948 article in Magazine of Art rebutting Robert Woods Kennedy’s earlier piece on New England regionalism would further evidence their collision in the February symposium at MoMA. Their article continued the “Cottage Style” versus “International Style” debates resumed at every occasion from the symposium through 1949. Peter Blake, “Letter to Henry-Russell Hitchcock, October 14, 1948,” Henry-Russell Hitchcock Papers, 1919-1987, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC. Lewis Mumford’s 1947 article was published just a few weeks after the opening of Johnson’s Mies van der Rohe major exhibition at MoMA in September. The copy consulted is from Marcel Breuer Papers, 1930-1986, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC. When the following year nine Bay Region architects were asked by Architectural Record West Coast editor Elizabeth E. Thompson whether there was a regional style in Northern California, the interviewed authors responded mainly or answered no to the question. Thompson’s “Is there a Bay Area Style?” Architectural Record article published in its May 1949 issue demonstrated that, implicitly, in what most of them agreed was about the existence of a common ground regarding their understanding of a shared culture of place. Later, Thompson herself would explain the result of her survey by knowing that the individuality of the West Coast architects justified rebellion against such a restrictive label. See Elizabeth E. Thompson, “Is there a Bay-Area Style?” Architectural Record 105 (1949): 32-33. As Jane Castle suggests, despite the wide recognition gained by Northern California architects, the fact that they became conscious, willing to avoid being labeled as part of the “Bay Region Style,” would eventually contribute to the disintegration of their practice as an identifiable school, particularly when the theoretical argument supporting this notion also dominated as Mumford later become more preoccupied with technology than with writing about architecture. Thus, although Bay Region architects continued to practice during the 1950s and 1960s, the proposition of the existence of a recognizably Bay Region tradition “was not renewed until the mid-1970s when Sally Woolfbridge and her contemporaries began to research the architects Mumford had identified.” Castle, Vernacular and Modern, 59, 78. It would be also in this sense that Fenske stated that the Bay Region School happened to be the unfortunate “national casualty” of the debate over its very existence. Fenske, “Mumford, Hitchcock, and the Bay Region Style.” 75. That very month, Robert Woods Kennedy, who was then on William Wurster’s faculty at MIT, published a Wurster-sympathetic piece “The Small House in New England” in the April issue of the Magazine of Art. Kennedy’s essay was hardly answered by Philip Johnson and Peter Blake in an article published in the October issue of the same magazine (see note 47 above). Implicitly recalling Breuer’s speech at the 1948 symposium, the editorial claimed: “‘Cottagy’ points to Wurster’s residential work as being ‘cottagy’, while his large buildings are, according to them, in the International Style. The International Style is accepted (by this group of critics) as the correct style. Therefore, the ‘cottagy’ building is wrong. Therefore, as Philip Johnson and Peter Blake write in the Magazine of Art, ‘In the architectural framework of order there can be no room for the anarchy of cottages.’ Or, as Henry-Russell Hitchcock said at the Museum of Modern Art, ‘Its activities (the cottage style’s) are centered on what is frankly not one of the important problems of the architecture of the present day.’ To such a weird conclusion this twisted architectural logic leads—the small individual house is, Hitchcock went on to say, ‘all very little historical consequence today.’” Thomas Crowton, Architectural Not Style, Progressive Architecture 29 (December 1948): 122.
For the traveling exhibition, the original 52 entries of the contemporary section were reduced to 16 houses, being only included structures by the Acke and Alice, Ward and Wurster, Wurster, and Henry Parke Clark, Mario Corbett, Gardner A. Dasley, Joseph Esherick, John Funf, Hans G. Gerkan, Harry HIR, Jack Holman, and Warren Gallo; see J. G. Rolfe, Fred Langendorf, Francis Joseph McCarty, Edridge T. Spencer, and William Chermee Ambrose; Wurster, Bernardi, and Emmons.

Contrary to Northern California architectural historian Pierluigi Serraino’s statement that both the label “Bay Region Style” and the arguments of its cultural legitimacy were invented on the historical section of the 1949 show, the critic considered that the Greene brothers were quintessentially Bay Region architects regardless of their practice and office being based in Southern California.

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Lewis Clark, “Bay Region Domestic,” Architectural Review 104 (October 1948): 164. Thus, the 1949 show was anything but a delayed response to Mumford’s 1947 piece.

Due to SFMOMA’s scarcity of funds, the participant architects paid pro-rata for redrawing the blueprints. Richard Freeman, “letter to participants” (enclosing schedule and terms & conditions of the show), June 21, 1949. Exhibition Records; box 32, folder 3, SFMOMA Archives, San Francisco. Also, local companies and manufacturers got involved in the production of the show by paying the costs of materials for its installation. Richard Freeman, “letter to Don W. Ison, President, Producers Council of San Francisco,” September 19, 1949. Exhibition Records, box 32, folder 3, SFMOMA Archives, San Francisco.

The original exhibition, as shown at SFMOMA, included 52 houses by 35 architects. The average age of the architects participating in the show was 40 years and only one of them was a woman, Helen Dailey. About half of the houses shown in 1949 were designed by architects who had been practicing after returning from the front very shortly after the war.

Richard Freeman was at the helm of SFMOMA as its executive director during Grace Mottley’s 1947-1948 lease of absence in Paris to work for UNESCO.


By the time Mumford was invited to contribute an essay to the exhibition catalogue, in an article published in Architectural Review he reiterated that the “esthetic definition of modern architecture” emerging from the 1932 show was “still maintained” by Philip Johnson’s MOMA in 1948. Lewis Mumford, “Monumentation, Symbolism and Style,” Architectural Review 105 (April 1948): 174.


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The decade 1937-1946, when the Department of Architecture was headed by John McAndrew, which traveled to MoMA under the form and title of Domestic Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region Architects (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1949), unpaginated.

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Late in 1945 Philip Johnson began to be involved again with MoMA, in part because of few opportunities to build. The following year, he was already acting as the unofficial director of its Department of Architecture. See Jennifer Tobias, “The Museum of Modern Art’s What is Modern? Series 1938-1969” (PhD diss., The City University of New York, 2012), 185. Lefaivre and Toor have assumed Schacht’s account that Johnson eliminated Elizabeth Mock upon his return to MoMA to reclaim his former position. See Lefaivre and Toor, Architecture of Regionalism, 120; see also Françoise Huguier, Philip Johnson, Life and Work (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 173-174. However, according to Jennifer Tobias there are two versions of Mock’s departure. “In 1995 she explained it was her choice, that she left to join her husband in Tennessee, where he was chief architect for the Tennessee Valley Authority. She said that Architecture Committee Chair Philip Goodwin begged her to stay, but she was adamant. In 1995 Philip Johnson said he didn’t remember why she left. His biographer (Schacht) says Mock ‘never had a chance’ upon Johnson’s return, that (for example) Johnson purposely ignored her during a lunch with Barr. If the reasons for her departure are unclear, the date is certain. In a December 1946 memo outlining department activities for that year, Philip Johnson reports these personnel changes: Elizabeth E. Mock resigned on October 15, 1945; Philip C. Johnson, Consultant since August, 1945.” Jennifer Tobias, “Elizabeth Mock at the Museum of Modern Art, 1938-1946” (unpublished manuscript: Archives of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2003), 33-34.

In 1945, while preparing Built in USA: 1932-1944 as part of the program “Art in Progress: 15th Anniversary Exhibitions,” the Museum of Modern Art was requested by the OWI and the American Scandinavian Foundation to mount a major event in Stockholm. To cope with the many difficulties of this challenge,Mock decided that the only possible way to meet the deadline was to “conceal the exhibition from as much as possible material at hand,” for which she coordinated her team to assemble the four sections of the show from previous exhibitions: “In 1945, Richardson, Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright,” “Planning in the USA,” “1945 Housing in War and Peace,” and “Outstanding Buildings of the Last 10 Years,” which was an offshoot of the ongoing Built in USA: 1932-44. Elizabeth Mock, “Letter to the editor,” Pencil Points, 25, no. 10 (October 1946): 8. As usual, Mock counted on the assistance of her sister Catherine Bauer, as well as her brother-in-law William Wurster, who was also an exhibitor. Furthermore, Wurster’s close friend Alvar Aalto was instrumental to the success of the show in Scandinavia, as from 1944 to 1945 it was seen by more than twenty thousand visitors.

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