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Canada

West Coast Style: Modern Homes and Lifestyles in Canada, 1945-1995

Nancy Shaw
Graduate Program in Communications
McGill University
Montreal, Quebec
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Abstract

In Canada, West Coast Style has come to be associated with domestic architecture and a relaxed, modern lifestyle characteristic of the region's exceptional geography and climate. My thesis is a study of how this cultural formation has been figured and refigured since the Second World War through a historical and discursive analysis of West Coast Style. This cultural study focuses on how the term West Coast Style circulates and shifts meaning in relationship to a variety of domestic architectures such as the suburban single-family dwelling and more urban types like the coop, condominium and high rise. In addition, I consider how West Coast Style has been configured in debates about architectural modernism and postmodernism, Canadian cultural nationalism, and in newly emerging civic, global, and transnational geo-political, economic and cultural networks.

Resume

Au Canada, le style "West Coast" en est devenu associé etroitement à l'architecture domestique et au mode de vie moderne et détendu propre à l'exceptionelle géographie de la côte du pacifique et de son climat. Ma thèse est une étude de l'évolution de la conception intellectuelle de cette formation culturelle depuis la seconde guerre mondiale par le biais d'une analyse historique et discursive du style "West Coast." Cette étude culturelle se concentrera sur la façon dont le terme "West Coast" circule et se transforme par definition en relation avec diverses formes d'architectures domestiques tels les habitats familiaux de banlieux et les types d'habitation plus urbains comme les condominiums, les cooperatives, et les gratte-ciel. Du même coup je vais considerer les différentes configurations dont le style "West Coast" est perçu dans les debats sur l'architecture moderne, postmoderne, le nationalisme culturel Canadien, ainsi que dans les nouveaux reseaux culturels, economiques et geopolitiques a l'echelle civique, et trans-nationale et mondiale.

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This thesis is the culmination of many years of living, and writing about culture, on the West Coast. And, it would have been impossible without the contributions of friends, colleagues and family who I would like to acknowledge.

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Introduction

West Coast Style--a relaxed way of living determined by climate and geography--emerged in conjunction with modernist homes built in Vancouver between the Second World War and the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters, and Sciences (1949-1951). During this period, a concerted effort was made to shape a unified Canadian cultural identity based on the assumptions of liberal humanism. It was understood by those attempting to organize culture on a nation-wide basis that the humanist values of high art could bring peace, understanding, and democracy to a society in which the forces of modernization had created economic and material prosperity at the expense of social welfare. Left unchecked, the forces of modern industry, technology, urbanization, and capital accumulation culminated in poverty and war. The spiritual and social values of culture, therefore, were to ameliorate the destructive tendencies of modernization by fostering creative human potential.

In addition to forging national identity, the productive energy of the arts and artists would play an integral function in the regulation of the postwar welfare state. Artists would be exemplary citizens who could educate and produce work of moral and ethical value while contributing to the establishment of secondary industry. A strong

culture, moreover, would give the impression that Canada was a cosmopolitan and modern nation worthy of international recognition. Within the nation, cultural identity could mediate competing regional, linguistic, ethnic, racial, and economic differences. At the same time, the colonizing influences of the United States, mass culture and Great Britain could be resisted.

To approach such a task, the report of the Massey-Levesque Commission recommended that policy, programs and institutions be established for the organization and distribution of culture. Most of the report's recommendations were concerned with the support and centralized dissemination of high cultural forms. While the Royal Commission called for many new and enhanced state-sponsored programs and institutions, however, the arts remained in an idealized, intangible and abstract relationship to everyday life, thus, having little effect on many citizens' sense of national identity.

The Royal Commission's recommendations regarding architecture and town planning, nevertheless, are significant because emphasis was placed on cultural forms that directly affected all aspects of living. In addition to stressing the symbolic import of a well-planned, identifiable and representative public architecture--especially in the nation's capital--homes and neighbourhood

settings were highlighted. Within the home and community, the humanist values of high culture could converge with the everyday, thereby creating an environment for the development of happy, healthy, well-rounded citizens familiar with and committed to the goals of the nation-state.

In this context, culture existed not only in the rarefied realm of fine art, but was, as Raymond Williams wrote, a whole way of life. According to Williams, culture was modern because it was a realm in which change could be understood through the relationship between individuals and the institutions of any given social order. As a component of this whole way of life, architecture and town planning provided spatial structures through which a community of individuals interacted and developed. Moreover, housing could provide a constant source of employment and a national index of economic growth.

In this framework, a built environment would emerge to constitute an authentic and modern expression that was distinctly Canadian. It is within this articulation that West Coast Style was recognized nationally for its domestic architecture built with modern methods and materials that were sensitively adapted to the region's landscape and climate. Built by post-and-beam construction, homes first

associated with West Coast Style were flexible, affordable and an expression of Canada's burgeoning maturity.

Until the early 1980s, a number of domestic architectural types associated with West Coast Style were built either as a variation on, or critique of, post-and-beam homes. However, with the arrival of the postmodern and its links with neo-conservatives intent on dismantling the welfare state, discourses surrounding architectural modernism shifted from promoting it as new and innovative, free from the ills of the past, to asserting modernism as a local tradition defending the region against the impositions of postmodern, historical eclecticism.

It is from this vantage point in the 1980s that I begin my study of West Coast Style. Chapter one reviews the scholarly, critical and popular literature written in the 1980s to claim, define, historically locate and theoretically debate the role that modern domestic architecture played in establishing national identity and a distinctly regional cultural tradition. At the same time, a review of this literature situates the emergence of West Coast Style within both historical and current theoretical debates about architectural modernism in Canada, the United States and to a lesser extent in Europe--especially apparent in the struggle between those interested in creating a

modern, but regionally specific architecture, and those who promoted the virtues of a universally applicable style.

Regionalism and lifestyle are two predominant issues that emerge in the debates about West Coast Style. In chapters two and three an analysis of regionalism and lifestyle is based on an examination of recent literature as well as statements made by well-known cultural figures responsible for planning and instituting a national cultural infrastructure between 1943 and 1960. These statements were published in Canadian Art, the Journal of the Royal Architecture Institute of Canada and Western Homes and Living. Each of the journals addresses a distinct, yet sometimes overlapping cultural constituency that includes the artistic community, architectural profession and middle-class consumers respectively.

In chapter two I establish how concepts of regionalism associated with West Coast Style operated in debates about national identity. These debates in turn are analyzed in relationship to recent forms of postmodernism and globalization revealing how regional cultural expressions have been dislodged from nationalist discourses and then rearticulated in terms of newly forming civic and transnational cultural, economic, and geo-political boundaries.

Drawing on theoretical concepts defined by Raymond Williams, Caroline Mills and Lawrence Grossberg, chapter three analyzes several notions of lifestyle associated with West Coast domestic architecture. Through exploring the discourses surrounding a variety of dwelling types such as the detached suburban home, coop, condominium, and high rise, I examine the shifting functions of lifestyle associated with West Coast Style. First, it is established how postwar notions of lifestyle were depoliticized and associated with the therapeutic values of the domestic sphere. Then the ways in which counter-cultural movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s politicized the limitations of a lifestyle based on liberal humanist values intent on shaping national identity are discussed. In addition, the attempts of neo-conservatives to commodify and politicize the relationship between lifestyle and the domestic sphere by dismantling structures that facilitated participation in the decision-making processes of the public sphere are critiqued. And, in conclusion, an analysis of currently circulating notions of lifestyle will show how previously separated spheres such as the urban, suburban, leisure, work, and high culture have been rearranged to promote the West Coast as a hub of economic opportunity and cosmopolitan culture in a rapidly globalizing world order.

Chapter 1

West Coast Style: A Literature Review

> A nation is an association of reasonable beings united in a peaceful sharing of the things they cherish; therefore, to determine the quality of a nation, you must consider what those things are.[1]

Since the end of World War II, West Coast Style has come to be associated with architecture, design, and community planning that is modern and affordable. Official recognition of West Coast Style as a distinct and exemplary form of Canadian culture first appeared in the Report of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences 1949-1951. As a regional expression of national identity, principles of modernist design were applied to domestic architecture, community planning and were adopted to local conditions creating a distinctive West Coast Style.[2] At the same time, they were made available to an

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[1] St. Augustine, The City of God, epigraph of the Report of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, 1949-51. (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier King's Printer, 1951).

[2] According the Sherry Mackay "Western Homes, Western Living," SSAC Bulletin (September 1989): 73.

industrious and rapidly expanding middle class who were to identify with, and acquire, the tastes and moral values necessary for the building of an affluent, liberal nation. As the report of the Massey-Levesque Commission noted

> ....there is increasing consciousness of the need in Canada for the development of a regional architecture adopted to the landscape and the climate and also to the materials typical of the area. ... There are now however distinguishable regional developments in British Columbia which take advantage of commanding views and of the relative cheapness of wood. No such experiments are yet apparent elsewhere. It has been stated to us that a true Canadian architecture must develop in this way.[3]

While it was applauded by the Royal Commission, style associated with the Canadian Pacific Coast emerged from the collaborative efforts of many people who, through their work in the realm of culture in the decade leading up to the Commission's report, had attempted to discern a role for the arts in aiding the war effort. It was during this period that artists, architects, and a variety of people associated with culture planned for the integration and productive

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"The architecture, heralded in professional journals and popular press, and in the awarding of Massey Medals, can be understood as a solution to postwar problems that ranged from economics and new markets and materials to culture and its efficacy as a code of knowledge in a changing nation."

[3]Report of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts Letters and Sciences (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier King's Printer, 1951): 218.

functioning of the arts in social, urban, and economic postwar reconstruction. Through the enhancement of all things visual, the arts, in their engagement with everyday life, were to promote democracy through harmony and understanding. The arts would heal and repair by contributing physical, spiritual, and intellectual resources to facilitate modernization and create a highly developed culture allowing Canada to receive international recognition as a cosmopolitan civilization.

During the war, and in its aftermath, efforts were made to organize a cultural network and infrastructure across the country. Through conferences, exhibitions, magazines, group association, lobbying, and the development of policy, the creation of a sense of identity along national lines was attempted. To achieve this, cultural communications were organized geographically forming components and constellations that took their shape around the individual, home, community, and region. These components provided a spatial axis along which commonalities and differences that existed within the nation could be articulated, coordinated, and managed while achieving independence from American cultural influences. Furthermore, geographical tropes were employed to legitimize the values of liberal humanism that sought to institute notions of the common good and how it could be realized through individual self-improvement and a planned environment. Clearly delineated and rationalized design were to promote health and prosperity.

To illuminate the assertion that architecture on the West Coast was a standard of the "truly Canadian," I will analyze sources which contribute to an understanding of this style. And, although it was officially celebrated as an example of national culture, the formation of West Coast Style is the result of diverse and seemingly contradictory urges and ambitions.

Within a national context, as has already been noted, West Coast Style was understood as a regional expression, but one that was refigured from embodying the quaint and sentimental to representing the new and innovative. Other accounts highlight the modern aspects of West Coast Style, but disassociate it from geo-political boundaries such as the nation and region, suggesting that it was part of a non-partisan international movement of universal architectural expression. Nevertheless, modernism on the West Coast manifests a variety of geo-political impulses--national, continental, Western European, local and regional--enabling it to function as a resistance to British and American colonial impositions. At the same time, West Coast Style was compared with modernist developments in these and other countries which attracted international attention while distinguishing West Coast culture as a regionally distinct national style. West Coast Style as it developed after the war was modernist, yet it was ambiguously related to European and American West Coast avant-garde and socialist

predecessors because it constituted a model of artistic practice and social change that was inflected with the concerns of middle-class taste, domesticity and morality.

The most commonly understood manifestation of West Coast Style, nevertheless, is described in widely available literature such as architectural guide-books, newspapers, and lifestyle magazines.[4] In these sources, West Coast Style is most often associated with mid-sized family homes that are built with local materials and innovative construction techniques. Each house is respectfully and dynamically sited on heavily wooded and usually mountain-side suburban lots to take advantage of views and sunlight.[5] Open plans demand sparsely designed interiors tastefully decorated with local arts and crafts, and built-in furniture. And, most distinctly, post-and-beam construction methods eliminate the need for load-bearing walls. In their place, transparent planes of glass capture breath-taking views of city, neighbourhood, and garden, extending living space into nature and vise-versa. Post-and-beam construction offered a

[4]See for example Harold Kalman, A History of Canadian Architecture, vol.2 (Toronto: Oxford UP, 1994): 785-797; Harold Kalman, Ron Phillips and Robin Ward, eds., Exploring Vancouver: The Essential Architectural Guide (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1993); David Smith, "What Makes a Vancouver Special: From Craftsman to Contemporary the City's Economic History Written in its Houses," The Vancouver Sun, 15 April 1995; and Don Gutstein, "No Fixed Position," Vancouver (January 1984): 24-29.

[5]Eleanor Wachtel, "Ron Thom: The Pioneer of West Coast Style, Western Living (November 1984): 36g-36m; Michael J. McMordie, "Modern Vancouver Architecture," The Canadian Architect (March 1984): 22-27; Adele Freedman, "A Pioneer Spirit," The Globe and Mail, 1 February 1992.

flexible method that adapted to uneven terrain making it possible to build in less expensive, and undeveloped areas.[6] Extendible and easily renovated, these modern homes could accommodate changing family sizes and needs (see figure 1).

In their functional design and modern structure these modern homes were meant to be expressive of liberal democracy. Post-and-beam structures were flexible, affordable, and supposed to be something every family could own. Because they could be adapted to many types of terrain they were considered as intrinsic expressions of a regional topography that was dramatic and spectacular.[7] The use of local materials and respectful siting were to generate well-planned communities, and support local industrial design and artisanal economies. At the same time, aesthetic principles of high Modernism incorporated into naturally camouflaged domestic spaces were to allow for a creative family life free from the stresses and dysfunctions of industrial and urban chaos.

Many authoritative accounts connect the emergence of a distinct West Coast modern architecture to the regional

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[6]Post and Beam: Description and Design Factors (Ottawa: Canadian Wood Council, 1971)

[7]Brian Morton, "When Houses Were Matched to Their Environments," The Vancouver Sun, 21 March 1994; Kayce White, "The Nine Best Homes in BC," The Vancouver Sun, 15 April 1995; Elizabeth Godley, "That's West Coast Living," The Vancouver Sun, 18 March 1985; and "Four Projects by Fred Thorton Hollingsworth," The Canadian Architect (1971): 45-50.

geography and climate. The combination of temperate weather and complex topography literally determines specificities of its architectural form.[8] Located on the frontier and periphery of a young nation, the West Coast as it centred around Vancouver was thought to lack urbanity and cultural traditions. These conditions attracted and allowed individuals involved in modern art and architecture the space to live and work out their ideals. This was a necessity according to Alvin Balkin, since what little culture did exist in the city was thought of as a colonial

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[8]According to Alvin Balkind who along with Abe Rogatnick opened the New Design Gallery in 1955 (one of the first in the city to show modern painting) Vancouver in the 50s was

> "... a sleepy, provincial, rather stuffy city, sitting tight on the only distinction it had: its natural beauty. Penetrated by the Pacific waters of Burrard Inlet, resting at the foot of a mountain range, punctuated by navigable inlets and bays, marked with peninsulas, estuaries, bridges, spectacular views, and a large magnificent park, redolent of vegetation and cut lumber. Vancouver has always been seductive, holding out urban promise while evoking the mystique of nature. Its ring of beaches has given rise to an atavistic cult of summer sun (the winters are beautiful, but gray and rainy, more reminiscent of Valhalla than Olympus), encouraging hedonism and self-indulgence. In warm weather, Vancouver looks and behaves like a summer resort; when the rain comes to the city and snow to the mountains, it becomes a gathering place for winter sports enthusiasts. Why bother with high culture? Assuming a decent income, an attraction to idle pursuits, a modicum of athleticism, and undemanding tastes, anything wished for is here to be had with little effort. With no need to battle the extremes of climate and with every opportunity to relax and enjoy, the mind can easily slide into nothingness."

Alvin Balkind, "On Ferment and Golden Ages," Vancouver Forum 1: Old Powers, New Forces, Max Wyman, ed. (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1992): 64. Balkind was curator of the UBC Fine Arts Gallery in the sixties--a period of experimentation and counter cultural events. Among other things, he was also curator of contemporary art at the Vancouver Art Gallery and the Art Gallery of Ontario.

vestige--the dour and derivative implantations from another place and time.[9] While the city was dominated by parochial, philistine, and over cautious citizens, those few who were conscious of its provincial character hosted events imported from cultural capitals like New York, London, and Paris. And, because there was a dearth of such civilized activity, anything that did happen received recognition.[10]

The West Coast was fortunate to have cultured immigrants according to internationally renowned architect Arthur Erickson, given that high culture was thought not to be a priority in a city where people would rather ski, boat and golf.[11] In the face of nature's recreational distractions, postwar Modernist architecture offered an exception to West Coast hedonism. As Erickson recounts, this was a time when an authentic architectural style emerged from the "rough and tumble"[12] of an imported vernacular providing a "mecca" for young architects.[13] Moreover, for Erickson and his contemporaries this style was a gauge against which all other urban developments were to be assessed. Modernism's

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[9]Balkind 69.

[10]Balkind 66.

[11]Arthur Erickson, "To Understand the City We Make," Vancouver Forum 1: Old Powers, New Forces, Max Wyman, ed.(Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1992): 148.

[12]Erickson, 155.

[13]Erickson, 154.

apparently simple, honest, true to life forms, free of ornament, historicist references, inefficient building materials and techniques, countered the falsity of both colonial and postmodern architecture. Without an adherence to modernist principles, the city was in danger of being over-run with faceless sprawl.[14]

Architectural historian Rhodri Liscombe argues that the common understanding of West Coast modern architecture is more assumed than substantiated.[15] Since the early 1980s, however, local geographers, architectural and art historians have concerned themselves with accounting for this cultural formation. Scholarship on the subject has sparked a few debates. For instance, Scott Watson and Geraldine Pratt discuss West Coast Style in terms of middle-class taste and morality. Liscombe, Sherry MacKay and Irene Zenewych debate the degree to which West Coast Style constitutes a regionally distinct, national, or universally modern architecture.

Visual arts curator and art historian Scott Watson argues that West Coast modernism embodied a moral structure[16]

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[14]Erickson, 158.

[15]Rhodri Liscombe, "Modes of Modernizing: The Acquisition of Modernist Design in Canada," Bulletin SSAC (September 1994): 62.

[16]Scott Watson, "Art in the Fifties: Design, Leisure, and Painting in the Age of Anxiety," Vancouver Art and Artist, 1931-83 (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1983): 75.

because it primarily functioned to shape and support nuclear family life. Watson adds that in the war's aftermath, North America modernism emerged as the official style of an expanding economy that absorbed social critiques launched by its prewar European predecessors.[17] In Vancouver this occurred as high Modernist aesthetics permeated domestic spaces of leisure and creativity in order to improve everyday life. Newly forming arts groups such as the Community Arts Council and Art in Living (sponsored by the BC region of the Federation of Canadian Artists) subscribed to and promoted this lifestyle through events such as exhibitions. According to Watson, these associations had a moral agenda in that they "set out to present 'to everyone the idea that citizens must be participants in planning and they must no longer be the mere recipients of dead formulae served out to lazy minds.'"[18] They followed the lead of exhibitions sponsored by the National Gallery of Canada, The Museum of Modern Art in New York and The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. As one review of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts City for Living (1941) exhibition noted, these displays were concerned with shaping a happy family life measured through the state of the family dwelling unit "thence the community, thence the city, and thence the region."[19] The home,

[17]Watson, 72.

[18]Watson, 75.

[19]Watson, 77.

moreover, was to serve as a functional expression of its owner's taste and sensibility especially in its interior decor. The presence of local oil painting and indigenous arts and crafts inflected the realm of leisure and the domestic with aesthetic aura while art lost its autonomy, becoming an expression of individuality taking refuge in the familial.[20]

The analysis of taste as it operates to distinguish upper middle-class social perspectives is the subject of geographer Geraldine Pratt's study.[21] From her extensive interviews with women who resided in affluent Vancouver neighbourhoods such as West Vancouver and Shaughnessy, Pratt determines differences in social values within the upper middle class. Watson analyzes the development of a taste culture in the immediate post-war period which precedes Pratt's survey by twenty-five years. Nevertheless, her work is relavent in that it qualifies how the moral structure of postwar taste was embodied in the values of newer communities like West Vancouver and significantly differed from members of older communities like Shaughnessy. West Vancouver's neighbourhood plan and architecture is of concern, moreover, because it is largely the product of the

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[20]Watson, 80.

[21]Geraldine Pratt, "The House as an Expression of Social Worlds," Housing and Identity, James S. Duncan, ed. (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1982): 135-180.

West Coast postwar planning as discussed by Watson. And, as Pratt's study corroborates, women in this neighbourhood who were geographically and socially mobile, discussed their preferences in furnishings and decor in terms of self-expression. They attributed their tastes to the influences of professional designers, as well as various commercial and mass media. In contradistinction, for the woman of Shaughnessy, (a neighbourhood built by the CPR at the turn of the century to house the city's colonial elite) taste was a matter of continuing family and community traditions. Many women of this taste culture emphasized that they were in no way influenced by commercial or media sources.

According to MacKay and Zenewych, in the early 1950s, architecture on the West Coast comes to be linked with a regionally distinct culture. As MacKay notes, during this period the focus shifts from an architectural landscape that celebrates industry to one that celebrates culture.[22] Building upon MacKay's initial argument, Zenewych, using deconstruction as a mode of textual analysis, traces how the meaning of West Coast Style changes in the architectural and popular press. She suggests that rather than following a trajectory of historical progress, West Coast Style is a term whose meaning is contextually dependent.[23] She charts

[22]MacKay, 72.

[23]Irene Zenewych, Regionalism in the Face of Universality: West Coast Modernism as Architectural Landscape (diss., Simon Fraser University, 1985). In addition to using deconstruction, Zenewych invokes Manfredo

how West Coast Style, once associated with its claims for radically breaking with past forms and styles, comes to represent a "critical regionalism"[24] that defends the efficacy of modernist conventions against reactionary encroachments of early 80s postmodern eclecticism.

Through a discussion of four homes built between the war and the publication of the Massey-Levesque Commission's report, Sherry MacKay discerns how West Coast Style was transformed from a modern architectural type located on the West Coast to one which was distinctively West Coast. Regional distinction was defined by the presence of architect-designed homes that were expressive of, and able to integrate with, nature modifying modernist precedents whose rational design emphasized an aesthetics of plane and volume.[25] In addition, American architecture that was inflected with regional qualities was influential. Most notable was the work of Frank Lloyd Wright in the mid-West

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Tafuri's historiographic method which has been very influential to those concerned with modernist architecture on the West Coast. According to Tafuri, the past is reinterpreted in order to maintain or rupture historical continuity(p.5). In the case of modernism, the reinterpretation of the past is based on modern values that favour production and efficiency thereby invalidating the quality and character of past artistic processes which leads to a revolutionizing of historic meanings and a compromise of traditional values (p. 9).

[24]Kenneth Frampton first coined this term. See his essay "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance." The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture. Hal Foster, ed. (Port Townsend: Bay Press, 1983): 16-30.

[25]MacKay, 72.

and California. Other West Coast American sources were derived from the Californian magazine Art and Architecture, the California Case Study Homes, and visits to Vancouver by architect Richard Neutra.[26]

The expansion of the city--especially the expansion of the University of British Columbia after the war--provided the resources and clients to support modern architecture. This was also part of an attempt to organize nation-wide planning.[27] Significant contributions to the process of modernization were made by the then University of British Columbia President Dr. Norman MacKenzie. As a member of the Massey-Levesque Commission, MacKenzie was instrumental in working towards achieving national cultural unity organized along regional lines. Cultural identity would be designed to ameliorate the detrimental effects of technology and industry with the creative and spiritual values of the fine arts and humanities.[28]

To counter claims that West Coast modernist architecture was distinctly regional, Rhodri Liscombe traces lines of national and international aesthetic influence to suggest that the immediate prewar period was an originating moment

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[26]MacKay, 67.

[27]MacKay, 67.

[28]MacKay, 69.

in the development of West Coast modernism in architecture.[29] Like those who favoured International Style modernism, Liscombe rejects a regionalist analysis of local architecture because of its overdetermined associations with the parochial, romantic, and reactionary. In addition, he counters critiques of the International Style's alienating impositions, showing how it tends to regional and cultural variation on the West Coast. To do this, Liscombe suggests that activities such as travel, education, migration, and reading the architectural press were decisive in establishing the conditions through which the notable and sophisticated forms of the postwar period could achieve fruition.

Perhaps most significant were architects and educators from the schools at McGill University and the University of Toronto. Architects trained at the University of Toronto were exposed to the modernist agenda of Eric Arthur, credited with the reform of architectural education in Canada and later the editor of the Journal of the Architectural Institute of Canada (JRAIC). Frederick Lasserre, Bob Berwick and Ned Pratt were U of T graduates.[30] Berwick and Pratt joined the firm Sharp and Thompson, and soon after became partners. The then newly renamed firm of

[29]Rhodri Liscombe, "Modes of Modernizing: The Acquisition of Modernist Design in Canada," Bulletin SSAC (September 1994): 60-74.

[30]Liscombe, 65.

Sharp and Thompson, Berwick, Pratt, was involved with most of the building and design of modernist architecture in Vancouver. Their firm, moreover, was responsible for the master plan of UBC and many architects who were later to become well known worked there; Ron Thom and Arthur Erickson were two of the most legendary employees.

McGill graduates comprised an equally impressive force. They were influenced by John Bland who, after successfully challenging the arts and crafts oriented curriculum at McGill, established a Bauhaus-inspired program that trained architects to build environments that would shape and be shaped by social needs. Architects from McGill included Catherine Chard Wisnicki, Duncan McNab, John Porter, and Arthur Erickson.[31] Architects Harold Semmens, Douglas Simpson and E.B.K. Van Norman were trained at the University of Manitoba while Peter Oberlander, Geoffrey Massey and Abe Rogatnick set up shop in Vancouver after studying with Walter Gropius at Harvard.[32] In 1946, Frederick Lasserre, after graduating from U of T and working for the well known modernist Tecton architects in Britain, moved from his post at McGill to head the newly established school of architecture at UBC.

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[31]Liscombe, 66.

[32]Liscombe, 65.

Many scholars agree that architectural magazines were perhaps the single most important source of images and ideas that affected West Coast modernism. Magazines like L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui, Architectural Record, American Architect and Architecture, British Architectural Review and the Californian Arts and Architecture were instrumental in their dissemination of principles, methods and designs from modern cultural capitals.[33] Travel for the purposes of study, war duty, or sight-seeing tours complemented other forms of acquiring an understanding of modern architecture.[34]

According to Liscombe, then, rationally informed principles of design would avoid the pretentious, imitative and overdetermined codifications of non-modern and regionalist architecture, thereby challenging the precepts of those who argue for a West Coast Style that is regionally distinct.

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[33] As Liscombe writes (p, 69)

> "According to [Catherine] Chard Wisnicki, the magazines facilitated her understanding of a number of Modernist objectives. One she described as the intellectual challenge thrown down by Le Corbusier to fabricate a relevant form for the epoch, and his sense of the profound meaning that could be imported through the disposition of space. Another was the goal of an integrated welding of material, structure, and purpose desired by Gropius and Mies. A third was the formal and structural logic and the variety of space and scale achieved by the Dutch Modernists. And a fourth aim was the transformation of functional and technological factors into humanistic and naturalized buildings attained by Alvar Aalto."

[34]Liscombe, 63.

The debates surrounding regionalism were not limited to the Canadian Pacific Coast. In fact, regionalism has always been a prevalent issue in relation to Modernism in architecture at least since The Museum of Modern Art's exhibition The International Style in 1932. Curated by architect Philip Johnson and art historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock, this exhibition was a decisive moment in determining how modernist architecture would be defined in North America. Their aim was to promote predominantly European work, following the examples of Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, and Le Corbusier, whom they presented as a cosmopolitan alternative to the stylistic disarray of American architecture. According to Johnson and Hitchcock, the International Style

> ... is, first, a new conception of architecture as volume rather than mass. Second, regularity rather than axial symmetry serves as the chief means of ordering design. These two principles, with a third proscribing arbitrary applied decoration, mark the productions of international style.[35]

They added that their architectural style was not international in the sense of one country copying the style of another, nor did it constitute an architecture that is not clearly distinguishable.[36] It is a style that

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[35]Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, The International Style: Architecture Since 1922 (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1932): 20.

[36]Hitchcock and Johnson, 20.

> ...already exists in the present: it is not merely something the future may hold in store. Architecture is always a set of active moments, not a vague corpus of theory.[37]

As a movement, the International Style was very influential, even though it included a very strict and limited set of criteria. Forms of modernism that failed to meet Hitchcock and Johnson's exacting standards were considered to be half modern, romantic, or regionalist.[38]

One of the most controversial aspects of the exhibition was the relegation of Frank Lloyd Wright to the status of a modernist forefather. He was included in the exhibition because they believed he introduced the open plan and was the one of the first to conceive of architectural design in terms of planes existing freely in three dimensions. While recognizing this contribution, Hitchcock and Johnson dismissed Wright because of his use of decoration, his romantic attentions to nature and his rebellious personality.[39] These were all qualities that detracted from a pure architecture that was universal in its ability to employ modern methods and materials to construct an

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[37]Hitchcock and Johnson, 21.

[38]Henry Matthews, "The Promotion of Modern Architecture by the Museum of Modern Art in the 1930s," Journal of Design History vol. 7, no. 1 (1994): 44.

[39]Hitchcock and Johnson, 25-26.

architecture that expressed the essential quality of modern society--especially modes of production that were collaborative and rationalized. As Hitchcock proclaimed

> Wright's theories are curiously incomplete and even in part contradictory. He has learnt very little the lesson of Ford and he has but a limited sympathy for the spirit of the machine as such. His approach to pure architecture is complicated with the Nature worship and the ecstatic and individualistic democracy of Whitman. There is moreover an orientalism which appears as much in his writing as in his work.[40]

Frank Lloyd Wright was no doubt difficult to assimilate into any one aesthetic standard. Therefore, according to the criteria of International Style, his work was often needlessly embellished and unpredictable. But, because he was impossible to ignore, his work was categorized as a regional style. This was one of the first times that regionalism was linked to the modern.[41]

While controversy flared over the way Wright was represented in the exhibition, debates around regionalism intensified elsewhere. These tensions were nowhere more evident than on the American West Coast. Important modern innovators such as Irving Gill and the Greene brothers were dismissed by the

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[40]Matthews, 48. Here Matthews quotes Hitchcock from his book Modern Architecture: Romanticism and Reintegration (New York: Payson and Clarke, 1929): 117.

[41]Matthews, 44.

MOMA exhibition curators who thought they were too influenced by the specificities of locale.[42] Perhaps most controversial was the inclusion of California architect Richard Neutra in the MOMA show while his former partner Rudolf Schindler had been overlooked.[43] The tensions and critiques that resulted from this event in many ways prefigure developments in Vancouver after the war.

Schindler and Neutra had been friends since their days in Vienna as students of Adolf Loos and Otto Wagner. Both immigrated to the United States and worked with Frank Lloyd Wright in Chicago--Schindler during the war and Neutra after. After moving to California to oversee the West Coast projects of Wright, both architects eventually started their own practices. For a time the two men worked and lived together on Kings Road, Los Angeles, in the house that Schindler designed as a cooperative artist's dwelling.[44]

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[42]Matthews, 48.

[43]For a variety of perspectives on this issue see: Arthur Drexler and Thomas Hines, The Architecture of Richard Neutra: From International Style to California Modern (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1982); J. Riley, The International Style: Exhibition 15 and the Museum of Modern Art (New York: Rizzoli, 1992); August Sarnitz, R.M. Schindler-Architect 1887-1953 (New York: Rizzoli, 1988).

[44]Kathryn Smith, The R.M. Schindler House, 1921-1922 (Los Angeles: Perpetua Press, 1987); and Lionel March and Judith Shein, eds., R.M. Schindler: Composition and Construction (London: Academy Editions, 1993); David Gebhard, R.M. Schindler (California: Art Gallery of the University of California, Santa Barbara, 1967)and Schindler (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1986); Ester McCoy, Vienna to L.A.: Two Journeys (Santa Monica: Arts and Architecture Press, 1979); and Five California Architects (New York: Praeger, 1975).

Although the two had similar backgrounds, Neutra chose to emphasize the rational principles of modern design geared to both domestic and large-scale developments. Schindler, however, followed Wright's romanticism as expressed in his concern for creating intimate, healthy, and creative home environments. Both experimented with modern materials and methods. Schindler focused on small scale and do-it-yourself projects. Neutra created much publicity and drama around his work, often through the display of his experimental and technological ingenuity. Neutra was something of a misfit to L.A. bohemian society of the 1920s as he was concerned with earning respectability, recognition and a comfortable living. Schindler, on the other hand, was more at one with L.A.'s alternative culture. He hosted many gatherings of artists, intellectuals, physical culturalists, occultists, musicians, and actors--many of whom found the space to live out their convictions in L.A. away from the rigid and unforgiving East Coast establishment. And, in resistance to the dicta of the eastern technocrats who proclaimed their right to set international architectural standards, Schindler promoted his work as "space architecture." His architecture used space as a material to shape efficient, functional, and ground-hugging dwellings that highlighted the organic, and accommodated mobile, flexible forms of living.[45] Regardless of the regional specificities of

[45] See R.M. Schindler, "Space Architecture," Dune Forum (February 1934): 44-6; "Shelter or Playground," Los Angeles Times, 2 May 1926; "About Furniture," Los Angeles Times, 18 April 1926; "Furniture and the Modern

Schindler's "Space Architecture," it was positioned as a an alternative to the International Style. Schindler claimed that the International Style was a machine made by engineers, a machine that was in its early stages of development, composed of parts that were not yet fully functional. The International Style, Schindler wrote, was "an expression of the present with all of its interesting shortcomings."[46]

Tensions reminiscent of those among Neutra, Schindler, and Wright, and Johnson and Hitchcock permeated the development of West Coast Style in Canada, especially in terms of its ability to constitute a regionally specific national type and/or to exemplify the essential qualities of a universal architecture. And, although stylistic and geo-political affinities existed between Los Angeles and Vancouver, some cultural distinctions persisted. While both scenes were initiated by those seeking a new life, California modernism was strongly influenced and supported by a Jewish intelligentsia escaping persecution in Europe, and the conservative, WASP establishment of the East Coast. As well, assorted bohemians sought-out spiritual sustenance away from

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House: A Theory of Interior Design," Architect and Engineer, vol. 123 (December 1935): 22-25 and vol. 124 (March 1936): 24-28; and "Modern Architecture: A Program," (Vienna 1912). All reprinted in Sarnitz.

[46]R.M. Schindler, "Space Architecture."

the technocratic dicta of industrialization and urbanization in the interwar period.

In Canada, nevertheless, modernism first flourished with postwar planning and cultural nationalism led by an elite associated with educational institutions such as the University of British Columbia and Vancouver School of Art. Education and the domestic sphere were essential to the production of healthy and culturally sophisticated citizens. West Coast citizens, although portrayed as being more relaxed and creative in their ways of living and architectural settings, were by no means as culturally radical or rebellious as the bohemians who gathered at the Schindler home in the 1920s.

While new production methods and materials, distribution and market conditions made modern forms of housing more available and affordable than in the interwar period in California, discourse in Canada regarded mass production as something that had to be carefully monitored in order to avoid the effacement of individuality and community interaction. Influenced by British models of planning and cultural institutions, advocates of modern architecture on the West Coast positioned themselves as morally superior in their ability to forego the whims and extremes of American bohemia, and the colonization and dehumanization of mass culture rampant in Hollywood.

In Canada, as in the United States, differences existed between cultural communities located on the East and West coasts, but these debates were dominated in Canada by moralizing judgements as opposed to the debates about the virtues of technology versus nature in America. In the States, the modernist architectural debate was merely one of many. In contrast to Canadians, Americans already had nationally identifiable architectural types that had been established decades earlier. The debate about modern architecture in Canada took many forms, but was always in some way related to the national question.

Within Canada, the West Coast was associated with a cultural community that was more interested in the relationship between humanism and everyday living than with the transcendental values of humanism, the concern of more staid Canadians. Paul Litt presents a particularly vivid example when he describes the conflicts between two Massey-Levesque commissioners--west-coaster Norman MacKenzie and Hilda Neatby. Litt characterizes Neatby's position as morally riotous and puritanical because she valued high culture for its ability to educate and protect people from the sins of popular culture and materialism. She, of course, strongly disliked MacKenzie because of his "bonhomie", and

"boisterous spirit" and his indiscriminate attraction to the pleasures of popular and materialistic culture.[47]

On the Canadian West Coast modernism took shape through domestic architecture--primarily defined by its association with an exceptional geographical location and lifestyle. While influences on, and resistances to and within, West Coast Style are explored in popular, critical and scholarly literature, they are at the same time articulated through the strong association of West Coast Style with cultural identity, and the modernist post-and-beam, single-family dwelling regarded as a regionally distinct national type. Nevertheless, many of these sources function to uphold this type as tradition against newly forming civic and regional versions of West Coast Style.

[47]Paul Litt, The Muses, the Masses, and the Massey Commission (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992): 118-119

Chapter Two

Regionalism

> It is the city, really, rather than the nation, that holds our interest: we are connoisseurs of Portland and Paris, we compare Granville Island with Pike Place or Covent Garden, our Chinatown with San Francisco's. Cities are there within touch and sight; their streets present a continuous and changing spectacle; they can be thickly inhabited and experienced; everyone has an opinion about them and can point to the evidence too. Does anyone still feel this way about Canada? Yet this is not a simple transfer of allegiance: we do not swap a national identity for an urban one, because pluralism, difference, and the clash of cultures are stumbling-blocks for the nation, but constitutive of the city.[48]

Although modernist principles of West Coast domestic architecture are intimately associated with Vancouver and its region, they are no longer emergent and unfamiliar. With the arrival of architecture characteristic of postmodernism, West Coast Style is being refigured by new regional networks organized around civic and transnational relations. Its status, therefore, has become less synonymous with attempts to establish national identity. From the debates that emerge between modernists and postmodernists in the early eighties, I will analyse how shifting regional boundaries were

[48]Paul Delany, "Vancouver as a Postmodern City," Vancouver: Representing the Postmodern City (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1994): 7.

articulated in discourses about national identity between the Second World War and the late 1960s. Then I will briefly traverse some of the new regional networks that have emerged over the last decade to show how discourses around West Coast Style have been radically reconfigured.

One of the most notorious examples of postmodern architecture on the West Coast was the Terry Fox Memorial (1984), built to commemorate the local hero who died during his cross-country run to raise funds for cancer research (see figure 5).[49] The monument was controversial because it lacked reference to Fox and disregarded local modernist traditions with its apparent non-sensical mix of classicist forms. Constructed of the latest materials and colours, the memorial arch was composed of columns supporting a boxy screen adorned with fibre-glass lions.[50] The monument's decorative embellishments and symbolic representations were disconcerting to many because they signaled the return of architectural traditions that local modernists had rallied against for the past forty years. Yet, this was more than the return of the sentimental and provincial.

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[49]Trevor Boddy, "Plastic Lion's Gate: A Short History of the Post Modern in Vancouver Architecture," Vancouver: Representing the Postmodern City, Paul Delany, ed. (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1994): 27.

[50]Boddy, 28.

In many instances postmodern architecture addresses local circumstances as an antidote to the alienating impositions of International Style modernism. In Vancouver, nevertheless, the postmodern was met with resistance by the architectural establishment because it dismissed modernist conventions associated with the region. Three high-profile advocates of West Coast Style--University of British Columbia architecture professor Abraham Rogatnick, architect Arthur Erickson and former Vancouver Art Gallery director Luc Rombout were responsible for the monument's selection. While their choice of Franklin Allen's memorial arch seemed out of character, some speculate they opted for it to ensure that future atrocities would be avoided.[51]

The memorial also served as an announcement of burgeoning neo-conservatism in its placement at the entrance of the newly built BC Place stadium and False Creek, the site of Expo 86 and later condominium development. In this configuration, frontier-style neo-conservatism was seen to be in the process of replacing B.C.'s flailing resource-based economy with real estate and tourism. While attempting to attract and meet the needs of globalizing capital, this was one of the earliest efforts to dismantle state-sponsored social programs in Canada. And, like the Terry Fox memorial

[51]Boddy, 27.

itself, BC's new reality arrived in the awkward and old guise of laissez-faire capitalism.

With the challenge of postmodern forms, modernism's inextricable links to the new and innovative and its celebrated ability to break with the past were refigured as defensive and of the status quo, marking not only the authenticity of place as it had always claimed, but also its own provisional and tenuous position. In the terms of its program, modernism was acquiring the undesirable status of convention and history. While the Fox monument marks the arrival of postmodern architecture in Vancouver, it also signifies the emergence of a new form of regionalism, one that can still be identified as West Coast Style, but as a style dislodged from its links with modernism and national identity.

Within Canada, regionalism is usually analyzed in terms of its relationship to nationhood. Regionalism has been employed to organize and express cultural difference that contributes to, or resists, the homogenizing calls for federal unity. As cultural critics have argued, regional expression is manifest in attempts to find adequate forms to convey local particularities whether they be literary, architectural, or artistic. Experience, as it is valued in this construct, is articulated through renderings of landscape--ranging from realist representations to

figurative tropes that explore social, historical, economic, and political developments. The most familiar regionalisms are presented in terms of climate and geography. Although regionalism conveys a variety of meanings, it more accurately functions to delineate areas of economic production.[52] Canada, a vast and varied territory, is shaped by an ancient Precambrian shield surrounded by newer land forms that are divided into topographical regions such as the Pacific Coast, the Prairies, the North, the Maritimes, and Central Canada.[53] Climate and topography are thought to determine the cultural character of each region. Because distinctive regional characteristics distinguish Canada from other nations formed around unified identities, Canadians are thought to be more tolerant and understanding.[54]

Regional identities have the additional benefit of providing a relatively stable set of boundaries that can mediate ever-changing economic, social, cultural, and political phenomena. Foremost among these conceptual frameworks is the staples theory of ecoromic and political development whereby

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[52]Leonard C. Marsh, Communities in Canada (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970): 158-9.

[53]William C. Wonders, "Canadian Regions and Regionalisms: National Enrichment or National Disintegration?" A Passion For Identity, eds., David Taras, Beverly Raspovich, and Eli Mandel. (Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1993): 241-242.

[54]William Westfall, "On the Concept of Region in Canadian History and Literature," A Passion For Identity, eds., David Taras, Beverly Raspovich, and Eli Mandel (Scarborough: Nelson Canada, 1993): 230.

regions are organized around metropolitan centres that depend upon, yet exploit resources of the surrounding hinterlands. Historically, centre-periphery tensions involve Central Canada's exploitation of the resource-rich West while directing compensation programs toward more impoverished areas such as the North, the Maritimes, and Newfoundland.[55]

In terms of national identity, Northrop Frye[56] and George Woodcock[57] suggest that regional difference is based on cultural developments which vex Canadian unity because national commonalities are administrative, economic, and political. Identity is cultural and varies according to region, which motivates the nation state's constant struggle to coordinate, and homogenize regional cultural variation. Resistance and dissent are perpetuated by centre-periphery struggles.

Predictably, centre-periphery distinctions were inscribed according to climatic and geographical variation in the Royal Commission's report. One of the opening chapters of the report entitled "The Forces of Geography" describes Canada's cultural characteristics as they were determined by

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[55]Westfall, 233.

[56]Westfall, 228.

[57]George Woodcock, The Meeting of Time and Space: Regionalism in Canadian Literature (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1980).

the nation's small, scattered population that was isolated, but by necessity self-reliant.[58] Affected by both its geography and history, each community developed a particular richness of life which resisted the effacements of standardization. For the sake of national cohesion, the Commission recommended that methods be instituted to initiate the sharing of resources and communication between the regions thereby strengthening national identity while lessening dependence on American culture.

The Royal Commission's chapter "Architecture and Town Planning"[59] further defines the relationship between regional difference and national unity. While the report calls for the preservation of the few notable examples of architecture that are indigenous, it points to the absence of a readily identifiable national architecture. It suggests that a national architecture should emerge along regional lines following the developments on the West Coast significant for their adaptation of modern methods and materials to local conditions, thus, avoiding cultural traditions deriving from other generations and places.

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[58]Report of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier King's Printer, 1951): 11-18.

[59]Report of the Royal Commission, 216-220.

The Massey-Levesque Commission, it could be argued, recognized existing forms of regionalism, but through its recommendations called for rational planning and the creation of an infrastructure that would integrate the regions within a nationalist framework. Rational planning resisted the dehumanizing potential of standardization and mass production by using the creative qualities of the arts to complement the progressive forces of science. In this way the home, community and region which affected all aspects of living could contribute to the harmonious and enlightened operations of the nation.

Regionalism, then, was no longer a parochial and reactionary phenomena. Instead it was a local expression of modernity that emerged on the West Coast just prior to the war. The emphasis on new materials, standardization, and the use of flexible forms and techniques that were economical yet adaptable were thought to be conducive to the creation of a built environment free of the ills of the past. According to Rhodri Liscombe, modernism was not merely a style, but an ethic, a set of principles and a process of design concerned with integrating practice, economic and cultural functions in order to use the discoveries of industry and technology for social progress.[60] Modernism on the West Coast was not simply the technocratic imposition of rationalized forms as

[60]Rhodri Liscombe, "Modes of Modernizing: The Acquisition of Modernist Design in Canada," Bulletin SSAC (September 1994): 68.

has so often been claimed. Rather than providing an expression of geographic authenticity characteristic of folk culture whose forms are slow to change and cumbersome to diffuse, regional distinction came to be defined more in terms of the ability to acquire and adapt modern forms shifting emphasis from spatial to temporal determinates.[61] Disparity exists, nevertheless, in the ability of a region to acquire and then gain recognition for its modern, but distinctive forms, foregrounding asymmetries between cultural capitals and their peripheries.

During the war and in its aftermath, contributors to journals such as the Journal of the Royal Architecture Institute of Canada (JRAIC) and Canadian Art discussed the role that regionalism would play in postwar reconstruction and national identity. Under the auspices of planning, regions would coordinate and mediate the needs of the neighbourhood and town while implementing a nation-wide plan. It was assumed that social, economic and cultural planning would contribute to general welfare and ensure a decent standard of living thus preventing future destruction of the sort resulting from the war and economic depression. Unchecked forces of individualism, industrialism, urbanization, and capitalism would be thwarted. Keynesian

[61]Deryck Holdsworth, "Regional Distinctiveness in an Industrial Age: Some California Influences on British Columbia Housing," American Review of Canadian Studies (Summer 1982): 65.

principles of the welfare state could institute full employment, economic intervention, and an array of social regulations. Perhaps most symbolic of this regime was the focus on housing--a priority because it provided adequate and pleasing shelter. Its siting in thriving neighbourhoods provided space for creative and healthy citizens. In turn, it was a source of employment and economic stimulation boosted by postwar demand while making up for existing states of disrepair and chaos caused by the Depression and war.

Planning was accorded such a high priority that pamphlets on the subject were distributed to Canadian soldiers while still on duty in Britain. One British pamphlet was reproduced in the pages of the JRAIC.[62] It stressed that after the war everyone must be involved in the creation of postwar democracy which would result from citizens' full participation in the planning of home and community. Gainful employment was the foundation of this program, not apathy and hand-outs. Several issues of JRAIC included articles about postwar planning by architects, planners, construction industry representatives, engineers, and government officials alike.[63] These officials agreed that in order to

[62]Ralph Tubbs, "Shall We Rebuild Without a Plan?" JRAIC (June 1943): 81-85.

[63] See for example: Frederick M. Babcock, "Housing, Now and in the Post-War Era, JRAIC (January 1943): 3-5; O.J. Firestone, "Post-War Residential Construction: Its Significance for the Canadian Economy," JRAIC (September 1943): 141-144; A.S. Mathers, "The Construction

meet postwar demand, the building industry would have to standardize its operations. It was not prepared to produce on a large scale. Moreover, full cooperation between architects, engineers, planners, and builders was necessary for the reconstruction of a vital society. As F.W. Nicolls, director of Housing Administration in Ottawa stated

> Town planning prevents depreciation in values, safeguards investment and adds to wealth and well being of the country. Good housing, home ownership and good citizenship are synonymous.[64]

In the pages of Canadian Art, Eric Arthur and Humphrey Carver proposed that the Dominion government prepare national standards of planning to be managed by the provinces and deployed on a regional basis.[65] In this schema, housing would be assessed in the same terms as public health, welfare, and municipal affairs. The municipality would survey housing conditions, monitor human needs, as well as secure and maintain public sites and amenities.

Industry in Our Post-War Economy," JRAIC (June 1943): 147-149; Harold Lawson, "A National Housing Set-Up," JRAIC (September 1943): 150-153; Robert F. Legget and Griffith P. Taylor, "The Engineer and Low-Cost Housing," JRAIC (September 1943): 151-153.

[64]F.W. Nicolls, "Private Enterprise Housing," JRAIC (September 1943): 145.

[65]E. G. Faludi, "Housing--A Challenge to Canada," Canadian Art (December-January 1943-4): 52-57.

Many ideas about town planning circulated, but one of the most influential was the British New Town described in JRAIC by the West Coast urban planner Peter Oberlander (see figure 6).[66] The New Towns were based on notions of the deconcentration of urban density rather than decentralization characterized by the rapid and unplanned urbanization of the past. Decentralization was undesirable because it resulted in large-scale migrations to the suburbs leaving vast areas of the city to decay. New Towns were to be planned on a human scale and create self-sufficient communities with adequate public amenities and stable industry. New Towns were to offer a physical pattern that made for a balanced community life while respecting individual privacy.

The arts were considered to be essential not only to the task of establishing national unity through the organization of regional culture, but also to offset the consequences of irrational growth. Throughout this period painter and cultural advocate Lawren Harris made every attempt to call for unity of spirit over the diversity of life. Harris believed that art was transcendent, and because he thought it had the ability to touch the lives of many, it would serve as an effective tool in national unification.

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[66]Peter Oberlander, "New Towns--An Approach to Urban Reconstruction," JRAIC (June 1947): 199-211. See also H. Fliess, "The Social Aspects of Town Planning," JRAIC (May 1947): 165-170.

Moreover, art successfully negotiated difference because it could structure potentially divisive elements into a creative interplay of complementaries.[67]

The role of art in coordinating regional difference was embraced by artists who actively lobbied for and attempted to organize a unified national culture. In their efforts to foster artistic life in Canada, Harris and his contemporaries organized events such as the Kingston Conference of 1941. Through lobbying efforts and contributions to national commissions or organizations like the Federation of Canadian Artists, they forged links between art and the public. Artists organized on a regional basis--the Prairies and Pacific Coast were among the most active and effective regions. At the same time, Elizabeth Wyn Wood spoke about the need for the federal promotion of culture both in the hinterlands and abroad.[68]

One of the most comprehensive plans designed to activate regional culture was Harris's proposal for community art centres.[69] Like the economy, facilities for the arts were

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[67]Lawren Harris, "Reconstruction Through the Arts," Canadian Art (June-July 1944): 185-6

[68]Elizabeth Wyn Wood, "A National Program for the Arts in Canada," Canadian Art (February-March 1944): 93 and "Art Goes to Parliament," Canadian Art (October-November 1944): 3-6.

[69]Lawren Harris, "Community Art Centres," Canadian Art (December-January 1944-45): 62-64. See also Marcus Adeney, "Community Centres in Canada," JRAIC (February 1945): 21-23; Lionel Scott, "Some Facts About Community Centres," JRAIC (February 1945): 24-25 and William H. Conrad, "Community

thought to function best when they were organized into an integrated structure. Harris assumed that community centres would facilitate freedom of expression to balance and complement the economic and political processes of uniformity. According to Harris, freedom was moral and creative, not economic, and unification, not standardization, resisted mass production that threatened to efface regional difference. Community centres offered sites where national culture could be experienced by bringing the community into contact with it while inspiring local cultural production. A nation-wide system of community centres, if successful, could provide cultural access and self-determination. One of the earliest and most comprehensive manifestations of Harris's proposal was the Community Arts Councils established in the 1950s throughout British Columbia.[70]

Efforts to plan and coordinate cultural identity in Canada after the war emphasized the ameliorative functions of domestic architecture and the arts. National unity was brought about through celebrations of regional activity forming a nation, as Elizabeth Wyn Wood described, made up of a people of peoples. While evidence of distinct cultural

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Centres in United States War Housing Projects," JRAIC. (February 1945): 33-34.

[70]Scott Watson, "Art in the Fifties: Design, Leisure, and Painting in the Age of Anxiety," Vancouver Art and Artists, 1931-1983 (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1983).

forms emerged during this period, both Sherry MacKay and Irene Zenowych argue that regional distinction on the West Coast becomes more pronounced around the release of the Massey-Levesque Commission's report.[71] MacKay attributes this to a maturing of the art scene evident in a shifting discursive emphasis from architecture and planning and the building of pleasant and affordable homes to meet escalating postwar demand, to a scene where the promotion of local arts and crafts and their placement in the home provided evidence of a regionally distinct modernist culture.[72]

To illustrate this shift, MacKay argues that the Copp House (1951), built by Ron Thom--a local painter turned architect --is one of the first to register and be recognized for such tendencies (see figure 2). Unlike his formative predecessors who advocated the benefits of functional modernism, Thom was more concerned with the poetics of landscape often conveyed in the abstract paintings of his mentors and contemporaries. Like his fellow modernists, he too was concerned with utilizing modern materials and methods, yet his priority was to highlight the home's natural surrounds. As with many architects of the time, Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian homes were influential. The Usonian plan, Wright's postwar answer

[71]Sherry MacKay, "Western Homes, Western Living," Bulletin SSAC (September 1989): 65-74 and Irene Zenewych, Regionalism in the Face of Universality: West Coast Modernism as Architectural Landscape (diss., Simon Fraser University, 1985).

[72]MacKay, 73.

to economical and integrated family living, was designed with prefabricated materials and principles of construction consolidating heating, lighting, and utilities in a central service core surrounded by open living space.[73] Despite their industrially-based production methods, Thom's homes, like others under the influence of Wright, offered a shelter for the family, nestled comfortably in nature. These homes hugged the ground; they didn't project from it like their more rationalized contemporaries.[74] To such ends, MacKay notes that the Copp House combined stud framing with post-and-beam construction, employed an extensive system of eaves, and merged with nature by using the colour and details of the building's material structure and its surrounds.[75] Locally acquired artifacts associated with Japan, China and First Nations were to signify the specificities of local culture connoting the West Coast's proximity to what modernists figured as other and authentic--domesticating and aestheticizing the non-Western and indigenous in the name of regional distinction.

The use of decorative elements from non-European cultures to mark regional difference is repeatedly invoked in the then

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[73]See Frank Lloyd Wright, The Natural House (New York: Horizon Press, 1954); and John Sergeant, Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian Houses: The Case for Organic Architecture (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1976).

[74]MacKay, 72.

[75]MacKay, 71.

recently established lifestyle magazine Western Homes and Living. The founding of this magazine in 1950 suggests that not only was there an established and flourishing regional culture on the West Coast, but also a middle class that was able to support commercial endeavors. In the inaugural issue, a publisher's note asserted that the magazine was distinctly regional because it was useful, readable and informative. The magazine's address would be neither "high hat", nor "austere." It was merely intended to help "worthy Westerners" produce things that deserved patronage whether they be furniture, food, garments, painting or building material. As well, the magazine would advise readers on problems encountered in home-making while bringing consumers into contact with new products.[76] An editorial in the same issue stated

> We have said in our publicity that British Columbia living is of a different kind. It has a distinctively West Coast atmosphere, a Far West quality related to the entirely different geography and climate of this province. We don't boast about this. We just remark it.[77]

Western Homes and Living offered recipes, decorating and construction tips, and financial advice to encourage this

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[76]"Publisher's Note," Western Homes and Living (August-September 1950): 5.

[77]"Editorial: This is British Columbia's Own Magazine," Western Homes and Living (August-September 1950): 9.

unique lifestyle. It focused on verbal and visual representations of homes--their interiors and gardens presenting options that were intended to satisfy the needs of a variety of citizens who were middle-class but whose incomes varied. Although the magazine catered to families of all sizes and stages, it occasionally addressed the single professional. The magazine featured do-it-yourself Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation starter plans, renovation ideas, along with the self-designed homes of artist and architects. Always emphasizing the affordable and appealing, defining features of the West Coast idiom came to be associated with an open plan, local materials, respect for nature and the availability of scenic views.

As was to be expected, the home of newly rising star Ron Thom was featured in a 1956 issue of Western Homes and Living.[78] Similar to Wright, Thom emphasized the use of prefabricated material and planning around a central service core. Economical planning from the point of view of construction costs and family matters was the subject of this article. While the house could be built and maintained economically, Mrs. Thom would be able to effectively carry out household chores while attending to her very active children. Although prefabrication was of the utmost concern--the article notes that this was not a stock plan--

[78]"Experimental House Proves Versatility of Plywood Panel Construction," Western Homes and Living (February 1956): 11-14.

prefabricated materials influenced the plan, but did not fetter the design. Less discussed though evident in the accompanying photographs are the elements that distinguish the Thom's home: abstract landscape paintings and the abundance of orientalist objects such as grass mats, bamboo dividers, rice paper lanterns, wicker furniture, the garden design and interior foliage. These elements were meant to denote the local, yet took their cue from decorative influences of Frank Lloyd Wright, who along with many others, used motifs of non-Western cultures to link the aesthetic program of modernism with what was thought to be authentic, unembellished expression.

This Wright-inspired impulse to emphasize the cultural distinctiveness of the region was equally upheld by Thom's colleague Frederick Thorton Hollingsworth whose deep affinities with Wright's ideas permeate his calligraphy and drawing style. In one striking instance he adopted the architectural principles of Wright's Prairie houses to the necessities of British Columbia life (see figures 3, 4). As a special project for Western Homes and Living, he designed a hypothetical farm house in the Okanagan Valley for an imaginary couple--a retired businessman, his wife and teenage children from Vancouver.[79] This project could be compared to Wright's plan for Broadacre City where modern

[79]"Farm House of the Future," Western Homes and Living (March 1951): 12, 19.

citizens were to escape from the ills of urbanization to enjoy the more holistic values of agrarian living. Hollingsworth's farm house was perhaps the West Coast's version of an agrarian getaway for the twilight years of one cosmopolitan family. Like Wright's Prairie Homes with their low, sweeping forms, Hollingsworth's farm house was organized around a central service core that functioned as the hearth surrounded by an open living space. Wright's painstaking attention to human scale was echoed in Hollingsworth's description of his work as "human-related geometry."[80]

Comparable in program to Thom's house, Hollingsworth's return to nature was an attempt to humanize the technocratic effacements of modernism with the decorative touches of regional culture. Hollingsworth's decorative approach in the farm house is more structurally oriented than in Thom's home, where objects and artifacts serve as the focus of interior design. In the farm house, the compositional lines, motifs and textures of the building are meant to blend with the "gaunt" Okanagan hills, the "natural tones of eroded cliffs", "the rich-rolling ground." Topographical features were quoted in the pierced design of the diagonal cedar siding and colored glass on clerestory windows that created

[80]See Paul E. Sprague, Guide to Frank Lloyd Wright and Prairie School Architecture in Oak Park (Oak Park: Oak Park Municipal Corporation, 1986).

intricate patterns of sunlight on the floor. The clerestory windows and sliding glass doors were also functional in that they were arranged to capture the light and regulate seasonal climactic fluctuations.

When R.H. Hubbard visited the West Coast, he was so impressed by what he encountered that he deemed Vancouver the new centre of the arts in Canada. In "A Climate for the Arts"(1955),[81] Hubbard stated that shifting centres of art were inevitable in Canada, a nation lacking a single cultural capital like London, New York, or Paris. Vancouver's vital scene was driven by the collaboration of painters and architects, the magic setting of its landscape and climate, and the lack of cultural traditions. It also involved the coordinated efforts of educators at the city's art and architecture schools who had established a unified and coherent modernist practice benefiting from the absence of other traditions in a rapidly expanding postwar city. Hubbard stated that the emergence of a thriving modern culture on the West Coast was a distinctly Canadian phenomenon typifying an "advanced civilization existing on the fringe of wilderness." A climate for the arts, then, evolved through the combination of "urbanization, wilderness and salubrity." Evidence of this culture, he noted, was most apparent in the homes of artists and architects.

[81]R.H. Hubbard, "A Climate for the Arts," Canadian Art (Spring 1955): 99-105, 139.

The collaboration between artists and architects exemplifying a West Coast cultural presence was the subject of painter John Korner's article following Hubbard's in this same issue of Canadian Art.[82] Korner explained how painting, especially murals, when applied to functional surfaces such as interior and exterior walls, illustrated the innovative reunion between painting and architecture, thus humanizing the functional machine aesthetics of International Style modernism. For example, Korner's recent mural work in the homes of R.J. Young and local architect D.C. Simpson (see figure 7) enhanced the architectural setting through the use of abstract motifs that were structural, spatial, textural, and complemented the colour scheme of the domestic setting. As such, Korner's geometric abstractions added to the forms of local artistic expression, providing a variation on the expressive landscape of abstract organic forms found in the Thom home and the Copp house. Here regional expression, defined by the presence of organic forms that represent local topography or stylized artifacts evocative of cultures perceived to be synonymous with their environment, now also re-emphasized the relationship of structure and space embodied in a modern, integrated style of living made possible through the collaboration of artists and architects.

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[82]John Korner, " A Re-Union of Painting and Architecture," Canadian Art (Spring 1955): 106-107.

Korner's discussion of the Simpson mural is especially important because it positions geometric abstraction as a form of regional expression that is as evocative of local culture as the organically-based aesthetics of Thom and Hollingsworth. This approach to West Coast Style is first put forth in Douglas Simpson's statement "Towards Regionalism in Canadian Architecture," published in a 1953 issue of Canadian Art.[83] Regionalism, as it had developed in a nationalist rubric, mistakenly overemphasized climate and geography at the expense of understanding social variation. This form of regionalism forged deterministic links between regional climate, geography and architecture, because technical solutions were available to rectify and accommodate challenges of weather and geography in any region.

Arguably, Simpson's statement implicitly resists an emerging boosterism that places West Coast Style at the pinnacle of Canadian architecture and inadvertently situates regions not following the same program as parochial. Simpson is careful to add that architects in other regions are not ignorant of contemporary imperatives even though modern architecture is less visible than on the West Coast, due perhaps to the particularities of history and geography. In promoting architectural modernism, Simpson recommends that efforts be

[83]Douglas C. Simpson, "Towards Regionalism in Canadian Architecture," Canadian Art (Spring 1953): 110-113.

made to avoid inappropriate impositions on regions with needs and conditions that are different from the West Coast. And like more organically oriented architects, Simpson emphasized the importance of regional cultural and social difference and its potential for realization through the integration of art and architecture.

While Simpson's article is ground-breaking in its early calls for attention to regional social and cultural variety, the presence of the mural in his home--its geometrical abstraction--suggests there was a plurality of cultural forms with West Coast Style. This is confirmed in a 1956-7 Western Homes and Living readers' survey and again a few years later in articles written for the magazine's 10th anniversary. The readers' survey, "What Westerners Want in a Home,"[84] stated that the "form-follows-function" type of home was no longer the only style that characterized West Coast living. The magazine's readers preferred houses designed for "today's" pattern of living that didn't necessarily include an open plan, or post-and-beam construction. In fact, most readers who described their tastes as contemporary preferred bungalows, partitioned living, dining, and kitchen spaces. The one commonly agreed upon and persisting feature, however, was a preference for

[84]" What Westerners Want in a Home," Western Homes and Living (December-January 1956-7): 12-16.

"indoor-outdoor living" where living room, patios and gardens were separated only by sliding glass doors.

By the tenth anniversary of Western Homes and Living, the plurality of tastes registered through the readership survey had become the defining feature of West Coast Style. According to one of the most avid spokesmen for modern design, Frederick Lasserre, the only binding feature of West Coast Style was the potential it offered for gracious living.[85] Although great efforts were made to use technologies emerging from the war, a life of peace and privacy had not become synonymous with open-planned homes and rationally orchestrated communities. Moreover, the past decade was one of consolidation and reevaluation of ideas surrounding architectural modernism and the future decade promised to bring much of the same in the absence of social and economic change.

On the whole, other articles commemorating the magazine's anniversary built upon Lasserre's sentiments, suggesting that a plurality of tastes and styles complicated attempts to equate West Coast Style with any one architectural type.[86] In the foreseeable future, they predicted that there

[85]"Personalities and Comments: Observations on a Decade of Western Homes," Western Homes and Living (August 1960):6, 8.

[86]See "A Decade of Western Homes," 11-15 and "The 10 Most Significant Homes of the Decade," 16-21 in Western Homes and Living (August 1960). "The Award Winners in the First AIBC-WH&L Western Home Award Programme," Western Homes and Living (December 1960): 11-19.

would be no new radical designs in architecture although fashions in furniture and interior decor would be sure to change; instigating another understanding of West Coast Style as a relaxed and informal pattern of modern living with a "serious interest in creating a home atmosphere of dignity and beauty which reflects domestic warmth and a deep respect for family values."[87]

An informal style of life, a plurality of tastes, changing fashions in interior decor, and the prediction of few changes in architectural design in the upcoming decades, were the qualities that came to characterize West Coast Style in the late fifties. Nevertheless, the congratulatory, and sometimes resigned acceptance of pluralism expressed in these statements must not be mistaken for the plurality associated with the appearance of postmodern architecture.

Recently, postmodern architecture has challenged modernist presuppositions rather than serving as a variation and proliferation of modernism's forms. The pluralism associated with the postmodern is indicative of social and economic change that Lasserre suggests would bring radical changes in architectural style. With the Fox memorial, this change first emerged as seemingly nonsensical, clad in an eclectic mix of past styles and motifs that were associated with the

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[87]"The Award Winners," 12.

reactionary forces of neo-conservatism. This was a form to be resisted. In the 1990s, architects like Arthur Erickson,[88] with an affinity for West Coast architecture built in the late 40s and early 50s, subscribed to what Kenneth Frampton deemed critical regionalism--an architecture that was to counter the impositions of the postmodern, International Style modernism and the nostalgic return of preindustrial forms.[89] According to Frampton, critical regionalism highlights the experience of place through landscape and light, the tactile and tectonic. In this formulation, architecture is based on experience rather than a purely visual interpretation of the environment.[90] Critical regionalism, according to Frampton, offered a structural poetic along the lines of what had been asserted earlier by West Coast modernists. At this point, modernism was defensively positioned as illustrated by statements made recently by Arthur Erickson. He is troubled by postmodernism because it has supposedly unleashed forty years of suppressed eclecticism, shoddy technique, and anti-regionalist sentiment. He attributes postmodernism to the rise of globalization that dictates conformity, while

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[88]Arthur Erickson, "To Understand the City We Make," Vancouver Forum 1: Old Powers, New Forces, Max Wyman, ed. (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1992): 157.

[89]Kenneth Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture, Hal Foster, ed. (Port Townsend: Bay Press, 1983): 21.

[90]Frampton, 27-8.

creating fragmentation in the form of religious fundamentalism and nationalism.[91]

In the face of such disparate tendencies, critical regionalism re-establishes rootedness and belonging.[92] Erickson predicts that Vancouver will experience a population explosion while assuming its new position in a globalizing order because of its strategic location halfway in airtime between Tokyo, Taiwan, London and Amsterdam. To avoid the disasters of unchecked growth that threaten Vancouver's importance as a trade centre, Erickson insists that a regional plan and architecture be designed to foster local order.[93]

While Erickson acknowledges the new position of Vancouver within configurations of globalizing capital, he continues to diagnose the situation in terms of modernist criteria of rational planning and places emphasis on architectural structure as an expression of the local. He uses analytic teleologies that are time-based--that measure progress and establish hierarchy in order to judge the efficacy of architectural forms according to their appropriate stage of

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[91] Erickson, 156.

[92] Erickson, 156.

[93] Erickson, 158.

development.[94] His critique is rooted in an analysis of the spatial economies of industrial production that situates the region within the operations of the nation's centre-periphery relationships. Although these relationships still exist, they are no longer primary or dominant. While Erickson's line of argument serves as an important resistance to postmodernism's association with neo-conservatism in the early 80s, forms of globalization and postmodernism are today more riddled in their political, social, economic, and cultural allegiances.

Because globalism and postmodernism have proliferated into a variety of rapidly shifting association, older models of development and analysis based on the temporal relations of social, economic, and cultural progress are incommensurate with current conditions. Developmental teleologies exist simultaneously with more fluid and shifting spatial networks. This criticism is especially pertinent for cities like Vancouver whose formerly peripheral status has left it relatively free of infrastructures and traditions of earlier forms of political and economic accumulation and

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[94]My critique of modernist and industrial teleologies derives from Delany, pg 11 and Richard L. Florida and Marshall Feldman, "Housing in US Fordism," International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 12 (1988): 187-209; and A.J. Scott, "Flexible production systems and regional development: the rise of new industrial space in North America and Western Europe," International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 12 (1988): 177-185.

administration--allowing the city to flourish amidst newly globalizing formations.[95]

Needless to say, the role of West Coast Style is reconfigured within these new regional relations. For example, in Delany's analysis, modern architecture in Vancouver is at present an incoherent and reactionary force. It is merely part of a mix of styles that have accumulated in Vancouver over the years. In fact, he supports the program of postmodern architecture because he interprets it as trying to make intelligent sense of local melange.[96] For him, the defining feature of life on the West Coast is involved with a transcultural urbanism that thrives in Vancouver due in part to the city's liberal policies and its formerly peripheral status. Delany suggests that Vancouver and Toronto are amongst the most "successful pioneers of transcultural urbanism" because they subscribe to

> ...such universalist ideals as civility, an impartial justice system, and comprehensive rights to health care and social security. Part also derives from the relative weakness of the nativism that seeks to protect local identity from foreign intrusion.[97]

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[95]Delany, 4.

[96]Delany, 15-17.

[97]Delany, 11.

Vancouver is a city at the edge rather than a capital because it lacks administrative and political functions, Delany adds

> ...its reason for being is to be situated where four zones intersect: the Western Canadian hinterland, the US and Mexican West Coast, the North Coast up to Alaska, the Pacific Rim. It is not a bulls-eye or spider web city that extends uniformity to all parts of the compass, like Paris or Berlin, but a city where fault lines pile up against each other.[98]

In this formulation, regional associations are less concerned with the nation state. Paul Delany argues that notions of regionalism change because Vancouver comes to have more in common with cities in its geographic proximity, as well as with cities of a similar type, predominantly those that have become centres of global capital exchange. Vancouver, then, comes to be characterized by its transnational and transcultural ties while it simultaneously disengages from its relations with the BC interior and Central Canada--lessening its commitments to regional configurations that were once paramount to the cultural identity, economic and administrative functions of the nation-state.[99]

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[98]Delany, 19.

[99]Delany, 14.

Chapter Three

Lifestyle

Coincidental with the Terry Fox Memorial's association with the postmodern and neo-conservatism, Donald Gutstein, an advocate for affordable housing in the 1970s, wrote that the indigenous status of homes associated with West Coast Style had been challenged. In his article "No Fixed Position" published in the lifestyle magazine Vancouver, Gutstein reported that the West Coast Style emergent from World War II, which was "all post-and-beams, glass walls, cedar siding and landscape moving inside," was no longer the recipient of national attention according to the results of the 1983 Canadian Design Council Awards. Although 11 of the 37 awards were given to B.C. architects, only one was granted to a single-family dwelling. A juror explained that was this due to the social concerns of a jury interested in medium-density housing. To mark the passing of the single-family version of West Coast Style into history, Gutstein revisited award winning examples in his 1984 article to show what had changed since the 1950s and 1960s "when the single-family home on a large suburban lot was *the* great Canadian design problem."[100]

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[100]Donald Gutstein, "No Fixed Position," Vancouver (January 1984): 24-29.

In reviewing homes exemplary of West Coast Style, Gutstein perhaps intended to highlight the official recognition of socially conscious architecture instead of giving in to the reactionary forces of neo-conservatism that the Terry Fox Memorial was said to represent. And, although contrary notions of change were embodied by these positions, both were associated with postmodernism and attempted to offer alternatives to architectural modernism.

The early 1980's in British Columbia was fraught with highly visible manifestations of these competing tendencies. Paul Delany locates the emergence of postmodernism in the early 1970s. He writes

> The year 1973 is commonly seen as the beginning of a global transition to post modernism. Around then several things draw to an end: American involvement in Vietnam, Nixon's presidency, the romanticism of the sixties, modernist architecture with the demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe housing project in 1972. The oil crisis of 1973 marked the end of post-Second World War reconstruction, at least along the line of straight forward spatial and material expansion. The great wave of postwar North American growth seemed to fall back on itself; in its backwash, cultural moods of rejection, irony, and cynicism became dominant.[101]

[101]Paul Delany, "Vancouver as a Postmodern City," Vancouver: Representing the Postmodern City (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1994): 2.

Unlike Gutstein and Trevor Boddy[102], Delany claims that there is an absence in Vancouver of local architecture of any distinction. Therefore, the arrival of postmodernism is useful for making sense of the city's architectural incoherence. He adds that the examples of architectural modernism which exist in Vancouver are imposing, monolithic and in the face of postmodernism constitute a rear-garde force.[103]

By equating architectural modernism with public and commercial developments, Delany overlooks domestic architecture which many sources confirm has been the primary form through which the West Coast region has received cultural recognition and established its architectural tradition. At the same time, however, Delany agrees that if nothing else, Vancouver architecture is bound to be related to its setting.[104] While it is evident that no one architectural type is synonymous with the West Coast (even though the post-and-beam home has strong and lingering associations) most discussions of West Coast Style since the 1940s through to the 1990s link it to domestic architecture shaped by the determining features of geography and climate.

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[102]See Boddy's discussion of this and the Terry Fox Memorial in "Plastic Lion's Gate: A Short History of the Post Modern in Vancouver Architecture," in Paul Delany ed.

[103]Delany, 16.

[104]Delany, 15.

Under the umbrella of climate and geography, domestic architecture provides the space through which a distinctive West Coast lifestyle forms.

Just as configurations of regionalism are shifting and multiple within West Coast Style, so too are notions associated with its lifestyle. Cultural geographer Caroline Mills defines lifestyle as the objectification of a set of cultural forms such as everyday language, ways of living, and strategies for coping.[105] In its simplest form lifestyle on the West Coast, then, is a style of living associated with an attitude that is relaxed as a result of the overwhelming influences of climate and geography. Mills' definition of lifestyle parallels Raymond Williams' definition of culture. For example, Mills states that culture (of which lifestyle is an objectification) functions as a medium through which social, economic, and political change is experienced, contested, and constituted.[106] Raymond Williams conceptualizes culture as "a whole way of life" constituted through the dynamic interaction of individuals between their everyday activities and larger institutional frameworks.[107] Williams writes

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[105]Caroline Mills, "Myths and Meanings of Gentrification," place/ culture/ representation, James Duncan and David Ley eds., (New York: Routledge, 1993): 151.

[106]Mills, 151.

[107]Raymond Williams, Culture and Society: 1780-1950, (New York: Columbia UP, 1983): xviii, 65.

> [t]he history of the idea of culture is a record of our reactions, in thought and feeling, to the changed conditions of our common life. .... The history of the idea of culture is a record of our meanings and our definitions, but these, in turn, are only to be understood within the context of our action. .... The idea of culture is a general reaction and major change in the conditions of our common life. Its basic element is its effort at total qualitative assessment.[108]

Here Williams defines the culture of modernization as a culture of change--a culture in which notions of architectural modernism are dependent on moral and ethical imperatives to distinguish phenomena in the absences of a fixed cultural order.[109] That West Coast Style is engaged in a process of cultural change is evident in the shifting ethical and moral imperatives attached to domestic architecture.

Lawrence Grossberg agrees that Williams' understanding of culture is important and influential, yet any use of it to assess contemporary matters must realize its limitations as a modernist response to the continuing process of modernization.[110] Most important to this case is Williams emphasis on temporal order over the spatial distributions of

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[108]Williams, 295.

[109]Peter Collins, Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture 1750-1950 (Montreal: McGill-Queens UP, 1975): 40-41.

[110]Lawrence Grossberg, We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture, (New York: Routledge, 1992): 23.

power, and his disdain for mass culture. His critique is pertinent to modernism, but limited with respect to surpassing this cultural order's institutional terms and notions of progress.

In an effort to understand contemporary manifestations of West Coast Style, the limitation of these terms must be explored. Grossberg offers one such elaboration which supports an analysis of changing notions of West Coast Style. He locates a critique of modernism in counter-cultural contestations whereby the detrimental and alienating effects of progress and modernization were resisted and politicized. Alternative lifestyles offered a means through which to transcend the economic and political corruption of the state and multinational capital, as well as unveil the complicity of high culture.[111] For neo-conservatives a decade later, a politicized lifestyle was a way of precluding resistance to, and participation in, social, economic and political decision making. Grossberg explains that the counter-cultural and neo-conservative uses of lifestyle functioned as a critique of each other. At the same time, they differed from the depoliticization of everyday life that occurred in the immediate postwar era when the home and family were refuges from the ills of modern life. Moreover, because of the successful

[111]Grossberg, 294.

disassociation of the domestic sphere from public life, Grossberg notes, the home was easily targeted as a site of consumerism. In the case of Canada, the everyday and domestic sphere were predominately organized to facilitate a modern sense of national cultural identity.

The formative development of West Coast Style occurred between the war and the Massey-Levesque Commission. Although it was associated with a variety of cultural forces, in most of the literature the elements of a West Coast lifestyle were described in terms of regional and national cultural identity. During the Second World War, as Maria Tippett argues, artists were less interested in producing culture that would reflect the Dominion's place in the British Empire. They wanted to ensure that the arts would play an integral and productive role in preserving the values the nation fought for which in turn would be deployed in postwar reconstruction.[112] It was during the war that artists, for the first time, began to consider and organize culture on a national scale. The Kingston Conference of 1941 is cited as a decisive moment. According to organizer Andre Bieler, the conference sparked a sense of mutual understanding through discussions about the role that art should play in a

[112]Maria Tippett, Making Culture: English-Canadian Institutions and the Arts Before the Massey Commission. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990): 157.

democratic nation.[113] As Walter Abel reported, the Kingston conference and the subsequent activities of the Federation of Canadian Artists were intended

> ...to see that the arts in Canada, the one cultural aspect of our civilization that can be appreciated by all countries, should not suffer either in time or depression or inflation, and should take their rightful place beside our national achievements.[114]

As well as providing a space for common, world-wide understanding, British Columbia painter Jack Shadbolt insisted that art should relate to everyday life through its detailing of the local and the political, the domestic and the work-a-day world.[115]

In giving shape and meaning to the country's culture, artists hoped to play an indispensable role in determining the type of society Canada would become. As nation builders,

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[113]Andre Bieler, "The Kingston Conference--Ten Years Afterwards," Canadian Art (Summer 1951): 150-2.
Bieler notes that from this conference emerged the Federation of Canadian Artists who were instrumental in organizing the Canada Arts Council, an association of national and regional cultural organizations who formed a powerful cultural lobby and submitted influential documents such as the "Brief Concerning the Cultural Aspects of Canadian Reconstruction," to the House of Commons Special Committee on Reconstruction and Reestablishment in June 1944. Many of the principles associated with this culture lobby appeared as recommendations in the Report of the Royal Commission of National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, 1949-1951.

[114]Walter Abel, (republished report from the Kingstons conference published in Maritime Art, November 1941)Canadian Art (Summer 1951): 152.

[115]Tippett, 165.

educators, as the custodians of civilized values, according to Maria Tippett, artists envisioned culture in humanist terms. Postwar democracy could be realized if individuals acquired self-understanding in the context of the larger community.[116]

In his analysis of the Massey-Levesque Commission, Paul Litt discusses how the cultural values of humanism were linked to liberalism and nationalism. Liberal humanism rested on the idea that human beings were innately good. Spiritual, moral and intellectual perfection could be achieved through education and the arts.[117] The state of individual cultural enlightenment both created and reflected the status of the nation--internationally as well as at home.

A nation with a strong and distinguished culture would be one that could ameliorate the destructive tendencies of modernization--the amoralism of science and the immoralism of capitalism.[118] Of particular concern to the Royal Commission was the manipulative and profit driven impositions of mass culture that threatened to erode all social and cultural bonds.[119] The biggest threat came from

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[116]Tippett, 168.

[117]Paul Litt, The Muses, the Masses, and the Massey Commission, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992): 91.

[118]Litt, 91.

[119]Litt, 85.

the United States. Accordingly, the commissioners emphasized the moral superiority of Canadian culture and insisted on east-west national ties rather than north-south associations.[120] New associations with Britain appeared in the report as a source of tradition, distinguishing Canadian culture on the North American continent.[121] The cultural principles of liberal humanism such as democracy, peace and prosperity were also used as a tactic in the Cold War to ward off the perceived threats of Communism.[122] Through this process, the culture lobby gained state recognition while securing its ability to challenge the status of its rivals in business and science--based on their inability to take social responsibility.[123] Within the cultural lobby and among the commissioners themselves, tensions developed between the humanist elite who promoted the universalizing standards of high art and cosmopolitanism, and nationalists who celebrated popular, local and grassroots organizations.[124]

While the Massey-Levesque report was a negotiation of contradictory and competing tendencies that sought to create national cultural identity based on democratic and liberal

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[120]Litt, 109.

[121]Litt, 115.

[122]Litt, 105.

[123]Litt, 248.

[124]Litt, 250, 252.

humanist principles, its main objective concurred with a statement made by Lawren Harris who stressed that

> Nationalism in government, economics and ideology engenders suspicion and animosity between peoples. Whereas we achieve a basic understanding and appreciation of other people through their arts, despite differences in national outlook.[125]

Architecture, according to the Commission's report was an effective means of achieving such ends. The opening lines of the Massey-Levesque report's chapter "Architecture and Town Planning" stated that

> Architecture and town planning are related to almost all of the arts and to many of the sciences. They affect almost every aspect of the life of a community.[126]

The chapter concluded that of all of the arts, architecture had the greatest influence on the manner of living.[127] It was a space of common experience and humanity necessary as Jacques de Tonnacour wrote in Canadian Art because at present

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[125]Lawren Harris, "Letter to the Editor," Canadian Art, (March-April 1946).

[126]Report of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, 1949-51 (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier King's Printer, 1951): 216.

[127]Report of the Royal Commission, 221.

> We are not sufficiently interested in humanity. And humanity begins at home, in the framework of each of our beings. If it is not there first, it is no use to run around the world looking for it.[128]

Art and especially architecture were important because they not only housed human activities that were physical and utilitarian, but also ones that were cultural and spiritual. John Russell, writing on the Massey-Levesque Commission, found that architecture embodied the most fundamental sense of humanism out of all of the creative arts.[129] Potentially the function, structure, and the aesthetics of the building could affect human behavior--socially and culturally.

According to the Commission's Report, architecture and town planning could offset the alienating effects thought to be caused by mass produced housing, as well as provide stylistic coherence that was absent in Canada, a country that had undergone urbanization during the Victorian era--a period described as one of stylistic eclecticism. Moreover, with the advent of standardized and widely distributed building materials and techniques, the possibility of a distinct architecture was limited. These factors, and the impossibility of producing such expression in a nation built

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[128]Jacques de Tonnancour, "On Humanity in Canadian Art," Canadian Art (Autumn 1949).

[129]John Russell, "Canadian Architecture," JRAIC (July 1956): 154-156.

on regional and cultural diversity, hindered the development of a nationally recognizable architecture.[130]

A number of initiatives attempted to create a nationally celebrated architecture. One such program that was established to recognize and encourage innovative Canadian architecture was the Massey Medals for architecture that would supposedly shape identity and allow Canadians to admit

> ...that though buildings cannot produce people, they can have some effect in forming and molding people and indeed the whole national character, just as the Constitution of the United States, for example, was produced by men of superior character and intellect, in turn has exerted a formative influence on the American people.[131]

Implicit in the Royal Commission's understanding of architecture as a cultural form was the assumption that it engaged all of the arts and most of the sciences deriving from the humanistic doctrine that situated architecture as the "mother of all arts." Alex Colville, defending the establishment of public architectural competitions, explained that the doctrine had existed since the Renaissance, a period widely regarded as the golden age of humanism. During the Renaissance, painters, sculptors and

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[130]Report of the Royal Commission, 216-221.

[131]"Massey Medals for Architecture," Canadian Art (Spring 1951): 123.

architects created cultural forms which were integral to and displayed the authentic values of their society. Colville wrote

> It seems reasonable to believe that a country cannot produce visual art of any significance without developing an architecture which is honest and good. History justifies this. There has been no great period of painting or sculpture in which these branches of art were not related to good architecture.[132]

This ideal of architecture as an authentic expression of a unified society is imbued with a more modern meaning. As many modernists argued, in a society affected by the ravages of modernization, culture could no longer honestly represent the state of society's well-being. Painting and sculpture engaged in abstraction provided aesthetic forms detached from the instrumentality of daily life. Paintings, like the home, itself, offered a space that preserved cultural values no longer apparent in the public sphere. In this case, modern architecture, rather than representing social order, retreated and took its creative cues from painting and sculpture.

While architecture and town planning were considered to be a form of culture that affected a broad range of humanity,

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[132]Alex Colville, "Architectural Competitions--Can They Help Us to Obtain Better Public Building?" Canadian Art (Spring 1951): 121.

painting in the Massey-Levesque Commission's report (along with much of the discourse surrounding painting in Canada at the time) was seen as the most advanced and immediately communicable expression of the "Spirit of Canada" because it was able to transcend linguistic difference, and it was portable, allowing it to be easily shown in any location.[133] As painting was being celebrated as one of the most developed arts, sculpture was considered to be the most deprived, according to Eric Arthur's report to the Royal Commission. This was the result of the few opportunities available to sculptors, and the lack of properly planned public works where they could site their work.[134]

Painting was also a means through which artists could become financially self-sufficient. Although no market of any significance existed in Canada, George Robertson suggested that one could be created by attending to middle-class patrons. He wrote

> The only place an artist gains financial prestige is on the wall of a purchaser's home. By whatever means they wish, but by following some constructive plan, the artist and his society must concentrate upon selling more Canadian art into Canadian homes. There, in a proper domestic setting, it becomes the functional item that people are interested in buying, not just the

[133]"The Royal Commission--Some Extracts from the Report," Canadian Art (Summer 1951): 177.

[134]Eric Arthur, "Architecture," Documents in Canadian Architecture, ed. Geoffrey Simmins (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1992): 204.

> subject of critical note in a magazine, newspaper, or on the radio. There it achieves its essential value as a commodity--essential, that is, if the artist is to live by his art.[135]

In painting for the home, artists could acquire much needed revenue, while their work could permeate the single-family dwelling with the spirit of humanism. On the West Coast, abstraction was a genre of painting that predominantly relied on artists' interpretations of Asian and indigenous West Coast and North American art. As Doris Shadbolt explained, this category of cultural expression was understood as encompassing the primitive because it was thought to express the primordial relationship of man to nature, and represent the ability of these groups to maintain a shared sense of belonging, belief and community.[136] By hanging this sort of work in the home, a sense of vitality and emotional conviction was ever-present, reminding its inhabitants of the values of cultural authenticity they were striving to realize as sophisticated citizens.

The exoticization of indigenous and Asian cultures is one strategy that is employed in nation building to create a

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[135]George Robertson, "A Broader Base of Patronage," Canadian Art (Christmas 1951): 107.

[136]Doris Shadbolt, "Our Relations to Primitive Arts," Canadian Art (October-November 1946): 14-16.

cultural imaginary based on an evolutionary sense of history which legitimates contemporary authority. In this schema, the modern is either understood as the most sophisticated incarnation of society referring to preceding cultures as less modern, or these earlier cultures provide examples of cultural purity that are used to measure the state of modern society's decline.[137] The production of a national imaginary also involves the construction of fictive ethnicity, which, as Etienne Balibar notes, organizes entities such as the family, language, education and race into subordinate though not highly visible relationships to the nation-state--instigating a cultural imaginary based on ever-shifting frontiers of exclusion and belonging. In this rubric, the home--a shelter for the nuclear family--is analogously related to the physical and spiritual well-being of its inhabitants.[138] Domestic architecture, its design and decor, is to radiate an integrated sense of living. It serves as a reprieve for the timelessness of cultural principles expressed in modes of thought, feeling and behavior as it is realized in the articulation of identity right through, from the family to the community and nation.

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[137]See Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (London: Verso, 1989).

[138]Etienne Balibar, "The Nation Form: History and Ideology," Review. XIII, 3 (1990): 349-359.

Within this articulation, West Coast Style is associated with an ethical way of life, embedded morals, and a style that resists passing fashions. This is the whole way of life to which Williams refers that recognizes and fosters conflict and resistance, but always in relation to institutions of state.

Within the framework of national identity, the debates between architects who practiced the machine aesthetic and those whose work was more organically informed are less diametrically opposed. This is apparent in a variety of architects' statements made in the mid to late 50s, conveying concern for a distinct architecture recognized locally, nationally and regionally. For the purposes of this argument, I will review articles written by Ron Thom and Frederick Lasserre--two architects with opposed modernist concerns.

In a 1955 Journal of the Royal Architecture Institute of Canada forum on the future of housing in Canada, Ron Thom explains his affinity for an organically based architecture of the type put forth by Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright's ideas came to Thom via Richard Neutra who made two influential visits to Vancouver. The first was in 1946, at which time Neutra claimed to have had a role in establishing the UBC

School of Architecture. In 1953 Neutra revisited Vancouver. One of his lectures was published in JRAIC.[139]

Neutra's work is crucial to the development of modern architecture on the West Coast. Neutra's work was a combination of influences ranging from the work of Adolf Loos and Otto Wagner, to the International Style, to the precepts of Wright and his own idiosyncratic adaptation of these influences to the California cultural landscape. In a speech he delivered in Vancouver, the terms of biological evolution and physiology were used to legitimate the sociological necessity of architects and architecture. Architecture could potentially serve as a form of preventive medicine that would both preserve and promote the cultural values of humanism. According to Neutra, it was crucial that architects find appropriate forms for the age in order to resist extinction.

As agents of prevention, architects had the ability to diagnose cultural ills while prescribing social cures. They were said to be equipped with artistic insight and intuition. Their understanding of the arts, sciences, and human nature provided them with the ability to facilitate individual self-awareness in relation to a well-planned environment. In the service of such a project, the architect

[139]Richard Neutra, "The Architect and the Community," JRAIC

relied on notions of proportion and relationship based on human interaction rather than the abstract and fixed forms of Euclidean geometry and the world of finance. After Wright and Schindler and true to his own humanist form, Neutra proposed that the architect's materials were man and space--a space defined by physics of movement, gravitational fields, air, light and electricity.

As sociologists, architects were to manage the stresses of the human condition, whereby humans have a need to gather in groups, and yet are unlike animals in that they are distinguished by a consciousness of their individualism. On the whole the architect's mission as Neutra asserted involved the far-sighted planning that could respond to the tensions produced between the individual and the community while mediating technological developments that outpaced the ability of humans to respond physiologically to change.

Although greatly influenced by Neutra, Thom's language was less mechanistic than that of Neutra, who discussed the organic as if it operated on the same causal principles as the machine. For Thom, house design is a personal expression, but one related to culture, site, tools, money, methods, materials and clients. This manifold stimulus, as he called it, produced forms that were indicative of the inseparablity of the personal and the universal. In a tone reminiscent of the Massey-Levesque report, Thom suggests

that it was necessary to see through the waste and confusion of modern life in order to surpass the detrimental effects of the manipulations of mass culture and bad planning. As a result, he stressed the need for escape and the necessity to return to the conditions of nature in order to attain spiritual and physical health. Thom wrote

> This state which can then result, of buildings that beautify the site instead of defacing it can only come about when the form has fulfilled to its ultimate the demands made upon it by the environment and the culture of the country--in short, when it is a successful realization of the entirety of things.[140]

The goal of domestic architecture, according to Thom, was to achieve mental peace and freedom from confusion in order to secure privacy and identity.

Lasserre's architectural aesthetic was aligned with the rational geometry of the International Style. Nevertheless, he, too, was concerned with context. In a 1958 Canadian Art article he defined the maturity of the region's architecture through a series of criteria.[141] A regional architecture was truly distinctive if sound creativity replaced eccentricity and experimentation, if there was evidence of the local, if

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[140]Ron Thom, "What's Next in Home Design?--A Symposium," JRAIC (July 1956): 250-2.

[141]Frederick Lasserre, "Keeping Pace with Architecture in Vancouver," Canadian Art (April 1958): 84-89.

humanistic content dominated technological achievement, and if buildings were related to their neighbours while accommodating a happy family. Lasserre contended that these qualities existed in varying degrees on the West Coast. Nevertheless, in Vancouver more than in any other city, there was a desire to make architecture a great humanistic experience.

Themes reminiscent of the Massey-Levesque Commission emerge in this article. For example, Lasserre notes that even though modern architecture in Vancouver had been influenced by American design, it had managed to avoid the clever, superficial, and rapid obsolescence of American innovations, especially the excesses and stunts of that nation's west coast. Moreover, immigrants to Canada had brought their cultures' wisdom and experience to the youthful exuberance of the city. A most significant contribution was the thoughtful, controlled approach to long range planning by British city planners.

In a 1960 issue of JRAIC, Lasserre announced sweeping changes to UBC's architecture curriculum.[142] He proposed that students were to receive a more liberal education prior to their professional training. This would allow them to achieve "greater maturity of thought and knowledge of human

[142]Frederick Lasserre, JRAIC (March 1960): 91.

values" necessary for combatting the forces of free enterprise that resulted in conformity, superficial originality and banal repetition. The manipulations of mass media such as glossy magazines resulted in irrational imitation. In a society based on built-in obsolescence and "hidden persuaders," the university, as Lasserre prescribed, had to establish counter persuaders, courses and experiences to more firmly instill human values against what he referred to as an avalanche of slogans.

The emphasis on humanist culture--its moral and ethical values, its social principles of harmony and democracy during this period were associated with the family--its home and educational institutions. Together, these element were to resist and mediate the otherwise unchecked growth of technology, capital, urban and industrial areas. Not only do these ideas about culture permeate high art and professional periodicals such as Canadian Art and JRAIC, but they were also predominantly illustrated in lifestyle magazines such as Western Homes and Living. In the pages of this magazine, artists and architects were featured as trendsetters and exemplary Canadians, yet in this role they, too, were modest and middle-class, with a flare for highlighting their homes with just the right artistic touches. They offered practical tips and inspiration in order to move magazine readers to do the same. Moreover, these articles proved that a creative few were able to practice what they prescribed. Through

mixing the objects of high culture with everyday life, the values of humanism could be widely distributed.

In one thematic framework, the homes of architects Ron Thom, Hal Semmons, and Douglas Simpson were all discussed in terms of how their functional plans could provide a space that would be creative, and efficient for their growing, large and active families.[143] Most importantly, the open plans and new domestic technologies would supposedly allow mothers to keep an eye on children without confining their activities.

The home of Hungarian-born and Danish-trained architect Zoltan Kiss exemplified a fresh approach to living (see figure 8). In an argument that paralleled Lasserre's, the Kiss home was thought to be the result of a West Coast openness where immigrants could contribute their old world knowledge and skills to the young, progressive and rapidly growing region.[144] The home of Zoltan Kiss, according to Western Homes and Living, was notable in a place that was quickly becoming the style centre of Canada--this was not an isolated and local phenomena, but rather a regional phase of world-wide growth. Moreover, the Kiss home was contemporary

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[143]"Experimental House Proves Versatility of Plywood Panel Construction," Western Homes and Living (February 1956): 11-14; "Casual Contemporary"Western Homes and Living (March 1956): 17-21; and "Big Enough for Seven," Western Homes and Living (May 1956): 18-21.

[144]"Architect Zoltan Kiss Shows a Fresh International Influence," Western Homes and Living (August 1956): 16-19.

and innovative because rather than employing only a single stylistic trend, it was able to sport elements from a variety of West Coast home types such as the post-and-beam, ranch-style and California bungalow. The Kiss family, and their home, were indicative of the internationality of a new West Coast, inhabited by new Canadians.

Local artist Jack Shadbolt, and jewelry designer, critic and curator Doris Shadbolt designed their home with the help of Jack's brother Douglas Shadbolt.[145] The distinguishing characteristics of their house derived from its simplicity and lack of pretension. It was a personal expression. It was practical, and free from costly items, elaborate design and any conscious attempt to create an artistic atmosphere. At the same time, the Shadbolts applied the artistic values of their work to enhance already existing natural and material forms as part of their desire to find beauty in unexpected places. As such, they chose a lot on Capital Hill, a little known area of town. The neutral backdrop of the dwelling's interior emphasized painting and sculpture--the creative things that for them were more permanent than their conventional possessions. Every object and space was purposeful, and functioned both emotionally and physically. The interior spaces and furnishings were flexible, fluid and capable of change. The house was designed around two French

[145]"A House is Something Personal," Western Homes and Living (October 1956): 11-15.

shed style studio spaces which were to facilitate the needs of this artistic couple intent on spending their time on creative work. As the article stated, this allowed the Shadbolts to avoid the labour of living.

The 1960 Western Homes and Living feature on the C.E. Pratt home provides the most intriguing shift in tone.[146] Here Thompson, Berwick and Pratt partner Ned Pratt's house was assessed, not for its architectural form, but for its maturity--evident in the home's luxurious interior design. Nevertheless, the discriminating decor was not merely a sign of the owners' whims and tastes because, as the article stressed, Ned and Bunny Pratt were creative people attuned to the times. Changes in the Pratt's home were assessed in relationship to the magazine's 1952 feature which focused on Pratt's exploration of new building technologies--especially those of prefabricated panels organized by post-and-beam construction into modular units. For contrast, the home's once austere and crisp interior was, by 1960, described as displaying a casual elegance typical of the time. The article added that no structural changes were made to the home. The interior was warm and elegant, inviting and comfortable. It was adorned with gold wall paper imported from China, black lacquered living room furniture, a settled

[146]"We re-visit a trend-setting home Improved by the Years," Western Homes and Living (August 1960): 22-25.

garden, overstuffed furniture, a Shadbolt painting, a Frank Lloyd Wright tile, and pottery from Mexico, Peru and Japan.

While modernist homes associated with West Coast Style provided suburban retreats for family living, they also designated spaces where values of liberal humanism and high culture were fostered and distributed on a popular scale. Creativity could flourish here free from the harsh realities of economic and political spheres. In part, this made way for home as an effective site of consumption and national identity because of its apparently depoliticized state. This space was necessary because the presence of high art outside the domestic sphere was regarded as being the purview of a cultural and more aristocratic elite, and high culture was viewed with either suspicion and anxiety, or as a hindrance to economic growth and social progress.

Lasserre's melancholic predictions that cultural distinction would rest upon changing interior fashions signalled the limits West Coast Style. Coupled with his foreboding statement about how instrumental values had permeated educational institutions, it seemed that by 1960 a post-and-beam home was no longer something that every family could own.

It is not until the late 60's, however, that Lasserre's lament crystallized into a coherent and assertive critique

of the alienating and inhumane elements of modernization emerging through discourses about housing and lifestyle. During this period, two dwelling forms--the coop and the condo--challenged the supremacy of the single-family dwelling. Condos were the purview of developers who saw them as more lucrative than detached homes while coops were a product of the socially concerned left and counter-cultural movements.

Both of these dwelling types are characterized by their medium densities and units of multiple dwelling. Most of all, their appearance in the city of Vancouver proper distinguished them from their suburban forerunners. The emergence of the condo and the coop have been linked to the policies and programs of the newly elected liberal regimes both civically and nationally, an NDP provincial government, a strong labour movement, and a maturing cultural scene. As David Ley explains, these developments were all part of an attempt to make the city more livable.[147] The failures of former governmental and planning regimes could be rectified by, as Jane Jacobs recommended, attending to the local and the needs of people who lived there.[148]

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[147]David Ley, "Cooperative Housing as a Moral Landscape: Re-examining 'The Postmodern City'," in place/culture/representation, 133-34.

[148]Ley, 133.

The emergence of the cooperative housing movement on the West Coast is well-represented by Donald Gutstein's 1975 publication Vancouver Ltd.[149] His expose was the culmination of research undertaken with students while teaching in the UBC School of Architecture in the early 1970s. The type of work presented in this publication provides an index of how things had changed at UBC since the days of Lasserre, when students had been trained to design homes and suburban amenities. During the late 60s and early 70s, UBC architecture students participated in happenings and protests, and went on survival trips where they learned the basics--building dwellings from what nature had to offer.

Gutstein's leftist analysis centred on Vancouver's downtown architectural landscape. He emphasized that the city's domination by skyscraper and mall complexes was physical evidence of a small, self-sustaining corporate elite of bankers, developers, commercial interests, and multi-national conglomerations who manipulated the landscape for profit--proving that current forms of social democracy were a ruse. The corporate elite's disregard for local life made the city no place to live for the average citizen. In uncovering corporate ties and their devastating effect on community life, Gutstein advocated politicizing everyday life through local, grassroots citizen and tenant rights

[149]Donald Gutstein, Vancouver Ltd. (Toronto: James Lorimer& Company, 1975).

groups who would critique the system while members could be organized and educated. In turn, such organizations would then be able to create alternative institutions such as finance and housing coops, thereby giving decision making powers to those whose everyday life was most affected.

Within such a movement, coops were to provide affordable, socially-mixed housing involving dwellers in every aspect of the process from advising architects of their needs, to choosing tenants, to daily maintenance. Tenant cooperation, and medium scale projects resisted the dehumanizing stigmas of large-scale public housing of the past. To reflect this philosophy, housing units were built around court yards lending an inward orientation that focused on the social life of the inhabitants (see figure 9).[150] Coops were street oriented and contained a variety of apartment designs. In addition, each coop's exterior was to indicate the specific character of its inhabitants in relationship to their neighbourhood, and the social identity of the coop members through the use of domestic and postmodern vernaculars. As such, facades could be categorized as postmodern, but because of the highly polemicized state of that discourse, Ley discovered that architects were reluctant to discuss their work in such terms. They, along with their clients,

[150]Mills, 161.

emphasized sound design and affordability when speaking of their coop's architecture.[151]

Until 1986, coops were supported by members' equity, cooperative financial institutions and government programs. At this time the conservative federal government cancelled its programs supporting cooperative principles. Social housing then became a public amenity tax levied on developers. As a result, tenants became only marginally involved in decision-making processes, design standards have been changed, and social housing is often not built because developers have other priorities.[152]

To complement Ley's analysis of coops, Caroline Mills examines the case of condominium development on the south shore of False Creek that began in the mid 70s. At first the False Creek condominiums, built in a neighbourhood formerly associated with counter-cultural dwellers, were undertaken only by a few daring and liberal-minded developers. They built distinctly postmodern forms, but ones that provided "a blue print for new relations between people and the built environment."[153]

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[151]Ley, 145.

[152]Ley, 148.

[153]Mills, 167.

With condominiums, West Coast living was no longer limited to its associations with leisure and domestic life that separated the single-family dwelling in the suburbs from work and the city. Above all, life in False Creek rejected suburbia, in favour of convenience, leisure, low domestic maintenance and proximity to work and urban amenities. With regard to the condominium's architectural form, the facade was highlighted over the plan suggesting that the domestic interior was no longer the primary feature of the home. The facades of these dwellings signified social and professional status unlike the modernist attempt to create a structural expression of authenticity and human universality. In contrast to coops, whose architecture emphasized communal life, by the mid 1980s condominium developers were primarily concerned with financial gain and were championed by neo-conservatives who regarded real estate development as a major source of revenue along with leisure and tourism industries.[154]

Housing cooperatives and condominiums have been assessed as an architectural reaction to moves made by modernists to separate the city and the place of living into separate functional zones. As I have sketched out, neo-conservatives regard the single family detached home and the social and state institutions that surround it as interventionist and a

[154]Mills, 164-65.

detriment to free enterprise. Affordable housing advocates assert that profit was being made at the expense of social well-being. In these two instances, West Coast Style comes to be associated with the extremes of political activism typical of this frontier. Both architectural forms, nevertheless, are manifestations of attempts to make the city more user-friendly and/or profitable.

To conclude, I will examine recent formations of West Coast Style in Yaletown, Vancouver's newest downtown residential development. Yaletown is the first phase of redevelopment on the Expo 86 lands by Concord Pacific and is a prototype for new downtown residential neighbourhoods (see figure 10).[155] The development is an amalgam of familiar and well received elements drawn from earlier versions of West Coast Style. There is an emphasis on planning, cultural amenities, citizen's involvement in decision-making, breath-taking views, and the region's landscape and climate. At the same time, new dwelling forms and articulations of regional and cultural functions are quickly becoming defining features of West Coast Style.

Yaletown has been billed as the first fibre optics community in Canada because all residences are wired for elaborate

[155]See Lance Berelowitz, "Yaletown on the Edge," The Canadian Architect (March 1995): 20-21; and "High Rise Aniety in Vancouver," The Canadian Architect (January 1992): 9-13 . See also "location, location, reputation," The Financial Post (Special Supplement January 1995).

telecommunication hook-ups allowing owners to do their shopping, banking and even conduct business deals from home. This high-tech neighbourhood is composed of clusters of small floor-plate high rises that either house one luxury unit per storey or are divided into studio suites. New high rises are flanked by a former warehouse district undergoing gentrification. Here, existing buildings are being converted for high-end retail, restaurants and bars, media and high-tech companies, art galleries, and a few artist live-work lofts. As a whole, the area is planned to cater to the lifestyle of investors and executives who may live in more than one city, and a highly mobile work force of service sector employees.

In Yaletown, real estate development is carefully planned and it is promoted as a place that has learned from the mistakes of other large-scale urban developments and associates real estate with lifestyle. This is an attempt to avoid unfavorable public opinion of the type surrounding modernist monoliths and neo-conservative mega-projects. Unlike the profit hungry, socially irresponsible, and culturally tasteless real estate developer of the past, Concord Pacific has planned its project to take place incrementally over the next twenty years allowing it to change and respond to the times. Each phase will be represented by a neighbourhood cluster, and within and among each area, distinctiveness will be realized through

different architectural designs. Coherence will be maintained by the use of a coordinated 'family' of materials and colours. Moreover, towers will align and accentuate the existing skyline and punctuate street ends.

At the same time, elements of suburban design such as curving traffic arteries and street-oriented facades, parks, sea walls, and community centres have been designed to create a distinct neighbourhood aura for each stage of the development. Unlike suburban neighbourhoods, boundaries between work and the home are less defined--in some cases the dwelling serves as both a work and living space. In other cases, it is merely a shelter for rest and refreshment that is close to work. Former domestic services such as eating, laundry and entertainment are located nearby, catering to local residents as well as upscale tourists, investors, and business from the city's newly burgeoning information and entertainment sectors. In conjunction with this new lifestyle, the downtown core has shifted from the corporate banking towers that Gutstein speaks about to an area called the culture zone where a new library, theatres, galleries, shopping, and sports arenas are located. As the anchor of Vancouver's recent growth-based strategy, culture is no longer only symbolic, but acquires an economically productive function.

Vancouver's strategy for economic and cultural development is outlined in a Vancouver Downtown Business Association's advertising supplement in a recent issue of the Financial Post: "location, location, reputation." In this supplement, Vancouver is characterized by its unique urbanity--it is celebrated as being both the Hollywood and Silicon Valley of the North. As the brochure states, the vibrant city centre is the result of cooperation between businesses, civic professionals and cultural groups dedicated to promoting the city and preserving the lifestyle that makes the city easy to sell. This is an alliance that would have been unfathomable a few years earlier. The brochure attributes these developments to a thriving "post resource-based economy" that caters to investors and a "knowledge-based sector." Within this constellation, the status of modernist architecture is refigured. It is designated as the city's heritage. Two modernist landmarks, the B.C. Hydro Building (see figure 11) and the old Vancouver Public Library, have been recently refurbished to cater to new, emerging lifestyles. For example, the B.C. Hydro building, designed by Ron Thom, has been turned into a condominium complex while the old public library, designed by Douglas Simpson and Hal Semmens, will soon be occupied by Planet Hollywood and Virgin Records. At the same time, suburban dwellings associated with postwar West Coast Style have become the subject of study and tourism.

Conclusion

Over the past fifty years, West Coast Style has been linked to a variety of lifestyles and geo-political delineations. The most recent manifestation of this lifestyle combines many familiar and functional elements drawn from earlier articulations of West Coast Style. Nevertheless, these recognizable elements are rearranged in new discursive frameworks that bolster Vancouver's cosmopolitan appeal with domestic amenities. The focus of attention is a new downtown core that is safe, clean, affordable, and accessible. Within its proximity, new business, culture and entertainment, domestic, and work spaces flourish and intermingle. The boundaries between formerly distinct spheres such as high culture, education, and commerce are dissolved, but only for those with cultural capital and material resources. The less than well off are characterized as unfashionable and expelled from the realm of stylish living. On the West Coast, cultural distinction appears as the dominant class politic.

Downtown living pays homage to a number of postwar modernist elements like community planning, culture and the occasional cantilevered structure--a distinguishing architectural feature of modernism. However, in the new downtown there are

few calls for universally expressive standards rooted in a postwar modernist way of life. Now, the principle organizing features stress flexibility, and mobility, unlike the functional principles of postwar rational planning. In the postwar form of social organization, the domestic and cultural spheres were separated and protected from the ills and inequities of economic production and accumulation, and decision-making processes of the public sphere.

Although it was apparent by the late fifties that the promises of a democratic and conflict free postwar society had not been realized, these failings were not widely disputed until the late 1960s. At this time, affordable housing and coop movements were organized by counter-cultural and left-leaning radicals seeking alternative ways of living. They attacked the exclusionary and moral imperatives of liberal lifestyles, the profit driven and socially irresponsible practices of real estate speculators and developers. Capitalist monopolies and the stifling dicta of the status quo prevented the realization of well designed homes and communities able to support a democratic way of life that was accessible to all and free of pressures to conform to consumerism and identify with the middle class.

As a reaction to both liberal and counter-cultural ways of life, neo-conservatives considered the welfare state to be excessive, and wasteful. Rather than achieving peace and

prosperity, it had only managed to create an unwieldy bureaucratic structure that discouraged individual achievement and needlessly hampered market conditions. In its place, neo-conservatives supported a style of living rooted in the values of 19th-century laissez faire capitalism and evolution based on the survival-of-the-fittest. Biologically determined hierarchies legitimated racial and class subordination, and a return to conservative family values. Ironically, while these moral and ethical principles were applied to the public sphere, they were dislodged from domestic arrangements. Dwelling forms were no longer positioned as protected reprieves. They were now a source of profit for real estate speculators and provided a space of rest and refreshment for mostly young urban professionals who lived alone or with a partner. Condominiums were located close to work, required little maintenance, leaving ample time for leisure outside the home.

The arrival of neo-conservatives, postmodern forms challenged the primacy of modernism on the West Coast. While counter-cultural elements sought radical alternatives to the status quo, their critiques centred on extending the promises of democratic humanism. Neo-conservative repositioned modernism as resistant and conventional. Operating from a conceptual framework similar to that of Raymond Williams, West Coast modernists' critique of

postmodernism was at first relevant, yet unsustainable because their terms and assumptions were unable to recognize and accurately analyze newly emergent geo-political arrangements and cultural institutions. In being unable to discern the then barely visible and unfamiliar signs of cultural change, modernist critiques resisted postmodernism, but remained ineffectual because of the inability to conceptualize more complex allegiances.

In the midst of this analytic impasse, certainties persist in polemically charged debates about style. Discussions of style provide a forum for the expression of likes and dislikes which avoid more pressing questions of institutional transformation. For example, in current debates, modernists dismiss postmodernists because they interpret the postmodern as eclectic, confused, and fragmented. Postmodernists characterize their own affinities as providing plural and open forms that avoid the rigid, reductive, and alienating standards of modernism. This current dispute is reminiscent of debates between regionalists and supporters of International Style modernism, and modernists who rejected the stylistic eclecticism of the Victorian period in the name of forging a distinct, coherent, and modern national identity.

Although the circumstances of these debates radically differ, their structures are parallel. Debates about taste,

in these cases, often fail to acknowledge the social, political and economic status attached to such tastes and their associated lifestyles. As the same time, a series of moral and ethical assumptions are embedded in discursive frameworks surrounding stylistic variation. Therefore, in analyzing debates about culture and style, it is important to recognize such recurring patterns in order to analyze how social change is articulated, rather than merely engaging in debates that function to deploy moral and aesthetic judgements that are often incommensurate with newly emerging or radically reconfigured orders and boundaries.

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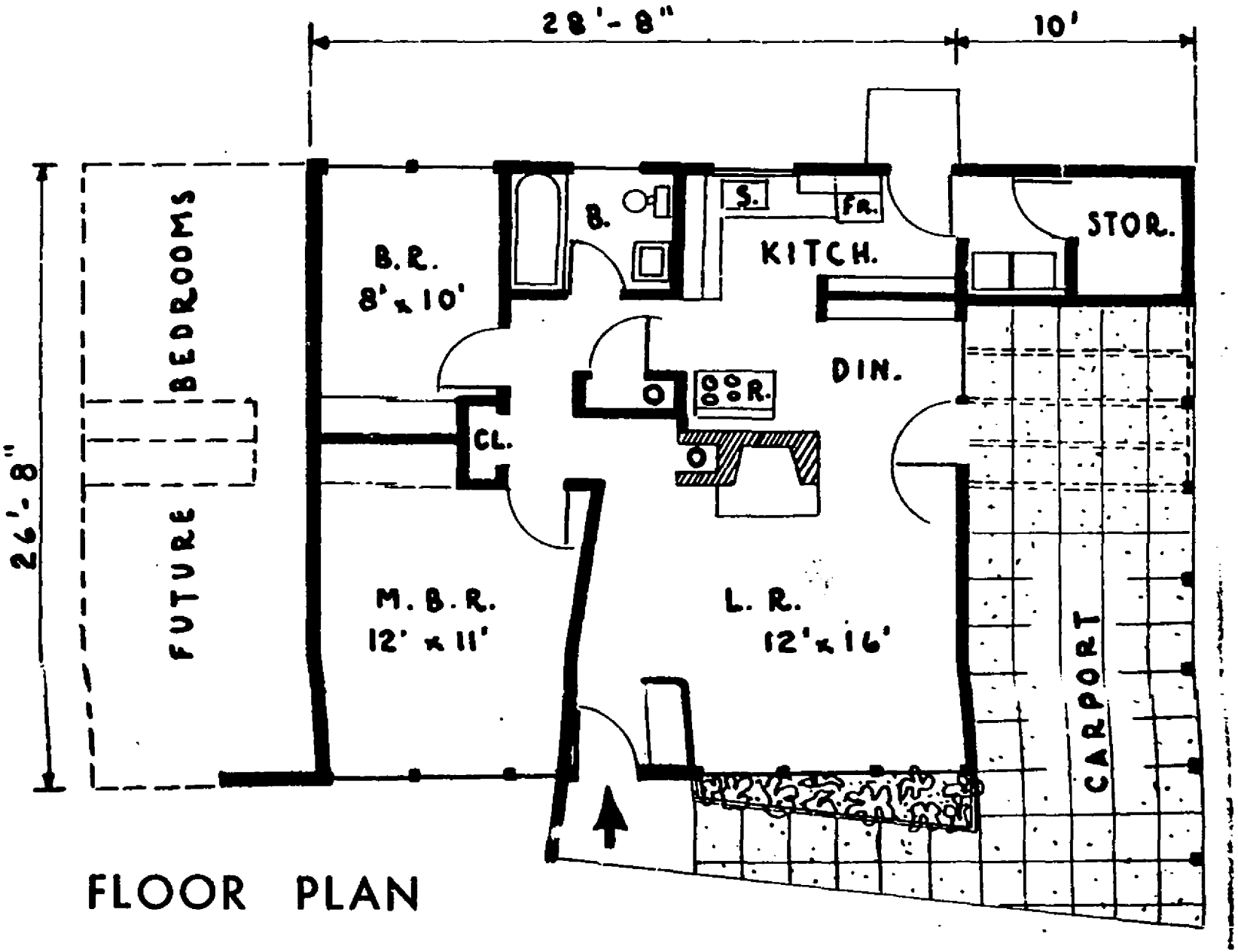
List of Illustrations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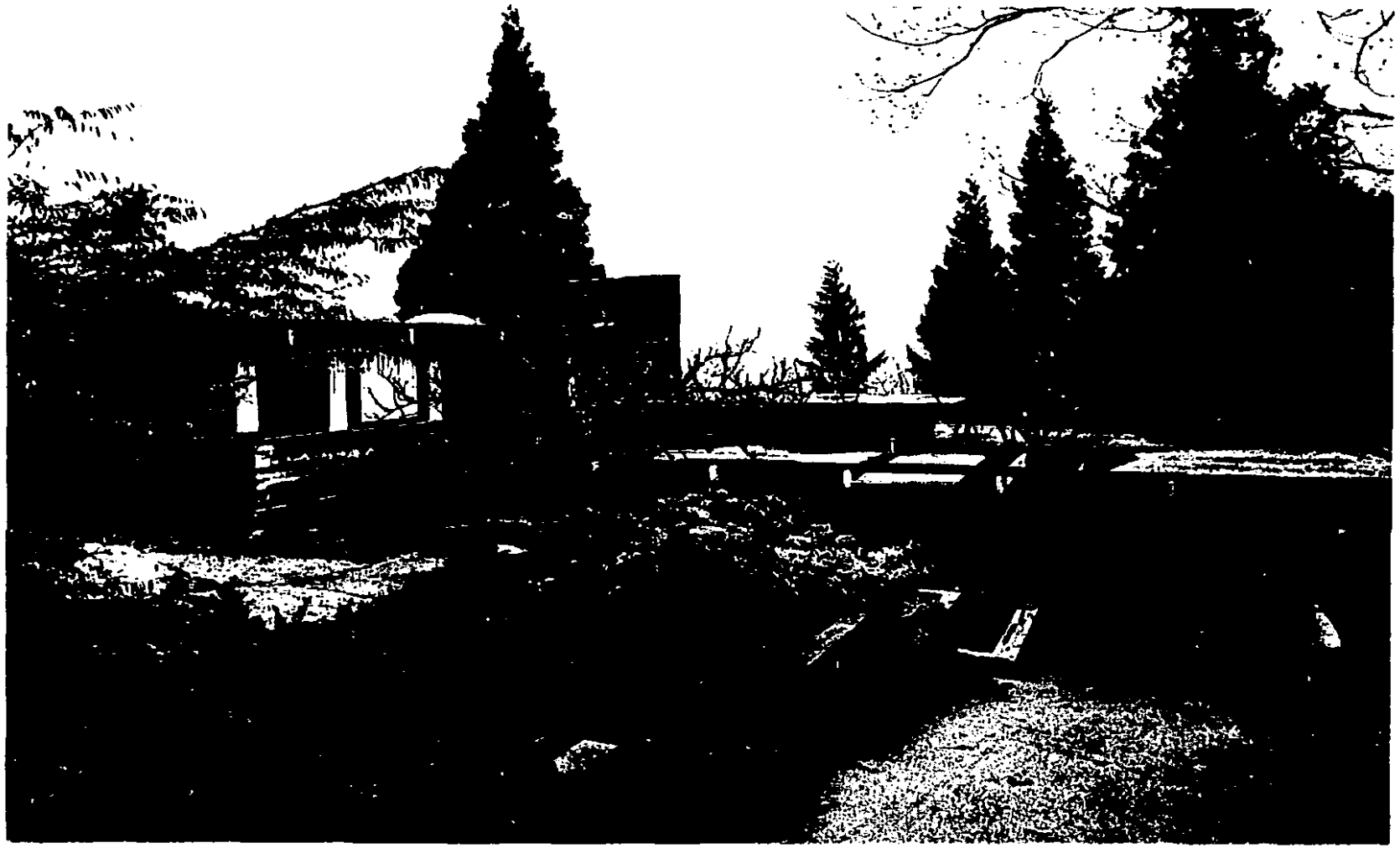

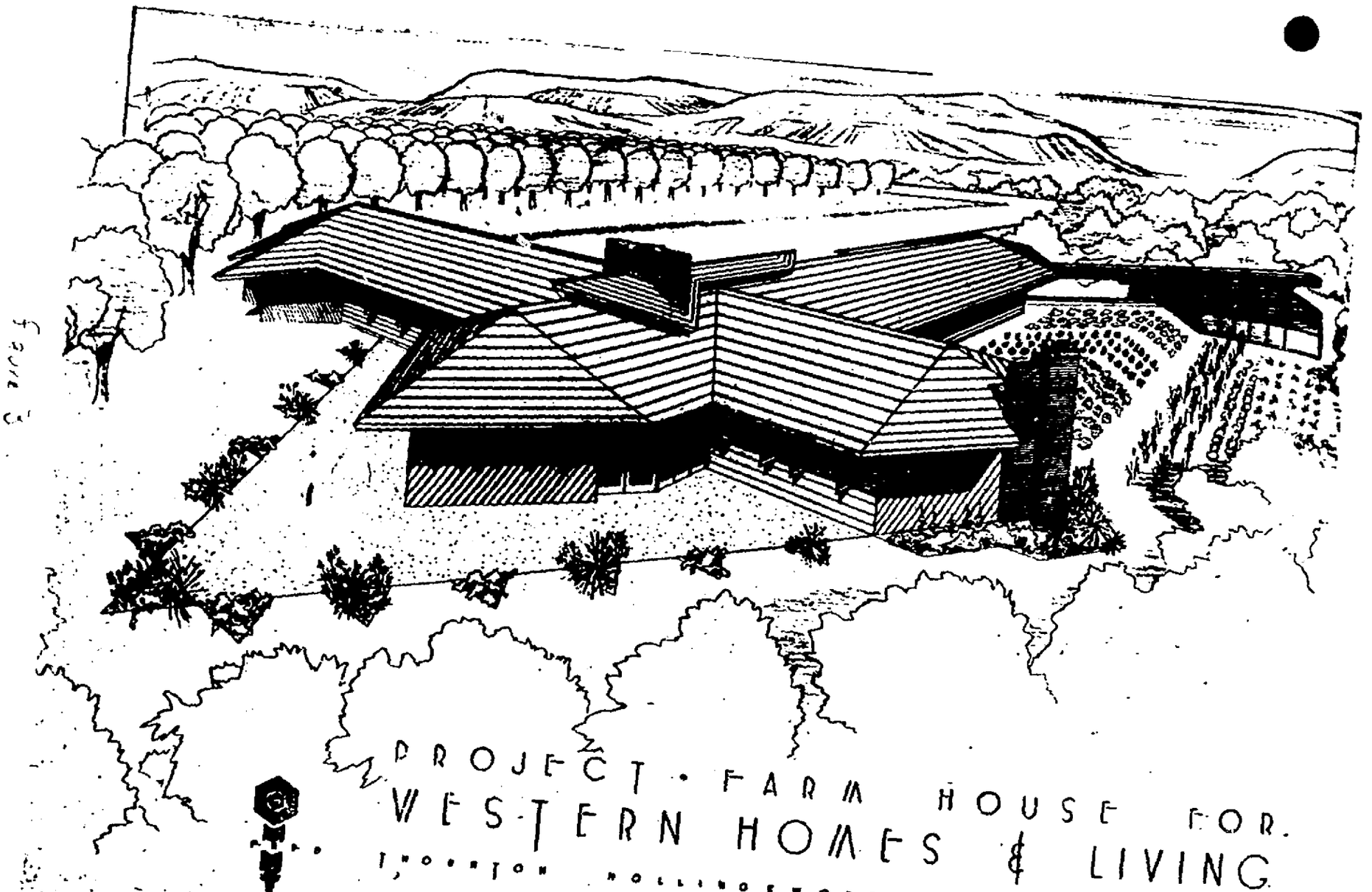
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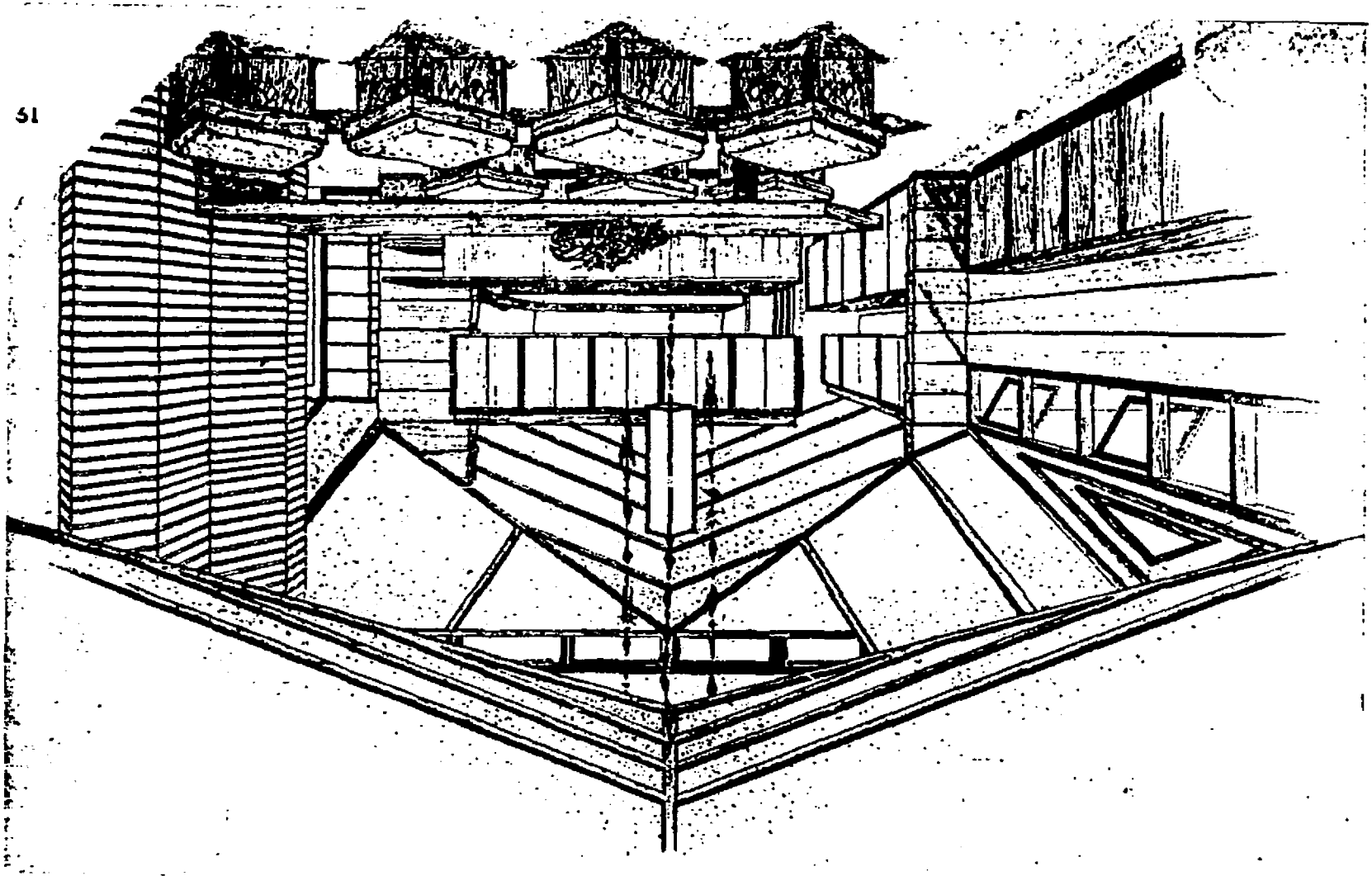

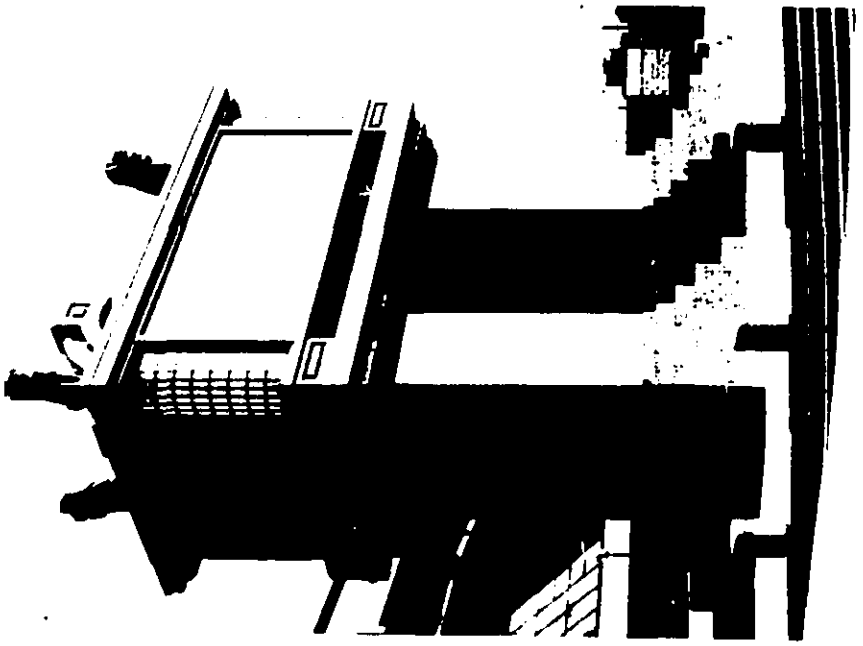

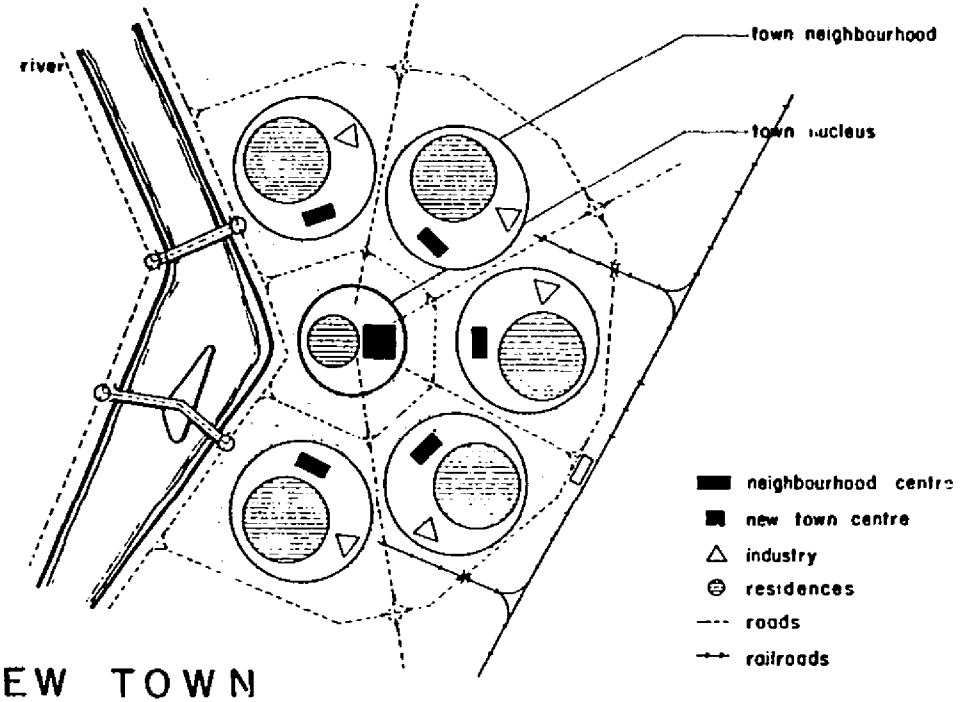

A NEW TOWN
a diagrammatic pattern of its components

ARCHITECT'S HOMES . . .