

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

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

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

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

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

Keywords: *Bay Region architecture; SFMA & MoMA exhibitions; Morley-Bauer-Mock connections; California and Eastern criticism; East Coast-West Coast cultural conflicts.*

SFMA AND THE EARLY PROMOTION OF BAY REGION ARCHITECTURE

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

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

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

herself to high-profile international programs such as the endeavor of constituting UNESCO.

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

The first great architectural exhibition held at SFMA was premiered on September 30, 1938.¹⁰ It was organized under the stewardship of the Northern California chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and was timed to coincide with its local convention in October.¹¹ The show, which was entirely devoted to Bay Area architecture and focused primarily upon single-family homes, began a series of formative architectural actions which would contribute decisively to the process of codification of Bay regionalism.¹²



Figure 1. Telesis's 1940 exhibition Space for Living installed at SFMA's South Gallery.

As Morley's priority was to make SFMA's architectural program an educational challenge,¹³ William Wurster, chairman of the exhibition, put local architect and graphic artist Ernest Born in charge of designing the show. Bringing Morley's vision to life, the public's curiosity was prompted by an itinerary along the walls of SFMA's North and West galleries, which were covered with a sequence of plywood panels laid out on a sawtooth plan. Yet, Born had to grapple with "strenuous resistance from the AIA,"¹⁴ and many of the participants, as he refused to privilege any individual. Instead, he decided to present the ensemble of the forty selected works in an unprecedented "systematic, uniform" manner.¹⁵ Born's enlightening and outstanding installation

not only promoted for the first time a clear image of the Bay Area as a coherent architectural region,¹⁶ but also set an exceedingly high design standard for future shows (Figure 2).¹⁷

Including this, Ernest Born put on three major architectural exhibitions at SFMA with tremendous popular and critical success. The second, Architecture Around San Francisco Bay (AASFB), came in the spring of 1941, being a prewar mirror of his third and most cited 1949 exhibition Domestic Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region (DASFBR), which would become a pivotal moment in the ideological debates on regionalism and modern architecture in America.

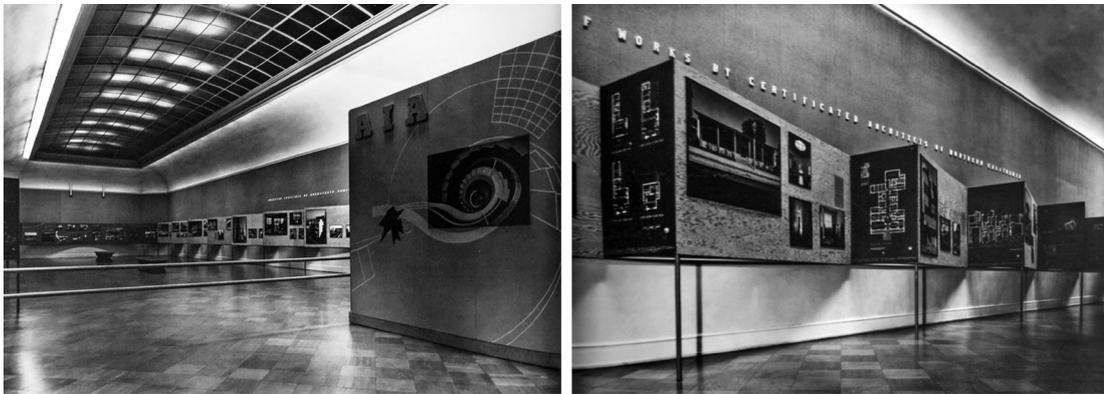


Figure 2. Installation views of 1938 AIA Exhibition of Northern California Licensed Architects. In this and subsequent SFMA's displays, Ernest Born collaborated with his wife, architectural photographer Esther Born. The primarily visual documentation of their exhibitions consisted of exceedingly handsome black and white pictures and floorplans completely redrawn to achieve the highest possible graphic coherence.

After an East Coast preview at the New York Architectural League,¹⁸ the 1941 show was mounted at SFMA to take full advantage of the AIA National Convention at nearby Yosemite National Park in May (Figure 3). Then, SFMA, along with local galleries such as Gump's San Francisco, joined forces to undertake a busy presentations and lectures program anticipating the full-scale AASFB exhibition in June. These events were extensively promoted to secure the presence of Bay Region architects both inside and outside SFMA's halls around the time visitors arrived in California for the conference, being enthusiastically received by both the professional press and shelter magazines.

As a leading cultural manager, Morley worked closely with architectural media, including the two most significant California-based magazines, *California Arts & Architecture* and *Architect and Engineer*.¹⁹ Morley's connections also facilitated the national coverage of SFMA's exhibitions in *Architectural Forum* and *AFA's Magazine of Art*,²⁰ which proved instrumental in the publicity of the region. Thus, it is possible to track down

the beginning of various systematically organized campaigns to promote Bay Region architects since, at least, the launching of SFMA's architecture exhibition program.²¹ From 1938 to 1941, in a series of Pencil Points articles,²² critic Talbot Hamlin conveyed his interest in the residential design of the Bay Region and applauded William Wurster and Gardner Dailey's "sincere simplicity."²³ Mumford's April 30, 1938 "Sky Line" piece indicates that, then, Wurster was already on his radar screen. In 1938, both Hamlin and Mumford independently agreed to the importance of the vigorous regional expressions that were "blowing" East Coast's "metropolitan pride."²⁴ This promotion was reinforced by the August 1938 Pencil Points issue devoted to Wurster as the titular head of San Francisco Bay's "soft" modernism.²⁵

Wurster's recognition increased after his marriage to prominent housing expert Catherine Bauer in 1940. Soon afterwards, a consistently maintained collaboration between *Life* and *Architectural Forum* boosted his public notoriety. In 1944, Wurster was appointed



Figure 3. Pencil Points May 1941 (left) and Architect and Engineer June 1941 (right) covers of the magazines' issues respectively devoted to the 1941 AIA National Convention and SFMA's Architecture Around San Francisco Bay show timed with the conference's major events. Pencil Points cover photo by Grace Morley's friend Ansel Adams. Architect and Engineer cover designed by Ernest Born.

Dean of Architecture at MIT which, along with Bauer and Morley's continuing contacts, secured his position on the editorial boards of various architectural journals like California Arts & Architecture, as well as his regular participation in architecture competitions, award juries and academic debates, where he exerted his influence. Furthermore, his close collaboration with the ideologically diverse scholars he hired to lecture at MIT—from Robert Woods Kennedy and Vernon DeMars to Henry-Russell Hitchcock—provided many opportunities for cultural exchange and East Coast exposure for the Bay Region.²⁶ In the wake of Wurster's celebrity, a

younger generation of San Francisco designers soon received increasingly growing media attention. Thus, Mario Corbett, Vernon DeMars and John Funk, among others, became the most published names of American editors who, at the end of the 1940s, were fully aware that "Bay Area architects were creating something out of the normal."²⁷

The 1941 AIA National Convention was also a seminal event in the historiography of modern architecture in California. Lewis Mumford's visit to San Francisco resulted in a personal tour with William and Catherine

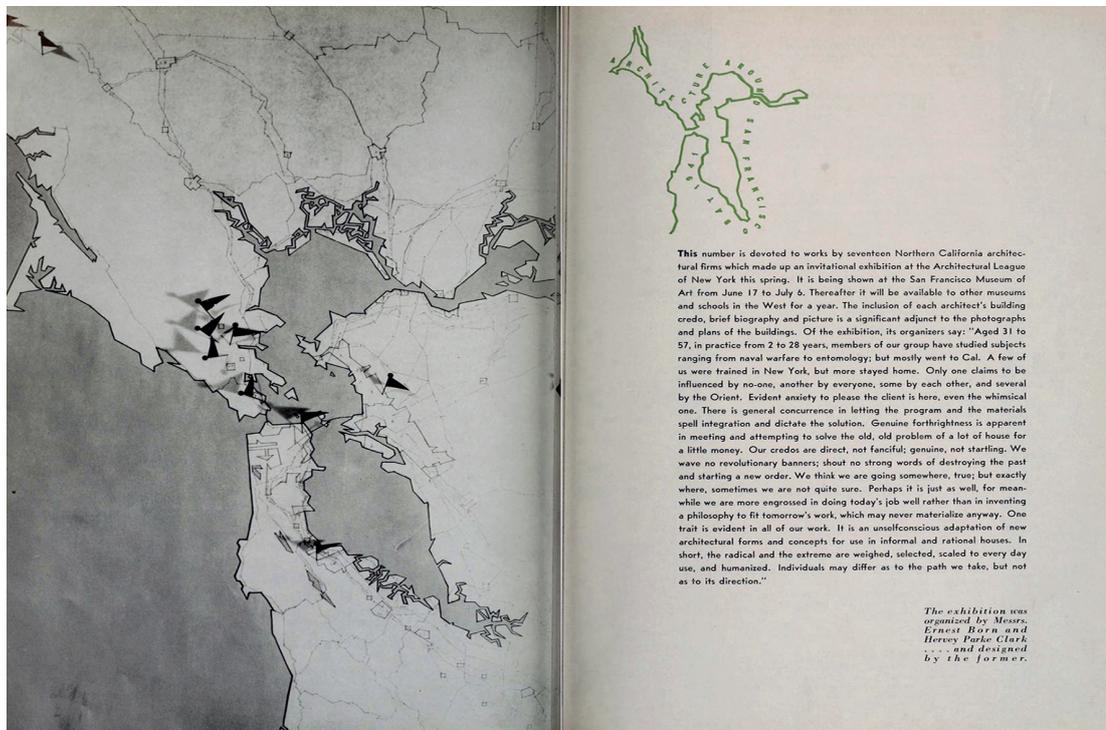


Figure 4. Ernest Born's presentation of the June 1941 issue of *Architect and Engineer* served as the Architecture Around San Francisco Bay exhibition catalogue.

Wurster –the critic's former lover and collaborator– from which emanated his fondness for Bay Region architecture. Coincidentally, the following year, Mumford would move to the Bay Area to teach at Stanford University (1942-44). Then, a number of local practitioners, such as Telesis members, recognized their fascination with Mumford's social criticism. In his turn, Mumford would interpret their work as an inspirational source to further elaborate his arguments defending an enduring Bay Region tradition of organic responses to time and place (Figure 4).

Unlike Mumford's first sight appreciation of the region's architecture, Hitchcock's early opinion of

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

original forms, seems either to have been arrested late or to have taken an unfortunate turning.²⁸ Contrary to Hitchcock, after his 1941-44 recognition of Northern California modernism, all but coincidentally,²⁹ Mumford recurrently praised Wurster's environmental adaptation as exemplary of the Bay Region tradition which,³⁰ in 1947, he would explicitly identify with the most eloquent, "free yet unobtrusive expression of the terrain, the climate and the life on the Coast."³¹

AUTONOMY AT STAKE: "WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO LEWIS MUMFORD?"

Lewis Mumford's famous October 11, 1947, New Yorker Sky Line column labelling San Francisco Bay Area domestic architecture as "Bay Region Style" fueled a national debate after he used the term to denounce what he considered the "sterile and abstract," "one-sided interpretation of function" of the International Style.³² Mumford's controversial essay not only expressed his disaffection with the mechanical and formalist version of modernism proposed by Hitchcock and Johnson at MoMA in 1932, but also criticized their insistence on the legitimacy of the International Style principles to evaluate contemporary architecture. Mumford believed that these principles "fostered a superficial attachment to the symbolism, rather than a deep understanding of the emancipatory possibilities of technology."³³ Instead, he proposed the domestic architecture of California's Bay Region, from Bernard Maybeck to William Wurster, as a model of a "native and humane form of modernism."³⁴ Mumford's excerpt from *The Sky Line* provoked such an angry response from the Eastern establishment that it prompted Johnson to host a symposium at MoMA to refute his criticism.

The event took place February 11, 1948, and was alarmingly entitled "What is Happening to Modern Architecture?"³⁵ Mumford's antagonists Alfred Barr and Henry-Russell Hitchcock profited from their position

as introductory speakers to aggressively undermine Mumford's arguments and exploited the word "style" in their own interests. Barr sarcastically dubbed Mumford's original "Bay Region Style" as "Cottage Style," presenting it as a less serious, provincial version of the International Style. The term was also bandied about by other speakers who used it dismissively to underline that it was merely restricted to the field of residential architecture.³⁶ Furthermore, as Gail Fenske has observed,³⁷ instead of focusing on the main cultural implications of Mumford's proposal, Barr and Hitchcock influenced the views of subsequent panelists, "nineteen highly opinionated colleagues,"³⁸ such as Walter Gropius, George Nelson, Marcel Breuer, Peter Blake or Frederick Gutheim, who charted ancillary lines of discussion through related cotemporary debates concerning monumentality, functionalism and style, which diffused the argument's force and clarity. Hence, unfortunately, Mumford's challenge "never received the level of debate it deserved."³⁹

The ensuing dispute between Mumford and Hitchcock over their dissimilar understanding of "Bay Region Style" is representative of their two fundamentally opposed visions of modern architecture. Contrary to Hitchcock's analysis based on methods of connoisseurship and from the history of art he learned at Harvard,⁴⁰ Mumford's interpretation of the architecture produced around San Francisco Bay emerged from a wider conceptual frame considering the built environment as interdependent with its natural surroundings and its urban and socio-cultural context. Mumford and Hitchcock's confrontation at the 1948 symposium, Fenske explains, was so impassioned for the reason that Mumford could not accept Hitchcock's methodology of evaluating buildings on the basis of formal criteria, whereas Hitchcock was unable to appreciate Mumford's complex approach to architecture, which was deeply rooted in the "ecological and social orientation of Patrick Geddes."⁴¹

Fenske's thoughtful examination of the 1948 symposium, however, overlooked Philip Johnson's role as the ongoing debate instigator.⁴² Peter Blake's autobiographical account *No Place Like Utopia* intimates that Johnson, who had taken Mumford's comments as an attack,⁴³ orchestrated carefully the event to refute Mumford's opinions in *The Sky Line*. Hitchcock's 1948 correspondence with MoMA provides corroboration of Blake's statement.⁴⁴ Similarly, the Breuer-Johnson communication during the planning of the symposium discussing how to rebut "Lewis Mumford's *Isms*" also indicates that Johnson was stacking the deck against Mumford at the time MoMA was simultaneously preparing a retrospective of Breuer's work.⁴⁵ In fact, Johnson's strategy to neutralize Mumford was twofold: first, he assigned his antagonist the role of moderator, which minimized Mumford's possibilities of defending his arguments; secondly, upon arrival at the Museum, a number of Mumford's opponents were given in advance Barr and Hitchcock's written comments,⁴⁶ evidencing Johnson's interest in controlling how the discussion could possibly unfold.⁴⁷

Upon his return to MoMA after the war, Johnson's change of mind regarding Bay Region architecture seems evident. For instance, in "Architecture in 1941," an unpublished article written in 1942, Johnson had appreciative comments on California's wood construction. He praised DeMars's Farm Security Administration housing complexes and mentioned Wurster's large-scale defense project in Vallejo as examples of site prefabrication. Yet, in 1947, within the coast-to-coast saturation of Bay Region architecture's press coverage, Mumford's *New Yorker* article must have been the straw that broke the proverbial camel's back and therefore perceived by Johnson as a threat to the goals of his new programs at MoMA.⁴⁸

After the 1948 symposium, Harvard University GSD Bulletin reported the event under the sardonic title "What has Happened to Lewis Mumford?" The article,

which was biased against Mumford's "attack on the modernist" reveals the divergent stances on the issue taken by the two faculties in Cambridge. Whereas MIT backed Dean Wurster, Harvard adopted MoMA's discourse, being summarized in the GSD review: "Mr. Mumford's claim that the Bay Region Style was a new form of architecture is incorrect and it should be judged as a regional expression of the modern movement."⁴⁹

As Pierluigi Serraino affirms, San Francisco Bay's "romantic blend of natural beauty and cultural legitimacy,"⁵⁰ was identified by Mumford's followers as an oasis of national values owing no debts to European modernism. Conversely, to his adversaries, the "Bay Region Style" was merely an instrumental myth to express their overly provincial discomfort with the growing presence of foreign architecture in the United States. To compound matters, despite the fact that the national recognition of Bay Region architecture was then firmly established by articles and exhibitions, its acceptance as an articulated phenomenon was questioned by both its detractors and supporters, including its practitioners. Having reached no conclusion during the meeting, the 1948 symposium at MoMA had the dichotomous effect of pigeonholing San Francisco Bay architects into a "Style,"⁵¹ of which none of its protagonists agreed they were consciously a part.⁵²

The main battle lines had apparently been drawn following the 1948 symposium and the dispute between enthusiasts and opponents of Mumford's arguments played themselves out on the pages of the most reputed architectural journals of the country, principally in *Progressive Architecture*. In its April 1948 post-symposium issue, Thomas Creighton published an editorial under the form of a letter to Philip Johnson expressing his support of Mumford's criticism.⁵³ Correspondingly, in December 1948 Creighton published a highly Wurster-sympathetic editorial entitled "Architecture: Not Style,"⁵⁴ which resulted in incendiary responses speaking volumes



Figure 5. Ernest Born's original installation of the 1949 exhibition Domestic Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region, at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

about how aggressively and differently the interpretations of Mumford's standpoint were received.⁵⁵

1949, A LANDMARK SHOW

Early in 1949, making the most of the stir caused by the previous year's symposium,⁵⁶ the core group of Bay Region architects and editors, led by Ernest Born, agreed to collaborate on the organization, funding and advertising of a new major exhibition at SFMA,⁵⁷ which

was tellingly named Domestic Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region. The show, which garnered the support of the local AIA chapters, was on display from September 16 through November 6, 1949. All the structures exhibited, except for a small apartment building in San Francisco, were single family residences, being most of them built after the war.⁵⁸ The installation design was once more entrusted to Born who provided the exhibition with the accustomed conceptual clarity and expressive dynamism (Figure 5).

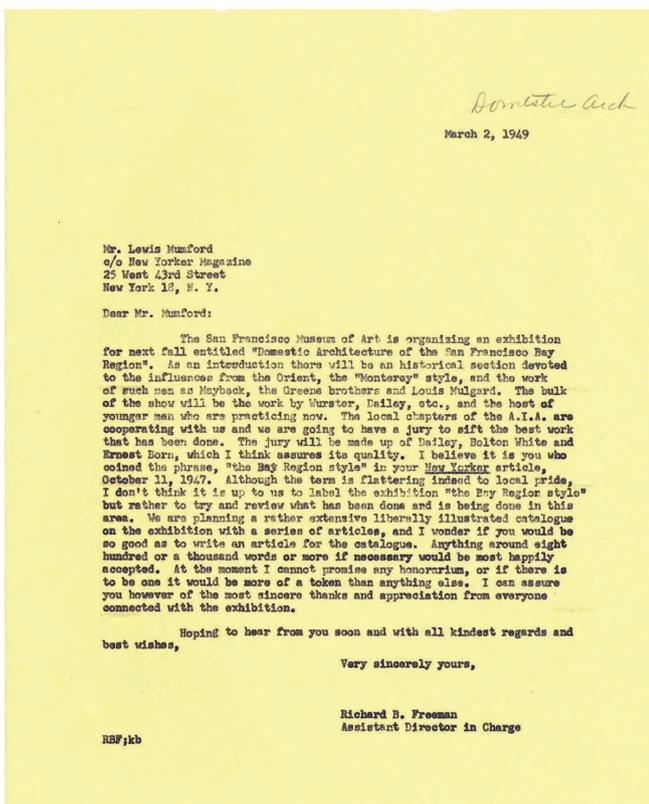


Figure 6. SFMA Assistant Director Richard Freeman's March 2, 1949 letter inviting Lewis Mumford to contribute an essay to *Domestic Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region* exhibition catalogue. This is the earliest correspondence concerning the show, which evidences its organizers' rush to contact Mumford.

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

Richard Freeman prefaced the book,⁵⁹ highlighting the leitmotif of the catalogue: local architects won international recognition for "the imaginative way in which they had met the problems of site, climate, materials and client requirements,"⁶⁰ being the reason why Bay Region architecture was monopolizing the pages of every magazine. Wurster also contributed an evocative essay recalling the virtues of the informal California lifestyle, the freedom, audaciousness and the pleasure felt in the anonymous Bay Area houses.

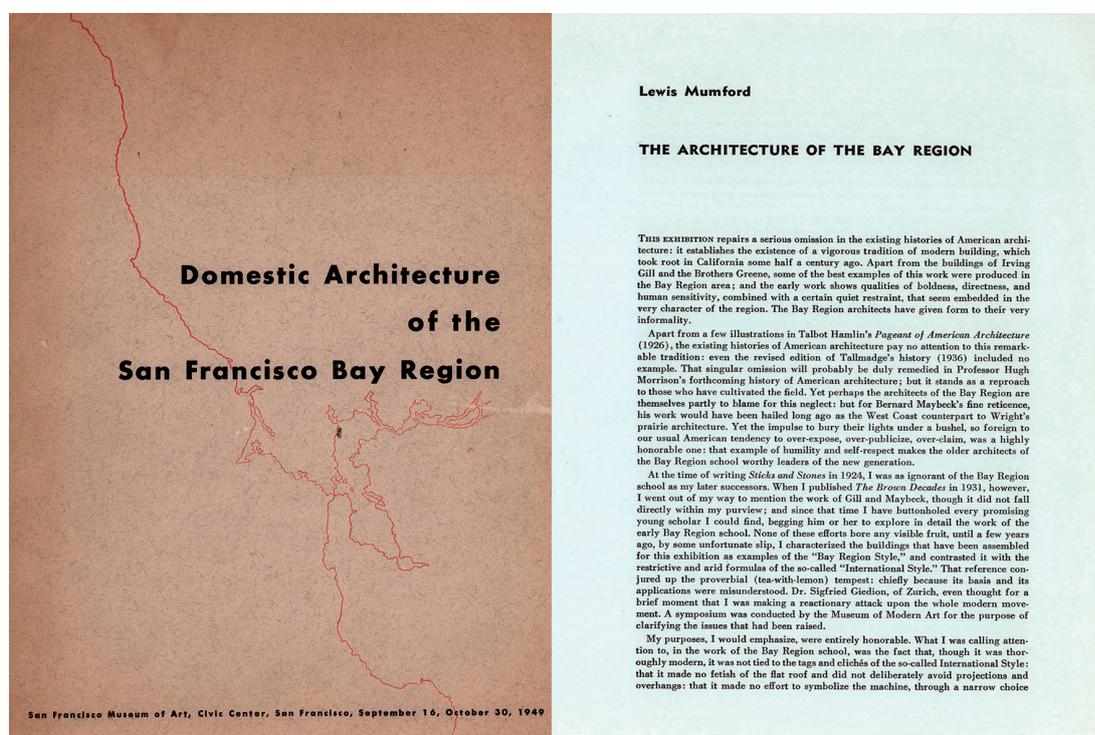


Figure 7. Ernest Born's design for the cover of 1949 DASFBF exhibition catalogue (left) and Lewis Mumford's essay first page (right).

Lewis Mumford's "The Architecture of the Bay Region" was the catalogue's most significant contribution. In his essay, Mumford reframed and clarified the ideas put across in his New Yorker column. Reemphasizing his discourse at MoMA,⁶¹ he celebrated the individualism of West Coast architects stating that their common ground was their sensitivity towards the environment which, again, he opposed to the "restricted and arid formulas of the so-called International Style."⁶² Mumford called historians and critics for proper study and recognition of what he more accurately renamed as "Bay Region School," an all-inclusive designation rectifying his former use of the word "style,"

which he lamented as an "unfortunate slip."⁶³ Quintessentially Mumford's, his essay revealed the work of the lucid and progressive thinker he was: "The main problem of architecture today is to reconcile the universal and the regional, the mechanical and the human, the cosmopolitan and the indigenous [...] Bay Region both belongs to the region and transcends the region: it embraces the machine and it transcends the machine. It does not ignore particular needs, customs, conditions, but translates them into the common form of our civilization."⁶⁴



Figure 8. Architectural Record, Western Section, an architectural guide to Domestic Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region, published in September 1949.

Elizabeth Thompson, whose participation in the catalogue explored the historical roots of the Bay Region School, was the brains behind the exhibition's national publicity campaign. As Architectural Record West Coast editor, Thompson had a vested interest in her close group of Bay Region architects. The intense editorial activity performed by Thomson during the months DASFBP was under preparation speaks volumes about her magazine's effort to take advantage of the debates following MoMA's 1948 symposium.⁶⁵ Coupling this promotion with DASFBP's production, Architectural Record released several pieces

documenting the show (Figure 8). First, in its May 1949 issue; then, in September, perfectly timed to coincide with DASFBP's opening, an exhibition guide and a richly illustrated presentation of the show for which Born himself designed the layout.⁶⁶ Finally, Architectural Record along with Architectural Forum and Life published different monographs on individual houses in the exhibition. Paradoxically, Arts & Architecture, which until then had been actively supporting SFMA's activities deliberately did not mention the 1949 event. Instead, in its September issue, Entenza preferred to include an article by Edgar Kaufmann revealingly named

"What is Happening to Modern Architecture," which tried a compromising formula. Entenza's interest in approaching Philip Johnson's circles might be a plausible explanation for his palpable change of editorial direction after Johnson's return to MoMA.

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

A DECADE OF SFMA-MOMA COLLABORATIONS

The 1949 show at SFMA coincided with the culmination of nearly a decade of cooperation between the country's two main museums, being primarily the result of a crescendo of interlocked advertising and publicity of Bay Region modernism. Grace Morley's prominent role in the American Federation of Arts, as well as her lobbying effort to secure a Western circuit for shows coming from the East, primarily explained her close collaboration with

MoMA, beginning as early as 1937.⁷¹ Morley's familiar relationship with Alfred Barr, and later with Elizabeth Mock via her sister Catherine Bauer and brother-in-law William Wurster, facilitated a number of noteworthy traveling exhibitions borrowed from MoMA,⁷² which naturally fit into her architectural programs. Mock's correspondence reveals that she was collaborating with both her sister and Grace Morley,⁷³ at least since her arrival at MoMA in 1938.⁷⁴ This unexplored triangle of intertwined personal lives and professional alliances would explain the vigorous circulation of exhibitions between the two museums during Mock's curatorship at MoMA (1938-1946),⁷⁵ which ensured the cultural exchange of progressive ideas regarding modern planning, public housing, wartime emergencies and, of course, their 1940s regionalist agenda (Figure 9).⁷⁶

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



Figure 9. Grace Morley's introduction to SFMA's 1942 exhibition *Western Living* in the *March* issue of *California Arts & Architecture*, which was conceived as its unofficial catalogue. The show traveled to MoMA in 1943, being presented as *Five California Houses*.

of Bay Region architecture in the most significant MoMA-produced shows encompassing the 1949 exhibition during and after Mock's curatorship: *Built in USA: 1932-1944 (1944)* and *Built in USA: Post-war Architecture (1953)*.

Elizabeth Mock's discourse was detailed in her major show *Built in USA: 1932-1944*. Although she aimed to educate the public in the acceptance of a wide range of different interpretations of modernism, Mock particularly stressed the importance of Northern California contributions,⁸¹ which, due to her sister's

guidance, were presented through cases of affordable homes for working families, urban facilities and rural community planning projects by William Wurster and Telesis members Vernon DeMars and Garret Eckbo, evidencing at MoMA the utmost concern of the Bay Region School.⁸² Anticipating Mumford's arguments and stressing the ideas she had put forward in one of her most popular exhibitions, *Regional Building in the United States (1941)*, Mock's introduction to *Built in USA's* accompanying catalogue insisted on the fact that,⁸³ since 1932, modern architecture had entered a process of humanization. Her message was that

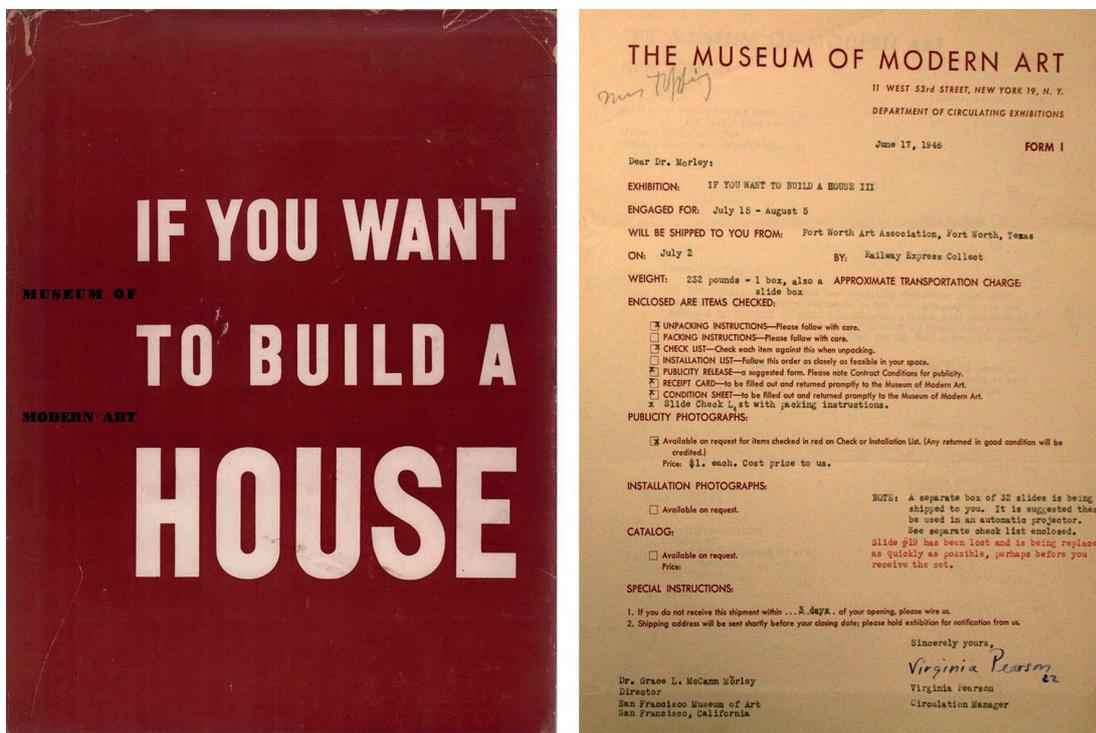


Figure 10. Left: Cover of E. Mock's 1946 book of her teaching show *If You Want to Build a House* also exhibited at SFMA. Right: MoMA-SFMA's agreement to the terms and conditions of the exhibition.

Americans had learned to adapt the modernist idiom with local materials, natural forms and the appropriate floor plans and building solutions for living in the different climates of the country. All but coincidentally, she illustrated her point with Wurster's work, which she presented as an example of "flexible native style which could go over into modern architecture without any serious break."⁸⁴

The second *Built in USA* show, subtitled *Post-war Architecture*, was mounted in January 1953 to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of MoMA's Architecture

Department. This retrospective was curated by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Arthur Drexler under Philip Johnson's tutelage. Unlike Mock's exhibition, *Built in USA: Post-war Architecture* focused more on corporate buildings and private residences than on urban planning and public housing. Moreover, its domestic section deliberately turned its back on Bay Region architecture, which was reduced to a couple of minor examples (Figure 12), being Southern California homes mainly explained through the industrial paradigm of the Case Study House Program.

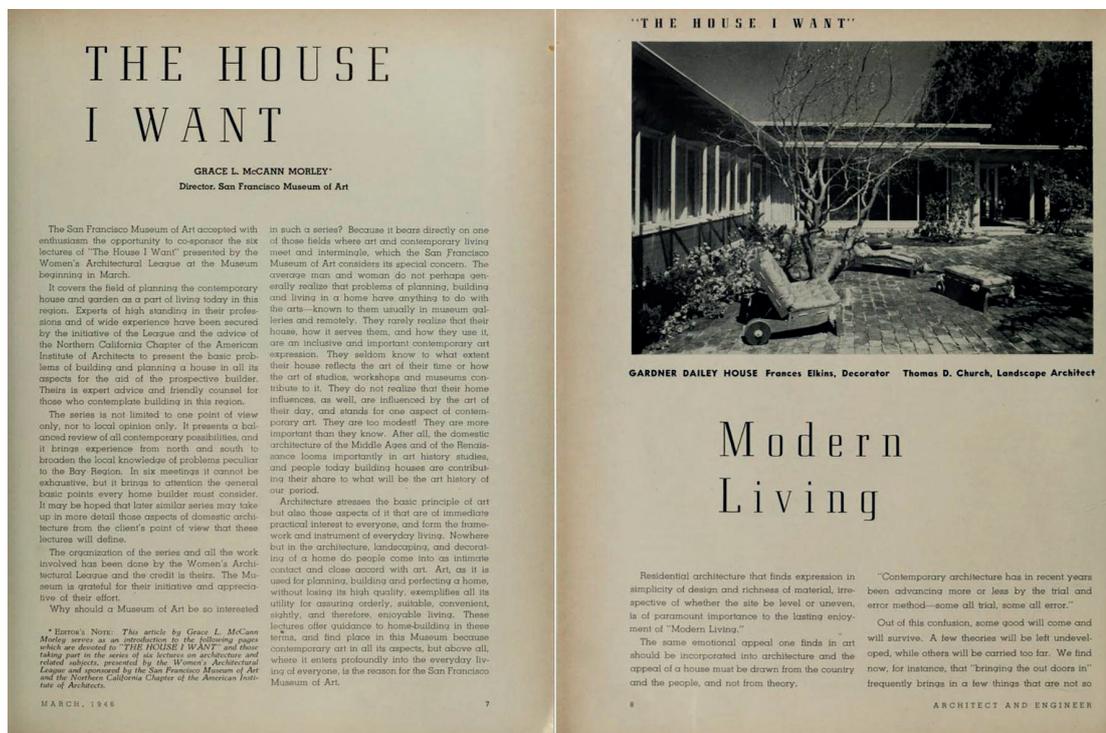


Figure 11. Pages from the March 1946 issue of *Architect and Engineer* featuring Grace Morley's *The House I Want* program at SFMA inspired by Mock's aforementioned *If You Want to Build a House*.

After a decade-long series of events devoted to introduce MoMA's public to regional planning and building, Philip Johnson's triumphal preface implicitly claimed that there was no other possible architectural present in America but an evolution from the International Style. Johnson alleged that his arguments were founded on Hitchcock's analysis and double selection criteria: "quality and significance of the moment."⁸⁵ Oddly, Wurster was not even mentioned in the catalogue despite being one of the authors most clearly identified with the major architectural debates of the time. As a first deduction, this appeared to be a logical consequence of Johnson's interest in securing his

viewpoint. However, the question was more complicated. During the preparation of *Built in USA: Post-war Architecture*, Hitchcock's relation with both Catherine and William Wurster was very fluent, if not familiar as their 1951-1952 correspondence reveals.⁸⁶ Wurster likely declined to participate in the show as he was devoted to the task of organising UC Berkeley Architecture School—for which he commissioned Hitchcock a report on its Library. Besides, the majority of the members of the exhibition advisory committee were sympathetic to Wurster, such as Creighton, Hamlin and Mock. Wurster's MIT faculty members Vernon DeMars, Carl Koch, and Robert Woods Kennedy had a project in

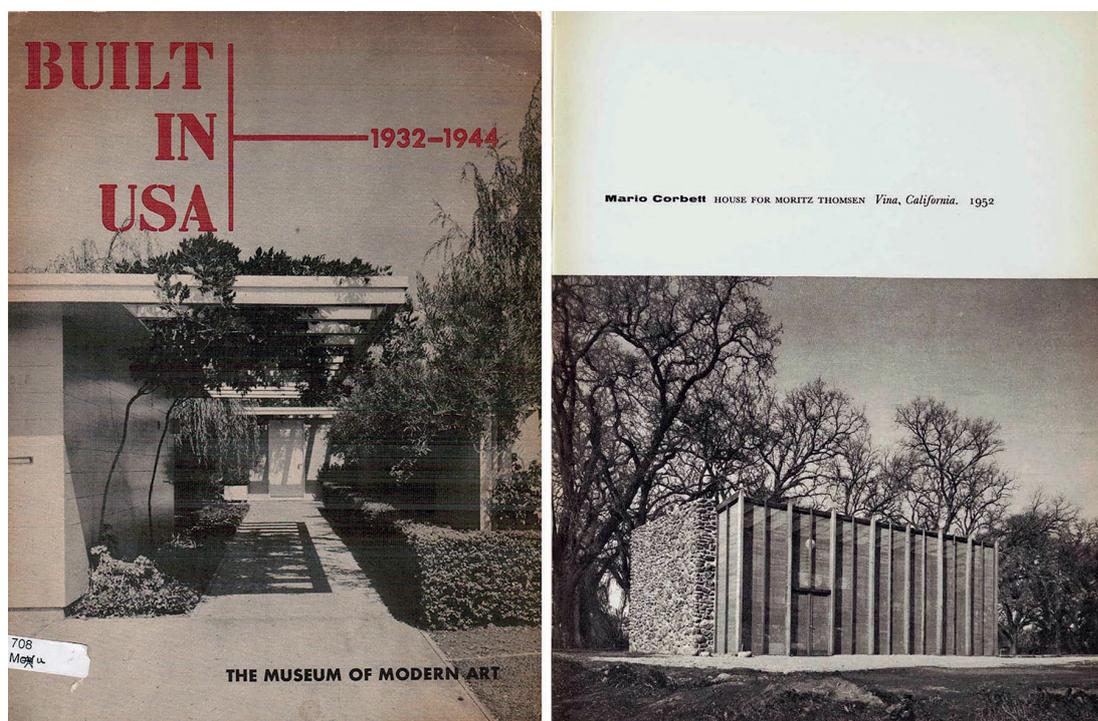


Figure 12. Left: Cover of Elizabeth Mock's 1944 Built in USA: 1932-1944 exhibition catalogue featuring John Funk's Heckendorf House. Right: Page from Hitchcock's and Drexler's 1952 Built in USA: Postwar Architecture catalogue featuring Mario Corbett's Moritz House as the only example of Bay Region's residential architecture in the book.

the show; Aalto's Baker House commissioned under Wurster's MIT tenure was included; and his successor Pietro Belluschi had his work conspicuously exhibited. Notwithstanding his absence from the catalogue, as a figure of national stature and influence, Wurster's fingerprints were all over the second Built in USA show.

Always less polemical than Johnson, Hitchcock's consideration of Bay Region architecture was problematic. Due to his strict formal criteria he had serious reservations about the domestic tradition of San Francisco Bay. Yet, Hitchcock's interest in obtaining the 1949 exhibition indicates his curiosity about its contributions.

Indeed, except for the occasions in which the critic collaborated closely with Johnson (such as in the 1948 symposium or the 1953 show), Hitchcock's stance vis-à-vis Wurster was ambivalent. Also, it is possible to ascertain ways through which the two Bauer sisters influenced Hitchcock's vision of California. They planted seeds for the production of *In the Nature of Materials, 1887-1941: The Buildings of Frank Lloyd Wright in conjunction with the 1940-41 MoMA exhibition Frank Lloyd Wright, American Architect*. Bauer had collaborated with Hitchcock and Mumford in the 1932 MoMA show and, again, on the 1937 *Modern Architecture in England* book and exhibition. Hitchcock's inevitable

mellowing as the impact of the International Style faded is evident in "The International Style Twenty Years After," his article finally accepting Wurster's architecture, which was published in the August 1951 issue of *Architectural Record*. It predicted Hitchcock's continuum referencing to the death of the International Style in his 1965 introduction to the 1966 edition of *International Style*, as well as his apologetic introduction to David Gerhard's 1971 survey on Schindler. Correspondingly, Hitchcock's chairing the series of three *Modern Architecture Symposia* at Columbia University in the 1960s and inviting to it both Catherine Bauer and Elizabeth Mock—who, again, questioned the International Style's contributions to the development of American modernism—⁸⁷ can be interpreted as another attempt to reassess his own 1930s-1940s preconceptions.

CONCLUSIONS

Although many studies have acknowledged the historical importance of the ideological debates surrounding the 1949 exhibition *Domestic Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region*, no survey has yet further examined the circumstances and decisions linking the show and its strategically planned venues to West Coast architecture's promotional campaigns that had begun more than a decade before Lewis Mumford wrote his renowned 1947 *New Yorker* piece raising the issue of a "Bay Region Style," which he presented as an alternative to the International Style. As this essay tries to demonstrate, previous displays at the San Francisco Museum of Art in collaboration with popular department stores and local press, such as the 1938 and 1941 exhibitions, prove that the 1949 show mounted after the previous year's symposium at MoMA was not an isolated event. Rather, it was another milestone in the series of well-orchestrated actions that, under the directorship of Grace Morley, had been developed by active groups of San Francisco-based architects

counting on the support the American Federation of Arts, the AIA and several editorial hubs that sponsored the cause of Bay Region architecture throughout the country years before regionalism became a nexus of national debates. Leading Eastern architects, scholars and editors' early experience to Northern California architecture through William Wurster, Catherine Bauer, Ernest Born and their Bay Region colleagues, as well as the continuum of 1940s MoMA-SFMA exchanges, and their New York Architectural League connections, approximately coincided with Mumford teaching at Stanford and with the rise and fall of the curatorship of Elizabeth Mock assisted by the connections of her sister. All these situations would coalesce into Mumford's recognition and support of a distinctive Bay Region sensitivity which, coupling with the process of codification articulated through the combined effort of exhibitions programs, media coverage and public discussion, had the effect of establishing for San Francisco Bay's domestic tradition a room in the pantheon of architectural history.

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the help of Jennifer Tobias, librarian at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, whose insightful comments and exchanges on Elizabeth Mock have been of the greatest importance to this research.

Notes and References

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

² Kara Kirk, "Grace McCann Morley and the Modern Museum," in San Francisco Museum of Modern Art: 75 Years of Looking Forward, ed. Janet Bishop, Corey Keller, and Sarah Roberts (San Francisco: SFMOMA, 2009), 71.

³ Such as the work of her friends Edward and Brett Weston, Ansel Adams, Imogen Cunningham, Dorothea Lange, Minor White and many others.

⁴ Morley was also ahead of her time when she made the decision of keeping SFMA open until ten in the evening on weekday nights and also organized late-night events, which allowed attendance by those busy in the daytime. See Grace L. M. Morley, *Artists, Museums and the San Francisco Museum of Art*. Interview conducted by Suzanne Reiss. *Regional Cultural History Project*. The Bancroft Library (Berkeley, CA: University of California Berkeley, 1960), 61-62.

⁵ Kirk, "Grace McCann Morley and the Modern Museum," 71.

⁶ Morley's resolution and perseverance were crucial in achieving all these goals in spite of SFMA's chronic shortage of funds. Unlike MoMA, it operated with a very small staff assisted by a public-spirited pool of female volunteers, largely provided by the Women's Board. This group of dedicated women made the most of helping Morley establish SFMA's roots in the community and to make this museum part of their fellow citizens' lives. See Grace L. M. Morley's *Oral History*. Interview conducted by Porter McCray. *Archives of American Art* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1982), unpagged.

⁷ For instance, Pierluigi Serraino's comprehensive survey of modern architecture in Northern California barely addresses SFMA's paramount contributions to promoting Bay Region architecture during the prewar period. Cf. Pierluigi Serraino, *NorCalMod: Icons of Northern California Modernism* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2006). In Spain, more recently, Raúl Rodríguez, in an article exploring midcentury debates on regionalism, has inaccurately stated that in 1949 "for the first time, the San Francisco Museum of Art organized an exhibition entirely devoted to the vernacular architecture of this city, entitled *Domestic Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region*." Cf. Raúl Rodríguez García, "La aportación regionalista en EE. UU. Génesis bibliográfica de una 'nueva filosofía' arquitectónica," *Cuaderno de notas*, no. 16 (2015): 61. This assertion overlooks the magnitude of Morley's previous architectural shows on the topic.

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

⁹ Telesis environmental research group was an informal alliance of young local designers and social activists. Its core group included architects Burton Cairns, John Dinwiddie, Joseph McCarthy and Vernon DeMars; planner T. J. (Jack) Kent; landscape architects – and future planners – Garret Eckbo, Corwin Macine and Francis Violich; industrial designer Walter Landor; and, among other notorious figures, social reformer and conservationist pioneer Dorothy Erskine. Grace Morley, William Wurster and Catherine Bauer were among their regular circle of contributors and benefactors.

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

¹¹ The Eleventh Annual Convention of the American Institute of Architects, Northern Chapter, was held in San Francisco, October 13 through October 15, 1938.

¹² The term "regional" is an elusive historical, cultural construct with multiple connotations, dialectical oppositions and ideological implications. "Regionalism," as Vincent Canizaro's reader on the topic explores, is now "variously a concept, strategy, tool, technique, attitude, ideology or habit of thought" which, regardless of its protean manifestations, collectively can be understood as a "theory that supports resistance to various forms of hegemonic, universal, or otherwise standardizing structures that would diminish local differentiation." Vincent Canizaro, *Architectural Regionalism*. *Collected Writings on Place, Identity, Modernity and Tradition* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007), 20. Given the difficult use of the term, the uneasiness with it on the part of most Bay Area architects and the East Coast bias expounded later in this paper, here, the meaning of the word "regionalism" is aligned with the comprehensive sense articulated by Lewis Mumford in his series of lectures "The South in Architecture," which the critic delivered in 1941 after years of exposure to different architectural traditions in the United States, including his growing interest in the Bay Region from the late 1930s (see note 24). In the first of his four presentations, "The Basis for American Form," Mumford underscored: "Regionalism is not a matter of using the most available local material, or of copying some simple form of construction that our ancestors used [...] Regional forms are those which most closely meet the actual conditions of life and which most fully succeed in making a people feel at home in their environment: they do not merely utilize the soil but they reflect the current conditions of culture in the region." Thus, instead of stressing the theme of "resistance" commonly associated with regional positions, Mumford's statement emphasized the idea of "connection." He wrote: "there has never been a human culture that was entirely self-contained in both time and space [...] every regional culture necessarily has a universal side to it. It is steadily open to influences which come from other parts of the world, and from other cultures, separated from the local region in space or time or both together." Lewis Mumford, *The South in Architecture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1941), 30-31. Mumford would re-elaborate this very argument in his contribution to the exhibition catalogue *Domestic Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region* (DASFR, SFMA, 1949), where he opposed the free expression of the architecture of the Bay Region to what he considered the restrictions of the "International Style" (see notes 62 & 64). Soon afterwards, Southern California architect Harris Hamilton Harris assumed Mumford's vision to propose his notion of "regionalism of liberation" at the North West Regional Council of the AIA (Eugene, Oregon, 1954), where he affirmed: "A region promotes ideas. A region accepts ideas. Imagination and intelligence are necessary for both [...] In California in the late twenties and thirties, modern European ideas met a live architectural tradition. California's acceptance was partial but intelligent, largely confined to what it found relevant [...] In New England, on the other hand, modern European ideas met a rigid and entrenched tradition that at first resisted and then surrendered." Echoing Mumford's 1949 interpretation (see DASFR exhibition catalogue), Harris declared that the East Coast had accepted European modernism whole because New England regionalism had been previously reduced to a collection of restrictions. See Harwell H. Harris, "Regionalism and Nationalism in Architecture" (originally published as a revised essay in *Texas Quarterly* 1, Feb. 1958), reprint in Canizaro, *Architectural Regionalism*, 60. Thirty years later, Frampton would identify Harris's discourse as a genuine expression of "critical regionalism." See Kenneth Frampton, "Prospects for a Critical Regionalism," *Perspecta* 20 (1983): 153. More recently, Canizaro has elucidated that, due to Mumford's commitment to delve into the inextricable linkage the critic felt lay between architectural forms and social forces, Mumford's idea of regionalism in "The South in Architecture," which was deeply informed by the ethical concerns of WWII, must be considered an important precursor to the "critical regionalism" of Tzonis, Lefavre and, of course, Frampton, a junction of concepts eloquently criticized by Alan Colquhoun. Cf. Canizaro, *Architectural Regionalism*, 96; cf. as well Alan Colquhoun, "The Concept of Regionalism," in *Postcolonial Space(s)*, ed. Gulsum Baydar Nalbantoglu and Wong Chong Thai (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997), 13-23.

- ¹³ Grace Morley, "letter to William Wurster," January 15, 1938. Exhibition Records, box 9, folder 23, SFMOMA Archives, San Francisco.
- ¹⁴ Nicholas Olsberg Architects and Artists: The Work of Ernest and Esther Born (San Francisco: The Book Club of California, 2015), 173.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶ Apart from every variation of the name "Bay Region" itself, or the problematic adjective "regional" –which may intimate an imported category created elsewhere and which may preclude understanding between different cultural geographies–, perhaps, a more accurate term to define the distinct character of modern architecture in Northern California is "Bay Region School," and also "Bay Region second tradition," which implies the connections between the younger generation of Bay Area architects and the local practices established by California pioneers. Moreover, to do justice to the historiography of California modernism, the notion of Bay Region School was already proposed by Lewis Mumford himself when he tried to correct his own "unfortunate" first attempt to name it after having used the controversial term "Bay Region Style" (see note 63).
- ¹⁷ Local and national press remarked upon the architect's ground-breaking installation whose innovative design was without parallel in the United States. Architectural Forum, for instance, laid emphasis on the simplicity and visual order accomplished by Born, whose refined proposal was celebrated as "a complete reversal of the usual practice of fitting together whatever material available might be." "AIA Exhibit of Architecture, San Francisco," Architectural Forum 68, no. 6 (December 1938): 468. Actually, no other museum in the country, including MoMA, had as yet arisen to this challenge, being the originality and quality of Born's first proposals at SFMA only comparable to the work that, by then, George Nelson produced for the New York Architectural League.
- ¹⁸ During this time in New York, from 1929 to 1936, Ernest Born was actively involved in a number of influential circles through which he and his wife Esther would contribute to the national visibility of their fellow Bay Region architects. Ernest had joined the artistic staff of Architectural Record (1933-34), and then served on the editorial board of Architectural Forum up until his 1936 return to San Francisco. He was also prominent in some of the New York Architectural League's initiatives. As he became one of the most valuable assets of the Bay Area on the East Coast, Born most likely facilitated Bay Region architects' entrée to the League shows of 1938, 1941, 1946 and possibly others.
- ¹⁹ Immediately after John Entenza's takeover, in 1940, Grace Morley became a member of the advisory board of California Arts & Architecture magazine. She also contributed a monthly column to the San Francisco-based publication Architect and Engineer.
- ²⁰ Grace Morley was also a board member of Magazine of Art, the organ of the American Federation of Art, among whose most prominent board members were Alfred Barr and Philip Johnson.
- ²¹ Proof of the emergence of a Bay Region modern tradition, or at least, of its articulation and public attention as a coherent movement around the time SFMA launched its program of architectural exhibitions in 1938 is that Sheldon Cheney, one of the most perceptive local critics and earliest observers of California modernism did not mention the work of the second generation of San Francisco Bay architects in his 1930 book *The New World Architecture*, which was reprinted in 1935. Cheney was the son of Charles Cheney, a prominent figure in the 1910s new planning movement in California, being the reason why he grew up and was educated in Berkeley. Like Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Cheney traveled to Europe in the late 1920s while researching for his book. Cheney's seminal *The New World Architecture*, which predates Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock's exhibition *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition* by two years, includes the work of almost all of the 1932 MoMA show participants. It features much of the 1920s work of Frank Lloyd Wright and his son Lloyd, as well as some late minute additions of Rudolf Schindler and his 1925-30 Kings Road tenant and sometime partner Richard Neutra. Cheney also discusses favorably the work of Bernard Maybeck and expands on a California Style but not much else is included on the Bay Region. Yet, Cheney's book would demonstrate that Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock were not alone in recognizing the rapid shift from Beaux Arts architecture to modern architecture throughout the 1920s, although they conspicuously missed some of the most original examples of the West, such as Schindler's iconic houses.
- ²² In April 1942, a year after the AIA National Convention in California and the premiere of Architecture Around San Francisco Bay at the New York Architectural League, Grace Morley prompted SFMA to mount *Western Living, Five Houses* under \$7,500, another exhibition on California residential architecture with a high media profile (see note 75). Allegedly, its genesis was a Harper's piece published by Talbot Hamlin in January 1942, which should be framed within the intense promotional effort undertaken by Bay Region architects through 1941. See Exhibition Records, box 16, folder 29, SFMOMA Archives, San Francisco. Talbot Hamlin's 1942 article would anticipate by half a decade Lewis Mumford's picture of the Bay Region as the center of the "most advanced domestic architecture in the world [being] characterized by a bold use of available materials, a free handling of spaces, [and] a constant preoccupation with the actual living of its inhabitants." Talbot Hamlin, "The Trend of American Architecture," Harper's 184 (January 1942): 169. As for the exhibition content, except for Frank Lloyd Wright, who refused to participate in the show, *Western Living* was conceived to illustrate Hamlin's criticism through the residential work of the architects mentioned in his Harper's article: John Dinwiddie and Albert Henry Hill associates; Hervey Parke Clark; Harwell H. Harris; Richard Neutra and William Wurster, each one represented by a single family residence. Unlike previous shows at SFMA, it was not restricted exclusively to Northern California and was sponsored by John Entenza's California Arts & Architecture magazine, whose March 1942 issue served as unofficial exhibition catalogue (see Figure 9), to which Grace Morley herself contributed an introductory article. See Grace Morley, "Western Living, 6 Architects in Exhibition," California Arts & Architecture 59 (March 1942): 24. Echoing Hamlin's words, Time's enthusiastic review of the exhibition affirmed that the showing at SFMA proved three things: that California had developed "its own brand new style of domestic architecture [that it was] perhaps the most advanced and progressive of the world [and that the California house was] modern and homelike at the same time." "New California Architecture," Time, April 20, 1942, 23.
- ²³ Talbot Hamlin, "The Architectural League Exhibition. Reviewing Contemporary American Architecture," Pencil Points 19 no. 6 (June 1938): 346.
- ²⁴ Lewis Mumford, "The Sky Line: The Golden Age in the West and the South," The New Yorker, April 30, 1938, 50.
- ²⁵ For further discussion of "soft" modernism –a term associated with "regional" architecture–, versus "hard-line" modernism –meaning International Style modernism–, see Wayne Andrews, *Architecture, Ambitions and Americans* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 252-287. See as well David Gebhard, "William Wurster and His California Contemporaries. The Idea of Regionalism and Soft Modernism," in *An Everyday Modernism: The Houses of William Wurster*, ed. Marc Treib (Berkeley and Los Angeles: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and University of California Press, 1999), 166-167.
- ²⁶ The 1939 New York World's Fair and Golden Gate International Expositions also brought about significant East-West Coast interactions. During WWII, leading California regionalist architects such as Harwell Hamilton Harris were also on the East Coast. Harris was teaching at Columbia University while Wurster was teaching at Yale and pursuing a doctorate at Harvard.
- ²⁷ David Gebhard, "Introduction: The Bay Area Tradition," in *Bay Area Houses*, ed. Sally Woodbridge, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 7.
- ²⁸ Henry-Russell Hitchcock, "An Eastern Critic Looks at Western Architecture," California Arts & Architecture 57 (1940): 22. Even though Hitchcock's comments on other Northern California architects such as Gardner Dailey, Clark, John Dinwiddie, John Funk and Joseph McCarthy were more indulgent than his review of his future employer at MIT, the historian-critic clearly expressed his preference for Portland architects, such as Pietro Belluschi, over William Wurster and the rest of the above-mentioned Bay Region architects.
- ²⁹ Wurster's effort in showing Mumford around would challenge UC Berkeley Architecture Professor Marc Treib's suggestion that, in 1948, after Mumford published his New Yorker piece, "quite unknowingly and surprisingly," Wurster must have found himself in the middle of a theoretical debate to reestablish the evaluation criteria of modernism. Marc Treib, "William Wilson Wurster: The Feeling of Function," in *An Everyday Modernism: The Houses of William Wurster*, 58.

- ³⁰ Marc Treib has advocated that Northern California regionalism, as a re-examination of the locale idiom, arose as an intrinsic theme during New Deal years, which was a combination of several factors. Marc Treib, "The Social Art of Landscape Design," in Garret Eckbo. *Modern Landscapes for Living*, ed. Marc Treib and Dorothée Imbert (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 43. For instance, due to the scarcity of the Great Depression, locally sourced materials, such as wood, became the basis for cost-effective building solutions. Thus, as an intersection of practical concerns and symbolic notions associated with the idea of home –so essential amid the stress and dislocation of the depression–, the pervasive use of wood resulted in the style association with William Wurster's second Bay Area tradition. Ironically, the prevalence of wood in the domestic imageries of San Francisco Bay, would be contemptuously used by Alfred Barr against Lewis Mumford and William Wurster during the 1948 MoMA symposium, as later expounded upon.
- ³¹ Lewis Mumford, "The Sky Line: Status Quo," *The New Yorker*, September 11, 1947, 109.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 109.
- ³³ Canizaro, *Architectural Regionalism*, 288.
- ³⁴ Mumford, "Status Quo," 109.
- ³⁵ The 1947 Princeton symposium "Building for Modern Man," which was attended by Philip Johnson himself and counted on many of the same participants he invited to MoMA the following year, most likely provided the inspiration for his 1948 "What is Happening to Modern Architecture?" discussion at MoMA.
- ³⁶ Alfred Barr ironically uttered: "It is significant, however, that when such a master of Cottage Style as William Wurster is faced with a problem of designing an office or a great project for the United Nations, he falls back upon a pretty orthodox version of the International Style." "What is Happening to Modern Architecture? A Symposium at the Museum of Modern Art," *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 15, no. 3 (1948): 8.
- ³⁷ Gail Fenske, "Lewis Mumford, Henry-Russell Hitchcock, and the Bay Region Style," in *The Education of the Architect. Historiography, Urbanism, and the Growth of Architectural Knowledge*, ed. Martha Pollack (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1997), 38.
- ³⁸ Rosemarie H. Bletter, "Introduction," in *The Modern Architecture Symposia, 1962-1966: A Critical Edition*, eds. Rosemarie H. Bletter and Joan Ockman (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 2. For further analyses about how Blake, Barr, Gropius and many other East Coast observers arrived at their biased opinions and repeated mistakes about Bay Region architecture, as well as significant West Coast and international counteractions see, among others: Liane Lefavre and Alexander Tzonis, "International Style versus Regionalism," in *Architecture of Regionalism in the Age of Globalization* (London: Routledge, 2012), 112-128; Jane Castle, "Vernacular and Modern: Lewis Mumford's Bay Region Style and the Architecture of William Wurster" (PhD diss., University of New South Wales, 2006); Fenske, "Mumford, Hitchcock, and the Bay Region Style," 37-85; also, of particular interest is Stanford Anderson, "The New Empiricism-Bay Region-Axis," *Journal of Architectural Education* 50, no. 3 (1997): 197-207.
- ³⁹ Fenske, "Mumford, Hitchcock, and the Bay Region Style," 38.
- ⁴⁰ Helen Searing, "Henry-Russell Hitchcock: The Architectural Historian as Critic and Connoisseur," *Studies in the History of Art* 35 (1990): 253. See also Fenske, "Mumford, Hitchcock, and the Bay Region Style," 63.
- ⁴¹ Fenske, "Mumford, Hitchcock, and the Bay Region Style," 63.
- ⁴² Gail Fenske did not consider either Wurster's and Bauer's institutional relationships concerning MIT, Harvard and MoMA, or Wurster's employment of Hitchcock, Kennedy and DeMars and his and Bauer's close relationship with Breuer and many other participants. The situation and the cross interests among them were thus much more complex than she related.
- ⁴³ Peter Blake who, after meeting Philip Johnson in 1947 was appointed Curator at MoMA's Department of Architecture and Design (1948-1950), would also admit in his autobiography that they were all wrong about Mumford (Blake, *No Place Like Utopia*, 106).
- ⁴⁴ Philip Johnson, "letter to Henry-Russell Hitchcock, January 30, 1948," *Henry-Russell Hitchcock Papers, 1919-1987, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC*. Johnson organized a first dinner the night before the symposium and a second private encounter right after it, inviting Mumford, Barr and Hitchcock to discuss the terms of the meeting and, the following day, its proceeding's publication.
- ⁴⁵ Marcel Breuer, "letter to Philip Johnson, December 30, 1947," *Marcel Breuer Papers, 1920-1986, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC*.
- ⁴⁶ Mary Barnes, "letter to Marcel Breuer, January 30, 1948," *Marcel Breuer Papers, 1920-1986, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC*.
- ⁴⁷ Blake's correspondence and discussion with Hitchcock about Johnson's and Blake's October 1948 article in *Magazine of Art* rebutting Robert Woods Kennedy's earlier piece on New England regionalism would further evidence their collusion in the February symposium at MoMA. Their article continued the "Cottage Style" versus "International Style" debates resumed at every occasion from the symposium through 1949. Peter Blake, "letter to Henry-Russell Hitchcock, October 14, 1948," *Henry-Russell Hitchcock Papers, 1919-1987, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC*.
- ⁴⁸ Lewis Mumford's 1947 article was published just a few weeks after the opening of Johnson's Mies van der Rohe major exhibition at MoMA in September.
- ⁴⁹ The copy consulted is from *Marcel Breuer Papers, 1920-1986, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC*.
- ⁵⁰ Serraino, *NorCalMod*, 94.
- ⁵¹ When the following year nine Bay Region architects were asked by *Architectural Record* West Coast editor Elizabeth K. Thompson whether there was a regional style in Northern California, the interviewed authors responded evasively or answered no to the question. Still, Thompson's "Is there a Bay Area Style?" *Architectural Record* article published in its May 1949 issue demonstrated that, implicitly, to what most of them agreed was about the existence of a common ground regarding their understanding of a shared culture of place. Later, Thompson herself would explain the result of her survey by avowing that the individualism of the West Coast architects justifiably rebelled against such a restrictive label. See Elizabeth K. Thompson, "Is there a Bay Area Style?" *Architectural Record* 105 (1949): 92-97.
- ⁵² As Jane Castle suggests, despite the wide recognition gained by Northern California architects, the fact that they became cautious, wishing to avoid being labelled as part of the "Bay Region Style," would eventually contribute to the disintegration of their practice as an identifiable school, particularly when the theoretical argument supporting this notion also diminished as Mumford later became more preoccupied with technology than with writing about architecture. Thus, although Bay Region architects continued to practice during the 1950s and 1960s, the proposition of the existence of a recognizable Bay Region tradition "was not revived until the mid-1970s when Sally Woodbridge and her contemporaries began to research the architects Mumford had identified." Castle, "Vernacular and Modern," 59, 78. It would be also in this sense that Fenske stated that the Bay Region School happened to be the unfortunate "historical casualty" of the debate over its very existence. Fenske, "Mumford, Hitchcock, and the Bay Region Style," 75.
- ⁵³ That very month, Robert Woods Kennedy, who was then on William Wurster's faculty at MIT, published a Wurster-sympathetic piece "The Small House in New England" in the April issue of the *Magazine of Art*. Kennedy's essay was harshly answered by Philip Johnson and Peter Blake in an article published in the October issue of the same magazine (see note 47 above).
- ⁵⁴ Implicitly recalling Barr's speech at the 1948 symposium, the editorial claimed: "critics' point to Wurster's residential work as being 'cottagey,' while his large buildings are, according to them, in the International Style. The International Style is accepted (by this group of critics) as the correct style. Therefore, the 'cottagey' building is wrong. Therefore, as Philip Johnson and Peter Blake write in the *Magazine of Art*, 'In the architectural framework of order there can be no room for the anarchy of cottages.' Or, as Henry-Russell Hitchcock said at the Museum of Modern Art, 'Its activities (the cottage style's) are centered on what is frankly not one of the important problems of the architecture of the present day.' To such a weird conclusion this twisted architectural logic leads –the small individual house is, Hitchcock went on to say, 'of very little statistical consequence today.'" Thomas Creighton, "Architecture not Style," *Progressive Architecture* 29 (December 1948): 122.

- ⁵⁵ In January 1949, Progressive Architecture received supportive letters to the editor from Bay Region architects Gardner Dailey, Ernest Kump and William Wurster, also from Wurster's then MIT faculty member Robert Woods Kennedy, as well as more confusing letters from Christopher Tunnard and Henry-Russell Hitchcock. In February 1949 mixed letters to the editor came from Philip Goodwin, Talbot Hamlin, Philip Johnson and Peter Blake. The following month Creighton published the annotated proceedings to the 1947 Princeton symposium "Building for Modern Man" which sympathized with Mumford and Wurster.
- ⁵⁶ Contrary to Northern California architectural historian Pierluigi Serraino's statement that both the label "Bay Region Style" and the arguments of its cultural legitimacy were invented on the East Coast, and the controversy only reached California in 1949, two years after the dispute had "snowballed from a passing comment in a weekly publication to become the subject of a debate of national proportions" (Serraino, *NorCalMod*, 70), it must be recalled that Bay Region architects provided the controversial conditions that echoed as far as the London-based *Architectural Review*. For example, as a result of Catherine Bauer and Elizabeth Mock's connections with English editor James M. Richards, *Architectural Review* openly endorsed Mumford's stance. See "Bay Region Domestic," *Architectural Review* 104 (October 1948): 164. Thus, the 1949 show was anything all but a delayed response to Mumford's 1947 piece.
- ⁵⁷ Due to SFMA's scarcity of funds, the participant architects paid pro-rata for redrawing the blueprints. Richard Freeman, "letter to participants" (enclosing schedule and terms & conditions of the show), June 21, 1949. Exhibition Records, box 32, folder 3, SFMOMA Archives, San Francisco. Also, local companies and manufacturers got involved in the production of the show by paying the costs of materials for its installation. Richard Freeman, "letter to Don W. Lyon, President, Producers Council of San Francisco," September 19, 1949. Exhibition Records, box 32, folder 3, SFMOMA Archives, San Francisco.
- ⁵⁸ The original exhibition, as shown at SFMA, included 52 houses by 35 architects. The average age of the architects participating in the show was 40 years and only one of them was a woman, Helen Douglass. About half of the houses shown in 1949 were designed by architects who had begun practicing after returning from the front very shortly after the war.
- ⁵⁹ Richard Freeman was at the helm of SFMA as its executive director during Grace Morley's 1947-1949 leave of absence in Paris to work for UNESCO.
- ⁶⁰ Richard Freeman, "Introduction," in *Domestic Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region* (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1949), unpagged.
- ⁶¹ By the time Mumford was invited to contribute an essay to the exhibition catalogue, in an article published in *Architectural Review* he insisted that the "restrictive definition of modern architecture" emerging from the 1932 show was "still maintained" by Philip Johnson's MoMA in 1948. Lewis Mumford, "Monumentalism, Symbolism and Style," *Architectural Review* 105 (April 1949): 174.
- ⁶² Lewis Mumford, "The Architecture of the Bay Region," in *Domestic Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region* (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1949), unpagged.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁵ The earliest correspondence concerning DASFBF kept in the SFMOMA Archives is dated March 2, 1949 (see Figure 6). Four months prior to its opening in September, Thompson had published the aforementioned "Is There a Bay Area Style?" spread in the May of 1949 issue of *Architectural Record*, which must have had at least a couple of month lead time to get the feedback from the architects interviewed and to put out such an insightful and well-designed article. Thus, its preparation would coincide with the planning of the exhibit.
- ⁶⁶ The September 1949 issue of *Architectural Record* published an eight-page central spread evidencing the coherence of Bay Region houses within the dramatic landscape of the Bay Region. Its visual strategy consisted of a series of double page layouts where images of the houses were combined with pictures of flowered valleys, unspoiled hills, the San Francisco fog and redwood trees from which came the building material of most of the structures in the show. The magazine also offered its Western Section readers a four-page hand guide and a map locating the houses shown in the exhibition. These two *Architectural Record* supplements were used strategically to enhance the publicity of DASFBF, and sent to every venue as part of the exhibition documentation.
- ⁶⁷ For the traveling exhibition, the original 52 entries of the contemporary section were reduced to 16 houses, being only included structures by Anshen and Allen; Worley K. Wong; Hervey Parke Clark; Mario Corbett; Gardner A. Dailey; Joseph Esherick; John Funk; Hans U. Gerson; Henry Hill; Jack Hillmer and Warren Callister; John G. Kelley; Fred Langhorst; Francis Joseph McCarthy; Elridge T. Spencer and William Clement Ambrose; Wurster, Bernardi and Emmons.
- ⁶⁸ "San Francisco Architecture 1950-1951," American Federation of Arts records, 1895-1993, bulk 1909-1969, box 72, folder 7. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC.
- ⁶⁹ Leslie Cheek, "letter to the American Federation of Arts, July 19, 1949," Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Exhibition Files 1936-1992, box 34, accession 31633, "Domestic Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region, 1950-1951," State Government Records Collection. The Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA. Leslie Cheek, who was close to Grace Morley, Lewis Mumford and Frank Lloyd Wright, outlined the installation in Richmond and wrote an article for the *Museum Bulletin* insisting on the uniqueness of the architectural production of the Bay Region as very different from the rest of the country. Leslie Cheek, "Bay Region Homes," *Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Members' Bulletin* 11 (1950): unpagged.
- ⁷⁰ Henry-Russell Hitchcock, "letter to Robert J. Duemling, April 21, 1950," Cunningham Center for Prints, Drawings and Photographs, Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, MA. In this letter he offers his viewpoint on the show to Duemling, who had been invited to give a lecture on Bay Region architecture at Smith College on the occasion of the DASFBF venue organized by Hitchcock himself. Referring to the house in Berkeley by Greene & Greene exhibited on the historical section of the 1949 show, the critic considered that the Greene brothers were quintessentially Bay Region architects regardless of their practice and office being based in Southern California.
- ⁷¹ See Grace Morley's October 1937 letters to MoMA, ARCH.EXH.001, box 6, folder 1, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) archives, San Francisco.
- ⁷² By the time, MoMA's circulation of exhibitions had two primary goals: to broaden the museum's audiences and to secure financially the museum's programs by leasing its shows to other institutions. Mathew Postal, "Toward a Democratic Aesthetic? The Modern House in America, 1932-1955" (PhD diss., The City University of New York, 1998), 54.
- ⁷³ Catherine Bauer Wurster letters to Elizabeth Bauer Mock (Kossler) and vice versa, Catherine Bauer Wurster Papers 1931-64 (BANC MSS 74/163), series 1, subseries 1.2, correspondence 1921-64, box 1, folders 8-10, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
- ⁷⁴ Having worked intermittently with John McAndrew since 1937, Elizabeth Mock arrived at MoMA in time to assist with the hanging of her former patron Frank Lloyd Wright's solo show on Falling Water House, which opened on January 25, 1938. Born Elizabeth Bauer, she had graduated in 1932 from Vassar College, where she joined McAndrew's art and architecture history courses. Shortly upon graduation she moved to Taliesin as Wright's student and became one of the first Taliesin Fellows. During her Taliesin internship she met Edgar Kaufmann Jr. and her future husband, Swiss architect Rudolph Mock.
- ⁷⁵ Among Mock's main exhibitions which traveled to Morley's SFMA, the following are revealing of her social concerns and regionalist concerns, as well as of the assistance of her sister Catherine: *Wartime Housing* (1942); *Look at Your Neighborhood: Principles of Neighborhood Planning* (1944) or *If You Want to Build a House* (1946) which Grace Morley immediately echoed through her *The House I Want* program relying on local examples of Bay Region's domestic architecture. In turn, MoMA received the influence of California exhibitors and even their exhibitions, like the aforementioned 1942 *Western Living* show (see note 22), which traveled to MoMA under the form and title of *Five California Houses*, indicating of the cross-pollination between both museums (see Figure 9).
- ⁷⁶ The decade 1937-1946, when the Department of Architecture was headed by John McAndrew, and later by his former student and collaborator Elizabeth Mock after the resignation of the former in 1941, is representative of MoMA's socio-political change of direction to embrace a broader regionalist standpoint.
- ⁷⁷ That very year many figures belonging to Wurster, Bauer and Mock's circles took significant regionalist stances, such as Katherine Morrow Ford's publishing of "Modern is Regional" in the March 1941 issue of *House and Garden*. Tellingly, the following month, when the interest of more and more authors in the regional insight was rising, Lewis Mumford would deliver his influential series of lectures "The South in Architecture" at Alabama College (see note 12).

- ⁷⁸ American Architecture paid a great deal of attention to the pioneers of modern architecture in the United States: Richardson, Sullivan and Wright. Regional Building in the United States was first conceived in 1941, and circulated from 1941 to 1944, then it was redesigned for the Office of War Information (OWI), renamed as Regional Building in America and sent to Great Britain under the auspices of its Overseas Division (1946-47). Also conceived in 1941, the extensively circulated and acclaimed *The Wooden House in America* paired the achievements of East Coast modern houses with West Coast residences, such as, respectively, Marcel Breuer's and Bay Region architect John Funk's, to whom, one year later, the show *Planning a Modern House* was devoted.
- ⁷⁹ Late in 1945 Philip Johnson began to be involved again with MoMA, in part because of few opportunities to build. The following year, he was already acting as the unofficial director of its Department of Architecture. See Jennifer Tobias, "The Museum of Modern Art's What is Modern? Series 1938-1969" (PhD diss., The City University of New York, 2012), 183. Lefavre and Tzonis have assumed Schulze's account that Johnson eliminated Elizabeth Mock upon his return to MoMA to reclaim his former position. See Lefavre and Tzonis, *Architecture of Regionalism*, 120; see also Franz Schulze, Philip Johnson. *Life and Work* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 173-174. However, according to Jennifer Tobias there are two versions of Mock's departure: "In 1995 she explained it was her choice, that she left to join her husband in Tennessee, where he was chief architect for the Tennessee Valley Authority. She said that Architecture Committee Chair Philip Goodwin begged her to stay, but she was adamant. In 1991 Philip Johnson said he didn't remember why she left. His biographer [Schulze] says Mock 'never had a chance' upon Johnson's return, that (for example) Johnson purposely ignored her during a lunch with Barr. If the reasons for her departure are unclear, the date is certain. In a December 1946 memo outlining department activities for that year, Philip Johnson reports these personnel changes: Elisabeth B. Mock resigned as Curator July 15, 1946; Philip C. Johnson, Consultant Since August, 1946." Jennifer Tobias, "Elizabeth Mock at the Museum of Modern Art, 1938-1946" (unpublished manuscript: Archives of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2003), 33-34.
- ⁸⁰ In 1943, while preparing *Built in USA: 1932-1944* as part of the program "Art in Progress: 15th Anniversary Exhibition," the Museum of Modern Art was requested by the OWI and the American Scandinavian Foundation to mount a major event in Stockholm. To cope with the many difficulties of this challenge, Mock decided that the only possible way to meet the deadline was to "concoct the exhibition from as much as possible material at hand," for which she coordinated her team to assemble the four sections of the show from previous exhibitions: "H. H. Richardson, Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright," "Planning in the USA," "US Housing in War and Peace" and "Outstanding Buildings of the Last 10 Years," which was an offshoot of the ongoing *Built in USA: 1932-44*. Elizabeth Mock, "Letter to the editor," *Pencil Points* 25, no. 10 (October 1944): 8. As usual, Mock counted on the assistance of her sister Catherine Bauer, as well as with her brother-in-law William Wurster, who was also an exhibitor. Furthermore, Wurster's close friend Alvar Aalto was instrumental in the success of the show in Scandinavia, as from 1944 to 1945 it was seen by more than twenty thousand visitors.
- ⁸¹ The exhibition featured works by Southern California architects Harris, Neutra, Soriano and Ain. The selection of Bay Region architects including Corbett, Dailey, DeMars, Funk, Kump and Wurster was perceptibly well-covered.
- ⁸² Significantly, none of the admirable works of these Bay Region architects in the field of social housing were included in *Domestic Architecture of the San Francisco Bay Region*, which would evidence that the political interest of the 1949 show was a discussion on identity that ultimately folded upon architectural language. Despite the emphasis of its exhibition catalogue on the progressive spirit of the region, DASFBR eluded a huge variety of innovative design practices, lacking a broader urban vision and not taking into account the role of the market forces in the transformation of the American landscape, such as the 1940 Telesis exhibition at SFMA had already investigated.
- ⁸³ Significantly, John Funk's indisputably Bay Region Heckendorf House (Modesto, CA, 1939) illustrated the cover of Mock's 1944 *Built in USA* exhibition catalogue. Among other MoMA's shows organized by Elizabeth Mock during the 1940s, this house was included in *The Wooden House in America* (1941), *Tomorrow's Small House* (1945) and in *If You Want to Build a House* (1946).
- ⁸⁴ Elizabeth Mock, *Built in USA: 1932-1944* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1944), 14.
- ⁸⁵ Philip Johnson, "Preface," in *Built in USA: Post-war Architecture*, eds. Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Arthur Drexler (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1952), 8.
- ⁸⁶ Hitchcock informed Bauer and Wurster about his new "association" with Philip Johnson to "get together a new *Built in USA* exhibition and publication." Although there is no invitation to Wurster to submit materials to the exhibit, the critic spoke frankly about it. Hitchcock even provided them with references of some of his students and collaborators in the ongoing show who were interested in visiting the Bay Area for summer internships and research trips. Henry-Russell Hitchcock, "letter to Mr. and Mrs. Wurster, June 6, 1952," Catherine Bauer Wurster Papers 1931-64 (BANC.MSS 74/163), series 2, subseries 2.2, box 19, folder 13, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
- ⁸⁷ "I am convinced that the International Style, as the dominant movement of the 1930s, produced no buildings of intrinsic value in this country. And I also now begin to question whether it really was very important in the development of our architecture." Elizabeth Mock Kossler, intervention at Sunday, May 10, 1964 session, MAS 1964 Proceedings (The decade 1929-1939), in Bletter, *The Modern Architecture Symposia*, 215.

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IMAGES SOURCES

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