Introduction: Critical Themes of Postwar Modernism

Architectural historians have come to view the several decades in architectural culture that followed the Second War as an interregnum between an expiring modernism and a dawning postmodernism: an inchoate moment when corporate culture co-opted early twentieth-century avant garde to create an International Style that eventually bled out, precipitating the putative collapse of modernism. According to this story, postmodernism, by virtue of its prominence in architectural culture after 1970, was the only lasting new trend of these immediate postwar years, one that emerged in opposition to the modern movement’s fixation on abstraction or, alternatively, on symbols of industrial culture and mass production.

This is a tidy narrative that oversimplifies and distorts this period’s architectural culture. By subsuming all historicist impulses, whether they came from Alvar Aalto, Louis Kahn, or Robert Venturi, into a univocal critique of the modern movement, this narrative obscures the diversity and the complexity of motivation that led some architects to truck with architecture’s tradition. It privileges historicism as the dominant new trend in these years, so that other movements and practices, whether they be the critique by Team Ten, the radical visions of the Metabolists, or any of many others, are seen only as disparate, fleeting moments of passionate intensity leading to no lasting, significant architectural influence. This narrative also obscures why and how some of the early modern “masters,” such as Mies van der Rohe or Le Corbusier, subtly adapted their design vocabularies to the new cultural, political, and social circumstances of the postwar years. Last, this narrative has fostered the uncritical acceptance of the tenet that, during the postwar years, modernism died.

There are three questions that emerge from the canonical story of the postwar period; the answers this story gives to each of these questions need to be reexamined, and revised. The first concerns how this narrative characterizes – or rather, mischaracterizes – the early modern movement, and therefore modernism in architecture in general. This question, of how one should conceptualize the modern movement, is
addressed in the Coda that concludes this book. This introduction and the essays that follow it examine the canonical narrative’s inadequate answers to two other related questions. Why was an extensive revision of early modernism called for? What followed the early modern movement in the postwar years?

The canonical story of the postwar period holds that the modern movement perished mainly from an internal critique that burgeoned after 1930, unearthing the deficiencies intrinsic to modernism’s founding principles. The movement’s aspirations toward an architectural Esperanto, an internationalism, left no room for reference to, or accommodation of, local culture, climate, and types. The modern movement’s love affair with technology and mass production bypassed the phenomenological experience of space, texture, and light. The movement’s pretense of rejecting architecture’s past ignored the inevitable persistence of architectural types through time. Its embrace of industrial technology led to a corporate “international style” that undermined the movement’s early, socio-critical orientation.

Certainly, in the account of the modern movement promulgated by its champions after 1930 in widely circulated texts by Nikolaus Pevsner, Sigfried Giedion, and Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson,4 limitations of the sort mentioned above left the movement open to substantial challenges from within. Yet this internal critique of the modern movement – or rather, of modernism as it became codified in the years leading up to the Second World War – only partly explains its reconfiguration after the war. From its inception, the modern movement has been premised upon the notion that architectural culture must grapple with the society of its time. Since society itself is always evolving, the movement from the start invited critique, reassessment, and revision from within.

In the several decades between the initial codification of the modern movement in the late 1920s and 1930s and the postwar world of the 1950s, the political, social, economic, and cultural terrain of the West changed dramatically.5 In the political realm there was, first and foremost, the ongoing threat that democracies would be consumed by totalitarian adversaries, a threat which continued long after the danger of a Nazi dominion over the Western world had been erased. In the postwar years, communism was the menace against which Western democracies guarded vigilantly in their own societies, and fought by trying to arrest the expansion of the Soviet Union. Exacerbating the perils of the Cold War was the new phenomenon of nuclear weapons. For the first time, all peoples lived under the threat of instantaneous, near total annihilation: if political tensions between the superpowers got out of control, as many, given recent history, reasonably expected that they must, the world might be destroyed. The simmering conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union enveloped both Europe and developing countries, as decolonization in Africa, Asia, and the Indian subcontinent left weak countries and unstable governments that could not resist, and indeed often encouraged, intervention by the superpowers and their allies.

Whatever instability and dread the international political climate created, hope for a better world was, at the same time, engendered by a number of scientific, technological, and cultural developments which were radically transforming lived experience and the visual landscape. Advances in physics, with the discovery of nuclear fission in 1939, opened up the possibility of producing nuclear energy. Advances in biology, such as
the discovery of the polio vaccine and the structure of DNA, promised the overcoming of diseases and increased longevity. Television heralded a new world of mass entertainment, the airplane a global village. Travel, which had been restricted during two decades of economic depression followed by war, increased, with many—among them architects and urban planners—journeying to faraway and still-exotic places, some seeking new experiences and others in search of commissions. These and other developments in the sciences, communications, and transportation produced great optimism about the future of humankind.

Optimism was fueled also by the postwar economic boom, which at various times affected most countries in Western Europe as well as the United States. With this boom many Western democracies instituted new policies of social welfare that, combined with increasing education and social mobility, promised to efface the rigid economic boundaries between the classes. Class conflict, in general, became a far less prominent feature in postwar society than it had been in the earlier part of the century, and prosperity in many postwar societies stimulated an explosion in consumption among the working and middle classes.

How did postwar architects respond to this new world? As the essays in this volume indicate, in a variety of ways, but perhaps most noticeably, with anxiety: anxiety about the adequacy of their architectural culture to cope with and positively influence society in its new state. In the wake of the First World War, many progressive architects, faced with the technological prowess of the twentieth century, felt liberated from old models and habits. They issued manifestos in confident tones: credos such as Le Corbusier’s “the house is a machine for living in,” Mies’s “we know no forms, only building problems,” and Hannes Meyer’s “building = function × economics” were suffused with the aura of newly discovered scientific facts. In the work and ideas of the architects and thinkers of the postwar years, by contrast, confidence vanished that any single philosophy or approach might bear universal public significance. Propositions for the direction that architecture should take were tentative. Jacob Bakema conceded in Team 10 Primer that “we can put on paper what has to be done and in the next moment we do quite another thing.” Even when architects presented new aphorisms with the kind of confidence that was pro forma in the 1920s, they led to no identifiable set of stylistic tropes of the sort that produced the putative uniformity of early modernism.

The changes and uncertainties of the late 1940s and 1950s caused disquietude in members of the older generation: Frank Lloyd Wright is anxious about the “mobocracy;” Le Corbusier is anxious about commercialism and the international dominance of American culture. For the generation of architects that emerged after the Second World War, the anxiety becomes even more pronounced. Bakema is anxious about the palpable challenge to democratic freedom posed by the totalitarian state and about the possibility that the idiom of the early modern movement had come, despite itself, to serve repressive ends. The architects and planners of the Hansaviertel are anxious about the German Democratic Republic; the architects and planners of the Stalinallee are anxious about the imperial aspirations of the West. Kisho Kurokawa and his friends are, after the devastation of Tokyo and the annihilation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, anxious about the very survival of their culture. This anxiety is not limited to the protagonists whose countries were physically scarred by war. In America, Eero Saarinen and his
corporate client at IBM are anxious about the threat computers posed to human dominance over nature and people's control over their own inventions. Bernard Rudofsky is anxious about the globalization of the International Style. Paul Rudolph is anxious about how ornament and tradition fit into emerging critiques of the International Style.

This anxiety knew no national or local boundaries. It affected the discourse of modernism as a whole, a discourse that had been far-flung from early on, with its supporting institutions – the Bauhaus, the International Congress of Modern Architects (CIAM), the various periodicals in which its architects published their work – run by participants from many nations. After the Second World War, the internationalism of the architectural discourse of the modern movement further expanded in scope. Architects began again to travel; many read the same architectural periodicals from Milan, Paris, London, New York, and Los Angeles. Important theorists and practitioners accepted temporary or permanent teaching positions in countries other than those in which they had been trained. Within this international discourse, architects selected, and took positions on, the topics and problems they found compelling, shaping their ideas on these problems according to their individual orientations.

This volume offers twelve monographic essays exploring the attitudes and positions of architects and movements which had a critical impact on the architectural culture of the postwar period. All these contributions are grounded in new, archival-based research. The range of the period covered extends from the last years of the Second World War to the events of May '68. The subjects of these twelve essays are geographically and topically diverse, focusing on Italian Neorealism; on ATBAT's housing projects in Casablanca; on Alison and Peter Smithson's ideas on the home; on Neutra's postwar suburban houses; on Price's Fun Palace; on Saarinen's work for IBM; on the Berlin housing developments of the Stalinallee and the Hansaviertel; on Rudolph's designs for a new art building on the Wellesley College campus; on Viennese emigré Rudofsky's architectural polemics; on the Marxist urbanist critique of the Situationist International; on the theories underlying Bakema's architectural approach; and on the Japanese Metabolists.

At first glance, such a panoply of topics might appear to substantiate the received image of the period as one with no cohesive trends other than an incipient historicism. But if style is abandoned as an organizing principle, and these individual voices and practices are examined in the context of the international discourse on architectural culture in which they originated, a more coherent picture emerges. However diverse was the architecture that these practitioners and theorists envisioned or built, they were united in their conviction that neither the modern movement, as it had been codified, nor the International Style, as it was being codified, were idioms that sufficiently responded to the character and circumstances of postwar society and culture.

With the exception of the Neorealists in Italy, these practitioners and theorists were also united in their determination to renew rather than abandon the legacy of twentieth-century modernism, to bring it back to its first principles by recasting some of its tenets and abandoning others. As such, their revisions of modernism emerged directly out of a constructive engagement with the legacy

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of the modern movement. The revisions of all these architects also drew on issues and concerns which emerged directly out of the social, cultural, economic, and political changes of wartime and the immediate postwar years. Among those are mass culture, freedom, a return to essentials, and contextualism in both time and space.

The modern movement (this will be further explored in the Coda) constitutes the central referent of postwar architectural culture. Movements, statements, manifestos, and buildings were conceived and constructed in explicit or tacit response to this overwhelmingly dominant recent history and to the International Style which modernism had appeared to become. Less ubiquitous, but equally important, was the central place occupied by mass culture. Many architects were struggling for a proper response to the growing dominance of popular culture and mass communications in everyday life. Others, having doubts about their continued role as elite professionals in their changing societies, became advocates of an approach that might be termed anti-architecture. Postwar society also raised anew, in two general ways, the problem of freedom. A number of practitioners sought to marshal architecture and urban planning to safeguard democratic freedom in the face of totalitarian threats. For some, the problem of freedom was equally construed as the personal and psychological freedom to play – homo ludens – in the face of an increasingly work- and consumption-oriented society. The wish for a return to essentials was shared by those architects who believed that focusing on humanity’s basic condition and most essential needs might ameliorate the fast-paced impermanence and alienated individuality of consumer culture. For some, it encouraged a kind of infatuation with so-called primitivism, which sometimes combined with, and sometimes was independent of, a search for the ‘authentic,’ as understood with reference to the Existentialist concept of authenticity. Finally, a belief in the necessity of contextualism of time and space precipitated inquiries into how, in a rapidly changing and possibly endangered society, architecture might reflect modern life while contributing to a deeply needed sense of continuity and identity. Some tried to do so by establishing a harmonious relationship to architecture’s history. Others tried by taking into consideration the character and constraints of specific locales, a concern for regional “factors” – regionalism – and for place.

From this nexus of interrelated themes – the modern movement, popular culture/everyday life, anti-architecture, democratic freedom, homo ludens, primitivism, authenticity, history, regionalism/place – a complex network of relationships emerges. Ludwig Wittgenstein’s famous description in the Philosophical Investigations of what he called “the criss-crossing logic of family resemblance” helps us envision how these themes operated in the culture of architecture. In any family, Wittgenstein writes, each member shares one, two, or more features with every other. Because genetic possibilities are various, the combination of features in any given descendant is unique. It is this set of ideologically grounded themes – as identifiable as the physical features found in any family – that undergirds the postwar reconceptualization of the modern movement. In most cases, practitioners or theorists engaged only some of these themes. For each theme addressed, practitioners took individual positions and constructed individual visions.

Some of the figures and themes that played a defining role in the evolution of postwar architectural culture are not directly
covered in this volume. There are no essays on Aalto, Kahn, Le Corbusier, and Mies. The debate on monumentality, encapsulated in the famous 1943 text by José Luis Sert, Fernand Léger, and Sigfried Giedion, and on the “synthesis of the arts,” prompted at the 6th CIAM congress in Bridgewater in 1947, are merely alluded to. Conversely, some of the themes defined and addressed in this volume were not necessarily consciously embraced as topics of architectural debate at the time: in a few cases, the terms introduced here – such as anti-architecture, authenticity, and place – do not even appear in the discourse of the protagonists. Still, although the portrayal of the period offered here is not comprehensive, the issues, notions, and anxieties which emerge from these essays unmistakably reverberate throughout these years, not only in the work of the protagonists discussed here but in the theories and constructions of other major and minor figures of the era.

As the title of this book and the work these essays examine make clear, emphasis has been placed on the experimentation of the postwar period. This choice poses the crucial question of the continuities and discontinuities between this era and the events of the 1930s and the wartime years. All the essays in this volume acknowledge, and many address, the cataclysmic aftermath of the Second World War and its effects on architectural culture. Yet for most of the authors, the larger historical issue is neither one of rupture alone nor of essential continuity. The semi-autonomous field of architectural discourse interacts with social, economic, and political change in a complex and fluid manner.

Rupture and continuity can in part be mapped by analyzing the interaction of some of the less recurrent themes discussed here with the modern movement. By the end of the war in 1945, the modern movement was nearly thirty years old, although during the long years of economic depression followed by world war it had made only a few really significant inroads into mainstream or vernacular architectural culture. Hitler’s, Mussolini’s, and Stalin’s embrace of an academic neoclassicism in the 1930s and 1940s had immensely helped the cause of the movement in the West. By the time workers began clearing the rubble from the cities bombed during the war, modernism had emerged as the architectural language symbolizing democratic aspirations, becoming the common datum from which many emerging postwar practitioners and theorists began their search for an architectural identity.

Each essay in this volume presents the approach of an individual, firm, or movement to this legacy. Taken together, responses to modernism ran the gamut from adaptation to internal critique to radical reassessment. Sandy Isenstadt, in his essay on Richard Neutra’s postwar suburban houses, shows how one of the best-known American practitioners of early modernism subtly adapted an architectural language he had established long before the war to ameliorate what he perceived to be the deleterious psychological effects on his clients of the emerging consumer society. Vladimir Bodiansky, Shadrach Woods, and Georges Candilis of Atelie-Afrique, writes Monique Ebel in her study of housing projects in Morocco, remained deeply engaged with many of the by-then canonical principles of the early modern movement while criticizing its internationalism. Atelie-Afrique sought to develop an idiom that they
believed—somewhat naively, Eleb points out—balanced modern identity with local cultures. In France, the Situationist International, as Jean-Louis Violeau writes, repudiated the International Style modernism of the postwar years to make the case for radical gestures such as détourner and dérive, which its members believed might reinvigorate the original principles of the early twentieth-century avant garde.

Though all the architects and theorists treated here were in some way evolving their ideas in relation to the modern movement, not all of them concerned themselves with every one of the other architectural issues that were prominent in this period. This is evident, for example, we examine the theme of mass culture. How a forward-looking architect should respond to newly visible developments in popular culture had been, of course, a dominant question after the First World War. Many architects, Le Corbusier and Gropius among them, argued that the boundaries of high and low architecture should be effaced, and sought to do so in their own buildings through the use of mass-produced furniture and industrial hardware and glazing. The more radical, German-Swiss wing of the early modern movement conflated high architecture with low in an attempt to undermine the notion that architecture is a high art: perhaps, as Hannes Meyer contended, design was simply “building.” After the Second World War, many architects felt an increased urgency to cope with popular culture, in part because of the explosion of consumerism, in part because Nazism and Fascism had reminded people in Western Europe and the United States of the intoxicating lure of mass movements. How to respond to a society in which consumption and mass communications dominated everyday life? How should the professional develop a style to accommodate this changing, and, some believed, increasingly leveled, society? Or should one follow the lead of neue Sachlichkeit and simply dispense altogether with the notion of architecture as a high art? The stylistic tropes of the early modern movement, owing to their growing association with bureaucratic elitism, could no longer plausibly be claimed to symbolize and serve the needs of the common man.

The essays that follow suggest that postwar responses to the growing dominance of popular culture can loosely be grouped into three categories, mapped along an axis with radical individualism at one pole, democratic liberalism in the middle, and radical communitarianism at the other pole. Mary Louise Lobinger, in her essay on Cedric Price’s unbuilt Fun Palace, reveals Price’s wish to dispense with the notion of architectural design in the conventional sense in favor of an ever-adaptable, ever-mutating, populist public space that might engage the whims and desires of every individual in an ongoing theater of spontaneous self-expression: boundaries between consumption, public display, and private reflection would collapse. Less radical architects such as Jacob Bakema, Cornelis Wagenaar shows, advocated balancing individual expression with group identification. The architect’s duty was not to conceive of visionary, futuristic spaces but rather to build for an actually existing democratic society, making buildings and urban environments that would combat the homogenizing qualities of postwar mass culture by facilitating an individual’s freedom of movement and thought. Maristella Casciato, in her essay on Italian Neorealist architects such as Ludovico Quaroni, explores how the radical left in Italy tried, in housing projects such as the INA-Casa Tiburtino quarter in Rome, to reject modernism by drawing
from earlier Italian modernists’ interest in vernacular architecture. By turning to such precedents, these architects hoped to accommodate and foster the group culture of the working classes. Other practitioners’ attitudes to popular culture and everyday life can be mapped along this continuum as well: Rudofsky and the Situationist International were as preoccupied with self-expression in everyday life, and as repelled by the homogenizing qualities of consumerism, as was Price. The Smithsons, as Sarah Williams Goldhagen points out, were as taken with the needs of the ‘common man’ as was their good friend and fellow Team Ten member Bakema.

Along with this populist questioning of the role of architecture in postwar society came a group of architects and urbanists who contended that architectural practice, as conventionally defined, could no longer exist. Price belongs in this category. So also do the Japanese Metabolists, as Cherie Wendelken demonstrates, innovators who tried to develop an anti-architecture, a vocabulary that might suitably express the tabula-rasa condition of their society after catastrophic destruction and defeat. Jean-Louis Violeau shows how the Situationist International, a radical movement composed mainly of artists and social theorists rather than architects, were perturbed by the same social problems as the Smithsons, Bakema, and their other, less-radical colleagues in Team Ten, but saw their role as one of negative critique rather than pragmatic or principled reform. Even Constant’s vision solved few architectural problems through design, and Constant himself acknowledged that he was theorizing for a post-revolutionary world.

Closely related to – in some cases overlapping with – the focus on popular culture, everyday life, and the rejection of high architecture were anxieties about freedom, specifically the two intertwined aspects of democratic freedom and the freedom to play, to express oneself in a non-goal-directed manner. During the early years of the modern movement, with participants’ political affiliations running the gamut from anarchist to democratic to communist, the potential of architecture to liberate its users from oppressive societal bonds was a central consideration. After the Second World War, in Europe and the United States the specific question of how architecture might be employed to buttress the cause of democratic freedom became paramount. Three historical events laid the foundation for this ongoing postwar preoccupation. A world war had just been fought to prevent the takeover of democratic societies by repressive, murderous regimes. This hot war was followed by an ongoing Cold War, which set communist totalitarianism against capitalist democracies. And the Cold War was itself accompanied in many countries by a growing mass culture in which a person’s aspirations to be an active, self-determining agent were held hostage by the pressure to conform and to consume. Taken together, these historical phenomena contributed to a belief, often heard in the postwar years, that people’s psychological and political freedoms were under siege and in need of fortification. In an essay comparing the Hansaviertel to the Stalinallee, landmark housing developments in West and East Berlin in the 1950s, Francesca Rogier furnishes the starkest example of how different political cultures manifested their ideologies of freedom in architectural form. Architects and planners in the West believed that modernism was, or could be, the symbolic embodiment of democratic ideals; communist architects espoused academic classicism as an architectural language that ennobled the proletariat. How best to use architectural
form to preserve individual freedom is also addressed in the work of Price and the Situationists as well as in the buildings, projects, and architectural theories of the Smithsons, who sought social and psychological liberation through the celebration of the everyday. Reinhold Martin’s essay, “Computer Architectures: Saarinen’s Patterns, IBM’s Brains,” portrays power relationships between client, architect, and such larger forces as the corporation or the state in a far more nefarious light. In his design for the IBM complex at Rochester (Minnesota), Saarinen, Martin argues, devised an architectural patterning system that bore an isomorphic relationship to the internal workings of a computer’s “brains;” thus, Martin contends, emerges a complicitous relationship between the architect and his client that was not necessarily within Saarinen’s conscious control.

One component of the general concern for freedom in the postwar years was manifested in the specific ideal of *homo ludens* – man at play. The concept of *homo ludens* was introduced into architectural culture in Holland with the publication of Johann Huizinga’s book of that title in 1938, in which the Dutch historian and philosopher argued that, as the pace of living accelerated with every passing year because of new developments in the sciences, communications, and transportation, society had come to neglect the cultural and psychological importance of play. *Homo ludens* should have equal social status as *homo faber* (man as maker) or *homo sapiens* (man as thinker). Huizinga depicted play as an activity that is simultaneously socio-critical and fulfilling in its own right, a notion that was taken up, and given a more specifically Marxist bent, in the 1960s in the work of the French urban theorist Henri Lefebvre. That architecture should create a playground for *homo ludens* became central to the work of several archi-

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sparked by both Surrealism (the Surrealist magazine *Minotaure* published articles on Dogon culture as early as 1933) and the new-found prominence in European and American intellectual discourse of anthropology and ethnography.27

Felicity Scott reveals that for Bernard Rudofsky, organizer of the exhibition *Architecture without Architects* at the Museum of Modern Art in 1964, it was above all the nomadism of certain undeveloped societies, particularly in Africa, that provided an intriguing model for living in opposition to the culture of consumption. Rudofsky thought that the only way to escape from the homogenizing monotony of his age was to move about, like the earliest hunters and gatherers: the shelters which most inspired him were tent-like, portable, and light. A primitizing impulse of a different sort can be found in the work and ideas of the Neorealists, who sought, in the wake of Fascism, indigenous vernacular models in their attempt to forge for postwar Italian architecture a "real," unsullied, democratic national identity with aggressively anti-authoritarian connotations.

A second manifestation of the impulse to return to essentials appears in the pursuit by some architects of the Sartrean ideal of authenticity. The Smithsons were touched by Sartre’s ideal that life should be lived, as much as possible, in a state of heightened consciousness that challenged the blindness and apathy created by hegemonic social conventions. To arrive at such an aesthetic, the Smithsons looked to the work of artists such as Jean Dubuffet to devise an architecture that simultaneously coopted and defamiliarized the detritus of everyday life through an aggressively honest use of familiar materials. This conviction that architecture should be “real” above all else, and should promote the experience of authenticity, also touched the work of the Neorealists and perhaps that of *Atbat*-Afrique as well, not to mention the work of architects central to the period whose work is not focused upon here, such as Kahn, Le Corbusier, and van Eyck. Sartre’s concept of authenticity also shaped the ideas of the Situationists, whose ideological proximity to various members of Team Ten is discussed by Violeau; Guy Debord acknowledged that his concept of the revelatory, liberatory *situation* had been directly inspired by Sartre’s ideas.28

Postwar architectural discourse also centered on the contextualism of space and time — the relationship of contemporary architecture to its location and its history. Both of these postwar themes were born in the early years of the modern movement. The relationship of architecture to its region or place — whether that be climate, region, topography, or vernacular tradition — had become problematic for architects in the 1930s, as nationalistic sentiments, following the internationalism of the 1920s, reigned in tense political and economic circumstances. Le Corbusier, with projects like the Villa de Mandrot (1929–30) and the Maison de Weekend (1935), began to inflect his machine-age vocabulary with reference to local topographic and climatic conditions,29 and Aalto, in his exhibition pavilions in Paris (1937) and New York (1939), tried to develop a peculiarly Scandinavian brand of modernism. In the early postwar years, issues of contextualism in time and place assumed a heightened importance for several reasons. In the wake of a catastrophic world war, some architects concluded that it was more important to emphasize continuity than rupture. The Smithsons and *Atbat*-Afrique, picking up on the regionalist concerns of Aalto and Le Corbusier, additionally argued in favor of a locally inflected architecture, not so much on the grounds
that it would express national identity (the Neorealists did maintain this) as on the
grounds that an architecture of 'place' would
combat the numbing iterability of the Interna-
tional Style.

After the war architects also began to
examine the language of the modern move-
ment in relation to its evolution over time,
considering the context in which modern
buildings were to be set, conceptualizing
new buildings in urban locales often satu-
rated with history. The issue of monumen-
tality emerged in the 1930s and lasted through
the 1940s and into the 1950s, highlighting
the value of historic monuments in an ever-
changing world. At the CIAM conference of
1951 at Hoddesdon, England, on the topic
of “the heart of the city,” this revitalized inter-
est in architecture’s history was expanded,
as architects, theorists, and historians looked
at historic urban plazas and parks as means
by which contemporary planning might
reinvigorate urban centers. The need for
sensitivity to historic and vernacular settings
also became apparent to architects who
faced unfamiliar architectural circumstances
and traditions in developing countries.

The desire of postwar architects and
theorists to situate architecture in space and
time emerged in part out of their disaffection
with the technological imagery that domi-
nated the monuments of early modernism.
As is further discussed in the conclusion,
technology after the Second World War
came to be viewed in a Jekyll/Hyde manner:
sometimes as a friend, sometimes as an
enemy, sometimes as a boon to, and some-
times as the bane of, the visual landscape.
This ambivalence about technology was
combined with concerns among architects
and theorists that people’s sense of responsi-
bility to their local communities was eroding
and that architecture, by causing people to
“identify” (the term is the Smithsons’) with
their immediate locale and its history, could
help buttress people’s sense of belonging.

Some architects, like Paul Rudolph, the
Neorealists, and the architects of the Stalin-
allee, embraced historical precedents,
while others, like the Metabolists, rejected
them. Tim Rohan shows, in his essay on
the Jewett Arts Center at Wellesley College,
that Rudolph’s attempt to link a modernist
building to its surrounding historic fabric
was inspired by discussions, originating
in the Italian circle of architects and theo-
rists around Ernesto Rogers, on the relation-
ship of architecture to its historic setting.
Literal historicism, however, such as that
employed by architects along East Berlin’s
Stalinallee, was at all costs to be avoided.
History was also in the minds of the Metabo-
lists, who felt the war and its aftermath
had left them no choice but to express the
virtual annihilation of their past and their
enslavement to the present and the future
by devising an architectural language with-
out precedent or roots in Japanese history.

INTRODUCTION

These essays reveal that one sector of
postwar architectural culture consisted of
practitioners and theorists who were par-
ticipating in a wide-ranging international
discourse on the future of the modern
movement. Its themes – popular culture/
 everyday life, anti-architecture, democratic
freedom, homo ludens, primitivism, authen-
ticity, architecture’s history, regionalism/
place – constitute a vibrant and important
component of architecture’s postwar years.
In light of this, the inquiries into architec-
ture’s history that eventually led to post-
modernity become but one element in a
larger field.
The essays in this volume highlight the failings in the canonical account of postwar architectural culture, in its explanation of why revisions in modernism were called for and undertaken, and in its summation of what replaced the early modern movement in the postwar years. Important aspects of postwar architectural culture, invisible in the blinkered vision of postmodernism, have been recaptured here. These essays begin to restore that culture's plurality and its richness. Collectively, they underscore the need to reconceptualize this period of modernist history and its relationship to the earlier modern movement. A framework for doing so is proposed in the Coda to this book.
Although the writings collected in Joan Ockman, Architecture Culture 1945–1968: A Documentary Anthology (New York: Rizzoli, 1993), present the rich plurality of postwar architectural culture, her introductory essay terms this period an “interregnum” between modernism and postmodernism. Diane Ghirardo’s Architecture after Modernism (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1996) also presents the postwar period as an “interregnum” leading to postmodernism.


6. Thanks to Stanislaus von Moos for pointing out to us the anxiety of the postwar years.


10. An exception to this is the movement that coalesced around R. Buckminster Fuller in the early 1950s. See Sarah Williams Goldhagen, Louis Kahn’s Situated Modernism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), chapter three.


17. See “Reaffirmation of the Aims of c.i.a.m,” republished in Ockman, 100–02.

18. In Tra guerra e paece, Jean-Louis Cohen stresses that chapters in traditional histories usually end at 1939, but again only in 1945, insisting on the need to address the void of the war period as a whole that is fundamental to the reorganizations of architectural theories and practices. P. Bonifazio et al., Tra guerra e paece: Società, cultura e architettura nel secondo dopoguerra (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1999).


21. A German translation of Huizinga’s Homo Ludens was published in 1933, followed by translations to English in 1949 and French in 1951.


23. See this essay in this volume by Cornelis Wagenaar.


28. See Sadler, 45.

29. See the work of Mary McLeod, especially her “Urbanism and Utopia: Le Corbusier from Regional Syndicalism to Vichy,” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1983); see also Colin St. John Wilson, The Other Tradition of Modern Architecture: The Uncompleted Project (London: Academy, 1995).