

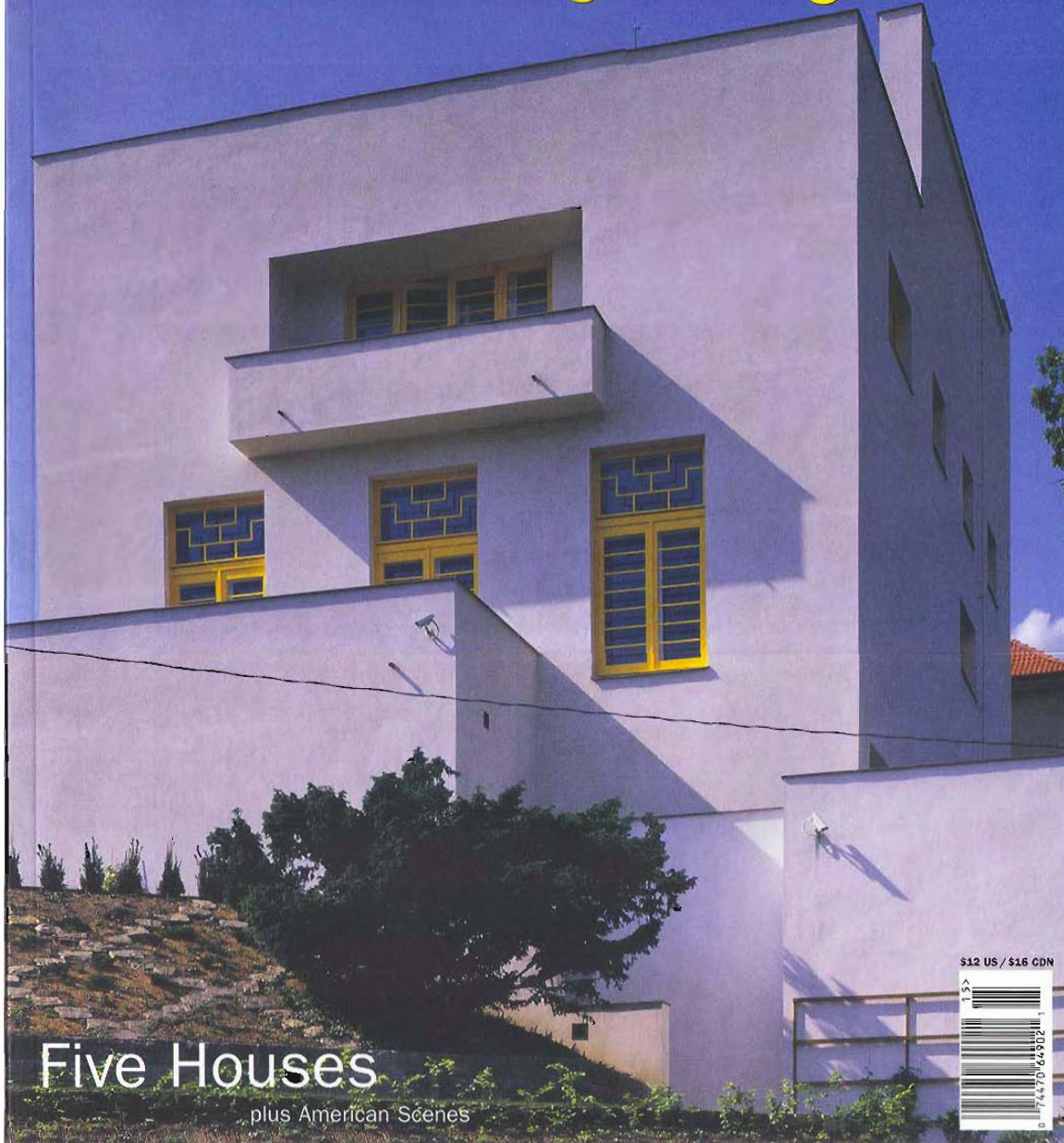
Harvard Design Magazine

Fall 2001

Harvard University Graduate School of Design

Architecture, Landscape Architecture,

Urban Design and Planning



Five Houses
plus American Scenes

\$12 US / \$16 CDN



Peter G. Rowe
Dean of the Faculty of Design
Russell A. Sanna
Associate Dean for Administration and Finance

William S. Saunders
Nancy Levinson
Editors

Kelly McMurray/kellydesign
Art Director
Kristie Downing
Designer
Meghan Ryan
Editorial and Business Coordinator
Jessica Kraft
Benjamin Wurgaft
Interns
Johanna Richardson
Student Assistant

Editorial Board
George Baird
Peter Buchanan
Roger Conover
Margaret Crawford
Kenneth Frampton
Gary Hilderbrand
Alex Krieger
Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani
Joan Ockman
Graham Owen
Michael Pollan
Bartholomew Voorsanger
Cynthia Weese
Mabel Wilson

- 4 **Savoye Space** by Daniel Naegele
14 **White Walls in the Golden City** by Jan Otakar Fischer
24 **Tugendhat Frames** by Claire Zimmerman
32 **A Name, Then a Chair, Then a House** by Beatriz Colomina
38 **Once Again by the Pacific** by Tim Culvahouse and Lisa Findley

American Scenes

- 46 **Biospherian Dreams** photographs by Richard Barnes
essay by James S. Russell

On Design

- 60 **Genius Loco** by Michael Sorkin

On Place

- 68 **Notes from Underground** by Marshall Berman

Harvard Design Magazine

Fall 2001 Number 15

Front cover: Villa Müller, 2000.

Photo: Pavel Stechav/Radoven Bocek

Inside front cover: The Biosphere. Photo: Richard Barnes

Back cover: Sea Ranch. Photo: Morley Baer/Morley Baer

Archives, University of California at Santa Cruz. Tugendhat House. Photo: Courtesy of the Miles van der Rohe Archive, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. The Biosphere. Photo: Richard Barnes.

Harvard Design Magazine (ISSN 1093-4421) is published three times yearly (winter/spring, summer, and fall) by The MIT Press for the Harvard University Graduate School of Design. Subscriptions and address changes should be addressed to MIT Press Journals, Five Cambridge Center, Suite 4, Cambridge, MA 02142-1407; tel. 617 253 2889; fax. 617 577 1545; e-mail: journals-orders@mit.edu. Per year subscription rates are: Individuals \$40, Students and retired \$24, Institutions \$98. Outside the United States add \$20 for postage and handling. Canadians add additional 7% GST. Current issues are \$14. Back issues are: Individuals \$17, Institutions \$34. Outside the United States add \$5 per issue for postage and handling. Canadians add additional 7% GST. Claims for missing issues will be honored free of charge if made within three months of the publication date of the issue. Claims may be submitted to journals.claims@mit.edu. Prices subject to change without notice. HDM web site: <http://www.gsd.harvard.edu/hdm>. MIT Press web site: <http://mitpress.mit.edu/HDM>

Distributors: CMG, 250 West 59th St., New York, NY 10021; tel. 1 800 223 8030; fax. 212 265 1024.

For advertising information, contact the Marketing Department, MIT Press Journals, Five Cambridge Center, Suite 4, Cambridge, MA 02142-1407; 617 253 2866; e-mail: journals-info@mit.edu.

Harvard Design Magazine is abstracted/indexed in the Avery Index to Architecture Periodicals, ARTbibliographies Modern, and Bibliography of the History of Art.

Information regarding permission to photocopy, republish, or otherwise redistribute this material may be obtained by contacting: Subsidiary Rights Manager, MIT Press Journals, Five Cambridge Center, Suite 4, Cambridge, MA 02142-1407 USA; tel. 617 253 2864; fax. 617 258 5028; e-mail: journals-rights@mit.edu.

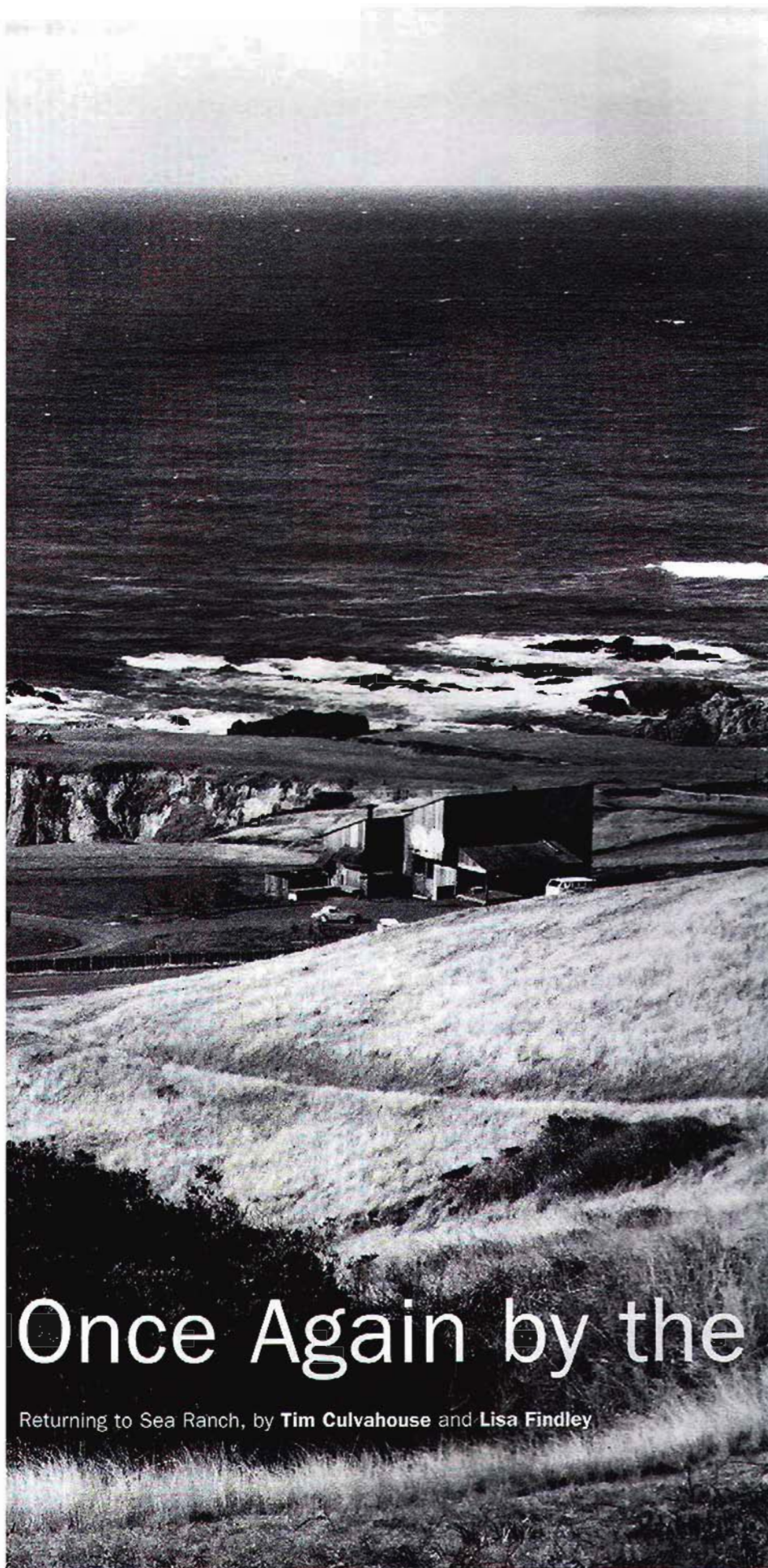
© 2001 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College

Book Reviews

- 76 **Mart Stam's Trousers**
by Crimson with Michael Speaks
and Gerard Hadders
reviewed by George Baird
82 **Shaping the Great City**
edited by Eve Blau and Monika Platzer
reviewed by Matthew S. Witkovsky
85 **Le Corbusier and the Continual Revolution in Architecture**
by Charles Jencks
reviewed by Ivan Žaknić

GSD Notes

- 88 Faculty Project, Faculty Publications, GSD Books, Events, and Programs

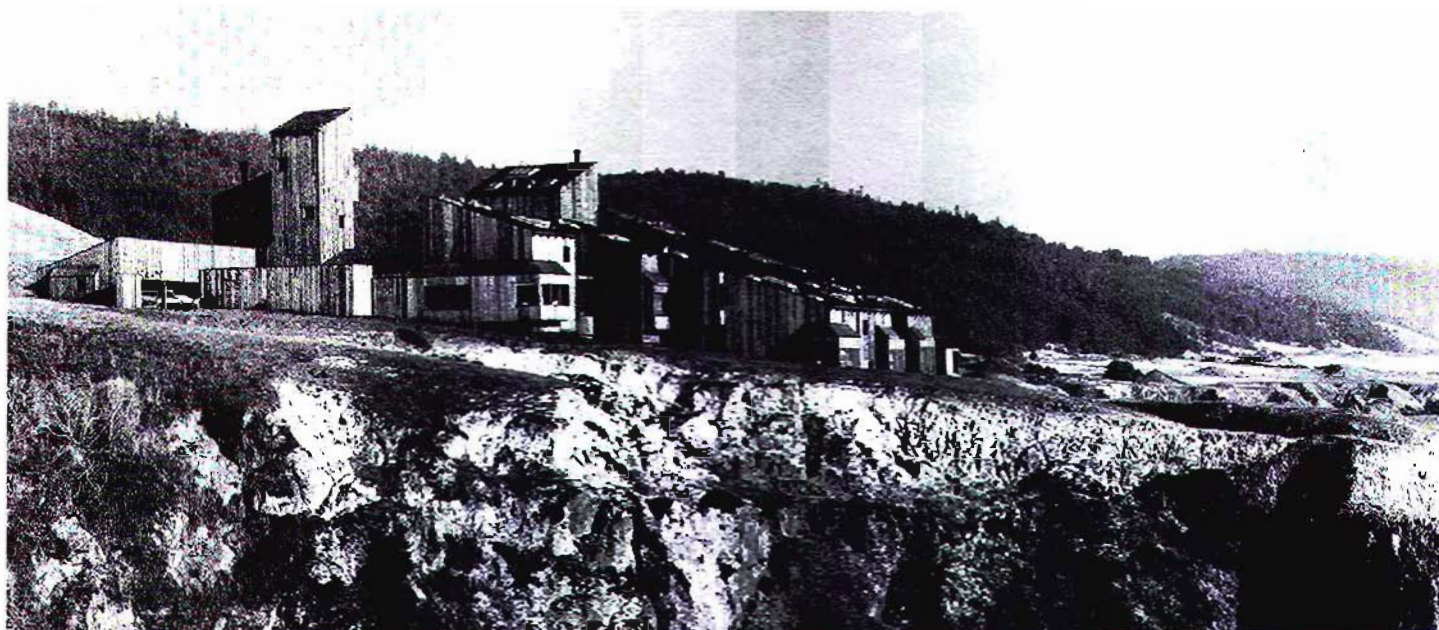


FOR THOSE OF US studying architecture in the '70s and early '80s, the condominium complex at Sea Ranch was a touchstone work. Designed by Charles Moore, Donlyn Lyndon, William Turnbull, and Richard Whitaker—or MLTW, as they were known collectively—and completed in 1966, the project was praised for its harmonious but not self-effacing incorporation of the Northern California vernacular, for its sensitive response to the spectacular Pacific coast, and for its inventive approach to the casual weekend life of well-to-do San Franciscans.¹ Sea Ranch would eventually extend up the coast for ten miles, and include countless single-family vacation houses. But it was this first condominium that put the place on the architectural map and suggested rich possibilities for residential architecture in a volatile era marked by the search for new beginnings.

More recently, however, Sea Ranch has almost disappeared from the map; it is no longer on the list of projects likely to be referred to in books, articles, and lectures. It is curious, and perhaps ironic, that the project began to disappear just when it received the Twenty-Five-Year Award from the American Institute of Architects, in 1991. It cannot be found in even so comprehensive a venture as "At the End of the Century: One Hundred Years of Architecture," the millennial exhibition organized by Richard Koshalek and Elizabeth Smith through the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles.² Nor is it mentioned in books where it would be a natural addition to the conversation, books like David Leatherbarrow's *Uncommon Ground* or Steven Harris and Deborah Berke's *Architecture of the Everyday*.³ A recent article in the "House and Home" section of the *New York Times* focused on single-family houses at Sea Ranch, mentioning the condominium only in passing.⁴ Condominium 1 at Sea Ranch seems no longer to be canonical.

Once Again by the Pacific

Returning to Sea Ranch, by **Tim Culvahouse** and **Lisa Findley**



Sea Ranch, circa 1964

Before considering further the case of Sea Ranch, one might ask: How does a building become canonical? We can think of several ways. First and most obviously, a building becomes canonical when many people admire it. For many Americans, but not for many American architects, the United States Capitol is a canonical building, as is the White House. Grandeur, historical and political significance, neoclassical style—these have helped to establish and maintain these famous buildings in the public mind.

For those of us on architecture's professional-academic axis, other criteria might prevail; or perhaps merely other registers of the same criteria. A building's status is as likely to be secured by the grandeur of minimalism as by that of classicism; by the historical and political significance of a building to our profession; by an intellectual, rather than visual, beauty; and certainly by habits of thinking.

We might identify several ways in which a building gains the admiration of architects. One way is originality. Is the building the first of its kind? San Francisco's Hallidie Building holds a minor place in the canon as the first structure with a glass curtain wall. A building may also be canonical for being the last of its kind—witness the Monadnock Block, the last of the skyscrapers with load-bearing walls. A building might be worthy of the textbooks because it seems to epitomize a significant historical moment, as Monticello epitomizes American Palladianism. And a building may be thought to be the best of its kind (one sort of epitome), as the Seagram Building is arguably the best midcentury modernist high-rise (or, alternatively, the best tall building by Mies).

Or a work may be the most extreme case of a type. If extremity is the principle at work, then the Glass House by Philip Johnson is surely a canonical design. But this strategy does not always work: Johnson's Brick Guest

House is as extreme in its own (opposing) way as the Glass House, but hardly ranks comparably in the canon. One notable kind of extremity is iconic clarity: an extreme of figural distinction, of which Palladio's Villa Rotunda and Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye are examples.

A building may become canonical not just because it has inherent value, but also because it is readily teachable. Much of Le Corbusier's work qualifies here, as it is easy to diagram and illustrative of articulated and historically differentiated principles (which is not to say that the buildings are not admirable on other terms as well). Richard Norman Shaw's buildings, by contrast, are not so easy to explain, so they are not so fondly taught in design studios: thus they are not so canonical. Or so one argument might run. A counter-argument would hold that the clarity of intention of Le Corbusier's work is precisely what makes the work good—that it makes it easy to teach is merely an added benefit—and Shaw's less clear buildings are simply less good. Finally, a building, once in the canon, may remain there while others fall from view if it continues to yield insights when approached from new critical perspectives. Canonical buildings sustain interrogation.

No doubt there are other reasons a building might be canonized, but we ought fairly to suppose that a combination of ground-breaking originality, crystallization of a historical moment, clear and demonstrable intentions, excellence for its type, a depth that rewards continued attention (and the affection of its users) might secure for a building a place in the canon. If this were the case, there would be no question about the standing of Condominium 1 at Sea Ranch.

And so we believe that the disappearance of Sea Ranch from the map, from the canon, is undeserved—that Sea Ranch merits continuing study and that it is instructive not merely historically but for contemporary practice as

well. Its virtues are many. Indeed, like any good poststructuralist project, Sea Ranch is open-ended, nonhierarchical, contingent, and spatially complex, a building in which traditional forms, construction techniques, and spatial ideas have been intriguingly reconsidered. And ultimately, and perhaps most important—since architecture is enclosure for inhabitation—it structures an experience precisely attuned to the lived time of the weekend.

What happened? Why has Sea Ranch receded from view? It is not difficult to imagine why Condominium 1 has recently been neglected within the academy. No doubt this has to do with the subsequent careers of its architects, and particularly with the provocative—some would say kitschy—buildings that Charles Moore designed after he left MLTW: the Piazza d'Italia, the Wonderwall for the New Orleans World's Fair, and so on.⁵ William Turnbull followed a more modest path, but if his subsequent projects have earned wide admiration, they have generally been too unassuming to excite critical debate; much the same can said for Donlyn Lyndon's later work. While he has continued to practice, Richard Whitaker has focused more on education.⁶

More is at stake, however, than stylistic preferences for "less" or "more." Condominium 1 reflects the continuing struggle of modern architects to come to grips with history and with the physical and temporal contexts of architecture. As anthropologist and folklorist Henry Glassie has observed, designers "create out of the smallness of their experience."⁷ Within this inescapable limitation, Moore, Lyndon, Turnbull, and Whitaker sought, by combining their various passions, to expand the bounds of modern architectural practice and to bring to it a renewed formal, spatial, and material generosity. Moreover, in view of the subsequent polarization of architecture into "modernist" and "postmodernist" camps,

The disappearance of Sea Ranch from the canon is undeserved—Sea Ranch merits study, not merely historically but for contemporary practice as well. Like any good poststructuralist project, Sea Ranch is open-ended, nonhierarchical, contingent, and spatially complex.

it is worth insisting upon the *modernity* of Sea Ranch. Because of its debt to the regional and vernacular, Sea Ranch has been categorized by some as “postmodern,” and this association, too, has diminished its reputation.⁸ But to its designers, although they clearly contributed to the contemporary critique of high modernist practice, Sea Ranch was in no way a repudiation of modernist principles. And the critique of high modernism—which originated within modernism itself, in the work of Alvar Aalto, Hugo Haring, Sigurd Lewerentz, and others—argued that modern architecture should not be considered ahistorical and that universalized building forms should not be deployed indifferently from Grenoble to Timbuktu.⁹

The current neglect of Sea Ranch is due partly to the discipline’s recent forgetting of these critical propositions. The condominium seems to have disappeared behind Charles Moore’s more flamboyant work in much the way that Colin Rowe’s historicization of modern architecture has disappeared behind the cluttering proposals of Rowe and Fred Koetter’s *Collage City*.¹⁰ New modernist buildings are promoted in opposition to the “historical styles,” as if once again we believed that the forms of modernism, alone among artifacts, reside outside history. Recollection of ‘20s bungalows is nostalgic; recollection of ‘20s *siedlungen* somehow is not. And Colin Rowe’s is not the only criticism we have forgotten; one might think, these last few years, that Alan Colquhoun had never written the essays collected as *Modern Architecture and Historical Change*.¹¹ Compared with Daniel Libeskind’s recent and projected “ducks” (to use Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown’s term), those of Paul Rudolph have faded like wallflowers into their context.¹² Sea Ranch is, from this perspective, one more victim of architecture’s loss of short-term memory. It has been easy, in these neomodernist days, once again to repudiate the idea of historical style, because so much postmodernist work recalled historical sources only referentially. A building was to remind you of a Chippendale highboy, but not mislead you into supposing that you were actually seeing such a thing. The work that resulted was deliberately devoid of any of those qualities of the original that might serve to ground one in the present—material character, for example, or texture and relief, the play of light and shadow; in this way, it was hoped, it would carry you back more surely to the original. Postmodern historicism has been dissatisfying largely because it has sacrificed the lived experience of the new thing to the recollection of the old.

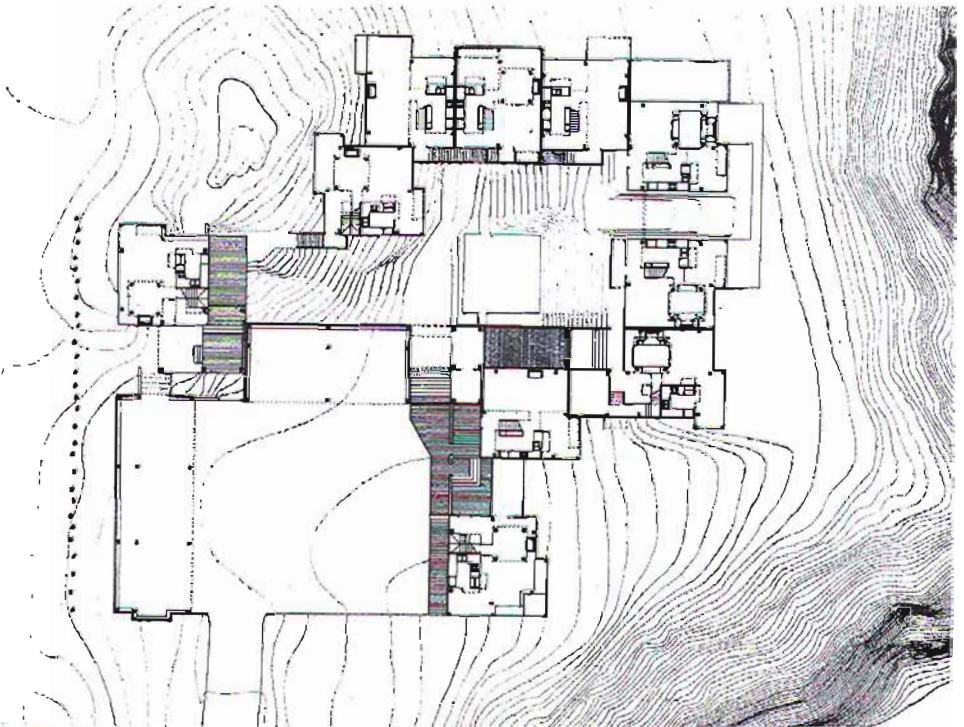
At Sea Ranch, however, the architects have

deployed historical sources not to remind us of those sources (though we may be reminded, and no harm done), but rather to strengthen and shape our immediate experience of the place. The condominium looks to a nearby sheep barn as a material and constructional model, and to the work of Louis Kahn for ideas about the relationship between structure and spatial order. Its spatial composition draws on the concept of the *aedicula* as described by architectural historian John Summerson,¹³ on the idea of the free plan, and also on the idea of the free section, which had been projected but seldom realized in the early years of modernism. In the shaping of the landscape, too, the designers of Sea Ranch have not only learned from what was there but also incorporated other influences. The landscape planning reflects the designers’ careful study of local landforms and of the relationship of vernacular buildings to those forms, but it also uses an idea about “precinct” and “marker” found in William Wurster’s Gregory Farm House, and a concept derived from the Japanese house about how foreground can work as a miniature landscape. The landscape of the courtyard of Sea Ranch, a steeply rumbling, grassy common space, finds its model in Aalto’s Town Hall at Säynätsalo. The automobile court alludes (another instance) to the Gregory Farm House, but it also recalls a more nearby model, that of Fort Ross, a 19th-century Russian trading post a few miles down the road. Like the fort, Condominium 1

can be viewed as a self-consciously civilized wilderness outpost. As such, Sea Ranch was artfully shaped to accommodate the very particular experience of time and distance that is the city-dweller’s weekend in the country.

BUILDING

The ways in which MLTW found and used sources for the structure and construction of Sea Ranch tell us much about the eclecticism and transformative energy of their method. The most apparent and thus best-known local source was a sheep barn that still stands on a bluff north of the condominium. (Until the postwar era, this stretch of Northern California coast was occupied mostly by sheep farms.) The architects used the barn as a model, both material and constructional, for how to build in this windswept meadow—but they combined the barn’s post-and-beam construction with their own modern understanding of structure. The framing in the barn consists of a series of simple spans—not the most efficient use of wood, since it maximizes bending stress at midspan. In the condominium, the columns are pulled back from the corners in one direction to allow continuous beams to cantilever. In the other direction, another continuous beam spans between both the cantilevers and a single, center column. The repeated spatial module, given measure by a structural system that capitalizes on the efficiency of the cantilever, was a lesson learned from Louis Kahn.¹⁴



Sea Ranch, plan



The condominium's sensitivity to the land is not sentimental. Rather, it suggests the pragmatic yet loving concern of a farmer for the land: the attitude that land is valuable, possesses its own logic, and can be shaped and used.

The cantilever allows a square plan to work as a linear structure; spatially, it accommodates the expansion of the corner into an oblong bay—the strategic, Wrightian dissolution of the corner inflected toward the view. Also, while in the barn the beams span from column to column, in the condominium the beams continue beyond the columns on the outboard side. One critical result is that the siding is separated from the columns by the four-inch width of the beam, which underscores what is only implied in the barn—the distinction between structure and cladding, or between frame and curtain wall. The square structural columns stand clearly separate from the wall, emphasizing the latent modernity of the vernacular.

The free plan of early modernism, as articulated by Le Corbusier, may have liberated space horizontally; however, when sandwiched between the floor plates of a building, as in the *Maison Dom-Ino*, it suffered a loss of freedom in section. At the condominium, free plan and free section are combined to create a complex, three-dimensional composition of living spaces within a simple shell. That shell, as we have been arguing, is a modern one, formed by frame and curtain wall. To our eyes, the bed and bath lofts of Condominium 1 that overlook the main living spaces recall the spiraling spaces of Adolf Loos's *raumplan*, and it is not difficult to see the spatial development of the condominium complex as a synthesis of Loosian *raumplan* and Corbusian *plan libre*.¹⁵ Of course, Loos was not much on the minds of MLTW, or of American architects in general, in the early 1960s. There were, however, other modern precedents for this sort of disposition of spaces; Donald Lyndon refers in particular to a 1939 project by expatriate American architect Paul Nelson for *La Maison Suspendue*, in which free-form sleeping pods are hung along a ramp spiraling through a simple, cubic volume.¹⁶

Each unit of the complex is occupied by diverse, built-in objects that give the spaces both human scale and a sense of expansiveness: a bathroom stacked above an open kitchen, a bay window, a fireplace. Often, a four-columned square loft (one of Moore's beloved *aediculae*) shelters an intimate space below and forms a bed-box above. And if the vocabulary of objects is similar from unit to unit, its deployment is never the same. The architects use a variety of elements to create, within large simple enclosures, complex and overlapping spaces. In this manner MLTW have afforded at Sea Ranch many places in which to be—to sleep, to read, to talk, to have a civilized camp-out.

The spatial complexity of Sea Ranch antici-

pates, on the one hand, the current trend in loft living, and on the other, recent morphological experiments. The bohemian style of San Francisco in the '60s, blended with a deliberately casual version of high modernism, has here produced double- and triple-height spaces, mezzanine bedrooms, non-programmed living/dining spaces, open kitchens, and large expanses of glass, all of which have come to characterize high-end urban living. The loft, understood as the highly specified occupation of a generic container, has been theorized by Rem Koolhaas in his 1978 *Delirious New York*.¹⁷ OMA's project for Paris's *Très Grande Bibliothèque*, with its figural volumes suspended in a cubic matrix, is one among many of its latter-day progeny. As an exploration in formal variation, Condominium 1 anticipates as well current investigations into open-ended morphological systems and algorithmic spatial variation, such as those of Greg Lynn.

Unlike many of these investigations, however, the condominium began not with form in the abstract but with concrete conceptions of structure, construction, and inhabited space. MLTW took up the early '60s fascination with the module, but instead of merely rotating or shifting identical units, as was common practice, they deployed a set of discrete elements—aedicula, kitchen/bath tower, fireplace, bay window—and then disposed them differently in each unit in relationship to the fall of the land, to views, to solar orientation, and to other units. Their method can be seen as "proto-poststructuralist," if by post-structuralism we mean not the presence of certain visual qualities (jarring formal collisions, skewed volumes, Form-Z-generated warped spaces, accelerating curves) but instead the exploration of particulars that set up contingencies, the dismantling of hierarchies, and the opening up of relationships.

LANDSCAPE

The condominium's relationship to the landscape is as systematic and as particular as its construction. Its sensitivity to the land is not sentimental. Rather, it suggests the pragmatic yet loving concern of a farmer for the land: the attitude that land is valuable, possesses its own logic, and can be shaped and used. Buildings designed and made with this attitude have a strong presence in the landscape; they do not try to hide, to blend into the scene. They establish a dialogue. Nestling against the slope of an existing hill, the condominium echoes and in fact accentuates the landforms of the site. Just as Charles Moore would, in later work, develop and refine the kind of spatial complexity he first explored at Sea Ranch, William Turnbull

would cultivate this sort of conversation with the landscape. It was Turnbull's early diagrams—what the partners refer to as his "Kama Sutra for how to fit the land"—that gave rise to the final clustering of the units.

The landscape armature for the entire Sea Ranch property was the work of landscape architect Lawrence Halprin and included as a central notion the maintaining of cypress hedgerows, planted by sheep farmers as windbreaks, and the planting of new ones. These hedgerows not only eased the wind; they also created, in effect, large, room-like outdoor spaces between the ocean to the west and the mountains to the east, and thus divided the huge parcel of land into smaller segments. MLTW worked explicitly with this theme of landscape rooms: they distributed the units around two courtyards and gave most private patios. One experiences the landscape at Sea Ranch as a series of nested, enclosed spaces open to the sky and protected from the wind.

MLTW organized the condominium under one shed roof large enough to hold its own against the vastness of the sea and the rocky coastal plain. They chose also to allow the roof slope to generate the building section. At the edge nearest the ocean, the architects set the eave at the lowest height possible; this establishes the low point of the great sloping roof, which echoes the average slope of the site: four-in-twelve. And because the earth does not rise at a regular rate, the volume between the shed roof and the rocky ground varies. It is this variation that allowed the architects to create the intricate spaces in the ten units that make up the complex.

The fit with the landscape continues at other scales. As observant Bay Area architects, MLTW knew of the relentless glare that in the afternoon bounces off the Pacific Ocean. Everyone wants an ocean view, but that view can be unkind; and so the architects provided each unit with an alternate view, up or down the coast, focused on nearer features than the horizon of the Pacific. These middle-ground views also work to anchor the visitor in the landscape, providing a sense of human scale, a place to be, a way to feel grounded at the edge of the limitless sea.

As with the interiors, the relationship between the individual units and the landscape is characterized by inventive variation with a simple palette. The project's south elevation, for instance, which encompasses five units, presents in almost textbook fashion five ways in which the indoors could relate to the outside: with a small fenced court, a balcony, a strip window, a greenhouse, and a sliding door letting directly onto the rocky ground. Almost

If you spend only one weekend at the condominium, the unit to rent is Charles Moore's own, number 9. Here, daylight filters from skylights and glows on the wood walls. The aedicula, with bed-box above, creates a low, intimate space in front of the fire.

every unit contains a space level with and opening right onto the ground outside, on the uphill side; the fall of the land leaves the same floor level perched above the ground on the downhill side. This play with topography is overlaid with the play between intimate and distant views. The contrast of outlooks is perhaps most dramatic in Unit 1 where, on the uphill side, a sliding door opens onto a small, rocky flat patio shaded by a wind-shaped cypress, while just twenty-five feet across the unit, a bay window two stories above the ground commands a view of the Pacific. What is achieved here is that "simultaneous experience . . . of intense sensations of being inside and outside, of envelopment and detachment," that architect and critic Colin St. John Wilson considers "uniquely the role of the masterpiece."¹⁸

WEEKEND

Neither the configuration of the buildings as such—their space, structure, and construction—nor their relationship to the landscape is an end in itself. Condominium 1 is, in essence, a place to be inhabited in a very particular way: as a weekend retreat located at the limit of what most of us would consider a comfortable driving distance from the Bay Area. Condominium 1 must finally be understood as a destination, arrived at with some effort, enjoyed briefly, left reluctantly. This experience and its understanding begin with the journey.

From San Francisco and other Bay Area cities, the hundred-mile trip takes you about two-and-a-half hours, whether you wind over the hills from Healdsburg or twist and turn along the coast on Highway 1. The drive is beautiful, but it is not fast. On either route you encounter the precarious cliffs above the Pacific, the ragged stands of pine and cypress, and the windswept grasslands of the high coastal plain. In this part of California, almost every day, the calm morning air gives way to fierce afternoon winds; the rock-strewn beaches, which all but disappear at high tide, bear little resemblance to the fabled stretches of Los Angeles sand several hundred miles south.

Four decades ago, when Sea Ranch was built, the coastal drive took you through Fort Ross; then, in the mid-'60s, the old trading route that had already become Highway 1 curved through a gap in the palisade of redwood logs, meandered through the fort, and exited through another gap. Slowing for a moment, you were contained by the buildings, sheltered from a landscape that could be as harsh as it was beautiful. You would, in those days, have been aware of the how the arrival court of the condominium recalls the court-

yard of Fort Ross. That recollection is not possible today, since the highway has been rerouted east of the fort (which is now a state park); but it would have been clear enough to anyone at the time. Less obvious to the lay person (and even to many architects) would be the recollection—noted earlier—of Wurster's Gregory Farm House, with its water tower standing sentinel over an entry court, just as the court at Sea Ranch is heralded by the tower of Unit 10. The Gregory Farm House itself is part of a regional tradition that derives from the architecture of the Spanish mission: a cluster of buildings surrounding a court, identified afar by its bell tower.

Both the mission and the fort are frontier outposts; each brings civilization into the wilderness. Fort Ross, in its mix of ruggedness and refinement, was, for the designers of the condominium, a telling paradigm of frontier urbanity, of how to make a place in the country intended not for country people but for city dwellers. The fort buildings are constructed of dark, rough-hewn redwood logs, but, in vivid contrast, the windows are finely crafted and whitewashed, evidence that the Russian traders had come from a place more cultivated than the distant country in which they settled. And if in the fort urbanity is suggested mainly in the refinement of the windows, in the condominium it is achieved by the precision with which elements are situated and sequences are developed, a precision that belies the apparent casualness of the juxtapositions. The condominium accommodates the city dweller not symbolically but spatially, making it possible to come to rest in this restless landscape.

Cypresses edge both sides of the short road from the highway to the building. From this shady, fragrant tunnel you emerge into the blinding glare of the afternoon sun. The road then swings left across a meadow and you enter the first of two courtyards, this one enclosed by tall wooden walls and parking sheds. MLTW's orchestration of automobile entry perceptually prolongs your arrival: by the time you have moved through this series of compressed, contrasting spaces and emerged from your car, you feel far from the highway. Your muscles register the steepness of the site with each trip between car and condo, as you carry in clothes, bedding, firewood, groceries, and wine. The distance between car and condo further distances the visitor from the workaday world.

MLTW have given each unit an astonishing series of small gestures that makes the passage from courtyard to entry hall seem a considerable distance. (This also helps to set up a kind

of distance between you and the other, unknown weekenders; you mingle only if you choose to.) Sometimes a gate opens onto a tiny private courtyard; sometimes an intimate short run of stairs ends at a small, enclosed porch; and always the front door is concealed from the courtyard, so that comings and goings are discreet, and privacy is maintained.

If you spend only one weekend at the condominium, the unit to rent is Charles Moore's own, number 9. Here, daylight filters from skylights and glows on the wood walls. The aedicula, with bed-box above, creates a low, intimate space in front of the fire. On the main level, window seats as wide as single beds flank the bay window, extending out beyond the walls like saddlebags. Let the others take the loft beds and the more conventional bedroom (installed for an ailing Moore shortly before his death). Volunteer for the window seat. There is surely no finer place to wake up in the morning, overlooking the edge of the bluff, with the surf surging around huge rocks where sea lions are also waking, as the mist dissolves and the sun breaks through the fog. And there is no better place to understand the nature of MLTW's work at Sea Ranch.

Observe, for example, the column that intervenes between the main space and the window seat. What might appear to be a happenstance of the morphological system is in fact carefully calculated. The column brings the largest scale of the dwelling—its massive structure—up against one of its most intimate places, emphasizing the extension of the window seat beyond the principal boundary of the enclosure. That enclosure itself, as we have seen, is spaced away from the frame by several inches, reiterating the extension outward. Countering that extension is the thin, taut membrane of glazing that contains you, out beyond the heavy structure, on a light, delicate ledge, just yards from the bluff and the surf below. This place, secure and comfortable, and yet on the edge and also reaching beyond the edge, beckons the moment you arrive.

And that is the crucial moment, the moment you arrive, since the weekend itself is hardly more than an extended arrival, ending in a last-minute departure. It is not only for the sake of the preservation of the landscape that the condominium does not encourage you to spill out onto the lawn with your Weber grill and your whiffle ball. You have no time for such things. Instead you find, packed into the simple volumes, a complex set of spaces that allows two people to begin a conversation without preliminaries, or a half-



dozen people to sit down to a meal in a setting that is contained and yet open, obliquely, to the sea. And you find the window seat. The immediacy of these spaces and their expansion into the landscape are the two poles toward which every design judgment was directed. Juxtaposing enclosure and extension, settling you variously but effortlessly into a bracing landscape, the condominium at Sea Ranch gives your weekend a most generous shape.

Notes

1. In 1963, an Hawaii-based developer, Oceanic Properties, commissioned MLTW to design a site plan for several clusters of weekend condominiums on thirty-five acres at the southern end of a 5,000-acre coastal site. The developer was convinced that the relative density of condominiums would not compromise the sense of "getting away from it all"; well-configured density might help not only to preserve the landscape but also to enhance the experience. Urbane and environmentally responsible, condominiums would concentrate development, and land for open space would be held in common. MLTW's Condominium 1 (the only cluster built to their design), along with the nearby Sea Ranch Lodge (the development's only hotel) and a small group of single-

family houses—designed, as was the lodge, by Joseph Esherick—became models for the buildings that would eventually comprise Sea Ranch.

Lawrence Halprin was the master planner. The development of Sea Ranch began at its southern edge, at Condominium 1. Halprin's original concept—that all the houses should tuck up against existing or new hedgerows, leaving the meadows between them open, was realized only in the first few meadows. As the development gained popularity, this strategy was replaced with the more lucrative approach of the typical subdivision.

2. Richard Koshalek and Elizabeth A. T. Smith, "At the End of the Century: One Hundred Years of Architecture," Museum of Contemporary Art, Geffen Contemporary, Los Angeles, 16 April–24 September 2000.

3. David Leatherbarrow, *Uncommon Ground: Architecture, Technology, Topography* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000); Steven Harris and Deborah Berke, eds., *Architecture of the Everyday* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997).

4. Diana Ketchum, "A Sea Change Where the View Once Ruled," *New York Times*, May 31, 2001, D1.

5. See, for instance, Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980), 293. Here Frampton writes: "The cynicism which ultimately motivates such scenographic operations [as Moore and Turnbull's design for Kresge

College at University of California at Santa Cruz] has since been openly conceded by Moore." Frampton then refers to the "flaccid eclecticism of Moore (who abandoned the constructional purity of his Sea Ranch complex . . . as soon as it was completed)." This parenthetical comment is the only mention of Sea Ranch in the book.

6. A recent monograph is noteworthy here: *William Turnbull, Jr.: Buildings in the Landscape* (San Francisco: William Stout Publishers, 2001). Also, several houses by Donlyn Lyndon are featured in the *New York Times* article cited in endnote 4.

7. Henry W. Glassie, *Vernacular Architecture* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2000), 17. Glassie's earlier *Folk Housing in Middle Virginia* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1975) is perhaps unsurpassed as an example of rigorous structural analysis of architecture.

8. Such distinctions may be made too casually and unreflectively, prompted, for example, by what Donlyn Lyndon refers to as "the dumbfoundingly stupid idea that roofs with shapes aren't modern."

9. For this critique within modernism, see Colin St. John Wilson, *The Other Tradition of Modern Architecture: The Uncompleted Project* (London: Academy Editions, 1995), which expands on earlier essays collected in *Architectural Reflections: Studies in the Philosophy and Practice of Architecture* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, Ltd., 1992).

10. See, for the former, Colin Rowe, *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976) and, for the latter, Colin Rowe and Frederick Koetter, *Collage City* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1979).

11. Alan Colquhoun, *Essays in Architectural Criticism: Modern Architecture and Historical Change* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981).

12. Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas*, rev. ed. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1977), 87–103.

13. John Summerson, *Heavenly Mansions* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1963).

14. Compare, for example, the plan of Condominium 1 with that of Kahn's Richards Medical Research Laboratory of 1961.

15. For a comparison of the two spatial conceptions, see Max Risselada, ed., *Raumplan versus Plan Libre: Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier, 1919–1930* (New York: Rizzoli, 1991).

16. *La Maison Suspendue: Recherche de Paul Nelson* (Paris: Éditions Albert Morancé, 1939).

17. Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

18. Wilson, *Architectural Reflections*, 8. Wilson applies here to architecture concepts originally developed by Adrian Stokes for painting.

Tim Culvabouse is an adjunct professor at California College of Arts and Crafts, an architect with Peterson Architects in San Francisco, and editor of arcCA, the quarterly journal of the AIA California Council. Lisa Findley is an architect and writer who teaches at California College of Arts and Crafts.