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Paradigm of Living: Modern Residential Architecture on the East End of Long Island

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Paradigm of Living: Modern Residential Architecture on the East End of Long Island

Abstract

“Paradigm of Living” explores domestic design as a vehicle for experimentation and expression. Since World War II, every major architectural movement has made a mark on the East End of Long Island from the International Style and Post-Modernism to Regionalism and Deconstructivism. The architect’s ability to engage the natural setting, accommodate leisure, cultivate privacy and community, investigate new materials, foster personal expression, and assimilate avant-garde impulses and the influx of ideas from New York City, gives one a framework for understanding the ever-morphing and progressing architecture of the Hamptons.

Keywords

residential architecture, Long Island, Humanities, Art History, David B. Brownlee, Brownlee, David B

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Long Island has long been appreciated for its natural beauty and the picturesque qualities of its hamlets, drawing artists, architects, families, and more recently, a growing number of businessmen, socialites and celebrities from around the world. The area has established an international reputation as a haven from the cares of the urban environment, culturally saturated with historical precedent and an influx of power and sophistication from New York. Its close proximity to that major metropolitan center has made it noteworthy not only as a place for urban respite but also as a forum for the exchange of ideas and new physical forms. With miles of coastline on the Atlantic Ocean and the tame and endlessly varied inlets and coves of Peconic Bay, the landscape of the Hamptons is a varied and striking combination of swelling dunes, sheltered bays, and groves of evergreens.

The artists and architects convening in the Hamptons in the forties and fifties laid the foundation for a cultivated intellectual setting that was as attuned to the subtleties of the landscape as it was to the prevailing ideas in design. Their ongoing engagement with modern life reflects changing views towards technology, environment, and identity in architecture. The Hamptons was a place for the artistic and architecturally astute. Since World War II, every major architectural movement has made a mark on the East End of Long Island from the International Style and Post-Modernism to Regionalism and Deconstructivism. Each decade demonstrates architecture that is made of continuities and changes. The diversity of approaches and physical appearances symbolize the primordial needs of man and the influences of his time and place. Domestic design is a
vehicle for experimentation and expression. By examining why the vacation homes of Long Island were built and what they embody, we gain an understanding of the notion of modern living in each generation. The architectural products reflect changing cultural values and new conceptions of modernity. Kenneth Fampton writes, “The modern American house has always manifested an intense drive for self-fulfillment. At its best it has been a testament of hope, both for the individual and for the nation, particularly in its effort to move beyond the confining traditions of the Old World.”

Domestic architecture continues to embrace a new aesthetic to convey ideas and to personalize the home for the inhabitant. The architect’s ability to engage the natural setting, accommodate leisure, cultivate privacy and community, investigate new materials, foster personal expression, and assimilate avant-garde impulses and the influx of ideas from New York City, gives one a framework for understanding the ever-morphing and progressing architecture of the Hamptons.

Nestled in the trees or riding the crests of the dunes, these houses explore new living arrangements and interact with their surroundings in variety of ways that requires their structures to correspond directly to the complex topography of the environment in which they are situated. The dynamic panorama of sea and sky has inspired a wide array of personal and innovative architectural responses. The integration of the house with the surrounding land has forced architects to define the purpose of the home in regard to the specifics of the land. The varied landscape demands attentive responses and authorizes a proliferation of experimental and individually tailored architecture.

Visitors arrived as early as 1870 to enjoy expansive unadulterated land and design residences far from the city. From this point forward, the Hamptons have always been
associated with repose and recreation. They had an unusual taste for the forlorn landscape that was barren and wild. In 1888 Long Island native Walt Whitman wrote his ode “From Montauk Point” to this area, reveling:

I stand as on some mighty eagle’s beak, 
Eastward the sea absorbing, viewing, (nothing but sea and sky,) 
The tossing waves, the foam, the ships in the distance. 
The wild unrest, the snowy, curling caps – that inbound urge and urge of waves, 
Seeking the shores forever.

His poem evokes a sense of wonder at the liberating and uncultivated landscape. Many of the admirers were artists who derived inspiration from the distinctive physical attributes of the area. The land was imbued with a quiet sense of energy that was at once soothing and invigorating. Weekend excursions to eastern Long Island bore the fantasy of escape and renewal. The Tile Club was one of the first artistic associations of New York City to organize an expedition there to sketch the landscape and take refuge in the country. This group of artists, journalists, and architects were at the forefront of an artistic community that thrives to the present day. World War II drew scores of people in search of reprieve, including many more prominent artists and architects in exile from Europe. Salvador Dali and Marcel Duchamp visited the area while Max Ernst and Andre Breton lived for prolonged periods in the Hamptons. Even Gerald and Sarah Murphy, the couple who inspired F. Scott Fitzgerald’s novel *Tender is the Night*, were residents in East Hampton. The area attracted some of the best and the brightest, nurturing creative impulses and generating an original and innovative artwork that came to define the area.

In the late forties, American artists Jackson Pollock, Robert Motherwell, and William de Kooning resided in the Hamptons solidifying its reputation as an artists’ haven, synonymous with intellectual ingenuity. Architects followed the lead of the
painters with a wave of architectural creations that exhibit personal expression with inventions in structure and space. It was a time of convergence; ideas of art penetrated architecture and vice versa. Artists and architects were intertwined in a creative symbiosis. Architect Peter Blake collaborated with Jackson Pollock in 1949 to create an “Ideal Museum” to display Pollock’s paintings, deconstructing space and boundaries with walls of murals to create a seamless integration of art, architecture, and space beyond. (fig 1) Sculptor Constantino Nivola’s house in Springs was also a design lab, planned by architect Bernard Rudofsky and decorated by the artist’s own sculptural gardens and murals by Le Corbusier in 1950. (fig 2) Terraces, pathways, sand-cast sculpture, and murals articulated the landscape and extended the living space outdoors to engage the surroundings and awaken the senses. The fusion of art and architecture at Nivola’s house exemplifies the growing awareness of the house as an experiment for living.

The Hamptons and its architecture have been flavored by the close proximity of Manhattan, with almost eighty percent of its residents being second homeowners who make the weekly or annual pilgrimage from the city. The transmission of ideas and culture has paralleled the influx of peoples. In the fifties and sixties there was a clear correspondence between the International Style commercial buildings erected in New York and the rectangular, glass-sheathed houses that embodied Mies’ motto, “Less is more.” The affordability of industrial building materials gave rise to the factory-produced beach house that lured to the area many residents who were on a strict budget. The eighties stock market boom brought out wealthier clients with more elaborate schemes. Modern architecture evolved beyond a glass box, exploring a wide range of issues through the articulation of space and affirmation of structure.
Another characteristic of the architecture of the Hamptons is that it has always been designed to ensure the relaxation of the client. While many of the Hampton’s initial residents in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were artists seeking rejuvenation after enduring city life, other New Yorkers quickly recognized the relaxing potential of this culturally rooted place. The New York weekender has become ubiquitous, changing the nature of the place from an enclave of quiet beach towns to a flourishing resort destination. The character and scale of domestic architecture has been transformed along with the clientele. The significant funds necessary to afford a second home ensure that many of the houses have been thoughtfully planned with investment in fine materials and distinguished architects. While the houses vary greatly in design, what they share as second homes is that they focus almost exclusively on leisure. The very nature of a vacation home enables the architect to take certain liberties and risks that are not associated with permanent dwellings to ensure the peace of mind of the inhabitant. We can see this in experimental designs that incorporate new structural systems. While some projects are fueled by the desire to try something different and find unique solutions, others are conceived simply to define the individuality of the patron, establishing architectural status while making a statement in the community.

The built environment has undergone many transformations as the availability of vacant lots and untouched land has been depleted, forcing architects to devise new ways to approach the landscape and the diminishing space. An emphasis has been placed on translating the meaning of the site to the design of the house. Whereas the first International Style homes were indifferently mounted on the site like sculptures, there has been a growing concern about integration of the house with the landscape and making
visible connections between nature and artifice. The scarcity of land has decreased the average size of lots and focused attention on the topography and physical attributes of the site. There have been many diverse responses, with houses that have become submerged in the site, houses that distill the nature inside the structure, or houses that merge with the landscape, erasing the boundary between interior and exterior. Architects have created a variety of exchanges between the indoor and the outdoors; some houses function as a filter for nature while others shut out nature altogether. Whatever its manifestation, the house cannot shed its role as a shelter that mediates between man and nature.\textsuperscript{10}

The prevailing consciousness of architecture in the Hamptons has made the home a vehicle for expressing individual tastes and views on family life and technology. The vacation house was exploited as a tool for personal expression and status. Since the International Style made its mark in the Hamptons in the forties and fifties, it became acceptable to erect homes that were vastly different from their neighbors and shocking in their physical forms. The house became an architectural statement, publicizing how the inhabitants chose to live. The explosion of vacation homes in the sixties and seventies also had many cultural and architectural implications.\textsuperscript{11} The experimental, costly, and expansive projects caught the attention of the press, triggering a wave of architecture that was intentionally made to generate a response from the public. Whereas enormous scale once denoted status, renowned architects with a signature style were increasingly employed to endow the home with notoriety and prestige. The patron found some identifying quality in the architect’s visual rhetoric and aligned himself with it. Architecture was consciously shaped by its expectation of public critique.\textsuperscript{12} Gwathmey explained, “The opportunity [to design a home in the Hamptons] comes with a good deal
of pressure –the pressure of expectations, visibility, and scrutiny–placing the designer and his building in a continually competitive cycle. In this design climate the results are either architectural exaggerations or sophisticated transformations, maintaining the image-oriented tradition of most resort areas.” Some patrons and architects longed for validation with time-honored designs while others wished to astonish the community with novelty.

A major challenge in constructing a vacation home was to sustain privacy while making the house belong to the community. The architect had to design for relaxation and solitude while maintaining a level of sociability. In effect, the construction of space and boundaries designated residents’ living experiences. The plan ascribed needs to spaces, determining areas for interaction and isolation. In the eighties, architects began to push this ability further, not just determining the functions of spaces, but also experimenting with the construction of space and its effects on the inhabitant. Architecture was developed to impart experiences to the residents. In some cases, the architect went so far as to designate how the inhabitants interacted with natural world. As architectural interaction has gained an edge, architects pioneered new designs to generate more complex responses from inhabitants. The house has become a device to shape human experience and consciousness of place.

The development of new building materials and technology greatly influenced the structure and appearance of modern residential architecture in the Hamptons. Starting with the International Style, modern industrial technology impacted the theory, construction and the physical product of architecture. It was the dawn of a new era that used new materials and technology and employed them in an explicitly novel way,
removed from historically predetermined form. The emergence of new forms and eccentric structures was promulgated by new theories, equipment, and expertise. These high-tech designs, like the homes designed by Charles Gwathmey and Zaha Hadid, were no longer reserved for transportation facilities and cultural institutions as individual patrons sought to differentiate themselves with innovative designs. Many of these structures lacked regional or cultural associations imbedded in vernacular materials and instead became the product of universal design language.

The battle between architecture that embraces a vernacular sensibility of design and architecture that is dedicated to finding the unique forms of the age is a central debate that persists in the Hamptons. Although modern architecture was criticized for its barrenness and unlivability, it became increasingly receptive to its external environment, resulting in complexities and pluralities of style that transcended the glass box. Many architects, including Robert A.M. altogether rejected the innovative materials and the advancements in construction, harking back to the indigenous traditions by appropriating the shingle style to lend an air of permanence and lyrical richness to the home. These houses have become a part of the long and rich history of local building on Long Island and thus endowed with significance. In their staunch resistance to modernity, they have been condemned by modernists for emulating the past without looking to the future. The conflict between modern and traditional can be boiled down to the contrast between homes that are of the age and homes that are of the place. A variety of architects have transcended the boundary between styles with some architects employing modern methods and materials while learning from the traditions of the past and responding to the historical setting, as other architects employ vernacular architecture with a modern logic.
and sensibility. The architect working with a modern vocabulary has begun to absorb local customs and local phenomenon while the traditional architect has begun to adopt modern materials and structural devices.
II. The First Tide: Artistic Convergence & The International Style

The pioneers of the Bauhaus had a profound affect on American architecture when they migrated to the United States during World War II. The modern buildings of Le Corbusier, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and Walter Gropius in the twenties and thirties redefined attitudes towards the form and function of architecture. Their work was abstract and geometrical, derived from the historically stripped, machine-oriented designs of the Bauhaus. The economy of their structures was promising in the midst of the Great Depression; architects working and studying in their wake embraced technology and efficiency with rationalized design.\(^{16}\) The 1932 International Style Exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, organized by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, solidified this architectural aesthetic thus formally introducing and promoting Modern architecture in America. Hitchcock and Johnson assured, “There is now a single body of discipline, fixed enough to integrate contemporary style as a reality and yet elastic enough to permit individual interpretation and to encourage general growth.”\(^{17}\) In the accompanying book, *The International Style: Architecture Since 1922*, they presented the principles of the style as: “architecture as volume rather than mass,” “regularity rather than axial symmetry serves as the chief means of ordering design,” and the prohibition of “arbitrary applied ornament.”\(^{18}\) The International Style was not merely a stylistic manifestation, it was an approach to design that encompassed ways of living, interacting, and perceiving.

In the decades following the MoMA exhibition, the International Style came to define a large body of architecture including skyscrapers, campus facilities, and country
homes. The Lever House by Gordon Bunshaft, the Illinois Institute of Technology by Mies van der Rohe, and the Kaufmann Desert House by Richard Neutra demonstrate that the International Style had become an elite and intellectual expression of structure. It was now a technique and mode of design unattached to its initial societal implications. In the forties and fifties, there were numerous variations of the International Style; houses erected in the Hamptons exhibited a variety of approaches as architects experimented with adapting these principles to the vacation home. While the architects assimilated the International Style into their American repertoires, their houses were consistently informed by the paragons of the International Style, Mies van der Rohe, Walter Gropius, and Le Corbusier. It would be difficult to underestimate the influence of the Farnsworth House in Plano, Illinois, the Barcelona Pavilion in Spain, and the Villa Savoie at Poissy-sur-Seine on the houses that were constructed in the forties and fifties. They served as prototypes for a new generation of homes that were built for leisure.19

Several of the architects of the Hamptons were educated in Europe and brought forth new ideas that contributed to the development of the modern vacation house on Long Island. Although many were temporary visitors, they introduced innovative theories and practices that had a profound impact on the area. Peter Blake, Pierre Chareau, and Bernard Rudofsky were all emigrants who settled and built in the Hamptons, fertilizing the architectural discourse with new design methods based on standardized types and prefabricated materials. Historic styles were abandoned for glass-enclosed boxes that evoked the freedom of a dawning age. The highly disciplined, boxy qualities of the International Style buildings being constructed in New York City were translated into vacation residences with open floor plans, communal spaces, and large
glass windows to capture the views. The modern house was a place of freedom and escape.

The avant-garde artists and architects working in this period brought many fresh ideas while the impact of new materials had no small effect. Pierre Chareau experimented with glass and steel, conceiving of new ways to construct with prefabricated components while Peter Blake investigated innovative approaches to open the house to the exterior. Johnson’s house demonstrates that the spatial character of architecture had changed; his open plans revealed a new anatomy with large communal places that were the focal point with small, private rooms on the periphery. Despite their underlying order, there was a lightness and airiness inherent in the spaces of these early modern homes. Gordon Bunshaft’s house illustrates that visual stimulation came from the structural unity rather than applied decoration. Like the Villa Savoye, these vacation houses struck a personal cord with the play of pure volumes. Le Corbusier wrote, “Architecture is the masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light.” Even in Gordon Chadwick’s Low House revival, the unity of the parts in relation to the whole provided proportional clarity and geometric control while the simple masses and proportionate facades were designed to stir the observer.

Robert Motherwell’s house in East Hampton, designed by Pierre Chareau in 1945, did not engage the International Style canon, but was a testament to the possibilities of industrial design and progressive materials. Chareau was renowned for his functional aesthetic and his explorative use of space. His Maison de Verre, built in Paris in 1928, was an archetypal modern house that employed building methods and replicable materials that were derived from other types of structures. The Motherwell house was a
continuation of Chareau’s experiments in Paris, built from a pre-fabricated Quonset hut, which had been developed to provide shelter during the war. The primitive structure that was adapted to serve as simple hospitals, warehouses, and garages was selected for its efficiency and durability. The Quonset was delivered as a kit comprising a corrugated steel membrane, wood lining, insulation, and curved steel ribs. (fig 3) The strength of the materials eliminated the need for extraneous walls and supports, accommodating a free flowing open plan with large expanses of glass. It was an experimental improvisation at its heart with a thirty-six foot glass window that was savaged from a dilapidated greenhouse and manufactured materials. (fig 4) The house was defiantly modern, bearing no relation to the regional architecture and materials or the local landscape.  

The combination of exposed structural elements and large glass panels recalls the architect’s enthusiasm for technology and mechanical systems at the Maison de Verre. (fig 5) Both the East Hampton and Paris homes were conceived as giant machines to control the environment. Chareau celebrated the structure with exposed, rough members that evoked his fascination with the qualities of metal, which can be traced back to his early furniture designs. Although the interior of Motherwell’s house was far more humble in its details, the materials employed were poetic and practical, giving an organic quality to the industrial structure. Disks of oak were imbedded in the cement to provide natural floor covering while combed plywood and concrete made up the partition walls. (fig 6) Alexander Calder advised Motherwell on painting the interior structural beams a lacquered red, which he used to finish his mobiles. Motherwell stated, “I wasn’t trying to make a manifesto, I was just trying to make something that suited me.”  

The cumulative
effect of the textures was a Dada collage with a conglomeration of materials that explored the possibilities of surface while lending a personal temperament to the space.

At the brink of the International Style, the Motherwell house presented a new approach to architectural space. The vault like interior of the Quonset was divided by partition walls that separated the space into intervals without disuniting the continuous space. (fig 7) Thus, Chareau created a series of spaces within a larger, universal space. The upper level was open to the downstairs with a balcony overlooking the large greenhouse window, allowing for a double height ceiling that extended entire length of the northern front of the home. Four bedrooms were sectioned in this upstairs space and accessed along the balcony. In effect, portions of the house were secluded while remaining closely associated to the collective space of the interior. This assembly of interpenetrating spaces had been an enduring component of Chareau’s work, and can be seen in the floating planes and sliding walls suspended from the steel frame of the Maison de Verre. In the Motherwell house, individual spaces also resided within a much larger framework with movable parts that created something of a spatial improvisation. Sliding screens and partial walls allowed for privacy without compartmentalizing the interior. Like the Maison de Verre, the Motherwell house revealed a propensity for creative and interpretive use of space.23

The Motherwell house was in its essence an artistic collaboration with a poetic sensibility for materials and space. As an artist’s studio, the structure expressed the organization of the composition, alluding to the artist’s own creative process. The architect’s apartment in Paris was a similar synthesis of art and architecture with many great works of art from Paul Klee, Mondrian, Chagall, Picasso, Braque, Lipchitz,
Modigliani, and Max Ernst. His art collection demonstrates propinquity to modern language of form, which was translated into architectural spaces. The structural correspondences in the paintings had an underlying affinity with the house’s joints and connections. Chareau exploited the natural properties of the materials and made them a vehicle for architectural expression. Motherwell’s environment was as inspirational as it was economical. Motherwell claimed to have completed some of his best paintings while living and working in Chareau’s invention. He observed his experience with architectural space: “Structures are found in the interaction of the body-mind and the external world; and the body-mind is active and aggressive in finding them.” The geometric order and unusual spaces of the house challenged Motherwell’s perception and increased his awareness of his surroundings. His way of living and contacting the physical environment certainly affected his work in which the act of painting became the content of painting.

The critic Brian Taylor suggested the influence of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Textile Block houses in California as persuasive on Chareau’s designs with their modulated interiors and consistent use of one material. While the Motherwell house may have been a truthful and straightforward presentation of its mechanics and constituent parts, the houses by Wright were not only sensitive to human needs and gestures, but also to their natural setting. Wright’s structures echoed their surroundings whereas the Quonset was a self-contained entity that remained completely indifferent to its environs. However, it is possible that like Frank Lloyd Wright, Chareau saw his house as a prototype for American popular housing. (fig 8) The affordable building kit of industrial materials cost a mere $3000 and the structure gave the inhabitants a logical framework
and artistic license to accommodate their needs. Motherwell himself could have written the advertisement; he claimed, “It is natural to rearrange in order to bring about states of feeling that we like, just as a new tenant furnishes a house.” This house was founded on a belief in modernity and the individual’s role in conceiving of his own dwelling. The house was a synthesis of leisure, economy, creativity, and experiment. Chareau rejected the classical antecedents of modern design, focusing exclusively on invention. The house was a self-contained entity, a lab for modern living.

The Farney house, built by Philip Johnson in 1946, just three years prior to the conception of his own Glass Pavilion in Connecticut was the precursor to the famous New Canaan house and a proliferation of International Style houses that were soon built in the Hamptons. Johnson embraced a modernism that was as innovative and groundbreaking at its time as Chareau’s Motherwell house, but rather than experimenting with pioneering materials, he employed theories that stemmed from his study of modern art and architecture. The Farney house was completed in the year that Johnson became the Director of the Department of Architecture and Design at the Museum of Modern Art. While he was well versed in contemporary design, the simplicity and organization are indicative of the house being his first architectural commission. He was experimenting with domestic plan types, designing a house invested with symmetry and proportion and not quite attuned to human incident or nature.

The first plan for the house reveals Frank Lloyd Wright’s influence on Johnson. The L-shaped plan wrapped around a central terrace, with each portion of the house opening to a separate direction like Wright’s First Jacobs House in Madison, Wisconsin, one of Wright’s first “usonian” houses. The central living and dining areas
were the hinge from which the ancillary rooms extended west and north. (fig 11) The paneled cedar exterior of the house was punctured in certain portions, giving each room a distinctive view – north, south, east or west. Only the common living area was in open contact with the exterior, with continuous glass walls to the south and north. Each major room faced a different direction, emphasizing its distinctness from the others. The guest bedrooms faced to the east while the master bedroom faced north, and the service areas faced west, providing intimate and personal private areas, while connected to the main core. The plan of the house, as first designed, hugged the natural environment and provided an informal living area that recalled the Usonian homes that Wright designed for the post-war servant-less middle-class family.  

The final product however, was a more clearly orchestrated exercise in modernism that was an ode to designs of Le Corbusier and Mies rather than Wright. (fig 12) The house became a symmetrically balanced composition with clearly demarcated areas for privacy and interaction. It retained the concept of a central living and dining area from the initial plan, but applied it to a more rigorous and structured arrangement. The living and dining area now separated the other portions of the house, acting as a bridge between the sleeping and service quarters, eradicating the need for corridors and entrance spaces. To the east a door led from the central living space to an isolated hallway to the bedrooms while the service area was approached from a door on the western wall. The greatest portion of space was reserved for the main living area, which had large expanses of glass windows to the north and south, appearing to connect two solid pavilions of vertical cedar planks to the east and west. Enclosed by continuous walls of glass, the central living area appeared independent from the other areas of the
house, giving the feeling of an isolated beach pavilion, which served communal relaxation. The sectioned off kitchen and bedrooms appeared to be discreet, separate entities with enclosed rooms that were subordinate to the open and airy living area.\textsuperscript{30}

Johnson’s design, while encased in a modern stripped-down box, was still a traditional, highly regulated and self-contained ordering system. While the interior spaces were instilled with formality, they fostered contact and interaction by designating subsidiary spaces that fed into a large open area. The spacious communal room encouraged residents to convene away from their small sleeping accommodations. The openness of the living and dining area recalled Johnson’s second design at Harvard for a “beach pavilion” in which the communal space was transparent and open while service and private areas were distinct entities enclosed in masonry.\textsuperscript{31}(fig 13) His work also reflects the influence of his Harvard professors, including Marcel Breuer. The fundamental value of his influence can be seen in the steadily and rationally planned structure in a naked wood frame, raised on pilotis. The pilotis made the structure not only any easily identifiable piece of modern architecture, but also a proud structure hoisted over the dune to admire the ocean.

The symmetry, proportion and clear expression of function in the Farney house, additionally demonstrated Johnson’s acute knowledge of Mies van der Rohe’s work, for Johnson was planning an extensive exhibition on the architect during the Farney house’s construction. The Resor house project, designed by Mies in 1938, was a model for the design of private and communal areas in a flowing open space. The clear symmetry and central alignment of the Farney house plan were derivative of Mies’ axially ordered spatial system. Johnson was consciously combining traditional and modern concepts of
space, designing the house with harmonious proportions. The Farney house’s façade was imbued with a Miesian elegance. A cantilevered beam extended over the periphery of the deck, connecting the service and sleeping pavilions. Two delicate beams vertically divided the space between the pavilions in thirds, articulating the façade by breaking the severity of the opposing surface and void. A ramp running parallel to the enclosed porch provided an entrance to the house, neglecting notions of a ceremonial entryway and instead simulating Le Corbusier’s motorized entry at the Villa Savoye. The house was a machine for experience, a carefully ordered system for interaction and privacy.

As built, this final rectangular, sectioned box for the Farney family was contradictory to everything Wright stood for. Wright promoted an organic architecture that was rooted in its site, which provided vital, life-enhancing spaces. He admonished the International Style, claiming: “Human houses should not be like boxes blazing in the sun, nor should we outrage the Machine by trying to make dwelling places too complimentary to machinery. Any building for humane purposes should be an elemental, sympathetic feature of the ground, complementary to its natural environment.”

The Farney house was self-contained mass that made no gestures to its surroundings. The exterior balconies on the north and south were imbedded in the house’s rectangular perimeter. Inset glass walls allowed the terrace to rest beneath the flat roof and within the space separating the service and living quarters, so that it appeared to be an extension of the interior living space. The living and dining room could be extended to the peripheral balconies by opening the glass walls, but communion with the natural environment did not transcend the house’s physical boundaries. Although subject to the external environment, the terrace spaces in the front and back of
the house were held tightly inside the frame and belonged to the structure. By containing the outside balconies within the overall volume, Johnson restrained the inhabitant’s interaction with nature. The house was a controlling machine for the enjoyment of nature; relaxation had to be performed within the confines of the home.

The Farney house exemplified an experiment to accommodate leisure and freedom in a weekend home. The lack of sympathy for nature and site demonstrated an overarching concern for order and economy of form. The plan was bound by classical spatial proportions that ineffectively combined the indoor and outdoor spaces. The house had not attained the liberating space and dissolved boundaries that characterized the Glass House, completed in 1949. Through this commission, Johnson was beginning to grapple with the challenge of creating interior and exterior transitions with the common living area encased in a transparent skin that was the progenitor to the weightless steel and glass box in Connecticut. (fig 14)

Much like Philip Johnson’s Glass house, Peter Blake’s Pinwheel house, constructed in 1954, offered new spatial experiences. The house was a twenty-four foot square perched above an open field with glass walls on all four sides. Unlike the Glass House, the Pinwheel house could be opened and closed to the exterior via large barn-like doors that slid on steel tracks. When all four walls of the house were opened, the house looked like a pinwheel from an aerial view and when closed a completely isolated cube that was dropped in a field. The house was a weekend abode that could be opened to the panoramic views while the owners were in residence and completely closed off to the natural elements in the winter months when the house was too bare to provide shelter. The house was a “primitive” structure, animated by its mobile parts that
instilled complexity and meaning. In its capacity for instantaneous connection with nature, Blake’s glass enclosed box explicitly capitalized on Johnson’s Glass House, which Vincent Scully referred to as “a frame for the individual in nature.” The Pinwheel house was a harbinger to the Long Island architecture that would wrestle arduously with the relation between man and nature.

The Pinwheel house’s four-foot elevation above the ground provided guests a view of the nearby ocean and caused the house to be slightly removed from its environment, floating above the ground like Mies’ Farnsworth House. The structure was stacked and dense unlike the pure, horizontal planes that make Mies’ creation a weightless prism. When the Pinwheel house was open and the walls were stretched out beyond the perimeter, this house appears to be firmly rooted in the landscape. Like the Farnsworth House, the interior was served by one utilitarian wall, which provided essential services while dividing the interior space. This wall bent at a right angle, providing a kitchen and dining area on one side and a brick fireplace on the other. There was no decoration, just simple furnishings and expansive views. Blake negated extraneous parts; each element was functional and tightly woven into the architectural entity. The main living area of the house was surrounded by wall-to-wall glass, giving the feeling of being submerged in the landscape. When the sliding glass doors were opened the structure resembled an open pavilion, flooded with natural light and air. The house dissolved the boundary between nature and the interior.

The Pinwheel house was an active structure that empowered the inhabitant with options that tailored the simple environment to his preferences. The house could be opened and closed with endless variation according to the individual’s will. The eastern
wall could be opened to embrace the sunrise or closed to repel the direct sun, instead keeping the northern wall slightly ajar for an expansive luminous light. Infinite combinations of light and temperature could be created, allowing man to control his living environment. The minimal and straightforward structure was the embodiment of a machine for living. The house was a simple mechanism that responded to the weather, views, and the desires of the inhabitants. By opening and closing at various degrees, the house maintained privacy while belonging to the community. The owner would expose himself to the outside when and how he pleased. (fig 17) The house was an embodiment of human centrality, manipulating form to serve human desires.

The flowing space of Blake’s living area replaced the conventional separation of rooms seen in Chareau and Johnson’s designs. Blake perpetuated the most modern notion of communal space in which cooking; relaxing, socializing, and dining were accommodated in one open room. He created privacy with personal spaces that were tucked away below the main living area. (fig 18) Whereas Chareau and Johnson experimented with different orthogonal arrangements that were highly ordered, Blake presented a completely open spatial module. He took Johnson’s notion of the separation of living and sleeping areas, and exaggerated it, placing the bedrooms in the basement beneath the house to emphasize the principal space for interaction above. The interior division between public and private was continuous with the façade, which was communal when open, and private when concealed. It went one step beyond the Glass House, allowing the resident the option to embrace or reject the outdoors. Mobile exterior walls reinforced the purpose of the house to impart experiences, generating conflicting sensations of enclosure and exposure.
While the Pinwheel house mediated between man and nature, opening and closing to its surroundings, the structure did not acknowledge the site around it. The boxy dwelling could be placed almost anywhere as it hovered over the ground plane without making any connections to its environment. Its rigidity was at odds with the gently sloping fields and the peaked roofs in the distance. It was as if the natural environment had been reduced to a stage for the architecture’s performance. While the house faced the landscape in the most direct way possible, it did not make reciprocal gestures to the local setting. It was a withdrawn and isolated structure, despite its ability to open. Blake was primarily concerned with exploring a new kind of space, liberating the house from its inhibiting box. The Pinwheel house forged a new way of living that was not bound to its specific site; it was exclusively about the vessel and its ability to communicate and impart experiences on the dweller.

The Pinwheel house was designed for the Blake himself and presented a total reform of the living environment. It was a precursor to an array of houses in the area that were designed by and for architects. Just as Breuer and Gropius designed houses for themselves during their careers at Harvard to exhibit their progressive, even radical solutions to modern living, Blake seized the opportunity to create his ideal house, which was a testament to his values and self-identity. Designing for oneself provided the rare opportunity to create without inhibitions and expectations. Often clients were too apprehensive to invest in groundbreaking schemes, however, the opportunity to see an experiment materialized was a convincing persuader. The profusion of glass-clad boxes that sprung from Philip Johnson’s Glass House testified to the influence of an original architectural work. While the Glass House and the Pinwheel house were representative
of their owners and designers, even self-promotional, they also encapsulated new ideas
about how the modern house felt and functioned. For many, Johnson and Blake’s model
homes did not offer practical solutions, but they did spur a variety of architectural
responses and inspired new ways of thinking about domestic architecture.

At a time when many architects were experimenting with the International Style
on the East End of Long Island, Gordon Chadwick and George Nelson’s Spaeth house,
built in 1955, dismissed the modern idealism that rejected sentimentality, ornamentation,
and decadence. Their East Hampton house embraced the historical precedent on
Long Island while incorporating a modern sensibility of space and structure. It was
signal that modernism was now under revision, even attack as white walls and geometric
boxes were rejected in favor of shingles and trim. The house was a reinterpretation of
McKim, Mead and White’s Low House in Rhode Island, erected in 1886. Resting under an expansive gabled roof, the house was an abstraction of the essential
gemetric shapes, articulated with a clarity that was inherently modern. Chadwick was
striving to reincorporate vernacular traditions into the modern era. He employed
materials that were sympathetic to the local traditions while abstracting the fundamental
volumes of the Low House to generate a modern vocabulary. The Spaeth house was at
its essence a negotiation of classical traditions and modern forms.

Despite its remarkable similarities, the Spaeth house was not a mere quotation of
McKim, Mead and White’s Low House. The signature roof, which swelled the width of
the Low House, enclosing even the expansive side porch in an organic compound,
drastically overhung the Spaeth house’s ground plan, emphasizing the geometric triangle
resting upon the first floor. The bay windows were eliminated and the entire surface
flattened in a single plane. This compression of the façade emphasized the appearance of one clear volume in space, composed of a few simple shapes. Chadwick replaced the projecting windows, encased in extensive mullions, with streamlined windows that ran horizontally, puncturing the pediment in one steady motion. The lower level was dissolved by the repetition of glass doors opening the bottom level to the outdoors and dislocating the triangular pediment from its foundation. The windows and doors that elaborated the Low House’s façade were reconfigured as clear spatial elements that endowed the structural skeleton with a metrical rhythm. The Spaeth house was designed with a sense of precision and harmony derived from the articulation of these pure forms. 

Despite the abstractions, the Spaeth house maintained robust, classical proportions. The effect was a massive and compelling structure instilled with permanence. The bold geometrical forms were linked to the natural environment through their wood shingled membrane. The sloping roof gently reached for the ground, planting the structure in its site while rising above the dunes to admire the ocean views. The vernacular saltbox houses in the area appeared to be siblings of this monumental house that embraced the earth and sheltered its inhabitants with one pronounced gesture. A 1958 article published by *House & Garden* deemed the house decidedly modern, assuring readers that “contemporary design can profit, as this house by the sea proves, by adapting fine ideas of the past.” Chadwick was devoted to this vernacular interpretation, adding bold modern touches that forced the viewer to evaluate the house thoughtfully and consider whether it was modern or traditional. The classically derived triangular pediment was engulfed in undulating curves that challenged the traditional application of
wood shingles. The entrance lacked a monumental door or window to welcome visitors. Instead, the northern pediment was pierced with fifteen miniature square windows that were disproportionate to the imposing structure. The unevenly placed lower windows were in opposition to the house’s symmetrical configuration, disrupting the visitor’s sense of balance and stability. A wood bridge approached the house, directing visitors to a side entrance that embraces them in a familiar way. Unlike the Low House, there was not a ceremonial point of entrance. The integrity of the structure was disrupted by the unusual approach and jarring structural enhancements, intentionally contradicting conventional configurations to give the house a modern spin.44

Chadwick’s deduction of McKim, Mead, and White’s Low House was symbolic of a new era of architectural interpretation in which the architects contemplated the architecture of the past to give meaning to the modern home, which had drastically changed over the course of the century.45 Architects had become disillusioned with the constraining tenets of modernism and began to seek inspiration in vernacular forms. Chadwick forged an innovative style, reconciling the ambitions of different generations in a congruent and harmonizing fashion. He dispelled traditional notions of the home by fusing the pure forms and precision of modernism with a historic antecedent. A decade after the completion of the Spaeth house in East Hampton, Venturi erected the momentous house for his mother outside Philadelphia, borrowing the same features from the Low House. (fig 22) The gabled roof and traced pediment were abstracted and applied as linear decoration.46 Venturi’s reduced geometric shapes formulated the historic ideal of a home while Chadwick’s traditional materials articulated the ideal
modern living environment. In either case, the architect was responding to the historic traditions and the modern architectural discourse to create a meaningful structure.47

In the sixties a distinguished body of more refined International Style homes were built that were aware of their natural settings and tailored to the needs of individual clients. Architects honed their skills and began to advance their designs beyond experimental living. More sophisticated materials were employed and refined shapes took form as architects began to expand the International Style’s limits and bend its rules. The design strategy of the Bunshaft house, built in East Hampton in 1964, was generated by a desire to showcase art and entertain. With steel, glass, and travertine, Gordon Bunshaft created a house to view art on the inside and nature on the outside. (fig 23) The simple interior was wrought with sophisticated materials and unusual lighting to elevate the resident’s living experience. The taut rectangular space was enhanced with subtle refinements that elevated the space. The interior was an enchanting place to contemplate art.

The broad rectangular house was not indifferent to its surroundings, like the previous white, modern boxes that appeared to be dropped indiscriminately from space. The expansive façade hugged the earth and paralleled the flat landscape. The structure had succumb to the horizontal plane, opening its solid white walls along the expansive southern front to face Georgica Pond. (fig 24) Bunshaft recognized the disparity between nature and his solid white travertine walls, heightening the contrast to enhance the building. The north entrance wall was a solid white curtain while the short east and west sides were punctuated with glass, ensuring privacy from the street. This ensemble of solid and void provided spacious interior walls for displaying art while directing attention
to the landscape. The three panels of glass that penetrated the travertine membrane framed expansive murals of natural phenomena. The house was as committed to articulating its interior as its exterior.

In the spirit of the Hamptons, the Bunshaft house was an expression of freedom, leisure, and openness. With the exception of the bathroom, there were no interior doors or walls. The center third of the house was devoted to the living and dining areas, similar to the plan of Johnson’s Farney house, except that the strict boundaries were replaced by subtle partitions that restored the openness of the house. Bunshaft removed any potential for isolation, designating the house as a communal space for interacting. While the spaces were shaped by the structure, it was the light that gave them their character. Pre-cast concrete T-beams spanned the entire width of the house, providing a sequence of 2 ½ feet windows adjoining the uppermost part of the northern and southern walls to the ceiling. (fig 25) The clerestory windows offered a constant glimpse of the sky and reinforced connections with the outdoors. As the light penetrated the space between the ceiling and the walls, the roof had a floating disembodied effect similar to the dome of the Hagia Sophia. Approaching from the outside, the succession of raised T-beams enlivened the exterior while the reflections of natural vegetation animated the inset glass panes.

The Bunshaft house could be appropriately compared to an exhibition space with understated interiors for the arrangement of artwork. The house was constructed as Bunshaft was completing the Albright-Knox Gallery in Buffalo, New York, demonstrating his acute understanding of the display of works of art. The house’s interior was decorated with pieces from the Bunshafts’ art collection, including tapestries.
by Picasso and Le Corbusier, sculpture by Giacometti and Miro, and primitive African
masks and artifacts. (fig 26) Like the Motherwell House there was a close association
between art and architecture. Bunshaft explained:

“An architect should see all he can of the visual arts. He may not remember
it, but although he won’t know how it comes out in his work, it will…A site
plan may come form a Mondrian painting. That’s why our interest in art has
been good for my architecture.” 49

Bunshaft’s logical and carefully fashioned plan revealed his insistent effort for
control. The house was reduced to an elemental structure, yet it accommodated
intricacies that gave it human purpose. The penetrating light provided the interiors with a
rich and varied texture as the progression of beams across the ceiling implanted structural
logic and simplicity. 50 The ceiling reflected Bunshaft’s growing interest in integrating
structural components as part of the design. The T-Shaped beams were evocative and
functional, providing visual stimulation and structural support. The simple structural
advances that Bunshaft achieved in his house in East Hampton were the platform for
complex, large-scale projects later in his career. For example, the T-Shaped beams
appeared again in the American Republic Life Insurance Company Headquarters in Des
Moines a couple years later.(fig 27)

Bunshaft’s greatest accomplishment was conjuring of intense emotional feeling in
taut, solid structures that appeared resilient to external forces. The Beinecke Rare Book
and Manuscript Library at Yale University was a marble-and-granite-clad rectangle that
admitted light evenly and poignantly, much like the Bunshaft house in East Hampton.(fig
28) The virtues of the architect’s own home were indicative of the virtues with which he
struggled to instill all of his projects. His adherence to ordered structure, diffused light,
and rich materials demonstrate a closing gap between the domestic architecture of urban
and rural America.

At the end of the fifties, the Hamptons weekend house was no longer a simple
cottage, beach bungalow, or modernist box. People were investing the same thought and
money into their second homes as in their full-time residences. Additionally, an
awareness of the developments in corporate and monumental architecture informed the
materials and styles. The ideas that were investigated in the Long Island vacation homes
could in turn enlighten larger designs.51

Paul Lester Weiner designed a series of summerhouses in the early sixties on
Long Island that bore striking resemblance to Mies van der Rohe’s Neue National Galerie
built in 1968 in Berlin. The Saypol house, Simpson house, De Cuevas house, and Scull
house all shared a distinctive overhanging roof that projected over a transparent glass
box.(fig 29, 30, 31,32) Weiner wrote, “The roof extends the possibilities of the glass-
wall house and breaks architectural clichés.” This formation was about to become an
iconic architectural assemblage with the completion of Mies’ gallery in Germany in
1968.(fig 33) Wiener’s houses were completed between 1962 and 1963, years before
Mies began his minimalist gallery, suggesting that he had seen the plans for Mies’
Bacardi Office Building, built in Cuba in 1957-8, with the same structural composition.
What is more remarkable is that the horizontal and vertical members of Weiner’s houses
that composed the ceiling and structural envelope had been fashioned with the same dark
brown steel as the structural components of Mies’ gallery. The result in each case was a
modern interpretation of columns and beams, with a prominent roof that hovered
triumphantly over a transparent membrane below. While Weiner’s houses differed
slightly in their appearance, he was devoted to a minimalist glass box that was reinforced by a bold and dramatically overhung roof. Variations in the width and size of the windows and steel mullions aside, Weiner’s houses and Mies’ gallery reveal that two German architects working in different parts of the world conceived of similar structural solutions. While it is nearly impossible to determine the possibility of exchange and influence, it is worth noting that the Hamptons was either attuned to the ideas of prominent architecture or at the forefront of architectural design.
III. STRUCTURAL IMPROVISATIONS

Post-war prosperity revolutionized the American lifestyle, changing people’s notions of leisure and responsibility. Bourgeoning development on Long Island brought a sea of affordable large-scale communities further west for working families and weekend homes for urbanites along the beach. In the Cold War days the home was as important as the weekend residence; symbolizing leisure and affluence that was counter to Communist conservatism. The weekend house was a growing phenomenon of American capitalism, a patriotic, well-earned fruit of labor. By the 1960’s nearly two million Americans owned second homes. The population on Long Island was also sky rocketing to five million residents, one third of the state’s total. With the Highway Act passed by Congress in 1956, highways sprung up all over Long Island, including the six-lane Long Island Expressway that was extended from Queens to Suffolk County by 1962. This direct route to the Hamptons made the concept of a weekend escape more feasible, attracting many new residents to spend their free time in a different locale. A market was established for affordable vacation houses to accommodate the demand. Magazines and department stores advertised prefabricated vacation houses and two hundred of Raymond Loewy – William Snaith Corporation’s “Leisurama” were sold in Montauk alone. Escape houses were the trend de jour. A 1959 edition of Life magazine predicted that 75,000 vacation houses would be built per year in the United States, insinuating that the second home had become a societal ideal, an extension of the American Dream.

Residents of the Hamptons were eager to explore the possibilities of modern living with
impulsive and free-spirited structures that were testaments to their liberty and individuality.\textsuperscript{55}

The late sixties and seventies brought a wave of younger architects to the Hamptons who were enthusiastic to do away with the modernist boxes, and explore new geometry. There was a reaction against the prosaic forms of the International Style; each house had its own identity, promising inhabitants an invigorating and personal living experience. The designs were riveting and challenging, stressing individuality and originality. Some of the houses played with geometries while others were complexly crafted structures of shocking forms. Plans could now be metaphysical abstractions rather than carefully proportioned systems. These architects were thinking of space and structure in a new light. The continuity between indoors and outdoors and the sense of free-flowing interior space were fashioned with a feeling for the structure’s volume and space. The carefully balanced compositions of horizontal and vertical planes of the International Style were now surpassed by elaborate sculptural designs that were more attuned to outward appearance than pragmatic problem solving. Space was conceived as an organic entity inhabiting the structure and liberated from the repeatable modules of the International Style.

Despite such strides in domestic architecture, there was continuity with certain International Style principles as the architects maintained their interest in the purity of materials, clarity of structure, and communal living spaces. Richard Meier and Charles Gwathmey pushed the limits with these minimalist forms, animating and enlivening them with a predilection for layered, planar, and disjointed spaces. A more dynamic and instinctual architecture came into play.\textsuperscript{56} Andrew Geller presented architecture without
codes, empowered by creative inspiration and bold forms. Architects working in this period were becoming increasingly aware of their ability to design houses that were advanced systems for personal expression. Alfred de Vido and Norman Jaffe made the materials and spaces of International Style sympathetic to the landscape, demonstrating that modern vocabulary could address regional concerns. In each case, the architect was straining the limits of modernism, rejected the cool reason of the forties and fifties in favor of a highly personal expressionism.

Andrew Geller was a product designer whose career as an architect began as a hobby and expanded quickly with the reception of his designs. His playful beach houses in the fifties and sixties were a testament to the public’s craving for individuality and freedom. He abandoned the imitation of past styles, using humble materials and clear geometrical shapes to create domestic space within sculptural objects. Geller took a visionary approach to the Pearlroth house built in Westhampton Beach in 1959, perching two diamond pods prominently on the dunes. The house cost less than ten thousand dollars yet it sent shockwaves through the community and evoked newspaper headlines that dubbed it the “extreme ultramodern house.” Geller deliberately combined mass and imagination to generate this response. With its exuberant geometric underpinnings and angular surfaces, the Pearlroth House was a harbinger of the uninhibited designs that were to follow in the sixties and seventies, capturing the spirit and confidence of the age.

Throughout his career, Geller worked personally with clients, creating homes that were individually tailored and highly expressionistic. The design for Arthur Pearlroth, a Port Authority manager, heralded his reputation as an infamous Casanova. With two
cubes tilted to become prominent diamonds, the house was manifest by an architectural
pun of a square brassiere. Novelty in domestic architecture was certainly the spirit of the
day. The example of a butterfly, box kite, and milk carton also provided inspiration for
this provocative structure. The wood “brassiere” was embedded with glass panels that
furthered the image of an exhibitionist dwelling. The Pearlroth house demonstrated that
people were inventing their own style of living and eagerly showing it off. The house’s
plan was adapted to the client’s living habits, while its appearance was customized to
reflect his persona.  

The Pearlroth house spoke of carefree leisure and the desire for an easy,
inexpensive, and adventurous living environment. Geller claimed, “Of all the forms
of dwelling space, none allows so much room for fun as a summer house. Furnaces and
carports and laundry rooms are left behind in the city, and the elements one works with
are sunlight and space.” The Pearlroth House was an evocation of such carefree living
and testified to the client’s desire to be experimental and daring with his second home.
The newly defined spaces within the diamond-shaped structure were a welcome change
from the rectangular rooms of apartments and offices. The program for leisure
eliminated staff and service space, allowing a simple plan with rooms and balconies
overlooking the ocean.(fig 35) Geller’s experience as an industrial designer at Raymond
Loewy made him well versed in designing envelopes for parts. His houses have been
compared to his streamlined camera designs, which opened up and peered out through a
glass lens. The Pearlroth House can be viewed as platform for seeing, with the most
basic needs of living satisfied within the striking exterior membrane.
During the design of the Pearlroth House, form came before function. Geller designed the provocative double-diamond silhouette and then grappled with the task of creating the necessary living components. The central living and dining area was the space inset between the two pods and sheathed in glass to provide ocean views. The master and guest bedrooms were located in one pod and stacked to accommodate the angular recesses. The awkwardly shaped space of the second level of each pod was adapted as a storage room and an additional sleeping area with three bunkrooms and a bathroom. The result was a compact living space that made use of every square inch.

Geller conformed the pointed bottom cubes into traditional flat-floored living spaces that afforded residents privacy and views. The interiors did not align with their exterior appearances, dumbfounding the casual observer as to how the space was inhabited. Geller subverted the traditional home, literally overturning the exterior cubical structure and differentiating the interior spaces with distinctive elevations.

Although Geller’s houses were conceptual and thought provoking, they made modernism seem accessible and even playful to working-class clients. He designed homes at less than twelve dollars per foot, providing modern, high-spirited designs for a modest price. The Pearlroth House was based on such economic principles with strong, simple forms and humble materials. The structure was exposed, with a single layered skin that provided no insulation. Geller used these basic means to generate extreme results. He claimed, “I think human beings, once they put their imprint on anything on earth, create some sort of havoc and it might be the solution to be contrary and not try to compliment direction or landscape.”

His structures were deliberately indifferent to their setting, isolated as sculptural entities. Nothing was in excess with the exception of
the apexes of the triangular roofs. The wood and glass sheathed diamonds, while
minimalist like Bauhaus designs, rejected mass-production and uniformity. Each of
Geller’s houses was an individual statement. Even when admiring clients requested that
he repeat the Pearlroth design, Geller declined to do so. His houses were portraits of his
clients that exemplified and celebrated their unique personalities. 67

Charles Gwathmey was a member of the New York Five, a group of architects
including Richerd Meier, John Hejduk, Peter Eisenman, and Michael Graves, assembled
in an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art by Arthur Drexler in 1969 and in the book
*Five Architects*, published in 1972. They reinterpreted the International Style,
appropriating formal elements they saw attractive and purposeful for their designs.
While Meier, Gwathmey, Hejduk, Eisenman, and Graves were engaged in the same
architectural tradition, each architect produced individual responses that demonstrated a
unique interpretation of the International Style. Gwathmey and Meier were interested
explicitly in the work of Le Corbusier, focusing on his buildings from the twenties and
thirties with smooth surfaces, strong geometries, asymmetric façades, and weightless
volumes. Gwathmey’s cuts and three-dimensional shapes assembled on the façade
destroyed Le Corbusiers’ pure cube, which concealed arbitrary shapes, while Meier
adhered more closely to the purist abstractions, interpreting them in sober plans with
layered and planar space. Both Meier and Gwathmey’s subsequent houses demonstrate
an enthusiasm for complex volumes and a love for looking out.

The residence that Charles Gwathmey built for his parents in 1966 in Amagansett
presents a monumental and sculptural modernism. He did away with the flat roofs and
boxes of the International Style and transcended the straightforward geometry of Geller’s
beach houses, creating a more nuanced architecture with a dialogue between solid and void. The Gwathmey residence was fundamentally a cube modified by penetrating areas rotating around the exterior. (fig 38) A diagonal roof and stair protruded while volumes were cut out of the main mass. Le Corbusier’s work was clearly a departure point for Gwathmey’s rhythmic abstraction. Gwathmey absorbed Le Corbusier’s criteria when Le Corbusier stated:  

68

The business of Architecture is to establish emotional relationships by means of raw materials. 
Architecture goes beyond utilitarian needs. 
Architecture is a plastic thing. The spirit of order, a unity of intention. 
The sense of relationships; architecture deals with quantities. 
Passion can create drama out of inert stone.

By juxtaposing curved, angled, and rectangular forms, Gwathmey designed a house of poetic, highly personal geometries that resonated. His structure was composed of inherent contradictions, at once rigid and flexible, open and closed, timeless and forward thinking. The Gwathmey residence could not be comprehended with a quick glance at its plans or façade; its design was probing and defined by its complexity.  

69 The dynamic forms were conceived not simply to shock passersby, but to make visitors conscious of the design and the spaces they inhabited, thus stimulating them to inquiry. 

Gwathmey’s rhythmic approach to space and form was decidedly modern, yet he incorporated vernacular traditions to engage the historical context. Organized around a prominent diagonal, the house’s materials and abstractions alluded to the architectural precedents in the area, namely the saltbox houses. Sheathed in vertical cedar siding, the geometric forms and planar surfaces evoked the solid, pragmatic wood structures. The smooth surfaces were austere and free of ornament, clearly articulating the volumes and incised voids. The sharp angles recalled simple shed roofs or an indigenous angular
crown while the solid walls evoked a barn’s continuous surfaces of vertical sheathing. The house was an abstraction of these various elements. The angles and layered planar elements synthesized plastic modeling and modern syntax with local traditions through the reinterpretation of the Shingle Style. As the Shingle Style’s solidity and openness was maintained and further developed, Gwathmey demonstrated the possibility of an architecture that was moving forward while linked to the American vernacular.70

Like Louis Kahn, Gwathmey incorporated primordial geometric elements, which instilled a historical presence. The house’s four surfaces were a geometric play of masses. One façade was incised with a square, which provided a porch entryway with a cylindrical protruding stairway that embraced the corner. The adjacent side had a concave lower level that cut into the structure, forming an entrance that was both within and beneath the house. A cylinder projected from the base and rose upwards, surpassing the roofline alongside other volumes. Square and rectangular windows of various shapes and sizes punctured the skin, initiating a dialogue between solid and void. Although geometric forms were subtracted and added to the surface, rather than being a primary space definer as in Kahn’s architecture, the volumetric manipulation was reminiscent of Kahn’s National Assembly in Dacca being built around the same time. (fig 39) The geometric volumes articulated and defined the exterior with the vivid intersection of forms and the subtle interplay of light. This imbedded monumental feeling transcended the here and now, elevating the experience of the house beyond the present moment. Like Kahn’s architecture, the Gwathmey Residence was reaffirming man’s place on earth.
Kahn’s pursuit of geometrical forms that prescribed “served” and “servant” spaces were also recalled in Gwathmey’s carefully wrought design for distinct living and working spaces. The Gwathmey Residence had secluded guest and work rooms on the lower level and an open living area on the second level with a loft-like studio suspended above. (fig 40) The strict separation of the communal and private areas recalled Blake’s Pinwheel design with the bedrooms tucked beneath the living areas. Gwathmey took this dualism and expanded it, manipulating the spatial boundaries to create vertically defined areas that intersected and overlapped. The living area was an expansive, airy cube that had double height ceilings with a horizontal roof protruding over the dining room. A tall spindly pier bisected the view vertically, penetrating the ceiling and extending beyond the roofline while a portion of the second floor balcony projected outwards, sheltering the entryway below and expanding the living space out toward the horizon. The bisecting and overlapping forms extended in different planes, creating a vibrant architectural language while geometrically ordering the space. With its formal and pragmatic spatial definition, the house was a functional composite engaged in dynamic tension.

Unlike Geller’s fanciful design perched on the dunes, the Gwathmey residence’s geometrical forms were tied to their use, like the earlier International Style homes. The cylindrical units housed the stairs while the horizontal protrusions formed balconies and places on which to perch. The geometric cylinder and triangle extended above the roof, capped with skylights that allowed light to pour into the long corridor and diffuse in the interior space. (fig 41) Outside, the forms engaged in a dialogue with the father’s studio, a separate structure across the lawn. The studio’s strong diagonal roof and projecting stair echoed the bold geometric lines of their counterparts in the main house. The
dialogue changed continuously as one moved around them. It engrossed the spectator throughout his effort to find a viewpoint between the two structures. (fig 42) The house and studio’s unresolved discourse and tautness reveal an indifference to the landscape. The two structures did not frame panoramas nor define the land through a shared axis; instead, their primal geometries were engaged with unsympathetic regard for their setting.  

While the Gwathmey house made references to its place with its materials, it was ultimately an architectural statement of its time. The house is a self-contained mass detached from the natural landscape. “I didn’t care about the context,” claimed Gwathmey. “As far as I was concerned, it was like a clean palette.” He was concerned primarily with the structure and not its setting when he was designing. The house stood alone, defining the site by its presence. Gwathmey’s ambitions were classical and monumental in this aspect. The house was unrelated to the landscape and stood triumphantly, making no gestures to its surroundings with the exception of the connection to the studio across the lawn. The house was reminiscent of Corbusier’s Villa Savoye with its frontal presentation on an open site. The Gwathmey House was firmly rooted in the earth, with a grandeur that was derived solely from its structure and the way the environment affected its temperament. (fig 43) The house’s cubic forms and transparent voids were enlivened by the natural phenomenon, notably the play of light and shadow.

The Gwathmey residence exerted a strong impression, becoming the archetype of modern East Coast vacation architecture. Architects were not only motivated by their contemporaries, but also by the preexisting vernacular traditions. Gwathmey acknowledged the pressure of the exposure and the architectural precedent as a stimulant
in his work. He claimed, “The architecture of the Hamptons represents a great opportunity for architects since the area has an affluent, intellectual, and architecturally sophisticated tradition. A new architect-designed residence is an event much discussed, analyzed, criticized, and evaluated against its existing counterparts, new and old.”

Gwathmey was challenged by the architectural precedent and the discussions surrounding modern architecture. His house was a response to the need for an architecture that was forward-thinking while acknowledging and addressing regional issues. Gwathmey’s modern forms were ambitious and conceptual while striking a cord with a variety of structures in the local area that had been around for over a century. Architecture on Long Island was becoming recognized not only for its ingenuity, but also for its ability to assimilate modern and vernacular traditions.

Richard Meier’s Saltzman house, built in 1969, was an abstract composition that referenced early modern architecture, namely houses by Le Corbusier, rather than vernacular traditions. His broad white surfaces and cubical modulations demonstrated a propensity for geometric abstraction that was dogmatic rather than open-ended in its approach. The house was a highly ordered living environment with open spaces that negated a feeling of containment. The International Style precursor had been expanded and elaborated with a greater variation in the plan and an outward extension of space. The Saltzman house was defined by the juxtaposition of solid and void, which held the structure together visually and structurally. Meier’s conception of space and form reverberated against the delicate contours of the surrounding environment while rising above it. Like Geller and Gwathmey’s designs, his house was a machine for looking while the land was a stage for its sculptural abstraction.
The Saltzman house displayed greater sensitivity for its site than the Pearrhoth house or the Gwathmey residence. Its structure was carefully positioned on the site in coordination with its surfaces of solid and void to satisfy the need for communion and privacy. The north entrance wall was a nearly solid front with a short segment of windows along the lower wall. (fig 45) The integrity of the solid façade was diminished on the western front where a lines of ribbon windows penetrated the upper and lower levels, bringing the interior in contact with the outdoors. (fig 46) The southeast front provided complete exposure with a continuous arc of glass that connected the north and west walls while orienting the house toward the southern ocean views. (fig 47) A continuous ribbon window traced the spine of the arc and was met by prominent vertical windows on the south and east walls. The arrangement of vertical and horizontal views calculated the inhabitant’s engagement with the landscape; the ribbon window provided a panorama that unfolded sequentially as the viewer walked along the wall while the vertical windows infused the interior with wide-ranging views to maximize the sense of spaciousness. (fig 48) This combination of enclosure and fenestration provided privacy from the entrance and momentous interaction with the landscape in seclusion, elaborating on the simple International Style scheme’s like Bunshaft’s residence with a solid wall facing the road and large panels of glass opening to the backyard. Meier was taking liberties with the modular container, manipulating it for greater sense of excitement and gaiety.

With its rounded walls, curved glass, robust volumes, and smooth white surfaces, the Saltzman house was a direct descendent of the International Style. The plan was derived from a Corbusian villa, complete with ribbon windows and pilotis. There was an
uncanny resemblance to the Villa Savoye as the bulk of the house is raised above the ground on pilotis. As a result, the external walls were not structural, enabling the Meier to configure the facade with greater freedom. The white surfaces were articulated with long strips of ribbon windows and the non-supporting walls were virtually diminished by the expansive openings to uninterrupted views. Meier followed Le Corbusier’s requirements accurately with the exception that Meier improvised Le Corbusier’s ramps, replacing them with prominent external stairways and a long suspended ramp to the guest house to accommodate an architectural promenade. (fig 49) Meier even topped off the design with white tubular railings of the “ocean-liner” aesthetic that Le Corbusier advocated. Indeed, the house recalled a vessel complete with its sea views and wide-open surroundings. The Saltzman house was an ideal apparatus for living in and observing nature.

Meier’s adaptation of the Villa Savoye dismantled Le Corbusier’s static volumes and rectangular plan. His lyrical treatment of the volumetric façade vitiated the strict frontal façade with a preference for a more picturesque approach. The interiors were also growing increasingly complex. Meier designed a carefully controlled system for the separation of different types of space. (fig 50) The house provided open, glazed public areas and closed private rooms. The sequence of space spiraled upwards as the closed and compartmentalized regions of the lower level dissolved into progressively open areas on the second and third floors. Meier’s division of private and communal areas provided sleeping and service areas on the entry floor and more open areas above, mimicking Blake and Gwathmey’s designs, although Meier’s arrangement was wrought with increased complexity. He designed a gradual increase in the openness as the resident
ascended to the upper levels. The central dining area on the first floor provided the base to an open space that rose to the roof. From this point upwards, a variety of open rooms unfolded. The second floor had few wall divisions, sufficient to separate the master bedroom from the main living area. The living area had soaring spaces that reached to the ceiling of the third floor, augmented by a double story window, recalling the large expanses of glass employed in the International Style homes, such as the Farney house and the Pinwheel house. This window aligned itself directly above the panoramic glass in the dining area to emphasize the house’s vertical posture. Spatial boundaries dissolved entirely on the third floor, providing an airy study and double height spaces. By placing service functions on the lowest level, the communal areas were hoisted up to provide sweeping views of the surrounding fields and coastline, thus cementing the house’s role as device for looking onto nature.

The completion of the Saltzman house in 1969 was at a point of departure in Meier’s career when he received several commissions for homes in New York, Connecticut, and Michigan, including two large-scale residential complexes in New York City. He continued to deliver white homes and institutional facilities that stood independent of their climate, vegetation, and topography. The schemes integrated programmatic, structural and mechanical organization into clearly defined public and private spaces. The Saltzman house’s solid white forms punctuated with glass characterized Meier’s later designs. With the establishment of his definitive style, Meier cemented his architectural production, making his work more recognizable and ensuring clients a specific appearance for their homes.
At the beginning of the seventies, clients were beginning to turn to architects not only to differentiate their homes, but also to give them an identity. Hiring a recognized architect with an identifiable mode automatically distinguished a residence and ensured status. Whereas the International Style architects of the forties and fifties were sought to instill residences with an air of modernity, architects in the late sixties and seventies were employing elements of the style to generate their own vocabulary and give their homes a distinctive character. Architects were becoming brand-name artists, whose work was desired to lend an air of forward-thinking ingenuity as well as urbanity. Whereas Meier’s houses could be criticized for appearing mass-produced and indistinguishable from one another, their distinctive style ensured immediate recognition and association with a greater body of renowned architecture. While the Saltzman house could have been erected anywhere, its home in the heart of the Hamptons was symbolic of the growing desire for recognition and prominence in the realm of the residential architecture in the late sixties. The vacation house was no longer a simple expression of modernism; it was also an identifiable image of both its client and its architect.81

Alfred de Vido studied at Princeton and made several contributions to the architecture of the Hamptons. He was notable for a wide body of architecture that was difficult to characterize with a “signature style” because of his regionalist sensibility that tailored each structure to the local topography, heritage, and climate. Many of De Vido’s homes on Long Island were shingled wood structures with peaked roofs and central living spaces. The Garranty house was a departure from these simple structures, however, the house still demonstrated his commitment to designing a modern residence that was sympathetic to the weather, site, construction methods, and the built
environment rather than designing an art object. De Vido employed modern vocabulary like Gwathmey, Geller, and Meier, yet he adapted it to the surroundings. His houses were defined by clear geometries and natural materials that were a result of his experience in the US Navy as a construction battalion, where he honed his craftsmanship and inherited his sensitivity for regional concerns. De Vido’s pragmatic approach to the structure and materials contrasted the severe abstractions and conceptual methods of his colleagues, demonstrating his penchant for a regional distinctiveness.\(^\text{82}\)

In his Garranty House, built in Sag Harbor in 1973, De Vido employed solid purist forms that were personalized to the inhabitants and the site. The Garranty house did not flaunt its modernity; it subtly transformed it with traditional materials and forms. The architecture was understated and unpretentious, resigning itself to the horizontal plane of the earth. De Vido’s idiosyncratic forms responded more to the native traditions than to International Style modernism that Meier and Gwathmey adapted. Gwathmey’s dynamic sculptural ensemble and Meier’s machine for viewing were discarded for a desire to express a close connection to the natural world. His consciousness of the natural landscape was paired with a desire to solve design challenges with proportional order and composition. The resulting design was restrained and dignified, celebrating the concrete and tangible aspects of the structure. The outline of the house recalled a sprawling cottage, while the structural components were geometric cubes stacked sporadically along the shore. (fig 51)

The Garranty house reflected a growing interest in regionalism, an aesthetic ideal that arose in the late fifties, which was preoccupied with a concern for local climate, materials, and history. De Vido was attuned to Long Island’s regional identity,
conceiving of the Garranty House to be organically imbedded in its site with natural stone, wood, and concrete. Perched directly over the Peconic Bay, the house was designed to withstand winter weather and blustery summer sun. The house was encased in a waterproofed concrete block with concrete floors and a flat roof. The interior was inlaid with a wood frame to soften the décor and provide additional support. De Vido explained, “The area’s traditions include forms such as gabled roofs, barn and saltbox shapes, and the simpler flat-roof configurations. It seems desirable to work within this existing visual language, while allowing more exuberant spatial and decorative concepts in the interior.”

While the house was composed of simple cubic units, the interiors were enlivened by the sculpted form and exposure of the ceiling. (fig 52) Skylights were arranged to absorb light from above while large square windows penetrated the façade, ushering in light to animate the wall surfaces and voids.

With the simple rectangular components of the Garranty house, De Vido was able to create a highly refined structure with individual views afforded to each of the spaces. Whereas the Saltzman house and the Gwathmey residence raised the communal spaces to the second level, the Garranty House was organized with the communal spaces on the lowest level and the bedroom areas and studio above. (fig 53) The dynamic soaring spaces that distinguished Meier and Gwathmey’s houses were absent from the Garranty House, although De Vido shared a passion for pure geometry and composition. The cubical modules ensured a rational organization while their uneven yet tightly woven assemblage created a multiplicity of views and spatial experiences. The plan also established privacy from the road to which it turned with opaque surfaces. On the bay front the cubes projected at various depths with large glass openings that punctuated
every surface. Overhangs, sun porches, and pronounced setbacks distinguished the cubes from each other. De Vido’s plan was a carefully wrought juxtaposition of privacy and openness with individual spaces that were distinct while being interwoven in a greater whole. Although many of his contemporaries and International Style predecessors compromised an intimate relationship with nature for suspended abstractions, De Vido manipulated the scale and complexity of his blocky masses to integrate architecture with the site. Architects in the seventies were beginning to incorporate traditional materials and construction methods with their modern vocabulary, adding a new richness to the formal qualities of volumetric expression. Postwar regionalism was finding its way into the modern idiom, asserting the individual identity of architecture in the collective sphere.

Norman Jaffe was also recognized for his regionalist sensibility and his profusion of modern, shingle-clad vacation homes on Long Island. He was dubbed the “Romantic Modernist” for his undying devotion to the special qualities of the land. He borrowed widely from Frank Lloyd Wright, using natural materials, berms, and low profiles to merge the house with the landscape. The Lloyd house, constructed in 1978, actively pursued a meaningful relationship with nature and the site. (fig 54) Jaffe combined light, space, and texture to make the house a transformational experience. He designed the Lloyd house to provide interior spaces that were unlike any other spaces the inhabitant had experienced. Unusual angles and vistas, self-contained enclaves, and dissolving walls characterized the asymmetrical plan. The house didn’t remind the inhabitant of nature but rather told him his place in nature. Jaffe’s house demonstrates that at the end of the
seventies, some architects were abandoning the pure white cubist sculptures that floated over the lawn for modern compositions that were grounded in their site.

Situated in an architecturally distinguished area of East Hampton, the Lloyd house was a distant neighbor of Gordon Chadwick’s Spaeth house, Gordon Bundshaft’s house, and Richard Meier’s Saltzman house. Jaffe approached the house differently than his colleagues, translating the meaning of the site into the design of the house. The horizontal roofs helped the house fuse with the flat terrain while the structure was firmly bound to nature by its massive granite walls. The granite softened the modern lines of the glass and steel greenhouse that encased the dining area. (fig 55) Jaffe explained, “The quality of a vacation house is measured by its effort to meet the standards of the environment in which it is set. The materials should be alive with the snap and vitality of the natural.”

Although he abandoned the farmhouse vernacular that was characteristic of many of his earlier houses in the area, the Lloyd house was still an organic compound that was imbedded in the terrain. The field rose to engulf the back of the house so that the house and the earth were deeply interconnected. The house was attached to the Hamptons not by mimicking the characteristics of the local houses, but by forging links with the natural landscape.

Unlike the early International Style architects who designed primarily functional and pragmatic houses, Jaffe exemplified that the architects working in the sixties and seventies had an increased sensibility for the human aspects of a home. Beginning with Geller and Gwathmey, architects were growing more attentive to their clients and the patterns of daily life, orchestrating the International Style vocabulary with a more individual, man-centered approach. Jaffe embraced this humanism further with his belief
that the house must address the senses. The Lloyd house was conceived with the idea that people need physical contact with nature to orient themselves. Jaffe employed rich and diverse materials to create a sense of space and belonging. He attempted to knit together the indoors and outdoors with sloping panes of glass that emerged from the thick granite walls and windows that separated the horizontal and vertical planes of stone and wood. Light entered through skylights throughout the house, penetrating the interior in unexpected places. The kitchen backsplash behind the counter was even replaced by a continuous plane of glass that looked out onto the pool while the dining room projected into the open front lawn in a glass enclosed solarium. (fig 56)

Jaffe was careful to include details that would enhance the connection with nature while making the house a unique environment for living. Jaffe noted, “The presence of the sky triggers an unlimited craving for light; high skylights fulfill this need well. The details should create a sense of newness and adventure rather than a dated déjà vu.”

The oblique positioning of the house on the plot demanded that the visitor walk the length of the house to the opposite end where the entrance was tucked behind a discrete alcove. The overhang had a prominent hole to allow a group of Cyprus trees to pass through, literally merging the house and nature. (fig 57) In the backyard, the swimming pool met the house, tracing the periphery of the structure while leading the eye to the swelling berm that consumed the house. (fig 58) The house was a direct response to its time and place, illustrating the possibility for sensitively executed modern forms that could elicit the same sense of place as the vernacular shingle style. Jaffe was not looking for eye-catching shapes and volumes to outdo his precursors; he was looking for a way to
unite the structures in which people lived with the outdoors by affirming the house’s connection to the earth.\textsuperscript{92}
During the sixties and seventies the population in the Hamptons increased almost twenty-eight percent. The result was thousands of new vacation homes that infringed on the open potato fields and beachfront property. The proliferation of houses and diminishing supply of vacant land also meant drastically rising real estate prices. In 2004 over 350 permits were issued for single-family homes in Southampton Town alone, at an average price of $667,500. It appeared as though the area would not be able to satisfy the endless demand for land and housing. As real estate prices soared, the old concept of a ten thousand dollar beach house became inconceivable. Architectural experiments were replaced by expensive investments and the prosperity of the eighties brought a desire for more opulent forms of traditional architecture. Many of the International Style houses of the forties and fifties and their architectural offspring of the sixties and seventies suddenly appeared self-enclosed and aloof. People now wanted to be associated with enduring wealth rather than creativity and innovation. A Post Modern sensibility began to take shape, which grew from local building traditions and turn-of-the-century architecture. This went beyond the mere borrowing of a barn’s shingled walls and slanted roofs to include pedimented facades, prominent gables, and shuttered windows. Patrons sought to include themselves in an architectural tradition that reached back to early twentieth century architecture of McKim, Mead, and White. They longed for the prestige of venerable old estates that recalled the *Great Gatsby*. Robert A.M. Stern, Robert Venturi, and Jaquelin Taylor Robertson built charming architectural interpretations with ornate facades and historic detail in response to this cultural trend.
Despite this promulgation of picturesque architecture, many architects remained committed to their search for a new domestic architecture that was a product of its time rather than its place. Innovative and experimental ideas in architecture persisted, although with considerable difference. The architects of the late twentieth century absorbed the lessons and experiments of their predecessors, pushing them farther and executing them with greater clarity. They were still testing ideas about technology, modes of living, and the relationship to the land. The houses built from the beginning of the eighties to the brink of the twenty-first century assimilated the ideas pursued by the earlier generations. Many of the discoveries of the first International Style houses such as the large fields of glass in the Pinwheel House that opened the house to the landscape and the modifications of the sixties and seventies such as the interpenetrating spaces of Gwathmey and Meier’s houses had become inherent features of this generation’s vacation homes. What were once exploratory experiments with structure and composition, such Geller’s Pearlroth House built in 1959, have become mature forms and the basis of modern domestic architecture. Architects continued to search for certain qualities: the possibilities of new materials, restrained design, the connection of a building to its site, and the importance of space for privacy and interaction. The architecture was no longer a fixed style. The house was a sum of its parts, a cohesive whole that allowed for greater richness through elusive features and perception over theory.

Architects responded differently to the environment as lot sizes became smaller and exposure increased with the multiplication of neighboring houses. Domestic architecture demonstrated a desire to retreat and advance simultaneously. The balance
between privacy and community became increasingly difficult to master. Architects had to devise elaborate schemes for community and privacy, outer experience with nature and isolated solitude. In many cases the architecture challenged conventional ways of perceiving and interacting with the environment. The different materials employed and the structural compositions orchestrated illuminate new aspects of human activity. The house was becoming a more sophisticated response to human needs and interests as architecture was reattached to its purpose as a shelter rather than sculpture.

The realization that land could be improved by development reached its apotheosis in this era. The diminishing land resources pushed developers further and further north, and the Hamptons came to symbolize not just beachfront living but forest dwelling. The architect was no longer receiving inspiration from open fields and swelling dunes, as the majority of new homebuilders owned less desirable land sheltered in the trees north of the highway. This uninspiring terrain demanded greater ingenuity from the architects, calling on the house to giving meaning to the site. Whereas the dwindling open land made structures increasingly self-enclosed, it also prompted further manipulation and variation of interior spaces to replace the expansive and sprawling nature that once enveloped the homes. The character of architecture had changed. Gwathmey’s pure abstracted spaces and Meier’s elegant minimalist compositions would be underwhelming nestled in the trees. Where they derived their potency from the planar forms that floated above the ground and expansive glass windows overlooking vast fields, their successors were forced to turn inwards and derive inspiration from the complexity of interior forms.
Parallel to this focus on interior life, came greater effort to design the home for living, giving shape to all aspects of the client families’ lives. There was a visible shift of interest from the creator to the audience. The house was no longer simply about expression of personality or the architect’s ability to integrate the historical context. The 1983 De Menil residence by Gwathmey Siegel was a formula of accommodation that surpassed simple conceptions of solid and void and form and space. Whereas for residence for his parents Gwathemy took the stark forms of the International Style and enlivened them with volumetric complexity, his work in the eighties was less concerned with creating energetic compositions of primal geometries to animate the landscape. Attention was now focused on the minute details of life; the De Menil residence was committed to fulfilling personal desires of the inhabitants. An analysis of requirements and possibilities gave way to homes in the eighties, nineties, and early twenty-first century that accommodated procession and arrival, human scale and proportion, circulation and enlivening light. The distinction between private and public realms grew more acute as the conception of the interior became critical. The house was not just carefully divided; it was inlaid with complex levels of interpenetration and a journey through the spaces. The emphasis on the interior reflects the inward-looking site influences that required that the architect disregard predetermined ideas and conceptions about what the home was and what it should look like.

Beginning in the eighties, architects shifted away from focusing primarily on the external appearance of the homes and debates centered on vernacular versus modern stylees. Instead, they concentrated attention on the house as a locust for both social and private life. Architects were concerned with how a structure could express the aspirations
of domestic living. Gwathmey’s De Menil residence and Ulrich Franzen’s Glimcher residence were invested in the interior, designed to provide spaces with a symbolic focus and a sense of community, privacy, and social organization. The house was still a reflection of the architect’s ingenuity, but it was more centered on the inhabitant and his diverse needs. Even Tod Williams’ Tarlo house, which appeared to belong to the previous body of sculptural and expressionistic architecture, was manifest to shelter the inhabitant and orient him in the landscape. Williams’ effort to foster privacy was mirrored in Henry Cobb’s design for extreme seclusion. His Sagaponac house specified how the inhabitants encountered nature by incorporating a journey in the house’s plan. The house was becoming a sophisticated device for experience, which reached its apotheosis in the work of Zaha Hadid. She challenged notions of interior and exterior to create vivid spatial experiences. Hadid’s recent plan for a Sapaponac residence was the antithesis of earlier monumental structures, such as Gwathmey’s 1966 residence for his parents. His active play of forms propped self-assuredly on the fields was dismissed for a design that could not be viewed with one glimpse from the road; her house had to be lived in to be experienced. Architecture was now designed as an encounter rather than an external display.

Tod Williams’ architecture was founded on a belief that the built environment could enlighten human life. His homes and projects made strong but quiet statements and demonstrate the regional awareness that was fostered in the sixties and seventies. The Tarlo house, designed by Tod Williams in 1979, addressed the increasing need for privacy in the Hamptons with a structure that was reclusive despite its position central stage. Although the house sat on an open field, it became self-conscious and almost
timid, hiding behind a detached solid wall that extended the length of the façade. (fig 59) Williams used this device to protect the home and conceal the entrance from the road while forcing dwellers to contemplate their abode. This screen provided inhabitants framed views of the landscape, enhancing the visual drama of the open field. The Tarlo house was conceived as an element of spatial layering to disrupt traditional notions of form and space so that the house was interpreted with a fresh perspective. Like many of the houses in the sixties and seventies, the house read as sculpture. Williams was still working in a repertoire of sculptural forms perched on the land, but articulating them with a new desire for privacy.

The screen projected from the house parallel to the road, asserting the house’s presence while protecting and framing it in its wide-open space. A grid of square punctures in the lower portion of the barrier imparted visual animation, while the majority of the surface remained opaque as a prohibitive screen. Williams’ abstraction recalled the massive forms of the Unite de Habitation in Paris. (fig 60) Williams expanded Le Corbusier’s search for active monumentality with stark eye-catching form. Although Le Corbusier’s plastic structure was poured concrete, the Tarlo House’s wood grain emitted the same rough texture and endowed the same overwhelming presence to the site. 97 Williams monumental design, unlike his precursors in the sixties and early seventies, demonstrated that a sculptural home could be designed in relation to the human figure. Of these new man-centered forms at the end of the twentieth century Vincent Scully wrote, “The space-dominated environmental continuity of the materialistically confident late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in which the image of man normally disappeared from architecture, was thus cast aside in favor of a new, mid-
twentieth-century image of the embattled human presence in the world.” This struggle to assert the individual is apparent in Williams’ effort to transcribe the body in the building and the site. The house was no longer an expression of outward appearance and formal strategies; it responded to architecture’s capacity to effect change and become a frame for experiences.

Williams claimed that his explorations were derived from John Hejduk’s theoretical Bye House, which inlaid a wall between the entrance and living quarters to convey the transition of time and space to residents. David Morton wrote that Hejduk was “Interested in effecting the direct, spontaneous, and sensuous response to architectural form, interested in the poetics of architecture, in that which only the architect can give.” “But,” Morton continues, “Of all the aspects of architecture though, this one –its art or poetics– is the least accessible to verbal description or analysis. Language, except as poetry, is at best a poor substitute for the reality of art, which finally can only be known through participation in the art object itself.” The Tarlo House was similarly meant to move the inhabitant physically and spiritually in a way that could not be articulated in words. Williams verifies, “Our work is grounded in use, with the desire for transcendence through art.” He wanted residents to feel a physical confrontation when approaching the house. The separate elements were manifest to impart a bodily experience of the transition from open to closed and public to private.

Williams’ Tarlo house was conceived to be experienced first hand. Unlike Meier and Gwathmey’s earlier monumental structures that confronted the audience from the street, Williams’ house was designed to be engaged by personal contact. A walkway extended from the second level of the house to a door-size opening in the screen,
establishing a specific point from which to view the landscape. (fig 62) This cavity between the screen and the structure was identical in width to the tangential house. The void evoked the presence of the physical interior space. Williams claimed, “I was immersed in my own exploration of simplified, almost totemic architectural elements.”

The space was intended to be understood through personal experience, by encountering the discomfort of the massive form in open space. Williams explained, “This was my first realization of an architecture that was conceived as much by the movement of the body as by the eye.”

While the house felt independent of the landscape, the screen asserted its attachment to the earth. Walking into the interior gave the inhabitant the sensation of being in a stage for dwelling. The occupier activated the house and thus became part of the composition.

Rather than ordering and institutionalizing the living environment, Williams created a capacity to integrate the personal feelings and experiences of the inhabitant into the spaces. Williams clarified, “The truth of these places lies in the perceptions and hearts of the people who inhabit and use and walk in them.” By projecting the occupant’s living environment onto the landscape, Williams demonstrated that his architecture was designed to explore the individual’s instincts about the building and the site. Unlike Meier and Gwathmey, his sculptural structure was motivated by human responses rather than a love for abstractions in space. The Tarlo house was not about Williams as the creator; it was interested in the audience and their perceptions. It presented a possibility for monumental design that was sensitive and inspiring for its residents. Williams claimed, “We see architecture as an act of profound optimism. Its
foundation lies in believing that it is possible to make places on earth that can give a sense of grace to life – and in believing that that matters.”

Charles Gwathmey joined with Robert Siegel to form Gwathmey Siegel and Associates in 1968. In the first ten years of their partnership they built almost a dozen houses in the Hamptons alone. Their homes were sculptural and clearly volumetric like Gwathmey’s residence for his parents although the houses Gwathmey and Siegel conceived together were designed on a larger scale with budgets that enabled them to use richer materials. The De Menil residence, completed in 1983, exemplifies the sophistication of their work and the increased complexity and refinement of architecture in the eighties on Long Island. It was an intricate structure with interweaving spaces and a mode of organization that accommodated variations of human motion. (fig 63) The house was not ordered into clearly distinguishable fields; instead, overlapping public and private realms redefined the organization of interior space. Unlike the Tarlo House, the opportunity for architectural promenade existed on the interior rather than the exterior. The areas for relaxation, privacy, and interaction were embodied in the overall structure of the house so that the resident could take a stroll along a bridge, enter an open garden with soaring trees, wander over the edge of an outdoor balcony, and climb a cylindrical stairway all within the house’s structural perimeter. The house was essentially a compound, serving varied human needs and interests in a single container.

From the exterior, the De Menil residence produced a flat image unlike the three-dimensional sculpture of Gwathmey’s earlier residence for his parents. (fig 64) Spatio-temporal implications surfaced only once the visitor entered the interior. Where Gwathmey’s earlier house separated function on different floor levels, the De Menil
residence expanded these spaces with horizontal and vertical trajectories. Geometry was still essential to the organization of space, but it was less about sculptural effect. The house was composed of a series of structural layers that intersected in the inner zones of the house rather than on the exterior. The plan was divided into four zones that ran parallel to the ocean while escalating vertically the height of the building. The first entry zone was an open space that rose to the glass-topped ceiling of the fourth floor, providing an internal greenhouse. This functioned as the transition zone from outside to inside, fostering a gradual interaction between the house and the landscape. The space also served as a zone of integration for all of the upper levels that touched it. The interior volumes were lined with the same vertical Cedar siding as the external surfaces, creating a seamless fusion of the inner and outer walls, making it difficult to determine precisely where the boundary between the two lied. The second zone, joined to the entry zone, was essentially the backbone connecting the various levels of the house with a continuous stairway and spine that spanned the entire house. All of the necessary living and communal areas were encased in the third zone, including the kitchen, den, dining room, and double story living room. The last zone included the exterior living spaces enclosed under the quadruple story brise soleil. These balconies, porches, and walkways made the final transition to the ocean in the distance. This seemingly straightforward program was enriched by a variety of intrusions and juxtapositions. The second floor was a point of collision as the study room projected into the greenhouse and double and triple height spaces penetrated the floors, asserting the existence of each volume as an individual spatial entity. The master bathroom jutted out into the brise soleil, separating...
the master terrace from the guest terrace, further subverting the distinction between interior and exterior.\textsuperscript{106}

The De Menil façade was bilaterally conceived with its front facing the road and its back towards the ocean. Its rectangular form contrasted the radial structure of his parents’ residence. Rather than engrossing the observer in its geometric façade, the De Menil residence turned inwards, allowing the complexities to reveal themselves internally.\textsuperscript{107} The façade was a protective container, moderating the exposure to the exterior. The entryway was imbedded in the façade behind a curving wall. This simple front façade was contrasted on the back, which was wrought with the greater complexity of interior and exterior overlapping planes. These interwoven masses aroused interest though they did not provoke the observer’s movement around the periphery in the same way as done at the Gwathmey residence. This house was far more consumed with its internal composition, which only invited guests had the opportunity to experience.\textsuperscript{108}

Despite its overarching simplification of form and elimination of unnecessary detail, the De Menil residence’s monumental grandeur was reminiscent of a traditional mansion. It was a modern abstraction of the large houses erected by Venturi and Stern at the time.\textsuperscript{109} With its internalized representation of function, the De Menil Residence corresponded more closely to the work of these post-modernists than to its modern predecessors. While Gwathmey had lost some of the dynamism of his first house, he began to filter in such romantic impulses as the peaked glass roof and the curving balconies. The De Menil Residence continued to engage in the ongoing modern-historicist dialogue, adapting modern vocabulary to the post-modern impulses for eclecticism and diversity of representation. Unlike the Gwathmey house and studio, the
De Menil residence was more focused on the effects on the inhabitant than the external appearance.

Ulrich Franzen was also a significant modernist of the postwar years in the Hamptons whose first house was a residence for himself, built in 1978. He was a German immigrant who studied under Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer at Harvard and was classmates with Philip Johnson and Paul Rudolf. Like Johnson’s first body of work, Franzen’s early homes were influenced by Mies van der Rohe with their rectangular compositions and minimalist frames. The house he built in East Hampton for Millie and Arne Glimcher in 1984 was more advanced than his initial glass enclosed living spaces.\(^{110}\) He employed geometric forms in a classical composition that was unsympathetic to its context and its site. Franzen was not employing the International Style canon or deriving his inspiration from the vernacular; he used the formal qualities of geometry to define this vacation house in the Hamptons.

Built in the same year as the De Menil residence, the Glimcher residence was also an inward turned structure. Franzen further expanded the boundaries of a home conceived as an inner sanctum, removed from external influences. The house resembled an institution with remarkably few features that denoted a home.\(^{111}\)(fig 67) The entry foyer was reminiscent of a lobby with a vaulted glass roof and granite and marble flooring. The house was totally withdrawn from the natural environment; the only dialogue with nature was within the boundaries of the house, in the trees and fountains of the atrium. The magnitude of detail, the richness of materials, and the powerful geometric forms did not convey the warmth and ease of a vacation home, but rather a stately environment for formal usage. (fig 68)
The house was being constructed as Franzen’s Philip Morris World Headquarters was being completed in New York City across from Grand Central Station. Franzen had convinced the Whitney Museum to display paintings in a gallery in the building’s atrium and designed the interior spaces for viewing art. The Glimcher residence was informed by these experiments; Franzen employed materials and scale appropriate for an executive office structure when designing this vacation residence for displaying art. Franzen articulated a careful hierarchy of spaces that unfolded along a central axis. The entrance was set on a prominent diagonal bisecting a cube. This entry axis was enclosed with a vaulted glass archway that extended from the front to rear, separating the two symmetrical triangles. Living spaces were built into these triangles made of cast stone blocks, which were inspired by Franzen’s love of Romanesque architecture. The thickness of the solid walls lent an air of permanence and strength to the structure while making the interior appear guarded and almost fortified. This inward-turned arrangement established the house as an ideal picture gallery for art appreciation.

The Glimcher residence itself was displayed like a sculpture on a pedestal with the grade around the house raised five feet above the natural landscape. (fig 69) As a result, the structure was distinct and removed from its surroundings, recalling early International Style Houses that were perched indifferently on the lands. Whereas Blake’s Pinwheel house opened entirely to the exterior, there were minimal opportunities for contact with the outdoors in the Glimcher residence, with the exception of the front and back entrances along the spine. Like the International Style architects, Franzen neglected the local materials and traditions of the Hamptons. Instead, he used geometrical forms to instill order and meaning in the house. This recalled Gwathmey’s design for his parents
in 1966 where the geometric forms gave the house a sculptural, symbolic, and monumental presence. However, Franzen was less concerned with the plays of masses; his primary geometric forms were employed to make the house a place of universal significance.\textsuperscript{112}

The collage-like assembly of materials and the fragmented composition of the architecture denote that Franzen was questioning the accepted notions of modern architecture. He did not conform to any one school of thought or present a singular approach to the house. Designs like the Alley Theatre in Houston, Texas, built in 1968, were sculpturally liberated with a range of forms molded in concrete while designs like the Research Tower at Cornell University, built in 1975, were more restrained with angular geometry. The Glimcher residence plan adhered to the geometric discipline. The two structural triangles were reminiscent of Kahn’s primary geometry while the painstaking details in steel and glass were synonymous with Mies’ vocabulary. Franzen’s predilection for order contradicted the free plan associated with the International Style beach houses of the postwar years. Whereas the later modern homes of the sixties and seventies created subtle spatial distinctions with vertical circulation and interpenetrating fields, Franzen chose to rely on geometry to supply forms and organize spaces. Peter Blake wrote, “Franzen’s buildings do not celebrate ‘complexity’ and ‘contradiction,’ they seem to celebrate ‘complexity’ and resolution, more difficult to achieve that ‘contradiction.’”\textsuperscript{113} The unity and visual coherence of the Glimcher residence exemplify Franzen’s desire to order the living environment and demonstrate how vacation houses of the Hamptons were becoming increasingly formalized in the eighties.
Henry Cobb of was briefly a colleague of Ulrich Franzen’s when Franzen worked at Pei Cobb Freed in the beginning of his career in the fifties. As one of the founding principals of Pei Cobb Freed since its formation in 1955, Cobb has executed a wide variety of architecture, including museums, educational facilities, and office buildings. The range of his work enhanced the quality of his individual projects, demonstrating that he was equipped to tackle a diversity of settings and conditions. Cobb’s acuity for defining a sense of place is apparent in the house he built in 2004 in Sagaponac, where he transformed a mundane setting through a meaningful communion with the landscape. The structure was designed to give significance to the simple and uninspiring site in a flat, wooded site north of the highway with an almost entirely closed structure marked by a few carefully placed openings. Cobb’s design preserved a classicizing symmetry of mass and spacing that was employed at the Glimcher residence, adapting it to an open plan. (fig 70) Cobb endowed the structure with carefully arranged views, balanced spaces, interior promenades, and allusions to limitless space to provide inhabitants a restorative experience.

Cobb’s one story-house was devised as two separate structures, linked by a promenade with one area for living and dining while the other was a spacious studio with a guest bedroom. (fig 71) From the entrance, the house was enwrapped in a continuous wall of teak shutters that provided privacy from the road and neighbors. (fig 72) The organization of the interior was also applied to the exterior so that the pool and yard appeared to be a seamless extension of the structure. The outdoor porches were enclosed within the perimeter of the house and protected under the roof while the pool appeared like a removed puzzle piece that inserted perfectly into the outdoor cooking station inset...
in the deck. (fig 73) Two bedrooms mirror each other on either side of the living area and open onto the deck to create a constant circulation of space from the interior to the exterior.¹¹⁴

The interior of the house was transformed into a theatre of landscape. The living room stood as the threshold between the outer communal realm with its lawn and pool and the contemplative inner realm with its quiet garden. On the exterior wild and abundant nature grew, while in the interior courtyard nature was pristinely abstracted for the inhabitant’s pleasure. (fig 74) By abstracting nature and enclosing it in the house, Cobb designated a meaningful experience with nature. (fig 75) He filled the garden with local trees rather than exotic shrubs and greenery to create a dialogue between the house and the natural environment. The garden echoed the landscape in its surroundings, placing it before the residents in a more thought-provoking way. Indigenous trees were arranged in a circular formation with a deeply recessed center that resembled a pit. The guest studio made a bold imposition, jutting out into the court and disrupting the circular pattern of the plantings. This arrangement was eye-catching without being unsettling or overly contrived. In this way it acknowledged the site but staged it with visual drama to heighten perception.

The boundaries between inside and outside and the distinction between front and back were equivocal in Cobb’s design. The house’s distinctions between interior and exterior nurtured a multitude of impressions. The sheltered walkway that connected the guest studio to the house could be accessed from two opposite ends of the house, both of which met at the studio. (76) The route from either end was designed to be lengthy and contemplative. To proceed to the studio, the guest had to depart from the axis and follow
the long, narrow corridor that flank the expanse of the home. This deliberate removal of orientation pushed the guest into a state of uncertainty and forced him to contemplate his surroundings and his destination while enclosed in the corridor. The long, reflective walk made it impossible to enter the studio mindlessly. The process of presentation, removal, and return created greater anticipation of the final destination and promoted self-awareness. Cobb deliberately orchestrated this drastic spatial experience for residents and guests. The journey to the studio could be heightened further with the opening and closing of the screens that enclosed the corridor from the garden and the exterior. They could potentially be opened on all sides, recalling Peter Blake’s sliding glass walls.

While the enclosed rectangular structure of the house was indifferent to the setting, Cobb’s modifications to its external skin and interior arrangement provided very site-specific encounters. He employed simple devices to generate profound and environmentally astute connections with nature. His regionalist sensibility did not emerge in the quotation of vernacular traditions such as an enormous outdoor porch, but in designing for optimum light, consciousness of time and season, and awareness of place. Rather than institutionalizing living as Gwathmey and Franzen did in the eighties with massive self-contained structures, Cobb prescribed functions to the home that would inspire an appreciation for the site. His mandated journey to the guest studio instilled residents with tranquility, demonstrating that the architect was capable and willing to impart experiences on the residents to designate how he believed they should interact with nature. In effect, the house was a mechanism for experience.

In 2004, Zaha Hadid designed a home in the same development, although her Sagaponac House presented a drastic split with the architectural that preceded her on
Long Island. Her radical design presented a reinvention of living through engagement with the site and manipulation of the structure. The progressive and extremist quality of Hadid’s work has made many clients apprehensive to carry through with her designs, which have been deemed unpredictable and controlled manifestations of chaos. Although she has been a practicing architect since the seventies, only recently, in the past decade, have her designs been executed while the majority of her work has remained conceptual. As a Deconstructivist architect, Hadid’s work actively deconstructed the ordered rationality of Modern architecture, fragmenting space and discarding linear relationships. Whereas Cobb, Franzen, and Gwathmey Siegel’s architecture expressed a social structure, Hadid’s architecture questioned structure and modified it. She presented the house as an experiment, articulating the house as a layered topography that bent and wove throughout the terrain.(fig 78)

Unlike the International Style designs and its reinterpretations in the sixties and seventies, Hadid’s plans were non-hierarchical, challenging habitual ways of ordering space. Three concrete bands molded the landscape, stripping and distorting the land surface to imbed living features in the site. The landscape appeared to transform itself as undulating surfaces gave rise to a changing sequence of spaces.\textsuperscript{116} Hadid carefully assessed how people, goods, and information might flow through spaces, designing the house as a series of spaces that could be approached from a variety of angles. Unlike its predecessors, the house lacked a single, straightforward view of nature. As certain portions of the house were externalized by the warping landscape, vistas from the interior were unpredictable. There were not permanently ascribed views, such as at Williams and Franzen’s house, because the entire structure was undulating between interior and
exterior. Like Cobb’s design, there were no definite boundaries for “inside” and
“outside” or a clear orientation of “front” and “back.” The house was a constant
transformation between interior and exterior.

Simultaneously in a state of birth and decay, emerging from the earth and
plummeting back into it, the house demanded a new kind of approach. The entrance
began at the road, feeding guests into private or public spaces. (fig 79) The ground
curved slowly upward as it entered the structure, rising to become the ceiling of the lower
level. The inhabitant could ascend to bedroom or onto the garden roof that sloped to
the main site entrance. The spaces varied in size and shape, generating a multi-sensual
and immersive atmosphere that kept inhabitants attuned to the environment. Hadid
dismissed the ordering of the house into clearly distinguished elements and embraced
jarring angles and unpredictable spaces. She questioned the use of a ninety-degree angle,
arguing that there were 359 others to choose from. She explained, “I want to look at the
way you move through space, rest your body or look at, feel space. When you move
through spaces that have a degree of fluidity, you use them differently, organize your life
differently.” The dimensional transformations through plane and volume heightened
the sense of passage. (fig 80) By fragmenting the conventional geometry of architecture
with tilting walls and fractured planes, Hadid expanded the spatial possibilities of the
house and set new boundaries for the shape of domestic architecture.

Hadid’s composition of interwoven spaces was more elaborate than those of
Gwathmey and Meier in the sixties. Whereas the Saltzman house and Gwathmey
residence were composed of overlapping masses and interstitial spaces, the Sagaponac
house was a compilation of interpenetrating zones that emerged and disappeared within
the landscape. (fig 81) Interior spaces were externalized by the entanglement of the paths, which pushed certain surfaces to the exterior while concealing others. Hadid also exceeded the elaborate and self-contained houses put forth by Gwathmey Siegel and Ulrich Franzen in the eighties, designing fluid spatial transitions while expanding the possibilities for stirring experiences within the structure. Her spaces lapsed unpredictably into the threshold between interior and exterior, giving the inhabitant the sensation of breaking through the surface to another world. The smooth transitions from one space to the next existed because the structure was conceived in terms of the landscape rather than geometric order. The house’s broad horizontal mass receded and projected like a sculptural surface melded to the unpredictable terrain. The moving parts conveyed a narrative journey with a sequence of changing spaces. Through the undulating rhythm of the landscape the inhabitant attained a multitude of perspectives that were synchronized with the movement of the house. (fig 82) It was this closely forged relationship with the setting that designated a sense of place. Hadid did not make superficial connections to preexisting architecture or employ vernacular materials. Her structure was more aloof to the local traditions than even Ulrich Franzen’s Glimcher residence, rejecting shingles, peaked roofs, and Euclidean geometry. Despite having no precedent, the Sagaponac house became an appropriate and relevant structure for the site by merging seamlessly with the landscape.

The Sagaponac house was an experience for living, offering inhabitants a new way to conduct their lives and migrate through their daily routines. Hadid’s plan eradicated empty geometry and intellectual abstraction to convey the deeper meaning of the site. The structural interpretation of landscape heightened the connection to nature by
fusing the home with the topography. Hadid transcended regionalist and modernist disputes by inserting modern architecture in its surroundings in the most direct way possible. Her habitation system was a point of departure from prescribed ways of living in the home, forcing inhabitants to relinquish their dependency on orthodox walls and concrete boundaries between interior and exterior. Robert A. M. Stern claimed, “Clients often do want their lives to be aestheticized, do want the privilege of formal virtuosity, do want the imposition of art. On the other hand, it is the rare patron who wants his or her life, patterns, and habits scrutinized, changed, or exposed.”¹²⁰ Unlike all the architects that came before her, Hadid forced inhabitants to make their own voyage in space and chart their own living habits. Hadid’s clients may have difficulty navigating themselves and adjusting to the abstracted landscape, but in embracing a lyrical approach to the home they will discover new possibilities for the experience of two worlds. Her work demonstrates that at the beginning of the twenty-first century, architects in the Hamptons were devising new ways of living in nature and connecting to the world, challenging the solutions of the previous generations of architects.

The houses built by Cobb and Hadid north of the highway in Sagaponac point to a whole new direction in architecture. Commissioned by a developer rather than a client, they encouraged architects to design what they saw as the paradigm of living, ascribing to space what functions they believed to be ideal and necessary for the client. Thus these houses were not a portrait of their clients but an autobiographical expression of their architects. The impetus to buy one of these homes in an undesirable area of the Hamptons stemmed from the desire to lay claim to an original piece of architecture by an esteemed architect. Living in the Hamptons was no longer simply about the enjoyment of wide-
open space and the pleasure of beachfront living, but rather the original experience of architecture. Unique design solutions replaced the delights of the land, which once drew people to the area and inspired architects. The contrived experience of nature through the mechanism of the home was now what lured weekenders. The quality of living came from the meaning of the house rather than the implications of the land.
V. Conclusion

The houses in the Hamptons reflect prevailing efforts to ground architectural dreams in existing norms, fashioning houses from what was culturally present. This unique body of architecture demonstrates that conventions were often abandoned with discovery and architectural consciousness was at the forefront of the agenda. Architects constantly furthered innovative design ideas while simultaneously contesting the architectural status quo. Novelty and innovation were a symptom, but by no means the only concern of, the twentieth century. The desire for new architecture evolved from the challenge of creating a structure that would positively impact the quotidian existence of its inhabitants. Expressed as a universal solution with the International Style and subsequently tailored closely to man’s needs in the eighties and nineties, architecture was envisioned to enhance the individual’s living experience, making him as content outside his domicile as he was within it. Vincent Scully spoke of the modern man, claiming, “He has at once become a tiny atom in a vast sea of humanity and an individual who recognizes himself as being utterly alone. He has therefore vacillated between a frantic desire to find something comprehensible to belong to and an equally consuming passion to express his own individuality and to act on his own.” The houses in the Hamptons struggled to foster a sense of community and belonging while asserting their inhabitants’ individuality. In their diverse appearances, the houses reveal the architect’s pressing desire to improve the quality of life for the inhabitant.

The architecture of the Hamptons has continually been characterized by the avant-garde impulses of its artist residents in the mid-twentieth century. They invested the area
with a conscientiousness of style and an enduring quest for newness. As a result, there was not one expression, one style, one idea, or one single concept that defined the architecture of Long Island. Each generation presented their ideas about dwelling differently, with many of them focusing on “living in a new way.” The first wave of modern houses in the forties and fifties were principally concerned with the technical aspects of architecture. Architects tentatively experimented with new materials and the implications of the International Style. Johnson’s glass-enclosed living room dissolved boundaries between interior and exterior while Blake’s house, with its living spaces tucked beneath, projected the common room out into the fields. Architects were realizing the potential of new materials and beginning to stretch their practical applications.

Bunshafts’ meticulous arrangement of proportions and surface treatments demonstrate that simplicity and restraint could articulate the sophistication and distinctiveness mandatory for monumental architecture. These characteristics of the International Style were even attractive to architects working in the vernacular tradition, offering a new way to formulate space and calibrate formal relationships. Gordon Chadwick took advantage of these tools to design a well-balanced shingle style house in which all the pieces addressed each other rather than falling randomly against each other. The ornamented façade was not an aggregate of individual forms, but rather a unified composition.

Towards the end of the fifties, architects were building towards a complexity and richness that would come to define the architecture of the area.

Architects in the sixties and seventies expanded modern forms beyond the bare and restrained International Style, adapting them into complex organisms with expressionistic possibilities. Gwathmey and Meier’s double story houses with layered
planes and spaces exhibit a new openness and liveliness that came into the plan, obliterating the sense of a house as a four-square volume. Function was no longer the guiding motive affecting design as appearance was given greater consideration. Architecture was at times conceived as packaging, a kind of self-generating animus where the client could express his individuality. Geller’s architectural pun on his client exemplifies the manipulation of the exterior for individual expression. Both the design process and product testify that architects were trying to leaven practicality with wit. The aesthetic content played a dominant role, generating sculptural and sensualist designs that were stimulating to contemplate. While architects were largely appropriating forms from the International Style, inspiration was also coming from outside the confines of Modern architecture. The regionalist concerns in the seventies brought attention to the special qualities of the site, straining the limits of Modernism further. Jaffe and De Vido employed natural and industrial materials to design structures that blended with the earth thus demonstrating the possibility that modern architecture could be sensitive to the environment.

In the eighties and nineties there was a greater esteem fostered in the designs for appropriateness to human habitation. Up until this point, meaning was primarily defined by the architect, as the house became more relevant to the people inhabiting it. There were opportunities for people to discover a multitude of ways to use the house. Todd Williams’ design exemplifies that residents had to discard their preconceptions and consider the context when approaching the house. There was a conscious loading with meaning and a more varied proliferation of architectural styles. While Gwathmey refined the architectural vocabulary he used for his parent’s home, focusing closely on the
interior system of circulation, Ulrich Franzen revived symmetry and fundamental
geometry within a distinct volumetric frame to generate connectedness and belonging.
Architecture was less about self-conscious, expressive innovation, with a variety of
approaches undertaken to instill a sense of place. In the twenty-first century architectural
integration with the natural landscape engendered a positive sense of place. The house
was no longer hovering over the site on pilotis, but rather constructed as part of the
landscape. Henry Cobb employed spatial layering, stratification, and a multiplicity of
views to specify encounters with nature while Zaha Hadid conceived the house in terms
of its landscape features, fusing the house and the site. Their plans included a subtle
interweaving of spaces with intersecting zones of privacy and community. They were
seeking physical forms that defined clients’ needs rather than a visual presence that
depended on empty gestures. There was a sense that architecture did not need anything
else to exist; the house created its own meaningful place without regard to the local
buildings or traditions.

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