THE MODERN AMERICAN HOUSE

In *The Modern American House*, Sandy Isenstadt examines how architects, interior designers, and landscape designers worked to visually enhance spatial perception in middle-class houses. The desire for spaciousness reached its highest pitch where it was most lacking, in the small, single-family houses that came to be the cornerstone of middle-class life in the nineteenth century. In direct conflict with actual dimensions, spaciousness was linked to a tension unique to the middle class between spatial aspirations and financial limitations. Although rarely addressed in a sustained fashion by theorists and practitioners, Isenstadt argues that spaciousness was central to the development of modern American domestic architecture, with explicit strategies for perceiving space being pivotal to modern house design. Through professional endorsement, concern for visual space found its way into discussions of real estate and law. This book documents how over the course of a century the taste for visual space came to be internalized as a cultural value.

Sandy Isenstadt is assistant professor of art history at Yale University. A scholar of modern architecture, he has written on the work of Richard Neutra, Josep Lluis Sert, Leon Krier, and Rem Koolhaas. His work has been supported by the Center for Advanced Study of the Visual Arts (National Gallery of Art), the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Graham Foundation.
MODERN ARCHITECTURE AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

SERIES EDITOR
Richard A. Etlin, University of Maryland, College Park

ADVISORY BOARD
Steven Mansbach, University of Maryland, College Park
Narciso Menocal, University of Wisconsin, Madison
Andrew Saint, Cambridge University
Gwendolyn Wright, Columbia University

Modern Architecture and Cultural Identity comprises monographic studies of important movements and buildings by European and American architects created roughly between 1850 and 1950. Unlike the first histories of modernism, which stressed the international aspects of modern architecture, recent scholarship has attempted to clarify the delicate balance achieved by architects working in a modernist idiom who maintained nonetheless a strong allegiance to their cultural roots. This series has been developed in response to this trend and will explore the complex interplay among modern identity and local, regional, national, and related cultural traditions.

Other books in the series:
Wendy R. Salmond, Arts and Crafts in Late Imperial Russia
Elizabeth Greenwell Grossman, The Civic Architecture of Paul Cret
Kathleen James, Erich Mendelsohn and the Architecture of German Modernism
Barbara Miller Lane, National Romanticism and Modern Architecture in Germany and the Scandinavian Countries
Katherine Solomonson, The Chicago Tribune Tower Competition: Skyscraper Design and Cultural Change in the 1920s
John V. Maciuika, Before the Bauhaus: Architecture, Politics, and the German State, 1890–1920
The Modern American House

SPACIOUSNESS AND MIDDLE-CLASS IDENTITY

Sandy Isenstadt

Yale University
The universe is wider than our views of it.

Henry David Thoreau, 1854
CONTENTS

List of Illustrations xi
Acknowledgments xv

INTRODUCTION. Spaciousness, History of a Visual Effect 1
ONE. The Small House Era 14
TWO. The Production of Spaciousness 59
THREE. Spacious Interiors 84
FOUR. Looking at Landscape 113
FIVE. Glass Horizons 146
SIX. “The View It Frames”: A History of the Picture Window 179
SEVEN. Cultivated Vistas 215
EIGHT. The Ruler and the Eye: The Compensations of Spaciousness 251
NINE. Conclusion: This Excellent Dumb Discourse 267

Notes 273
Selected Bibliography 317
Index 323
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

2. Huson Jackson, House design. 5
3. John Wood, House plan. 17
4. J. C. Loudon, Worker's house. 23
5. Edward Everett Hale, *Workingmen's Homes*. 27
6. Currier and Ives, “The Four Seasons of Life.” 29
7. William Ranlett, House design. 31
8. A. J. Downing, Laborer's cottage. 33
9. E. C. Gardner, “Mrs. Smith and Her Charming Daughters.” 40
10. Calvert Vaux, View of house. 41
11. Fisk Balloon Cord Tires advertisement. 44
12. Hollow Tile advertisement. 45
13. Chicago House Wrecking Co., House design. 50
15. Ernest Flagg, Partition system. 52
16. Architects' Small House Service Bureau of the United States, House design. 53
17. Architects' Small House Service Bureau of the United States, House design. 55
18. A. J. Downing, Country House design. 61
19. George Wightwick, Dado design. 62
20. Henry Hudson Holly, Staircase Hall. 63
21. H. H. Richardson, Browne House. 65
22. Frank Lloyd Wright, Frank Thomas House. 66
23. Frank Lloyd Wright, Ward Willits House. 67
24. Frank Lloyd Wright, Jacobs House. 68
25. Frank Lloyd Wright, Jacobs House. 69
26. Architects' Small House Service Bureau, Mountain Division, House design. 71
27. E. C. Gardner, Living room. 73
29. Gustav Stickley, Living room. 75
List of Illustrations

30. E. C. Gardner, Living room. 83
31. Elsie de Wolfe, Hall. 87
32. Dyada Sterling, Interior. 93
33. Elsie de Wolfe, Interior. 95
34. Henry Collins Brown, Library. 101
35. Tiffany, Ceilng paper. 104
36. Candice Wheeler, Honeybee wallpaper. 105
37. Emily Post, Living room. 111
38. Henry Hoare the younger and Henry Flitcroft, Stourhead gardens. 117
39. Robert Kerr, Aspect compass. 121
40. Sunset magazine, City and country. 123
41. Crane Co. advertisement. 125
42. Frank Jessup Scott, Suburb plan. 126
43. Frank Jessup Scott, Suburb view. 127
44. Liberty Hyde Bailey, Planting plan. 131
45. Myrl Elijah Bottomley, Backyard planting. 135
46. William G. Rantoul, Suburban house design. 137
47. W. L. Risley and James Perry Wilson, House design. 139
48. Charles Skinner, Planting plan. 140
49. Lilian Alderson, Planting plan. 141
50. Humphry Repton, Diagram. 143
51. Henry Hudson Holly, House design. 151
52. Libbey Glass Pavilion, Chicago. 153
53. Pittsburgh Plate Glass, House of Glass. 155
54. Mrs. George Draper, View through window. 159
55. Richard Neutra, Lovell House. 162
56. Julius Shulman, Tremaine House. 163
57. Mies van der Rohe, Courtyard house design. 164
58. Maud Keck, View through window. 165
59. Mies van der Rohe, Resor House. 165
60. George Howe, Thomas House. 166
61. Herbert Croly, View from house. 167
62. Angeles Mesa advertisements. 169
63. Salon des Malachites, Versailles. 185
64. Ruby Ross Goodnow, House comparison. 187
65. Frank Lloyd Wright, Typical house, Quadruple Block Plan. 189
66. Robert Spencer, Casement windows. 191
67. Collier-Barnett Co., Cottage window. 194
68. Keith’s Magazine, Landscape window. 195
69. Country Life in America, cover. 196
70. Wilhelm Miller, View of prairie. 197
71. Libbey-Owens-Ford advertisement. 200
72. Libbey-Owens-Ford advertisement. 201
73. Plate Glass Manufacturers of America advertisement. 203
74. Libbey-Owens-Ford advertisement. 204
### List of Illustrations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>75.</td>
<td>Libbey-Owens-Ford advertisement.</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76.</td>
<td>Libbey-Owens-Ford, Photo-shoot.</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77.</td>
<td><em>New Yorker</em>, Picture window cartoon.</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78.</td>
<td><em>House Beautiful</em>, Picture window scene.</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79.</td>
<td>Libbey-Owens-Ford advertisement.</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80.</td>
<td><em>House Beautiful</em>, Interior paint colors.</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81.</td>
<td>Henry T. Williams, Garden window.</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82.</td>
<td>Libbey-Owens-Ford advertisement.</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83.</td>
<td>Frank Lloyd Wright, House design.</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84.</td>
<td><em>Life</em> magazine, Living room diagram.</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85.</td>
<td><em>Architectural Record</em>, Indoor-outdoor garden sketch.</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86.</td>
<td>Kenneth Welch, View from living room.</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87.</td>
<td>Pittsburgh Plate Glass advertisement.</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88.</td>
<td>Libbey-Owens-Ford, Living room model.</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89.</td>
<td>Richard Neutra, Von Sternberg House.</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90.</td>
<td>James Marsman, Harbor wallpaper.</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91.</td>
<td><em>Arts and Decoration</em>, Folding screen.</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92.</td>
<td>Marcel Breuer, Wolfson House.</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93.</td>
<td>William Beckett, Bathroom.</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94.</td>
<td>J. L. Eichler, Living room.</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95.</td>
<td>Housing and Home Finance Agency, Window diagram.</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96.</td>
<td>Thomas Church, Site diagram.</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97.</td>
<td>Crane Heating advertisement.</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98.</td>
<td>Dan Graham, “Picture Window Piece.”</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99.</td>
<td>Diller + Scofidio, Slow House design.</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to the friendship, guidance, and critical insight of Professors Stanford Anderson, Neil Levine, and Akos Moravanzsky, who advised me during the completion of my dissertation at MIT. I am grateful for financial support from MIT, including the Schlossman Award, which funded my initial research travel. I have been fortunate as well in having smart friends and colleagues who offered support and cast doubt. Jenny Anger, Robert Bruegmann, Juliet Koss, Wallis Miller, Mitchell Schwarzer, Lawrence Vale, and Sarah Whiting have all been unstinting in both. Julie Buckler, Grady Clay, J. Ritchie Garrison, Dianne Harris, Jeffrey Hornstein, Nina James, Peter Manuel, and Wolfgang Natter have also freely given their energy and concentration to this project and it is only the better for it. Thanks, too, to Tracee deHahn, Francesca Ammon, and Heather Loeffler for their research assistance. I am especially grateful to David Mohney, who demonstrated his confidence with years of openhanded support, and to Henry Millon, Dean of the Center for Advanced Study in Art, at the National Gallery of Art, which supported me with a predoctoral fellowship. I am deeply thankful for support from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Kress Foundation, and the Hilles Publication Fund of Yale University. To the many librarians and reference specialists who have helped me, I offer my thanks and admiration. In particular, I thank Michael Leininger, Barbara Floyd, and Hannah Bennett.

For suggesting I write a book in the first place, I thank Richard Etlin, whose two-hour questioning of my forty-minute presentation on this topic was a revelation. His encouragement and trenchant editing have made all the difference. He also brought to this work the high standards and critical judgments of Professors Joseph Siry and Gwendolyn Wright. I thank them for their copious comments as well as for Professor Wright's steadfast optimism regarding this work. I also
Acknowledgments

very much appreciate Beatrice Rehl's support in publishing this work and her extraordinary patience.

Finally, I am grateful – now – that my children, Aaron and Anna, insisted on a nightly basis that I follow Panofsky with Pinocchio and reminded me that I was never without a playmate nearby. This book was written entirely for Deborah and is dedicated to her.