ARCHITECTURAL CONSUMPTION IN LOS ANGELES: MODERNISM, POWER,
AND THE AESTHETIC OF PLENTY

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Abstract

This paper examines the economy produced by modernism as the site for developing an aesthetic grounded in opulence and consumption. While early modern architects aimed to break with tradition and create a new language of architectural forms, the call for new architecture has exploded into sites of what Glen Hill calls "aesthetic waste" in his article, "Aesthetics of Architectural Consumption" (2011). In Los Angeles, this aesthetic obsolescence results in developments being demolished at an alarming rate. As the idea of beauty is valued by its proximity to cleanliness or novelty, massive homes are turned to "junk" in pursuit of the 'new'.

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Introduction

On November 17th 1982, architects Peter Eisenman and Christopher Alexander met for

the first time to debate their practices and the future of architecture at the Harvard

Graduate School of Design.   As Eisenman refuted the use of *feeling* in architecture, he

resisted the notion that architecture has anything to do with comfort. Modern

architecture, Eisenman asserted, was rooted in the epistemology of the Enlightenment

and the 'loss of center' that ensued. In other words, as contemporary culture becomes

increasingly alienated and confronted with chaos, there is need for an architecture which

"transgresses wholeness and contaminates it"[1]. According to Eisenman, architecture

should be intellectually challenging, and uncomfortable.   Christopher Alexander

famously responded: "I find that incomprehensible. I find it very irresponsible. ... I also

feel incredibly angry because he is fucking up the world"[2]. The audience lit up with

applause.

In 1982 Christopher Alexander seemed to have captured the hearts of his audience; since

then Eisenman has had emerge with far greater influence on contemporary development

as a professor as well as the founder and principle of Eisenman Architects. Eisenman

continues to preach an architecture of form, flipping through various theoretical

vocabularies[3] to defend his affliction for new, transgressive styles. And yet, even as

questions of limited fossil fuels and sea levels rise, Eisenman's architectural practice has

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[1] Jencks, Charles "The New Paradigm in Architecture" *Datutop* 22 (*absolute motion*), Tampere U. of Technology, 2002, p.18. quoted in http://www.katarxis3.com/Alexander_Eisenman_Debate.htm
[2] "Contrasting Concepts of Harmony in Architecture" Accessed November 3, 2014. http://www.katarxis3.com/Alexander_Eisenman_Debate.htm.
[3] Jencks, The New Paradigm.

remained ambivalent towards notions of social and environmental justice. As his firm

has stated, "Mr. Eisenman... does not 'wrestle' with sustainability."[4] This feeling has

been echoed by Patrick Schumacher, partner at Zaha Hadid architects, responding to the

breadth of architecture:

> Architects are in charge of the FORM of the built environment,
>
> not its content. We need to grasp this and run with this despite all
>
> the (ultimately conservative) moralizing political correctness that
>
> is trying to paralyze us with bad conscience and arrest our
>
> explorations if we cannot instantly demonstrate a manifest
>
> tangible benefit for the poor - as if the delivery of social justice is
>
> the architect's competency.[5]

 In turn, this provocative language helps establish top architects as lone artists, the

enfants terribles, unconcerned with the repercussions of their aesthetic choices. Turning

their cheek to these injustices though, does not negate their influence; as this paper

hopes to demonstrate, their aesthetic choices have vast consequences.

Since 1982, the discussion between architecture and its social function has been

intensifying as the wealth gap widens and the culture of development hinges on

environmental crisis. It is not only the built environment at stake, but everything that it

contains and everything it touches. This renewed sense of urgency has given weight to

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[4] Stephens, Josh. "Starchitecture and Sustainability: Hope, Creativity, and Futility Collide in Contemporary Architecture." *Planetizen: The Urban Planning, Design, and Development Network*. Accessed October 27, 2014. http://www.planetizen.com/node/41489.

[5] "'Architecture Is Not Art,' Says Patrik Schumacher in Biennale Rant." *Dezeen*. Accessed October 27, 2014. http://www.dezeen.com/2014/03/18/architecture-not-art-patrik-schumacher-venice-architecturebiennale-rant/.

theorists, architects, and critics reapproaching the nature of development and reimagining the role of aesthetics in daily life. Architecture critic Peter Buchanan announced a bold reevaluation of contemporary building practices in his project *The Big Rethink* (2011)*, launched in the *Architectural Review*. As he puts it, "the nature of change is changing" and as modernity, marked by progress, has ceased to propel us forward, it is time "in which to rethink almost everything, including architecture and the design of the larger environment it is part of."[6] Like Buchanan and Alexander, I am interested in the link between the aesthetic choices made by cultural figures, such as lead architects, to the cycle of waste production and global climate change that is increasing at frightening speeds.

This research project examines building practices in Los Angeles and the ways in which aesthetic ideologies are circulated and enacted on the landscape. I acknowledge Manfredo Tafuri's critique that the avant-garde exists within the framework of capitalist development, allowing architects to do little else but manipulate the form itself.[7] However, my aim is to explore the culture of design, image circulation, and media that propels the aesthetic economy. How have the signs and signals of celebrated architecture filtered down into contemporary vernacular design? How has this impacted our relationship with waste? Is there such a thing as a sustainable aesthetic? This thesis is organized in four sections that analyze the ways in which cultural values are translated

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[6] Buchanan, Peter. "The Big Rethink Part 1: Towards a Complete Architecture." Accessed October 27, 2014. http://www.architectural-review.com/essays/the-big-rethink-part-1towards-a-complete-architecture/8624049.article.

[7] Tafuri, Manfredo. *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1979.

into the built environment. My sense is that as the values of high modernism filter down into vernacular design, there must be greater consideration of the repercussions of environmental aesthetics when considering waste sustainability. Environmental and aesthetic injustice occurs when development favors the elite and elite codes of taste, and the environment (either in resources or aesthetic upkeep) is compromised in lower income and minority communities.

Because the territory of this thesis runs through many disciplines, including environmental studies, film, and communication and culture, it is impossible to cover the full scope of this problem. Therefore, I have rooted this discussion around aesthetics, desire, pleasure, and the landscape in a fictional research-creation project filmed in Los Angeles. The main goal of this project is to widen the discussion around waste and the production of *the new*.

The Field

The word *sustainability* is generally associated with reducing energy and material consumption, but there are vastly different views on the benchmarks needed to call a process *sustainable*. The World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) initially defined sustainable development as that which "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."[8] This definition ensures that the expectations of "the present" remain intact but does not

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[8] See *Our Common Future: The World Commission on Environment and Development*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

challenge any patterns of consumption or social justice. This paper will use a more recent definition for sustainable development by Ageyman (2003) as "the need to ensure a better quality of life for all, now and future, in a just and equitable manner, whilst living within the limits of supporting ecosystems."[9] Ageyman's definition pulls together the socio-political context of environmental depletion and forces systemic reevaluation of equity in daily life.

Contemporary benchmarks of sustainability imposed by programs like Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) aim to provide industry standards of sustainable materials and processes. Critics have pointed out that these programs often end up marketing buzzwords and images rather than addressing the causes of architectural waste.[10][11] For example, LEED encourages the use of *environmental appliances*, like eco-toilets and washing machines that use less water, but these systems do nothing to reduce the cycle of consumption and the desire for "new stuff". Once a "more efficient" or newer toilette is released, the LEED certified building can still turn them all to waste. These standardized programs are not enough to curb environmental damage.

Additionally, alternative economic structures, including Cradle to Cradle (C2C) and the Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI), provide alternatives to waste production while maintaining the framework of capitalism. McDonough and Braungart (2002) argue that

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[9] Agyeman, Julian, Robert D. Bullard, and Bob Evans, eds. *Just Sustainabilities: Development in an Unequal World*. 1 edition. Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2003: 2.

[10] Lee, Sang, ed *Aesthetics of Sustainable Architecture*. Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2011: 13.

[11] Kibert, Charles J., and Kevin Grosskopf. "Envisioning Next-Generation Green Buildings." *Journal of Land Use & Environmental Law* 23 (2008 2007): 146.

the industrial economy can eliminate the idea of waste as long as it reformulates itself to be completely biodegradable, or upcycled, into an equal or better product. Further, the Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI) has developed a system of *natural capital* that applies monetary value to biodiversity.[12] This model reorganizes the benchmarks of economic progress to promote policies that support the overall quality of human life. L. Hunter Lovins, a founding member of RMI, also runs the consulting project, Natural Capitalism Solutions, which advises lead businesses in the economic advantages of sustainable development. Models like C2C and RMI, build on the framework of capitalism to motivate producers and consumers to eliminate waste instead of eliminating consumption.   These alternative economies provide ways to lessen waste, but have yet to be adopted by architects, developers, and designers on a wide scale.

In developing a thorough definition of sustainable practices for the purpose of this paper, it is important to establish what is unsustainable, and why the stakes of reevaluating the aesthetic economy are so high. When speaking to the notion of sustainability, my focus is on addressing the problems associated not only landfill space and social inequality, but also with global warming, acid rain, and greenhouse gasses. With the availability of cheap fossil fuels at the heart of mass development [13] the built environment is at the center of all of these environmental stresses.[14] Residential architecture is particularly

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[12] Hawken, Paul, Amory Lovins, and L. Hunter Lovins. *Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution*. 1st edition. Boston: US Green Building Council, 2008.

[13] Buchanan, Peter. "THE BIG RETHINK Part 2: Farewell to Modernism – and Modernity Too." Accessed October 27, 2014. http://www.architectural-review.com/essays/the-big-rethink-part-2-farewell-to-modernism-and-modernity-too/8625733.article.

[14] Government of Canada, Public Works and Government Services Canada. "Chapter 1 - Overview - The Environmentally Responsible Construction and Renovation Handbook - Real Property - PWGSC," January 15, 2005. http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/biens-property/gd-env-cnstrctn/page-1-eng.html.

vulnerable. Because the average American family moves every ten years, each new

home entails innumerous renovations over its lifetime, or is completely leveled to make

room for a newer home.[15] Renovation, demolition, and construction can account for up

to fifty percent of waste production.[16] Environmental injustice occurs when the effects

of these issues are disproportionately higher in minority or lower income communities,

as I discuss in chapter three.

Creation as Research

The city of Los Angeles is immense and as Norman Klein (2007) argues, almost

impossible to fathom. Even though the actual city limits of Hollywood are only 3.5

square miles, the notion of Hollywood signifies almost all of Southern California, its

history, and its movie stars. Through a creative research project in film, I was able to

engage with the landscape in a very specific context, through time and space.

Additionally, the images that the creative research project produced of the landscape and

of longing, allow a different kind of reflection to enter the dialogue of representations of

the city. Central to this project, was the process documenting the experience of the city,

its images, contradictions, and its *feeling*. In scholarly research, this kind of research

creation is a newly recognized field, which I will briefly outline before discussing its

importance in establishing a new kind of scholarly dialogue.

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[15] Buildings and the Environment: A Statistical Summary (2009): 6
http://www.epa.gov/greenbuilding/pubs/gbstats.pdf
[16] US EPA, Region 1: New England. "Construction & Demolition (C&D) Debris." Overviews &
Factsheets. Accessed October 27, 2014. http://www.epa.gov/region1/solidwaste/cnd/.

The Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada defines research creation as:

> An approach to research that combines creative and academic research practices, and supports the development of knowledge and innovation through artistic expression, scholarly investigation, and experimentation. The creation process is situated within the research activity and produces critically informed work in a variety of media (art forms). Research-creation cannot be limited to the interpretation or analysis of a creator's work, conventional works of technological development, or work that focuses on the creation of curricula.[17]

This definition emphasizes the process of experimentation that is vital to certain forms of research. Additionally, Kim Sawchuck and Owen Chapman (2012) define four types of research creation:[18]

> -research for creation
>
> -research from creation
>
> -creative presentations of research
>
> -research as creation

This creative research project follows the model "research as creation", although all four types are intertwined at various times in the process.[19] Research as creation signifies

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[17] Government of Canada, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. "Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council," May 11, 2012. http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programs-programmes/definitions-eng.aspx#a22.

[18] Chapman, Owen B., and Kim Sawchuk. "Research-Creation: Intervention, Analysis and 'Family Resemblances.'" *Canadian Journal of Communication* 37, no. 1 (April 13, 2012). http://cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/2489:7

[19] Ibid

"creation is required in order for research to emerge."[20] This subcategory allows for experimentation, observation, and discovery to formulate the research. The ability to film the landscape, to not only experience it through narrative, but through a camera lens, was central to understanding aesthetics, image production, and sense of place in Los Angeles.

In the following chapters, I explore the way our relationship with aesthetics dictates these habits of waste. I argue that the values embraced by cultural figures such as lead "neo-avant garde" architects, filter down into vernacular design, and increase waste. This also points to the ethical problem with pleasure, especially when it is manifested in novelty in the built landscape. The first chapter on Aesthetics and Taste follows Glen Hill's article on aesthetic waste to detail the ways in which values and taste evolve and influence consumption. The following chapter, Cultural Currents of Modernist Architecture, outlines the principles of high modernity, and examines the way values of novelty, pleasure, and hygiene continue to influence the built landscape. Chapter three focuses on the scholarly debate in Postwar Residential Housing Projects, and the alternative subdivisions in Los Angeles that challenged these models. The last chapter addresses the influence of image representation in Los Angeles and the relationship between film and the city. This culminates in an analysis of the creative research project, a narrative film that challenges the filmic representations of Los Angeles and documents the landscape of the city within a fictional story about desire

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[20] Ibid:19.

Chapter 1: Aesthetics & Taste

People collect altars, statues, paintings, chairs, carpets, and books, and then comes a

time of joyful relief and they throw it all out like so much refuse from yesterday's dinner

table

-Milan Kundera (1984)

This chapter presents the significant bodies of knowledge on the concept of aesthetic

obsolescence, its relationship to architecture, and the media that propels it forward. This

thesis aims to create a link between the values produced by high modernity and the

culture of architectural consumption and land use in Los Angeles that too often results in

environmental injustice (for example, diminishing resources that immediately affect

racial or class divisions). On one hand, the literature is presented on the concept of

modernity and waste. On the other hand, the literature on these concepts is explored in

relation to Los Angeles, architecture, and cultural capital.

1.1 Aesthetic Waste?

Architectural depreciation refers to the decrease of value over time. In architecture,

depreciation can be attributed to three causes: economic, functional, and aesthetic.[21]

Fluctuations in property values as well as 'curable depreciation' such as ignored

building maintenance contribute to building devaluation over time, and can result in

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[21] Baum, Andrew. "A Classification of Property Investment Depreciation and Obsolescence." *Property Investment Depreciation and Obsolescence*. Cengage Learning EMEA, 1991. http://www.andrewbaum.com/uploads/publications_and_papers_9_1_3.pdf.

demolition if the property value outweighs the cost of upkeep.[22] However, increasing

expectations in scale, innovation, and personal taste contribute to a growing amount of

architectural waste that is accumulated from transitions in aesthetic preferences

concerning architectural form.[23]

According to architectural historian Glen Hill (2011), aesthetic waste is the devaluation

of materials and objects that are still functional, but no longer satisfy aesthetic

expectations. In residential architecture, this means that homes are continuously

remodeled or destroyed in order to "keep up" with consumer preferences. Thus,

architectural environments transform into "junk" when compared with newer aesthetic

expectations. Hill uses the term *aesthetic obsolescence* to describe objects that fall out

of favor *under the modern desire for change* as taste fluctuates to represent current

cultural value. On a larger scale, the fluctuation of aesthetic tastes impact land use and

ecology as buildings are rapidly cleared away to correspond with changing tastes.

The uncertainty in developing a cohesive architectural aesthetic has resulted in a pattern

of demolition to increase site value, regardless of curable depreciation.   As land values

increasingly outweigh aesthetic values, properties are often marketed for their address

and lot size regardless of their aesthetic values, using a "blank slate" as a means of

increasing site value. In Los Angeles, many iconic midcentury houses have fallen to the

rising property values around them, including the Kingsley Residence by JR Davidson

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[22] Ibid

[23] Hill, Glen. "The Aesthetics of Architectural Consumption." In *The Aesthetics of Sustainable Architecture*, 26–40. Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2011: 35.

(1947), William Krisel's residence (1955-7), and John Lautner's Shussett House (1951).

Even celebrity landmarks such as Frank Sinatra's Hombly Hills home could not avoid

rising property values and aesthetic expectations and once the 8,631-square-foot

Mediterranean home (Fig 1) was demolished, the owner relisted the land for the same

purchase price.[24] The small midcentury Backus House (1950) (Fig 2) in Bel Air, built by

one of the few mid century female architects Greta Magnusson Grossman is currently

listed with architectural renderings of "what could be built"[25] (Fig 3) instead of actual

photographs of the existing modernist house.[26]   Although a few buildings find

preservationist-inclined niche buyers or institutions, most homes cannot keep up with

the increasing expectations that coexist alongside rising property values. The lack of

consensus on current aesthetic values leads to increasing demolitions of houses on all

scales and styles, especially in luxury neighborhoods in Los Angeles.

As the aesthetic economy quickens, properties are considered "outmoded" at an

increasing speed and targeted by developers, including recently built homes. Beverly

Park, a gated community built in 1990, has seen luxury homes increase from 10,000

square feet to 30,000 square feet.[27] With nowhere else to build, recent homes get

demolished to meet the rising expectation. In 2011, a 17,000 square foot neo-French

chateau sold for 19 million dollars; it was considered a "teardown" in order to keep up

[24] "320 N Carolwood Dr, Los Angeles, CA 90077 | MLS# 10-477013." *Redfin*. Accessed October 27, 2014. https://www.redfin.com/CA/Los-Angeles/320-N-Carolwood-Dr-90077/home/6824246.

[25] Ficarra, Michelle. "677 NIMES ROAD BEL AIR." *Joe Babajian*, n.d. http://www.joebabajian.com/current-listings/327/677-nimes-road/.

[26] "Backus House." *Los Angeles Conservancy*, n.d. https://www.laconservancy.org/locations/backus-house.

[27] Abramovitch, Seth, and Alexandria Abramian. "'Real Housewives' Star Lisa Vanderpump's Former Mansion Is a Teardown." *The Hollywood Reporter*, November 26, 2013. http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/real-housewives-lisa-vanderpumps-mansion-659933.

with the current demand for larger homes.[28]   The desire for "new stuff" and an

increasing awareness of scale is the driving force that accelerates the process of

production and consumption. In architectural consumption, material waste is not just a

necessary part of modern life, but also a by-product of specific aesthetic choices.

1.2 Preservation scholarship

The importance of maintaining a sense of place, and of remembering, specifically Los

Angeles, is shaping new debates in architecture, urbanism, and conservation scholarship.

As the most infamous examples of Los Angeles' residential architecture begin to

corrode, most of the current midcentury design scholarship emphasizes preservation.[29]

Some buildings, such as Richard Neutra's Van der Leeuw Studio and Residence (1932),

are preserved by a university, while others have accrued foundations or private owners

ready to maintain them.   As the discussion in conservation increasingly focuses on

preserving buildings that have been widely publicized, conservationist Ned Kaufman

emphasizes the urgency of preserving a sense place in all of its vernacular

manifestations. Kaufman argues that the importance of not only noticing utilitarian

spaces, but actually preserving them as they are, is central to social justice.[30] While

conservationists struggle to preserve the most culturally significant buildings,

architecture that bears any markings of the past becomes at risk of being demolished.

[28] Ibid

[29] Anthony Fontenot, Barbara Lamprecht, and Donlyn Lyndon. Kyle Normandin, Moderator, "Everyday Modernism in the California Landscape" Getty Institute, Los Angeles. 10 Dec. 2013: Lecture.

[30] Kaufman, Ned. "Extraordinary Prizes in Ordinary Places: How Preserving Everyday Things Can Save People and the Planet." USC School of Architecture, Los Angeles, March 11, 2014: Lecture.

Additionally, Norman Klein's *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory* describes the crisis of a city that continuously replaces itself and the difficulties of writing its history.[31] These contributions to everyday aesthetics, memory, and urbanism are significant reminders of the difficulty conservationists face in preserving anything at all.

1.3 Modernity and Waste

Glen Hill demonstrates the changing significance of aesthetics throughout the last century through a reading of scholars and concepts related to aesthetic consumption. Hill points to the Enlightenment and the dissolution of Absolutism, which brought the onset of aesthetic judgment. Once objects cease to be part of a religious order, they emerge as things that elicit emotional responses, both subjective and fluctuating. Thus beauty is the emotional response to an experience, filtered through a conceptual framework, not an absolute value in itself.[32] It can speak of the beholder's ethical alignments, but it ceases to be a matter of virtue. This aesthetic response, that an object can offer *delight*, instead of moral guidance [33] flourishes in the industrial revolution and the onset of mass production. From Hill's contribution, we can examine the aesthetic economy as the site for the production and consumption of goods rooted in novelty and judgment.

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[31] Klein, Norman M. *The History of Forgetting: Los Angeles and the Erasure of Memory*. London; New York: Verso, 2008.

[32] Hill, 37.

[33] Ibid: 31.

With a growing merchant class, the stability of this system would begin to erode, culminating in a bourgeoisie eager to partake in this god given beauty. Hill proclaims that, "[i]f the overarching project of being for the pre-modern world was to be in a way that is appropriate to one's (ascribed) place, then in modernity the overarching project of being is to be in another('s) place."[34] Although Grant McCracken believes that upward transformation, or at least the desire for transformation, has existed for centuries (medieval societies contained upwardly aspiring individuals as exemplified by the medieval merchant class, adopting the lifestyle of nobility)[35], its success is still a modern phenomena in the sense that it is not just an individual yearning that is suppressed by the upper classes, it is now a culture that uplifts and values transformation. The widening of the bourgeoisie not only creates consumers, but creates an image of "living well" that is directly connected to the consumption of aspirational images and aesthetics as cultural capital.

1.4 Ideology of Aesthetic Taste: Cultural Capital

Both McCrakin and Hill acknowledge that all transformations require outward status accumulations to solidify one's social standing. Pierre Bourdieu defines these goods as *symbolic capital*, "the collection of luxury goods attesting the taste and distinction of the owner" which "conceals the fact that it originates in 'material' forms of capital".[36] David Harvey links these objects of symbolic capital to fetishism and the consumption of

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[34] Ibid: 29.

[35] McCracken, Grant David. *Transformations: Identity Construction in Contemporary Culture*. First Edition. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008:62.

[36] Pierre Bourdieu quoted in David Harvey. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Oxford England ; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991:77.

surfaces that shadow ideology with 'culture and taste'.[37] Architecture, as ideology,

contributes 'to the reproduction of the established order and the perpetuation of

domination remain hidden."[38] Bourdieu argues, "the most successful ideological effects

are those which have no words, and ask no more than complicitous silence."[39] Even

though architecture can pose as a silent backdrop to everyday life, it speaks firmly of the

social order and the desires of its builders. It is the largest commodity that can

distinguish spatial value.

To participate in this *symbolic capital* is to keep up with the aesthetic economy as it

shifts to new standards of taste. Bourdieu writes,

> taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified
>
> by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they
>
> make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the
>
> vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed
>
> or betrayed.[40]

Taste is the strongest motivation of architectural consumption, especially within very

wealthy communities, that can build however they see fit. The social ramifications of

taste maintain the connection between goods and social interactions.

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[37] Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Oxford England ; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008:78.

[38] Bordieu quoted in Harvey: 79.

[39] Bordieu quoted in Harvey: 78.

[40] Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Translated by Richard Nice. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984:6.

Joost Zoonefeld (2001) situates the social values of taste within "prestige communities" in Calabasas (Fig 4), a wealthy neighborhood of gated communities at the edge of Los Angeles, built around the idea of the fence: Charles Jenks calls these gated communities the "wallification of America" and Mike Davis calls it the "militarization of public space".[41] The subdivisions are standard, but "the gates are motivated to project an image"[42], specifically the separation between those who are allowed inside, and those who are not. The case study of Calabasas examines the residents and their desire for security and order, highlighting the division between public and private that is associated with luxury and beauty. Zonneveld argues that this represents a shift in society, where security and hygiene have begun to represent status. These aesthetic choices are unified by a voting system that must pass by two thirds of the residents standardizing the appearance of each structure, and ensuring that the signified status stays homogenized. Cars cannot be parked on the street, lawns must be cut, and gardens can't grow wild. These choices are rooted pursuing a clean and ordered environment that separates itself from lower status, less clean neighborhoods, while maintaining an aesthetic that is perceived as aspirational.

The psychological underpinning of this love of hygiene and order can be summarized in a political campaign penned by Parisian Marthe Richard in Vichy France as "Moral cleanliness! Purification… Pull out the evil by the root!"[43] Marthe swore to "clean the

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[41] Charles Jencks and Mike Davis quoted in Zonneveld, Joost. "Defending the Suburban Dream: Gated Communities in Calabasas, California." *Etnofoor* 14.1, SUBURBIA (2001): 32.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ross, Kristin. *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture*. 4 edition. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1996: 74.

streets" with the goal of "cleanliness and moral progress".[44] In Calabasas, this sentiment

is echoed by the borders that surround the estates in order to keep out undesirable foot

traffic, and draw separations between high and low, clean and unclean. The extreme

fear of dirt and disorder manifests itself in highly privatized spaces viewed as the

antidote to the messy, polluted, and unhygienic urban core. Baudrillard notes the refusal

of color in the bourgeois interior, which prefers "tints and nuances" that signify "dignity,

repression and moral standing"[45]. Colors such as gray, white, and beige mark a moral

refusal of color, as anything too spectacular is a threat to interior life. Security, hygiene,

and extreme order become both symbols of taste and benchmarks for "keeping up" that

hastens aesthetic waste. This love of hygiene and order will be discussed in terms of the

cultural currents of modernist architecture in chapter three.

1.5 Aesthetic Consumption in Lost Angeles

John Chase (1991) defines consumer architecture as vernacular structures that are

intrinsically tied to the production or consumption of material. One tier would include

the shopping complex or the theme restaurant and the other would be the shiny, tall

business towers that are beyond the reach of the consumer, but nonetheless develop the

product and its identity definition. The building not only defines an aesthetic code for

the product and the consumer, it is often part of a carefully designed marketing plan

"plotted to achieve the goal of inducing consumption."[46] Chase distinguishes this type of

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[44] Ibid

[45] Baudrillard, Jean. *Le Système Des Objets*. Verso, 2005: 31.

[46] Chase, John. "The Role of Consumerism in American Architecture." *Journal of Architectural Education* 44.4 (1991): 211.

building from "high art" architecture, which removes itself from the populous, a "self

referential art form"[47] like that of sculpture or conceptual art.

However, amusement parks, theaters, shopping complexes, movie sets, high art

buildings, and luxury homes are *all* intrinsically tied to the production of consumer

fantasies and their relationship to each other is especially poignant in Los Angeles,

borrowing and building off of one another within arms length.   The Grove in West

Hollywood is a perfect example of this kind of bleeding out. Designed in 2002 as an

outdoor shopping complex next to CBS Studios and the landmark Los Angeles Farmers

Market (1934), the upscale mall falls in line with a succession of outdoor shopping

environments in Los Angeles that "simulates a halcyon retrospective of the LA

experience."[48]   The Grove (2002), built by developer Rick Caruso, plays on this

heritage sight, constructing a main street of art deco facades, which encircles a fountain

built by WET Design, the same firm that designed the waterworks at the Bellagio Hotel

in Las Vegas.[49] The street is completed with gas burning lampposts, string lights, and a

trolley that travels back and forth. The complex includes a movie theater, many high-

end stores and restaurants and acts as the set of the daytime talk show *Extra*. It is it's

own ecosystem, where the "good life" dream is produced, bought, sold, and copied. The

simulation does not replicate Main Street USA, or New Orleans in the 1920s. Like

Disneyland, the mall is a "copy of a copy"[50], where "make believe and altered identity is

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[47] Ibid: 211.

[48] Stenger:280.

[49] "The Grove Property Features." *Http://www.thegrovela.com/tourist_information.php*, n.d.

[50] See Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Translated by Sheila Faria Glaser. First Edition, 17th Printing edition. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995.

part of what the buildings are selling."[51] That image is a complex mix of grandiose and simple charm that pushes the California dream into a tangible, 3d space. Chase argues that this kind of "commercial vernacular architecture" is a product of detailed research and marketing and just as much a form of "environmental psychology" as any high art building.[52] This architecture is an experiential package that must carry with it a specific ambience and meaning, as an environment that articulates and encourages aesthetic waste.

The neighborhoods of Los Angeles that are often left out of the dominant aesthetic rendering of the city are the industrial subdivisions full of sprawling big box stores and warehouses. These places have an entirely different agenda according to Chase, a *non-image*: blank space that has been designed to be efficient and developing an aesthetic of utilitarian efficiency. Long industrial boulevards are produced with the understanding that objects don't have to be interesting to have purpose, "a view legitimized by orthodox modernism, once it had been drained of its earlier ideological core. Late modernism has celebrated the capacity for producing blankness by creating buildings that are not articulated either by ornament or by the materials from which they are made."[53] Many box stores and grey strip malls have borrowed much of their language from early modernism. Lacking expensive materials and meant for the marketplace, these buildings have in many ways shaped Los Angeles as the non-place par excellence, as well as many urban and outer-urban cities all over the world. Both the Disneyfication of the Grove, and the utilitarian boxes of chain stores, have their own psychology and

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[51] Chase: 217.
[52] Ibid: 215.
[53] Ibid, 218-219.

relationship to commerce that is expressed in their aesthetic. These commercial

buildings, though seemingly opposite in design, show how buildings communicate their

economic interests, and how first and foremost, they are objects of consumption. Thus,

they are inherently tied to the ebb and flow of consumer expectation and waste. This

chapter traced the history of aesthetics, taste, and consumption as social and economic

pressures that create waste. The next chapter explores the ideological roots of

modernism and its transition into a style, emptied of its social aspirations.

Chapter 2: Cultural Currents of Modernist Architecture

> It is not difficult to be unconventional in the eyes of the world when your
> unconventionality is but the convention of your set. It affords you then an inordinate
> amount of self-esteem. You have the self-satisfaction of courage without the
> inconvenience of danger.
>
> -Summerset Maugham (1919)

This section discusses the emergence of modernity and its relationship with aesthetics, architecture, and consumption. Walter Benjamin's *Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century* provides context for the development of modernist ideals, including environments of novelty, pleasure, and fantasy. These values were then challenged by celebrated modernist architects, claiming to wipe away the encrusted interiors of the earlier period, in favor of clean, efficient spaces. However, modernist buildings not only upheld many of the values established by high modernity, but they also became their own cultural currency. The styles that followed into late modernity maintained much of the delight and love of hygiene but emptied of the rigorous attention to human activity that orthodox modernism offered. The cyclical desire for pleasure, hygiene, and novelty, are the roots of aesthetic obsolescence.

2.1 What it Means to be Modern

This discussion demands a brief critical analysis of what it means *to be modern.* The definitive period of modernity varies for many scholars, and implies a wide variety of

meanings. The term is associated with the effects of modernization on daily life: technological progress, social mobility, a breaking away from tradition, a sudden increase in communication, and an increased understanding of the world, and our place within it.[54] The Enlightenment marks the turning point towards secularization and the loss of stability, as enlightenment thought embraced the idea of progress, and actively sought a break with history and tradition.[55] David Harvey (1992) coins the term "creative destruction" to describe the attempts by modern individuals to implement new kinds of order and organization by erasing the past through physical demolition and spatially rescripting the present with architectural forms and features that facilitate capital accumulation.[56] Modernity, in the largest sense, represents change, and to borrow from Charles Baudelaire's observation, that which signifies "the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent".[57] Thus modern development is that which is current, new, and transient but also replaces that which came before.[58]

Throughout the 1980s and 90s, cultural and architectural postmodernists including architectural theorist Charles Jenks (1977) declared that postmodernism and deconstructivism marked the end of modernism as a movement, arguing that postmodern architecture created entirely new language of form out of appropriation of the classical and the vernacular.[59] This coincided with the fragmentation and uncertainty vocalized

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[54] Berman, Marshall. *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. Reissue edition. New York, N.Y., U.S.A: Penguin Books, 1988:16

[55] Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Cambridge: Wiley-Blackwell, 1992:12.

[56] Ibid: 16.

[57] Baudelaire, Charles, and Jonathan Mayne. *The Painter of Modern Life, and Other Essays*. London: Phaidon, 1964: 6.

[58] Heynen, Hilde. *Architecture and Modernity: A Critique*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1999:9.

[59] See Jencks, Charles. *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*. 6th edition. New York: Rizzoli, 1991.

by both intellectual and aesthetic movements. (Later, however Jencks conceded that postmodern architecture is not entirely a departure, but a critical reaction within modernism).[60] Postmodernity as a style was in fact ephemeral, and the project of building and modernization continues and changes as information and communication quickens.

2.2 Postmodernism vs. Late Modernity

Los Angeles is often cited as the model postmodern, post-industrial city, a perfectly executed "hyper-reality"[61] where fiction and reality converge. Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi developed their admiration of "architecture without architects" in Los Angeles, which became their springboard for postmodern architecture and the reappropraition of the vernacular.[62] Los Angeles, with its sprawling freeways, decentralized neighborhoods, and artificial plasticity, still conjures up every image in Baudrillard's *America* (1986). In many ways, these images of Los Angeles continue to mark the city, but do not account for the contingencies that remain untouched by Postmodernism. In just as many ways, Los Angeles is unable to shake the aspirations of high modernism, its love of hygiene, and its obsession with novelty and mobility. By drawing on the work of Anthony Giddens, this study of Los Angeles allows its architecture to be examined as a continuum of actions and reactions "against all types of

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[60] See Jencks, Charles. *Critical Modernism: Where Is Post-Modernism Going What Is Post-Modernism*. 5th Edition Chichester: Academy Press, 2007.

[61] See Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Translated by Sheila Faria Glaser. First Edition, 17th Printing edition. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995.

[62] Reynolds, Christopher. "They Build Out Loud." *Los Angeles Times*, June 16, 2002. http://articles.latimes.com/2002/jun/16/entertainment/ca-reynolds16.

traditional order."[63]

In *The Consequences of Modernity,* Giddens separates history into three periods: pre-modernity, high modernity, and late modernity. This distinction does not dispute the changes that occur with the acceleration of technology, information, and infrastructure. Giddens acknowledges these changes, but maintains that postmodernism did not mark a "new era" beyond the grasp of modernity. Instead, the current tide of late modernity function as a hyper-continuation, Giddens argues, "which the consequences of modernity are becoming more radicalized and universalized than before."[64] Using Gidden's approach allows the discussion around aesthetics, consumption, and architecture to trace the environmental repercussions of high modernity on contemporary design, land use, and real estate speculation.

2.3 High Modernity

Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project* (1940) provides a platform to examine the aesthetic economy of modernity and its waste. According to Benjamin, the world's exhibitions were the precedent to the entertainment industry as phantasamagorias: miniature worlds of endless consumption - world within its self, a dramatic play for the audience to buy from the extensive displays, to the glass and iron walls. Here, the threshold between inside and outside was dematerialized by iron and glass. The interior is destroyed for a public passageway that was designed to catalyst desire and dreaming. As Benjamin

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[63] Giddens, Anthony. *The Consequences of Modernity*. 1 edition. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990: 3.

[64] Giddens: 3.

says, "A passage is a city, a world in miniature".[65] The world exhibitions "glorify the

exchange value of the commodity. They create the framework where value becomes

secondary"[66]. From the grand ceilings to the endless displays of goods, the objects are

inflated by their surroundings. The space becomes the integral architecture of the

economy and capitalism directly affects human experience and begins to control it.

Glass, iron and mirrors are the key architectural devices that bring the outside in. It is

not merely playing with light, but "mirrors bring the open expanse, the streets, into the

café [and] this to belongs to the interweaving of spaces, to the spectacle"[67]. With the

doors and walls lined with mirrors, the light is distributed throughout the cafes and

brasseries, illuminating the darkest corners of the arcades. The walls disintegrate, in an

endless loop of surfaces. The tradition of lining walls with mirrors was not a new

phenomena. If these arcades were to be places of transition, built from the same

material as the train, they were to demarcate the home of the modern man: places of

movement and commerce. In this utopia, the arcade, the place of movement and

commerce, becomes the dwelling place.

In the steady slippage between inside and outside, private and public, the consumer

reinforces the walls with objects. These phantasmagorias become machines for

longing. It is where the collector flourishes, defining his space with objects and art

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[65] Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*. Edited by Rolf Tiedemann. Translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 2002: 3.
[66] Ibid, 18
[67] Ibid, 537

works where "he makes his concern the idealization of objects"[68]. Rather than assigning

them use values, they are coveted for their ability to entertain and distract. This

distraction is the interior, the "box in the theatre of the world".[69]. The collector, whose

aim is to own, and the flaneur, whose aim is to see, may have different intentions, but

their actions are both in search of some kind of fulfillment which is manifested in the

modern consumer.

David Graeber argues against the assumption that this longing is symptomatic of the

modern condition. The collector feels that whatever longing one feels will be soothed

by the next acquisition, and Graeber argues, that is not a new idea.[70] In Medieval

societies, "the idea that by seizing the object of your desire you would resolve the issue

was actually considered a symptom of melancholia."[71] In the economy of modern

hedonism, "what's actually new is the notion that you should be able to resolve desire

by attaining the object. Perhaps what's new is the fact that we think there's something

wrong with alienation, not that we experience it."[72]

For the flaneur, as much as the modern individual, this longing is invested novelty.

Baudelaire goes, "[d]eep in the Unknown to find the *new*!"[73] Suddenly, novelty

becomes the standard by which objects are weighed. Newness is not only interesting, but

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[68] Benjamin,:19.

[69] Ibid

[70] See Graeber, David. *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*. Reprint edition. BROOKLYN, NY: Melville House, 2012.

[71] "Another World - Michelle Kuo Talks with David Graeber." *Libcom.org*. Accessed October 27, 2014. http://libcom.org/library/another-world-michelle-kuo-talks-david-graeber.

[72] Ibid

[73] Baudelaire quoted in Benjamin: 22.

meaningful. The experience of encountering the new object is given a profoundness that will continue to grip not only the commercial and entertainment industries, but also its most radical artists and architects.

2.4 The New Aesthetic

This paper links the project of modernity directly with modernization, the quickening of technology and the development of capitalism. Thus, all architecture of modernity is in sense, *modern* as a product of technology and capital. However for scholars writing through the doubts of postmodernism, *architectural modernism* is defined by a distinct period after Victorian revival architecture and before postmodern eclecticism. The beginnings of modern architecture induced a wide variety of styles and ruptures posed as reactions against classical architecture and urban design. Architects such as Walter Gropius, Adolf Loos, and Mies Van Der Rhoe helped to define a new language of simplified forms that would speak to an upheaval of cultural values that addressed new patrons, new problems, and new methods of construction.[74]   Adolf Loos' essay, *Ornament and Crime*, defines this aesthetic purism against the pillars of traditional architecture, where "[t]he evolution of culture is synonymous with the removal of ornament from utilitarian objects."[75] This "machine aesthetic" signified a cultural shift in architecture towards the purity of form.

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[74] Curtis, William J. R. *Modern Architecture Since 1900*. Third Edition. London: Phaidon Press, 1996:22.
[75] Conrads, Ulrich, ed. "Adolf: Ornament and Crime." In *Programs and Manifestoes on 20th-Century Architecture*, New edition edition. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1970:20.

Although modernism included many interpretations, the international style has

succeeded as defining the *look* of modernity with its sharp edges, white walls, and large

glass windows. Anthony Vidler defines the whole second stage of the modern period,

preceded by the enlightenment, as the international style.[76] While the style emerged in

the 1930s with Henry-Russell Hitchock and Phillip Johnson's exhibition of the same

name, its streamline aesthetic still influences contemporary architects and its

appropriations linger in contemporary vernacular development. This has influenced the

lexicon of real estate jargon that maintains the term modern in reference to any building

that is not revival (or as Christopher Alexander offers, anything with a pitched roof).[77]

Early modern architecture was rejected by some critics as a fleeting fashion style, which

architects were quick to refute. Architects sought to define a pure aesthetic that

demonstrated a "fit, mechanized body", stripped of its 19th century clothes. The look of

modernity attempts to express progress, function, and hygiene but this "stripping away"

is also conscientious, and contrary to its aspirations, also needs to be painted on. These

white walls, flat roofs, and sharp horizontal lines try to express a building's utility, a

machine for living. However, the modernist push towards an anti-aesthetic is also an

aesthetic choice. *Anti-aesthetic* in the *avant-garde* rejection of traditional aesthetic

values, is still rooted in the very aesthetic economy that it condemns.[78] Even the attempt

at recreating indifference, or wiping clean, is a motivated aesthetic choice that attempts

to situate the object in a contemporary facade. Contemporary development cannot not

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[76] Foster, Hal. *The Art-Architecture Complex.* Verso Books, 2013, 4

[77] "Contrasting Concepts of Harmony in Architecture." Accessed November 3, 2014. http://www.katarxis3.com/Alexander_Eisenman_Debate.htm.

[78] Wigley, Mark. *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture.* Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1995: 125

fully remove itself from this economy, when its values are structure on change.

Modernity defined itself in the architecture of Le Corbusier, looking to the ship and the automobile for a new style, the *l'esprit nouveau*, of a new age.   It is an endless pursuit of the new. Le Corbusier sees the ship as the icon of the new spirit. He admires the streamline halls and large windows lining the interiors, which he calls, "[a]n architecture pure, neat, clean and healthy"[79] one that "lies in spheres, cones, and cylinders, the generating and accusing lines of these forms are on the basis of pure geometry"[80]. The ships are strong, utilitarian creatures that define Le Corbusier's obsession with modern machines for living. Their corridors are bright seemingly endless, wrapping themselves around the ship and embracing the continuity of the line. Glass walled walkways found their way into his five points of architecture and exemplify the *l'esprit nouveau*. If we forget that we are looking at a ship, he asserts, "we shall feel that we are facing an important manifestation of temerity, of discipline, of harmony, of a beauty that is calm, vital and strong."[81] The ship is a holy experience for the modern human and the aesthetic goal is one of simplification, but also of staggering mass. Le Corbusier proclaimed the ship as "[f]reedom from the "styles" that stifle us; good contrast between the solids and voids; powerful masses and slender elements."[82] The masses of material and engineering towers over us, using the language of power over nature. The steam liner dominates the past.

[79] Le Corbusier, "from *The City Tomorrow and its Planning.*" in Bridge, G. and Watson, S., eds. The Blackwell City Reader Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002, 90.
[80] Ibid, 41.
[81] Ibid, 92.
[82] Ibid, 89.

Mass was a cornerstone to the new style, exemplified by Le Corbusier's love of industrial grain elevators. These megaliths stand erect in the landscape much like his Unite D'Habitation in Marseille (1952) (Fig. 5). This concrete block was a prototype for five more buildings, and influenced countless others apartment blocks throughout the world. The buildings protrude from the landscape, and just like the industrial farming factories, are organized geometrical forms stripped of ornamentation. Le Corbusier admired these grain elevators for their utilitarian design, simple forms and massive scale. He looked to these industrial buildings to define a new kind of aesthetic, declaring that "primary forms are beautiful forms because they can be clearly appreciated… [m]ass and surface are the elements by which architecture manifests itself".[83]   For Le Corbusier, rationality is at the core of the modern pysche- the way in which humans control the landscape, and the standard by which he constructs his machine. He believes that the architect "gives us the measure of an order which we feel to be in accordance with that of our world, he determines the various movements of our heart and of our understanding; it is then that we experience the sense of beauty"[84]. Le Corbusier offers a beauty based on rationality and mathematics, subverting the renaissance ideal beauty, based on a rationality that serves as a means to understanding god. In Brunelleschi's S. Lorenzo in Florence (1421) (Fig. 6) the whole church is based on mathematical unity and awe inspiring mass. The use of symmetry suggests that God is accessible through numbers, prayer and geometry. But for Le Corbusier, God is removed from the equation. Now, through rationality, humanity is given the keys to owning its own nature.

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[83] Ibid: 32-33.
[84] Ibid: 18.

The machine age required quickly built houses grounded in these principles. The first step for Le Corbusier is to replace all "natural materials by artificial ones"[85], as he argues that pouring concrete houses would reduce building time to three days. Reinforced concrete allows for more interior space, glass walls, and an open plan. The bones are on the outside; a kind of exoskeleton, replacing all "old world timber" and defining the style that persists today not as a utilitarian object but as a sign of class and taste: slate white gallery walls, high ceilings, and glass facades. In Le Corbusier's dreams, "the house will no longer be this solidly-built thing which sets out to defy time and decay, and which is an expensive luxury by which wealth can be shown; it will be a tool as the motor car"[86]. This declaration helped push cheaper manmade materials into the vocabulary of building culture that would create and destroy. The house is declared a problem to be resolved, like that of transport or machinery; this required an aesthetic revolution, and a set of aesthetic rules that look to a better, brighter future in the face of "perpetual disintegration and renewal"[87].

The Corbusian manifesto had a powerful affect on what it means to be modern, to live the modern life. Le Corbusier calls for the modern person to do away with ornamented furniture, precious wardrobes, chandeliers, and cluttered walls to accommodate a utilitarian lifestyle. He also requires a vacuum cleaner. There is a paradox at work, between wealth and ornament. The minimalisms and white gallery walls do in fact look very appropriate with modern art, as Le Corbusier suggests. But that in itself has become a status symbol of the very rich aesthete, not dissimilar to the padded rococo

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[85] Ibid: 195.
[86] Ibid: 197.
[87] Berman: 15.

interiors that Le Corbusier despises. Modern architecture has flourished as the new bourgeois aesthetic, where asceticism and utility are replaced by an expensive minimalism.

2.5 The Healthy House

Rudolph Schindler, an emigrant architect from Vienna, was central to developing an architecture influenced by his European contemporaries, but adapted to the landscape of Los Angeles. He emerged as a major figure of the Los Angeles modern style, with his Lovell Beach House (1926) (Fig. 7), which is often cited as one of the most important buildings of the modern movement.[88] As Raynar Banham reveals in *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* the Lovell House, though geographically disconnected from the European avant garde, displays many of the impulses of the International style with its own exuberance:

> [I]t was a world class building not only because of its quality as design, but
> also because its style, and manner of handling space, demand comparison
> with the best European work of the same period-and emerges from the
> comparisons enhanced, not diminished. Its catalogued virtues reveal a
> buildings that could carry all Le Corbusier's theoretical propositions. It has a
> concrete frame which raises it clear off the ground on legs; it has a two-story
> studio-type living-room and a roof terrace; it has parking space, a play area
> and a wash-up at the ground-floor level. But the Corbu version is a timid,

[88] Sarnitz, August E. "Proportion and Beauty-The Lovell Beach House by Rudolph Michael Schindler, Newport Beach, 1922-1926." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 45, no. 4 (December 1986): 374–88. doi:10.2307/990208: 374.

constrained design whose adventures take place only within the almost unbroken cube of the building envelope, whereas Schindler's spatial extravagances break forward and oversail the ground floor, with staircases threaded visibly through the frame. [89]

The division between California and Europe was reconciled by Schindler's collection of European architecture periodicals that would have informed his practice, bringing the radical uses of technology and concrete to California.[90] His collection of photo clippings from magazines such as *Die Bau Gilde, Soziale Bauwirtschaft,* and *Das Werk* included buildings by Gerrit Rietveld, Le Corbusier, and Walter Gropius among many others.[91] Following these influences, Schindler's beach house was constructed of reinforced concrete, with structural support from the outside of the building, akin to Hitchock and Johnson's International Style dogma of "planes surrounding a volume"[92]. Three large horizontal masses define each floor of the home, seemingly perched above the lower garage. The interior space (Fig. 8) is defined by shifting volumes, including a two-story living area, and smaller sleeping quarters. David Gebhard compares the Lovell house to a kind of colorless de Stijl, using a vocabulary of volumes to create horizontal and vertical "Loosian space"[93]. All of these references pulled on the vocabulary of the European *avant garde* to produce an icon of Los Angeles modern residential architecture.

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[89] Banham, Reyner. *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies*. 2 edition. Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 2009: 35.
[90] Sarnitz: 387-8.
[91] Gebhard, David. *Rudolph Schindler*. 3rd edition. San Francisco: William K Stout Pub, 2001:51
[92] Hitchock and Johnson quoted in Graber: 57.
[93] Gebhard: 78.

The home was commissioned by Dr. Phillip Lovell, a well-known health reformer who wrote a popular weekly column 'Care of the Body' for the Los Angeles Times.[94] Victoria Jane Salon points out that the suffix "Dr." was an honorary title, as Lovell was primarily a naturopathic practitioner who sought architecture to build a modern image for naturopathy and an environment of preventative health.[95] In "Care of the Body" Lovell called for "rebellion against the orthodoxy of old ideas", and his aim was to align technology and modernity with inner health. In turn, this aligned Schindler, as well as the wider context of architecture in Los Angeles, with modernity, health, and hygiene. Lovell's weekly column helped Schindler, and later Neutra, advertise their own architectural programs, with open house tours that included photographs and descriptions of the home. Additionally, Schindler wrote six articles for the Los Angeles Times on subjects including "Ventilation", "Plumbing and Health", "About Heating", "About Lighting", "About Furniture" and "Shelter or Playground" that would detail his practice for a wide audience. [96] The Beach House was an extension of Lovell's commitment to health "wrapped up in a scintillatingly novel package"[97] and Lovell provided Schindler with the opportunity to incorporate hygiene, sunlight, and health into 3d space. Lovell's health philosophy included regular sunbathing, sleeping outdoors, and exercise. These beliefs were integrated into a sheltered playground, an open sleeping porch, and an exercise area on the roof. The house has seven outdoor zones and large windows, with the intention to collapse the distinction between outside and inside.

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[94] Gebhard: 47.

[95] Solan, Victoria Jane. "Built for Health: American Architecture and the Healthy House, 1850-1930." Yale University, 2004. ProQuest. http://202.28.199.34/multim/3125309.pdf:138-140.

[96] Sarnitz: 374.

[97] Gebhard: 60.

It was an exercise in preventative health that articulated the warm California weather and its obsession with a clean, fit body in its architecture.

Three years later, Richard Neutra was commissioned to build the Lovell Health House (1929) (Fig. 9) using many of the same principles as Schindler. Neutra was also educated in Vienna under Adolf Loos and later worked for and Schindler in Los Angeles. After a falling out between Schindler and Lovell, Neutra embarked on a new plan for incorporating health and science into the modern home. The floating terraces and gridded pattern of the windows give the impression of an airy, geometric whole, as air flow was embraced as a preventative health measure of naturopathy. The Health House emphasized the natural, whole food diet prescribed by Lovell, aided by technology and kitchen gadgets to modernize raw vegetable preparation.[98] Outdoor sleeping and sunbathing shelters were made "scientific and modern"[99], as were the large, white bathrooms that exuded hygiene. Though swimming pools were rare in Southern California at the time, Neutra integrated a pool directly underneath the home as a healthy exercise regime incorporated into the linear planes of the building. Lovell's weekly column praised Neutra's healthy home and its smooth lines and streamline surfaces that signified purity of health and body.[100] Even though the house was commissioned as an advertisement for naturopathic healing[101] it became an icon for modernity, Los Angeles, and the healthy home.

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[98] Solan:148.
[99] Ibid:152.
[100] Ibid:2-3.
[101] Ibid:V.

Both the Beach House and the Health house helped to establish Los Angeles as a center for modern architecture. The Lovell Health House was included in Hitchock and Johnson's exhibition of International Style, and its notoriety secured Neutra as a top architect along with Schindler. Both buildings aim to dematerialize the division between inside and out, playing with light, and space, so airy that it feels like the home is about to float away. Schindler pointed to the stilts as a reference to historical beach huts, declaring that, "[t]his theme fulfills the basic requirements for a camper's shelter: a protected back, an open front, a fireplace and a roof".[102] But if the modern ideal is to be a person of the world (always on the move and at home everywhere), as critic Peter Buchanan argues, the home begins to signify a temporary container, an investment property that has little engagement with the land and its ecology.[103] Architecture discourse remains convinced of the glass walls dematerializing the division between outside and inside, bringing nature into the interior. And yet the hygiene of the house is its most affronting aesthetic. Dirt and mud and rain, are kept from contaminating the white rooms through veil of glass.

Schindler and Neutra designed with attention to psychological comfort the basic need for protection and privacy, through intelligent design. William Curtis points to the conscious, but "curious blend of cave and tent" that demonstrates Schindler's interest in our primal need for shelter and "psychological nuances of space".[104] However, the style emerged as a symbol of luxury, where status is thus accrued through the building's own

[102] Schindler, quoted in Gebhard: 48

[103] Buchanan, Peter. "THE BIG RETHINK Part 2: Farewell to Modernism – and Modernity Too." Accessed October 27, 2014. http://www.architectural-review.com/essays/the-big-rethink-part-2-farewell-to-modernism-and-modernity-too/8625733.article.

[104] Curtis, William J. R. *Modern Architecture since 1900*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2006:134

proximity to hygiene, novelty, and pleasure. As Solan argues, these homes

demonstrated that architecture could be used to promote health and hygiene, which has

"remained deeply embedded in the design and ideology of the middle class single family

home."[105]

2.6 The Production of the New

These cultural currents of modernist architecture manifested themselves in photographs

and publications such as *Sunset Magazine* where the earliest ideas of the western home

defined the aesthetic, moral, and cultural values representative of the reasonable,

comfortable, and modern, single-family house. *Sunset* offered taste-making resources in

literature, art, and architecture for a distinctively "middlebrow" aesthetic, revealing what

historian Barbara Berglund calls "a compelling story of how visions of social order and

aesthetic sensibility constructed and reinforced one another in the early-twentieth-

century American West".[106]

Sunset began as a way to publicize and promote the West as a tourist destination and

investment opportunity. It was one publication amongst many types of boosterisms that

encouraged people and their capital to invest in new development. The magazine

featured small, elegantly decorated, single-family houses that catered to the "civilized,

modern, westerner"[107] (Fig. 10), ignoring the vastly diverse immigrant communities. As

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[105] Solan:3.
[106] Berglund, Barbara. "Western Living Sunset Style in the 1920s and 1930s: The Middlebrow, the Civilized, and the Modern." *The Western Historical Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (July 1, 2006):134.
[107] Ibid:134.

neighborhoods began to grow, a housing boom in the 1920s and 30s began making this segregated "order" a reality, excluding non-white minorities from purchasing houses in certain neighborhoods (a process termed "redlining"), so that the fantasy of a homogeneous West prescribed in Sunset, could be realized through residential segregation.[108] Sections such as "Interesting Westerners" and "Western Homes Number" (Fig. 11) aimed to assure the rest of the country that the west has come far from its barbaric roots. The magazine worked to promote a distinctive, "California-Style" included Navajo rugs, Oriental ornaments, and Spanish-style architecture and furnishing were safely reappropriated into a clean and well ordered modern home.[109] *Sunset* "saw the design of housing as crucial to the processes of civilizing and modernizing and thus tied to politically charged visions of the proper social order" [110].

In this utopic ideology, homes that were "light airy, spacious, and hygienic" became affordable to the white middle class. The availability of technology made housework less burdensome and even possible for just one person, but the circulation of magazines like *Sunset*, also raised the standards of cleanliness higher than ever before.[111] Public awareness of sanitation and hygiene was simultaneously promoted by public policy, such as the creation of the Center of Disease Control and Prevention in 1948. Although there has been much scholarship devoted to this fascination with hygiene, few scholars have examined these reforms in relation to consumer products. Ellen Lupton and J. Abott Miller (1992) offer a critical analysis of hygiene in twentieth century domestic

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[108] Ibid: 141.
[109] Ibid:141.
[110] Ibid:148.
[111] Ibid:154.

design, focusing on the streamlined aesthetic that "echoes modernity's twin obsession with bodily and economic consumption".[112] Here, the 1930's *streamline style* does not just offer a utopic analogy for progress and innovation, it smooths over the messiness of everyday life. This pursuit of cleanliness, however, coupled with the rise of products designed to be replaced or consumed (such as razors, light bulbs, and nylons) helped to shape an economy that needs to ingest and excrete.[113] This notion of "planned obsolescence" is central to the consumer economy and helped to create the ideal interior of the midcentury home. Cleanliness quickly becomes a method of distinction, shaping a middle class aesthetic, and an economy of consumers devoted to pursuing a healthy house. Health and sanitation entangles itself in the ideology of new things that quickly propel objects into junk. This also created a visible rupture "with the shortcoming of the old world [for] a clean, unspoiled, and more perfect future"[114]. The cyclical desire for pleasure, hygiene, and novelty, sought by both the neo-*avant garde* and postwar housewives, quickens the pace of aesthetic obsolescence.

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[112] Lupton, E., and J. A. Miller. *The Bathroom, the Kitchen, and the Aesthetics of Waste.* 2nd edition. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996:2.

[113] Ibid: 5.

[114] Scanlan, John, and J. F. M. Clark. *Aesthetic Fatigue: Modernity and the Language of Waste*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2013:9.

Chapter 3: Postwar Residential Housing Projects

The last section traced the values produced by modernism filtered into sites of consumption, planned obsolescence, and waste in the suburban home. The aim of this section is to situate the consequences of these aesthetics within postwar residential housing by tracing their political, spatial, and demographic history.   First, this section presents the changing significance of suburban communities in scholarship. Then, I explore two developments that challenged this model.

Postwar development was iconized by the emergence of the film industry in Los Angeles in the 1920s. Charlie Chaplin's film, *Modern Times* (1936) epitomizes the suburban paradise as Chaplin imagines the good life in a dream home, where oranges, grapes, and fresh milk lay just outside his window. He is greeted by an adoring wife cooking him a steak dinner, in a house that matches her finery. This image, along with many more, pushed the detached single family home into an icon of success and happiness for audiences all over the world. The tract homes that developed around city centers provided clean, affordable mass housing a growing middle class, described by historian William H Pierson, Jr. as "imaginative and intensely romantic schemes."[115] Scholarship from the 1930's to the 1960's is highly critical of this boosterized image. postmodern scholarship however is more conflicted, arguing that these subdivisions are

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[115] Quoted in Martinson, Tom. *American Dreamscape: The Pursuit of Happiness in Postwar Suburbia.* New York: Carroll & Graf, 2000.:24

not fantasies of the Hollywood imagination, but deliberate results of government

legislation to shape the landscape and increase home ownership.[116]

3.1 Critics of Suburban Development

Mid-twentieth century scholarship shaped a critical, pessimistic view of post-war

suburbs that reacted against much of the cultural promotion of suburban life. Lewis

Mumford accused post-war tract houses of "fake romanticism" that grew out of quick,

makeshift solutions to housing. From 1940 to 1960, the population of residents living in

the suburbs had doubled from 15.3 percent to 30.6 percent[117] and increased interest

encouraged developers to look for raw land. These developers, mortgage lenders, real

estate agents, lifestyle magazines, and film studios profited by increasing the image of

the suburbs, fighting to sell new houses and everything inside.[118] This boosterism

resulted in scholarship developing a language of condemnation. In *The City in History:*

Its Origins, Its Transformations, and It's Prospects (1961), Lewis Mumford articulates a

familiar image of suburban anxiety:

> A multitude of uniform, unidentifiable houses, lined up inflexibly, at
>
> uniform distances, on uniform roads, in a treeless communal waste,
>
> inhabited by people of the same class, the same income, the same age

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[116] Vicino, Thomas J. "The Political History of a Postwar Suburban Society Revisited." *History Compass* 6, no. 1 (January 1, 2008): 372.

[117] Ward, Stephen V. *Planning the Twentieth-Century City: The Advanced Capitalist World*. Chichester: Wiley, 2002:188.

[118] Stenger, Josh. "Lights, Camera, Faction: (Re)producing 'Los Angeles' at Universal City Walk." In *Hollywood Goes Shopping*, edited by David Desser and Garth Jowett, 277–308. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000:292.

group… so narrow are their choices, so limited and deficient their

permitted responses. Here indeed we find 'The Lonely Crowd'.[119]

Scholars who tried to debunk the *myth* of suburbia, like Benet Berger (1961) were not nearly as successful as novelists and filmmakers who drew on these contradictions. Moreover, Walter Whytte, like Mumford, viewed the suburbs as an empty, soulless place, turning these sentiments into a best selling book *The Organization Man* (1956). Further criticism of homogenous development was echoed by Jane Jacobs in *Life and Death of Great American Cities* (1961), accusing modernist planners such as Robert Moses of killing dynamic pedestrian life. The massive development of single family homes in Los Angeles made the city the "archetype for decentralization", as one of the first cities to implement the form.[120] By 1970, more than one third of the entire city of Los Angeles was devoted to the car: driveways, freeways, streets, and parking lots.[121] Thus, LA became the poster child for the automobile city, accumulating critics that shamed its lack of a centralized core and overdependence on the car. All together, suburban development was a source of disgust for urban scholars who saw these projects as failures to respect community, public space, and the limits of scale.

[119] Mumford, Lewis. *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1961:512.

[120] Nicolaides, Becky. "'Where the Working Man Is Welcomed': Working-Class Suburbs in Los Angeles, 1900-1940." In *Looking for Los Angeles: Architecture, FIlm, Photography, and the Urban Landscape*, edited by Charles Salas and Michael Roth. Issues & Debates. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2001: 59.

[121] Davis, Mike. *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster*. Vintage Books. New York: 1998: 80.

3.2 Conflicts in Scholarship

Following an almost unanimous decry of mass produced housing, emerged a revised history which pinpointed government legislation as the major force pushing city boundaries and increasing middleclass home ownership. Dolores Hayden (2004) stresses the shift of power after 1945, where public subsidies increasingly funded private development.[122] This coincided with a shift away from public space, and toward increasingly commercialized space (including shopping malls and office blocks) that drew on public funds. Many of these policies stemmed from the establishment of the Federal Housing Administration in 1934, which developed strict zoning codes under the Hoover administration to boost large-scale land development. Social scientists Harvey Molotch and John Logan call these coalitions of real estate developers and government subsidies "Growth Machines"[123] which preconditioned the political climate for a series of massive booms in suburbanization. Urban historians of this era, including Peter Hall and Stephen Ward pull focus to the Federal Aid Highway Act (1956) to mark the first of these booms. The act ensured easy commutes into the city and maintained distinct separations from what was perceived as the polluted, crowded, urban core. In just ten years after the inception of the Highway Act, the city had transformed into an "extensive orbital belt-ways with radial spokes".[124] Instead of focusing on the commercial and cultural shifts in the psychology of suburban development, scholarship after the 1970s critically analyzes the role of public policies in developing land use.

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[122] See Hayden, Dolores. *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820-2000*. New York: Vintage Books, 2004.

[123] Hayden, Dolores, and Jim Wark. *A Field Guide to Sprawl*. Reprint edition. New York; London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004:48.

[124] Ward:189

Contemporary scholarship highlights the racial and class divisions of these policies.

Scholars including Jon Teaford (2006) argue that both the pull of spacious, low crime

neighborhoods and a strong push from public policy paved the way for development at

the limits.[125] Historian Kenneth T. Jackson (1985) also points Home Owners Loan

Corporation (HOLC) and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) as key innovations

in shifting spatial patterns.[126] The HOLC shaped housing history by introducing and

perfecting low-interest, amortized, life long mortgage payments, replacing previous five

or ten year plans, and sweetening the appeal of low density housing. However, both the

HOLC and the FHA favored white, middle class neighborhoods that they perceived to

preserve housing prices, which in effect, red-lined whole neighborhoods from African

Americans and other minorities, especially in Los Angeles. Additionally, the National

Federal Housing Acts attempted to "reinvigorate" inner city neighborhoods that had

been abandoned by the middle class, but Teaford argues that these efforts only destroyed

the little housing that was available, increasing crime and drug use, and pushing the

white middle class further away.[127] For example, the destruction of the Mexican

American enclave, the Chavez Ravine in Los Angeles, displaced over 970 households to

make way for a housing project that was never built.[128] Slum clearance was often

racially prejudiced and the demolished neighborhoods were simply replaced by more

expensive housing. Dana Cuff describes this shift as modernism's new pressure, "of

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[125] Vicino: 373.

[126] See Jackson, Kenneth T. *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

[127] Vincino: 378.

[128] Architectural Resources Group, ed. "Garden Apartments of Los Angeles: Historical Context Statement." Los Angeles Conservancy, October 2012:20.

scale and order" that would mark contemporary development, especially in Los Angeles, as a series of "irriversable and unstable" upheavals.[129] Since the 1970s, scholarship has helped to shape a new kind of history, focusing on issues of race and identity embedded in government regulation that formed suburban development.

3.3 Alternative Housing

Anthony Denzer's case study (2005) on postwar homes in Reseda, California, focuses on a housing project by architect Gregory Ain that proposed a new kind of ideological subdivision.   The development, called Community Homes (Fig. 12), disallowed racial segregation, and provided houses at market price within a range of options to provide housing for many different incomes. Instead of separating and delineating plots, each house looked onto a shared green space, while parks and recreation areas dipped in and out of the community. Sparsely laid streets allowed pedestrians to dominate public space and variations on architectural and landscape design ensured a cohesive image of the site without feeling repetitious.

The FHA decided that Community Housing posed too much financial risk under the belief that allowing minorities into the community would make housing prices fall considerably. Additionally, the community's utopian aspirations fell suspect in the height of the McCarthy era. [130] Its idealism, written into the structure and layout of the buildings, the open plans, and flowing gardens all articulated a political agenda that

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[129] Cuff, Dana. "Fugitive Plans in the Provisional City: Slums and Public Housing in Los Angeles." In *Looking for Los Angeles: Architecture, FIlm, Photography, and the Urban Landscape*, edited by Charles Salas and Michael Roth. Issues & Debates. Getty Research Institute, 2001: 97.

[130] Denzer, Anthony. "Community Homes: Race, Politics and Architecture in Postwar Los Angeles." *Southern California Quarterly* 87, no. 3 (October 2005): 279.

could act as an alternative to the agenda of formulaic and commercialized building strategies laid out by traditional subdivisions. In the San Fernando Valley the later has succeeded and matured, as these sprawling low-rise commercial buildings and gated communities speak to notions of cleanliness, privatization, and moral purity rather than progressive and equity-oriented strategies for living.

Baldwin Hills Village, now known as The Village Green (1941) however succeeded in offering a radical approach to development in Baldwin Hills, California. The low-density condominiums face a sprawling park, with parking around the perimeter (Fig. 13). Gregory Ain admired the development in Baldwin Hills as, "one of the best ever done in the country"[131]. With large sections of communal green space inspired by the planned community Radburn [132], the community successfully implemented many of the aims of the Garden City movement and provided an alternative to single family bungalows.

The development spans eighty acres, of which only fifteen percent holds buildings.[133] Clusters of numbered and labeled "garage courts" face the street, keeping most of the units facing the interior greenery (Fig. 14). Past the garages, the "superblock" has no streets, only pedestrian pathways, like other traditional 19th century Garden City communities. However, unlike the traditional colonial revival cottages at Radburn, The Village Green is striking in its pastel colors, flat roofs, and thoroughly modern lines. Its

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[131] Quoted in Denzer, Anthony. "Community Homes: Race, Politics and Architecture in Postwar Los Angeles." *Southern California Quarterly* 87, no. 3 (October 2005): 274.
[132] Stein, Clarence S. *Toward New Towns for America*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1966: 189.
[133] Stein: 191

attention to function, technology, and space align the development with many of the

utopic aspirations of high modernism. In the Village, the living rooms and bedrooms in

each home face the park and include a patio to allow for private outdoor space. The

residents praise the development's high quality materials, including large windows and

closets that have continued to satisfy contemporary tastes.[134] This functionality

addresses very human desires for space, comfort, and community in modest

accommodation. Above all, it is clear that attention was paid to investing in highly

functional and well planned spaces, as the Village Green continues to attract young

professionals and families interested in its lush park land and high quality design.[135]

3.4 South Los Angeles

However, if The Village Green speaks to developments that have proven aesthetically

and socially viable, the Baldwin Hills neighborhood that surrounds The Village Green is

testament to the larger problem of aesthetic and environmental injustice that plagues

minority communities. The neighborhood emerged as a wealthy African American

community after the Rumford Fair Housing Act (1963) outlawed real estate

discrimination and redlining. The so-called "white flight" opened up this affluent area

to minority homeowners and has remained both upper income and more than seventy

percent African American.[136] But despite its wealth, Baldwin Hills has the least park

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[134] Han, Gregory. "Complex Love: Village Green (Baldwin Hills Village)." *Apartment Therapy*. Accessed October 28, 2014. http://www.apartmenttherapy.com/complex-love-vi-29541.
[135] Ibid
[136]Bureau, U. S. Census. "American FactFinder - Community Facts." Accessed October 28, 2014. http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml.

space per capita in all of California, and is under consistent threats to clean air and water. According to Garcia and Sivasubramanian (2013):

> The concentration of African American homes and businesses, lack of parks and recreation, and environmental degradation in these neighborhoods is not an accident of unplanned growth or the result of a free-market distribution of land based on personal utilities—they are a direct result of a continuing pattern of discriminatory land-use planning, restrictive housing covenants, federal mortgage subsidies limited to racially homogeneous neighborhoods, and discriminatory New Deal economic policies. People of color continue to suffer from the double whammy of disproportionately being deprived of environmental benefits, including parks, while bearing environmental burdens, including environmental degradation.[137]

This environmental degradation includes sewage overflows and urban oilfields that threaten clean air and water. The Baldwin Hills Overlook, a conservation area established to provide public green space in South Central Los Angeles, is also the location of one of Los Angeles' many oilfields. Its remaining parkland has been continuously threatened by more urban industrialization, including proposals to build a power plant and garbage dump. Furthermore, in 2004 Baldwin Hills took part in a two billion dollar settlement against the city of Los Angeles who by court order, claimed responsibility for over 3,500 sewage spills. These threats to the immediate environment are only part of a larger problem. Concerned Citizens of South Central Los Angeles, an

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[137] Garcia, Robert, and Ramya Sivasubramanian. "Environmental Justice for All: Struggle in the Baldwin Hills and South Central Los Angeles." *Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law*, January 16, 2013. http://povertylaw.org/communication/advocacy-stories/garcia.

organization that continues to fight inequality and environmental injustice, clarifies that "[t]he environment is not just about the absence of contamination" but also about schools, affordable housing, jobs, as well as access to outdoors space.[138] Aesthetic and environmental justice is key to establishing a sense of place, community, and well-being that includes all member of society.

Curdling underneath this debate lays a history of racial discrimination, violence, and civic uprisings that stand in opposition to the city's opulence and optimism. Racial and ethnic minorities in Los Angeles endured years of discrimination, unemployment and housing shortages that exploded after World War II. African Americans (as well as Asians and Latinos) that had migrated to the coast in search of well paid, industrial, wartime jobs, found their options extremely limited by the end of the war. As race and class tensions continued to rise, Los Angeles began to resemble a centrifugal force, where most of the government subsidies for affordable housing avoided the urban core. South Central was left without any means of political representation, and many of the previously white middle class neighborhoods of the inner city declined into barrios and ghettos of poor minorities.[139] The crackdown on narcotics in South Central under the Chief of Police William H. Parker, catalyzed a long, tumultuous relationship between the LAPD and the community. In 1954, 150 African American business owners protested the 'campaign of intimidation and terror' in response to the police brutality

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[138] Ibid

[139] Hahn, Harlan. "Los Angeles and the Future: Uprisings, Identity, and New Institutions." In *Rethinking Los Angeles*, edited by Michael Dear, H. Eric Schockman, and Greg Hise. Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications, Inc, 1996:78.

and racism that governed the inner city.[140] The Watts Rebellion (1965) and the Rodney

King Riots (1992) articulated "long standing, deep seated grievances about the

imposition of police authority in Los Angeles."[141] Harlan Hahn argues that the

seemingly random looting and civic unrest distracted from the root of both riots as a

"massive demand for restructuring of social and political institutions".[142]   Although the

rioting eventually stopped, the community still faces gang activity, underfunded public

schools, and street crime behind a backdrop of urban decay. This legacy of struggle and

violence shadows the glossier narratives of Hollywood. As the barrios and ghettos of

South Los Angeles continue to suffer, the lack of concern for the physical environment

amplifies the city's disparities of wealth and influence.

The uneven distribution of environmental welfare, in all of its manifestations, is a large

part of understanding development aesthetics in Los Angeles. The promotion of "high

art" buildings and clean, luxurious estates further ignores these issues, hiding their

binaries underneath the promoted aesthetic economy. The landscape of Los Angeles is

heavily divided from a history of injustices in policymaking, articulated by the very

kinds of buildings and infrastructure that play out in its neighborhoods. The aesthetic

and environmental welfare of marginalized communities is compromised while the

production of aesthetics remains unchanged. Guy Hawkins (2005) contextualizes the

way in which our interaction with waste expresses a particular ethics[143], particularly

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[140] Davis, City of Quartz: 294.

[141] Hahn: 80.

[142] Ibid.

[143] Humphery, Kim. "Australian Humanities Review: Kim Humphery Reviews The Ethics of Waste: How We Relate to Rubbish by Gay Hawkins." *Australian Humanities Review*. Accessed October 28, 2014. http://www.australianhumanitiesreview.org/archive/Issue-August-September-2007/Humphery.html.

"'how waste mediates relations to our bodies, prompts various habits and disciplines, and orders relations between the self and the world."[144] Engaging in an aesthetic economy that encourages "excess, redundancy and disposal"[145] places these aesthetic decisions in larger ethical and political terms.

[144] Ibid
[145] Ibid

Chapter 4- Film in Los Angeles

> In Los Angeles becoming is more characteristic than being.[146]
>
> -Anton Wagner
>
> The cinema rules the world – for better or for worse.
>
> - Le Corbusier

There are few other cities in the world that speak so loudly to the ethics of pleasure. The history of racial and class divisions that was outlined in the previous section is juxtaposed with extremely private sprawling estates in Los Angeles, while its exclusive luxuries are recorded, broadcasted, and widely consumed. As Barbara Goldstein writes, "Los Angeles is a city of alienation. It is a city of private places, of secrets very few people can share."[147] The city is largely defined by interior pleasures, but its location as a media empire introduces its otherwise concealed luxuries into the aesthetic economy. Baudrillard describes Los Angeles as "nothing more than an immense script and a perpetual motion picture".[148] The city's image is strategic in developing an aesthetic that carries over to other contexts and other communities, producing and reproducing an aesthetic of novelty and newness that promotes waste. I have already outlined some of the repercussions of an aesthetic economy that prioritizes novelty, pleasure, and hygiene. In this section, I will discuss the way in which the city of Los Angeles advertises these

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[146] Quoted in Vidler, Anthony. "Rewriting the Past: Banham Redux." presented at the Urban Ambition: Assessing the Evolution of L.A. Symposium, Museum Lecture Hall, The Getty Center, July 17, 2013.
[147] Goldstein, Barbara, "Los Angeles in Context", Los Angeles Now, ed Goldstein, Barbara and Peter Cook, Architecture Association, Spin Offset LTD, London, 1983: 7.
[148] Quoted in Stenger: 278.

aspirational values. Then, I will discuss my creative research project, which documents

the landscape within a fictionalized story of inhabitation.

In *America,* Baudrillard advises that any analysis of an American city must first look at

the cinema, and then move outwards. He proclaims that the moving image "invests the

streets and the entire town with a mythical atmosphere"[149] which must be understood in

order to move forward. In Los Angeles, every street corner is imbued with a sense of

cinematic legacy, as layers of cinematic history unfold onto even the most banal

locations. Just as important are the multitude of homes made famous not only as film

locations, but also as tangible space that envelops celebrity daily life. The promotion of

these interiors mark "Hollywood's colonization of everyday lives, turning reality into

spectacle" with the "serialization of lives of the rich and famous."[150] In order to

understand these spaces, it is important to understand the cinematic context in which

they appear.

4.1 Los Angeles and Film

 Early movie stars such as Mary Pickford would set the stage for the spectacle of

domestic space, at once both real and unreal.   Her own ascension from poverty like

many of the early screen stars, projected the image of real, everyday people, not royalty

[149] Baudrillard, Jean. *America*. London ; New York: Verso, 1998:56.

[150] Hozic, Aida A. "Hollywood Goes on Sale; or What Do the Violet Eyes of Elizabeth Taylor Have to Do with the 'Cinema of Attractons'?." In *Hollywood Goes Shopping*, edited by David Desser and Garth S. Jowett, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000: 210.

beyond reach.[151] Richard Dyer chronicles the private lives of these early Hollywood

actors as a crucial cornerstone to molding the public's affection. Heroes that rose from

the bottom, "The American Way", allowed audiences to admire stars like themselves.[152]

House tours encouraged spectators to visit many early Hollywood homes, and eventually

magazines such as *Photoplay* extended the gaze of the tourist into the intimate lives of

these celebrities.[153] Images circulated of celebrity houses, their kitchens, gardens, dogs,

and parties, which were then reappropriated by tract houses of the 1920s. These homes

were filled with "Hollywood set touches" including half timbering and rustic doors

imitating the palatial Beverly Hills mansions.[154] Within the magazines that display the

aesthetics of a good life, the interior is made public and intimate at the same time.

Reading these magazines, the consumer is no longer on a stage at the department store,

sharing the experience of looking with other consumers.   It is a private longing that can

be reengaged at any time. As Roland Barthes writes "the private is consumed as such,

publicly".[155]

As the cult of celebrity became heavily connected to place, other fields such as real

estate speculation increasingly exploited its fantasies to entice buyers.[156] Today, the city

of Los Angeles is "economically, culturally, psychologically invested in its celluloid self

[151] MacCann, Richard Dyer. *The Stars Appear*. Metuchen, N.J. : Iowa City, Iowa: Scarecrow Press, 1992:14

[152] Ibid: 15

[153] Charles, Jeffrey, and Jill Watts. "(Un)Real Estate: Marketing Hollywood in the 1910s and 1920s." In *Hollywood Goes Shopping*, edited by David Desser and Garth S. Jowett Editors, Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2000: 269.

[154] Ibid: 270.

[155]Barthes quoted in Aynsley, Jeremy. "Graphic Change: Design Change: Magazines for the Domestic Interior, 1890-1930." *Journal of Design History* 18, no. 1 (April 1, 2005):50.

[156] Charles, Jeffrey, and Jill Watts: 254.

image."[157] Thom Anderson explores the way this image is produced in his video essay,

Los Angeles Plays Itself (2003), where LA lights up with its vast surfaces, on which

Hollywood projects its fantasies. The film showcases the way in which LA bends itself

to be no place and any place: becoming Milwaukee or Tokyo, sometimes more

convincingly than others.   When Los Angeles does play itself, Anderson argues, it is

difficult to get right because the city is full of contradictions, overflowing with

architectural styles, and lacking in landmarks. The reality of the Los Angeles landscape

is vast and confusing and the cinema creates its own version of the city, where it is

"recorded and dismembered, and then edited back together into a fantasy world where

Koreatown is next to Van Nuys and Griffith Park is somewhere between Torrance and

Santa Monica."[158]   Films such as *Blade Runner, Mulholland Drive,* and *Chinatown*

infuse the streets with a sense of impending doom, what Mike Davis calls "noir's

distopianization of Los Angeles"[159]. Films that are less obvious depictions of the

landscape, such as *Father of the Bride*, *Friends with Money,* and *The Big Lebowski*

nevertheless instill a sense of overabundance and glamour that seems inherent to the

location. Michael Sorkin observes that this constant referencing makes the city

completely unknowable as "the most mediated town in America, nearly unviewable save

for the scrim of its mythologizers."[160] As a city bubbling over with representations of

itself, Los Angeles sits somewhere between reality and fantasy.   But it is this

combination of aspirational design, media power, and house next door image that makes

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[157] Stenger: 278.
[158] Ibid: 288.
[159] Davis, Mike. *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*. New York: Vintage, 1991:21.
[160] Ibid:20.

Los Angeles a site of enormous consequence. Making a film provided an opportunity to gain insight into the landscape through the camera that propels this image.

4.2 Los Angeles: The Film

In the creative research project, I am interested in exploring the cycles of longing in image consumption that propel the aesthetic economy and increase waste. The film follows a woman designing her dream home while living in a Uhaul. Although shaped by an unconventional narrative, the project combines both documentary and fictional styles to capture the feeling of the city. The aim of this technique is to relish in the space between reality and delusion, as if any given moment could open up into a multitude of fantasies. What emerges is a "hybrid fiction" film, which documents the city within a fictionalized story of desire.

One of the tools of developing the research project was the experience of watching the landscape of the city through a camera lens. The camera actively divides inside from outside, creating its own interior space with its own logic and decisions. Every focus and every cut reveals a particular world and excludes much more than it includes. Gaston Bachalard (1994) describes these forces, between outside and inside, as "the sharpness of the dialectics of yes and no, which decides everything."[161] The filmic space constructs its own interior narrative, constructing its own world out of the larger landscape. One of the aims of the film was to use this cut, between outside and inside,

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[161] Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994: 211.

to highlight the divisions between public and private space that is central to the experience of Los Angeles.

As the city is primarily experienced from the car, the gates, highways, and sidewalks that hide its luxury are its most common landmarks. James Kunstler acutely observes that LA is a place where "things happen inside"[162], while the exterior remains placeless and unassuming. This 'jewelbox inside'[163] becomes a motif in the film, where a hidden, temporary shelter stands in for the gigantic homes that "are completely invisible from the twisting roads... [and] lie hidden behind stucco walls and laurel thickets."[164] Almost immediately after I turned on the camera, I realized how specific the landscape of Los Angeles really is. Although films bend its locations into other metropolitan cities, its empty boulevards, golden light, and hilltop houses peering down, flavor every frame with a particular atmosphere that no other city can replicate. The experience of watching Los Angeles through this lens helped to observe the city's identity in its banal, everyday locations.

As the film began to take shape, my aim was to capture the quintessential Los Angeles of my own memory, layered with the vivid imagery of the research. In early drafts of the film, I began with a feeling of the city that I wanted to evoke, rather than an image. Once I committed to the narrative, I developed a visual language inspired by the landscape photographs of Ed Ruscha, Lewis Baltz, and Catherine

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[162] Kunstler, James Howard. *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-Made Landscape.* New York; London: Simon & Schuster, 1994: 210
[163] Ibid.
[164] Ibid.

Opie that evoked the everyday Los Angeles that I felt was essential to its atmosphere; it's empty parking lots, long stretches of highway, and stark, geometric gas stations. Later, I began to photograph various neighborhoods to develop my own aesthetic that hooked into this visual language to inform where and how I moved the camera during the shoot. After experimenting with different formats during pre-production, I found a camera rig that could amplify the dream-like atmosphere of the story. This 35 mm adapter allowed me to use photography lenses on a consumer grade camcorder. The advantage of this technology was that I could operate the system myself, allowing for a very intimate relationship between the actress and the camera and resulted in an image somewhere between documentary and classic road movie. The soft vignetting was a direct affect of the technology, but was embraced for its dream-like quality while playing with the nostalgia of Hollywood and its overrepresentation of the city.

Through many different drafts of the script, the film became less illustrative of a traditional narrative. I spent my whole shoot schedule getting as much material as I could, pulling together the fragments in postproduction. As I documented the shifting streets, it became increasingly challenging to turn the camera on the city's pedestrian life, especially in disadvantaged neighborhoods such as Skid Row. In Los Angeles, there is a distinct power relationship between who can see, and who can hide in these "interiors". The process of filming the street intrudes on those without privacy or security. Additionally, the view from the car disallows any kind of objection or resistance to the image. Nevertheless, this social contract between who and what is

private and public play out in the format of the film and was an important device in documenting the landscape. The protagonist never enters the interior of a house, and her only experience is mediated through the endless gates and sidewalks that provoke her imagination. As the narrative slid from traditional fiction to documentary, I pulled back much of the original plot in postproduction, and started to collage together scenes with found audio. This process of re-editing and re-writing found a very different kind of story, and pulled the film deeper into a dream-like space.

The beginning of the film opens onto images of the landscape of Los Angeles, its oceans and dream homes, but also its draught warnings and armed response signals. The very first few moments of the film describe both the industrial corners and luxurious homes, including Mountain View Estates, the subject of Zooneveld's (2001) case study on the aesthetics of security in gated communities. Throughout the film, the Uhaul meanders through the contemporary condos in Santa Monica, the gated estates in Beverly Hills and Malibu, the homeless camps on Skid Row, and the vast industrial parks in Burbank. This patchwork landscape, a familiar pastiche in cinema production, resists the familiar Hollywood landmarks that usually are sewn together to make "Los Angeles". Instead, the camera is focused on the immediate landscape: the pedestrians, the highway dividers, and parking lots. All of which are smoothed by the act of driving.

Richard Weinstein describes this Los Angeles landscape as always in flux, and ever changing. For Weinstein, this is reverberated by empty spaces and flimsy and decaying buildings that deny any sense of permanence or stability. Additionally, Weinstein points

to the car as a device for deepening this experience of impermanence. He describes the

experience of Los Angeles as a "passage through space with constraints established by

speed and motion".[165] The shapes and patterns of the city are constantly renewing

themselves through the car, which Weinstein claims further alienates its citizens and

encourages privatization over the public realm.[166] This struggle over privatization and

the production of "unjust geographies" in Los Angeles is detailed by Edward Soja in

Seeking Spatial Justice (2010). The division of resources, including public transportation

and development projects reflects these spatial structures of privilege. In the film, the

spatial apartheid, between downtown Los Angeles' tent city, and the pristine street

corners of Beverly Hills is also smoothed together in the film by the act of driving.

The moving cube truck is a play on the white, modernist box, fit for the modern

individual "always on the move and at home everywhere"[167]. The Uhaul simultaneously

fulfills the demands of a rootless machine for living in, pointing to modernity's

obsession with technology and mobility. This moveable structure also illuminates the

binaries underlying the notion of home as inside/outside, public/private,

comfortable/uncomfortable, safe/unsafe. [168] The Uhaul space is fixed in between all of

these oppositions, allowing the protagonist to exist in a kind of limbo, a foreigner not "at

home" anywhere. The Uhaul signifies a home with "no fixed or essential past", its

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[165] Weinstein, Richard S. "The First American City." In *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the End of the Twentieth Century*, edited by Allen J. Scott and Edward W. Soja, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996:35.

[166] Ibid.

[167] Buchanan, "Farewell to Modernism".

[168] See Mallett, Shelley. "Understanding Home: A Critical Review of the Literature." *The Sociological Review* 52, no. 1 (2004)

borders shifting and its boundaries "permeable and unstable"[169].   In this way, the Uhaul is similar to the psychological underpinning of large-scale real estate that is being demolished at ever quickening speeds. Peter Buchanan asks how sustainability could ever be realized if development aims to "merely camp without establishing deep roots"[170] when the next big investment is always around the corner. The film addresses the inner psychology of dwelling when it is fixated not on the experience of place, but on the desire for future developments.

The form of the film, its meandering pace, and cyclical ending, reflect the phenomenology of desire as "a powerful cyclic emotion that is both discomforting and pleasurable"[171] , eliciting "dreamlike fantasies"[172]. We see a woman flipping through magazines and paint chips, studying and collecting images of home. Her interior life is dominated by dreaming of this house, and as she becomes increasingly absorbed into these images, the longing intensifies. The irony of the fictionalized Uhaul home is that the promise of interiority and infinite dreaming, that is satisfied in the Uhaul will never be satisfied in the actualized mansions that she imagines. The sound designer, Matt Miller, focused on creating distinct aural spaces that reflected interiors and exteriors to amplify this shift. He chose the motif of a dollhouse to introduce the Uhaul as a wistful, fairytale-like space. The Uhaul space becomes a kind of miniature dollhouse which Susan Stewart describes as "the secret recesses of the heart: center within center, within

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[169] Ibid:70.

[170] Buchanan, "Farewell to Modernism".

[171] Belk, Russell W., Güliz Ger, and Søren Askegaard. "The Fire of Desire: A Multisited Inquiry into Consumer Passion." *Journal of Consumer Research* 30, no. 3 (December 2003): 326.

[172] Ibid: 333.

within within."[173]   This dream space allows the film to go deep into the protagonist's

psyche, where the viewer can start to piece together the narrative fragments.

This inner space signifies the protagonist's inner struggle between "desire for what is

unobtainable" and "fear of being without desire".[174] A study by Belk et al (2003) on

passion in consumer habits, revealed the ability of consistent longing to give hope and

purpose to life; that the fear of losing desire is associated with a loss of passion,

enchantment, and excitement.   In this way, without the object of "thundering emotion"

consumers described feeling aimless, bored, empty, and indifferent. The central struggle

for the protagonist, is what Nietzsche had once observed: "In the end one loves one's

desire and not what is desired."

The film emerged from a passage from Aldous Huxley's *After Many a Summer Dies the
Swan* (1939). The novel follows Jeremy Pordage, a British scholar encountering the San

Fernando Valley for the first time to work for oil tycoon Jo Stoyte in his sprawling

mansion. Inside, the old European world is foiled against the new idealism of Los

Angeles, which Huxley describes as a "suburban world of filling stations and billboard,

of low houses in gardens, of vacant lots and wastepaper, of occasional shops and office

buildings and churches… with pillars and pediments, like banks."[175] Huxley himself was

a recent émigré, drawn to Hollywood to pursue a brief career as a screenwriter. His

experience of encountering Los Angeles is poured into the protagonist, Jeremy, who

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[173] Stewart, Susan. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. 10 edition. Durham: Duke University Press Books, 1993:61.
[174] See Belk et al.
[175] Huxley, Aldoux. *After Many A Summer*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1968:5.

observes Mr. Stoyte's collection of old European art amidst his desire for eternal youth

and the affection of his young lover, Virginia. After the throws of a secret, passionate

encounter between Virginia and Mr. Stoyte's doctor, Huxley describes Virginia's

amorous ecstasy:

> But, like all the other addictions, whether to drugs or books, to power or
>
> applause, the addiction to pleasure tends to aggravate the condition it
>
> temporarily alleviates. The addict goes down into the valley of the shadow
>
> of his own particular little death- down indefatigably, desperately down in
>
> search of something else, something not himself, something other and better
>
> than the life he miserably lives as a human person the hideous world of
>
> human persons. He goes down and, either violently or in delicious inertia,
>
> he dies and is transfigured; but dies only for a little while, is transfigured
>
> only momentarily. After the little death is a little resurrection, a resurrection
>
> out of unconsciousness, out of self-annihilating excitement, back into the
>
> misery of knowing oneself alone and weak and worthless, back into a
>
> completer separateness, an acuter sense of personality. And the acuter the
>
> sense of separate personality, the more urgent the demand for yet another
>
> experience of assuaging death and transfiguration. The addiction alleviates,
>
> but in doing so increases the pains demanding alleviation.[176]

This cycle of desire, of "death and transfiguration", speaks to Virginia's obsessive pangs

for romance, but also highlights the nature of desire that plagues the other characters

throughout the novel. Stoyte, even more so than Virginia, fervently succumbs to his

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[176] Huxley: 198.

fears and desires lurking just beyond his grasp. Although Huxley rarely leaves the property in *After Many a Summer*, this addiction to pleasure describes so vividly the yearning that provokes the project of development central to modernity.

Marshall Berman describes the problematic of modern development as the pleasure derived from novelty and progress in the built environment. The pursuit of permanence and stability is no longer pleasurable- Berman writes, "modern men must yearn for change… must learn not to long nostalgically for the past, but delight in mobility, renewal, to thrive, to look forward to future developments".[177] Except the environment cannot absorb all of the waste that is created in these waves of desire. With an aesthetic system built on the need for change, the built environment sets itself up for constant demolition, and with that, comes the flimsy, placeless developer lots that refute a sense of place. These values of mobility, renewal, and hope for the future are the double edged sword that plagues the crisis of development. Slavoj Zizek argues that aesthetic ideologies articulate power structures underlining all of development, and urges architects to "tread softly because you tread on the dreams of the people who will live in and look at your buildings."[178]

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[177] Berman: 96.

[178] Architecture and pleasure from the aesthetics of the common beauty icons. Slavoj Zizek, University of Ljubljana (Slovenia). Filmed Thursday, June 10, 2010. Video belongs to Arquitectura y Sociedad (Foundation for Architecture and Society).

Conclusion

"If Faust is a critique, it is also a challenge- to our world even more than to Goethe's
own- to imagine and to create new modes of modernity, in which man will not exist for
the sake of development, but development for the sake of mans'

-Marshall Berman (86)

From the onset, Los Angeles was a city built on anticipation, where the future was
always brewing in the distance. The city built itself to be mobile, to embrace the
highway, to celebrate distance and breadth. But the values that celebrate modernity,
technology, and change, also maintain that architecture must be ephemeral, that it is not
here to stay, and like the machine for living that it aspires to be, so shall architecture be
improved and replaced. Consequently, architecture that celebrates novelty instead of
stability also falls victim to the cycles and tragedies of aesthetic tastes. With houses and
everything they hold growing in size, and needing to keep up with aesthetic trends, the
cycle of consumption quickens as does the amount of material that goes to waste.

The effects of the cultural currents of modernist architecture are regurgitated in the
highly privatized, gated neighborhoods in Los Angeles and small suburban lots at its
foothills, shifting the properties of high modernism into pure exercises in consumption.
Within this system, the aesthetic aspirations of modernism function as a site of power
and authority over the landscape, creating a clean and ordered environment for those
who can afford it. Contemporary vernacular architecture continues this aesthetic

consumption, fueled by mass production and an aesthetic that announces comfort in excess, or an 'aesthetic of plenty'. The aesthetic economy that drives these new communities disallows mention of issues of ecology, social justice, and land use, sublimating the land into an artificial oasis and creating massive amounts of waste- the effects of which are felt disproportionately in lower income, minority communities. This is none more evident than in Los Angeles, where this glamorous, sprawling modernism becomes icons of order, surface, mobility, and change, while leaving many communities suffering from aesthetic and environmental injustice.

Modernity's twin obsession with novelty and hygiene produced an aesthetic that glorifies newness. With the avant-garde pointing to a sophisticated architecture of "purity", this translated into modern buildings fixated on cleanliness and novelty- an architecture that was not only "morally unblemished" but also directly affects ones health.[179] The optimistic belief in technology and efficiency created icons of modern architecture that celebrated form, light, and space. But the technology and efficiency that made these buildings possible, stemmed from the cheap availability of fossil fuels that are contributing to global warming and the earth's depletion of natural resources.[180]

While early modern architects aimed to break with tradition and create a new language of architectural forms, the call for new architecture has exploded into sites of *aesthetic waste*, where whole homes are remodeled or demolished in pursuit of the "new".

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[179] Rybczynski, Witold. *Home: A Short History of an Idea*. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1987: 202.
[180] Buchanan, Peter. "THE BIG RETHINK Part 2: Farewell to Modernism – and Modernity Too." Accessed October 27, 2014. http://www.architectural-review.com/essays/the-big-rethink-part-2-farewell-to-modernism-and-modernity-too/8625733.article.

Current architectural practices fueled by a "neo-architectural avant-garde", attempt to reinstate claims of "newness". Patrik Shumacher, partner at Zaha Hadid Architects, claims that this neo architecture "succeeds modernism as a new wave of systematic innovation. The style finally closes the period of uncertainty engendered by the crisis of modernism."[181] The culture of this neo-avant garde, however, resist many of the social and political aspirations of the high modern avant-garde, favoring radical shapes and proportions as resistance in themselves; a break with the architectural aesthetics of its past. These experiments in taste do little to change the structure in which aesthetic taste functions.

As the neo-avant garde architecture competes to establish a new style, older styles are razed or remodeled to reflect current shifts in taste. This contributes largely to waste production that is increasingly aesthetic. Objects which still function are considered obsolete because the pursuit of order, efficiency, and perfection requires a constant re-evaluation of these tastes. As Bruce Thomas argues, "[p]erverting so essential an architecture characteristic as empathy will not usher in a new egalitarian world any more than did previous naïve [m]odernist political-architectural formulas."[182] After the failures of social housing, architecture abandoned its social agenda[183], and turned its attention to re-evaluating the form itself. Architects such as Eisenman and Schumacher "exemplif[y] a position where architectural culture is hermetic, sealed off against the

[181] Schumacher, Patrik. "The Parametricist Manifesto." *The Architect's Newspaper*, June 10, 2010. http://archpaper.com/news/articles.asp?id=4623#.VJZo-sACxQ.
[182] Thomas, Bruce. "Culture, Merchandise, or Just Light Entertainment? New Architecture at the Millennium." *Journal of Architectural Education (1984-)* 50, no. 4 (May 1, 1997): 263
[183] See Glazer, Nathan. *From a Cause to a Style: Modernist Architecture's Encounter with the American City*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2007.

very world it inhabits"[184]. The major problem facing contemporary aesthetics is that there is nothing developing in opposition to this.[185] Instead, these values are being filtered into good "judgments of taste" that fuel desires for cleanliness, order, and the pursuit of pleasure. But if there is one thing that this paper hopes to establish, is that aesthetics cannot remove itself from this top down system. Pleasure is ideological,[186] and in Los Angeles, this is manifested in the built landscape.

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[184] Murphy, Douglas. *The Architecture of Failure*. Reprint edition. Winchester: Zero Books, 2012:110
[185] Murphy, Douglas. "Architecture, 'Avant-Gardes' and Failure." Delavsko - punkerska univerza, August 14, 2010. https://vimeo.com/14135975.
[186] Wood, Robin. "Papering the Cracks: Fantasy and Ideology in the Reagan Era." In *Movies and Mass Culture*. Rutgers University Press, 1996.
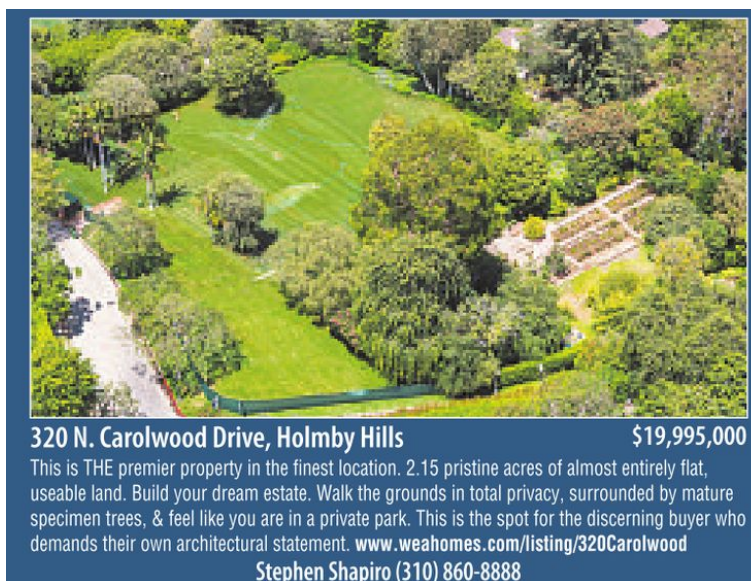
Figures

Fig. 1: Real Estate listing for Frank Sinatra's Demolished Home, n.d. Source:
http://npaper2.com/real-estate-westside--central-los-
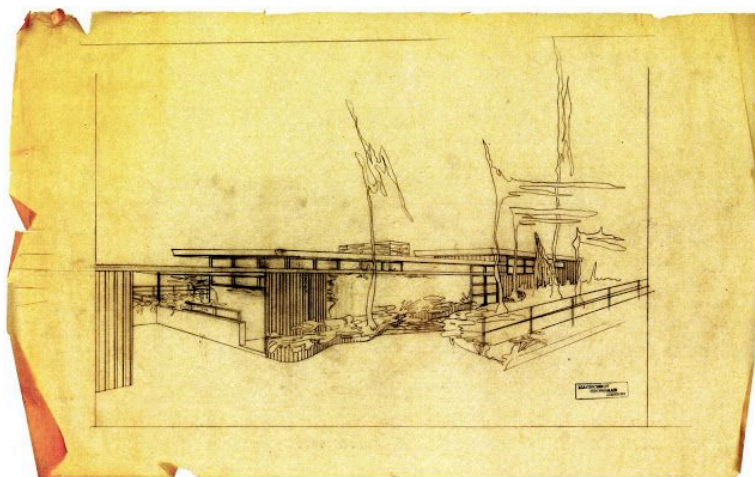angeles/2012/12/08/#?article=510203

Fig. 2: Original Rendering of the Backus House, 1949. Greta Grossman, architect.
Source: Great Magunusson Grossman: A Car and Some Shorts reproduced in
http://esotericsurvey.blogspot.ca/2012/09/grossman-backus-house.html

Fig. 3: Design Renderings for the Backus House Real Estate Listing, Bel Air, California, nd. Source: http://www.joebabajian.com/current-listings/327/677-nimes-road/

Fig. 4: Mountain View Estates, Aerial View, Calabasas, California, n.d. Source: http://www.cityofcalabasas.com/mtnview.html

Fig. 5: Unité D'Habitation, Marseille, France, 1947-52. Le Corbusier, architect.
Source:
http://www.fondationlecorbusier.fr/corbuweb/morpheus.aspx?sysId=13&IrisObjectId=5
234&sysLanguage=en-
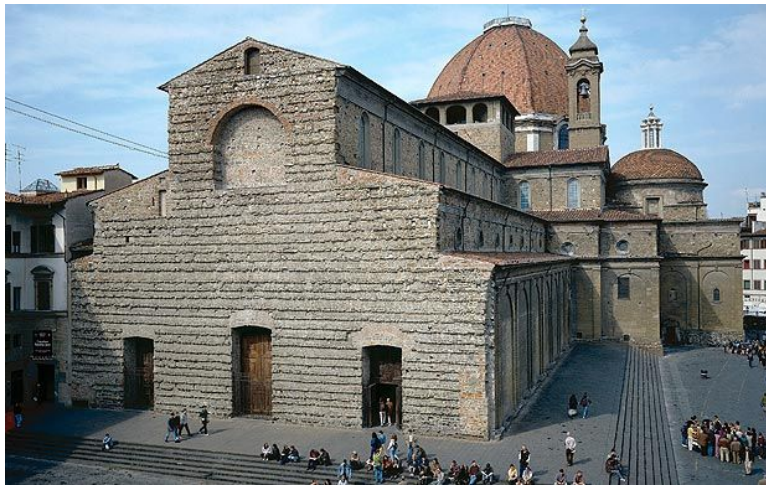en&itemPos=58&itemCount=78&sysParentId=64&sysParentName=home

Fig. 6: San Lorenzo Basilica, San Lorenzo Basilica, Florence, Italy, 1421. Filippo
Brunelleschi, architect. Source: Getty Images reproduced in
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/italy/8687266/Michelangelos-San-
Lorenzo-Basilica-exterior-could-be-revived.html

Fig. 7: Lovell Beach House Exterior, Newport Beach, California, 1926. Rudolph Schindler, architect. Source: Library of Congress
http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/ca0448.photos.014320p/resource/

Fig.8: Lovell Beach House, Interior. Source: Library of Congress

Fig. 9: Lovell Health House, Los Angeles, California, 1929. Richard Neutra, architect. Source: http://www.neutra.org/tours.html

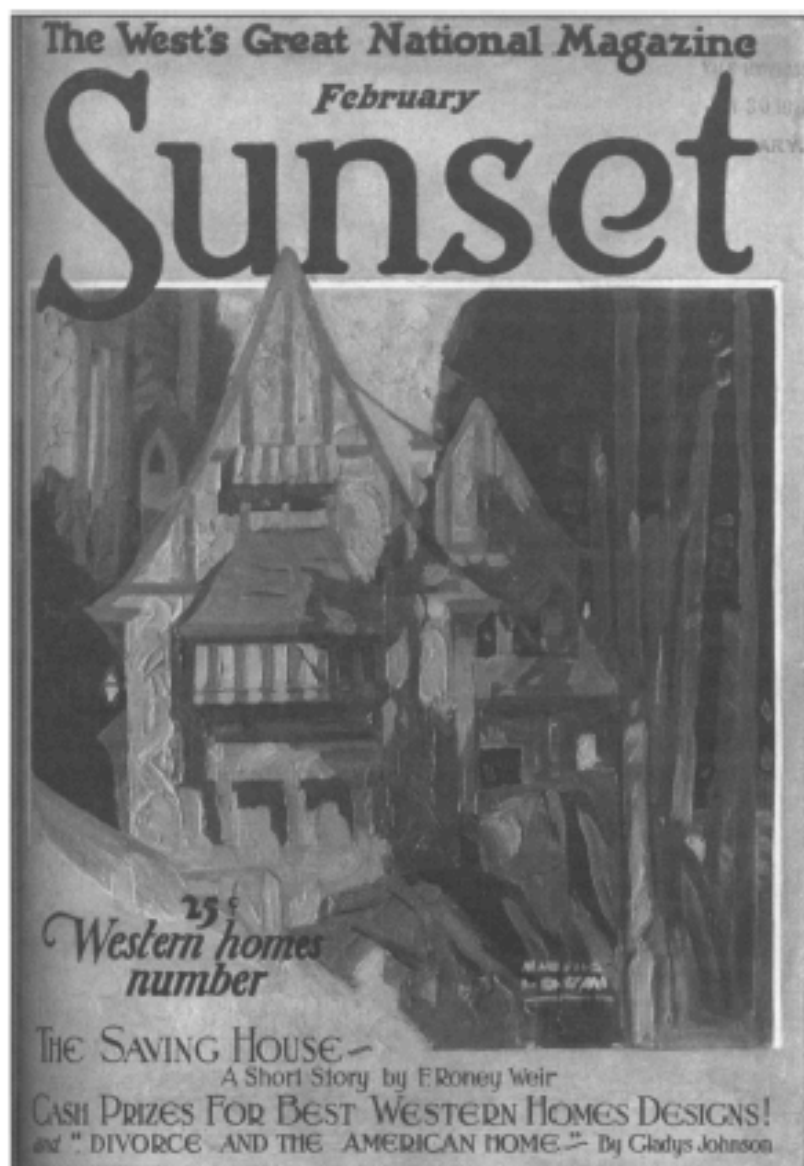Fig. 10: Illustration of the Ideal Modern Sunset Family, 1929. Source: "Western Living": 153.

Fig. 11: Cover of Sunset Magazine's February, 1926 "Westerners Homes Number"
Source: "Western Living Sunset Style in the 1920s and 1930s: The Middlebrow, the
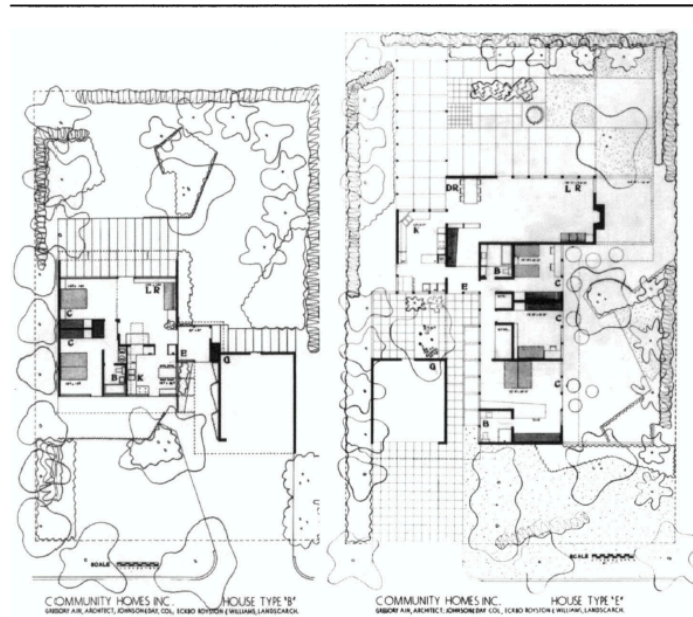Civilized, and the Modern", *The Western Historical Quarterly* 37:137.

Fig.12: Community Homes Site Plan, 1947, Gregory Ain, architect. Source: Community Homes: Race, Politics and Architecture in Postwar Los Angeles, 276.

Fig. 13: Baldwin Hills Village, Baldwin Hills, California, 1942. Reginald D. Johnson, Robert Alexander, Lewis Wilson, Edwin Merrill, Clarence Stein, architects. Fred Barlow, Jr, landscape architect. Source: "Garden Apartments of Los Angeles: Historic Context Statement": 55.

Fig. 14: Aerial view of Baldwin Hills Village. Source: "Garden Apartments of Los Angeles": 9.

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