

EVERY HOMEOWNER A PRETENDIAN?:

On Locke, Abstraction, and the Architecture of West Coast Modernism

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PICTURED HERE IS AN interior photograph of a 1970s West Coast Modern single-family home, designed by architects Hassell/Griblin (Figure 1).¹ The project was built in North Vancouver – unceded territory of Skwxwú7meshh Úxwumixw (the Squamish Nation) – for Corky McIntyre and her husband, Scott McIntyre, one half of the book publisher Douglas & McIntyre. The house opens expansively onto its site while existing securely within the order of nature, producing what one architecture historian of the McIntyre House calls a “comfort of enclosure.”² Enclosure is provided not so much by the architecture itself, given West Coast Modernism’s archetypal open threshold with nature through the use of glass and light, but rather by its position vis-à-vis property and its surrounding forested landscape. The architecture is both open and enclosed – open to an outside nature yet simultaneously enclosed within property. The house is nested in turn within the suburban plan, embedded as a discrete unit on the colonial grid.

In its basic profile, the McIntyre House is a characteristic if understated example of the architectural movement known as West Coast Modernism. This architecture shared many features with other variants of mid-century domestic modernism in the postwar years, including the embrace of the open plan, an absence of exterior ornament, and other

¹ Thank you to Eva Graham for inviting me to present this research at the Darstellung lecture series in Vancouver, hosted by the English Department at Simon Fraser University, 24 July 2024. I am grateful to participants of the seminar for insightful discussion and feedback, and a text related to the lecture created by the artist and writer SF Ho (“History Lesson #3,” *Calyx*, 2025). Thank you to Caitlin Shane for reading and editing an early version of this article, and to the staff and editors of *BC Studies*. Thank you especially to Paige Raibmon and two anonymous reviewers for valuable comments and feedback. All errors remain my own.

² Sherry McKay, *McIntyre House* (UBC School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture / ORO Editions, 2020), 20.



Figure 1. Cartelier I House / McIntyre House (1973), architects Robert Hassell and Barry Griblin. North Vancouver, BC, commissioned by Corky and Scott McIntyre. Photograph by Michael Perlmutter, 2017.

shared design elements.³ Yet West Coast Modernism also laid claim to a set of regional specificities. The penchant for a flat or low-pitched roof was pushed as far as possible in a part of the country with less snowfall. The use of large windows, also the preserve of a milder climate in the era of single-pane glass, allowed for a merger with nature and exterior while supporting the typical modernist emphasis on architectural honesty. Structural principles were made legible and visible, with walls of glass “curtains.” This often drew attention to the use of post-and-beam methods of construction, featuring exposed wood and the use of cedar and other local tree species. Related to each of these aspects but less discussed in writings on West Coast Modernism is its cultural and architectural metabolising, repurposing, and appropriation of Indigenous themes of dwelling and inhabitation.

WELFARE-STATE ARCHITECTURE

In their first years in the house, beginning in 1973, the McIntyres must have witnessed the unprecedented and possibly mystifying contortions of BC politics, with the brief rise and fall of Dave Barrett’s NDP government over three and a half years from 1973 to 1975. In a departure from premier W.A.C. Bennett’s exclusive focus on homeownership and private development in the preceding years, Barrett’s cabinet would create a provincial Department of Housing from scratch and quadruple the stock of public, nonmarket housing in a last burst of late-modernist socialism. In the construction of infrastructure projects and public buildings, too, the reigning social democrats moved fast to commission modernist works like Arthur Erickson’s Robson Law Courts.⁴ Agricultural land also underwent reform. The NDP created the Agricultural Land Reserve to protect farmland from further industrial and real-estate development in the Lower Mainland. For British Columbia’s political

³ For a representative sampling of works on residential West Coast Modernism, see Adele Weder, Kiriko Watanabe, Donald Luxton, and Barry Downs, *Selwyn Pullan: Photographing Mid-Century West Coast Modernism* (Douglas & McIntyre, 2014); see also essays by Greg Bellerby, Barry Downs, Kiriko Watanabe, Alan Bell, Hilary Letwin, and Adele Weder in *Design for Living: West Coast Modern Homes Revisited* (West Vancouver Art Museum, 2019); see also the West Coast Modern House series published by ORO Editions and UBC’s School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture (SALA) between 2011 and 2020.

⁴ Three Block Project, Robson Square, 1973–1981, AP022.S1.1973.PR09, Architectural projects, 1963–2002, Arthur Erickson fonds, 1947–2002 (predominant 1963–2000), Canadian Centre for Architecture, <https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/archives/108951/arthur-erickson-fonds/397577/architectural-projects/413130/three-block-project-robson-square>.

establishment and media of the 1970s, these reforms amounted to a fundamental and existential threat to property.⁵

A new-old constellation of forces united around Bill Bennett's Social Credit Party, eventually winning back hegemony and a legislative majority.⁶ With the provincial election of December 1975, the NDP experiment gave way to a restoration of "Locke's sacred right," as the political scientist Philip Resnick put it shortly after Barrett's defeat at the hands of the Socreds.⁷ This sacred right was a gift to the owner from society or God to dispose of and possess, with neither the constraint of state nor commons, following John Locke's theory of property outlined in the *Second Treatise of Government* (1689). Private ownership, only barely held back and modified by Barrett, was reconstituted with historic vigour in the 1980s. In retrospect this movement was termed neoliberalism for its new take on an old liberal dream of untrammelled property. Scholars describe this historic period as a "second enclosure" for its privatization of the artificial commons of the postwar welfare state, echoing the early enclosures of the Lockean past but in a new late-colonial setting.⁸ Advanced technologies of the enclosure emerged in this period, particularly the condominium, but the single-family home would maintain its central and dominant place within the housing economy.⁹ Perhaps more surprisingly and dialectically, the single-family home – the founding unit of the colonial grid – also became the basis for a new European claim to Indigeneity.

West Coast Modernism, I will argue, became a cultural and aesthetic means by which settler identity was forged through a material claim to land and place. By the 1950s, an avant-garde of intellectuals and artists became leading figures in this movement as commissioners of single-

⁵ The housing and land reforms of this period were frequently decried as a "sinister first stage of a move against all private property." Peter McNelly, "Good Grief – It's Way Past Quitting Time," *Province*, 3 February 1973, 8; see also "Private Land Takeover Claimed Goal of NDP," *Vancouver Sun*, 13 November 1975, 22. Progressive Conservative Peter Hyndman accused the NDP of a "total assault on private property" and claimed Barrett was delivering the province into a "boiling cauldron of socialism." "Barrett's 'Boiling Us,'" *Vancouver Sun*, 24 February 1973, 3.

⁶ William K. Carroll and R.S. Ratner, "Social Democracy, Neo-Conservatism and Hegemonic Crisis in British Columbia," *Critical Sociology* 16, no. 1 (April 1989): 29–53, <https://doi.org/10.1177/089692058901600102>.

⁷ Philip Resnick, "Social Democracy in Power: The Case of British Columbia," *BC Studies*, no. 34 (Summer 1977): 13, <https://doi.org/10.14288/bcs.v0i34.923>.

⁸ David Lloyd and Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonial Logics and the Neoliberal Regime," *Settler Colonial Studies* 6, no. 2 (2016): 109–18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2015.1035361>, see 109; see also Brett Christophers, *The New Enclosure: The Appropriation of Public Land in Neoliberal Britain* (Verso, 2019).

⁹ Douglas C. Harris, "Condominium and the City: The Rise of Property in Vancouver," *Law & Social Inquiry* 36, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 694–726, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-4469.2011.01247.x>.



Figure 2. Smith House II (1965), architects Arthur Erickson and Erickson/Massey. West Vancouver, BC, commissioned for Gordon and Marion Smith. Photograph by Arni Haraldsson from the series *Smith House II*, 1996.

family architecture. Painters from Jack Shadbolt to Roy Kiyooka and Gordon A. Smith commissioned West Coast Modern post-and-beam designs for their private homes (Figure 2). For art historian Scott Watson, Vancouver painting's earlier adherence to social realism in the 1940s gave way to a reassertion of landscape in the 1950s, expressed through both painting and architecture. Discussing a modernist living room, "from whose large sun balcony will be seen a tree-screened view of a planned city," Watson illustrates this historic shift:

The view from the balcony was revealing and prophetic: if the view is tree-screened and of a cityscape, the modern home is not in the city, it is on a suburban slope. During the following decade [1950s], the professional artists of Vancouver became enchanted with this model and almost all of them built architect-designed homes in the suburbs. This move accompanied their dwindling interest in paintings which reflected "social consciousness" and, in its place, their practice of a personal art dependent on a language of expressive form which took its inspiration from the landscape.¹⁰

¹⁰ Scott Watson, "Art in the Fifties," in *Vancouver: Art and Artists 1931–1983* (Vancouver Art Gallery, 1983), 75.



Figure 3. Patio view looking north and west from Shadbolt House (1950), architect Douglas Shadbolt. Capitol Hill, Burnaby, BC, commissioned for Doris and Jack Shadbolt. Photograph by Arni Haraldsson from the series *Shadbolt House*, 1994.

In contrast to a surrounding nature, the inner city became a spectacle of catastrophe and decay. In one particularly dramatic and symbolic event, Jack and Doris Shadbolt are reputed to have witnessed the collapse of the Second Narrows Bridge on 17 June 1958, from the balcony of their West Coast Modern home perched on the west-facing slopes of Burnaby (Figure 3).¹¹

To critique both the meaningless chaos of urban life and the rigid modernity of the “planned city,” Jack Shadbolt increasingly turned to Indigenous forms and signifiers in a period that produced some of his most unsuccessful and caricatural work. In a series of paintings, Shadbolt attempted to inhabit Indigenous culture through the figure of the shaman, which he ascribed to Pacific Northwest Indigenous ritual. Characteristically in this period, Shadbolt didn’t merely strive for aesthetic representation or an incorporation of motifs, he also was said to *become* the shaman. “[Shadbolt] takes his place in the shamanic tradition, though ultimately he does not *derive* from the shamans; he becomes one himself, disintegrating and reassembling the fragments of

¹¹ Author conversation with Arni Haraldsson, 29 October 2024.

his meaningless world into meaningful systems,” as the historian, critic, and writer George Woodcock put it.¹²

Traversing the metaphor of the collapsed bridge, we can consider Shadbolt's shift from socialist realism to postwar defiguration through his Marpole Bridge paintings. In his 1947 version of the 1945 painting, he methodically erased the workers from the bridge.¹³ After the calamitous and fatal collapse of the Second Narrows Bridge ten years later, Shadbolt turned ever further towards landscapes both natural and sublime, culminating in an inner landscape. With an unironic nod to the heroic ego, Shadbolt gave shape to what he christened the “mind's I,” something attuned to the sacred inner landscape of the shaman.¹⁴

Artist and designer Robert Kleyn echoes Scott Watson's account of West Coast Modernism but picks up on the 1960s, at a moment when artists were gradually deposed as the spiritual avant-garde of the single-family home.¹⁵ The settler attachment to landscape and a reinvented modernist imaginary were both naturalized and commercialized, less dependent on the active cultural interventions of artists and architects. At this same moment, in homes increasingly adorned with Indigenous art, West Coast Modernism steadily asserted itself as an “Indigenous” tradition. The single-family home would eventually become the urform through which to develop the “indigenous style ... known as West Coast Modernism.”¹⁶

The postwar boom in both rural resource extraction and urbanization meant an accelerated material displacement of Indigenous Peoples from their lands and waters, alongside renewed settler claims to land

¹² George Woodcock quoted in Scott Watson, *Jack Shadbolt* (Douglas & McIntyre, 1990), 125, emphasis in original.

¹³ Watson, *Jack Shadbolt*, 36–37.

¹⁴ Jack Shadbolt, *Mind's I* (McClelland and Stewart, 1973).

¹⁵ The social-mindedness of the original post-and-beam period “went missing shortly after, ... and was all but absent by the 1960s when these architects were servicing clients with generous budgets.” Robert Kleyn, “Proving Ground for Modernity,” *Capilano Review* 3, no. 8 (Spring 2009): 158. Rhodri Windsor-Liscombe is similarly critical of the shift away from the high-minded progressivism of the immediate postwar years, although he is at odds with Scott Watson's reading of the artists' turn towards landscape and West Coast Modernist architecture as already a loss of progressive commitments as they shrank away from their former socialist and communist politics. Nonetheless, Kleyn, Watson, and Windsor-Liscombe all seem to agree that the late 1950s and early '60s were a moment of abandoned egalitarian utopianism. Windsor-Liscombe blames the rise of postwar spectacle, commercial photography, and consumerism, all of which would “augment the devolution of Modernist motive into formal uniformity and materialist rather than communitarian enterprise.” See Windsor-Liscombe, “Living Spaces,” in Fred Thornton Hollingsworth, *Living Spaces: The Architecture of Fred Thornton Hollingsworth* (Blueimprint, 2005), 27.

¹⁶ Lance Berelowitz, *Dream City: Vancouver and the Global Imagination* (Douglas & McIntyre, 2005), 197.

and property.¹⁷ In a further turn of the knife, however, settler claims increasingly doubled as identity claims. These involved a settler mimesis of traditional Indigenous relationships to the land, which meant a confiscation and appropriation of those traditions alongside a more unadorned process of material expropriation and dispossession. In his study of mid-century modernist leisure architecture in Palm Springs, Manuel Shvartzberg Carrió has pointed to precisely this double logic. At his Oasis Hotel (1925) and elsewhere, architect Lloyd Wright asserted a direct lineage with Indigenous cultural and architectural practices:

As Lloyd Wright claimed, his architecture (like that of his father) sought to “establish a link and a continuity with that which was architecturally indigenous to America. Lloyd quite openly referred to his buildings as objects which sought to convey the spirit of the American Indian.” The Oasis precisely sought to articulate this type of paroxysmal racialization: while physically entrenching the first colonial structure on Agua Caliente land, it represented real Indigenous people in a plethora of settler imaginary figurations.¹⁸

In a political and architectural context strikingly similar to the Pacific Northwest, the modernist development of Palm Springs operated through both racial and regional modalities. These two overlapped, but in effect they arrived in historic succession, mapped out in detail by Shvartzberg Carrió.¹⁹

FALSE INDIGENEITY OR REAL ORIENTALISM

When the Vancouver architect Arthur Erickson began his design practice in the 1950s, he was met with a civilizational and cultural problem. The late 1940s were a period of aesthetic confusion in Vancouver, with its attempt to recreate “indigenous European styles” after the war, as soldiers returned from Europe and sought to recreate what they had

¹⁷ George Manuel and Michael Posluns, *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality* (Collier-Macmillan, 1974; repr., University of Minnesota Press, 2019).

¹⁸ Manuel Shvartzberg Carrió, “Designing *Terra nullius*: Mid-Century Modernism and Settler-Colonial Leisure,” in *Coastal Architectures and Politics of Tourism: Leisurescapes in the Global Sunbelt*, ed. Sibel Bozdoğan, Panayiota Pyla, and Petros Phokaides (Routledge, 2022), 61.

¹⁹ Shvartzberg Carrió argues that colonial planners and architects initially operated through a racialized essentialist mythos of Indigeneity. Only later did they pivot to a regionalist idiom that assimilated Native American nationhood into both local and federal structures of the US government, propelling in modified form the original attempt to undermine Indigenous autonomy and self-determination. See Shvartzberg Carrió, “Designing *Terra nullius*,” 52–68.

seen on the old continent.²⁰ For Erickson, this effort had failed. What might have been organic to Europe was now out of place on the West Coast. By September 1961, after a life-changing trip to Japan and Asia, Erickson saw this architectural failure as both a crisis and a potential opening.²¹ If any such redemption could be actual, Erickson argued, it would have to be anchored in the here and now of the land, the bioregion, and the mythic West Coast. He would later state as part of an extended polemic: “Our cities are alive with fake building styles, our homes with fake antiques, our hotels and restaurants and shopping centres with the false pastiche of other lands.”²²

When Erickson returned to Vancouver, he took distance from his earlier work, in particular the much-praised Filberg House, described as an exemplary “Mediterranean Baroque.”²³ Now, for the post-Japan Erickson, the Filberg House was felt to be derivative, beholden to the artifice of a supposed Pacific Riviera.²⁴ The Japan trip “sharpened [Erickson’s] interest in folk cultures, particularly the indigenous cultures of the Pacific Northwest.”²⁵ What was needed was a new bioregional attachment to land, site, and environment. From this point forward Erickson began to craft a conception of Indigenous architecture via his newfound Orientalism. Sometimes Indigeneity would play a role of transference, acting as a kind of vanishing mediator in this complex operation. Erickson’s biographer puts it like this:

[Erickson] was uncomfortable transposing another cultural tradition to British Columbia. He was painfully aware that indigenous traditions had been almost completely exterminated and that Europeans had no real roots in BC, no relationship to the land. Only by seeing aboriginal culture, with its pantheistic reverence for nature, as Oriental could he justify bringing Japanese traditions to bear on his work.²⁶

Erickson’s theory and practice of design in this period is both a demystification and a remythification. Demystification: the recognition

²⁰ Heritage Vancouver, “The Disappearing Design Legacy of C.B.K. Van Norman Homes,” Heritage Vancouver, 2015, <https://heritagevancouver.org/top10-watch-list/2015/6-cbk-van-norman-houses/>.

²¹ Laurent Stalder, “Europe-America-Japan: In Search of a New Architectural Language,” in *Arthur Erickson: Critical Works*, ed. Nicholas Olsberg and Ricardo L. Castro (Vancouver Art Gallery / Douglas & MacIntyre / University of Washington Press, 2006), 59–67.

²² Arthur Erickson quoted in Edith Iglauer, *Seven Stones: A Portrait of Arthur Erickson* (Harbour / University of Washington Press, 1981), 58.

²³ David Stouck, *Arthur Erickson: An Architect’s Life* (Douglas & McIntyre, 2013), 134.

²⁴ Stouck, *Arthur Erickson*, 167.

²⁵ Stouck, *Arthur Erickson*, 164.

²⁶ Stouck, *Arthur Erickson*, 168.

that Europeans on settler territories had no organic traditions within architecture, no real connection or legitimate cultural relation to land.²⁷ Remythification: the search for a spiritual and communitarian vernacular that could express the will and spirit of a people through architecture. Erickson would gradually supersede some of these architectural preoccupations, but they would carry on and multiply within the work of other West Coast Modernists, in particular those who – unlike Erickson – would remain core practitioners of the single-family home.

TOWARDS A SETTLER INDIGENEITY?

“West Coast Modernism [is] perhaps the closest we have come in Canada to developing a regional indigenous style of architecture,” writes Vancouver urbanist and developer Bob Ransford in a laudatory text on the architecture of Fred Hollingsworth.²⁸ The terms “indigenous” and “Indigenous” have at least two distinct meanings. On the one hand, “indigenous” conveys that something is specific to the here and now of the place and climate in which it is made; a reference to a style, a design solution, and a set of building materials that are not imported from elsewhere (cedar, andesite, local flagstone, and so on). On the other hand, “Indigenous” signifies a racialized or ethnocultural reference to individuals and collectives of individuals descended from first inhabitants.²⁹

²⁷ Discussing Jack Shadbolt’s use of Coast Salish themes and imagery, Scott Watson wrote of “larger cultural anxieties” at work in these paintings: “These primarily have to do with a sense of place, a feeling of belonging, the anxiety that as a colonial one does not quite fit, that the society is askew somehow. ... For Shadbolt, a regional modernism depended upon a cultural graft that would appropriate Indian art into the modernist heritage. This heritage ... would then provide the medium in which a feeling of rootedness, belonging, and *spiritual ownership of place* could be nourished and grow.” Watson, *Jack Shadbolt*, 129, emphasis added.

²⁸ Bob Ransford, “Architect Fred Thornton Hollingsworth,” *Nuvo*, 1 August 2006, <https://nuvomagazine.com/magazine/autumn-2006/architect-fred-thornton-hollingsworth>.

²⁹ Throughout this current essay, I cite claims to settler architectural “Indigeneity” found in recent texts published within the past decade or two by Bob Ransford, Lance Berelowitz, Jennifer Chutter, and others. In texts from the height of postwar West Coast Modernism, references to “indigenous” were often specific to local materials and regional design solutions, whereas the terms “Indian” and “Native” were more commonly used for Indigenous Peoples. These same texts quickly made spiritual and architectural claims to land, ecological harmony, non-Western “folk traditions,” and Pacific Northwest Indigenous culture. This essay attempts to trace a genealogy of the merger between these two uses of “Indigenous” into a coherent and singular claim to architectural settler Indigeneity by the 1970s. Not incidentally, Indigenous Peoples also increasingly self-identified with the term “Indigenous” in the 1970s. For the latter, see “Terminology,” Indigenous Foundations (2009), UBC First Nations and Indigenous Studies, accessed 11 September 2025, <https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/terminology/>. For the usage of “Indian” and “Native” in the middle of the twentieth century, see Paul Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849–1989* (UBC Press, 1990), xi.

Beginning at the height of West Coast Modernism in the immediate postwar decades, the two meanings gradually became drawn into one another, with the latter pulled along by an elusive construction of what Tsimshian and Haida critic Marcia Crosby calls the "Imaginary Indian."³⁰

Imaginary settler projections of First Peoples are malleable because they refer only obliquely to a living set of cultural practices, a specific group of people, a community, or a nation. This paradoxical settler Indigeneity functions through the reduction of Indigenous Peoples to a set of cultural significations, subtracted from relations of land and sovereignty. Settler projections of Indigeneity often compensate for a perceived settler crisis by integrating meaning through a vague but seemingly transmittable cosmic harmony, closeness to the land, and cultural "heritage." Each of these were appropriated into the architectural and homeownership practices of West Coast Modernism, gradually spun into an embodied form of dwelling. With it came an accompanying discourse, sometimes quasi-metaphysical in its tenor. Through a slow process of material substitution and semiotic displacement, Indigeneity became a life form that settlers could eventually strive towards and embody, firming up a *spiritual ownership of place* for the West Coast Modern inhabitant.³¹

Discussing what she calls "the erasure of indigenous Indigeneity," historian Jean Barman addresses an emerging phenomenon in early twentieth-century Vancouver:

Erasure ... gave the means for the young city to assert that sense of rootedness that is at the heart of Indigeneity without its having to be indigenous to Vancouver. With the totem poles erected in Stanley Park in 1923 to mark the forced removal of the last of its indigenous residents, erasure functioned as a pathway to indigenous Indigeneity's replacement by a sanitized Indigeneity got from elsewhere.³²

The term "indigenous Indigeneity" is counterposed by Barman to a more distant Indigeneity, equal parts sanitized and romanticized. In the case of Stanley Park, the eviction of Indigenous residents coincided in 1923 with a kind of municipal ceremony in which the Vancouver Parks Board put up four Kwakwaka'wakw totem poles.³³ We can understand

³⁰ Marcia Crosby, "Construction of the Imaginary Indian," in *Vancouver Anthology: The Institutional Politics of Art*, ed. Stan Douglas (Talonbooks, 1991), 267–91.

³¹ Watson, *Jack Shadbolt*, 129.

³² Jean Barman, "Erasing Indigenous Indigeneity in Vancouver," *BC Studies*, no. 155 (Autumn 2007): 4.

³³ Barman, "Erasing Indigenous Indigeneity in Vancouver," 26–28.

this as a form of “settler Indigeneity” insofar as it was orchestrated by the state and Vancouver Parks Board following the obliteration and incineration of Skwxwú7mesh settlements in so-called Stanley Park. The Kwakwaka’wakw poles were to be followed by the creation of a “replica of an Indian village,” but the latter never materialized.³⁴

Paradoxically, the replacement of indigenous Indigeneity by settler Indigeneity needed to pass through the figure of the “authentic Indian.”³⁵ To displace the actual Indian, colonialism has frequently leaned on the strategy of the authentic Indian. In the case of Stanley Park, the authentic Indian was designated as the Kwakwaka’wakw of the Pacific Northwest Coast, conveniently held at a distance from events in Vancouver. The Kwakwaka’wakw were figured as more remote, untouched, and uncorrupted by proximity to industrial development, urban decadence, and racial miscegenation; by contrast the Skwxwú7mesh of Stanley Park sometimes married recent immigrants and brushed too closely with the lifestyles, technologies, and social habits of settler urbanization to be considered truly authentic (even if their offspring were authentic enough to be sent off to residential school, Barman adds caustically).³⁶ This was framed in the naked language of noble savages and race science, as displayed at the time on the pages of *The Province*.³⁷

³⁴ Sean Kheraj notes that these were in fact two totem poles and two “house posts” displayed in 1923, purchased from Kwakwaka’wakw Elders in Alert Bay. The Park Board added three more totem poles in 1936. See Sean Kheraj, *Inventing Stanley Park: An Environmental History* (UBC Press, 2013), 21–23.

³⁵ “Authentic Indian” is a term that Paige Raibmon employs in her study of nineteenth-century colonial encounters in the Pacific Northwest. See Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Duke University Press, 2005).

³⁶ Barman, “Erasing Indigenous Indigeneity in Vancouver,” 23–24.

³⁷ “The Kwakiutl together with the Haida, who were even further away from Vancouver on the Queen Charlotte Islands, were ‘the most advanced of all British Columbia Aboriginal tribes in culture.’ They were distinguished by ‘strong physique and higher mental capacity’ and a ‘far higher degree of courage and intelligence than their more easy-going and pusillanimous cousins of the south.’” *Province*, 12 April 1925, quoted in Barman, “Erasing Indigenous Indigeneity in Vancouver,” 27. This recalls a version of contemporary environmentalism in British Columbia that aligns with rural Indigenous struggles against resource extraction yet turns a blind eye to urban displacement in areas of Vancouver like Grandview-Woodlands, Hastings Sunrise, and the Downtown Eastside each with a large Indigenous population. For a critique of this tendency, see Maria Wallstam and Nathan Crompton, “Pipelines and Elites: The Politics of Greenwashing in Vancouver,” *Mainlander*, 11 November 2014, <https://themainlander.com/2014/11/11/pipelines-and-elites-the-politics-of-greenwashing-in-vancouver/>.

PRETENDIAN MAXIMALISM

When seen at a certain angle or under a particular light, a subtle artistic compensation can be detected in the architecture of West Coast Modernism. Somewhere in each of these buildings lies a restrained yet effective tension in which the brute calculations of economy become saturated with culture. In its discourse on “Indigenous” architecture and materials, West Coast Modernism was split between a self-referential assertion of the Lockean enclosure, and therefore a crude economism, and a simultaneous *spiritual response* to that economism. Both Indigenous land and culture were appropriated, but first the appropriation had to pass through a division where actual land goes to the settler while culture was assigned to a real or imagined Indigeneity. Abstractly, land and culture were then brought back together or “integrated” – to use a key West Coast Modern concept – through property (economy) and architecture (art). In this way, superficial forms of cultural recognition were indelibly bound up with Indigenous erasure and the settler “art of living.” In a structurally unequal colonial context, cultural recognition acts as a diversionary vehicle by which material dispossession and land theft is enabled and sustained, as Glen Coulthard (Yellowknives Dene) forcefully argues.³⁸

Long before transformer masks and Coast Salish baskets hung next to mustard yellow shag carpets in the cedar interiors of West Coast Modernism, settler Indigeneity had rested its laurels on the concept of the authentic Indian, as we have seen. Extrapolating from nineteenth- and early twentieth-century iterations of settler Indigeneity, however, we can anticipate a step further in the long development of the concept – one in which settlers make a more *direct* claim to Indigeneity. The mediation of a third term – Barman’s “sanitized Indigeneity got from elsewhere”³⁹ – gradually leaves the equation, with Indigeneity imputed directly to settler design and creativity. In the case of West Coast Modernism, the process involved at least three axes: the immediacy of the earth, landscape, and region; the genius of the architect who channels rather than creates these grounded energies, geological planes, and bioregional forces; and the imagined yet embodied knowing of an authentic Indigeneity that gives anthropomorphic meaning to the inanimate object of architecture. In this way, what started as a moment of Lockean rationalism became saturated with the cultural and aesthetic mythos we are familiar with

³⁸ Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 25–49.

³⁹ Barman, “Erasing Indigenous Indigeneity in Vancouver,” 4, 26.

today, built into the figurative and literal blueprints of residential West Coast Modern architecture.

These supplemental operations sometimes resemble the defence mechanisms of a bad conscience, but they can also take very developed and baroque forms akin to what Brenna Bhandar calls the “alchemical nature of conjuring fictitious value in land.”⁴⁰ With its manic-depressive logic, two settler extremes of boosterism (mania) and crisis (depressive anxiety) are ultimately never far from one another. Carcross/Tagish First Nation writer and curator Candice Hopkins argues that settlers can often “turn to the Indigenous in times of Western crisis.”⁴¹ Hopkins wrote this text after learning that a colleague of hers in the art world, curator cheyanne turions, was not in fact Indigenous, contrary to her long-standing claims. After years of turions occupying respected curatorial roles in the artworld, it was revealed that she was pretending – or, colloquially, she was a “pretendian.”⁴²

What’s revealing about the pretendian logic (and here I am not necessarily addressing turions) is its excessive character: the pretendian is faced with a pressure to always go *one step further*. The pretendian logic is not satisfied to make a claim to be included within Indigenous culture, it aspires to be *more Indigenous than Indigenous*. A recent interview with self-appointed “Grand Chief” Guillaume Carle, a well-known pretendian, is striking and illuminating in this regard. Carle insists that in contrast to his own authenticity, Indigenous people raised on reserves are legally ensconced in the Canadian state, corrupted by modern society, and divorced from tradition and nature.⁴³ Among other things, the power of such claims derives from a notion of unmediated nature, closer to both the land and to ancestral, precontact Indigenous practices. This is a phenomenon I will term pretendian maximalism.

Across the European world, in both colony and metropole, the postwar period witnessed a significant proliferation and even a craze

⁴⁰ Brenna Bhandar, *Colonial Lives of Property: Law, Land, and Racial Regimes of Ownership* (Duke University Press, 2018), 82.

⁴¹ Candice Hopkins, “A Response,” in *Under the Mango Tree – Other Sites of Learning* (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen/documenta, 2021), unpaginated insert.

⁴² Jessica Kolopenuk, “The Pretendian Problem,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 56, no. 2 (June 2023): 1–9, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423923000239>. For an extensive treatment of the phenomenon in Quebec and Canada, see Darryl Leroux, *Distorted Descent: White Claims to Indigenous Identity* (University of Manitoba Press, 2019).

⁴³ Robert Jago and Angel Ellis, hosts, *Pretendians*, podcast, episode 1, “Interview with a Pretendian,” interview with Guillaume Carle, 14 May 2013, Canadaland, <https://www.canadaland.com/podcast/1-interview-with-a-pretendian/>.

for primitivism.⁴⁴ But British Columbia artists and critics like Marjorie M. Halpin argued that, whatever Jean Debuffet may have been putting out into the world (or Paul Gauguin well before him), local efforts on the West Coast were separate from any broad international obsession or fad.⁴⁵ “[Shadbolt’s] painting is not in the culturally casual mode of international primitivism,” wrote Halpin, “it is the lyrical evocation of a definite place.”⁴⁶ The affirmation of Indigenous people and culture in their here and now, however, only meant the here and now of their *places*.

From this fact, West Coast Modernism was very much pressed into an intractable problem. Arthur Erickson and his contemporaries had complained of a generic or eclectic architecture, ornamented with its “fake antiques.”⁴⁷ Yet this problem was not and could not be solved by the development of a settler Indigeneity, even if at times it very much gave the appearance of doing so through the advanced practices of postwar modernist craft, ceramics, and design.⁴⁸ What is crucial to understand here is that the fakeness persisted not in *spite* of but *because* of the quest for the so-called authentic Indian.

Postwar painting in British Columbia did the most to weld an obtuse continuity between abstraction and landscape – something West Coast Modernism eventually brought into the realm of architecture. Gordon Smith comes to mind in the medium of painting (see Figure 4), but in effect a lineage of postwar Vancouver painters has relied on a productive but fraught abstraction-landscape slippage. This has allowed the conservative aspects of landscape painting to be heightened, if not redeemed, by the avant-garde aspirations of abstraction. In turn, natural and even Indigenous reference could be used to assert the groundedness

⁴⁴ For an excellent study of the French case, see Daniel J. Sherman, *French Primitivism and the Ends of Empire, 1945–1975* (University of Chicago Press, 2011).

⁴⁵ Marjorie M. Halpin, *Jack Shadbolt and the Coastal Indian Image* (UBC Press, 1986).

⁴⁶ Halpin cited in Watson, *Jack Shadbolt*, 129.

⁴⁷ See “fake antiques,” footnote 22 above.

⁴⁸ Michael J. Prokopow, “‘To Have a New World’; or, Contingent Modernisms, Colonialisms and Rethinking the Histories of Design and Culture in British Columbia,” in *Modern in the Making: Post-War Craft and Design in British Columbia*, ed. Daina Augaitis, Allan Collier, and Stephanie Rebick (Figure 1 Publishing & Vancouver Art Gallery, 2020), 40–69. Prokopow documents a whole series of postwar ceramicists and designers who directly incorporated Coast Salish imagery and motifs into their work to great acclaim and commercial success, from Ruth Meechan to Herta Gertz to David Lambert. Lambert’s designs were widely praised as “authentic West Coast Indian designs” on the pages of *Western Homes and Living* (66, fn. 17). In effect, the Indigenous standard of authenticity was set impossibly high – as Barman showed palpably in her study of Indigenous displacement at Stanley Park – whereas Indigenous authenticity could be readily attainable for white designers. In many important respects, Prokopow’s essay establishes for postwar modernist handcrafts and ceramics a version of what I am here proposing for the domestic architecture of West Coast Modernism.



Figure 4. Artist studio for painter Gordon Smith in Smith House II (1965), architects Arthur Erickson, Erickson/Massey, and Russell Hollingsworth. Built in the 1980s, the studio addition was designed in partnership with architect Russell Hollingsworth, son of Fred Hollingsworth. Photograph by Arni Haraldsson from the series *Smith House II*, 1996.

of abstraction. Even the most oblique and subtle appearance of “Coast Indian” references in an abstract painting by Shadbolt could help assert that the “process of abstraction was continuous with nature and revealed the potential for an organic relationship to nature exemplified in native art. The overall result was a landscape.”⁴⁹

ROMANTIC ANTICAPITALISM

I turn now to an architectural equivalent for this phenomenon in the form of West Coast Modernism, often found teetering on the cusp of a tense social and aesthetic interaction. On one side of this claim, these works performed a kind of false modesty, expressed through a self-effacing deferential mimesis based in the landscape, amounting to an impressionistic homage to themes of region and site, nature and indigeneity. On the other hand, mimesis quickly escalates into something more

⁴⁹ Watson, *Jack Shadbolt*, 72.

like “mimetic exacerbation,” to employ Hal Foster’s useful term in this context.⁵⁰ *Exacerbation* because the mimesis is pushed to an outer limit, with architecture landing upon all forms of historic, metaphysical, and ontological truth-claims and descriptors. At their most emboldened, these architectural practices take themselves to have become, in their *form* and their *being*, culturally Indigenous and ontologically invested in the land.

In bioregional terms, such works become “more natural than nature itself,” to quote a text on renowned West Coast Modernist architect Fred Hollingsworth’s architecture.⁵¹ The surplus of nature, we learn in another text on West Coast Modernism, is ... nature: “Nature is present everywhere, both natural and man-made.”⁵² Dominant currents of West Coast Modernism attempted to offer a new category of surplus nature as unmediated groundedness, *more natural than nature itself*. In these terms, for example, Hollingsworth spent his life building bungalows, with a few notable exceptions.⁵³ He describes his single-family homes in this way:

I’ve always said a home is an escape from the world; a place to which you escape to reconnect with nature ... I think you belong to the ground. You need to be able to walk in and out of the home. You need doors that you can open and you need to be able to belong to nature that is your site.⁵⁴

Belonging to nature here has an uncanny resemblance to nature belonging to you, on a line of flight that leads further and further away from the social. Or rather, West Coast Modernism develops a tailored critique of the social and its modern technological order that it remedies through the theory of a grounded and nonalienated ontology. This overwrought Heideggerian tendency echoes what Lyko Day calls “romantic anticapitalism,” a term that is not limited to North American variants of settler ideology even while it burrows very deep into the settler unconscious.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Hal Foster, *Bad New Days: Art, Criticism, Emergency* (Verso, 2015), 63–96.

⁵¹ Ransford, “Architect Fred Thornton Hollingsworth.” Hollingsworth’s architecture oscillated between the *equivalent* to nature and the *more natural than nature itself*. In the former register, organic architecture proposes that “a building could be natural as nature itself. ... as natural as all other parts of nature.” Fred Hollingsworth, “On Organic Architecture,” in *Living Spaces*, 38.

⁵² “Sanctuary,” *The Poetics of West Coast Modernism in West Vancouver* (West Vancouver Cultural Services, 2005), 72.

⁵³ For a career overview, see Hollingsworth, *Living Spaces*.

⁵⁴ Fred Hollingsworth quoted in Ransford, “Architect Fred Thornton Hollingsworth.”

⁵⁵ Lyko Day, *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism* (Duke University Press, 2016), 73–114. For Heideggerian notions of space and dwelling in Hollingsworth’s architecture, see Windsor-Liscombe, “Living Spaces,” 34.

Under the aegis of romantic anticapitalism, the rift between concrete and abstract labour is artificially separated and caricatured, reduced to a binary rather than a dialectical relation. Once this binary is expressed in a framework of romantic anticapitalism, land becomes the idealized enclosure of property, but also the site of “honest” work against abstract labour (further below in the section “Locke 1 → Locke 2,” I discuss this admittedly complex but crucial point on the ideological striation of abstract and concrete labour). Not incidentally, Day draws a close resemblance between romantic anticapitalism and the settler appropriation of Indigenous culture. Among other sources, she cites Shari Huhndorf’s concept of the settler “going Native” to demonstrate the inner relation between modes of settler culture and social critique that draw on a one-sided conception of land and Indigeneity.⁵⁶

For the romantic anticapitalism of an architect like Hollingsworth, the groundedness of property was an escape from the world as it exists. It also constructed a ready polemic against the depravities of development, with no distinction between *forms* of development, their historic determinants, and who they might serve. The forces of settler state and capital quickly affirmed, for their part, that development is development. The essential result was “economic and technological *growth* without real social *development*,” to quote Henri Lefebvre.⁵⁷ Strictly speaking, in the eyes of romantic anticapitalism, the West Coast Modern home is neither the outgrowth of a social metabolism nor the intervention of some man-made development. On the contrary, the architect mixes labour with nature to produce surplus nature; nature and labour are in harmonious equilibrium wherein nature is simultaneously the architect and the one who works upon the materials of architecture.

An essential work of architecture is *of site not on it*, to invoke a phrase coined by Hollingsworth.⁵⁸ As another architecture historian has put it apropos the McIntyre House, *the site itself generates the design*.⁵⁹ This was quite nearly an architecture without architects, and fittingly so for its

⁵⁶ Day, *Alien Capital*, 19; see Shari M. Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Cornell University Press, 2001).

⁵⁷ Henri Lefebvre, “Theoretical Problems of Autogestion” (1966), in *State, Space, World: Selected Essays*, ed. Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden, trans. Gerald Moore (University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 139, emphasis in original.

⁵⁸ Windsor-Liscombe, “Living Spaces,” 30.

⁵⁹ “The site ‘generated’ the design of the house and inspired its construction materials ... [McIntyre House is] deeply respectful of its woodland setting, at one with the elements of its immediately [sic] surroundings.” Martin Segger, “McIntyre’s West Coast Modern,” *British Columbia Review*, 20 September 2020, <https://thebcreview.ca/2020/09/20/917-segger-mckay-mcintyre-house/>.

time.⁶⁰ In this organic framework, site, ecosystem, and bioregion were posited as the true authors of architecture. Somewhat provocatively, we might term this a “*terra nullius* architecture,” an architecture from which settler and Indigenous social life are both carefully evacuated. This aspiring vacancy or emptiness – architecture’s totalizing integration into nature – can be seen in ecological terms, and again Hollingsworth provides imagery: “The whole building belongs to the site, in an organic sense. It should look as if it grew there and is just as comfortable as the plants.”⁶¹

But it can also be understood as the enigmatic foundation or non-foundation of private property, as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon long ago understood. *Property is nothing*, insofar as that which has been stolen was not private property at all. In the strictest sense, private property is not so much a stolen object as something *created through an act of theft*, as Robert Nichols puts it in *Theft Is Property*, an illuminating reversal of Proudhon’s famous dictum “property is theft.”⁶² In her recent book on property and the French Revolution, Catherine Malabou similarly describes this process as private property’s inherent “performative act.”⁶³ Proudhon knew this well, she argues, despite Marx’s complaint that the formula “property is theft” naturalizes its object by casting property as something firm and transhistorical; something stably pre-existent which could then be subsequently stolen.⁶⁴ As the Nisga’a and Nuuchahnulth activist Herb Varley often reminds us, Indigenous people did not have a concept of private property nor a pre-colonial land market based in commodification and market exchange.⁶⁵ After the dust settles on colonial property’s nothing-operation, something remains. The dust clears away and the settler is there on *terra firma*, standing solemnly in place. The “nothing” was only a mask. In effect the evacuation is something like a house made of mirrors – an architectural optical illusion created by the disavowal of a *social relation*.

⁶⁰ See Bernard Rudofsky, *Architecture Without Architects: An Introduction to Non-Pedigreed Architecture* (Museum of Modern Art, 1964). Following the periodization laid out by Watson and Kleyn above, we can see the early phase of the West Coast Modern home as a “heroic” period for both the artist and the architect. Kleyn, “Proving Ground for Modernity,” 158.

⁶¹ Fred Hollingsworth quoted in Greg Bellerby, “An Introduction,” in Hollingsworth, *Living Spaces*, 15. As Hollingsworth adds in his own contribution to *Living Spaces* in a short manifesto-like text called “On Organic Architecture,” a building should “become a part of the whole site as if it had grown there also.” Hollingsworth, *Living Spaces*, 38.

⁶² Robert Nichols, *Theft Is Property!: Dispossession and Critical Theory* (Duke University Press, 2019).

⁶³ Catherine Malabou, *Il n’y a pas eu de révolution: Réflexions sur la propriété privée, le pouvoir et la condition servile en France* (Éditions Payot & Rivages, 2024), 63–64.

⁶⁴ Malabou, *Il n’y a pas eu de révolution*, 15–16.

⁶⁵ Unpublished author interview with Herb Varley, 25 October 2024.

To reiterate this point, Indigenous economy did not hand over private property ready-made and prepackaged. The thing of property could only be created by a historic “coup.”⁶⁶ The forceful process of enclosure and “primitive accumulation” – that *deus ex machina* which creates the first capital – arrives not from exchange but out of violence. What is the nature of this primitive accumulation – this enclosure of land and resources that generates a private capital “covered in blood *and dirt*,” as Marx put it in his chapters on primitive accumulation?⁶⁷ Sooner or later, in any discussion of modern property, we are forced to return to Locke.

LOCKE 1 → LOCKE 2

The process of colonial dispossession and landed enclosure can be illuminated, both theoretically and historically, through John Locke’s theory of property outlined in his well-known *Second Treatise* (1689). Property within this theory operates through a two-part manoeuvre, divided between what I will call Locke 1 and Locke 2. Everything so far in this essay bears on the first part of the Lockean double manoeuvre. Our contemporary moment comes into clearer view, however, when seen through both halves of the manoeuvre.

Locke begins chapter 5 (“Property”) of the *Second Treatise* by outlining a process for the morally and politically justified acquisition and enclosure of a commonly held land. Property, he argues, can only be rightfully created and acquired by mixing one’s own labour with it.⁶⁸ While the earth is held in common by all humans, granted by God, the Lord has also given another power held by us alone: labour. We alone can own our labour; by extension, the “unused” land which we transform through this labour is also ours. Locke writes, “Every Man has a *Property* in his own *Person*. This no Body has any Right to but himself. The *Labour* of his Body, and the *Work* of his Hands, we may say, are properly his.”⁶⁹

⁶⁶ “Elle [la propriété] n’existe que comme coup.” Malabou, *Il n’y a pas eu de révolution*, 64, emphasis in original.

⁶⁷ “Capital comes [into the world] dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt.” Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (International Publishers, 1967), 760, emphasis added.

⁶⁸ “Whatsoever then he removes out of the State that Nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his *Labour* with, and joyned to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his *Property*. It being by him removed from the common state Nature placed it in, hath by this *labour* something annexed to it, that excludes the common right of other Men. For this *Labour* being the unquestionable Property of the Labourer, no man but he can have a right to what that is once joyned to, at least where there is enough, and as good left in common for others.” John Locke, “The Second Treatise of Government,” in *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge University Press, 1988), 288, all emphasis in original.

⁶⁹ Locke, “The Second Treatise of Government,” 287–88, emphasis in original.

Almost instantly, however, Locke then performs a bait and switch. After establishing this first principle (Locke 1), he proceeds to undermine it with a qualifier, which I will term “Locke 2.” Yes, he argues, labour is the source of value, since “labour makes the far greatest part of the value of things.”⁷⁰ As such it is the moral and unalienated basis of any acquired property. *However*, if a person hires a servant or a wage worker to work his land, the fruits of that labour still belong to the owner, even if the owner has “mixed” nothing of his own labour (recalling, again, that this “mixed” labour is a central premise of Locke 1). Property is simultaneously everyone’s common right, granted by God, yet also the privilege acceded to the most economically advanced and entrepreneurial (“the Industrious and Rational”).⁷¹ The disproportionate ownership by the industrious and rational is more than justified, according to Locke, because it ostensibly releases a productive output that benefits everyone. This formed a central aspect of the moral economy underpinning the colonization of the Americas. The entire North American continent (“the wild woods and uncultivated waste of America left to Nature”) yields an equal productivity and “as many conveniences of life as ten acres of equally fertile land doe in Devonshire [England] where they are well cultivated.”⁷² Those who are able to assemble their inheritance to acquire more land are therefore justified in pursuing these enlarged possessions (“*Possessions enlarged*” [sic]).⁷³ Finally, such owners of accumulated property are within their rights to secure or resecure enlarged possessions through the historic creation of laws, cities, and ultimately nations.⁷⁴

This eclipsing of labour-value belongs to Locke 2. Through both exchange value and propertied inheritance, and in lockstep with the formation of the modern state, Locke 2 inaugurated the law of property as legal and economic abstraction. As a nascent political form, this new juridico-economic abstraction was incarnated above all in the Whigs – those land-owning aristocrats defended by Locke.⁷⁵ Whig political agitation was pitted against the figure of the absolute monarch, but also against the early expressions of a new instability posed by those “free” labourers migrating to urban centres (i.e., new proletarians displaced from the land through the systematic process of enclosure in the seven-

⁷⁰ Locke, “The Second Treatise of Government,” 297, emphasis in original.

⁷¹ Locke, “The Second Treatise of Government,” 291.

⁷² Locke, “The Second Treatise of Government,” 294.

⁷³ Locke, “The Second Treatise of Government,” 295, emphasis in original.

⁷⁴ Locke, “The Second Treatise of Government,” 295.

⁷⁵ Peter Laslett, introduction to Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 25–44.

teenth and eighteenth centuries). At its origins, Locke 2 pertained to the abstraction of property in both its political and economic actuality – the process through which land became fungible, parcelled, and alienable under the abstractions of exchange value and legal rationality in the transition to agrarian capitalism.⁷⁶ Its counterpart and material basis was enclosure and dispossession. In Europe this involved the long separation of the worker from the land and the creation of a modern proletariat, severed from their immediate (nonwaged) means of subsistence, famously outlined in the theory of primitive accumulation in volume 1 of *Capital*.⁷⁷

But Marx's concept of primitive accumulation was also extended to the colonies. What Marx saw as a violent process of theft and dispossession, Locke saw as one of consent and mutual interest, thanks both to territorial abundance and productive efficiency when placed in the hands of a new class of industrious land-entrepreneurs. Locke smoothed over the contradiction between 1 and 2 through a vision of abundance ("*God has given us all things richly*"), brought to its full realization in the doctrine of *terra nullius*.⁷⁸ In short, temporary conflicts over property and resources could be "resolved" by the infinite expansion of new territory, if also wedded to new productive efficiencies and extraction techniques. There is no Locke without colonial expansion. The contradiction between dreams of plenty and realities of dispossession are placed at the foot of a contradiction between dead labour (accumulated land) and *living beings*: commoners, tenants, Indigenous Peoples, those who do not rush to use their own labour as a means of enclosure and privatization. Locke 2's reversal of Locke 1 conveys the fundamental truth that enclosure is about landed property, not propertied labour. This can be seen in the process through which Locke 1's regime of owner-occupation is definitively eclipsed by Locke 2, entering all manner of capital circulation and absentee title through holding companies, banks, registries, and stock exchanges – something already glimpsed throughout the *Second Treatise*.

On the side of labour, in tandem with his theory of primitive accumulation, Marx also laid out this process in sections of the *Grundrisse* (1858). These passages have been analyzed fruitfully by Bhandar and Alberto Toscano:

As Marx writes [in the *Grundrisse*], "the relation of labour to capital ... presupposes a process of history which dissolves the various

⁷⁶ For an unsurpassed theoretical reflection on these central themes in the colonial development of British Columbia, see Brenna Bhandar, "Propertied Abstractions," in Bhandar, *Colonial Lives of Property*.

⁷⁷ Marx, *Capital*, 713–74.

⁷⁸ Locke, "The Second Treatise of Government," 290, emphasis in original.

forms in which the worker is a proprietor, or in which the proprietor works.” [Marx] is alluding to the dissolution of the relation to the earth, in which there is “direct common property”; the dissolution of proprietorship of the instrument (in craft production); the dissolution of the means of subsistence; and the dissolution of serfdom and slavery.⁷⁹

Dreams of a quasi-Physiocratic labour theory of value – in effect, a labour theory of land and agriculture – turned on useful fictions of artisanal agriculture. This fiction of a precapitalist “artistic” labour, as Marx termed it, wishes away the real abstraction of capital and pretends to derive from an unmediated “relation to the earth.”⁸⁰ At every turn, Locke 1 attempts to disavow and oppose itself to Locke 2. It tries to purify property and return it to a pre-speculative Eden, deploying its ideology of romantic anticapitalism in a vain attempt to proffer an honest and nonabstracted ownership of property. Yet as Bhandar demonstrates in her painstaking study of British Columbia, the legal and economic abstractions of property were immanent to colonization from very early in the process:

The drive to render land as fungible as possible, the desire to commoditize land that had been pursued in earnest since the seventeenth century in England, was realized in the space of the settler colony decades before it would be implemented in the United Kingdom.⁸¹

The financialization and politico-economic abstraction of the land were already well underway in early settler-colonial British Columbia by the middle of the 1800s. By the time of the economic boom following the Second World War, these processes had only deepened, and they have since been followed by an even greater acceleration with the advent of late twentieth-century neoliberalism.

Despite this fact, the widespread attempt to give an account of self-sufficient labour and proprietorship remains one of the essential moral foundations and political contradictions of ownership in British Columbia. To own property is to be *independent*, as though the economic valuation of stolen property were derived from the owner himself or

⁷⁹ Brenna Bhandar and Alberto Toscano, “Race, Real Estate and Real Abstraction,” *Radical Philosophy*, no. 194 (November/December 2015): 8–17, see 8–9.

⁸⁰ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (Penguin/New Left Review, 1973), 497.

⁸¹ Brenna Bhandar, “Title by Registration: Instituting Modern Property Law and Creating Racial Value in the Settler Colony,” *Journal of Law and Society* 42, no. 2 (2015): 253–82, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6478.2015.00707.x>.

herself alone, and not from the dense relations of dependence, extraction, and sharing – both immediate and abstract – in which ownership is embedded.⁸² Naturalist, grounded, or organic theories of property never tire of that self-generating loop construed from the ideology of the independent homesteader and then modern homeowner: in public, the stolid and hardworking ethics of the autonomous homeowner; in private, the *terra nullius* titleholder who reaps the rentier's surplus. This helps explain the moral role that nonabstracted labour plays in the fictions of Locke 1, recalling that for Locke, the first property is one's own labour. Labour is one's first *possession*, and it is this property of the labouring self that becomes coextensive with the possession of an external property.⁸³ This also helps explain why property ownership is framed, especially within the settler-colonial nations, as the highest form of disalienation and self-realization.

Despite two centuries of the colonial experiment and its blatant unjust outcomes, the myth of this self-made equity continues to thrive and has rarely come under scrutiny. It would therefore be unsurprising for core settler-colonial ideologemes to find themselves expressed – and sometimes dramatically restaged – in the architecture of residential West Coast Modernism. They also had a notable moment in what followed on the heels of West Coast Modernism. The architecturally postmodern brought West Coast Modernism, without much difficulty, into the throes of a postmodernist counterculture that thrived in British Columbia in the 1970s. It is this particular moment in British Columbia's history to which I now turn.

GROUNDENESS AND COUNTERCULTURE

In the 1970s a new logic of land and enclosure merged powerfully with the rising North American counterculture. With its critique of mass society, consumerism, and the overbearing abstractions of postwar socialism, the counterculture was anchored in a philosophy of going “back to the land.” Consciously or unconsciously, postmodernism on the West Coast sought out a new-world energy, at once natural and electric. In effect it crisscrossed and short-circuited along these divergent paths: on the one hand, the electricity of the artificial, hyperreal, and simulated,

⁸² For a compelling critique of the Lockean subtext of “independence,” see Patrick J.L. Cockburn and Mikkel Thorup, “Proprietors and Parasites: Dependence and the Power to Accumulate,” *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 44, no. 2 (2017): 179–99, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453717723189>.

⁸³ Locke, “The Second Treatise of Government,” 288.

politically associated with globalization and financialization; on the other hand, a revived mythos of land, culture, and even religion, often associated with localism and the return to a communitarian ethos, craft practices, and ecological consciousness.

This uneasy bifurcation was exemplified in the divergent themes of Foster's 1983 landmark edited volume *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*. The volume included Jean Baudrillard's delirious "The Ecstasy of Communication" and the dialectical text "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" by Fredric Jameson. But it also opened with Kenneth Frampton's influential essay on Critical Regionalism and his lament that "the *ground* in which the mytho-ethical nucleus of a society might take root has become eroded by the rapacity of development."⁸⁴ The postmodern counterculture of the West Coast attempted to create precisely such a ground, all while conjoining itself to its new accelerated and increasingly abstracted economic context. Both tendencies laid an equally plausible claim to the postmodern moment. Instead of an open clash, they opted to coexist eclectically. Hollingsworth, for example, was able to continue pursuing his organic and ecological architectural passions as a West Coast Modernist despite the arrival of neoliberalism. "Even the advent of wealthier clients and Neo-Liberal social values from the 1970s," writes architecture historian Rhodri Windsor-Liscombe, "did not interrupt either [Hollingsworth's] environmental ethos or his functional organicism."⁸⁵ Far from being locked in an eternal combat, current and ground could find a mutual accommodation, and in some cases an inherent synthesis.

We can see this vividly by turning back to the architecture of West Coast Modernism, and to the McIntyre House one last time. In a short preface to a recent book on the McIntyre House, the artist Douglas Coupland describes his first experience visiting the house, encountered through the prism of the ecological movements and counterculture of the 1970s:

[Ecological politics and the counterculture] engendered in most people like me a deep cynicism about large planned systems: big government, big corporations – or basically anything overly organized. So, to enter the McIntyre's house was to enter a solution to the problems of the world.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Kenneth Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Bay Press, 1983), 17, emphasis added.

⁸⁵ Windsor-Liscombe, "Living Spaces," 30.

⁸⁶ Douglas Coupland, preface to McKay, *McIntyre House*, 8.

Coupland and McIntyre's Hassell/Griblin, as much as Hollingsworth and the wider architectural milieu of West Coast Modernism, consistently posited an approach to design that upheld nature as both model and inherent "solution" to social and architectural problems.⁸⁷ In their accounts, the single-family home is not part of any large or planned social organization. It is unplanned and organic, unchanging as an object of nature (and for this reason, all the more "Indigenous" to Vancouver). The single-family home is both an originary dwelling archetype and an ahistorical, "timeless" object. With no history and no plan, the single-family home in general and the West Coast Modern home in particular became levers against mass society, its pernicious artificiality, and its overwhelming scale and "Bigness."⁸⁸

Vancouver is a city without a history, Coupland claims.⁸⁹ It is a city without a history within a geography that calls forth an equally timeless architecture. This is what we are frequently told, at least, in writings on West Coast Modernism. The supposed absence of history is at once derived from youthfulness and the deep time of antiquity. Vancouver skips over history because it partakes in a realm of newness and youth in a city less than two centuries old, while simultaneously belonging to an order of deep time in communication with ancient eras and architectural forms from Pergamon to the Acropolis. In a double sense – geological and architectural – West Coast Modernism works "on behalf of the centuries," to use Erickson's phrase.⁹⁰

This is how Vancouver was allegedly able to keep away the "taint" of the recent past and the excessive "luggage" of history, as Coupland claims in the first edition of *City of Glass*.⁹¹ *City of Glass* is a text that Coupland dedicated to his publisher, Scott McIntyre. The original passages about the absence of the past in Vancouver would later be removed from the second edition of the book.⁹² Unfortunately, Vancouver *does* have a

⁸⁷ Here the attempt to solve the social is frequently a blunt attempt to *dissolve* it, with nature firmly on the side of hyper-individuation against the intrusions of the social: "Architectural design is all about individual solutions for individual problems." Ransford, "Architect Fred Thornton Hollingsworth."

⁸⁸ "In general, Big is suspect. Vancouver distrusts Big. We don't want Big. Big is to be fought." Douglas Coupland, *City of Glass: Douglas Coupland's Vancouver*, 1st ed. (Douglas & McIntyre, 2000), 42.

⁸⁹ Coupland, *City of Glass*, 1st ed., 58.

⁹⁰ Arthur Erickson quoted in Stouck, *Arthur Erickson*, 132.

⁹¹ "If you're a Vancouverite, you find the city's lack of historical luggage liberating – it dazzles with a sense of limitless possibility. The mountains ... act as buffers to keep away the taint of the Past." Coupland, *City of Glass*, 1st ed., 58.

⁹² See Douglas Coupland, *City of Glass: Douglas Coupland's Vancouver*, rev. ed. (Douglas & McIntyre, 2009).

history, and this history, despite Coupland's incantations, carries much "luggage," following the violent theft of the land on which it was built and founded, and the accompanying dispossession of Peoples who were and remain hereditary stewards of the land.

In what sense might the McIntyre property – and its many Lockean variations across the region – continue to cement a lineage of dispossession and enclosure? Despite an obvious departure from Locke's narrow preoccupations with cultivation, "improvement," and agrarian use-value, the notion of the grounded and natural piece of landed property remains for us today the congealed expression of Locke 1. Locke 2 neatly isolates and preserves the fiction of Locke 1, phantasmatically guarding it from embarrassment by tucking away the entire universe of financial mediation and neofeudal rentier extraction-abstraction. This in effect can be understood as Locke's fundamental conception that enclosure is about property and rent, not about labour-value or even owner-occupation. Enclosure can extend into the sky, like a condo, freed from any agrarian referent. What matters is "highest and best use" in market terms, with *highest* sometimes taken in its literal or architectural sense. Does this mean that themes of groundedness exist in a fatal tension with a more capacious Lockean concept of generalized property and highest use? Absolutely not.

SKY BUNGALOW, LOCKEAN HIGH-RISE

After his trip to Japan, Erickson – like Hollingsworth and so many others in their shared tradition – searched intensely for an architectural form that would give expression to an organic merger between building and site. If successful, this architecture would reconcile the aporia between European inhabitants and Indigenous land. But what if the necessary architectural operation for this reconciliation is more generic and less aesthetically rendered than Erickson had thought? What if, in the most pared down and essential terms, *the organic form of European settlement is enclosure*? Groundedness would be a secondary element within this more fundamental conception. In reality, the productive tension between groundedness and property is only a contradiction in appearance, not in essence. Settler colonialism is uniquely privileged in its relationship – almost taking the form of a secret knowledge – to the inner dialectic of vacancy and development. *Terra nullius* is not strictly an originary

historic moment, Shvartzberg Carrió and others have stressed, but is perennially built into the structure of developmental appropriation.⁹³

This principle is conveyed in Hollingsworth's paradoxically named "Sky Bungalow," the celebrated West Coast Modern bungalow built as a model home and exhibited to the public in a downtown Vancouver parking lot in 1949.⁹⁴ A bungalow is a compact object. It conforms to the earth, creatively or obediently. In some cases, it can hover a few feet above the ground to allow for parking spaces below, like Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye and indeed Hollingsworth's Sky Bungalow. Despite its hovering, the bungalow as an architectural form does not exactly reach towards the sky – until we realize that Sky Bungalow was both an object and an idea. As an *idea*, Sky Bungalow could gesture towards both a skyward enclosure and an enclosure on the ground. Finally, then, we arrive at the denouement of this architectural saga, because Sky Bungalow was always framed as two things at once: both a "truly indigenous" and eminently modernist domestic architecture.⁹⁵

Sky Bungalow was positioned within the whole. This great whole includes an assemblage of various diverse elements spanning past and present: mansion outposts, covenant restrictions, vast empty holdings, Indigenous reserves, national parks, the various landbanks of monopoly capital, and so on. It is tempting to understand each of these as particular modes of scarcity, in contrast to those supposedly unregulated forms of rapid development, captured in Frampton's "rapacity of development." In reality, development and scarcity exist in a cooperative and dialectical unity. Instead of discrete entities they form multiple nodes or architectural *genera* on a continuum, contained within a single unity known as settler private property.

This explains why influential urbanists and developers like Ransford, in the passages cited above, can sing the praises of Hollingsworth's one-storey bungalows while also being among Vancouver's most ardent defenders of increased supply through high-rise development.⁹⁶ What

⁹³ Shvartzberg Carrió, "Designing *Terra nullius*," 55.

⁹⁴ Hollingsworth, *Living Spaces*, 48–51.

⁹⁵ For the Sky Bungalow as "truly indigenous," see Rhodri Windsor-Liscombe, "Organic Modernism: The Architecture of F.T. Hollingsworth," *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* 21, no. 2 (June 1996): 47. It seems likely that Windsor-Liscombe is here quoting the American architect Kenneth Reid who strived for this form of architecture. Windsor-Liscombe writes: "Hollingsworth realized the 'truly indigenous' American domestic architecture Kenneth Reid hoped for in 1944."

⁹⁶ As Ransford argued more than a decade ago, "the solution is simple: more supply equals more affordable housing." Bob Ransford, "Activists, Council Must Think Collaboratively," *Vancouver Sun*, 10 August 2013, H7; see also Bob Ransford, "Single-Family Zones Could Solve Shortage," *Vancouver Sun*, 17 January 2015, H11.

matters is not Locke 1 *versus* Locke 2, but rather the calculated and economically sound continuum between the two, coordinated at each level of the urban machinery and brought into an overall harmony by the edicts of municipal planners, financial institutions, and the holders of large development monopolies. This fine balance between scarcity and abundance – a convergence of two data points – is determined in the last instance not by aesthetic criteria, but by the imperatives of political economy: the effective and evolving combination of Locke 1 and Locke 2 that enables their shared valuation within the urban totality. In this process, suburban sprawl (scarcity) and controlled high-rise production (expansion) are conjoined facets of a single process of enclosure and capital accumulation, in which the market valuation of both elements is mutually calibrated and jointly preserved. Build too little and the economies of scale and mass markets decline, even if per-unit price climbs; build too much and overall asset value depreciates, following the iron laws of monopoly capital – laws obediently followed by banks, developers, and city planners alike.

The relatively exacting determinants of political economy do not mean that aesthetic and architectural questions are simply part of an inconsequential superstructure. An *architectural* history of the dialectical unity of bungalow and high-rise might look at transitional works by Erickson – public buildings that are neither sprawled and glued to the ground nor mechanically reaching up to the sky. On the one hand, Erickson always felt that “buildings must grow out of the ground.”⁹⁷ In the 1960s, he searched for a means to develop this grounded ethic of architecture. He critiqued the New York skyscraper, which had turned its back on bioregional context; instead, he wanted to discover “indigenous forms.”⁹⁸ This midcareer Erickson operated still within reach of the ideology of Locke 1, with its direct lineage to the homestead or settler shack. At the opposite end of the spectrum is “The Erickson” (2010), the twisting Yaletown high-rise that is equal parts whimsical and abominable, reputed to be designed by Erickson but completed after his death.⁹⁹

At his most experimental and inventive, Erickson proposed the complete elimination of private property in favour of common ownership of the city, arguing against the discrete high-rise in favour of a

⁹⁷ Arthur Erickson cited in Stouck, *Arthur Erickson*, 237.

⁹⁸ Stouck, *Arthur Erickson*, 179.

⁹⁹ Trevor Boddy, closing remarks at “Erickson on Film: Documenting the Designer,” 16 June 2024, Vancity Theatre, VIFF Centre, Vancouver.



Figure 5. Museum of Vancouver (1967–68), architect Gerald Hamilton & Associates. Photograph by author, September 2020.

utopian conception of the megastructure or housing “complex.”¹⁰⁰ The complex is neither house nor apartment tower, but an architectural agglomeration or megastructure that extends into every dimension of the space-time continuum. More concretely and less speculatively, a number of Erickson’s public and institutional buildings come to mind in their attempt to surpass a residential West Coast Modern orthodoxy, which I have associated with the ideology of Locke 1.¹⁰¹ These include,

¹⁰⁰ See Arthur C. Erickson, *Habitation: Space, Dilemma, and Design* (Canadian Housing Design Council, 1966).

¹⁰¹ The orthodoxy or dogma of residential West Coast Modernism succumbed to the normal inertia of any architectural style or system, and even supporters conceded that “design innovations [that] were considered radical in their day became part of [a] creative dogma for over fifty years of practice.” Barry Downs, preface to Hollingsworth, *Living Spaces*, 10.

I would argue, the Museum of Anthropology, often held side by side with images of Pacific Northwest Coast Indigenous post-and-beam long houses photographed by Edward Curtis.¹⁰² The Museum of Vancouver presents a parallel example, designed by architect Gerald Hamilton with elements modelled on the “Salish Indian’s conical cap” [*sic*] (Figure 5).¹⁰³

MIMESIS IN TWO DIRECTIONS

In discussing both the Museum of Vancouver and the Museum of Anthropology, a convincing argument can be made that precontact post-and-beam architecture had more in common with twentieth-century modernism than the pitch-roofed settler vernacular of early colonial urbanization. The Sk̓wxwú7mesh leader August Jack Khaatsahlano stated in his 1935 interview with city archivist Major J.S. Matthews that the pitched roof was only added to Sk̓wxwú7mesh structures in the early colonial period. Major Matthews writes: “I told Khaatsahlano about a painting of Kitsilano Beach made by Lt. Willis, of H.M.S. ‘Ganges,’ in 1861, and of the Indian house on the shore at the foot of Yew Street, and asked how it came about that the roofs were peaked.” Khaatsahlano’s reply was: “Copy whitemans, I think.”¹⁰⁴

Colonialism often operates through an imposed mimesis. It foists strategic constraints and regimes of governance upon colonized lives, enforcing assimilation through the imperative to *replicate*. Assimilated Indigenous life must mirror dominant social life – or mimetically *resemble* it, since pure mimesis is made impossible and out of reach. For the colonized subject, this process is always plagued by a “not quite,” as Homi Bhabha stresses in his text on colonial mimesis.¹⁰⁵ Magdalena Miłosz points out that postwar modernist architecture in Canada was intimately involved in this mode of mimetic imposition, inculcating settler domesticity and a colonial version of the nuclear family on Indigenous life.¹⁰⁶ In this article I have attempted to map a kind of reverse-mimesis – a process

¹⁰² “Beyond Wilderness: Modern Architectures in Canada’ with Michelangelo Sabatino,” lecture delivered by Michelangelo Sabatino at the University of Toronto on 5 October 2017, posted by UofTDaniels, 3 November 2017, YouTube, 1:22:40, <https://youtu.be/rGH9BJoLMb0>.

¹⁰³ Harold Kalman, Ron Phillips, and Robin Ward, *Exploring Vancouver: The Essential Architectural Guide* (UBC Press, 1993), 166.

¹⁰⁴ Major J.S. Matthews, *Conversations with Khaatsahlano, 1932–1954* (City of Vancouver Archives, 1955), 45.

¹⁰⁵ Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” *October*, vol. 28 (Spring 1984): 125–33, <https://doi.org/10.2307/778467>.

¹⁰⁶ Magdalena Miłosz, “Simulated Domesticities: Settings for Colonial Assimilation in Mid-Twentieth-Century Canada,” *RACAR: Revue d’art canadienne / Canadian Art Review* 45, no. 2 (2020): 81–96, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1073940ar>.

through which settlers constructed their own ways of life and culture by replicating or appropriating Indigenous land and traditions. Here the “not quite” of mimesis is turned to the settler’s advantage, but from an opposing angle.¹⁰⁷

If we ignore these contradictory aspects of modernism’s subterranean mimesis, we are left with only digested notions of twentieth-century modernism from high up above.¹⁰⁸ Modernism becomes simply the epigone of abstract reason, master planners, and a new faith in technology. Modernism was the religion, the Planner was its God.¹⁰⁹ Modernism, we are told, is fully legible to posterity as that past experiment of a failed religious scientism – that regrettable mistake which lurks only in the depredations and abstractions of Locke 2. Perhaps, but the received historiography of this modernist religion needs to be brought alongside a different religiosity – that “*spiritual ownership of place*” invoked throughout the development of West Coast Modernism.¹¹⁰ Only then do we begin to see the profound continuation between West Coast Modernism and Locke 1, that object more natural than nature itself; the architecture which promises to leave no trace and grow back into the earth, hinting too at the withering of the artist-architect.

For some, this might furnish a surprising history of postwar modernism, much more DIY in its ethos. The first West Coast Modern home was a self-built house, assembled not by an architect but by the artist and educator, B.C. Binning (Figure 6). A few short years later, Hollingsworth got his job at the firm of Thompson, Berwick and Pratt without holding an architecture degree. He would practice for several years at the firm and design many buildings before undergoing formal training and receiving accreditation as an architect.¹¹¹ This uncredentialed, DIY, and homesteader aspect of single-family architecture in

¹⁰⁷ Writing again on the “shamanism” of Shadbolt, Woodcock qualifies that “Shadbolt cannot become an Indian; he would be lost as an artist if he merely imitated an Indian; reading the hieroglyphs of another world he must create his own calligraphy.” George Woodcock quoted in Watson, *Jack Shadbolt*, 128.

¹⁰⁸ In a slightly different setting, but highly relevant for settler-colonialism in North America, historians of the French empire have stressed its ability to operate through both universals and particulars. See Gary Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State: Negritude and Colonial Humanism Between the Two World Wars* (University of Chicago Press, 2005).

¹⁰⁹ Will Langford, “Is Sutton Brown God?: Planning Expertise and the Local State in Vancouver, 1952–1973,” *BC Studies*, no. 173 (Spring 2012): 11–39, <https://doi.org/10.14288/1.0071873>. Or as we read in another characteristic recent text on postwar modernism in British Columbia, “Scientific Rationalism [was] the underpinning religion of Modernism.” Martin Segger, “Saving West Coast Modernism,” *British Columbia Review*, 5 January 2021, <https://thebcreview.ca/2021/01/05/1002-segger-augaitis-modern/>.

¹¹⁰ Watson, *Jack Shadbolt*, 129.

¹¹¹ Bellerby, “An Introduction,” 14.



Figure 6. B.C. Binning House (1941), architect Bert Binning. West Vancouver, self-built. Photograph by Árni Haraldsson from the series *B.C. Binning House*, 1994.

Vancouver becomes centrally important to today's illusory and potentially dangerous revival of Locke 1 against Locke 2 – as we will see in the next section.

PRETENDIANS ON STRIKE AT SEN'ÁKW?

Today, within metres of the Museum of Vancouver lies a residential project called Sen'ákw – the high-rise development currently being built at the foot of the Burrard Street Bridge at the entrance to False Creek.

The project, built and owned by Sk̓wxwú7mesh Úxwumixw, bears the name of the nearby Sk̓wxwú7mesh ancestral village of Sen̓ákw which was enclosed by the boundaries of Kitsilano Indian Reserve No. 6 in 1877. The community remained in place until 1913, when the provincial government forcibly evicted more than twenty Sk̓wxwú7mesh families from their homes on the reserve. In the words of Khelsilem Tl'ákwasiḱan Sxwchálten (Sk̓wxwú7mesh), whose great-grandfather was twenty-one years old when he was displaced from Sen̓ákw, the community was “put on [a] barge, and the barge was pushed out into the ocean.”¹¹²

More than a century after being forcibly displaced from their village, Sk̓wxwú7mesh Úxwumixw is today finally able to rebuild at Sen̓ákw. In a form of historic redoubling, the Sen̓ákw development has provoked a renewed wave of racial antagonism on the part of property holders. Well-known politicians from Michael Geller to Colleen Hardwick have inveighed against the Sen̓ákw development, with Geller characterizing it as a form of spiteful intergenerational revenge for the harms of colonization.¹¹³ Heritage advocate and author Michael Kluckner has suggested that Sen̓ákw is a case of “Colonialism 2.0.”¹¹⁴ Evacuated of its racial and historical determinants, colonialism here simply means “inhabiting an area as if it were empty,” Kluckner suggests. Does this mean in effect that the homeowners of Kits Point, with their twentieth-century arts-and-crafts porches and multimillion-dollar property assets, are now the colonized? Are these new “colonized” subjects the convoluted new economic pretendians facing down twenty-first-century colonization?

The market-driven Sen̓ákw development will inevitably add to the displacement effects amid wider development pressures in this renter-

¹¹² Maria Wallstam and Nathan Crompton, “City of Perpetual Displacement: 100 Years Since the Destruction of the Kitsilano Reserve,” *Mainlander*, 25 July 2013, <https://themainlander.com/2013/07/25/city-of-perpetual-displacement-100-years-since-the-destruction-of-the-kitsilano-reserve/>. See also Mayana C. Slobodian, “The Kitsilano Scandal: The Destruction of Sen̓ákw as Told in Local Newspapers, 1913–16,” *BC Studies*, no. 222 (Summer 2024): 71–99.

¹¹³ In a tweet, Geller described the Sen̓ákw development as “awful” and appreciatively relayed the story of a colleague who stated “it’s their [Sk̓wxwú7mesh] way of saying ‘it’s payback time.’” Twitter (now X), @michaelgeller, 8 October 2024, <https://x.com/michaelgeller/status/1843845654646489578>.

¹¹⁴ “From Sen̓ákw to Kitsilano to Sen̓ákw Again – A Quick History of Kitsilano – M. Kluckner,” lecture delivered by Michael Kluckner at the Vancouver Historical Society on 28 November 2024, posted by Vancouver Historical Society, 2 December 2024, YouTube, 1:04:52–1:05:38, <https://youtu.be/SWWO3jDkdaQ>.

heavy area.¹¹⁵ Yet figures such as Geller and Hardwick are not known for championing the renters' movement in Vancouver, nor for aligning with historically marginalized communities. When the concern is not property value in its crudest sense, their passion lies in human scale and neighbourhood character, those timeless signifiers of Locke 1 that more often than not accompany a strong dose of antipoor sentiment.¹¹⁶ For Hardwick, whose \$4.4-million Kits Point property is located just down the street from Sen'ákw, Vancouver's problems stem from those who do not have a sense of balance – those who, by poverty and sometimes by luxury, have fallen out of touch with the honesty and wholeness of Locke 1. A private asset worth \$4.4 million reflects balance and groundedness, we are told, whereas a call for housing justice from below is excessive and entitled. Homeless residents who dare to clamour for a place to live do not have a proper sense of balance because they “want, want, want, want,” according to Hardwick.¹¹⁷ For Hardwick, the last sane guardians of the land are settler property holders with freehold title and sensible single-family homes.

Addressing another Indigenous development, this time on the Heather Lands, Hardwick poses the question in these familiar terms: “How do you reconcile Indigenous ways of being with 18-storey high-rises?”¹¹⁸ Turned battle-ready by the clarion call of neighbourhood character, owners of Kitsilano bungalows and multimillion-dollar properties have found a grounded language to denounce the Indigenous builders of an ungrounded utopia at Sen'ákw and elsewhere. In this essay I have

¹¹⁵ A deeper integration into local property markets is also likely to exacerbate class inequalities within Indigenous communities, import a social logic of property into urban Indigenous contexts and the formal institutional structures of colonized nations, and aid in the consolidation of a new Indigenous bourgeoisie. Instead of decolonizing neoliberalism, developments like Sen'ákw are more likely to neoliberalize decolonization. Such projects stand to enrich settler rentier, financial, and developer interests, as can be seen in the profits accrued to Westbank Corp. at Sen'ákw and in the project's glaring absence of social and affordable housing units. See Michael Fabris (Krebs), “Decolonizing Neoliberalism? First Nations Reserves, Private Property Rights, and the Legislation of Indigenous Dispossession in Canada,” in *Contested Property Claims*, ed. Maja Hojer Bruun, Patrick Joseph Cockburn, Bjarke Skærlund Risager, and Mikkel Thorup (Routledge, 2017); see also Nathan Crompton, “Dispossession Under the First Nations Property Ownership Act,” *rabble.ca*, 31 January 2013, <https://rabble.ca/indigenous/dispossession-under-first-nations-property-ownership-act/>.

¹¹⁶ For a representative sampling of this strong dose, see Jen St. Denis, “Interview: Colleen Hardwick Wants to Be Mayor of Vancouver,” *The Tyee*, 27 September 2022, <https://thetyee.ca/News/2022/09/27/Mayoral-Candidate-Colleen-Hardwick/>.

¹¹⁷ St. Denis, “Interview.”

¹¹⁸ Colleen Hardwick quoted in Michelle Cyca, “Vancouver's New Mega-Development Is Big, Ambitious and Undeniably Indigenous,” *Maclean's*, 11 March 2024, <https://macleans.ca/society/senakw-vancouver/>. The supposed contradiction between modernity and Indigeneity is a long-standing colonial trope. See Raibmon, introduction to *Authentic Indians*.

attempted to historicize this trend towards enclosure and settler “ground,” tied to the nebulous centre-left counterculture of the 1970s. Today’s property-owner movements are animated by those same countercultural references of times past, yet they increasingly merge into a far-right and “nativist” politics taking shape globally.¹¹⁹ The new right largely continues to build its momentum around the old-right threat of immigrant communities, rejected for their supposed lack of specific private property norms (coded as *citizenship*), a lack of rootedness (coded as *natural* and *bioregional* – and let us now add “*native*” in the double sense of that term), among other reliable and time-tested configurations. Yet at a time when property owners increasingly frame themselves as true natives and guardians of the land, Indigenous people in turn become paradoxical original immigrants.¹²⁰ Indigenous people and communities become retroactive trespassers on their own land, as Nichols puts it.¹²¹

In Vancouver, these dynamics evidently go back much further than West Coast Modernism or the property-owning counterculture of the 1970s. Nothing is new in settler attachment to land and hearth, and the rootedness of property in earth and soil has always been the basis for owners’ claims to the privilege of citizenship. These claims have been wielded against Indigenous, immigrant, and propertyless communities for distinct yet overlapping imperatives, articulated within settler-colonial political economy in a succession of “racial regimes of ownership.”¹²² Indigenous people were characterized as inherently non-sovereign because of their nonconformity to European standards of agrarian use-value; nomadic, because of their movement between seasonal fishing, hunting and gathering sites, and therefore without sovereign title; juridically discounted for keeping oral rather than cadastral records of

¹¹⁹ For a compelling summary of recent trends in far-right discourse in Europe, specifically an emergent discourse of “Indigenous” European attachment to land and heritage, see Miri Davidson, “Sea and Earth,” *Sidecar*, 4 April 2024, <https://newleftreview.org/sidecar/posts/sea-and-earth>. See also Mylan Tootoosis, host, *Radicle Narrative*, podcast, episode 6.6, “The German Fetish for Nativeness: Pretendians, Settler Identity, and Far-right Nationalism” (interview with Anna Schneider), 26 July 2025, <https://podcasts.apple.com/ca/podcast/6-6-the-german-fetish-for-nativeness-pretendians/id1531491803?i=1000719078943>. For historic context in the German case, see Frank Usbeck, *Fellow Tribesmen: The Image of Native Americans, National Identity, and Nazi Ideology in Germany* (Berghahn Books, 2015).

¹²⁰ For parallel shifts in postwar policy, see Heidi Bohaker and Franca Iacovetta, “Making Aboriginal People ‘Immigrants Too’: A Comparison of Citizenship Programs for Newcomers and Indigenous Peoples in Postwar Canada, 1940s–1960s,” *Canadian Historical Review* 90, no. 3 (16 September 2009): 427–61. Not incidentally, critics of Sen’ákw have frequently framed the Squamish Nation as agents of foreign and migrant interests.

¹²¹ Nichols, *Theft Is Property!*, 40.

¹²² Bhandar, *Colonial Lives of Property*, 5–22.

territorial delineation; and economically based in a material commons that did not obey a European logic of enclosure and fixed ownership.¹²³

The system of reserves in British Columbia and elsewhere was an attempt to contain displaced Indigenous inhabitants as the erstwhile unstable figure of the “tenant in common,” to use Locke’s term for Indigenous people.¹²⁴ The tenant in common was contrasted with the settler who encloses the commons and secures property based on a narrowly-defined, self-referential and often arbitrary set of use and “improvement” claims.¹²⁵ For its part, the propertyless tenant has always been seen as an unstable threat to the social order, since “[property] makes better and more contented *citizens* and eliminates that prey of unrest and radicalism – discontented rent-payers.”¹²⁶ The Indigenous “tenant in common” is not identical with the propertyless tenant in general, but helps illuminate an important aspect of the treatment of Indigenous communities by the colonial state. A dweller of the commons could not also be a citizen in formal terms, and Indigenous people were not given the right to vote federally until the middle of the century in Canada. In Vancouver, Indigenous and non-Indigenous tenants alike were not fully granted the right to vote in municipal elections until a series of provincial and municipal reforms in the early 1970s.¹²⁷

Like the nomadic “tenant in common,” the immigrant in new-right ideology has also been invoked as a figure of groundlessness. As Day has powerfully argued, immigrants on the West Coast – particularly communities racialized as Asian – have long been defined as the

¹²³ Bhandar, *Colonial Lives of Property*, 33–75.

¹²⁴ Locke, “The Second Treatise of Government,” 287.

¹²⁵ For a discussion of the central importance of the Lockean conception of “use” in the white settlement of Kitsilano, specifically in relation to the Kits Reserve and surrounding area, see “The Kitsilano Indian Reserve – Douglas Harris,” lecture titled “Property & Sovereignty: The Kitsilano Indian Reserve and the City of Vancouver” delivered by Douglas C. Harris at the Vancouver Historical Society on 24 November 2016, posted by Vancouver Historical Society, 27 November 2016, YouTube, 1:24:55, <https://youtu.be/gnfDpK4ztU0>; see also Madeleine de Trenquaye’s interview with Douglas C. Harris, “The History of the Kitsilano Indian Reserve,” *Vancouver Historical Society Newsletter* 56, no. 3 (November 2016): 1.

¹²⁶ Passage from a BC housing industry article published in 1921, cited by Jesse Donaldson, *Land of Destiny: A History of Vancouver Real Estate* (Anvil Press, 2019), 82.

¹²⁷ Municipal History Society, *Your Worship, Member of Council: Highlights from the Municipal Reform Movement in the Lower Mainland* (Municipal History Society, 1980) 35, 45–46. In 1978, looking back on ten years of collective action, tenant organizer Bruce Yorke argued that “tenants have gained more voting rights [since 1968], even though they are still not equal voting rights.” Bruce Yorke, “The Tenant Movement in B.C. from 1968 to 1978,” *Mainlander*, 9 November 2012, <https://themainlander.com/2012/11/09/the-tenant-movement-in-b-c-from-1968-to-1978/>. “[T]he requirement for Council Members to own property only ended in 1973,” according to Kumtuks. “British Columbia Has Two Systems of Government – Parliamentary and Municipal,” Kumtuks, <https://kumtuks.ca/parliamentary-and-municipal-government-in-british-columbia-explained/>.

embodiment of a floating antground, firmly on the side of capital's abstraction through what I have termed Locke 2, systematically divorced from Locke 1's vision of honest labour and Lockean "improvement." Day argues that in historical terms, the Asian immigrant is akin to the "new Jew," today framed as the bearer of property's abstraction through housing speculation, immaterial labour, finance, and all forms of abstract capital.¹²⁸

In the land of Greenpeace and ecological living, Vancouver's new articulation of property and community in no way abandons earlier ecological countercultural roots. On the contrary, the two gradually converge in the milieu of a rising new-right ecology. This can be seen in the tone of figures like Geller or Hardwick concerning Sen'ákw – but also the more subtle Sen'ákw opponents like Patrick Condon, who focus the entirety of their housing critique on population growth instead of subjecting the property system itself to any kind of critique. We have long witnessed this slow drift in revered and above-reproach figures like environmentalist David Suzuki who claim that Canada is "full."¹²⁹

This undeniable convergence of ecological and anti-immigrant discourse is a trend currently being echoed in Europe's burgeoning ecofascist movement. Far-right French politician Marine Le Pen said recently: "Environmentalism [is] the natural child of patriotism, because it's the natural child of *rootedness* ... If you're a nomad, you're not an environmentalist. Those who are nomadic ... do not care about the environment; they have no homeland."¹³⁰ If such conceptions feel too burdened with mental gymnastics and eccentricities to be of concern, we should recall the potent history of the *Heimat* ("homeland").¹³¹ When it comes to the historic notion of the *Heimat* – the simultaneously boastful and modest formula of home-plus-land – it cannot be neglected that Heidegger came before Hitler, so to speak.

¹²⁸ Day, *Alien Capital*, 1–10. Interestingly, as George Mosse pointed out in his historic study of Nazi and pre-Nazi Germany, German Jews were already considered "Asiatic," and the Jewish ghettos were described as "half Asia." George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (Grosset & Dunlap, 1964), 127.

¹²⁹ "Canada doesn't have enough room to accommodate many more newcomers," according to David Suzuki. Pamela Fayerman, "David Suzuki's Anti-Immigration Views," *Vancouver Sun*, 18 February 2014, <https://vancouversun.com/news/staff-blogs/david-suzukis-anti-immigration-views-an-ode-to-the-gifts-of-filipino-immigrants>.

¹³⁰ Marine Le Pen cited in Matt Hern, *Outside the Outside: The New Politics of Suburbs* (Verso, 2024), 41–42, emphasis added.

¹³¹ For the ideology of the *Heimat*, see Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*, 155–62.

AFTERWORD

A final note on architecture might bring together some of the arguments put forward in this essay. As the Sen'ákw example helps to clarify, the Kitsilano homeowner does not need to live in a West Coast Modern home to partake in the reinvigoration of Locke 1. Even the celebrated Vancouver Special, for its part, can lay claim to an Indigenous status. It does this partly through a countercultural tradition of architecture without architects, a tradition discussed in this essay through its West Coast Modernist variants. As one historian writes, "the Vancouver Special is architecturally significant, even though it was not designed by a credentialed architect, *because it is an indigenous form of housing*."¹³² Whether it is a sprawling mansion or a humble Vancouver Special, settler property owners increasingly rely upon an ersatz discourse of anticolonial resistance. In a bid to secure their asset values – assets which double as their homes, if they are owner-occupiers – they cite the effects of market displacement and draw on a proclaimed allegiance to land and region.

Those who fight against Sen'ákw with their references to "Colonialism 2.0" provide a vivid illustration of this phenomenon. Yet if we pose this same question to these owners about restitution for the previous owners of the land, displaced and redisplaced ever since the founding of so-called Vancouver, the answers range from reluctant to denialist. In rare moments of self-conscious lucidity, some have attempted to understand settler preoccupations with a "primitivist" Indigeneity. Doris Shadbolt in her 1947 *Canadian Art* essay "Our Relation to the Primitive," framed this appropriation charitably, as a spiritual attempt to break from the constraints of modern life. In a prescient analysis, Prokopow has framed this as the desire to find a cultural rootedness, and a "homesickness and a longing for a simpler life."¹³³ The abstractions of modernity create an endemic feeling of "homelessness" and the absence of a unifying *Heimat*. Much is revealed in those same settlers' response to Indigenous people who literally – not figuratively – have been made homeless by the force of colonial settlement. One-third of unhoused people in Metro Vancouver are Indigenous, even though Indigenous people comprise roughly 2 percent of the overall regional population.¹³⁴ The lasting effects of

¹³² Jennifer Chutter, "What's So Special About the Vancouver Special?" (master's thesis, Simon Fraser University, 2016), 48, emphasis added.

¹³³ Prokopow, "To Have a New World," 50.

¹³⁴ Nathan Crompton, Tintin Yang, and A.J. Withers, "Homelessness in Vancouver: Numbers, Trends, Analysis for 2024," *Mainlander*, 23 August 2024, <https://themainlander.com/2024/08/23/homelessness-in-vancouver-numbers-trends-analysis-for-2024/>.

original and ongoing colonization are emblazoned onto every surface of the city and wedged into every crevice.

In short, those whose relation to land is both invoked and appropriated by settlers are themselves continuously excluded from property and forced to live in endemic houselessness. Settlers want reconciliation, but they want it on their terms. Today, reconciliation and even versions of “decolonization” can act as the occasion for the resurgence of a whole range of early settler fixations. Between the farmers’ market, barber shop, and general store, all that seems to be missing today is the horse-drawn carriage. When seen through the prism of ownership, bourgeois nature and bourgeois culture are not two separate concepts but two moments within a single concept. Ecological traditions, attachment to land, and even an ethnic lineage of ancestors are all reappropriated and absorbed into Vancouver’s settler culture.

Does all this, finally, amount to pretendianism? To associate the homeowner with the pretendian might risk an unnecessary provocation, an anachronism, or an ill-conceived effort to cast the net too wide in an attempt to critique property and colonialism – or all of the above. Yet insofar as Indigenous land and culture are inseparable, the settler claim to be the “owner” of that land already contains a kernel of the pretendian in it. That is, one who claims to “own” unceded and stolen land already implicitly makes a claim to wear on their person – in the form of their dwelling – a central aspect of Indigenous culture in a particular place or region. This, however, makes only a weak version of the charge of pretendianism. A stronger version comes not from the bare fact of land theft, but from the dense cultural and aesthetic framework layered on top of that theft. These accretions of culture were brought to their apogee in the architecture of West Coast Modernism. West Coast Modernism was never simply one monolithic thing. This, however, does not prevent us from pointing to its possible derivations and entrapments on the way to something different.