



INLAND EMPIRE

Settler Colonialism and
Modern Architecture in Southern California

Manuel Shvartzberg Carrió

Inland Empire



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Global and Insurgent Legalities

*A series edited by Eve Darian-Smith
and Jonathan Goldberg-Hiller*

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Modern Architecture in Southern California

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For Danielle & Azia

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Abbreviations

BIA	Bureau of Indian Affairs
DWA	Desert Water Agency
FHA	Federal Housing Administration
FSA	Farm Security Administration
IRA	Indian Reorganization Act, aka the Indian New Deal
IRRP	Indian Relief and Rehabilitation Program
MIA	Mission Indian Agency
MIF	Mission Indian Federation
OIA	Office of Indian Affairs
PSWC	Palm Springs Water Company
RA	Resettlement Administration
RPAA	Regional Planning Association of America
SAI	Society of American Indians
USGS	US Geological Survey
USSH	US Steel Homes, Inc.
WPA	Works Progress Administration

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Preface

“Where do you want *your* body to be laid to rest?”

The question came from my father as I waited to board a flight, scrambling to hear his voice over the airport noise. As I mulled my reply, he confessed never having seriously considered the question for himself until very recently, prompted by a trip back to his hometown of Buenos Aires, Argentina, where he reconnected with family members he hadn’t seen in more than twenty years. There, he visited his parents’ graves and had the sudden realization that he wanted to rest in peace next to them, when the time comes. His decision was a bit of a shock to me, as my parents have lived in Spain since 1976, when they left Argentina for fear of their lives, hunted by a military junta that committed genocide against tens of thousands of people just like them. Both of them were young militant socialist activists, involved in what the junta saw as “subversive” behavior. My father took up armed struggle and was eventually captured and tortured. He was extremely lucky to have been released on the whim of a particular judge; most did not live to recount the experience. One day not long after this ordeal, my parents got a phone call from a source saying that their names were on a blacklist, that they were at risk of imminent abduction. They turned off the stove, grabbed their passports, and left for the airport to go to Spain, where many Argentine political exiles were fleeing. They wouldn’t return home until after the fall of the dictatorship, nearly ten years later.

I begin with this biographical story to lay down some coordinates for where I am coming from and why I am writing this book. The reason my parents’ story of political exile is meaningful to me is because it constitutes an echo of both the present—the current neofascist US context where I am now an immigrant myself—and the past, one snapshot in a long line of working-class migrating family members; a story of multiple generations that each had to ask themselves, “Where in the world will my body be laid

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to rest?” Each migration wave prompts the question time and again, an echo of the past, present, and future, as parents consider the question for their own children, too.

The four most recent generations of my family have all been first-generation migrants to a new continent. My great-grandfather escaped the pogroms in Russia in the nineteenth century, emigrating to Argentina. My grandmother fled war and famine in Ukraine for Argentina in the early twentieth century. My father and mother became political exiles in Spain. And I, having been born in Spain, left for the United States in the wake of the Great Recession of 2008. Four consecutive generational waves of trans-continental migration over 150 years, fueled by war, political repression, and economic need. While distinct, they are all case studies in what Lukács called modernity’s unique “transcendental homelessness”—its relentless drive toward upheaval and dislocation. They are also all tied together by the fact that the migrations constituted acts of settlement, however brief or insecure. We migrated to the settler-colonial nation-states of Argentina and the United States, and in the case of Spain, to the country that inaugurated modern colonialism.

To this background and these concerns—the experience of migration as a white Hispanic family, culturally Jewish and Catholic but atheist in practice; the legacy of uncertain settlement; and a socialist tradition that runs deep in my family—I have to add my identity as an architect. In many ways, besides socialism, architecture was the other only faith I grew up with. Both my parents are architects—they managed to finish their studies in Argentina after the dictatorship—and I was fortunate to work for some great architects before becoming an academic. As part of my architecture studies and later employment, I was exposed to both the hubris that comes with designing large, ambitious projects and the brilliant deconstructions of the discipline by luminaries like Jane Rendell, Adrian Forty, and Douglas Spencer. This heady mix was always tempered by my own life experiences of architecture growing up, when my parents constantly struggled to make ends meet in a profession that requires enormous amounts of privilege to be able to survive the extreme crashes of the real estate cycle. Still, architecture gave me a way of falling in love with the world—in some sense, of appreciating *all* spaces and thus of feeling at home wherever I was.

The monumental naivety and entitlement of this perspective would only fully dawn on me decades later, once I immigrated to the United States and began asking myself questions about belonging similar to the ones my parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents had asked themselves before.

In this new context, though, living in a country where my position as a settler is so much more evidently constitutive of the nation-state itself, and where dynamics of racialized class dislocation are not just naturalized but are frankly celebrated, prompted me to rethink many of the articles of faith about architecture that I had internalized.

My first conscious encounter with the problem of architecture and settler colonialism was on what can only be described as a modernist pilgrimage to Palm Springs, California. Like most architects, I glorified the work of midcentury “masters” like Richard Neutra and thoroughly studied their work in college: Going to see Neutra’s Desert House in Palm Springs was a rite of passage. But when I arrived, things immediately seemed contrived to me: an “old-West” town in full-on mid-twentieth-century modernist garb? The extreme low-rise suburban pattern, with golf courses and lawns into the horizon, in the middle of a desert? And why so many undeveloped plots of land everywhere, in a city that was so clearly flush with millionaires?

As I reflected on these initial observations—which did not match the idealized imagery of Palm Springs that I had been fed as an architecture student—I learned about the city having been built upon the Agua Caliente Reservation, about the history and theories of settler colonialism, and about the fact that the Agua Caliente Tribal members I spoke with, like so many Indigenous people, know *exactly* where they want their bodies and spirits to rest, since time immemorial.

This is a book about modernist architecture, but at a deeper level it is an inquiry into the particular metaphysical and material interplay implicit in the idea of settler and Native modes of belonging grounded in fundamentally different ways of knowing and being—*how* to know what your place is, *where* bodies and souls come to rest—or to put it more starkly, the dialectics of modernity and Indigeneity. While this binary is deeply problematic—among other things, for example, global migration and mobility are not just modern experiences; they have always been present in Indigenous societies—it nonetheless marks a terrain of thought and politics that goes to the core of the history of the United States. Yet, rather than mourning this dialectic as tragic or teleological (from either side), I have found it more productive to reflect on how the dialectic itself historically emerged; to try to identify how modernist architecture participated in its construction while refusing to sublimate its immanent contradictions.

Perhaps for this reason, it took me a long time to decide who the primary audience for this book ought to be. An early reader, Mohawk anthropologist Audra Simpson, encouraged me to write it in dialogue with Tribal members.

Agua Caliente elder Moraino Patencio kindly talked to me about it while I was a student. And as I moved to Southern California for my job at UC San Diego, I found an organic community of scholars, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, with whom I could discuss the project. Friends and colleagues such as Theresa Ambo (Gabrielino-Tongva) and Kate Anderson (Citizen Potawatomi) encouraged me to go beyond the narrow expectations—and audience—of my discipline, architectural history, while also modeling for me the type of serious, sustained engagement with Tribal members that such a project would require. Conversations with them and others, such as Heather Ponchetti Daly (Kumeyaay), Gerald Clarke (Cahuilla), Terria Smith (Torres Martinez), and Sean Milanovich (Agua Caliente), often focused on the difficulties of adequately capturing the history of midcentury modern architecture from the perspective of Indigenous peoples in the region.

These exchanges made it clear to me that without deep, embodied, and sustained knowledge of Indigenous languages, cultures, and relationships—which after ten years I am still only starting to develop—this would be an impossible *epistemic* pursuit. More importantly, however, it became clear that these epistemic issues also make it untenable *ethically*: That story is not for me to tell. There are already many Native elders, historians, artists, and theorists who are doing this work and who can do it better. As much as possible, I have tried to draw on their knowledge and insights in the making of this book, citing them where appropriate, but their work cannot be reduced to the relationship between modern architecture and settler colonialism—it is much broader and in many ways richer than that. I should note here that although the Agua Caliente Tribal Council is aware of my work, nothing in this book should be construed as having been approved by them.

Beyond the epistemological and ethical obstacles there are also substantive *political* ones. My own perspective on this history, for better or worse, is most closely aligned with the modernist architects and designers analyzed in the book, from a place not of ethno-racial solidarity but of class position. Their way of seeing and experiencing the world was, though now modulated by decades of modernist criticism, in some ways similar to how I was educated and trained to see the world as a young architect. Their split allegiances to abstract principles of efficiency, order, and vague liberal ideas of egalitarianism ultimately benefited the tiny minority of rich clients who hired them and their selected users and publics. Overall, their (our) class positions were often at odds with those of both their clients and the people they effectively managed: the workers who built and maintained the structures that they designed—what the sociologist Erik Olin Wright identified

as a “contradictory class location.” The fact that this peculiar ideological alignment persists in architecture—today paradoxically encompassing liberal discourses of environmentalism and Indigenism itself—is testament to the lack of serious critical analyses of class composition in the discipline, which naturalizes the hegemonic status quo and prevents counterhegemonic frameworks and strategies of solidarity across architects, workers, and users to emerge.

I recognize that my commitment to addressing these political concerns—about the structural difficulties of locating and enacting class solidarity in the expanded field of architecture—is far from the most fundamental political commitment for many of my Indigenous colleagues, whose central concern is regaining full sovereignty over their stolen lands. Their politics cannot be reduced to a variety of socialism, at least not presumptively and generically.

As such, this book is emblematic of the epistemic, ethical, and political challenges involved in trying to bring together these diverse constituencies and concerns. And yet, the history of the Inland Empire shows that they are inextricably and structurally bound together. There is no midcentury California desert modernism without Indigenous struggles for self-determination, and vice versa: They are entangled histories. I see this book as an attempt to draw out exactly *how* they are entangled and to challenge architects to simply recognize the antagonisms implicit in this entanglement—a recognition that, despite some grandstanding institutional gestures over the last decade, has not yet been grounded in a materialist politics, and perhaps never will be, for truly doing so would require a complete restructuring of the discipline of architecture and of US society and politics in general.

Despite these difficulties, the book takes a positive view on the potential for productive exchanges across epistemological and political divides—or across classic modernist criticism and Indigenous anticolonial activism. Three aspects are particularly salient in this regard: *translatability*, *transgenerationality*, and *totality*.

I have sought to interrogate the Inland Empire as a *totality*—the Marxist concept for an interrelated whole with definite historical causations, including metaphysical ones, that immanently expresses its contradictions, movements, uneven developments, and future potentials—configured by the dialectic of modernist design and Indigenous resistance. While certain strands of postcolonial and decolonial thought would balk at this formulation, I find the history of the Inland Empire to be precisely constituted by different modes of translation within this totality—from the complex translations of Indigenous practices and cosmologies of land across Native

languages in the region, key to embodying and enacting *transgenerationality* as a core condition of Native socio-ecological reproduction; to the ways in which modern architecture both negated and co-opted these modes of land stewardship by (mis)translating them in its own terms. The fact that this was, and is, a profoundly asymmetric and coercive epistemological exchange occurring under the hegemonic framework of US settler-colonial capitalism does not preclude, in my view, the project of tracing how these translations were productive in their own right, far exceeding modernist designers' intents and purposes and at certain moments becoming critical tools for Indigenous self-determination. Architectural *translatability* as such, in other words, was both a destructive *and* a creative force; producing contradictory forms that harbored a plethora of transgenerational possibilities, not just for Native nations, but also for the many migrant architects and workers who have long labored in the region.

Weighing the relative causes and ultimate balance of these sometimes competing, sometimes correlative projects would require a much more capacious lens than I have offered here. In the meantime, I hope this book will add fuel to the momentous struggles that Indigenous peoples and immigrant workers are involved with in the Inland Empire as they continue crafting a counterhegemonic politics, while also contributing to the formulation of more critical discourses of midcentury modern architecture in California and beyond.

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Introduction. Midcentury

Modernism: Architectures of Termination and Survivance

In 2014 the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians dismantled their Palm Springs Spa, a renowned midcentury modern structure located on the Agua Caliente Reservation. First opened in 1960, the spa's design recalled both ancient Roman baths and California's Spanish Colonial Revival with a dramatic concrete entrance colonnade that welcomed hordes of tourists into the center of the town (plate 1). Inside, a massive mechanical steel tank enclosed the geothermal spring's entire flow at ground source, collecting and distributing the Agua Caliente's sacred waters (*Séc-he*) toward individual hot tubs and collective pools.

Commissioned by the first all-female Tribal Council in the United States—led by Vyola Olinger, LaVerne Saubel, Eileen Miguel, Elizabeth Monk, Flora Patencio Siva, and Gloria Gillette¹—the Palm Springs Spa was designed by a collaborative of well-known local modernist architects who had been hired by the Tribe's new lessee, a Chicago developer. Requiring risky excavations and geotechnical surgery deep into the Tribe's natural spring, the project represented a veritable design achievement but also the culmination of decades of legal wrangling between the Tribe and city, state, and federal authorities, as well as internal Tribal debates regarding the conversion of the sacred spring into a large-scale tourist attraction. As the first formal, long-term commercial lease of Native American land in the United States, the stakes over this strategic opening were as immense as they were contentious. By means of midcentury modernism, the Agua Caliente had finally been able to reap a modest revenue from the growth of Palm Springs—though only through a corrupt system of state-appointed non-Native “guarantors” between the Tribe and the developer. This was a vexed political struggle

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conducted under duress, given that the project was designed and built at the height of a federal push to legally terminate Native American sovereignty, attempting to undo centuries of ostensible comity between the United States and Native nations. At the same time, however, it was an extraordinary act of Native survivance—with midcentury modernism bringing together competing settler and Indigenous visions of modernization.²

By 2014, however, the brief midcentury alignment of interests between the Tribe and the city had taken a sharp turn, revolutionized by the Tribe's plans to demolish the spa. As recounted by Agua Caliente historian Sean Milanovich (LaVerne Saubel's grandson), the original building was decaying and posed a number of intractable safety issues that required the demolition of the structure, leading the Tribe to hire the Choctaw/Cherokee architect Johnpaul Jones to make a proposal for an entirely new design: a cultural center inspired by Cahuilla culture and cosmology to be built on the grounds of the demolished midcentury modern spa.³

The Agua Caliente faced an orchestrated campaign against its new cultural center from a plethora of local arts and civil society organizations. Advocacy letters were sent to First Lady Michelle Obama, while Nancy Sinatra published an op-ed declaring her opposition.⁴ As the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation reported, with palpable indignation, "the historic Spa Bath House and colonnade was demolished by the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians before a crowd of stunned onlookers."⁵ Though arguments for preservation were framed in terms of a shared architectural heritage for both the city and Tribe, the currency that the spa building had acquired was much more complex and ambivalent than this would suggest. The Tribal Council replaced midcentury modernism with a more layered and plural design narrative—an explicit hybrid of Native and modern architectural traditions.⁶ It was this plurality and its underlying political antagonisms, I argue, that made the spa project's history so discomfiting for both settler and Native advocates, if for completely different reasons.

While modern design processes bring these particular layers of history together technically and symbolically, they do not materially resolve their inherent contradictions.⁷ Rhetorical appeals to synthesis or hybridity—such as expressions of identity communicated in composite architectural forms—attempt to suture the gaps between apparently autonomous cultural narratives. Often, however, they do so without accounting for how such syntheses are implemented on the ground, thus eliding how entangled and unresolved these histories actually are. Instead of semiotic and historical closure, the competing epistemic and political systems at play in projects such as the Agua

Caliente's 1960 Palm Springs Spa—which involved paternalistic scrutiny and approvals from the US Congress, the Department of the Interior, the US Geological Survey, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs—show that architecture is a key mediating discipline between culture, capital, and statecraft. Architecture does not synthesize the contradictions within and across these realms but rather orchestrates them in hegemonic arrangements—normalizing extant power relations while suppressing and co-opting dissent.

Indeed, it was precisely through the state's rationalization of "the Indian problem" as a *design problem*, I argue, that the United States prototyped transformations in its modes of government in the early twentieth century. Through innovations at the intersection of design, planning, and social science, architects and technocrats—variously spurred and challenged by Native activists—set the stage for shifts in how the settler state sought to manage and control Native land and people, contributing to the broadest shift in US governance since the end of Reconstruction.⁸ From a US hegemony based on selective *segregation and exclusion*, modernist architecture became a vehicle for the selective *integration and co-option* of Native peoples' land, labor, and political dissent. As a result, the architecture of this period helped prototype a new kind of US hegemony—what later came to be known as "neoliberalism."⁹

As theorized by Quinn Slobodian, neoliberals sought a different hegemonic legal "encasement" of the relations between politics and economics to challenge the Keynesian state's distributive policies, enshrining principles of capitalist competition worldwide through institutional mechanisms like national constitutions, trade organizations, and supranational federations.¹⁰ Alongside this neoliberal drive for a global legal encasement of market discipline, Slobodian argues, were also processes of "perforation" through which capital sought to escape any and all democratic regulation: "punching holes in the territory of the nation-state, creating zones of exception with different laws and often no democratic oversight."¹¹ In this book, I show how both "encasement" and "perforation" were not just generic ideological metaphors tied to late twentieth-century free-trade economics but were actually prototyped spatially and legally decades earlier, through architecture and urban planning on Native American reservations since the 1930s.

Native reservations have always been "zones of exception," but it was only in the twentieth century that their legal exceptionality was made into a tangible design problem, changing the terms of both settler and Native statecraft. In places like Southern California—home to the largest number of federally recognized Native nations in the United States, as well as its own

traditions of modernist design—the co-constitution of neoliberalization, modernization, and settler colonialism is particularly evident.¹² This book explores their confluence through case studies of midcentury modernism in Palm Springs and the broader Inland Empire—a place and a time when the United States’ hegemonic ascendance directly clashed with Native nations like the Agua Caliente and others throughout the region.¹³ Rather than exemplifying US supremacy, these architectural projects show that the rise of American hegemony in the twentieth century was not without resistance from Indigenous nations who continually asserted jurisdiction over their ancestral lands.¹⁴ At stake in these clashes was not just the question of cultural legitimacy and legibility as expressed in various architectural styles, but rather a contestation over what modes of politics should govern the land, ranging from diverse oppositional Indigenous ideologies and forms of organization to various formations of liberal capitalism.

Liberalism presumes, and thereby constructs, a foundational separation between certain figurations of the human and the nonhuman. It shares this philosophical foundation with the ideologies of modern Euro-American colonialism that historically sought to rationalize white supremacy as a natural outcome of racial hierarchy, which is why Indigenous histories systematically problematize liberalism as an abstract set of ideals.¹⁵ In fact, liberalism and neoliberalism are social and political orders that depend on structural historical inequalities—establishing degrees of dehumanization based on class, gender, race and ethnicity, or mobility, among other factors—for their continued existence.¹⁶ In this book, I theorize neoliberalism as intensifying this axiom of separability through the development of specific technical means, namely architecture and design: neoliberalism as a set of spatial technologies of social disentanglement and dismemberment that reconstruct subjects and environments according to market principles.¹⁷ From this perspective, US midcentury modernism did not emerge autonomously as a Euro-American architectural tradition, but rather developed in direct if unacknowledged relation to preexisting Indigenous social and geopolitical orders that it sought to systematically negate. This tense relation, however, remade both American hegemony and midcentury modernism, with consequences also for how Native nations in the United States were interpellated by the state.

Midcentury modernism’s constitutive negation of Native land and life was not an exception but rather a continuation of centuries of settler-colonial policies and practices. In many ways the United States has always sought the termination of Native nations as fully sovereign entities. In the 1830s, the US Supreme Court defined Native American polities under the ambiguous

label of “domestic dependent nations,” recognizing their status as sovereign but under US paternalistic “guardianship.” This was followed by a century of US policies of geographic removal, genocide, reservations, and cultural and economic assimilation through boarding schools and the transformation of Indigenous land into capitalist private property.¹⁸

By the 1930s and especially after World War II, however, a remarkable rhetorical and technical shift had occurred.¹⁹ Instead of the blunt weapons of genocidal war and forced acculturation, the state paradoxically sought to *dispossess* Native Americans from their lands through particular mechanisms of *integration* into US society. The first official termination law, House Concurrent Resolution 108, passed in 1953, sought to “effectively terminate federal trust protection of American Indian reservation lands.”²⁰ It thus attempted to fully disestablish the unique autonomous political structures and legal rights of Native peoples in order to assimilate them as individual US citizens. Yet this resolution had been self-consciously prototyped in a very specific place and through a very specific set of policies: a series of laws and associated urban schemes directly targeting the Agua Caliente’s lands and sovereignty in the 1930s, as Southern California grew into the midcentury modernist haven it is today. In other words, the federal legal maneuvers for Native termination were grounded in particular design projects—such as housing and infrastructure—across Native American reservations in the Inland Empire, eventually contributing to the formation of a new type of American hegemony premised on technical modes of selective inclusion.

This book examines how modernist architecture and urban design became key tools for this hegemonic transformation. In this period, architecture became a state-supported technology for regulating dissent and extracting profits through its particular ways of developing land and enrolling myriad subjects into capitalist structures. Architecture didn’t just find these subjects as such but actively construed them in particular ways: It imagined, figured, and translated their subjectivities into the state’s preferred modes of understanding politics, life, and land.

These terms—politics, life, land—are heavy with conceptual colonial histories of their own, to say nothing of terms like Indigenous, Native, or Indian.²¹ I provide neither complete intellectual nor empirical histories of them, nor of the multiple intersecting and overlapping social histories of the Inland Empire.²² Rather, at stake in this book is the problem of hegemony—how power is naturalized—through architectural design processes that effect technical and epistemological translations between and across different worlds. I focus on modern architecture and planning as disciplines that

forcefully rendered commensurate different *epistemologies of land*, articulating and expressing processes of class composition, racial formation, modes of representation, and forms of settlement over land.

The book traces five specific discourses of design in relation to five colonial epistemologies of land in this context: (1) architectural type and *sovereignty*; (2) community development and *property*; (3) housing prefabrication and *logistics*; (4) environmental design and *jurisdiction*; and (5) modernist regionalism and *hegemony*. Through architectural case studies at the intersection of these pairings, I show how architecture became a key technology for governing empire through Indigenous land and migrant labor, while also mediating Indigenous efforts toward self-determination. If the California coast had been imagined as the final frontier of nineteenth-century Euro-American colonial settlement—the physical and psychic terminus for the ideology of manifest destiny—the twentieth-century turn of this frontier “inland,” to areas where Native nations still formally held their lands, highlights the co-eval nature of California midcentury modernism and decolonization at the highest point of US termination policy. This book shows that midcentury modernism and Native American decolonization were not just synchronic phenomena but that they cannot be understood without each other.

The arc of the book—and of this introduction—takes us from the history of the Inland Empire through the lens of Native American contestation, to the ways in which dissent was recuperated and US hegemony was naturalized by midcentury modernism. Along the way, I offer theorizations of the connections between racial capitalism, liberalism, and neoliberalism, showing how modern design variously grounded these ideologies, while juxtaposing how Indigenous modes of design—grounded in alternative epistemologies of land—were also at play in their configuration.²³ In conclusion, I reflect on what these entangled histories mean for thinking about decolonization and modernity not as ontologically opposed but as intimately related intellectual and political projects.

Prototyping US Hegemony: From Termination to Recognition

Palm Springs offers an illustrative case study of these dynamics, having been conceived and constructed as a model settler-colonial city for the exclusive enjoyment of a white upper class.²⁴ From early colonial structures to mid-century estates, projects by now-canonical modernist architects like Lloyd Wright, Richard Neutra, Albert Frey, William Cody, and William Krisel

enshrined and instrumentalized the Agua Caliente's undeveloped lands for settler profit and power. Although the Tribe was the city's largest landowner with 6,700 acres, it faced multiple impediments to legally developing its lands.²⁵ The politics of land thus utterly saturated the development of the city and the surrounding region, underpinning its famed design culture.

Amid rapid settler expansion and tenacious Native resistance, modernist architects' technological innovations in environmental design, construction, and management of labor fragmented and alienated Indigenous land and sovereignty. At the urban and regional scales, their projects segregated the new desert leisure economy from the Inland Empire's sprawling military and agricultural infrastructures, redefining manifest destiny for a postindustrial world. Design, I argue, offered particular new ways of managing Indigenous resistance by reinforcing the underlying logics of a rising American hegemony: economic and logistical growth via environmental extraction, racialized displacement, and selective assimilation into markets and civil society.²⁶

These colonization efforts, however, were resisted by Agua Caliente political leaders from Francisco Patencio to Vyola Olinger, who deployed various design tactics of their own against discriminatory urban policies. The Palm Springs Spa of 1960 represented one moment in a longer history of Native American design practices that had been placed in direct relation to those of modernist architects since the early 1900s. California modernism was born from this friction and contradiction: As a structure of internalization of Native American lands it formally depended on these lands' artificial underdevelopment to make possible the quintessentially midcentury modern architectural effect of connecting the building's "inside" with the land "outside." These were not merely metaphorical or visual relations but were grounded in the territorial history of settler colonization. Many canonical modernist projects were sited right at the edges of Native reservations whose lands had been fragmented (or "checkerboarded") in the nineteenth century, structurally determining the character of land development in the region (see plate 2). This territorial pattern also affected the Agua Caliente's own orientation toward development—the 1960 Palm Springs Spa, for example, was sited at the edge of two sections, though on the reservation side, enabling the Tribal spa project to connect to the city's economic center and cater to its tourists.

In this context, Inland Empire reservations like Agua Caliente in Palm Springs and Barona in rural San Diego became crucial experimental sites for a national push to terminate Native American tribes altogether, *by design*. Modernist projects didn't just segregate these spaces visually but actively

construed what was “modern” and what was “Native”; what was “architecture” and what was “land”; scrambling or disavowing preexisting Indigenous design approaches, epistemologies, and debates. In other words, the hegemonic matrix that gave meaning to these concepts was entangled with the Inland Empire’s colonial and anticolonial politics over land, which played out through specific architectural and urban projects.

Los Angeles developers flocked to the Palm Springs area in the 1930s, seeking to gain control of Tribal lands in order to market the budding town and its natural landscape as “the world’s foremost Desert Resort.”²⁷ Eventually, city officials and developers lobbied Congress to pass a landmark law, the Act to Confer Jurisdiction on the State of California over the Lands and Residents of the Agua Caliente Indian Reservation (1949), constituting the first time in US history that civil and criminal jurisdiction was formally transferred from the federal administration to a state government, thus empowering city officials to control the Tribe’s security, health and safety, building codes, sanitary conditions, and policing. This law set the groundwork for a national version, Public Law 280 of 1953, the centerpiece of the postwar Native American termination law, HR 108, which attempted to systematically undo centuries of federal recognition of Native sovereignty and rights in the United States.

Agua Caliente Tribal members fought such attempts at erasure at a time of momentous internal change regarding whether to hold the reservation’s land communally or accept state-managed “allotments”—the US policy of privatizing Native land among individual Tribal members. As an older generation of male leaders passed away—such as Pedro Chino and Albert Santos Patencio—the anti-allotment position of the Tribe was challenged by a new generation of Agua Caliente women leaders, some of whom advocated for the practical and strategic need to assimilate at least partially into US society. The result of this shift was stark. Not only did the pro-allotment group prevail after decades of division, but the Tribal leadership also changed from a patrilineal system to the first all-female Tribal Council in the United States, constituted in 1954 by young “progressive” Agua Caliente women who strategically embraced economic development projects in order to survive the threat of termination.²⁸

Furthermore, this occurred in an urban context increasingly defined by a racialized and migrant working class—mostly Hispanic, African American, and Asian American—who were the Tribe’s neighbors, and often, its tenants. As such, the dynamics of erasure faced by the Tribe were also deeply entwined with the structure of worker exploitation across the region—those

who staffed, served, drove, cooked, cleaned, educated, cared for, built, and maintained the desert resort and its surroundings. Part of the Agua Caliente Reservation was in the very center of Palm Springs (Section 14), and the Tribe could not legally develop it through long-term contracts, so they began leasing land informally to working-class tenants. As the city doubled its population between the 1940s and the 1950s, housing conditions in the Agua Caliente Reservation became ever more precarious. Although Palm Springs was a wealthy city, officials refused to fund public housing or provide utilities like water, gas, and electricity, thus generating a so-called slum in the heart of the town.

This constituted an affront to the city's settler interests, who explicitly championed a high-income, low-rise, and racially white profile for the city. Between 1951 and 1967, the city maneuvered to condemn Section 14 on the grounds of "insalubrity," operating a number of fire campaigns to burn the homes of the 3,500 workers living there (see plate 3).²⁹ By the end, almost two-thirds of Palm Springs' entire adult population was forcibly dispossessed and ejected from the city.³⁰

In the context of this legally sanctioned spatial violence, the Agua Caliente's agreement in 1959 to lease their land to a non-Native developer for the construction of the Palm Springs Spa appears much more ominous and coerced than triumphant memorializations would imply—indeed, it was an intergenerational investment in Native survivance under deeply authoritarian conditions.³¹ As an artifact of a changing US hegemony, however, the Palm Springs Spa represented more than just authoritarian subjection or the emergence of a new class of Native American capitalists.³² It also prefigured how designers and technocrats would transform Native land and rights into a new series of spatial metrics and modes of calculation, formulated by planners and architects, so that they could be integrated into the settler capitalist state's preferred models of economic development.³³ As such, these projects constituted a key material nexus between local designs and federal policies. In 1975, the United States adopted a new federal policy of Native American "self-determination"; in 1977, after a lengthy court case, the Agua Caliente won their first land-use contract with the city. As Tribal Chairwoman Vyola Olinger remarked, the agreement signaled the end of protracted "Land Wars" between Palm Springs and the Tribe.³⁴ This, however, also marked a new terrain for the co-option of Native claims into US hegemony, in sharp contrast with the radical anticapitalist and anti-imperialist Red Power movement of the 1960s and 1970s.³⁵ From a framework of total dismissal and appropriation of Native land and life—"termination"—the state now offered



I.1 Lewis-Bella Vista Terrace Court with central ramada (“pergola”) at Sierra Madre housing project, 1910. Irving Gill, architect. From “New Architecture in a New Land,” *The Craftsman*, August 1912, 467.

one of “recognition” premised on limited support for cultural and economic autonomy.³⁶ This new terrain exchanged political tactics of exclusion for technical strategies of incorporation.

More than merely symbolic or rhetorical, this transformation was architecturally articulated on the ground as part of the historical development of modernism over the twentieth century. Two seminal modernist projects of the American Southwest symptomatize and bookend this changing dialectic—exclusion and incorporation—from around 1910 to 1975. In 1910, the Sierra Madre worker housing project, designed by Irving Gill, one of California’s first modernist architects, prominently enclosed a large Native American ramada in its central court (figure I.1). The ramada—a traditional Native American architectural space formed of upright columns and a flat roof made of palm fronds—was the fulcrum of the whole design, built at the heart of the Sierra Madre housing project. Gill, however, did not acknowledge the structure as a ramada, labeling it instead as a “pergola”—even though the region’s Native ramadas were amply publicized in the design and culture magazines that Gill contributed to, such as *The Craftsman*. Native architecture, in other words, was used but not acknowledged as such.



1.2 Ramada House, Tucson, Arizona, 1973–75. Judith Chafee, architect. Photo by Bill Timmerman.

By 1975, however, a remarkable reversal had occurred: Architect Judith Chafee inverted Gill’s design approach in her celebrated Ramada House, where an abstracted and enlarged ramada literally enclosed an entire modernist house in the Sonoran Desert, ostensibly for purposes of environmental control—to modulate the temperature inside the private home (figure 1.2). Although the project proclaimed its affiliation with Native American architecture by proudly using the word *ramada*, this was merely a nominal gesture, unconnected to actual decolonization struggles on the ground.³⁷

Both projects reproduced what Grace Kyungwon Hong calls a “structure of disavowal” over Native American sovereignty: one through epistemic theft, the other through mistranslation.³⁸ Both projects naturalized the ramada as an architectural type for purposes of climate regulation, even though the ramada’s Indigenous uses and meanings were much broader. It was not merely a shading device but an architectural type that structured social intercourse and life among multifamily dwellings; thus, it was not a device of class differentiation or accommodation—either for conspicuous leisure or for the physical rest of laboring bodies—but a device for articulating communal divisions of labor.

These projects can be understood metaphorically as different ways of conceptualizing notions of “civilized” modernist architecture and “primitive” or “vernacular” Indigenous craft, but it is also possible to see them as *encasing* different legal orders and land relations.³⁹ In this sense, the projects symptomatize the shift from state exclusion to symbolic incorporation of minoritized life that has been theorized as one of the hallmarks of the rise of US hegemony at midcentury, and as previewing—indeed, prototyping—a series of “design technics” for the American neoliberal revolution that emerged in this period.⁴⁰

This logic of inclusive disavowal was institutionalized through exclusionary juridical constructs such as “domestic dependent nations,” racialized spatial containers such as reservations and redlining, and policies that sought to appease struggles for better wages, housing or neighborhoods—the mechanisms of recuperation into US hegemony.⁴¹ In this context, mid-century modern architecture and planning offered precise techniques for sorting which land and life was protectable and which was amenable to optimization or termination.

As suburbanization accelerated, policies that made it harder for Native nations to access, manage, govern, and develop their lands were increasingly enacted in order to channel their demands through novel mechanisms of criminalization, housing, natural resource management, and community development. Termination policies sought to transform Native Americans into wage earners, relocating them to large urban centers in newly produced Native ghettos. For those who were able to join the rush of suburban homeownership, doing so often came at a cost for Native political structures of self-determination.⁴² The social science frameworks that had enabled the Indian New Deal’s “spatial turn,” effecting policy by physical design—originally modeled on the first federal community planning project in US history: the Barona Indian Reservation in rural San Diego, designed by Irving Gill in 1932 (discussed in chapter 1)—were now refashioned and redeployed to enable the reconstruction of Native Americans as ideal proto-neoliberal subjects and Native American land as proto-neoliberal property susceptible to debt and financialization.⁴³

The horizon of Native termination as an ideological project was always the stabilization of the United States as a settler-colonial state. In the Inland Empire, however, this ideological project also had a strong material base—for much of the land was still held by Native nations in an area of the country that would become a major motor of national economic growth in the postwar period. The arrival of what Cahuilla artist Lewis deSoto called “the new Americans” to the region, migrant workers “who swept in like waves

of difference—Spanish, Mexican, Irish, German, Japanese, Chinese, African American, and then the refugees that blew like dust from Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas during the Depression”—was driven by the labor needs of high-growth industries like steel, construction, manufacturing, agriculture, hospitality, and the military.⁴⁴ These regional industries were key to the postwar “politics of productivity” that underpinned the project of US hegemony both domestically and internationally.⁴⁵ As such, given the outsized weight of this particular economic engine to the United States writ large, the state had a crucial need to stabilize both Native land claims and labor struggles that might have united the region’s Native and non-Native workers against their exploitation and dispossession.

In other words, US hegemony after World War II required the containment and channelization of Indigenous dissent in the Inland Empire, as the region became a key operational landscape for US global ambitions.⁴⁶ Indeed, the former Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier, who closely oversaw the hegemonic transformations of the Indian New Deal in Southern California, reflected on the socio-spatial experiments that he prototyped in the 1930s as a crucial “Laboratory of Ethnic Relations”—deriving a set of techniques from US “Indian Administration” for economically integrating Natives within the emerging discourse of “development” that would grip the entire world in the postwar period.⁴⁷ State planning experiments on Native American land became a workshop for rationalizing hegemony in other areas of the world where US interests were at play.⁴⁸

Scholars have argued that neoliberalism was not simply theorized in Western institutions and then deployed in the Global South, but was rather first prototyped in particular “enclaves” of developing countries throughout the postwar period.⁴⁹ Similarly, the spatial epistemologies and techniques forged in the first four decades of the twentieth century within and between the offices of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Brookings Institution, research programs at the University of Chicago, and sites of application such as Native American reservations configured a networked “laboratory” of expertise that was intimately formative to the emergence of neoliberalism. The history of the Inland Empire shows how neoliberal spatial developmentalism was born within the realm of Native American administration between the 1930s and 1950s.⁵⁰

Architecture played a key role in this intellectual and technical transformation of subjectivity and land. This book shows how design came to ground neoliberalism’s “epistemological structure of disavowal, an epistemological framing, a way of seeing and not seeing.”⁵¹ Design offered a specific set of spatial technologies for managing Native nations—a mode of technical

expertise to channel the deployment of law in exceptionalized spaces like Native American reservations.⁵² To understand this transformation, however, we must first unpack where the canonical account of midcentury California modernism came from and then read it backwards, from the land.

Desert Modern

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, a number of modern architects based in Southern California developed techniques to situate and frame the relation between building and land that would later become canonical to the discipline. In projects like Richard Neutra's Desert House (1943–46) for Edgar Kaufmann in Palm Springs, the architect configured the steel structure as a formidable perch on the vast planes of the Coachella Valley. With floor-to-ceiling sliding-glass walls, cantilevered open corners, and sumptuous outdoor porches, the design attempted to gather the whole desert landscape, creating a sensation of spaciousness beyond the actual physical limits of the house and its lot—setting a new architectural standard for the emblematic midcentury modern effect of blending inside and out, even as these were starkly demarcated.⁵³

Framed by the surrounding San Jacinto Mountains to the west and the Little San Bernardino Mountains to the east, the house's terraces offered secluded sanctuaries to take in the therapeutic desert breeze. The relative articulation of architectural elements—massing, orientation, topographic emplacement, landscaping, windows, and eaves detailing—was designed to generate a near-sublime sense of possibility, collapsing near and far, the intimate and the cosmic. As architectural historian Alice T. Friedman put it, “Here was a dream of leisure, glamour, and desire lived out against a background of a desert landscape held in check by unseen forces.”⁵⁴ But what were these forces, and how were they “unseen”?

We might consider the tools by which the boundaries between the house and the landscape were dissimulated. If the earlier California modernist Irving Gill had imagined his starkly geometric architecture as eventually blending building and land through bucolic weathering and planting—akin to romantic monuments inspired by Spanish mission ruins⁵⁵—Neutra choreographed a sense of unencumbered *access* to the land as something external yet eminently available from the home itself. This visual conceit was supported by the building's placement on the land itself, accentuating certain physical connections through sectional changes and continuities. In the Desert House, for example, the main living area was subtly elevated from the southern boundary wall so that the interior-exterior flooring, flush

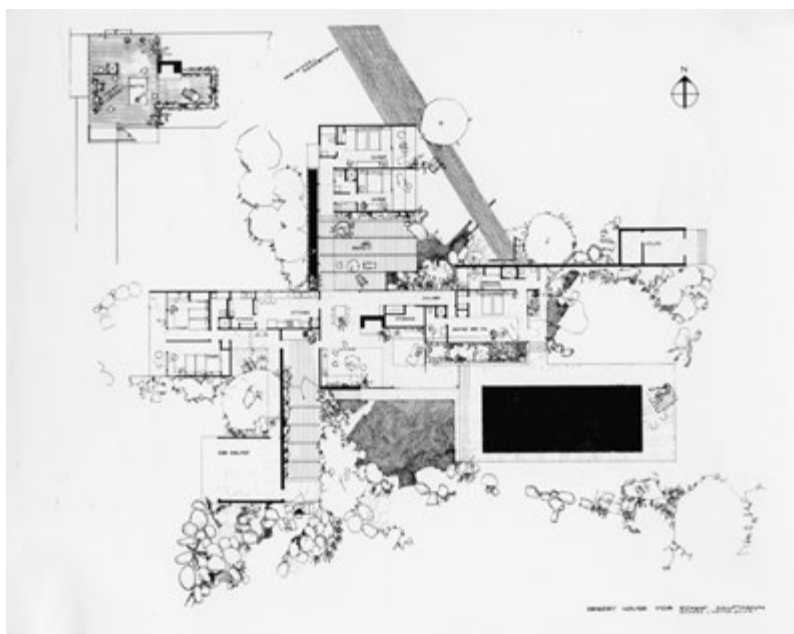


I.3 Desert House, built for Edgar Kaufmann, ca. 1946. Richard Neutra, architect. South view from the main living area. Photo by Julius Shulman. © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10).

with the planted lawn, led the eye over and above the boulders and hedges shielding the street, thus focusing the inhabitant's attention on a succession of mountains cresting into the horizon (figures I.3 and I.4).

These techniques—accentuating connections and dissimulating boundaries—exalted the experiential relation between the house and the desert landscape. Neutra's (and his celebrated photographer, Julius Shulman's) architectural reputation was rooted in this ability to mythologize the relation between modern architecture and land as one of total access, crafting sensational views and sectional shifts as keys to designing the thresholds between interior and exterior. Yet this was a double-edged mythology of access: Private projects like the Desert House *prevented* access to sacred Agua Caliente burial grounds in the area—a reminder of whose mythologies such architectures and images actually memorialized, and what laws were actually in place to secure whose access to land.⁵⁶

As one of the earliest and most publicized examples of this indoor-outdoor design mythology of settler access in the American West, the Desert



1.4 Plan for the Desert House, built for Edgar Kaufmann, ca. 1945. Richard Neutra, architect. Courtesy of the Neutra Institute.

House became a founding classic of the architectural history canon now known as Southern California midcentury modernism, and within this field, as “Desert Modern.”⁵⁷ Shortly thereafter, other landmark projects would be built nearby.⁵⁸ These homes followed in the Desert House’s footsteps through exemplifying the kind of relaxed indoor-outdoor design that came to be celebrated as an exceptionally midcentury modern American way of life—not only in its apparently casual demeanor, blurring house functions (living, cooking) and cultural conventions (privacy, publicity), but also in celebrating the growth of a world of domestic leisure and commodities crafted to the changing tastes of consumers through an ever-evolving capitalist market.⁵⁹ By the early postwar period, in other words, the spatial design techniques inaugurated by Gill and developed by Neutra and others had become formulaic—a reified architectural ideology ready to be deployed at mass scale. Like a well-designed consumer product, architecture would fulfill a predetermined set of requirements according to the subject’s personal choices and biological functions—reifying a standardized architectural subject coded as middle class, heteronormative, male, and white.⁶⁰

In turn, moreover, the land itself was subordinated to the building user's ostensible behaviors and desires according to seemingly objective, scientific knowledge.⁶¹ Through various architectural rationalizations, the land itself was presented as a given, a stable referent, historically and technically—not something that would ever call into question the power relations and contested histories that underpinned these architectures. By the 1950s, the combination of mass consumerism and the modernist dream of building a universal single-family housing prototype were both propelled and produced by the formatting of land as an inert plane amenable to potentially infinite division and multiplication: the speculative landscape of apparently limitless suburban growth (figure I.5).⁶² In Craig Ellwood's modernist homes of this period, for example, the obsession with the standardized steel frame utterly overwhelms the land. Entire cantilevered floors, essentially inhabitable structural steel grids wrapped in glass, hover above the California hills in great displays of sheer *indifference* to land: Gill's geometric simplicity sublimated to its final logic, minus the nostalgia (figure I.6).

These modernist architectural approaches to land were neither entirely new nor merely scientific but rather were variations on picturesque, pastoral, and romantic ideologies of landscape through new design technologies, practices, and materials.⁶³ As such, they rearticulated the foundational separations between subject and world, private and public, at the core of liberalism—nature as passive backdrop for individual human agency. Although modernist homes entrenched the appearance of the land as an empty and ahistorical platform for architectural experimentation, the buildings were nodes within a systematized landscape of trade and migration enabling the occupation and commodification of land (and everything on it) that had been planned and constructed over the prior two centuries. The land was not pregiven as an undefined “constitutive outside” of nature or law.⁶⁴ Instead, it had been designed through competing projects: Indigenous political orders and modes of land stewardship on the one hand, and the spatial expansions of capitalist empire-building on the other.⁶⁵

Inland Empire: California Modernism, Inside Out

This book addresses different aspects of the relationship between Indigenous and modernist technics—reframing this relationship around the land politics from where it actually emerged rather than as a tendentious dialectic to be sublimated or disavowed.⁶⁶ A simple territorial map locating seminal



1.5 Aerial view of the Upper Coachella Valley with Palm Springs at the base of Mount San Jacinto. In the foreground (bottom right), the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks cut diagonally across the sand. In the middle ground, multiple tract-housing projects are under construction, showing the spread of suburbanization in the Colorado Desert, ca. 1950s. Courtesy of Palm Springs Historical Society. All Rights Reserved.

Desert Modern homes would show that their history was deeply contingent on their locations abutting Native American reservation lands; this was a crucial condition of possibility for their formal and technical innovations.⁶⁷ Palm Springs itself was built on and around the Agua Caliente's checkerboarded reservation—a common pattern of Native landownership under US colonialism, though not often present in urbanized areas dominated by settler development. Classic modernist works like Neutra's Desert House and Miller House (1937) were in fact perched directly across the divide between US land and Tribal land (plates 4 and 5).

The checkerboard resulted from nineteenth-century settlement projects. As the United States ramped up the colonization of California, the tracks of the transcontinental Southern Pacific Railroad were laid across the Coachella Valley in 1876. The train brought more visitors to the area, first for agriculture



1.6 Smith House, Case Study House No. 16, Los Angeles, California, 1958. Craig Ellwood Associates, architects. Photograph by Marvin Rand. Marvin Rand Archive, College of Environmental Design, Cal Poly, Pomona.

and then for tourism. However, the state's payment to the railroad was in alternate one-square-mile land sections, leaving a checkerboard pattern of private and public landownership along the US land grid. Thus, when President Ulysses Grant signed the executive order creating the Agua Caliente Reservation in the same year (1876), only the public, even-numbered sections were reserved for the Agua Caliente. This interlocking pattern became fundamental to the subsequent development of the region, including its modernist architecture. More than two dozen additional reservations would be created in the Inland Empire over the next three decades, making it the area with the highest number of federally recognized Indigenous nations in the entire United States—a “perforated” mode of sovereignty that created a complex legal terrain for Native struggle (plate 6).⁶⁸

As the city of Palm Springs grew, it did so mostly on the non-reservation private sections. Settler authorities actively mobilized the checkerboard pattern into a series of impediments, neither fully allowing the Tribe to engage in land sales or leases nor recognizing their sovereign jurisdiction to craft their own laws, zoning policies, or plans. As a result, by the time of Palm Springs' touristic explosion in the 1930s, the reservation land appeared empty and "untouched"—*terra nullius* for modernist experimentation.⁶⁹ In reality, Tribal development was being legally thwarted by what Agua Caliente Tribal Chairwoman Vyola Olinger called the checkerboard's "fragmented jurisdiction."⁷⁰

This fragmented territorial pattern throughout Southern California effectively blocked development on large inland areas of the state—but in so doing, it also created a bank of land for settlers' aestheticization and speculation. In other words, part of the reason Desert Modern buildings came to be canonized as architecturally exemplary has to do with the colonial history of the lands they occupied, a basic relationship—the politics of architecture and land under US settler colonialism—that has been largely neglected within the field of architectural history.⁷¹ Accounting for this relationship requires a critical reconstruction of the established genealogy of midcentury modernism in California, a process that must be understood as codifying an "inside-out" logic: ostensibly subaltern spaces, margins, peripheries, and hinterlands becoming the sites for momentous political and economic changes due to the capitalist drive for land.⁷²

In California, this means contending with the history of the Inland Empire, as its relatively remote location from the more urbanized coast made possible two crucial historical phenomena in the first decades of the twentieth century. On the one hand, as a repository of seemingly empty land, it became an operational and sacrificial landscape for the United States at large, key to the formation of a new postwar US hegemony. On the other hand, the Inland Empire remained a haven for Native American nations until precisely midcentury—it was only with the development of projects in rural San Diego, Palm Springs, and the surrounding deserts from the 1920s onward that systematic federally sponsored dynamics of spatial removal and assimilation effectively began, through modernist designs.⁷³

This juxtaposition underscores why both midcentury modernization and modernism *required* Native termination, even as certain industries—especially tourism and architecture—benefited considerably from the legal limbo in which Native land was mired. As long as the land remained empty and undevelopable, it would be eminently exploitable visually, recreation-ally, and financially as a speculative real estate asset.⁷⁴

“Indians were California’s architects. Natives built their structures of found and tended-to natural materials, creating homes and communal structures that were essentially part of the environment. California Indian buildings were temporary by design, leaving few traces on the landscape. The settlements of California Indians showed them living lightly, responsibly, and sustainably. Native ways of using the environment contrasted profoundly with that of early European settlers, who valued the land primarily for the extractive resources it could provide.”⁷⁶

Native societies throughout Southern California were structured around a “kin-communal” mode of production, whereby “collective control and appropriation” of materials and resources were codified in social norms, laws, and practices based on cooperation between and across different villages, families, and divisions of labor, which were not strictly gendered.⁷⁷ Thus, the idea of the single-family home as a nuclear unit of society did not exist; rather, entire communities were the unit of social reproduction, involving a number of villages organized cooperatively.⁷⁸ While political and spiritual leadership was often hereditary, the broader community of elders held effective say over leaders’ legitimacy and tenure, ensuring that their mode of government remained one of “democratic form: autonomous self-sufficient villages linked together by kinship, marriage, exchange relations, and similar languages.”⁷⁹ Geopolitical confederations among different nations were common before colonization and have continued to this day.⁸⁰

Against these political structures, the Inland Empire’s modernization was driven since the nineteenth century by an influx of exploited and indentured labor into the region, including Native labor.⁸¹ Before then, the Native nations of the Inland Empire were relatively undisturbed by Spanish and Mexican colonialism: In the 1840s, before the Mexican-American War and eventual incorporation of California into the United States in 1850, the state’s Native population stood at around 150,000 people, about half of what it had been before the arrival of Spanish missionaries in the late eighteenth century.⁸² Although the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo between the United States and Mexico (1848) had guaranteed three-quarters of the land in the new state of California for Native people, this provision was not upheld by the United States—in fact, Native people were denied suffrage, citizenship, and land rights.⁸³ By the 1850s, at the height of the Gold Rush, the state had begun an organized genocidal campaign to eliminate Native Americans—“only 30,000 survived the following maelstrom.”⁸⁴ The state’s first piece of legislation, the ironically titled Act for the Government and Protection of Indians (1850) was passed summarily in nine days and established a “de jure system

of California Indian servitude,” stipulating that white settlers could arrest Native American adults for “loitering” in public spaces and organizing a system of “convict-leasing legislation” that effectively legalized Native slavery.⁸⁵

The act also made it easier to dispossess and exploit Native workers. It transferred all Native jurisdiction to local settlers—including contested land settlements in places like Los Angeles and San Diego; made Native American testimony against whites inadmissible in court; sanctioned the kidnapping and exploitation of Native children; prohibited Native landscape management practices; and compelled and deputized Native leaders to enforce these regulations on their own people. As such, the coerced exploitation of Native Americans—the region’s main source of labor—working for little or no pay in the ranches and fields of Southern California became commonplace.⁸⁶

Parallel to this systematic campaign of genocide, criminalization, slavery, and exploitation, the state dispatched three “Indian agents” in 1851 to negotiate land treaties with California’s Native nations.⁸⁷ Eighteen treaties were signed in the Native villages of Temecula and Santa Ysabel, granting Native nations about a seventh of the state’s entire land area (see plate 10).⁸⁸ However, these land concessions were strongly opposed by the settlers and ranchers who dominated Southern California’s politics, which led to the treaties being secretly left unratified by Congress—a fact that was only disclosed by the United States in 1905.⁸⁹ Instead, in 1851 Congress passed an Act to Ascertain and Settle the Private Land Claims in California, which was used to prevent the certification of Native land titles through bureaucratic obfuscations and manipulations, effectively dispossessing the majority of Native Americans from their lands.⁹⁰

In tandem with this act, a policy of reservations was enacted to contain the Native population in what many considered “as something between a prison and a concentration camp.”⁹¹ Meanwhile a newspaper “suggested that the federal government might purchase Baja California and there erect a massive reservation.”⁹² These policies led to the coercive acculturation of Native Americans in the 1850s and 1860s to the US capitalist system, many of whom “preferred to pursue highly modified versions of their traditional economies in the interstices and beyond the boundaries of the towns, ranches, farms, [and] vineyards” and accept meager reservations under duress as a way of holding on to some of their land.⁹³

By 1860, approximately 20 percent of an estimated total population of 35,000 Native people in Southern California worked as domestic laborers, with many uncounted because they were either in reservations or considered “in flight or rebellion.”⁹⁴ In 1862, the federal government passed the Pacific

Railway Act and the Homestead Act, which transformed the region into a new national market for agricultural goods and a destination for settlers. Many Native Americans worked in the construction of the Southern Pacific and other railroad projects through the 1870s.⁹⁵ At the same time, speculative agricultural ventures were taking up more land, leading the state to designate further Native American reservations to contain the conflict between encroaching settlers and Indigenous peoples.

The same capitalist forces that were fragmenting and containing Native American life were also institutionalized to racialize and govern migrant populations such as Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, and Hispanic workers, who were channeled toward laboring in mines, farms, fields, construction, and domestic service.⁹⁶ Racial discrimination abetted the promise of desert homesteads for white settlers who flocked to the Inland Empire to organize horticultural ventures. By the early twentieth century, as the political and economic leaders of Los Angeles became notoriously anti-organized labor and sought to attract disaffected industrial corporations from the East, ever larger numbers of workers were drawn to Southern California, causing land prices to spike and leading to the speculative housing developments that established its enduring racially segregated land-use pattern.⁹⁷ The growth of Los Angeles led to more tourists and settlers arriving in the Inland Empire, many seeking to work the land as part of policymakers' plans for "internal colonization."⁹⁸

In tandem with urban industrial growth, by the mid-twentieth century the Inland Empire was reconstituted as the ultimate frontier of Southern California's suburbanization—an abundant reserve of land and resources, including surplus labor, opened for plunder by large and small capitalists.⁹⁹ Given the increasing competition for land, consolidation ensued: Agricultural monopolies turned the Inland Empire from a site of white individual and cooperative settlement to one of corporate conglomerates serving the food needs of the entire nation.¹⁰⁰ In parallel, settler communities began incorporating as cities in order to govern themselves—and often, in order to protect their status as racial and class havens. As a result, the threats to Native American land bases also increased: Large areas were now in contention in terms of jurisdiction and land use. Thus, the continued development of Southern California at midcentury was premised on terminating Native landownership and self-governance.

Throughout, however, Native nations continued resisting this wave of colonial settlement, now taking shape through modernist technics, eventually resulting in the paradoxical example of the Agua Caliente's Palm Springs

Spa in 1960. Before then, in the first half of the twentieth century, resistance had taken shape spatially through the continued building of Native architectures within and across reservations, the development of housing and infrastructure in the Indian New Deal, and pan-Indigenous organizations, such as the Mission Indian Federation, which institutionalized its own political, legal, and security systems as a direct and explicit challenge to US sovereignty and jurisdiction.¹⁰¹

Epistemologies of Land

These Native jurisdictional challenges took place through formal legal and political channels, via meetings with officials and lawsuits in state and federal courts.¹⁰² But jurisdictional challenges were also codified in other ways. At stake in this struggle wasn't just a contest for land but also "an epistemological framing, a way of seeing and not seeing" the land.¹⁰³ Part of the reason modernist architecture wielded hegemonic power was the way it naturalized certain ways of framing, seeing—and not seeing—the land. For this reason, it is important to denaturalize the epistemologies by which land was apprehended—physically, aesthetically, technically, and cognitively. If liberalism encodes particular relations between subjects and worlds, liberal modes of *design* are a key way in which such figurations are materialized.

For California modernists, design was a way of synthesizing the dialectic between human agency and nature, with "land" generally being cast as a natural object available to human subjects for manipulation, resulting in landscapes dominated by architecture. Even when this relationship was construed in subtle or romantic terms, the land's Indigenous histories and presences were subordinated to modernist narratives and imperatives.¹⁰⁴ The desert, in particular, lent itself to this highly gendered frontier binary—pioneering men making the desert bloom.¹⁰⁵ Whether it was Gill's redemptive architectures inspired by the ideals of the Arts & Crafts movement or Albert Frey's sublimations of the Inland Empire as a universal space of "unlimited possibility" for architectural experimentation, modernist works weren't just the result of abstract, aesthetic speculation—they also rested on particular understandings of land.¹⁰⁶ Yet they mostly assumed the land as an unchanging epistemic datum, not something that required translation across epistemologies.

However, as I show in this book, midcentury modernism was intimately configured by intersecting histories, entangling diverse epistemologies of settler colonization and its resistance by Indigenous nations. Modernist

practices did not develop in a historical or epistemic vacuum but rather were codified in relation to other ways of knowing and acting on the land—what I call “epistemologies of land” to problematize the ways in which narrations and representations of land become naturalized, escaping historical and political contestation.¹⁰⁷

To open up naturalized epistemologies to contestation means engaging the problem of translation—how can one use a particular discourse, such as architectural history and theory, to engage modes of seeing, understanding, and being that inherently challenge that discourse’s hegemonic status, whether as a matter of linguistic difference, cultural literacy, or even access?¹⁰⁸ These are thorny issues of positionality that require careful comparative analyses across epistemologies to parse how frames of legibility and legitimation are organized, authorizing some representations and disavowing others.¹⁰⁹ Complicating matters further, moreover, despite the asymmetric power relations produced by colonialism, translations and mistranslations occur in multiple directions—not only from metropole to periphery, but also from the margins to the center, with hegemony contingently at play in all cases.¹¹⁰ From this perspective, we can ask: How does architecture organize land relations of perception, use, governance, and domination, and how does it do so in hegemonic or counterhegemonic ways?¹¹¹

Midcentury California modernism is one such hegemonic epistemology of land, constituted in dialectical relation to the counterhegemonic land epistemologies and practices of Native Californians. Although few, if any, architectural histories of California modernism have taken up this comparative inquiry, there have been many critical histories written about the Inland Empire, including many recent Native American ones.¹¹² These histories reframe the very grounds upon which settler mythologies are built, not just by foregrounding different populations’ concerns, but also by expanding the range of ways of seeing and experiencing the land.

The contemporary Cahuilla photographer and writer Lewis deSoto, for example, describes the Inland Empire as a substantively more profound and exhilarating place than the California coast. The desert, he writes, is able to capture “the haze of past, present, and future” in all its simultaneity—a “more ancient and primal” place where “all the efforts of humanity feel like a thin crust applied on the surface.”¹¹³ Here, cosmologies, systems of thought, political action, and modes of stewarding or destroying the land compete in an unruly and explosive contest for hegemony. Observing the sublime antinomy of this struggle in the Inland Empire, he comments on modernism’s brutal changes over the land with calculated ambivalence, mixing haunting

and wonder, melancholy and elation: “It was an empire of things. Oranges, tract homes, steel, freeways, earthquakes and floods, desert and deep water. Crackling fire in the hills. It was an empire of smog, the asthma it gave me, that is still with me to this day. It was the empire of mountains, deserts, and weird inland seas. It was marvelous and abject. It was filled with opposites: blue mountains with white snow presiding over crispy weeds and sunbaked lots, balmy palms.”¹¹⁴ By connecting Cahuilla visuality and language with the modern dynamics that shape land use and change, deSoto offers bridges between worlds and epistemologies that are often understood as separate. His account does not deny either the Indigeneity of the place nor its modernity, epitomized in the various transformations of the land. Rather, he shows that the Inland Empire’s singularly modern phenomena, “the full range of elements that compel and inspire—the vast public works, the neighborhoods both grand and beat down, the air fragrant with citrus and acrid from smog and industry”—were here modulated through a “redistribution of power as it related to cosmology,” both settler and Indigenous (plate 7).¹¹⁵

DeSoto’s is a project of “(re)storying the land,” in the words that Gabrielino-Tongva scholars Theresa Stewart-Ambo and Kelly Stewart have used to describe efforts to “(re)write/right/rite the past for a prosperous Indigenous future.”¹¹⁶ This is not just a celebration of sublimated diversity, a happy synthesis that may be easily accommodated by US liberal multiculturalism, but an epistemology of land unique to the Inland Empire—and distinct from the colonial ones reviewed in each chapter of this book, which sought to integrate Indigeneity at the price of land dispossession.

The chief difference between liberal and radical Indigenous conceptions of land is the latter’s focus on active relationality. According to Tanana Athabascan scholar Dian Million, Indigenous peoples’ epistemologies are co-constituted via land “practices and disciplines of place, the protocol for relations between people, all life forms, spirit, and entity that are the places we inhabit.”¹¹⁷ Native “land” doesn’t mark a simple territorial claim, a geographically bounded space, but is rather a system of interdependencies among human and nonhuman entities that must be *enacted*.¹¹⁸ Thus, Indigenous sovereignty cannot be understood as static—referencing an inert plot of earth or a set of written precepts—but is instead intrinsically embodied and in motion, always requiring interpretation and performance.¹¹⁹

This is precisely the opposite of notions of property and sovereignty under US hegemony, which structurally prefigure Native immobility or death as conditions of their own existence. For Million, Indigenous sovereignty challenges this hegemonic sovereignty, offering instead “the power

of lived and performed epistemological practices that might possibly be *change* rather than an irretrievable loss, a fountain of sorrow, or an object of recovery.”¹²⁰ Similarly, Seneca scholar Mishuana Goeman writes that Indigenous “(re)mapping is not just about regaining what is lost and returning to an original and pure point in history, but instead understanding the processes that have defined our current spatialities to sustain vibrant Native futures.”¹²¹ In this definition, land is alive with emergent and unpredictable relations—not merely haunted by past traumas and ongoing predations, and not just a generic template for environmental stewardship, but an opportunity for critical renewal in the very process of examining and making Indigenous spatialities.¹²²

To see Indigenous land as active and alive, beyond the generic epistemological templates of midcentury modernism, is a key challenge posed by this book. The history of Native American relations to architecture and planning complicates hegemonic narratives, suggesting that modernism was always entangled with its “others”—even when it systematically disavowed the alternative epistemologies of land on which it was built.¹²³

Structure of the Book

This book is structured around architectures that articulated historical dynamics of Indigenous termination and survivance, prototyping spatial techniques of neoliberalization and resistance. Each chapter examines a particular epistemology of land as it was transformed by a particular architectural discourse or technique, illuminating specific connections between midcentury modernism, settler-colonial capitalism, and struggles for Native American self-determination.

Chapter 1 shows how struggles over *sovereignty* in Southern California since the nineteenth century construed particular histories and ways of occupying the land that disavowed Native labor over it, including Indigenous economic and geopolitical governance systems that were articulated around the ramada as a key spatial technology. Instead of seeing such systems of governance in Native architectures, modernist designers and historians—from Irving Gill and Albert Frey to Frederick Gutheim and Catherine Bauer—concerned themselves with the ramada as a “primitive hut,” an ideological symbol of architectural and racial evolution rather than a node in a different epistemological and geopolitical network. In this way, a particular architectural legacy of historical legitimization emerged that appropriated certain technical aspects of the ramada while eliding its Indigenous

significance, assimilating it as an *architectural type* akin to colonial mission courtyards, and thus obscuring and replacing other ways of organizing politics and land. The chapter explores how historical genealogies and epistemologies of architecture are themselves enmeshed in the problem of representing sovereignty—both seeking to legitimate particular discourses of sovereignty as well as construing the land technics that underpin sovereign claims through particular representational means, including ethnography, photography, cartography, and architectural typology.

These struggles for architectural and political definition are examined further in chapter 2, with a focus on how Native American reservations and allotments problematized the legal and regulatory distinction between sovereignty and *property*. Analyzing the social-scientific methods deployed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the 1930s, the chapter traces a *spatial turn* in logics and instruments that enrolled Native identities and economies into state regulation, including the establishment of metrics for *community development*, housing, and its others—criminalization and dispossession. Through technologies of inscription like social surveys and performance evaluations of gendered architectural vernaculars, an apparatus of community inclusion was produced that could, ironically, be refashioned as a tool of exclusion once termination policies were mobilized in the postwar period. The rationalization of allotment as a *technocratic design project* heralded the prototyping of neoliberal policies of land and subjectivity following the emerging models of transaction costs and property rights emanating from hegemonic schools of thought in law and economics. Victor Gruen's designs for the Agua Caliente Reservation were a key instrument in this rationalization of Native American allotment, which took place amid the wholesale expulsion of non-Native labor from the reservation in the 1950s and 1960s.

Chapter 3 examines how architectural design structured a corporate *logistics* complex that systematically dislocated labor in this period. Tracing the techno-politics of an increasingly monopolized yet fragmented construction industry, it shows how technologies of architectural *prefabrication* were crucial to the delamination of workers according to race and class. Canonical midcentury modernist architects like Albert Frey, William Cody, Donald Wexler, and William Krisel were influential actors in this field, designing divisions of labor and logistical assemblages for maximum managerial efficiency and profitability, which reproduced the logics of human expulsion and land dispossession that made them possible in the first place. Such visions of techno-economic integration became central to the United States' ideological bid during the Cold War, grounding the project of deploying

American technology transfer through systems of construction—particularly housing—as a utopian solution to global “underdevelopment.”

Relations between architectural production and political organization are further explored in chapter 4, which focuses on how the Inland Empire’s pattern of explosive growth was predicated on the extraction and distribution of groundwater to feed the suburbanization of land, organized through new technologies of *environmental design*. Massive developments in agriculture and tourism—such as the expansion of golf courses in the desert—were possible because of particular arrangements of *jurisdiction* over groundwater between local, state, and federal authorities. The Agua Caliente, however, had an ancestral stake in such water. Their claims over groundwater challenged the state’s jurisdiction through their development of the Palm Springs Spa in the 1950s—a project that exposed the precarious ways in which water and Tribal jurisdiction were politically, culturally, technically, and economically apportioned.

The complex mechanisms of delegated authority that the Tribe had to contend with in order to develop the project contrasted sharply with the generalized pattern of desert development, where individual property owners could simply dig wells and claim the water as their own. The chapter explores this private infrastructure model through the building of Sunnylands, the so-called Camp David of the West, a sprawling estate designed by A. Quincy Jones and Frederick Emmons for Walter and Eleanor Annenberg at Rancho Mirage in the late 1960s. This project boasted its own private golf course, having been designed as a monument to an emerging American neoliberal consensus organized around the purported efficiency of natural resource allocation through private market mechanisms.

Finally, the coda explores how neoliberal *hegemony* was naturalized architecturally through the incorporation of Native aesthetics—a culmination of the idea that midcentury modernism could effectively take root in particular locales of the world, becoming a paragon of modernist regionalism. The chapter addresses this liberal confluence between regionalism, Indigenous rights, and democratic capitalism, as modeled in the early postwar period via efforts of US and Latin American elites to formalize diplomatic, political, and economic ties between the Native peoples of North and South America. This marked a hegemonic shift toward *Indigenism* that disavowed the more radical ambitions of the American Indian Movement and other projects for Indigenous decolonial modernization. This conclusion reflects on the problem of hegemony and the fate of Indigenous movements for self-determination worldwide at the end of the termination period, arguing

that midcentury modern architecture attempted to symbolize Indigeneity precisely as a mode of hegemonic co-option.

Other Modernities

To regionalize modernism was to make modernism appear more natural in its place, to naturalize the conditions of modernization by which it was designed and built—attempting to neutralize the anticapitalist potential of the Red Power movement. This effort affected Native peoples directly but without their full and free consent. Just as the principles of neoliberalism were beginning to gain ground among governing elites, Congress passed the Indian Self-Determination Act in 1975, which had been promoted by President Nixon (a regular guest at Sunnylands). At the same time, Native American vernacular architecture was beginning to be institutionalized in practice, history, and theory, as shown by Judith Chafee's *Ramada House* of 1975 and a steady growth of publications on the subject since then.¹²⁴

Today, the uncritical and symbolic reappropriation of Native design as an unchanging panacea continues unabated, a premise that both racializes and essentializes it while disavowing the very realities of Indigenous histories and futurities. Such a homogenizing view neglects the sheer variety of ways in which Indigenous architects and thinkers are developing their work.¹²⁵ Similarly, the case studies assembled here show that there never was a modern architecture without Indigenous political struggles and that, indeed, as scholars like Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, Philip Deloria, and Jean O'Brien have argued, "Indigenous peoples have always been modern."¹²⁶

Both discourses of subjugation, such as neoliberalism, and of resistance, such as critical Indigenous theory, merit closer historical architectural examinations in light of the actual spatial struggles of Indigenous peoples beyond those offered by voluntarist desires of "delinking" from modernity.¹²⁷ Modernity isn't done with us, so we're not done with it.¹²⁸ Addressing modernity as something more than merely oppressive—as holding emancipatory potentials despite its brutal history—requires parsing the issues of translation, projection, and sublimation that have often accompanied the projects and discourses of both its proselytizers and its antagonists.¹²⁹ This is not merely a problem of replacing one epistemology with another but of understanding how epistemologies are embodied and emplaced—how they come to be encoded in the material world through particular procedures and operations. Epistemologies don't exist in the abstract. In this sense, *design* can be

understood as embodying particular mediatory techniques between epistemologies and worlds; attention to design products and techniques can open up the politics of land and architecture to more careful analyses—attentive to multiple histories, multiple relationalities, and multiple contradictions.

As the various case studies of this book show, midcentury modern architecture is much more dialectical, ambiguous, and multivalent than its canonical historiography would suggest. Its epistemologies and its histories are not homogenous and unalloyed but rather layered and complex—including myriad engagements with Native American epistemologies and histories of design. Building situated epistemic frameworks to understand and challenge architectural modernity's contradictions and multiplicities is a key condition of possibility for thinking and acting against the twinned structures of capitalism and colonialism—to write more critical histories, and to build other modernities.

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Notes

Introduction. Midcentury Modernism: Architectures of Termination and Survivance

- 1 Bean, *From Time Immemorial*, 609.
- 2 Vizenor, *Manifest Manners*.
- 3 Dr. Sean Milanovich, personal conversation with author, April 26, 2024. The Tribe later turned to JCJ Architecture, a large corporate firm based in Phoenix, Arizona, and specializing in casinos, to build on Jones's conceptual design. The new cultural center, which includes a museum, spa, plaza, and gardens, opened to the public in November 2023.
- 4 Sinatra, "Spa Hotel Is Worth Preserving."
- 5 Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, "Palm Springs Spa Hotel Complex—100 North Indian Canyon Drive," www.pspreservationfoundation.org/Spa-Hotel-Complex/.
- 6 As Johnpaul Jones wrote, his project was "a modern architectural design abstraction of the Agua Caliente cultural artifacts and their architecture, not a copy of their traditional buildings." Cited in Malnar and Vodvarka, "Contemporary Native American Projects," 798.
- 7 On how modern architectural design both reflects and embodies these contradictions, see Fortin, "From *Indian* to *Indigenous* Agency."
- 8 Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*; Novak, *New Democracy*.
- 9 For intellectual and geographic histories of neoliberalism, see Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason*; Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*; Mirowski and Plehwe, *Road from Mont Pèlerin*; Gerstle, *Rise and Fall*.
- 10 Slobodian, *Globalists*. See also Cooper, *Counterrevolution*.
- 11 Slobodian, *Crack-Up Capitalism*, 3.
- 12 I use the term *settler colonialism* to describe a mode of colonization where settlers seek to replace Indigenous nations and their existing legal systems

with their own, seeking full territorial control rather than merely the exploitation of human and nonhuman resources while remaining based in their own nations. There is a rich body of literature on the overlaps and differences between the fields of settler colonialism, postcolonialism, decolonialism, and Indigenous studies. See, for example, Bhambra, “Postcolonial and Decolonial Dialogues”; Te Punga Somerville, “OMG Settler Colonial Studies”; Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism”; Mamdani, “Beyond Settler and Native.” For reflections within architecture, see, for example, Weizman, *Hollow Land*; Osayimwese, “From Postcolonial to Decolonial Architectural History”; Herscher and León, “At the Border of Decolonization.”

- 13 The Inland Empire is not an official geographic designation but rather an idea launched in the early twentieth century to attract speculative investment to the rural and desert areas east of the urbanized Southern California coast, from San Diego to Los Angeles. “The *Los Angeles Times* began throwing the term around less precisely between 1910 and 1920 to alternately describe . . . any place considered rich with agricultural or development potential. . . . Beginning in the 1950s, when the state Department of Commerce lumped the region together, ‘Inland Empire’ became a convenient economic term . . . It could mean everything east of Los Angeles.” Rosenblatt, “‘Inland’ for Sure.”
- 14 On the ideology of US supremacy, see Wertheim, *Tomorrow, the World*. For countervailing histories from third and fourth world perspectives, see Manuel and Posluns, *Fourth World*; Mazower, *Governing the World*; Lightfoot, *Global Indigenous Politics*; Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire*.
- 15 On Euro-American colonial ideology, see, for example, Schmitt, *Nomos of the Earth*. For problematizations of liberalism, see, for example, Moreton-Robinson, *White Possessive*; Povinelli, *Geontologies*; Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time*; Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*; Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*.
- 16 See, for example, Fraser, “Behind Marx’s Hidden Abode”; Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*; Bell, “What Is Liberalism?”; Slobodian, *Globalists*; Connell and Dados, “Where in the World?”; Brown, *Undoing the Demos*; Ferreira da Silva, “On Difference Without Separability.”
- 17 For recent theorizations of neoliberalism within architectural history, see Fontenot, *Non-Design*; Mattsson et al., *Neoliberalism on the Ground*; Shvartzberg Carrió, “Foucault’s ‘Environmental’ Power”; Spencer, *Architecture of Neoliberalism*. For parallel approaches in other disciplines, see Murphy, *Economization of Life*; Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception*.
- 18 See, for example, O’Brien, *American Indian Tribal Governments*; Williams, *American Indian in Western Legal Thought*; Bruyneel, *Third Space of Sovereignty*; Rana, *Two Faces of American Freedom*.
- 19 As K-Sue Park has argued, the 1930s represented an attempt to construe American law as race-blind despite the previously frank and widespread

acknowledgment of the “racial violence that gave rise to much of American property law.” Park, “Property and Sovereignty,” 1495.

- 20 Ponchetti Daly, “Fractured Relations at Home,” 427.
- 21 All these terms are problematic; part of a violent colonial history and also homogenizing of hugely different peoples, histories, and cultures. While recognizing the contested and conflictive valences of such terminology, in this book I follow historical actors’ own chosen forms of identification, where available. Thus, for example, historical communications from the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians’ political leadership often used the term *Indian* to refer to Tribal members. The word *Tribe* was used for the Agua Caliente Tribal Council, and is thus capitalized throughout, as is the Agua Caliente Reservation. With these important qualifications in mind, where no particular historical-contextual usage seems applicable, the terms *Native American* and *Indigenous* are used interchangeably.
- 22 See the preface and this introduction’s conclusion for discussions of my own positionality and this book as an epistemological object in its own right, at the intersection of different political desires and histories.
- 23 My use of the term *racial capitalism* is indebted to historical studies in the field of law and political economy. See, for example, Blalock, “Law and the Critique of Capitalism”; Byrd et al., “Economies of Dispossession”; Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*; Day, *Alien Capital*; Bhandar, *Colonial Lives of Property*.
- 24 For social histories, see Kray, “Second-Class Citizenship”; Culver, *Frontier of Leisure*.
- 25 Historic Resources Group, *City of Palm Springs*, 32.
- 26 On these racial and economic dynamics in the Inland Empire, see De Lara, *Inland Shift*.
- 27 McManus Real Estate, “Palm Springs, California,” advertisement, local hotels brochure, ca. 1930, C. C. Pierce Collection, Huntington Library and Archives, San Marino, CA, 27.
- 28 On the shift from “traditionalists” to “progressives,” see Ortner and du Pont, *You Can’t Eat Dirt*, 240–41.
- 29 Kray, “Path to Paradise,” 85–126; Ringwald, *Agua Caliente Indians and Their Guardians*; US Department of the Interior, Palm Springs Task Force, “Report on the Administration of Guardianships and Conservatorships Established for Members of the Agua Caliente Band of Mission Indians, California, March 1968,” Agua Caliente Cultural Museum Archive, Palm Springs, CA.
- 30 In 1968, California Deputy Attorney General Loren Miller Jr. published a report denouncing that Palm Springs had subjected its own citizens to a “City-engineered holocaust.” Miller, “Memorandum on Palm Springs,

Section 14 Demolition,” Office of the Attorney General, Department of Justice, May 31, 1968, Agua Caliente Cultural Museum Archive.

31 With thanks to Nancy Kwak for suggesting that I think about the spa project as a mode of intergenerational investment in the face of imperial coercion.

32 On the continuities between architecture, neoliberal development, and authoritarianism implied here, see Shvartzberg Carrió, “Defending Democracy”; Martin and Zimmerman, *Architecture Against Democracy*. On Native American history and capitalism, see, for example, Harmon, *Rich Indians*; Harmon et al., “Interwoven Economic Histories.”

33 Koshy et al., *Colonial Racial Capitalism*.

34 The land-use agreement, certified by US Supreme Court rulings, finally established the Agua Caliente Band’s right to zone their own land. Ortner and du Pont, *You Can’t Eat Dirt*, 57fn142.

35 Cobb, *Beyond Red Power*.

36 On this historical shift in the United States and other settler nation-states, see Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*; Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*; Johnson, *Land Is Our History*.

37 Gill’s project is discussed further in chapter 1. On the Ramada House, see Domin and McGuire, *Powerhouse*.

38 Hong, *Death Beyond Disavowal*, 17.

39 On the relations between vernacular architecture, primitivism, and modernism implied here, see Heynen, *Sibyl Moholy-Nagy*; Sabatino, “Primitive in Modern Architecture”; Odgers et al., *Primitive*; Chavez, *Indigenizing California Mission Art and Architecture*; Upton, *Holy Things and Profane*.

40 “Design technics” shift attention from “technology” as simple machinic objects to the broader “constellation of interrelated practical, artifactual, and procedural material conditions” that undergird sociotechnical processes. Alexander and May, *Design Technics*, ix. On this periodization of neoliberalism, see Gerstle, *Rise and Fall*. Grace Kyungwon Hong clarifies that “Historically, [neoliberalism] emerged as a response to the liberation movements of the post–World War II period—by which I mean movements for decolonization, desegregation, and self-determination, within and outside of the territorial bounds of the United States” (*Death and Disavowal*, 7).

41 See, for example, Taylor, *Race for Profit*; Pasternak, “Assimilation and Partition”; Byrd et al., *Economies of Dispossession*; Goldstein, *Poverty in Common*, especially chap. 2: “On the Internal Border: Colonial Difference and the Locations of Underdevelopment”; Immerwahr, *Thinking Small*.

42 Blansett et al., *Indian Cities*; Keeler, *American Indians and the American Dream*.

43 See, for example, Demsetz, “Toward a Theory of Property Rights.”

- 44 DeSoto, *Empire*, 3–4. On major Southern California industries in the post-war economy, see Davis, *City of Quartz*; McWilliams, *Southern California*; McWilliams, *Factories in the Field*; Lotchin, *Fortress California*; Starr, *Embattled Dreams*; Starr, *Golden Dreams*; Voyles, *Settler Sea*; Davis, “From Oasis to Metropolis”; Hise, “Nature’s Workshop.”
- 45 Maier, “The Politics of Productivity: Foundations of American International Economic Policy After World War II,” chap. 3 in *In Search of Stability*, 121–52.
- 46 In this sense, the Inland Empire is a key site for an emerging body of literature mapping the continuities (and discontinuities) between histories of US federal-Native affairs and US foreign policy. See, for example, Williams, “United States Indian Policy”; Black, *Global Interior*; DeLay, “Indian Politics, Empire, and the History”; Rosier, “Crossing New Boundaries.”
- 47 Collier, “United States Indian Administration.” On the global discourse of development, see, for example, Escobar, *Encountering Development*. For parallel architectural histories, see Aggregate Architectural History Collaborative, *Architecture in Development*; Levin, *Architecture and Development*.
- 48 Grandin, *Empire’s Workshop*; Slobodian and Plehwe, *Market Civilizations*.
- 49 The roots of neoliberalism are varied and complex. See, for example, Slobodian, *Globalists*; Connell and Dados, “Where in the World?”; Cooper, *Family Values*; Martin and Zimmerman, *Architecture Against Democracy*; Bockman, *Markets in the Name of Socialism*; Offner, *Sorting Out the Mixed Economy* (with thanks to Quinn Slobodian for pointing me to Offner’s arguments).
- 50 Gonzales Toribio, “Contradictions of Neoliberal Multiculturalism,” 368.
- 51 Hong, *Death Beyond Disavowal*, 17.
- 52 By “exceptionalized spaces” I mean legally sanctioned spatial zones where the rule of law has been suspended or modified by the state for a particular end—often ethno-racial segregation, labor exploitation, and capital accumulation. See, for example, Easterling, *Extrastatecraft*; Slobodian, *Crack-Up Capitalism*; Johnson, “Disavowing History.”
- 53 Isenstadt, *Modern American House*.
- 54 Friedman, *American Glamour*, 97.
- 55 Sepulveda, “California’s Mission Projects”; Kryer-Reid, *California Mission Landscapes*; Kropp, *California Vieja*.
- 56 Dr. Sean Milanovich, personal conversation with author, April 26, 2024, reported the loss of access to Agua Caliente burial grounds. On the genealogies of visibility and access to Indigenous lands, see Raheja, “Visual Sovereignty.”
- 57 See, for example, Hess et al., *Palm Springs School*; Cygelman, *Palm Springs Modern*; Chavkin, *Unseen Midcentury Desert Modern*; Stern, *Julius Shulman*;

- Niedenthal, “‘Glamourized Houses’”; Loewy, “Desert House in Palm Springs,” 57; “House in the Desert.”
- 58 Examples are Albert Frey’s Loewy House (1947) and Frey’s own homes (1953, 1963), Dan Palmer and William Krisel’s Twin Palms Estate (1957), William Cody’s Cannon House (1959), Donald Wexler and Richard Harrison’s houses for US Steel (1962), Archibald Quincy Jones and Frederick Emmons’s Sunnylands Estate (1966), and Craig Ellwood’s Max Palevsky House (1970).
- 59 Colomina, *Domesticity at War*; de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire*; Castillo, *Cold War on the Home Front*.
- 60 Hayden, *Grand Domestic Revolution*; Harris, *Little White Houses*; Wilson, *Mid-Century Modernism and the American Body*.
- 61 Lavin, *Form Follows Libido*.
- 62 On single-family housing prototypes, see, for example, McCoy, *Case Study Houses*; Herbert, *Dream of the Factory-Made House*. On formatting the land as suburbia, see Hayden, *Building Suburbia*; Ammon, *Bulldozer*.
- 63 Neutra, *On Building*; Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*.
- 64 Conroy, “Constitutive Outsides or Hidden Abodes?”
- 65 This empire-building territorial project, taking shape through the Jeffersonian land grid since the late eighteenth century, is reviewed in chapter 1. For a longer view of competing regimes of spatial and political order across the Americas, see, for example, Deere, *Invention of Order*.
- 66 For my definition of *technics* in this context, see Shvartzberg Carrió, “Towards an Architectural Theory.” The most influential synthesis of this dialectic within architectural theory was Kenneth Frampton’s “critical regionalism,” which sought to sublimate the antinomy between the globalizing tendencies of modern technical rationality and the cultural particularities of site and craft. This synthesis, however, erased the colonial and capitalist histories that gave rise to it as an epistemic structure in the first place. For Frampton’s original essay, see Frampton, “Towards a Critical Regionalism.” For recent critiques, see Muzaffar, *Modernism’s Magic Hat*; Nolan, “What Is Regional?”
- 67 If the historiography of modernist homes built along the California coast and in urban areas like San Diego and Los Angeles has not (yet) addressed their occupation of unceded Indigenous land, this is partly because nations like the Tongva are still denied federal recognition and thus land rights under US law. See, for example, Stewart-Ambo and Stewart, “From Tovaangar to the University of California”; Chilcote, “‘Time Out of Mind’”; Chilcote, *Unrecognized in California*.
- 68 Akins and Bauer, *We Are the Land*; Slobodian, *Crack-Up Capitalism*; Elden, “Legal Terrain.”

- 69 Shvartzberg Carrió, “Designing *Terra Nullius*.”
- 70 Ortnier and du Pont, *You Can’t Eat Dirt*, 57fn142.
- 71 For some recent reviews, see Axel et al., *Settler Colonial Present*; Nesbit and Waldheim, *Technical Lands*; Allais et al., *Architecture and Land*; Narath, *Solar Adobe*; Lara, *Spatial Theories for the Americas*.
- 72 Veracini, “Suburbia, Settler Colonialism.” Veracini argues that this horizontal “inside-out” drive was purposefully engineered by settler states as an escape valve for the revolutionary tensions that threatened to turn the world vertically “upside down” beginning in the eighteenth century. For a Marxist critique of Veracini’s work (and settler-colonial studies more generally), see Davies, “World Turned Outside In.”
- 73 For earlier histories of Native expulsion in the region, see Hyer, *We Are Not Savages*; Thorne, *El Capitan*.
- 74 See, for example, Akee, “Checkerboards and Coase”; Sutton, “Private Property in Land.”
- 75 Patterson, *From Acorns to Warehouses*, 21; Anderson, *Tending the Wild*.
- 76 Sepulveda, *Native Alienation*, 59. See also Sepulveda, “Our Sacred Waters”; Chavez, *Indigenizing California Mission Art and Architecture*; Ettinger, “Hybrid Spaces.”
- 77 Patterson, *From Acorns to Warehouses*, 42.
- 78 Coulthard calls this an Indigenous “mode of life” in contrast to a “mode of production.” See Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 65; Patterson, *From Acorns to Warehouses*, 44.
- 79 Patterson, *From Acorns to Warehouses*, 45–47.
- 80 Lightfoot et al., “Study of Indigenous Political Economies”; Phillips, *Chiefs and Challengers*.
- 81 Phillips, *Vineyards & Vaqueros*; Rovner, “Architectures of Coloniality”; Andrés, *Power and Control*; Vollmann, *Imperial*.
- 82 Akins and Bauer, *We Are the Land*, 128. Before the arrival of the Spanish, California was the most populated part of North America, with an estimated population of 310,000, a sixth of which lived in Southern California (Cook, *Population of the California Indians*). However, Sean Milanovich estimates the Native population was actually in the millions (Milanovich, personal conversation with author, April 26, 2024).
- 83 Garner, *Broken Ring*, 151; Hyer, *We Are Not Savages*, 50.
- 84 Akins and Bauer, *We Are the Land*, 128, 137.
- 85 Madley, *American Genocide*, 158–59.
- 86 Hyer, *We Are Not Savages*, 60–61; Phillips, *Vineyards & Vaqueros*.
- 87 Akins and Bauer, *We Are the Land*, 144.

- 88 Patterson, *From Acorns to Warehouses*, 107.
- 89 Milanovich, "Treaty of Temecula."
- 90 Hyer, *We Are Not Savages*, 69–70.
- 91 Street, *Beasts of the Field*, 140.
- 92 Hyer, *We Are Not Savages*, 70.
- 93 Patterson, *From Acorns to Warehouses*, 107; Hyer, *We Are Not Savages*, 77.
- 94 Hurtado, "'Hardly a Farm House,'" 248.
- 95 Akins and Bauer, *We Are the Land*, chap. 6, "Working for Land."
- 96 Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*; Day, *Alien Capital*; Karuka, *Empire's Tracks*; Andrés, *Power and Control*; Flores, *Grounds for Dreaming*.
- 97 Nicolaides, *New Suburbia*; Davis, *City of Quartz*; Hise, "'Nature's Workshop'"; Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles*; Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe*; Cuff, *Provisional City*.
- 98 Coman, "Some Unsettled Problems of Irrigation"; Barrows, "Giving the New Settler a Lift."
- 99 De Lara, "Last Suburb," 138.
- 100 Veracini, *World Turned Inside Out*, 203–4; McWilliams, *Factories in the Field*.
- 101 These Native architectures and jurisdictional struggles are reviewed in chapter 1.
- 102 See, for example, Ponchetti Daly, "'American Indian Freedom Controversy.'"
- 103 Hong, *Death Beyond Disavowal*, 17.
- 104 See, for example, Neutra, *On Building*; Marx, *Machine in the Garden*.
- 105 Limerick, *Desert Passages*; Limerick, *Legacy of Conquest*; Worster, *Rivers of Empire*.
- 106 Frey, *In Search of a Living Architecture*, 72. This argument is developed in chapter 1.
- 107 I use *epistemology* rather than *ontology*, to suggest that modernist modes of representing, operationalizing, and co-articulating narrative, legal, and technical dimensions of "land" were critical to how colonial-capitalist territoriality was formed and generalized. Attention to modes of representation illuminates the roles of producer, medium, and user or viewer, thus highlighting the situated and constructed nature of the encounter with land. On epistemology, ontology, generalization, and incommensurability, see Liboiron, *Pollution Is Colonialism*, 152–56; Apter, *Against World Literature*; Povinelli, "Radical Worlds." On the socio-technics of visuality, see, for example, Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*.

Land itself is also not an obvious term. I use it to engage a set of contemporary theoretical discourses where the term has particular currency, including radical Indigenous political thought, where land signifies the core site of political struggles and cosmologies as well as historical materialist analyses. On land as central to Indigenous political struggle, systems, and cosmologies, see Tuck and McKenzie, *Place in Research*; Rivera Cusicanqui, “Ch’ixinakax utxiwa”; Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*; Deloria, *God Is Red*. On land as central to the geographic process by which capital and the modern state historically co-emerged through violent colonial conquest and the exploitation of labor, see Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*; Nichols, *Theft Is Property*. On the process by which land (or “nature”) is commodified as part of the capitalist mode of production, see Smith, *Uneven Development*.

- 108 See, for example, Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*; Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*; Roy, “Grammars of Dispossession.” For recent publications in architecture that have taken up these questions, see McGaw and Pieris, *Assembling the Centre*; O’Brien et al., *Our Voices*; Akcan, *Architecture in Translation*; Nolan, *Savage Mind to Savage Machine*; Kennedy, “Infrastructures of ‘Legitimate Violence’”; Siddiqi, *Architecture of Migration*; Osayimwese, *Africa’s Buildings*.
- 109 On positionality, critique, and comparativism, see, for example, Sunder Rajan, *Multisited*; Táiwò, *Elite Capture*; Asher, “Spivak and Rivera Cusicanqui”; Kornbluh, *Immediacy*.
- 110 The risk of not accounting for the complex directionality of such translations and mistranslations is to essentialize Indigenous architecture as unchanging, pure, or unmediated. Similarly, for example, Itohan Osayimwese writes, “Though notable as an effort to analyze African architecture on its own terms rather than impose seemingly irrelevant western frames of reference, structuralist and phenomenological approaches are problematic precisely because they reinforce a notion of African architecture as immune from external stimuli, incapable of multiple meanings, and fundamentally different from their counterparts elsewhere in the world.” Osayimwese, *Africa’s Buildings*, 113.
- 111 As Antonio Gramsci theorized, dominant rule isn’t merely *imposed*; instead, it is *naturalized* through the production of a prevailing “common sense” enmeshed through institutions, cultural practices, and traditions, critically determining the conditions of the thinkable and politically actionable. These hegemonic regimes of order are as much social—encompassing relations of gender, sexuality, race, family, and kinship—as they are material, through the organization of class, labor, and resources. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 328. See also Anderson, “Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci”; Guha, *Dominance Without Hegemony*.

- 112 See, for example, Akins and Bauer, *We Are the Land*; Milanovich, "Treaty of Temecula"; Sepulveda, "California's Mission Projects"; Smith, *Know We Are Here*; Sepulveda, *Native Alienation*; Chilcote, *Unrecognized in California*.
- 113 DeSoto, *Empire*, 88.
- 114 DeSoto, *Empire*, xii.
- 115 DeSoto, *Empire*, xv, xiii.
- 116 Stewart-Ambo and Stewart, "From Tovaangar to the University of California," 126.
- 117 Million, "Epistemology," 340.
- 118 On this perspective, see also Deloria, *God Is Red*, 173.
- 119 See Barker, *Sovereignty Matters*.
- 120 Million, "Epistemology," 340; emphasis added.
- 121 Goeman, *Mark My Words*, 3.
- 122 On the "ecological Indian" trope, see, for example, TallBear, "Review Essay."
- 123 For an example in a different context, see Deloria, *Becoming Mary Sully*.
- 124 See, for example, Nabokov and Easton, *Native American Architecture*. The anthropological lineages of this discourse are discussed in chapter 1.
- 125 For different examples, see O'Brien et al., *Our Voices*; Grant et al., *Handbook of Contemporary Indigenous Architecture*.
- 126 Saldaña-Portillo, "Indians Have Always Been Modern," 228; Rivera Cusicanqui, "Ch'ixinakax utxiwa"; Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*; O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*, 204.
- 127 On neoliberalism and critical Indigenous theory, see Byrd, *Transit of Empire*; Connell and Dados, "Where in the World?" On delinking from modernity, see Mignolo, *Darker Side of Western Modernity*.
- 128 As Miranda Johnson observes, "a significant problem with anti-modernist, de-historicizing approaches is that they fail to account for their own conditions of possibility." Johnson, "Disavowing History," 2037.
- 129 See, for example, Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*; Friedman, "Periodizing Modernism."

Chapter 1. Sovereignty: The Ramada and Architectural Type

- 1 Arendt, *Human Condition*.
- 2 Arendt, *Human Condition*, 63.
- 3 Kotef, *Colonizing Self*, 62.
- 4 There is a huge body of literature on these "blind spots" in Arendt's thought. For a review, see Kotef, *Colonizing Self*, 55–71.



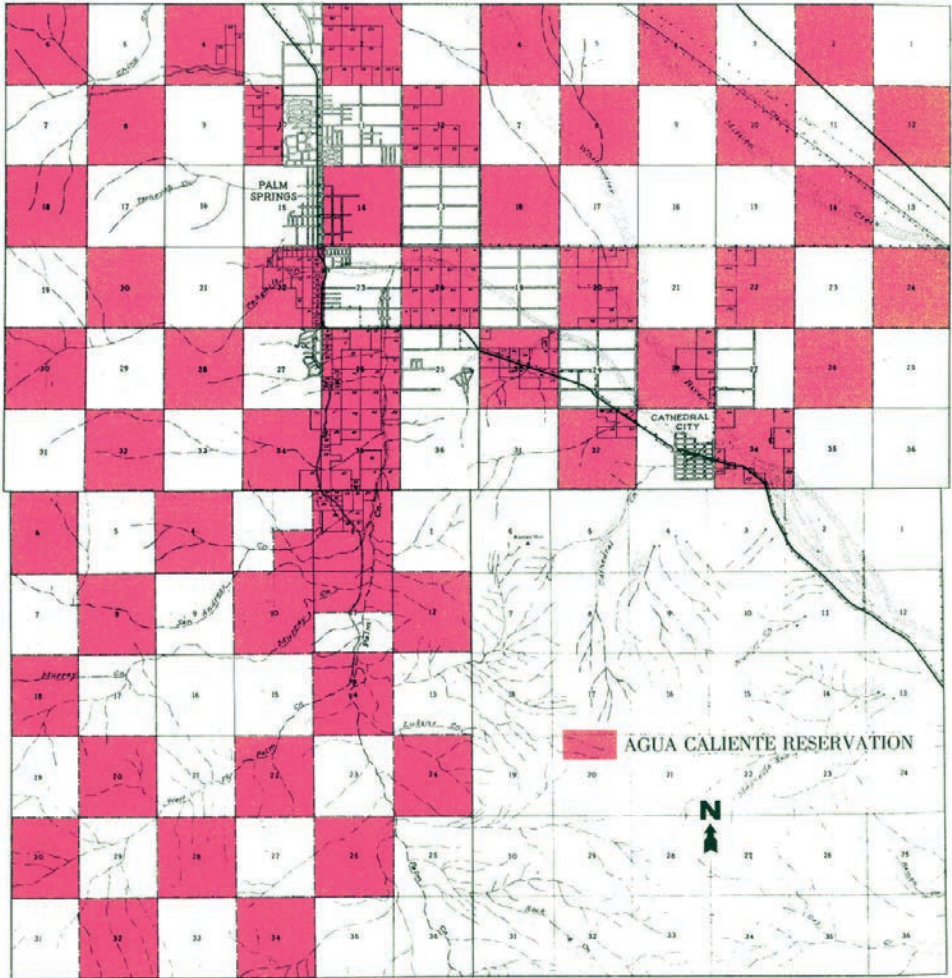
1 Tribal Council Chairwoman Eileen Miguel and developer Sam Banowit under the now-demolished Palm Springs Spa Hotel entrance colonnade. The building was designed by architects William F. Cody in collaboration with the firm of Donald Wexler and Richard Harrison, and with associate architect Philip Koenig. Cover, "Palm Springs Spa Hotel and Mineral Springs: First Anniversary," ca. 1964. Courtesy of Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians.

AGUA CALIENTE RESERVATION

T.4&5S.-R.4&5E.-S.B.B.M.

SCALE 1"= 2640 FT.

RIVERSIDE CO, CALIF



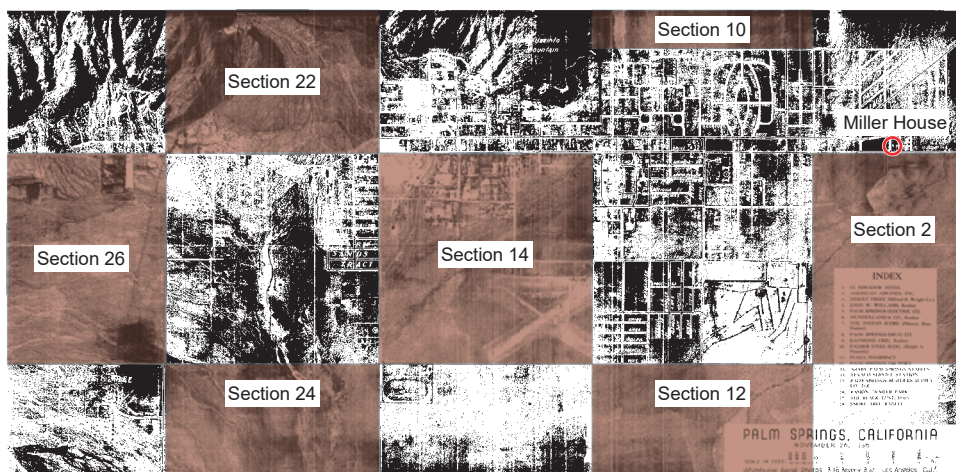
2 Agua Caliente Reservation (red sections). The checkerboard pattern shows one-square-mile reservation sections interspersed with non-reservation sections. Many modernist projects were built at the edges of Agua Caliente Reservation sections, visually appropriating the land as “empty desert.” The 1960s Palm Springs Spa was located at the border of Sections 14 and 15, close to where the label “Palm Springs” appears. Agua Caliente Progress Report, 1962. Courtesy of Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians.



3 A recently demolished housing area in Section 14, in front of the new Palm Springs Spa Hotel, ca. 1964. The caption overleaf reads: "Buildings on leases from Section 14 where the slum area was cleared." Hilton H. McCabe Papers, Collection no. 0018, Special Collections, USC Libraries, University of Southern California.



4 Miller House, 1937. Richard Neutra, architect. Grace Lewis Miller sits in the glassed-in porch, facing east toward the Agua Caliente Indian Reservation. Photo by Julius Shulman. © J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2004.R.10).



5 Location of Richard Neutra's Miller House (circled) in relation to the Agua Caliente Reservation's territorial checkerboard. Aerial photograph, November 1936. Courtesy of Palm Springs Historical Society. All rights reserved.



7 Lewis deSoto, "EMPIRE, Cabazon, CA, 06.11.2013
(Construction debris and wildfire)." Courtesy of Lewis deSoto.