

THE FUTURE OF PLACE

MOORE RUBLE YUDELL



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20/F Manulife Tower
169 Electric Rd, North Point
Hong Kong
Tel: 00852-28672587
Fax: 00852-25050411
E-mail: Kevinchoy@designmediahk.com
www.designmediahk.com

Editing: Matthew Claudel
Proofreading: Katy Lee
Design/Layout: Victoria Lam

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The architects of Moore Ruble Yudell are reflective designers. In a practice that has spanned more than 30 years, the principals have expanded on the valuable lessons they learned from their teacher, Charles Moore, and have passed them on to younger generations of architects. This, to me, is how architecture should be practiced: a collaboration of talented people who continue to evolve a set of shared beliefs and values about architecture in response to contemporary life, keeping that vision alive for architects that will follow. What better reason is there to be an architect?

This book contains a range of recent projects of functional variety and from all over the world. It demonstrates that a carefully considered architectural value system can be adapted and suitable for virtually any client, use, or place. "Place" continues to be the bedrock of MRY's approach to architecture: the making of place, defining it, articulating in, inventing it, celebrating it. These architects see architecture as a place for human life to unfold.

MRY has studied architecture all over the world, attentive to the ways that human beings make themselves at home, in their culture, amid the collected wisdom of the civic and private worlds. MRY understands how architectural form connects with human worth—how architecture speaks to these values, articulates these values, and gives form to them. Because the architects understand how architecture helps us to make a place in the world, MRY's designs never appear arbitrary, or configured just for some arcane effect, or engage just with other architects. One senses in these buildings that architecture is always in service to larger ideas about living, about inhabiting, about making a place in the world to call your own—one connected to shared communal history and personal memory. It is, in short, one of the most demanding and challenging ways to design.

Part of MRY's place-making is aided with an understanding of typology's poetic power. This transforms typology from the way we usually understand it—the "type" of a library, for example, its configuration of spaces and forms, the materials that a library typically is composed of, the functional relationships that a library often displays. MRY also considers the cultural significance of typology—the role of the building in a neighborhood, or at the scale of the city—as well as the poetic weight of a type. What poetic dimension does the library bring to the reader's life? What fantasies does the library make possible in the reader's life? And, MRY asks, how can the type be reinvented to embody new meaning and give new life to the architectural assumptions about a type? The architecture here shows inventive responses to those questions.

From the well of this book's excellent projects, I have drawn eight that I believe capture the essence of such themes and their variations, pursued by MRY for many years. They neatly break down into two projects from each of the four typological realms that structure this book.

Residential Architecture has been a touchstone for MRY for all kinds of projects, residential or not. The house is the place where architecture starts. The Ruddell House (fig. 1) is rich in so many ways. Environmentally, it responds to its spectacular topical site. The house stretches out along the bluff of a hill, facing the sun. John Ruble and Buzz Yudell have reflected thoughtfully about the historical role of the pavilion in architecture—its power to define the place below a sheltering roof. Ruddell is a study in pavilion making. Six of them are tuned to the natural environment, catching prevailing breezes, sunlight, and views. There is also a game here of indoor and outdoor space (seen in many of their other projects) where one blends into the other, challenging us to find the line between the two. The game is never the same, as the time of day, the temperature, the views, and the inhabitants and their activities keep shifting the lines of what is outside and what is inside.

The Livermore House (fig. 2) in California contains some of the same themes as Ruddell, with a strong presence of materials. Throughout this arrangement of pavilions, which in turn are surrounded by an 18,000-acre nature reserve, one finds the celebration of natural materials. The rustic and variegated stonework near the pool is a play of light and shadow throughout the day; zinc roofs capture and reflect the hue of the blue sky; the pavilions are supported in some cases by stout columns of Douglas fir; exposed wood-beam ceilings are a counterpoint to the tight-grained wood floor below your feet.

fig. 1



fig. 2



The design of the U.S. Courthouse in Bakersfield, California (fig. 3), shifts our focus from residential to civic architecture, but the connections between the two are explored in this project. This small courthouse has a civic presence, expressed in a monumental curved concrete wall near the entrance. The interior has a strong sense of domestic architecture, which seems entirely appropriate. The scale of the large lobby—an outdoor/indoor space—is carefully modulated with an articulated wood ceiling and a textured wall of wood and glass, which overlooks a lake.

Another civic project, the U.S. Embassy in Santo Domingo (fig. 4), speaks to the architectural context and sense of place of this Dominican Republic city. Rather than an outpost of U.S. architecture, the embassy reflects the presence of modern architecture in this city, albeit with a Spanish accent. Here, MRY explores a theme of sculpted volumes that slide past each other between screen walls of white limestone.

The architecture of a university is its public identity. The University of Virginia is known primarily through its architecture by Thomas Jefferson, and what could be more intimidating than adding a complex of buildings in close proximity to America's President-Architect? For a new College of Arts and Sciences Center, instead of recreating a miniature version of Jefferson's Great Lawn, MRY distilled UVA's DNA of pavilions on a green, punctuated by a circular central commons (fig. 5).

The identity of the University of California at Berkeley over the past 50 years has been that of an institution engaged with its surrounding community. MRY's re-designed master plan for Sproul Plaza on the Berkeley campus (fig. 6) forges a stronger connection between the university and the community to the south, and extends out to a creek and riparian ecosystem to the north. MRY maintains that its design sensitivity is a product of careful listening. For this project, workshops with students, faculty, and the community helped to define the project and its characteristics.

fig. 3



fig. 4



fig. 5



fig. 6



At a different scale than Sproul, the Manzanita Residential Village at U.C. Santa Barbara (fig. 7) possesses a likewise visceral sense of place. Like Sproul, it is designed to be sustainable. It reaches out in all directions to the existing landscape. The open spaces around which the buildings meander are carefully designed to give the different quads their own unique identity. The central plaza at the heart of the village has the welcoming scale and sense of place of a small seaport village, where locals gather to celebrate community events.

Manzanita uses color to distinguish between living and community space. At Tango (fig. 8) in Malmö, Sweden, color is iconic as a series of vertical landmarks. This housing development has an outside wall that relates to the surrounding urban context. Its interior courtyard is a vibrant stage for community interaction. Eight towers in varying heights, each an intense color, step out like characters in a play. Containing stacked living rooms for each ring of units, the towers play the game of inside/outside space, and put the residents on stage as well. I can't think of a better place for a remake of "Rear Window".

The pace of development in China is break-neck, and the scale of much of this new building has been inhuman, disconnected from China's tradition of exquisitely scaled architecture. MRY's competition-winning master plan for the Tianjin Xin-He residential community (fig. 9) displays the firm's trademark sensitivity to scale and to indoor/outdoor connections. The plan defines two activity centers: a town center and a business center, connected by a meandering promenade along a river. Residential neighborhoods extend east and west from the promenade. Such walkable communities woven along a river could be models for future Chinese development.

Today the discipline of architecture seems all too fascinated with a mixture of formal blobism, recycled classicism, fascistic asceticism, and nihilistic sameness. There appears to be little room for the timeless human need for creating place, celebrating community, honoring materials, learning from the vernacular, building with the environment. The work of Moore Rubel Yudell shows us that great architecture needn't be monumental or self-conscious. Architecture is at its very best when it designed, first and foremost, as a theater for human existence. Have we already reached a point where such a notion is too passé?

The architecture herein says we have not.

fig. 7



fig. 8



fig. 9



Time and space appear to be shrinking under the influence of new technologies. Travel and electronic communication are transforming our lives—our relationships to one another and to place. The culture of architecture reflects this new globalization.

Aspects of this are energizing: cross-cultural understanding, communities of collaboration, extraordinary technologies, a vast array of cultural and environmental experiences.

Yet there are ominous trends in this period of transition. The globalization of architecture can default into the branding of place, the erasure of difference and the co-modification of the environment. How can we work creatively in a manner which embraces the energy of global transformation while celebrating the differences of place and the continuities of culture?

One effective approach is a region-based practice. Architects we greatly admire such as Kengo Kuma, Alvaro Siza, Glenn Murcutt, and Lake Flato have created powerful contemporary works that are inspired by continuities of place and culture.

Moore Ruble Yudell has taken a different path, pursuing an international practice based on a contemporary celebration of place, climate, context and regional culture. Even as we practice globally, our work is inseparable from its site, climate and context. While we explore contemporary ways of building and responding to evolving needs, we seek continuity with the specificity of culture and place. We are connecting to timeless lessons while creating places which nurture present communities and are flexible for future transformations.

The diversity of our practice presented in this volume are recent and current projects, each of which presents its own particular responses, all centered by a commitment to humanistic place making.

Respecting Heritage and Renewing Place

In certain contexts where a highly sensitive historic language of architecture and landscape has been nurtured, we have explored ways of building with great respect for these traditions, reinterpreting their principles with both traditional and contemporary expression.

At the University of Virginia, our South Lawn project revives the historic axis to distant mountains, which Jefferson had begun, only to have it later obstructed. The experience of the new building and landscape connects to the historic campus through classically inspired proportions and planning, yet surprises with an unfolding choreography of contemporary, light-filled places.

At Dartmouth College, we carefully studied the most successful patterns of historic buildings and landscape. Our new academic and residential buildings resonate with the proportions and cadences of the original campus. While the material palette connects to the historic fabric, subtle shifts in form and detail signal the newer rhythm of twenty-first century campus life.

Respecting Tradition and Transforming Place

Some historic settings have provided the opportunity to be both respectful and transformative. At UCLA, the new home for World Arts and Cultures comprises components of historic restoration, adaptively renewed spaces and flexible contemporary places such as the new Kaufman Family Garden Theater. The contrasting elements interact like a jazz composition with shared rhythms and themes, but highly varied expressions. The ensemble reflects the richness of the academic program which embraces a range of art from vernacular to emerging contemporary exploration.

New Places—New Paradigms

Working across many cultures and building types has allowed us to explore evolving paradigms in place-making.

The Tango Housing in Malmö, Sweden is part of a pioneering environmental project. A pedestrian-oriented district was designed to restore vitality and environmental health to a degraded industrial site. The project employed both cutting-edge environmental technology and timeless patterns of low-rise, high-density, urban living. It was envisioned as an urban laboratory and has become a place of pilgrimage for its enlightened environmental and urban design.

On a much larger scale, new housing in the Chun Sen Bi An project in China takes on a daunting contemporary challenge: how to build humane housing at very high density. Typically, projects at this density have created repetitive monoliths which float in space, leaving anonymous and undefined spaces at the street level. Our project uses mid-rise and high-rise buildings to shape and connect the ground plane. Courtyards, gardens, paths and streets emphasize social and environmental connections. The historical pathways and geology of the site are recognized in the new urban planning. Even at great density, there is a strong sense of community and of specificity of place.

At the University of Cincinnati, we collaborated with campus architects and colleagues (Morphosis, Gwathmey Siegel, Hargreaves Associates) to create a new 24/7 center of student life. The campus had recently completed a series of iconic buildings by distinguished architects (Eiseman, Gehry, Graves, Pei Cobb Freed). The client felt that the next challenge was to build equally distinguished buildings but to plan them collaboratively so that the spaces between buildings and the places of community would be more important than the individual buildings. This collaborative process involved programming and masterplanning prior to building design. The result has been such a vibrant contemporary ensemble, that critics have considered it the most successful integrated piece of campus planning and design since Thomas Jefferson's Lawn at the University of Virginia.

New Places to Nurture Community

Each new project is a chance to shape places which in turn nurture community. At the Santa Monica Public Library, a quiet courtyard building is configured to welcome study and activity at many scales, from the single patron to large community gatherings. The building is shaped for environmental response, optimizing daylight and coastal breezes with a flow of interior and exterior space.

At a much larger scale, the new town center of Camana Bay creates a vibrant pedestrian-oriented mixed-use core, based on an extrapolation from the environmental wisdom of traditional building types. Computer modeling and contemporary materials raise the performance and comfort of buildings. Outside spaces are shaped for community and environmentally tempered by the architecture and landscape, allowing a broad range of 24/7 activity in a tropical climate.

New Places in Harmony with Nature

From the town center of Camana Bay to single-family houses, our architecture adapts to its environment and celebrates the specific qualities of its site. From tropical environments in the Caribbean and Hawaii to temperate sites in California and harsher climates of Scandinavia, we welcome the diversity of climate, landscape and culture. Understanding the specificity of places helps us to engage in a dynamic dialogue with the fundamental qualities of the context. This in turn creates new places which have meaningful and specific connections to nature.

In the Ruddell House in Kauai, the connection to precise views and sun angles informs the gently skewed geometry of the house's pavilions. In Malmö, Sweden, the apartments of the Tango Housing jostle like phototropic plants to gather the precious sunlight.

The diversity of our work is an expression of the diversity of place and culture, and of our on-going collaboration with clients and colleagues. We continue to approach each project as part of an evolving exploration, guided by humanistic principles.

Equally important, we understand that each work makes its own particular contribution to places that already exist—respecting, enriching, and sometimes transforming—but always recognizing the defining qualities of each context and setting. In that spirit, projects presented in *The Future of Place* are titled according to their location—a geographic perspective for architecture that is above all a celebration of place.

THE HOUSE AS PLACEMAKER The house is the elemental archetype of habitation. It manifests our primal needs for shelter and identity and is often the object of intense aspirations. It is not accidental that the phrase “dream house” has persisted for decades nor that popular magazines and books focus disproportionately on the single family house.

For millennia houses were aggregated in socially structured groups. These structures supported community, safety, shared production, trade and cultural development. The configurations were powerful diagrams of the social and environmental imperatives. Primary geometries of circle and line typically formed enclosures, terraces and eventually street and courts. The materials and tectonics of construction manifested a close connection to local materials and to the contours of the land. The shapes of the houses evolved in close harmony with the environmental needs of the region.

The circular enclosures of many African villages created security while also allowing for flexible growth within the protected boundary. The construction was of local materials—mud and wattle. Ornament and identity were provided by sculpting and incising patterns in relief and at times by bold graphic painting. The Trulli's of the Abruzzi region of southern Italy are houses formed by the aggregation of gently rounded conical units. Rooms are grouped into houses and houses linked to form streets (fig. 1). The plan and section of the house is the elegant result of the circumferential layering and tapering of flat stones, culminating at an ornamental roof vent.

In early house forms, the logic of material construction is married to an impulse to mark and ornament for identity and expression. There is harmony between the expression of the community and the marking of the family.

With prosperity came greater differentiation and hierarchy. In some cultures, the house became a set of uniquely expressed rooms, each of which met a specific need. In traditional Balinese villages, each room became a house unto itself: one for sleeping, one for cooking, one for storage, one for honoring ancestors (fig. 2).

A strong social order was maintained by aligning these house compounds along a street which oriented toward the mountaintop, the realm of the divine.

The villas of early Mediterranean civilizations developed as an expression of great affluence and power. The Roman villa organized around a series of courtyards is a powerful typology that persists after two thousand years.

RESIDENTIAL



fig. 1



fig. 2

Grand houses evolved as places of residence, work and social and political intrigue, mirroring the ancient connection between living, working and socializing. This applied both to the country villa and the urban palazzo.

Even the briefest consideration of the evolution of the house demonstrates that it is charged with socio-economic and political implications and reflects the greater forces at work in a society.

In our own residential work of over thirty years we have witnessed and participated in the rapid transformation of the American house.

The post World War II expansion of housing financing and the proliferation of roads and interstate highways enable the spread and eventually sprawl of suburban housing. And as the dream of the single house with its ample yards proliferated the expectations for size of house rapidly expanded. In fact the average American house size has increased from 980 sf in 1950 to 1,500 sf in 1970, 2,080 sf in 1980 and 2,350 sf in 2004.

In our early practice, it was not unusual to design houses of modest means for clients with modest budgets. In the seventies we designed houses as small as 600 sf for artists and young academics. In that period, houses in the range of 1800 sf to 2,400 sf were considered comfortable and those over 3,000 sf were thought of as capacious. We often found that the smaller houses stimulated more invention and clearer concepts.

Our recent houses have ranged from about 3,500 sf to over 10,000. It is increasingly difficult for clients of modest means to design and build a house with an architect.

While we miss the challenges of the small urban house, we have been able to transfer that interest into the opportunities to design humane and imaginative homes in multi-unit housing. We continue to see the design of houses as a laboratory for exploring the many dimensions of habitation and placemaking.

Most importantly, our houses give us the chance to explore many of the issues that are fundamental to successful architecture: the connection of building to landscape and climate, the shaping and proportioning of spaces to accommodate varied scales of habitation, the choreography of space and the connections that nurture community, the use of passive techniques to create affordable sustainable buildings, the wonder of light and shadow, the integration of craft, materials and color.

Our houses allow us to explore and exercise the fundamental elements which lead to creating buildings in harmony with their inhabitants and with their environments.

This experience and knowledge continuously inform our multi-unit residential design, our civic and campus work.

Another essential component of house design has been an intimate collaboration with our clients. Usually one family, but sometimes as many as three generations, are involved. We've been able to test ways of working which invite the participation, and dreams of our clients, while not abdicating our expertise in shaping place and exploring materials and technology.

The five houses presented here represent recent and current work. While most of these are large houses in spectacular settings, each has presented opportunities to explore the connection to place, to study the harmony of building and landscape, to reveal the wonder of light and shadow, to celebrate the life of the families within.

LIGHT AND LAND Our houses are lenses which heighten our awareness of the natural world. Light and shadow are used dynamically as if painting space in time. The Livermore House explores the movement of light as a link between nature and the rooms we inhabit. The Yudell/Beebe house studies gradations of transparency and the framing of nature as a means of heightening the sense of time and place.

THE CHOREOGRAPHY OF PLACE Our movement through space intensifies our awareness of the connection of body to place. At the Ruddell House a series of pavilions part and slide to welcome breezes and reveal distant landscapes. The columns of the house dance with a syncopated rhythm through space as markers of habitation.

In the Livermore House, a gallery forms a faceted street for the house, connecting alternating courtyards and carefully proportioned rooms. The movement of the street accentuates the shifting perspectives of spaces beyond.

The Moir House uses the great room as a central anchor of family life. From this all paths and rooms flow out and trace the contours of the land both uphill and down. As in a dancer's body, the center is still and the extremities are fluid.

BREAKING BOUNDARIES: INSIDE OUT All of our houses study the layering of space from defined rooms, through spaces which are transitional to the outside, and on to outdoor "rooms." Inside and out shape each other and are equal partners in habitation.

The Maguire House creates outdoor rooms as defined as those within. The Ruddell House literally breaks opens to become a series of individual rooms held together by a protective roof.

SHAPING SUSTAINABLE SPACE All of our houses owe a debt to the early Sea Ranch explorations of Charles Moore and his MLTW partners and landscape architect Larry Halprin. Their nature was studied and understood as a primary imperative in the discovery of form. Designing buildings in harmony with nature and understanding natural landscapes as ecosystems were prescient in their use of what is now called passive techniques for sustainable design. Understanding climate and place has continuously inspired our residential work. We see sustainable design as an evolving exploration, adding new tools while not losing timeless ways of building sustainably.

The Ruddell House pursues the extent to which shaping a house in plan and section can enhance its environmental responsiveness.

The house maximizes permeability to prevailing breezes, shades outdoor living and filters the strong daylight.

The Yudell/Beebe house takes a case study approach employing an array of strategies. It begins with passive design to shape the section and plan for maximum convection, shades in summer and captures winter sun for radiant heat storage. It then develops a spectrum of strategies based on renewable energy, sustainable materials and new technologies with the goal of approaching net-zero energy use.

LEARNING FROM HOUSES These generous private houses hold lessons in shaping habitation and understanding the connection to nature. These lessons inform our work in multi-unit housing with many constraints on space and budget as well as our larger civic and campus work. Our affordable housing in California or Europe aspires to the same richness of experience we have brought these private house clients.

Our large Civic and Campus work benefits as well from understanding habitation in houses. It's been noted, for example, that our large Courthouse in Fresno provides a surprising sense of comfort and intimacy as one moves through the building.

Public or private, modest or grand, all buildings can provide humane places which celebrate our range of individual and communal life.



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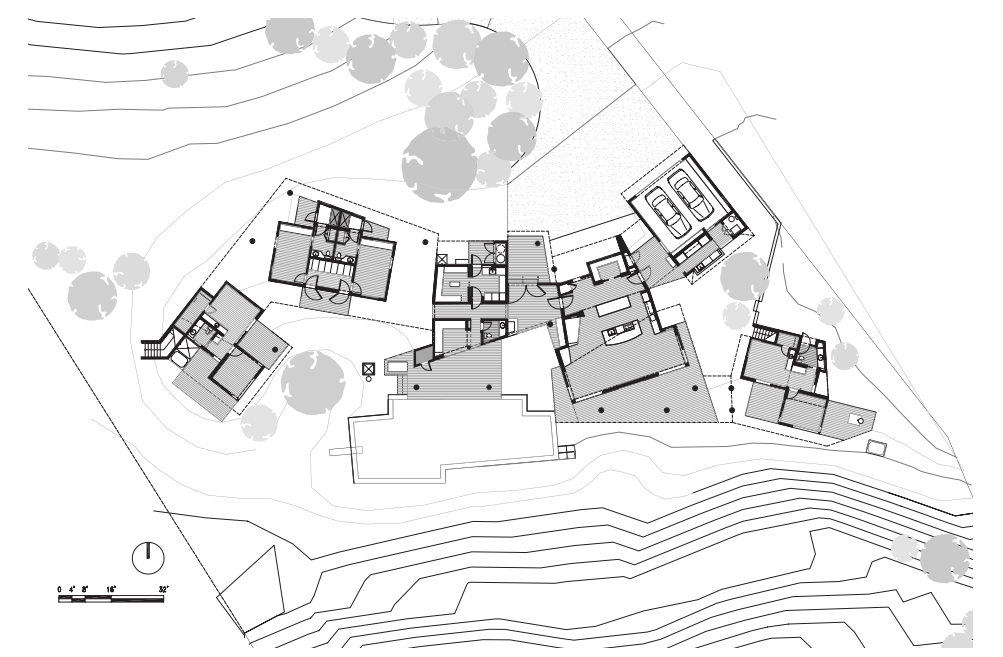
KAUAI



The Ruddell House responds to unique regional and climatic challenges of the tropics. Situated on a south-west facing bluff on the north shore of Kauai, the design concept integrates environmental considerations into the aesthetic composition. The building mass is defined by a series of pavilions, interconnected by arcades, loggia, courtyards, and passageways, rendering the building threshold physically transparent. The interior/exterior boundary is dictated by common patterns of movement and habitation, allowing a synergistic lifestyle that is unique to the region.

Open spaces alternate with building masses to create a porous design that admits natural ventilation as well as weaving a fabric of interior and exterior spaces organized along a central circulation spine. Deep overhangs provide shelter from the harsh tropical sunlight and echo the vernacular architecture of the island. Despite the shading methods, the home maintains a well-lit interior environment through the use of clerestory windows open at the top of the pavilions to admit soft, indirect light into the heart of the home. Each design component is a multifaceted solution to environmental and programmatic goals: truly a contemporary aesthetic expression of vernacular architecture. The home facilitates the residents' active engagement with the environment through a modern design that is informed by the site, region and architectural heritage.

Pavilions part to frame views and catch trade winds.











圣巴巴拉市

SANTA BARBARA

The architecture and the interior palette of the Maguire Beach House both reflect the oceanfront surroundings of the site. This existing beach house estate required a complete architectural re-configuration that included a revision to the first and second floor plans, a new beach façade, electrical, plumbing, HVAC and an entirely new interior finish palette.

The estate is composed of a tennis court, guest house and a main house facing the beach. The main house planning concept turned the former cluster of small, low-ceilinged rooms into a lofty plan that opens to the expansive beach view. Two decks with a new hot tub were added to the beach side of the house, and on the second floor, a spacious shower with floor-to-ceiling windows looks out onto the ocean. The second floor master bedroom suite enlarges the plan to reveal spaces that flow into one another: the dressing room communicates with bathroom, which flows into the sleeping area, the offices, and the decks.

Furnishings reflect the updated contemporary design and beachside setting: simple shapes with slip-covered upholstery keep the aesthetic clean and fresh. The architectural palette includes new wide-plank, bleached oak floors, concrete Caesarstone countertops, and stainless steel cabinets in the Baulthaup kitchen. Louis Poulsen Artichoke ceiling pendants recall seashells in the double-height main entry and contribute to the house's uniquely oceanfront aesthetic.

An older beach house was opened horizontally and vertically to connect to the ocean and breezes.



Santa Barbara, California

MAGUIRE HOUSE





