

The Houses of William Wurster: Frames for Living

by **Caitlin Lempres Brostrom** and **Richard C. Peters**

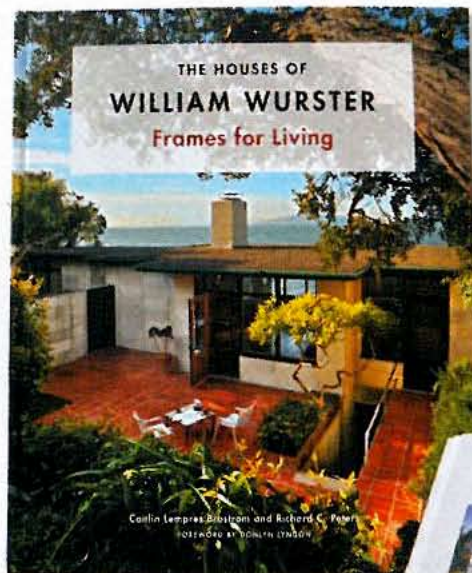
New York: Princeton Architectural Press, \$50

224 pages, 300 illustrations (150 color)

As Donlyn Lyndon, a professor emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley, writes in his foreword, this book “brings us back. . .to a milieu that valued accomplished modesty, spare spaces, and graceful movement.” Accomplished modesty! That does seem a rare virtue amid today’s gymnastics and flash. And modesty is likewise reflected in this book’s subtitle. William Wurster designed houses as “the frame for living, not the picture,” Caitlin Lempres Brostrom and Richard C. Peters explain.

Thanks to family or professional connections to Wurster, who died in 1973, Brostrom and Peters were mega-equipped to write this book, and they chose 33 residential commissions from the more than 1,300 that Wurster undertook. (Ever prolific, he also executed 700 commercial and institutional projects and served as dean of the schools of architecture at Berkeley and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.) The houses date from the 1920’s to the 1960’s and represent,

according to the coauthors, “a variety of responses to mountain, city, suburban, and seashore environments.” Outstanding are the following, all in California: “an unadorned whitewashed redwood structure. . .[with] roots in the vernacular tradition of carpenter building”; a house with a cavelike kitchen and large bifold doors open-



ing to the Big Sur view; a nearby design that resembles “a stone barn, simple and rough”; a residence comprising four square pavilions and a “living porch”; a summer getaway with a central lanai that Wurster called “a room with no name”; and an adobe-walled metal-roofed structure on a horse farm. A Nevada example, built from granite, is called “as casual as an old hat.” In all, a landmark chronicle of a wonderful career.

Dubuffet as Architect

by **Daniel Abadie**

Paris: Éditions Hazan, distributed

by Yale University Press, \$40

192 pages, 160 color illustrations

Late in life, Jean Dubuffet, champion of the *art brut* movement, turned much of his attention to sculpture on the scale of architecture, enclosing spaces meant to be considered as rooms. One of these pieces, the 1969 *Cabinet Logologique*, is furnished with Marcel Breuer’s cantilevered Cesca chair; another, most delightful of all, contains a 1967 painted polyester chair by Dubuffet himself. In these sculptures, at once imposing in scale and pleasing in detail, richly decorated with the artist’s distinctive scrawls, we see an adventurously original confluence of art, architecture, and interior design. It’s worth noting that the AIA awarded Dubuffet the Medal of Honor in 1982.

This book serves as catalog for a traveling exhibition curated by the author and organized by three French embassies. It comes to the Musée d’Ixelles in Brussels in late October.

