

Sense of Place: Kovac Architects



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Reviews

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(Derick Brekke)*

SENSE OF PLACE: KOVAC ARCHITECTS

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ORO Applied Research + Design. Hardcover. Book Condition: New. Hardcover. 180 pages. Dimensions: 12.1in. x 9.4in. x 1.1in. A Sense of Place is a collection of built and un-built residences by Los Angeles-based firm Kovac Architects. Over the past twenty-five years, firm principal Michael Kovac has quietly built a number of idiosyncratic, modernist residences from rural Maine to Baja California; Sense of Place primarily looks at homes built in the foothills of Los Angeles. The firms work characteristically rejects any signature form or formula- houses are pure responses to a sites characteristics and a clients program. For guidance, the office looks to a set of essentially modernist principles, distilled in Southern California by Schindler in the 1920s, and refined through the end of the Case Study House Program era in the late 1960s. Each house is conceived of as a unique, and deeply personal space, patiently and meticulously tailored from the finest materials. Although many of the homes in Sense of Place enjoy expansive vistas, the firms houses are never conceived of as platforms for studying the environment from afar. Each embraces nature and often invites it in; one is made to not only see, but also to feel, the outdoors. This ethos, consistently present in all of the projects featured here, also allows the nearly invisible integration of passive sustainable features. A deep understanding of the site is also critical to Kovacs work. In Los Angeles, sites are often vertiginous, and the firms solutions explore a variety of building terrain relationships. Some projects are situated on the brow of a hill, while others cantilever beyond the edge of a slope or are sheltered below it. Building on a steep site presents a number of challenges; including compliance with municipal zoning laws and reconciling seismic issues. However, a sloping lot can...

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