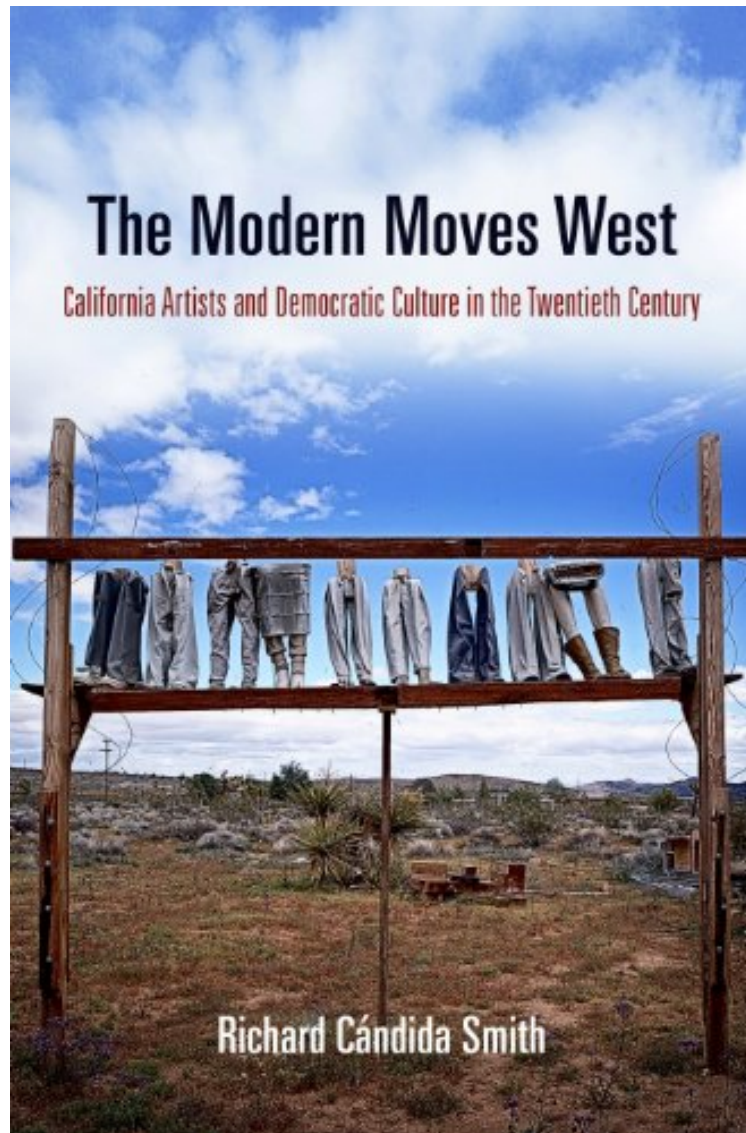


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The Modern Moves West: California Artists and Democratic Culture in the Twentieth Century (The Arts and Intellectual Life in Modern America)

Richard Candida Smith

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Richard Candida Smith : The Modern Moves West: California Artists and Democratic Culture in the Twentieth Century (The Arts and Intellectual Life in Modern America) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Modern Moves West: California Artists and Democratic

Culture in the Twentieth Century (The Arts and Intellectual Life in Modern America):

In 1921 Sam Rodia, an Italian laborer and tile setter, started work on an elaborate assemblage in the backyard of his home in Watts, California. The result was an iconic structure now known as the Watts Towers. Rodia created a work that was original, even though the resources available to support his project were virtually nonexistent. Each of his limitations—whether of materials, real estate, finances, or his own education—passed through his creative imagination to become a positive element in his work. In *The Modern Moves West*, accomplished cultural historian Richard Candida Smith contends that the Watts Towers provided a model to succeeding California artists that was no longer defined through a subordinate relationship to the artistic capitals of New York and Paris. Tracing the development of abstract painting, assemblage art, and efforts to build new arts institutions, Candida Smith lays bare the tensions between the democratic and professional sides of modern and contemporary art as California developed a distinct regional cultural life. Men and women from groups long alienated—if not forcibly excluded—from the worlds of "high culture" made their way in, staking out their participation with images and objects that responded to particular circumstances as well as dilemmas of contemporary life, in the process changing the public for whom art was made. Beginning with the emergence of modern art in nineteenth-century France and its influence on young Westerners and continuing through to today's burgeoning border art movement along the U.S.-Mexican frontier, *The Modern Moves West* dramatically illustrates the paths that California artists took toward a more diverse and inclusive culture.

"This is a voyage into a corner of contemporary art seldom visited. Richard Candida Smith explores this arena by focusing on three main artists: Simon Rodia, Jay DeFeo, and Noah Purifoy, among others. Through their unique and diverse vision we begin to see a rich and thought-provoking debate that is central to the history of California culture."—Ed Ruscha

The strengths of this book are its inclusion of much material that has been thus far omitted from narratives of the period, and the origin of its research in archives and oral history interviews, several of which were conducted under the auspices of the Archives of American Art and the UCLA oral history programme, some by the author himself."—Lucy Bradnock, *Art History*

About the Author: Richard Candida Smith is Professor of History at the University of California, Berkeley, and author or editor of several books, including *Utopia and Dissent: Art, Poetry, and Politics in California*.