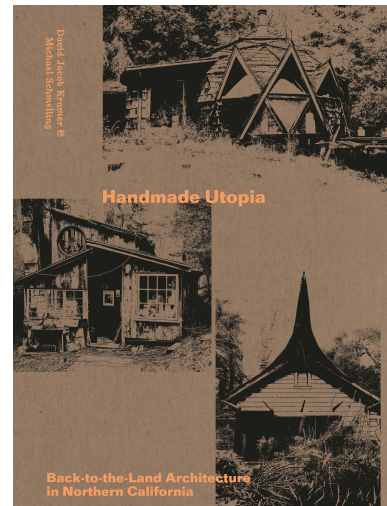


## Press Release

David Jacob Kramer, Michael Schmelling

### *Handmade Utopia: Back-to-the-Land Architecture in Northern California*



Half a century ago, young idealists dropped out of society and went “back to the land,” one of the largest urban-to-rural migrations in American history. Northern California became the movement’s epicenter, where utopian communes gave rise to radical, handbuilt, sometimes otherworldly homes.

*Handmade Utopia: Back-to-the-Land Architecture in Northern California* traces those still committed to this way of life,

capturing their buildings and the stories behind them at the tail end of a generation’s social experiment.

*Handmade Utopia* travels through Northern California, along hidden dirt roads and into redwood forests, uncovering handmade homes concealed for decades. Schmelling’s photography documents these structures today, while Kramer’s oral histories with

38 back-to-the-landers recount how they came to be, complemented by archival materials, historical texts, and locally produced publications from the movement’s heyday.

These pioneers taught themselves to farm, embraced alternative lifestyles, and developed architectural approaches that influenced broader building practices—

through imaginative design, ecological materials, and energy efficiency. In pursuit of a different way of living, they rethought what a home could be. Only a few remained after the Summer of Love. Now in their seventies and eighties, they raise the question of what will remain.

These homes were never constructed for their resale promise, anti-capitalistic to their foundations, and they are rapidly disappearing. *Handmade Utopia* presents them as artworks in their own right—captured before they are lost.

# Edition Patrick Frey



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