

History within the Wall



TRANSITION & TRANSFORMATION:

THE TRANSITION OF ARCHITECTURE TO ART





I do not know which to prefer,
The beauty of inflections
Or the beauty of innuendoes,
The blackbird whistling
Or just after.

Wallace Stevens, from
"Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird"

HISTORY within the *WALL*

ARCHITECTURE ART

SOCIETY'S EXPRESSION OF ITS STATE
OF MIND

ARCHITECTURE PERFORMING STAGE,
EXPRESSED,
SHAPED FUTURE PAST
PRESENT CARVED SCEN-
ERY. EXPLORATION OUR
INNERMOST REVELATION OUR OUT-
ERMOST. SOCIETY LEAVING IMPRESSION
ARCHITECTURE; ARCHITECTURE LEAVING
IMPRESSION SOCIETY. ARCHITECTURE
CARVING IMPRINT SOCIETY; SO-
CIETY MOLDS IMPRINT ARCHITECTURE.
ARCHITECTURE STATE OF MIND.

THE TRANSITION OF ARCHITECTURE TO ART

HISTORY within the *WALL*

ARCHITECTURE = ART

SOCIETY'S EXPRESSION OF ITS STATE
OF MIND

ARCHITECTURE AS A PERFORMING STAGE,
NOT ONLY WHERE IS EXPRESSED, BUT ALSO
SHAPED INTO THE FUTURE BY THE PAST AND
PRESENT ALREADY CARVED INTO ITS SCEN-
ERY. IT IS A CONSTANT EXPLORATION OF OUR
INNERMOST AND A REVELATION TO OUR OUT-
ERMOST. SOCIETY LEAVING AN IMPRESSION
ON ARCHITECTURE; ARCHITECTURE LEAVING
IMPRESSION OF THE SOCIETY. ARCHITECTURE
CARVING AN IMPRINT ON THE SOCIETY; SO-
CIETY MOLDS AN IMPRINT ON ARCHITECTURE.
ARCHITECTURE IS A STATE OF MIND.

THE TRANSITION OF ARCHITECTURE TO ART

T R A N S F O R M A T I O N

T R A N S I T I O N

&

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of

MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

William Galloway, Chairman

Michael O'Brien

Frank Weiner

Heiner Schnödt

1
Memory

2
Transformation

3
Ideas

4
Anatomy

5
Sculpture

6
System

7
Atrium

8
Outgrowth

A Memoir Photo Existing Building Reminiscent Precedent 1 - Colosseum - Ruins of an apartment house Ostia Antica Ruins Photos of the building in its actual condition Intended Aging A candleholder design (Time as a design factor)

Paisaje Isleño Peninsula The Site Photographs of the site model Facade's Study

Analogy: Motion: From Light to Darkness, Building within a Building, Habitable Wall Lightscape studies Precedent 2-Kern House, Baumschlager & Eberle Architects Section Precedent 3-Exeter Library, Louis I. Kahn Perspective drawing - Light study - Photographs of model Precedent 4-Carlo Scarpa and Makkan houses Solids vs. Voids

In Between Three Zones Existing Floor Plan of the Building - Proposed Floor Plans, Facades

Wall's Layer axonometric Light Sculpture - Wall's Layers elevations - Section

Datum & Order Structure Axonometric - Axonometric's Series

Perspectives on pastel and pencil of the Atrium

Afterthought - Light study Perspectives on pastel and pencil

01

05

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Directions

“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to walk from here?”
“That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” said the Cat.¹

¹ Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865).

Abstract

We are living in a fast track world, where technology increasingly dictates our way of life. With technology progressing faster than ever and infiltrating our jobs and homes, we are forced to adapt to this way of life in order to keep up with our ever-changing world. Cities are experiencing changes as well. Buildings are becoming obsolete while creating great strain on the cities. In the long term, we need to allow our cities to adapt and change with us. Otherwise, their inability to adapt and be flexible to our changing needs will cause them to become ruins.

We are in need for flexible spaces that not only serve us, but also technology yet to come. Cities are in demand for buildings that withstand a metamorphosis. It is our duty to recognize usable buildings and their architectural contribution in order to increase their life span.

Architecture affects us. It affects our moods and lifts our spirit, ultimately contributing to our well-being. Consequently, spatial quality is a very important factor. Light and shadows, scale, vertical and horizontal movement, sound control, temperature and color influence the quality of a space. Space is transformed by means of layers, material finishes, and movement sequences to name a few. After all, is not the act of transforming something, also discovering that which was always there?

Work

A work is never completed except by some accident such as weariness, satisfaction, the need to deliver, or death: for, in relation to who or what is making it, it can only be one stage in a series of inner transformations.¹

¹Paul Valéry, "Recollection," *Collected Work* vol. 1 (1972).

Foretaste

Architecture is a reflection of our society. It engages our minds in a sense of wellness or illness, happiness or sadness, accomplishment or failure. In architecture everything is important from the big picture to the smallest detail. Since every single piece is playing a part of the masterpiece, the attention to or the misplacement of unattended affairs will in the end cause an assonance or dissonance.

“Architecture is the mother of the Arts”¹

¹ Bianca Albertini and Sandro Bagnoli, *Carlo Scarpa: Architecture in Details* (Massachusetts: 1988) ix.



Northeast view of the existing building.
Corner of San Sebastian st. and Cruz st.

A Memoir

Building is undoubtedly society's most positive act. A city without construction sites is handicapped and runs the risk of declining and becoming a museum.¹

¹ *Paris 1979-1989* (New York: 1987) 193.



Ruins of an apartment house in Ostia, Antigua.



The Roman Colosseum



Existing floor plan of building.

Cease existing?
All the entities we
are familiar with
have a life span or
a physical duration,
then it *Transforms*.
Now we live as
RUINS.

Reminiscence

“Ruskin said, ‘*Great nations write their autobiographies in three manuscripts, the book of their deeds, the book of their words and the book of their art. Not one of these books can be understood unless we read the two others, but of the three the only trustworthy one is the last.*’ On the whole I think this is true. If I had to say which was telling the truth about society, a speech by a minister of housing or the actual buildings put up in his time, I should believe the buildings,” wrote Kenneth Clark¹

¹Francis D. K. Ching, *A Visual Dictionary of Architecture* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1995).



Cornice at corner of building

A ruin is a memoir of a life story. The reminiscences are a recollection of adventurous anecdotes carved in its skin, as a shaped journal. Even when a building's initial function has been long abandoned, the building's character will undoubtedly preserve the memory of the faded customs and the way of life that witnessed its creation.

My first impression: Abandonment, Emptiness, Destruction, as I imagined it to be at the other side of the wall. Like an old book, covered in dust, forgotten at the side of a bookshelf, but still, with a great deal to offer for those who may know how to read it.



Window on North Facade



East Facade

RUINS

"People visit us as if we were a museum or the site of ancient ruins. We are thinking of keeping some of the destruction as it is and using it to attract clients."¹

¹ Fahed Abu Shaaer, "Overheard," *Newsweek*, July 22, 1991.

This candleholder was designed to embrace the fast transformations of frequency of use and weather inclemency.

In this sense, the transformation of a material depicts moments in its life process. Materials can register brightness, temperature, and the effects of the elements through the passage of time.



Design by Martinez and Reymundi.

Intended Aging

All things are impermanent. The inclination toward nothingness is unremitting and universal. Even things that have all the earmarks of substance – things that are hard, inert, solid – present nothing more than the illusion of permanence.¹

¹Leonard Koren, *Wabi-Sabi* (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 1992).

Paisaje Isleño

Suelo donde afincamos nuestras raíces
Raíces profundas que penetran nuestra alma
Alma definida por esta costa caribeña.

Sol caribeño que calienta nuestro espíritu
Espíritu definido por tu luz
Luz cambiante, imprecindible, aunque constante.

Rayos candentes que generan sombras
Sombras que me permiten soñar tus formas
Formas seductoras de miradas.

Viento olulando me susurra
Susurrando acaricia y seduces su verdor
Verdor moldeado por su pasión.

Mar moldeante de tus curvas costaneras con tus lágrimas
Lágrimas que lloran tu vaivén.
Vaivén que besa tu faz.

Mar, con tu intensidad nos refresca
Refrescante ahullar que azota mis contornos
Contorno único de Puerto Rico.



Old San Juan Peninsula - El Morro

Positions

To become aware of one's own position, one must situate oneself and others in some way. To question positionality can become the most rigid position.¹

¹ Aimee Rankin, "Legacies of Critical Practice in the 1980's," in *Discussions in Contemporary Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1987).

The Site

Puerto Rico

A Caribbean island that presents a cultural medley of customs between the Taino Indians (the native indians of Puerto Rico), Spanish and Africans. Being the African presence the most consistent element among all the Caribbean islands, but the Spanish influence being the stronger. After the end of the Spanish American War in 1898, Americans have influenced the culture and customs of Puerto Rico.



Old San Juan Peninsula

Scale

I think working with scale puts you in an almost godlike position, like "You're in good hands with Allstate"; that ad on TV. You can hold a piece of turf in your hand, or a house, and you can plant it somewhere, or you can crush it, smash it.¹

¹ Ron Steiner, OMA, interview by Jennifer Sigler, May 1990.



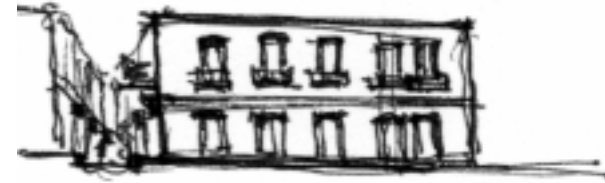
"Adoquín", Old San Juan's cobblestone pavement.

San Juan

Old San Juan contains sixteen blocks of almost 500 year of old Spanish colonial style architecture, in their majority, are perfectly restored and carefully preserved. Old San Juan streets are paved with cobblestone, a blue stone cast from a furnace ash. They were brought over as ballast on Spanish ships. Time and moisture have lent them their unique color and character.

Space-Time

The representation of the contemporary city is thus no longer determined by a ceremonial opening of gates, by a ritual of processions and parades, nor by a succession of streets and avenues. From now on, urban architecture must deal with the advent of a "technological space-time." The access protocol of telematics replaces that of the doorway. The revolving door is succeeded by "data banks," by new rites of passage of a technical culture masked by the immateriality of its components: its networks, highway systems and diverse reticulations whose threads are no longer



San Sebastian Street

This cobblestone street, have an east-west orientation, serves as the backdrop for the annually-celebrated “Fiestas de la Calle San Sebastian” (Celebrations of the Saint Sebastian Street), an art festival where different artists exhibit their work. This thoroughfare also hosts residencies, commerce and nightlife for Puerto Ricans and tourists. Once a residence and family business, a two-story building is located at the corner of “Calle Cruz” (Cruz Street).



East San Sebastian street



West San Sebastian street

woven into the space of a constructed fabric, but into the sequences of an imperceptible planning of time in which the interface man/machine replaces the facades of buildings and the surfaces of ground on which they stand.¹

¹ Paul Virilio, “The Overexposed City,” in *Zone 1/2: The City* (New York: Urzone, 1987).

Buildings are particularly influenced by their environs; however, environs are also influenced by buildings as the buildings become part of the environs' context. The peninsula of Old San Juan is characterized by its distinctive coast line, which is very important in the definition of the fortress wall that protects this peninsula. The Fortress Wall encloses the 16 buildings blocks that forms the nucleus of the city. One of the city's primary components is the plaza, which generates the pedestrian interaction. The presence of the buildings at the

plazas creates a duality as it defines the streetscape and permits a breathing space for the city.

The building is located between the two main plazas, at the corner of the two most active streets in the city. Consequently San Sebastian street and Cruz street are the most transited streets by pedestrians. This building's structure "turns" with the street, thus, allowing a sense of redefinition as it ends one street and smoothly starts the other one. The building becomes indeed the joint of this streetscape.



Coast line



Fortress wall raises along the coast line.



The 16 buiding blocks that comprises Old San Juan.



Plazas defining a pedestrian walk course



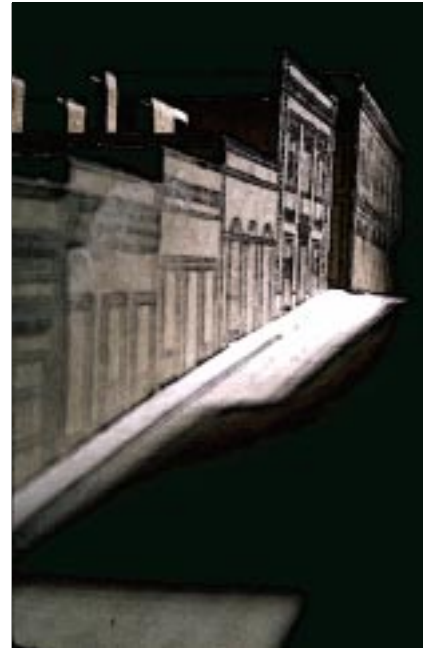
Building location, the plazas and the 16 building blocks of Old San Juan.



Planning

I find it interesting to understand the city no longer as a tissue, but more as a "mere" co-existence, a series of relationships between objects that are almost never articulated in visual or formal ways, no longer "caught" in architectural connections... But if you have come to the insight that connection is no longer necessary, in a way you put a bomb at the base of your professional existence. If planning is not necessary, or irrelevant... why "plan"?'¹

¹Rem Koolhaas, interview by Alejandro Zaera, "Finding Freedoms," *El Croquis*, March 1992.



Calle Cruz, North



Calle San Sebastian, West



Calle San Sebastian, East

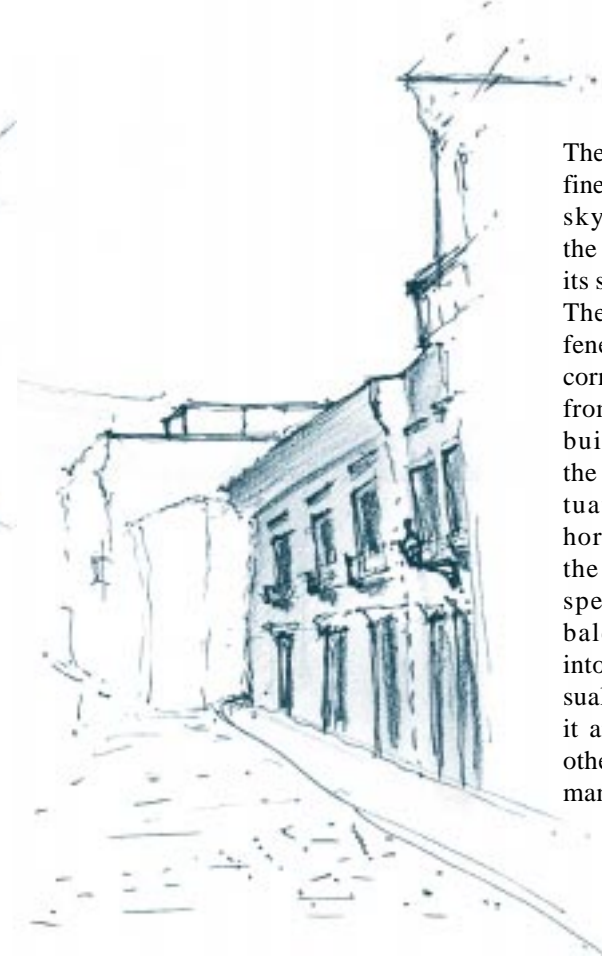
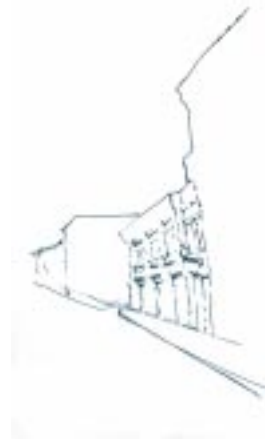
The first model of the site maps the changes of the slopes around the building and its relationship to the surrounding buildings, characteristic of this city. Several points worth noticing are listed below:

- the role of the facades with the inviting cool shadows created by the depth of their fenestration originates the contrast between the coldness inside of the buildings and the heat and humidity on the streets.

- the human scale of the city, and many of its buildings is dictated by the nearness between buildings, their heights relationship, and the distance across the street.

As Louis I. Kahn said, *“The only way you can build, the only way you can get the building into being, is through the measurable. You must follow the laws of nature and use quantities of brick, methods of construction, and engineering. But in the end, when the building becomes part of living, it evokes unmeasurable qualities, and the spirit of its existence takes over.”*¹

¹Francis D. K. Ching, *A Visual Dictionary of Architecture* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1995).



The buildings define and shape the skyline, giving the city some of its sense of place. The lines of the fenestrations and cornices continue from building to building along the street accentuating the horizontality of the street's perspective. The balconies steps into the street visually narrowing it and define another level of human scale.

Reminders

As Stephen Tyler said, "*These essays on the unspeakable evoke the carnival of the everyday and parody the dominant discourse of a decaying order. They do not pretend to novelty or invention for they are but reminders, in their own paradoxical way, of the common sense world modernism had thought it had surpassed or suppressed in its domestication of all the world that was exotic.*"¹

¹ Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, *S, M, L, XL* (New York: Rem Koolhaas and The Monacelli Press, Inc., 1995) 1100.



A series of three pencil drawings showing the changes and transformation of patina on the Wall.

It will become the fleshed-out body of the habitant skeleton. The stringy tissue left after carving and excision has had its way through.

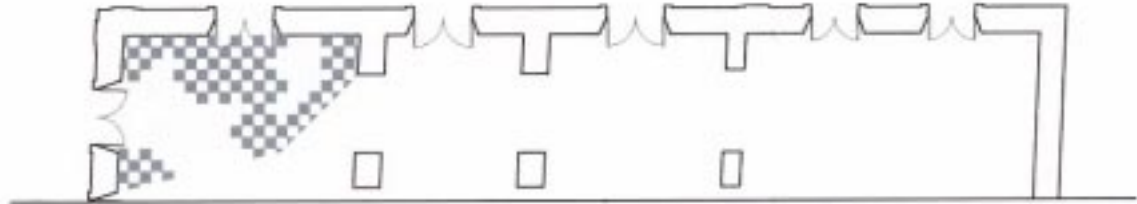
A Façade Study

One eye sees, the other feels.¹

¹Paul Klee. *The Diaries of Paul Klee 1898-1918*, no. 937 (1957; tr. 1965), 1914.



The north facade fronts San Sebastian street



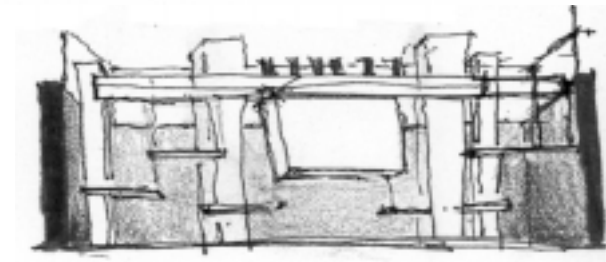
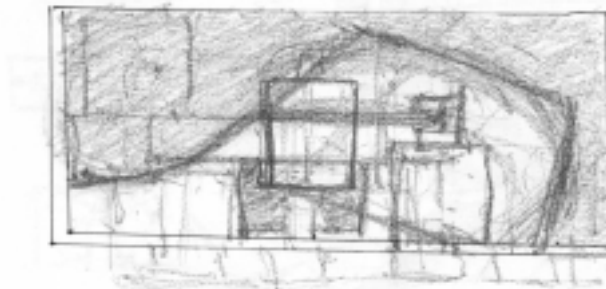
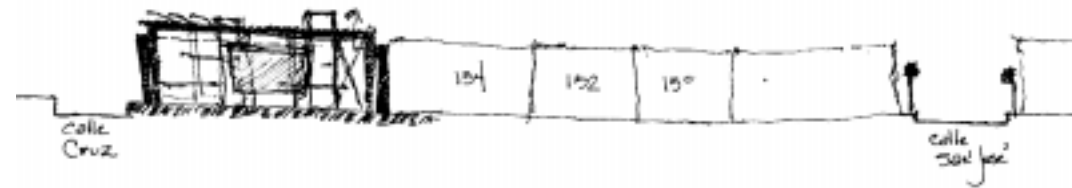
Partial plan of existing building

Facing San Sebastian Street stands the north facade of the old building. The facade is divided in two sections that are discernable by the scale and details. The smaller one was a later addition mainly generated to expand the ground floor business and to shelter the help personnel on the second floor.

Pregnancy

It was like a second pregnancy of the same conception.¹

¹Rem Koolhaas, interview by Alejandro Zaera, "Finding Freedoms," *El Croquis*, March 1992.

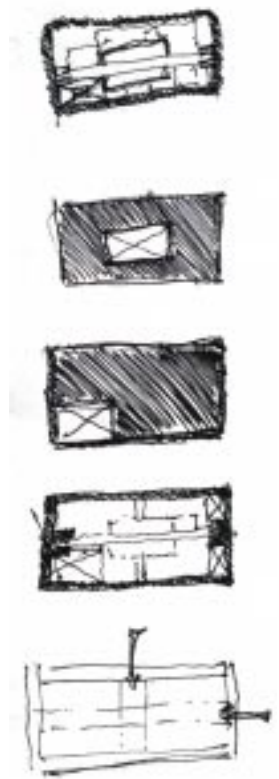


Conceptual Ideas

A building within a building:

- An era surrounded by another.
- The skin of a building, that once was a building by itself.

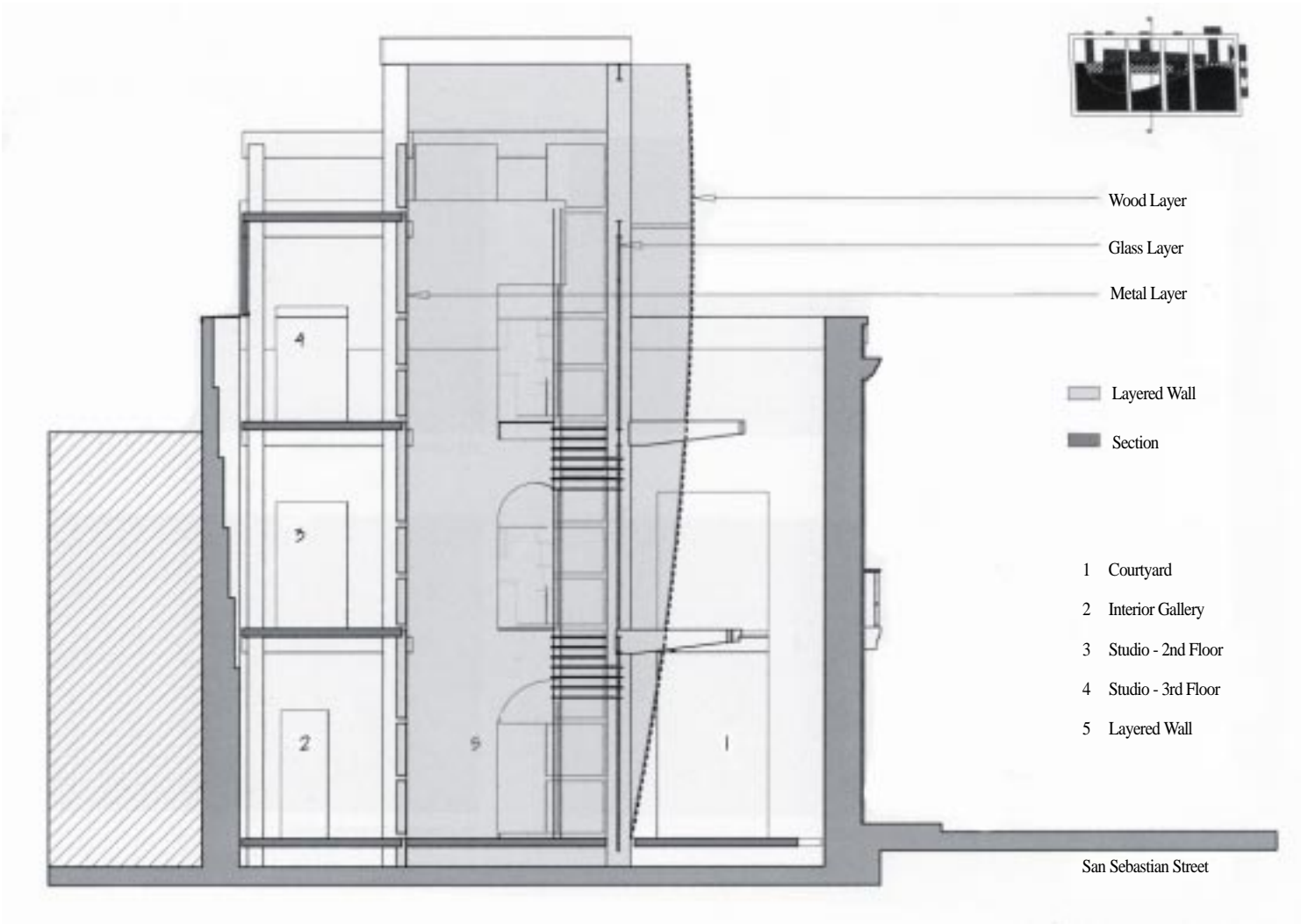
The greatness of this building can be preserved as a skin for the new building, influencing its atmosphere and demonstrating the importance of coexistence. In this particular case, in which both entities live as individuals and at the same time as a whole, they will develop a relationship of dependence.



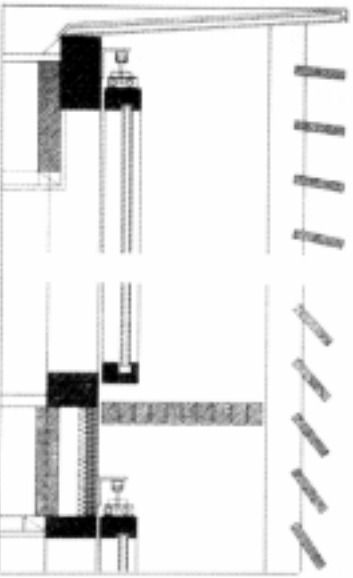
Ideas

The silky feel and thrust of idea, its small haunches, like those of and ermine.¹

¹Harold Brodkey, "The Animal Life of Ideas," *XXIst Century* 1 (Winter 1991-92).



Implementing a screen that modulated natural light and natural ventilation during different times of the day, as well as different seasons of the year required a flexible element with very easy accessibility. A segmented wood louvered wall became the solution, as it poses as an interior facade between the courtyard and the interior gallery. As the wall matured, two more layers developed transforming three thin wall layers into a thick habitable wall. Now, a three layered wall raises within the existing old walls.



Wall Section
 KernHouse, Lochau Austria
 Baumschlager & Eberle architects

*“Structure is the giver of light,”*¹ by Louis I. Kahn.

¹Urs Büttiker, *Louis I. Kahn: Light and Space* (New York: Whitney Library Of Design, 1994) 171.



Looking up from the layered wall.



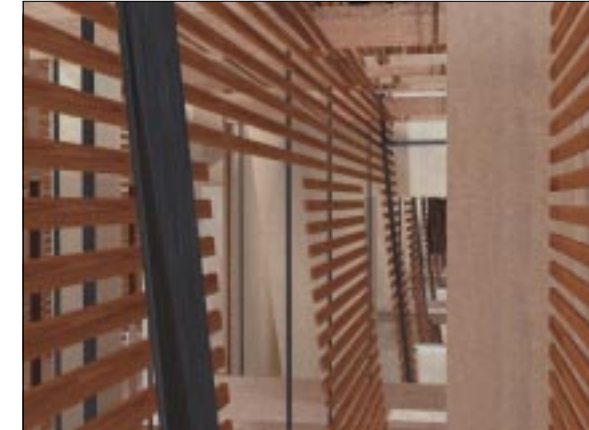
View from the layered wall to the balcony.



Looking down at the layered wall.



View from the layered wall at the bridges that intersects it.



Perspective view through the layered wall.

There is this fascination with the space in between; the space that happens because of the sum of volumes or their thicknesses. Where one is not outside nor inside, this is the residual of a transitional sequence of spaces. What if this transitional space becomes habitable? What if you are inside the space that transitions you from the outside to the inside? What if the residual becomes *The Great Transitional Space*?

Between

I take another peek up and down the corridor. For a loony bin, it's awful quiet. Most rooms have double doors. The outside door only has a small glass window so you can look in at the crazies; the inside door has bars. I'm sitting in the space between the two doors.¹

¹William Wharton, *Birdy* (New York: Avon, 1978).



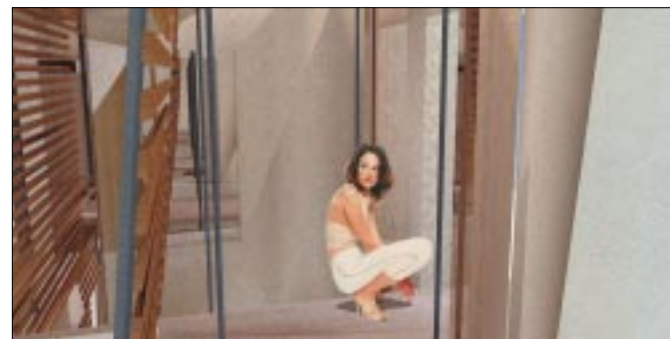
View from the studios.



View of the habitable wall from the balcony at the second floor.



View from the third floor of the layered wall at the second floor balconies.



View from the second floor of the court yard at the balconies.

Circulation and privacy of spaces are definable by the quality of light. Light and shadows leads us through spaces marking a rhythm. Light patterns influence velocity marking a rhythmical pace while we move through spaces. Usually bright spaces defines common areas while the softer light defines the more controlled and private ones. This is the case in this project, where the more controlled light is dedicated to the studios and gallery, while the courtyard presents the brighter one which slowly change inside the habitable wall.

Movement

“In its steadfast forward movement, the architecture of our time has made more than a few mistakes, but in the final result will be created a powerful embodiment of the human vision in spatial and volumetric forms. One must create; one must manifest one’s own creative capacities and summon to creativity those who are inert, in order that life within the art of architecture should be in a state of maximum movement.”¹ Iakov Chernikhov wrote.

¹ Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, *S,M,L,XL* (New York: Rem Koolhaas and The Monacelli Press, Inc., 1995) 934.

This wood louvered wall will regulate the quality of light inside the building bringing an always changing light experience. While we would experience the light filtering through the louvers and the casting shadows on the walls and floors, Puerto Rico's latitude will position the sun almost at a 90 degree angle from the floor creating a glowing wall around midday.



Interior view
KernHouse, Lochau Austria
Baumschlager & Eberle
Architects

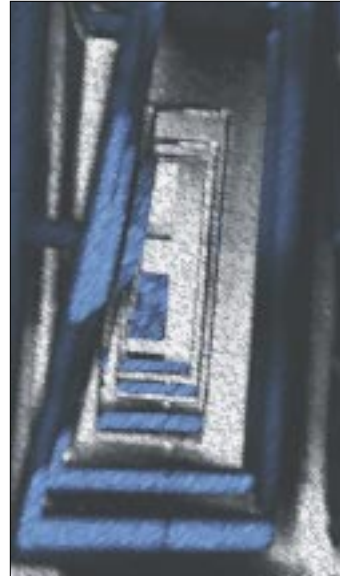
*"Light is the information perceived by the eye when it touches something."*¹

¹James Carpenter, "Presence Symposium," VA Tech, Blacksburg, 15 Sept. 1998.

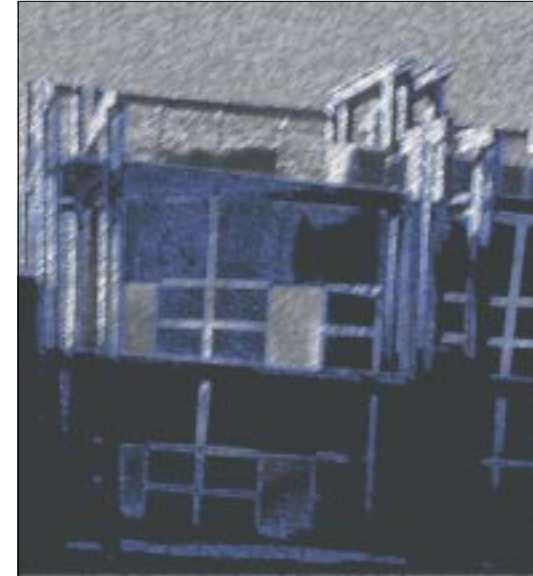


Photographs of the model showing some of the different light effects created by the wood louvered wall.

Light is our 'revealer'. It is the announcer of the palpable and intangible environs. As Louis I. Kahn mentioned, without it we are in complete silence. Light is the revealer of forms, colors, and transparencies. It defines the shape, size, textures, materials and colors of forms. Light gives the brilliance, shade and intensity to colors and presents the sheerness, translucence, and clearness of transparency.



View of the courtyard.



View from the interior of the apartments.



Light study in chalk and charcoal of the Exeter Library by Louis I. Kahn

LIGHT

Silence to Light

Light to Silence

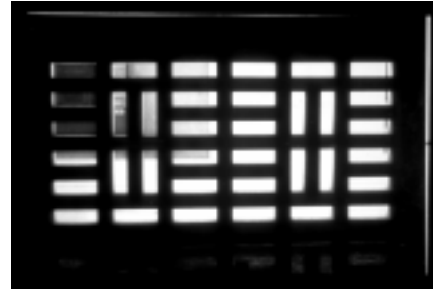
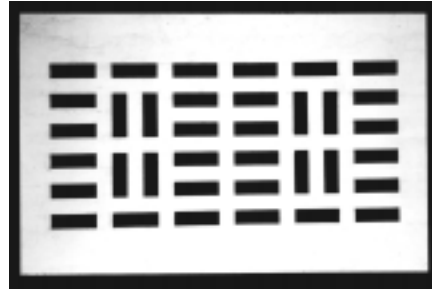
*The threshold of their crossing
is the Singularity,
is Inspiration,*

*(Where the desire to express meets the possible)
is the Sanctuary of Art,*

is the Treasury of Shadows,

(Materials casts shadows; shadows belong to light.) by Louis I. Kahn.

¹Urs Büttiker, *Louis I. Kahn: Light and Space* (New York: Whitney Library Of Design, 1994) 74.



¹ Bianca Albertini and Sandro Bagnoli, *Carlo Scarpa: Architecture in Details* (Massachusetts: 1988) ix.

One's point of view is greatly influenced by the glass being viewed through. A person looking in has a different perspective than one looking out. In a building a view is subject to changes. Natural and artificial lights are constant changing factors defining a different contrasted character in the solids and voids. Solids also frames a view setting the parameters through which it will be seen or what will be seen.

Views can be achieved in many different ways, for example, through a carefully designed window; they are mainly influenced by the culture and climate characteristics. The Western version of a window is a picture frame and the Eastern version a 'screen', which subdivides a view and, at the same time brings privacy and protection from bright solar rays.



Traditional house at the Holy City.



Windows carved with geometric patterns.



A Makkian house.

Window

In front of a window seen from inside a room. I placed a painting representing exactly that portion of the landscape covered by the painting. Thus, the tree in the picture hid the tree behind it, outside the room. For the spectator, it was both inside the room within the painting and outside in the real landscape. This is how we see the world. We see it outside ourselves, and at the same time we only have a representation of it in ourselves. In the same way, we sometimes situate in the past that which is happening in the present. Time and space thus lose the vulgar meaning that only daily experience takes into account.¹

¹ René Magritte, *La Ligne de vie II*, Feb. 1940.



Facade studies of the front facade.



Solids vs. Voids

Articulated solids molding hollows silhouettes. These opposites complement their cavities and protuberances, creating a balanced relationship of chiaroscuro, rhythms, symmetries or asymmetry. In this relationship, the body's shape and the silhouette it creates, are corresponding to the void as the figure and the solid the delineator.



Views of the model showing how light filters through the voids the layered wall creates.



Absence

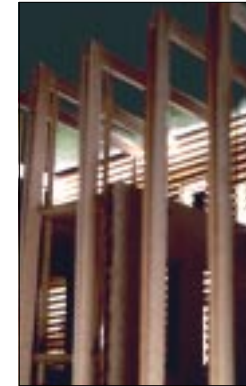
*"The most beautiful is not to be present."*¹
Mangelos

¹ Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, *S.M.L.XL* (New York: Rem Koolhaas and The Monacelli Press, Inc., 1995) xviii.



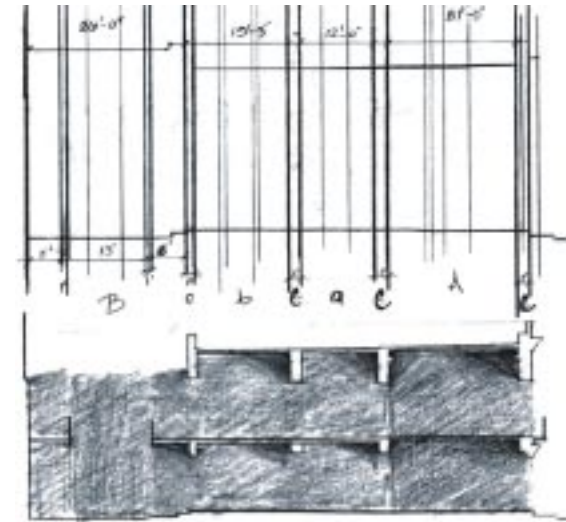
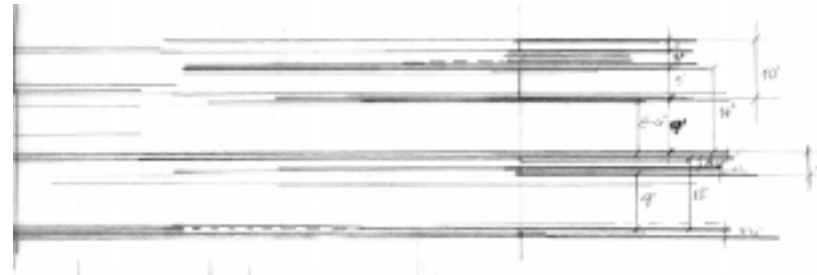
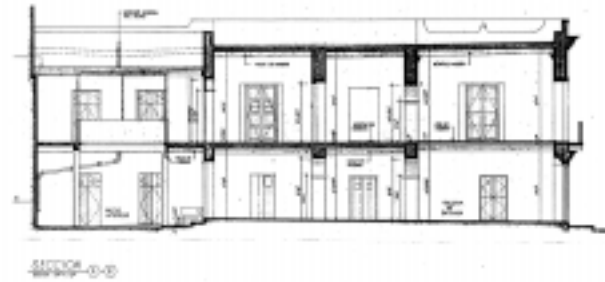
It is a process of adaptation, where the existing serves as a scenario to the new, and the new evolves respecting the existing.

This concept refers to the way the old and the new come together. If the old and the new meet, do they complement each other? Or do they just accommodate each other? Whenever possible, the new recognizes and allows the space necessary for the existing. However, if convergence is inevitable, the new will only limit itself to providing some structural stability for both



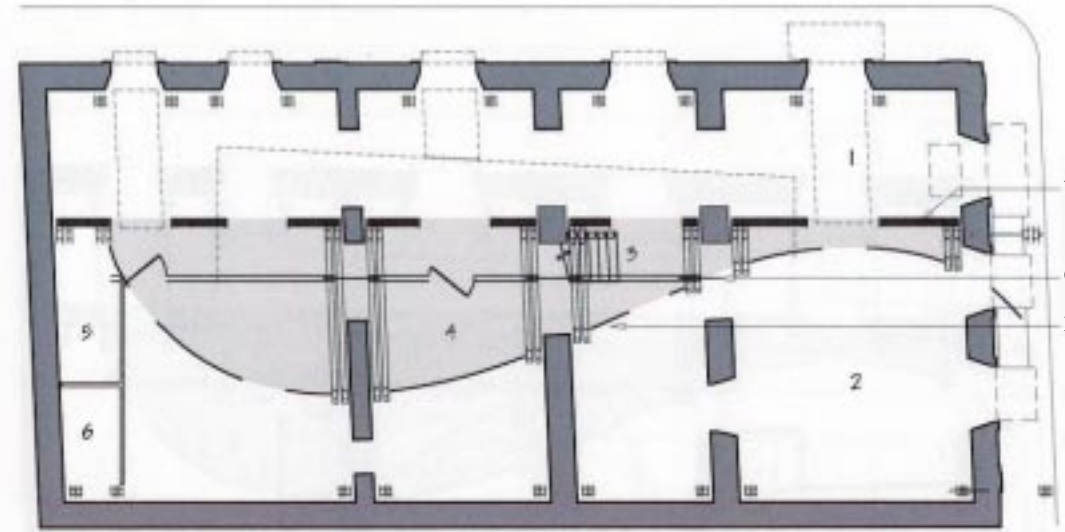
"The fox knows many things but the hedgehog knows one big thing." ... "whether he is a monist or a pluralist, whether he is of a single substance or compounded of heterogeneous elements."¹

¹ Colin Rowe, *Collage City* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1978, 1988), 92.



Proportions of the original building were the first studies developed. They initiated the new order within the existing one. Studies of light, shadows and enclosure followed. All of them exposed possibilities and set the parameters for the insertion.

Built environments have various purposes: to shelter people and their activities and possessions from the elements, from human and animal enemies, and from supernatural powers; to establish place; to create a humanized, safe area in a profane and potentially dangerous world; to stress social identity and indicate status; and so on. Thus the origins of architecture are best understood if one takes a wider view and considers sociocultural factors, in the broadest sense, to be more important than climate, technology, materials, and economy. In any situation, it is the interplay of all these factors that best



Ground Level Floor Plan

The ground floor is divided in three sections by means of a hollow layered wall that makes an spatial transition between the courtyard and an interior gallery. The courtyard serves as a gallery for exterior exhibits while it transitions from the street to the building with six openings to the San Sebastian and Cruz streets. Positioning the public in an open space inside the existing building but outside the inserted new building. From the courtyard through the three layered wall to the interior gallery which have access to a smaller courtyard of its own created when the third layer of the wall conveniently curves horizontally opening a space between the metal and the glass layer.



2nd Level Floor Plan

The second floor can be accessed by a stair located inside the layered wall, between the wood and glass layers leading its way to the studios on the second and third floors. It also gives access to the balconies overlooking the courtyard and the streets. The glass layer is the perimeter of the studios separating the public and private spaces. The metal layer runs inside the apartments creating a mellower light quality in them.

- Existing Wall
- Layered Wall

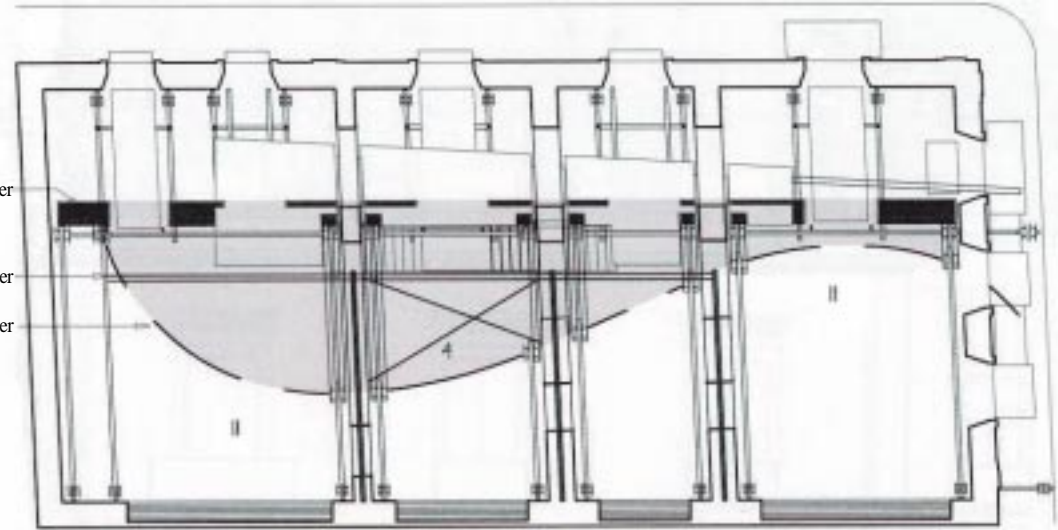
- 1 Court Yard
- 2 Int. Gallery
- 3 Stair
- 4 Int. Court Yard
- 5 Restroom
- 6 Mech.
- 7 Int. Balcony
- 8 Studios
- 9 Bridge
- 10 Balcony

explains the form of buildings. No single explanation will suffice, because buildings – even apparently humble dwellings – are more than material objects or structures. They are institutions, basic cultural phenomena. People think environments before they build them. Thought orders space, time, activity, status, roles, and behavior. But giving physical expression to ideas is valuable. Encoding ideas makes them useful mnemonics; ideas help behavior by reminding people of how to act, how to behave, and what is expected of them. It is important to stress that all built environments – buildings, settlements, and landscapes – are one



3rd Level Floor Plan

Two more studios on the third floor are accessed by the interior balcony that overlooks the courtyard. This studios are very similar to the second floor ones, but have a different light quality.



Roof Plan

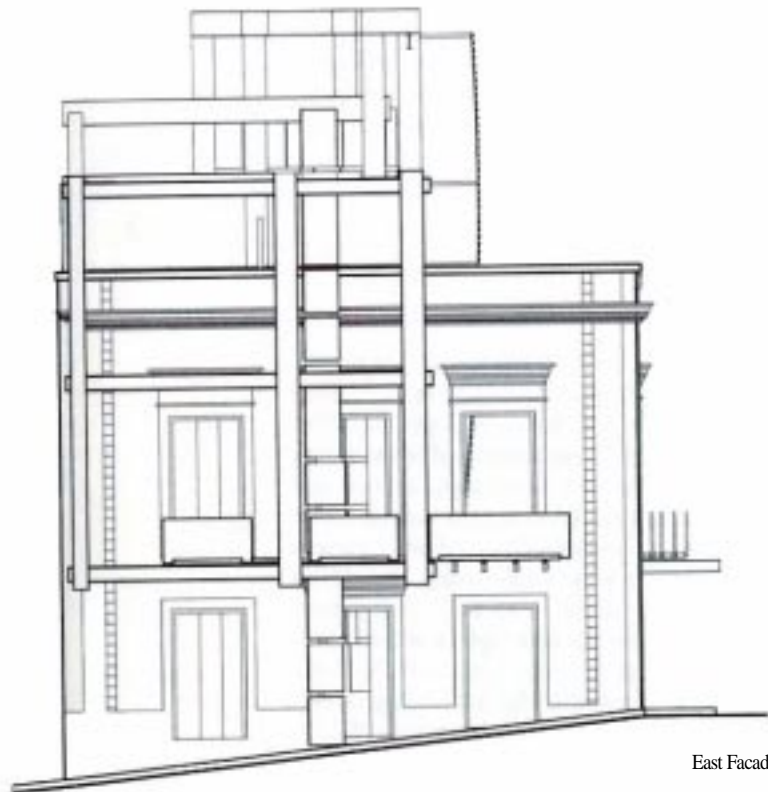
The layered wall stands one third of a level taller than the roof over the apartments. Except for the in-

- Existing Wall
- Layered Wall

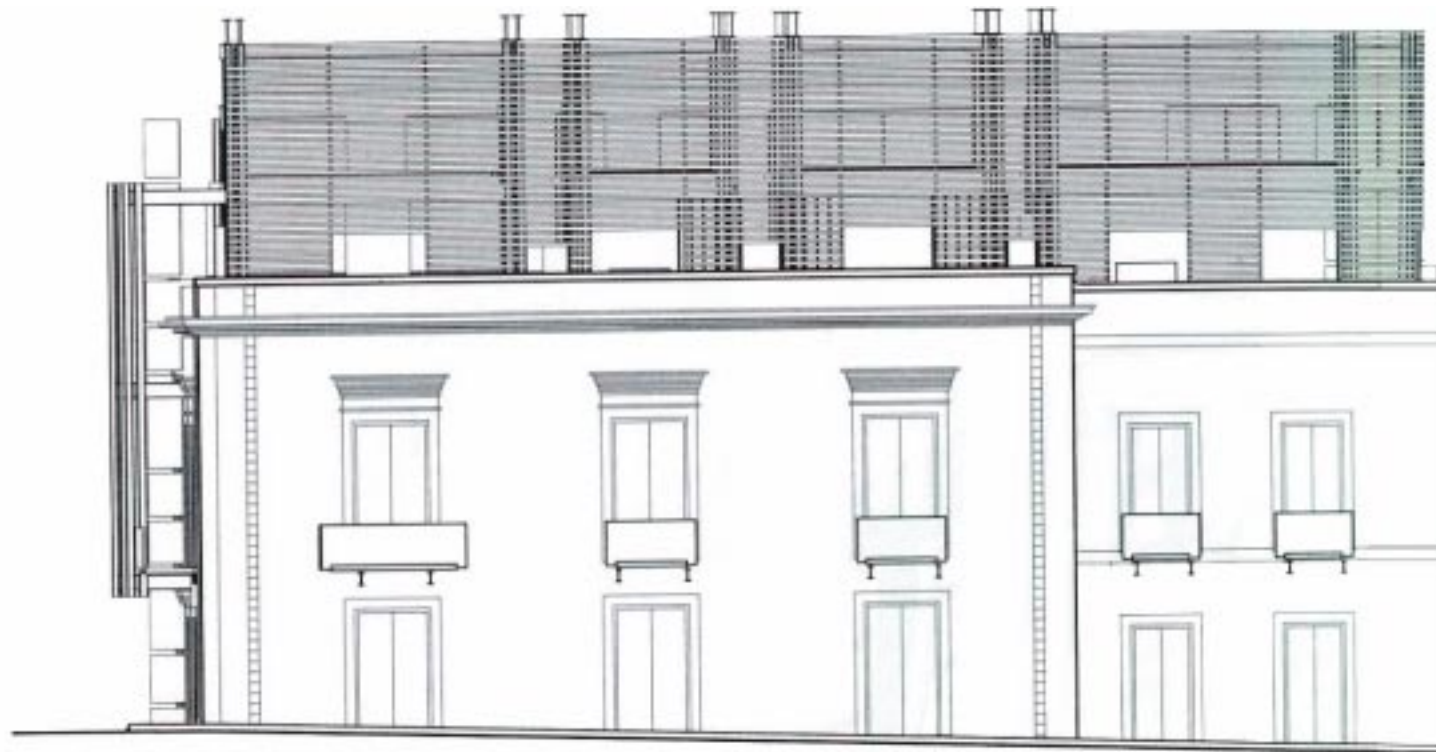
- 1 Court Yard
- 2 Int. Gallery
- 3 Stair
- 4 Int. Court Yard
- 5 Restroom
- 6 Mech.
- 7 Int. Balcony
- 8 Studios
- 9 Bridge
- 10 Balcony
- 11 Roof

*way of ordering the world by making ordering systems visible. The essential step, therefore, is the ordering or organizing of the environment.*¹
Amos Rapaport

¹Francis D. K. Ching, *A Visual Dictionary of Architecture* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1995).



East Facade



North Facade

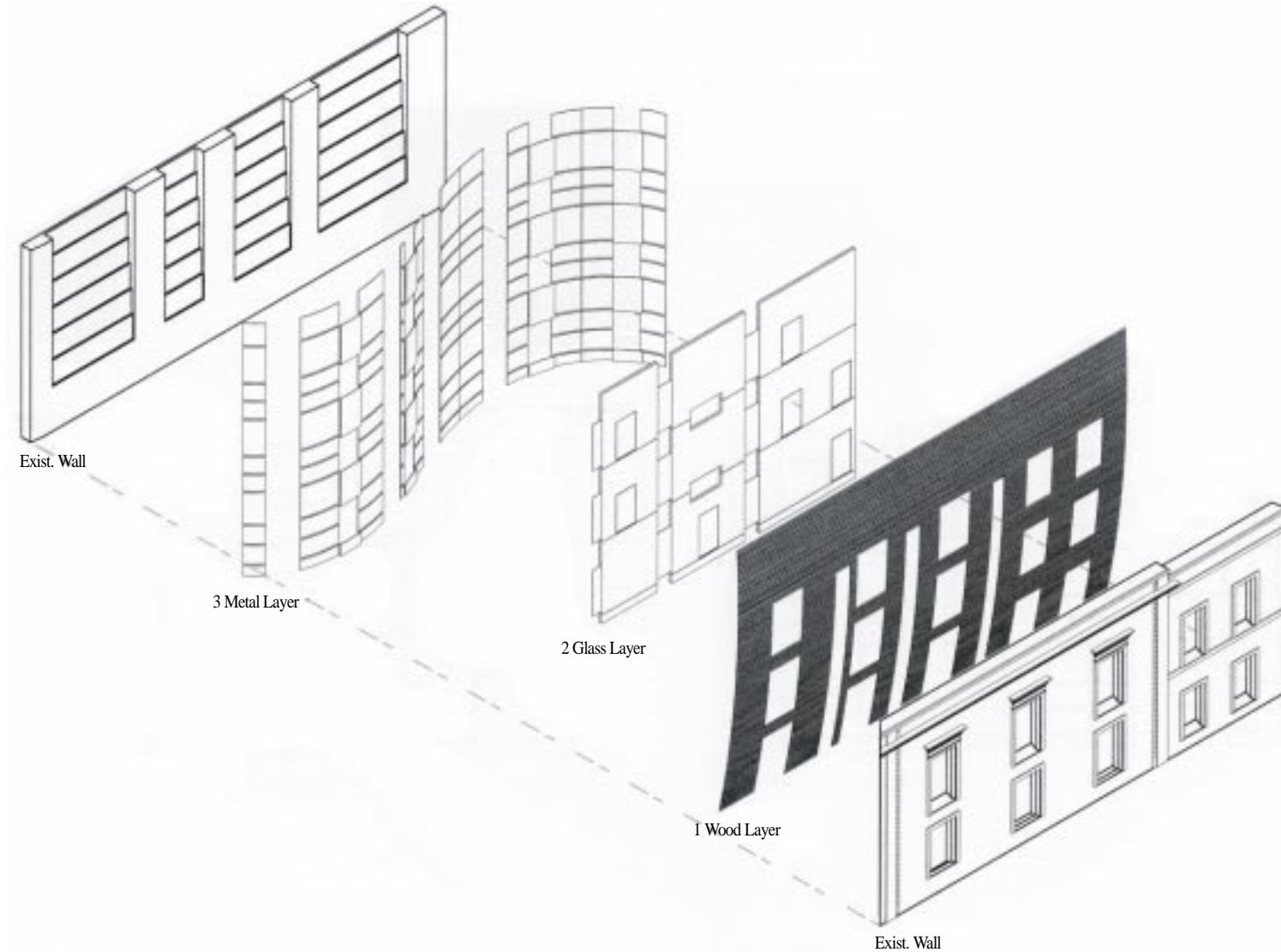
Facade

To the outside world the architect still seems to live glamorously and to hold a position in which great expectations are justified. But this is just appearance. In fact, architects are like kidnap victims who have to phone home to say that they are alright, even when the gun is being held to their head. Hardly any architect dares to point out the dangers, humiliations and absurdities of the building process or to explain who has the power in the daily struggle that has to be endured. As long as this does not happen, nobody, no matter how involved he may be, can see through the heroic facade of the architect.¹

¹Rem Koolhaas and Bruce Mau, *S,M,L,XL*. (New York: Rem Koolhaas and The Monacelli Press, Inc., 1995) 402.

The parallel layers of the new wall enclosed by the existing walls act as layers of privacy, filters of light, transition from light to darkness.

The wall is composed of three layers of different materials which contribute to the diffusion, regulation, and provision of a datum to shadows and lines of light. The first layer is constructed of wood louvers which create a rhythm of filtered light and shadow. The second layer is made out of translucent glass occurring at the same time as that of the stairs and this one diffuses the filtered light from the wood layer. The third layer created out of aluminum sheets regulates the light by letting in strips of light into the darker spaces. Finally, removing some of the bricks in intervals causes the existing rear wall to be washed by light. This effect helps illuminate the apartments, but at the same time, allows them to be dark enough that the light from the new wall can be appreciated.



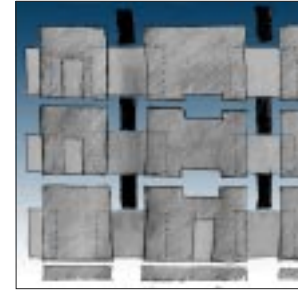
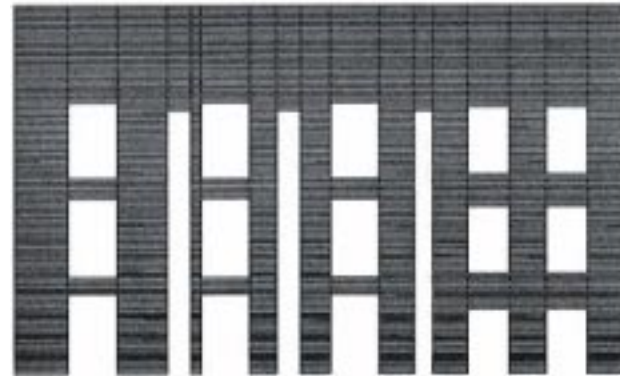
A Wall

In Japan a wall enters the consciousness on a quite different way. It is thin, often temporary, and more or less symbolic as a separation of inside and outside.¹

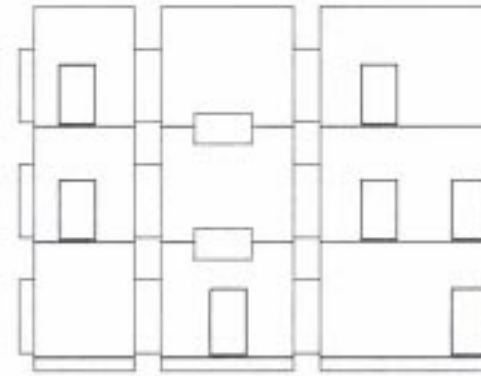
¹ Yoshinobu, *The Aesthetic Townscape*. Lynn E. Ricos (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983).



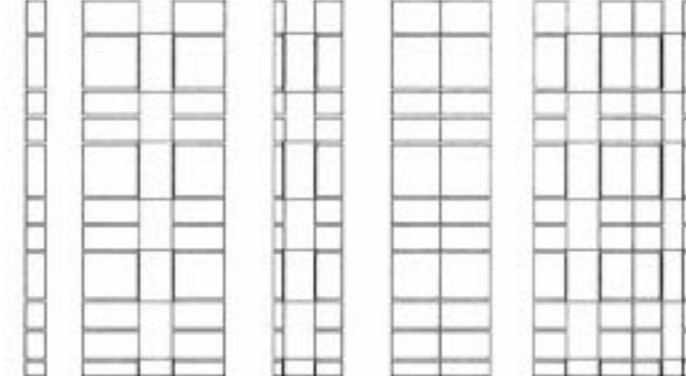
First layer of The Wall, wood louvered wall.



Middle layer of The Wall, glass wall.



Third layer of The Wall, metal wall.



Communication

Two prisoners whose cells adjoin communicate with each other by knocking on the wall. The wall is the thing which separates them but is also their means of communication. It is the same with us and God. Every separation is a link.¹

¹ Simone Weil, Gravity and Grace, "Metaxu" (1947; tr. 1952).



Kern House, Lochau Austria
Baumschlager & Eberle Architects

The first layer of the wall, which is made in wood louvers, originates an interior façade. The wood louvers are interrupted to accommodate to the existing building walls and to open to the courtyard and balconies.

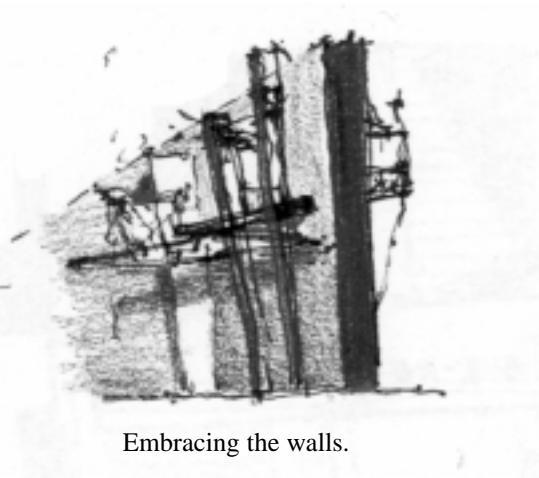


Architecture is the masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light. -Le Corbusier

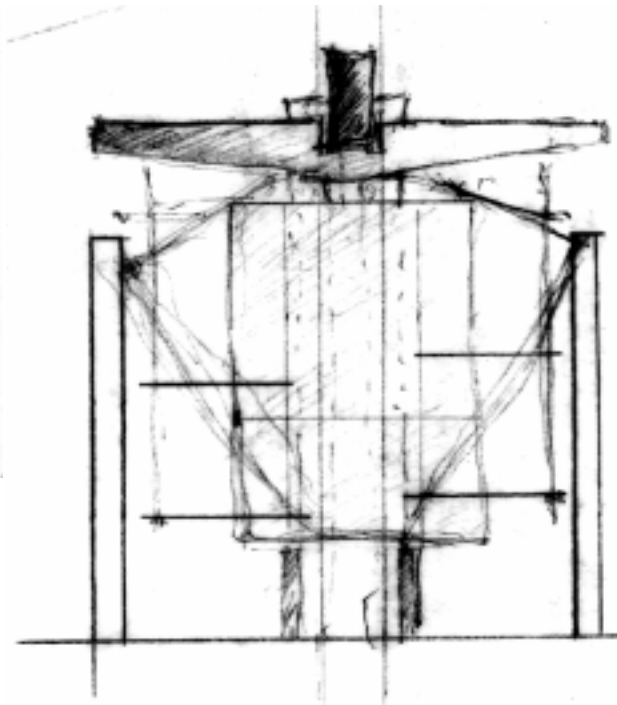
Francis D. K. Ching, *A Visual Dictionary of Architecture* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1995).



A wall among the walls.



Embracing the walls.



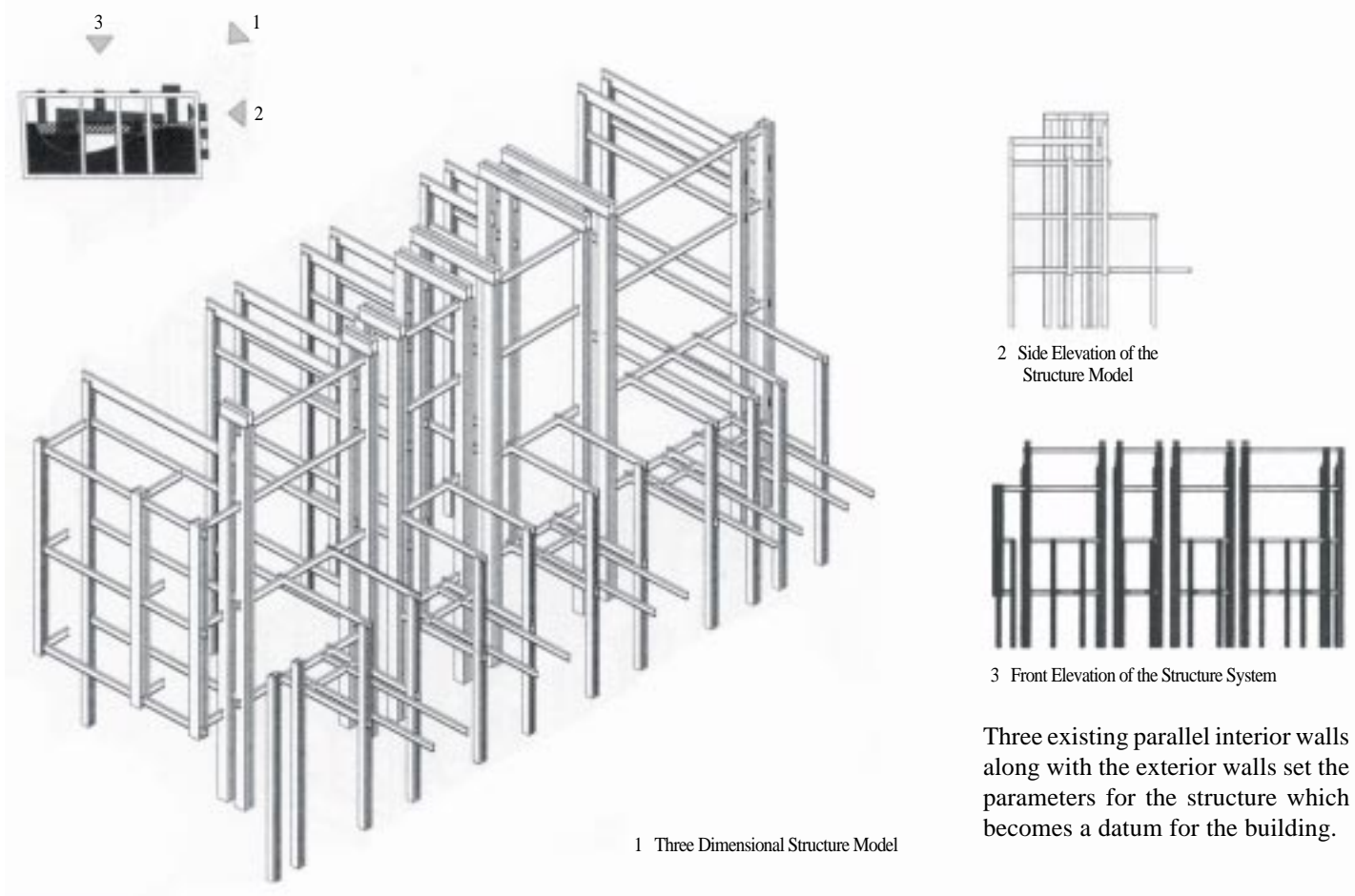
The embracing walls.

An independent structure gives support to the outside walls while the shell stabilizes the structure.

Order & Datum

“Architecture depends on Order, Arrangement, Eurythmy, Symmetry, Propriety, and Economy. All of these must be built with due reference to durability, convenience, and beauty. Durability will be assured when foundations are carried down to the solid ground and materials wisely and liberally selected: convenience, when the arrangement of the apartments is faultless and presents no hindrance to use, and when each class of building is assigned to its suitable and appropriate exposure: and beauty, when the appearance of the work is pleasing and in good taste, and when its members are in due proportion according to correct principles of symmetry.”¹ – Vitruvius

¹Francis D. K. Ching, *A Visual Dictionary of Architecture* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1995).



1 Three Dimensional Structure Model

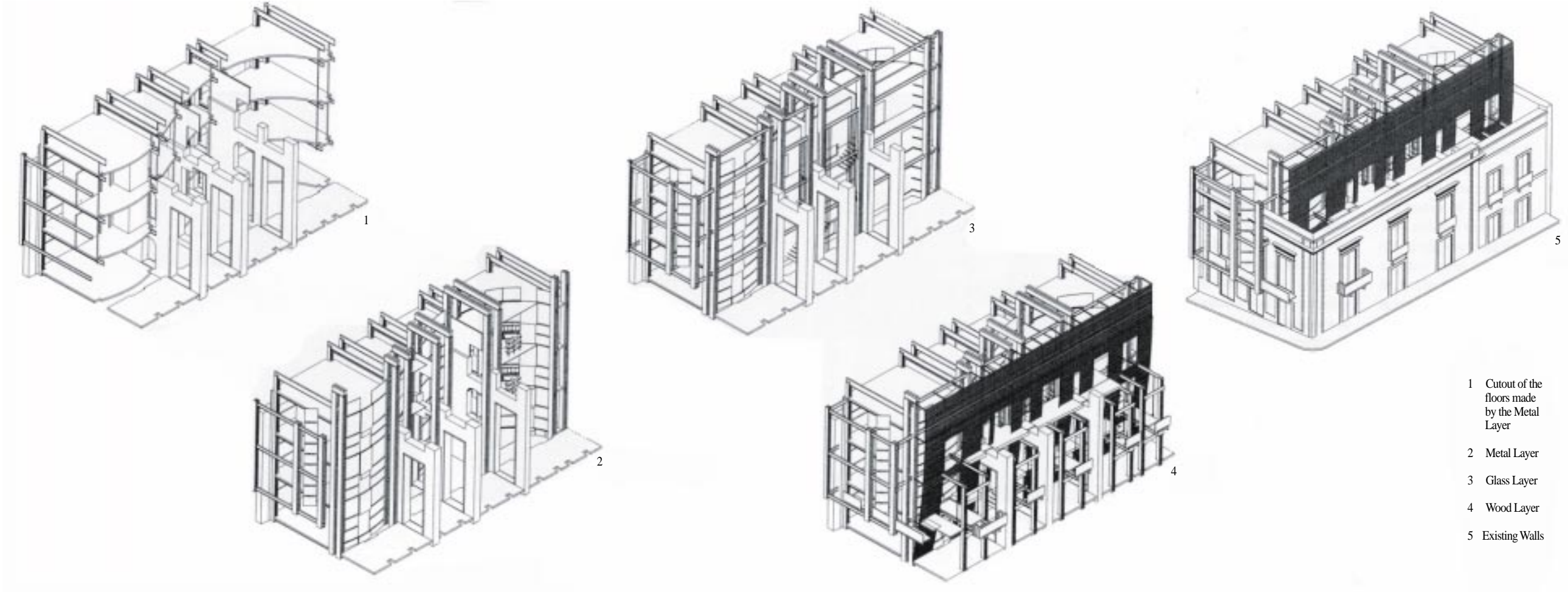
2 Side Elevation of the Structure Model

3 Front Elevation of the Structure System

Three existing parallel interior walls along with the exterior walls set the parameters for the structure which becomes a datum for the building.

A structure becomes architectural, and not sculptural, when its elements no longer have their justification in nature.¹

¹Guillaume Apollinaire, *The Cubist Painters*, "New Painters" (New York: George Wittenborn, 1962) 14.

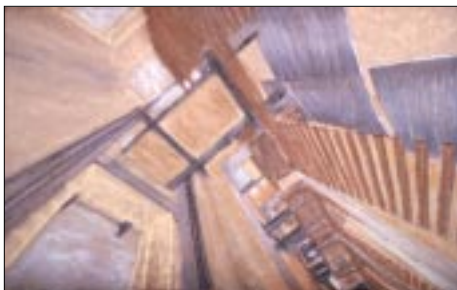


- 1 Cutout of the floors made by the Metal Layer
- 2 Metal Layer
- 3 Glass Layer
- 4 Wood Layer
- 5 Existing Walls

Systematize

I believe that the moment is at hand when by a paranoid and active advance of the mind, it will be possible to systematize confusion and thus help to discredit completely the world of reality.¹

¹Salvador Dalí, *La Femme Visible* (Paris: Editions Surrealistes, 1930).



Perspectives of the courtyard - Pastel and pencil

The urban streetscape is defined by the skin of the buildings as the skyline by their silhouette. The plaza is the element that allows the city to breathe introducing the pedestrian interaction. The presence of the building at the plaza creates a duality; a duality between open spaces and volumes. By creating a rhythm and density structured by voids and volumes, the plaza takes over the street and provides a place to which to migrate. The building's location makes it the elbow between the two plazas; Thus, emphasizing one of

the building's important attributes as the joint of the two streets. Creating an interior plaza at the corner of the street will aid the transition into both the building and the street intersection. The plaza is considered a good point for the insertion of culture, by means of a sculpture, in a public circumstance. This is exactly what is happening inside this building on its courtyard, it becomes the elbow of the street where the relationship to the contemporary culture is reveal.

Atrium

Usually situated just inside the main entrance of the building, the atrium is a large space, several floors high. Furnished with ramps, stairs, escalators and elevators, it gives the impression of kinetic activity, of people coming in and out of offices, going up and down stairs, stopping in coffee lounges. The aim of the atrium is to infuse the employee with a sense of belonging to a whole, and therefore identifying with it.¹

¹ Piera Scuri, *Late Twentieth Century Skyscrapers* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1990).

Afterthought



Perspective of the studios - Pastel and pencil

Objective

The objective was to create human-structure interrelations in an architectural context via the observation of our surroundings and the adaptation of all the elements.

Task

The task was to comprehend and recognize the simplest facts. The wind, which is not visible, but is present. The understanding of light cycles and its behavior led to a treatment of the natural elements as materials. The awareness of the elements is the praise to the sublime. *"The superb noise of silence..."*¹

Site

Three possible sites with different circumstances were carefully considered for this project. The charm of a forgotten heritage no longer desired by those who are temporarily blind, seized my curiosity. A 500-year-old historic building abandoned in the center of Old San Juan, Puerto Rico is situated at the corner of a very busy pedestrian intersection.

Incentive

My premise began with an intention to do a good job, a remarkable and special one, which we take with us and leave for others. Understanding the importance of the past allows us to move forward; in the appreciation of our heritage, we can learn to make our own place in it. Today's world cities seems to be designed more for the automobile, lending a tendency of abandonment towards older city parks which do not accommodate traffic properly. Old cities are becoming abandoned by societies without vision. We are in a great need to move forward, but is in our best interest to do so by preserving and utilizing the old cities as the foundation of our growth process.

Contiguous

The building is surrounded by Spanish colonial buildings of the same period. It is located on the streets that conduct to the two main city plazas.

Foresight

Therefore, I hope it will be a building that speaks about the past and lives in the present.

Brainstorm

A third plaza, courtyard.
 A wall, three walls, a WALL.
 Wood, glass, metal.
 Long, slim, filter.
 Translucent, transparent, layered.
 Segmented, curved, sandblasted.
 Light, materiality, physical substance.
 A view, a window, a balcony.
 A habitable wall, vertically, horizontally.

¹ Miguel A. Reymundi. Comment recalled on lecture, January 23, 2000.

All in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act. This becomes even more obvious when posterity gives its final verdict and sometimes rehabilitates forgotten artists.¹

¹Marcel Duchamp. "The Creative Act," lecture, April 1957, in Houston, Texas (published in *Art News*, New York, Summer 1957; repr. in Robert Lebel, *Marcel Duchamp*, 1959).



Quest Creating an in-between place in the city that can materialize all the new conceptual ideas.

Duality The duality between a massive wall and a habitable light wall both with the same thickness.

Insertion The main idea was to develop a building within a building. To be able to maintain the existing building a separate structural system was proposed. Walls will surround the addition, more like a shell.

Idiosyncrasy A habitable light and thick wall that glows rather than illuminates.



Individualism Each component has its very own set of parameters and proportions that defines each one as individual systems. The wood layer is composed of thin long pieces that act as a screen, while the glass layer are big rectangular sandblasted glass that diffuses the light. The metal layer, on the other hand, creates thin lines of light patterns.

Integration It was very interesting to notice how the individual behavioral characteristic of this layers regulate the quality of the light when combined.

Allegory The project became a record of a growing process. It is no longer a building, but an allegory.

Outcome *“One does a whole painting for one peach and people think just the opposite— that that particular peach is but a detail.”¹* Life is made out of special moments. An special mment in the masterpiece is as important as the masterpiece itself and, occasionally, it is the originator. The development of a project that was the realization of idealistic thinking became the first step toward understanding that every parameter is really imposed by us and can be treated as a material. Furthermore, the materials can become as special as anything that marvels our senses. At the beginning, the search for a design that would satisfy the parameters was arduos. However, looking at the conditions and materials the site provided brought about an approach that, in turn, led to a better understanding of what architecture could be.



Perspective of the layered wall - Pastel and pencil

¹Pablo Picasso (1881–1973), *Vogue* (New York, 1 Nov. 1956).

There is nothing more difficult for a truly creative painter than to paint a rose, because before he can do so he has first to forget all the roses that were ever painted.¹

¹ Henri Matisse (1869–1954), Comment recalled in obituaries reporting his death, 5 Nov. 1954.



Perspectives views of the atrium at the third floor.

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Photographic Credit

- Eduard Hueber : p.madera eberle
- Francois Bergert : p. paris arab
- Nihal and Bulent Uluengin : p. arab

Beyond

For anyone who, like Rem Koolhaas, shares “a special penchant for grey zones,” the gaze into the “beyond” and into that sphere “where one does not see anything of the ‘architecture’” can provide an incredible source of inspiration. With the magic formula “to imagine nothingness,” one could open up and utilize this “beyond” for oneself.¹

¹ Fritz Neumeyer, “OMA’s Berlin: The Polemic Island in the City”, Assemblage 11.



Perspectives of the layered wall - Pastel and pencil

Acknowledgements

In memory of Awilda Reymundi, a great woman who always encouraged me and believed in me, but more importantly, taught me that there is something to be learned from every person that crosses our way.

To William Galloway, Michael O'Brien, Heiner Schnodt, and Frank Weiner for all the architectural discussions and for sharing a vision.

To my parents and brother for their endless support, enduring love, their encouraging words and their infinite patience. Thanks for teaching me to believe in myself. It's been quite a journey to learn from you that taking care of the smallest details makes the product a lot more enjoyable and impressive, since "in the details lie the magic."

To my husband for all those endless working nights, for the sacrifices you made so that I could follow my dreams, and for your reassuring love.

To all my friends, specially Jorge del Castillo, Jonathan and Yamilet Fleming, Seung Ju Lee, and Edgardo Martínez for your support, the laughs and all the moments that made this journey so special.

To my co-workers, for their support and understanding.

Knowledge

Knowledge is in the end based on acknowledgement.¹

¹Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, sect. 378 (ed. by Anscombe and von Wright, 1969).



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Necessity

*Fact I know; and Law
I know; but what is this
Necessity, save an
empty shadow of my
own mind's throwing?!*

"Thomas Henry Huxley, "On
the Physical Basis Of Life"
(1868; published in *Collected
Essays*, vol. 1, 1893).