



# URBAN RETREAT



This thesis is submitted to the faculty of the  
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fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
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# URBAN RETREAT

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Thank you to my family, for their unwavering faith in my abilities. No words of gratitude could possibly express all their confidence, encouragement, and support have meant to me.

Thank you to Andreas Wenzel for all the insightful questions and assistance you provided me.

Thank you to Camden Whitehead for being a mentor and always having the right words to feed my thoughts.

Mike O'Brien  
William W. Brown  
Donna Dunay  
Camden Whitehead

Thank you to my thesis committee, for their criticism and guidance. They have helped me develop my architectural sensibilities and convictions. Thank you for taking time and an interest in my architectural education. Thank you for your guidance and support. Thank you for educating me as an architect.



graffiti found while waiting for a bus in Paris, December 2002  
began initial thoughts for urban retreat



Cities are the center of human activity, rich in human interaction, cultural experience and entertainment. We are attracted to the city because it lies at the center of things. The convenience of city life is appealing to many cultures. The range from small to large buildings and from public to private spaces within the city offers choices for the individual.

Although urban living can offer many appealing qualities city life today often denies us the privacy we need. It is hard to feel our individuality when we are part of a common mass moving from one place to another. Individual identity is difficult to maintain in the daily routine of the city.

As members of a collective whole, each of us, as a necessary event, must interact with others for our livelihood as well as the prosperity of society.

However, just as we are part of a collective whole, we are also individuals. As individuals, we need places which do not express community values, rather, affirm our own identity and offer security and separation from the public realm.

We need an individual refuge from the everyday trials of working and traveling in the city crowds. We need a place to retreat

where we can relax and reflect on the complexity of city living.

*"A retreat is not a place where the outside world is forgotten, rather it is a place where man gathers his memories and experiences of the world and relates them to his daily life of eating, sleeping, contemplation, conversation and entertainment."*

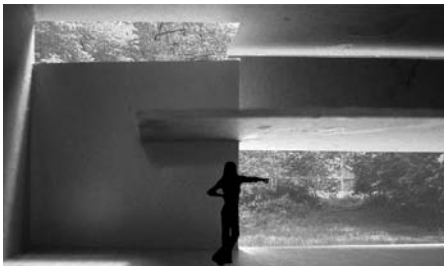
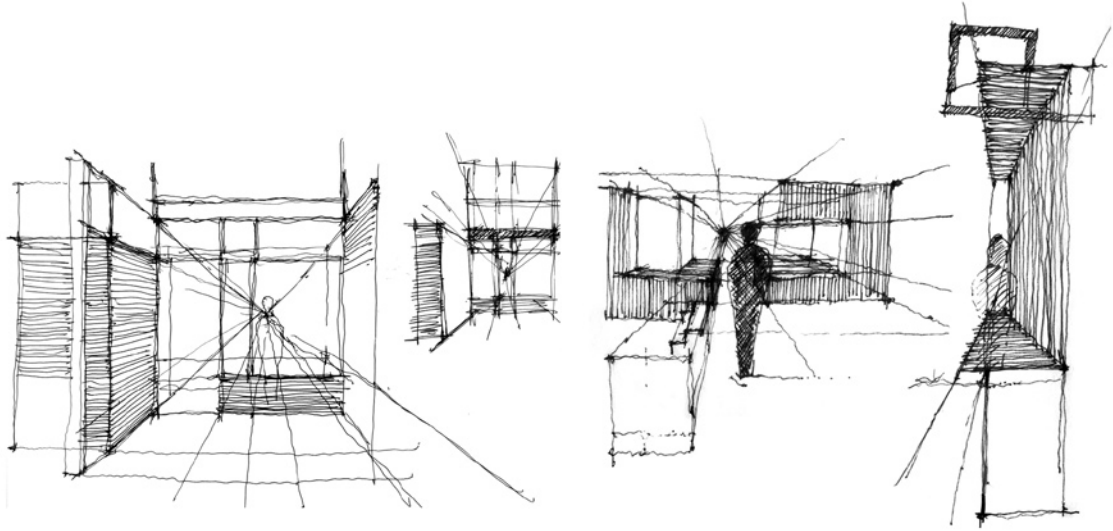
*Christian Norberg-Schulz*

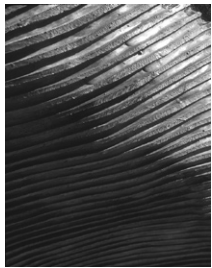
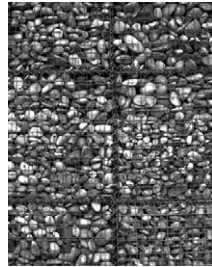
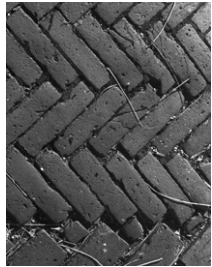
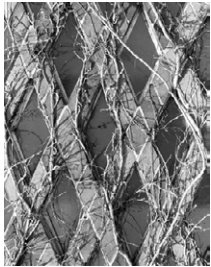
The place where these events happen is a house, a dwelling to offer intimacy and a place for reflection where one can escape from the distractions of the city. This idea appears contradictory. If a retreat implies withdrawing from what is routine, how can the everyday be a retreat?

Early design thoughts were to maintain the purity of form, room and path and to create a composition of nature and events of the city. Allowing the architecture to frame and act as a backdrop for life's activities, for light to perform and shadows to prelude.



*Images above and right study a framed view and attempt to create a composition of nature within the city.*





The following textures are a small selection from a photographic study **1** Baumschlager & Eberle, Haus Kern, Austria **2** Herzog & De Meuron, Signal Box, Switzerland **3** Mario Botta, Banca del Gottardo, Switzerland **4** Eero Saarinen, Concordia Theological Seminary, Indiana **5** Eero Saarinen, Concordia Theological Seminary, Indiana **6** masonry sidewalk, Richmond, Virginia **7** Zaha Hadid, Flower Pavillion, Germany **8** clay roof tiles, Switzerland **9** Peter Zumthor, Thermal Baths, Switzerland **10** sculpture, London **11** service road, Aurelio Galfetti, Castelgrande, Switzerland **12** Arena of Verona, Italy

Concurrently with the investigation of an urban retreat, I began photographing materials, patterns and textures. I realized that once I am detached from my everyday habits I become more aware of things. Shape, structure, and texture are all basic elements that we encounter each day. We seldom pay attention to these elements and how they affect our experience of a place.

Inspired by the parts and how they create rhythm of light and shadow there is a difference between texture and architectural texture. Architectural texture is the planned result of the interplay of materials, construction and composition. This is apparent in the work of Baumschlager & Eberle, Herzog & De Meuron, Mario Botta and Eero Saarinen.

In Baumschlager & Eberle's Haus Kern 1, the wood louvered siding rotates slightly in increments so it appears that the house is opening to the sky. The Signal Box 2 by Herzog & De Meuron, is wrapped from top to bottom with copper slats that bend upward in the window areas to allow light to the interior. Mario Botta 3 utilizes the structure to support the exterior cladding at the Banca del Gottardo. This contrast

between the smooth lines of granite and the roughness of each support creates an architectural texture that results from the construction of the facade. Eero Saarinen 4 constructs a similar condition at the Concordia Theological Seminary by allowing the offset of diamond shaped bricks to create the surface of the wall.

As students of architecture, we are constantly representing materials. The texture study brought awareness to the physical qualities of materials and how to express them through drawing and construction.



The following images have been sources of inspiration for their material and spatial compositions; **1** Miller + Hull Architects, Michaels/ Sisson Residence, Washington **2** Wespi & De Meuron, House in Flawil, Switzerland **3** Shim + Sutcliffe Architects, Craven Road House, Canada **4** Le Corbusier, Le Petit Cabanon, France **5** **6** Rietveld Schroder House, Utrecht, Germany **7** Carlo Scarpa, Olivetti Showroom, Venice, Italy **8** Architecture Research Office, Soho Loft, detail of slate sliding panel, New York **9** Shim + Sutcliffe Architects, Laneway House, Toronto, Canada **10** Shim + Sutcliffe Architects, Laneway House, Canada **11** London courtyard **12** Tadao Ando, courtyard, Japan

Textural qualities do not live alone. They have to relate to the larger scale of things. Composition is the relationship between the different parts of the whole, or the whole to its separate parts. It is the visual harmony between materials, textures, and patterns. Composition occurs both materially and spatially as seen in the work of Miller + Hull, Shim + Sutcliffe, Gerrit Rietveld and Carlo Scarpa.

*"We all experience architecture before we have heard the word. The roots of architectural understanding lie in our architectural experience: our room, our house, our street, our village, our town, our landscape – we experience them early on, unconsciously, and we subsequently compare them with the countryside, towns and houses that we experience later on."*

*"Wooden floors like light membranes, heavy stone masses, soft textiles, polished granite, pliable leather, raw steel, aged mahogany, crystalline glass, soft asphalt warmed by the sun...the architect's materials, our materials. We know them, and yet we do not know them. In order to design, to invent architecture, we must learn to handle them with awareness."*

*Peter Zumthor*

This thesis rediscovers the built environment and develops an awareness of scale, materiality and composition in architecture.



The Fan

Monroe Park

Oregon Hill

Hollywood Cemetery

James River

State Capitol

Shockoe Bottom





## CONTEXT

Every work of architecture has a context. Context can not be ignored in an urban setting. One must consider components such as scale, material, texture and regulating lines in order to decide what ought to be transformed, translated and replaced. These components are the means of creating the relationship between what was, what is and what will be.

Earlier considerations of the retreat house neglected the context of the neighborhood and how it affected the larger rhythm of the street. Therefore, a closer analysis of the site was necessary.

The site for this thesis is located in Richmond, Virginia. Typically, the city experiences cold winters with little snow and hot humid summers. Within two hours, one could travel north to our nations' capitol, west to the Appalachian Mountains or east to the Atlantic Ocean.

In 1737, the original settlement of Richmond was structured parallel to the James River in thirty-two squares, eight blocks long by four blocks deep. Each square contained sixty-five foot wide streets, with four lots per square. The trolley line shifted this regular grid by fanning the streets out from a central park (Monroe Park) in the nineteenth century. This historic district, known as The Fan, is an eighty-five block Victorian neighborhood mixed with residential and retail buildings.

*left: aerial photograph of Richmond, Virginia 1994 reveals the texture of the city and its grid structure above: view of downtown Richmond's skyline*



195

Laurel St.

Belevidere St

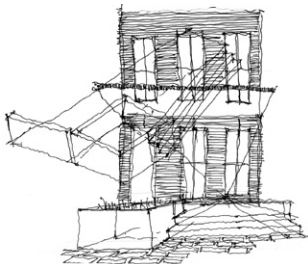


The street grid provides order to most of the surface of Richmond creating a tight fabric woven with small row house structures spread across the city's neighborhoods. Only the downtown area, which forms its own hill of medium to high-rise buildings, is an exception to the regular urban texture.

Oregon Hill is one of Richmond's oldest neighborhoods. Its natural and man-made boundaries include the James River rapids to the south, the Downtown Expressway to the north and Hollywood Cemetery to the west.

Oregon Hill experienced a building boom in 1838 when Tredegar Iron Works was located at the foot of the neighborhood. The iron works employed more than 2,000 Irish and Welsh workers with most populating Oregon Hill. Although most homes were designed

*left: aerial photograph of Oregon Hill, Richmond, VA 1994 provides a closer view of the pattern that covers the city. Most structures are located around the perimeter of the block, creating an interior courtyard within each block* **below: photographs from Oregon Hill**  
**1** front gardens provide an element of privacy to the porches **2** the line of windows and porches gives the street rhythm and continuity **3** herringbone pattern adds character to the sidewalk sketch typical Oregon Hill house



1



2



3

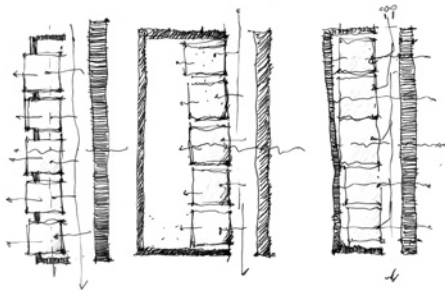


*above: street view of Oregon Hill reveals layers from the street to the house right sketch; conceptual diagram of row house as a series of rooms located along a narrow path right bottom; typical houses of Oregon Hill*

and built by relatively few local architects and contractors, a variety of details and style's contribute to the distinctive quality of living.

Walking around Oregon Hill, one could compare the layers of the neighborhood with those of a house. Cars parked along the street create an invisible wall between the traffic and pedestrians. A line of trees, filter through cars allowing the sidewalk to feel like an outside corridor. The sidewalk is a public room where people can interact with each other, where children can play, where cats can nap. Small gardens set boundaries between the life on the sidewalk and that of the porch. The porch becomes another layer of public space before you enter the house.

Oregon Hill consists of row houses and detached houses with as little as a foot between. Most houses are narrow. Widths range from 15-25 feet. At the most basic description, they are simple rectangular 'boxes' constructed of wood, some with common or contiguous walls. Rooms typically are located on one side of a single circulation path and occur in a sequence along a long narrow hall. These spaces are referred to as "side halls" with a single or



1

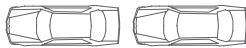
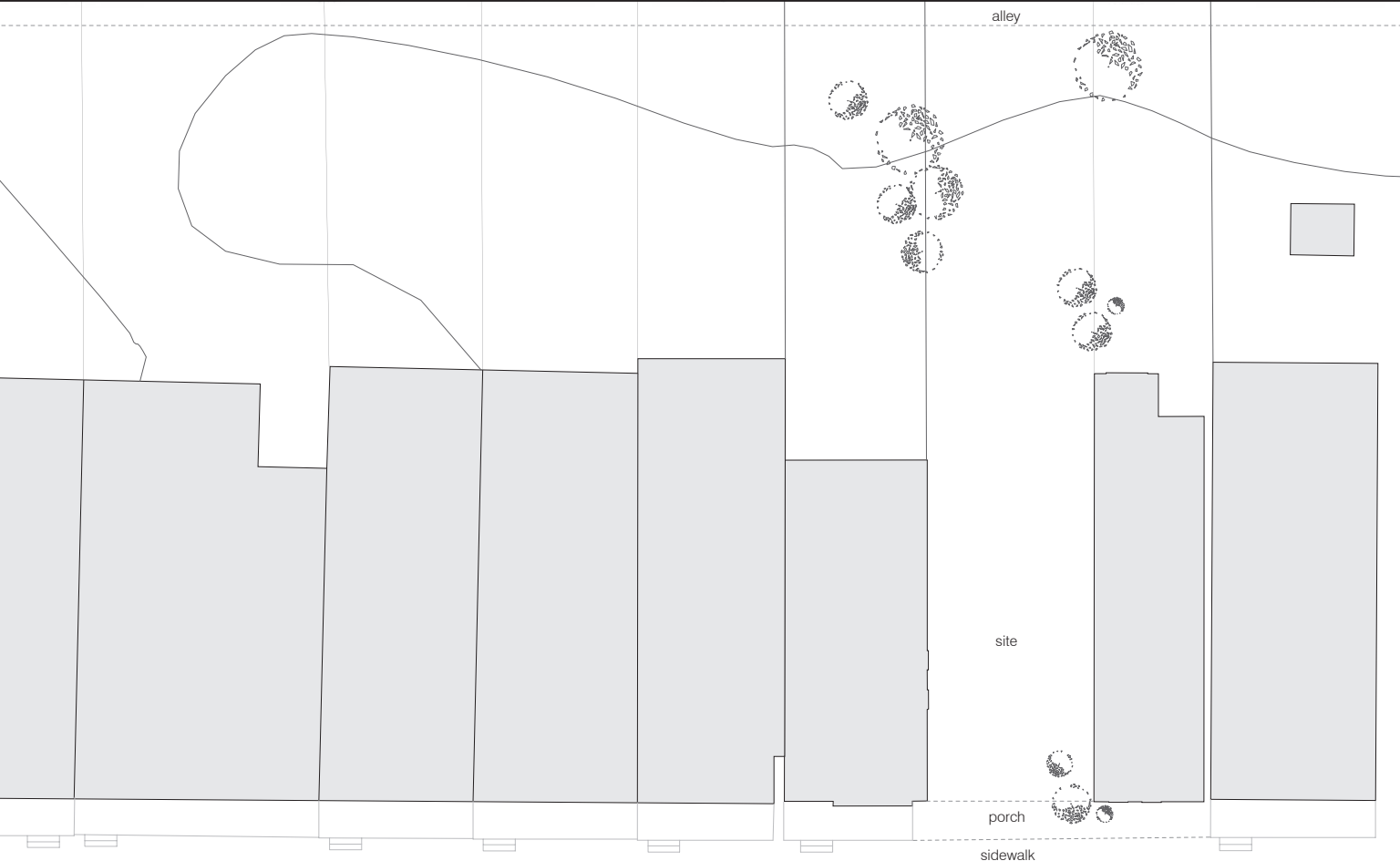
2

3

4

5

6



LAUREL ST



# SITE



1



3

double parlor. Central rooms often receive little light and natural ventilation.

The site itself is 25'x 120'. The neighboring building to the north 1 is wood construction with two windows that look onto the property. The southern building 2 is brick construction with no openings and a wood facade. There is an alley to the east 3 providing automobile access while the building fronts the west 4.



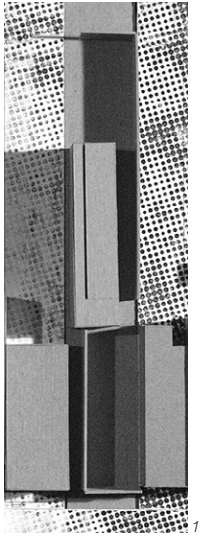
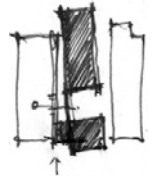
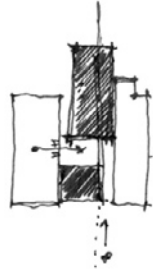
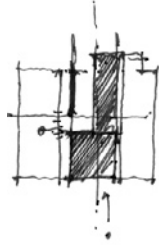
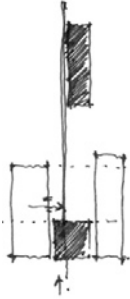
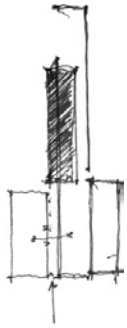
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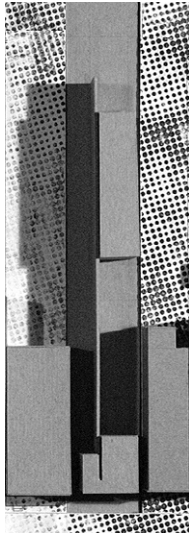
The design of the retreat home works within the constraints of a typical Oregon Hill lot with its narrow width and attempts to respect, mediate and transform those constraints.





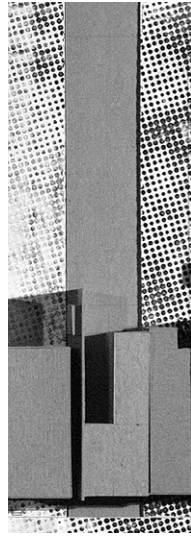
1

*situating the house toward  
the back of the site*



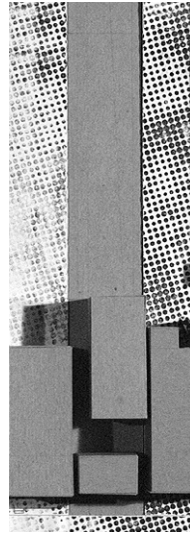
2

*separating the public  
spaces through a large  
courtyard*



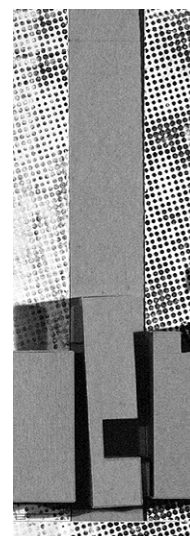
3

*utilizing a wall to separate  
spaces*



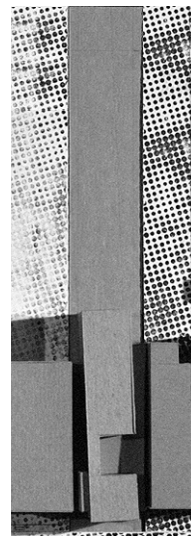
4

*arranging building  
masses to accommodate  
neighbors sightline*



5

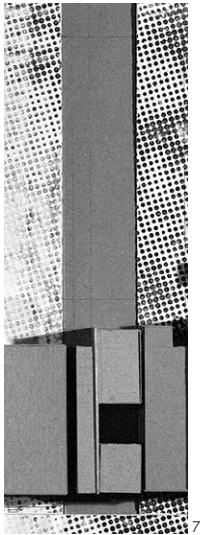
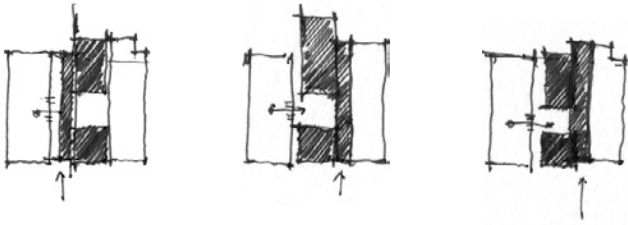
*rotating the house to  
the site*



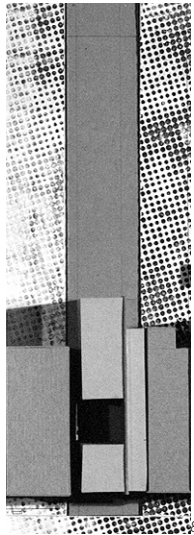
6

*rotating the house to  
the site*

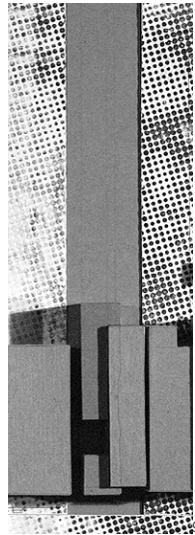




7  
re-orienting the house to the street and site; a wall becomes the delineator between public and private zones



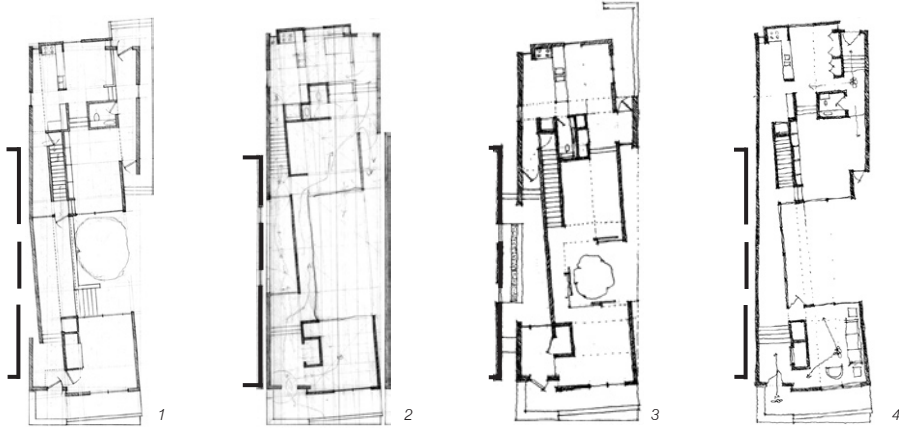
8  
flipping the house to allow neighbor to have natural light



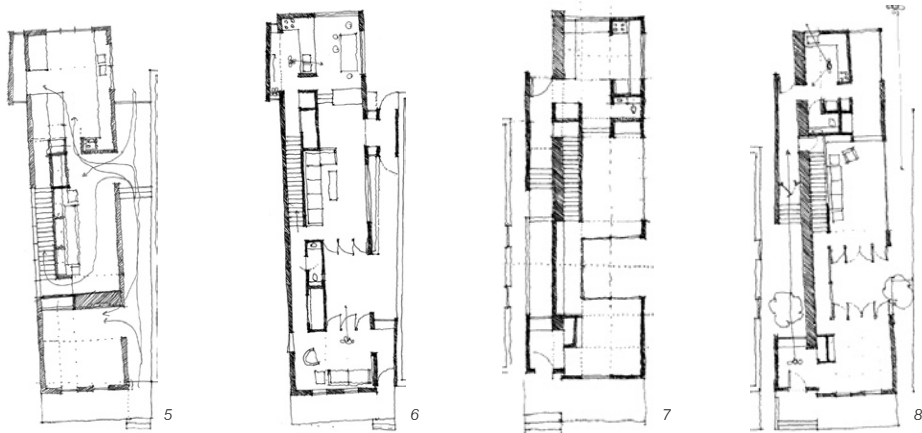
9  
distinguishing between circulation and room; developing a hierarchy

The lack of visual privacy, the lack of natural light, the isolation from the natural environment and the constraints of a narrow footprint were important factors in locating the building to the site. Early design attempts tried to resolve these issues through the spatial organization of the house to the site. The following images are investigations of that study.

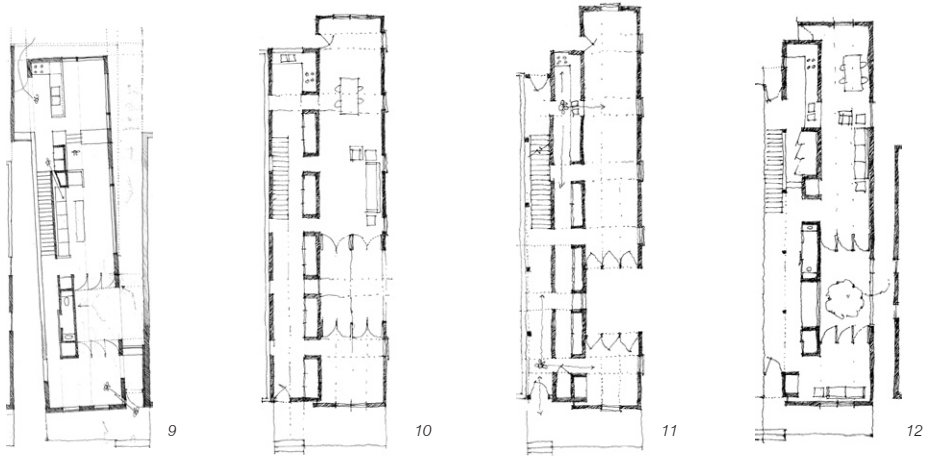
The next pages are early investigations that examine the issues of a narrow urban site and try to resolve them spatially through plans and sketches. Many floor plans developed over the course of this exploration. Although, most of them are variations of the same ideas, this was a necessary step in realizing that architecture is not a floor plan.



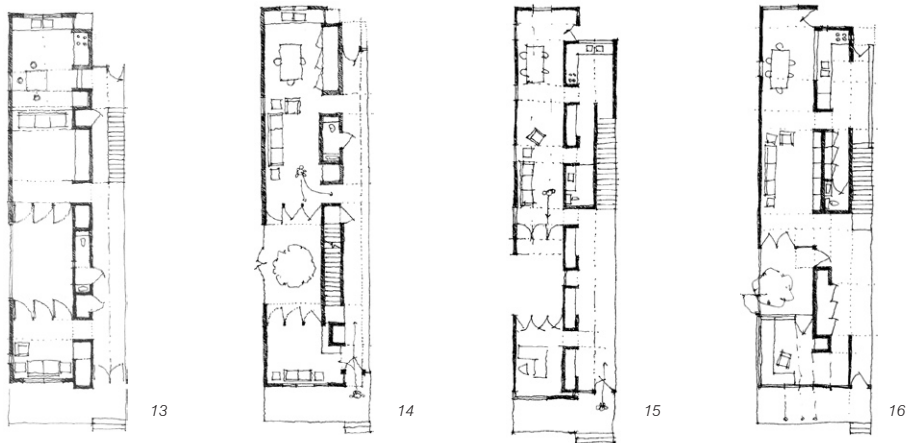
**VISUAL PRIVACY:** placement of a wall at various distances and angles from the neighbors building allowed a habitable outside space that acted as a buffer zone between the two buildings and prevented direct visual contact.



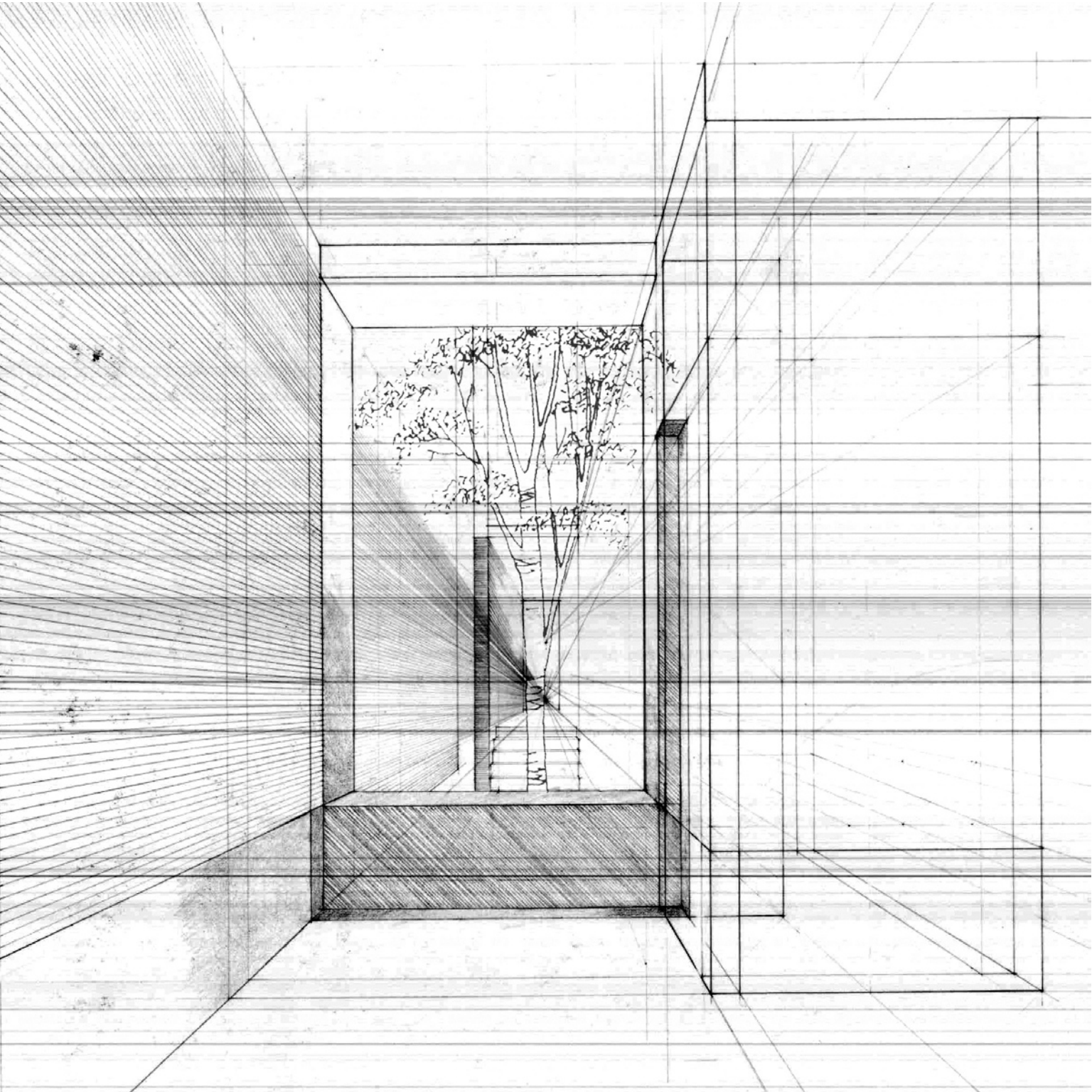
**NATURE & NATURAL LIGHT:** utilizing the wall as the circulation path allows the courtyard to act as a room for nature and a barrier between public and private spaces.

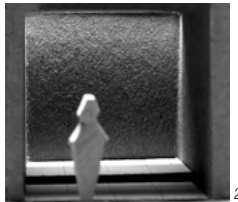
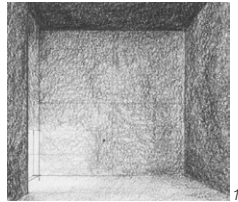
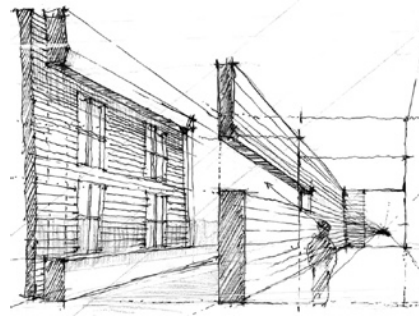
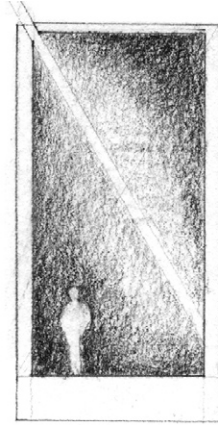


SPATIAL CONSTRAINTS: investigations of the wall as a functional and habitable space provided an open flexible plan free of unnecessary partitions.



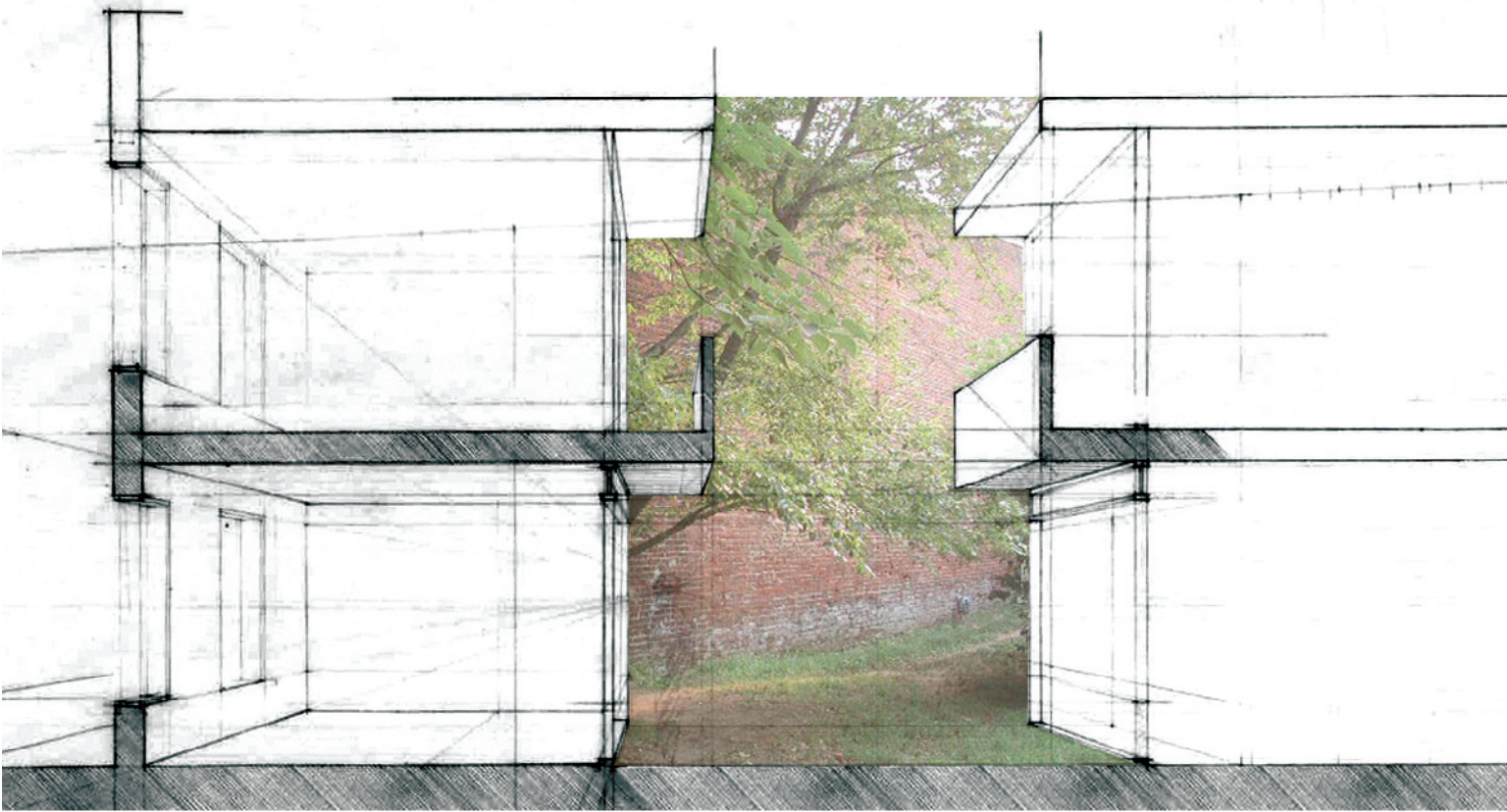
SPATIAL CONDITIONS: by flipping the location of the courtyard to utilize the neighboring wall as an interior wall provides light to both existing and new buildings and diminished the number of interior alleys.



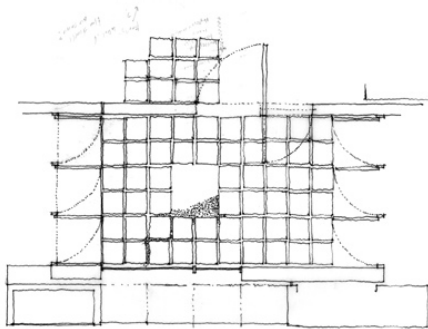
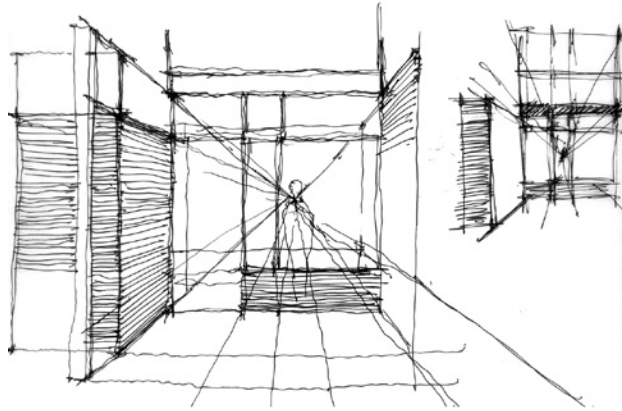
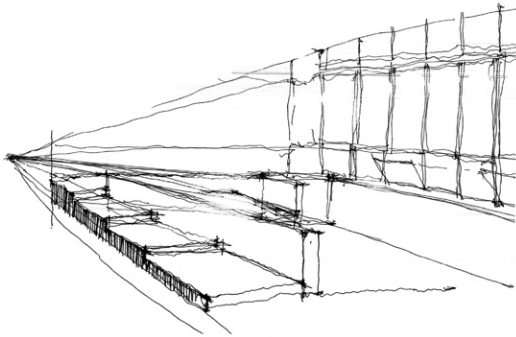


**VISUAL PRIVACY:** placement of a wall at various distances and angles from the neighbors building provided a habitable outside space that acted as a buffer zone between the two buildings and prevented direct visual contact. Further questions arose such as how to frame a view and capture light without imposing on the neighbor and how a new building should respond to an older building.

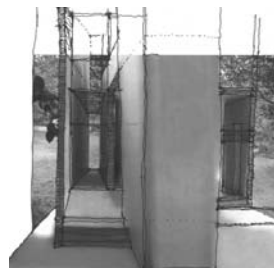
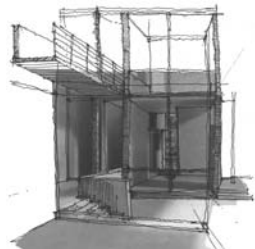
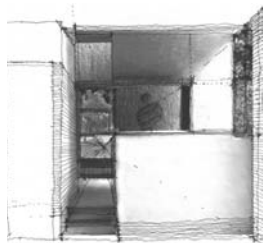
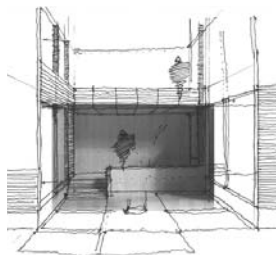
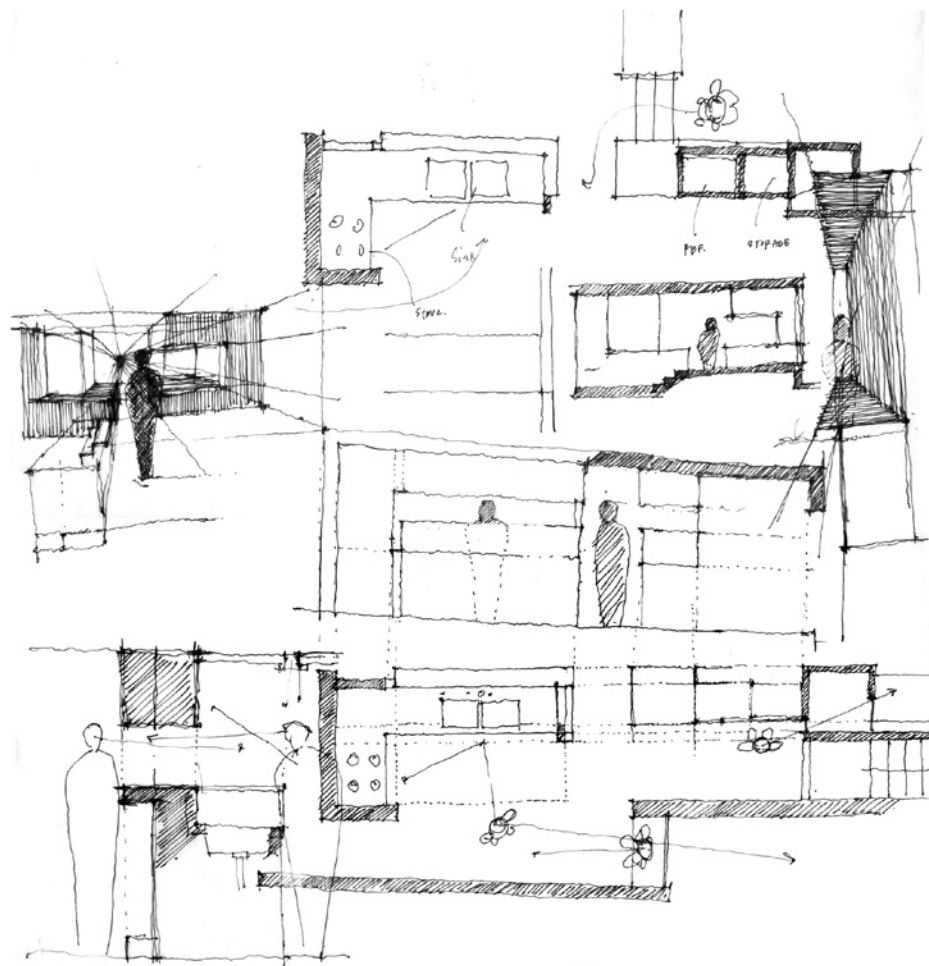
*left: study of narrow alley between existing and new buildings incorporate natural elements into a visually shared space above: study of the size and location of an opening affects the quality of light.*



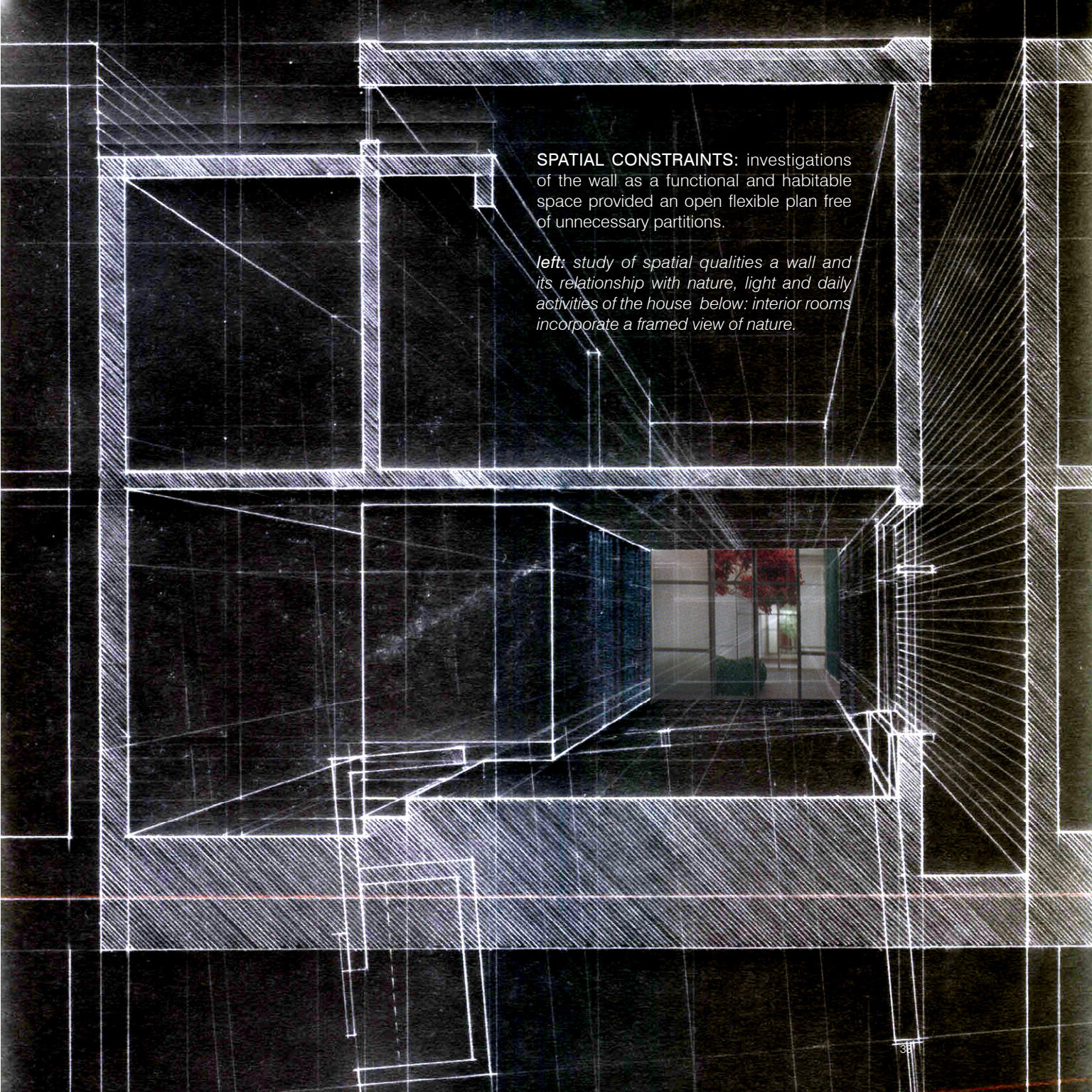
*above: courtyard as a "living space" within the house allows all rooms to have a visual connection with the outside right: study of the spatial relationship of exterior walls and doors and how spaces change during different uses. When the doors are open, small rooms or thresholds provide a transition between inside and outside.*



**NATURE & NATURAL LIGHT:** utilizing the wall as the circulation path allows the courtyard to act as a room for nature and a transition between public and private spaces. The courtyard provides light, wind, rain and all natural elements that are usually lost in modern dwellings to the center of the narrow urban house. All spaces within the house have some sort of visual connection with the outside.

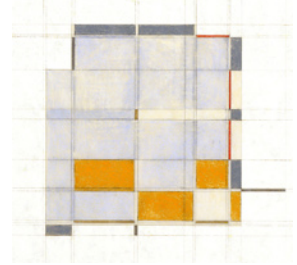
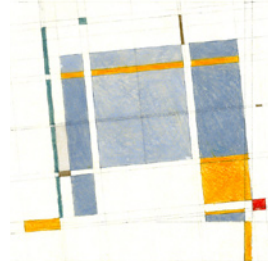
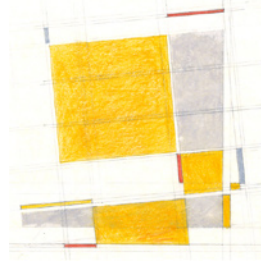
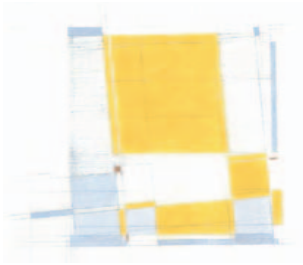




A detailed architectural section drawing of a house, rendered in white lines on a dark background. The drawing shows a multi-level structure with various rooms and a central corridor. A grid of white lines is overlaid on the entire drawing, providing a reference for scale and alignment. The drawing is a cutaway view, showing the internal structure and the relationship between different levels of the building. The walls are thick and have a hatched texture, while the floors and ceilings are represented by solid lines. The overall style is technical and precise, typical of architectural drawings.

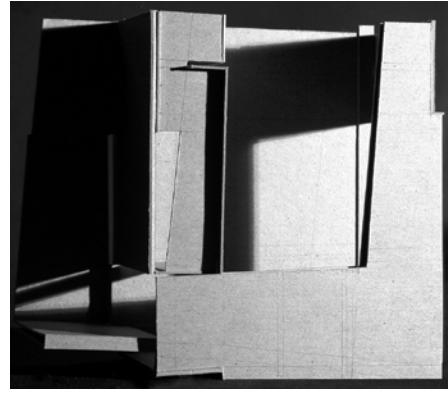
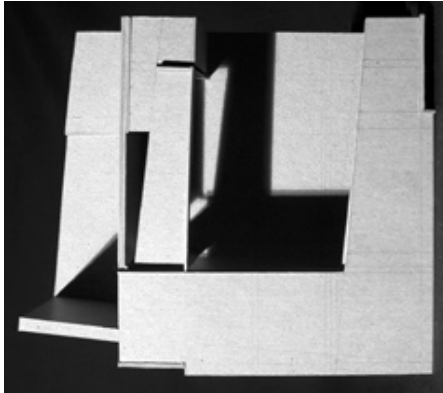
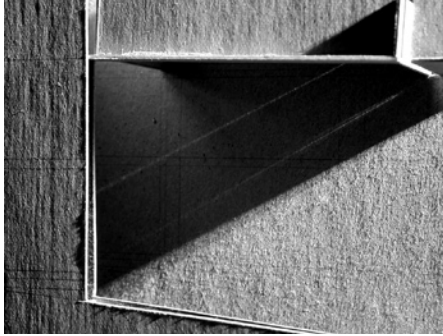
**SPATIAL CONSTRAINTS:** investigations of the wall as a functional and habitable space provided an open flexible plan free of unnecessary partitions.

*left: study of spatial qualities a wall and its relationship with nature, light and daily activities of the house below: interior rooms incorporate a framed view of nature.*



**SPATIAL CONDITIONS:** It is important to find a visual balance between things. Everyday we become over-stimulated with so much stuff that it is hard to find a visual relief. The house is simple and acts as a stage for daily activities of eating, sleeping, conversation, contemplation and reflection. Its design provides a balance by creating places for our routines.

The graphic sketches above are a method for measuring the composition of what exist. They allow one to step back from the programmatic requirements and simplify what is there. The sketches allow one to see a hierarchy of parts and generate ideas for the next level of investigation.



*left: graphic sketches to understand spatial relationships  
above: graphic models as a three dimensional understanding  
of sketches*

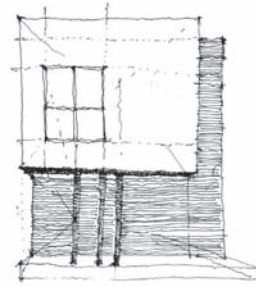


LAUREL ST



Two types of spaces exist within the house, circulation and living spaces. Circulation spaces are those areas that create movement and a path from one location to another while living spaces become areas for resting, scattered along the path. The division of these spaces established an order to the architecture. Therefore, the house is comprised of three elements: screen, wall and stair.

The house mediates between the existing buildings of the block and responds to the dominant lines from the porches, rooftops and windows that create the street facade. The facade is composed of a simple transparent screen and solid volume, both constructed from wood. The solid volume



projects in front of the screen creating an exterior space similar to that of the neighboring porches. Two columns provide structural support to the cantilevering room above. The columns define the edges of the porch while aligning with the center of the porch and window above.



*left: building mass study reveals the location of the courtyard and how it responds to the neighboring building above; photographic study to understand how the new building will bridge*

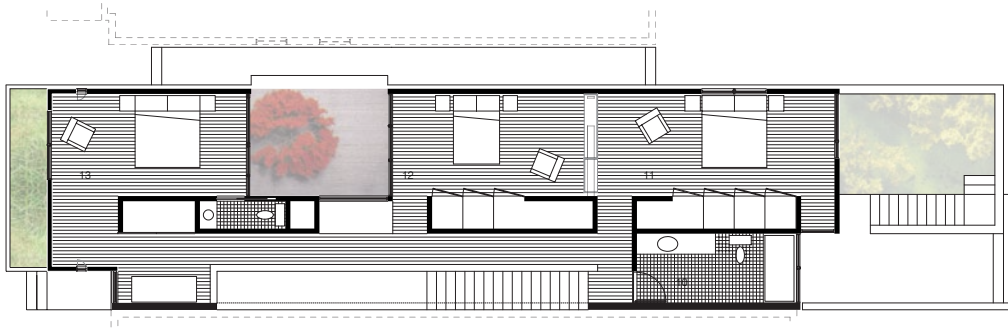


The front door is an extension of the screen. The wood slats on the door are larger in dimension and taper back to the standard dimension used in the screen. This makes a subtle differentiation between door and wall.

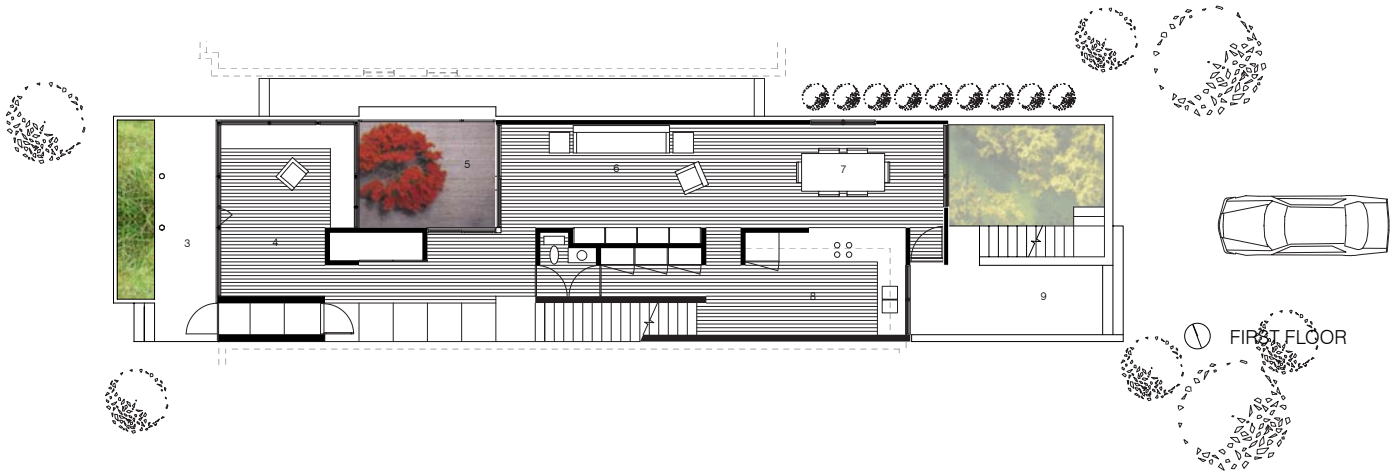
A small vestibule serves as a transitional space from the activities of the street to the life of the house. It becomes a place for practical uses such as package delivery, mail, or just a place to keep shoes. The rough concrete floor of the porch extends into the vestibule but becomes more refined and smooth as it folds to become the wall.

The front room is extroverted, defined by glass and a wooden screen. It allows an extension of the porch into the house as well as the house to the street. The screen filters the actions of the street. This room is flexible and can accommodate many functions: a home office, a formal living room or a library.

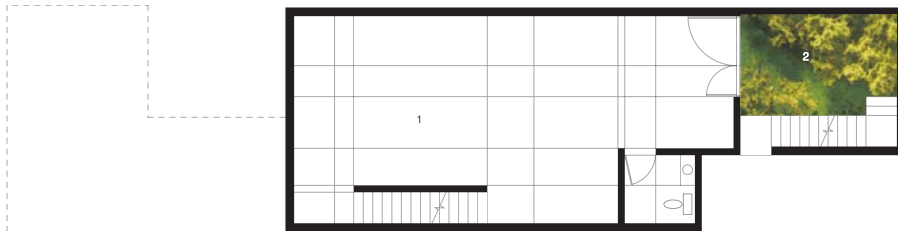
A small courtyard mediates the communal life of the neighborhood and the private spaces within the dwelling. A cherry blossom tree in the courtyard emphasizes the changes in seasons. The courtyard will fill with brightly covered leaves in the fall and beautiful blossoms in the spring. The courtyard provides natural light to the center of the narrow urban house as well as to the neighbors. All spaces within the house have a visual connection with the outside.



SECOND FLOOR



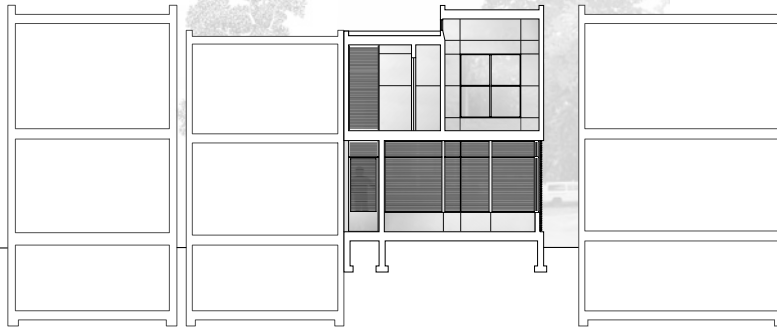
FIRST FLOOR



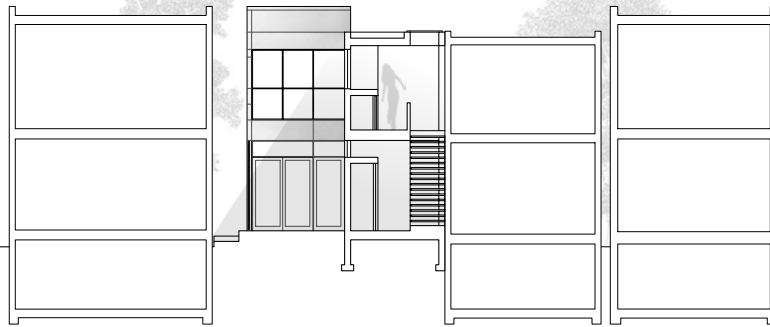
- 1 studio/storage
- 2 courtyard
- 3 front porch
- 4 office
- 5 courtyard
- 6 living
- 7 dining
- 8 kitchen
- 9 patio
- 10 bath
- 11 bedroom
- 12 bedroom
- 13 bedroom

BASEMENT

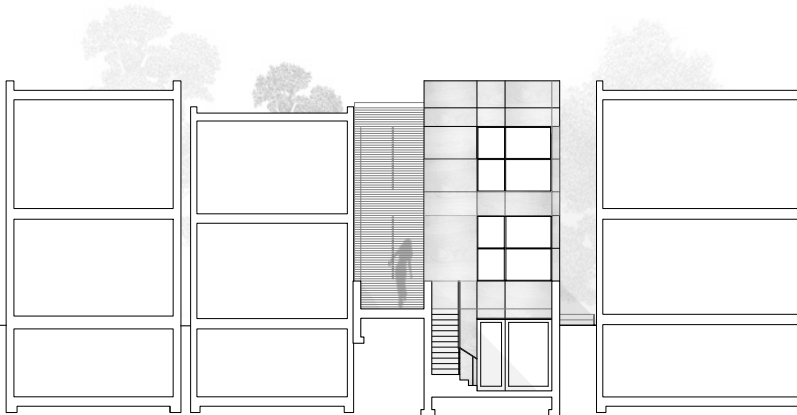
*view looking west through  
screen filtering the activities  
of the street*



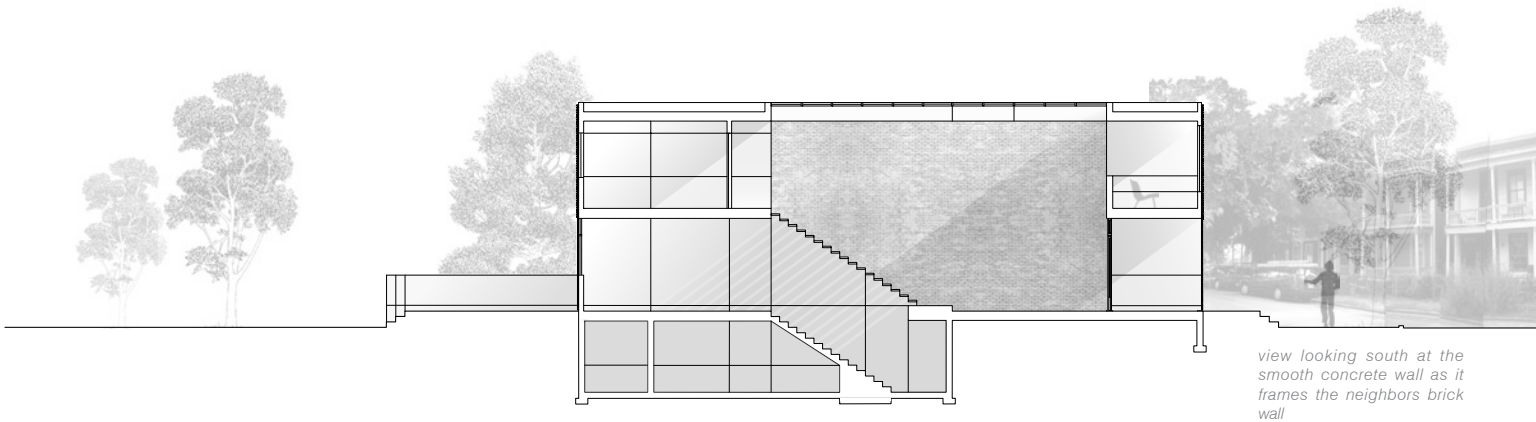
*view through courtyard looking  
east reveals a small two story  
exterior space*



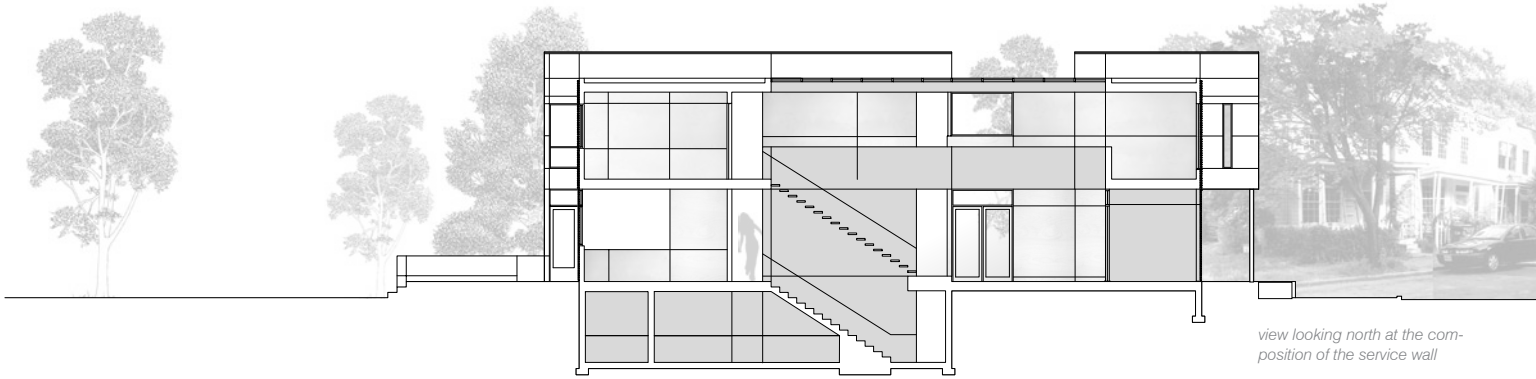
*view through basement entry  
provides another exterior  
court area*



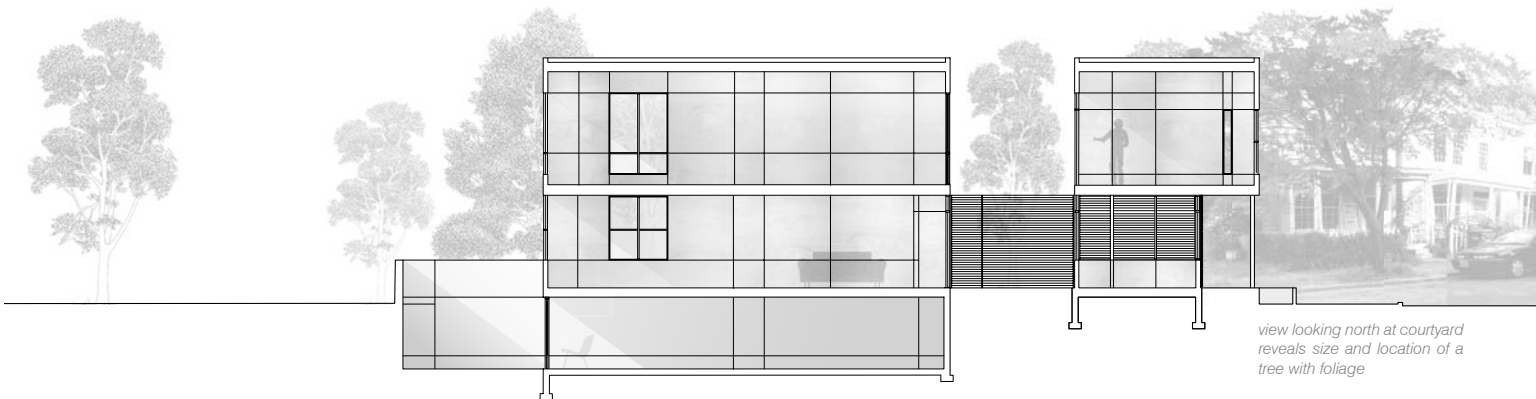




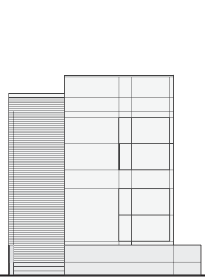
*view looking south at the smooth concrete wall as it frames the neighbors brick wall*



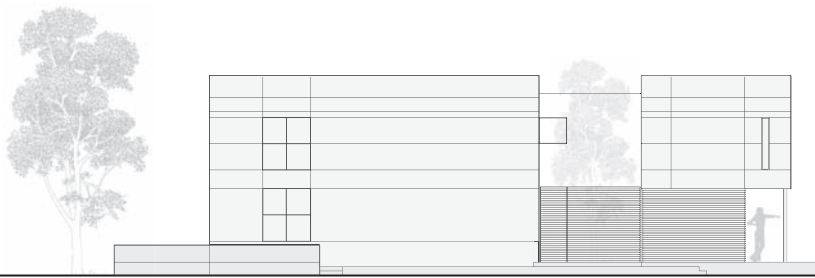
*view looking north at the composition of the service wall*



*view looking north at courtyard reveals size and location of a tree with foliage*



rear elevation



side elevation



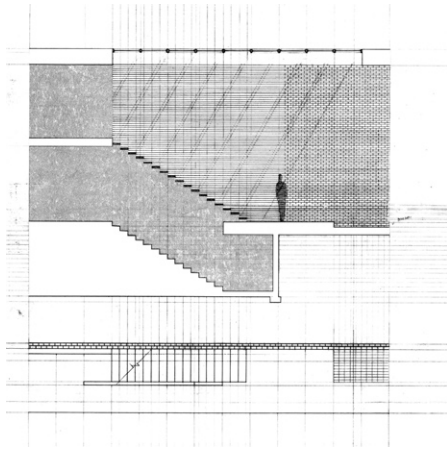
street elevation



street elevation



street elevation

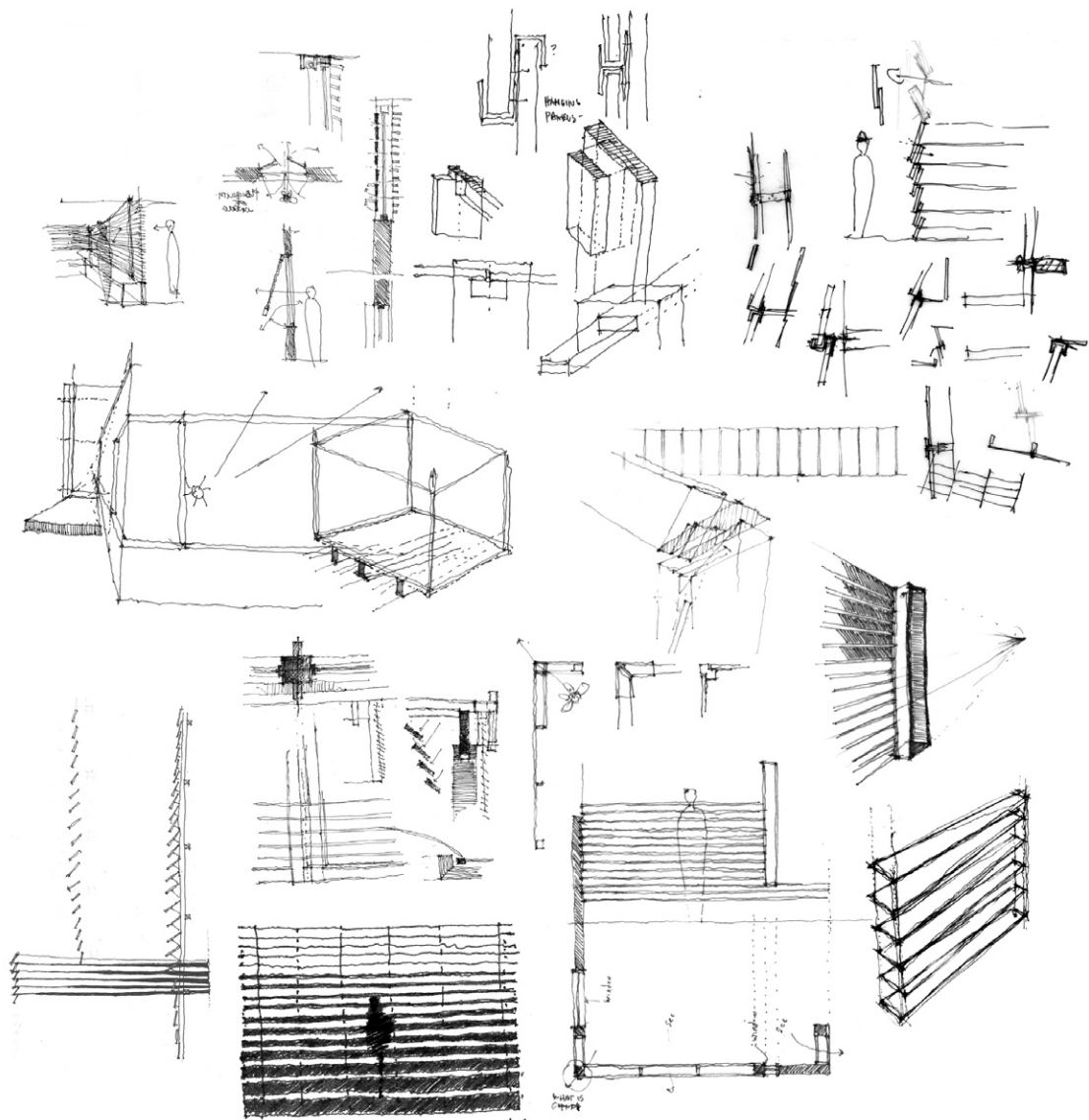


A smooth concrete wall frames the rough weathered brick of the neighboring building. This contrast celebrates the character of the existing while creating a backdrop for life's activities and a stage for light and shadow to perform from the skylight above. The skylight illuminates the circulation spaces from above where as the living spaces are flooded with light admitted through the front screen, courtyard and side windows.

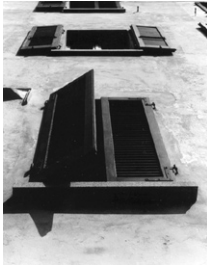
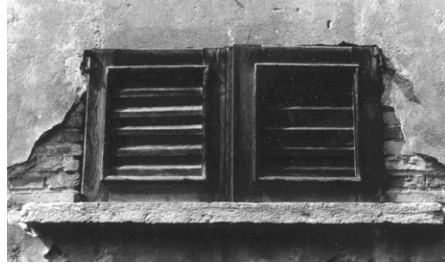
Storage, mechanical and plumbing services are located within the wall, allowing living areas to be unencumbered by mechanical systems and creating an open plan. The open plan contains no barriers to obstruct the diffusion of light and view of nature. The plan is open and flexible for change. The design is simple and allows the belongings of the owner to bring life to the space.

*above: smooth concrete wall frames the weathered brick of the neighboring building below: view out reveals open plan and framed view of nature*



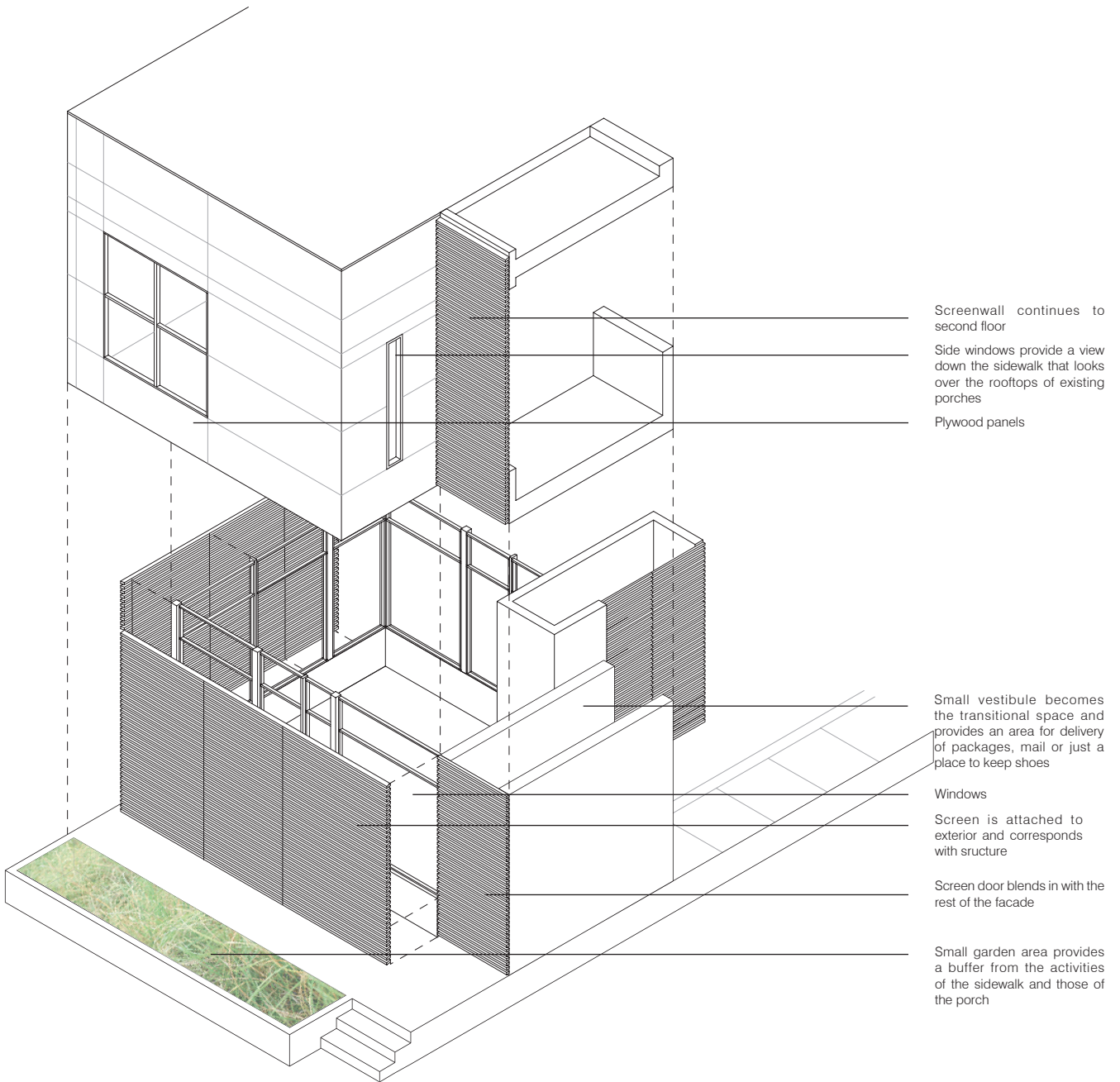


above: investigations of methods for constructing the screen wall right: photographic study of shutters found in Europe



The house is comprised of three elements: screen, wall and stair. The screen was inspired from wooden shutters found throughout Europe. Many houses allow multiple layers of privacy between the street and interior through adjustable shutters. Louvered shutters provide a range of light, ventilation and privacy.

## SCREEN



Screenwall continues to second floor

Side windows provide a view down the sidewalk that looks over the rooftops of existing porches

Plywood panels

Small vestibule becomes the transitional space and provides an area for delivery of packages, mail or just a place to keep shoes

Windows

Screen is attached to exterior and corresponds with structure

Screen door blends in with the rest of the facade

Small garden area provides a buffer from the activities of the sidewalk and those of the porch



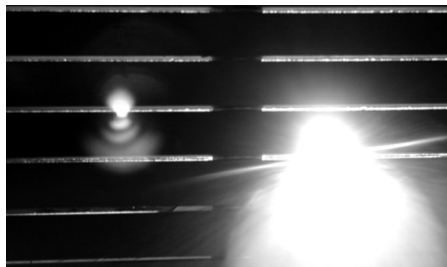
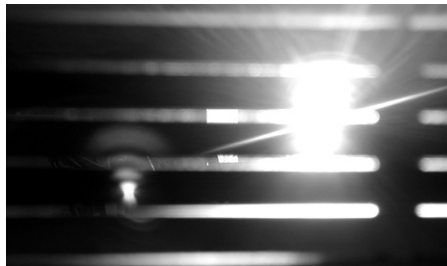
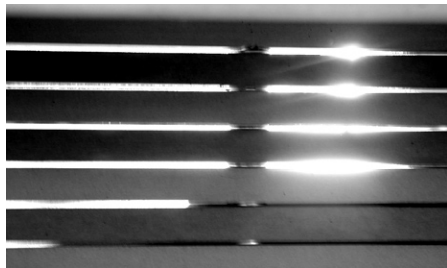
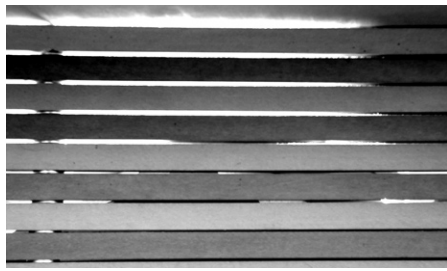
## SCREEN

Maintaining a sense of visual privacy for the residents informed the exploration of screening elements. The screen filters the activities of the street. It is located on the exterior of the house and designed in segments that respond to the modules of its wooden structure. Adjustable wood louvers create various degrees of separation from the public realm. Operable windows located behind the screen further aid in buffering the view from the street while allowing light to penetrate the interior. The screen allows the porch to extend into the house and house to extend to the street.

At night, the play of light and structure change. The source of light is the building. The front screen filters the activities of the house into the street. Warm honey-colored light spills into the street and courtyard.

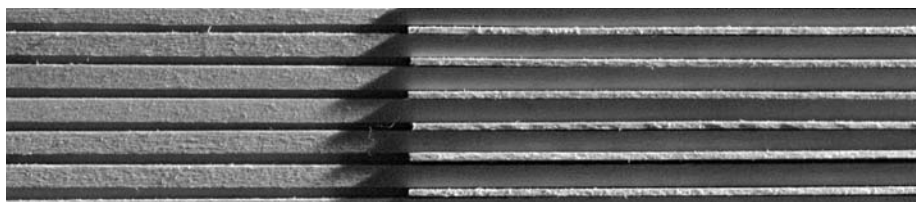
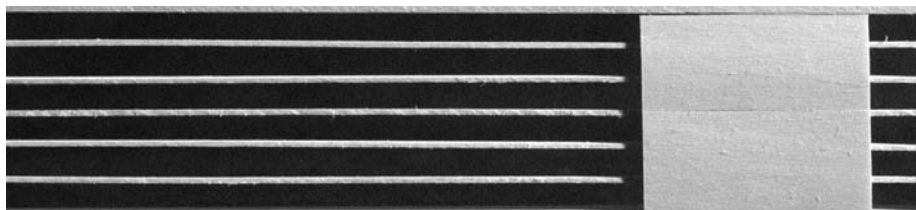
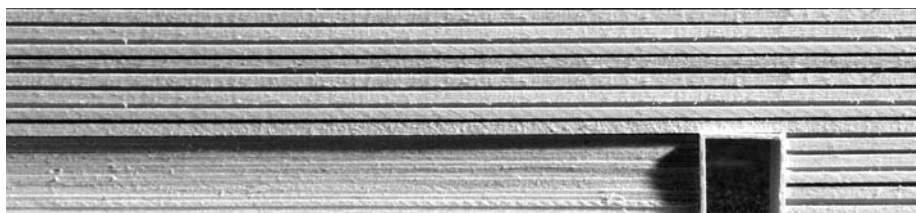
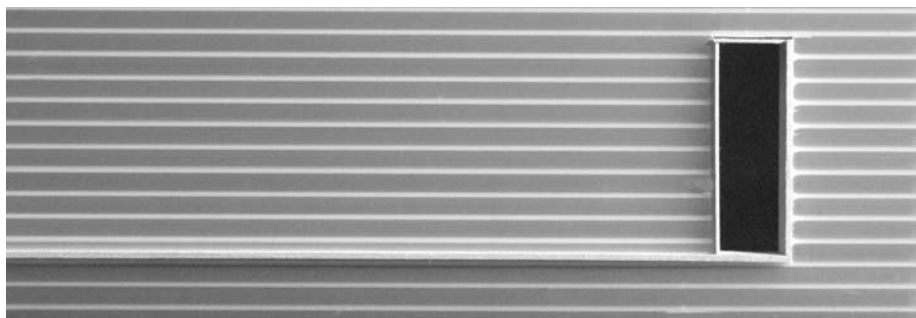


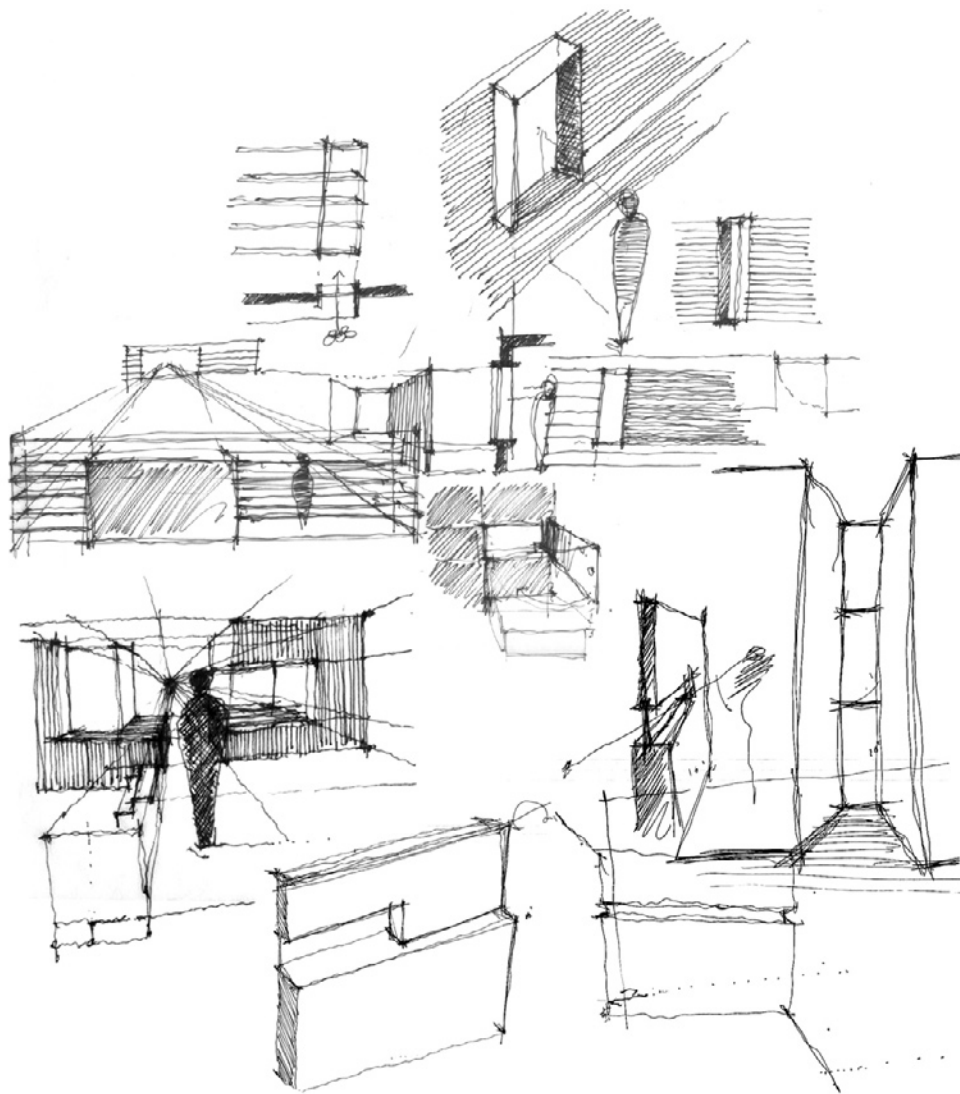




## SCREEN

The screens' texture consists of many individual elements that provide a rhythm of light and shadow which change from night to day. Variations of patterns produced by the screen are endless. The play of sunlight on the repetitive slats creates a constantly shifting pattern.





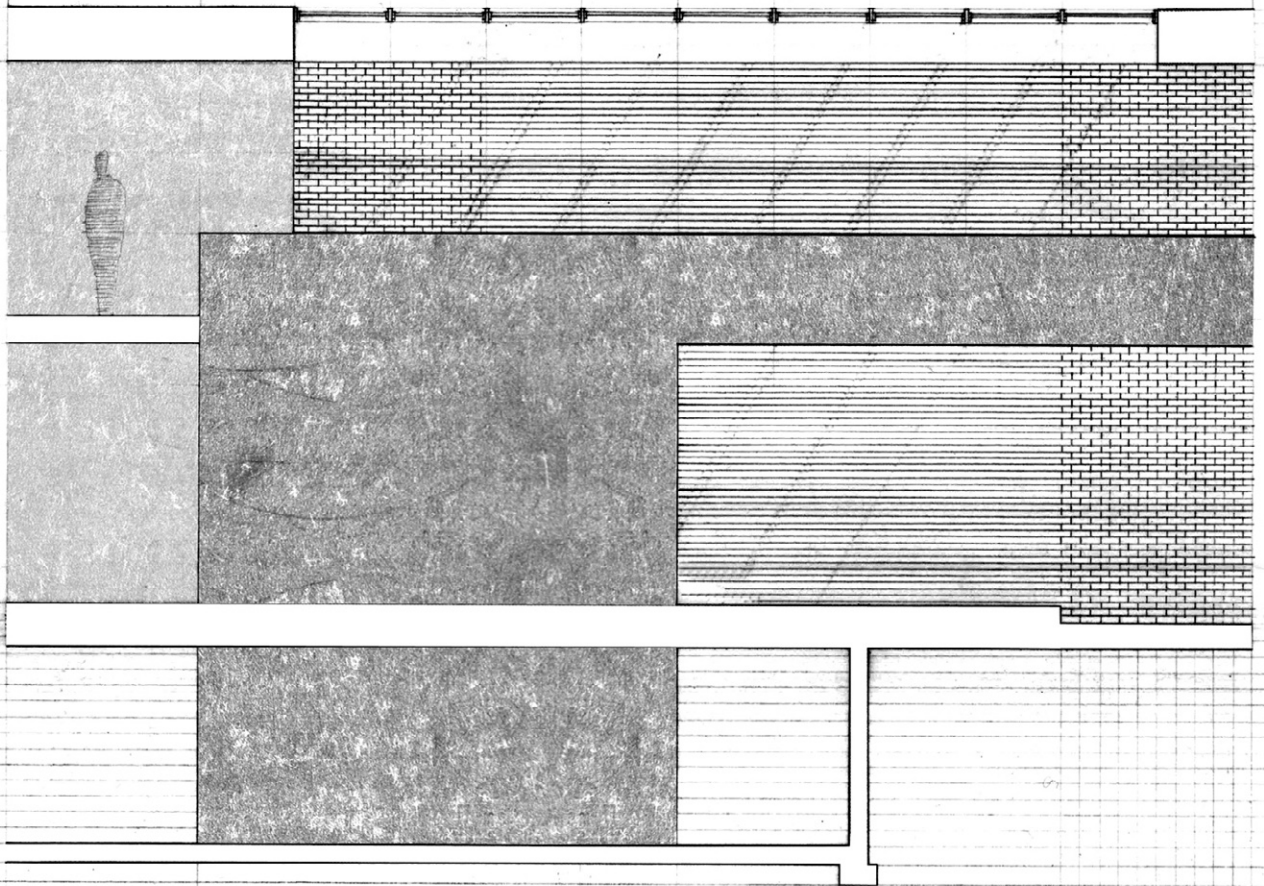
## SCREEN

*The composition of an opening within the screen was investigated by changing the dimension and direction of wood. The study models on the left demonstrate various ways an opening could occur within a screen wall.*

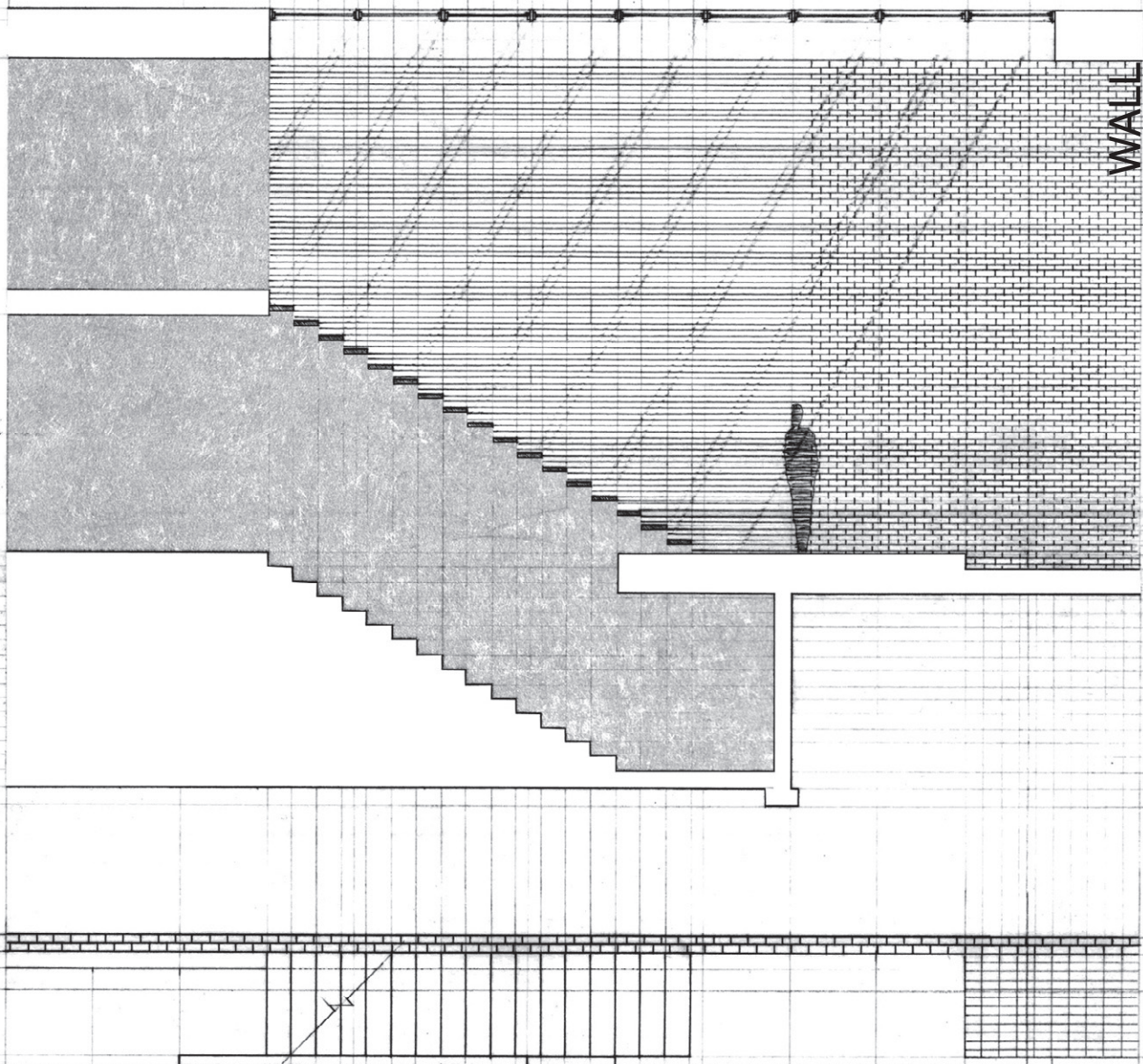




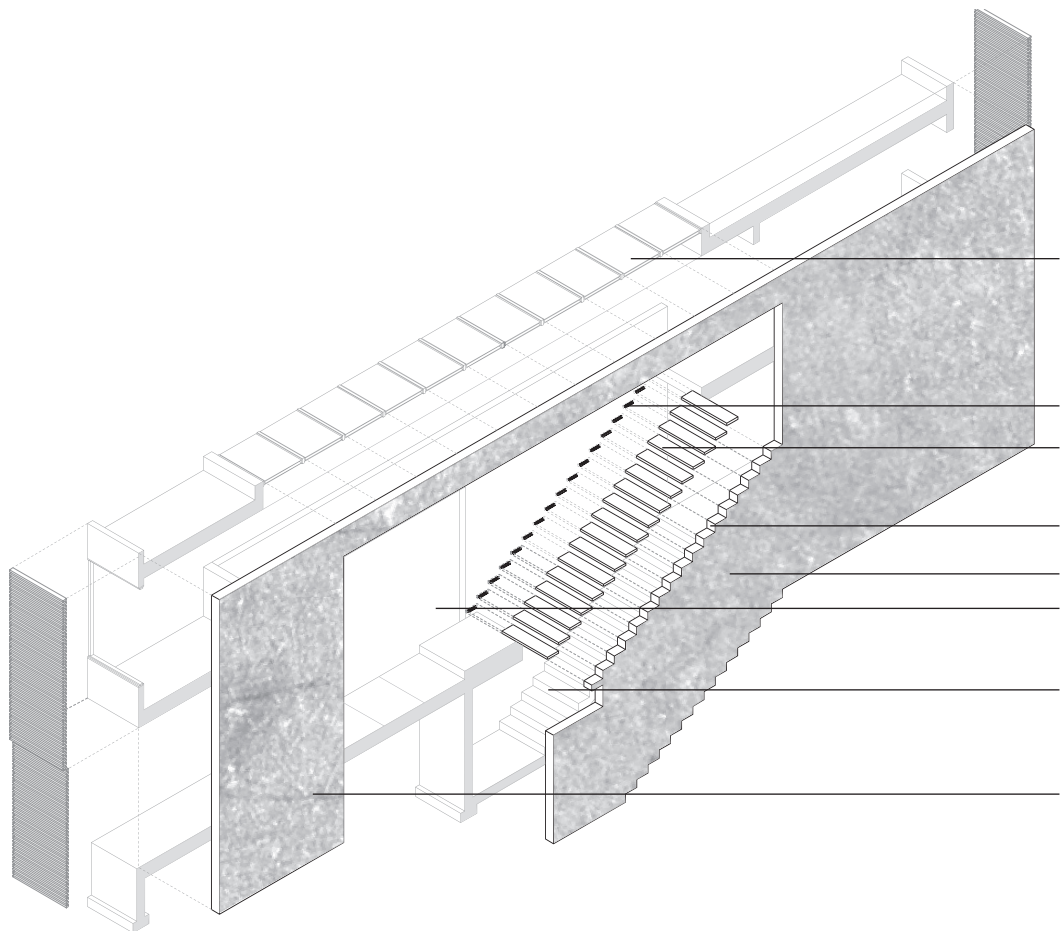
*View through screen and its relationship to the street and courtyard. The screen allows the porch to extend into the house and house to extend to the street.*



Party walls, shared walls between the parties on either side, are basic features of building design in which neighboring structures touch one another. Party walls tend to be thin, perhaps eight to ten inches thick. Their design is very straightforward. Often appearing as a simple line in plan and as a two-dimensional surface in the built form the party wall lacks a third dimension. By expanding the depth of the wall, it becomes a habitable space.



above & left: study of the concrete wall framing neighboring brick wall



Skylight provides view of sky while allowing natural light to reveal the texture of the brick and concrete wall

Steel angles supporting stair

Wood treads with open risers create a screen and filter the view

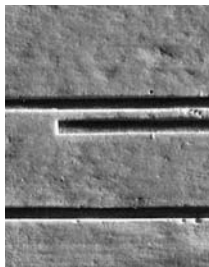
Stairs are supported along concrete wall

Concrete wall

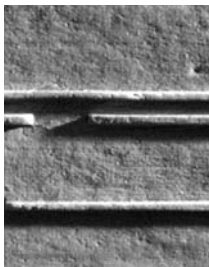
Two-story gallery

Light from skylight filters through stairs and into basement

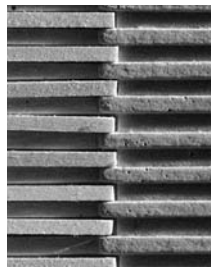
Openings within concrete wall can be filled in the future



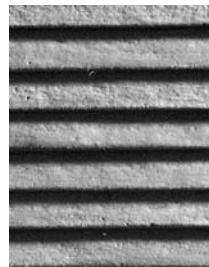
1



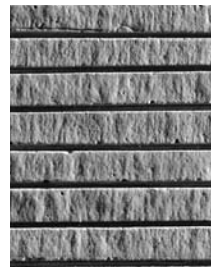
2



3



4



5





The wall and the path along the wall are the places in which vertical movement occurs. Exterior and interior stairs occur within the space of the wall. The wall becomes the path of circulation and a container for mechanical, plumbing, electrical and storage needs that serve the rooms. The stair and circulation area are the alley of the house.

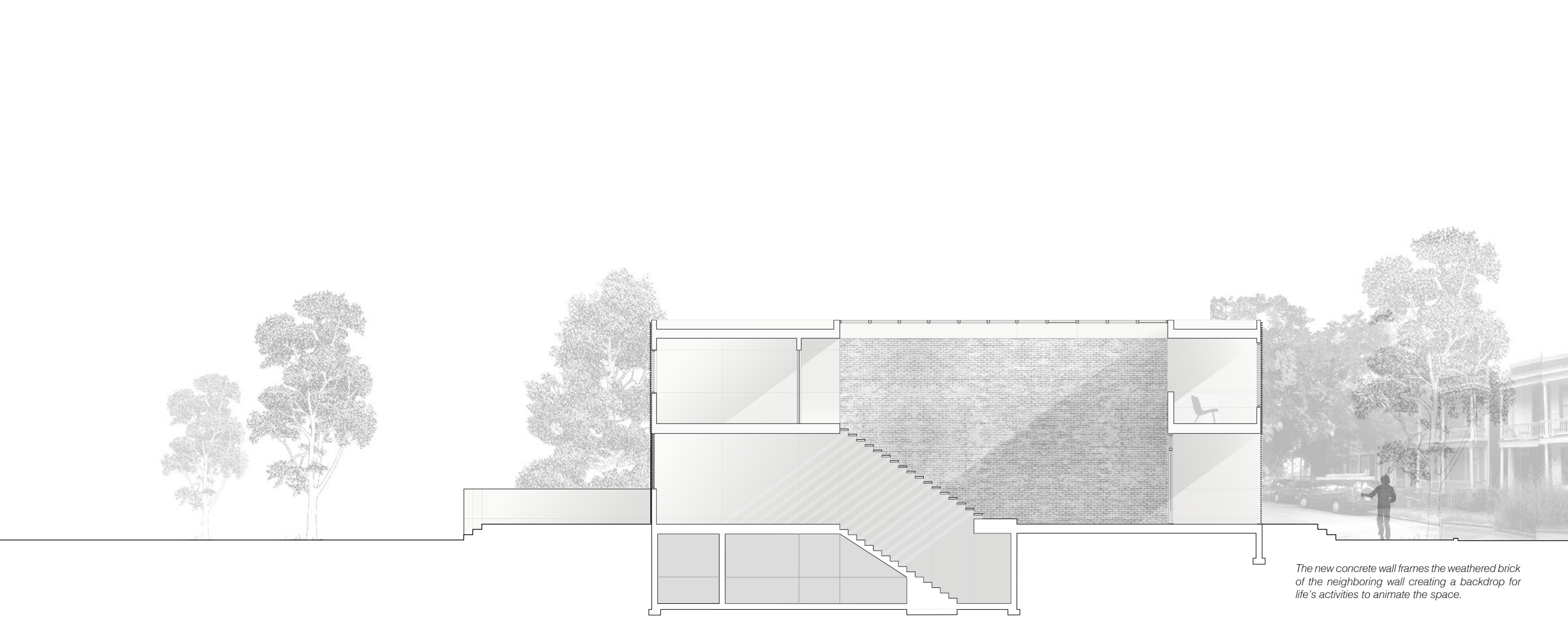
A smooth polished concrete wall frames the rough weathered brick wall of the neighbor building and provides an infill structure for the house when this neighboring building is removed.

A study of the texture of the concrete wall relates the coursing of the brick with the pattern of the wall. The intention is to create a contrast between what exists and what is new and for the texture of the wall to be simple and not compete with the wood screen. This contrast celebrates the existing while creating a backdrop for life's activities to animate the space.

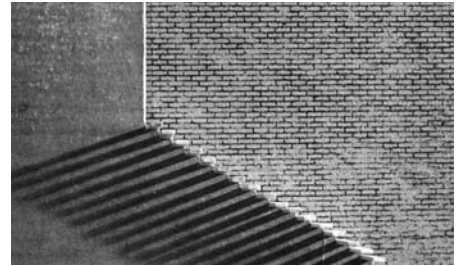
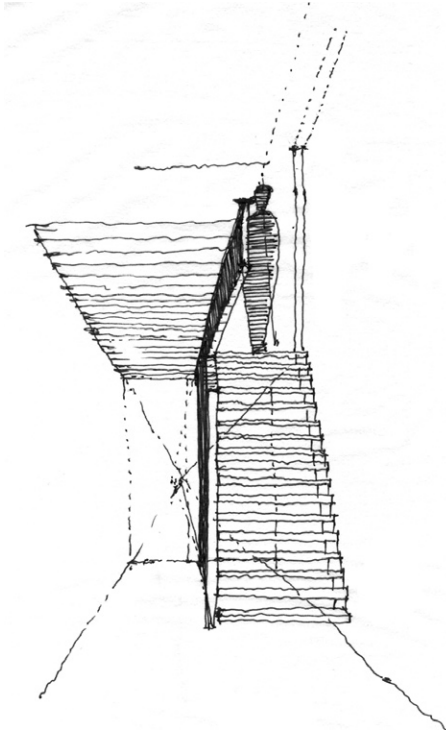
A skylight above the stair allows natural light to the "alley" area revealing the texture of the brick and the concrete walls. The skylight also creates a view to the sky and allows light to filter through the stairs and into the basement.

*left top: exploded view of stair and wall relationship left below: concrete texture study for stair wall above: light and shadow study shows pattern across the textured wall*





*The new concrete wall frames the weathered brick of the neighboring wall creating a backdrop for life's activities to animate the space.*



The stair area is open to above, creating a gallery on the second level, connecting the first and second floors.

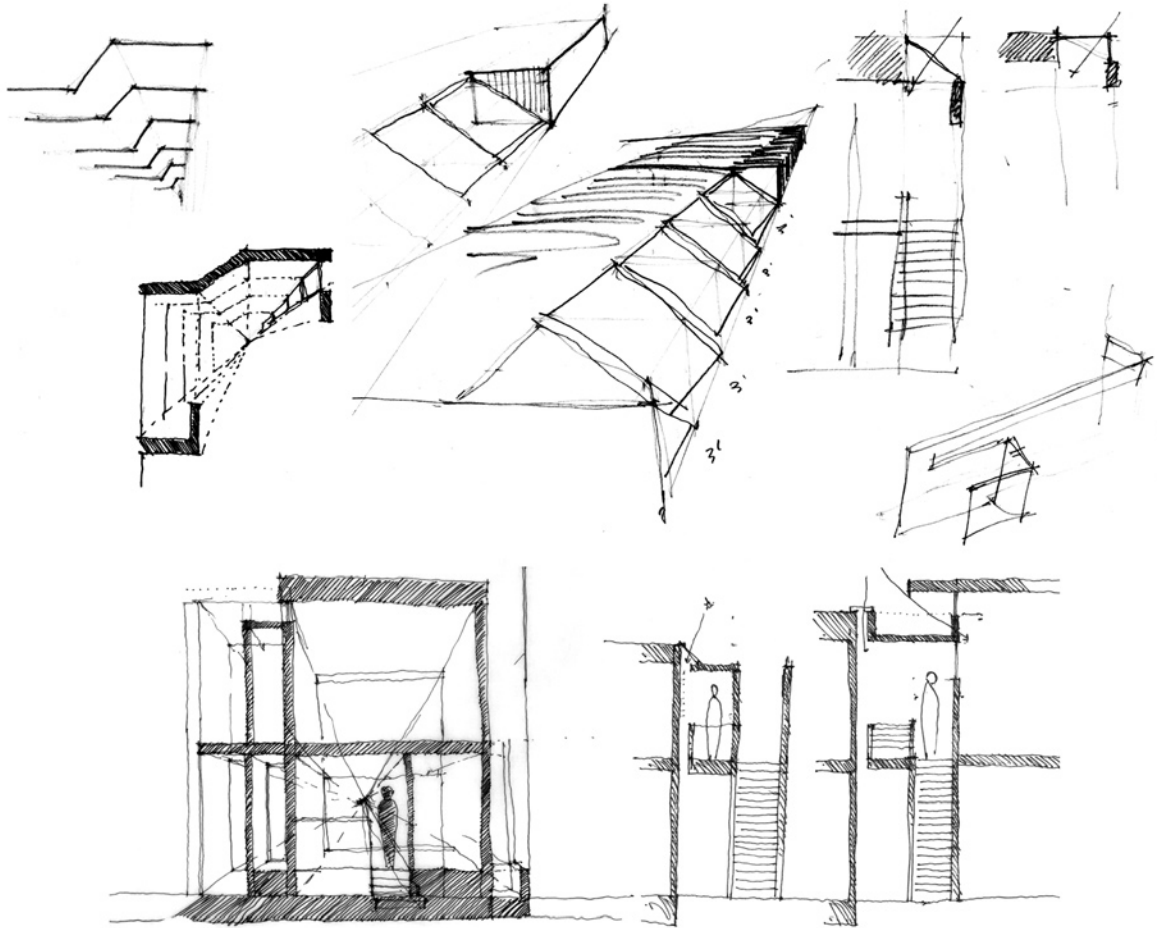
Stair treads are wood with open risers that filter the view from the front to the back of the house. Stairs are supported by steel angles fastened to the concrete wall.

Traces of formwork create a pattern or grain, which respond to interior and exterior regulating lines. The composition provides places for practical elements such as outlets, light switches and door handles.

*above: images of wooden stair treads with open risers as they filter the activities within the house right: mid-afternoon view of how light illuminates circulation area*



## STAIR



skylight above the stair allows natural light to the "alley" area revealing the texture of the brick and the concrete walls. The skylight also creates a view to the sky and allows light to filter through the stairs and into the basement.









*View through interior reveals the stair wall and how its composition responds to interior and exterior regulating lines.*



The project began with an inquiry of how the places in which we live could express our individuality. Our homes should enrich us, both as individuals and as members of our communities, affording us the opportunity for connection, retreat and reflection. Seeking to understand how the everyday could become a retreat, investigations were made of creating privacy while engaging the natural environment of the city.

The exploration of scale, material and composition removed thoughts of a specific building type and focused on the architectural qualities that would define the character of the building.

Early design attempts tried to resolve issues of the site through a floor plan. After months of continuous iterations of the same idea, I realized that architecture is not a floor plan but spatial moments created from the floor

plan. I simplified my ideas and searched for a hierarchy of parts. The screen, wall and stair become the major elements that define the building.

Architecture poses a physical relationship with life. To experience it one must touch, see, hear and smell it.

*"A sensitive container for the rhythm of footsteps on the floor, for the concentration of work, for the silence of sleep."*

*Peter Zumthor*

The architecture of the retreat provides a background for life that occurs in, on and around it.



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