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by

Philip M Freeman

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R E S I D I N G

By: Philip M Freeman

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.

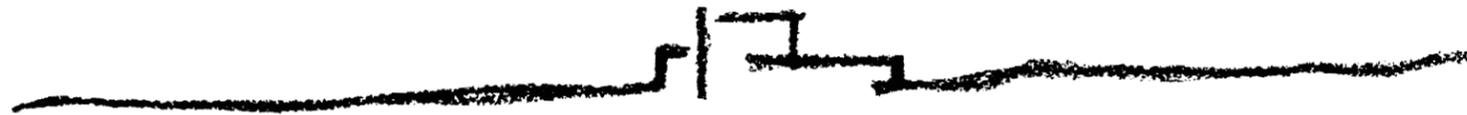
Approved: Pia Sarpaneva, Chairman

Michael O'Brien

Frank Weiner

To my mother and my beloved Karen, for their love and support. Praise to the Lord for blessing me with the ability and the will. Thanks to Pia, for the guidance and encouragement, and my committee: Michael and Frank.

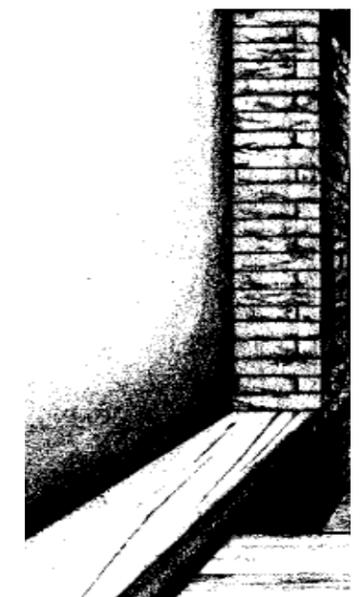
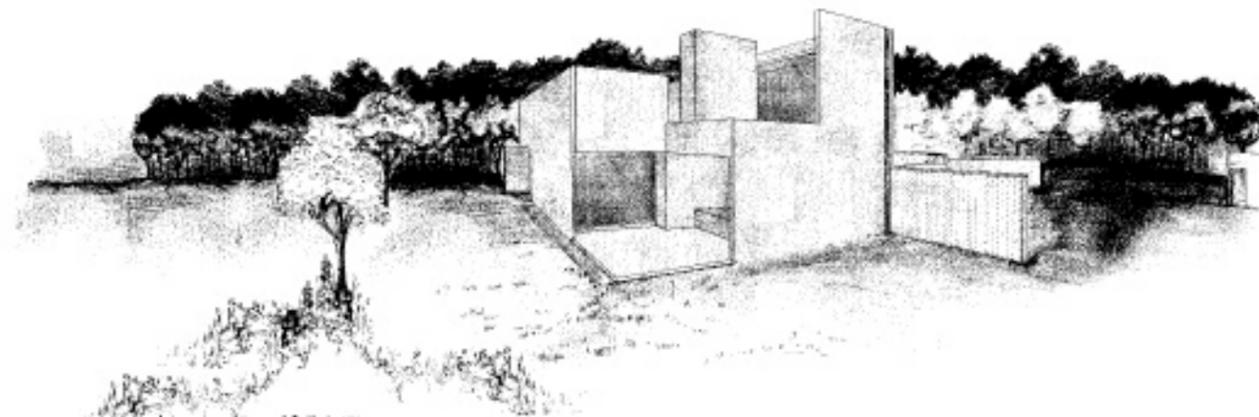
Architecture possesses the potential to elevate one's intellectual and visceral perceptions from unconscious passings to informed events. The quest for creating events involves an intermediary which promotes the transition from a casual involvement to an active engagement. This intermediary role is that of the experience. By imposing a presence, or creating a sense of place, architecture awakens the mind and stirs the soul. Doing this, the architecture is raised to a higher order, revealing a significance that is true, as something more, not as something else. The making of events through the experience fulfills the aspirations of architecture to unearth the events that dwell in the interaction between place and occasion.



Providing the basis for this project is the idea that architecture can elevate the experiences of life from mundane to eventful. Using the house as a vehicle, the question, how can the elevation from everyday occurrences to meaningful involvement be realized, is posed.

This project views architecture as an entity which addresses life, with the notion that the house provides the common denominator for all of humanity. Having this position, a house must be seen as more than a shelter from the rain, or a symbol of status; the very essence of life, and the elevation thereof, must be present. The house must serve as the setting for the poignancy and solace of the everyday.

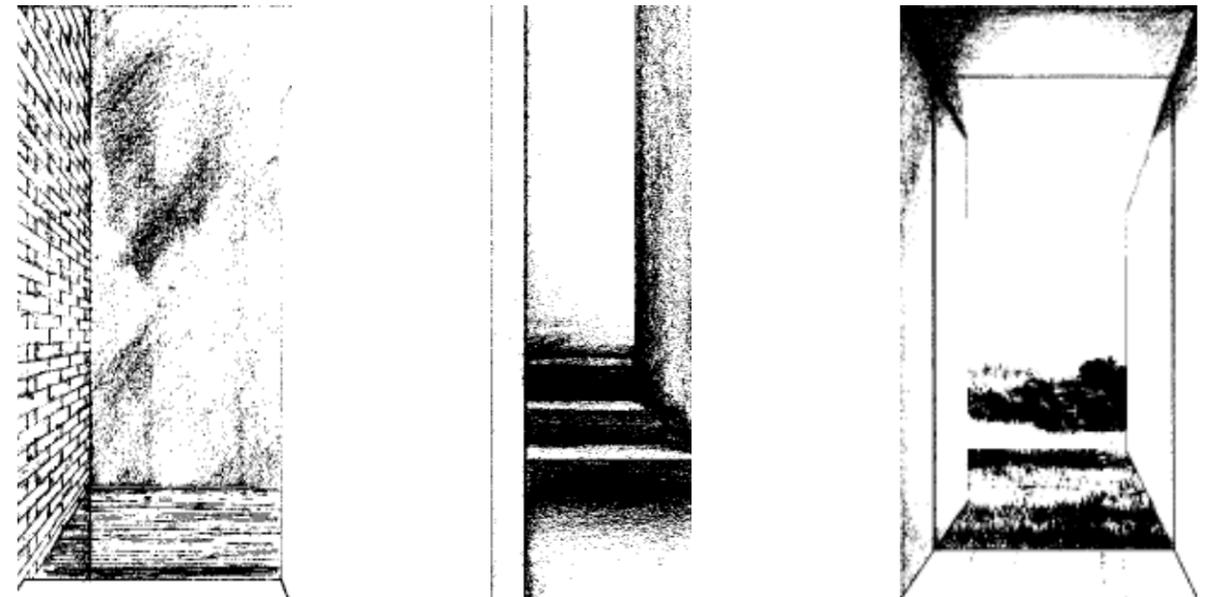
Human lives are filled with patterns and acts that encompass a large portion of time. Since a house serves as the container of life, it becomes clear that the places of habitation, must in their nature be engaging and uplifting to the senses. Be it large or small, expensive or not, the potential exists for the architecture to create something more than protection from the elements, and vain icons of the world. A house exists with the embodiment of life, a transposition of experience and meaningful realization that exposes the poetic nature of our existence in place and time. The house becomes what the everyday longs to become, the holder of experiences and the maker of events.



Crackling beneath the tires, the cinders from the recently vanquished winter provided a pleasant accompaniment to the visual rhythm of the roadside fence posts as the car motored along. Being on top of the mountains the view of the valleys teeming with blossoming flora was immaculate. Fields of spring green rolled away gently from the road's edges. Topping a small hill, the road became almost consumed by the forest. Overhead, the sun danced lively through the tapestry as the thin line of pavement was swallowed by a tunnel of branches and leaves. Ahead to the left a break in the wall of oaks and maples allowed a portal of daylight to appear.

This was obviously the place. Turning from the road, the wall of trees opened into a rolling meadow. Almost immediately the car was nearly overshadowed by the presence of a wall of pure white which crowded the driveway and dictated the view. Directly ahead stood another wall, larger and as white as the first, it appeared that the road was going to dissolve into the wall. Sharply the road turned right and continued to caress the endless wall. The sun appeared in the rear view mirror, prompting a quick glance. Beyond the wall's edge was a view over the mountains, extending for miles until the peaks were enveloped in the lingering haze. Looking forward again, a pleasant white body stood stately in front of a curtain of green and blue; glowing as the sun bathed its surface.

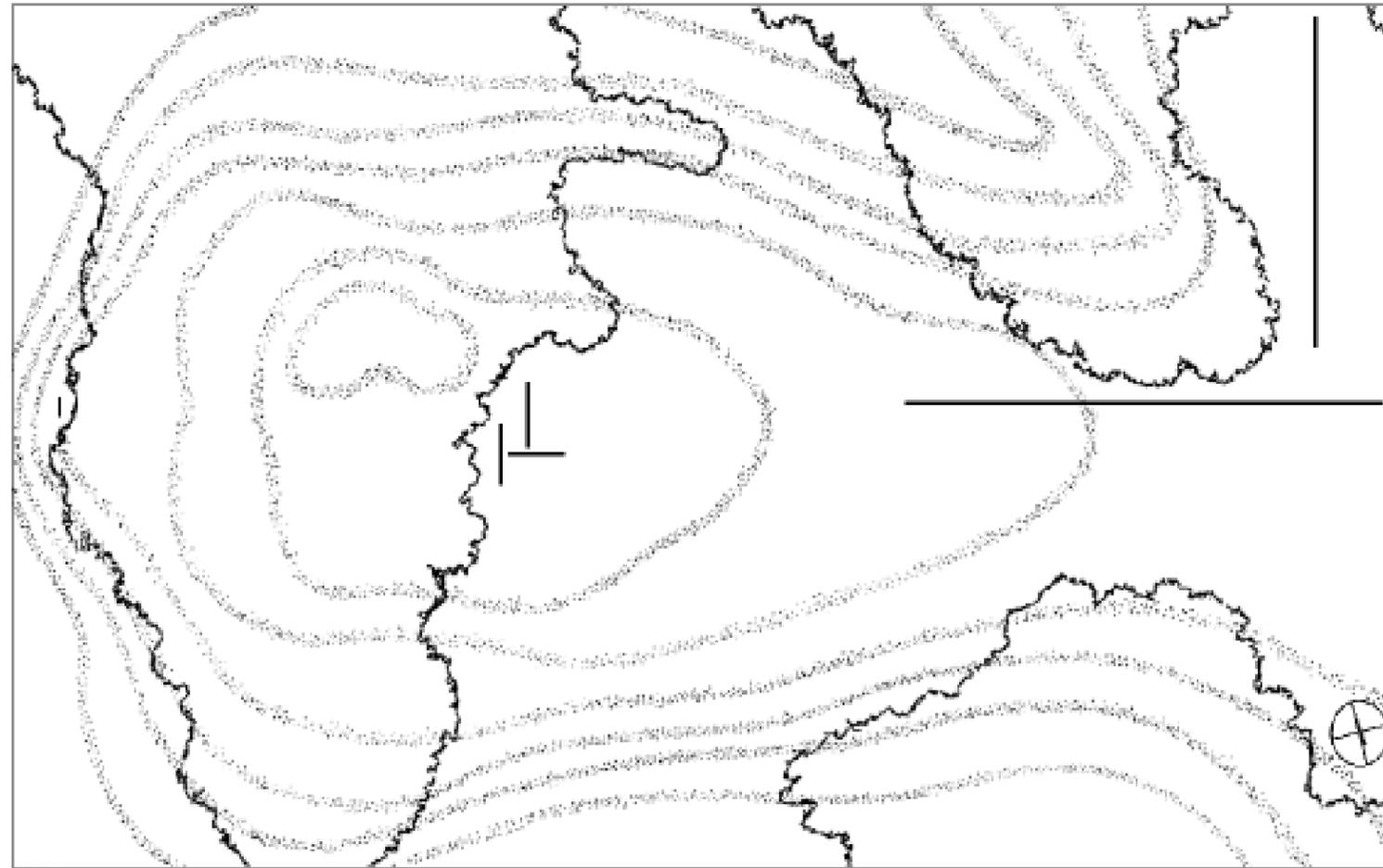
As the walls that had guided the way relinquished to the earth, more walls, not the scale of cars, but of people reached out onto the landscape. Walking beside the walls toward the body, the warmth of the sun radiated from the masonry. The walls led briefly through an outside room open to the sky, then receded into the house; urging a transition from one world to another. An opening at the intersection of the masonry walls provided passage to the realm that no longer belonged solely to the outside world. The tall passage became a long hallway that appeared to stretch into the forest. Inside the passage was a bench of maple, filling the entire hand that embraced its edges. The wood had been handsomely treated and whispered of the kindness of the material, evoking a subtle touch and then a moment of rest. Sitting for a moment, there was a serenade of solemn quietness. Light drifted in from high above and cascaded down the masonry in drops of shadows.



Sunlight and shadows poked from various doorways and crept along the ceiling, walls, and floors. The spaces lived for the light; and it was easy to wonder if the light did not live for them. The first space was large and distinguished by shadow, ahead was an equally large space distinguished by light. Following the allure of the sun and the promise of something unknown, a window in the far end was approached. The window was its own little room, a place where the inside and outside met and spoke to each other. The glass met the walls and ceiling with a single line, and at the bottom disappeared into the carpet of grass. Gazing outward, the whiteness of the wall next to the window made the grass appear greener than ever. The contrast of the wall and the grass caused the wall to seem all the more alive. Stealing a brief glance over shoulder, the window became part of the past and a band of soft light glowing beside the hearth became the point of attention. The slit of light was slightly larger than a person, opening into a room for one, perhaps two people. Being there if only for a moment was comforting, nestled between the walls and basking in the warm tones of the sun.

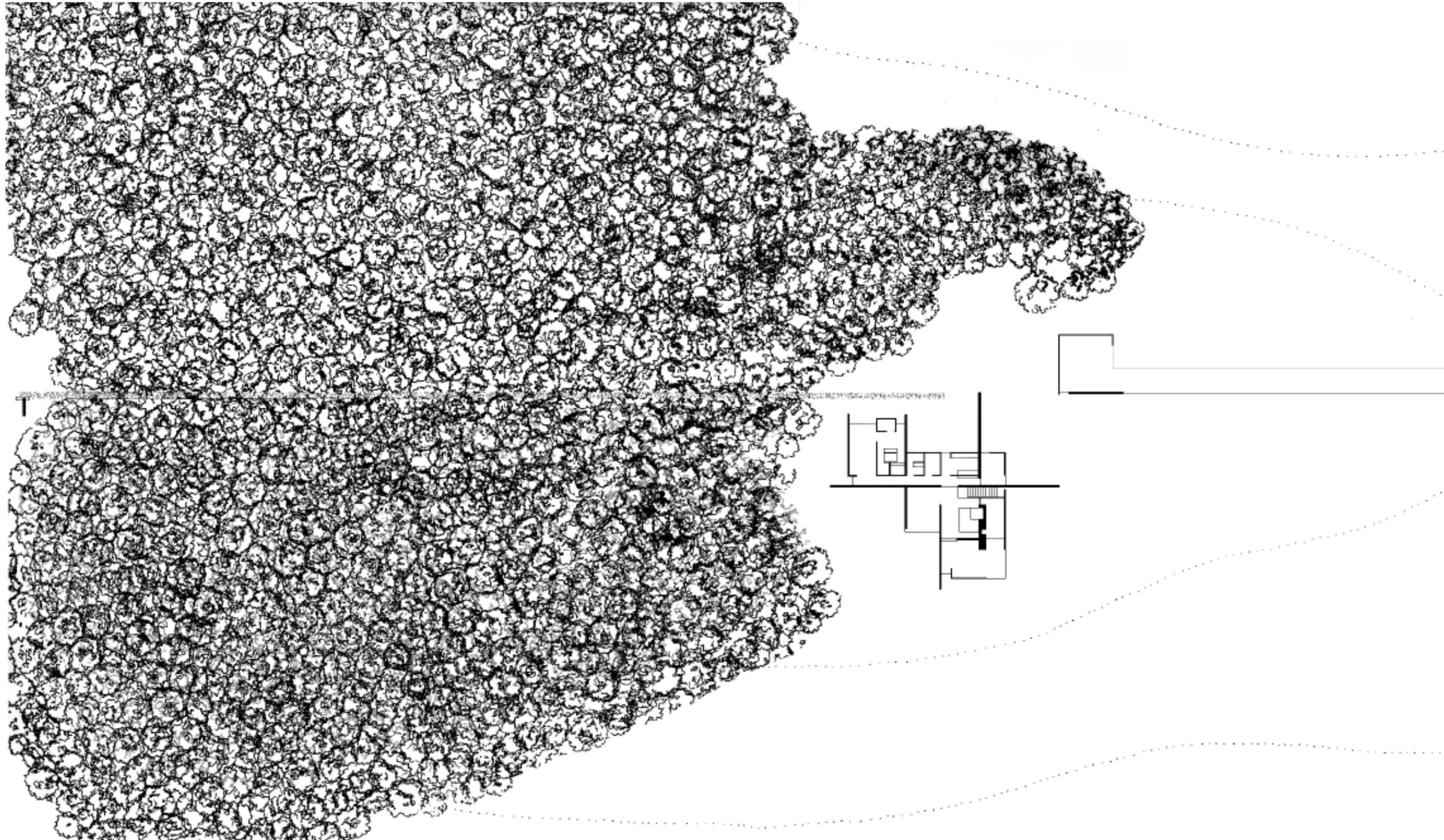
Each instance engaged the mind and spirit, following the walls that traversed the spaces increased the anticipation and wondering of the next encounter. The walls ran for great lengths, from inside to outside, and connecting the heart of the house to everything that surrounded it. Deeply withdrawn into the cradle of the masonry dwelled a calm pool, evoking distant images of an ancient baptistry. At this place the ceiling had succumbed to the sky, and the floor was of still water. The walls glistened with golden specks from above. The water captured the reflection of the sky, making it appear as though one could step into the azure blue. Kneeling to embrace the water, steps could be seen beneath it, leading to a subtle immersion, an immersion into the water, the house, and the soul.

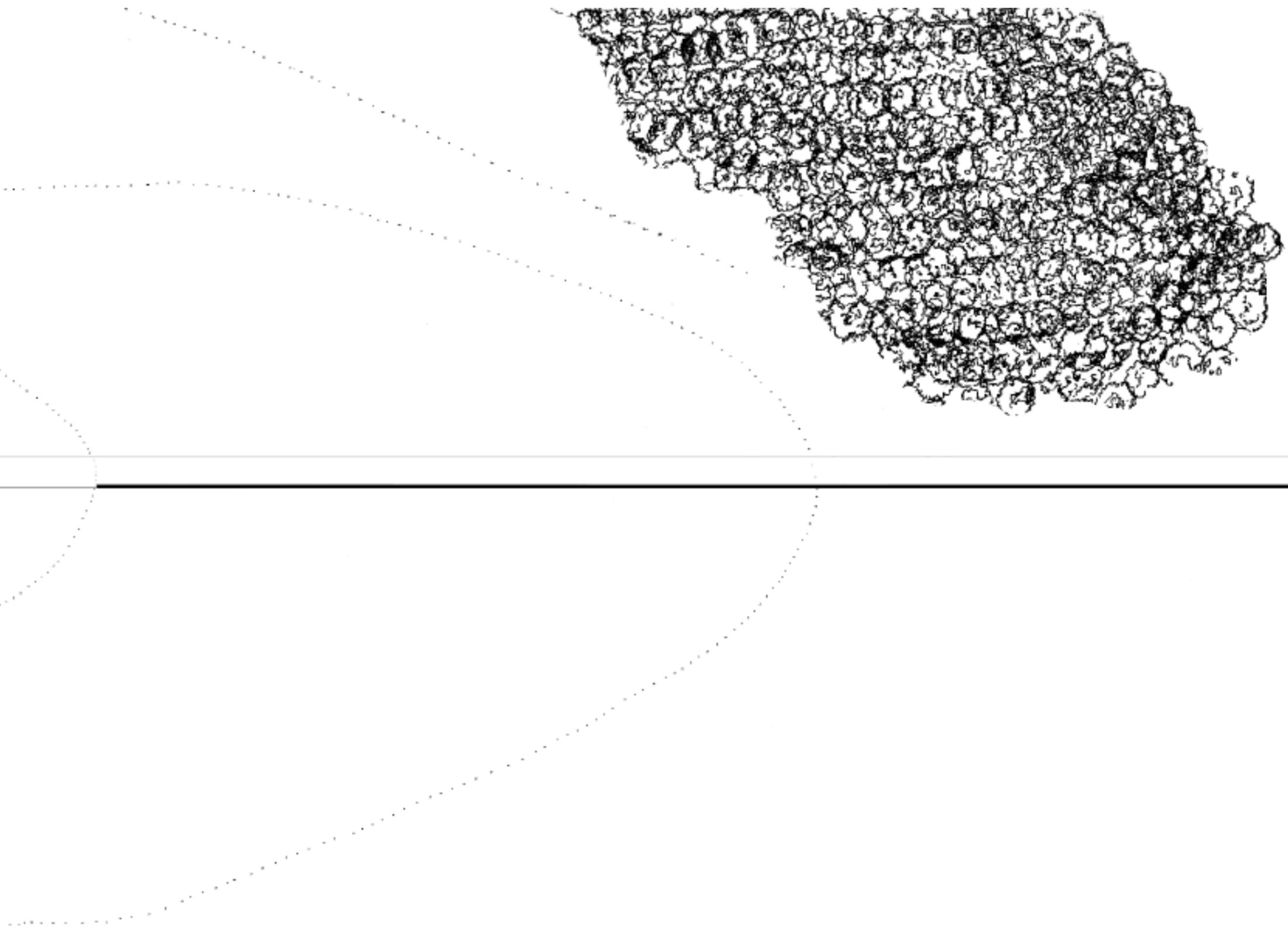
Was the water about regeneration, or communion, was this the place to take on part of the house or to restore the mind and body? It was more of a thought than a question. The entire house had been imparted by the experiences that dwelled within. The architecture is about life, through experience and occasion the awareness of our existence overcomes the memories of irrelevant icons. The house - like life - is about the significance of the experiences along the journey and about arriving more than leaving. Arriving at a place you can never leave, a place that lends grace to the everyday.

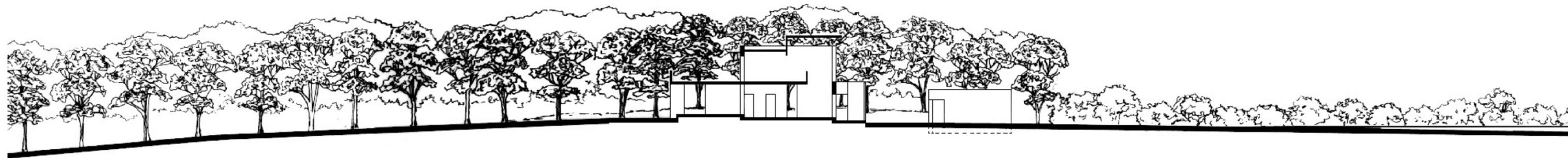




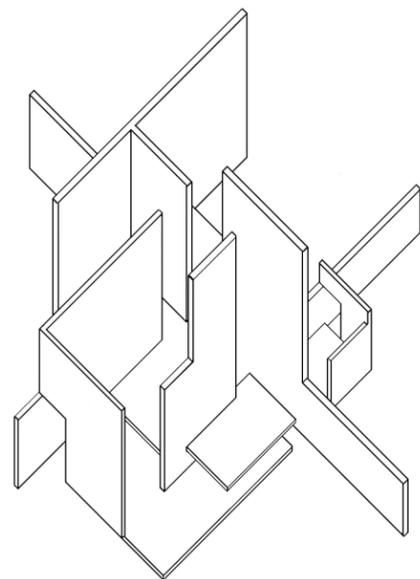
The house is located on a mountain plateau in north central West Virginia, in an open field surrounded by hardwood forests. Having a setting of unspoiled splendor enforces the notion that the house must not be an idle imposition, but share a peaceful relationship with its surroundings. In this respect, the house must be an event upon the landscape. By touching the land as lines and planes, the house reaches out, encompassing the entire site and establishing the domain of the house and man.





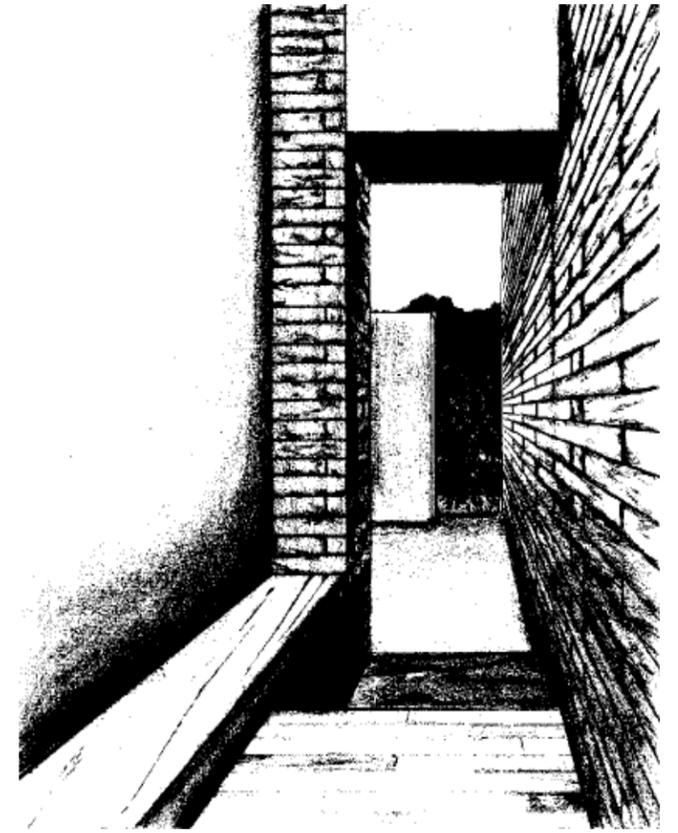




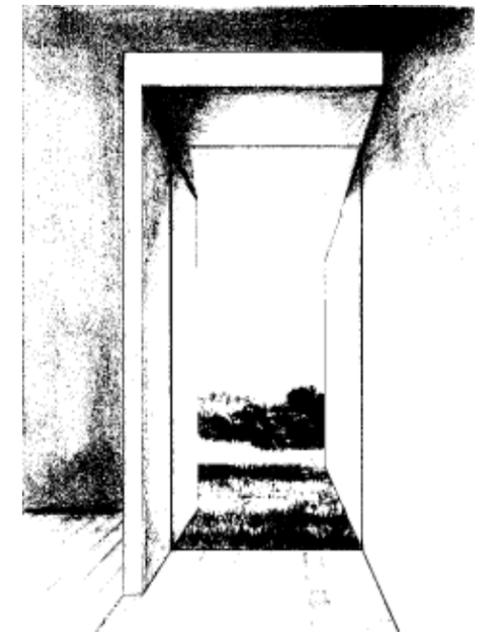
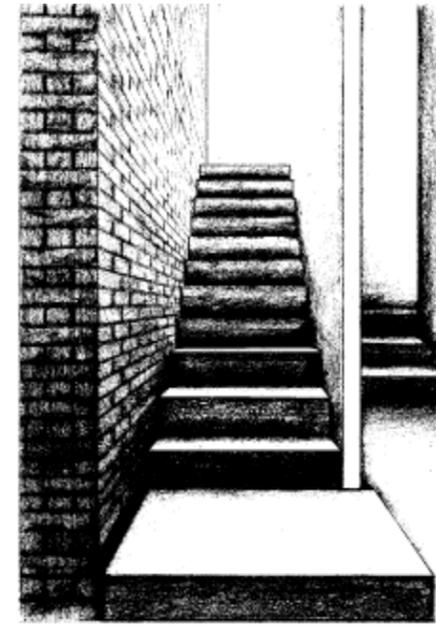


As planes, the walls that compose the house materialize, constituting the realm of the house and extending its presence to the boundaries of the site. The walls establish a dialogue between inside and outside, while generating the spaces that nestle among them. Serving as more than barriers, the walls share a relationship that goes beyond shelter to an interaction between architecture and nature. The dynamics of life thrive around the walls. The walls capture time, through the animation of shadows and in the warmth and ever changing colors of the sun. The essential nature of the walls provides for the poignancy of the architecture and reveals a clarity that is inherent to the interaction with the landscape.

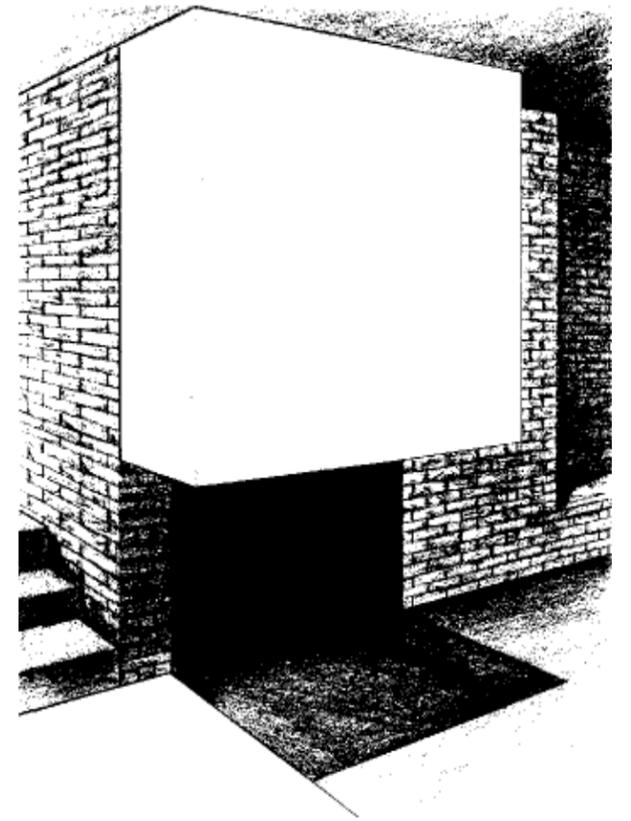
Becoming aware of a building's presence is the initial act of entering. This arrival arouses the sense of anticipation, and acknowledges the idea that a threshold stages a merger of life and architecture. Entering embraces the physical and emotional reflections of place and memory. A door is more than an opening between inside and outside, it is the engagement of body and mind with the notion of passage. Staying is the culmination of the event; completion and solace envelope the everyday with the sense of belonging to the place.



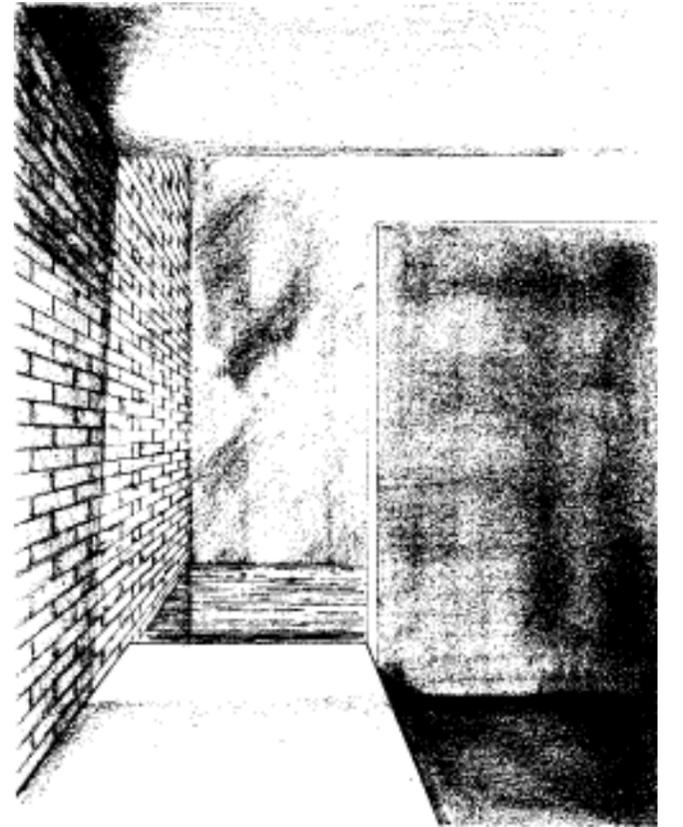
Places and moments dwell in experiences and perceptions that are gained through their character. The subtle change of light, a line of cool granite passing underfoot, or the act of moving toward a vista acknowledges an interaction between place and being that elevates our awareness. Each instance, threshold, hallway or stair engages the dynamics that belong to an expressed transition. Moving from one place to another holds an importance equal to arriving or departing. This passage from moment to moment creates a unity between the place and time.



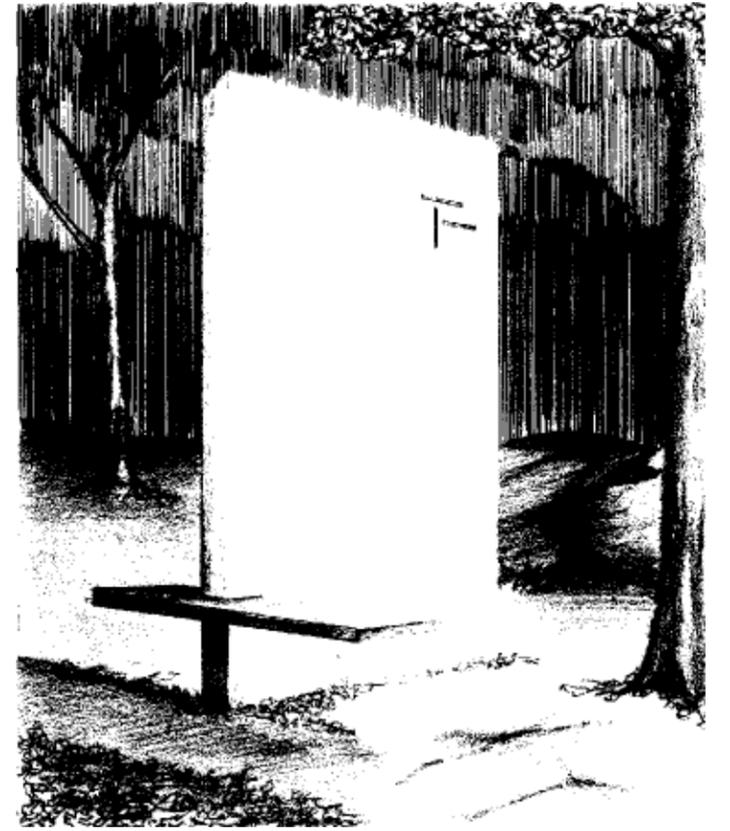
The thought of coming together in a common way extends from the heart of our perceptions of a house. Fellowship and unity imply more than a physical closeness, the mere words express sharing, emotionally and intellectually. A place for gathering must elevate a physical act in a way that it enforces our formal notions of congregating. A space glowing with the light from a fire, or the intimacy that is present in the closeness of one to another reaches the essence of gathering. A room of light, acknowledging a multitude, its animation, and its contribution to life in the space, beams with the very nature of our ideals about gathering. Gathering becomes about place and time, embracing the few and encompassing the many, while in turn filling the hollow of the lone and giving meaning to the everyday.

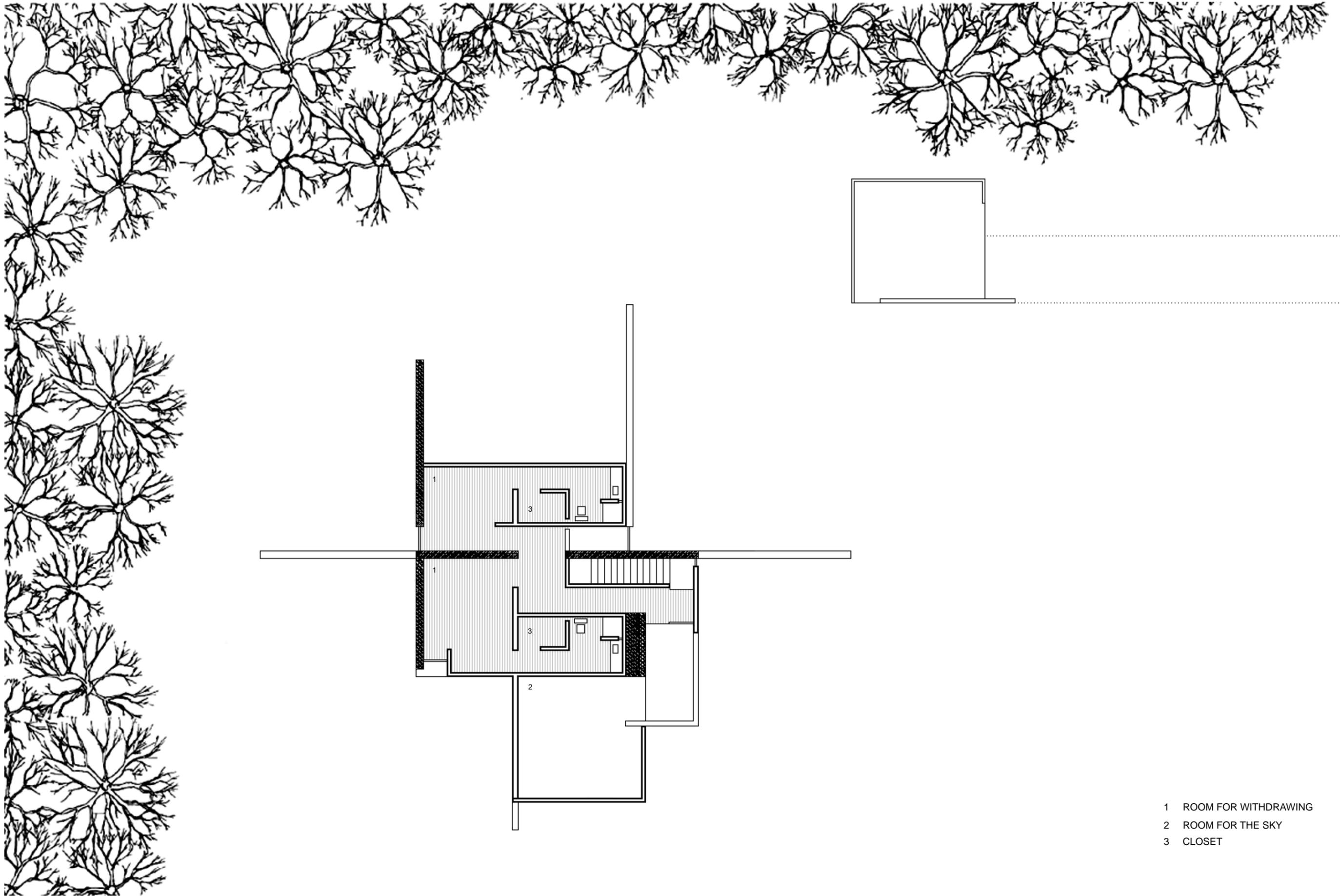


In a place of life, exists the need for refuge. As spaces for gathering address many, the occasion for quiet repose entices the one. More than merely being alone, withdrawing involves a communion with the essential nature of the place. Unity with the space is an engagement of thought and feeling, a withdrawal from unrecognized daily acts to the eventful encounters that are the expressions of life. Through the poetics of memory, a room of water, or light becomes a place of the soul, recalling a comforting corner within the masonry that holds time within its walls. A place for withdrawing is more than a room of solitude, it is a space or moment for reflection, thought, and escape.

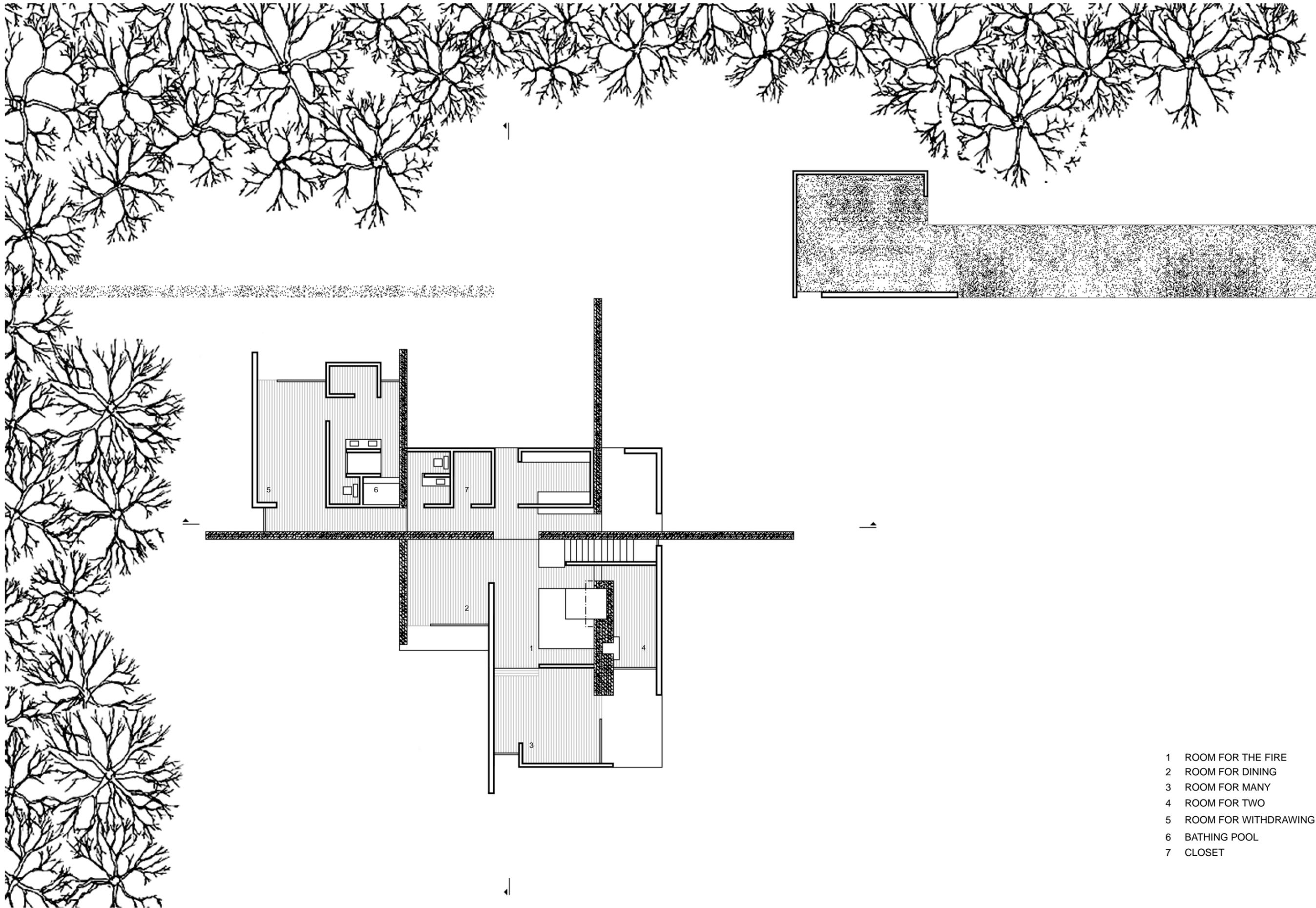


Life can be thought of as a walk through time, an anticipation of an eventual end, and a consciousness that we are part of nature. Architecture affords one the opportunity to endear time for a moment; and celebrate a place as the maker of occasions. Among the trees, the gentle bustling of leaves and branches whisper words only silence can understand. At the edge of the sentinel forest stands a wall of white, a place of time. The wall becomes a canvas for the broad strokes of the retreating sun, bathing it in the splendor of the impending eve; and holding its presence as though the sun was sinking for the last time. The wall in the forest is an end to a journey, a place for the sun and a keeper of time.

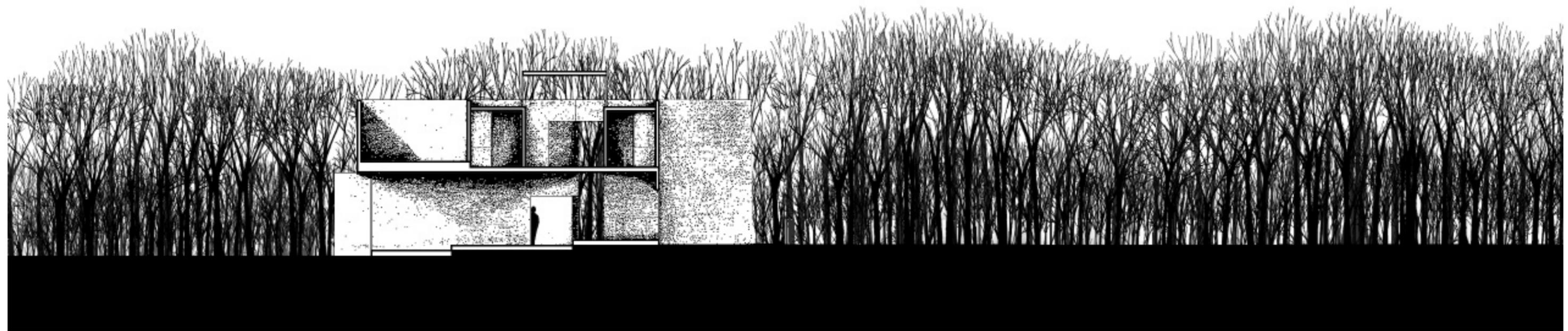


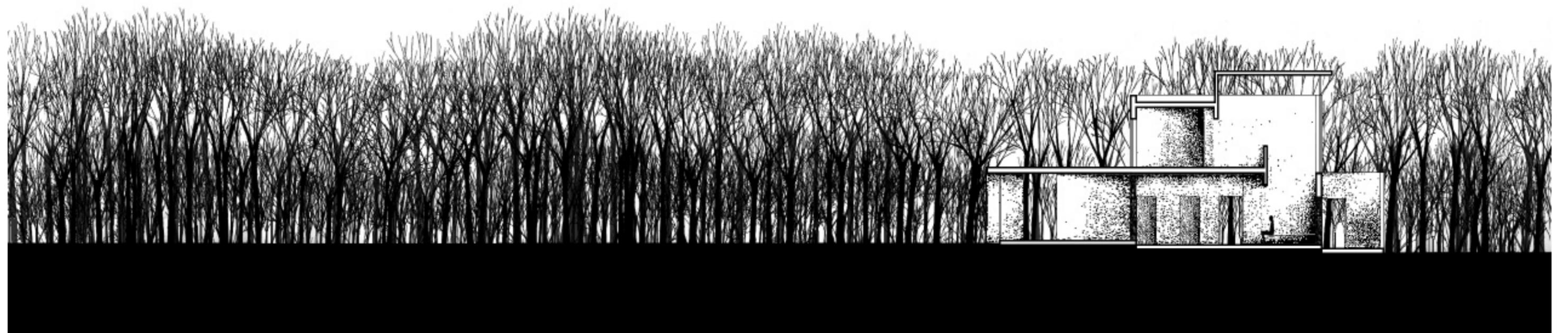


- 1 ROOM FOR WITHDRAWING
- 2 ROOM FOR THE SKY
- 3 CLOSET

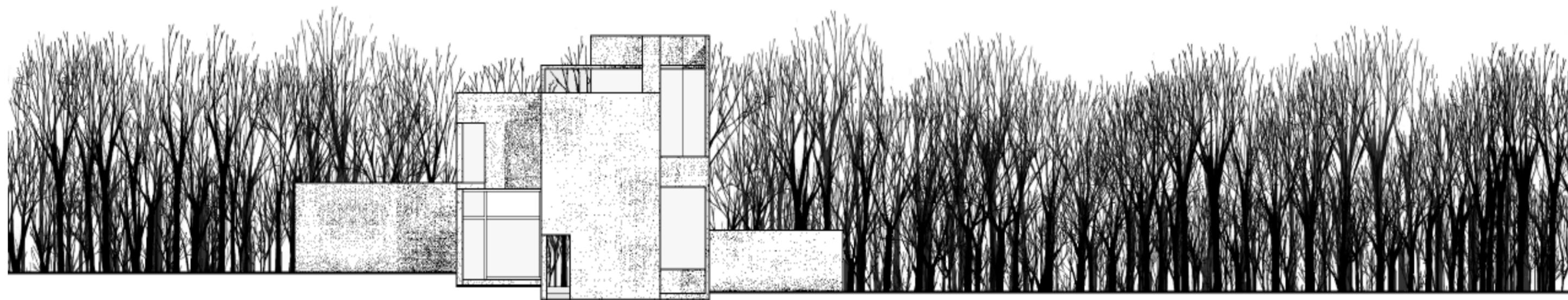


- 1 ROOM FOR THE FIRE
- 2 ROOM FOR DINING
- 3 ROOM FOR MANY
- 4 ROOM FOR TWO
- 5 ROOM FOR WITHDRAWING
- 6 BATHING POOL
- 7 CLOSET









The influence that architecture has on our experiences of a place, lies in the essential nature of light, shadow, texture; and our notions of time and memory. These provide the means for elevating our perceptions of, and relationships with our surroundings.

vita

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Positions

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