Context

To think about community one must first have an overall idea for a guide, then focus attention to the elemental aspects of the community so that the whole may begin to grow from the inside out. Within a community the most elemental piece is the individual.

The individual must be allowed to develop and express his or her own identity within the larger context of the community. Only in this dialogue between the individual and the collective may an identity of place begin to develop offering a unique character to the place both cultural and physical.

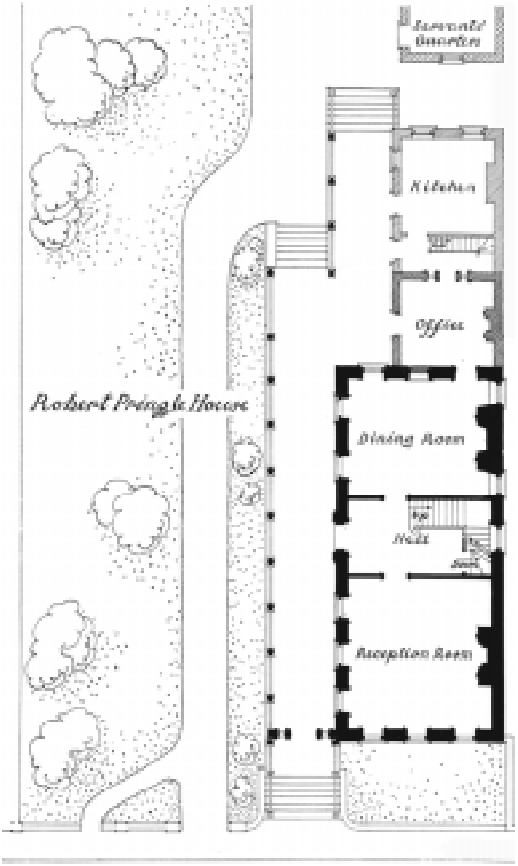
The planning and development of the places in which we live must be sensitive to the requirements of the pedestrian. By blurring the boundaries between the public and private realm we begin to establish a continuity of spaces that flow from one to another fluidly and promote interaction between people.

Much care should be taken when attempting to establish these intermediate zones. The wrong articulation could begin to infringe on the private realm thereby reducing the feeling of protection.

"As architects we do not primarily design buildings as physical objects, but the images and feelings of the people who live in them. Thus the effect of architecture stems from more or less common images and basic feelings connected with the building." [8]

As a type, the Charleston House was the most influential for this project. The general shape of the house is narrow and deep. This shape allowed the house to be placed on one boundary of the lot. By orienting the house to the side maximum use of the narrow and deep yard was achieved.

In an attempt to reduce the type to its most fundamental expression we can see three basic elements: the heavy wall along the lot boundary, the perforated wall opening the house up to the yard, and the columns or frame that establish the edge of the porch.



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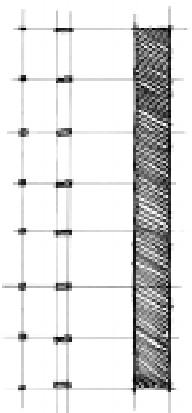
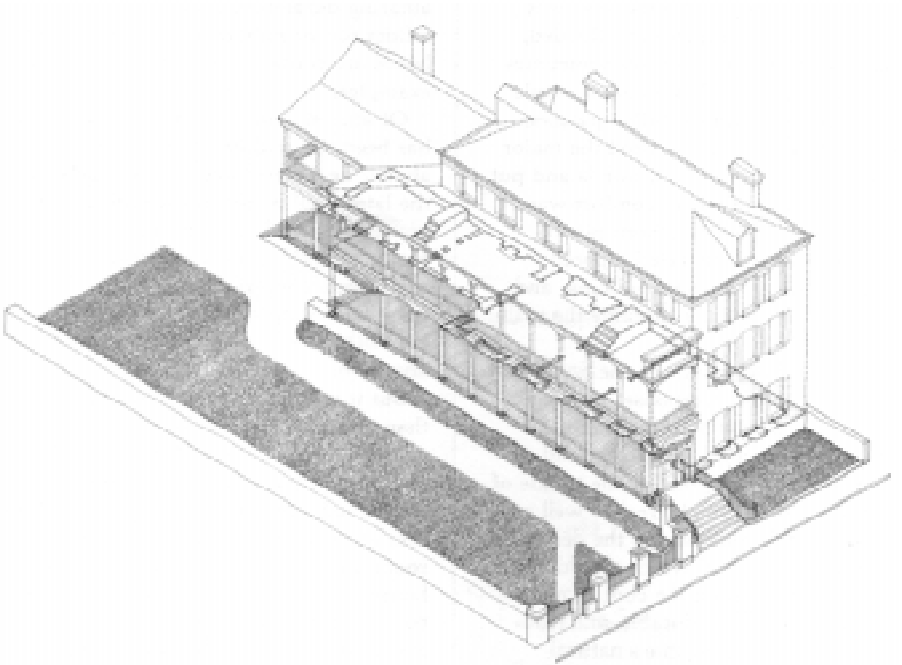


5. Opposite page



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This yard was sometimes closed off to the street by a wall of some type. The entry into the private realm of the house was made through a door or a gate element.

This gate element essentially became the formal threshold for the house. Passing through the gate allowed entry into the porch or yard but not into the actual house. This allowed the yard to become more integrated with the house.

A clear separation between the public and the private realms within the house was achieved by separating them horizontally. The bedrooms were located in the upper floors of the house while the living and dining spaces were in the lower levels.

9

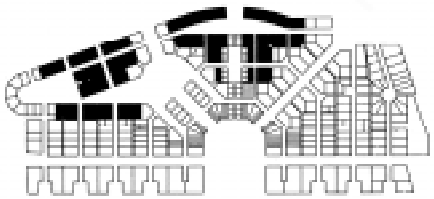
The existence of the porch along the length of the house allowed for an ambiguous zone at the ground level that wasn't inside but wasn't outside either. This ambiguity provided some continuity between the two spaces.

The influence of the side yard may be seen when looking at the entire community. There is potential for greater interaction between the individual and his neighbors thereby increasing the overall sense of community.

Positive Directions

There have been recent attempts to try and recapture the qualities that some of the older communities possessed. This effort can be seen in the work of Duany Plater-Zyberk. During the development of Seaside Florida, zoning ordinances were written in an attempt to create a more pedestrian oriented community. These visual zoning guides dealt primarily with the spaces created between and around the buildings.

This visual-zoning approach was developed using Southern historic housing types as models. The Charleston was one type used for establishing a spatial character within a specific part of the community.



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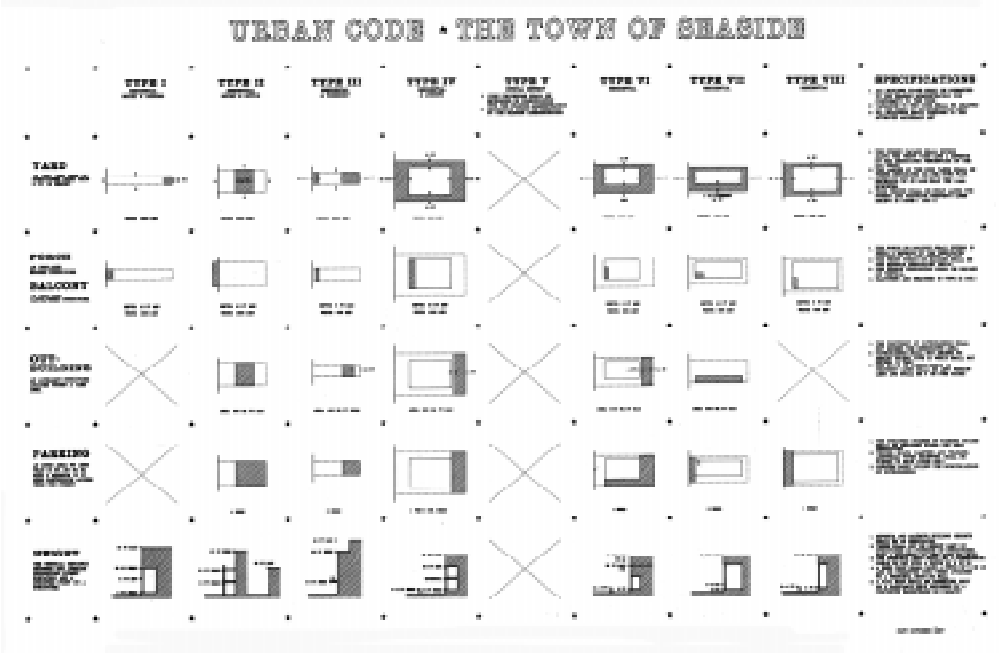
Although Seaside was one of the first communities planned with this new thought about zoning it is not alone. There are currently many similar communities throughout the country.

One of these communities, Harbortown and is located adjacent to downtown Memphis, Tennessee, provided a good testing ground for the thoughts developed within this thesis.



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13. Background Image

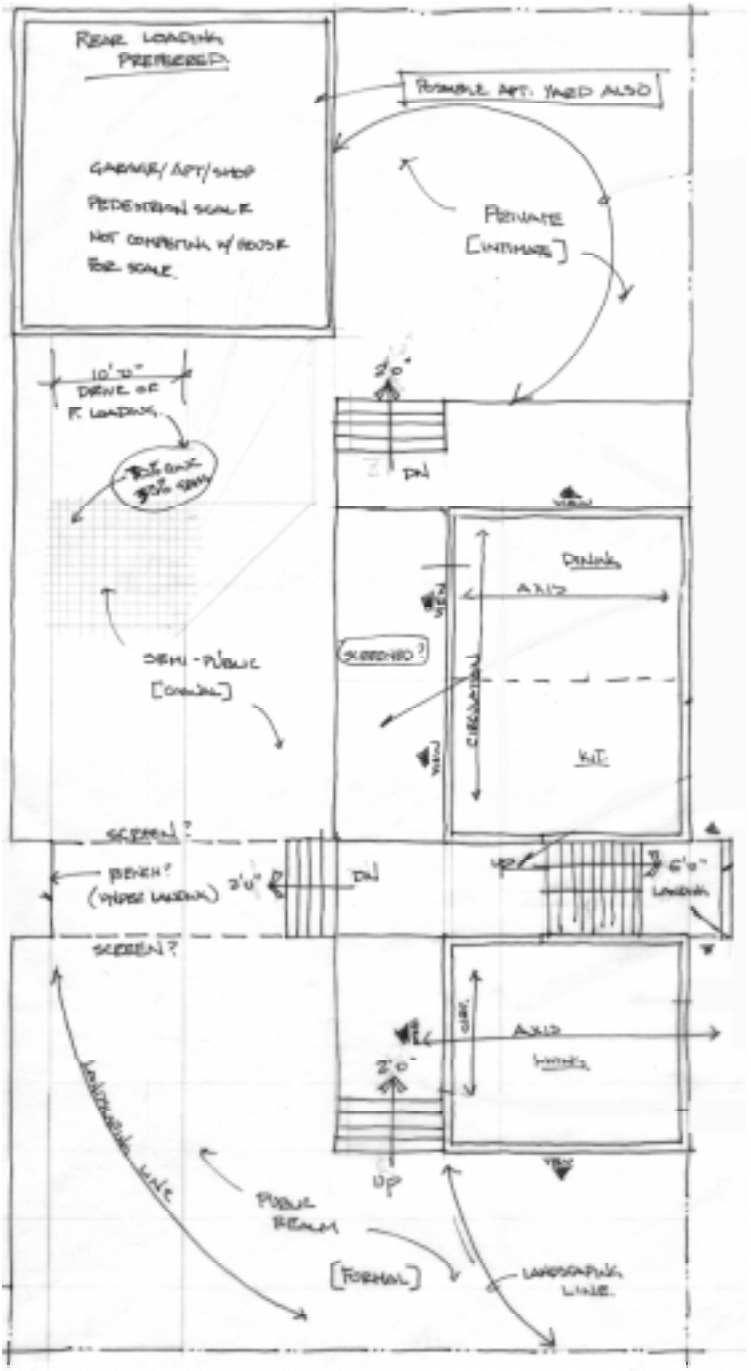
Situated on a peninsula in the Mississippi River Harbortown is an attempt to create a real community using some of the techniques advocated by the "Congress for New Urbanism".

The specific site chosen for this thesis project is a corner site across from a park in the center of a small square.

The lot itself provides a point of transition between the square to which it belongs and the adjacent sections of the development. The rear alley access acts as one of the thresholds for entering this Square.

Early evaluation of the site using the basic Charleston type began to reveal a kind of zoning or transition of the yard from the public to the private. This articulation of the yard suggested a possible continuity between community space and private space.

The continuity of space became a driving force in the design of the house. While public spaces needed to flow into each other, the private realm had to be distinctively separate. This relationship between the different spaces needed some ordering principle to be successful.


REAR LOADING PREFERRED
GARAGE/APT/SHOP
PEDESTRIAN SCALE
NOT COMPETING W/ HOUSE FOR SCALE
POSSIBLE APT. YARD ALSO
PRIVATE
[INTIMATE]
10'0"
DRIVE OF
F. LOADING
2'0"
DN
DINING
AXIS
SEMI-PUBLIC
[CASUAL]
SCREENED?
CIRCULATION
KIT
SCREEN?
BENCH?
(HYDRO LANDING)
2'0"
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UP
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UP
PUBLIC
REALM
[FORMAL]
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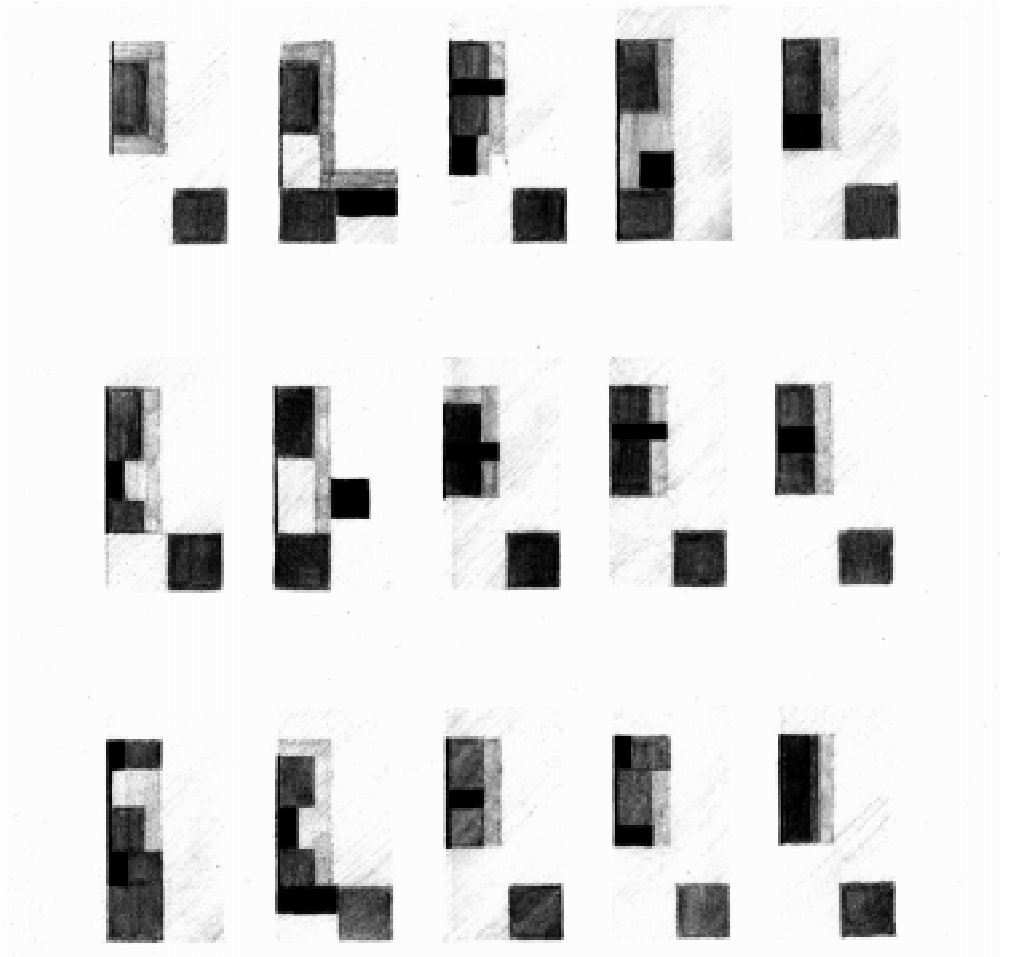
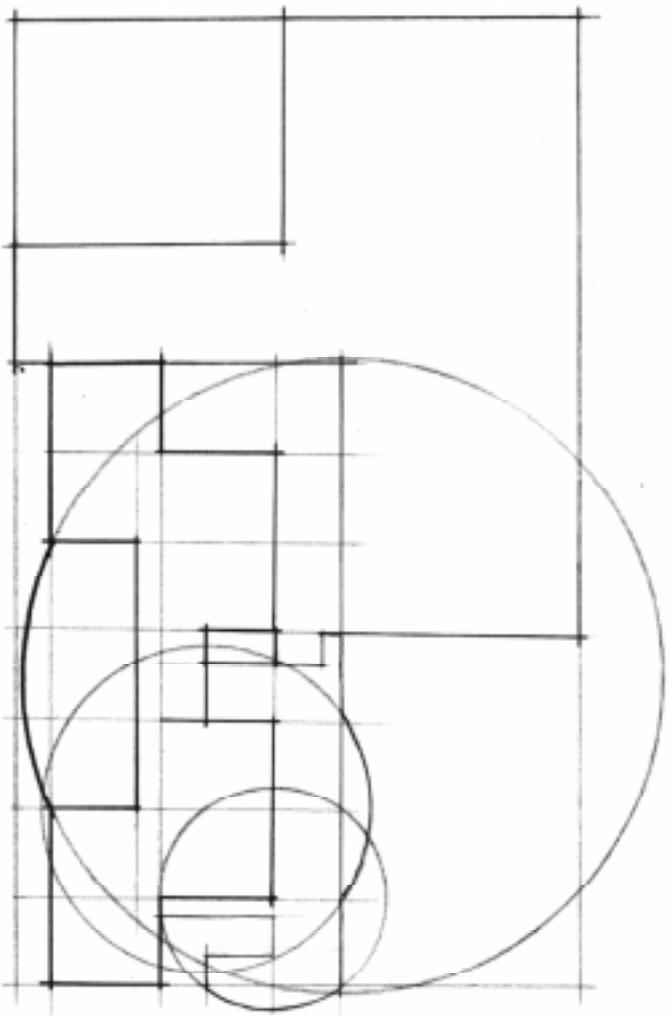




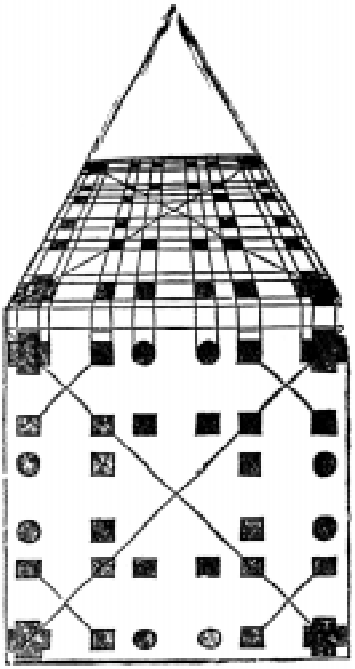
Order & Projection

Formal organization in architecture was achieved classically through the orderly arrangement of the parts within the building. This arrangement was guided by what Aristotle called *taxis*.

Taxis is an ordering principle that places the elements of a building into a guiding geometry, producing coherency of parts.

This taxis could be established trough various methods. The equal grid, the unequal grid, and the polar grid. Each of the three imposed an order and hierarchy within the building.

The strength of the classical thought can be still seen today in the establishment of some ordering principles within an architectural work.



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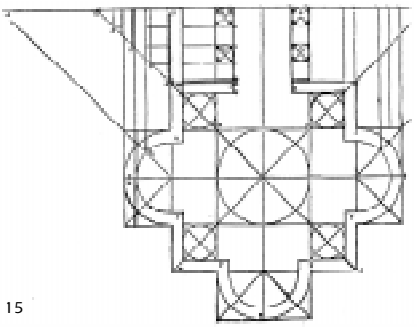

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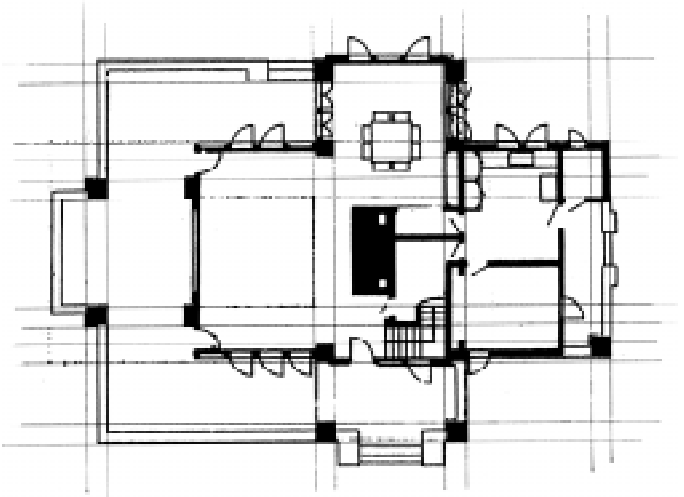
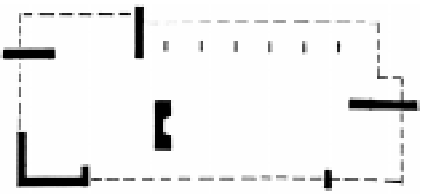


16

Following the classical example somewhat, Frank Lloyd Wright experimented with the grid as an organizing system within his architecture.

Wright used a modified version of a tartan grid to organize the elements of his architecture. The coherency offered by the location of the elements within the grid allowed Wright to explore the opening up of the interior spaces of the house.

Re-ordering the elements into simple planes that defined the rooms within a new spatial context was a break from the typical "box-like" plan and can be seen diagram of a Usonian house.



17

Taking some cues from Wright, Modern architects began to experiment with a similar thought about organizing the house.

Modern architects like Mies van der Rohe used the wall as the predominant element in framing the spaces of the house.

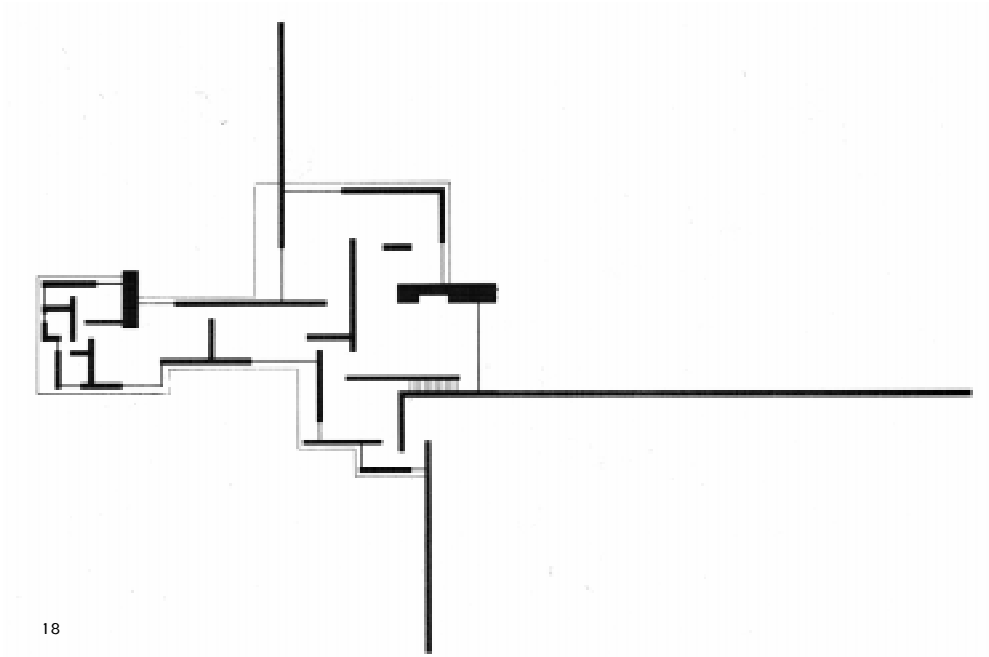
The continuity between the spaces of the house required eliminating the typical response to the interior walls. The solution was found in the wall.

The overall grid ordered the placement of these walls or planes, while the orientation was dictated by the spaces it connected. These planes allowed the spaces to be connected to each other while remaining independent from one other.

This kind of minimization of the elements that make the house required that the elements themselves be more efficient, they should accommodate several functions within each piece.

A certain hierarchy could then be established between similar elements within the house due to their functional nature.

Certain walls provided a location for practical concerns while others offered qualities of a more experiential nature.



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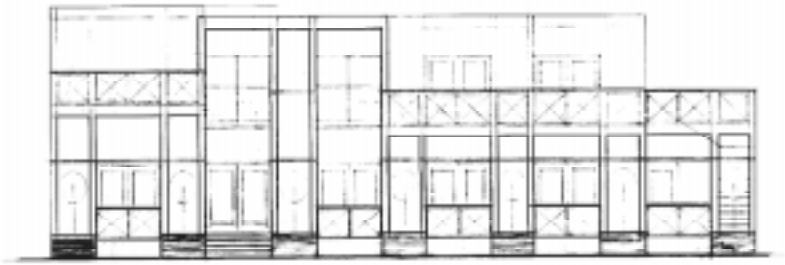
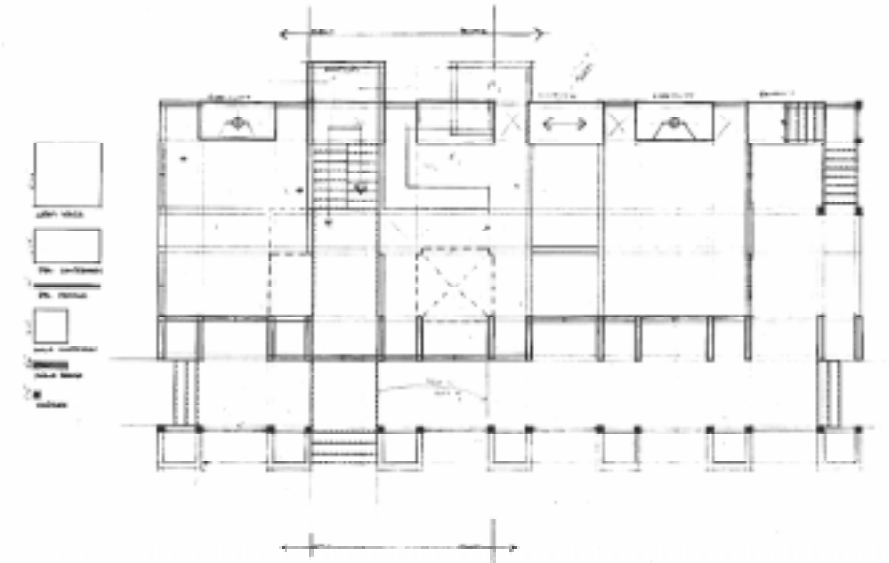
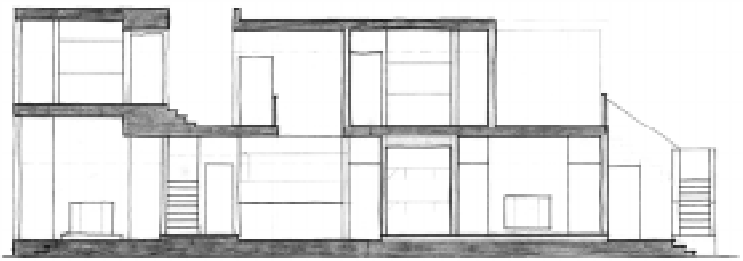
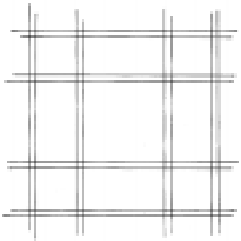


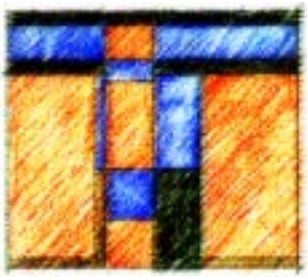






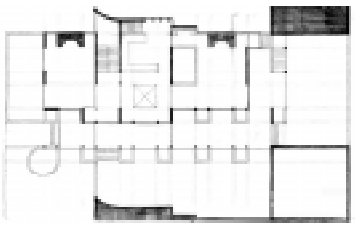
The development of the house evolved hierarchically from within. The places were revealed through the relationships between the elements. These relationships were guided somewhat by the larger ordering principle of the house.

The irregular tartan grid immediately provided locations for the elements while giving some sense of hierarchy to the remaining spaces.



The ideas of passage and presentation revealed themselves at this point. Within the house one was either in a state of passage or being presented with a particular space.

The overall development of the thesis was beginning to change direction. The quality of place was beginning to emerge as an important factor in the design of the house.

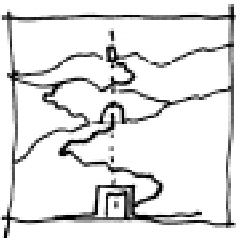


Certain qualities of place could not be described or contained within the ordering principles discussed thus far. The qualities necessary for capturing the fundamental idea of home would have to be developed using other means of exploration.

Memory & Invention

In Classical thought, the axis is a strong tool in giving motion or direction to a space. The physical movement through the space might be different than the visual axis, thereby giving two different dimensions of experience simultaneously.

" In some of the most interesting places , axes and paths interweave, with the axis allowing the mind to do the connecting, and the path allowing the feet to wander, explore, make choices, and put things in sequence." [9]



19

This sequence of experience is often connected through apertures or openings of some type. These openings begin to influence our perception of an axis or object through the contextual relationship between foreground and background.

The ability of the openings to frame or present something differently than it might otherwise be seen allows the viewer to take their own meaning from the place.

Since each person is able to derive individual meaning, in a sense, from the place, the connection with that place may become stronger and more intimate.

" Only in intimate communion with solitude can man find himself." [10]

20

This communion is what Luis Barragan was constantly striving to achieve. Barragan often used colors that would reveal some natural phenomenon that otherwise might not be so apparent.

"In a beautiful garden, the majesty of nature is ever present, but nature reduced to human proportions and thus transformed into the most efficient haven against the aggressiveness of contemporary life." [11]

The existence of the building as an aperture was Barragan's attempt to capture the phenomenon of this place while evoking memories of other places.

Barragan's architecture somehow transcended its physical boundaries merging with its environment in an almost inseparable manner.

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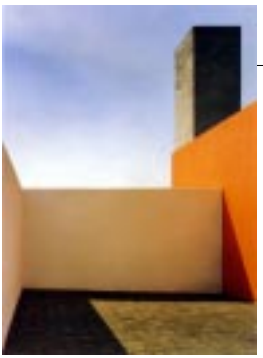


22

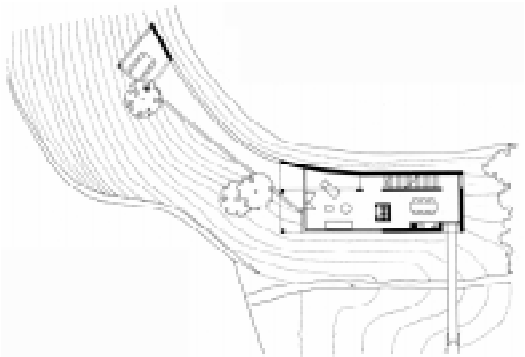
Similarly to Barragan, Architect Luigi Snozzi explored the integration of house and environment.

Snozzi's houses have a tendency to reach out and almost grab the landscape, claiming it as their domain.

At the Kalman house in Minusio, Snozzi uses the idea of claiming the landscape to extend the influence of the house. The extension of the house ends physically with the pergola, but visually the extension leads into the valley beyond.

This idea of claiming the land contributes to the creation of place. In its thought about what is being claimed the architecture begins to reveal its surroundings.

23



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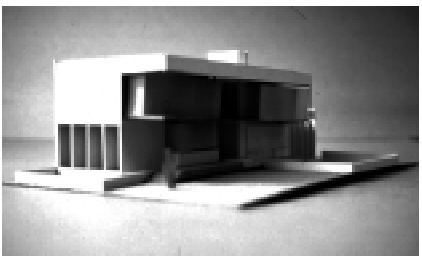
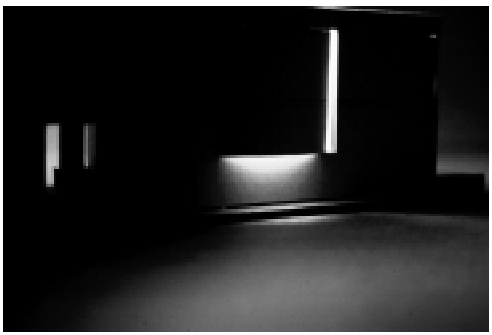
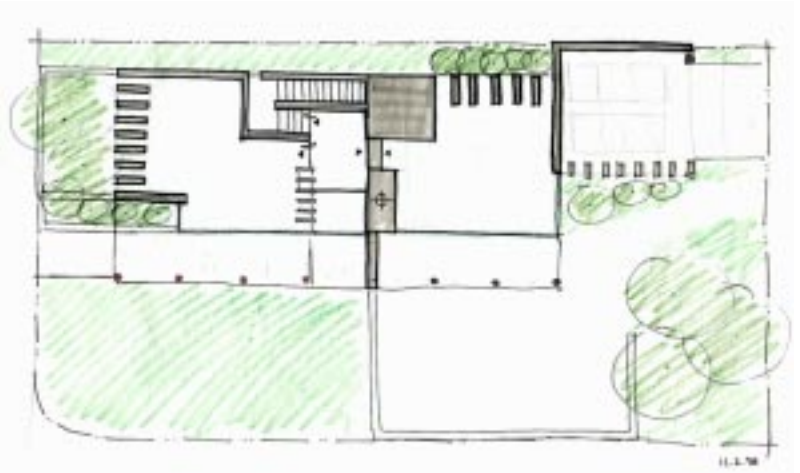
The connection between house and site had to become more integrated. This connection could be achieved through the extension of the wall element into the realm of the yard.

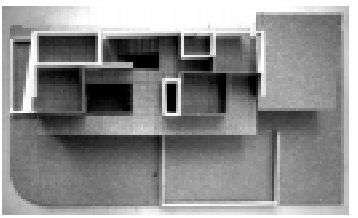
The extension of the wall into the yard creates an outward expression of the idea of embracement. The wall reaches out defining different levels of privacy within a single space.



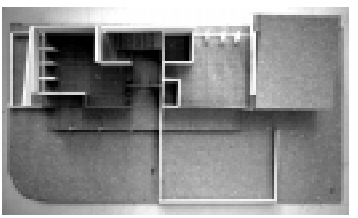




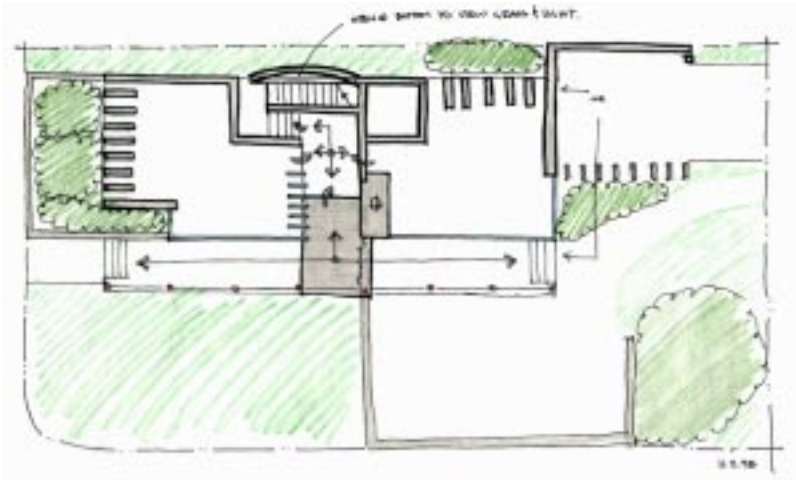
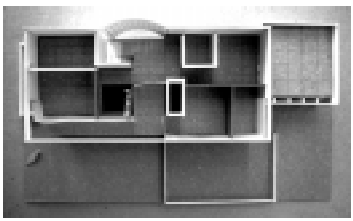
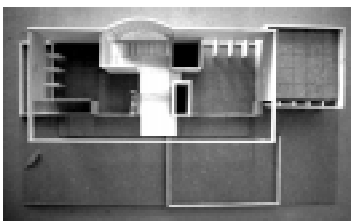
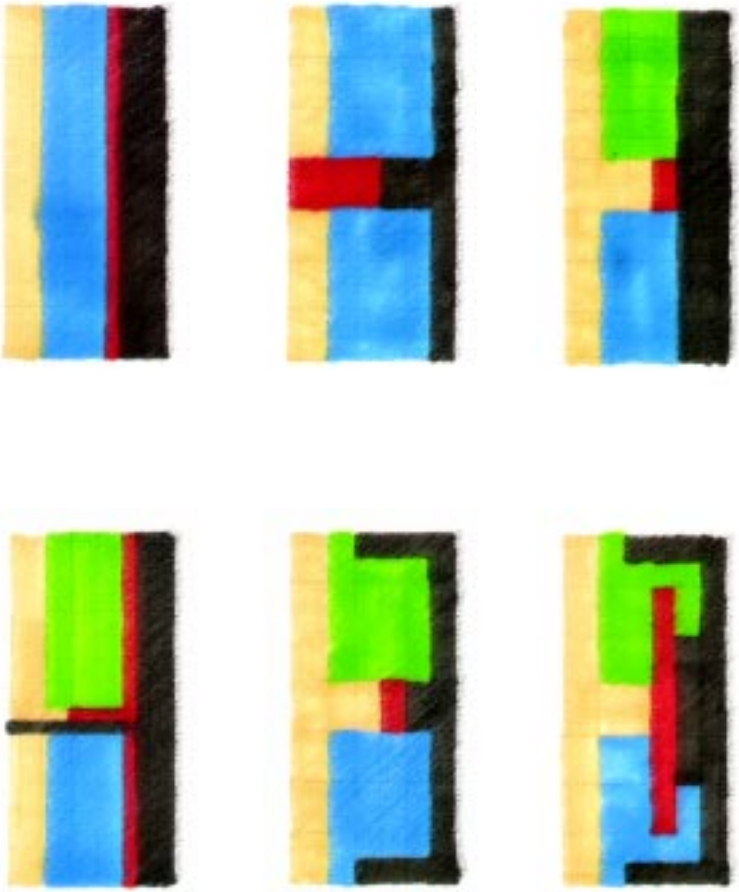
The idea of embrace became important in the development of the elements within the house. The fundamental relationship created in establishing this embrace was one of heavy versus light, creating a space that was protective without being totally enclosed.



The wall was conceived as a mass. This mass then had some connotations of protection & passage through its size and material. In contrast the screen and frame elements were progressively lighter than the wall.



The relationships between the elements could then begin to define places feeling the individual characteristics of each.



It is here that the idea of being at "the forests edge"[12] was associated. The edge of the forest provides both the protection and cover of the trees while offering a view of the clearing. In this sense both places are experienced in relationship to each other. This coexistence offers a different view of each than if they were experienced individually from within.