

FOUR HOUSES IN A ROW

BLACKSBURG, VIRGINIA
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by

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Thesis submitted to the graduate faculty of Virginia Polytechnic Institute
and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of

MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

Approved by:

William Brown, Chairman

Michael O'Brien

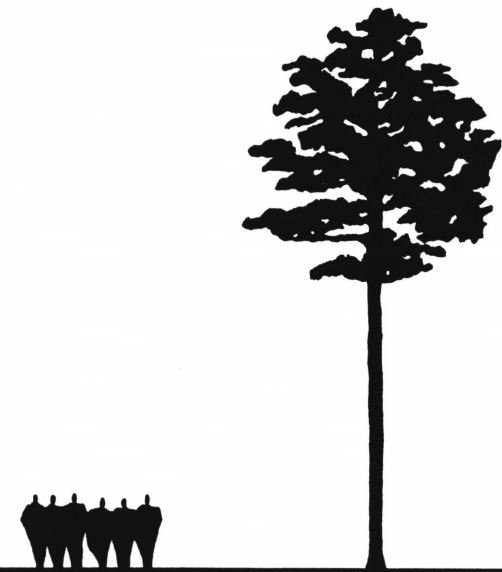
Sai Choudhury



FOUR HOUSES IN A ROW

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

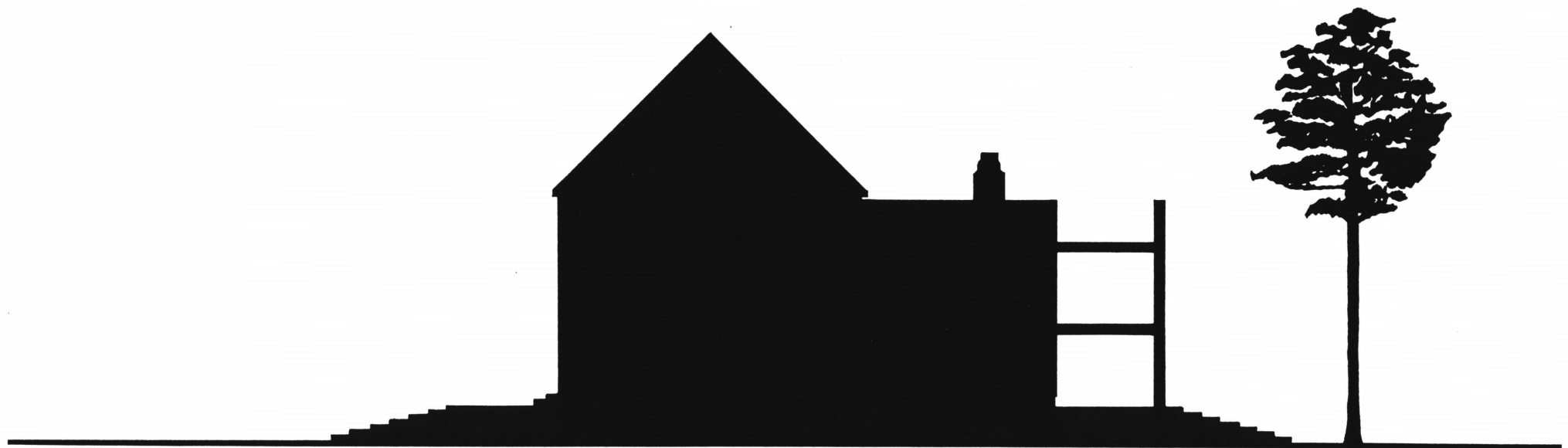
I would like to thank those who have assisted me with the development of this work. Most of all, I would like to thank my mother, _____, for her constant encouragement and support. To Greg, who made me think. To my peers, who kept the task from becoming too overwhelming. And to my committee members, for their guidance.



FOUR HOUSES IN A ROW

ABSTRACT

Architecture, if genuinely conceived and thoughtfully executed, can help to bring meaning and understanding to our existence. It can evoke emotions that touch us, recall a memory long thought lost, mark and signal the passage of time, inspire us to do great things, and provide us with warmth and security even for a short while. Architecture can play host to our dreams. It is the role of the architect to create fragmentary places that stand as enclaves, as pockets of intolerance that resist the placelessness of modern culture, and that allow us to reach these ends.



FOUR HOUSES IN A ROW

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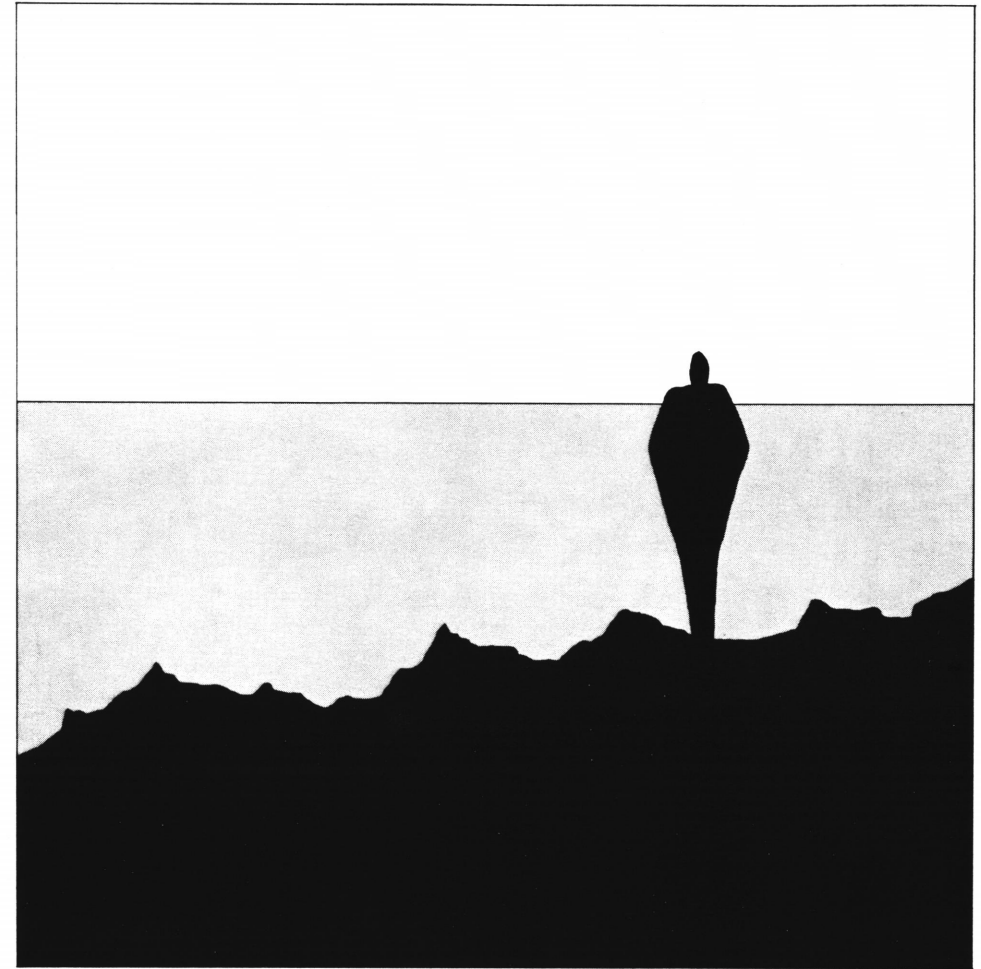
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FOUR HOUSES IN A ROW

COASTAL MAINE

The context for the building of this project is along the rocky coast of Maine. Here, where the ocean meets the land, a variety of tactile, olfactory, visual, and audible sensations are engaged. The sky meets the ocean in one infinitely driven line, the horizon. Rough, water hewn rocks which absorb the heat of the summer sun meet the icy cold December waters along a jagged, ever-changing edge defined as the coastline. Seagulls and loons congregate on the beaches and rocks. The salt air blows in your face and you realize you are alive. Here in this part of Maine, along this stretch of coast, most of the houses are colonial in appearance, driven by a steep sense of history. They are of wood construction, the older ones being post and beam structures, while the newest are of light wood frame construction. Some of the older and more elaborate houses along the coast make use of the rocks found occurring naturally on this coastal landscape, and take form in the shapes and functions of fireplaces, chimneys, walls, and steps. The houses for the most part, sit like objects on the landscape, almost as if placed there in a single moment from above. The houses do not attempt to appear as if they are a natural extension of the site nor do they attempt to dominate the landscape with their presence; such an attitude would be out of place in this environment. Instead, the houses often stand alone and independent to confront the elements, much like the earliest settlers to this area. The houses and the people who live in them reflect each other.



FOUR HOUSES IN A ROW

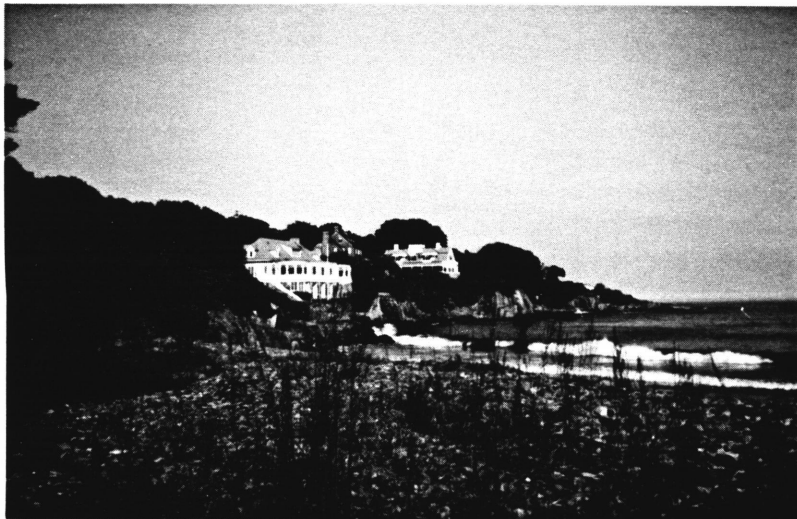
COASTAL MAINE



WHERE LAND MEETS WATER

FOUR HOUSES IN A ROW

COASTAL MAINE



OBJECTS ON THE LANDSCAPE

FOUR HOUSES IN A ROW

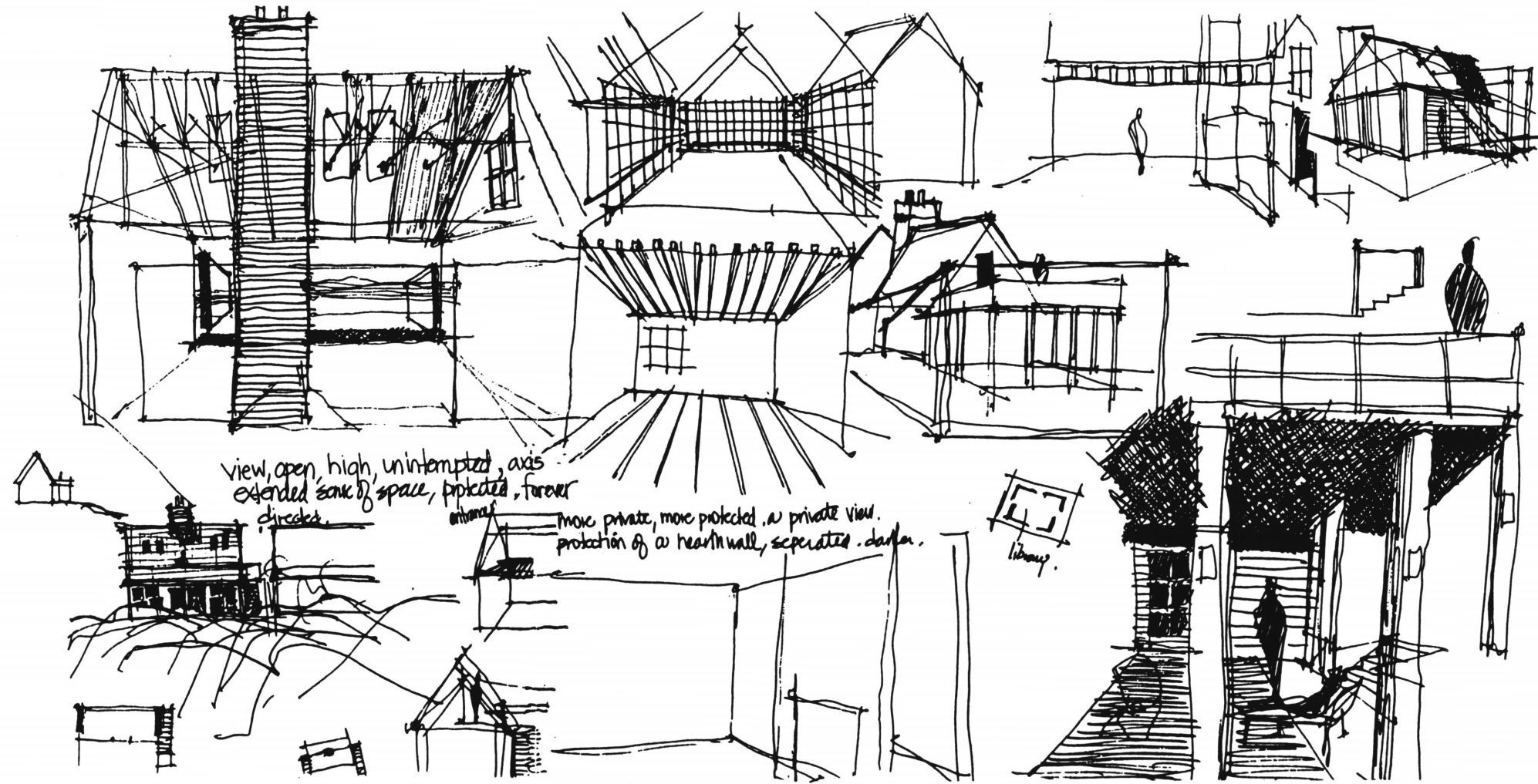
COASTAL MAINE



REACHING FOR A VIEW

FOUR HOUSES IN A ROW

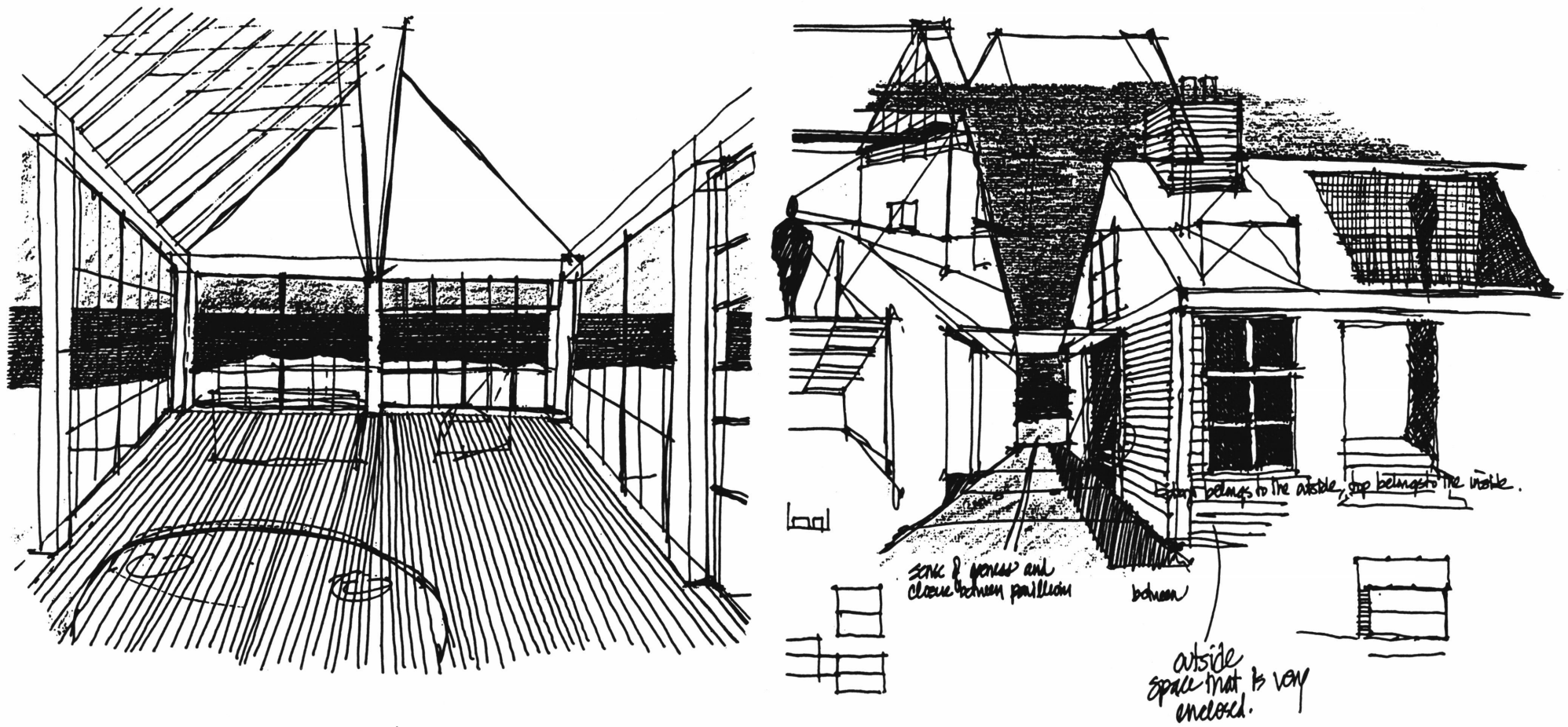
COASTAL MAINE



BEGINNING SKETCHES

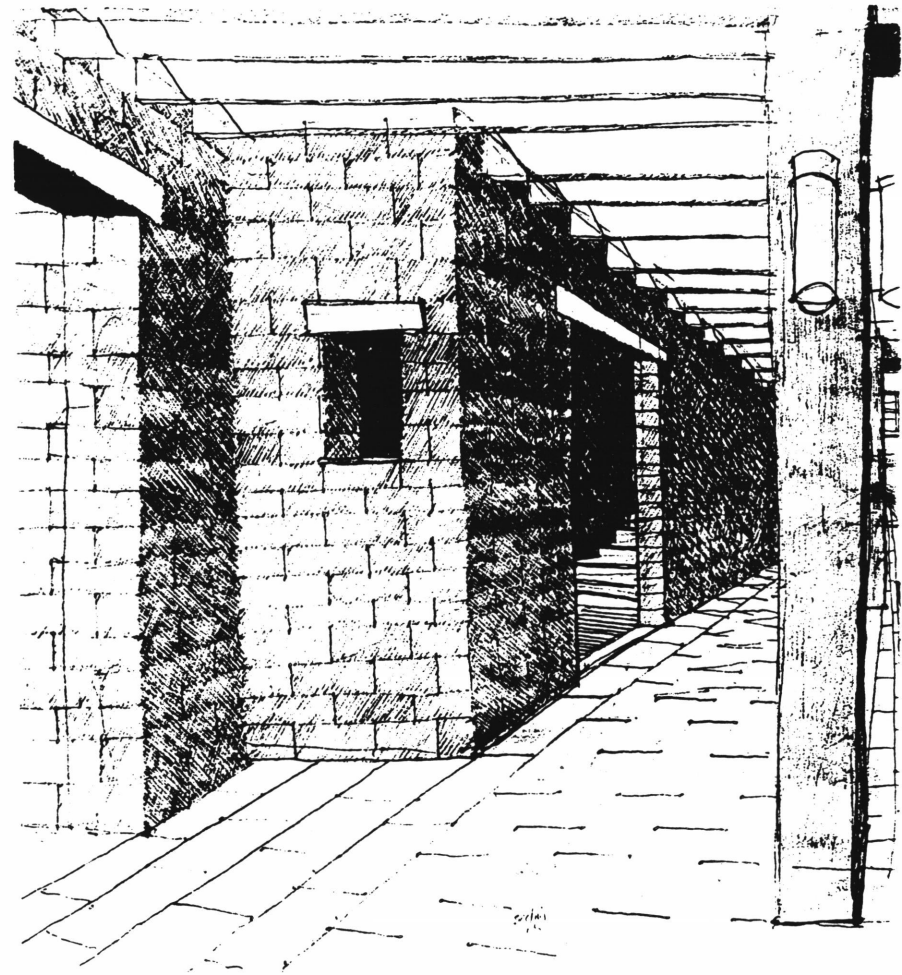
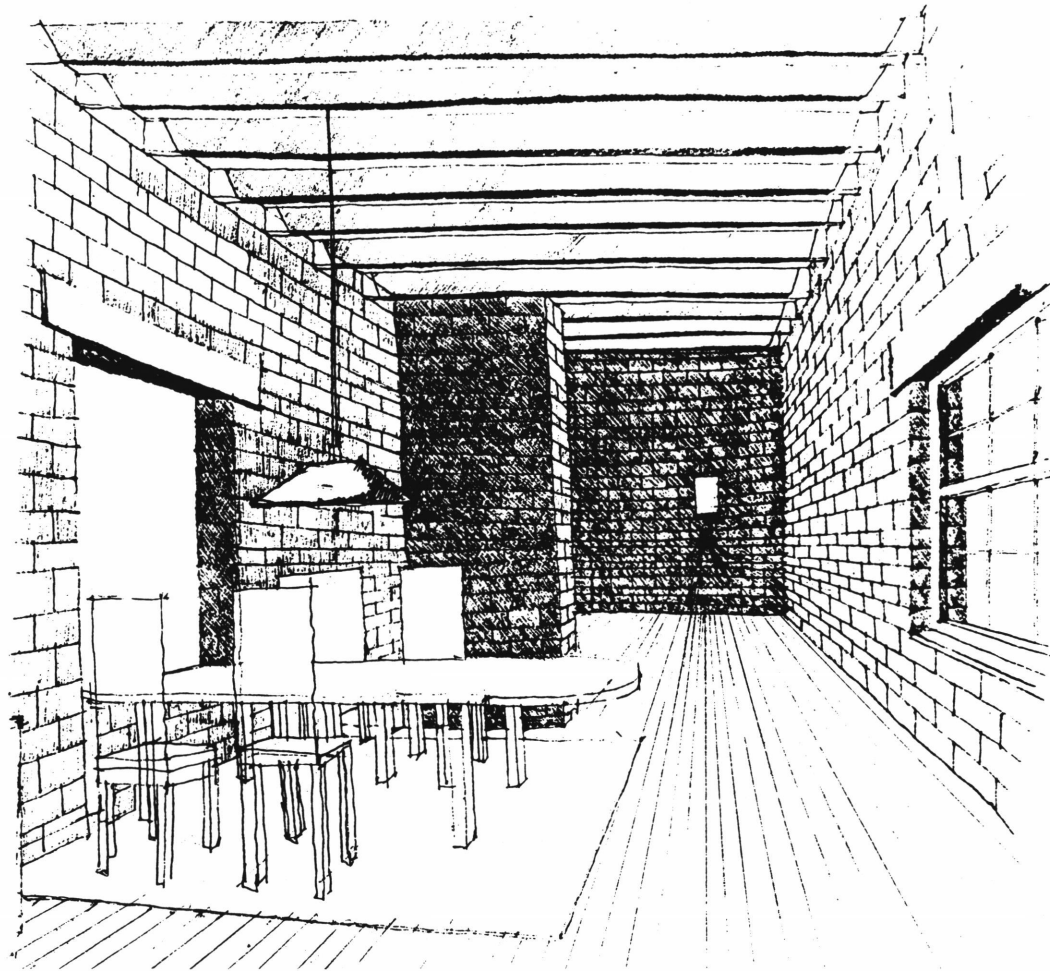
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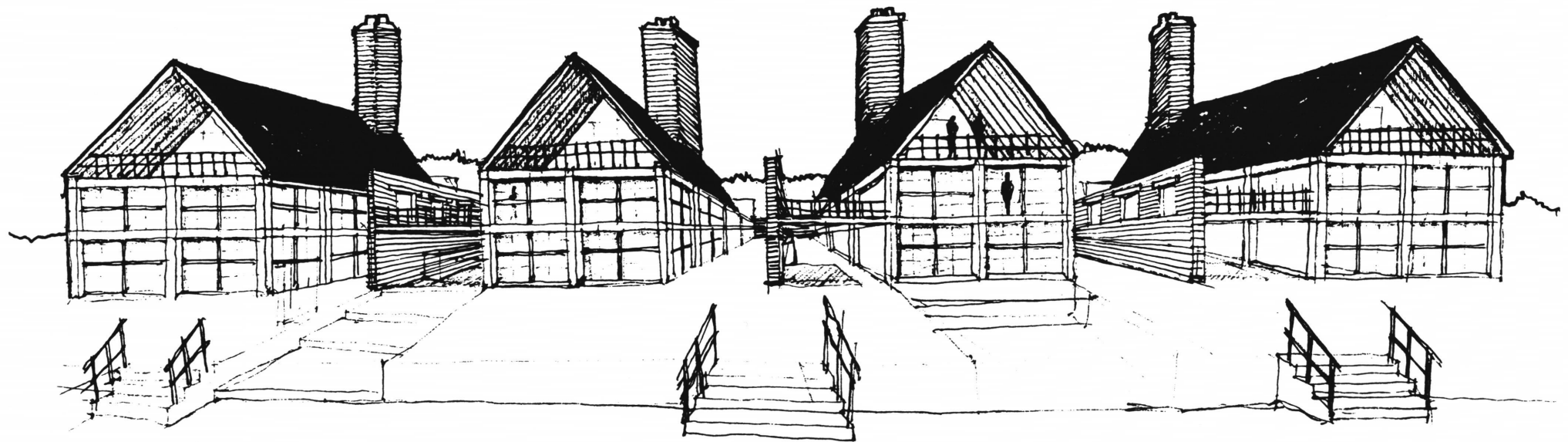
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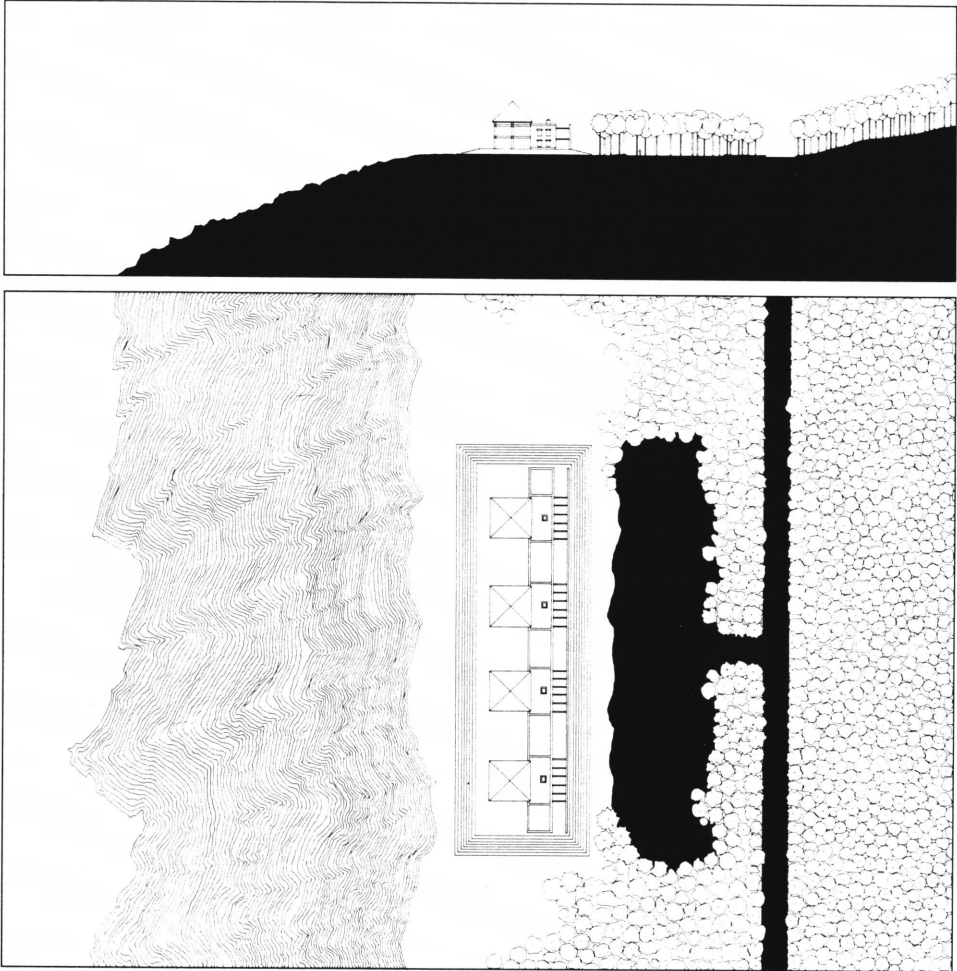
COASTAL MAINE



FOUR HOUSES IN A ROW

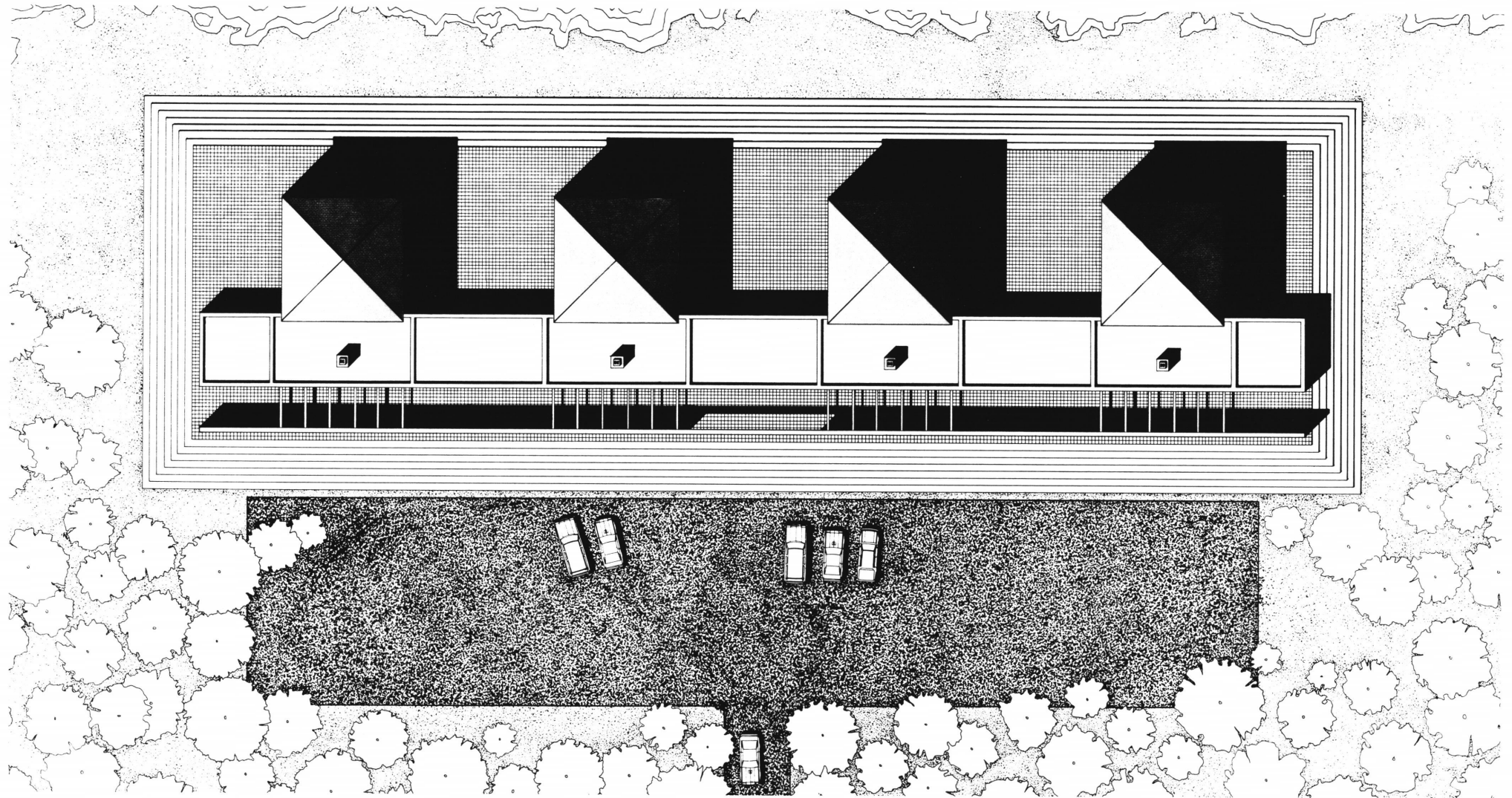
THE SITE

The site for Four Houses In A Row lies between the towns of York and Ogunquit along the Southern Coast of Maine. You approach the site along the Shore Road; a coastal route that mimics the ins and outs of the jagged coastline. A gravel road that lies parallel to the site reaches out to take you to the ocean's edge. Once on this road, with the sound of crushed gravel below, the enclosing pine trees above, the smell of the sea air, and the great vistas of the ocean ahead, it is apparent that a special place awaits you. The site presents itself to you in the form of a large, narrow clearing that lies parallel to the approach road, situated atop a bluff overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. To the east is an unprecedented view of the ocean. Separating the site and the ocean is approximately two hundred feet of rocky coastline which extends itself out into the water, while acting as an impressive retaining wall protecting and holding back the bluff atop from the rushing ocean currents. There is no room for a beach. To the west of the site from which the approach comes is a densely wooded pine forest that provides this place of beauty with perfect seclusion. The long, narrow site itself is covered with a thin layer of pine trees along the edge of the access road and they become less dense and more random the closer to the coast. In place of these diminishingly occurring pines, and intermixed with them is a tall, full, entwining bush that surrounds the clearing on the north, east, and west sides. In spring and summer, this high ground cover nestles the site with a green privacy.



FOUR HOUSES IN A ROW

THE SITE



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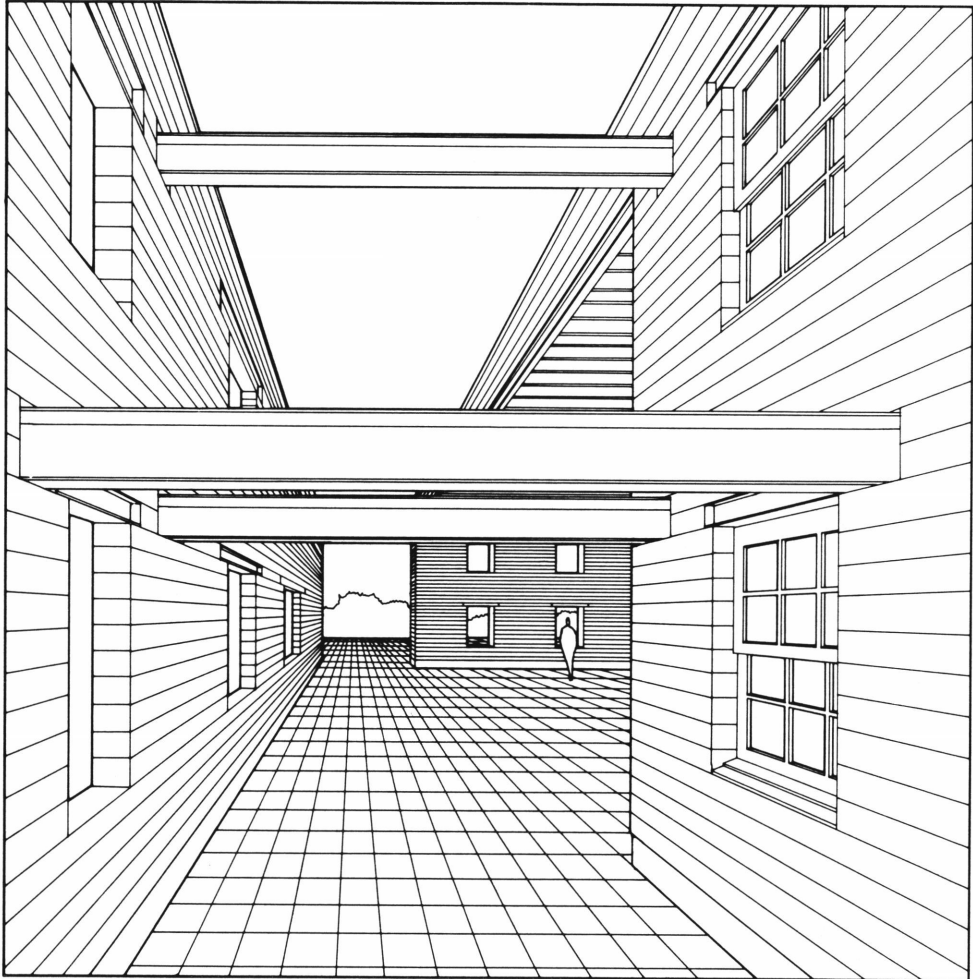


SITE PLAN

FOUR HOUSES IN A ROW

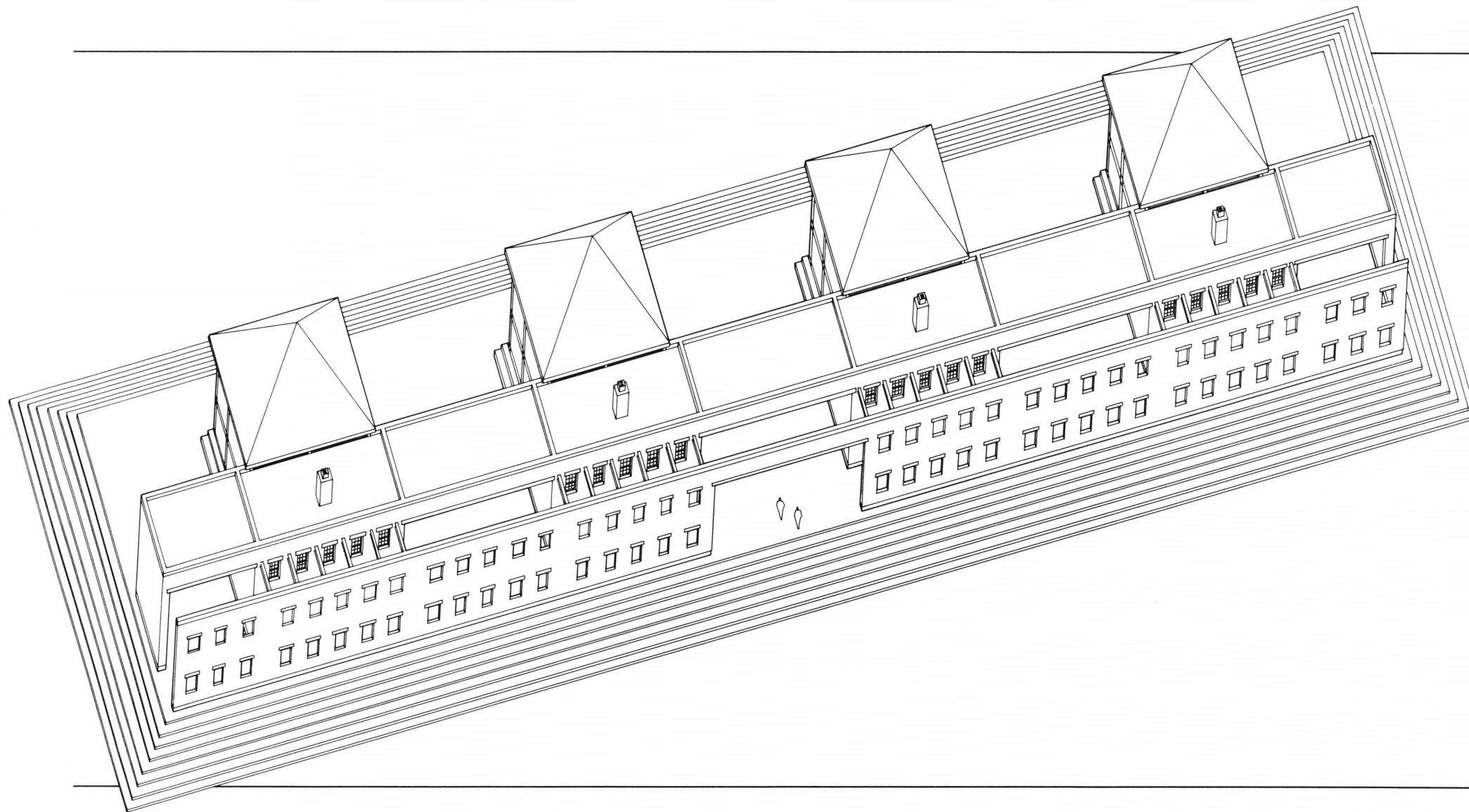
THE COLLECTIVE OF FOUR

The decision to link the four vacation houses together by a common wall/entry corridor and a plinth was an intentional effort to create and enhance the sense of community between the houses. The plinth, the elevated base upon which the four houses are perched, introduces an initial order to the site and becomes an artificial landscape which links and gathers the individual parts of the project into a cohesive whole. The entrance wall and the entrance corridor created behind it, provides the houses with a common gateway and passage through the project. Additionally, as a result of the spatial proximity of the wall to the houses and the entrance spaces between the units, a series of outdoor rooms that overlook the ocean are created. Symbolically and physically, the front wall unites the houses together while simultaneously cutting them apart from the public world beyond. The wall in this sense is likened to the masks stage actors hold in front of their faces; the masks link the actors together into a collective band, yet also act as a barrier between their actual selves and the audience.



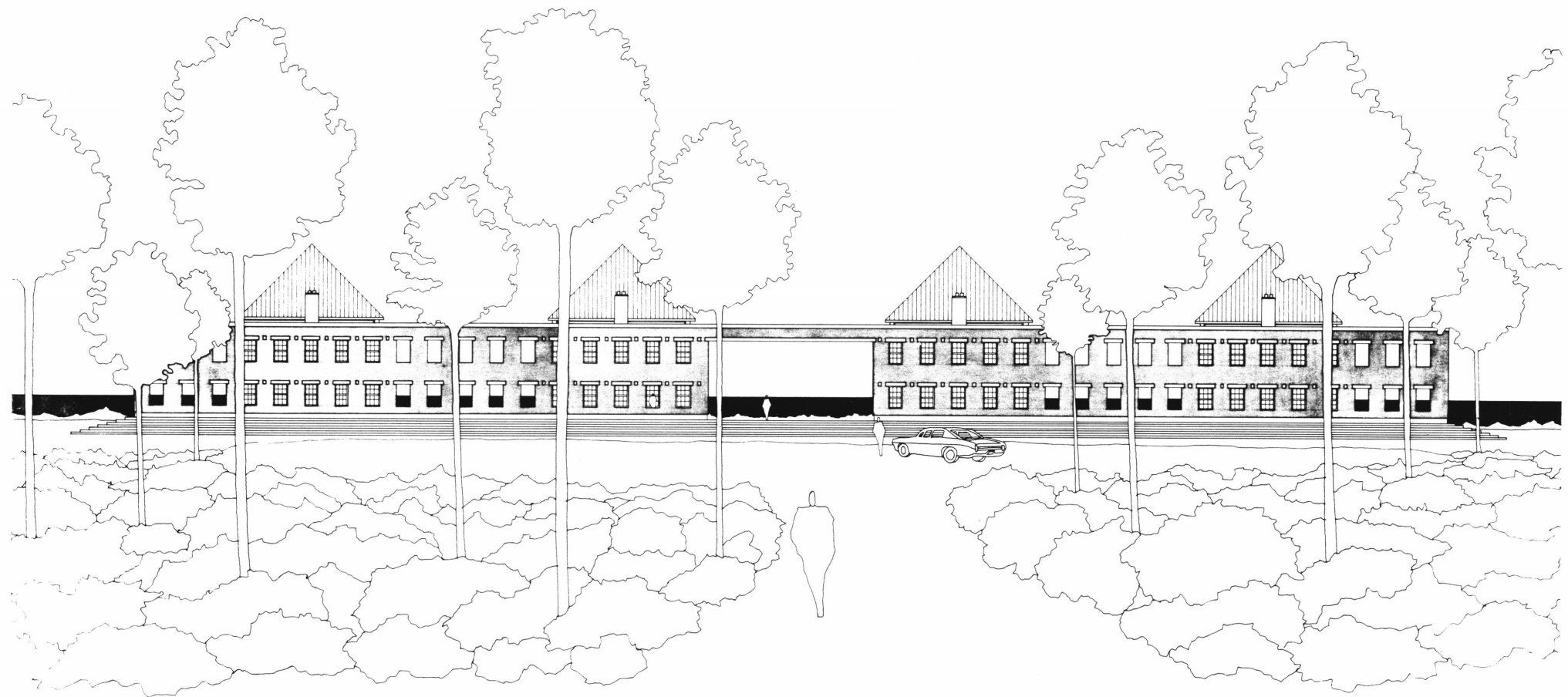
FOUR HOUSES IN A ROW

THE COLLECTIVE OF FOUR



FOUR HOUSES IN A ROW

THE COLLECTIVE OF FOUR



PRIMARY WEST ELEVATION

FOUR HOUSES IN A ROW

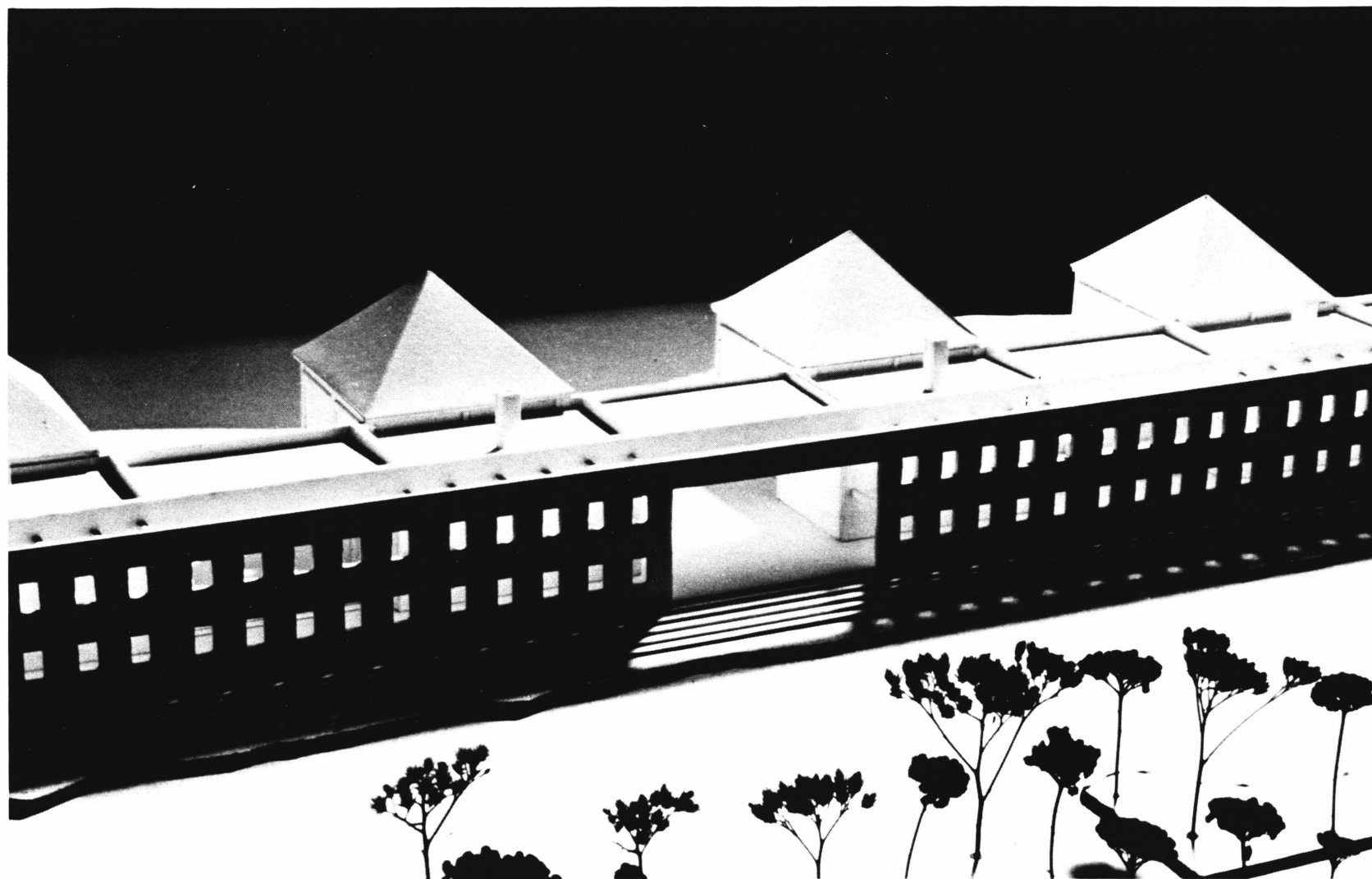
THE COLLECTIVE OF FOUR



SECONDARY WEST ELEVATION

FOUR HOUSES IN A ROW

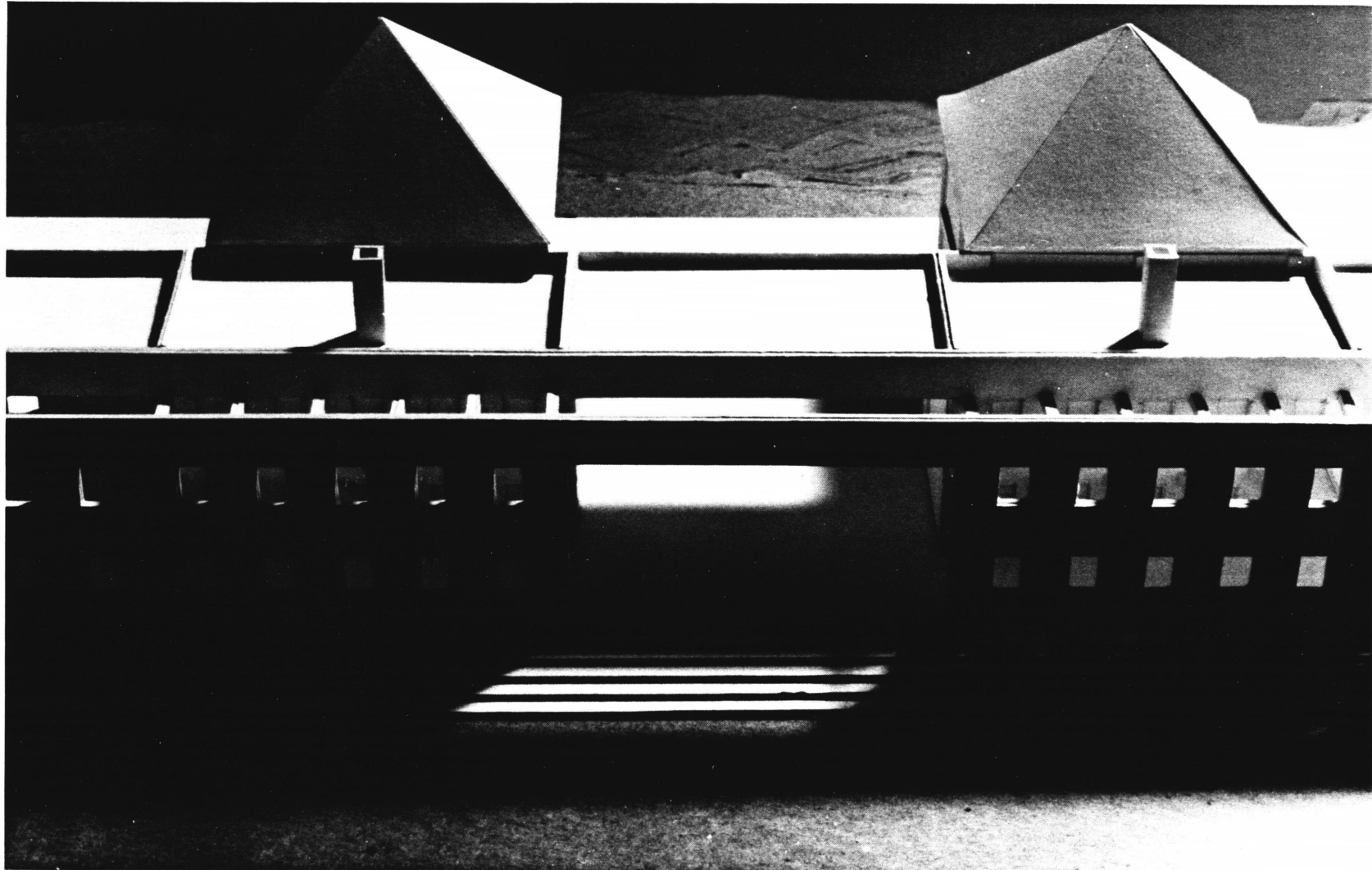
THE COLLECTIVE OF FOUR



FINISHED MODEL

FOUR HOUSES IN A ROW

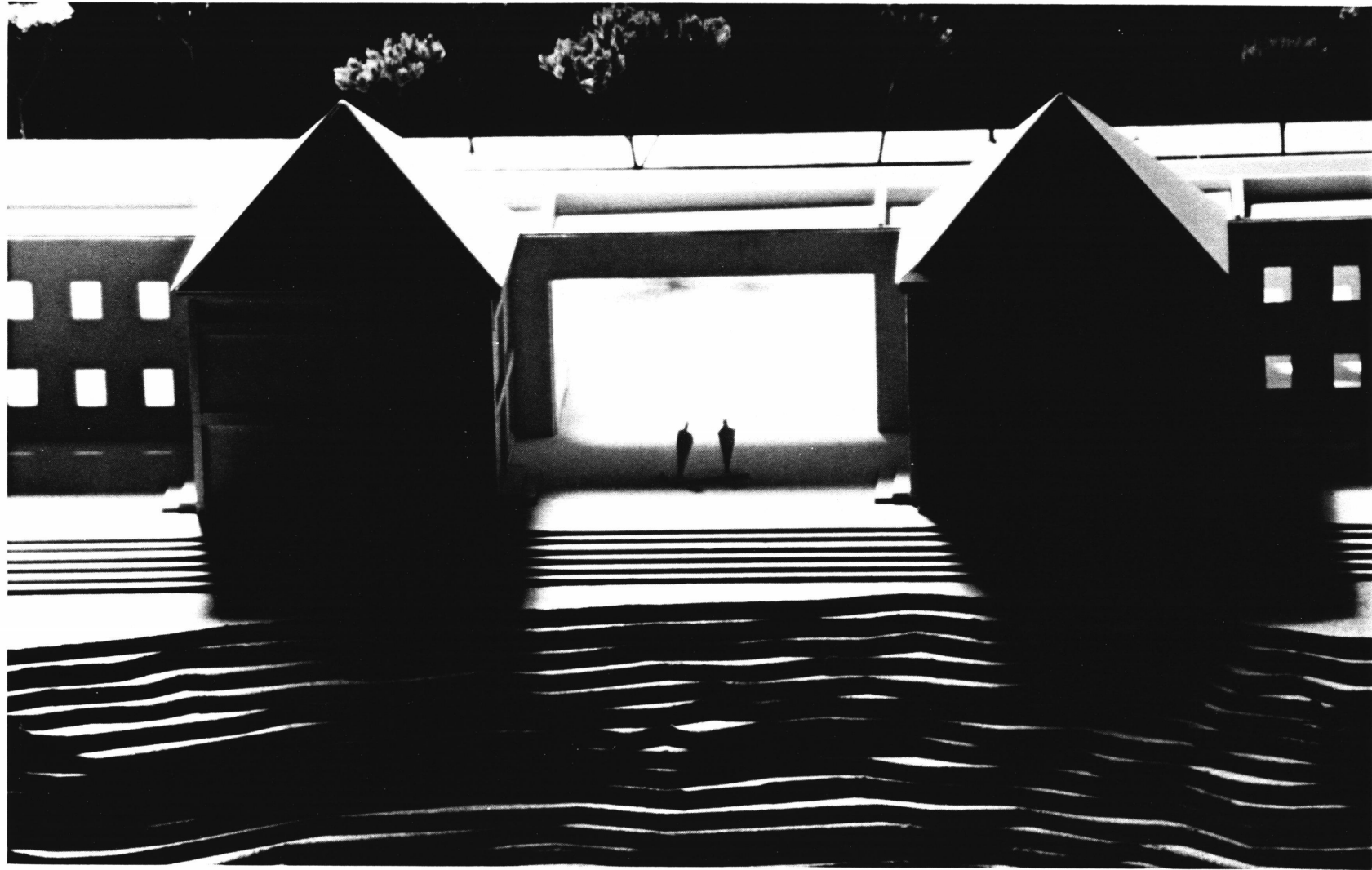
THE COLLECTIVE OF FOUR



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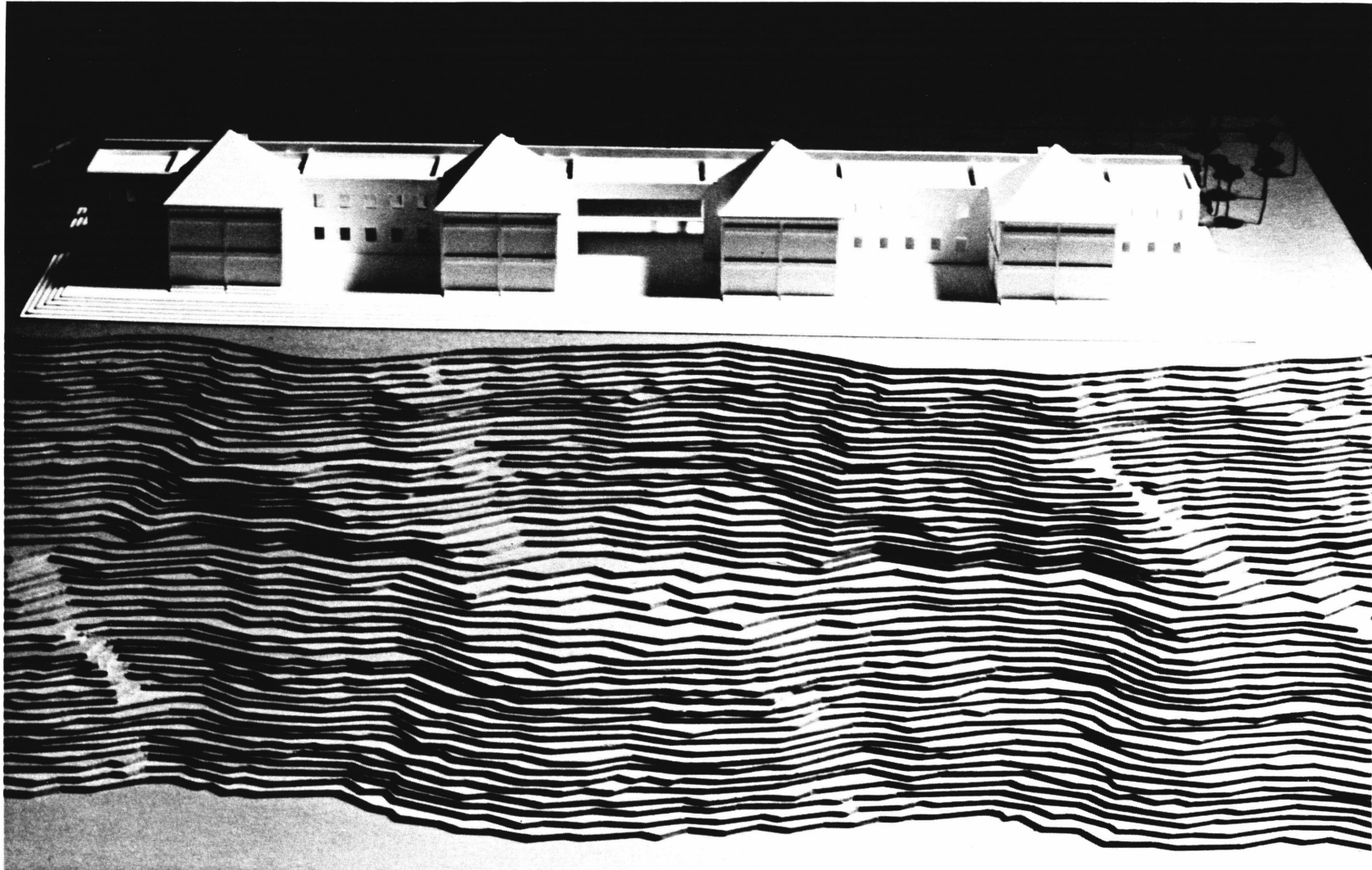
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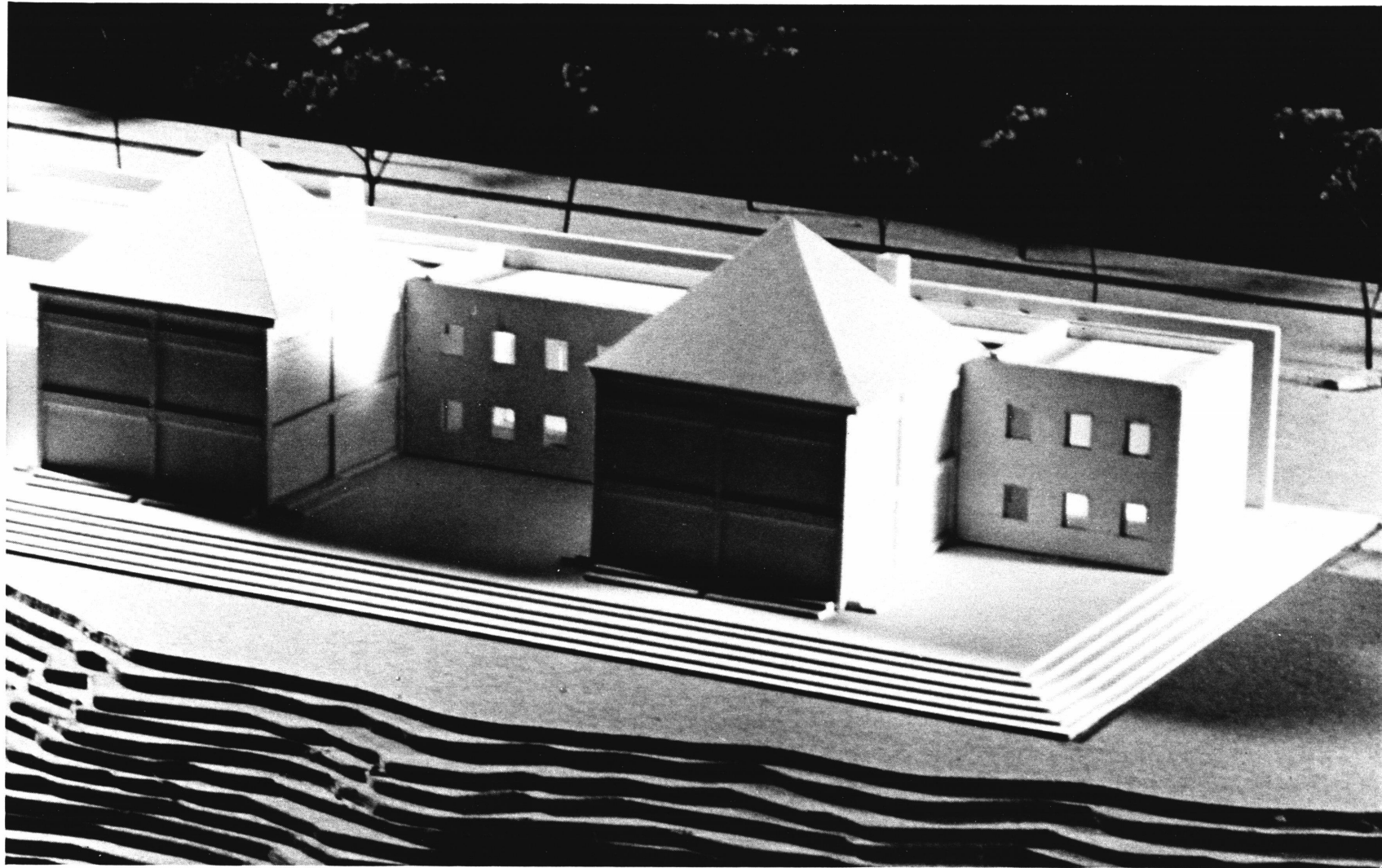
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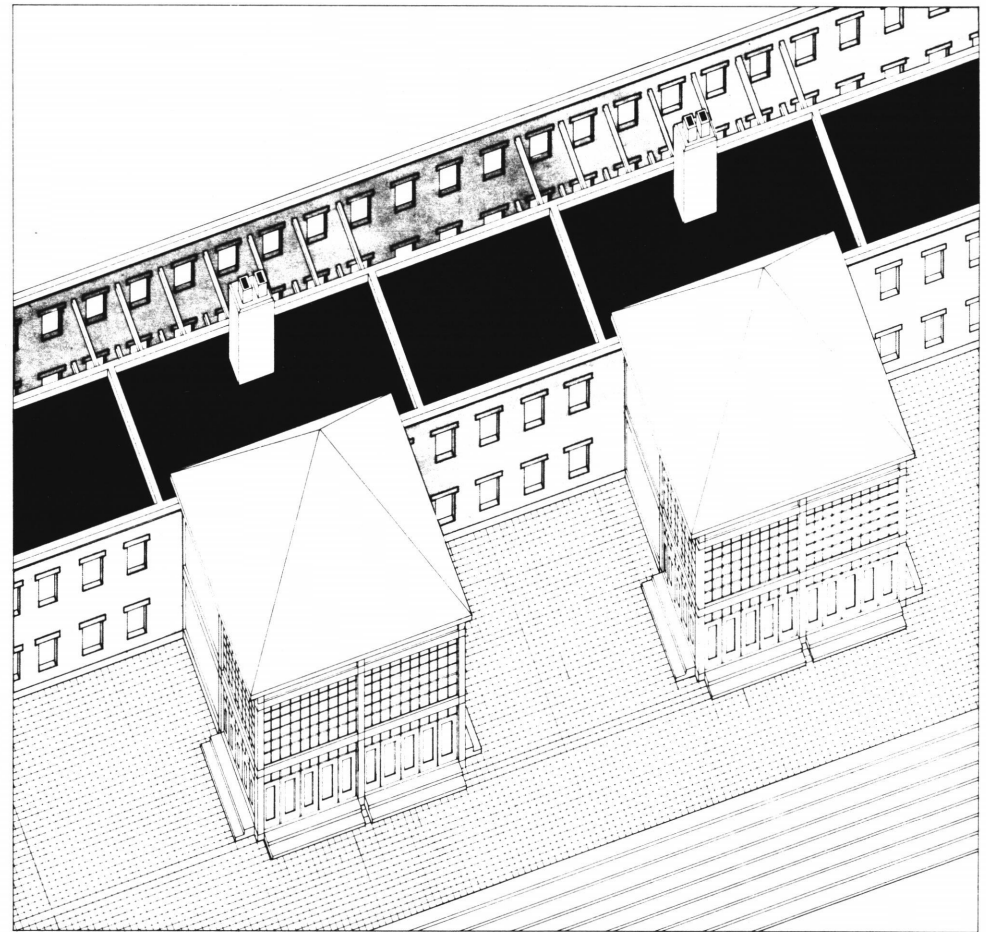


FINISHED MODEL

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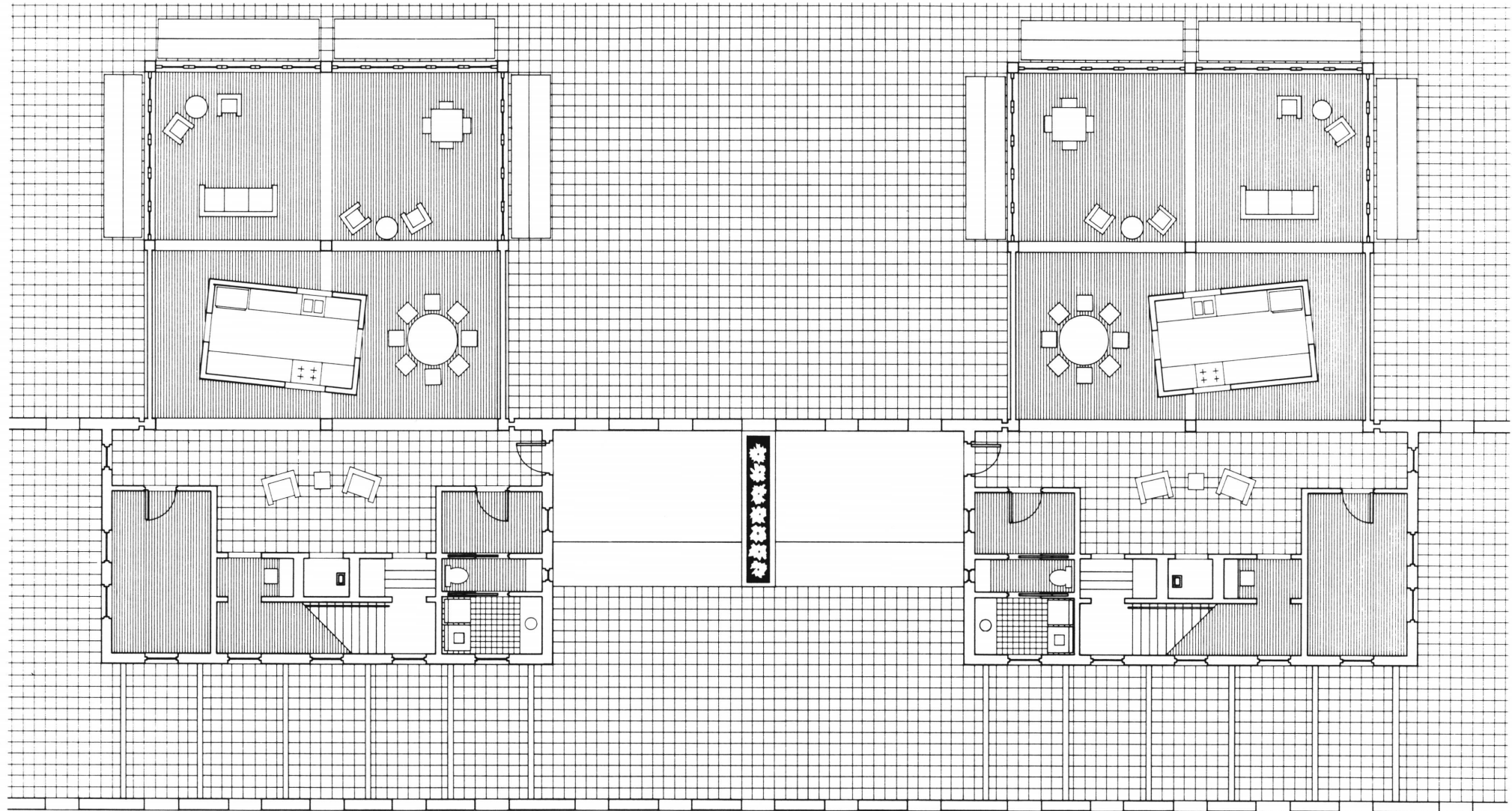
THE ORDER OF THE HOUSES

Each of the four vacation houses is organized into two parts, the core and the frame. The core portion, which seeks to express the idea of enclosure, is constructed of one foot thick walls that are made of site cast concrete formed with rough boards taken from the site. The formwork, which will allow the concrete to bleed between its members will leave a rough, imperfect, and desired appearance. The core spaces are intended to call to mind the rough tactile qualities of the site: the rocky, jagged edge of the ever-changing coastline, the dense entrapping bushes that enclose it, and the gravel bed of the approach road. The second part of the house, the pavilion, takes the form of a glass enclosed wood frame structure that is attached to the concrete core and is oriented towards the view. The spaces within it are open, airy, bright, and free. Here, space soars. Views abound. Rooms overflow into other rooms without the restrictions of walls. Movement is carefree and generous. The pavilion spaces are the result of an abstraction of the limitless qualities of the site: the endless view, the abundant light and fresh sea air, and the timelessness of a lazy summer afternoon.

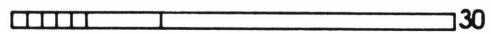


FOUR HOUSES IN A ROW

THE ORDER OF THE HOUSES

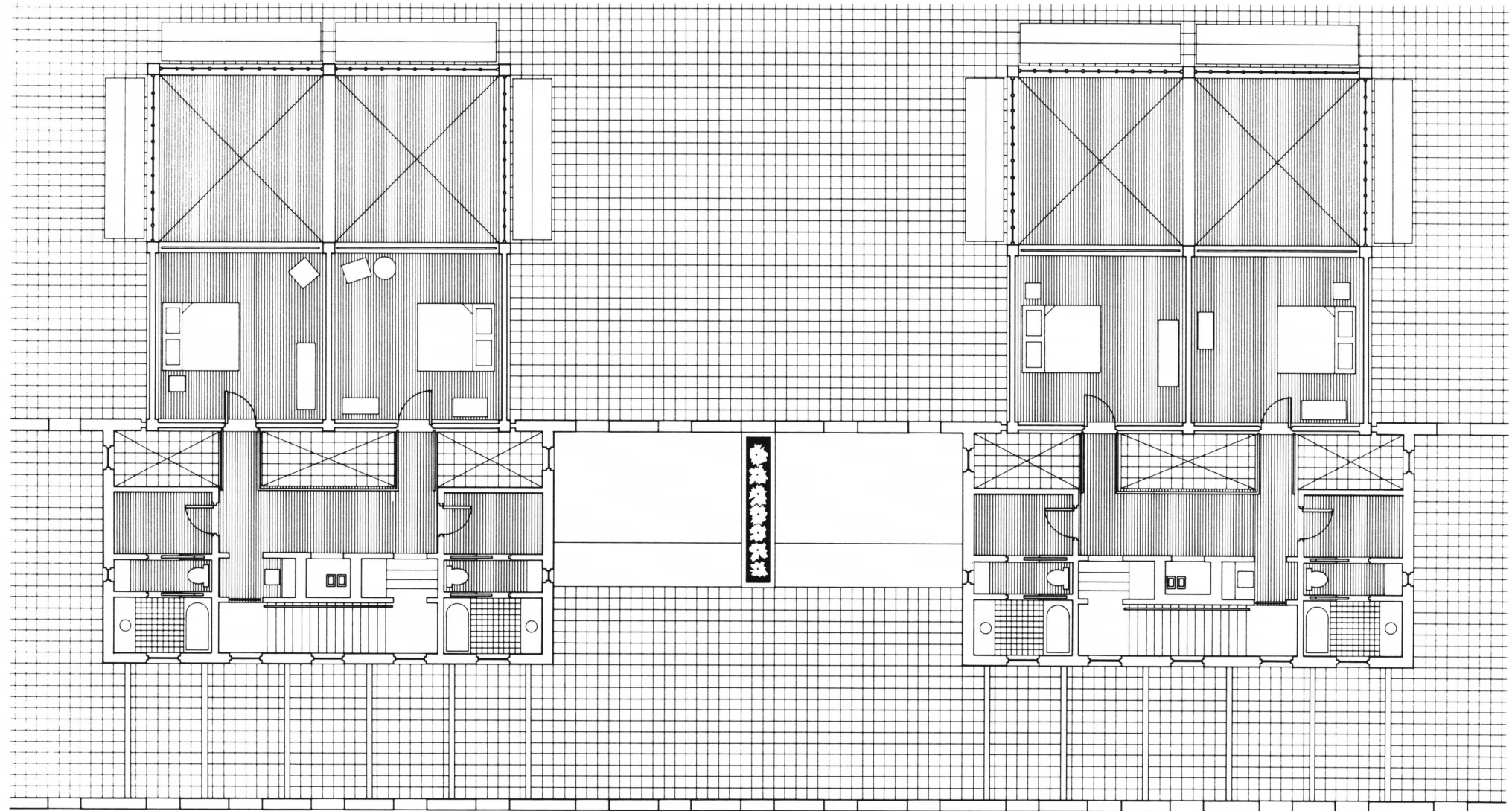


FIRST LEVEL PLAN

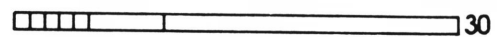


FOUR HOUSES IN A ROW

THE ORDER OF THE HOUSES

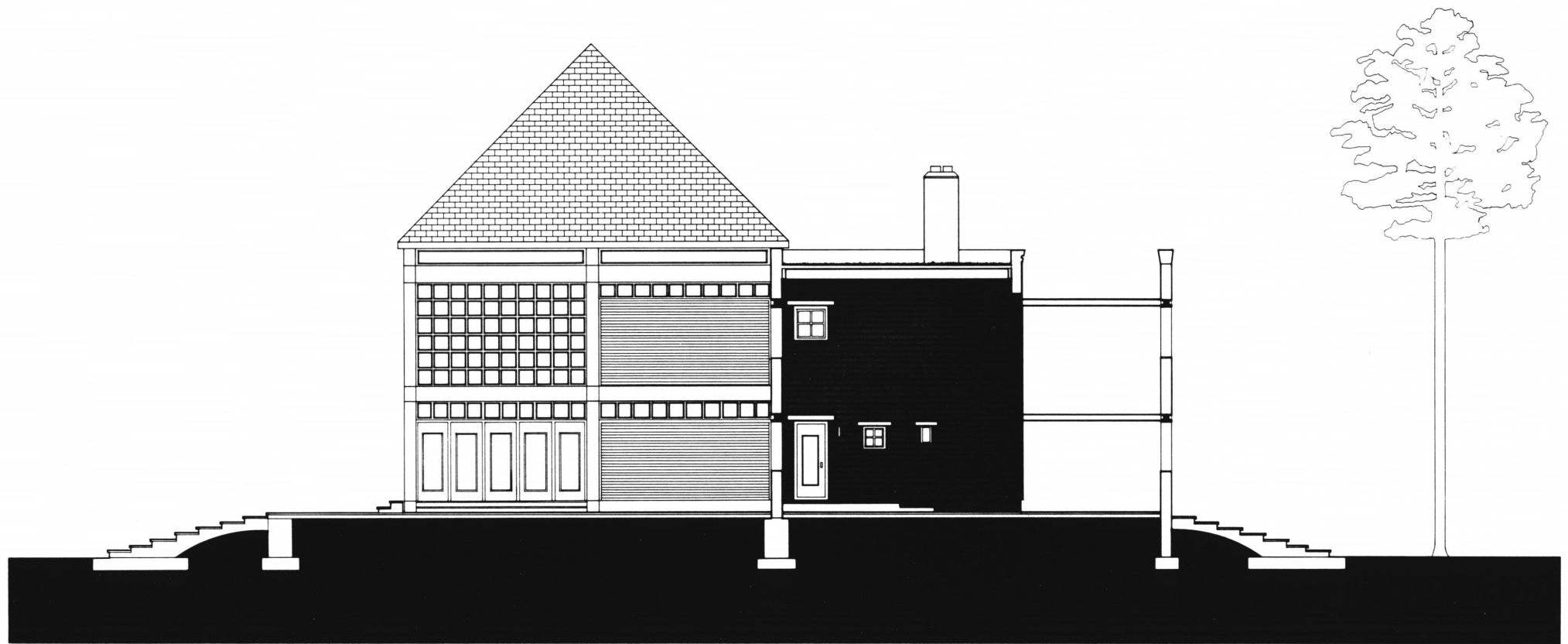


SECOND LEVEL PLAN

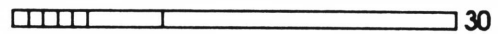


FOUR HOUSES IN A ROW

THE ORDER OF THE HOUSES

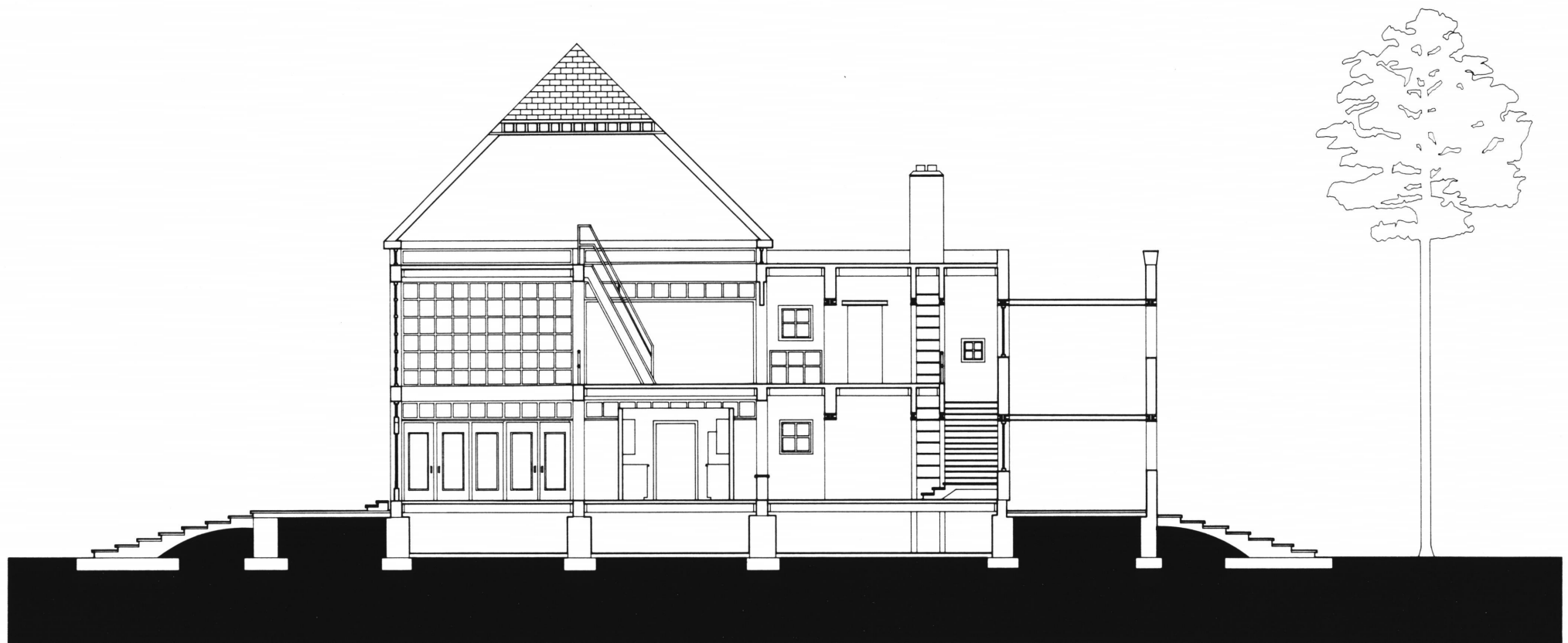


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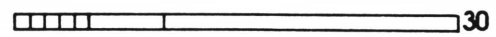
FOUR HOUSES IN A ROW

THE ORDER OF THE HOUSES



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TRANSVERSE SECTION

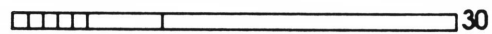


FOUR HOUSES IN A ROW

THE ORDER OF THE HOUSES

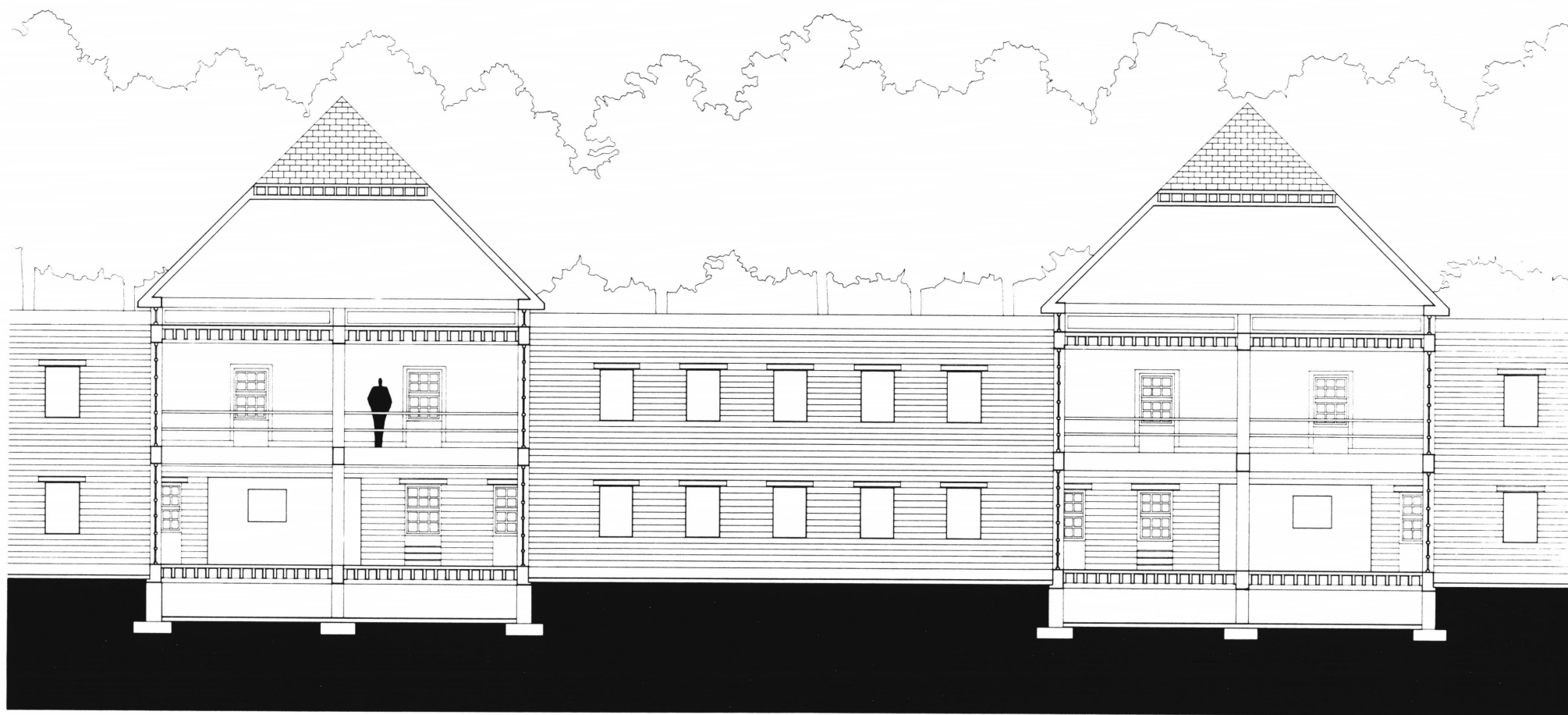


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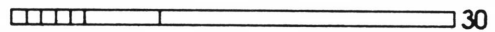


FOUR HOUSES IN A ROW

THE ORDER OF THE HOUSES

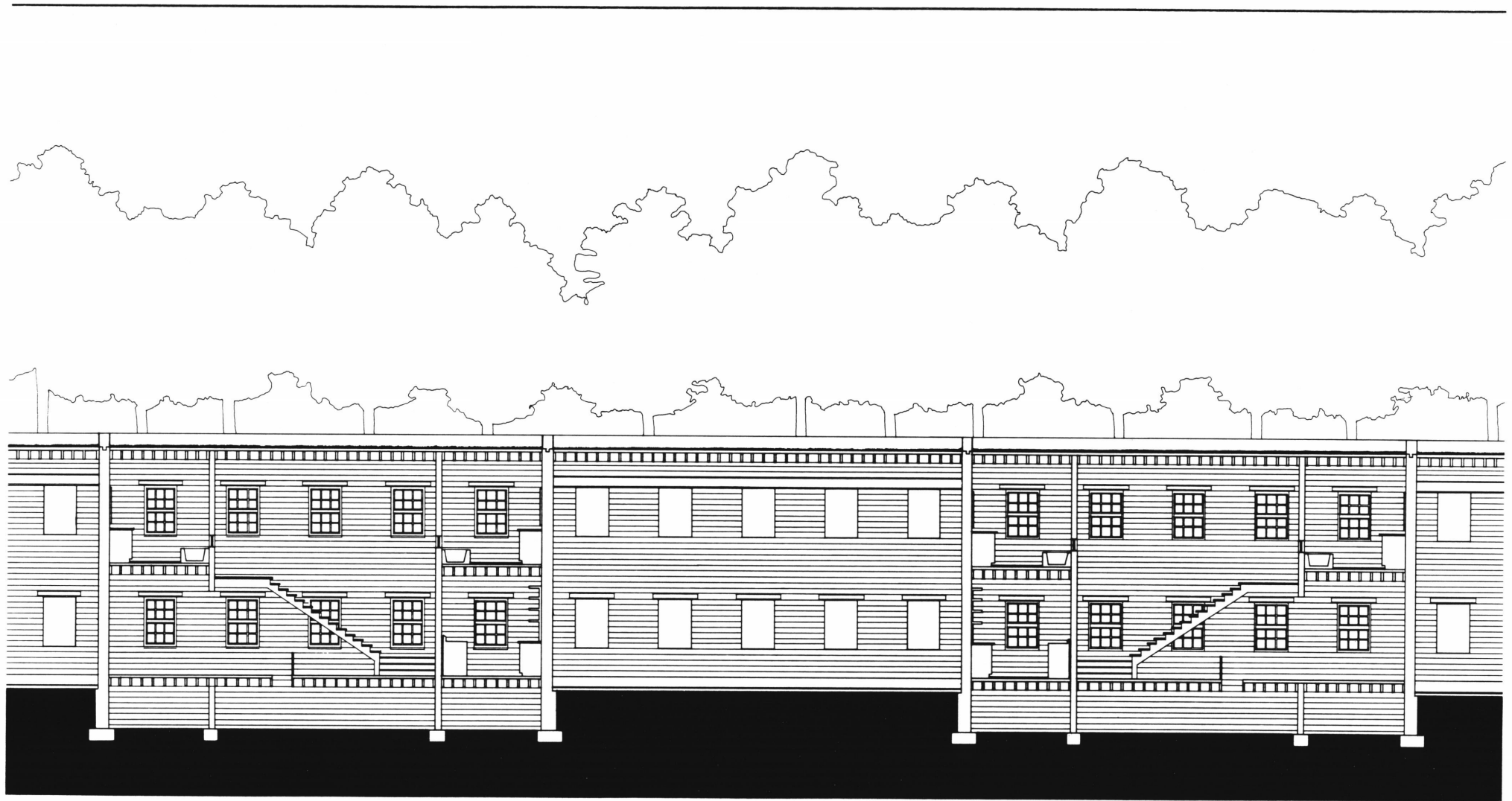


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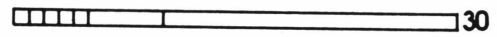


FOUR HOUSES IN A ROW

THE ORDER OF THE HOUSES

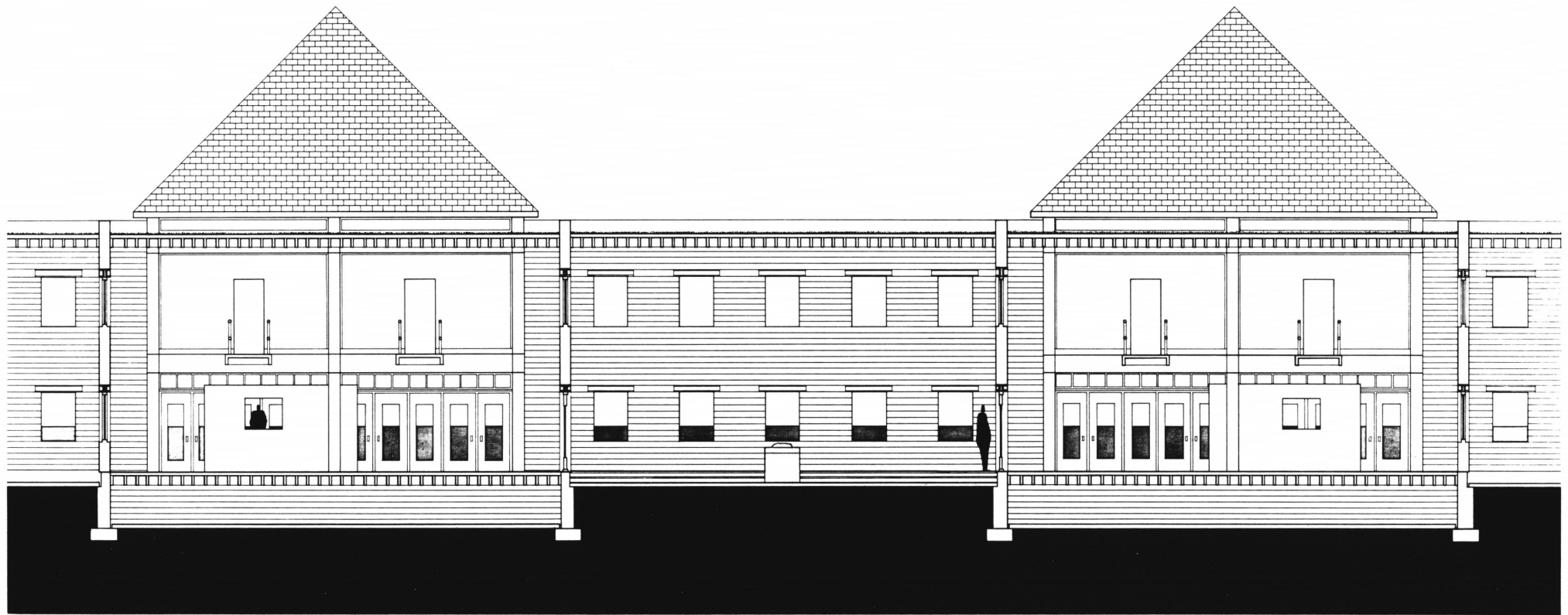


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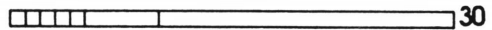


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THE ORDER OF THE HOUSES

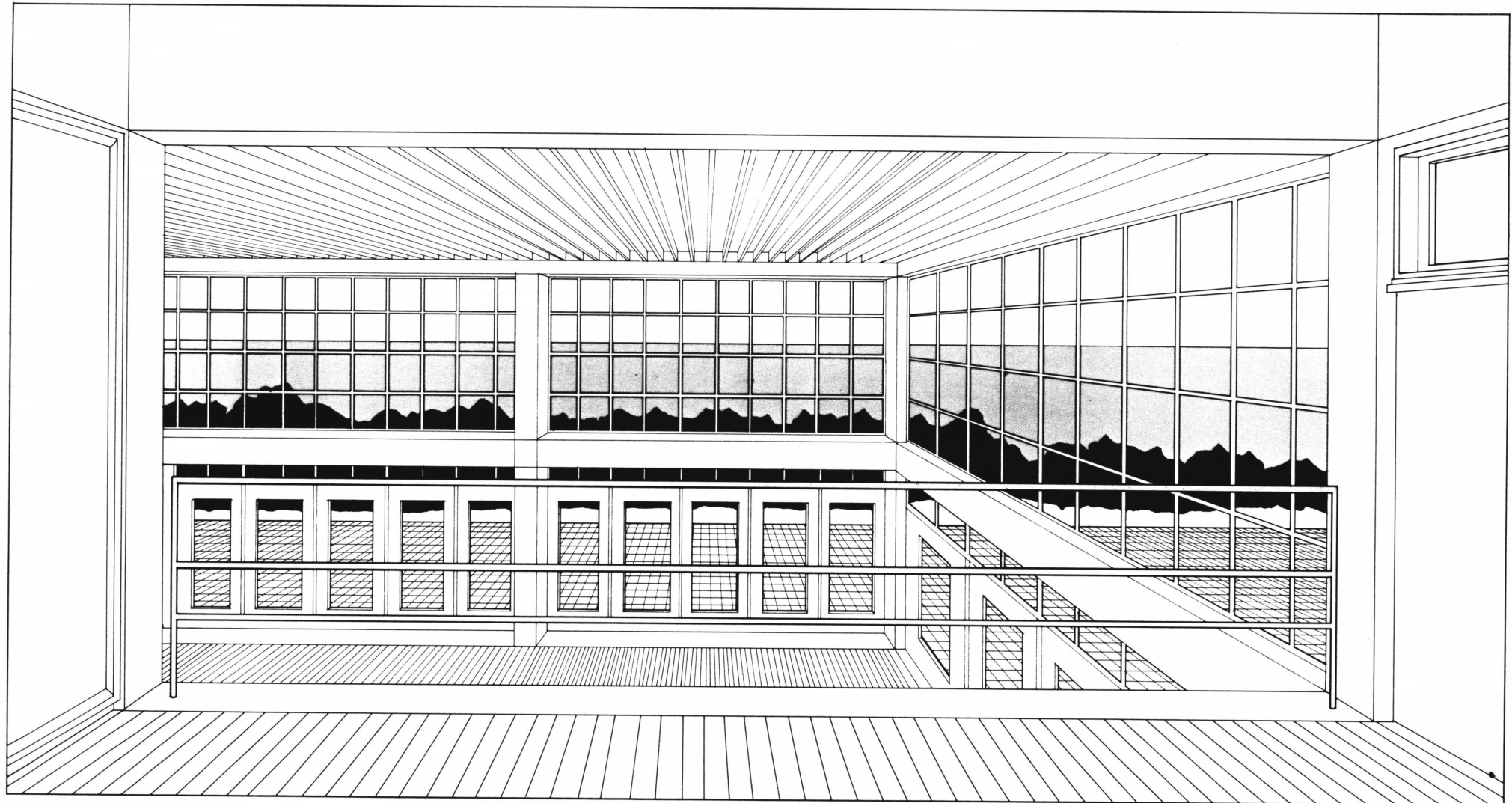


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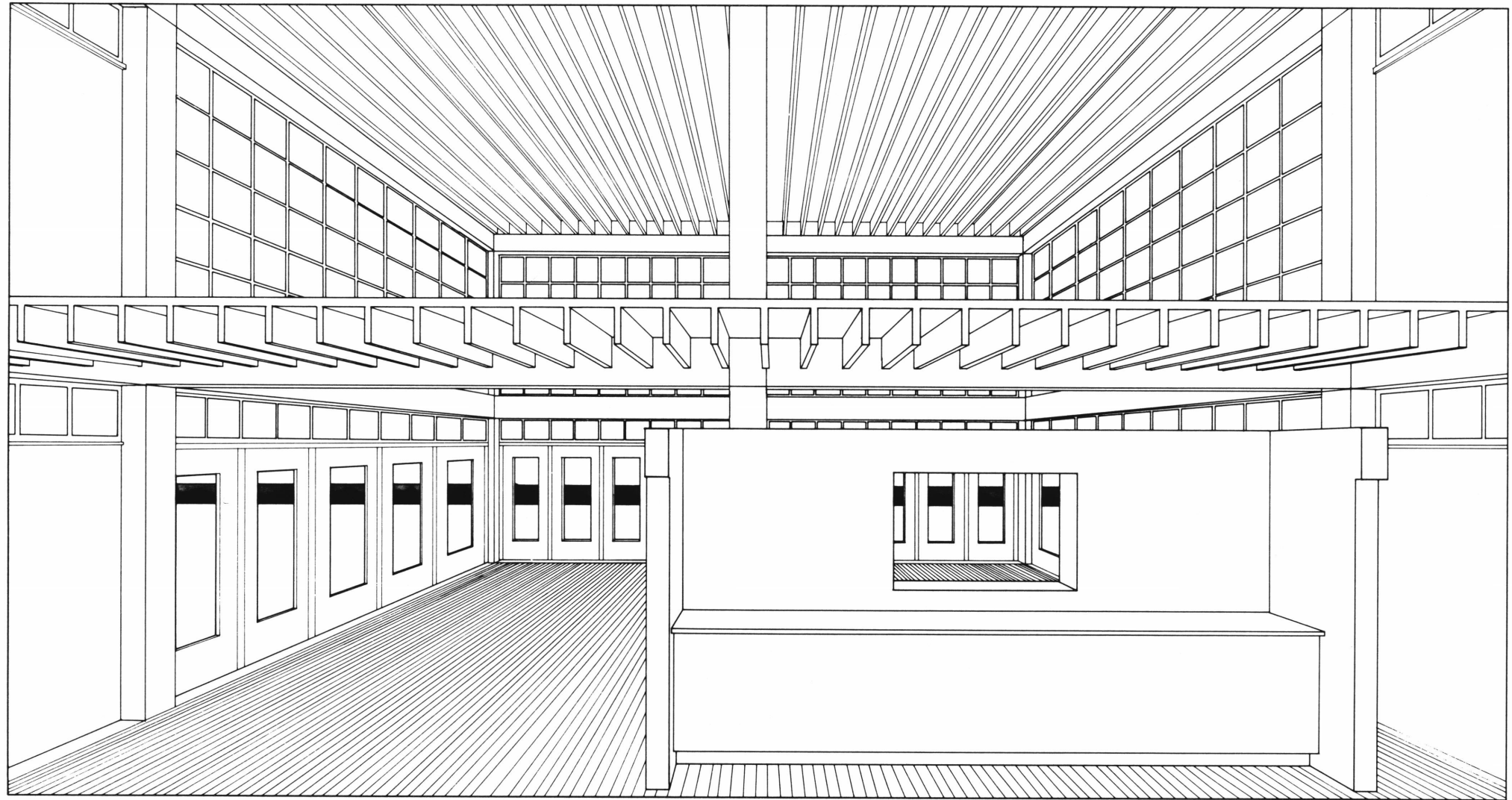
THE ORDER OF THE HOUSES



BALCONY BEDROOM VIEW

FOUR HOUSES IN A ROW

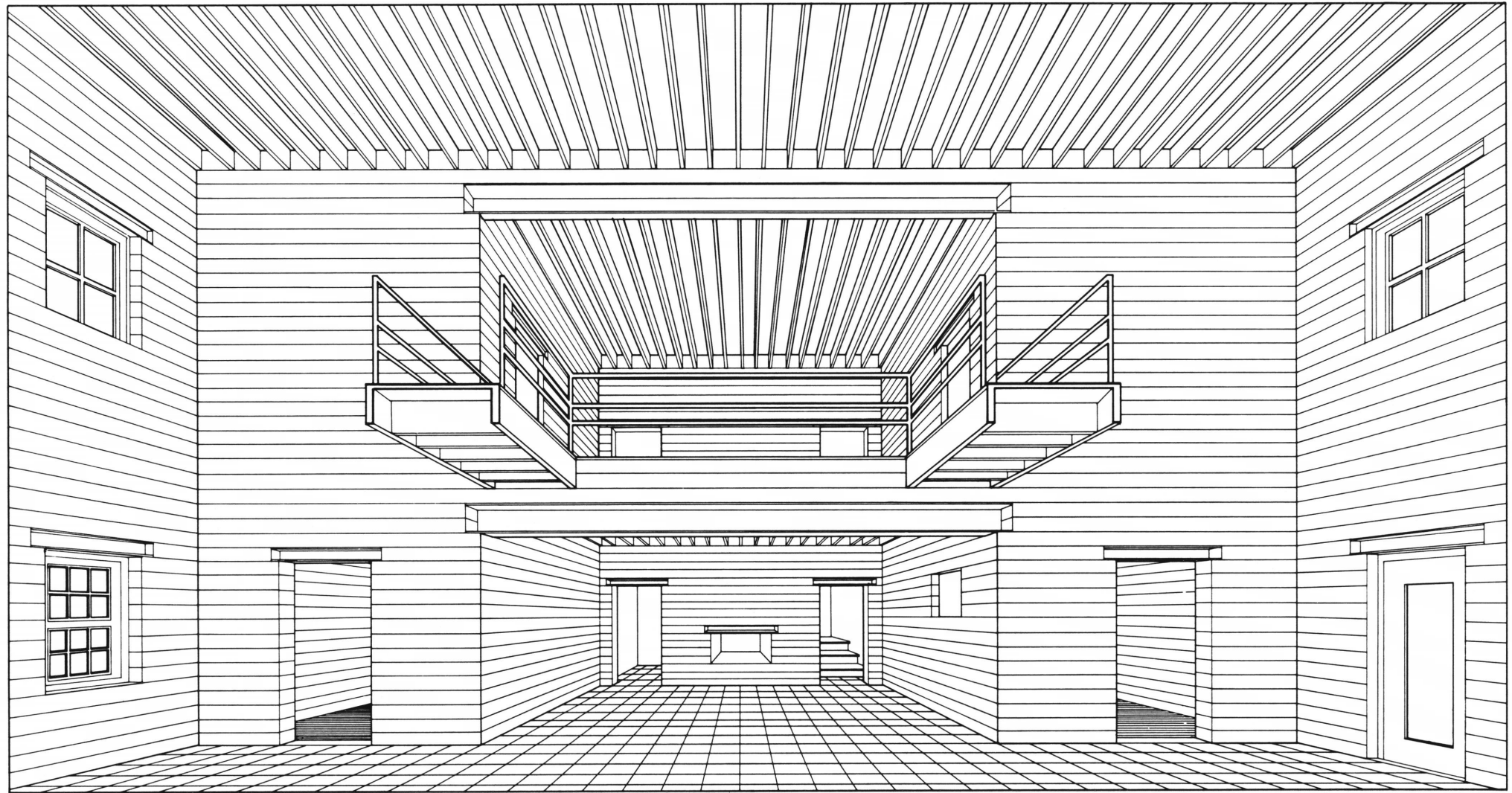
THE ORDER OF THE HOUSES



PRIMARY LIVING SPACES

FOUR HOUSES IN A ROW

THE ORDER OF THE HOUSES



ENTRANCE AREA WITHIN THE CORE

FOUR HOUSES IN A ROW

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