

THE MAKING OF A HOUSE

by

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MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

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March, 1979

Blacksburg, Virginia

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This thesis is dedicated to my father, Kenneth Weimer, for his infinite patience and dedication to my development.

Thanks be to God for its completion.

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## INTRODUCTION

The making of this house represents a response to a client's need for a retirement home. For me, the house is a design vehicle. As a result of acknowledging specifics of site and behavioral criteria stated through the client, my struggle throughout the process has been to unite the house with the site and recognize the order of the house through its internal function as it interpretes the client's need.

The clients are a couple whose life has been full of travel and community involvement. The couple has two grown children with families of their own.

The wife is an artist. She has enjoyed giving lessons within the community she is now a part of and wishes to continue in her new home. She has taken part in her husband's

career as he has traveled across the state. The husband has established himself through years of experience in state and local government with his background in agricultural development, economics and education. For the benefit of his continued development and as a personal contribution, he has created a corporation which offers speaking, consultation and workshop services as a resource for private business, government and civic organizations. The house itself is to become a center for consultation and communication.

It is not the intention of the couple to enter retirement as a dormant stage of life.

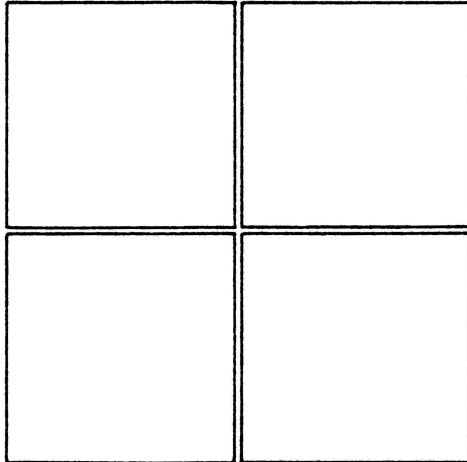
The clients' brought to the project an image of how the house might operate in response to their lifestyle as well as respond to the site.

The site is part of the clients' home estate outside Staunton, Virginia, overlooking the farm that has passed down through the family. They stressed the impact of the view on this particular site as it surveyed the surrounding landscape. The view from the gentle rolling hillside dominates the site but its sentimental value to the clients intensified my desire to bring the awareness of the site into the house.

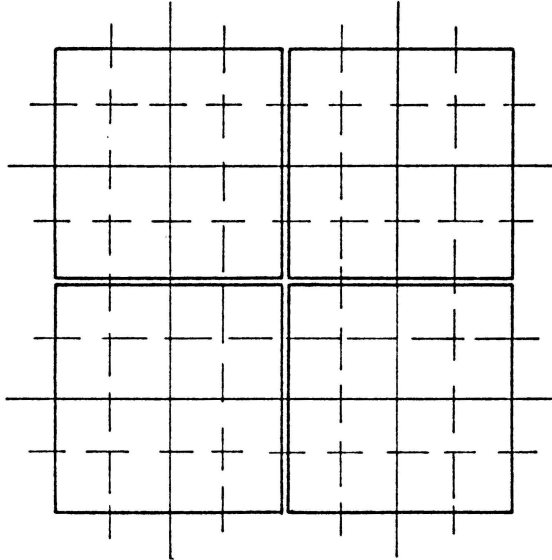
Uniting the house with the site involves an operation that is carried out through the physical form of a building. The functional order of the house is woven through the operation but is not directly dependent on it. The independence of the functional order and the operation creates the strength of the house allowing the interplay of parts.

The objective was to develop a house where the functional order and the operation are independent but not in conflict providing a rich spatial excitement.

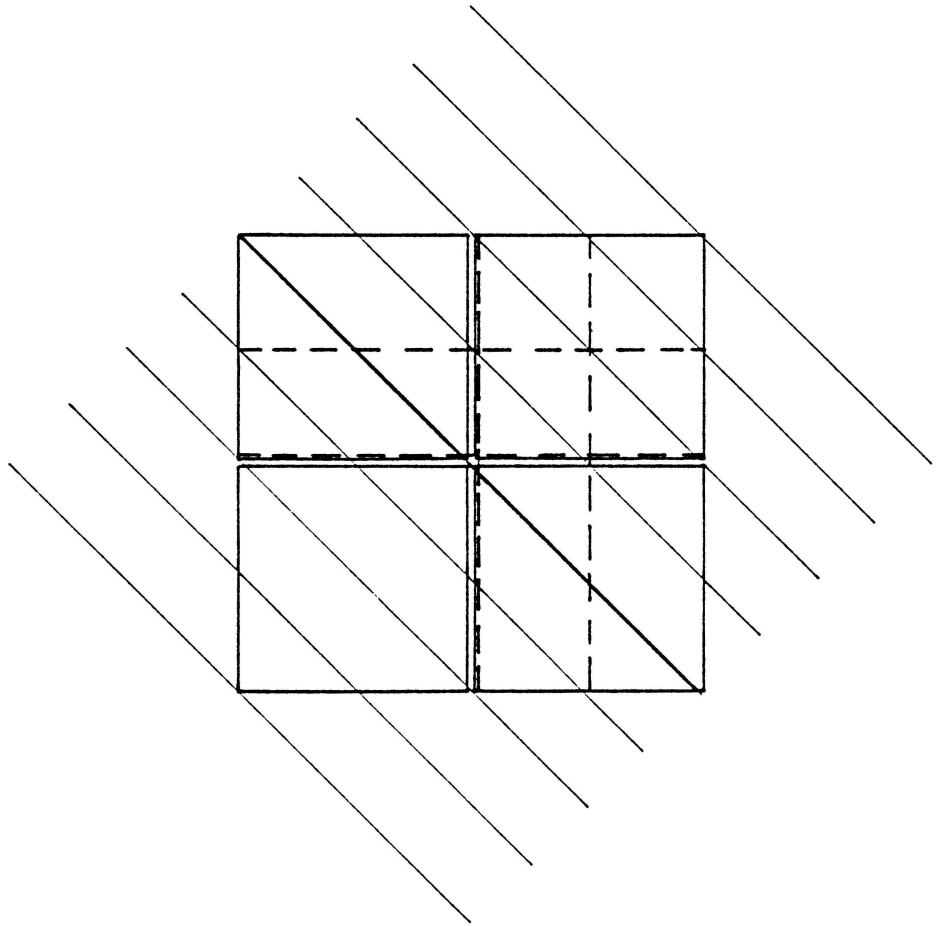
DIAGRAMMATIC PROGRESSION



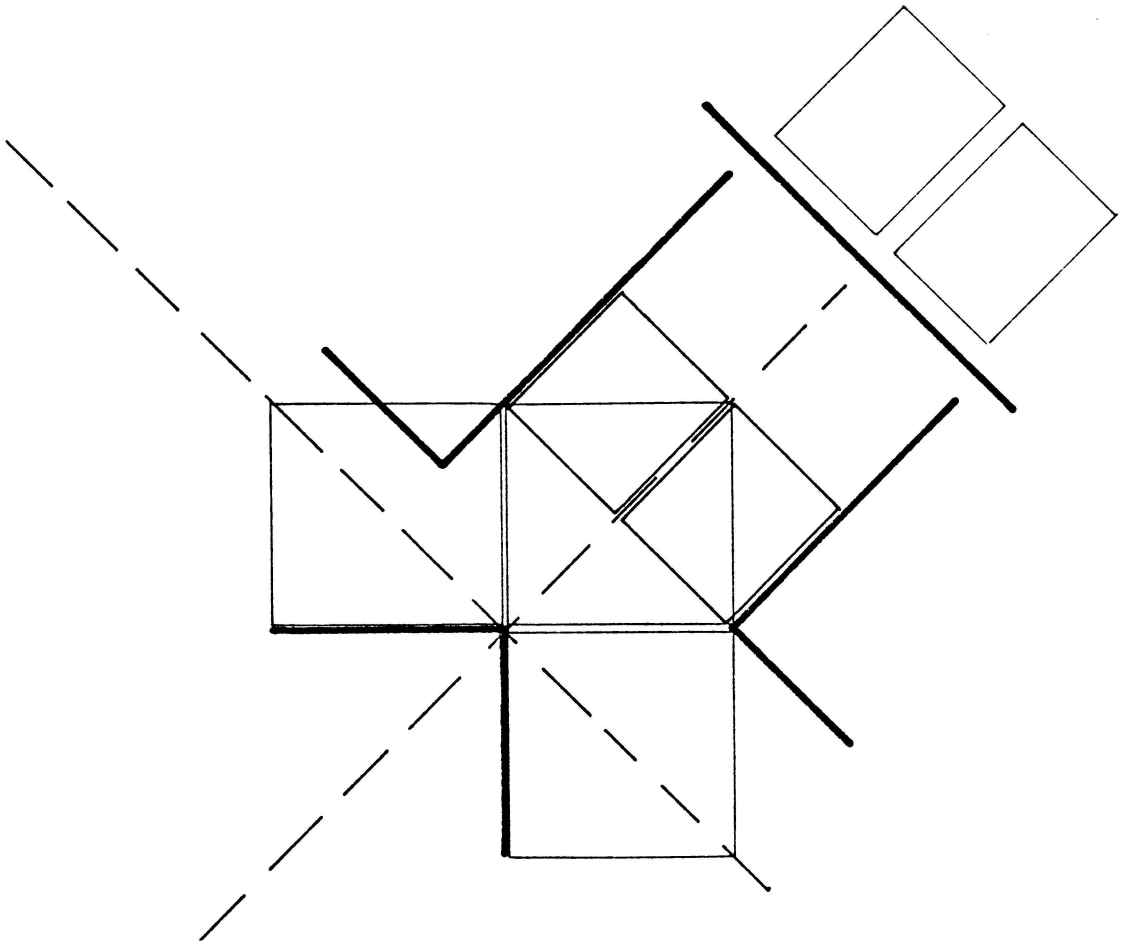
The basic concept is drawn from the quadrant of the vernacular farmhouse. The major spatial pattern defines a twenty foot grid system. Within the farmhouse, clear boundaries are established that in turn determine circulation through an entry along a perpendicular axis or a center point of vertical circulation.



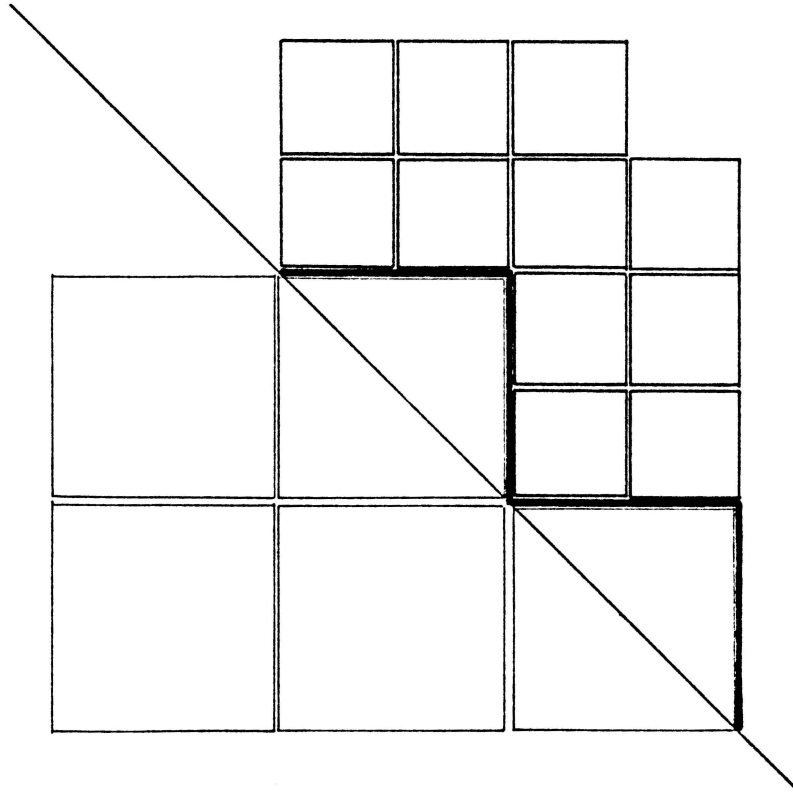
The quadrant is open to infinite operations  
to derive an order of spatial scale.



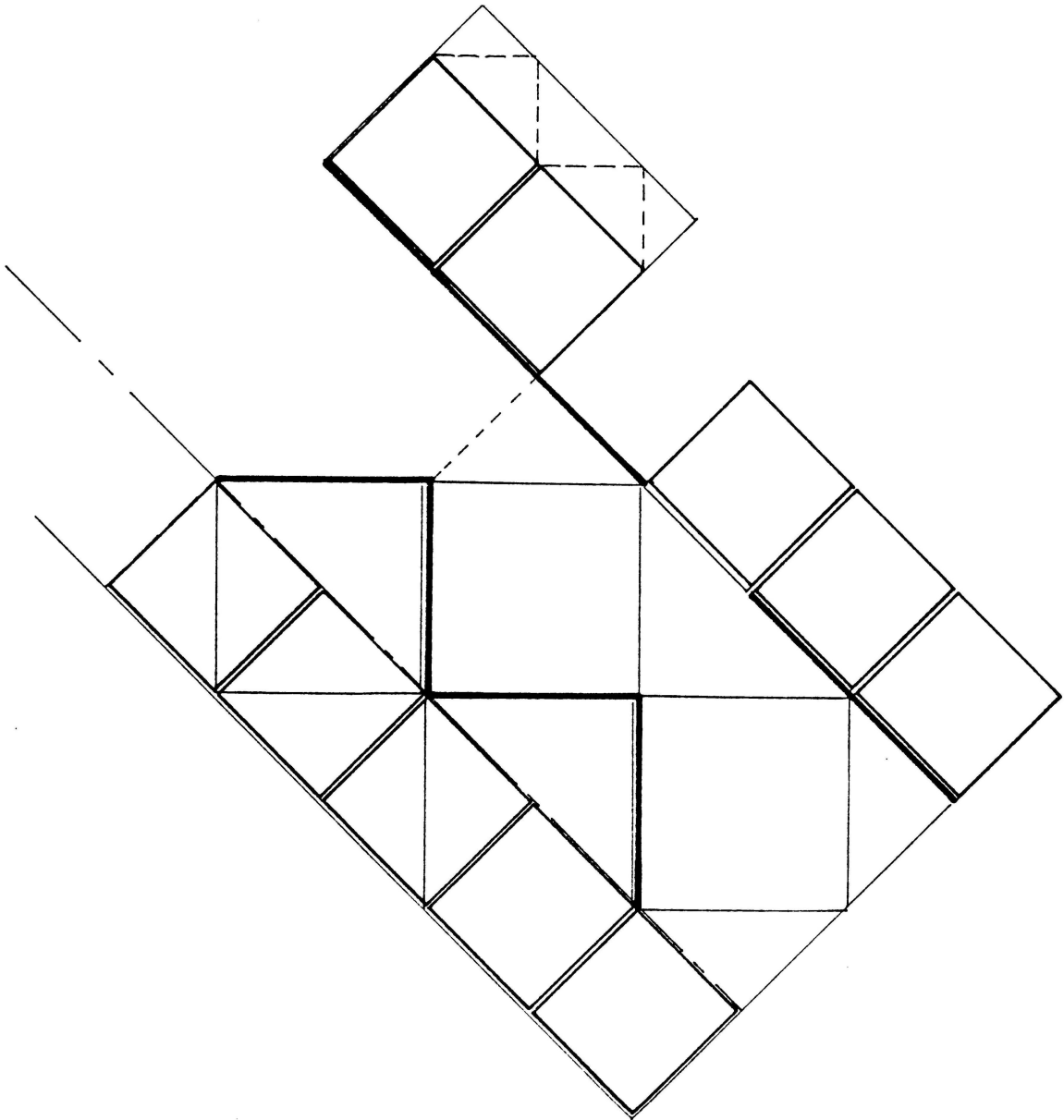
The house will be located at high elevation on a gentle hillside surrounded by a panoramic view of ridges and valleys. One objective in the design was to permit vision from the center of the house along implied axes, then using a diagonal operation as a generator, expose the house to the site.



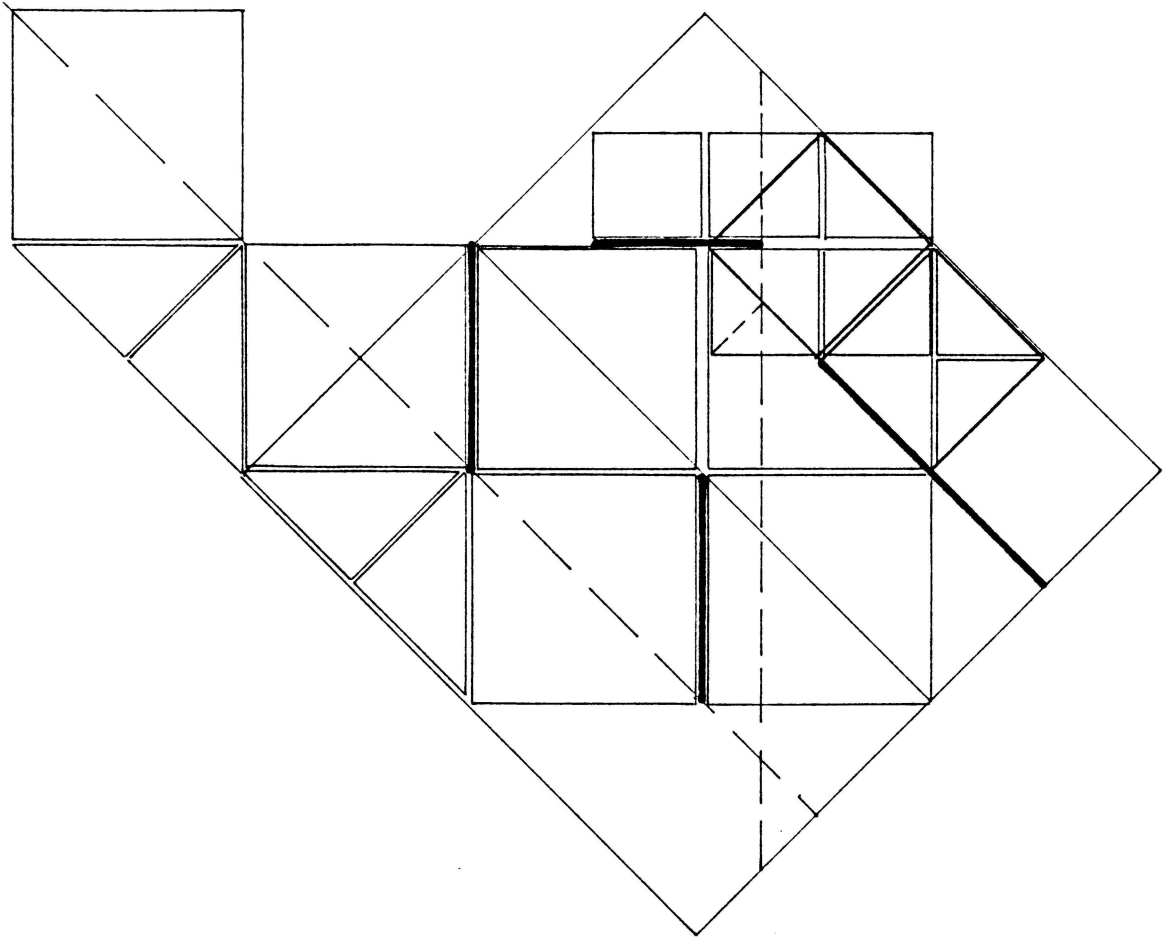
The diagonal allowed the investigation of movement out from the set grid pattern introducing a third spatial condition and a second grid. This perpendicular out from the diagonal introduces the possibility of three sides to the house instead of four, reinforced by the vehicular approach.



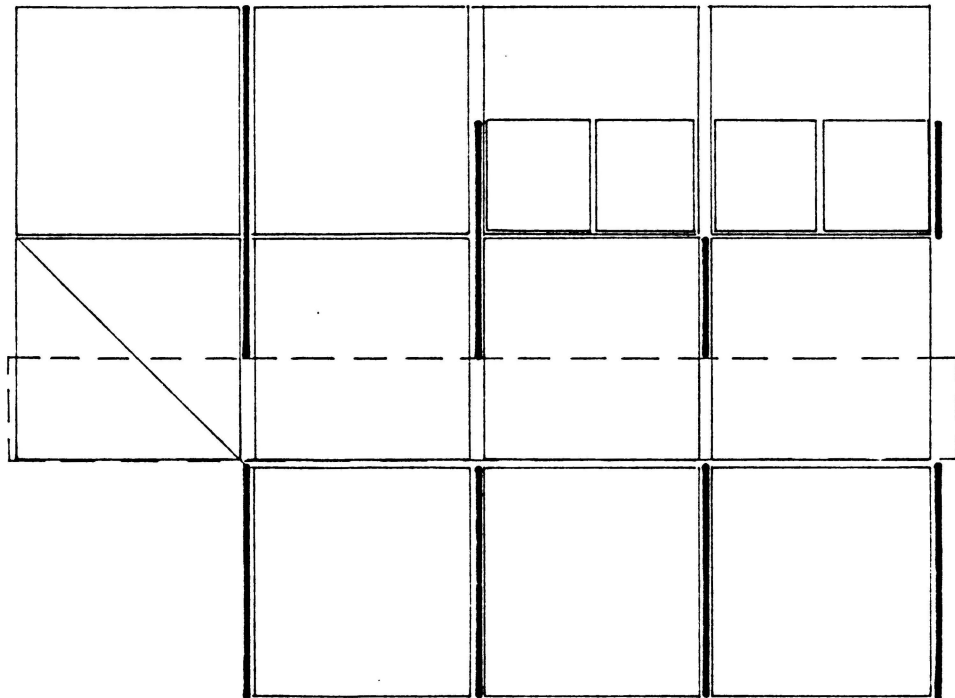
Another alternative was to organize the spaces in correlation with the line of direction of the diagonal. With this constraint, the house started to address the possibilities of zonal separation.



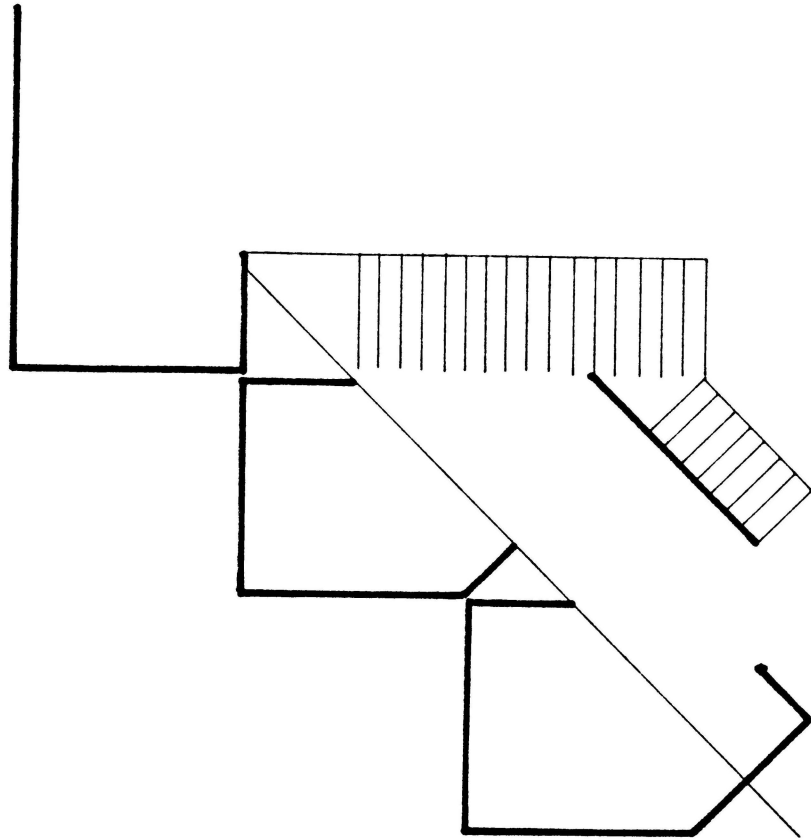
A clear separation was proposed through the definition of the diagonal operation as a widened line that becomes a linear space between specific types of living spaces.



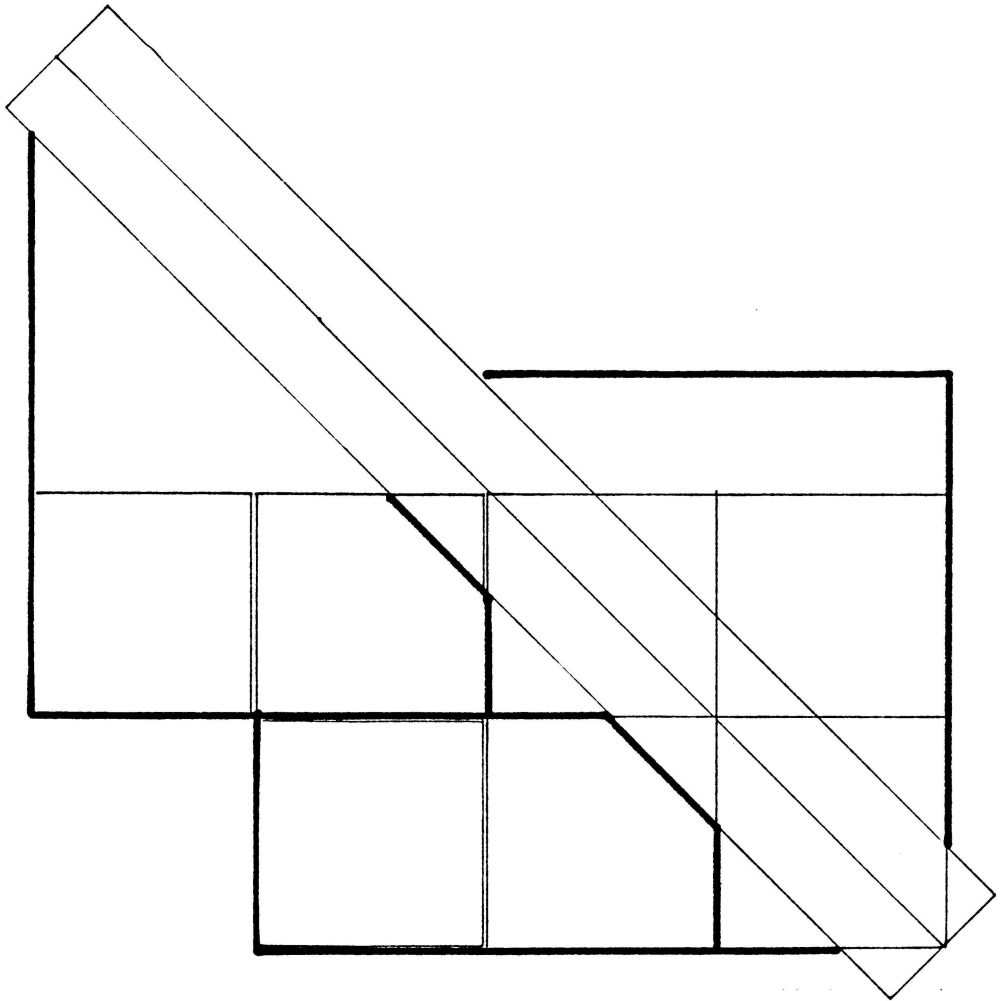
This step in the progression was a compromise between the use of the outside spaces and the continuation of the linear break presented through the diagonal. Throughout the design process, the points of conflict between the clients' needs and the development of the conceptual idea must be resolved in searching out the opportunities afforded by an operation.



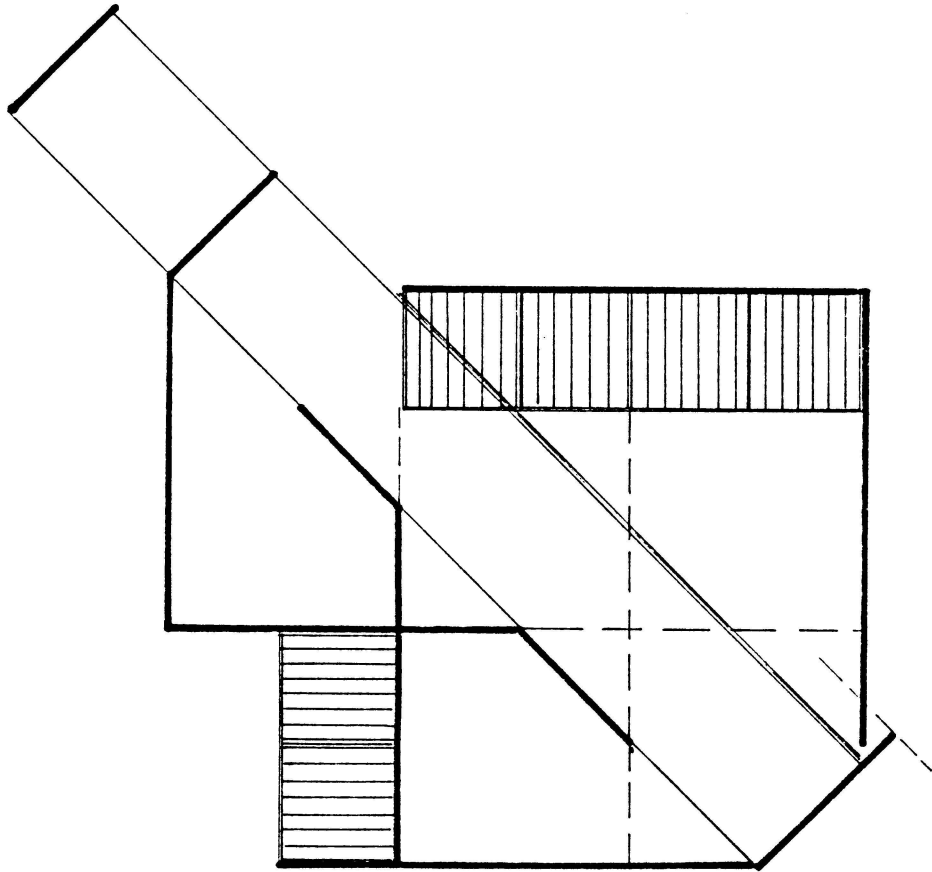
The quadrant configuration implied throughout the exploration of the house a structural pattern in the juxtaposition of the spaces. This structure reinforced the organization of the spaces along the axes of the quadrant channelling movement along a linear path of circulation. In its relationship to the site, this configuration projects a clear frontality.



The diagonal starts to define a space into which the bordering spaces open. Specific living areas can be established through their relationship to this space.

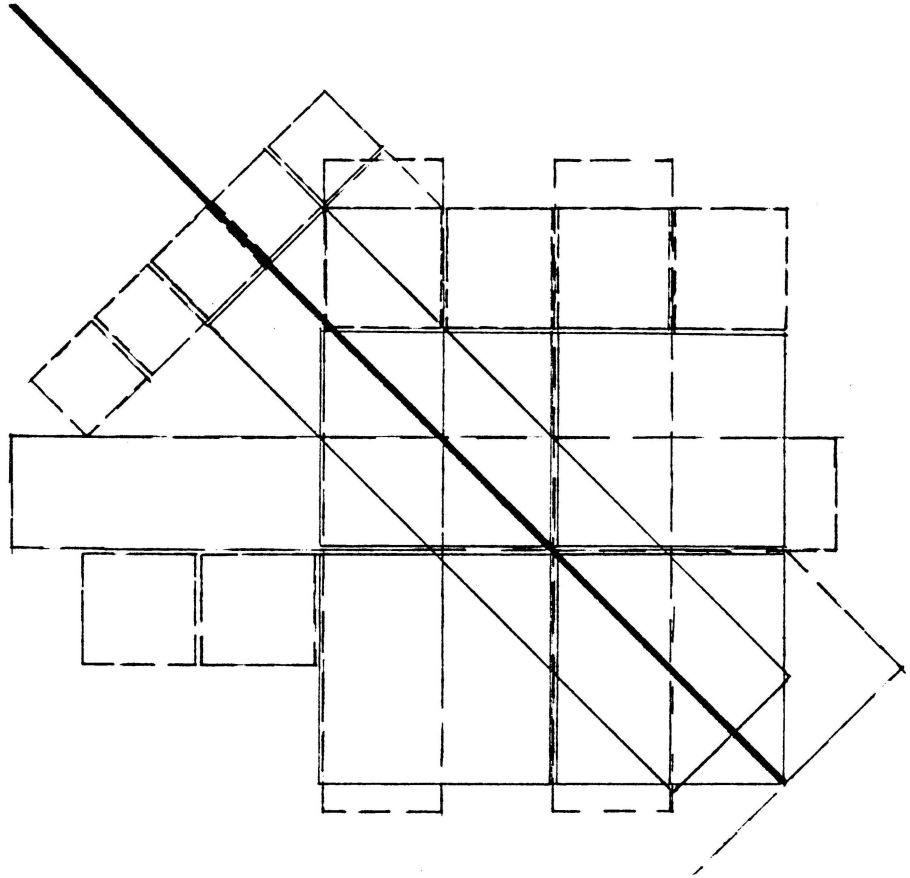


As a spatial linear element, the diagonal can respond more actively to the inner workings of the house. It is perceived as a break within the house filtering its relationship to the outside as the common denominator between the parts.

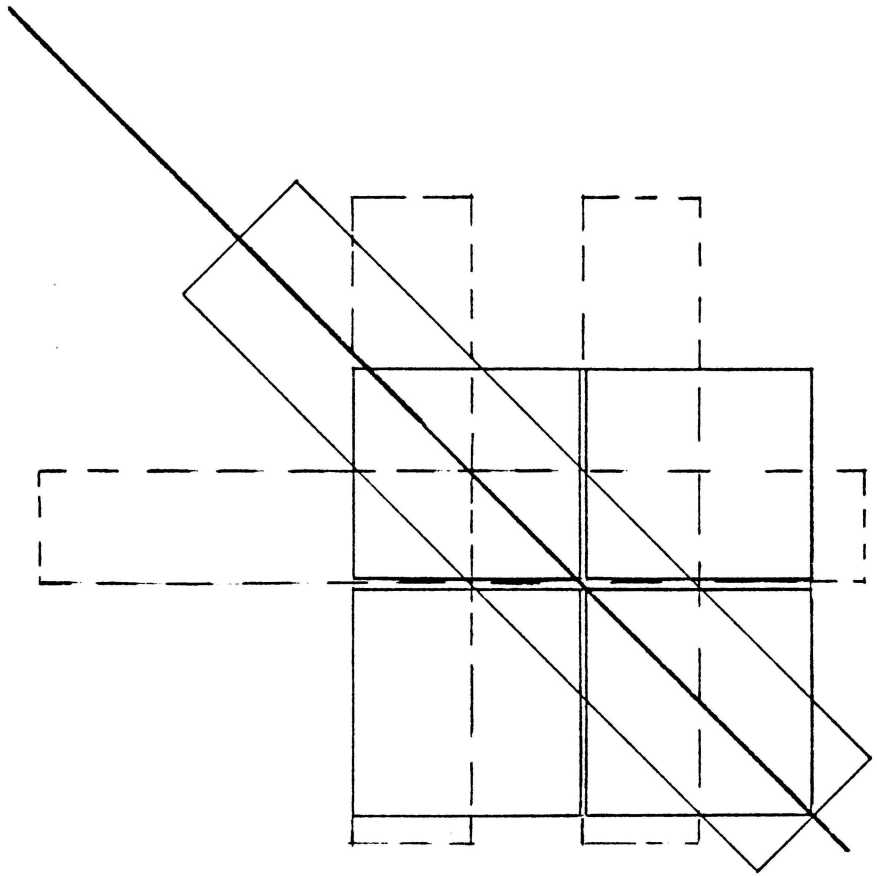


The diagonal....a linear space directed by a wall. The diagonal space clearly divides the house as it is expressed in relationship with the solid wall and at the same time unites the parts delicately.

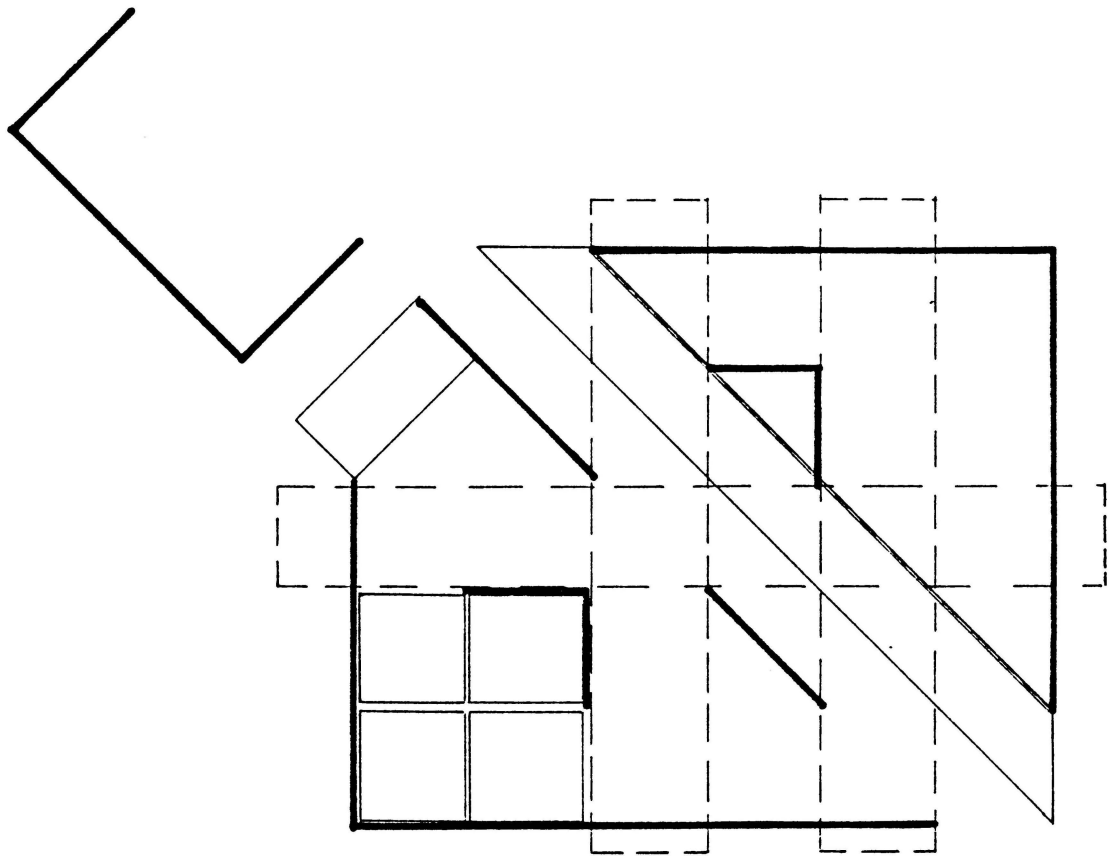
The enclosure surrounds the exterior as a barrier to the elements and continues inside between activities, shielding the more private areas.

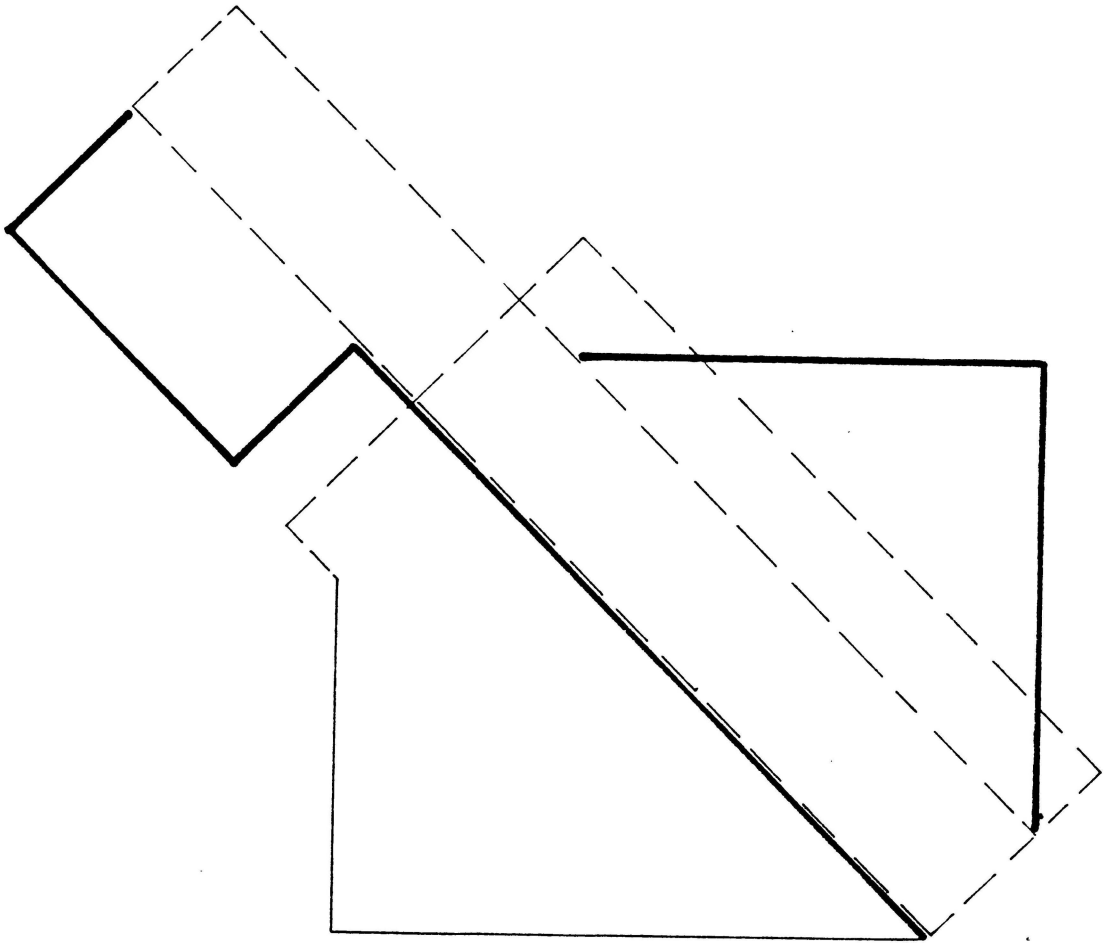


The final house is a woven matrix of the parts of the house as they were explored through each development. In a sense the house is a result of a series of transparent overlays organized around the feeling of an idea and its response to a lifestyle and the conditions inherent within a site.

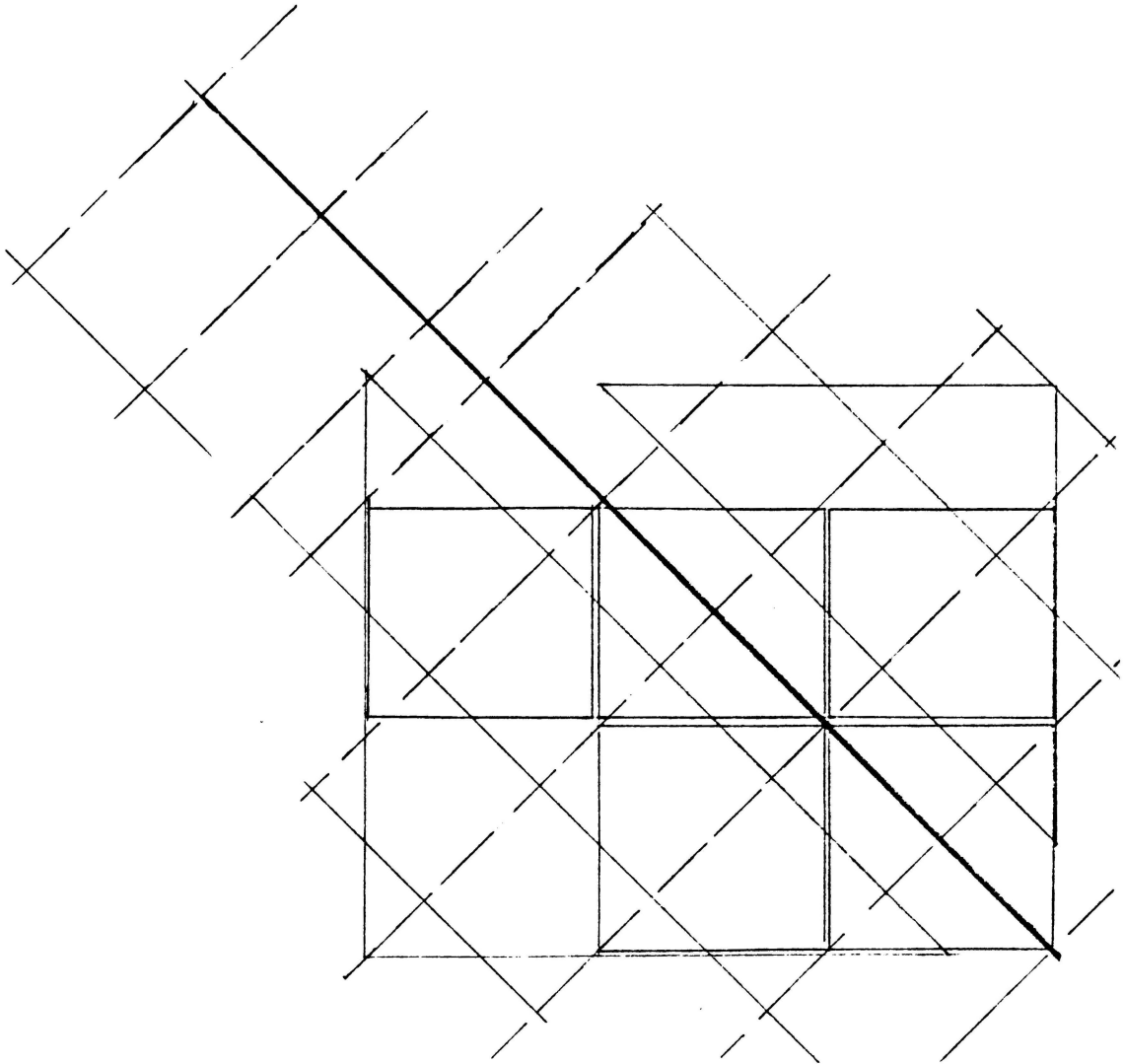


Specific parts of the weave are revealed as the point of perception changes. The house has the ability to hide itself and provide the element of surprise.





Two types of open to closed systems work in the structure of the house. One system flows from the exterior wall to the openness of the interior diagonal space. The other flows from the interior wall to the openness of the exterior. The public, more active areas flow into the diagonal as if it were a great hall. The more private areas have access to the interior through the wall but flow out to the exterior view.



The structure is organized by the diagonal. The spatial increments within the diagonal frame establish a grid of 14' - 3" which intersects with the 10' - 0" grid of the quadrant. To achieve the clear spans within the house, the structure relies on a point load system. The interior walls pick up

the diagonal joists wherever the spatial situation allows.

The diagonal is emphasized through a curved clearstory-skylight that essentially shelters the breach between the two parts of the house. The skylight leaves the second story ceiling from a cantilevered section of the roof structure and rests on the interior enclosure wall.

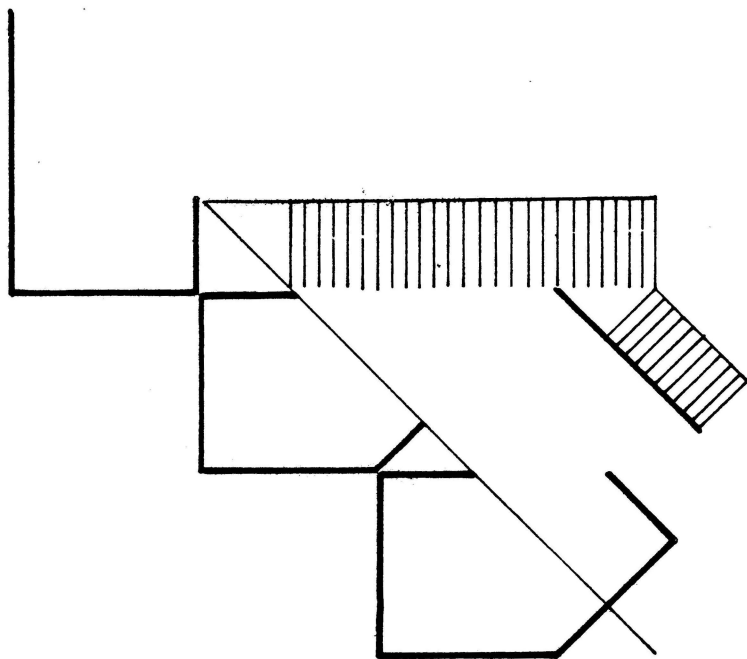
## CONCLUSION

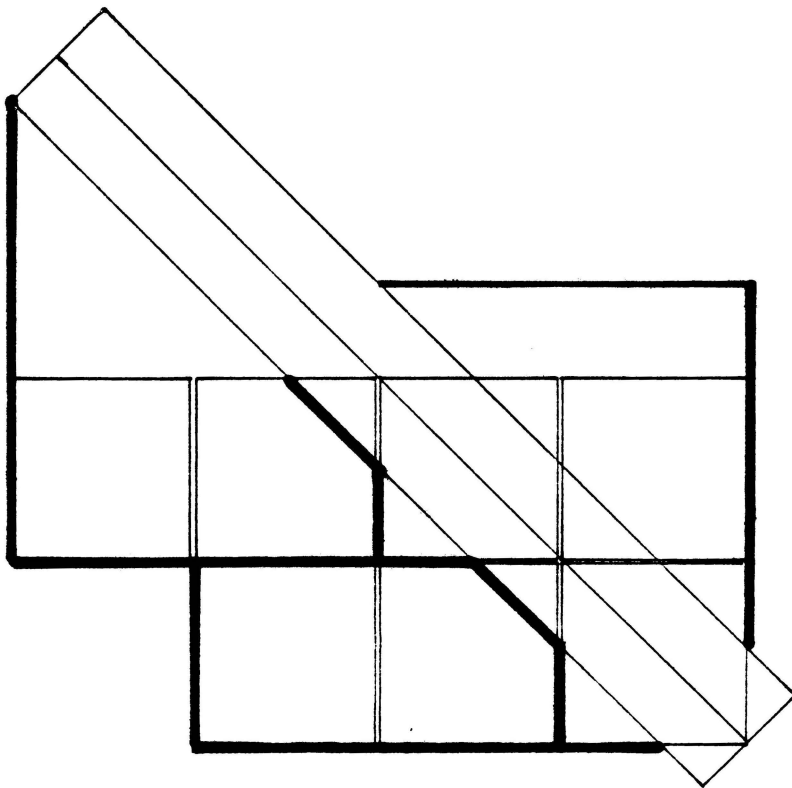
This house as a design solution is only the first application of the making of a house. It is not to be seen as a final building on the hillside but represents an understanding of the intent of an idea. One viable solution that establishes a base for further distinction of areas in the house such as the kitchen, bathrooms, and the details that make the house and carry through the intent with touching and feeling

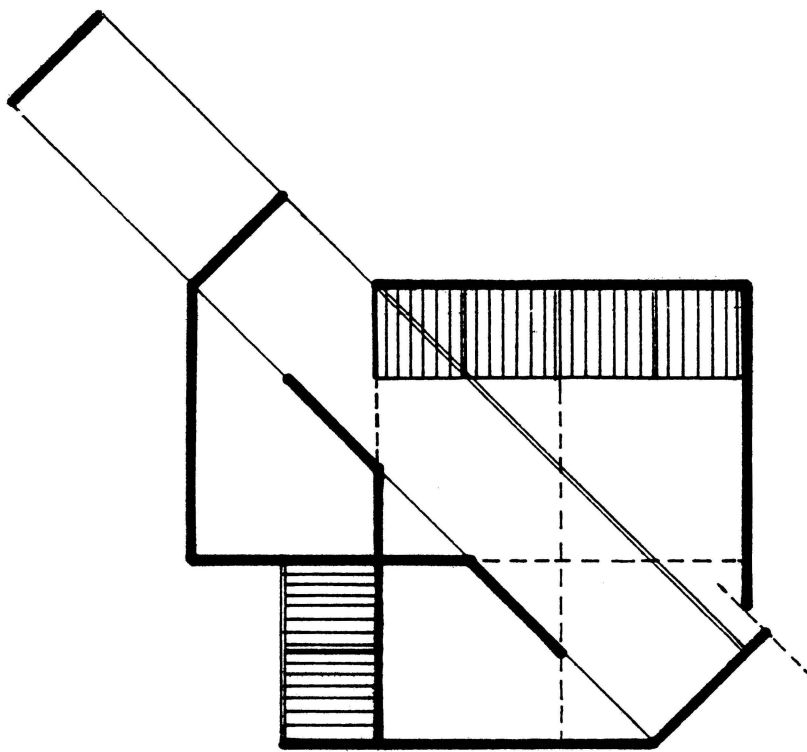
This progression stopped here, as the idea could be seen clearly. The basic framework of the house and its relationship with the site is finally understood.

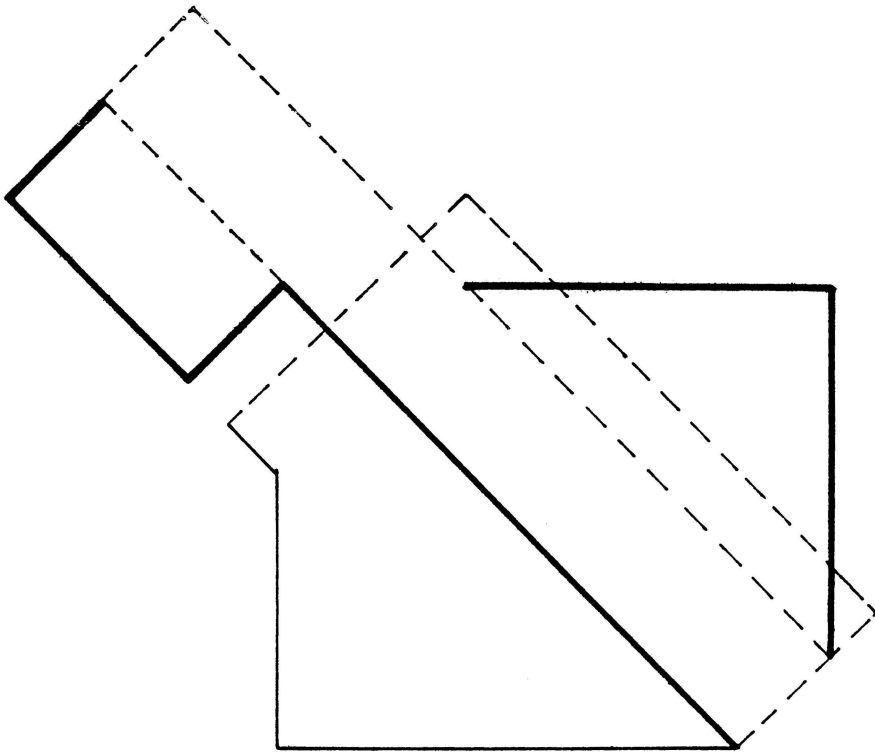
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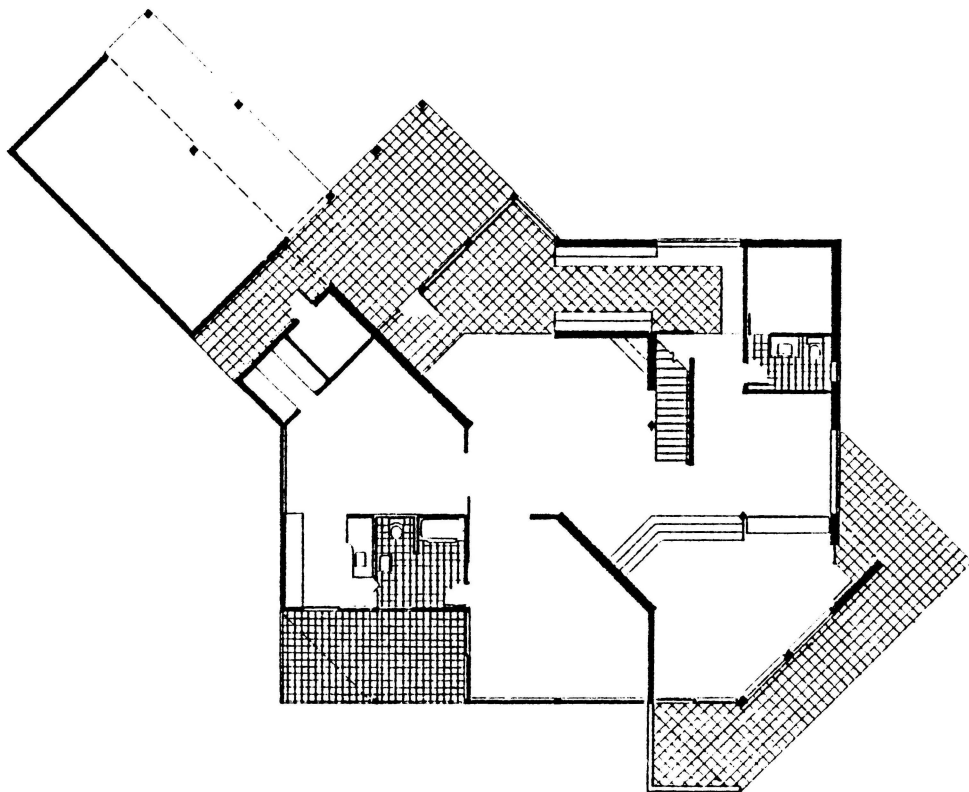
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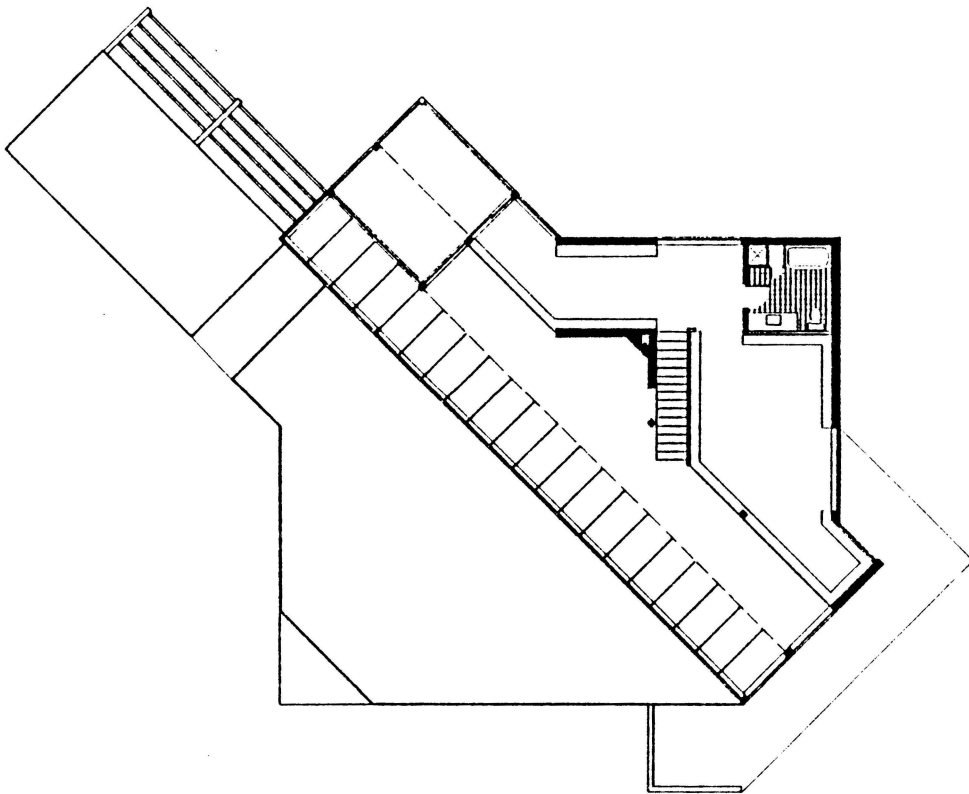




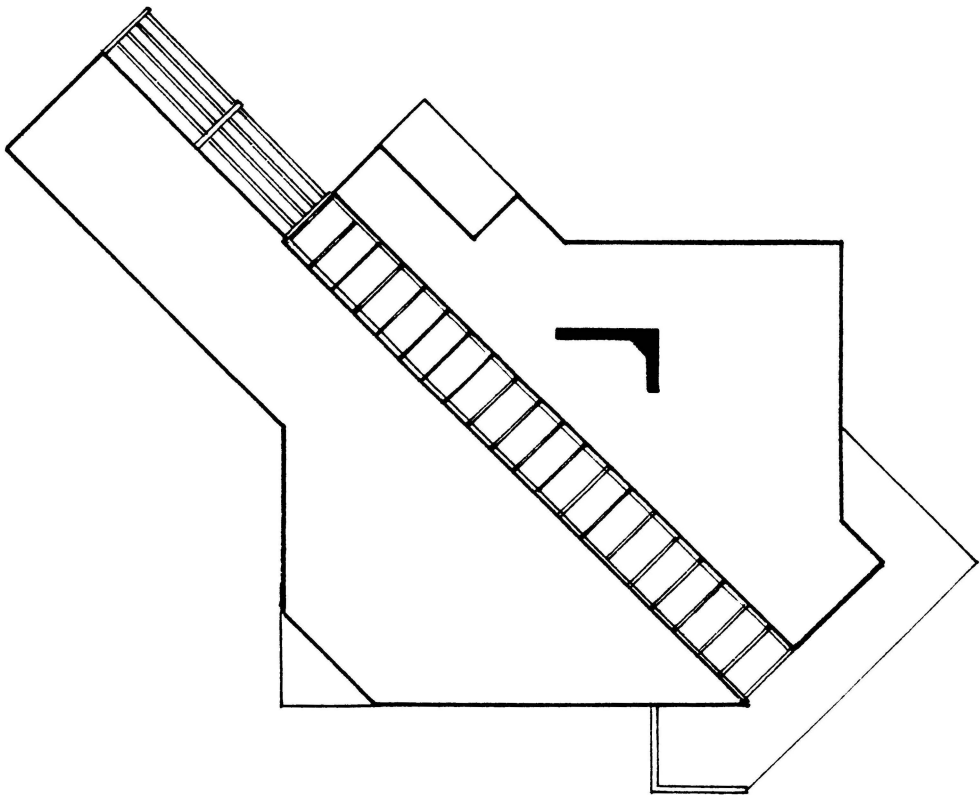


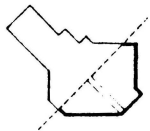
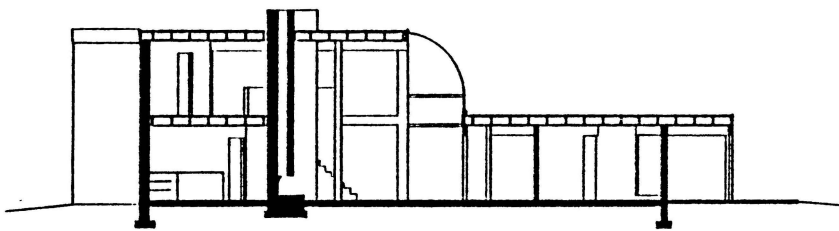
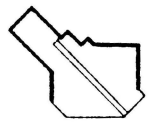
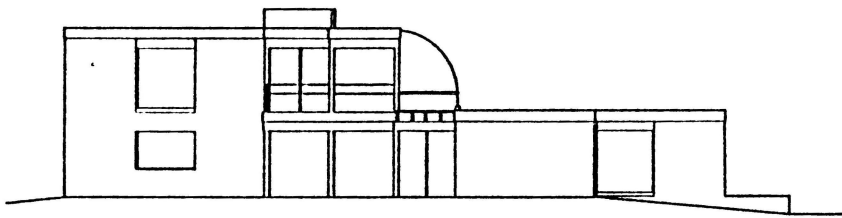


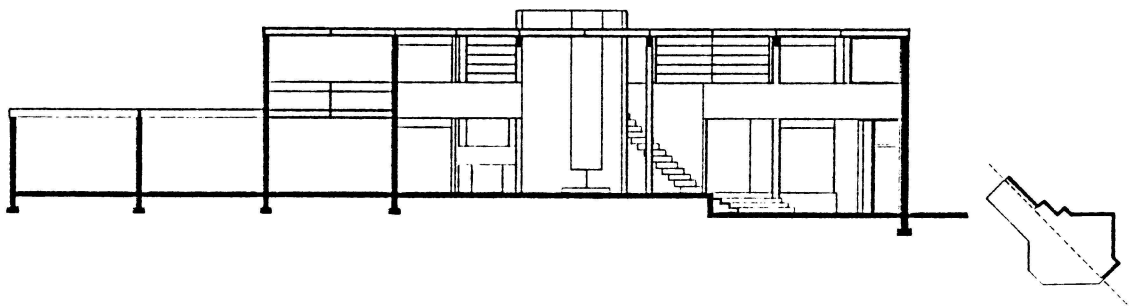
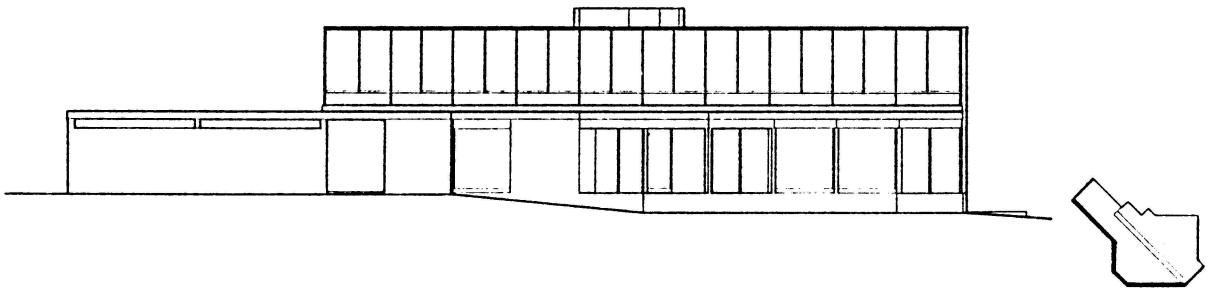
LEVEL 1

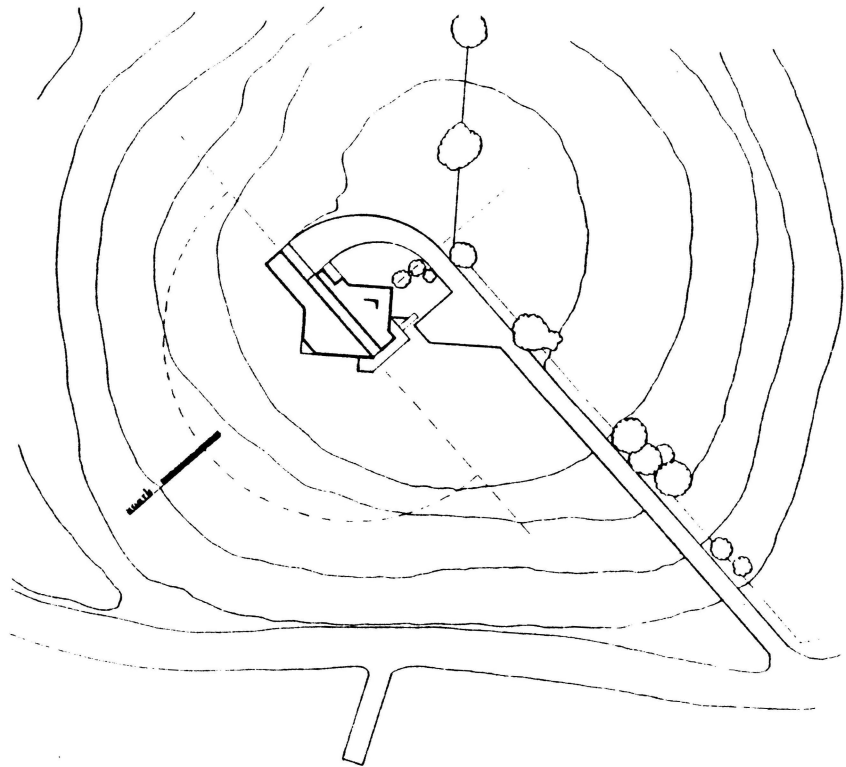


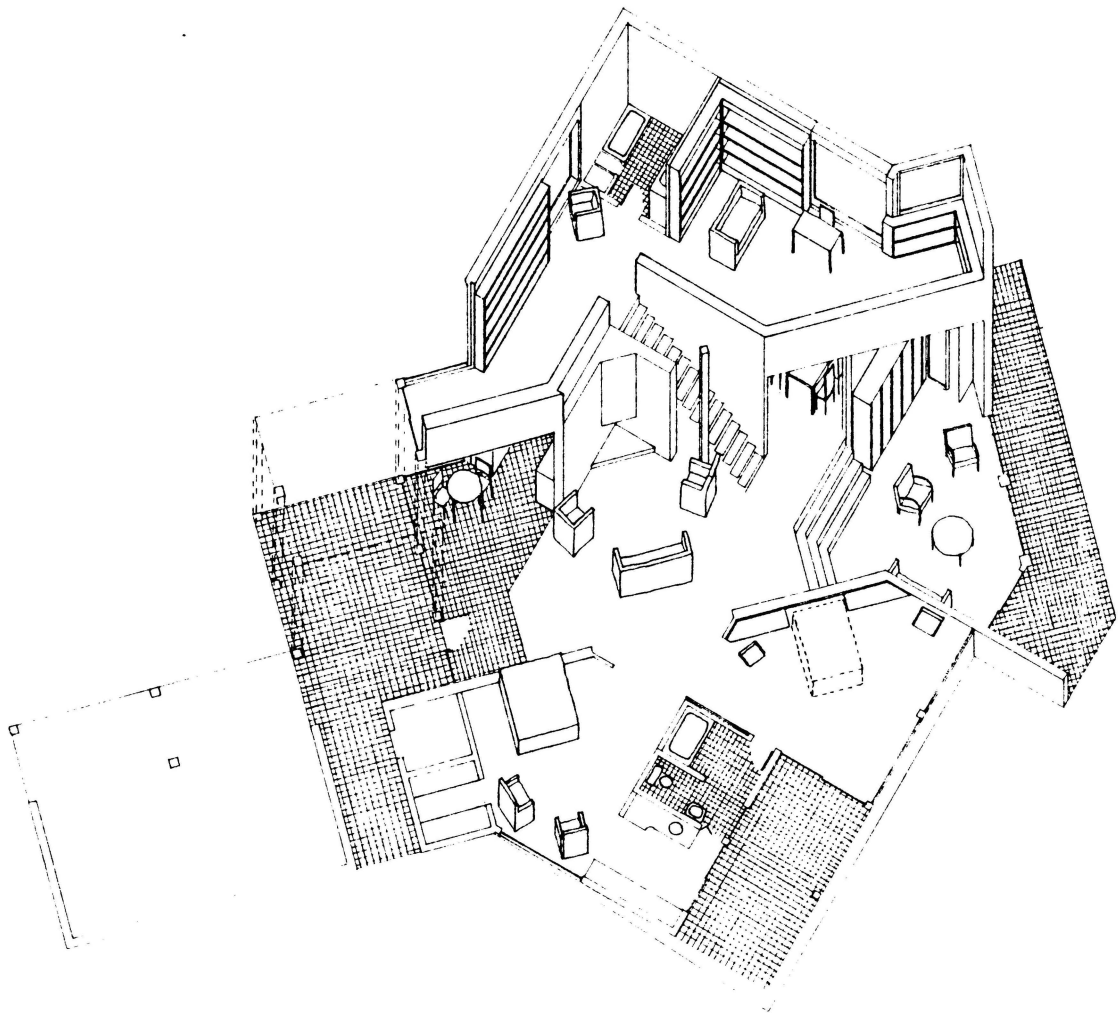
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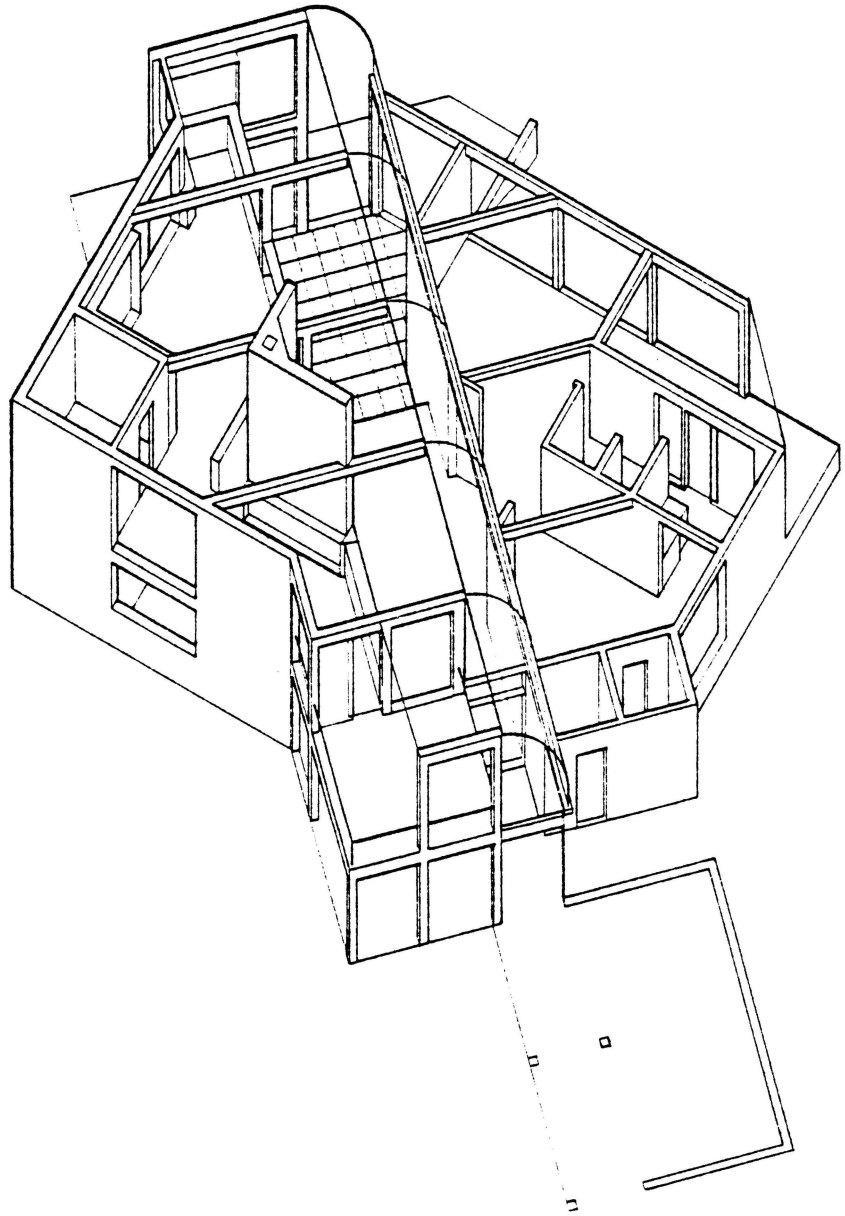












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(ABSTRACT)

This work is presented as the first realization of the making of a house, a conceptual development of an idea. The idea not being the result of an exploration of form or solely responding to a behavioral pattern but the combination and compromise of both.