

The Making of a Small House

by

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Master of Architecture

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Acknowledgements

I thank God for all the "little" miracles of life.

I would like to acknowledge my committee, whose personal commitment as educators allowed me to "trust in the whispers."

To my family, for their thoughts and words of wisdom.

This book is dedicated to your love, patience, and support has helped to make this work a reality.

Architecture is an expression of existence; it is the realization of a sense of place, a manifestation of a way-of-being in the world through built elements.

"I want to see things. I want to see, therefore I draw. I can see an image only if I draw it."
- Carlo Scarpa

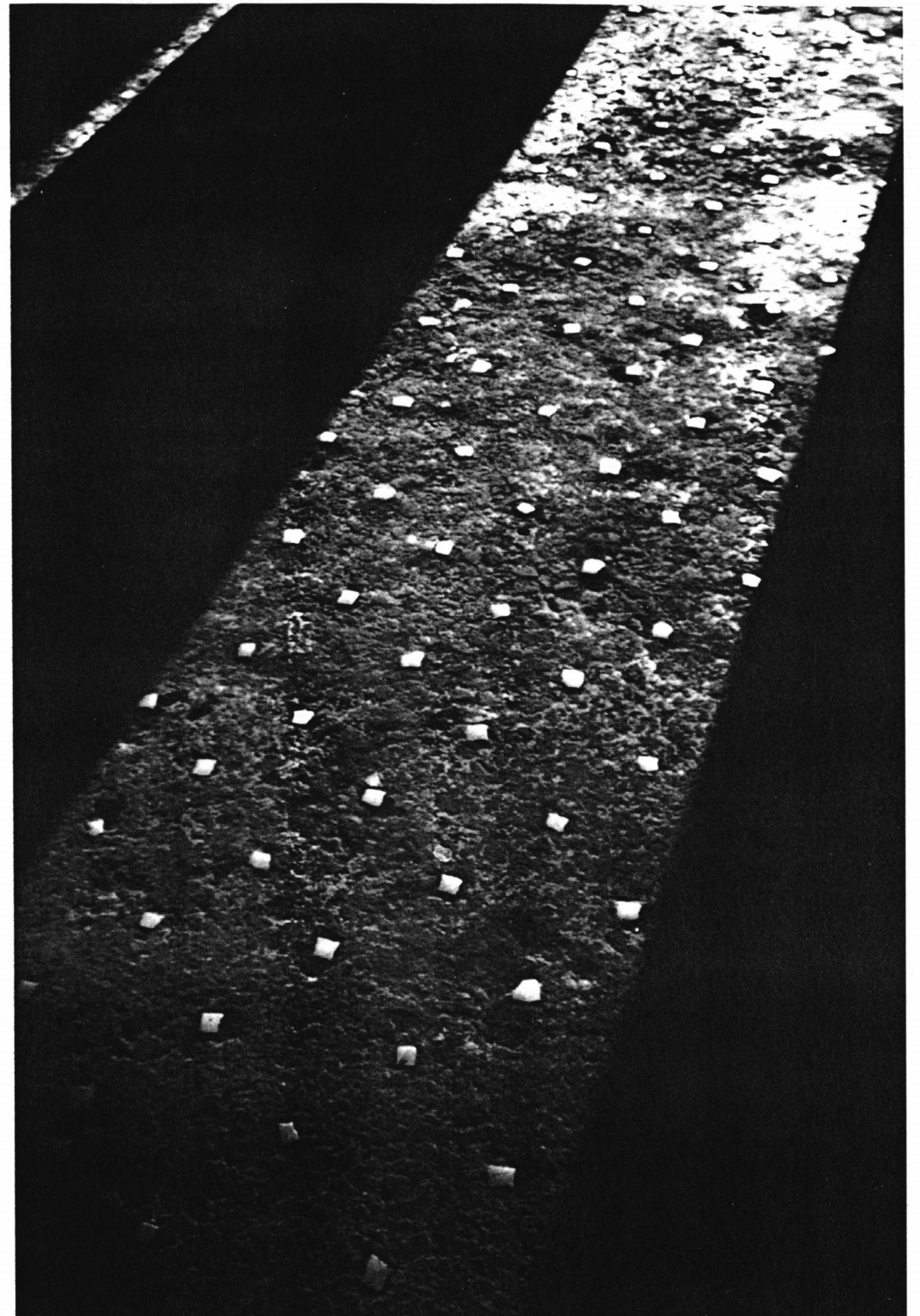
Carlo Scarpa expressed that he wanted to see, therefore he would draw, and draw incessantly. In that spirit, this thesis has been a search for what is authentic in my own work, based in a discovery through making.

The way of making indicates a way of seeing a world; the drawings and the way of drawing directly impact my thoughts. The drawings tend to be fragmentary, indicative of an architecture of parts.

The focus is on "the way to be" of the individual, and the way that individual is to the whole.

These relationships inform a sense of order and direct the parts towards a greater whole.

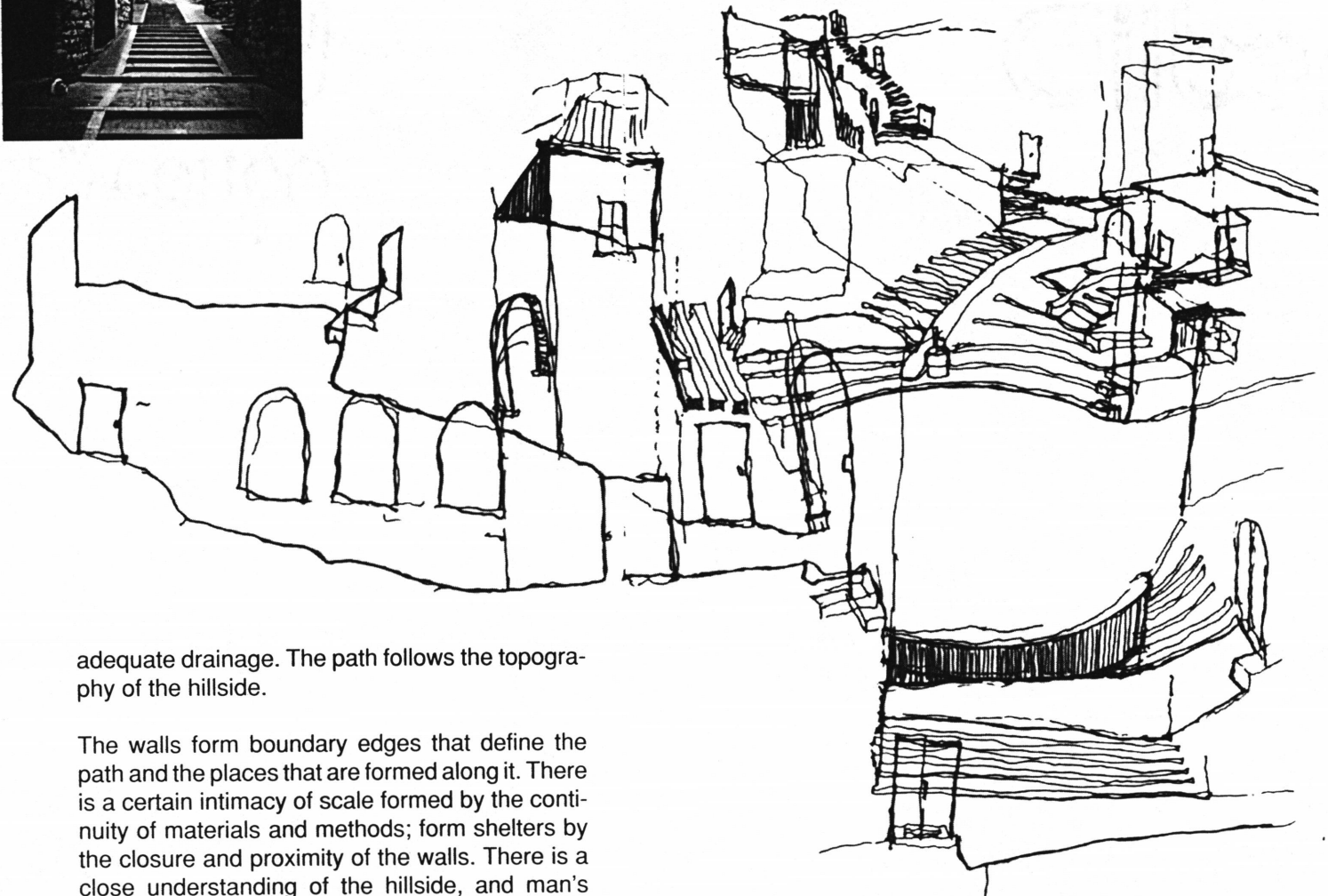
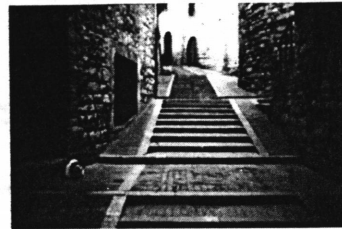
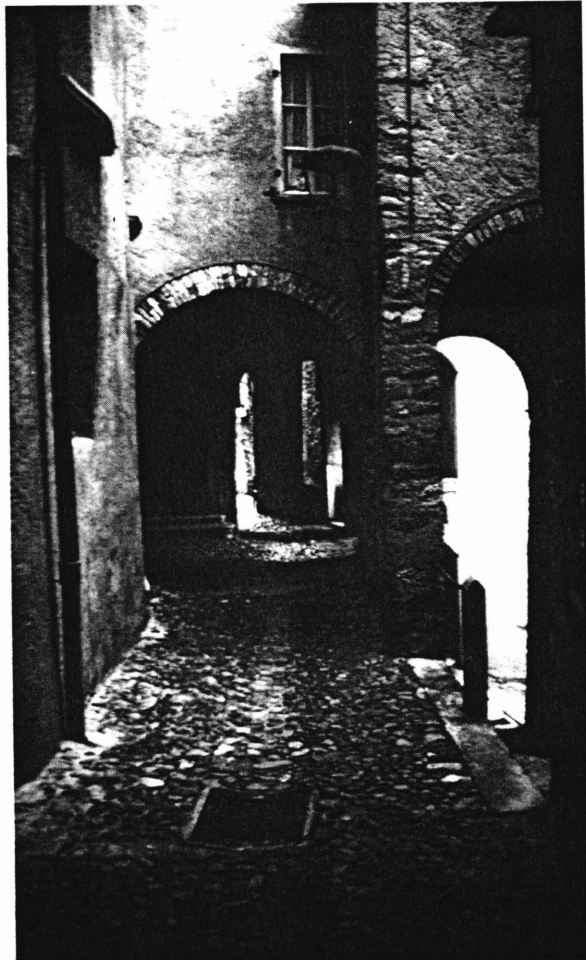
Those issues are explored in the making of a small house; it is one step toward a greater understanding.



Different manifestations of order speak to me about different manifestations of life. Ways of being.

By examining various conditions, ways of doing things, and thoughts that appear different, we can learn a lot from architecture.

There is a strong sense of place in this hilltown near Lugano. We can speak of this place being ordered by the path. The elements along the path are structured by the relationships that occur between them. These relationships are multifaceted. They are as much an expression of a common thought about life as they are a necessity for



adequate drainage. The path follows the topography of the hillside.

The walls form boundary edges that define the path and the places that are formed along it. There is a certain intimacy of scale formed by the continuity of materials and methods; form shelters by the closure and proximity of the walls. There is a close understanding of the hillside, and man's relation to it. The village is of the hillside.

There are agreements of meeting and living as a collective, yet there are places for each individual. Windows are carved out of the mass, opposite to doorways, to engage the path by light. Thresholds never occur directly opposite of one another and are raised above by one or two steps. The path coincides with a common gathering place, here a well. It acknowledges the act of fetching water and the spiritual need of meeting.

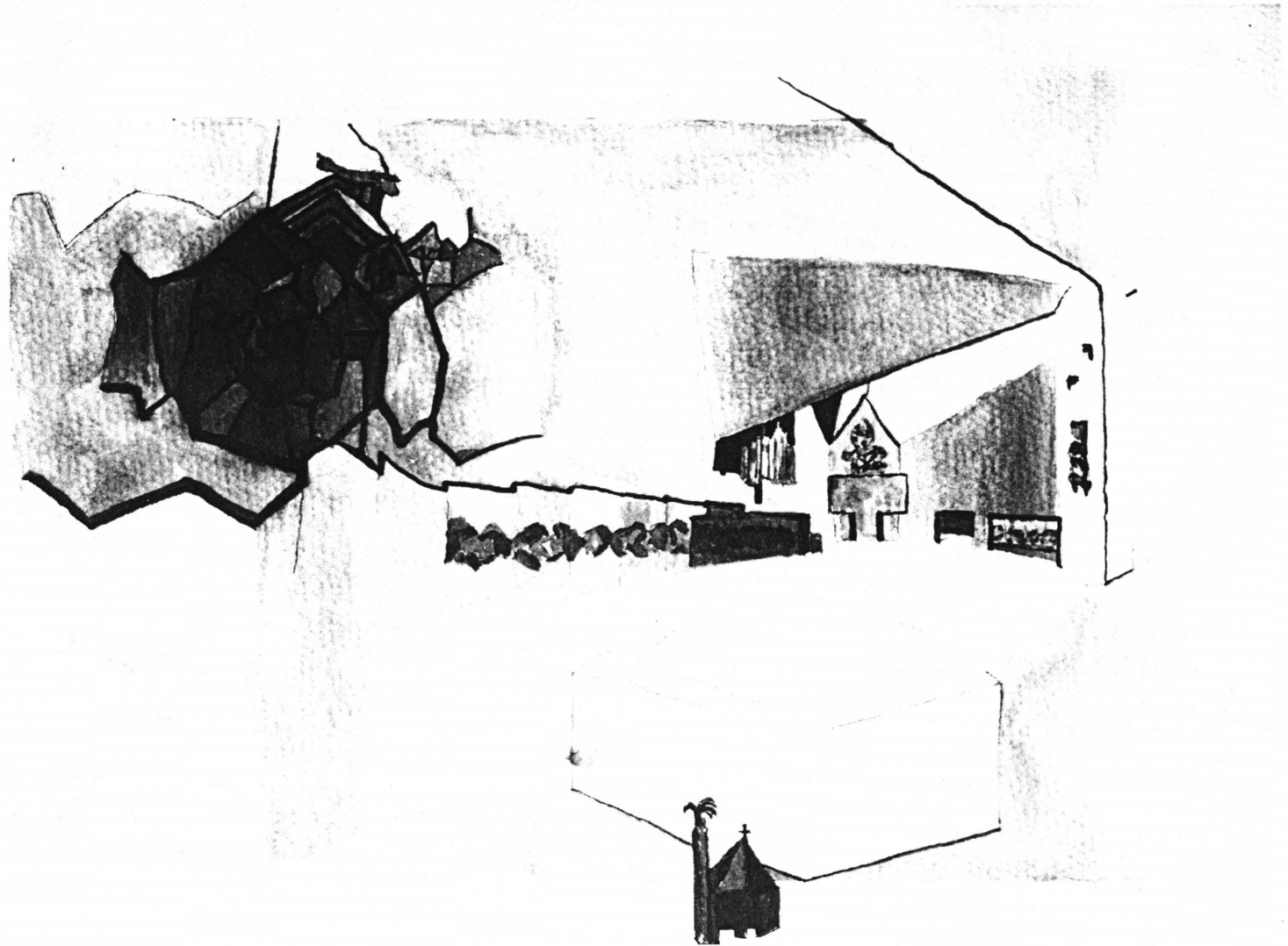
Light and shadow, threshold and path establish a rhythm (cadence) that acknowledges this human need for an outdoor room for living. Seemingly inconsequential acts become major initiators of a way of ordering.

The Church is a physical manifestation of shared beliefs; the journey from birth to death to rebirth through salvation in built form.

A church in Palermo and a church by Gottfried Bohm in Stuttgart use archetypal figures, such as a tower and a great hall to order one's experience and speak to us on a shared level. The tower rises from the earth to the sky, defying the laws of nature. It demarcates the threshold of the path in which a transformation occurs. We enter a place of shared agreement, the meanings of which are gathered in the great hall.

Palermo's church embodies a powerful presence. It rests firmly on the earth upon a massive base that elevates the church nearly fifteen feet above the street level. The base clearly establishes its presence in the life of the street, by forming the backdrop to a great outdoor room; the base, being of the church, is part of the community. The base creates a plane on which the sanctity of the church can exist above the profane below, establishing it as an oasis; a reinterpretation of place. The tower clearly marks the path by which the faithful must journey. There is a separation of the sacred and the profane and yet the church must rest firmly upon its foundations, a touch of poignancy when one stops to think that the base contains catacombs.

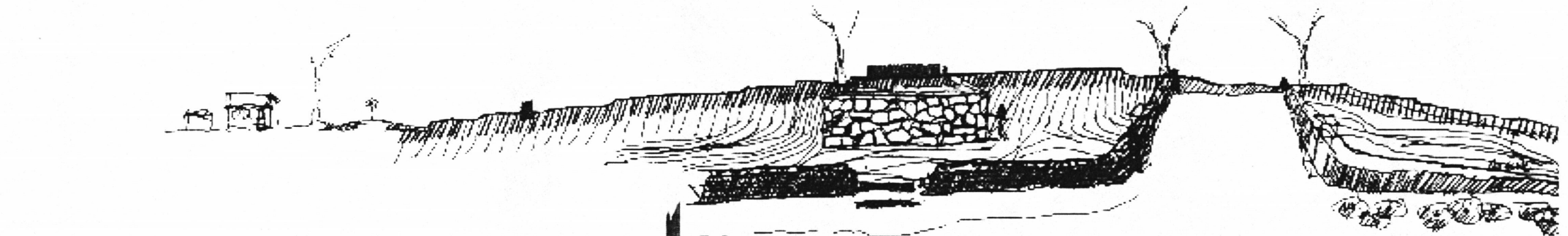
Bohm's church also relies upon the use of path, tower and hall to establish a powerful means of ordering. It consists of parts that are planar; one can feel the structure of the plan in the rosettes of the stained glass windows. The great strength is within the individual pieces and the relationship of one to another giving rise to a greater whole. These parts are manifested as the types - tower, hall, path, which give



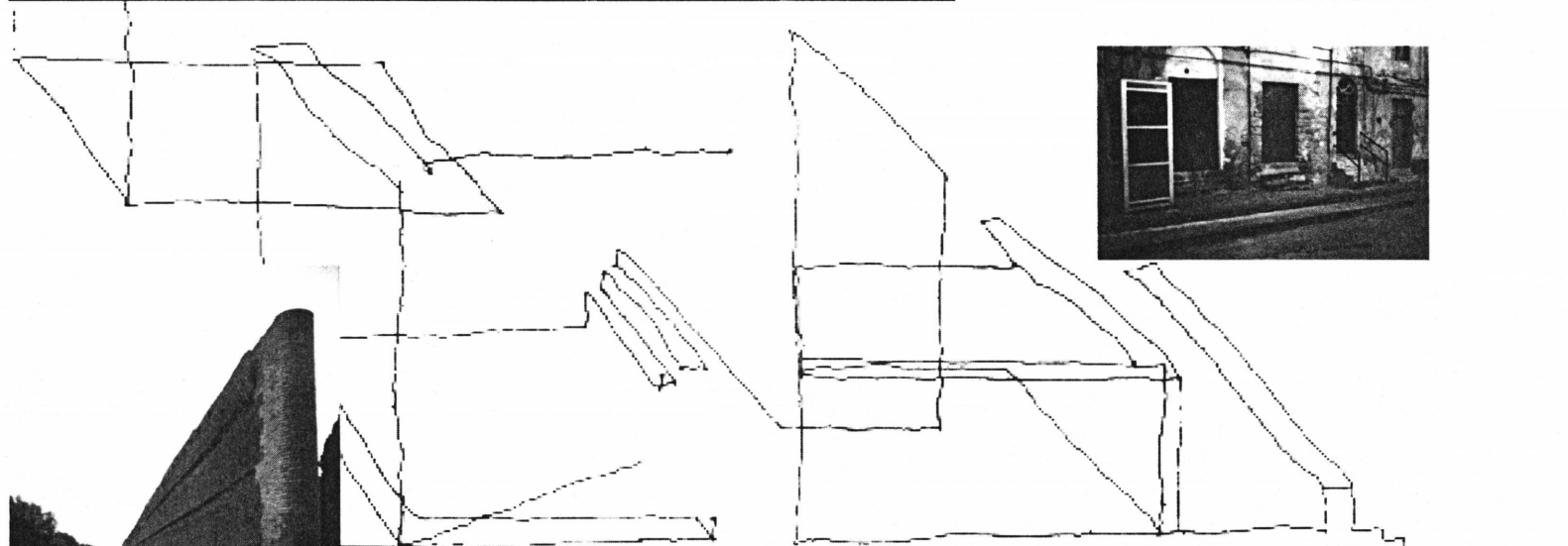
order to the spiritual events that occur along the journey and have significant latent meanings for the members of the church community. They serve to reinforce the understanding of one's relationship to the church, with his fellow man, and with God. In this church the phenomena of the path takes the form of physically leaving the outside world. All events are interrelated: on the first step of the journey we are met by the baptismal font; this is a place to be welcomed by the congregation and shed aside the profanity of the earth (metaphorically one must be baptized to enter God's kingdom); the next step takes us in an ascending and spiraling stair that reorients us in the church (the disconnection with the outside world is complete) and then we cross

by the virgin tower (we prepare ourselves through her love and compassion) to reach the altar - redemption.

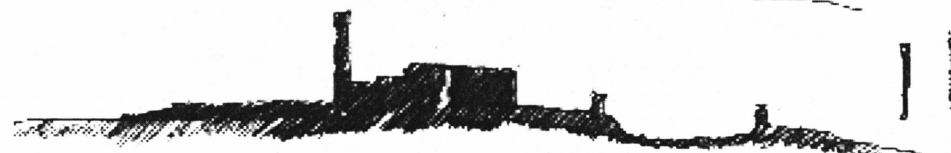
These two churches use order in a conscious way to manifest a vision of life on this earth and of an afterlife removed from it. They represent an institutional agreement of peoples. The archetypal figures order one's experience on a shared subconscious level. While both churches symbolically represent the path to salvation, the perceived experiences we encounter and the relationships of church to society and individual to whole are revealed to us differently by the ordering and articulation of the parts. The events give structure to our experience.



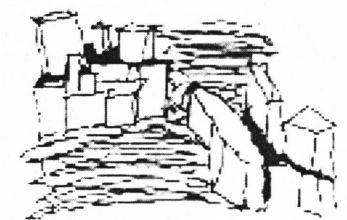
Walls.
Private place.
Objects in a field.
Path is at once
public and private.
Walls create this
barrier to intrusion.
Yet there is a second
penetrating entrance.
One path goes up and
around about the place.
The other must pass
directly through a boundary.
One enters at the foot
of the site and rises.
At the summit you are
reoriented toward the outside.
Height and command.
One is conscious of this act,
Not immediately conscious
of the whole.
One to one.
Person to mass.
The path skirts the periphery.
The larger masses form
boundaries, delineating space.
Hints at what is behind.

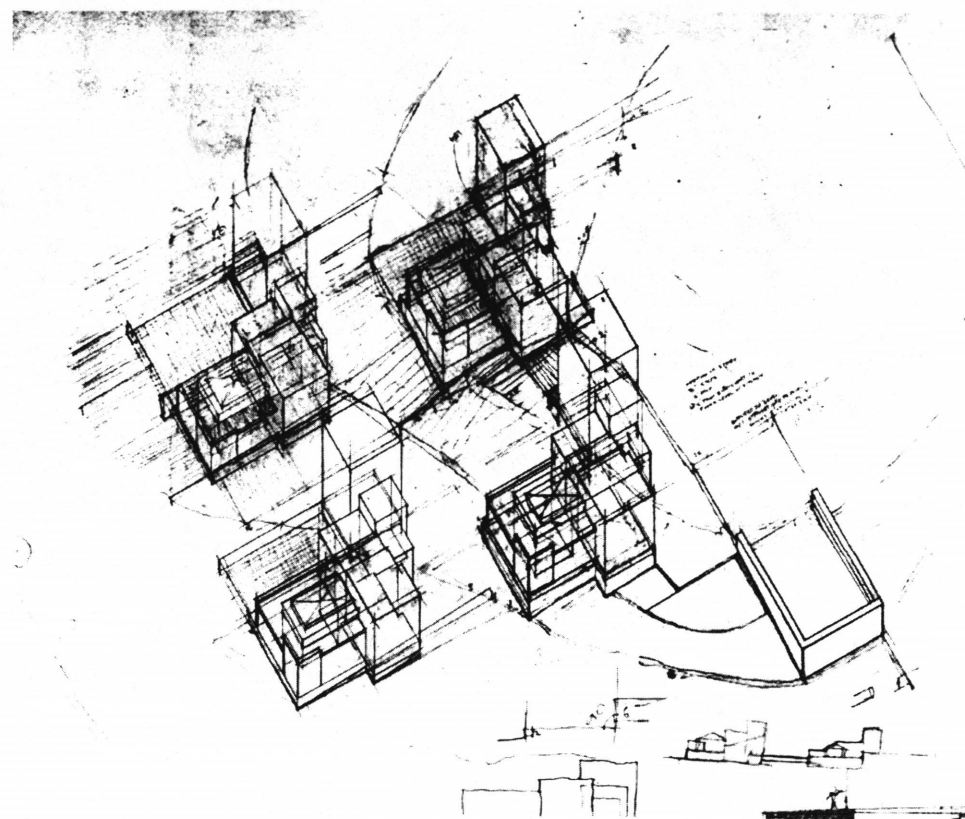
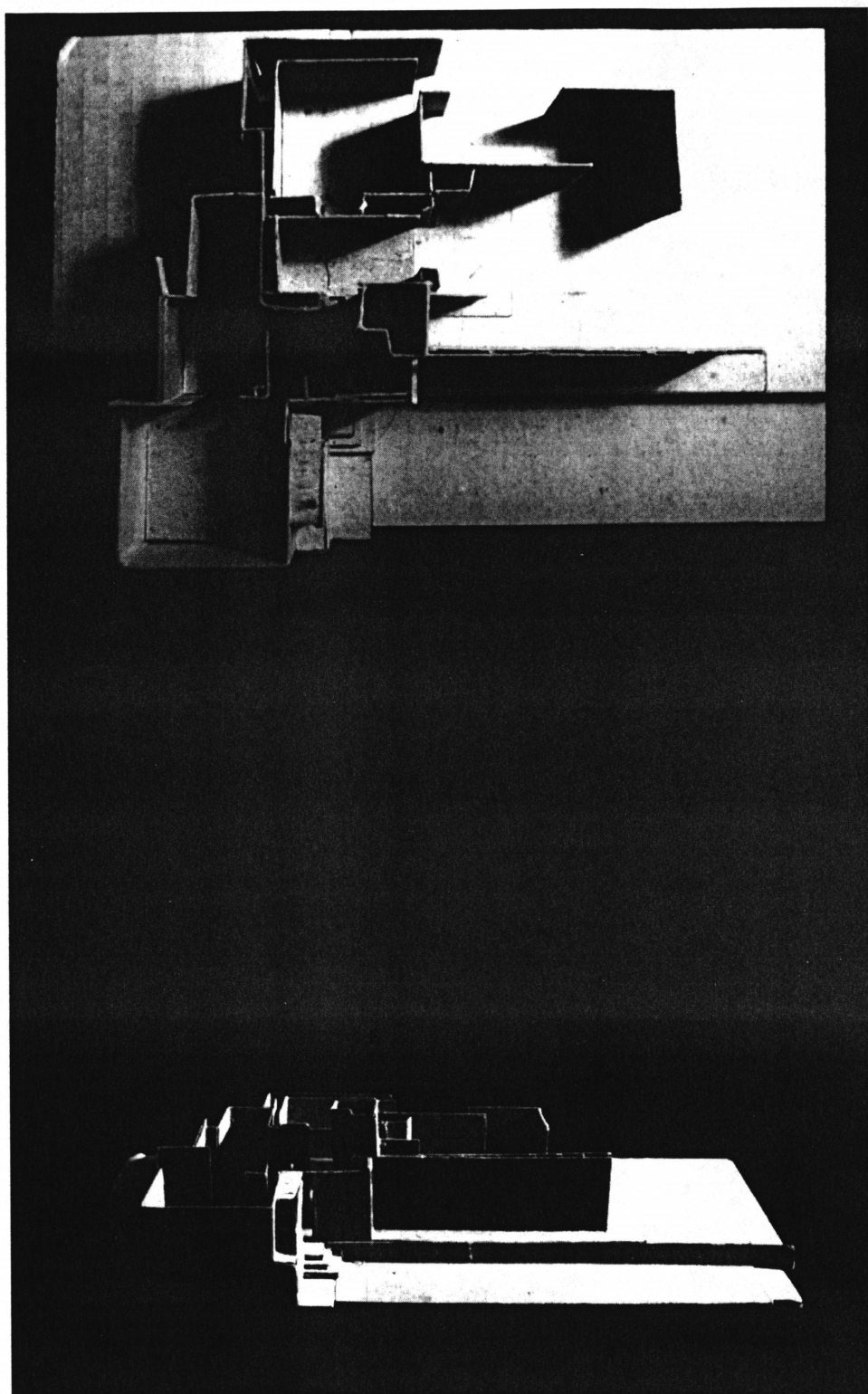


Straight to Terra Firma.
Human scale comes to the
fore at the entrance.
Mass boundary.
Wall of house sets off individual.
Larger scale house
happens behind this.
Hints at small scale human space.
Path and entrance are
part of our collective whole.
There is humanity here.
Recognition.
Path and door important
(relationship of buildings).
To create scale and unify
space in courtyard.

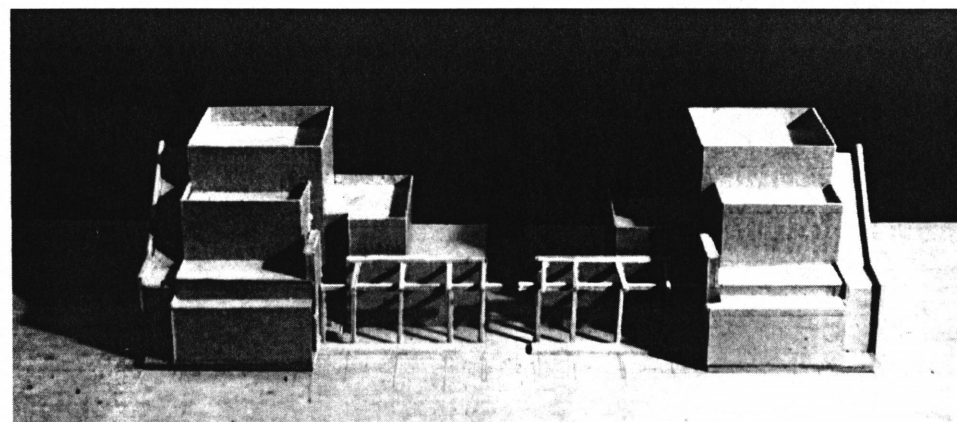


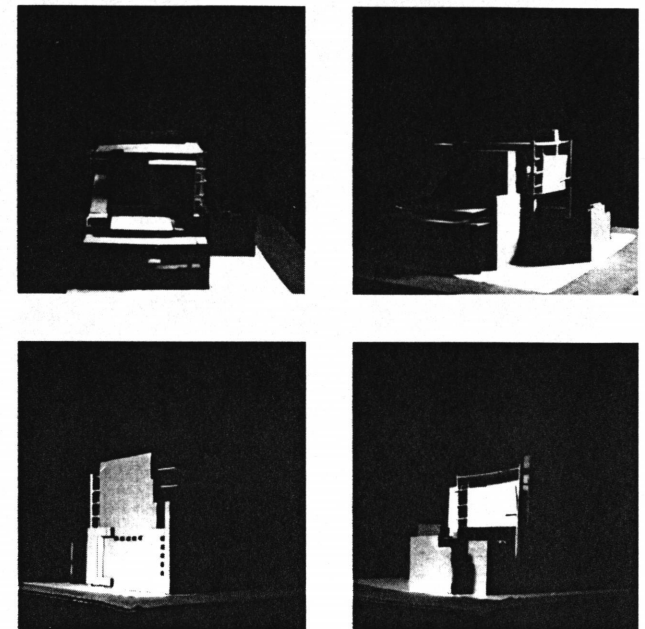
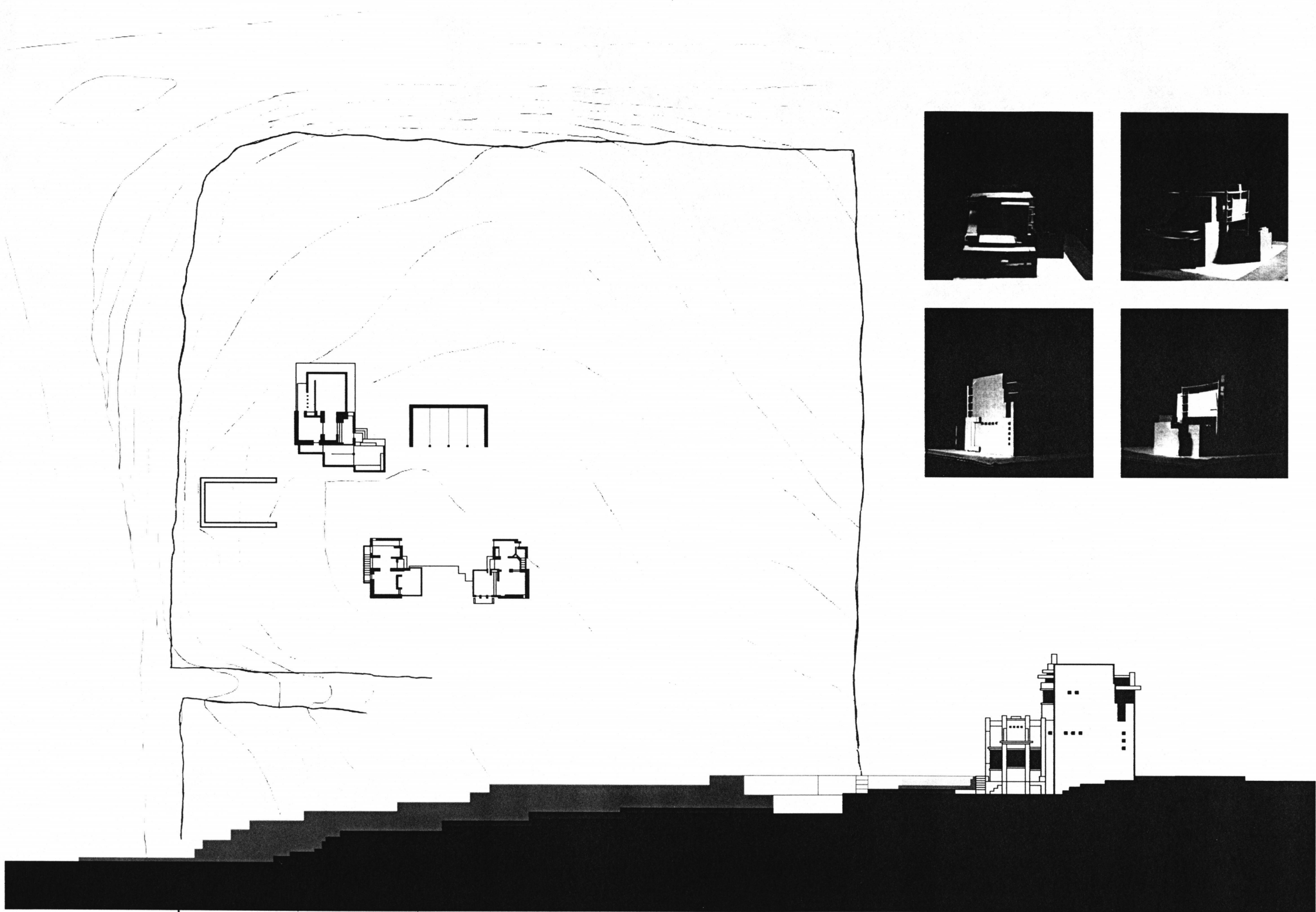
Building line opens south
looking down on road.
On south see into nature
of living house at night.
During day high enough
to command site.
North building line creates
privacy to the inside.





The small house is part of a larger whole that forms a village-type cluster. While the members have distinct characters and appear different (as individuals), the underlying structure makes them part of a definite group.





The houses are made of concrete block and light wood frame construction. All loads are gravity fed, thus reinforcing the integrity of the pieces as place definers. Piers rest

firmly on pediments; walls, solidly on the ground. The elements differentiate the held and the holder. These things are indicative of man's relation to earth and sky.

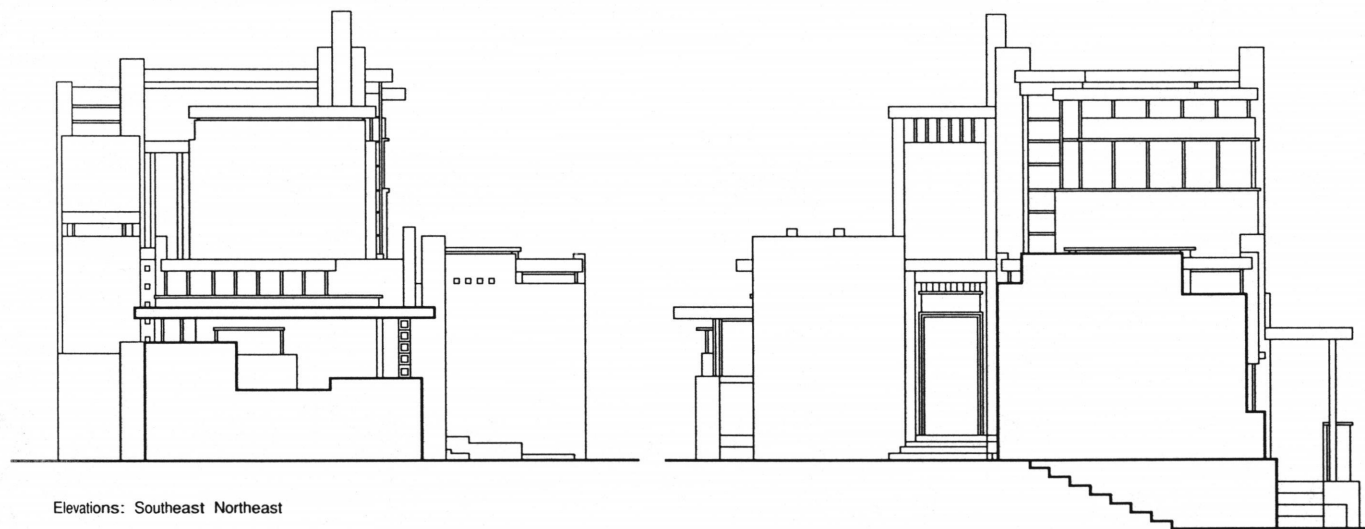
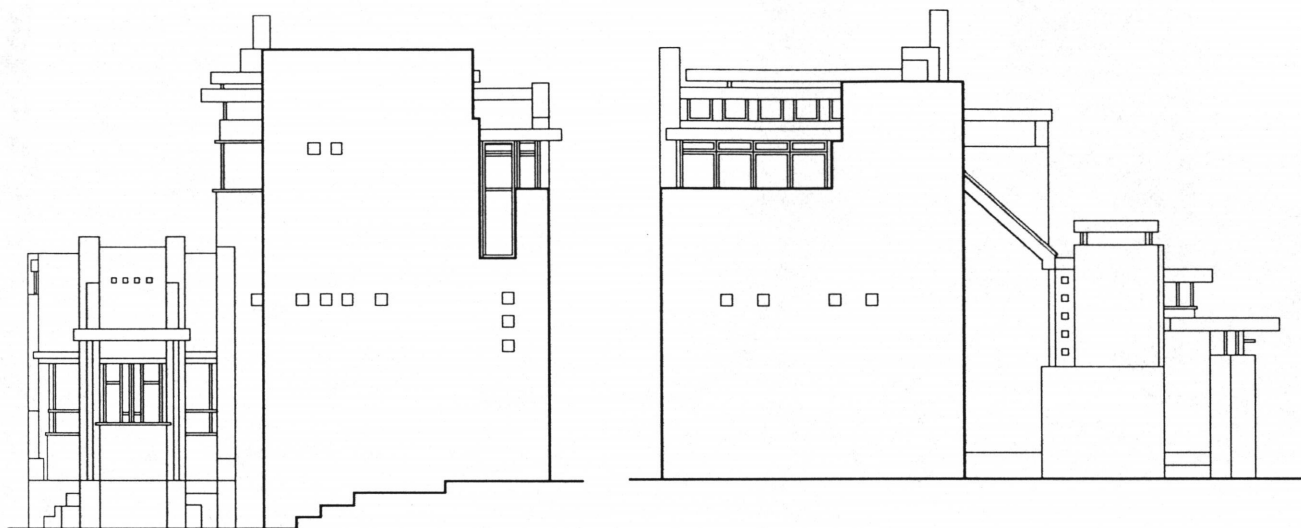
Model:

Southwest West
East South

Small House:

Site Plan and Section





Elevations: Southeast Northeast
Northwest Southwest

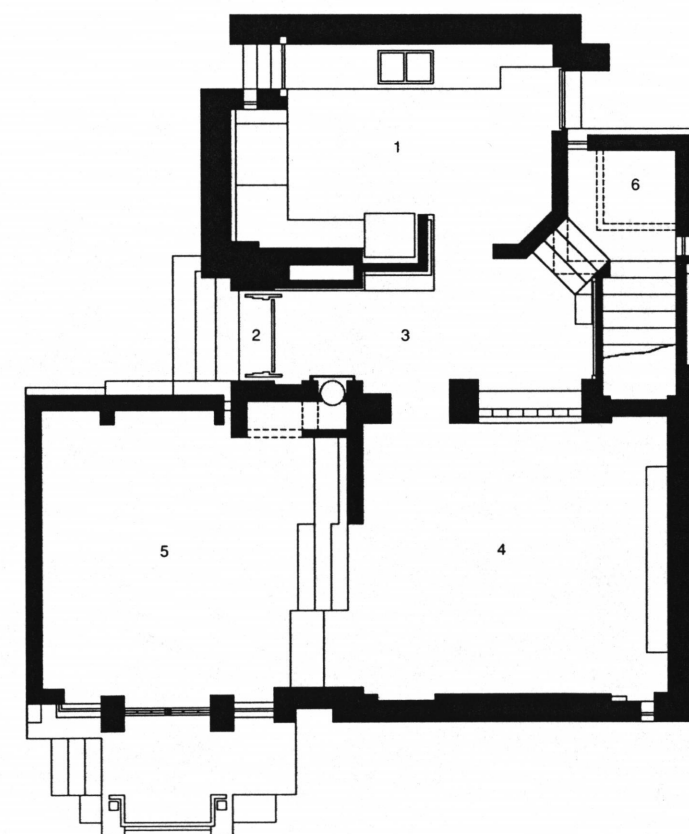
The small house is inwardly focused. The masonry shelters and holds the institutions of family. The walls create boundary edges that distinguish between public and private realms. The visual overlap of elements in space encourages a sense of discovery, and constantly frames ones experience. This layering of autonomous parts reveals a gradual understanding of the whole over time. There is a continual hint at the whole without seeing it. Portals and window embrasures create moments of light that establish the character and sense of space of each room.

Plan: 1 kitchen 2 threshold 3 entry hall
4 living room 5 dinning room 6 stair



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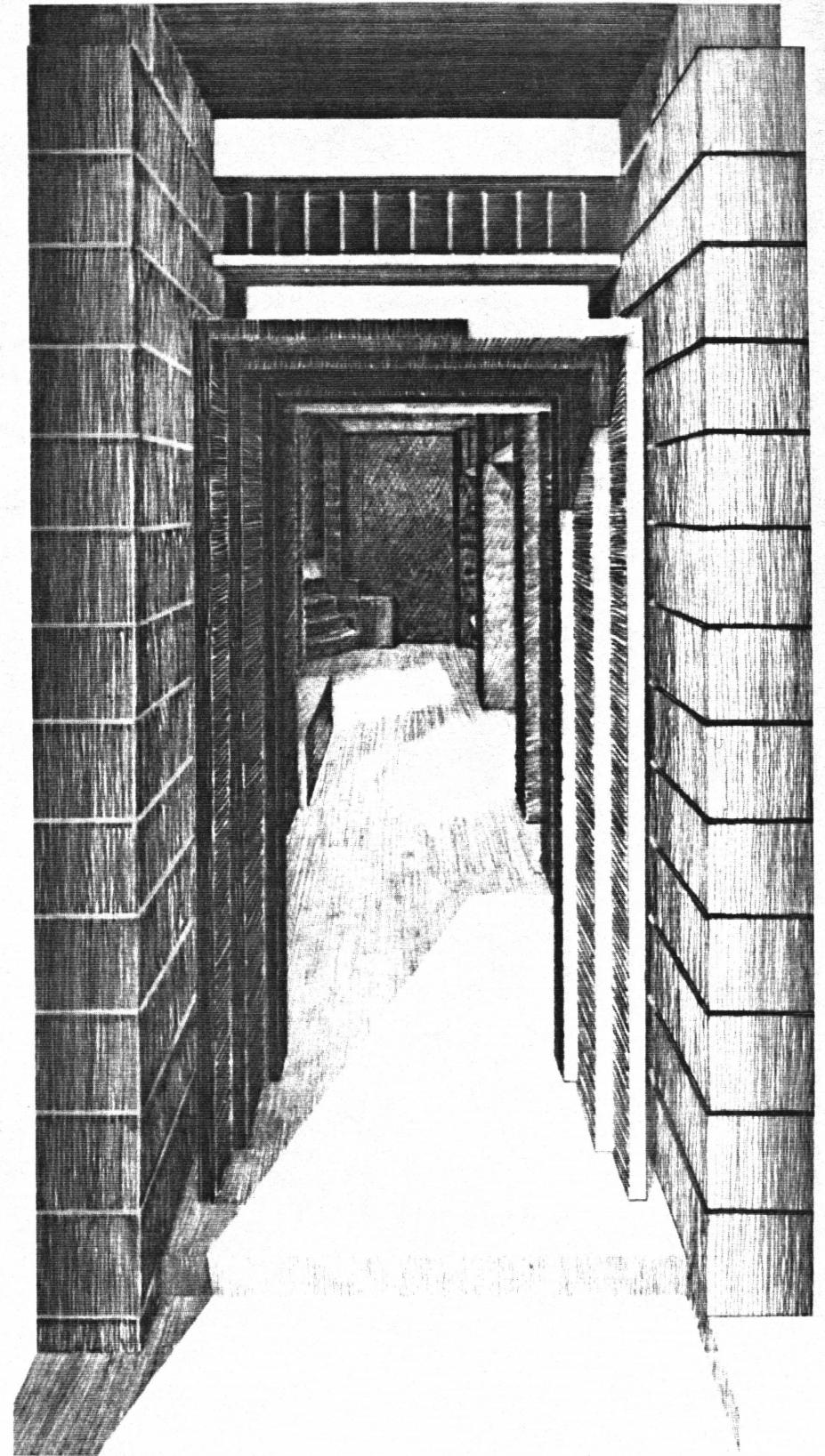
The house that comes to view defines the boundary edge of the private world of the community. The approach facade is a bastion wall; a smaller deeper addition offered up on a pedestal. Windows form embrasures and portals or protected lookouts. The vertical of the main block firmly grounds it. It's rising to meet the sky, clearly demarks the turning point to the site. As the visitor enters the path about the house, the faces of the house gradually become more particularized. Horizontal roof planes bring this side of the house down toward the human. Verticals part so as to give glimpses behind the facade. Deep protected windows peep toward the visitor. At the threshold of the house, one is greeted by gently rising steps and seats that lead to a deeply sheltered door. The threshold is bounded by a walled enclosure. Two stacks rise from behind it. There is the smell of sweet bread and burning timber in the air. The house rises two stories above the door enlivening and calling attention to the act of entry. We are watched over by the glass vertical. The house, although small, imposes itself on the visitor because of changes in scale.

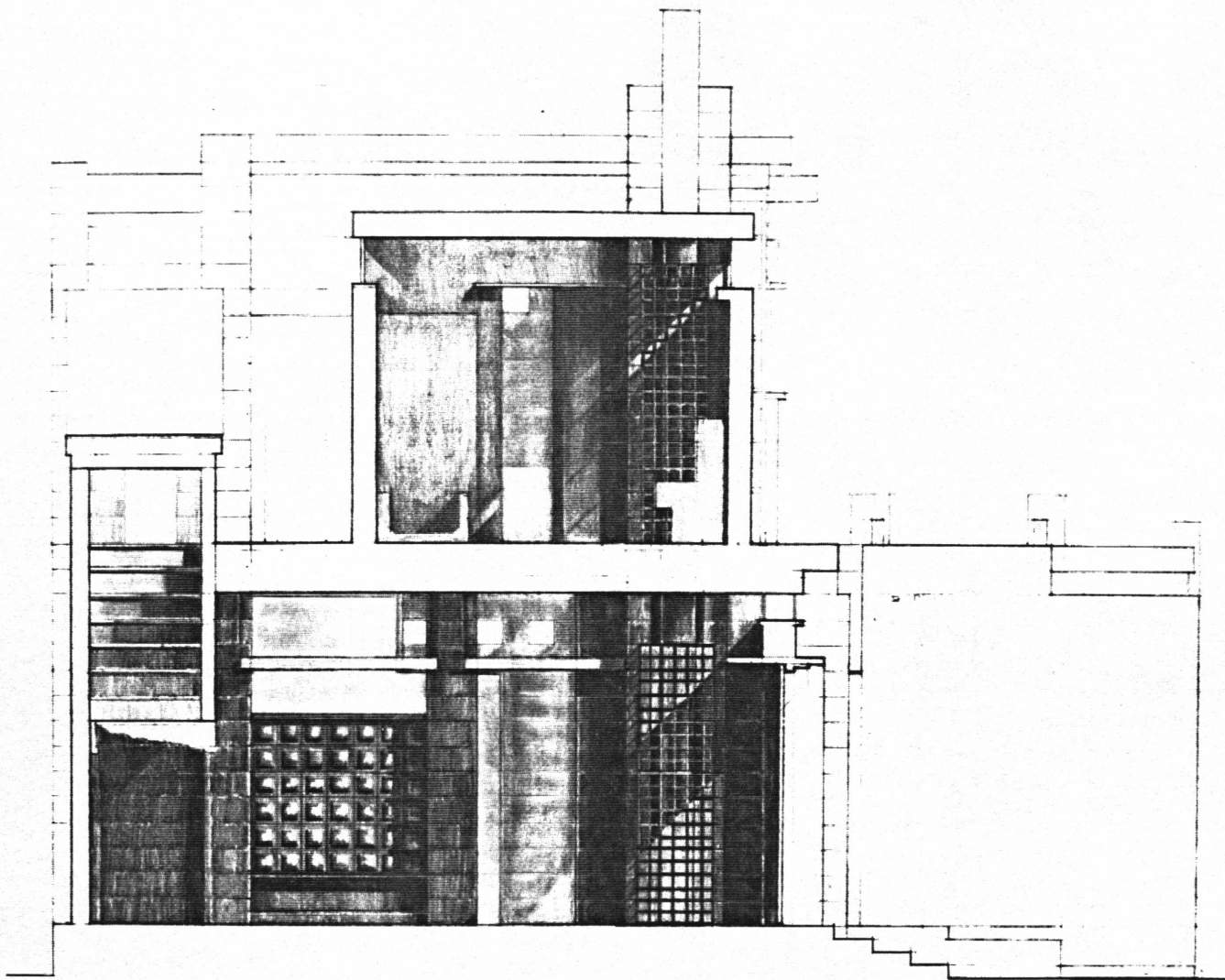


Upon entering, one notices the integrity of the door, standing firmly between the walls and guarding the passage it is meant to protect.

The light becomes dimmer here at first entry. The roof of the sky now compresses. But ahead is the soft glow of the late day sun sweeping across the wooden floor boards. Light beams and shadows scurrying across the crevices. But we are weary from our journey.

We see ahead the light, sifting from many unknown places. The floor lies between the walls shoulders, or paces clear overhead into the adjoining rooms. We are presented with different paths.





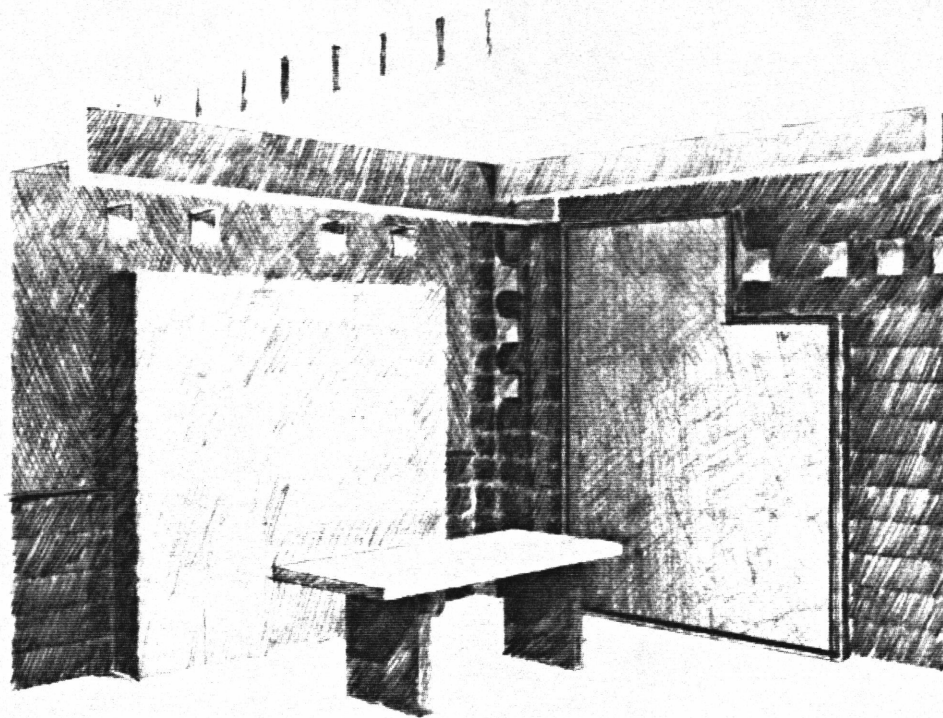
Hall Southeast Section

To the left, the wall falls away, and the hall becomes wider, anticipating our arrival. A wooden bench, sheltered against the wall, offers us a moment to pause, and rest our feet or take off our shoes and hang up our coats on pegs. A soft warmth catches us unawares as it emanates from a steel flue that rises from floor to ceiling, protected by a cast iron grill.

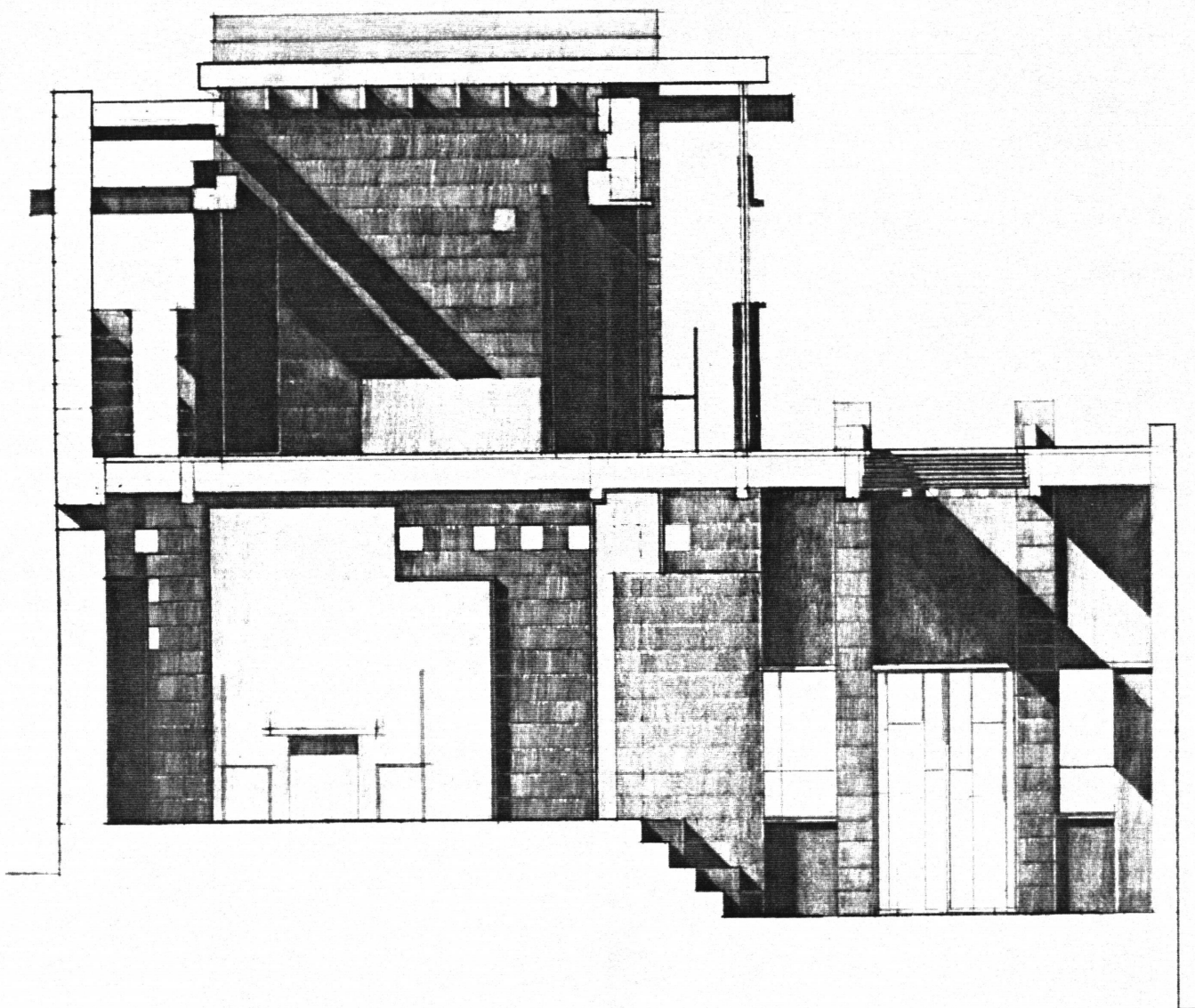
But this is not a place to linger long...



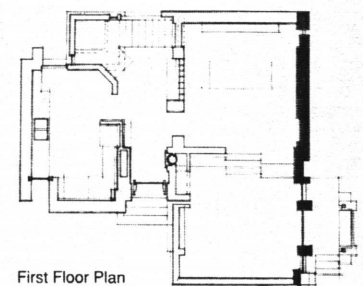
First Floor Plan



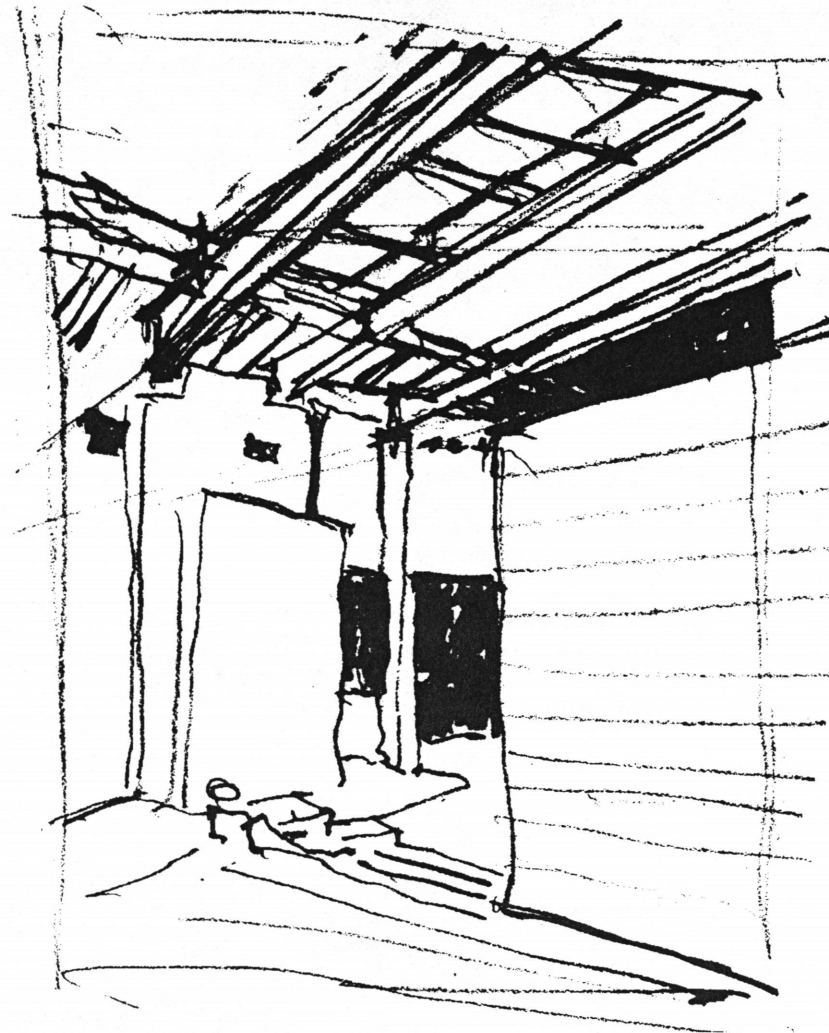
To the right of us a soft sparkle catches our attention, and draws us into a dimly lit room that is punctured by hazy light. The threshold to this room compresses us and releases us as we enter.



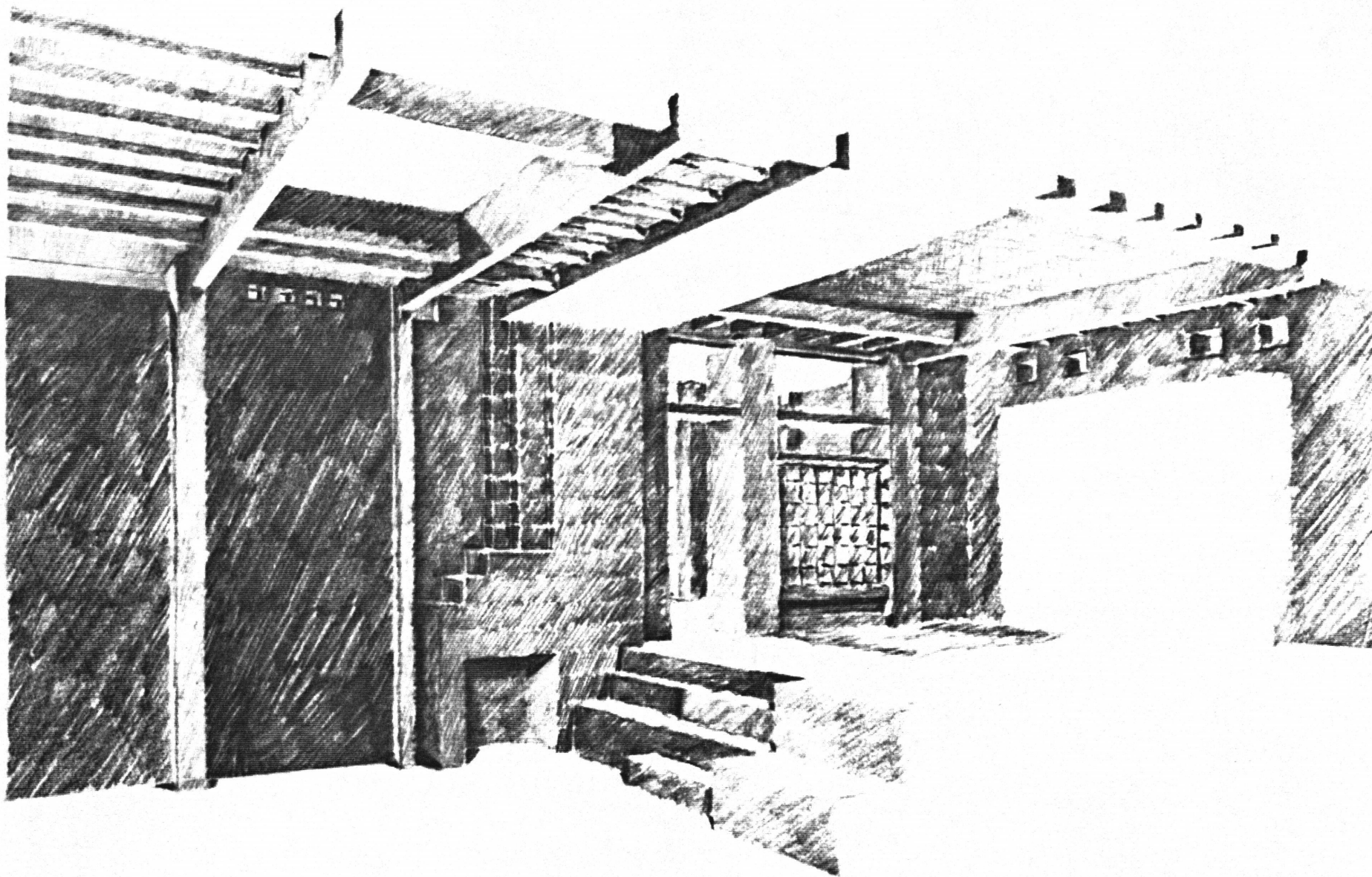
Dining and Living Rooms Southeast Section



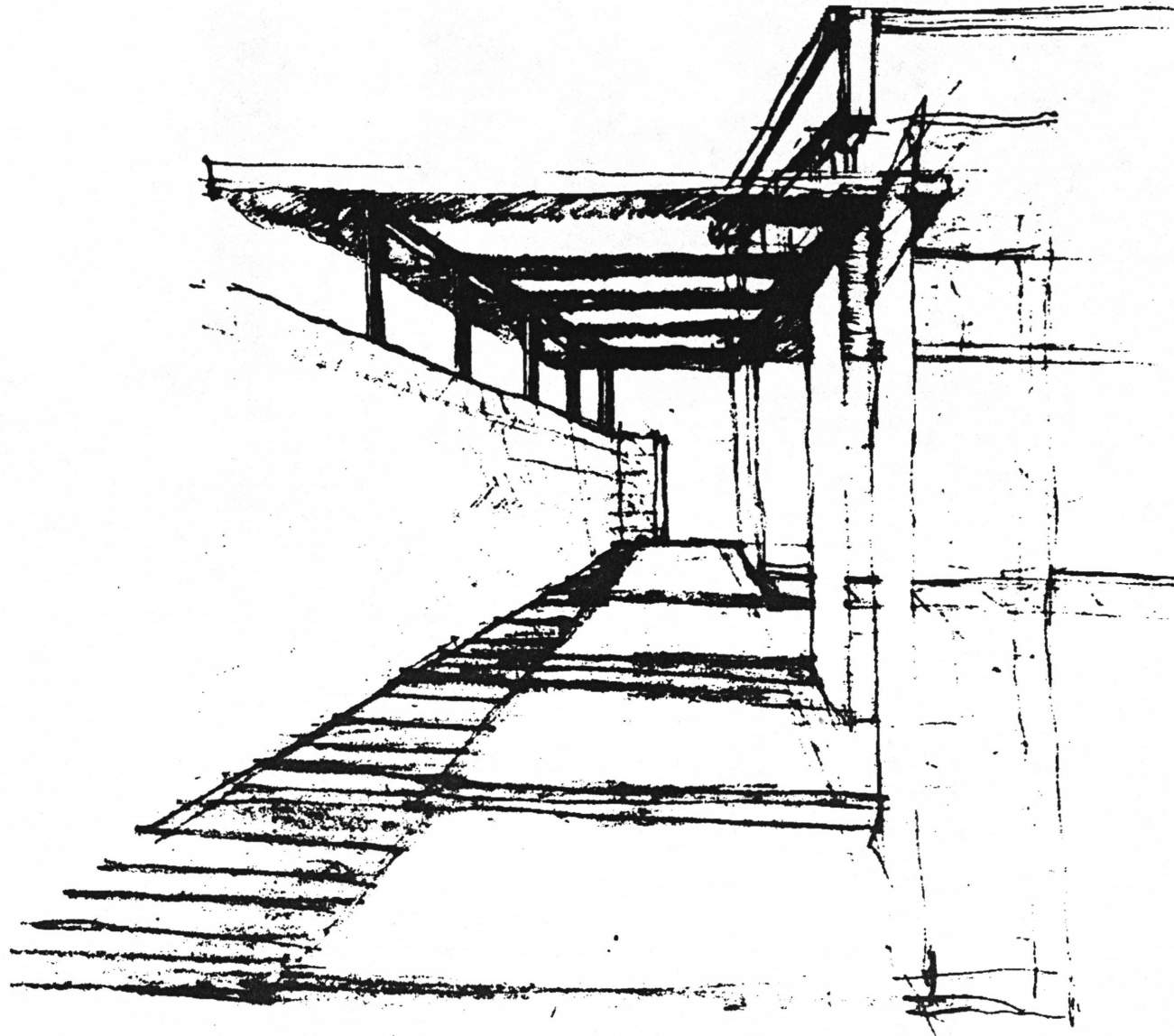
First Floor Plan



Directly ahead through the space we stand tall. Light from the sky above calls us with a glimpse to the outside world we have just left behind. It is a place to be part of a collective or be alone.

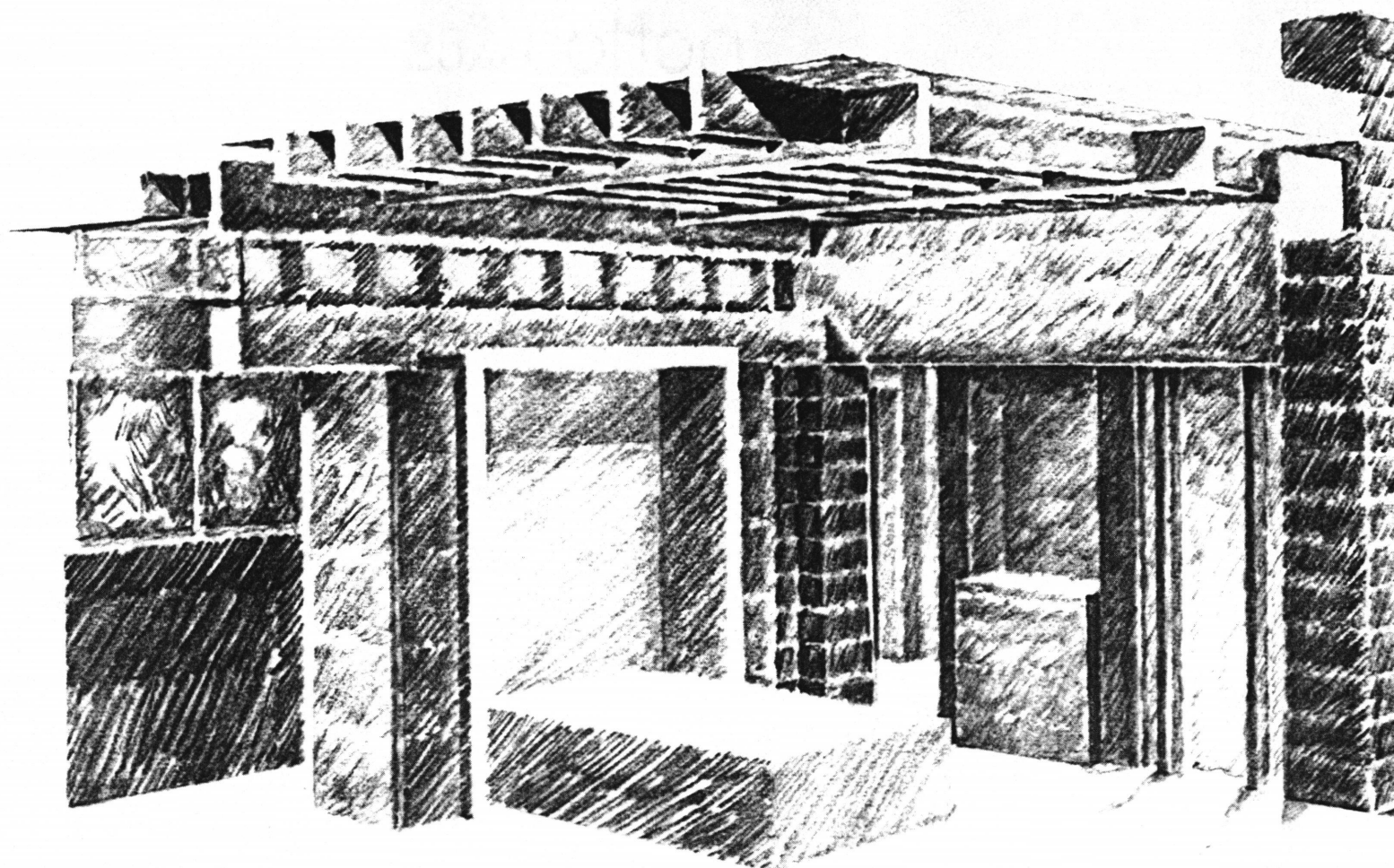


A large wooden table rests in the silence at one end. It is a place to share and gather. The walls rise above us, carrying a ceiling that places us in the room. The raw concrete block is indicative of the humble nature of the hollow place deep in the house. Plaster panels bring the scale of the room down to us, along with the cabinets. This makes us feel more sheltered in the space for sharing.

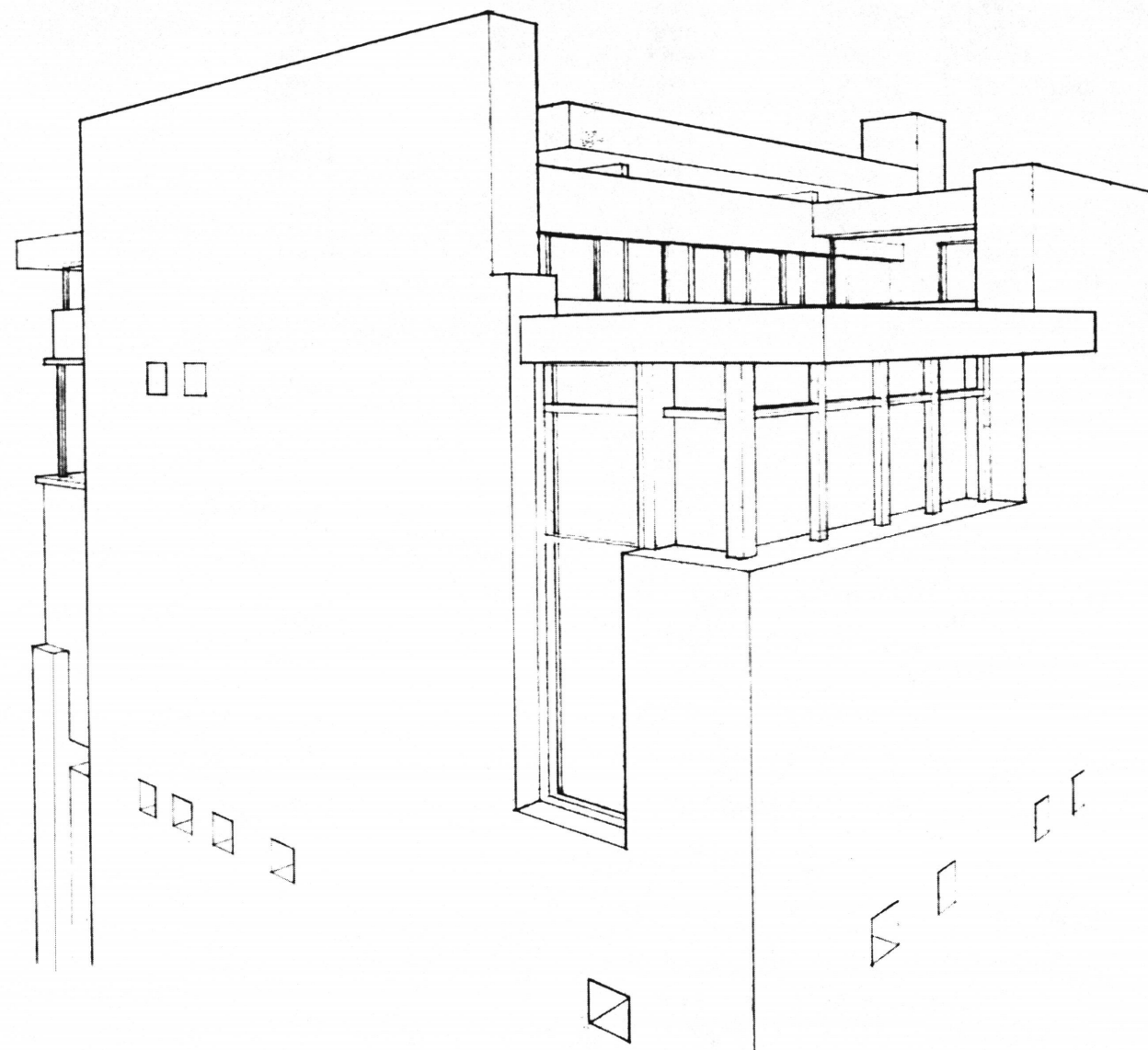


Ahead, we catch a glimpse of a stair tread, that is awash with a soft glow.

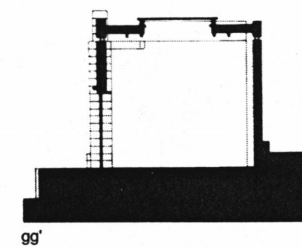
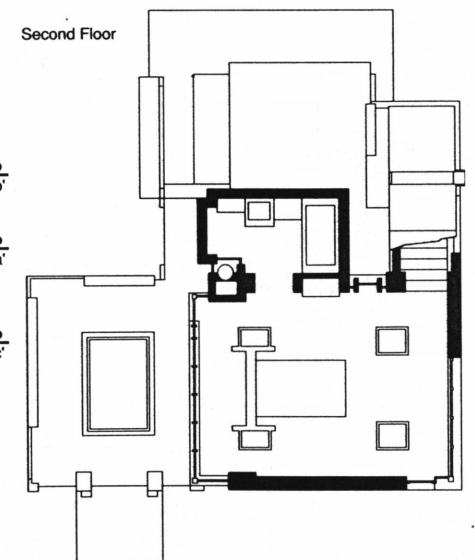
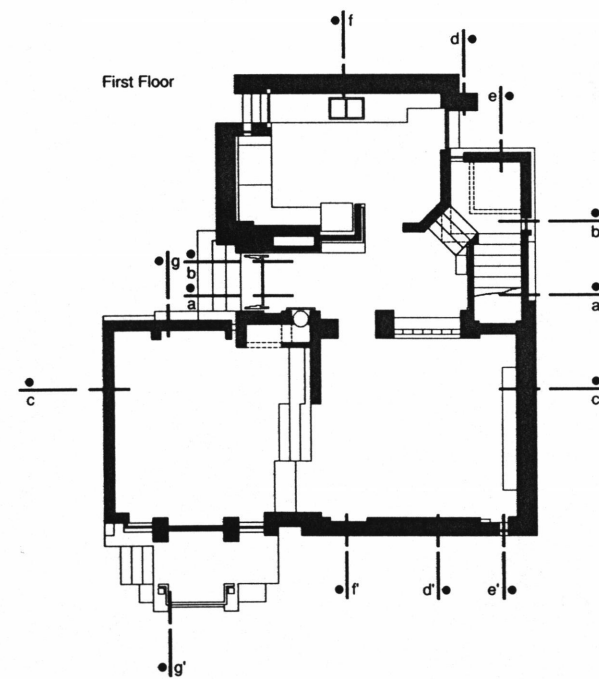
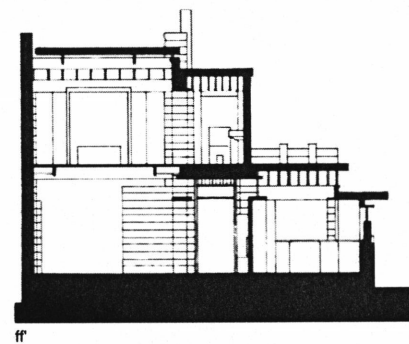
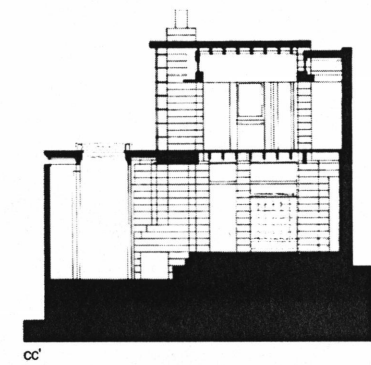
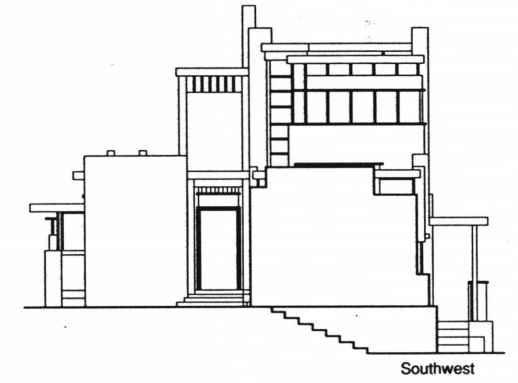
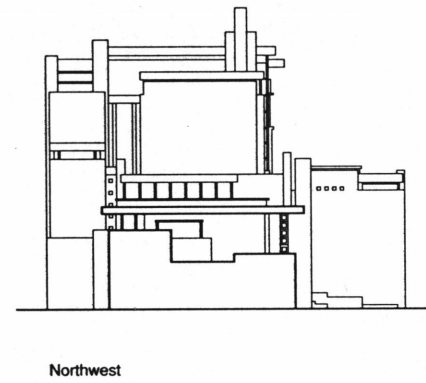
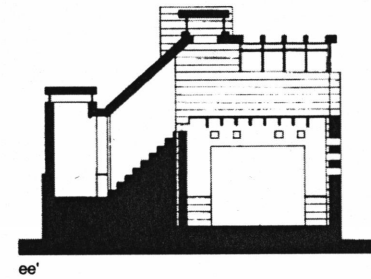
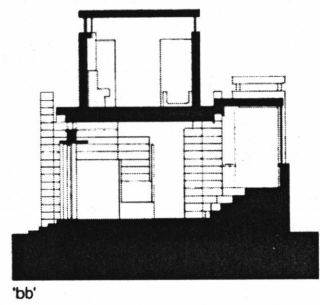
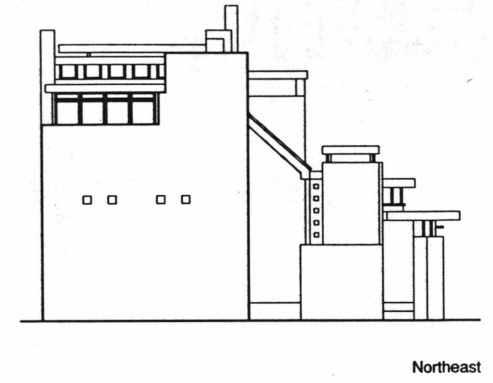
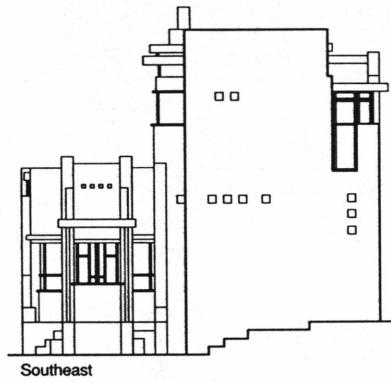
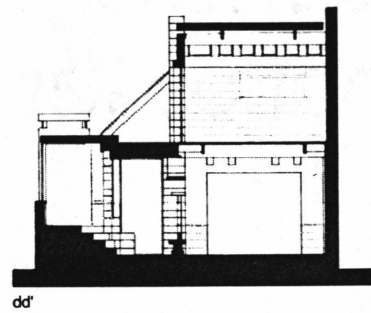
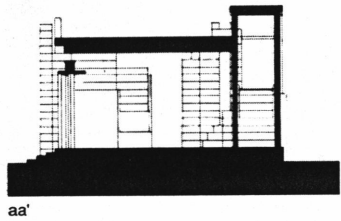
On entering the vertical passage to the second floor it is dimly lit. Light spills from the stair top. We pass from one horizontal to another.



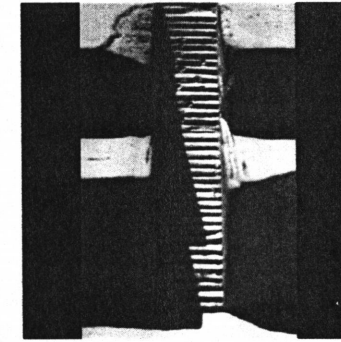
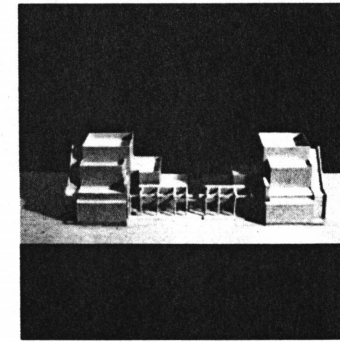
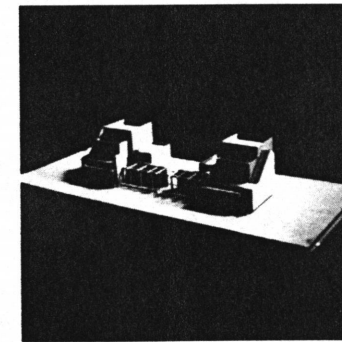
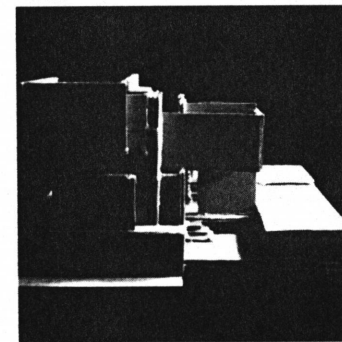
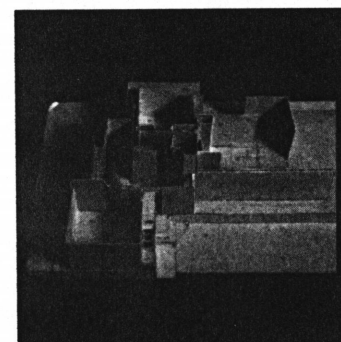
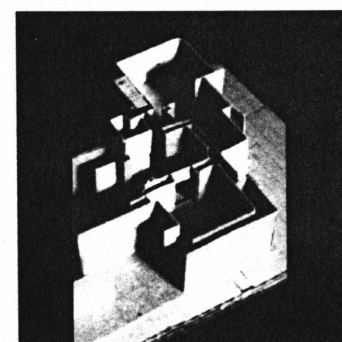
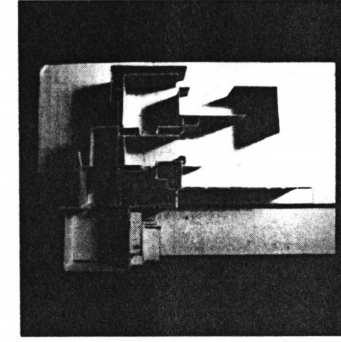
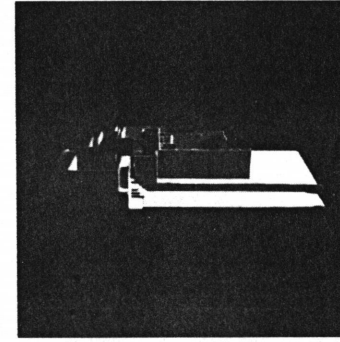
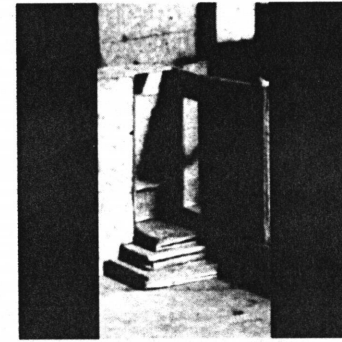
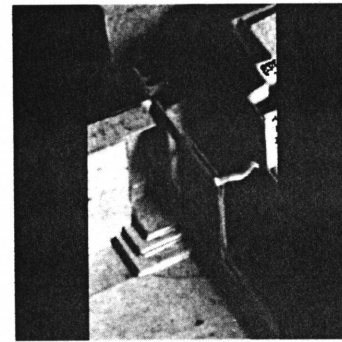
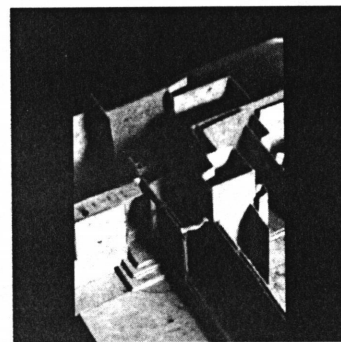
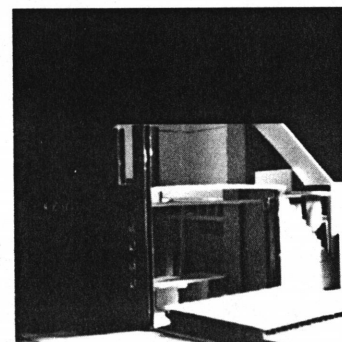
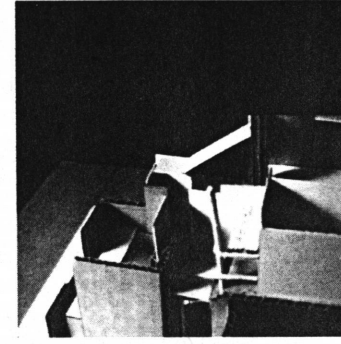
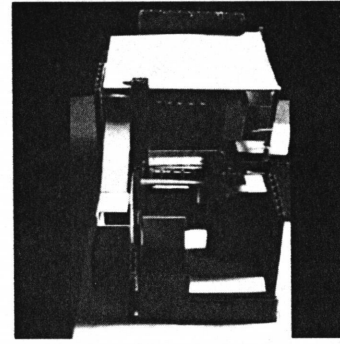
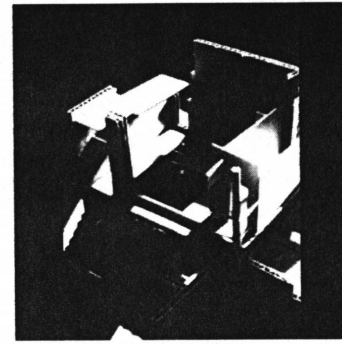
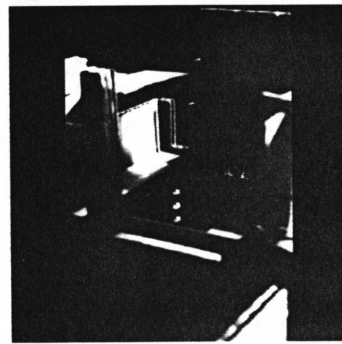
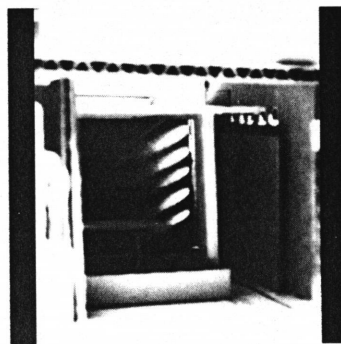
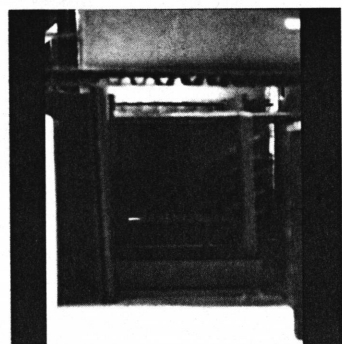
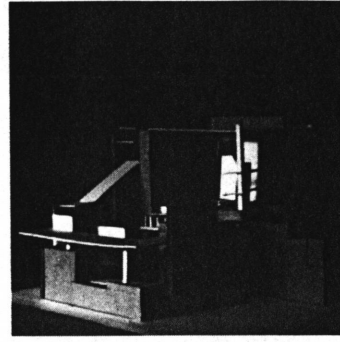
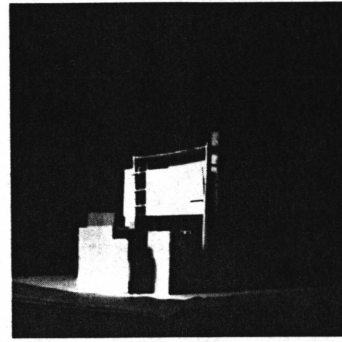
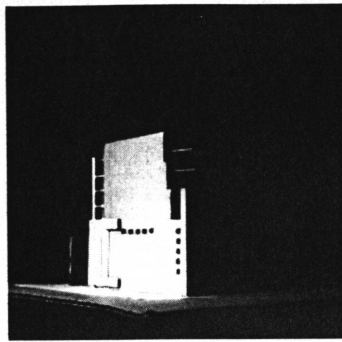
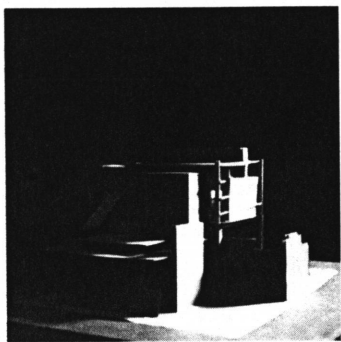
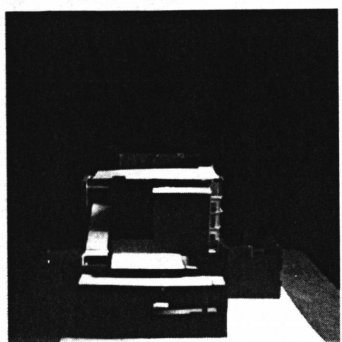
We walk on the wall edges on the second floor. Wall surfaces rise past the ceiling, which is supported between the walls by light frames of wood. Light seeps in around all its edges. We are cradled between the walls under the edge of the sky. The bed is nestled in a nook between two "pillars" of the room. From behind this screen, glimpses of the sky and countryside reveal a private sanctum that is sheltered under the overhanging edges.

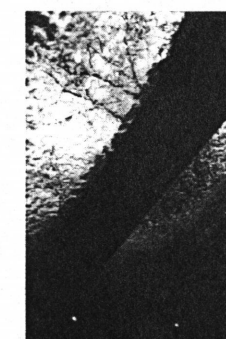
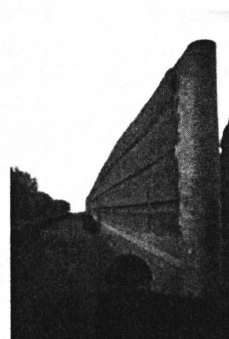
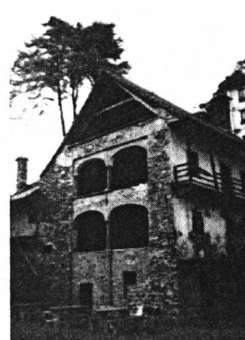
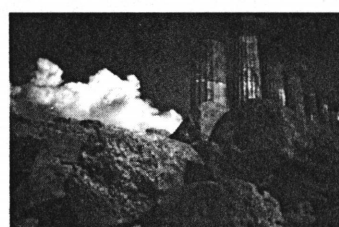
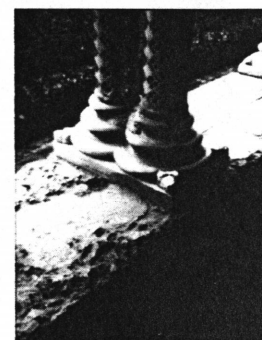
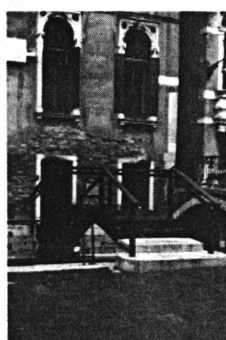
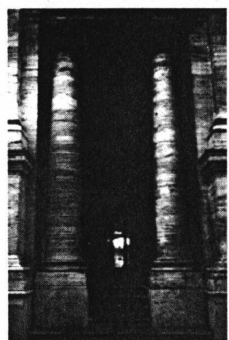
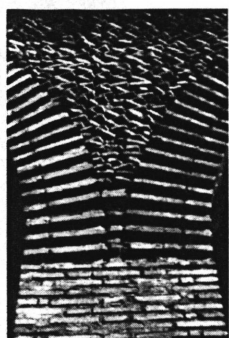


The hall at the stair top is the outer edge of the adjoining bedroom. The platform offers us once more to the outside, giving us a commanding view over the surrounding.



Sections, Elevations and Plans





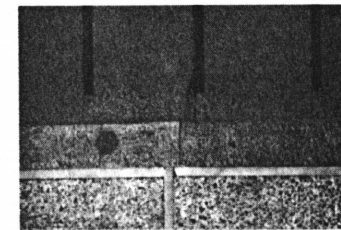
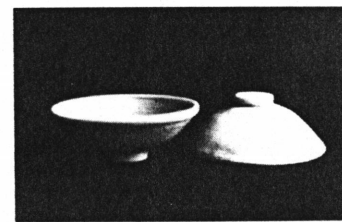
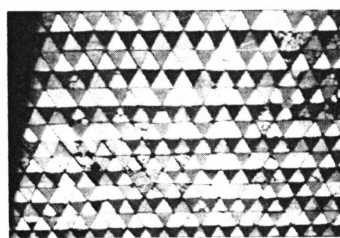
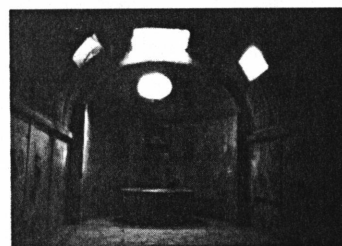
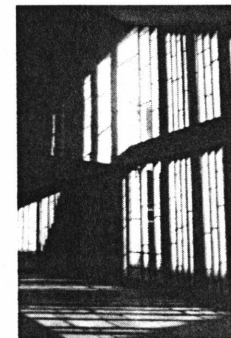
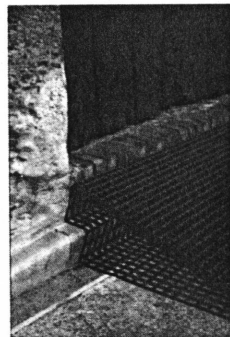
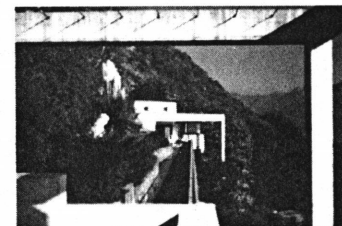
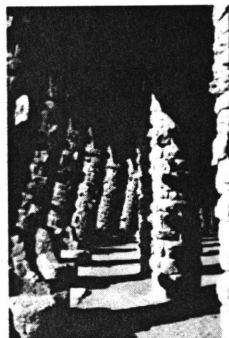
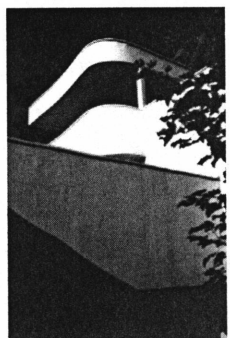
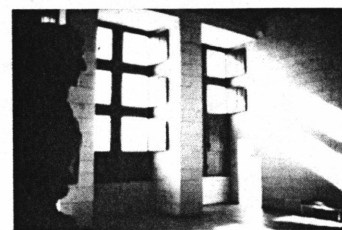
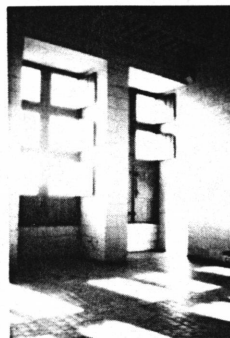
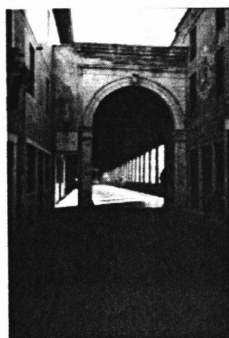
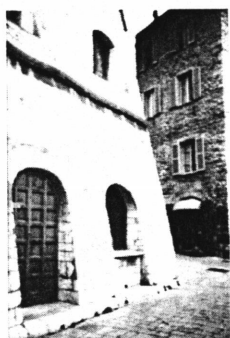


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