



Beginnings

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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

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abstract

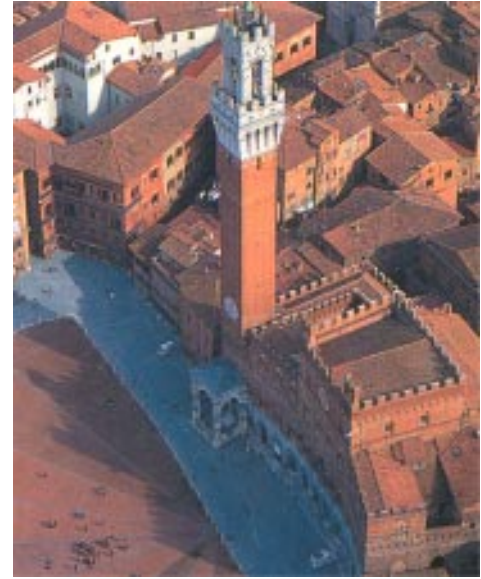
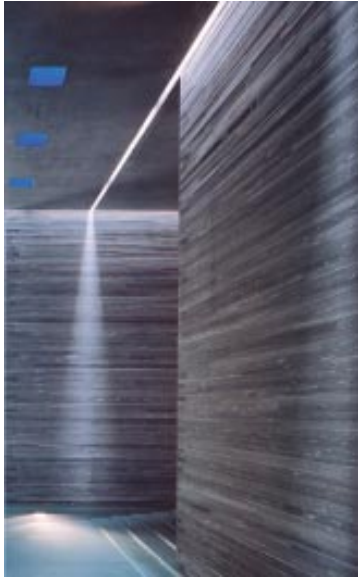
This book is a beginning. It begins to explore three conditions.

First is the idea of the boundary – not simply the boundary as something that fixes limits, but as something that defines the spatial qualities of architecture. For example, a space that has four opaque walls, a dark floor and a heavy ceiling will feel like a closed cell. But what if the ceiling doesn't quite complete the boundary of the box, and instead it pulls away from the walls to let in traces of daylight. The light trickles down horizontal bands of green stone and reflects in a plane of water that is the floor. The light indicates the space beyond the boundary. This room has the quiet, meditative feeling of an ancient cave. It still feels closed, but the slight change in the boundary creates an experience more stimulating to the memory and the senses than the closed cell of the original box.

Second is the idea of the core – the core as the life, the center, and more importantly, the core as the foundation. It is of a different nature than the parts that envelop it; it is lasting. Think of driving down a long country road on a bright summer day. The surrounding fields are overgrown and lush green. Wooden barns inhabit these fields, some in use, some no longer used, but beautiful just the same as the sunlight gleams through the spaces in the weathered wooden boards. From a distance, a tall figure rises from a hillside. It appears at first to be one of the many storage silos of the old farms. The stone stack pointing to the sky is surrounded by low walls. It is the chimney that rises from a hearth. It is central to what was once home. It remains standing, a sight reaching across time to speak of home as a shelter, as a place for family, and hearth as a place to gather.

Third is the light of a place. The sun sets on a small town in Italy. The color of the light at this time, in this place burns into one's memory. No other town holds this color. Nestled in the green of the surrounding hills, the rich red city gets its hue from the glow of the sun on the bricks of the earth that were used to make its buildings. To take the brick from there and lay it in another light would change its color completely. It is the light of a place that makes its color so unique. To know the color of the light is to know the place, to experience the color of the light is to experience the place.

The ideas of boundary, core and light of a place are where this project begins.



What we call the beginning is often the end
and to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from. And every
phrase
And sentence that is right (where every word is
at home
Taking its place to support the others,
The word neither diffident nor ostentatious,
An easy commerce of the old and the new,
The common word exact without vulgarity,
The formal word precise but not pedantic,
The complete consort dancing together)
Every phrase and every sentence is an end
and a beginning..."

-T.S. Eliot

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place

site

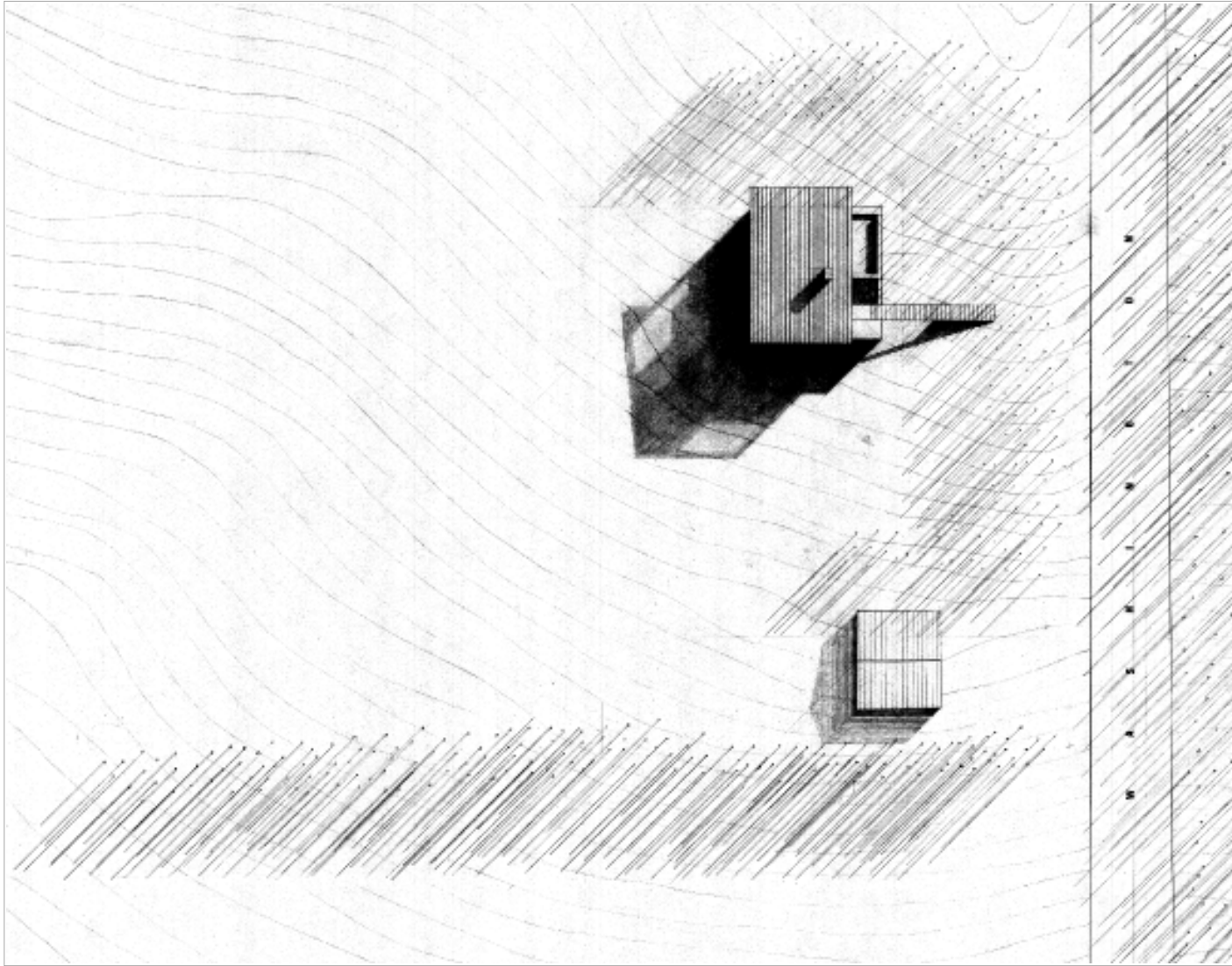
The New River Valley is enveloped by the Blue Ridge mountains of southwestern Virginia. As the ridge of the mountain chain rises and falls, it describes the horizon and marks the boundary for those who inhabit the valley below.



Buildings rest in the valley. In some places they are spread out on acres of rolling green farmland, in other places, they are more dense forming small towns.



At the edge of the town of Blacksburg, just below the crest of a hill, grows a small stand of trees. It encloses a room on a slope that is open to the mountains in the west.

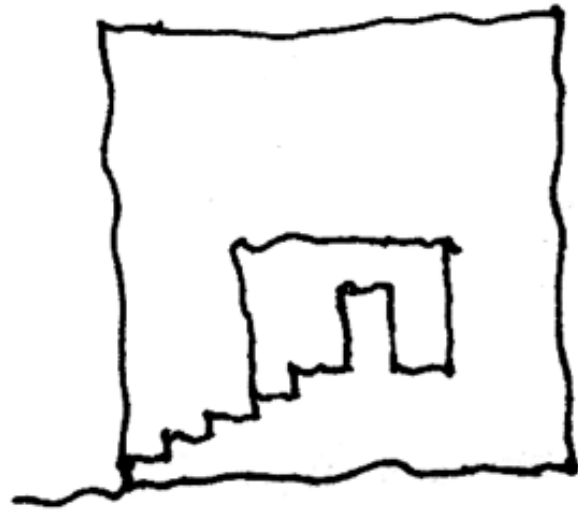


The slope rolls toward downtown. The buildings there are more dense. Movement in town is more dynamic, the streets and alleys come alive with the passage of cars, bikes, people. In the row of existing shops, there is a long narrow space connecting the main street to the neighboring block.



a rural dwelling

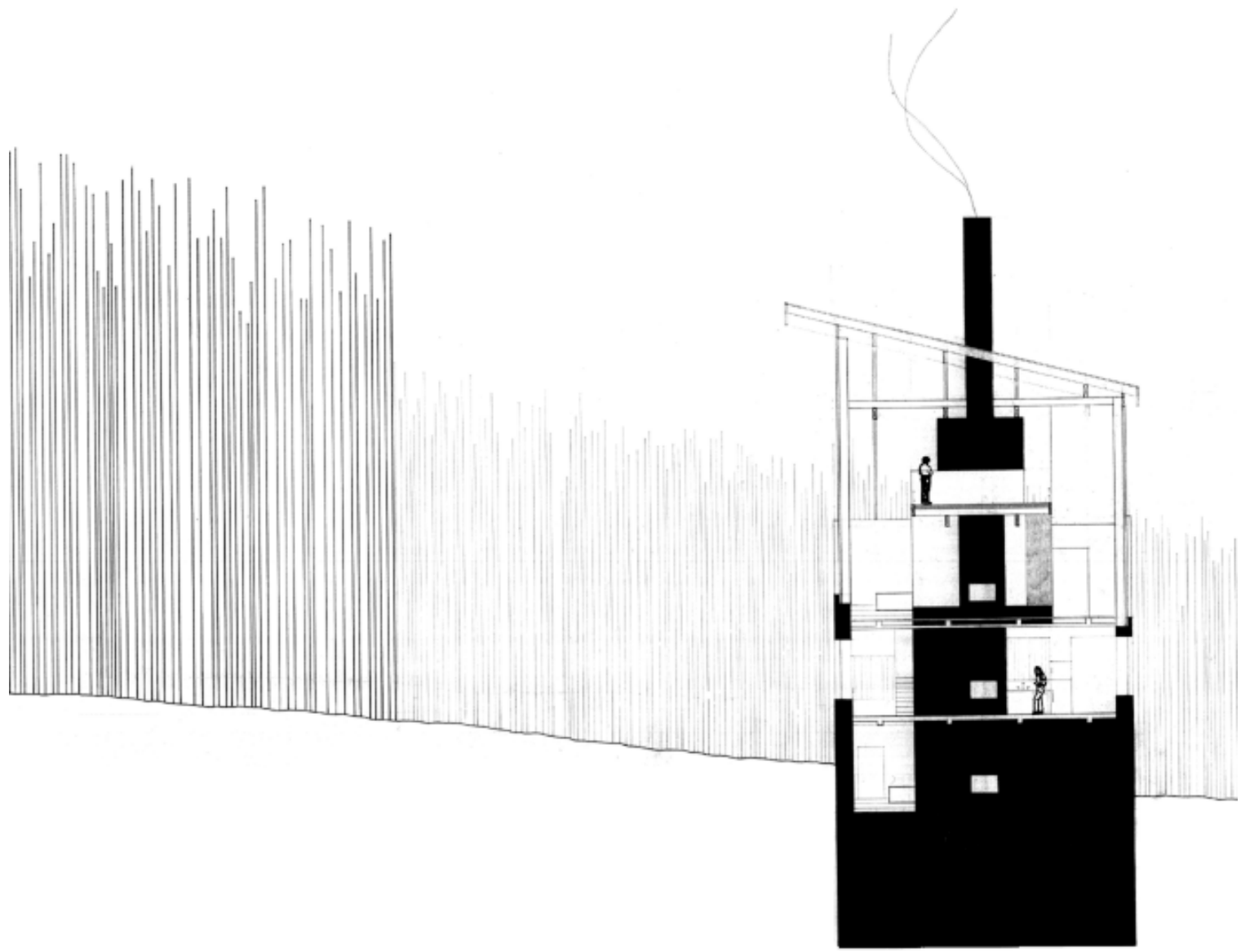
The core is where the house begins. It grows from beneath the slope and contains the elements earth, air, fire, water and the stair that is the passage from floor to floor. Surrounding the core is the boundary of the house. Enveloping the space of the rooms, the boundary begins as a hard edge that divides inside from outside. As it grows with the core, the boundary opens up defining softer edges and giving transparency. The light lays its color onto the surfaces of the core bringing its texture out. Some elements of the boundary also give surfaces to the light and others absorb its brilliant glow. The house provides places for the light while the light gives the house a presence.



core

earth
water
fire
air

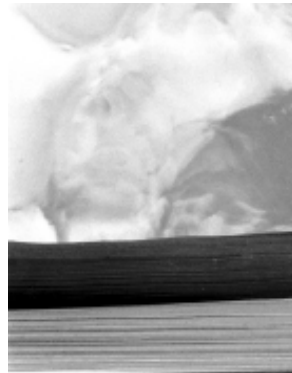
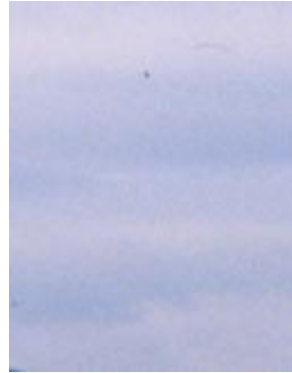
The core grows from below the earth and reaches toward the sky.



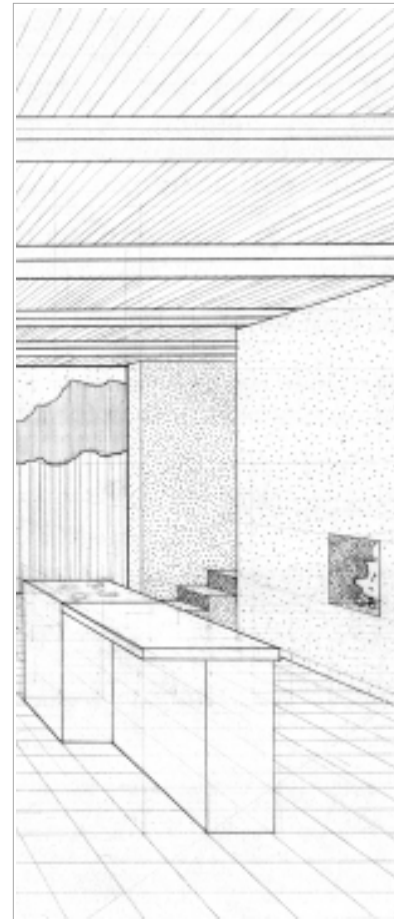
It is made of textured concrete the light red color
of the earth.



Outside, carved into the mass, is a well filled with water. The water forms a pool that reflects the light onto the concrete.



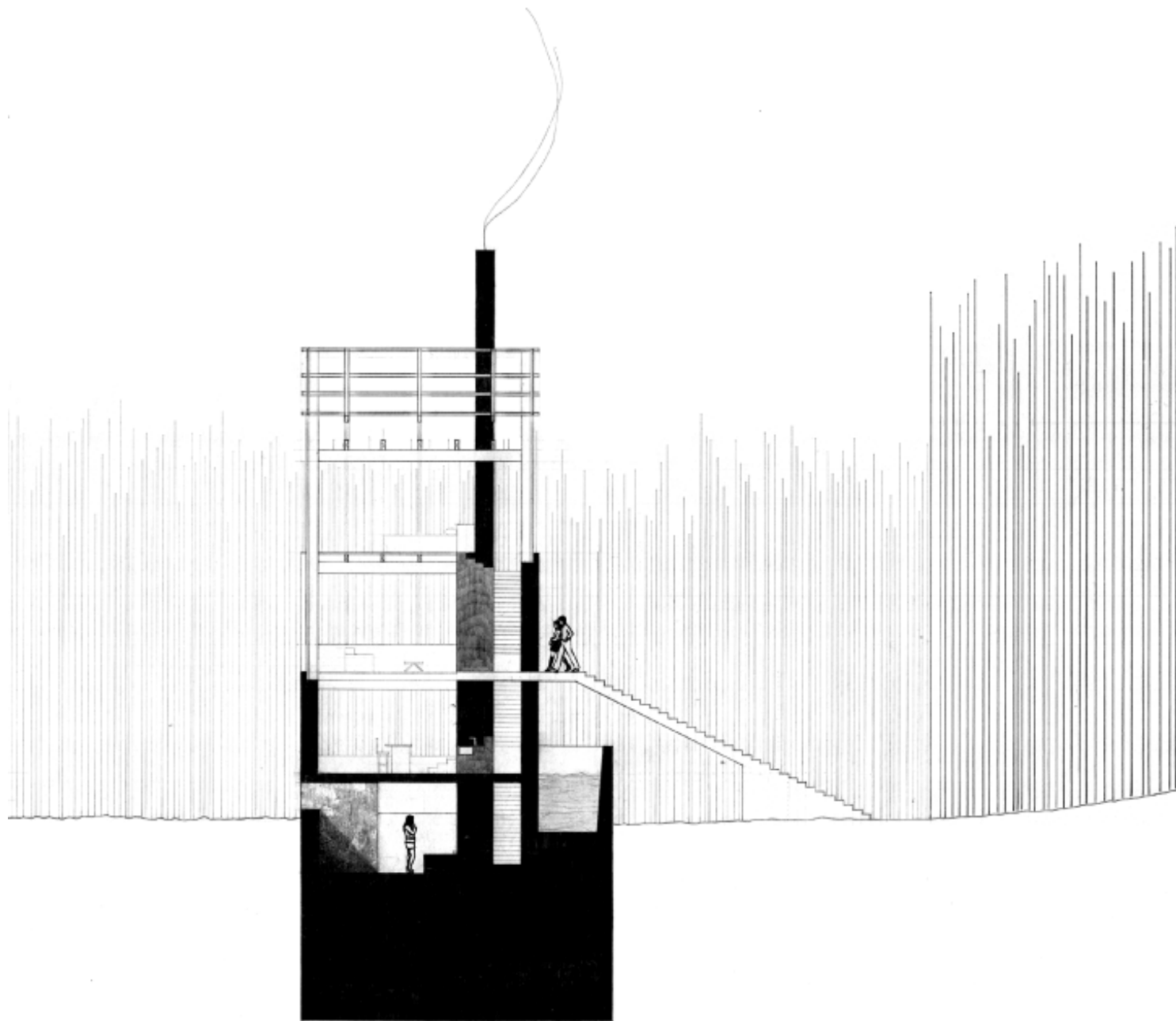
The hearth is held inside the core. Each floor contains a place for the fire, the center of warmth and vitality in the house.



The core is made strong and thick to hold the flame in a safe place.

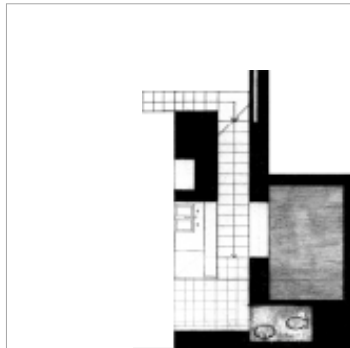
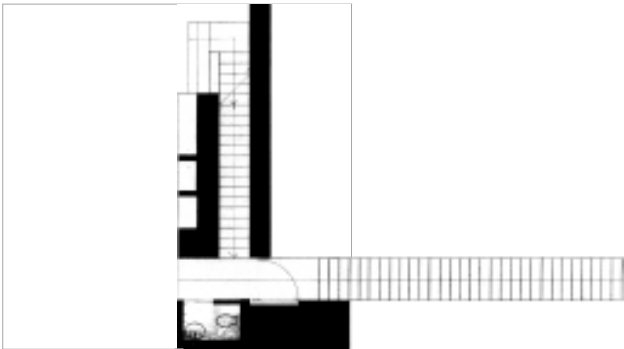
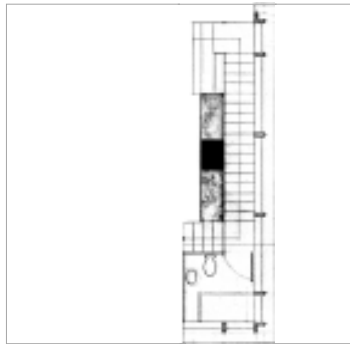


Smoke from the fire rises up through the core
continuing outside toward the sky. The fireplace
and the chimney are the parts of the core that
remain throughout time standing for the memory
of the home.

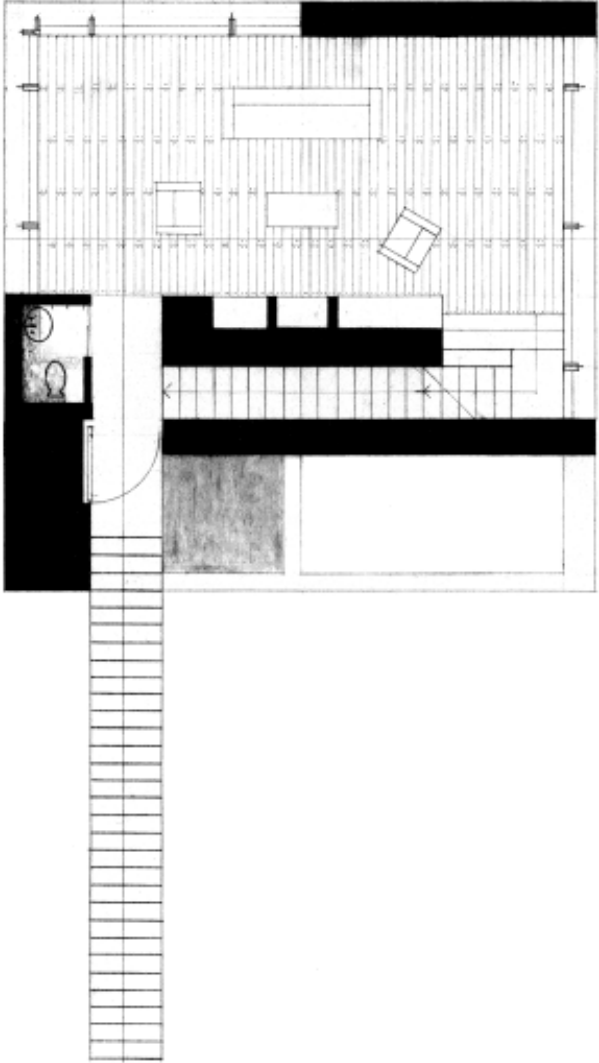


passage

The vertical form of the core stacks the living spaces one on top of the next. A stair, sculpted out of the mass, wraps around the core .



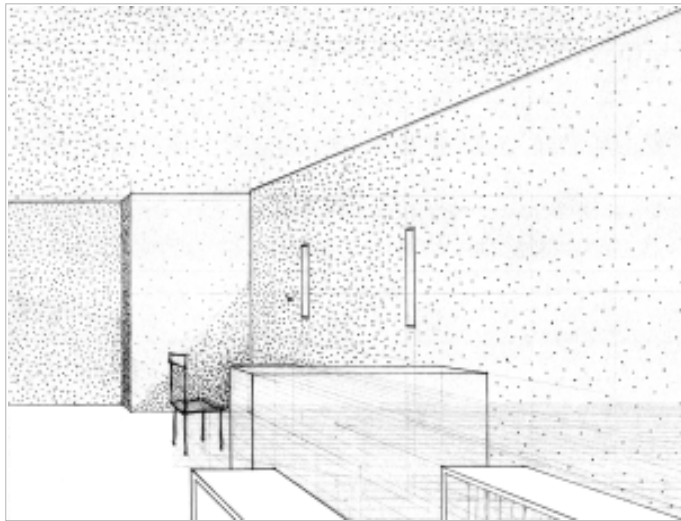
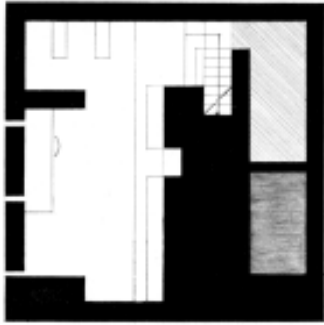
The stair arrives at one end of the space and leaves from the opposite end. To move from one floor of the house to the next, you pass through the whole room. The point of entry is a part of the flow around the core.



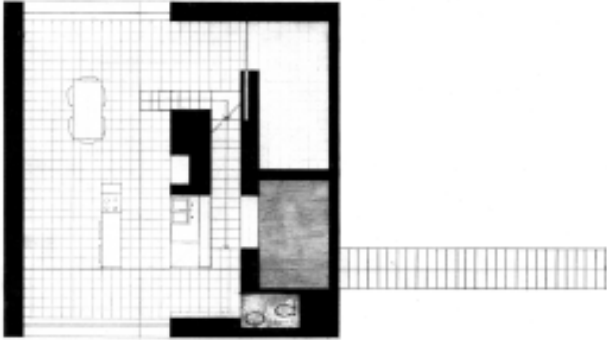
boundary
and
light

reading
eating
dwelling
dreaming

There is a room below the earth. The space is dark and quiet. It is at the base of the core, and the boundary defining its edges is thick, textured concrete. Three long, narrow openings in the wall let light wash in over the concrete surface. It is the only trace of outside. The light casts the shadows of the layered texture. The faint red hue of the concrete fills the room invoking the presence of the earth held back by the walls.



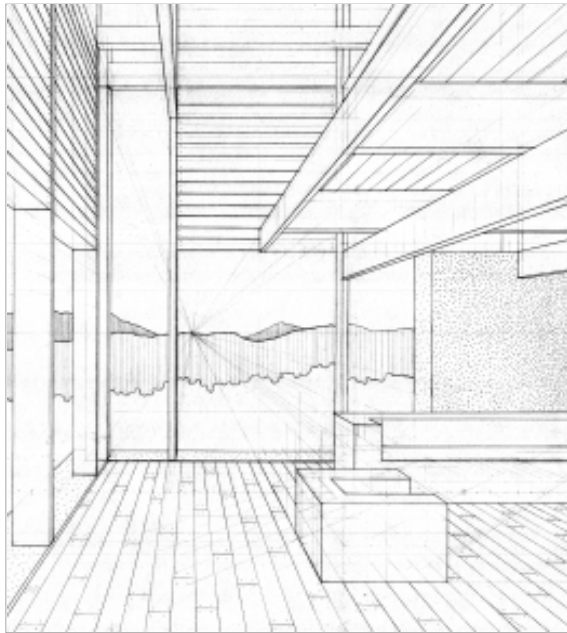
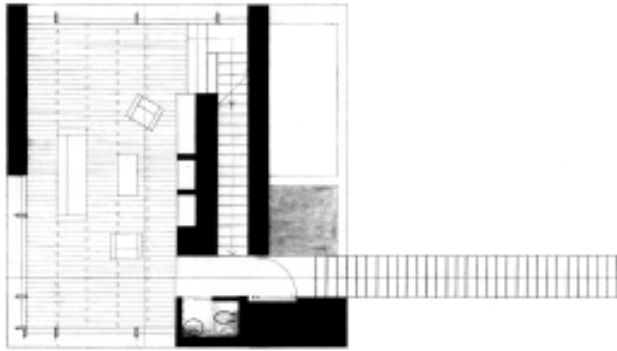
As the core rises out of the earth, the boundary enveloping it opens up. Concrete walls enclose the space on two sides. The opposing sides are transparent, and the line of trees beyond makes a secondary boundary. Light filters into the room through the trees and dances on the concrete walls.



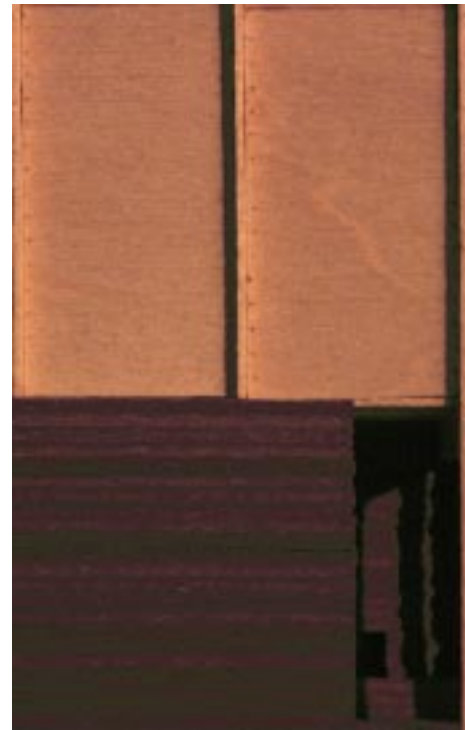
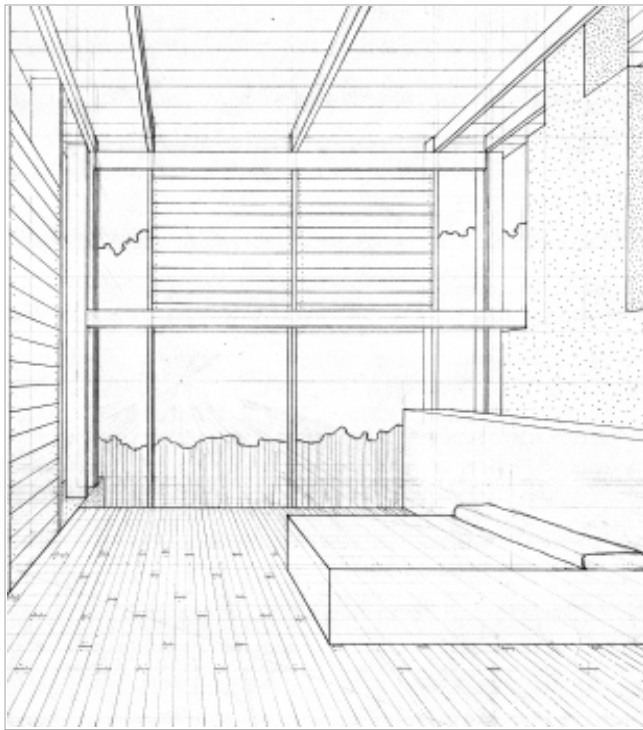
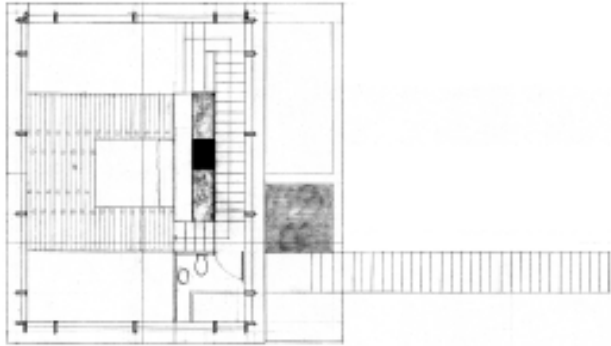
In the room directly above, the concrete wall
opens up and a stair reaches out past its edge.
The stair springs over the water below and
touches the earth inside the line of the trees. Like
a finger, it receives and delivers into the house.



Crossing the threshold of the entry, the space is released in all directions. The walls are transparent where columns of pale wood touch the concrete. To the west, the line of the distant mountains feels like a part of the room. In the evening the sun sets behind the mountains casting long, slender shadows across the wooden floor. The textured surface of the concrete core gives a place for the light to cast its shadows and the sun, in turn, paints the concrete with its red orange color.

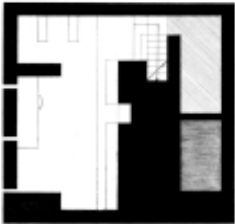
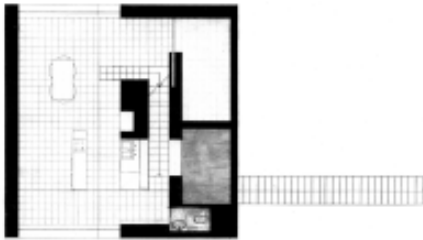
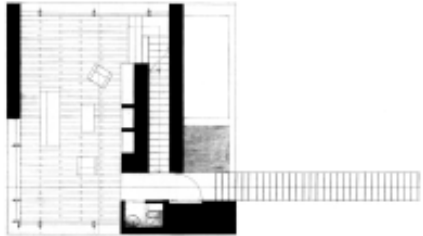
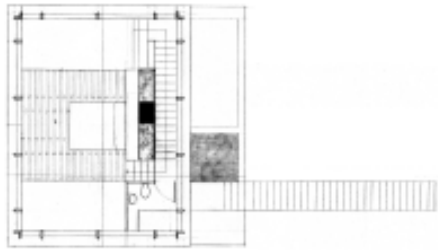


A loft occupies the open space above. Panels of pale wood stretch between the columns encircling the chimney that rises past the roof. The corners of the space remain transparent letting glimpses of the outside slip through. The panels absorb light and as the sun drops below the mountains, the wood glows in a rich honey color. The warmth of the sun is captured in this room and the room holds the light and is made luminous, a lantern in the night.

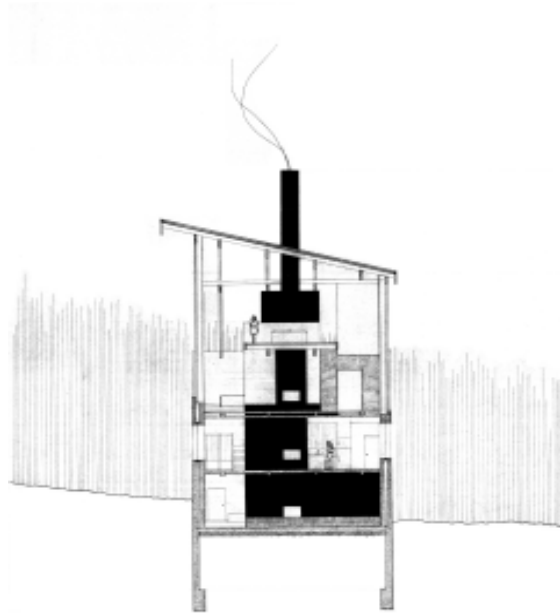
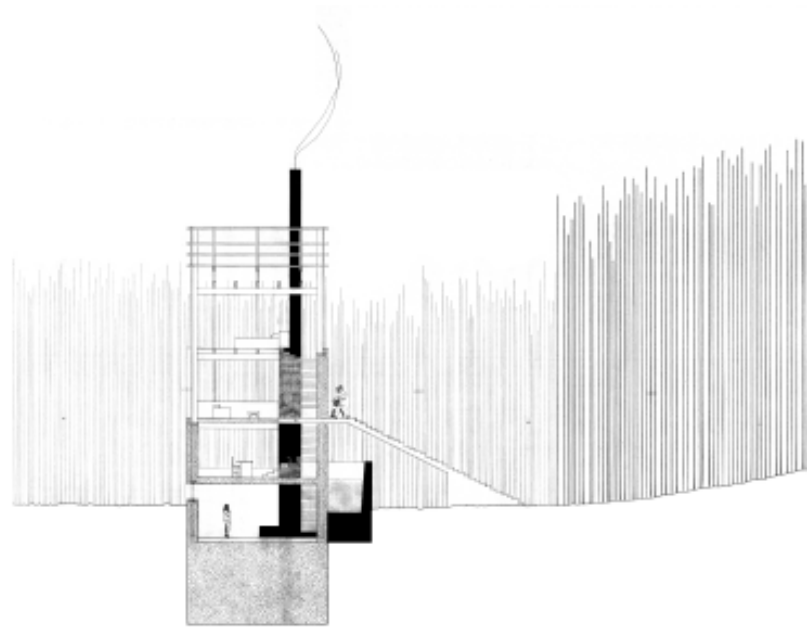


drawings

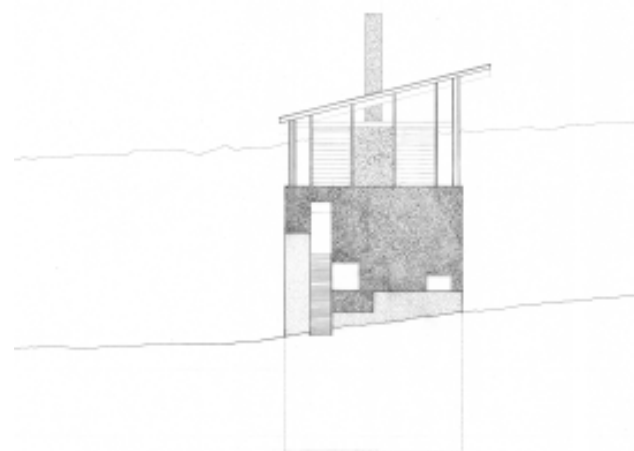
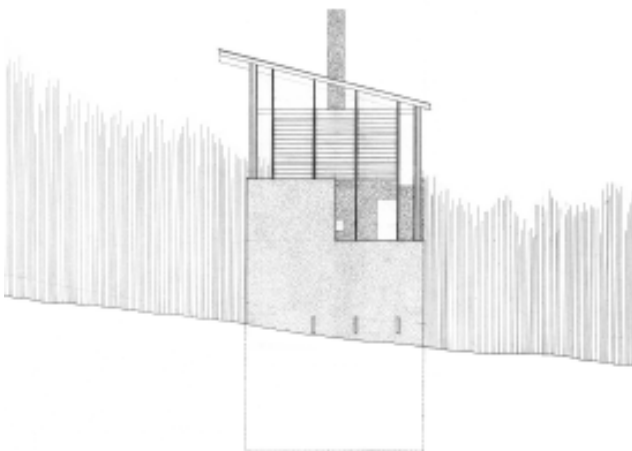
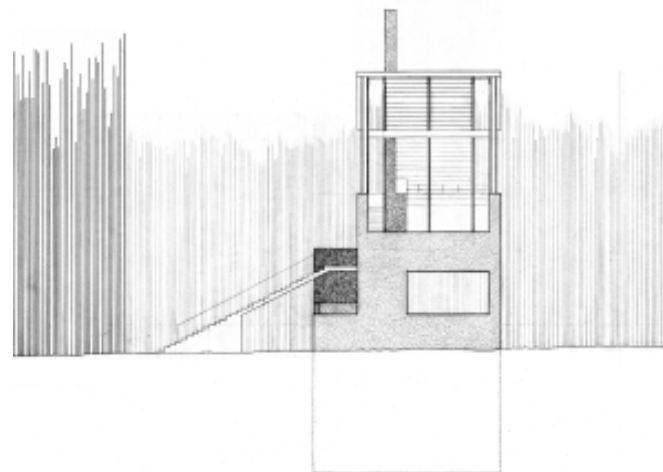
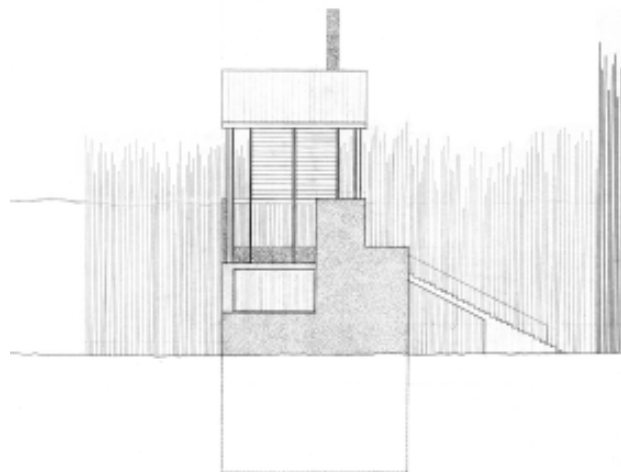
plans
sections
elevations



plans



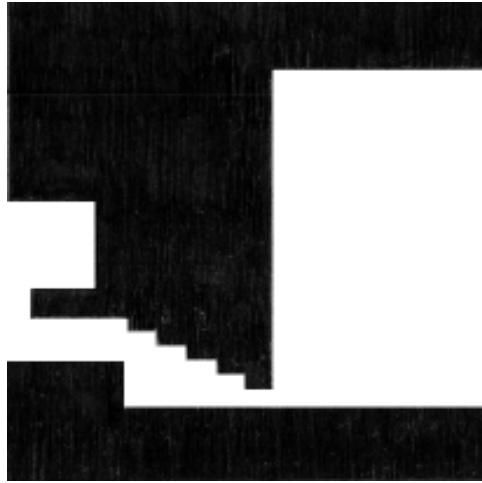
sections



elevations

an urban dwelling

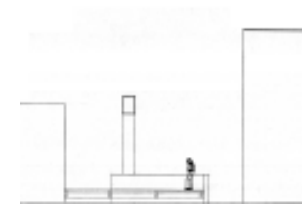
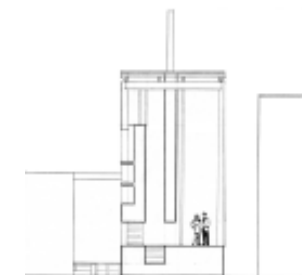
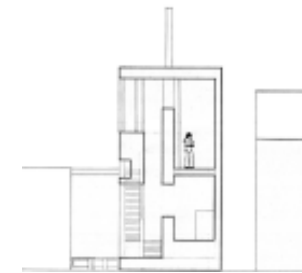
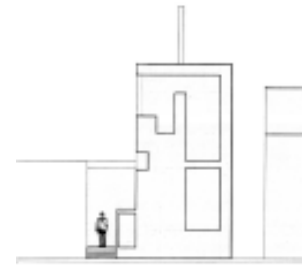
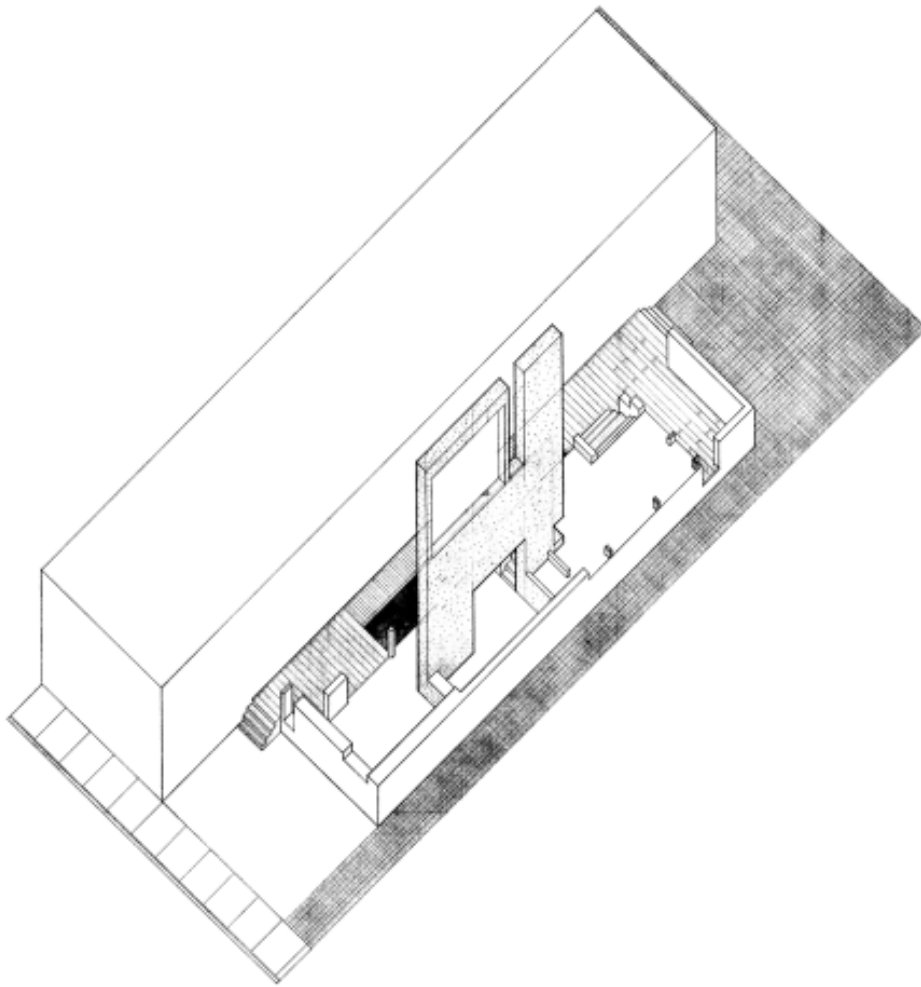
The elements of core, boundary and light remain at the heart of the next project. The core becomes a spine. The spine is oriented horizontally along a narrow alley. The boundary again wraps around the spine and both encloses and releases space.



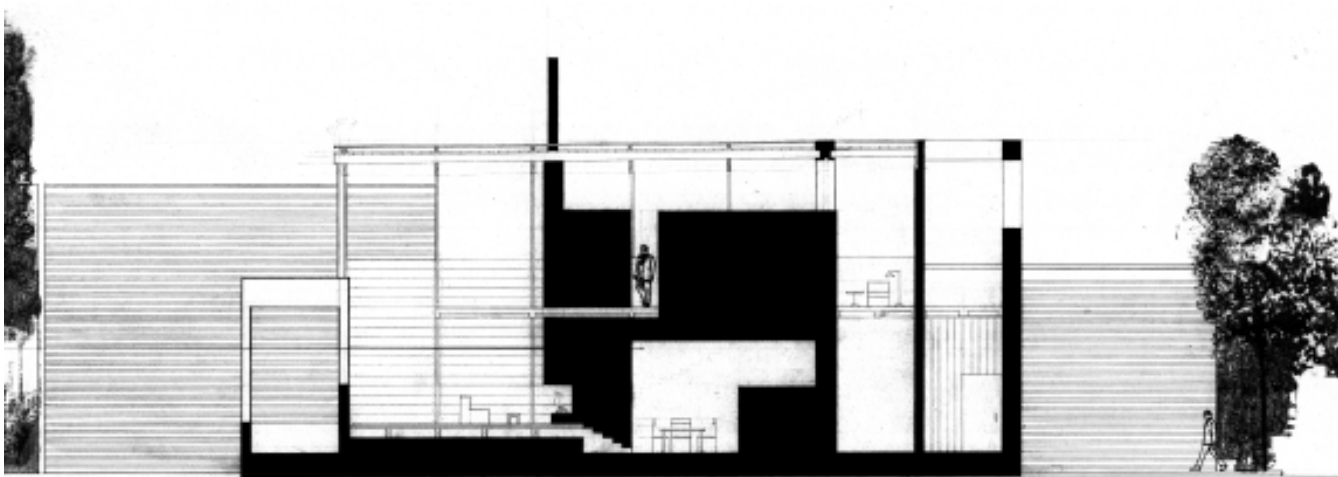
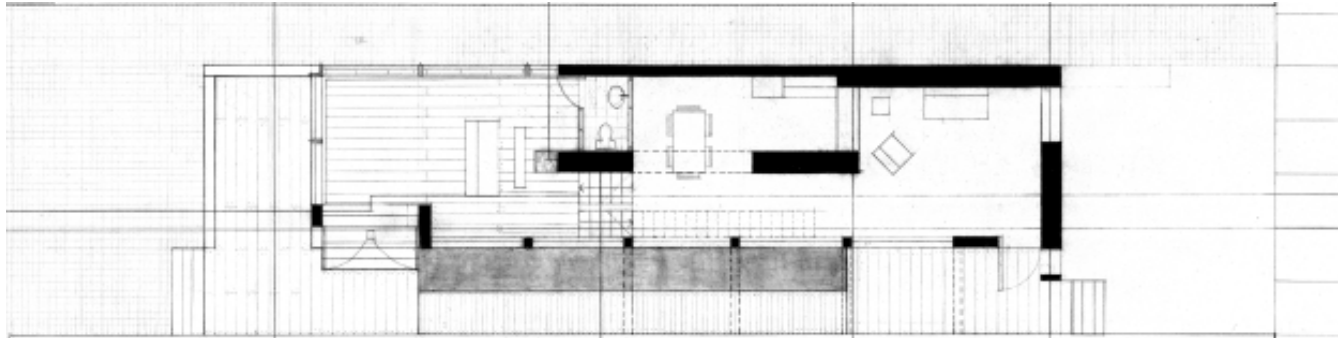
spine

fire
air

The spine is a long wall. It has the height of two floors. The rooms are no longer stacked vertically, they are arranged around the spine as open spaces, one flowing into the next. The spine does not grow from the earth like the core before, instead it grows out of the fabric of the town.



The spine begins at the entry and ends at the hearth. Rising to the second story, the wall turns into a chimney and passes through the roof. The smoke from the fire is carried above the tops of the neighboring buildings.

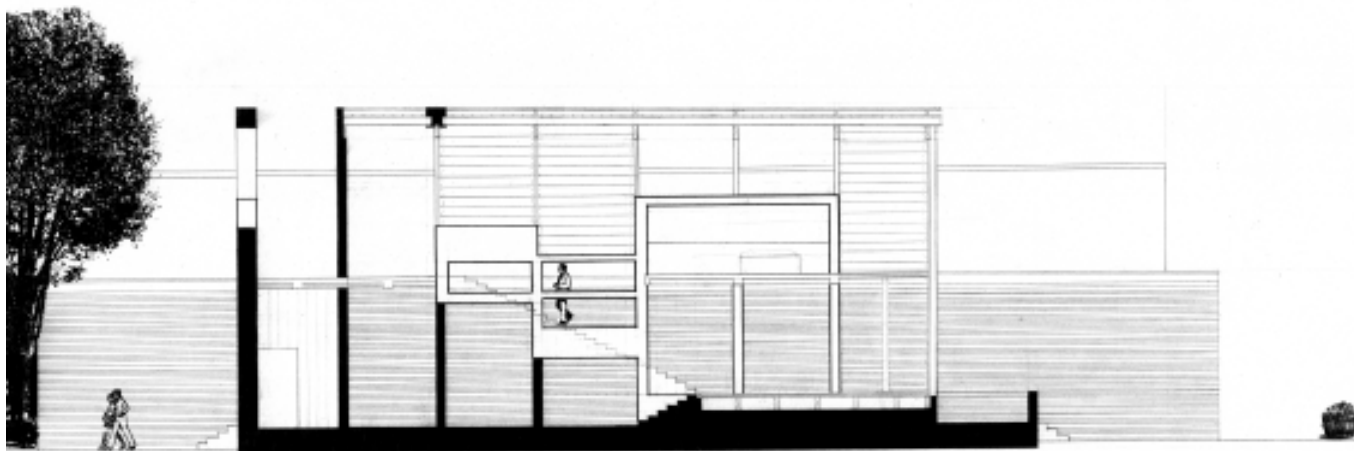
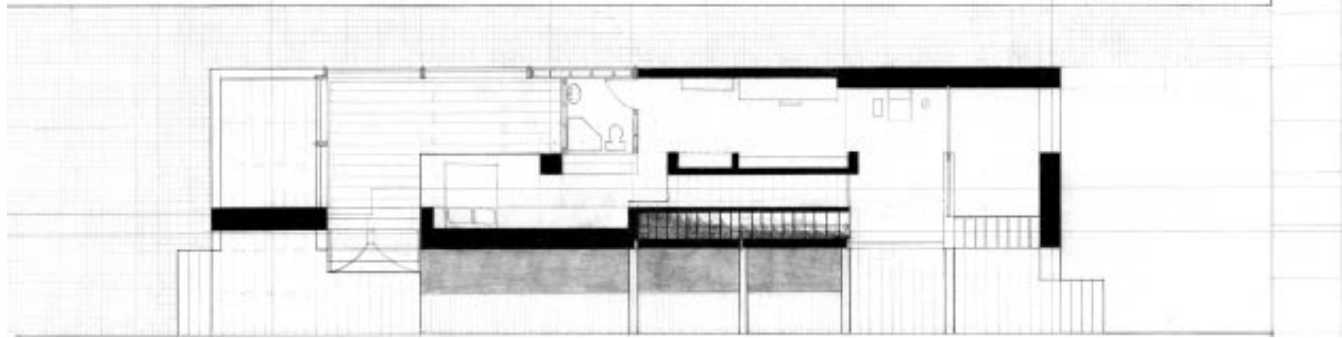


passage

Passage through the house happens along the spine. From the entry, you move past the kitchen which flows into the dining room. The space is long and narrow like the alleys that penetrate the town blocks.



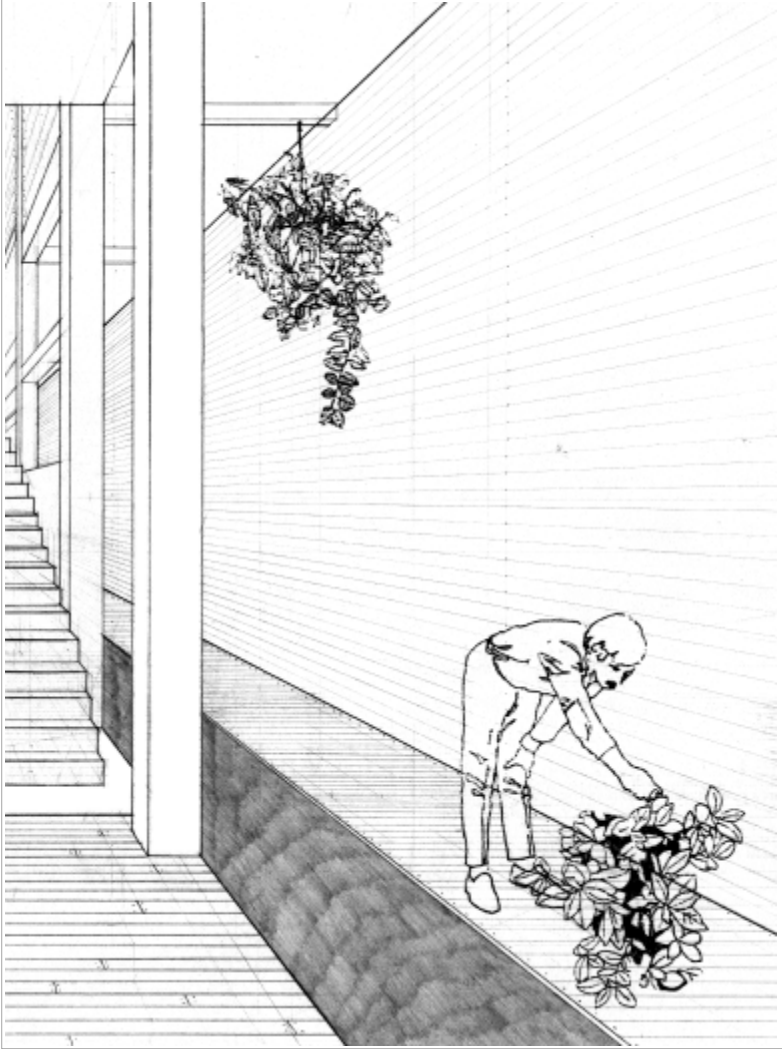
The stair to the second level is held between a wall of columns and a wall of openings. Climbing the stair you experience the space of the outside and the space of the inside simultaneously.



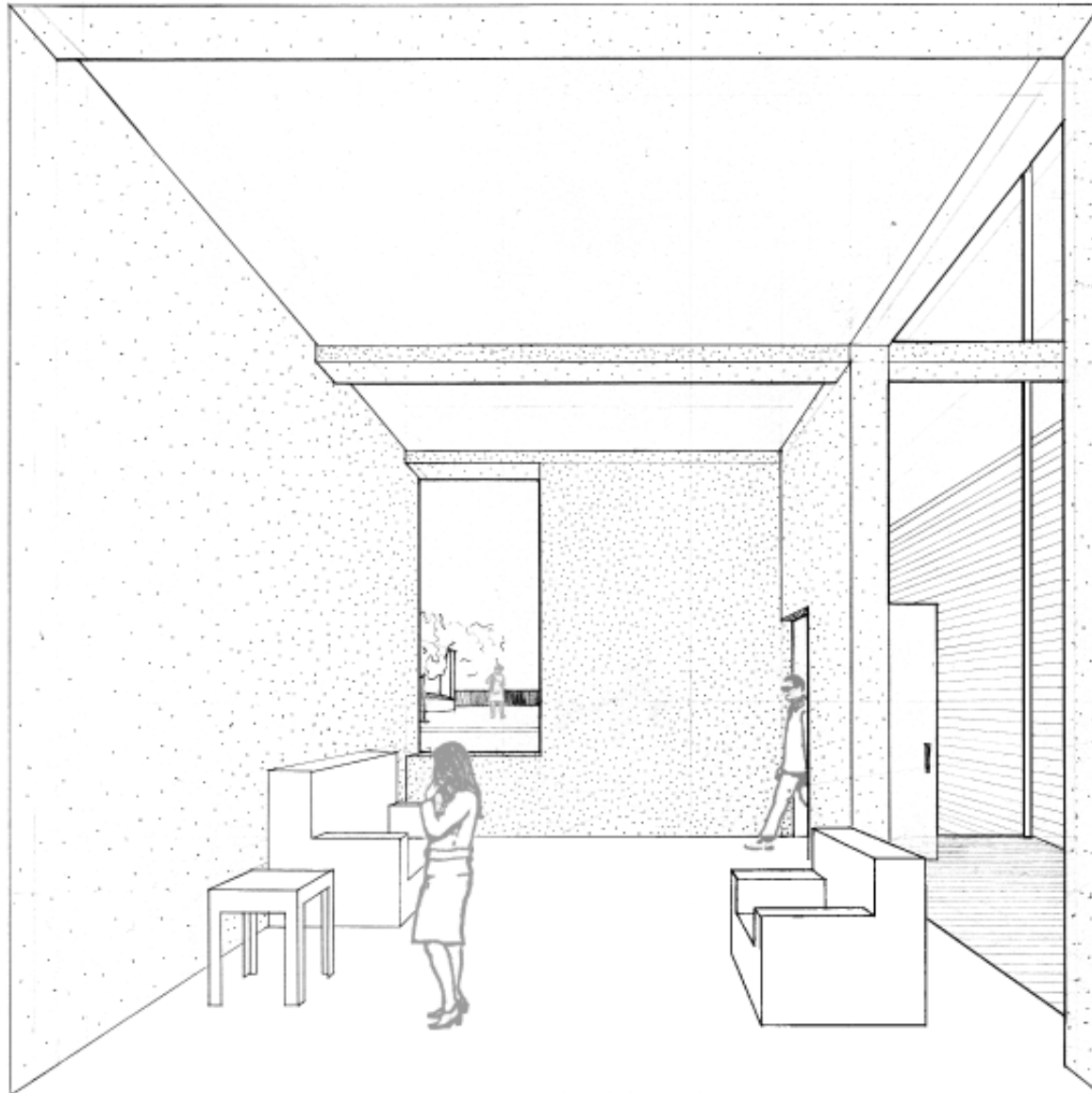
boundary
and
light

continuous
space

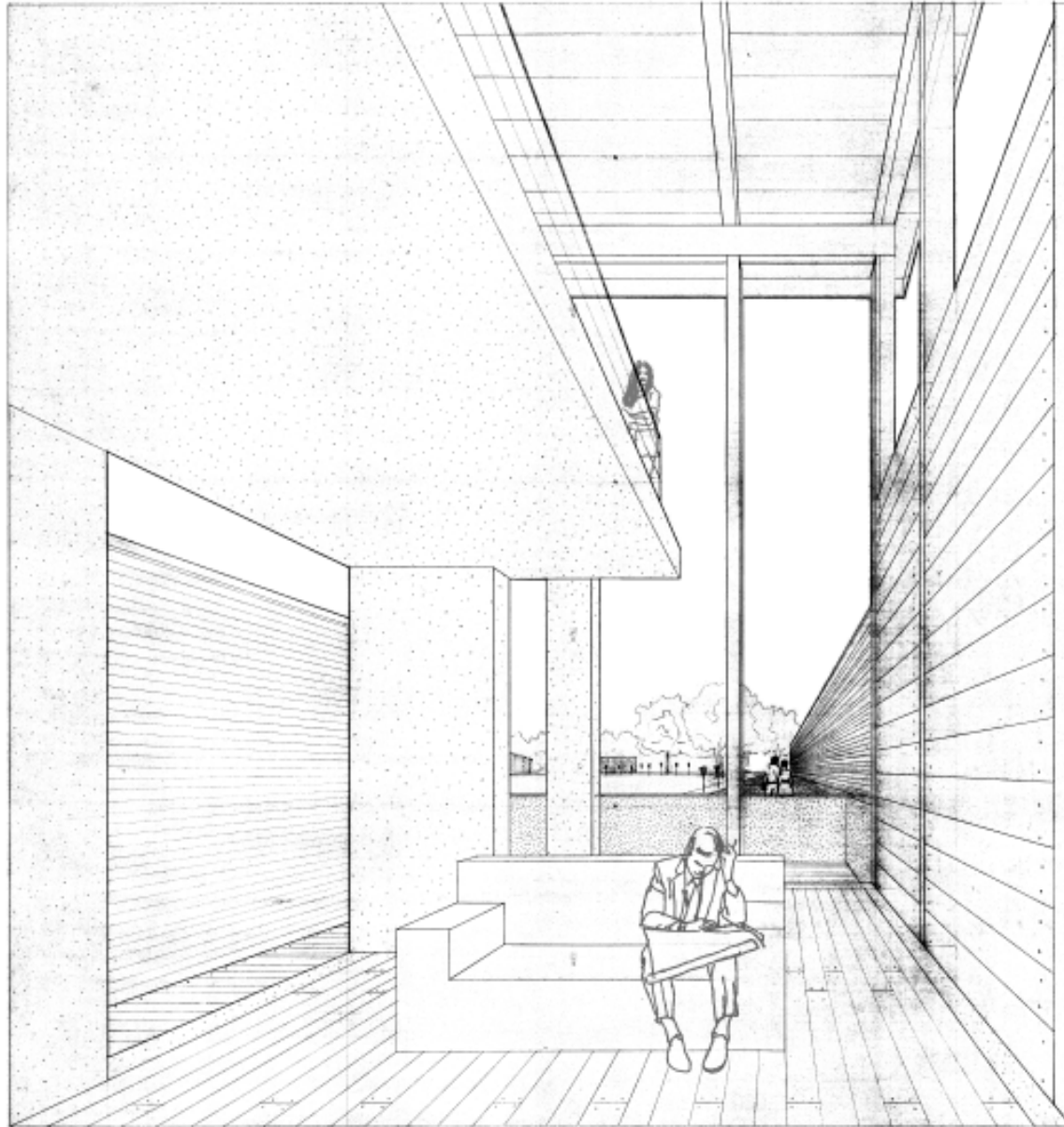
The boundary encircles the spine on all sides. It defines the house within the limits of the alley. The house pulls away from the wall of the neighboring building and forms an outside living space. Light is able to make its way into the house through the wall of columns that marks the boundary between the inside and the outside.



The first floor of the house has luminous spaces and dark spaces. Where the concrete walls surround the spine, the space feels enclosed and the quality of the light is calm. It casts shadows over the textured concrete surfaces bringing the walls to life.



Columns of pale wood provide bright, illuminated spaces. The walls open up and are transparent letting the light flood the room. The columns rise from the first level letting the outside in. Pale wood panels inserted between the columns absorb the light and hold it. The space enclosed by the panels is private and at the same time gives a feeling of openness.



Walls of wood and concrete are the boundary of the house. They are opaque and heavy, light and transparent, luminous and translucent all in the same plane. The boundary does not enclose four separate rooms, instead it allows the space inside and the space outside to be continuous.



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1985 High School Diploma
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