

Fluxional Domiciles

By

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Abstract

This thesis is the result of a study on the character of the traditional single-family working class dwelling and the investigation into the densification of an existing detached-dwelling district – Hintonburg – an inner-city neighborhood in Ottawa, Ontario. In so doing, a response to the question of whether medium density configurations may be able to retain the ideas of ‘place’ and ‘home’ that characterize the earlier district is here offered. This thesis also explores the shift in traditional social meanings of the terms ‘place’ and ‘home’ within the context of the radical pluralism and nomadism that characterizes Canadian urban settlements today. Throughout the investigation, emphasis is placed on the urban condition and its related effect on the theme of ‘home’. This project examines how architecture might simultaneously organize the experience of rooted-ness and stasis (which characterize the detached home), and anticipates change, departure, and transformation. Accordingly, the design proposal of a new typology – a walk-up residential building that recognizes and anticipates contemporary urban dwellings’ sense of change and transformation –brings forth some interesting thoughts and questions on architecture’s role in accommodating a fleeting society.

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1. Introduction

Question of 'home'

The question of the home, and specifically the home in the city, has been a concern to architects and theorists since the early 20th century. The very idea of 'home' is loaded with social and personal connotations. Consequently, as social and individual norms fluctuate, so too must the act of dwelling evolve and housing typologies grow. Anthropologist Roxana Waterson refers to the house as the embodiment of memory about the past "and the connections memory creates between houses and landscape thereby contributing to a particular sense of place."¹

In choosing to explore new forms of dwelling for the urban condition, this thesis and its corresponding architectural proposition pay special attention to two basic modes of dwelling: private and collective. More specifically, this inquiry concentrates on the private working-class home with a yard, as well as higher density settlements where the individual dwelling has little or no expression other than as a "unit" forming part of a collective, larger whole. The first mode of dwelling is typically found in rural settings while the second is exclusively located in the urban landscape. According to Christian Norberg-Schulz, who writes extensively on the topic of dwelling, 'private' dwelling belongs to the realm of the house. For Norberg-Schulz, the detached family house epitomizes the 'private home' as the place of necessary withdrawal and refuge: the center of the dweller's experienced world. In turn, 'collective dwelling' is dwelling in urban space; the latter of the two modes thereby contributes to the richness of the social world.²

¹ Roxana Waterson, "House, Place, and Memory in Tana Toraja." *Beyond Kinship: Social and Material Reproduction in House Societies*, P 182

² Christian Norberg-Schulz, *The Concept of Dwelling*, P 13

‘Collective’ thus becomes synonymous with gathering or assembly: emphasizing and exemplifying the social aspect of dwelling.

Question of the ‘urban condition’

This project is a critical reflection about urban living and it aims to propose a new housing typology for medium-density configurations that draws inspiration from the daily experience of urban life. The question of urban dwelling comes up as a product of the social, cultural, and political re-structuring of home, family, and domesticity, opening up an array of architectural interpretations. In order to elaborate a new urban dwelling, this thesis revisits the terms ‘dwelling’ and ‘place’ and reconfigures their architectural components so as to address the conditions of the present urban environment. The proposal for a new urban residential typology addresses the current context of radical pluralism and nomadism, seeking the possibility of a dwelling that simultaneously admits traditional notions of dwelling-as-rootedness as well as dwelling-as-change. As a result, the design strategy is a twofold: the first stage identifies new essentials of the act of dwelling inherent in all homes. A second stage offers the integration of a new social plane inherent in the detached home but, as of yet, unrealized to its fullest potential. New fundamentals are revealed as the dwellers’ domestic rituals replace exhausted ideals of ‘home’, and the residual space of the detached home on the lot is converted into an animated social realm for the urban dwelling. What follows is a new dwelling place specific to the urban condition and yet culturally and socially universal in its strategic application within the city fabric.

The selection of a site; Hintonburg

The site of Hintonburg, an old working-class neighborhood in Ottawa, Ontario, provides an incredibly rich stage on which the project can take form. In the attempt to redefine home and celebrate the experience of living in the city, this dynamic inner-city district possesses both a stable core and a transitional quality as it undergoes its own process of urban redefining. The neighborhood attests to themes of both permanence and transience in 'home'. Today, it manifests itself as a neighborhood that still maintains its cultural past – Hintonburg's present built environment consists of an abundance of century-old worker homes – but that also accommodates new social practices. In this sense, Hintonburg embraces the advent of a changing identity. Hintonburg's identity is undergoing a sort of re-construction as a result of densification and gentrification; this phenomenon is just one specific instance of a much broader movement affecting cities across the world.

2. Fragmented social identities and the need for a new typology

A. Identities in translation

Urbanites... run for your lives.

Perhaps then we should be envisaging not 'architecture' so much as 'architectures' – unpredictable, flexible and hybrid 'architecture' - ...'architectures' that match the fluidity, flux and complexity of contemporary existence...³

In order to begin the exploration of domestic urban architecture, the issue of social identity must first be addressed. This thesis investigates the possibility of new urban housing paradigms that respond to complex notions of social identity while maintaining a sense of what it is to dwell. The early 21st century urban dweller is at some level homeless, placeless, and yet liberated within the very disorder and confusion of a being-in-flux. The urbanite is “a creature who constantly travels and creates”, where the “act of creating is more important than the product created, and the act of traveling outweighs arriving at one’s destination.”⁴ The 21st century urban dwelling must thus address the demands of a being-in-flux. For the person who has arrived from another country, for example, or who has relocated from a small town to a large city, memories of what was overlay themselves upon anticipation of what may be in complex ways, leaving them in a state of *in-betweenness* in relation to their past and future. The rules of ‘home’ laid down by past conceptions of social and private life are seldom still applicable to the new dweller. It is within this context that this inquiry now questions the contemporary home.

³ Neil Leach, “The Dark Side of the Domus”, P 40

⁴ Koos Bosma, Dorine van Hoogstraten, Martijn Vox, *Housing for the Millions: John Habraken and the S.A.R. (1960-2000)*, P 51

In his book *In/Different Spaces*, Victor Burgin writes on the construction of identities and subjectivity within the environment of media representation. Burgin examines the city dweller's paranoia of the "other" in terms of a loss of identity through displacement. With displacement from their original homeland or nation, racial group, or social class, the "lost people" fall into the grasps of paranoia and become isolated as "other" in the world.⁵ Henri Lefebvre identifies this 'loss of identity' in terms of "increasing displacements of populations between nations, changing distributions of racial and ethnic populations *within* nations, and the mutating geographies of post-cold war global politics [which] are redrawing old maps of identity – national, cultural, and individual."⁶

Burgin and Lefebvre express the very condition in which today's urban dweller exists - a fragmented reality. Notions of self, other, and family have been deconstructed and reconstructed many times over. The instability of an existence without definition has created a condition of unpredictability where the very act of encounter in the contemporary city has rendered the experience of 'home' in the urban setting all the more complex. Burgin explains how from infancy onwards, "the formation of an identity takes place through a series of identifications with others, alienated models 'to which the subject attempts to conform'."⁷ Jacques Derrida in turn rejects the very idea of identity entirely: "there is no identity. There is identification"; the self is always caught up in the "movement of supplementarity."⁸ So it is not that one inherits 'identity' or is given 'identity'; no one is necessarily trying to 'find' identity since this would imply that they

⁵ Victor Burgin, *In/Different Spaces*, P 117-37

⁶ *Ibid.*, P 36

⁷ *Ibid.*, P 136

⁸ Nicholas Royle, *Jacques Derrida*, P 59

at some point had one to begin with. Instead, people are constantly constructing their identities, and like the cities they live in and the homes they dwell in, their identities endlessly change and grow, evolving into who they are. For Derrida, identities are “always already in deconstruction.”⁹ One may also say they are “always already under construction.”¹⁰ These philosophical conceptions concerning identity have intriguing architectural counterparts and raise provocative architectural questions. How can one construct a “home” for a “deconstructed” dweller? Indeed, such fragmentary conceptions of identity radically challenge traditional notions of residential architecture and domestic spaces. This is especially true in urban contexts, where identities are apt to be more radically deconstructed than in more homogeneous environments.

B. Heidegger, Bachelard, and Norberg-Schulz: dilemmas and challenges in traditional conceptions of ‘home’.

The city is the space where human beings come together in their diversities, a place of discovery, and a “milieu of possibilities.”¹¹ In his book *The Concept of Dwelling*, Christian Norberg-Schulz writes that ‘collective dwelling’ must occur in urban space because that is the setting within which one experiences the richness of the world, “in an act of identification”, and “in a sense of belonging to a certain place.”¹² Here ‘collective’ life is understood in the sense of gathering or assembly. The house provides the realm for ‘private dwelling’, and the city for ‘collective dwelling’. The term ‘private’ is here understood in the sense of belonging to the household and shielded from the public exterior. There is no argument that the house possesses a level of public-ness, but

⁹ Ibid., P 85

¹⁰ My own rewording of Derrida’s notion of identity under deconstruction

¹¹ Christian Norberg-Schulz, *The Concept of Dwelling*, P 13-5

¹² Ibid., P 13

here Norberg-Schulz is referring to the relation to the public domain of the city. The house then becomes the place of necessary withdrawal in order for individuals to define and develop their own identity, and where actions seem protected from public view and intrusion. Inside the home, the dweller controls what activities and which spaces are deemed private and public and to what degree. Indeed, the home itself becomes a microcosm of the city, with its own places of encounter, retreat, and social gathering, and its own organization of public and private spaces. Consequently, the home, according to Norberg-Schulz, becomes the “refuge where man gathers and expresses those memories which make up his personal world”; it is the only space where the dweller asserts mastery.¹³

This last notion of home and ‘dwelling’ recalls Gaston Bachelard and Martin Heidegger’s poetic descriptions of what it is to ‘dwell’ on this earth. Both philosophers idealize the home, describing it as rising from the soil and extending vertically towards the sky in an act of building and nurturing. Such conditions of rootedness and verticality are requirements for poetic dwelling, and to “poetically dwell” is of essential significance to human well-being. Heidegger underscores the in-dissociable relationship between building and dwelling in his study of the word *buan*: the Old English and High German word for “building” but which means, “to dwell”. *Bauen*, he adds, means “cherish”, “protect”, “preserve”, and “care for”; the act of dwelling can thus be understood as both building and nurturing.¹⁴ Furthermore, Heidegger’s argument for a ‘situated’ architecture can be understood as a longing for the “soil”. Soil is really synonymous with “homeland” in Heidegger’s thought, and is therefore only within reach in the countryside

¹³ Ibid., P 13

¹⁴ Norman Crowe, *Nature and the Idea of a Man-Made World*, P 40-1 on referring to Heidegger’s study of the term *buan*; Martin Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking.” *Poetry, Language, Thought*, P146-7

of one's nation. In his analysis of Heidegger's writings on "home", Neil Leach points out that this ideal of home and dwelling consequently excludes those living in the city.¹⁵

In turn, Gaston Bachelard regarded the city as an environment that sooner prohibited dwelling than accommodated it for its lack of 'cosmicity'. In the following excerpt from *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard writes about the city:

*The inhabitants of the big city live in superimposed boxes. ... They have no roots and, what is quite unthinkable for a dweller of houses, skyscrapers have no cellars. ... The different rooms that compose living quarters jammed into one floor all lack one of the fundamental principles for distinguishing and classifying the values of intimacy [verticality]. ... A house in a big city lacks cosmicity. For here, where houses are no longer set in natural surroundings, the relationship between house and space becomes an artificial one. Everything about it is mechanical and, on every side, intimate living flees.*¹⁶

As does Heidegger, Bachelard denies the urban dweller the ability to participate in the 'poetic dwelling' that he speaks of. Dwelling takes place on earth, encompassing the whole of humanity, Nature, and the cosmos. According to Bachelard, the psychology of the home consists of two main principles of organization: "the first is concentration, which appeals to our sense of centrality. The second is verticality, which is represented by the contrast between attic and basement, areas in the house with the most freedom of movement: places associated with heaviness and lightness, with going up and going down."¹⁷ For Bachelard, verticality in the house - cellar, living floor, sleeping floor, and attic - is therefore instrumental in "distinguishing and classifying the values of intimacy. Thus there is no true Oneiric house that is not organized vertically."¹⁸ In the detached home, privacy and intimacy increase as the household members move backwards into the

¹⁵ Neil Leach, "The Dark Side of the Domus", P 31-2

¹⁶ Joan Ockman, *Architecture Culture 1943-1968*, P 110

¹⁷ Koos Bosma, Dorine van Hoogstraten, and Martijn Vos, *Housing for the Millions: John Habraken and the S.A.R. (1960-20000)*, P 13

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, P 112

lot, and upwards within the home. Consequently, the traditional sequence of public to private domestic space assumes both verticality and segregation. Where then is the urbanite to seek out a meaningful experience of dwelling if the very built environment within which this 'wanderer' is searching denies the proposed definition of dwelling altogether? Where, within the oblique wasteland of the city, is the soil that engulfs the foundations of the home? Where is the attic where "old things attach themselves for life to the soul?"¹⁹ How does the 'homeless' and 'placeless' 21st century dweller thus reconcile the subtle longing for the nostalgic experience of dwelling with the intense anticipation of the spontaneous nature of urban life? If it is to be concluded that the urban dweller is not privy to such an experience, then there must be a new identification of the act of dwelling that can lead to a new dwelling typology for the inner-city fabric. The "artificial" relationship between house and space, that for Bachelard is a consequence of the nature of the city can be replaced with a new relationship between dwelling and city that embraces the experience of urban life much more fully.

The fall of dwelling

Neil Leach goes on to argue that because of the conditions of life in the city today, the very term 'dwelling', as philosophers like Heidegger and Bachelard have defined it, can have negative consequences that work against the very ends it wishes to achieve.²⁰ Their notion of dwelling seems incompatible with the urban condition. Leach also questions the very primacy of the concept of 'dwelling' as a source of identification

¹⁹ Ibid., P 112

²⁰ Neil Leach, "The Dark Side of the Domus"

when such a place-specific term is unable to retain authority within the urban condition.²¹ In order to consider a new urban dwelling, it is critical to revisit the terms ‘dwelling’ and ‘place’. It would be a mistake to consider these two notions in the same manner as in the past, without acknowledging contemporary practices of urban life, as they exist in our present urban environments: the city. One can no longer understand ‘place’ in the same sense as that which Bachelard and Heidegger have described. Within the urban setting, the concept of ‘place’ is very different than ‘place’ within suburban and rural landscapes, and is identified through event and the memories thereof, as eternalized in the structures that make up our built environment.

If Leach sees ‘place’ as the creation of a space of difference – “the very placelessness of contemporary society has prompted a fresh interest in ‘place’ as ‘difference’”²² – then urban theorists Jane Jacobs and Henri Lefebvre propose it as a space of spontaneity and encounter. In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jacobs stresses the importance of sidewalk or street presence in the city, as the sidewalk is the natural place of social contact. In cities that lack this element of casual public street life, the inhabitants must choose between a “togetherness” in the form of sharing too much of their private life, and a life lacking “togetherness” altogether: it is an all or nothing choice.²³ Jacobs describes sidewalks as “lowly, unpurposeful and random”, and yet stresses how “sidewalk contacts are the small change from which a city’s wealth of public life may grow.”²⁴ For Lefebvre, the manifestation of social interaction and experience in the city is critical. He rejects the notion of space as “containers of content”,

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., P 36

²³ Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, P 55-75

²⁴ Ibid., P 72

and makes a demand for urban places to be “places of simultaneity and encounter, places where exchange does not pass into exchange value, commerce, and profit.”²⁵

Another dimension of this meditation on dwelling considers the differences between ‘dwelling’ and ‘home’. When trying to impose traditional definitions of ‘dwelling’ and ‘home’, one inevitably comes to a position where “...home is represented as a paradigmatic nonsite where social contradictions become instead visible and irreconcilable.”²⁶ As a result of the social, cultural, and political re-structuring of home, family, and domesticity, the exploration of urban dwelling can lead to a multitude of new possibilities for the architecture of urban dwelling. “The ideal of home, while universal, exists simultaneously as a deep-rooted individual concept – at once fantasy, memory, and longing – and as cultural norm.”²⁷ Home consists of both what the dweller needs and desires, and what society informs the dweller to need and desire. The house is embedded with many social meanings and practices that, although relevant at one point in time, now prevent the home from progressing forward alongside its inhabitants.

The post-war prototype for happy home-life must be wholly reconsidered because this is no longer the world of the nuclear family. By the time Dolores Hayden was writing her book *Redesigning the American Dream* in 1983, the predominant North American family type was the dual-income family, while the fastest growing family type was the single parent, with 90% of these single parents being female. Furthermore, a quarter of all households consisted of a single person living alone.²⁸

²⁵ Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, P 148

²⁶ Maurizia Bosagli, “The Squat, the Tearoom, the Urn, and the Designer Bathroom: Citing Home in Ken Loach’s ‘Riff Raff’.” *Burning Down the House: Recycling Domesticity*, P 387

²⁷ Gwendolyn Wright, “Prescribing the Model Home.” *Home: A Place in the World*, P 214

²⁸ Dolores Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream*, P 40-1

In 2001, the Ottawa West area – encompassing all of Hintonburg – consisted of 85,370 families of which 56,150 were married-couple families; 16,965 were single-parent families; and, 14,260 of single-parent families were female single parents.²⁹

Adoption and foster-care have bred spontaneous families and variable household sizes. This shift in patterns of family composition has also encouraged a shift in definitions and a porous-ness in boundaries. Same-sex co-habitation and, more recently, same-sex marriages have reconfigured the distribution of gender roles in en-gendered space. Single parenting demands have re-defined household authority. More recently, at-home offices are requiring a re-negotiation of work/rest spatial relationships and distribution.

As such, today's designs for domestic space must accommodate the flexibility of a population on the verge of change, and a society evolving into something else. More specifically, urban dwellings must accommodate “the ‘wanderer’, belonging to a transitory, fleeting society”, and embrace “the contemporary moment – rootless, international, mobile, deterritorialized.”³⁰ In the content of this thesis, the contemporary Canadian ‘wanderer’ can be understood as a ‘newcomer’. In this context, the term ‘newcomer’ encompasses all individuals who came into a new way of being: from suburb to city, nation to nation, working class to middle class, from nuclear family to a restructured family. The ‘newcomer’ embodies the essence of the post-structuralist urban subject³¹, *wandering* into a new way of life, a new way of dwelling, and then, just as easily *wandering* back out of it into another new way.

²⁹ Statistics Canada's [www.statcan.ca, http://www12.statcan.ca/english/profil01/Details/details1fam.cfm?](http://www12.statcan.ca/english/profil01/Details/details1fam.cfm?), September 7th, 2004

³⁰ Neil Leach, “The Dark Side of the Domus”, P 39

³¹ My advisor suggested this definition of ‘newcomer’ to me for the purpose of this thesis.

3. A Hintonburg worker home

A. Hintonburg: a neighborhood in translation



Figure 1: Hintonburg homes north of Wellington

Nowhere is the process of urban redefining felt more strongly than in “transitional” urban regions, such as the district of Hintonburg, along the western seam of the capital city of Ottawa, Ontario. Through the 19th and early 20th century, the old working class neighborhood of Hintonburg generally identified itself as French and Catholic.³² In this district, families built their own homes, lived next to (if not with) their relatives, handed down their properties and belongings to their kin, and strove to possess that which all people strived for; a home of their own. Especially during the latter half of the 19th century, Hintonburg’s land and lower taxes gave the workers the opportunity to own a real home of their own, on a property of their own, still within reach of the city core and employment opportunities.³³

By the 1920s, the effects of modernization – specifically the introduction and establishment of the electric streetcar railway line into the district – were being more strongly felt, and the arrival of middle class settlers began to diversify the predominantly working-class neighborhood. A neighborhood that had once been home to mainly local mill and railway workers, Hintonburg was slowly becoming heterogeneous during this time. Holland Avenue (by Wellington) became a clear division line between the socio-economic groups, mostly as a result of the already established residents who had settled along the eastern side of Holland Ave and the northern side of Wellington St.³⁴ Even today the northern land is cheaper than the southern land. As a result, there are many more opportunities for redevelopment along Wellington’s northern boundaries than along the southern borders.³⁵

³² John Leaning, *Hintonburg and Mechanicsville: A Narrative History*, P 35, 42-5

³³ Bruce Elliot, “Streetcar Suburbs 1891-1914”, from *The City Beyond*, P 191-3

³⁴ Christina Newell, *Hintonburgh: A Working class Streetcar Suburb at the Turn of the Century*, P 13, 21-2

³⁵ John Leaning, *Hintonburg and Mechanicsville: A Narrative History*, P 21



Figure 2: Southwest of Holland and Wellington



Figure 3: North of Wellington Street West

The demise of the electric streetcar by the 1950s halted Hintonburg's growth. By the latter half of the 20th century, the City of Ottawa considered Hintonburg a "slum area" in need of serious repair and re-construction.³⁶ The neighbourhood's image eventually became one of failure, as "motorcycle gangs began to appear, followed by a noticeable influx of drug dealers and prostitutes after their ouster from Lower Town in the later 1980s and the 1990s."³⁷ Around the same time, this district's strongly French Catholic identity also began to shift. Little French was publicly used after Hintonburg's annexation in 1907. Major demographic changes were felt by the 1970s, when Hintonburg began to lose its French-speaking population altogether.³⁸ The relocation of French Canadians to other areas of the capital region and the adoption of English into daily life deeply changed the neighborhood's cultural identity. With the closure of some schools and the loss of many French residents, attendance at the St. Francois D'Assise church dropped significantly.³⁹ Where once it had played such an integral role in the area's self-perception – the origin of the *village* of Hintonburg centered on the arrival of the Capucin monks from France and the construction of the great church⁴⁰-- St Francois D'Assise now plays only a minor role in comparison.

³⁶ John Leaning, *Hintonburg and Mechanicsville: A Narrative History*, P18-9

³⁷ *Ibid.*, P 38

³⁸ *Ibid.*, P 31

³⁹ *Ibid.*, P 32

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, P 35-7

All the workers have left...enter a new breed.

While older settlements maintain a presence in Hintonburg, as evidenced by the number of century-old homes still standing there, Hintonburg is changing. A great diversity of inhabitants now layers their presence onto the once tightly knit community. For example, in 2001, of the 330,820 people residing in Ottawa West, 74,630 belong to a visible minority; 87,190 are foreign-born; and, 37,480 immigrated to the area between 1991 and 2001 – compared to 49,735 who immigrated up until 1991.⁴¹ In addition, a number of high-tech businesses have moved into the commercial area of Wellington Street, and an attempt to designate the area as an Arts District is currently underway.⁴² Evidently, Hintonburg's identity, like that of numerous cities worldwide, is undergoing a sort of re-construction as a result of densification and gentrification.

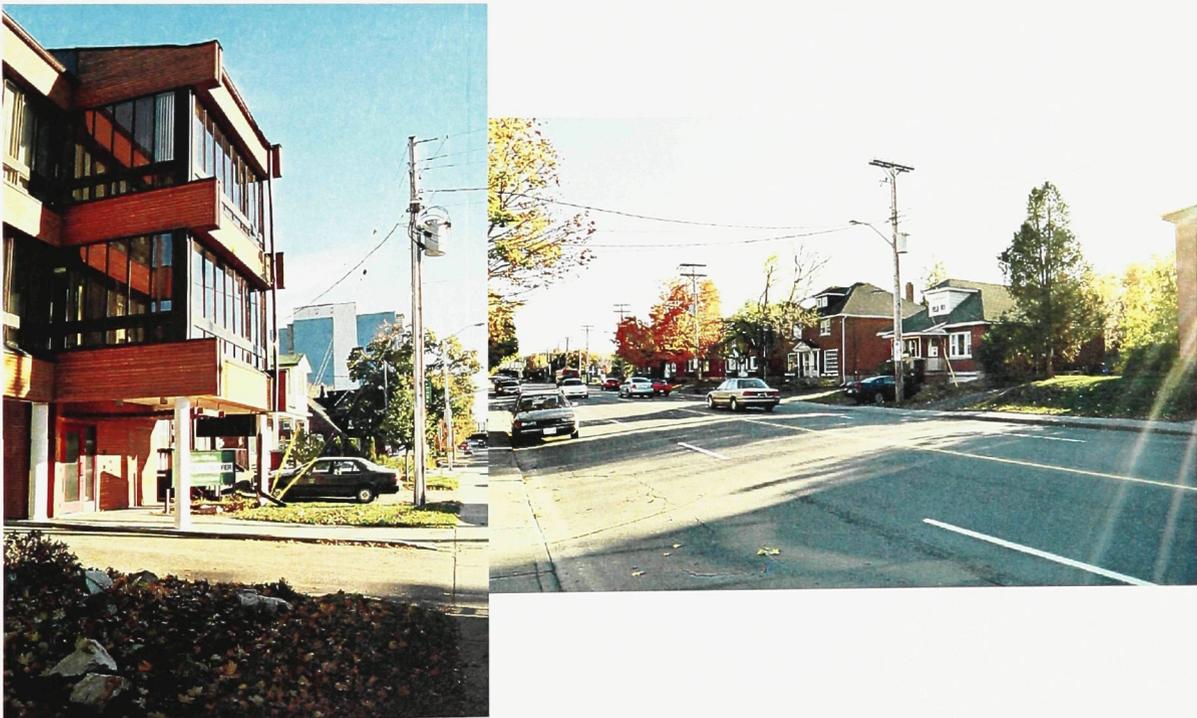


Figure 4: Holland Ave., new business moving into Hintonburg

⁴¹ Statistics Canada's [www.statcan.ca](http://www12.statcan.ca/english/profil01/Details/details1pop3.cfm?), <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/profil01/Details/details1pop3.cfm?>, September 7th, 2004.

⁴² Hintonburg Community Association website. <www.hintonburg.com>

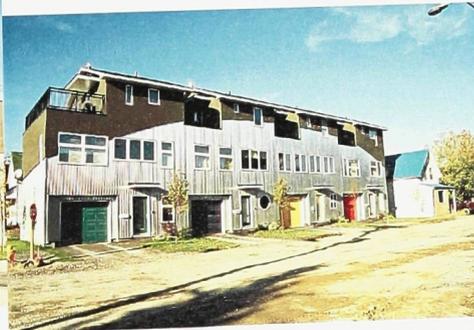
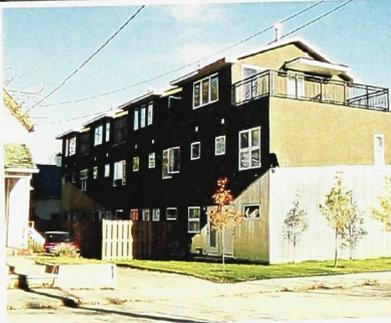
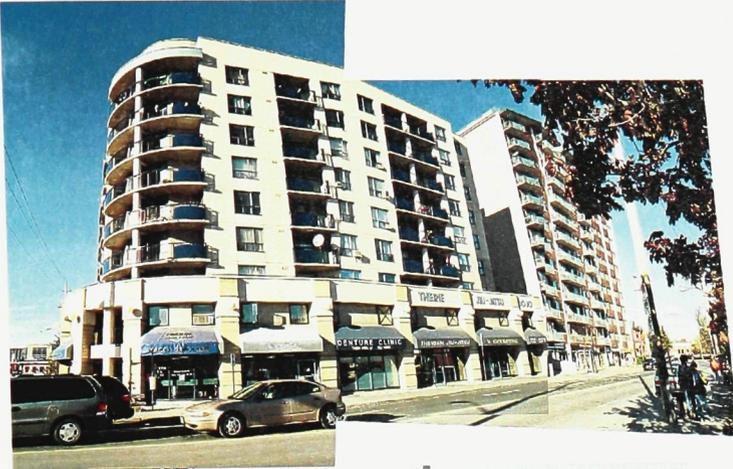


Figure 5: Housing Typologies in Hintonburg

Neil Leach writes of a “shift in the way in which we relate to the world” as a result of living in “an age that constitutes its identity less through notions of place – place of origin, birthplace, etc. – and increasingly through more transitory phenomena, such as jobs and possessions.”⁴³ Today, Hintonburg prides itself on being a “vibrant neighborhood”, endowed with ethnic, social, economical, educational, and professional diversity. To its solid core have been added “new arrivals from around Ottawa and beyond, from across Canada and around the world, some to settle here permanently, some who will move on.”⁴⁴ The 21st century Hintonburg includes a range of housing options in terms of price as well as dwelling types. Old A-frame houses, social housing, apartment blocks, and renovated house conversions are some of the residential typologies offered to new residents. Presently there are also several loft and condominium projects underway with many units already sold.⁴⁵

The nexus of so many of the emblematic shifts, Hintonburg provides an ideal setting for an exploration of new housing typologies in the urban context of the contemporary city. While this neighborhood’s identity undergoes re-construction, it provides an apt context for a discourse on urban dwelling. For instance, there are, as mentioned above, a number of century-old detached houses in Hintonburg whose presence attests to the persistence of the ideal of ‘home’. The 100-year old single-family house, now almost a symbolic relic in the urban landscape, plays a powerful role by “being the one piece of the world around us which still speaks directly of our bodies as the center and the measure of that world.”⁴⁶ These houses still provide a sense of stability

⁴³ Neil Leach “The Dark Side of the Domus”, P 37

⁴⁴ John Leaning *Hintonburg and Mechanicsville: A Narrative History*, P 46

⁴⁵ Based on my own observations of Hintonburg’s available housing during multiple visits to the site in the period of August 2003 and May 2004, and real estate announcements in the area for existing and proposed housing.

⁴⁶ SITE, *Highrise of Homes*, P 15, Quoting Charles Moore on the single-family house

in many people's lives as they stand firmly grounded in their lots, protective and massive in their recollection of an identity no longer within reach. Since the spatial and economic liberty of building detached homes is no longer affordable in dense city neighborhoods like Hintonburg, how can one begin to translate the fundamental qualities of 'dwelling' into a housing paradigm that accommodates contemporary urban densities? In an attempt to answer these questions, one must simultaneously investigate the idea of densification in an existing detached-dwelling district while recalling the purpose and character of single-family dwellings. How can medium density configurations retain the idea of 'place' and 'home' that characterized the earlier district of Hintonburg?



Figure 6: Hintonburg's traditional worker home (top) and its future housing developments (bottom)

B. Domestic rituals and memory of home life

To consider the house as the embodiment of memory about the past is to understand that the house has a life history intertwined with those of its inhabitants or dwellers. In *Architecture and Disjunction*, Bernard Tschumi writes of the importance of understanding architecture as inhabited: "...sequences of events, use, activities, incidents are always superimposed on those fixed spatial sequences," providing architecture with programmatic sequences that suggest "...secret maps and impossible fictions, rambling collections of events all strung along a collection of spaces, frame after frame, room after room, episode after episode."⁴⁷

The daily rituals of domestic space – the consumption of food, the reception of guests, the preparation of self, and the recovery of self – are manifestations of memory, both social and personal, in the house. They recall cultural backgrounds and social precedence, as well as individual practices and family customs. These rituals, which contribute to the formation of the social self's identity, dynamically intertwine with the architecture that surrounds and forms the space within which they take place. These domestic rituals and acts of 'private dwelling' require a 'defined and imageable stage'.⁴⁸ The home's architecture is born out of the ritual, as the forming of space around the event. This process linking architecture and event resembles Bernard Tschumi's writings on memory and architecture. He elaborates:

*Memory bears the marks of the situation which gave rise to it; it is part of the inventory of the individual who is isolated in many ways. Where there is experience in the strict sense of the word, certain contents of the individual past combine with material of the collective past.*⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, P 157

⁴⁸ Christian Norberg-Schulz, *The Concept of Dwelling*, P 13-5

⁴⁹ Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire." *Illuminations*, P161

Domestic architecture is therefore strongly tied to patterns of individual and collective memory: the house's formal language is realized in its relationship with the dweller through social and personal events. The house's plan and section are tied to structures of memory in the sense that they unfold as the spatial organization of the home's events and bear within them the traces of the house's evolution. Architecture can and does, nonetheless, also have the ability to affect these domestic ritual themselves, changing and evolving them into a response to an architectural shift, as a consequence of architecture's ability to manipulate spatial experiences. This intertwining relationship between architecture and ritual provides an understanding of why the home evolves as it does and why home life is so fundamental to both those who reside within and those who design it.

C. Case study at 190 Armstrong St: a Hintonburg worker home



Figure 7: The house at 190 Armstrong St.

These general concepts of dwelling – the social and individual implications within the idea of the home – yield the following conclusion regarding urban dwelling: that the terms ‘home’ and ‘place’ must be redefined for the urban context so that new dwelling typologies may provide both the stability of a familiar place of refuge and the flexibility to adjust with changing identities. I will now examine these general conclusions in relation to a specific urban dwelling site. By interviewing the present owners of the house at 190 Armstrong St., in Hintonburg, as well as the designer for their latest addition, I was able to complete a set of drawings that traced the home’s transformation from the original 21’x 22’ footprint to the present 21’x 48’ home. Coupled with research into the historical evolution of the Canadian home over the last three centuries, this process allowed me to more closely understand how to strategically address the questions I am putting forth in this thesis.

My exploration of the life history of one house in particular unfolds as a biographical journey of domestic rituals over the last 100 years. This working-class house was built at the turn of the 20th century and has been home to a handful of different residents, but is presently occupied by Patricia Nevin and Dave Dewar. Study of the domestic rituals performed within this home over the course of a century (in relation to the social history of the Canadian home in general) has made it clear that there are constancies that solidify and strengthen the idea of ‘home’. In my study of this one house in particular, I articulate four principle rituals – consumption of food, receiving of guests, preparation of self, and recovery of self – as the memory of the home since they remain relatively stable over the course of time. It is within this context that a discussion engaging the concept of ‘dwelling as rootedness’ for urban home life presents itself.

Consumption

The first sign of human settlement and rest after the hunt, the battle, and wandering in the desert is today, as when the first men lost paradise, the setting up of the fireplace and the lighting of the reviving, warming, and food-preparing flame. Around the hearth the first groups assembled; around it the first alliances formed; around it the first rude religious concepts were put into the customs of a cult. Throughout all phases of society the hearth formed that sacred focus around which the whole took order and shape. It is the first and most important, the 'moral' element of architecture.⁵⁰

The first western dwelling places were most often one-storey, single room houses. The typical late 17th century pioneer homes across Canada sometimes had a small sleeping area within the attic space accessible by a ladder or some form of makeshift stairs.⁵¹ At the time, the common home formed around a single heating source, situated in the centre of the room. All of the family's activities occurred in the common space of the house, in a room that can be equated to subsequent notions of the kitchen. The daily ritual of beginning and ending the day by the warmth of the hearth, watching and waiting for the preparation of food, was carried out in this space. This, the centre of the home, was perceived as a cosmological centre.

In his essay "House and Home", Joseph Rykwert elaborates on the notion of the fire/hearth as the nexus of *home* and advances the idea of the taming of the fire as the origin of culture. The fire, for Rykwert, is "the token of control over the environment."⁵² The fire provides heat, light, and nutrition, making the hearth space the focal point of the house. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, the kitchen – the hearth space – was the social space of the house for both family members and guests. Even when the home began its route to compartmentalization in the mid-19th century, the kitchen would

⁵⁰ Gottfried Semper, *The Four Elements of Architecture*, P102

⁵¹ Peter Ward, *A History of Domestic Space*

⁵² Joseph Rykwert, "House and Home." *Home: A Place in the World*, P 47

occupy more than half of the floor plan and remained the place within the home where the family spent most of their time, and where neighbors and friends visited when they dropped by.⁵³

During the late 18th and early 19th century, the elite had begun allotting specific functions to specific rooms as a sign of status and symbolic representation of economic success.⁵⁴ Homes were divided into spaces for everyday life: formal occasions and sleeping. Essentially, the home's three main areas responded to the household's social activity, the necessary formalities of social etiquette, and the luxury of privacy. Spaces began to be more clearly defined in terms of levels of privacy and public-ness.

As a result of new methods in heating and lighting, household services such as lighting, heating, and running water, were extended across larger areas. This allowed for the family to move into other areas and utilize more spaces within the dwelling, turning the early 20th century kitchen into less a communal gathering space and more a space of work and consumption. Privacy became more sought out within the home, and rooms were dedicated to specific events/rituals. The kitchen, now devoted to food preparation alone, was pushed back to the rear, separated from the rest of the house by a wall with perhaps not more than a single access door. By the turn of the 20th century, the kitchen had begun to stand apart from the rest of the dwelling. No longer the home's centre, the kitchen's architectural quality was driven by demands for efficiency and production, and for separation from the public. On the other hand, the daily ritual of gathering around the source of food (previously the hearth,) and the family's social activity of receiving

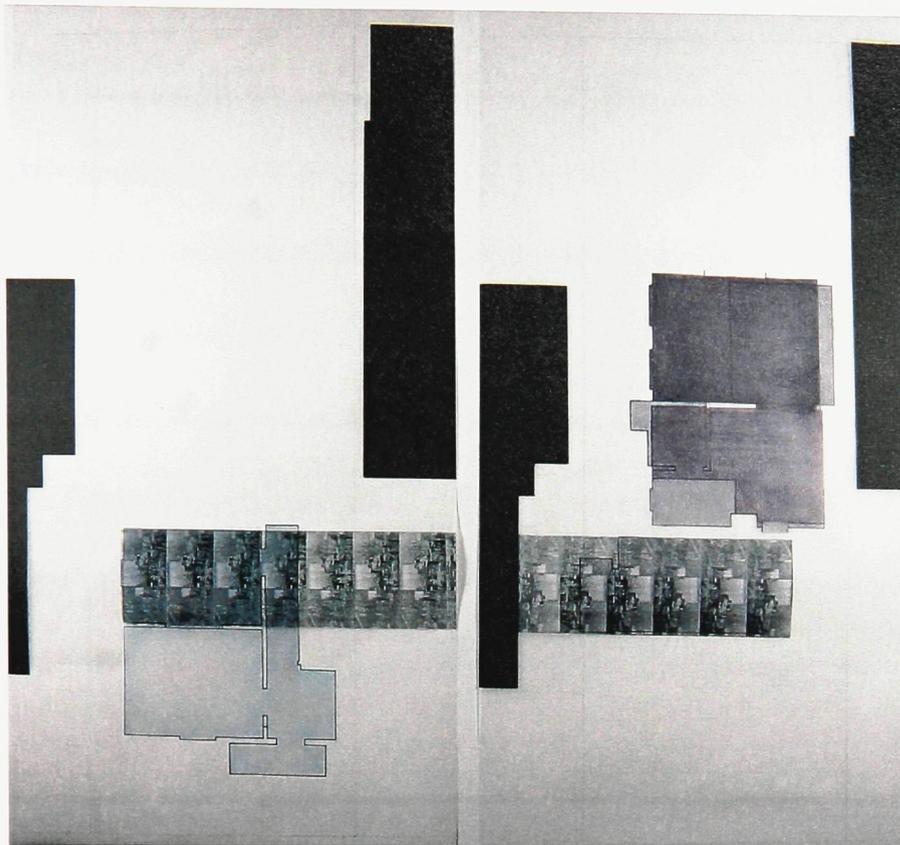
⁵³ Peter Ward, *A History of Domestic Space*; Peter Ennals and Deryck W. Holdsworth, *Homeplace: The Making of the Canadian Dwelling Over Three Centuries*

⁵⁴ Peter Ennals and Deryck W. Holdsworth, *Homeplace: The Making of Canadian Dwelling Over Three Centuries*, P 90-2

nutrition were all still bound to this space. The hearth was now a space reserved for family members alone, as the dining room now provided a formal space for consumption of meals when non-family members were involved.

The Hintonburg house I studied had already undergone the process of spatial division. As such, the main floor originally consisted of both a kitchen and a parlor. A separate entrance, used by the family and familiars, led directly into the kitchen. Concepts of privacy were minimal in these conditions, and the home's domestic rituals were in common and shared within the household. Indeed, through its many uses over the years, this significant room had always remained the place where food was prepared. Food preparation endowed the kitchen with an enduring core function that has overridden the many architectural evolutions it has undergone.

In a similar reflection of broader changes, the interior of the home at 190 Armstrong is divided into three main areas, organized as a set of functioning spaces that delineates, more specifically, the home's public and private spaces. The ground floor serves as the home's public realm, becoming slightly more intimate as it spreads backwards into the lot. The second floor, logically, is the home's private realm, lifted upwards away from the public sphere of the ground floor. This is consistent with many working class houses built in the 19th century: they were spatially laid out in this manner, seemingly in emulation of more costly and flamboyant houses.



The original layout (farthest left) shows the rituals of consumption (image strip) and receiving (pale blue rendering). The current layout (left) shows the expansion and removal of both this ritual spaces into the back of the lot, completely removed from the original footprint. Consumption of food and receiving of friends now occur in overlapping spaces. The front of the house is reserved for the most formal of occasions.

Figure 8: Analytical drawings

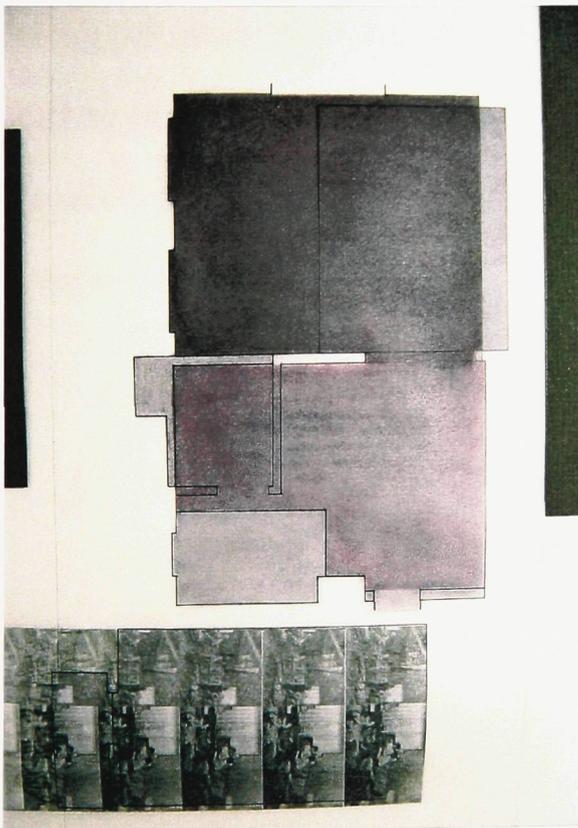
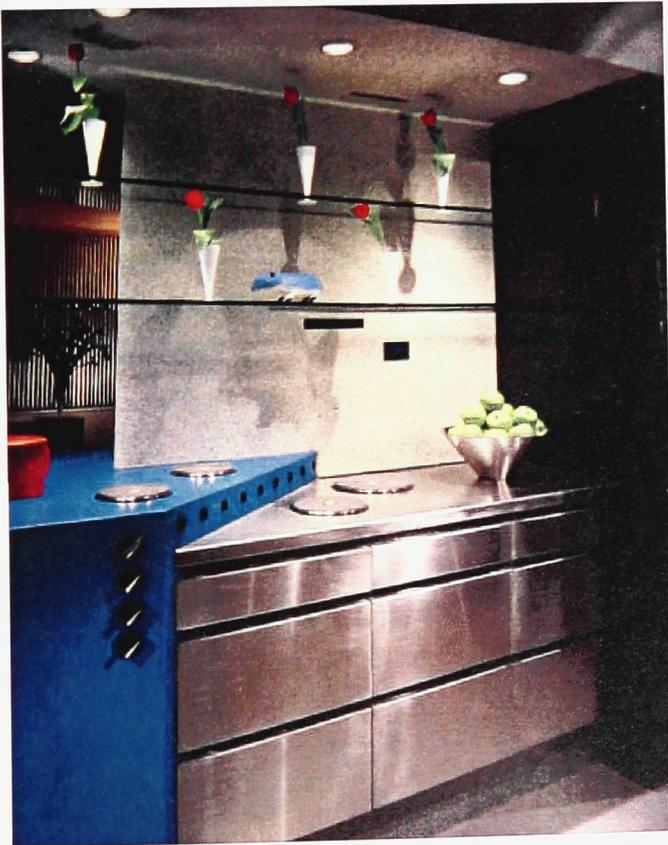
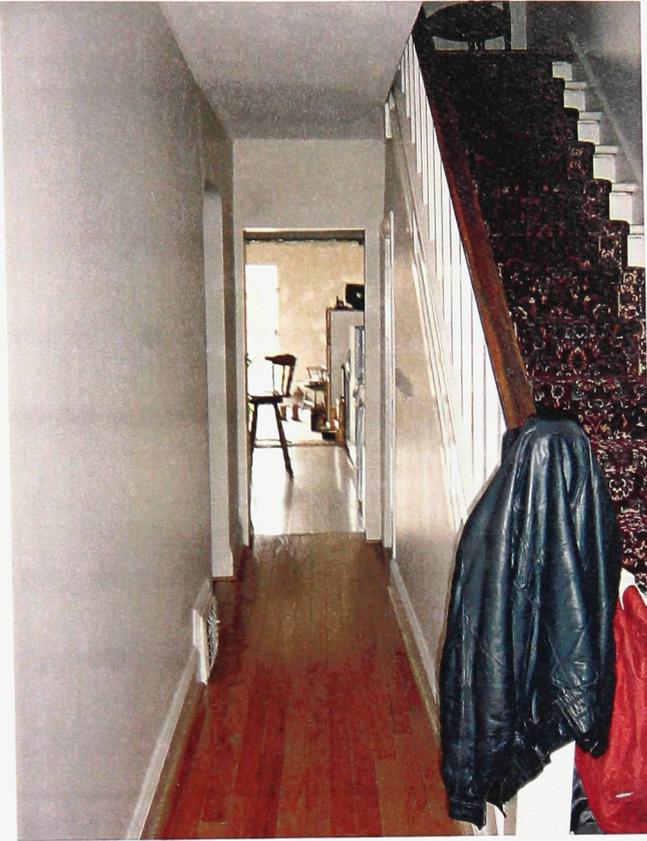


Figure 9: Detail of analytical drawing

Nevertheless, since the mid-20th century, the kitchen has slowly crept its way back into the household, becoming a place of pleasure and sociability. In the case of 190 Armstrong, the kitchen, originally located at the rear of the house, was moved completely out of the realm of the 1900 footprint and into the more intimate space of the backyard, as part of a 1960s addition. This annex, built by one of the previous owners, has yielded one of the more social spaces within the home. While formal guests are entertained in the front of the home, family members and close friends dwell in this spatially introverted area of the house. The present owners describe it as a focal space for much of their daily activity: eating, reading, and watching TV. Furthermore, while the home maintains a clear separation between formal spaces and casual ones, the kitchen has re-established itself as a space of social gathering. Most people have participated in “kitchen parties” at one point or another, where hosts and their guests all gather in the kitchen. The kitchen’s strong pull alludes to its ritualistic power as the home’s center and origin; perhaps the kitchen gathering is a kind of instinctive return to the home’s origin. Today, “...the kitchen and bathroom have been drawn toward the front stage and made suitable for presentation.”⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Tim Putnam, “‘Post-modern’ Home Life.” *Home: An anthropology of Domestic Space*, P 147



The kitchen at 190 Armstrong St. is tucked away at the end of the hallway, in an addition entirely removed from the original home's footprint. To the left of the hallway, past the wall, are the two 'parlours', open to each other but closed off from the rest of the home. Sheltered in the upper realm are the home's most private spaces.

Figure 10: 190 Armstrong (top) and today's exhibitionistic kitchen (bottom). Image on bottom from Charles M. Mount, *Residential Interiors*, P 48

Receiving

*The twentieth-century house is exhibitionistic in character. It is not just that it is designed for publication, designed to photograph well. Rather, it is concerned with new forms of exposure, new forms of display, new forms of transparency.*⁵⁶

The parlor, also known as the ‘salon’, ‘sitting room’, ‘front room’, or ‘living room’⁵⁷, was originally the room “where the family met its visitors and presented its face to the outside world.”⁵⁸ In essence the home’s most public space, the parlor provided a place in which to entertain guests invited into the home. This anteroom marked the migration of the ritual of receiving guests from the kitchen to a separate room on the home’s street side. By the mid-19th century, the anteroom had found its way into most Canadian homes, and was reserved for special occasions.⁵⁹ In the beginning, the honorific and separate front room was exclusive to more expensive constructions, and was only later included in middle and working-class homes.⁶⁰ As the home’s ‘public face’, the parlor played a powerful, symbolic role in representing the family to their guests. Much like “a museum exhibit under glass, it displayed the family to the outside world through its material possessions; its links with the past through family portraits, its wealth through its furnishings, its refinements through books, pictures, *objects d’art*, and musical instruments.”⁶¹

Even in Hintonburg’s small, two-storey, two-room working-class houses, 19th and early 20th century home owners contributed up to half of their available floor space – a rather significant amount considering the economic importance of floor space in the

⁵⁶ Beatriz Colomina, “The Private Site of Public Memory”, P 358

⁵⁷ These terms have been used interchangeable to refer to the room at the front of the house set aside for more formal receptions and occasions.

⁵⁸ Peter Ward, *A History of Domestic Space*, P60

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Peter Ennals and Deryck W. Holdsworth, *Homeplace: The Making of Canadian Dwelling Over Three Centuries*, P 90-2

⁶¹ Peter Ward, *A History of Domestic Space*, P 62

worker home – to the parlor. It is possible that in these smaller homes the ‘front room’ would have been used for some family activities in addition to formal entertaining – like reading by the fireplace, telling stories, or watching television – although there was definitely a transitional period during which the kitchen’s ritualistic nature and the front room’s public activities were interchangeable.

It is, thus, no surprise to see what has since happened at 190 Armstrong. The first addition, circa 1960, first housed the kitchen, and was later modified to accommodate a powder room as well. This annex has recently been expanded in order to fit a one-storey den. The original parlor and kitchen that occupied the original house’s main floor are today ‘front rooms’ with a large archway connecting the two. There is no dining room, and instead, there are two sitting rooms in which all the most valued furniture and ornaments are placed.⁶² The entire social activity of the house is now completely removed from the house’s core, and the two front rooms are reserved for particularly formal occasions.



Figure 11: 190 Armstrong St - the two dens, viewed from the home's main hallway

⁶² My own observations from site visit

Although presently enclosed in the Armstrong home, the fireplace – the hearth – maintains its presence in many homes even though its utility as the single heating source has long been surpassed by more efficient heating methods. Its symbolic presence as nurturing centre within the home is still seen today, except that it has been removed from the hearth-room (the kitchen) and now resides in the gathering spaces of the family room or living room. The location of the fireplace in the living room is still prevalent in many homes. This is a clear indication that the fireplace forms part of the house's public image, and that the latter constitutes a 'metaphorical focal point of family life'.⁶³ Even after its removal from the kitchen, the fireplace has continued to provide the setting for the primordial ritual of gathering around the warmth. Many individuals hold memories of sitting by the fire with family members, playing board games or reading. With the changing of family and individual activities, the unused fireplace asserts itself within the room as a sort of ruin of another time.

Preparation (of the self)

Then, when a superior technology and a watery infrastructure were finally in place, the outdoor privy began its dignified march from the back of the lot to a small room inside the home.⁶⁴

From the standpoint of household privacy, the most influential technological change within the domestic realm was the introduction the flush toilet. Until the late 19th century, the outdoor privy was the typical system for waste disposal in most Canadian homes.⁶⁵ Indoors, a chamber pot and/or commode were used and then dumped regularly in the small house at the back of the lot. When full, owners dug out their privies and emptied them into nearby fields, woods, or vacant lots. Sometimes the streets were the

⁶³ Peter Ward, *A History of Domestic Space*, P 65

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, P 53

⁶⁵ Peter Ennals and Deryck W. Holdsworth, *Homeplace: The Making of Canadian Dwelling Over Three Centuries*, P 218-9

unfortunate destination for waste disposal. In contrast to contemporary norms, the entire processes of “meeting bodily needs were neither carefully hidden or artfully disguised, and the odor of human wastes blended into the rich bouquet of everyday life indoors and outdoors alike.”⁶⁶ This became socially unacceptable in cities striving to achieve modernity. By the 20th century, most Canadian middle and working-class homes had washrooms resembling those found in every home today. The death of the privy greatly influenced the dweller’s sense of self because it brought social relationships into a more formal context where etiquette and appropriate behavior were beginning to strictly dictate them.⁶⁷ What was once natural and acceptable became associated with disgust and shame. By domesticating this act of bodily waste disposal, society privatized what was an otherwise public and natural act of elimination, and confined it to an isolated space inside the home, setting it apart from the social world for good. Peter Ward, on the evolution of the home’s washroom over the last century, elaborates:

As elimination became confined to a small indoor chamber a new and more powerful sense of shame attached itself to these normal body functions, as well as to the rooms where they were performed. A growing aversion to the odors of excreta accompanied the toilet on its journey into the home. The results were heightened embarrassment about passing body wastes and increasing sensitivity about giving offence while performing such acts.⁶⁸

As a result, during the 19th and early 20th century, washrooms were expelled to the rear of the house and on the second storey, situated as far away as possible from the social activities of the home, and as far removed as possible from the home’s public realm. The idea was to have it share as few walls as possible with other rooms. The full flowering of domestic plumbing did not reach the Canadian middle-class until the mid-

⁶⁶ Peter Ward, *A History of Domestic Space*, P 52

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., P 54

20th century, in the form of the en-suite.⁶⁹ It was not unusual, in fact, that at the turn of the 20th century the working-class were still using only a bucket and a cloth towel for bathing, which occurred less frequently than its later daily frequency. Washrooms in any ordinary home would have been no bigger than a large closet, and only large enough to fit in a toilet, bathtub, and basin.



The washroom on the left is a basic and simple configuration of the necessary hygienic tools – toilet, sink, and bathtub. The washroom on the right is today a space of personal refuge and pampering.

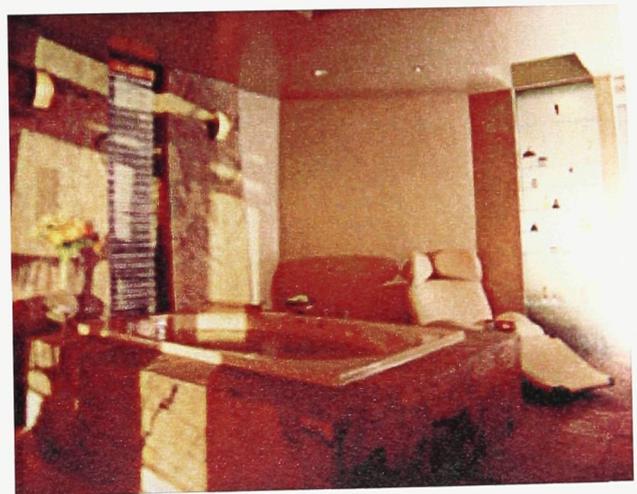


Figure 12: Typical washrooms of before (left) and today (right). Image on right from Charles M. Mount, *Residential Interiors*, P 42

⁶⁹ Ibid., P 55-6

When the home at 190 Armstrong was first inhabited, a toilet, sink, and large bucket were likely the only components found in the second storey bathroom. As was the case with most homes, once the bathtub became accessible, the Armstrong bathroom probably expanded a degree in size, but most likely still occupied a minimal amount of interior space. Since the current occupants moved in during the early 1980s, the house's washroom has undergone a serious transformation and is today the site of elaborate daily personal rituals of preparation to engage in the social world. The new 'spa' comes complete with 9' ceilings, wood paneling, and a sauna. A self-timer for the sauna turns on at 6:45 am, along with the stereo, which is transmitted into the sauna through its built-in speakers. By the time the residents enter to use it at around 7:00 am, it is already heated and prepared.⁷⁰ Here, the bathroom is the most celebrated space in the home, amplified in size (horizontally and vertically) and importance. It is removed from the public realm of the home and the city, though its removal is not driven by shame, as was its predecessor, the privy. It is, today, one of the home's retreat spaces and a sanctuary for the household.

No longer just a space set apart for the unsocial acts of elimination and washing, the bathroom has become a private space to cleanse the body for personal pleasure and social presentation. ... The longstanding concern for offensive bathroom smells remain, but today it takes second place to the newer task of preparing the body for social display.⁷¹

Emblematic of a modern transformation, all individuals undergo a ritualistic performance in the washroom as they prepare to venture out in the world of chaos that lies outside the safety of the home. It is the most private of all spaces in the house, where

⁷⁰ Interview with current resident Dave Dewar, Nov. 17th 2003

⁷¹ Peter Ward, *A History of Domestic Space*, P60

the preparation of the self undergoes a daily routine, one that is fundamental to the wellbeing of the individual. Most importantly, the bathroom's evolution from a space attributed with shameful acts of expelling bodily waste to an ultimate haven for relaxation and pampering is a testament to the home's fundamental ability to exist as both channel to and refuge from the social world.



The renovated bathroom at 190 Armstrong St. was originally a small bedroom with an even smaller closet-sized bathroom behind.

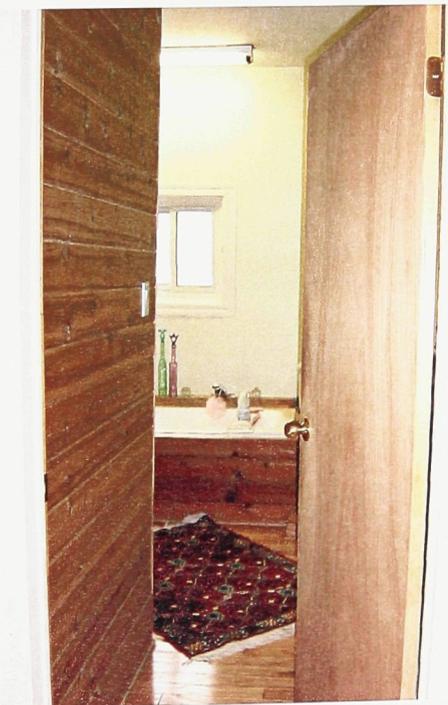


Figure 13: 190 Armstrong - the sauna (left) in the refurbished bathroom (right)

Recovery (of the self)

The bedroom, largely an invention of the late 18th century and early 19th century, also provides a space for retreat and private contemplation within most homes.

Typically, prior to the 18th century, beds were simply placed about in the shared open space of the 'hearth-house'.⁷² When space permitted and interior rooms were subsequently allocated, the distribution of sleeping quarters followed a certain pattern of hierarchy. Firstly, the mister and mistress of the house (parents or owners) picked their room, as they were most deserving of privacy. Then, other rooms were given to the children, with same-sex siblings sharing rooms and even beds until the number of children eventually evened out to the number of rooms in the common home. This practice shifted over time, and by the end of the Second World War, most Canadians slept in their own bed, some their own room.⁷³

In the 19th and 20th century, it became common practice to separate the bedrooms from the public domain of the house by moving them to the second floor, accessible only by the family and those that the family invited up.⁷⁴ In modest homes, sleeping spaces were sized for utility and were usually quite small, used mainly for rest since heating was an issue. In this sense, they were the only truly private spaces of the house until the eventual move of the washroom to the interior of the home. Bedrooms were the only spaces where one could retreat to in solitude and, thus, provided a place where one might attempt to settle down in contemplation of the day's events. The bedroom continued to evolve and, with the introduction of central heating during the first half of the 20th century, increasingly became a place of solitude and independence. Of late, most middle-

⁷² Peter Ennals and Deryck W. Holdsworth, *Homeplace: The Making of Canadian Dwelling Over Three Centuries*, P 48-50

⁷³ *Ibid.*,

⁷⁴ Peter Ward, *A History of Domestic Space*, P 86-7

class homes often equip their bedrooms with closet space, access to a private washroom, television, entertainment systems, and even a small, personalized gym with exercise equipment that is later tucked away in storage space. Indeed, the “main suite” bedroom is much like a self-contained living unit, lacking only a space designated for the preparation of food.

The bedroom is also a privileged room for the expression of self. For adolescents in particular, the bedroom is an important locus for the formation of ‘identity’. As a retreat and because of its intimate and private character, the bedroom provides an extension of the underlying experience of the home itself as an ordered world of our own and acts as both a point of departure and of retreat. This can be seen in the adolescent’s attitude of possessing a fundamental right to his/her own space, a space that is their domain and which demands the respect of and recognition by those exterior to it.⁷⁵

What is interesting about the Hintonburg home is that the three original bedrooms of the house have been transformed into different types of private spaces. A single master bedroom has been added to the back of the house on the second storey of the 1960s addition. Two bedrooms at the front of the house have been converted to a TV room (the only other TV is in the kitchen below) and an office. These spaces, while not as private as the bathroom or the bedroom, still offer more privacy than on the floor below and are reserved solely for the household members. The third bedroom, which was originally next to the small washroom, has been completely overtaken by the bathroom during the latter’s conversion into a ‘spa’. So, in this respect, the residents at 190 Armstrong have made alterations that privilege private activities and imply greater

⁷⁵ Ibid.

separation from public life. The bedroom, in this case, is once again used only for sleeping and, as such, becomes a space of true seclusion.

In order to turn towards a new interpretation of what, fundamentally, the act of dwelling is, and ensuring that it encompasses the whole of the urban condition, then we may say that much of this can be found within the domestic rituals of daily life. The four rituals of consumption, receiving, preparation (of self), and recovery (of self) commemorate the home. Here, 'dwelling as rootedness' can begin to be realized outside of Bachelard and Heidegger's conception of a house that must be intimately connected to one's native land. It is no longer a question of digging forth into the ground and raising one's home with bare hands – from cellar to attic -- surrounded by the familiar childhood landscapes; rather, it is a question of accommodating the unfolding of everyday events essential to home life.

4. Urban Fences

A. Home as reconciliation of opposites

The home is a nodal point in a whole series of polarities; journey-arrival; rest-motion; sanctuary-outside; family-community; space-place; inside-outside; private-public; domestic-social, sparetime-worktime, feminine-masculine; heart-mind; Being-Becoming. (John Rennie Short)⁷⁶

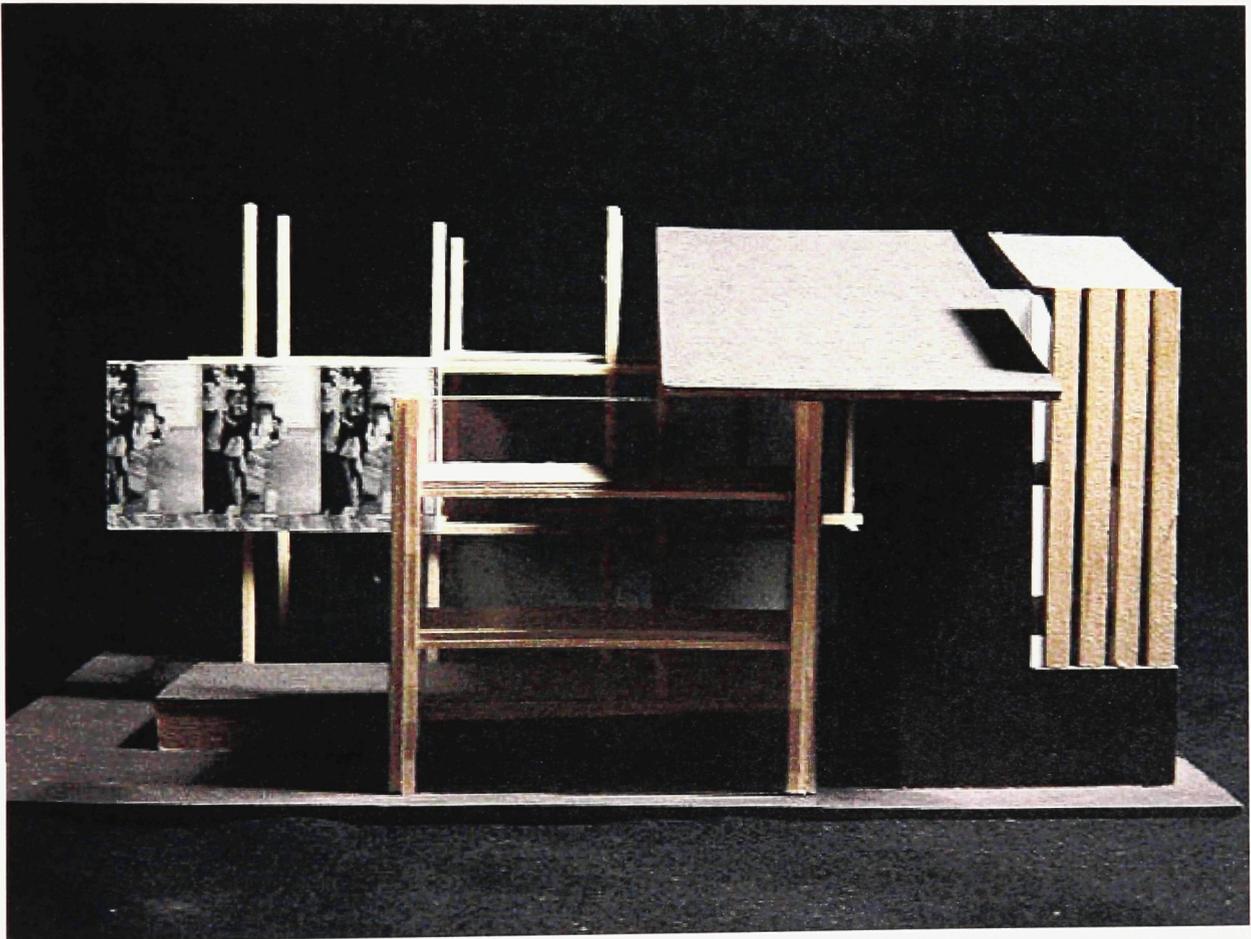


Figure 14: Study model - "oppositions"

⁷⁶ Irene Cieraad (ed), Forward. *At Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space*. By John R. Short, P x

The home is the place from which the urban subject departs every morning – thrust into the social realm of public life – and the space to which he/she returns at journey’s end. For the urban dweller whose fragmented reality calls for the constant (re) negotiation of ideals, the home is both metaphorically and physically a point of departure and a destination. A space that at one time clearly defined itself a rest space as opposed to a work space, the home now provides the setting for all sorts of activities and relationships: private, social, professional, and recreational. The dweller considers this space to be their own – decorated to their taste, spatially organized according to their needs, and inhabited as to their lifestyles – and yet the home also reflects social and cultural norms, and often remains a product of economic and political intention. The ideal of home distinguishes “familiarity from strangeness, security from insecurity, certainty from doubt, order from chaos, comfort from adventure, settlement from wandering, here from away”.⁷⁷ Taken even further, it is fair to argue that part of what it means to dwell is to, at some point, experience all of the above mentioned experiences within the home, though some definitely more so and with more intensity.

More importantly, it is within this ‘realm of oppositions’ that the home maintains both its stability as a fixed part of a person’s culture and its flexibility as an expression of individual thought. While the home should continuously grow and evolve in response to a changing and dynamic people, it must also continue to “embody personal and projected mythologies”.⁷⁸ It is the embodiment of memory – of the collective past – and at the same time anticipation of the future and what is yet to come.

⁷⁷ Delores Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream*, P 101. This is a quote borrowed from Kathleen Ann Mackie’s writings on the history of home.

⁷⁸ SITE, *Highrise of Homes*, P 13

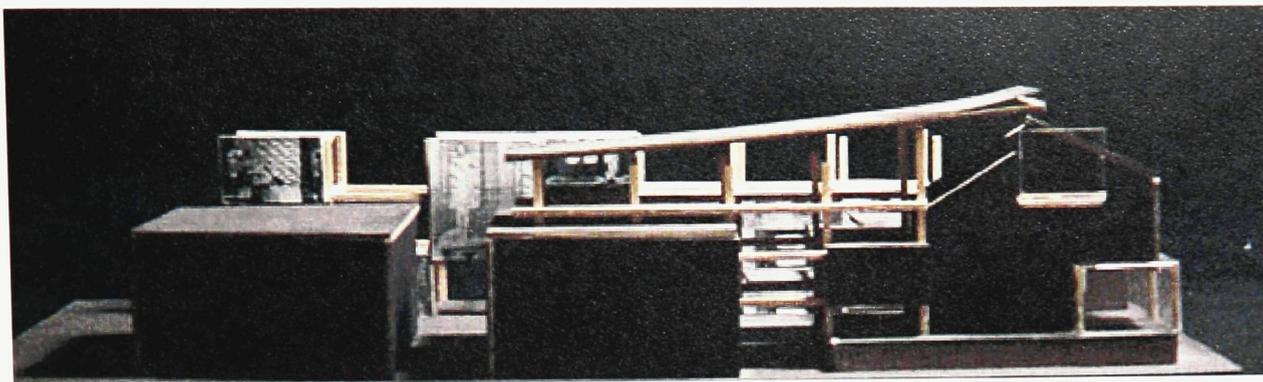


Figure 15: Study model - "memory"

Henri Lefebvre writes that what people want “is to be able to hold onto and combine oppositions, such as inside/outside, intimacy and environment, and thereby reinvent a symbolic dimension.”⁷⁹ In this light, we may set out to examine the shift from the traditional sense of the terms ‘place’ and ‘home’ towards a new definition of dwelling which responds to the current context of radical pluralism and nomadism. Can a dwelling admit traditional notions of dwelling-as-rootedness and the possibility of change simultaneously?

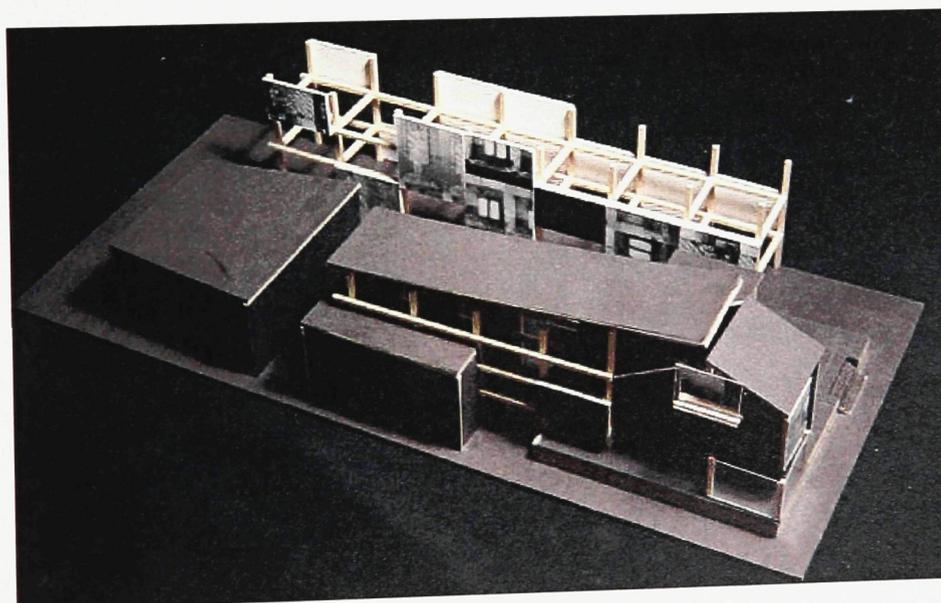


Figure 16: Study model - "memory"

⁷⁹ Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, P 18

B. Private and Public realms within the home

It is no longer the house that is a theatre box; there is a theatre box inside the house, overlooking the internal social spaces, so that the inhabitants become both actors in and spectators of family life – involved in, yet detached from their own space. The classical distinctions between inside and outside, private and public, object and subject, are no longer valid.⁸⁰

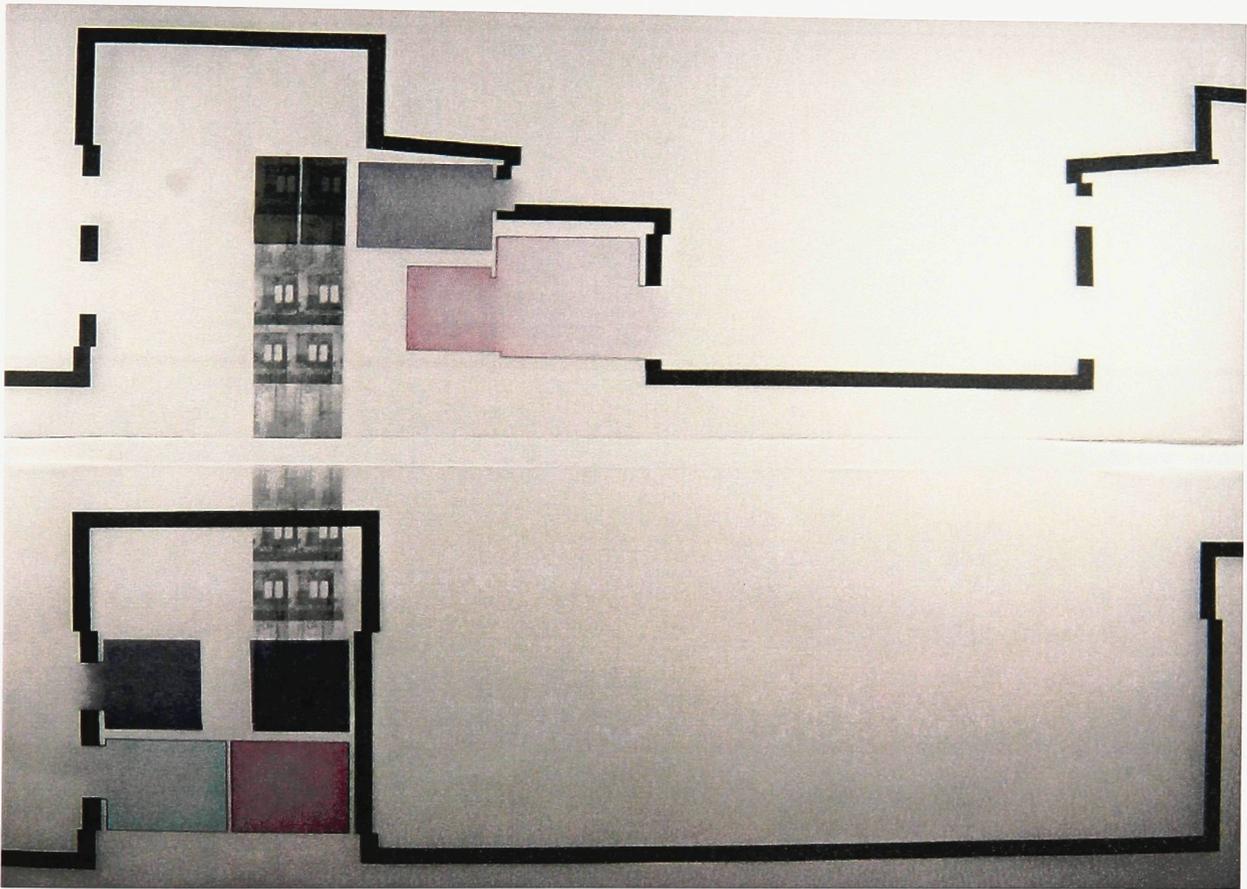


Figure 17: Analytical section

The section depicts public space (lightly rendered) and private space (more densely rendered) as they were laid out in the original home (bottom) and are currently found in the expanded home (top). The image strip joins the most private of spaces, the bathroom.

⁸⁰ Victor Burgin, *In/Different Spaces*, P 148. This is a quotation from Beatrix Colomina's "Intimacy and Spectacle: The Interiors of Adolf Loos", *AA Files*

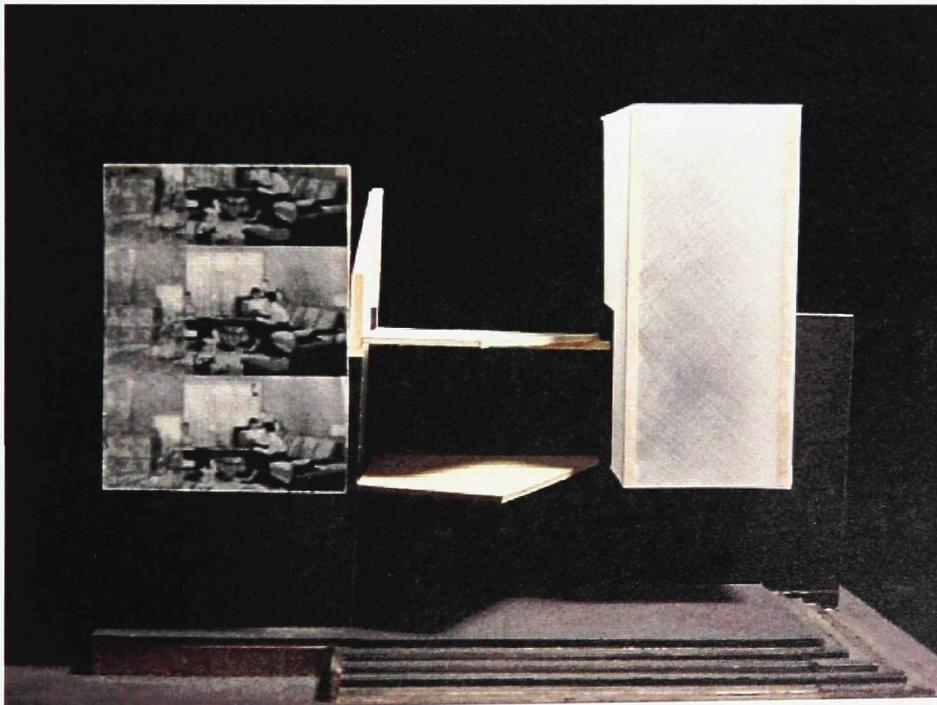
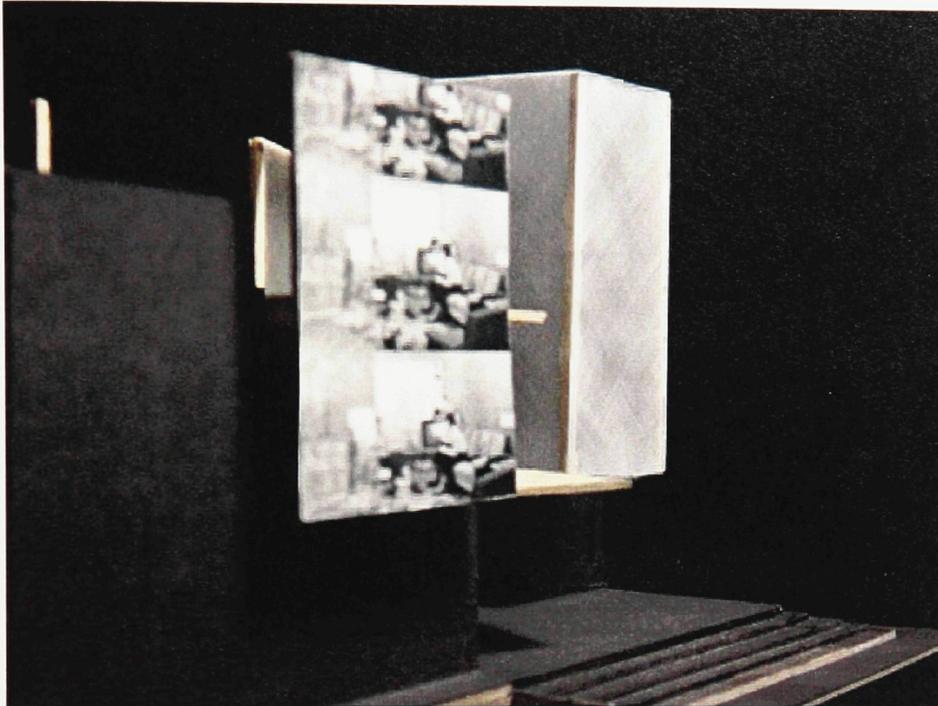
While the home is the space of private retreat for most beings, it too bears witness to separations of public and private space within its boundaries. The four principal domestic rituals clearly demonstrate activities of both public and private nature, and subsequently link them to the spaces where they occur, deeming those spaces as private or public in turn. Typically, the detached single-family house organizes public and private space in a vertical fashion. The ground floor is the public realm, where guests are received and the house opens to the street and city outside its steps. The further back into the lot it reaches, the less public it becomes. Nonetheless, the ground floor remains the space where an audience is welcomed in and allowed to intrude on the household's world. The private realm is elevated off the ground floor, away from the grasps of the public life flourishing in the streets below. Here, above the world, the most private and sacred of domestic rituals take place: preparing the self for the social world, and recovering from it afterwards. The outsider is not permitted to intrude into this space unless directly invited by the family.

Today, however, the home's public and private boundaries are losing their definition, much like the boundaries between public and private space are dissolving in the city itself. This is especially true of urban dwellings, which are often subject to condensed spaces and cannot afford the luxury of the previously stated spatial separations. In his writings about the 'postmodern' home, Tim Putnam speaks of the "informalization" of spaces within the home, as with the kitchen, which grants non-household members access to areas previously reserved for the family. At the same time, it instigates a "dressing up" of previously backstage areas, like the kitchen and the

bathroom.⁸¹ “Private life and public life, private space and public space are bound together, despite all the cultural pressures to separate them.”⁸² The urban dwelling, which already finds itself in the midst of an un-raveling of clearly articulated private and public spaces, needs to respond to such an existing and growing slippage. The intrusion of public life into the private realm of the home, and vice versa, is itself the condition of urban dwelling today.

⁸¹ Tim Putnam, “ ‘ Postmodern’ Home Life.” *At Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space*

⁸² Delores Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream*, P 227

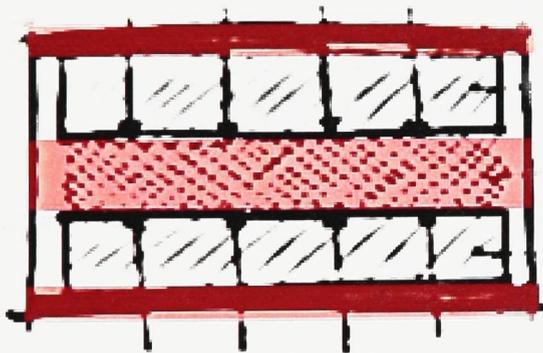


“Publicity” -
The fading
boundaries
between the
home’s private
and public
spaces,
exhibitionistic
qualities of the
home, and the
unfolding of the
city at the
home’s
doorstep.

Figure 18: Study model - "publicity"

C. Privacy and Publicity: the home within the city

As previously stated, ‘collective dwelling’ – dwelling in urban space – contributes to the richness of the social world.⁸³ As such, to speak of the act of dwelling in the city is also an inquiry into the home’s relationship to city space. The detached home is surrounded by ‘buffer zones’. Like a well-protected fortress, the home is protected from its surrounding environment by the different spaces set along its periphery. The front yard and stoop provide a buffer between the city and the home, as it “mediates between the private and public lives of the inhabitants.”⁸⁴ Through this bridging space of the front lawn, the house is exhibited, and the approach and subsequent entry into the home celebrated. The side yard/laneway provides a space of passage, used but scarcely inhabited, which separates neighboring homes. The back yard provides a public/private area isolated from the city and contained within the realm of the home.



A typical working class residential block in Hintonburg – the detached home’s ‘buffer zones’: thresholds to be crossed

Figure 19: Sketch

Although the back yard acts as a larger and more efficient buffer – allowing for event and activity to take place within – it is itself separated from neighboring homes and other back yards by the fence, yet another barrier. While the back yard anticipates event and

⁸³ Christian Norberg-Schulz, *The Concept of Dwelling*, P 13

⁸⁴ SITE, *Highrise of Homes*, P 13

potential for growth, the front yard, side yard/laneway, and the fence are all edges that anticipate being crossed, and as such, become exciting spaces of spontaneity and encounter. This becomes all the more significant and interesting in the designing of a new home for the urban dweller because of the potential for social activity inherent in the home's surrounding environment; that is, the plot of land on which it is built. Is it possible to rearrange these buffer zones in such a manner that they maintain their functional efficiency while responding to the limits of a denser site, and also reconstruct the way to inhabit them and the spaces they enclose? These buffers are thresholds, begging to be crossed and inhabited, and are potentially the most social spaces of home-life.

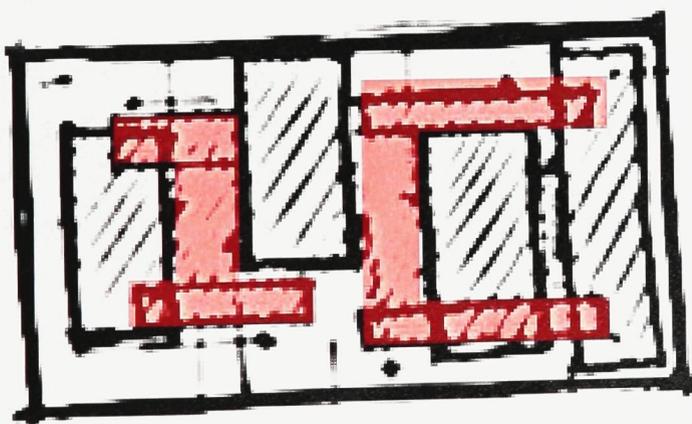
Lurking right around the [home's] corner is a glimmer of hope, or the threat of danger.⁸⁵



Figure 20: Sketches

⁸⁵ SITE, *Highrise of Homes*, P 12

The residual space of the lot on which the house is situated bridges the private realm – home – with the public realm – city, providing potential sites for social encounter. Hayden speaks of how in suburban homes “there are few transitions between the public streets and the private homes, no community parks, no space to socialize with neighbors because all space is either strictly private or strictly public.”⁸⁶ And yet, the surrounding exterior spaces of the home – the yards, laneways, and stoops – provide the opportunity to perform as transitional spaces between the public and private realms. For some reason, perhaps because these architectural devices rely heavily on the vitality of city life, they are simply not exploited nor taken advantage of in dwelling models that still adhere to the conditions of a home in the rural setting. It is in this context that my design strategy focuses on exploiting the potential of the outdoor space that surrounds the home.



Rearrangement of ‘buffer zones’ in an attempt to animate threshold spaces

Figure 21: Proposed schematic of rearranged thresholds

⁸⁶ Delores Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream*, P 185

5. Vertical Yards

A. On the periphery: yards as unclaimed and potential spaces of anticipation.

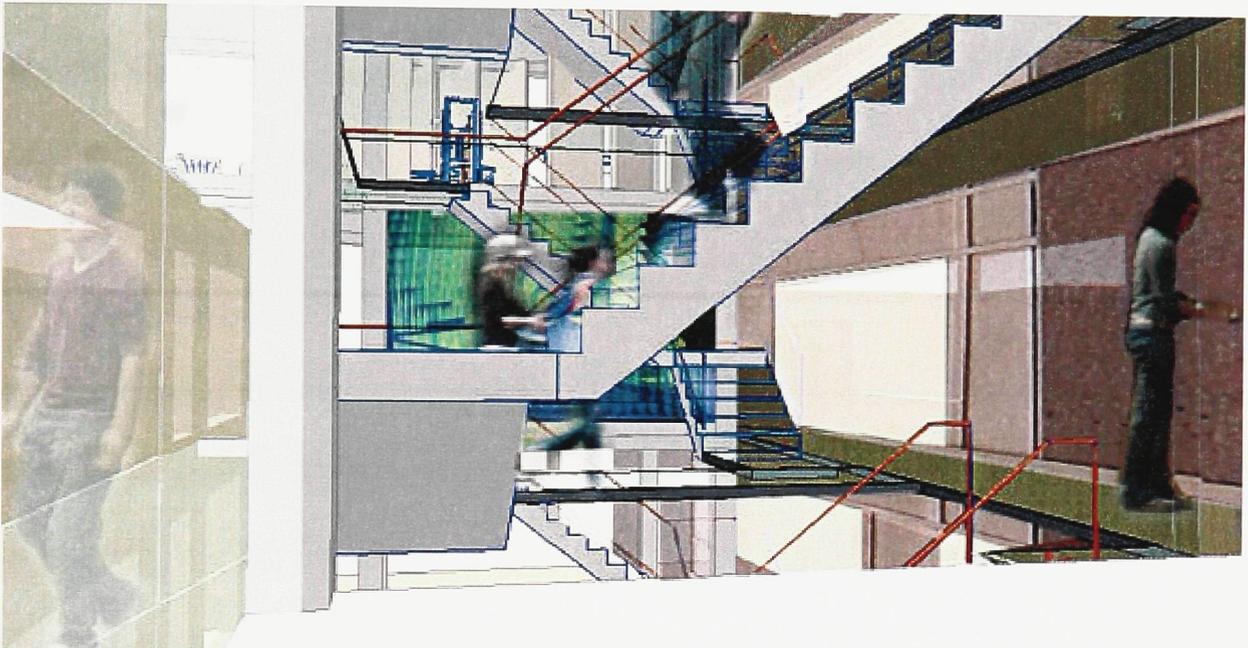


Figure 22: Proposed residential building

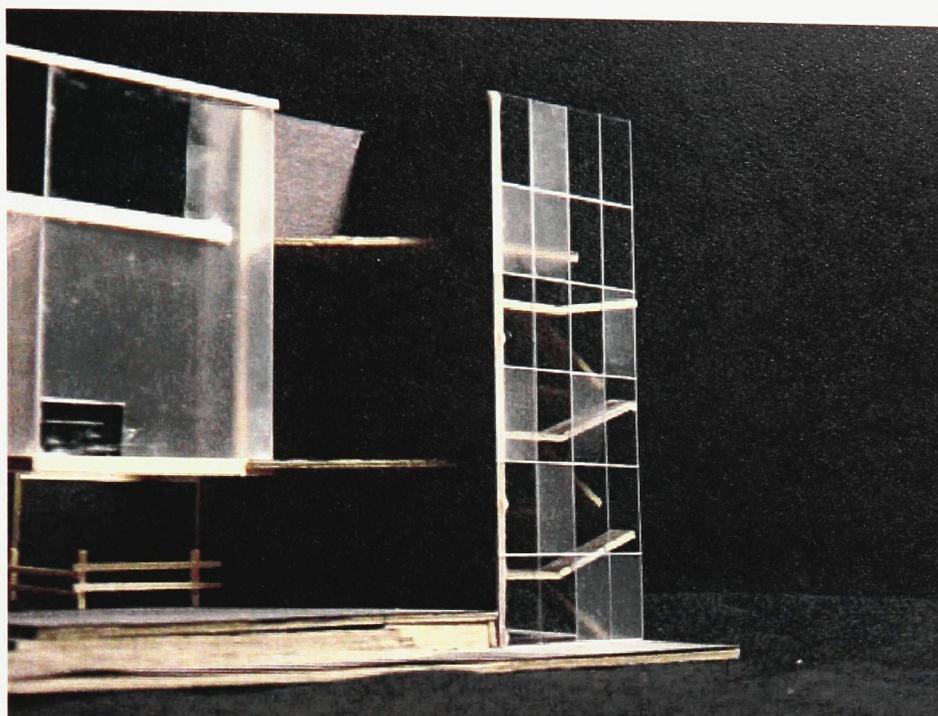
Vignette from inside the animated 'laneways'

Within the domestic realm, one space has had the ability to perform both as public and private: the garden/yard. This transitional space belongs to the household but remains open to the public gaze, encroachments, and overlaps with neighbouring lots. Social precedents of ‘front’ and ‘back’, with respect to the home and domestic space in particular, inform the degree of public-ness and privacy of the front and back yards. But most interestingly, the yard of the detached home provides the structure for a potentially inhabitable space, both on an individual (family) level and a social (neighborhood and community) level. It extends the living space of the home into the realm of the great outdoors.

While front lawns have always had little social uses for their household members – “much too exposed to public view, they seldom invited outdoor leisure”⁸⁷ – they have held a symbolic role as a sign of good housekeeping and a healthy family life inside. In the case of the detached home, the front of the house – and thus the front *yard* of the house – is the public face of the household and allows for a space catering to an audience of outsiders.⁸⁸ As well, it marks the arrival to the home and subsequent departure from it, and in being the threshold on which the public (guest) meets the private (family) it also celebrates the important social nature of the home.

⁸⁷ Ibid., P 147

⁸⁸ Judith Attfield, “Moving Home: Changing Attitudes to Residency and Identity”, P 254



The new
front lawn
– arrival,
departure,
and display

Figure 23: Study model - "encounter"

Prior to the 20th century, backyards had far less to do with gardening and leisurely recreation than they do today. Instead, they housed the eyesores of domesticity: privies, tools, garbage, stables, etc. Even by the 20th century, they were still mostly a space for a shed or garage.⁸⁹ Nonetheless, it was not long before the backyard became ever so crucial in playing out the ideal of ‘home’. “Privacy is defined not by space, but by a specific activity such as reading, gardening, or taking a walk.”⁹⁰

For the first residents at 190 Armstrong, the search for their home began and ended with a house located on their very own plot of land. For these working-class families, a home of their own consisted of a house with a yard – the free space that belonged solely to them, with the potential to become whatever they dreamed of. Since the 1960s, the Canadian house has been subjected to numerous alterations and expansions, especially since “households ... continually invest in personal developmental

⁸⁹ Peter Ward, *A History of Domestic Space*, P 147-50

⁹⁰ Akiko Busch, *Geography of Home*, P 21

activities, redefining spaces to fit these new ambitions.”⁹¹ The back yard provides a space to modify the home and, as such, it is a space that physically bears the marks of social and personal growth and development. It can be shaped into any desirable form, providing for temporal activities and circumstances. As a result, yards become markers of transitional moments in our lives. Yet the yard – as a space of potential expansion – is lost in the multi-dwelling apartment buildings of today’s urban life. The balcony, a compressed ‘yard’, simply does not afford the same potential and unpredictability of the backyard space. Can the yard somehow be recovered?



Figure 24: 190 Armstrong addition (left); existing (top left) and proposed (top right) layouts

⁹¹ Tim Putnam, “‘Postmodern’ Home Life.” *Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space*, P 148

Boundaries and fencing

To discuss the detached house's yards and the spatial, as well as social, relationships between the homes and their yards, attention must also turn towards the question of 'fencing'. The back yard of the detached home, with all of its potential as a social and intimate haven, can in many cases become a desolate and abandoned urban void. Today, many examples across North America demonstrate this condition. There are an abundant instances of residential developments where detached, duplex, triplex, and row houses are laid out across a large area with their back yards facing each other.⁹² For example, Ottawa's Hintonburg and Barhaven districts, and Montreal's Newman Boulevard all share this characteristic.



Figure 25: Montreal's Newman Boulevard residences

⁹² One such example exists in Montreal, Canada, in the Newman Boulevard neighborhood. This residential neighborhood was studied during a Graduate level Studio course with visiting critics, *In Situ*, at Carleton University School of Architecture, during the Winter 2003 term.

Even though 'shared' backyards hold the potential to play out magnificent social activities, they are more often than not used primarily for storage, tools, and junk. In this sense, they are more like the old yards of the late 19th and early 20th century homes. In many cases, they are fenced off from each other to heights well above the possibility of human contact. Added to these conditions is the fact that some of these buildings house apartments on each floor, prompting the question of ownership to become even more ambiguous and the desertion of the yards even more severe. How can the potential of the backyard as social haven be exploited in urban housing? Within such a context, the concept of the fence and, specifically, its power to delineate space and the clarity with which it determines barriers within residential developments, becomes quite fascinating. The fence affords the homeowner both privacy and the sense of ownership so intensely sought after, and also signals social fears of otherness. There is a sense, in the act of fencing, that all security and safety are lost beyond the fence – beyond the border of the yard.

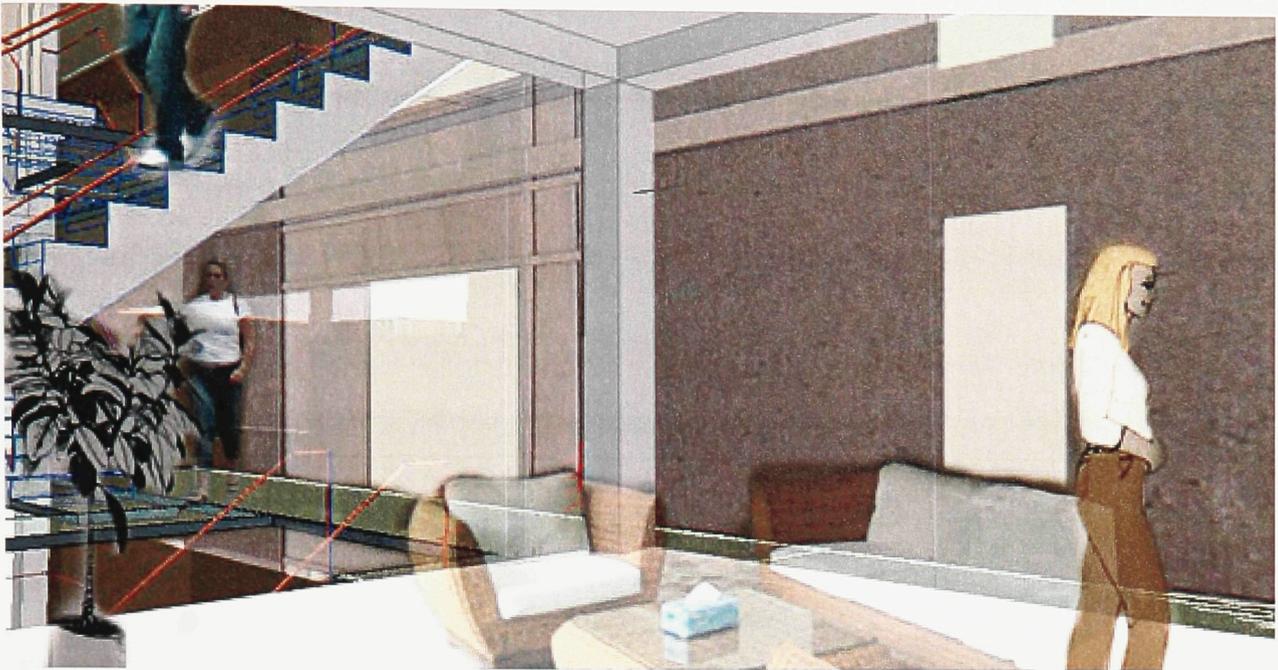


Figure 26: Proposed design – vignette

Privacy and ownership but also intrusion and encounter of the public

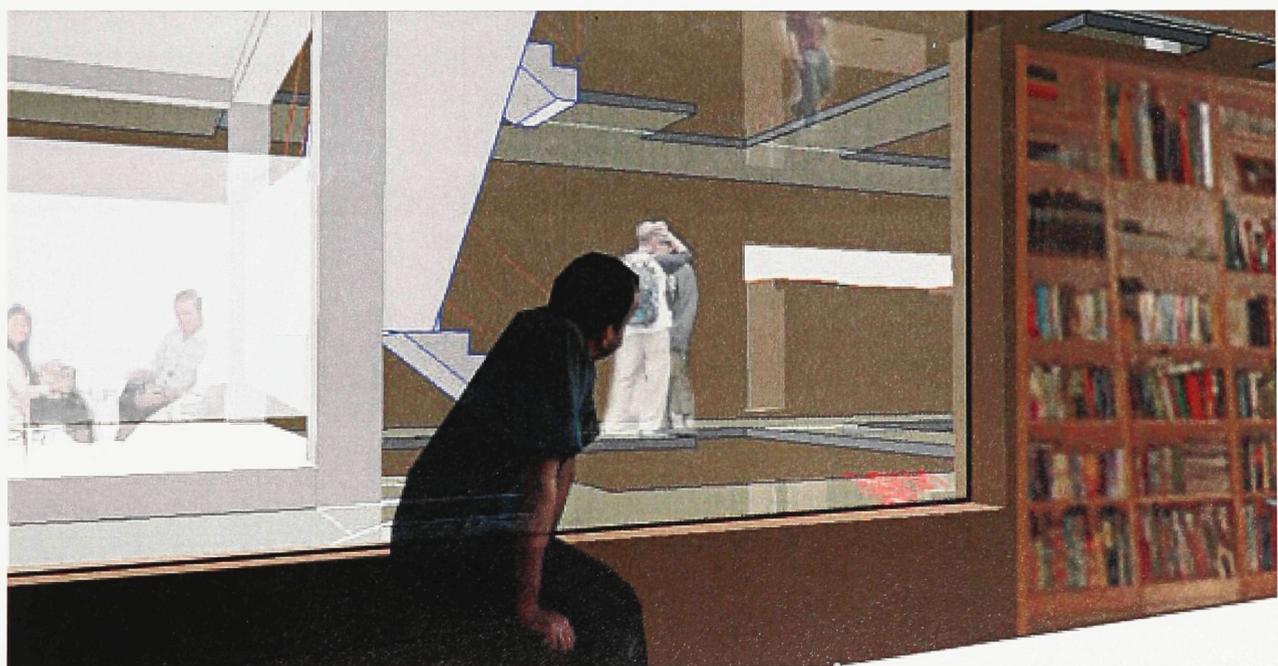


Figure 27: Proposed Design – vignette

A view from inside one of the living units looking out onto the vertical yards

As human nature demands, however, curiosity of what lies beyond increases the desire and need for accessibility. “To go beyond the edge, to penetrate through the mask, is in every case a kind of spelunking where we wish to preserve the status of the invisible as invisible and, at the same time, steal a peek.”⁹³ This is indeed part of the experience of urban life: to march forward into the unfamiliar. The city is collaged with layers of different people, customs, and attitudes. The eclectic collection making up the whole of urban life begs for the dwellers’ attention. In the city, daily life’s inevitable public display invites the individual – whose voyeuristic nature leads him on – to join in the event of public life. It is such an enriched spatial experience that this thesis seeks out in bringing the home to the city.

⁹³ Donald Kunze, “Teratology of Civic Place”, P 3

B. A home for Hintonburg today: design strategies

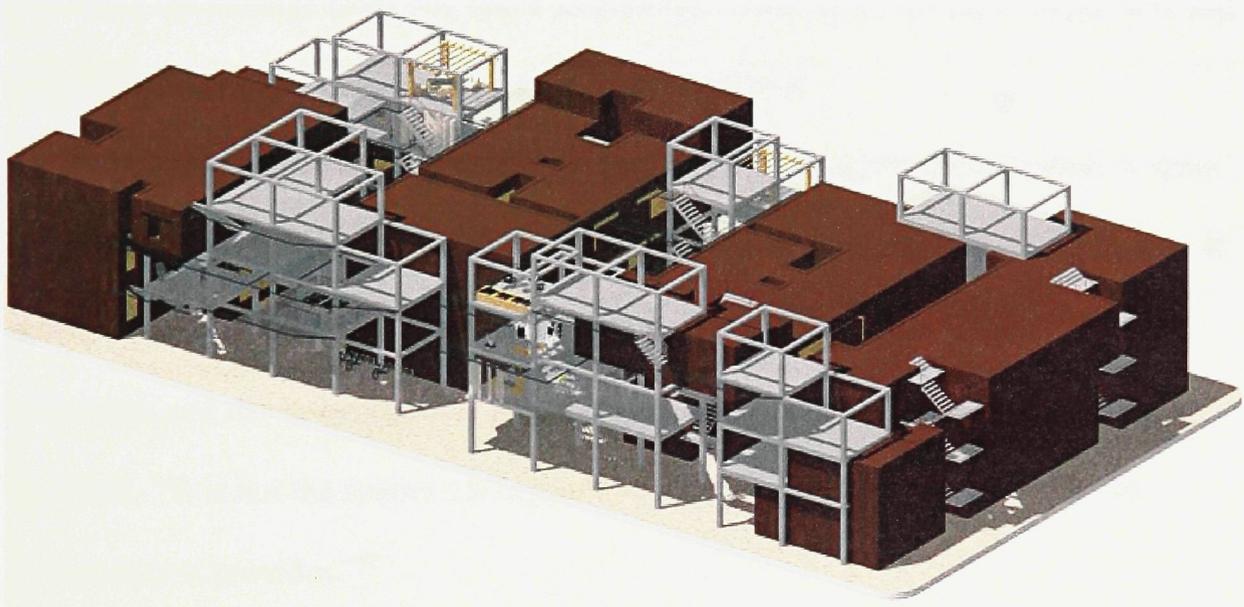


Figure 28: Proposed residential complex – massing

Lefebvre writes, the ‘right to the city’ is a right “to urban life, to renewed centrality, to places of encounter and exchange, to life rhythms and time users, enabling the full and complete usage of these moments and places”.⁹⁴ In the city, time and space is exploited and there is an increased intensity in the potential for human encounter and interaction. Spaces of passage – sidewalks, streets, and other edge conditions – become infused with the potential for spontaneous event and thus evolve into destination places. In the typical working class residential block, these spaces of passage are the side yards/laneways that mediate between neighbouring homes. In this particular condition, however, these spaces are uninhabited, and as a result end up serving only the purpose of providing the passage from one space to another. There is no reason to linger here and the exploitation of its potential is simply never fulfilled.

In designing a new residential block for Hintonburg, the densification of space requires that destination places (like back yards) become superimposed with spaces of passage (like laneways and side yards). As a result, the potential inherent in yards, sidewalks, and the in-between becomes realized and the public space of dwelling is enriched. “It is not the spatial enclosure that determines the atmosphere, but the opportunity it provides.”⁹⁵

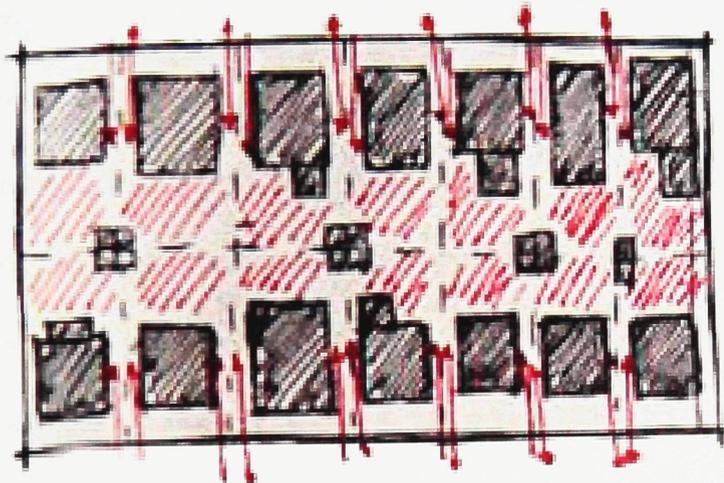
⁹⁴ Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, P 179

⁹⁵ Paul J.J. Pennartz, “ The Experience of Atmosphere.” *Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space*, P 138

The home on its plot of land

People need the personal affirmation and territorial definition associated with the detached 'house' even though living in the compressed environment of a multi-storied structure.⁹⁶

In a typical working class residential block, such as the many still seen in Hintonburg today, the layouts of land and home are straightforward: long narrow lots lie side by side, with equally narrow homes centered on them. The homes are set close to each other to maximize the limited lot width and are separated only by the width of the equally narrow laneways. The houses sit close to the sidewalk with a small front yard snugged between the home and the city street. Behind the home, another larger yard unfolds the living space of the home into the outdoor realm. There it meets another yard unfolding from another home with the same laneway and same front yard organized on its property.



Typical site layouts for Hintonburg's residential blocks, mostly housing single-family detached dwelling

Figure 29: Sketch

⁹⁶ SITE, *Highbury of Homes*, P 47

The densification of the house lot

The yards play an important role in the setting of the detached home as an expansion of the house itself. This potential space of expansion plays an important role in the design of a walk-up apartment for the Hintonburg community. Although yards are lacking in structural form, they are spatial and indeed very much defined. One of the central aims of this project is an attempt to capture the qualities of the detached home and translate them into an urban context so that they may provide for a meaningful dwelling experience. And yet, how is such a task possible when it is clear that to attempt a reconstruction of the detached home on its individual lot would deny the urban requirement for densification and spatial compression? Obviously, a direct superimposition onto the new site would be frivolous and would result in a condition where the 'urban' potential of the residual spaces found on the lot would still remain as just that: unrealized potential. To take advantage of this very real possibility for a social space, the back yard, front stoop, and side yard /laneway conditions need to be given form and structure. Their formal realization and their spatial relationship to the living units are an integral part of the design strategy. By taking the residual space of the lot and compressing and rearranging it on the site, it can be made to co-exist with living units that are also densely arranged on the site. This residual space is then turned outwards to confront both the neighboring living units and the city that surrounds them. In their re-positioning on the site, these spaces instigate new scenarios of social activity and encounter. The journey from the home (apartment unit) to the yard unfolds as its own event, with the anticipation of whom and what would or could be encountered along the way. In the city, the journey becomes the event, and the destination is simply a

matter of consequence.

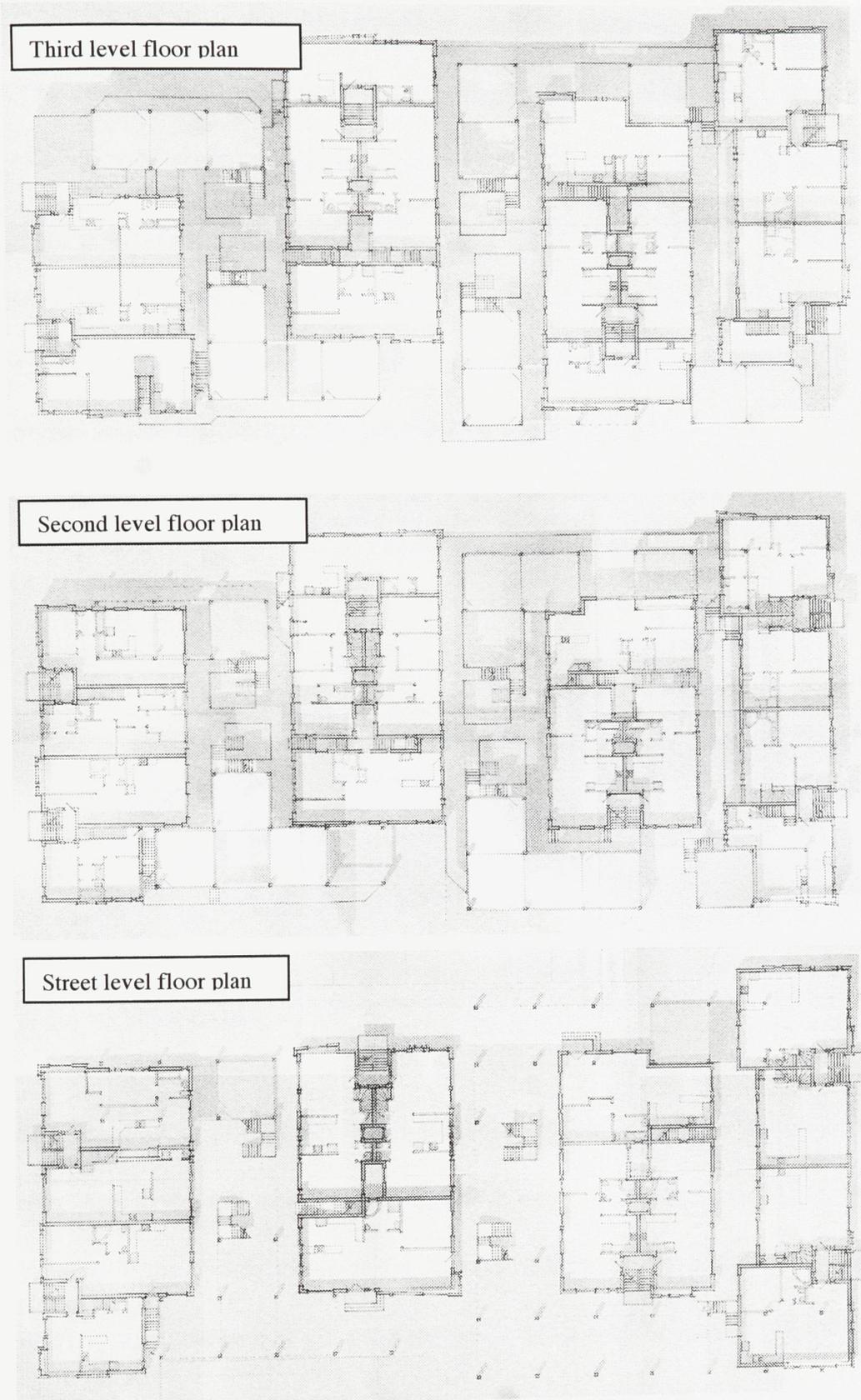
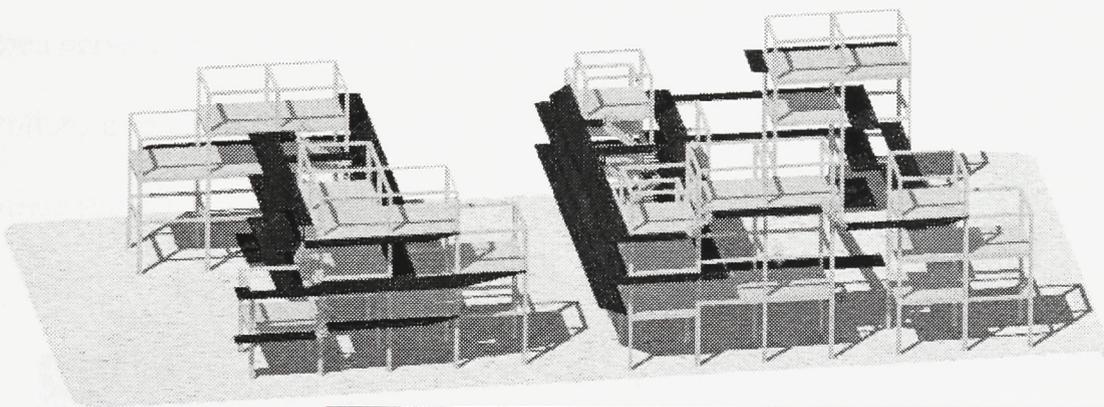


Figure 30: Proposed design - floor plans

Verticality

What of Bachelard's emphasis on the vertical axis of dwelling spaces? As previously mentioned, the French scholar identified 'verticality' as one of the two principles of organization that contributed to the psychology of home. Accordingly, he attributes much importance to the vertical element of the home's spatial distribution and physical presence in the world. As a result, the multi-leveled housing blocks that make up the dwelling places of the contemporary city fall short of fulfilling these principles of organization, thus denying the 'ideal' of home.

Verticality is something that exists only on the exterior of an urban dwelling: nature is excluded, the light supply is regulated and uniform, and elevators replace stairways.⁹⁷



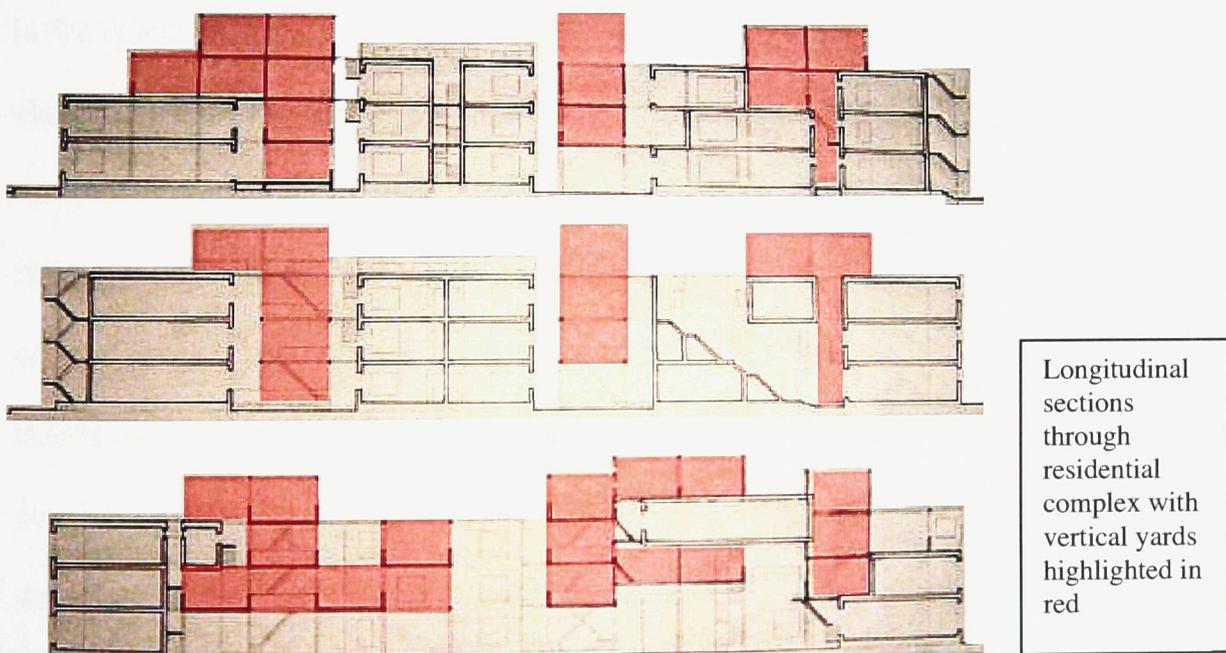
Design Strategy – the detached home's residual space is reconfigured on the new site and creates a new social realm in the urban dwelling

Figure 31: Vertical yards

While today's multi-storey urban dwelling cannot accommodate both the cellar and the attic – as in the detached, single-family home – verticality can still be experienced and may continue to contribute to the home's experiential qualities. Today, building “up” is a logical response to a city's growing population and increasing land values. And, although traditionally “verticality was often mandated by environment and technology,

⁹⁷ Koos Bosma, Dorine van Hoogstraten, and Martijn Vos, *Housing for the Millions: John Habraken and the S.A.R. (1960-20000)*, P 14

...there was inevitably an overlay of cultural traditions and mythologies which enriched these housing precedents.”⁹⁸ Whether for defense reasons or ephemeral, spiritual beliefs, verticality has always held a position in house form. Today’s urban dwelling must recover that verticality in such a way that it may play a new role in the experience of home life. In the new residential complex, the vertical dimension manifests itself on both a spatial and formal level. Spatially, verticality plays an important role in the design since residents find themselves exiting the home and traveling outside and upwards to their private yards. Formally, the vertically stacked ‘yards’ speak of both the compression of space in the city and the layers of public life that form part of any dwelling place, especially in that of the urban dwelling. Furthermore, as these spaces are then personalized and altered, their vertical layering on the site begins to reflect upon notions of a multi-faceted society and the eclectic nature of living and growing in the urban setting.



Longitudinal sections through residential complex with vertical yards highlighted in red

Figure 32: Sectional Drawings - design process

⁹⁸ SITE, *Highrise of Homes*, P 17

Specificity

*Monolithic systems in government and economy have failed to respond to the humble, everyday, idiosyncratic requirements of people.*⁹⁹

Variety in household types addresses the urban dweller's dynamic and transitional identity, which is always under construction. For this reason, I am proposing a new walk-up apartment consisting of different household types – open-plan studios, two-storey town houses, and single-storey apartments – all mixed into the complex together. This spatial configuration re-examines the relationships between living units by placing apartments on top of and/or adjacent to two-storey homes, or vice versa, and offers different variations on basic seventy-two square meter units to accommodate different lifestyles. Instead of one large structure, the units are spread across four walk-up apartment buildings, adjusting entrance- and access-ways as needed, and thereby creating a more individual experience within the medium density configuration.

The back yard's personalization has always been a quality associated with living in the detached home. Even in the larger, medium- to high- density residential blocks so characteristic of city life, residents attempt to personalize the balconies that have replaced the spacious and flexible back yard. "The personalization manifested in the single-family home continues to have great psychological power. Yet because of real estate economics and limitations, this individuality has been repeatedly subdued in urban, highrise buildings"¹⁰⁰ Because of the juxtaposition of the *vertical yards* with the apartment building, the façade becomes dynamic as it differs from unit to unit (yard to yard) and also changes over time with the departure and arrival of new tenants. In this respect, the yards also celebrate the 'transient' nature of today's urban 'dweller'. The yards speak of

⁹⁹ Ibid., P 70

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., P 29

moments of transition as experienced by the urbanite: moving into the building and later moving out and/or the arrival or departure of a roommate, resulting from a change in economical, social, or personal status. In that respect, these spaces become animated during such moments of transition, and, for those individuals, retain within them the memory of certain life stages. The yards become both active participants in the event and the triggers of subsequent personal and collective memory. It is not only the inhabitants who experience such moments within the yards, but also the city itself that bears witness to these periods since the façade of the building becomes temporarily altered and the urban landscape marked.

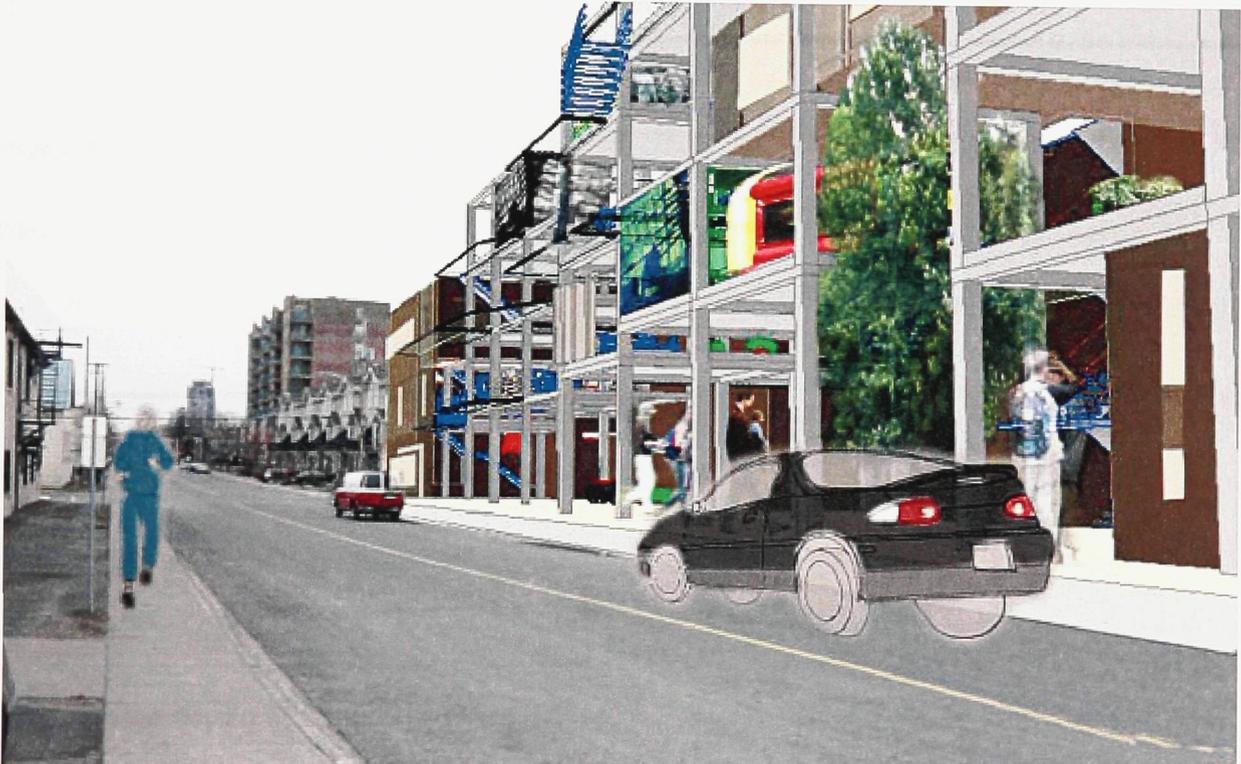


Figure 33: Streetscape vignettes

Streetscape views of the proposed walk-up residence, facing westward on north side of the walk-up at the Parkdale intersection (top) and facing westwards on Spencer St. at Parkdale (bottom)

6. Conclusion

In designing an urban home that truly addresses today's urbanite – the 'newcomer' – and that re-configures and re-defines what it is to 'dwell' in the city, one must find an architecture that brings the 'other' to the center, and dematerializes conventional notions of periphery and boundary. The new dwelling must reconfigure the old and unfold new spaces of potential social encounter. This can be achieved by reconsidering the detached worker house as a conceptual prototype for multiple urban dwelling typologies. Specifically, the home as embodiment of memory about the past, the backyard as space of anticipation of the future, and the fence as place of encounter have all provided the foundations on which this thesis is built.

The bridging of the detached home with the urban multi-leveled dwelling is the principle strategy behind this project. The intention is to transpose and reconfigure the qualities of the single-family, detached house into a workable schematic that speaks to both the fundamental act of dwelling and the nomadic character of today's urban dweller. This thesis celebrates the contemporary, and specifically Canadian, urban condition – a dynamic human nexus on the verge of transformation and full of opportunity. The inspiration is in the freedom of and potential for the modification characteristic of a transient existence: to dwell is to be in a constant state of in-between, to be in process. Here, the term identity refers to this process of change – the construction of 'identity' – instigated by the constant re-defining of self, other, family, home, and society. There does exist a set of fundamentals in the act of dwelling. The daily domestic rituals are revealed in homes of various different forms, and while their cultural and personal practices may differ across space and time, their underlying essence remains unscathed.

The question of 'urban dwelling' in Ottawa comes up as a product of the social, cultural, and political re-structuring of home, family, and domesticity. To dwell in the city is to uncover a new definition of home-life. In Canadian cities, and Ottawa in particular, the domestic rituals are easily identifiable, but here the city's eclectic and social nature confronts them, and new social realms come into being. Specifically, Canada's tendency to become a home for many diverse cultures and social groups lends itself to such an opportunity. In the reconfiguration of the detached home into the urban context of compressed and densified space, the creation of the home's social realm becomes the architectural response to a fifth ritual: the ritual of collective dwelling in a multifarious world.

...The project becomes the stage for an infinite variety of unpredictable performances.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ SITE, *Highrise of Homes*, P 47

Afterword

This investigation does not end here. While this design for a medium density urban dwelling challenges us to rethink and re-evaluate how we dwell in our present homes, the relationship between the dwelling units and their outdoor “vertical yards” would require further study in a next stage of design development; more specifically, the architecture of these yards would need to be refined, in order to secure the qualities we look for in the outdoor space of the back yard. It seems almost inevitable that when attempting to re-configure the back yard into a medium-density typology, certain qualities of the ground-level adjacent back yard system would be lost, but there are perhaps ways to re-capture some of them through careful detailing. This project purposely focused on instigating and encapsulating certain spatial experiences to do with the home’s urban context and with the theme of migration and change in the home. I attempted to reflect on the creation of a new social realm within the community formed by higher density housing, but did not concentrate here on the specifics of the newly formed outdoor spaces. Now that this first step has been taken, it is possible to take a more critical look at the design proposal for a new dwelling typology for the urban environment, its strategy, and the end result, and assess its weaknesses and strengths.

In my design strategy for a new medium-density residential block, I focused on the following criteria for the detached home’s back yard:

- To be able to provide a semi-public/semi-private extended living space
- To be able to anticipate social gathering
- To be able to provide for architectural expansions and alterations
- To be able to adjust programmatically based on changes and needs

- To be able to welcome social exchanges through spatial proximity, visual porous-ness, and shared boundaries

While I attempted to maintain these qualities in the vertical yard spaces of the residential complex, I drastically altered the spatial relationship between the home and the yard in an effort to (1) create a higher density, and (2) address the urban conditions of 'publicity' and 'encounter' and create a celebratory urban experience. In my proposed residential complex, I spatially extended the threshold between home and yard and turned the act of crossing into a social event in and of itself. For most of the units in my proposal, the vertical yard spaces are a short distance away: a walk up a set of stairs and down the hall. This strategy of distancing the outdoor space from the dwelling generates a certain amount of 'confrontation' between residents in day-to-day life. Of course, in doing this, I've also sacrifice the kind of "homely" comfort that comes with the owning of an outdoor space directly outside the home's doorstep. The yard is no longer physically part of the home, here conceived of as a separate platform supported on steel framing, structurally independent from the living units. Furthermore, the lightweight steel structure is the framework for the yard's adaptable and flexible inhabitation.

Since most residents must leave their homes in order to enjoy their yards in this design, these spaces have to be all that more desirable or else they may remain empty and uninhabited. While a great degree of their desirability is the fact that they provide the already compressed living conditions with an extra space that remains to be programmed by the residents as they please, they also need to capture some of the "lost" qualities of the back yard, such as sunlight and open-ness. It is in this respect that I would argue the project does not meet the demands for creating such a desirable space, the lighting

conditions for both the yard spaces and the units being the most problematic aspect of the design. While all units receive ambient light and fresh air, many of the yard spaces in the current proposal are lacking in direct sunlight. A next iteration of the project could rearrange the layout on site to place all the yard spaces along the southern-most side, for example. As well, by slightly offsetting the yards vertically, each one could receive direct sunlight from above, while still maintaining a shaded area. This would also contribute to a greater sensation of open-ness since the yard spaces would not be completely roofed in, as they are now. Floor assemblies that allow light to filter through, cantilevers, chamfering of the yard platforms in response to orientations and views, and openings in the floors, could also be explored.

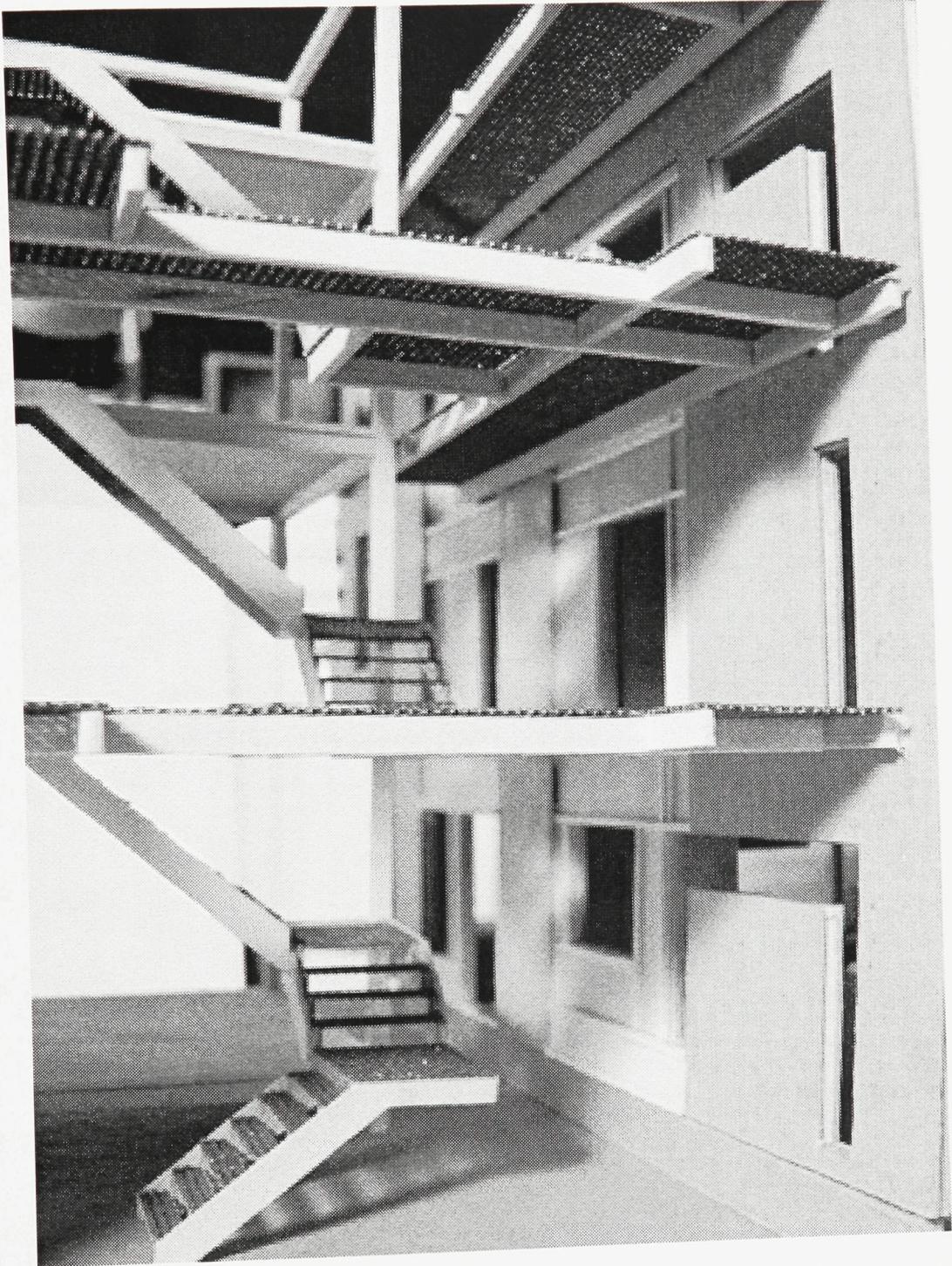
It is also important to understand what distance is too great a distance to be traveled between the units and their corresponding yard spaces. In my proposal, there is always a visual connection between the units and their yards, although getting there may require stepping onto the catwalk, traveling a few steps and then climbing a flight of stairs before entering the yard space. The question of how one knows that a given yard belongs to a unit would be worth addressing in a further research stage. The next iteration for the design could further explore a more spatially connected layout between the units and yards, although it would be important to maintain a spatial gap between the two as one of the aims of the project is to inhabit this threshold and to articulate it as an important social space.

Architectural projects are rarely realized without the possibility of further exploration. This yearlong study into a new typology for the urban home has yielded many interesting and provocative situations, but is by no means complete in its

resolution. Likewise, as our cities continue to grow and evolve, so too will our understanding of 'home' and 'dwelling', opening the door for further architectural explorations into housing typologies for contemporary situations.

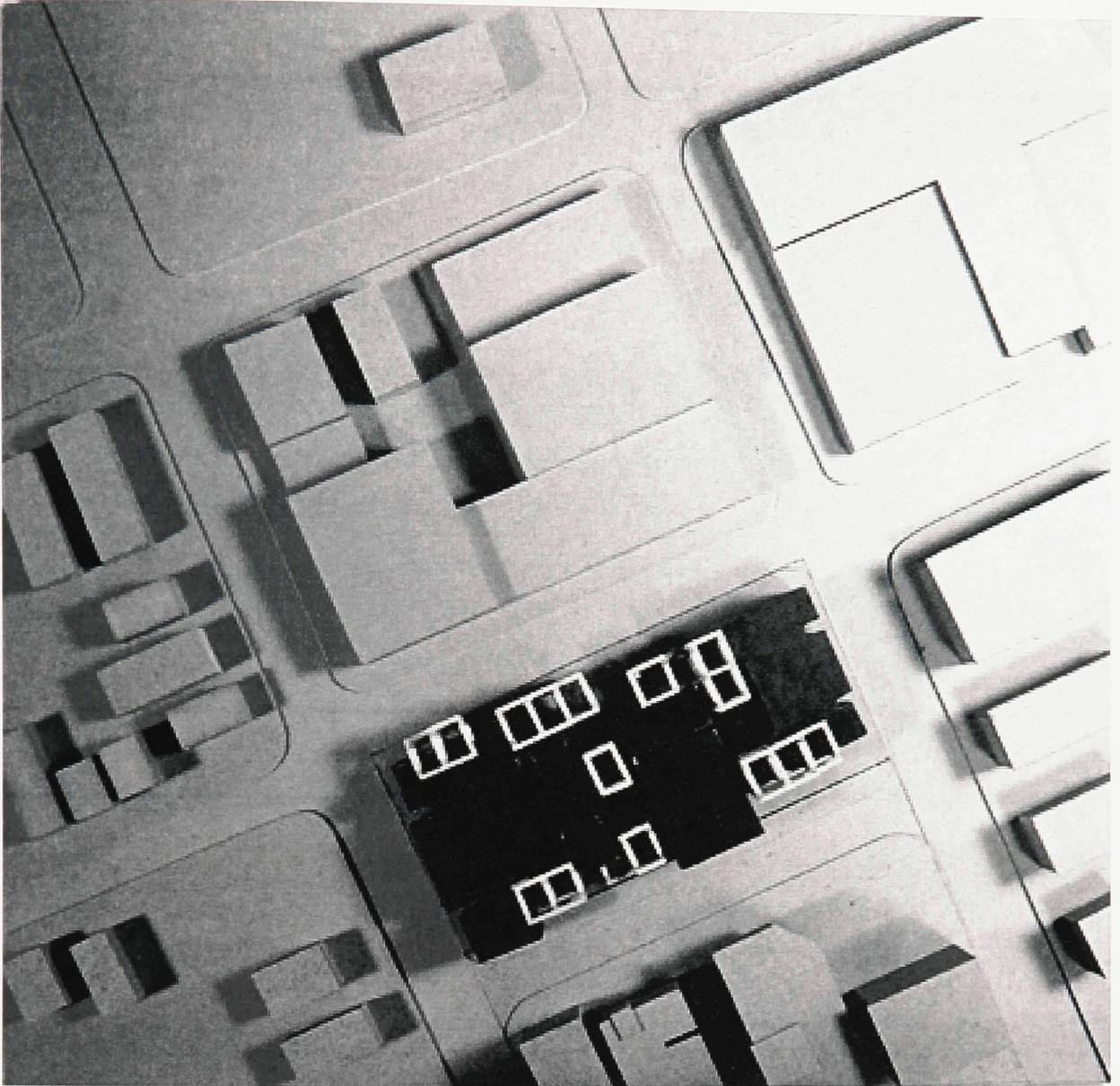
Appendix

Project Images: drawings and models

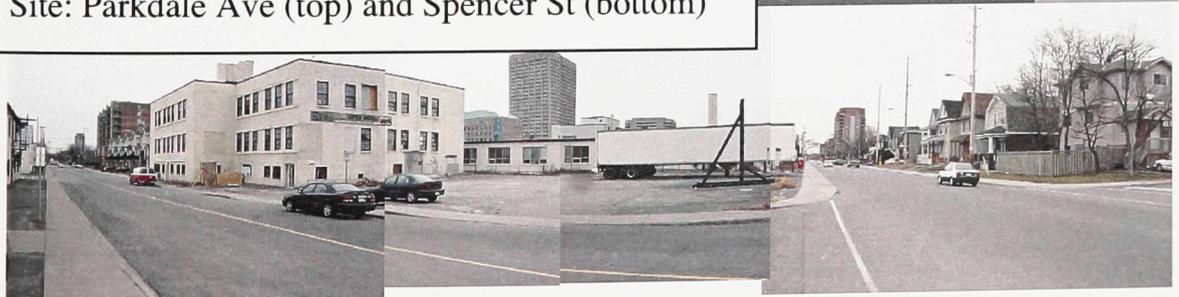


Site

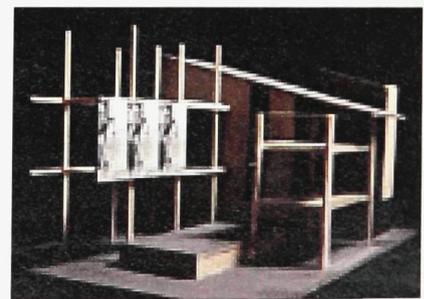
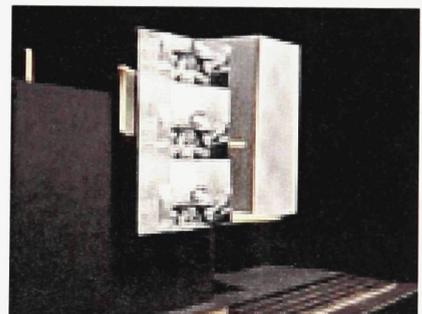
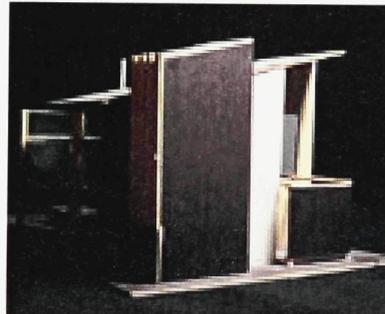
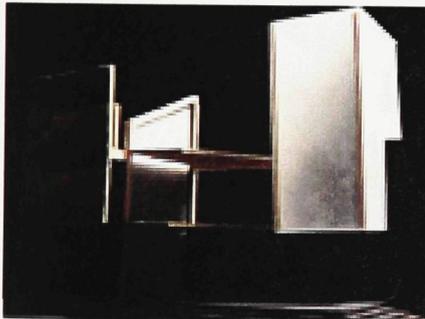
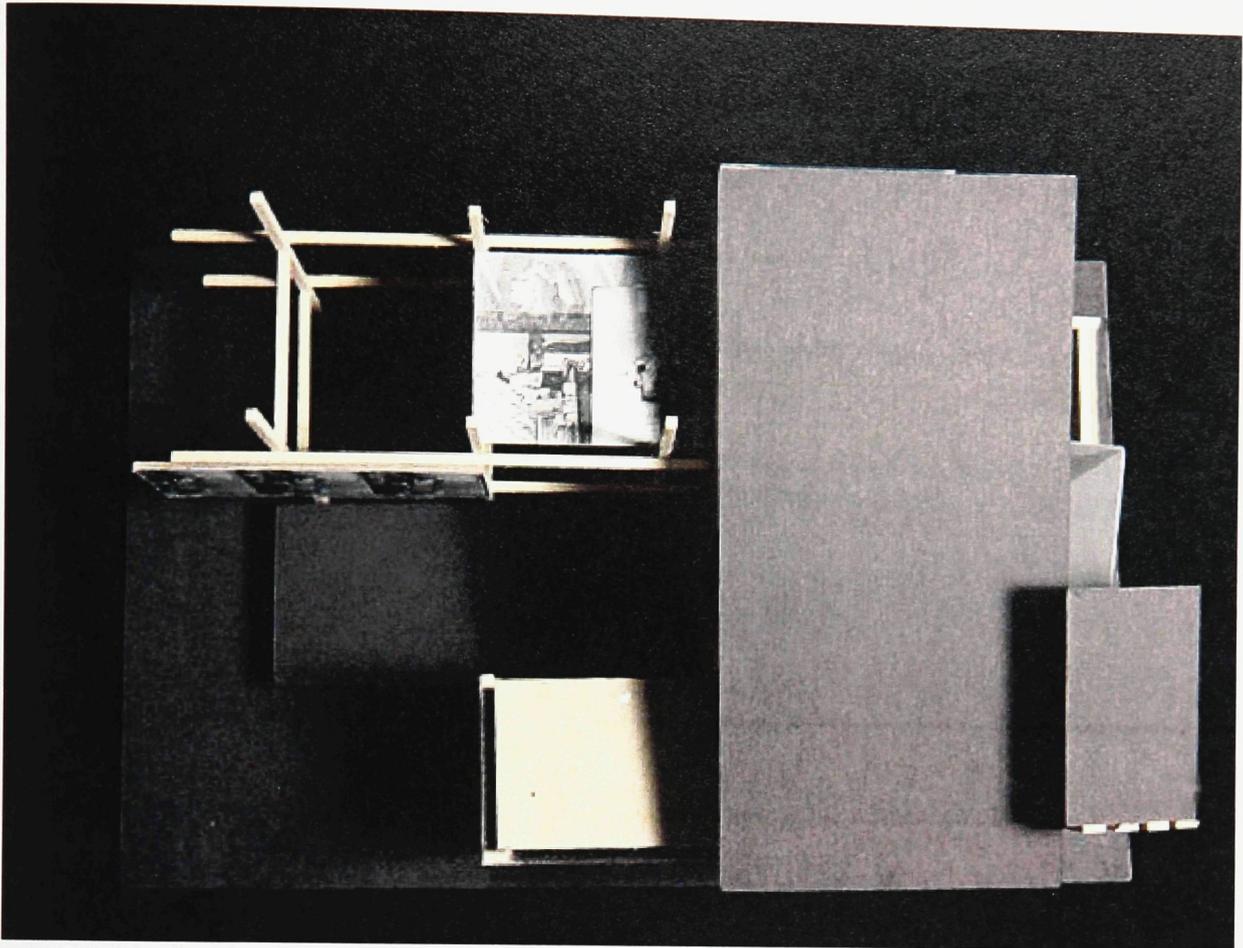




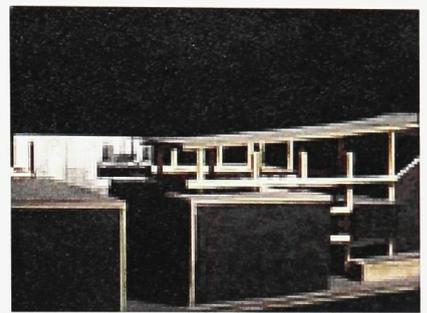
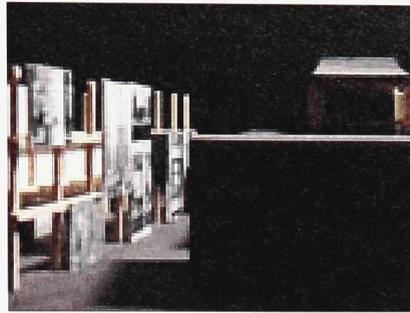
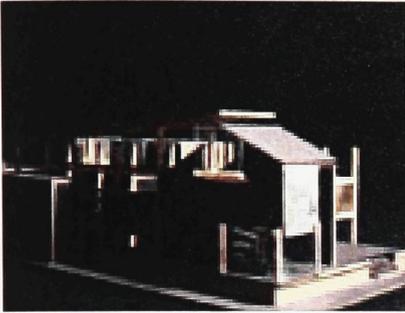
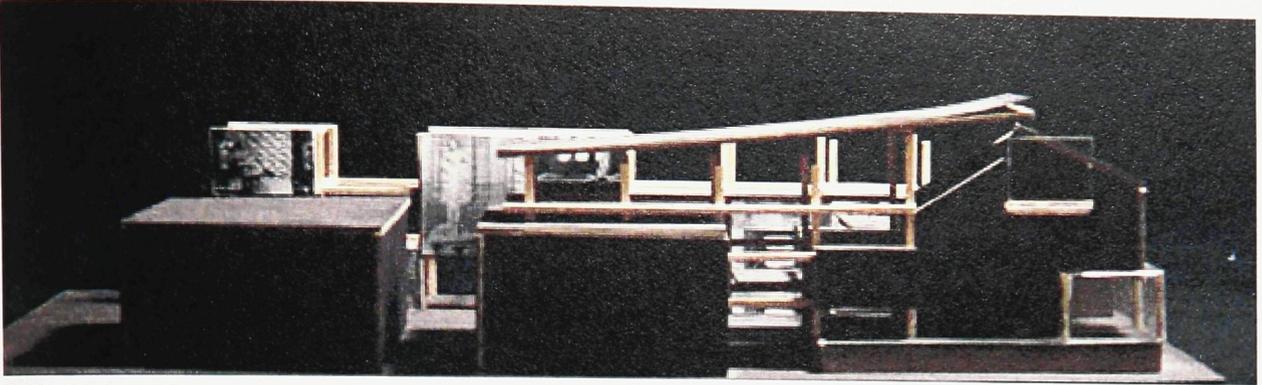
Site: Parkdale Ave (top) and Spencer St (bottom)



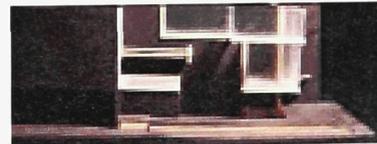
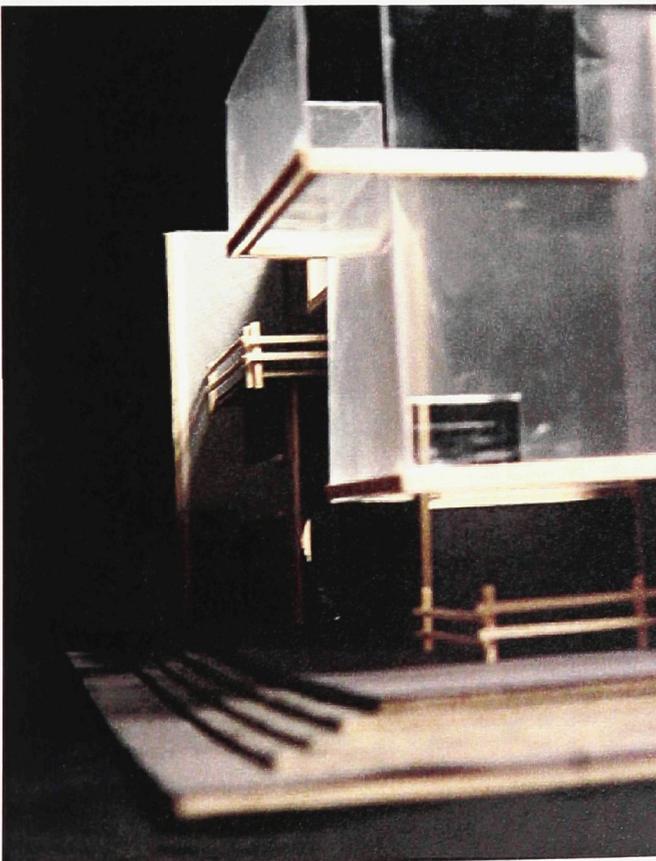
Study Models



Study maquette: "oppositions"

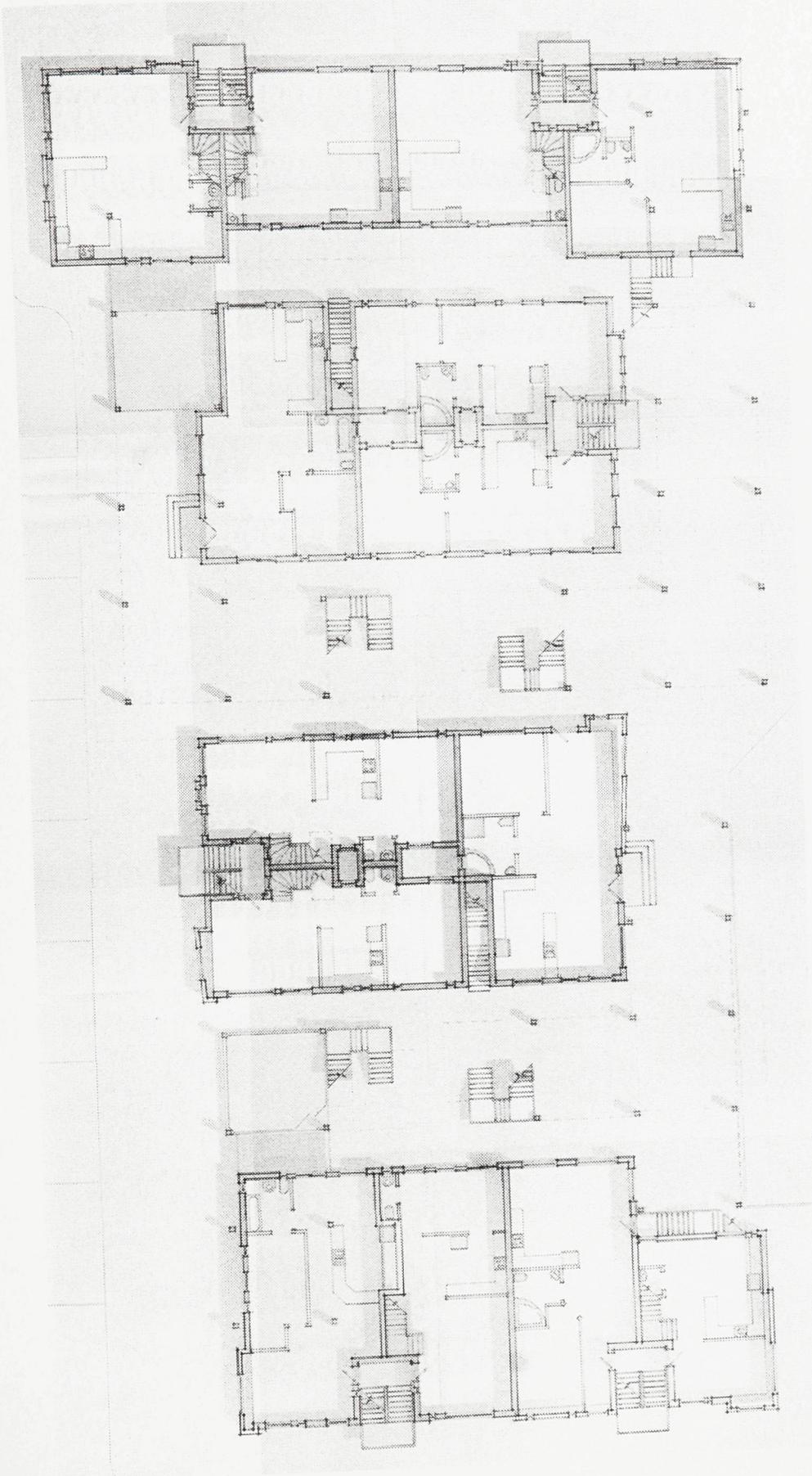


Study maquette: "memory"

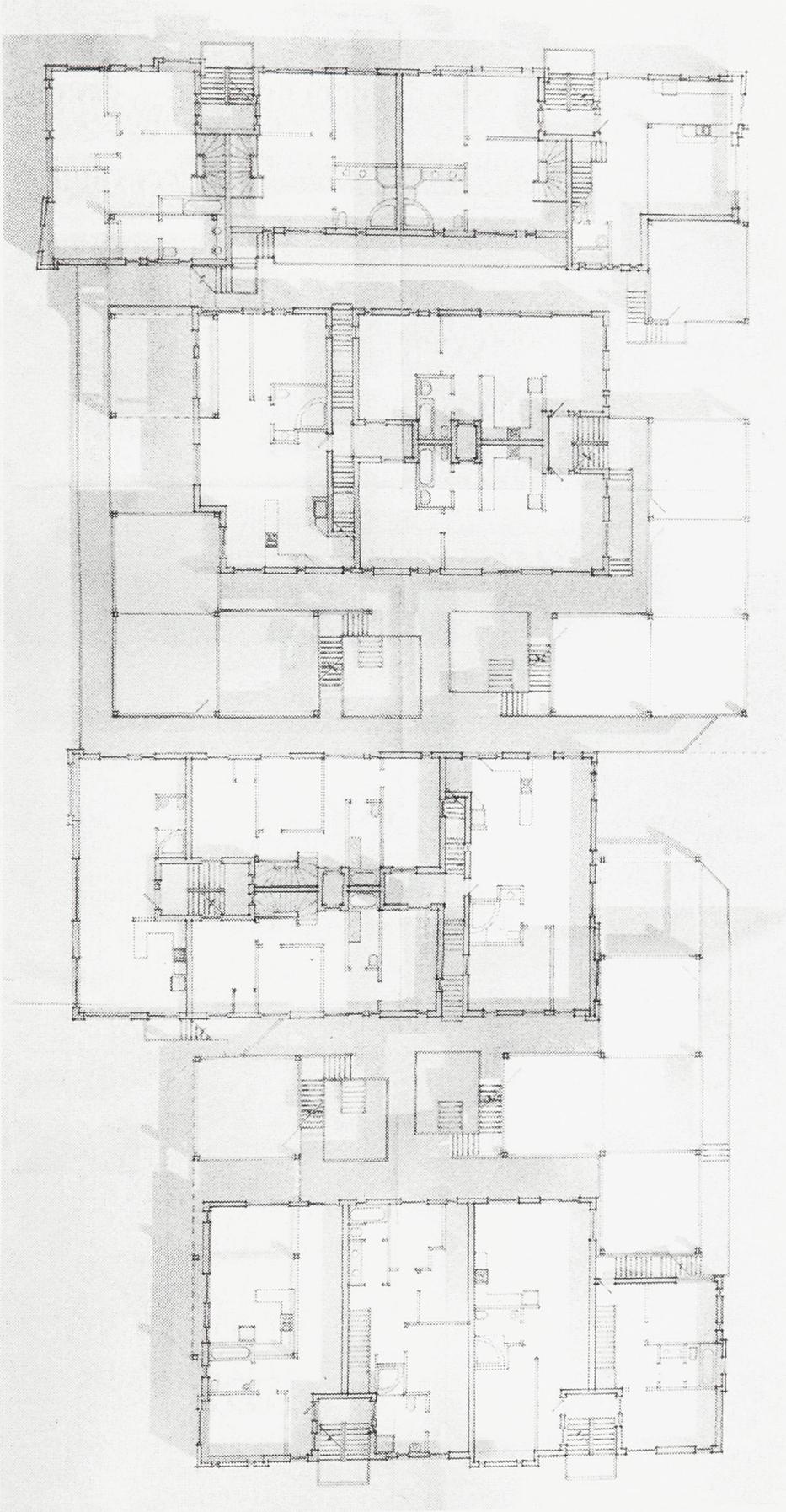


Study maquette: "encounter"

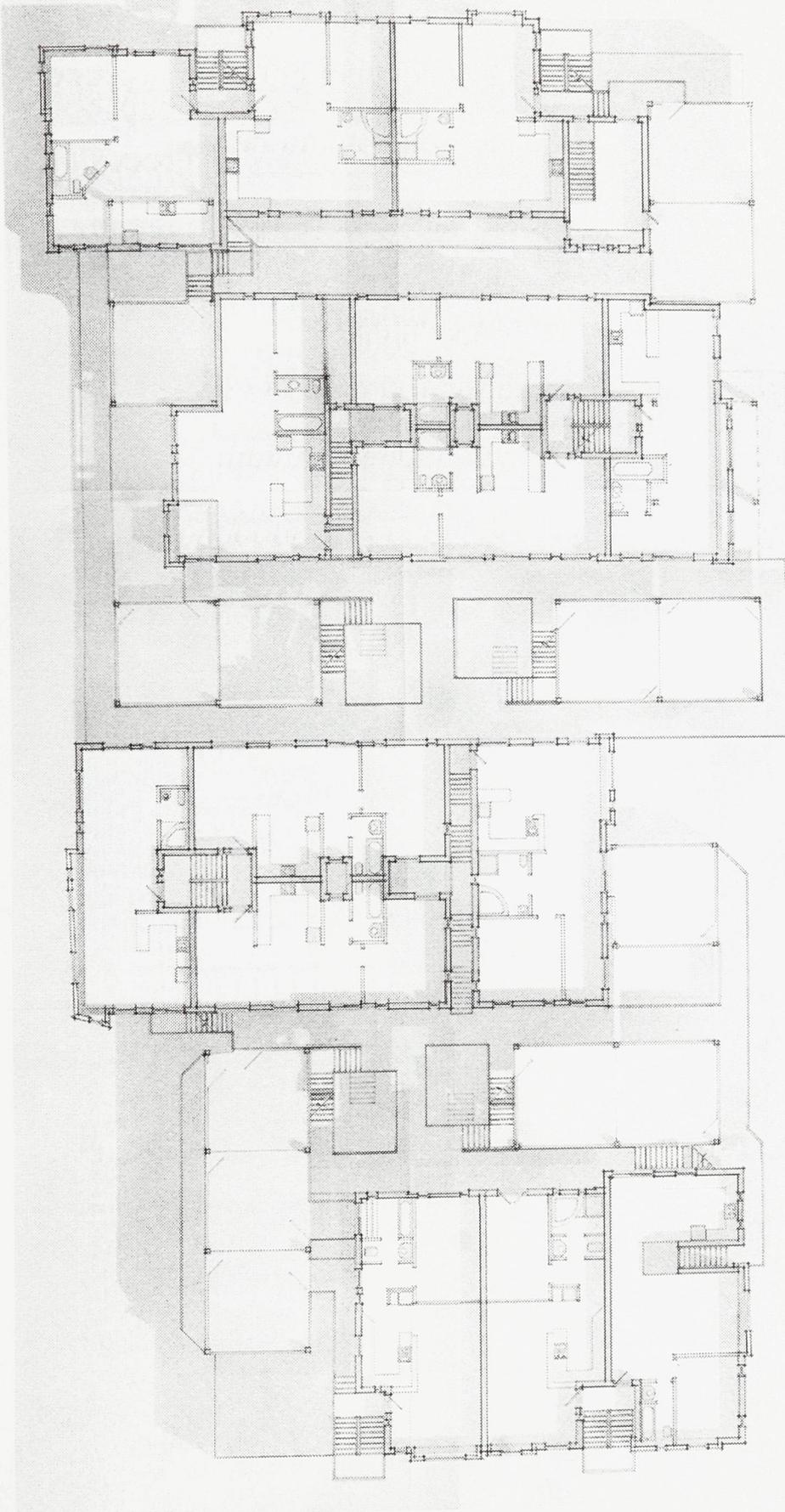
Drawings



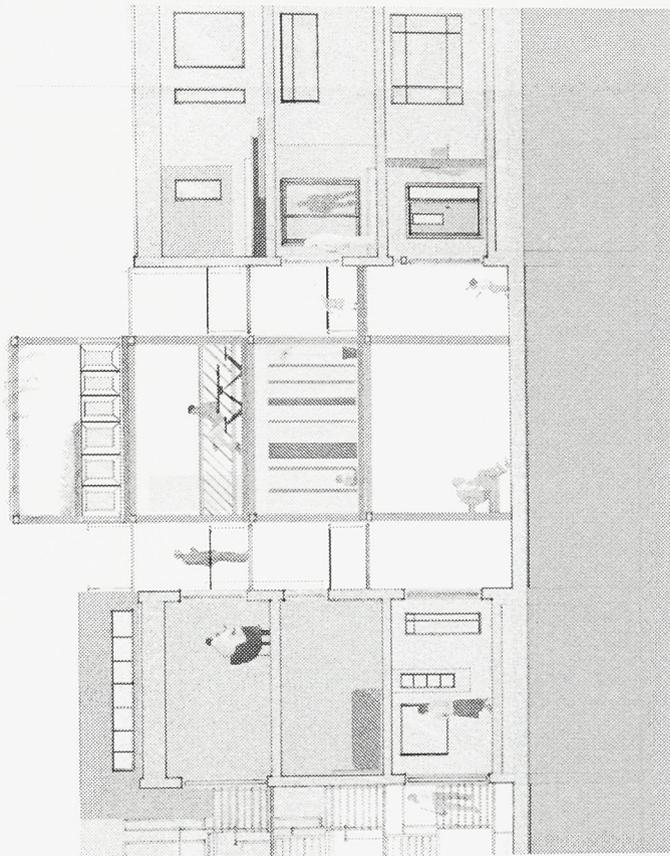
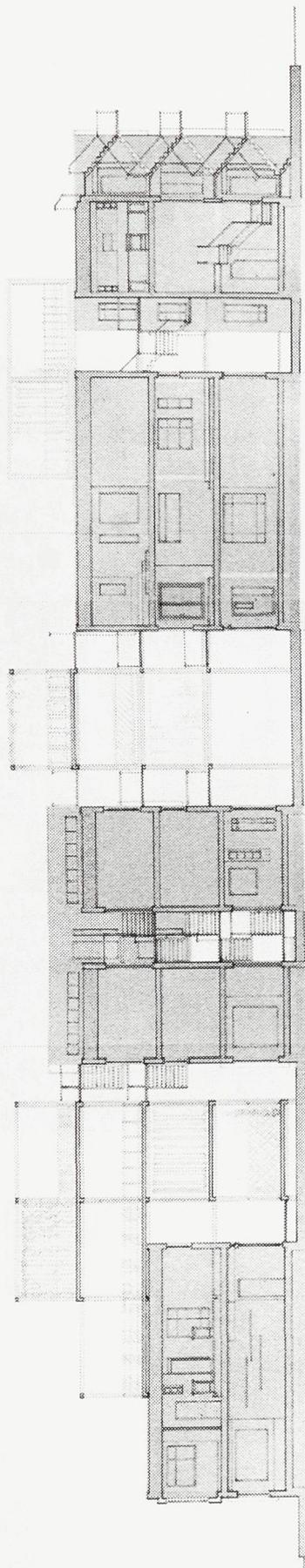
Floor plan – street level



Floor Plan – second level above grade



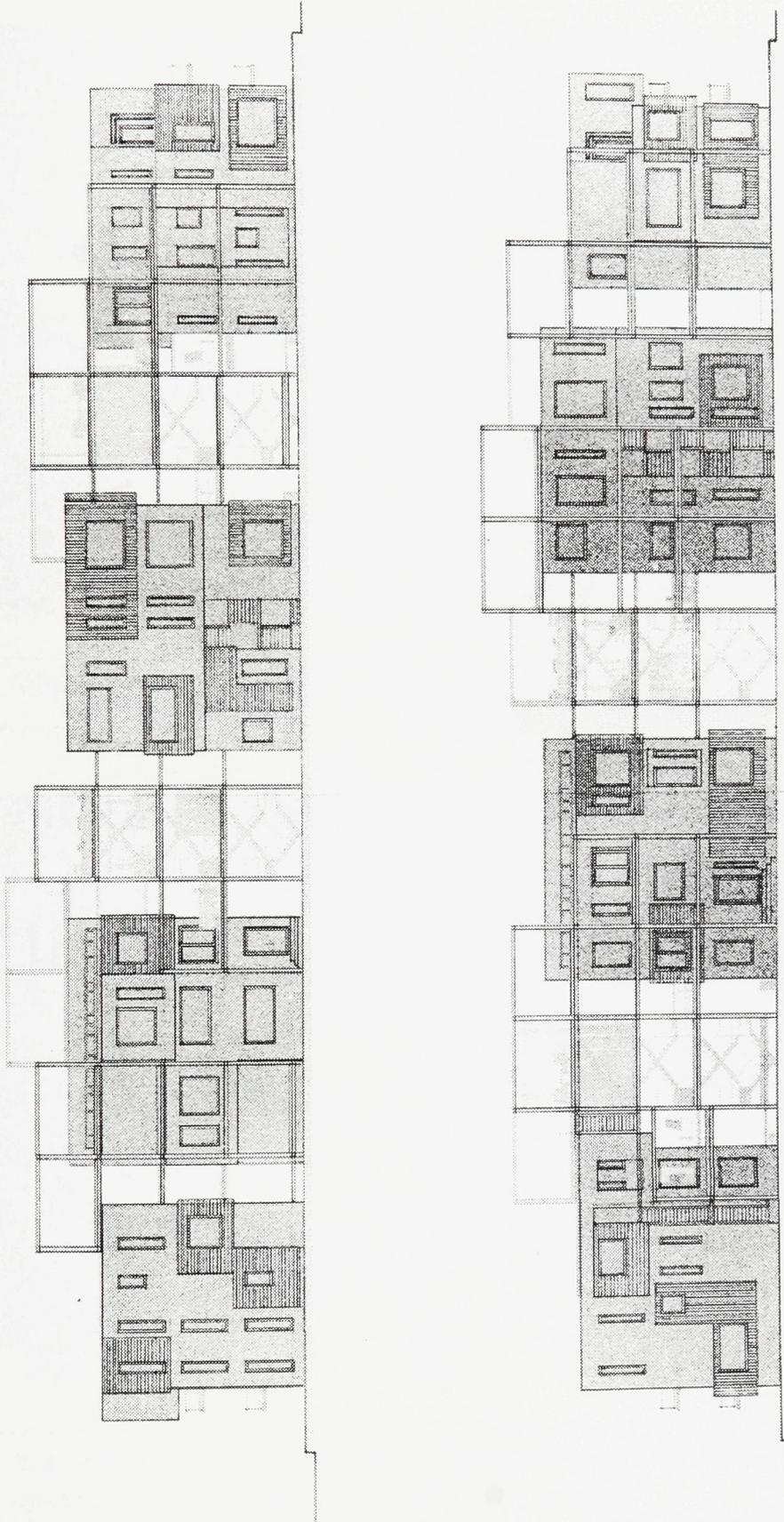
Floor Plan – third level above grade



Longitudinal section through entire residential complex; below – detail from section showing of different inhabiting of vertical yards



Detail of section – different yard spaces are inhabited differently by the residents

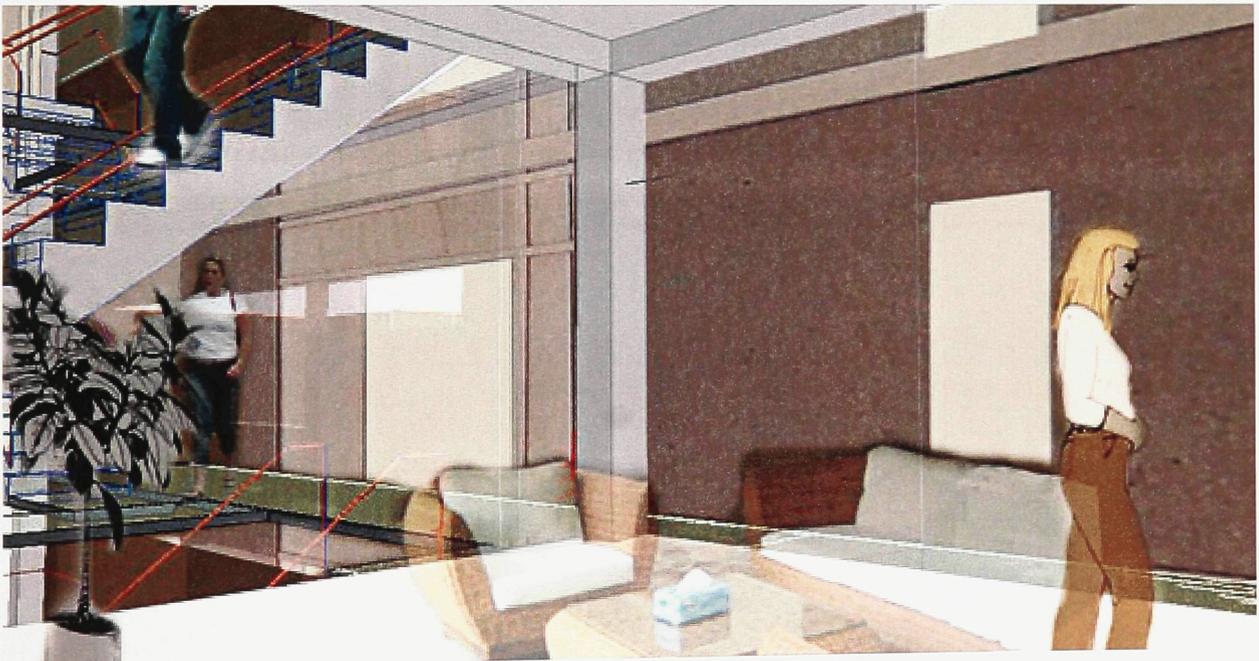


Elevations on Spencer St (above) and the new street connecting Parkdale and Hamilton on the other side of the residential block

Vignettes



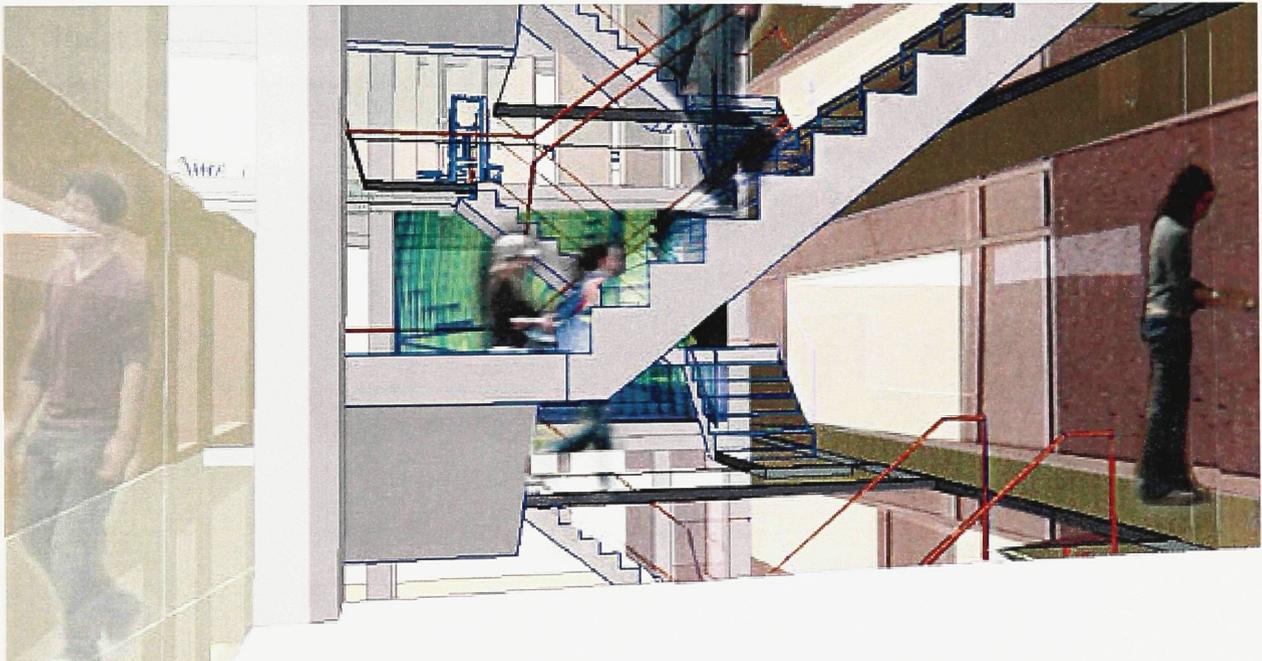
Vignette from street level on Spencer St



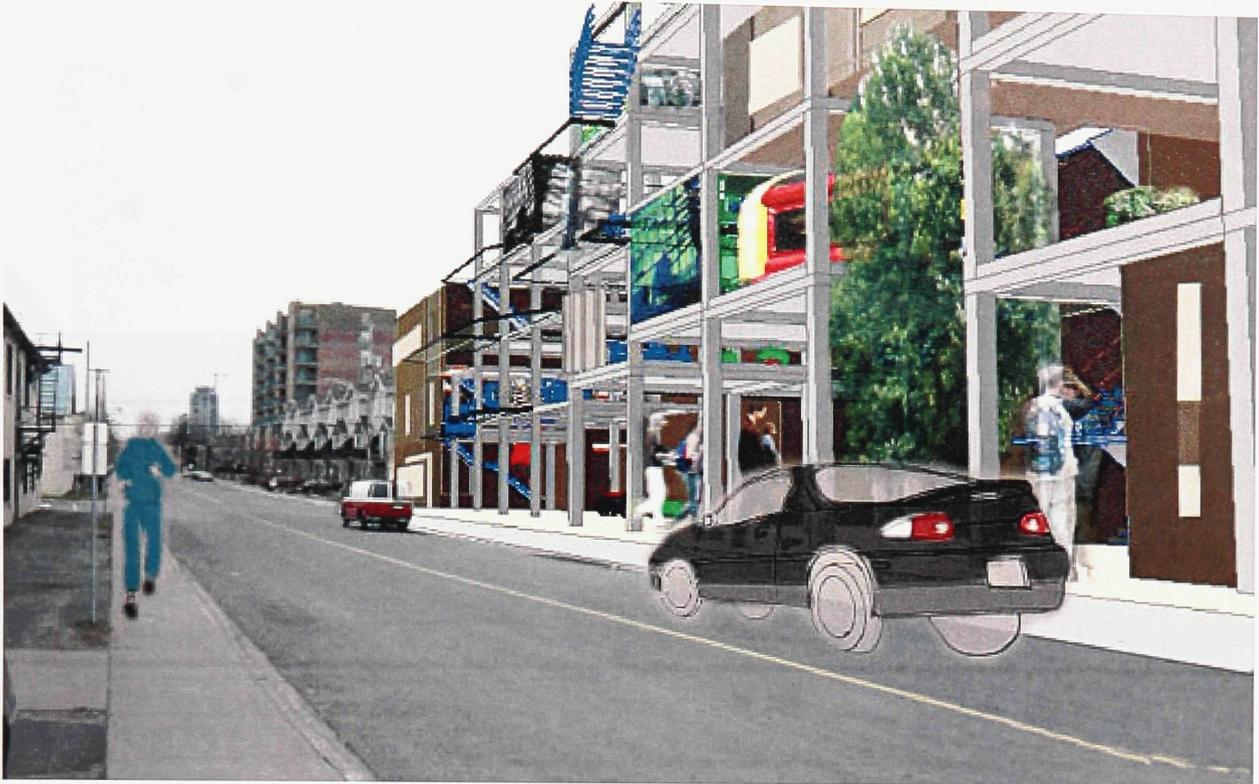
Vignette from one of the vertical yard spaces looking inwards to catwalks and circulation – the yard as an extended living space



Vignette from the inside of a living unit looking outwards to the newly formed social space outside the window



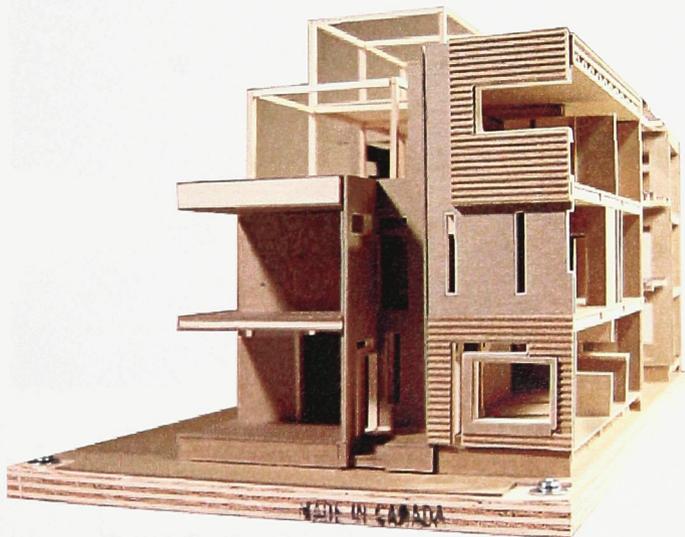
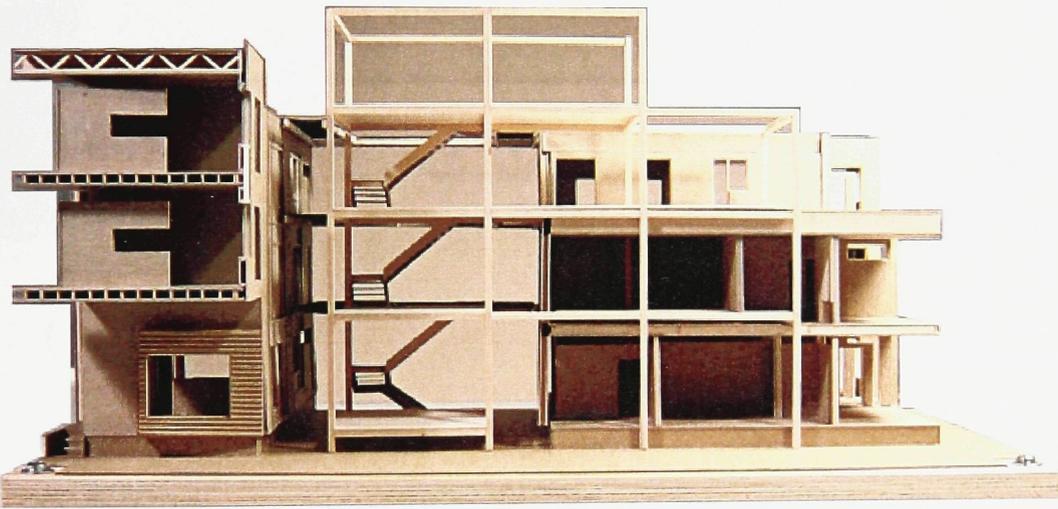
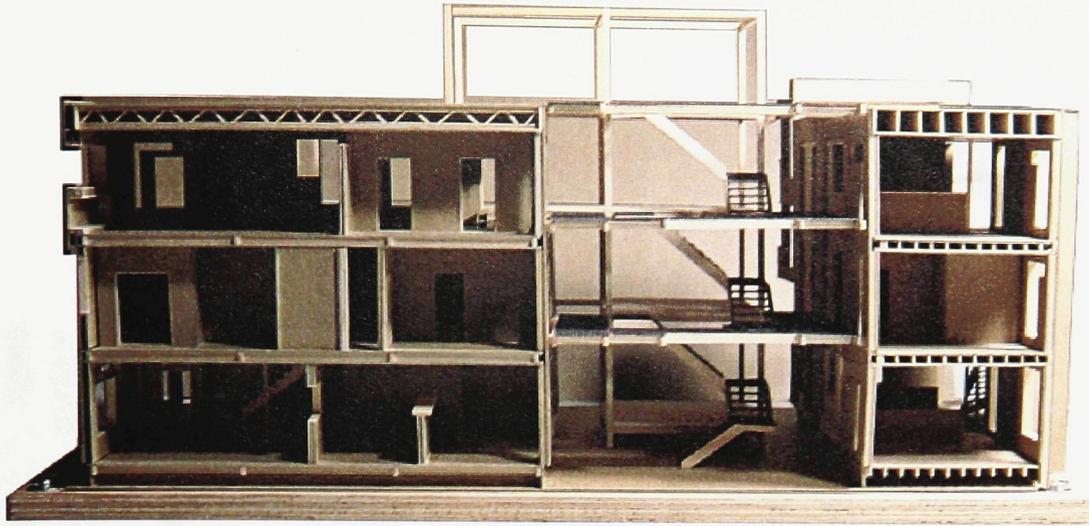
Vignette on second level vertical yards – circulation both up and down; in the background we can see different finishes on the steel frame structure



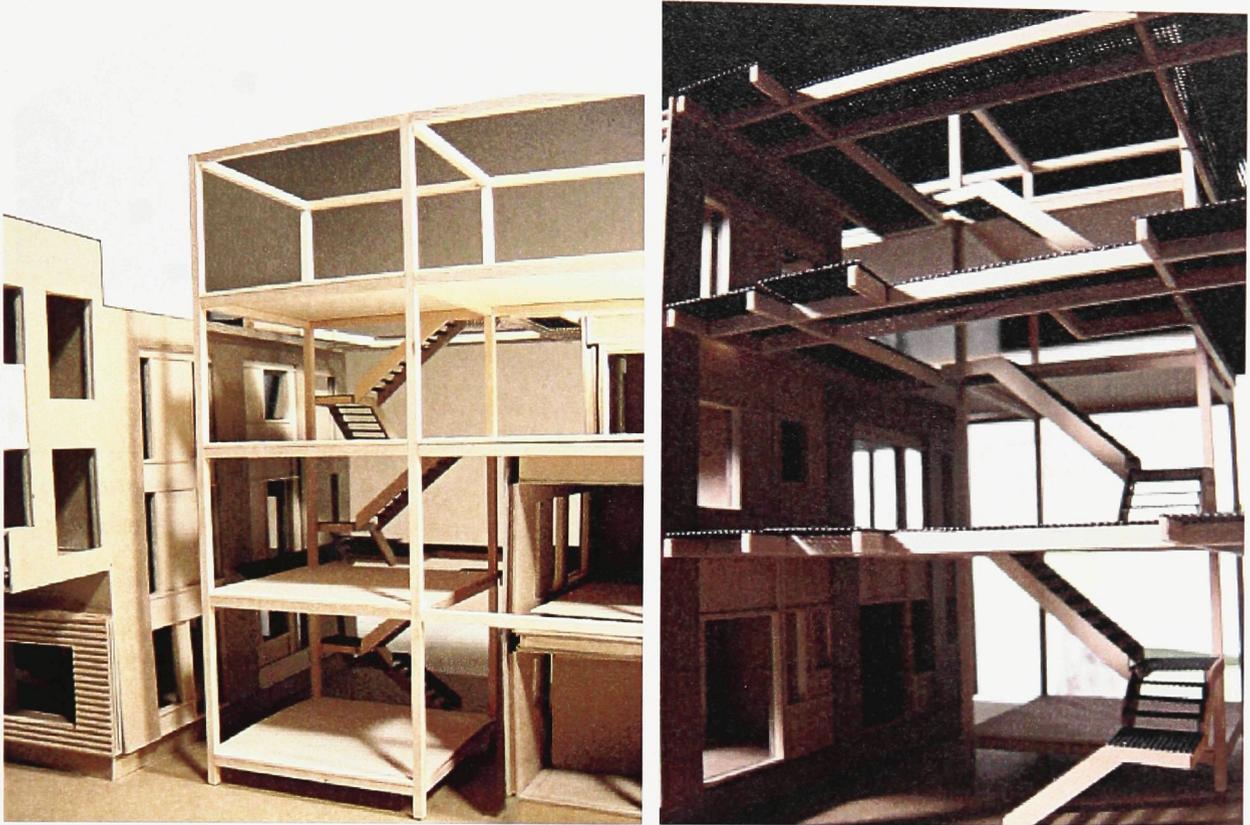
Street level vignette from across the Spencer facade



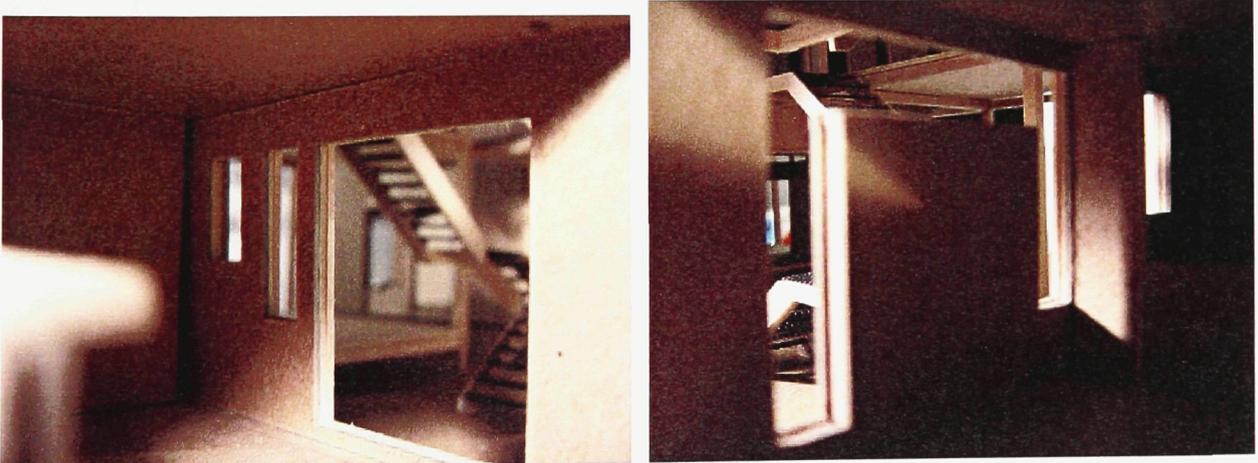
Street level vignette from the new street parallel to Spencer

Model 1:50 Detail

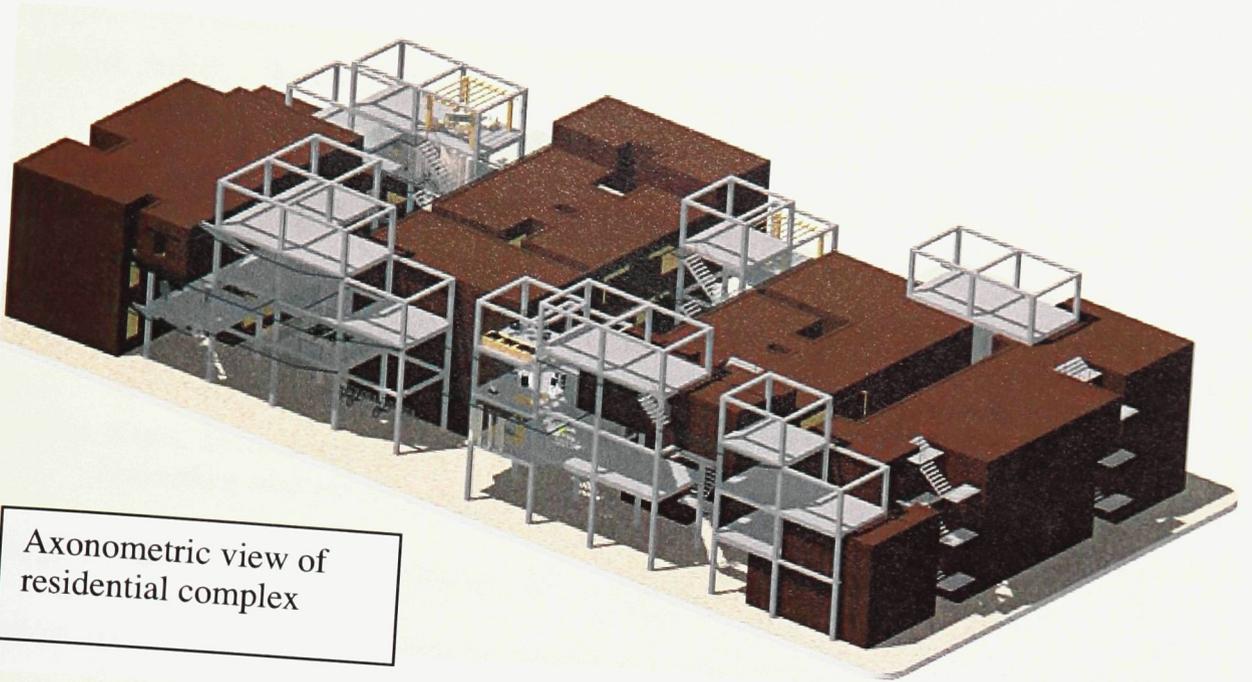
Sectional model of residential complex – showing section cut through vertical yards, circulation, and living units



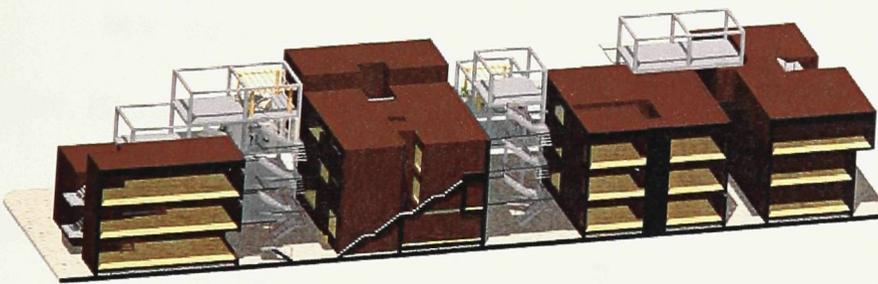
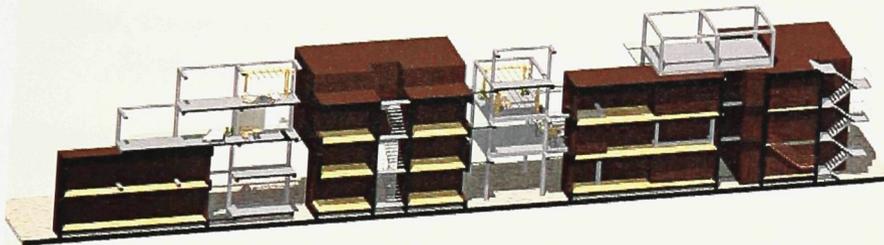
Views from model – urban backyards (left) and circulation (right)



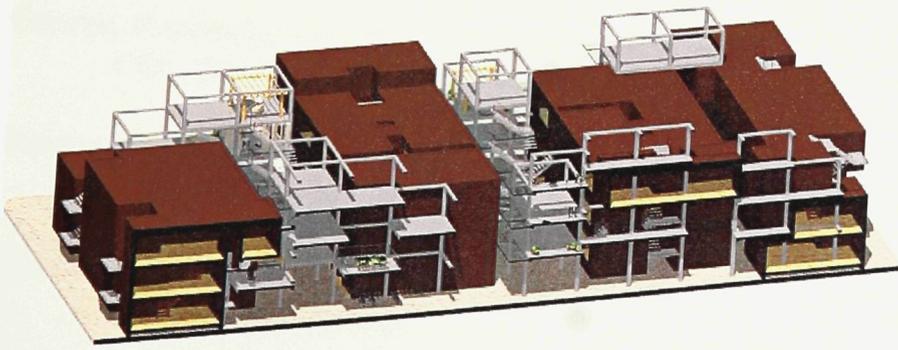
Views from model – inside the living units looking out onto the urban yard



Axonometric view of residential complex



Sectional axonometric views through residential complex



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