

RICE UNIVERSITY

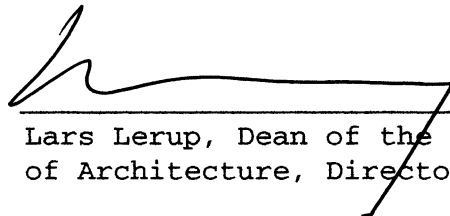
BOXING DOMESTICITY

by

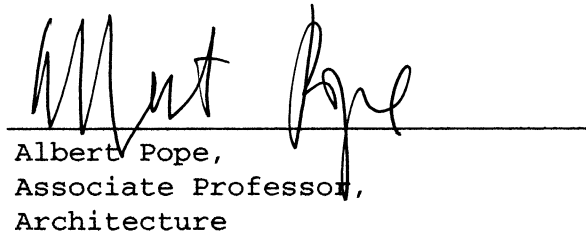
STEPHEN E. TRAEGER

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

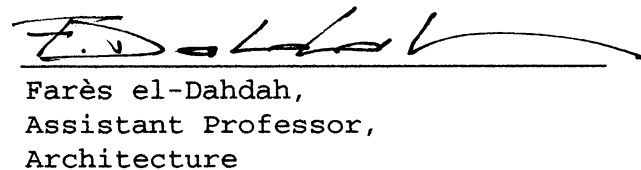
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Abstract

Boxing Domesticity

As society evolves so should its housing. Today's family is diversified, mobile and subject to change, while the typical detached single family suburban house remains the same. Bound by economic constraints, mortgage/insurance practices, tradition, and history, the suburban house has been resistant to change. It was designed with a particular type of consumer in mind and therefore has a particularly familial grain to it. It seems to work marginally well for most families who meet the specified two parents, 2.5 kids, and a dog consumer profile but breaks down for that family which does not. It therefore becomes necessary to repackage the house and offer an alternative - yet another new model. Something that functions more like a garage or loft while hinting at a new domesticity.

The garage marks the beginning of the investigation. The house and garage once separated for various reasons, have migrated and merged. Since the latest mutation, the garage has been contained within the house. The project reverses this relation by locating the house within the garage. The contained becomes the container, the recessive becomes the dominant.

Although it is quite common today for the garage to be either integrated into the house or detached (often with an apartment above), the interior often remains unfinished relating to the multi-purpose nature of the garage. It is somewhat strange that despite how integral the garage has become to the house (caring for the car has become one of the main functions of the American house), very little attention is received in terms of design, construction and analysis. The garage is often the largest room in the house and has had an interesting history migrating throughout the backyard. It's adaptability and simultaneity of function has had a profound effect on the single family house. The garage has shifted the private spaces (bedrooms) from the back to the front and the public spaces (living room, family room) from the front to the rear to look out the back slider instead of the picture window giving rise to the cult of the backyard. Trying to avoid merely a taxonomy or historical analysis of the garage, I began to look at other building types based on the car (banks, car washes, firehouses etc.), roadside architecture and how the car effects the city. As a result, I realized that some buildings are no longer based on the human figure but instead removed one step and based on the vehicle dimensions that are in turn based on human form, economics, and manufacturing issues. I started to document and trace the garage's migration throughout the backyard (detached, semi-attached, attached, facade, incorporated etc.).

The typical suburban detached single family

house is too compartmentalized, prescriptive, restrictive and generally unimaginative. It is built with a particular type of consumer in mind and therefore has a particular grain to it. It seems to work okay for most families who meet the specified consumer profile (married couple, two kids and dog etc.) but doesn't work so well when you deviate from the profile (i.e. live/work situations). So I am suggesting a repackaging of the house - a model house. One that is more flexible and adaptable to an occupant's needs. Something that functions more like a garage or, for lack of a better word, loft. The garage has always been the younger sibling of the house, I'm trying to make the dominant/recessive relationship more equitable. Because of it's cross-programmability and multi-functionality the garage has always been a place for the "other." That is, the garage allows other things to simultaneously occur that the house does not. With this in mind, I am taking the house, exploding it and relocating it's components in the garage. The garage is pumped up on steroids and becomes a box for the others (the contained becomes the container). The other rooms are distilled (to their essence) to a piece of furniture and placed in the box. So, in a way, I'm sort of turning the house inside out. Maybe its more like exploding the house and imploding the rooms - regardless, its transforming rooms into objects. I am trying to hint at a new domesticity by performing a series of operations on a typical suburban house.

The project proposes a house within a garage (as opposed to a garage within a house). That is, a house that reconsiders the traditional notion of what a garage is. The garage is no longer merely a place to store the auto and/or other "stuff." The garage seems to be a product of the industrial revolution. Looking at the Eames house, how it functions and how it is constructed with off the shelf pre-fab materials, one may draw a parallel with the loft which might be considered a kind of garage. In addition to storing things, the garage is highly adaptable, multi-functional and cross-programmable.

As the American home has become more leisure oriented, it's spatial organization and relation to the garage has changed over time. Built by builders responding to changing social conditions, the garage has undergone at least three phases. These include (as J. B. Jackson notes) the romantic garage, the practical garage and the family garage. Garage evolution served as a starting point. Like the multiple lines on a gymnasium floor for basket ball, volley ball etc. that signify different things to different people at different times, the garage has several simultaneous layers of order among the apparent mess. Garage exploration included everything from the single family house, multi-unit complexes, fire houses, malls, drive-thru services (fast-food, banks, lumber yards etc.), ice houses, service stations (gas) to commercial parking structures. The car has become an extension/prosthetic of ourselves. The modern Vitruvius man has learned how to drive and is now seated behind the steering wheel. He picks up Le Corbusier's Modular Man who is hitch hiking. Although they both enjoy the drive, Modular man says that he hates the bus and refuses to buckle-up. Structures today not only accommodate the car but are designed to its specifications thus serving vehicle first then driver/operator. I began to look at roadside architecture and how the car has extended Main Street. As car production/consumption increased it became necessary to build more roads. Many roads, serving faster traffic, bypassed town centers. Motorists, unless they elected to take older, slower routes, only saw the back of downtown. Although the car initially increased traffic to downtown it eventually had the opposite effect. Traffic became so congested that the only hope was to keep it flowing. Cars that used to stop, now passed by. The center had become a thoroughfare. Eventually merchants followed the car towards the edge. Not only were there more potential customers (each car passing by) but more real-estate was available at cheaper rates. As the rate of traffic flow increased at the edge of town, American cities witnessed the emergence of architecture for speed-reading. "The automobile in a few short

years reverse the millennial primacy of architecture over movement. Firmness has gave way to flow...The boulevards caused a gradual shift in the urban metaphor, from the stable, an almost classicizing idiom of train and streetcar engineering to the new and liquid language of the automobile." (Suisman, Los Angeles Boulevards).

Three Periods of Garage history as defined by J.B. Jackson:

General

To be interested in pop-culture is also to be interested in pop-architecture. The buildings we live, work and play in reveal something about societal values and attitude towards the surrounding milieu. Private and public spaces do not just exist but must be made. What is made then, is a reflection of current thought and attitudes. Necessarily, both our public and private existence's have evolved. The concept of "home" has changed over time by the elimination and addition of certain spaces.

Romantic Garage

The garage, an almost standard and essential feature of the American home of today, can be traced back to the stable or coach house while the parking structure was derived from livery stables. In this country the stable was usually detached from the house and located towards the back of the property line for health reasons. This arrangement seemed to work well for the automobile and chauffeur as well who took a room above the garage. One does not have to look much past the hedges at Rice to see this lodging/storage relationship peaking around the rear corner of the house. This is the Romantic Garage, indicative of the exotic and expensive nature of early automobile couture (...French

origins of "garage" and "chauffeur").

Practical Garage

As an automotive middle class emerged, work called for mobility and people located further out in the suburbs (in relation to BCD), a garage of a different sort was needed. Small prefabricated boxes began to line the service alley since the dimension of the average lot precluded building anything next to the house.

Family Garage

After World War II, outlying suburban communities offered lots with a wider frontage that allowed the garage to not only integrate into the facade of the house but to integrate internally as well. Garages became bigger accommodating additional functions (i.e. additional and larger cars, freezer, hot water heater, work bench, laundry facilities, collections of lawn furniture, skis, gardening tools etc.)

The Car and its Home (Carports and Garages, a Sunset Book)

"In this era of virtually more Automobiles than Americans, the home garage or carport is one of the last places where you can park all day free. But for most of us it must be something more. Granted that the family plays an extremely important part in our daily life, the sacrifice of several hundred square feet of space on a small lot merely to allow the automobile to rest between trips is a luxury few can afford.

Most homes built in recent years provide some type of roofed shelter for two cars, plus off-street parking for two more (usually in the form of a wide front driveway). These parking facilities are certainly an improvement over old one-car arrangements. And yet, people continue to remodel them. Why? There are two primary

reasons: (1) What is good for "the average family" may not be good for their own particular needs; (2) a family's needs change from time to time.

Happily, a carport or garage can be put to a wide variety of uses, even though it may not be near the kitchen or the entry. At the simplest, a few shelves can tidy up a storage problem. At the other extreme, a garage can be converted to an added indoor room, and a new and more versatile carport can be built. With ingenuity, you can make the carport or garage double as a patio, a play yard, an extension of a workshop - or even an art gallery.

In thinking about the car and its home, here are some problems to be considered.

Where should a new car shelter be located, and how much space is needed for getting to, around, and through it? How can a shelter be best fitted to various lots and orientations and to existing structures?

How can the car be brought closer to the front door and to the service door?

How can a car shelter be converted into a livable room? And then where new space be gained to park the car?

What about extra parking? What about parking when a carport or shelter can't be built?

In addition to sheltering the car, how else can auto storage space be utilized?

Must parking areas and driveways have that parking lot look, or can they be fitted harmoniously into the landscaping?" (p.4)

Consider the commercial automobile - the truck

The car's impact on the American family and house

gender issues

The role of the car in shaping the city

Car and garage as status symbol

Fragments -

Survey, collect and catalog the "garage"

How the car interacts with and relates to place and destination

Alternative and/or concurrent usage of the garage

Garage as framing device

Garage sales

Automobile, ergonomically designed to fit the human figure, has replaced the Vitruvius man. Buildings removed one step further from the human figure, that is they are based on the dimensions of the car which are based on those of the human figure.

Commute from car "garage" to destination (home, office etc.)

Gender issues - although traditionally considered male space, the garage might now be considered androgynous

Vernacular v. "polite" architecture

American v. European models

Security regarding the garage

Garage taxonomy (avoid merely a taxonomy, take it further)

Garage as a political question (how does it effect the street, pedestrians, automobiles etc.)

Death, people commit suicide in garages

Storage, largest room in the house (do we suffer from agoraphobia?)

Commute between house, office and garage

Consider the commercial automobile - the truck

The car's impact on the American family and house

The role of the car in shaping the city

Status symbol

Styling the strip

How garage relates to the street (attached, detached etc.). If attached, it is often a major component of the facade (ie. counterbalancing the picture window), sometimes comprises the entire facade (ie. hillside housing).

Vernacular v. "polite" architecture

"The automobile in a few short years reversed the millennial primacy of architecture over movement. Firmness has gave way to flow."

"The boulevards caused a gradual shift in the urban metaphor, from the stable, an almost classicizing idiom of train and streetcar engineering to the new and liquid language of the automobile."

Circus/Carnival

Garage organization can be likened to that of a circus. What at first appears to be free and chaotic is actually quite organized and ordered. The three ring circus under the big tent offers the spectator/viewer several simultaneous concurrent events to view. The viewer/spectator then decides/ranks the view at hand thereby beginning the editing process (cutting and pasting the constructed views) of the spectacle. The viewer/spectator is confronted with a vast array of information/stimuli that is necessarily edited. Information/stimuli presented is greater in quantity than can be taken in/absorbed/processed encouraging repeat visits.

Circus organization like that of the Acropolis?
(see Eames)

fragments, blurbs etc.

New type v. transformed type

Garage moving towards the house, nearing the
hearth and now replacing it?

There is a seed of a new domesticity already
planted in the house and that is the garage.

Maybe the "new domesticity" is a progression and
happens in stages ie. additional bays are added
over time.

Gradually place/add "house" elements into the
garage, eventually the house shrinks and the
garage grows.

Maybe its not so much a new type as a blending
of two existing types (hybrid)?

Possible scenerio: remodelling a typical
suburban house but owner/client does not have
much money so remodel is done in stages as more
money becomes available.

It is the nature of the automobile that the city
spreads out thus and far away. -Frank Lloyd
Wright, "America Tomorrow"

Main Street to Miracle Mile (Table of Contents):

Space

-From Main Street to Miracle Mile

Image

-Architecture for Speed-Reading

Type

-Auto Showrooms

-Gas Stations

-Supermarkets

-Miniature Golf Courses

- Drive-in Theaters
- Motels
- Restaurants (including fast-food etc.)

Add,

- +Banks
- +Lumber Yards

Roadside business costumes/disguise

- Roadside buildings cloaked in a variety of guises to promote business
- Discuss the wardrobe, when and why are particular garments/wraps in vogue

Urban commercial landscape

Main Street behind the windshield

- Cinematic Cacophony of Commercialism/Consumerism (riot-like parade of images?)

Materials

- From White porcelain-enamel cladding to stainless-steel to slick black High-Tech look. Hidden motive behind conveying the modern/moderne look - to encourage employees to keep the business clean and tidy

Gas Stations

- Selling gas at the curbside
 - The drive-in filling station
 - The service station: from house to box
 - The self-service station: independent innovation
 - Redecorating the box
 - High-value pumpers and convenience stores
 - The return of the "store with gas"
- (albeit on an asphalt covered lot instead of along the Main Street curbside)

fragments, blurbs etc.

New type v. transformed type

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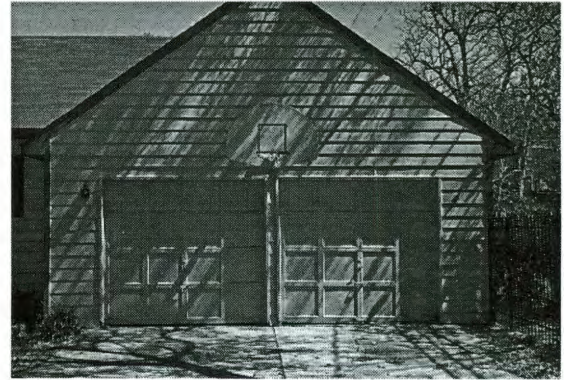
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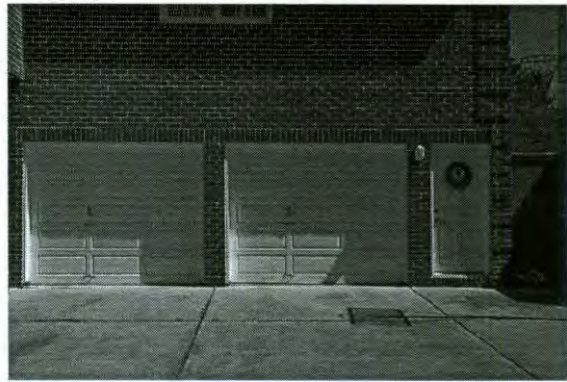
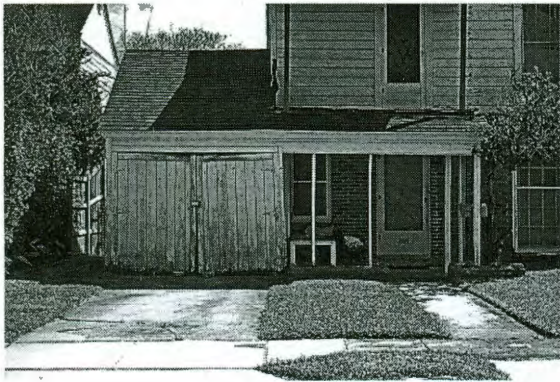
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Garage Taxonomy

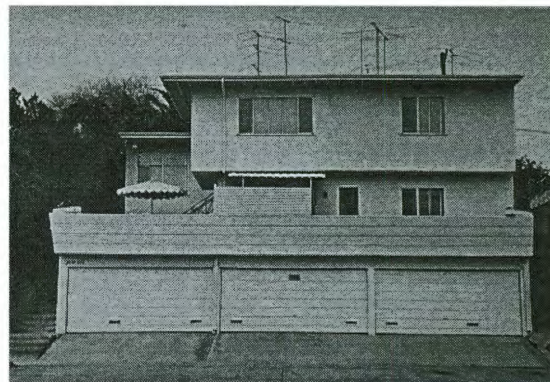
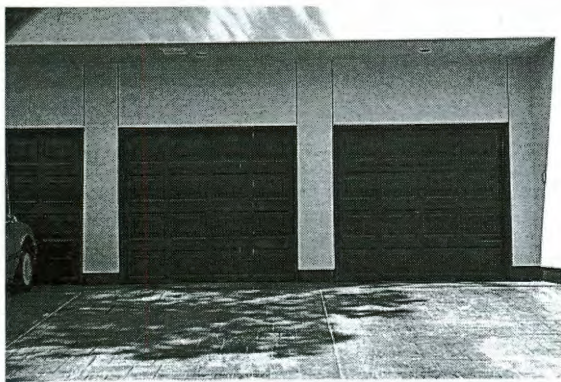
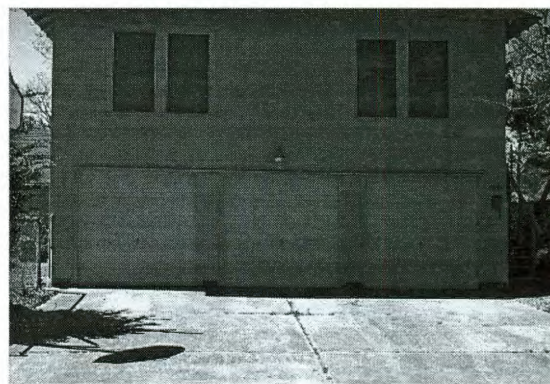
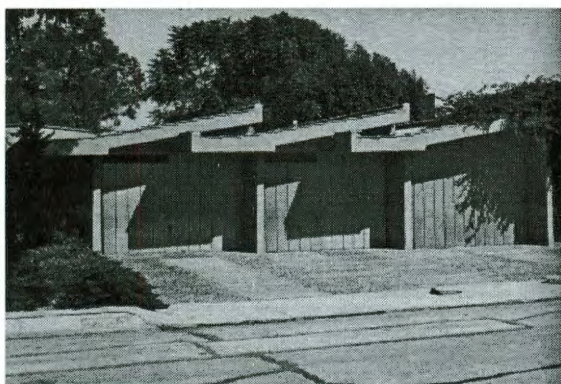
Collect, catalog, and analyze
the garage.



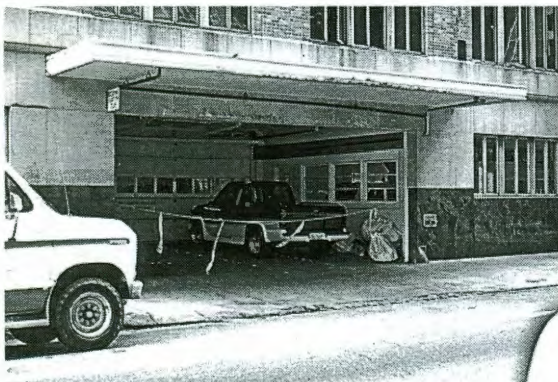
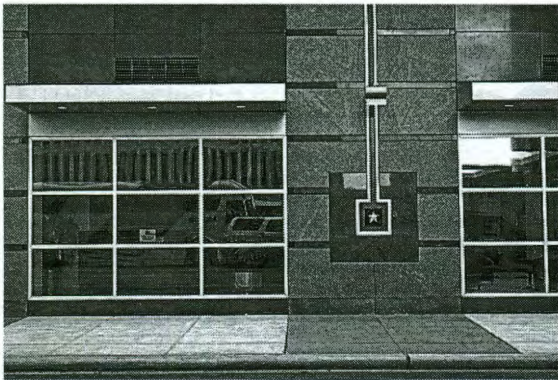


A survey of West University
Garages (Houston, TX).

Detached single-family homes
with three-car garages.



The garage often exists within
the shadows of the building.



car + cinema = drive-in movie
theater.

Storage.



Storage.



Drive-thru services.

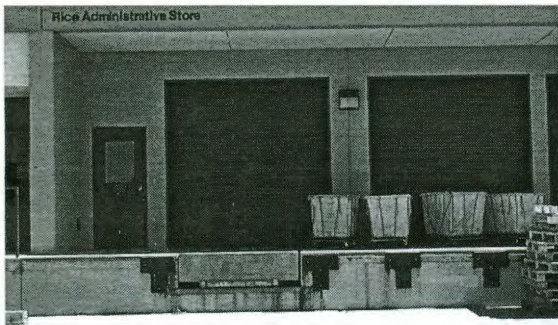


Parking.

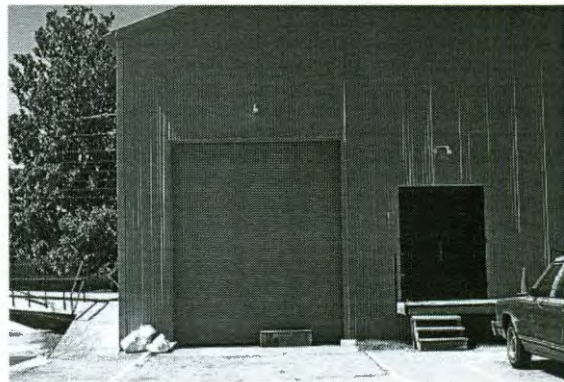
Fire house.



Fire house.



Post-office.



Rice media center loading dock.

Garage as service station,
service station as garage.



Automotive services.



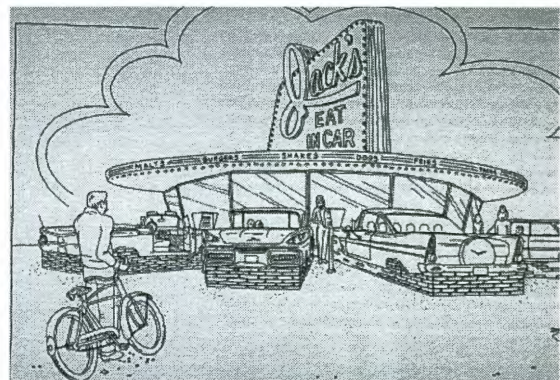
Garage as automobile dealership, automobile dealership as garage.



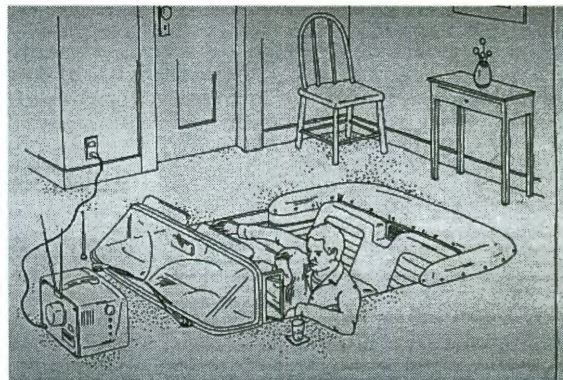
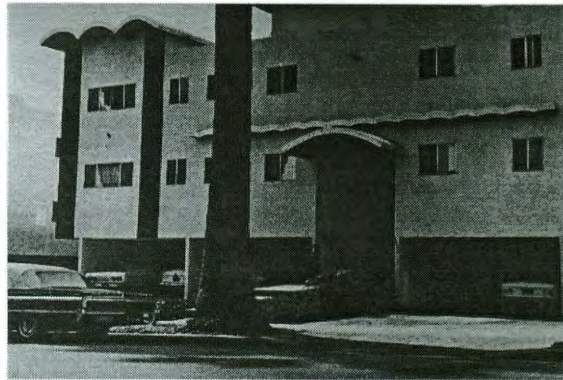


Shopping.

Eateries.

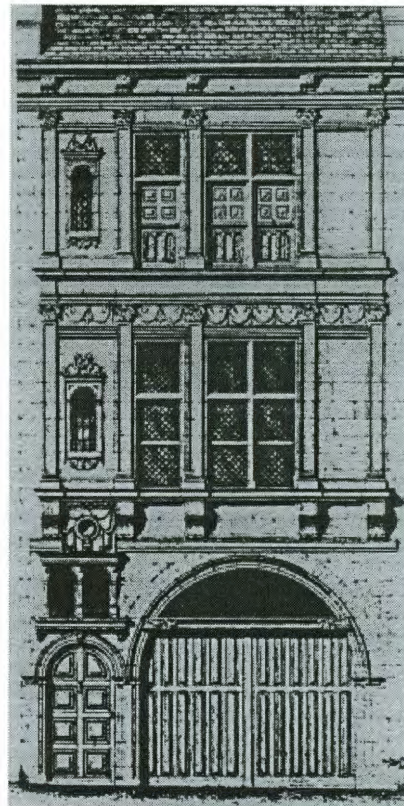
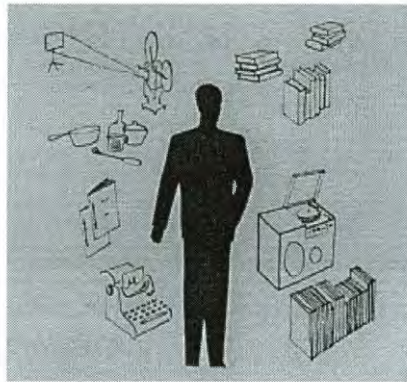


Domesticity.

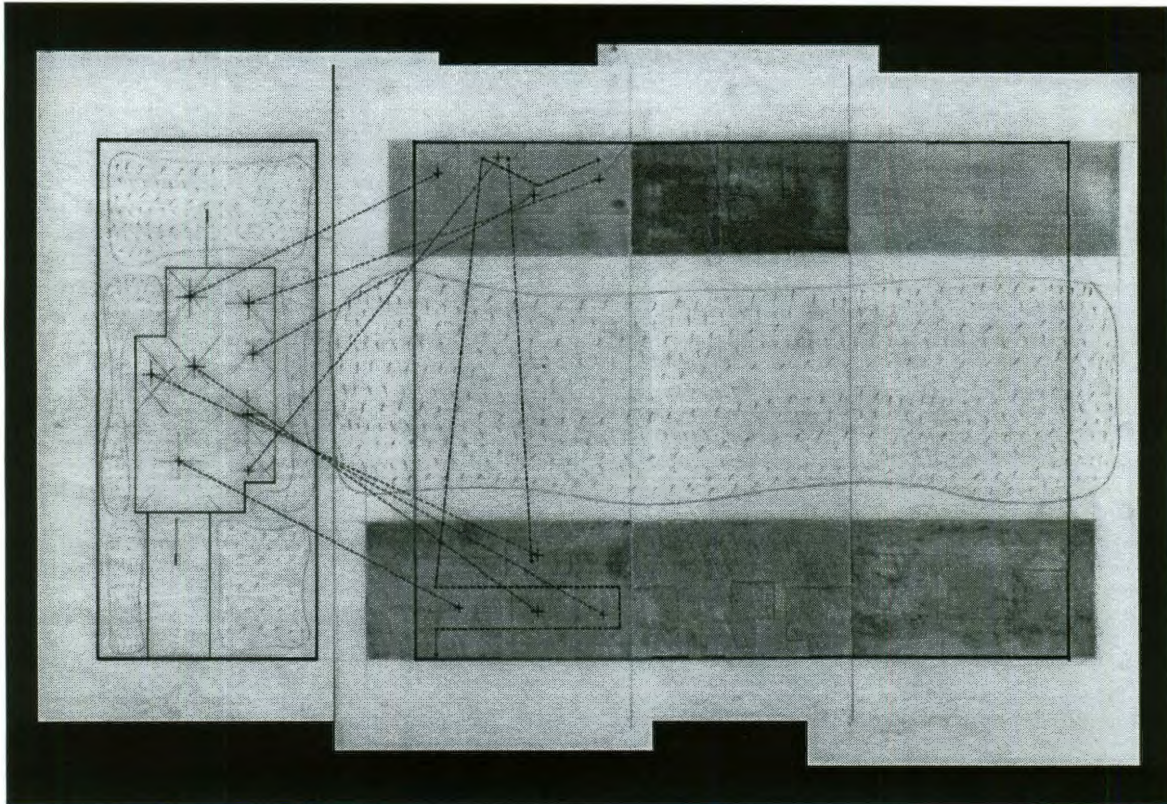


F l a t w o r k

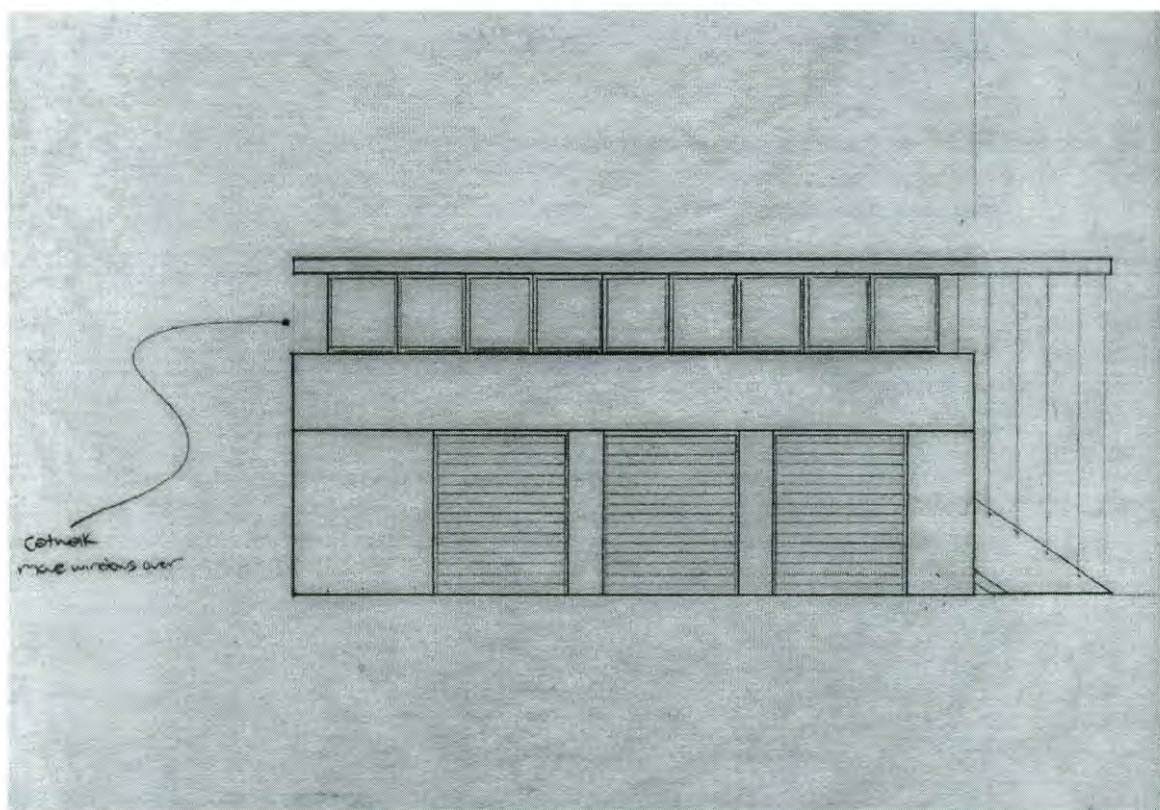
The garage evolved
from the stable.

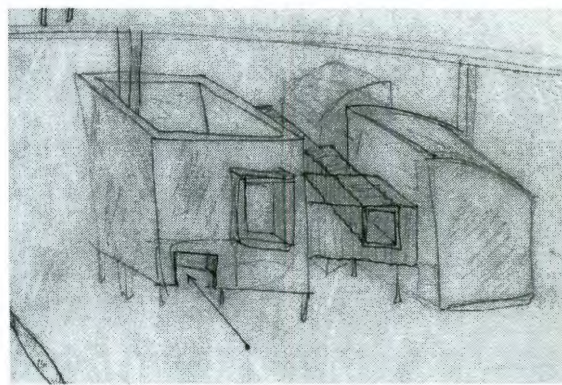
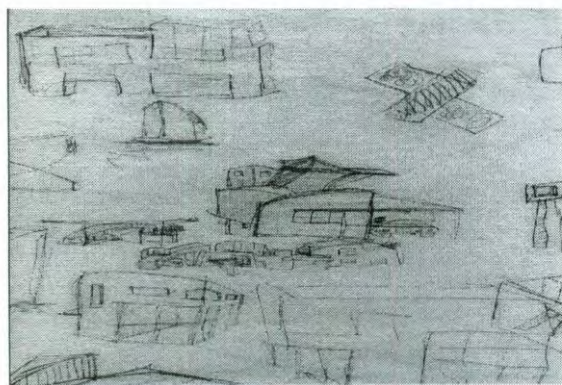
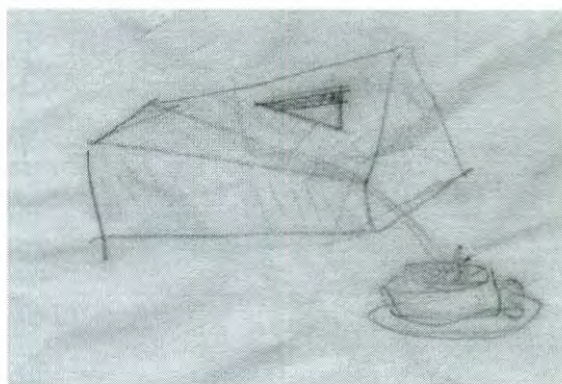
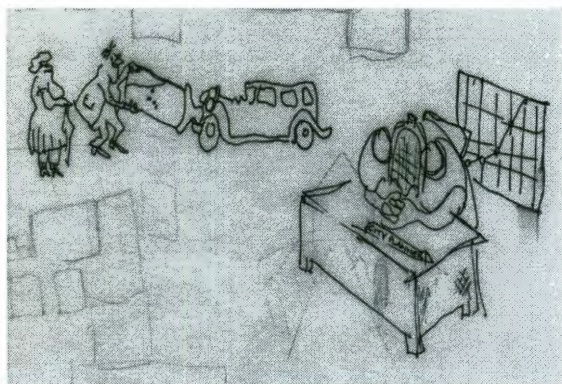


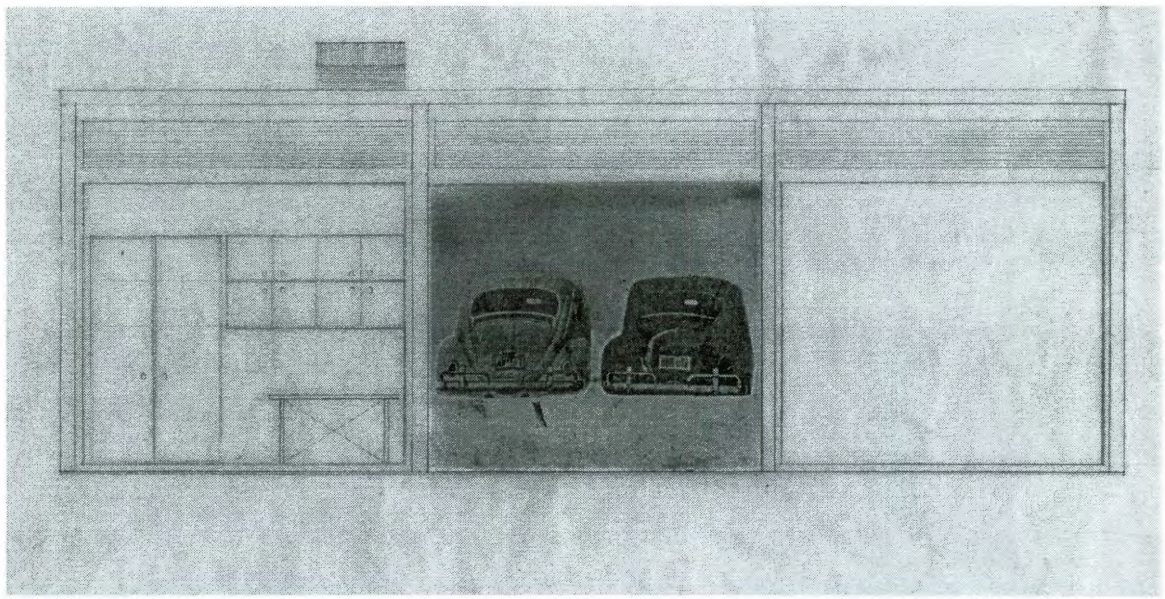
Early study investigating movement over time. Front and backyard become bands of green space, orange represents daytime use while blue represents nighttime use.



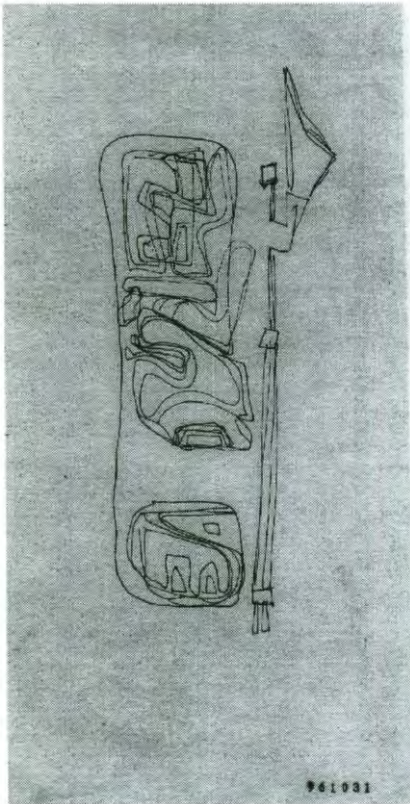
Early sketches.



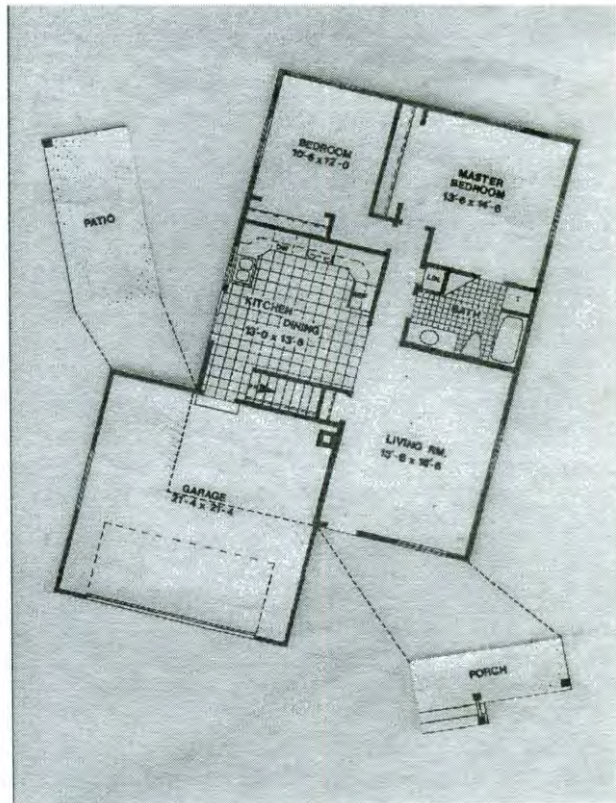




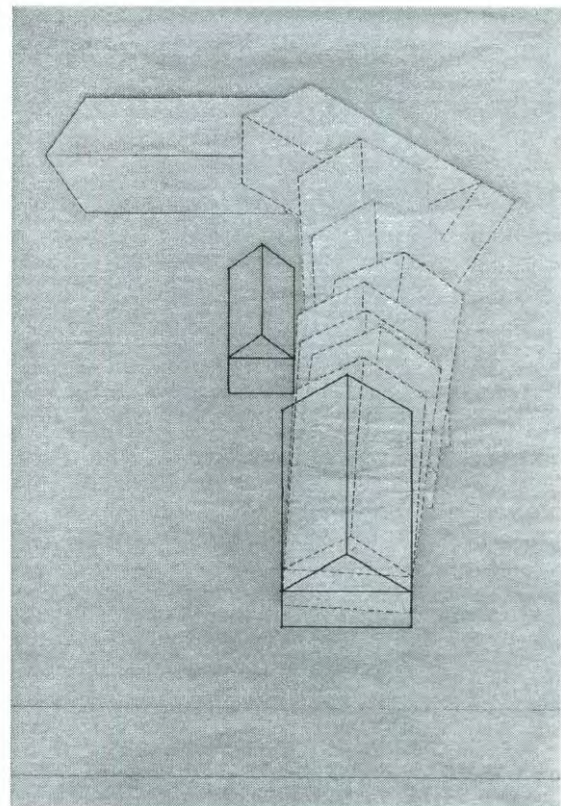
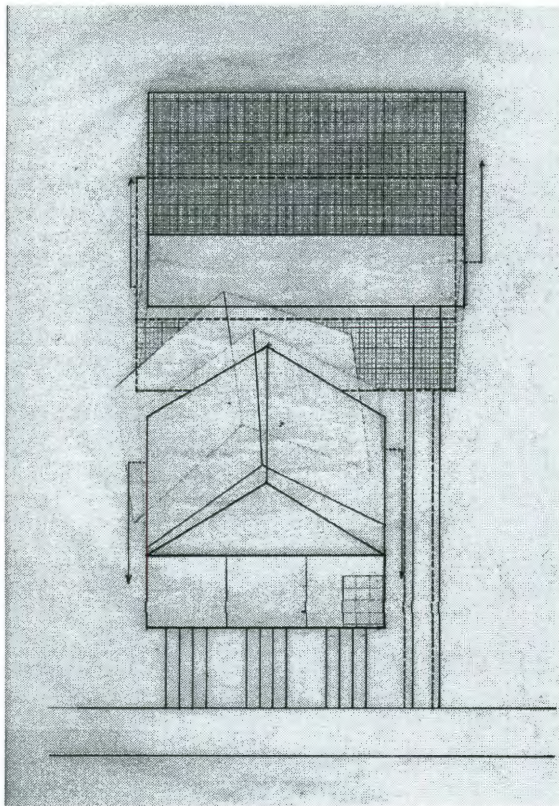
Disecting and performing a
series of operations on the
detached single-family house.

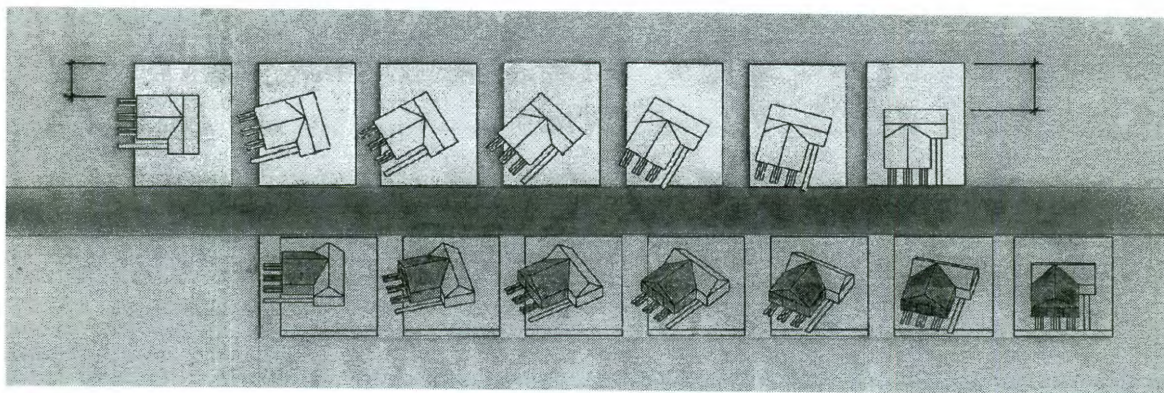


Sketch of movement
throughout a bar building.

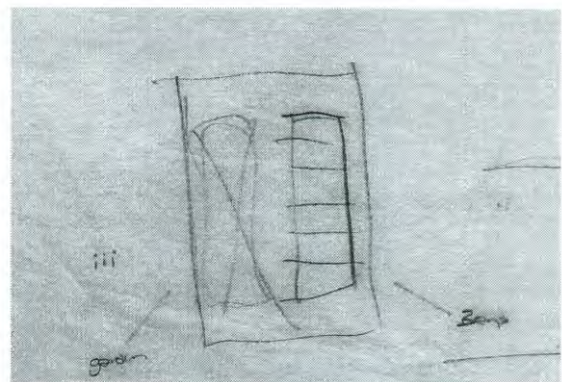
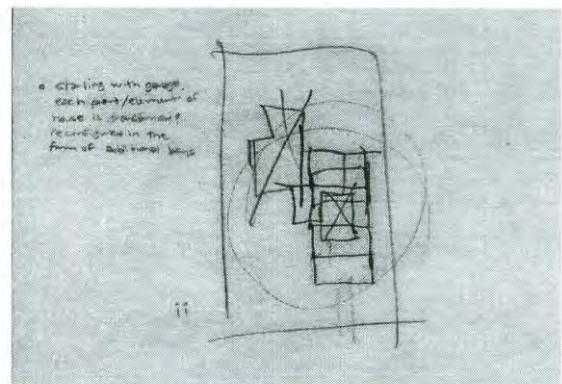
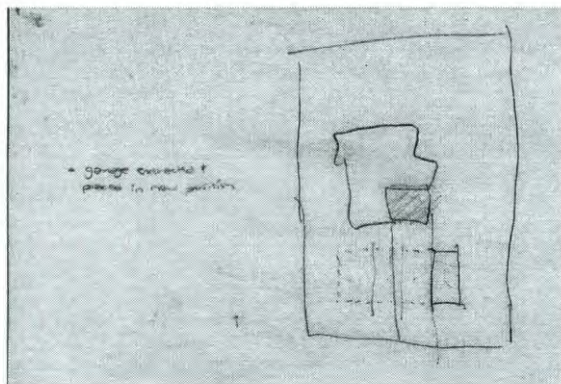


The migrating garage and the
curb shy receding house.

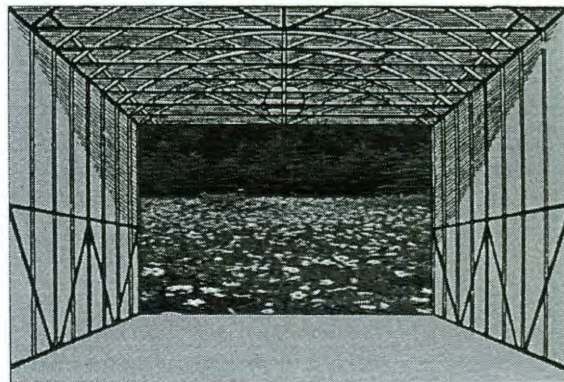
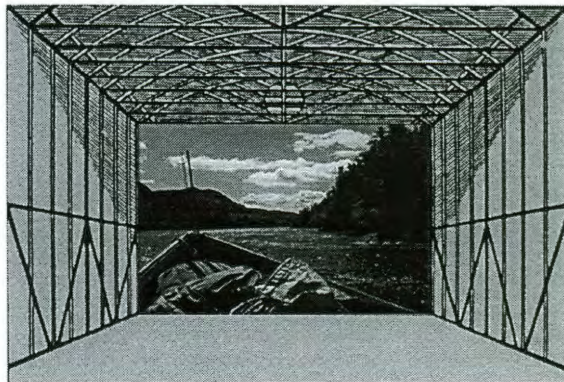
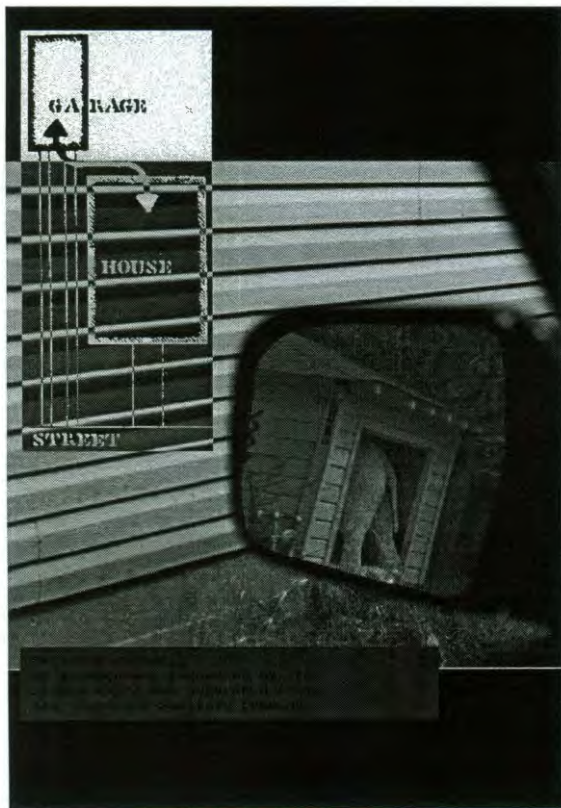


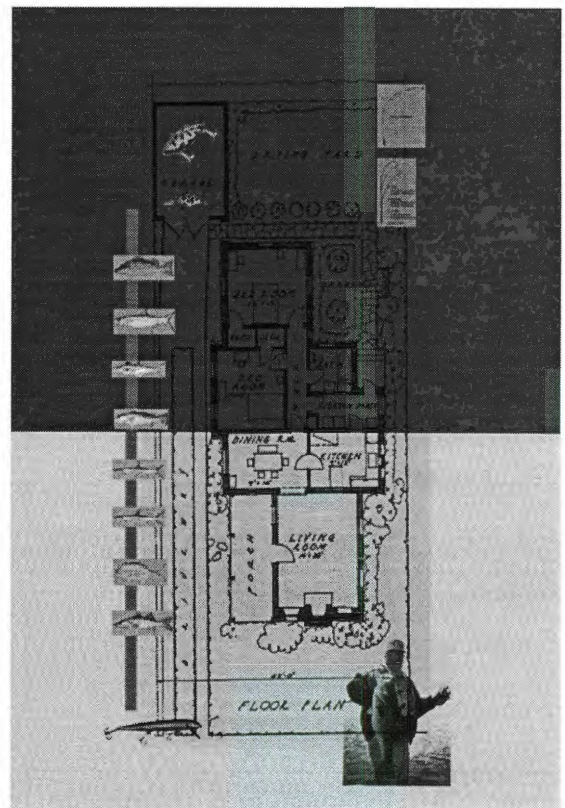
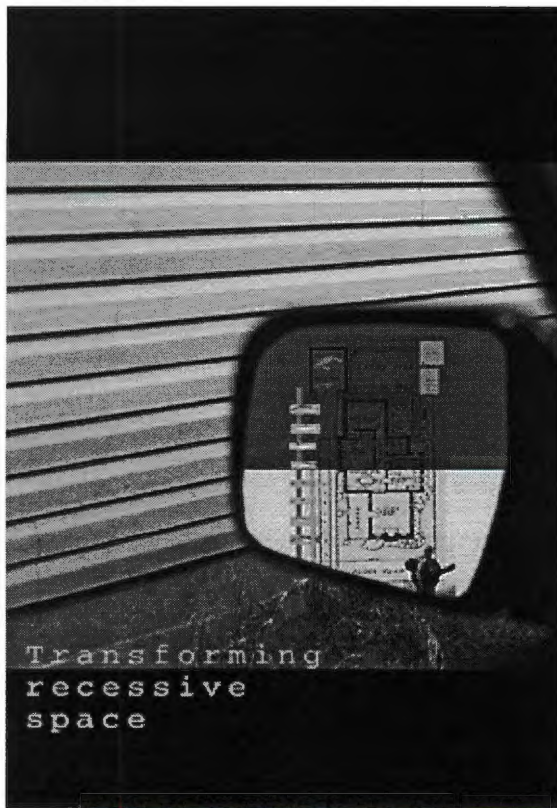


Shifting orientation.

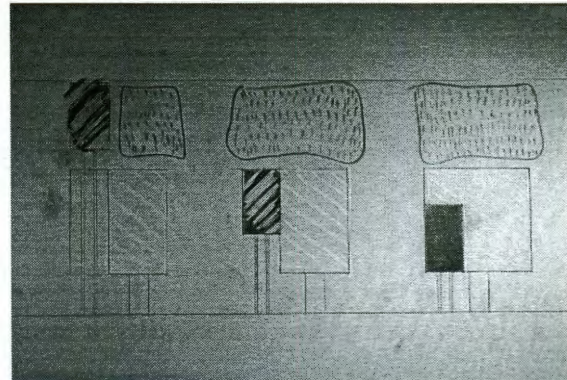
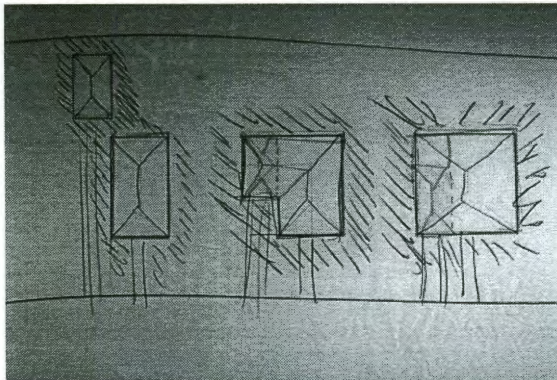
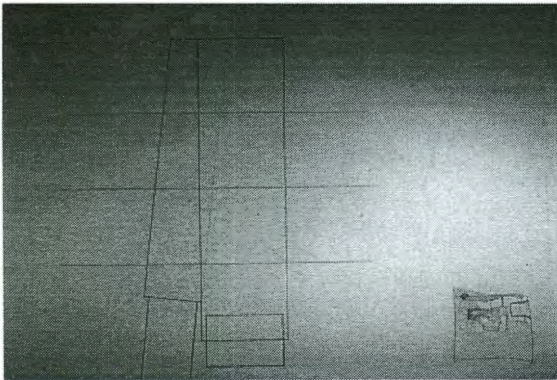


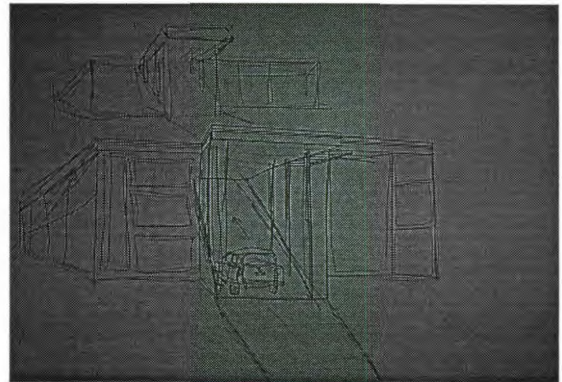
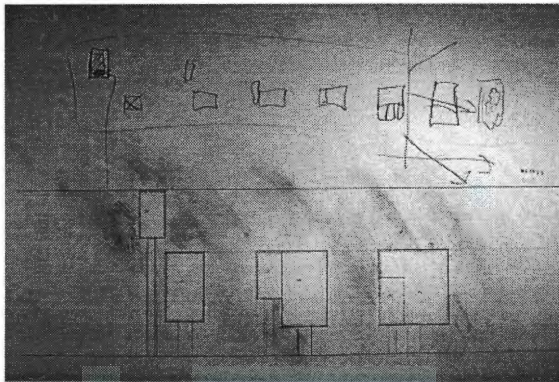
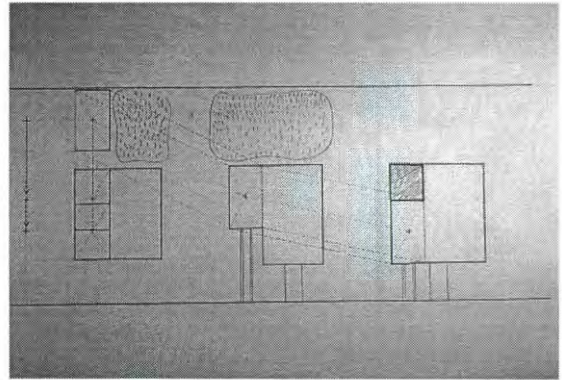
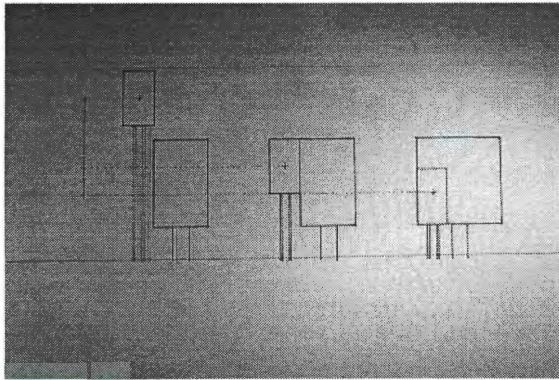
Collages.

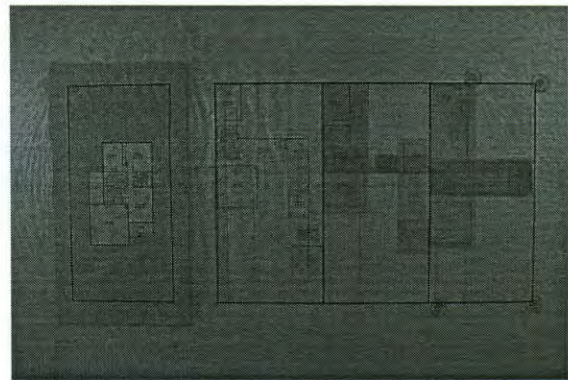
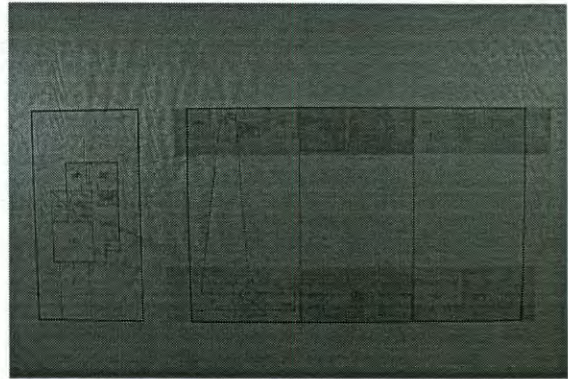
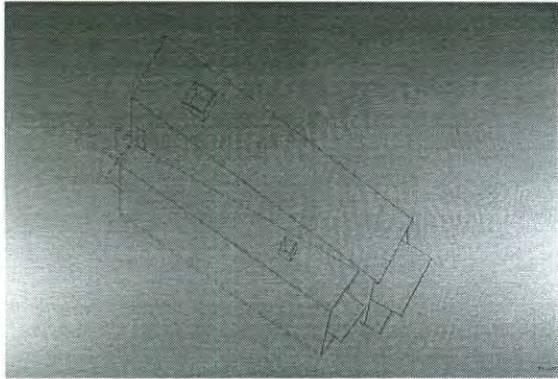


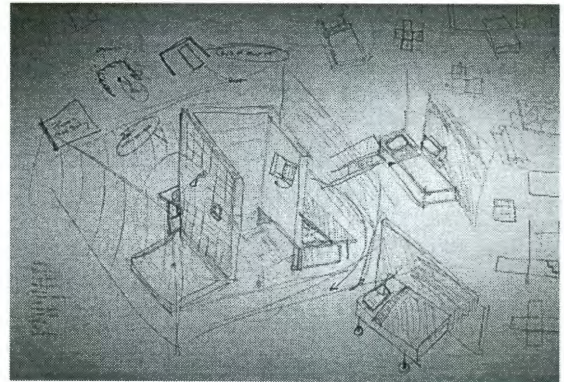
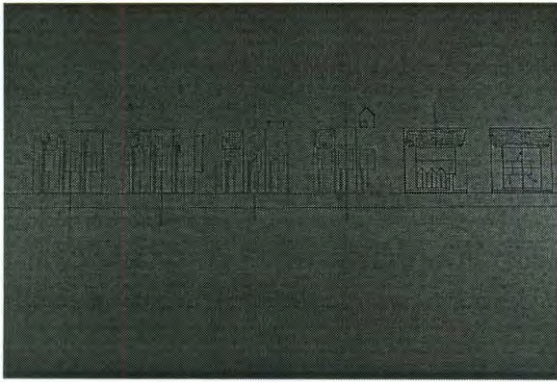
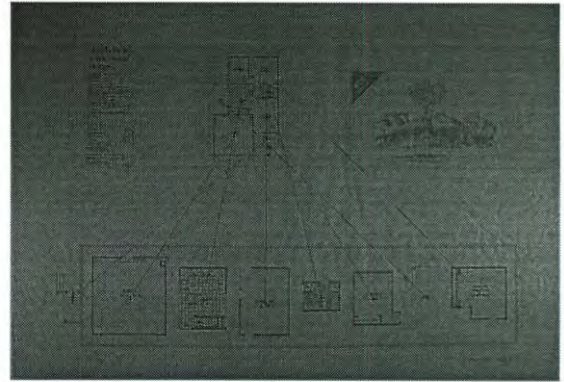
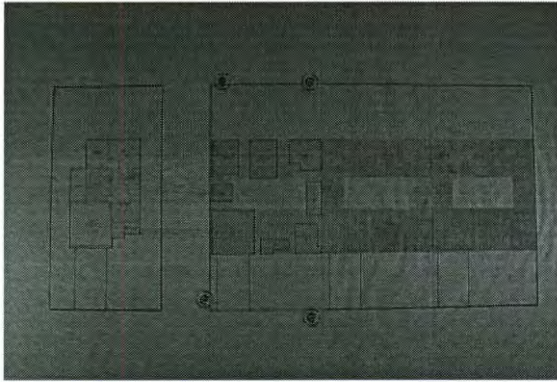


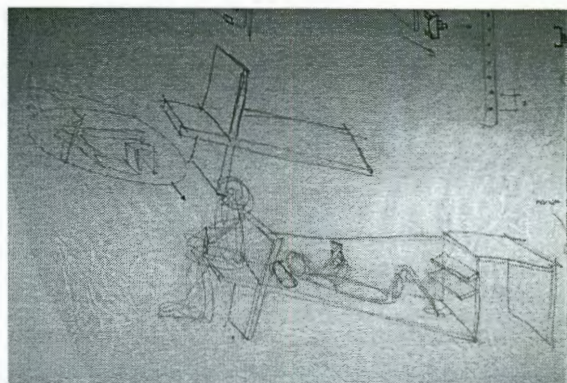
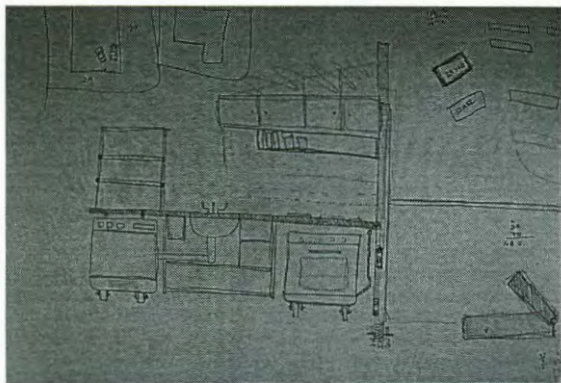
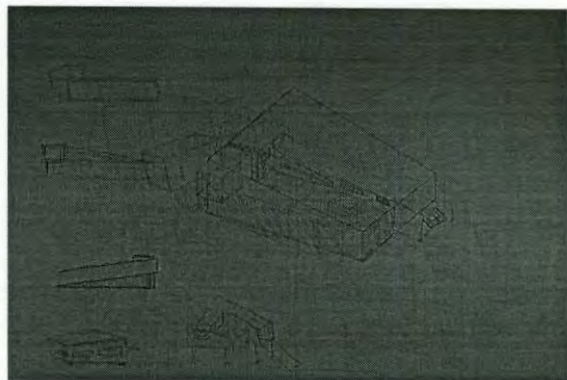
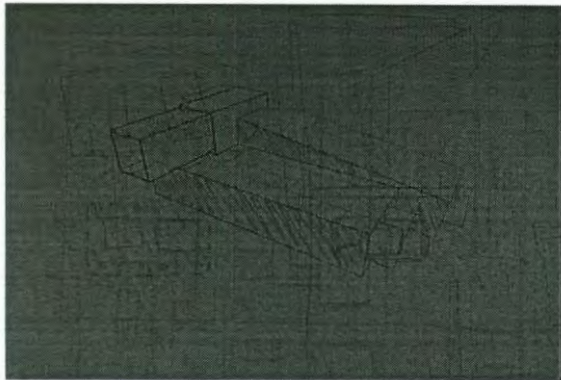
Sketches.

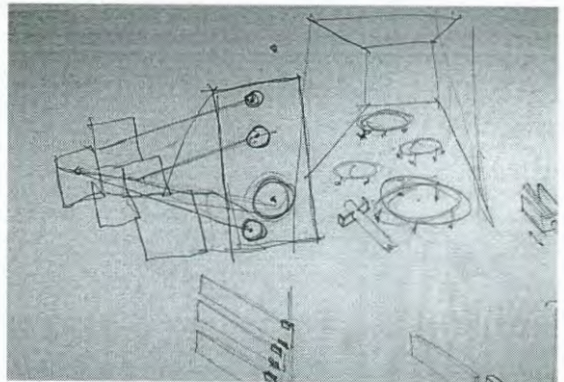
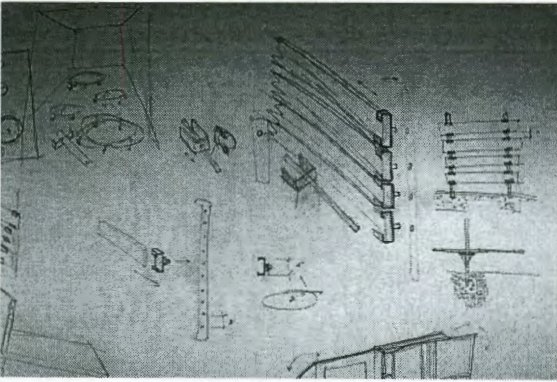
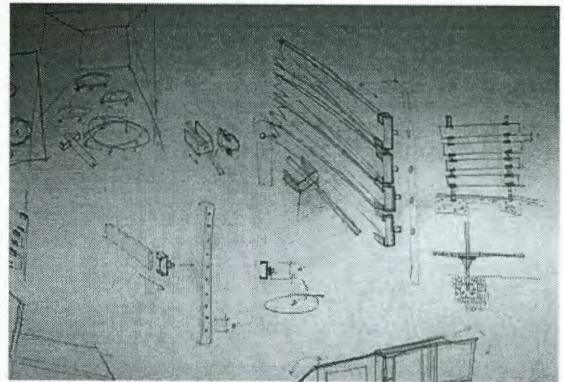
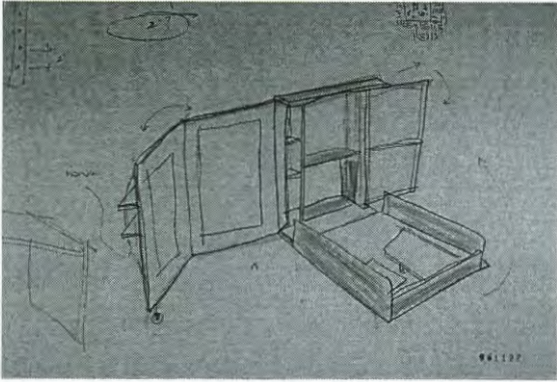


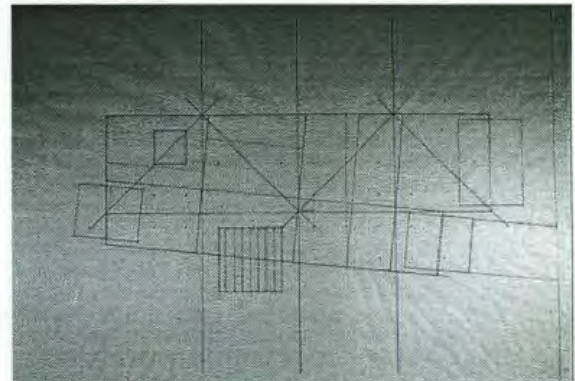
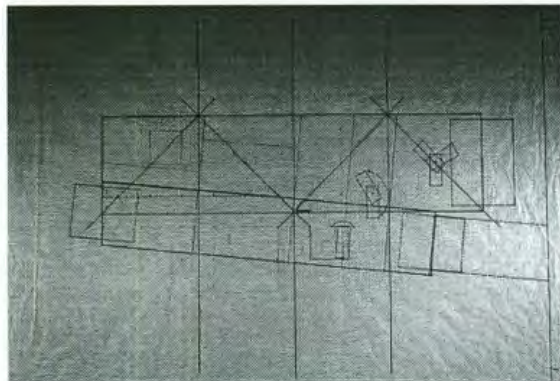
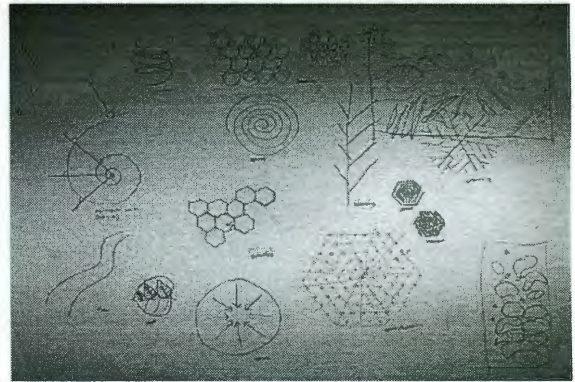


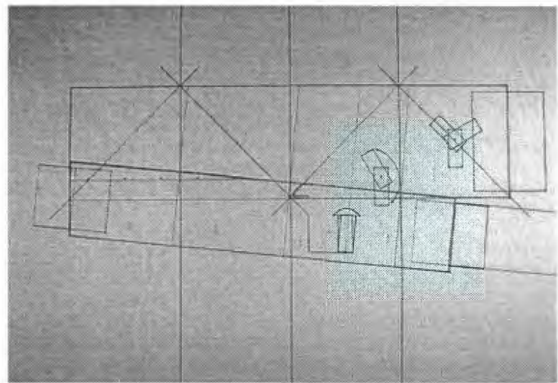
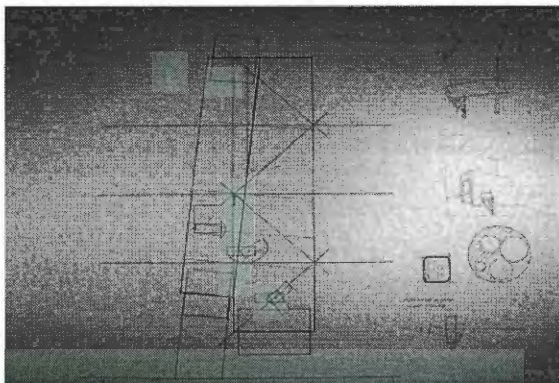
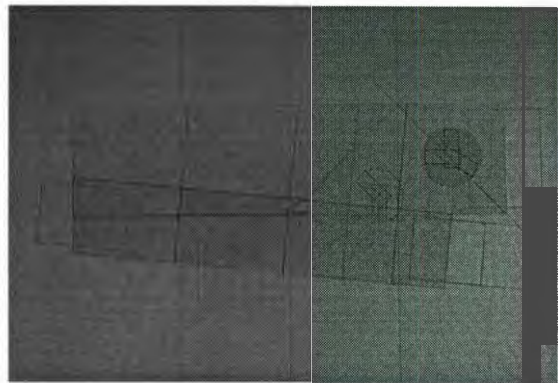
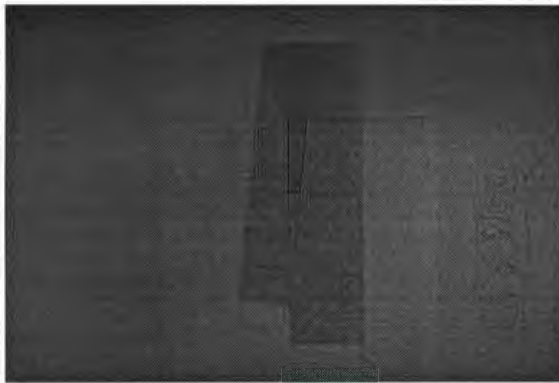


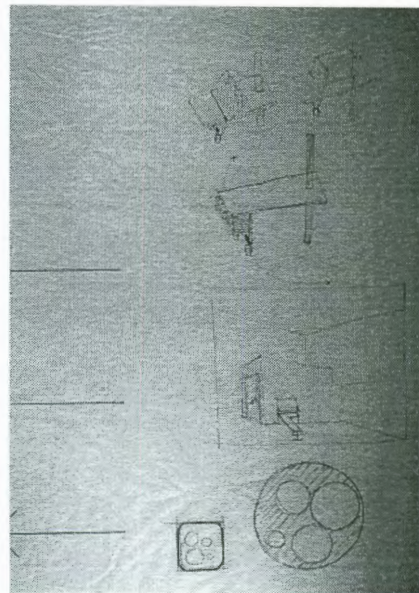
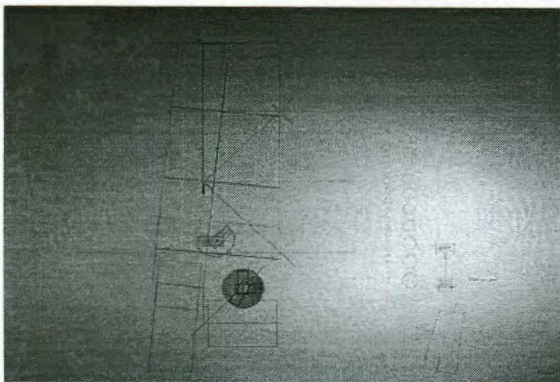
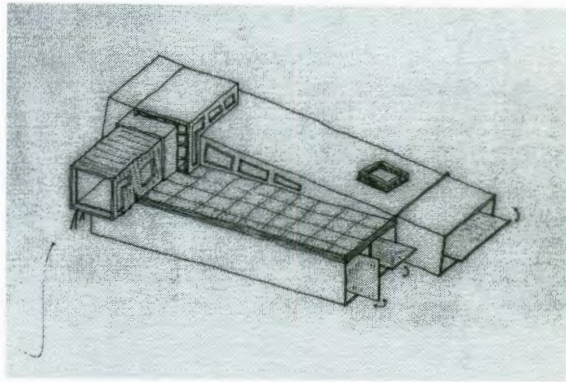
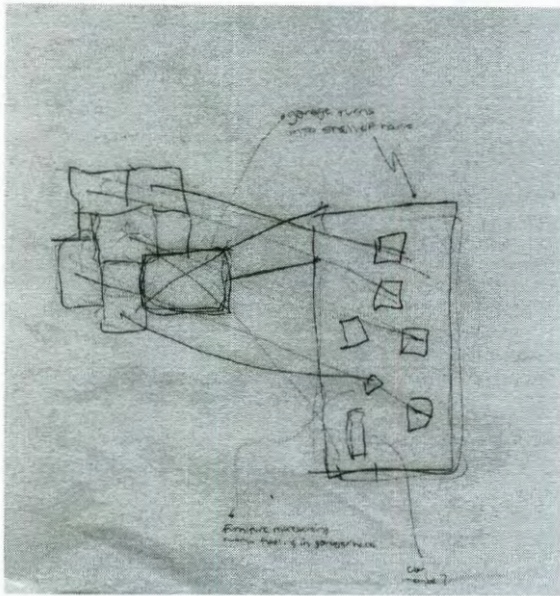


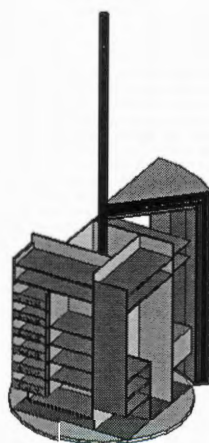
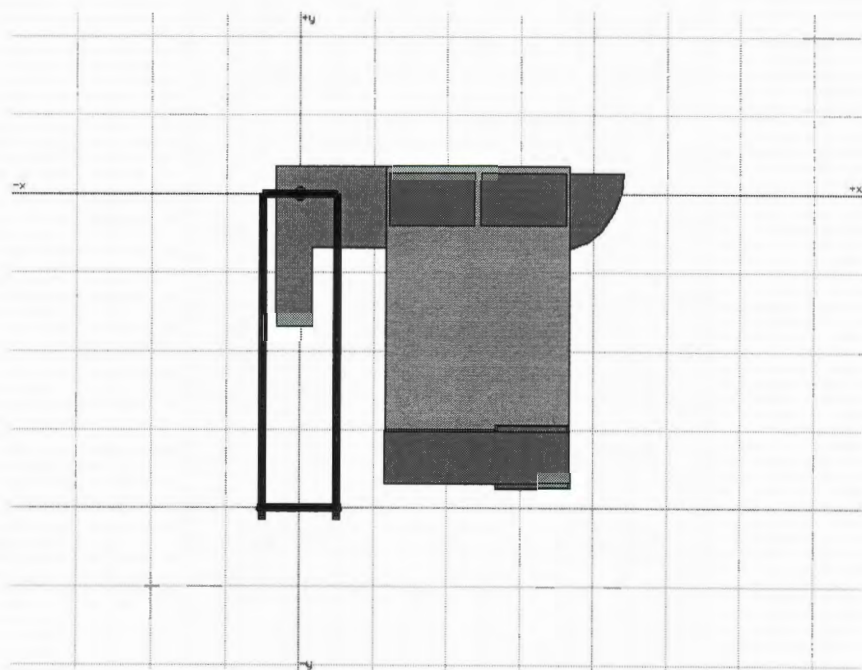


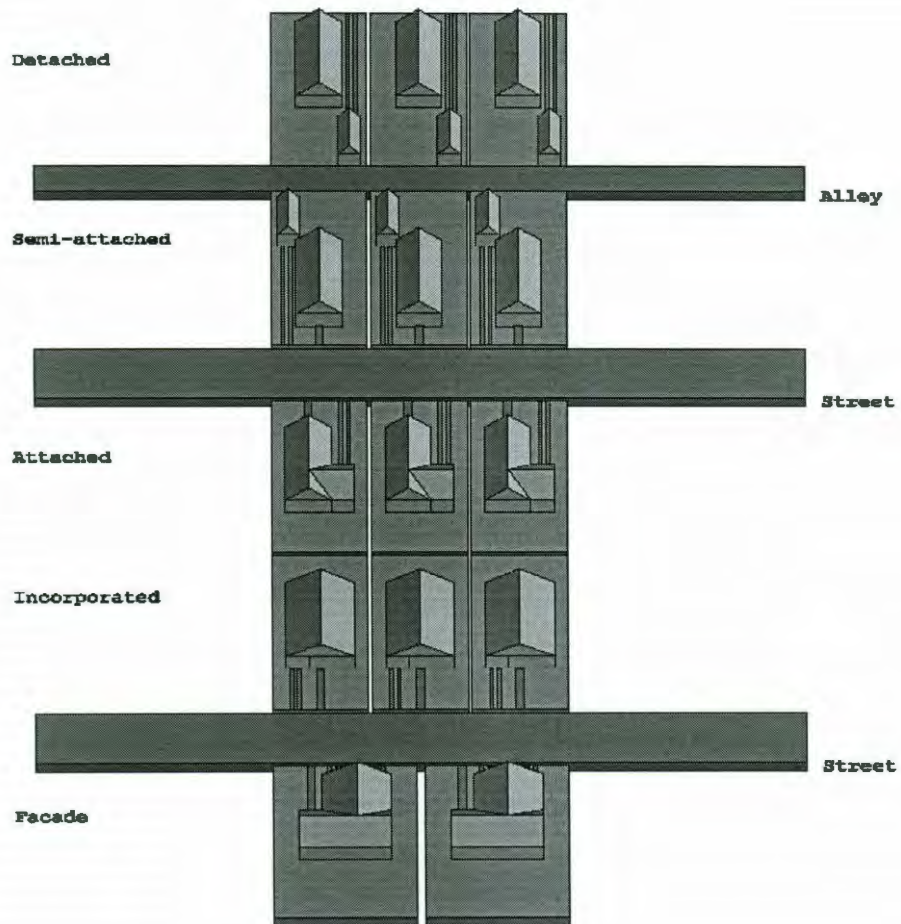








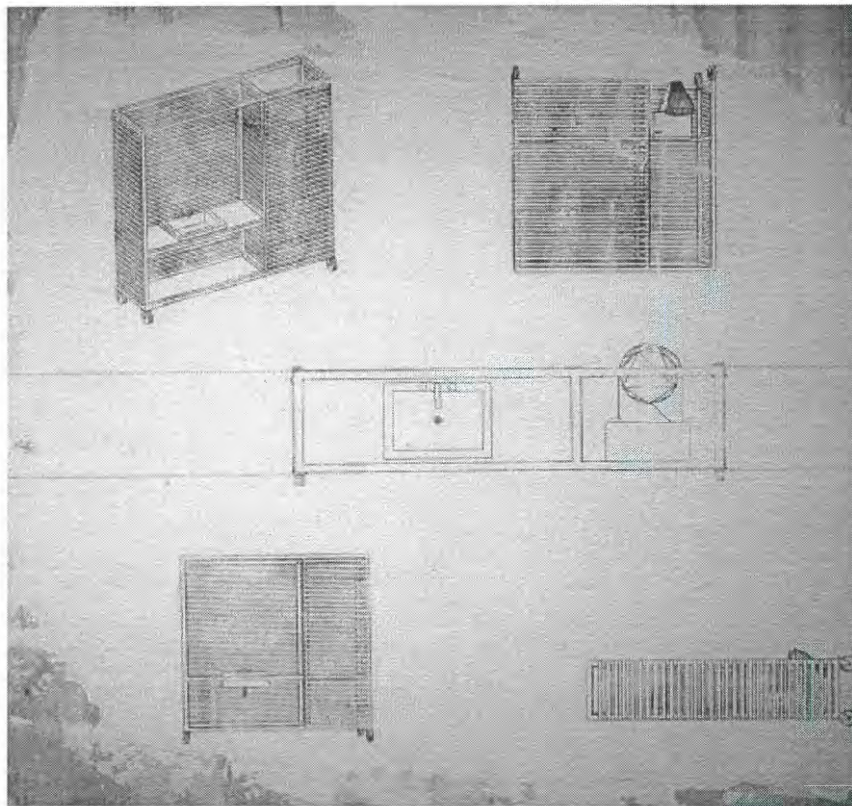




Garage geneology.

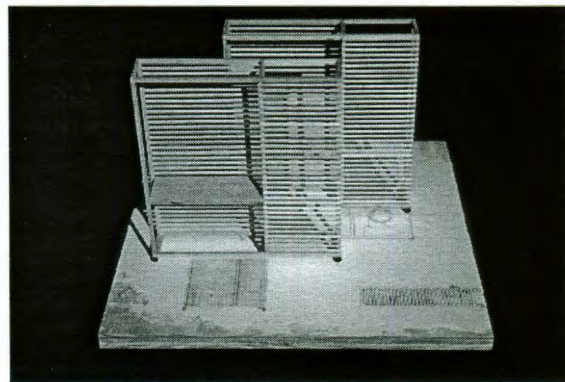
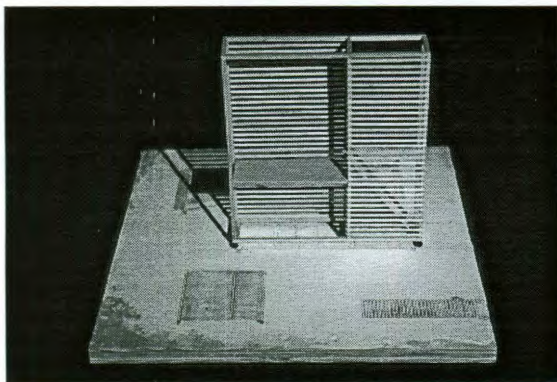
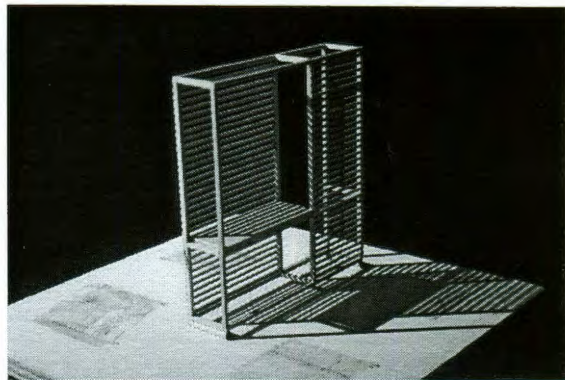
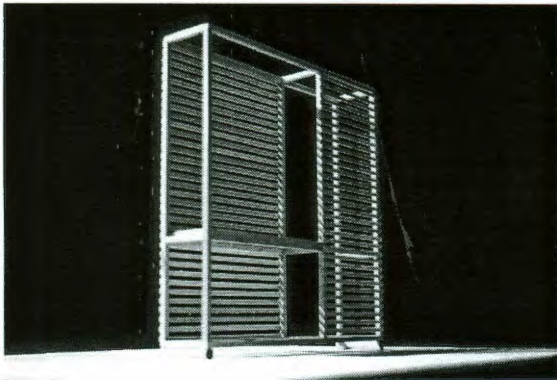
M o d e l s

Bath Station.

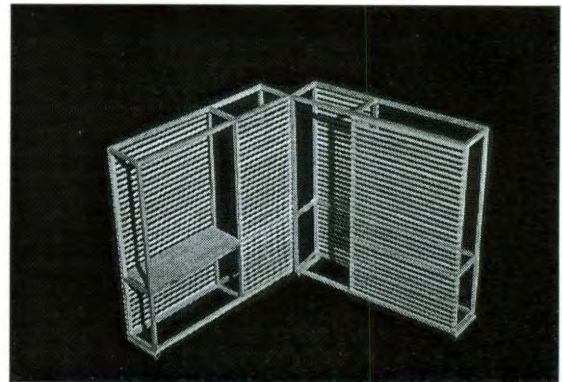


detail of base.

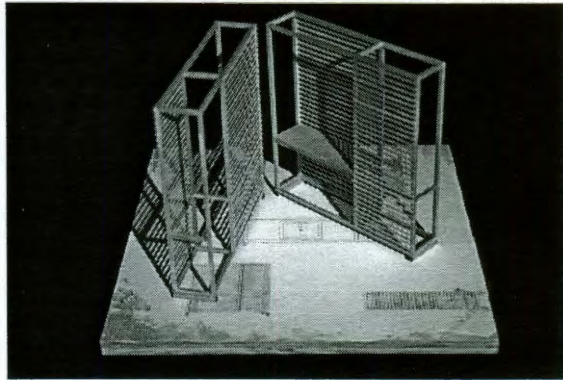
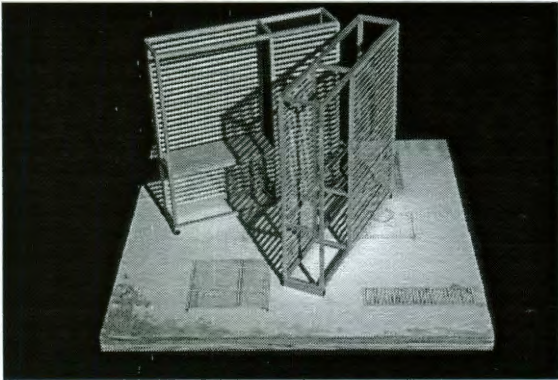
Mobile bathroom on casters that
plugs into the utility grid.



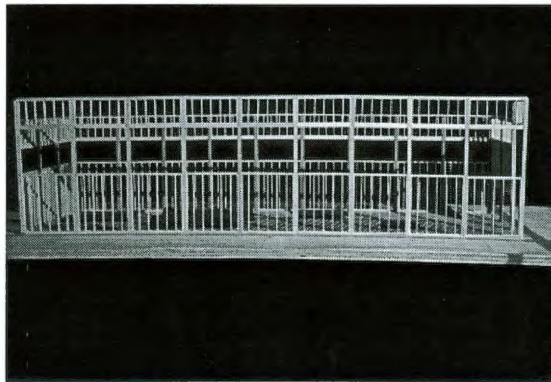
Like a piece of furniture, this bath is mobile. Simply unplug the "flex" plumbing and electric from the grid, move, and plug back into the nearest utility grid outlet. The bath may be located in accordance to the occupant's needs.

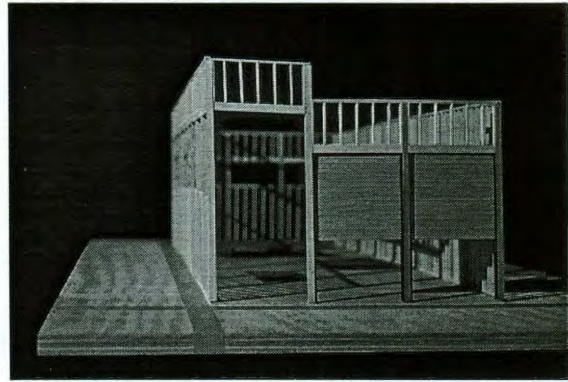
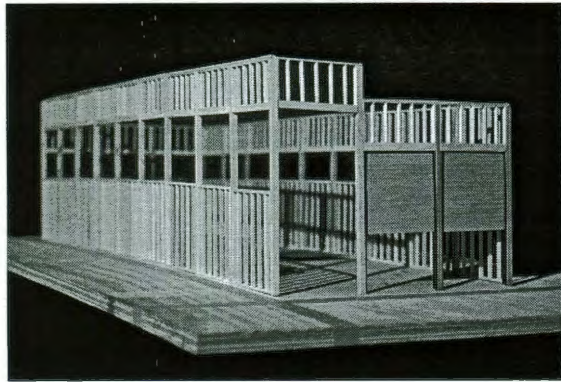
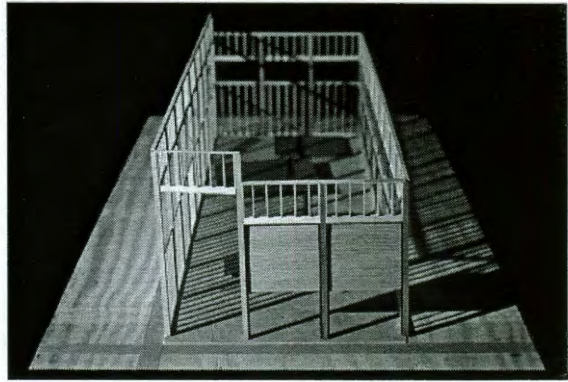
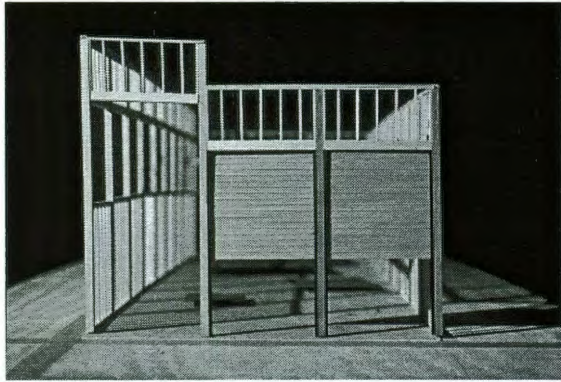


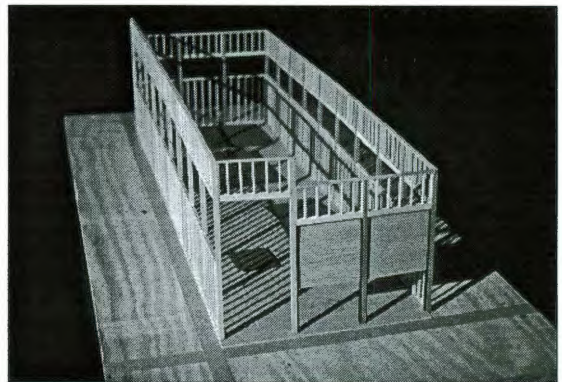
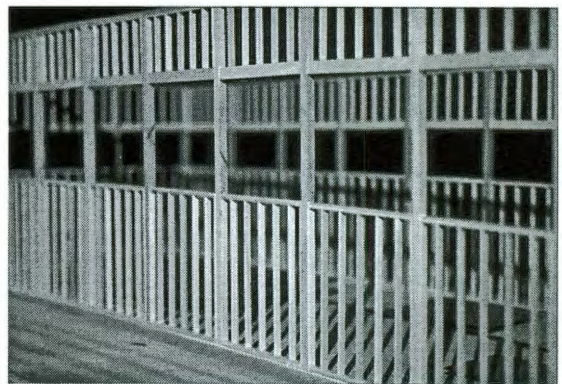
Individual frames/bathrooms may be left separated for additional baths or coupled together for larger baths.

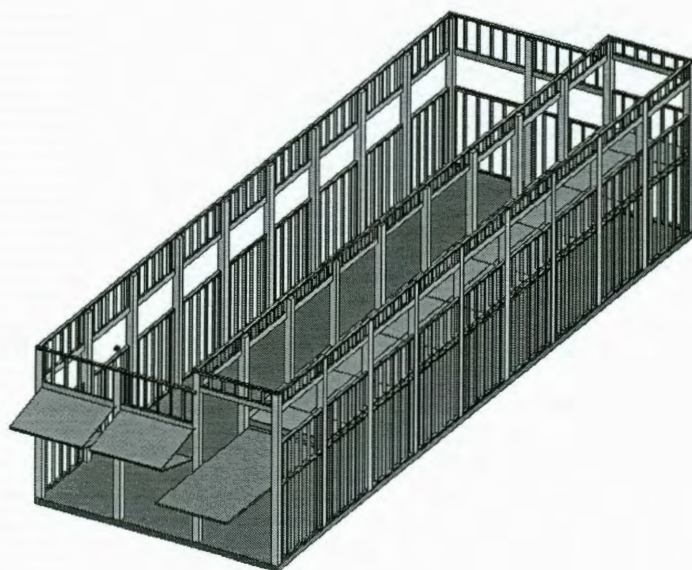


Garage as house, house as
garage.









A place to take food.

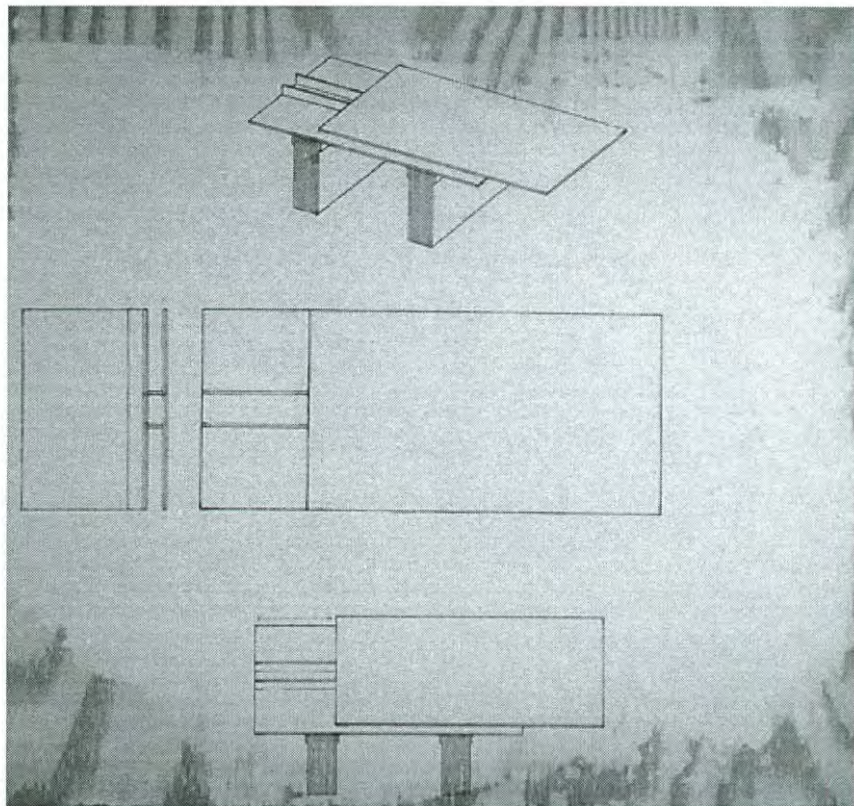
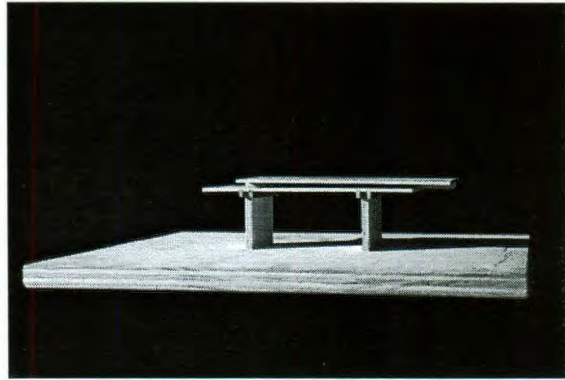
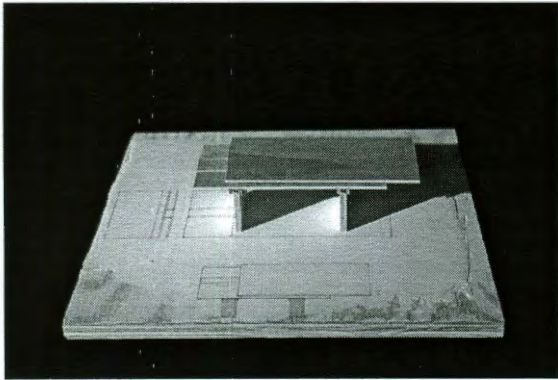
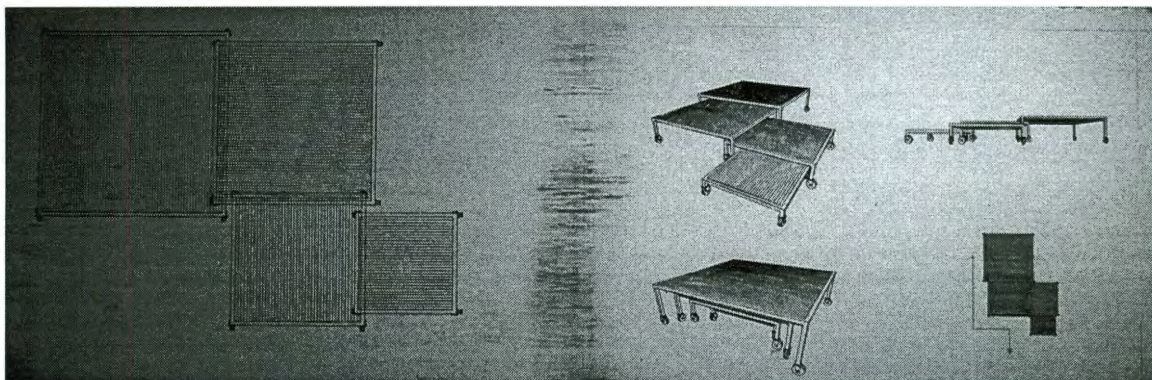


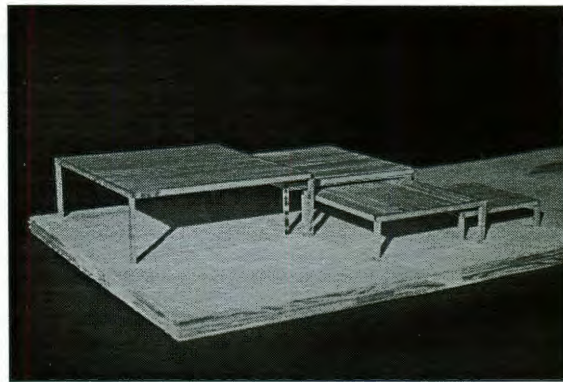
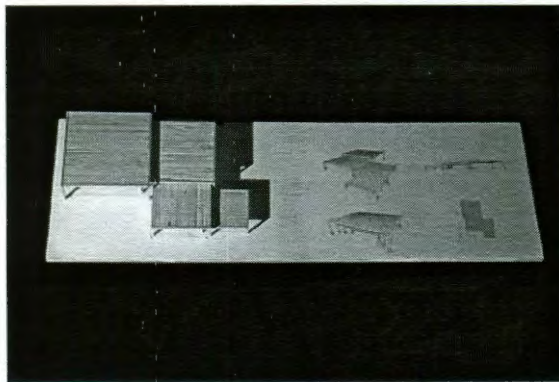
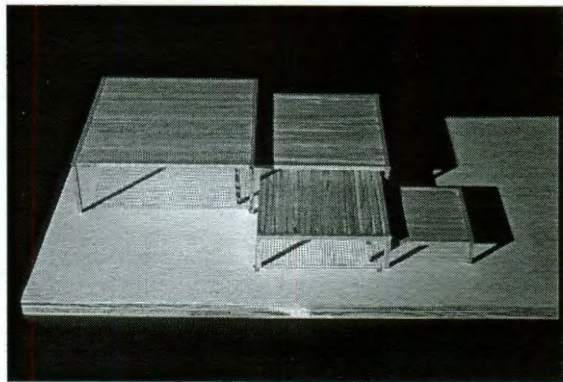
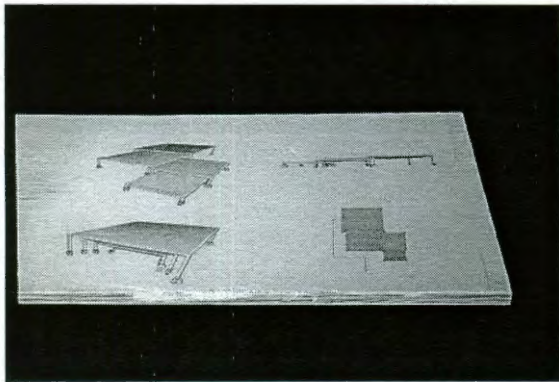
Table top rolls along track to
lengthen.



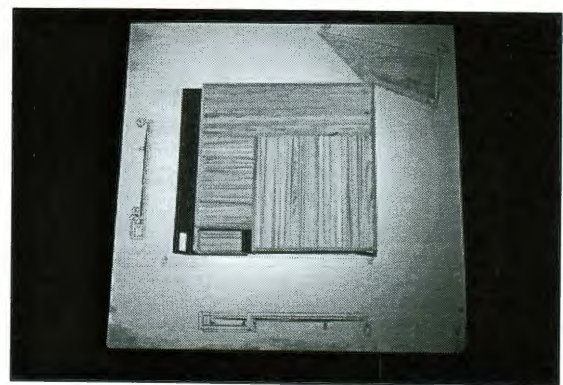
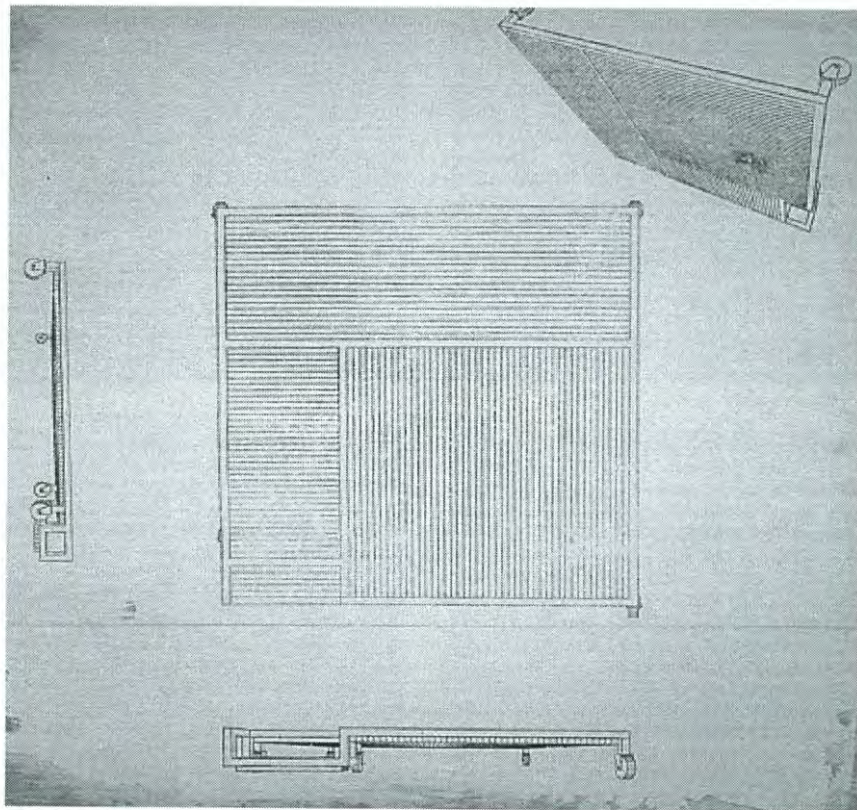
A place to receive others.

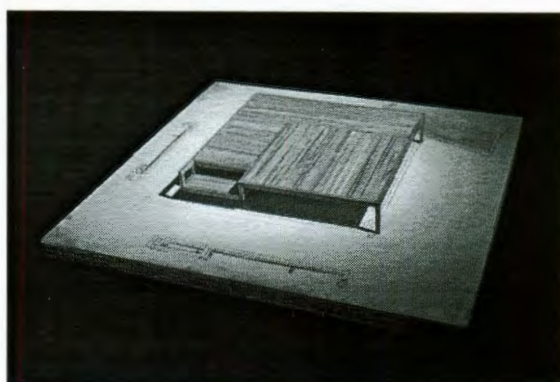
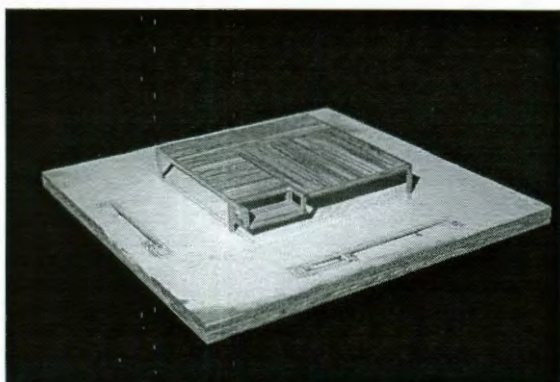
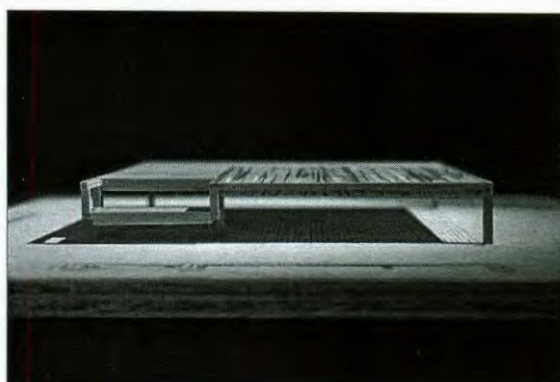
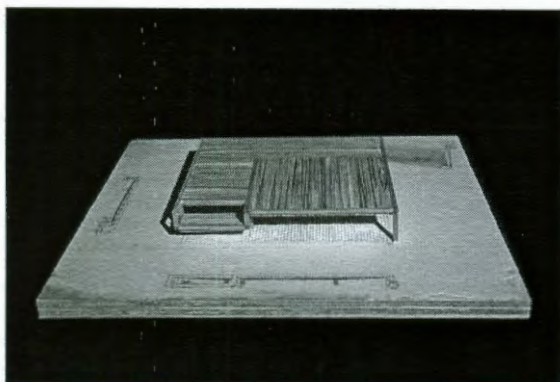


Four varying sized platforms on casters may be nested together to make room smaller or separated to make groupings of rooms.

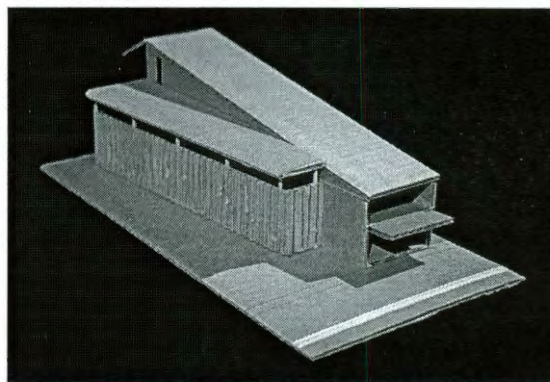
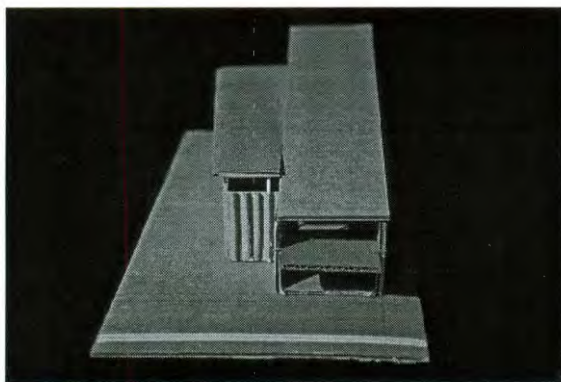


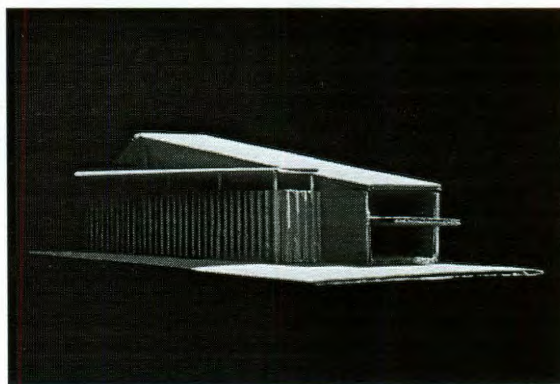
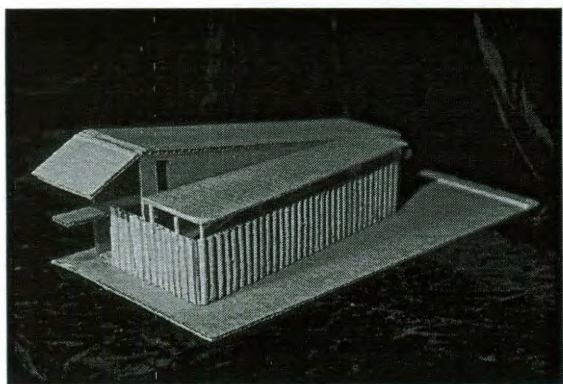
A place for leisure.

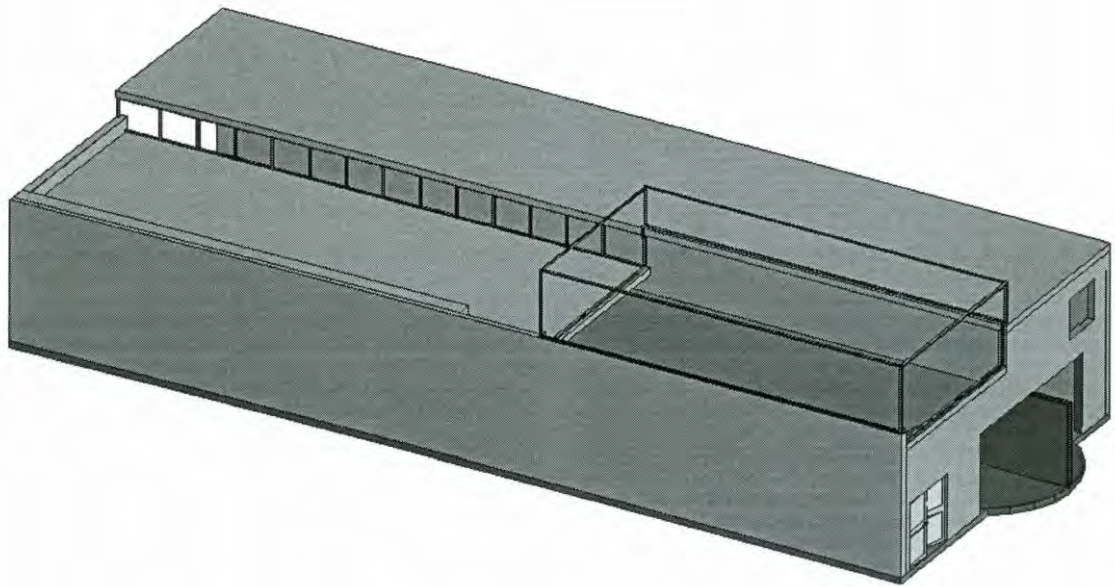




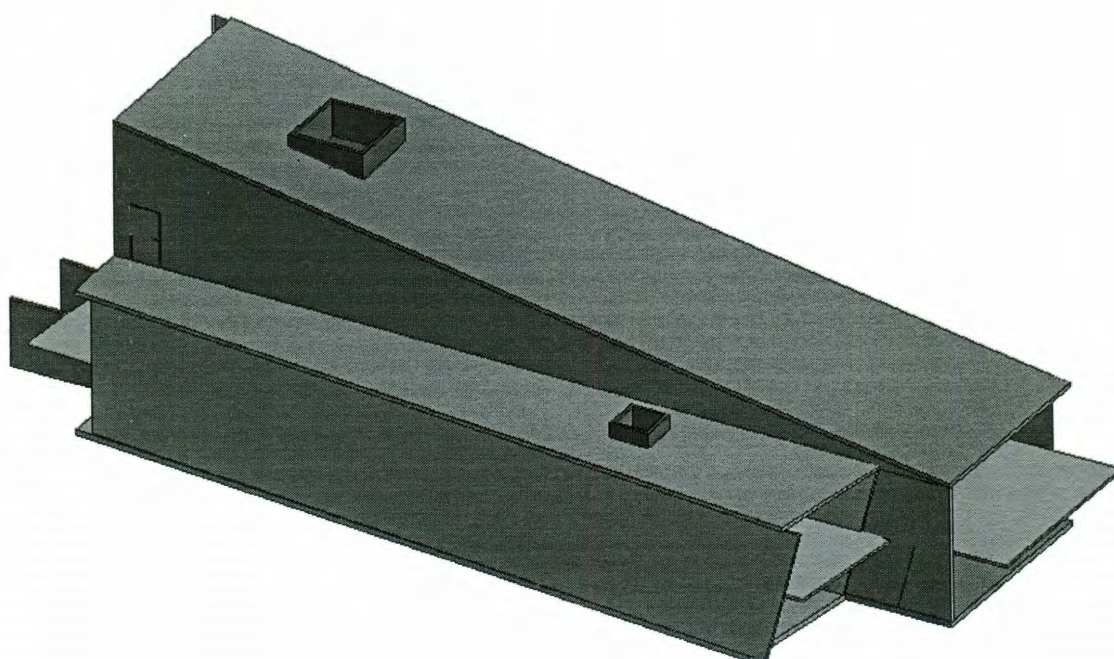
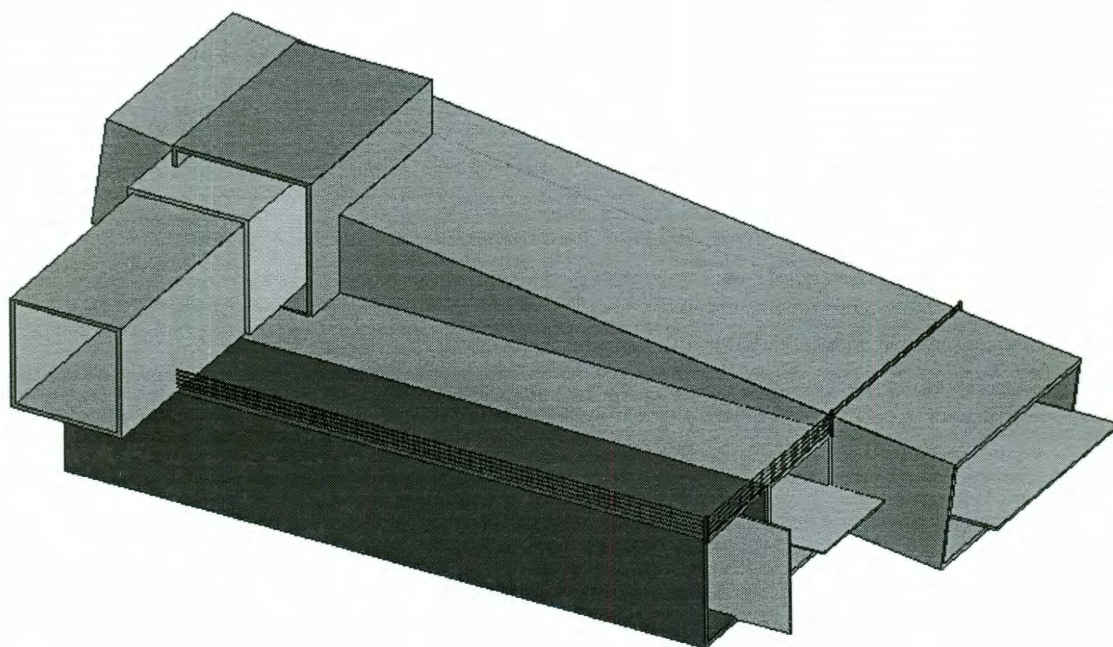
Study model.



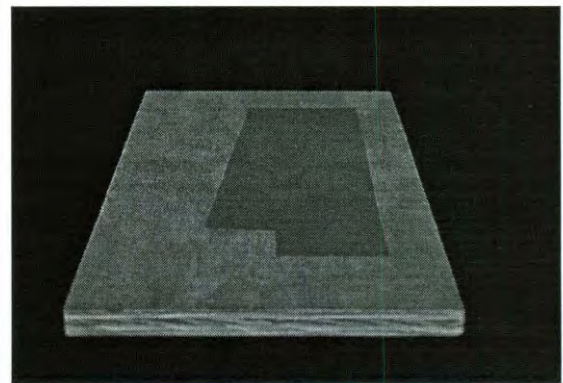
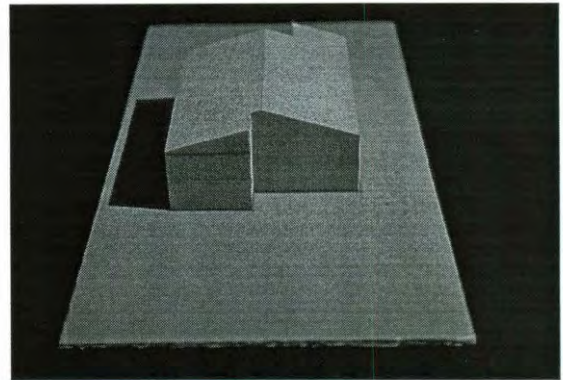




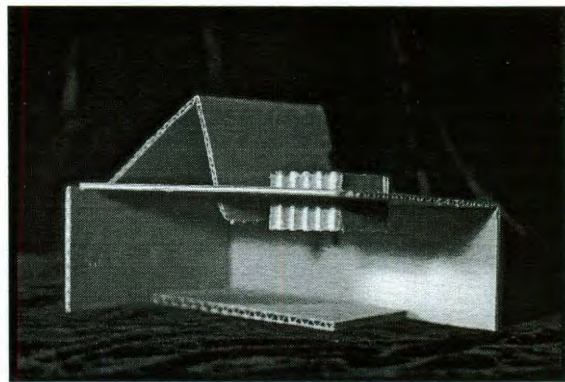
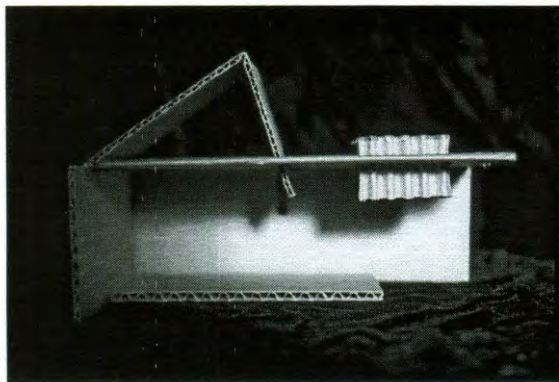
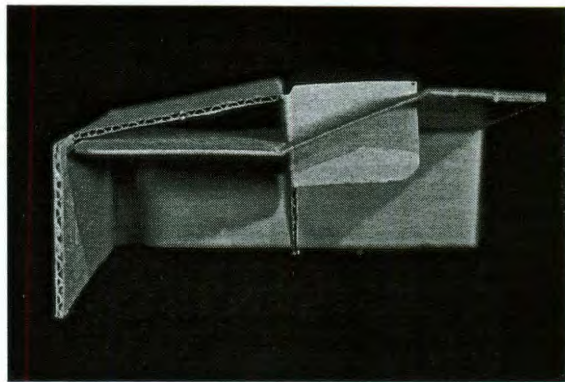
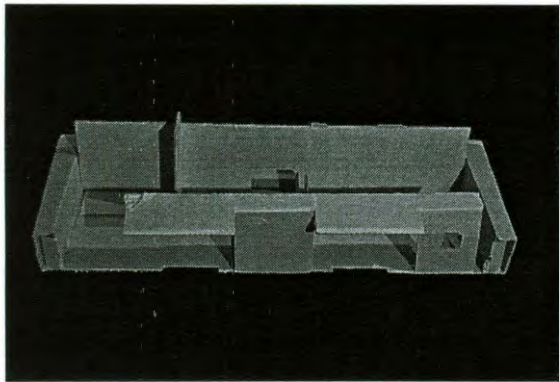
Early scheme.



Typical suburban detached single
family house.

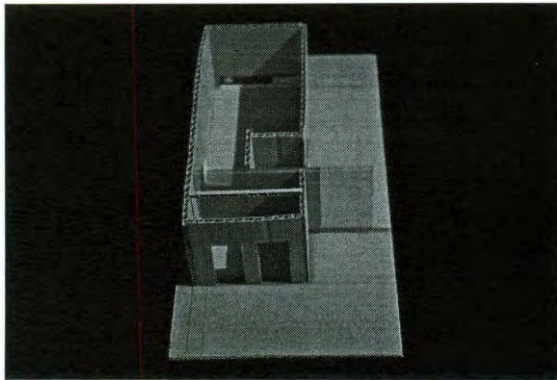
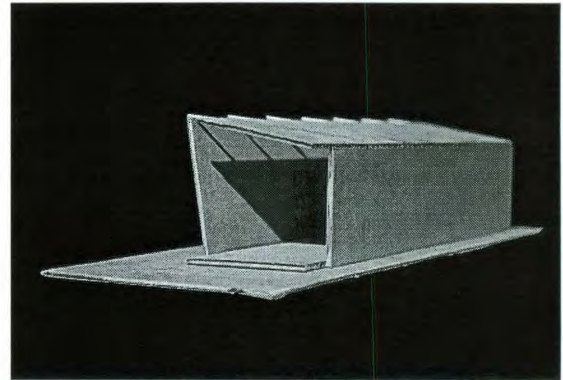
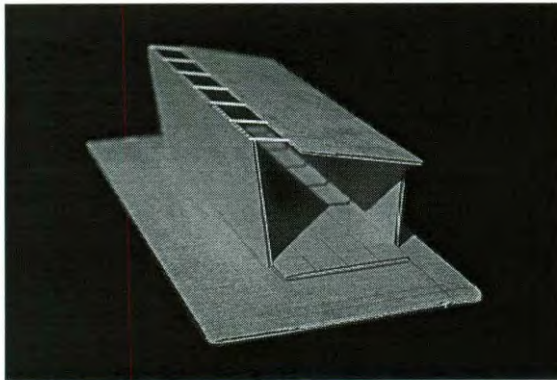


Step one: erasure.

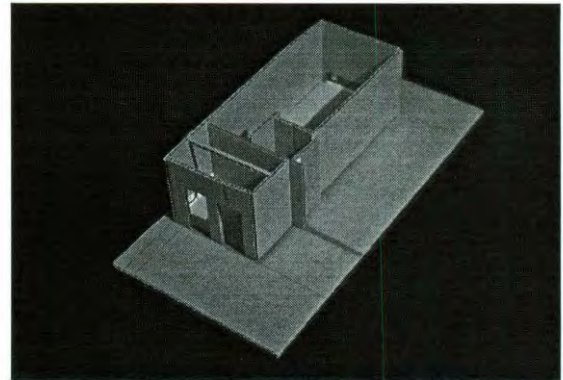


Study models.

Study model addressing light and color while uniting house and garage.

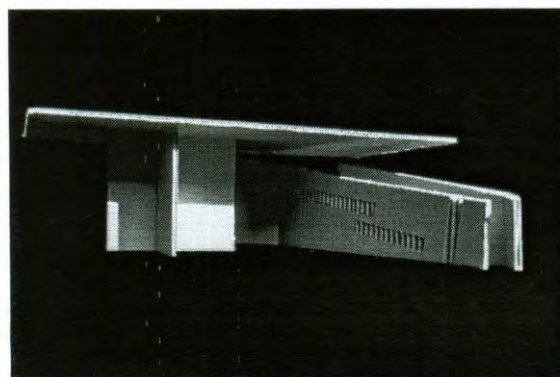
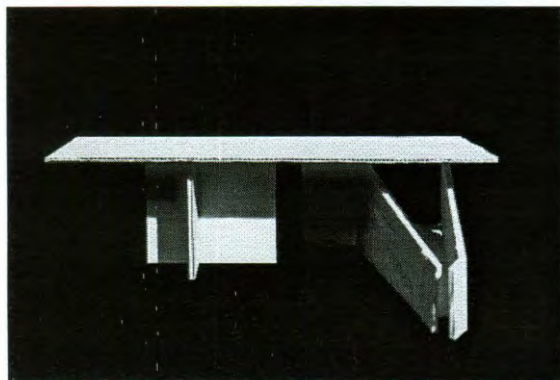
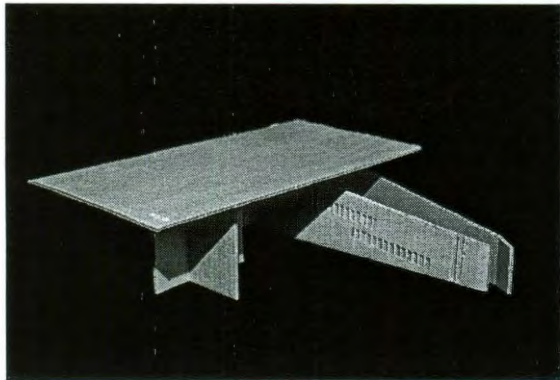


Movement of wall.

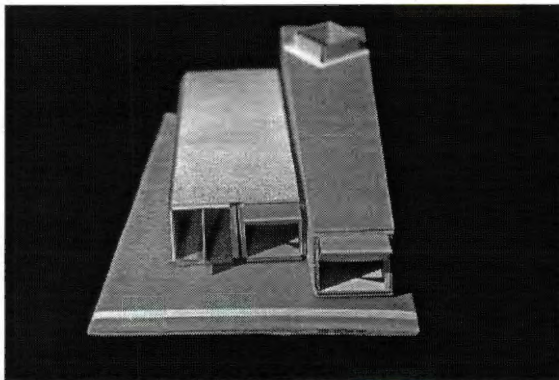


Study model investigating the house/ garage relationship in a bar building. As moveable wall opens, house and garage merge together residually creating an outdoor room. As moveable wall closes, house and garage divide while outdoor room vanishes .

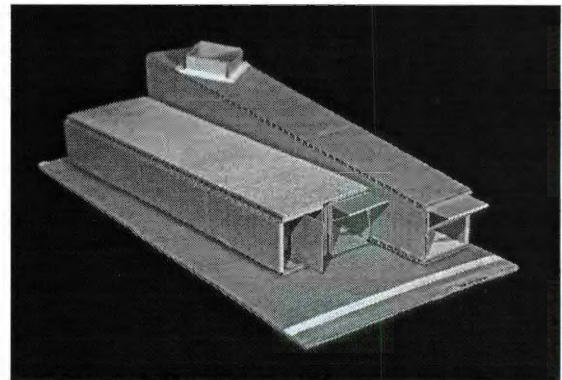
Asserting that the garage door has replaced the traditional front door, this study model attempts to re-establish the front door and it's immediacy to the street and sidewalk.



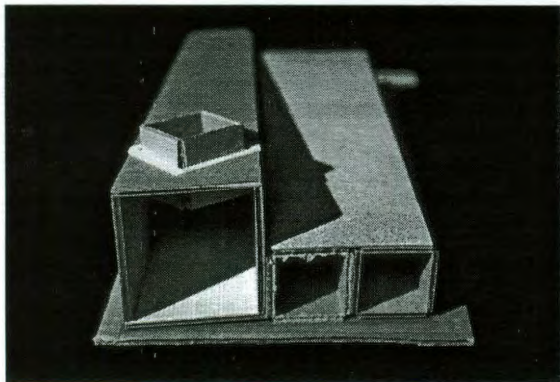
Early study model elongating
the house and garage into a
tube-like bar building.



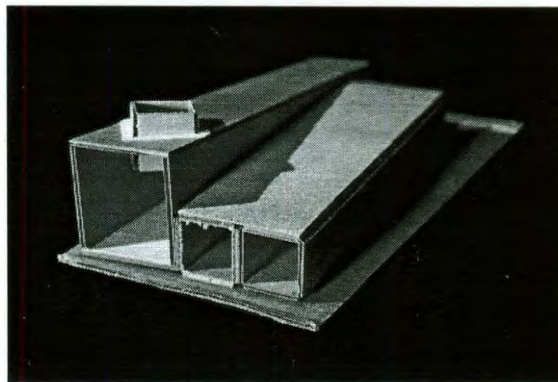
Elevation of front.



Axonometric view of front.



Elevation of back.



Axonometric view of back.

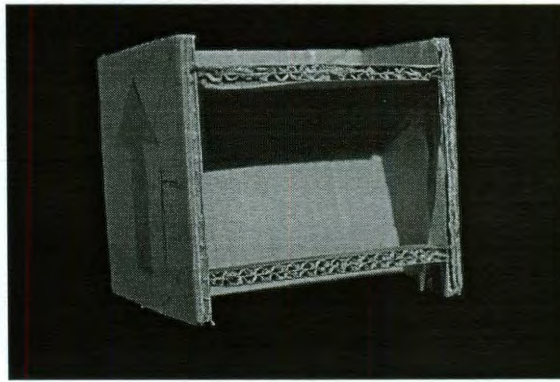


Study model for a collapsable chair
made of two pieces of notched
plywood.

Study model for Die Chair. Roll a three and it is a chair, roll a four and it is a high stool. Roll a one or six and it is a table. Roll a two or five and it is a shelf.

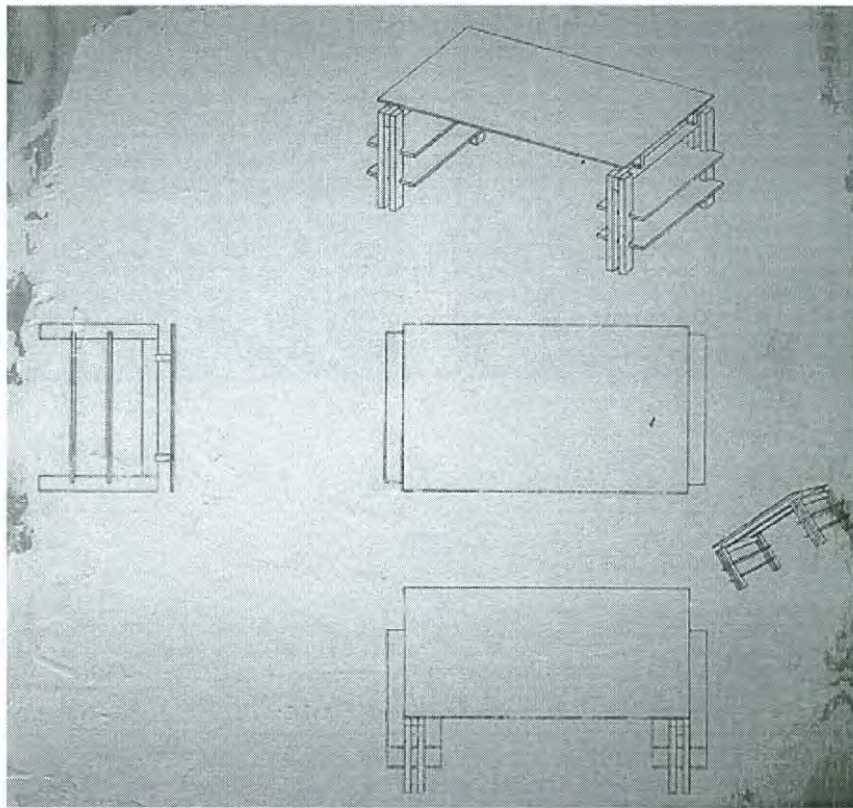


Die Chair as a chair.



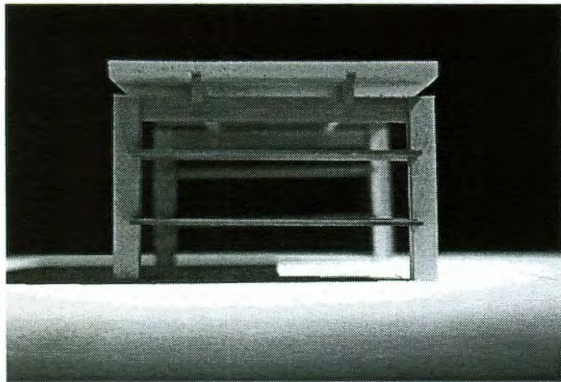
Die chair as a high stool.

A place to read and/or write.

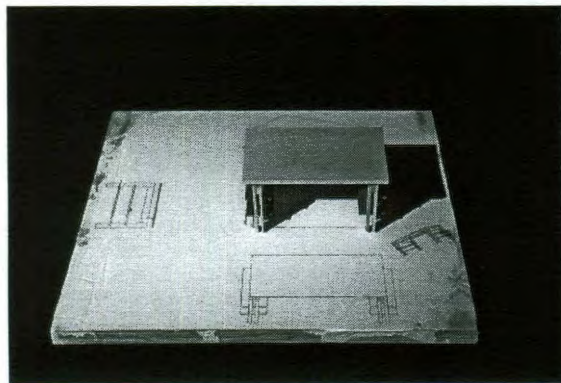
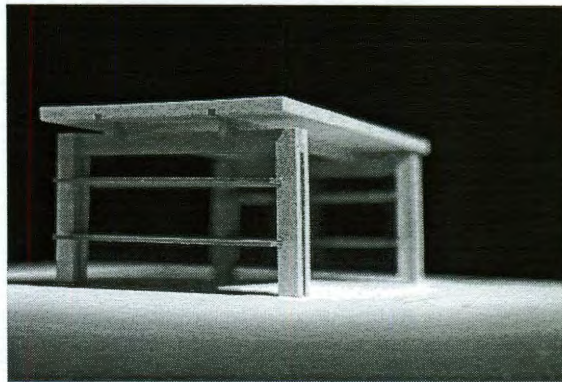


Plan view of base.

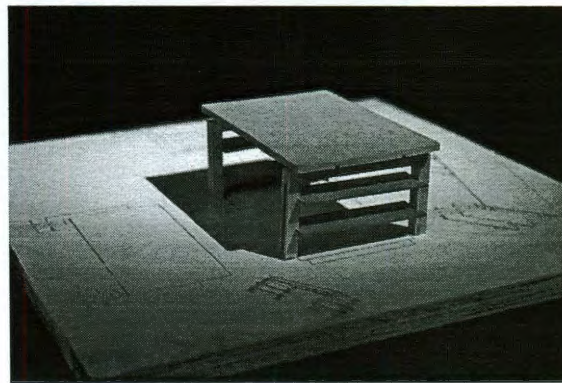
Detail of elevation.



Detail of axonometric view.

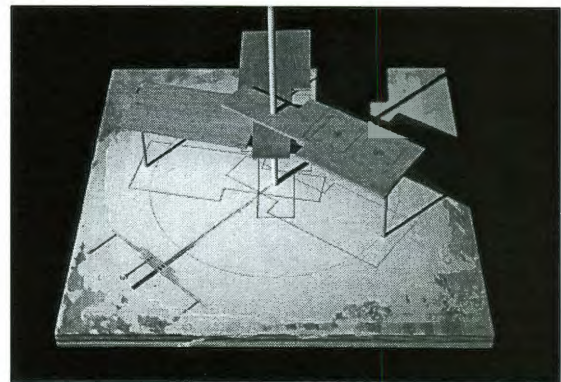
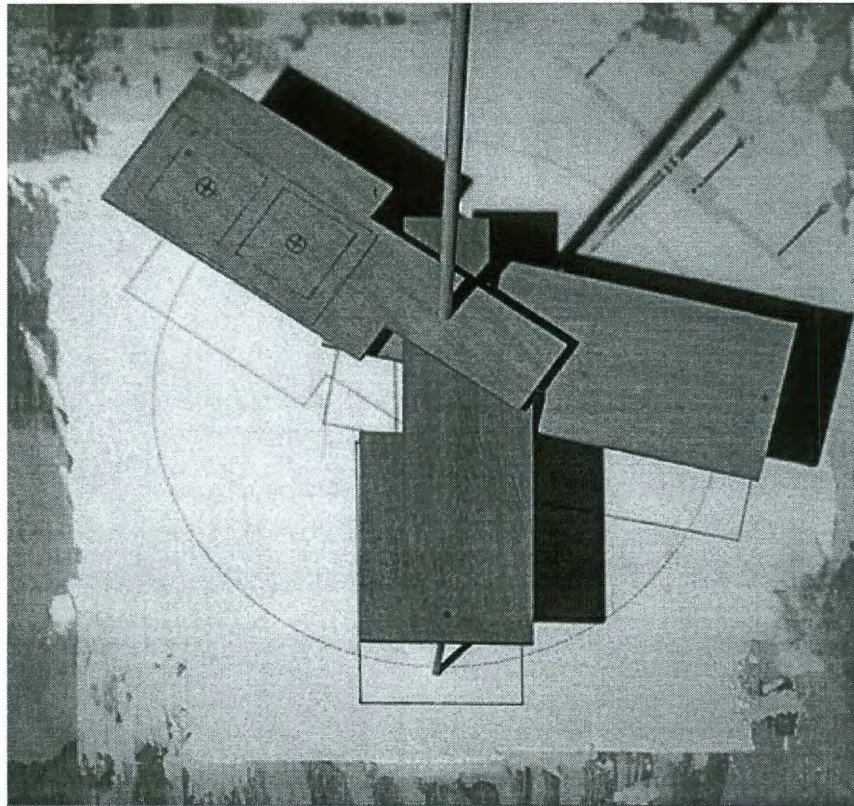


Plan view.



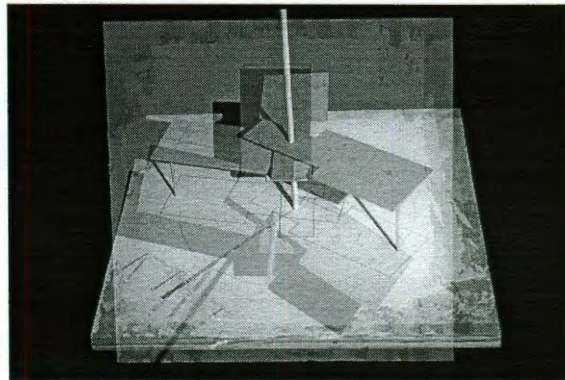
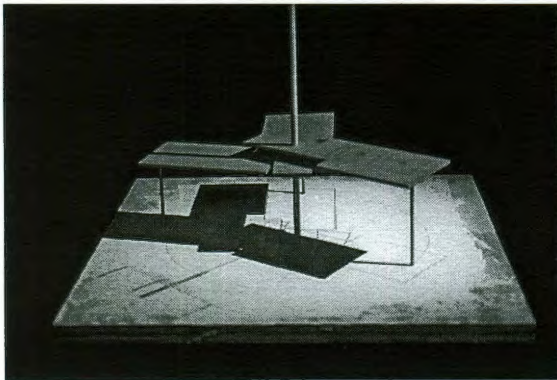
Axonometric view.

A place to prepare food.

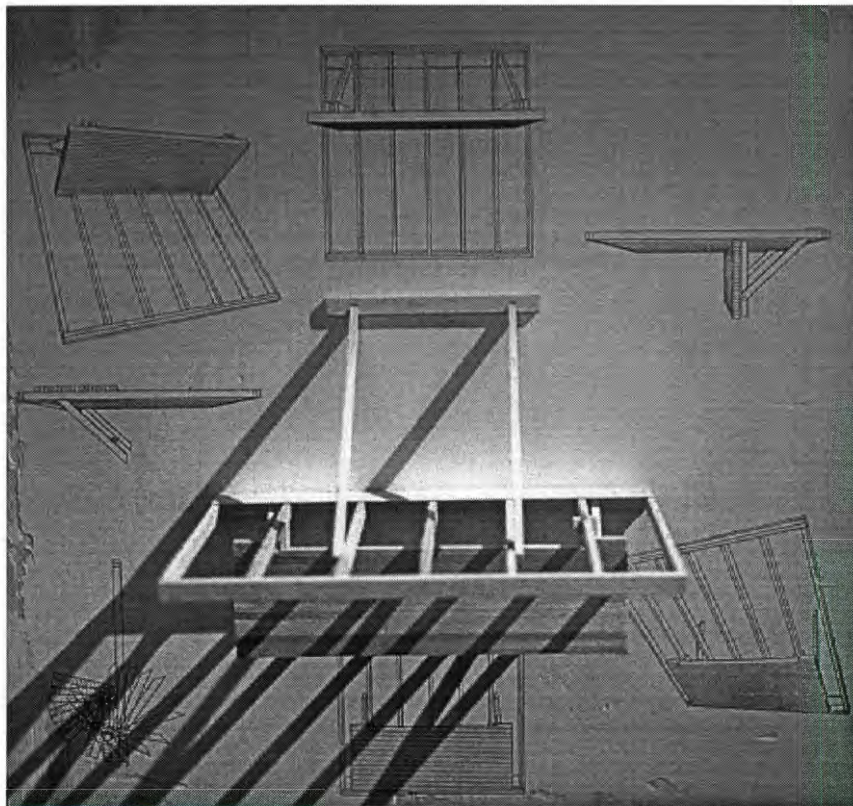


The kitchen distilled to it's
essence, in a way, is turned
inside out or imploded. Kitchen
facilities rovolve around a
pole that is both structure and
utility.

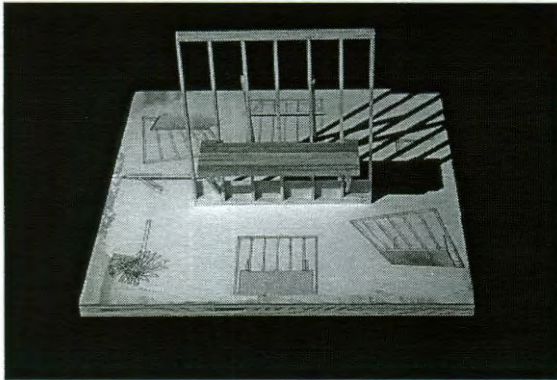
View of kitchen over time.



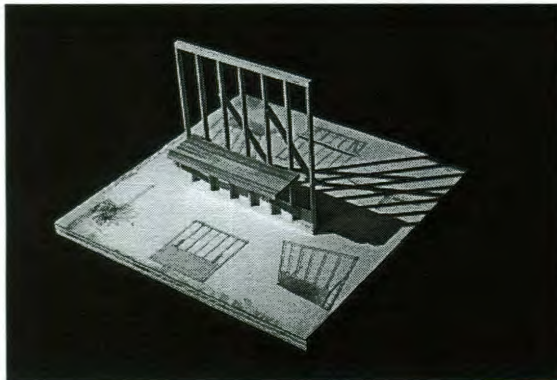
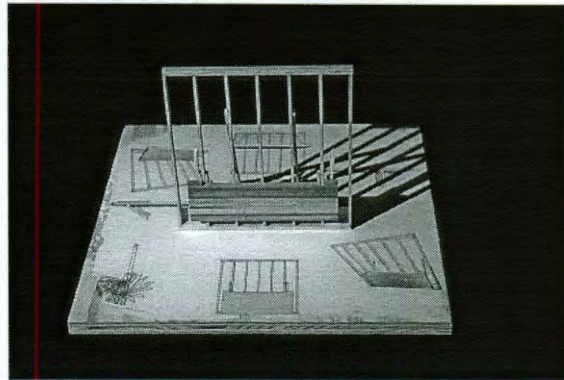
A place to work.



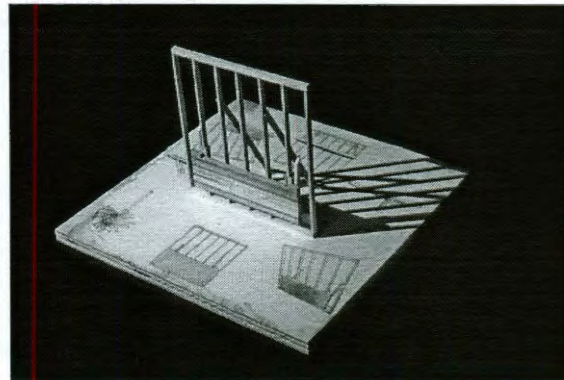
Plan view with work surface in up position.



Plan view with work surface in down position.

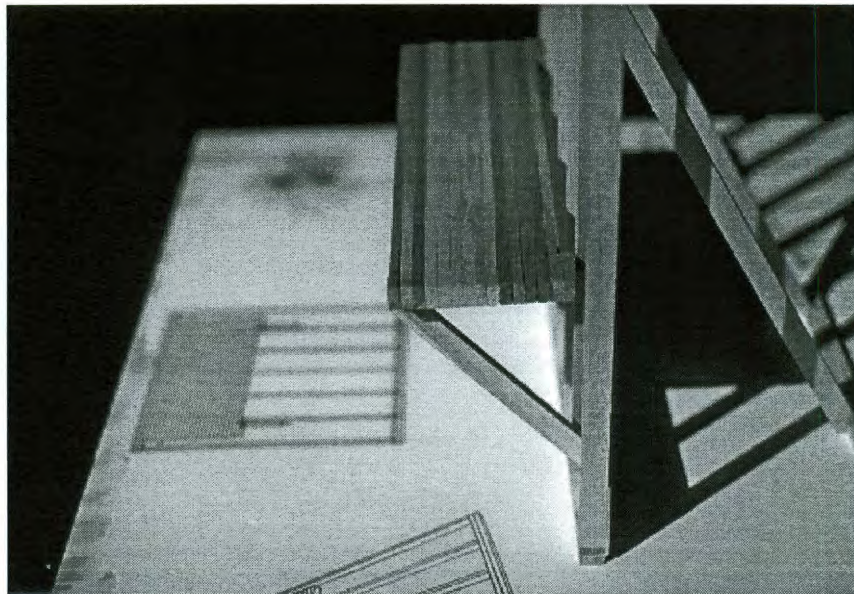
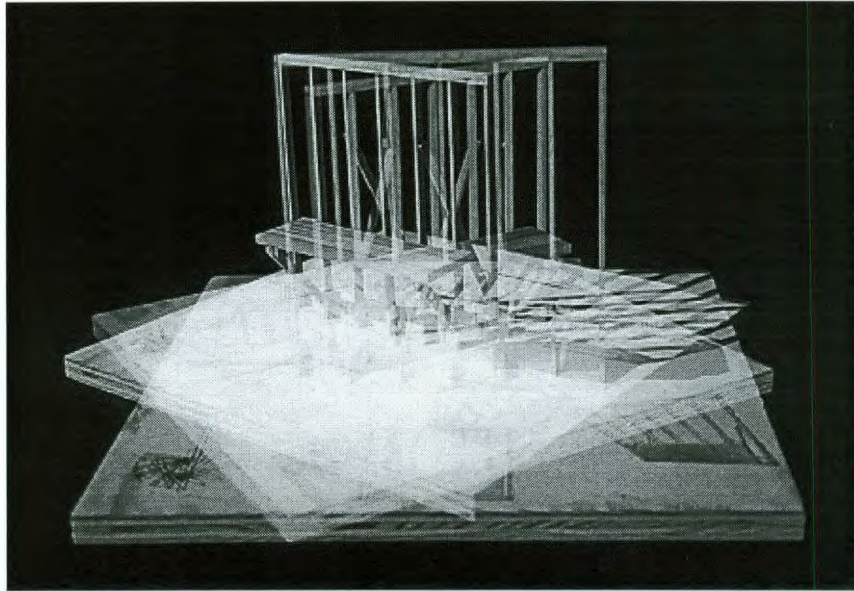


Axonometric view with work surface in up position.



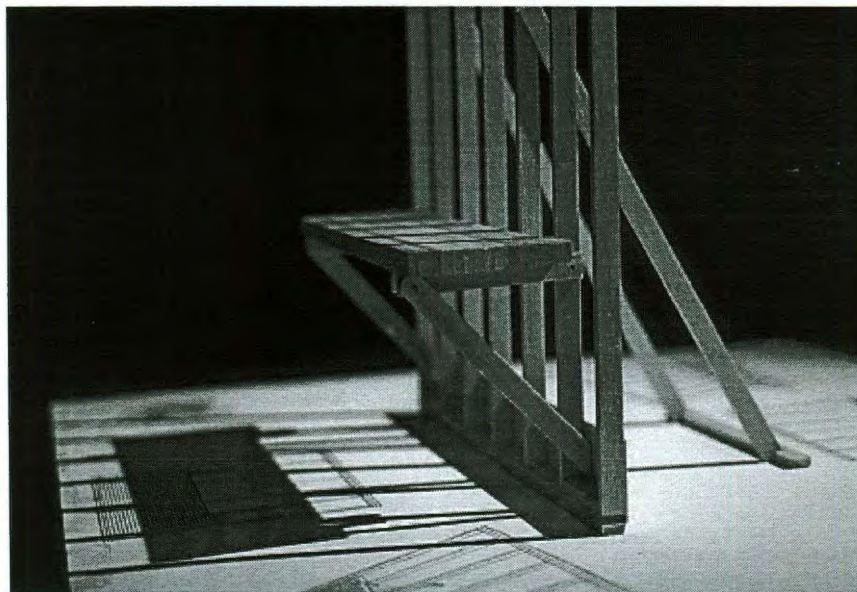
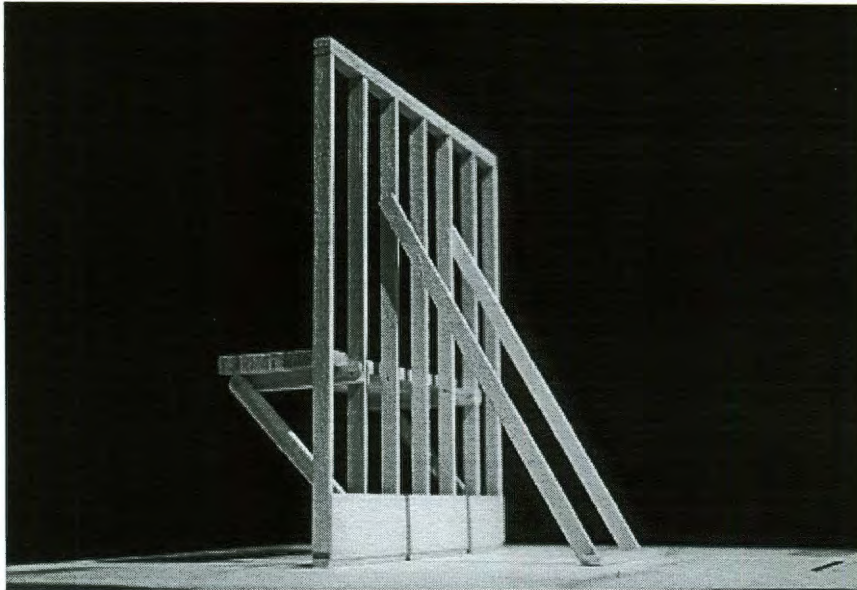
Axonometric view with work surface in down position.

Several simultaneous views.



Detail of work surface.

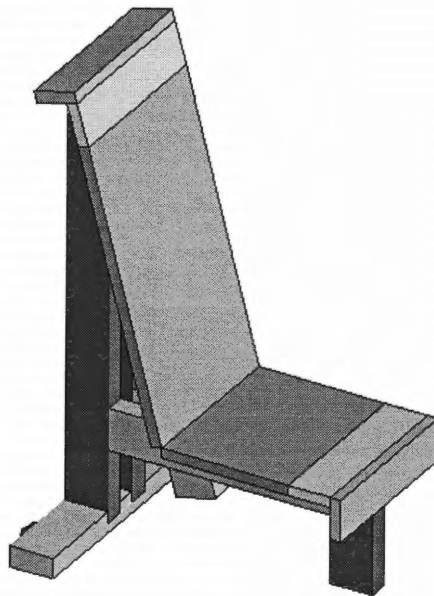
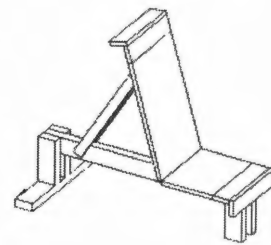
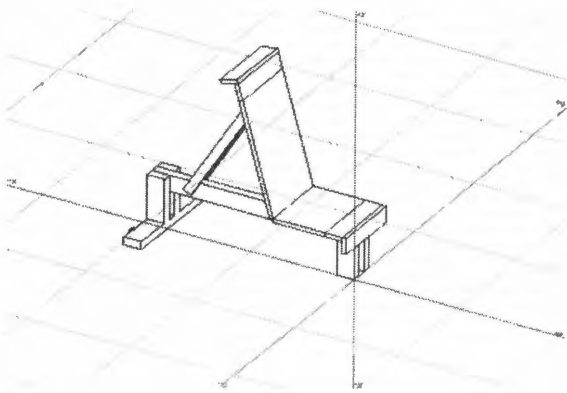
Stud wall with work surface in "work position."



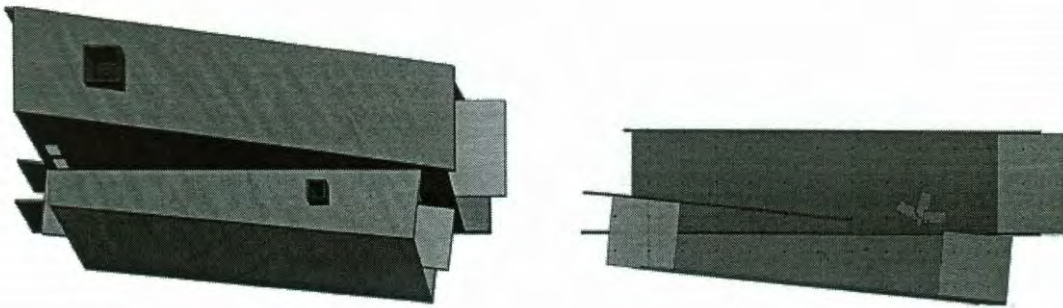
Detail of work surface.

Renderings

Chair study.

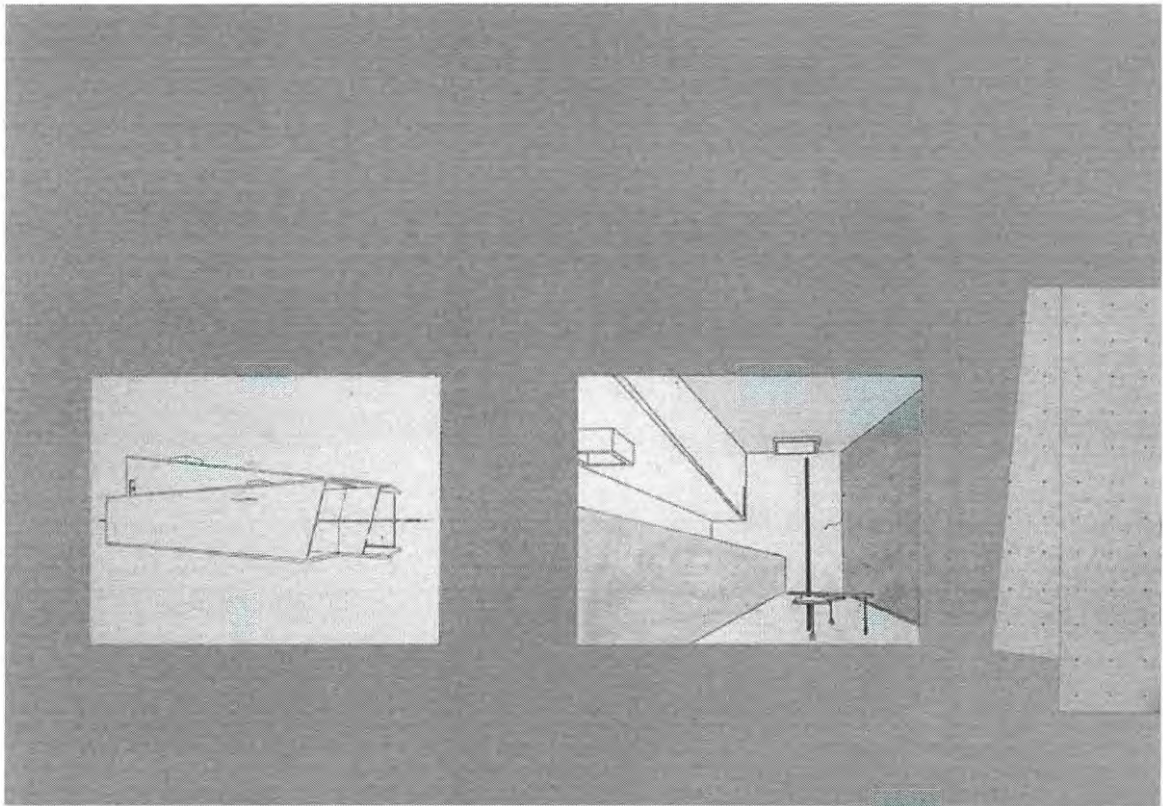


The garage engulfs the house,
the house is now completely
contained within the garage.



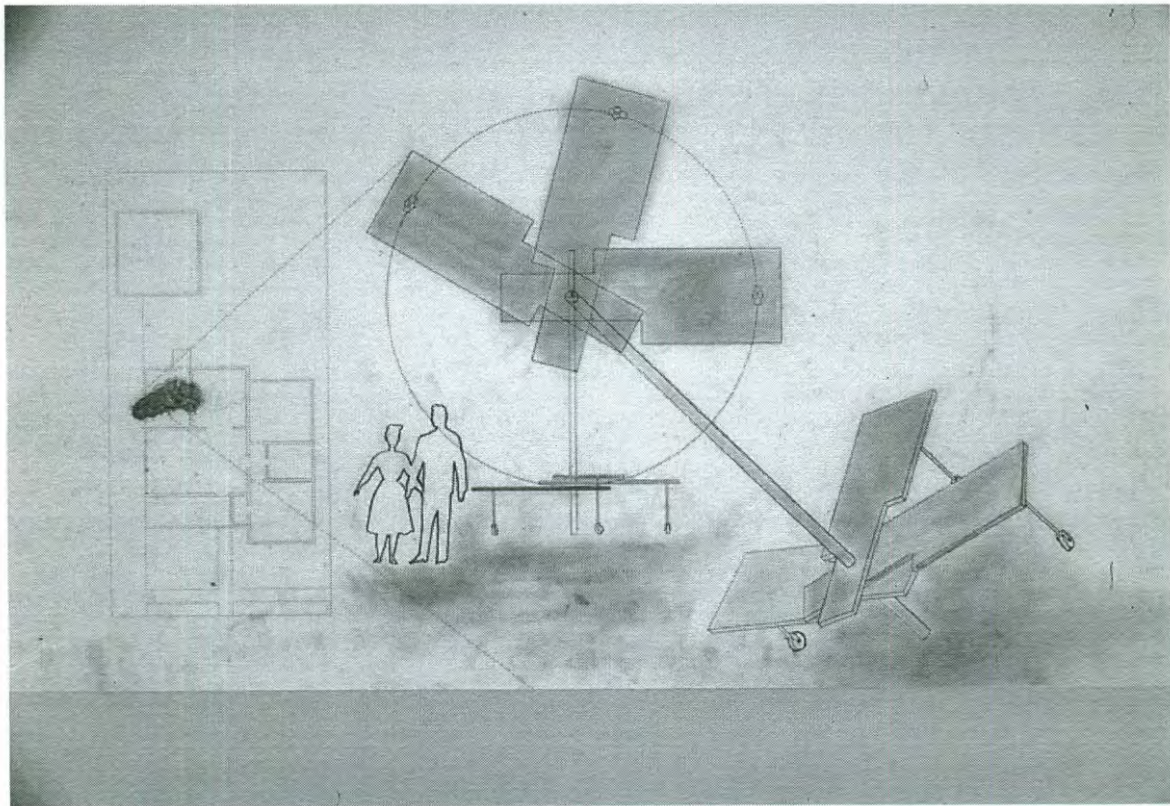
Preliminary studies.

Shifting dominant models, the house is turned inside out. The garage once contained, now contains the house. A house is no longer a house, instead the garage is the house.



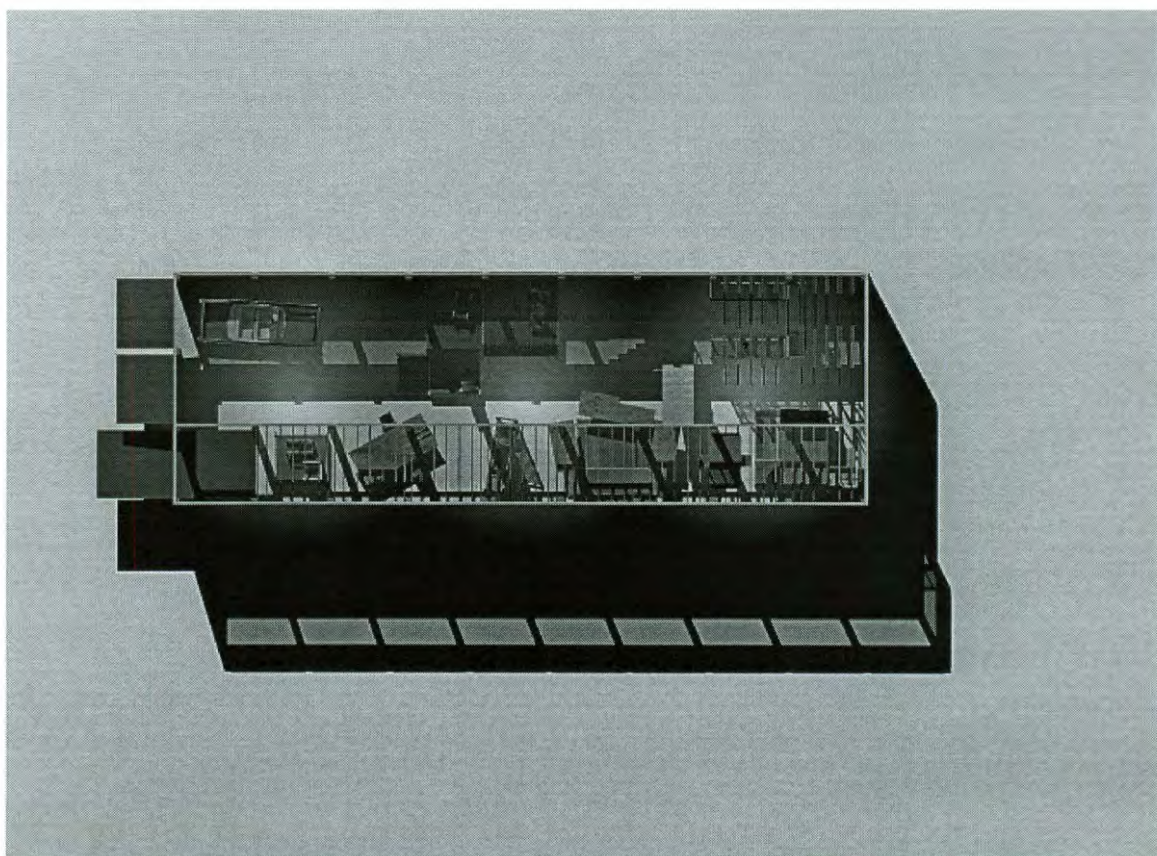
Preliminary studies.

Rooms are reduced to their
essence and distilled to an
object that captures and
conveys the spirit of the
place.

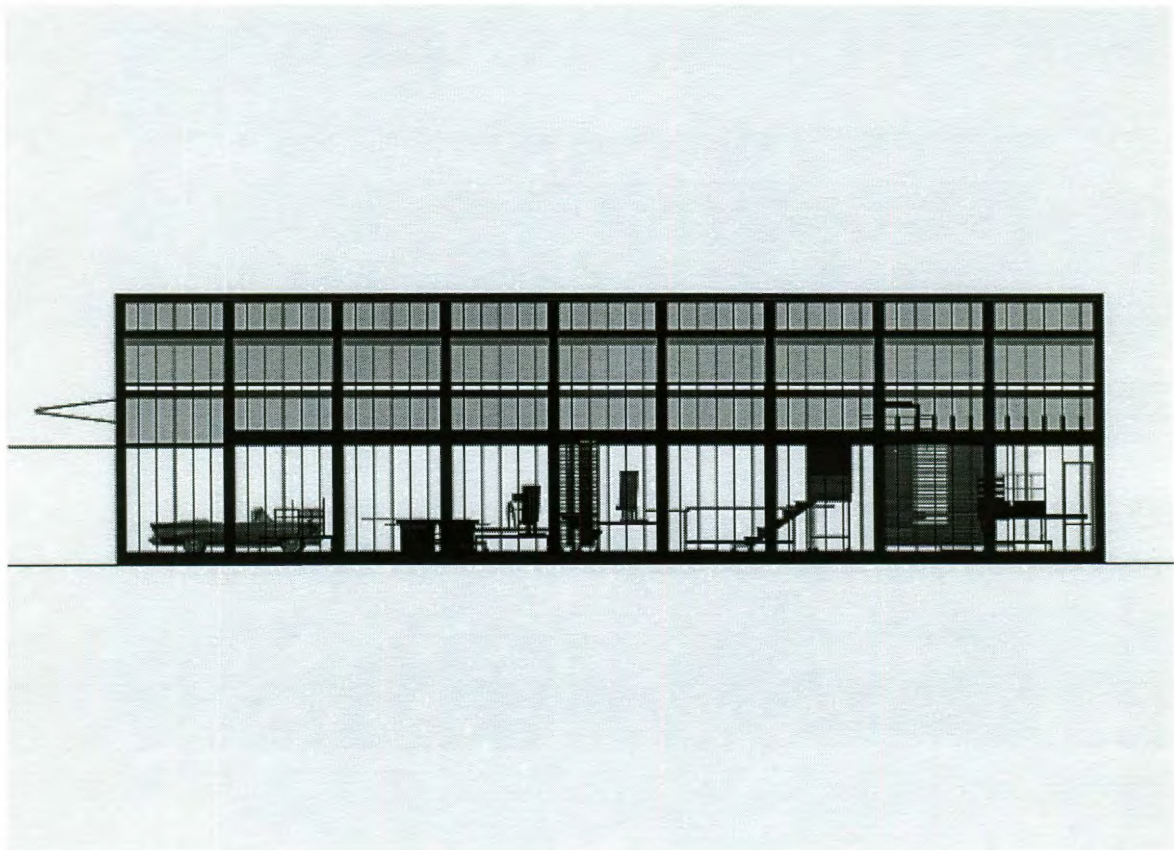


Imploded kitchen. Study for a hyper
condensed kitchen that rotates around
a structural utility pole.

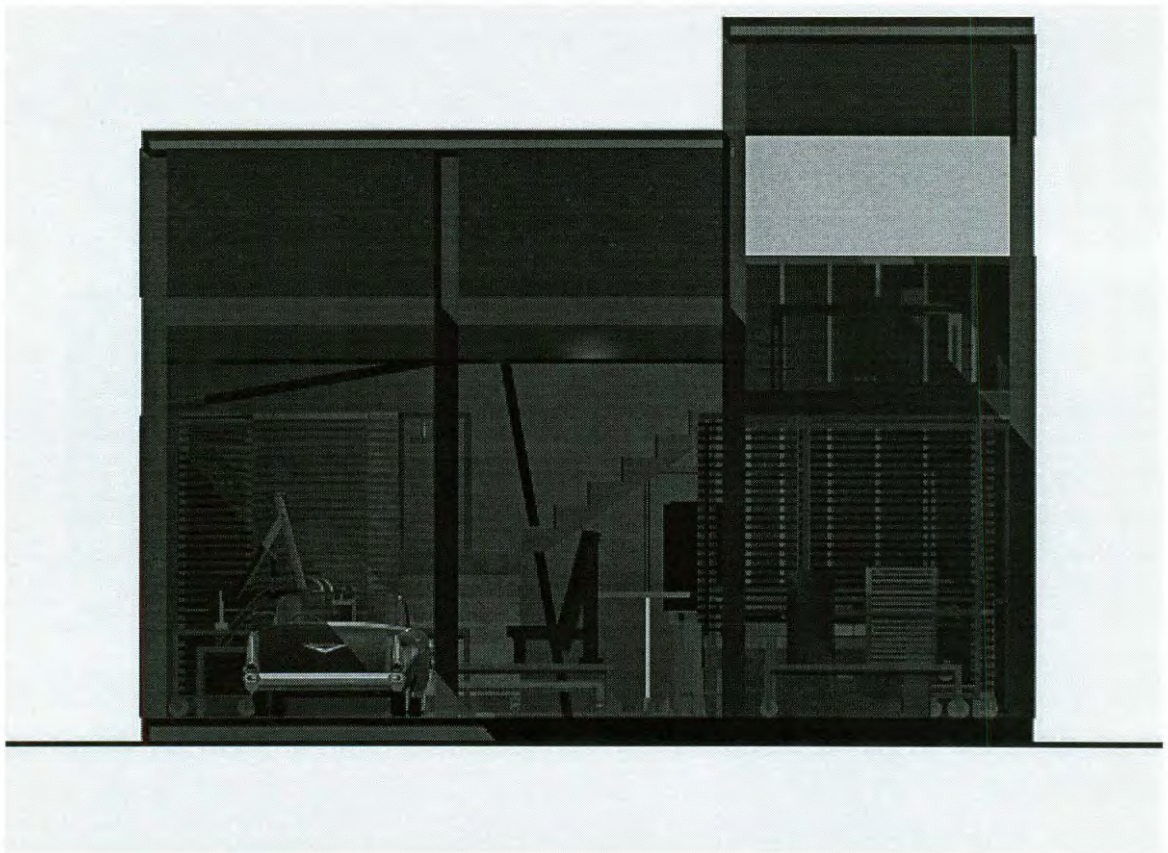
The garage is exploded while
the rooms are imploded. The
garage becomes a shell that
houses the now object-like
rooms.



Plan.



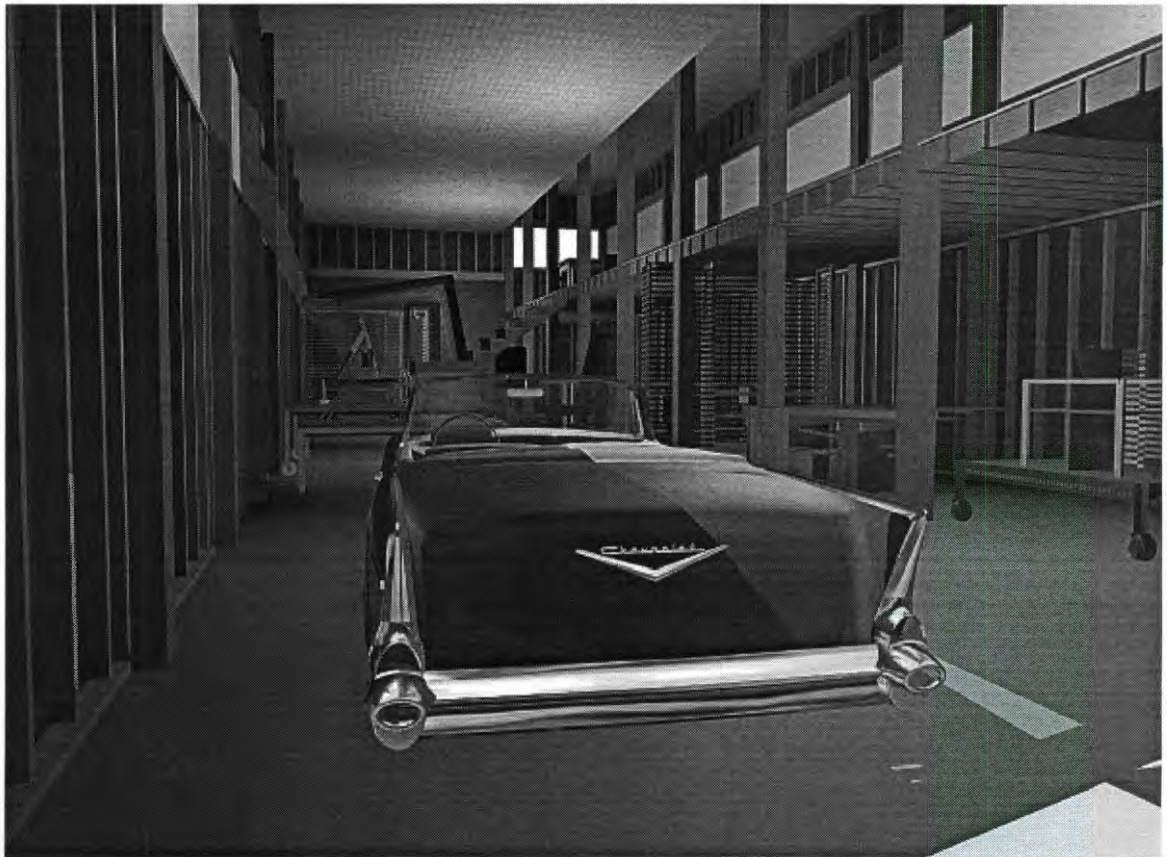
Section.



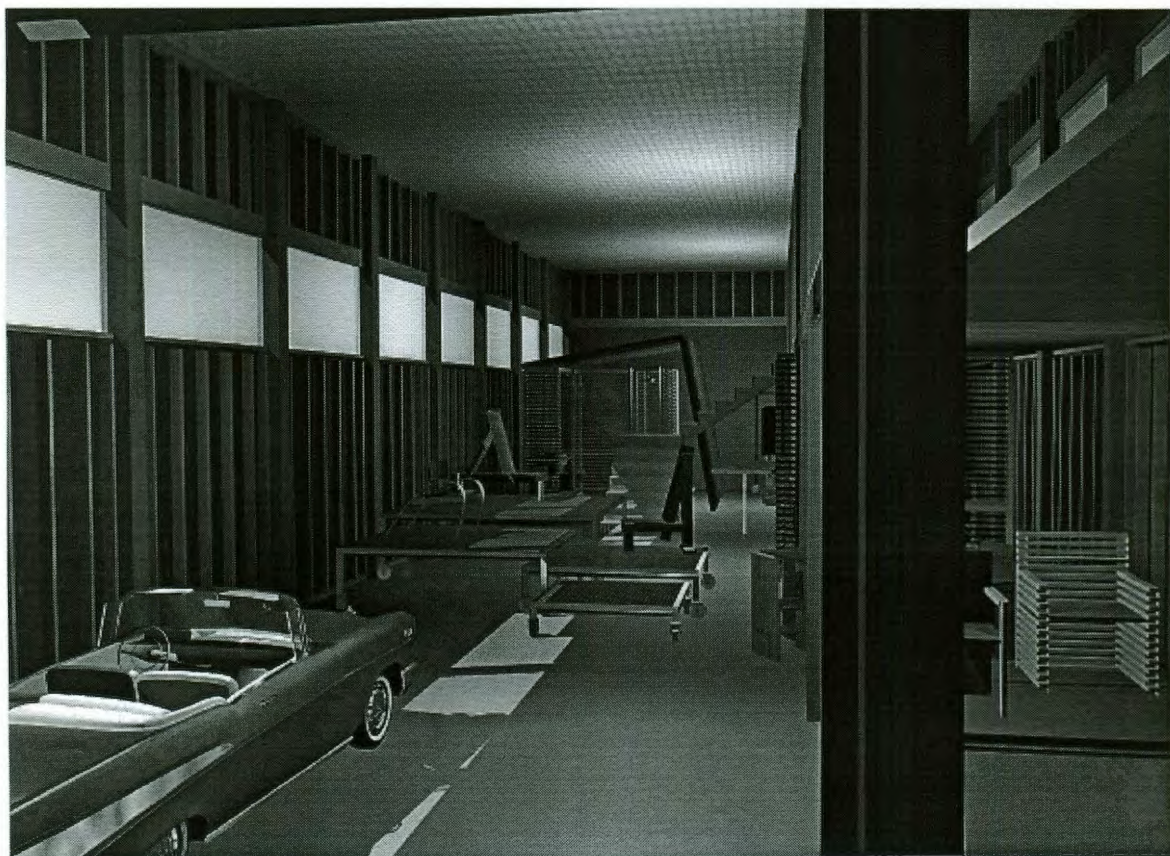
Section.



Interior view.



Interior view.



Interior view.



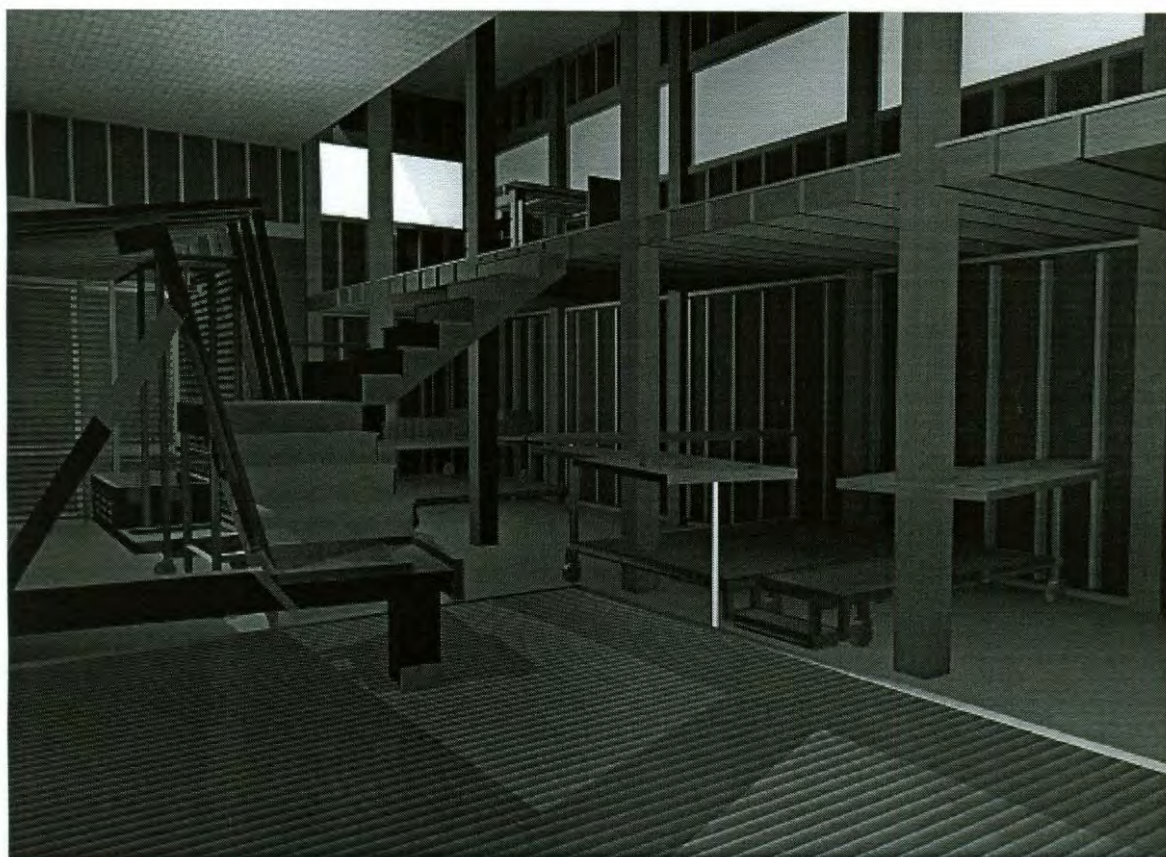
Interior view.



Interior view.



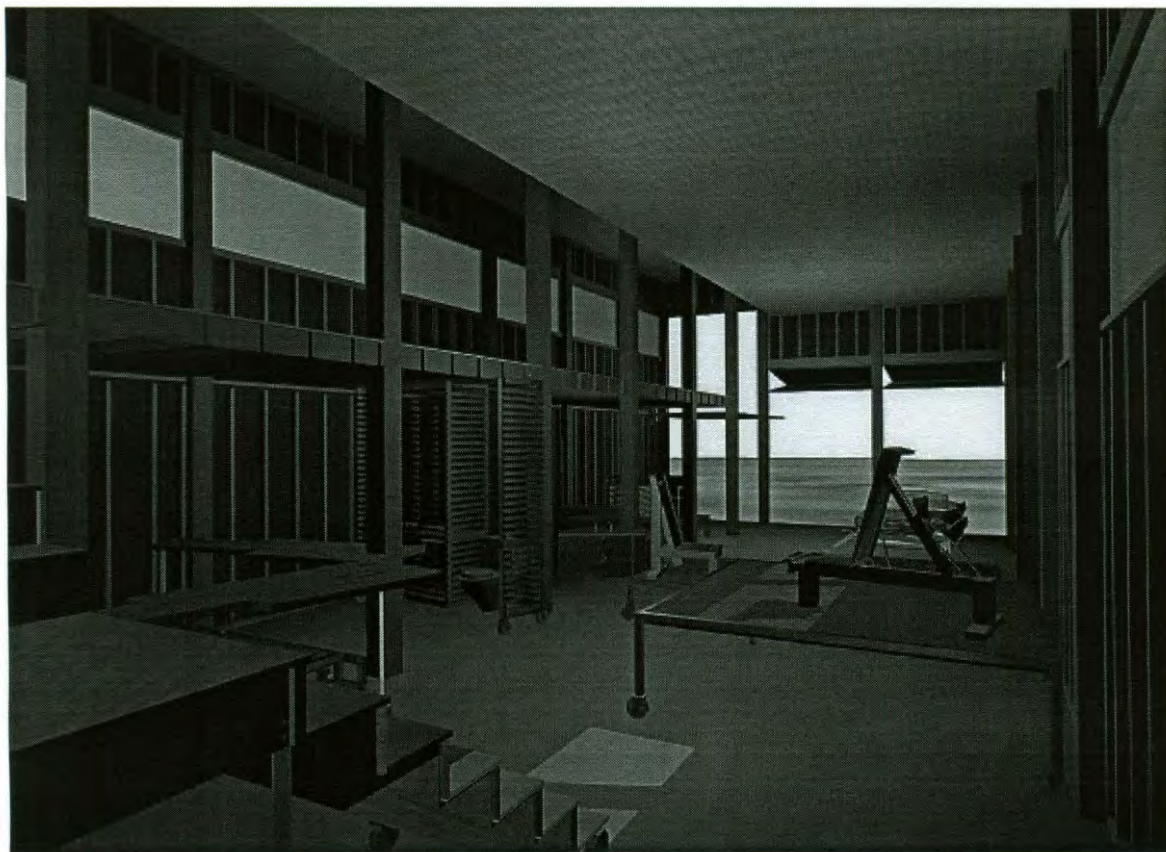
Interior view.



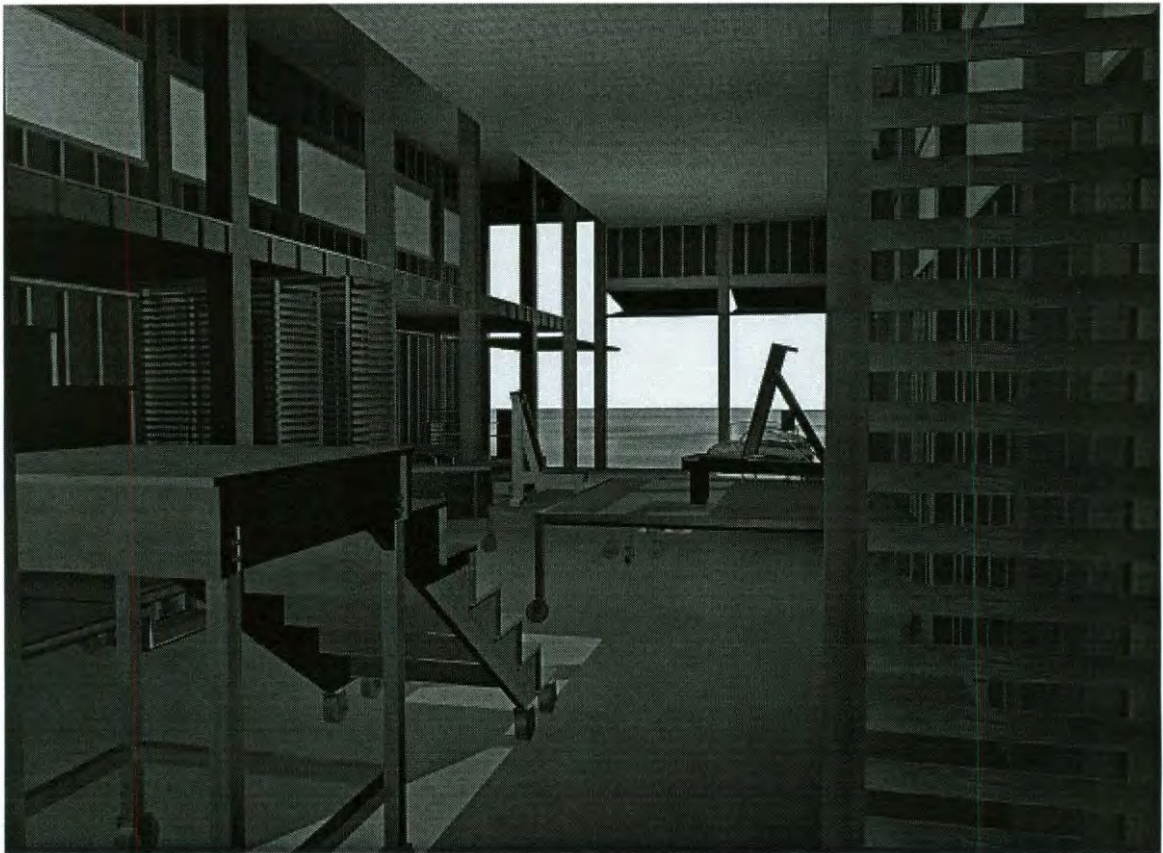
Interior view.



Interior view.



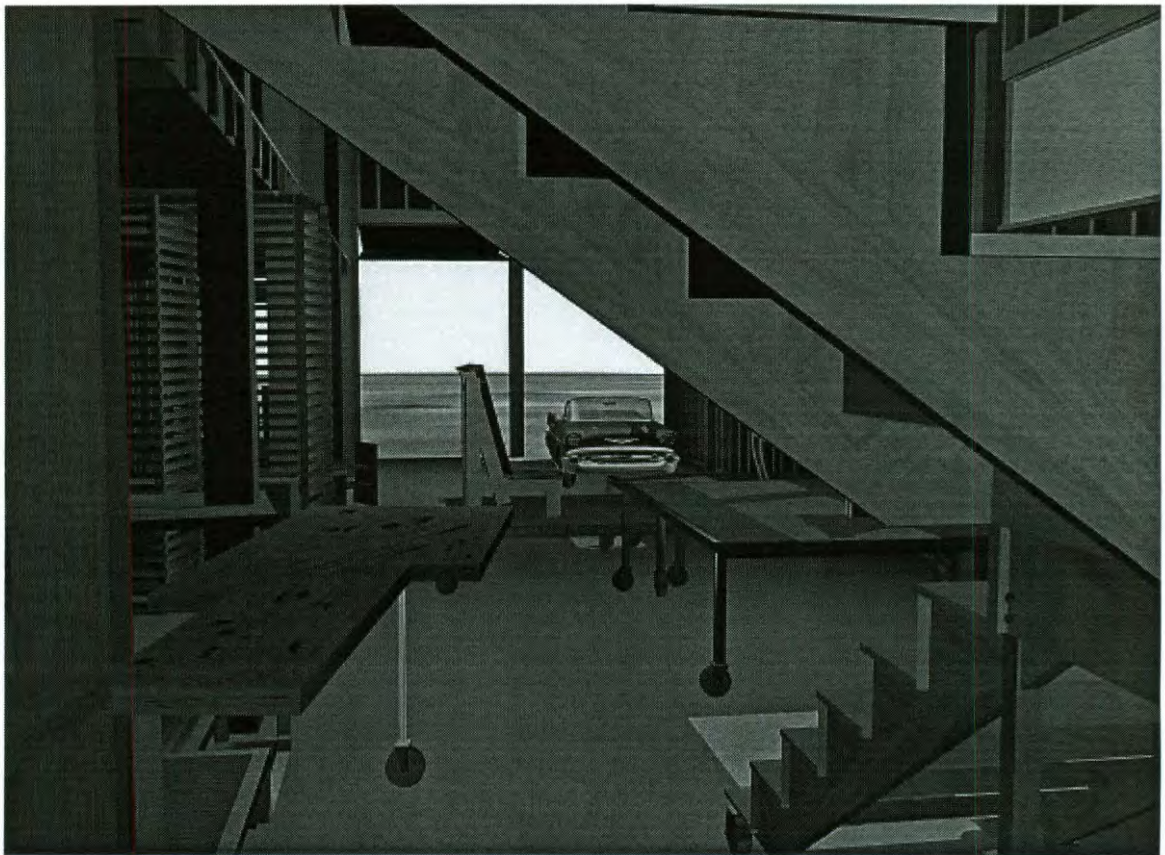
Interior view.



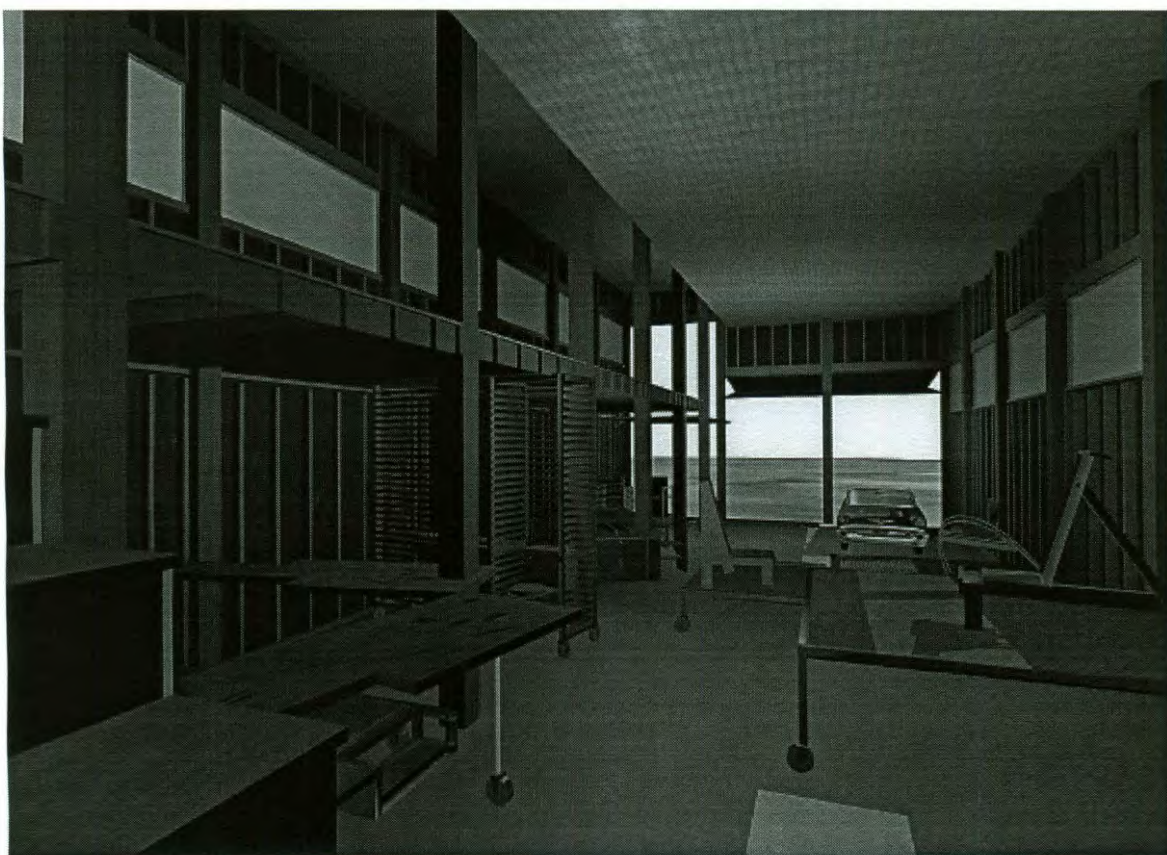
Interior view.



Interior view.



Interior view.



Interior view.

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Acknowledgments

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