

THE SMITH HOUSE- RICHARD MEIER

-Darien, Connecticut

Project Date: 1965-1967

Project dimensions: 8640 sqft. (estimated from section elevation)

Original clients: Mr. and Mrs. Fred Smith

Biographical Details about the Architect :

-Meier's houses typically feature intersecting planes--e.g. an interior floor may extend through a glass wall to form an exterior deck--and in their crisp geometric whiteness provide a sharp contrast with the natural setting.

-The 1920s revivalist element in the neorationalist movement is demonstrated in the United States in the work of Richard Meier, for example in his Smith House, Darien, Conn. (1965-67), inspired by Le Corbusier's Citrohan and Domino houses.

-Meier was born in Newark, New Jersey.[1] He earned a Bachelor of Architecture degree from Cornell University in 1957, worked for Skidmore, Owings and Merrill briefly in 1959, and then for Marcel Breuer for three years, prior to starting his own practice in New York in 1963. Identified as one of The New York Five in 1972, his commission of the Getty Center in Los Angeles, California catapulted his popularity among the mainstream.

Much of Meier's work builds on the work of architects of the early to mid-20th century, especially that of Le Corbusier and, in particular, Le Corbusier's early phase. Meier has built more using Corbusier's ideas than anyone, including Le Corbusier himself^[citation needed]. Meier expanded many ideas evident in Le Corbusier's work, particularly the Villa Savoye and the Swiss Pavilion.

His work also reflects the influences of other designers such as Mies Van der Rohe and, in some instances, Frank Lloyd Wright and Luis Barragán (without the colour)^[citation needed]. White has been used in many architectural landmark buildings throughout history, including cathedrals and the white-washed villages of the Mediterranean region, in Spain, southern Italy and Greece.

In 1984, Meier was awarded the Pritzker Prize,[2] and in 2008, he won the gold medal in architecture from the Academy of Arts and Letters.[3]

Sources:

-Wikipedia Search: Richard Meier

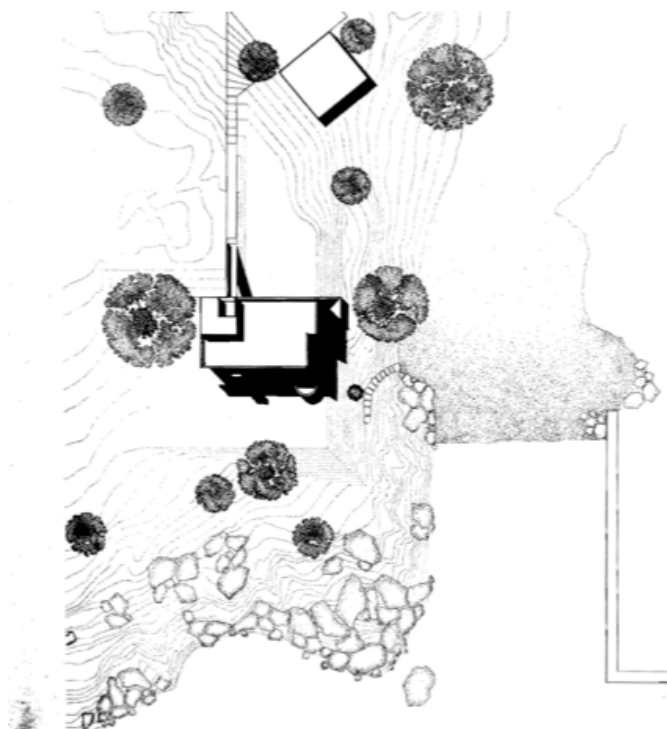
-Meier Architect (Book

-Google Image search: Richard Meier Smith House

Darien, Connecticut. 1965-1967

The Smith House, situated among rocks and trees on a 1½-acre site, overlooks Long Island Sound from the Connecticut coast. Dense evergreens stand at the entrance to the property. The land clears and rises to the center of the site, then drops sharply to the rocky shoreline, and falls away on one side to the beach.

There is a formal layering, giving a sense of progression, as one moves across the site from the entrance road down to the shore, and the "line of progression" determines the major site axis. Perpendicular to this axis, the intersecting planes in the house respond to the rhythms of the slope, trees, rock outcroppings, and the shoreline. As the site plan indicates, the approach, entrance, access, and view are organized to cross the contours of the site, and thus afford an unusual prospect of the landscape and water. The angle of the garage to the path leading to the front façade, and the curved wall on one side of the door help to draw one through to the open zone of the house. Access is on the uphill side of the house, and the primary view is toward the downhill portion of the site.



The cascading effect of the balconied spaces and the open layers of vertical development are stretched over three stories. As the viewer descends along the line of the hill, this arrangement creates a secondary, diagonal relation to the site—a relation that acknowledges the interruption of the coast-line by a small, sandy cove.

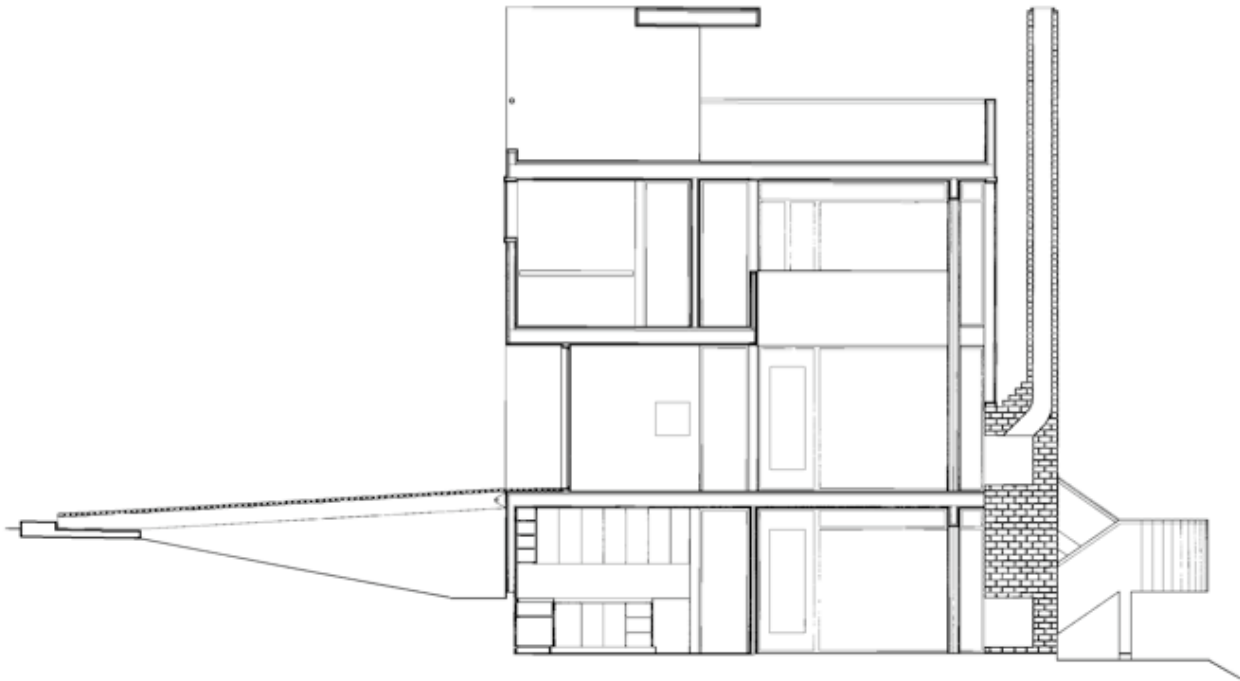
The house was sited slightly below the crest of the hill. The entry façade was treated as an opaque screen that must be penetrated in order to reveal the view to the water lying beyond. The surprise that follows the entrance is celebrated at the rear of the building, where the highly reflective surfaces of the glazing catch light and color from the land, the sky, and the water. The masonry fireplace seems as a solid drawn from the front façade. It is directly opposite the entry, and so continues a line of movement through its own glass plane.

The circulation system, which guides movement through the house, actually extends far beyond the limits of the building itself. Within the Smith House, horizontal circulation links the cells of the private zones and also links the private with the public areas; vertical circulation occurs in a stairwell set within the zone of the enclosed rooms. The major circulation pattern, and the activity contained, weave together the two otherwise discrete spatial units of the interior.

The spatial organization in this house, as in many of the projects to follow, incorporates a programmatic separation between public and private areas. Ideally, every person in the household would have his or her own private space for sleeping, bathing, and retirement. The private side of the house is on the entry side, facing the land, the woods, and the road. The public spaces, where the family meets and entertains, are at the rear of the house, overlooking the water. The private sector is a series of closed, cellular spaces, organized on three levels. The public sector consists of three platforms within a single, three-sided glass enclosure.

The compact, prismatic form of the Smith House expresses a certain attitude toward the site: apart from being a shelter, the house is also an object, reflecting and refracting the natural scene around it. The house is rooted in the strong New England tradition of detached, self-sufficient units.

The articulation of the two contrasting vertical strips of private and public spaces is expressed by the two structural systems. In the public spaces, the structure consists of free-standing round steel columns that support the beams and the roof— independent elements that outline the grid. In the private or enclosed side of the house, the wood studwalls are load-bearing. The external building materials—vertical wooden siding and glass—serve also to express the contrast between the open and enclosed spaces. In this abrupt juxtaposition of solid and void, the one is incomplete without the other, and there is manifest a tension and dialectic between the two zones.

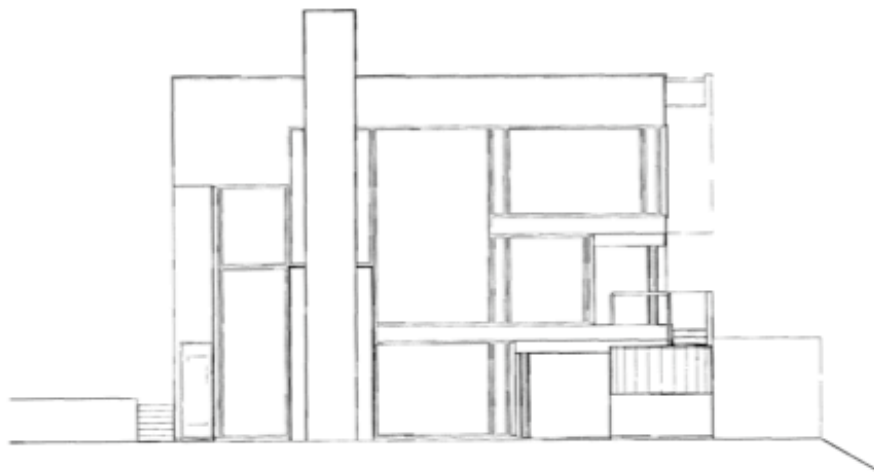


Cross section

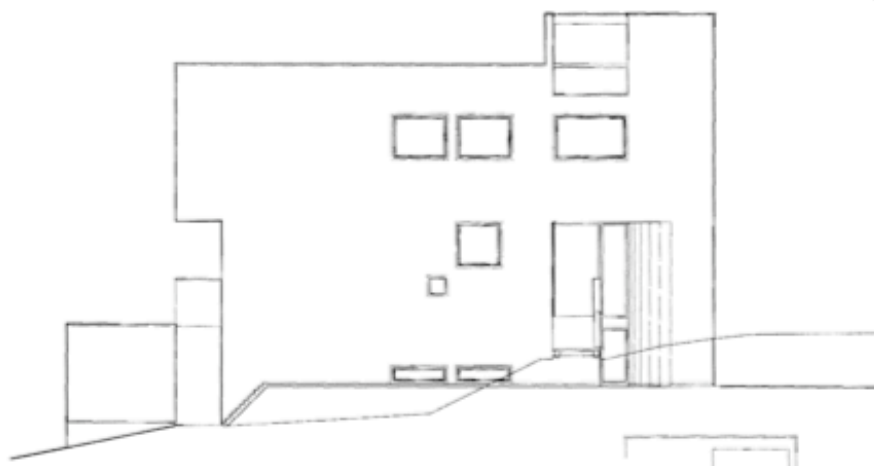


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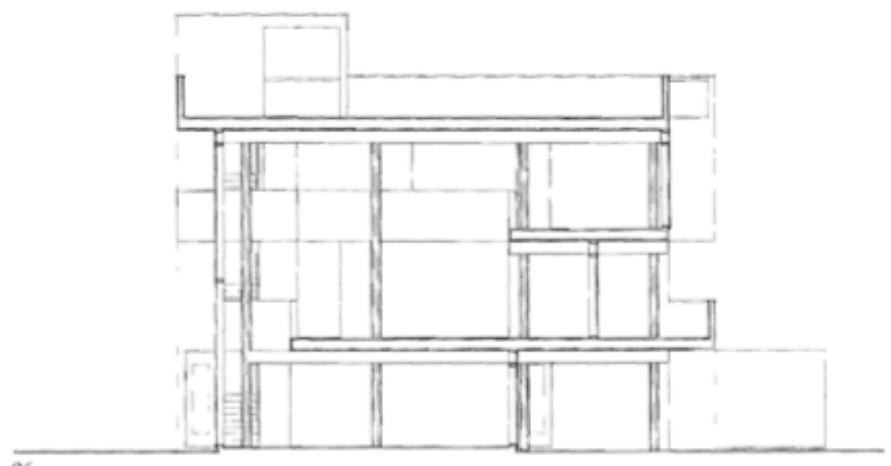
Cross Section



*Southeast elevation
Northwest elevation
Longitudinal section*

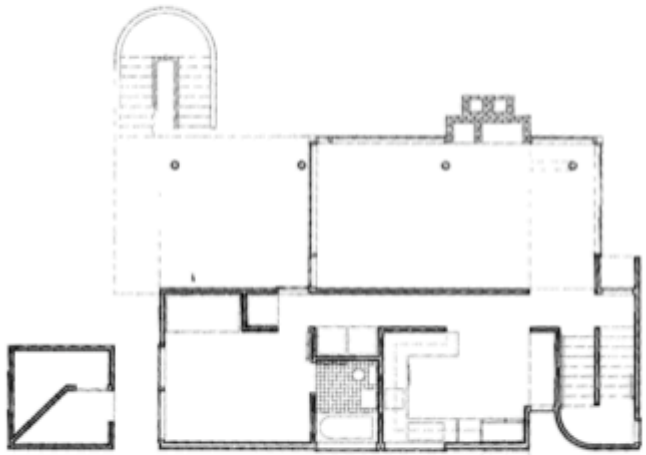


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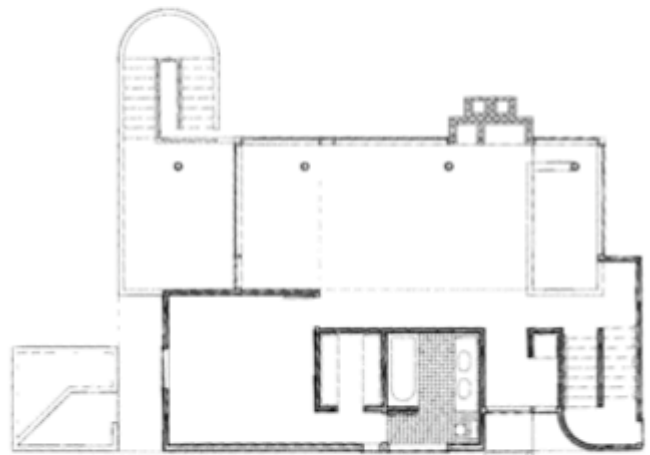


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Southwest, Northwest, and Longitudinal Elevations



Entry Level Plan



Lower Level Plan

Lower level plan
Entry level plan

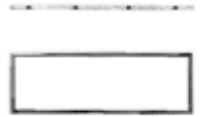
Site



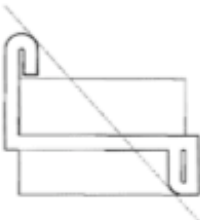
Program



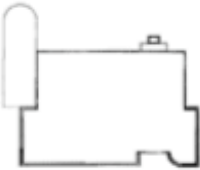
Structure



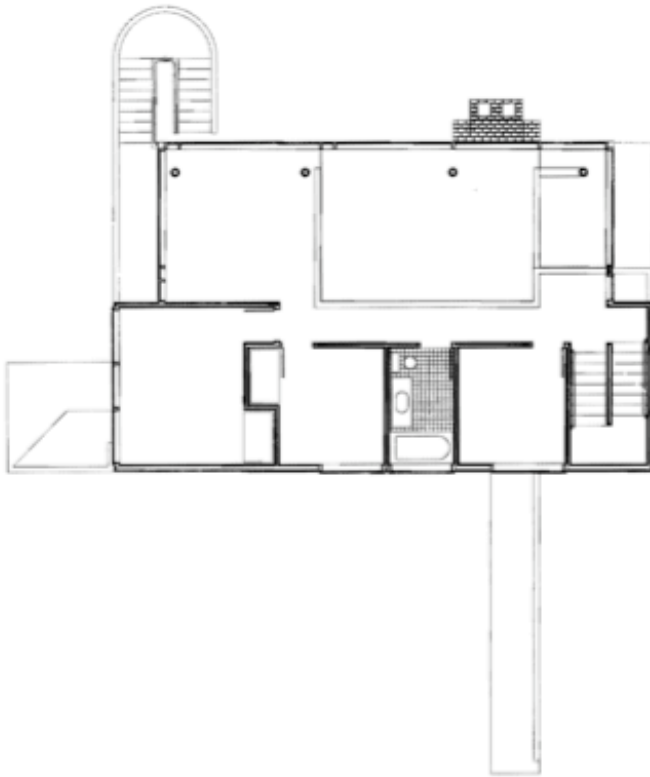
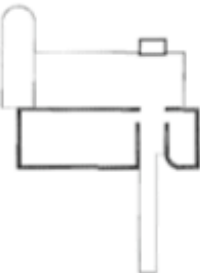
Circulation



Enclosure



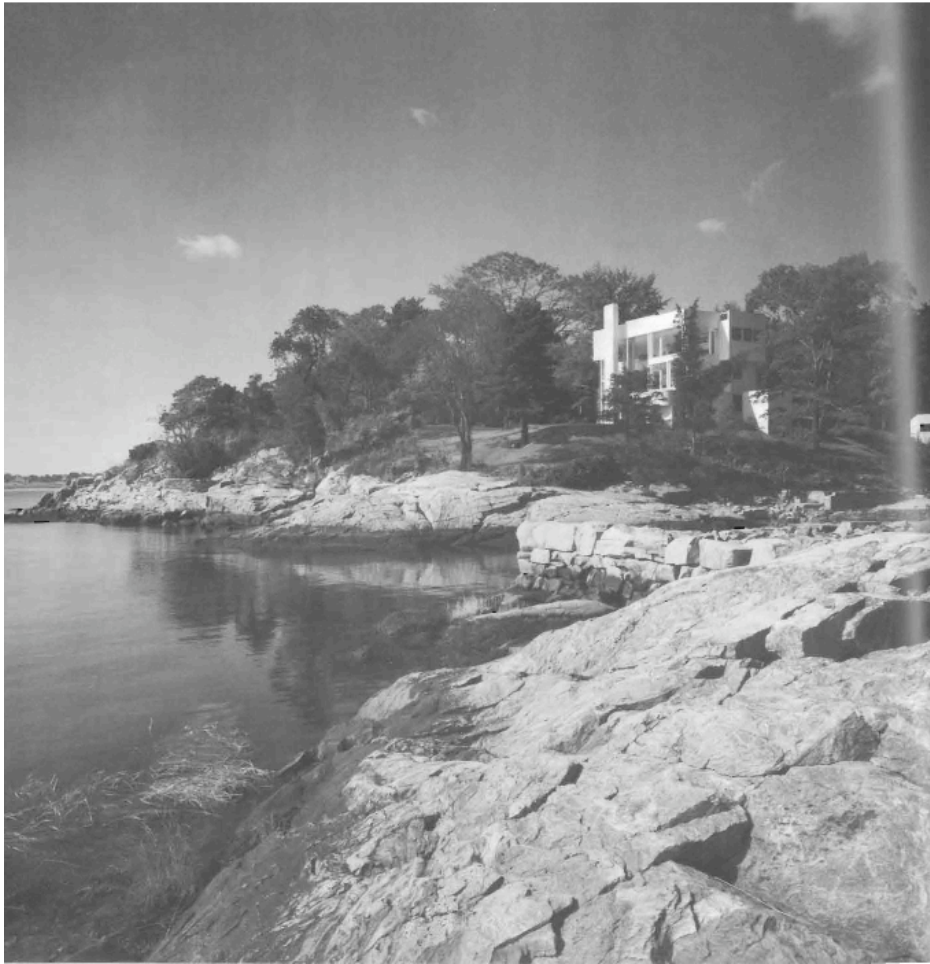
Entrance



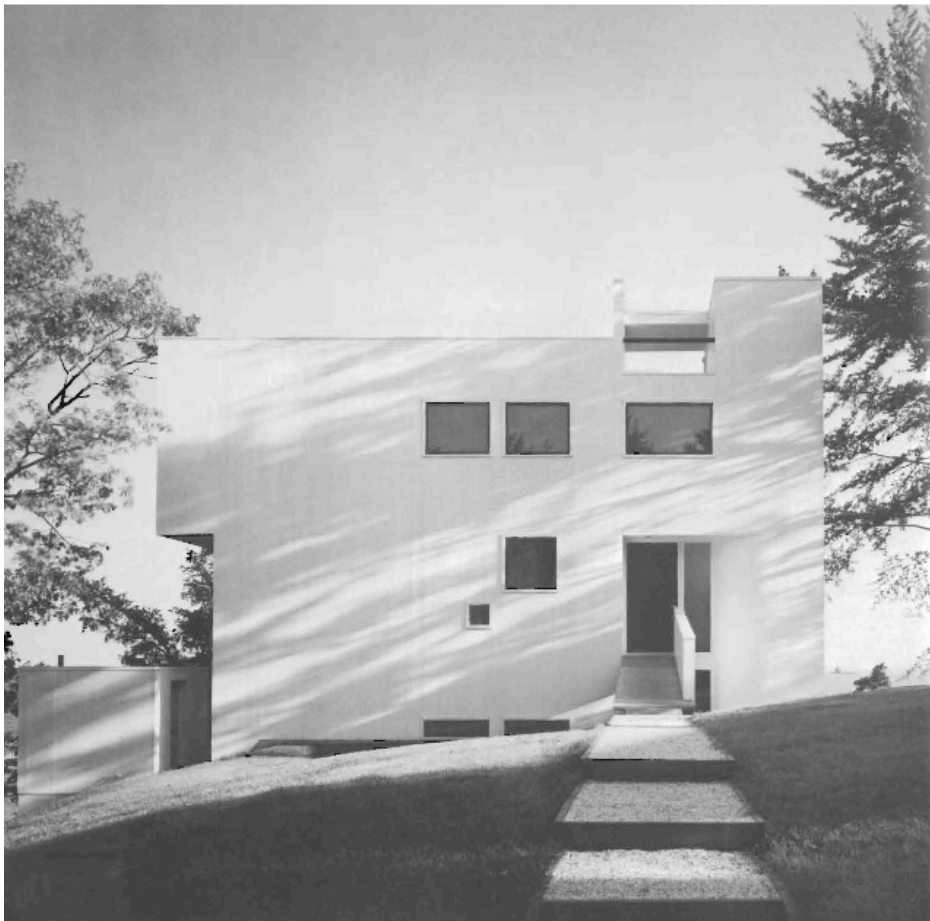
*Upper level plan
Diagrams*

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Upper Level Plan



View from Lakefront



Side View

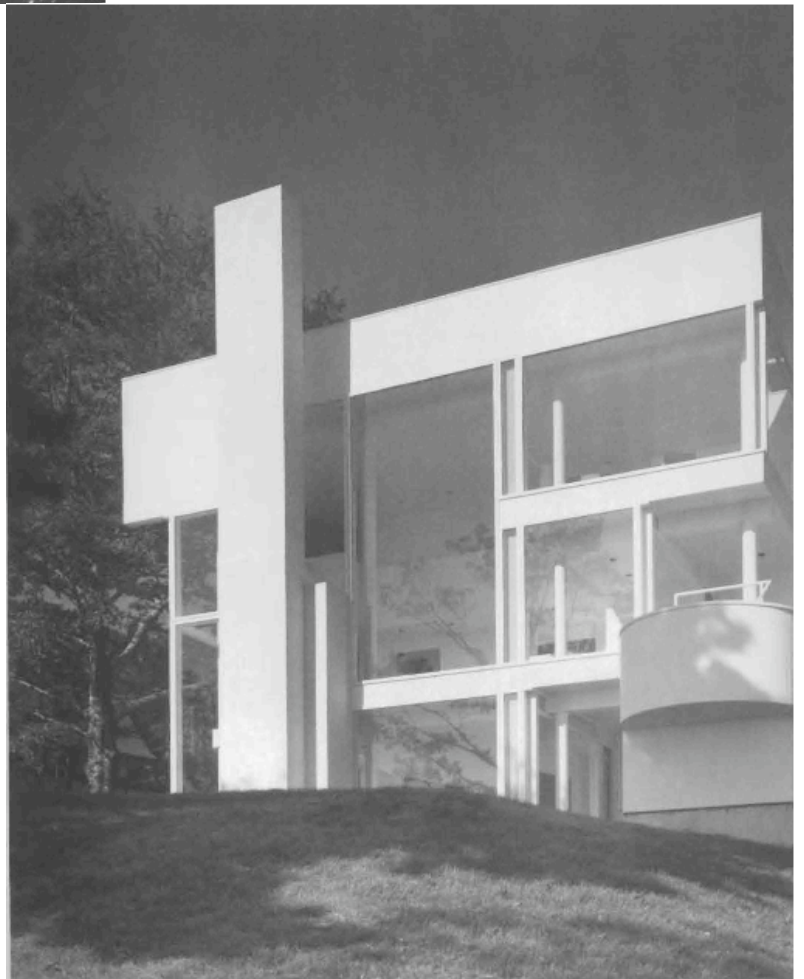


Interior View





Exterior Views



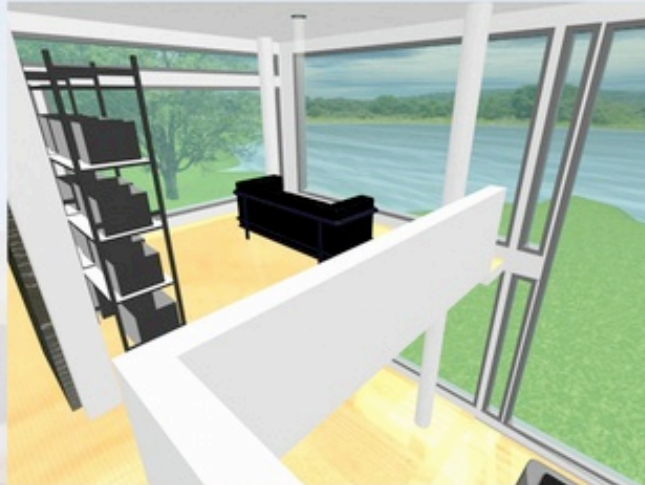


Axonometric Views



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1965-1967
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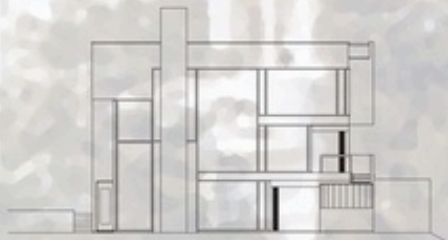


TOP LEVEL

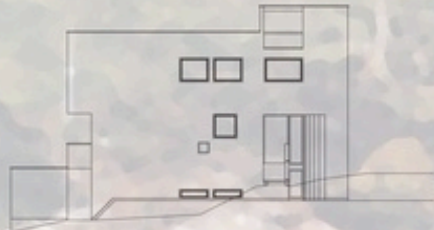
CROSS SECTION



SOUTHEAST ELEVATION



NORTHWEST ELEVATION



LOWER LEVEL / DINING ROOM



Interior and Exterior Perspective Views