Koolhaas designed a complex house in itself and surpassed the conventional, in every detail.

- Halldóra Arnardóttir + Javier Sánchez Merina, Stories of Houses

Koolhaas describes Maison a Bordeaux as three houses placed on top of each other. The lowest section: “a series of caverns carved out of the hill for the most intimate life of the family.”
The middle section: a glass room that allows an open view of Bordeaux atop the hill.
The top section: a concrete box that conceals the separate spaces for the husband, wife, and children

Maison a Bordeaux, was designed for a family of an elderly couple, of which the husband became confined in a wheelchair after a car accident. When Koolhaas talked to the couple about the design of the house, the husband stated, “Contrary to what you expect, I don’t want a simple house... I want a complex house, because the house will define my WORLD...”
The top floor rests on three legs. One of these legs, a cylinder that includes the circular staircase of the house, is located off-centre. Although this displacement brings an instability to the house, it gains equilibrium by placing a steel beam over the house which pulls a cable in tension...Koolhaas has created a structure which, equal to the life of the client, depends on a cable.

- Halldóra Arnardóttir + Javier Sánchez Merina, Stories of Houses

The elevator is the core of the house. Furnished with the owner’s desk, the platform is mounted atop a column of polished steel and driven by machinery buried beneath the ground floor. In addition to providing the disabled owner with mobility, it keeps the house in a state of visual flux. The platform occupies just enough of the building’s floor area so that, when it moves from one level to another, it changes the house’s spatial composition. The movement alters the dimensions of each floor and enlarges or impedes the flow of space between them. On whatever level, the desk assumes the symbolic presence of a control panel for the entire house.