

Vernacular House for a Graphic Designer

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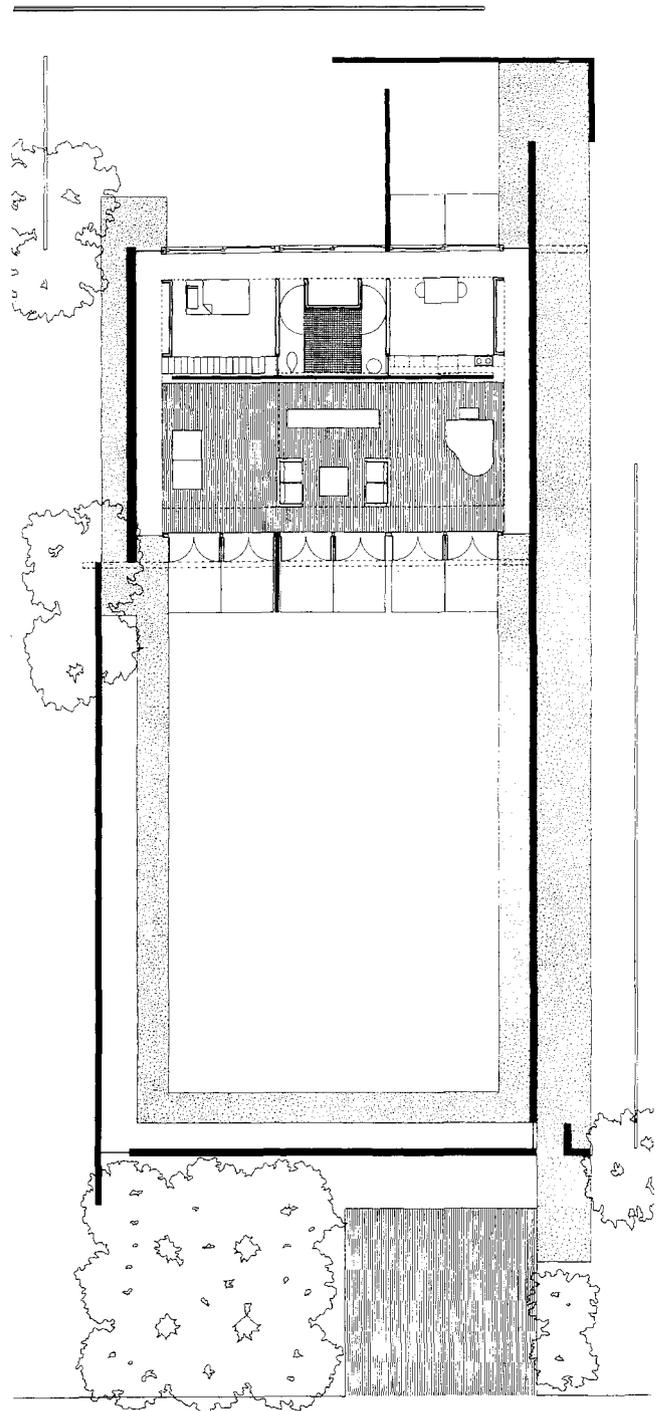
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The client commissioned a modest personal residence to accommodate a variety of domestic and professional activities. The design was developed to provide visual and/or auditory privacy within a conservative building program and context.

As a graphic designer and professor, he wanted the design to reflect his aesthetic of structural minimalism; objects should stimulate a field or a PLANE in a way that focuses the viewer's attention. Too many objects risk over-stimulation. Secondly, he wanted vernacular elements drawn from the iconography of traditional Americana to be incorporated into the design. This engaging duality informed the simplicity, character, and spatial relationship between the house and site.

The lot purchased for the house fronts a modest residential brick street with mature trees. Neighboring houses, fences, and storage buildings comprise broken edges and no particular spatial order. Two structures on the adjacent corner lot form a framed opening which is visible from the cross street to the east. In response to that framed opening, the house sites itself as an image within it. The house's location at the rear of the lot protects it from the northern exposure.

The graphic design for the house creates a dialogue between minimalist structure and contextual site lines. Material elements and spatial sequencing evoke an American vernacular character. The plan is single level with regular structural bays exposed at floor planes and below ceiling planes which zone the independent functions. In keeping with the client's graphic design aesthetic, structure acts as minimal objects which enliven without overstimulating the field or GROUND PLANE. No spaces are completely enclosed by a solid wall. Planes of space extend beyond the area defined by the roof to incorporate the garden landscape and reinforce the neighborhood street edge. The space created by the placement of these elements is intended to harmonize the duality of activity and image, object and field, inside and outside, spirit and place. Their use is based on economy, functionality, contextual sensitivity, "*Clarity, Simplicity, and Integrity.*"



The client once related that entry through the back door of his hometown farmhouse was such fixed custom that the front door literally sealed itself shut from lack of use. In response to that cultural memory, one enters the house by walking along the east wooden wall toward the rear of the lot, around to a rear courtyard of the house and through the kitchen. Load bearing walls pass beneath the roof and define spaces within and beyond the perimeter of the ceiling planes. Their minimal structural integrity of the walls both stimulate and literally support the graphic field. A 45-degree sloped galvanized roof evokes a traditional barn-like character inspired by the client's personal collection of traditional Americana images and satisfies the functional need for loft storage. The cross-sectional silhouette is created at the eave and returns at the curtain wall. North and South scuppers are treated as "barn-door" tracks of the same material and cantilever over entry points as overhead boundaries. North skylights near the ridge beam admit light which is filtered through the wood frame structure plane above and around the undisturbed white ceiling planes below. A load bearing pre-cast concrete wall supports continuous wood rails to be used for the display of works in progress and images the client has framed. Open shelving for domestic activities are regulated on the opposite side. The resulting plan responds to the client's desire to have a "house within a house" so that he can nest within the service functions.

