

4 Houses

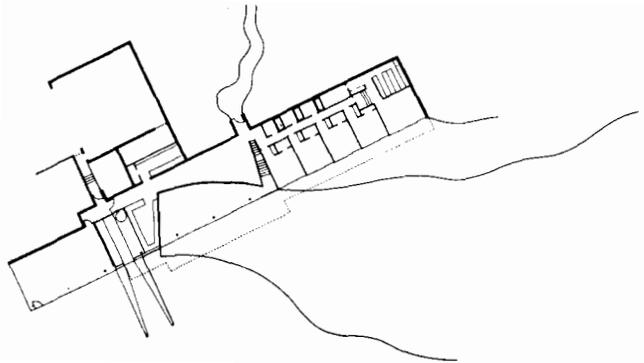
1996 ACSA Design Award

JOE MASHBURN

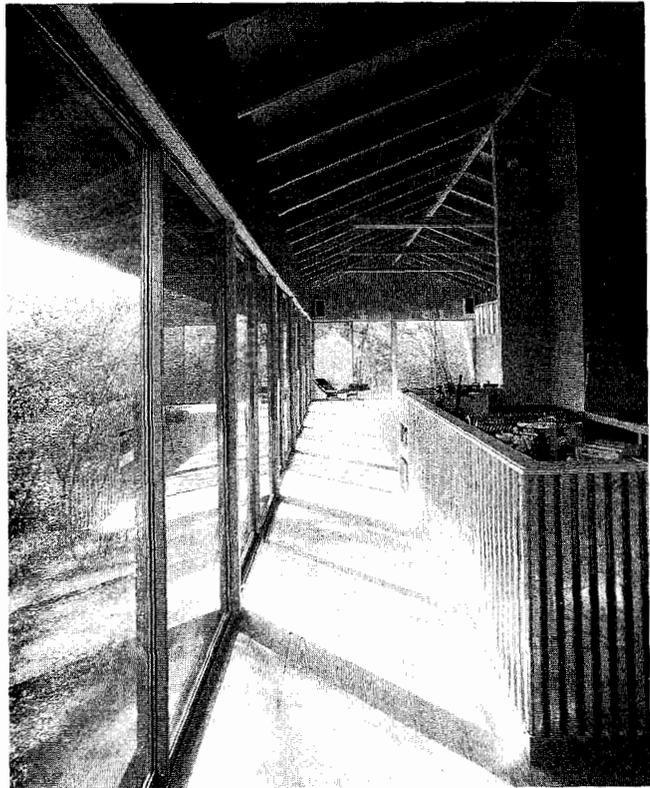
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

The four houses represent an evolutionary study of issues leading to increasingly universal goals which overlay earlier concerns and raise more fundamental questions.

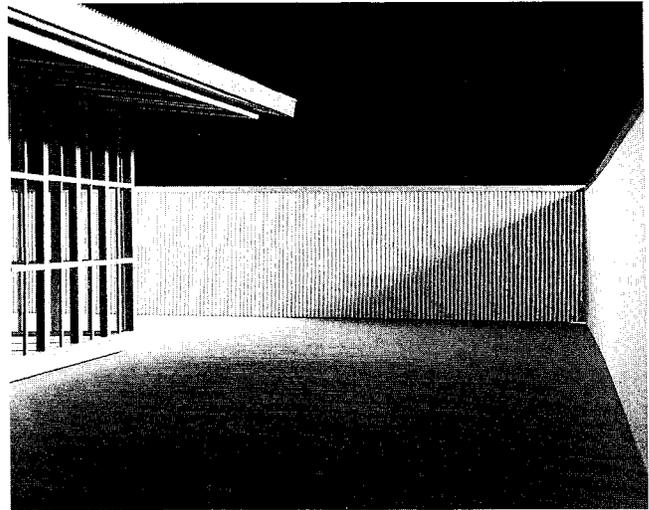
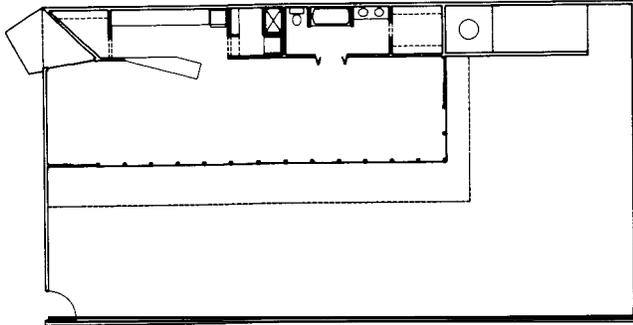
The Oklahoma house was unified by a circumstantial composition concerned with local orientation, climate, topographical land form, views, wind, and sun. Responses to the natural world were based on an analysis of clearly identifiable local features. Interior space was directed toward huge granite outcroppings to the east, while the body of the house turned south for sun.



The Texas house extended local circumstance and eroded the division between human habitation and nature by including aspects of region. Syntheses of dualisms were sought, such as a providing a sense of protected enclosure within the open pavilion living space and engaging the central space of the house with the earth, while the living and bedroom wings raise on concrete piers to sit among native yaupon and oaks.



The small infill house constructed circumstance, exploring a two way connection between landscape and human consciousness. Perceived space extended the actual volume and linked the interior to a controlled, serene place within suburbia.



The mountain house presented local and regional aspects through constructed circumstance in an attempt to make meaning visceral. Strategies included organising the building intervention as an earthwork incision slicing slope and continuously knowing the slope through spaces in the house constructed as interior terraces. Each terrace was connected with specific meanings related to its program and physical landscape context. In this way the mountain house offers the deepest perceptual sense of unity of the four houses, yet it remains the least whole as a physically composed object in the landscape.

As goals become more universal, the quality providing unity becomes paradoxically easier to identify and harder to achieve. When the four houses are seen in retrospect, success is not lineal. The questions raised propel the next effort.

