

Hotel on the Road at a "Casa de Caminero"

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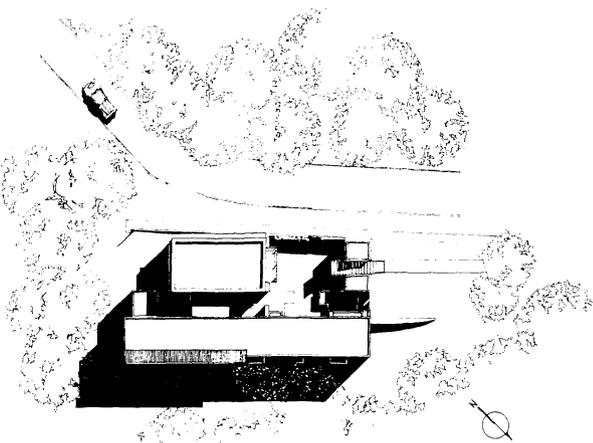


Fig. 1. SITE PLAN

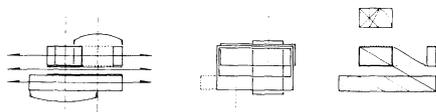


Fig. 2. DIAGRAMS

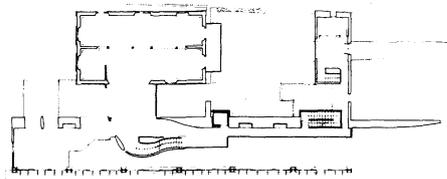


Fig. 3. FIRST FLOOR PLAN

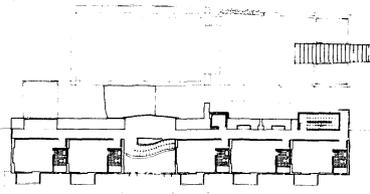


Fig. 4. SECOND FLOOR PLAN

PROBLEM

At the Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico, the third-year design studio addresses architectural strategies concerning complexities pertaining simultaneous problems related to building design at different scales: site, massing, spatial sequence, and facade articulation. In the final first-term project, the student confronts such objectives in multiple, yet concurrent ways. The problem being, in this case, a small hotel on the road developed from a historic *Casa de Caminero* (Fig. 5), its specific programmatic requirements included: five rooms with private bath each, a restaurant, lobby, administration, common areas, vertical circulation and several terraces.

The original *Casas de Caminero* (Fig. 5) were built from 1870 to 1880, when the Spanish Government promoted in Puerto Rico their construction as part of an extensive public works program. Developed as a prototype, they housed the person entrusted with maintenance of a specific segment in rural roads around the island. Many of these structures in brick, masonry and wood are still to be found around Puerto Rico. Today, in spite of their undisputable value, they still stand, in defiance of time and neglect.

Besides underlining the integrity of the structure, special attention was required to be given to the topographical condition, its orientation, accesses and views, but also to formal composition, all in relationship to related and pertinent issues of preservation.

PROPOSAL

Upon study of the main architectural characteristics of the existing piece, reinforcement of the parallel relationship between structure and street became a goal. (Fig. 2, a) The 3-zone, original, internal lay-out of the *casa* (perpendicular to both its longitudinal axis and the road) was altered (by subtraction of every non-bearing wall) to establish two

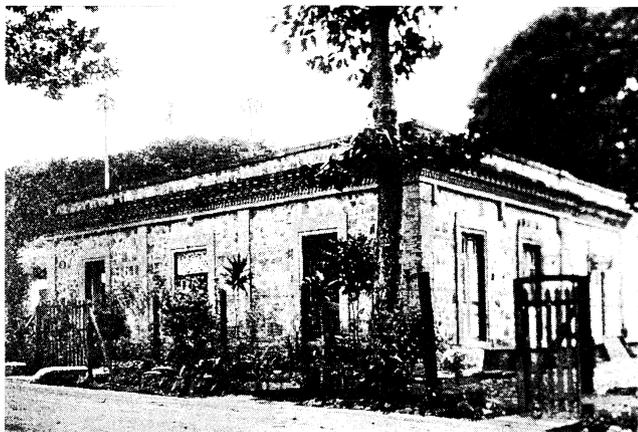


Fig. 5. CASA DE CAMINERO

longitudinal zones laid out parallel to both enclosure and street. These areas are intended to serve as rooms for exhibits and/or special activities.

For this specific project the separation of Old and New (as choice, not an obligation) became an articulation device by itself. Other strategies of similar intention included: manipulation of the topography for contrasting levels (*Figs. 1 & 6*); consistent application of a proportional system throughout the scheme (*Fig. 2,c*); also, massing and composition resolved jointly as an interplay of volumes and spaces linked purposely by the sequence (*Fig. 2,a & b*). In addition, the proposed internal rearrangement of the given historic structure, by itself, represents an example of spatial re-articulation.

Other programmatic requirements were housed in a new building, added as an independent volume, parallel to the *casa*, larger than it, and acting as its background or backdrop, a fact stressed (in the new structure) by adherence to a contemporary vocabulary in both plan and elevation (*Figs. 1 & 3*). Twice its height, the new volume frames the pre-existing house, stating the former's presence as a wall, both in literal and conceptual terms (*Fig. 6*).

This new longitudinal volume houses most of the required program for a hotel of this reduced scale and more informal type. Its depth as a wall is both functional, compositional, transitional and (con)sequential. How one moves through the solids and voids thus becomes most telling of the design intentions: old and new elements are perceived in interplay, but also interior and exterior space, brought together by the backdrop element.

A patio brings together the different elements and scales, perceived differently from two different access sequences, one fast, the other ceremonial.

Interlocking spaces (*Fig. 7*) and similarly interrelated materials (*Fig. 8*) come together: concrete, brick and steel, as expressed in the wall section, reinforce the spatial layering suggested by the architectural composition.

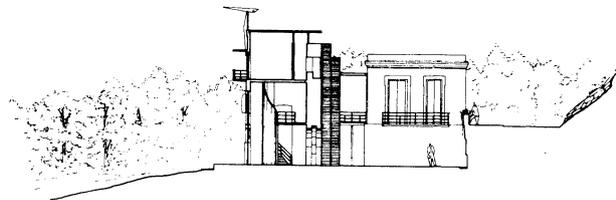


Fig. 6. TRANSVERSE SECTION

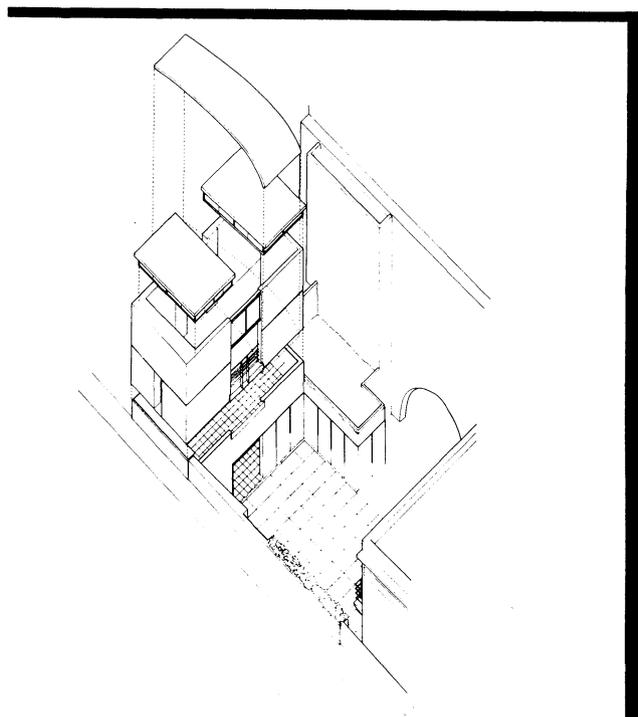


Fig. 7. ASSEMBLY COMPOSITION VOLUME

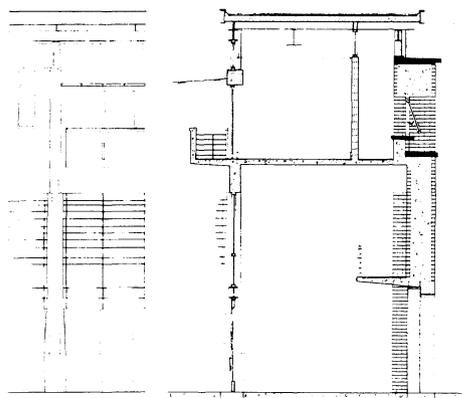


Fig. 8. WALL SECTION