

# Puri-Gaind House

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Two women, built like professional wrestlers, stood stiffly in the light, each holding one corner of an enormous white bedsheet, their arms raised high above their heads so that the sheet hung between them like a curtain. In the very center of the sheet, a hole had been cut, a crude circle about seven inches in diameter...the perforated sheet became something sacred and magical, because through it he had seen the things which had filled up the hole inside him.

- Salman Rushdie,  
Midnight's Children



**Location:** Copake Pond, in the foothills of the Berkshire Mountains about 20 miles Southwest of the meeting of New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts.

**Program:** A new 1500sf house and 400sf garage that connects, by exterior walkway, to an existing 1000sf, woodframe, pre-fabricated house. The new house is to have one bedroom, a "semi-connected" office with a separate exterior entry, a kitchen, two baths, and living spaces. Various outdoor living spaces are defined because the home, though meant to be a primary residence year-round, is expected to experience heaviest usage in the summer months. The existing house is to be redefined as a guest house for extended family visits.

Puri-Gaind House was commissioned by an immigrant Indian couple in their mid-forties who bought the four acre parcel with an existing 1000 sq. foot wood-frame pre-fab house as a summer home. As the couple prospered in their careers, they made a choice to redefine their corporate relationships and spend considerably more time at this site. The project was therefore posed as a house of semi-retirement. However, this characterization elicited a certain ambivalence in a young active couple far from their "golden years." The ambivalence of our clients became central to the project's development.

In addition, the prominent site view of the pond held opposing connotations. In Hinduism, the dispersal of the ashes of the dead in the flow of a river represents a certain finality of present life. In Western iconography, on the other hand, water represents relaxation, release, and sport. In the context of the Puri-Gaind House, the "soothing view" of relaxation coexists with the "final view" of retirement at the water's edge.

Puri-Gaind House is posited as a mediator between dialectic worlds of work/retirement and corporate/ethnic identity. The devel-

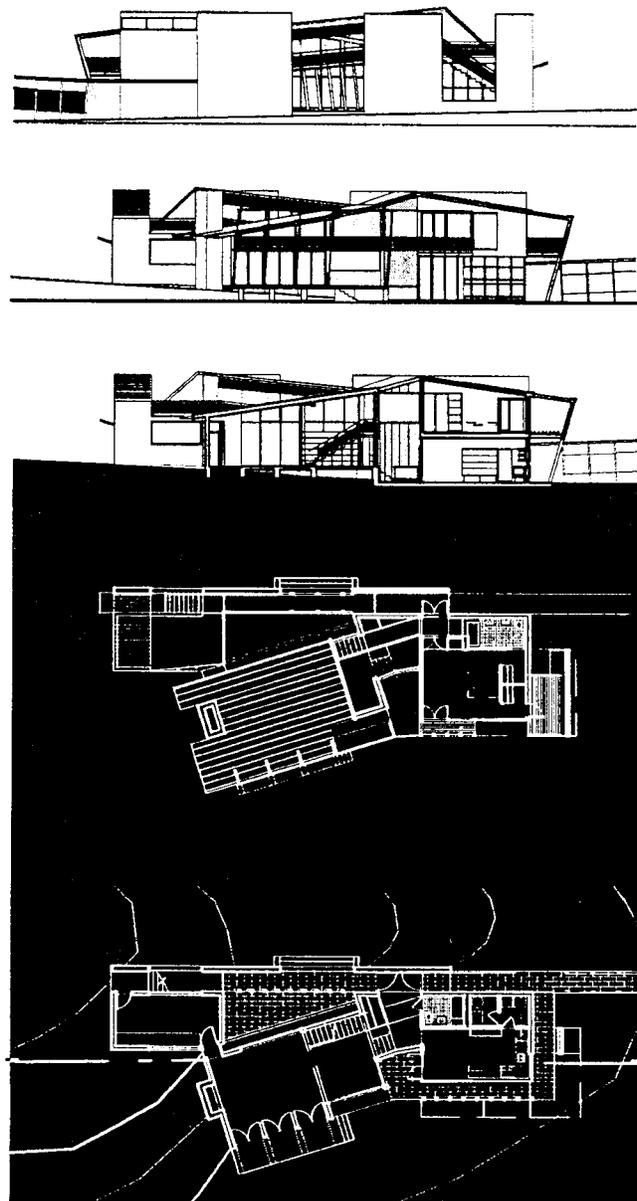


Fig. 1. From top: North elevation; South elevation; 2nd floor plan; and 1st floor plan.

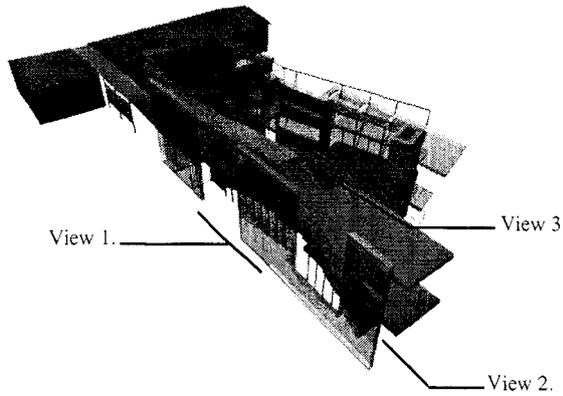


Fig. 2

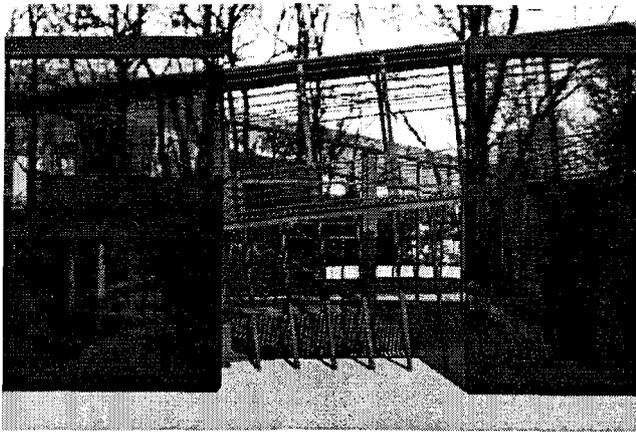


Fig. 3. View 1: Approach through entry wall

opment of this domestic space of meditation is outlined with regard to arrival and movement through the site as a process of "enclathing." "Enclathing" delves into the simultaneous functionality of cloth as in the sari which a. veils... and b. allows for movement.

On arrival at the site, traveling south towards the lake, one encounters the landscape. The narrow site funnels the view towards the lake at the southern end of the site where it is seasonally revealed through screens of trees. Separating the view of the approach from the view of the water, the entry wall, provides glimpses rather than an expanse as it simultaneously forms as barrier and aperture. Holes in the weave of the wall reveal another scale created in the process of cuts: the fray. Each glimpse is through a weave of structure, circulation, and trees. This secondary scale of filtration provides

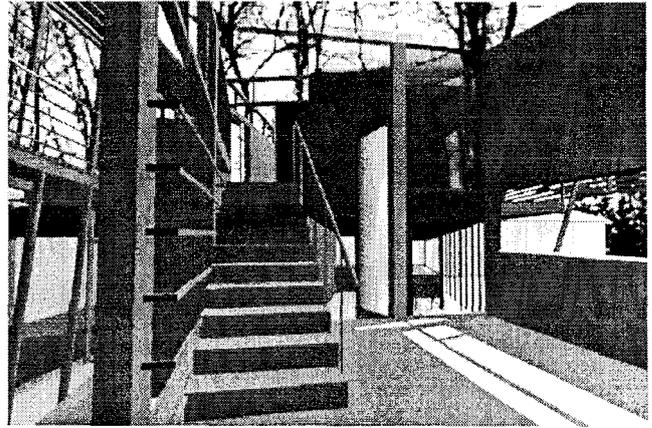


Fig. 4. View 2: Circulatory paths beside stair to 2nd floor

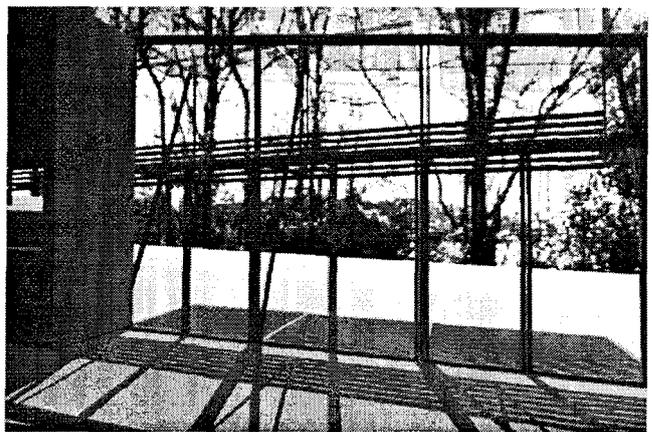


Fig. 5. View 3: Fray through to pond.

detailed frames for both the domestic and natural realm.

As the sari screens and focuses due to a cultural ambivalence towards revealing the body, the house similarly engages an ambivalence towards the site. The house is a cloth frayed through to the "final view" of the pond.

Adjacent to the wall is a walkway that connects existing house to new house to office space. The ritual of departure and arrival is situated within a domestic and productive space along this path, thereby, simulating and collapsing the ritual of the daily commute to work.

Engaged in the ritual of leaving and arriving along the main circulation path, one never walks out towards the water. In transit, the view lingers to the side, over the shoulder of the subject as it is filtered through the fray.