

PHENOMENAL LANDSCAPES

FOG HOUSE

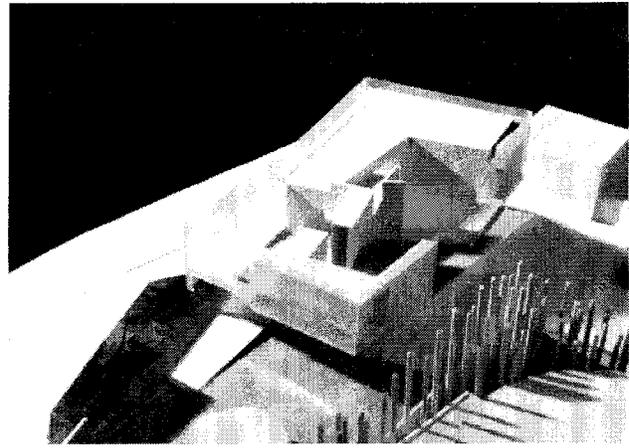
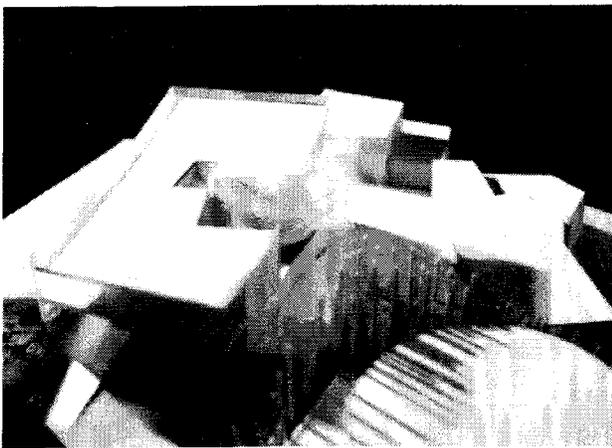
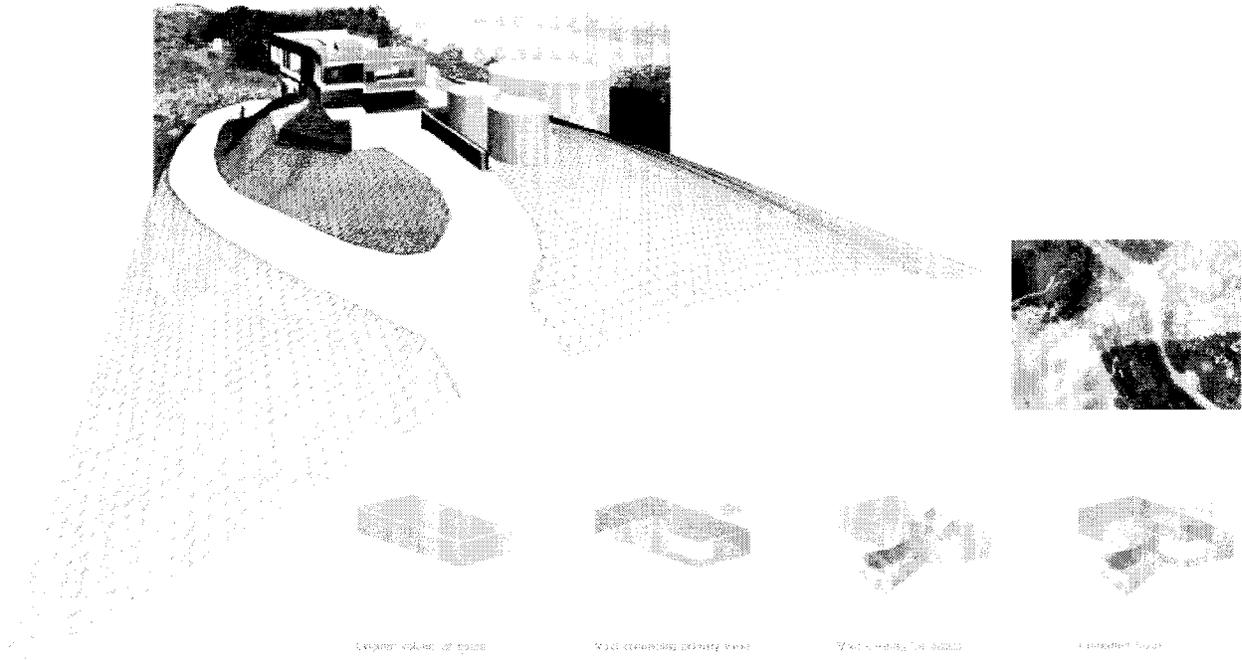
Wolfback Ridge Road, Sausalito, CA

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The Fog House's spatial quality derives from attempting to synthesize responses to the rich context, the specificity of the landscape and climate, as well as the particularity of the client's program brief. This program includes accommodating both private residence and home office for a biofeedback consulting practice in a new house.

The site is located on the ridge between the Marin Headlands and the San Francisco Bay. It occupies the near high point on the ridge from which it slopes steeply towards the east. There is a 270 degree view overlooking the SF Bay, the Pacific Ocean, Golden Gate Bridge, and the Marin Headlands. The owner currently lives in an existing two bedroom house located on the downslope.

The client imagined a glass house on the high point of the project site to take advantage of dramatic views and weather elements such as winds and fog arriving from the Pacific Ocean. The panorama that wraps the house differs significantly on each side. To the east is the San Francisco Bay, to the south the Golden Gate Bridge, to the west the Pacific Ocean, and to the north, Mount Tamalpais. In addition to the spectacular surrounding landscape and views, the project's immediate context includes nearby concrete bunkers from World War II dotting the coastline, and a 50's Case Studies type berm house on the property.

While re-visits to a place in different seasons can often reveal dramatic difference, at this site, a span of a few hours can reveal an incredibly quick and dynamic transformation as fog rolls in from the Pacific Ocean and sweeps up the hillsides toward the site. The fog often blankets the surrounding lower landscape, making the site an island in the clouds, with the Golden Gate Bridge's towers protruding through, until the high points are themselves finally engulfed in fog.

Driving the project is the idea of an architecture that can directly and spatially engage these dynamic phenomena. The house is organized around a void, emerging from the ground, which can funnel and harness the fog to effect a spatial redefinition of the interior. The design is further developed as a hybrid of figured earthwork and hovering glass box. In engaging the complexity of situation and program, these two paradigms interact to become a transformative whole. Parts of the house are treated as poched solids intertwining with open expanses. The relationship of landscape to enclosure is intentionally made problematic, even involuted. As well, the spatial condition of figure ground inverts with the weather, from clear distant views pulled deep within the interior, to low-visibility fog engulfing and splitting the glass box's interior.

The drive onto the site passes fire-fighting water tanks and leads into an auto court defined by existing trees, new walls and hedges. An entry ramp rises from the berm and cuts through the house's volume, passing over the fog void to the living/home office and switches back to the dining above. The configuration of program taps into the possibilities of shifting internal relationships between living, kitchen/breakfast, dining and home office. Where the fog void sometimes veils living from kitchen/dining, a curtain of shear fabric can be pulled between living and office, bayview and ocean view. Materials for the house and site consist of bermed earth, hedge walls, cast-in-place concrete lower level/groundworks, 'turf-block' paving, steel-framed upper level, clear low-e tempered glass, skim-coat plastered walls and ceiling, and epoxy resin floors.

