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Making by Taking: An Investigation of Architectural Appropriation

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Making by Taking: An Investigation of Architectural Appropriation

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University

Victoria Lee
Candidate for Bachelor of Architecture Degree
and Renée Crown University Honors
May 2014

Honors Capstone Project in Architecture

Capstone Project Advisor: _____
Kyle Miller, Assistant Professor

Capstone Project Reader: _____
Larry Bowne, Associate Professor

Honors Director: _____
Stephen Kuusisto, Director

Date: May 6, 2014

Abstract

The project contends that explicit appropriation can be a legitimate method of architectural production. The scope encompasses four canonical works of architecture: Villa Rotonda, Villa Savoye, Fallingwater, and the Farnsworth House. These works are appropriated as the basis of a retrospective analysis and as the foundation for a speculative, generative design strategy.

Following the height of postmodernism, the notion of explicit formal appropriation was characterized in a negative light, seen as inauthentic imitation. However, an increasing number of contemporary artists and architects are utilizing explicit appropriation and historical reference as a primary method of production. This mode of thinking can perhaps be traced to our contemporary network culture, where all material is appropriated, copied, pasted, and rehashed. Through appropriation, fidelity to the original is lost, and the intention for producing the copy becomes embedded in the product itself. Rather than postmodern, this project's strategy of appropriation identifies with the atemporality of network culture. We are challenged by the notion of origin and, therefore, originality. Elements are freely appropriated from history and seamlessly incorporated into new contexts.

Within this network culture, society is also consuming imagery at an ever more rapid pace, bombarded with images that discard history, context, and meaning. We are becoming more numb to form, and as we search for gratification through newness, everything has begun to look the same. The appropriation of form without content has become easier, encouraging an uncritical consumption and production of design. Exposure to high volumes of imagery has overtaken any critical, extended engagement with a single project. Projects are categorized and homogenized, denying a more critical and overarching understanding of architecture.

The project manifests through two types of representation. Orthographic drawings fulfill the project's intention of rigorous analysis and comparison. Through the flattening and abstraction achieved through orthographic projection, the drawings emphasize the seamless formal integration of the works. Logics inherent to the works are discovered once more as the projects are re-diagrammed, juxtaposed, and remade. Secondly, the project goes beyond abstract comparisons through the usage of quasi-realist representation. It utilizes appropriation as a generative method towards the creation of new spatial conditions. Here, the project begins to speculate on how contemporary culture might appropriate these past works. It attempts to exacerbate the dissonance between icon and reality and examine the dissemination of ideas from high-brow to mass culture.

The project serves as a critique of the traditional understanding of architectural authorship and the contemporary production and consumption of architecture.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of the people who have aided me in the completion of this Capstone.

Firstly, I would like to thank my primary thesis advisor, Kyle Miller, for his continued support and interest in the project. His insight into the discipline has made a distinct impact on my outlook on architecture. Without his enthusiasm, motivation, and active engagement in the project, this thesis would not have been possible.

I am also thankful for the support of my secondary advisor, Larry Bowne. His critique throughout the past year has been pivotal in the development of the project. His presence has encouraged me to be continually critical of the work, and I appreciate the depth of his counsel.

I am indebted to Brian Luce, whose assistance in completing and presenting the work cannot be understated. I am so thankful for his encouragement along the way.

Finally, thank you to my family. This absolutely would not have been possible without their support.

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Chapter 1

Relevance

This project critiques the traditional notion of architectural authorship.

Architecture has largely retained the outdated idealization of architect as sole artist and author. Critics praise what makes a work different and distinct, and we still assess value of architecture based on authorship and the traditional methods of assigning economic value to art. This adherence to individual authorship is problematic; architecture has no single author. In reality, all products of culture, including architecture, are primarily advanced through the appropriation and regurgitating of ideas. In fact, it can be argued that all architectural works express evidence of past precedent.

Following the height of postmodernism, the notion of any explicit formal appropriation was characterized in a negative light, seen as inauthentic pastiche. However, an increasing number of contemporary artists and architects are utilizing explicit appropriation and historical reference as a primary method of production. Historical material has become the basis for new interpretation and arrangement. This perhaps can be traced back to the culture of the internet and networking technologies, a network culture, where all material is appropriated, copied, pasted, and rehashed. In every case of appropriation, the resultant would likely be different. Rather than postmodern, this strategy identifies with the atemporality of network culture. Unlike in previous decades, the naming of eras has largely been discontinued since the beginning of this culture. It suggests that

with our immediate and nearly unbounded access to information, we can no longer situate ourselves within a broader historical structure. We are challenged by the notion of origin and, therefore, originality. Elements are freely appropriated from history and seamlessly incorporated into new contexts.

Concurrently, in this network culture, society is consuming imagery at an ever more rapid pace, bombarded with images that discard history, context, and meaning. We are becoming more numb to form, and as we search for gratification through newness, everything has begun to look the same. Digital form-making has also made the appropriation of form without content easier, encouraging an uncritical consumption and production of design. Exposure to high volumes of imagery has overtaken any critical, extended engagement with a single project. Exacerbated by our instant consumption of imagery, architecture is more quickly pigeonholed. Projects are grouped based on style or time, homogenizing bodies of work and excluding a more critical and overarching understanding of architecture.

This project explores the issues of appropriation, authorship, and the contemporary production and consumption of architecture. The scope encompasses four canonical works of architecture: Villa Rotonda, Villa Savoye, Fallingwater, and the Farnsworth House. These works are appropriated as the basis of a retrospective analysis and as the foundation for a speculative, generative design strategy. The project contends that explicit appropriation can be a legitimate method of architectural production.

Chapter 2

Objectives

The project employs explicit appropriation as a method of architectural design.

The scope encompasses four canonical works of architecture: Villa Rotonda, Villa Savoye, Fallingwater, and the Farnsworth House. The four works offered the iconicity and heavy historical associations that were necessary to the project.

They also offered the variety in formal parameters that would allow for a productive juxtaposition. Additionally, the works all have an established relationship to appropriation already, whether as the product of appropriation itself, or as the subject of later appropriation. The project separates these canonical forms from their cultural significance in order to test form-making strategies in a context-less environment.

The project is both retrospective and projective. It manifests through two types of representation in order to fully achieve its intended goals. Traditional orthographic drawings fulfill the project's intention of rigorous analysis and comparison. Through the unavoidable flattening and abstraction achieved through orthographic projection, the drawings emphasize the seamless formal integration of the works. In this sense, it aims to revisit past projects in order to expand the understanding of the works. Logics inherent to the works are discovered once more as the projects are re-diagrammed, juxtaposed, and remade. Ideas previously thought to have been dissimilar are illustrated to be much more alike. The appropriated forms are initially devoid of meaning and context, but in

appropriating the form of these iconic, revered works, the project forces the viewer to bring personal understanding and imparted meaning into the experience. In line with the notion of atemporality, the project appropriates from different styles/time periods/lines of thought, ignoring “labels” and pre-conceived associations in order to challenge these specific understandings and encourage a more complex understanding of the project.

Additionally, the project goes beyond abstract comparisons through the usage of quasi-realist representation. It utilizes appropriation as a generative method towards the creation of new spatial conditions. Through the atemporality of network culture, past forms are re-earthed for further design. It is a form of repetition that challenges the notion of origin and originality. It does not attempt to create something wholly new, but rather to make anew that which we already know. A productive way to understand appropriation may be through the process of creating the copy. The process of appropriation often means that fidelity to the original is lost, and the intention for producing the copy inevitably becomes embedded in the product itself. Therefore, the product of appropriation need not be a direct simulation, but rather something radically new, with additional layers of complexity. The combination of unrelated forms results in a hybrid that was previously unimaginable. Here, the project begins to speculate on how contemporary culture might appropriate these past works. It attempts to exacerbate the dissonance between icon and reality and examine the dissemination of ideas from high-brow to mass culture.

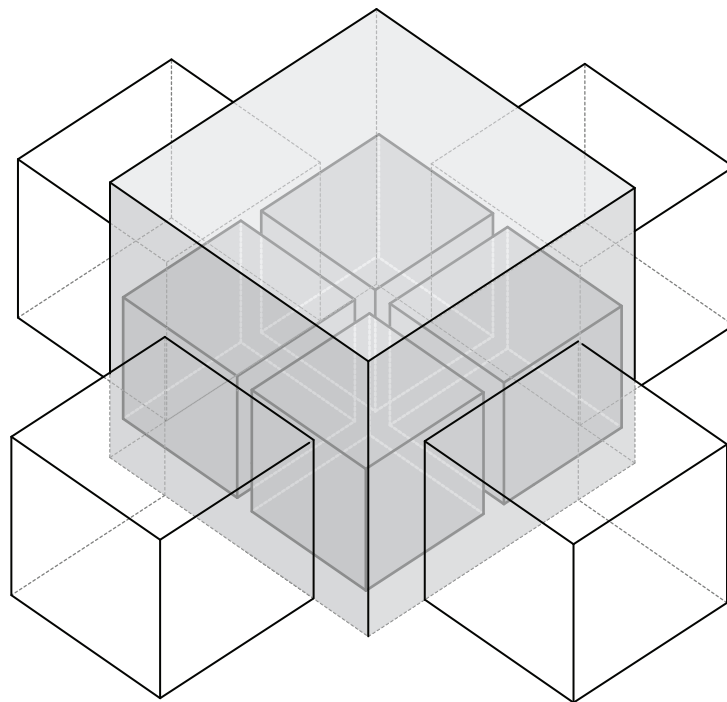
Chapter 3

Methods

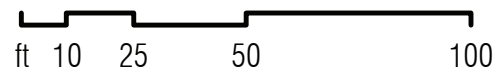
Formal Parameters

The initial research methodology for the case studies consisted of diagrammed analysis of formal parameters. This process identified the distinct conditions and elements inherent to the projects. The *formal parameters* were: spatial relationships, spatial organization, form-making, volumetric compositions, and relationship between building and ground.

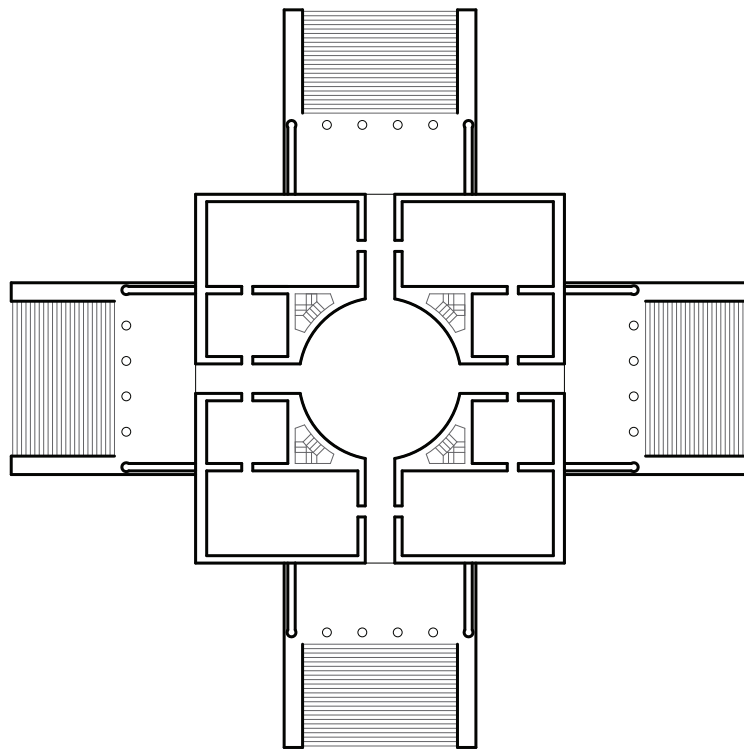
Spatial Relationships



Adjacent Spaces

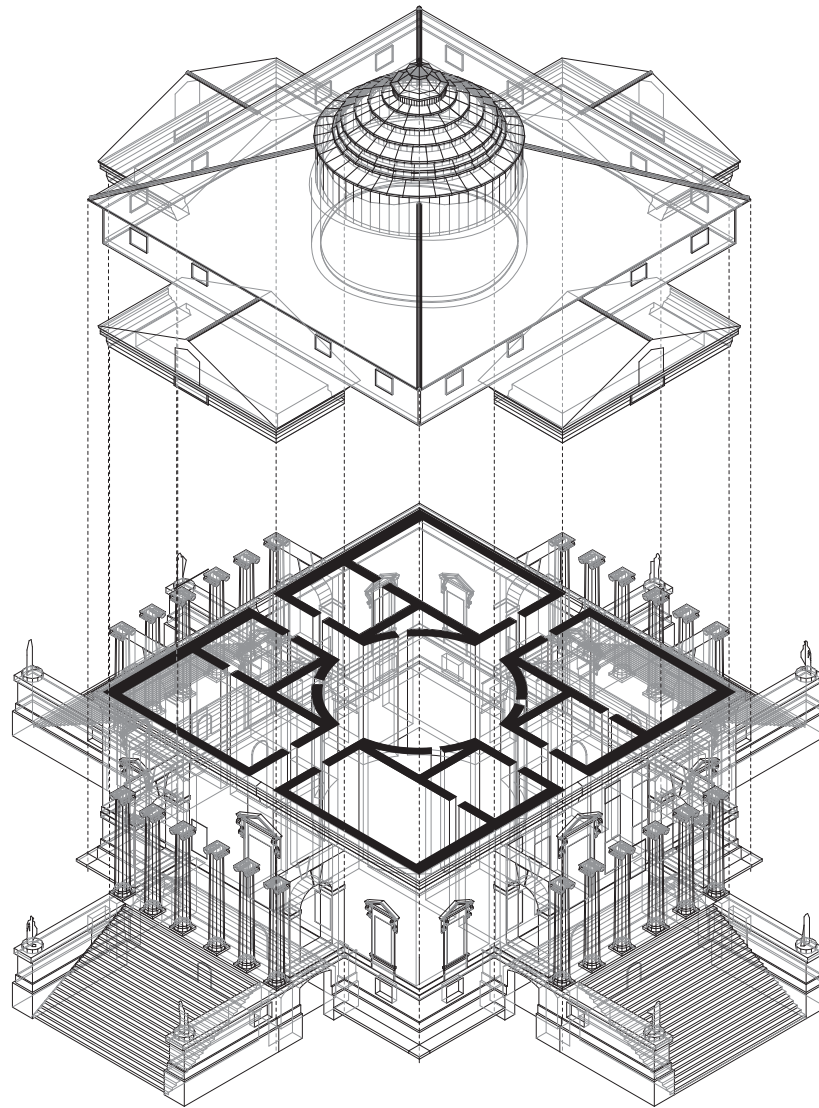


Spatial Relationships



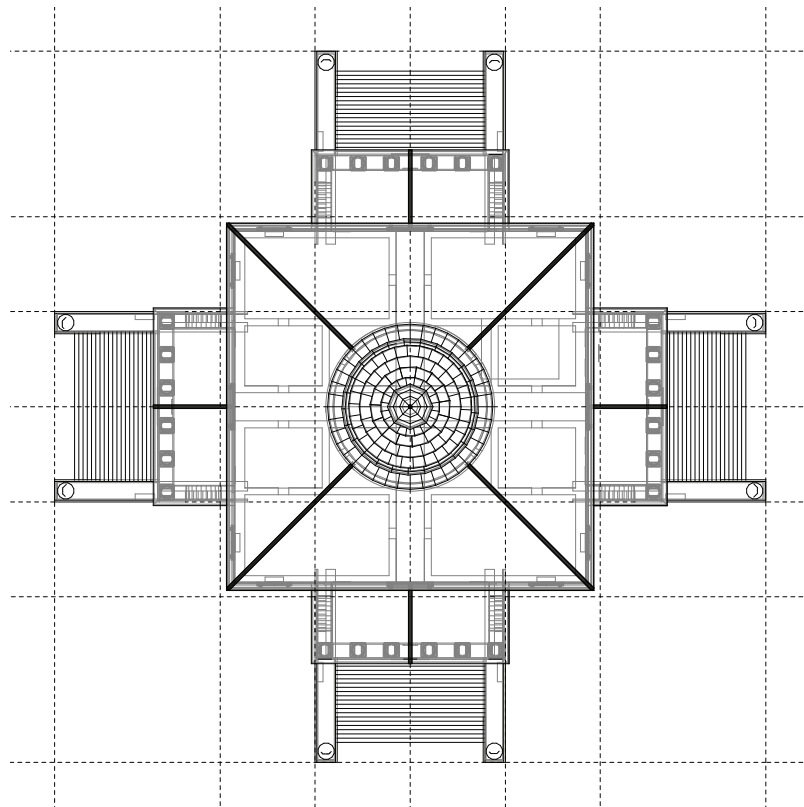
Adjacent Spaces

Spatial Organization



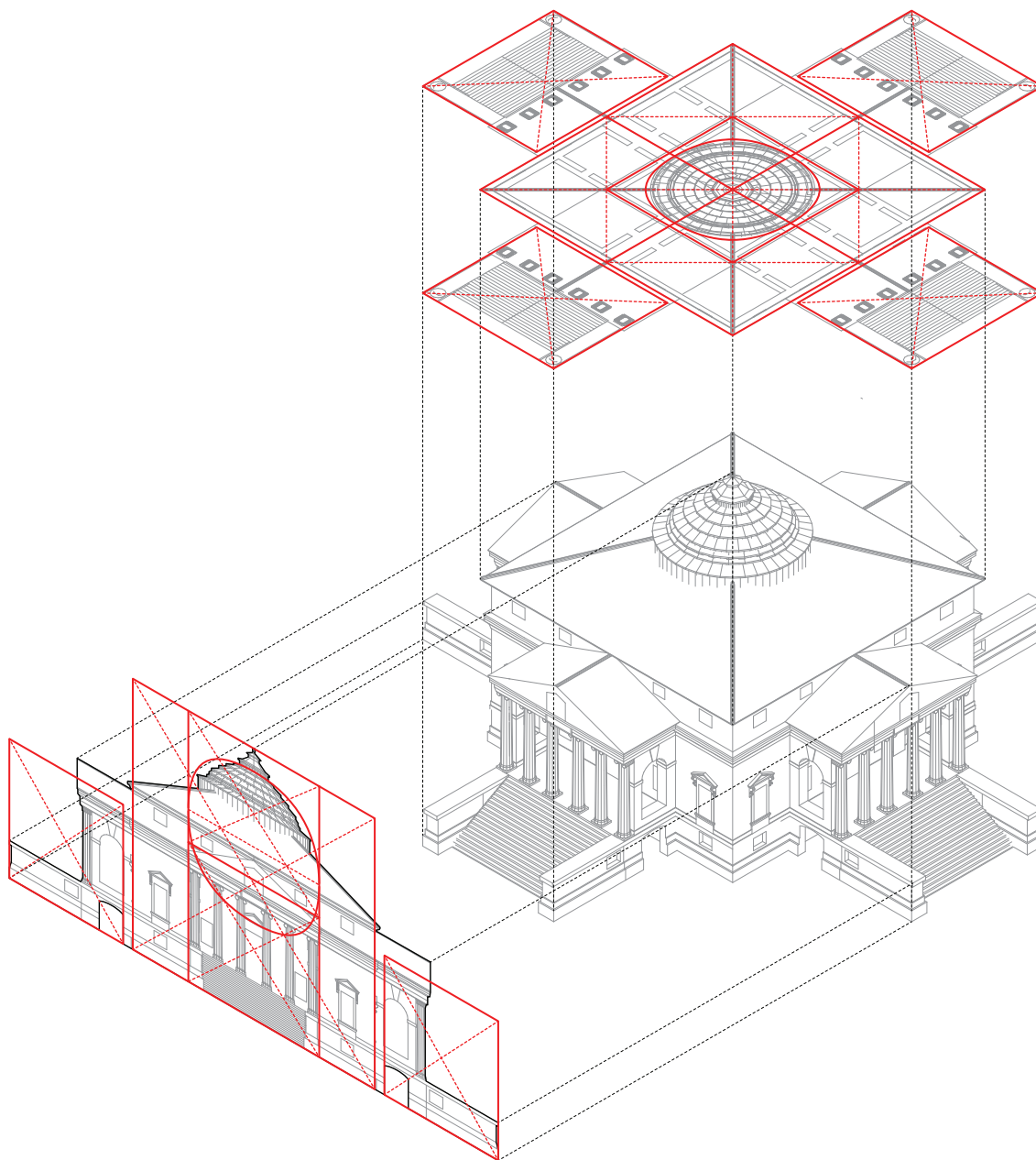
Centralized Organization

Spatial Organization



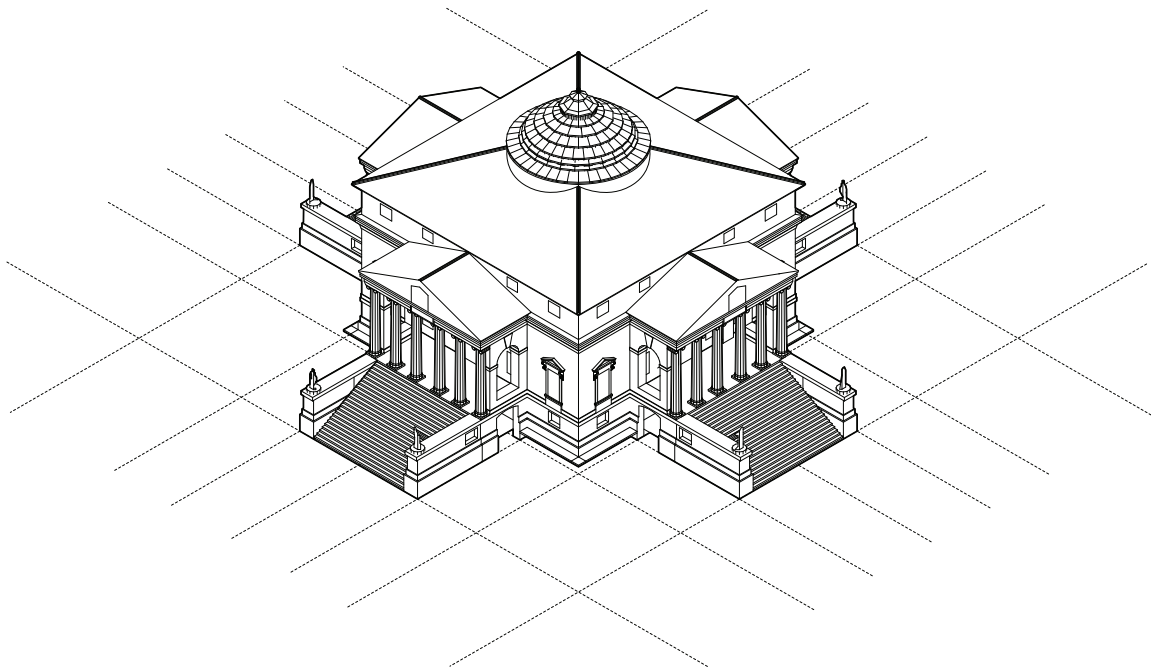
Grid Organization

Form-Making



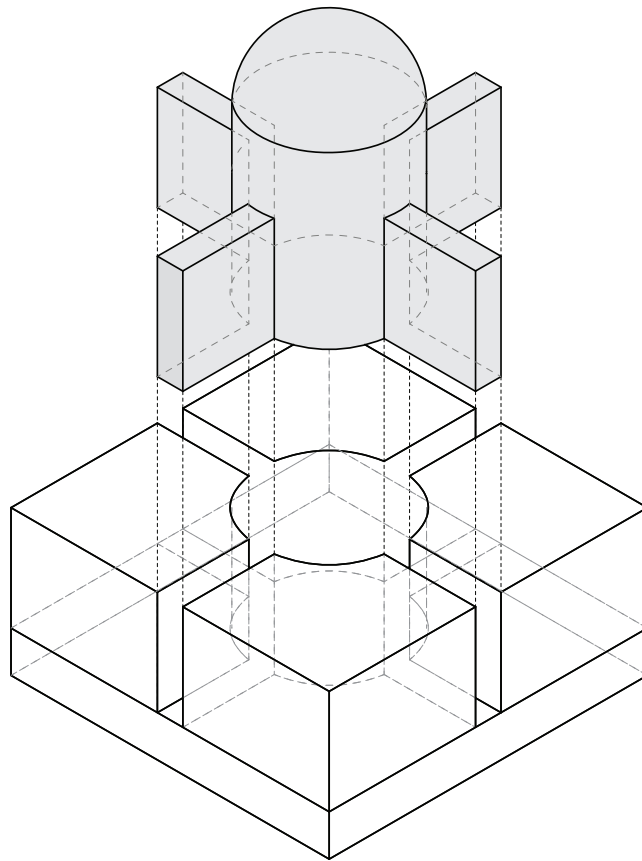
Proportioning Systems

Form-Making



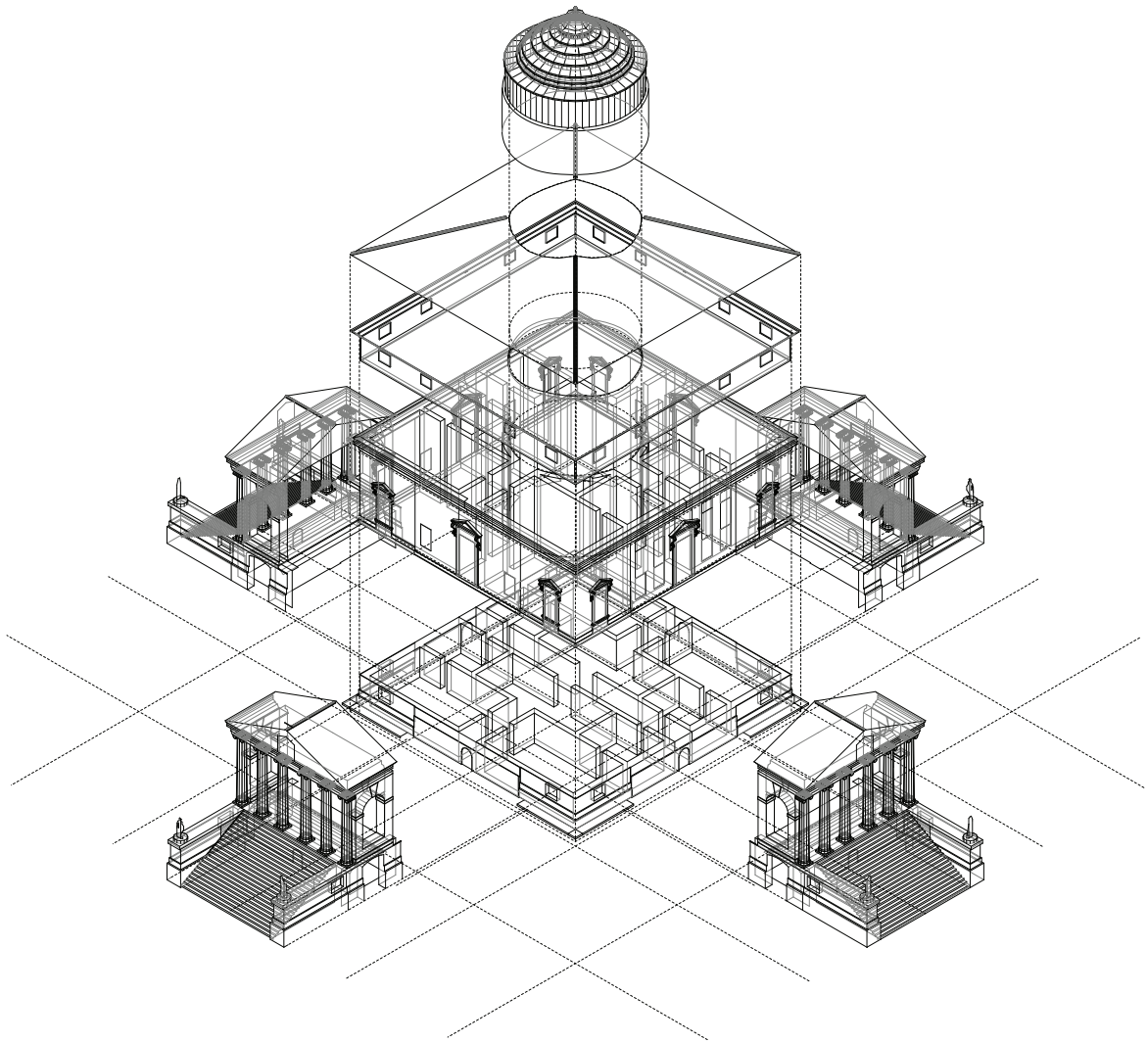
Centralized Form

Form-Making



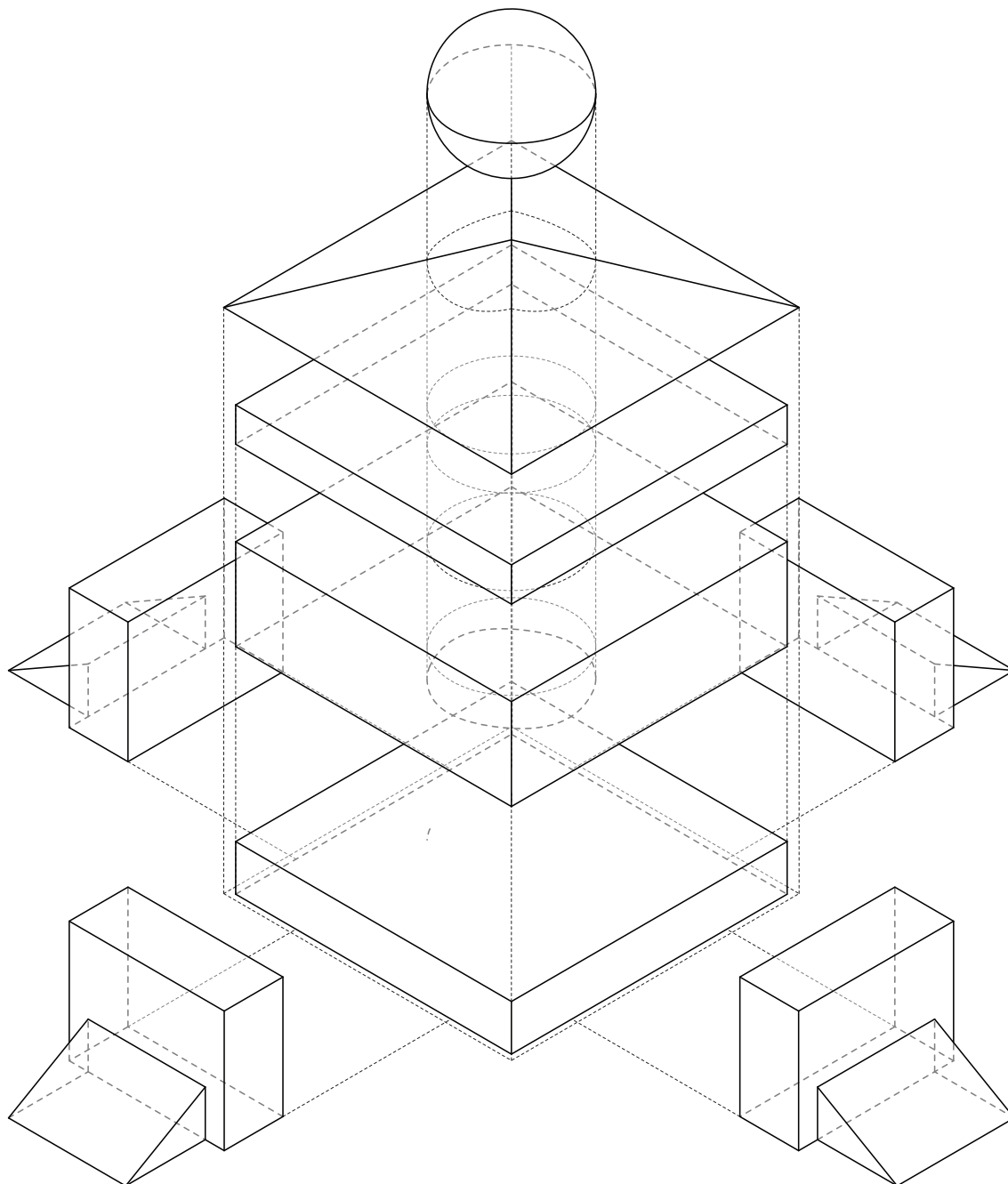
Subtractive Form

Volumetric Compositions



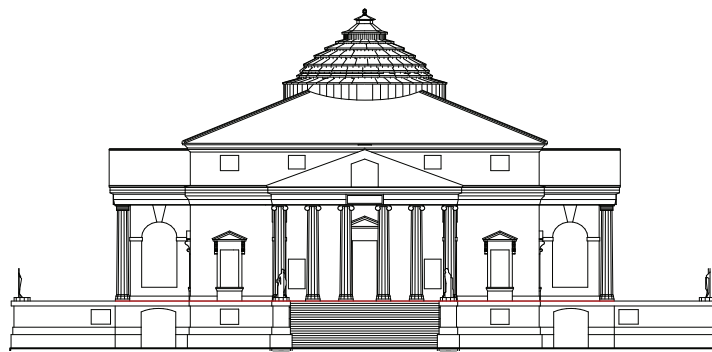
Articulation of Volumetric Form

Volumetric Compositions



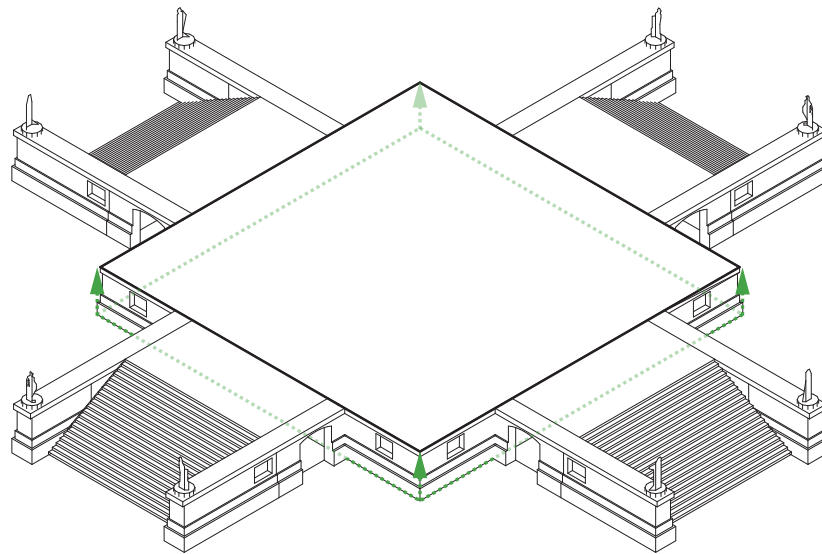
Reduction of Form to Primary Solids

Building/Ground Relationship



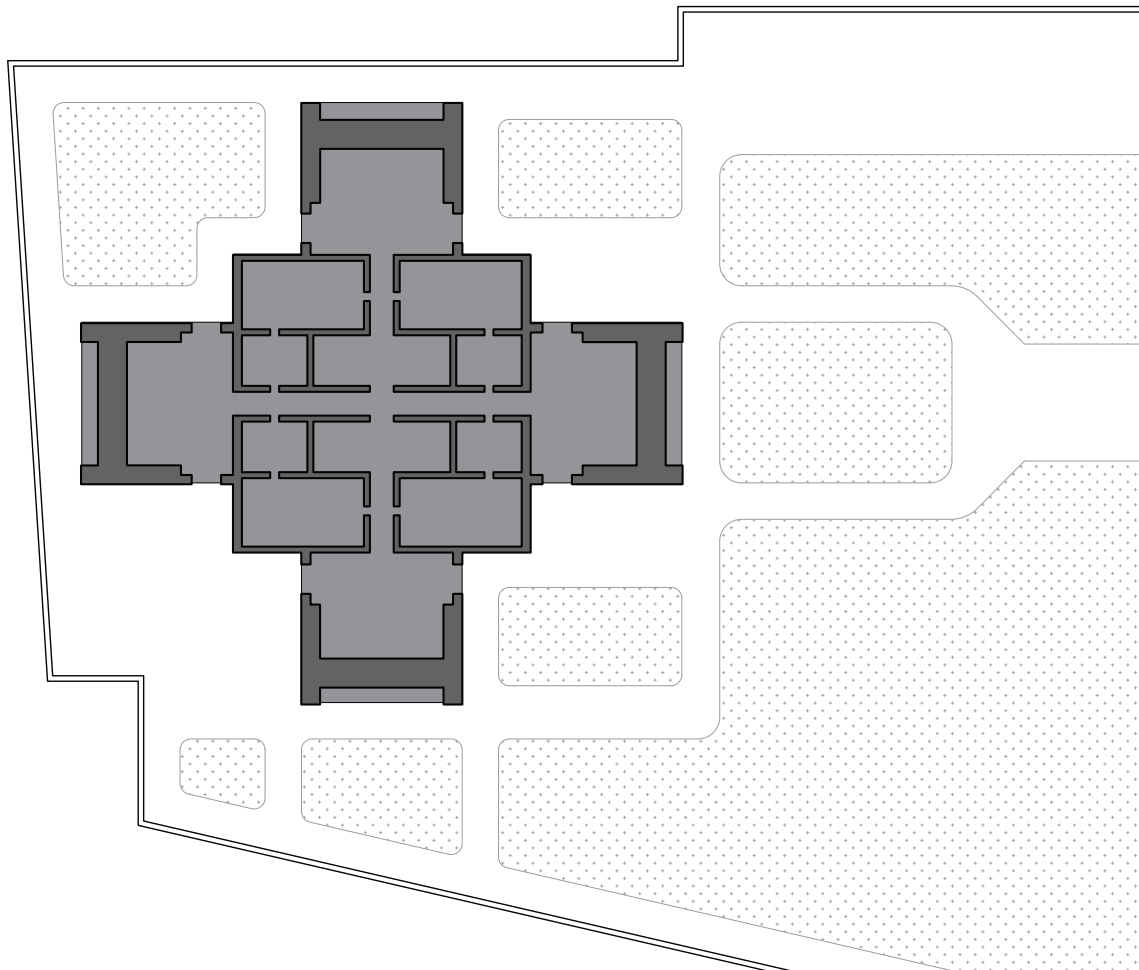
Elevated Base Plane in Elevation

Building/Ground Relationship



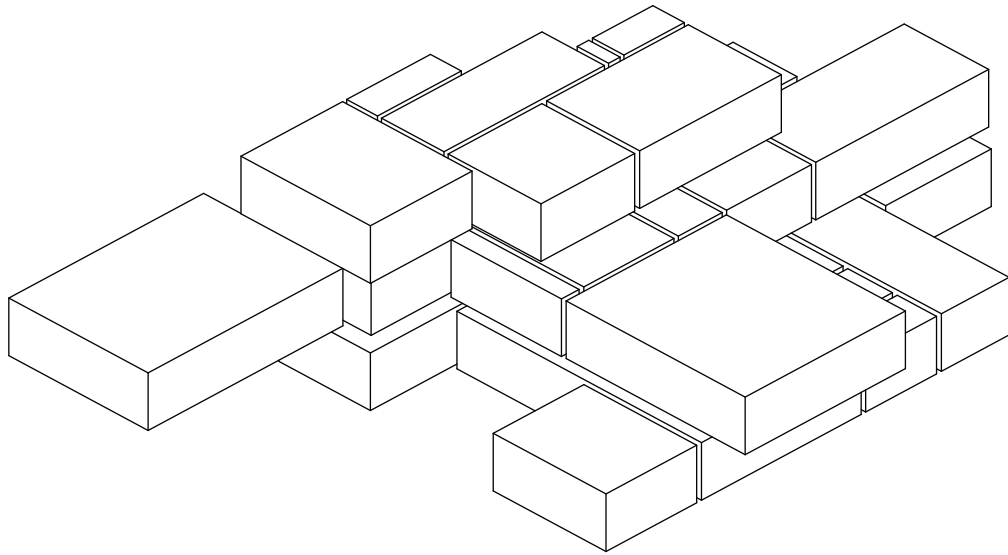
Elevated Base Plane

Building/Ground Relationship

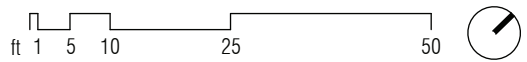


Connection Points to Ground Plane

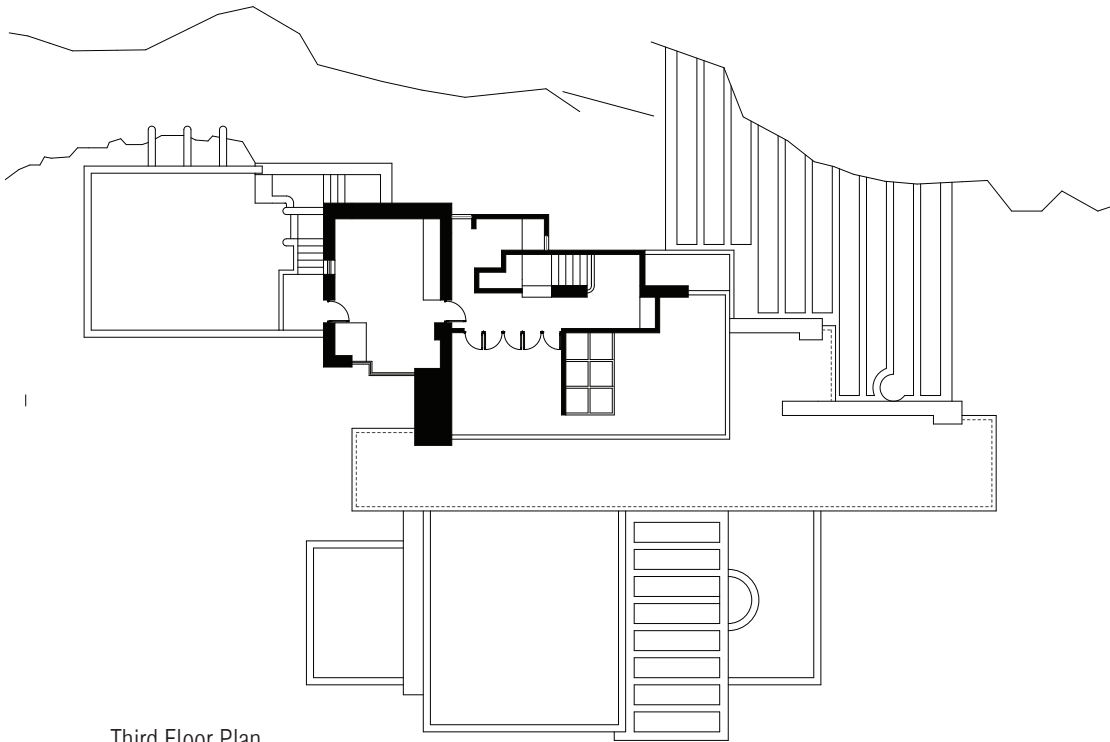
Spatial Relationships



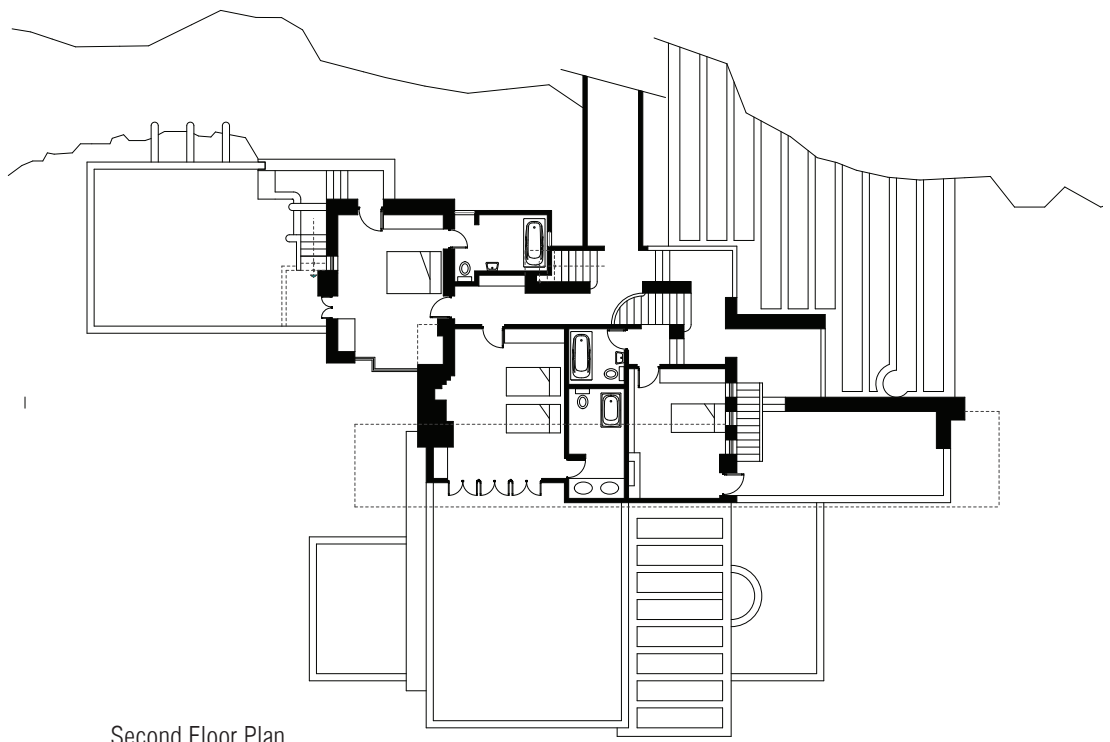
Adjacent Spaces



Spatial Relationships



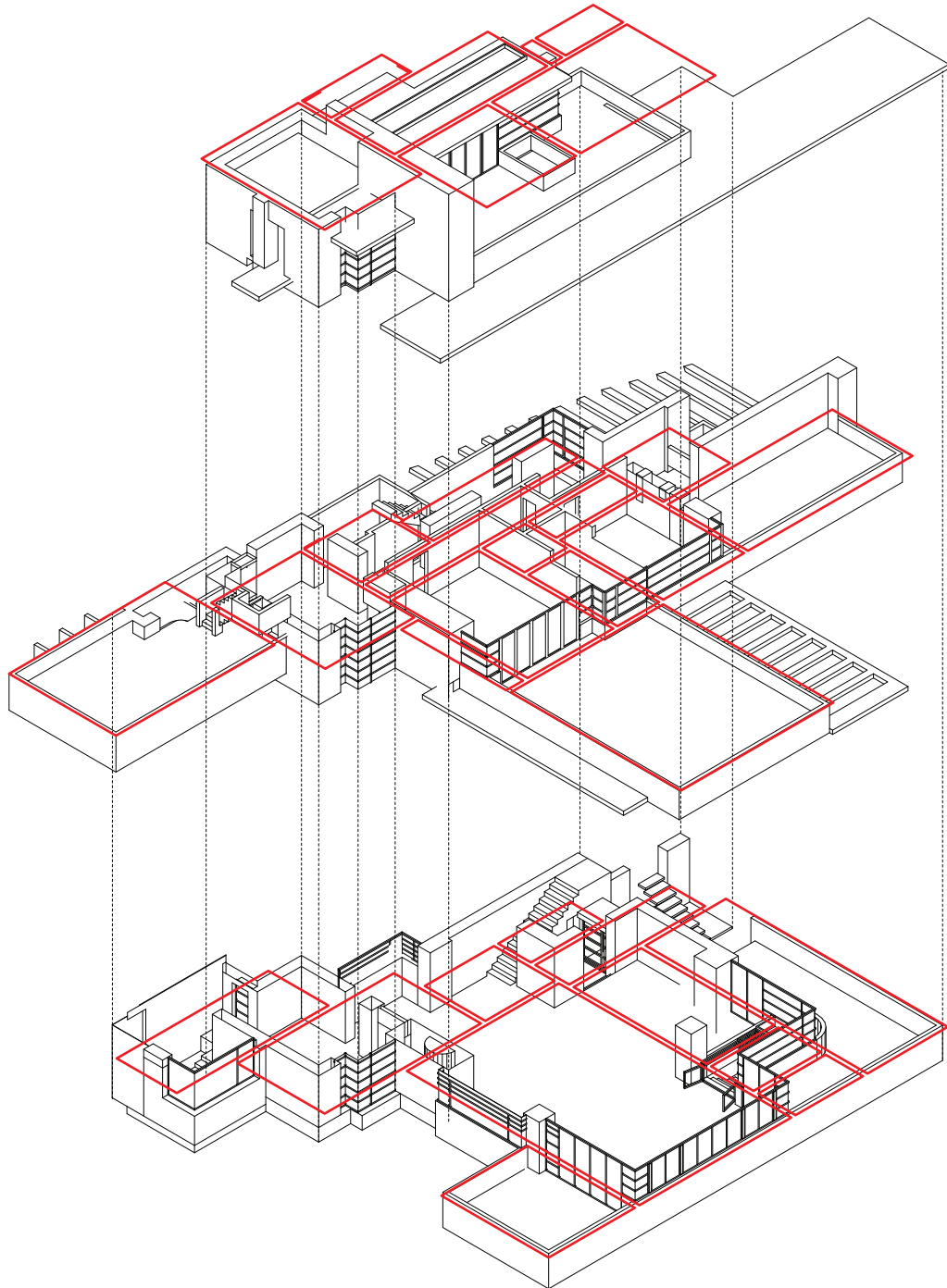
Third Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan

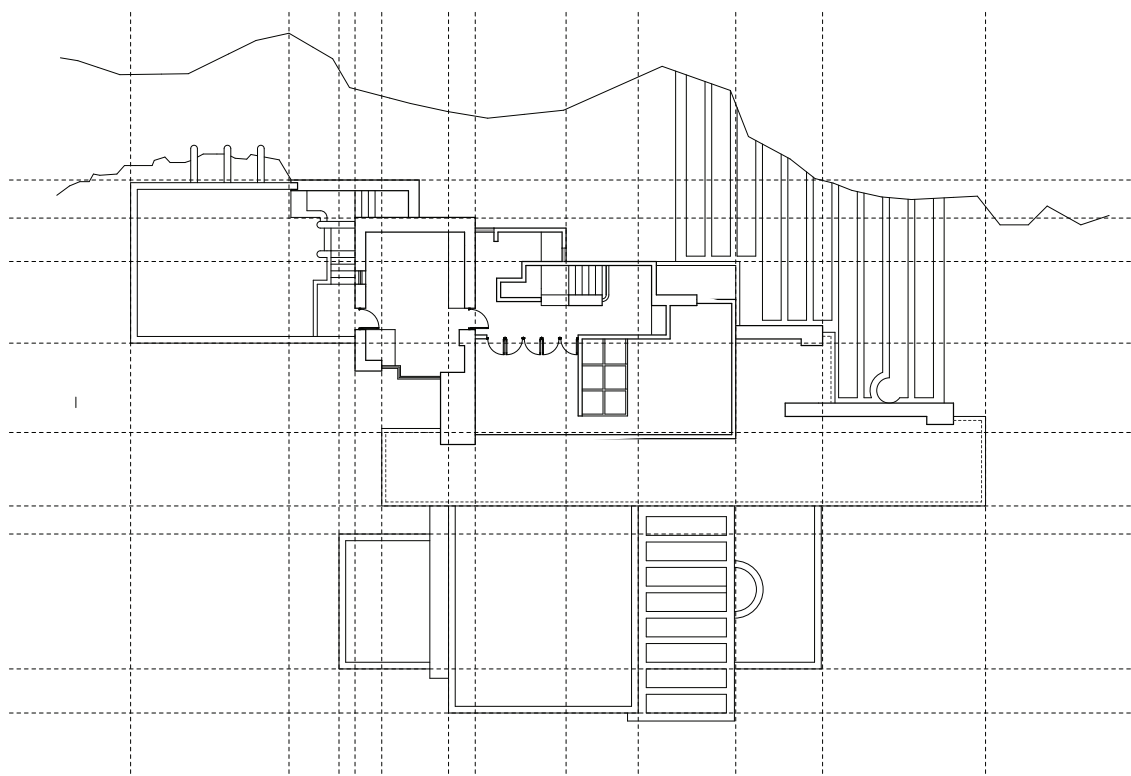
Adjacent Spaces

Spatial Organization



Clustered Spaces Organized by Geometric Pattern

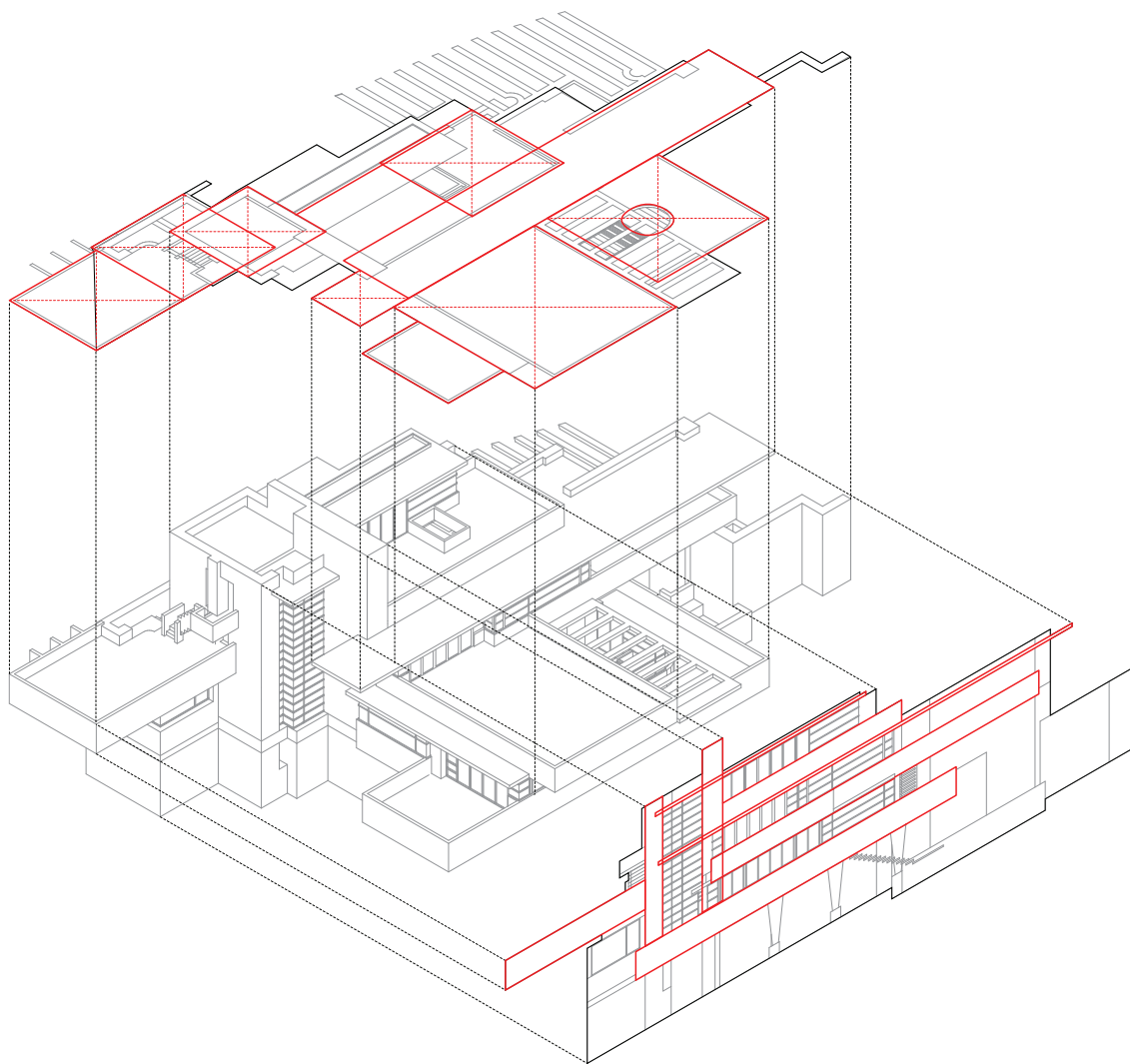
Spatial Organization



Third Floor Plan

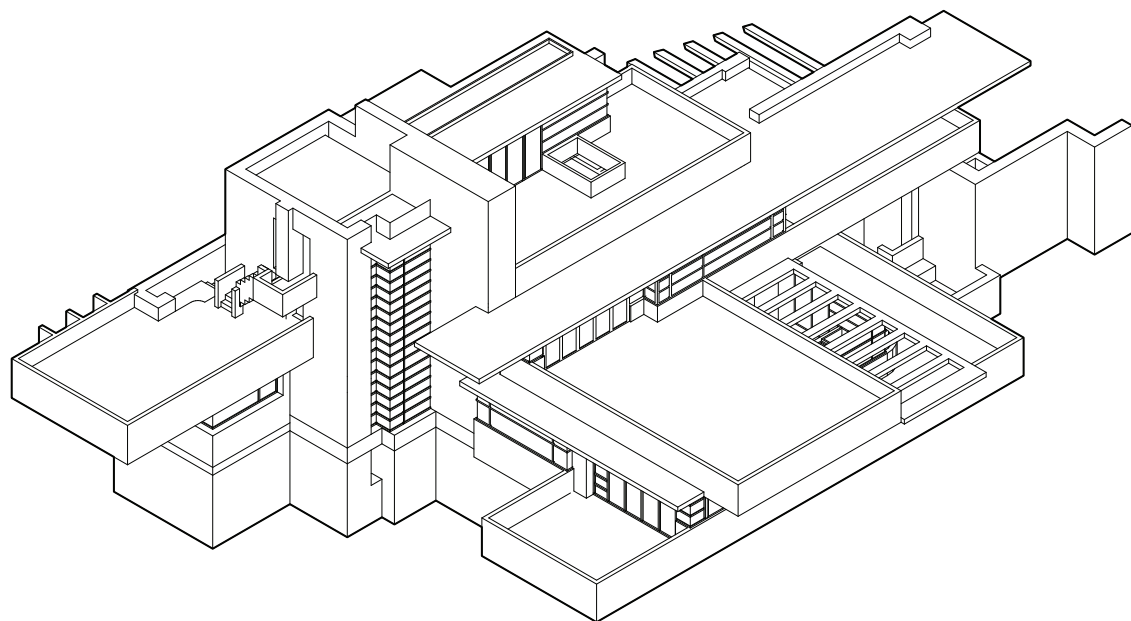
Grid Organization

Form-Making



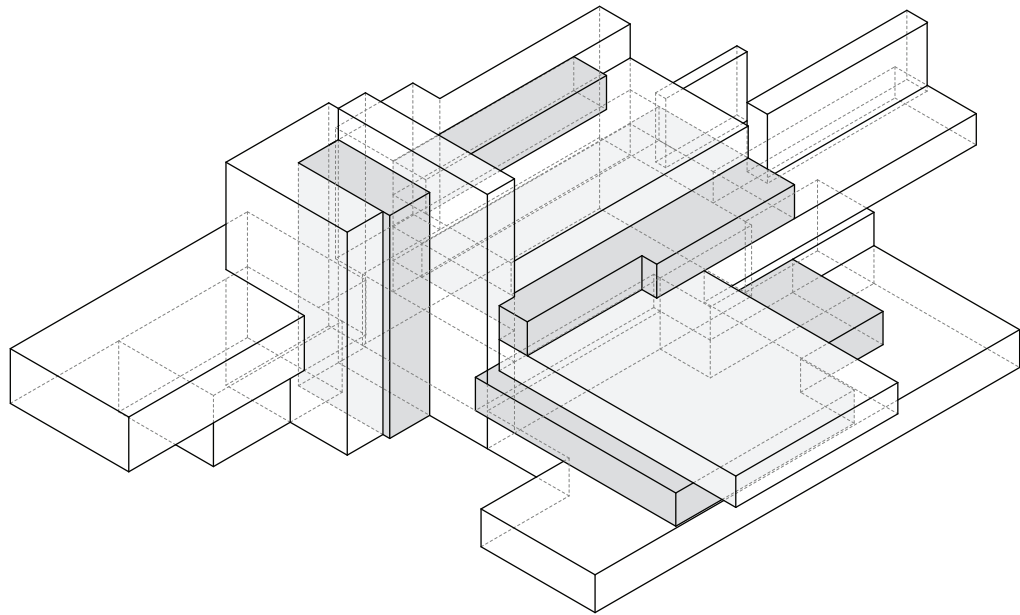
Proportioning Systems

Form-Making



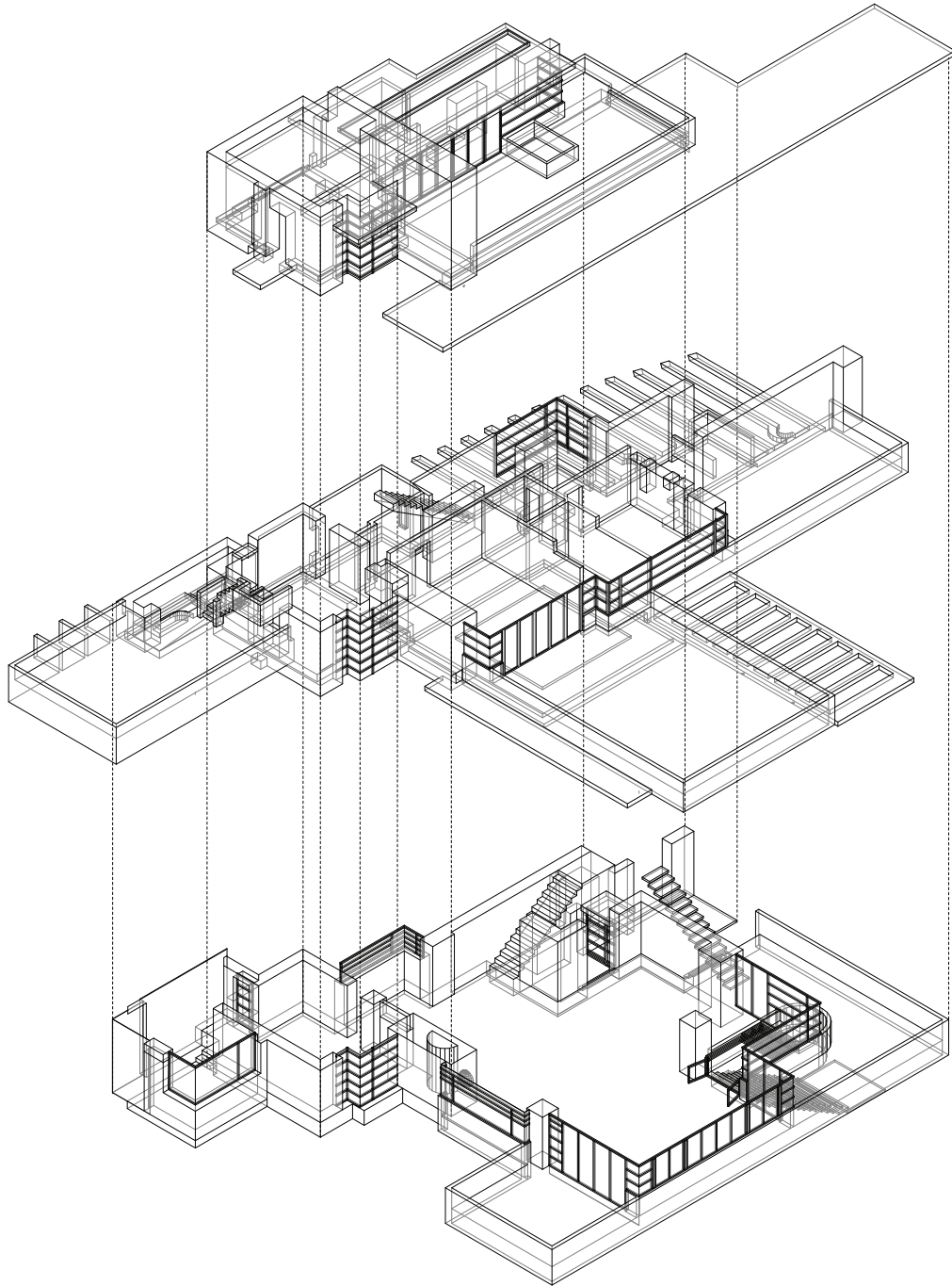
Clustered Form

Form-Making



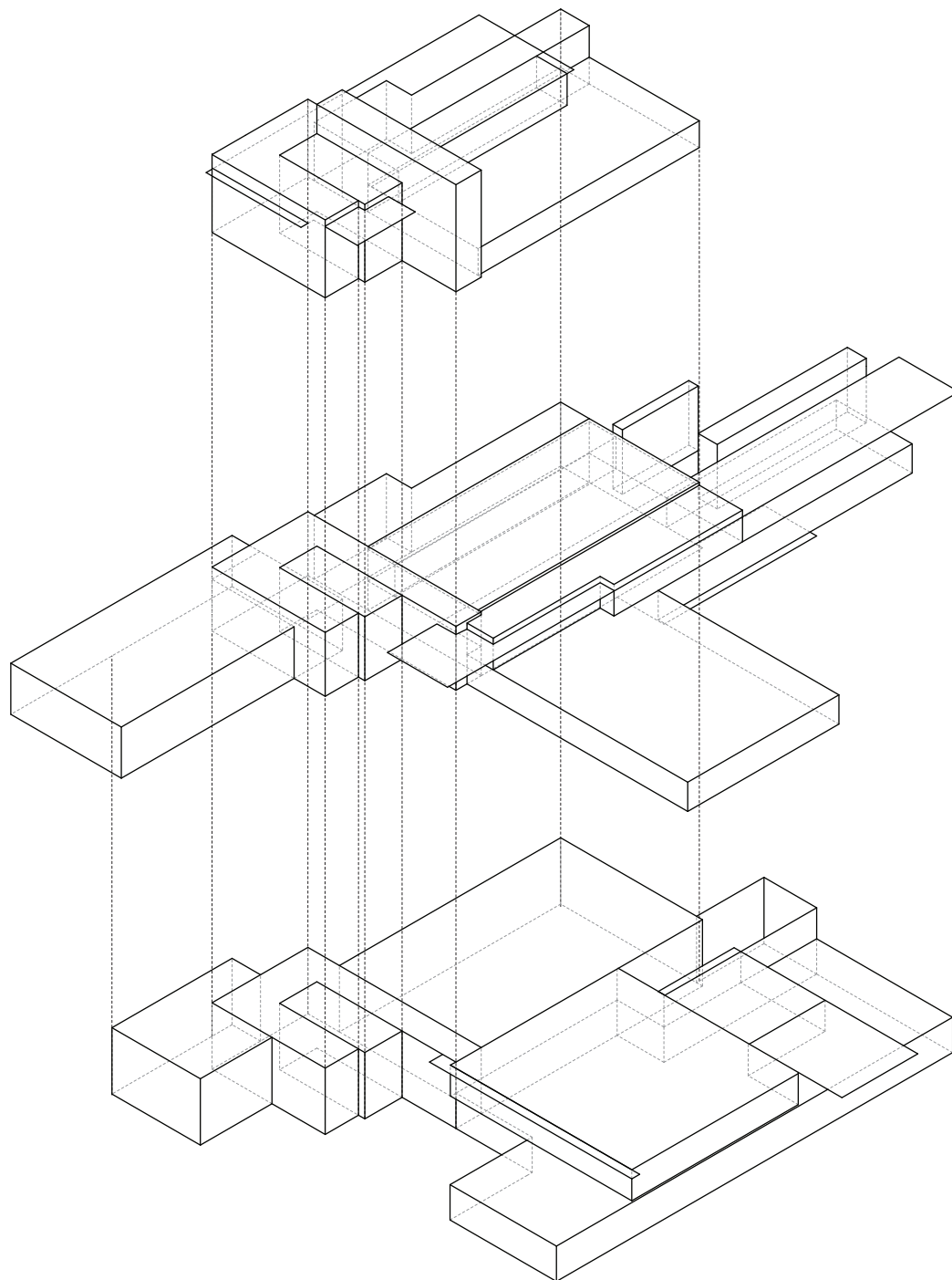
Subtractive Form

Volumetric Compositions



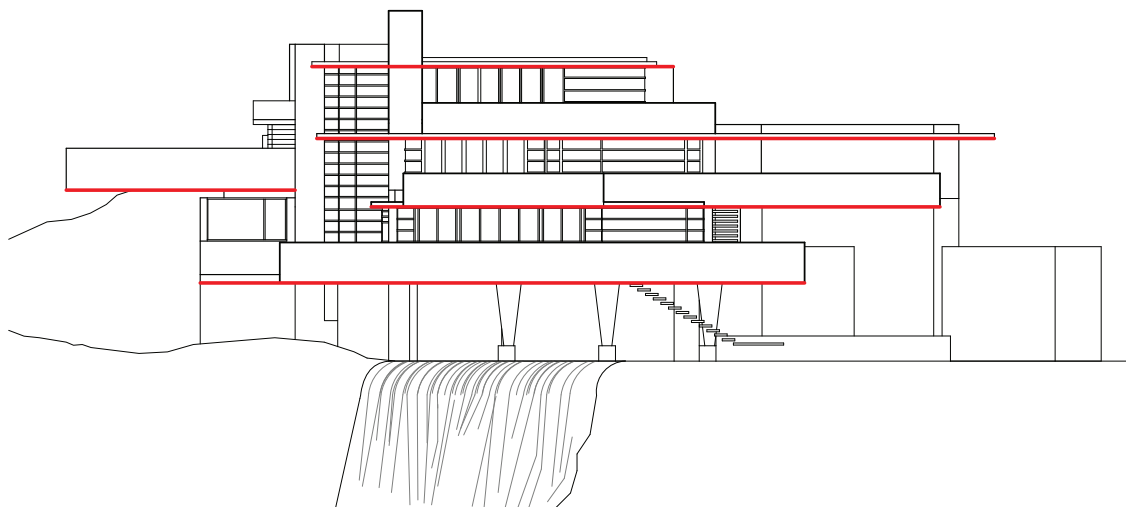
Articulation of Volumetric Form

Volumetric Compositions



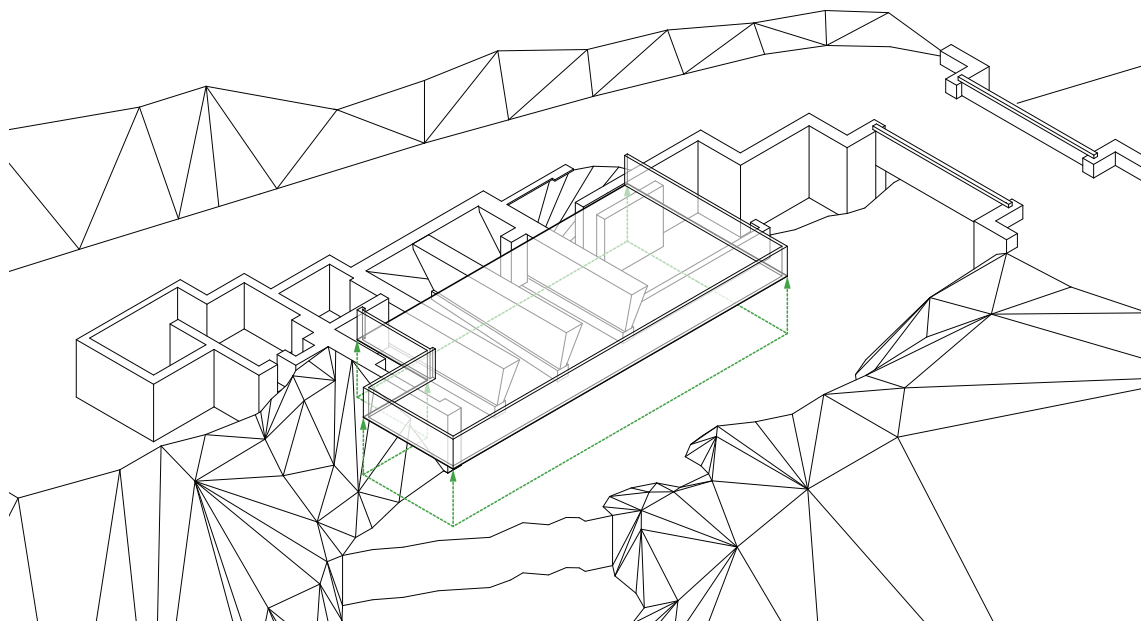
Reduction of Form to Primary Solids

Building/Ground Relationship



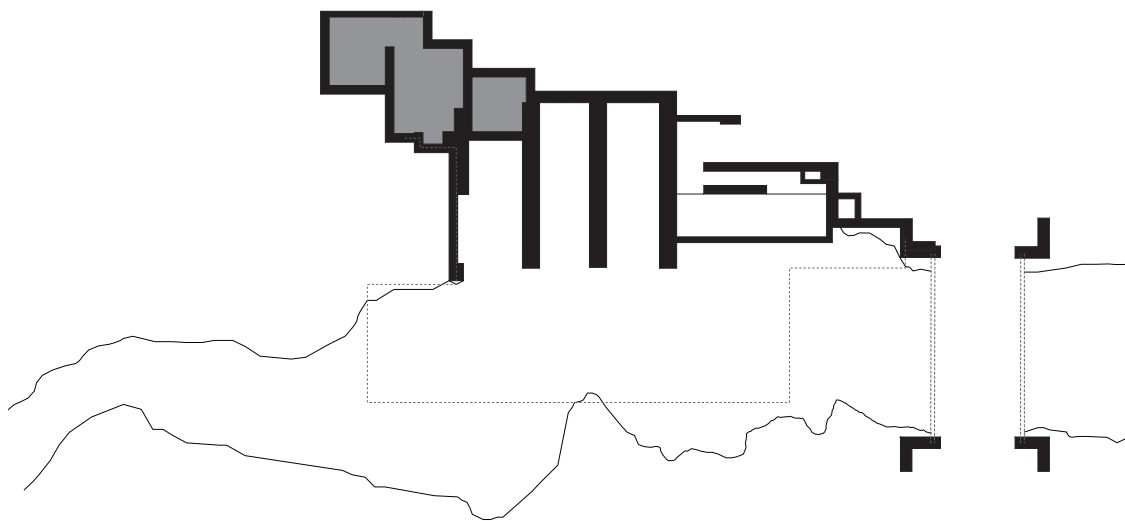
Elevated Base Plane in Elevation

Building/Ground Relationship



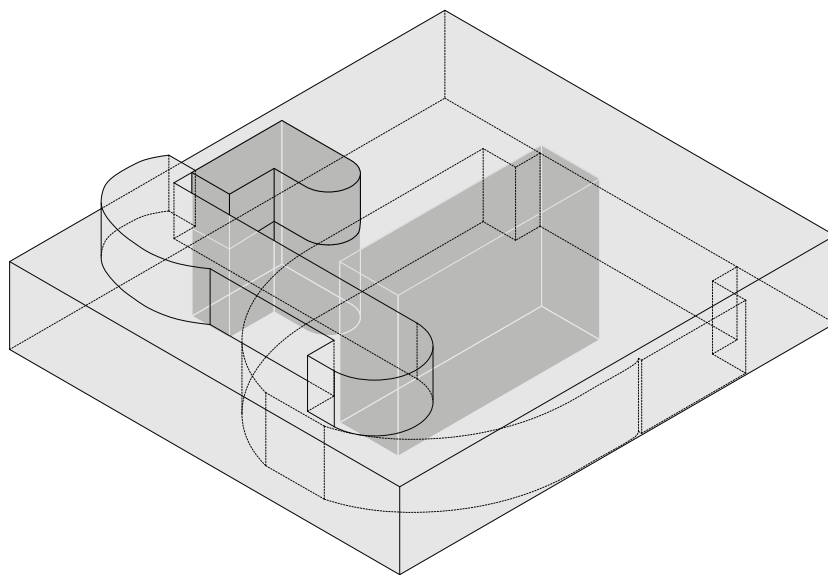
Elevated Base Plane

Building/Ground Relationship

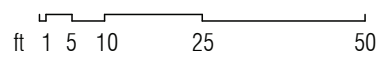


Connection to Ground Plane

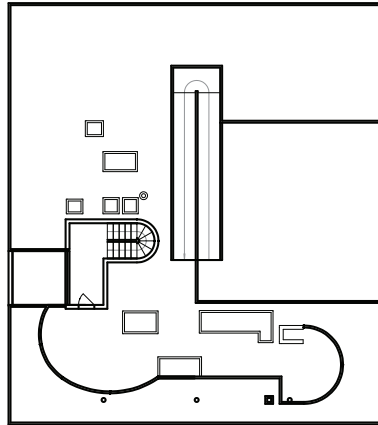
Spatial Relationships



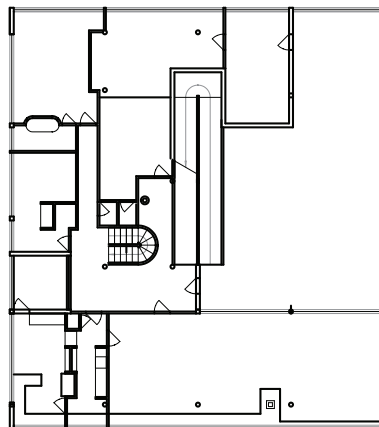
Spaces Linked by Common Circulation Space



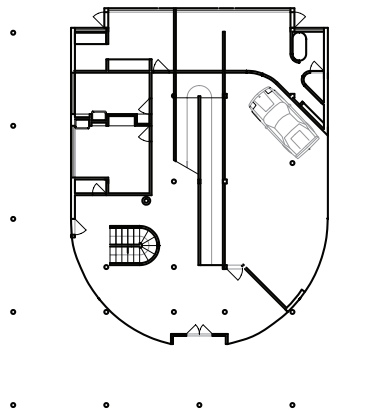
Spatial Relationships



Third Floor Plan



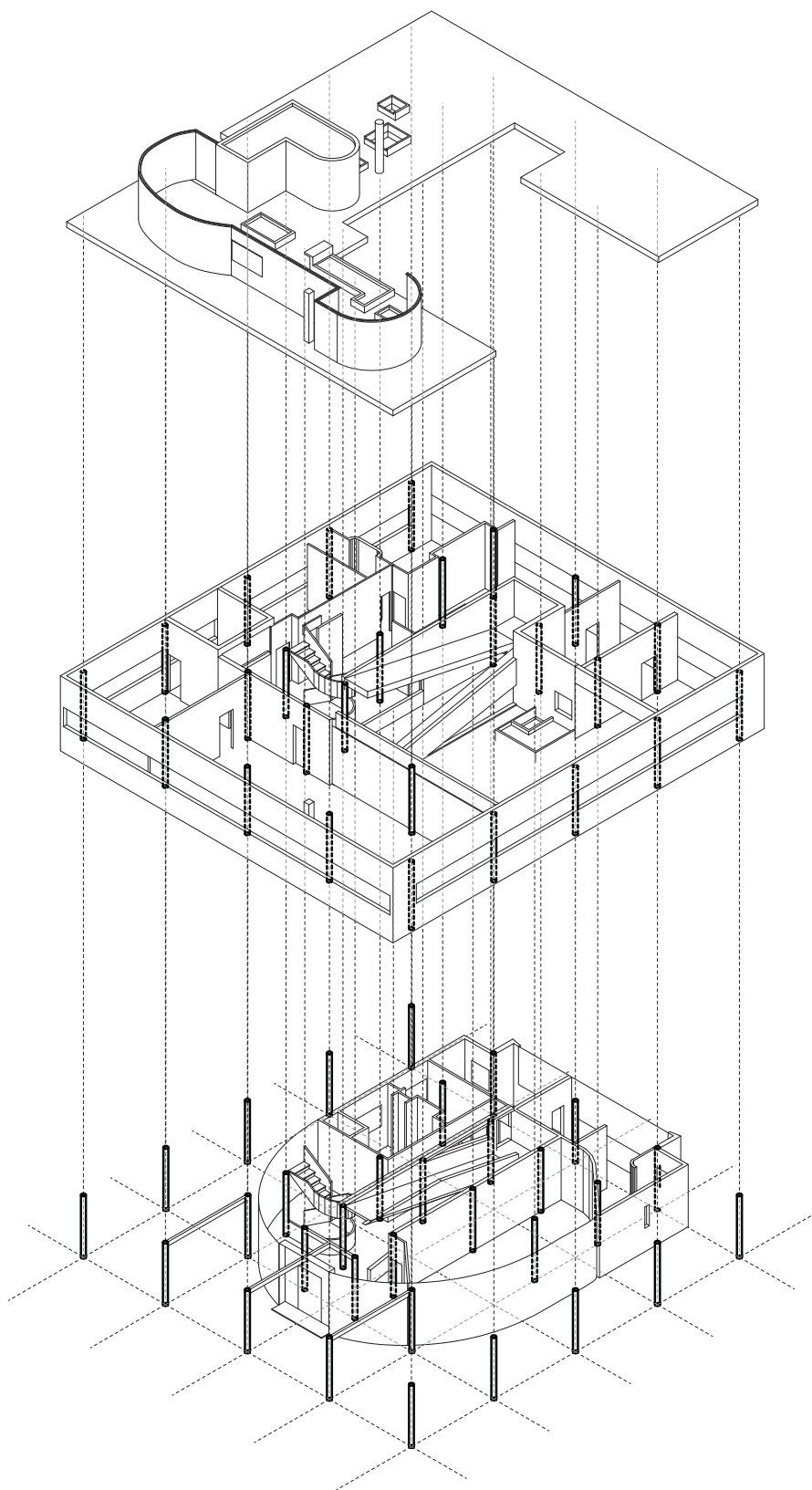
Second Floor Plan



Ground Floor Plan

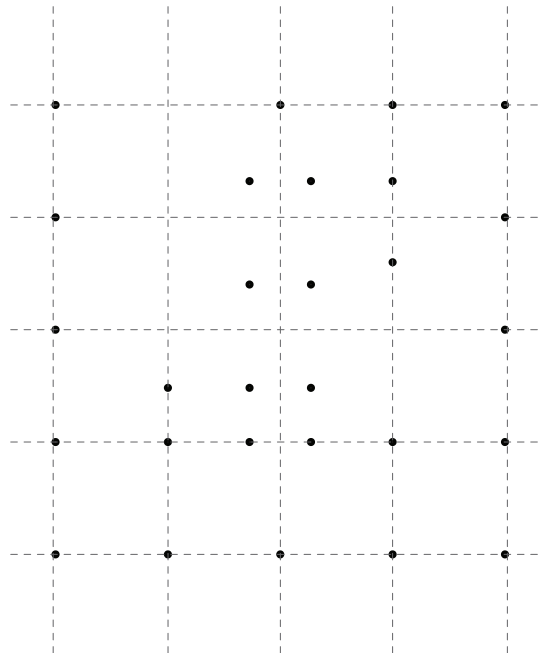
Adjacent Spaces

Spatial Organization



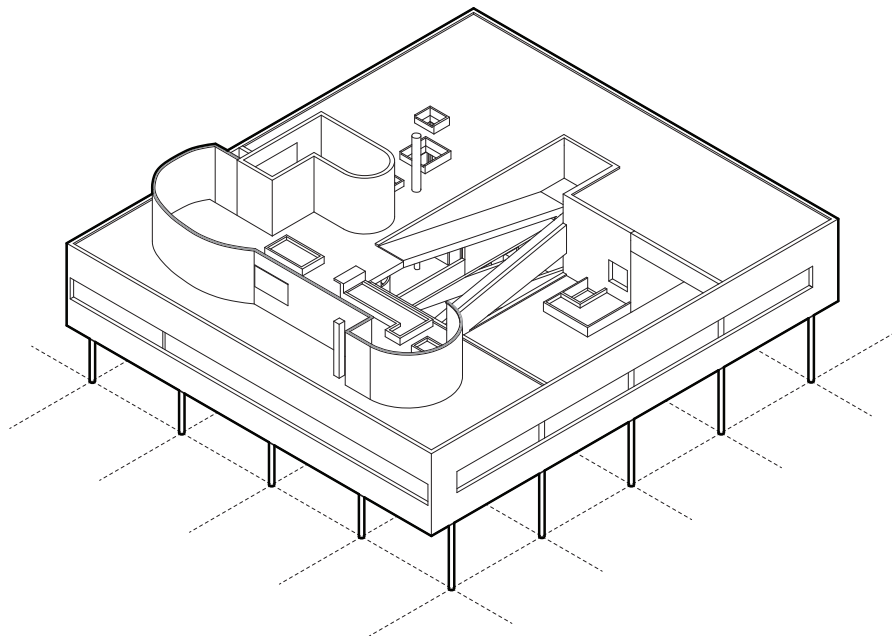
Grid Organization

Spatial Organization



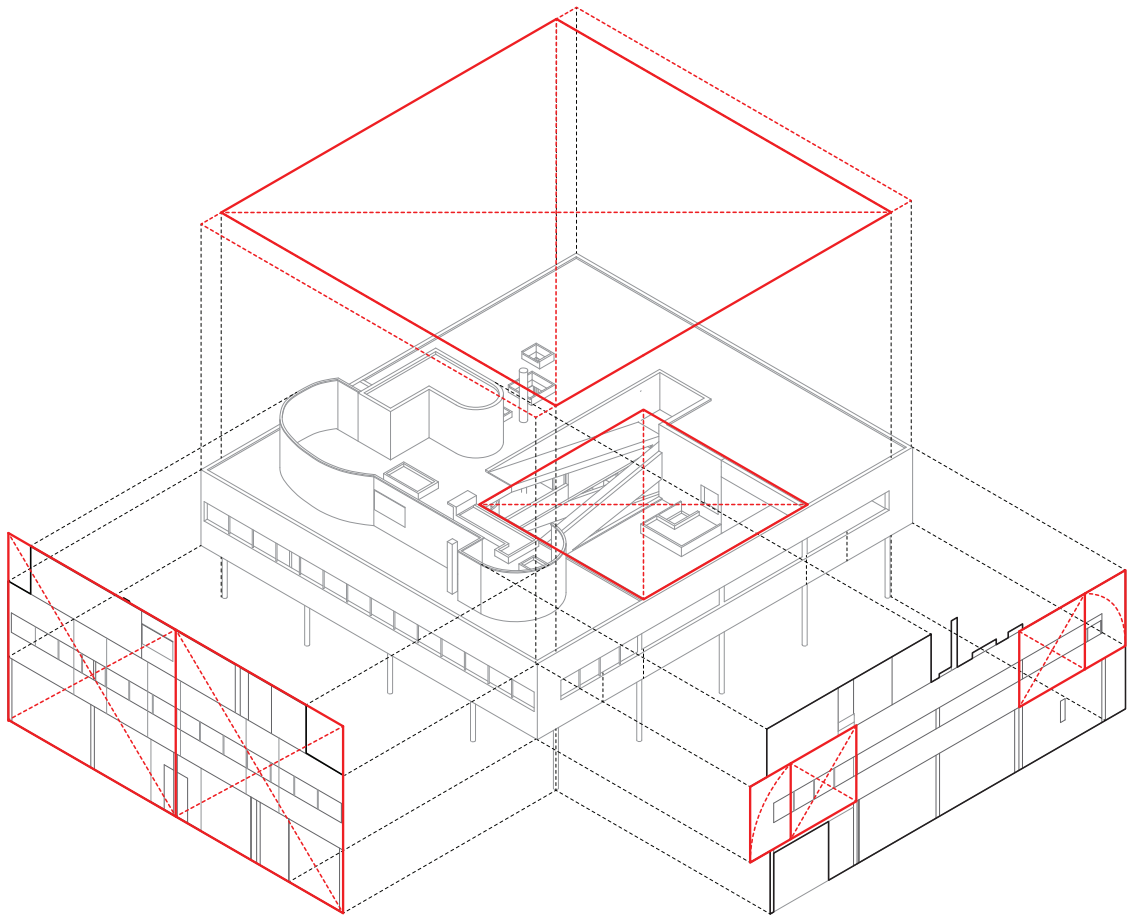
Grid Organization

Form-Making



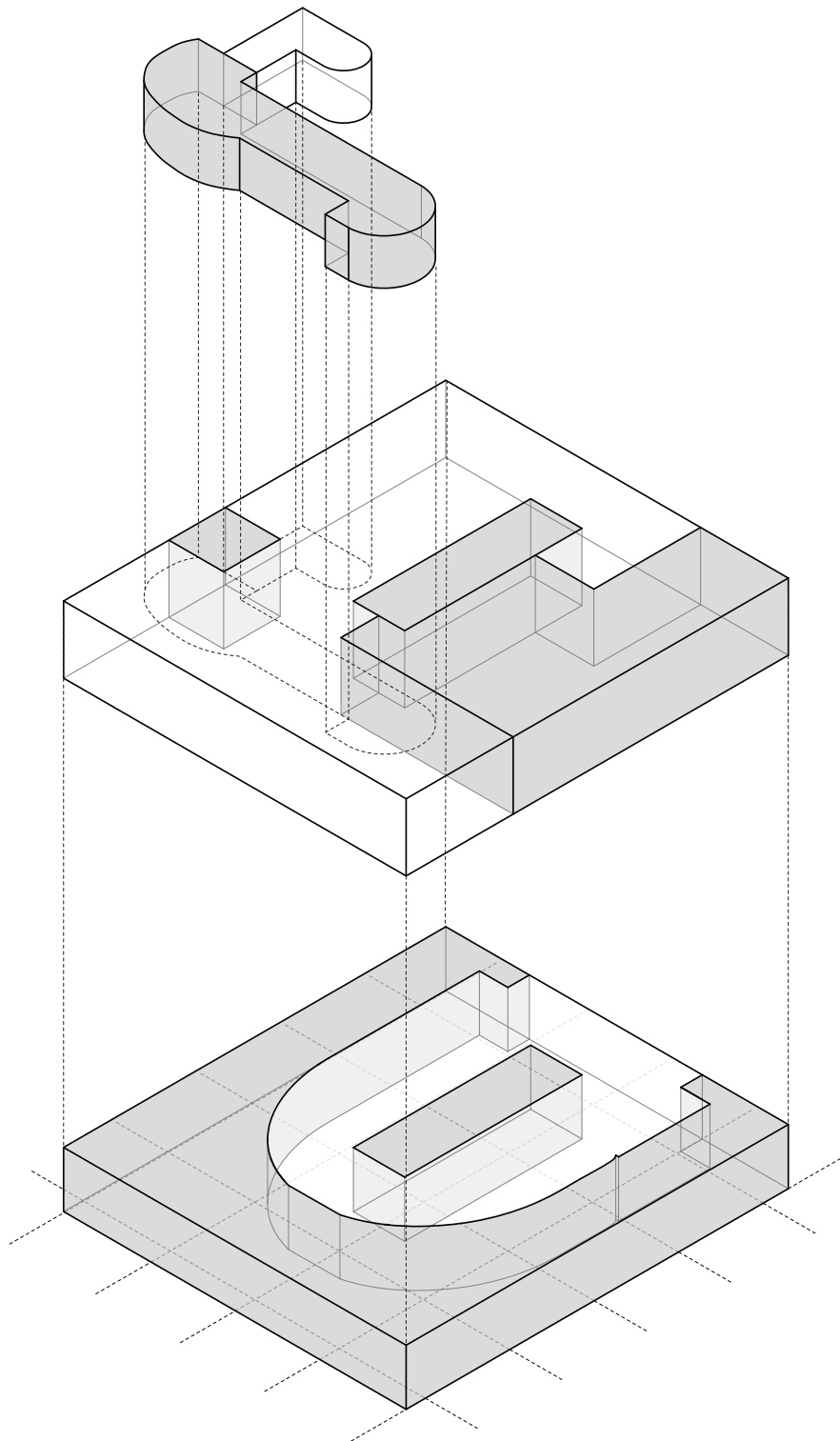
Grid Form

Form-Making



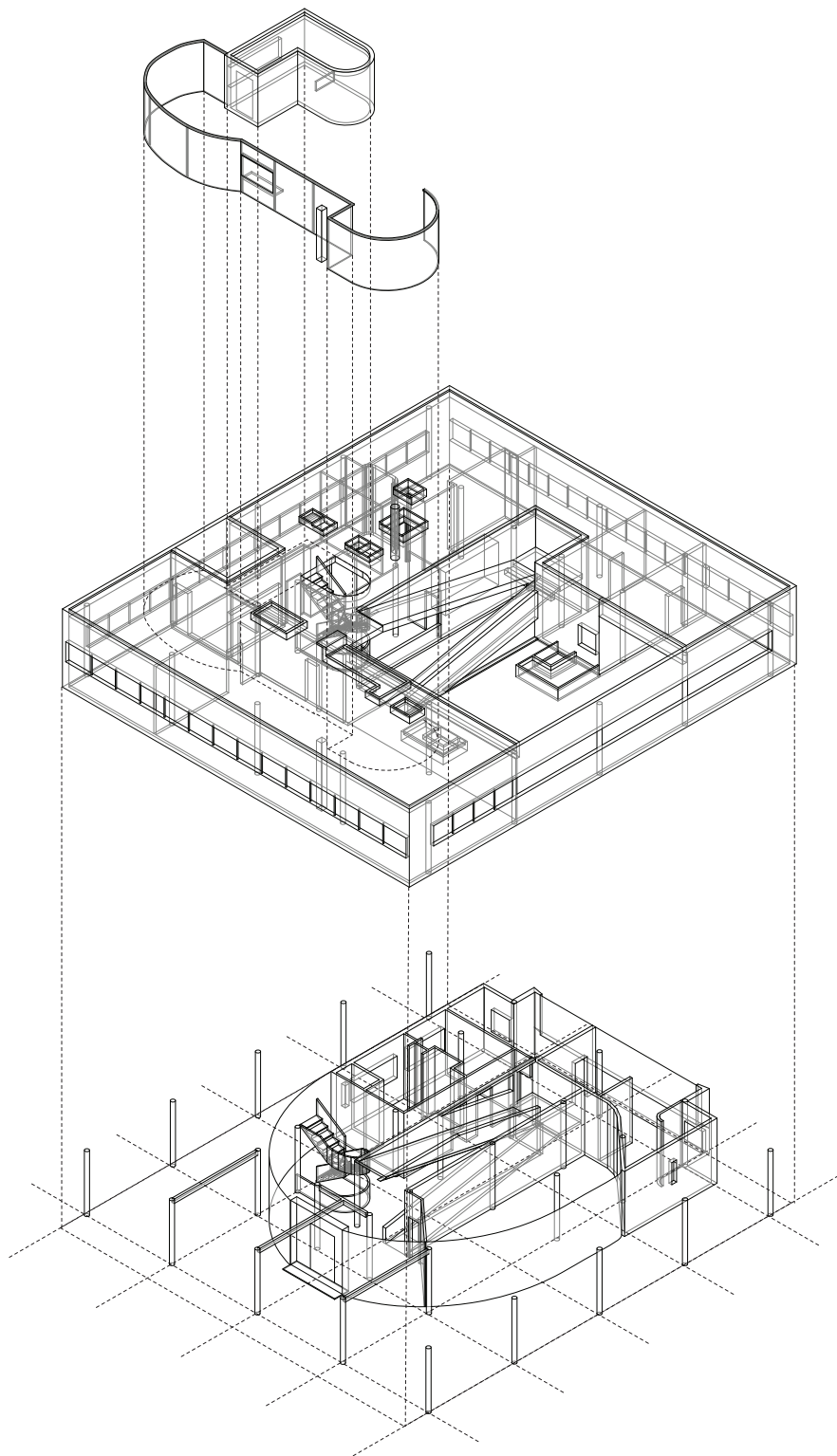
Proportioning Systems

Form-Making



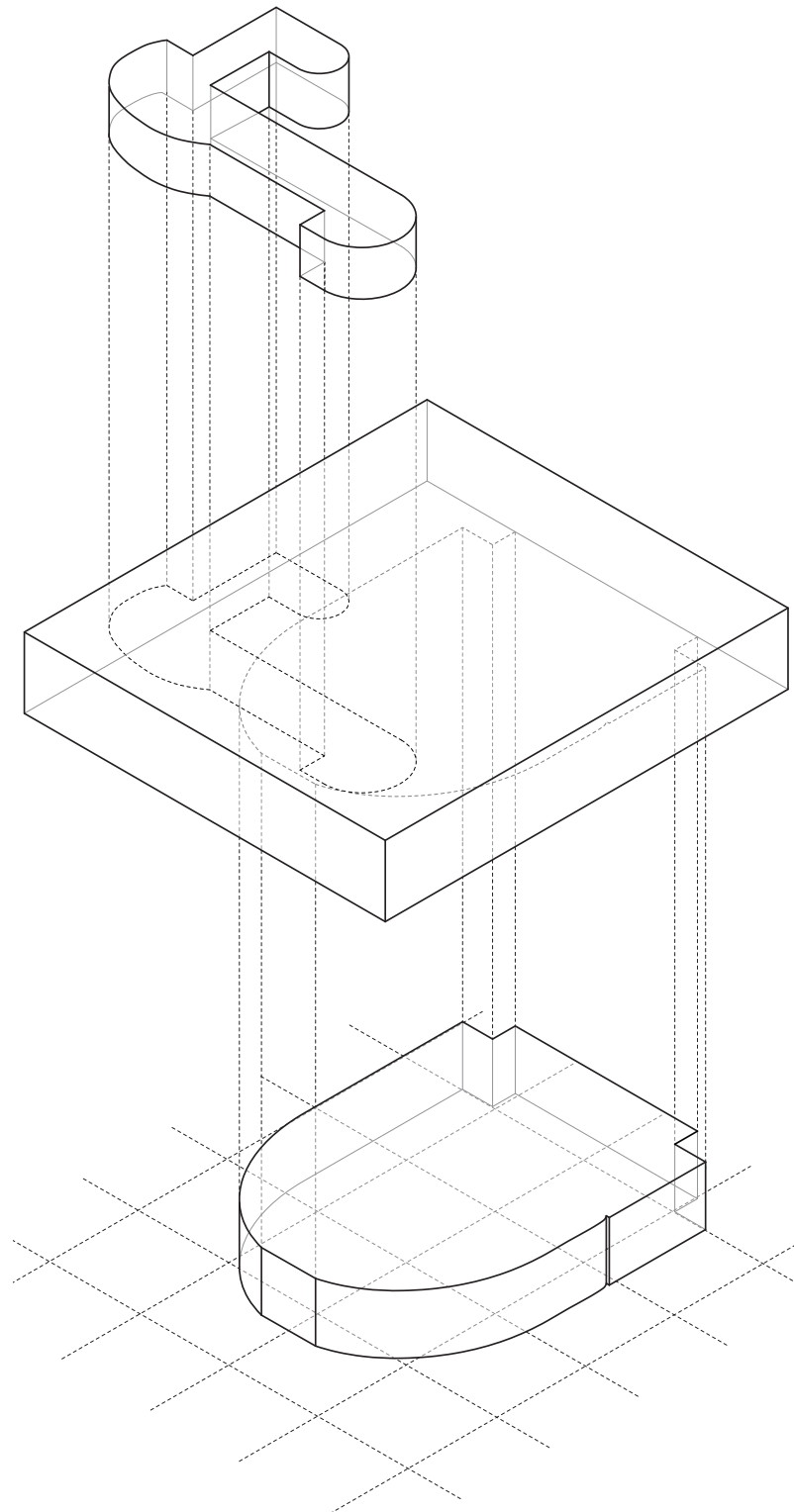
Subtractive Form

Volumetric Compositions



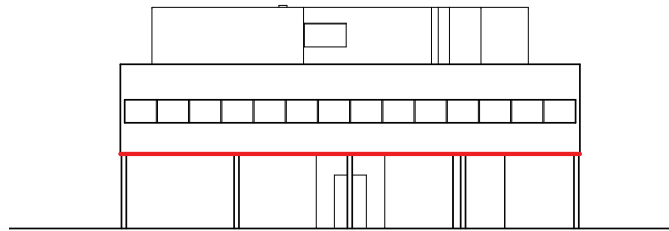
Articulation of Volumetric Form

Volumetric Compositions



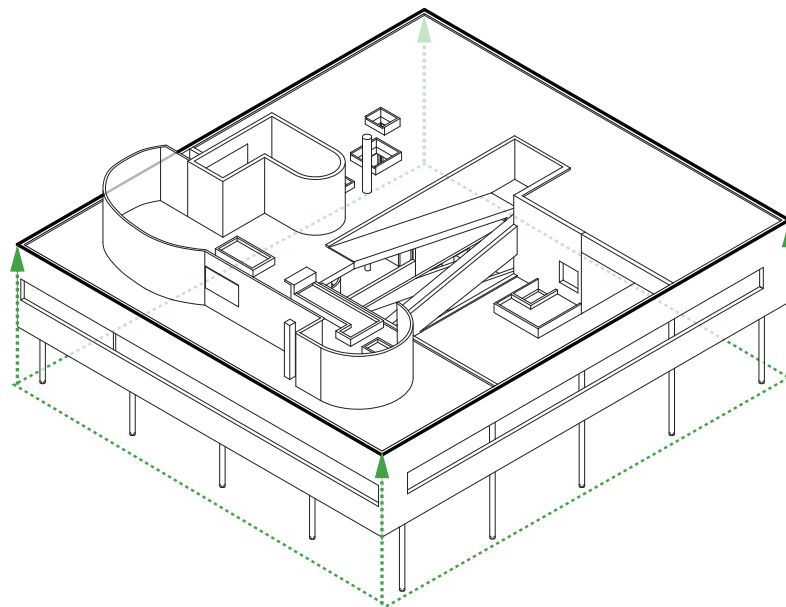
Reduction of Form to Primary Solids

Building/Ground Relationship



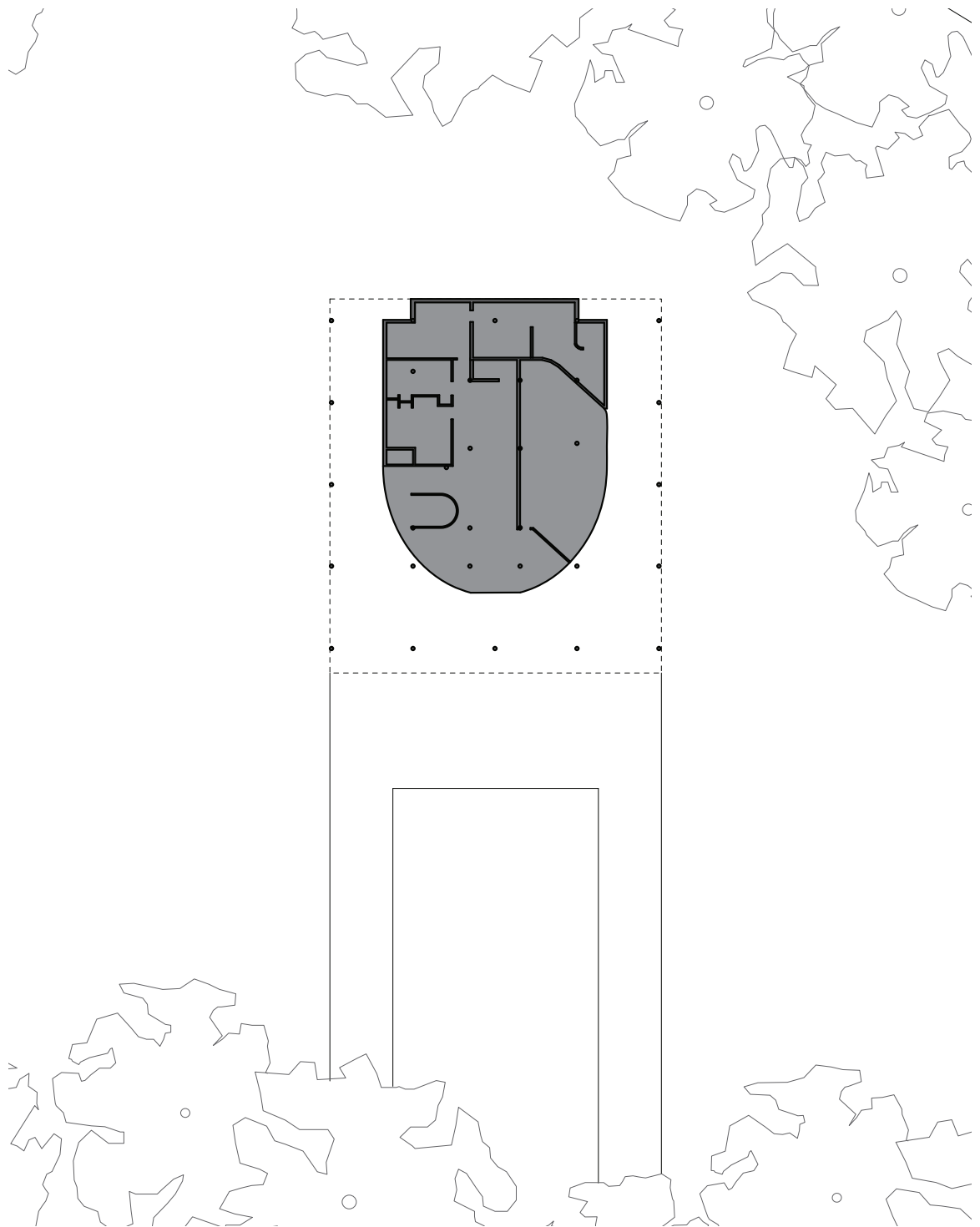
Elevated Base Plane in Elevation

Building/Ground Relationship



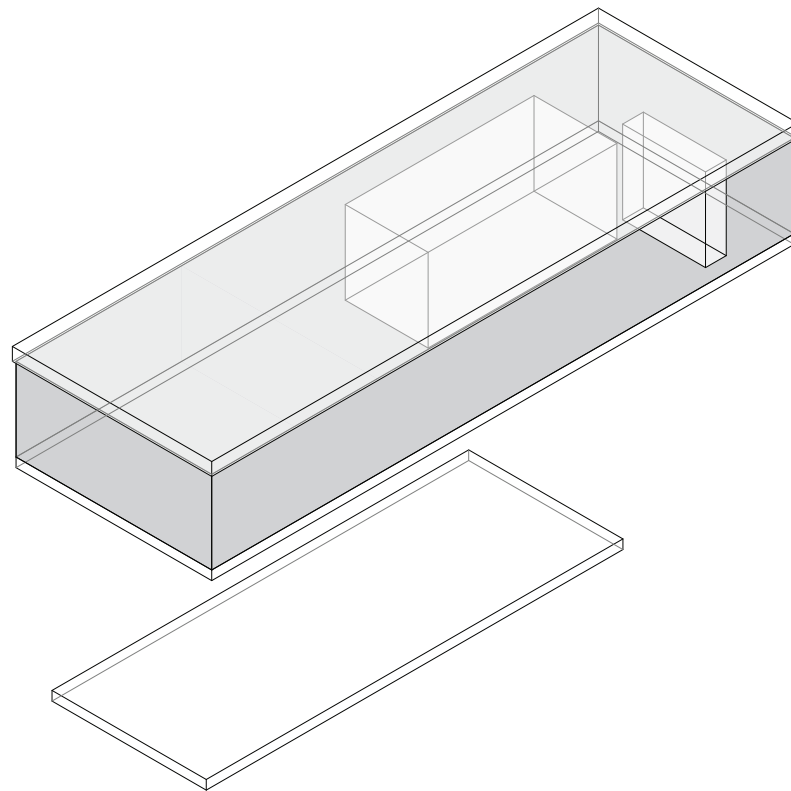
Elevated Base Plane and Overhead Roof Plane

Building/Ground Relationship

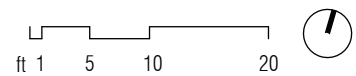


Connection Points to Ground Plane

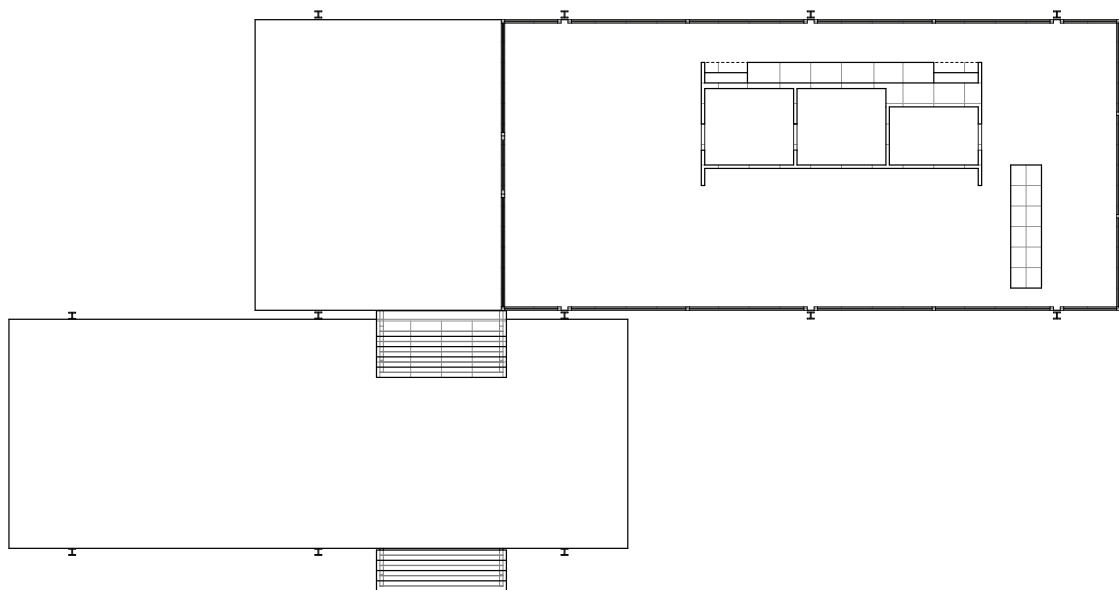
Spatial Relationships



Space within a Space

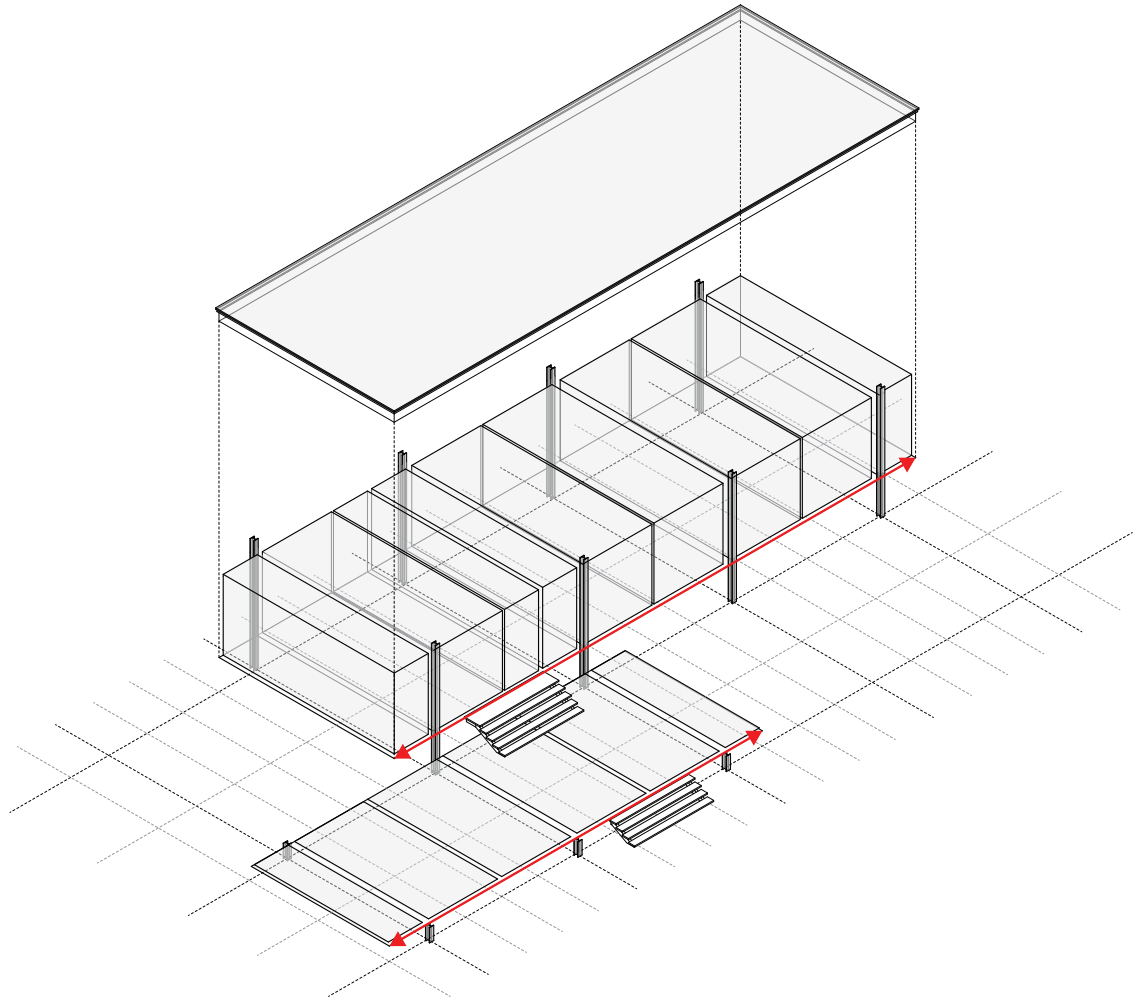


Spatial Relationships



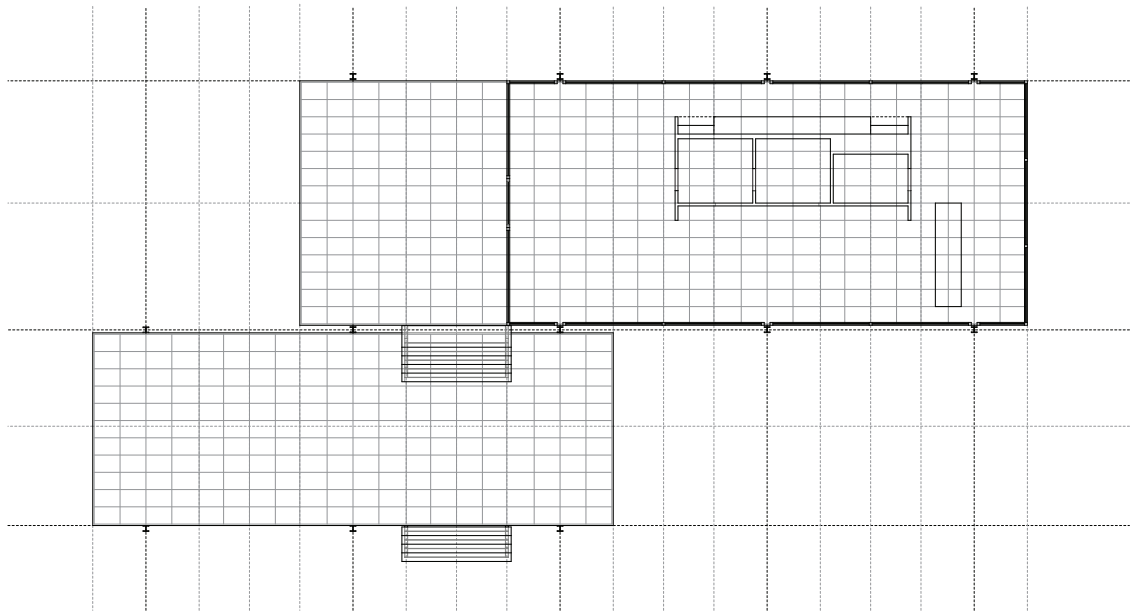
Adjacent Spaces

Spatial Organization



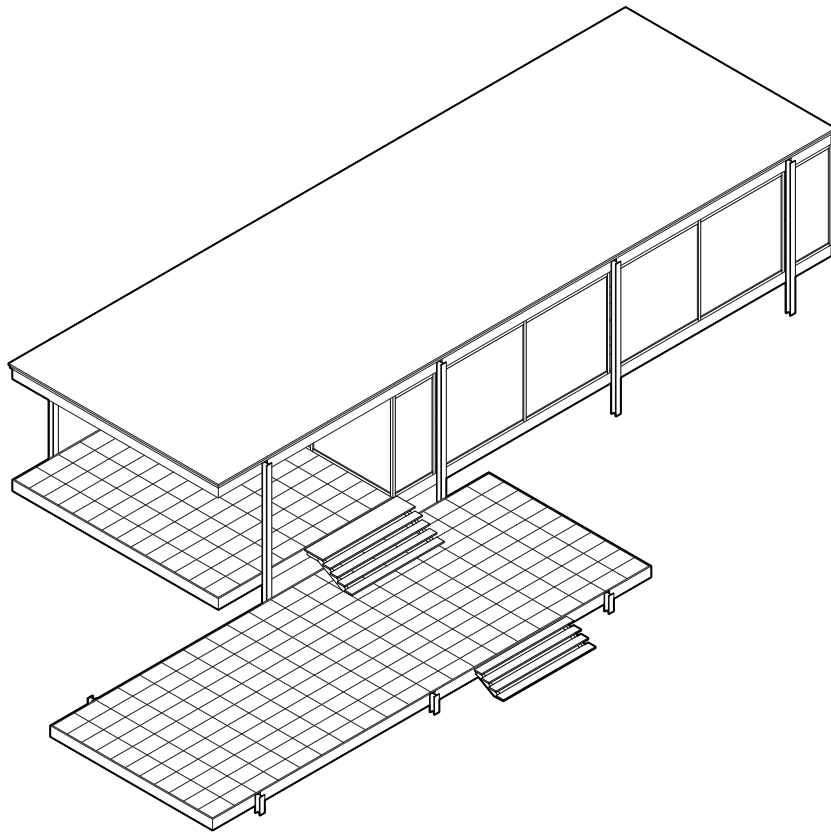
Linear Organization

Spatial Organization



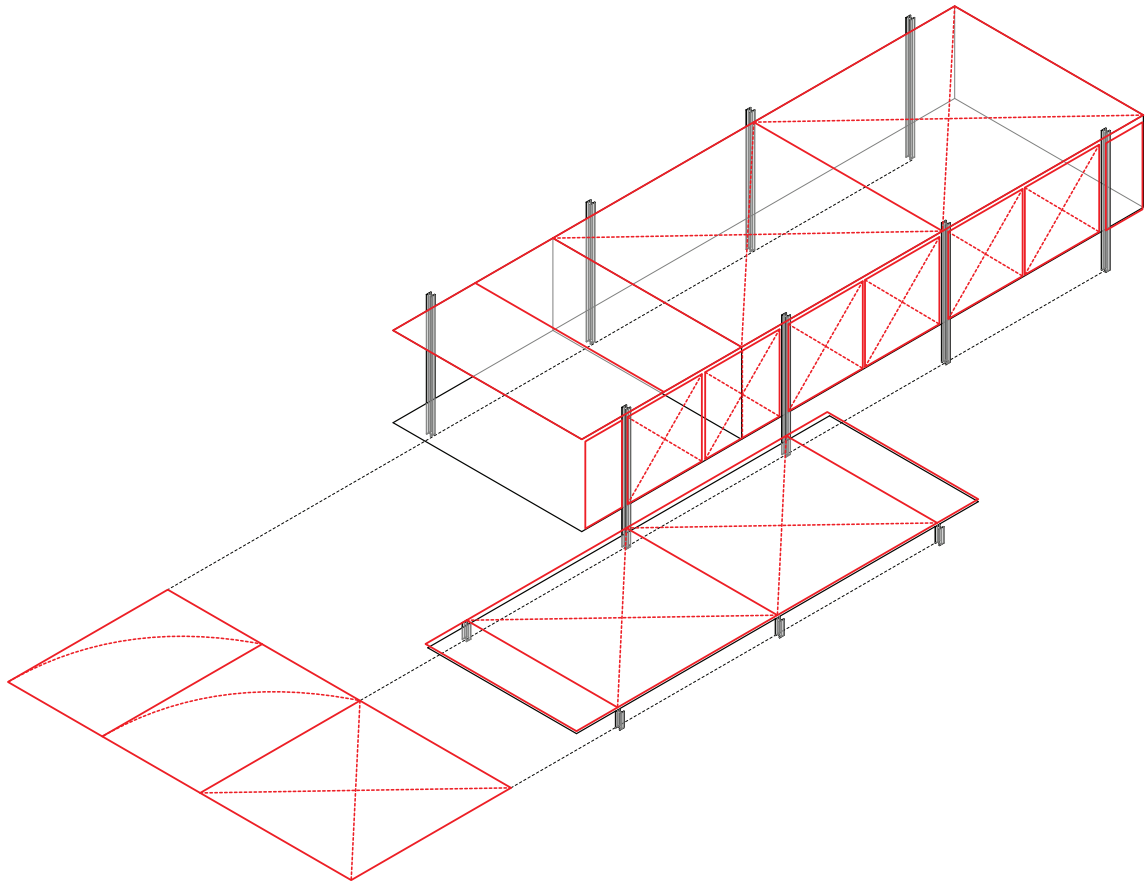
Grid Organization

Form-Making



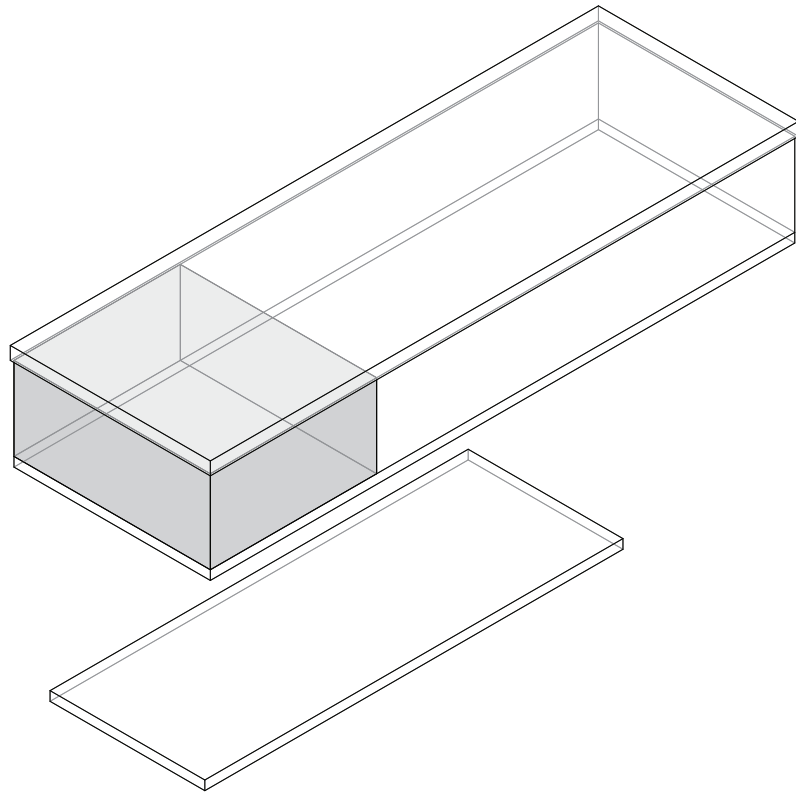
Linear Form

Form-Making



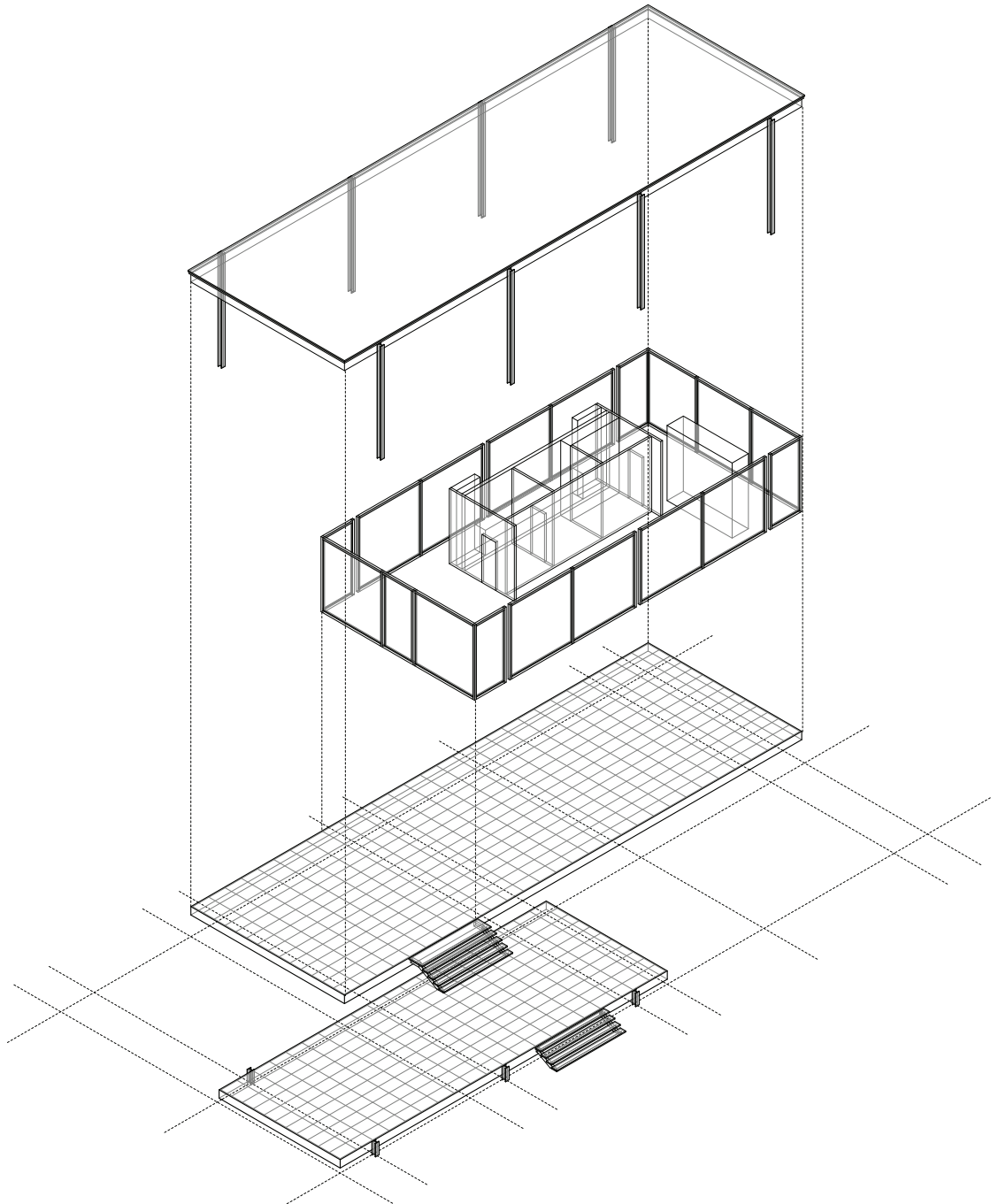
Proportioning Systems

Form-Making



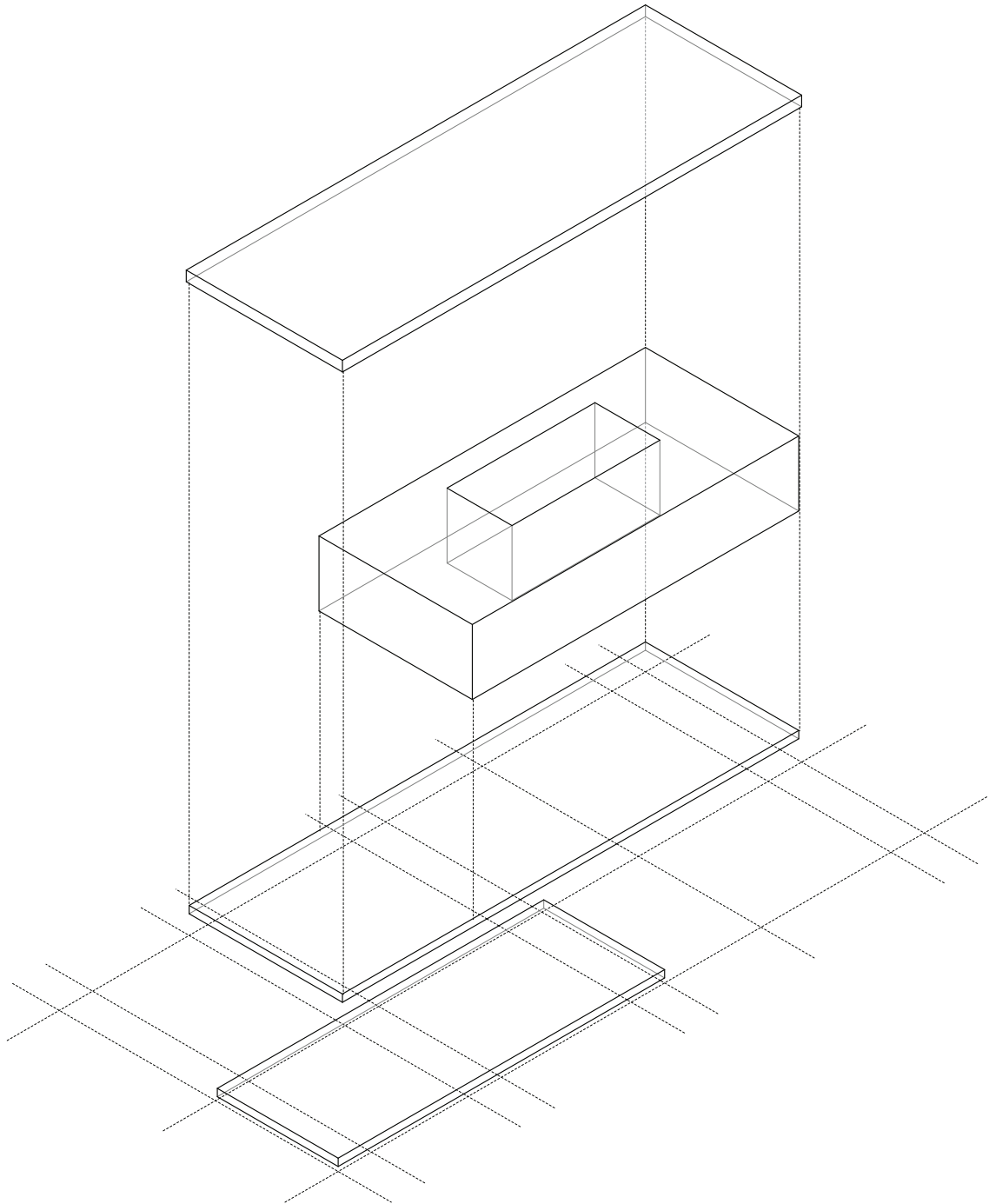
Subtractive Form

Volumetric Compositions



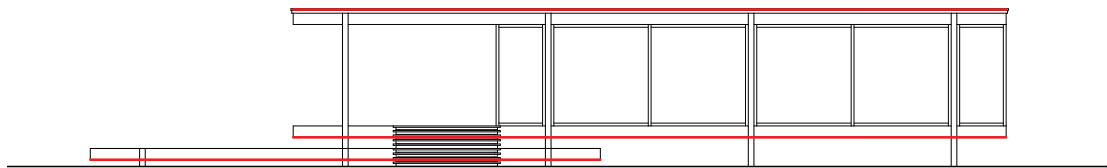
Articulation of Volumetric Form

Volumetric Compositions



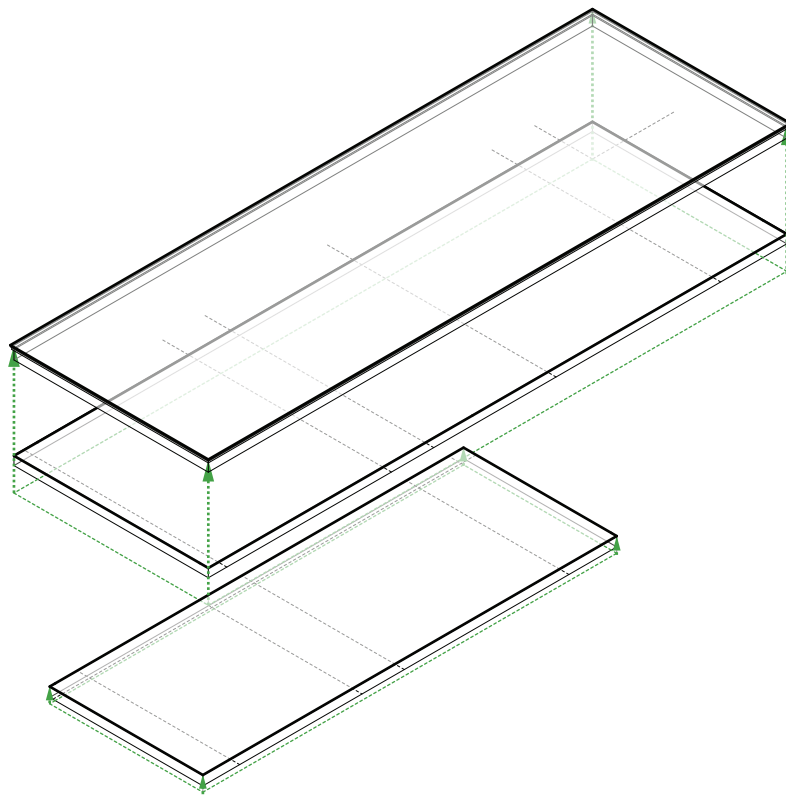
Reduction of Form to Primary Solids

Building/Ground Relationship



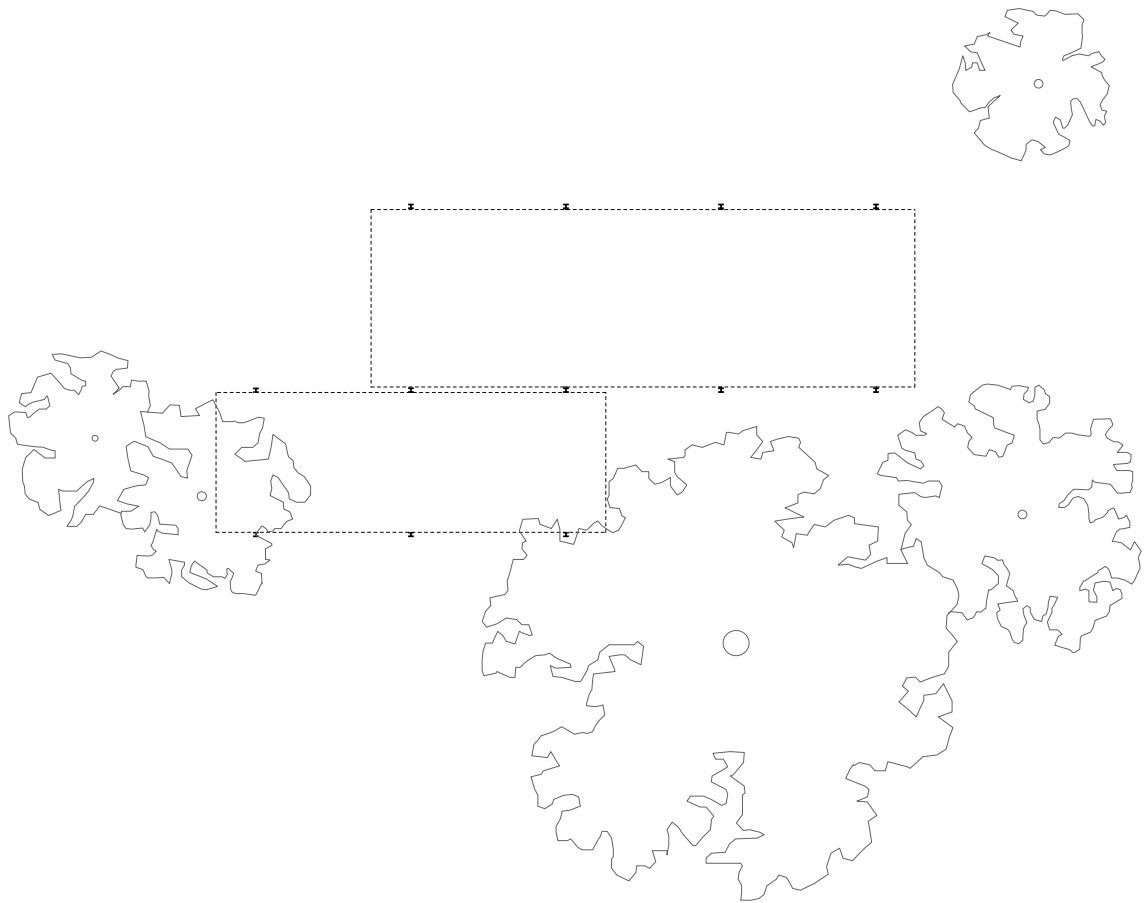
Elevated Base Plane and Overhead Roof Plane in Elevation

Building/Ground Relationship



Elevated Base Plane and Overhead Roof Plane

Building/Ground Relationship



Connection Points to Ground Plane

Methods of Defamiliarization

These identified formal parameters were then appropriated and redeployed through different *methods of defamiliarization*: displacement, figuration, scalar shift, volume reconfiguration, and hybridization. These methods allowed for the productive generation of new form.

<i>Site Displacement</i>				
Placed on the site of...	Villa Rotonda	Fallingwater	Villa Savoye	Farnsworth House
Villa Rotonda	Villa Rotonda on Villa Rotonda site	Villa Rotonda on Fallingwater site	Villa Rotonda on Villa Savoye site	Villa Rotonda on Farnsworth House site
Fallingwater	Fallingwater on Villa Rotonda site	Fallingwater on Fallingwater site	Fallingwater on Villa Savoye site	Fallingwater on Farnsworth House site
Villa Savoye	Villa Savoye on Villa Rotonda site	Villa Savoye on Fallingwater site	Villa Savoye on Villa Savoye site	Villa Savoye on Farnsworth House site
Farnsworth House	Farnsworth House on Villa Rotonda site	Farnsworth House on Fallingwater site	Farnsworth House on Villa Savoye site	Farnsworth House on Farnsworth House site

<i>Figuration</i>				
Alteration of shape through...	Planar Figuration	Planar Defiguration	Volumetric Figuration	Volumetric Defiguration
Villa Rotonda	Villa Rotonda altered through Planar Figuration	Villa Rotonda altered through Planar Defiguration	Villa Rotonda altered through Volumetric Figuration	Villa Rotonda altered through Volumetric Defiguration
Fallingwater	Fallingwater altered through Planar Figuration	Fallingwater altered through Planar Defiguration	Fallingwater altered through Volumetric Figuration	Fallingwater altered through Volumetric Defiguration
Villa Savoye	Villa Savoye altered through Planar Figuration	Villa Savoye altered through Planar Defiguration	Villa Savoye altered through Volumetric Figuration	Villa Savoye altered through Volumetric Defiguration
Farnsworth House	Farnsworth House altered through Planar Figuration	Farnsworth House altered through Planar Defiguration	Farnsworth House altered through Volumetric Figuration	Farnsworth House altered through Volumetric Defiguration

<i>Scalar Shift</i>				
Exhibiting isolated cases of...	Lateral Compression	Lateral Expansion	Vertical Compression	Vertical Expansion
Villa Rotonda	Villa Rotonda with cases of Lateral Compression	Villa Rotonda with cases of Lateral Expansion	Villa Rotonda with cases of Vertical Compression	Villa Rotonda with cases of Vertical Expansion
Fallingwater	Fallingwater with cases of Lateral Compression	Fallingwater with cases of Lateral Expansion	Fallingwater with cases of Vertical Compression	Fallingwater with cases of Vertical Expansion
Villa Savoye	Villa Savoye with cases of Lateral Compression	Villa Savoye with cases of Lateral Expansion	Villa Savoye with cases of Vertical Compression	Villa Savoye with cases of Vertical Expansion
Farnsworth House	Farnsworth House with cases of Lateral Compression	Farnsworth House with cases of Lateral Expansion	Farnsworth House with cases of Vertical Compression	Farnsworth House with cases of Vertical Expansion

<i>Volume Reconfiguration</i>				
Exhibiting isolated cases of...	Vertical Displacement	Horizontal Displacement	Rotational Displacement	Reflected Displacement
cases of...	Villa Rotonda with cases of Vertical Displacement	Villa Rotonda with cases of Horizontal Displacement	Villa Rotonda with cases of Rotational Displacement	Villa Rotonda with cases of Reflected Displacement
Fallingwater	Fallingwater with cases of Vertical Displacement	Fallingwater with cases of Horizontal Displacement	Fallingwater with cases of Rotational Displacement	Fallingwater with cases of Reflected Displacement
Villa Savoye	Villa Savoye with cases of Vertical Displacement	Villa Savoye with cases of Horizontal Displacement	Villa Savoye with cases of Rotational Displacement	Villa Savoye with cases of Reflected Displacement
Farnsworth House	Farnsworth House with cases of Vertical Displacement	Farnsworth House with cases of Horizontal Displacement	Farnsworth House with cases of Rotational Displacement	Farnsworth House with cases of Reflected Displacement

<i>Hybridization</i>				
Exchanging identifiable elements of...	Villa Rotonda	Fallingwater	Villa Savoye	Farnsworth House
Villa Rotonda	Villa Rotonda with elements of Villa Rotonda	Villa Rotonda with elements of Fallingwater	Villa Rotonda with elements of Villa Savoye	Villa Rotonda with elements of Farnsworth House
Fallingwater	Fallingwater with elements of Villa Rotonda	Fallingwater with elements of Fallingwater	Fallingwater with elements of Villa Savoye	Fallingwater with elements of Farnsworth House
Villa Savoye	Villa Savoye with elements of Villa Rotonda	Villa Savoye with elements of Fallingwater	Villa Savoye with elements of Villa Savoye	Villa Savoye with elements of Farnsworth House
Farnsworth House	Farnsworth House with elements of Villa Rotonda	Farnsworth House with elements of Fallingwater	Farnsworth House with elements of Villa Savoye	Farnsworth House with elements of Farnsworth House

Techniques of Appropriation

The design iterations fell into four larger techniques of appropriation, whose terminology has been borrowed from the discipline of music and the techniques of the disc jockey: cover, remix, sampling, and mashup.

Cover

A cover is a subtle reworking of a single appropriated work, whose transformation is less legible than in the case of the remix. The cover is characterized by a lack of hybridization, a low degree of transformation, and a high degree of subtlety. The cover is an especially productive strategy for developing a deeper comprehension of the appropriated work, as the applied transformations must closely adhere to the inherent rationalities of the work in order to remain subtle.

Remix

A remix is a noticeable reworking of a single appropriated work, whose transformation is immediately legible. The remix is characterized by a lack of hybridization, a high degree of transformation, and a low degree of subtlety. The remix is a productive strategy for generating form, as the transformations can be pushed beyond the limitation of subtlety and closer to a new, diverging proposition for form.

Sampling

A sampling is a subtle, barely legible integration of a small portion of one work into another appropriated work. The sampling is characterized by a low degree of hybridization, a low degree of transformation, and a high degree of subtlety. The sampling is a productive strategy for developing a deeper understanding of the juxtaposed works, as the subtle overlay of elements can reveal specific hidden similarities between the logic of the projects.

Mashup

A mashup is a legible, comprehensive integration of two appropriated works, where there is no clear dominance of either of the works' forms. The mashup is characterized by a high degree of hybridization, a high degree of transformation, and a low degree of subtlety. The mashup is a productive strategy both for generating new form and for discovering hidden likenesses, as the inherent logics to the works must be carefully overlaid and distorted in order to appear seamless.

<i>Techniques of Appropriation</i>			
characterized by a ____ degree of:	Hybridization	Transformation	Subtlety
Cover	n/a	low	high
Remix	n/a	high	low
Sampling	low	low	high
Mashup	high	high	low

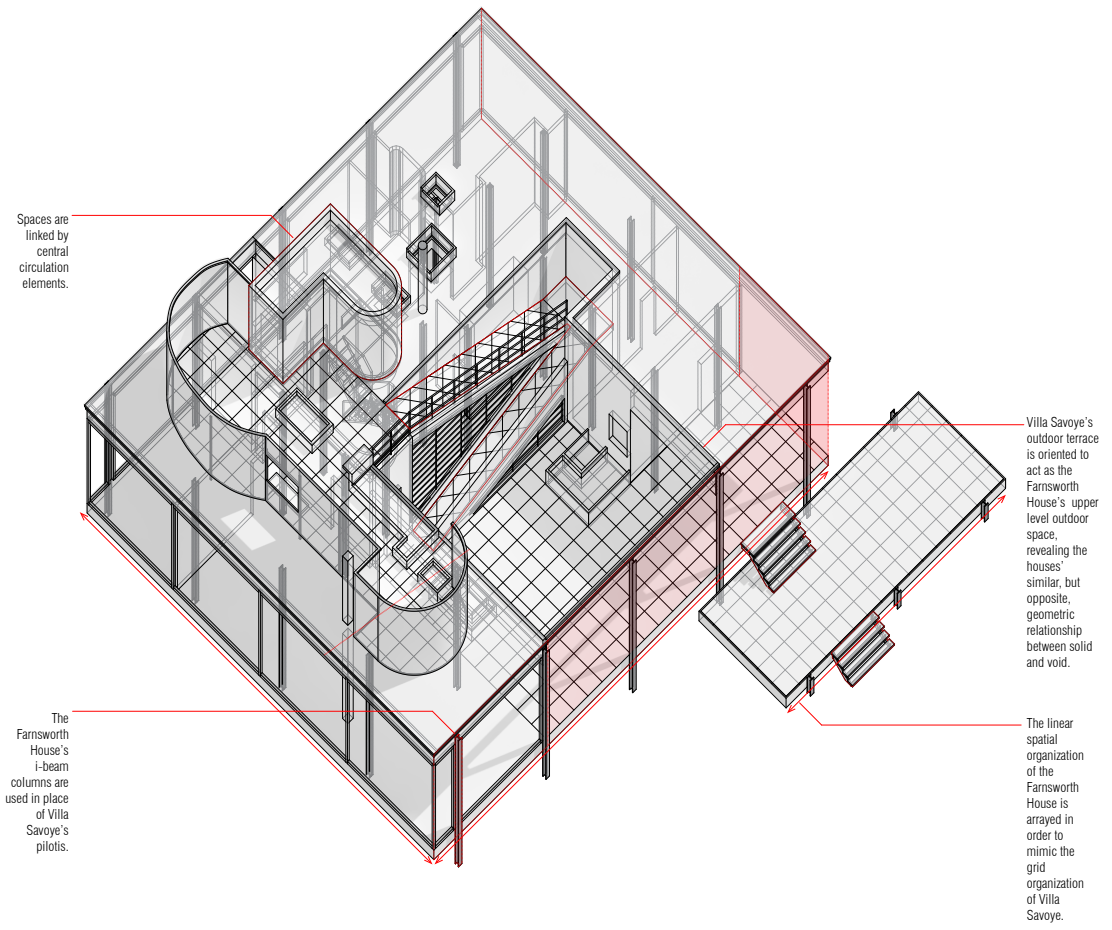
<i>Iterations</i>	
Type	Work(s)
<i>Cover</i>	Villa Rotonda
<i>Cover</i>	Villa Savoye
<i>Cover</i>	Farnsworth House
<i>Cover</i>	Fallingwater
<i>Remix</i>	Villa Rotonda
<i>Remix</i>	Villa Savoye
<i>Remix</i>	Farnsworth House
<i>Remix</i>	Fallingwater
<i>Sampling</i>	Villa Rotonda Villa Savoye
<i>Sampling</i>	Villa Savoye Farnsworth House
<i>Sampling</i>	Fallingwater Farnsworth House
<i>Mashup</i>	Villa Rotonda Villa Savoye
<i>Mashup</i>	Villa Savoye Farnsworth House
<i>Mashup</i>	Fallingwater Farnsworth House
<i>Mashup</i>	Fallingwater Villa Rotonda Farnsworth Villa Savoye

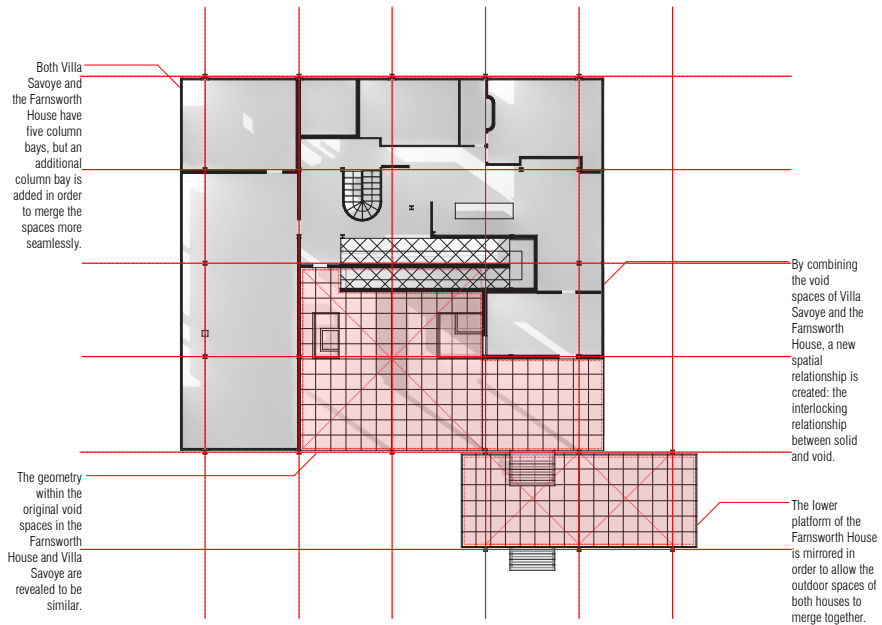
Chapter 4

Mashups

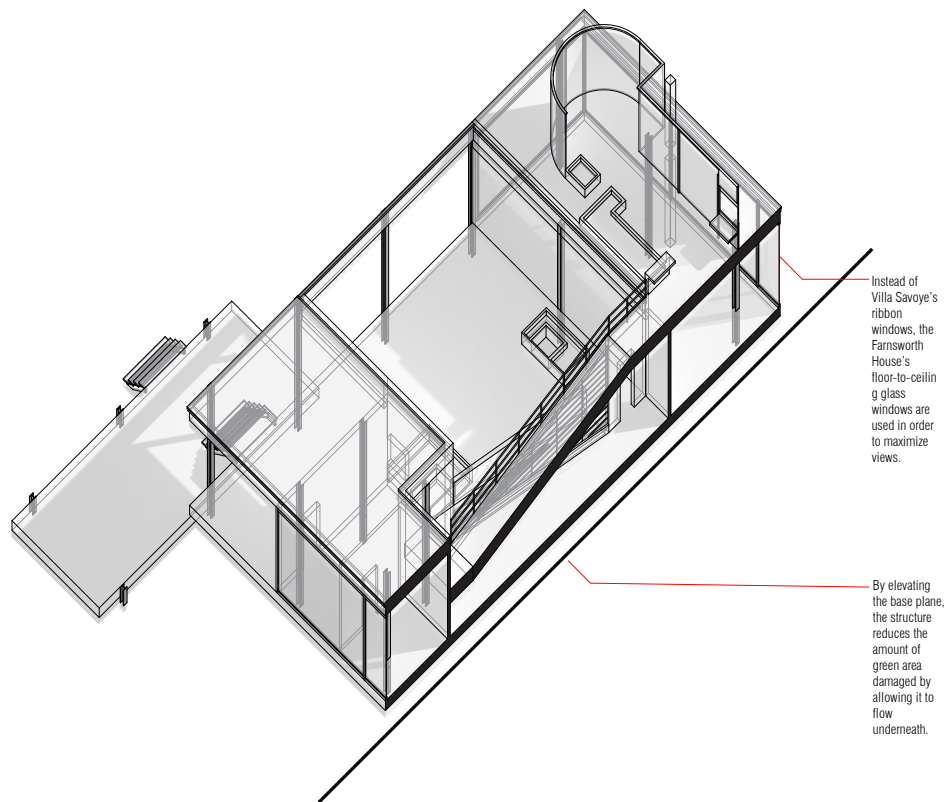
The mashup proved to be the most productive strategy of appropriation. With the mashup, success can be declared when there is no clear dominance of either of the works' forms. The resulting architecture creates a sort of "search and find" game, where the viewer must determine which formal elements originated in which appropriated work. This addresses a more minor goal for the project: to make architecture fun. The project reintroduces a sense of lightheartedness into architectural analysis, design, and representation. We inherently enjoy visuals that we are familiar with, and finding easter eggs within the mashups provides gratification through recognition and identification.

The following mashups were chosen for further development: Farnsavoye, Villa Satonda, Fallingworther, and Villa Farnssavwater.

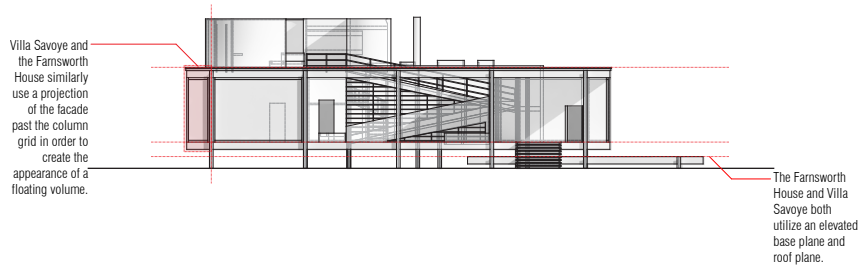
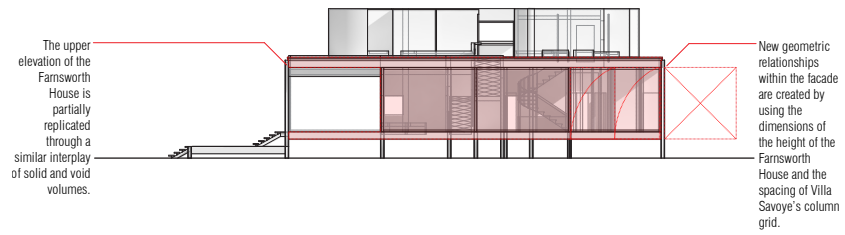




Plan



Section

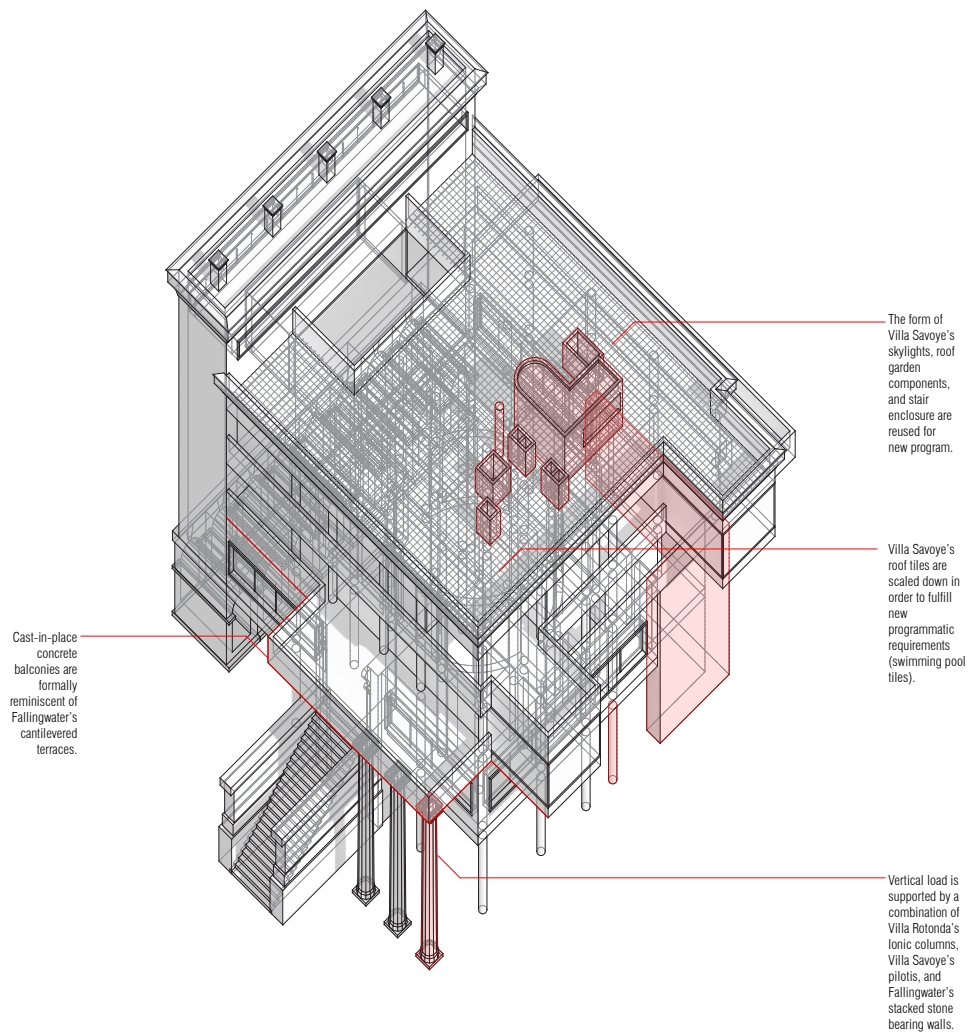


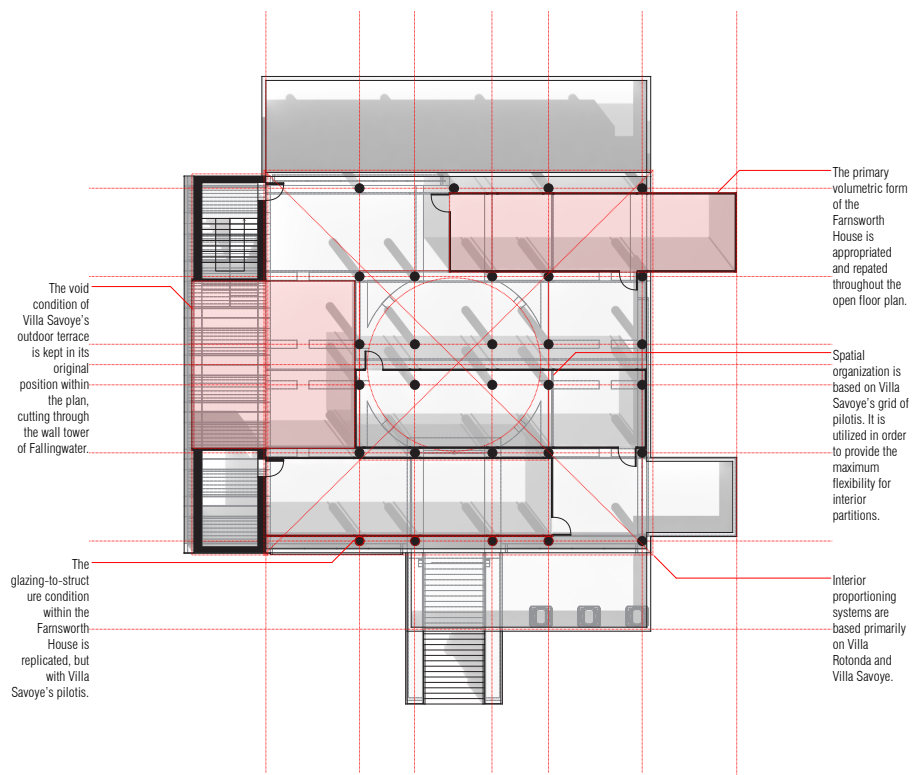


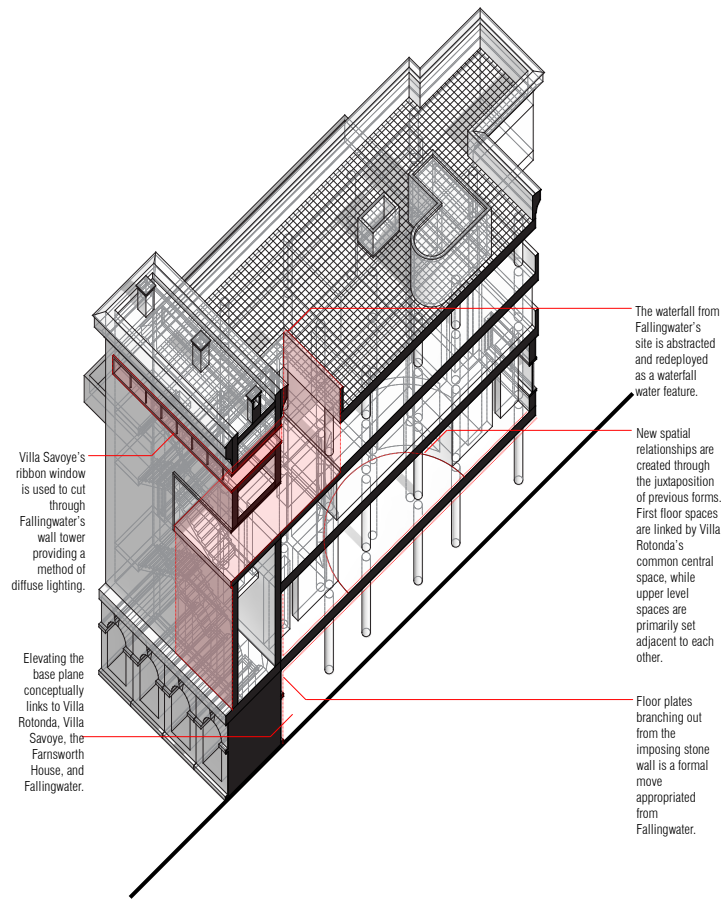
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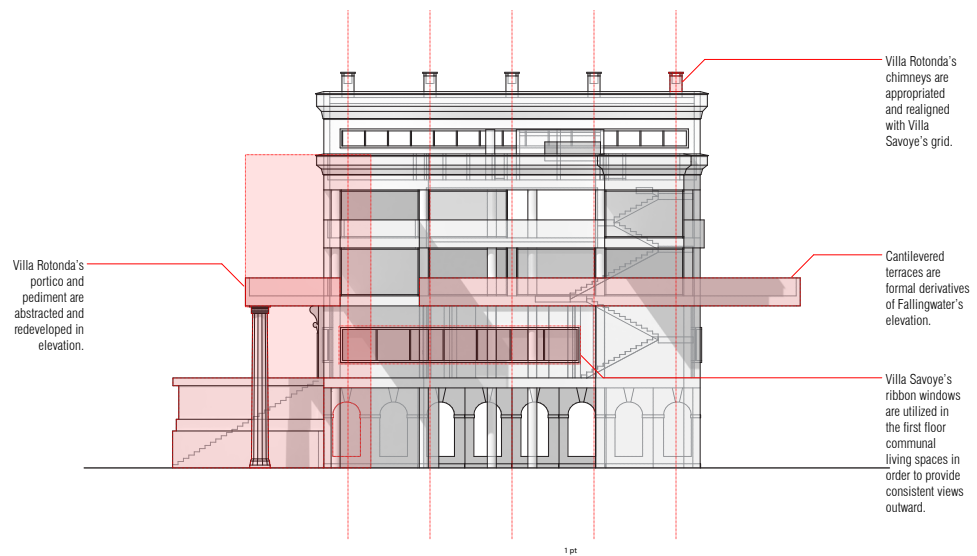
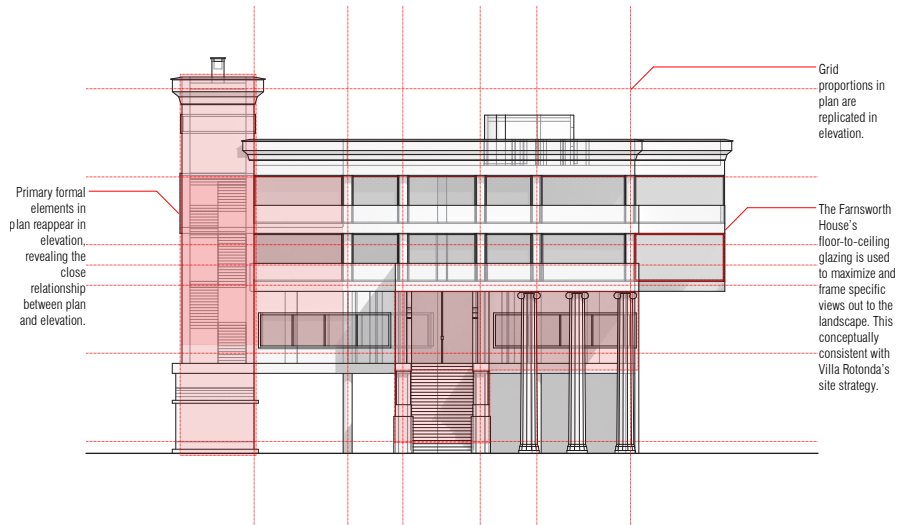
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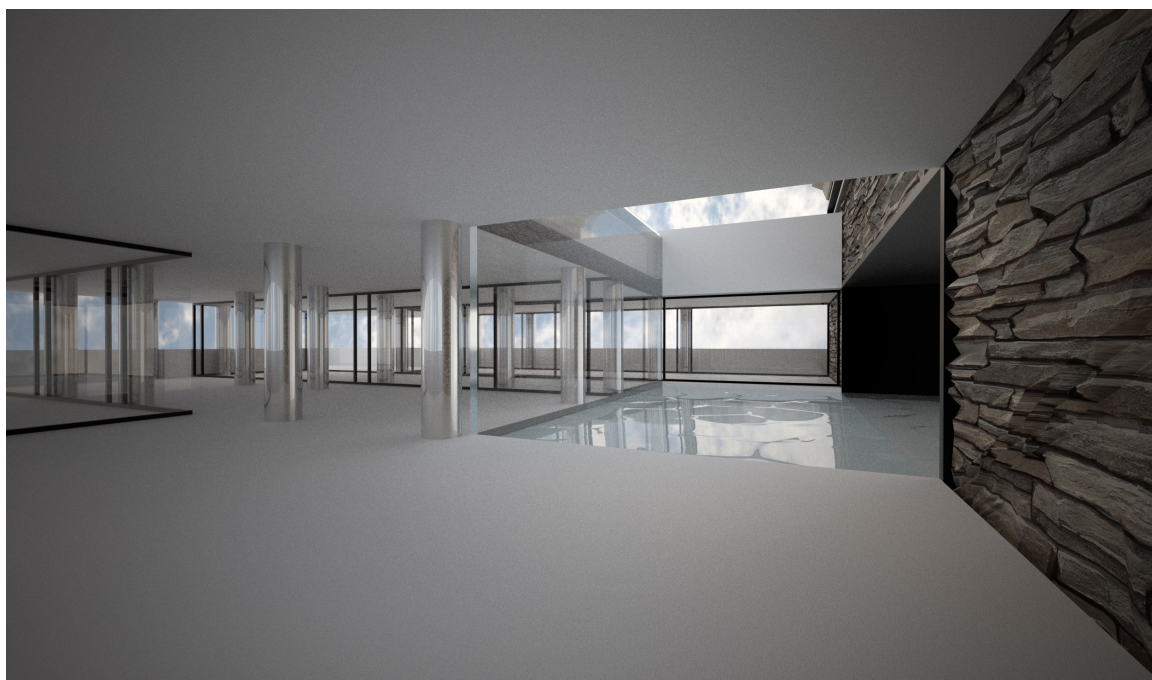


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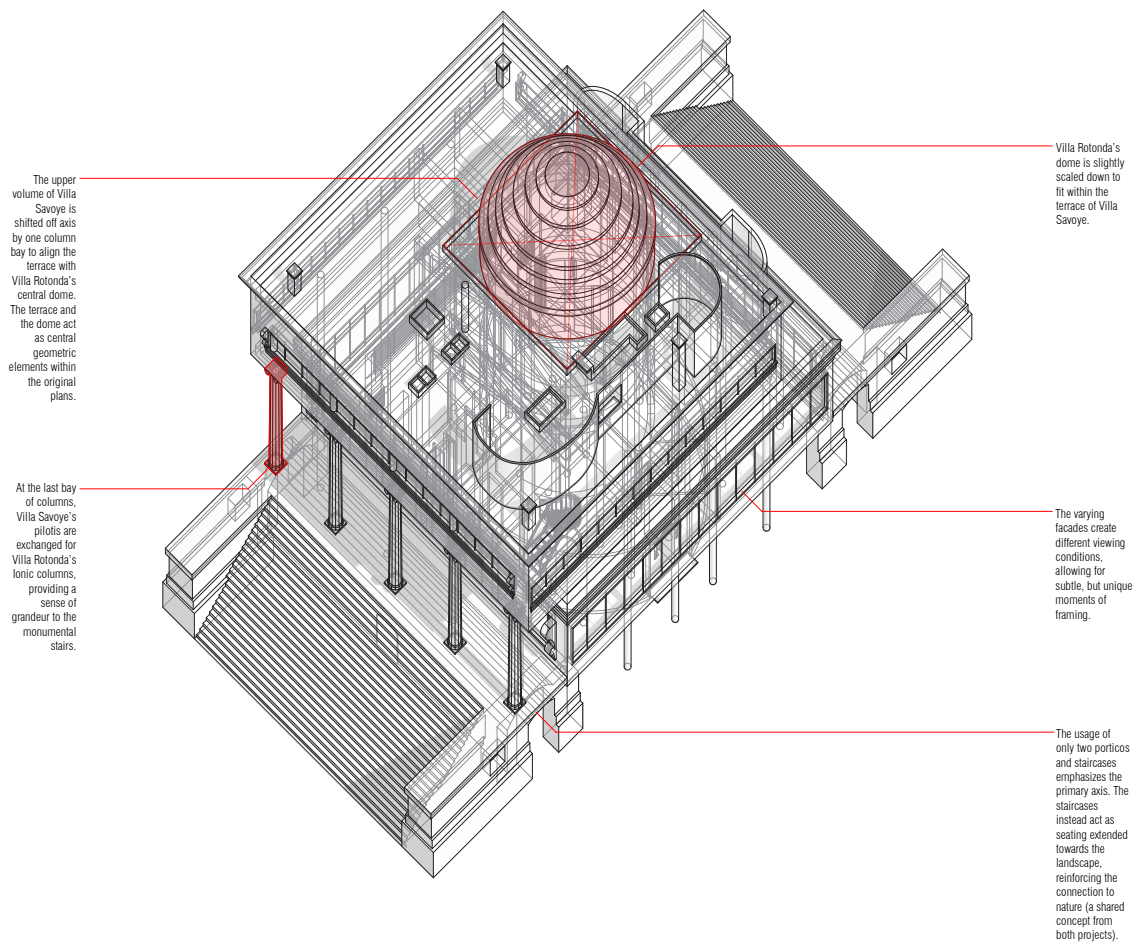


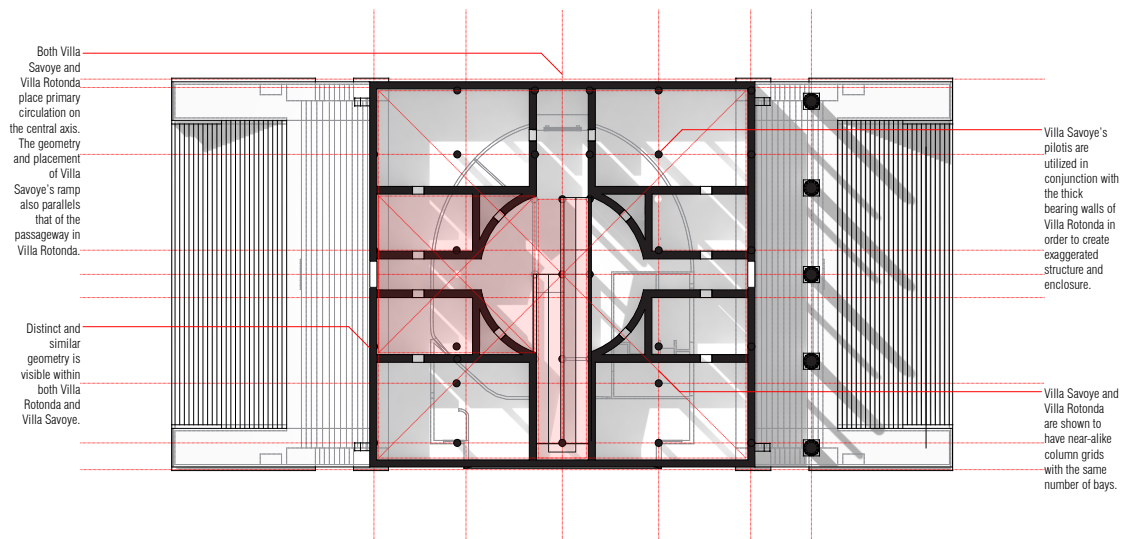


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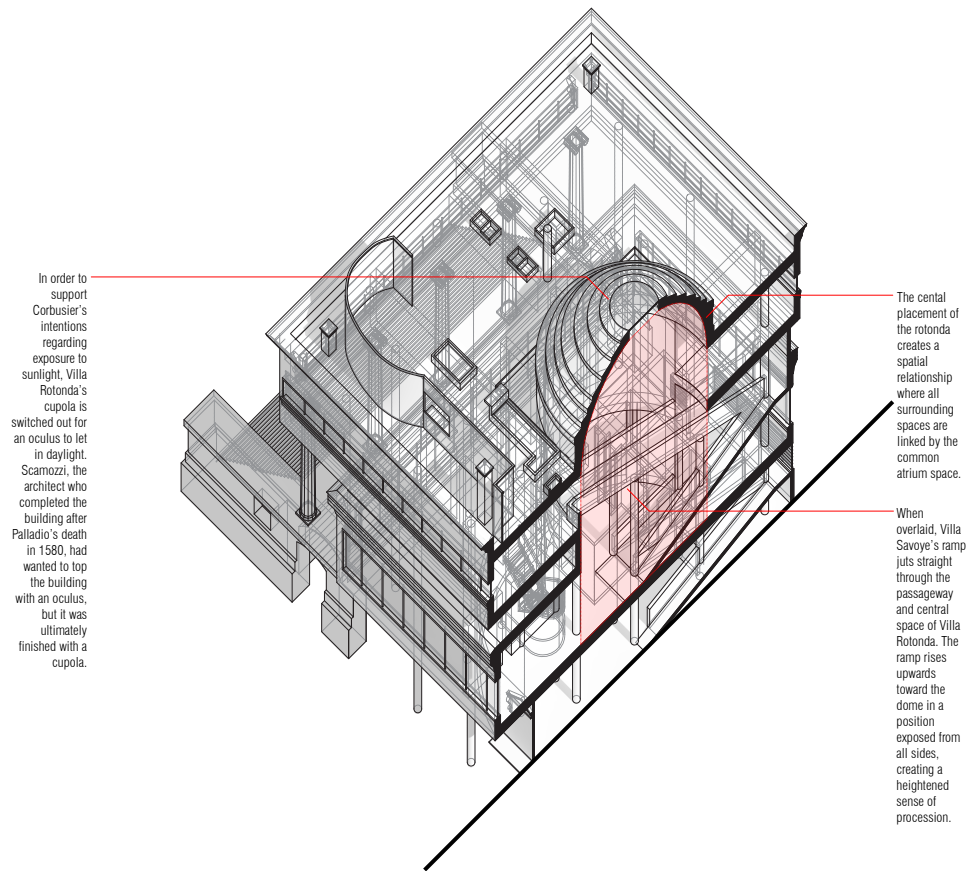


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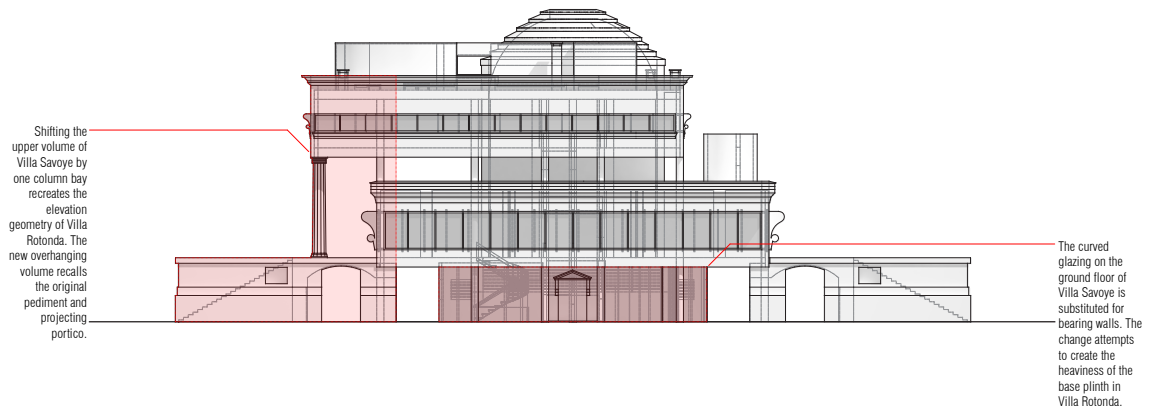
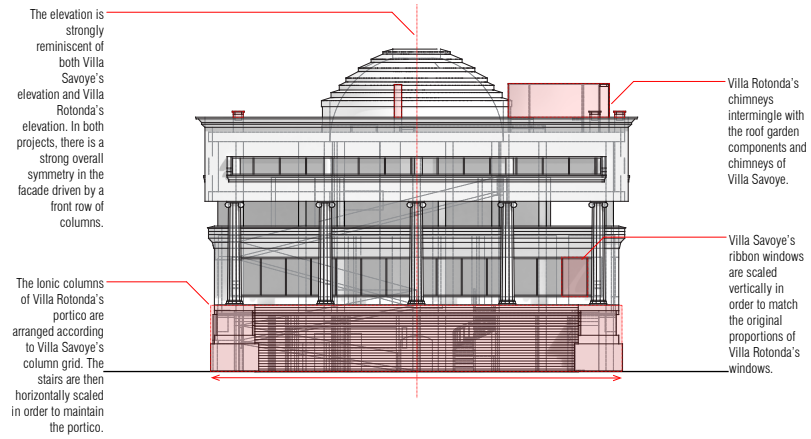




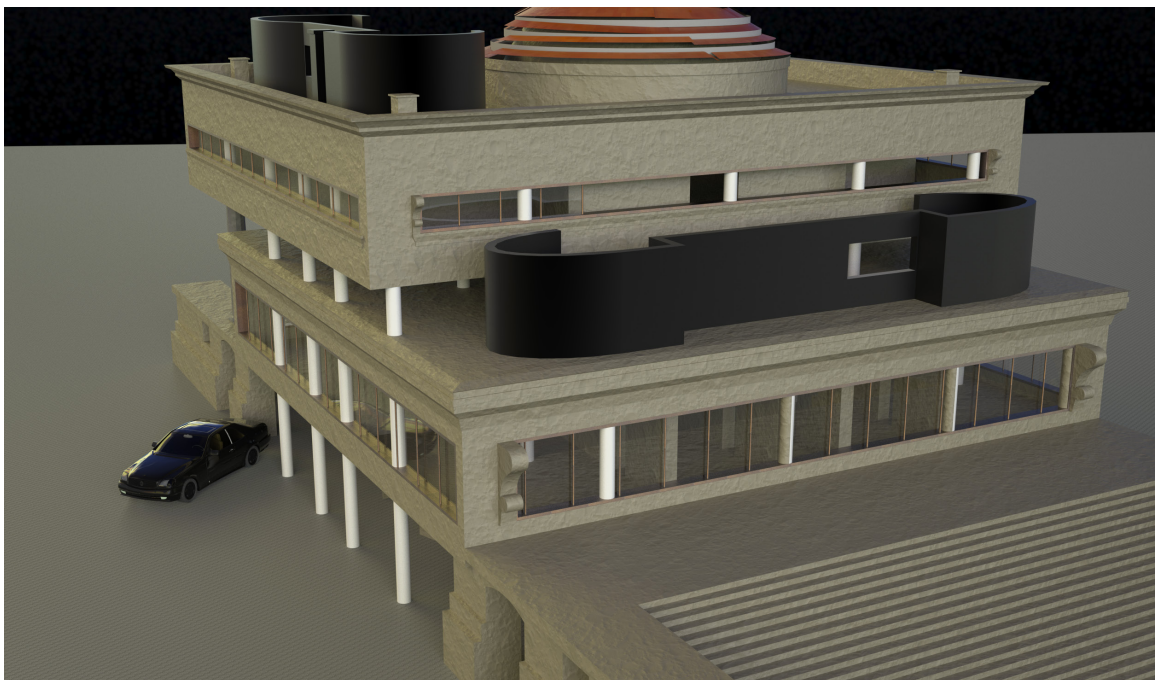
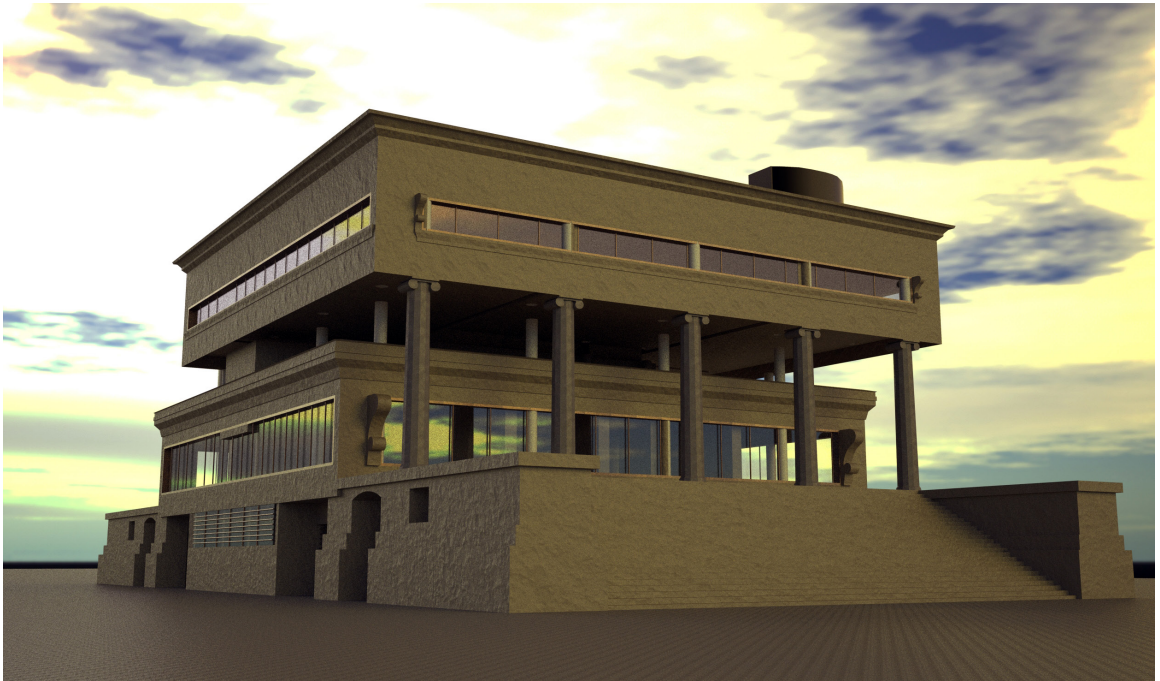
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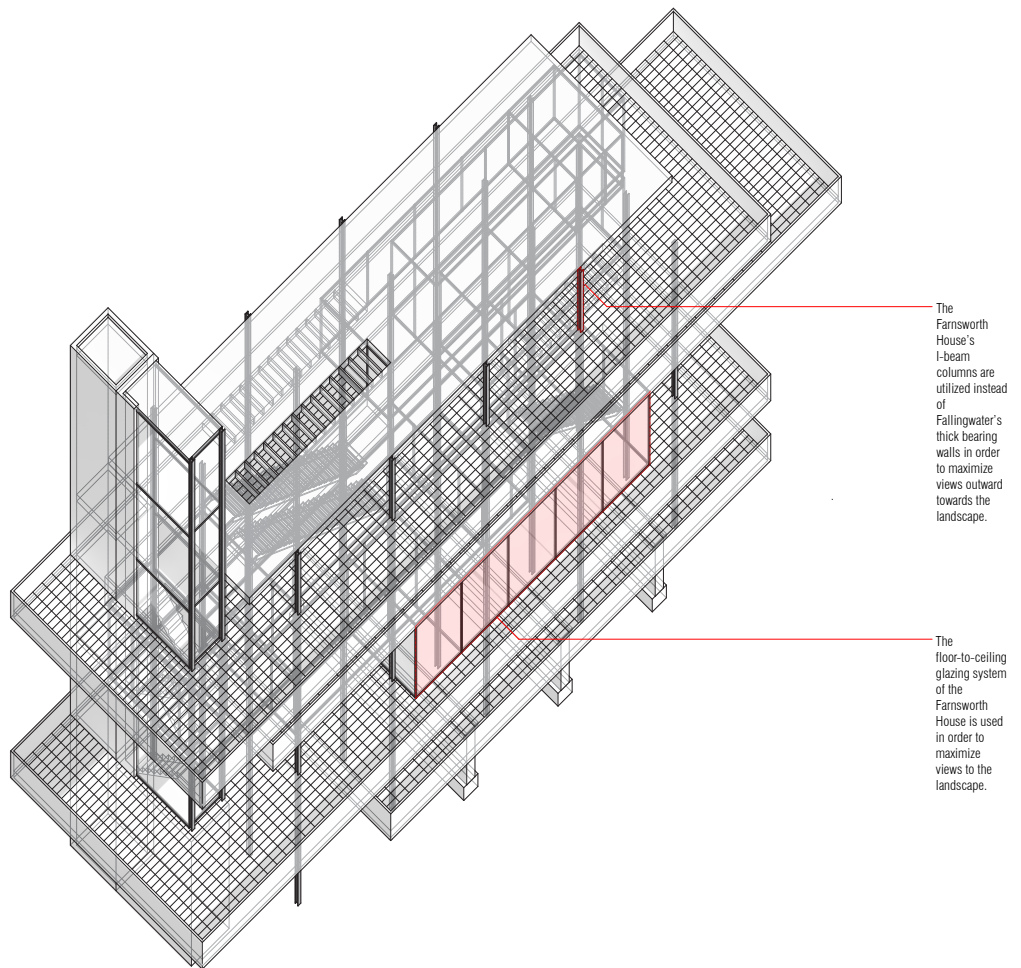
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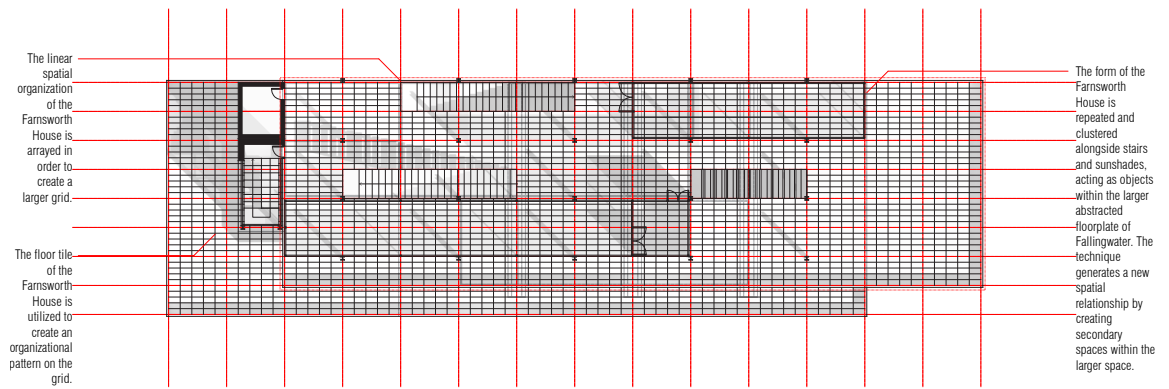


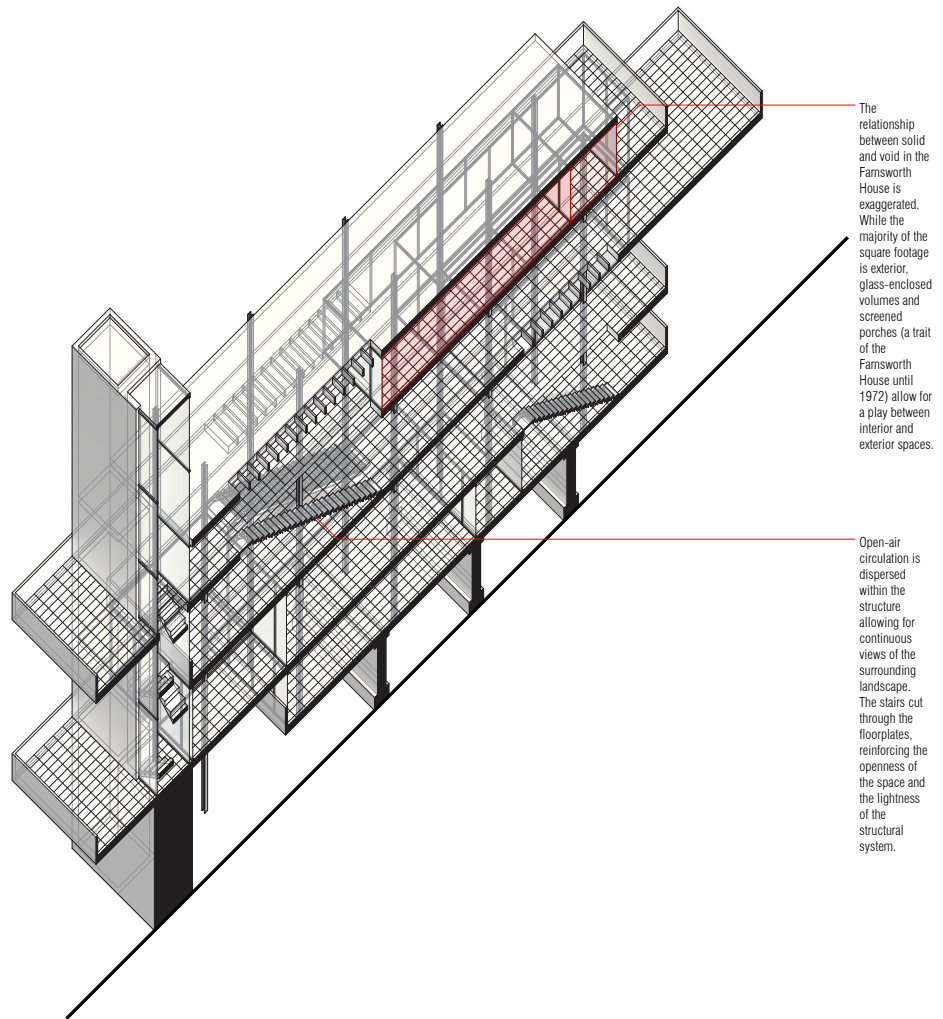
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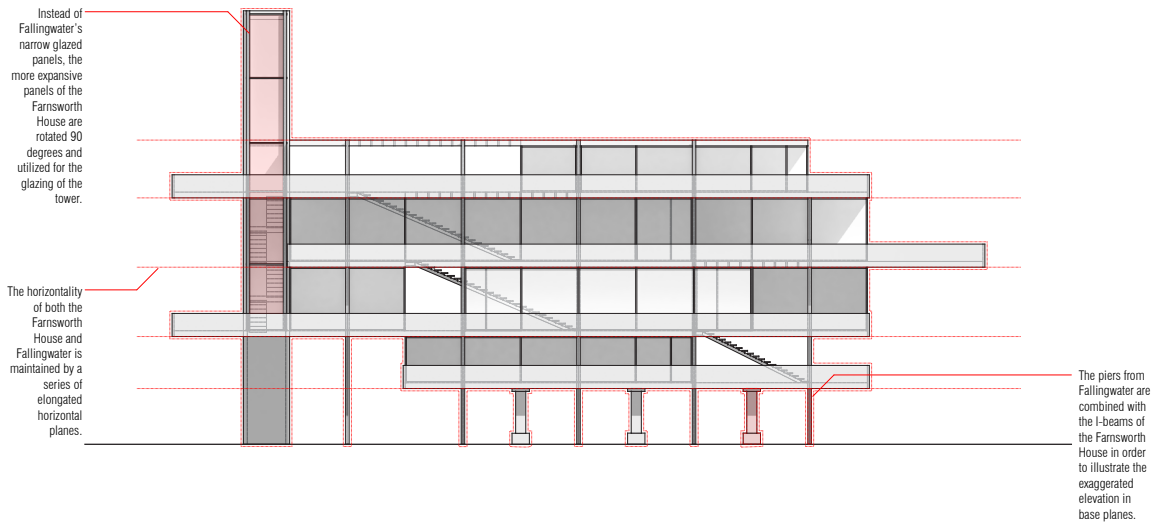
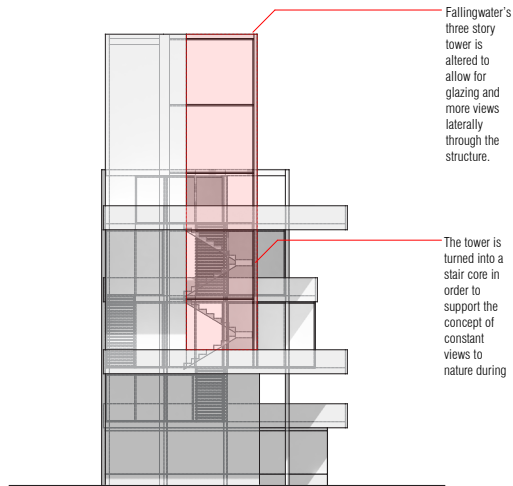
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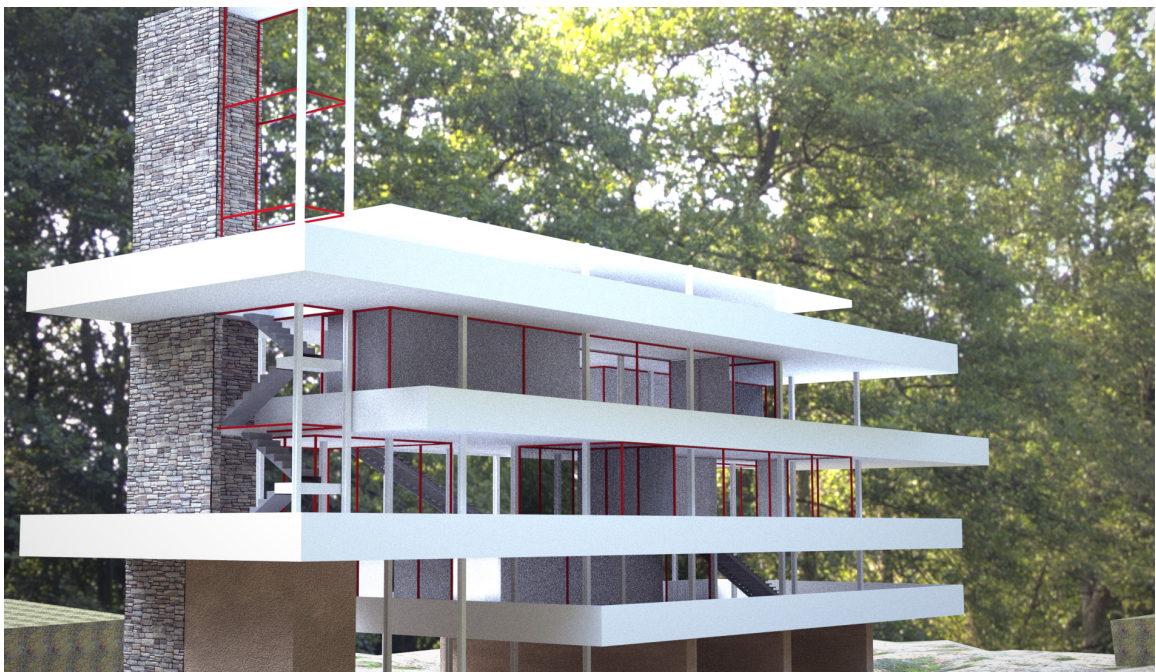
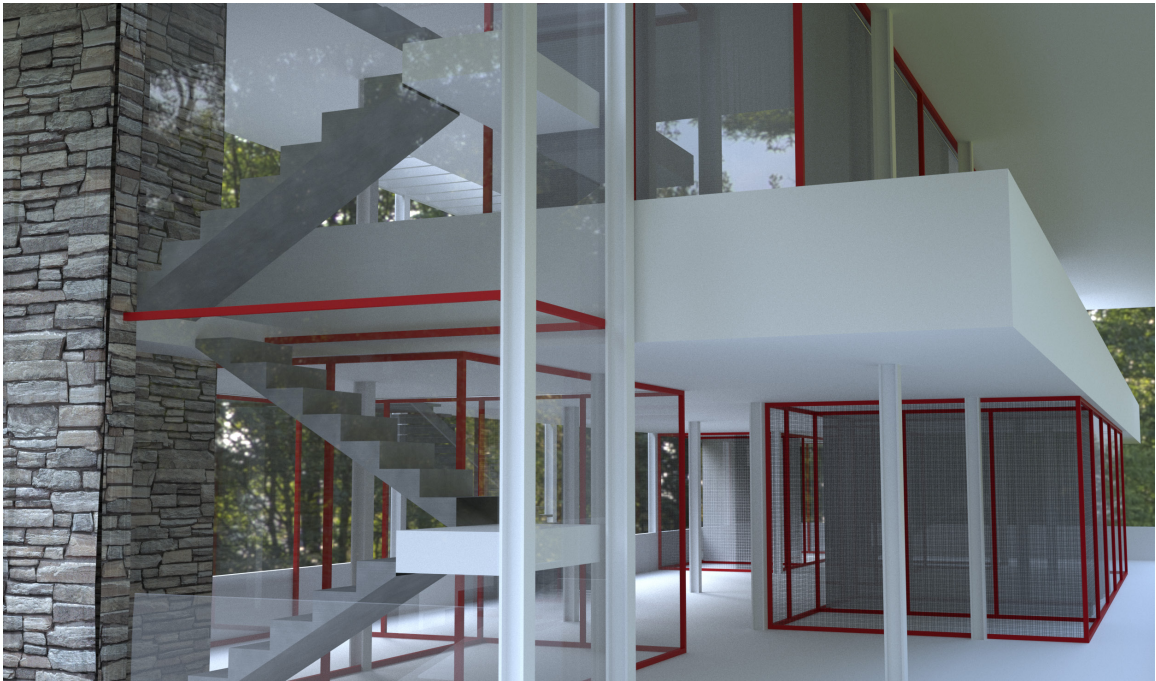




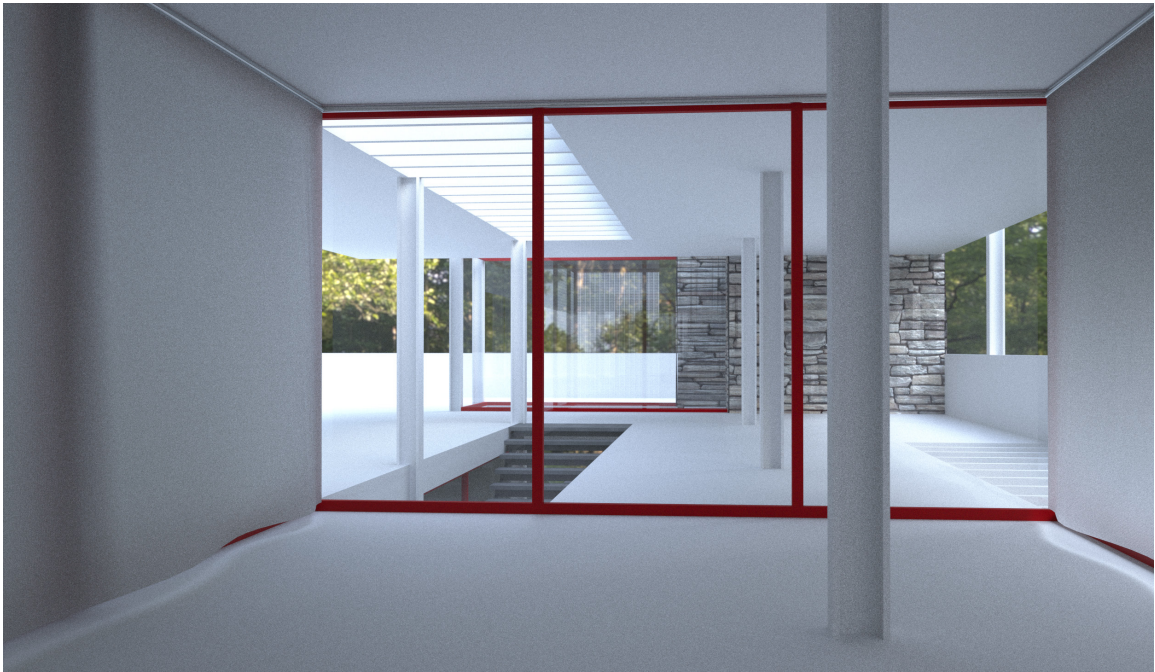
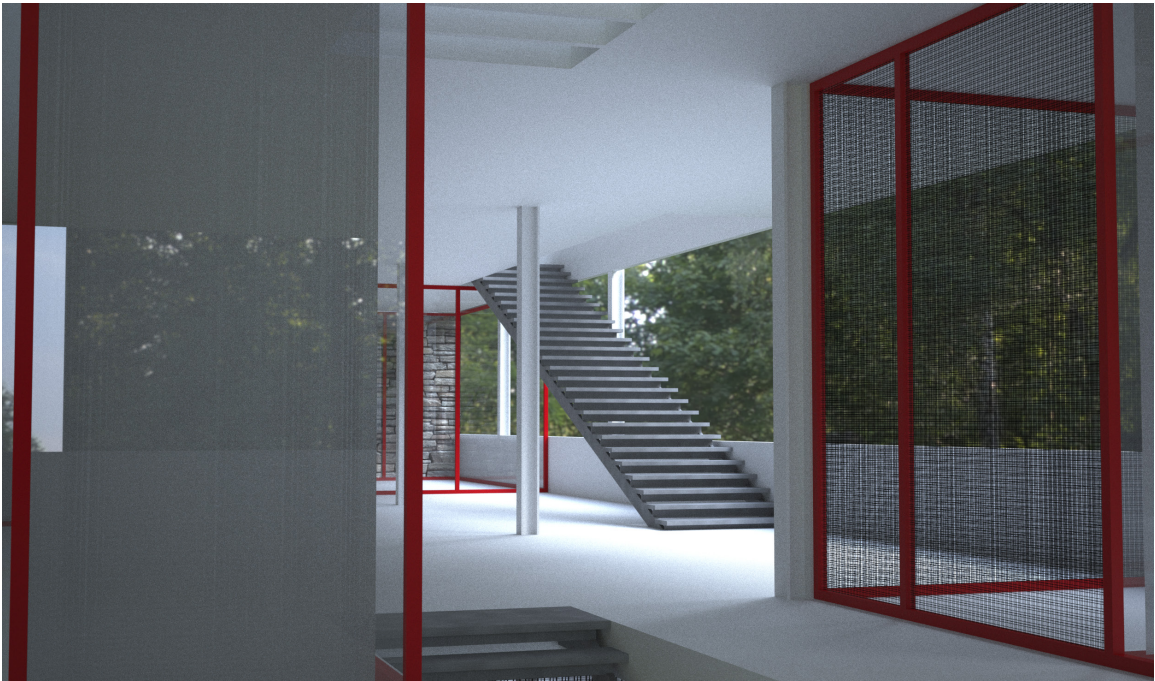
Section



Elevations



Renderings



Renderings

Chapter 5

Conclusion

In conclusion, the project challenges a traditional understanding of architectural authorship, appropriation, and the production and consumption of architecture.

The project contributes to the discipline both by prompting the reconsideration of these canonical works and by providing a new strategy for the generation of architectural form.

In its retrospective sense, the project makes explicit our unbridled access to information and past works. We are living in a network culture, where all material is available to be appropriated and reconsidered; today, there is little notion of origin or originality. The project breaches styles, time periods, and labeling conventions in order to challenge our pre-conceived associations. Simultaneously, new understandings of the works are developed through a careful juxtaposition.

The project also illustrates the strategy of explicit appropriation in producing new form. Through appropriation, fidelity to the original is lost, and the intention for producing the copy becomes embedded in the product itself. Meaning is rewritten. Through the repetition of form, the appropriated work translates into something new, with additional layers of complexity developed through reference. The combination of unrelated forms results in a hybrid that was previously unimaginable, prompting a speculative questioning of what is possible.