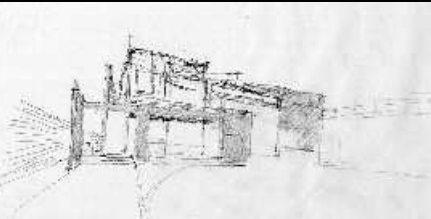


SHARING  
IDENTITY



OUT THE SEVERITY OF PHYSICALITY STILL PRESENT IN THIRD WORLD PLACES (EVEN WHILE THEY BECOM

NEELANGARAI HOUSE  
madras india  
1998

[independent work]

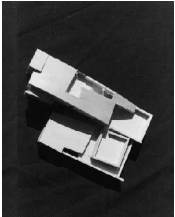
Within an extruded load bearing masonry culture of construction, the plan-lines are very important.

Various forces dynamically act in "drawing" the foot-prints of the two houses: A complex perimeter of the site maps the chaotic parceling of the periphery of the city, and simultaneously bears imprints of its non-gridded structure; The adherence to "Vasthu" principles, the Indian equivalent to Feng-Shui as required by the two owners. Within these limits, the notional focus of the project was the interplay of *sharing* (two families own this site), and *identity* (independent houses).

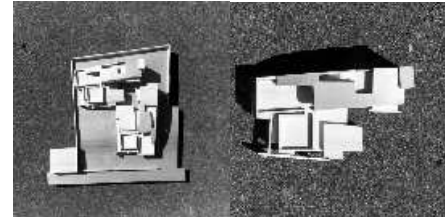
Two almost similar houses, through spatial extensions and translations of their own generative lines (which is first determined by their relative site location and Vasthu) influence each other, and in the process, appropriate the site as *common*: the most significant physical manifestation of their sharing.

Each house becomes an apparatus to absorb, extend and record archeologically the city's influence. This, not intended for a future "reading" (fact-finding), but to engender a particularity: subtle and subsumed and realized through lived experience.

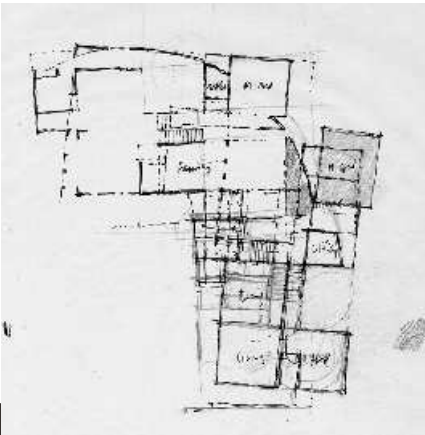
roof: house B



model views: roof

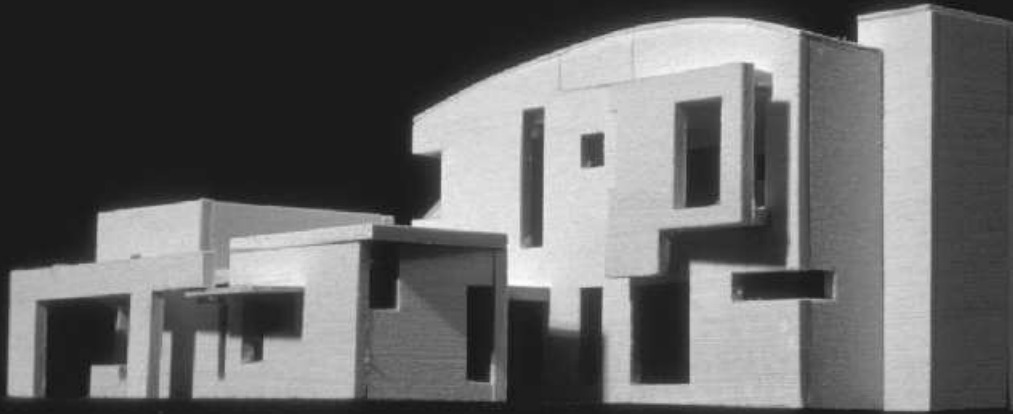


E P I C T U R I S E D B Y T H E M E D I A ) A N D T H E S E V E R I T Y O F S E P A R A T I O N O F P L A C E S F R O M P H Y S I C A L I T Y I N T H E



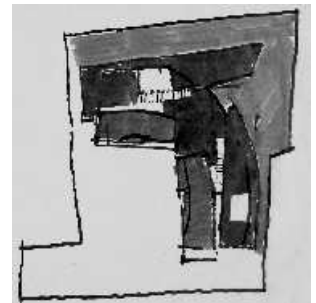
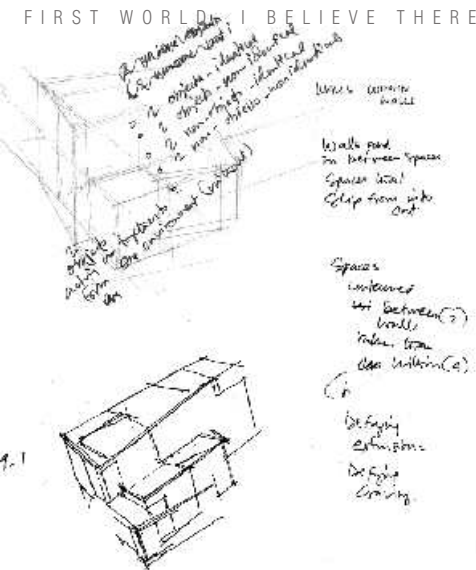
21

plan study



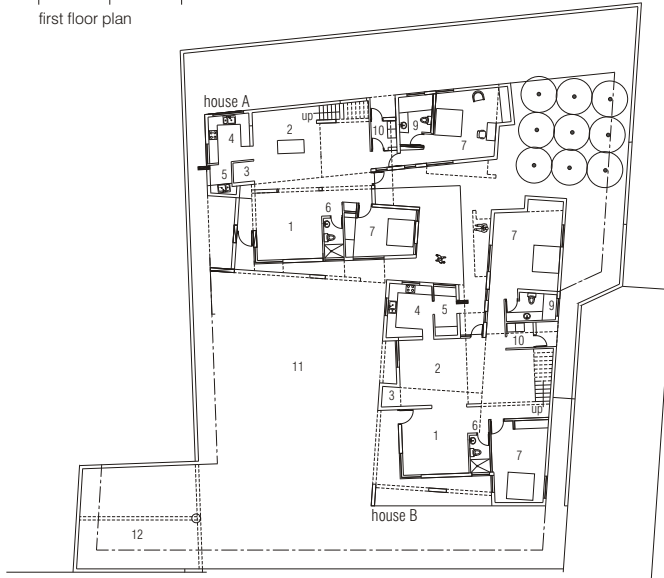
view of house A

FIRST WORLD, I BELIEVE THERE IS AN INBETWEENNESS THAT MARKS ARCHITECTURE/PLACE. THERE IS A



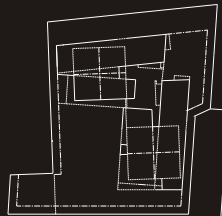
conceptual sketch

0 16 32 ft  
first floor plan

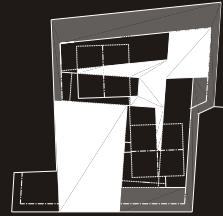


- 1 Living Room
- 2 Dining Room
- 3 Pooja
- 4 Kitchen
- 5 Service
- 6 Toilet
- 7 Bedroom
- 8 Master Bedroom
- 9 Master Bath
- 10 Laundry
- 11 East Court
- 12 Garage
- 13 Multipurpose
- 14 Balcony
- 15 Light "Scoop"

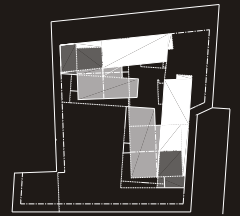
FINE LINE THAT HOLDS THE IMPERCEPTIBLE SPACE OF DIALOGUE, INTERACTION, WHERE DUALITIES MEET



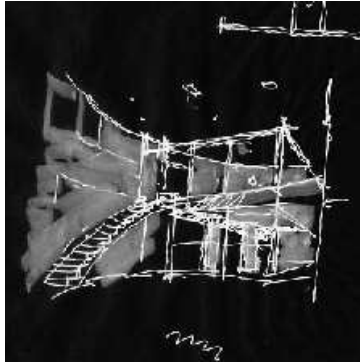
Lines/Traces



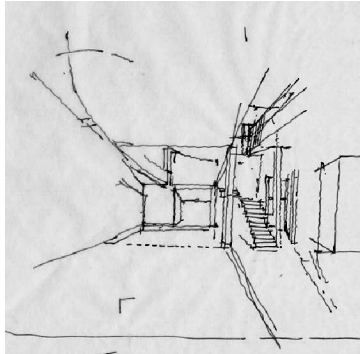
GROUND/figure



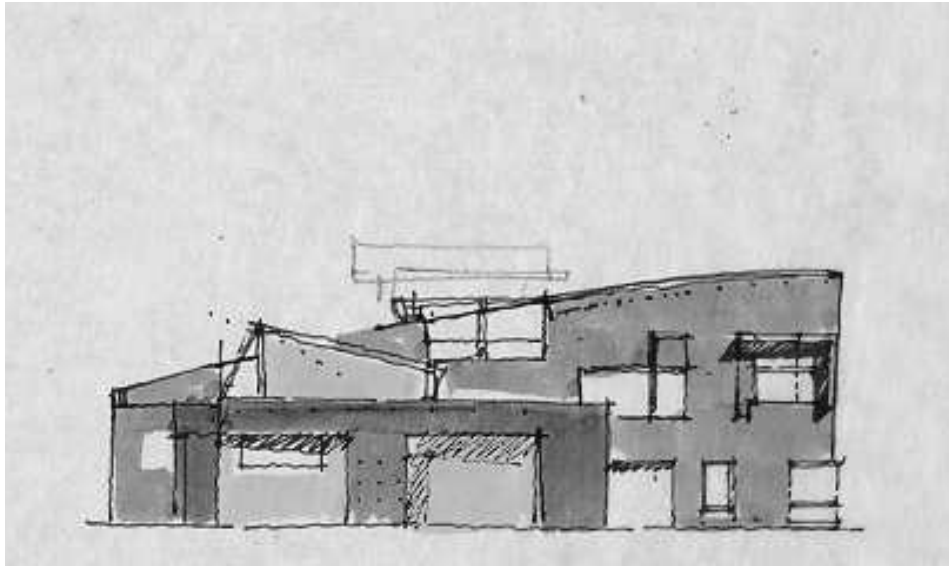
ground/FIGURE

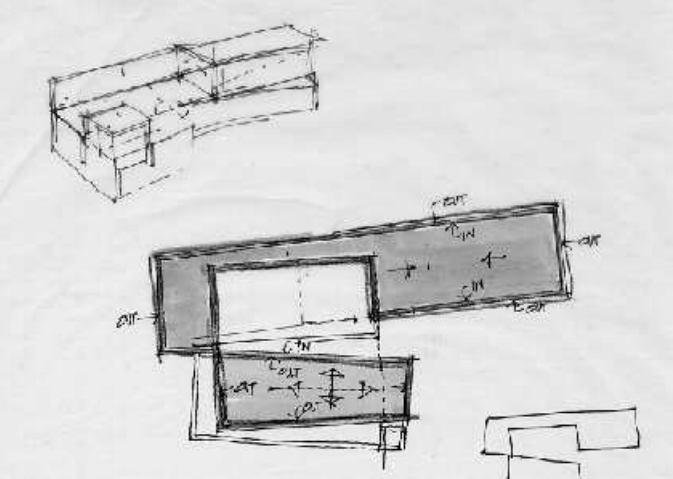


conceptual sketches



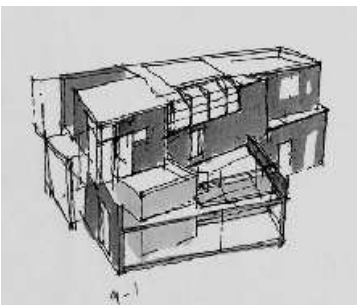
WITHOUT MERGING. > THE LINE YOU PASS AT 65 MILES AN HOUR WHERE THE RADIO WAVES OF STATION



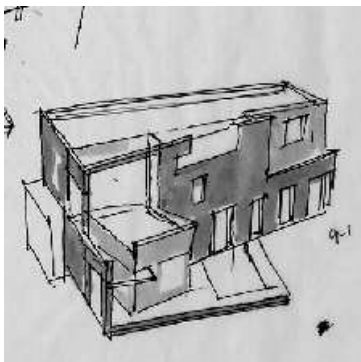


unraveling line

volume studies



I DIES. THE LINE THAT BECOMES/MOVES AS THE HEADLIGHT OF A CAR ILLUMINATES A CURB FROM THE



## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The two houses have been designed to be similar in many aspects without being identical. While duplication was consciously rejected, so too was any attempt to "custom tailor" each house to any perceived uniqueness of the families. The latter seems to portend artificial differences and a sense of severance.

Differences in each house arise largely through relative location of each house to the site; this, even while maintaining common programmatic requirements which includes broad principles of Vasthu:

1. Both houses are placed to be most open to the east and north directions and to reject the inauspicious influences from the west and south.
2. Both houses are entered at their north-east corner.
3. Kitchens in both houses assume the south-east corners
4. The Master bedrooms assume the south-west corners
5. The massing of each house increases in height toward the south-west corner

As the two families choose their house based on its uniqueness they innately choose a relative location within the site.

## THE PROGRAM

Although exact square footages of individual spaces vary between the houses they are provided with the same set of spaces (refer plans). Essentially they are each a three bed room house with an additional multi-functional room that accesses the terrace and can be used for sleeping. A common two-car portico is set away at the Southeast corner of the lot preventing an unwanted encumbrance to the two residences.

## THE PARTI

The two houses are pushed to the west and south extremities of the site, as much as building set back lines would permit. This allows the two houses to cooperatively form a series of three exterior spaces that traverse the site diagonally.

### The Court of East Light

A large frontal East court to which both houses are most open to is the most critical element through which the two houses set themselves apart as well as formally relate to each other. It is from this court that the independence of each house is most apparent.

### The Court of Formed Space

An intimately sized mid court, protected from harsh and hot sun by the high volumes, is the most physical connection between the houses and is the most shared space.

### The Court of Trees/Formed Volume

A discernable court in the north-west corner of the lot is defined through a filling of the space with trees. The filter and mass of the trees symbolically and practically protect the two houses and the connecting tissue of their outdoor spaces.

## MASSING

Volumetrically the house simply responds to the cardinal directions and with respect to Vastu Sastrha. Each house rises toward the west and the South in symbolic act of defense and protection and decrease toward south and East in receptive gesture.

*Aside:*

*The roof is not a FIGURATIVE element but inhabited space under the divine vault*

The act of roofing in the gravity bound construction-culture is a process of Plan extrusion and capping. This project begins with adherence to this convention and then deviates in selectively claiming some portions of the roof as habitable spaces. The forming of terraces is intended to not only create a certain hierarchy and rhythm but also act to "trace" and emphasize the spatial organization of the houses. At its most deviant and inventive form a terrace is found embedded and protected within the hold of the sweeping curve roof of each house.

## MATERIALS/ ARTICULATION

Each house is composed of two discernable volumes. The protecting/silent mass to the south and the west back the lower more articulate frontal volumes in each house. The intention is to clad the primary volume in some dark masonry: Large blocks (24" x 12" w/staggered joints) of stone of bluish hue or stained pre-cast concrete panels used like veneer stone. The lower masses are intended to be plastered and painted in light color. Screen walls in the front of each house begin a layering of spaces between outside and inside.

The protective west face of House-B and south face of House-A are seen as hard shells, akin to the relatively mute but hard crust of an amethyst rock that belies the vibrant crystalline innards that it holds and protects. Thus each house embodies a condition of duality that it attempts to dynamically resolve: a condition that characterizes the whole project.

(conceptual notes presented to client)

Two families that will to share a site a location, and create one common shared place that will be the domain of two houses. This is the essential beginning of this project, which prompts us to consider the notions of sharing and of identity.

#### OPTIONS (FORMAL

Two identical entities that are objects

Two non-identical objects that are objects

Two identical entities that are non objects

Two non-identical entities that are non objects

(Objects are of a self-referential spirit while non-objects are of self effacing spirit)

The site, the common pre-existing beginning will transform the house(s) and will be itself transformed. The process then is not to create the two houses (exercising any one of options above) on the (mute) site or even for the site but rather with the site.

*(The topography of this site is its edges and its relation to the sun)*

#### STRATEGY

An attempt to physically tie the houses to the site and therefore, by implication to each other, alleviates the anxieties of having to make a formalist choice founded on imagery (viz. a viz. Options above) as the point of departure. Two strategies are concurrently employed in this attempt.

First is the process of tracing edges and boundaries of each house based on its relative location within the site and extending its influence to the other house. This two dimensional, yet dynamic process, treats the site as palimpsest upon which is found a trace of lines seemingly drawn in one continuous motion of a pen.

*Contextual aside: A culture limited to masonry means of construction wherein delimiting lines/ and walls are extruded upwards;*

*Traditional walls contain space*

*Shared (common) lines = Shared walls. Party walls are shared walls that separate space. Here the sharing of the walls is through extension. Lines of influence extend from one to the other and back in continuous and seemingly endless way. Space*

*(common/Exterior) is "held" (rather than be contained) in this process. These extensions, tracing and projecting of lines begin at the boundaries of the site.*

*Tracing differences underlying superficial similarities (and vice-versa)=tracing as process of discovery through lived experience.*

*Tracing the contours of one entity on to another.*

The second process, the adherence to broad principles to Vastu, informs the first. Consideration of the cardinal directions and the Sun prevents the process from becoming a merely two-dimensional exercise.

Each house becomes an instrument, a reference for the other to trace and establish its own identity. Differences and similarities found in both houses are not resulted from conscious design application, but instead through the natural influence of the site. To immediate observation the two houses seem almost identical. But closer inspection (inhabitation) would reveal subtle as well as substantial difference that are present. Furthermore there could also be a discovery of lodged relationships between the houses: Walls extend from one house to other enclosing spaces and establishing continuity that leaps across.