

**FOUR SQUARED HOUSE PROJECT
“FABRICATING FICTIONS” EXHIBITION**

CHICAGO ARCHITECTURAL CLUB 1997

THEORETICAL OVERLAY:

The arrangement of the house in plan and elevation is based on the traditional four-square house type common to Illinois prairie farmhouses. Its compact square plan and two story configuration is climatically appropriate to cold winters.

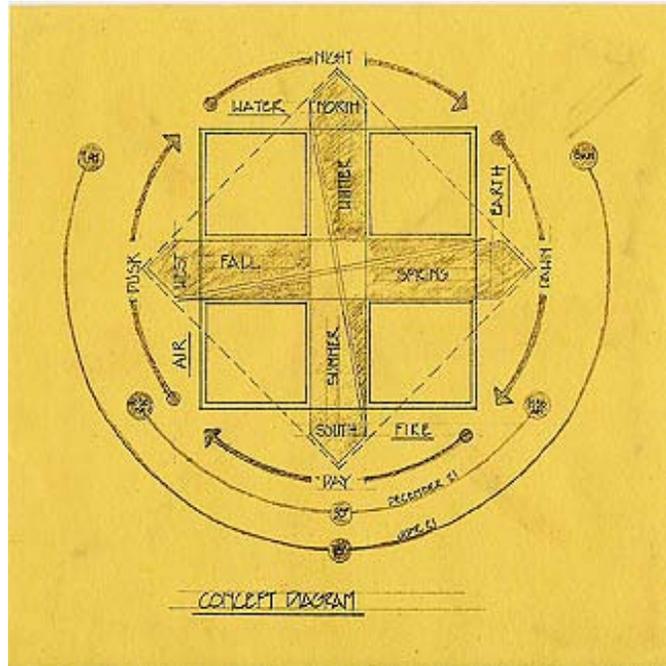
The plan employs a square of 30 feet and a rotated square (diamond) of the same size. The basic square is composed of a tartan grid of 12-foot squares separated by 6-foot rectangles. The squares are at the corners, forming the principle rooms, and the rectangles form the minor rooms and circulation

Overlaid on the exploration of this house type are four sets of four:

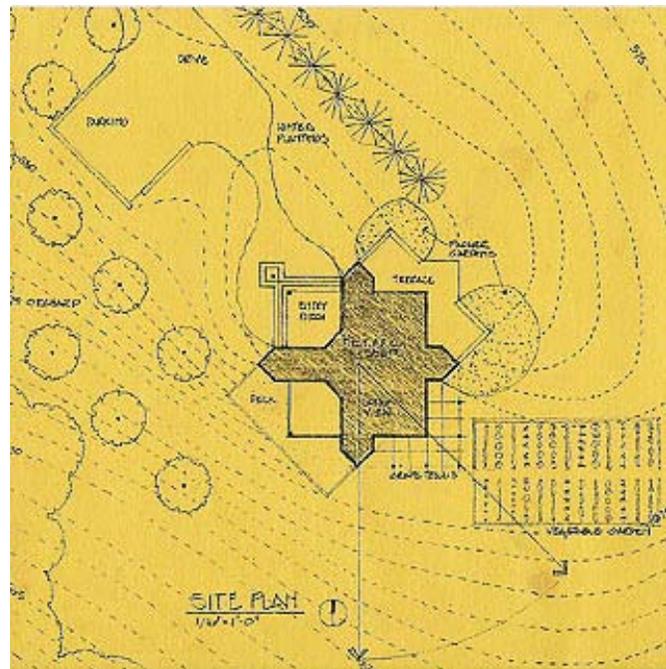
- compass points (north, east, south, west)
- ancient elements (water, earth, fire, air)
- seasons (winter, spring, summer, fall)
- times of day (night, dawn, day, dusk)

The “four sets of four” are represented and reinforced in various ways:

- location of rooms
- times when rooms are most used
- where the sun (and is not)
- the particular elements of the house (fireplace, outdoor shower, terrace, screened porch)
- the gardens with their focus on particular seasons



CONCEPT DIAGRAM



SITE PLAN

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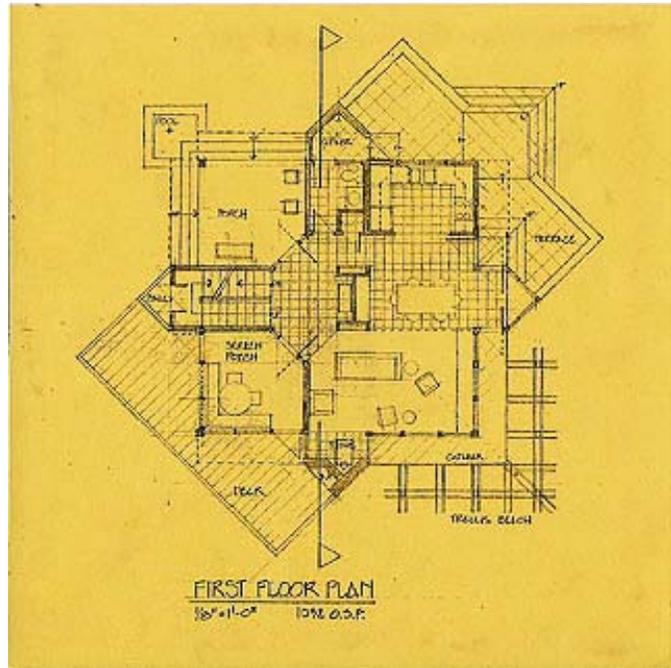
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PROGRAM:

A year round getaway house on a 25 acre hilltop site at the edge of Shawnee National Forest in Southern Illinois. The clients are a professional couple from Chicago and their extended family. The purpose of the house is to be a retreat from city life, a “villa,” a place to affect and be affected by the natural world. The clients want the house to be both efficient and affordable; intimate enough for a couple or small family visit, but also accommodate larger day gatherings and overnight stays of the whole extended family or guests, with some sense of privacy.

The house should employ sustainable design practices – passive solar energy, natural ventilation, grey water system, wood stove heating, e.g. It should also take advantage of local and regional customs for aesthetic, functional and physical comfort reasons. Locally available and on-site materials should be used where possible.

The site is approached from a steep drive leading to a ridge-top lane. it includes open meadows, evergreen and deciduous woods, and a pond. Orchards and flower, vegetable gardens are to be developed and some outbuildings may be required in the future. Long views from the house location are primarily to the south and east. Orchards and trees are close on the west and the ridge-top lane is to the north.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

Architecture and Conservation P. C.

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FICTION:

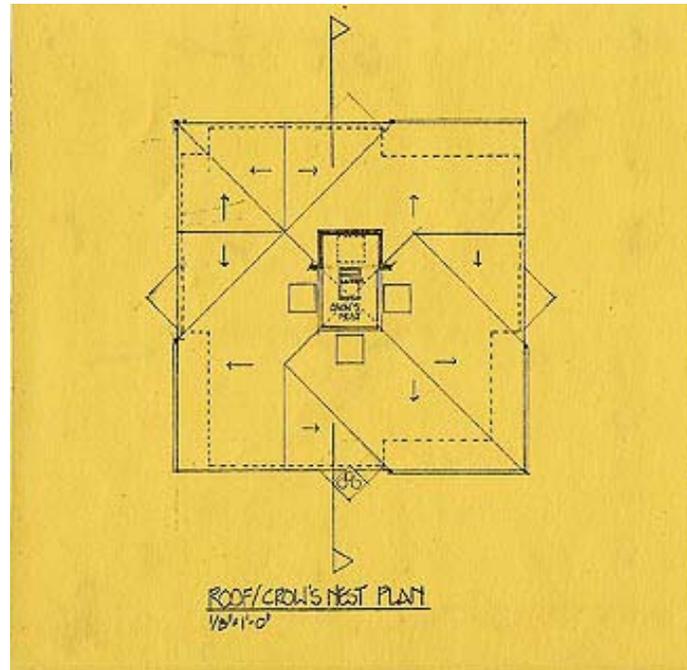
In the world of architecture created and lived in by my imagination, these “fictions” involve the ceremonial, the idealized experience of the life of the place, as opposed to the reality of the day-to-day experience as it is lived – at high speed without much taking much notice of our surroundings. Instead of masking experiences with electronic devices that think for us and provide continuous background music during all our waking hours (as is often my custom), my imaginary people attempt to *be* in this place *here and now* with a Zen-like focus. Hence the vision that follows as we walk through this house through a day and through a year; with apologies to T.S. Eliot and James Agee.

I

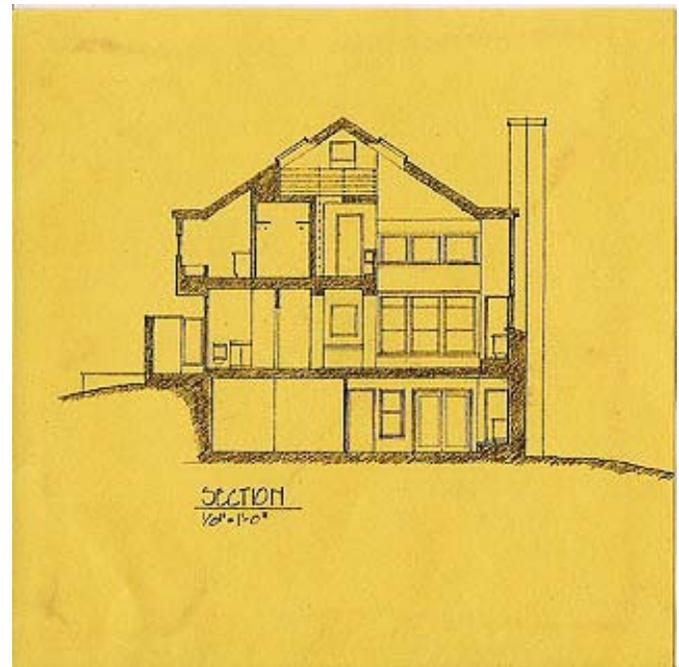
Strong cold wind from the north
 Brings night, brings winter
 Brings us up the hill, through the trees
 Along the ridge path leaving tracks.
 Cold, pale, barren winter,
 Silent and strangely bright
 In the purple snow under the blue-black sky.
 Four square house ahead, hip hooded,
 hunkered down.
 Porch, peaks, welcoming windows
 glowing yellow
 With light of warm life-within.
 Stamp boots, step in, shut door
 To dry and thaw beside the fire.

II

Rise, rub eyes, descend stairs, turn east,
 Called by smells of coffee and kitchen sounds.
 Wash out sleep under a corner of sky.
 Step out onto damp, cool stories
 And be warmed by the sun still rising,
 strong and low
 Over a flowering meadow slope
 Down to an edge of pale green trees.
 Vernal smells of cut grass and plowed earth
 Enter through newly opened windows.



ROOF / CROW'S NEST PLAN



SECTION

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FICTION (CONTINUED):

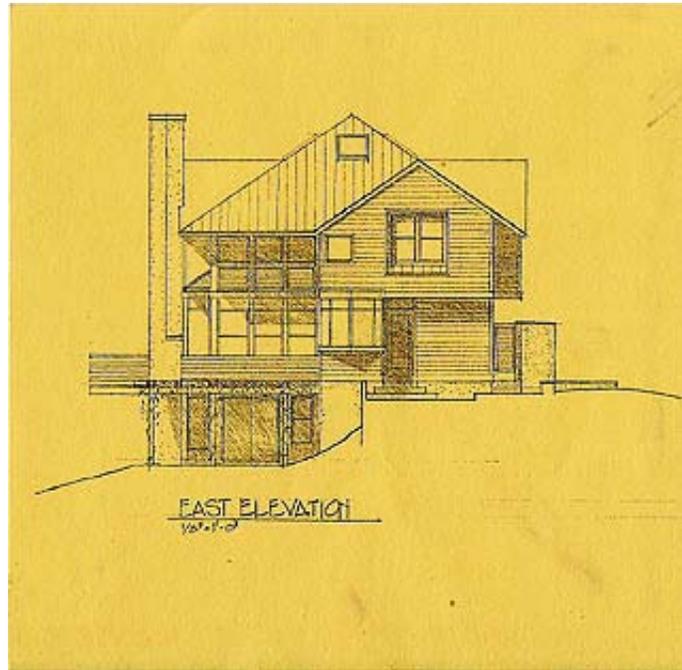
III

From out of the south summer saunters slowly
Up the big rivers to sit hot and motionless.
White blades whip the air in that tall room
Rustling the white shrouded furniture.
Through half-shuttered windows
the long view over treetops
Reveals advancing green-black clouds.
A bright electric burst strikes at a distant water
tower.
The rumble follows late and with windy gusts
A neat long line of falling water approaches
swiftly.
It beats down hard on that hot metal roof
Pouring off into a pool and filling cisterns.
Ending quickly, suddenly as it began, steam rising,
Bring damp thick smells of faraway oceans
and the return of the cicadas' whirring sounds.

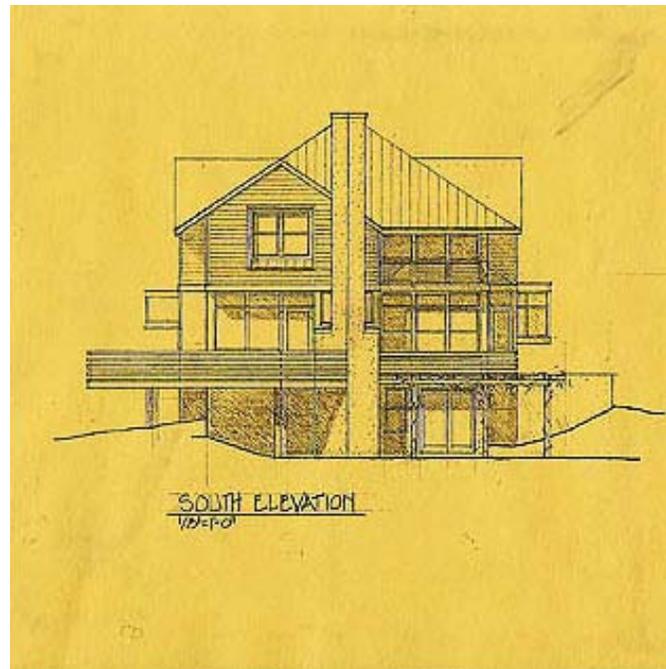
IV

*It has become that time of evening
when people sit on their porches,
rocking gently and talking gently...
about nothing at all.*

The pungent smell of too-ripe apples
And leaf smoke are brought close on autumn air.
As cards are dealt and talk persists
The sun slides down,
orange behind black trees, soon gone.
The western sky turns deeper blue until those trees,
No longer visible, still give sense
Of their near-distant presence.
Children grumble as they climb up to bed.
The screen door slaps and gravel crunches
As others take their leave. Then only silence,
And borrowed window light remain.



EAST ELEVATION



SOUTH ELEVATION

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