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Images of a House

Christine Czyzewski

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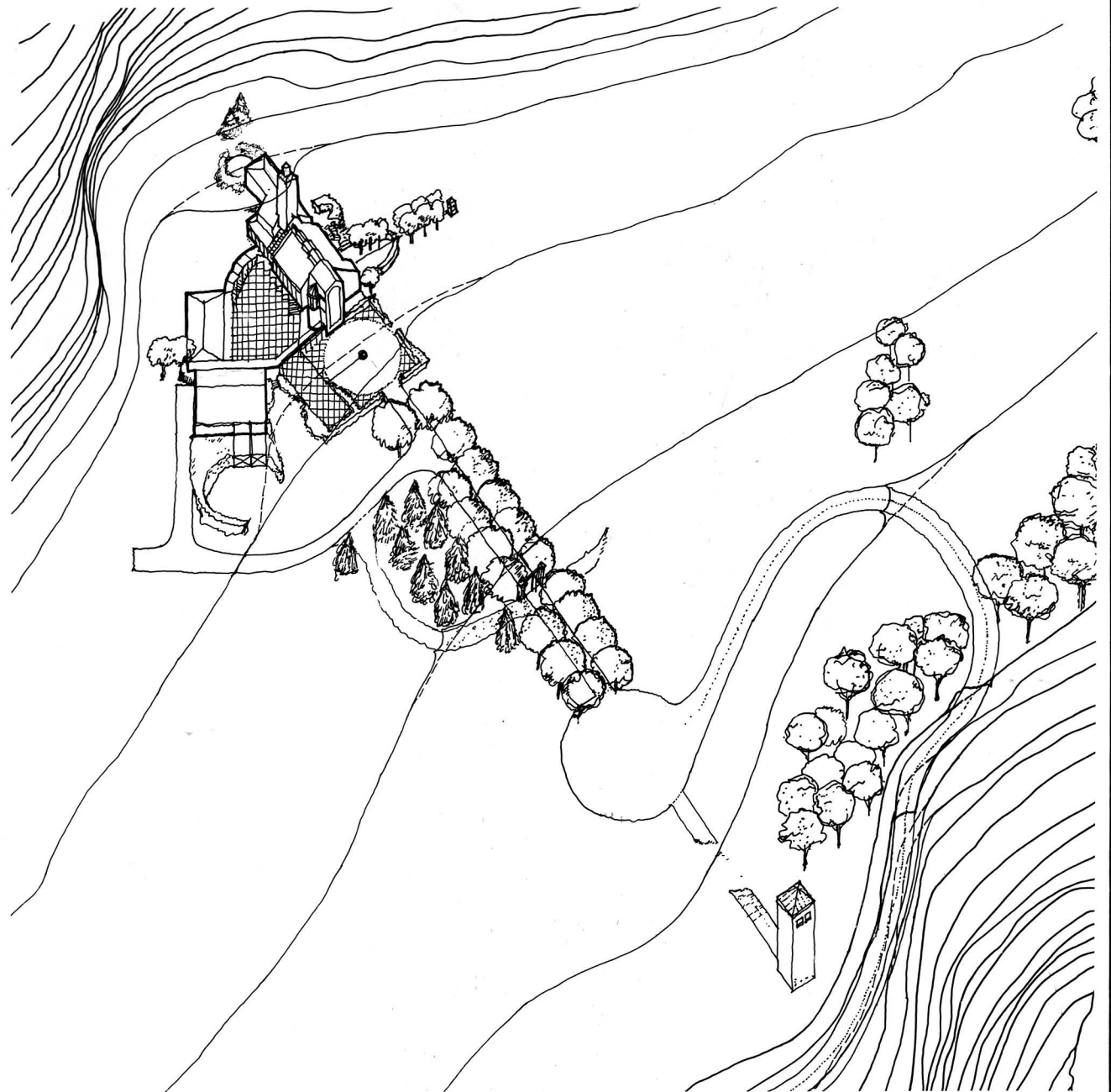
Images of a House

Christine Czyzewski

Critics: Bob Burnham
Dale Bryant
Gene Ernst

This house embodies the dreams of its hypothetical owners by employing symbolic expression. "Symbolic expression," Susanne Langer emphasizes, "is something miles removed from provident planning or good arrangement. It does not suggest things to do, but embodies the feeling, the rhythm, the passion or sobriety, frivolity or fear with which any things at all are done"¹. The investing of things with a symbolic meaning or character is very different from using signals, since "a signal is comprehended if it serves to make us notice the object or situation it bespeaks. A symbol is understood when we conceive the idea it presents."² Symbolism thus becomes a language of duality, speaking on two levels at once. In design it speaks on one level to the populace who can decode the references to traditional building types, and on the second level it speaks to a few people who are able to read a specific meaning.³

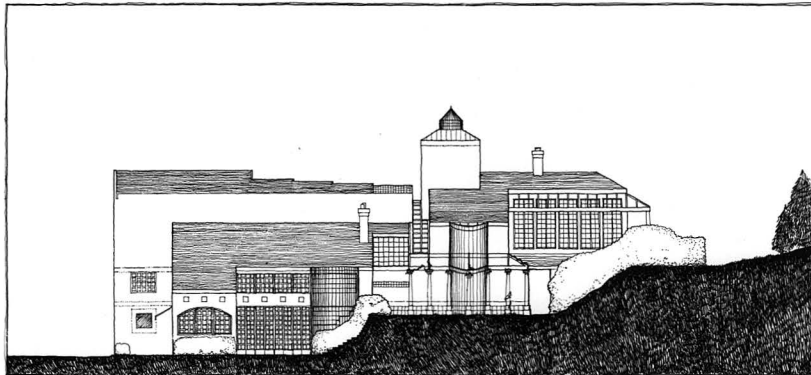
The meaning of symbolism, as expressed by Jung, is that "the symbol is not a sign that veils something everybody knows . . . on the contrary, it represents an attempt to elucidate, by means of analogy, something that still belongs entirely to the domain of the unknown or something that is yet to be."⁴ The "something that is yet to be" is an archetype buried in the collective unconscious. The archetype, or idea, has to be publically realized



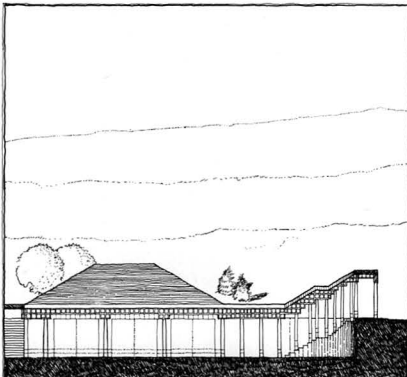
Site axonometric



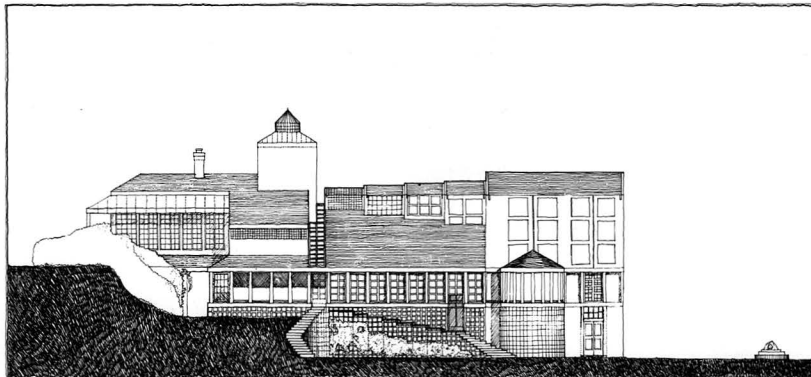
Northwest Elevation



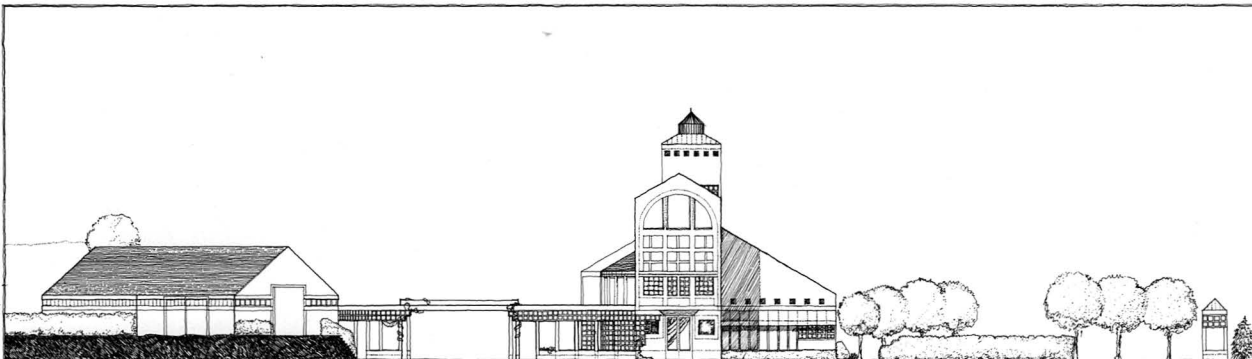
Northeast Elevation



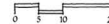
Inner Courtyard Elevation



Southwest Elevation



Southeast Elevation



and its meaning extracted. This was accomplished through a hypothetical dialogue with the clients in which they expressed their dreams. Those dreams were then transformed into possible symbolic notions and images: 1) House as a Natural Mother Earth; 2) House as a Vertical Being; and 3) House as a Concentrated Being—the concept of Core/Periphery. These images were then studied to determine their potential for the ordering of the house.

House as a Natural Mother Being

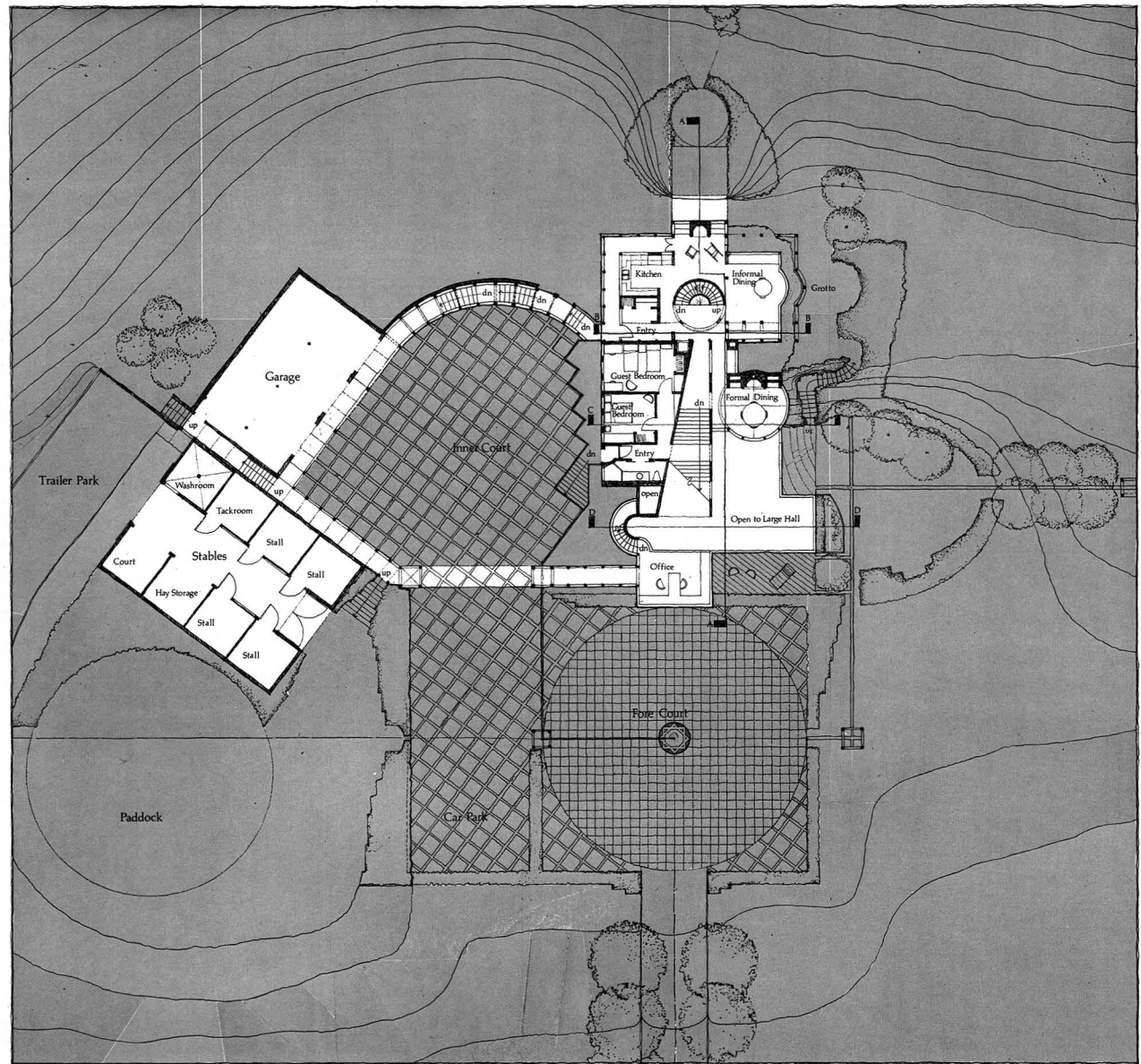
The evolution of the house has symbolized a rebirth in that man moved out of the protection of his primitive cave dwelling into a bright and new world. The return to Mother Earth's womb is a recurring theme in dreams: "To build a house is to create an area of peace, calm and security, a replica of our own mother's womb, where we can leave the world and listen to our own rhythm; it is to create a place of our very own, safe from danger. For once we have crossed the threshold and shut the door behind us, we can be as one with ourselves."¹⁵

House as a Vertical Being

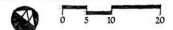
Dreams about the verticality of a house are often thought of as progressing in three steps. In the first step, the foundation and the basement are equated with primitive thought and the subconscious. In the second, the main body of the house is equated with physical reality. In the third, the attic is linked to memory and the mind. Furthermore, the house is thought of in three planes because of the polarity of up and down, and the need for a mediating plane to occur in the middle. Specifically, this house is imagined as a vertical being in a different way by each of the two clients. For the first client, it was seen as a Being that would step up from the plateau, and for the second, as a Being that would rise up and take a human-like stance and dominate the surrounding land.

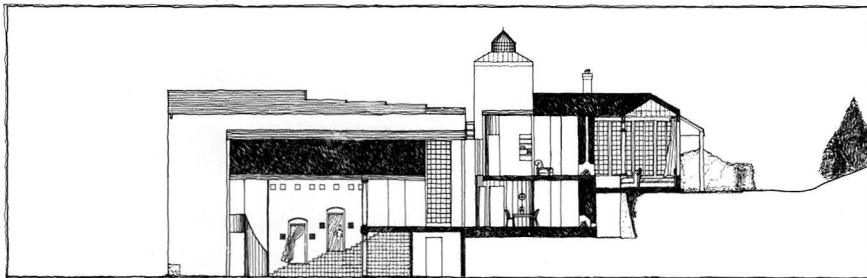
House as a Concentrated Being

According to Yi-Fu Tuan, "the idea of center and periphery in spatial organization is perhaps universal. People everywhere tend to structure space-geographical and cosmological with themselves at the center and with concentric zones (more or less well defined) of decreasing value beyond."⁶ What is suggested by this core/periphery concept is a mandala, or more fundamentally, a circle. As an order-

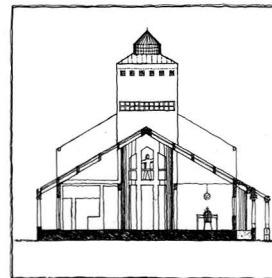


Site Plan with Second Floor

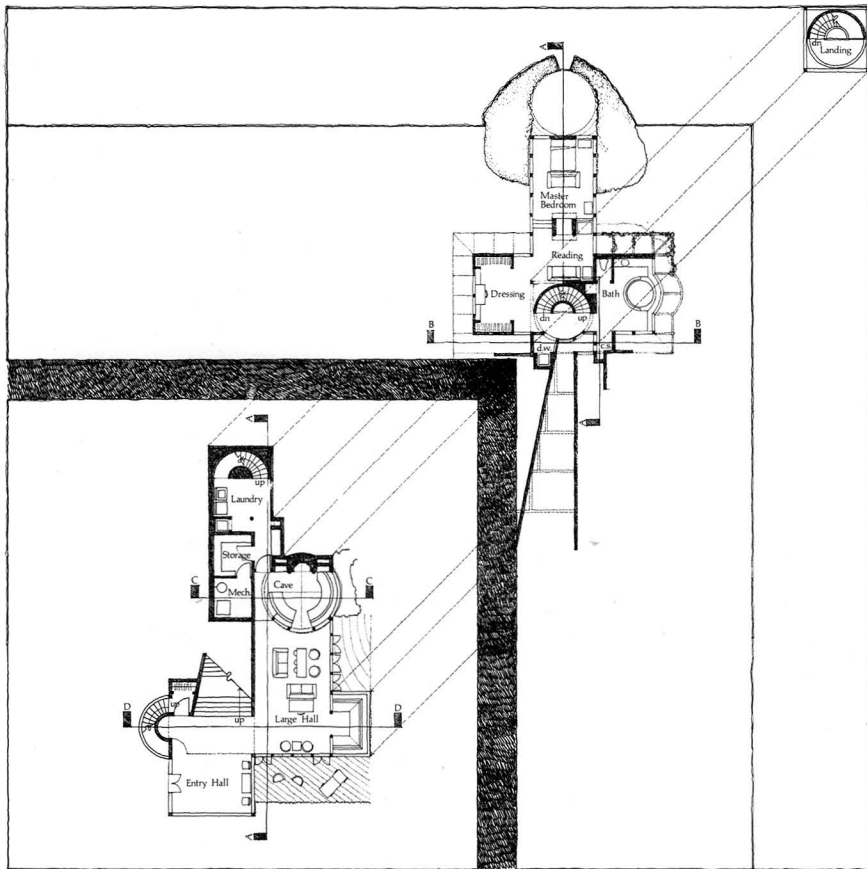




Section AA



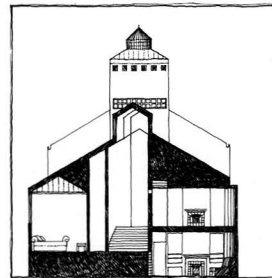
Section BB



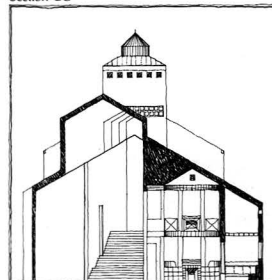
First Floor

Third Floor

Fourth Floor



Section CC



Section DD

ing device, the circle gives a sacred importance to the center of the scheme. All secondary forces radiate from that point. Regarding the egocentric character of the core/periphery concept, Jung states that the circle "expresses the totality of the psyche in all its aspects, including the relationship between man and the whole of nature."⁷ Physically, the core/periphery becomes a "house within a house" and is the outer "cloak" or mask of identity that one presents to the world. It is often seen in dreams as a coat, thus the translation to an "outer identity." The self is symbolized by the inner core, that is, the true rendition of one's inner feelings. The peripheral "cloak" becomes a protective cover for the vulnerable core. This became the major ordering device of both the site and the house.

NOTES

1. Susanne Langer, *Feeling and Form*, New York, 1953, 26.
2. Charles Jencks, *The Language of Post Modern Architecture*, New York, 1977, 6.
3. Calvin S. Hall and Vernon J. Nordby, *A Primer of Jungian Psychology*, New York, 1973, 116.
4. Oliver Marc, *Psychology of the House*, London, 1977, 14.
5. Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia*, New York, 1974, 27.
6. Carl G. Jung, *Man and His Symbols*, New York, 1964, 266.