case study house 12

entry
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There is the story of the amateur inventor who never had a better place
to putter than a corner of a dark and crowded garage. . . . There is the
story of the woman who designed her own clothes and never had anything
but the dining room table to work on. . . . There is the story of the
enthusiastic young photographer who took possession of the family bath
two nights a week.

Was there ever more tortuous procrastination than that imposed by
a stereotyped house?

Take it or leave it or make it what you can. This is the formula built
in rows on 10,000 streets: bedrooms and bath . . . living room, dining
room, breakfast nook, kitchen . . . service porch, garage.

Now here and there is an encouraging sign. The stereotyped pattern of
middle class living is being disrupted by extra-curricular special interest
activities, and in spite of all the away-from-home attractions, these Special
Interests are earning space that is an intrinsic part of the home. And when

the primary and universal living needs are met in a plan, when standard
units are turned out prefabricated in mass production, it is provision for
Special Interests which will make the Jones House an individual house,
different, not in superficial externals or arrangement of rooms, but in
actual character and motivation from the house next door.

So here is the story of the man who has nurtured his rare and wonderful
plants in a lean-to made of lumber scraps. Instead of planning his new
home with the housing for his horticultural collection back of a garage
with the chicken coop, the LATH HOUSE was recognized as a distinguishing
symbol of the client's living pattern and made the dominating motif
of the architectural design.

The plan is so arranged that one loath house provides inviting transition
from the outdoors to the glassed front entrance; another, at the opposite
end of the large multi-use room, makes a background for a free-standing
fireplace. At least one of the loath houses, with decorative and delicate
plants which thrive in a shaded sanctuary, is visible from any part of the
main living area. The effect is particularly rich in contrasting elements
of light and shadow, sun warmth, fire warmth, and cool forest-like shade.

. . . a space of openness and shelter defining the zone of the main
living area.

Though the front Through-the-Lath-House entrance gives convenient
access to any part of the house, each part is a distinct self-contained area
zoned for orderly and unconfused function by means of distance and
orientation. The private rooms face away to a sun-bathing terrace, and
are acoustically insulated from the main living area by indoor planting
and the ample wardrobe and storage cabinets. The car port, close to
both service and front entrances, opens to a drive large enough to provide
off-street guest parking and back adjacent to an outdoor area isolated
each enough to do well as a general work and tinkering terrace. The extra
room with bath has a degree of privacy and its own walled garden which
would be a haven for the late-sleeping guest, a prize for an independent
adolescent, a retreat for the studious . . . or an inducement to a resident
housekeeper.

Diagonal placement of the house, in addition to avoiding any completely
north exposure, making possible longer vistas from the windows than
parallel placement on the lot would give, and putting only minimum
corners of the house near the property lines, automatically zones the
outdoor area into courts or terraces related in function to the rooms they serve. For the sake of continuity with the surrounding land and interesting variation within the particular site, the natural slope of the lot was preserved. The resulting change in levels within the house is controlled in a way which further emphasizes the zoning: private rooms are a few steps down from the main living area. (Steps up to the lath house at the end of the multi-use room serve only to bring the plants nearer eye level and form a low back to the large open fire-place hearth.)

Because it is somewhat optimistic to assume that the form which follows function as varied and complex as that of a residence is automatically good in terms of three-dimensional art, which is what architecture, in addition to all sociological considerations, must also be, careful attention was given to the continuity of the structural materials, the pattern of windows, the interplay of the mass and proportion of the light lath-house motif with the strong anchoring-to-earth rock and mortar retaining wall and the intermediary neutral background of plastered surface. The purpose was a house designed for both looks and living.

GENERAL SPECIFICATIONS:
- concrete slab floor, integral color
- wood frame construction, plaster inside and out
- rock and mortar retaining wall
- horizontal laths on sun terrace fence and lath house walls and roof
- roofing, composition paper with tar and crushed ceramic