Nicole Yael Michel
Bachelor of Science in Art and Design
MIT, Cambridge, 1999

Submitted to the Department of Architecture in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, February 2002.
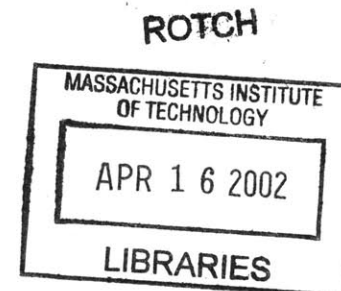
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by Nicole Yael Michel
Bachelor of Science in Art and Design
MIT, Cambridge MA 1999

Submitted to the Department of Architecture on January 18, 2002 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

abstract

The national pastime, playable in all four seasons, has become show-and-tell, and there are few among us who don't occasionally want to avert our eyes, or close them, in the hope of rediscovering, at least in our own minds, the line between private life and public exposure.
Nancy Franklin, "Show and Tell", the New Yorker 74, no. 25, p. 11.

In a growing globalized world where ideas of connections, transparency and exposure are becoming commonplace, the need will arise to devise an architecture that addresses issues of identity and belonging by creating places that protect the INTIMATE.
By looking at a culturally significant housing typology in Buenos Aires, Argentina, one can begin to understand how, one hundred years ago, it achieved a sense of intimacy while remaining modern (modern meaning that with very rational moves, it reaches a high level of simplicity and flexibility) and maintaining a site and culture-specific feel.

An analysis and reinterpretation of its major architectural components lead to a formal and conceptual transformation that derived in the proposal of three PROTOTYPICAL URBAN INTERVENTIONS that explored the REFORMULATION of spatial relationships in order to create intimacy within a highly transparent volume.

By reinventing a cultural typology one can engage in a discussion about IDENTITY.

By creating spaces of intimacy within a world of exposure, it becomes possible to allow one's self to be expressed and thus to intensify and strengthen a feeling of BELONGING to a place.

While exploring an architecture of INTERIORITY one can generate an architecture that allows for IMPRINTS to be made, and for TRACES to be read.

thesis supervisor: Jan Wampler
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4 | Para mami, papi, Guy -
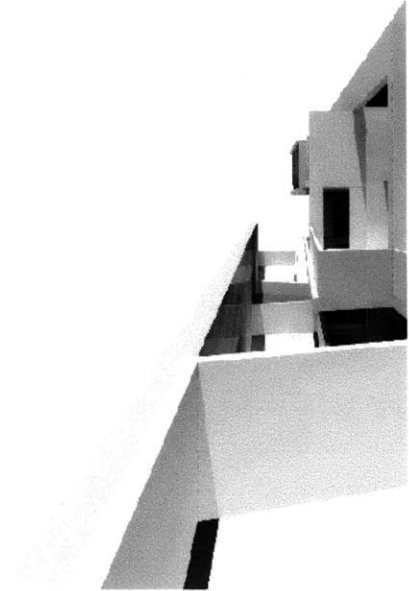
Architecture holds our memories, and thus defines our identity. It remains a constant in a constantly changing world.

In light of the recent political and economic events Argentina has been going through, it seems important to explain the reasons why this thesis focuses on ideas of urban identity and culture, and the effects of globalization on our lives. Architecture cannot solve political and economic crises, but the rediscovery of our identity can shape our individuality and our role within the nation we belong to.

I believe architecture influences the way people understand their environment, the way they inhabit their present, remember their past and imagine their future. I believe architecture redefines people's character and affects a nation in its identity. I believe architecture can reawaken a feeling of belonging and a sense of place, and define an individual as part of a whole that shares past, present and future.

Architecture is sometimes seen as a political statement, or as a reflection of a country's economic policies. It could easily become part of a web of economic speculations and social and political stances. Yet, I feel that the power of architecture resides in its ability to adapt to different social, cultural and economic conditions, in its role as a container of -and expression of- memories and desires. The strength of architecture lives in its capacity to accept imprints of life, traces of who we are, becoming an extension of our souls.

Architecture will not solve the country's current problems, but it can certainly reflect and reshape our identity as individuals, and frame our presence and role within a community. By defining an individual as part of a group that shares his / her concerns and ideals, a feeling of containment and understanding can help distill solutions to the issues concerning the group as a whole. Facing a time of doubt and uncertainty, the role of architecture as a safe-house, as the keeper of one's intimacy as the one place where one can express one's interiority becomes especially important.

Globalization has proven to affect people's lives immensely, economically and culturally, in positive and negative ways. It seems therefore necessary to address some of the problems it creates (the lack of privacy, the lack of differences, the merging of identities and cultures) in an effort to protect a sense of belonging to a place, to a city, to a nation, in a world filled with turmoil and unrest.

It is necessary to explore an architecture that will safeguard spaces of intimacy, quiet and introspection; an architecture that can be imprinted with traces of one's life. Architecture holds memories. Even while providing the possibility of veiling one's interiority, it should still provide links to the reality that exists outside.

An architecture of traces bears witness; it expresses a nation's idiosyncrasy and becomes a symbol of a people's identity. In that sense, it can tie past and future, becoming the link between one and oneself, between one and the rest, between a nation and the world. Economics and politics exist beyond architecture; yet, architecture has the power to ground us or elevate us, and provide spaces where the memory of a people, so often forgotten and cast aside within the world of politics, lives beyond mere words.

[01]

contents

introduction

[02]

introduction

In an increasingly interconnected, interactive, borderless world, intimacy is poised to soon become a commodity rather than a given. Techno-logical innovations and the rapid growth of digital media are trans-forming architectural types into more permeable structures immersed in the fluctuating world of receiving and transmitting images, sound, language and data. Within such an environment, the politics of privacy are becoming ever more unpredictable, as the use of electronic media proliferates.

Media and its effect on the experience of space has become a cata-lyst for architectural experimentation and innovation. In the midst of all technical and material transformations, the "problem of the house"[1] maintains its leading role in framing contemporary debates. The "Un-Private House" MoMA exhibition in 1999 featured houses with "open, loft-style spaces and flexible interiors, adaptable to varying family needs[2]." Yet, they primarily focused on the insertion of diverse types of digital technologies into the household and within that framework pushed forward a model inspired by ideas of literal and virtual trans-parencies, exposure, surveillance. These concepts resulted in explora-tions of boundaries, and most proposals investigated the blurring of edges between public and private, open and closed, inside and out-side, revealed and concealed. The consequence was a nakedness that often resulted in the obliteration of intimacy, reawakening some of the fundamental issues brought forward by modernism. In the search for an open, permeable, flowing architecture, modernists proposed eye-opening innovations in spatial arrangement, the use of secondary struc-tures (room dividers, partitions, stairs, windows, doors) and the design of furniture as an intrinsic part of domestic architecture. Private spaces thus attained a level of openness never achieved before, but called for a varying degree of public exposure that periled the basic notion of the house as the one space that contains traces of one's deepest nature.

Though it is necessary to explore and incorporate the transformation of cultural and social parameters, which drive the development of the pri-vate house, as they respond to the fast-paced relentless globalization our society is experiencing, the house still remains "the most personal-ized form of architecture[3]." Not denying the fact that digital media is today immersed in the house and thus generates a new way to experi-ence and organize space, this thesis intends to investigate how spatial configurations within a "modern" house can be reformulated in such a way that maintains a certain flexibility, openness, and accessibility while creating edges and boundaries that transition from public to pri-vate. Private architecture in an ever more public environment demands the creation of spaces that support the mediation between exposed and veiled, indoor and outdoor, while safeguarding the possibility of permeability and separation between both conditions. The role of lit-eral and virtual transparencies becomes then that of revealing what one wishes to expose, and concealing what one wishes to veil from the public eye. "Then the control over the visible, the series of filters, the controlled transparency of some spaces and the deliberate con-cealment of others, rather than segregating a domestic interior from a public exterior, represent the creation of an intermediate, uncoded ter-ritory, that useless, intimate, shared space[4]." The investigation becomes then an exercise of reconciliation between a public life in a public city, and a private interiority that seeks to shut out that same public city.

It is the intimate spaces that contain one's identity, one's self, one's interior. Whether one wishes to expose or withhold that information,

ubiquitous transparencies (literal or virtual) menace to start blurring all differences between people, cultures and places resulting in a loss of identity. It becomes thus necessary to reinvent the meaning and the place of intimacy within the home:

If setting boundaries on our surroundings in order to conceal ourselves led us to an even denser interior, then perhaps making cracks, creating empty space will allow us -without fleeing from the interior, an undertaking which is impossible- to live in this house as invisible beings. It must be said that this "intimate" as a void is by no means comforting or comfortable, because it can never be a foundation, a support or a sheltering cave; inhabiting the crack means living life without fleeing from solid identity.
Gloria Melich, Between, in Quaderns "The Intimate", no. 226, p. 15.

The rediscovery of one's intimacy lies in the search for a place of mediation, a fluctuating boundary that supports private retreat while presenting a permeable space to the public realm. The thesis takes place in Buenos Aires, where globalization is rapidly taking a toll on intimacy and identity, and yet, at least one almost forgotten housing typology does embody modernist ideals while preserving traces of one's interiority....

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[03]

The public/ private is characterized by neither term being able to exist without the other; each contains within itself the conditions, which make its opposite possible. Each limits the other, and each contributes to the other's form. One extreme, the public, coded, labeled, marked out and exposed to view, goes hand in hand with the other: the intimate space as a resistance to being visible, to being coded and identified. A boundary with its own complex topography seems to appear between the two. There are openings and filtrations, it is a permeable boundary which can be transgressed and which has no stable form. It is not clearly delimited, and responds to a twofold on interiorization and exteriorization by means of an osmotic membrane, which screens prying eyes by interposing a series of filters, or marks out subtle openings and partially uncovers inner spaces. In this way, transparency is altered by subjectivity, fiction, and play. It is, ultimately, the boundary of a shared territory.
*Editorial from* Quaderns "The Intimate", *no. 226, p. 2.*

Though public and private are generally defined in opposition to one another, I believe intimacy can transcend the barrier between one and the other and find shelter in both. It is without difficulty that one can relate intimacy to privacy if one understands an intimate space as that which is protected from public gaze. Such intimate spaces are then to be found ubiquitously.

However, it is undeniable that one can find intimate spaces within public places. Restaurants, parks, plazas, malls, all abound with spatial instances that are - architecturally or otherwise - inherently intimate. It may be a result of a change of scale or proportions within a larger more open space that can create a feeling of being protected from the exposure that prevails in public spaces. Low covered areas, niches within walls, smaller spaces within larger ones can create such a sensation. These are cases in which what one could call a transition space, offers the possibility to be either public or intimate. In this situation, one could be part of the larger public space but chooses to be intimate. One is inevitably aware of the public gaze, but the characteristics of the space provide a shield, a veil - or create the necessary psychological feeling of being shielded - and one is, at one time, part of the public but allowed to express one's interiority.
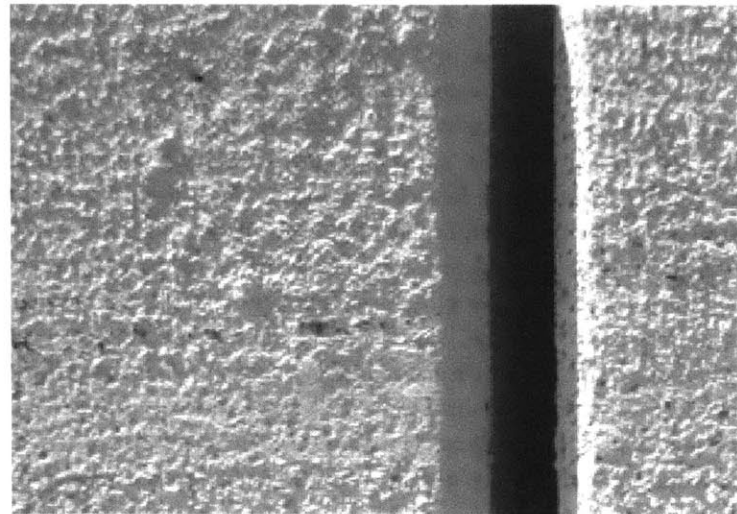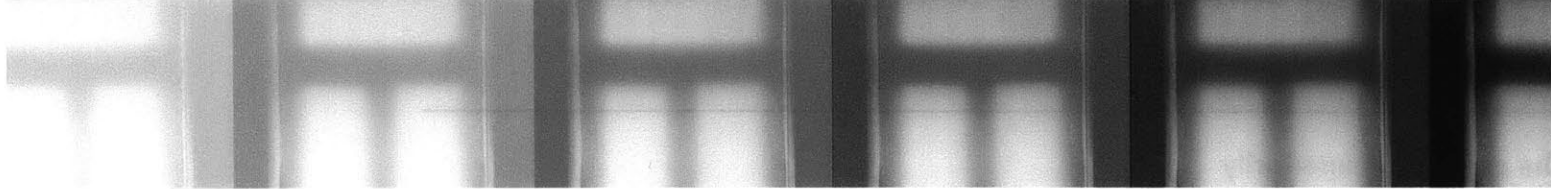
BETWEEN. The adjective intimate is derived from the Latin preposition inter, meaning "between", and therefore speaks of a certain relationship with space. "To be between" implies a situation in a special setting. This spatial relationship gives us the adjective interus (that which is between, that which is in the midst), the comparative form interior (that which is further inside) and the superlative intimus (that which is innermost).

We know that intimate is the superlative form of the interior. "Intimacy" appears a couple of centuries later as a noun to designate a space, the innermost of spaces, the fullest, the most closed: domestic space. We say that a man lives in the intimacy of his home, that space which has established almost unsurpassable boundaries, which separates it from its surroundings. So "to be between" implies a strong, secure, dense position in relation to the world. Intimacy, then, becomes a redoubt, the one space in which we can hide from others' eyes, where each individual is unique and invisible from outside its walls. The only space to escape the endless flow of merchandise and production on the outside. However, this intimacy, created as an intense interior, one's own space, and marked by one's individuality, sets itself up as a private rather than as an intimate space, it is seen as a place for one's own things. These things have been drawn out of the continuous flow to be given an owner and a new value, a personal, symbolic value. Inside the home, each one of us is alone with our family, our interests, our affections. This form of intimacy is intimacy as the closing off of space, as safekeeping, as container, as a place of possessions. It is comfortable and comforting. The home is the very densest way of inhabiting the world, the most marked, the most mapped out. One would have to be a fly on the wall to view the "intimacies" of different homes to see if there is a qualitative difference in these interiors, which

amounts to something more than privacy.

At the same time, we know that the intimate represents a between quality of space. So if we shift the emphasis from the substantivizing of the intimate, its corporeality, to its condition of nexus or relationship, we discover another intimacy, which is based on our consideration of the intimate as one of the ways in which we relate to ourselves and to the world. It is precisely what is not packaged, not held back. It is what we never see when we look at ourselves in the mirror. An interior space, which is not space, but the relationship between spaces, it takes the form of a crack or cleft. It is the inner fracture, which opens a void, a hole from which we emerge. So it is not our identity, which would take the form of an object, of a possession, but an opening in the depths of our interior. A non-space, which cannot, then, be charted. Might the opening be a way of living the interiority of the world, which allows us to establish intimate relationships with what surrounds us? If setting boundaries on our surroundings in order to conceal ourselves led us to an even denser interior, then perhaps making cracks, creating empty space will allow us -without fleeing from the interior, an undertaking which is impossible- to live in this house as invisible beings. It must be said that this "intimate" as a void is by no means comforting or comfortable, because it can never be a foundation, a support or a sheltering cave; inhabiting the crack means living life without fleeing from solid identity.

Gloria Melich, Between, in Quaderns "The Intimate", no. 226, p. 15.

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I believe that it is fundamentally different to create architectures of interiority within private or public spaces. When one discovers an intimate space within a public place, the space is much more significant and provides a breath of fresh air. It becomes possible to lend to that space one's own identity and it is thus transformed into a window to one's own interiority. Sizes, scale, proportion, form, the concepts of wrapping or folding matter or space all come into play when creating intimate architecture.

Contemporary residential propositions are starting to look at the implications of introducing digital technologies into the privacy of the home. Walls, windows, even ceilings or floors start to dissolve as they become sources of information transmitting data, images, and more. Several proposals inevitably recall issues that were already controversial at the beginning of the 20th century, when modernists looked at dissolving edges and corners, transforming walls into windows, exposing the inner life of a home to the outside gaze of strangers. Whether one addresses literal or virtual transparencies, both one hundred years ago and today, intimacy becomes a commodity, and it is difficult to find within a "private" house, a transitional space that, though somewhat public, could potentially foster that sought feeling of intimacy.

A turn of the century typology developed in Argentina as the result of the evolution of the roman patio house proves to embody several of the modernist ideals guiding the organization and the creation of space - which are being reinterpreted today in an attempt to address contemporary issues - while remaining inherently intimate. This thesis starts with that typology in order to try to understand how transparency and exposure can coexist with intimacy, and to then define a possible pathway to follow based on today's - or perhaps tomorrow's - increasingly interconnected and globalized cultures.

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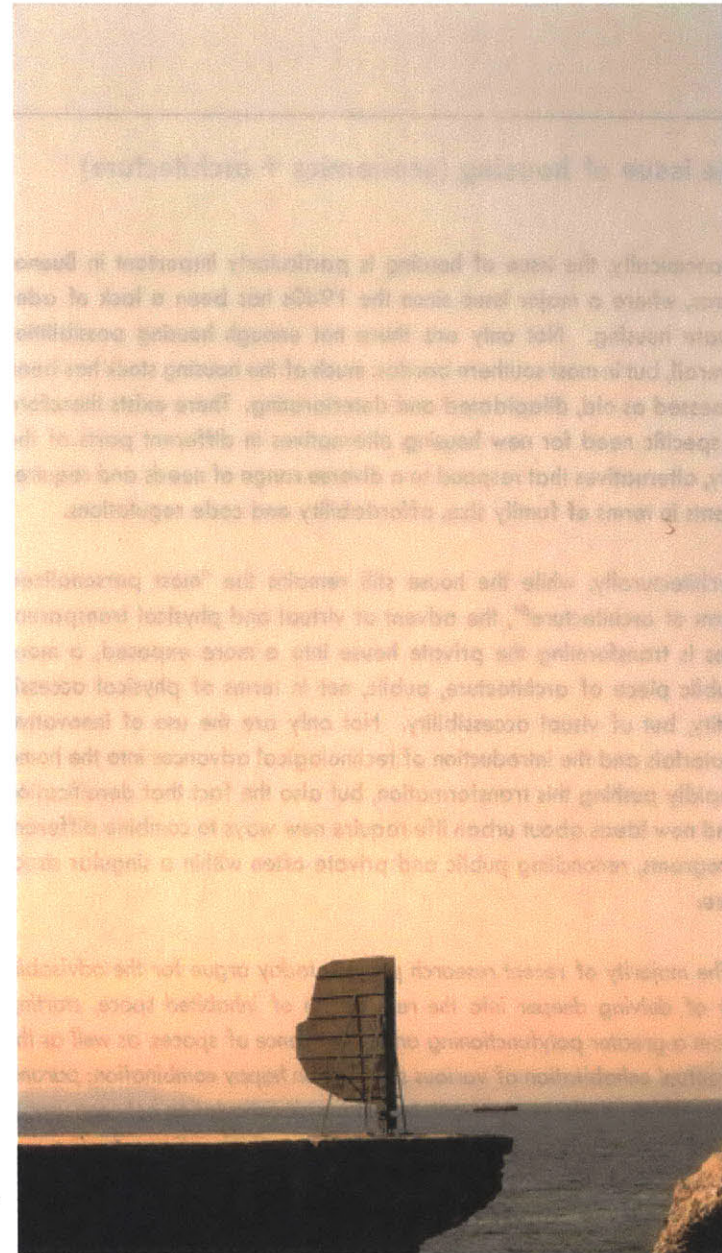
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the issue of housing (economics + architecture)

Economically, the issue of housing is particularly important in Buenos Aires, where a major issue since the 1940s has been a lack of adequate housing. Not only are there not enough housing possibilities overall, but in most southern barrios, much of the housing stock has been assessed as old, dilapidated and deteriorating. There exists therefore a specific need for new housing alternatives in different parts of the city, alternatives that respond to a diverse range of needs and requirements in terms of family size, affordability and code regulations.

Architecturally, while the house still remains the "most personalized form of architecture[5]", the advent of virtual and physical transparencies is transforming the private house into a more exposed, a more public piece of architecture, public, not in terms of physical accessibility, but of visual accessibility. Not only are the use of innovative materials and the introduction of technological advances into the home rapidly pushing this transformation, but also the fact that densification and new ideas about urban life require new ways to combine different programs, reconciling public and private often within a singular structure:

"The majority of recent research projects today argue for the advisability of delving deeper into the redefinition of inhabited space, starting from a greater polyfunctioning and polyvalence of spaces, as well as the eventual cohabitation of various subtypes, in happy combination; parameters which allude, in any event, to a strategic articulation between usage, technique and space."
Manuel Gausa, *Housing, New Alternatives, New Systems*, Birkhauser Publishers, ACTAR Barcelona, 1998, p. 21.
This situation can easily provoke a tension between public and private,

where the boundaries become layers of inhabited space that ease the transition from open to closed, from exposed to protected. Thus arises a new condition in which boundaries, edges, surfaces, become organizing elements that contain space and define intimacy as they meander between private and public.

In doing so, an architecture that protects interiority is revealed; an architecture that mediates both spaces of exposure, and spaces of withdrawal and solitude.

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method of inquiry

I believe that the answer to the question posed is to be found in the process of analysis, transformation and reinterpretation of the initial guidelines. Though that conceptual and diagrammatic process was molded in order to arrive at one architectural proposition, that particular architectural prototype is to be seen as merely one possible response to an abstract set of diagrams that holds an answer, yet remains flexible enough to suggest a variety of interpretations.

Globalization appears inherently tied to a loss of personal and communal identity. As cultures merge and mix, what could result in a deeper understanding of world identities and an enhanced sentiment of belonging to a specific place, time and culture, creates, instead, a homogeneity that obliterates healthy differences and pushes one's assimilation to a global identity where distinctions and oppositions defer to an ever more homogeneous and undifferentiated life.
Through the introduction of virtual technologies into everyday architecture and the assertion that one must be part of a whole, of a global community, the place of personal intimacy, of cultural identity, and of individuality loses ground.

More specifically, Argentina has often been seen as a country without a defined identity, where the inhabitants would rather belong to Europe than to Latin America. A sense of pride and sometimes even arrogance characterizes certain groups in the Argentine society. Therefore, to consider that a particular architectural type could inform and shape today's urban identity in Buenos Aires could seem ludicrous. Yet, if a typology originally transformed and modified to fit an *argentine* way-of-life were seen as a conceptual starting point for developing a new type that addresses issues of publicity and intimacy, while making an imprint on the urban identity of a city and its people, then a site- and culture-specific response to architectural and cultural globalization could begin to be formulated, and issues of belonging and the preservation of one's interiority could emerge in a world apparently seeking assimilation and exposure.

With that in mind, the investigation began with the conceptual analysis of such a typology (*Casa Chorizo* or *Half-Patio House*) in order to distill a number of rules that could provide guidelines as to how to balance exposure and veiling, global and intimate life.
The resulting rules were then transformed and applied to three different site conditions within the city of Buenos Aires, each defined by the presence of specific social groups, specific programmatic needs, and specific code regulations that dictate heights and uses.
These three interventions were then diagrammed in order to understand the evolution of the initial typological concepts; one of them was taken one step further in an attempt to develop it to an architectural scale. Thus, a prototype for the contemporary urban occupation of the city was proposed.
Finally, a new set of diagrams was extracted from this latest proposition, developing a number of rules that could shed new light on the urban culture of the city of Buenos Aires.

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notes

1. Jean Hélion, "Termes de vie, termes d'espace", Cahiers d'art 10, nos. 7-10 (1935), p.268.
2. Terence Riley, The Un-Private House, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1999.
3. Editorial, "The Intimate", Quaderns d'Arquitectura i urbanisme 226, July 2000, p.2.
4. Editorial, "The Intimate", Quaderns d'Arquitectura i urbanisme 226, July 2000, p.2.
5. Jean Hélion, "Termes de vie, termes d'espace", Cahiers d'art 10, nos. 7-10 (1935), p.268.

images
Unless noted here, all images are by the author.

[01]	modified image from "Provisional Home" by Eulàlia Valldosera, in Quaderns d'Arquitectura i urbanisme 226, July 2000, p.20-21.
[02]	modified image from "Provisional Home" by Eulàlia Valldosera, in Quaderns d'Arquitectura i urbanisme 226, July 2000, p.20-21.
[03]	"House with Studio (for an Ikebana Artist)" by Hiroshi Nakao, photographed by Nacàsa & Partners, in Quaderns d'Arquitectura i urbanisme 226, July 2000, p.65.
[04]	"Coups de Sonde I - VI", by Hiroshi Nakao, photographed by Nacàsa & Partners, in Quaderns d'Arquitectura i urbanisme 226, July 2000, p.44.
[05]	Aerial photograph reproduced from "Identidad cultural e integración urbana", Francisco Pratti, in SCA 189, July 1998 "Patrimonio", p.87.
[06]	"Things of Before", oil on canvas, Antonio Seguí, 1986.

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[01]
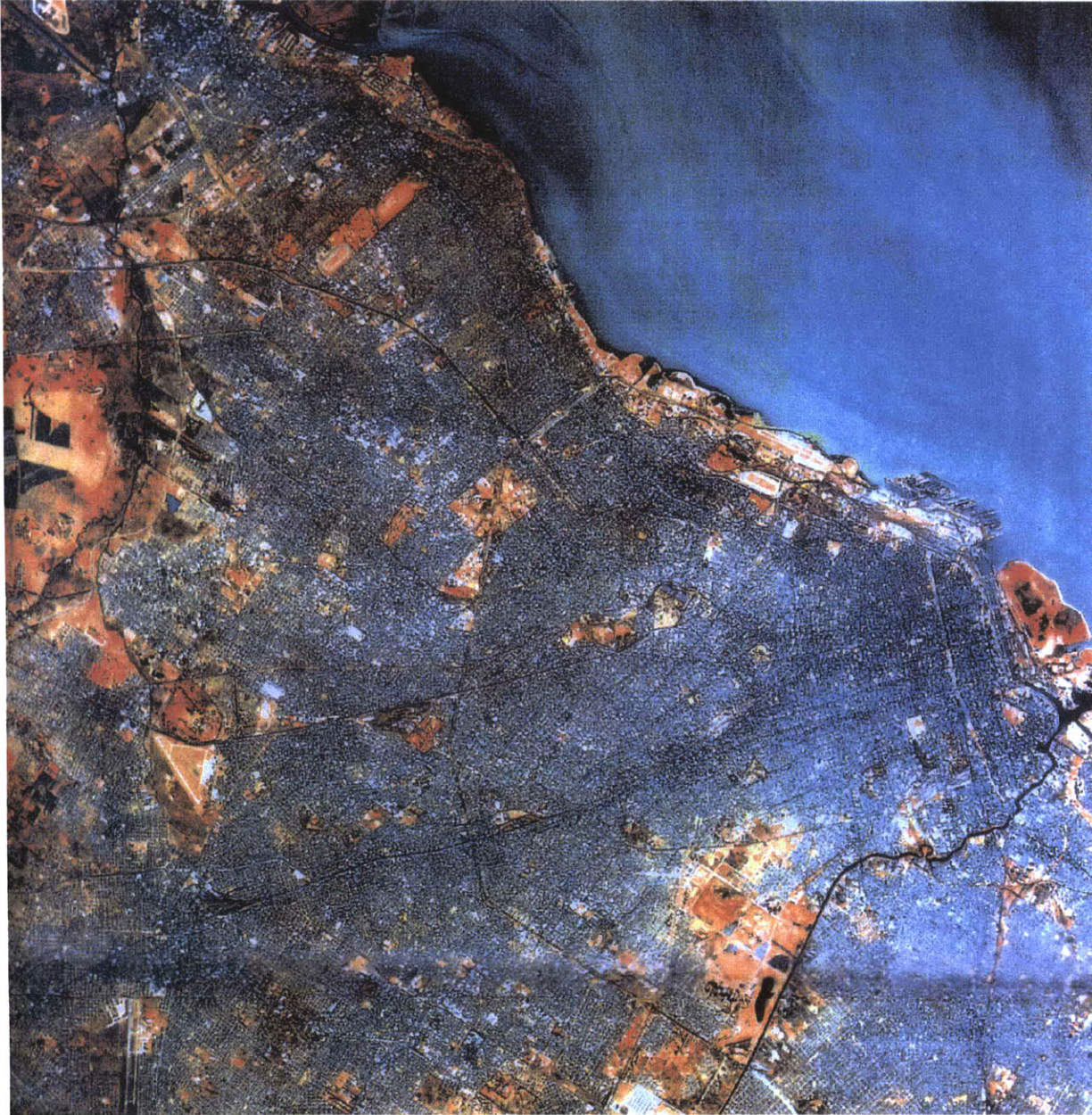
La Fundación Mítica de Buenos Aires

Y fue por este río de sueñera y de barro
Que las proas vinieron a fundarme la patria?
Irían a los tumbos los barquitos pintados
Entre los camalotes de la corriente zaina.

Pensando bien la cosa, supondremos que el río
Era azulejo entonces como oriundo del cielo
Con su estrellita roja para marcar el sitio
En que ayunó Juan Díaz y los indios comieron.

Lo cierto es que mil hombres y otros mil arribaron
Por un mar que tenía cinco lunas de anchura
Y aún estaba poblado de sirenas y endriagos
Y de piedra imanes que enloquecen la brújula.

Prendieron unos ranchos trémulos en la costa,
Durmieron extrañados. Dicen que en el Riachuelo,
Pero son embelecos fraguados en La Boca.
Fue una manzana entera y en mi barrio: en Palermo.

Una manzana entera pero en mitá del campo
Presenciada de auroras y lluvias y suestadas.
La manzana pareja que persiste en mi barrio:
Guatemala, Serrano, Paraguay, Gurruchaga.

Un almacén rosado como revés de naipe
Brilló y en la trastienda conversaron un truco;
El almacén rosado floreció en un compadre,
Ya patrón de la esquina, ya resentido y duro.

El primer organito salvaba el horizonte
Con su achacoso porte, su habanera y su gringo.
El corralón seguro ya opinaba Yrigoyen,
Algun piano mandaba tangos de Saborido.

Una cigarrería sahumó como una rosa
El desierto. La tarde se había ahondado en ayeres,
Los hombres compartieron un pasado ilusorio.
Solo faltó una cosa: la vereda de enfrente.

A mí se me hace cuento que empezó Buenos Aires.

La juzgo tan eterna como el agua y el aire.

The Mythical Foundation of Buenos Aires

And was it along this torpid muddy river
That the prows came to found my native city?
The little painted boats must have suffered the steep surf
Among the root-clumps of the horse-brown current.

Pondering well, let us suppose that the river
Was blue then like an extension of the sky,
With a small red star inset to mark the spot
Where Juan Diaz fasted and the Indians dined.

But for sure a thousand men and other thousand
Arrived across a sea that was five moons wide,
Still infested with mermaids and sea serpents
And magnetic boulders which sent the compass wild.

On the coast they put up a few ramshackle huts
And slept uneasily. This, they claim, in the Riachuelo,
But that is a story dreamed up in La Boca.
It was really a city block in my district - Palermo.

A whole square block, but set down in open country,
Attended by dawns and rains and hard southeasters,
Identical to that block which still stands in my neighborhood:
Guatemala - Serrano - Paraguay - Gurruchaga.

A general store pink as the back of a playing card
Shone bright; in the back there was poker talk.
The corner bar flowered into life as a local bully,
Already cock of his walk, resentful, tough.

The first barrel organ teetered over the horizon
With its clumsy progress, its habaneras, its wop.
The cart-shed wall was unanimous for Yrigoyen.
Some piano was banging out tangos by Saborido.

A cigar store perfumed the desert like a rose.
The afternoon had established its yesterdays,
And men took on together an illusory past.
Only one thing was missing - the street had no other side.

Hard to believe Buenos Aires had any beginning.
I feel it to be as eternal as air and water.

Jorge Luis Borges

With no gold or silver, the Río de la Plata area developed slowly in the early stages and underwent two consecutive foundations. The first occurred in 1536, by Pedro de Mendoza, who named it Santa María del Buen Ayre. Two years later, it was destroyed by native indians. The second, in 1580, was undertaken by Juan de Garay who, with only 66 followers, founded the city named Santísima Trinidad and built the Santa María de los Buenos Aires port. It went from seat of the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata, to heart of the independence wars that started in 1810, to seat of the government of the United Provinces (the original colonial territories), before becoming the capital of the Argentine Republic in 1880, the first and main port of South America, and an immigration and commercial magnet.

"The transformation of Buenos Aires from a dusty, colonial town, La Gran Aldea, to a sophisticated world city, La Gran Ciudad, remains unmatched in scope or implication by any other Latin American urban center[1]".

From the first moments, Buenos Aires was conditioned by the placement of its site. The choice for the site responds to two visions: one focused on the idea of a city with two fronts, surrounded by two deserts, the *pampa*, and the river. This mythical vision based on the continuity of the two deserts frames the first experiences of conquest of the land. The other much more practical and functional vision reflects the need for a port city, entry point for the colonization of a vast territory *in the waiting*, and exit point to the newly acquired richness provided by the New World. It responds to a strategic geographic positioning on the Atlantic Ocean and one of the major hydrographic systems within the continent. The coexistence of these two visions will inevitably condition the development of the city, growing without limits towards the constructed interior, but incapable of clearly defining its natural edge, the point of contact between the *pampa* and the river, the edge of the river and the land.

[02]

historical growth of the center of the city of Buenos Aires, years (starting from left) 1700, 1800, 1900, 1920, 1980).

From the beginning, the Spanish colonization designed an orderly city completely based on the *Law of Indies* plan. Defined as a continuous rectilinear grid, it permitted the spatial identification and regulation of the new territory. These original traces made such a strong imprint on Buenos Aires that it was often able to develop without urban planners, applying the *Law of Indies* model to every topographic variation and under most political and economic régimes[2].

Buenos Aires, the capital, is usually tied to its surrounding area, called Greater Buenos Aires, which encompasses a group of 24 communes, the *conurbano bonaerense*. With approximately 12 million inhabitants (about 35% of the population) it occupies an area of 3 880 km², 0.14% of Argentina's total area. It is one of the biggest metropolises of the world, and the third in Latin America, after Mexico and Sao Paolo. It is also one of the richest.

Buenos Aires is the result of an urban planning model that was based on the system proposed by colonial urbanism: a regular grid of streets surrounding a central plaza that became the geographic, functional, political and cultural center: the Plaza de Mayo, named after the Independence Revolution in May 1810. All major institutions were located around the plaza: church, fort, and cabildo (municipal council chamber).

[04]

[03]

[05]

27
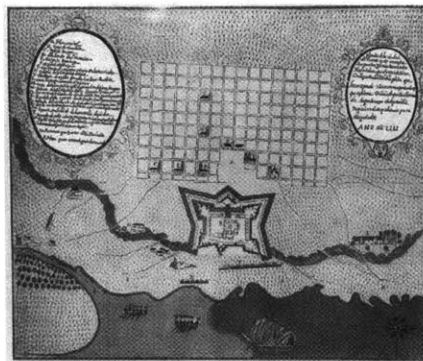
Buenos Aires slowly became the port of entry for all people and goods traveling from Europe to the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata. Distance from interior villages allowed Buenos Aires to reach considerable autonomy and economic self-sufficiency, and within one hundred years, it became a commercial center for most of South America thanks to its insertion in the world market. It grew faster after 1750, because it attracted a large quantity of European immigrants hoping to take part in the growing economy. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, Buenos Aires had achieved economic, political and administrative control over the entire region. Two axes of urban growth began to take shape in Buenos Aires, one along the coast, and the other to the west. A major yellow fever epidemic in 1871 struck heavily in the southern *barrios* of San Telmo and La Boca, accelerating the northward shift of wealthy *porteños* (Buenos Aires dwellers) who preferred the northern *barrio* of Palermo. Many of the houses abandoned by the elite in the southern *barrios* were taken over by immigrants and the urban poor and turned into *conventillos* (tenement houses).

[07] *Conventillo, Buenos Aires, ca.1900*

[08]

historical growth

| 1792 |
| 1830 |
| 1867 |
| 1892 |
| 1930 |
| 1991 |

district growth (2000)

population increasing
population stable
population decreasing

density

RIO DE LA PLATA

AV. GENERAL PAZ

RIACHUELO

0 - 261.60
261.60 - 375
375 - 587.5
587.5 - 958.03
958.03 and more

inhabitants / ha

PALERMO

SAN TELMO

LA BOCA
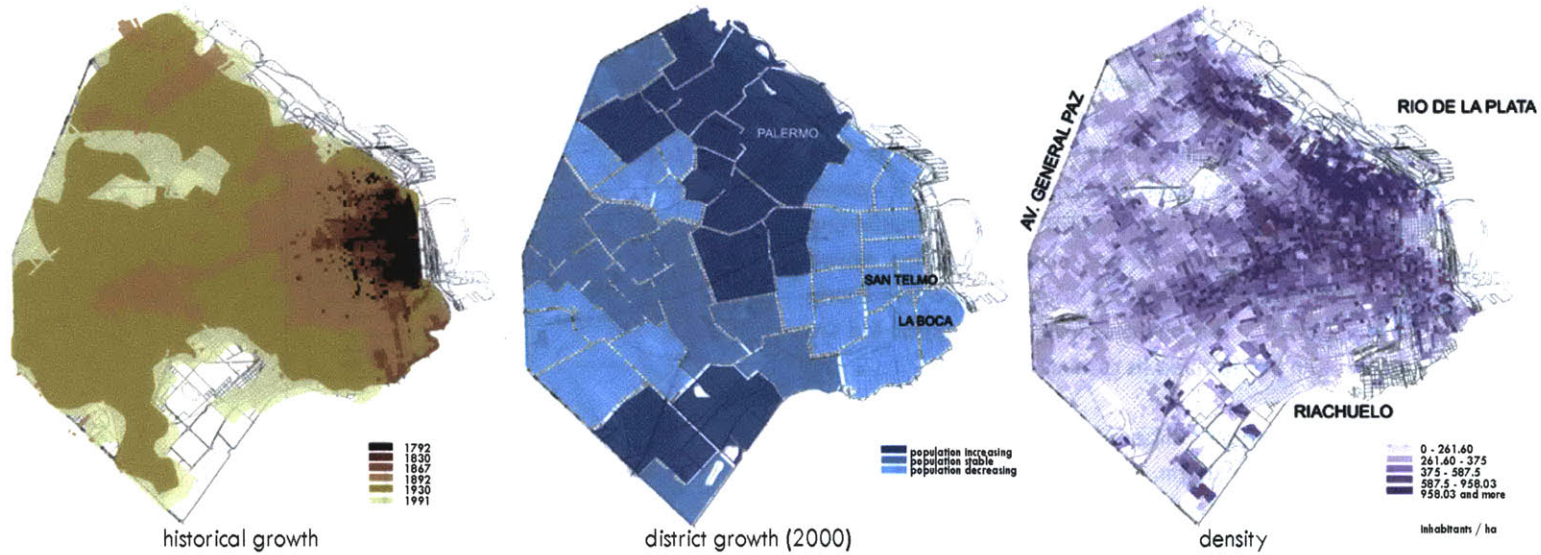
All of America received immigrants during the 19th century, especially the United States. But no country received such a large number (in relation to the existing population) as Argentina. No other country saw its cities and fields so radically transformed by people of other cultures, to the point that today there is no aspect of Argentine culture that can be disassociated from this event. "The way of speaking, loving, making friends, the food, the music, politics, gestures, games, religion are all[3]" tied to the wave of people who immigrated to Argentina. The period of greatest arrival of immigrants happened between 1890 and 1910. At the turn of the century, Buenos Aires was a cosmopolitan city where one of two inhabitants was a foreigner. Originally from Spain and Italy in its majority, with a number of British, French, Germans and Jews from Russia, most of them settled either in or close to the city of Buenos Aires. One of the reasons for such an exodus was a growing hostility experienced by some in the form of racial and religious discrimination and intolerance. Others were civil wars and political reasons, but it was mainly a means of escaping hunger and sickness. For those Europeans in search of additional sources of income, the possibility of temporary or seasonal migration proved fruitful and convenient. "Consequently, newly arrived immigrants often moved periodically to and from their countries of origin, in a pattern known as 'swallow immigration'.[4]" This phenomenon greatly expanded the middle class, and in turn transformed its customs and habits.

The arrival of such an important number of immigrants, though greatly sought after, did raise some alarm. Though Argentina did possess a central state, some questioned the idea that it was a nation, with common cultural, social and historical grounds. This was to later mark the beginning of a lack of faith in the existence of a cultural identity that could define the character of Argentine people.

[09]

30

the issue of cultural identity

As opposed to other Latin American countries, such as Cuba, Brazil, and most of Central America, Argentina did not possess enough local traditions -and what it did possess was rapidly eliminated- to create an architecture that was a formal, structural and theoretical exchange between Spanish colonial ideals and local examples. The city was thus created from scratch as a mosaic of European architectures, mainly the Spanish, French and British.

Between 1880 and 1920, the infrastructure and architectural works in Buenos Aires were comparable to the ones in Europe:

Buenos Aires is a "great European capital that gives the impression of a premature growth that announces by its advance, the capital of a continent."
Georges Clémenceau, Impressions de Voyage, 1910.

Still referred to as the *Paris of South America*, Buenos Aires has, since the early times, lacked a sense of local identity as a consequence of its founders' aspirations to resemble some of the leading metropolises in Europe. The same issue manifested itself in other artistic expressions as well.

The Buenos Aires middle-class has long shown a lack of interest in traditional music, art, painting. It is the consequence of a certain arrogance and a desire to assimilate Argentine culture to European cultures. Often, and sadly, contrary to many Latin countries, Argentine people are not proud of being Argentine, and just like tango, they are more often than not, sad people, very polite within their community, but overprotective of their intimacy. The *viveza criolla* (native cunning) is an important characteristic of Argentine people who, in general, tend to be known for their good manners, their elegance, and their sophistication.

Though many have sought a similarity with Europe, in their search they came across a unique identity that crosses local boundaries and becomes global. It is an identity defined by style, self-importance, respect and introspection. Sports, arts and entertainment are essential to the *porteño* way of life. Thus, architectural uses are beginning to mix and combine into singular structures, as the boundaries between living, working, and entertaining start to blur and merge.

[10]

31

Architecturally, the city of Buenos Aires borrowed from a variety of countries, with a notable Spanish influence well into the nineteenth century, being replaced by British and French influences at the turn of the century, the time when Buenos Aires achieved the category of metropolis. British influence expanded from the architecture to the way of inhabiting space, especially defining the importance of the separation between live and work, the presence of social and sports clubs, soccer, and even the five o'clock tea[5].

Yet, some of these traits are slowly disappearing due to the effects of globalization, and a stronger North American influence. While these foreign characteristics can be easily sorted, other architectural elements, those which were built, transformed, and adapted by working classes, remain present in the city. These types are the ones that ultimately hold the key to the identity of the city, for they represent the needs, personalities and individualities of Argentine people, rather than the direct transposition of European types onto Argentine soil.
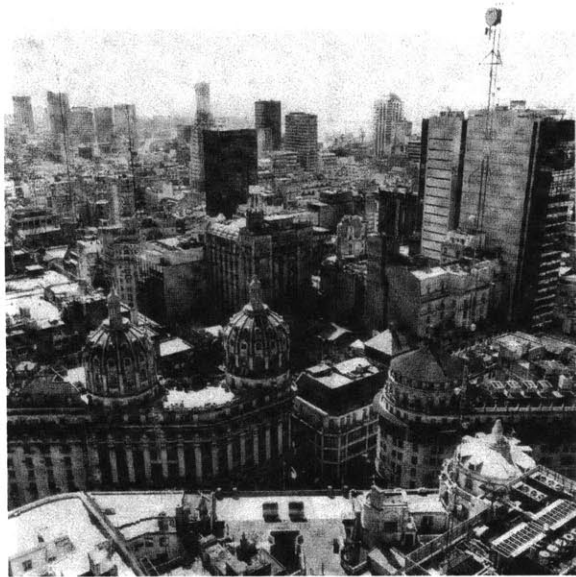
[11]

[12]

the city, the *barrios*

With the arrival of new inhabitants and the intense growth of cities, urbanization became a substantial component of everybody's life. Industrialization and the incorporation of working and middle-classes into the urban scene had a direct impact on the aesthetic and social characters of most urban developments. Yet, within the urban context, the Spanish idea of a rectilinear grid of 100 meters by 100 meters blocks was maintained. One can find several ways in which the blocks were filled with lots and eventually built elements, but in general, the chamfered corner and the concept of an interior green space - named the heart or the lung of the block - that would be part of each lot and would provide air, nature, ventilation to each house, were respected.

As the city grew and expanded away from the city center, *barrios* were created. *Barrio* is probably the most urban term of the language of Buenos Aires, the word that says the most about the bond between the essence of the city and the people who live it[6]. A specific barrio can determine one's identity, one's belonging. 60% of the city is covered by low-density barrios, the ones that embody the mythical charge that their name carries[7]. One of the most revealing characteristics of the *barrios* is their diversity. Different programs tend to coexist within the same *barrio*, and from that arises the architectural diversity. The existential diversity lives in the expression of the diversity of the inhabitants, and in the possibility - still there - of interacting with neighbors. The barrio is thus emotionally charged, for each *barrio* is a legend that continues to live in the words of poets:

"Mis pasos claudicaron
cuando iban a pisar el horizonte
y quedé entre las casas,
cuadriculada en manzanas
diferentes e iguales
como si fueran todas ellas
monótonos recuerdos repetidos
de una sola manzana.
El pastito precario...
...salpicaba las piedras de la calle...
...y sentí Buenos Aires...
los años que he vivido en Europa son ilusorios,
yo estaba siempre (y estaré) en Buenos Aires."
Jorge Luis Borges

"Las calles de Buenos Aires
ya son mi entraña.
No las ávidas calles,
Incómodas de turba y ajetreo...,
sino las calles desganadas del barrio,
casi invisibles de habitantes...
...Hacia el Oeste, el Norte y el Sur
se han desplazado - y son también la patria -
las calles..."
Jorge Luis Borges

[15]

[14]
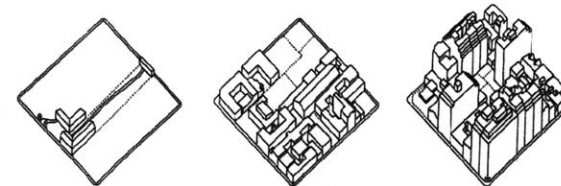
[13] *evolution of an urban block*

33

The people of Buenos Aires include all social and economic classes. However, it is the middle-class who inhabits the *barrios* of the city that can most accurately reflect the face of the people, the face of the city. Generally inward-looking, they are focused on the *barrio*, the family, the community.
Many people are open to new economic policies, yet, "many fear the process of economic globalization, with its free market, free trade, and free competition.[8]"

Despite the number of influences that have shaped the city of Buenos Aires, *porteños* have become a relatively homogenous society in their nature. Hard-working, polite, friendly, *porteños* seek public respectability. They are proud of their city and passionate about soccer, money, and members of the opposite sex, though they have a tendency towards melancholy, introspection, and almost fatalism. A porteño is intimately related to his / her *barrio*, which inspires a sense of belonging. Yet, as urban environments become depersonalized and almost androgenous, *barrios* and the level of intimacy they provide to their people seem to vanish.

[16]

34

[17 - 20]

notes

1. David Keeling, <u>BUENOS AIRES Global Dreams, Local Crises</u>, John Wiley & Sons, England, 1996, p.2.
2. Graciela Schneier-Medanes, <u>Portrait de Ville: Buenos Aires</u>, Institut Français d'Architecture, supplement to Bulletin d'Informations Architecturales, n.186, summer 1995, p.22.
3. Ema Wolf, <u>La Gran Inmigración</u>, Editorial Sudamericana, Buenos Aires, 1991, p.21.
4. Jorge Francisco Liernur, "The Casa Chorizo. Low Income Housing in Argentina, 1870-1920", in <u>Harvard Design Magazine</u>, summer 1999, p.33-39.
5. Graciela Schneier-Medanes, <u>Portrait de Ville: Buenos Aires</u>, Institut Français d'Architecture, supplement to Bulletin d'Informations Architecturales, n.186, summer 1995.
6. Jorge Hampton / Emilio Rivoira, "Buenos Aires, buenos barrios", in <u>Otra Arquitectura Argentina, un camino alternativo</u>, Colección SomoSur, Facultad de Arquitectura, Universidad de Los Andes, Bogota, Colombia, 1989.
7. Id.
8. David Keeling, <u>BUENOS AIRES Global Dreams, Local Crises</u>, John Wiley & Sons, England, 1996, p.27-28.

images
Unless noted here, all images are by the author.

[01]   satellite image from <u>Buenos Aires Metrópolis</u>, p.79.
[02]   images from "Ciudad y futuro" in <u>Arquis</u> n.1, p.6-8.
[03]   plan of Buenos Aires, 1973, from Alfredo Taullard, <u>Los Planos más antiguos de Buenos Aires (1580-1880)</u>, Editorial Peuser, Buenos Aires, 1940.
[04]-[07]   photographs of Buenos Aires, ca. 1900-1915, from <u>H.G. Olds, Fotografías</u>, p.36, 37, 42, 50.
[08]   modified image from "Plan Urbano Ambiental", GCBA.
[09]   map of Argentina, from <u>BUENOS AIRES, Global Dreams, Local Crises</u>, p.4.
[10]   photograph by Constanza Mirré, from <u>Bares de Buenos Aires</u>.
[11]   photograph of Diagonal Norte Avenue, from <u>Buenos Aires Metrópolis</u>, p.77.
[12]   photograph by Eric Tschumi / Genève, from <u>Portrait de Ville: Buenos Aires</u>, p. 12.
[13]   image reproduced from <u>Portait de Ville: Buenos Aires</u>, p. 8.
[14]   photograph of Buenos Aires by night, from <u>Buenos Aires Metrópolis</u>, p.113.
[15]   photograph by Daniel Leotta, from <u>Buenos Aires, el lugar</u>, p. 34.
[16]   photograph of Av. del Libertador by night, from <u>Buenos Aires Metrópolis</u>, p.105.
[17]-[20]   photographs by Fabio Grementieri (18), Alejandro Leveratto, Doc. IPU (17, 19), Mirta Robert (20), from <u>Portrait de Ville: Buenos Aires</u>, p. 11, 35, 49.

typology

[TYPOLOGY: CASA CHORIZO]

historical context

Towards the end of the 19th century Argentina was experiencing deep changes that were mainly rooted in its economic growth, which, though strong, was not lineal. Argentina was already subject to the changing cycles of capitalism, as well as growing internal conflicts. Thus, the 19th century ended in the midst of a contradictory atmosphere: on the one hand, Argentina seemed to be a very promising land (railroads were expanding, exports grew and the number of immigrants increased rapidly), on the other, the possibility of a war with Chile due to border issues threatened to slow the economy and propel insecurity.

The start of the 20th century saw an increase in national confidence, after a peace agreement was signed with Chile. The internal economy grew faster than ever and transformed Argentina into the richest country in Latin America. Such growth was based mainly on the expansion of exports (primarily wool, grain, meat). With the advent of a sustained economic growth (between 1900 and the beginning of the first world war, incomes increased 70%) Argentina became a very profitable market and thus became a magnet for European workers looking to conquer America. Between 1900 and 1914, with a population of 4.6 million people, Argentina saw the arrival of 3.2 million immigrants, half of whom stayed permanently[1].

Most of the uninhabited areas of the country became populated, towns expanded and new cities appeared in the horizon. Though most urban areas grew considerably, no city came close to the growth experienced by the capital. Buenos Aires had 187,100 inhabitants in 1869, and 1,575,800 in 1914[2]. As a result, the urban physiognomy was dramatically affected. The advent of the subway in 1913 permitted the growth of a number of barrios surrounding the older downtown areas that evolved into dynamic hubs, in response, especially, to the development of equipment and services necessary for export activities and most other porteño needs.

With the political struggles behind them, porteño civic leaders now could concentrate on remodeling Buenos Aires into a progressive modern city. Buenos Aires underwent a dramatic physical, cultural and social transformation between 1880 and 1920, evolving from La Gran Aldea (the big village) into the stewplace of Latin America. The federal capital's urban facade began to take on its present form, shaped by a growing cosmopolitan population, renovated architecture, European ethnic groups and their likes and habits, an active and expanding port, and the beginning of a modern industrial base driven by railroads, streetcars and printing factories.
David Keeling, BUENOS AIRES, Global Dreams, Local Crises, p.27-28.

During the 1920s, Buenos Aires was seen as the cultural hub in Latin America. Opera, ballet, and tango (which had arisen from brothels, bars and conventillos, and was now considered respectable after its success in Europe) were performed at such venues as the renowned Teatro Colón.

Artists, intellectuals, and writers found in Buenos Aires a rich European cultural ambience.

the typology: its essence

Con la tarde
se cansaron los dos o tres colores del patio.
La gran franqueza de la luna llena
ya no entusiasma su habitual firmamento.
Patio, cielo encauzado.
El patio es el declive
por el cual se derrama el cielo en la casa.
Serena,
la eternidad espera la encrucijada de estrellas.
Grato es vivir en la amistad oscura
de un zaguán, de una parra y de un aljibe.
Jorge Luis Borges, "Patio" en _Fervor de Buenos Aires_

With evening
the two or three colors of the patio grew weary.
The huge candor of the full moon
no longer enchants its usual firmament.
Patio: heaven's watercourse.
The patio is the slope
down which the sky flows into the house.
Serenely
eternity waits at the crossway of the stars.
It is lovely to live in the dark friendliness
of covered entrance way, arbor, and wellhead.
Jorge Luis Borges, "Patio" in _Fervor de Buenos Aires_

Soon after the foundation of Buenos Aires, the city's inhabitants developed the first domestic typologies that closely resembled the country rancho, consisting of one elongated room with load-bearing adobe walls and a sloped roof.

With the amelioration of social and economic conditions, an important number of immigrants settled in some of the major cities and in so doing established a new residential type. It consisted of a version of the roman courtyard house that had suffered relatively minor changes in its structural composition. A house that follows the street in its front design, it opens, through a corridor and entrance hall (*zaguán*) to a first courtyard around which the main spaces are organized. A second corridor opens to a back courtyard, central to the service rooms, such as kitchen and bathroom. The *Colonial Courtyard house* (1700-1850) remained a single-story house and maintained its longitudinal composition, and the centrality of the courtyards as the organizing elements. Eventually, the front was transformed to accommodate commercial uses, since it was towards the courtyard -and not the street- that the main rooms expanded. Reductions in size in an attempt to accommodate a larger number of inhabitants transformed the house by covering patios and incorporating verandas (*galerías*) surrounding the courtyard. This would later become a fundamental feature in the way circulation evolved.

A final reduction on the available lot width transformed the *Colonial Courtyard House* into the *Half Courtyard house* or *Casa Chorizo* (1870-1915) because of its elongated proportions, mainly determined by the sites (8.66 meters by 30 to 50 meters), the smallest reduction of the original 100-by-100 meter Spanish grid. A type deeply rooted in the city, architecture without architects that shaped *barrios* and villages based on prototypical models that adapted to the different conditions of the system of land subdivision: the lot, the block. Like most popular architecture, it was adjusted over time and thus arrived at a solution rich in its resolution and technologically pure and distilled.

[01] *Transformation of the Colonial House into the Casa Chorizo*

Its construction process is simple and responds to customs and techniques introduced by Italian builders: load-bearing walls, with linteled vertical openings, interior wood floors, and either vaulted roofs with tiled accessible terraces or metal corrugated decks on a wooden structure for non-accessible roofs.

Air gaps within the floors, dropped ceilings acting as air chambers, shutters, lattice windows and grilles are the essential elements used for insulating and ventilating purposes. There tends to be a clear technological distinction between that which expresses the enclosed based on the wall, and that which relates to the open materialized by light elements (metal and glass partitions, metal eaves, wood treillages).

Its plan was the result of the division in half of the courtyard house. It is at this point that the *galeria* became a standard element in residential compositions. This architectural type maintained an important formal and compositional stability for more than forty years, and became a reference for a variety of collective residential types. It evolved into a series of apartments sharing one courtyard with the *galería* acting as the circulation axis throughout the complex, and later into low-income housing (*conventillo*), with one family occupying only one of the rooms. Even the plan of the mid-rise apartment building of 1945, which appears in building codes of the time, appears to be an extrusion of the *Casa Chorizo* with one single patio; it became a means of introducing light and ventilation into all interior rooms not sharing a window with the outside.

As an architectural type, the *Casa Chorizo* illustrates not only the importance of a direct relation between indoor and outdoor spaces, but also a very specific and defined circulation pattern that articulates the outdoor space -be it a constructed or a natural area- as the core of the living quarters, encompassing all private activities and creating and maintaining through its position within the architecture and its adjacencies to *galerías* and balconies a series of relationships based on transparencies, opacities and direct views that define the experience of each space. The importance of boundaries and layers suggests a need for transitions and intermediate spaces. It also reflects the search for diversity in both private and public spaces, and indoor and outdoor spaces. Both private and public activities are expected to expand onto outdoor areas; while the courtyard acts as a catalyst for static private activities, public activities open towards the street and become visible through openings and entry halls that, at times, can become an integral part of the urban dynamic landscape. Issues of privacy, movement, circulation and transformation of static spaces into dynamic areas transform the architectural intention into a framework for the development of the urban cultural identity of the city.
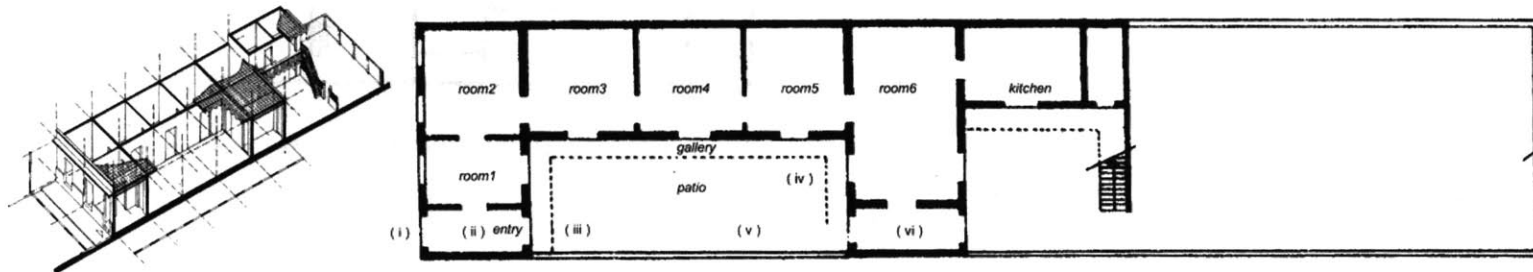
[02] *Typical house layout - numbers refer to photographs on following page*

[i]

[ii]

[iii]

[iv]

[v]

[vi]

However, the evolution of this type has resulted in the loss of everything the patio stood for in terms of social gathering space: it evolved from being the center of the house, to being merely an airway for light and ventilation. In most contemporary housing typologies, the evolution of the *casa chorizo* has resulted in the complete disappearance of the patio in favor of a typical front / back yard configuration. The 1944 Building Code regulated that each new lot be at least 10 meters wide on the street edge, and dictated that each lot maintain an open area towards the back. The number of empty areas would thus shape the *lung* of the block. Later on, a 1948 addition to the Code included the *Ley de Propiedad Horizontal*, authorizing the construction on these lots of 8 to 12 story-high apartment buildings owned in part by each family. This law brought forward a strong densification process within the city center, and the juxtaposition of very different typologies with very different heights, emphasizing party walls which create today an uneven profile, with higher buildings towards the center of the block, and lower at the corners.

As a consequence, did the architectural culture of the city not only lose the concept of the patio; it also lost the qualities that made this type modern and intimate, and a possible typological prototype for a contemporary look at the question of manipulating interiority and exposure within a culturally charged house to respond to current virtual and literal transparency issues affecting the way we think about private houses and their future. Overall, it lost the possibility of using a typological space in a way that allows for the expression of one's own singularity, one's own identity, one's own need for poetry.

[03] *apartment building after Ley de Propiedad Horizontal, 1950s.*

However, it also introduced the elements that make up the urban identity of Buenos Aires today: the ubiquitous presence of party walls, and the search for a continuous facade along the street.

A party wall belongs to each of the two lots that it separates. Thus, each owner is responsible for building half of it, and in order to respect each other's privacy, if one side grows higher than the other, it is to keep the party wall blank: free of windows and openings. It is therefore possible to observe, very often, a number of blank party walls orthogonal to the street defining the boundaries of a lot. Openings and outdoor expansions of indoor spaces (balconies and terraces) will only occur towards the front or the back of the lot, never along the sides.

The initial concept of opening towards the interior of the lot along the party wall in order to safeguard one's privacy and interiority gave way to a type that opened up towards the street, not only losing other ways of introducing light and air for ventilation into the living environment, but also down-playing the importance of a balance between exposure and intimacy, which nevertheless remains an important characteristic of *porteño* personalities.

party walls in the city center

[04] *mix of typologies within the same block*

45

a modern type

The real "solution" of the "housing problem" in the cities of Argentina was not a product of official commissions, or industries, architects, or political groups. Instead, it was achieved by land speculators and by the people, and through the almost infinite expansion of the casa chorizo. After all, this was a housing type that, because of its industrialized elements, was cheap and easy to build. It was also flexible - half urban and half agrarian - and it had big rooms. In addition, it was really "modern." Not by chance, when Le Corbusier and Werner Hegemann visited Buenos Aires in 1929 and 1931, both discovered and praised these houses as among the best examples of an appropriate response to modern times.
Jorge Francisco Liernur, "The Casa Chorizo. Low Income Housing in Argentina, 1870-1920", in Harvard Design Magazine, summer 1999, p.38.

In fact, a loose translation of Le Corbusier's text included as part of one of his lectures in Précisions can read as follows:

I draw an enclosing wall, a door opens to the inside, the wall is extended by the gable of a lean-to with a small window in the middle; to the left, I draw a clear square loggia. On the terrace of the house, I elevate the delicious cylinder: a water tank. You may think: "Look, there you have him composing a modern village!" Not at all, I draw the houses of Buenos Aires. There are at least fifty thousand like it. They have been made - they are made every day - by Italian entrepreneurs. They are a very logical expression of the life of Buenos Aires. Their dimensions are right; their form harmonious; their reciprocal situations

skillfully found. It is your folklore; it is fifty years old, it is still from today. You tell me: "We have nothing!" I answer: "You have that, a standard plan, and a play of nice forms under the Argentine light, a play of beautiful forms, of very pure forms. Look! Measure the scandal of those British cottages with their tiled roofs, unusable, making attic rooms, entailing annual maintenance charges. You have naturally discovered the roof-terrace in Argentina.
Le Corbusier. Précisions sur un état présent de l'architecture et de l'urbanisme. Collection de "L'Esprit nouveau." Paris, G. Crès, 1930.

In an essay on the Curutchet House in La Plata, the only building by Le Corbusier in Argentina, Alfonso Corona Martinez, relates the house to the Casa Chorizo type, but in doing so suggests that Le Corbusier might have wanted to reinterpret the type rather than create an improved version of the type: "I would like to suggest (...) that he wanted to avoid repeating this type, even though it seemed the only rational solution for a lot that was narrow and deep. Faced with these constraints, Le Corbusier decided to build into space. (...) To build into space - to use the lot as a volume rather than a surface - was perhaps the only way to prevent the house from being submerged in its surroundings: to create a patio house, but with the patio high up where it could catch sun and fresh air, and, facing the patio (which is in fact a terrace), to install a duplex of interconnected spaces."[4]

The Casa Chorizo is inherently modern in that it offers the possibility of connecting spaces in order to achieve a flexibility and accessibility that would be inexistent in other urban types. The structural configuration

46

of the spaces transforms the internal walls between the more private rooms into merely partitions that could easily be altered or removed. Already the typical plan shows the existence of three doors in each room, demonstrating that the inter-connectedness is more than the separation. Furthermore, two circulation routes exist within the house. One, more public, traverses the patio along the party wall. The second, more private, is intended to occur from room to room, designating the rooms not necessarily as individual spaces but as entities conforming one larger whole.

Other than the service areas (kitchen, bathroom, entry) no other rooms are labeled. Thus, living room, bedrooms and dining rooms could be set up in any room within the house, and examples exist of several configurations, conferring to the user a freedom of organization and subdivision of space that had not been seen before and has been lost since.

Not only are the rooms unlabeled and interconnected, they are also laid out on a uniform three-dimensional grid of 4 meters long by 4 meters wide by 4 meters high. Both the existence of the grid and the fact that all unlabeled rooms share the same uniform dimensions make this house as modern as Le Corbusier described it to be.

[05] Le Corbusier's interpretation of the Casa Chorizo in Précisions, p. 229.
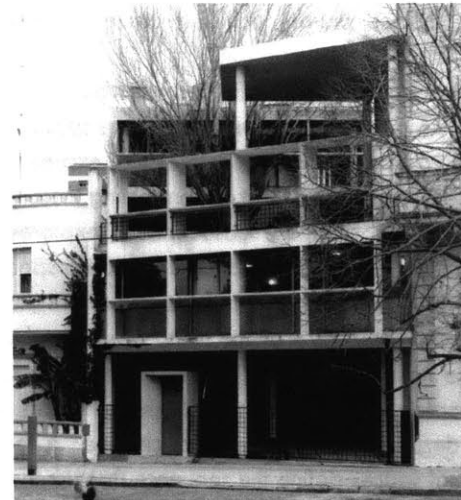
[06] Curutchet House, Le Corbusier, La Plata, 1946.

As modern as this typology was, it succeeded in creating an intimate type. In colonial times, its formal vocabulary responded to a need for protection from outside dangers. Thus, the house turned itself inward, and all public and private activities occurred within the lot, in the patio.

Though rational and modern in its formal organization, its materiality, its relation to the outdoors, its use of walls as spatial containers, make this typology a paradigm as it explores and expresses the power of a people's identity and their thirst for protecting their interiority.

As an architectural type, the *Casa Chorizo* explores the need for a direct relationship between outdoor and indoor spaces, and also the need for a clear and defined circulation pattern that articulates the outdoor space as the core of the living areas, as the main gathering space in the house. The patio relates to the other spaces through a series of transparent, translucent and opaque layers of enclosure that define the degree of privacy within each zone. A series of thresholds or transitional spaces define the sequence through the house, from private to intimate. A continuous wall (part of the party wall) wraps on itself vertically and horizontally to create intimacy along it or within it. This container is complemented by a series of dividers, which, though not necessary structural, organize spaces into smaller, more private zones.

In its evolution from a single-story house to a mid-rise building, the meaning of the patio as a social gathering space was lost. It went from being the center of the house to being merely an airway for light and ventilation.

ZONES

[A] public / compressed (entry + circulation) <outside>
[B] semi-public (circulation) <outside>
[C] semi-public (patio) <outside>
[D] semi-private (expansion of inside) <outside>
[E] private <inside>
[F] intimate <expansion of party wall: inside + outside>
[G] private / compressed (circulation) <outside>
[H] private <outside>

INTERIORITY

[iS] intimate space
[ECHO] echo of party wall <spatial container>
[PW] party wall

WRAPPERS

[w1] wrapper 1: site edges <public framework>
[w2] wrapper 2: conceptual envelope <private framework>
[w3] wrapper 3: private enclosure

SPATIAL ORGANIZERS

[Sp D] spatial divider
[Sp C] spatial container
[PW] party wall
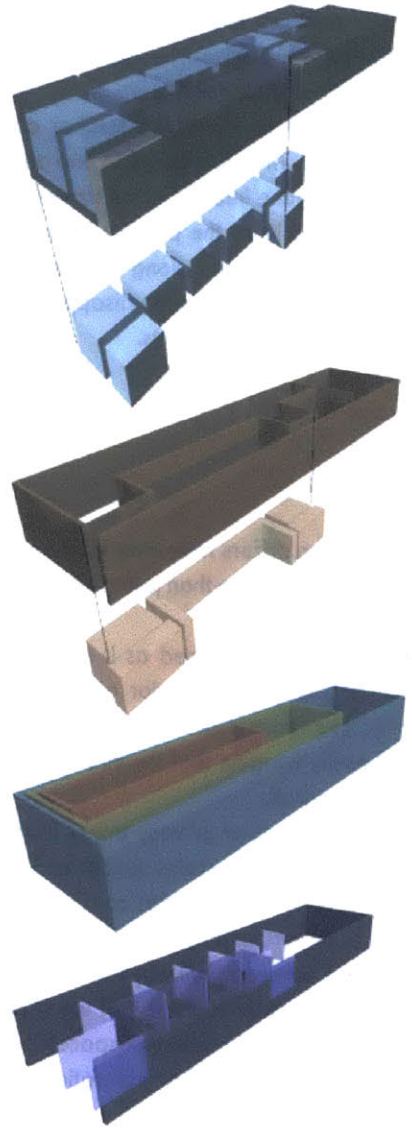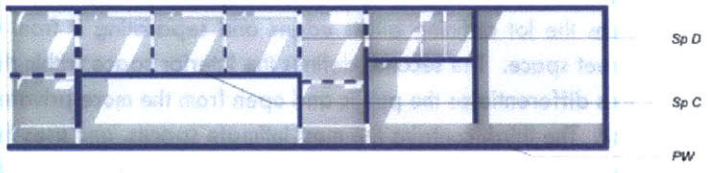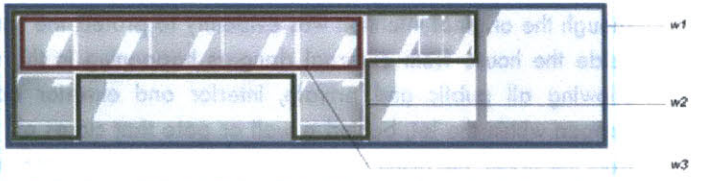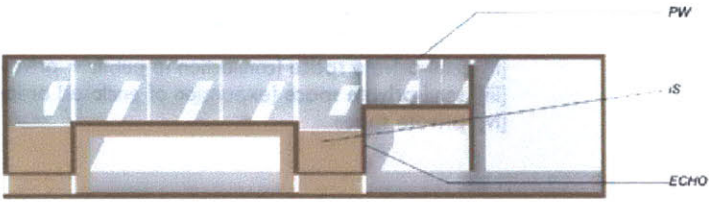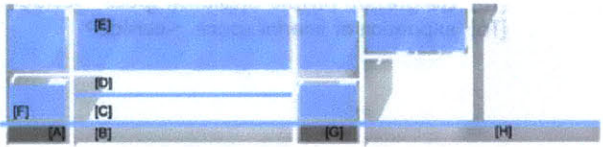
The *Casa Chorizo* presents, as was discussed earlier, a very rational layout. Not only are most of its rooms the exact same size, they are also unlabeled, which gives the user the freedom to arrange the house to fit his / her personal needs.

Thus, it is possible to identify a number of independent inhabitation zones: the rooms. They are linked to one another through two separate circulation paths (one interior which traverses each zone and therefore lacks privacy and limits the privacy of the individual rooms; the other exterior, through the patio along the party wall). As one moves from zone to zone, the public element disappears and gives way to increasingly more private environments.

The *Casa Chorizo* differs from most modern types in its use of walls and interior elements as more than just spatial dividers: they become spatial containers.

One main wall can be traced as it meanders through the site and in doing so defines spaces, interior and exterior. However, it does not only divide one room from the next, it contains each room within itself: one could easily imagine that the individual rooms were carved from a thicker, deeper wall.

A feeling of intimacy, of privacy arises from the treatment of the wall, from the way the wall contains spaces and in containing spaces, it contains their essence and provides comfort and quiet. As the wall folds onto itself both horizontally (containing space within itself) and vertically (creating covered walkways or *galerías*), and merges with itself (when it comes so close to itself that the space within cannot be called a room but rather an *in-between* space) it creates an architecture of interiority, an architecture that with rational moves, seeks to safeguard a feeling of intimacy.

THRESHOLDS

[T1] entry / compressed space (public framework) <outside>
[T2] circulation space <outside>
[T3] expanded interior space <outside>
[T4] private / intimate space <inside>
[T5] compressed private circulation space <outside>
[T6] expansion of interior space <outside>

(UN)ENCLOSED SPACES

[i]   public circulation space
[ii] semi-private space (connection to public + private framework)
[iii] semi-private space (expansion of enclosed areas)
[iv] private space

Though the original intention was evidently to protect the family living inside the house from external dangers happening in the streets by allowing all public and private, interior and exterior activities to happen within the lot, behind a wall or gate that closes off the house from the street, the result was a typology that uses architectural spaces and elements to transition from public to private, from the street edge to the most intimate spaces. It achieves this in several ways, one being the creation of a set of abstract architectural wrappers; one that contains the lot defining all its edges and separating it from the public street space. The second, defines the interior space within the lot, and thus differentiates the public and open from the more private and interior. The third, contains the most intimate spaces, and uses the *interiority wall* to create the boundary between the more public and the most private areas within the interior zone.
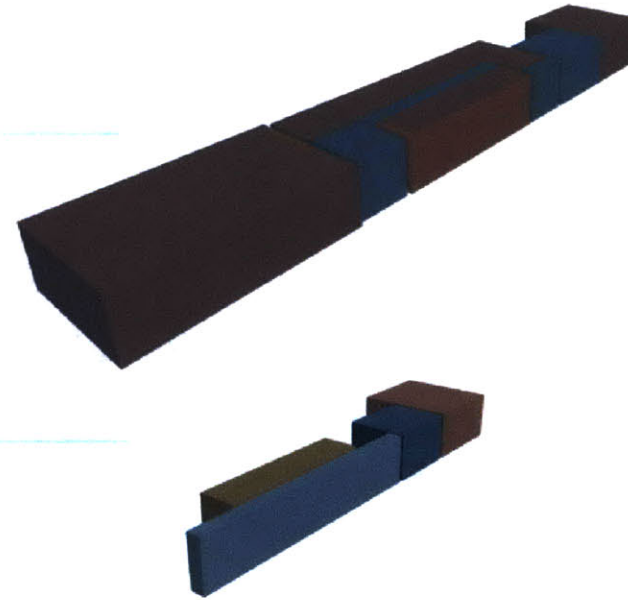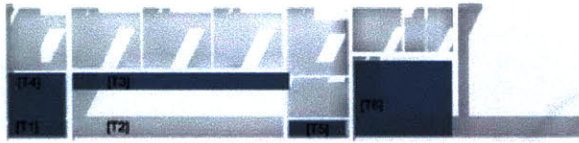
spatial organizers

As mentioned before, this type establishes a difference between spatial dividers and containers. The container, the *interiority wall*, is also load-bearing and encompasses larger spaces within itself. Dividers become lighter elements that subdivide smaller zones within the larger area. They are not structural, and though they are almost always present in existing examples of this type, they are not vital to the definition of the type, and could therefore be removed in response to the needs of the user. Spatially, they are especially significant since they offer the user the possibility to manipulate the space creating tighter, more intimate spaces within larger, more public zones.

thresholds

A series of courtyards and interior *in-between* spaces ease the transition from outside to inside, from public to private. As opposed to other residential typologies, this type uses spaces to define this transition, rather than walls, partitions or furniture dividers. They can thus be seen as spatial thresholds that become infinite in the manner in which they affect spatial qualities, rather than finite elements that merely separate spaces, but do not necessarily affect them qualitatively.

(un-)enclosed spaces

An essential characteristics of this typology is its dependence on exterior spaces to define its interior zones. Courtyards define the way interior and exterior spaces are inhabited, yet, they do not only organize the type, they also become the heart of the house, contain all public activities and circulation paths, and are directly tied to specific interior rooms, creating transitions and defining spaces of intimacy both inside and outside.

notes

1. Fernando Rocchi, "La Argentina de Principios del siglo XX", in <u>H.G. Olds Fotografías 1900-1943</u>, Ediciones Fundación Antorchas, Buenos Aires, 1998.
2. Jorge Francisco Liernur, "The Casa Chorizo. Low Income Housing in Argentina, 1870-1920", in <u>Harvard Design Magazine</u>, summer 1999,   p.33-39.
3. Alfonso Corona Martinez, "Le Corbusier's Curutchet House in La Plata", in <u>AA files</u> 1998, autumn, n.37, p.36.
4. Alfonso Corona Martinez, "Le Corbusier's Curutchet House in La Plata", in <u>AA files</u> 1998, autumn, n.37, p.33.

images
Unless noted here, all images are by the author.

[01]   plans from "Vivienda. Rosario" in <u>DANA</u> n. 10, p. 20.
[02]   drawings from "Vivienda. Rosario" in <u>DANA</u> n. 10, p. 20-23.
[03]   photograph by Roberto Converti from <u>Portrait de Ville: Buenos Aires</u>, p. 32.
[04]   photograph by Mirta Robert from <u>Portrait de Ville: Buenos Aires</u>, p. 10.
[05]   drawings by Le Corbusier from <u>Précisions</u>, p. 229.
[06]   photographs by Claudio Meszel from "Le Corbusier's Curutchet House in La Plata" in <u>AA files</u> 1998, n.37, p. 35, 37.

urban interventions

[02]

[03]

[01]
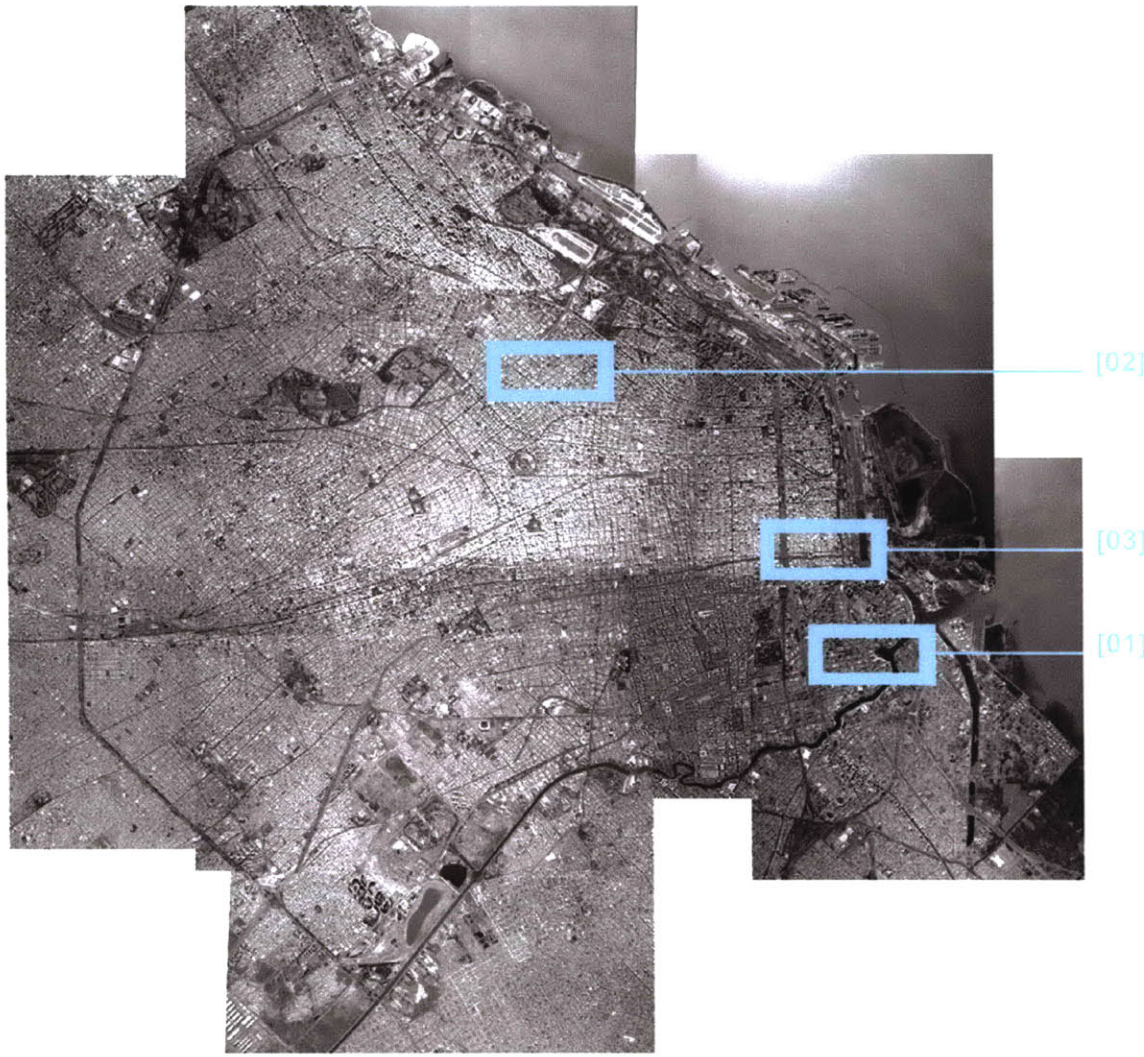
introduction / process

The typological analysis of the *Casa Chorizo* resulted in a series of six independent concepts that guide the development of a type that combines the rationality of some modern typologies with the intimacy sought by Argentine people -and that is thus important to translate into an architecture that expresses the cultural identity of the place.

Although any typology is undeniably tied to its formal characteristics, this analysis intended to detach the six concepts from any formal considerations. It is impossible to believe that the architectural forms that were adopted one hundred years ago, are the most suited for a housing typology that contains the types of spaces needed today. Several elements in the organization and layout of the house are outdated and would not be acceptable considering present standards. Thus, the guidelines extracted from the initial typology were manipulated without considering their formal counterparts. However, some of those forms did not only respond to old-fashioned customs and habits. They were directly linked to site conditions and code regulations that are still valid today. Therefore, they will inevitably reappear in most propositions, creating spaces that feel familiar to the user, in terms of their shape, materials, light and spatial qualities.

The goal behind the three urban interventions was to transform the initial concepts to fit three different situations within the city of Buenos Aires. Though they are all residential types, and they all contain a public function that penetrates the site and thus forces a direct interaction between public and private spaces, the sizes, heights, and functional requirements vary per the location and users targeted. From a single-family house for an artist and his / her family containing an art studio and art gallery within it recreating a live-work situation in a working class neighborhood, to a five-story apartment building with a bar / restaurant attached to it providing a number of smaller studio apartments for young couples and single professionals in a fast-growing, young, hip neighborhood that still maintains a sense of community and where older generations are welcoming younger ones to their *barrio*, to an eight-story building attached to a bookstore / cafe, providing family apartments in one of the oldest areas in town, filled with antique stores that emanate the smell of past, culture, identity, these interventions intend to show that the initial concepts can inspire solutions for a variety of problems and conditions, regardless of the code requirements and social needs.

The three interventions were developed in an abstract way in order to concentrate on the reinterpretation and transformation of the diagrams, rather than the formal characteristics of the three buildings. Though heights, square footages and programmatic layouts were determined, the intention was to incorporate the initial concepts into the three sites, develop them, and extract a new set of diagrams that illustrates the way in which the guidelines were adapted. Once the diagrams were developed in an attempt to understand the process of reinterpretation of the original typology, one proposition was developed further.

In order to transform the initial diagrams and adapt them to the different site conditions, three of the original guidelines were looked at as a starting point. The goal was to develop a vocabulary with which to begin the design process.
They were considered in an abstract way and manipulated in two dimensions first, then in three dimensions, translating the two-dimensional guidelines into three-dimensional propositions.

As the continuous wall becomes independent from the party wall, it acquires a sense of freedom that allows it to open up and fold both horizontally and vertically, creating, defining and enclosing space. As it configures a spatial container, the folding of the wall creates situations in which planes merge, contain space within, or fold over one another, defining thresholds and evoking spatial intimacy...

Patios are created by the interaction of the continuous wall and the party wall. As one courtyard connects to another, thresholds are defined. By understanding and respecting the spatial qualities and characteristics of each outdoor condition as they relate to circulation, views, openness, privacy, it is possible to transpose a sense of familiarity closely tied to the cultural identity of a place.

58

By liberating the party wall from its double role as the main structural element and the provider of privacy, it is possible to manipulate it in order to exploit it as part of a skin system, a wrapper that could potentially be controlled by the user. Seen now only as a screen defining the amount of privacy or exposure within the living environment, it can be expanded to contain elements that diffuse or emphasize its solidity. As part of a system of skins that relates to the user and the human scale, it can become a record of life in a particular place.

continuous wall

[01]　　　[02]　　　[03] . . .
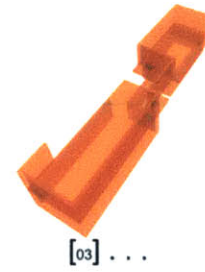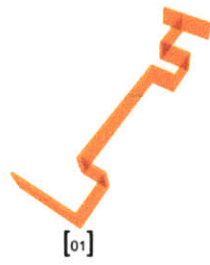
patios / thresholds

[01]　　　[02]　　　[03] . . .

party wall

[01]　　　[02]　　　[03] . . .
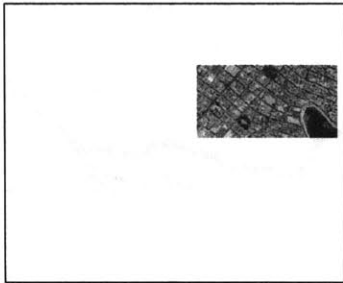
Ui.01

[photographs of areas immediately surrounding the site]
they represent a range of spaces, from the touristic route (see below) to the everyday grocery stores, newspaper stands, and the major presence of the river edge facing the site with its remains of old ships, reminding visitors of this area's past role as the port of Buenos Aires.
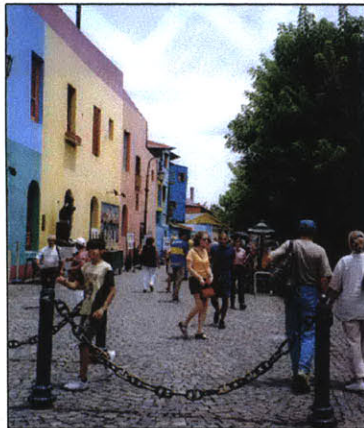
One of the oldest and most industrialized *barrios* in the city, La Boca was founded by immigrants and grew facing the river and listening to tango (some say tango was born in the *conventillos* of La Boca).

Its houses, built on piles and painted with assorted colors make La Boca a *barrio* different from all others.

At the turn of the century, La Boca, an Italian neighborhood, received thousands of immigrants, particularly Jewish, Arabic, Greek, Spanish and Italian, especially from Genoa. It was poverty that turned La Boca into the happiest and most picturesque neighborhood of the city, because of its myriad tin and wood houses built on piles, colored facades, and abundance of types that relate back to the *Casa Chorizo.*

This area became an icon of the cultural identity missing in other, perhaps faster growing areas of Buenos Aires. It was also considered a provocative and somewhat transgressive area, as this was the place where tango was danced when it was banned everywhere else, and this is where innovative theater plays and artists found receptive and interested people to address.

A very innovative and culturally diverse area, it fosters the idea of a free architecture that engages the public and the private, and suggests a leap forward in design and material technology.

The coexistence of traditional and modern style architectural examples, the necessity to establish the area as a promising community. The presence of people with a variety of cultural and economic backgrounds, and its location between major urban corridors overlooking the river, make this area ideal for the location of an urban intervention.

Traditionally a low-income neighborhood, it is receiving the influx of younger generations with diverse cultural and economic backgrounds. Being a very touristic area, small commercial activities are developing, and artists are moving to the area for its exposure and affordability. The presence of families calls for single-family housing with an emphasis on live-work.

GUIDELINES:

LOCATION: P.D. Mendoza 1975

DIMENSIONS: 9.5m x 30m

TOTAL AREA: 283m^2

MAX. HEIGHT: 12m

FAR: 2.5

MAX. LOT COVERAGE: 237.5m^2

PROGRAM: ART GALLERY + HOME (LIVE - WORK)
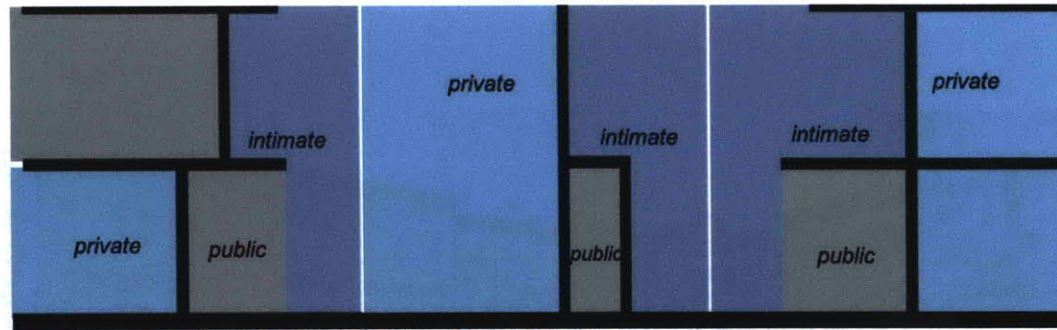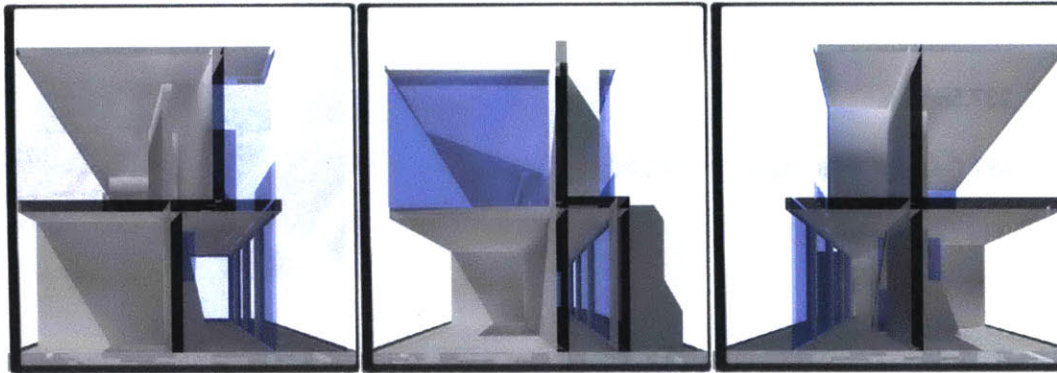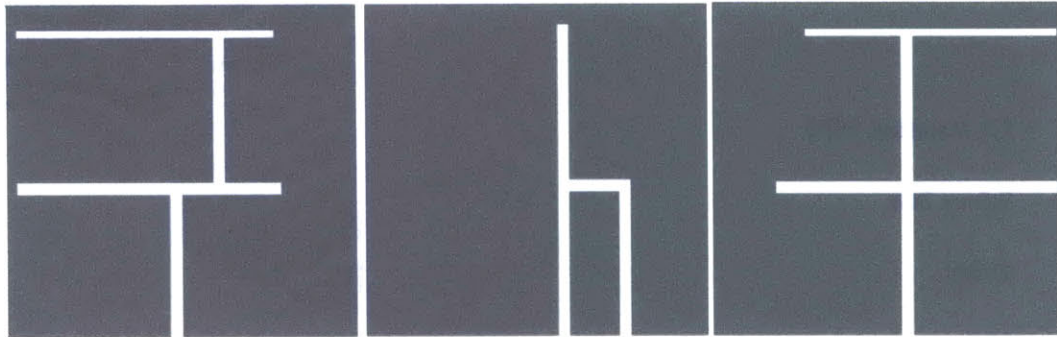
private

intimate

private

intimate

intimate

private

private

public

public

public

sectional studies

the urban intervention was developed using simultaneously physical and virtual models in order to fully understand the three-dimensional spatial qualities proposed.

public

private

intimate

The three concepts extracted from the analysis and interpretation of the original typology were manipulated physically through the creation of models, and virtually, using computer simulations to understand the way these manipulations affect the programmatic, functional and qualitative aspects of the design.

Although the design was always considered diagrammatic and fairly abstract, the concept was to provide two separate
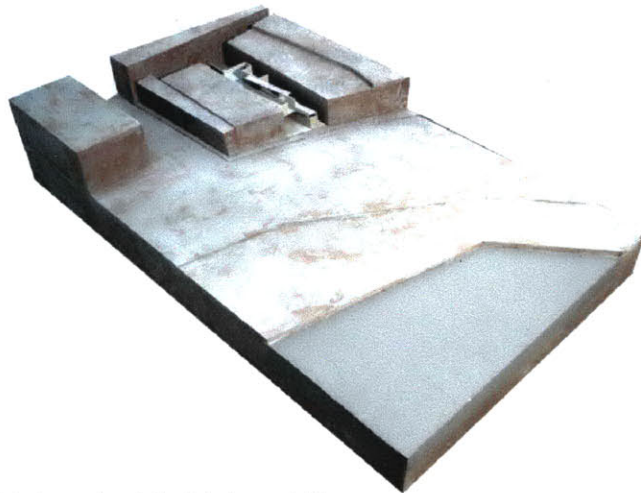
65

[photographs of final study models]
during the design process, several models were inserted in the site model in order to understand the impact the insertion would have on the site, and the site on the intervention.
since the code regulations on heights and dimensions were respected, it was important to constantly check them with the surrounding existing buildings.

entrances on the street side for the public element (the art gallery) and the private component (the house). The gallery is accessed directly from the street and opens up to a courtyard towards the inside of the block. The house, however, is accessed through a courtyard that creates a spatial threshold from the public street-edge to the private rooms. Though the most intimate spaces are reserved for the second floor, they are adjacent to the art studio that becomes accessible to the public through a set of stairs that shares visual transparencies with the private circulation path. Thus, public and private interact visually and physically. Furthermore, a zone of interiority is created next to the party wall: it is accessible to the public on the ground floor, and to the private on the top floor, creating, if not a physical interaction, at least a psychological connection.

This particular scenario looks at the possibility of engaging the public with certain elements within the private spaces. The fact that the house belongs to the family of the artist who owns and manages the art gallery on the first floor, creates a more direct relationship between the public and private components on the site. As the continuous wall folds in plan and section, it merges spaces that relate to both the public and the private, such as the circulation spaces, and the artist's studio space. By interlocking the circulation paths, public and private are inevitably entangled, and it is at those particular instances that the more permeable controllable membrane becomes engaged in the play between public and private.

A vertical intimate zone is created between the party wall and the house's enclosure. This zone relates both to public and private, and, as it bridges spaces with a variety of functions and spatial qualities, it becomes the core of the house, sustaining intimacy, openness, publicity and solitude.
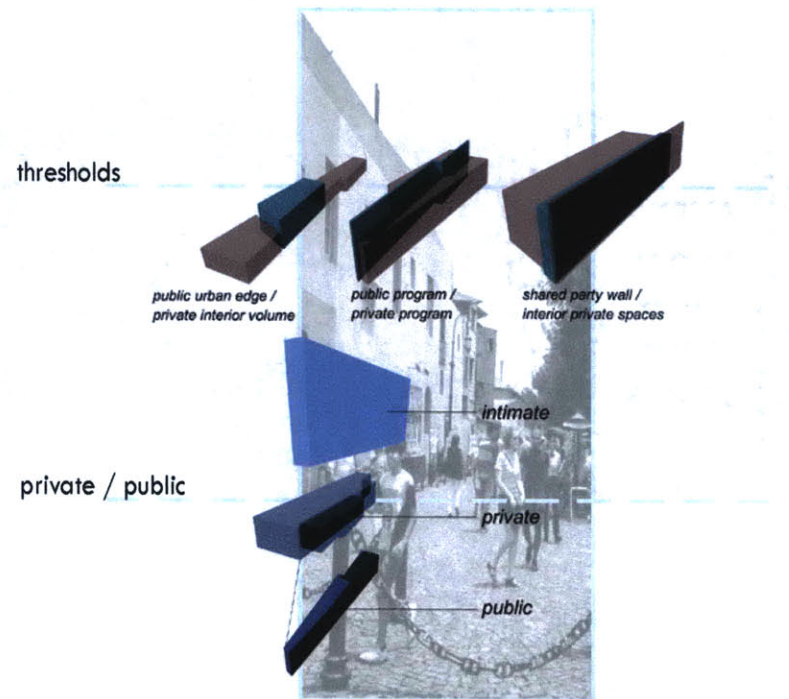
container

wrappers

zones

thresholds

public urban edge /
private interior volume

public program /
private program

shared party wall /
interior private spaces

intimate

private / public

private

public

[final set of diagrams analyzing the proposition in the same way that the initial typology was analyzed]
this set of diagrams was useful in understanding all three interventions using the same terms.

Ui.02
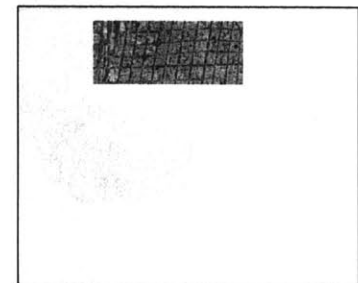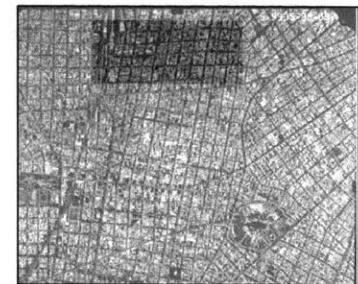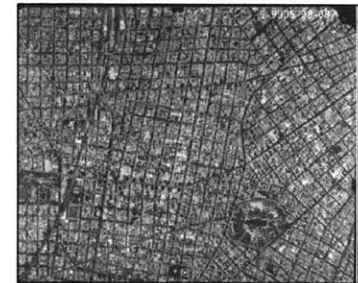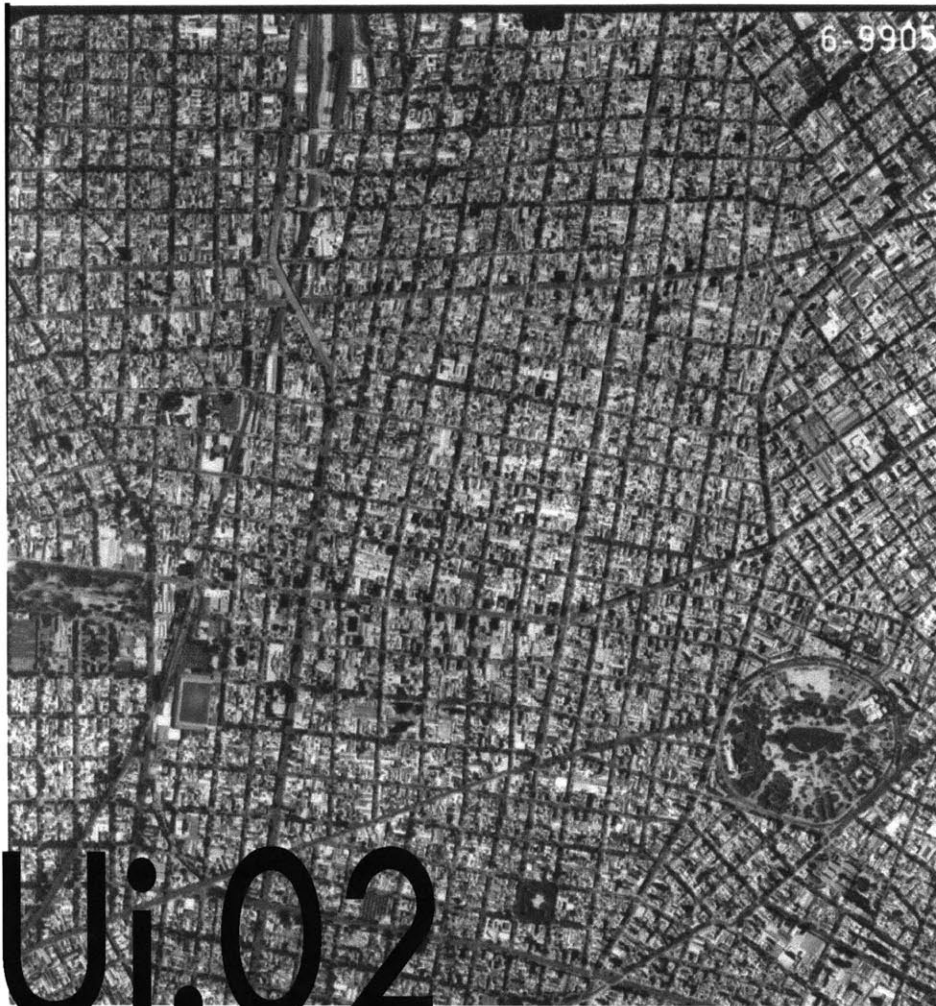
[photographs of areas immediately surrounding the site]
they represent a range of people who live together in a same neighborhood, from young single friends enjoying drinks or a cup of coffee in one of the many local cafes and bars that have transformed the barrio into a very attractive area with a very appealing nightlife, to families with pets and young children, to young professional couples. it is this mixing of groups that makes the area so interesting socially and architecturally.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS:

A central area with a particular idiosyncrasy made up of local housing typologies (some of which have been transformed to house bars, antique stores and restaurants), small industry and a growing commercial activity, Palermo Viejo -also referred to as Palermo Hollywood, or Buenos Aires' Soho- is in the process of becoming one of the most active points of encounter for local youth.

As the *barrio* transforms itself to attract young professionals, it is seeking to maintain the right balance between built space and open space, new and old, housing and commercial.

With its tree-lined mostly cobble-stone streets, it still preserves the qualities of a calm inviting neighborhood where older and younger generations can find a variety of private, public and intimate spaces. It has also become one of the most poetic *barrios* of Buenos Aires, with close ties to tango and to writers such as Jorge Luis Borges, who has described extensively its neighborly character.

Its proximity to central areas of development and to a number of means of transportation, and the fact that new commercial, dining and entertainment activities are relocating to this area, make Palermo a very attractive place to live in.

As younger people move in, the need for alternative housing possibilities arises. Single-family homes might start to give way to buildings housing single people, couples, and small families at one time.
A mixing of activities might also call for spaces that can accommodate live-work situations, and that can facilitate the interaction between private and public spaces, open and enclosed, interior and exterior.

70
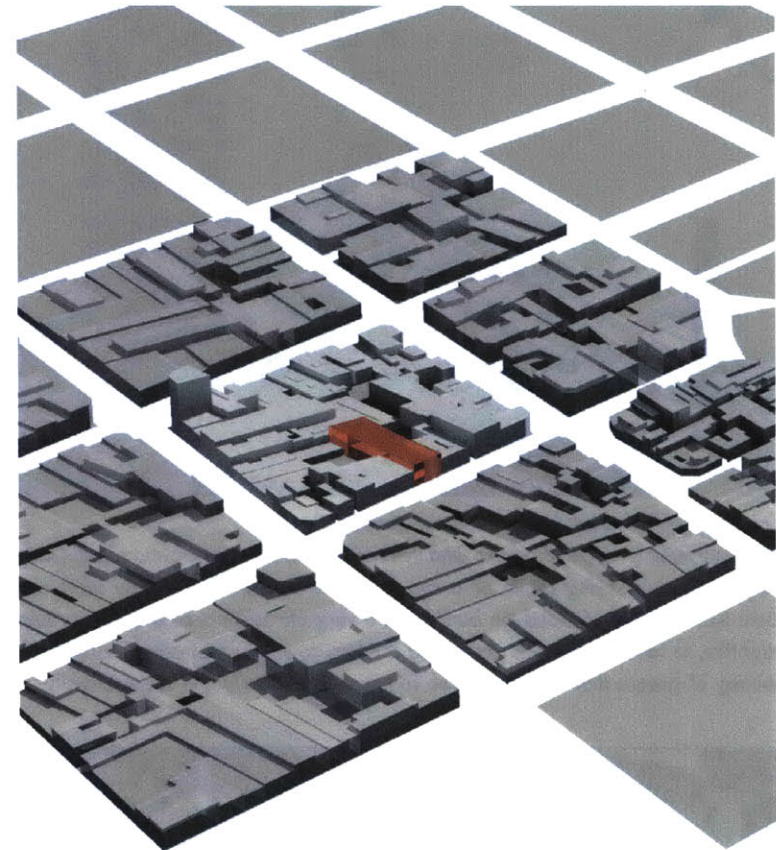
GUIDELINES:

LOCATION: Honduras 4850

DIMENSIONS: 12m x 44m

TOTAL AREA: 528m^2

MAX. HEIGHT: 13m (+3m)

FAR: 2.6

MAX. LOT COVERAGE: 300m^2

PROGRAM: RESTAURANT / BAR + EFFICIENCY APARTMENTS
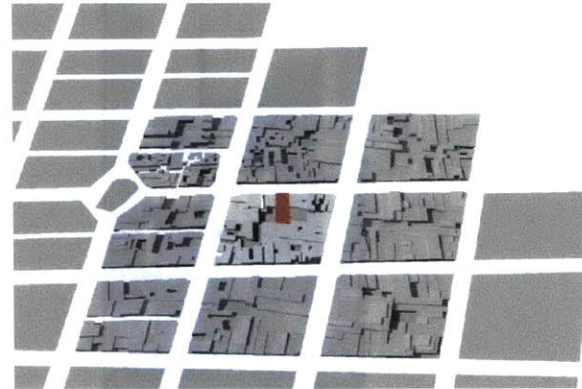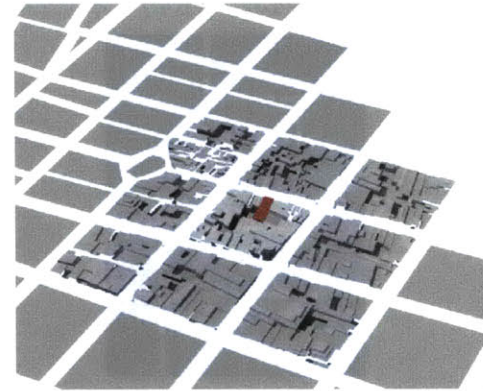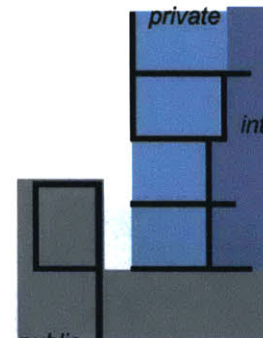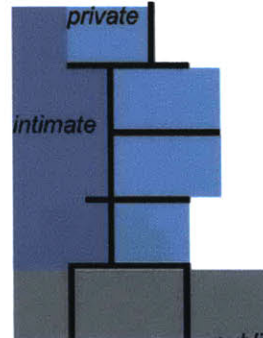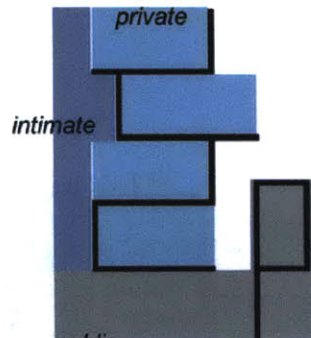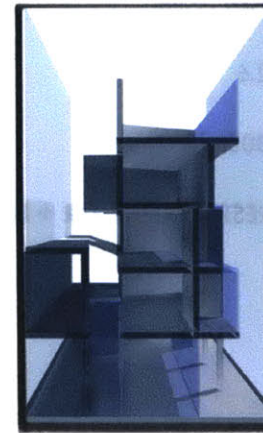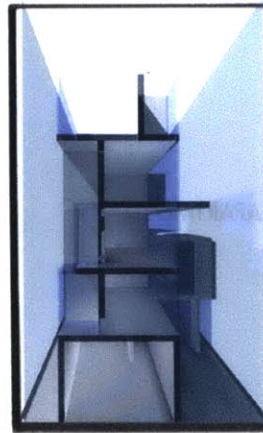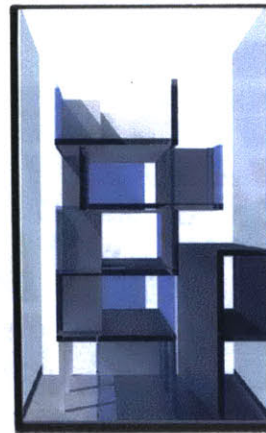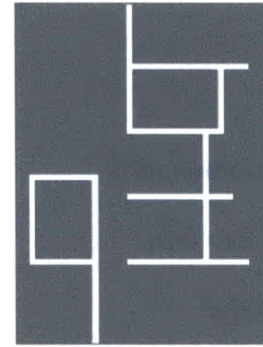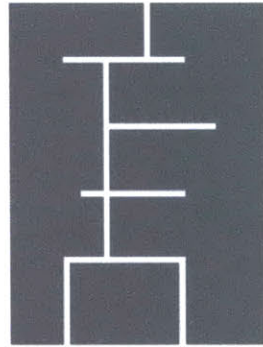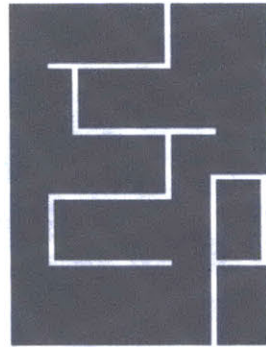
private

intimate

private

intimate

private

intimate

sectional studies

the urban intervention was developed using simultaneously physical and virtual models in order to fully understand the three-dimensional spatial qualities proposed.

public

private

intimate
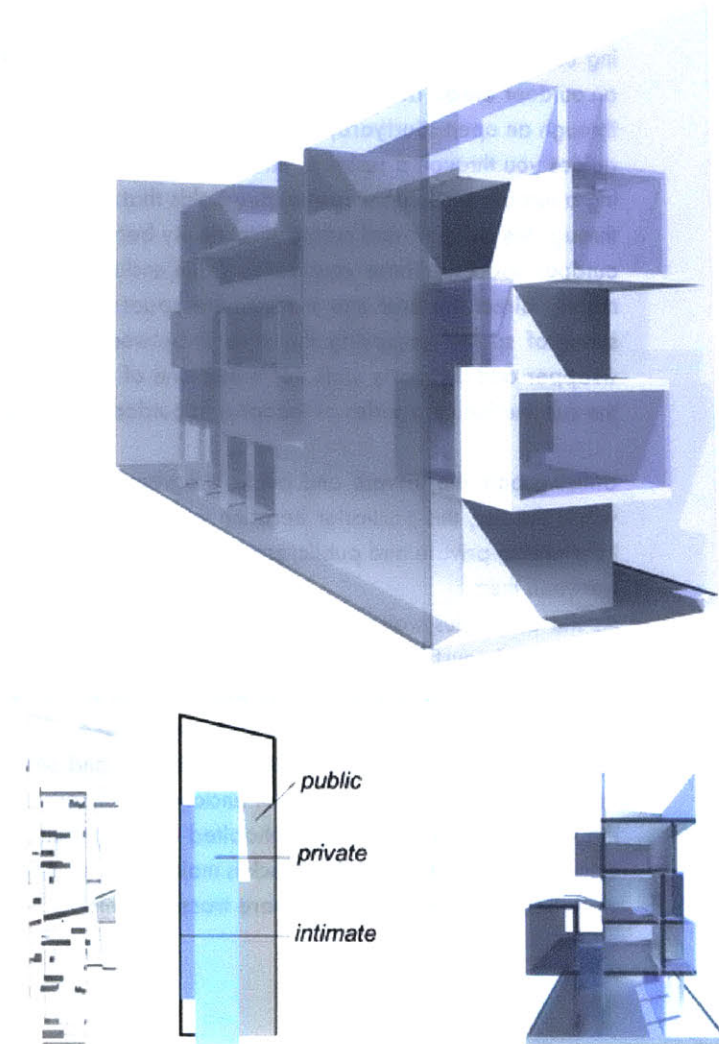
As in the previous proposition for the barrio of La Boca, the three concepts extracted from the analysis and interpretation of the original typology were manipulated physically through the creation of models, and virtually, using computer simulations to understand the way these manipulations affect the programmatic, functional and qualitative aspects of the design.

Although the design was always considered diagrammatic and fairly abstract,

[photographs of final study models]
during the design process, several models were inserted in the site model in order to understand the impact the insertion would have on the site, and the site on the intervention.
since the code regulations on heights and dimensions were respected, it was important to constantly check them with the surrounding existing buildings.
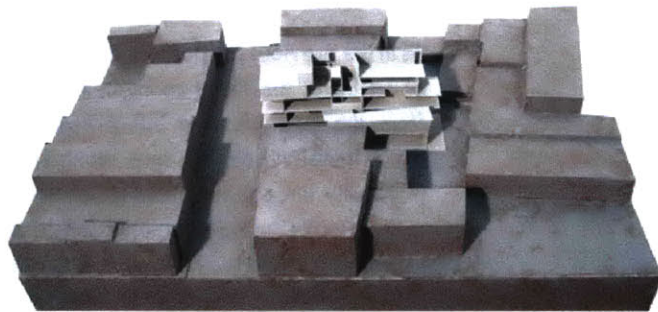
the concept was, once again, to provide two separate entrances on the street side for the public element (the bar / restaurant), and the private component (the apartment building). However, visual connections relate both circulation paths (from the restaurant to the bar, and from the private entrance to the apartments above), always maintaining a contact between private and public. Once again, the back of the lot remains open (respecting code regulations) and allows the restaurant to spill out into an outdoor area. The entry into the apartment building happens through an open courtyard, and the circulation (stair + elevator) guides you through a series of interconnected courtyards, creating a number of outdoor spatial thresholds that guide movement through the building and create a continuity between indoor and outdoor spaces. These courtyards / (un)enclosed spaces ultimately direct the user into the intimate spaces in each unit: a series of spaces occupying the zone in-between the building's wrapper and the party wall: this is the zone of interiority and is the culmination of a series of indoor and outdoor thresholds.

Utilizing both the private and public programmatic components within the site, this particular iteration looks at the possibility of interlocking private and public, emphasizing the areas of friction between them.
As the continuous wall wraps and folds in section, open three-dimensional courtyards and patios are created, becoming positive spaces that define thresholds between public and private, and between the building and the edges of the site.
Intimacy is created by the overlapping of solid and permeable membranes, and by the merging of enclosure and party wall. As the vertical courtyards become inhabited bridging from edge to edge, the continuity within the block is maintained, and the party walls become intimate spaces where traces are made.
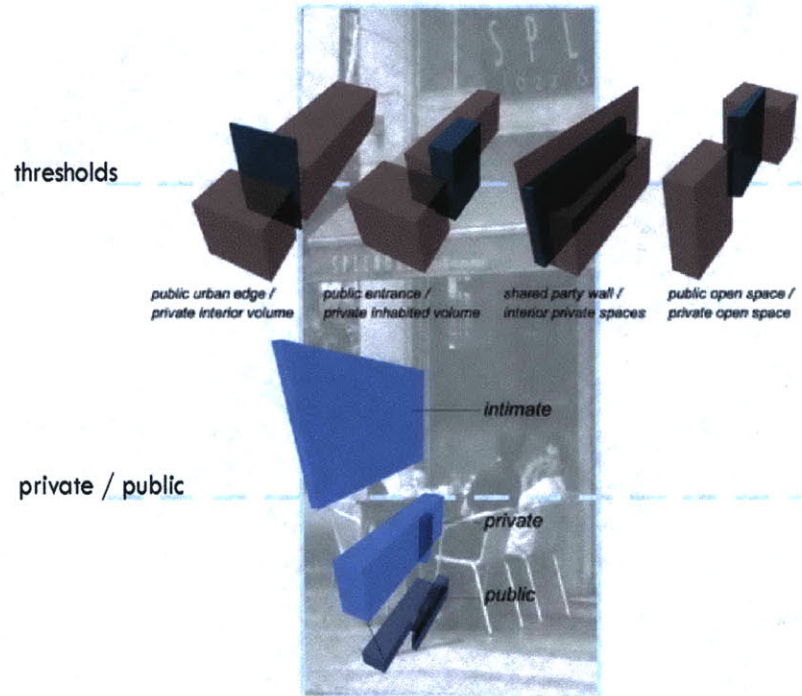
container

wrappers

zones

thresholds

public urban edge /
private interior volume

public entrance /
private inhabited volume

shared party wall /
interior private spaces

public open space /
private open space

intimate

private / public

private

public

75

[final set of diagrams analyzing the proposition in the same way that the initial typology was analyzed]
this set of diagrams was useful in understanding all three interventions using the same terms.
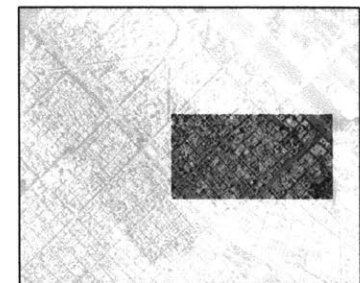
Ui.03

[photographs of areas immediately surrounding the site]
the photographs intend to show the way in which younger and older generations interact with the strong cultural identity of the area. with examples of architectural typologies that remind us of our roots, of the way past generations shaped the way we view and inhabit space, this barrio holds the key to our past, to the way our past represents our identity, and to the way we might begin to translate that identity into our present and future.
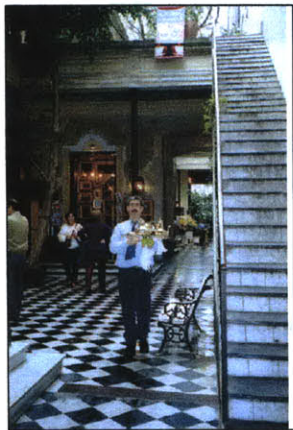
GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS:

Called originally Altos de San Pedro, and then San Pedro Telmo, this is one of the oldest and most traditional areas of the city. Poised today as one of the most representative neighborhoods of colonial Buenos Aires, San Telmo grew around the Plaza Dorrego which today hosts a weekly antique market, and is usually filled with artists, painters and antique dealers exhibiting their work and possessions.

It has the particularity of counting with a number of historical architectural examples, and thus requires that one consider the issue of identity and conservation before undertaking a new development, even though much of its colonial heritage has been lost to deterioration due to lack of maintenance and the illegal occupation of several buildings by families with little or no resources.

With a mix of people, San Telmo is known for its antiques, its old-fashioned bars and coffee places, and its links to tango. Not only are there several institutions and bars dedicated to tango, but street tango shows are commonplace especially on weekends.

In the past few years a very big redevelopment of the neighborhood brought investment, growth and therefore a renewal in terms of people, activities and architectural demands.

Lately, painters, photographers, architects, artists and students have decided to move into the area, for its wealth in culturally intense corners, streets, alleys and its proximity to university buildings and teaching facilities. They now share the barrio with San Telmo's more traditional families. The area's household size varies but is usually between 3 and 4 people, and is high when compared to other barrios within the city.

78
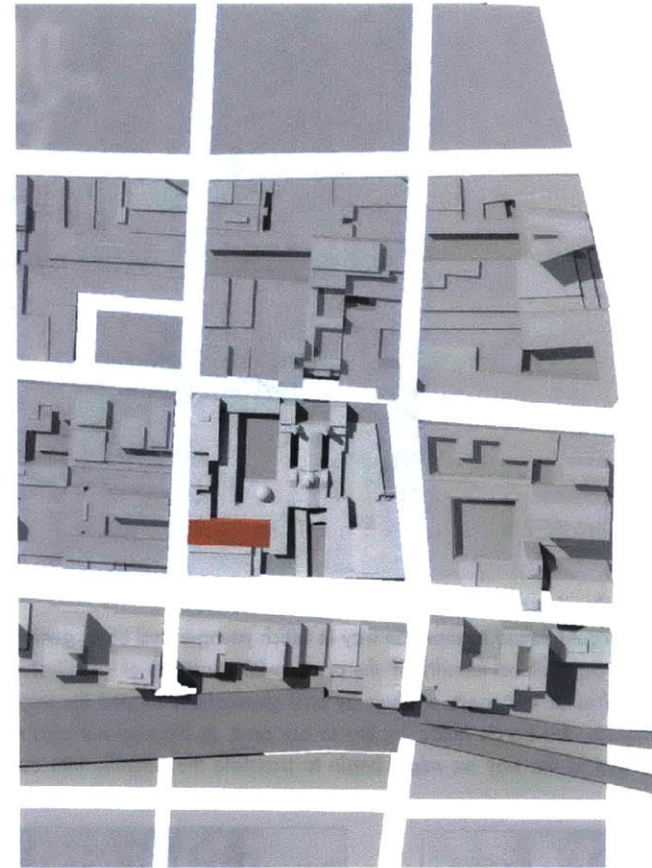
Famous for its literary connections to writers like Jorge Luis Borges, San Telmo represents today one of the most attractive barrios in downtown Buenos Aires.

It has the potential to become an area prone for redevelopment and re-occupation, while still maintaining its major role in safeguarding the identity of its people.

GUIDELINES:

LOCATION:	Defensa 1170
DIMENSIONS:	14.5m x 36.5m
TOTAL AREA:	530m^2
MAX. HEIGHT:	21m
FAR:	3.1
MAX. LOT COVERAGE:	362.5m^2
PROGRAM:	CAFE / BOOKSTORE + APARTMENTS
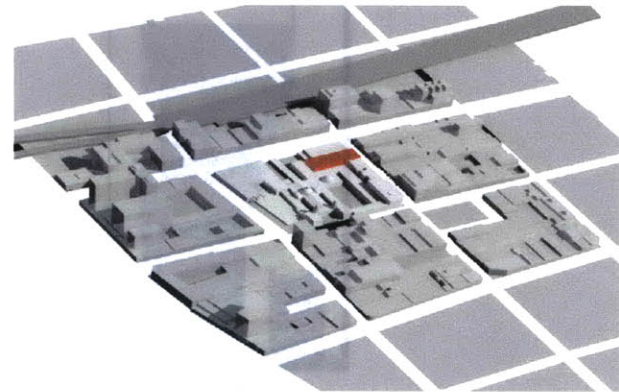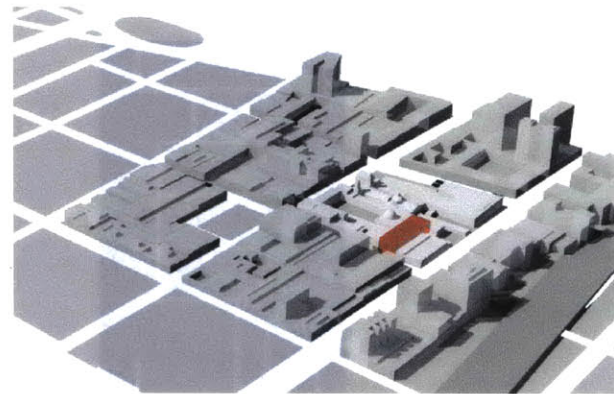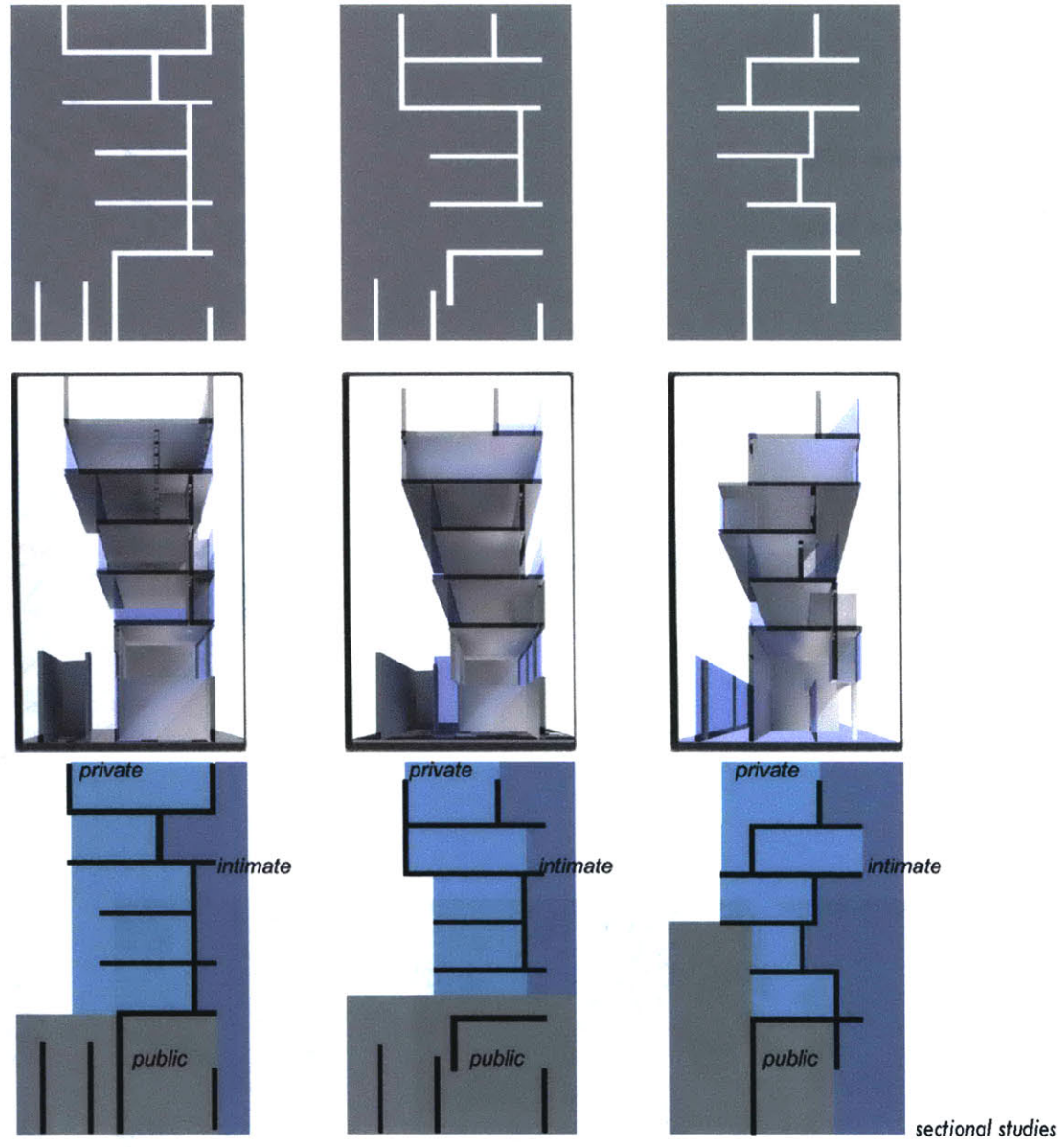
private

intimate
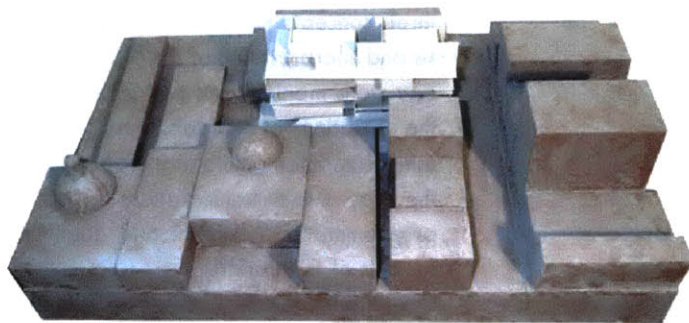
public

sectional studies

public

private

intimate
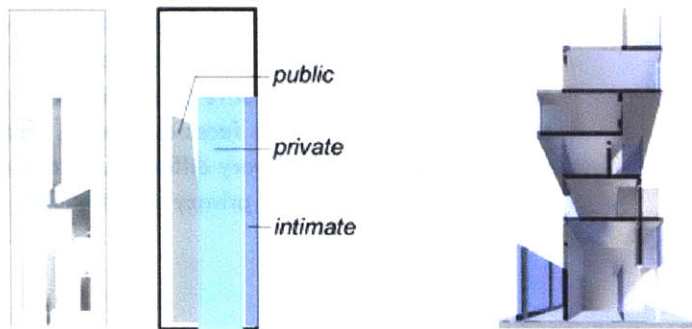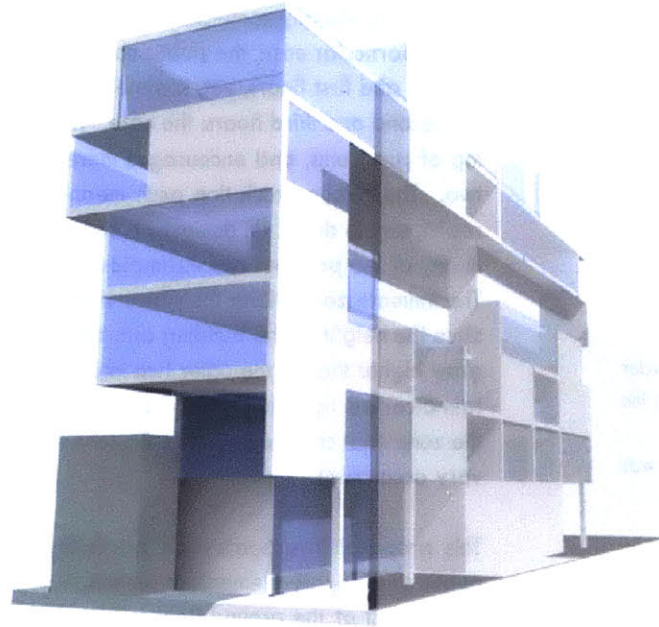
As in the previous two propositions, the three concepts extracted from the analysis and interpretation of the original typology were manipulated physically through the creation of models, and virtually, using computer simulations to understand the way these manipulations affect the programmatic, functional and qualitative aspects of the design.

Once again, there are two circulation systems (one pubic, one private) that maintain and encourage visual connections through the building and across both public and
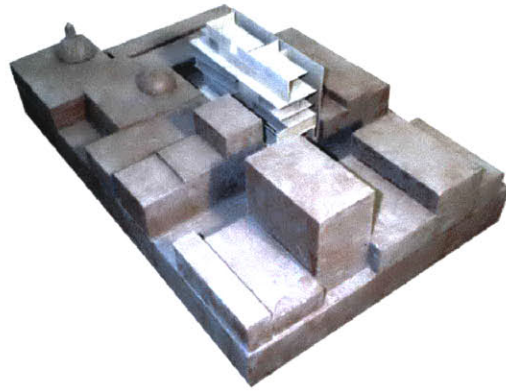
81

[photographs of final study models]
during the design process, several models were inserted in the site model in order to understand the impact the insertion would have on the site, and the site on the intervention.
since the code regulations on heights and dimensions were respected, it was important to constantly check them with the surrounding existing buildings.

private components. However, with seven stories, the private circulation is mainly restricted to a core containing fire stairs and elevators. Thus, the interaction between private and public changes its focus from the circulation areas, to the open courtyards, patios, and balconies, that expand the residential zone into the sky zone of the public areas. Thus, public and private are always visually connected.

In this particular case, the public components occur mainly on the ground and first floors, yet, some elements find their way up into the second and third floors: the cafe. This increases the intertwining of programs, and encourages more interaction between the two. The public circulation path meanders through the private realm, and in doing so, achieves a connectivity that is not present in any of the previous two examples.

The intimate zone along the party wall is still present. However, since the height of the building and the height of its surroundings grow higher than in the other two interventions, in order to maintain a certain light and spatial quality within the intimate spaces, the zone must change its width. Dimensions within the apartments vary accordingly.

This proposal investigates the possibility of further combining public and private elements in section.

While most of the ground floor is occupied by public programs, both the first and second floors house complementary spaces that address the public components organized within the site. As public and private become the molding spaces for one another, they begin to define thresholds that organize the building.

As the private spaces grow above the public elements, it becomes possible to qualify both side faces as intimate, creating a variety of intimate spaces with very different spatial qualities, each offering varying degrees of privacy and interiority.
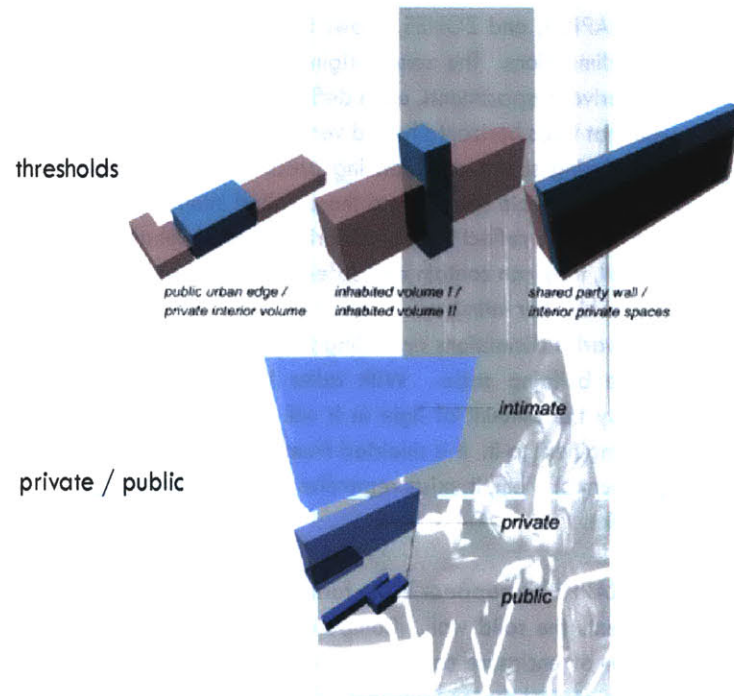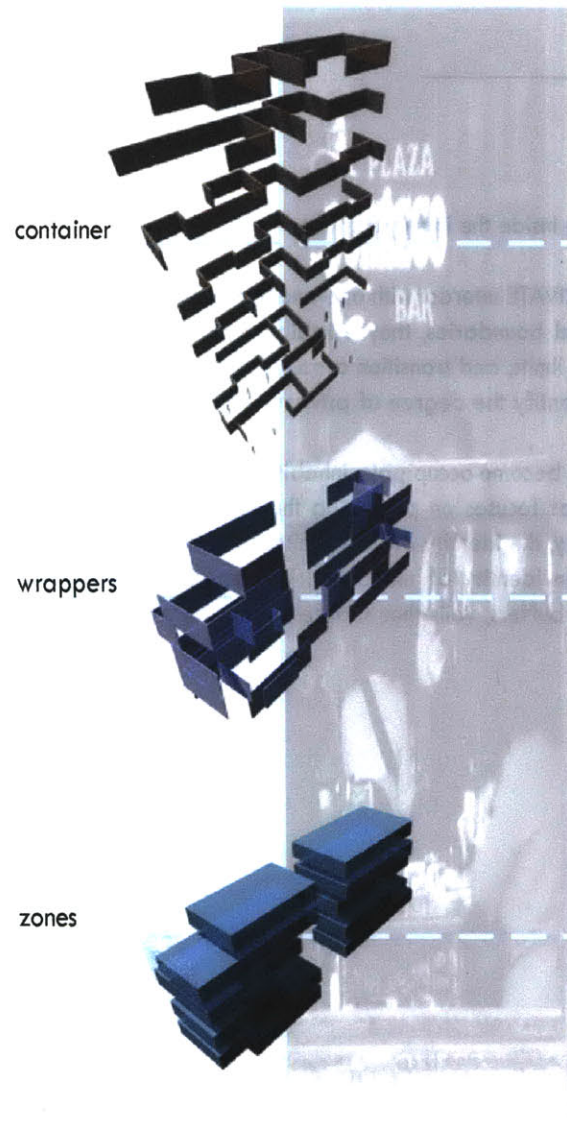
container

wrappers

zones

thresholds

| public urban edge / private interior volume | inhabited volume I / inhabited volume II | shared party wall / interior private spaces |

private / public

intimate

private

public

[final set of diagrams analyzing the proposition in the same way that the initial typology was analyzed]
this set of diagrams was useful in understanding all three interventions using the same terms.

The vertical transformation of the concepts of CONTAINER / WALL, ENCLOSURE / WRAPPER, and ZONES, allows for the manipulation of space in all three dimensions. The zones originally containing private rooms evolve into private apartments, each defined by the presence of a continuous wall that folds horizontally and vertically containing structural elements, enclosing space and defining areas within each zone that will hold the most private spaces, and those called intimate zones. These spaces are meant to reflect the particularities of each inhabitant. Like cracks in a wall, they can contain and safeguard the identity of a person, and protect his/ her intimacy.

The intimate zone varies dimensions according to the height limitations established by the building code. With taller buildings the zone expands. That way the amount of light in it will not depend on the height of the building next to it. It is shielded from its surroundings and becomes independent of them, it exists regardless of what the contiguous buildings are like.

The conceptual WRAPPERS reappear in the form of a more permeable skin that complements the solid wall. Composed of more translucent materials, this layer of enclosure can be altered and manipulated by the user in order to control the environment. The continuous wall and the new skin are present in every space, creating a continuity that can be read throughout.

As both WALLS and SKINS fold and merge with the party wall, the most INTIMATE spaces are created as they occupy the space *in-between* the newly built and the existing party wall.

The articulation of SPATIAL THRESHOLDS also defines the journey from public to private, starting with the exterior public edge (the street-scape) and ending inside the intimate space.

As PUBLIC AND PRIVATE interact with one another delimiting each other's jurisdiction and boundaries, they establish a series of thresholds that define edges, limits, and transition areas. These spatial conditions, the *in-between*, quantify the degree of privacy within a place.

As these thresholds become occupiable, inhabitable, they begin to mold an architecture that focuses on protecting the interiority of the user, defining in that way, the identity of the architecture, its cultural meaning, and the urban identity of the place. Those spatial thresholds become dampers, buffers, veils that seduce us with *hints* of *what may lie inside*.

All illustrations by author unless otherwise noted.

architectural exploration

introduction

In translating the diagrammatic and conceptual propositions into architecture, issues of materiality, tectonics, and light, become fundamental.

The journey from the public edge of the building (the street-scape) to the most private spaces carved out of the party wall and suspended in mid-air in the *in-between* space, is marked by a series of spatial thresholds.

These spaces become the prelude to more private spaces, and in doing so allow us to leave the public world behind, and seek our own places that can protect, safeguard and hold our interiority.

By redefining the boundary between public and private (a boundary that now becomes a series of zones, a series of spaces, rather than a single line that separates) it is possible that we might no longer *want to avert our eyes, or close them, in the hope of rediscovering, at least in our own minds, the line between private life and public exposure.*
(Nancy Franklin, "Show and Tell", the New Yorker 74, no. 25, p.11)

That line becomes a space that we experience as we inhabit an architecture that contains spaces where we can safely express our inner selves, our interiority. All together, this creates an architecture that contains legible traces of the identity of the people that inhabit it, and therefore expresses the identity of a people.

By recognizing themselves in the architecture they inhabit, users can begin to read about who they are, as individuals and as a group, and begin to understand their place within the group, establishing it as a cohesive community, that can use its heterogeneity to enhance its identity in a globalizing world, without losing track of what makes it different, unique, and worth protecting.

architecture

Programmatically, the proposition responds to the demand for smaller, more compact and flexible apartments that can accommodate single people, couples (younger and older), and young families with small children.

Their flexibility and accessibility allows for the reorganization of space in response to the necessities of the different groups that might occupy the apartments.

Spatial dividers can fold onto themselves or disappear into the wall in order to open up a series of smaller areas, or subdivide larger spaces. In doing so, they manage to affect the quantity and quality of light within the interior space. Furthermore, these dividers also influence the degree of privacy or exposure within the apartment. They can be manipulated in order to veil from (or open up to) the public gaze, but they can also close off one space from another within the apartment, controlling and affecting privacy issues within the already private zones.

In that way, the more private areas inside the apartment can be (or not) opened up to the public areas within that same living environment. There are thus several types of public spaces: the street-scape, the public elements within the site, and the public spaces within the apartments *per se*.
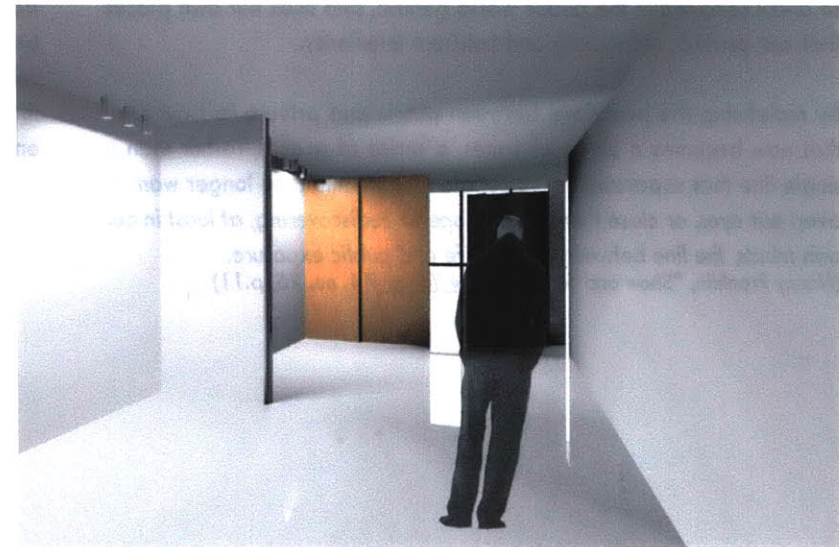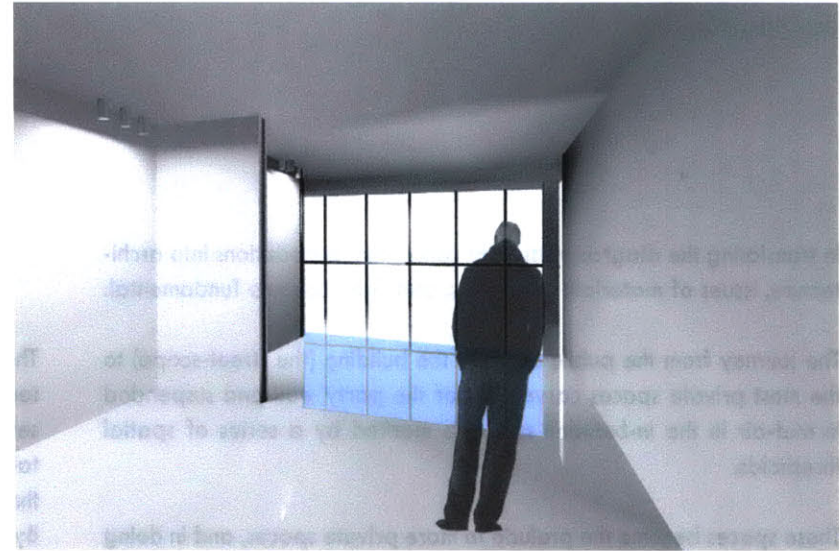
[computer renderings of interior of apartments]
these renderings were kept abstract in order to emphasize specific elements, such as light
quality, materiality, spatial dividers, exposure to outside.

The introduction of a public element within the site presents a new programmatic challenge, and demands a new way to combine public and private elements.

The adjacency of residential and commercial programs is not a programmatic innovation and has been in use since the beginnings of medieval towns (cf. the home on top of the shop). However, as the public component begins to occupy space vertically (as opposed to just horizontally on the ground floor), it inevitably reshapes and redefines private spaces, as public and private share and negotiate boundaries and edges.

Circulation through the building is articulated by the use of courtyards of different sizes, spatial qualities, and uses. The courtyard is reintroduced into this residential typology as a source of light, ventilation, and interaction between public and private, inside and outside, individual and community.

Not only are outdoor spaces seen as extensions of indoor spaces, but they are designed to complement and define the boundaries between inside and outside.

The circulation into the site and up into each apartment follows a series of courtyards that articulate the transition from the public street-scape all the way into the private apartments; through vertical courtyards that contain stairs and elevators and function as the core of the building, as the organizing element; through public courtyards that delineate entries and contain extensions of indoor spaces, encouraging visual connections and social interaction between public and private and among the different apartments; and through private (un)enclosed spaces that create more intimate outdoor zones that are directly linked to indoor private activities, yet provide the possibility of a connection to the outdoors, and a proximity to more exposed, more public spaces.
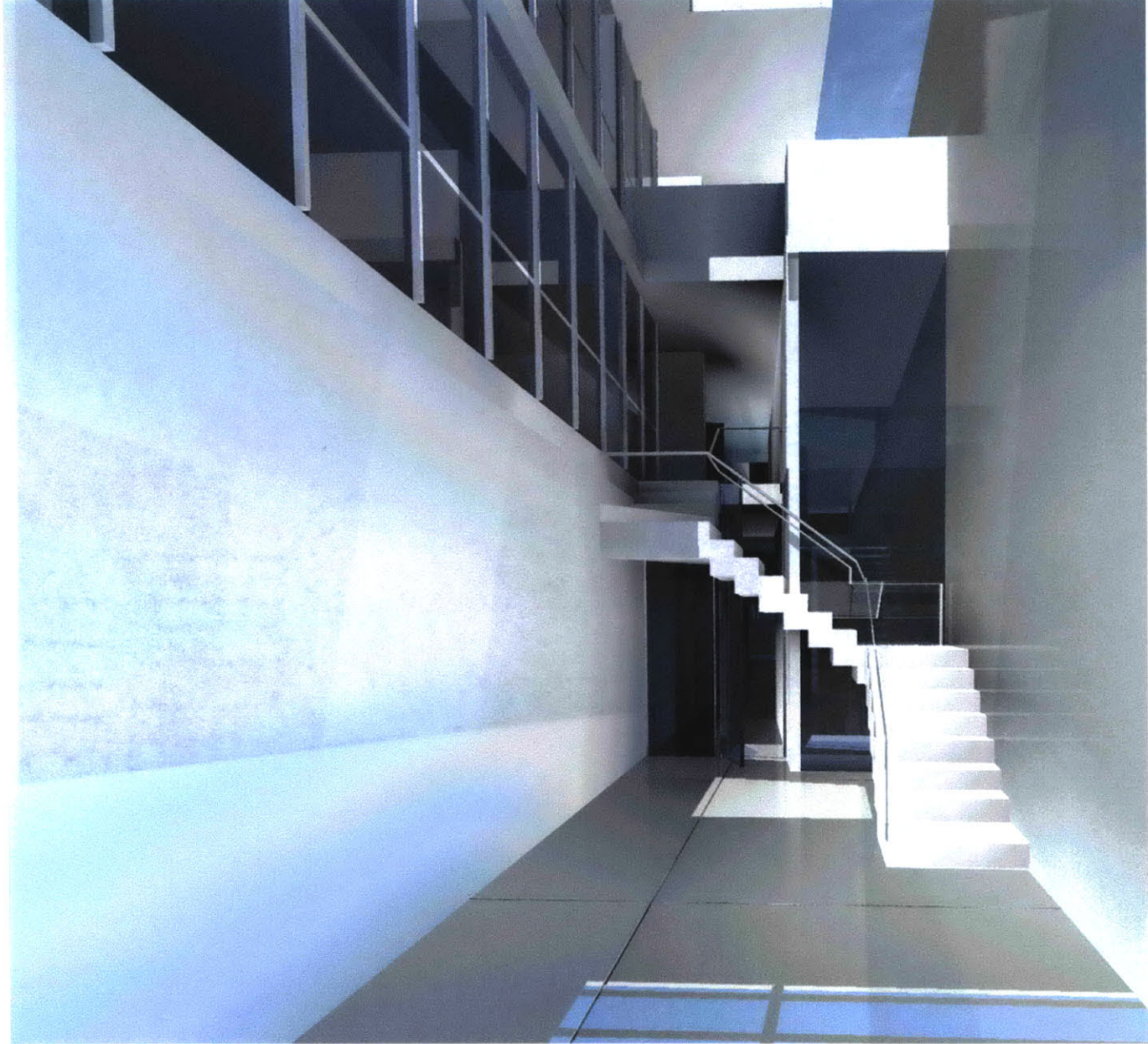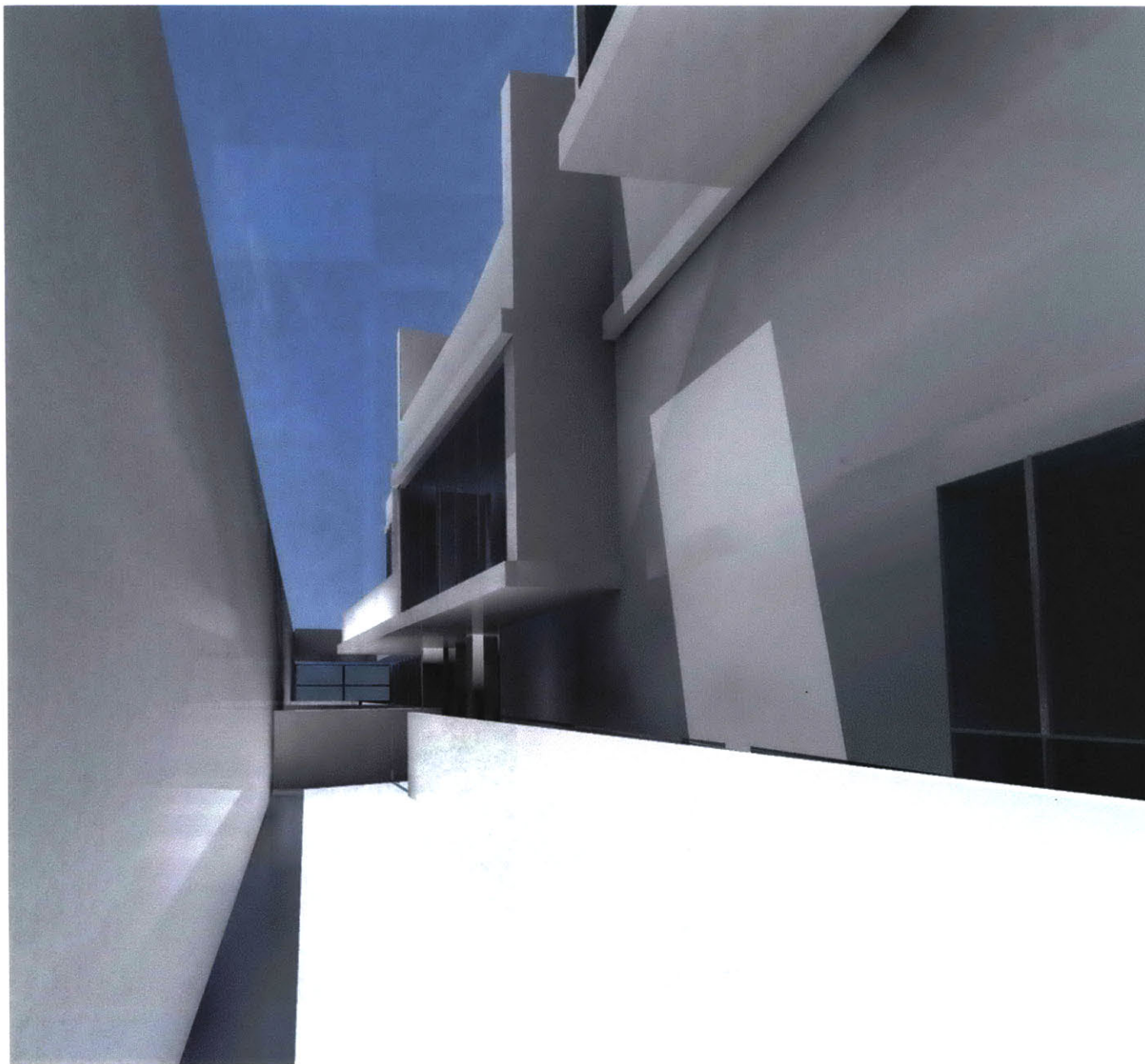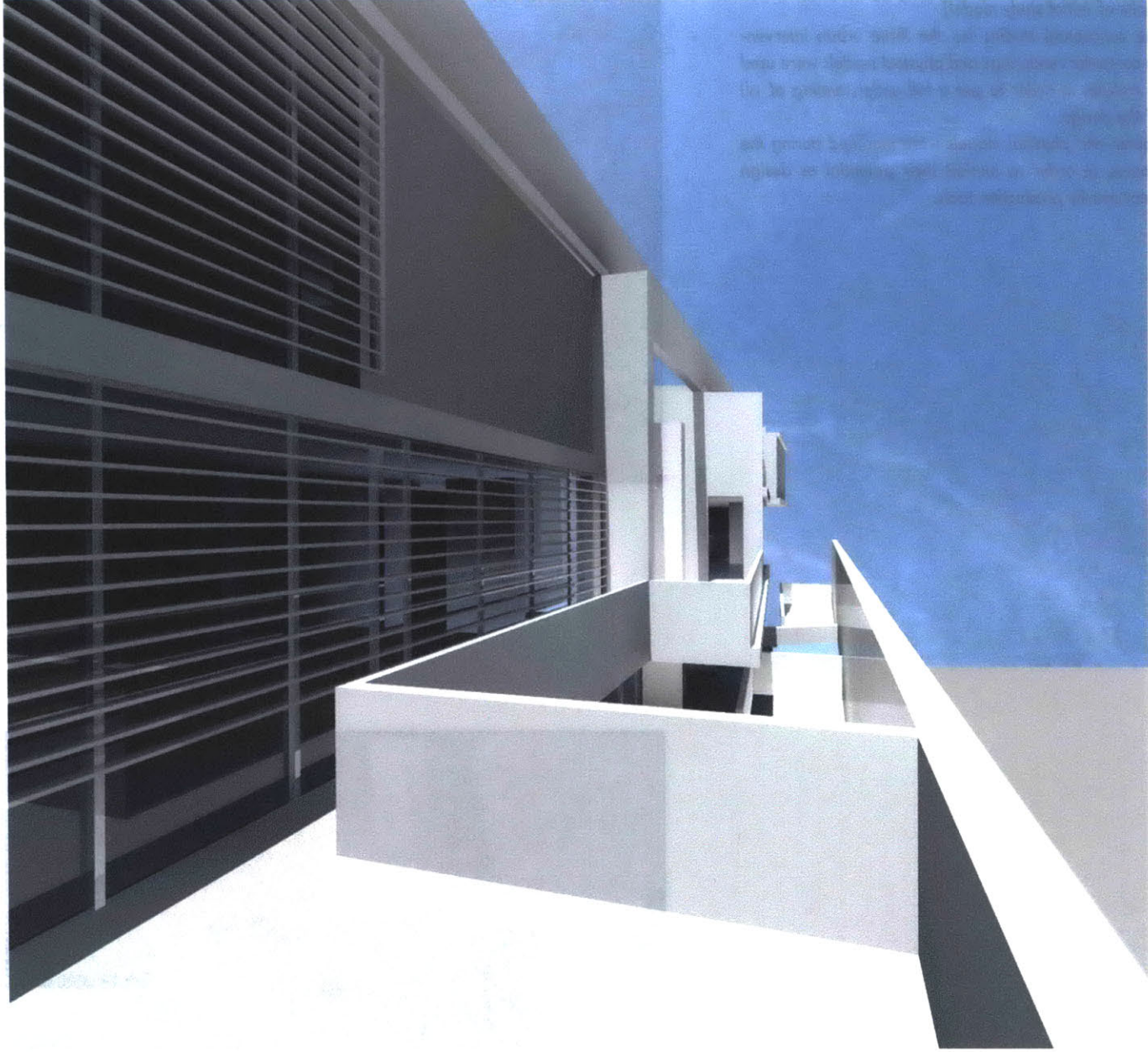
[photographs of initial study model]
as with the conceptual studies for the three urban interventions, both computer renderings and physical models were used alongside sketches in order to get a full understanding of all aspects of the design.

both computer and physical models were modified during the design process, in order to exploit their potential as design tools and not merely production tools.
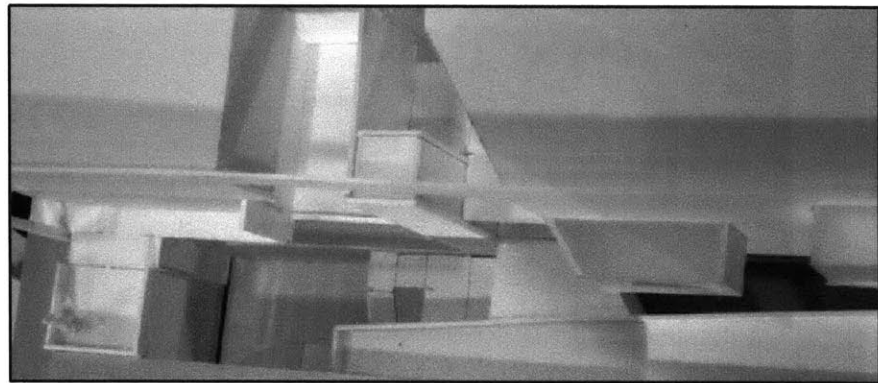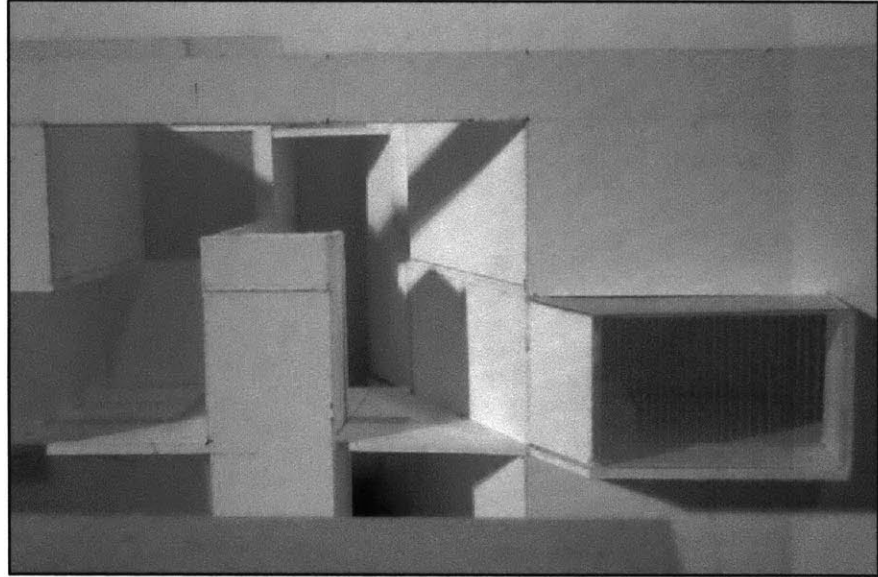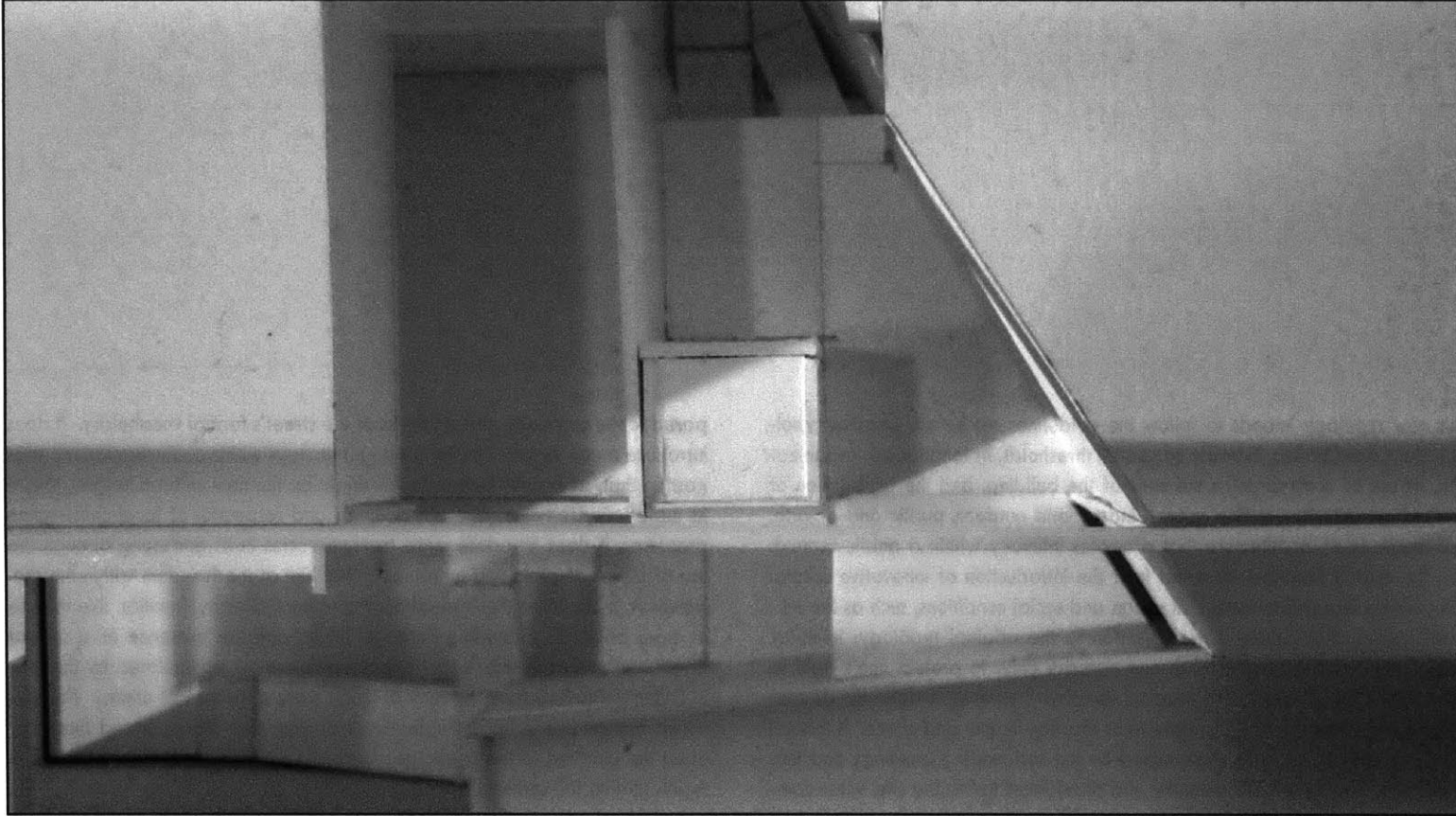
these close-ups of the initial study model show some of the outdoor spaces flowing into one another within the site. they become more than outdoor extensions: they become the core of the architecture, the organizing elements, at a public scale, and at an intimate level.

This new typology intends to follow the guidelines set by the original typology, the Casa Chorizo, in its use of spatial thresholds, its longitudinal organization, its use of courtyards as the core of the building, and the articulation of containing walls that define spaces, indoor and outdoor, public and private. This results in an architecture that promotes intimacy within a public context. Yet, the design proposal does not fear the introduction of innovative spatial components that relate to current urban and social conditions, such as the intimate spaces, that add a new dimension to the original typology: intimacy within private zones, spaces with one purpose only: to protect one's right to one's interiority, to one's recognizable identity. However, it does not do that without respecting issues that relate to its location in time and space. It follows the street facade already determined by the surrounding buildings and thus emphasizes the formal discontinuity and playfulness inside the site, when compared to the continuity and rigidness of the street's formal vocabulary. It does introduce a new height into the block, but it stays within code regulations, suggesting that, as density increases, this might be the new uniform height. While its materiality remains generally familiar and respectful of local construction processes, it does introduce more transparencies in its enclosure, through the use of layers of glass and metal mesh that hint at the freedom within the site. However, it combines these elements with others already familiar, like the use of front balconies extending onto the street, and the presence of a second layer that works together with the glass and can be manipulated by the user in order to provide more privacy at times, more exposure at others. This louvered system (which can completely disappear into the slab and thus fully open the building to the public gaze) assists other elements in anchoring the typology into the current urban landscape.

[collage: computer rendering of front facade on photograph of existing adjacent buildings]

As one moves through the building, all courtyards encourage views out onto the street or towards the back, yet, the most private *(un)enclosed* spaces maintain a tight relationship to the indoor spaces that they mediate, providing intimacy within more exposed spaces.

Thus, outdoor spaces become the core of an architecture that seeks to transition from an open and exposed world, to an intimate and containing private volume.

These courtyards function, in many instances, as spatial thresholds that articulate the transition from public to private to intimate. With a variety of uses (circulation, vertical communal outdoor spaces, entrance areas, private expansions of indoor areas) and a variety of spatial and light qualities, courtyards become essential in the creation of an intimate type that reconnects with exterior spaces and provides, at times, public exposure, and, at others, private withdrawal.

As one moves up, private elements that belong to the residential programs, begin to interact and intertwine with the public zone in the form of terraces, entrances, and volumetric expansions of interior spaces, such as studies, living-rooms, dining rooms, and balconies.

These zones become public components of private apartments that, as they extend out into a more exposed area, become the public face of an architecture that stands in-between the showing and the veiling.

The reintroduction of the courtyard as a free element that articulates flexible interior spaces and the expansion of interior public spaces into an exterior public zone, is accompanied and balanced by the definition of its counterpart, a new kind of space that departs from the original typology that served as the starting point for this thesis, an added space: the intimate space.
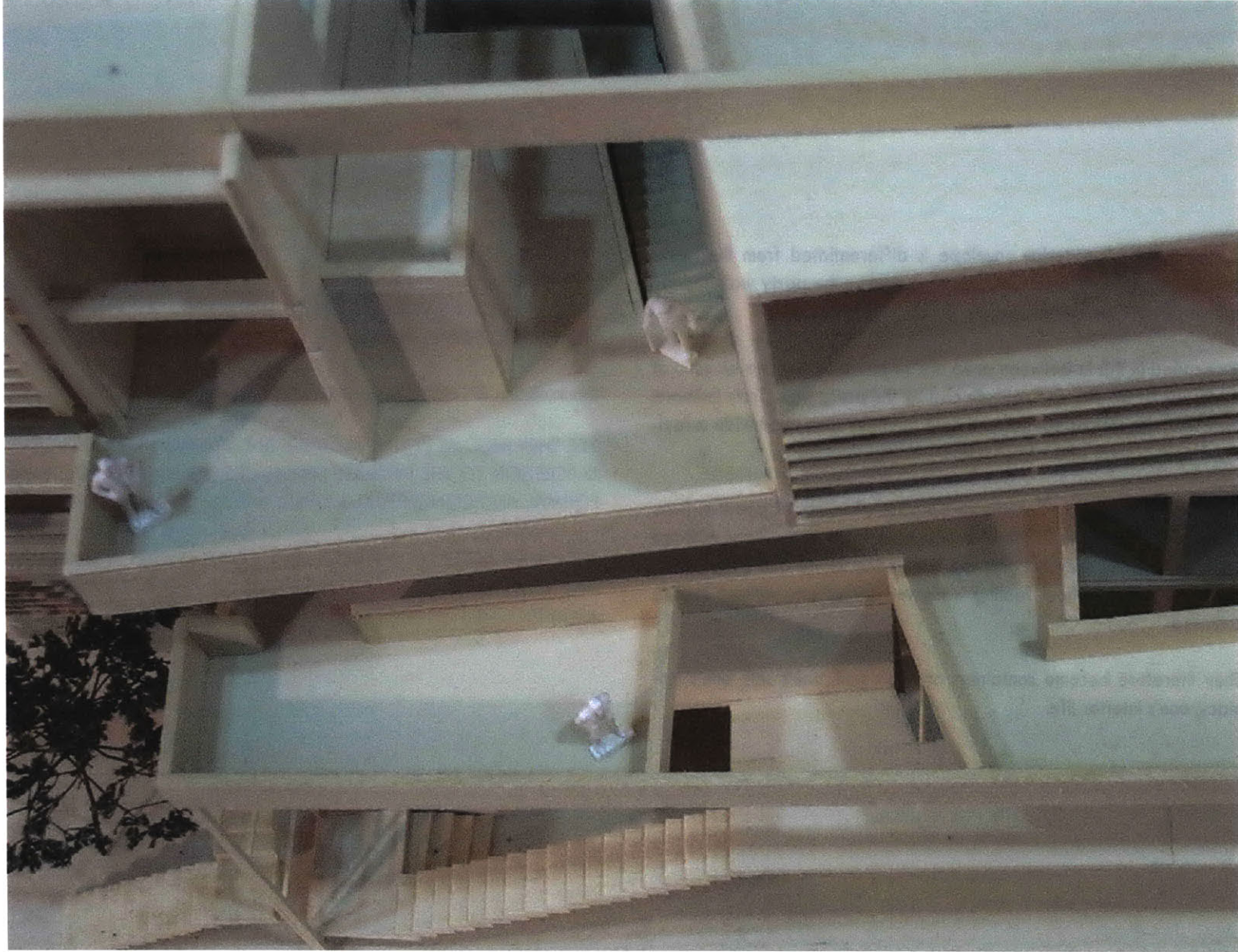
[photographs of final model: journey through open spaces]

As the building's exterior envelope is differentiated from the party wall, a new type of zone is created in-between the party wall and the structural wall: an intimate zone.

Suspended in this in-between area are spaces that become an echo of the image of solidity and solitude cast by the party wall. Truly intimate, their size, dimensions, formal and light qualities seek to provide a feeling of withdrawal and introspection.

Their sole function is to become receptacles of traces of people's lives. Being the only spaces in the apartments that are completely shielded from public view, they become the one space where one can express one's interiority without feeling observed by others, without feeling exposed.

They therefore become containers of one's soul, one's self, one's intimacy, one's interior life.

THEY ARE CRACKS WITHIN A THICK, SOLID WALL, AND *INHABITING THE CRACK MEANS LIVING LIFE WITHOUT FLEEING FROM SOLID IDENTITY.*
Gloria Melich, BETWEEN, in Quaderns "The Intimate", n. 226, p.15.

YET, THEY BECOME REALLY VALUABLE AND ENGAGING IN THEIR JUXTAPOSITION TO THE INTIMATE SPACES CREATED BY ARCHITECTURAL FORMAL AND CONCEPTUAL MOVES, WITHIN THE PUBLIC ZONES.

THE ENTIRE ARCHITECTURE ACTS AS A CRACK WITHIN A GLOBALIZING WORLD; THE INTIMATE SPACE ACTS AS A CRACK WITHIN THE ARCHITECTURE.
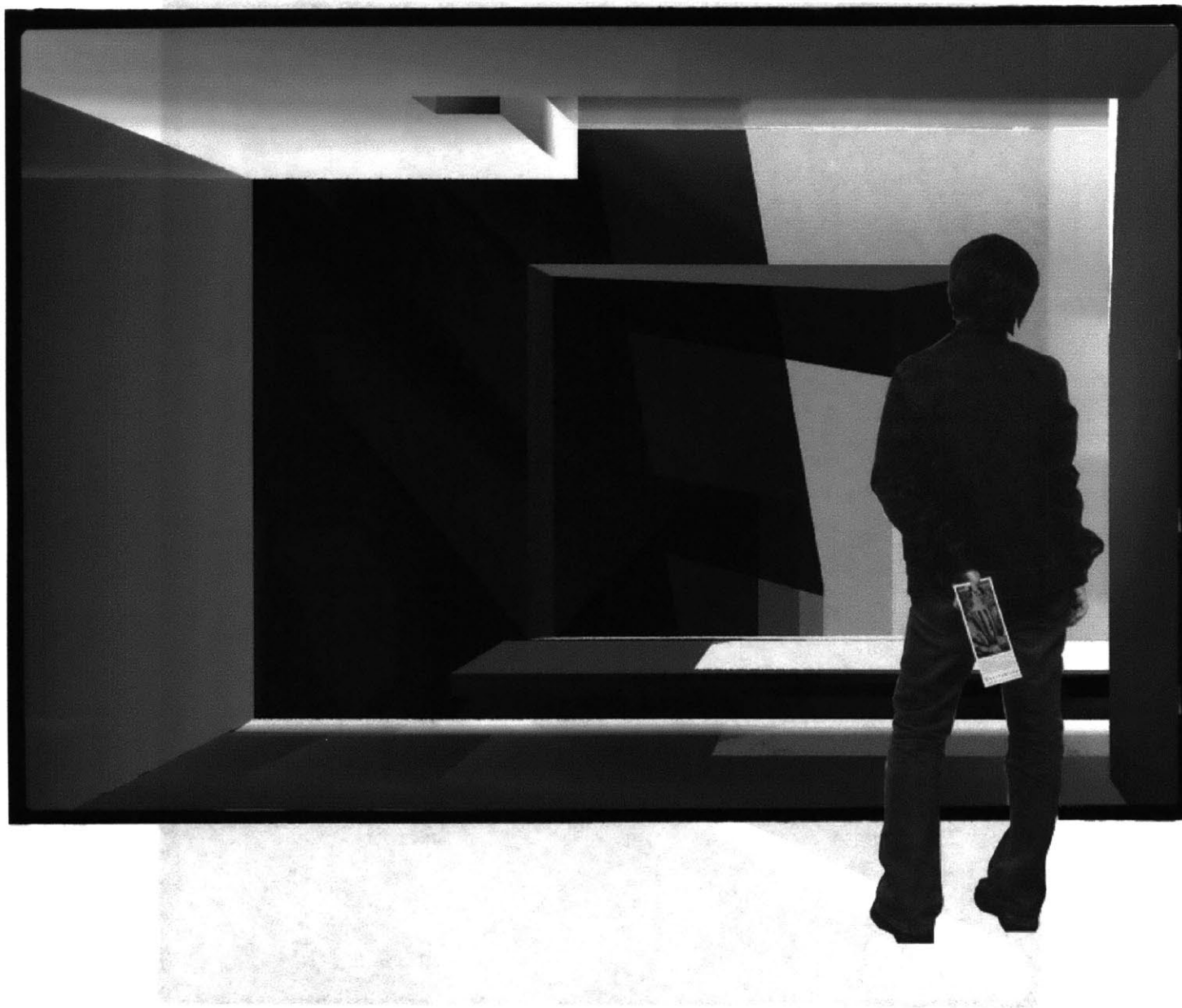
[abstract computer-rendered representations of some of the intimate spaces, looking towards the party wall]
the sharp light quality differentiates these spaces from any other space in the apartments.

in these examples, the party wall is carved into in order to create coves, cracks to be inhabited by the user. however, ideally, the user would design the interior feel of these spaces to fit his / her needs and expectations.

that way, sharp angles could be replaced by curves, or one cove could be replaced by several insertions into the wall, providing a variety of spaces to be used and occupied by the inhabitant.

The following building sections illustrate the way outdoor courtyards (both vertical and horizontal) affect the way spaces are organized on the site and vertically into space. Open spaces are seen as spatial definers, containing circulation spaces, gathering areas, and acting as spatial thresholds.

A section through the intimate spaces shows how, even though all spaces are physically related to one another, they each become a jewel box, carved out of a larger volume associated with the party wall. They float in space, engaging specifically with the sky, and the solidity of the party wall itself.

This zone, though intended to be the most intimate one, the one that contains one's interiority and asserts one's need for solitude and withdrawal, is eventually the one relating the building back to its site and context, and grounding the architecture in its urban reality.
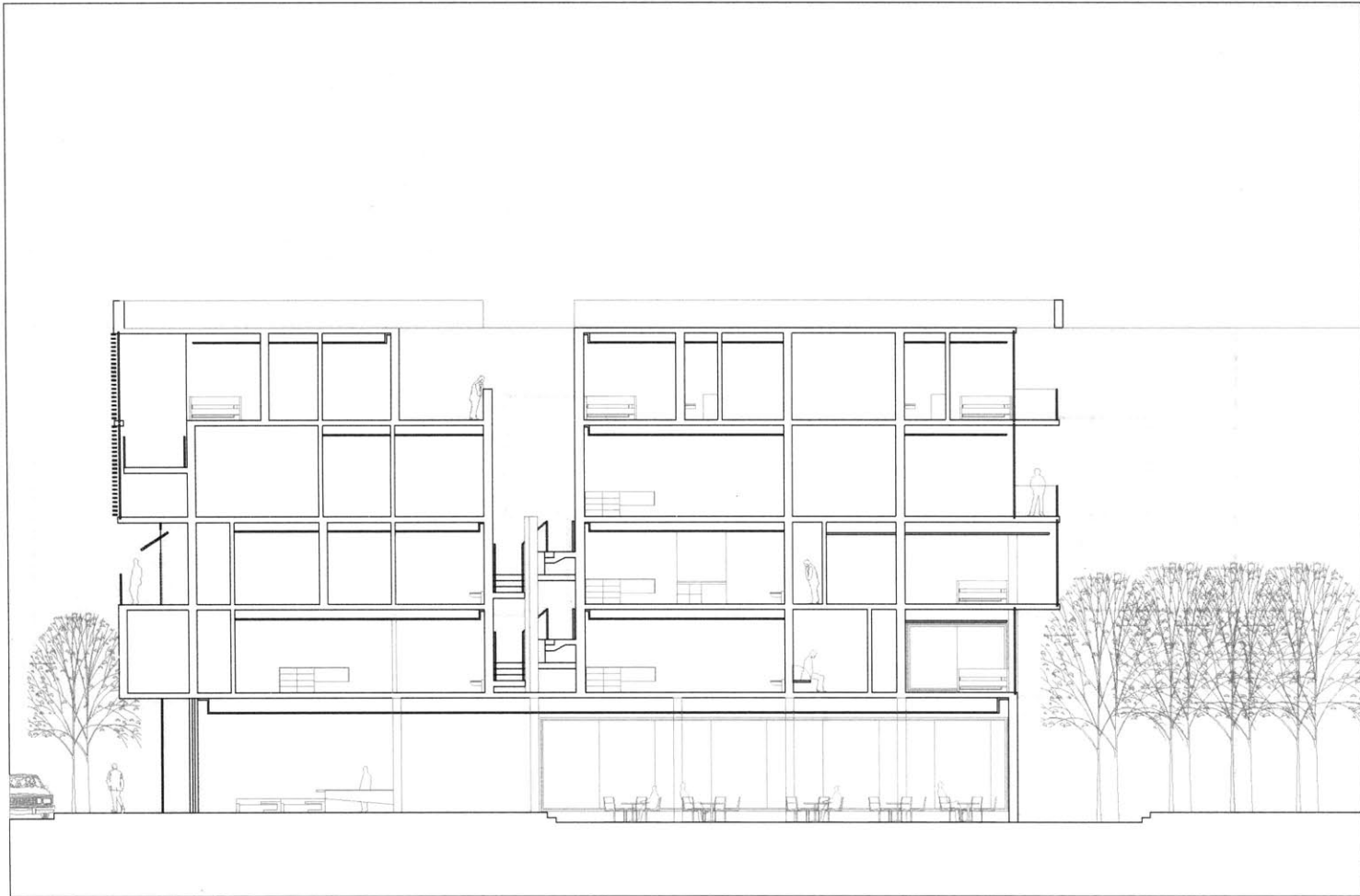
[section aa / scale 1:250]
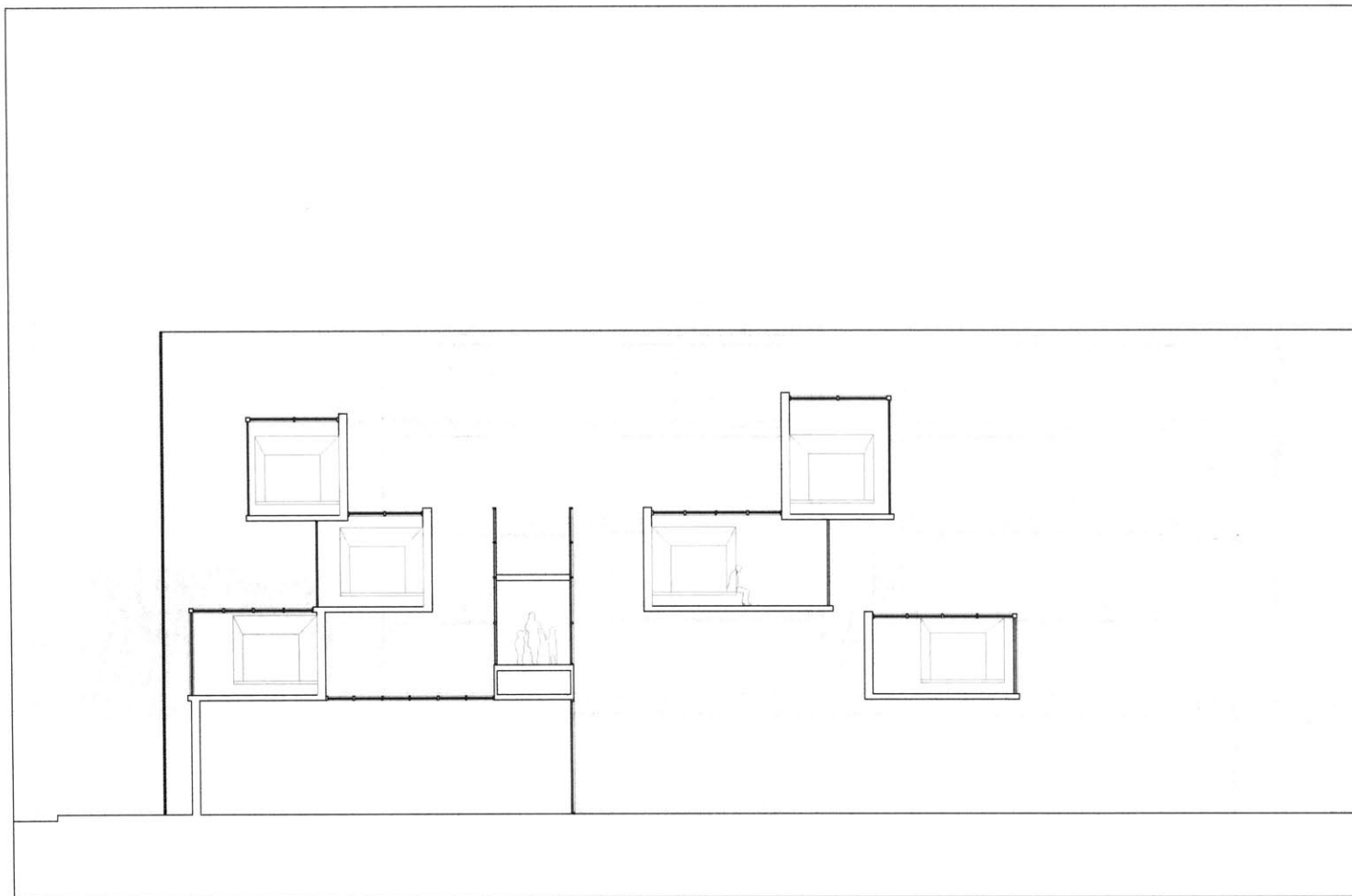
[section bb (through intimate spaces) I scale 1:250]
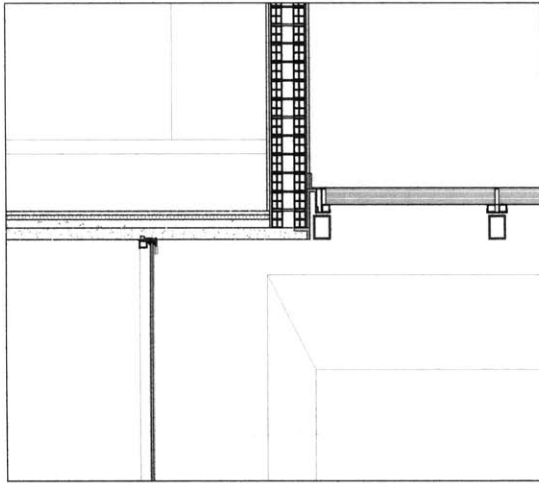
[detail through typical intimate space I not to scale]
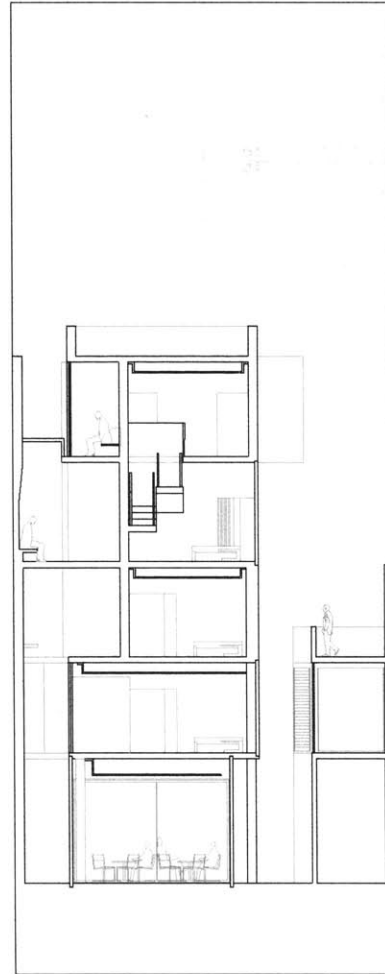
[section cc I scale 1:250]   [section dd I scale 1:250]

109
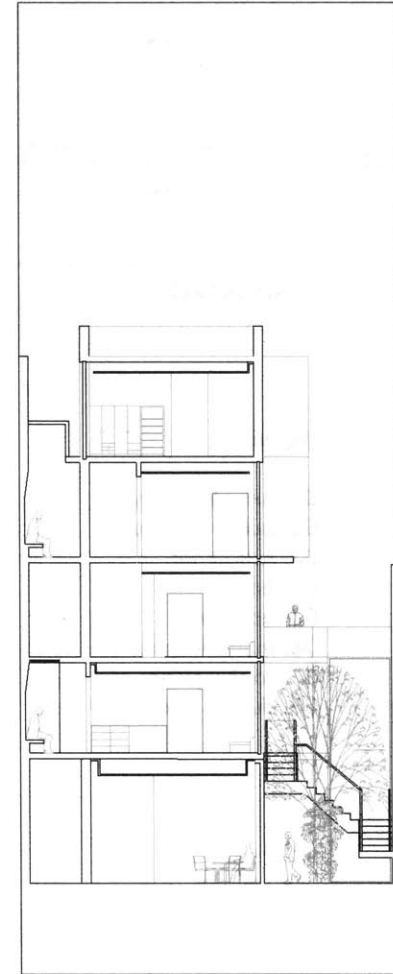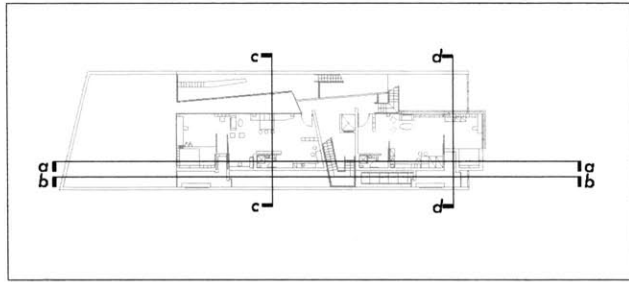
[section key]

[legend]

01. private courtyard
02. public courtyard
03. restaurant
04. bar
05. apartment
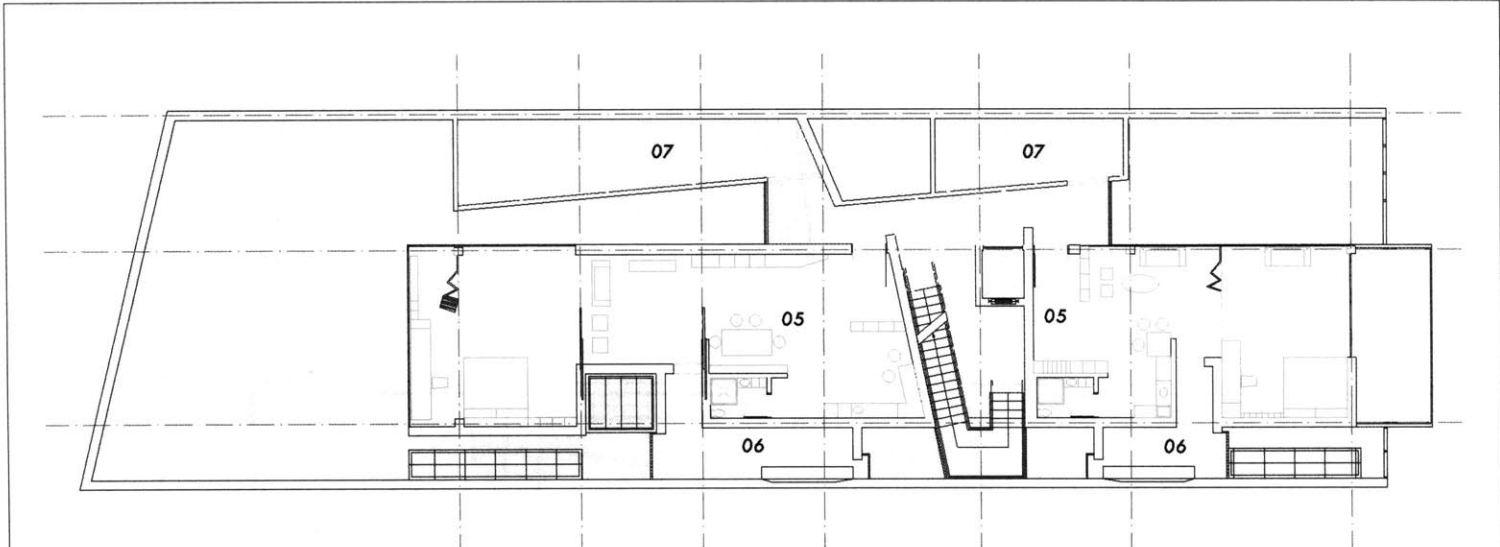06. intimate space
07. roof garden
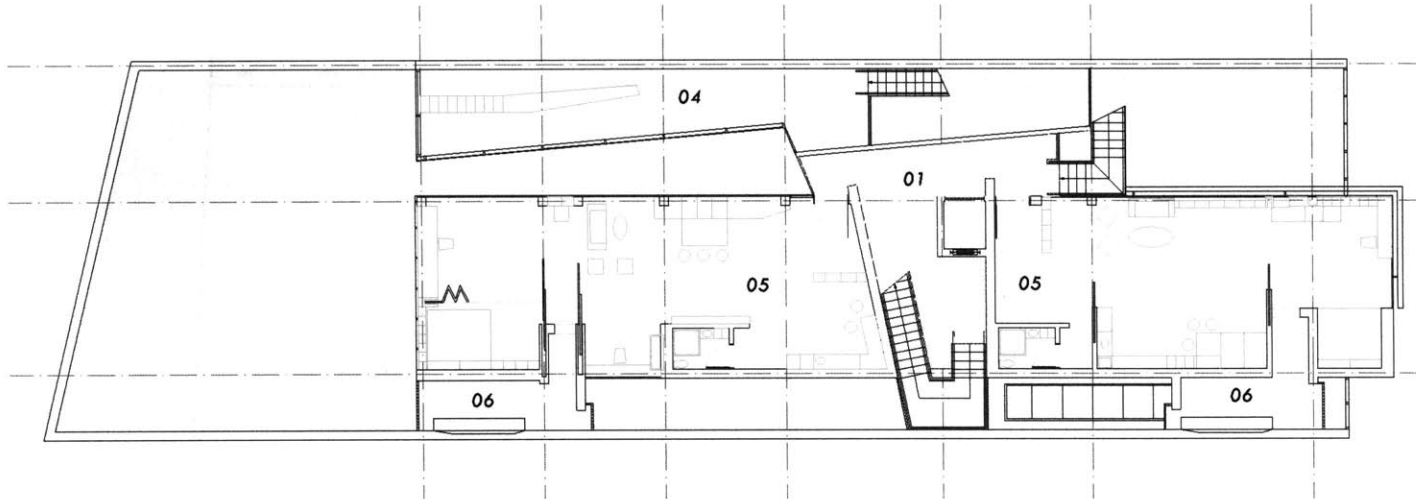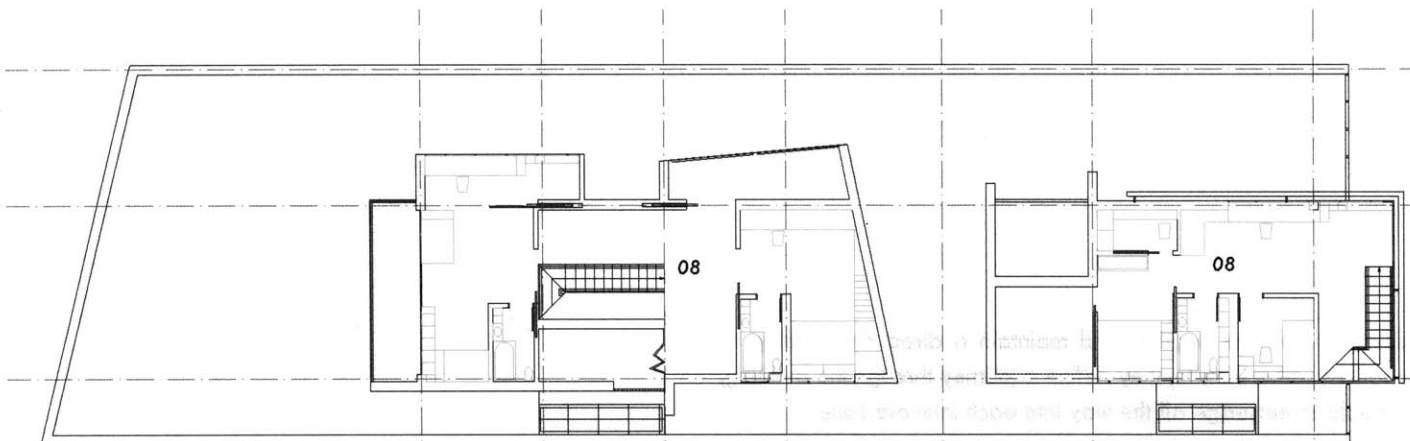08. duplex apartment

[site plan l not to scale]

04

02

02

01

03

03

[ground floor plan I scale 1:250]

07 07

05 05

06 06
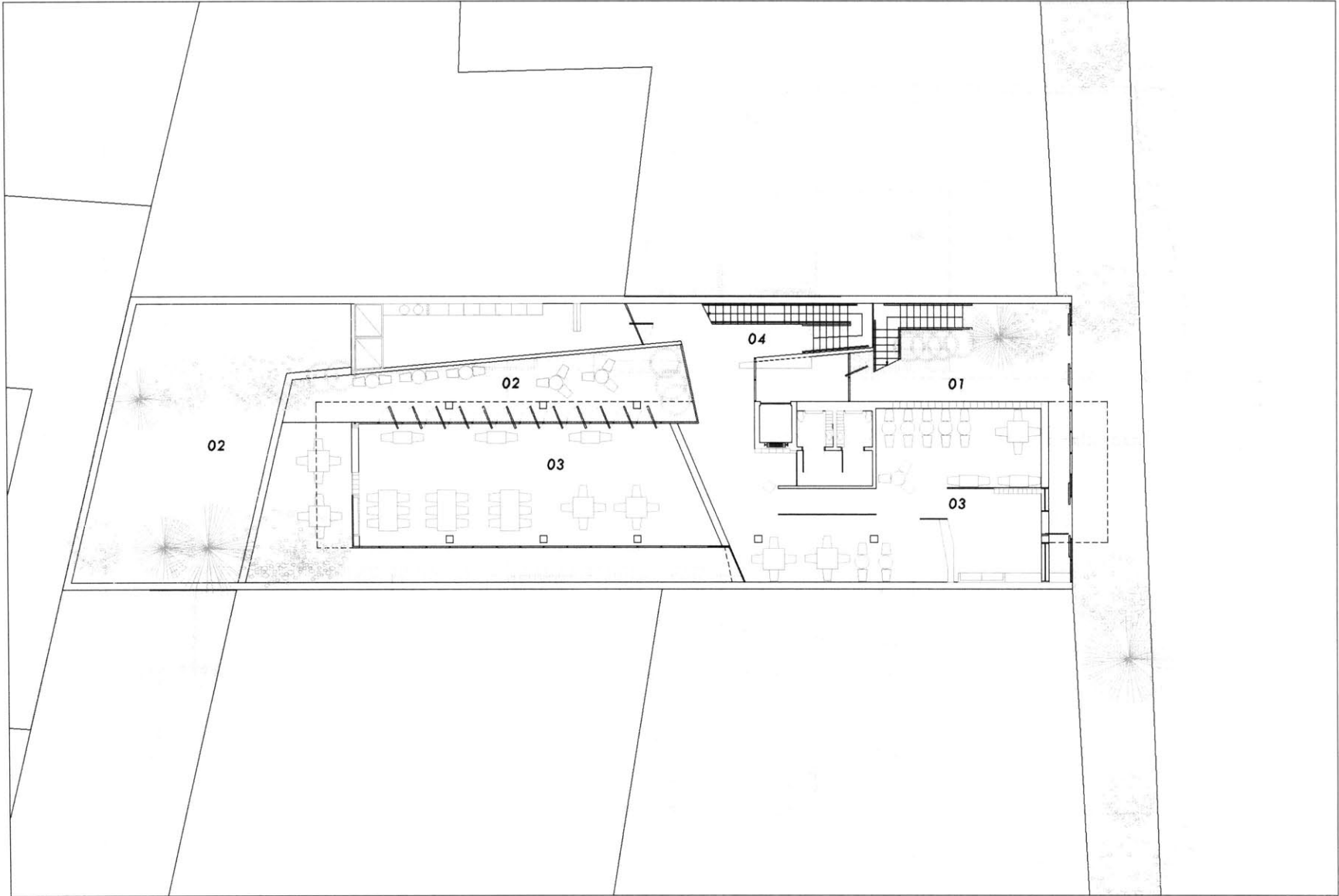
[second floor plan | scale 1:250]

04

01

05 05

06 06

[first floor plan | scale 1:250]

[fourth floor plan | scale 1:250]
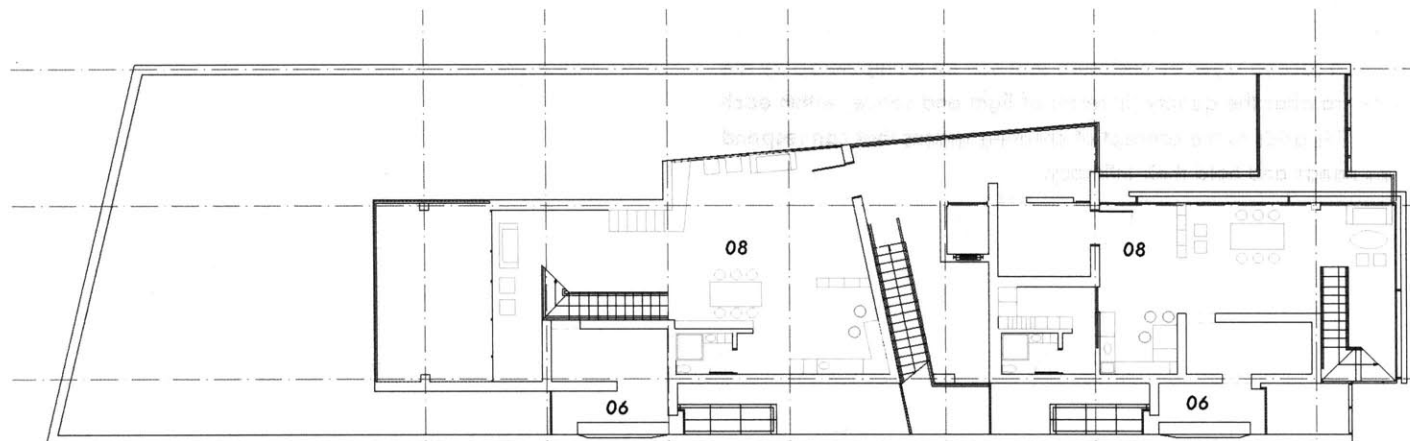
[third floor plan | scale 1:250]

As spaces flow into one another and maintain a direct relationship to outdoor spaces within the site, they define a journey through the building, from the public street-edge all the way into each intimate zone.
Shifting grids and paths guide the user and create a circulation pattern that involves the whole site, from side to side and from front to back. Every space is part of a whole, and every space contributes to the transition from public to intimate. They all act together creating one buffer, one veil, that protects the interiority of the people and seeks to contain imprints of their soul, of their identity.
The flexibility of the apartments is emphasized by the presence of spatial dividers and a second layer of enclosure that can be manipulated by the user in order to alter the quality (in terms of light and space) within each apartment. This adds to the concept of creating spaces that can respond to people's needs and hold their intimacy.
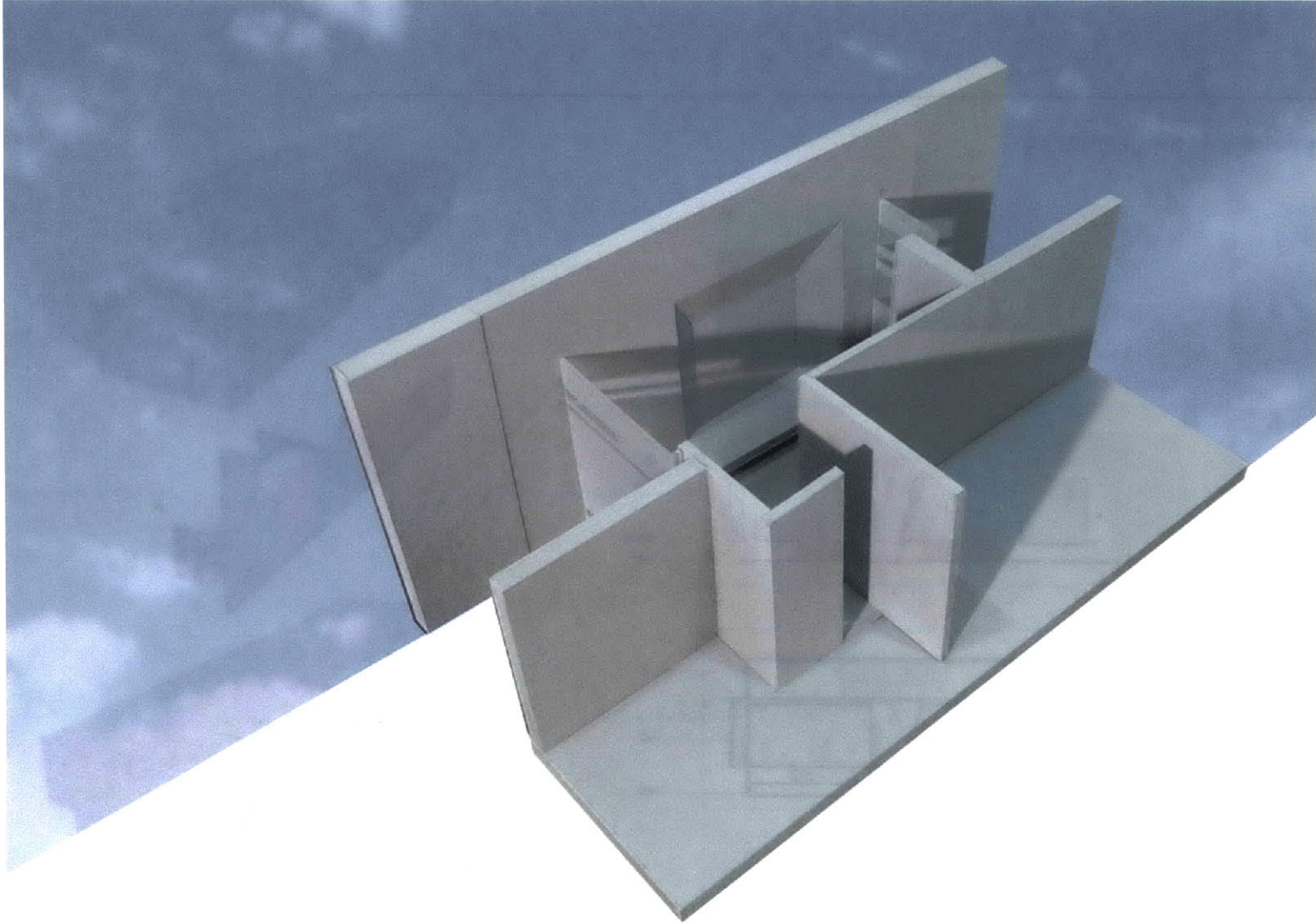
[image of typical intimate space: dimensions, quality of light, quality of space, feel]

typological diagramming
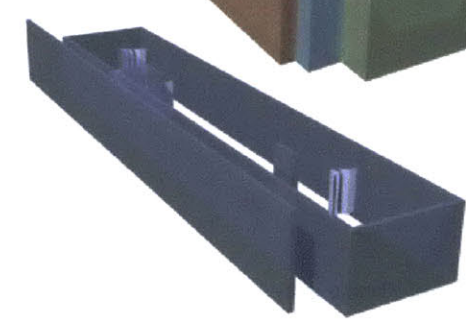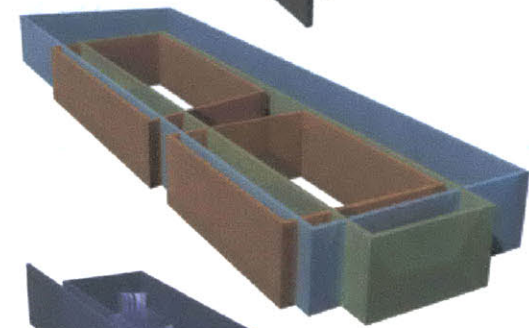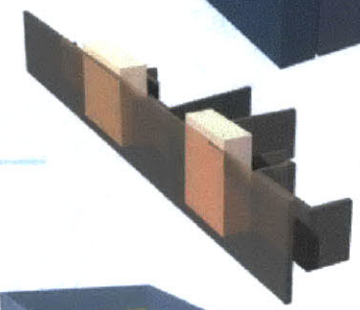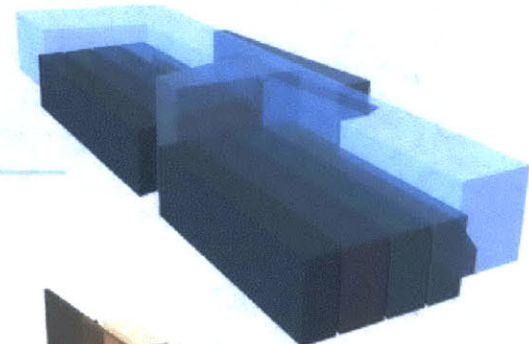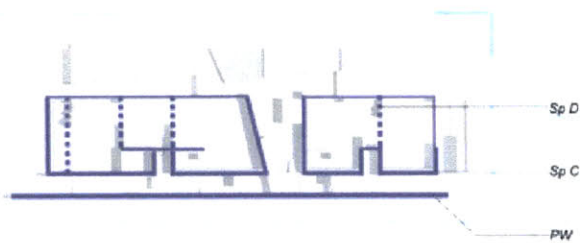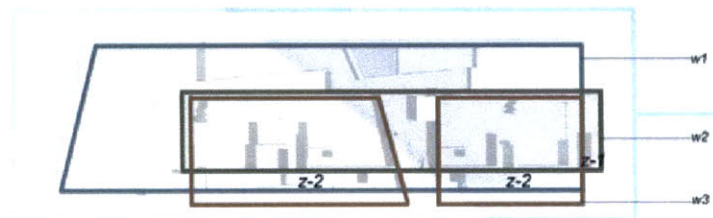
ZONES

[A] public (courtyards + circulation) <outside>
[B] semi-public (circulation) <outside>
[C] semi-public <inside>
[D] semi-private <inside>
[E] private <inside>
[F] intimate <expansion of party wall: inside + outside>

INTERIORITY

[iS] intimate space
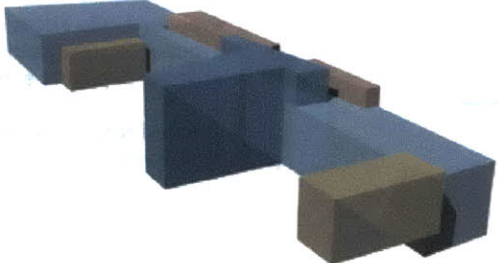[ECHO] echo of party wall <spatial container>
[PW] party wall

WRAPPERS

[w1] wrapper 1: site edges <public framework>
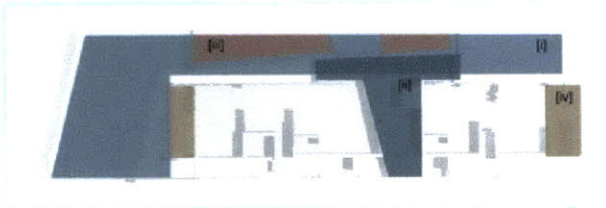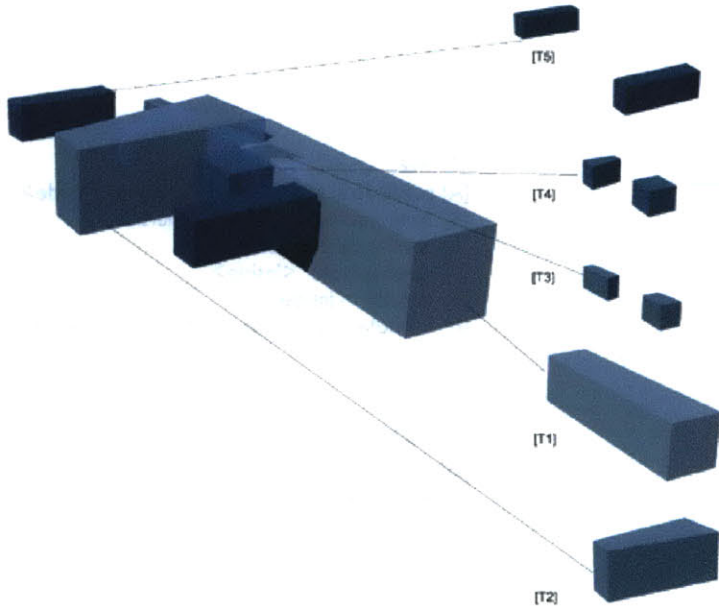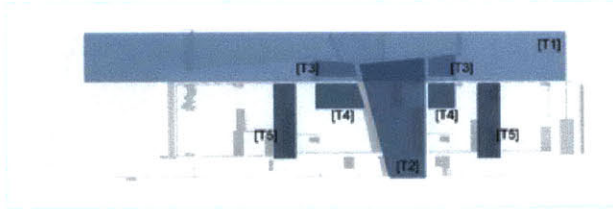[w2] wrapper 2: conceptual envelope <private framework>
[w3] wrapper 3: private enclosure

[z-1] exposed space <within w2, outside w1+w3>
[z-2] intimate space <intersection of w1+w3>

SPATIAL ORGANIZERS
[Sp D] spatial divider
[Sp C] spatial container
[PW] party wall

[T5]

[T1]

[T3]   [T3]

[T4]   [T4]

[T5]   [T5]

[T2]

[T4]

[T3]

[T1]

[T2]

[ii]

[i]

[iii]

[iv]

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THRESHOLDS

[T1] entry + circulation courtyard (public framework) <outside>
[T2] circulation space <outside>
[T3] private entry area <outside>
[T4] private entry space <inside>
[T5] compressed private space (prelude to intimate space) <inside>

(UN)ENCLOSED SPACES

[i] vertical public spaces
[ii] circulation spaces / vertical connections
[iii] private spaces (connection to private + public frameworks)
[iv] private spaces (expansion of enclosed areas)
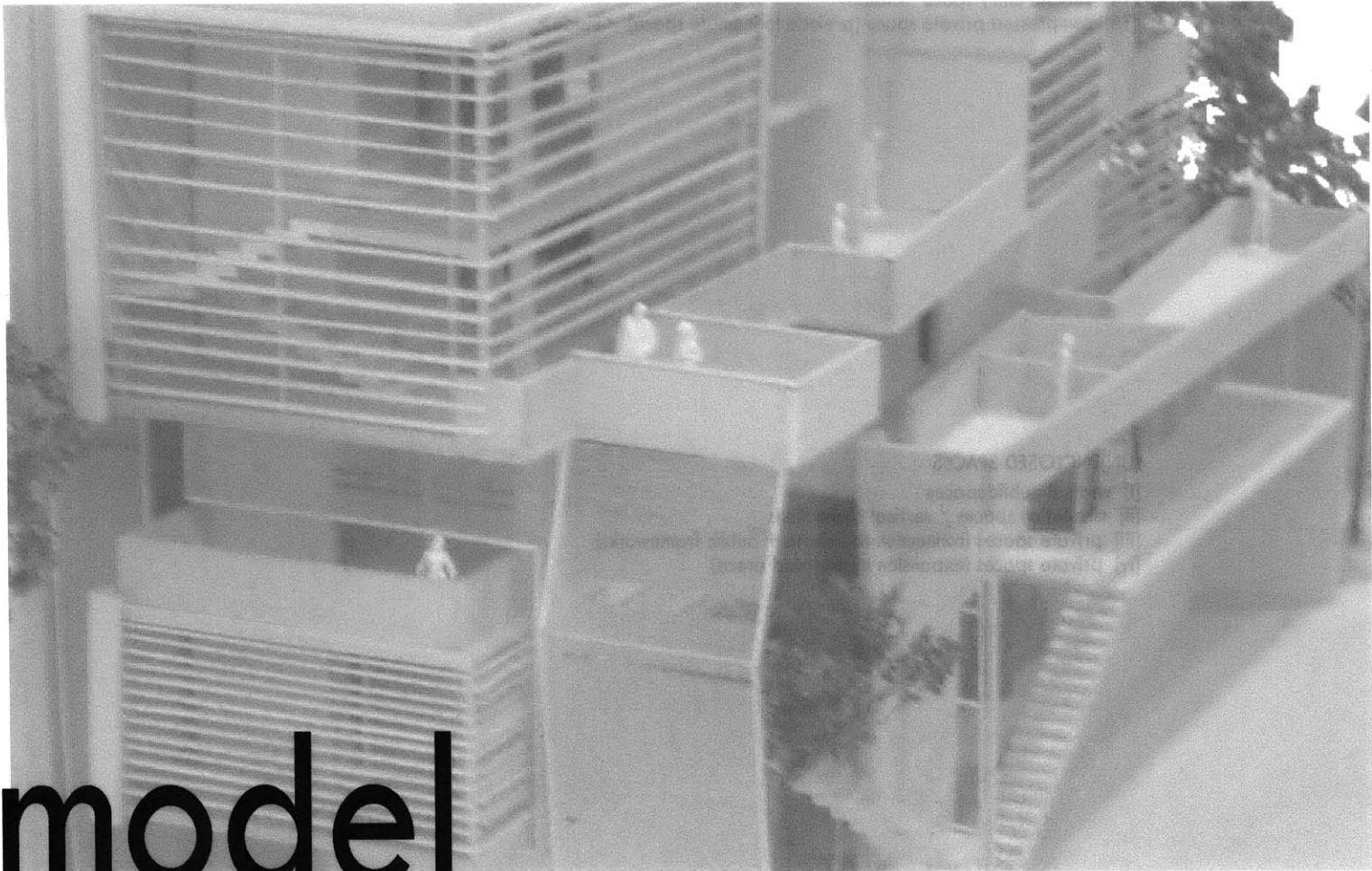
model

All illustrations by author unless otherwise noted.

conclusion

[CONCLUSION]

final diagramming

In order to propose a set of diagrams that could potentially result in a number of different formal propositions that arise from the same concepts, it was necessary to translate the diagrams that represent the Palermo interv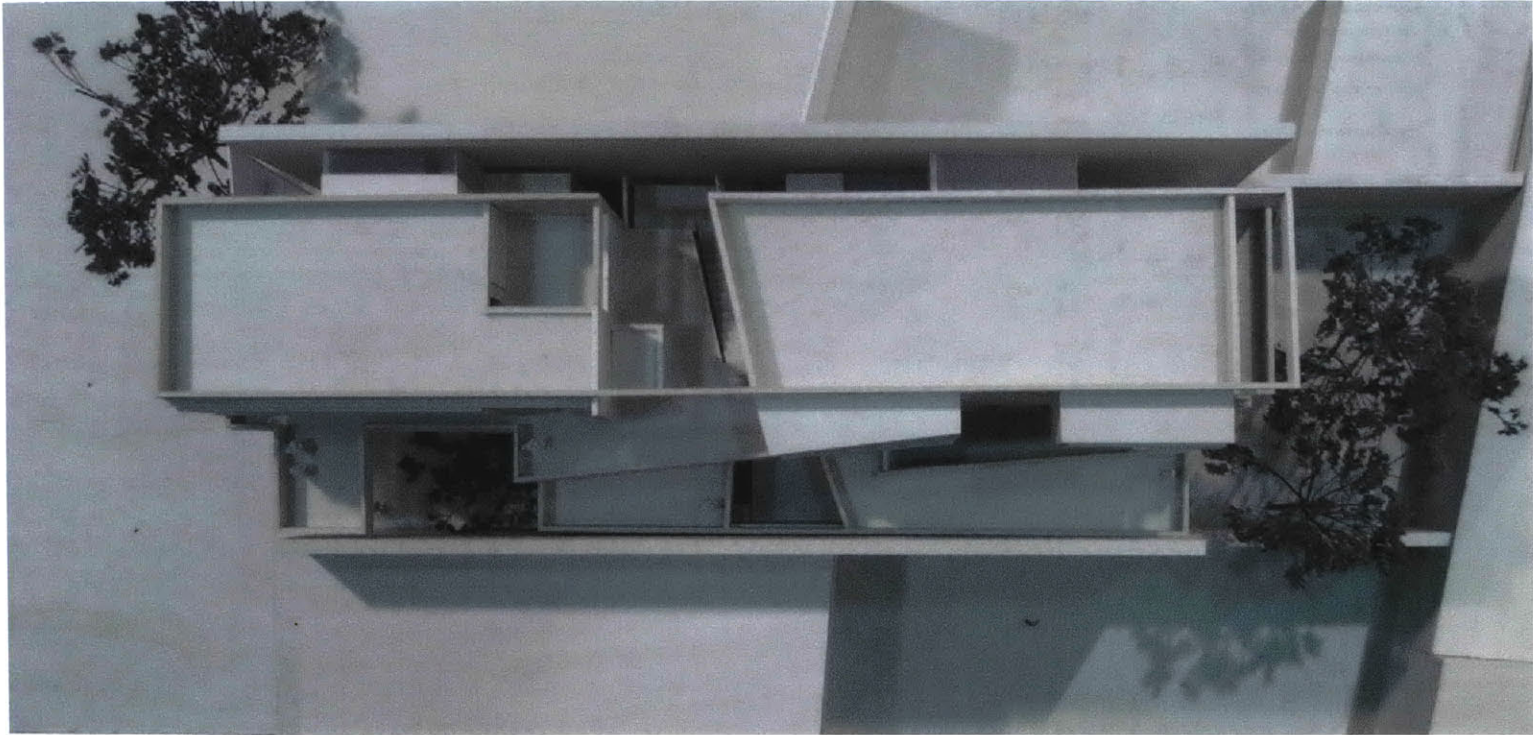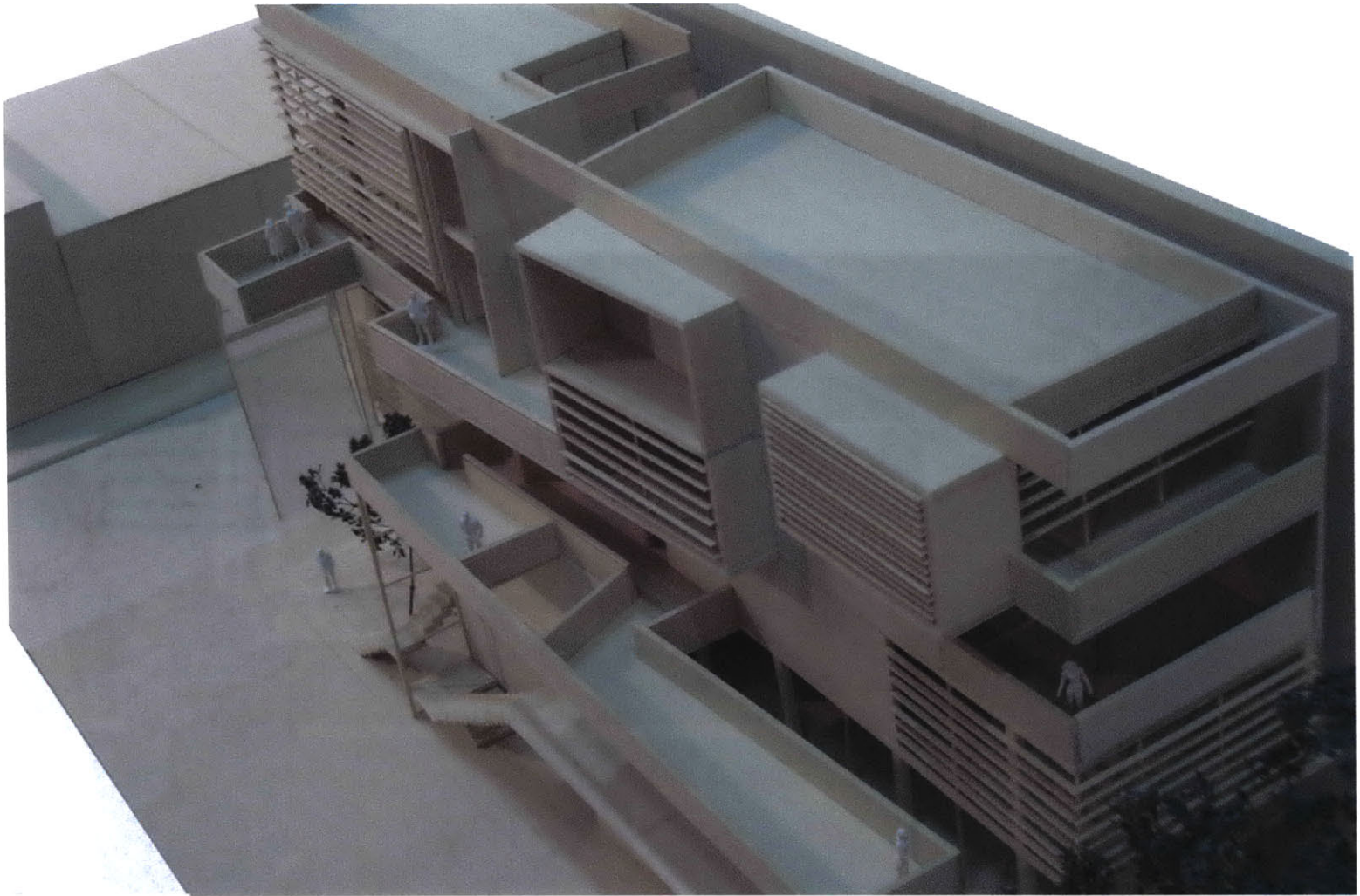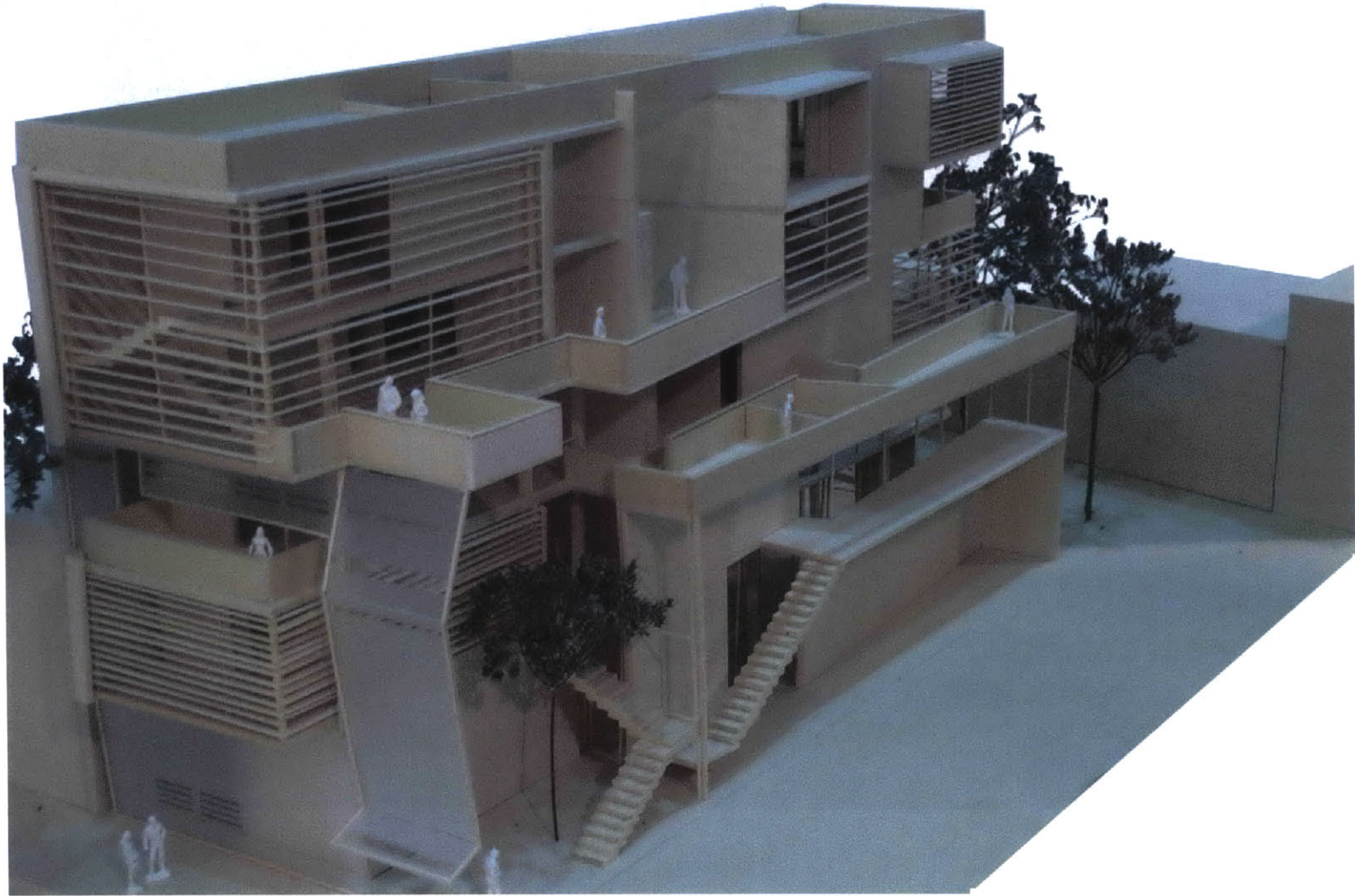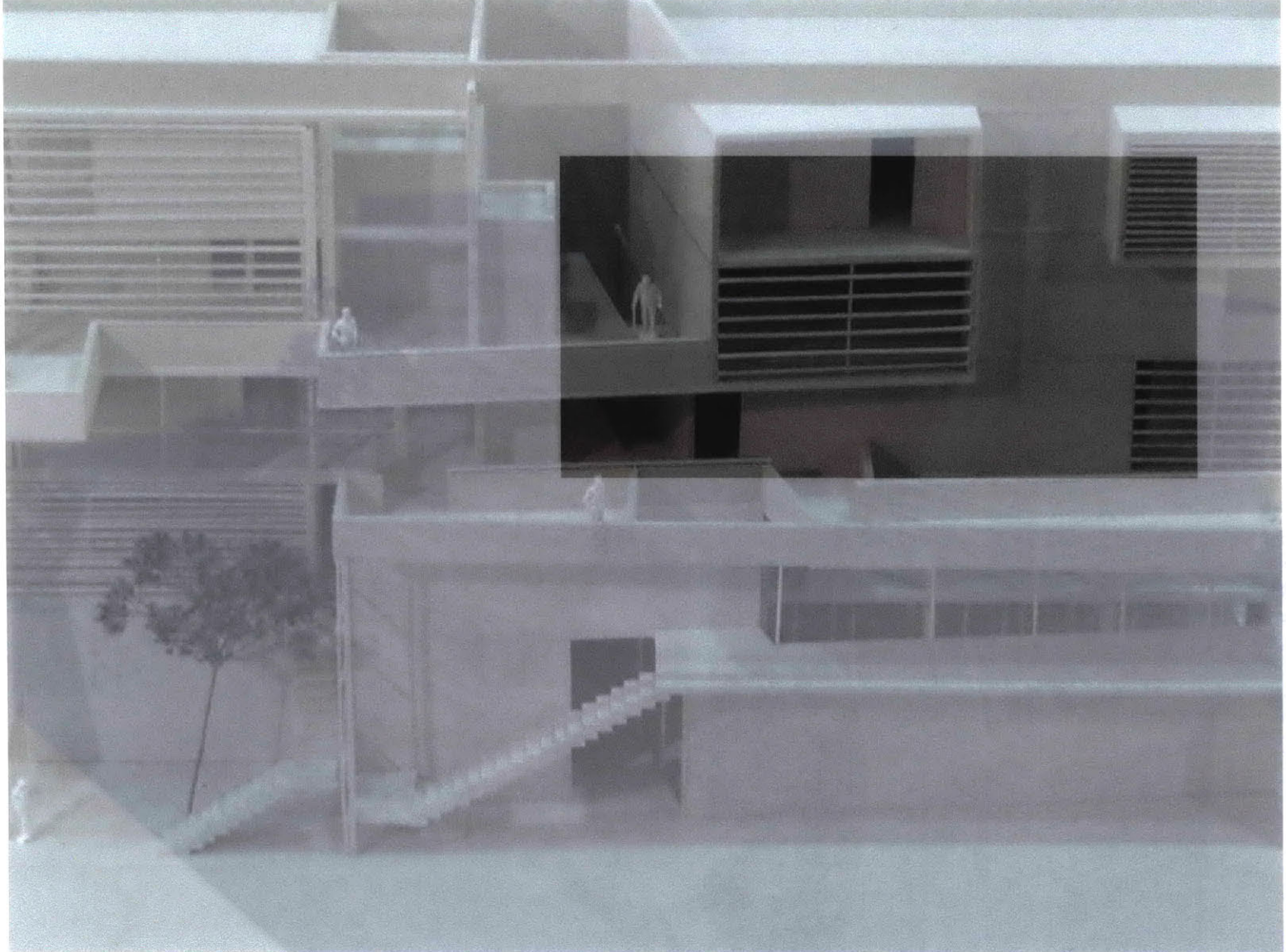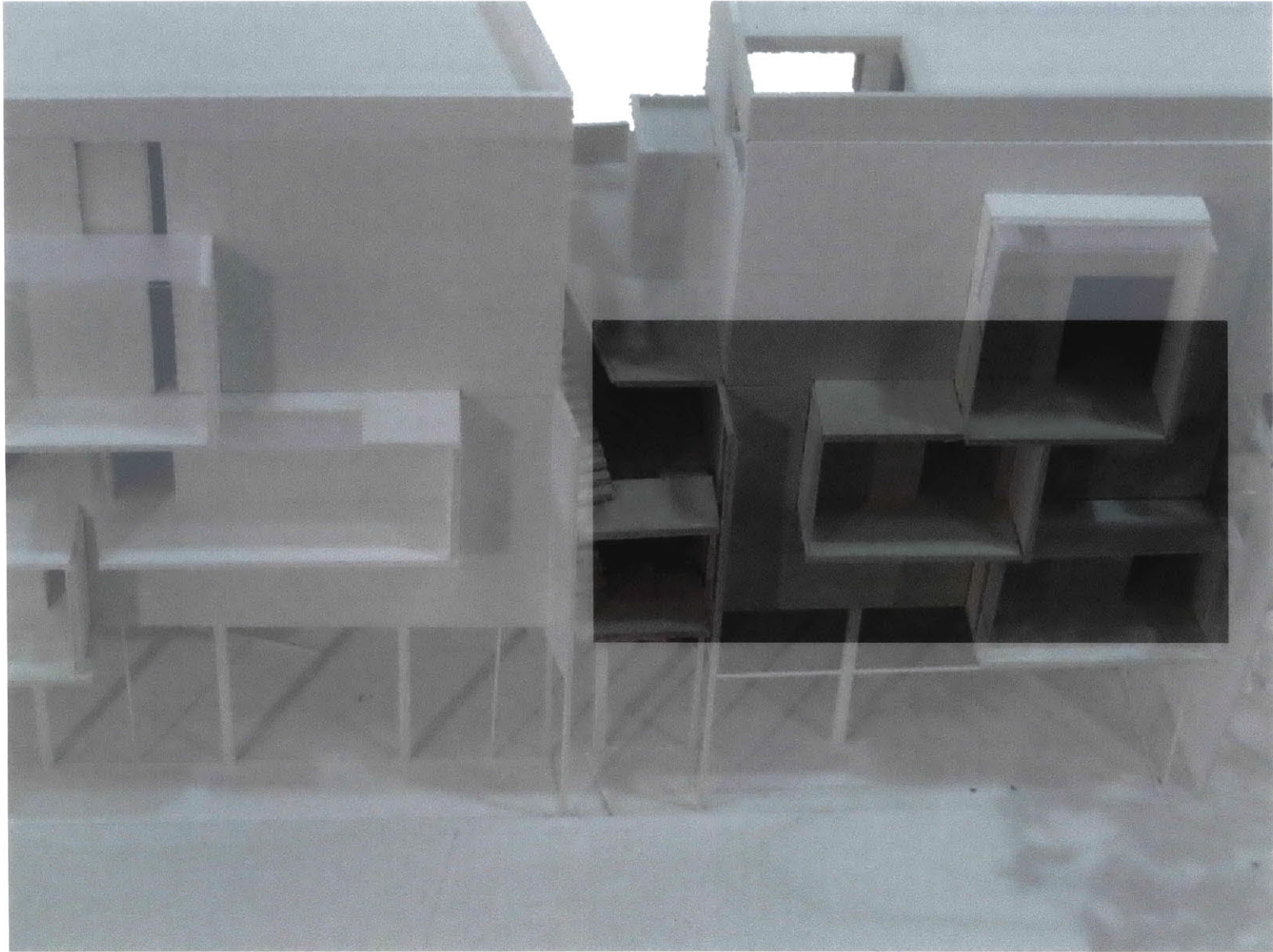ention into diagrams that are not tied to a specific site, or formal vocabulary. In doing so, the diagrams and concepts were simplified and stripped down to the bare essentials. The result is a selection of seven guidelines:

01. OUTSIDE / INSIDE OCCUPATION

The site is divided longitudinally to include outdoor and indoor vertical spaces. The fact that the split is longitudinal encourages the creation of internal courtyard spaces and the increased interaction between indoor and outdoor, since there are more areas of friction between the two and more possibilities for one to define the other.

02. ZONES

Both indoor and outdoor areas are divided into longitudinal zones that describe their level of publicity and privacy.

03. ECHO OF WALL

In order to create a zone that becomes inherently intimate, an echo of the party wall is transposed into the indoor zone, defining the most private zone of all. In doing so, it expands the party wall and makes a deeper container of imprints of life.

04. SPATIAL OCCUPATION OF WALL

As the zone defined by the actual party wall and its echo is inhabited, it creates jewel boxes that contain and protect the interiority of the user.

05. SPATIAL THRESHOLDS

Not only is it important to protect the intimate zone with traces of the party wall, it is also necessary to create a series of outdoor and indoor spatial thresholds that guide movement through the building, from public to intimate. The number, size and quality of each threshold affect the degree of intimacy achieved as each becomes a prelude to the space that follows.

06. SPATIAL CONTAINERS

The physical or psychological creation of a series of concentric containers emphasizes the feeling of privacy. Yet, an always present connection between public and private is needed to create truly intimate spaces that mediate between veiled and exposed.

07. HIERARCHY OF OUTDOOR SPACES

The concept of longitudinal zones results in the possibility of introducing a number of outdoor courtyards that allow for an inward-looking housing typology. This enhances the interaction between outdoor and indoor, as outdoor, open spaces become an organizing element rather than merely left-over space.

P: public
O: outside
C: circulation
S: semi
i: inside
p: private
I: intimate

POC SPO SPi Spi pi livb

out   in
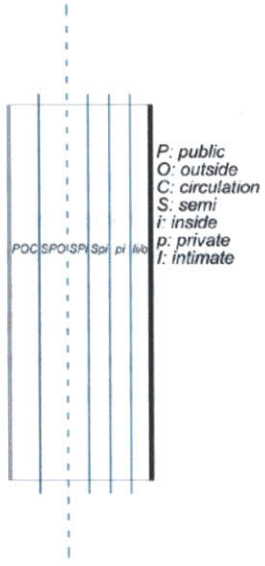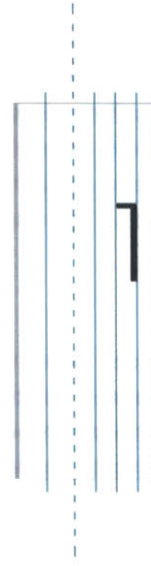
outside / inside occupation   zones   echo of wall   spatial occupation of wall

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threshold spaces

P: public
O: outside
C: circulation
S: semi
i: inside
p: private
I: intimate
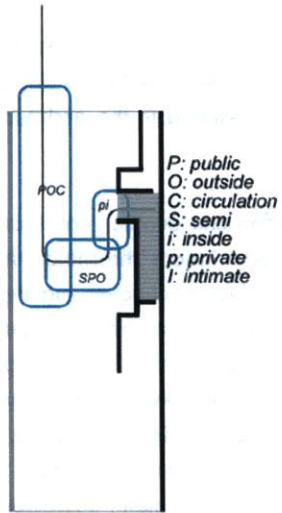
spatial containers

hierarchy of outdoor spaces

P: public
O: outside
C: circulation
S: semi
i: inside
p: private
I: intimate
V: vertical
E: expansion of
enclosed space

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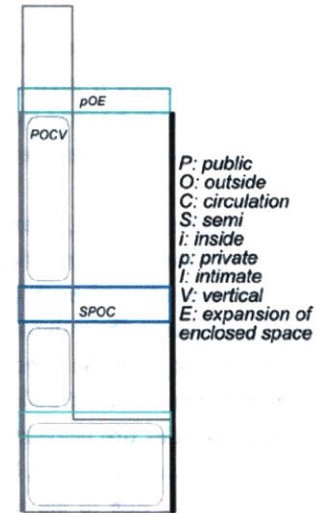
The cultural identity of a city is a function of its people, its architecture, its food, the way space is used and inhabited, its customs. Yet, architecturally, certain traits become more prominent and thus mold the character of the city in a more definite way.

The ubiquitous presence of blank, unexploited and uninhabited party walls that clearly define the boundaries of every site, as well as the continuity of the street-edge of each urban block, are clear features of the city of Buenos Aires. The manner in which party walls are dealt with is tightly regulated, and the urban code mandates that no windows be opened in them. As most buildings occupy the entire width of their site, the side facades are uneventful blank walls that, due to the varying heights of adjacent buildings, become landmarks in the urban landscape. Furthermore, due to the tight dimensions of the site and the strict code regulations, most buildings occupy the entire lot, creating a uniform constructed line that defines the sidewalk as an uninterrupted and linear element that creates the feeling of a legible and strict volumetric continuity.

These deeply rooted concepts became essential elements in the redefinition of an architecture that, by understanding the culture of a place, suggested a way to balance exposure and interiority in the midst of globalization, which is inevitably pushing towards an architecture that is, both physically and virtually, more and more transparent.

The analysis of the *Casa Chorizo* typology resulted in a set of diagrams that triggered very specific ideas orienting the development of an architecture that, while welcoming transparency, sought to protect the intimate. In particular, the attention to spatial thresholds, the articulation of a solid wall that contains and defines space, and the definition of zones of inhabitation, became the starting point for a series of conceptual studies. These resulted in the architectural articulation of one of the propositions.

As inside and outside define one another, courtyards are transformed into a series of outdoor and indoor thresholds that guide movement through the building and traverse all zones, moving from public to private to intimate. As one experiences the transitions from one space to the next, the public world is left behind as it defers to private life. Though spatial qualities change, views out are always present. As the containing wall becomes the building's enclosure, it pulls away from the party wall, creating an in-between intimate zone. Each apartment, though flexible in its arrangement, possesses a defined intimate space carved out of the party wall and suspended between itself and the containing wall. Its dimensions, materiality, and sharp light quality encourage a complete withdrawal from the outside world, making it possible to express one's self.

As these intimate spaces are occupied, they become traces / imprints of life within an expanded party wall. Although each intimate space is preserved as a jewel box within a larger spatial volume and is therefore invisible to everyone but the person in it; the larger volume, the expanded party wall is visible to the street. Thus, the jewel boxes become inherently and physically, though not psychologically, engaged in the urban life of the city. In that sense, this becomes an architecture that does not only contain the identity of

the people, but also defines the identity of the city, and in doing so becomes a constant in a constantly evolving world. It is a constant that draws from the past, yet influences the contemporary city by reflecting the identity of the people of today.

With this thesis I intended to extract a set of guidelines or criteria from an existing typology, and develop a new typology that is born from those diagrams but that, in the transformation process, becomes an innovative architectural element, with a new and different formal vocabulary, but with spatial and conceptual qualities that recall its beginnings.

This new typology resulted in a new set of criteria or guidelines that do not only deal with current issues of finding a balance between exposure and veiling, between publicity and intimacy, but also seek to propose a way in which the identity of a place can be protected in an increasingly globalized and homogeneous world.

It is the sequencing of spaces, the materiality, the uses, the relationships between outside and inside, the way the user inhabits the spaces, that link an architectural type to a specific place.
A type that embodies a sense of belonging to a place, to an urban context, also translates into three-dimensional space and form, the essence of a people's identity.
By reinforcing not the form but the spatial characteristics of a historical type, the intention was to transpose some of its fundamental architectural concepts into a different and new architecture that addresses

the contemporary urban culture by responding to issues it sees relevant today, while embodying the spirit and soul of a people.

BY CREATING AN ARCHITECTURE THAT BECOMES A PLACE OF MEDIATION, SUPPORTING PRIVATE RETREAT WHILE PRESENTING A PERMEABLE FACE TO THE PUBLIC REALM, "THE CONTROL OVER THE VISIBLE, THE SERIES OF FILTERS, THE CONTROLLED TRANSPARENCY OF SOME SPACES AND THE DELIBERATE CONCEALMENT OF OTHERS, RATHER THAN SEGREGATING A DOMESTIC INTERIOR FROM A PUBLIC EXTERIOR, REPRESENT THE CREATION OF AN INTERMEDIATE, UNCODED TERRITORY, THAT USELESS, INTIMATE, SHARED SPACE[1]."

1. Editorial, "The Intimate", Quaderns d'Arquitectura i urbanisme 226, July 2000, p.2.

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illustration credits

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