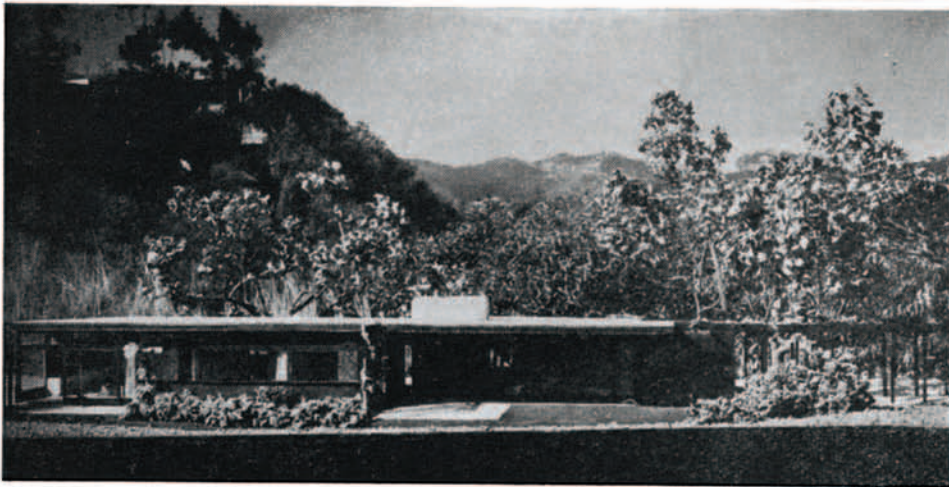
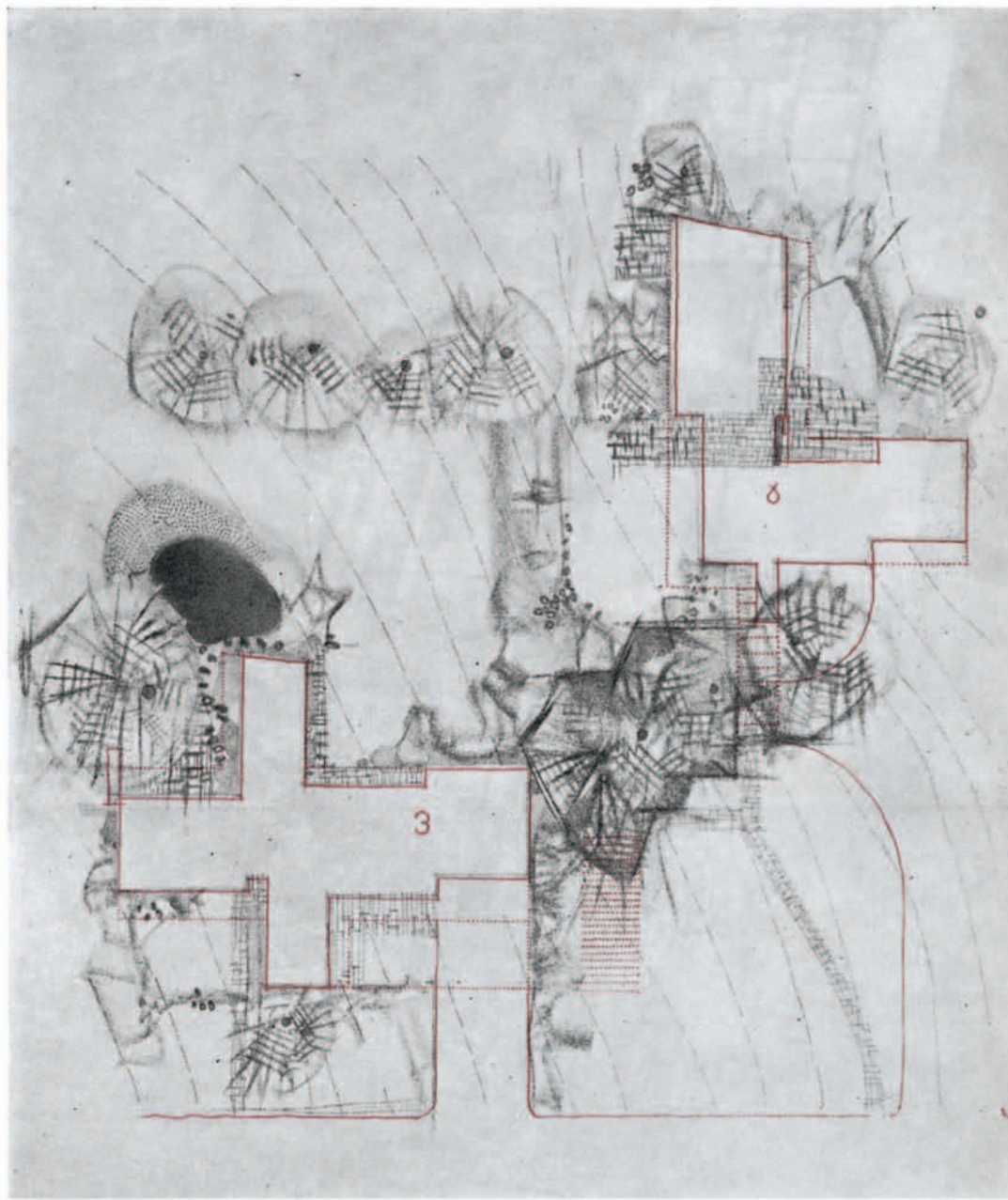


case study house

13



ALPHA . . . FITS ANY LEVEL VALLEY BOTTOM

BY RICHARD J. NEUTRA, A. I. A.

This is the second of two houses designed for the magazine's Case Study House Program by Richard J. Neutra. He has taken two hypothetical families, the first, a Mr. and Mrs. Omega, were pretty thoroughly digested in the October issue. We now come to the problem of Mr. and Mrs. Alpha and the solution of their particular project.

■ Mrs. Alpha's sister and her husband, the Omegas, have their house on the next lot to the north. Together these people had decided on a most favorable scheme, to settle themselves side by side—with their houses and gardens in a harmonious relationship. In this manner, it should be possible to preserve both a controlled and agreeable view out of the major rooms of their homes, and to accomplish desirable privacy—(in other words, to avoid a breakfast nook that looks directly into someone else's bath room windows.)

It is only a miracle when houses not planned together avoid mutual

THIS IS THE THIRTEENTH OF A CONTINUING SERIES OF STUDIES BY NINE NATIONALLY KNOWN ARCHITECTS FOR ARTS & ARCHITECTURE'S CASE STUDY HOUSE PROGRAM. THESE HOUSES WILL BE BUILT BY THE MAGAZINE AS CLIENT, IMMEDIATELY GENERAL BUILDING CONDITIONS MAKE IT POSSIBLE.

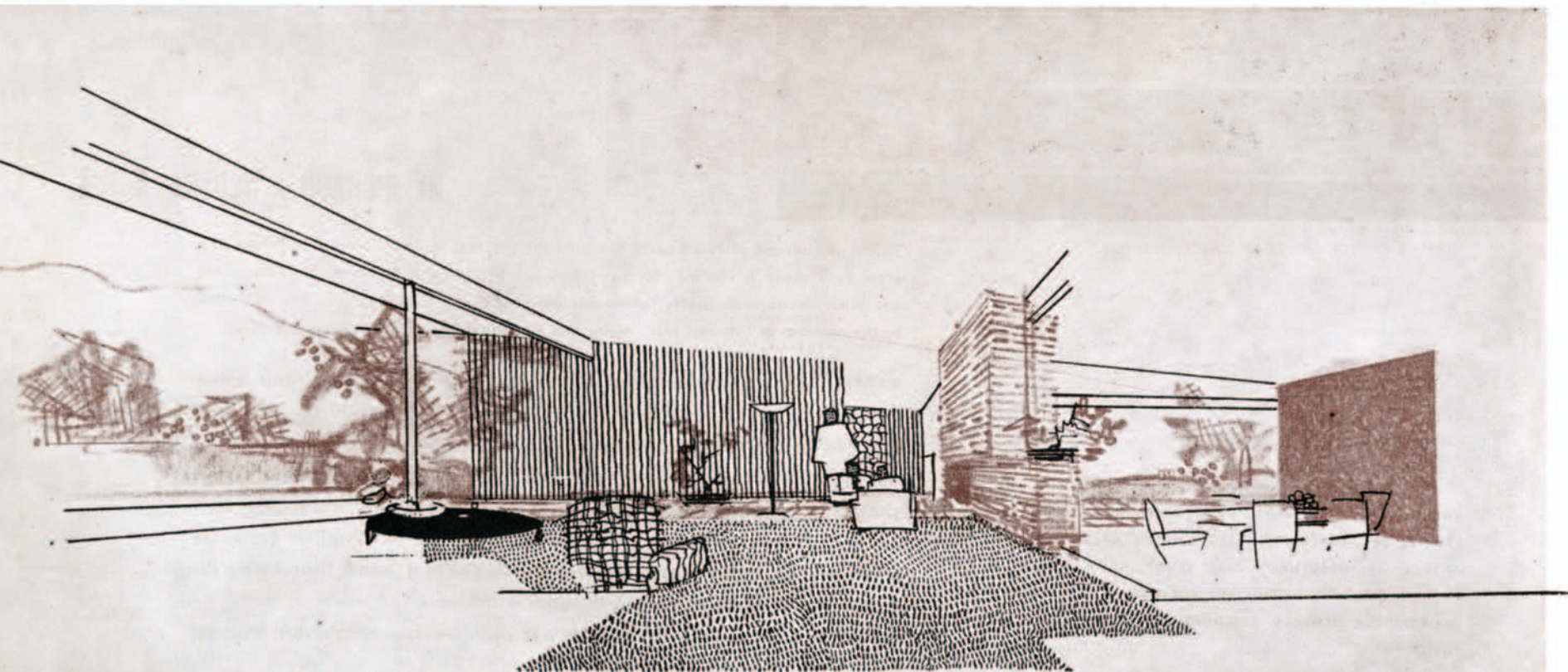


BIRDSEYE VIEW OF THE ALPHA HOUSE FROM THE SOUTHWEST
LIVING QUARTERS AND DINING BAY FORM A CONTINUOUS SPACE AND EXTEND INTO THE PATIOS

nuisances. Any sensible pair or group of prospective home owners can co-ordinate their effort—right from the lot purchase to the employment of an architect and later of a building contractor—so that they will derive from the combination greater advantage and savings.

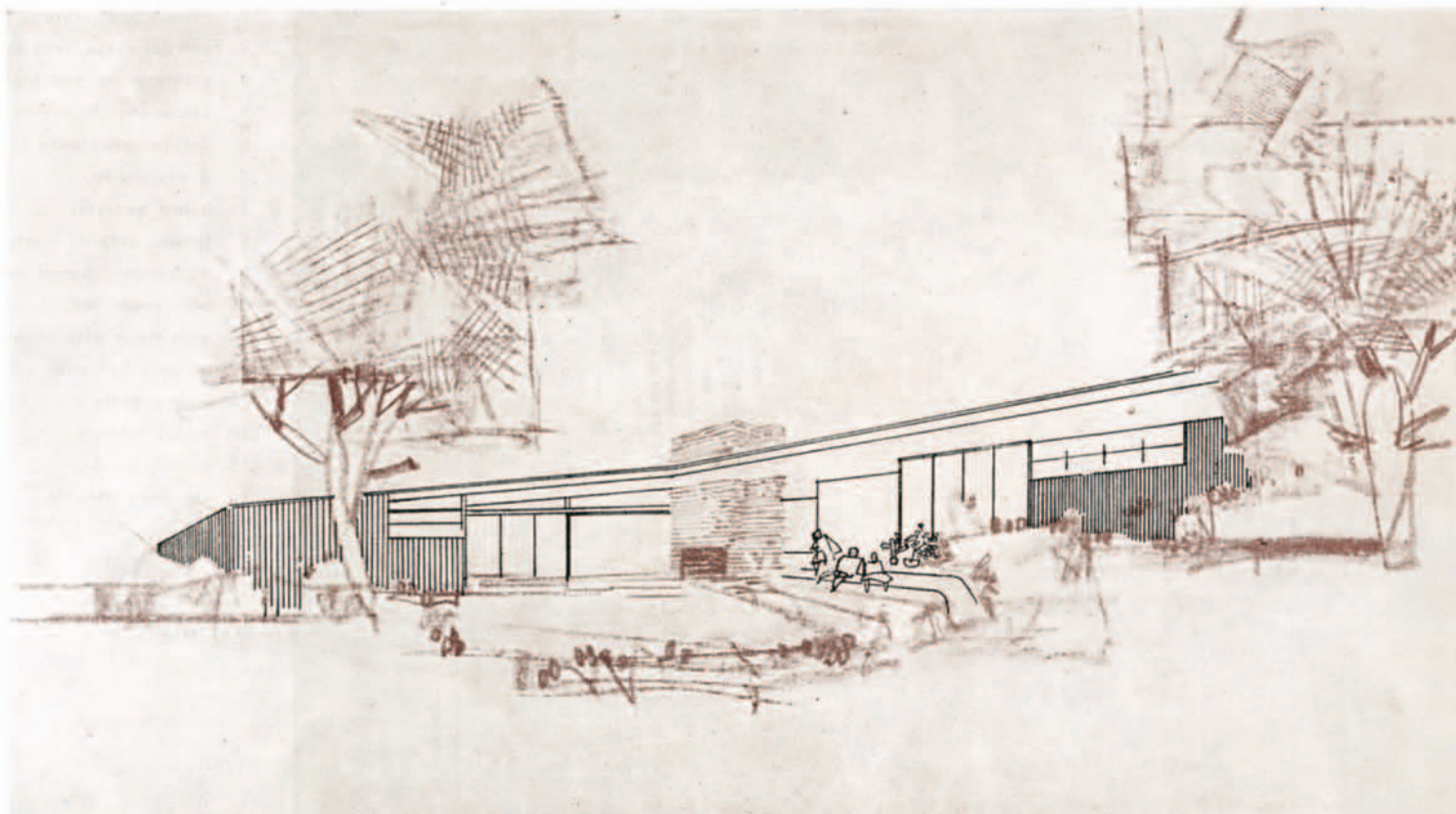
As made clear by site sketch and model, which show the relation of the two houses to each other, the lovely mountain view remains for both saved and unobstructed! The buildings and adjoining free areas are staggered for a minimum of mutual interference. Of course, within all this combined planning, the Alpha house is a unit of its own and in itself. It could well stand alone, without its companion. But together the two give an atmosphere and form that favorably reflect upon each of them.

The tall and shading trees, landmarks of this spot of Southern California foothill land, have been preserved for everybody's visual benefit. The Alphas are, as a family, a little older than the Omegas. In this case the two girls are the younger, eight and ten, and their brother is thirteen. The Alpha and Omega girls have been playing together





THE PLAY AND PICNIC PATIO SERVES FOR ROUGH AND MOST FORMAL USE



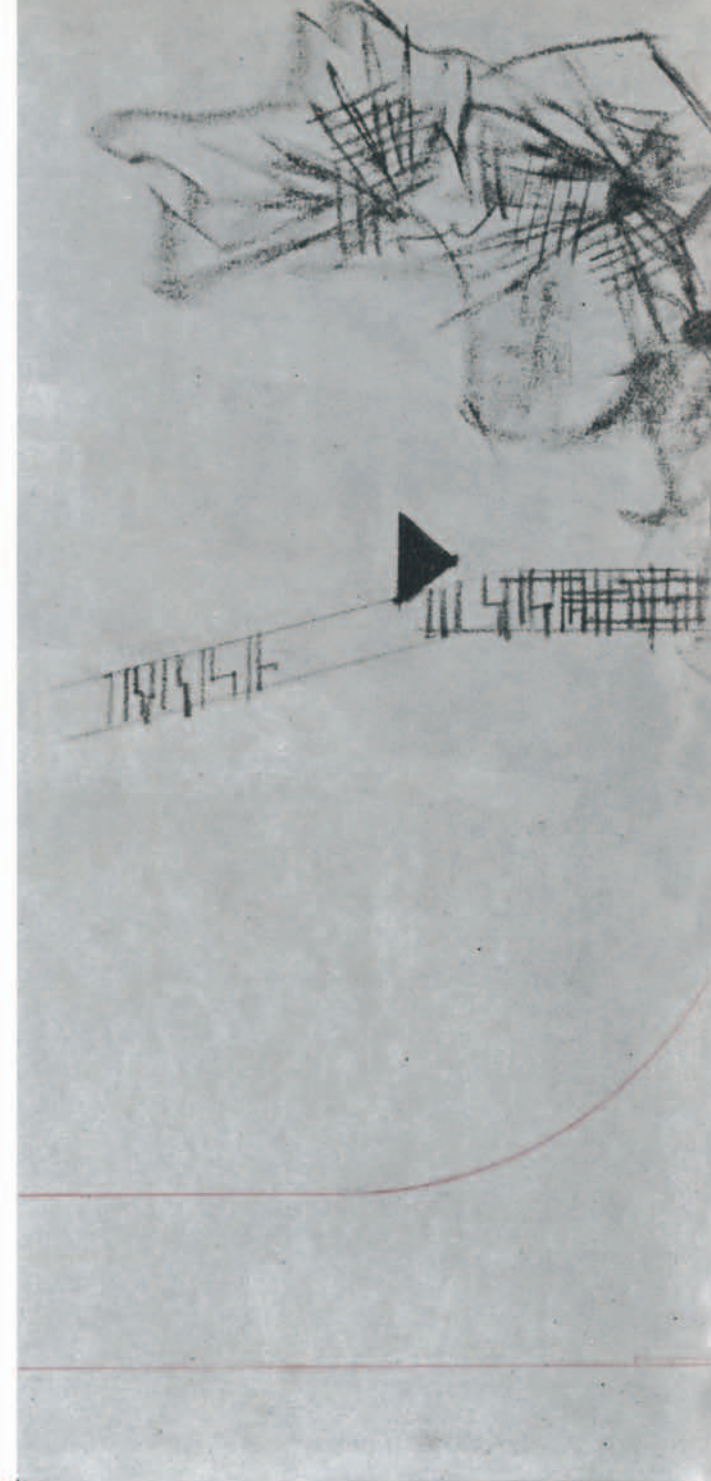
for years, and the detached lath house, which Mr. Alpha, (an amateur-and after workinghours horticulturist, wants to overgrow with vines), will contain a large room for youthful gatherings, a neutral ground dedicated to the children of both families.

The Alphas have a requirement as to spaces and facilities for their family of five, which, on many points, is not unusual: Living quarters with a fireplace; a dining bay or room, articulated off these general living spaces; definitely two outside sitting areas well connected with it—one with morning light, and the other with evening sun—but not the too early rays when they are still hot. The Alphas feel that a cool afternoon sitting space is an asset in the foothill plain. The two outdoor living areas, although naturally on different sides of the building, should, (and this was a specific wish of Mrs. Alpha), psychologically connect with each other. (This seemed a difficult condition! And it was aggravated by Mrs. Alpha's anticipation that on occasions of picnic parties, with youngsters about, there would probably be continuous traffic from one open air terrace to the other; — root beer to be spilled and greasy sandwiches to drip.) The plan shows how we solved the problem by using the same coarse pavement north and south of the building and passing through a zone of the living quarters adjacent to the hearth of the fireplace. When the sliding doors are open, there is a unity of the entire social area in—and—outdoors and on both sides of the building.

The living quarters, should on occasion be able to accomodate a guest, —if possible as far removed from the family sleeping quarters and toileting facilities as possible. The Alphas, among themselves, are not very prudish, but they think that their negligé-behaviour might be bothersome and embarassing to an adult guest.

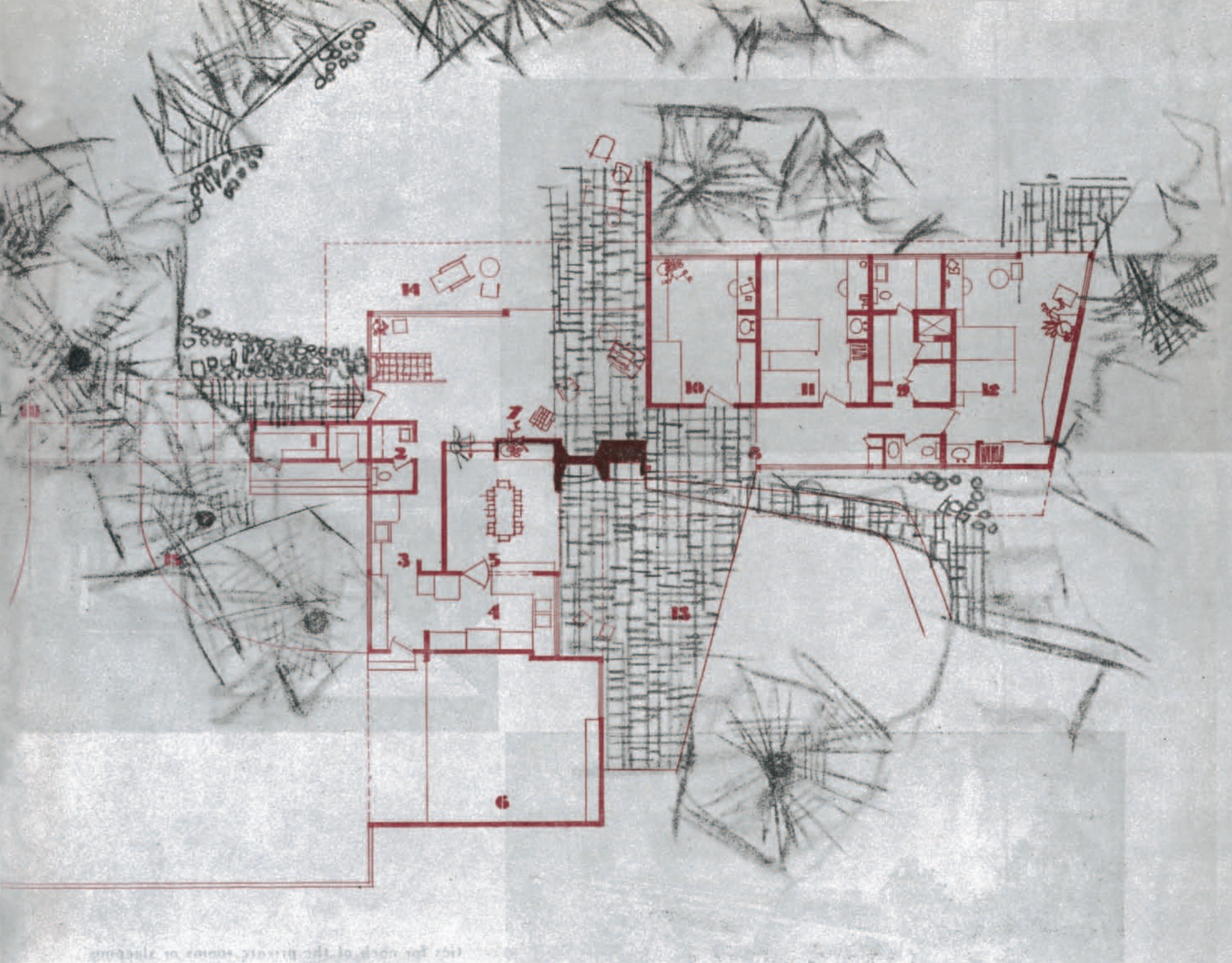
We decided that a guest of this sort hardly ever goes to bed, while the family stays up in the living room, and so a bay with a couch, not far from the powder room and entrance lavatory, where a drape can be pulled, would be the best solution. (Mr. Alpha, who as we already have mentioned, is a chronic horticulturist, promised he would use this bathroom on Saturday afternoons. It was, however, agreed that a future very simple addition should be provided for: a special gardener's toilet, west of and back to back to the entrance lavatory.)

The Alphas explained that a very regular informal out-of-door taking of meals and hospitable feeding of others was a cherished practice



- 1 garden tool storage at entrance pergola
- 2 powder room near entry
- 3 utility room and laundry
- 4 kitchen with service counter from kitchen
- 5 dining space with service counter from kitchen
- 6 2-car shelter
- 7 living quarters
- 8 family activity room opening on to patio 13
- 9 washroom, shower and toilet section
- 10 boys room with 2-story bunk and lavatory
- 11 girls room with lavatory
- 12 parents bedroom with lavatory
- 13 dining patio
- 14 social terrace
- 15 service yard
- 16 entrance pergola

A VIEW OVER PARENTS PATIO WESTWARD

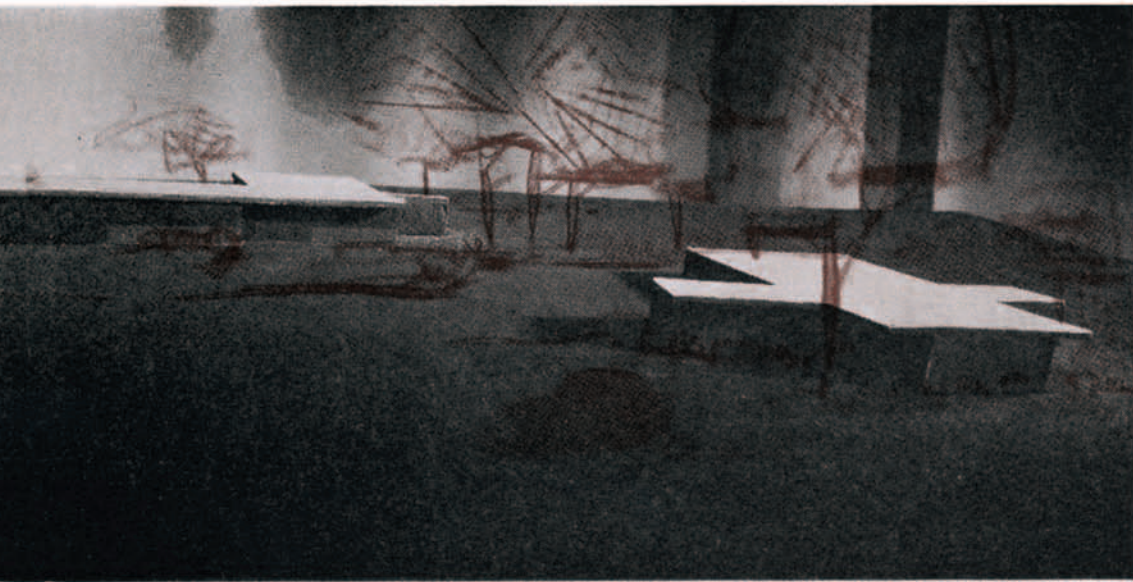


FLOOR LAYOUT OF THE ALPHA HOUSE

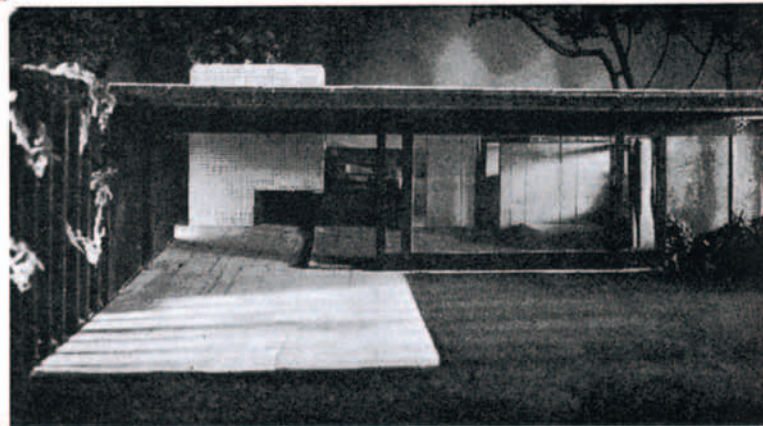
with them. The barbecue adjoining the outdoor fireplace and a benchlike set of two steps was very welcome to them. Likewise, they desired a very intimate connection of this primary food-and-meal patio with the culinary production center. Accordingly, only a few steps need be taken to carry trays from the porthole in the dining bay and kitchen wall to the outside eaters. The kitchen itself overlooks the outside service area, and on its other end connects in an "L" with utility room and home washing facilities. The service entrance is placed where the two wings meet, and where groceries and purchases made in town, enter from the car parked under the garage roof overhang.

The Alphas desired at least a modest indoor family play room. Without spending much money here, it was to be divided off from the more quiet sitting room, where visitors are received. We decided to simply enlarge the hall which leads to the bedrooms, and a few feet added in width turned the corridor into something more usable. (A broad sliding door on its long exterior front helps to widen this space into the outside on friendly days.)

The boy has occasional school fellow guests, so a double bunk bed seemed the best idea with a lavatory right in the room and a desk near the window. This suggested the idea of providing similar facili-



ALPHA AND OMEGA FROM THE STREET



CLOSER BIRDSEYE VIEW OF THE ALPHA HOUSE ALONE FROM THE NORTH

MODEL BY JAN VAN TAMELEN

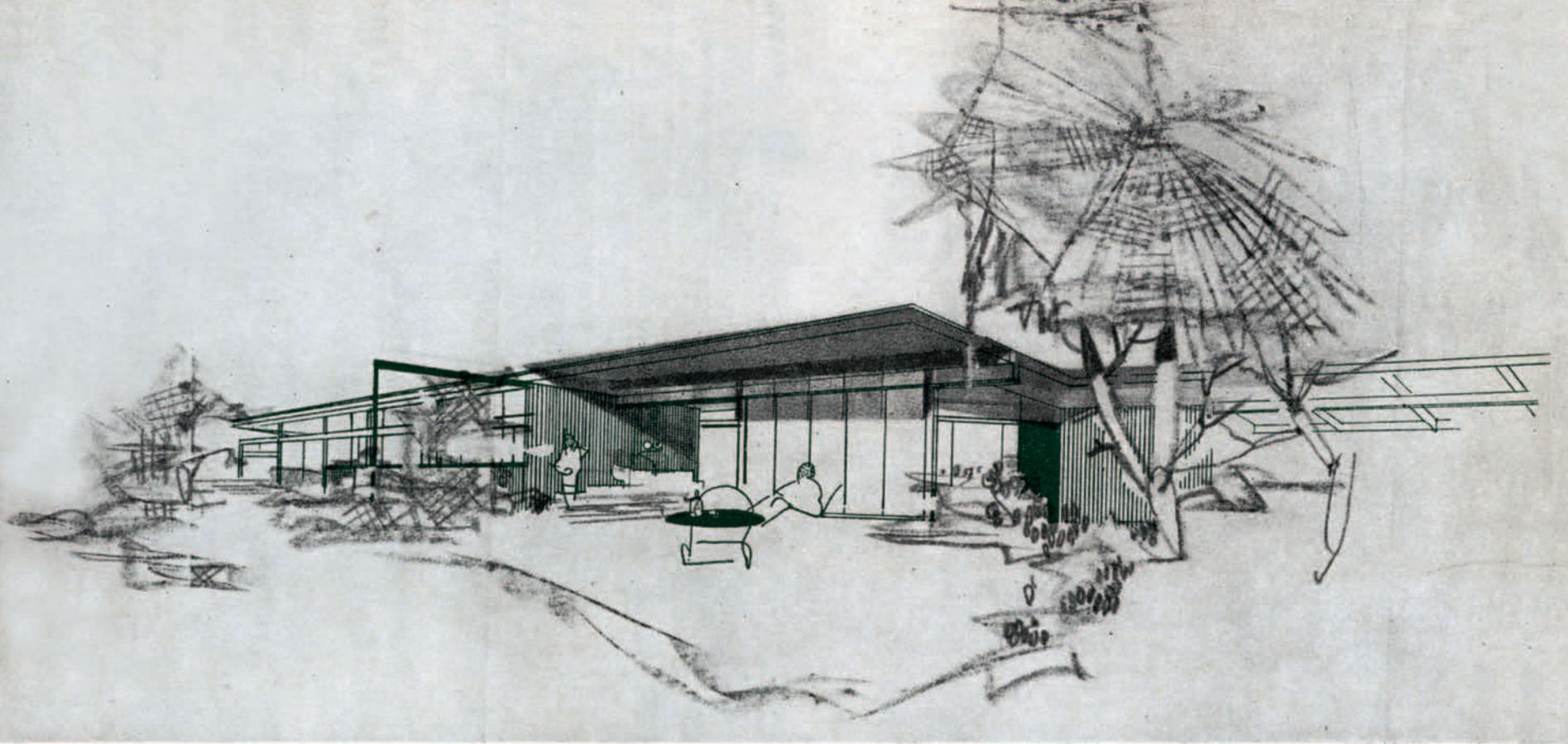
ALL PHOTOGRAPHS OF MODEL BY JULIUS SHULMAN

ties for each of the private rooms or sleeping quarters. This to avoid crowding of bathroom facilities.

The clients desired one tub-equipped bathroom; one completely separate, and separately usable shower; and one equally independent toilet, all clustered into one section of the house to reduce plumbing runs.

All private rooms, and especially the parents quarters, have a defined sleeping and an equally defined "living section." The parents enjoy a sliding door out into their own private garden. The social space as well as the private rooms all have a magnificent view of the mountains.

In appearance this house has been designed with constant thought for its relation with its neighbor. The same facing and finishing materials, as well as similar fixtures are used.



THE QUIET SOCIAL PATIO IS WELL TREE SHELTERED AGAINST THE STREET

The considerations and motives given for the type of flat but slanting roof, draining the rain water in the same direction as does the sloping ground itself, were readily accepted. The angle of roof pitch, the light gravel cover are identical on the Alpha and Omega houses; they are prominent features of harmonizing the buildings with each other and with the sloping grounds, an effect which the sketches can only incompletely show.

ALPHA AND OMEGA UNDER THEIR EXISTING TREES

