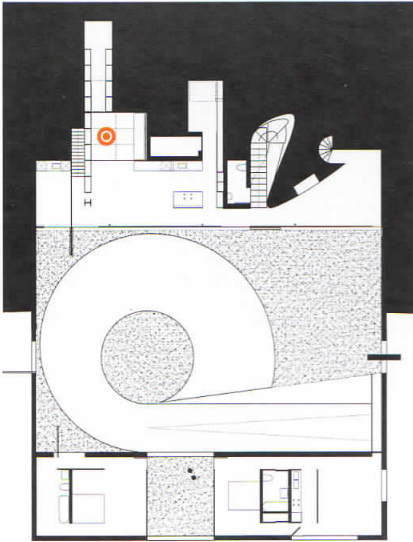


koolhaas houselife

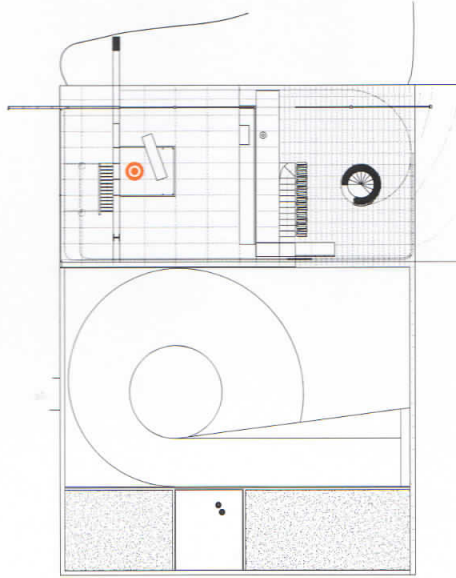
a film by Ila Bêka & Louise Lemoine



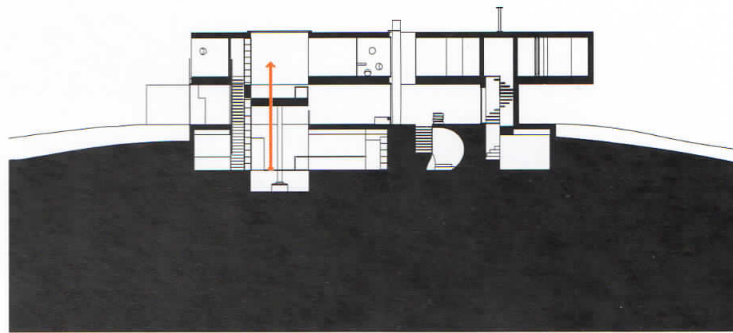
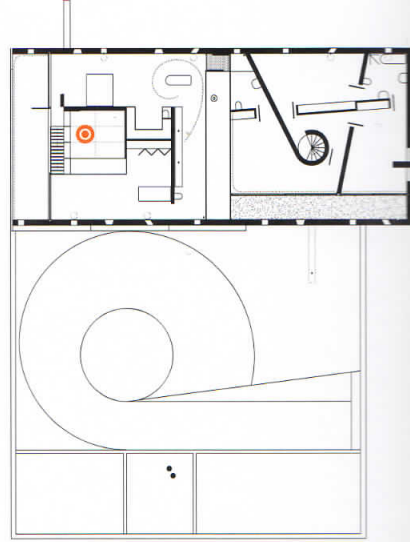
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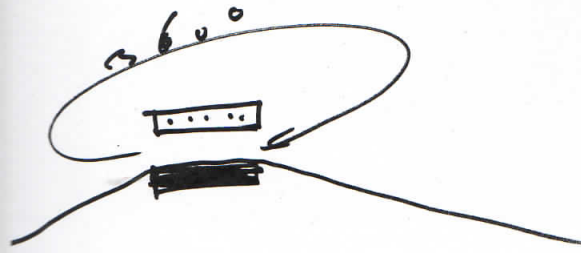


LEVEL_1



LEVEL_2





DAY_1

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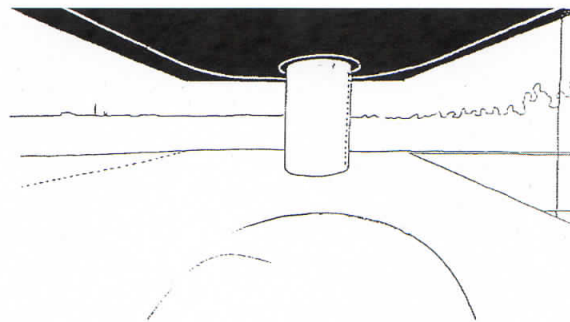
11 am. The morning tour

It's Heritage Day. Doors have opened to the public everywhere in France. Armed with umbrellas against the bad weather, architecture lovers start queuing from the early hours of the morning. To begin our first day of shooting at the house in Bordeaux – which, by the way, is not in the city of Bordeaux but in Floirac – we registered on the waiting list of the morning tour. The house was recently added to the supplementary list of historic sites – which significantly helps the task of any architecture student who would no longer need to think up boy scout-style strategies to get a few covert photographs of the house, with the fear of getting caught by stray dogs or by some weekend hunter.

A stream of colorful raincoats was already in front of the school bus hired for the occasion. In-between two bends, the bus driver explains that he definitely prefers driving on Heritage Day than on the Bull fight day. It certainly is less bloody.

While giving technical explanations and detailing the excellent track record of the house, the architect conducting the tour advises the visitors to take a small precaution in case it rains. Since the ground is muddy, they would be kindly requested to take their shoes off to avoid leaving the house in a terrible state.

Thirty people in raincoats, with umbrellas, backpacks, cameras and other of the kind remove their shoes in unison in a corner of the entrance with the fear of not being able to find both shoes at the end of the visit. And so begins the tour of the house in Bordeaux on a rainy Heritage Day.



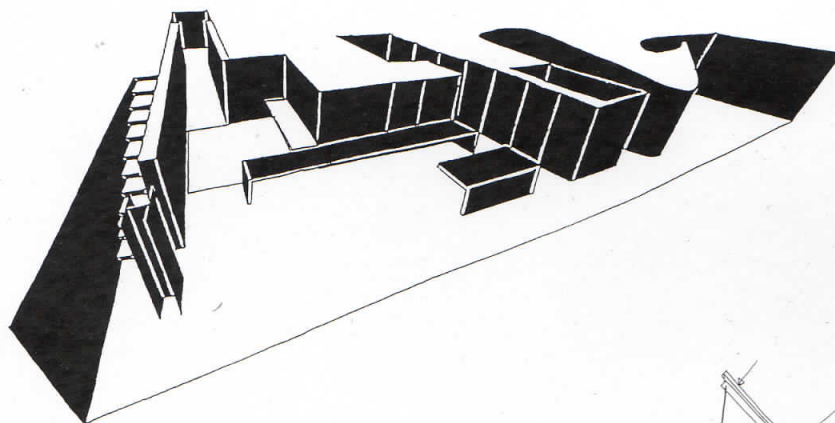
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DAY_1

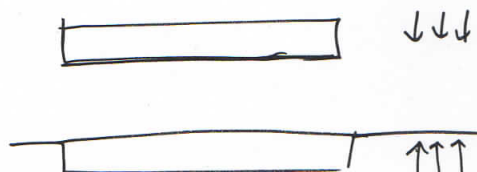
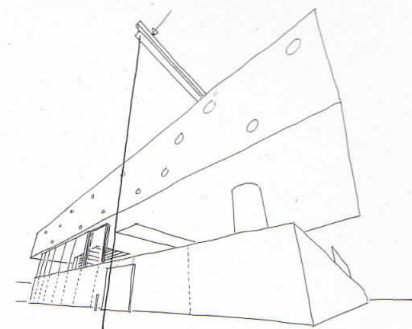
7 pm. Each to his own

After its day in the public eye, the house shuts its doors again. We start chatting with Guadalupe to get her personal opinion on the house.

Talking about the kitchen and its furniture, Guadalupe, who always takes the fitting out of her own house as a pragmatic reference, systematically ends her sentences with *"Well, it's different, you know, it's not the same thing..."* – an impartial opinion which, as she herself insists, *"respects the tastes of others"*.

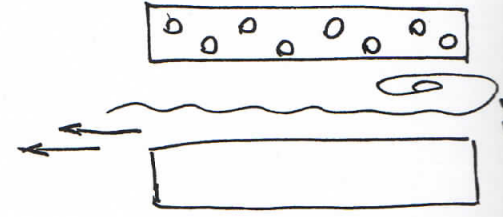


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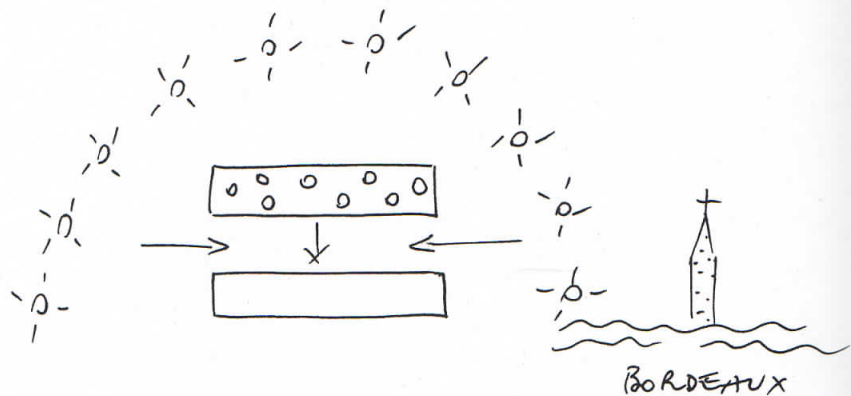
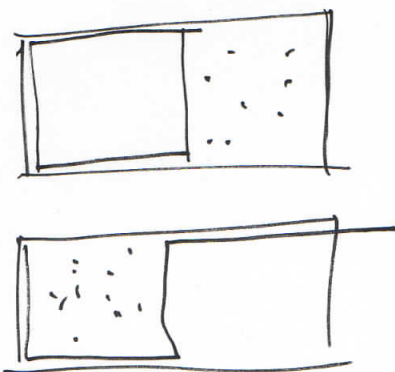
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Rem Koolhaas

DAY_2

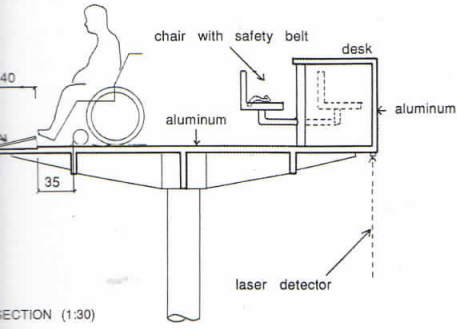


9.30 am. The curtain

Morning. The household is still asleep and swaddled in a vast burlap curtain fluttering lightly in the air. It literally wraps the house up at its most sensitive level: its transparencies. The circulation mechanism of the curtains on this particular floor is a skilful and delicate process. In the summer, the heavier fabrics are pushed back together at the far ends of the rails, while the lighter jute and tulle fabrics can flutter about up onto the terrace as the rails travel from the inside to the outside. It is, by the way, not uncommon on windy days to get caught in a ghostly dance of curtains. A sudden gust of wind and the curtain runs without warning from one side of the terrace to the other. A breeze in the opposite direction, and it rushes back. One might first think it is due to some defect in the mechanism. And yet, it is just the wind!



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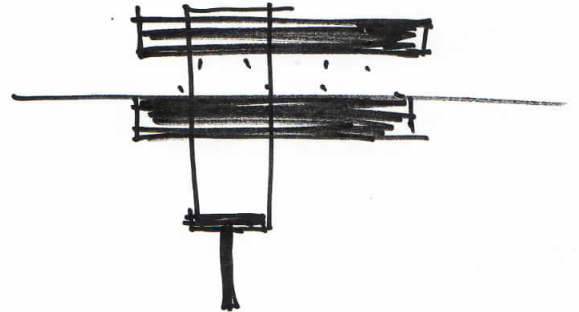
DAY_2

Noon. The elevator-platform

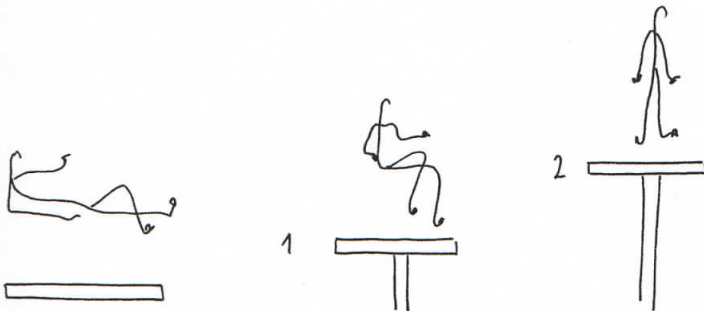
As a way of concluding the morning session, we wanted to film Guadalupe, who would, for once, use the platform to take her cleaning equipment upstairs. We soon realize that Guadalupe's insistence on always using the stairs rather than comfortably being taken upstairs on the platform is less to do with practical time considerations than with an earlier trauma. She explains, with supporting evidence, that this high-tech machine is extremely sensitive, and can be rather lunatic at times.

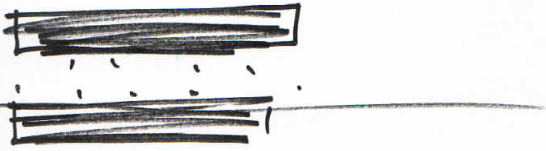
One morning when she was using it to reach the second floor, for no apparent reason, the platform suddenly stopped. And there she was, stuck half way between two levels. Impossible to get it moving again. No one around to be seen. After a few long minutes of panic, the sound of footsteps could be heard. She screams out, someone comes, she explains. To get her out of there, the technical box has to be reactivated from the platform itself, which can only be reached through the bookshelves. First step: clear a path through the books. Then, huddle up and get on to the platform. Press some buttons to reactivate the mechanism, and there we go again.

Ever since this mishap, our superstitious Guadalupe would rather climb the stairs four times a day than venture on the platform on her own.



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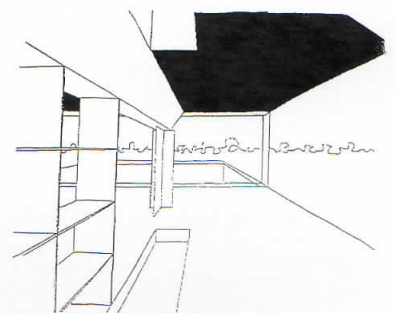
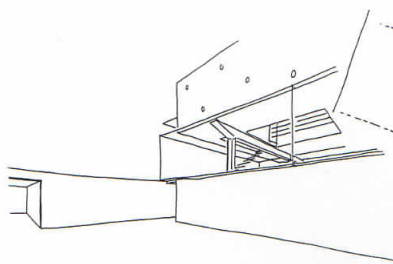
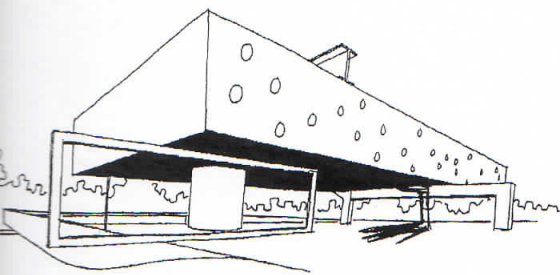
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Rem Koolhaas

DAY_3

11 am. The window cleaners

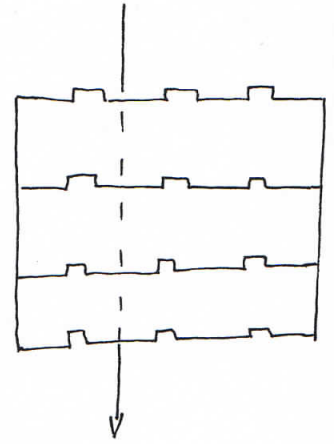
Every month, the house becomes the setting for a unique acrobatic act. If one takes into account the length of the windows and their position, it is easy to imagine how spectacular the window cleaners' performance can be.

A man in his fifties and a twenty-something woman step out of the van. He is apparently used to the house while she is a first timer here. We watch her first ladder experience with excitement. Using the squeegee on a window ledge six metres from the ground is worthy of a trapeze artist. Hats off!



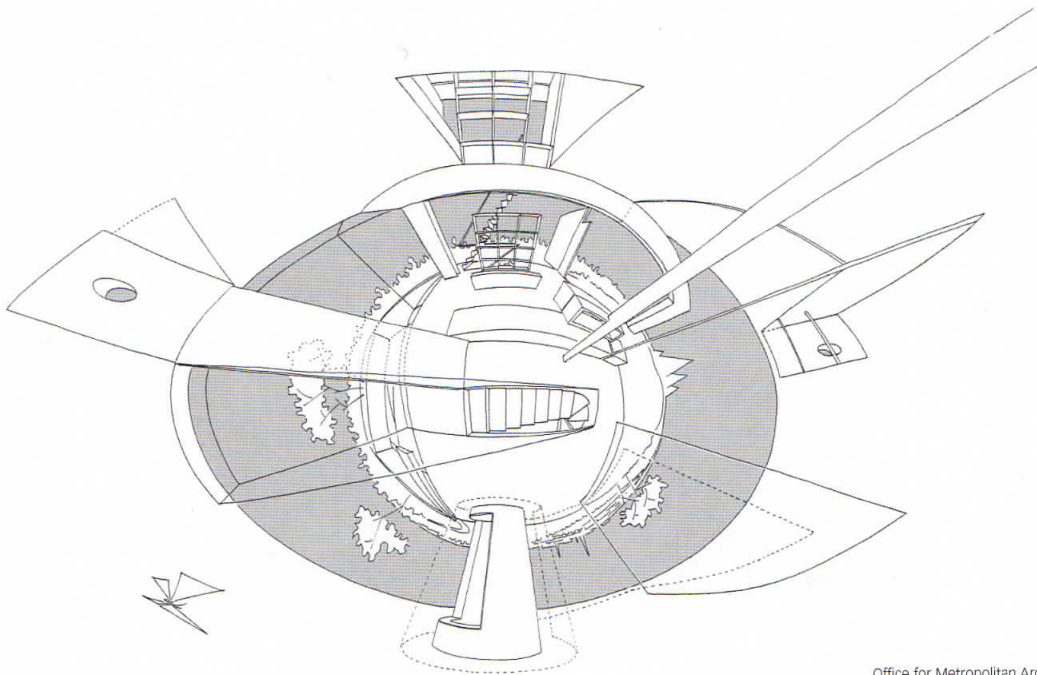
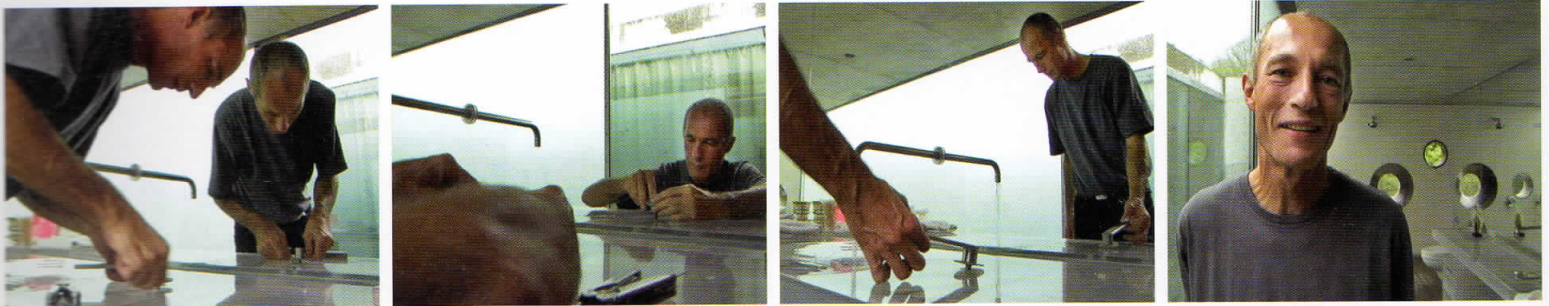
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DAY_3

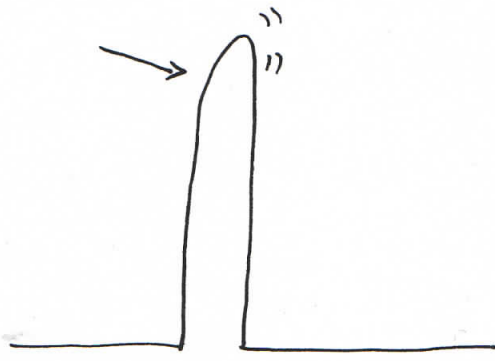


2 pm. The house doctor

During an impromptu snack, we meet a person who is an essential figure in the running of the house. Everyone calls him the "house doc". He earned this honorary title because of the unequalled ingenuity demonstrated in the history of this house. He, indeed, finds solutions in record time to dysfunctions and deterioration affecting all prototype mechanisms, which can only be tamed in a blink of an eye by a creative and technically-oriented mind.



Office for Metropolitan Architecture/
Julien Monfort

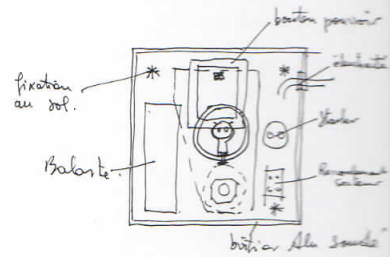
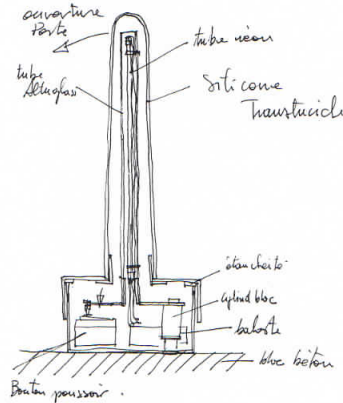
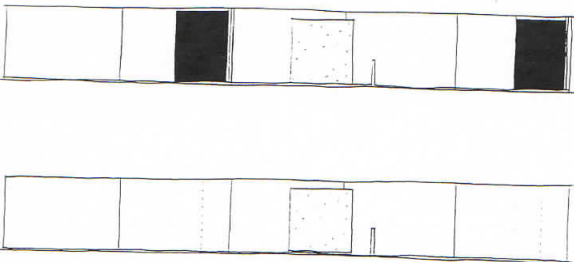


Joystick

DAY 3

3 pm. The joystick

The joystick is not working today – joystick is one of those words that add a certain high-tech feel to the daily vocabulary of the people who live in this house. There are no keys in the house; there is a joystick. The front door is automatic: the opening of the door from inside is switch-controlled; outside, a mobile luminous bollard, called “joystick” allows the opening of the door. In order not to disturb the house doc who is carrying out a technical intervention elsewhere we ask Guadalupe to provide us with some details on how the joystick is operated. She points out a simple detail that might seem obvious, although useful for impatient people who could easily get annoyed. Since the joystick can only be operated in one direction, only a continuous push will open and close the door. If one does not pay attention and keeps pushing repeatedly, the door would open, and then close straight after. To avoid such issues, those impatient can also use the service entrance.



DAY_4

11 am. The stairs

On today's cleaning agenda: the children's room. Before starting, Guadalupe prepares her equipment with much care, suggesting a combination of habits and peculiar ways. We take stock of the equipment to be carried upstairs: a vacuum cleaner, which must easily weigh over six kilograms, a black bucket full of detergents, a sheet torn into strips, a mop, a red bucket in which lies a floor cloth.

The magic of this building lies in the fact that any heavy or large object can be taken to each floor through the central platform. Guadalupe, who does not rely much on the high-technology of the house, prefers to carry everything up the stairs in one go.

There are, until further notice, three different ways to get to the children's bedrooms. The platform takes you to the master bedroom on the second floor, then you need to follow a narrow footbridge located between the master bathroom and the en-suite bathroom of one of the opposite rooms. The rooms are at the other end of the bridge.

A more direct route, thought out for the kids' autonomy, connects the ground floor to the second floor by a spiral staircase.

The third way, which is slightly more complex, is to take the "grotto-stairs" from the ground floor to the terrace and then continue to the rooms using the second half of the spiral staircase.

After a thorough analysis of the grounds, Guadalupe has decided that this third route is the most appropriate to carry her equipment: the vacuum cleaner on one side and the two buckets on the other. In spite of her determined choice, this route remains hazardous as the second half of the spiral staircase, which is narrow and dangerous, is hardly suitable for large or heavy objects. To guard against any hazard, Guadalupe removes the handle of the vacuum cleaner and grasps it in her right hand and uses it as a mountaineer stick as she slowly climbs the stairs.



Marie Bruneau, Presse Papier

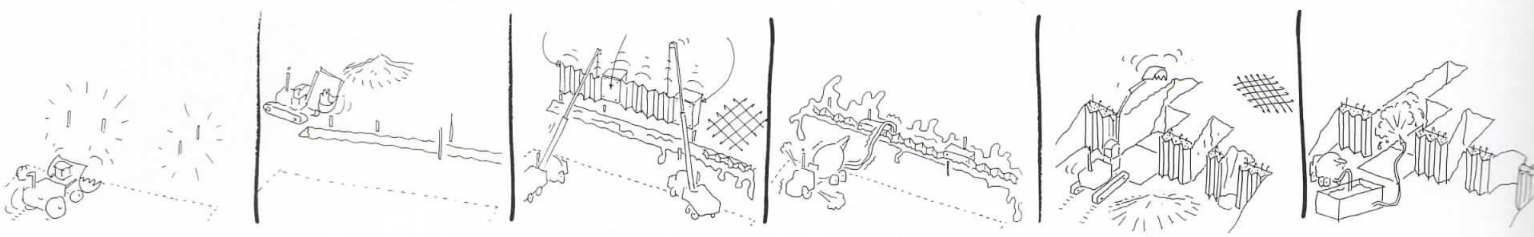


DAY_4

Marie Bruneau, Presse Papier

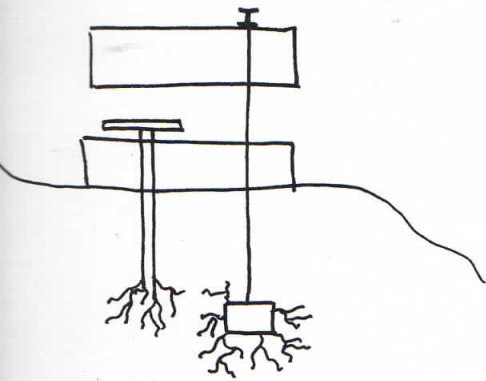
6.30 pm. Marseille soap

Not only is this house exceptional in its architecture, but it is even more in the inventiveness required to get round everyday life issues. The house being built on a clay hill, the structure has evolved over the time. The changes, as tiny as they are, caused by this movement can still be seen in a few details. The sliding glass door used as a balustrade to the platform on the ground floor shows sometimes the effects of these changes. It scrapes, gets stuck and jams. Guadalupe's trick to tame these stubborn items is to rub the resin floor with Marseille soap. And it works!



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DAY_5



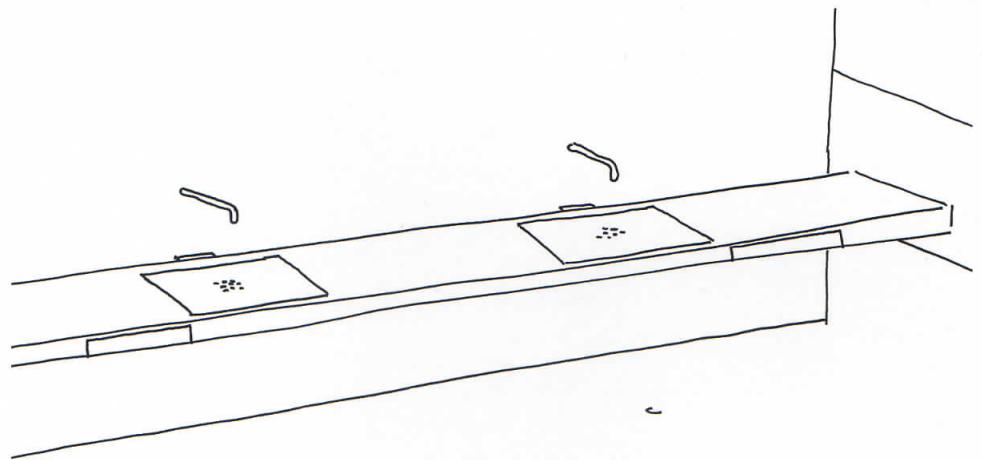
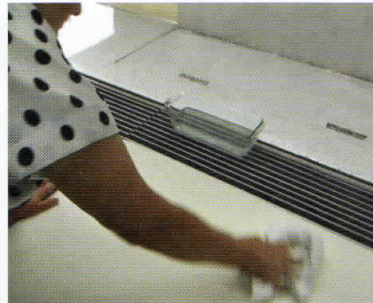
11.30 am. Leaks

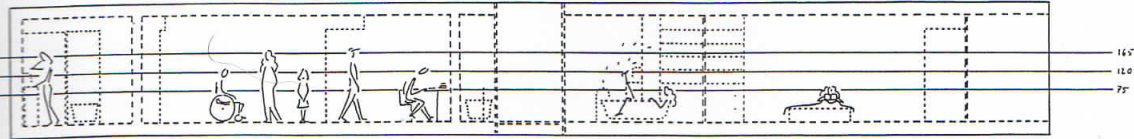
The water tightness of this house is a real problem. For years, water infiltration of varying degrees of severity has plagued the residents and specialists, who have tried in vain to find the source of the endless leaks.

On rainy days – even more so when there are storms – the house becomes a hive of frenzied activity, with everyone enlisted in finding cups, jars, bowls, basins, or anything else, to be quickly taken upstairs. These are passed on to the expert hands who place the small stoups, like in a game of chess, under the miraculous springs.

Towels, sponges, floor cloths or anything that can be used to wipe and plug the leaks end up in every corner of the house like emergency bandages.

The month of August is typical of stormy and heavy weather, and this August is no different. The situation is made even worse by the windows on the intermediate floor and in the parents' bathroom waiting to be replaced. Two temporary panes held in place with nothing more than shims have been fitted while waiting for the new glass to be delivered. Unfortunately, the contractor has not taken rainy days into account.





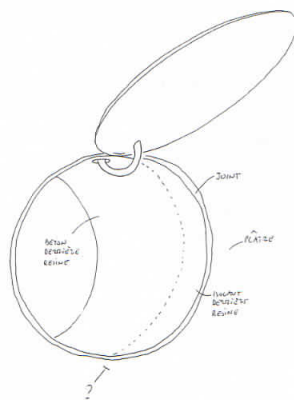
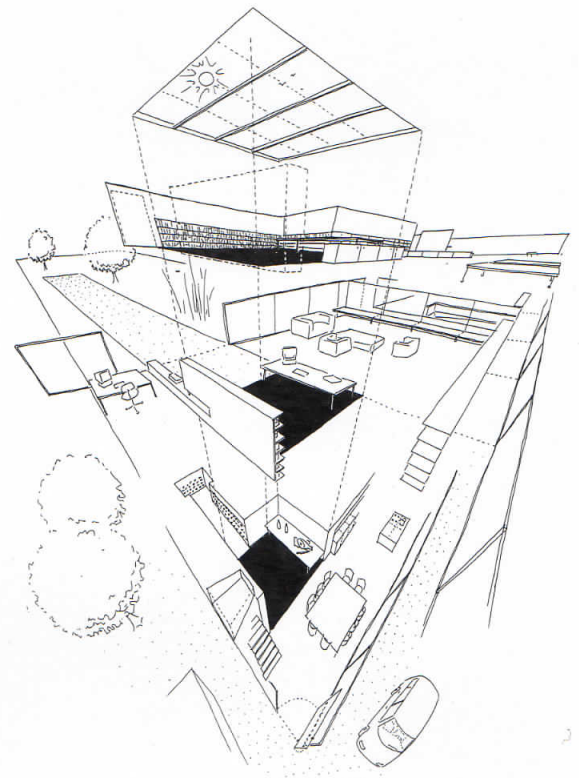
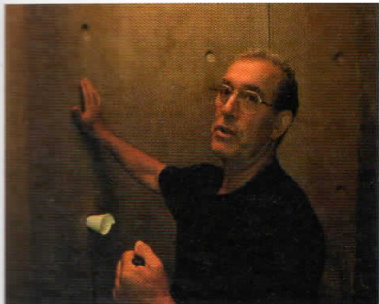
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DAY_5

3 pm. The hole

More than just a crack, another watery mystery of the house is a fully ledged hole: the footprint of the concrete formwork used to build the spiral staircase. It is visible from the second step from the bottom. Rain or shine, this unpredictable hole endlessly drips with water. It is not uncommon, Guadalupe explains (who by now is an expert on the subject), to find yourself, when you come down the stairs in the morning, in the middle of an enormous puddle that has been quietly soaking lamps, armchairs and other objects for hours.

While waiting for the experts' report, Guadalupe, who is impatient to find a remedy to this open wound, has come up, with the help of her husband, with an ingenious expedient – another of her own innumerable prototypes that livens the house up. She takes a plastic cup, cuts it lengthways, removes the bottom, rolls it up on itself and pushes it into the hole. It then acts as a kind of high-precision spout that directs the water into a bucket she leaves on the step.



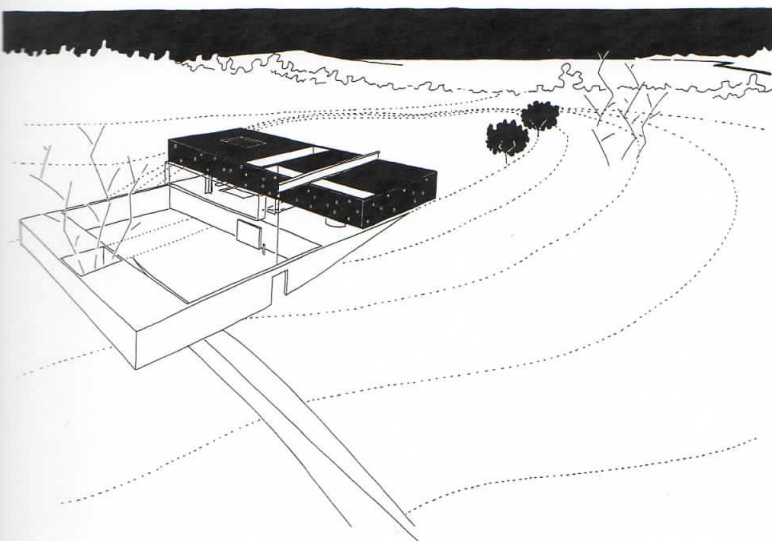
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DAY_6

9.30 am. The gate

This morning Guadalupe shares some of her memories with us. The house is not what it used to be. One of the things that have changed is precisely the gate. At present, at the entrance to the driveway, there is a large gate, similar to those one can see at highway tolls or at level crossings. A pedestrian could easily walk around it, but a car would not. Guadalupe explains that this gate has at least managed to dissuade a few sticky beaks. Gone are the days when busses full of Japanese architects on tour would suddenly appear in the courtyard. Thanks to the gate, they now think twice before entering.

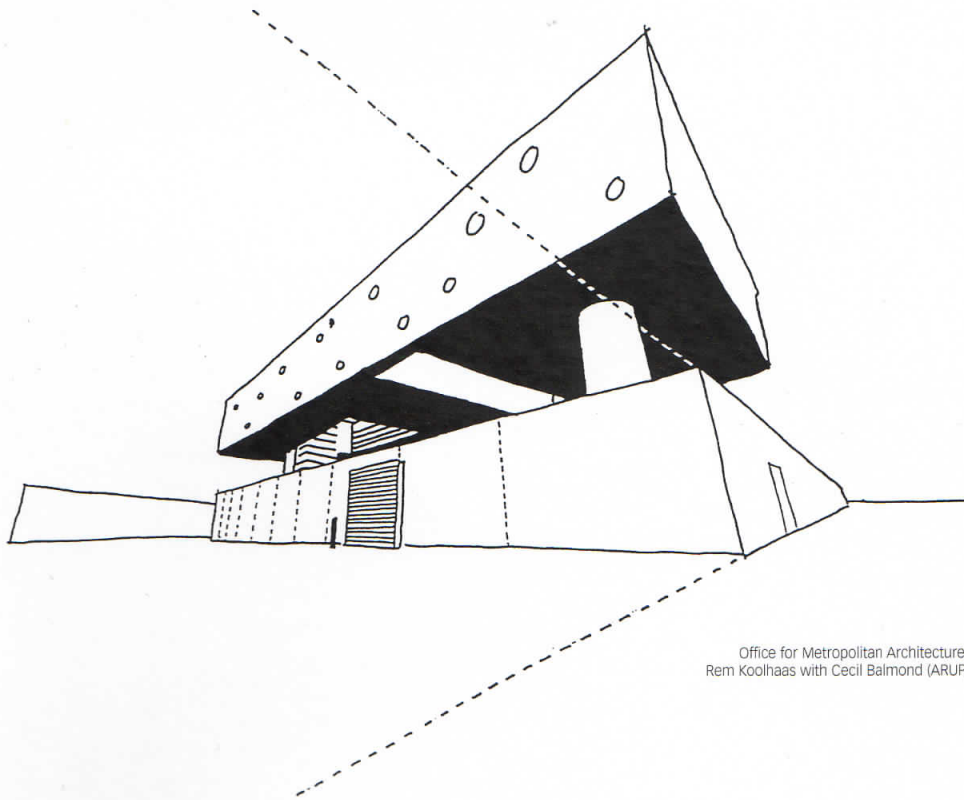


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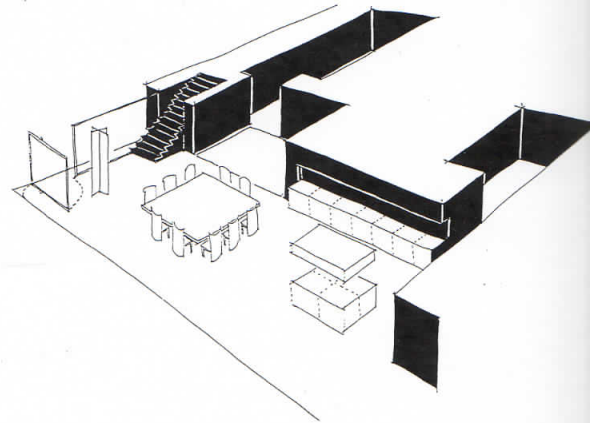
DAY_6

Noon. The recycling bin

Some aspects of the kitchen, which is the work of a Flemish designer, reveal how disciplined our Nordic neighbors are towards modern age requirements. The extraordinarily complex rubbish bin is a big metal container divided into six different compartments. We ask Guadalupe how the rubbish is divided up. *"The difference between the compartments? That one holds 30 litres and that one 50."* We ask her for more details on the environmental features of the bin. *"If I had to sort the rubbish, it would take me all day!"* There's no doubt that the Flemish rubbish bin will still be, for some time to come, slightly ahead of its time here in Floirac.



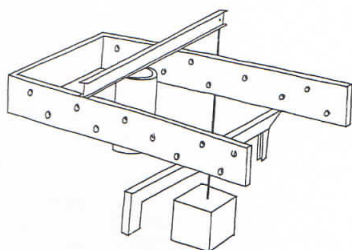
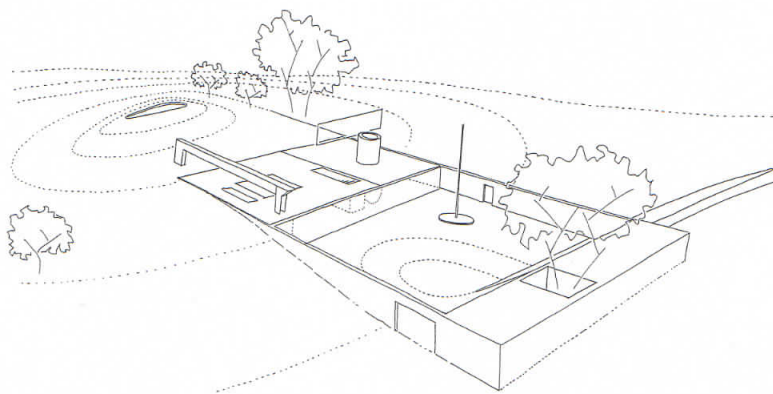
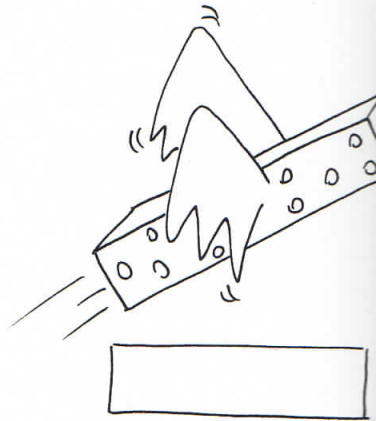
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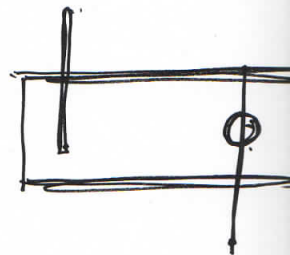
DAY_6

3 pm. How does it stand?

Between changing the sheets and vacuuming the floor, we get onto a few purely architectural issues with Guadalupe. She tells us that for her the real mystery of the house is to understand how it stands. We follow her onto the terrace where she shows us what she means. *"Over there, for example, tell me, on what does it hold? Look, there's nothing there. It's true, there's a wall there but it holds nothing. Same thing here, you see. Nothing here either."* She therefore draws the conclusion that the house is "hanging". This balancing act worries her more than a little, particularly on windy days. *"I hope it doesn't fall apart. It's just hanging, you know!"* Isn't that an example of the magical aspect of architecture?



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