The Domestic Microcosm

"A House knows who lives in it."
- John Hejduk

"If I was asked to name the chief benefit of the house, I should say the house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace."
- Gaston Bachelard

The problem of home is a difficult one. It must, of course, fulfill those necessary and necessary duties that all buildings should - it must keep the rain out, the heat in, and the inhabitants clean. They should be good regards to the environment, useful to the earth’s resources, and, in some history, should provide the environment with as much physical comfort as possible. But in technical proficiency, sustainable design and comfortable living the most of the domestic living quarters is there now?

This project believes that the aforementioned improvements - as well incorporated as they might seem - reduce the value of architecture to a senseless and hollow problem. It argues that any singular objective - be it sustainability, functionality, or social engineering - ultimately fails to satisfy the multifaceted desires and needs of humanity. A domesticity of worth that also provide a spiritual and psychological refuge, one that both shelter from the world and allows one to reflect deeply upon it. The works of Alvaro Siza and Gau visually present "The creation of order in a changeable and finite world is the ultimate purpose of man’s thoughts and actions." It is within the scale of the domestic where this nature is more fully and intricately developed. The domestic is the home to each person’s microcosm.

Here, there is no skin, it is made to fit an average sized urban lot. It is intimate in size large enough to accommodate the predictable fluctuations in family size, and provide a spatial organization whose flexibility can adapt to evolving social structures and advancing technologies.

This project begins with our primitive space - a grid enclosed of 4’ x 4’ x 4’ volumetric module, rigidly organized about an orthogonal grid, used to accommodate minimal, off-the-shelf construction materials and methodologies. It recognizes that, given the rate of social and technological revolution, predicting what the future looks like is impossible. By using a simple grid, the design provides a flexible, adaptable space. The concept is both feasible and manipulable. It’s design is not to follow a formula, but to adapt to the occupant’s needs as an environment.

This part of the house is defined by temperature, flexibility and the persistence of change. It is an architecture that is free to be whatever it is.

However, there are specific aspects of humanity and domesticity that have remained universal since the man first built with the primitive tools made of stone hundreds of years ago. These elements have been cut in stone, providing an anchor of continuity and offering precedents and support from modern living. They provide a very real, useful effect as the harmonizing unity and continuity of our world. Upon the primitive grid of temperateness, elements of permanence are inserted.

This house has three main elements, expressed as a series of elements:

1. The Universe and the Womb

Bournouf said that a perfect garden, no matter its size, should enclose nothing less than the entire universe. A garden anchors one corner of the site. Diagonally opposed to it is the "womb," a solid, anchored cube that contains the essential elements of domesticity: a place for entertainment (the library), a place for the service (the cellars), and a place for recreation (the living room). If the garden offers a microcosm of the universe, the womb offers a microcosm of the self.

2. The Hearth and the Stream

The heart of the house is the heating heart of domesticity. All public and private activity find themselves drawn towards this center. Its function expresses a common theme of structure and research, one which remains unchanged throughout time. Just passed one is an is the stream, a small feature and water feature key fed by the site water, which in turn feeds the garden. Its perpetual motion and constant flow are reminders of the persistence of time and thus, the constancy of change.

3. The Threshold, the Park and the Divine

The threshold between the world and the home is a sacred transition. This house sets up a choreographed sequence of events that provide a repose from the contact of the world. The path from public to the house to the inner arrayed can be seen from the street and ends at a single room, being a sign of the sacred and divine.

This house acknowledges the inevitable and unpredictable march of change by providing a flexible space for intervention, yet anchors this space with references to these characteristics as the nature of humanity. It hopes to look forward by looking back, one towards any stylistic or visual possibility, but rather towards those essential characteristics of humanity which define us as a species - the march for order, the hope for meaning and the exploration of the universe within.
The Womb and the Universe

"He who has a garden and a library wants for nothing." - Cicero

The womb provides a place of recovery, repair and reflection - a chamber of introspection. From this chamber born of the outside world are allowed in - the entrance of the garden and the anteroom of the light slip. The garden offers itself as the universe compressed - the entirety of existence shrunk into the mixture of falling and life.

The Hearth and the Stream

"The simple hearth...is the center of our universe." - Manzette Felton

The hearth acts as both the physical source of heat within the home and the metaphoric heart of the dwelling. Its heavy instability is a symbol of continuity and place. The stream, on the other hand, is a constantly changing flow, it rises with the torrent of rain or absorbs with the spell of drought. It symbolizes life's ceaseless permanence and the persistence of change.

The Path, the Threshold, and the Divine

"If the door of perception were cleansed everything would appear to men as it is, infinite." - William Blake

This single axis offers a transition from the profanity of the outside world to the sacrosanctness of the dwelling within. Its employs resting base units, a path, a threshold, a door, and a tree. The sequence of events - from elevation to opening of the line of sight of nature gardens spilling through the aperture into the outside world - offers an abstracted and immaterial meditation on the sacred and the divine.

Looking through the Womb and towards the garden

From the hearth looking towards the fountain and stream

The opening of the door to the divine

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