

Gwathmey Residence and Studio

Amagansett, New York



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The site, a one-acre flat field, was surrounded by undeveloped land at the time of design. However, future construction was anticipated, and has since occurred. Access to the property is from the south with views across the dunes to the ocean. The program of the original 1,200 square feet, 30,000 cubic feet house included a living/dining space, kitchen, master bedroom/studio, two guest bedrooms and a workroom. A year after completion, a second 480 square feet structure was added, accommodating a guest room and full studio.

Within the limited budget, a design parti and vernacular were developed that set a precedent for later work. By organizing the house vertically, programmatic and site constraints were resolved through sectional as well as plan manipulations. The guest rooms, workroom, and covered terrace occupy the ground floor; the living/dining room and kitchen are on the second floor; the master bedroom/studio on the third floor balcony overlooks the double-height living space. Raising the "public" spaces one level above grade both capitalized on the extensive views, and established a relationship between living areas and the ground plane that is unique to rural house architecture. By placing the continuously occupied portion of the "habital" house on a "base" of intermittent functions, the "parlor floor" was reinterpreted and a sense of privacy was established.

1 Entry view from southwest showing guesthouse

2 South facade of residence

3 Studio and house from northwest

The addition of the studio building extended and enriched the site/object relationship. The studio's section is derived from the house, but by siting it at a 45° angle to the original structure a perceptual dynamic of corner vs. facade was created. A second dynamic was established by the juxtaposition of structures and ground: whereas the house is clearly anchored, the studio is "precarious" and appears to be almost in motion. The sense of duality, expectation and change adds a further dimension to the overall composition.

Both structures are composed of primary, minimal geometric forms that appear to be carved from a solid volume rather than constructed as an additive, planar assemblage. As they are manipulated in response to site, orientation, program and structure, the intersections of these forms are defined by either erosion or natural light, or both.

The use of cedar siding on both the interior and exterior of the wood frame buildings establishes a primary referential container from which secondary and tertiary elements are developed. Transparency, perceptual and literal extension, and volumetric interpenetration give this small building a unique sense of scale and presence.



Dining and balcony from living



Stair detail

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Living and deck from dining



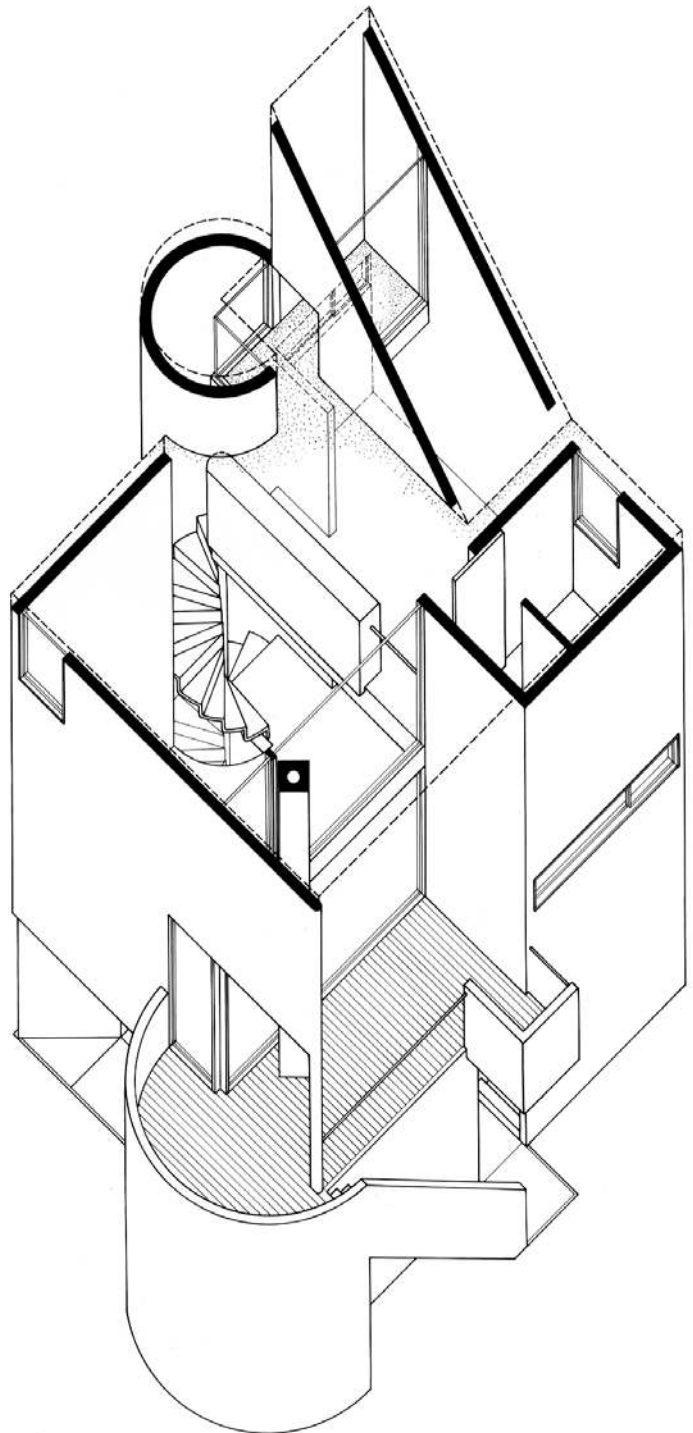
View from studio/sleeping balcony

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Key Project Information

- double-height living space
 - 3rd floor balcony
 - living/dining space
 - kitchen
 - master bedroom/studio
 - two guest bedrooms work rooms
 - work room
 - covered terrace
 - artist's studio
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- completed 1967
 - gsf 1,680



Third level axonometric