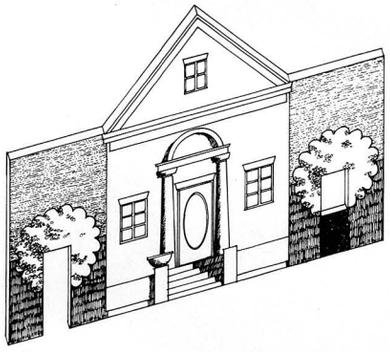
Five Walls and a Roof

(A post-modern "Just-so" story)

By Dale A. Bryant (with apologies to Rudyard Kipling)

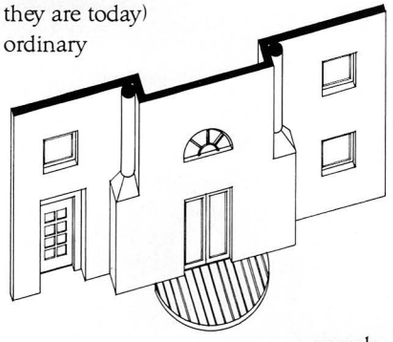
Ever so long ago before anything was modern, O Best Beloved, each house had just four walls and a roof. They were plain boxes with simple gables that glanced against the great blue cloud-scudded sky and there were no interfaces, interferences, or international styles to stumble on to. Houses were simple beings. They sprang out of sidewalks behind manicured parking strips from foundation to facia made of wood and stone and brick and mortar. Ordinary carpenters apprenticed to older ordinary carpenters (who hired extra



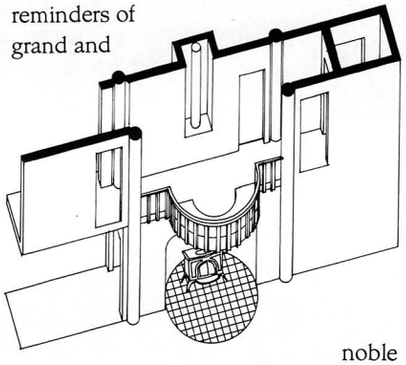
ordinary carpenters whenever they got behind schedule, of course) would assemble each of the four walls, add the roof and retire to their own orindary houses. But this was not long to last.

Soon the ordinary carpenters began to assemble cornices from assorted moldings. Catalogues of referrential matter referring roughly to Rome (in the days of the emperors and legions) also contained current prices. Houses told a story:

The occupants of each house in those ancient days, before anything was modern were (exactly as they are today) ordinary

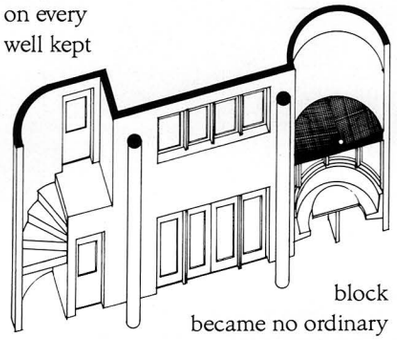


people (around holidays) there were a few extra ordinary people, of course) but these people, because they *owned* the house in which they lived did not want to be thought ordinary. People who were *really* ordinary, they imagined must (because of their ordinariness) live in plain, unadorned boxes, so each of these people (who didn't want to be thought ordinary) decided that their boxes should be decorated with reminders of grand and



noble deeds that are not often performed by ordinary people. Pediments, friezes, doric (and other kinds of) columns referrential to and referring roughly to Rome (in the days of the emperors and loyal foreign legions) suited them to a tee. And we all know, Best Beloved, what this led to.

It was not long before the catalogues of referrential matter referring to Rome (in the grand days of royal emperors and loyal legions) grew all out of proportion and every house on every well kept



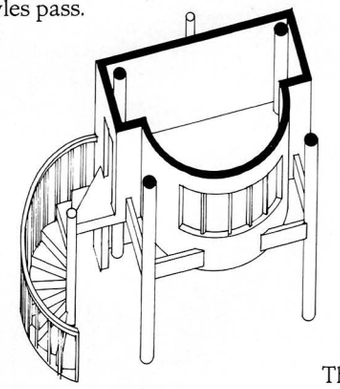
block became no ordinary house at all. All of the people (who were *really* ordinary) apparently disappeared. The idea of a house as no more than four walls and a roof had passed.

And then, Best Beloved, a strange thing began to happen. A few people (who were really not ordinary), who happened to have become artists and architects and who came from a bow (like wow) house decided that all of the referrential matter referring to Rome (and other figments of past and splendorous times) should be cast, as it were, into the melting pot of present potential and prosperity. That all ordinary people (and a few extra ordinary people around holidays) should learn (in spite of logic to the contrary) that less is really more.

Due to some interfaces and interferences with economics and idealogies an international style stumbled into existence. Ordinary people, however, never did buy it, at least not on their own.

Those who did buy it (and there were quite a few, I must say) taught it to all of the new architects, and all of these architects taught it to all of their clients. 'Splaining to them (as architects are wont to do) that the adoption of this style would surely show that no ordinary person lived in *their* house. They (especially the architects but their clients, too) became obsessed with abstract form and flowing space. Decoration (or the lack of it) became a moral obligation, not spoken of or admitted to. And so it went for many, many years.

Now it happened, as it often does, O Best Beloved, that although principles endure, styles pass.

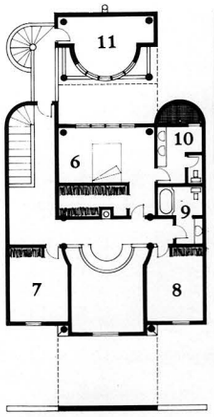


The ordinary people who had been left out for such a very long time — that although they became rich they never became obsessed with abstract form or flowing

Street Elevation

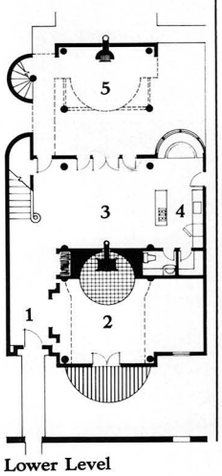
space — found that their houses, over the years, had lost much of their decoration as the catalogues of referrential matter referring to Rome (and other figments of the past and splendorous times in the days of emperors and brave and loyal legions) had ceased to be published and the carpenters, apprenticed now to institutional corporations instead of older carpenters, had lost many of their ordinary (and now it seemed their extraordinary) skills. The architects, who by now no longer remembered everything about their bow (like wow) house, and were always fast to catch the mood of the ordinary people (especially when many of the ordinary people became rich!) began casting about for what to do next. During what to some must have seemed like a moral lapse, they stumbled on the idea that houses (and I mean here, Best Beloved, all buildings and architecture in general) *can* be decorated with referrential references to Rome (and other figments of the royal past and splendorous times) and not be thought altogether silly or out of style.

All of this has proceeded along the procession of the process of time in a ordinary and orderly manner until today — when at least one architect faces a dire dilemma. What to do with a truly ordinary client that was erroneously educated in the style no longer preferred! And thus, at long last we have come to the reason for *Five Walls and a Roof.*

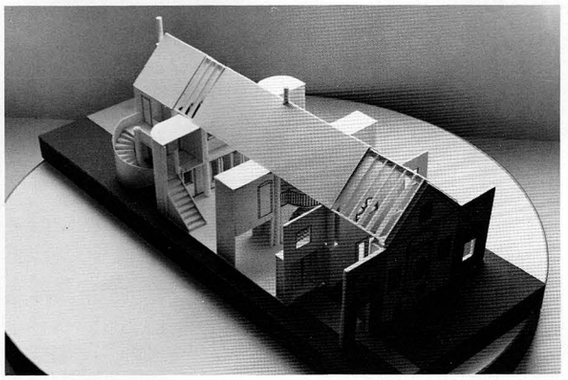


Second Level

1. **Entry**
2. **Living Room**
3. **Dining/Family**
4. **Kitchen**
5. **Patio**
6. **Master Bedroom**
7. **Bedroom**
8. **Bedroom**
9. **Bathroom**
10. **Master Bathroom**
11. **Jewelry Studio**



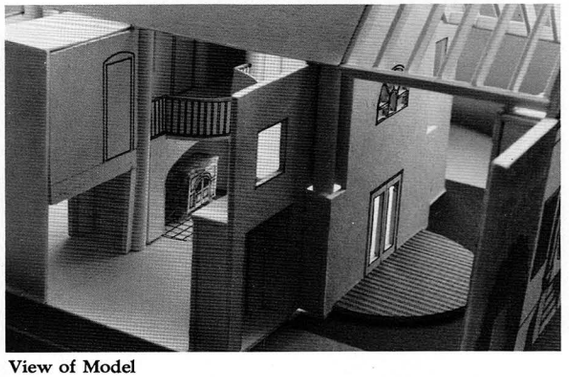
Lower Level



View of Model

Winnie the Pooh

Christopher Robins House



View of Model

The client for this house is Dr. Sanders, a New Orleans dentist, (who certainly believes that *he* is not an *ordinary* person) and his extraordinary family. Sanders also hand-crafts lost-wax gold jewelry. He and Mrs. Sanders have been educated by architects to desire *modern* but also to respect the context of the neighborhood (this is called social conscience). The design makes fun of the conflict by reproducing a symbol of the neighborhood (this is called social conscience). The design makes fun of the conflict by reproducing a symbol of the neighborhood *context* in the form of a flat painted billboard at the normal setback line. The idea of *five* walls and a roof is a response to the notion that *four* walls and a roof is the norm, and for this extraordinary client something *more* is required — thus *five.* The five walls, however, come about in this design as a series transformation of the billboard wall (that's the extra one!) into a second, third, fourth, and fifth wall parallel to the first. The side enclosures of course are not counted as walls, for they simply define the edge of the abstract form and flowing space. The transformation is from flat to sculptured, to occupied, to transparent, to pregnant. The dentist as a jeweler, creates his jewelry in the (pregnant) studio which is enclosed by the fifth wall.

Part of the imagery derives from A.A. Milne's *Winnie The Pooh,* where Pooh Bear lives "under the name of Sanders," and Christopher Robin's house is shown to be entered by walking into a door in a tree.

Alley Elevation