

Three Houses that Are Three Ideas

Turégano House, Gaspar House, De Blas House

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I will not tire of repeating that architecture without ideas to sustain it is nothing: it is only form, and forms pass with time and are destroyed. An idea, a constructed idea, reveals itself, unveils in its entirety when it is materialized, constructed: when it is a constructed idea.

When one of the characters in Alessandro Baricco's excellent novel, *Océano Mar*, paints the sea with seawater, the literary image moves us deeply, but his action is completely useless. In a similar way, architecture is made not only out of ideas expressed well in words; it is made out of ideas capable of being constructed, of awakening precisely as they stand up, as they are materialized.

The three houses that I would like to discuss here are three houses to be lived in. But furthermore, or rather before that, they are constructed ideas. Ideas of the house or of spaces built to be lived in: a "white, cubic cabin," a "hortus conclusus," and a "belvedere."

Place

The three houses respond to the place in which they are built in a clear way.

The Turégano House, the "white, cubic cabin" takes advantage of its position halfway up the hillside with one height open to the south, propped up at the mid-level which serves as the street entrance and the lower level as the garden floor. On the uppermost level, above, are the bedrooms. The

cube opens its eyes to the sun, to the south, to the garden that "frames" the nature controlled within. On the ground level, one half of the house is open to the garden, to the south, and the other half is closed in the back, to the street to the north.

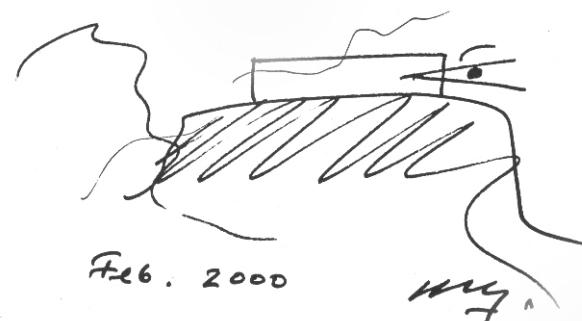
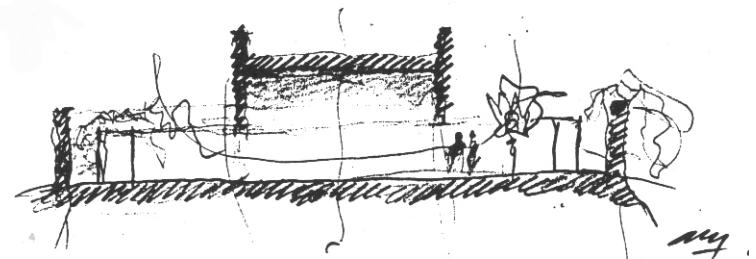
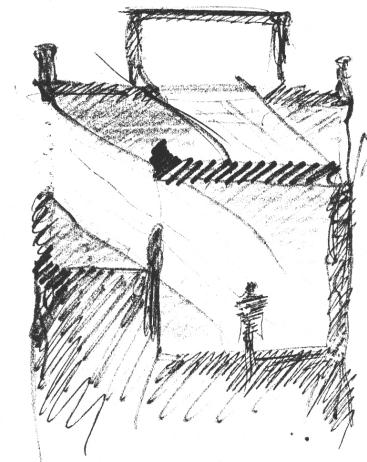
The Gaspar House, the "hortus inclusus," is situated on a flat plot surrounded by houses and pine trees. The property demanded absolute privacy, which has been translated into the patios that embrace the house in front and in back, framing the sky and allowing only the tops of the surrounding pines to peer in. The house is closed to the exterior and opens wholly to the patios and through them to the sky.

The De Blas House, the "belvedere," enjoys the most privileged situation: on top of a hill with magnificent views to the north, as it presides over the vertex of a valley, with the mountains of the "Sierra de Madrid" in the background in the horizon. To create a platform from which to contemplate this incredible landscape, a concrete crate was built with a light structure of white painted steel on top, which is delicately glassed in for protection. The house is a refuge, with a cave below and a lookout, a belvedere, above.

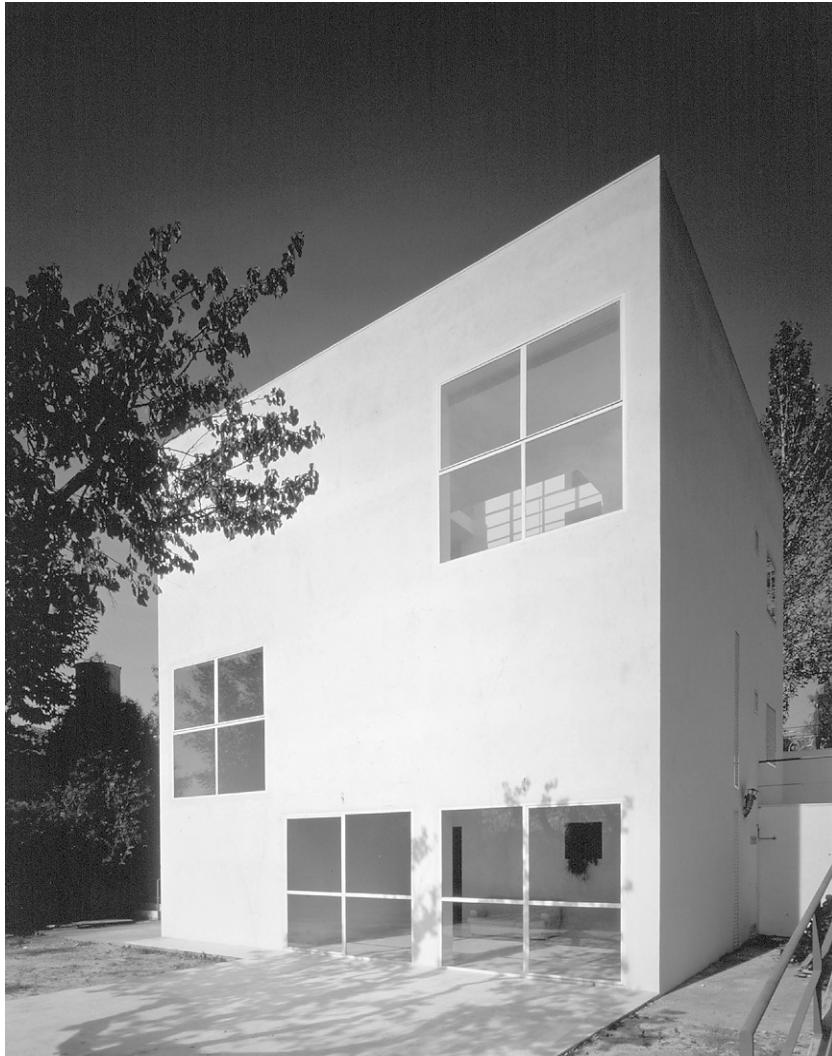
Space-Light

Spatially, the three houses use three different mechanisms.

In the Turégano House, two displaced spaces of double height are connected



Top to bottom, Turégano House, Gaspar House, De Blas House



Turégano House, Madrid

so that a diagonal space is achieved. Tensed logically by the diagonal light that comes from the high, large window in the west, this space is highly efficient and seems much larger than its actual measurements.

In the Gaspar House, the opening of four large holes in the intersection of the two low, transversal walls with the two walls of the main area makes the space flow and the continuity supported on the horizontal and vertical planes real. This continuous space is comprehended by means of the horizontal light that crosses through it. The inner walls limit the east–west continuity, or better yet,

lead this continuity towards the sky, framed by the patios.

In the De Blas House, the horizontal plane of the roof is low, with the canonical Corbusian height of 2.26 meters, with its eight pillars like the legs of a well proportioned table and the glazing tucked in without carpentry. Thus, in its transparency and continuity, this living space on the platform, more than just stressing nature, brings nature to the viewer's feet. So that it is as if the viewer floated or flew over these surroundings, blending in with them. The distant horizon of the mountains appears in the foreground. Inside the concrete box



below, a large window measuring two meters by two meters opens to frame the same mountainous landscape, holding it at a distance.

Function

The function of these three houses, these homes, is also developed with great simplicity.

In the Turégano House, a central strip of service elements, bathrooms and stairs, divides the house into its more public part, open towards the front, and its more private part, with the bedrooms, more closed, behind. The main area is joined to the garden that is used the greater part of the year.

The dining room, at the mid-level, as it is open above the living room, also enjoys that unity of diagonal space.

In the Gaspar House, the private areas and bedrooms are situated on both sides, flanking the main space. The service elements are included in these private areas. The climate of Zahora, in Cádiz, where the Gaspar House is located, allows the two patios that merge with the central space to be used and inhabited all year round. The patios are dwelling spaces and are lived in.

In the De Blas House, the service elements, bathrooms, and kitchen are in



54 Gaspar House, Cádiz

TUREGANO	GASPAR	DE BLAS
<p>espacio DIAGONAL un diagonal ojo al sur (mirada) al horizonte</p>	<p>espacio HORIZONTAL un horizontal ojo interior (mirada)</p>	<p>espacio HORIZONTAL un horizontal ojo al norte (mirada) al infinito</p>
<p>N-S</p>	<p>E-W</p>	<p>S-N</p>
<p>12 M 1988</p>	<p>7 M 1992</p>	<p>20 M 2000</p>
<p>Se eleva el plano H Se clarifica</p>	<p>Se eleva el plano H Se clarifica.</p>	<p>Se crea el plano H Se establece</p>
<p>se marca la naturalidad</p>	<p>Se recrea la naturalidad</p>	<p>Se está en la naturalidad</p>
<p>con capotes</p>	<p>con muros verticales</p>	<p>con muros horizontales</p>
<p>enmarcar</p>	<p>alzar</p>	<p>subir</p>
<p>jardín (ver parte)</p>	<p>huerto (ver dentro)</p>	<p>paisaje (ver fuera)</p>
<p>White, cubic cabin</p>	<p>Hortus conclusus</p>	<p>Belvedere</p>



De Blas House, Madrid



a strip to the back, below. The stairs going up to the belvedere establish the limit in the center, with the rooms at the ends. The climate of the area where the de Blas House is located is especially mild and allows the use of the lookout on the upper floor, the “cabin,” during most of the year. When it is very cold or very hot, one goes down to take refuge in the “cave.”

Composition

Compositionally, the three houses use classic schemes.

In the Turégano House, the square is divided in two: to the south, the public area, to the north, the private area. In the other direction, three equal strips define a main core. (5–5, 3.3–3.3–3.3)

The Gaspar House is doubly symmetrical, with three equal strips, oriented

east-west: the entry patio, house, and back patio. Two strips of private areas on the sides and one twice the size in the center. (6–6–6, 4.5–9–4.5) There is a main east-west axis.

The De Blas House works from a more complex play of proportions that is well understood on the floor (4.5–9, 6–18, 9–27). The arrangement of the “columns” stresses the horizontality of the landscape, referencing it appropriately and marking a main north–south axis.

Structure-Construction

In regard to their structure and materials, the three houses try to reveal themselves with the greatest coherence possible.

The Turégano House resolves its diagonal section with a reticular structure

of reinforced concrete whose order is easily recognizable. The white that unifies and abstracts over the partition helps the unity of the operation.

The Gaspar House, consisting of one story, is resolved with the bearing wall that separates the patios from the house and that is open so that the space and continuity flow freely. The limestone floor inside and out collaborates in this effectively. The white also helps to sustain this unity and the glass windows without carpentry accentuate the continuity.

The De Blas House reveals the double face of the operation in its configuration. The concrete crate, constructed as such with walls, seems to emerge from the earth with a clear stereotomic character. With great precision in its measurements, the light box of steel,

—forged with honeycombed plaques on the reticular structure of steel with eight pillars like the legs of a table and glass box of floor-to-ceiling windows without carpentry, 2.26 meters, along with the store-like doors—is posed on the concrete crate, revealing its tectonic character.

In short, three houses that are three ideas that try to respond coherently to the context, the space and light, to their function and composition in the most rigorous fashion possible. Three constructed ideas.