

The Domestication of Open Space:

Interior Sequence Mediations between the Wild and the Garden in the Urban Houses of Luis Barragán

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in Residence at Casa Barragán
Tacubaya, CDMX

Wild

Entry

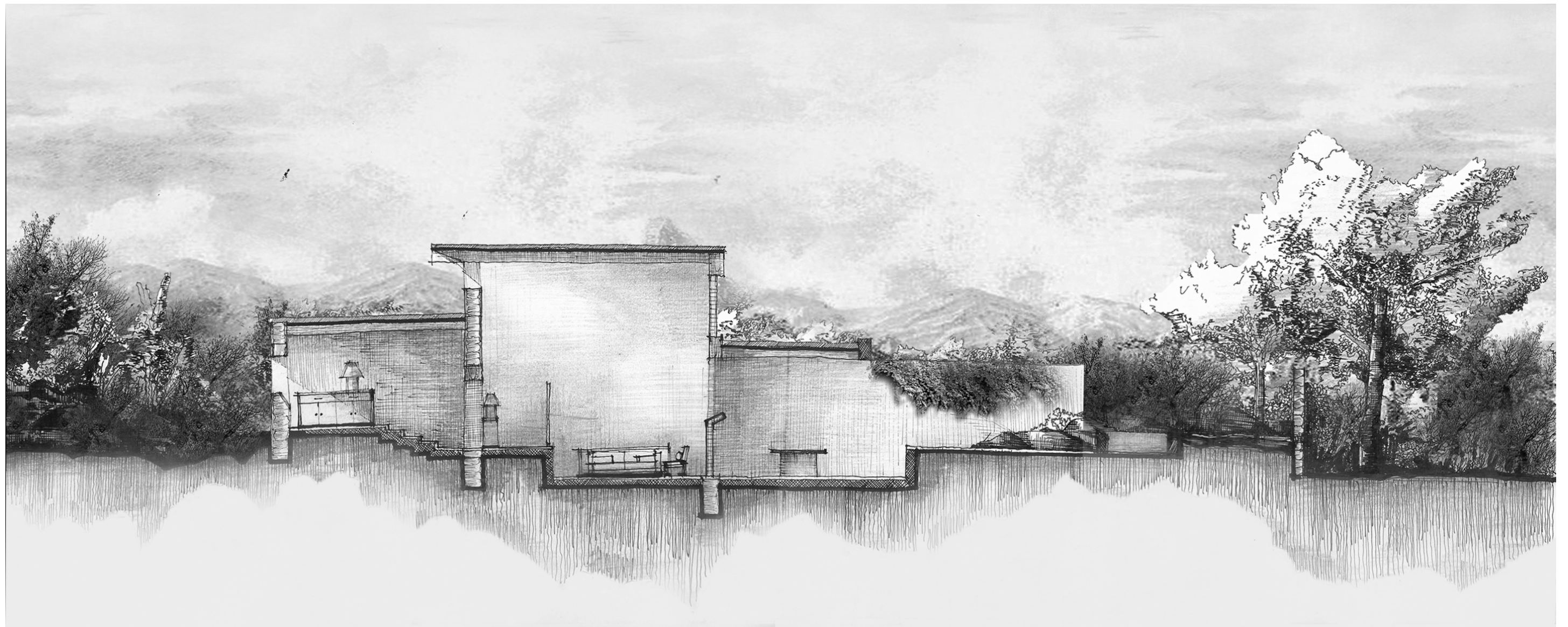
Corridor

Parlor

Porch

Patio

Garden

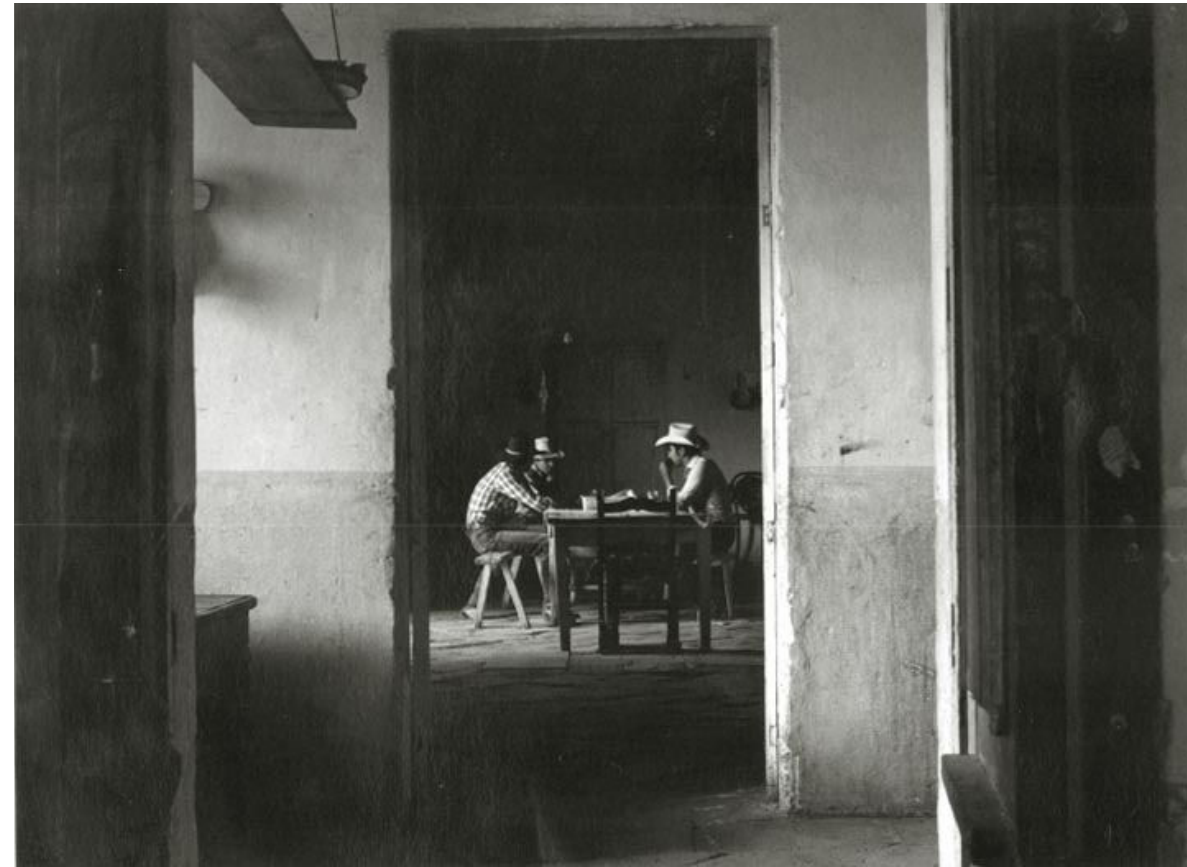
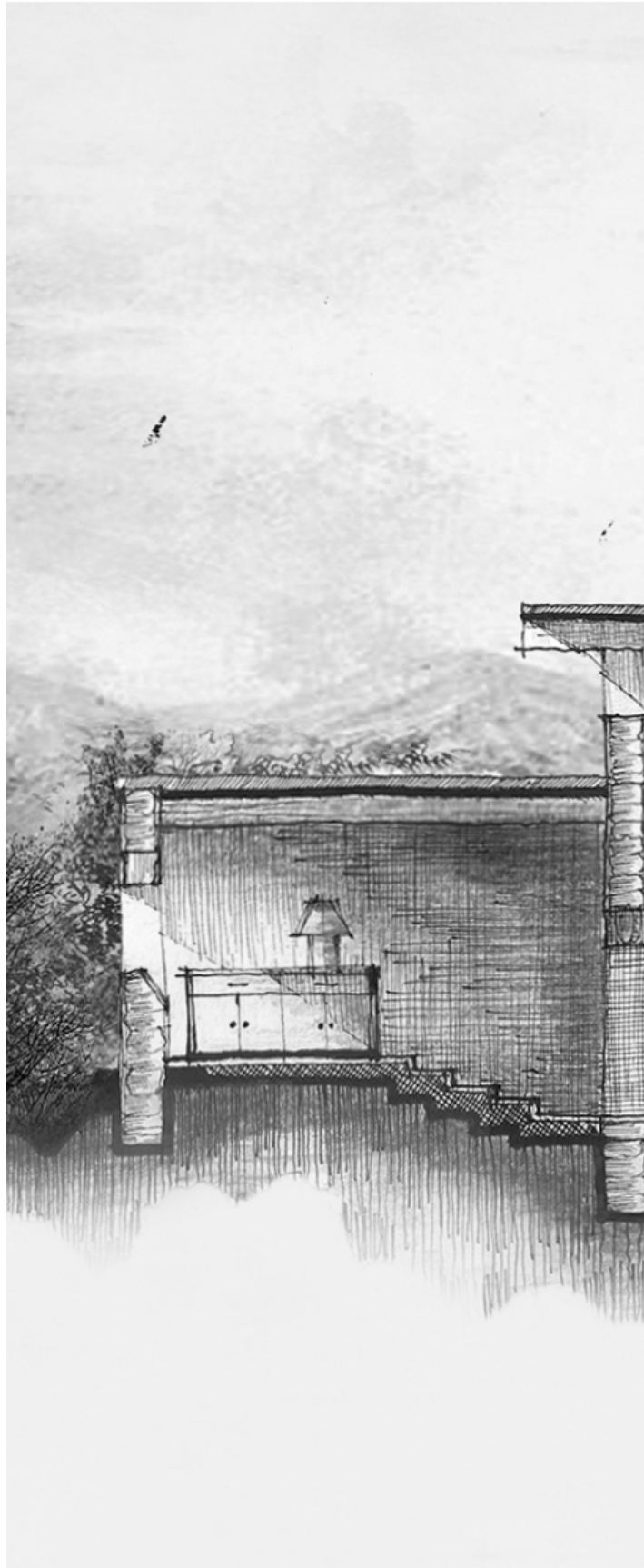




The un-controlled world beyond the walls —
beautiful, but also dangerous

Wild

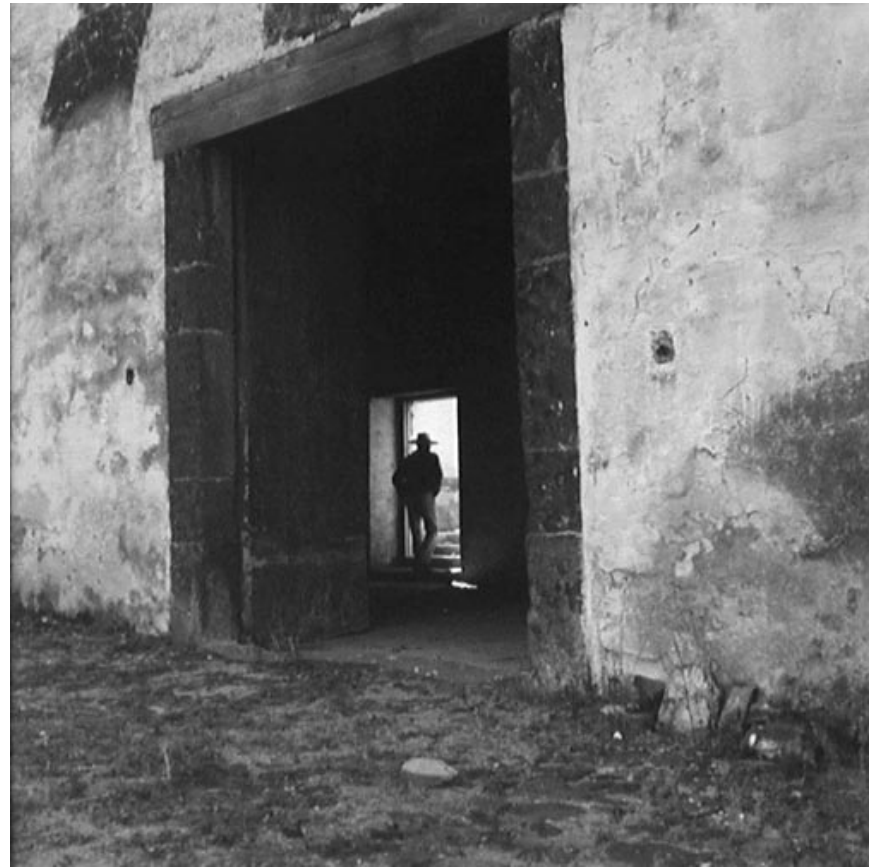
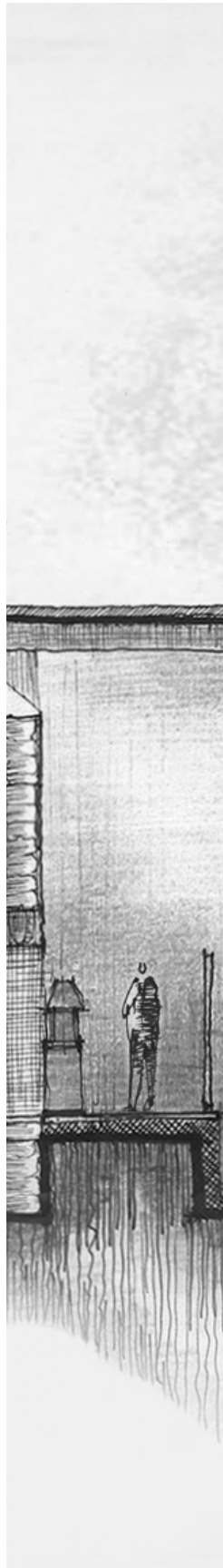




Compression, comfort, security within the walls
A stasis, a pause, but also a glimpse into the domestic beyond
Change of level announcing a shift and directing you onwards

Entry

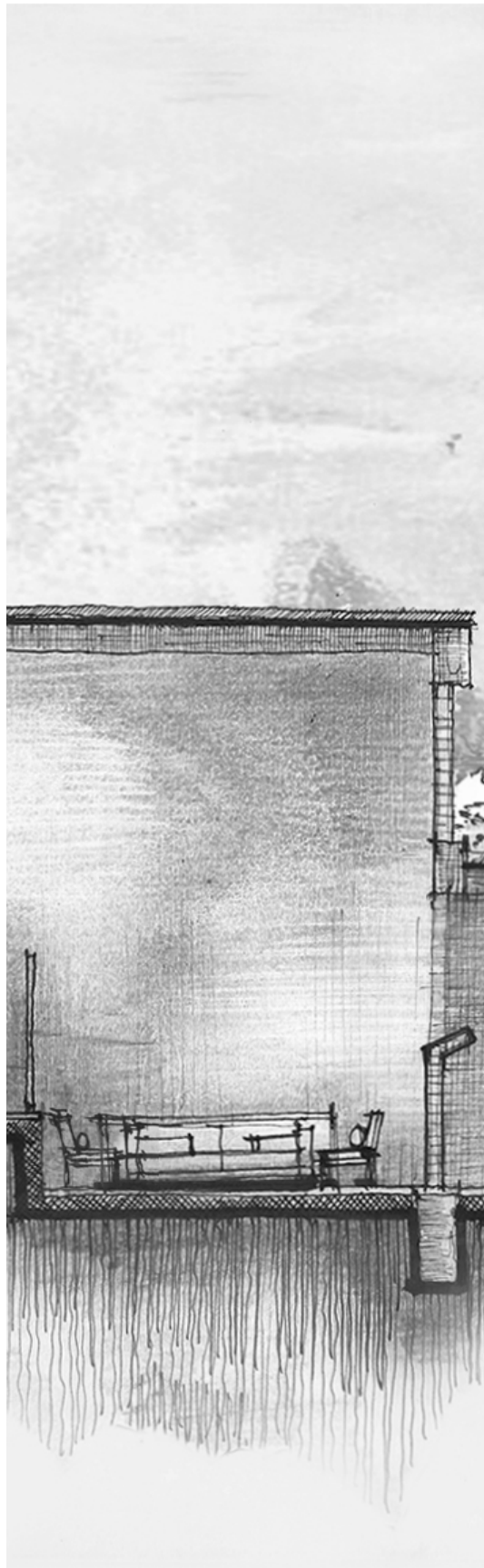




A narrow, long space, pulling you deeper, away from the wild
Sidelong glimpses into moments of life, a flicker of events
A sense of journey, a drawing out of time

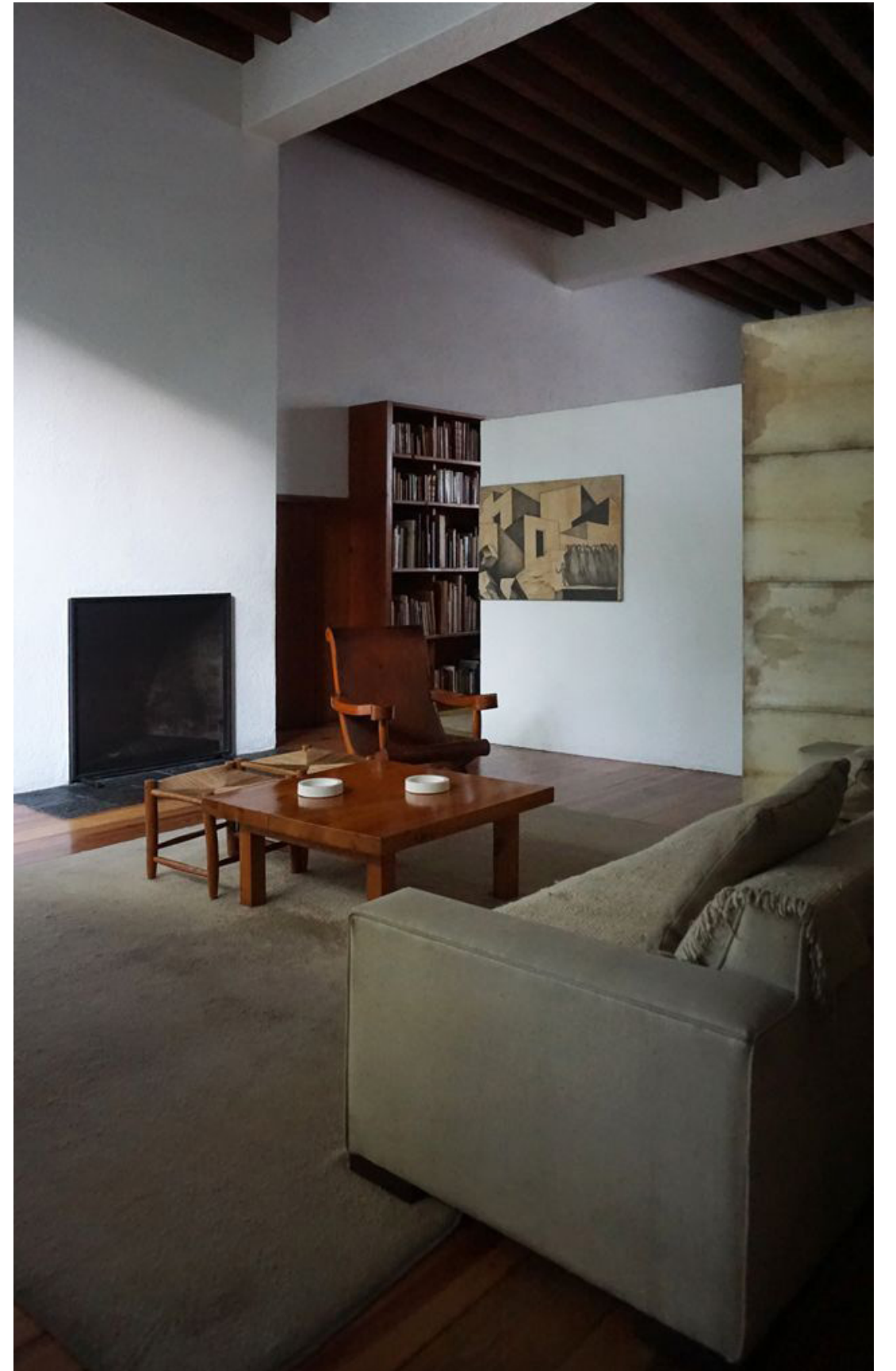
Corridor

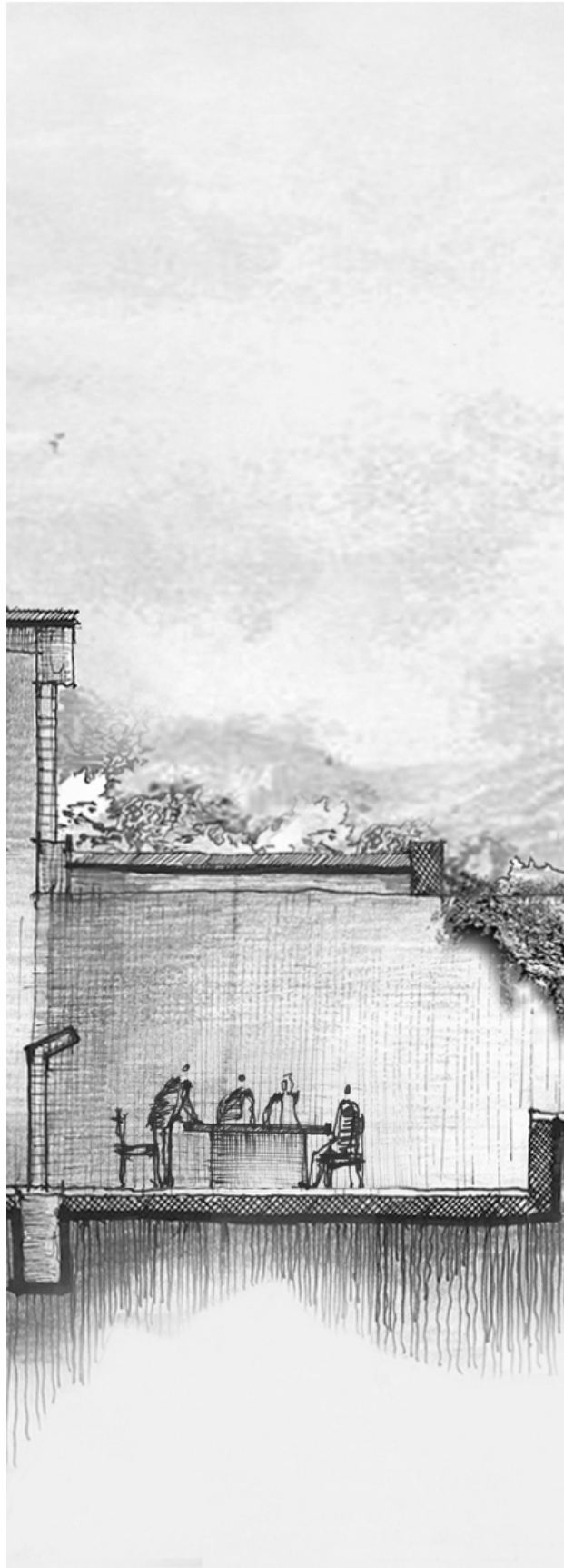




The heart of the interior — warm, soft, secure —
And yet bright, not buried deep behind walls;
Thin at the edges, admitting light and opening to a new green beyond

Parlor

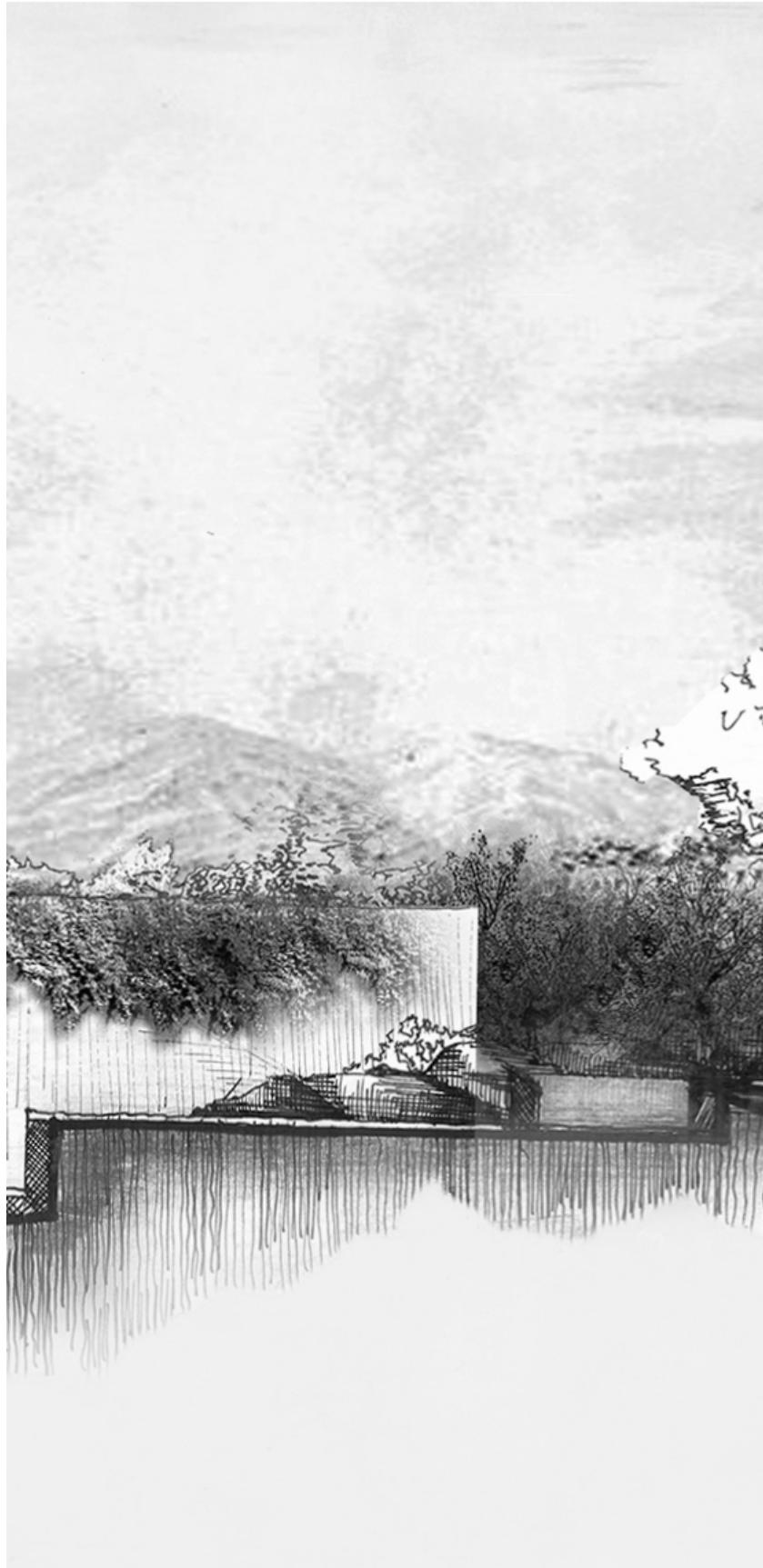




A place to gather and be still: airy, low and shaded
Opening laterally to higher spaces: parlor clerestory and patio sky
Allowing the wild, now domesticated, to creep in at the edges

Porch

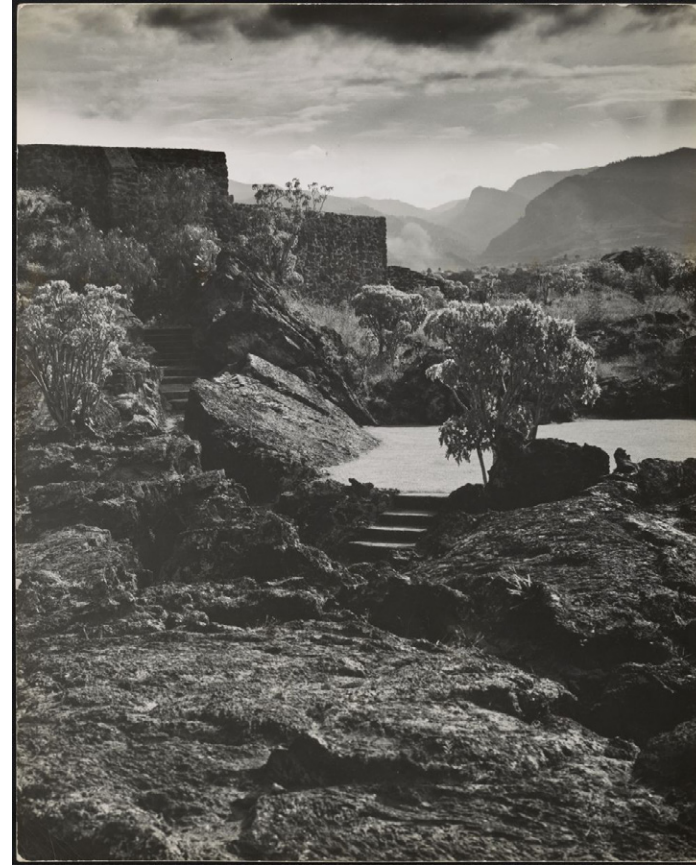




Broad, flat and exposed to the heavens
A space of laundry and games: active, working
Between architecture and the wild, a re-opening

Patio





At once wild and domestic, a bent mirror of the world beyond
Shaped, controlled at edges by walls, terraces, pathways
A space to encounter, know, enjoy beauty without danger

Garden



It is a spatial sequence, a threshold from the untamed exterior deep into intimate interior and back to exterior, now familiar, domesticated. It is structure-as-mediator, balancing the ordered and the disordered; the known and the nameless; the benign and the menacing; the Edenic and the wild world of the Fall.

The sequence is omnipresent in Mexican architectural tradition as passed down from both the Teotihuacano courtyard apartment house and the Spanish mission or monastery. It is carried through the rural hacienda and into the urban home where Barragan regularly employs it with slight variations. It absorbs, in Barragan's world, the Andalusian paradise garden as its ultimate end, its sanctus sanctorum, beyond the household space of the patio.

It is born of its context, a landscape that does not immediately offer clear shelter but provides the raw materials that come, in the Architect's, the craftsman's hands, to form house and garden alike. In Tacubaya as on the Pedregal, Barragan forms the volcanic rock underfoot to architectural ground: floors, patios, terraced gardens.

The stone is harvested, shaped, stacked into walls, thick and thin, shaping the daylight and the fresh breeze that penetrate the shade of house and porch, building a decay deep into the home's heart; ordering the garden as path, wall, edge, pool, separating this green from the wild beyond. The sequence connects spaces for rain and for sun, for one and for many.

It requires a deep sensitivity to mass and material as each takes contrasting forms: Thick and secure against the world; thin and playful, dissolving the separation between the house and garden.

It calls for a craft of the hand and the eye to build meaningful but limited connections between each element of the sequence, requiring at times that the architect inhabit the space in order to understand, to frame a juncture, forgoing the drawing in favor of direct observation and action. It requires careful work, sometimes the unbuilding and rebuilding of whole assemblies to shape each space in turn to its activity and the bodies of those who live it.

It is a sequence, a program, a site section that is deeply Mexican, and it finds its deepest manifestations in the hands of Luis Barragan as he shapes the urban homes that dominate his mid-career. Through his unique hands-on process, his sensitivity to the materials and conditions in which he operated and his deep roots in the commingling soils of Mexican and European traditions he successfully recreates, reshapes, possibly perfects a sense of movement-through-building that belongs to the nation, land and people themselves.

Wild

Entry

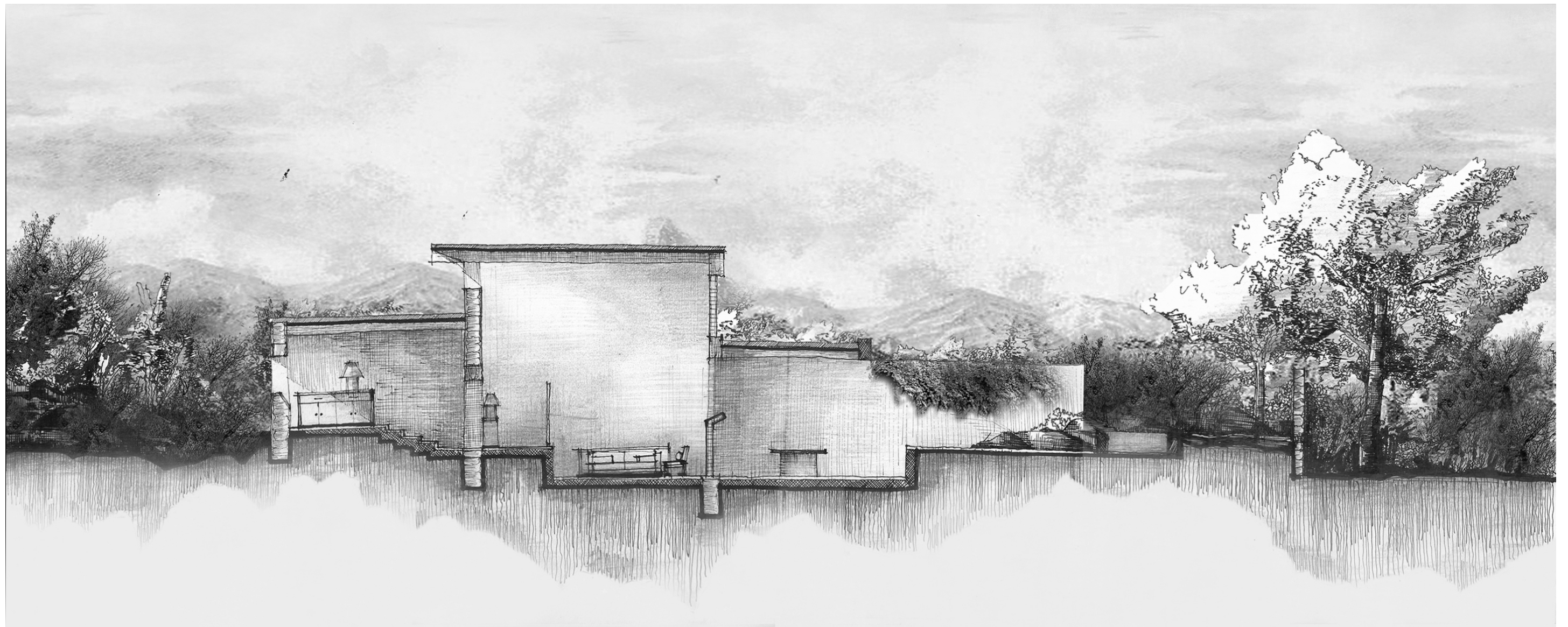
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Parlor

Porch

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Garden



Research conducted at:

Casa Barragán, Calle Gral. Francisco Ramírez 12, Miguel Hidalgo, CDMX, Mexico

Casa Ortega, Calle Gral. Francisco Ramírez 22, Miguel Hidalgo, CDMX, Mexico

Jardín 17, Calle Gral. Francisco Ramírez 17, Miguel Hidalgo, CDMX, Mexico

Casa Gilardi, Calle Gral. Antonio León 82, Miguel Hidalgo, CDMX, Mexico

Casa Prieto-Lopez (Casa Pedregal), Av. de Las Fuentes 180, Jardines del Pedregal, Álvaro Obregón, CDMX, Mexico

Casa Galvez, 10 Calle Pimentel, Álvaro Obregón, CDMX, Mexico

Archival images by:

Armando Salas Portugal; Wild, Parlor, Garden

Mariana Yampolsky; Entry, Corridor, Porch

Margaret McCarthy; Corridor

Josef Albers; Patio

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Digital collage by **Fabian Escalante & Allen Pierce**

Text by **Allen Pierce**

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