

# The Function of Canon

Ciro Najle and Anna Font

Opening Quote:

'Nature is creative, but the creator is as well, by definition, a destroyer; creative nature is a cruel nature.'  
Friedrich Nietzsche

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Anna Font

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School of Architecture and Urban Studies  
University Torcuato Di Tella Buenos Aires

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**The Function of Canon**

The function of canon is to betray itself precisely by means of its certainties. Architectural canon is not only the crystallization of past informal uses and habits into a normative system with precise instructions, principles, routines, and protocols, but the making transparent of those principles for the laying out of a ground for the construction of edifices of transformation from within. Canon is radical self-exposure, vulnerability, and celebration of candidness, and that, more than its illusory truth, is what makes it a truly genuine and authentic force. Canon is not simply the ultimate expression of disciplinary knowledge but the means by which disciplinary knowledge becomes material of work for itself and for its own self-superseding and self-challenging drive. It is not until the construction of canon that a system of beliefs becomes, ironically, instantaneously obsolete, using the systematization of the perversions, corruptions, and declinations of the previous state of things as a means of emancipation. Canon is neither merely an end to aspire and fulfill nor a principle to subscribe and adore, but rather the means by which both attitudes melt down in a medium for the next. Canon is a threshold of unfolding, neither a false truth nor a persuasive lie, but a device to construct uncertainties nurtured by the misguiding force of previous certainties. It is thus not a solid thing itself, strong and fragile, serious and absurd, both being and claiming to be in the world, but rather material in state of pure force. Canon is fire, sheer self-obliteration, and its function is no more, no less, than to destroy itself, rigorously and from within, in order to construct the fertile conditions of existence for its successors, with whom it atemporally speaks.

Architectural Genealogies is a Studio Series operating at the First Year Undergraduate of the School of Architecture and Urban Studies of the Universidad Di Tella in Buenos Aires. The Studio proposes the learning of architectural design skills through the investigation of XX century projects, which, as a result of their organizational characteristics and discursive apparatus, have left apparently permanent traces in contemporary architecture culture.

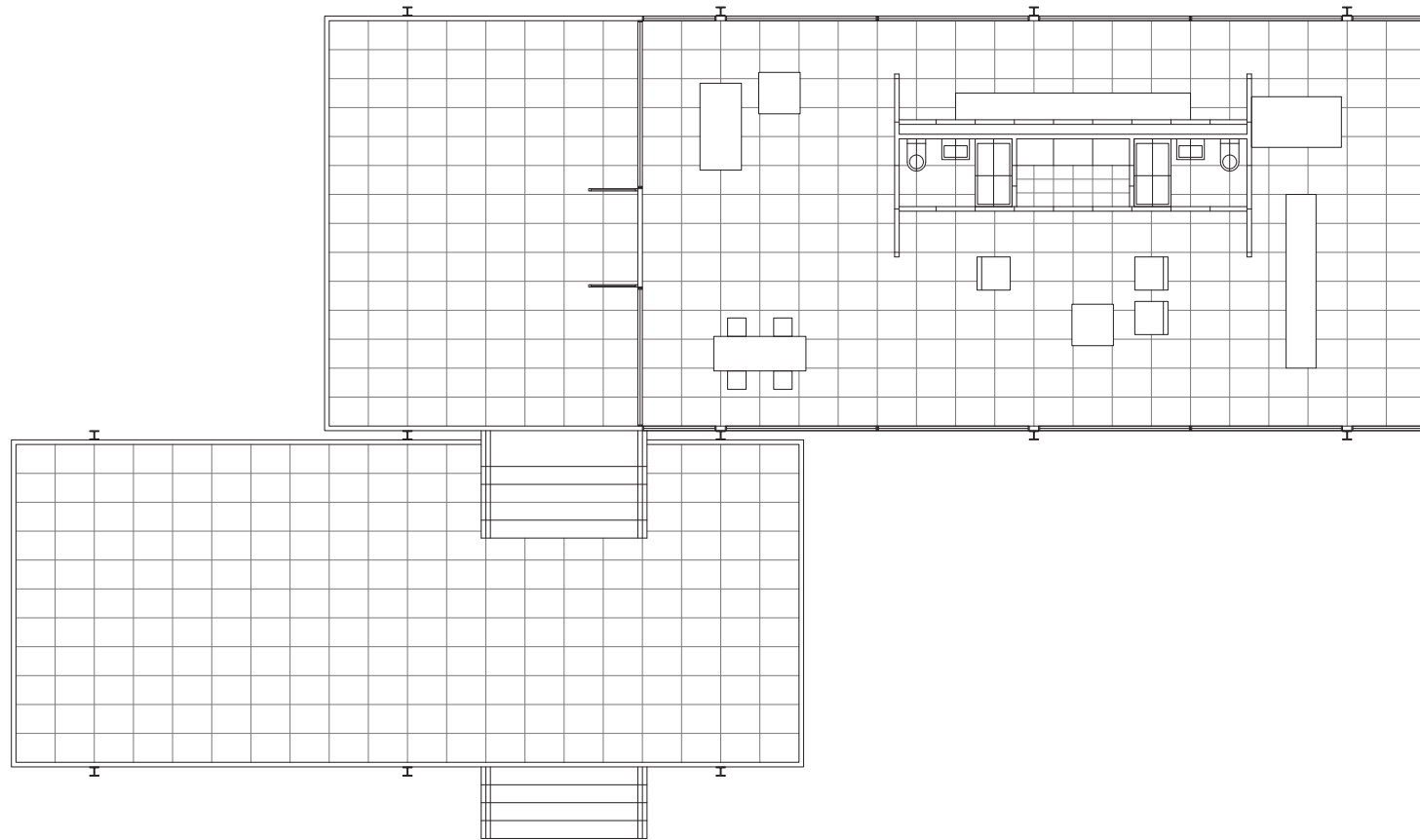
A piece of canonical architecture works both as a model and as a primitive of differentiation, providing the basis of a reasoning and value system, but more importantly introducing attributes, variations, and relationships that, synthesized as design techniques, are capable to challenge that basis from within. The architectural project is thus conceived as a process of deviation and qualitative change, bred at its core by a historical material.

The Farnsworth House, by Mies Van der Rohe, is adopted for the second research in the series, Miesianisms. The project is understood both as an end and as a means for further changes, and, while studied in its values, it is also abstracted to overcome its own ethical and formal limitations. Conceived as a material in a process that far exceeds its historical condition, the canon is taken out of its 'heroic' zone of comfort, and used for reloading the discipline.

Farnsworth House

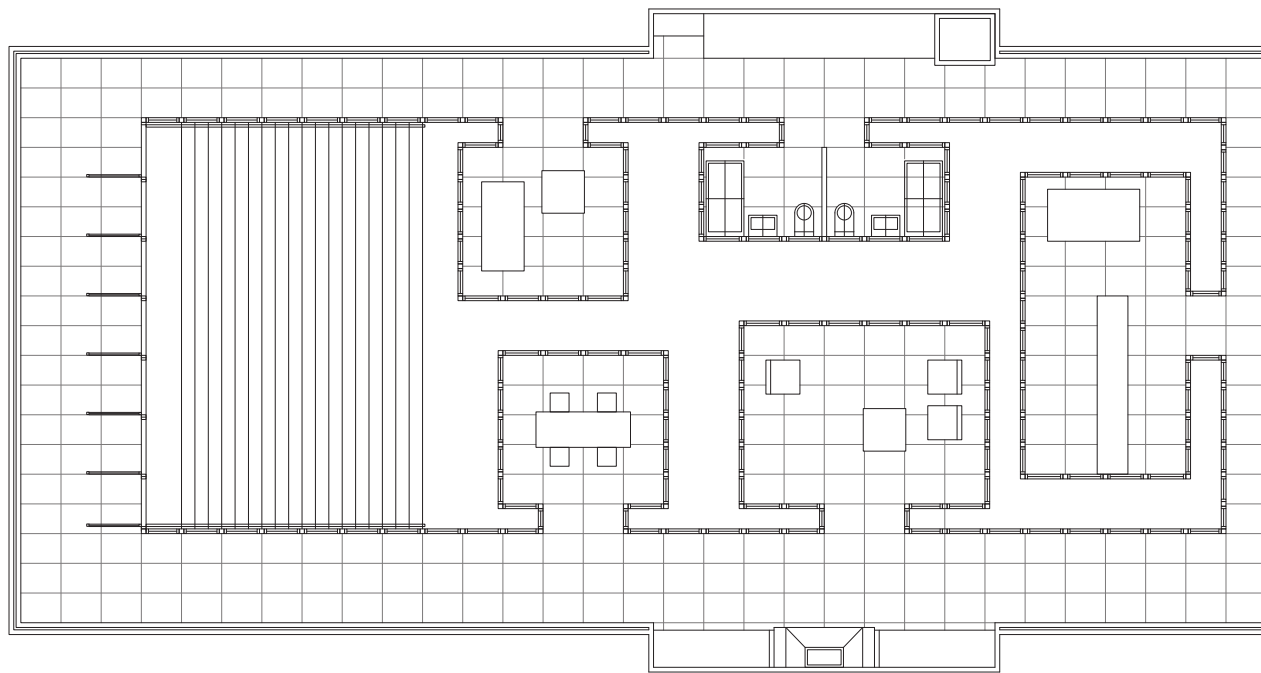
Mies van der Rohe

Illinois, 1945-1951

*Drawing on the basis of the presentation plan of 1951*

Inside Out House

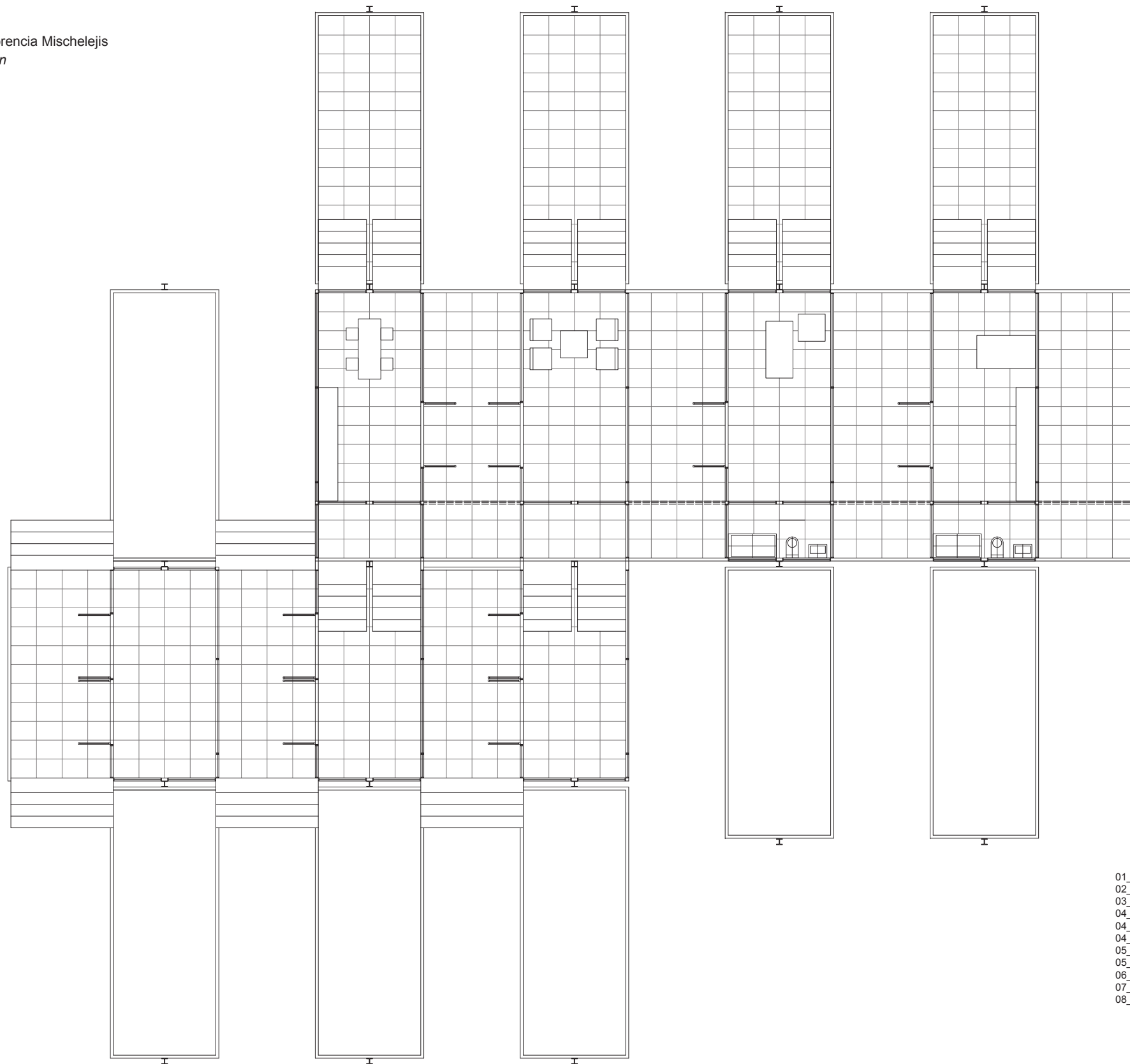
Valeria Ospital, Francisca Zarza de la Iglesia  
*Paradoxical Miesian Absences*



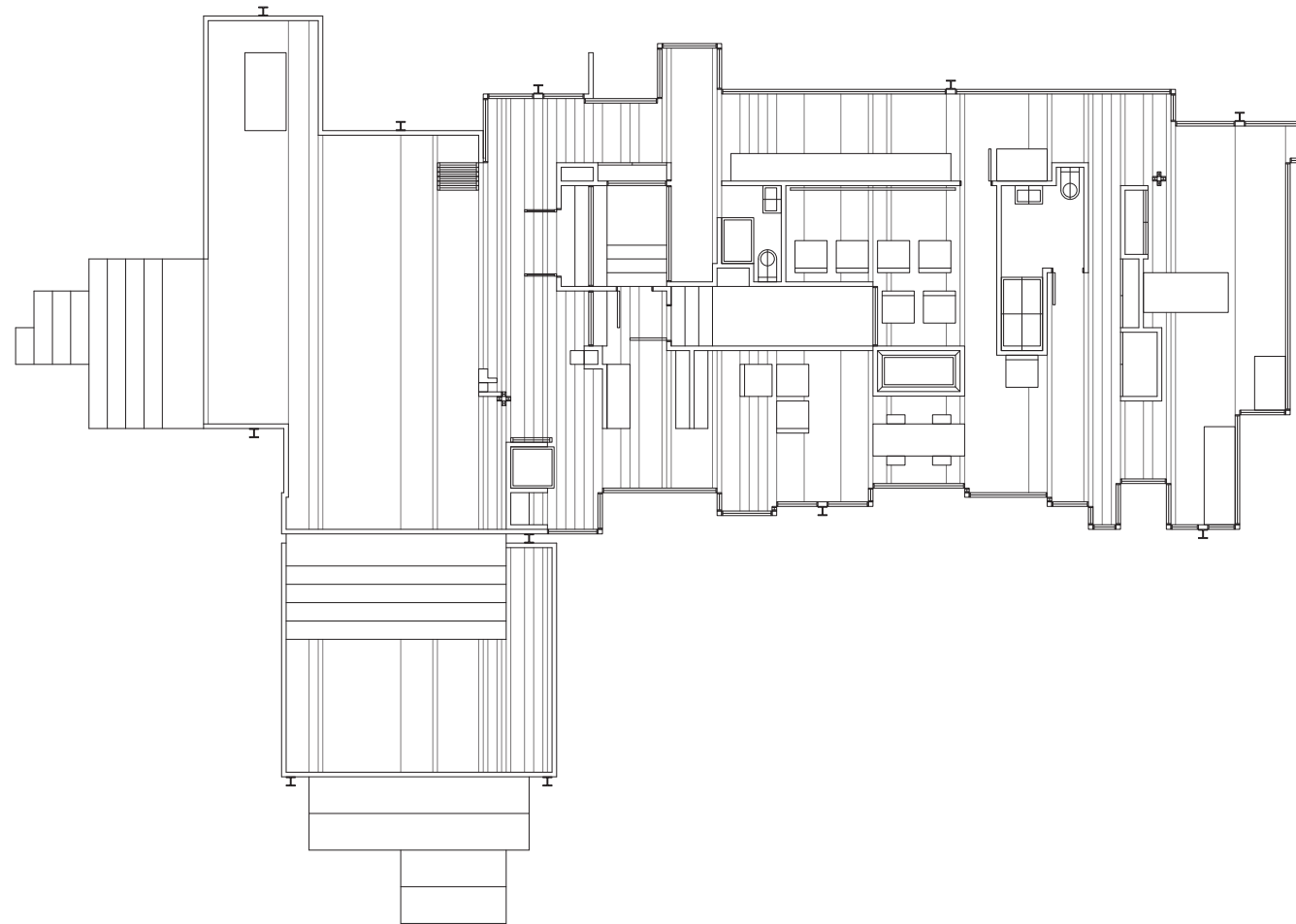
- 01\_abstraction of symmetries
- 01\_abstraction of rhythms
- 01\_abstraction of reflection
- 01\_abstraction of transparency
- 01\_abstraction of monochromatism
- 01\_abstraction of elevation
- 02\_integration of abstractions
- 03\_selection of abstractions
- 04\_integration of selected abstractions
- 05\_delimitation of rooms
- 05\_extraction of fireplace and kitchen
- 05\_collapse of service isle
- 06\_outfolding of corridor
- 06\_delimitation of gallery
- 06\_subdivision of interior skin
- 06\_modular adjustment of rooms
- 07\_variation of corridor-staircase
- 08\_displacement of fireplace and kitchen
- 08\_enclosure of service peninsulas
- 08\_opaque interior-exterior delimitation

One and Many Houses

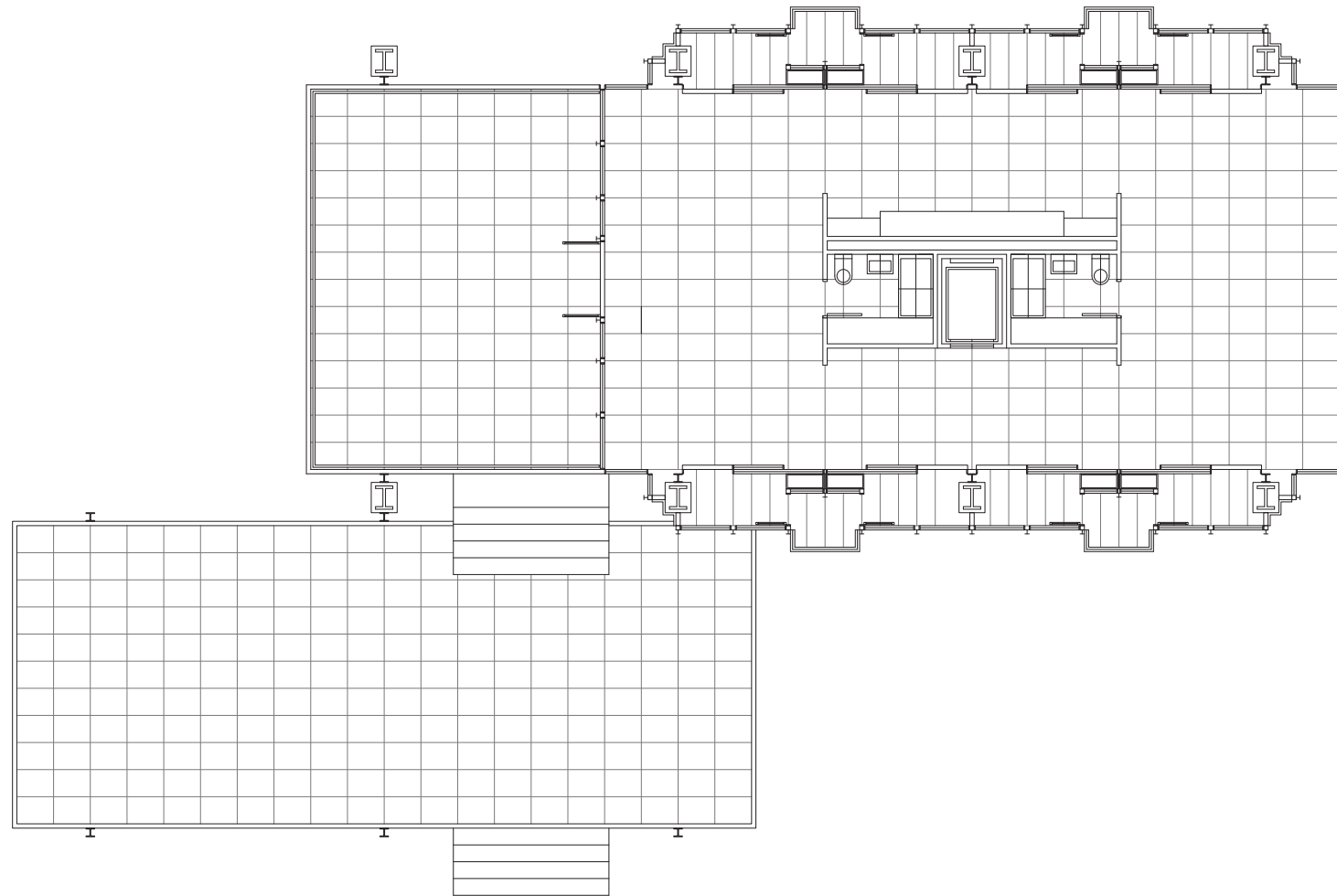
Julia Chiesa, Sofía Villalba, Florencia Mischelejis  
*Multiplication by Representation*



- 01\_abstraction of profile details
- 02\_classification of profile details
- 03\_combination of paths from profile to profile
- 04\_configuration of profile primitive
- 04\_definition of primitive variation modes
- 04\_determination of primitive variability ranges
- 05\_definition of structural field
- 05\_assignment of variability in the field
- 06\_integration of variabilities
- 07\_strategy by levels
- 08\_strategy by programs



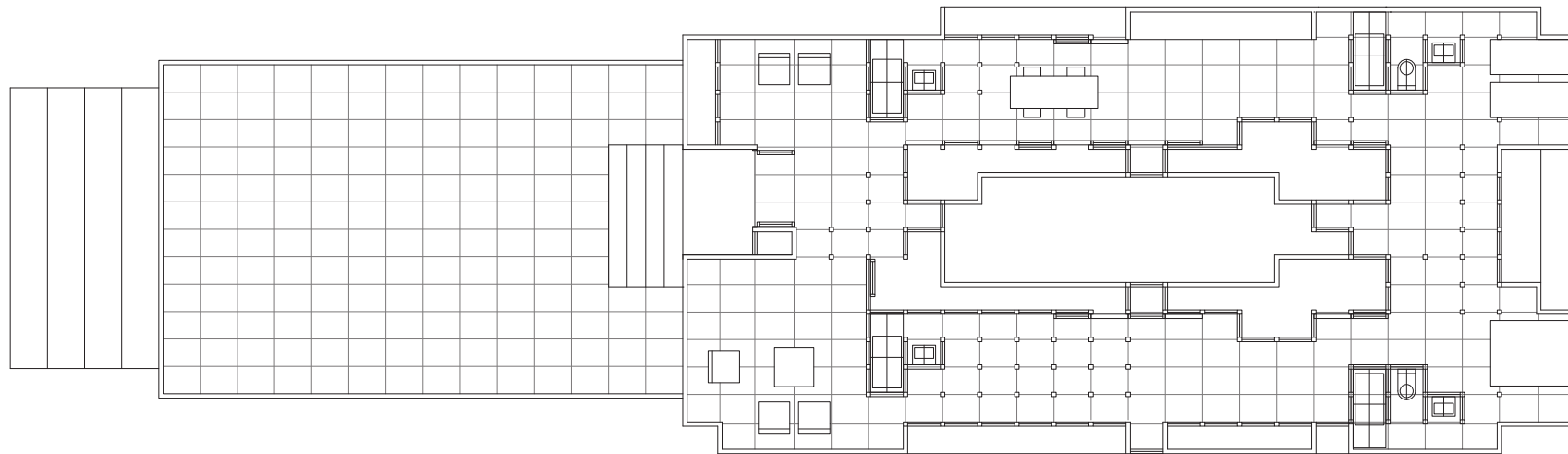
- 01\_definition of outer perimeter
- 02\_recognition of furniture envelopes
- 03\_definition of circulatory path points
- 03\_rules of directional break
- 03\_tracing of path
- 03\_path orthogonalization
- 04\_definition of lateral projections
- 04\_definition of midpoints
- 04\_degrees of circulatory tightness
- 05\_tracing of perimeters at various degrees
- 05\_orthogonalization of perimeters
- 06\_selection of exterior-interior perimeters
- 06\_subdivision of perimeters
- 07\_relaunching of furniture
- 08\_definition of inner open cores
- 08\_definition of inner dark core
- 08\_inner core population
- 08\_evaluation of circulation



- 01\_definition of slab profile
- 01\_modulation of slab profile
- 02\_running of outer mullions
- 03\_definition of outer slab profile
- 03\_modulation of slab profile for mullions
- 03\_adjustment of mullions
- 04\_identification of corner problems
- 04\_development of typical corner solutions
- 04\_window panes partitions
- 05\_symmetricization of service core
- 05\_introduction of elevator core
- 05\_adjustment of core sizes
- 06\_variations of systems at various levels
- 06\_development of transitions between levels
- 07\_resizing of balconies
- 07\_solution of exits at balconies
- 07\_adjustment of details and corners
- 07\_rationalization of double skin
- 08\_reinsertion of primitive at ground level
- 08\_development of access
- 08\_adjustment of podium

Filter House

Camila Jalil, Sofia Perazzolo

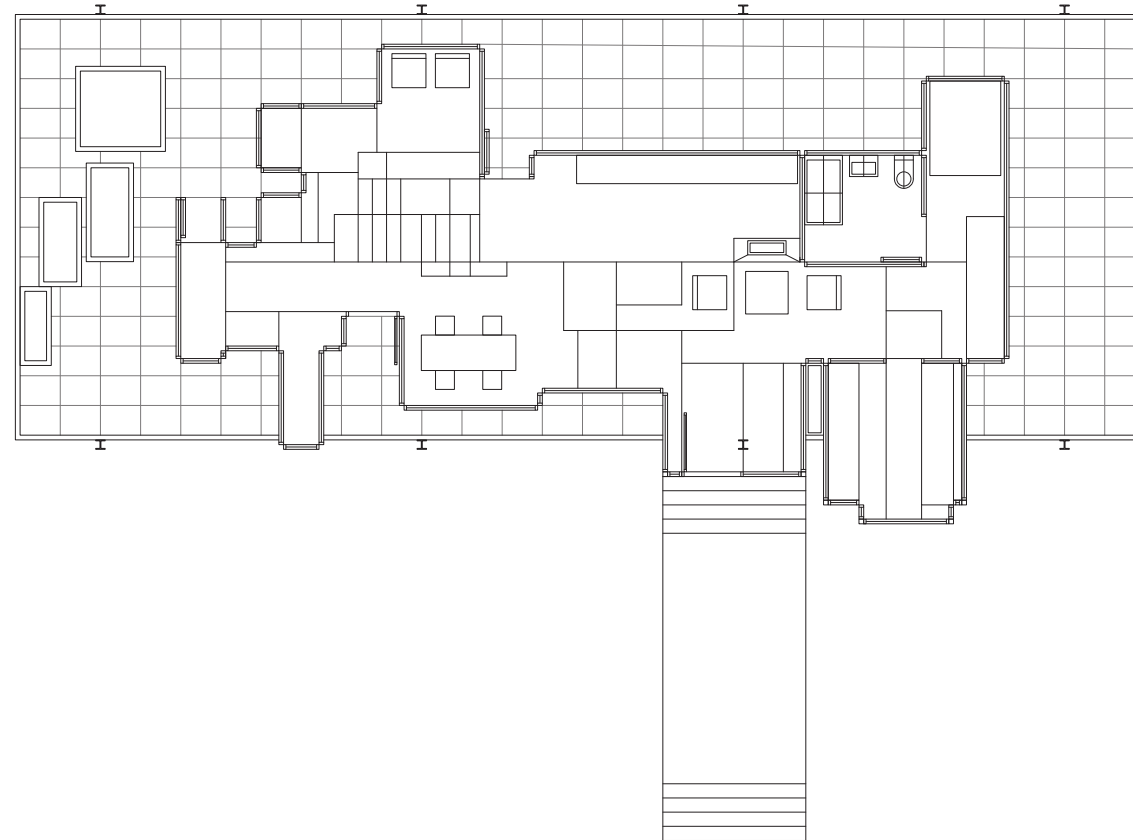
*Structural Fields, Spatial Interfaces*

- 01\_identification of curtain systems
- 01\_identification of curtain partitions
- 01\_determination of regimes of openability
- 02\_curtains opening from centers
- 02\_curtains opening from corners
- 02\_curtains accumulated at centers
- 02\_curtains accumulated at corners
- 02\_total accumulation of curtains
- 03\_quadrupling scale of thick envelope
- 03\_calibration inward-outward envelope growth
- 04\_furniture prototypes
- 05\_maximum furniture fitting scenarios
- 05\_establishing of hierachies of accumulation
- 06\_running of furniture prototypes
- 06\_selection of furniture prototypes
- 06\_maximum, medium, minimum perimeters
- 06\_superimposition and further selection
- 07\_running of dense structural-soil matrix
- 07\_erasure of conflicting columns
- 08\_detection of left-over spaces
- 08\_qualifying of left-over spaces
- 08\_running of services



Intexterior House

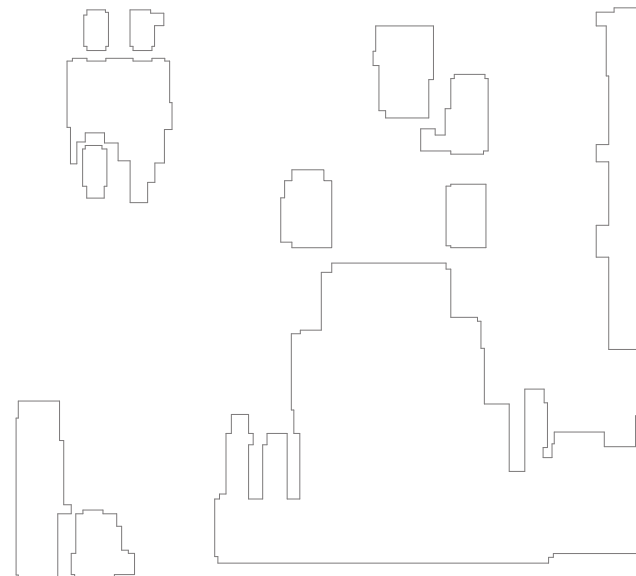
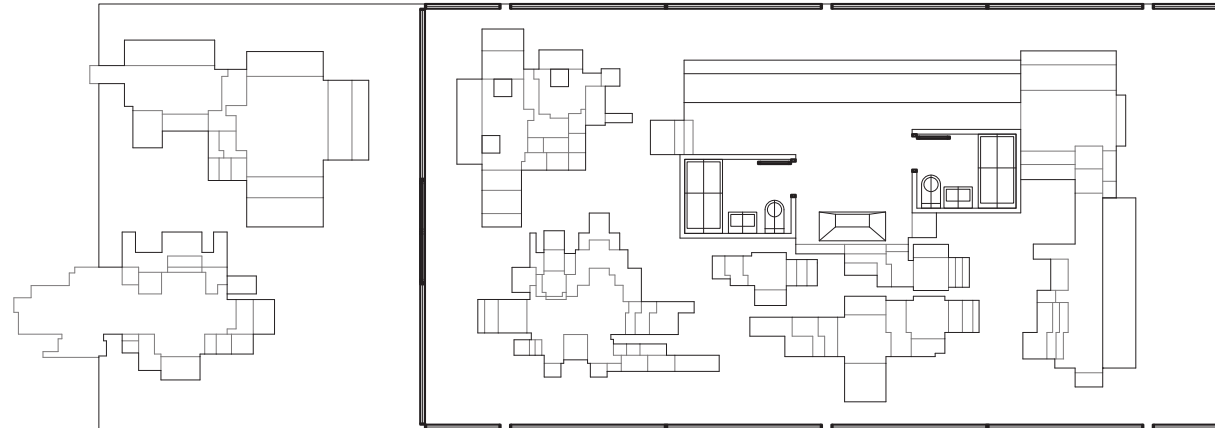
Sofía Lowe, Gabriela Zarwanitzer

*Nature Embedded Interior-Exterior Transitions*

- 01\_degrees of transparency
- 01\_degrees of reflection
- 02\_delimitation of interiorized exteriors
- 02\_delimitation of exteriorized interiors
- 03\_network of delimitations
- 03\_path variants between delimitations
- 04\_transitions between delimitations
- 05\_recognition of overlaps
- 05\_degrees of interiority by accumulation
- 06\_degrees of interiority topographic variation
- 07\_definition of envelope
- 07\_circulations, entrances, exits
- 08\_running of furniture
- 08\_running of slab openings

Habitant House

Agustina Suar, Camila Valdivia  
Cavern Slab



- 01\_identification of furniture
- 01\_definition of furniture envelopes
- 02\_definition of local axii
- 03\_gradient of influence from furniture axii
- 03\_gradient of influence from furniture envelope
- 04\_integration of gradients
- 05\_evaluation of cummulative intensities
- 05\_topographic variation
- 06\_setting of scale of steps
- 07\_crystallization of situations
- 07\_typifying of furniture
- 08\_outward unfolding of traces
- 08\_outward scaling of traces
- 08\_landscape topography

Open Room House

Melanie Dluganoga, Agustina Medina Gonzalo

*Labyrinth-Continuum*

- 01\_structural rhythms
- 01\_setting of axii between columns
- 02\_setting of axii of service aisle
- 03\_structure-partition matrix
- 04\_recognition of hierachies
- 04\_offsetting of axii according to hierachies
- 05\_development of masonry wall prototypes
- 05\_development of masonry wall corners
- 05\_development of masonry wall intersections
- 06\_running of masonry details
- 06\_integration of masonry mass
- 07\_running of furniture
- 07\_selection of furniture
- 07\_size adjustments
- 08\_hollowing out of masses
- 08\_running of trees

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**Ciro Najle** is an architect, Dean at The School of Architecture and Urban Studies at Universidad Torcuato Di Tella, and Visiting Professor at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design. **Ciro Najle** is the founder and former Director of the Landscape Urbanism Graduate Design Master Program and Diploma Unit Master at the Architectural Association in London, and has taught at architectural institutions including Cornell University, Columbia University, the Berlage Institute, the Universidad Federico Santa Maria in Valparaiso, and the Universidad de Buenos Aires. Director of GDB General Design Bureau, architectural office and multidisciplinary laboratory of research in Buenos Aires, and previously of MLab Machinic Laboratory, material research laboratory in Valparaiso, and of MID, Young Architect of the Year Second Prize in London in 2001, his work has been exhibited in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Denver, Le Laboratoire in Paris, the Prague Biennale of Art, and the Beijing Biennale of Architecture, where he was the curator of the London Pavilion. His theoretical work has been published in *Quadrerns*, *After the Sprawl*, *Architectural World*, *Oris*, *UR*, *Egg*, *Esquire*, *Plot*, *Praxis*, *Summa*. Author of the introductions to the 2G Monographs on FOA and MGM Architects, **Ciro Najle** is co-editor of the 'Landscape Urbanism: A Manual for the Machinic Landscape,' with Mohsen Mostafavi.. He is currently working on the books 'The Generic Sublime,' by Harvard University Graduate School of Design, and 'Atlas of Suprarural Architecture,' with Lluís Ortega.

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