



Poli House

designed by
Heinz von Ellrichshausen Architects
Coliumo Peninsula, Chile; 2004

When considering centralized plans, the location of
res – for circulation and servicing – often
dictates the form of the spaces that surround
them. In this distinctive house, however, set high on
the Chilean Coliumo Peninsula, the core has
effectively been eliminated through the skilful
integration of stairs, services and storage into the
depth of a heavy perimeter wall; reminiscent in
any way
of medieval fortresses with massive rampart walls.

The house, equivalent in height to a modest
two-storey dwelling is, in fact, organized on three
principal levels, linked by two voids – one half-
height, the other full. The house also has two secret
circuses, each set within the thickness of the
walls, that oppose one another in location and
direction: the first links living, kitchen, dining and
droom spaces, by turning the southeast corner in
an anticlockwise direction; the second leads directly
from ground floor to roof terrace by dog-legging
clockwise around the northwest corner, providing
views both into and out of the house en route.

The ground floor living room sits beneath the
two voids and is split-level, with a subtle two-step
height defining two separate zones. From here the
length single-level dining and kitchen space is

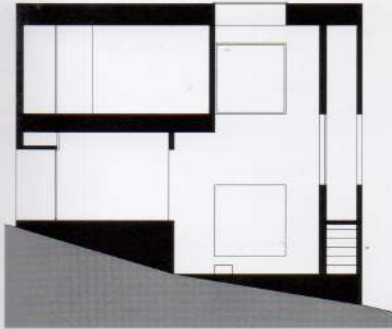
reached via five more steps, giving it an elevated yet
connected relationship with the living room. The two
bedrooms are appropriately made remote, reached
via the southeasterly anticlockwise stair. Each
bedroom turns to face opposite directions (west
and north respectively), both with en suite shower
rooms held within the thickness of the perimeter
wall, with views into the inner void, and with a
similar split-level to the living room that extends out
onto a private balcony set within deep reveals.

Very nearly composed as a perfect cube with
a square plan – but falling slightly short in height –
the rough-cast concrete perimeter walls are
punctuated by a series of deep square openings.
These either expose thick concrete reveals, with
glazing set flush with the inside skin, to give the
illusion of 1 metre (approximately 3 foot) deep
walls, or, by contrast, they allude more directly to
the wall's secret inner life where, for example, the
externalized northwesterly clockwise stair pauses
with a half-landing, where a more revealing and
honest thin edge frames a simple unfilled opening.

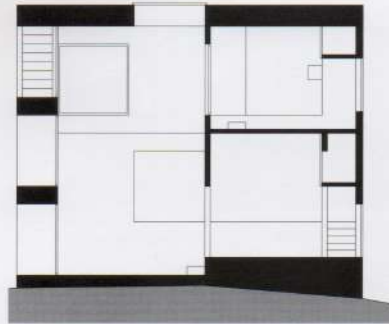
The house, commissioned by a local cultural
organization, not only has a secret stair but also
a double life, functioning as it does as an informal
cultural centre. It is therefore more appropriate that

it is at once domestic and monumental through its
composition and use of material. The simplicity
and power of its form, however, can also be
justified on more than simply aesthetic terms,
responding as it does to the practicalities of
building with semi-skilled labour and basic
materials in an extremely remote location – the
Poli House was built by local farmers and
fishermen who only had one small concrete mixer
and four wheelbarrows between them.

CENTRALIZED PLANS



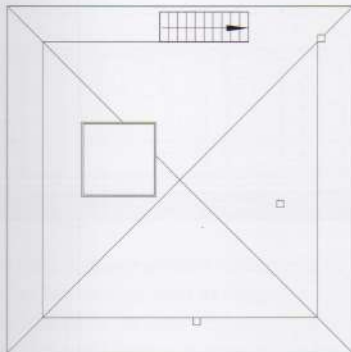
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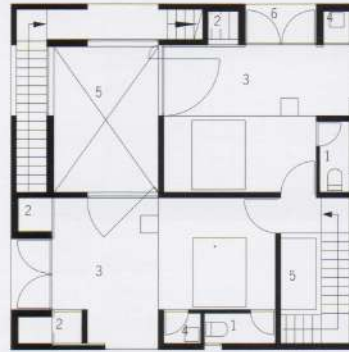
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1 Section A-A

2 Section B-B



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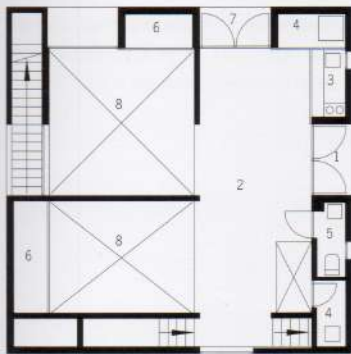


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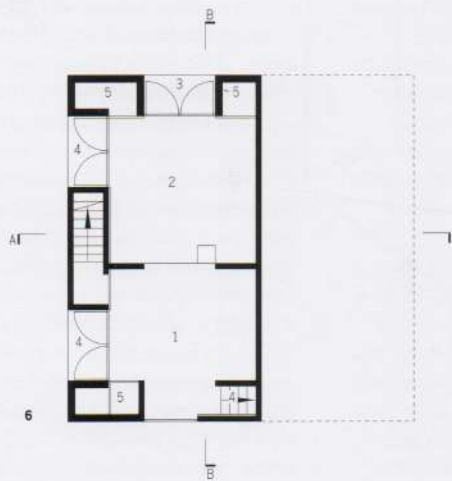
3 Roof Terrace Plan

4 Upper Floor Plan

- 1 Bathroom
- 2 Closet
- 3 Bedroom
- 4 Sink
- 5 Void
- 6 Balcony



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5 Upper Ground Floor Plan

- 1 Entrance
- 2 Dining Room
- 3 Kitchen
- 4 Storage
- 5 Bathroom
- 6 Closet
- 7 Balcony
- 8 Void

6 Lower Ground Floor Plan

- 1 Living
- 2 Studio
- 3 Access to Terrace
- 4 Balcony
- 5 Closet

