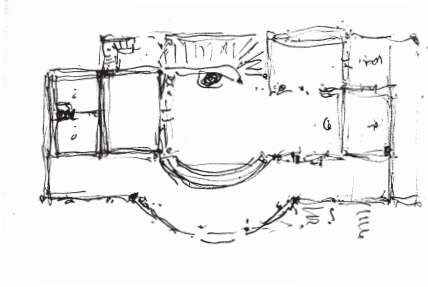




5 / A HOUSE FOR MIKE AND PATRICIA GODDU



Goddu house, plan after one-hour telephone discussion and visualization with Mike and Patricia Goddu.



Goddu house, sketch after 1 hour telephone call, Christopher Alexander, 1994.

With Mike and Patricia Goddu it was different again. The first picture that the Goddus had of their house came from the fact of its being at the top of the hill, and seen from underneath. When I asked them,

Q. What is the first vision you have of your house?

They answered:

A. As you approach the house you come through a small garden. Then, around the whole front of the house you see a huge and massive porch, curved, looking out over the lake... we see a great curving porch, from below, the whole front of the house.



Great curved porch of the Goddu house, seen from below, Christopher Alexander, Saul Pichardo, Randy Schmidt, 1994.



Living room of the Goddu house, dark and elegant.

I felt, from my experience on the site, that this was a genuine “vision”—something truly felt and seen spontaneously, in the mind’s eye.

Next, once we had this curved porch established, Mike and Patricia then moved into a detailed picture of the inside of the house.

Q: What happens when you come in off the porch?

A: You come in from the porch—and the moment you come in, you have the kitchen in front of you, a counter there, so it is welcoming for a visitor, or for one of us in the family; the moment you come through the door you are home.

A: You come in and right ahead of you is the kitchen. It is a place where Patricia can be cooking and talk to guests and see who comes into the house right away as they come in.

A: Then, to one side of the kitchen, to the left, there is the living room, following the curve of the porch . . . with a fireplace at the back . . .

Q: So, what can we see from this place?

A: You see the living room, dark and elegant.

Other interesting things that happened in the course of that one-hour talk with the Goddus included the idea that because of their children, there might be two staircases in the house—the main stair going up from the living room, essentially going to the master bedroom—and a back stair, going up from the playroom (downstairs and connected to the garden) to the boys’ bedroom. This small stair, side by side with the big one, is already visible in the small sketch that came from the telephone call.

The connection from the kitchen straight out to the sleeping porch, the fact that the porch was not only large in front but also wrapped around the house and was to be (and is) the major communication from all the ground floor rooms, as well as including a sleeping porch for guests, outside the kitchen area—all this was established in the first 60 minutes of discussion simply by going straightforwardly through the steps of placing one thing, and another, and an-



Living room of the Goddu house



Inside the great curved porch of the Goddu house



Looking out through the windows of the master bedroom.



The bedroom for the two boys.



Steps leading up to the entrance of the Goddu house.

other, in uncomplicated serial order. The process continued far enough so that we had most of the

detailed organization worked out: rooms, doorways, windows, porches, stairs.



6 / OVERVIEW OF THE UNFOLDING PROCESS FOR THE THREE HOUSES

With each family, by the end of a one-hour conversation, I had built up a fairly complete picture of each house, both in my own mind and in the minds of the two people I was talking with

As you can see from this process, the design, in each case, came largely from them. Certainly, the *inspiration* came from them. But I asked the questions and it was my way of putting these questions, in the order that I asked them, which made sure each house really did unfold in a nice orderly fashion. That is what made it a living process. *The unfolding was smooth.* Each time it was my questioning (both my persistence, and the sequence of my questions) which brought all of us three (the two family members in Austin and me in Berkeley) to the point that we had a

coherent structure emerging, in each case, and that we could, all three, visualize the same emerging whole.

If the questions had been different, and I had been less experienced, we might easily have spoken for an hour, reached some ideas, and then, I would have had to go away and “design” the house. But instead (because I really managed to get the house to unfold in this question-and-answer process) by the time the hour had passed, we all had a grasp of the same fairly coherent whole: a plan that worked, founded on an emerging inspiration that came from *them*.

After the phone call, in each case I was able to sit down and make a quick freehand sketch