



# HOUSE AS HOME

The trouble with making an issue about houses is that it is terribly easy to think of them as test-beds of style — particularly so because, since the sixteenth century, one-off houses have been the type with which talented architects have experimented to generate an approach to making buildings. From Palladio to Le Corbusier and into our own day, the house has provided the young(ish) architect with a built manifesto of intentions at a particular point in his development. The house as style was the way in which we approached our last issue on houses (AR September 1981).

But we were (mostly) wrong. The house as style is a fascinating topic for architectural historians — but one that almost always leaves out the essential element of being in houses — that they are a setting for life: that, to be successful, they must first of all be homes. Here is another problem about making an issue on houses. In the Anglo-Saxon world, the words 'home' and 'dwelling' have been kidnapped by estate agents (realtors) and bureaucrats. Advertisements in the papers talk about 'desirable developments of prestigious homes'; government departments announce with pride the number of dwellings that have been achieved by their efforts (they say) each year. Yet 'home' and 'dwelling' are very old words which, through all the hype, remind us about notions of abode and living place. The houses shown in this issue, in one way and another, have been chosen to illustrate different ways of identifying living place.

Few examples shown will be seen on the pages of those magazines devoted to style — the pictures are not always glamorous. But we hope that they (and the drawings) show ways of how architects can design to create places where people will feel at home. Places where individuals and families can continue and adapt traditional patterns of living (p76). Places where they can generate important relationships to context, whether it be a dreary suburb (p50) or a virtually virgin site (p44).

To make a really successful contemporary house, the designer must mediate between the chosen style of life of the people who are going to live in it and the place in which it is set. Style is more than just 'lifestyle', an expression of consumerism and an advertisement for the inhabitants. A good house must make a magic leap between contemporary living and tradition, between today's pragmatic needs and patterns of life received from the past when servants provided many of the functions which machines now do.

Today, everyone ought to be able to afford the degree of service which servants used to provide. But it must be admitted that the houses shown on these pages have been built for a very privileged income group. These people may no longer have servants, but they tend to be better serviced by machines than most.

This relative degree of economic freedom has enabled the owners and architects of these houses to make them into exemplars of how architecture (at least in the Western world) could come to terms with the basic need of humanity for abode: places of particular identity set within a communal framework; places which offer freedom of individual expression within the reassuring framework of tradition.

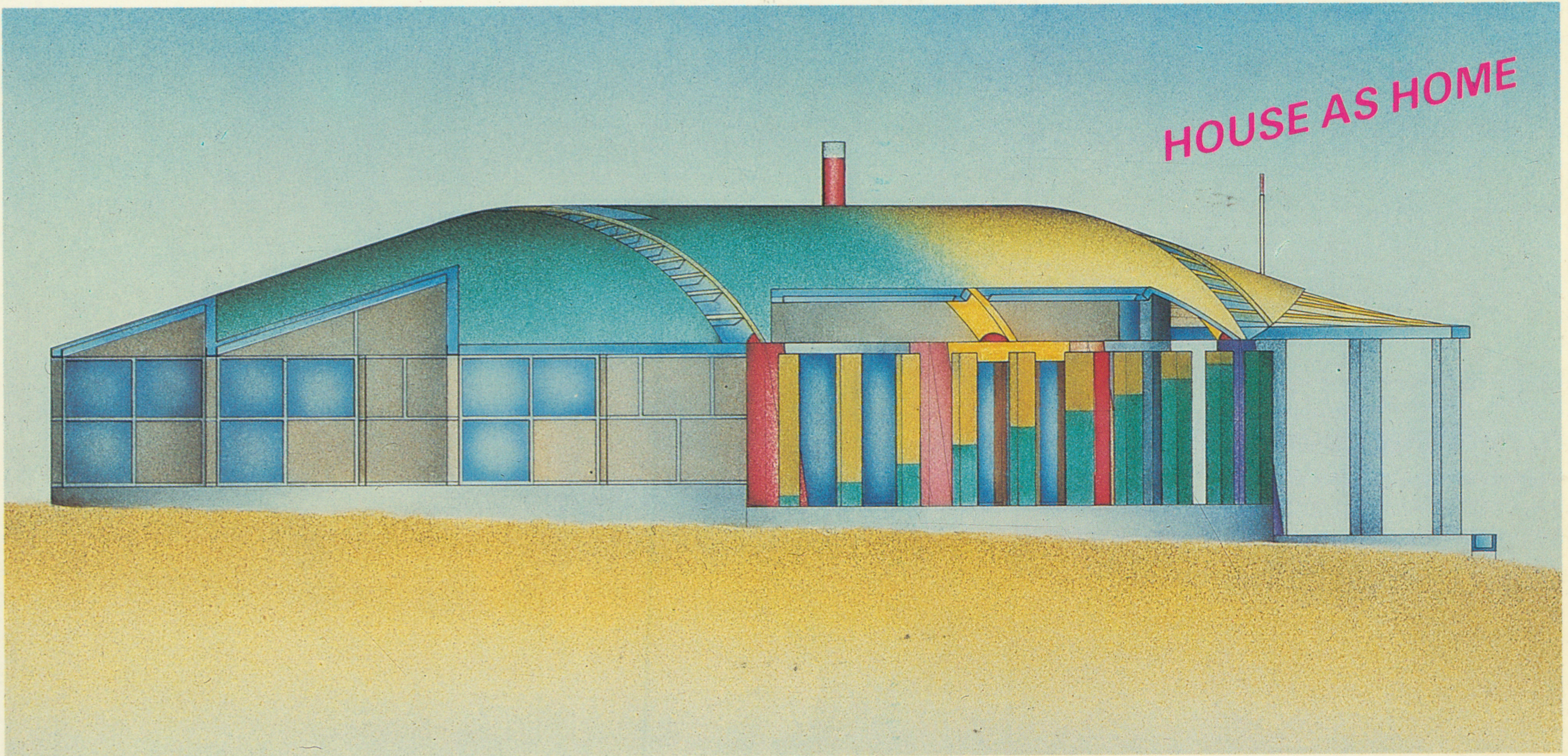
In these senses, home, dwelling, the place where you bring up your family, are really important concepts to late twentieth-century architecture. Viewed in this human way, the house is a generator of meaning and identity, and a crucible of concerns that ought to obtain other areas of architectural activity.

*Opposite: two aspects of placemaking and style of life. The almost clinical dining room by Jo Crepain (top and p61) contrasted with the warm farmhouse kitchen of Christopher Alexander's Sala house (bottom and p27). The alcove of the Sala house was painted by Alexander Lord.*

# THE ARCHITECTURAL

# REVIEW

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