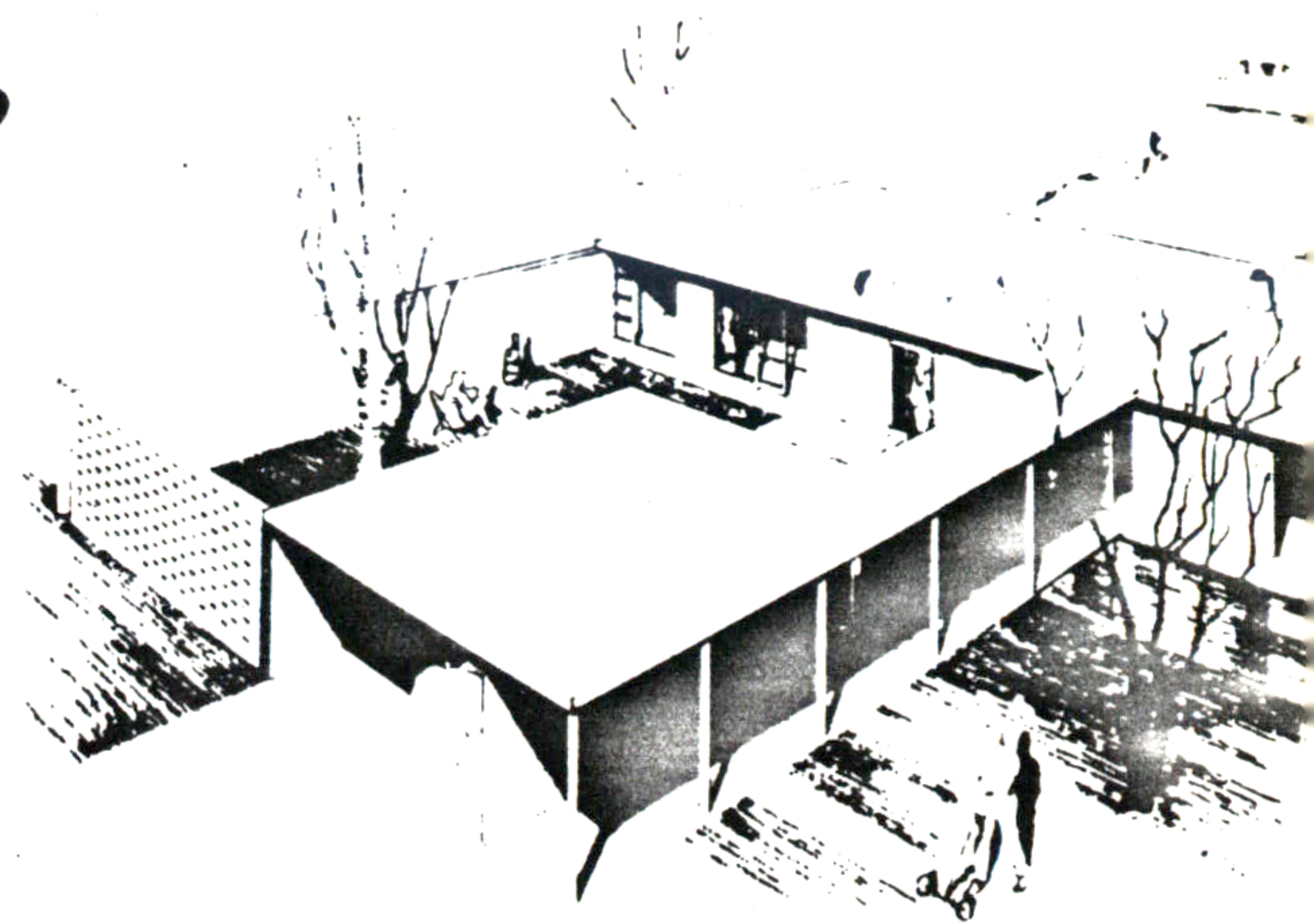


Patios Which Live

The patios built in modern houses are most often dead. They are intended to be private open spaces for people to use—but more often end up unused, full of gravel and abstract sculptures.



Informal observation suggests that these “dead” patios are unused for the following reasons:

1. No one ever goes to them when they do not have any natural relation to the activities in the house—this is especially true for those that are dead-ends, off to one side of rooms. To overcome this, the patio should have activities, opening off at least two opposite sides, so that it becomes the meeting point to these activities, provides access to them, provides overflow from them, and provides the cross-circulation between them.
2. They are so enclosed that they become claustrophobic. Patios which are pleasant to be in always seem to have “loopholes” which allow you to see beyond them into some further space.

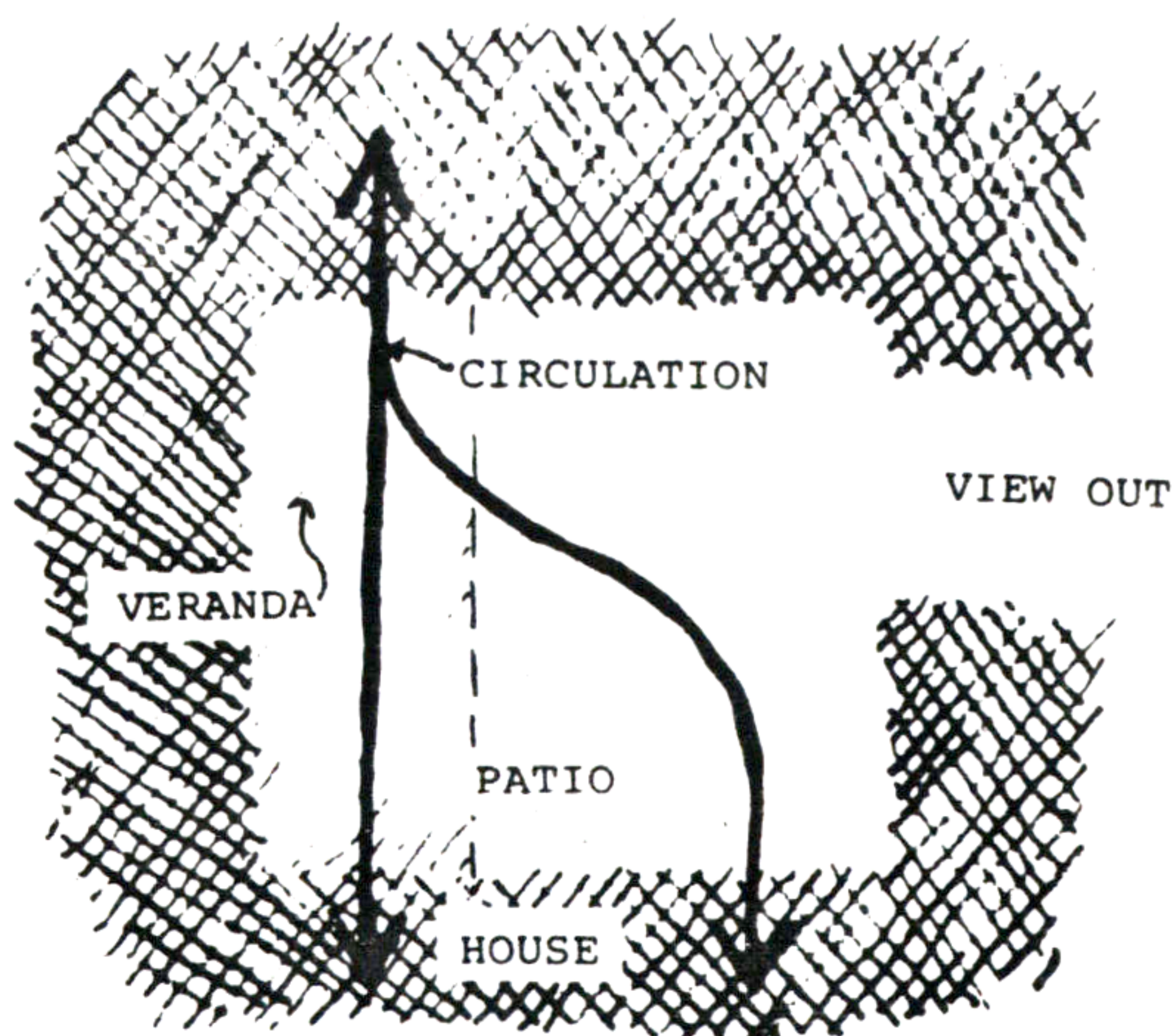


The patio should never be perfectly enclosed by the rooms which surround it, but should give at least a glimpse of some other space beyond.

3. They are oppressive. No one wants to sit surrounded by blank walls, disconnected from the house, with a little square of sky overhead. To solve this problem, the patio needs to be partly roofed. This provides a sitting space that is less nakedly exposed to the sky, and, if the roofed part is continuous with some interior part of the house, makes the patio seem more like a part of the house, and makes it more likely that people will drift naturally into the patio.

Therefore, to make a patio work:

1. Place it so that there are sources of traffic and activity on at least two sides, preferably three, and it functions in part as a circulation space.
2. Don't enclose it completely, but make sure that you can see out, in at least one direction, to some larger space beyond.
3. Roof at least one side of it, and make this roofed part at least two meters deep, and continuous with the inside of the building.



Patios Which Live

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This pattern is tentative. If you have any evidence to support or refute its current formulation, please send it to the Center for Environmental Structure, P.O. Box 5156, Berkeley, California 94705; we will add your comments to the next edition.