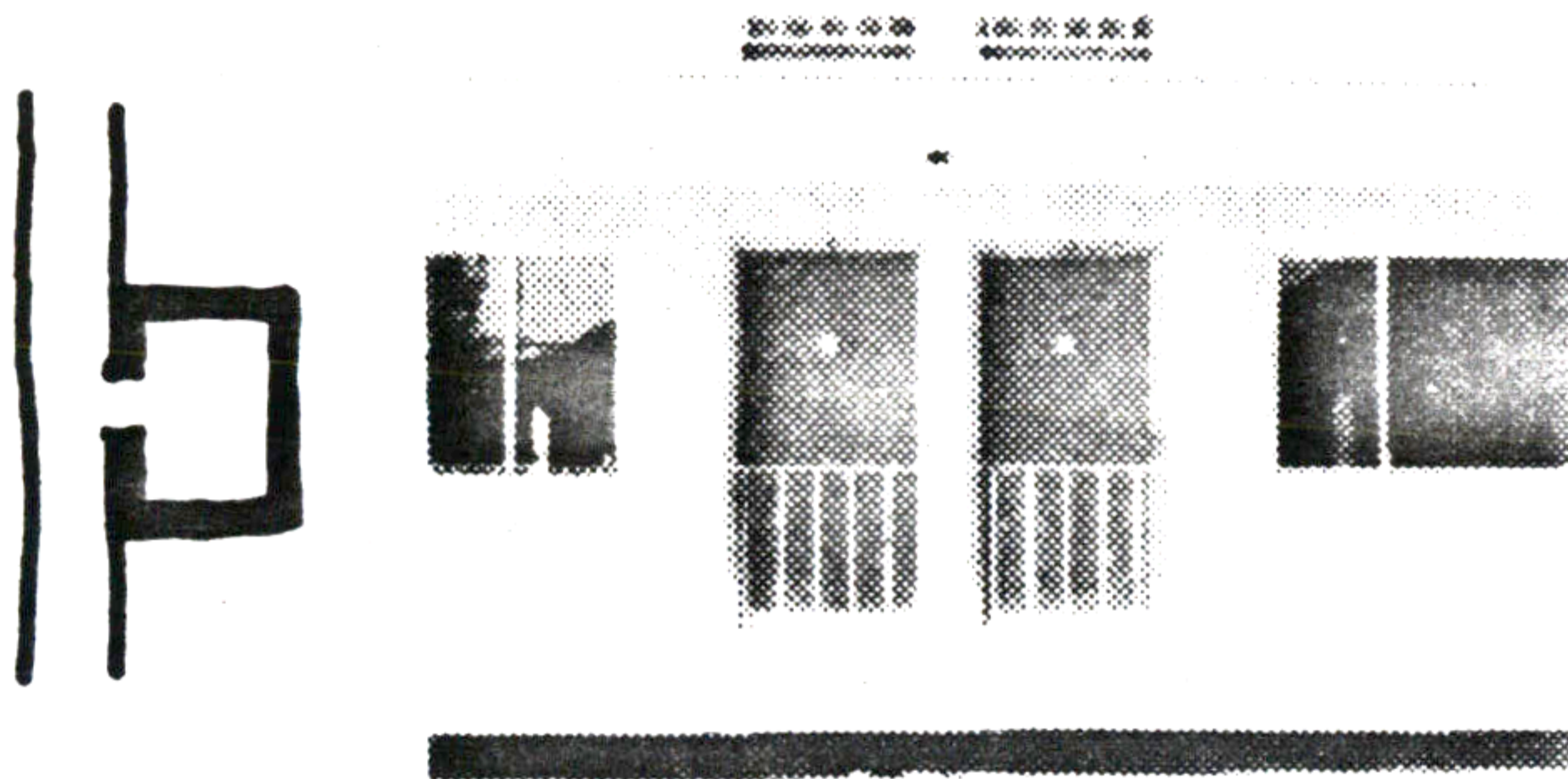


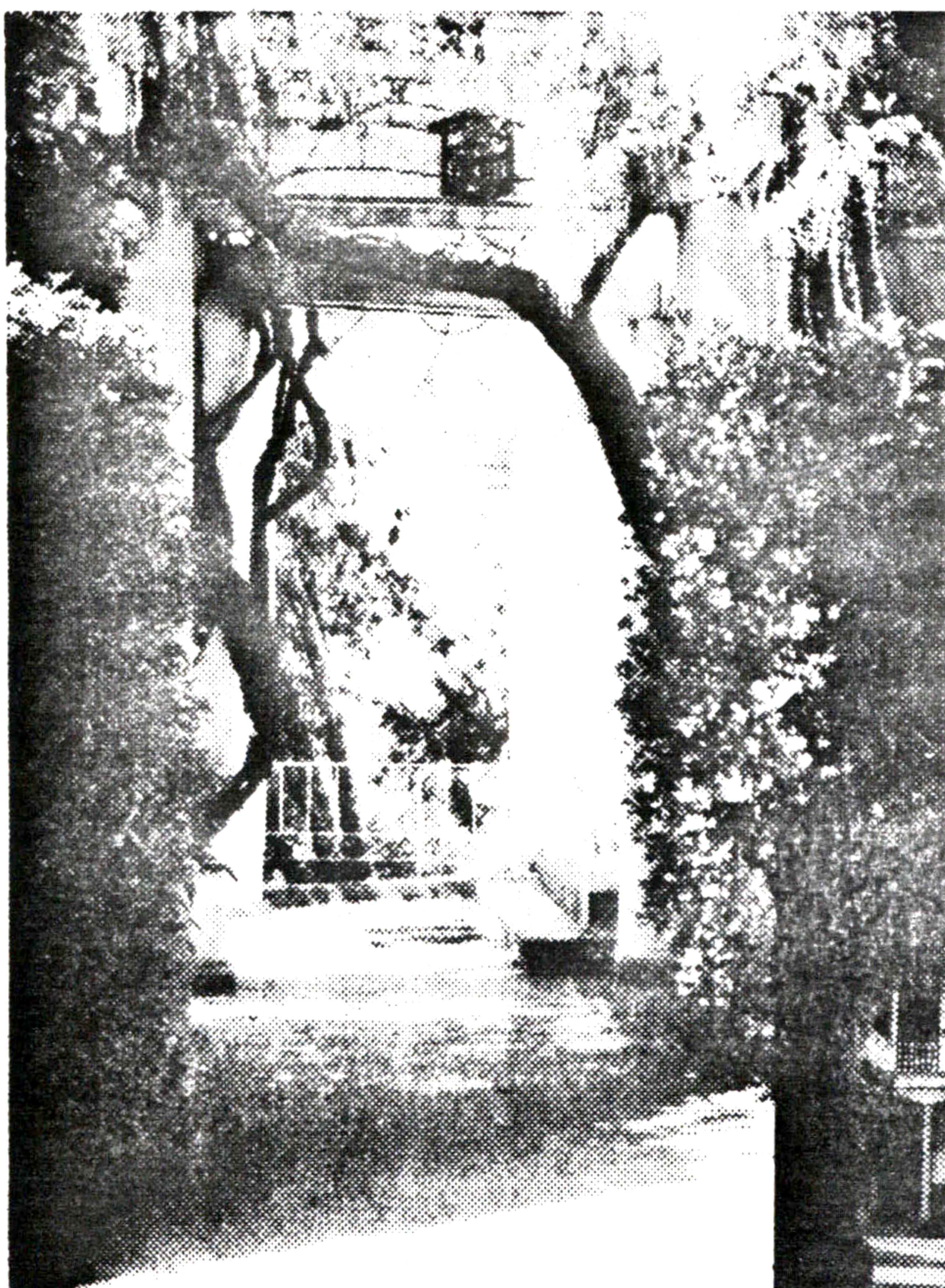
Entrance Transition

Houses with a graceful transition from the street to house, are more tranquil than houses which open directly off the street.

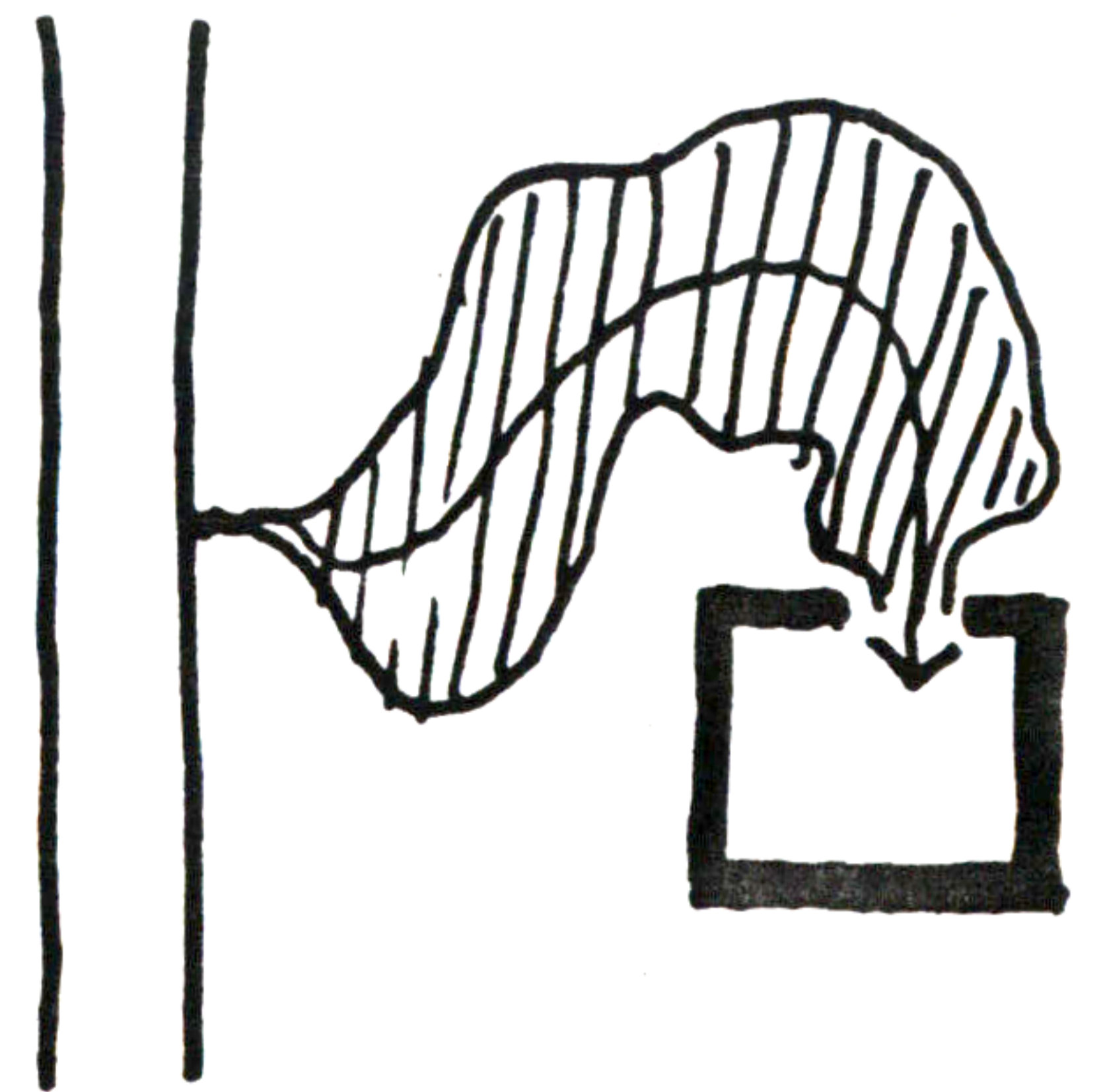
The experience of entering a house influences the way you feel inside. If the transition is too abrupt there is no feeling of arrival, and the house fails to be an inner sanctum.



The following argument may help to explain it. While people are on the street, they adopt a mask of "street behavior". When they come into a house they naturally want to get rid of this street behavior and settle down completely into the more intimate spirit appropriate to a house. But it seems likely that they cannot do this, unless there is a transition from one to the other which helps them to lose the street behavior. The transition must, in effect, destroy the momentum of the closedness, tension and "distance" which are appropriate to street behavior, before they can relax completely. (continued over)



Therefore: Place the entrance so that the path between the street and the inside of the house passes through a transition zone, including change of direction, change of view, change of light, change of level, change in sound made by your feet, and change of surface.



Entrance Transition

Problem (continued)

Evidence comes from the report by *Robert S. Weiss and Serge Bouterline, Jr., Fairs, Exhibits, Pavilions, and Their Audiences, Cambridge, Mass., 1962*. The authors noticed that many exhibits failed to "hold" people; people drifted in, and then drifted out again within a very short time. However, in one exhibit people had to cross a huge, deep-pile, bright orange carpet on the way in: in this case, though the exhibit was no better than other exhibits, people stayed. The authors concluded that people were, in general, under the influence of their own "street and crowd behavior", and that while under this influence could not relax enough to make contact with the exhibits; but that the bright carpet presented them with such a strong contrast as they walked in that it broke the effect of their outside behavior, in effect "wiped them clean", with the result that they could then get absorbed in the exhibit.

Critical Experiment

Draw, or photograph, house entrances with varying degrees of transition, and ask people: Which of these has the most "houseness".

Michael Christiano, who invented this experiment, found that the more changes and transitions a house entrance has, the more it seems to be "houselike". He found that the entrances which were judged most houselike are approached by a long open sheltered gallery, from which there is a view into the distance.

See *Michael Christiano, "The House Entrance", unpublished paper, Center for Environmental Structure, 1970*.

Context

We believe this pattern applies to a wide variety of entrances. It certainly applies to all houses, and to apartments (even though it is usually missing from apartments today). It also applies to those public buildings which thrive on a sense of seclusion from the world: A jewelry store, a church, a public library, etc. It does not apply to any public buildings which thrive on the fact of being continuous with the public world—a market for example.

By: Christopher Alexander, Sanford Hirshen, Sara Ishikawa, Christie Coffin, Shlomo Angel.

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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.