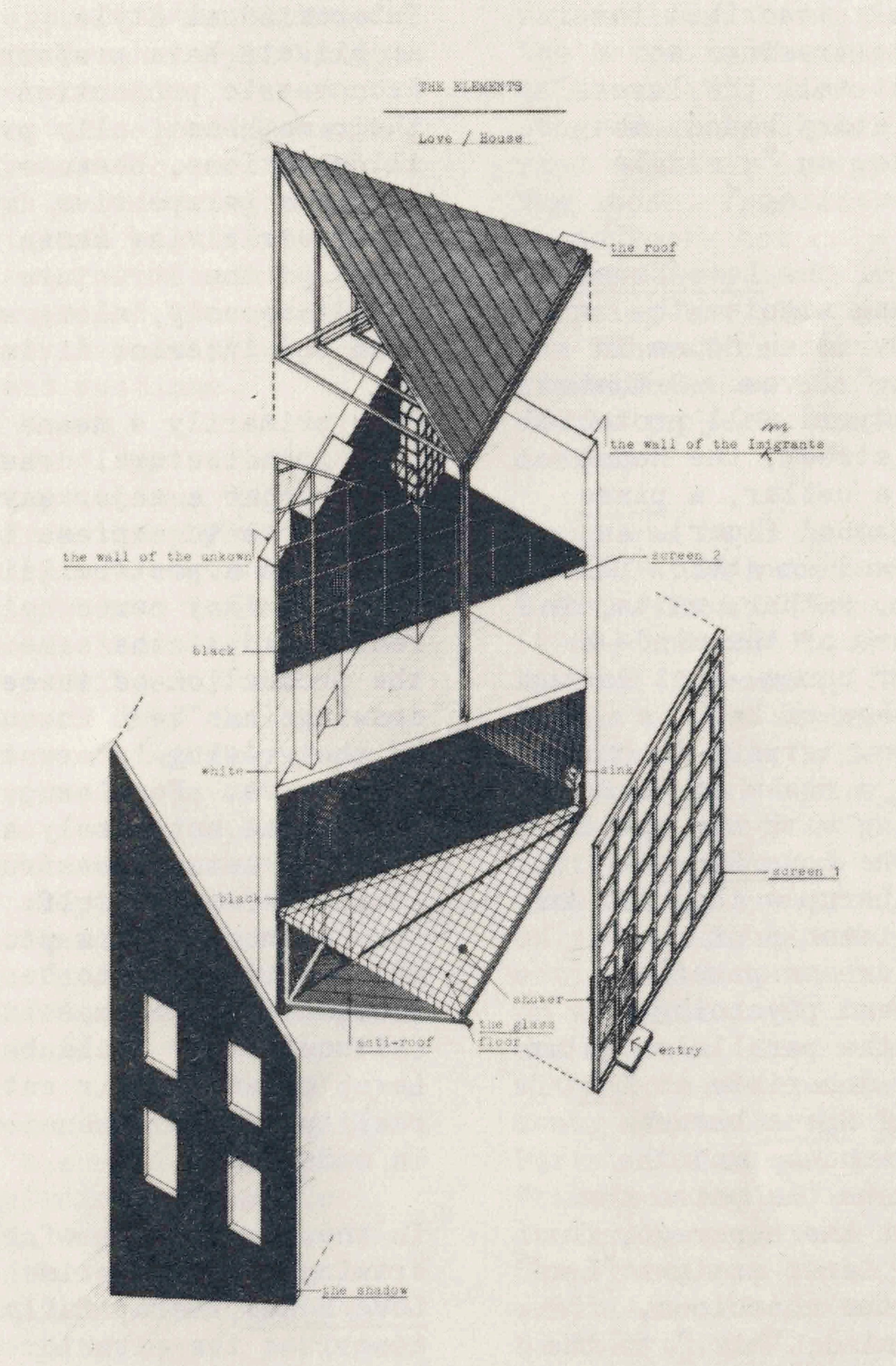
The Elements, 1982, from Love/House



The plan of the typical suburban house is geared to cultural stereotypes of the family -- the husband who goes to work, the wife who cares for the house, the children who go to school -- the sort of family that, for better or worse, is fast becoming a minority. The Love/House is the third in a series of projects by California architect Lars Lerup that comment on the single-family dwelling. The Love/House is a house for estranged lovers. It is fully described in forty-nine drawings and a model that tell the lovers' story, a story based, as Lerup says, on "a single emotion -- waiting."

The core of the Love/House is an existing nineteenthcentury Parisian house in which "she" lives. Situated in a courtyard well protected from the street, the house contains a cellar, a piano nobile (ground floor), an atelier, and an attic. "He" lives, or, rather, waits, in a structure of the mind--a mere paper house--that is the shadow image of hers, a phantom counterpart to her vitality, a realm of darkness contrasting with her world of light. The Love/House reflects Lerup's interest in the relationship of architecture to painting, language and psychology. Aware of the parallels Gaston Bachelard describes in The Poetics of Space between parts of a house and the human psyche (he pairs the attic with the superego, for example), Lerup assigns "her" house to the conscious, rational mind, "his," to the domain of the irrational. An adjacent building is occupied by a widow, a metaphorical counterpart to the woman. The widow's house is adjoined by that of a madman, who

corresponds to the man.

Traditionally, architectural drawings have two major functions: to document and advance the stages of the development of a building project, and to simulate graphically its finished appearance. Nineteenthcentury Beaux-Arts architects often adopted romantic painting techniques to illustrate the relationship of building to setting. Conversely, twentieth-century International Style architects have preferred the axonometric projection for their mathematically precise illustrations, because, unlike a perspective drawing, an axonometric view shows all sides of the structure simultaneously, along with the plan and interior divisions.

Once primarily a means to an end, architectural drawings have become a major way for architects to express ideas which--in a post-building boom era--may never be realized. At the same time, the production of these drawings has been encouraged by the growing interest of collectors. For Lerup, the drawing is not merely a step toward eventual construction; it is the work itself. Because many of his projects are not intended to be realized three-dimensionally (although they could be), Lerup creates their entire reality in two dimensions or in models.

In the first group of drawings that comprise the Love/House, Lerup fully describes its exterior and site in plans, sections, elevations and axonometric projections. The drawings are rendered in graphite and colored pencil in a tight style; "her" house is often

represented by a Polaroid photograph. Typed fragments from The Lover's Discourse by the late French philosopher Roland Barthes and from The Interpretation of Dreams by Sigmund Freud accompany many of the images. The Barthes quote on one of the drawings, "Tumult of anxiety provoked by feelings of waiting for the loved being, subject to delays, rendezvous, letters, telephone calls, returns," articulates the feelings that Lerup evokes through design. Lerup appropriates Barthes' semiotic vocabulary of signs to interpret his architecture, peeling away the layers of connotative meaning in order to unmask the original significance of architectural elements, such as windows and doors, and their relationship to people, ideas and emotions.

In a second series of renderings, Lerup depicts the house from the physical and psychological viewpoint of the neighbors. In these, as well as in the slightly larger drawings of the interior of "his" house, Lerup moves gradually from the precise style of earlier works to a more expressive manner characterized by short, choppy pencil lines. The predominant blue and green coloration adds to the distressed mood of this group of drawings.

In a later series (which he calls "borrowed scenery"),
Lerup alludes to Kasimir
Malevich and Giorgio de
Chirico (a postcard
reproduction of an early de
Chirico painting is collaged
onto one of the sheets) and
places the house in several
different geographical
contexts. These drawings are
followed by a related set of
richly colored watercolors

(named "displacements") in which it appears as if an explosion has pulled apart the walls and roof of the house. By giving the house a new formal grammar, Lerup questions the entire concept.

The stylistic influence of de Chirico is evident in these works, whereas the illustrational style of the previous group relates to the drawings of David Hockney.

Finally, in large
watercolors, Lerup has moved
the house to the beach (in
California?), where it leans
progressively closer to the
sand until it disappears.
The loose, free style of
these works not only echoes
contemporary landscape
painting but also suggests
the liberation the artist
experienced at the conclusion
of the project, the end of
desire.

Lerup was born in Sweden in 1940. He received his B. Arch. from UC Berkeley (1968) and his M. Arch. from Harvard University (1970). He has been a member of the faculty of the College of Environmental Design, UC Berkeley, since 1970. His various activities include fire safety research, a book on architecture and human action, and numerous articles on architectural criticism and theory. Lerup has worked with architectural and urban design firms in Stockholm, Paris, Zurich and San Francisco and is currently designing a private house in San Francisco. A major exhibition of his work will be held at the Jamileh Weber Gallery, Zurich, in February 1985.

Constance Lewallen

Works in MATRIX:

Love/House, 1981-84, consisting of 49 drawings and model. Lent by the artist.

All drawings are various combinations of graphite, colored pencil, Liquid Paper, watercolor and collage on paper.

Sizes of drawings: 28 are 16-1/2" x 11-5/9"; 6 are 23-1/4" x 16-1/2"; 2 are 29" x 20-1/2"; 3 are 20" x 13"; 4 are 15" x 22-1/2"; 6 are 22-1/2" x 30".

Model: 1984, wood, lead, paper, plexiglass, paint; approx. 4' wide, 2-1/2' high, 10" deep.

Selected one-person exhibitions:

The Institute for Art and Urban Resources, Inc., P.S.I., '80, catalogue; Rizzoli Gallery, NY, The Edge of Architecture 1980: Between Buildings and Bodies, '80.

Selected group exhibitions:

William Aronowitsch,
Stockholm, Sweden, '74;
Phillipe Bonnafont, S.F.,
'78, '79, '81; Cooper-Hewitt
Museum, NY, Ornament in the
20th Century, '78; Provincia
di Roma, Italy, New
Americans: Nuove Tendenze
dell'Architettura Americana,
'79, catalogue, traveled.

Selected bibliography by the artist:

Building the Unfinished:
Architecture and Human Action
(Sage Publications: Beverly
Hills/London, 1977).

"Villa Prima Facie,"

Pamphlet Architecture, no. 3

(monograph) (William Stout

Architectural Books: San

Francisco, 1978).

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