

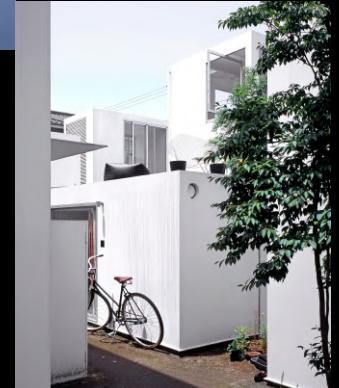
# THE SPACE BETWEEN: A VISUAL EXPLORATION OF MORIYAMA HOUSE

Calvin Kent Ho — Professor Teddy Cruz — VIS 103

Confronted with a lack of tabula rasa and the ruins of an atom bomb, Japan underwent a divine reconciliation in the post-war economic miracle that brought wealth and prosperity to the country's new gleaming metropolis: Tokyo. In the rapid currents of modernization amidst Japan's mountainous terrain, the historical and cultural fabric of Tokyo was torn asunder and rebuilt at the crossroads of East and West; establishing a new urban reality unlike anything in the world. Shaped by a historical awareness of natural disaster — earthquake, tsunami, flood, fire — one Tokyo civil law arises: for a given plot, the exterior wall of the building must be set back at least 50 centimeters from the edge of the lot. Iterated, multiplied, and manifested countless times over throughout the course of modernization, each 50 centimeter gap underwent mitosis as old suburban lots splintered, fractured, and sold off through generations. The subdivision of the suburban, brought on by the unstoppable forces of economic growth, represents a rhythmic metabolism of the city: void metabolism, as christened by Yoshiharu Tsukamoto. In an almost divine steadfastness, the voids watched and waited as space was consumed whole, consummating in the ultimate organic expression of Tokyo's inherent will. Instead of a master plan, buildings seemed to rise and fall overnight, as a chest breathing in and out, as the social, cultural, economic, and historical forces of Tokyo flowed in and throughout the city. Finally, as the great living organism seemed to shutter its eyes and turn inwards, so too did the eyes of its citizens, establishing a new era of introversion and inwardness as enabled only through contemporary society. Moriyama House, then, is the absolute ambiguity at the center of a number of fundamental questions. What are the interiors and exteriors? What are built spaces and void spaces? How do borders enforce their will? What is a community? How does money let us live? In the midst of a scattering of hermetic white boxes, Moriyama House says almost nothing at all, unflinching in its centrality. Yet between realities, Moriyama House expresses everything one needs to know about living, for the unbearable physical ambiguity becomes the foundational canvas for the mind and its desires. The dissolution of modern industrialized reality, as nature snakes its way through our own void space, is the staging ground for a fundamentally personal expression of who we are.



Edmund Sumner



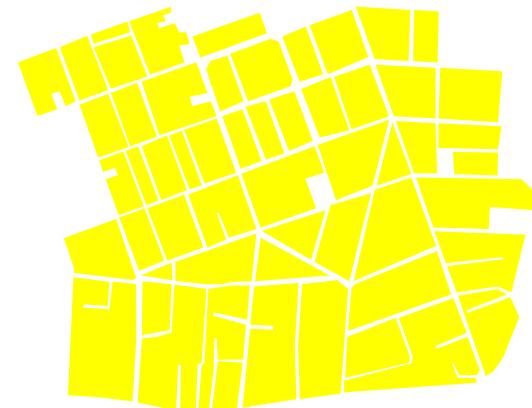
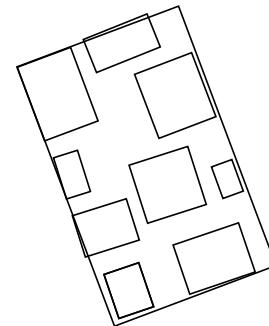
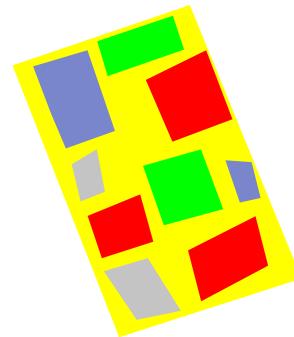
INTRODUCTION — i.

# CONTEXTURAL

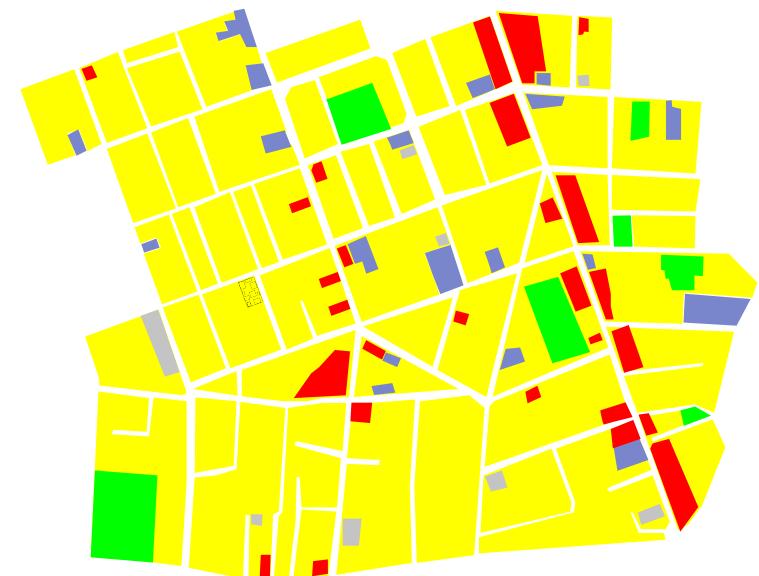
Moriyama House is situated in Ota City, Tokyo: an old suburban neighborhood left to deal with the successive waves of urbanization sweeping over Tokyo in the generations following the war.

Despite the apparent density of the space, with single family homes packed tightly against the occasional low-rise apartment building, the programmatic context of the neighborhood is relatively traditional. Small lots of public space dot what is otherwise a residential area, while much of the local retail business is placed along one main road.

As a result, the alleyways that form between the tight buildings are shared by neighbors, and typically contain a myriad of garden plants, bicycles, outdoor equipment, and other supplies.



residence



retail



parking



public

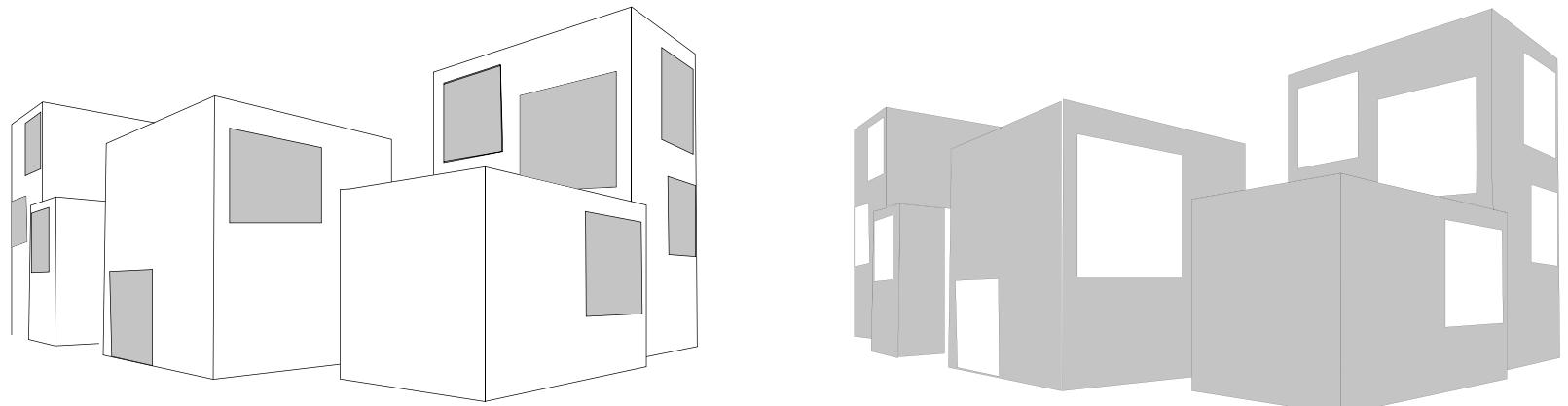


# PROGRAMMATIC

As a home, Moriyama House  
as an architecture  
encompasses what is  
simultaneously a very narrow  
and very expansive program:  
a space to live within.

The connotation of living  
contains a great many  
implications in regards to the  
human condition. Here, the  
illustrations depict the ability  
of Moriyama House to  
operate with lightness in both  
day and night. As the sun sets,  
the exterior facade of the units  
fade to gray, while the large  
windows illuminate a brilliant  
white as to almost exhibit the  
numerous artifacts housed  
within the building.

To further illustrate this  
dynamic, two banal functions  
of the typical home — a  
mailbox and shower — are  
contrasted against the more  
'artistic' objects of display.



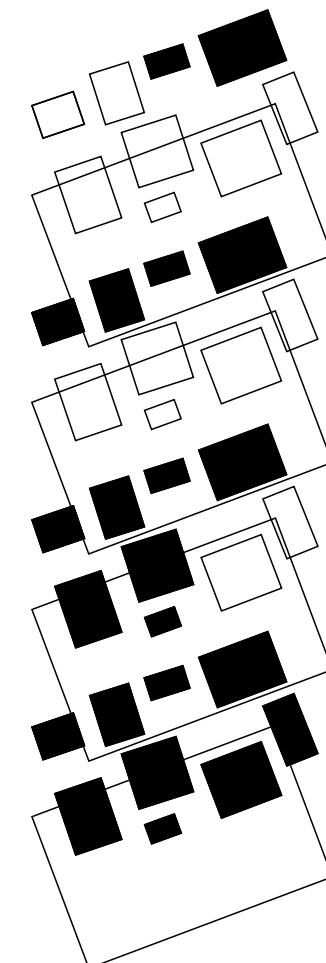
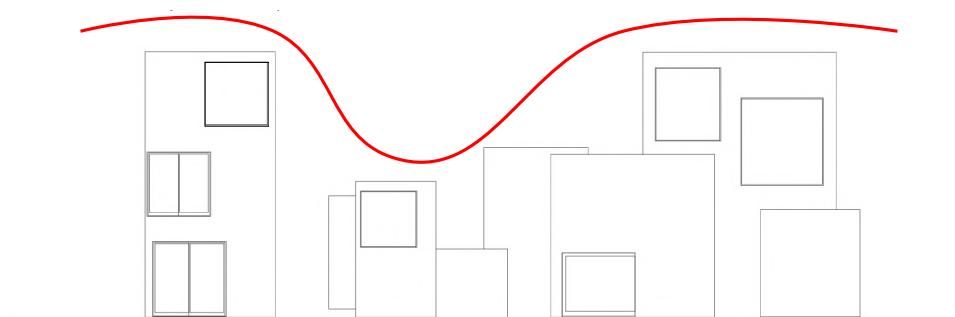
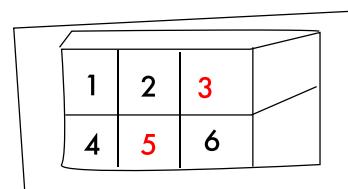
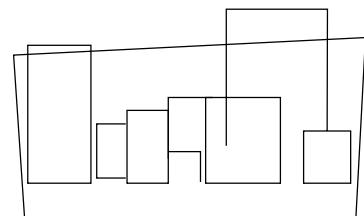
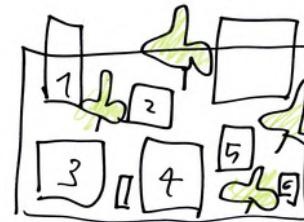
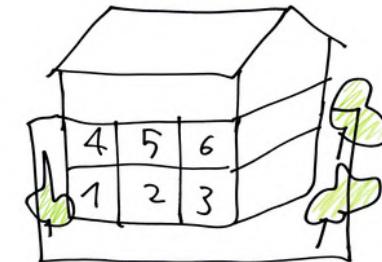
MORIYAMA HOUSE — 02

# CARTOGRAPHIC: PLANS-SECTIONS

As a tool of representation, Ryue Nishizawa's original cartographic concepts emphasize the distribution of space and program in turn. However, an alternative interpretation of Nishizawa's representation is offered below the original concept.

Rather than viewing Moriyama House as a discontinuous system, interrupted by the outdoors, the spaces in between buildings as labeled by red numbers can be viewed as rooms with their own set of functions.

The side profile plan of the architecture also evokes a movement more akin to a natural landscape; the sharp geometries created by the changing levels of the boxes is softened by the programmatic function of the exterior spaces.

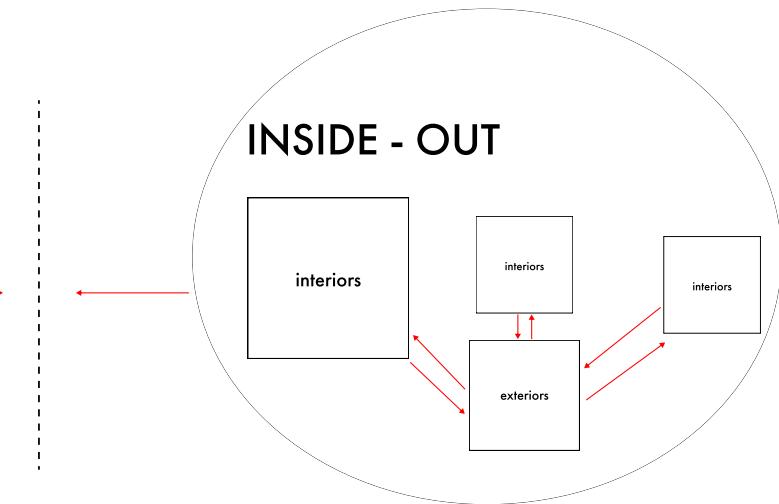
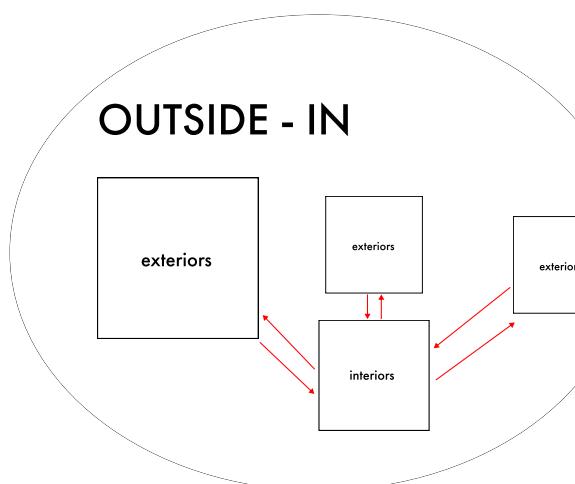
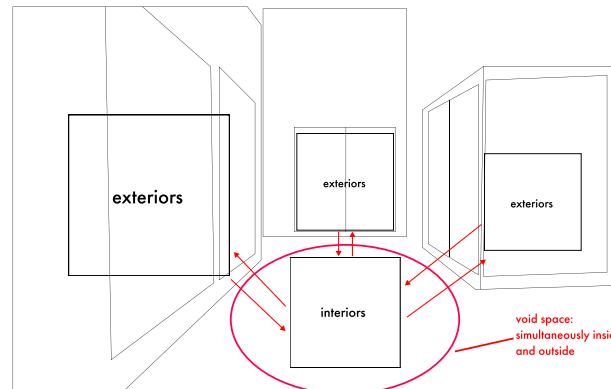


# SPATIAL - PERCEPTUAL

A core conceptual tension at the heart of Moriyama House's spatial phenomenology lies within the inherent nature of the space itself: interior versus exterior.

By removing the materiality and program of a particular outdoor area, the space comes to resemble a room in its own right, complete with windows and/or doors. This is further compounded by the real-world presence of what is typically associated with interior living: a bathroom.

Through this fundamental dialectic between interior and exterior, Nishizawa challenges the traditional hegemony of built, interior space, charging the exterior of his architecture with intimately human functions that ultimately suggest new ways of living within our spaces.



# MATERIAL

Ryu Nishizawa's material palette is restrained and measured. In Moriyama House, a continuous presence of clinically white steel plate is placed in relation to displaced gravel and the numerous greenery that sprouts from it.

The lack of a defined material facade shifts the emotional imagery of the building away from a visual interpretation into a more holistic and tactile experience that suggests a heightened attention to things going on in the world.

Rather than association to a cold, rational form of modernity, Ryu Nishizawa uses the artificiality of the material to create a canvas for human expression within the living space. The house in turn suggests an active involvement over a passive occupation.

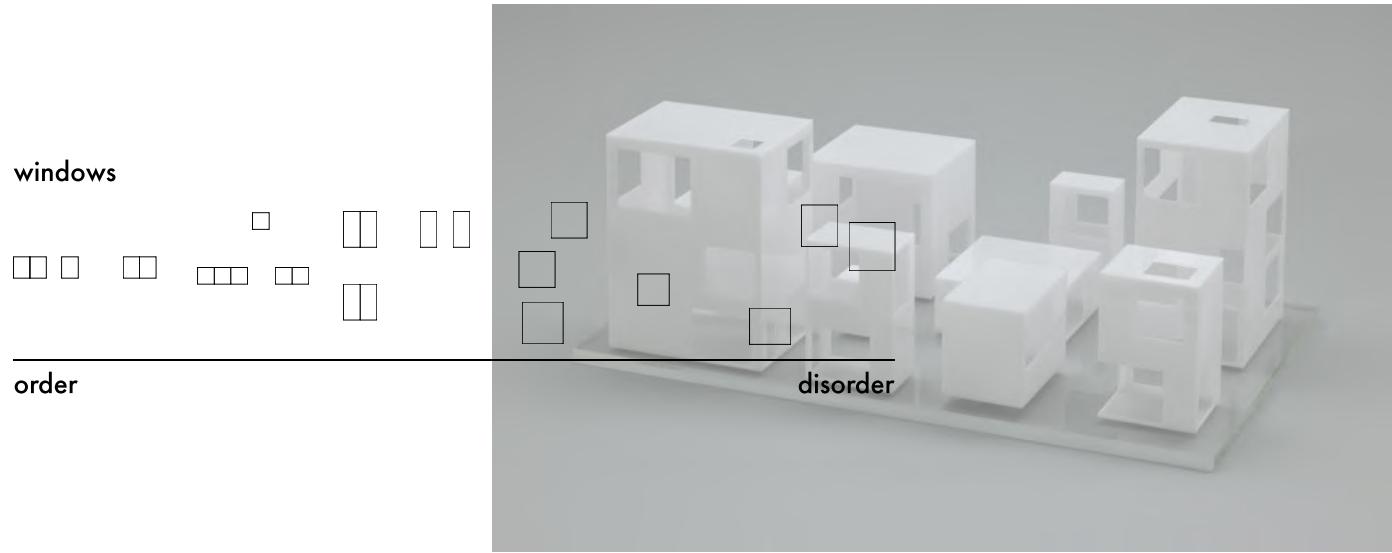


MORIYAMA HOUSE — 05

# FORMAL - VOLUMETRIC

The hermetic nature of Moriyama House's white boxes is most offset by Ryue Nishizawa's more unorthodox distribution and sizing of windows. Ambiguity permeates both the function and program of the windows: inside becomes outside through light, while windows become doors at floor level.

Ryue Nishizawa also charges the rooftops of lower level buildings with function by placing the windows of higher level buildings in line with the rooftops. By arranging and sequencing in this manner, Nishizawa centers the otherwise empty rooftop within the context of daily activity, while simultaneously granting the opportunity for those inside to witness whatever communal event or gathering that may be taking place on the centralized roof.



MORIYAMA HOUSE — 06

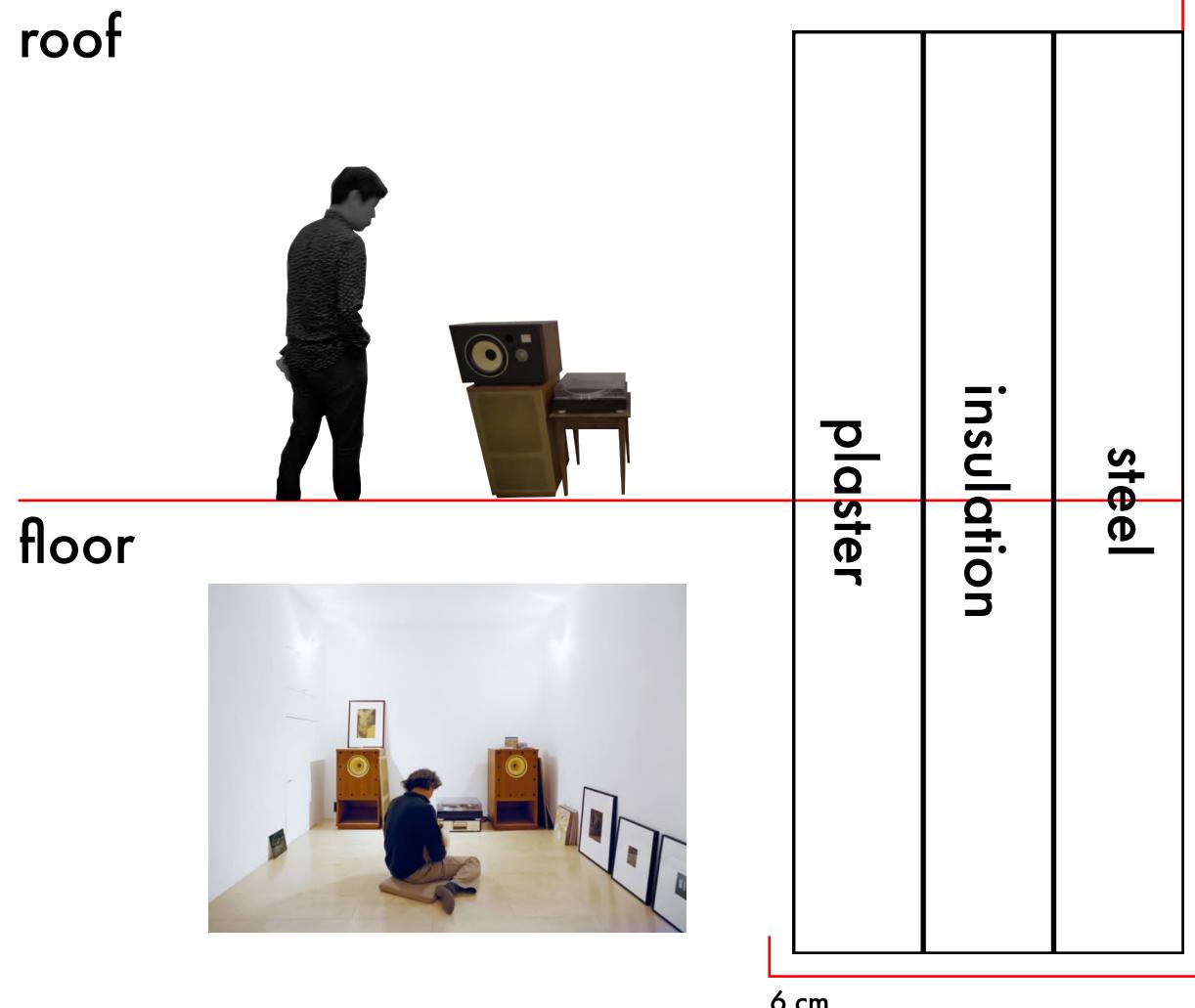
# STRUCTURAL

The primary structural concept at play within Moriyama House is transparency and the dissolution of the wall as a device of separation.

Continuing along the thematic motivation of blending the interior and exterior, the walls of Moriyama House are thin and simple.

The steel facade of the units is also responsible for the support of the flooring and roof, establishing the transparency in structure that Nishizawa often alludes to.

The thin insulation within the walls is enabled by Japan's temperate climate, allowing the occupancy of the house to experience the pleasant weather. Furthermore, the tactile experience of nature in this fashion enables a form of occupying the exterior without physically existing there.

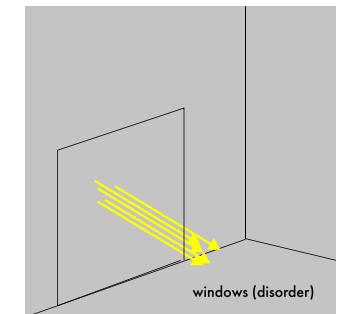
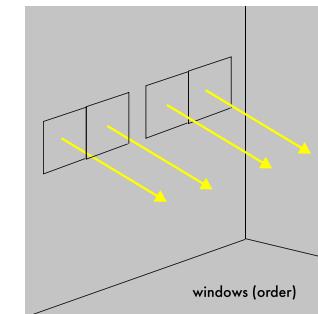
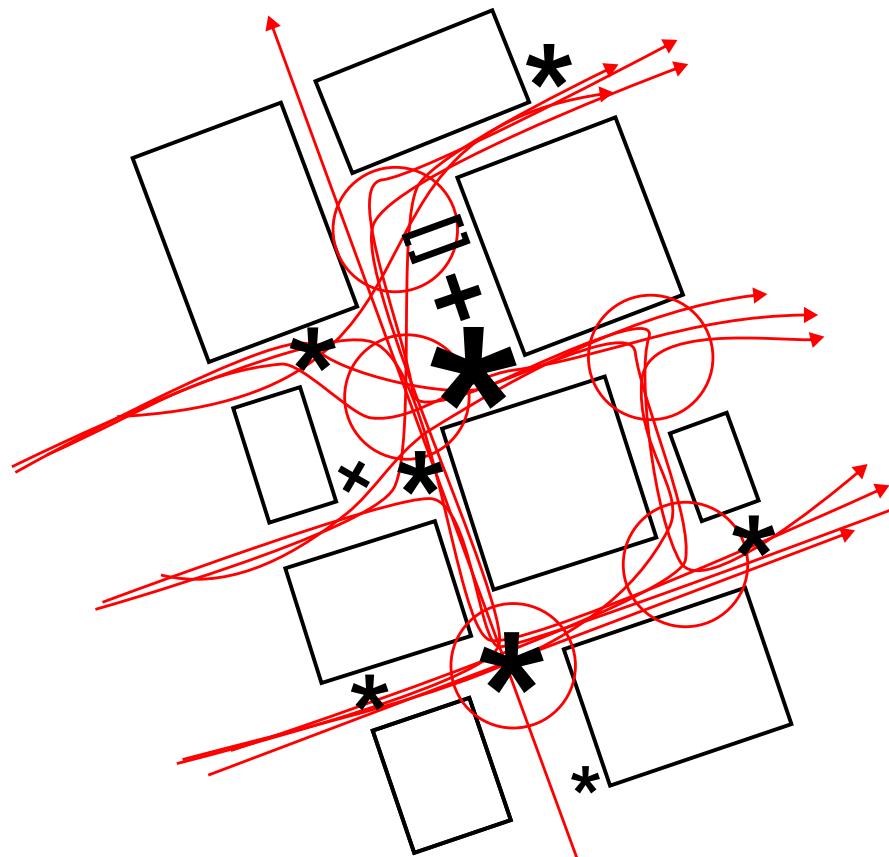


# ENVIRONMENTAL - SYSTEMS

One of the most apparent functions of the distribution of boxes across Moriyama House is the movement and circulation through the exterior spaces. Trees, tables, chairs, and other objects are dotted across the parcel, offering one new possibilities by navigating the space.

This circulation is also created through a lack of hierarchy within Moriyama House. As there is no main house or entrance, people are free to come and go as they please in any direction depending on their motivations at the time.

The large windows that also absorb the circulation of the space open more dynamic angles of light, wind, and movement into the interior spaces. Moriyama occupies this window, for example, as a door and balcony at night.



# INFORMATIONAL - MANAGEMENT

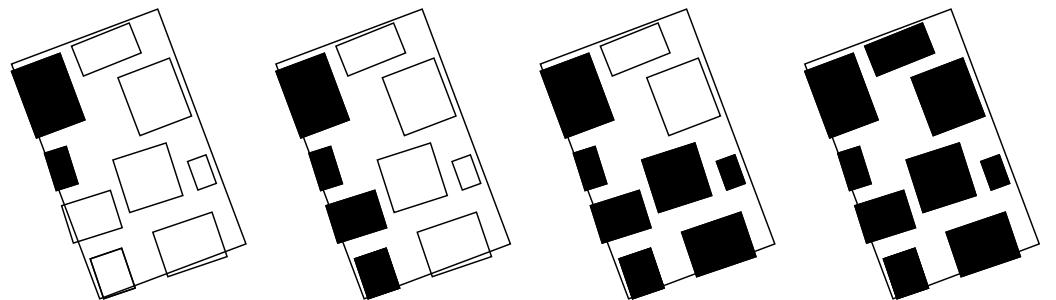
By scattering separate, distinct units across Moriyama House, Nishizawa echoes a lineage of Japanese urban development in the subdivision of suburban plots. In the way that a landowner could separate and sell parts of their larger lot for financial support, Moriyama does the opposite.

By beginning with a subdivided plot distributed across a number of tenants, Moriyama is able to receive an income used to help pay his mortgage. Through time, Moriyama could theoretically begin to reclaim parts of his space, giving him new possibilities in room placement and function.

The pixelation of plots, neighborhoods, and the city in turn offers a model of sustainable growth and new level of social interactions.

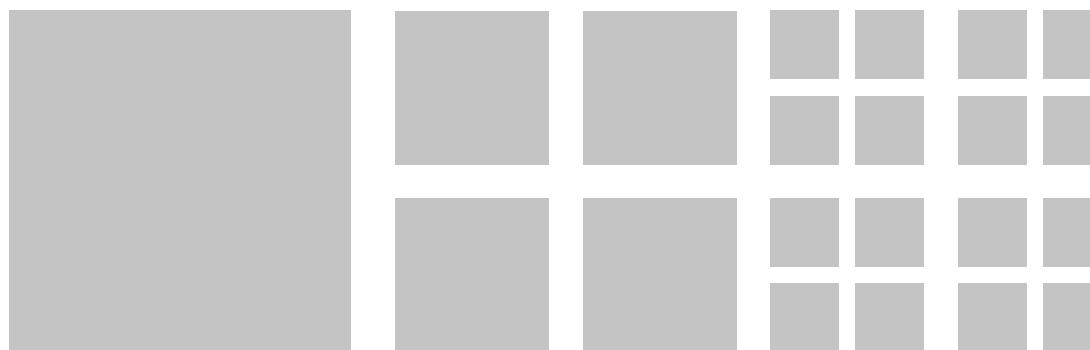
■ Mr. Moriyama's property

□ Property rented out



construction (2005)

future (20??)



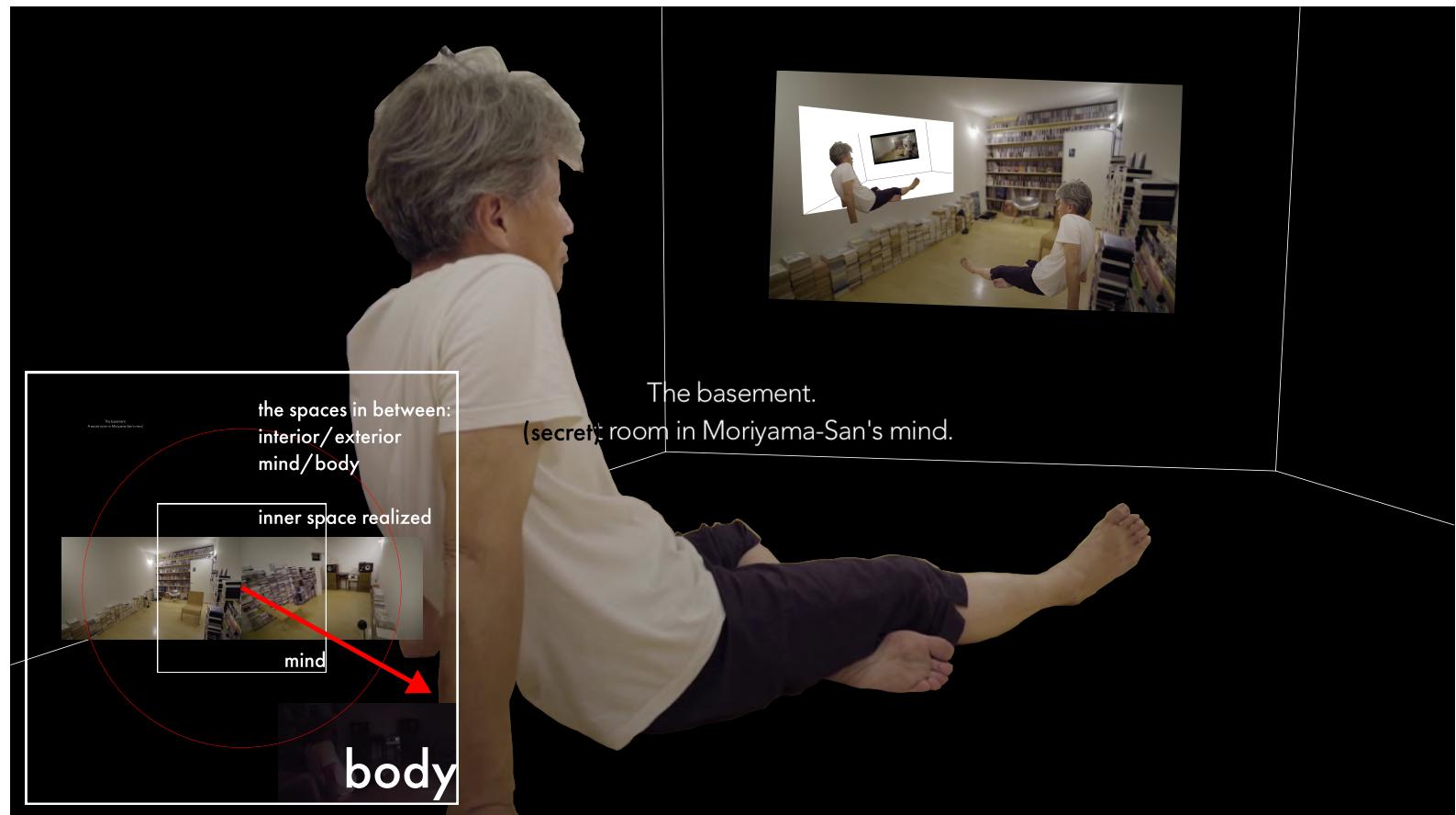
1940

1973

2005

# CONCEPTUAL

The act of cutting is a tool of the Surrealists to expose a reality that may exist, but is not perceived. When applied to the intimacy of a home or living space, said reality manifests as a true representation of inner space. Tenets of adaptability, intention, and creativity have been used to describe the conceptual tensions that Moriyama House presents. These ultimately coalesce into the final manifestation of Moriyama's will: his basement and its housing of music and video. Fundamentally, the question the basement answers is: what does one do with the freedom that Moriyama House provides? For Yasuo Moriyama, the client the house was conceived for, his inner space is able to be placed within real space, stretching the limits of everyday life.



# CONCLUSIONS

Many thanks to Ila Bêka, Louise Lemoine, Edmund Sumner, El Croquis, Lafic Kim, Yasuo Moriyama, and Ryue Nishizawa for providing many of the images and resources used here.



*Yasuo Moriyama's home is blurred out on Google Maps*