

Villa Dall'Ava

Time of construction: 1985-1991
Location: Saint Cloud, Paris, France
Clients: M. et Mme. Boude

Madame Lydie Boudet is a psychologist, and her husband Dominique Boudet is an architecture journalist.

Architect: Rem Koolhaas

Born in Rotterdam in 1944. Was working as a journalist before he went to study architecture in London. Koolhaas founded the Office for Metropolitan Architecture in 1975 together with Elia and Zoe Zenghelis and Madelon Vriesendorp. He graduated from the Architectural Association in London and in 1978 published *Delirious New York*, a Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan. In 1995, his book *S,M,L,XL* summarized the work of OMA and established connections between contemporary society and architecture. He heads the work of both OMA and AMO, the conceptual branch of OMA focused on social, economical and technological developments and exploring territories beyond architectural and urban concerns. Rem Koolhaas is a professor at Harvard University where he conducts the Project on the City.

Site:

650m² area in St. Cloud, bounded by greenery and garden walls, sloping steeply toward Paris, in a traditional residential neighborhood

Program:

A house (1350m²) for a family of 3 with 2 separate `apartments` (one for a couple and one for their daughter) with a swimming pool (30m²) on the roof

Materials:

superstructure: concrete, steel columns under front apartment; cladding: sell pilarguli slate, exposed concrete, corrugated aluminium lacquered with copper and aluminium, polished anodized aluminium mullions; clear, green, and sandblasted glass

Budget:

500,000 euro

Project

“The architectural option was determined by the notable influence of the built up and landscape surroundings. Thus, in order to preserve the visual relationships and control the complex correspondences between the existing architectural objects, it was decided to divide the terrain into three belts on an east-west orientation. The first partition, defined as a garden, is inscribed in the continuity of the upper allotment section and extends to the pedestrian entrance. The wish to preserve an unconstructed belt at the end of the site permits the establishment of the idea of a cross in the void, and the value the new neighborhood relationships. The lengthwise building constitutes the second belt while the third, asphalted, provides access to the garage. The main volume of the building is arranged along the axis of the allotment, grouping the bedrooms on the upper floor in two perpendicular volumes to the main body. The roofs offer a panoramic view of Paris.”

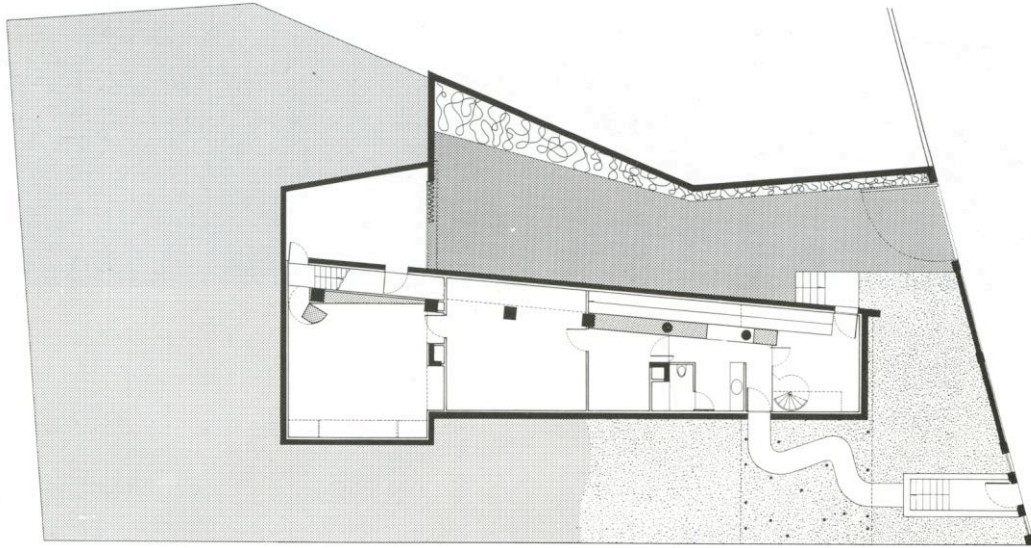
-OMA/Rem Koolhaas, 1987-1993

“You have to look at it from all angles before you can grasp this Villa by Rem Koolhaas. Retrace the shock it causes from the street, in this calm and cushy quarter of Saint-Cloud, on this hillside looking towards the Bois de Boulogne and the distant spectacle of Paris. Its silhouette is reminiscent of an aggressive and run-down Villa Savoye, rising behind the alibi of an old boundary wall. The same features are there: A floor torn by a long window, set on a floating ground level that stands on piles. But the upper floor, capped by lacquered corrugated iron, butts brusquely against a wall that cuts it. And, once past the gate, the eye balks at the piles out of plumb, painted in differing grays to create a trompe l'œil depth. With the pathetic little concrete path running over the lawn and weaving thru them. So the snare is set from the start: the house is not what it appears to be, and systematically adopts – sometimes with humor, sometimes aggressively – the contrary position to what it recalls, to what we expect, or to what we imagine. In this way the ground floor is nothing of the sort. Because of the slope it is imbedded in the ground. The real ground floor is upstairs, flush with the upper part of the garden. After the sophistry of the entrance that gives onto a room glazed full height, a ramp, like the one at Poissy, leads up there. The ramp runs along the glazed wall, which would be a façade were it not parallel to a party wall. The promenade is brief and uncovers nothing, except the living room, glazed like an aquarium and opening onto the garden that nothing really delimits. This level turns about to return to the volume of the entrance. It unfurls spaces that are fluid – too fluid – and glazed too, on the other long side. It is an open corridor, too open, a sequence of spaces accelerated by the curved kitchen wall in folded, translucent plastic. Caught and held in a state of weightlessness, the Villa Dall’Ava seems to be running away from itself, as if it were on the verge of dissolving, even if it does run towards the forbidden facades of its stuffy neighbors. You have to push on to understand, take one or the other stairways placed at either end, leading to the suspended boxes that are the two private apartments of the house. The first, on the street, is for the child. The second, for the parents, is placed over the living room. It is displaced to the other side of the wall line in an unbelievable overhang. You have to go even higher up to look at the suspended places of the roofs, the basin of the swimming pool, and the vista over Paris, which up to here the villa seems to have ignored. Everything is contrary to common sense, disconcerting. Gravity is upended: the heaviest on top, the laws of physics denied. Let's go back over what we have seen in this villa. It is roughly regulated by the thick concrete wall set lengthwise on the lot, at either end of which is one of the two boxes, one leaning against it, the other straddling it where it disappears. The whole thing I like a powerful lever. The remainder is merely circulation, even if we call the indeterminate spaces of the garden floor living rooms. It is a

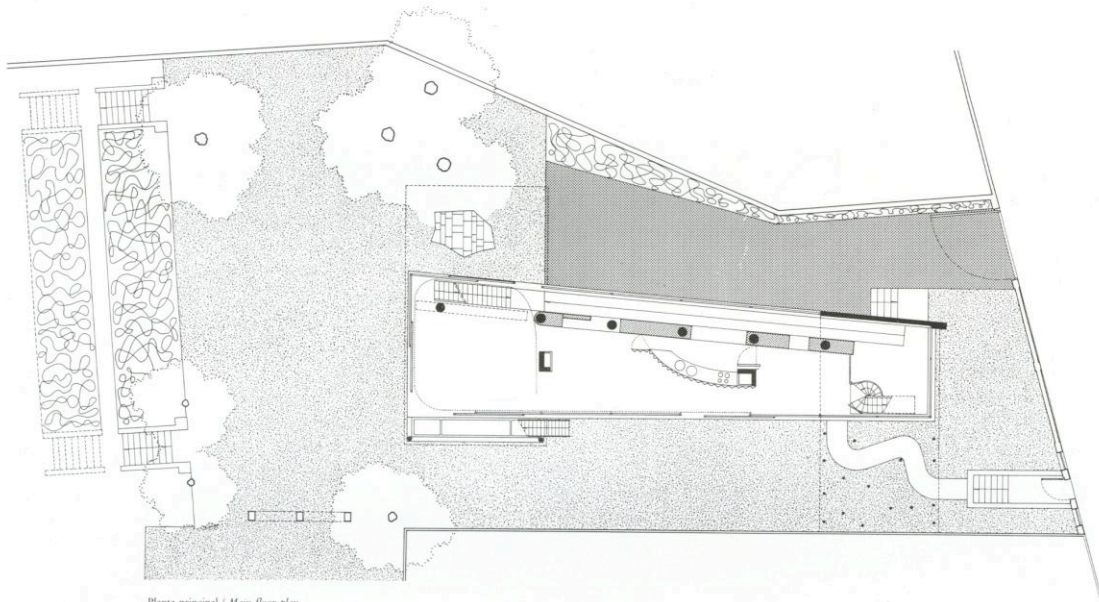
pedal mechanism that produces nothing but movement, disequilibrium. Arranged as it is, the system produces all manner of vertical compressions against which struggle the powerful interior columns, partly masked by the line of the cupboards that separate the ramp from the adjoining rooms. These compressions are resolved by the horizontal dilatations of the glazed walls. Space overflows to the exterior, or takes hold of it, to such an extent that the borders between the inside and out become indistinct, just as the balance between above and below is uncertain. The outcome of these inversions of direction is a feeling of contradictory or contradicted forces, that scans the itinerary, depending on whether we are in a passage of expansion, in the living room for example, of pouring (if we may so express ourselves) as is the case in the kitchen, or of vertical extension, as in the volume of entry. So many delicate balances, constantly threatened by instability, are to be found among these gravitational tensions abolished by frozen movements, or interferences of directions. There is no pause, however. No static position really possible. To escape from this discomfort, you have to take refuge inside the boxes, where intimacy seems to be reserved. The play on the roof offers another illusion. The gift of the sky is factitious. Resting one's body there would mean exhibiting one's self, and, since there is no parapet, it wouldn't do to be subject to vertigo. Not for you and me then. No more perhaps than the villa itself, since nothing proves that it is a house, so thoroughly has the idea of home been evacuated. This manifesto of the new age is thrown like a fierce and exultant cry in the face of our times. It says that its values are empty, like words without meaning, but which we still play. That there is no living, other than the hollow of a box. No communication other than deambulation, or the dumb parade of bodies. Just as there are no walls, no windows, no below or above, no inside, no outside. When nothing says, when nothing more is said, when anything can be done, there still remains what we desire. Making architecture for instance, and talking about it. But is this house – which could in no way serve as a model – still architecture? It is creation, pure creation, and in this sense it satisfies the clients who wanted – more than a mere house – to add something to history. Koolhaas' own exigency has gone beyond their dreams. Their villa is a work. Hieratic and perfect, critical and absurd, enigmatic and loquacious, like a work of art, a Don Judd or a Tony Smith. The latter one of his works – a black box – Die, which might be taken as an injunction. It is purely mental space could not be lived in. Similarly the Villa Dall'Ava might well be entitled Live, Live now, if you can!"

-L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui.

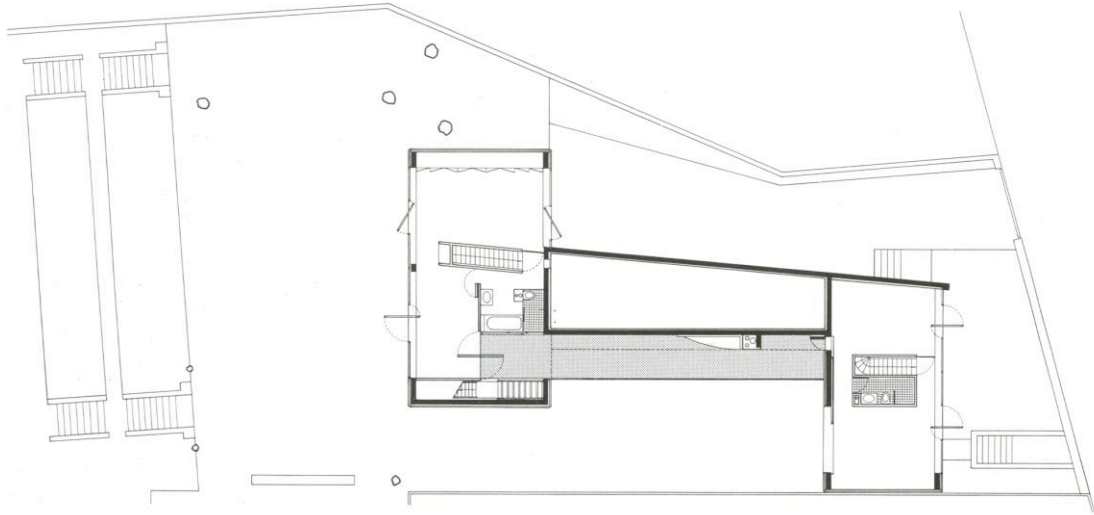
Plans



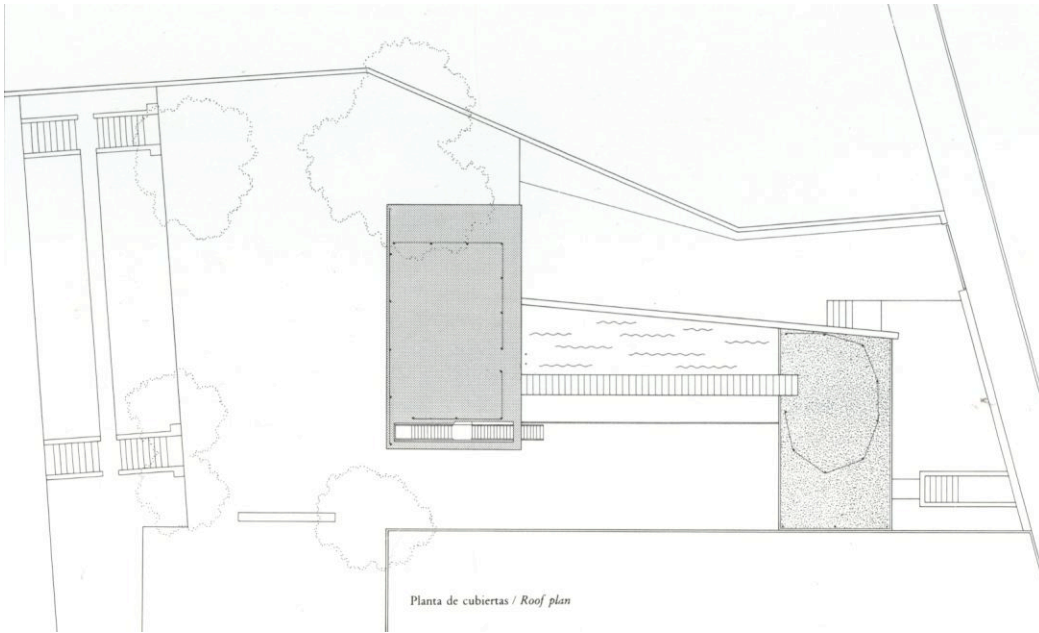
Planta de acceso / Access floor plan



Planta principal / Main floor plan

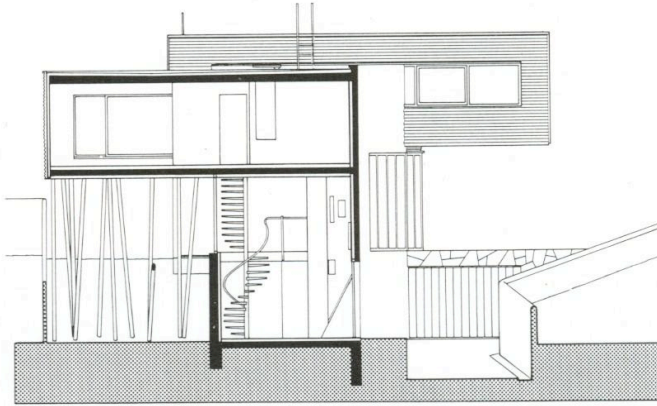


Planta alta / Upper floor plan

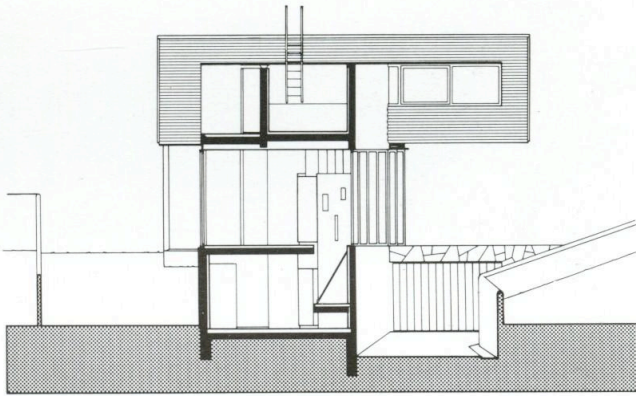


Planta de cubiertas / Roof plan

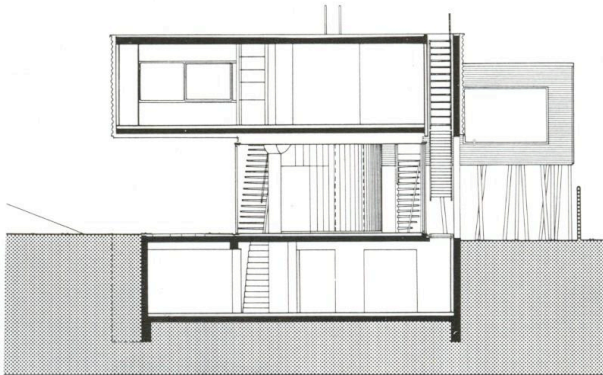
Sections



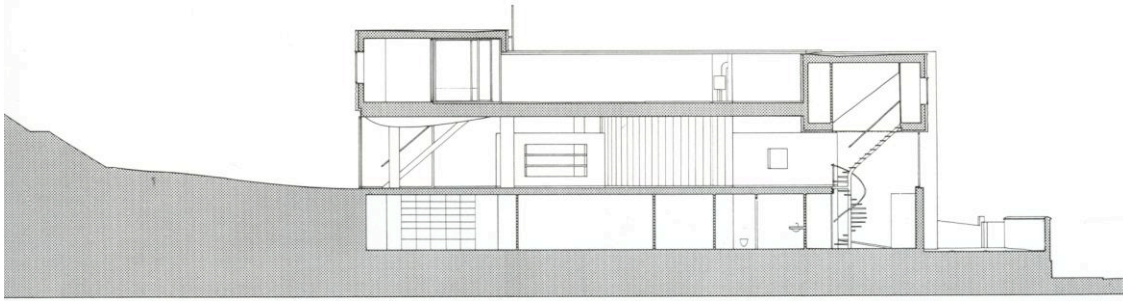
Sección transversal por dormitorio niños
Cross section through children's room



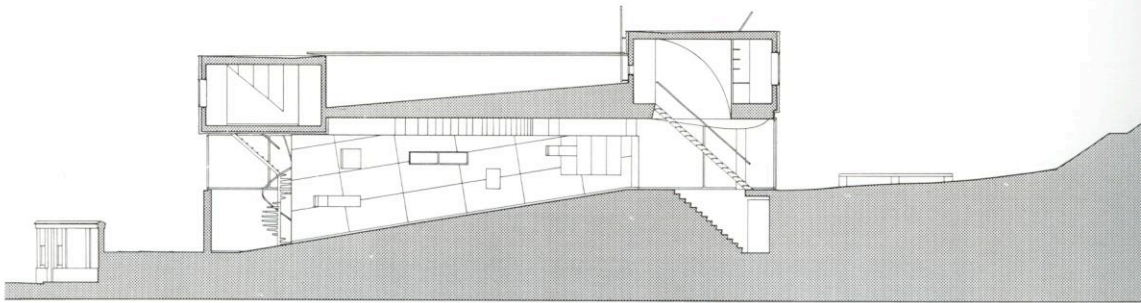
Sección transversal por piscina / *Cross section through the pool*



Sección transversal por dormitorio principal / *Cross section through man bedroom*

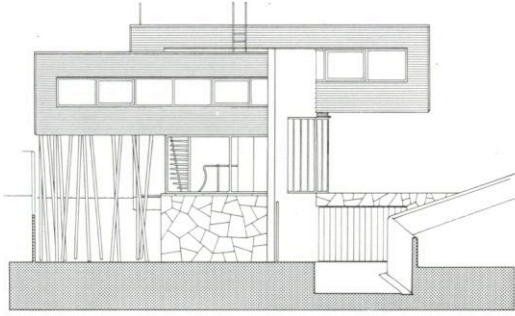


Sección longitudinal por escalera Este / Longitudinal section through East staircase

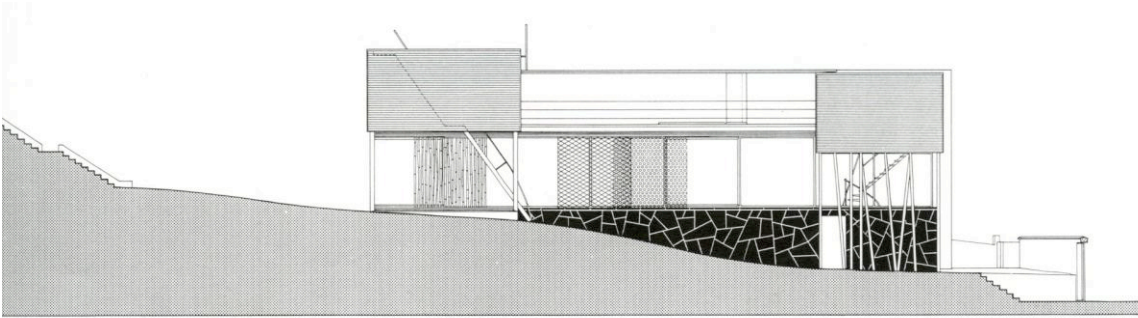


Sección longitudinal por rampa / Longitudinal section through the ramp

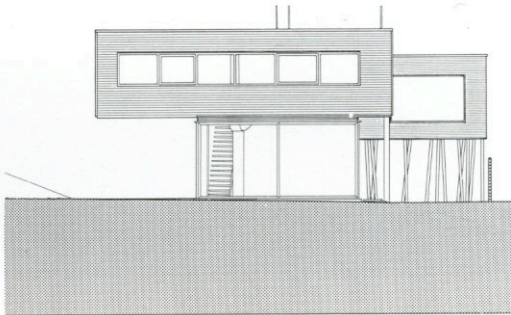
Elevations



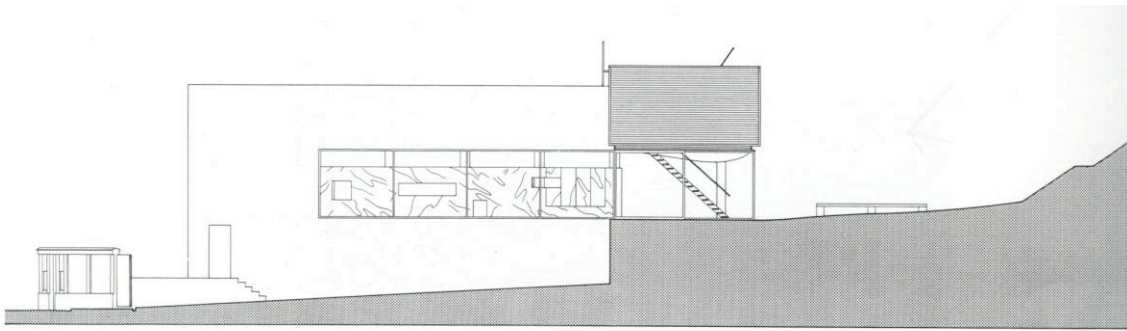
Fachada principal (Este) / Main facade (East)



Alzado Sur / South elevation



Fachada al jardín trasero (Oeste) / Rear garden facade (West)



Alzado Norte / North elevation

Photographs of built project

























Sources

Books

OMA/Rem Koolhaas, 1987-1993 (Photographs and plans from here)

Key houses in the 20th century

Considering Rem Koolhaas and the Office of Metropolitan Architecture: What is OMA?

Journals

GA Houses

L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui

House and Garden

Arkitektur

Lecture

Rem Koolhaas, University of Michigan, 1998

Website

www.oma.eu