

## **FORM FOLLOWS FIRE**

PROPOSAL FOR A FIRE-RESILIENT CONCEPT HOME  
IN THE PACIFIC PALISADES  
LOS ANGELES, CA

CASE STUDY 2.0

**CONCEPT**

## WHAT SURVIVED ?



- MASONRY
- WATER
- VEGETATION

PACIFIC PALISADES, CA - JANUARY 21, 2025

An aerial view of homes destroyed by the Palisades Fire. Surviving materials predominantly comprise masonry (walls, chimneys), pools, and some vegetation (especially old growth). (Photo by Mario Tama)

## FORM FOLLOWS FIRE

Proposal for a Fire-Resilient Concept Home  
in the Pacific Palisades, Los Angeles, CA

California wildfires in 2025 were some of the most destructive in the state's history, claiming thousands of structures, tens of thousands of acres, and a great many lives. In the wake remains a labyrinth of grief for vanished homes, ravaged ecosystems, and neighborhoods rendered unrecognizable. The scope and danger of the fallout on public health is as yet incalculable, as is the psychic damage to residents who watched the physicality of their lives, including shared memories of community and place, evaporate.

These unprecedented fires make plain the utter fragility of our ecological and social systems, highlighting the existential threat that persists if we fail to confront the reality of our climate trajectory. Without rebuilding initiatives that make good-faith, informed attempts to integrate rather than retrofit fire-risk solutions, we leave future generations more vulnerable to catastrophe. We are challenged to develop new designs that consider and anticipate these threats before they recur. Faced with the task of rebuilding, the absence of intention is an avoidable mistake.

*Form Follows Fire* is a proposal for a re-dreamed LA home that makes fire-resilient design a visible and expressive part of its architecture. It is a functional, buildable case study on how the circumstances of climate threats can

catalyze new forms of beauty and comfort, and embody environmental integration. The fundamental aim is to transform fire resilience into architecture that elevates standards of living.

At its core, FFF is a palette of fire-resistant, passive, and sustainable systems, both shaping the home's performance under climate pressure and enriching residents' experience of daily life:

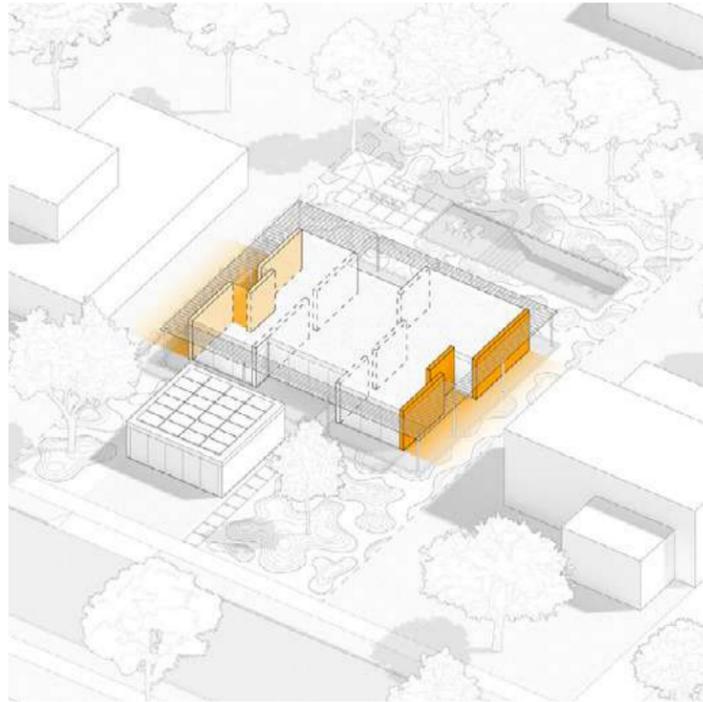
- Concrete block walls provide fire shielding and thermal mass, invoking a sense of durability and permanence.
- An emergency water sprinkler system draws from the pool, which doubles as a reservoir independent of strained utility supplies, defending the property during service outages.
- A thin perimeter pond surrounds the house like a moat, slowing the advance of flammable debris and embers during fire events, passively cooling the home in the summer, or remaining empty during drought conditions.
- The landscape is composed of wild native gardens separated by a network of decomposed granite pathways, creating a defensible archipelago of coastal scrub ecologies that slows fire spread. Set back from the house, coastal live oaks are established that can be enjoyed for many generations.
- Integrated solar power, rainwater harvesting, sun shading, and natural ventilation make the house

not only survivable, but a thriving, life-sustaining environment.

The design approach pays homage to the original Case Study Program and LA's modernist lineage, drawing from Neutra's interpretation of light and space, Koenig's steel and water, Ellwood's simplicity, and Lotery's connection to nature. This novel typology considers fire protection and ecological viability as intrinsic design features, with the belief that such life-affirming details will have a net positive effect on residents and the ecosystem. It was developed in collaboration with LA firefighters who battled and experienced the behavior of the fires firsthand, as well as firesafe landscape specialists from Theodore Payne Foundation. It represents an effort to honor LA's most celebrated architecture while integrating firesafe principles, which we hope leads to something new that is rooted in and representative of our cultural heritage and present-day climate reality.

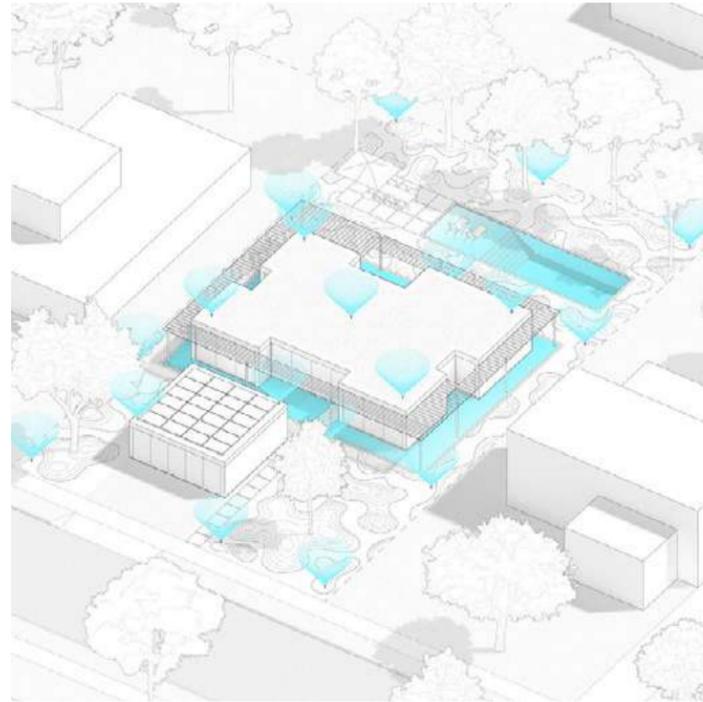
The following is a proposal for the Pacific Palisades as part of the Case Study 2.0 program. Additionally, we have put forth a concept for a typical Altadena parcel. Instead of a fixed design concept, each of these proposals represents a flexible design system that can adapt to a variety of lot types and be fine-tuned to meet the specific needs of those looking to rebuild.

## CONCEPT DIAGRAMS



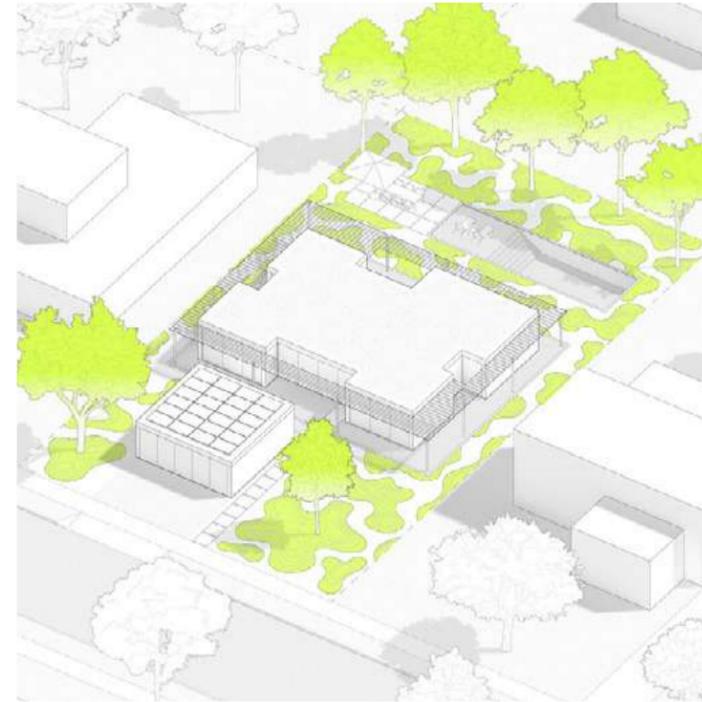
### FIRE WALLS

Non-combustible concrete block walls are oriented to protect against the primary fire spread through adjacent neighboring houses. Within this protected core, larger glazed openings frame views and connections to front and rear landscapes.



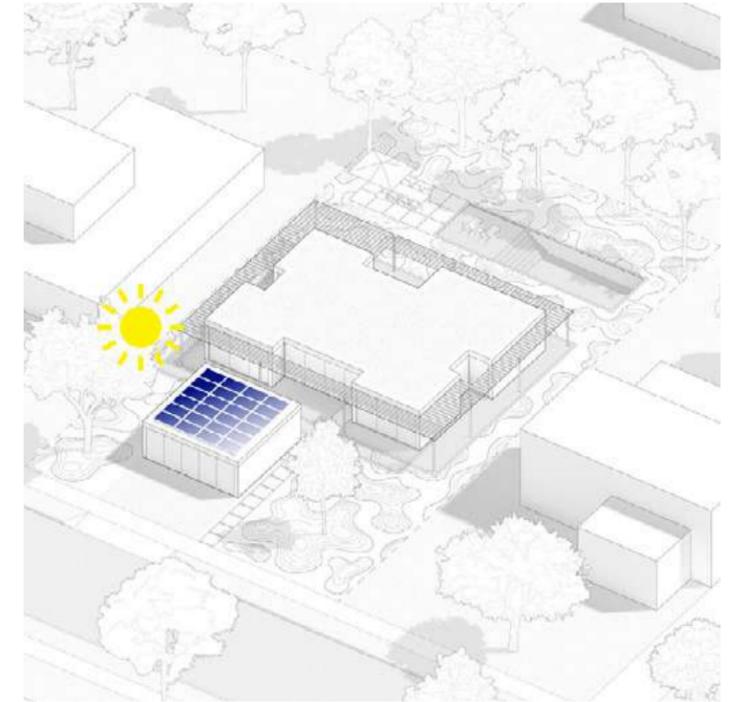
### WATER DEFENSE

During extreme fire events, when water becomes an invaluable resource, sprinklers located on the roof and landscape draw water from the swimming pool. A reflecting pool surrounds the house to protect against flammable ground debris and embers. During times of drought, homeowners may opt to drain the pools to conserve water or refill them strategically to build up reserves.



### FIRESAFE LANDSCAPE

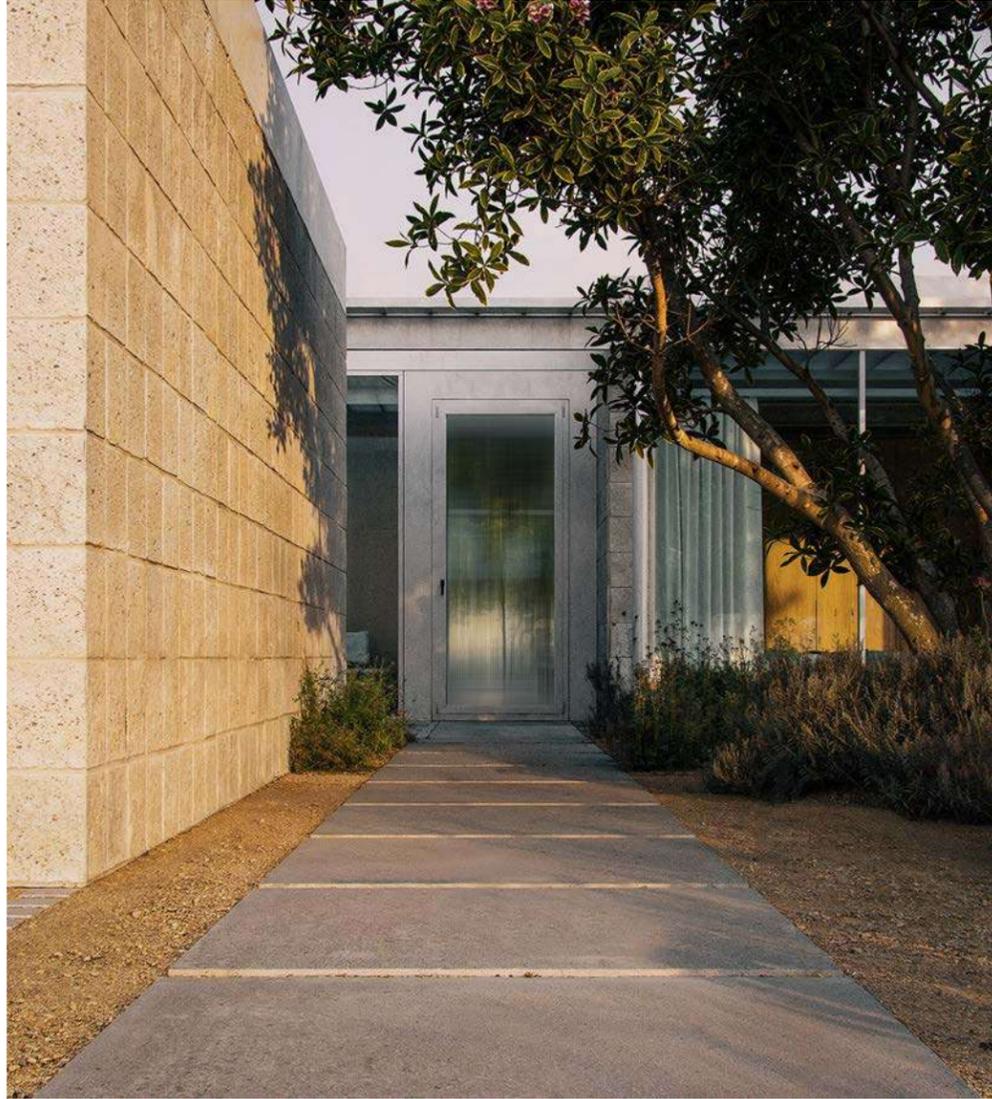
Wild native gardens separated by a network of decomposed granite pathways slow fire spread and create a defensible archipelago of coastal scrub ecologies. Set back from the house, coastal live oaks are established that can be enjoyed for many generations.



### ENERGY

A 10kW solar array generates electricity, which can be stored on site to reduce peak utility demand and provide backup power to the sprinkler system in the event of a power outage.

IMAGES

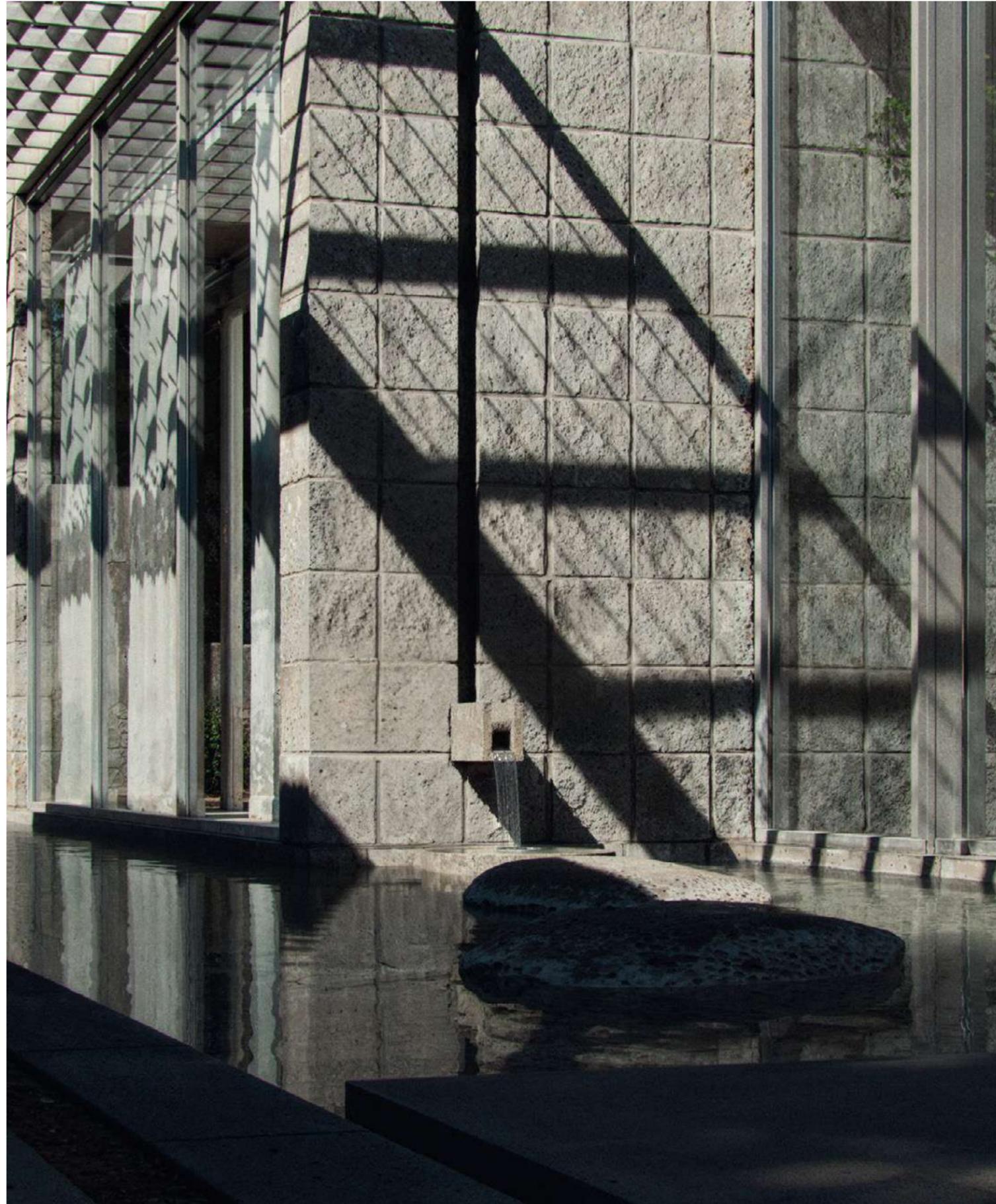


FORM FOLLOWS FIRE / PACIFIC PALISADES



MAX MORIYAMA





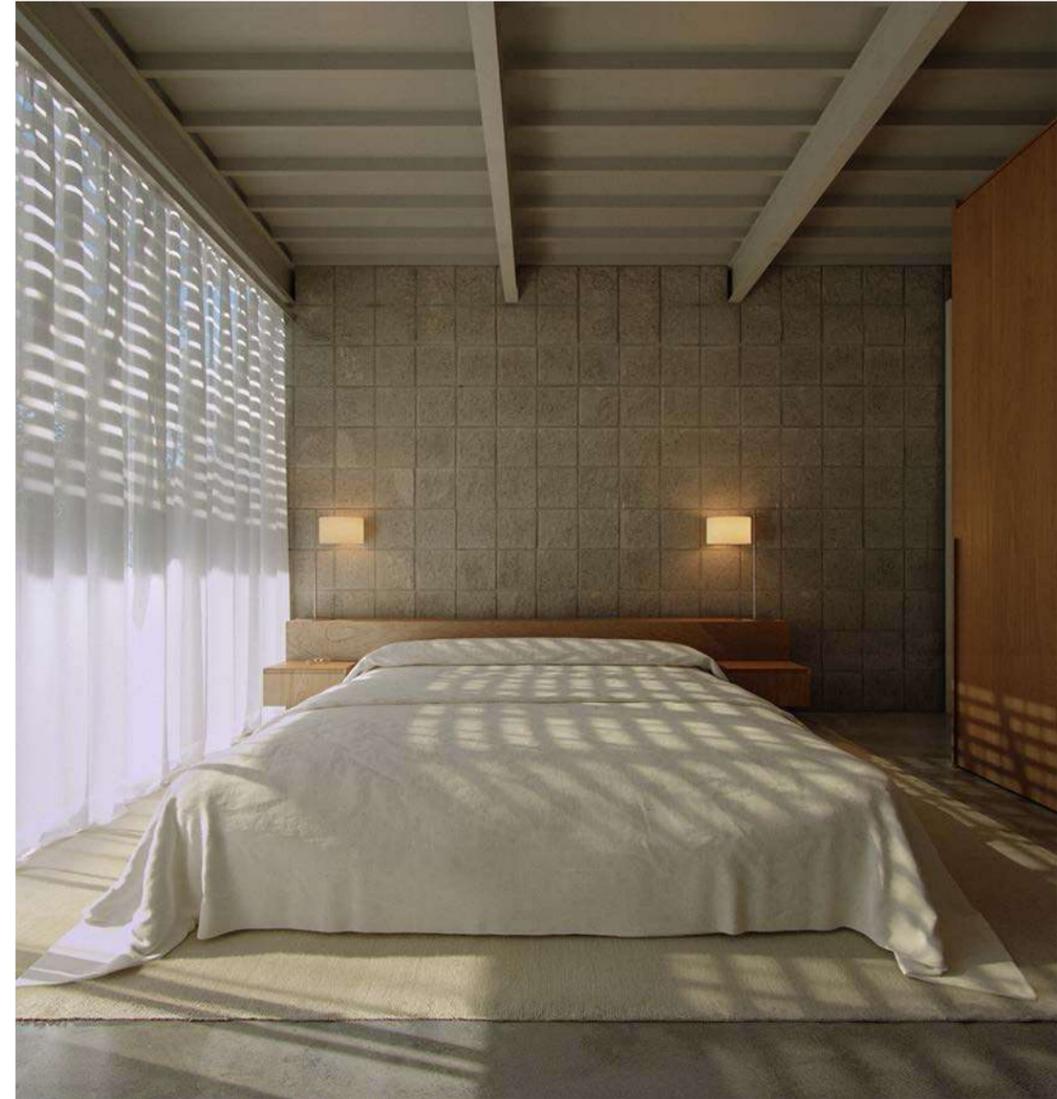


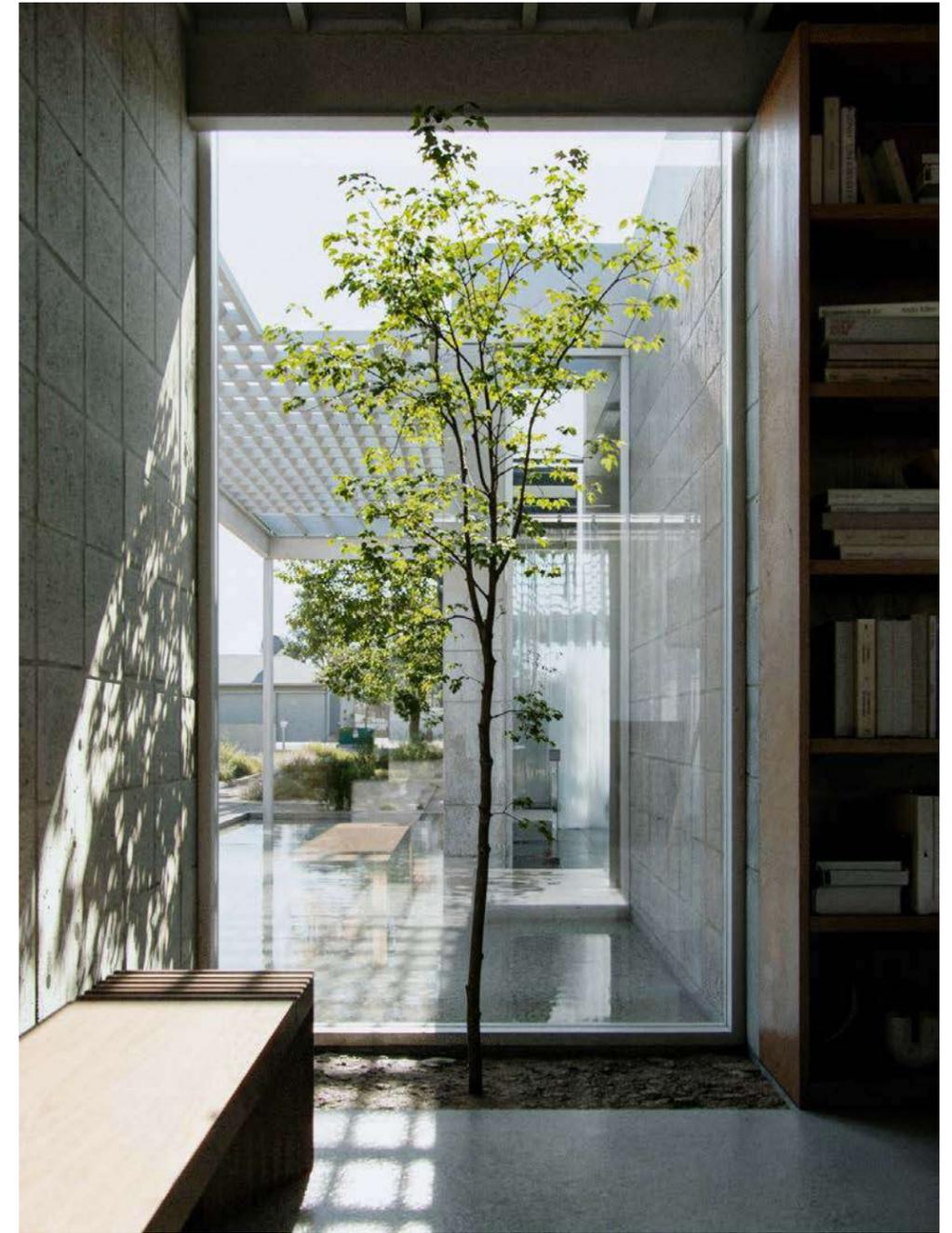
FORM FOLLOWS FIRE / PACIFIC PALISADES



MAX MORIYAMA







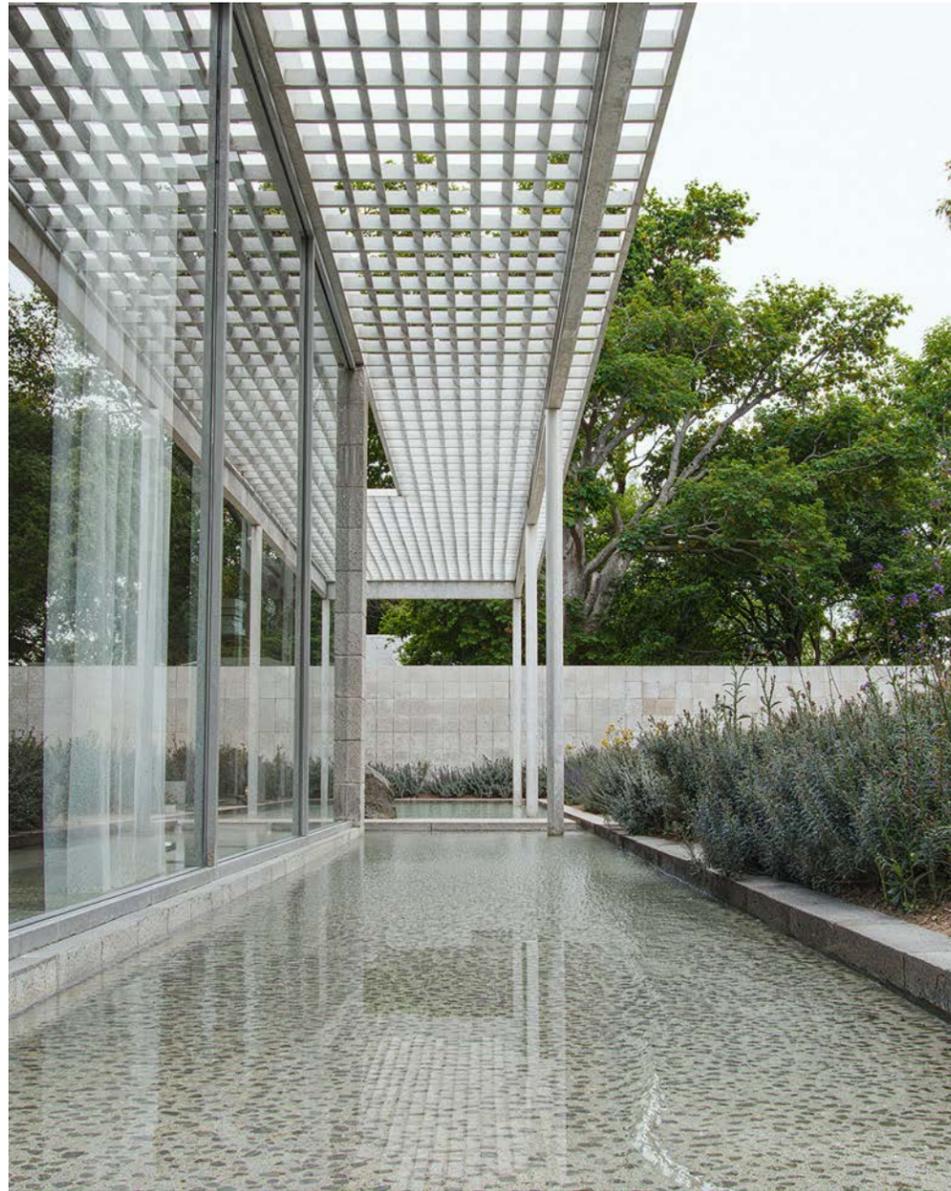




FORM FOLLOWS FIRE / PACIFIC PALISADES



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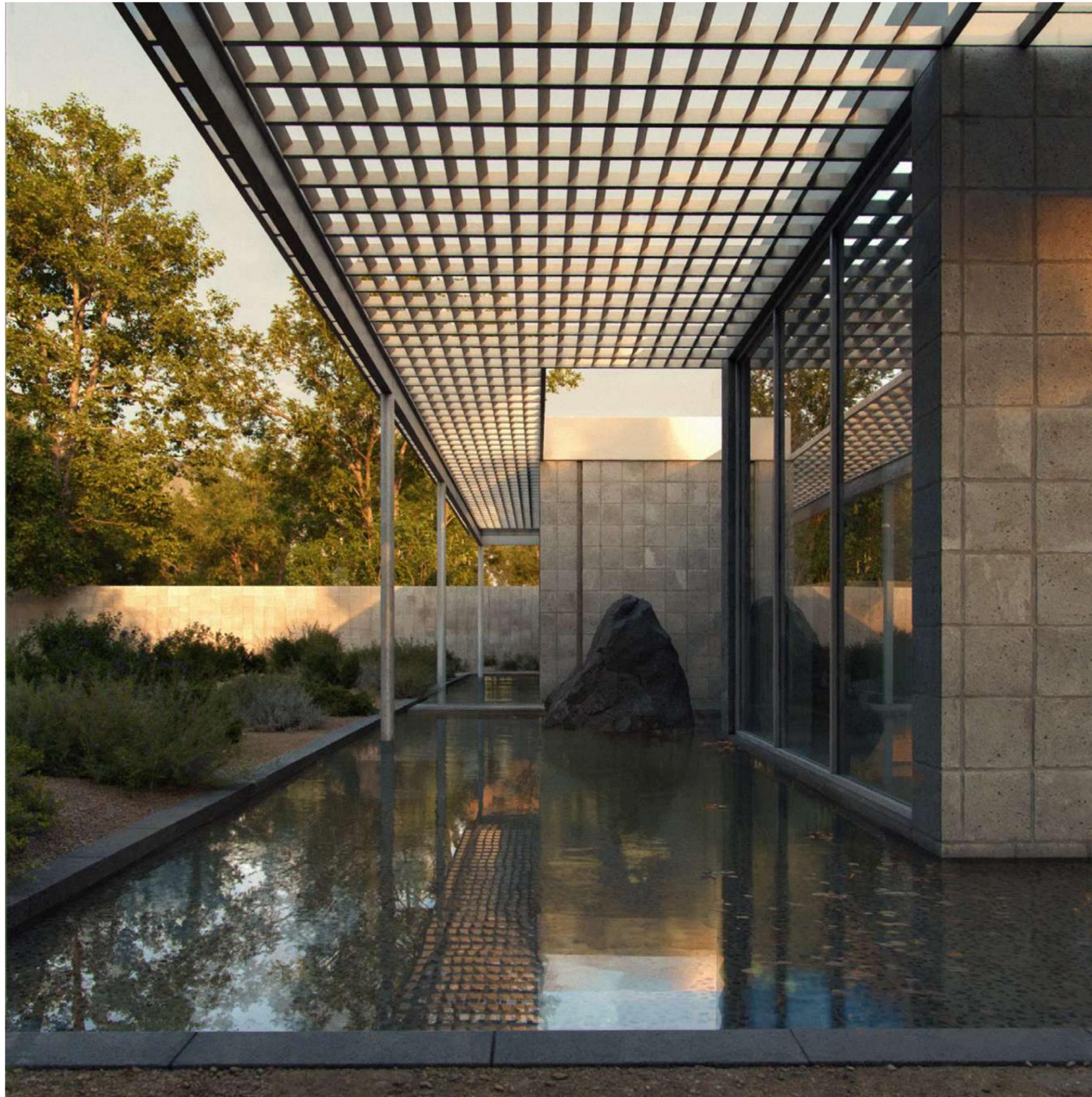
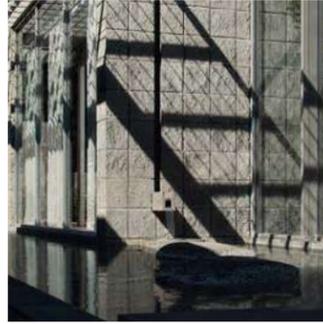




IMAGE OVERVIEW



001  
Entry view



004  
Entry water garden



007  
Living room



010  
Living room II



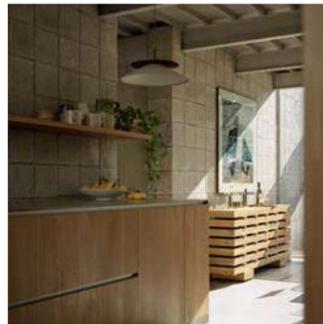
013  
Pool, lounge, outdoor dining



016  
Sunshade and water garden II



002  
Street view



005  
Kitchen



008  
Bedroom



011  
Indoor planter



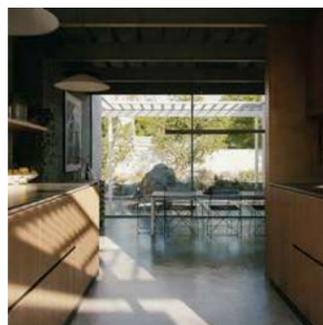
014  
In-pool lounge chairs



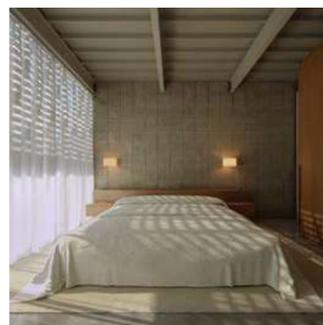
017  
Sunshade and water garden III



003  
Master bedroom exterior



006  
Kitchen II



009  
Bedroom II



012  
Rear water garden



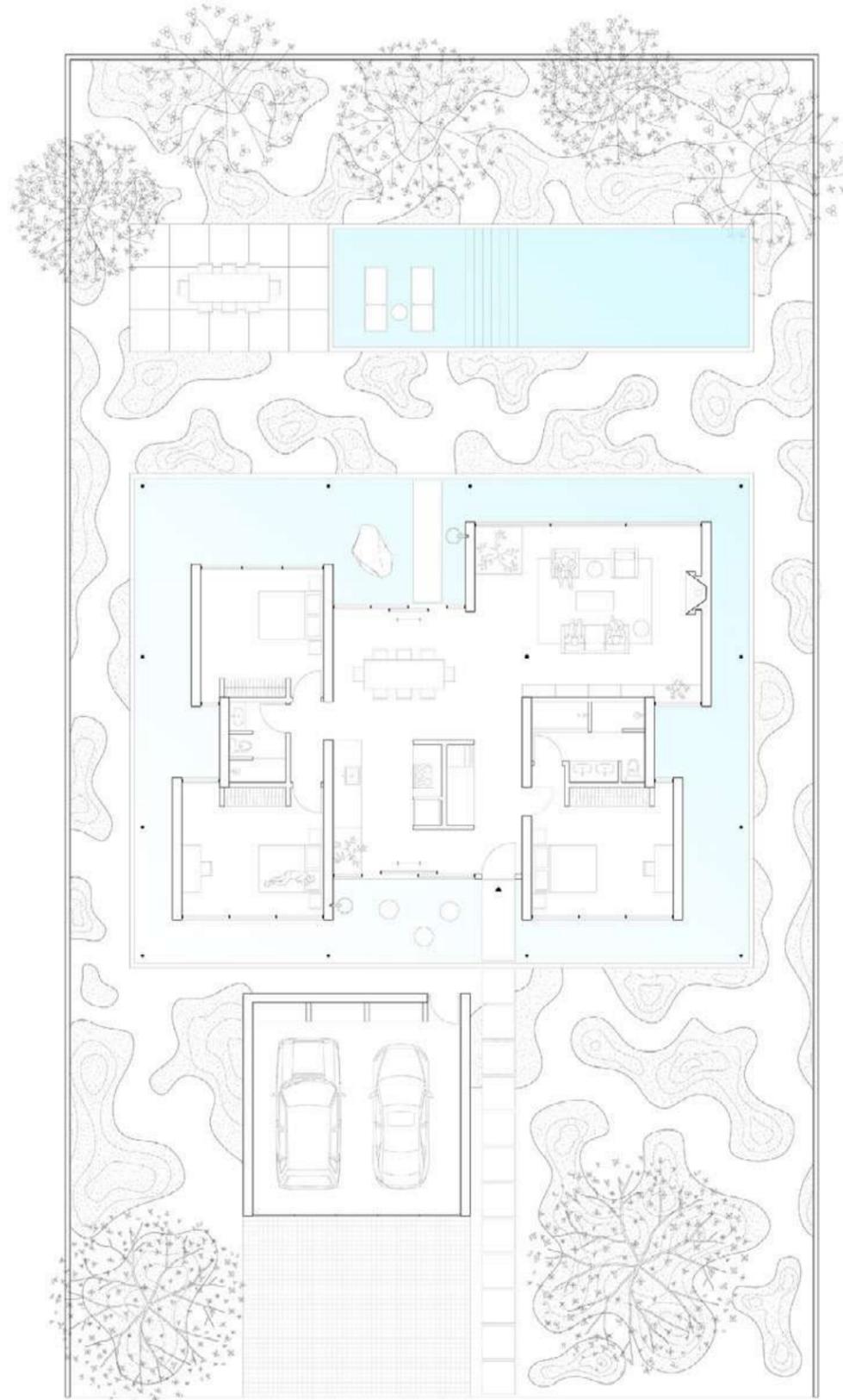
015  
Sunshade and water garden



018  
View from rear landscape garden

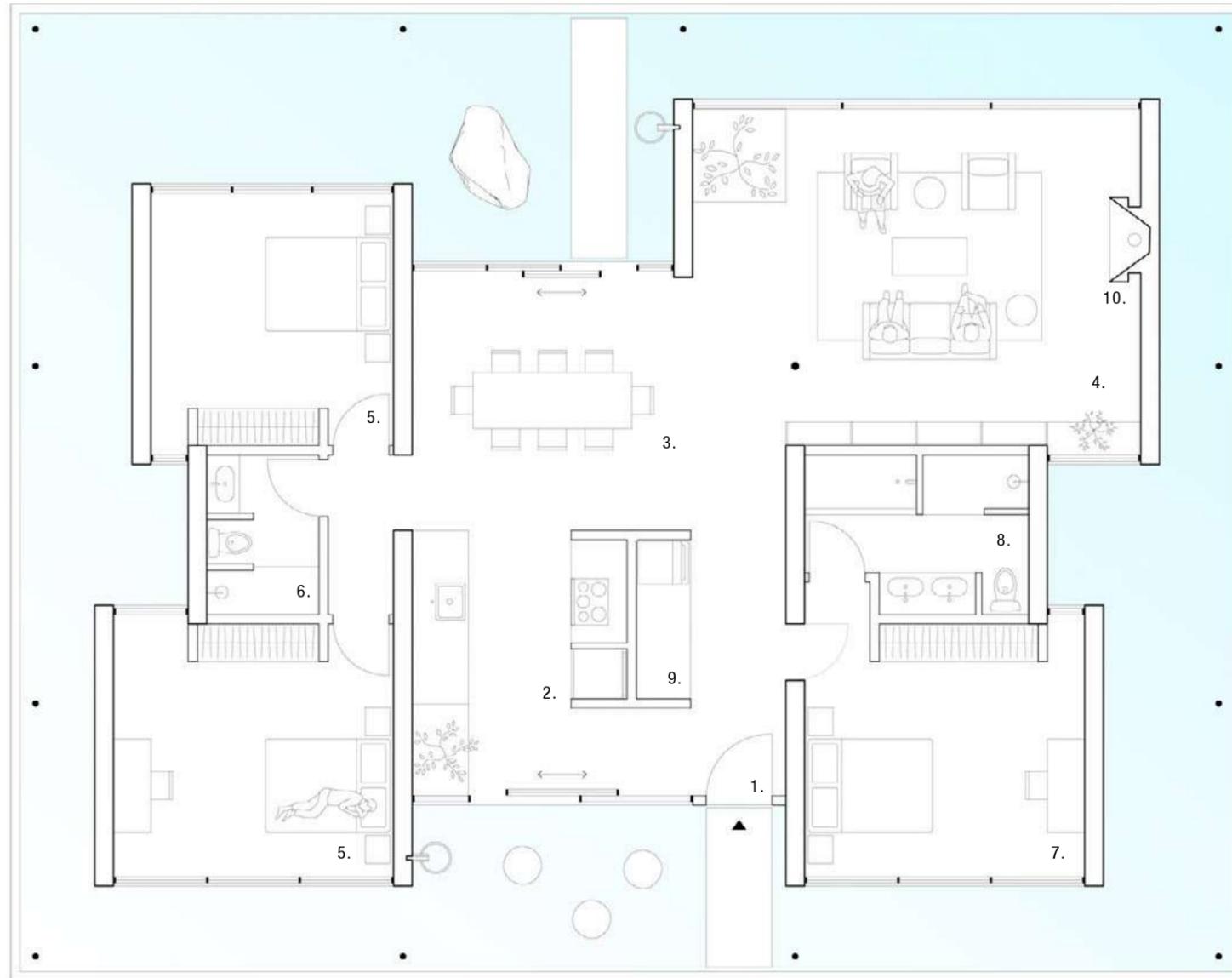
## DRAWINGS

**SITE PLAN**  
SCALE: 1:200



**PLAN**

SCALE: 1:100



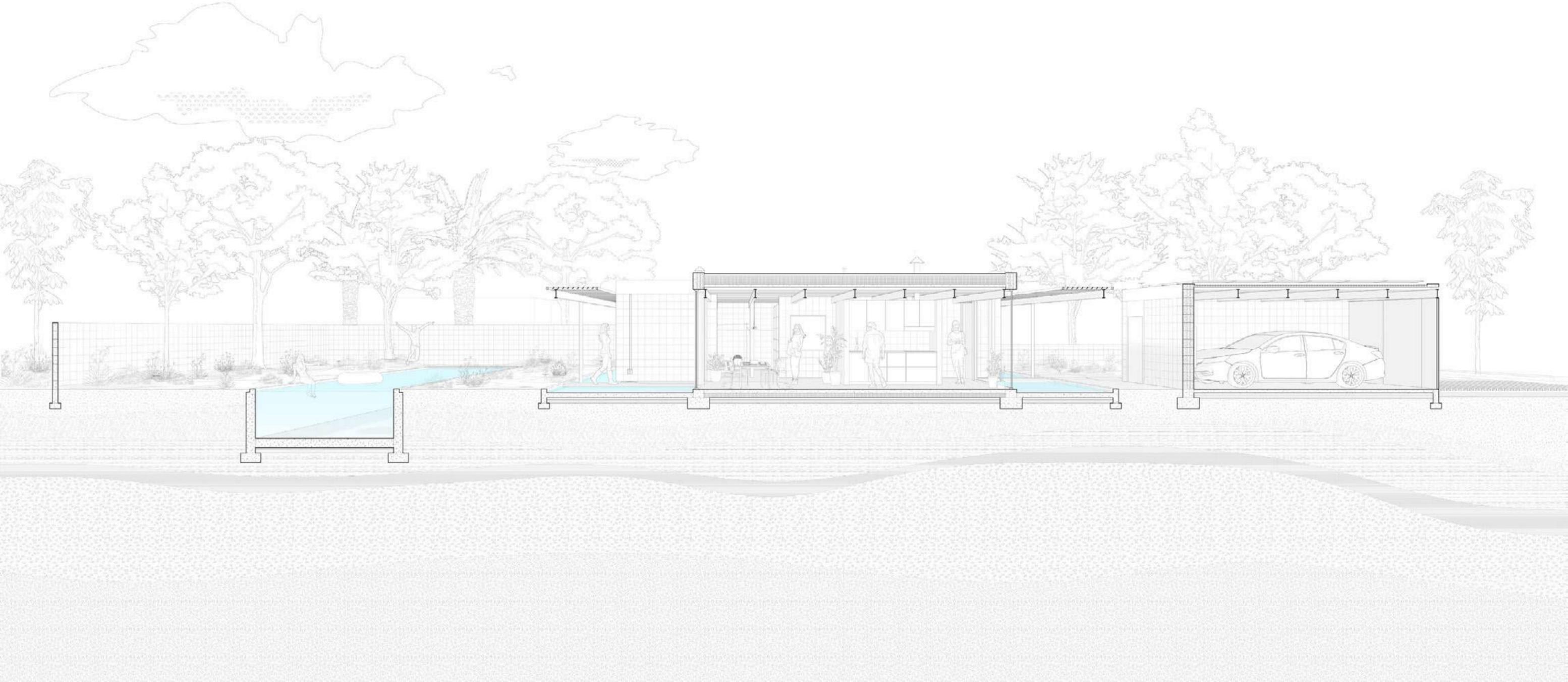
- 1. ENTRY
- 2. KITCHEN
- 3. DINING
- 4. LIVING
- 5. BEDROOM
- 6. GUEST BATH
- 7. MASTER BEDROOM
- 8. MASTER BATH
- 9. LAUNDRY/STORAGE
- 10. FIREPLACE

GROSS AREA: 2,000 SF

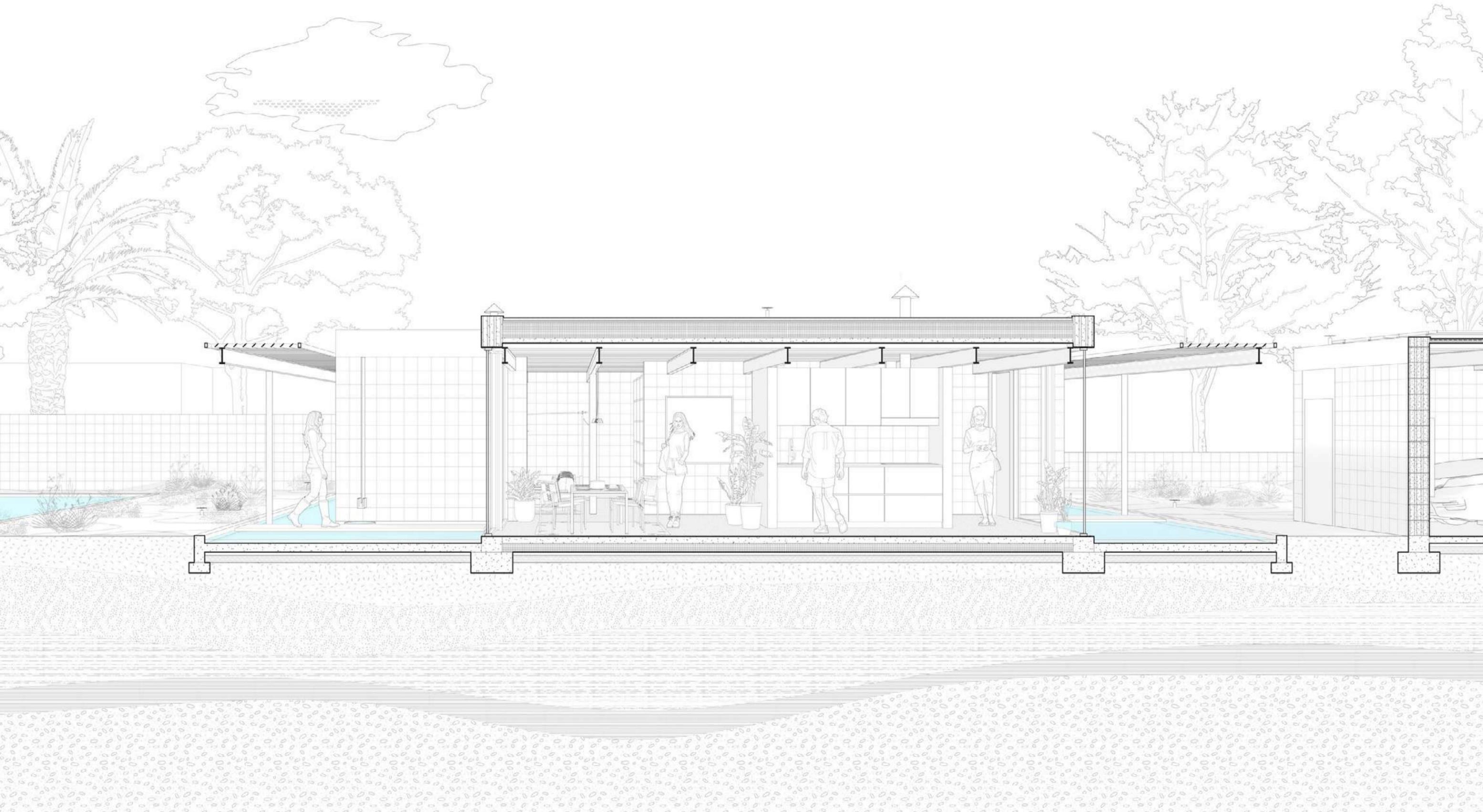
10'

**SITE SECTION**

SCALE: 1:100



SECTION 1  
SCALE: 1:50



SECTION 2  
SCALE: 1:50



**INFO**

## DESIGN TEAM

### MAX MORIYAMA

Max Moriyama is a Los Angeles-based designer focused on residential, hospitality, landscape, and industrial design. As a paraplegic, his work is committed to accessible design and advocacy for the disabled community.

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### BUILDING SCIENCE: TOSHI WORKS

Toshi Works is an international practice that operates as a critical link between conceptual ambition and the realities of construction, specializing in designing for demanding climates and remote landscapes. They seek to bridge human to nature within a values-driven framework emphasizing beauty and harmony of materials.

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### FIRE CONSULTANT: ERIC SHIROISHI

Eric Shiroishi is a Firefighter and Paramedic with 15 years of experience, working for LA County for 11 years. He holds certifications in wildland firefighting and wildland-urban interface from Cal Fire Wildland, Palomar, and LA County Fire Academies. He has firsthand experience fighting a number of brush fires, including the 2018 Woolsey Fire and the 2025 Eaton Fire.

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