Five Glass Houses: An Architectural Collection

MUOTO

This is the tale of a strange house once imagined for a house collector. Mister Collector, as we may call him, used to live in five glass houses. He had bought these five houses over the years, not by necessity, but as a way to fulfil his love of glass architecture (he had German origins). Due to his eccentric and intense character, he could not stay more than a few days in a single place, and his life was about to travel from one house to another. And always in the same order. Once he had visited them all, he would simply go back to the first one, visit all the others again. Just like Howard Hughes, the famous aviator who used to live in a series of strictly identical apartments spread around the world, his life was about experiencing speed. The speed he was seeking was not yet the same speed as that of a bullet train or a sport car. Rather, it was a kind of inertia. A speed so absolute that it would become like static. Having bought these five beautiful glass houses, he had managed to combine his contradictory desires of speed and architecture.

One day, he thought he had become to old to keep moving from one house to another, and decided he would gather all his collection in a single place, so as to live in all his houses at once. No more travelling ! No more moving from one house to another. The houses had to move to him. He called his architect who suggested to deconstruct all five houses and reconstruct them in the same place, arguing that glass houses were particularly suited for deconstruction and reconstruction. Mister Collector enthusiastically accepted. His houses were then unbuilt and rebuilt on the same plot. But not just one next to the other, but really intertwined with each other, so as to make one house out of five. The result was a kind weird space-time compression. A house with five bathrooms and his five kitchens. A labyrinth of crisscrossing glass panels, steel structures, flat and slopped roofs, stone and wooden floors, decorated with an eclectic set of original pieces of furniture, carpets and vintage appliances. Mister collector could then live in all his five glass houses at once. Trapped in his own crystal castle, he found what he had always looking for: enjoy his entire collection and feel like waking up in a new glass house everyday.
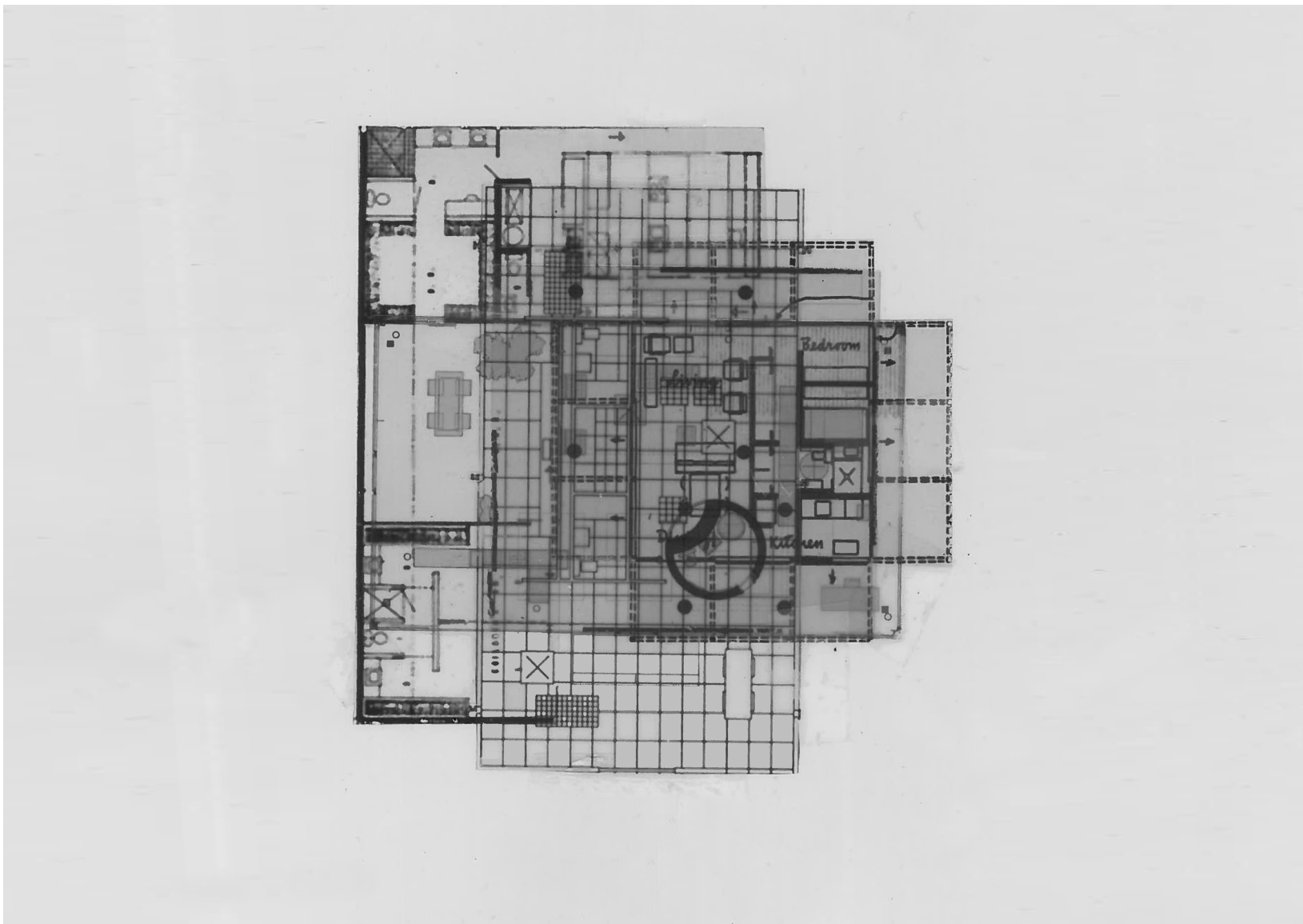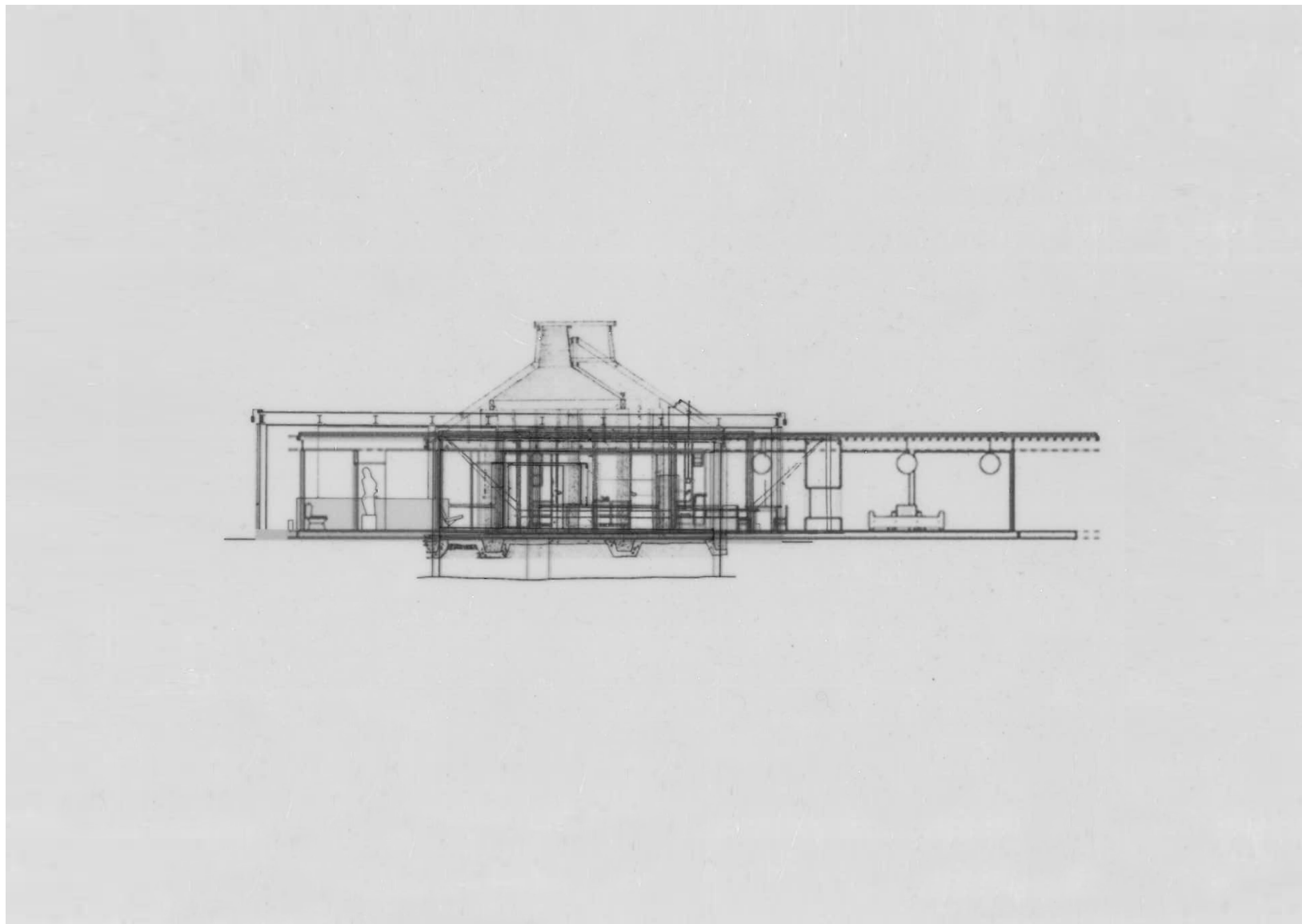
Philip Johnson, Glass house, 1949.
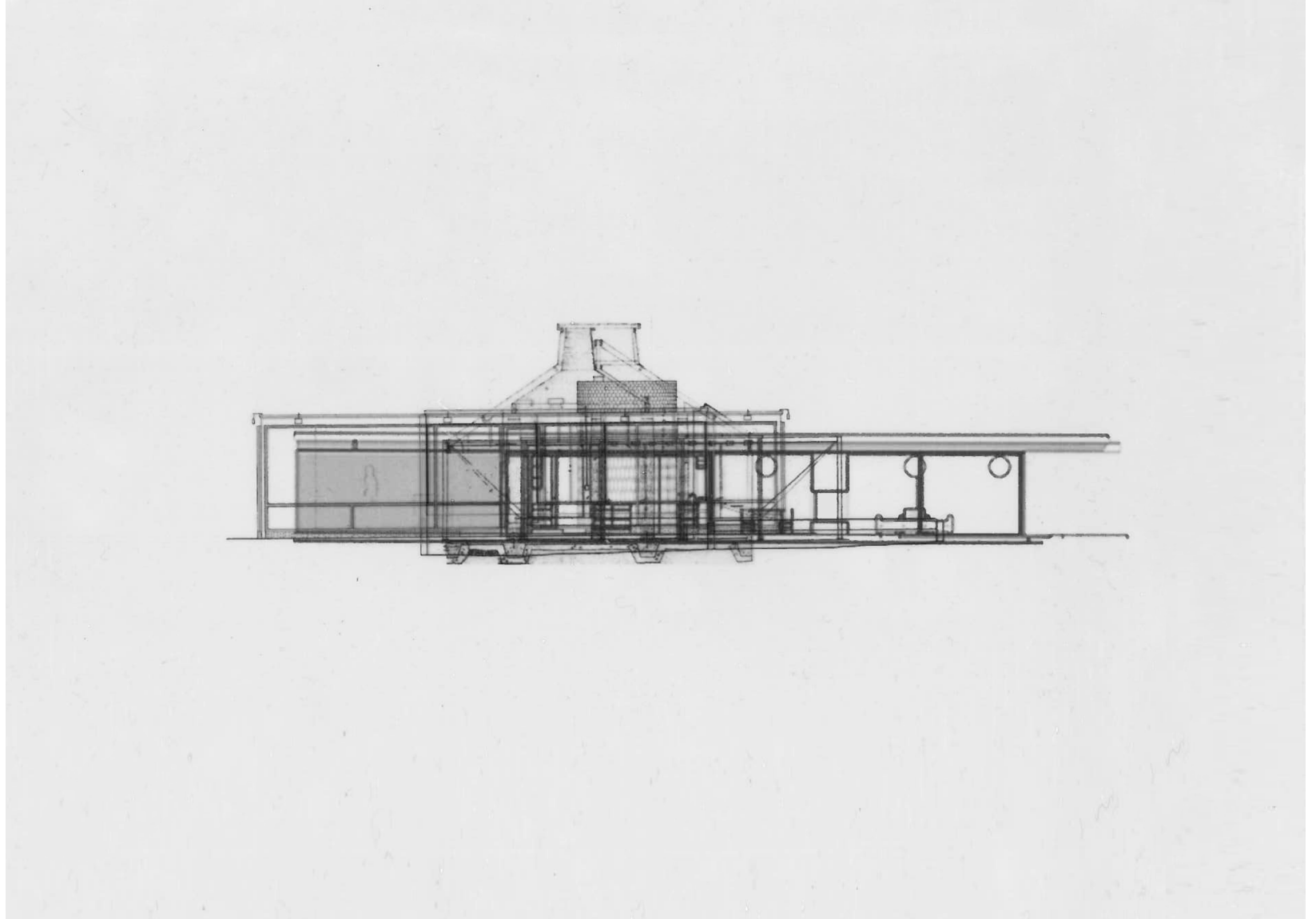Mies van der Rohe, Farnsworth house, 1951.
Paul Rudolph, Walker Guest house, 1953.
Pierre Koenig, Stahl house, 1959.
Charles W. Moore, Orinda House, 1962

MUOTO is an architectural office based in Paris, founded by Gilles Delalex and Yves Moreau in 2003. Its activities cover the fields of architecture, urbanism, design and scientific research. Muoto means form in Finnish.

Muoto's work often features minimal structures made of rough materials, as a means to combine different activities, and merge economical as well as aesthetic issues. Vertical diversity as an articulation between building and city scales is a recurrent figure in Muoto's projects. The office has been rewarded by several prizes, such as Holcim Awards 2014, Equerre d'Argent 2016, and Bauwelt 2017.

Gilles Delalex is a French architect. He studied architecture in Grenoble and Montreal. He holds a Master in urban planning and a Doctorate of Arts from Alvar Aalto University Helsinki. He is a professor at the School of Paris-Malaquais, where he heads the department "Theory, History and Project". Since 1998, he has been a research fellow at the Liat Lab focusing on modernity and infrastructures.

Yves Moreau is a Dutch-Belgian architect. He studied at the Ecole des Arts de Saint Luc in Brussels and graduated from Chalmers Teknista Högskala, Göteborg. Between 2000 and 2001, he collaborated with Blå Arkitektur Landskap, in Sweden. Between 2001 and 2006, he worked with Christian Dior and Dominique Perrault. In 2008 he was awarded the Nouveaux Albums des Jeunes Architectes and Paysagistes.