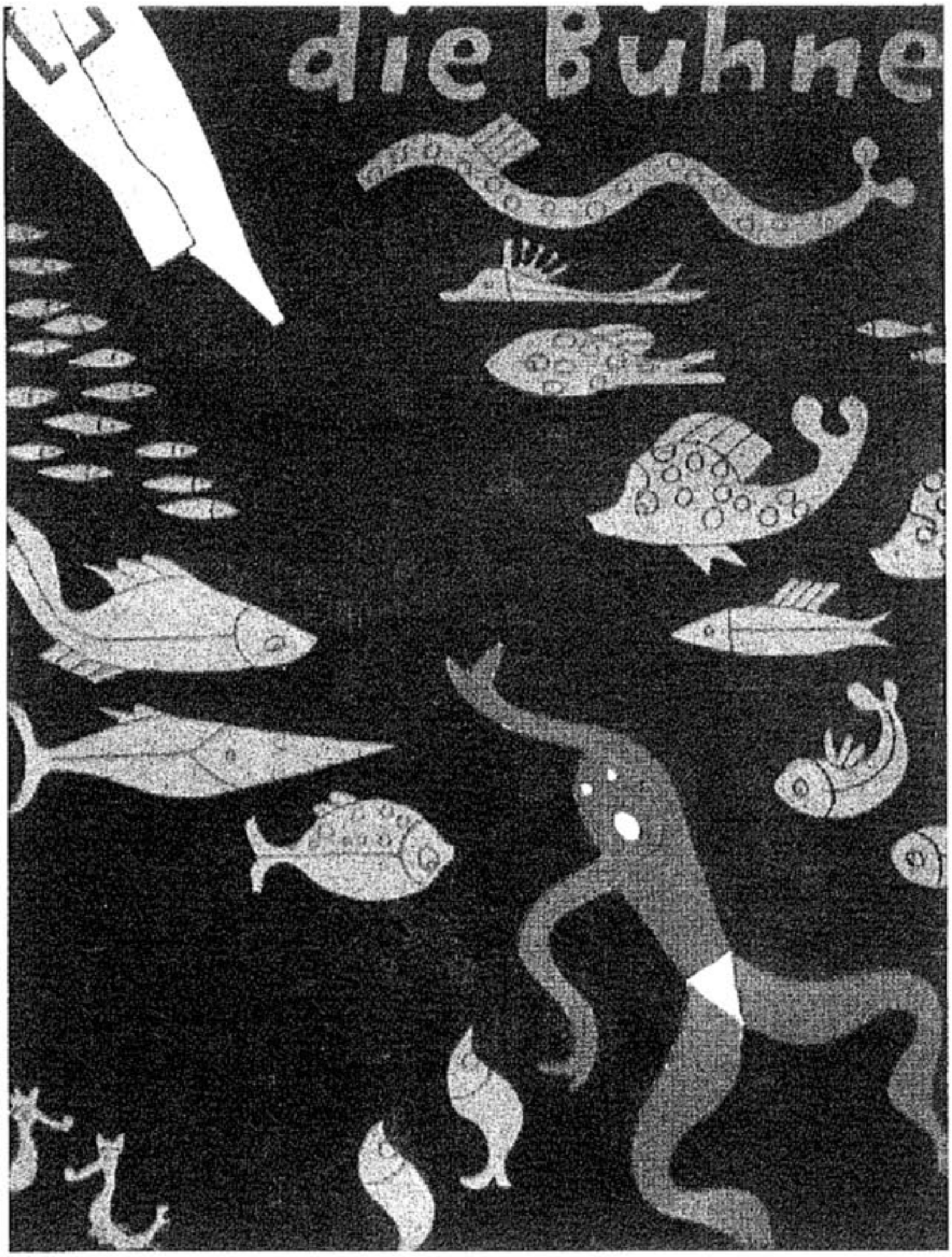
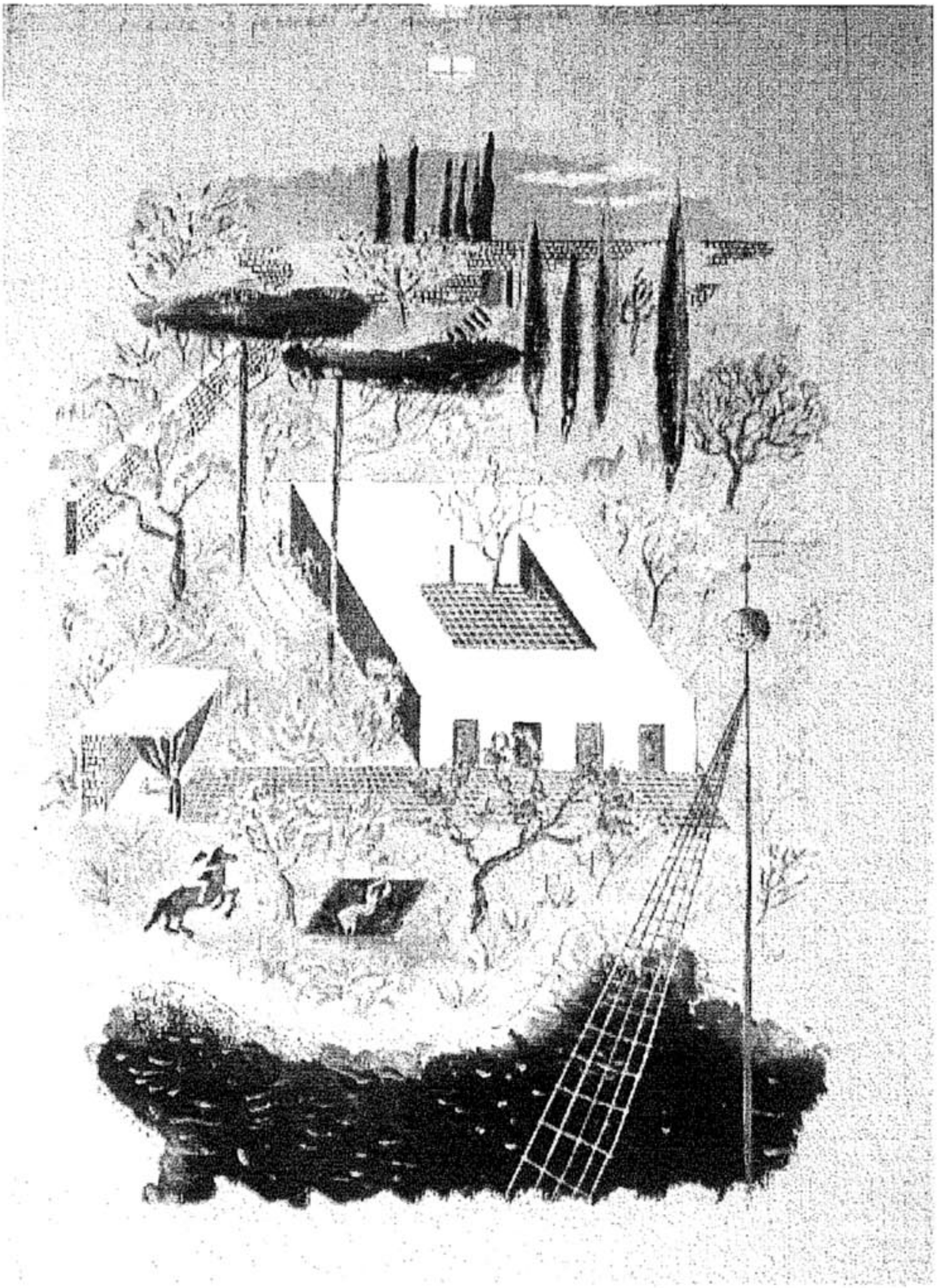
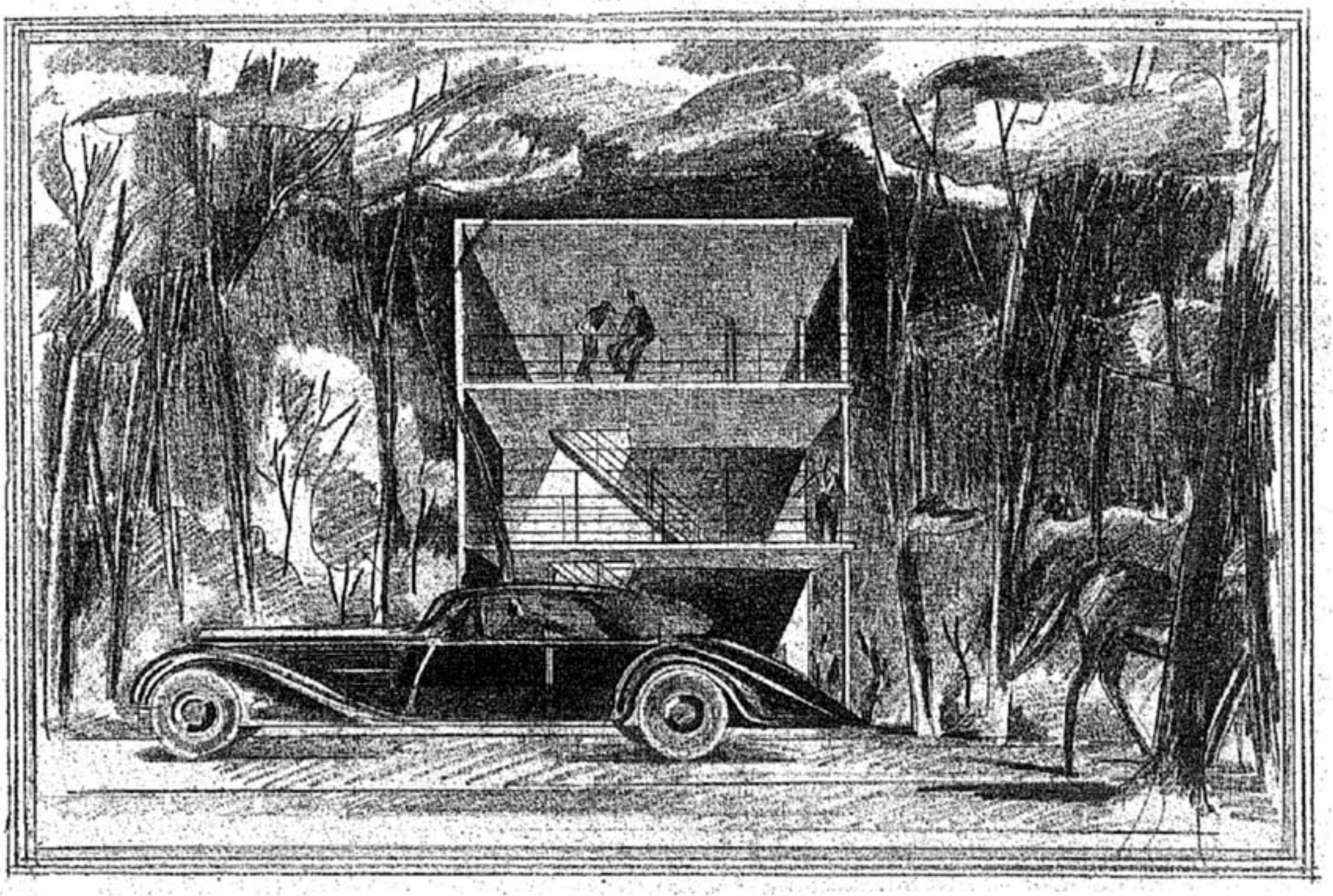
Bernard Rudofsky. A Humane Designer



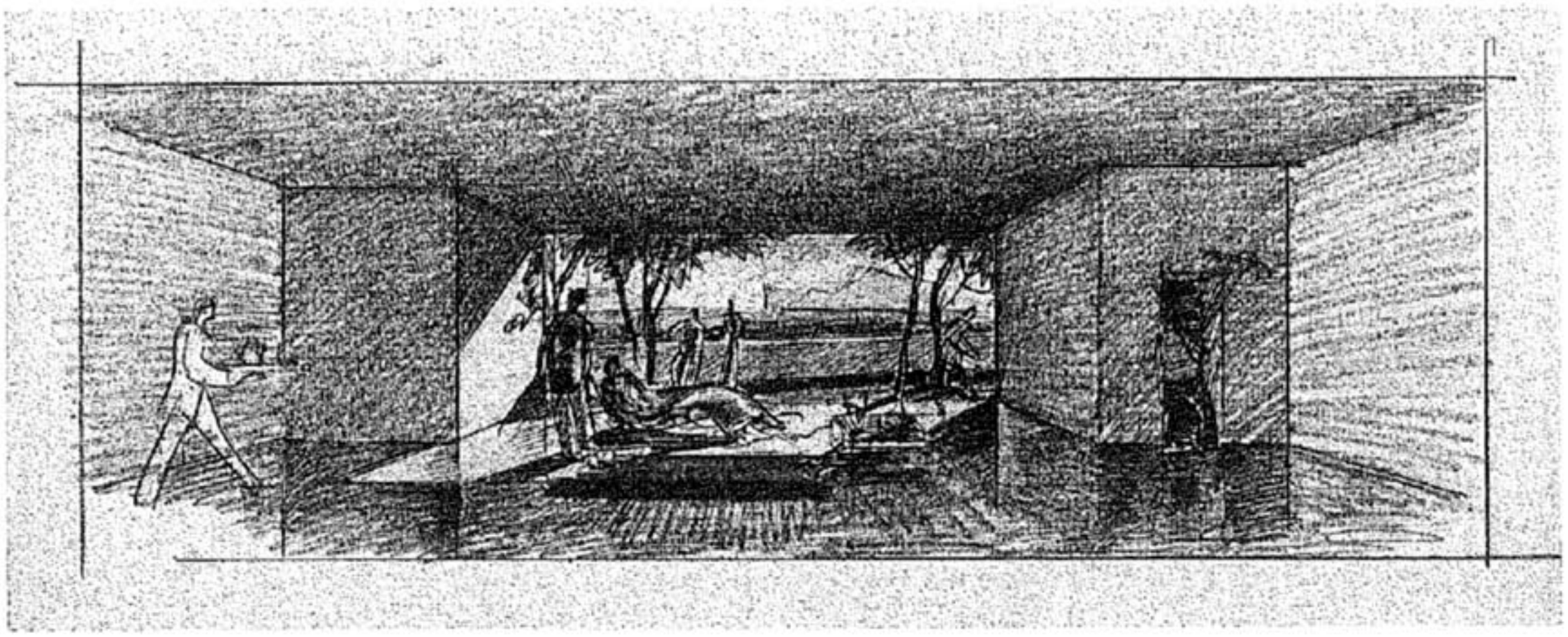
Bernhard Rudofsky. Cover for die Bühne *magazine, ca. 1932-33 (?).*



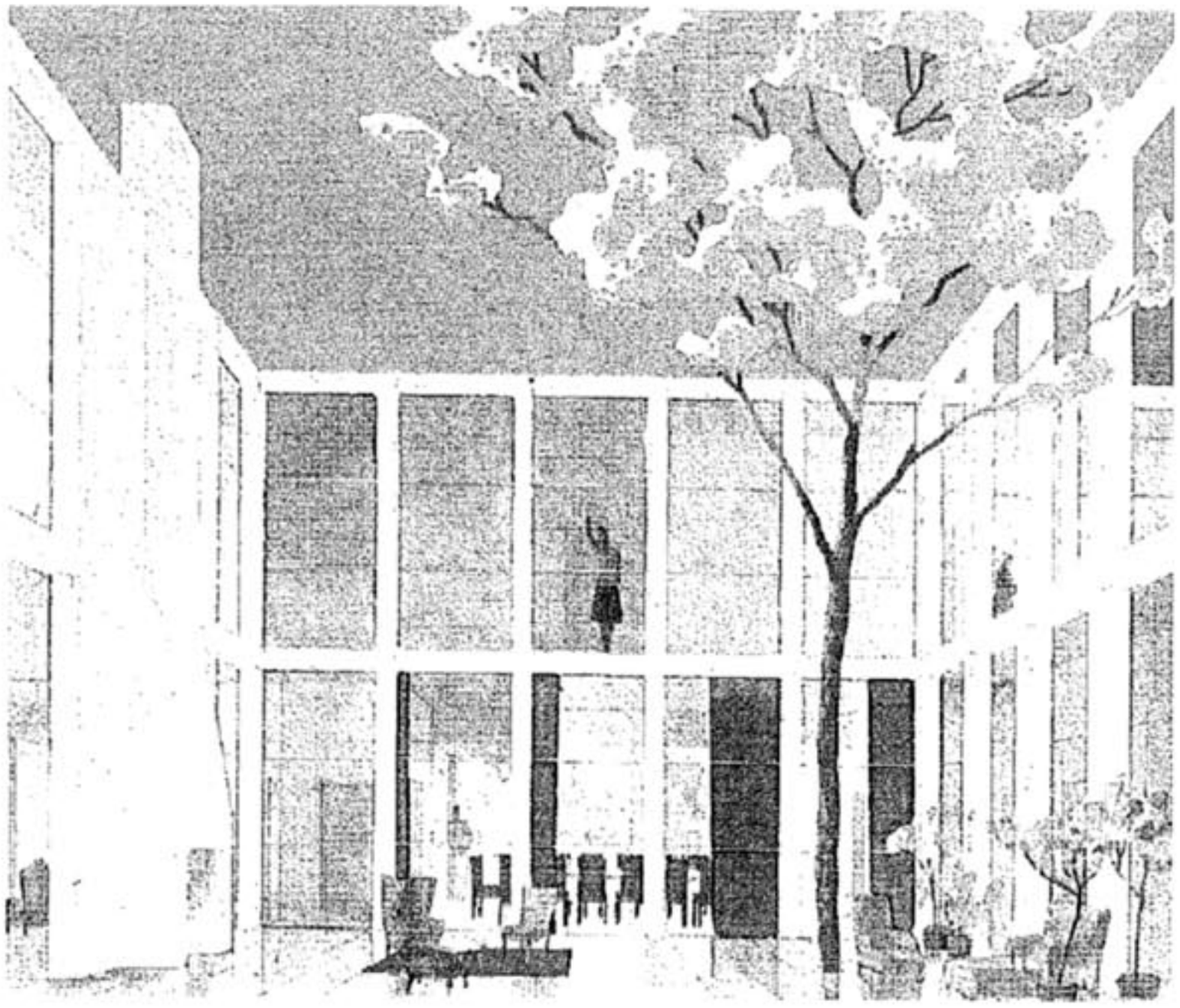
Bernhard Rudofsky. Naive perspective of the Procida house, ca. 1935.
The gouache playfully mimics the Japanese artwork which Rudofsky published in "Rapporti" (BR38.2, p. 5), taken from Tetsuro Yoshida's book, Das japanisches Haus. *All four architectonic archetypal elements identified by Semper (hearth, roof, enclosure, terrace) are present.*



Bernhard Rudofsky. Perspective of Naples Tennis Club, 1935.

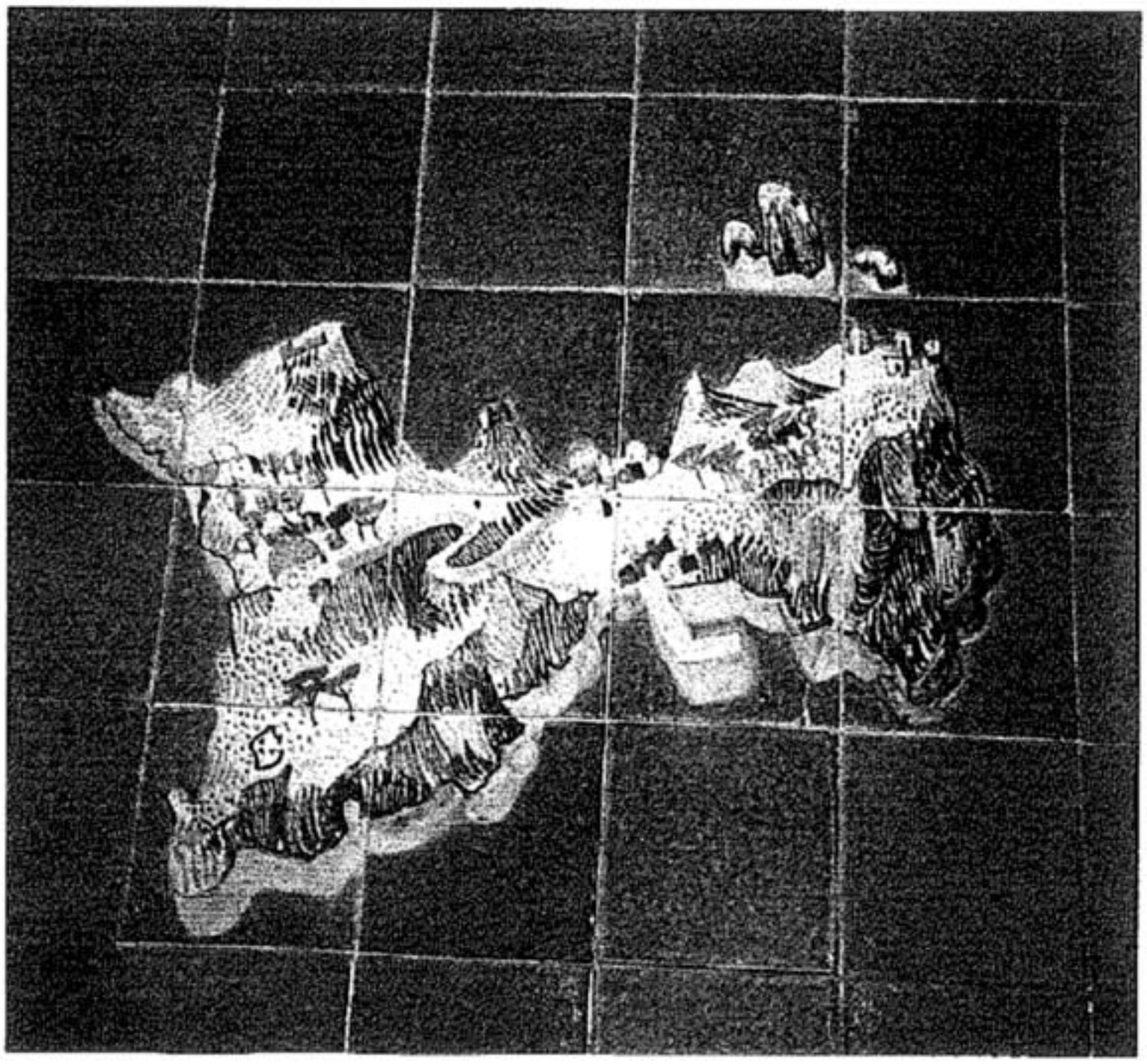


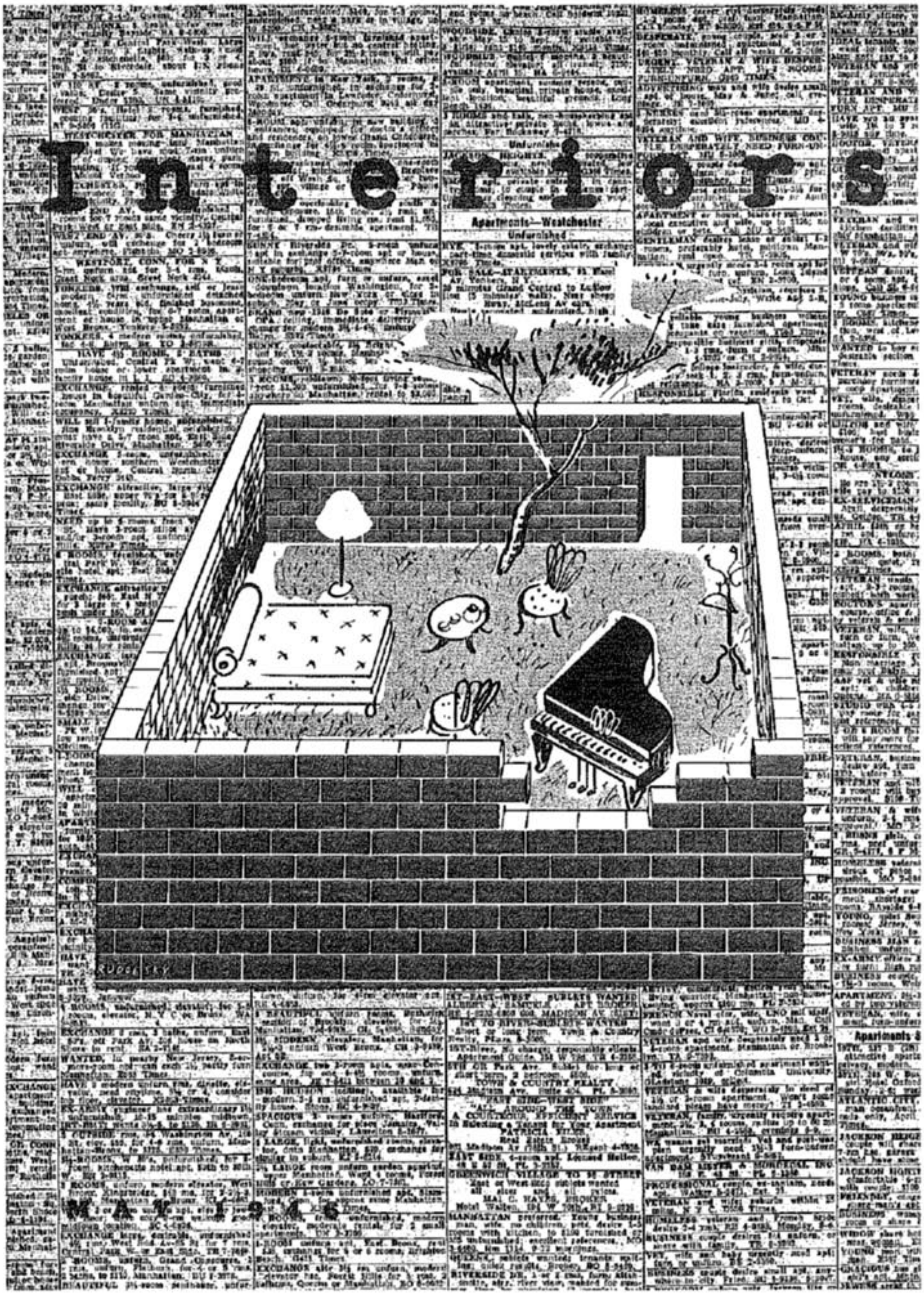
Bernhard Rudofsky. Perspective of Oro house's shady summer living room, open to the garden like a Greco-Roman portico. In the background, the silhouette of Capri, ca. 1936.



Bernard Rudofsky. Perspective of Frontini house's courtyard, ca. 1940.
This courtyard represents the most complete and grandiose expression of Rudofsky's conception of the center of the house as an uncovered, intimate space where to perform the acts of a dignified life.

Andrea Guarneri. Tiled floor of the Oro house's bar, designed and painted by Bernard Rudofsky. Detail with the isle of Capri, 1994.
Rudofsky painted the ceramic floor of the bar in the workshop at Vietri where the tiles were made, and signed the work. It depicts a map of the Bay of Naples from Licola to the peninsula of Sorrento with the same naive figures that illustrate his articles in the magazines of the Berlin publisher Mosse, as though it were the Earthly Paradise *in the church at Anacapri. A modern equivalent (but one that draws on the vernacular tradition) of the Pompeian floor mosaics. Under the influence of the tradition of the Campania region, between 1936 and 1938 Rudofsky also designed floors in hand-painted ceramics for other buildings: the Villa Campanella and the hotels San Michele and for Dalmatia.*

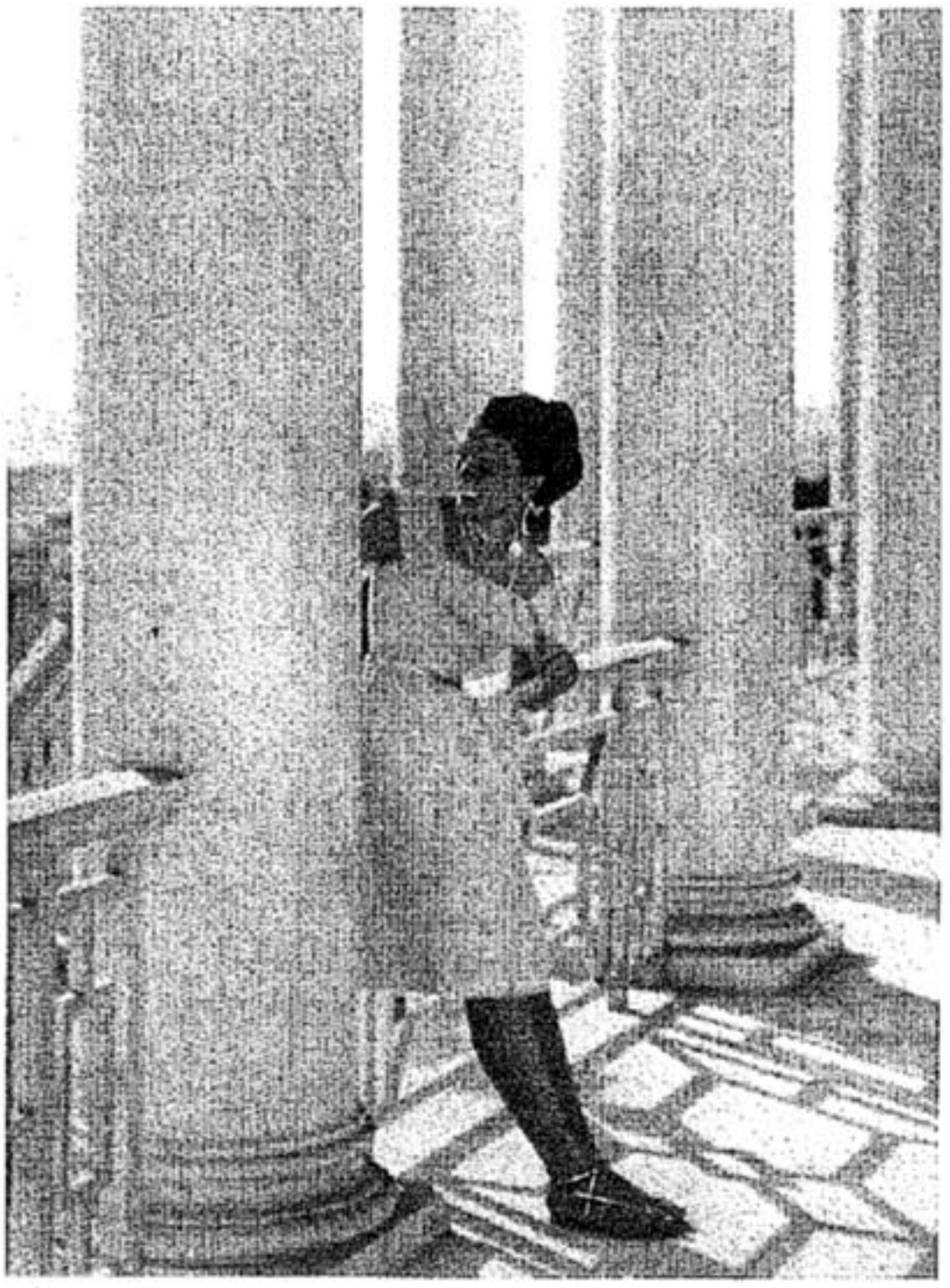




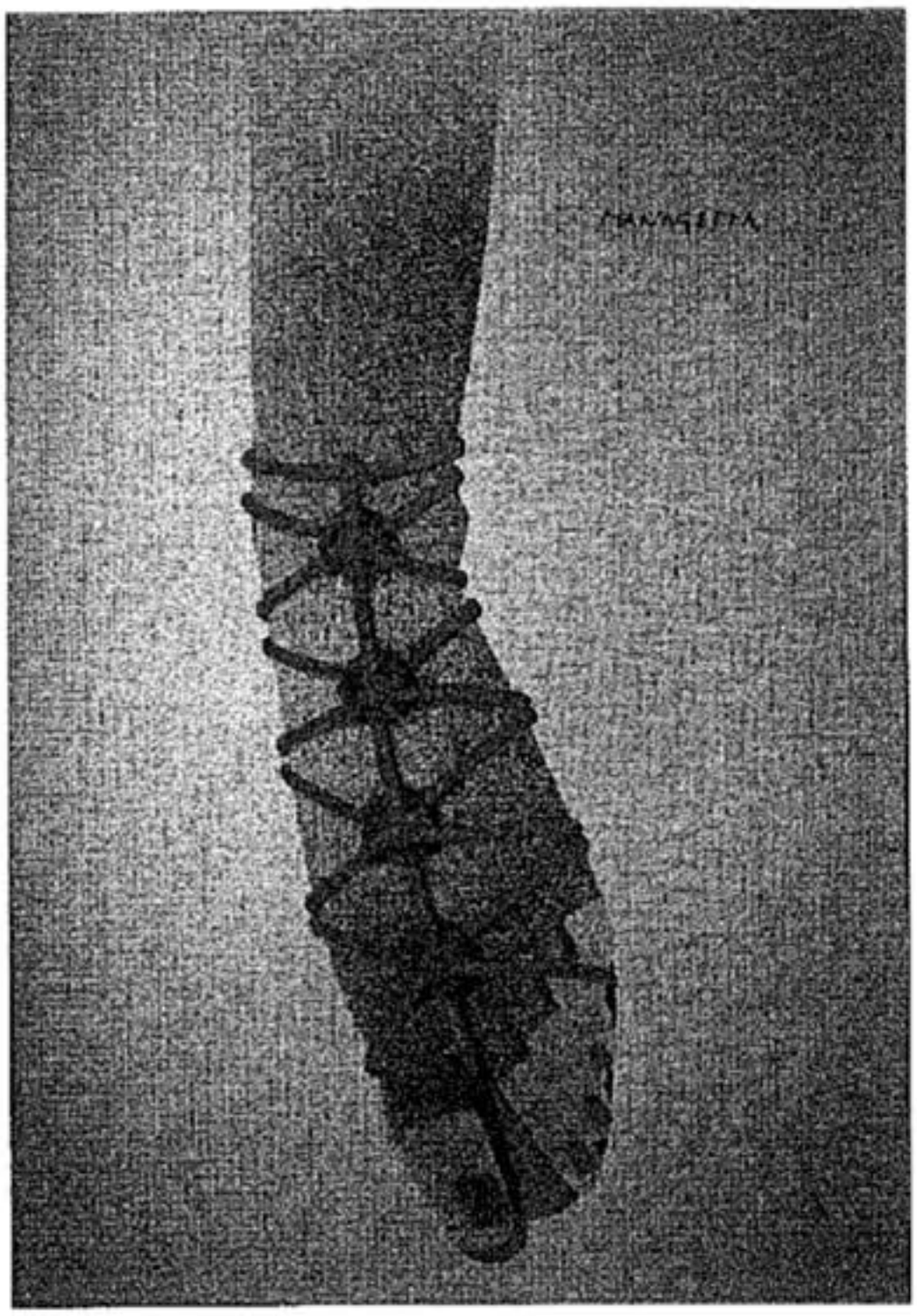
Bernard Rudofsky. Problema, *ca. 1938 (?).*
This drawing, first published in Domus *magazine (1938), and later as the cover for* Interiors *magazine of May 1946, epitomizes Rudofsky's theory of the house.*
The center of the house is an uncovered space, nevertheless a veritable living room (sometimes with a tree growing there). What counts is the privacy, ensured by its enclosure.

Melvin Sokolsky. Bernardo parsimmon and white clogs, *1965*.

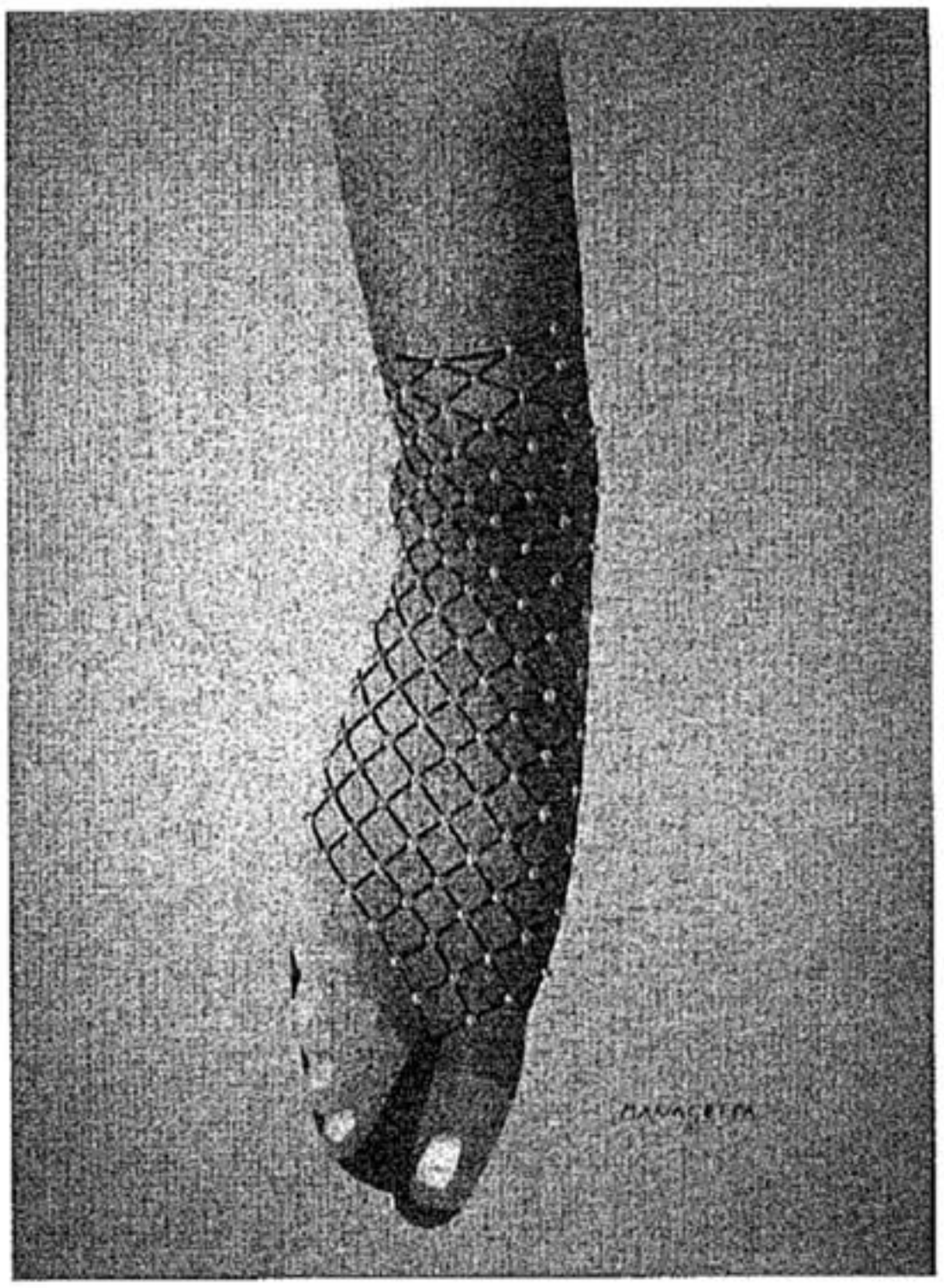
Louise Dahl-Wolfe (?). Barefoot sandals by Bernardo, *1957*.



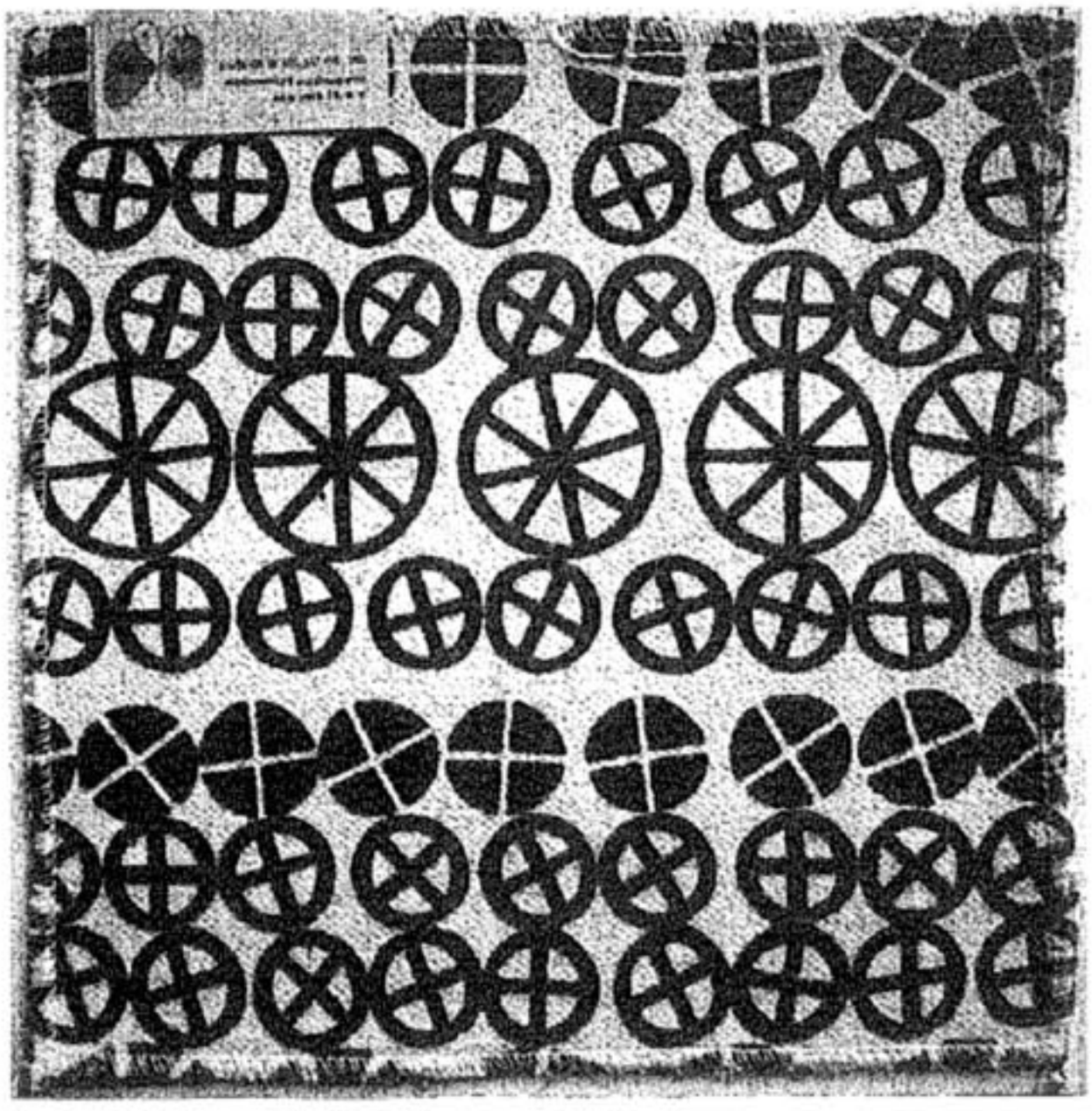
Unidentified photographer. Clipping from a fashion magazine showing a model wearing Bernardo Sandals, *date unknown (late forties?)*.



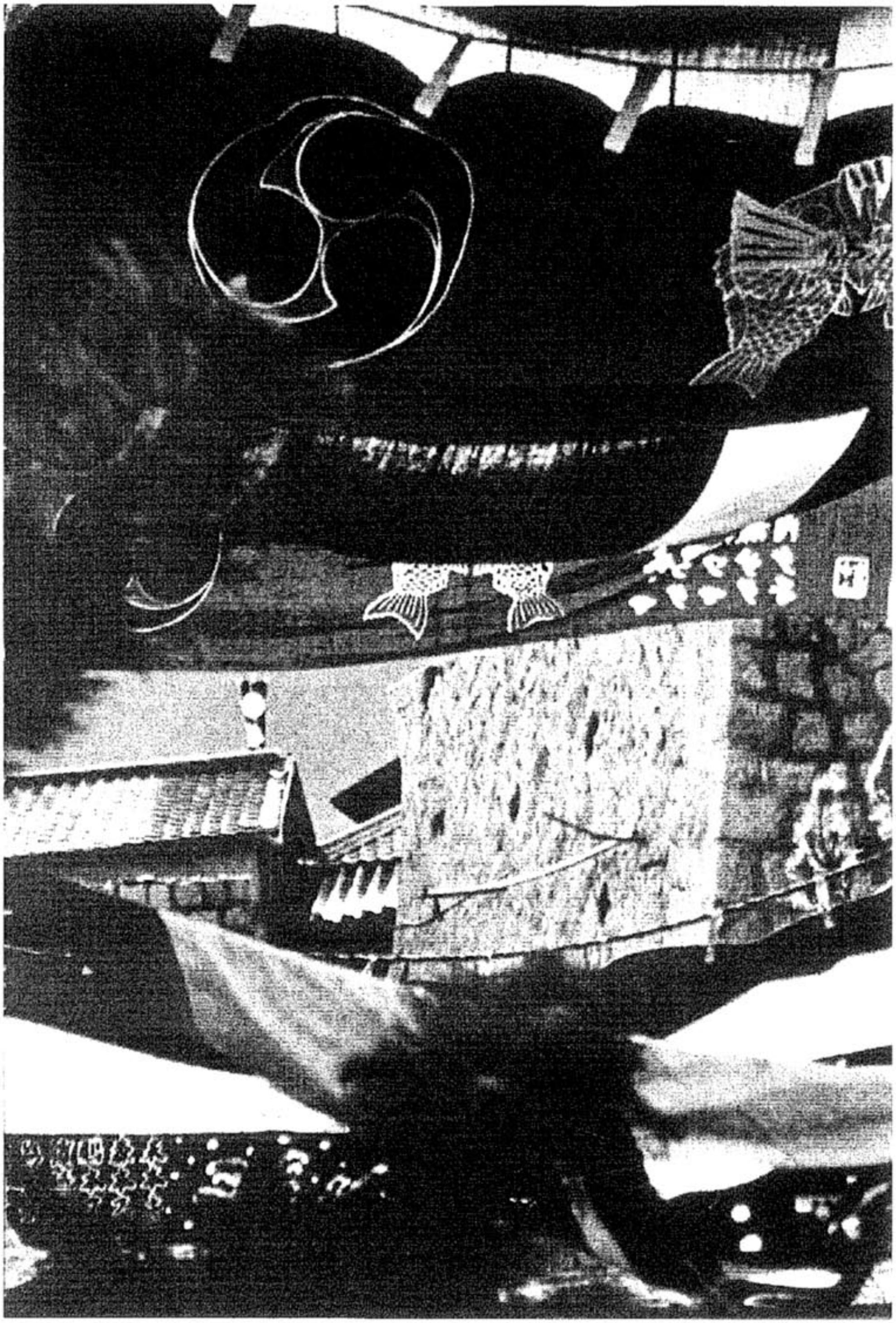
Bernard Rudofsky. Sandal, ca. 1936.
The pictures suggest that the sandals be worn with open-toed stockings.



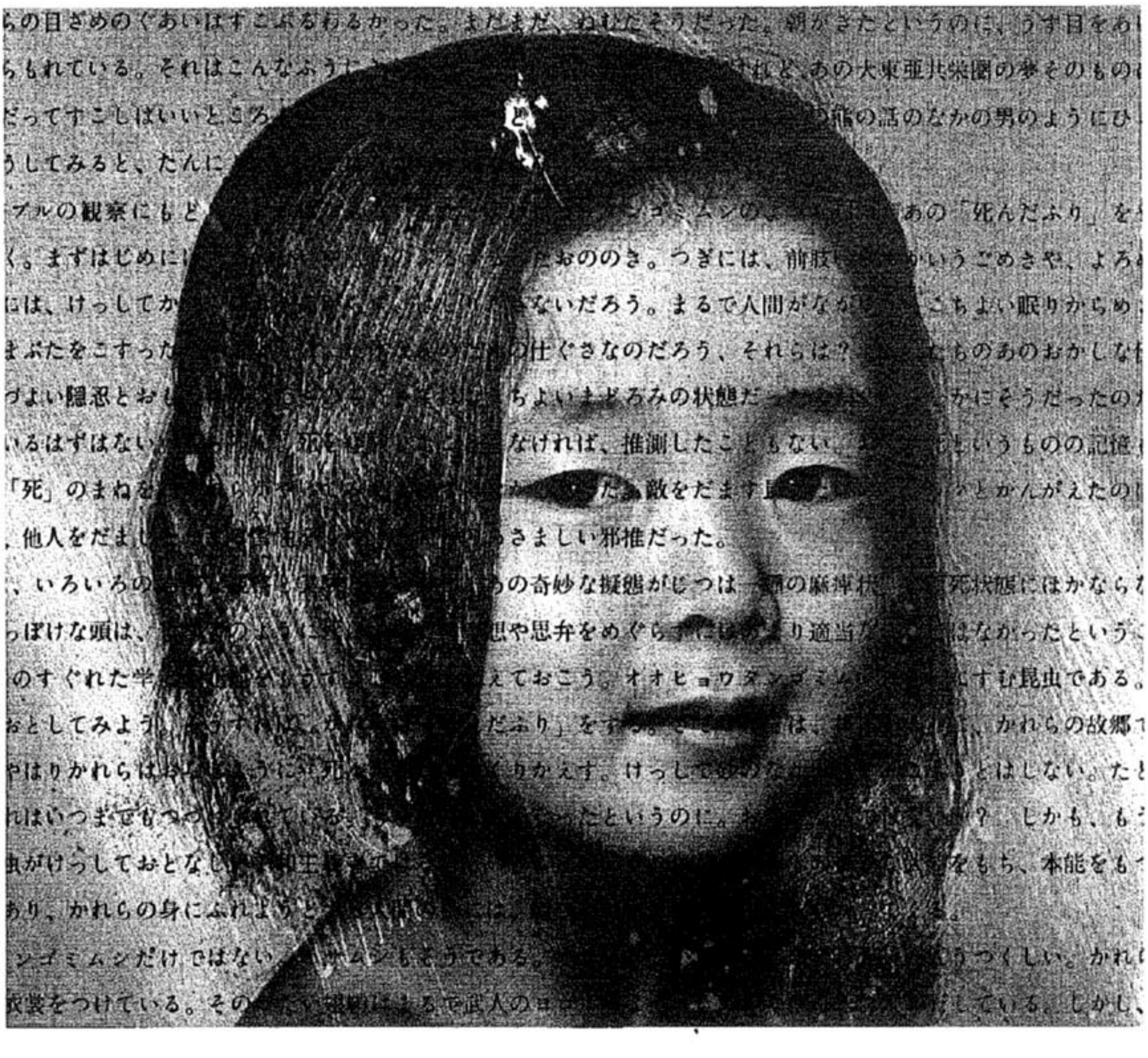
Bernard Rudofsky. Sandal, ca. 1936.



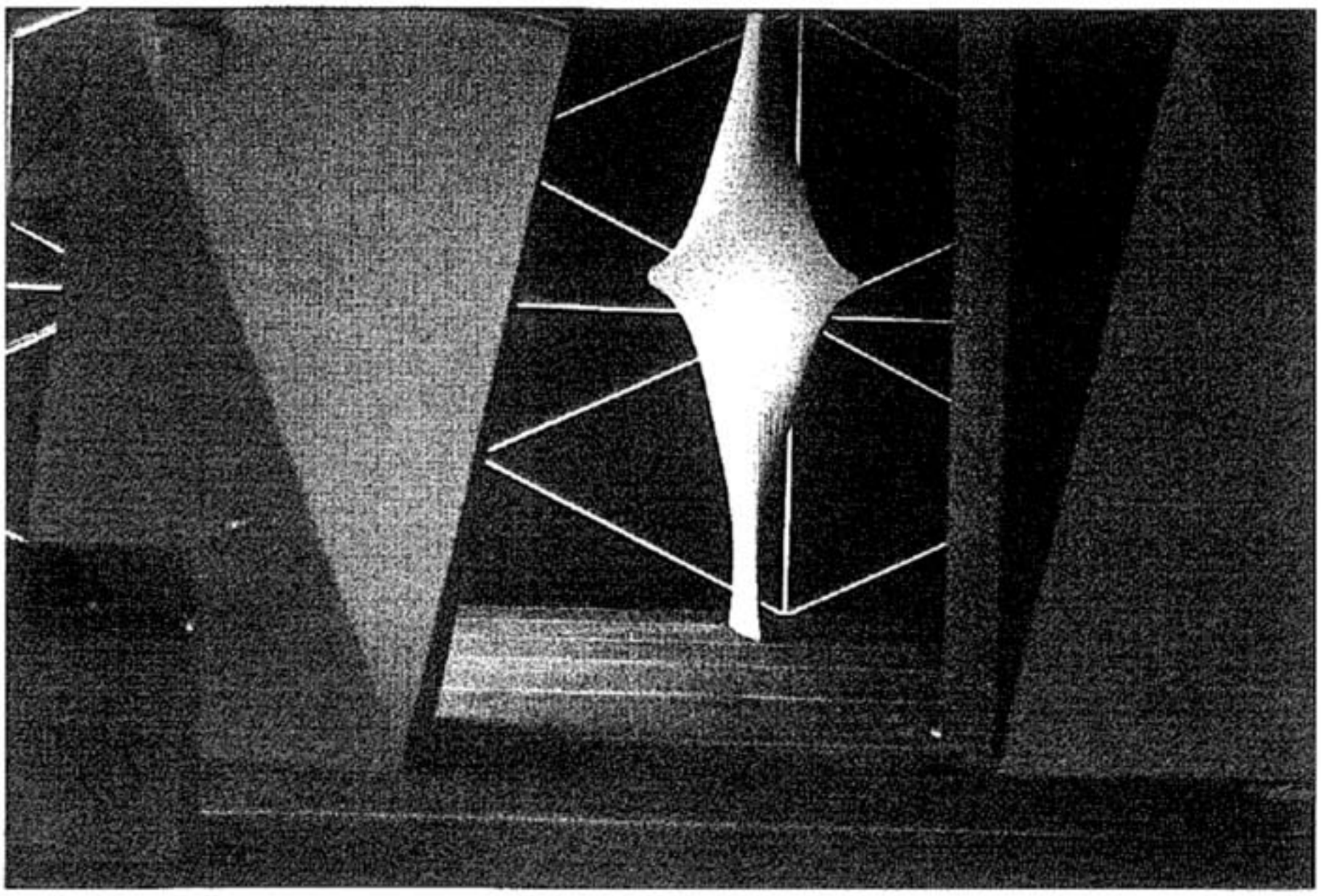
Sample of "Wheels" fabric, designed by Bernard Rudofsky for the **Stimulus** *collection, 1949.*



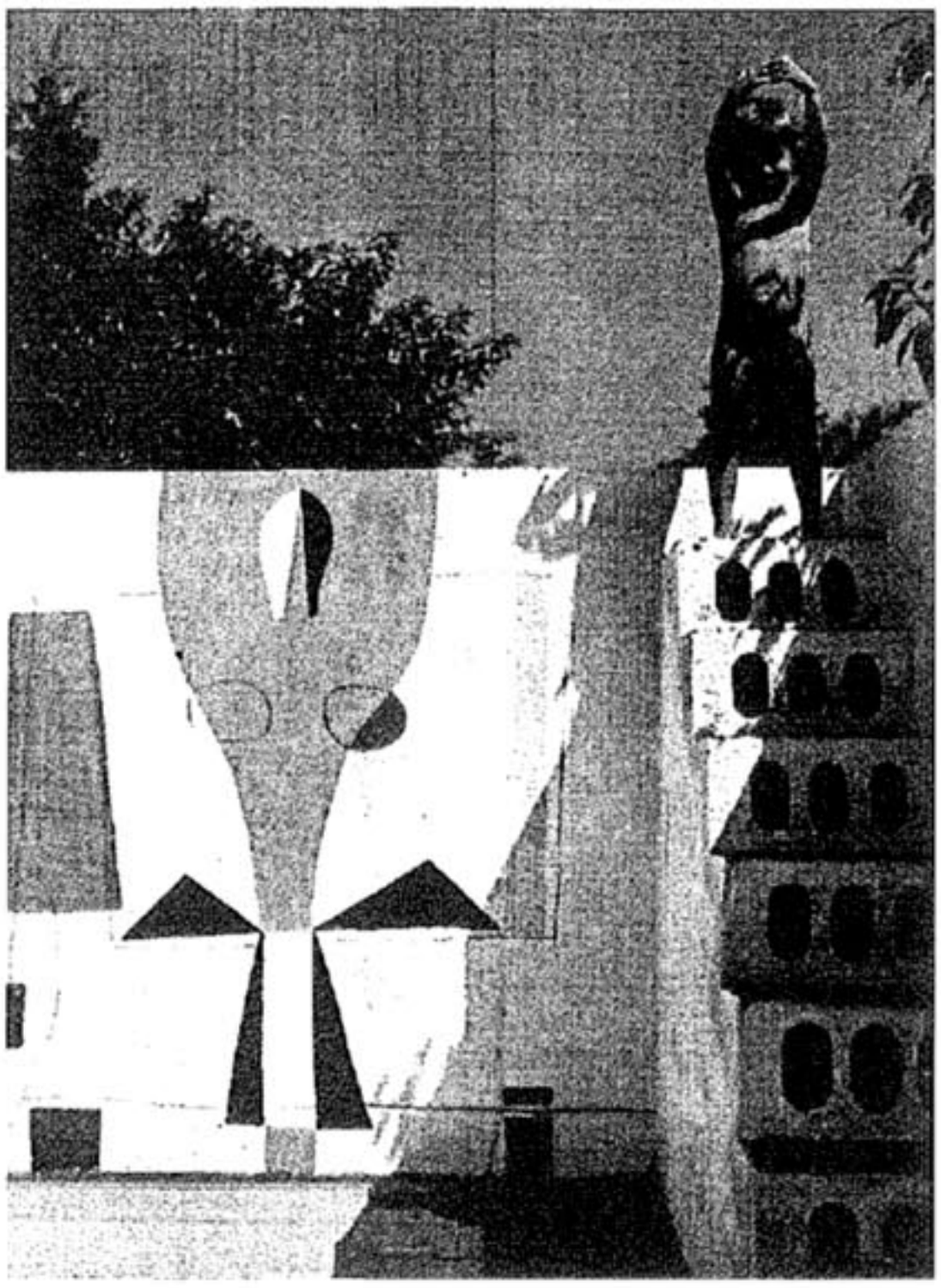
Bernard Rudofsky. Photo of street decorations for a festival in a fishing village on Megishima island (Kagawa prefecture), 1955. Originally published in "Introduction to Japan (I)" (see p. 209).



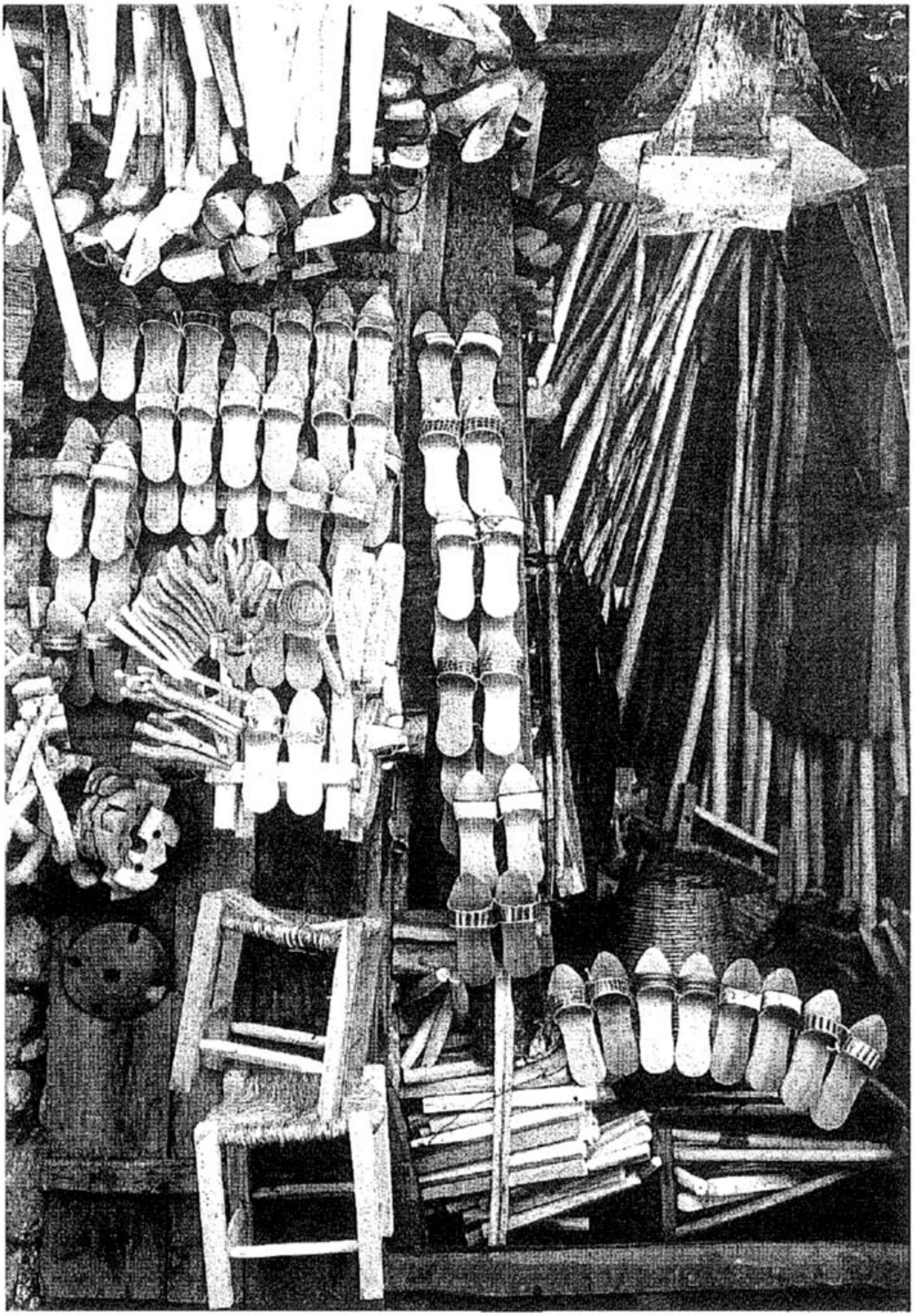
Bernard Rudofsky. Cover for the book The Kimono Mind, *ca. 1965.*
Despite the passage of more than 35 years, this graphic design of Rudofsky's still stands out for its absolute modernity.



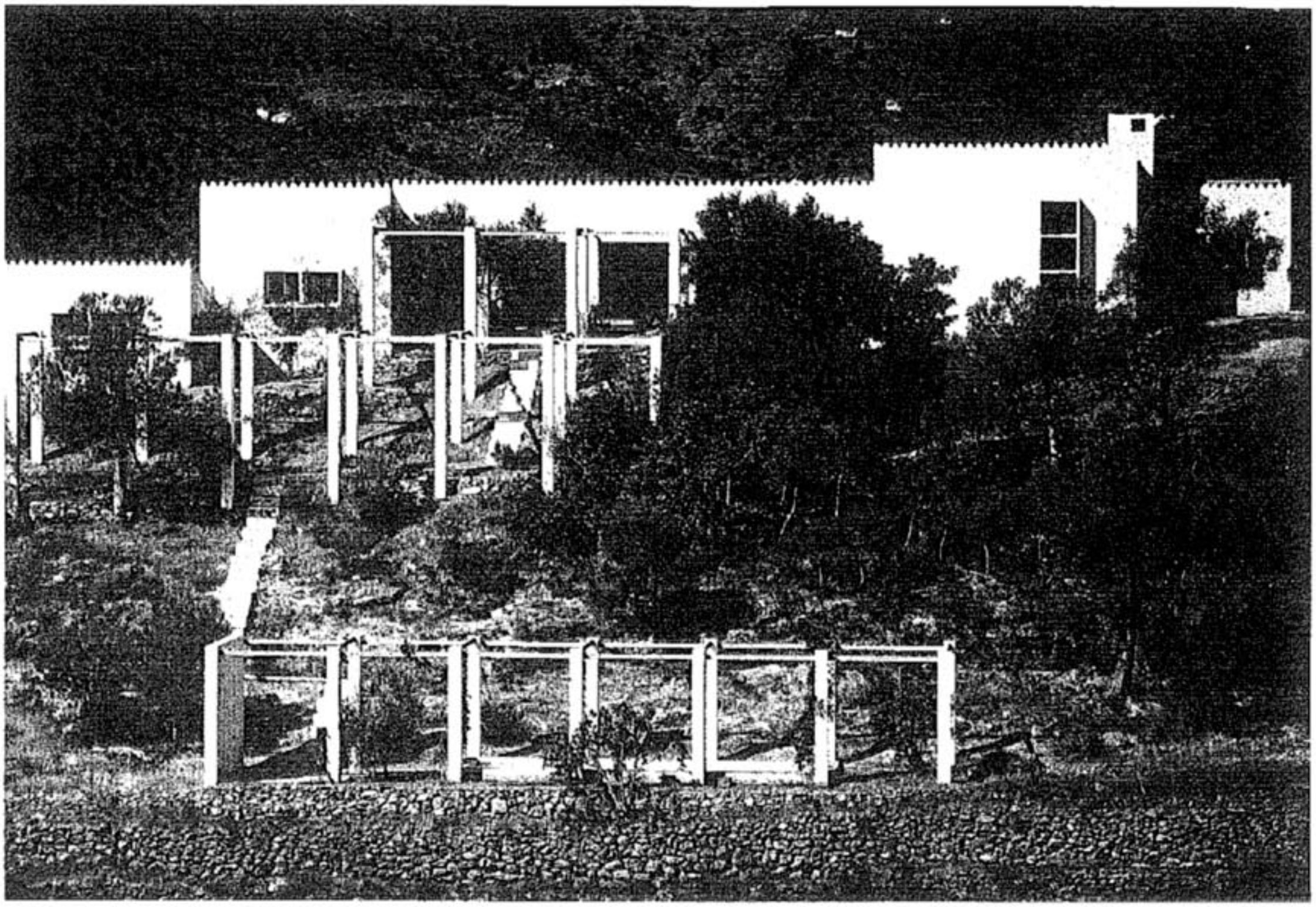
Bernard Rudofsky. Textiles USA *installation at New York's Museum of Modern Art, ca. 1956.*
In general, to do away with a clothing-shop look, Rudofsky's idea was to show the textiles per se *in many different ways without hanging them on walls. He was convinced that the tubular jersey structures he built in the main exhibition room were "a classical example of exhibition design: It is simple to the extreme; it takes next to no time to mount it – the cost is a few cents only; the nature of the material is abundantly and convincingly demonstrated"* (An Architect Looks at Exhibition Design, *1958, p. 9 of second part).



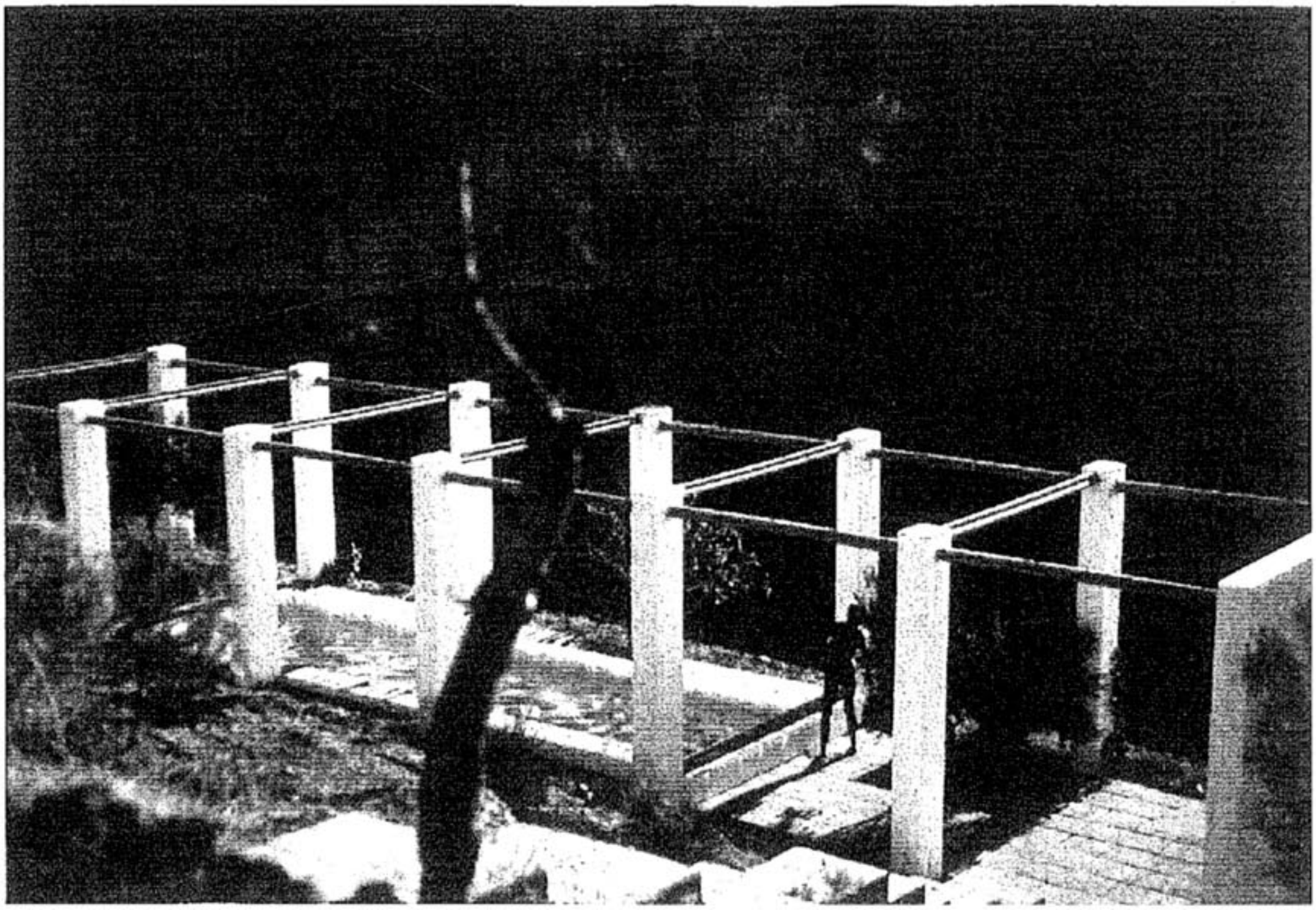
Unknown photographer. The topless, doorless solarium of the Nivola "house-garden," built of cement blocks embellished with water-color murals, *designed by Rudofsky and Nivola, ca. 1951.*



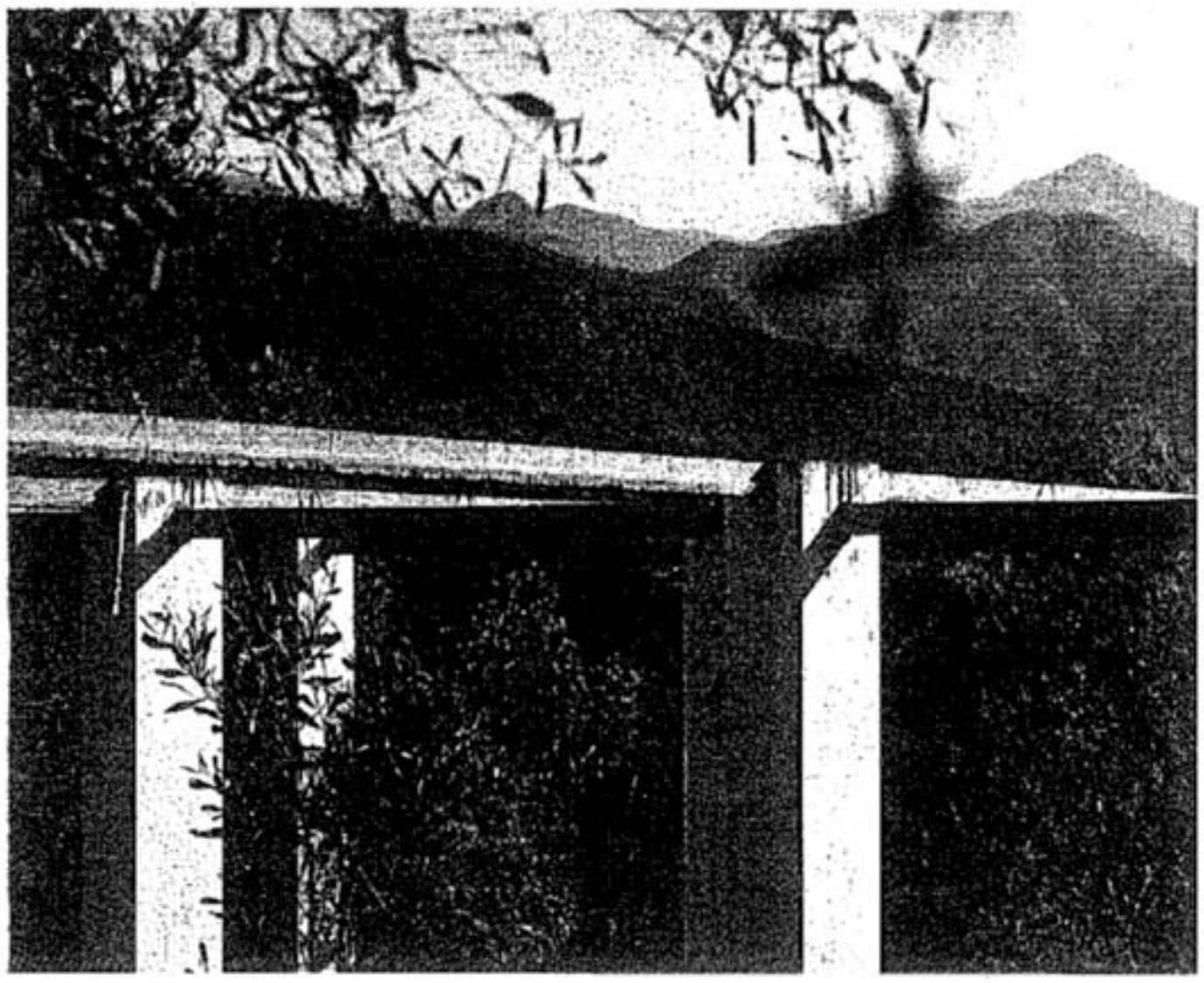
Bernard Rudofsky. Photo of a shop of wooden items, specifically clogs, 1966.
Among Rudofsky's favorite subjects, were goods on display.



Bernard Rudofsky. La Casa seen from east, 1972.
From left to right: studio, bedroom, porch, living room, kitchen. At the bottom of the picture, the swimming pool.
Although the spaces communicate by way of open-air routes, there are no detached structures: each room shares a wall with its neighbor. Thus the single-pitch roof confers an identity and unity on the house, gracefully and securely following the profile of the hill.

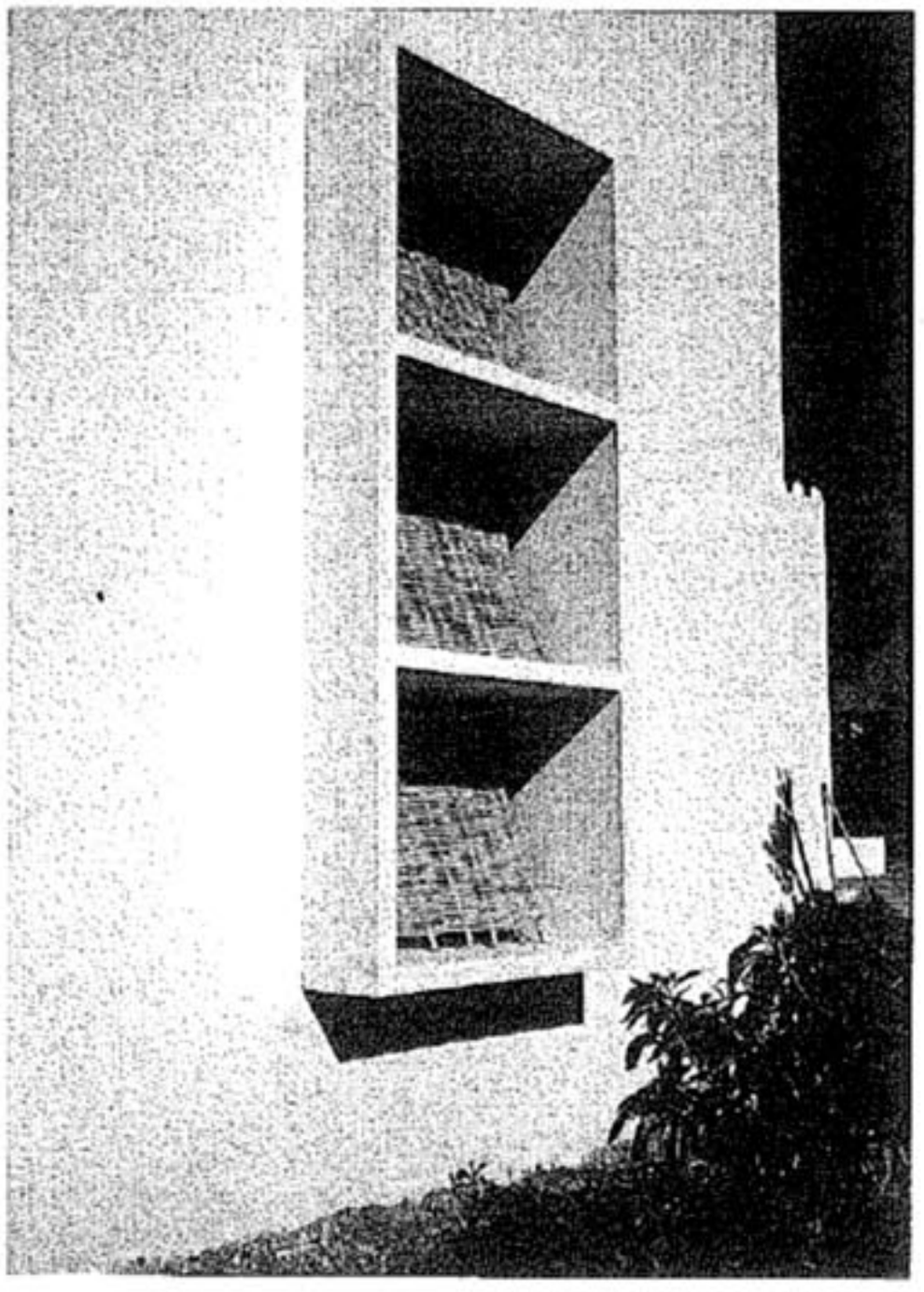


Bernard Rudofsky. La Casa's swimming pool just after completion of building work, 1971. It is enclosed by a wall and a trellis which define a perceptually precise "outdoor room."



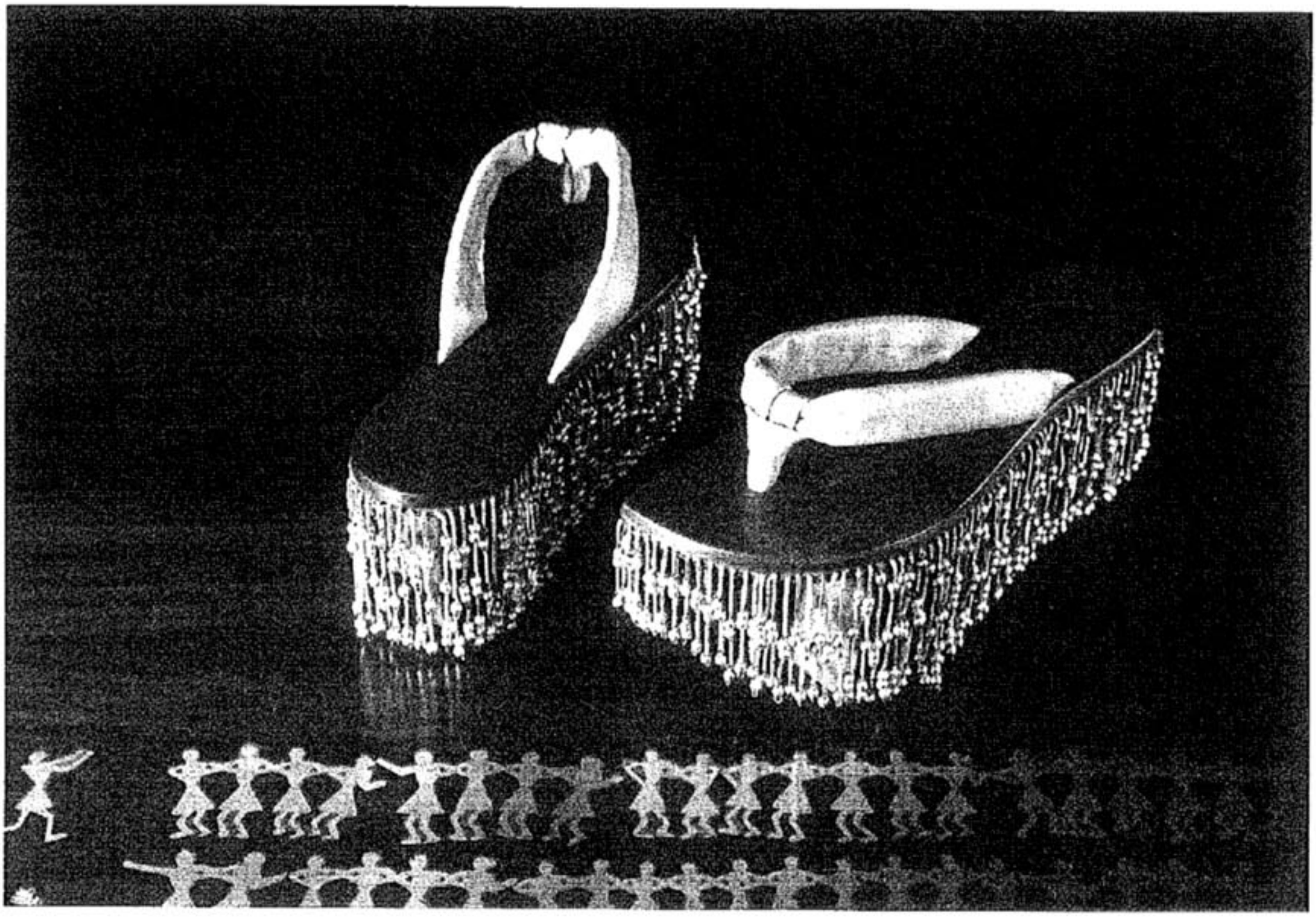
Bernard Rudofsky. View from La Casa's porch, 1986.
The brick pillars symbolize the artificial order superimposed by man on the natural landscape and help direct the gaze to the Sierra Nevada.

Bernard Rudofsky. La Casa's living room with a view through the kitchen to the north patio, 1970s (?).
The living room is on two levels: on the low partition, a black clay figurine from Mexico; on the lower level, a plywood chair by Eames and a Noguchi paper globe, both gifts from their creators; the right (east) wall is pierced by a triple window whose external view is shown at right.
The house is traversed by a rectilinear visual axis along which are located, from south to north: garage, patio-solarium, bedroom, porch (a room without a fourth wall, as in the Oro house), entrance, living room, and the kitchen with its patio.

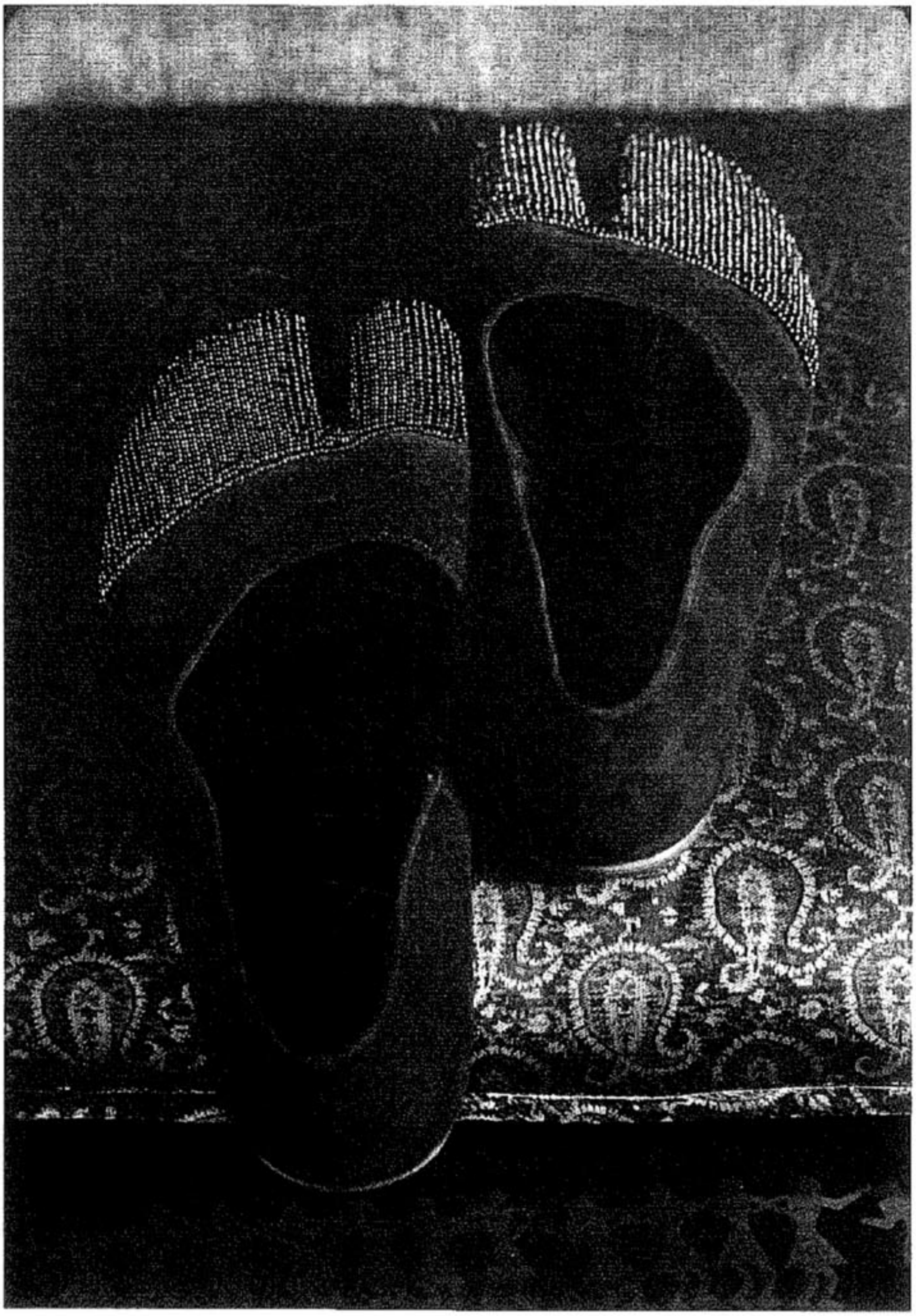


Bernard Rudofsky. Detail of triple window in La Casa's living room, 1974.
Wicker lattices, manually placed in each of the masonry boxes enclosing the windows, filter the glaring Andalusian light.

Bernard Rudofsky. The north-east corner of La Casa's solarium, 1971.
On the left, the bedroom's door. Two portions of the enclosed patio are paved to form sun-bathing platforms: one (from which the photo was taken) struck by morning sunrays, the other (visible in the picture) by those of the afternoon.

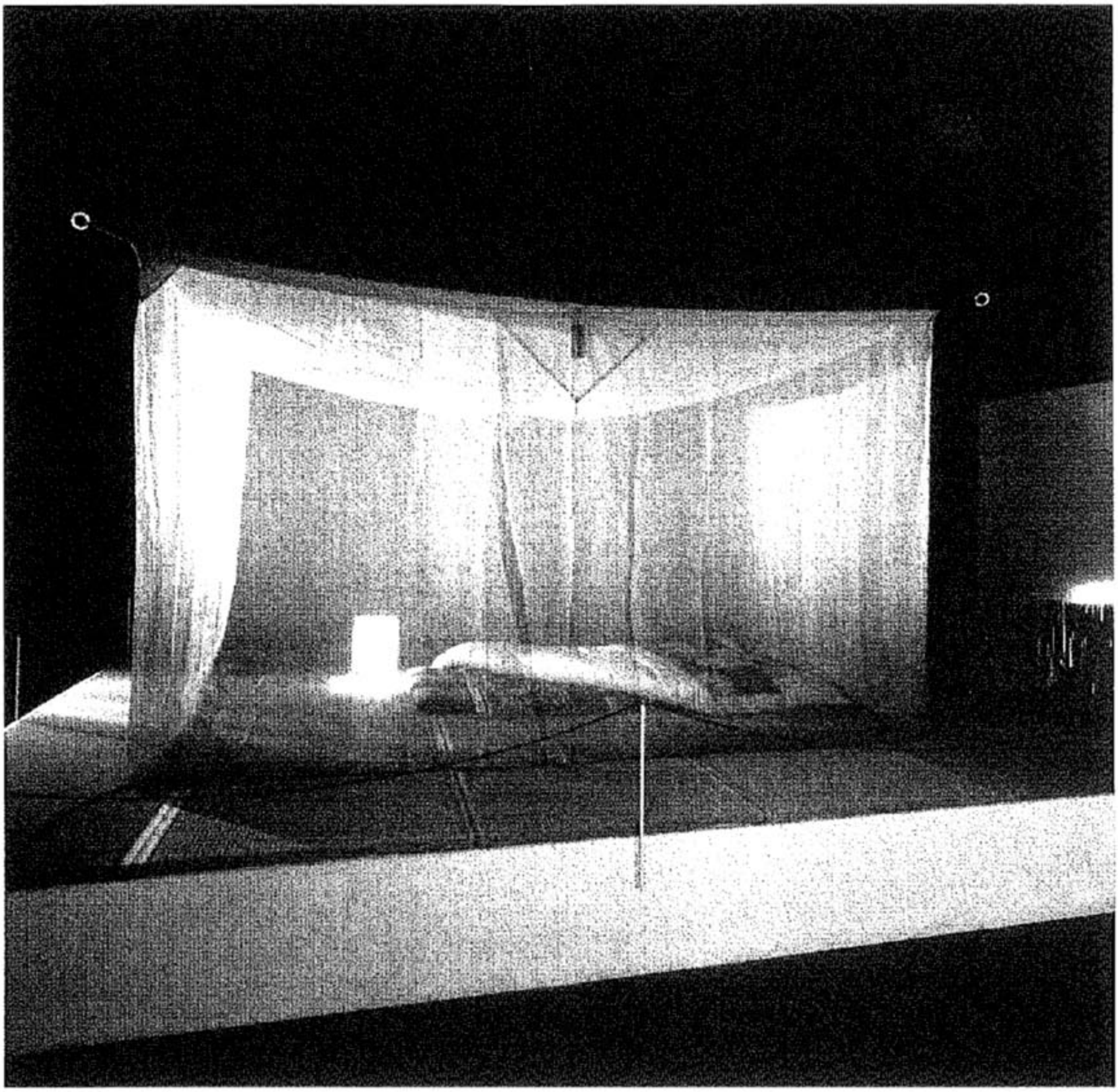


Jyoti Rath. Golden Eye *"fringe" platforms (mahogany sole, silk thongs, and bidri fringes), photographed on a* Golden Eye *inlay table top, both designed by Bernard Rudofsky, 1985.*
"Rudofsky thinks it unlikely that American or other manufacturers will consider his styles. Some versions have been decorated, he says, not only to show the craftsmanship of the Indian artisan, but to catch the attention of the museum visitor" (AR85.8).



Jyoti Rath. Embroidered Golden Eye *shoes (leather sole, suede uppers, and glass beads embroidery), photographed on a* Golden Eye *inlay table top, both designed by Bernard Rudofsky, 1985.*
Rudofsky explained his design by saying that "Since our chances of eventually growing the Big Toe in place of the middle toe (to fit today's shoes) are nil, we should come to our senses."

Gerald Zugmann. Convivial bath from the exhibition Sparta/Sybaris, *1987.*
Rudofsky maintained that "not the frescoed canopy, but the pleasure of taking a convivial bath symbolizes Sybaritic luxury."



Gerald Zugmann. Japanese sleeping arrangement from the exhibition Sparta/Sybaris, *1987. Rudofsky claimed that the Western way of sleeping in an immobile and often heavy piece of furniture resembled a foretaste of eternal sleep; while the Japanese tradition encouraged one to prospecting for a favorite spot in which to settle down with one's temporary bedding and to change it at will, without hampering the daytime use of the room. A touch of poetry may be added by the* kaya, *likewise Japanese, which — in addition to offering protection against mosquitoes — defines, very simply but also quite spectacularly, the space temporarily occupied by the futon, thus allowing one to pitch camp under one's own roof.*

Bernhard Rudofsky. Youngsters on a donkey,
from Die Insel der Verrückten, *1932–33.*

A Rudofsky Reader

Note: The texts have been faithfully reproduced, with only spelling corrections where called for. In the case of unpublished writings, the printed text incorporates Rudofsky's autograph corrections and changes.

Where the images originally associated with the texts are known and available, as in the case of the majority of published articles, a selection has been reproduced here (Rudofsky's original captions are made recognizable by normal type print instead of italic).
In the cases where the texts came into being with no accompanying pictures, they have been illustrated with a few images which are germane to the words on account of their subject or spirit. Among them are previously unpublished line drawings by Rudofsky.

What's Needed Is Not a New Way of Building, What's Needed Is a New Way of Life

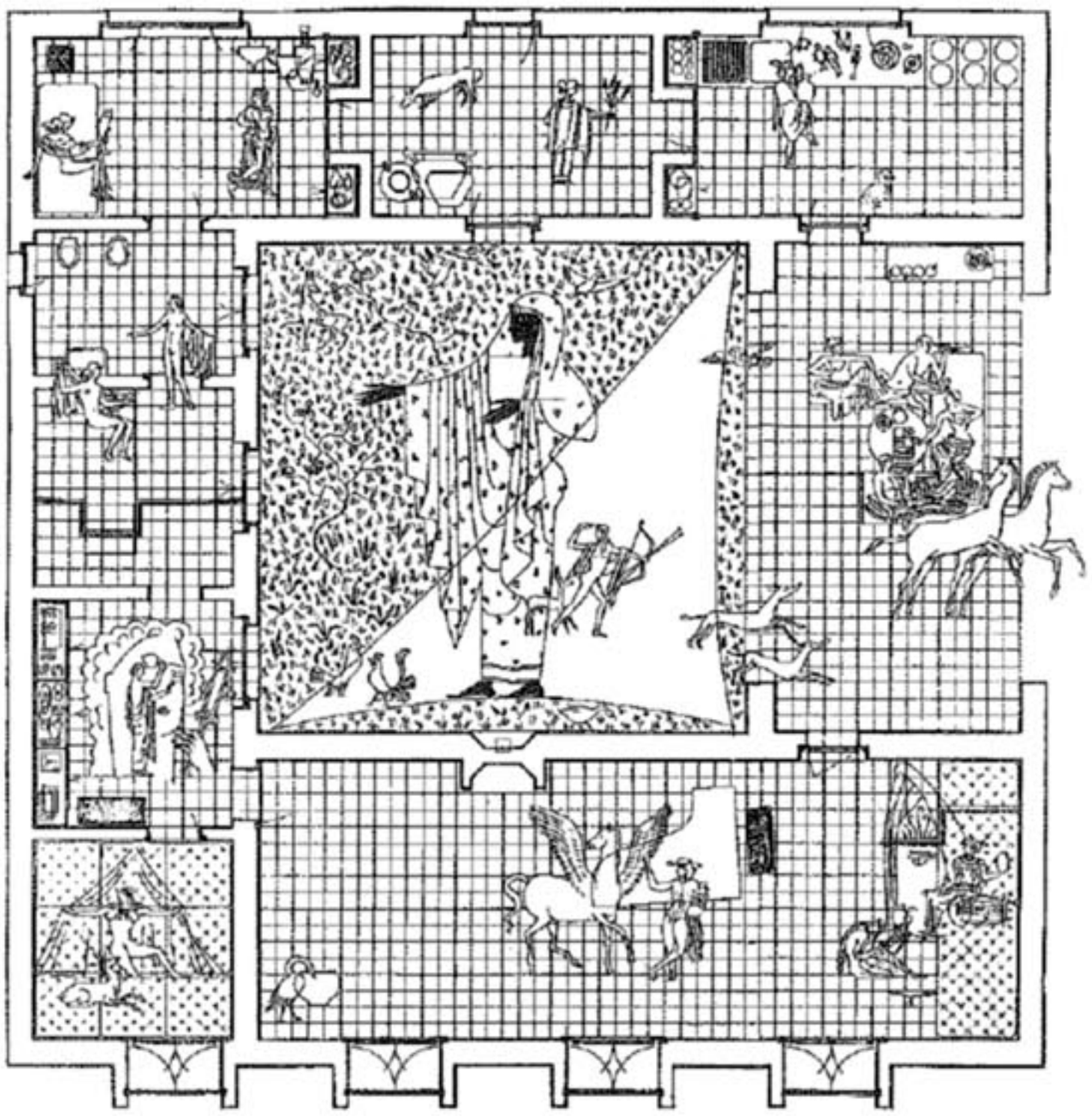
(Comments on a design for a house on the island of Procida)[1]

"How can this people expect to have good architecture when they wear such clothes?"
William Morris

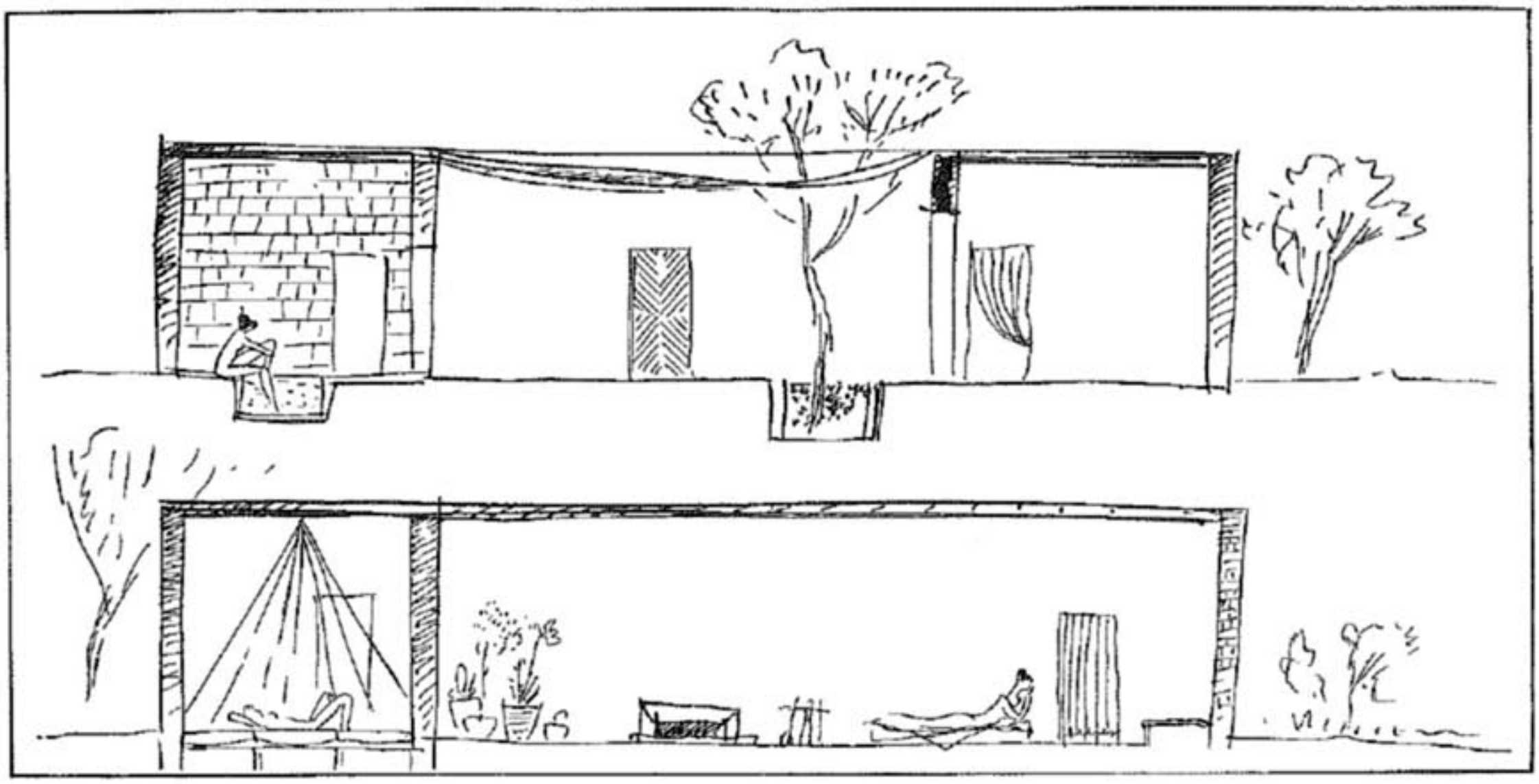
For a long time now, we have lost touch with the ground.
The gentleman who, returning from his morning horseback ride, cannot remove his boots without the proper tool;
the lady who wears high heels that invite her to sit or recline, but which are not made for walking;
the sportswoman who puts her feet into three pairs of thick woolen stockings and then squeezes them into shoes that are like trunks, hobnailed and stinking;
or her opposite, the leaping and bounding ballerina with her so-called ballet slippers, designed specifically for the aforementioned activities — themselves the epitome of gracelessness —; all these people have lost touch with the ground beneath their feet.
They no longer know the joy of feeling the soles of one's feet tickled by sand, by fresh-cut grass, by smooth marble.
Ancient Roman epitaphs celebrate the bearing of the deceased. Ovid sings the praises of a noble gait. Asphalt is a surface not for feet, but for motor vehicles.
The plan illustrated here is for a country house.
Staircases have no place in a country house. Staircases are the most important requirement of monumental architecture; they should be built out-of-doors, and become part of the landscape. In a small house, with its steep and narrow staircases, one does not stride majestically, but instead must hop.
As for windows, how wretched and profoundly bourgeois they are! Windows are openings in the walls set wherever one likes — often cut into the ceiling — so as to allow a certain measure of light and air.

1 BR38.9.

Bernard Rudofsky. Plan of the Procida House, 1938 (?).
The plan is built upon a 25 x 25 cm module, corresponding to a common format of local floor tiles.
The author's notes read:
"The servant-girl's room looks out on the path leading to the entrance.
The bathroom contains no apparatus. There is a pit in the floor that collects water for the bath. The morning sun enters through the door. Hygienic equipment is confined to the adjacent room.
The courtyard is the true living room. Its floor is formed by mown grass with little daisies and veronica; in spring there will be violets and orchids. The sky, with its ever-changing appearance, serves as ceiling. One can protect oneself against the summer sun with a rust-colored sun sail. A fireplace makes it possible to enjoy the room on spring and autumn evenings as well. Dogs, cats, and doves will find a refuge here.
One takes off one's shoes in the dressing-room, before entering the bedroom, because its floor is entirely composed of mattresses. Against mosquitoes and flies, mosquito netting is needed; it hangs from the ceiling.
The kitchen is electric. Here meals are completely prepared and seasoned, to avoid all work at the table.
The dining room, open towards both the courtyard and the garden, has neither table nor chairs, but there are one (or more) couches on which to recline, forming a bi- or triclinium, along with a small serving table. With this arrangement, the architect solves a whole lot of evils, with which we put up without challenging them: first of all, poor digestion and paunchiness. Not to mention the aesthetics of the arrangement.
The music room, which in bad weather also serves as living room. Along one wall there is a masonry divan that can serve as bed for one or two guests."



In southern countries windows are placed low, at chair level, and these are the most agreeable. (One finds seated by such windows women with blazing eyes.) In more northern regions, the window runs from the waist upward, in keeping with the preference of weary men who fill the aperture by leaning their heads against the window-pane.
The window is not always conveniently situated. Sometimes one must reach it by means of stairs. In the Palazzo Pitti, there are even elegantly curved stairways leading up to the windows. Today there exist windows incalculably large and incomprehensibly beautiful; nonetheless, they remain windows.
The ancient house knew no windows. The only opening worthy of a room was the doorway, because one could pass through it.
(This is a country house for a woman).
In the fourth century, there were eight hundred fifty-six public baths and eleven hot springs in the city of Rome.
Modern man no longer bathes: he washes himself. To this end, he clambers into an iron tub 5 or 6' long and 30" wide. The various bodily positions he assumes are determined by his ability and desire to become clean. This activity, which for lack of a better word we will call bathing, takes between ten and fifteen minutes. The setting is a tall, narrow room — often illuminated by a window — which is filled, on account of other hygienic exigencies, with various instruments and fixtures.
When the bath is finished, one dries oneself.
(In the hot season individuals of both sexes, ingeniously dressed, migrate toward the sea. However, it is the custom to wear clothing even in the water. Violators are punished.)
In this house the bathing room is empty and well illuminated; in the center of the floor, there is a concavity containing water. The morning



Bernhard Rudofsky. Two east-west sections of the Procida House, 1935 (?).
Above, section through the bathroom (with the bathtub sunk into the floor), courtyard (paved, and shaded by a velarium), and dining room. Notice that, in this early version, the latter opens only onto the courtyard and not — as the later open portico solution shown in the plan at left — outwards as well.
Below, section through sleeping room (with mosquito net) and living room (with low fireplace and masonry divan).

sun enters through an open door. (The open door underlines the intimacy of the space.) The accessories for personal hygiene are kept in another room.

Built-in wall cabinets are commonplace today. And so are squeaky, creaky beds with a headboard and a footboard, or with metal tubes or well turned columns supporting a baldacchino; a bed with a gilded or silvered cover and with carved or inlayed decoration. Such beds answer to masculine or feminine names: Maria Theresa or Louis Fourteenth.

Let us understand a bed instead as a pallet on the floor, a nuptial or matrimonial pallet, or one that simply invites us to solitary, passionless repose.

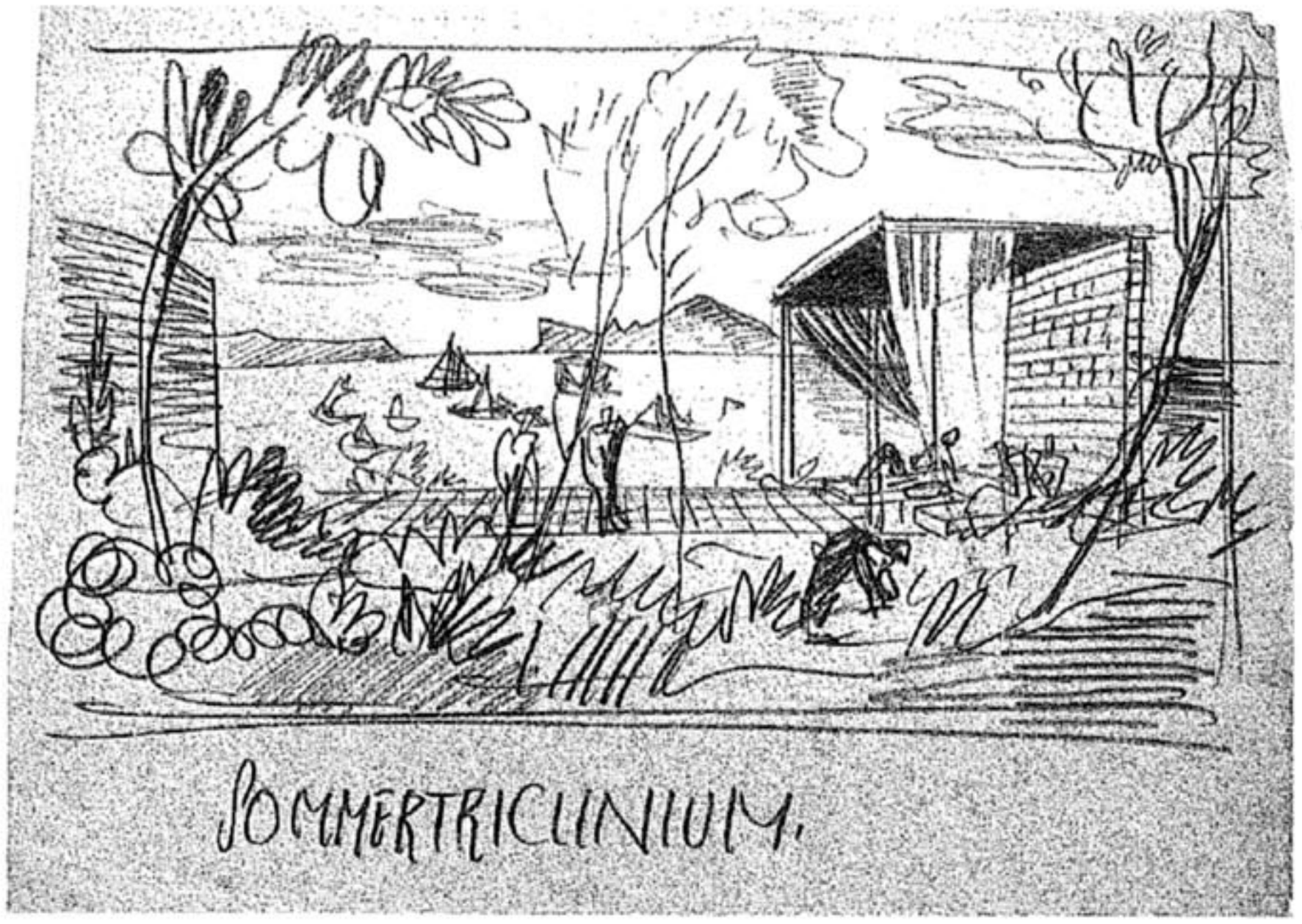
Let us make a pallet of solid stone; we shall call it a *cline*.

No table buckling under the weight of gifts,
no shaky table with a drawer,
no table that presses against one's ribcage and hides one's feet,
no table for elbows and heavy heads.

And we shall eliminate as well the dining table, the desk, the night-table, the vanity, and the kitchen table.

Here are the chair, the bench, the folding chair, the armchair (a relative of the bed), the rocking chair, the child's highchair (poor child!), the easy chair (as the Americans and English call it — we would rather call it the awkward chair), the stool, and finally the *chaise-longue*. All the possible sitting positions under the sun.

Let us take some more blocks of stone, construct a reclining chair and call it, like the bed, a cline. In ancient times, three of these would constitute what was called a *triclinium*. One need only add another slab of marble to serve as a table.



Bernhard Rudofsky. **Sommertriclinium** *(summer triclinium in the garden of the Procida house), 1935 (?).*
The view looks southwards. At left, the house. In the background, Sorrento peninsula and Capri.

It is not true that the ancient practice of eating in a reclining position causes a stomach ache; on the contrary, it is our habit of eating while seated upright that is unhealthy. Originally, the men of ancient Rome reclined at table, while the women sat upright — the *triclinium* thus accommodated six people. Later, during the Imperial period, the ladies let themselves go to the point of reclining at table along with the men. In cultural history, this is called decadence.

(This is a country house for a woman with no preconceptions.)

As we conceive of it, the reclining position is a mythological posture. For this reason, every woman should recognize that it is the most flattering position — Venus, Danaë and Olympia all had their portraits done while reclining. Of Madame Récamier, that prudent woman of taste, we shall speak a bit later.

A revision of our eating customs is a prerequisite for the adoption of the horizontal position at table. But first we must banish all weapons — such as steak knives and fish knives, carving knives, and fruit knives — to the kitchen. Chinese cuisine, the most ancient and most flavorful in the civilized world, takes into account the absence of flatware: the Chinese never put a metallic instrument anywhere near their mouths. The Turkish peasant eats capably and enjoyably with bread, never soiling his fingers. The wooden spoon of the prison inmate will conquer the table of the gourmet.

When it comes to anachronisms, the baseness and insensitivity of our taste is even more evident in our clothing.

(The absurdity of men's way of dressing merits no more than a sigh.)

The incomprehensible and brutal fact that today we must cut fabric before using it cannot be explained merely by women's desire to dress themselves in a minimum of cloth. One glance at a book of the history of costume is enough to teach us that the ancients had no need to wear theatrical draperies on every occasion. The candor of young Spartan girls thoroughly eclipses the plunging necklines of today's women. To cite an example: does there exist anything in the world more ungainly,

obsequious, and wretched than a sleeve? (A second sigh for the sleeves that gentlemen wear around their legs — sleeves which, two thousand years ago, were already regarded as barbaric and shameful. Doesn't anyone remember that skirts used to be worn by men? The thought of Solomon, Pericles, and Dante in trousers is surely an unpleasant one.) Does there exist a man who wears shoes whose feet are not deformed? Does there exist a shoe from Padua or by Batá which is made for the human foot? We are born with fan-shaped feet, not pointed ones.

Is there anyone who has not been struck by the ridiculousness of men's hairstyles? Of course not, for our gentlemen take their coiffures very seriously.

Is there a woman who still knows how to dress her head with a kerchief, to wrap it in a turban, to embellish her hair?

Today's hairdresser fabricates curls with electrically powered machines that give off steam. Here is papier-mâché sculpture on a woman's head, barely distinguishable from a hat.

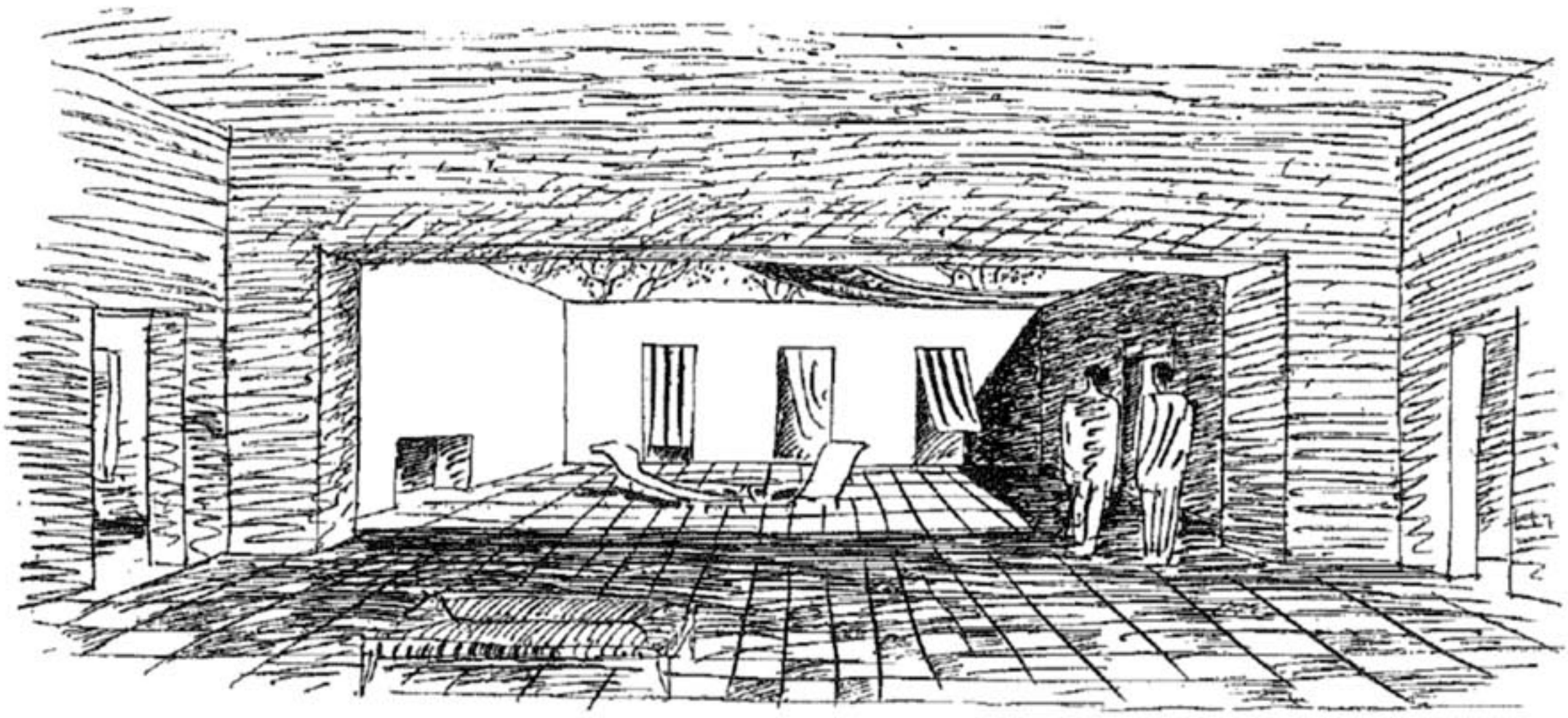
The woman dressed like the Empress Eugénie will cut a poor figure on the cline. Here, a long shirt is more appropriate. Madame Récamier rightly noted this, and took off her shoes and stockings as well.

Our woman without preconceptions will not wear tailored clothing, styled hair, or cobbled shoes in her country house.

The bedroom of her house contains no furniture. Not even a cline. The floor of this room, upon which one walks with shoeless feet, is made entirely of mattresses. A mosquito net in the form of a hut hangs from the ceiling.

A few words more on bed linen. Since the well-dressed gentleman and the well-dressed lady wear colored garments to bed (something which was once considered to be in bad taste), it is impossible to understand why bed-sheets must always be white. Among people who are accustomed to change their bed-sheets, one cannot seriously maintain that color is a measure of cleanliness. Indeed, the cleaner the sleeper, the cleaner the bed. Women should look a bit at the backgrounds of all the sleeping goddesses in our museums, and they will return home full of learning and new ideas.

Bernhard Rudofsky. Perspective sketch from the portico (dining room) towards the courtyard (outdoor living room) of the Procida House, 1935 (?).
Notice the low fireplace in the wall at left and the courtyard's paved floor.



Fashion: Inhuman Garment [2]

Let it not seem strange that *Domus*, too, is for once joining in the fray about fashion which has been going on for some time now. Modern man must think not only about his house, which is merely his second layer of clothing. It is not enough for the house to cease to be anachronistic, so long as the first layer, the one we wear, remains out of date. It is perfectly useless for us to invent new architectural organisms and new structures for houses, so that life may flow along in them with a new naturalness, if we persist in keeping the body imprisoned within the caprices of irrational fashion. The problem of today's fashion, broadly considered, lies not in finding some new variant for the decoration of an evening gown, but rather in suggesting to man, in the context of a new way of life, other ways of dressing as well. Modern architecture has proceeded analogously in its own field, undoubtedly renouncing the chance to grab hold of some vain originality in useless ornamental motifs, but instead pushing itself — in an act of unprejudiced criticism — to rethink an entirely new structure for the house. Fashion must do no differently, unless it wants to die out at the very moment when it deceives itself that it is being reborn.

It isn't hard to demonstrate that our clothing remains the surviving expression of a civilization that we have already changed in many respects. With this clothing, which has become a mere habit, we cover up the ills that we ought to combat. We must understand what ancient dress was. For nine centuries, the most beautiful garment belonged not to him who had the best tailor, but to whoever knew how best to drape about himself and wear better than others the *himation* woven in his own house. Ancient clothing — like our rudimentary folk costumes — was immutable, but unlike the latter it was logical, healthful, absolutely perfect. The injustice of our days reveals itself — to those who are not blind — in the still extremely different prices of the materials and manufacture of women's clothing. (And it doesn't occur to any of you that things were not always so, and that they could still be different today.)

There is no hope for "human" clothing unless we first shed our habit of viewing the human body exclusively through the eyes of tailors.

Let's forget for a moment about cheap, miserable clothing and turn our attention to the art commonly called *haute couture*.

Without bothering to follow human anatomy, natural plasticity, and certain fundamental rules of hygiene (not to mention the rules of aesthetics), the tailor and the shoemaker have tackled the truly irrational problem of modeling their male or female clients in accordance with a vague ideal of design, consisting of a very complicated organism of cylinders, cones, and tubes. It is clear that this enterprise can have no rational solution.

What most offends not only our aesthetic sense but our common sense as well is to view the tailor engaged in his work. For centuries, he has seen his task as beginning only with the cutting the fabric. And it is not without deep-seated reasons that we speak of the "cut." It requires all the insensitivity that every trade brings with it to divide a beautiful material into pieces. But our tailor teaches us that in order to use the cloth, one must first cut it into little bits.

How was ancient clothing made?

Ever since our far-off school days, we have imagined antiquity as an ideal stage trodden by heroes and bit-players draped in sheets. This idea, popularized in part by stage plays and films, has intensified our misunderstanding of costume in the ancient world. How can we, still

2 BR38.13.

today, think that an industrious people, with a "modern" mentality as "scientific" — in the broad sense — as our own, went about on stilts? Besides, our own clothing — let's call it tubular — was familiar to the ancient world on account of the barbarians, who dressed as we do today.

To better understand the relationship between ancient man and his clothing, we must get rid of certain misunderstandings.

His life was not a setting for a parade, as it may appear in certain reconstructions. Because of the harmony between his aspirations and the surrounding reality, the pathetic aspect of life was unknown to him. So his clothing, too, could not but be rational, eminently practical, accessible to all and, as a consequence, "social." Nothing could be falser than to think of ancient costume, whether Greek or Roman, as monotonous, uniform, and leveling.

We are materialists to such a degree as to presume — contrary to the evidence of history — that the present is everything.

There has been no lack of experiments in modern times. Whether because he was possessed of an admirable instinct or because he was disgusted by the carnival that was the Directory, Napoleon commissioned David, the greatest artist of his time, to create a costume worthy of the French people. One could expect nothing but a failure, since it was merely a matter of an arbitrary disguise lacking any moral basis.

But what would be left for the tailors, if one day humanity were to free itself from their cabalistic arts? History itself has provided the answer, every time that a trade has become obsolete. But there would collapse, along with the tailors, all their accomplices, such as shoemakers, milliners, hairdressers, etc., who have reduced their customers to a sort of slavery. To be sure, mankind will not go barefoot, nor will it let its hair grow to incredible lengths. And since the purification of our way of building our homes (which is equivalent, for us, to modern architecture with its naked houses) has not impoverished the world, but rather intensified our way of seeing things, it would be no bad thing if we got rid of the baroque aspects of our clothing.

The honor of having effectively combated the corset goes to an architect. Doctors, even if they may already have had their vague suspicions, kept quiet out of the fear of being seen as immoral and losing their patients as a result; but the architect, who on account of his profession was already halfway to being an artist, could express himself with impunity, running no risk. In the health field, he was a dilettante. Nonetheless, it took a world catastrophe such as the war to destroy our mothers' armor. Today the stigmata that could symbolize our impure civilization are the distortions of our feet. There is no one who, wearing these shoes of ours, does not have crooked feet. We must distinguish between two evils: the high heel and the symmetrical tip or shoe. If there is a convincing example of the need to keep shoemakers from making shoes in the future, it is the fact that they have yet to notice that the human foot is asymmetrical. Their incompetence has given rise to a whole "orthopedic" industry. If, from one day to the next, there were a law obliging shoemakers to make exact shoes, i.e., shoes for human feet, thousands of families who currently live on this artificial industry would be thrown into poverty.

To take a stand against the high heel is to place oneself, in terms of one's conception of life, on the level on a soldier in the army of health, a vegetarian, etc. Today not even governesses or schoolteachers still wear low heels. But how can we explain the fact that only women wear high heels, given that statistics tell us that that they are no shorter than

Bernhard Rudofsky. Gehüllt in Lana di Capri (Wrapped in Lana di Capri) *from* 5 Zeichnungen zum Aufsatz Leichte Winke für Kreuzfahrer (5 Drawings for the Essay 'Instructions for Crusaders'), *ca. 1932–33 (?).*

men? Here we are dealing with a full-fledged psychopathology. The heel, utterly unknown in antiquity, appears in the darkest period of our medieval civilization. And the shape of today's heel is no different from what it was in the century of Louis XIV-XV and so on: figures to whom goes the honor of having given a name to this monstrosity. Women who worked did not take part in these excesses, thus distinguishing themselves from their modern-day sisters. Woman was, and is, deprived of the power of disposing freely of her own limbs. It was, in short, a mutilation, thought up in a refined manner by men and progressively perfected to the point where it saw, in eighteenth-century Venice, limping women relying on the help of two female assistants.

The perfect — and perfected — comparison is with Chinese footwear; we are still speaking of feminine fashion. The Chinese woman, too, has an unconquerable aversion to the display of the bare foot. She, too, in walking, makes use of mechanical joints. The only difference is that the Chinese torture has by now come to an end.

Among us, there is no sign heralding a revolution in this field. This fact is easily accepted by every social class, out of ignorance or neglectfulness. We have reached the point where we think it indecent for a woman or child to enter a church in sandals and without stockings. But if up to this point we are speaking of ignorance, hypocrisy, perversity, the matter becomes inexplicable when it is a matter of men's footwear. They never told us in school that man is born with straight toes and that his foot has a top. This fact is unknown to many sculptors and painters, especially those of the Renaissance. In any event, no one has ever heard an artist protesting about the deformation of the human body that comes from a love of fashion. We, however, do protest, begging you to have a little respect for the intentions of God, man's creator and animator.

To repeat: were I to design a house, it would have to be for a woman.

Bernhard Rudofsky. Foreign Capri residents buying roasted chestnuts from a street vendor, ca. 1932–33.

Variations — On a Floor[3]

If an architect chances to do something successful, cherchez la femme. La femme qui nous inspire, but who prevents us from realizing our inspirations.
I would draft a lovely floor plan. (Consider for a moment the Italian word for this: *pianta*. The *pianta*'s fundamental role is underscored by the fact that, in Italian, this same term also denotes the sole of the foot. The sole that caresses the soil, which is the footprint of the house itself. Note the affinity between these two things, so well expressed by the Italian language. But you may also think of the green plant — once again, in Italian, *pianta* — that springs from the soil. For it is not a foregone conclusion that this soil must be sterile and produce no plants.)
For example. The living room or the garden-room (which may or may not have a ceiling) will certainly have a floor of grass. Well-mowed grass, of that fresh, cool green that you look for in vain in other types of flooring.
The garden must come in, and not stop at the door. And the lady who does not suffer from rheumatism will enjoy the same exquisite sensation experienced by the peasant girl harvesting hay — and with no need for recourse to the prescriptions of J.-J. Rousseau. This use of grass is by no means a new idea. It only asks to be remembered.
A murmured aside. For many years I have had the idea of creating a sculptural floor — of stone, naturally. It doesn't much matter whether it's marble or porphyry; they both have the same temperature. But it must be stone. Think of those tombstones you find in churches and cemeteries depicting some medieval knight stretched out on the ground, dressed in his armor and surrounded by handsome inscriptions in crisply carved lettering. And since this heroic warrior lived long ago,

Bernard Rudofsky. Variazioni, *ca. 1932–38.*

3 First part of BR38.14.

the reliefs have been worn down by the feet of the clergy. You will surely recall such stones, especially if you've ever slipped on one! This event — insignificant as it may seem to you — serves to indicate that, on such sculpted stone, it is better to walk *without shoes*.
This sculpted floor is something I dream of only for highly sensitive natures, for connoisseurs, for virtuosi of the sense of touch.
But perhaps I would be willing to settle for nice smooth marble, of a pale pink veined with bluish white. Just so long as you don't cover this beauty with a carpet. (Because people always put carpets on handsome floors.) You find it chilly? I have another solution: one which is more practical and more aesthetically pleasing. In the winter, wear buskins with soles of cork.
Try to persuade yourselves that the floor is the noblest part of the house. Make beautiful floors and respect them. The floor is the measure of the floor plan. A beautiful floor is possible only if the floor plan is good.
Just look at the way children enjoy themselves on the ground. And don't force them to sit on chairs. (Slavic and Nordic peoples, less corrupted than we by baroque ceremony, have better preserved the freedom of the body. They sometimes prefer to sit on the ground, even when dressed in society garb.)
You can see from many early examples that it is possible to eliminate nearly all furniture from the house in order to show off the floor. Do you know the House of the Faun at Pompeii? Here one readily understands why the Pompeians, despite their Greek culture, were well able to do without frescoes: they had deeply beautiful pictures on their floors.
Every culture has its perfect flooring. In the Japanese house, it is the tatami mat. One walks on it without shoes; there is no furniture. In the Middle East, we find the carpet. (Have you ever, by chance, waded in a mosque upon layers and layers of carpets? Soft, as yielding as snow. You have to leave your shoes at the door.) And then there are the acrobatics executed by Louis XIV heels on a parquet of the period: smooth, luminous, glossy, dazzling.
And certain of today's houses? The floors are already a bazaar, even before they've been covered with furniture. Marble and artificial stone, majolica and cement, wood and linoleum, rubber and fabrics, carpets, lots of carpets (oh, what carpets!), and even mats, all scuffed and rubbed by the shuffling heels of our civilization. We sweep them, wash them, polish them, vacuum them — yet they always remain dirty.

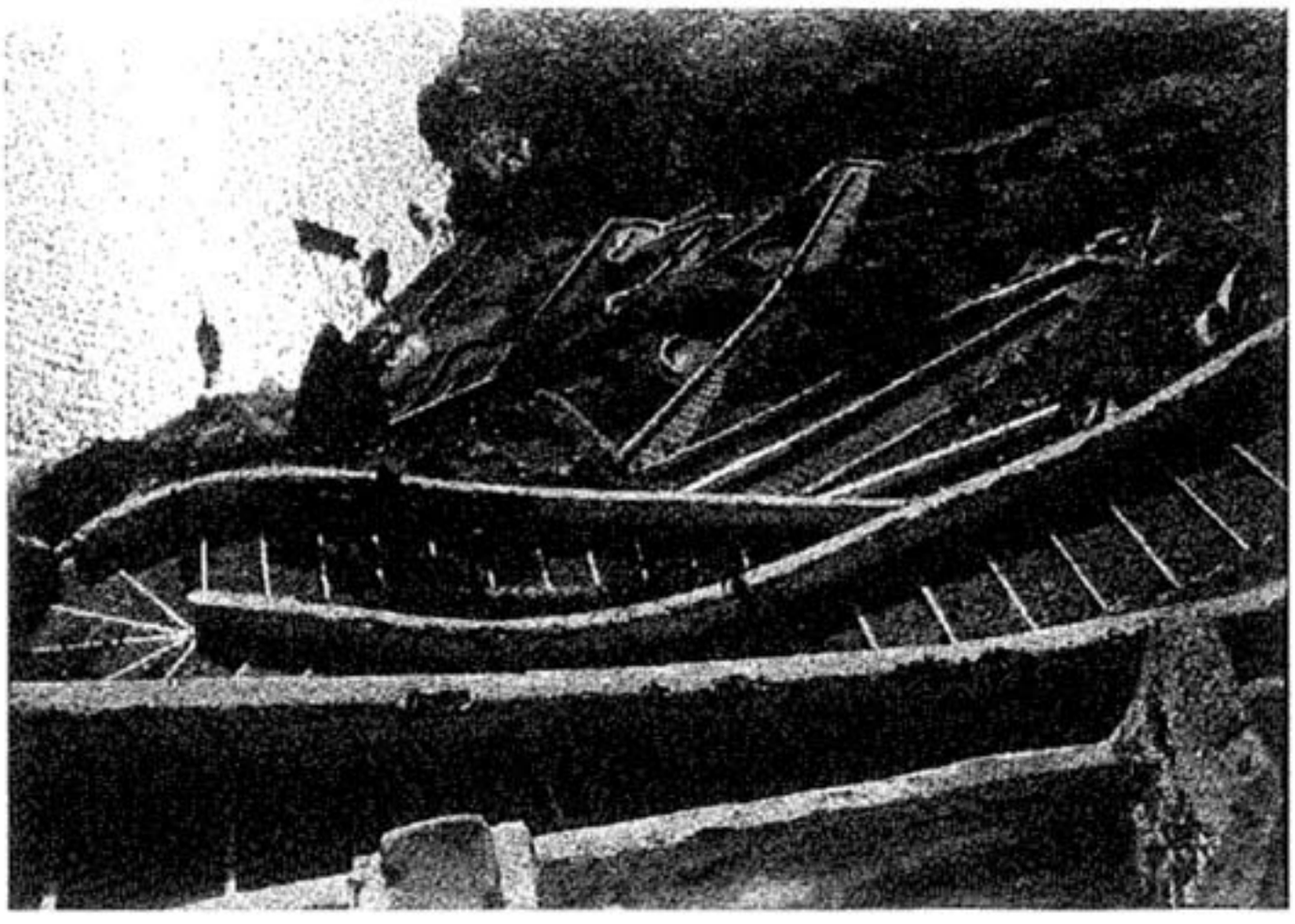
The Origin of the Dwelling[4]

Ten years ago, while spending an entire season on the [Greek] island of Santorini, I had enough time to contemplate its dwellings, living documents of our planet's most ancient houses. Their stylistic resemblance to certain structures on the Amalfi Coast was perfect, even if the Greek examples possess a stylistic purity never achieved by their later counterparts.
The walls of these prehistoric buildings were made up of the same irregular blocks still used today. Although the roofs have collapsed beneath the weight of the pumice-stone, one sees clearly that every room had its own vault. The thicknesses of the walls and vaults were the same as nowadays; it is also demonstrable that their makers knew

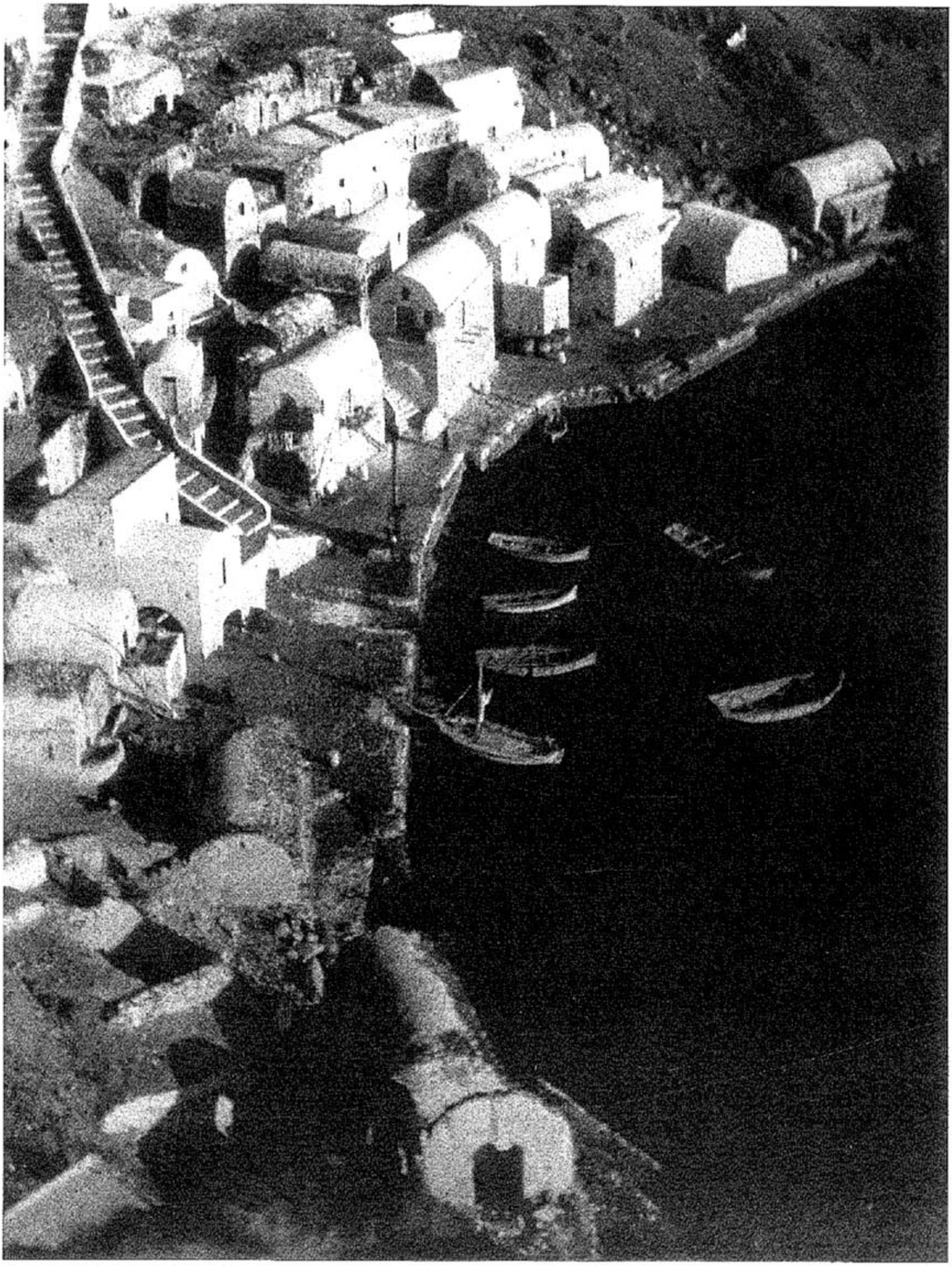
4 BR38.15.

how to cover them with plaster. Lastly, it was also possible to observe the use of a sort of whitewash. The prehistoric ruins' resemblance to the houses of today was so stupendous that the archeologists didn't want to believe their eyes.
These discoveries have subsequently been neglected. The excavations have been filled in and the matter has been forgotten.

Bernhard Rudofsky. View from Phira to the coast, *1929.*



Bernhard Rudofsky. Phira *[principal town of Santorini]* is linked to its "harbor" through a 200 m high stairway, *1929.*



Bernhard Rudofsky. The fishing port of Oia (Apanomeria), *1929.*

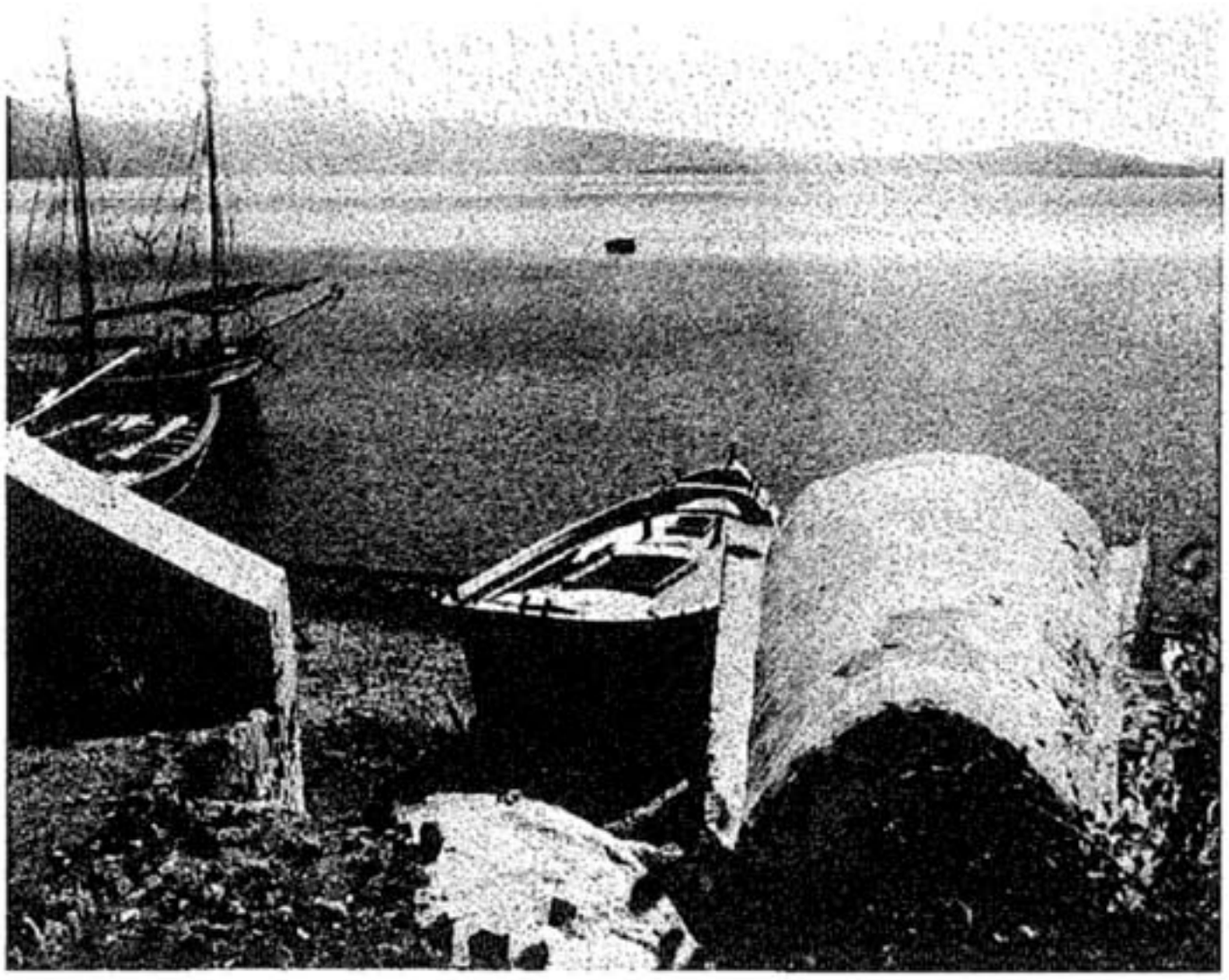
Bernhard Rudofsky. The main street in Apanomeria *[Oia], 1929.*
Around 1930, "from that vantage point of the European South, the rest of the world looked to me like one big slum" (lecture at Yale, 1961 (?)).

When, after the war,[5] with the first attempts to find a new architecture, interest in the primitives touched off long polemics regarding the origins and precedents of this modern architecture, no one mentioned the episode of the discoveries on Santorini. In discussions of the architectural concept, a primary place was occupied by the primitive houses in certain regions of the Mediterranean such as the Balearic Islands, the islands in the Bay of Naples, etc., so that people talked of a Mediterranean architecture as a precursor of modern architecture, or even of modern architecture as Mediterranean architecture. Books and magazines have offered us delightful images of these naive structures. And the dream of an ambitious client, in the Central Europe of some years back, was to possess a house of the same nearly pathetic simplicity.

Santorini also teaches us a lesson about the birth of the vault. A good share of its inhabitants are troglodytes. And one can see there all the phases of the vault's evolution, from the cave sculpted in volcanic rock down to the thinner vaults that seem to preannounce modern vaults in reinforced concrete.

5 WWI.

Bernhard Rudofsky. Chimneys in Oia (Apanomeria), *1929.*



Bernhard Rudofsky. The crater sea *[of Santorini]* looking southward, *1929.*

(Note: In announcing the winners in [an] Industrial Design competition for twenty-one American republics, the Museum of Modern Art stated that in Category C — furniture for a dining room — no submissions were found worthy of a first prize.[7] Winners were selected in all categories excepting for dining room furniture, where no competitor had made a sufficient study of the various essential dining room requirements.)

Give Us Our Dining Room[6]

It would seem that there is something fundamentally wrong about the dining room; and there certainly is. The pleasures of the table have at all times been looked upon as amongst the most sublime bestowed upon us. Man's genius has succeeded in spiritualizing the ingestion of food — a rather humiliating process for that macabre mechanism: the body — into the realm of art. It is always overlooked that epicures do not consider culinary sensations as an end in themselves. Plato's and Horace's symposia suggest strongly that there once was an interrelation between food and thought; wise-cracking vice-presidents at annual dinners are all that is left of it today.

Another mistaken idea associated epicurism with nightingale tongues and ostrich brains. But a handful of olives, a glass of wine — it is the wine that raises man above the animal, thought the Greeks — and some fruit are sometimes the only ingredients of an epicure's meal. How is the miracle achieved?

Until men had become civilized, there certainly were no fixed hours for eating. The savage is the only one who ignores hours for mealtime. And to judge from such modern institutions as automats, lunch counters and drug stores, the cycle of evolution has come to a close. An overmechanized age has degraded eating into feeding. But besides hamburgers and vitamin pills there still have survived such elaborate gatherings as formal luncheons and dinners. Let us have a quick look at them.

6 BR42.

7 The *Organic Design* competition (1941). See also Catalogue no. 36 (p. 282).