

ATOMAA COR



#COR 2021 House Corstorphine - Edinburgh, UK Urban House 184sqm
a family nook

Corstorphine Hill is one of the seven hills that surround the historic center of Edinburgh, and is occupied in part by an enchanted wood, a zoo, and on the south side by a fairly dense residential fabric overlooking the magnificent Pentlands.

The project lot has a limited width, less than 5 m, with neighbouring buildings touching its boundaries. The main goal is to build a house that can meet the needs of a young couple with a small child, to grow together and live, study and work in environments with varying degrees of privacy, silence and light.

For the conformations of the lot, the internal spatial organization must develop in section, partly following the flowing course of the ground and moving back to the upper floors to create artificial landscapes towards the south.

The building sits in a very slim piece of land between very close neighbouring buildings. The characteristics of the ground have forced a mixed construction system, which includes a base, like an auditorium, with steps made in bands in concrete from 1 to 2 meters wide, with concrete piles. For the lower level, the perimeter walls are made of concrete blocks, while the two upper floors have a wooden structure. The façades on the short sides are characterized by prefabricated concrete panels. The top floor is coated with pigmented zinc.

The main facades, on the street and on the private garden to the south, reflect a tension towards the simplicity of the elements that compose them, reducing the figure to the massive trilithon system of the first two levels, and to the light frame of the metal structure on the upper floor.

The facades are not “designed”, but excavated through an operation of reduction in the case of the compact volume, and are manifested through the materiality of a few elements; smooth concrete with inserts of local stones, aluminium windows and zinc cladding pigmented.

“[...] Quality materials and good workmanship [...] they make ornamentation redundant.
Fine material is God’s own wonder.”
Adolf Loos, “Hands Off”, 1917

The window system alternates from small windows on a domestic scale, which can be opened for ventilation and protected by the overhangs of the roof, to large fixed windows which are shifted flush with the exterior of the facade. The depth given by the misalignment is inhabited, through different configurations of fixed furniture, in order to create favourable places for activities that require light and freedom of thought.

The internal landscape is constructed in section; the vertical connecting staircase is also a channel of natural light that brings light to the lower floors through the large skylight. It is an object in itself composed of the lower half in birch and the upper half in folded lacquered perforated metal sheets.

From street level one can access the intermediate floor. The entrance is a real vestibule, a generous entrance space, which also serves as a laundry and coat room.

The internal atmosphere aims to build a balance between different material surfaces and natural colour tones, as they occur in the landscape of Eastern Scotland, where the sandstone has shades of pink, ocher or sand. The material elements are few; the pigmented or polished concrete of the floors or the defined accents of the steps, the natural oak and the walls in natural lime plaster.

Towards the south, the silence of the roof with wild flowers forms the backdrop to the main bedroom.

The internal landscape is constructed in section, the connecting vertical distribution is also a channel of natural light that brings light to the lower floors through the large skylight. The staircase is an object in itself, composed in the lower half in multilayer birch essence and in the upper half in folded lacquered perforated metal sheets. The vertical development of the house is also reflected in the different degree of privacy of the rooms: starting from the lower floor, where the shared activities of life together take place, also in relation to the garden, up to the upper floors where the rooms become more silent and find a more direct relationship to the Pentland sky and landscape.

The spaces of family life together, with the domestic hearth, are located on the lower floor connected to the garden. The three main rooms (living, kitchen and dining) have different heights; this helps to change the proportions, brightness and acoustics.

The living room with a height of less than 2,5m is illuminated by a small patio and has cosy shadows, carpets and a fireplace.

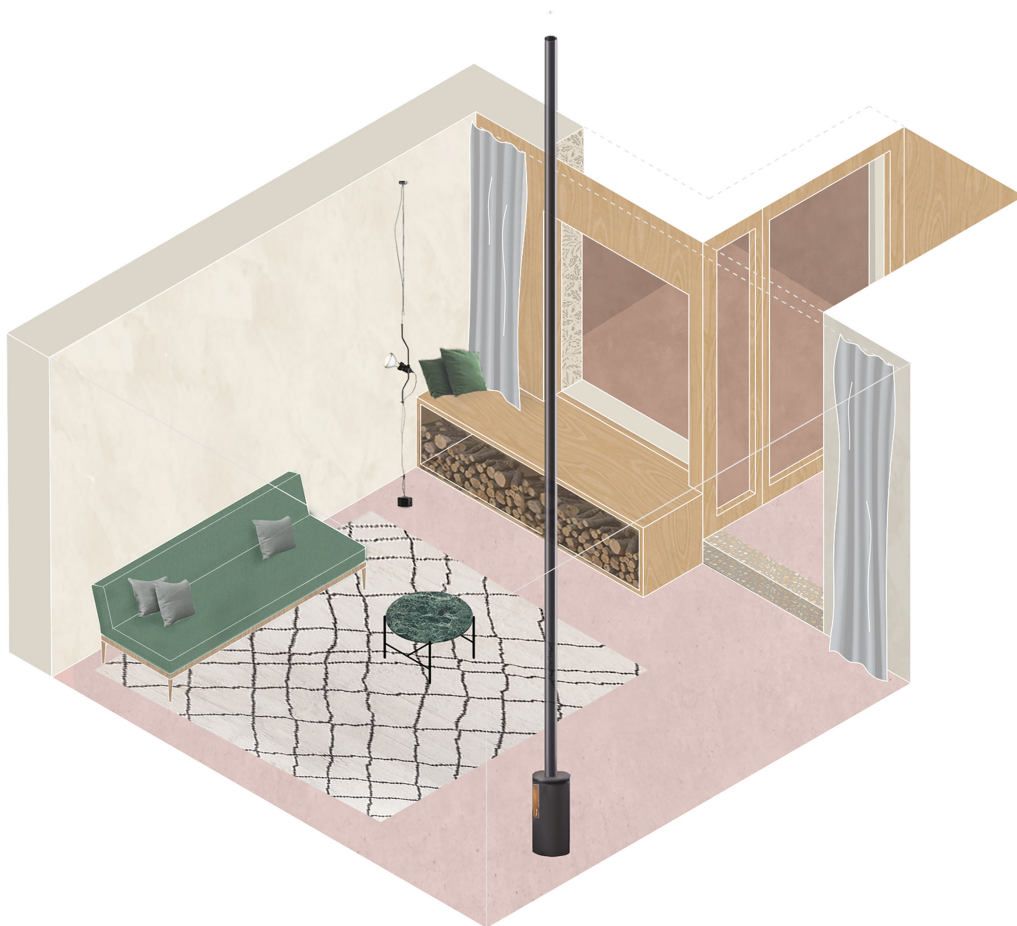
The moments of the kitchen and dining, and of the relationship with the private garden, are concentrated towards the south window. The height reaches 4 meters and the garden becomes the domestic landscape, the background for dinners and lunches.

The façade system integrates the windows with the fixed benches around the convivial table; with the storage furniture and the open structure of the passing kitchen.

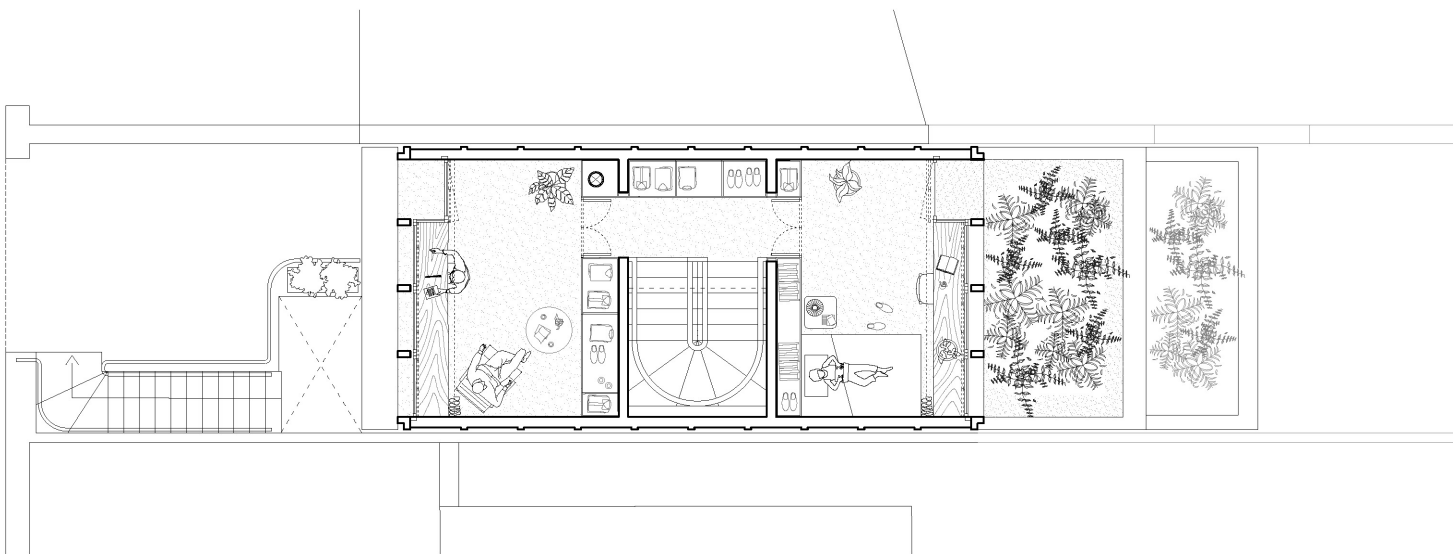
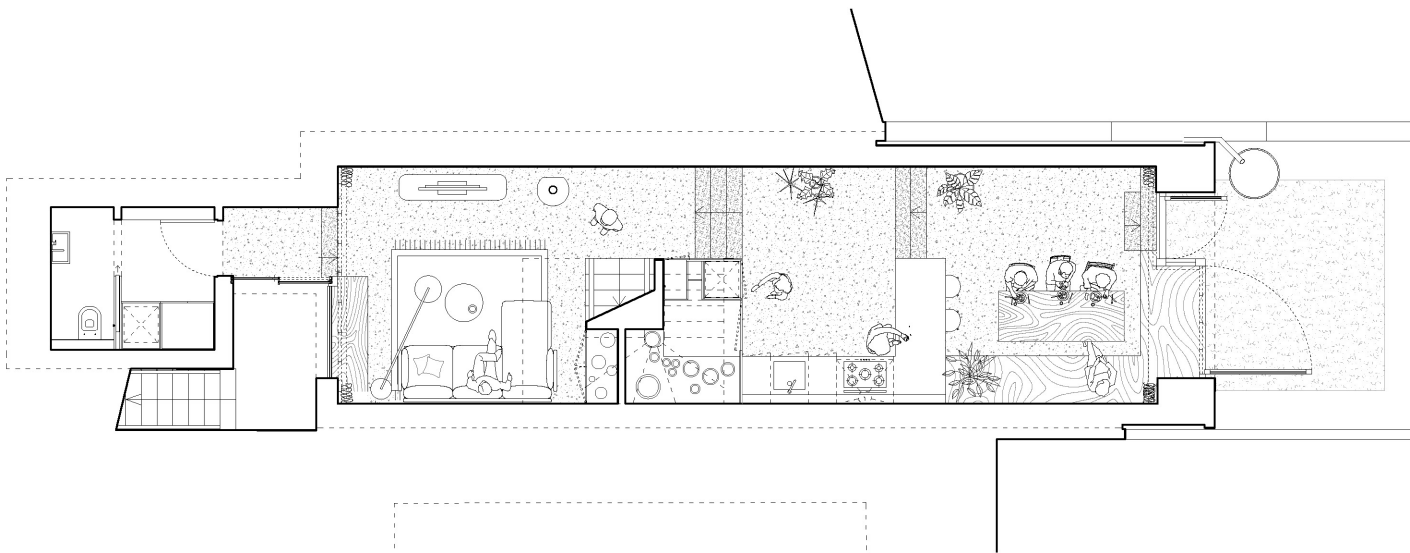
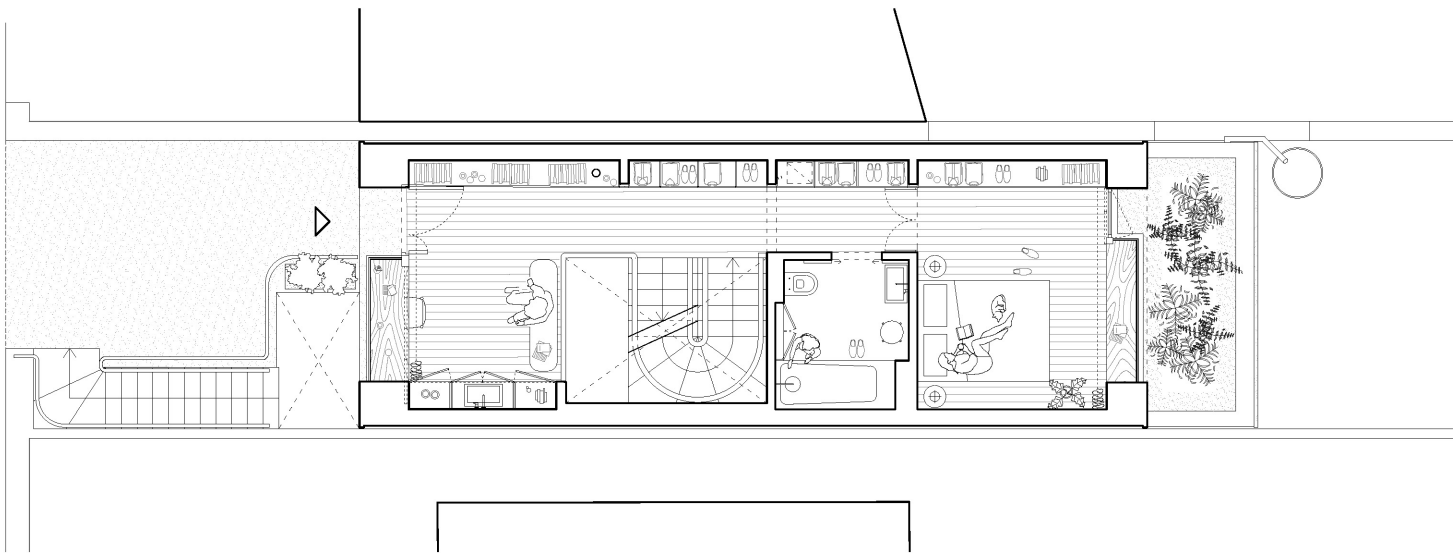
On the upper level there is the study, and the second bedroom. The first faces north, to benefit from more constant and regular lighting, while the bedroom faces south, towards the Pentlands, floating on a landscape of wild flowers.



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Credits

Client: Private

Typology: Urban House

Place: Edinburgh, Scotland

Year: 2021.08

Sqm: 184

Architectural Design: ATOMAA

Design Team: Philip Koleysohn, Bianca Magi, Celia Cardo-
na, Konstantinos Ballis, Margherita Dellepiane

Photography: ATOMAA Archive

Model photography: Alberto Strada

Structural consultant: David Narro Associated

Building Warrant and local coordination: Oliver Chapman

Architects

SAP Calculation: Christine Palmer

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