

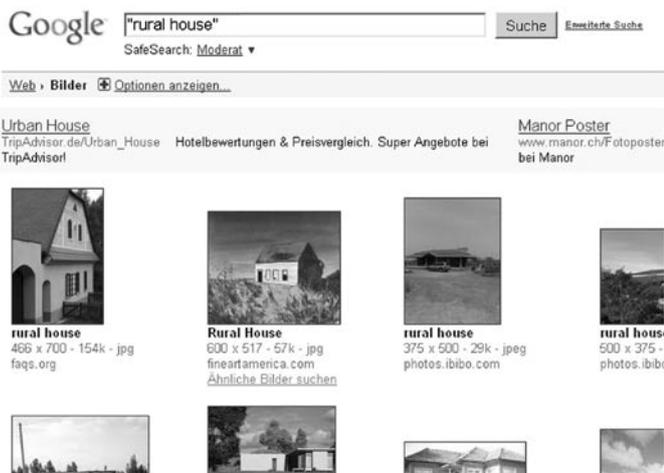
Rural House

Frei + Saarinen Architekten



Topic

The given frame to propose a concept for a sustainable and affordable freestanding house in a rural area made us think about the rural condition in general and we wondered how an innovative concept for a rural house could look like.



We discussed how a truly rural lifestyle would influence architecture and we got interested in the idea of sharing the house with farm animals. This idea seems to correspond with the the need of human beings to run a farm. At least that's what we assume looking at the exploding amount of users playing *Farmville*, the most popular Facebook Application.

Farming might be the only justification for covering untouched land. We were asked to make a design that fosters urban sprawl. But that might be okay under the condition that the surrounding land is used for food production.

Being Swiss, we are familiar with cows. So we started to develop a 100m²-house that is combined with a cow-stable plus some storage for hay, straw and forage. We discovered that there is not only an economic, atmospheric, spatial but also energetic potential in living close with animals: The bodywarmth of ten cows is sufficient to heaten all rooms.



Reference

As an architectural reference we used not less than the most famous freestanding rural house on earth, Andrea Palladio's *Villa Rotonda* close to Vicenza, 1571.



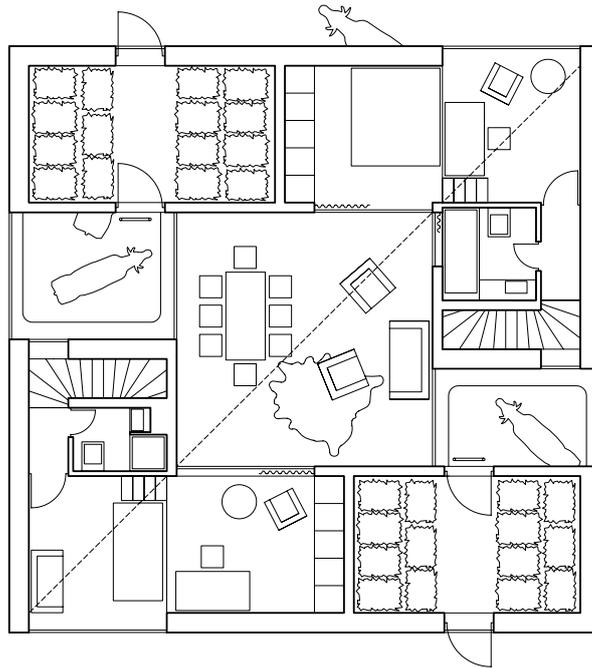
The architecture of the Rotonda is „virtual“ in the sense that it's completely without any correspondence to place or orientation as if it would have been planned without knowing anything about the context. We speculated that Palladio might not have looked at the plot at all when he designed the building. By sharing the same problem of contextlessness with Palladio, we got more and more interested in his villa and his architecture in general.



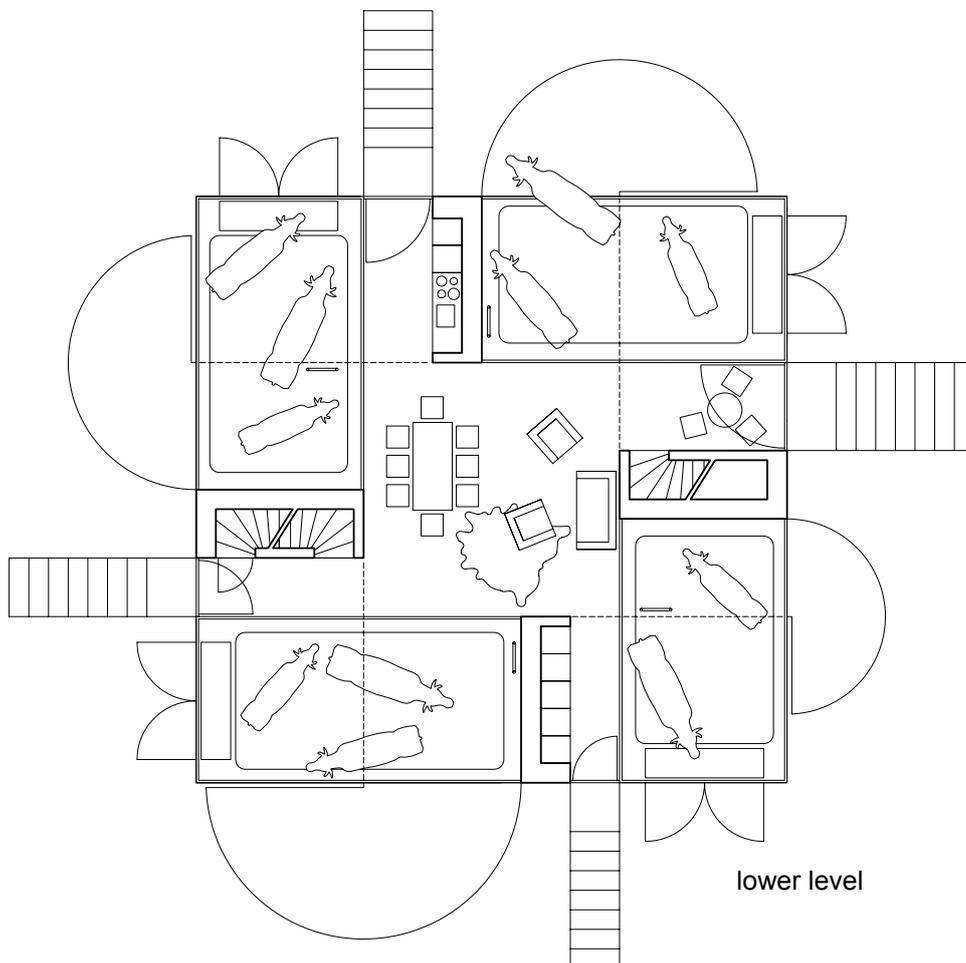
We started to like the rather weird idea of copying the concept of four entrances that are accessed by stairs. The square-shaped plan together with the redundancy of accesses is ideal for a freestanding house that should work with no - or within every possible - context. Maybe Rotonda can also be read as archetypical design for a prefabricated house, because it's easy to implant it to almost every site. This might be one reason why Palladio's villa was copied and pasted to countless places all over the world.

Scheme

It turned out that Rotonda's square-shape, the four accesses with four stairs, the high central hall, the access of the upper level by individual stairs and the pitched roof work perfectly for our purposes.



upper level



lower level

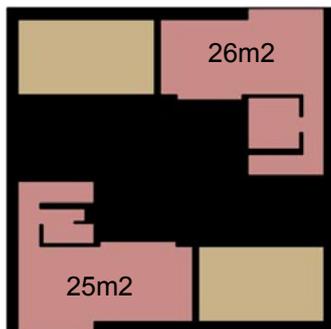




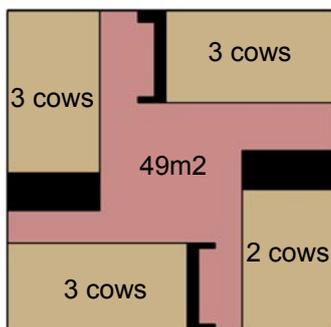
Use of space

The usable area for humans is precisely 100m². This „2-bedroom house“ that corresponds to the brief is intertwined with 4 stables with slightly different sizes plus room for hay, straw, forage.

The inhabitants of the proposed house are not necessarily farmers. We suggest a mix between house and stable - not house and farm, because that would be not realistic with the given size of the project. It's enough to have a farmer somewhere in the surroundings who would lend / rent the animals. Or maybe farmers would even pay for that new kind of outsourced stable.



- for humans : 2 bedrooms plus bath / shower room
- for cows: hay, straw, forage



- for humans: living room, kitchen, wardrobe
- for cows: 4 stables

Cow-appropriate spaces

Looking at Damien Hirst's *Golden Calf* we were fascinated about the idea of placing the stables on a socle. The raised position of the calf makes it somehow look back. To be eye-in-eye with a cow, even if it's laying on the ground of the stable would be a more respectful way to watch cows and be watched by cows.

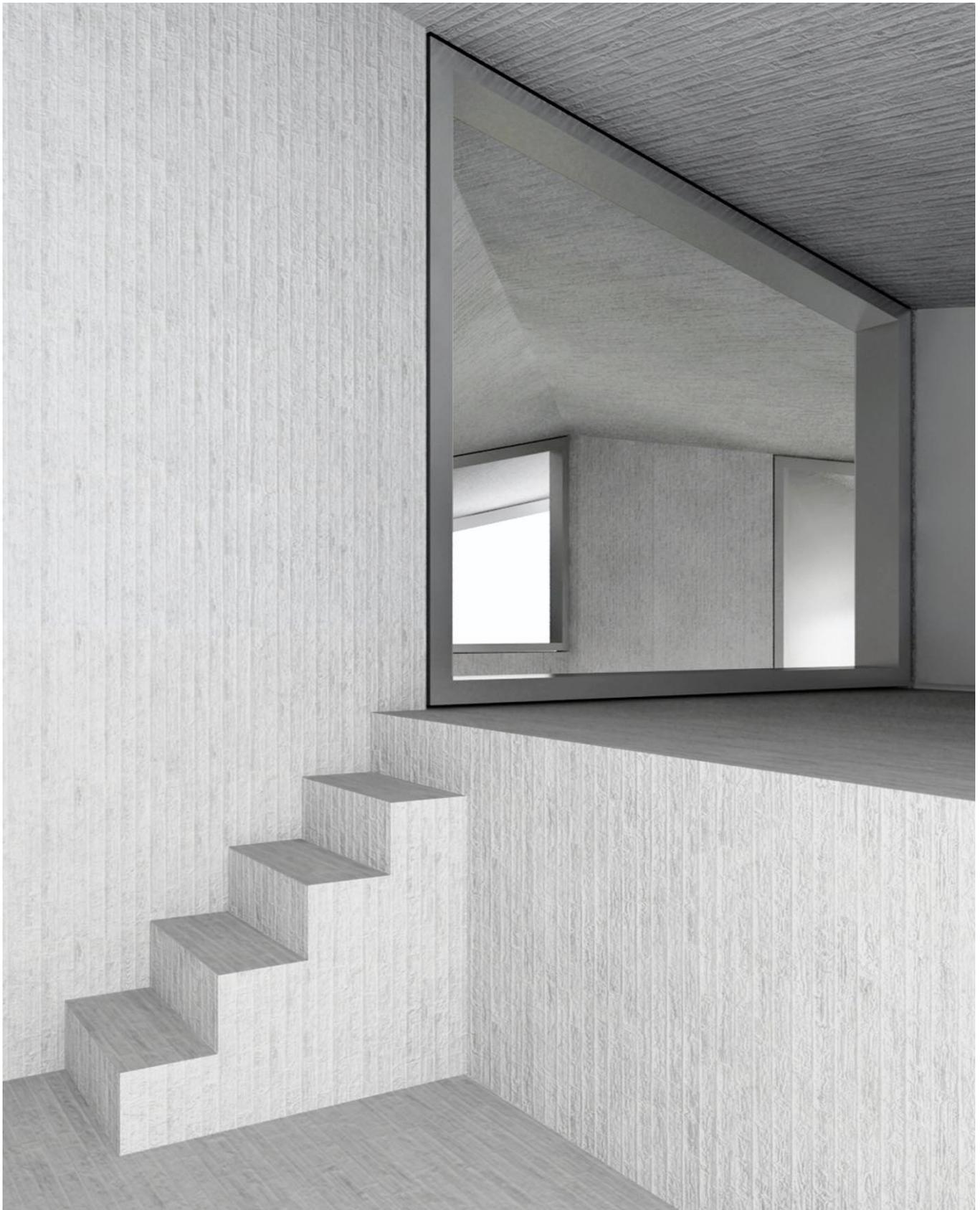
Cows are highly intelligent animals, The fact that cows that listen to music are more healthy and produce more milk prove that cows love to be entertained. This means that also cows benefit from the proposed idea of very close visual connections. We think that putting cows in an ordinary stables is a crime. The use of the inhabitants for the entertainment of the cows is not only funny, intellectually challenging, philosophically adventurous but also species-appropriate

Since the stables have to be on ground level, the living room is slightly sunken which dramatizes the experience of the surrounding landscape as comparative 3D-studys proved. Additionally, the living room gets much more usable, because furniture like sofas, tables, sideboards etc. can be arranged along the walls without corrupting the spatial idea.



We propose a humble socle, no marble. But we decided to copy Damien Hirst's way of how the glass is framed, because it has to be strong (living cows instead of liquid-pressure) and it seems to be formally convincing.





Spatial benefits

The stables increase the total size of the house and make it more generous. The Rotonda-scheme with the high central hall allows visual connections through the hall or even from one facade to the other as shown above.

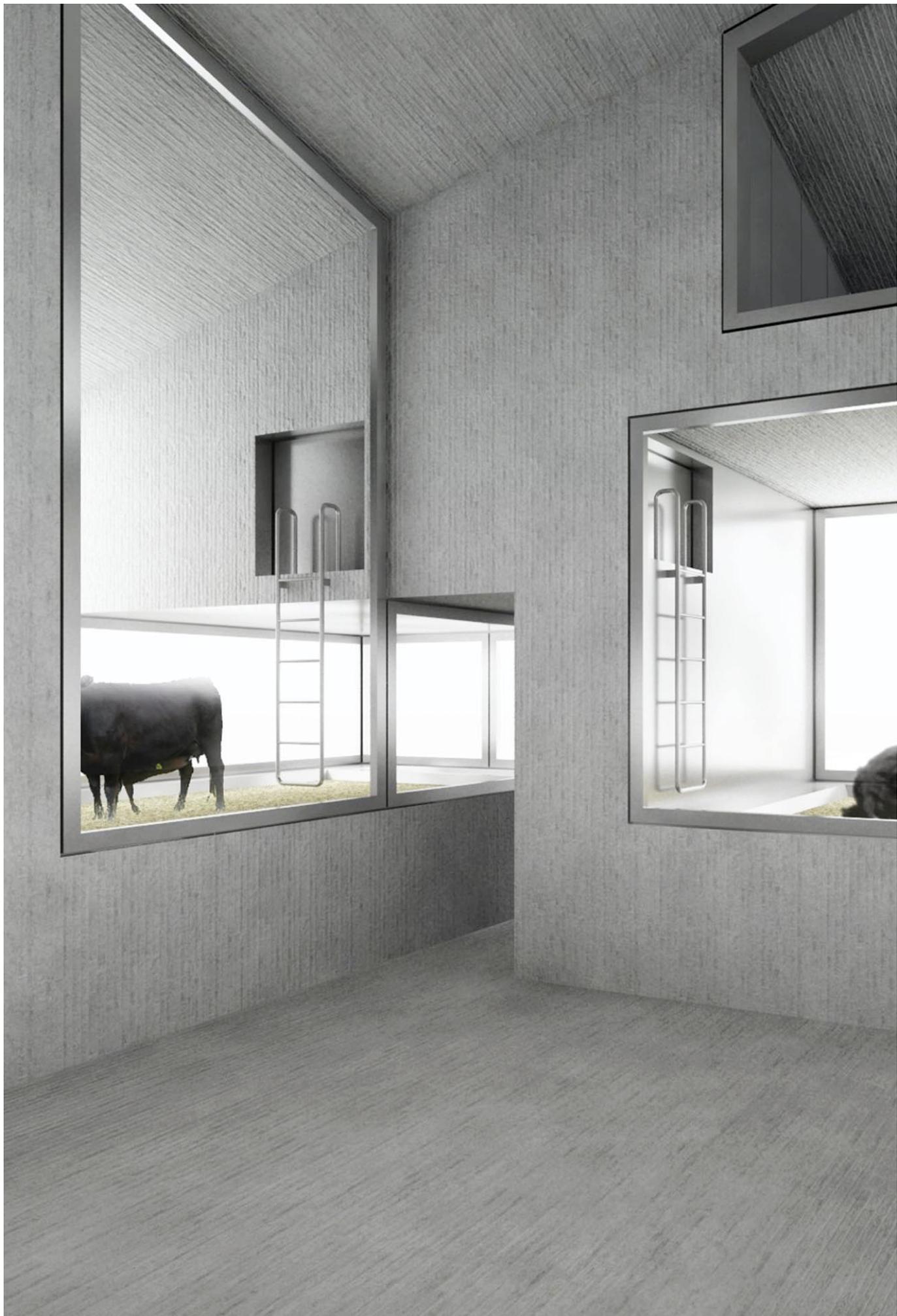
The cows generate a foreground for the visual experience of the landscape. This foreground-condition leads to two effects: Firstly, a hypercloseness to nature is generated. A cow is impressing - not only because its beauty but also for its sheer size. Secondly, the stable acts as a buffer, not only in the energetic sense but also aesthetically: Like the Villa Rotonda, the proposed rural house should work in every possible context. If the view to the surroundings is problematic there are still beautiful creatures in the foreground.

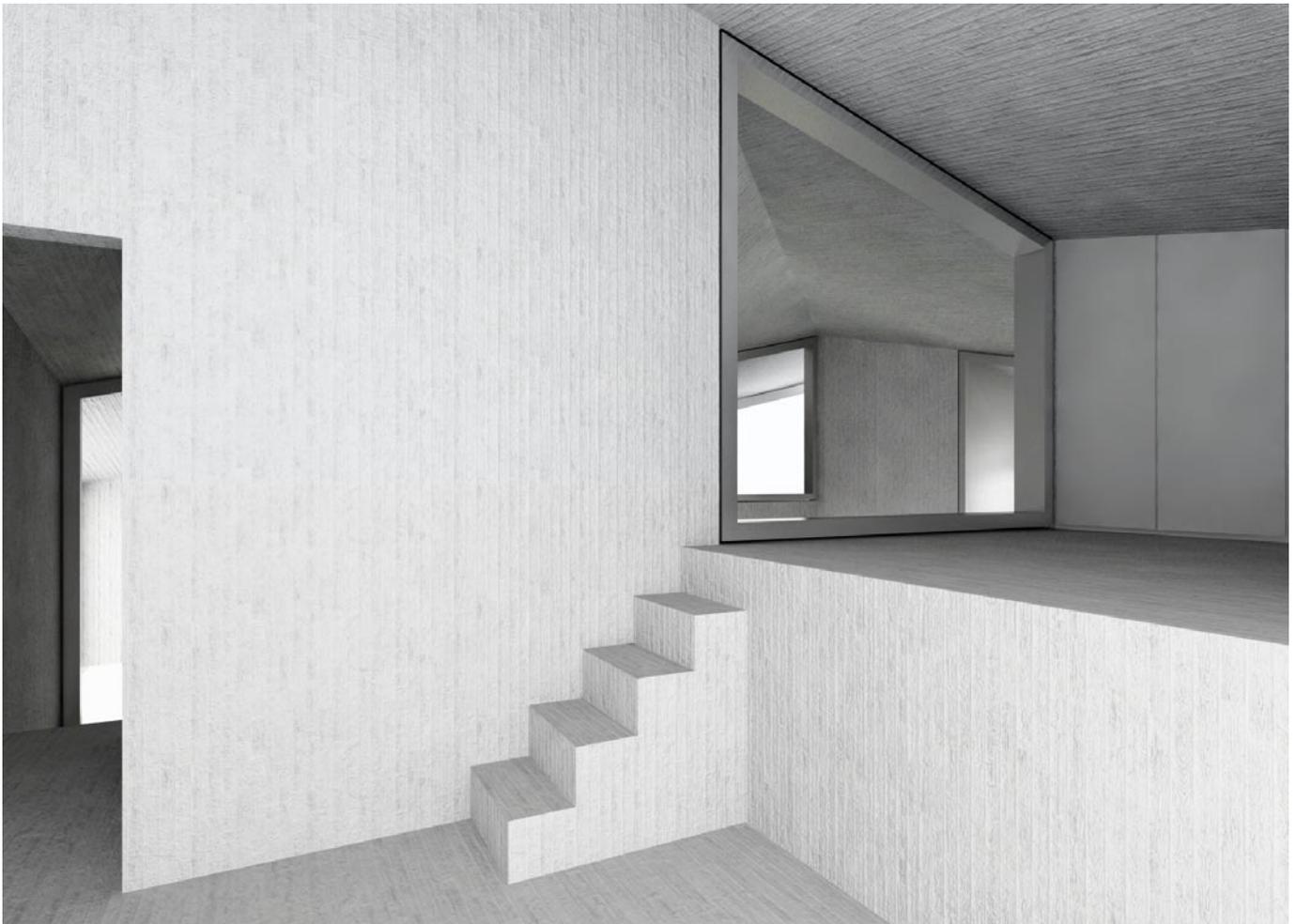


How the stables work

The cow feces are collected in the socle area below the perforated stablefloor. The storage room for hay, straw and forage is directly connected to each stable. Delivery to the storage is possible from outside.

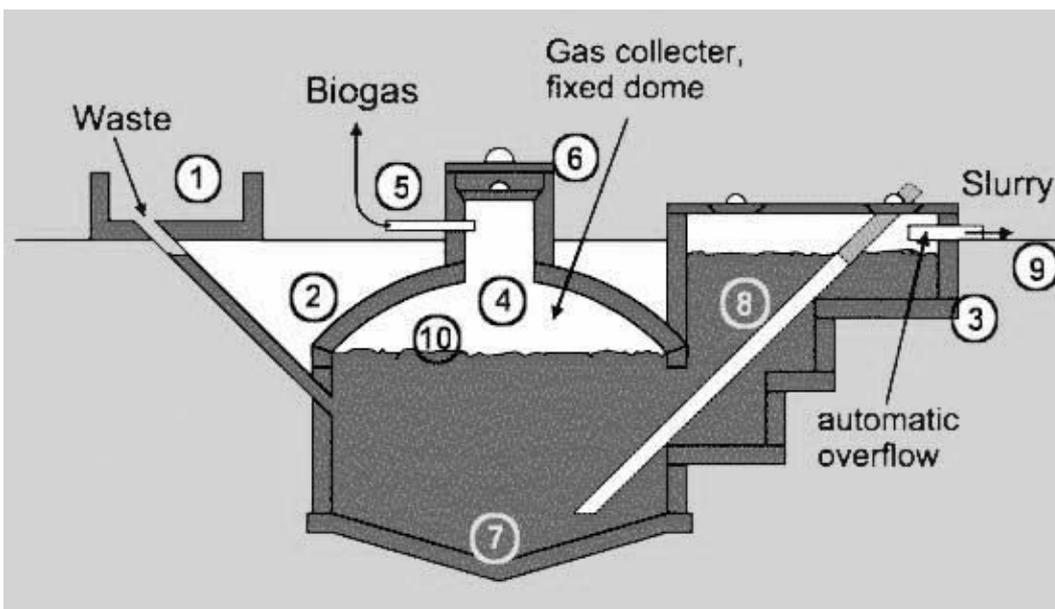






Sustainability and energetical benefits

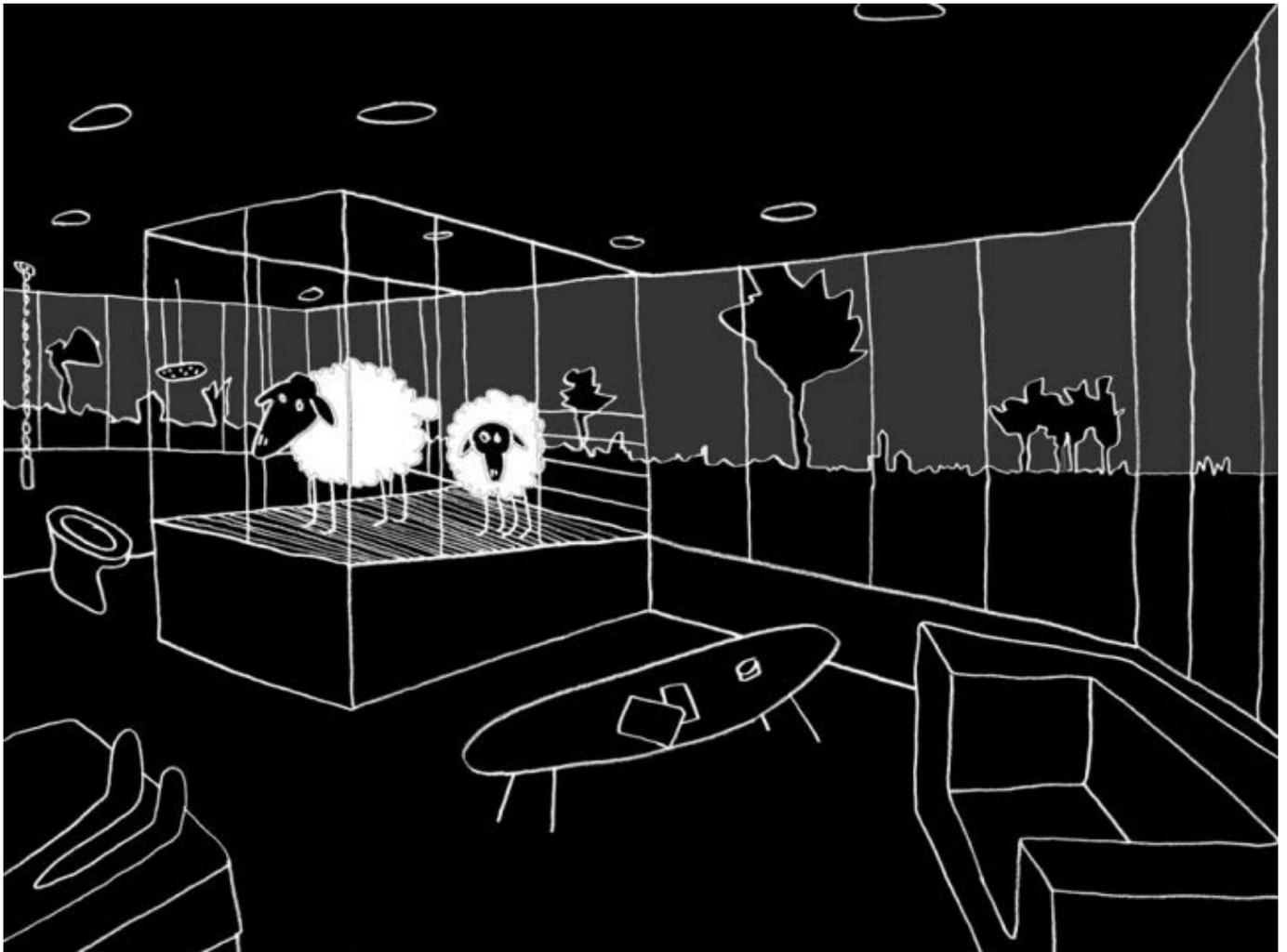
Gas from the feces is used for cooking and water heating. The bodywarmth of ten cows is sufficient to heaten all rooms. Additional heating is not necessary.



Affordability

The simplicity of the architecture in terms of structure, volumetry, use of materials and detailing leads to an affordable result. The cows generate heat and gas for free and might even generate an income if the outsourced stable-space is paid by a farmer who sells milk and meat.





Preliminary sketch

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