

# Casa Klumb (San Juan, Puerto Rico)

"Casa Klumb is the house of Frank Lloyd Wright disciple Henry Klumb. In this house, the principles of organic architecture were applied within a preservationist mind set. It stands as well, as an ecologically and enviornmentally aware approach to design, as an effort to rework organic architecture as 'green architecture'."

- National Register of Historic Places  
(U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service)



Figure 1: Casa Klumb I [n.d.]  
Henry Klumb Collection / AACUPR

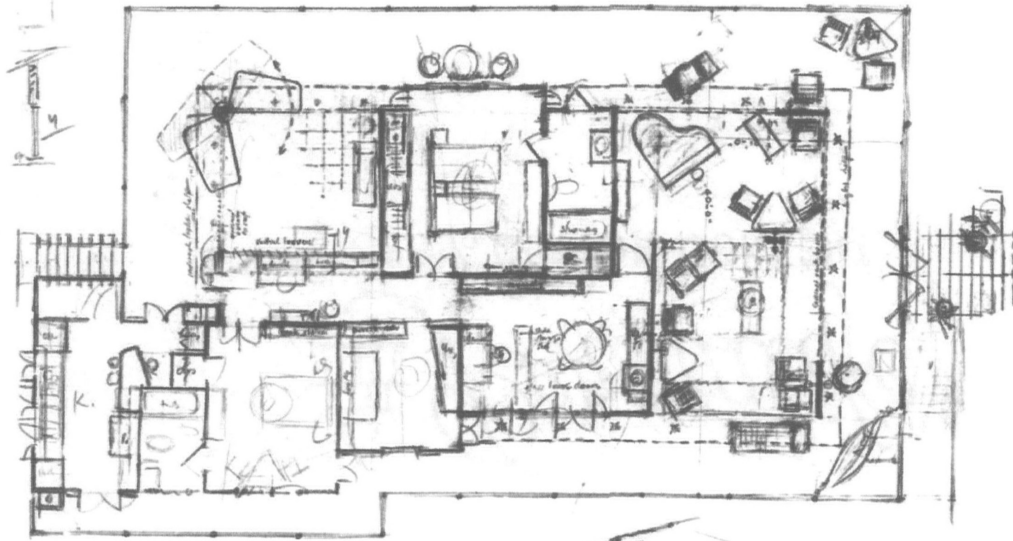
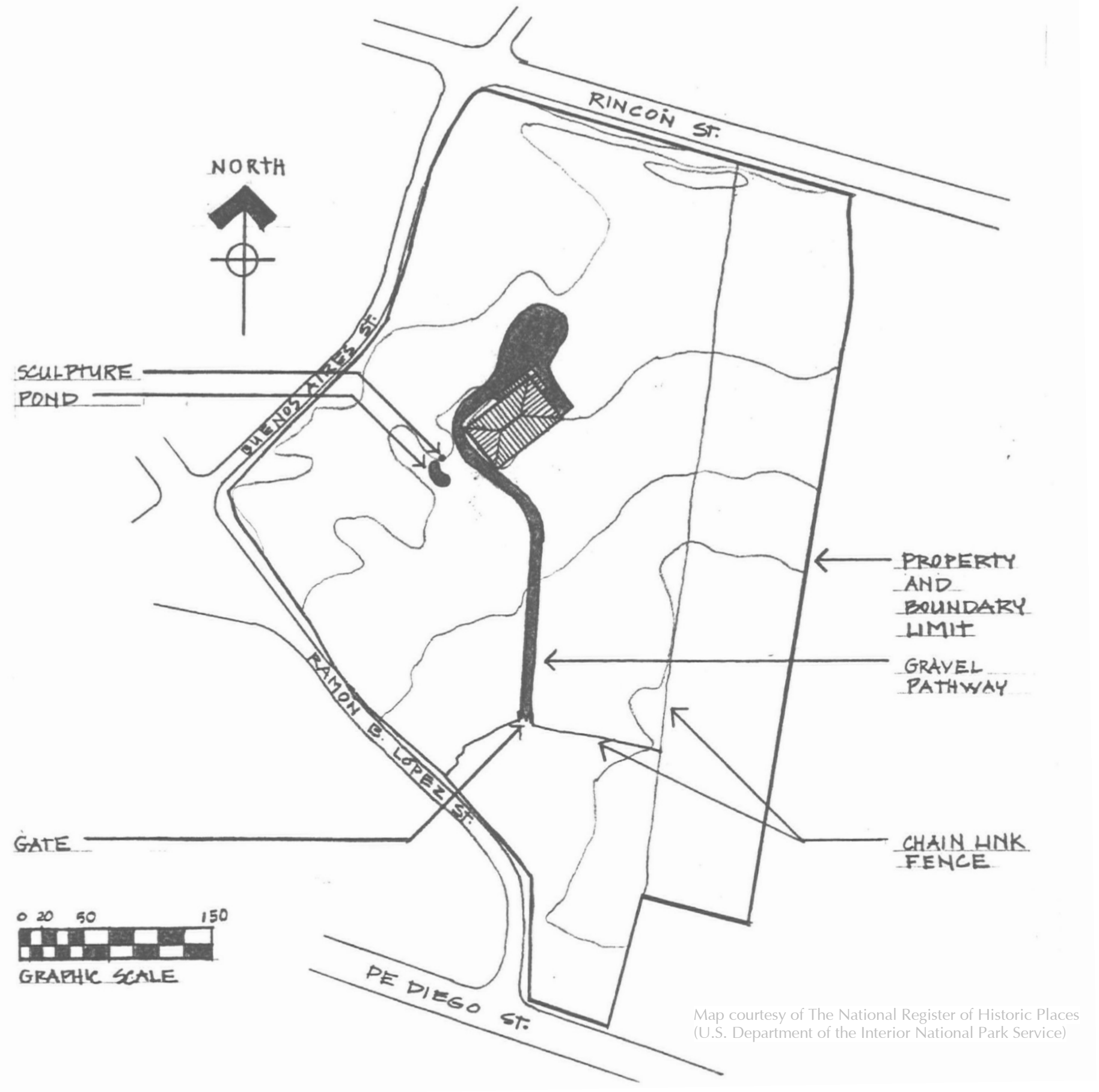


Figure 3: Casa Klumb I c. 1947  
Henry Klumb Collection / AACUPR



Map courtesy of The National Register of Historic Places  
(U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service)



# Nineteenth Century Hacienda-Type house

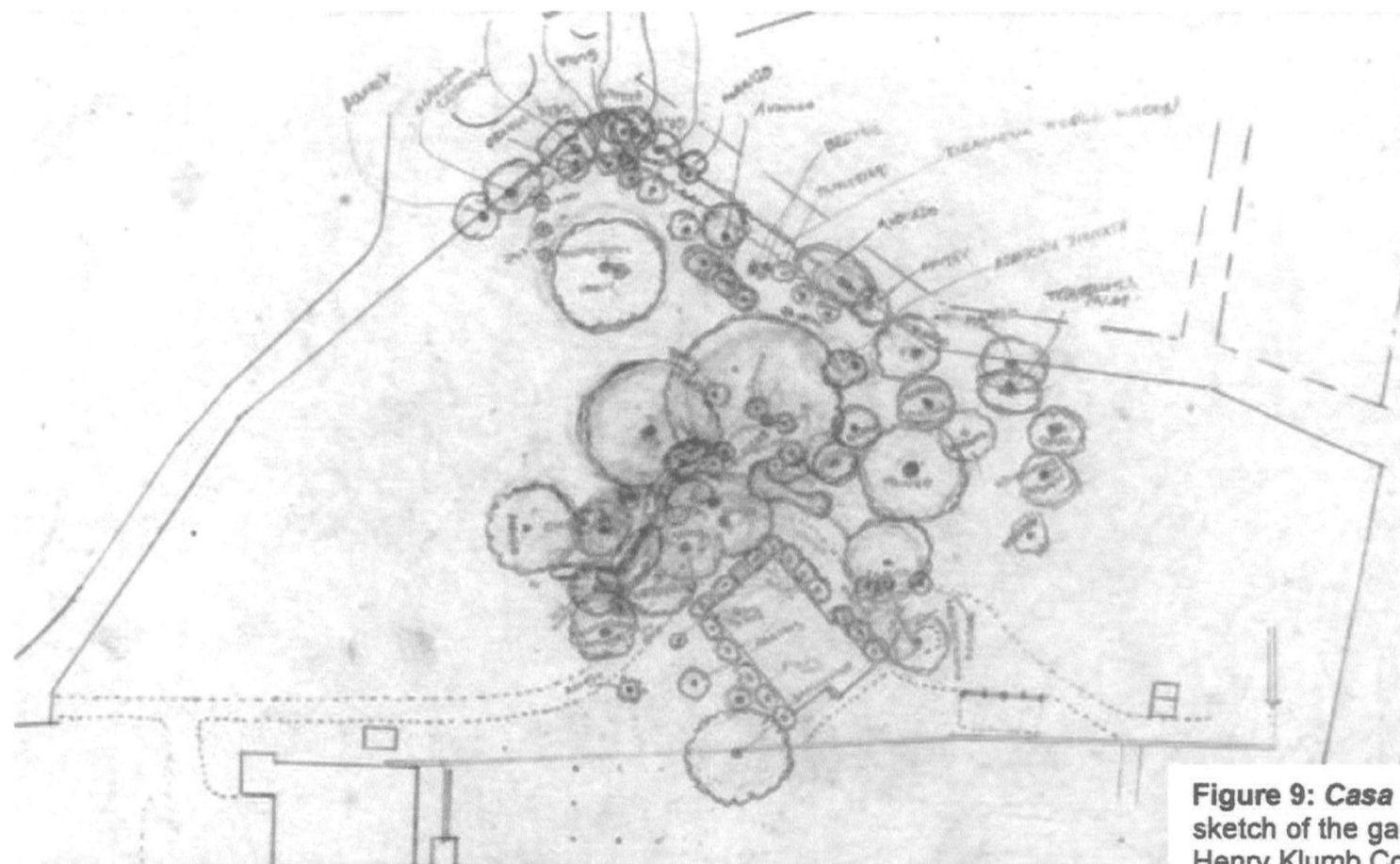
Despite only ever designing new construction projects, he did not demolish the nineteenth-century hacienda-type house on the jungle plot. He instead recycled the charming single-story home – reworking the space to his proposed format of modern tropical living. Surrounded by nature, a privacy screen of thick tropical plantings allowed for a complete omission of exterior privacy walls and containment – allowing Klumb to open up the living room, dining room, and all other interstitial spaces to the open air.

*"...to give equal importance to minor as well as major work, to do no more and no less than needed, to work within economic limitations and possibilities, has been, and still is today, the principle I adhere to.*

*Aesthetics of what there is -evolvea-results- expresses the intuitive within by working in tune with the conscious reality of need, whatever that need may be.*

*Following this design philosophy and letting the latent ecological, social and economic conditions of Puerto Rico and the positive and vital element of its cultural heritage guide design solutions, architecture expresses a way of life."*

- Henry Klumb, "My Architectural Design Philosophy, Celebration of Architecture Florida Design '79, 65th Annual FAIA Convetion (October 2, 1979), Henry Klumb Collection, box 84.11, AACUPR.



**Figure 9: Casa Klumb I c. 1947**  
sketch of the garden's inventory  
Henry Klumb Collection/ AACUPR



**Figure 5: Casa Klumb I [n.d.]**  
the space of introspection  
Henry Klumb Collection/ AACUPR



**Figure 8: Casa Klumb I [n.d.]**  
the living room  
Henry Klumb Collection/ AACUPR



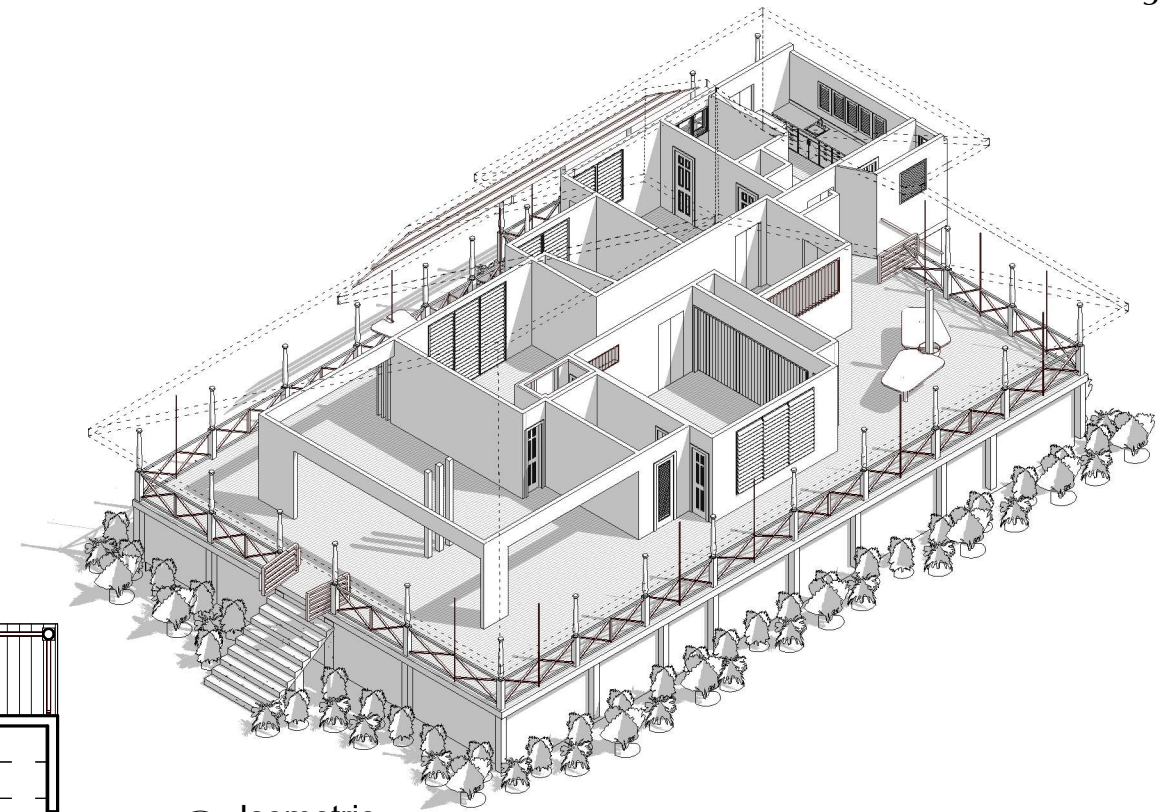
**Figure 11: Casa Klumb / 2008**  
pivoting doors  
condition survey / AACUPR

# Tropical Living as Sensory Living

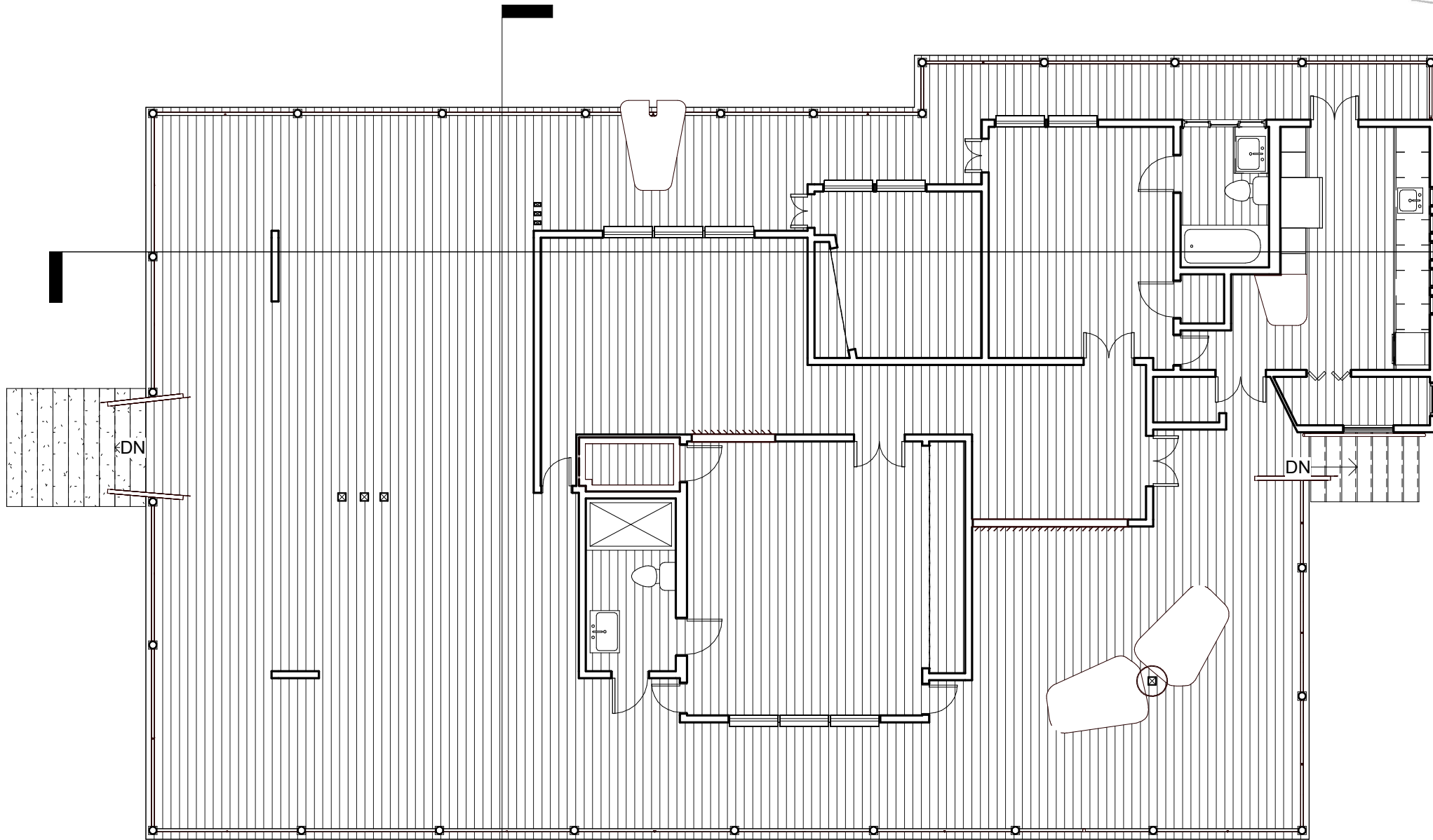
Three corners form nodes – connecting three different dynamic and social zones. One is for introspection (hammock included); the other is for coexistence- the family room; finally, the dining room exhibits Klumb's embedded eccentricities with a peculiar rotating table. The corner zones demand separate interactions, while also respecting and framing the bond between Casa Klumb and its Garden.

*"...[It] is almost a porch; the real extension boundaries are the dense, leafy plants thrusting up at the edge of the raft-like floor. Sitting listening to Beethoven singing out the several loudspeakers Klumb has stationed about, you can sometimes reach out and pick a banana. The sudden tropical downpours just add to the magic of the nonconforming shelter, washing down outside the boundary of the overhang. You turn the amplifier up for the music and sit and watch the rain and feel its coolness as it dries down like a waterfall."*

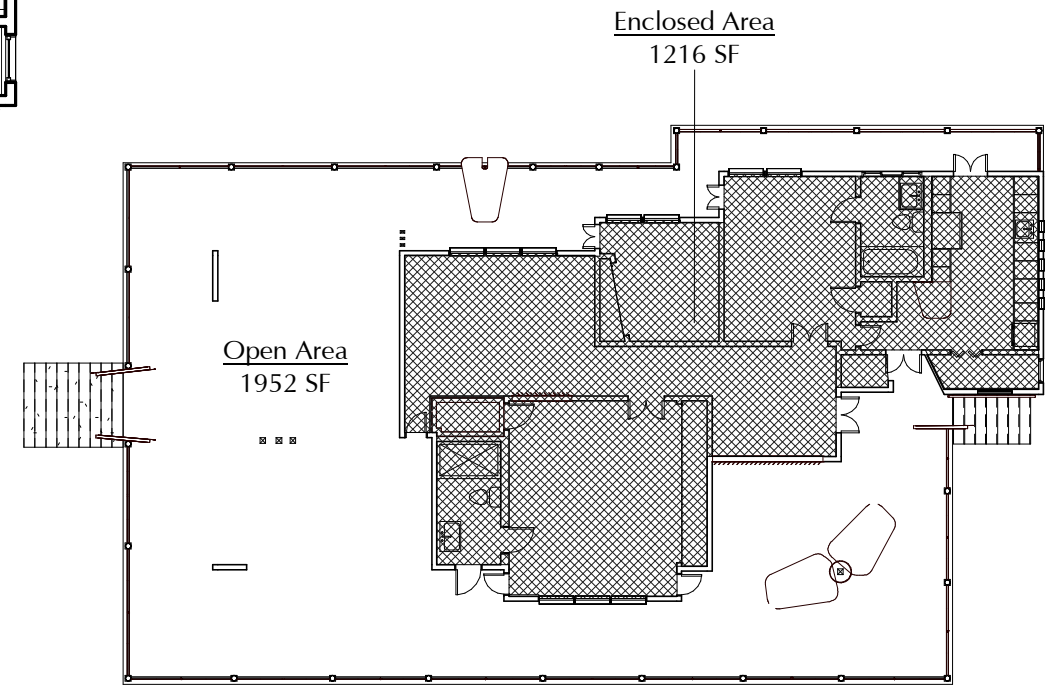
- Harold Taylor, "Henry Klumb Finds an Architecture for Puerto Rico," 123.



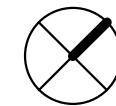
2 Isometric



1 Floor Plan  
1/8" = 1'-0"



3 Floor Plan - Indoor v.s. Outdoor  
1/16" = 1'-0"



# "What there is" - Henry Klumb

Klumb's organic architecture and spaces were designed from the outside in and from the inside out - fusing [wo]man with their environment. Following a mantra of "What there is," Klumb preserves where possible. Keeping every door open when designing, and at times removing the doors, all together.

By allowing climate and nature to participate in/with architecture, Klumb subverts the Wrightian concept of expansion - redefining and readjusting the exterior space to extend into the home. Casa Klumb pioneers this concept with complete openness of the family room devoid of any solid barrier to the outdoors. While one enters, they still step outside.

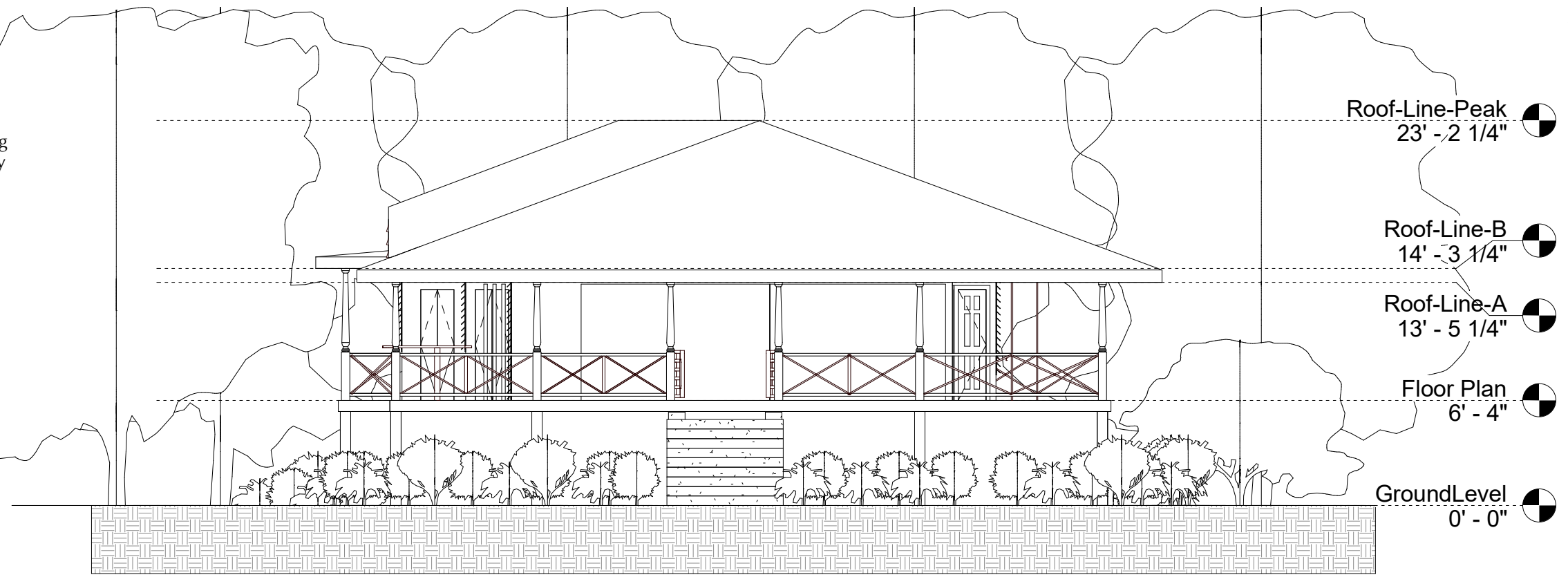
ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*This renovation by one of Puerto Rico's most important Modernist architects represents a unique fusion of interior + exterior spaces. Many of the original exterior walls of the house have been removed + the lush garden allowed to function as a sort of wall, providing privacy.*

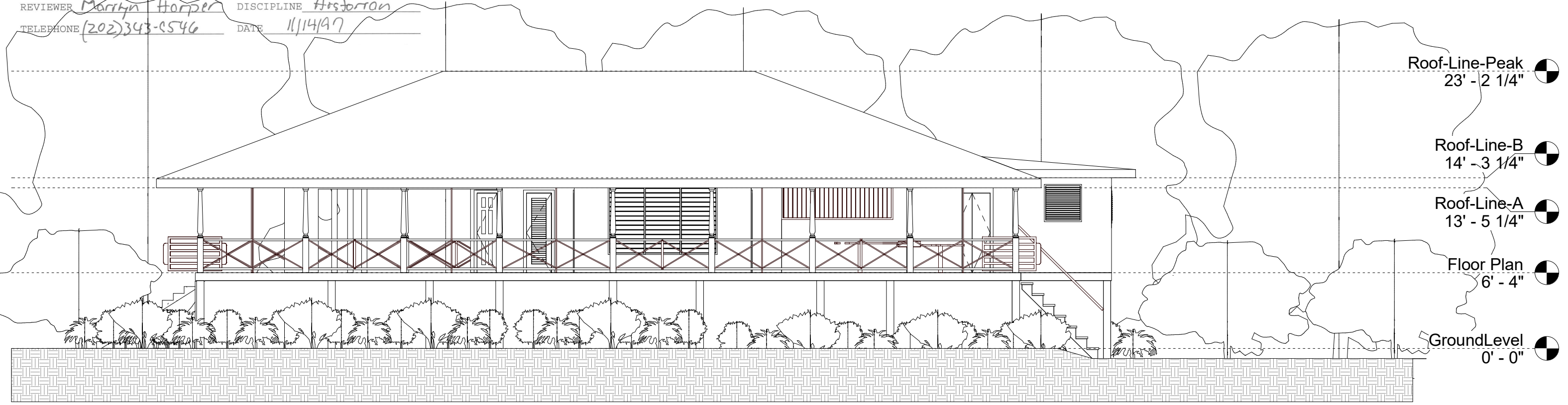
RECOM./CRITERIA Accept/C

REVIEWER Marilyn Harper DISCIPLINE Historian

TELEPHONE (202)343-8546 DATE 11/14/17



① SouthWest  
1/8" = 1'-0"



② SouthEast  
1/8" = 1'-0"

# Puerto Rican Vernacular Architecture?

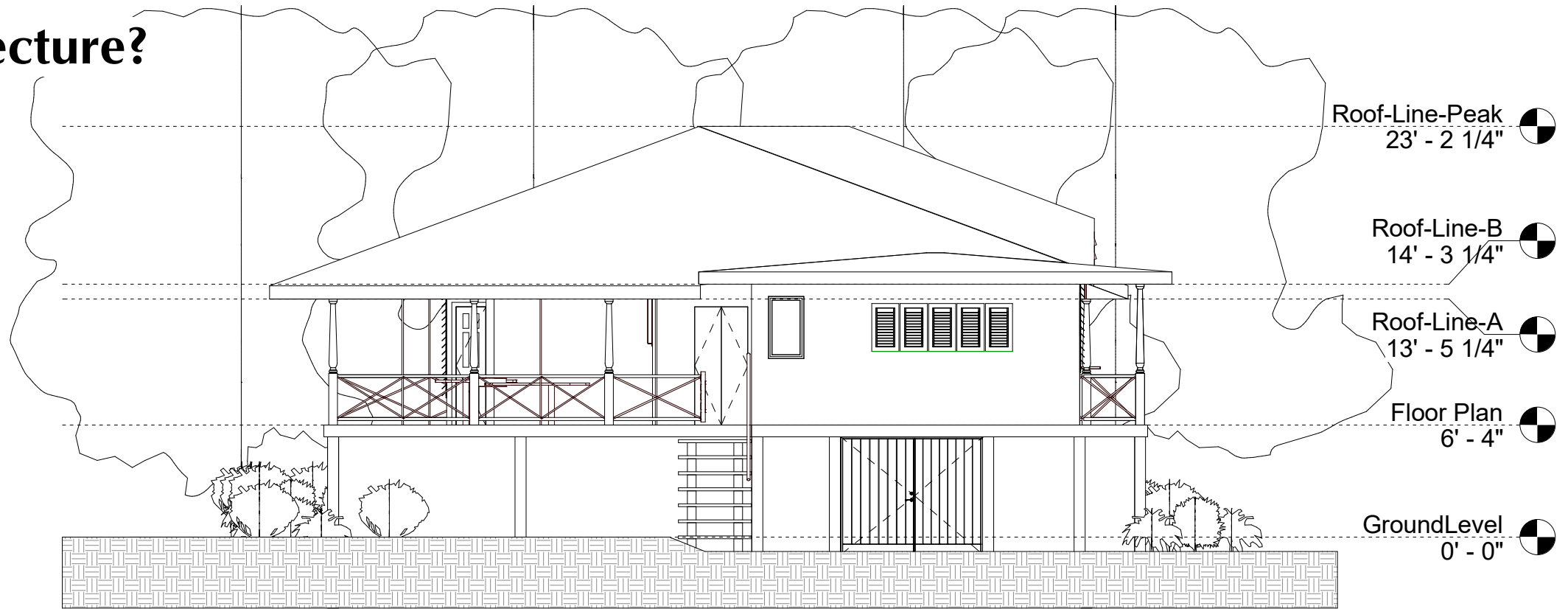
Casa Klumb was the best example of climate-responsive architecture. It is evident in the choices made by Klumb after adopting the property and expanding the home without matching the regional architecture that he was defining what it meant to live in the tropics through architecture. Based on his opinion of the Vernacular architecture of Puerto Rico, he was trying to correct it with something more in tune with the ethos.

*"There is no real architecture of the tropics or of Puerto Rico. Everything is bastard Spanish, which was never the heritage of more than 10% of the Puerto Ricans anyway.*

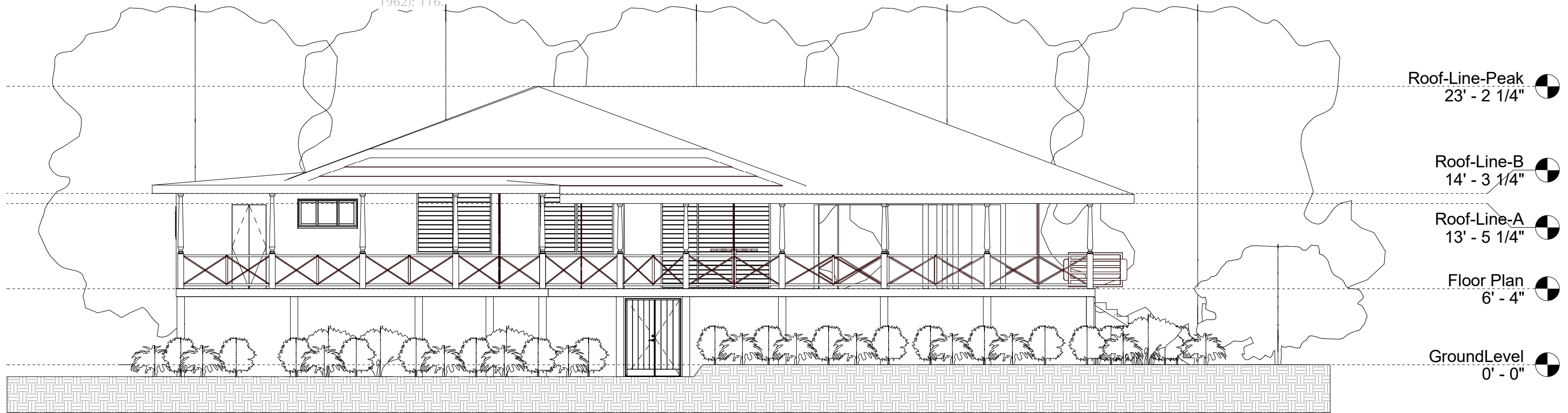
*And the Spanish enclosed everything behind thick walls and grilles. Their woman weren't to be seen; everything was protected.*

*Then you superimpose the Anglo-Saxon traditions on top of that, and you get the wretched architectural results imaginable."*

- Priscilla Ginsberg, "Design for the Tropics: Henry Klumb Puts Cooling Trade Winds to Work," Interiors (May 1962): 116.



① NorthEast  
1/8" = 1'-0"



② NorthWest  
1/8" = 1'-0"