



Context

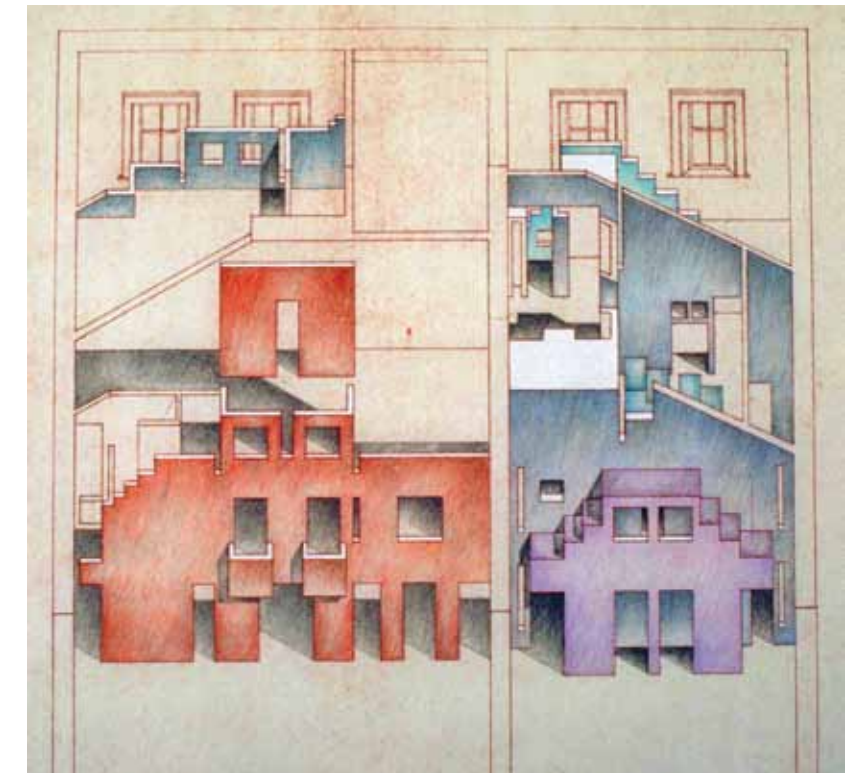
The host building was a listed historic landmark school, which had first opened in 1862. It was located in one of the oldest sections of Newport, Rhode Island. Six townhouse units were created, one of which was for the owners of the building, Mr and Mrs Boggs.

Concept

The reuse of an existing building to create a home is not just restricted to single-family dwellings. This project explores the notion of reworking extant space in order to create a high-density, multi-occupancy dwelling. Six new houses were intricately and carefully inserted into this two-storey building, utilizing the large basement and generous attic to form a jigsaw of interlocking habitats. Although strictly apartments, the use of the term 'house' is in recognition of the conceptual device that Ranalli employed in his realization of this project. Each dwelling was designed to act as though part of a city; a collective of houses forming a society of occupants. Each occupant has their own needs and requirements yet each shares public and private spaces with the responsibilities and civilities that that brings.

Organization

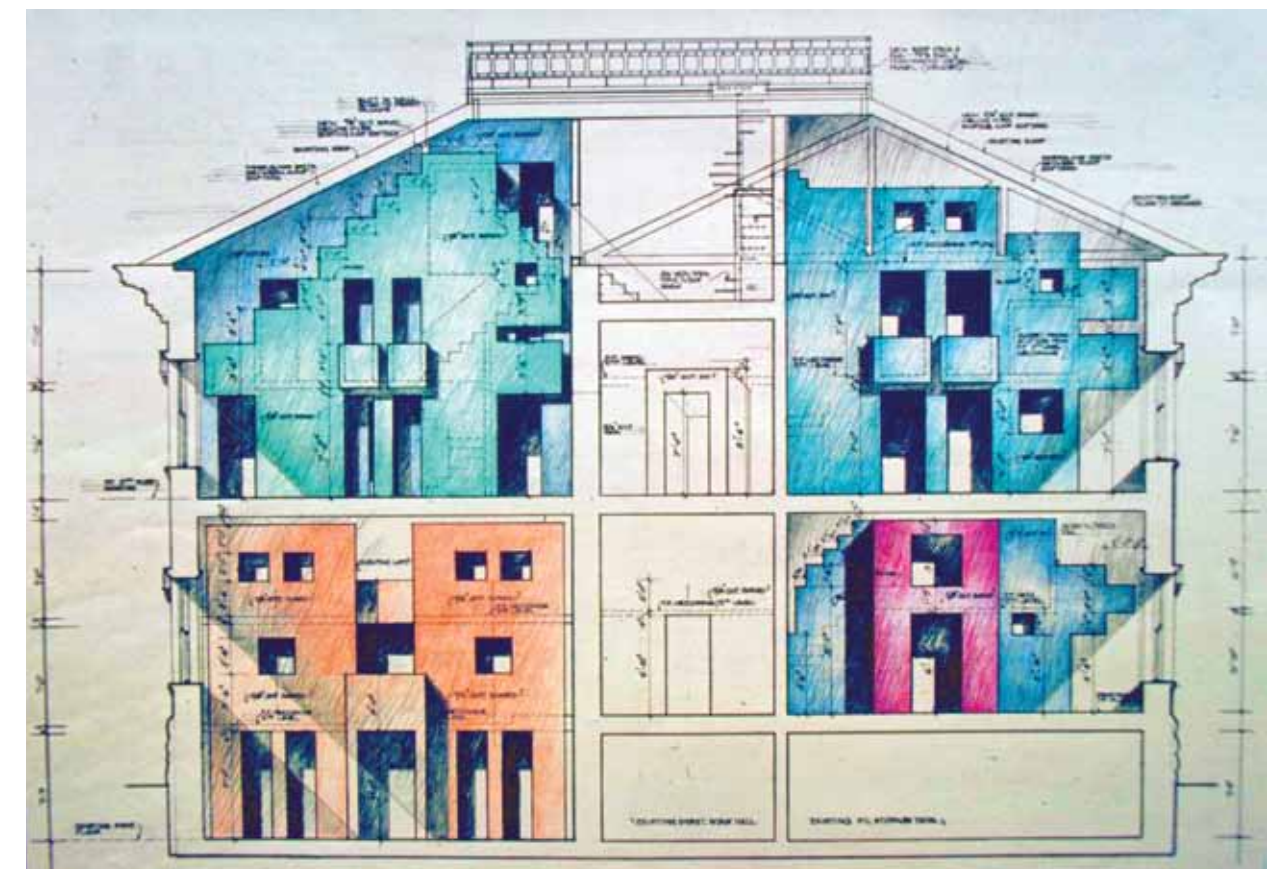
The repair and preservation of the fabric of the building created a backdrop against which the new elements of the houses could then be inserted. The existing building was constructed in two sections, a process that resulted in a thick internal wall running north to south with an east-west cross-wall chimney breast running up through the floors of the building. This layout informed how the essential form of the building might be retained and the six new houses could be organized within it.



Above Axonometric sketch looking at the north side of the building.

Below Section cut through the south of the building. The owner's triple-height apartment is at the top left of the building.

The existing building itself was an integral part of the city. Originally the local schoolhouse, it had been unoccupied since 1974. The exterior of the historic building was cleaned and restored. The cornicing, mouldings and detail of the interior were, where necessary, reinstated. The existing hallway and stairs of the old school were cleaned, repaired and retained in order to preserve some of the atmosphere of the old school building, as were the old classroom doors, which were reused as the entrances to each new house. The exterior and communal spaces of the building spoke of the institutional feel of the foreboding nineteenth-century Italianate schoolhouse, whilst the interiors of the dwellings were carefully designed and planned in order to provide new, unique and inviting domestic spaces.



PROJECT **Callender School Renovation**
 DESIGNER George Ranalli
 LOCATION Newport, RI, USA
 DATE 1979-81



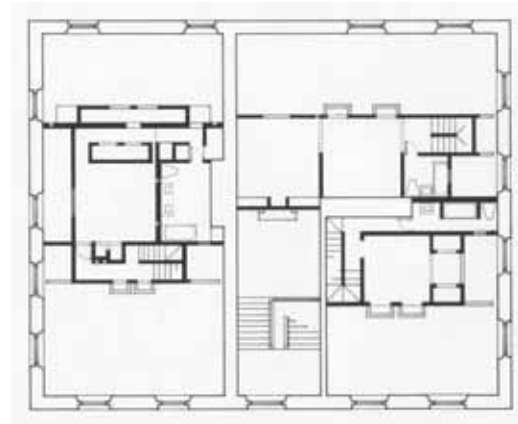
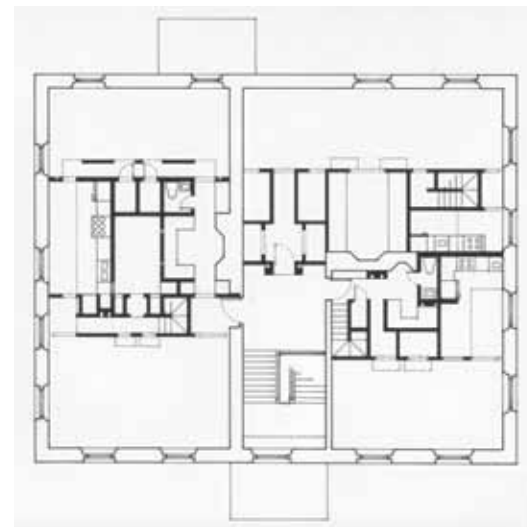
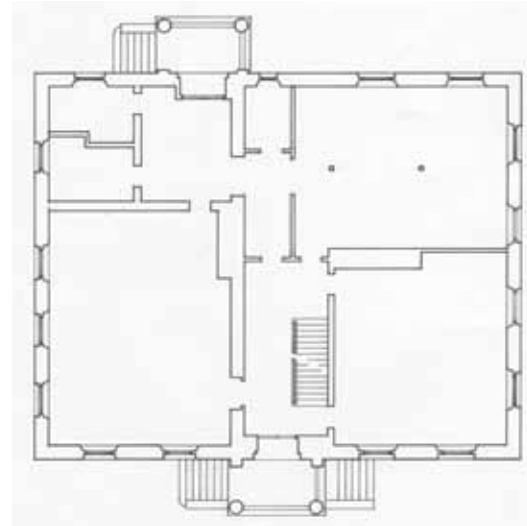
Above The triple-height main living room of the owner's apartment.

Left The nineteenth-century Italianate schoolhouse.

Below Plan of building before remodelling. Note the north-south internal wall and east-west cross wall and chimney breast.

Middle First-floor plan (left) and second-floor plan.

Bottom Basement plan (left) and ground-floor plan.



Four of the houses have a triple-height living space; the other two have a double-height space. The first three houses are accessed directly on the lower floor from the communal hall. The first house on the west side is a triplex. Entered on the first level, the triple-height main living space is situated in the basement. Kitchen, bathrooms, bedrooms and study, linked by a stair, are all organized behind the tall, notched 'city wall'. Both the slightly smaller second and third houses on this floor are duplex, with double-height living rooms that utilize the generous heights of the old classrooms with the use of mezzanines. The existing solid cross-wall divides duplexes two and three. The basement below these houses is used for services.

The three remaining houses occupy the upper floors of the schoolhouse and

are accessed on the upper floor. The owner's triple-aspect house occupies the entire upper west side of the schoolhouse and utilizes all three floors, including the attic. Occupants enter on the first floor and into the centre of the house, where a core of kitchen, bathrooms, study and bedrooms are stacked on top of each other. The owners were afforded two 'city wall' façades: a living room 'screen' on the south side of the house and a dining room 'wall' on the north. Both are 'serviced' by the kitchen and bathroom 'core'. The master bedroom is on the second level and the library is at the top, in the eaves of the attic.

The other two houses of the building are smaller than the owner's house but are both triple-height spaces and were built into the second floor and the attic of the building.



Above Model showing section through south façade (top) and north façade (bottom).

Detail

The mock façades are collections of walls, windows and doorways, rooflines and columns – architectural elements that are seen constantly, yet which seem to take on a new and symbolic importance here. For these elements within the Callender school serve much more than a functional purpose; they are ruminations on the nature of architecture's inner workings, studies in symmetry, openness and enclosure.¹

The six houses are all linked by a common theme; the response to the elegant heights and proportions of the extant interiors of the building. They are also connected by the desire to unite the dwellings with a similar yet nuanced language to accommodate the different inhabitants. This strategy resulted in a set of interior 'façades' inserted into each apartment. They divide the private and public functions of the spaces and aesthetically aggrandize the living space of each home. In each of the units Ranalli developed a spatial sequence which was unique and dramatized the relationship between the smaller intimate rooms and the larger 'public' spaces. This collective assembly of façades, grouped around the central hall of the old school, forms a symbolic city around the community of inhabitants, each with its own mixture of private and public spaces.

¹ Paul Goldberger, 'Callender School', *Architectural Digest*, December 1981, p.63

Above right The notched walls of the apartments are designed to be read as façades of buildings inside their own interior cities.

Above far right The institutional atmosphere of the communal hallway contrasts with the colourful interior walls of the apartments. The old school doors are reused for the front doors to the 'houses'.

Right The triple-height apartment on the west side of the building that starts in the basement and is entered at ground-floor level.

