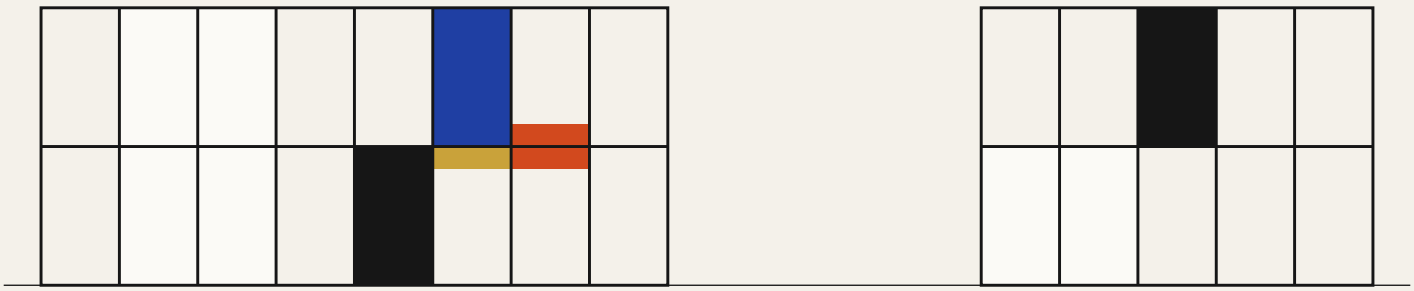
THE EAMES HOUSE



A house in a meadow

Thirty pictures of a computer model, seven drawings and a site map, with a short account of Ray and Charles Eames, the Case Study House program, the site, the construction of the house and what it has meant.

Every picture is an AI-generated visualisation of a 3D model. Not a photograph of the Eames House.

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A site map, then plans, elevations, sections and an axonometric from the model.

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Twelve views by day. The rooms, the studio and the work.

IV After dark

Six views with the lights on. Afterlife, conservation, significance.

Sources and notes

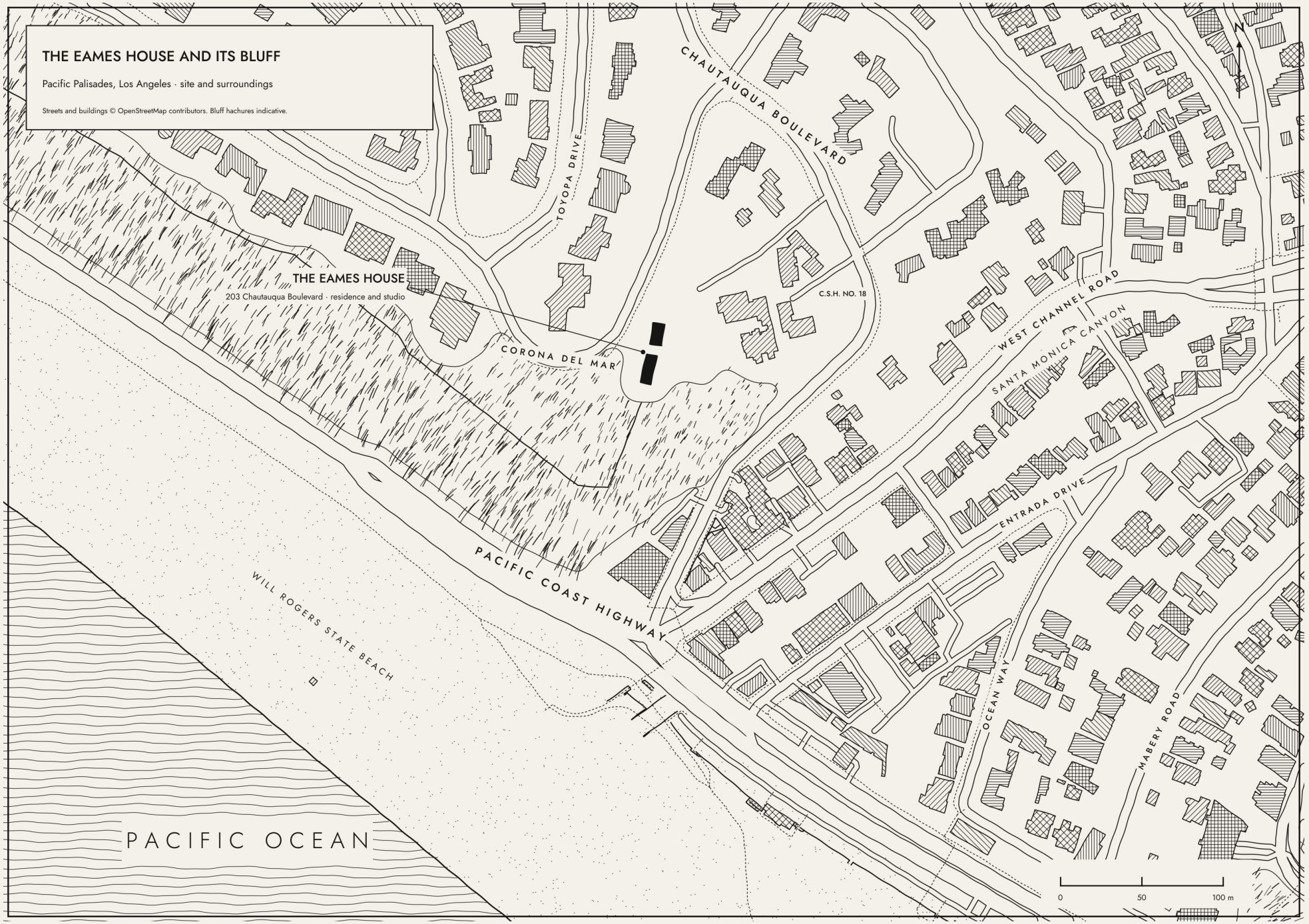
A note before you begin

Nothing in this book is a photograph of the real house. The pictures show a computer model, built from visitor photographs and published images, and finished with an AI image model that supplied materials, planting and light. The drawings are projections of the same model. The form, the steel frame and the main coloured panels follow the building closely; interior dimensions, the exact window pattern, the hillside, the garden steps and all planting are estimates. The loose furniture is the manufacturer's published 3D models, placed by estimate; lamps, storage units and the dining table are simple stand-ins.

Drawings

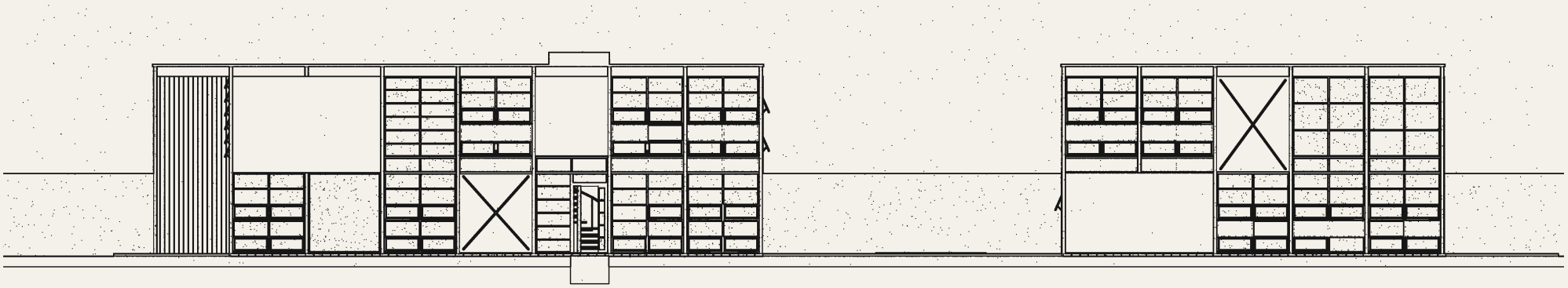
A site map and seven projections of the model.

First the house on its bluff above the coast highway, drawn in pen style from open map data. Then plans, elevations, sections and an axonometric generated from the computer model; they describe the model, not a survey of the building.



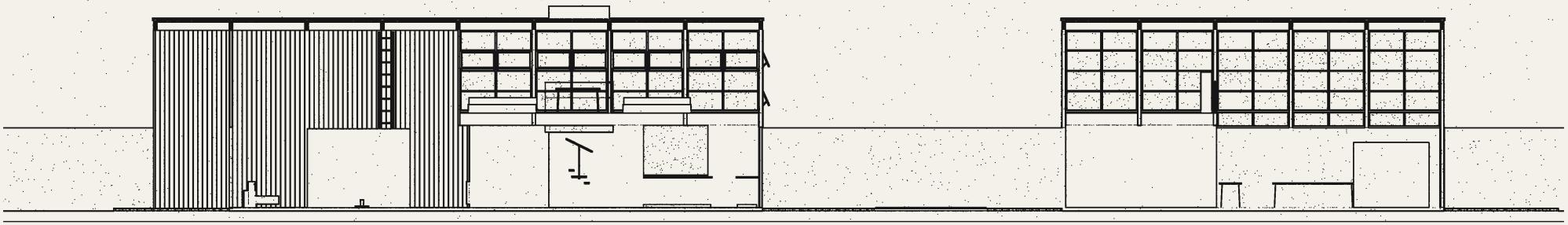
Streets, buildings and coastline from OpenStreetMap (© OpenStreetMap contributors, ODbL). Bluff hachures are indicative, placed on the undeveloped slope between the mesa and the highway.

MEADOW ELEVATION AND LONG SECTION



EAST (MEADOW) ELEVATION: RESIDENCE, COURT, STUDIO

0 5 10 m

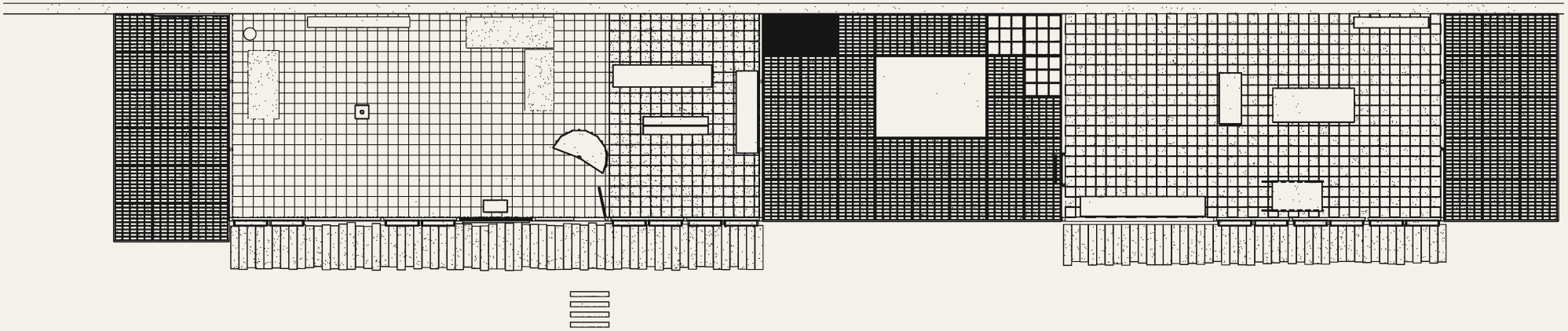


LONG SECTION LOOKING TOWARDS THE HILLSIDE

0 5 10 m

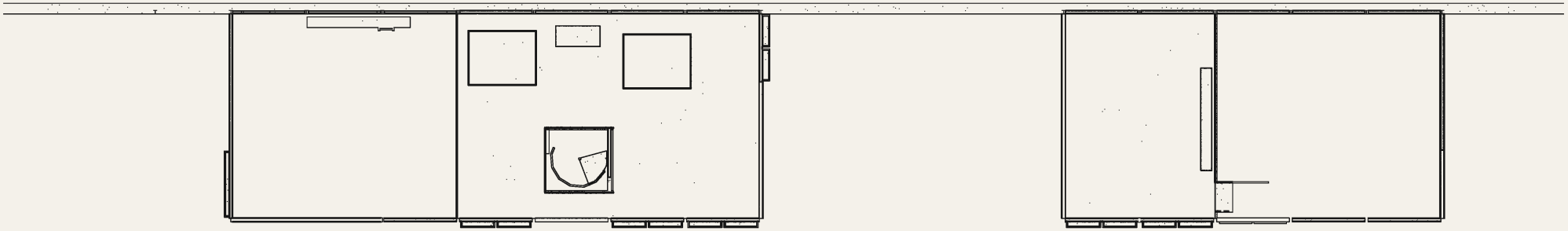
Drawn from the computer model; dimensions approximate. Not a measured survey.

PLANS



GROUND FLOOR

0 5 10 m

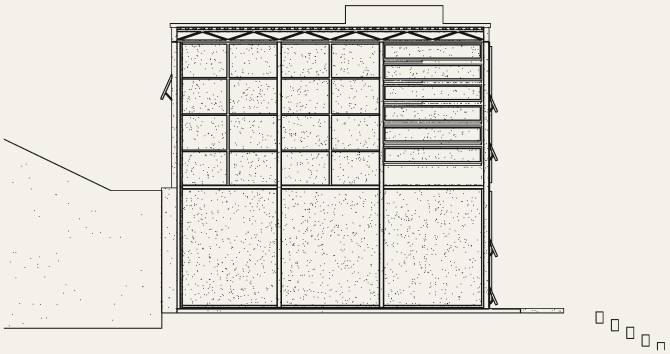


UPPER LEVEL: BEDROOMS OVER THE RESIDENCE, LOFT IN THE STUDIO

0 5 10 m

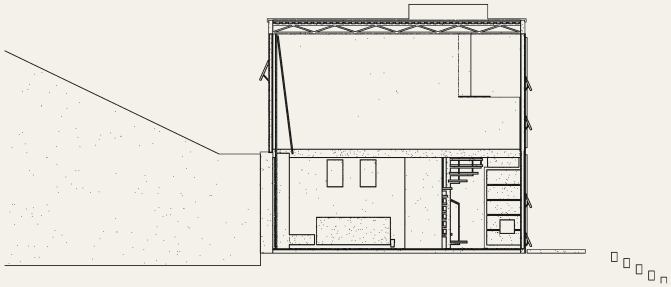
Drawn from the computer model; dimensions approximate. Not a measured survey.

SOUTH ELEVATION, CROSS-SECTION AND AXONOMETRIC



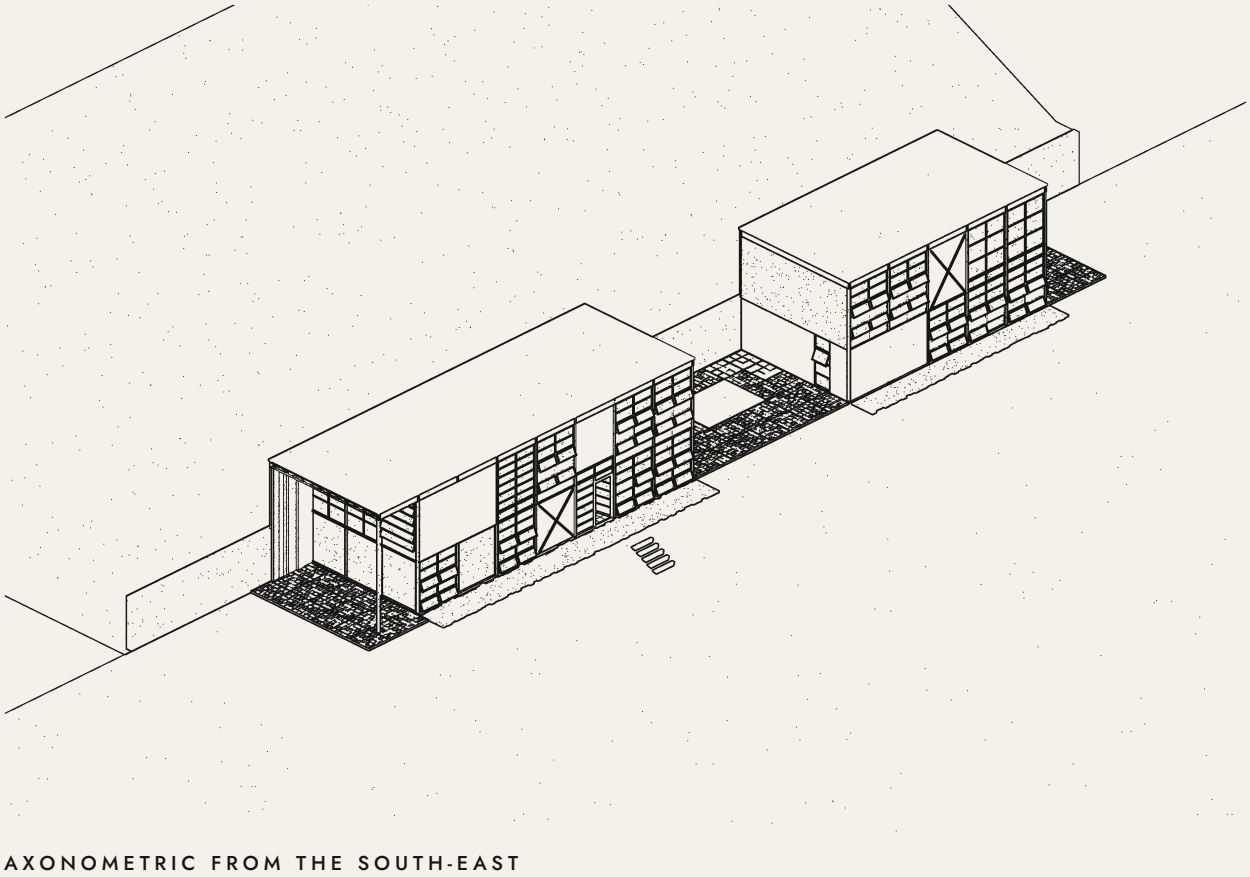
SOUTH ELEVATION WITH THE OPEN PORCH

0 2 5 m



CROSS-SECTION THROUGH THE RESIDENCE

0 2 5 m



AXONOMETRIC FROM THE SOUTH-EAST

Drawn from the computer model; dimensions approximate. Not a measured survey.

PART II

Outside

Twelve views of the house in its meadow.

On Ray and Charles Eames, the Case Study House program, the bluff in Pacific Palisades, and how the house was designed twice and built once.



01 OUTSIDE

The whole house from the meadow

Ray and Charles Eames

Charles Eames (1907–1978) trained as an architect in St. Louis.

Ray Kaiser (1912–1988) was a painter who had studied with Hans Hofmann in New York. For nearly four decades they ran the Eames Office together, and the range of what came out of it is hard to file under one profession: chairs, houses, films, exhibitions, toys, textiles and graphics. They treated all of it as one activity, a way of solving problems carefully and with evident pleasure. The house they built for themselves above the Pacific in 1949 is the place where that attitude is easiest to see in one glance.

AI-generated visualisation of a 3D model. Not a photograph of the Eames House.



02 OUTSIDE

The residence from the south-east

Cranbrook, 1940

They met in 1940 at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan.

Charles was teaching there and working with Eero Saarinen on moulded plywood furniture for the Museum of Modern Art's Organic Design in Home Furnishings competition; Ray, newly arrived as a student, helped prepare the drawings. The entry won, but the chairs could not yet be made economically, and that unfinished problem shaped the next decade of their work. Charles and Ray married in 1941 and left almost at once for Los Angeles, a city with aircraft factories, new materials and very little architectural orthodoxy to push against.

AI-generated visualisation of a 3D model. Not a photograph of the Eames House.



03 OUTSIDE

The south end and the open porch bay

Plywood and the war

In their Los Angeles apartment they built a home-made press to bend plywood into compound curves, working at night with glues and heat.

The first real product was not a chair but a leg splint: the United States Navy ordered it in 1942, and roughly 150,000 were produced. The contract paid for tooling, staff and hard experience of mass production. When peace came, the same technique produced the moulded plywood chairs of 1946, soon manufactured by Herman Miller. The lesson the Eameses took from the war years was that an industrial process, properly understood, could give good things to many people.

AI-generated visualisation of a 3D model. Not a photograph of the Eames House.



04 OUTSIDE

Porch corner: column, roof truss and steel decking

Arts & Architecture

Their closest ally in Los Angeles was John Entenza, editor and publisher of the magazine Arts & Architecture.

Under Entenza a regional journal became the most adventurous design magazine in America, publishing modern houses alongside painting, music and film. Charles and Ray joined its editorial board, and Ray designed more than two dozen of its covers during the 1940s, abstract compositions that carried her training as a painter into print. The magazine gave the Eameses a platform and a circle of architects. It also gave them, in 1945, a client: the magazine itself.

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05 OUTSIDE

The timber walk along the meadow side

The Case Study House program

In January 1945 Arts & Architecture announced the Case Study House program.

The magazine would commission leading architects to design and build model houses for the post-war family, and would publish every stage. The houses were to use materials and methods proven in wartime production, to be capable of repetition, and to be opened to the public before their owners moved in. Entenza wanted to show that a modern house could be affordable and humane at the same time. Richard Neutra, Raphael Soriano, J. R. Davidson, William Wurster, Charles Eames and Eero Saarinen were among the first architects invited.

AI-generated visualisation of a 3D model. Not a photograph of the Eames House.



06 OUTSIDE

Entry bay: blue panel, gold band, cross-bracing

What the program produced

The program ran until 1966.

It yielded thirty-six designs, of which about twenty-five were built, nearly all in and around Los Angeles. None became the mass-produced prototype Entenza had hoped for; builders and lenders stayed conservative. Yet the houses, and the photographs of them, fixed an image of California modern living that travelled round the world: light steel or timber frames, walls of glass, rooms that run out into gardens. Pierre Koenig's Stahl House above Hollywood is the best known picture. The Eames House, number 8, is the one that has been most closely studied.

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07 OUTSIDE

Steel sash with awning windows open

Pacific Palisades

Entenza bought about five acres on a bluff in Pacific Palisades, at the western edge of Los Angeles, where Chautauqua Boulevard drops to the coast road.

He divided the land among several Case Study projects. Number 8 went to Charles and Ray; number 9, next door, was Entenza's own house, also designed by Eames and Saarinen. Two more, by Rodney Walker and Richard Neutra, followed close by. For a few years this hillside held more experimental houses per acre than anywhere in the country. The Eames plot was the most secluded, reached by a long private drive.

AI-generated visualisation of a 3D model. Not a photograph of the Eames House.



08 OUTSIDE

Bird of paradise and potted plants at the glass

The meadow

The site is a grassy shelf between a steep bank and the edge of the bluff, with a line of tall eucalyptus trees running along it and the ocean beyond.

While they waited for building materials, Charles and Ray spent weekends there picnicking and flying kites. By the time construction could begin they had, in Ray's phrase, "fallen in love with the meadow." That attachment changed the project. The trees, the open grass and the long view became things to protect, and the house was eventually placed so that it would disturb them as little as possible.



09 OUTSIDE

The court between residence and studio

The Bridge House

The first design, drawn with Eero Saarinen and published in December 1945, is known as the Bridge House.

It was a glass and steel box raised off the ground, projecting from the hillside straight out across the meadow on two slender supports, with a separate studio set at right angles. It was a dramatic object, in the manner of Mies van der Rohe. The steel was ordered, but post-war shortages delayed delivery until late 1948. In the three years of waiting the Eameses came to doubt a scheme that put its largest volume in the middle of the place they liked best.

AI-generated visualisation of a 3D model. Not a photograph of the Eames House.



10 OUTSIDE

The studio seen across the court

One extra beam

So they started again, with a rule that makes the story famous: use the steel already delivered.

Working with the same catalogue parts and, by the Eames Foundation's account, just one additional beam, they turned the building ninety degrees and tucked it against the hillside behind a long concrete retaining wall. The single raised box became two tall pavilions in a line, a residence and a studio, separated by an open court. The new arrangement enclosed far more space than the first for almost the same tonnage of steel, and it left the meadow untouched.

AI-generated visualisation of a 3D model. Not a photograph of the Eames House.



11 OUTSIDE

The north end of the studio

A frame in sixteen hours

Construction began in February 1949.

The foundation and the entire steel frame were completed in sixteen hours of work, a figure the Eameses were proud of. The structure is as light as it looks: four-inch H-section columns, twelve-inch open-web joists and ribbed steel decking that serves as both roof and ceiling. The bays are roughly seven and a half feet wide, twenty feet deep and seventeen feet high. Diagonal rods brace the frame in a few places. Everything was ordered from manufacturers' catalogues, and the rest of the house was fitted into the frame by December.

AI-generated visualisation of a 3D model. Not a photograph of the Eames House.



12 OUTSIDE

Aerial view: two pavilions behind the eucalyptus

A façade from the catalogue

The walls are infill, not structure.

Standard factory steel window sections are glazed with clear, wired and translucent glass, or closed with stucco and cement-asbestos panels. Most panels are white, grey or black; a few are painted strong blue and orange-red, and one beside the entrance is covered in gold leaf. The result is often compared to a Mondrian painting, but its logic is practical: light where it is wanted, privacy where it is needed, colour as punctuation. Seen through the eucalyptus trunks, the grid of the façade and the pattern of bark and shadow read as one composition.

AI-generated visualisation of a 3D model. Not a photograph of the Eames House.

PART III

Inside

Twelve views of the rooms.

On moving in, the tall living room and the low alcove, the materials and the collections, the studio, and the work that came out of it.



13 INSIDE

The living room from the bedroom level

Christmas Eve, 1949

Charles and Ray moved in on Christmas Eve 1949 and lived here for the rest of their lives.

The brief published in Arts & Architecture described a house for a married couple working in design, whose children no longer lived at home, and who wanted living and working kept close but distinct. The residence has about 1,500 square feet of floor on two levels; the studio adds roughly 1,000. Those are modest numbers. What makes the house feel generous is height: the living room rises the full seventeen feet, so a small footprint holds a very large volume of air and light.

AI-generated visualisation of a 3D model. Not a photograph of the Eames House.



14 INSIDE

Living room looking south to the porch

A room made of light

The south and east walls of the living room are glass from floor to roof.

Light arrives filtered through the eucalyptus, so the room is rarely glaring; leaf shadows move across the floor and the translucent panels through the day. Long curtains can be drawn across parts of the glass, changing the room from open pavilion to enclosed interior in a few seconds. Outside the south wall the roof continues over an open porch, which shades the glass and extends the floor into the garden. The Eameses adjusted these layers constantly, as a sailor trims a boat.

AI-generated visualisation of a 3D model. Not a photograph of the Eames House.



15 INSIDE

Living room looking north to the alcove and hall

Warm against steel

Nothing in the interior hides how the building is made.

The ribbed steel deck is the ceiling, the open-web joists cross the room in full view, and the columns stand exposed in the window walls. Against that industrial frame the Eameses set warmer surfaces. The long wall against the hillside is lined from floor to roof with boards of tallowwood, a golden Australian eucalyptus timber. Floors in the living areas are pale tile; a tall bookcase and a library ladder stand against the wood. The balance between machine-made structure and hand-scaled finish is the room's whole character.

AI-generated visualisation of a 3D model. Not a photograph of the Eames House.



16 INSIDE

The meadow glazing from inside

Functioning decoration

Photographs of the living room in the Eameses' lifetime show it full of things: rugs laid over rugs, folk art, toys, shells, candlesticks, baskets, books and a great many plants.

Ray arranged and rearranged them with a painter's eye. The couple called this kind of arrangement functioning decoration, meaning that objects chosen with affection do real work in a room. It was a direct answer to the idea that modern architecture requires emptiness. According to the Eames Foundation the interior and its collections remain very much as they were, which is a large part of why the house matters.

AI-generated visualisation of a 3D model. Not a photograph of the Eames House.



17

INSIDE

The seating alcove under the bedrooms

The alcove

At the north end of the living room the bedroom floor crosses overhead and the ceiling drops to about eight feet.

Under it is a built-in seating alcove, lined with cushions and backed by shelves and cupboards. After the height of the main room it feels like a cabin, a place for conversation and for showing films to friends. The contrast is deliberate. A tall space is exhilarating but hard to sit in for long; a low one is comfortable but dull. Putting the two side by side, with no wall between them, gives each the benefit of the other.

AI-generated visualisation of a 3D model. Not a photograph of the Eames House.



18 INSIDE

The spiral stair behind its plywood screen

Stair and bedrooms

A compact spiral stair, with plywood treads fixed to a steel pole, rises from the hall to the upper floor.

It takes up very little room and is lit from above. Upstairs are two bedrooms and bathrooms. The main bedroom overlooks the living room across a waist-high wall, and sliding panels above that wall can close it off or open it completely, so the sleeping level borrows the height and light of the room below. The second bedroom faces the court. The whole upper floor is a mezzanine set inside the frame, not a separate storey.

AI-generated visualisation of a 3D model. Not a photograph of the Eames House.



19 INSIDE

From the dining corner down the hall

Hall and dining

A hall runs along the meadow side of the house, behind the entrance door, linking the living room to the dining area and kitchen at the far end.

One bay of this wall is solid, braced by crossed steel rods that show on the outside as a white X on a black panel. The dining table sits in the corner by the court, where a large door slides back so that meals can spill outdoors. Guests remembered the Eameses' hospitality as carefully staged and entirely informal: flowers, fruit and candles arranged with the same attention as an exhibition.

AI-generated visualisation of a 3D model. Not a photograph of the Eames House.



20 INSIDE

Kitchen counters and ribbed-glass screen

The kitchen

The kitchen is small and plain: white cabinets with metal pulls, a working counter under the window, a second counter screened from the dining area by a panel of ribbed glass.

The floor here changes from pale tile to dark. Nothing was custom-made that could be bought ready-made. This was the argument of the whole Case Study program brought down to the scale of a drawer front. The Eameses did not treat the kitchen as a showpiece, and its ordinariness, against the grandeur of the living room, is one of the more honest things about the house.

AI-generated visualisation of a 3D model. Not a photograph of the Eames House.



21 INSIDE

Looking down the living room from the upper level

A background for life

Charles described the aim of the house in terms that are easy to paraphrase and hard to live up to: it should make no demands for itself, and serve as a background for life and work, with nature close by to absorb the shocks.

That is an unusual ambition for a famous building. The house was not conceived as a monument or a manifesto. It was meant to be used hard, to hold whatever its owners were interested in that month, and to stay in the background. Its fame came from the fact that it did exactly that for forty years.

AI-generated visualisation of a 3D model. Not a photograph of the Eames House.



22 INSIDE

The studio and its storage loft

The studio

The second pavilion is the studio: a single tall room with a storage loft at one end, reached by an open stair along the window wall, and a small kitchen and darkroom beneath.

The floor is oak parquet. In the first years much of the Eames Office's work was done here. As the staff and the projects grew, the main office settled at 901 Washington Boulevard in Venice, a former garage that the Eameses occupied from 1943 until Ray's death, and the studio at home became a quieter place for reading, guests and work that needed distance from the office.

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23 INSIDE

The open stair to the studio loft

Furniture for everyone

The furniture is what most people know.

Moulded plywood chairs in 1946, moulded fibreglass shell chairs in 1950, wire-mesh chairs in 1951, a leather lounge chair and ottoman in 1956, cast-aluminium office seating in 1958: each began with a material and a manufacturing method and ended as an object in mass production, made in the United States by Herman Miller and in Europe by Vitra. Charles summarised the aim as getting the best to the greatest number of people for the least. The loose furniture in these pictures comes from the manufacturer's published 3D models, placed in the rooms by estimate; the lamps, storage units and dining table are simple stand-ins.

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24 INSIDE
The studio from the loft

Films and exhibitions

From the 1950s the office gave as much energy to communication as to objects.

The Eameses made more than a hundred short films, among them Powers of Ten (1977), which travels from a picnic blanket to the edge of the universe and back into an atom. They designed Mathematica for IBM in 1961, a seven-screen film of American daily life for the 1959 exhibition in Moscow, and the IBM pavilion at the 1964 New York World's Fair. The method was the same as with a chair: understand the need thoroughly, then make the explanation clear and enjoyable.

AI-generated visualisation of a 3D model. Not a photograph of the Eames House.

PART IV

After dark

Six views with the lights on.

On the house after Charles and Ray: who has kept it, how it is conserved, the fire of 2025, and why it still matters.



25 OUTSIDE AT NIGHT

The residence at dusk

After Charles and Ray

At night the house reverses.

By day the glass reflects trees and sky; after dark the frame becomes a lantern and the rooms are on show to the meadow. Charles Eames died on 21 August 1978. Ray remained in the house, completed the office's unfinished projects and organised its archive, much of which went to the Library of Congress. She died on 21 August 1988, ten years to the day after Charles. Through those years, and after them, the contents of the house were left largely as the two of them had arranged them.

AI-generated visualisation of a 3D model. Not a photograph of the Eames House.



26 OUTSIDE AT NIGHT
The south end lit from within

Keeping the house

The house passed to Charles's daughter, Lucia Eames, who cared for it with her five children.

In 2004 the family established the Eames Foundation to preserve the house and its site and to keep them open to visitors, who are received by reservation and generally see the building from outside. In 2006 the property was designated a National Historic Landmark. The Foundation's stated purpose is to preserve the experience of the place as well as its fabric: the meadow, the trees and the contents are treated as part of the work.

AI-generated visualisation of a 3D model. Not a photograph of the Eames House.



27 OUTSIDE AT NIGHT

The studio and court after dark

Conservation

A light steel house beside the ocean is not easy to keep.

Since 2012 the Foundation has worked with the Getty Conservation Institute on a long-term programme of investigation and repair. It has covered the paint history of the steel and panels, moisture under the living room floor, the condition of the timber wall, the health of the ageing eucalyptus and the effect of light on the collections, and it produced a conservation management plan for the whole site. The work has become a reference for the care of modern buildings, which often fail in ways older ones do not.

AI-generated visualisation of a 3D model. Not a photograph of the Eames House.



28 INSIDE AT NIGHT

The living room in the evening

January 2025

In January 2025 the Palisades Fire destroyed much of the neighbourhood around the house.

The Eames House itself did not burn, but it was coated in soot and suffered significant smoke damage, and it closed to the public. After about five months of cleaning and restoration it reopened in July 2025. The episode was a reminder of how exposed the site is, on a wooded bluff in a region where fire seasons are lengthening, and it has given new urgency to the Foundation's planning for the long-term protection of the house and its landscape.

AI-generated visualisation of a 3D model. Not a photograph of the Eames House.



29 INSIDE AT NIGHT

Evening, looking towards the alcove

Why it matters

Many houses of the period are more daring as structure.

The Eames House matters for a different reason. It showed that standard industrial components, chosen with care and assembled quickly, could make a home that was rich, personal and at ease with its landscape. A later generation of architects, including those who developed the British high-tech approach in the 1960s and 1970s, looked closely at its exposed frame and catalogue parts. Others have taken from it the idea that a house is a frame for the life inside it, and is finished by its occupants, not by its architect.

AI-generated visualisation of a 3D model. Not a photograph of the Eames House.



30 INSIDE AT NIGHT

The studio at night

About these pictures

None of the pictures in this book is a photograph of the real house.

They show a computer model, built in Blender to the dimensions of the 2013 Historic American Buildings Survey drawings, with visitor photographs and published images, and then passed through an AI image model to add materials, planting and light. The overall form, the steel frame, the bay grid and the main coloured panels follow the building closely. Interior dimensions, the exact window pattern, the hillside, the garden steps and all planting are estimates. The furniture is the manufacturer's 3D models, rendered separately and placed by estimate. For the house as it is, visit the Eames Foundation or consult the sources listed overleaf.

AI-generated visualisation of a 3D model. Not a photograph of the Eames House.

The historical text was written for this book in November 2026, drawing on the sources below and on general reference knowledge; not every statement was checked individually. Figures such as floor areas and bay dimensions are rounded, and accounts differ slightly between sources.

Eames Foundation, "Case Study House #8"
https://eamesfoundation.org/work/case-study-house-8/

Eames Foundation, "History & Legacy"
https://eamesfoundation.org/eames-house/history/

Eames Institute, "Case Study House No. 8"
https://www.eamesinstitute.org/stories/case-study-house-8/

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Case_Study_Houses

Wikipedia, "Eames House"
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The Architect's Newspaper, "The Eames House reopens after restoration following smoke damage" (July 2025)
https://www.archpaper.com/2025/07/eames-house-restoration-foundation/

Los Angeles Times, "After Palisades fire, Eames House reopens with a surprise" (August 2025)
https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/story/2025-08-21/eames-house-palisades-fire-smoke-damage-opening-studio

Fast Company, "The Eames House in L.A. is open again after closing during the fires"
https://www.fastcompany.com/91373559/the-eames-house-in-l-a-is-open-again-after-closing-during-the-fires

How the pictures and drawings were made

A 3D model of the house was built in Blender to the dimensions of the 2013 Historic American Buildings Survey drawings, with visitor photographs and published images. Each view was rendered from the model and passed through an AI image model, which added materials, planting, weather and light; the six night views were rendered at night with the lamps on. The furniture was rendered separately in Blender and laid back over each picture unchanged. The drawings are orthographic projections of the same model, converted to line; the site map is plotted from OpenStreetMap data. Set in Jost, a geometric sans serif in the tradition of 1920s typefaces such as Futura.