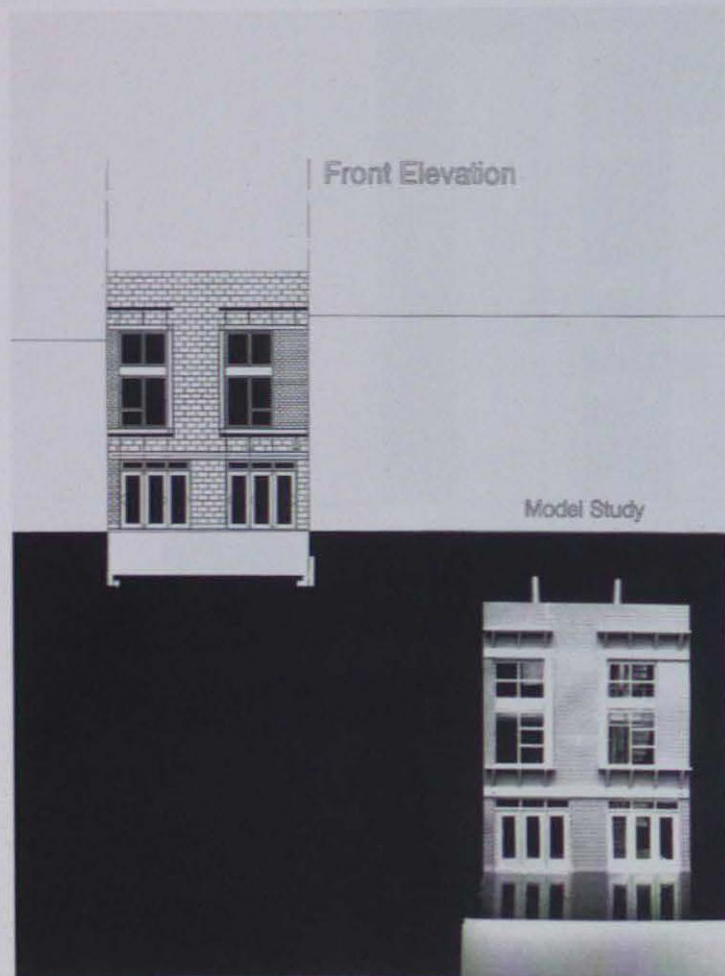


## Thin House, Divided House

4646-4648 ave. de L'Hotel-de-Ville  
Montréal, QC  
Roo + Carr Design

Michael Carroll



Project Team:	Michael Carroll, Danita Rooyakkers
Structural:	Mario Gendron
Contractor:	BOSSES Construction
Completed:	May, 1996
Size:	3,400 sq. ft. (total)
Photographs:	Mathu Manikowski

The Thin House occupies a narrow mid-block lot in Plateau Mont-Royal. The project challenges the traditional Montreal typology. The duplex offers another prototype for the City and makes an argument for a thinner, leaner, more urbane architecture where design is a critical component of the urban equation. Implicit in this project, then, is an experiment—how thin is thin?

Each unit is 11'-0" wide and 56'-0" long. Divided vertically into six levels and a 35'-0" atrium, each section contains a garage/storefront atelier, two bedrooms, two bathrooms, a mezzanine, living and kitchen/dining area. The Thin House is thus two thin vertical "lofts" designed with an emphasis on natural light and flexibility of space.

The project is contemporary in its architectural sensibility. The exterior has an industrial edge tempered by the contextual cues of the street and domestic scale of a house. For example, the cladding is brick combined with concrete block and galvanized metal sections with a folded metal cornice. The garage/front door can operate as a single door, or the three doors can act together to create an 8'-0" wide opening to the street.

The interior of the house is a play between exposed softwood and finished hardwoods, translucent and opaque surfaces, and industrial and domestic scales. The design emphasizes section over plan and volume over area. The spaces are choreographed within a maximized envelope dictated by City bylaws. At every scale the design works to be direct but considered, practical with a poetic sensibility, and thin.

### INFRATHIN City

The Thin House is part of a polemic for Infrathin City.<sup>1</sup> Paper thin architecture is the key strategy of Infrathin City. Infrathin City is piecemeal, a collection of slim volumes of fiction. Its infinitesimal architecture can only be viewed obliquely.

How do you get from Montreal to Infrathin City? Just head out of Collage City,<sup>2</sup> turn right at Metropolis,<sup>3</sup> drive straight on through Invisible Cities<sup>4</sup> and Delirious New York.<sup>5</sup> It is about 20 miles west of Alphaville.<sup>6</sup> There it is, a figment shimmering on the horizon, a mirage, a hybrid of cities experienced: Lima, Tangiers, Marrakech, London, Florence, Amsterdam, Berlin, Rio de Janeiro, New York. Venice is quintessentially Infrathin, L.A. is not. Infrathin City is the most urbane place on earth.



The economy of Infrathin City is aggressive. Land prices soar. Every crevice that holds promise is mined. Real space collapses to become slimmer, leaner, more imaginative. Land again is as precious as it was inside the walls of a Medieval town. Infrathin city is an experiment that takes the strategy of urban infill as its starting point and extends it to its limit. Marginal architecture in a vein of gold. Concentrated urbanity. Infrathin City exists in every city, in the interstitial spaces of the city, in its gaps and crevices. It is vertical, a soaring Gothic city.

Infrathin City is a micro-organism and the architect is an urban surgeon. The scalpel is as sharp as the tip of an angel's wing. Buildings as slight as those wings soar and plummet 100 feet below the earth.

Infrathin City is a new fact of *citylife*.

1. The term infrathin was invented by Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) in 1967. It first appeared in his third box of notes (New York: Cordier and Ekstorm Gallery, 1967). Infrathin denotes Duchamp's preoccupation with the infinitesimal and visceral qualities of the physical world. Will a sheet of copper always be opaque?

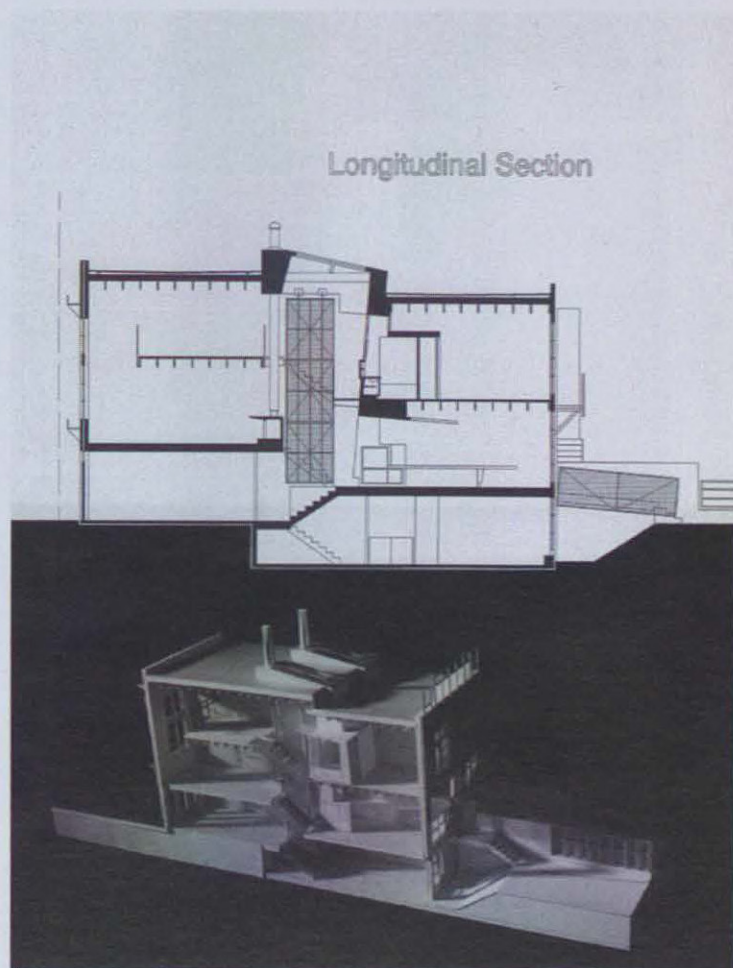
2. Colin Rowe (Basel: Birkhauser Verlag, 1984).

3. Fritz Lang, B/W film (Germany, 1926).

4. Italo Calvino (New York: Harcourt Bruce Jovanovich, 1974).

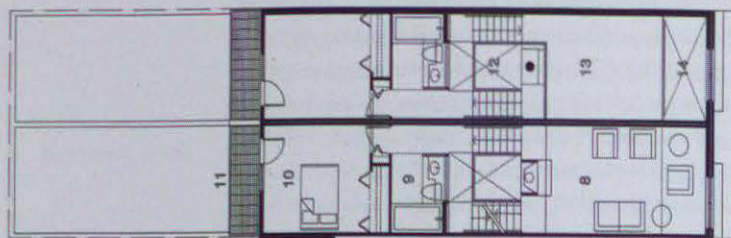
5. Rem Koolhaas (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

6. Jean Luc Godard, film (France, 1965).

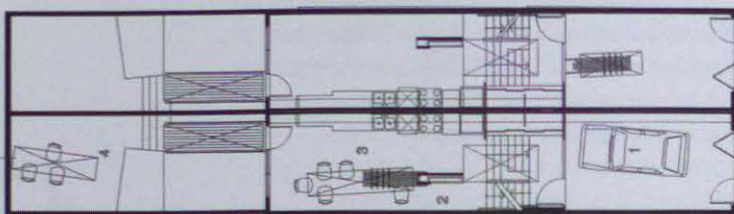


Roo + Carr Design are building two more projects in Montreal. Michael Carroll is also completing his Master's Thesis in the History and Theory Program at the McGill School of Architecture.

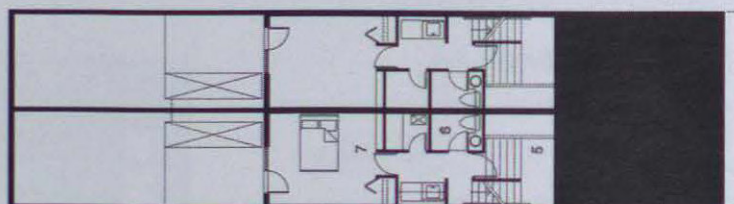




Upper Floor/Mezzanine Plan



Ground Floor Plan



Lower Level Plan

Legend

1. Garage/Studio
2. Library
3. Kitchen/Dining
4. Garden
5. Storage
6. Bath
7. Bedroom
8. Living
9. Bath
10. Bedroom
11. Balcony
12. Atrium
13. Mezzanine
14. Open to Below



