Upstairs, the ceiling was removed and framing exposed to make a big "tree house"—an enormous attic. Fortuitously, the original framing and lath turned out to be redwood, giving the spaces they now define the warmth of local craftsman architecture.

The "memories" of the old house are also honored. In gutting much of the interior and in opening it into the new spaces, Gehry proposed that he had trapped "ghosts" of the original cubic volumes. The window in the kitchen and its chain-link "shadow structure" above were meant "to read as a cube falling out of a box—as if it was trying to escape from the enclosure that was put around the old house."

The distinction between new and old is not made insistently. Explains Gehry, "I wanted to blur the edge between old finishes and new finishes... between real and surreal." Similarly, the corrugated metal wall that surrounds the entry and kitchen does not wrap the third side of the new shell; rather, it continues as a screen wall. A window-like opening provides a view into the backyard. From the street, those in the backyard are on stage; however, from the yard the impression is of being backstage looking out through props: both the screen wall and the cactus in midyard are apparently supported by two-by-four-inch bracing.

These "stages" provide a clue to some of the other ideas explored in the house. They follow a line of reasoning, or unreasoning, promoted by Duchamp and explored by a line of twentieth-century artists whom Gehry cites as influences. Duchamp argued that in life one knows and deals only with change and motion, not absolutes and fixity; and that which is art is equally volatile and amorphous—what he called "something like electricity" between the maker and the observer through the medium of the art work. What Robert Rauschenberg has said of his field—"Painting relates to both life and art. Neither can be made. I try to act in the gap between the two."—Gehry has brought to architecture. Thus the house is made for the people moving through it and living in it, its insights and incidents taking precedence over the strengthening of a formal part. And, as Duchamp's "Large Glass" offers a frequently changing view of itself by virtue of people seen through and reflected by its surface, so the "stage sets" in Gehry's house are enlivened and changed with the life it houses.

Glazing is used throughout because of its changing reflections, refractions, and shadows. Wire glass was used in conjunction with chain-link panels to intensify those effects. The kitchen and some of the bedroom windows frame the movements and shadows of a stand of Cedars of Lebanon. Other bedroom windows look through the slats, openings, and chain-link screens of the rear loggia. The reflections off the windows of the old house, left intact between interior spaces, are particularly evocative; the old window replaced with mirror and installed as a medicine cabinet is its endgame. One of the vaguely perpendicular panes making up the dining room window at the front corner slides by, unframed, that which it might have abutted. The result of looking through two sheets of glass set at different angles is a refraction of things seen through it, giving them the sort of kinetic torque Gehry identifies as that of Duchamp's "Nude Descending a Staircase." The angling of the window was one of Gehry's most calculated endeavors. As he describes it, "That slight angle allows the window to be perpendicular to a streetlight that's across the road. In the evening one looks out that window and all the interior lights in the house are reflected in that window and point toward that streetlight. The illusion is that the house is tilted toward the streetlight and it is one of the reflections I did plan. Most of the others are either intuitive or accidental, but they work equally well."

To extend the capacity of the house to surprise, and to allow the observer as much speculation and intrigue as possible, Gehry chose his rough materials and the "deconstruction" of the old house. As he explains it, "I was concerned with maintaining a "freeness" in the house. Often this freshness is lost—in over-finishing them, their vitality is lost. I wanted to avoid this by emphasizing the feeling that the details are still in the process: that the building hasn't stopped. The very finished building has security and it's predictable. I wanted to try something different. I like playing at the edge of disaster."

1.Kitchen window
1. View into backyard from street
2. View of rear elevation from street
3. Roofscape