**Figure 3.4** *Le Corbusier, Villa and apartment block, Wessenhofsiedlung, Stuttgart, 1927. From* Visual History of Twentieth Century Architecture, *Sharp, D., Heinemann.*
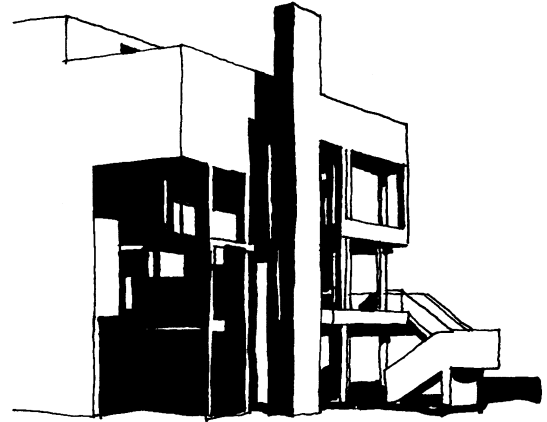


**Figure 3.6** *Richard Meier, Smith House, Long Island, 1975. From* Five Architects, *Rowe, C., et al., Oxford University Press.*
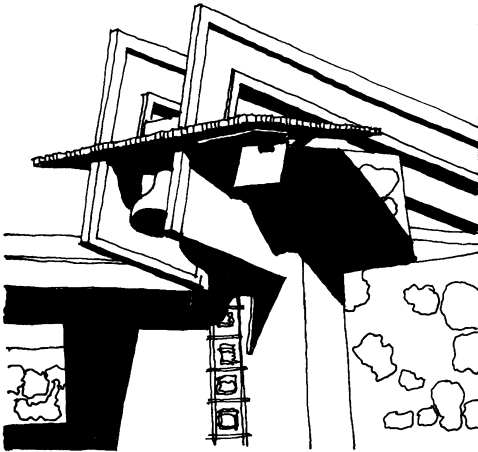


**Figure 3.5** *Frank Lloyd Wright Taliesin West, Arizona, 1938. From* FLW — Force of Nature, *Nash, E. P., Todtri, p. 61.*

be virtually consumed by the landscape so that physical intrusion is minimised (**Figure** 3.7).

## CHOOSING AN APPROPRIATE 'MODEL'

Although it may be ill-formed and far from clear, architects generally arrive at a visual image for their building soon after the design process gets under way. Such an image often merely exists in the mind's eye long before the laborious process begins of articulating such imagery via drawings and models and then testing its validity; nevertheless, this initial creative leap into form-making, this point of
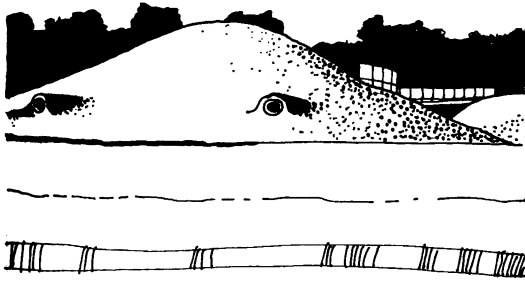
**Figure 3.7** *Edward Cullinan, Archeolink Visitor Centre, Aberdeenshire, Scotland 1997. From* Architects' Journal, *6/12/97, p. 35.*

departure when the initial 'diagram' of the building begins tentatively to emerge is the most crucial and most difficult aspect of designing and, indeed, the most intimidating to a fledgling designer.

## Getting started

Beaux Arts architects referred to the initial diagram of their building as the *parti*, literally, 'a point of departure'. The *parti* encapsulated the essence of a building in one simple diagram and implied that the development of the building design could proceed to completion without substantial erosion of the initial idea or *parti*. Whilst such a process had then been both informed and judged by accepted Beaux Arts canons, nevertheless the process of producing an initial diagram for a building of real clarity and order still has equal validity today even if in a pluralist modern world those canons have multiplied and shifted.

So which aspects of the 'programme' can we harness in producing this three-dimensional diagram from which the building design can evolve? What constitutes this crucial creative springboard?

As has often been articulated, architecture at its most basic manifestation is mere shelter from the elements so that human activity can be undertaken in acceptable comfort.

Should the designer assume this position, a greater concern for matters of fact rather than any theoretical stance, accepted canon, or precedent is implied. Indeed, the earliest, most primitive attempts at making shelter against the elements merely assembled available materials to hand; this was an entirely pragmatic process of design by trial and error (**Figure 3.8**). Even today, some decisions embodied in the design process are entirely pragmatic in nature particularly when incorporating new materials or methods of construction; early crude and tentative efforts tend to be refined and modified by trial and error using the same pragmatic processes as our forebears.

But in searching for this initial form or *parti* it is unlikely that purely pragmatic considerations will dominate. Designers are much more likely to be profoundly influenced by accepted ways of doing things or canons which are a useful source for ordering this notoriously problematic form-finding process. Classical architects worked, literally, within