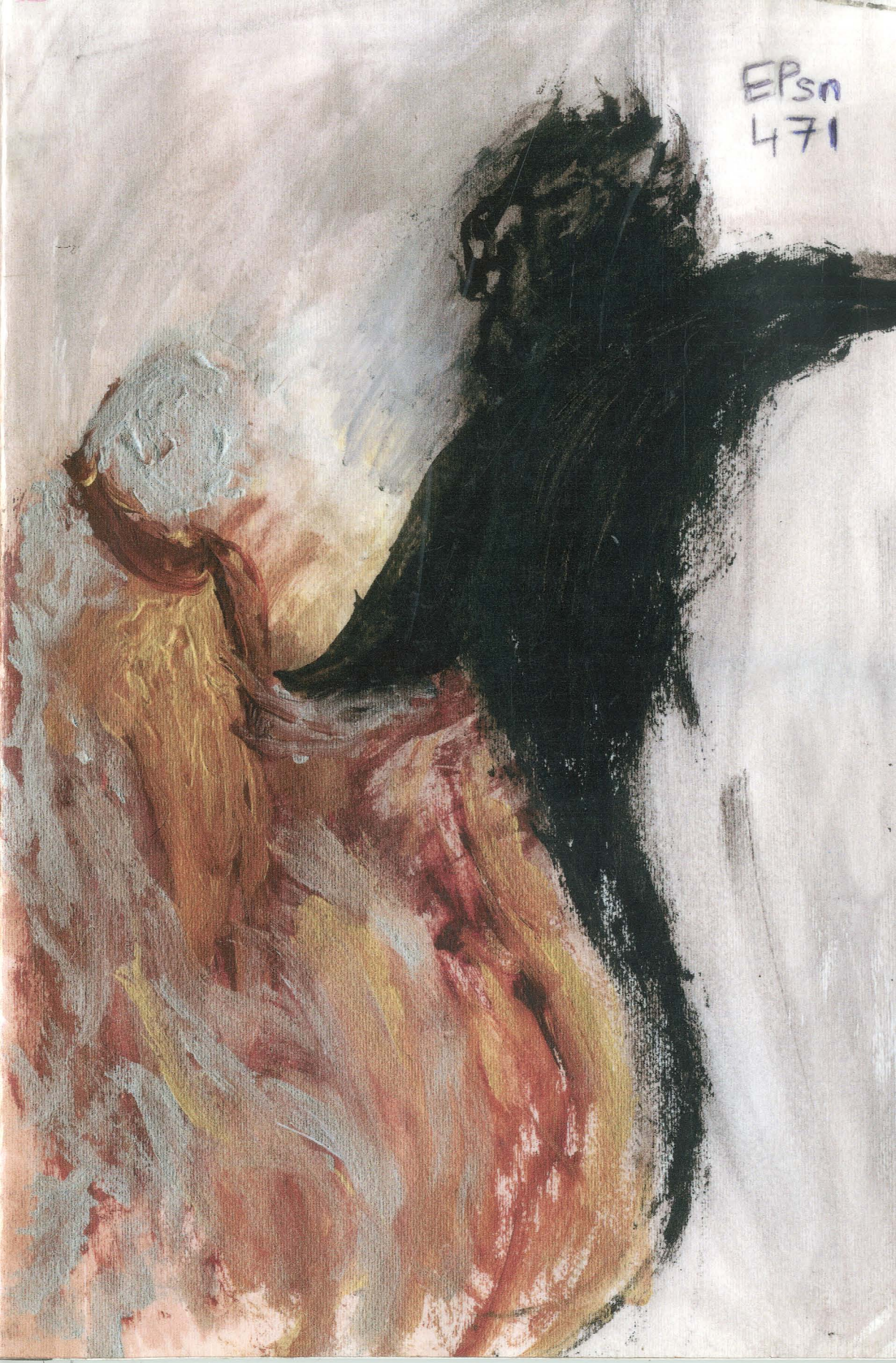


EPsn
471





EPsn
471

Anis Sfeir

Hotel

Jan 30, 2009



Prologue

“It is by no means an irrational fancy that, in a future existence, we shall look upon what we think our present existence, as a dream.” E.A.Poe

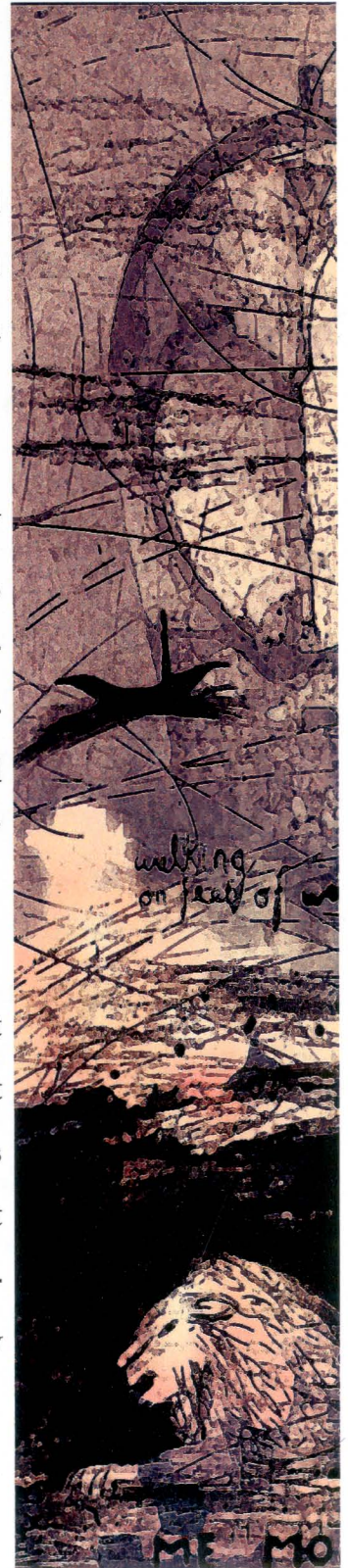
Remembering dreams and places we have visited leaves us with blurred visions and approximate lines. When we remember, time is relative and this elasticity may be irrelevant to our full understanding of the story.

Alain Robbe-Grillet, one of the precursors of the New Novel, went beyond that when he asked: “Why seek to reconstruct the time of clocks in a narrative which is concerned only with human time? Is it not wiser to think of our own memory which is never chronological?”

What is clear though is that the recalled events are constructed in our minds and they form an entity that we understand, a memory.

Memory is an intriguing notion on many scales; since the beginning of civilization, men asked questions of disappeared societies, empires and generations: their ancestors. They were curious and interested in the habits, the lifestyles, and the cults of the generation that preceded them.

This perpetual reconstruction of the past can be understood: people believed that their history had a meaning because it was not defined by a beginning and an end, it was a scene or a chapter of an infinite sequence: A permanent and sequential play of cause and effect.



So they understood that in order to know themselves, they should know those who came before them, and in the same time, leave a testimony and a legacy to those who will follow them.

On a smaller scale, I looked at the generalized model of the family: the parents and their progeny. The parent will often think of what he will leave to his children after his death.

The heritage is something that passes from one generation to the next so there is often a feeling of sacredness attached to it. This is a notion I couldn't understand, every Sunday, sitting with the family in the dining room. Part of the talk was about stories of the past that all happened in the place we were in at that time. The exaggerated affection towards this place was a little bit odd and it quickly became irritating as the years passed on.



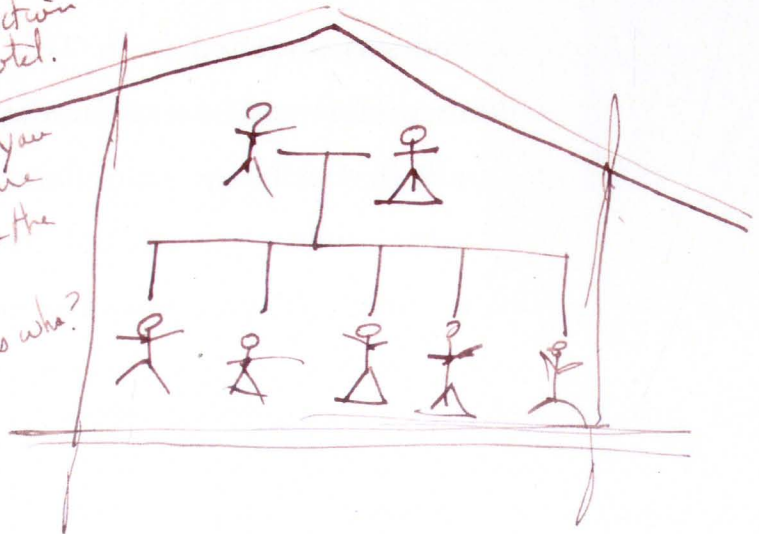
I used to remember the outrage of a mother that couldn't believe that every single penny should be invested in the restoration of that hotel, the indignation of the whole family when I innocently proposed to sell it.

So for a long time – I don't know when It began and if it ended- Burden and malediction were two words that I used when thinking about our family owned hotel. As much as I tried to avoid it and forget about it, it was there. It was there when I looked through the window, and it was there when I closed the shutters...

*The Malediction
of the hotel.*

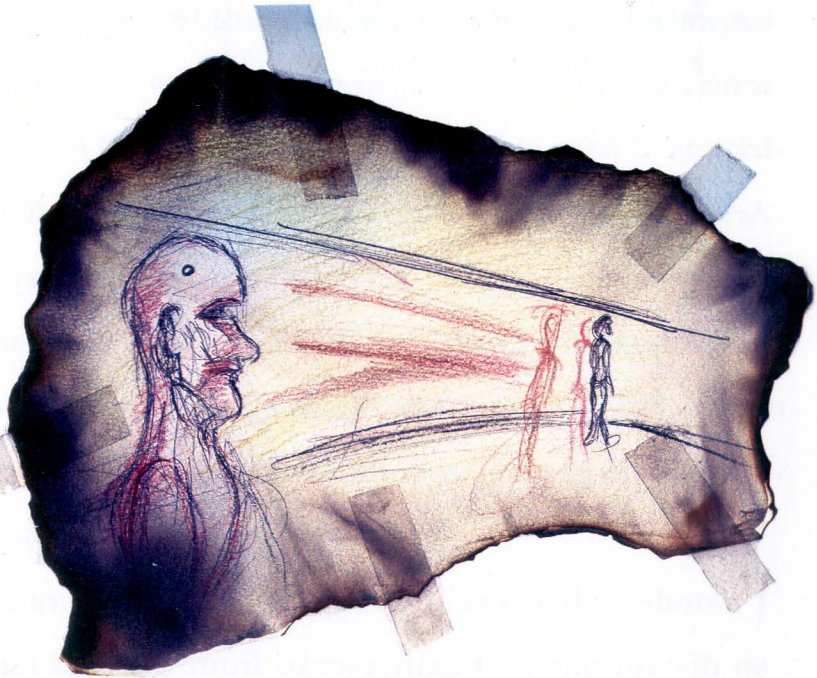
*Whatever you
do, you are
attached to the
hotel.*

Who owns who?



In addition to the hotel, I can talk about the inheritance of previous life experiences: the only proofs that are left about the hotel are stories told by the owners and the users. And I am talking about the history, when it all begun, the changes that took place.

*Reading and hearing
about our ancestors
makes us relive
what they have
experienced.
We can talk here
about capturing
their life experience.
The "real" in this
case is the story
that we tell.
Subjective and not.*



Therefore, there is a complete subjectivity, making the hotel a subject rather than an object. This view was justified a while ago when I was conducting interviews with the various users that I know.

The hotel they all talked about is not just the building we used to gather in. So maybe the hotel is some kind of an aura, an impression or a chimera? This view seems to me so close yet so far from the truth. What is sure though, is that this is a hotel because there is an inherited feeling and impression that this place is a building where people and tourists are hosted.

And so the legatee saw it as a curse, and had a feeling of indifference followed by rejection, the owners, maybe blinded by an imaginary sense of duty, continue to perform plastic surgery or even embalm it, the economist couldn't see it as a viable project.

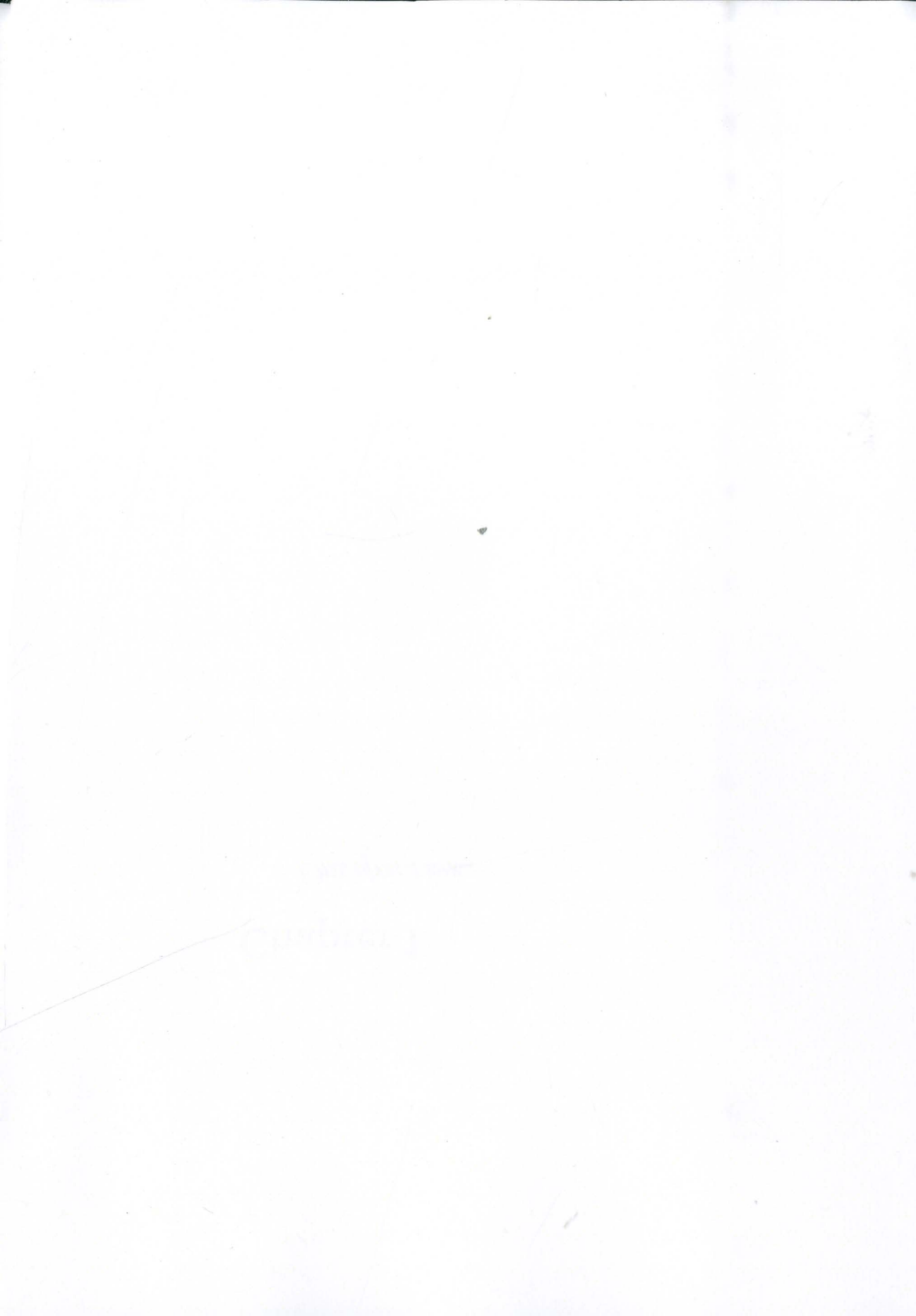
I wonder what was the trigger, maybe that once in a not so distant past, a businessman from the Arabian gulf was interested in buying the hotel and the obvious answer was no. So as an architect, I found it interesting to look at this building and see what kind of intervention would give it back its edge.

In a country where luxury is often a prerequisite for successful places, Where the term hotel is usually understood in the “Hilton” way, I decided to deconstruct the history of our hotel through the memories of the people that lived in it or even know about it. At the end, I would have fragmented the subject or the idea of this particular hotel, and its reconstruction would be an important process in order to intervene on it. Every scenario is possible even if according to the family, drastic changes would be a sacrilege.

This process of analysis and intervention on sacred heritage is a method that only applies to this hotel and that can only be applied by my own person, the narrator of the story that will follow.

Chapter 1

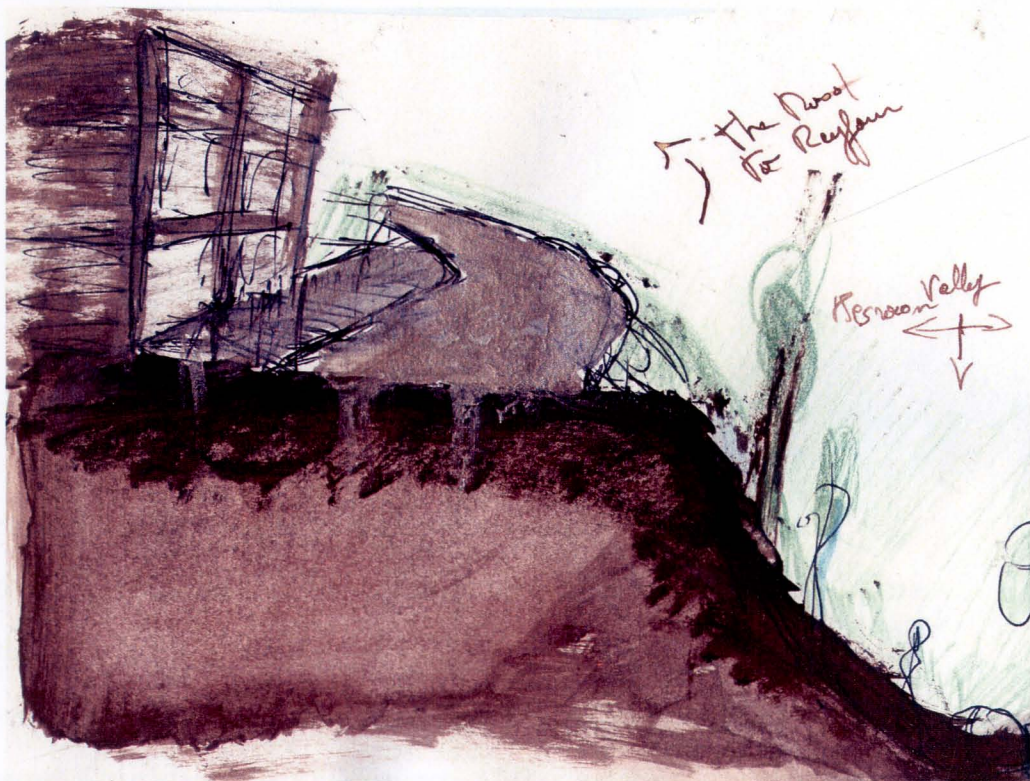
Once upon a time...



No one is there...

The road to Reyfoun is long. In case you didn't understand, this road is commonly know as the road to Faraya nowadays. This trajectory was my everyday trip for the past twenty years. some time ago, I took this path with a foreigner friend, and he made me realize something I have never thought about before: the contrast between the highway and this road is striking: On one side, a few buildings, on the other side, a deep and green valley.

Nothing special you would say, but It's a basic setup I took for granted and I could not feel the change of scenary anymore. Today, an for the very first time, I was considering this whole trajectory, and looking at it as a stranger.



In this season, the difference in temperature becomes bigger with altitude, and the clouds contribute to create a dim environment. The first autumn rains cleaned up the dust contributing to the sharp colors of the valleys.

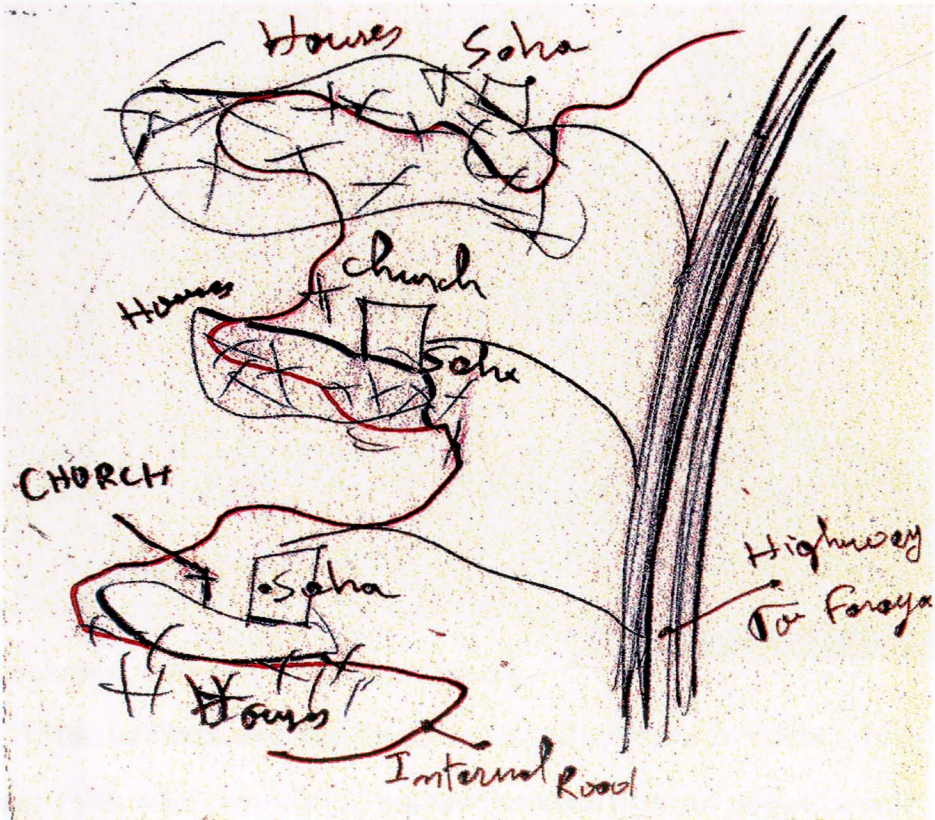
The traffic was very light this day and it was nothing compared to what it was one month ago. The car to population ratio in this country is surely incredibly high.



As I drive, I realize that this road was like a highway connecting the city to the ski resorts. Effectively, every now and then, a junction on one side of the road leads to a village. These villages are also connected to each other's through internal roads. I assume these were the original roads and that the one I'm driving on is a more recent one. The asphalt was renewed for the first time in many years making it a rather pleasant drive compared to last year...

The villages along this road resemble themselves, they are built on a slope, and a small place, called "saha", is used as a gathering place for people of all age groups, and next to this "saha" we often find a church. These villages are not autonomous, only one of them contains a hospital; another one has a small music academy and so on.

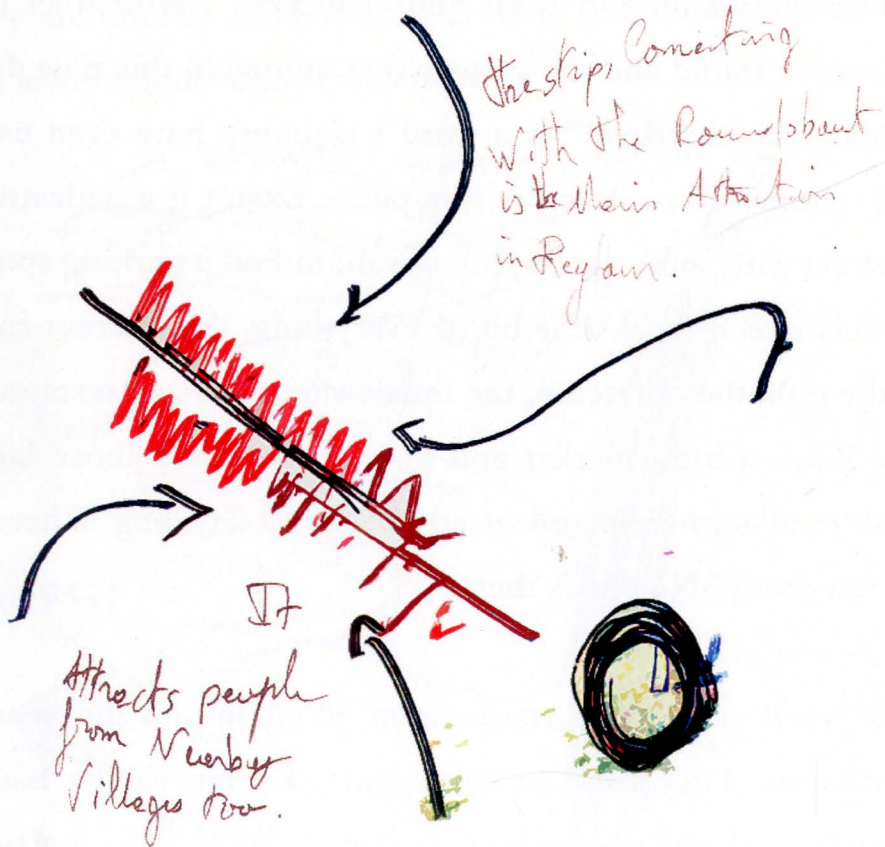
They are mostly residential, and more often than not, we find lower middle class residences.



I finally arrive in Reyfoun, which is also on the margin of the main "highway". Today the internal Reyfoun roads were empty, not even one person on the sidewalks. The many cafes across this street looked like they were closed for ages.

I finally arrive, and I am quite shocked. I remember the intense traffic and the crowds that animated this now desolated road. "Road" is a word I wouldn't have even used 1 month ago to describe this place: wasn't it a pedestrian street with some cars trying in vain to find a parking spot? This street had a little bit of everything, the internet café, the pub, the nightclub, the music shop, a dozen restaurant a least, a little market and most importantly those large sidewalks where people used to walk all day long. Where is everybody? No one is there?

Most of them were residents of Reyfoun and the nearby villages. They used to come because this village had a unique planar commercial "strip" connected to the saha of the church. The large sidewalks, the benches and the balustrades made this strip a very successful public space. People came to have a wak with their dogs, some used to do their morning jogging while their children rode on their bikes, and some teenagers used to sit on the balustrade and tease the girls.



I remember Reyfoun's very active nightlife during the summer. Different users go to the Creperies, french restaurants and chicha cafes. There is also a pub where the underage youth go and have drinks. In other words, there is a bit of the different functions and activities that one usually finds in places like Beirut.

Yesterday
we had a:

KARAOKE
NIGHT



TONIGHT
we have a:

LIVE
BAND



ENTRANCE 3500





This vision of Reyfoun contradicts what I see now, as there is no sign of the energy of a public space, or the promise of a change in a short future. Actually, even I do not feel like having a walk in this place, in this cold weather and insignificant street that lead to nowhere.

As I continue this detour-a deviation I often do unconsciously for no specific reasons, or maybe It's because have a bit of hope that something interesting is happening in the village-, a strange question came to my mind: What is the relation between the weather or the seasons and our perception of space? Could it have to do with the change in the tones of the colors? Are the greens of the trees, the yellows of the sun and the blues of the ski enough to attract people and invite them to walk on this sidewalk?

It is true that in this moment, and I don't know why, I can't envision this place in other colors than shades of grays, even if my eyes tell me that the colors are brighter after the rain.

“

Now and then I'm scared, when I seem to forget how sounds become words or even sentences ... No, I don't speak anymore and what could I say, since no one is there and there is nothing to say...

So, I prefer to lie in darkest silence alone ... listening to the lack of light, or sound, or someone to talk to, for something to share ...- but there is no hope and no one is there.

No, no, no ...- not one living soul and there is nothing (left) to say, in darkness I lie all alone by myself, sleeping most of the time to endure the pain.

I am not breathing a word, I haven't spoken for weeks and yet the mistress inside me is (secretly) straining her ears. But there is no one, and it seems to me at times that with every passing hour another word is leaving my mind...

I am the mistress of loneliness, my court is deserted but I do not care. The presence of people is ugly and cold and something I can neither watch nor bear.

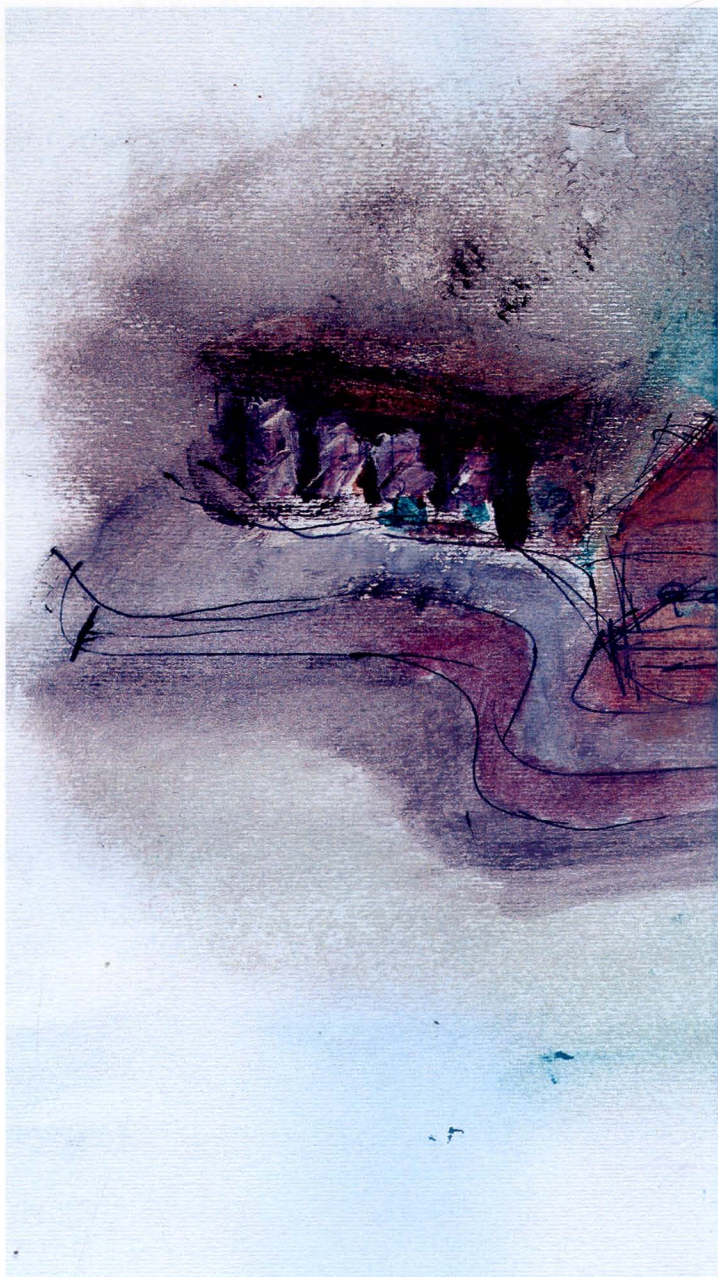
So, I prefer to lie in darkness silence alone, listening to the lack of light, or sound, or someone to talk to, for something to share ... but there is no hope and no one is there.

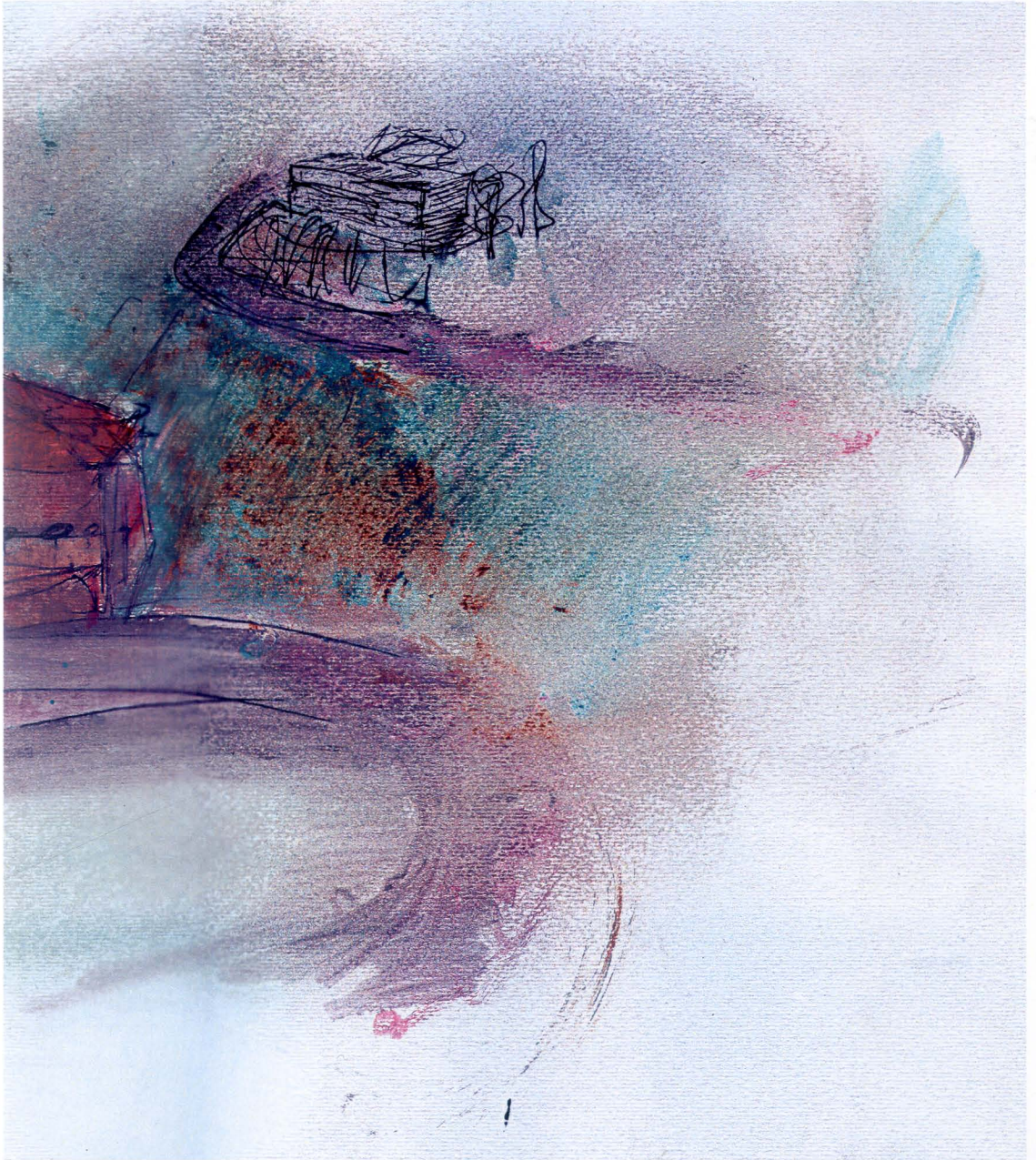
No, I don't speak anymore and what should I say, since no one is there and there is nothing to say? All is oppressive, alles ist schwer, there is no one and no one is there...

”

Anna Varney Cantodea

As I drive through the strip, doing this loop for the fifth time in a row, I stared at the hotel like I always did. It was still there, looking at the village, I had this idea of calling it village 90/275...





90/275

As far as I can remember, my experience of Reyfoun has always been the same: a perpetual succession of intensity and activity during summer, and inactivity and stillness during the other three seasons. This is a seasonal village and the only season that has witnessed activity until today is the summer, when people come from Beirut and other cities. This phenomenon called "estiyaf" is of great benefits for the village and it coincides with the reopening of the various restaurants and other places. This observable fact had a determining repercussion on the way the village was built through time. So due to this fact, there is an abundance of apartments for rent or sale.

These apartments are mostly located around the strip. Most of them are inhabited during summer but deserted during winter. So the majority of the renters usually stay in Reyfoun for 90 days (most of the owners propose a three-month price or a month per month tariff. During 275 days, most of these houses are not occupied and what is left is a semi-empty village.



As I tried to carry on with my investigation, I thought it would be interesting to get some official books and documents on Reyfoun from the municipality, only to learn that no documents exist whatsoever.

I was left with a fragmented history of the village made up of pieces of people's memories. The memory of the production of space in Reyfoun was a very ambiguous one, and some historical traditional Lebanese houses were dating from the 19th century.



Dr. MOUBARAK - RAIFOUN

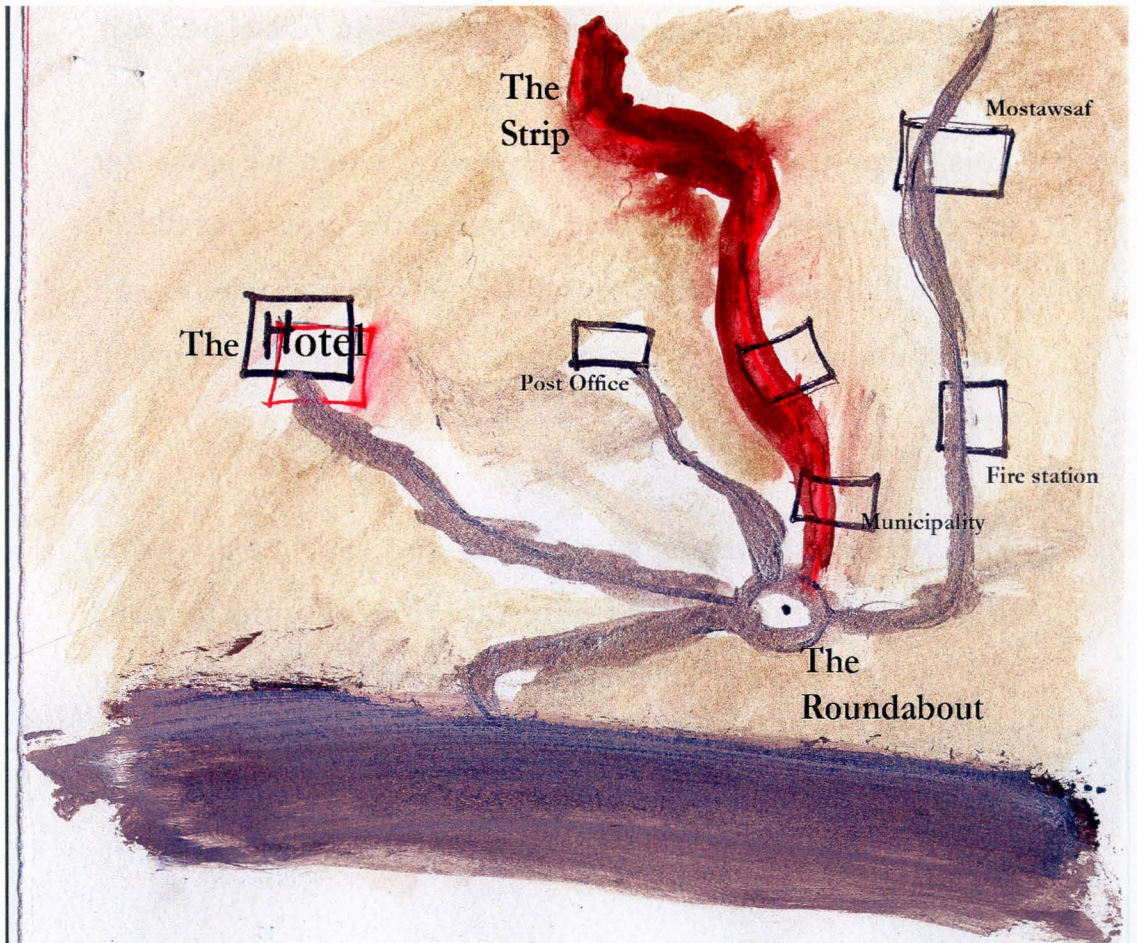
So, the fictive facts that I have about it are that after the world war and the capitulation of the Ottoman Empire, Reyfoun had an important touristic role as it was attracting people from different countries.

This interaction between foreigners and locals -The fez could be seen on some of the pictures- had an important cultural impact on the population that could still be seen today. A villager from Reyfoun always use some badly pronounced French words in his sentences, and some of the places were given names such as Le Boulevard.

In addition to that, and to try to make a profit from this new found prosperity (I guess), some villagers rented rooms in their houses to these tourists and hosted them. The only road connecting the coast to the mountain was passing through Reyfoun, and this fact, in addition to its advantageous landscape contributed so much to its fame.

Five hotels existed in Reyfoun's history: our own hotel and the hotel "palais des pins" were the first to open, then the "Saint Rock hotel" appeared and was a typical city hotel located on the strip and proposing a "4 stars" service. Strangely, our family owned hotel does not carry any star and is nameless.

When I decided to draw the map of Reyfoun and how I perceive the hotel in relation to the surroundings, I began by drawing the Faraya-Zouk axis, and then I drew a circle and connected in to this axis. And from this roundabout, used as a reference point, I could branch out the roads leading to the strip, the hotel etc...



Ninety two-seventy-five or in other terms a village that prepares during nine months for the summer season.

Nine months for the municipality to decide how to improve the public spaces, and decide what variety of events, and festivals would bring more people to the village. Then, after that, three months of assessment followed by nine months of making conclusions and deciding again.

This perpetual loop is also happening when we consider the cafes owners on the strip, whereas the ones that didn't work will close and reopen with a new design, menu and attraction, inspired by the success of the cafes that worked well.

This periodicity seems so amusing and cruel at the same time; it's hit or miss as you only have three months to make profits. During the 2006 war, Duncan Donuts opened in July and was closed on September to never open again in the region.

This phenomenon also affects the inhabitants as people change their habits during summer; the villagers often invite their periodic neighbors for "Sobihiyeh", or a small brunch where usually aged people gather and spend the whole morning conversing.

The 90/275 syndrome does not only hit the village, but also the hotels and particularly our unnamed hotel.

The program also affects the interests of people
change their behavior towards the village of
the their periodic neighbors for "jobless", or a small
budget which entails good people who are under the
the program, however, which has, except for the
rate, and, again, it is good for the village
the NY City government and the village, but also
the hotels and restaurants and businesses in the

This perpetual loop is also happening when we consider
the cafes owners on the strip, whereas the ones that didn't
will close and those with a few more will stay
attraction, inspired by the success of the other locations
well

This part of the program is also happening when we consider
the cafes owners on the strip, whereas the ones that didn't
will close and those with a few more will stay
attraction, inspired by the success of the other locations
well

Phantasmagoria

“

*Exposed with hands as empty
as the opposite space,
crawling we move
to where the final station lies,
to whom is the debt
that we are forced to pay...?
Real forces dare to appear only
when we turn away,
truth reveals itself
Reveal yourself!
A face ordained to hypocrites,
we know the masks,*

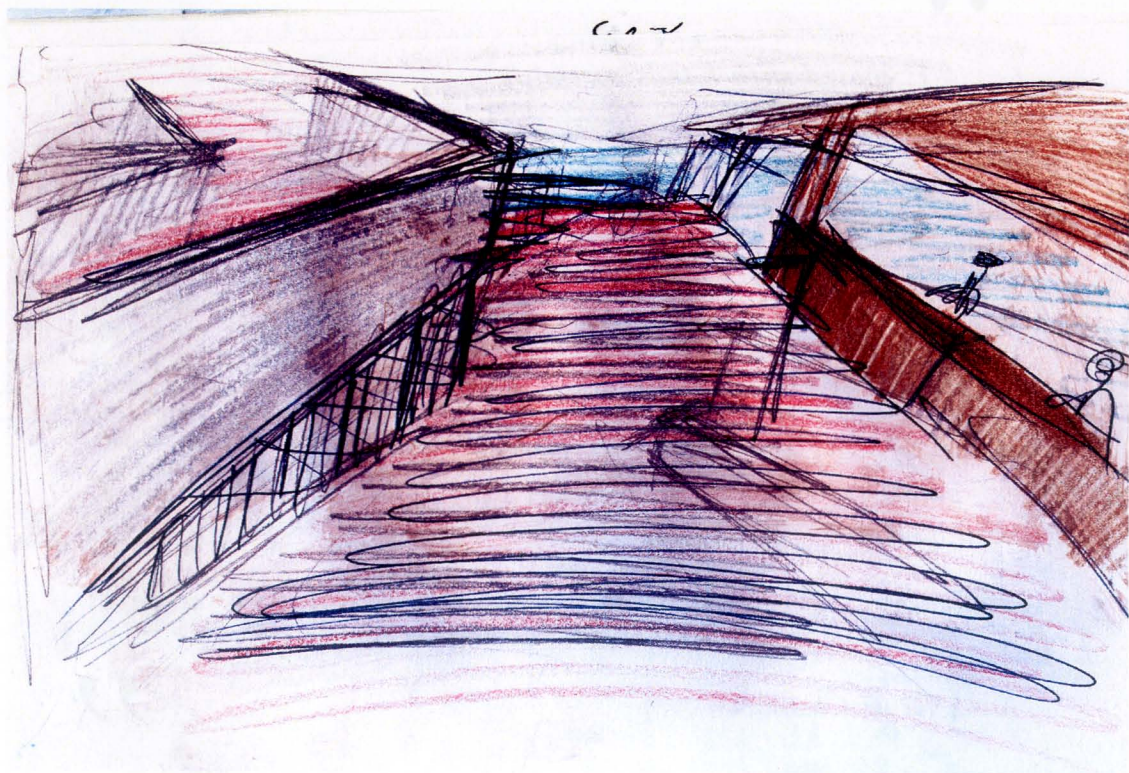
*Phantasmagoria...
such a useful weapon,
ineffectual against us, enemies,
with the knowledge of truth...
...truth makes me sick,
what a wretched play!
Paralyzed by flesh and bones,
Condemned to vegetate,
Condemned to stay alone
Helplessly we are escaping,
we're dinging to... stranded ashore,
"Oh, beloved infamous side!"
Our distress in perfections,
trials and tribulation,
preferring our pain,
we'll stay and die...*

Anna Varney Cantodea

”

I enter the hotel; the entrance looks attractive and welcoming. It is large and well lit. The portico of the prolonged entrance is surely here to protect clients from the rain. The transparent door gives a hint of the interior.

Inside, the hall is a welcoming, complicated and intriguing opening. It is a well-lit and transparent space. The open façade reveals a magnificent view. I'd like to take a closer look but first, I have to check in at the reception.



Here, the charming receptionist kindly guides me through the different services available in this section. The concierge desk, which is at her left propose some of the brochures and tour guides. At her right, I can pay at the cashier and keep my valuable items in the hotels' safe. There is a little corridor where I have telephonic cabins, a cash machine, and the toilets. The little boutique behind me seems like a little souvenir shops with traditional Lebanese products.

Farther, I discern a womanly silhouette that seems lost and searching for someone. Maybe she's looking for this small child that's running here?

As I articulate in vain "Hey kid!" a steward comes to inform me that this energetic child has been doing this running since last week, and that there is no need to worry. I plan to continue my exploration later; I'm taking a single bedroom with a view to the village. The steward comes to take my baggage as the receptionist guides me to my room.

Boutique



Entrance

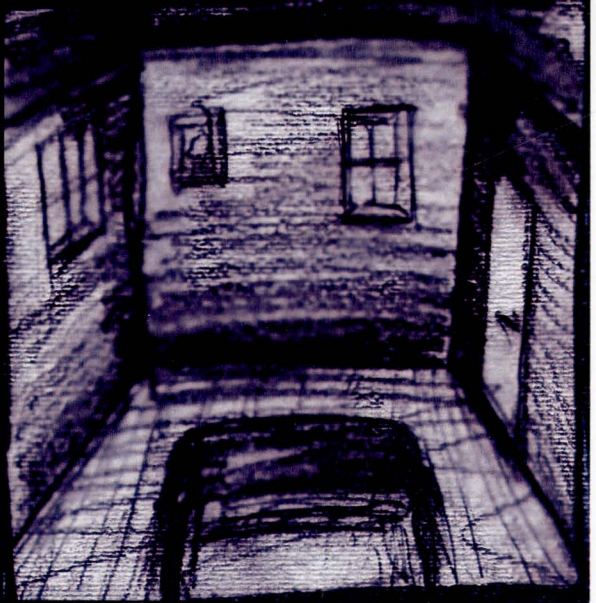
INFO.

Reception

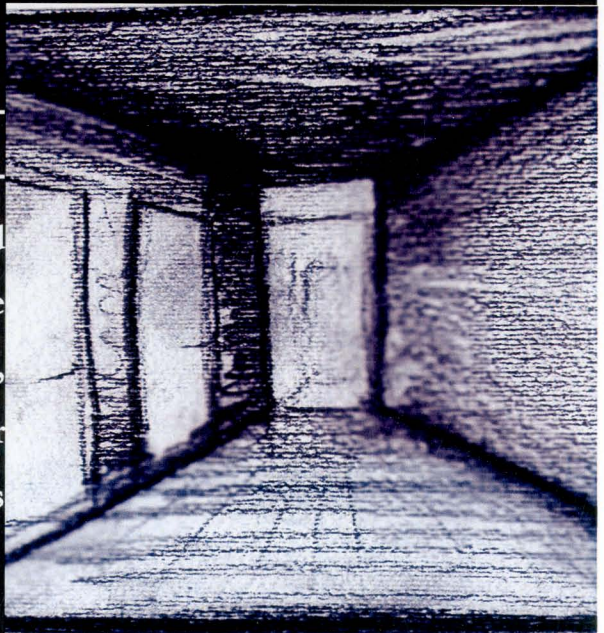




Its 6 am! I overslept! I have to get up quickly and help my parents clean up the house. As I prepare myself, I try to enjoy my last minutes in this room for at least three months. My room was the only one with a private bathroom and I will have to share one with the whole family again...



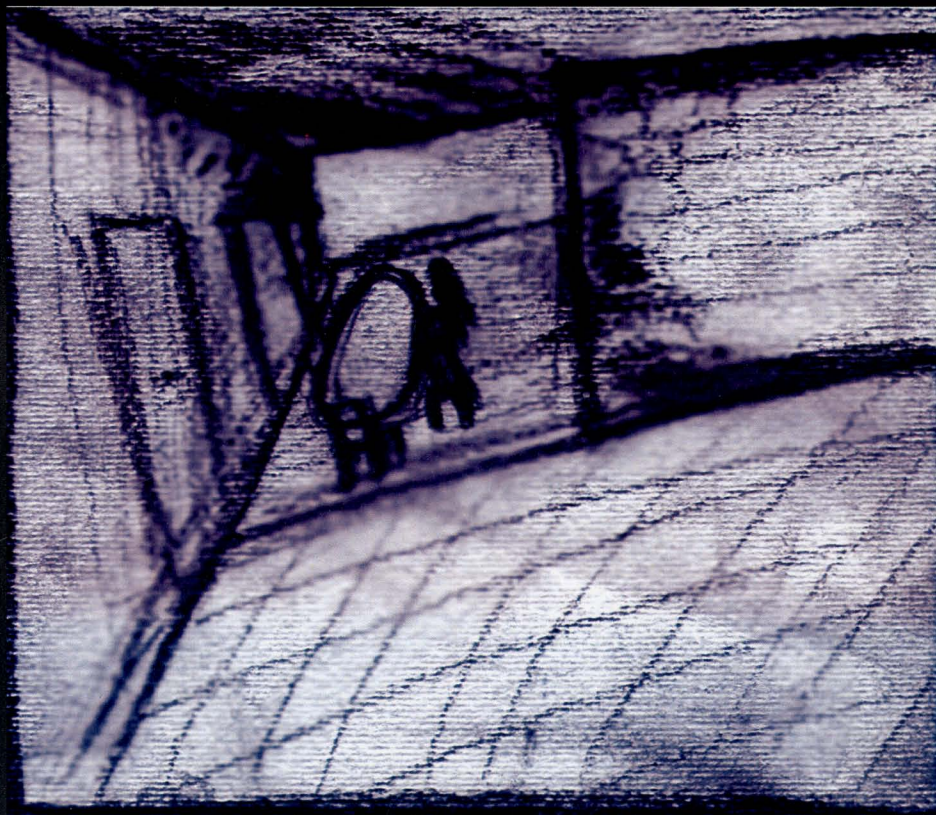
Everyone seems to have already left his room. My father was still here. He called me to help him clean out the kitchen, move the fixtures, bring back the “summer furniture” and make this look like a bedroom again.



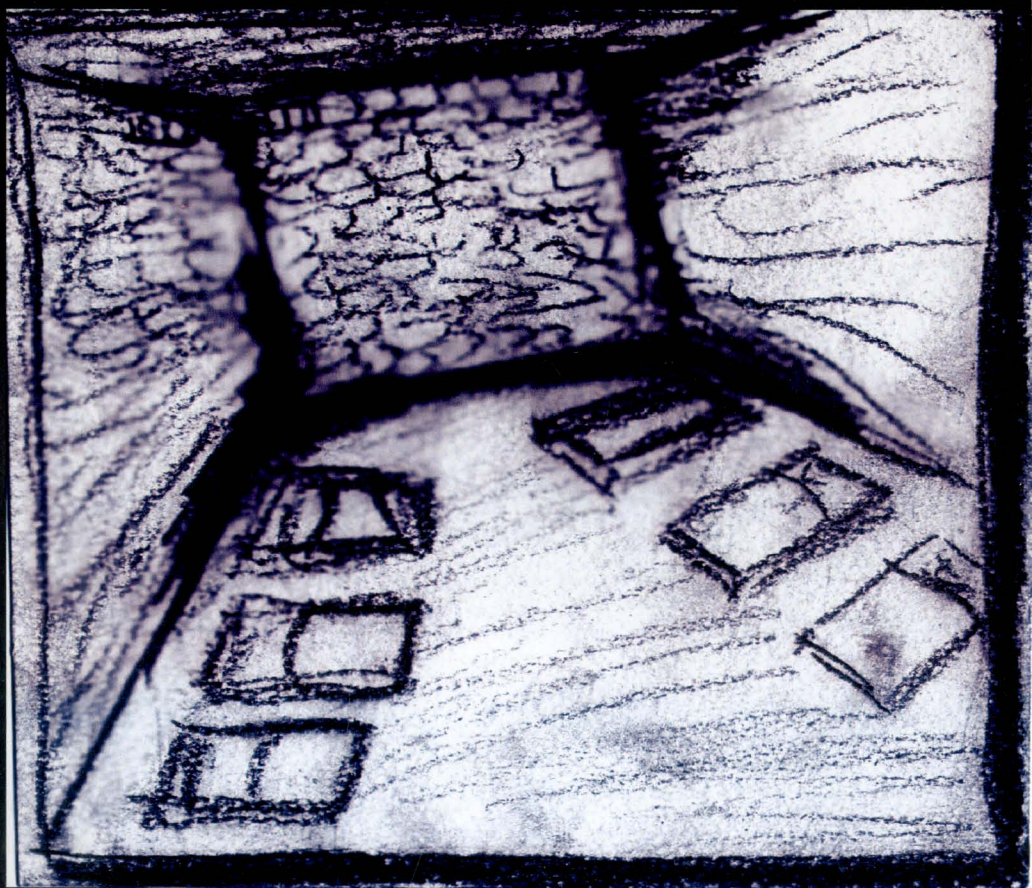
Everyone seems to have already left his room. My father was still here. He called me to help him clean out the kitchen, move the fixtures, bring back the “summer furniture” and make this look like a bedroom again.

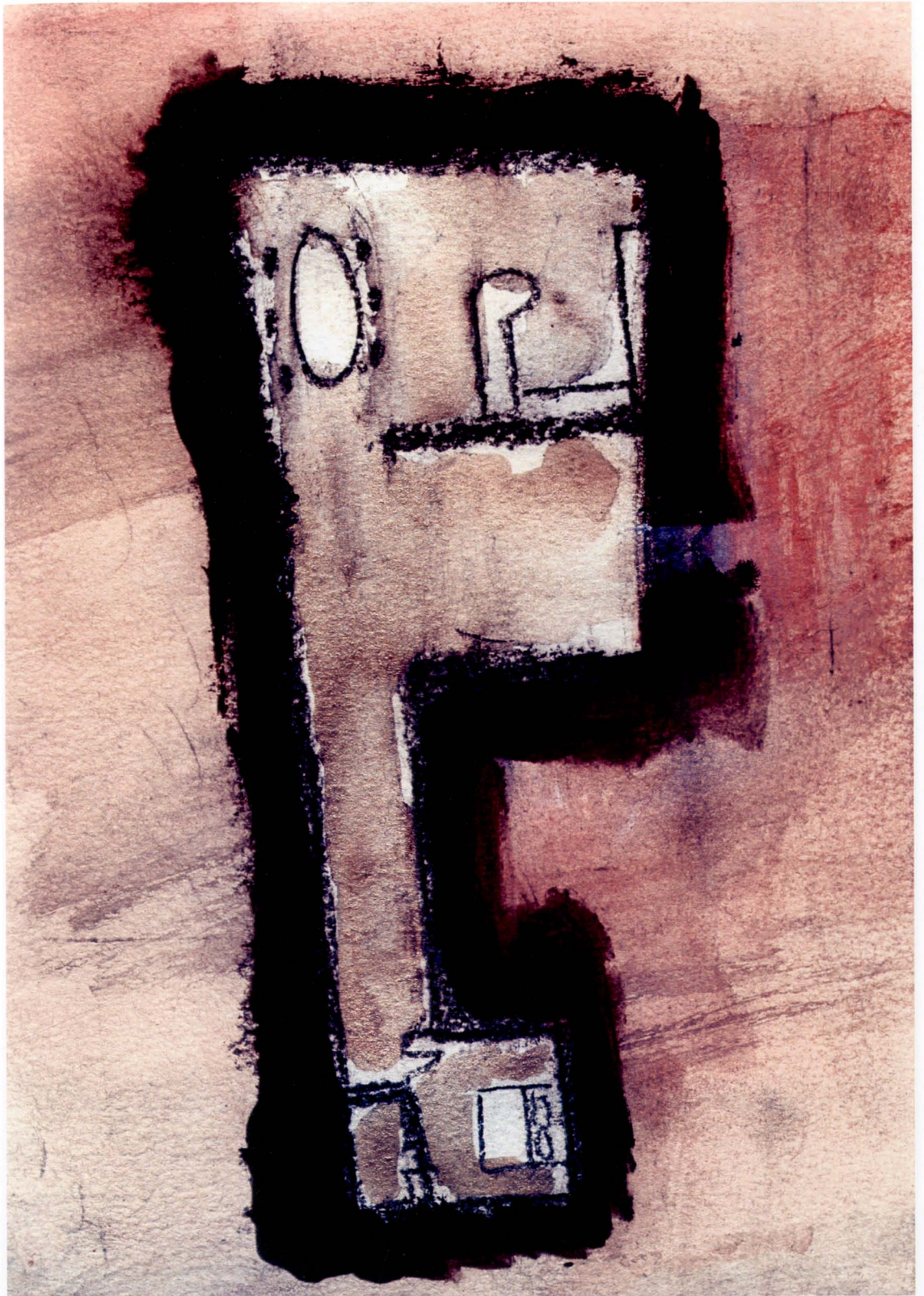
My sisters were surely helping Adel in the cave; which will be our room for the entire summer.

The new living room will surely please the clients. It’s all clean and refurbished.

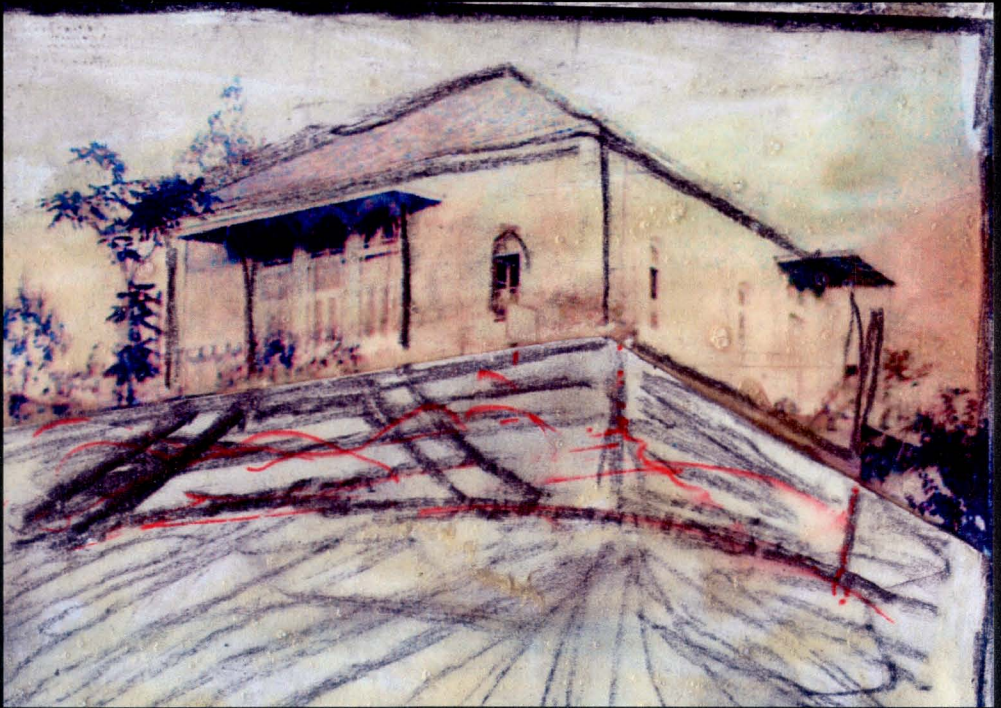


I get out of the house to access the basement and here I already see, lying on the floor, the six prepared mats. They thankfully opened that window to clear out this awful smell of dust and moist.

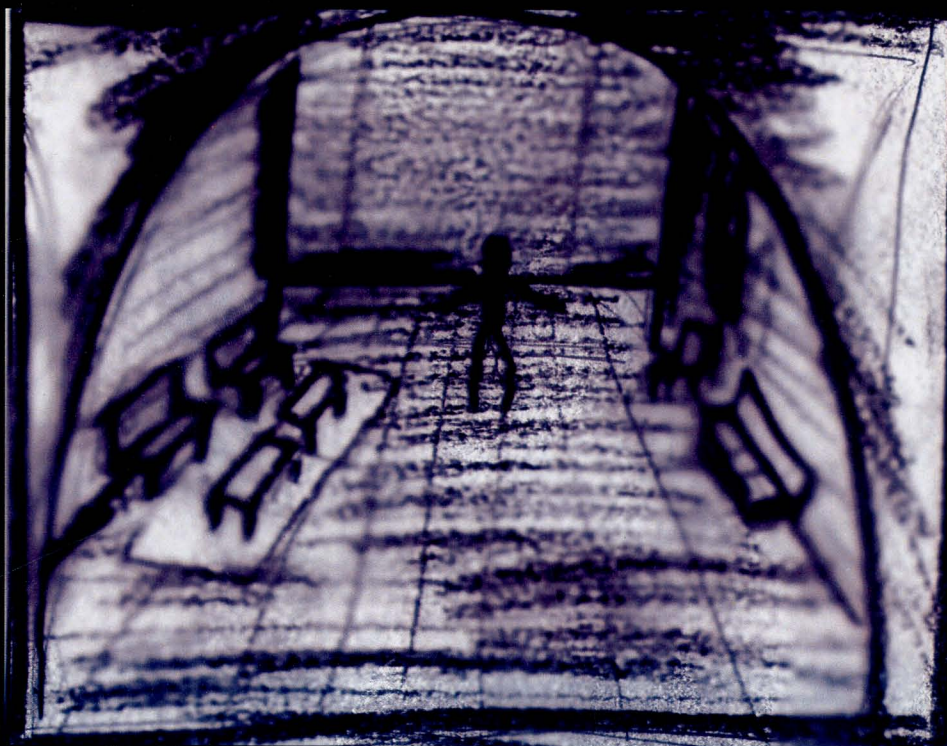




We have finally arrived in Reyfoun and the hotel of our dear friends. It's so refreshing to be back here after this long winter season and before it gets so hot in Beirut.



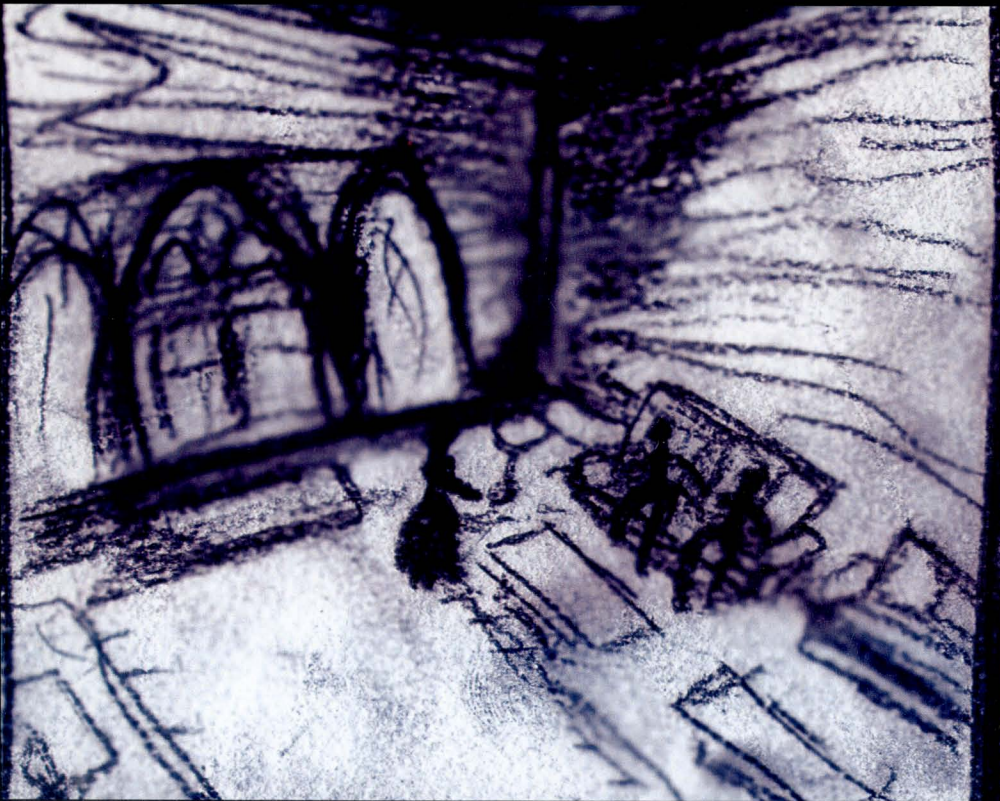
“We were waiting for you!” said the hotelkeeper spreading his arms. Sometimes I ask myself if it’s for the location or for the hospitality that I always come here with my whole family. It’s surely a little bit of both. These people look like they’re happier to have us for our company than for the profit!

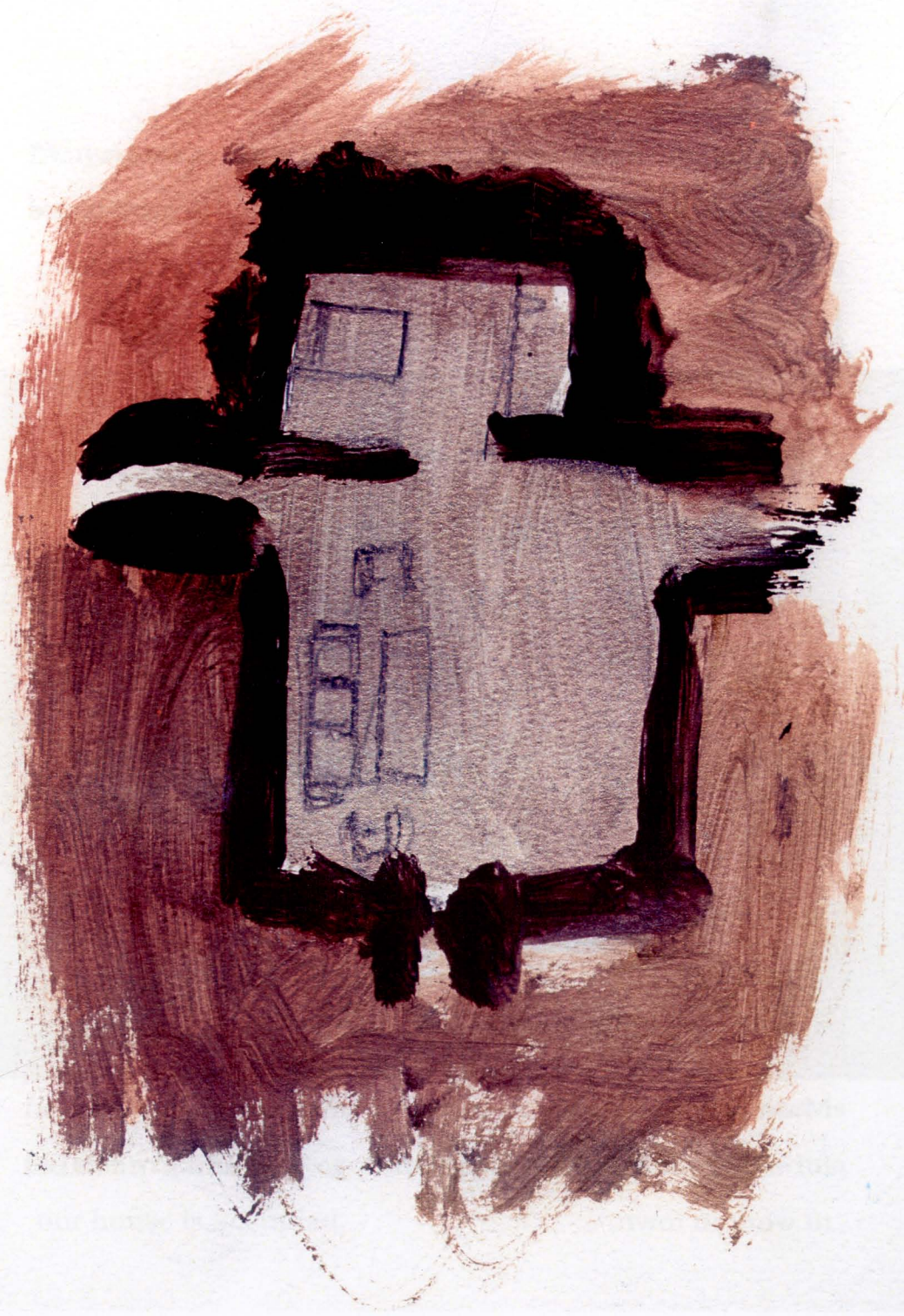


Before we enter the hotel, the owner tells me that he'd reserved us with a little surprise. Inside, the living room was entirely refurbished: the ceramic tiles, new couches and a television!

We sat down and we were served a hot Turkish coffee and we talked about the weather etc...

(NOTE: All discussions are about the mountain's cool weather, the political situation and relative's news.)





“...A hotel!” That was my answer when she asked what I had in mind when she saw me talking with the mason and the carpenter earlier today.



Many questions are turning in my mind. I have not worked for a long time, I have a big family to feed and I'm too old to work in town.

Why not take advantage of having one of the biggest houses of the village and rent some of our rooms to these people coming to Reyfoun? It looks like a good business when I see how much money our neighbors are making. And I think our house is bigger and better placed. People would pay to have such a view... I suppose.



Works started and we have added two rooms to the existing five by dividing the living room. All what's left now is to clean up the underground store so we can live in it when our house is occupied.

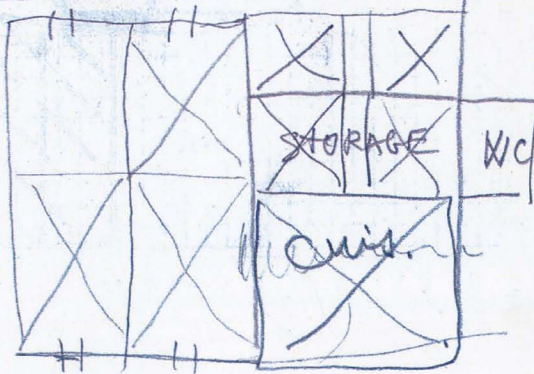
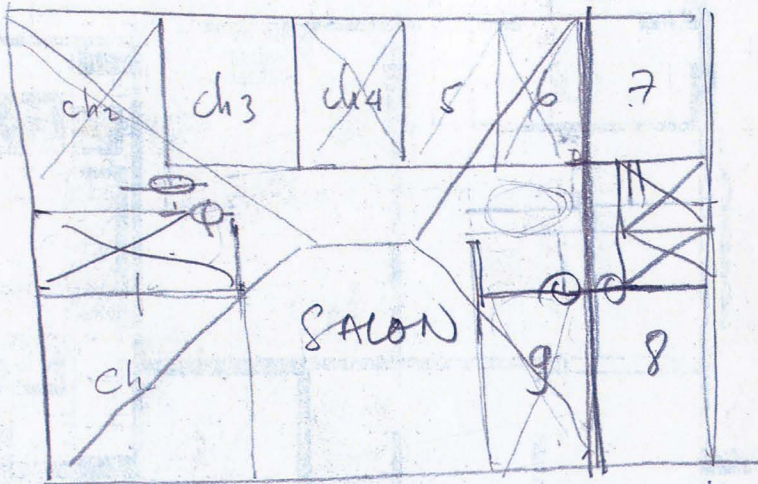
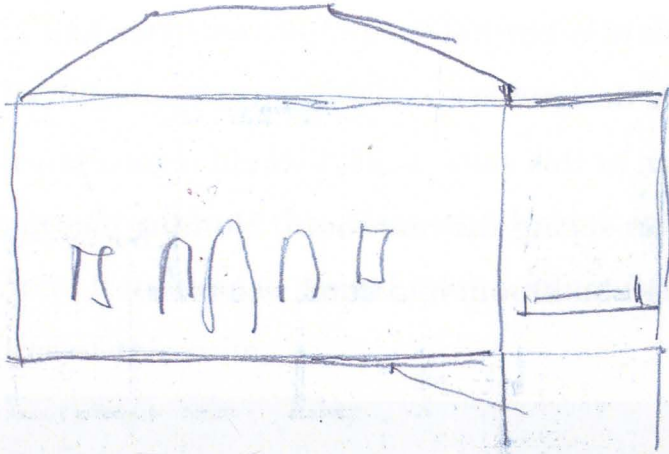
We are back in our hotel after a decade. The family that rented it took good care of it. My father's idea was a gamble at the time but it was worth it.

Our clients love the place and they keep coming back and sometimes we just can't host as many people as we'd like to. So I have plans to add two rooms to the hotel.

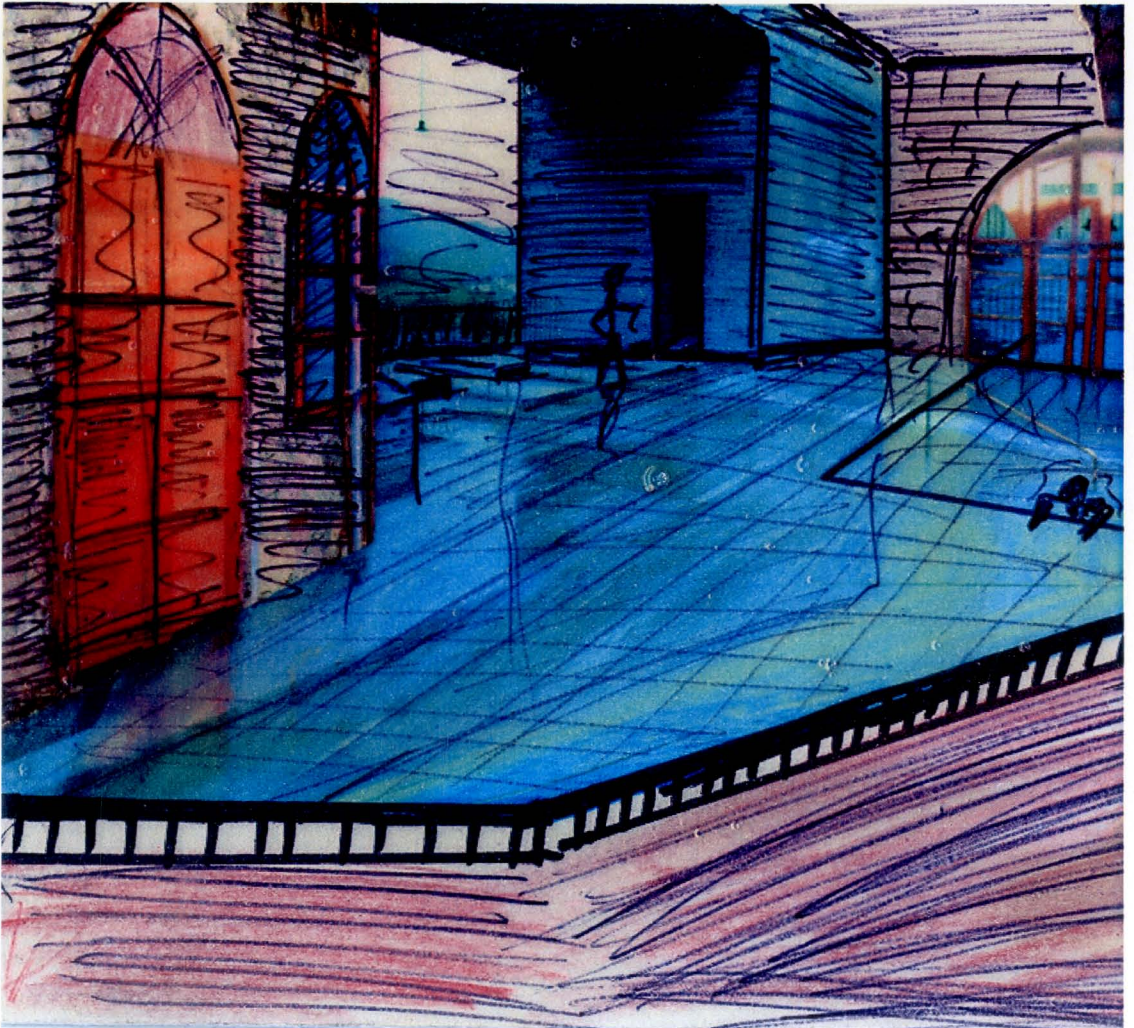
These two rooms should connect to the main corridor, and they should look like a natural extension of the volume to keep the whole volume as homogeneous as possible. The clients should feel themselves at home, and as if they were guests not just customers.

We sit and have lunch together; we talk about how hot it is in the city, and about what a great invention the television is and why it would be impossible to have it in colors... Two hours later, before leaving they thank my wife for this meal.

Maybe I should invest in a television after all. It would look good in the living room...

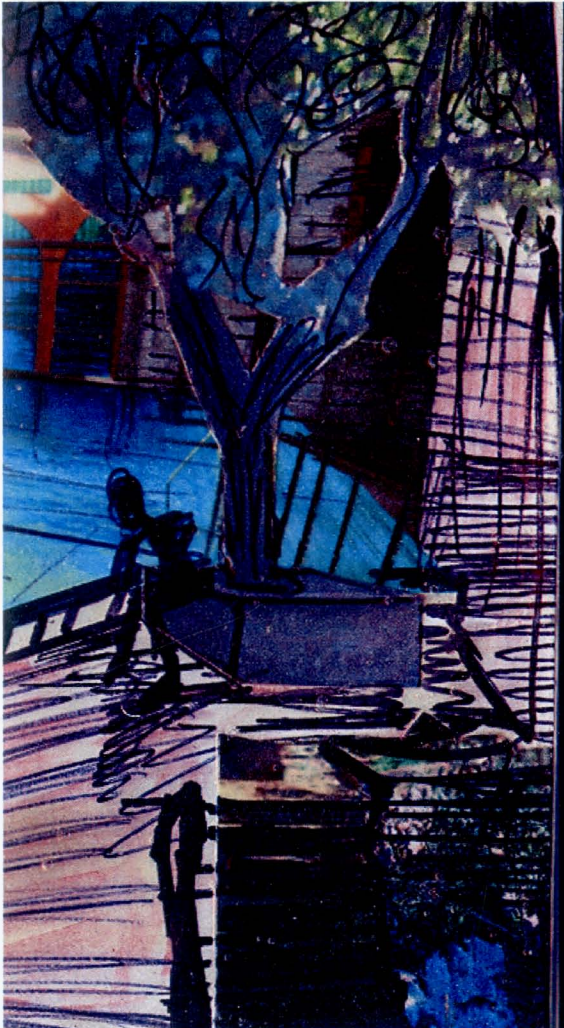


I've been to many hotels, and the entrance hall and the reception's design have rarely disappointed me. As beautiful and clean as this suite looks, I would reserve my final judgment after seeing the bathroom. Nothing can make up for a repellent bathroom in a hotel.



This one looks clean and beautifully designed and yet I try to make minimum contact with the fixtures.

I still feel positive about this place and I think it's nice to have a retreat from time to time. I can't wait to use the special features of this suite.

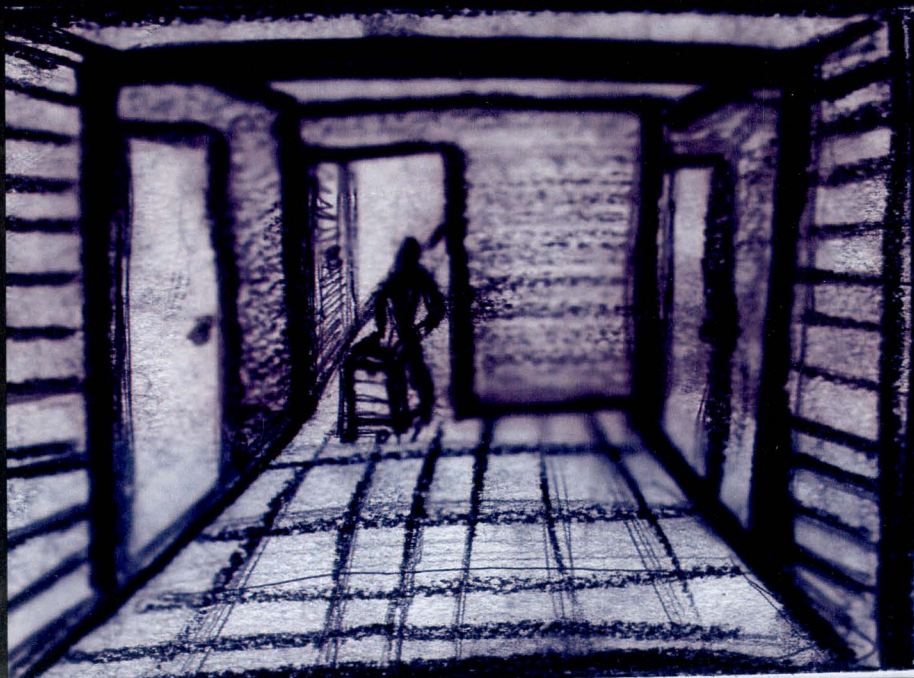


This door is a private one to get to the wellness services so I can make a discreet jump to the fitness center without passing through the lobby and seeing all these people.

I must Admit that It was a good idea to have a pool in the middle of these ruins...

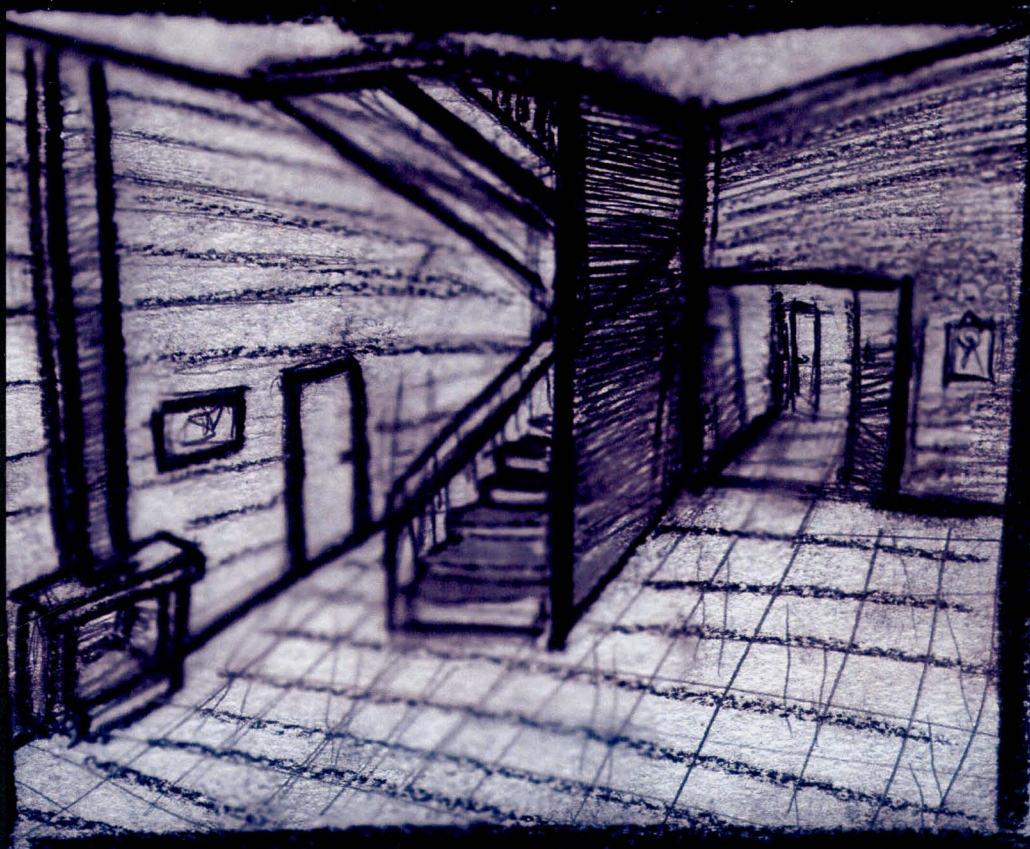
I had enough sleeping in the cave. From now on I'm going to keep my bedroom. Times changed and clients have a new idea of what a proper hotel should be so I've built a new hotel next to the house. The builder's idea was simple; it's to have an entrance from the road below the house, and then a private access to this hotel from our garden, on the top of the new building. Inside, a lounge, the rooms and the restaurant are connected to each other. A kitchen will serve the restaurant.

It's 12 pm, all the clients left their rooms, and Adel is cleaning.

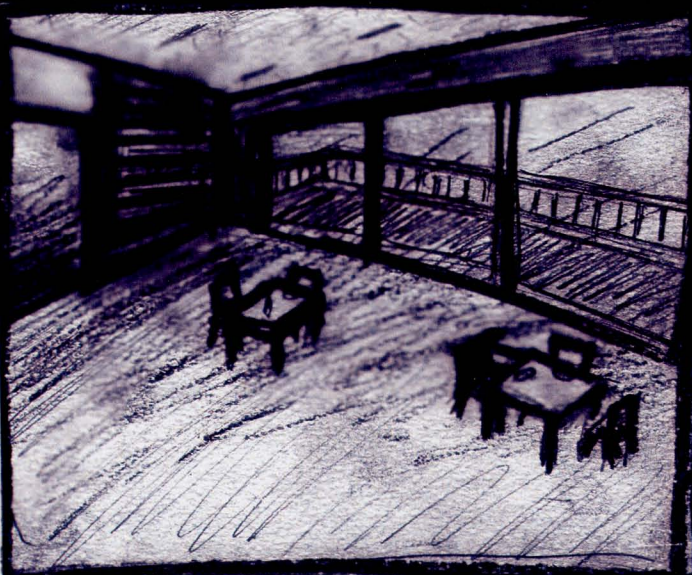


We have 3 rooms in this floor and I plan on adding some others after. Meanwhile, the habitual clients will be lodged in the original hotel.

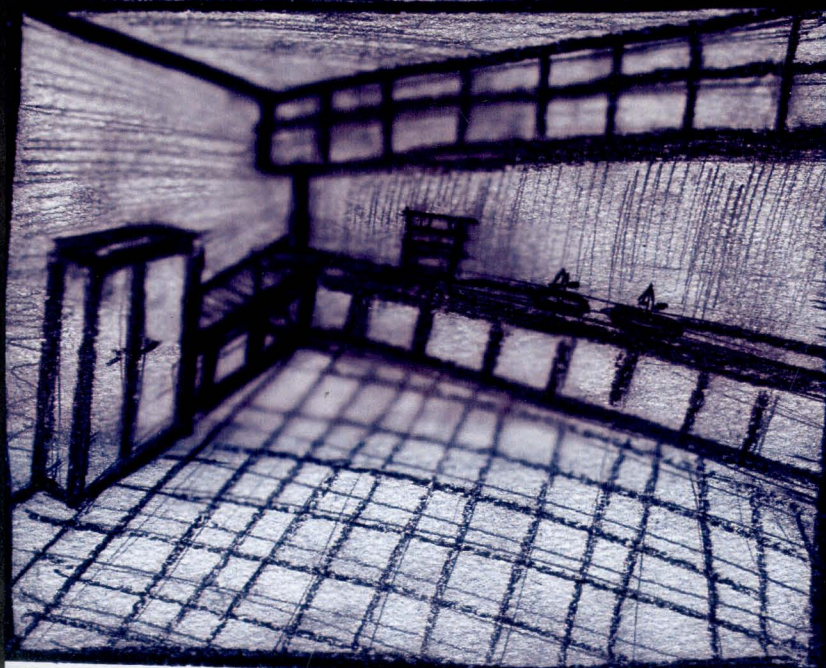
I have asked for a chimney in the lounge and a rough wall texture.

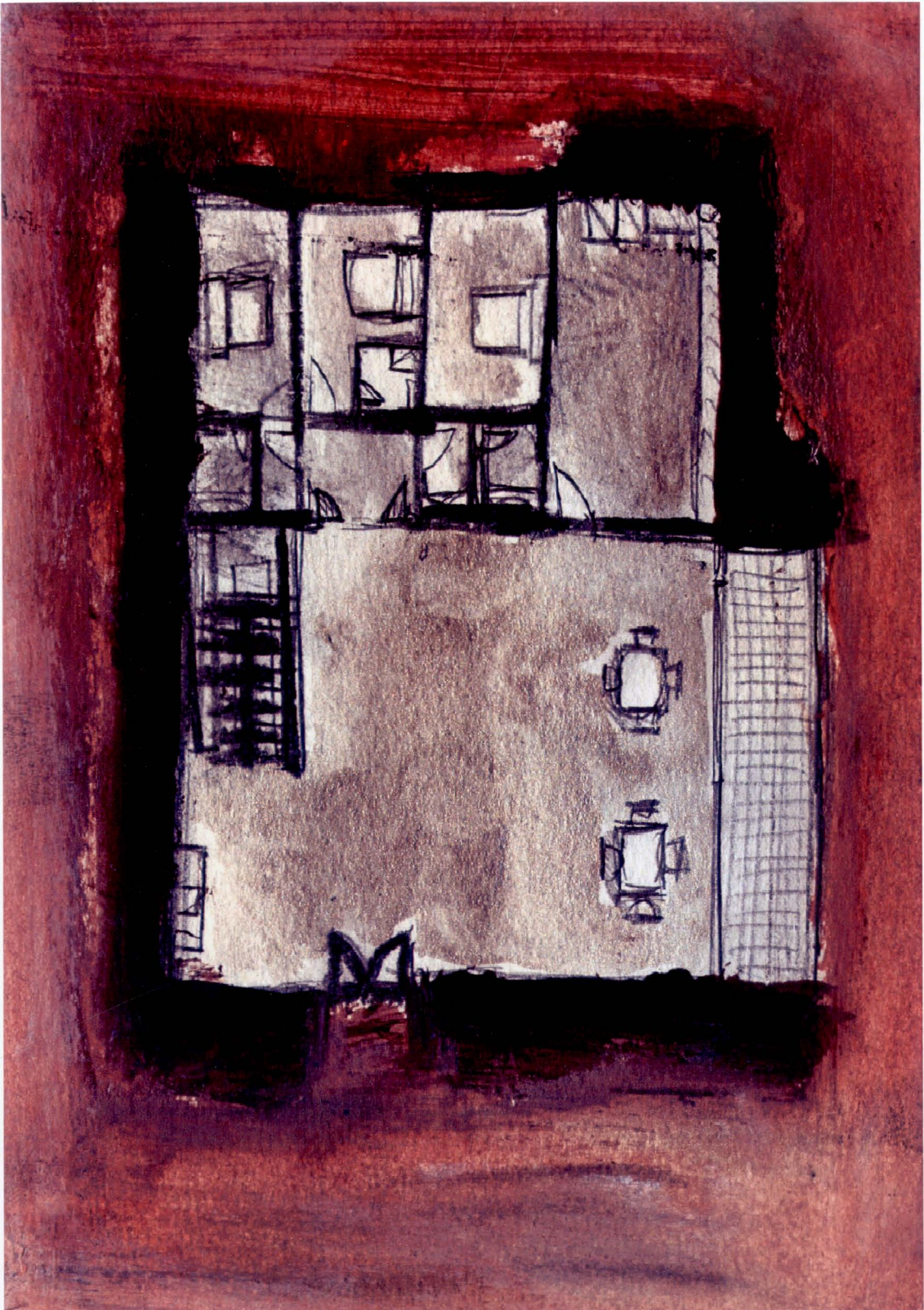


As I take a walk inside the restaurant, I notice that a person is having a quick meal all alone.

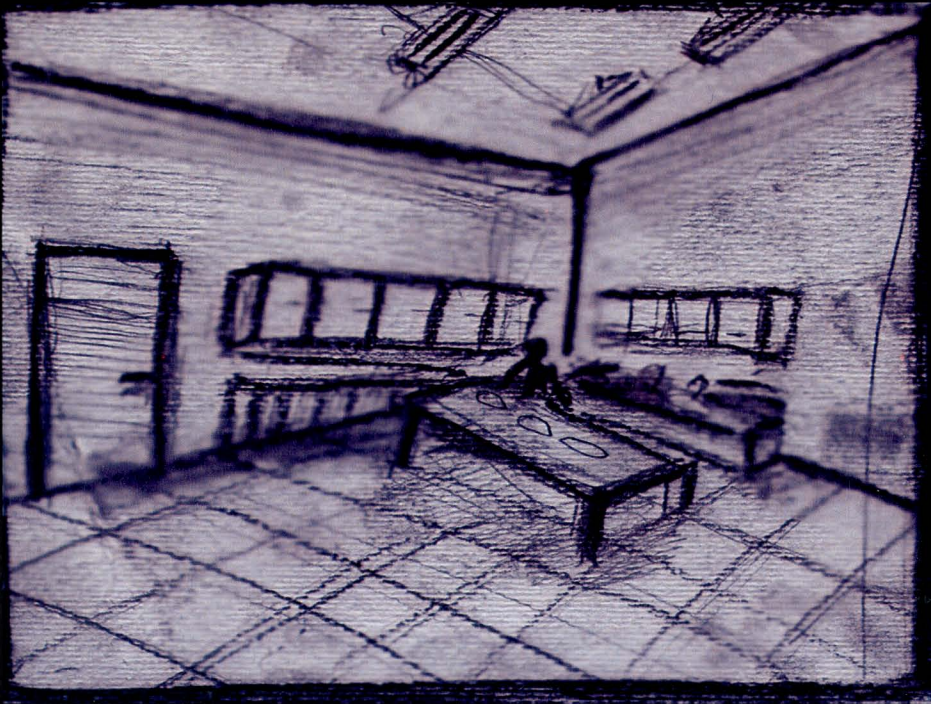


I look at this place and have a megalomaniac dream of making a big hotel out of this. A bigger kitchen, 40 rooms etc...





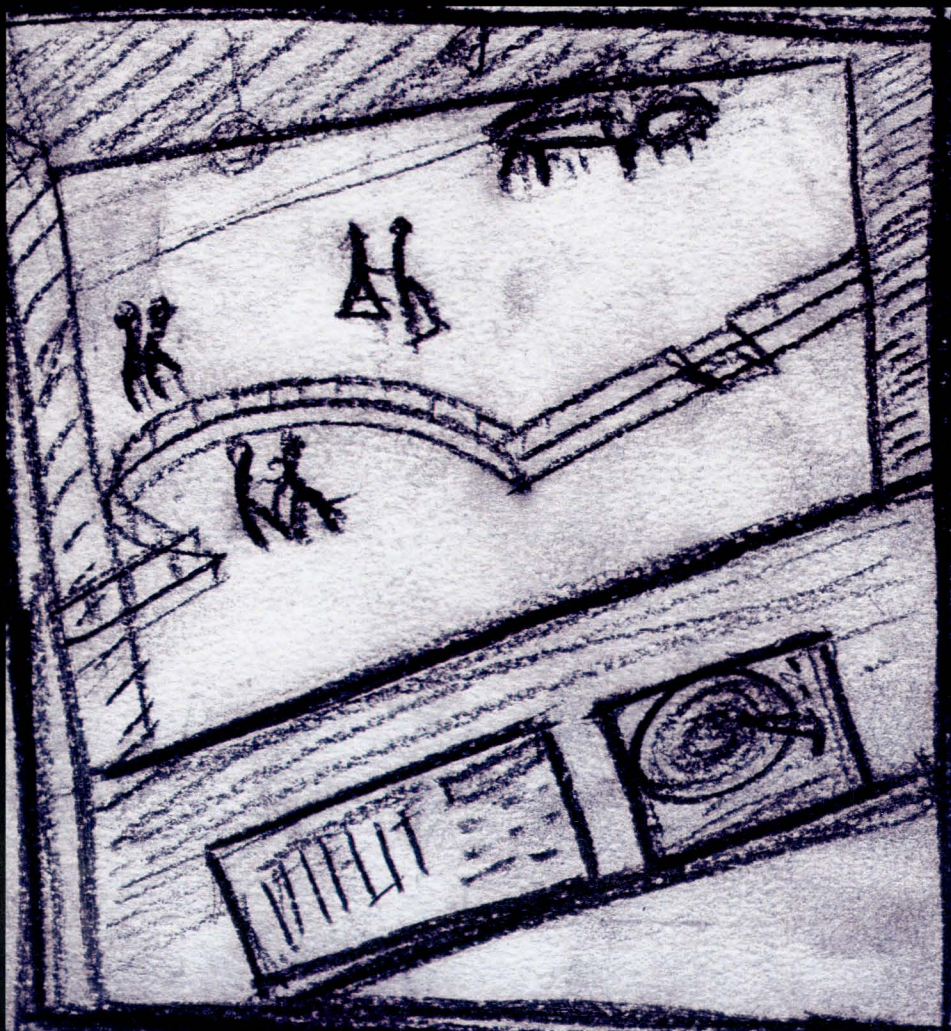
I begin my inspection in the kitchen; everything seems to be all right. Adel is preparing the appetizers; the chef is frying some steaks and preparing the dishes. Fortunately the kitchen is big enough to cater for the big demand. The Styx idea is really a success.



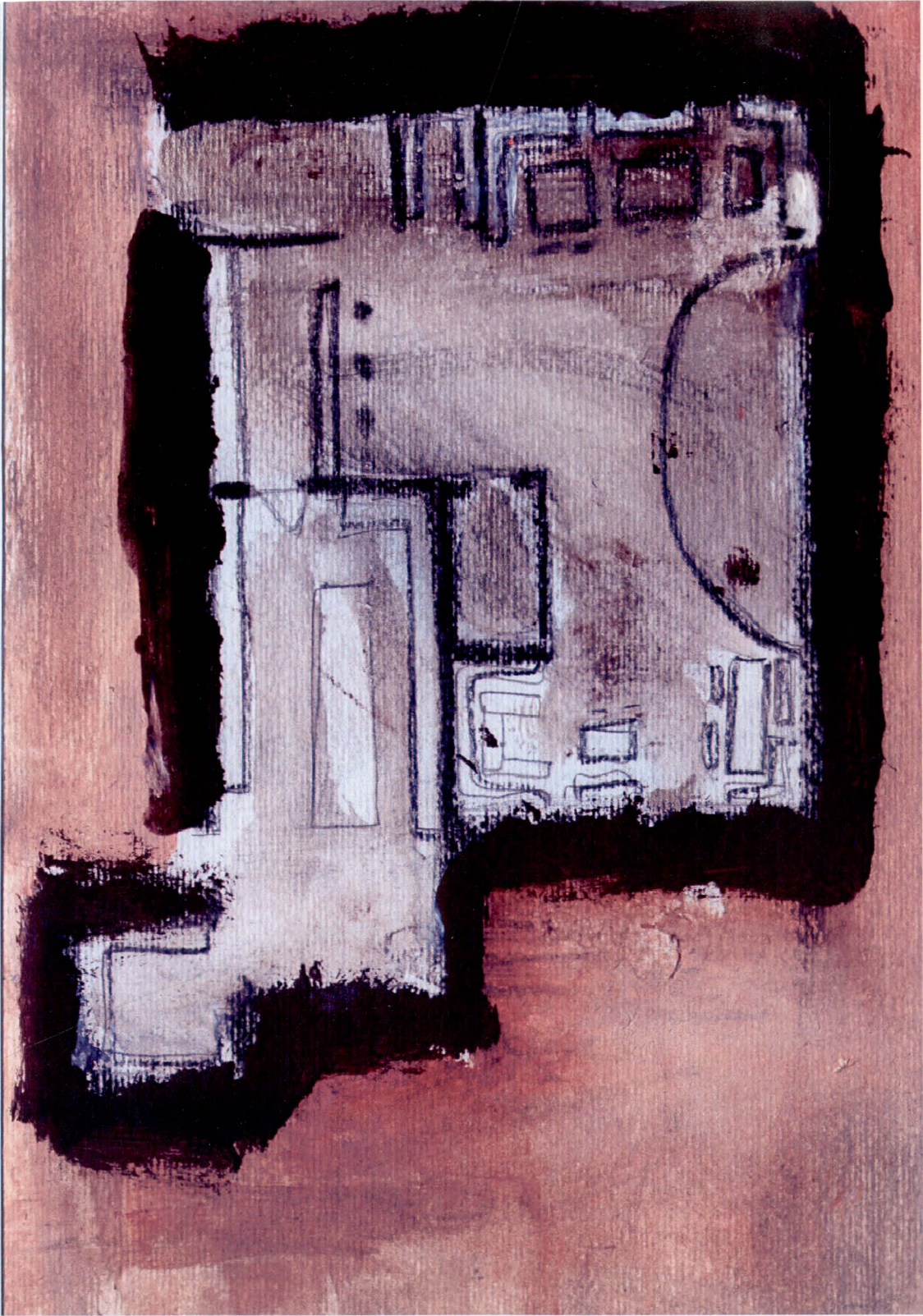
I open the door linking the kitchen to the bar. The loud music, the smoke the lights and the mood of the people is a joy to observe. The place was crowded, and the barman had trouble satisfying all the inebriated clients in front of him.



I enter the DJ's box and I make sure that everything is fine. From this point, I can clearly see the dance-floor, and the tables surrounding it. The DJ is enjoying the new lighting equipment.



I'll redo a quick inspection later; I'll go entertain some of the clients now. On my way, a well-drunk guy comes to ask me if he can sleep in the hotel. I show him the way to the reception.



“A hotel? It looks like a house doesn’t it?” Said the Doctor when I showed him our little domain. We took a walk together and he explained to me how important it was for my husband to take his daily medicine in order to regulate his various health problems.

He was amazed by the view from this little hill. The whole village could be seen from here as well as the nearby ones.

This scene of an evergreen valley separating both Kesrouan and Metn, ornamented with some red tiles here and there seems to have stunned the doctor.

He also liked the house; the triple arches on the main façade and the white stone composing it.

But we had no plans to sell it. However we couldn’t keep the hotel business alive since my husband lost his mobility so we accepted to sell him a part of our land. It is always good to live close to a doctor.

We couldn't have predicted that the war would hit us so directly. Since this armed force took over, bringing its heavy artillery to this hilly point, our movement has been limited. They took over by force, advising us to flee the region.

For the time being, our movement is restricted and we can only move after a strike hoping that the retaliation would not come too fast.

We all live in an isolated room in the hotel, twenty souls in a single room without bathroom.

I watch helplessly as the recent twenty-bedroom building, completed less than twelve years ago, fall to pieces after each strike. A work of seventy years is being destroyed in less than seventy hours.

As much as I'd like to stay- the captain always sinks with the ship- I knew the only place to go is higher, in the mountains, Baskinta, Mayrouba, or Faraya. I just hope we would find an empty hotel room there.

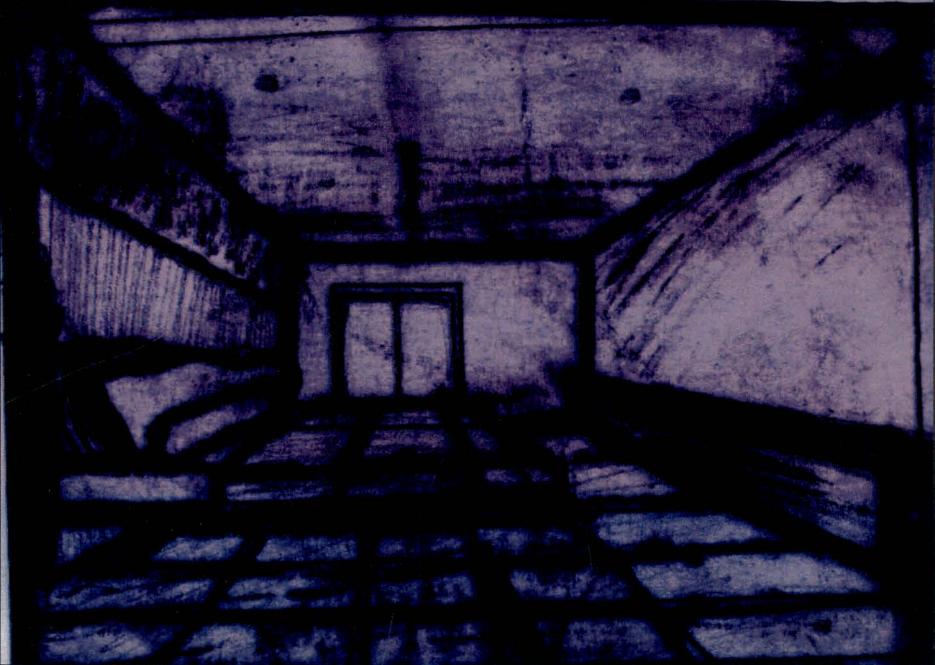
I lost count of the number of drinks I took tonight. I'm high and hyper and I can barely see. The ambiance is great the music too and the lights contribute to this psychedelic mood.

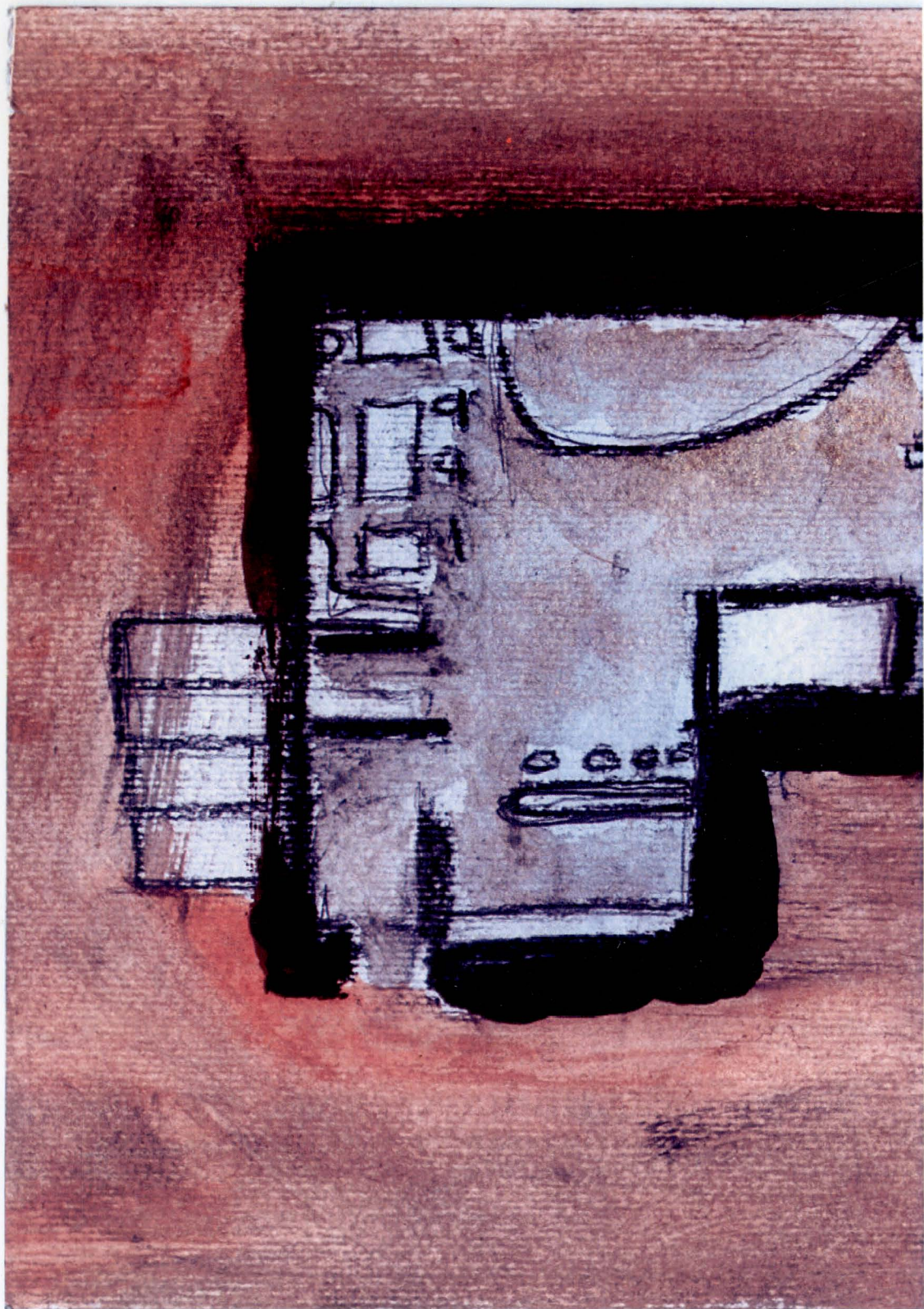
We decided to get up and join the others on the dance floor. I try to make my way between the crowds here and I notice that a girl is already holding my hand and inviting me to dance with her.

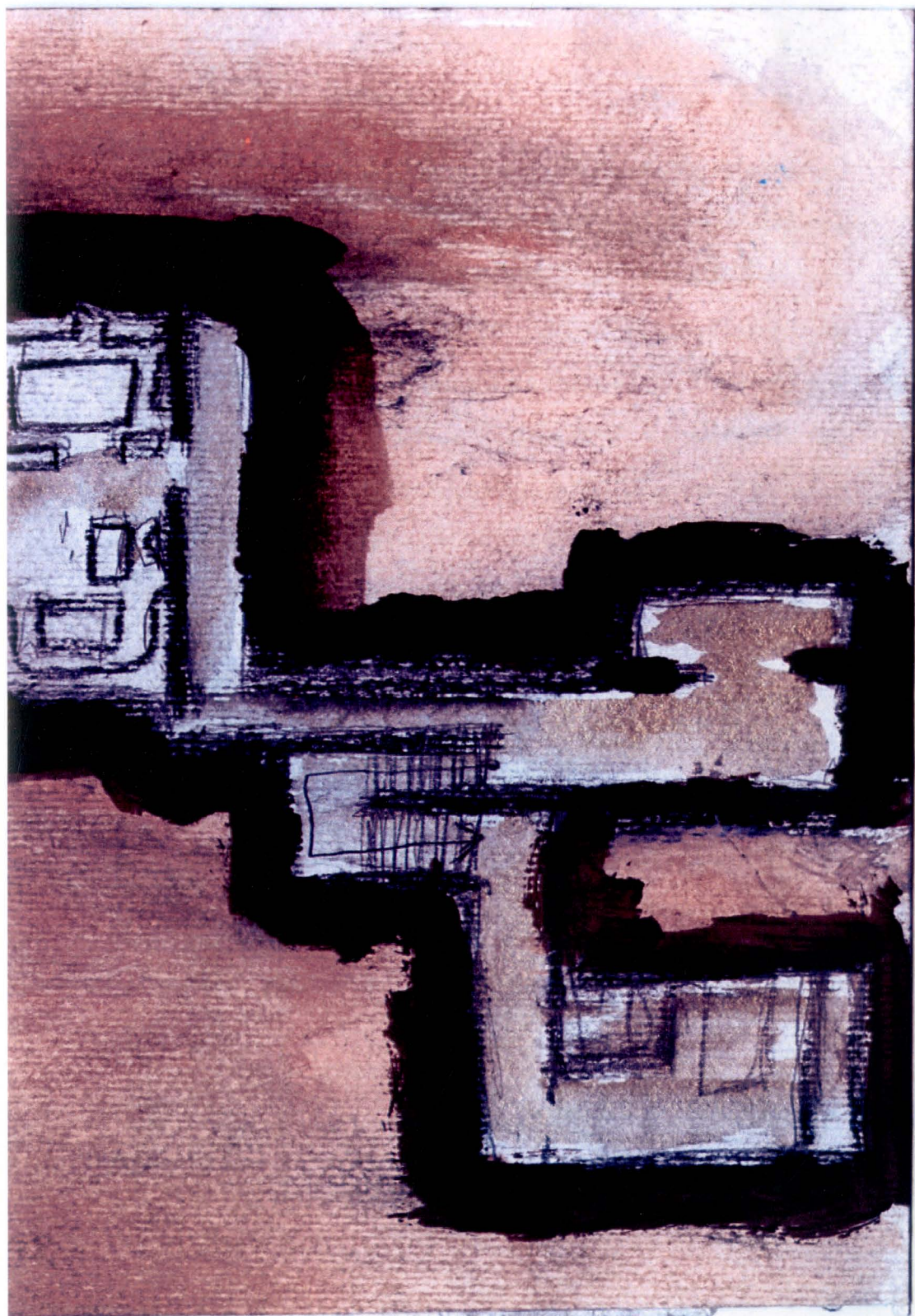


As I indulge into this frenetic dance, lost in the middle of a pleasant turmoil, she comes close to me and proposes we go to a quieter place. So we managed to get out of the dance floor and I ask the manager if they are still some available rooms. He shows me the backdoor that leads to the reception.

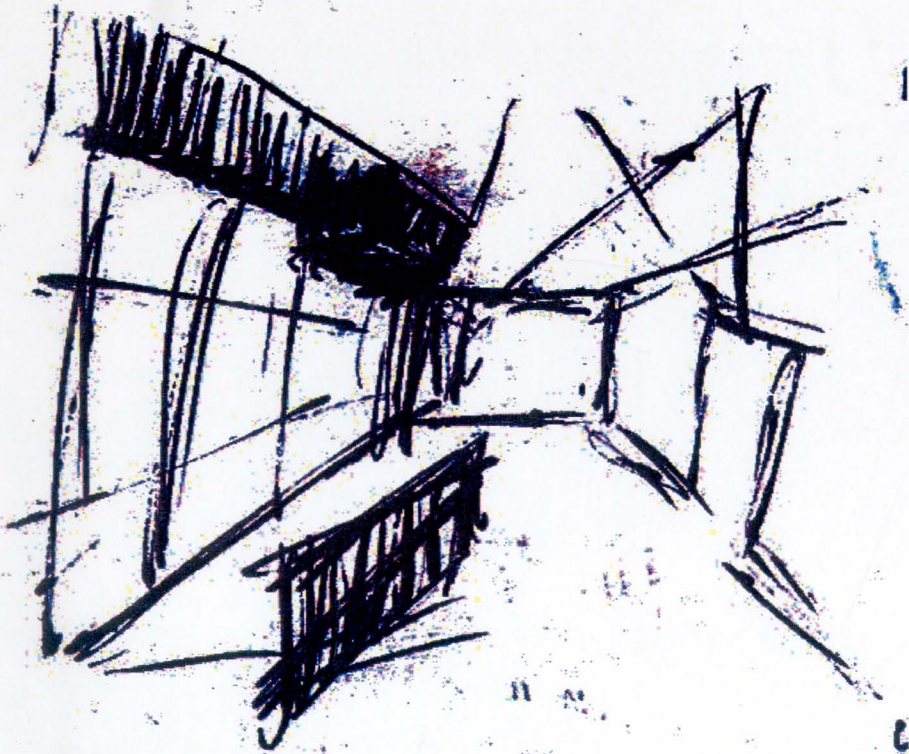
And here we go and try to find this reception. I put my hand on the red bricks of the wall to maintain a stable walk. I can see a desk twenty meters away from here. The receptionist must have seen this scene before... I check in and she







I was asleep... It's already 4 pm! I wonder where my husband is? He's certainly taking a bath at the outdoor pool or having a walk in the garden. I'll try to kill time by visiting the Hotel, something we didn't have time to do after our late check in yesterday. As I walk searching for the lobby, I pay attention to the details of this space. It looks like many parts of different buildings put together.



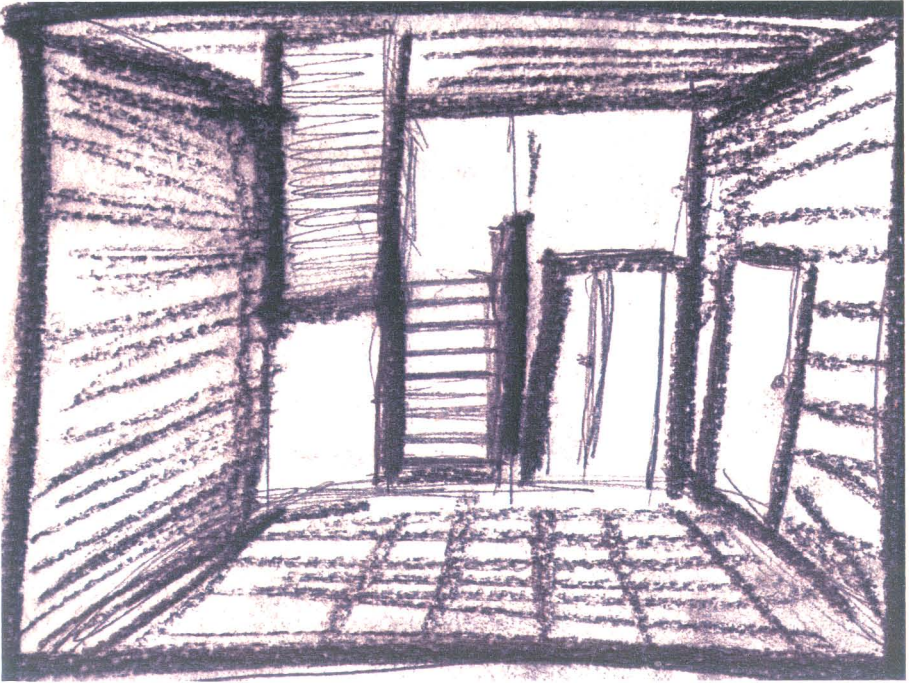
There is a complete lack of harmony yet a stimulating feeling that comes out from it. I wonder what this modern Dr Frankenstein had in mind when he designed it.

This “montage” of different buildings, and objects try to express something and the complexity of the layers makes up for the emptiness and the silence ruling this space.

I am drawn into this corridor; so inviting, yet I have to fight this feeling of being a persona non grata. In fact, the lack of signs or indications drew some mental barriers.

I was about to stop when, suddenly, a small boy runs past me.

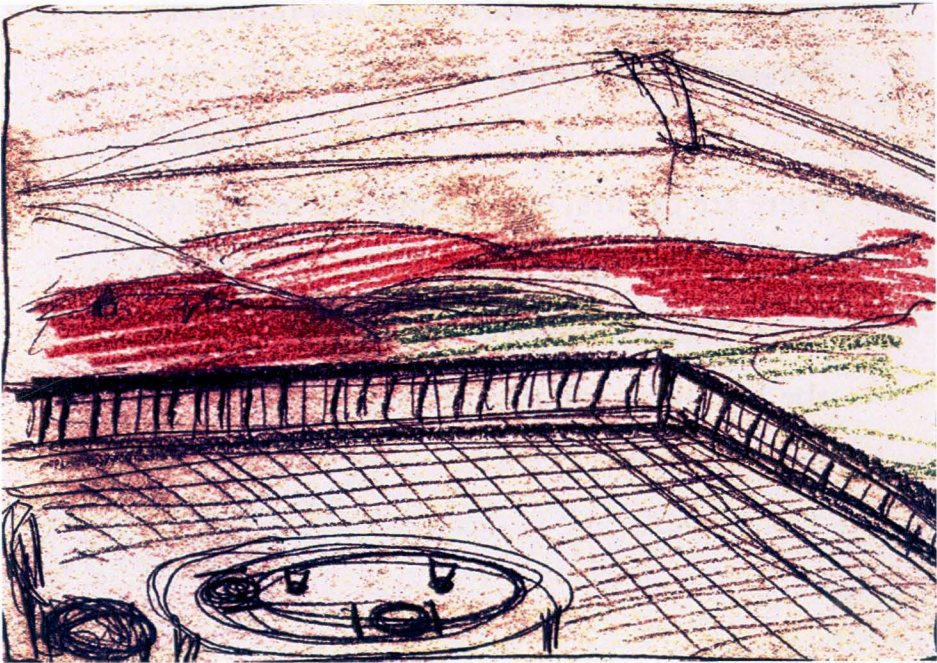
It's taking me so much time and energy to leave my room and go sit in the restaurant downstairs... I'm still grateful that I can walk at nearly 92 years old. My wife must be waiting for me.



Adel's always reminding me of taking my medicine before lunch! What would I do without him? He's always here when I need him. Tonight, we're eating a traditional rice stuffed squashes meal.

The squashes are cultivated in the nearby garden; I really enjoy eating healthy food, and it is one of the reasons that I keep coming back to this hotel, even though I can afford a much more luxurious one.

I'll pass the afternoon in the terrace with my wife and the two old widow sisters. We do agree that it's sometimes boring and there is nothing to do. I would have enjoyed a little promenade with my wife, or a sit in a 70's style bar, and have a drink while listening to a live band. In a place that reminds me of the one where I met my spouse.



I invested all my money in the reconstruction of the hotel after the war. I made some minor changes in the original plans, but I added a floor that is yet to be completed.

The main façade of the hotel is closer to the hill and the other façade continues the L shape, linking the hotel to our house, or what remains of it. The Styx was renovated too. All that was done because I assumed that everything would return to what it was before the war.

Here are the first clients since we reopened. I recognize these faces from the past. I guide them through the restored building, the big living rooms, the large terrace, and the nightclub.

As I show them to their rooms, they suggested decorating this long and dark corridor with some paintings.

It's a good idea, especially that this passage between the rooms is not naturally lit.

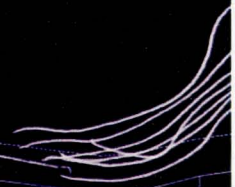
I enter the laundry room, and I take the services staircase linking it with the kitchen.

Where is Adel? He must be collecting some vegetables from the garden for tonight's dinner.

-24
+

-16
+

LAND
SOLD
BY
ANCESTOR



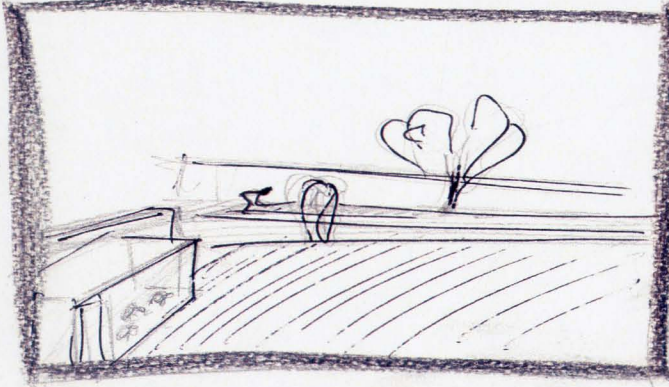
CONCEPT PLAN
- HOTEL -



A normal day on the field

The tomato, the cabbage, the corn, the fig, the broccoli etc...

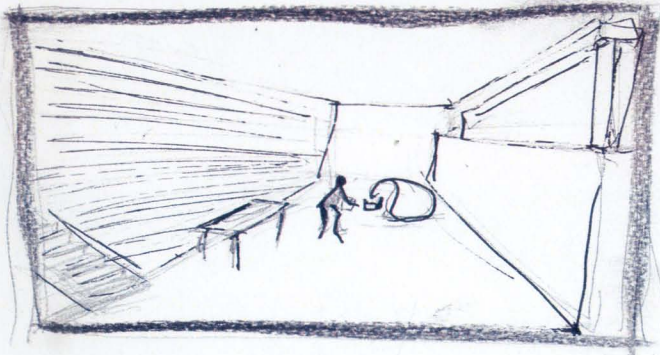
let's water all these plants, and collect some vegetables.



Now I have to feed the chicken. I enter the den, and they all come closer knowing that lunch has come. And when they all jump in to eat, I go and check if they laid eggs today.

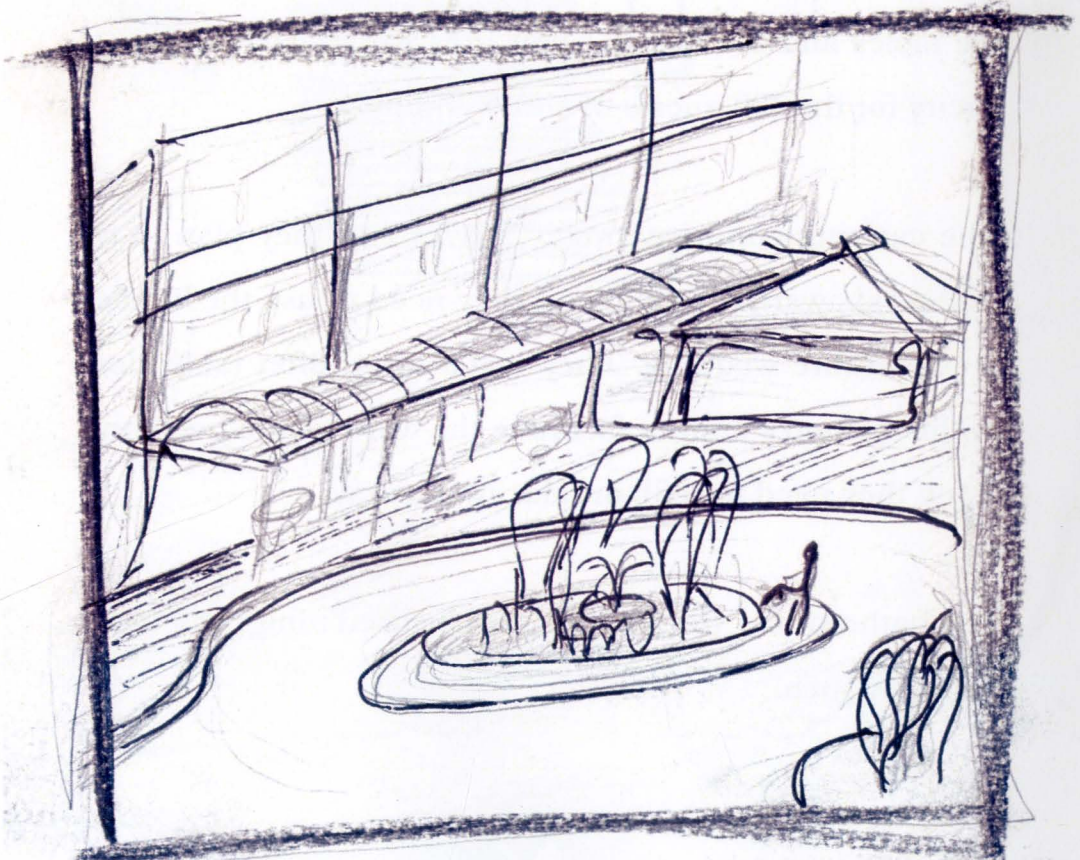
They did; I pick them up and put it in the basket.

Now I still have to prepare the grapes and the anise, and then clean the alembic; we're going to prepare some arak.



I take a walk to check in the workshop if the carpenter's finished to repair the table and the chairs that were broken during last night's wedding, and we carry them back together.

Now all what's left to do is to water the plants of the entrance and go buy some meat at the butcher's.

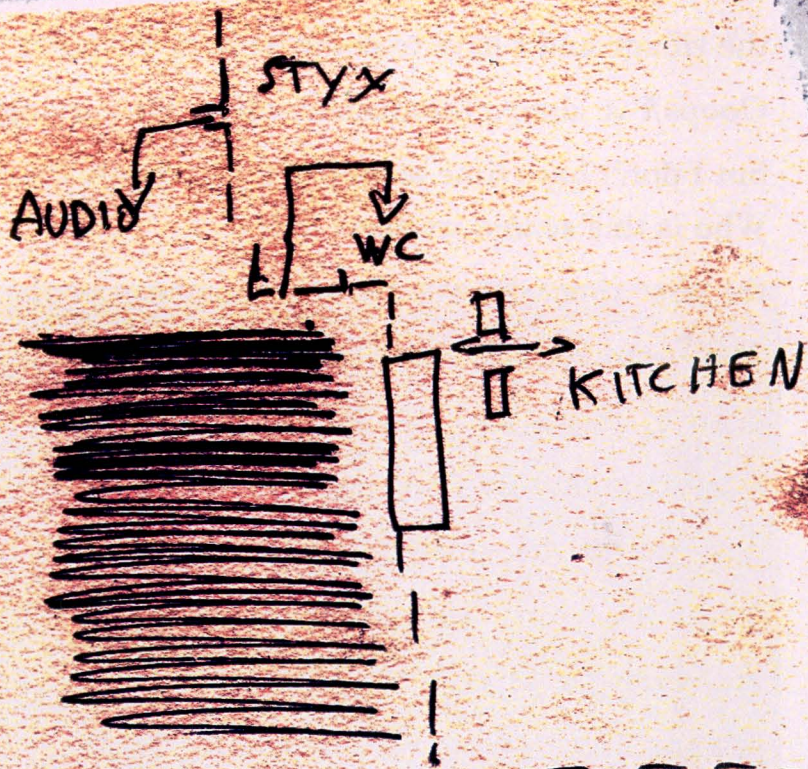


They have been working since this morning, and the white tent is finally installed. The projectors will now be put on the mats, and the sound system will be linked to the Styx's equipment.

We have no time to lose; tonight's wedding must be a success but we still have work to do. It took Adel two days to fully clean the area, and he's helping the workers putting the tables and the chairs. This area would easily have capacity for the 300 guests of this wedding.

The catering company finally arrives and they plan to install a "shawarma" stand and they need to use the kitchen for the entire wedding. They install the Buffet table close to the kitchen's door to facilitate the work of the personnel when they need to refill or take away a tray.

The bathroom of the Styx will also be used tonight so I kept the door open...



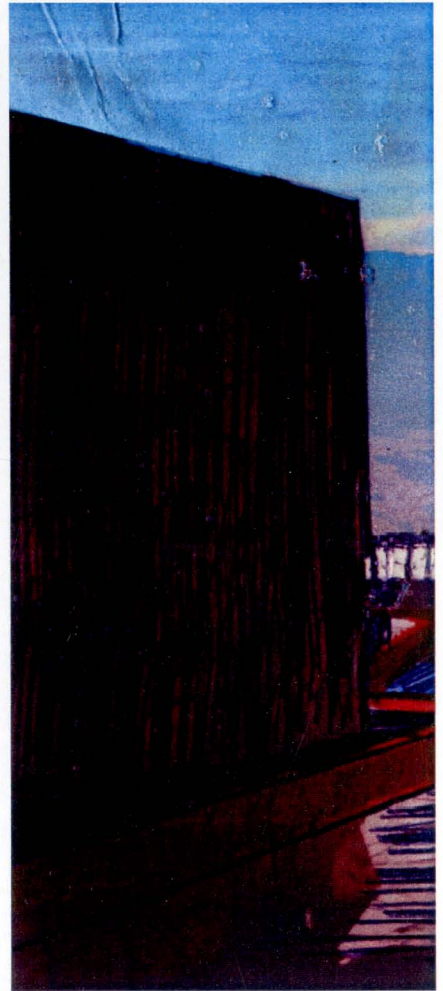
I want to be there as soon as possible, I was having a walk in the village and I have to come back to the hotel.

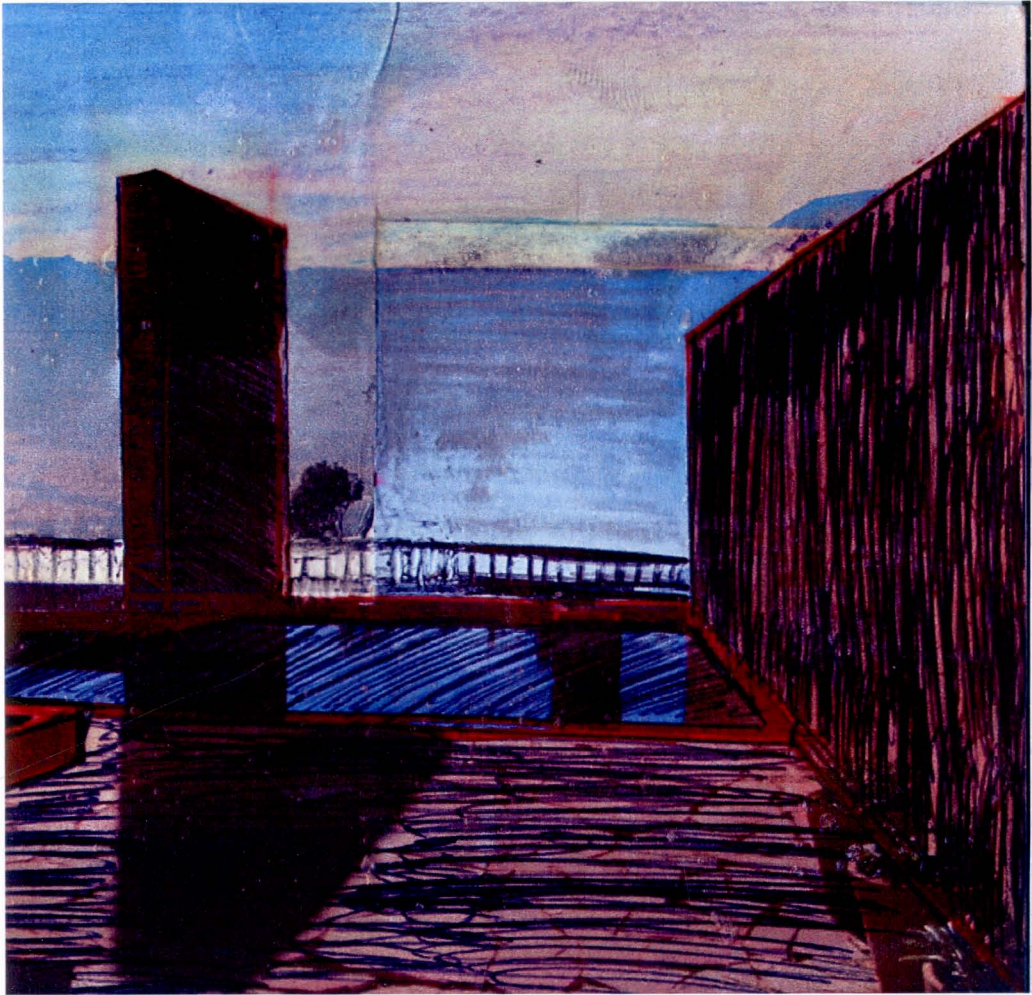
Ooops I've almost hit this new client. He's trying to call me but I don't have time to stop. I'll just ignore him.

Who is this scared woman? is it the first time she comes here?

The architect told me it's the heart of this place, it looks like a museum, but this is where the hotel keeps its souvenirs and people's secrets. The past and the future are written here. This is what keeps everything together.

But I'm not here to revisit the museum, I'm taking a shortcut to the hidden pool on the terrace. Here it is. Now I can stop.





It's 10am, an unusual time for a check in, but during the winter we are not really in a position to be strict on such rules.

I think I recognize this car entering from the service's gate, which is a gate we usually restrict to clients.

When she gets down from the car, wearing a hat and sunglasses, I recognize her. Her secret lover must have entered from the main entrance.

Adel opens the kitchen's door for her, and she takes the services' stairs and joins her beloved plumber.

The carnival lasts for up to three hours sometimes, twice a week, and when it's over, she pays and leaves the hotel as quickly as possible.

I get all the information after that through Adel. Her lover seems to enjoy having a conversation with Adel before he leaves, taking pride from the fact that he's secretly dating a woman from a higher social class.

Chapter 2

Rocks vs Plants

The coffee addict, the pipe or heroin
brings energy, just like the cigarette, which some people
are addicted. There is still the tea, the whiskey. Ah, the tobacco.
A simple leaf, and a man or woman organism in its
effect. It is a source of enjoyment in great, deep, and
wide. And of course there are the plants used as drugs,
the leaf of coca extract, the leaf of marijuana, the poppy.
The plant is a source of energy, and the human organism is the
human source of energy. There is no shortage of civilizations
and they are divided by lines. Never underestimate a
civilization of evolution, even if it seems to you at the first
sight to be a simple thing. I found Wells, Bernard Werber.

Chapter 2

Section 1.1

“The coffee awakens. The sugar of cane or beetroot brings energy, just like the chocolate to which some people are addicted. There is still the tea, the tobacco. Ah, the tobacco! A simple leaf, and it acts on human organism in its entirety. It intervenes in the regulation of grease, sleep, and mood... And of course there are the plants used as drugs, the leaf of coca extract, the leaf of marihuana, the poppy, the hemp... amusing, a vegetable that manipulates the human beings, isn't it? There is no shortage of civilizations that were distorted by plants! Never underestimate a dimension of evolution, even if it seems to you at the first sight inferior.” Edmond Wells, Bernard Werber.

In 1722, a Dutch fleet landed in a small island in the Pacific Ocean. They named it Easter Island because they discovered it on Easter day.

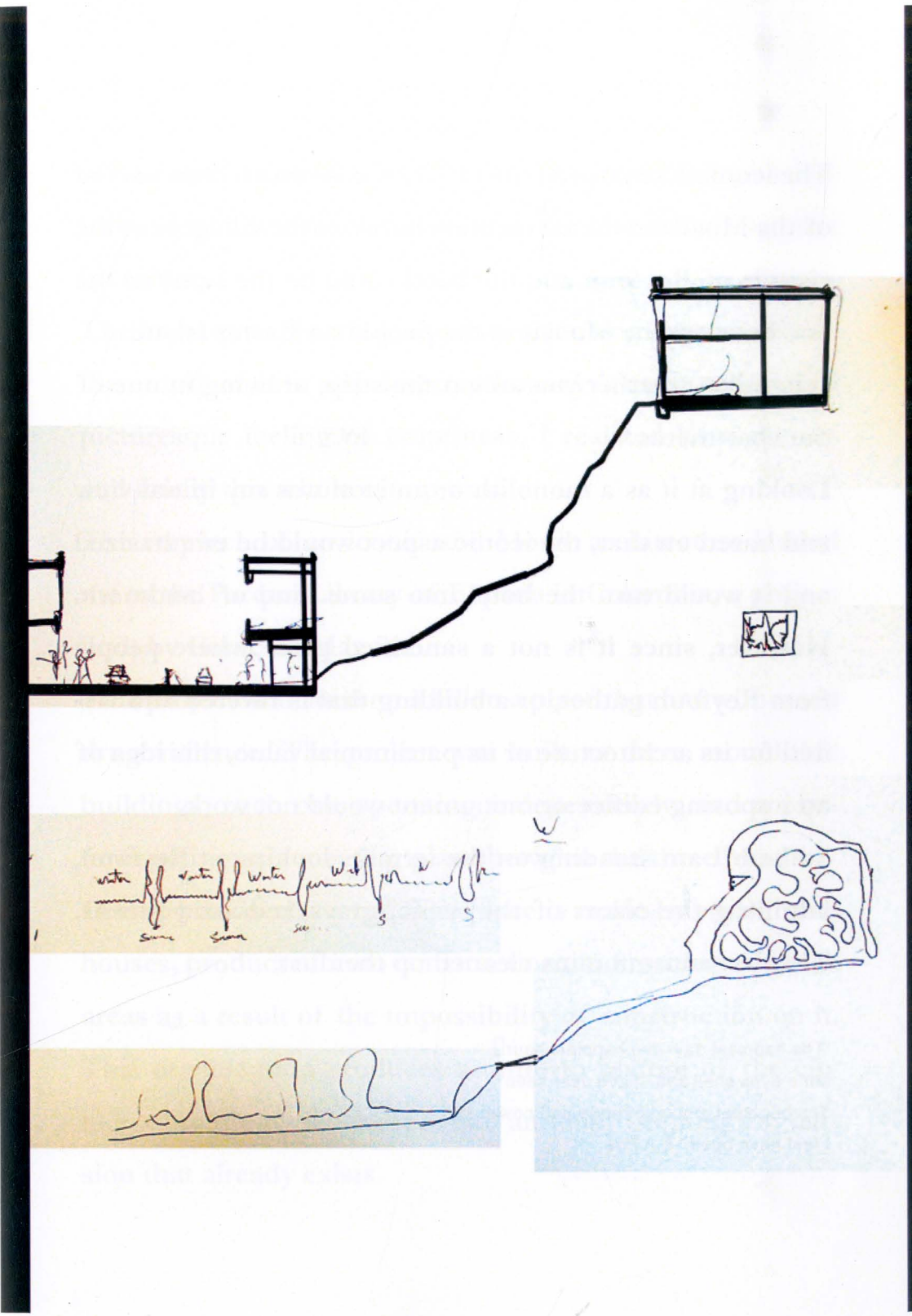
They were stunned by the presence of the many monolithic statues people used to bow to at dawn.

Today these statues are still an unresolved mystery of archeology.

It is interesting to note that these statues, whether they were representing ancestors, kings or gods, stood for many years as witnesses of all the events that happened during centuries.

The Moai standing on their Ahu, a stone platform, turning their backs to the ocean, looked just like the hotel, on its hill, overlooking Reyfoun.

In this representation, the Moai witnesses the 90/275 effect. Yet, Inside of it, some events are happening too. As I carried some investigation about the origin of this house turned hotel, or this Moai, it seemed to me that if the function "hotel" begun 90 years ago, the mass "Moai" was much older.



The iconic-like position of the hotel is so much reminiscent of the Moai and the connection between the villagers or the visitors of Reyfoun and the hotel could be the same as the one between the Moai and the people on Easter Island.

It is there, weather you are on the strip, or living in one of the apartments.

Looking at it as a monolith or an icon was my initial view and based on that, the iconic aspect would be emphasized and it would turn the hotel into some kind of landmark. However, since it is not a sanctified place where people from Reyfoun gather, or a building that is revered and visited for its architecture or its patrimonial value, this idea of an imposing edifice or monument would not work.

So here I am standing on the terrace, looking at Reyfoun, admiring the colors of the scene, grays, reds and greens.

The first autumn rains cleaned up the dust.

"The happiest day--the happiest hour
Mine eyes shall see--have ever seen
The brightest glance of pride and power
I feel have been:" E.A.Poe

...And there is really a feeling of power from that point of view, no wonder why they used it as a military shooting base for tanks...

The hotel saw this whole autumn cleansing happen. While the empty streets and deserted houses contributed to this picturesque feeling of emptiness, I realized how gloomy and lonely this whole set up was.

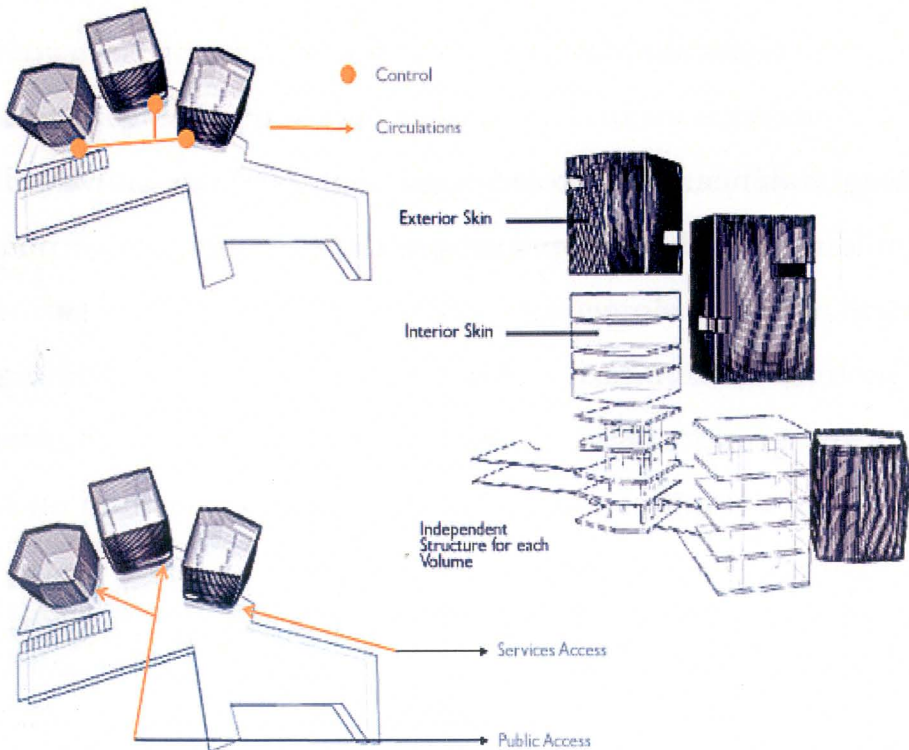
The research of an iconic and Moaic architecture leaded me to the Parque Library of Espana in Colombia, a project built by Giancalo Mazanti.

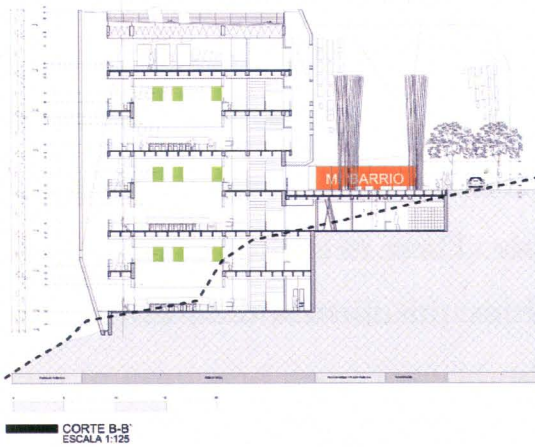
This project is located on a hill in a place that has witnessed drug violence. The project was built as three monolithic buildings, each one operating independently, and a platform acting as a meeting place between the three Moais.

Quoting the architect, :” The place is made by small brick houses, product of auto construction; and residue of green areas as a result of the impossibility of construction on it. This organization produces a uniform texture of the city like a building - landscape, like an icon, keeping the tension that already exists.

Geography as an element of hierarchy; and architecture as the epitome of texture.

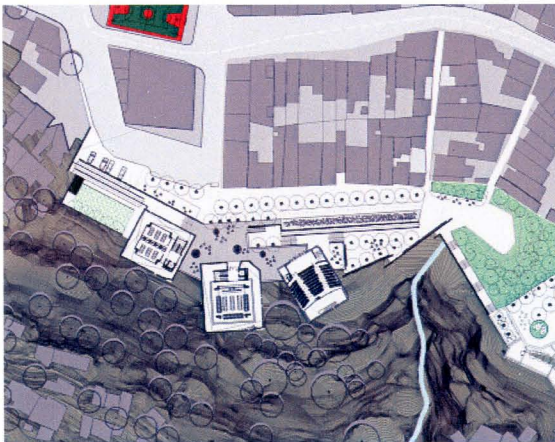
The Project is noticeable from a big part of the city, allowing it to redefine itself as the symbol of a new Medellín, as a way of making people feel identified and receiving the building as their own. In the present state, the building is one of the touristic points in the city and one of the most visited.”





This project made me forget about the icon, and the symbol on the hill.

The hotel seeks a much deeper connection with its landscape, with the inhabitants, and with the human being.



The Moai became a glorification of the decay of a village and a hotel. This edifice, with its galleries and rooms looks like its only reason to exist is to attract people and keep them inside as much as possible. There needs to be a strong connection between two parties: the client and the hotel, which would be beneficial for both.

One thing is for sure, three Moais in Reyfoun wont work!



While reading an essay on ants, I came across a wonderful example of association between fauna and flora.

The Bullhorn acacia, or acacia cornigera, is a tree known for its symbiotic relationship with ants. In order for this plant to grow and resist insect attacks, it needs ants to live in its hollow thorns. In return, the tree provides the social insects with nutriments.

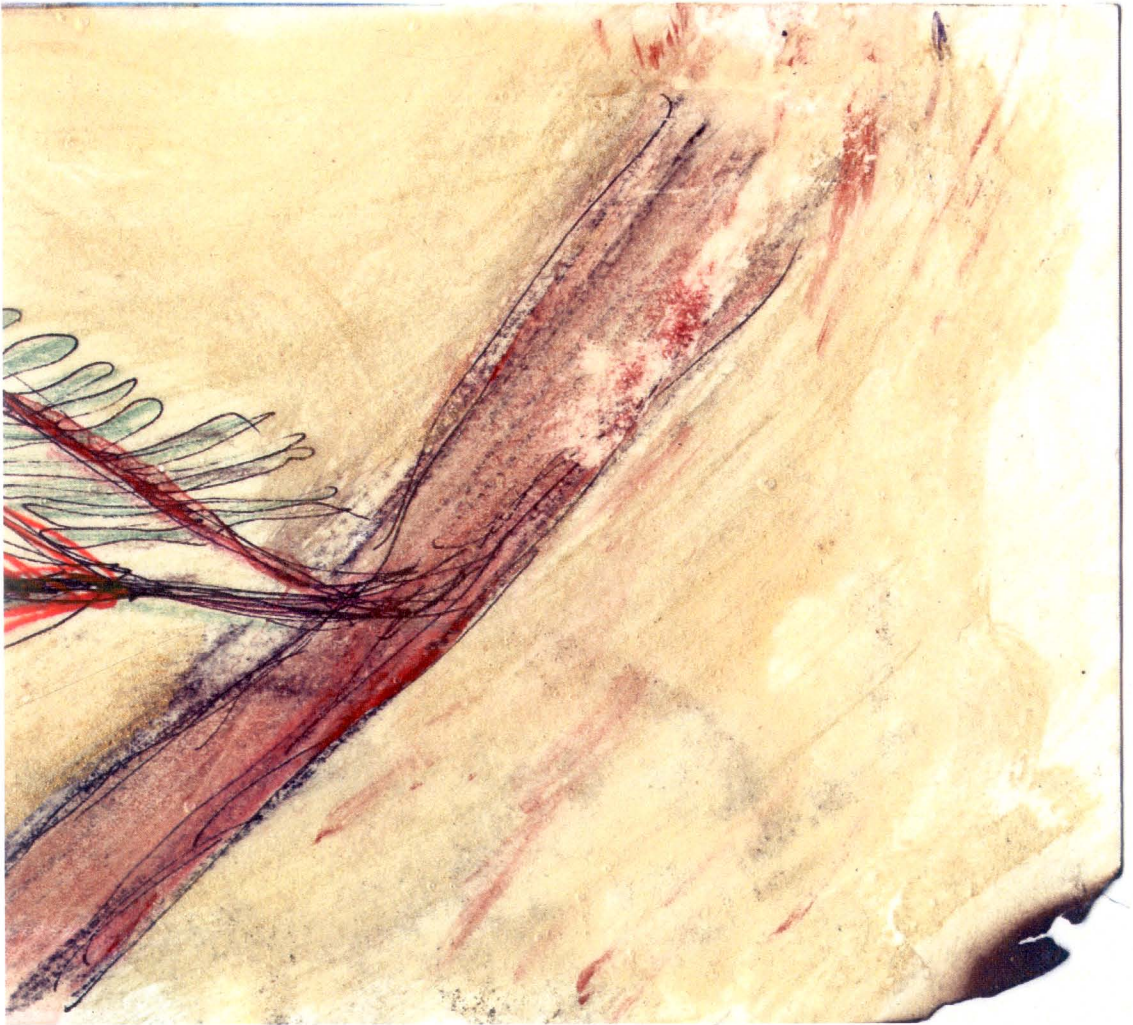
This concept could be applied to the hotel, whereas the clients will play the role of the ants, keeping the hotel alive, while the hotel, playing the role of the plants, would provide clients with the comfort they need. The potential clientele of a hotel is so varied that every group of clients would be looking for a special service or care.

So what is needed is an attractive setup and program that would really attract people and keep them as long as possible and make them come back.

Also, while drawing conclusions from the *acacia cornigera*'s example, the importance of having an interaction with the villagers should not be underestimated, because if this hotel will only attract tourists it will be at odds with the rest of the village.



And this is contrary to the concept of symbiosis; the ideal would be a symbiosis between the clients and the hotel, a symbiosis between the hotel and the land it sits in, and a symbiosis between this entity and the village.



Chapter 3

Adapt

“A man is born gentle and weak.

At his death he is hard and stiff.

Green plants are tender and filled with sap.

At their death they are withered and dry.

Therefore the stiff and unbending is the disciple of
Death.

The gentle and yielding is the disciple of life.

Thus an army without flexibility never wins a battle.

A tree that is unbending is easily broken.”

Lau-Tzu , Tao Te ching

While remembering the story of the hotel, it was clear that Reyfoun changed many times and the hotel had to adapt to the different circumstances. From a house to a hotel, from a nightclub with rooms to a refuge etc... The idea stayed the same, attracting people, hosting them or providing them with what they needed.

Therefore, it is important to remember that time changes and a design should account for adaptability, flexibility and easy switching between activities.

When trying to reconstruct this place I called hotel in the previous pages, I think that I could not end up with a strong unit, a building with a fixed function that I will be able to label a 5 star hotel, or a wellness center or a spa. What is certain is that I will end up with fragments of the different services these institutions offer. I will still have the rooms of the old hotel, the heated outdoor pool of the dream/vision, the garden, the fitness room, the remains of the old house as meditation spaces etc...

The program that I could derive from the following concept is one that is centered on the human being.

More than that, it is a custom made program for every possible type of client. When I think about the client, I see the human being. And centering a program on the human being's wants and needs would require this place to be a maze full of paths.

Before doing this, I have decided to divide the users of the hotel by thinking about this space as a village. A village where people are free to choose the activity they want to undertake, and the activities would be centered on the following numbers:

2 for symbiosis, the relationship between the client and the hotel. The client will pay, the hotel will take care of him.

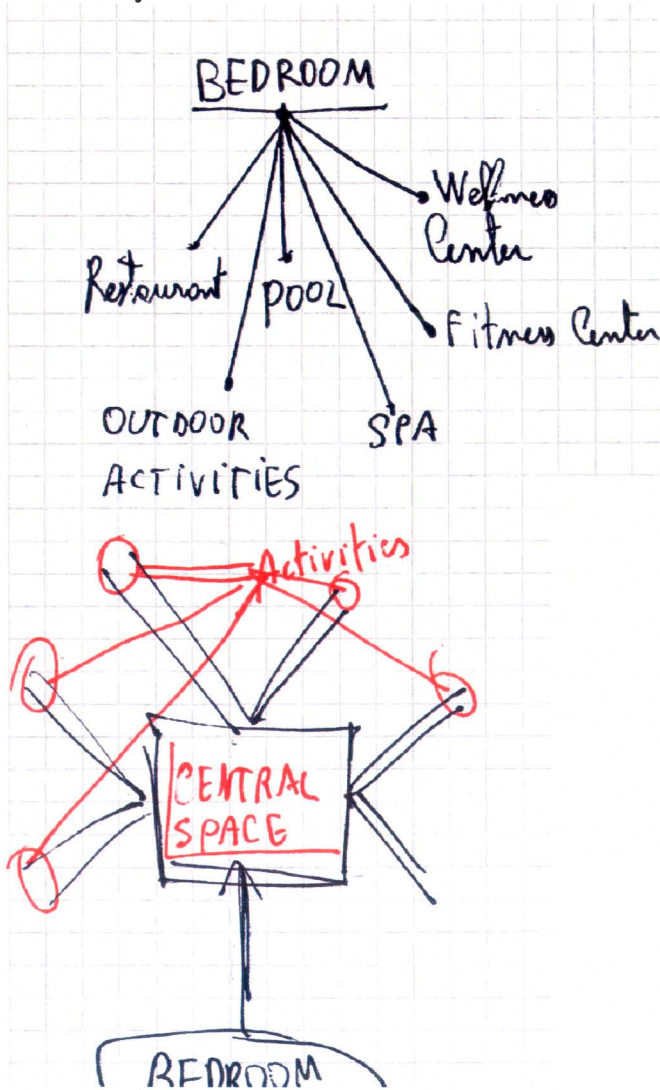
4 or four seasons and the adaptability that will also extend to the other seasons.

5 for the five senses, and especially appeasing the client's senses.

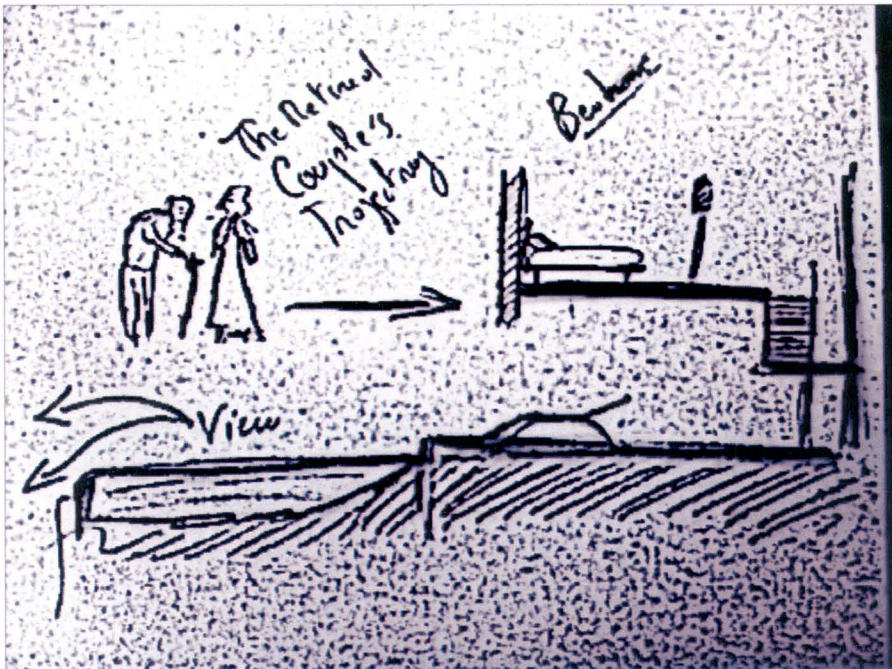
7 for the 7 sins, as the hotel will lead the client into indulgence.

The clientele will be segmented:

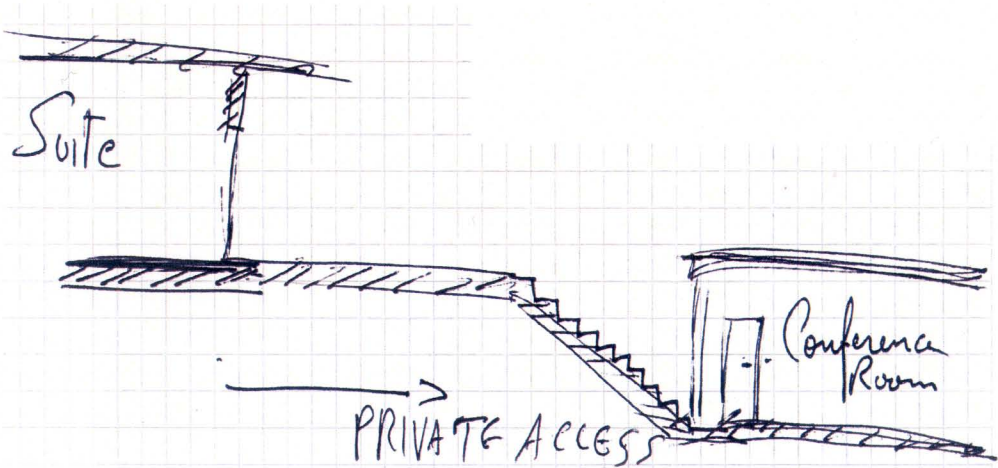
The normal family that wants to have a vacation. This is the kind of “tourists” that tend to spend one or two weeks in the hotel, and that will want to try all the activities the hotel can offer randomly.



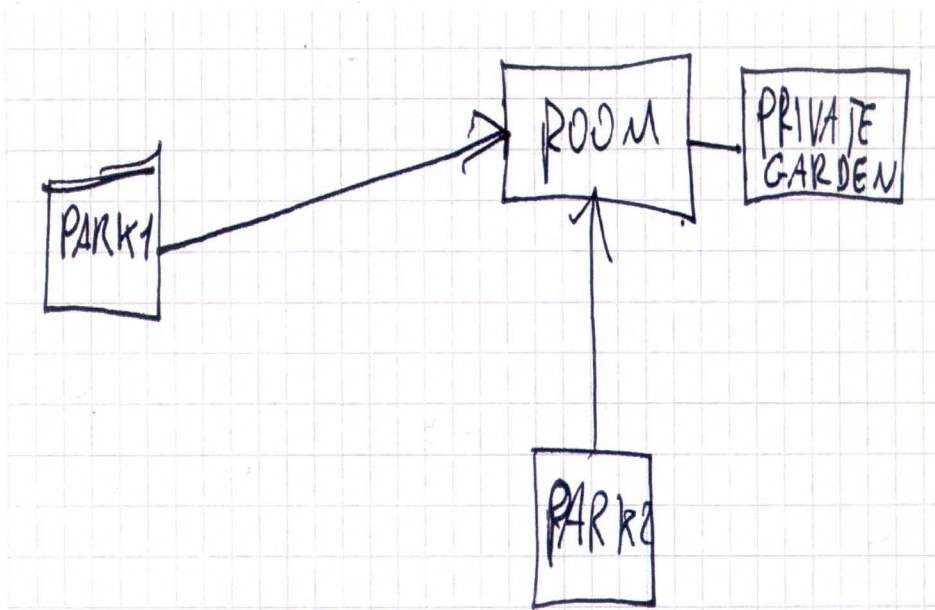
The retired couple. This couple will seek a peaceful place and will require a beautiful view, a “Zen” environment, slow paced exercises (in a pool for example) and good/healthy food. They usually stay for long period of time 2-3 months.



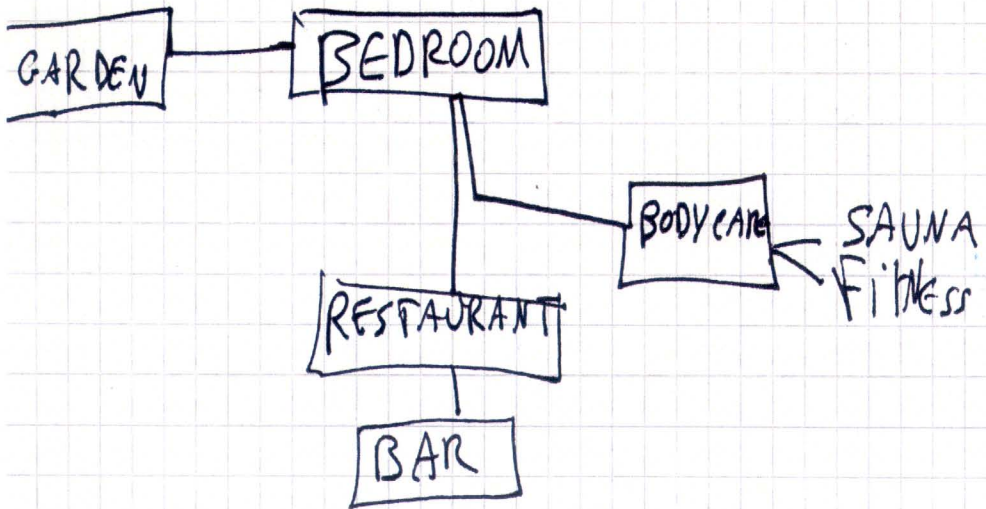
The businessmen. This group will need a meeting place, a conference table and privacy. They stay for 1 or 2 days in the hotel suites so this should be taken in consideration.



The illicit lovers. They usually need a room and in special cases discretion and privacy. Two parkings, or entrances are ideas of facilitating there couples.



The honeymooners. They seek a weekend in a beautiful and dreamlike environment; they eat in the restaurant, sit at the bar for drinks and use the pool, sauna and fitness room. They like to spend their afternoons in the garden.

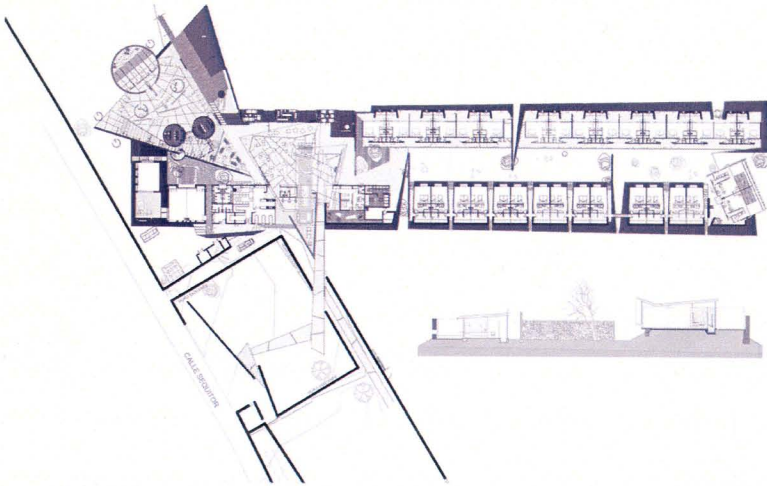




The stressed out. Tired from the everyday routine, this client seeks a therapeutic stay in the hotel and would appreciate everything a spa can offer. Massages, therapy, swimming pools, nice music at the bar, gourmet platters at the restaurant, access to the garden, meditation spaces.

For these clients, I have studied the hotel and spa Tierra Atacama in Chile.








 This hotel and spas design




 is based on the different




 views the landscape offers.




 It is a simple and 1 leveled

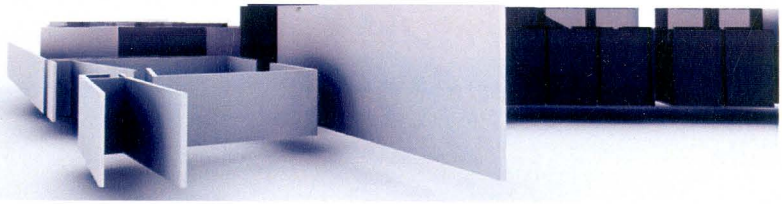



 design with all the rooms




 on the ground floor.



Students. The amateurs who wish to learn how to cook, how to prepare food, as well as take courses in wine tasting etc. The ideal scenario would be to have groups of students stay for a prolonged period of time stay at the rooms then have a series of kitchen labs and a room where courses are given to them.

The kitchen will have to be specialized, and delivery zone must connect to the storage (hot and cold storage)

Some classes will be taken from time to time so a class room would be added.

The group of tourists. Part of a tour, the tourists will use the space as a touristic compound, from their rooms to the pool to the therapeutic services, to the sauna and the fitness club.

The adventurer. This client would come to a village like Reyfoun and intend to sleep at the hotel and wake u early to take a walk, do some biking, jogging or even hiking while discovering the place.

The connoisseur. This client would come to eat at the restaurant, at noon or at night. In addition to have a professional kitchen to cater for such food, a wine cave is also appreciated.

Receptions, banquets and weddings. The project must be able to cater for such events that need a professional kitchen, a functional design to permit good interaction between services and the reception space. A large outdoor/indoor area is needed in order to accommodate a big number of guests.

Chapter 4

Guide for Reconstruction...

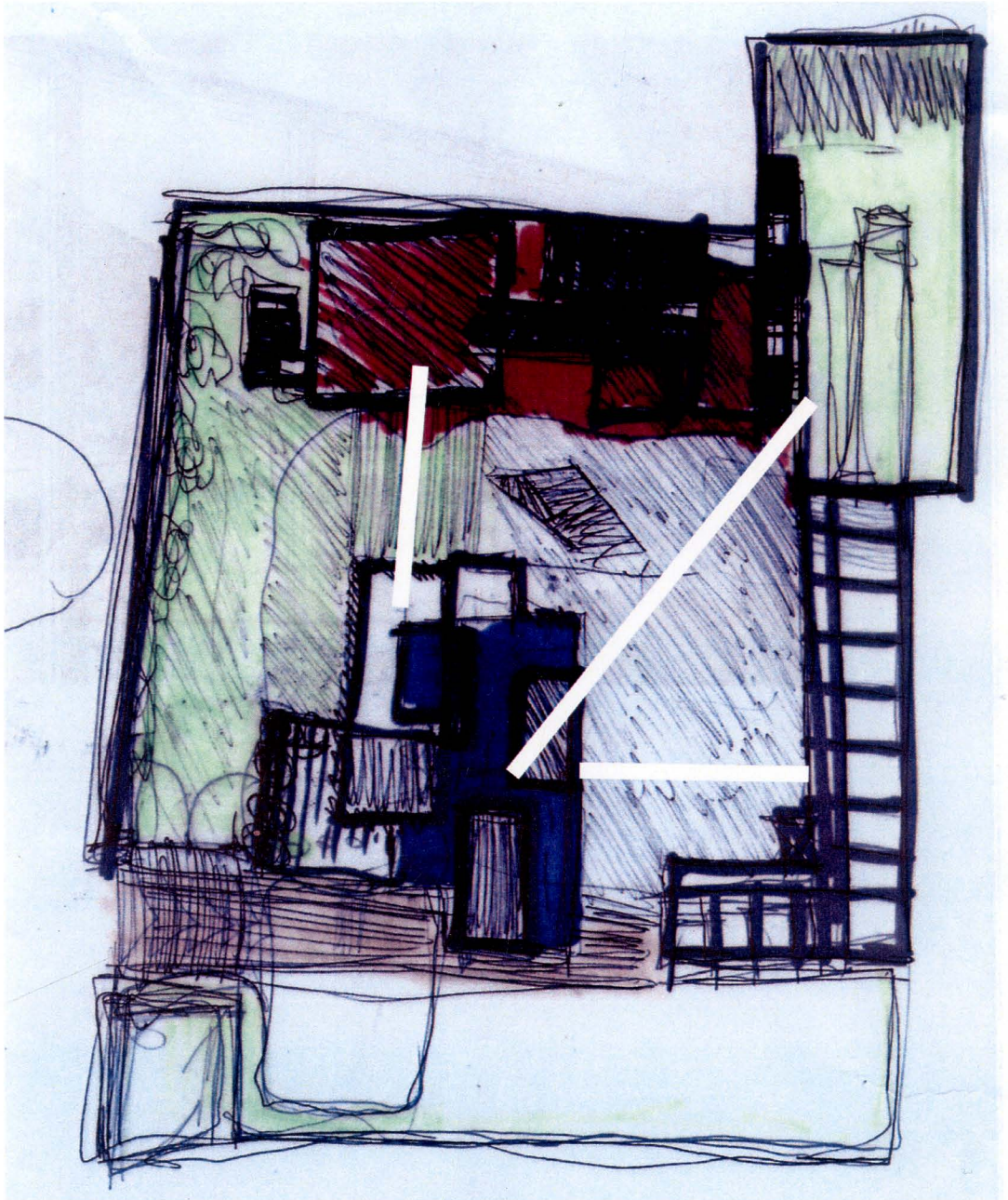
The idea of the design is to have a service built on the wants of every client, a building that looks like a reconstructed hotel, with a museum that binds everything. Also it is important to have maximum integration with the landscape, and a very sustainable project that tries to invite the Reyfoun residents to participate in the activities.

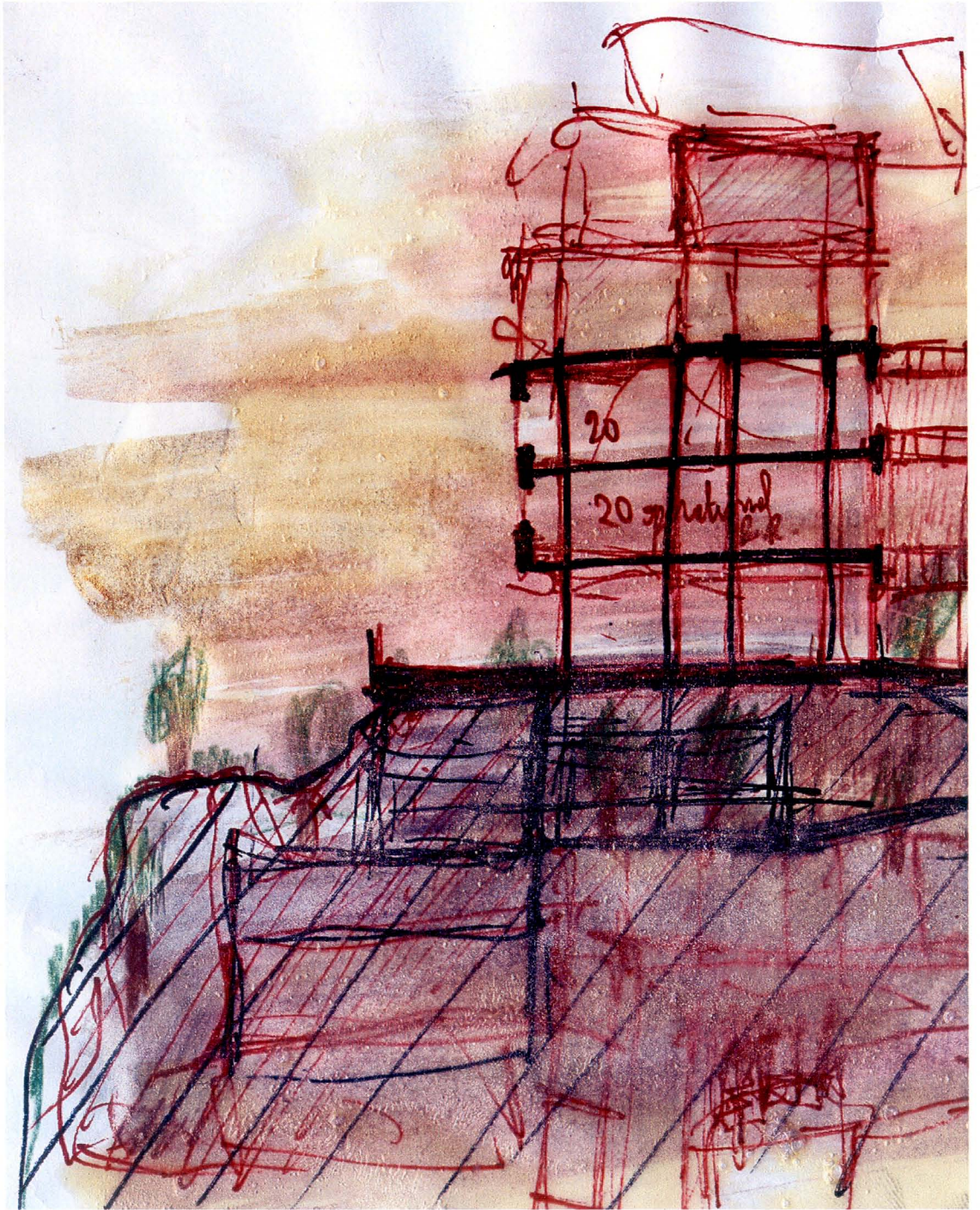
Every user in the user list would have his own track; his own specific mental map. So the project will look like a series of fragments connected to each other.

The project should not have more than 40 rooms and they should not be conventional rooms.

the old French maxim “le client est roi” (the client is king) is only true in the spaces the client is allowed in. All this system proves that the employees’ job in such a project is to guide every client through a specific channel and experience. The client ignores what’s happening behind his room’s walls, he’s not welcome to open any other door than his room’s etc...This contradicting fact should be visible in the design, it is not necessary to have all the rooms next to each others, and as an exaggerated example, having a bedroom next to the butchery would be a funny case of intersection between clients spaces and services areas.

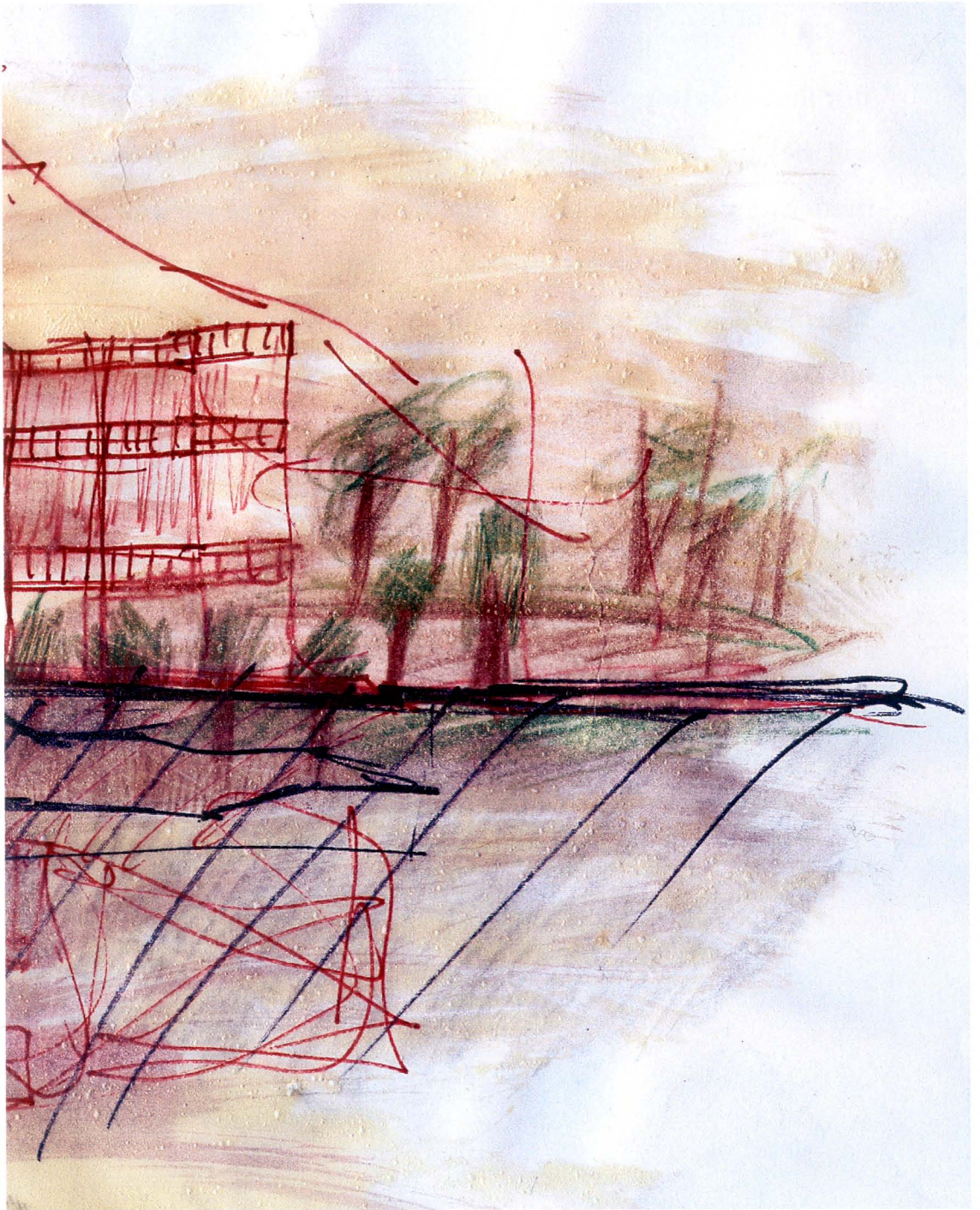
The diagram also indicates that some different zones should be present, the water on one side linked to the green spaces. the whole setup will try to recreate an interior court where activities can happen. The ruins of the oldest hotel building will be kept and a part of it will be drowned. Inspired by the Parque Espana library, I felt that the play of levels and integration into the landscape can play an important role in the success of this project.





20

20 7/10
revised
2/2



But the most important thing is that whatever the decision will be, the reconstruction, like the deconstruction, is a matter of personal choice. This book destroyed the building but kept the function hotel, to host.

The pieces of the deconstruction are like toys in our hands, but they are already defined; paths and tracks. The project should therefore be just like the book, a story or a passage or even a loop that can be so meaningless. The new design will also be a small story on a book like this one, remembered by an offspring I wont be able to blame. The curse is still there and I couldn't do anything to stop it.

Special thanks to Mona Harb, Karim Nader and all the advisors that helped me during the whole semester.

Books

- Lau-Tzu, Tao Te-Ching, Translated by G.F.Feng and J. English (N.Y, Vintage Books, 1972)
- Alain Robbe-Grillet, Djinn (Edition de Minuit 1981)
- Alain Robbe-Grillet, La reprise (edition de minuit)
- Alain Robbe-Grillet, For a New Novel, New novel new man, 1963
- Bernard Werber, La trilogie des fourmis, 1996
- Bernard Werber, les tanathonautes, 1994
- Bernard Werber, Le livre du voyage, 1997
- Bernard Werber, Nos amis les terriens, 2001
- Bernard Werber, Le livre secret des fourmis (le livre de poche 1993)
- Jocelyn Benoist, « La subjectivité » in Denis Kambouchner (éd.), Notions de philosophie, II, Paris, folio, 1995
- F.Claire, G.Savoie, J.Secheresse, L'Hotellerie, Le moniteur (1992)
- Voyages En Pays Houdanais

Films

- Last Year in Marienbad
- Oldboy
- Eyes Wide Shut
- The shining
- Psycho
- Inland Empire

Video Games

- World Of Goo

Music

- Sopor Aeternus Complete Discography

Poetry

- Edgar Allan Poe

Anis
Sfeir
Hotel

“What is firmly established
cannot be uprooted.
What is firmly grasped cannot
slip away.
It will be honored from genera-
tion to generation.”
Lau Tzu.

A design thesis about how I
treated my family-owned hotel
in order to intervene on it.

