

EP_{sn}
457

remedy

EPsn

457

remedy

by dana bazzi

73

1914

Tennedy

1914

to Lama

Outline

I. Abstract

II. Introduction

III. The notion of empowerment

IV. A holistic program

i. Catering to different users

- a. The person seeking relief**
- b. The person seeking a healthy lifestyle**
- c. The person seeking healing**

ii. A line of trust

iii. The program

**Case study: Rehab Basel, Switzerland,
by Herzog et de Meuron**

V. An introverted site

- i. Site criteria
- ii. Finding El-Aassfouriyeh
 - a. A brief history
 - b. The remaining structures
- iii. A punctuated landscape
 - a. The land
 - b. The traces

VI. A procession on site

- i. Reading of space in Le Corbusier's La Tourette
- ii. A place of discovery
 - a. Glass Temple, Japan, by Takashi Yamagushi and Associates
 - b. Prayer and Meditation pavilion, Cardiac surgery center in Sudan, by Studio Tamassociati Architects
 - c. Casa de Retiro Espiritual, Spain, by Emilio Ambasz
- iii. Program on site
- iv. Reinterpreting the existing

VII. References

I. Abstract

There are certain things many of us regard as the truth, without ever finding the need to question them. You wait until you get sick, at which point you go to the hospital and place your fate, regardless how much suffering it might entail, in the hands of a doctor.

My thesis is an option, one which is based on a holistic approach to health. The aim is to provide an opportunity; a way of life dismissed by many. I want to create a place that sets forth alternatives and relief in healthcare, while offering the means which allow anyone to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

My objective is to create an environment whose elements encourage the individual to actively participate in their own health. The investigation lies in finding the tools conducive to the desired healing atmosphere: a site embedded in nature, a program that embraces alternative therapies, a spatial experience capable of promoting a sense of personal involvement.

The result is a procession, a sequence of elements that intensify awareness and unfold a sense of responsibility through a process of exploration, of discovery. The experience induces relaxation, creativity, empowerment.

II. Introduction

She was diagnosed with breast cancer.

She had shown me a lump a few months earlier. I was in denial, told her it's probably nothing. After all, she's 24 years old; she eats healthy, exercises regularly. And above all, she's my older sister, she simply feels invincible.

She met the oncologist for the first time. She was crying, which irritated him. He told her he can't deal with patients who are too sensitive; she needs to toughen up because there's a battle ahead. She never made the decision to go to war. This is the only option. When you have a tumor, the doctor lays out a treatment plan for you: chemotherapy, radiation, surgery. This is supposed to kill the tumor.

The treatment was extremely invasive. It turned out the war was between medicine and her body. A few days earlier, she felt fine, looked fine. Now, she was constantly exhausted and nauseous. Now, she could be labeled a sick person, a cancer patient to be more specific. She tried to take control of the situation. When her hair started falling out, she asked me to shave it off; this was her only way of feeling like she was in command.

Along the way, she was only asked to show up to the hospital for her chemotherapy sessions. After all, she has cancer, what else could she possibly do? Her role simply consisted of laying in a hospital bed while a pink liquid poured into her body. And in fact, as time went by, she lost any will to be actively involved in her treatment. Cancer began ruling her life: she constantly felt helpless, depressed and scared. The sister I knew, who had always been the optimistic, vigorous one, was now resigned.

What my sister was put through is a testimony of the way mainstream medicine tends to lead the patient to a state of passivity. This is due to the “interventionist”¹ nature of the approach. A hospital is governed by a hierarchy of doctor/patient. Control of the person’s life is relinquished to the physician, as though the power to heal is beyond the scope of their own body and mind. When a person gets sick, all kinds of negative feelings arise – fear, anxiety, uncertainty about what will happen next. In my opinion, medicine, in many cases, is likely to confirm these fears, and then escort the patient to a submissive attitude, which “ultimately weakens the individual and increases disease.” (Watson, 1995: p. 343)

Also, the hospital environment is often thought of as a dry shell in which drugs are administered. It is generally not perceived as a “healing place”. The focus is centered on sick people, disease, machines. This predominantly downbeat atmosphere dismisses crucial aspects of healing, and fails to assist the patient in coping and focusing on the positive.

“You don’t have to fight to get rid of a disease. Just the simple process of letting go of negative thoughts will allow your natural state of health to emerge within you. And your body will heal itself.” (Byrne, 2006: p.134)

The purpose of my thesis is not to strip medicine and hospitals of their credibility, but rather to acknowledge that another concept of health and healing can be dealt with, both programmatically and spatially.

The question that arises is the following:

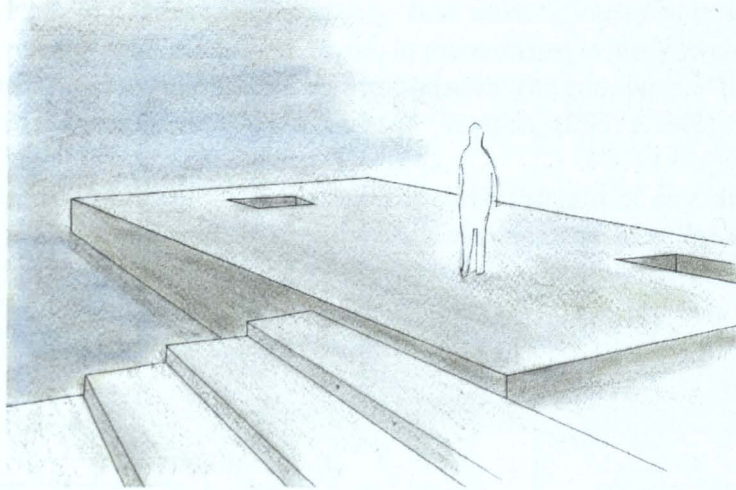
How can architecture, beyond the program, reflect and enhance the philosophy of empowerment?

How can the experience of space promote a sense of personal involvement?

¹ Donald Watson, «A dictionary of mind and body», London: Deutsch, 1995

III. Notion of empowerment

Alternative medicine «re-empowers the individual: in addition to providing an obvious opportunity for the exercise of choice, most alternative systems of medicine also invite the individual to take some responsibility for self-healing.» (Watson, 1995: p.207)



When a person is facing a difficult situation, the most common reaction is to constantly be ruminating about the problem, mentioning it to others, worrying about its possible consequences. If the focus of one's thoughts is continuously geared toward the disease, then this actually feeds it and makes it stronger. All the energy and effort become dedicated to the problem itself, the very thing that is undesired. On the other hand, when an individual shifts the focus of thoughts from the negative and undesired to the positive and desired, then it is a step toward eradicating the issue. This is owed to the power of the mind to dictate what occurs around us.

When the individual realizes that much of their healing lies in their own hands, then the entire process of getting better is facilitated. In fact, alternative and complementary therapies are rooted in the concept that in order to overcome limitations, one must be ready to adopt an active attitude in healing. This implies that one is aware of the power of the mind, and consequently the body's self-healing capacity; and takes on a willing, deliberate approach to overcoming the disease. This state can be reached gradually through the experience of various mind-body therapies – such as yoga, visualization and meditation. Such practices acknowledge an aspect of the human body which transcends the purely physical.

“Just as the physical body has layers such as the skin, tissue, muscle, and bone, the human energy body has layers – physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. The main energy systems are called chakras. They bring in the onslaught of every thought and emotion a person is exposed to throughout their daily experiences.” (McMurray, 2005: p.94)

The energy centers of the body can become oversaturated and, when left ignored, imbalance and disease find it easier to intrude. This is why the different therapies which connect mind and spirit to physical functions, actually feed the energy and promote a proper flow in the body¹. The aim of mind-body therapies therefore consists of letting go of any negative feelings to prevent them from interfering with the state of the body, while allowing the constructive emotions to arise.

With empowerment, come autonomy, dignity, and the activation of a natural capacity to heal oneself.

¹ Suzanne McMurray, “Chakra talk”, Holistic Nursing practice, 2005

IV. A holistic program

i. Catering to different users

a. The person seeking relief

Complementary therapies can be beneficial for people undergoing treatments which cause adverse side effects. Chemotherapy is an example. Patients suffer from nausea, pain, headaches, insomnia. Instead of considering this suffering an expected result of the treatment and simply letting it take its toll, certain adjuncts can be considered.

"Complementary therapies such as music, massage, acupuncture and meditation are non-invasive, gentle techniques applied to control physical and emotional symptoms commonly experienced by cancer patients." (Leung:2007, p.163)

When my sister was going through the treatment, at no point was there any option for easing the pain. She would have benefited greatly from such an attempt to offer relief. A patient is not doomed to suffer when diagnosed with cancer, and such a project allows them to see that: being able to alleviate the pain, in a place where the patient's life would not be centered around disease, but rather on gardens, natural elements, soothing therapies, meditation spaces.

b. The person seeking a healthy lifestyle

The various techniques used in alternative and complementary therapies can be used by any individual, as preventive methods. The benefits of such therapies are wide-ranging. They rely on the mind/body response to balance the organism. This involves being able to eliminate negative thoughts and elements, and maintain only those which contribute to a healthy life. In order to achieve this, the belief in one's own responsibility in health comes into play.

*"Disease is also something that does not exist from within itself, nor does it exist independently. The manifestation of diseases depends upon ignorance as the basic cause."
(Dunkenberger, 2000: p.61)*

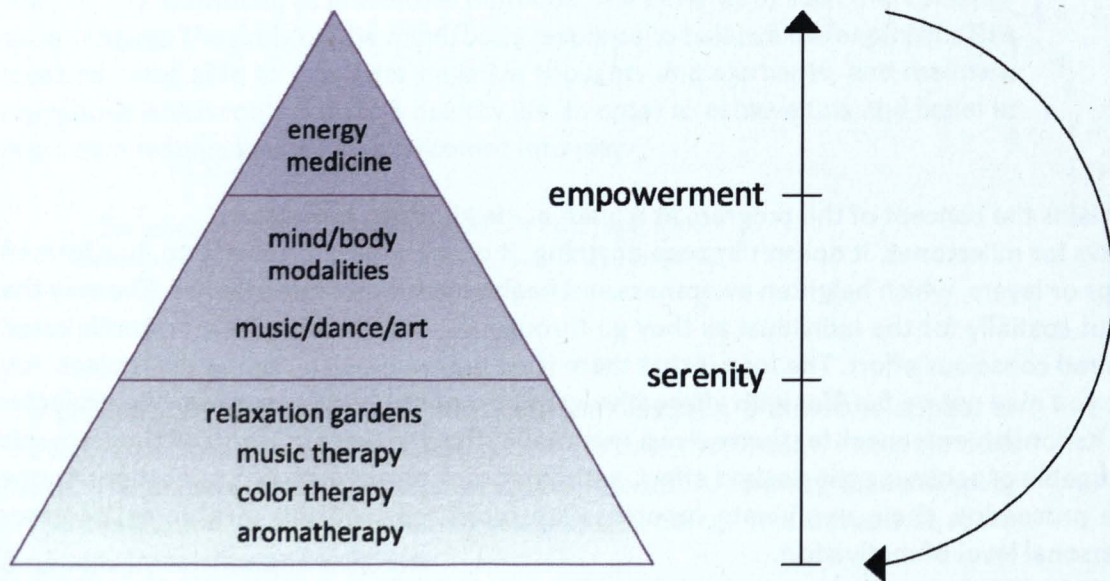
The program, as well as the way it is dealt with spatially, is aimed to appeal to the individual in a way that encourages them to take their health into their own hands. The experience of the project induces relaxation, serenity, an awakening of spiritual potential, and an increased sense of well-being. This leaves little room for bodily imbalance and sickness.

c. The person seeking healing

Many of us suffer from daily physical or emotional ailments, which we treat repeatedly with medicine. Such issues may include migraines, sleeplessness, stress and anxiety, depression, fatigue. The project caters to these issues in natural ways, without resorting to drugs. It promotes natural methods of increasing energy, reducing stress, managing pain and as a result improving wellness.

ii. A line of trust

This next part explains the concept of the program as a gradual, heightening experience. The program allows for milestones. It doesn't impose anything. It doesn't require conviction. It is formed by a series of steps or layers, which heighten awareness and health as they are experienced. The way the program is laid out spatially for the individual as they go through the procession will be communicated without any required conscious effort. The idea is that there is no prerequisite to visiting the project. You may be skeptical; you may not be familiar with alternative medicine or the bodily energies. The project is simply there; and its constituents speak for themselves. This implies that the mere presence of the elements of the project is capable of achieving the desired effect, without it seeking any type of justification. As one goes through the procession, their own innate capacities are mobilized; and this awakening increases along with the personal level of motivation.



The base of the pyramid is the part of the program which is more instinctive. The sequence of gardens may appeal to each individual in a different way depending on their own sensitivity and frame of mind. The colors, the aromas, the private meditation pavilions, accommodate health, calm and spirituality. One may decide to simply walk through the gardens for the sake of a brief sense of serenity; or enter a pavilion to meditate or pray. The carpet of gardens is not simply a complementary feature which is there to be viewed from the interior of a building. Rather, it is conceived as a multisensual experience that in a way acts as a catalyst toward taking the next step.

The middle part of the pyramid is where the program requires a more active and conscious participation. What is offered are spaces encouraging creativity, as well as places for learning about and practicing alternative medicine techniques. While a garden is naturally appealing, here, one moves on from passively receiving benefits, to willingly creating them. The milestone of serenity has already been reached, and at this point one is given the option to go further, to explore what they can do for themselves. The core concept is still the same – heeding way to the power of the mind – only doing so in a more aware manner, striving to reach empowerment.

Going up the pyramid gradually allows for empowerment. Once this is sensed, one can move on to accepting the work of a healer. This includes energy medicine, biofeedback, hypnotherapy. It requires that a certain level of trust be attained. Therefore, the previous layers of the program become essential in affirming the strength of the connection between mind, energy and the physical body.

It is important to mention that the pyramid concept is not a one-way process; it doesn't merely go from bottom to top. Once the milestones are crossed, and the top of the pyramid is reached, the way each one is re-experienced changes. For instance, having acquired knowledge about meditation and the way it is practiced, will render the use of the gardens and pavilions more specific.

iii. Program description and relationships

The choice of program is consistent with the concept of the pyramid. It is an elaboration on the constituents of each of the steps. I am introducing the types of therapies and modalities that reinforce the overall gradual experience, while explaining the use and benefits of each one.

The relaxation gardens

Color therapy garden

The focus of this garden is on flowers and plants in the colors and orders of the chakras. As mentioned earlier, the chakras are the body's "energy systems". Each one has a specific color.

Linking back to the concept of re-experiencing the milestones; a person who is simply looking for a calm place to relax in will see the garden as exactly that. A person who is aware of the Chakras, their colors, and the active visualization process one can engage in, will perceive the garden in a different way. Apart from the landscaping, there are color bathing pavilions, for individual use, promoting the idea of responsibility and self-healing.



"The first chakra, or root chakra, [...] is associated with the color red. It carries with it your life purpose."

"The second chakra, or spleen chakra [...] is associated with the color orange. It offers choice, [...] and is also the home of our creativity."

"The third chakra, or solar plexus [...] is associated with the color yellow. This is the personal power chakra."

"The fourth chakra, or heart chakra [...] is associated with the color green. This is the chakra of our emotions."

"The fifth chakra is the throat chakra and is associated with the color blue. The power of Will resonates from the fifth chakra."

"The sixth chakra, or third eye chakra, [...] is associated with the color indigo. This is the chakra of wisdom."

"The seventh chakra, or crown chakra [...] is associated with the glow of white [or purple]. It is our connection to Divine Energy."

(Nemri, 2004: p.38-40)

Music therapy garden

Some areas of the garden rely on the individual's sensitivity, the individual as a passive receiver. As one goes around or through the garden, they listen to the music or sounds being emitted, they benefit from their soothing effect, without necessarily having to do anything themselves.

On the other hand, some areas are more active and personal, whereby people can practice music in outdoor, semi-enclosed spaces.

Therapeutic water garden

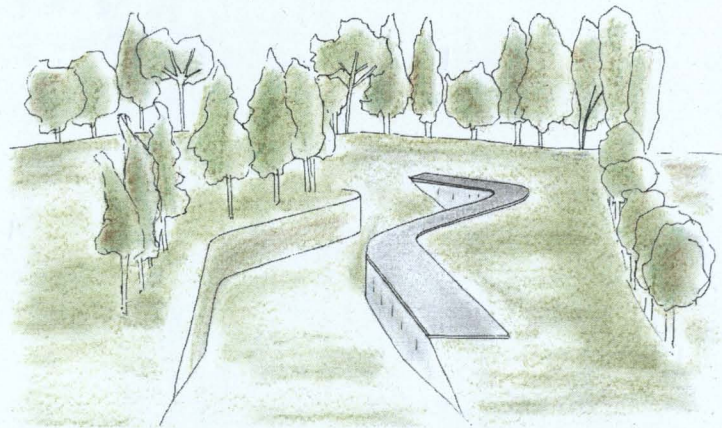
This is simply a relaxation garden of which the locus is water.

Aromatic garden

It is composed of plants emitting aromas known to have soothing or healing properties.

Gardening

This is the part of the project which involves the participation of the individual in various types of planting activities: Herbs, organic fruits and vegetables, which serve the restaurant and can also be sold to the public; flowers which can then be used to create flower essences. Each flower has unique properties, and the process of creating an essence involves the planting and then floating in water of the petals. Small quantities are then used to "alleviate emotional and spiritual disharmonies." (Gulmen, 2004: p.656)



Spaces promoting interest

This aspect of the program is meant to appeal to the visitor who hasn't experienced the entirety of the project. An exhibition space is used to display the art of the people participating in the center. It acts as a testimony to new visitors of what is being created.

In addition, there is a library, which is not limited to but includes information regarding the topics of health and alternative medicine, for people to gain knowledge about them.

Seminar spaces are used for lectures about relevant topics, as well as individuals relating their personal experiences to others.

These spaces will be placed discretely at the beginning of the project procession, since they are aimed at stimulating interest in people in order to incite them go further.

Spaces for creative therapies

The reason I chose to incorporate color, music, dance and art therapies is because they promote activity on the part of the user, be it physical, mental or spiritual. Their practice is evidence to a certain level of commitment; and they have the commonality of encouraging creativity.

Color therapy:

This part of the program is conceived as an indoor extension to the color garden. Therefore, just as in the garden, color therapy is based on the seven colors of the Chakras.. Each organ in the body responds to a particular color, and the therapy consists of "flooding" the area in it. The result is a balancing of the body's energy centers, thus helping to "stimulate our body's own healing process." (Watson, 1995: p. 98) In order for this therapy to be effective, the individual must be able to visualize the color, and imagine what benefits it is creating inside the organism.

Rather than using artificial lights to create the colors, there's the opportunity to achieve different effects through a play of natural lighting and colored glass. Each of the seven therapy rooms is centered on one of the seven colors of the spectrum. The interior of each room is entirely bathed in its specific color.

Music therapy

Music therapy generally consists of listening to particular types of music, sounds or *mantras*. The way I incorporate it in the program is in an active way: offering the opportunity for people to learn and practice music. Besides the music studios, the program includes a small-scale performance space. This will allow for some social interaction to take place, for the different users to come together.

Dance therapy is a method of self-expression. It is not restricted to a specific school of dance, but rather encompasses all types of free- flowing bodily movements which allow for a release of tension.

Art therapy encourages creativity and externalization of emotions, in an open, personal way. It does not require artistic talent; it is not about learning how to draw or create sculptures. It is a way of encouraging the individual to communicate freely through images and experience their feelings.¹

*"Music offers creative, lyrical and symbolic means to address existential and spiritual needs, is aesthetic, beautiful and expressive, brings form, order, comfort and hope".
(Leung, 2007: p. 172)*

¹ Rebecca Withrow, «The use of color in art therapy», Journal of Humanistic, Education & Development, 2004

Spaces for mind/body exercises

"Meditation is the practice of living fully in and bringing one's attention to the present moment to achieve better health, inner peace and a higher state of consciousness."
(Gulmen, 2004: p.655)

The spaces are for teaching and practicing of yoga, tai chi and meditation. The program allows for both group uses and individual practices. Some formal knowledge is needed before one can move on to practicing alone. But at some point, one can choose to meditate whenever they want to and in whatever form they choose to, and the program offers the privacy needed to do so.

Treatment spaces

The different treatment modalities included in the program are based on a practitioner's formal knowledge in how to create balance in the bodily energies:

Body-based practices , which includes the likes of massage and acupuncture.

Hydrotherapy is rooted in the nourishing of the body through the use of water, specifically by alternating between different temperatures.¹

Energy Healing is based on the healer transmitting energy flows from the hands to the client, to balance any abnormalities and treat disease.

Energy healing is best when placed underground, where the energy is most "grounded". Therefore, the space housing the rooms does not need any natural lighting.

¹ Funda Gulmen, «Energy medicine», American Journal of Chinese Medicine, 2004

Restaurant

This part of the program includes an organic, health-oriented restaurant. The food is provided by the fresh fruit and vegetable gardens, and is picked and possibly cooked by the users themselves. Along with the restaurant, there are cooking classes and education about maintaining a healthy diet, thus offering people the chance to improve their daily eating habits.

Sleeping accommodation

Some clients may choose to stay in the facility during the length of their treatment, in order not to interrupt it. Therefore, I am providing sleeping accommodations for them. These will not in any way resemble the patient rooms of a hospital. Instead, they are simply an extension of the rest of the program, whereby the concept of uniqueness, freedom and choice still applies. Rooms are separated from each other, and each one is designed differently. Reaching your room isn't as simple as going up an elevator and walking through a corridor – the process of looking for it is emphasized. Also, the rooms are quite small in area, and only contain the strict minimum.

1/2

Program areas



7 rooms * 25 sqm

175 sqm

2 practice rooms * 30 sqm
performance hall * 200 sqm

260 sqm

1 studio * 100 sqm
1 studio * 50 sqm

100 sqm

50 sqm

exhibition

200 sqm

library

300 sqm

seminar spaces

200 sqm

mind/body
spaces

270 sqm

body-based
treatment

300 sqm

hydrotherapy

800 sqm

baths and saunas = 200 sqm
therapeutic pools = 300 sqm
5 therapy rooms = 200 sqm
changing rooms = 100 sqm

energy healing

105 sqm

7 rooms * 15 sqm

restaurant

500 sqm

seating for 50 ppl = 200 sqm
kitchen + storage = 200 sqm
classes = 100 sqm

sleeping

800 sqm

40 rooms * 20 sqm

area

services




Total built-up area
= 5300 sqm

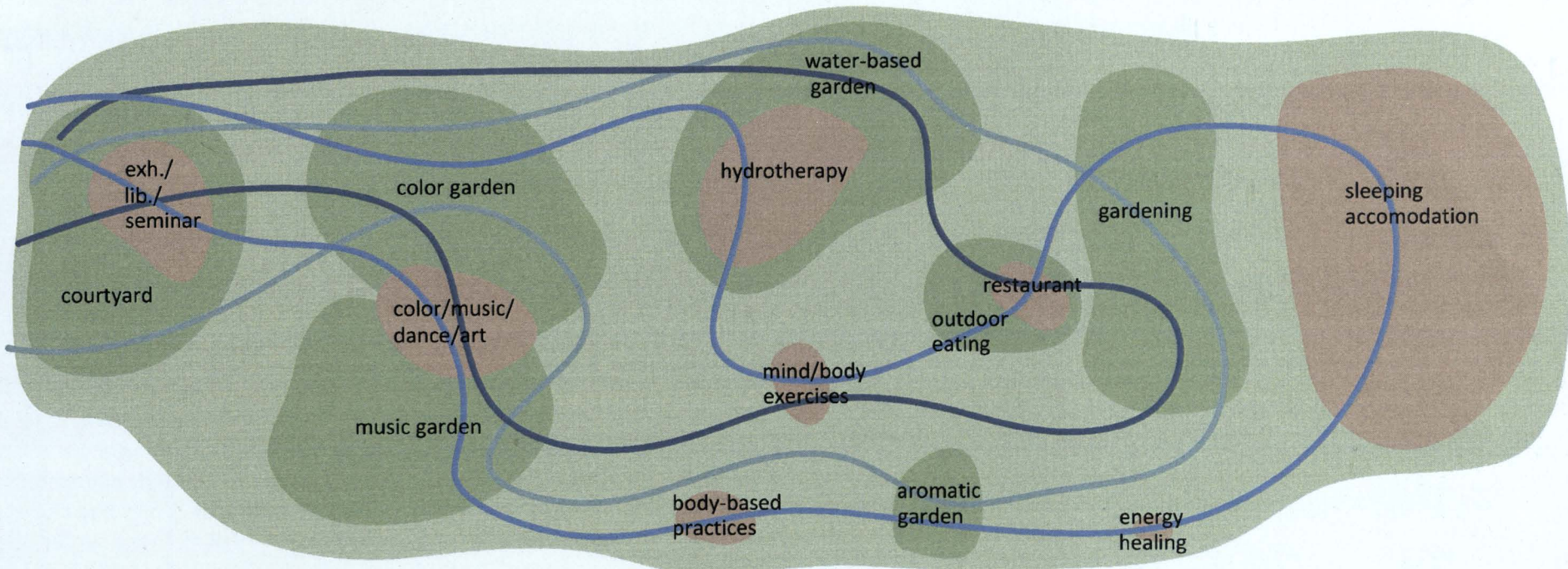
1200 sqm

admin.

offices

Program relationships

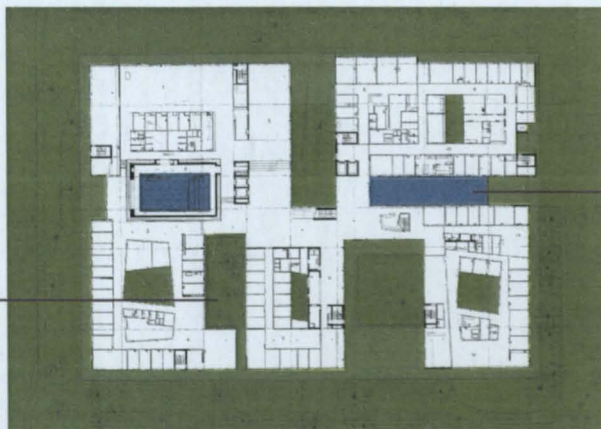
-  The prevention procession
-  The therapeutic procession
-  The garden procession



Rehab Basel [Center for spinal cord and brain injuries]

Herzog et de Meuron

Basel, Switzerland



The project is conceived as a “small town”; since it serves patients who need to spend several months living in the centre.

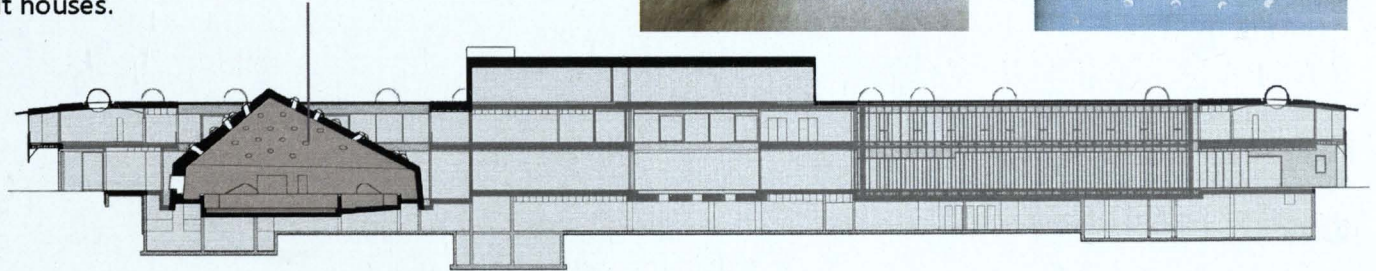
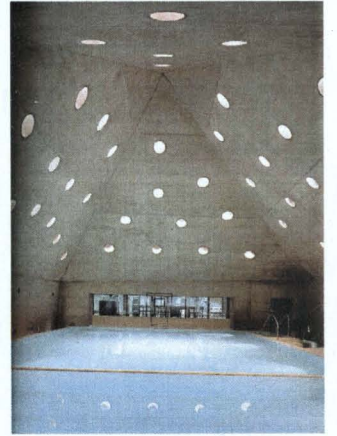
The plan is punctured by a series of courtyards which serve as orientation points in the building. Each one is therapeutic in its own way, and has a specific identity, be it planting or water. Interior and exterior are closely interconnected, creating views from every point in the center, and of course bringing in sunlight.¹

¹ Sarah Amelar, «Healing Architecture», Architectural Record, 2005

A punctured, dark-colored pyramidal structure emerges like a foreign object, which strongly contrasts with the rest of the building. When you look at it from the outside, its unexpected presence is intriguing.



This space contains the therapeutic pool; it isn't confined by the orthogonality of the building. It is an entity of its own, of which the form is devised in such a way so as to enhance the quality of the interior space it houses.



V. An introverted site





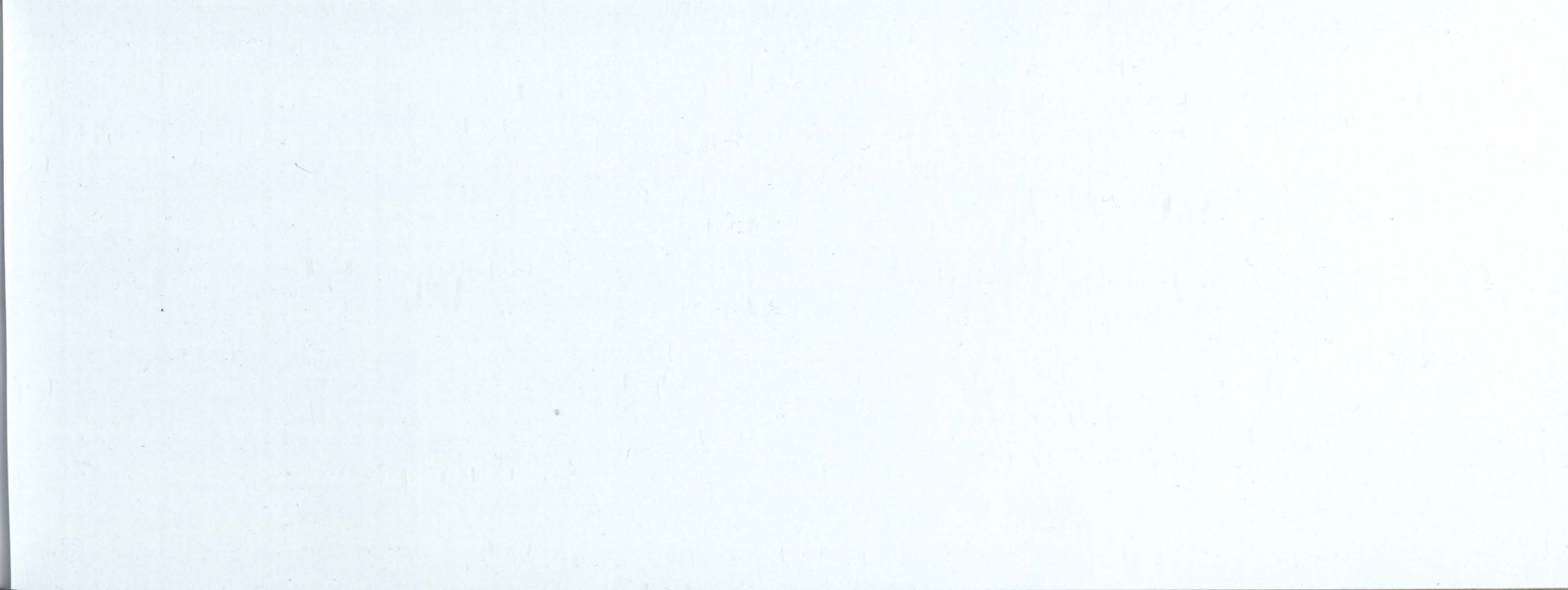
i. Site criteria

Site accessibility is important in the choice of site. The place needs to be quiet and relaxing, but not isolated. The location of the project should be such as to encourage people to visit it as often as they need. Therefore, it is not a place that sits far away from the city, and requires planning and effort to reach. Rather, it can become a part of everyday life.

Nature is known to have relaxing qualities to it; it is also central to the idea of healing and health. Gesler mentions four criteria associated with a natural environment:

*“Belief in nature as healer
Beauty, aesthetic pleasure
Remoteness, immersion in nature
Specific elements of nature” (Gesler, 2003: p. 8)*

All these aspects come together to contribute to the space being created. The project needs to be located in a place which has an a-priori healing character, with qualities such as a relaxing environment, greenery, trees, privacy, extensive areas. This opens up the potential for the project to explore the given environment in different ways, for the architecture itself to uncover a new significance to the site and in a sense empower it.







ii. Finding El-Aassfouriyeh

I parked the car in front of the entrance gate, and walked in. I was standing at the beginning of a long perspective, lined with trees and foliage on either side. I could see a red-tile roof building at the end of the street, to the left. I thought I was walking towards it; but then, to my right, there was a second entrance. I was faced with a large green area with tall trees. The aligned row of cypress trees appeared to, at some point, have been designed to be this way; but now each tree looks different, standing in its own "unmaintained" posture.

The site has a prevalent silence to it. It is wrapped with a variety of trees all around, and does not attempt to create a relationship with its surroundings. It was overwhelming finding myself inside this cocoon. I wanted to explore it, but it felt like there were too many ways to go about it; I didn't know where to start.

So I began by simply following the discreet pathway laid out in front of me. As I walked, I fell upon a series of elements and abandoned structures; I had no clue as to what they could possibly be.

The site turned out to be exactly what I was looking for. The silence, the extensive greenery, the remaining traces, the mystery, all played a role in leaving an immediate impact on me.

When I got back to the car, I asked the parking attendant if he knew anything about the site. He informed me that this is the place known as El-Aassfouriyeh.

Aligned row of cypress trees at entrance





a. A brief history

The site is located in Hazmiyeh. The connotation of the name El-Aassfouriyeh as society perceives it today is stigmatized with the idea of mad houses. However, it is worth mentioning that its name originated from the first owner of the land, Mr. Aassfour.

In the early 1900's, the land was bought by an English man, who built the first hospital on the grounds. It was specific to the treatment of psychological and mental illnesses, and was referred to as El-Aassfouriyeh Hospital.

Through the years, funds were gathered and different countries were commissioned to build specialized clinics on the site. Some were for the mentally challenged, others for specific diseases. There was a total of sixteen buildings on the grounds. Each of the structures took on the name of the country it was built by: the "Swiss House", the "American House" etc.

Mar Johanna church

The site: 95000 sqm

Aerial view

Mar Takla Place

Gardens

Damascus highway



The Aassfouriyeh was not exclusively geared toward the treatment of disease. Besides sick people, some healthy individuals rented a room to relax and find peace of mind. The area was seen as a tranquil, garden-filled hub. It was mostly affluent people who could afford to make use of the site in this way. They saw it as a temporary escape from the demands of everyday life. For instance, one of the interviewees mentioned that a regular client was the head of an important company, who often felt the need to get away from his stressful lifestyle.

A man who is now in his 60's recalls his visits to the Aassfouriyeh as a child. He used to go there with his friends during their free time, and roam around the gardens, talk to the patients who were sitting outside. Being a resident of Hazmiyeh, this man also mentioned that during the Lebanese Civil War, the bakery of the Aassfouriyeh site used to provide them with bread when the other local bakeries ran out. Based on this information, it can be said that the site was open to a wide array of people, which took it beyond a restricted zone housing clinics.



**Historical map -
1950**

demolished buildings

inner pathways

remaining buildings

b. The remaining structures

In the 1980's, *Gefinor* demolished most of the buildings on the site, in the purpose of eventually constructing another project. Today, only four of the sixteen structures remain.

The buildings

Two red-tile roof buildings, stand next to each. They are located to the left of the main entrance spine. They are somewhat disconnected from the rest of the site in the sense that they benefit from a certain privacy. This can be explained by the fact that one of them, "binayat al hakim", was the late Dr. Manoukian's private residence. He was one of the most renowned doctors in the area. The second building, "binayat al houkama", housed the physicians' offices.

Both buildings are still in a very good condition, and are currently being used as offices by *Gefinor*.

The gazebo

The gazebo sits at the midpoint of the site. It is octagonal, partly clad in red brick, with an opening on each of the sides. Its function was an information center, an office that helped visitors get around in the Aassfouriyeh. In a way it served as an orientation point, which makes sense given its central location.

Today, the gazebo is still in a very good condition. Only it is locked and abandoned.

The buildings



The gazebo



The arcaded structure



It stands at the far end of the site. It has gone through a series of functional changes since it was built in 1939. It was initially intended to house rooms for people suffering from nervous problems.

1939 – World War II struck; and the structure was used as a refuge.

1945 – The war ended; and the structure adopted the function it was originated for.

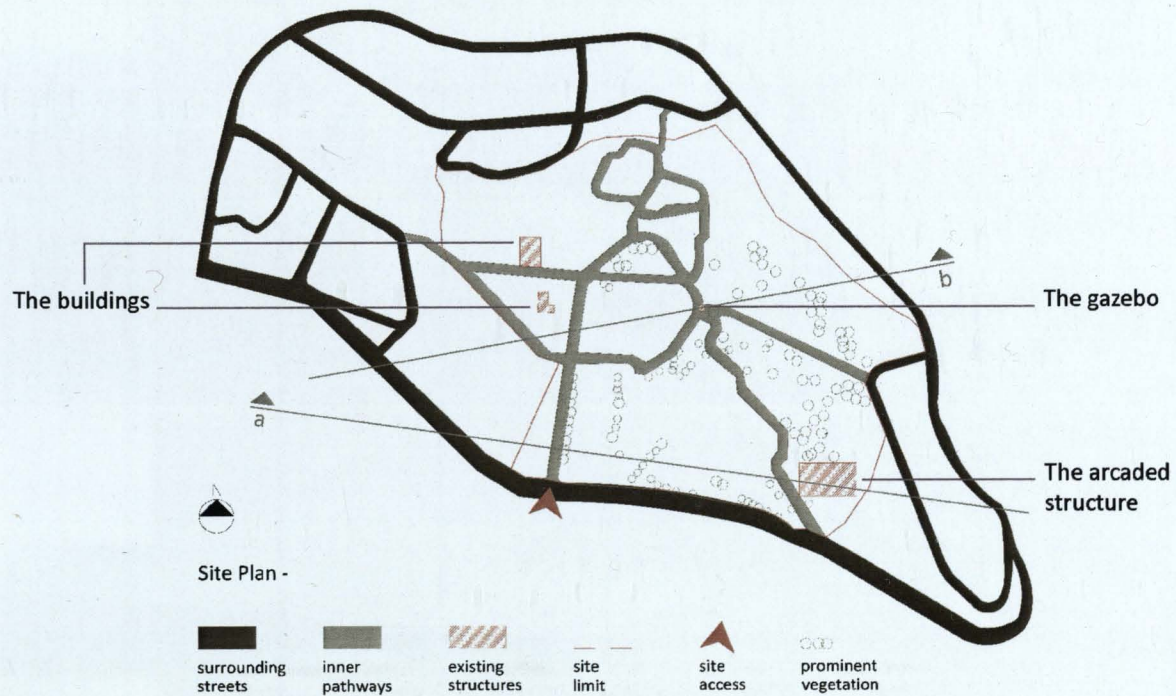
1960's – An increasing number of adolescents needed to be treated for drug abuse. The structure took on the function of a drug rehabilitation center.

1975 – The Lebanese civil war started. The structure was squatted by the Syrian forces.

Present – The structure is abandoned, abused, roofless and aging.

iii. A punctuated landscape

a. The land



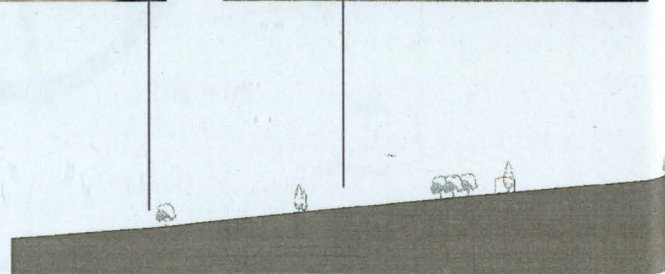
At different points on site, the trees are planted in rows. They form natural boundaries, which as a result delineate separate areas and patterns.



Entrance perspective



Looking back at the cypress trees



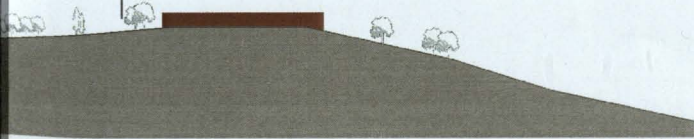
Having walked past the arcaded structure



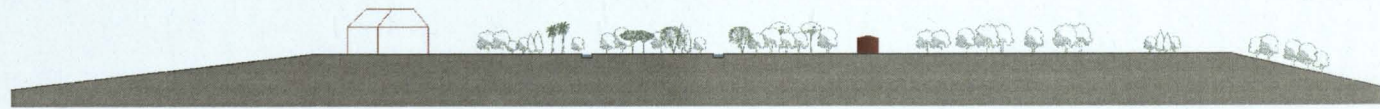
It is only at the far end of the site, in the area beyond the structure, that views open onto the surroundings.



section a



section b

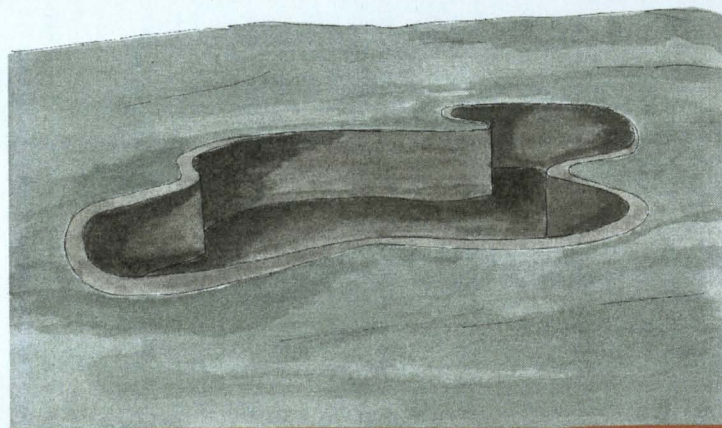


b. Traces

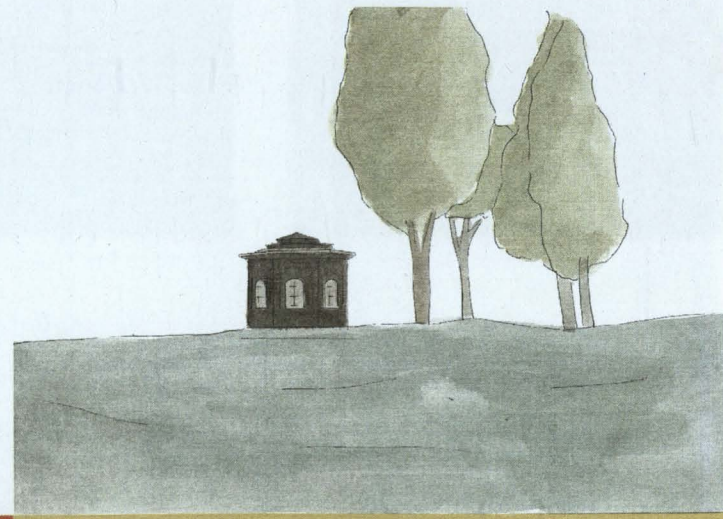
As mentioned earlier, when I went through the site, a series of elements appeared along the way. They do not scream out their presence immediately, but rather are stumbled upon as the site is explored. They do not intrude; they're a part of the landscape - they punctuate the walk.



Mapping of the elements on site



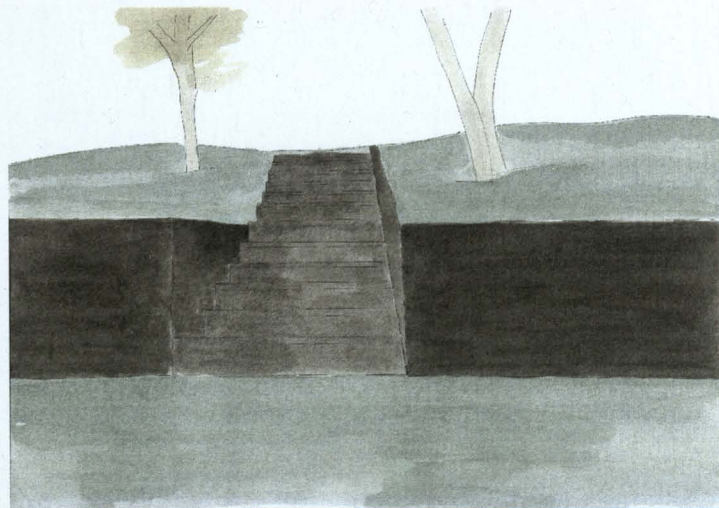
The pools



The gazebo



The basin

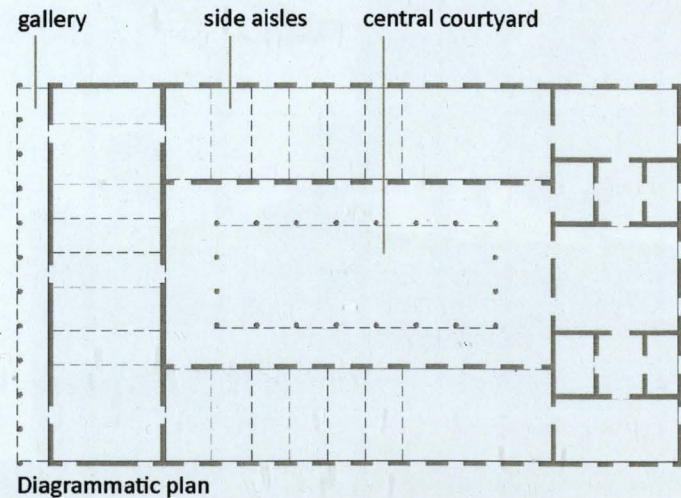
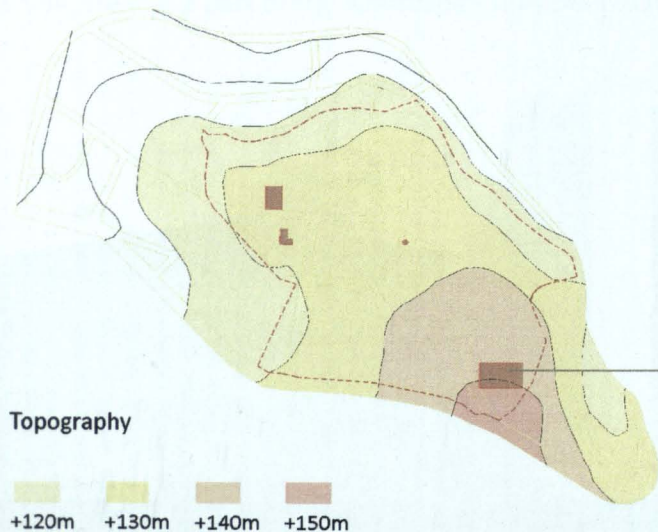


The stairs



The structure

Each of these elements acts as a landmark, and in a sense defines the area it is located in. The two pools are close to each other within the same limit, which they seem to assign as theirs; the gazebo is at the midpoint of the site, and all the pathways branch into its center; the arcaded structure sits at the farthest, highest point of the site.



From the gallery, you enter a rectangular space. It is roofless; and the concrete ribs are revealed. Plants and trees randomly spring out of the ground. You are faced with a wall, punctured by doors and windows. You enter the central courtyard: a large open space lined with arches. It is flanked by two side aisles, which have openings to both the courtyard and the exterior. The walls that used to divide the different cells have been destroyed; their trace is still present. Again, concrete ribs and random patches of greenery.

Facing the gallery



Walking towards the courtyard



Central courtyard



Side aisle



This structure is the only one on site which seems to impose its presence. At first, as you approach it, it looks massive. But as soon as you step in, this preconception falls apart. It is roofless. The walls are aging; the paint is scraped off. The floor is interrupted with plants; it no longer plays the role of separating building from soil, interior from exterior. In fact, nature in all its forms is capable of intruding: plants and trees, the sky, the sun, the rain, the wind.

VI. A procession on site

i. Reading of space in Le Corbusier's La Tourette

*"To judge by oneself;
to understand relationships;
to have one's own feelings;
to tend to be entirely disinterested;
to force one's material self into the background –
is to conquer reasoned conclusions from life.
Rather than submit to the
constraints of a declining age,
one may as well sacrifice oneself[,]...
take risks, be sensitive to everything,
and open one's heart
more and more to others."*

Le Corbusier, Precisions

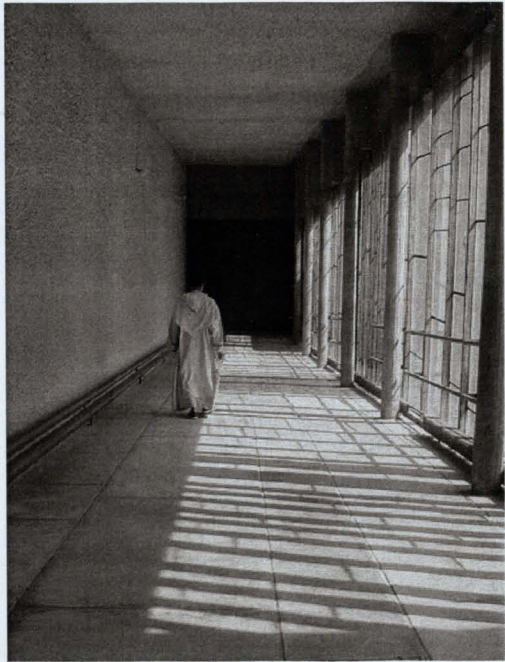
Architectural Representation and the Perspective Hinge

Alberto Perez-Gomez; Louise Pelletier

In the book entitled "Architectural Representation and the Perspective Hinge", the authors dedicate a section to the exploration of the Couvent Sainte Marie de la Tourette, built by Le Corbusier. The chapter in which they do so is called "Time into lived space: Le Corbusier's La Tourette." As the title points out, what Gomez and Pelletier are focusing on is the experience of the space, its qualities and their ability to interact with the user.

"The work's intentions are fulfilled only in time. The building is emphatically not an aesthetic object; it must be used." (Gomez&Pelletier, 1997: p.363)





"The Monastery of Sainte-Marie de la Tourette in Eveux-sur-l'Arbresle, near Lyons [...] seems to possess the power to transform the inhabitant into a participant, to effectively "change one's life ". (Gomez&Pelletier, 1997: p.361)

The space therefore leaves room for interpretation; for each individual to perceive it in their own way. One's perception becomes essential in creating a space which is not simply imposed, but requires an active participation. This notion is further elaborated on:

"The internal space is always surprising, always new and mysterious. Time here is no longer linear, our participation with the building adds up into layers that both reveal and conceal, never resulting in a final clarification of the "idea" of the building. [...]La Tourette seems to embody the conviction that architecture must both reveal and constitute itself through experience as a de-idealized notion." (p.362-363)

The building is not merely about its obvious physical components or the way it looks. It means nothing without the user. The user walks through it, experiences its spatial qualities, feels the intentions behind them. This is when some form of understanding of the space becomes possible. Also, the convent doesn't lay things out in a comfortable, passive, straightforward manner, but rather aims at rendering the individual aware, at allowing them to have an opinion.

"The space is rigorous and demanding," emphasizes a young novice, "it is always discomfoting in a way that vibrates with spirituality." (p.362)

ii. A place of discovery

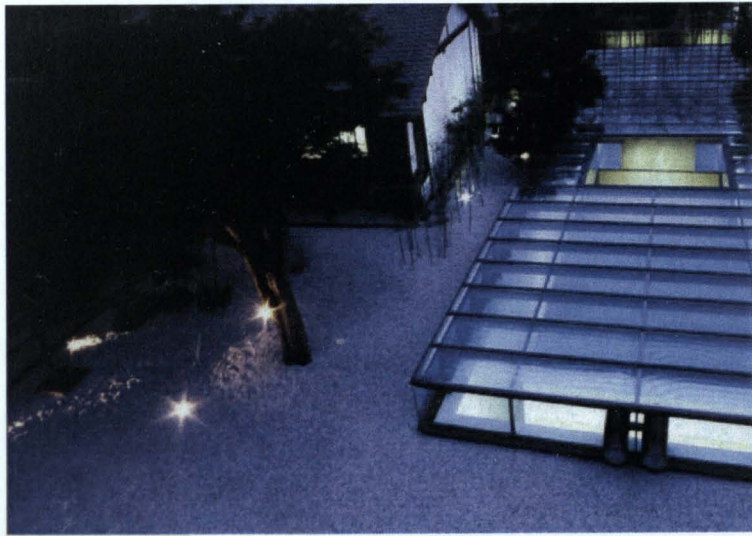
Alternative therapy is rooted in the concept of rendering the individual active, responsible and willing to heal. The architecture is meant to reinforce this, by putting the philosophy behind mind/body therapies into the experience of the space itself, ultimately leading to a sense of autonomy and empowerment.

My intervention is seen as one large continuous space. Buildings do not consist of obvious masses, to which the entrance is as clear as crossing a threshold. One does not directly relate to the height, width or scale of any particular structure. It is an architecture of intrigue, of discovery. The procession through the project is self-driven; it's a series of choices—deciding to go down a dark flight of stairs without predicting what it will lead to; following a water canal because of the curiosity of where you will end up; hearing music and looking for its source. What defines each part of the program is the way it relates to the procession, the way it is accessed and experienced.

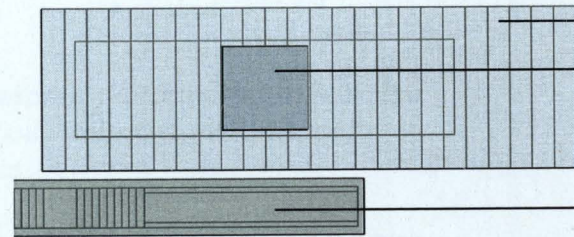
The sequence of the project is a way of further punctuating the site, while unfolding a sense of responsibility on the part of the user. Each person creates their own journey, depending on what elements they decide to explore. Interaction between the individual and the space is central, since a space only comes to be once it is experienced. In a sense, every part of the project has a specific storyboard: what you sense first, how you approach it, a gradual revealing of the interior, spaces open to interpretation.

- a. Glass Temple
Takashi Yamagushi and Associates
Japan

From the outside, the project looks like “an illuminated sculpture on the ground”¹. It entices the individual, yet doesn’t reveal everything at first glance. One needs to get closer, inspect, in order to discover what is happening.



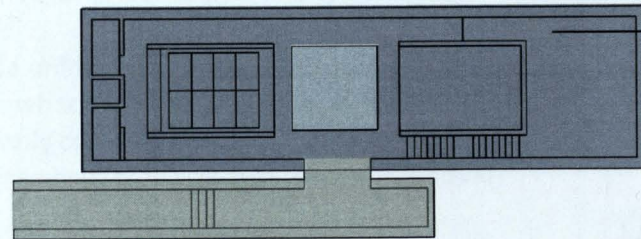
1 Phyllis Richardson, “New Sacred Architecture”, Laurence King Publishing, London, 2004



A single storey glass box sits above ground.

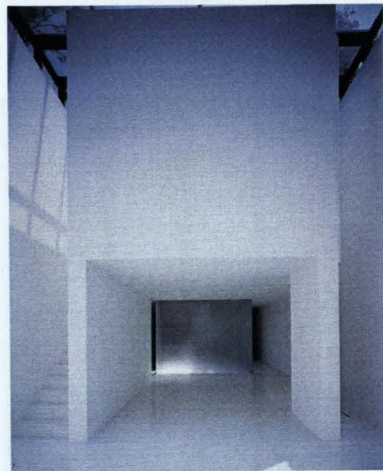
A vertical “light court” of frosted glass perforates the volume. It allows a soft light to filter through, while breaking the boundary between the box and the exterior space.

A discrete flight of stairs invites the visitor to discover what lies beneath the glass box.



The underground interior space is flooded with light from the glass box above it.

The underground interior space is flooded with light from the glass box above it. As light washes the different surfaces, it creates a unique interpretation of the outside for each of them. The nature of each surface dictates in what way it interprets the quality of light and color which are reflected on it.

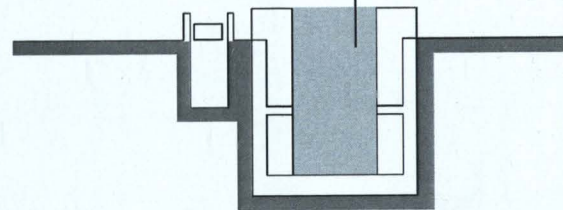
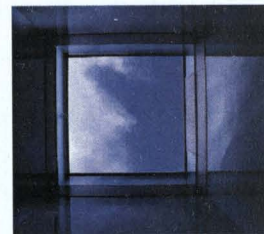
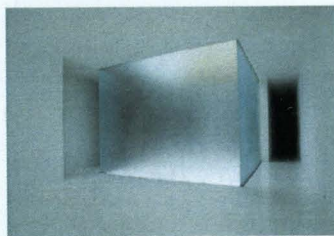


The "light court" is a means of allowing the exterior to envelop the interior space:

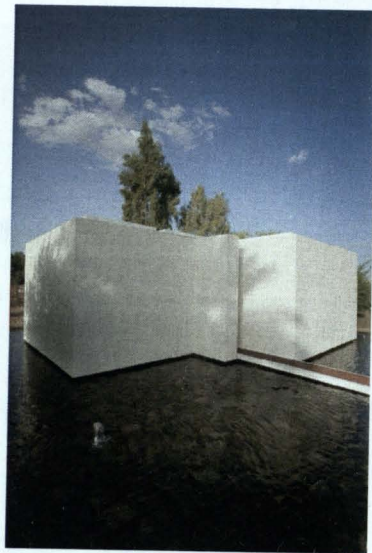
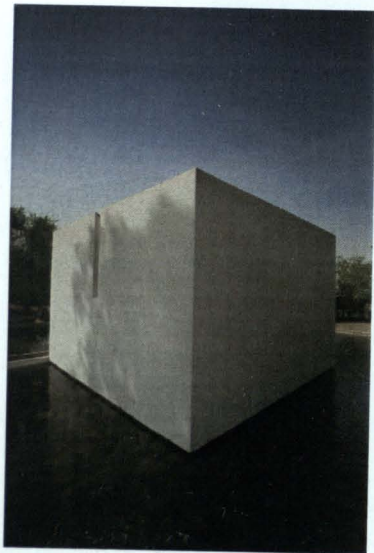
A soft sunlight is infiltrated

Rain goes right through the box, rather than merely hitting a surface.

What is happening outside (sky, nature, light) is reflected on the interior surfaces.

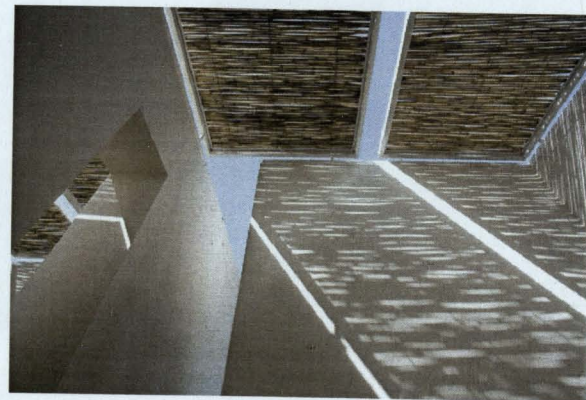


- b. Prayer and Meditation pavilion, Cardiac surgery center
Studio Tamassociati Architects
Sudan



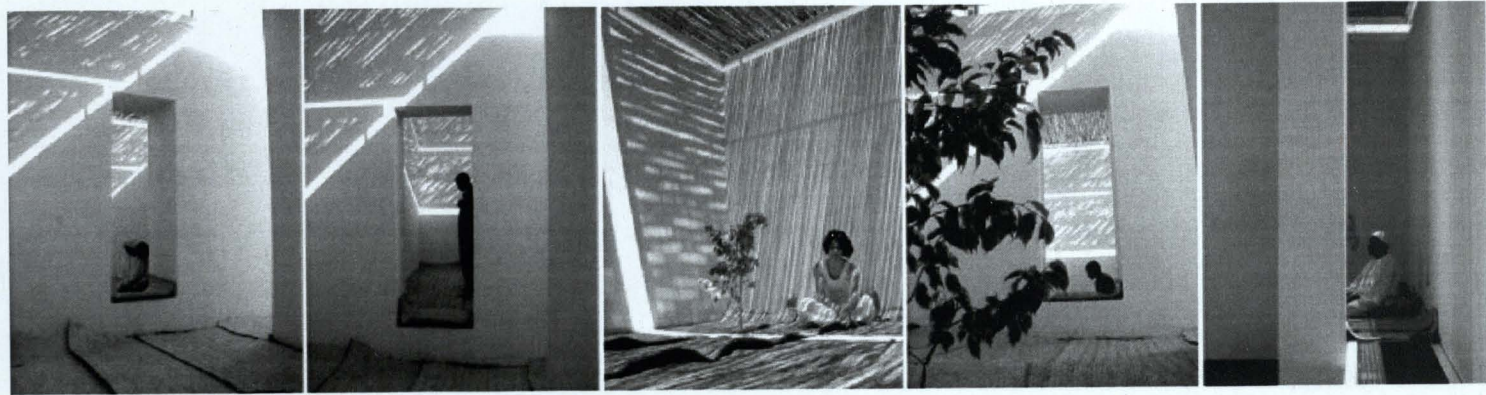
The pavilion sits on a bed of water, and is reached through a pathway. This gives it a sense of separation from the world around it, thus offering it privacy and enhancing its sacred aspect. From the outside, what you perceive are the white cubes intersecting each other, floating above the pool. Upon entering the pavilion, the essence of the spaces is revealed and felt.

The space is conceived as a "spiritual microcosm"¹. The way this is achieved is through a simple play of materials and light. The walls and roof are sliced with tall, thin openings. The roof, a semi-transparent cover, is slightly lifted above the walls, and allows for a filtering of the light into the interior.



¹ Prayer and meditation pavilion, www.tamassociati.org

Because the pavilion has a palpable, general sense of spirituality, it is used freely by each individual, whether it's prayer, meditation, reading, or just relaxing. This is interesting since it emphasizes the power of the space itself to embody spirituality, and appeal to each person in a unique way.



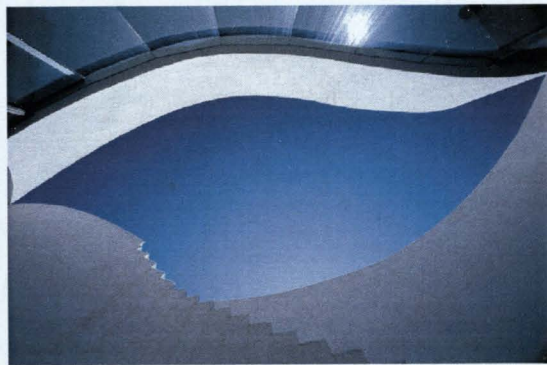
- c. Casa de Retiro Espiritual
Emilio Ambasz
Spain



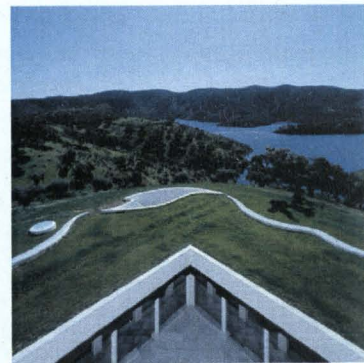
From a distance, all that is visible is a white object. As one gets closer to the project, a white, artificial, organic-shaped trail appears in the ground. Following the trail leads to a crevice, narrow on its edges and wider in the middle, as though the ground has been pushed apart.



From here, it is clear that the white object is not a building, but rather two perpendicular planes, that almost look like the open cover of a book. On each plane, a long staircase leads to a narrow opening on the top corner. The walk through the project consists of going down the staircase into the whole, then accessing the inside of the building. This underground space opens up again on its further edge, onto a sunken courtyard. From there, the staircases on the white structure lead to the opening on top, which frames the view.

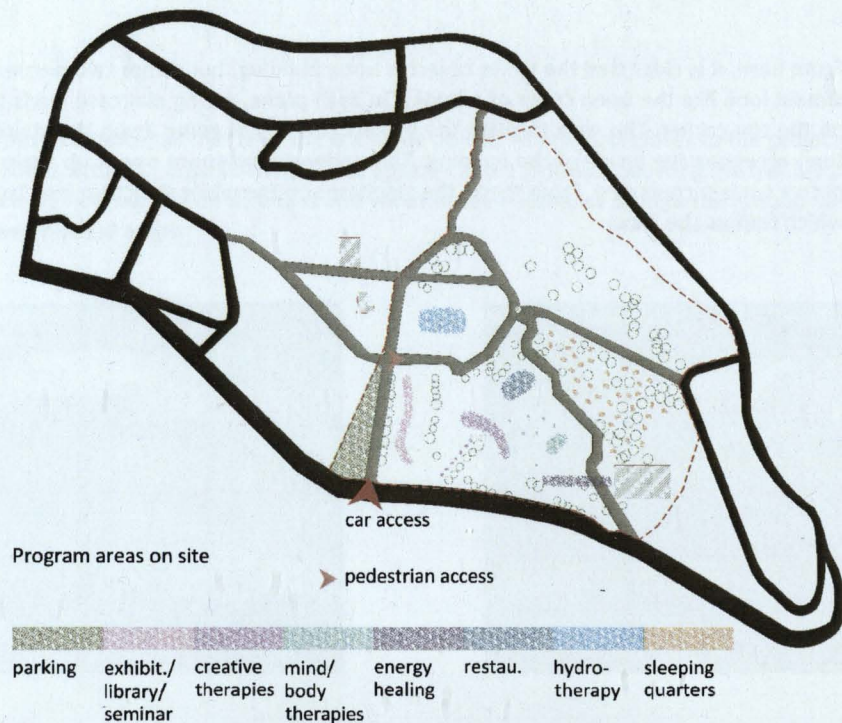


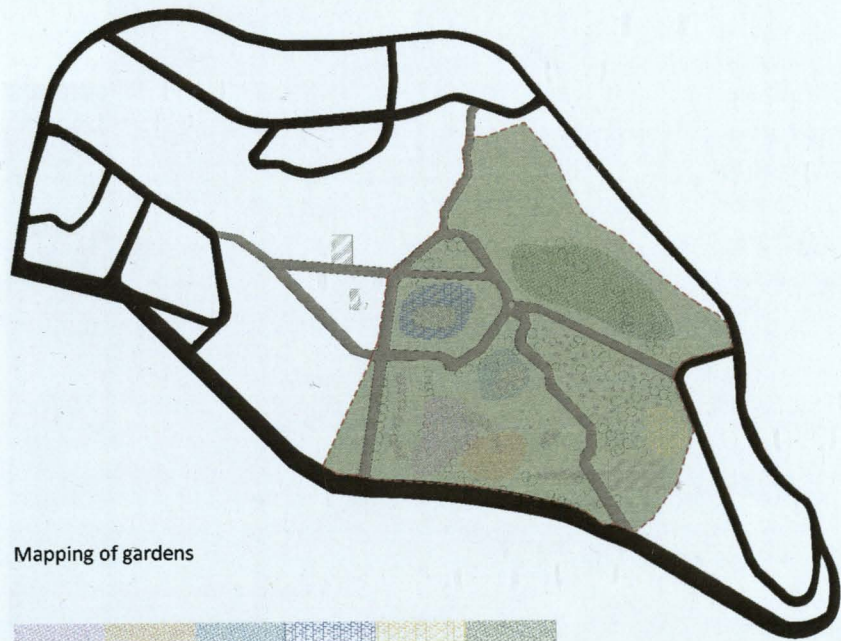
“Those who appreciate Ambasz’s projects probably do so because they recognize that, no matter how immediately graspable the gestalt they present in model and perspective view, what they would really offer is a richly varied, multisensual experience played out in time as they are moved through and around. [...] And these multisensual stimuli are carefully choreographed in dramatic sequence along processional routes.” (Ambasz, 1992: p.15)



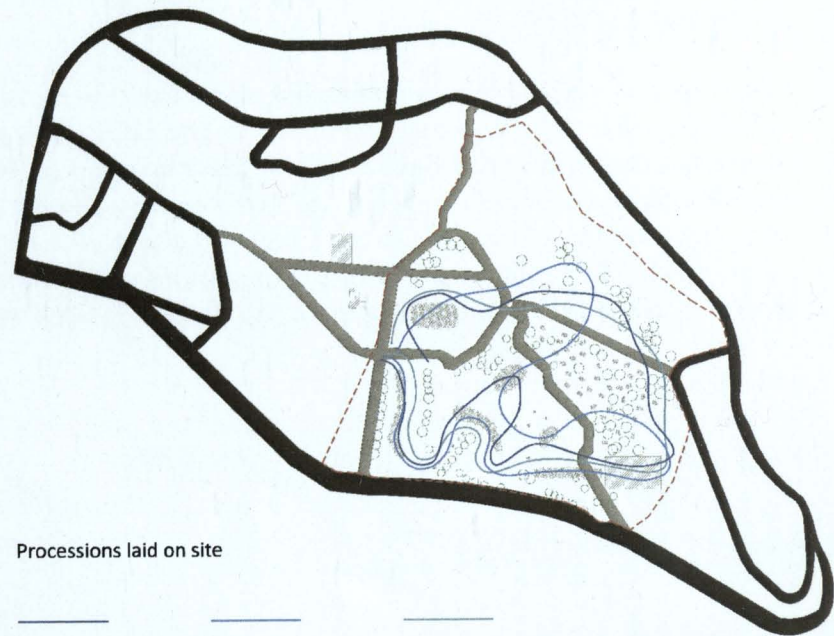
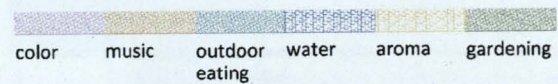
iii. Program on site

The existing path that is imprinted on the site remains as is. The reason is that it allows for a smooth, successive reading of the area, which I consider valuable to the overall experience, especially considering the way it reveals each of the landmarks. My intervention doesn't reduce the site to a blank green slate onto which buildings are imposed. Rather, the project itself is complementary to the existing: it respects, reinterprets and adds a layer to the present elements and boundaries. In a sense, the project becomes a series of added pathways – different possibilities of how to go through the site. In addition, the Aassfouriyeh used to be a charged location, embodying a lot of meaning. An intervention at this point is a remedy to its current static state. The project focuses on how it can go around the different elements – the traces, the boundaries formed by trees – to set them in motion, to revive their presence.

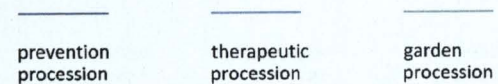




Mapping of gardens



Processions laid on site



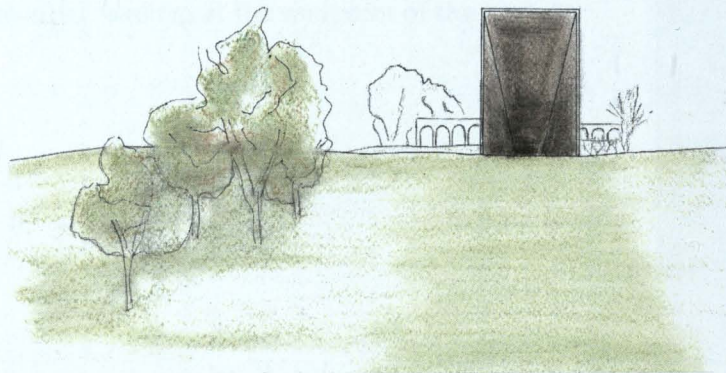
iv. Reinterpreting the existing

The gazebo is read as a midpoint between the site entrance and the roofless structure. It is currently inaccessible. It has a window on each of seven sides, and a door on the eighth. The glass windows are protected by an iron grille; the wooden door is locked. When I saw it for the first time, I got the impression that its architecture and scale are inspired by that of English garden follies. I wanted to step into it. The fact that it was hermetically closed on all sides was frustrating. It's almost like the enclosure suffocates it. I want to open up the gazebo; remove the iron, the glass and the door, allow wind to flow through. This would enhance it in the sense that it becomes the folly I expected it to be; a spiritual pavilion, open to individual reading, at the midpoint of the site.

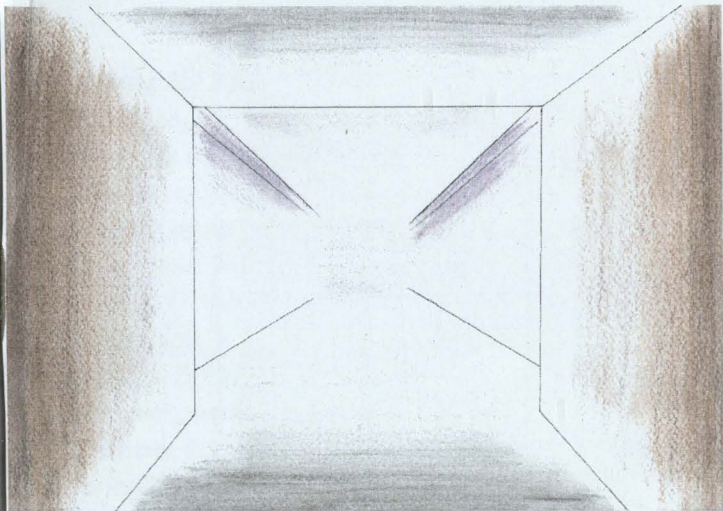


The roofless structure is reached through one of the existing pathways of the site. I want to create another way of falling upon it, through the rest of the project. As you walk through the landscape, you are faced with a large object. It sits in the garden. It doesn't have a door; just a long descending staircase, which pierces through the ground, and fails to announce where it is leading.

The walk down is silent, deliberate. You hear the sound and echo of your footsteps, you feel the roughness of the walls, and you allow your vision to adapt to the darkness. The end of the path reveals a door.



Behind it, the silence is still there, but the brightness strikes your eyes. White walls, washed with a purple light from above. The room is empty; still no reassurance of where you are. A translucent wall stands further away; you see reflections. Behind the wall, small individual energy healins units are laid out.



The way out of the space is the mirror image of the way in. You begin to ascend the staircase. The roof is soon slashed open. You're outside, standing in front of a stone arch. An arcaded gallery, leading the way into a roofless structure. An open courtyard, framing the sky, with patches of water, plants and trees springing out of the floor.



VII. References

- Ambasz, E; Ando, T; Maki, F & Buchanan, P. (1992). *Inventions: the reality of the ideal*. New York, NY: Rizzoli International.
- Amelar, S. *Healing Architecture*. Architectural Record; June 2005, Vol. 193 Issue 6, p. 115-30.
- Byrne, R. (2006). *The secret*. New York, NY: Atria/Beyond Words.
- Dunkenberger, T. (2000). *Tibetan healing handbook*. India: Pilgrims Publishing.
- Gesler, W. (2003). *Healing places*. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Gouk, P. (2000). *Musical healing in cultural contexts*. Aldershot England: Ashgate.
- Gulmen, Funda M. *Energy medicine*. American Journal of Chinese Medicine, 2004, Vol. 32 Issue 5, p651-658.
- Helene, C. (1964). *Healing and regeneration through color*. Santa Barbara, CA: J.F Rowny Press.
- Herzog et de Meuron. *El Croquis*. 1998-2000. Issue 109/110
- Leung, P. & Fong, H. (2007). *Alternative treatment for cancer*. New Jersey: World Scientific.
- McMurray, S. *Chakra Talk*. Holistic Nursing Practice, Mar/Apr2005, Vol. 19 Issue 2, p94-94.

- Murray, S. (2003). *Cancer Guided Imagery Program for Radiation, Chemotherapy, Surgery and Recovery*. Las Vegas, NV: Body and Mind productions.
- Nemri, K. *Aijjii Healing and how the chakras relate to disease and healing*. Proceedings (Academy of Religion & Psychical Research), 2004, p36-42.
- Perez-Gomez, A. & Pelletier, L. (1997). *Architectural representation and the perspective hinge*. Cambridge, Mass. : MIT Press.
- Reichle, F. *The knowledge of healing*, T&C Film.
- Richardson, P. (2004). *New Sacred Architecture*. London: Laurence King Publishing.
- Watson, D. (1995). *A dictionary of mind and body: therapies and ideas in alternative medicine, the healing arts and psychology*. London: Deutsch.
- Withrow, R.L. *The use of color in art therapy*. Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education & Development; Spring2004, Vol. 43 Issue 1, p33-40.

Mom, thank you for your genuine interest and input

Dad, for always encouraging me to work harder

Maha, for all your help

Lama, for making it happen

Karim, for believing in my topic

Ryam, for being there for me

Nicole, for your reassurance

Fall 2009

