

Edson
435

The Retreat



THE RETREAT



Epsn

435

THE RETREAT

Michel Azar

Fall 2008-09

Dedication

To My Parents for their constant support

To Karim Nader for believing in the subject

To Joanna El-Hayek for always being there



ABSTRACT

This is a call for all those whom are trapped in the vicious cycle of the urban life, and are looking to be rejuvenated without having to move out.

I want to isolate you from the world for as long as you wish
I want you to keep willing to see more in this space
I want to keep revealing new elements in this space
I want to give you suspense that intensifies as you go deeper
I want you to be grateful you are in this space
I want you to willingly show respect for this space
I want you to sit in this space
I want you to remember in this space

Having all this in mind, how about you enter The Retreat, a place where water is a dominant element guiding you through stages that will transform your unhealthy lifestyle into a positive one.

CONTENTS

Methodology	11
Hiroshima	
The Experience	12
The Analysis	20
Japanese style gardens	25
Rikyu's legend	37
Water	41
Masaru Emoto	42
From A Vicious Cycle to A Positive Cycle	47
Meditation	
Meditation space	54
Analysis	60
The Retreat	
A wellness Center	64
Spa and Health	70
Beginnings of HydroTherapy	72
Minimizing Stress and Sharpening your Mind	74

The site

Criteria for site selection	77
Location	78
Access and activities	86
History	91
Site impressions	92
Critical analysis	94
Building law	96

Design Strategy

Materials	102
Program	108
Stakeholders	111
Vision	112
Conclusion	131

References

Photo Credits	132
Bibliography	133



METHODOLOGY

A thorough investigation of an experience I had in Hiroshima, triggered the exploration of multiple stages this journey took me on:

The city

The call

Contemplation

Meditation

The city

The visitors to The Retreat will follow a path in order to renew their spirit. A study of the previous stages in relation to different case studies will clarify and draw the trajectory that these visitors will take.

Starting off with a deeper look on the path from the city to the call through Hiroshima's incident, we will move to the case study of the Japanese style garden which will show us unexpected aspects.

Afterward, a transition through the work of a Zen master will lead us to the case studies on water and the findings of Masaru Emoto that offer moments of contemplation.

Then we reach the work of Tadao Ando and we delve into his meditation space.

Finally, through the site analysis of The Retreat we will head back into the city and end with a vision on this whole intervention.

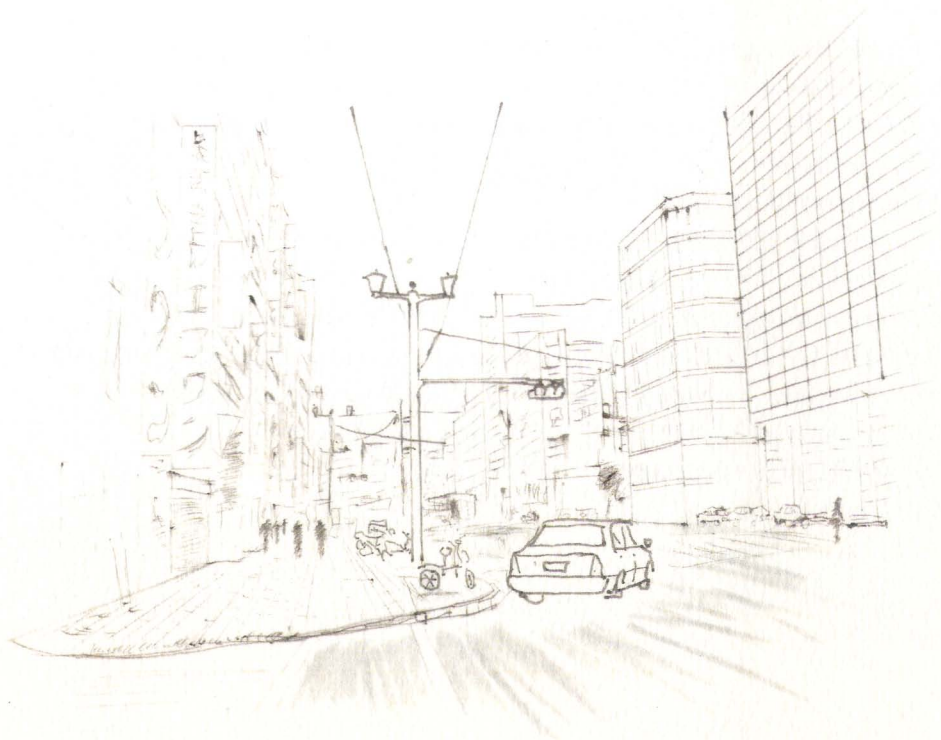
HIROSHIMA: THE EXPERIENCE

As I was walking in the streets of Hiroshima I got a feeling that I must head in a certain direction. I put down my already planed schedule, and allowed my senses to show me the way.

I found myself heading in a direction that I wouldn't have taken if I were the guide.

In fact, my feet were smoothly going in a path which had been artfully drawn across the streets, around the trees, over the river, reaching a spot of nothingness.

STAGE 1: THE CITY



I started wondering why I was lead to this place. I looked around but couldn't see anything special. Nothing more than a building behind me, a river to the right, an artificial lake to the left, and a wall in front of me. All of a sudden,

The city became quiet.

I could hear nothing but a strange sound. The sound of falling water coming from a mysterious source, it was not coming from the river, it was not coming from the lake. It was coming from behind the wall.

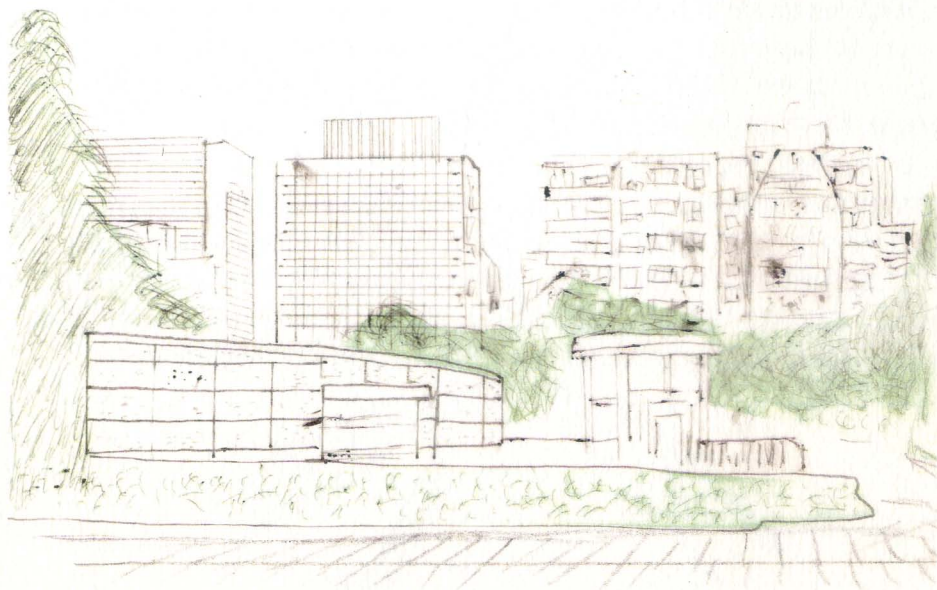
I headed towards this sound, and as soon as I turned around the wall, I saw a window from where a rush of air gushed into my face.

It was a waterfall.

Where does the water go?

I don't know.

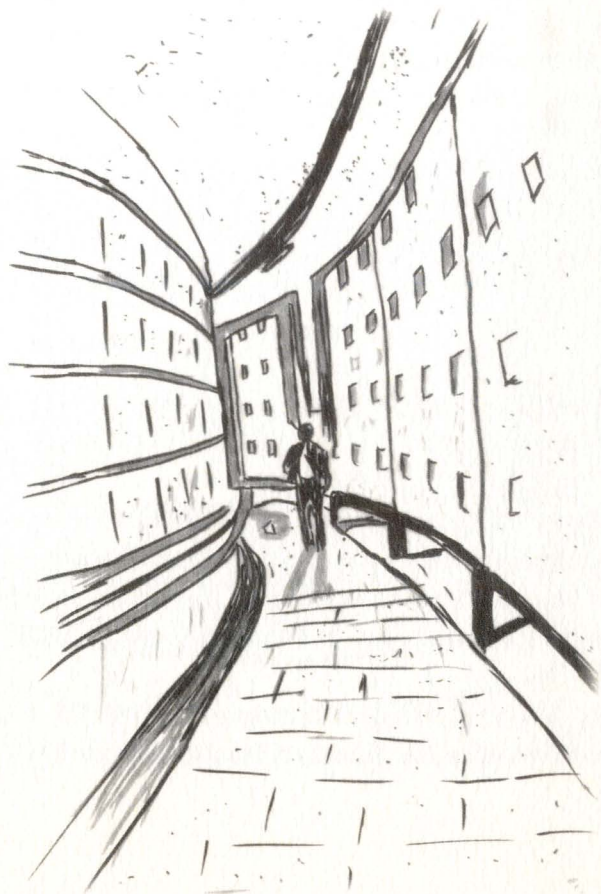
STAGE 2: THE CALL



It is as if this water is being funneled into a space below. Not wanting to go down alone, the sheer power of that suction has guided me towards this area; the ripples of water have oscillated in space and oriented my senses in order to take me down with it. At that moment I went around the wall and discovered an opening below this intriguing element.

As I entered, the light was dim, the walls were high and the temperature dropped. I headed towards a room with an even subtler light source, and I could still hear the water. I kept on my path which had started to slope downwards. I was walking in a circular manner, around a center I couldn't define. The walls are of the same material as the floor and as they were getting higher, it was getting darker.

STAGE 3: CONTEMPLATION



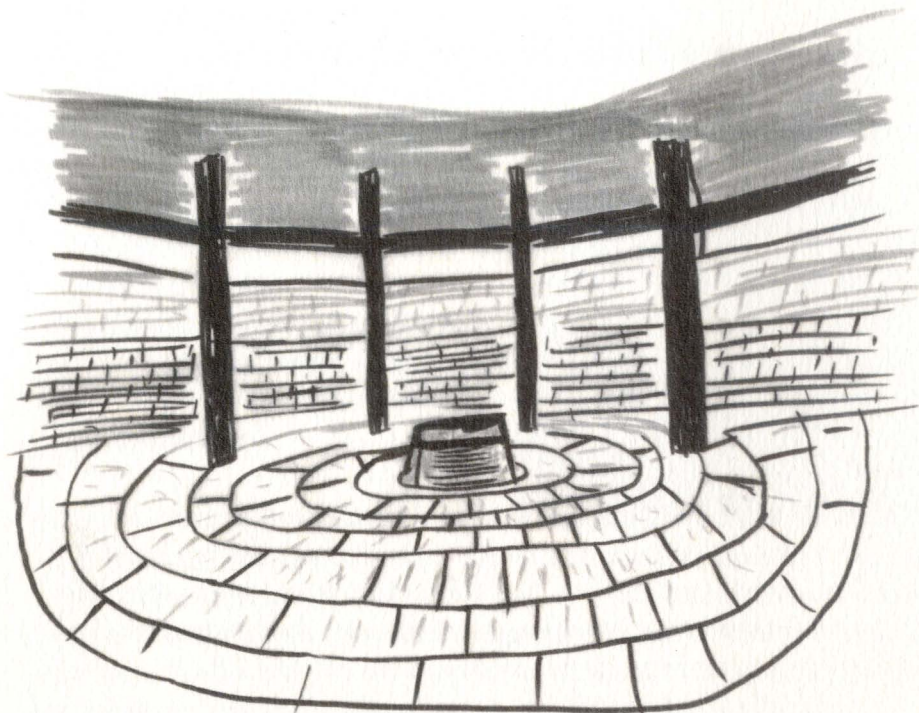
I saw a light at the end of this corridor.
Getting closer to it, my heart started beating faster so I took a final look
and entered.

I was struck!
Huge cylindrical space,
Cold monotonic material,
Echoes,
Light,
And at the center, the source of it all:
A tiny water source,

A small 2 layered cascade of water with the liquid flowing from one level
to the next creates a harmonious sound, which is being echoed by the
walls through the source of light, which is the hole where the water on
top had been disappearing into, to the outside where I was walking.

It is my space, it is your space, it is our space to share, it is a space to
rethink the past, imagine the future and to live the moment.

STAGE 4: MEDITATION



HIROSHIMA: ANALYSIS

It is clear that this journey is divided into different stages:

Stage 1: The city

With all the noise, people, cars, trains, and activities that were occurring all at once, I found myself on a path rich with subtle elements which eventually lead me to a space of complete silence amidst the hectic atmosphere. I felt that there was something different in the air, something that stood out from the rest of the city. It's as if I had been transported to a different psychological state, where I blocked out the city and was ready for a call.

Stage 2: The call

The sound of water had suddenly overtaken all other sounds rising from the city. I had understood that I have replied to this call by deciding to start this unexpected journey. The sound was strong enough for me to hear and feel, but subtle enough not to impose itself over the other actions happening in the city.

Stage 3: Contemplation

I started to wonder.

Why was there a call?

Why was I able to notice it?

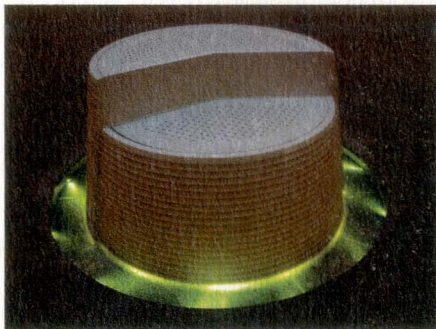
How did it surpass the line of events that were occurring and reach me that powerfully?

Then a window opened another opportunity, which I could not refuse to follow.

Stage 4: Meditation

It was the moment of truth. I took my final look back and entered.

It was a space of peacefulness, a space of meditation.



Stage 5: The City Again

I was released from this space, (released because in a sense I had been captured by this exceptional moment) and I was set to go back to the city, to look at the same things, but this time in a different perspective.

This journey of multiple moments gradually opening up,
Paths never exposing the whole scene at one instance,
Subtle elements along the way,
All brought back images of the Japanese style gardens.





JAPANESE STYLE GARDENS

Ponds and lakes in Far Eastern Countries represent the souls of the world, since the world is too large to be fitted around the lakes; elements were chosen and arranged around these watery edges.

The walk through the garden is one that constantly surprises

the visitor with its clever design. At times the pond disappears entirely from view, only to return in a panoramic vista, this is achieved by the play of the earth, by creating depressions, peninsulas, and islands.^(*)



.....
* Japanese Gardens, by David A. Slawson, Kodansha International

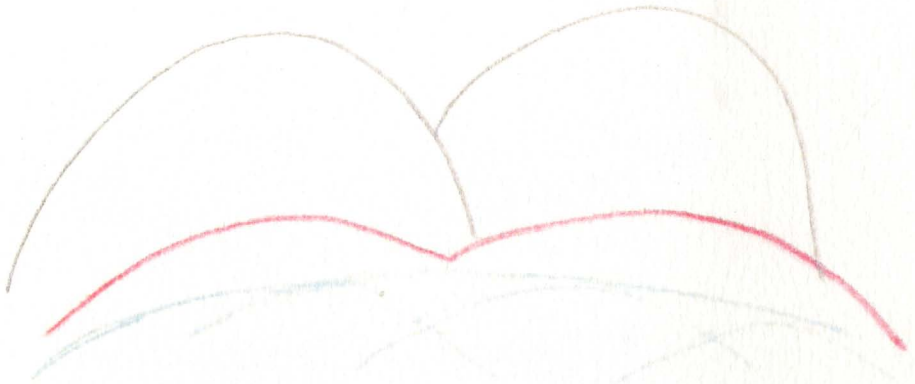
The Japanese have even mastered the art of imitating nature; they have managed to create a sense of nature without having the element of water itself. They are able to create an image of the ocean or river by simply laying out pebbles around boulders and raking them in a manner that evokes one's sight, making one feel the presence of the element and its constant flow.



The stone Gardens as well as the natural gardens provide a retreat for all those willing to discover multiple paths. One that might simply lead you to the other side, while others would take you on a journey of contemplation. You would experience non-city like elements, sounds of water, sounds of trees. They offer a place to rest and focus. Eventually you will have to leave these gardens and head back to the world of reality. But these gardens were sure to send you back after having refreshed your spirit, so that you would go out releasing positive vibes in your surroundings.



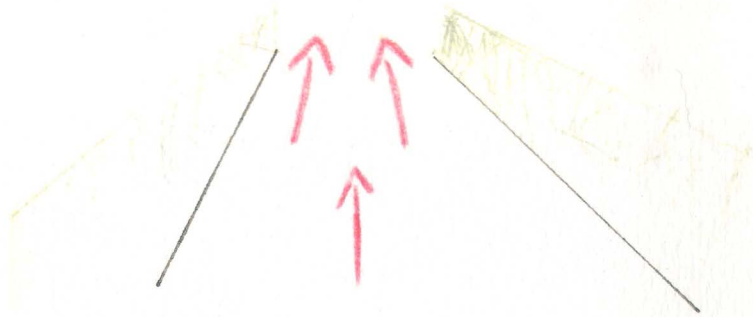




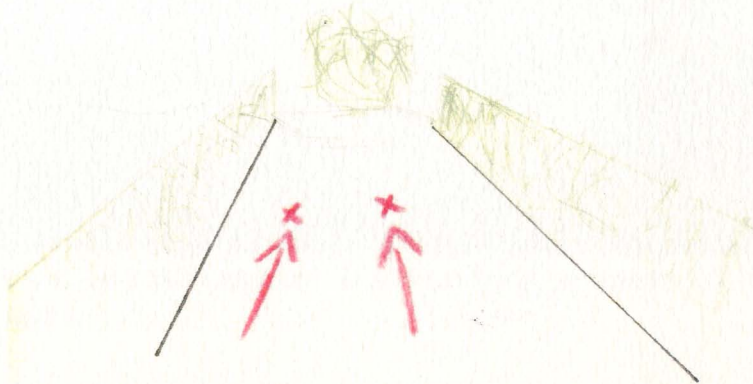
In the East Garden of the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, the vegetation is laid out in a multileveled manner in order to create a feeling of hierarchy that would have otherwise been lost if it had been laid out with the same height vegetation.

Here, the rice fields in the front represent the fertile grounds while the tall trees on the 3rd level represent the mountain range. In between these two, there are round bushes which represent the buffer zone.

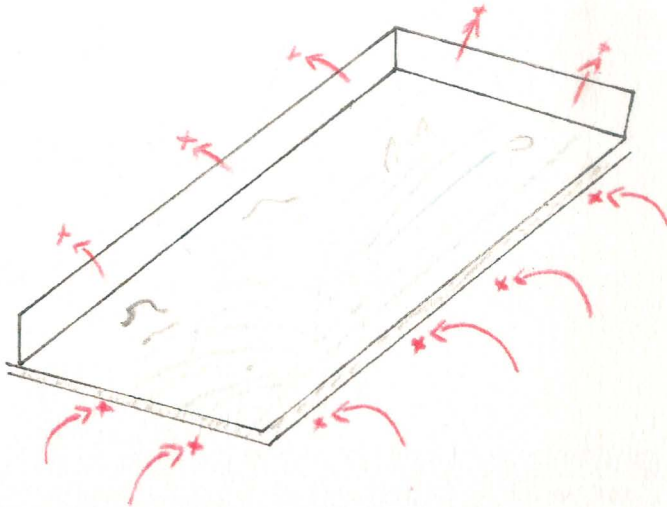




This is the entrance of the Katsura villa garden in Kyoto. If the tree had not been there, the surprise factor of the complete image would have been lost. One would have viewed the entire garden and therefore, he/she would have not walked around and discovered many hidden elements that make this promenade a noteworthy experience.



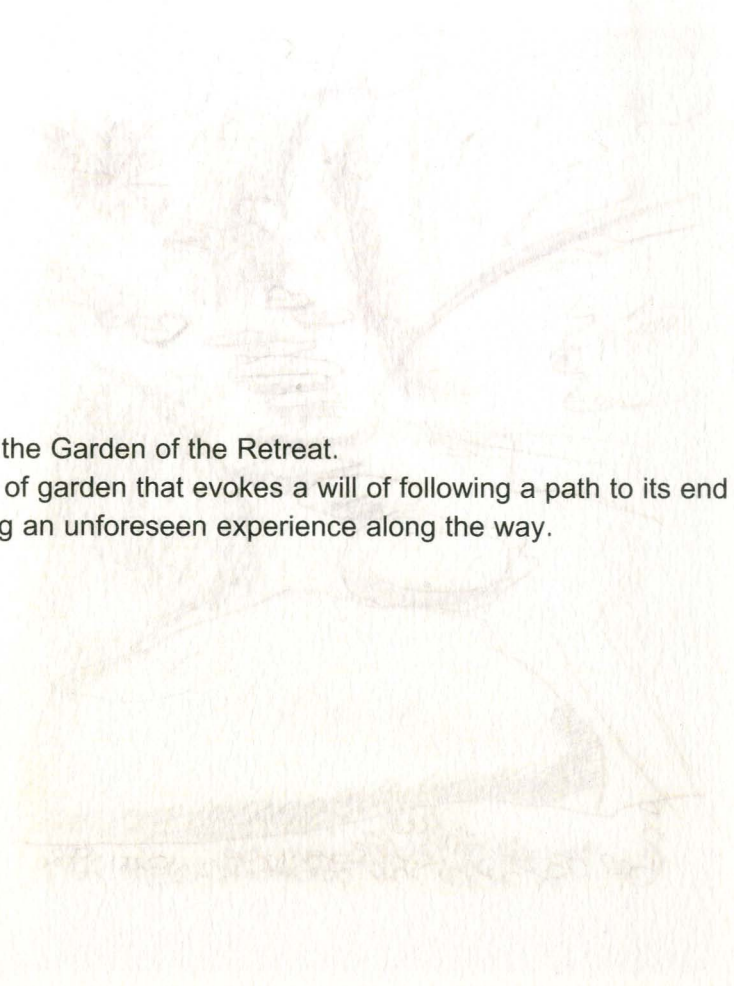




The Ryoan-ji Temple in Kyoto is a simple rectangle with white pebbles and some boulders. One does not dare to cross over the dark pebbles onto the raked stones, not because it's forbidden, but simply because one feels separated from the purity of this garden by a simple change in material.

This subtle change has managed to create a boundary for the space. On the far side, there is another boundary (the actual wall), but this wall is not only there to stop the individual from coming in or out of that side. It is there to limit one's sight of vision from trying to wander out into the surrounding.

These gardens have shown me that boundaries don't need to be partitions, since partitions themselves don't act as boundaries.



This is the Garden of the Retreat.

A style of garden that evokes a will of following a path to its end while awaiting an unforeseen experience along the way.



RIKYU'S LEGEND

If we go back in time, around four hundred years ago, a wise Japanese Zen master named Sen no Rikyu designed a legendary tea garden on a dramatic cliff site overlooking the Inland Sea, where he planted a high screen of hedges and trees all around it, blocking out the vista to the sea despite it being mesmerizing.

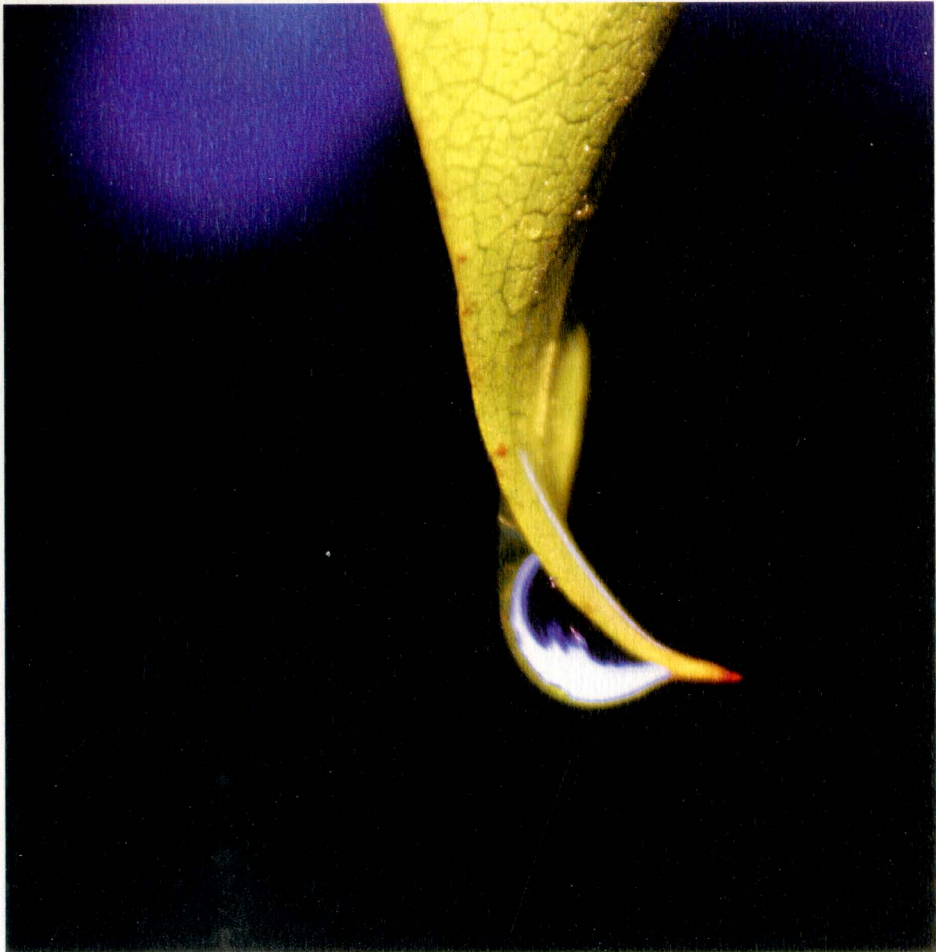
In front of the hedge, Rikyu placed a small stone font for washing the hands (an important prelude to the tea ritual). However, right above the basin he kept an opening in the trees.

As visitors knelt down to the bowl, just at the moment when their hands mingled with the cool water, their eyes would catch a fleeting glimpse of sea through the leaves.

*A bit of water here,
There, between the trees---
The sea!*

This is how Sen no Rikyu described the simple but profound experience that the tea garden could offer. The experience of the limited splash of water compared with the limitless ocean. (*)

*Water And Architecture by Charles W. Moore



The garden no longer exists. Today, Rikyu's legend exists, and the lesson he leaves is that, with only a slight amount of water and a spirited design, all the water in the world can be called to mind.



WATER

“Water escapes the earth’s surface in the form of a spring, moves forward as a river, stands still as a lake and rests in eternal calmness, yet everlasting movement in the form of the ocean. It transforms itself to ice or to steam, it ascends through evaporation while it descends as rain, snow or hail ... it hovers as a cloud ... it is colorless, yet can take on all colors ... it is formless, yet can adapt to any given form; it is soft, yet stronger than stone. It creates contours in the form of valleys, coastlines and grottos”. (*)

Take a moment to ponder...

Imagine if we have the power to influence the world with our thoughts.

* WIT Transactions on The Built Environment, Vol 86, © 2006 WIT Press
www.witpress.com, ISSN 1743-3509

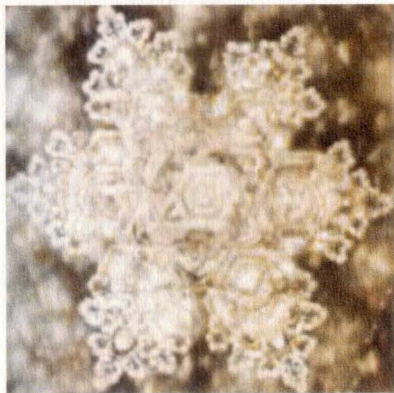
MASARU EMOTO

Now... consider the notion that if this is true, it must have always been true. We would then have to accept that our past thoughts have already influenced our bodies and our world and that our past thoughts and actions have contributed to the creation of everything we experience today. For some, this is a responsibility too great to bear, so they may consciously or subconsciously block out this knowledge.

For over ten years, Mr. Emoto has been observing and reporting

discoveries concerning the ability of water to reflect its environment.

Mr. Emoto conducted his experiments by freezing droplets of water which he then observed under a dark field microscope with photographic capabilities. By photographing water from many sources, Mr. Emoto discovered fascinating information about the differences in the structures that are created when water is frozen. He noticed that water from unspoiled mountain streams and springs forms

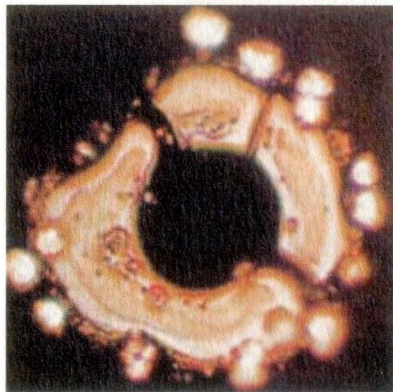


Spring Water

beautiful, geometric designs, unlike water from a polluted source.^(*)

* http://www.spiritandflesh.com/Masaru_Emoto_water_crystals_consciousness_matter.htm

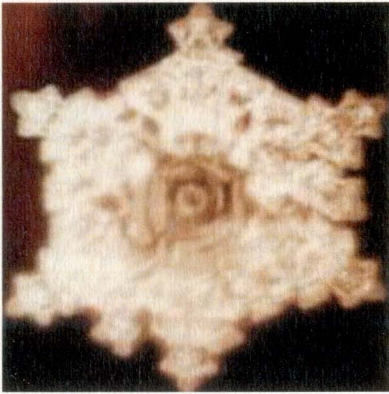
Mr. Emoto found water to be extremely malleable; its molecular shape easily transforms to reflect its environment. When we look at water with our eyes it does not appear to change. However, on the molecular level, water is constantly changing. These changes are in direct response to its surroundings. (**)



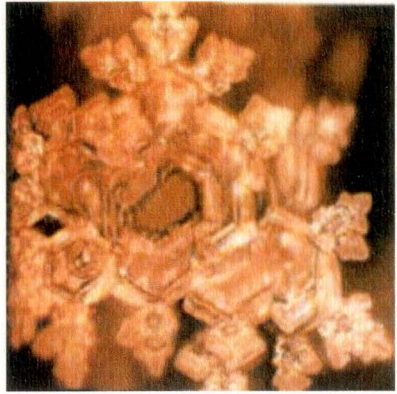
Polluted Water

With the recent popularity in music therapy, Mr. Emoto decided to see what effects music has on the structuring of water. He placed distilled water between two speakers for several hours and then photographed the crystals that formed after the water was frozen.

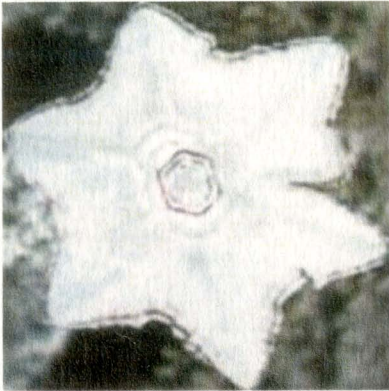
.....
** <http://unexplainedmysteries.yuku.com/topic/926>



Beethoven's Pastoral



Bach

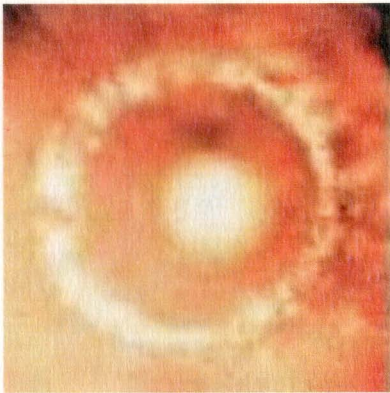


Kawachi Folk Dance

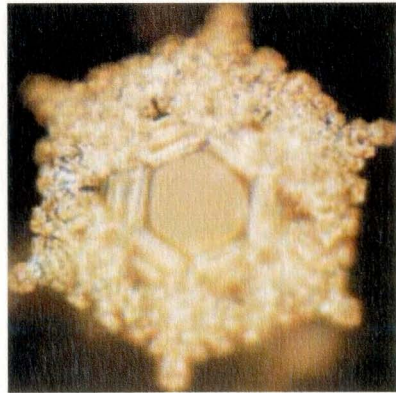


Heavy Metal Music

He also explored how thoughts and words would affect the structure of untreated, distilled water. Distilled water is like dead or blank water. During the distillation process, the water is completely stripped of any pollutants. At the same time, it is also stripped of all healthy materials such as minerals.^(*)



Distilled Water



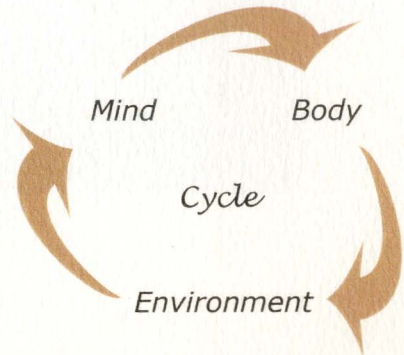
Love and Appreciation

.....
*How water reflects our consciousness by S. Sharp <http://www.wellnessgoods.com/MESSAGES.ASP>

FROM A VICIOUS CYCLE TO A POSITIVE CYCLE

Beliefs influence our minds. Our minds influence our moods. Our moods affect our bodies, which in turn affect the environment all around us. The opposite is also true; our bodies are affected by the environment, which in turn, affects our minds. This situation has created a seemingly endless vicious cycle which is felt throughout our world.

Like the properties of water, the mind is very impressionable and reflective of the external environment. Similar to a mirror which is still and clear until something dances in front of it, much of the activity in our minds is a result of the environment and is beyond our ability to control. We do, however, have control of what it is we choose to consciously think about. Thinking is an activity that can be controlled. Whether you realize it or not, you direct your mind to think. There may be other thoughts bouncing around in there, but you are the one who chooses what you think about. We always have the choice of what to think about. This choice will affect every area of our life from the mental and emotional realms, right down to our actual physical health.^(*)



.....
*What the bleep do we know!? Directed by: William Arntz Betsy Chasse and Mark Vicente 2004



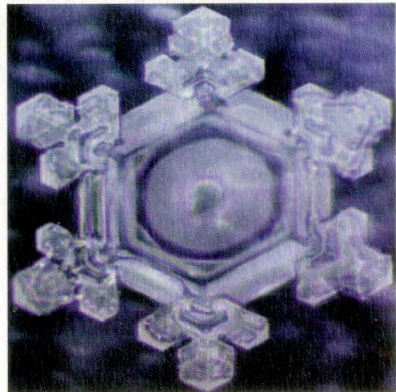
"Hado" is the intrinsic vibrational pattern at the atomic level in all matter. The smallest unit of energy. Its basis is the energy of human consciousness.

"Hado" creates words. Words are the vibrations of nature. Therefore beautiful words create beautiful nature, ugly words create ugly nature. This is the root of the universe. "

~ Masaru Emoto ~

Mr. Emoto has shown us that water is affected by its environment. However, he has proven in turn, that water also has the power to affect its environment. He demonstrated this by putting a picture of the “Thank You” crystal in front of a bottle of distilled water, the distilled water was transformed.

Mr. Emoto noted the similarities between the water crystal designs and the mandalas of many Eastern traditions. A mandala is a pattern that is used as a focal point for meditation. It is believed that simply focusing on these shapes will increase your vibration and hasten your path to enlightenment. These experiments suggest that we can do the same with the higher vibrational water crystal patterns. By simply staring at a picture of the crystal, you can transform your own molecular structure for the better.*



Thank You

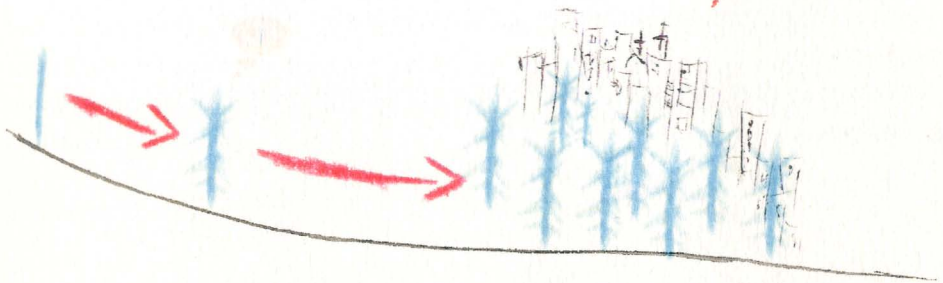
.....
* Masaru Emoto, Messages from Water vol 1

Similarly, humans are to be compared to these experiments.

When one is born, he is as pure as can be, just like the water from the spring.

Then, man's spirit gets polluted as he passes through the phases of life and he tends to forget the pure state; just like water which gets polluted as it goes down the stream, and lower on the path.

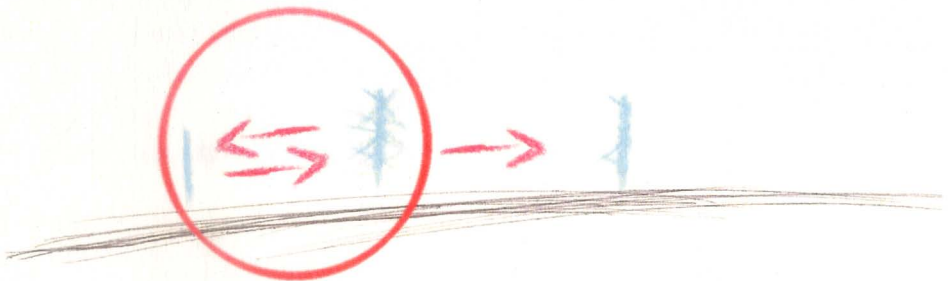
The water gets washed away in the ocean. Man gets washed away in the city.



What if I can create sort of a rejuvenation zone, where one gets in contact with this pure origin.

A place where one can come to, to transform the unhealthy spirit into a positive one.

Therefore I would be helping the society in creating a healthy atmosphere.



So, of all the elements which surround us and constitute us, water is the one that affects us most. Water can take us on a journey where all our senses can be stimulated and comforted at the same time. And with a little imagination, one can understand that through water, he/she can create many spaces where people can relax their bodies and refresh their spirit, meditate, and simultaneously, discover new bodily sensations.

MEDITATION SPACE

At the meeting point of 4 walls Tadao Ando has managed to create a space.

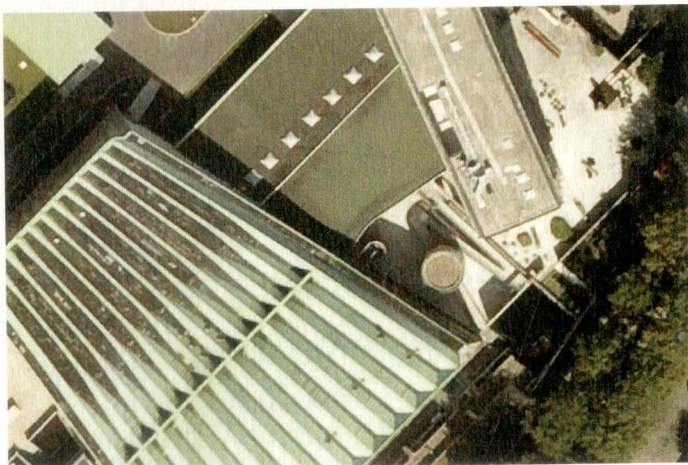
In an area of 350 m2 with 3 out of 4 sides blocked by construction a meditation space was created.

In the hollow between 3 structures and a Japanese style garden, a 4th much smaller element exists.

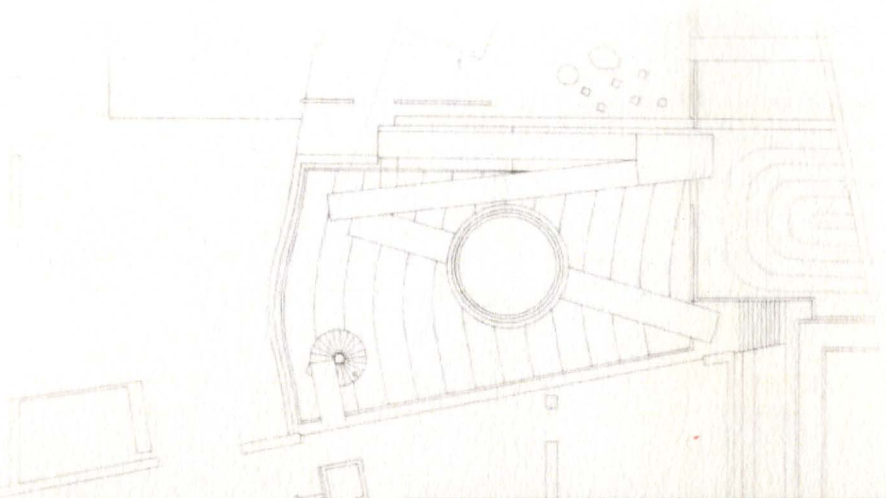
It is a space of meditation.

It is part of the UNESCO center yet it's disjoint. It is formed of a concrete cylinder and a path.

That is all there is to this space.



The City



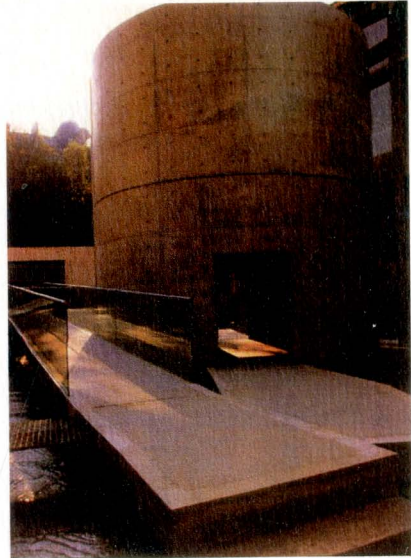
The plot is a rectangle made of stones exposed to the atomic bomb in Hiroshima that have been disinfected with a fine sheet of water running over them creating a clear stream. A bridge is added in order to create a path over this stream of water; it is a path you decide to take.



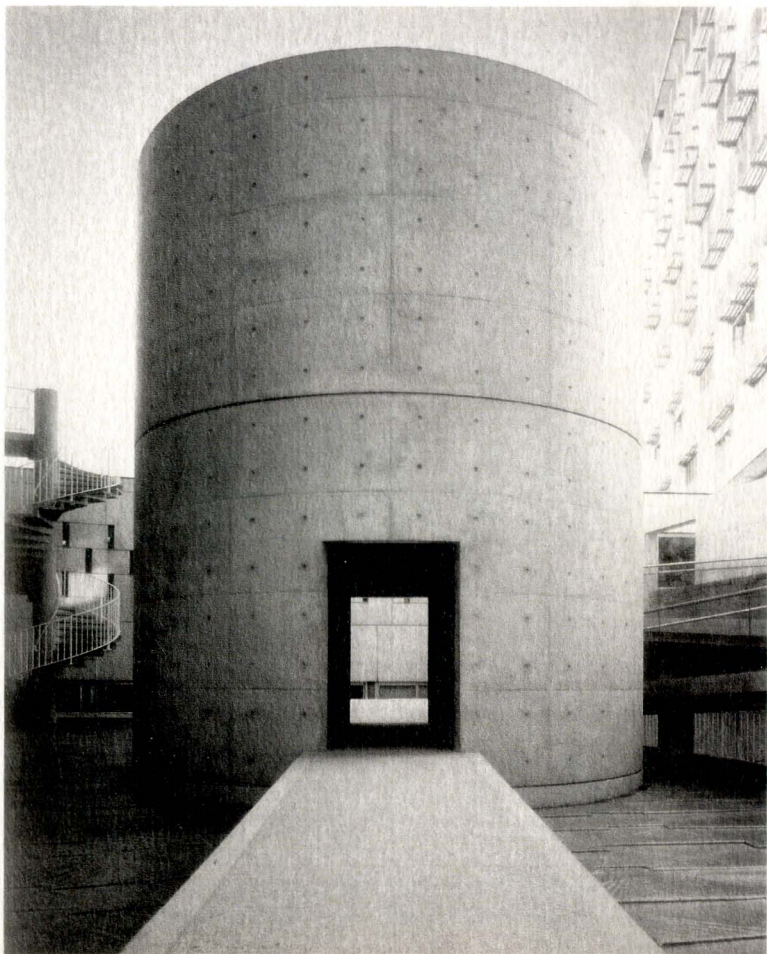
It takes you down gradually, stopping for a rest, where a window is created using fair face concrete to frame the Japanese garden in front. After you are done contemplating the garden you continue on this path. At the second corner there is a change. The railings disappear and you are within touching distance of the water below you. Here you are given the choice of either going down the steps and leaving the paths, or turning and continuing the walk towards the cylinder which you had the chance of discovering from the outside.



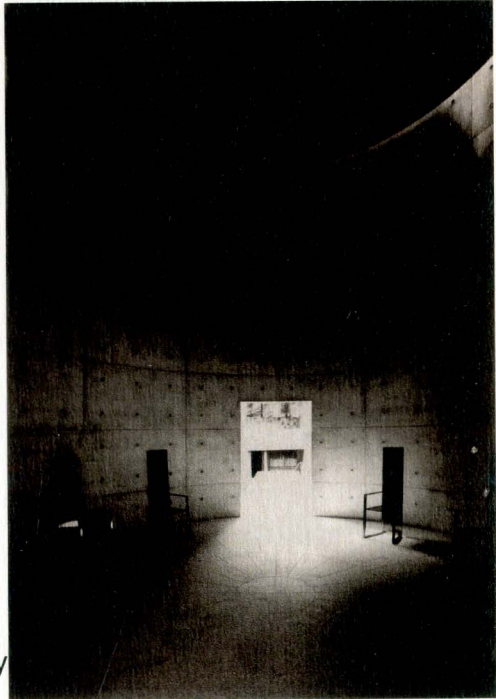
The Call



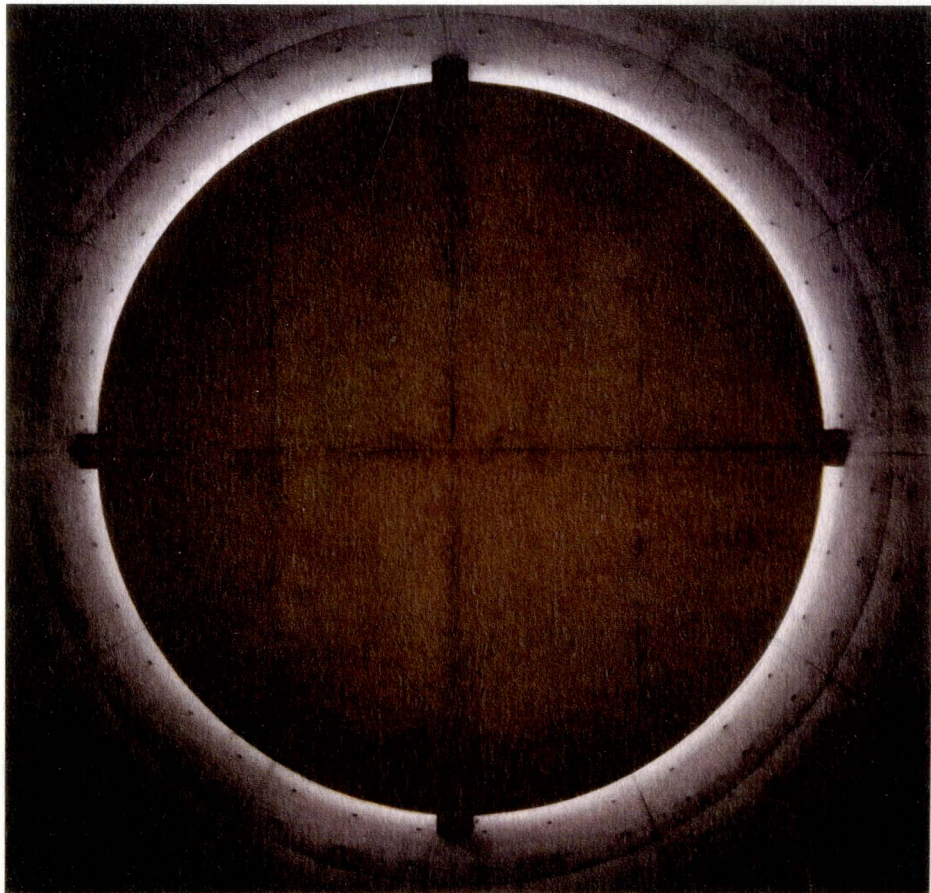
Contemplation



If you decide to leave the path, then you have used this path as a bridge for crossing over the water. But if you decide to continue, then you shall be greeted by an opening in the wall, an opening that leads to another one. Here, the ramp has penetrated the cylinder. The ramp represents the path you choose to take; and the cylinder represents the work the architect wants you to experience. Upon stepping into this unification, your world merges with the architect's world; you enter accompanied by the wind. This is the place where you sit and think, anyways there are only 4 metal chairs inside this cylinder. The light enters through a simple shift in the scale of the roof where the ceiling is a round structure slightly smaller than the periphery, therefore allowing the light to penetrate and flush the dry rough walls creating a sort of a halo over the space.



Meditation



MEDITATION SPACE: ANALYSIS

From the UNESCO Peace Memorial designed by Tadao Ando, I manage to deduce the 5 stages from the architecture he has built.

1-The City:

The project is in the central part of the city of Paris. It is at the center of the chaotic noise, concentration of people, rumbling of engines.

2- The Call:

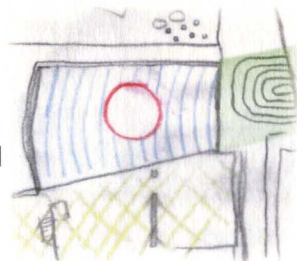
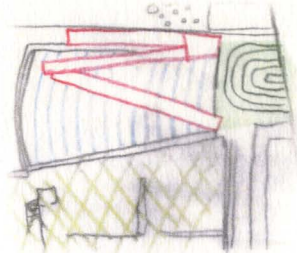
Seeking refuge, people answer to the call of silence coming out of this block

3- Contemplation:

A bridge leads one on a journey of deep thoughts, offering elements of surprise (i.e. view of garden).

4- Meditation:

A changing point where one decides to stop or face the chamber of self contemplation, where all is reduced to a minimum.



5- The City Again:

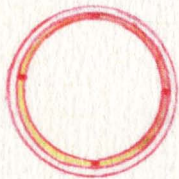
One exits the space to a complete exposure of the garden which he had viewed earlier.

Here you share the space with water, with light, with wind.

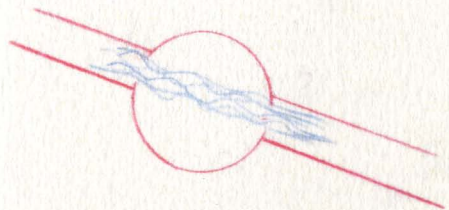
Water is slight enough for you to feel, wind is slight enough for you to breathe, and light is slight enough for you to see. Upon exiting you are greeted by the garden at the end of the paths.

It's a path that has taken one from having all aspects of nature with no appreciation, to a space with the minimum presence of the elements, to eventually going back to the same city with a completely refreshed spirit.

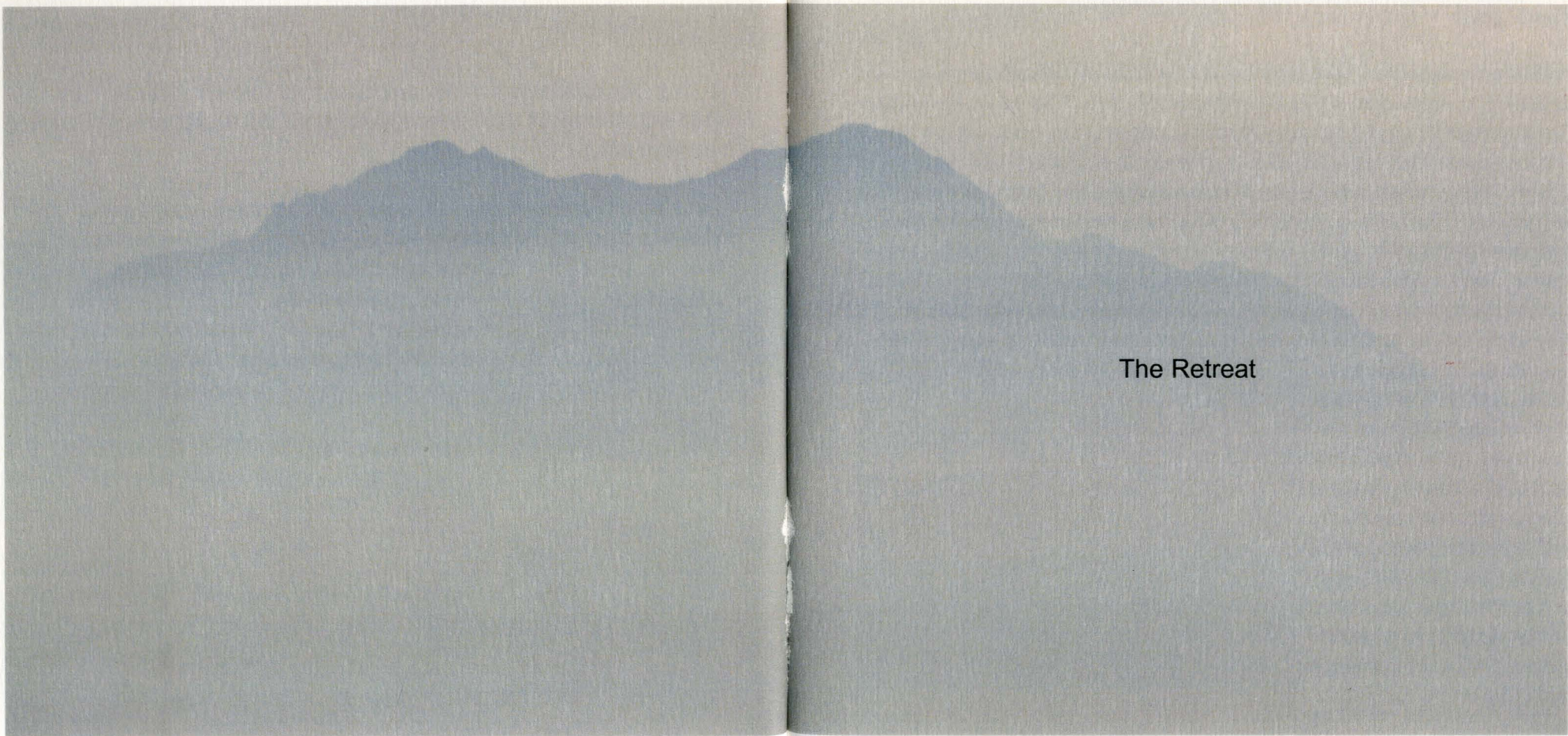
This path enables one to view the present in a different perspective.



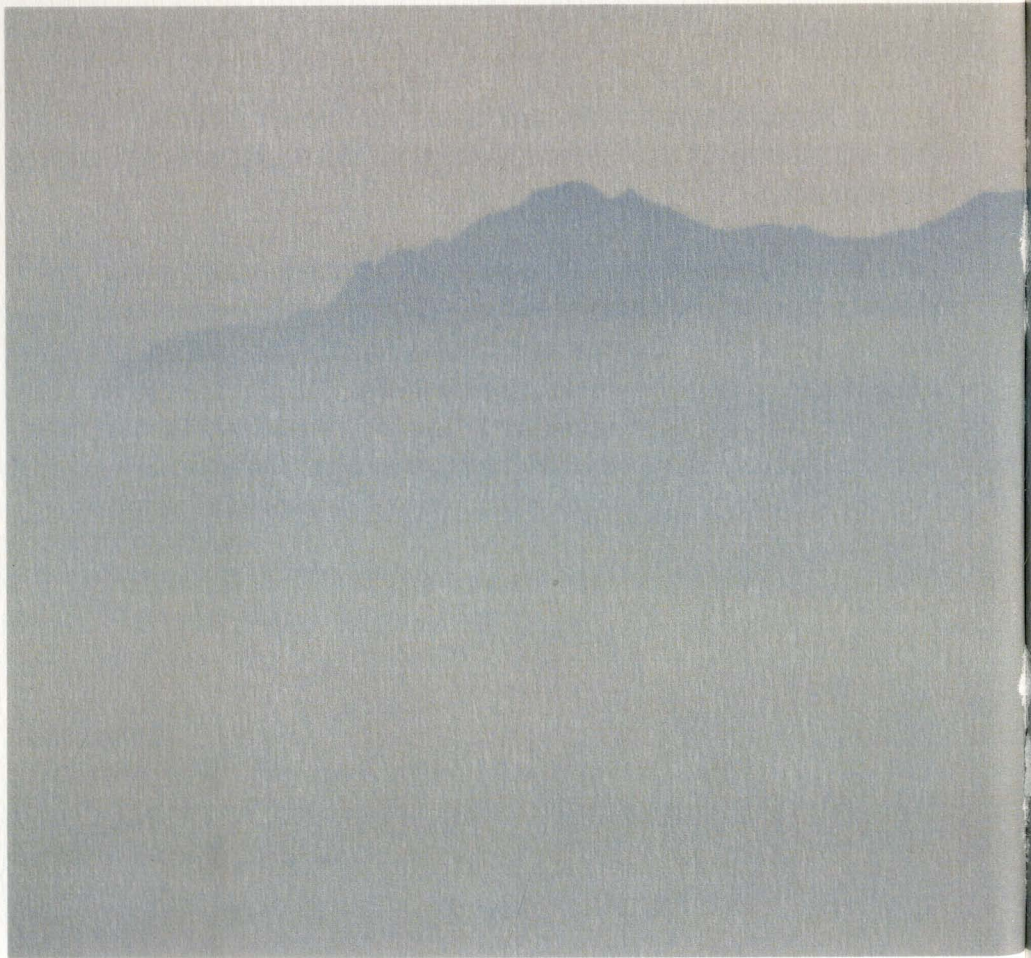
Light

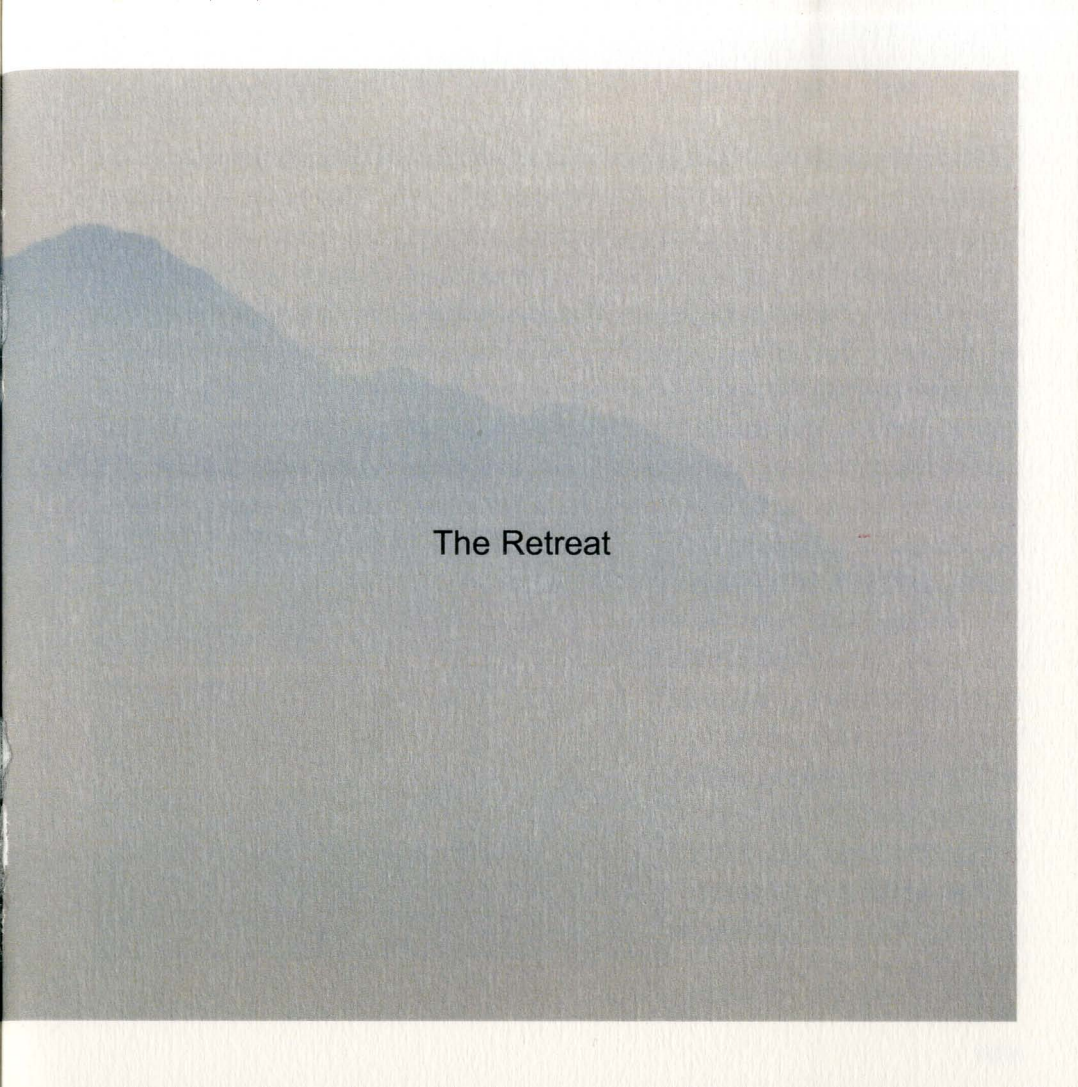


Wind



The Retreat





The Retreat

THE RETREAT: A WELLNESS CENTER

As I mentioned before, water is the centre of life: the food we grow depends on water and without, it withers and dies. The body, as well as the planet we live on, are approximately 70% water.

Without water, we could only survive for about 4 days.

Despite the obvious importance of water to our lives - as nutrition and for survival - the healing properties of water are often forgotten in our busy and stressed lives.

Hence, what I will be doing is creating a wellness center in the city. This center will be situated in a public garden rich with water elements, so that those willing to have a break from work can head there and enjoy the natural atmosphere, sitting next to flowing water or even around a fountain.

Fountains have symbolized sacred sources throughout history, the origin of life and the initial stages of the water cycle.^(*)

Water fountains are usually inviting to people because they bring back



* Water And Architecture by Charles W. Moore

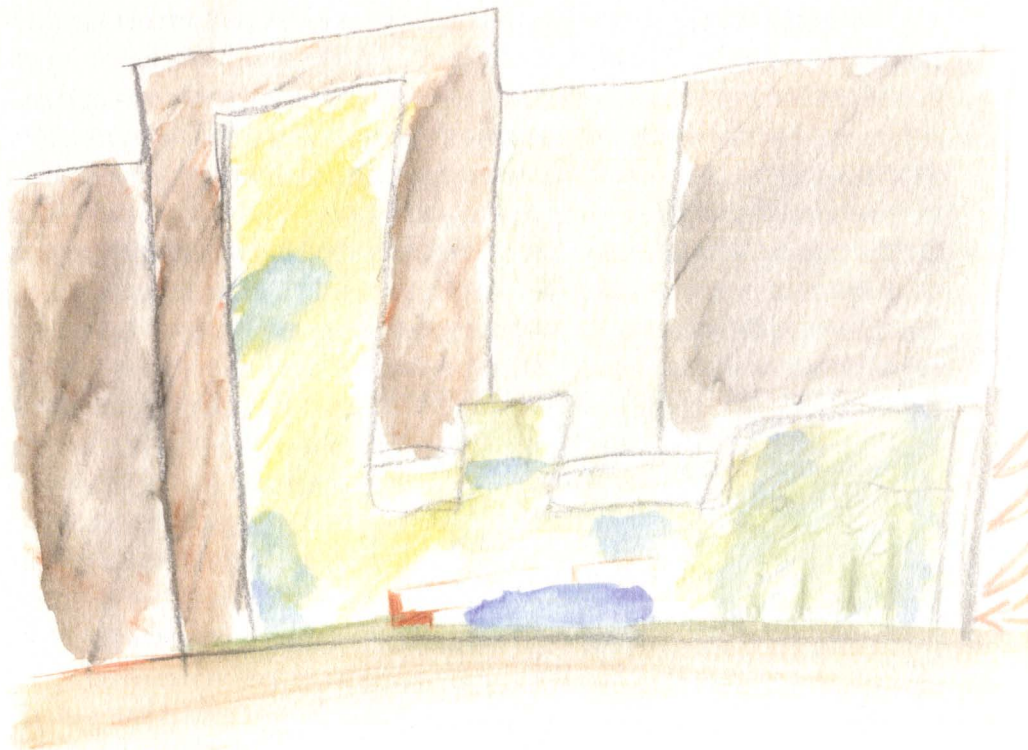
the nostalgia of when they were children and used to play around these waters.

In this garden they are free to go on a journey by taking different paths, one might lead them back to the city, another to a meditation space, a third one might lead them to more water, and a fourth might lead them to the wellness center.

On the outside (the transition zone) man gets close to nature although he is in the city, but on the inside man actually unites with nature, through the different treatments this space has to offer, from physical to psychological.

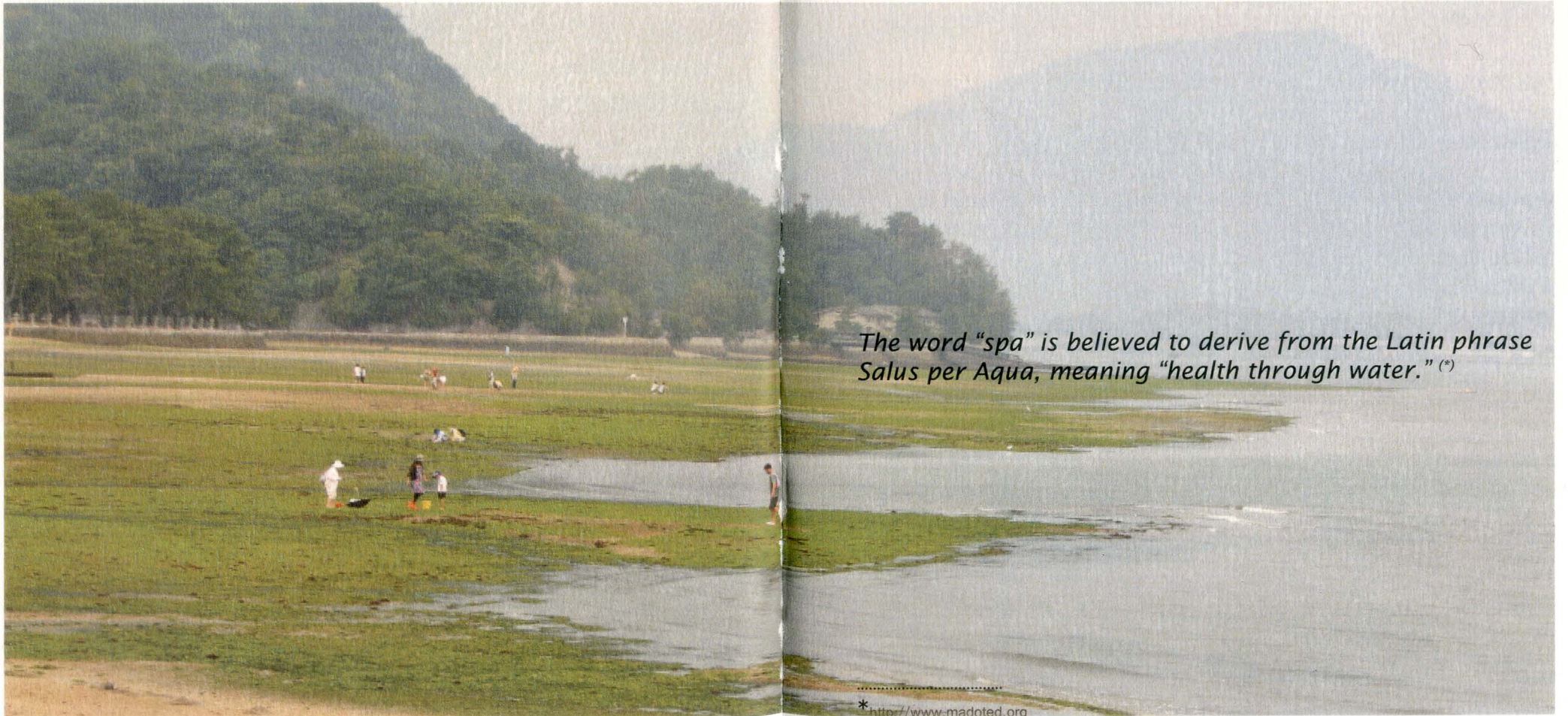


Remembering what Mr. Emoto said, the visitors to this center would actually be doing good to the city, since after exiting this space they will come out with a positive harmonic mood that will oscillate in the work environment leading to a healthier cycle of events.



The garden will act as a gate. It will filter the undesired sounds and transform them into a pleasant harmonic flow, using the different tones that the water creates. It will be an open boundary that will block the sounds of chaos and allow the passers by to take a limited glimpse of what lies behind.

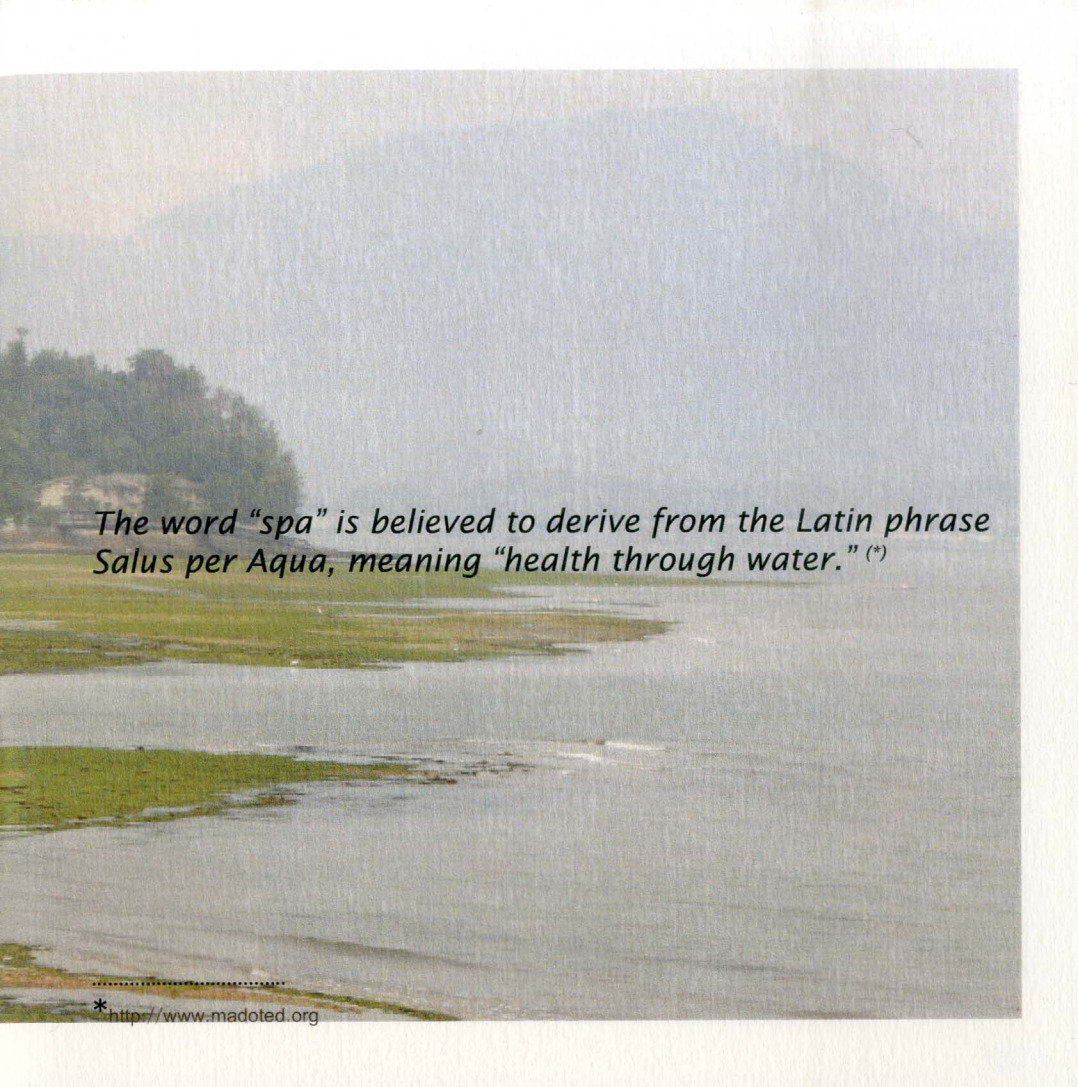
In the background a multileveled structure will house the functions of the rejuvenating process.



The word "spa" is believed to derive from the Latin phrase Salus per Aqua, meaning "health through water." ()*

.....
* <http://www.madoted.org>



A misty, overcast landscape with a body of water in the foreground and a forested hillside on the left. The scene is hazy, with soft light filtering through the clouds. The water is calm, reflecting the greyish-blue tones of the sky. The forested hillside is dark and dense, contrasting with the lighter, misty background.

The word “spa” is believed to derive from the Latin phrase Salus per Aqua, meaning “health through water.” ()*

SPA AND HEALTH

If you've sat in a spa, you already know how good it can feel when your muscles are tired or aching, and how mentally relaxing it can be while getting separated from the noise outside.

The word "spa" originates from the Belgian town of Spa, located in the Ardennes Forest in Belgium, which boasts several natural mineral springs which have been popular for their beneficial effect for thousands of years. (*)

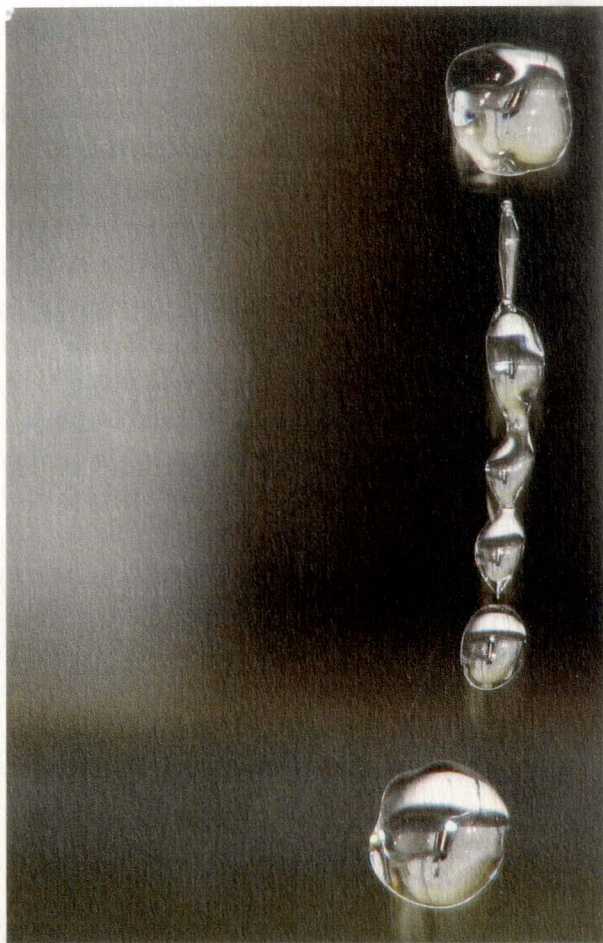
The Concise Oxford Dictionary will inform you that spa is "a place where there is a curative mineral spring".

However, The British Spas Federation recognizes that today the word has to encompass many different elements, although the main criterion is the use of water. A complete spa experience is far more than just a whirlpool bath; it is one that, through the use of water, imparts a feeling of well-being and cares for the mind and body. (**)

If you suffer from any form of unease, you should know that the Retreat could ease much of your discomfort.

.....
* USPA, Universal Spa Association

** SPAS AND THE HEALING POWER OF WATER By Dr. George J Georgiou, Ph.D., N.D., D.Sc (A.M)
Natural Medicine Practitioner



BEGINNINGS OF HYDROTHERAPY

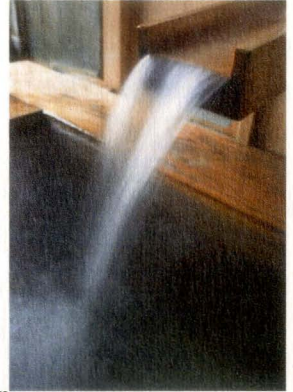
In one word, the water therapy can also be called as Hydrotherapy, which is an ancient form of medical treatment where water was used to ease the pains and to treat various diseases. It was believed that water has the power and the energy to treat problems like arthritis, stress, joint therapy, insomnia.

The foundation of what we know of today as water therapy, or hydrotherapy, began early in the nineteenth century with Vincent Preissnitz, a Silesian farmer. He had mangled his fingers while farming and a neighbor showed him how to use wet, cold compresses to restore them. It was Preissnitz's bad luck and hydrotherapy's good luck that later in his life a heavy cart rolled over him. The doctors of his day declared him "crippled for life."

However, Preissnitz remembered his early success with water and started treating and experimenting on himself. Eventually, his crippled body was cured. Word spread, and hundreds and thousands of people came to him. (*)

* SPAS AND THE HEALING POWER OF WATER By Dr. George J Georgiou, Ph.D.,N.D.,D.Sc (A.M)
Natural Medicine Practitioner

When immersed in a spa, your body's weight is reduced by 90%, relieving pressure on strained joints and muscles. Another way to ease the pain and accelerate the natural healing process is the warm massaging action of a well-designed spa. The increased blood flow caused by relaxing in a spa carries lactic acid away from the muscles faster, easing fatigue. Baths can be said to be the perfect herbal antidote to a relaxing and a soothing body to overcome stress and its related health problems like high blood pressure and other heart ailments. Stress has been believed to be the main reason causing certain other regular problems like headaches, anxiety, fatigue and sore muscles. Thus, to get rid of all these health problems, Spa and Hot tub baths are considered as the most beneficial treatment.^(*)



.....
* www.thespiritualhealth.com

MINIMIZING STRESS AND SHARPENING YOUR MIND

“Some stress is good; it can heighten senses, speed reaction time and help you feel more alert. But too much stress, especially chronic stress, can lead to high blood pressure, block learning and actually kill brain cells.

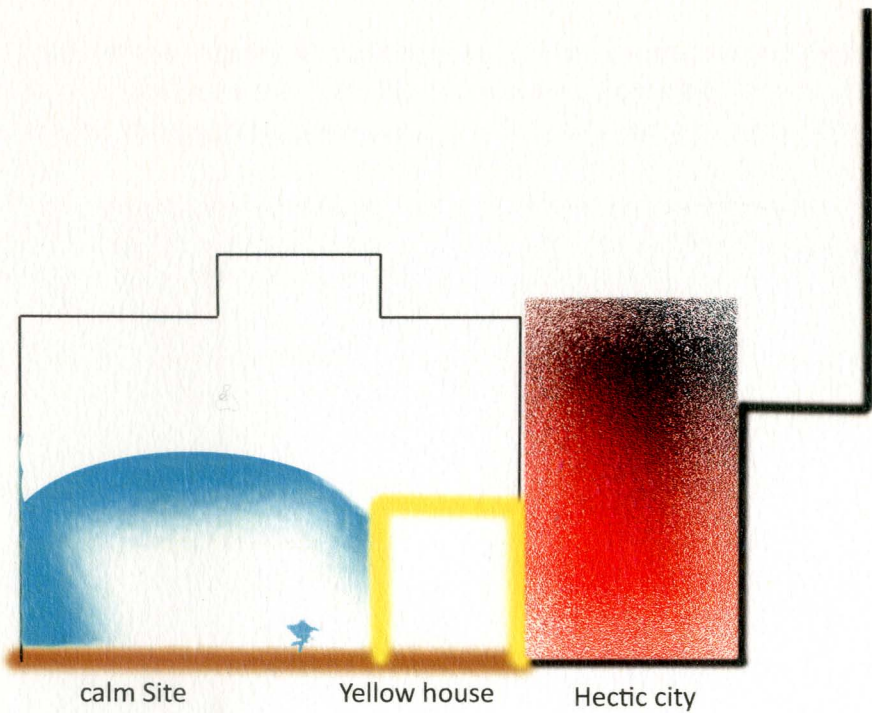
Minimizing chronic stress can help people take in and process more information. (If you've ever found it difficult to concentrate on something else when you were stressed, you know the feeling.) One solution is a spa, because the heated water and Body massages of a spa can help to tense muscles and reduce anxiety. And using a spa induces a feeling of euphoria, relaxation and tranquility in many people.

These days avoiding stress is almost impossible. But dealing with it and minimizing it aren't.

The core of a spa is the water treatment, but to be able to control stress more long-term, this needs to be linked to a balanced, wholesome diet, periodically interspersed with detoxification periods, and accompanied by gentle but regular exercise, relaxation and massage.”(*)

* SPAS AND THE HEALING POWER OF WATER By Dr. George J Georgiou, Ph.D., N.D., D.Sc (A.M)
Natural Medicine Practitioner

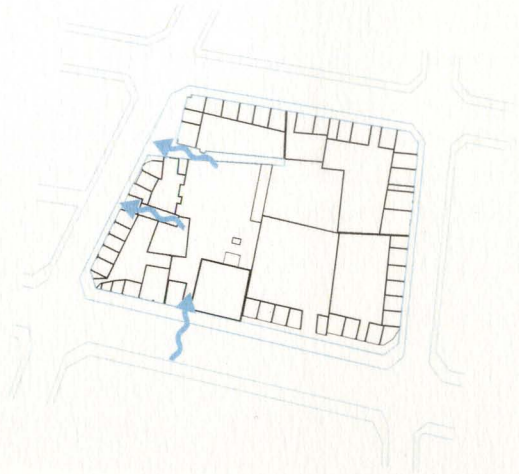




CRITERIA FOR SITE SELECTION

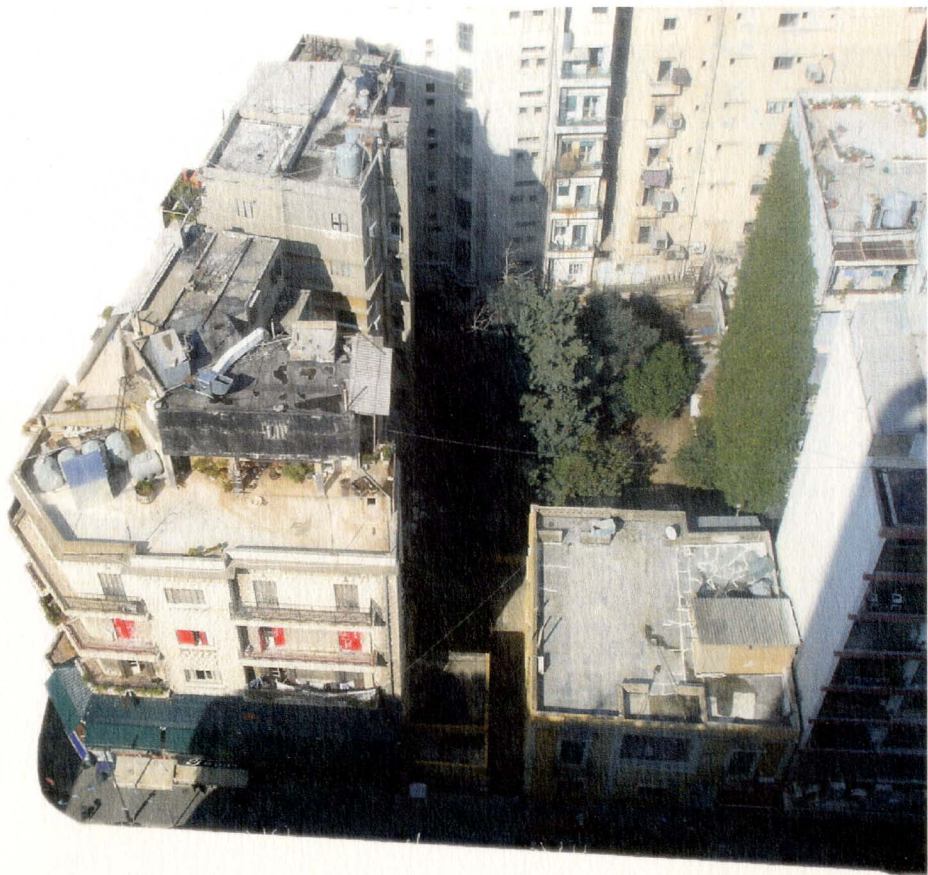
In order to target the biggest possible audience I am looking for a site inside a high density area, it is a site that is easily reached by pedestrians, since the project aims at creating a meaning for those wishing to take a journey on foot. It is at the end of the shopping street offering a potential ultimate end point that many would want to reach. It is a site with different cracks. Cracks that will enable the people to exit into different parts of the city, just as slits in a container create leaking points for the water to escape. It is a place that offers time away from noise; it is a place that creates a certain escape like feeling. It is like an island inside the dense pollution. It has an element of surprise which is a green facade created by a growing vegetation on the neighboring party wall.

It is in Hamra which is an area that has a wide variety of users therefore creating a bigger positive impact on society.

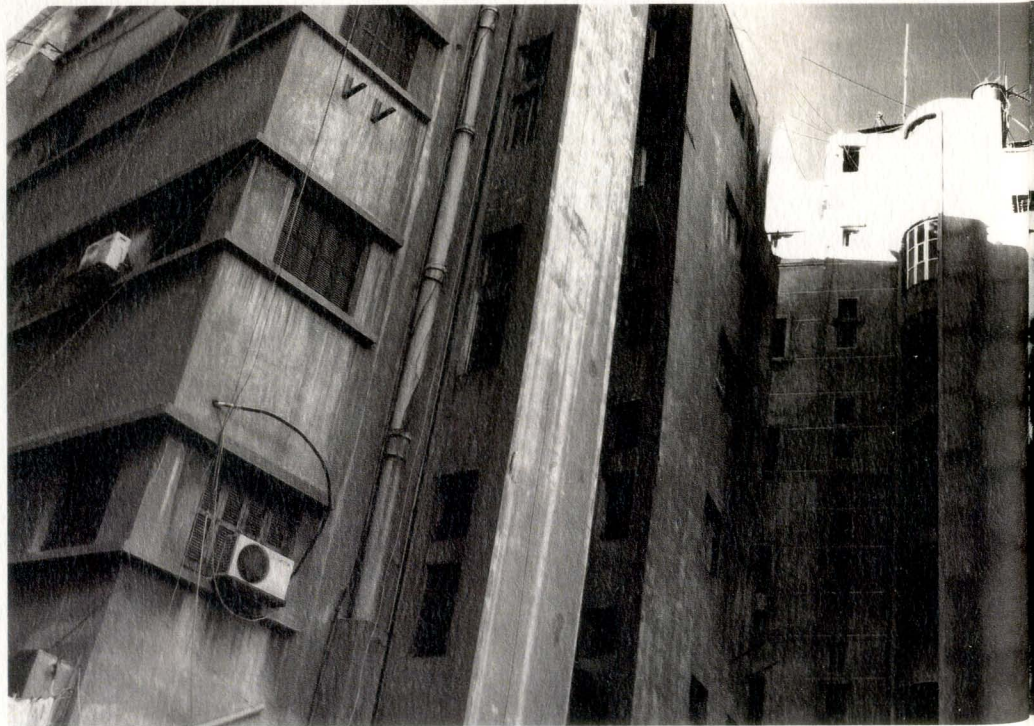


LOCATION

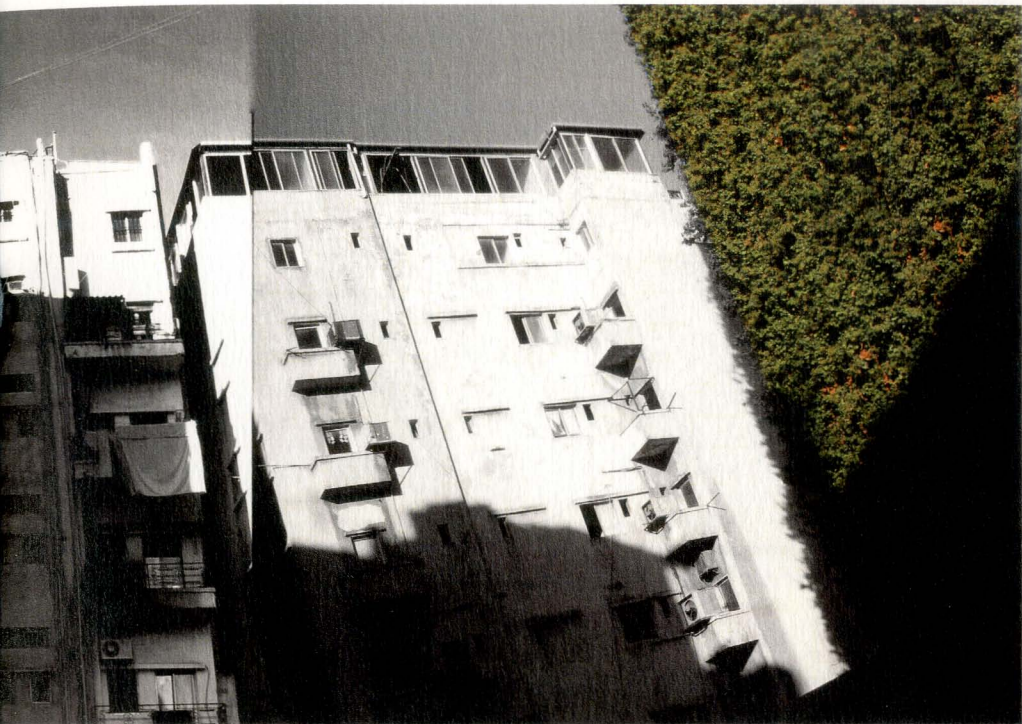
The site is located on Hamra Street, To the North of Crown Plaza (multifunction tower) right across the street. It is situated in a high density area in the center of Beirut. In the direct surroundings of the site there are 8 residential buildings ranging from 8-10 floors having their main facade towards the adjacent streets and their backs towards the site. There is a wide variety of commercial space on the ground floor of these surrounding buildings ranging from jewelry shops to exchange stations to cloth boutiques to minimarkets. On the east side there is a structure belonging to EDL where they have transformers for the region. This zone is accessed from the underground of one the surrounding buildings. This is the only direct surrounding that is 1 story high.



North View



8 story monotonic concrete Blocks, obscuring the North light.



South View



The yellow house is currently acting as a buffer zone in between the site and the Hamra street, therefore minimizing the noise that is coming out of Hamara



West View



Another concrete Block



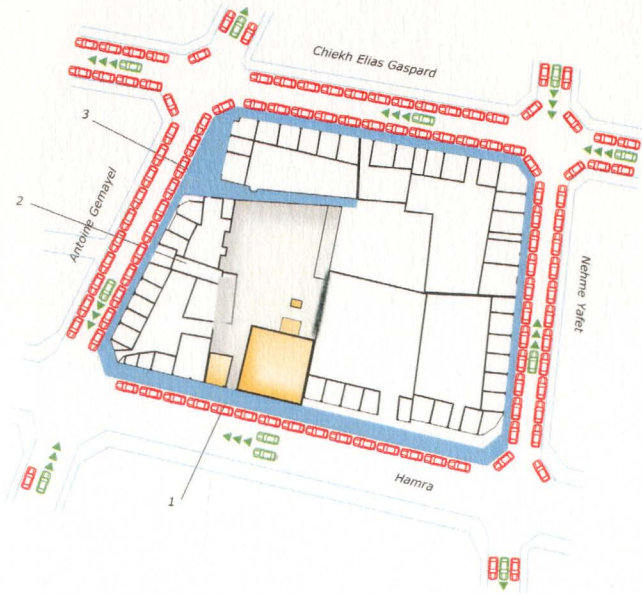
ACCESS

The site has 3 moments at which it connects to an adjacent street.

1-First access is on the South side right off Hamra Main Street where it has a facade of 21m divided into 3 zones an entrance of 2.5m an old house covering 14m and a small shop taking the final 4.5m.

2-Another access point on the West side with a width of 3m

3-the third on the North West corner of the site of 4m.



Access 1



Access 2



Access 3

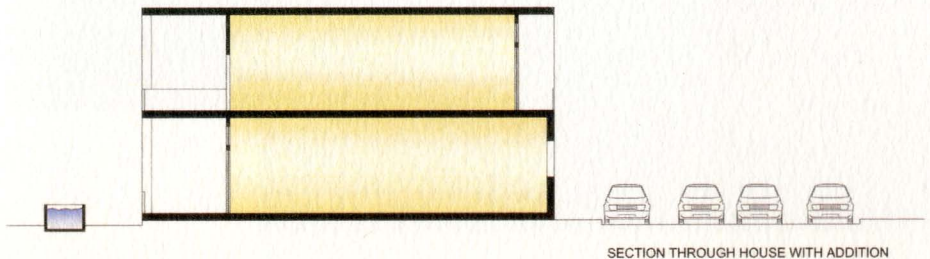




HISTORY



The yellow house was designed and built by its owner (who was a butcher), in 1925. At the time it was built, it only consisted of 1 floor, with its central bay directed towards the courtyard that actually gives to the north. The current Hamra Street was a cactus field, which explains the fact that the ground floor is closed towards the south. When the second floor was constructed, Hamra Street was already established which explains the fact that the 3 bay windows of the second floor overlook the south side. Yet for sun protection, these openings are recessed for almost 1.5 meters thus creating a balcony overlooking the street.



SITE IMPRESSIONS

It is an unexpected situation to come across such a calm site in one of the city's most vibrant zones.

A small gate guards this rare moment from the hustle of the Hamra main street.

It is a guard for the hectic life but it is a welcoming host to any explorer wishing to take a break, searching for a moment of calmness. The moment you decide to go through, the journey begins. One is funneled in between an old yellow house and a small shop, then finds himself next to a chicken house.

Now how unexpected was that? Seeing a chicken house in the center of Hamra.



Then, you have no choice but to be sucked in even deeper by the green fence that has wrapped itself around a neighboring building. After having spent enough time-out, you have the choice of going back to the city from 3 alternate exits.



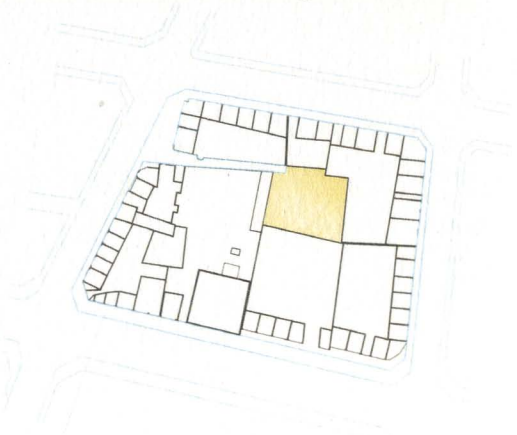
CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The site is one of the few remaining sites in Hamra that is still unbuilt. It has a quality which is different from other sites because it is on the main Hamra Heavy Street but still maintains a quiet secluded atmosphere. This is achieved by the presence of the yellow house facing the Hamra street.

This element also spares the site from becoming a claustrophobic site meaning that it has prevented it from being completely closed from the four directions with high structures, since it is the only 2 level structure enveloping the site, and the other three sides are mundane residential and office buildings which have their backsides overlooking the site with the hectic openings and balconies.

On the East side over the transformers there is possibility for expanding the site. Since there will not be any additions to this zone, it could be a well needed expansion of the semipublic space.

The two access points on the west side are slits in the urban fabric of the city that can potentially be transitional paths back to the city.



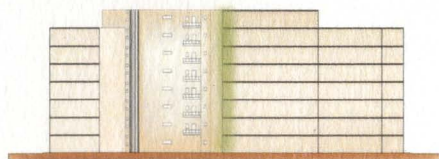


East View Overlooking The Transformers

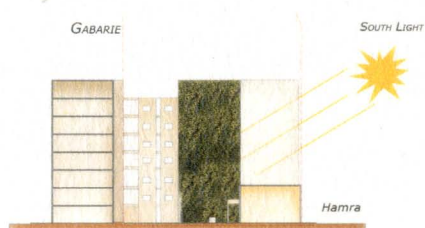
BUILDING LAWS

The building law that are applicable to the site are those of Zone 3 Beirut city.

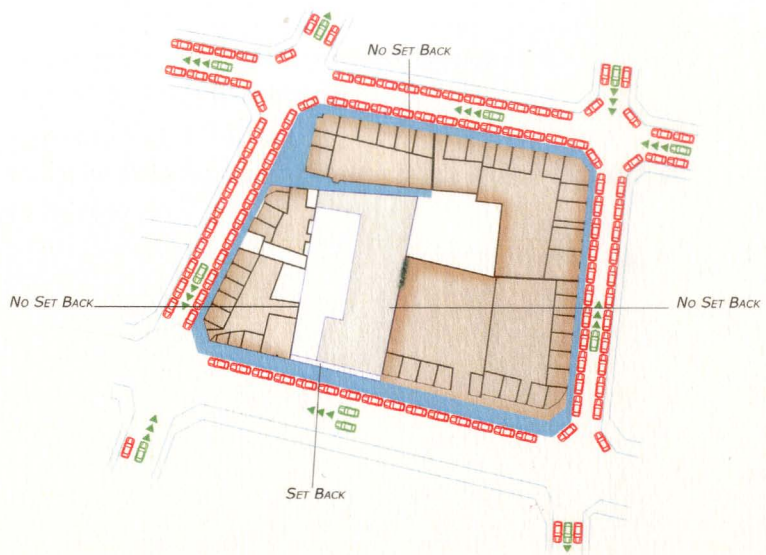
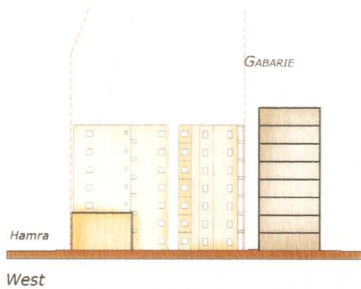
Area		865m ²
Exploitation Factor	(4x)	3460m ²
Balcony Area	(25%)	692m ²
Surface Area	(60%)	519m ²
Surface + Balcony		623m ²
Set Back	From Street Level only	4.5m ²
Gabarie	2.5x (Street width + Sidewalks)	44m
Parking	1 car per 75m ²	46 cars



North



East



The site is in the city

The site offers a call for all those willing to respond

It offers moments of contemplation

It offers a moment of calmness

It offers multiple choices that lead one back to the city with a
rejuvenated spirit.

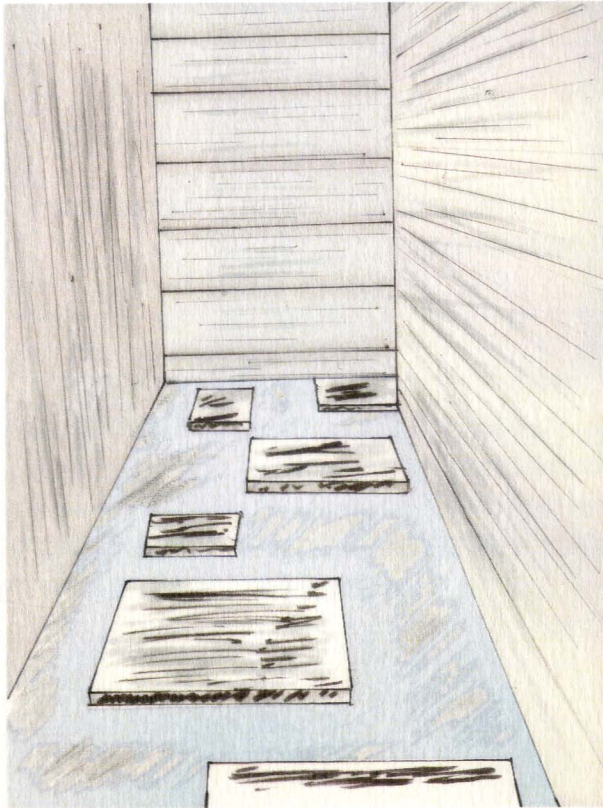
DESIGN STRATEGY

The project is all about the stages; the program is the key in achieving this promenade of multiple stages leading to a rejuvenation of the soul, therefore leading to the commencement of the positive cycle.

the intervention will offer those living in hamra and those passing by an element of surprise.

The whole image of the project will not be given out at any one moment, the individual will have to discover as he goes deeper and deeper, it is a stroll which pedestrians in the Hamra region are not accustomed to, since in Hamra they are always aware of what comes next, they therefore become unexcited to explore.

This place will be offering the aspect of surprise that they have forgotten about.



MATERIALS

The material used in this project should in a way or another remind one of the many aspects of water.

- deep
- viscous
- softness
- murky
- transparency
- wave
- float
- wash
- shallow
- tension
- serenity
- drop
- translucent
- splash
- flow
- refreshing
- Fluidity
- calmness
- rough
- reflection
- ripple
- sink
- flush
- Etc...



The different play of thickness could be used within the project in order to indicate the level of privacy. The spaces subjected to this type of material will still have the ability to see some life from behind these separators, since light would penetrate from one side to another and will transport the shadows of any moving object.

Glass is a building material which is similar to water and ice in many ways.

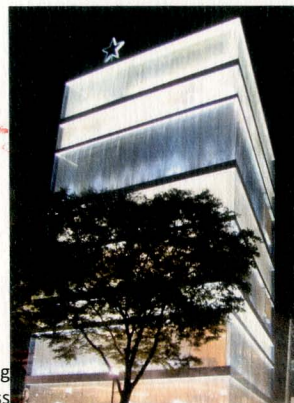


lightness

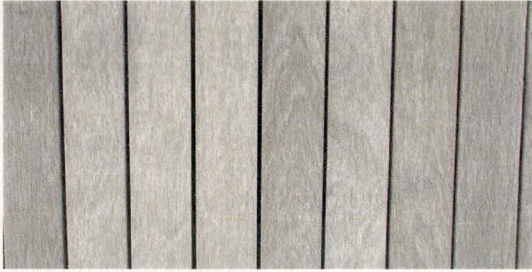


Reflexion

Glass can give the feeling of flowing water, it can create reflections of its surroundings, it can give a sense of lightness, agility, even rigidity, it can be used in its clear state or its opaque state, it even changes state as the day goes by.



SOME PROPOSED MATERIALS



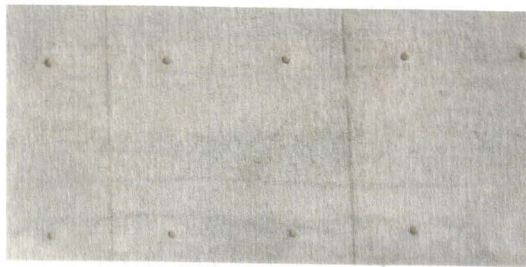
Float



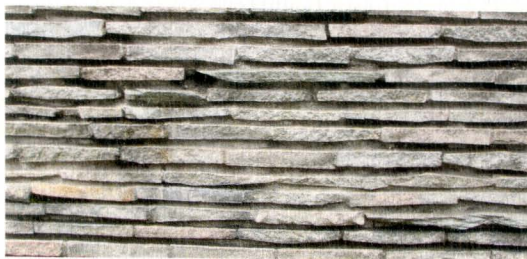
sink



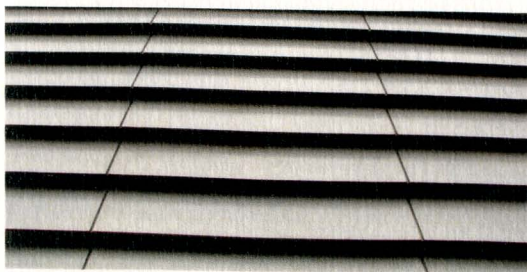
splash



Rough



Motion



Wave

PROGRAM

Name	Quantity	Area per m2
WELCOME		
Reception		40
Waiting		60
		Total 100
HALLS		
Multipurpose Hall		140
Lobby		60
		Total 200
SPA BOUTIQUE		
Showroom		150
Storage		50
SPA CUISINE		
Dining Hall		70
Kitchen		50
		Total 120
LOCKER ROOMS		
Desk		30
Waiting		20
Shop		10
Changing	2	10

Lockers	2	40
Shower	2	20
Sauna	2	10
Turkish Baths	2	10
		Total 240
TREATMENT ROOMS		
Dry Treatment	4	12
Wet Treatment	4	16
		Total 112
BATHS		
Cold Bath		30
Hot Bath		30
Mud Bath		30
		Total 90
RELAXATION		
Relaxation Room		20
Tea Room		20
Library		20
		Total 60
MEDITATION SPACE		
		40

SPORTS

Swimming Pool	220
Gym	150
Total	370

ADMINISTRATION

Reception	59
Office	200
Conference	35
Kitchen	6
Total	300

STAFF

Lounge	80
Locker Room	40
Kitchen	10
Total	130

TECHNICAL

Mechanical	150
Electrical	60
Water Tank	65
Storage	50
Laundry	50
Total	375

Total	2,337 m ²
20% Circulation	468 m ²
Absolute Total	2,805 m ²

STAKE HOLDERS

Since the Site is situated in a mixed use area, the users to this facility will be many. Ranging From the Users of Crown PLaza, to the employees of the surrounding Banks, retail stores, Offices, Universities (Aub, Lau), The staff of AUH and the patients who would want a place that might influence them positively, and last but not least the pedestrian on Hamra street who is not expecting to see such an intervention. It is not an area where children come to play, it is a place where their parents would come for a break.

The Retreat will creat many job opprortunities:

- Manegerial positions in order to control the flow of the project.
- Quality contro,Head of staff, Masseur, life guards, sports instructor,yoga instructor, Cleaner, waiters, cooks, accountants, receptionist, operator, gardeners, technical staff: mechanical, electrical, security.

VISION

Stage 1: The City

The first stage has always been there, even before my intervention. But what I will be doing is taking advantage of this regular walk in the city, and transform this loud unorganized experience of the street, to a trip which will eventually be part of the journey that will take the pedestrians to The Retreat.



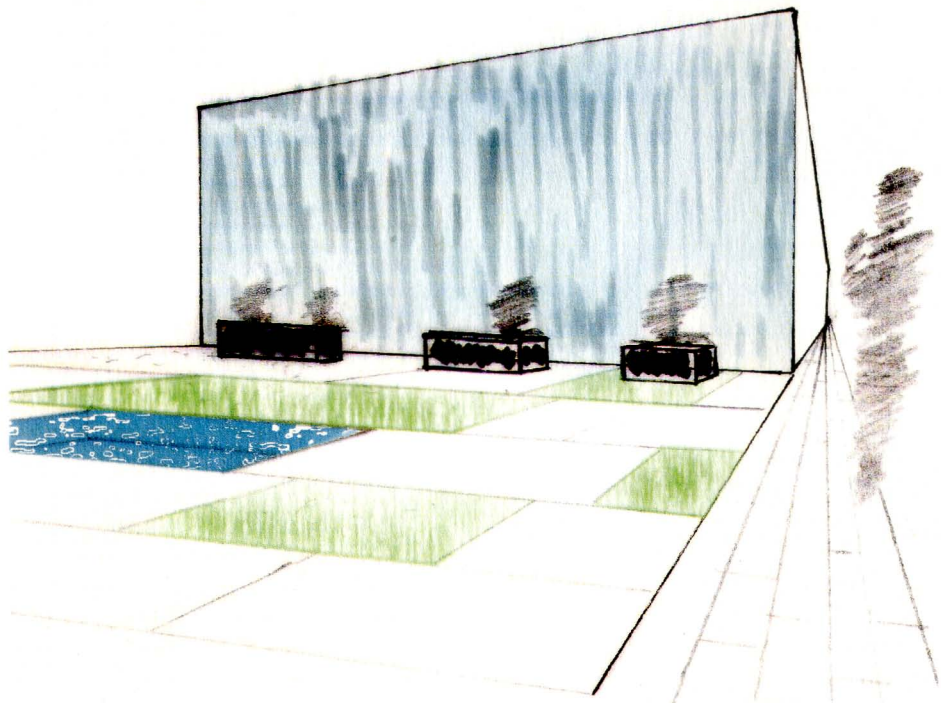
Stage 2: The Call

The first encounter with The Retreat would be the discovery of a new element in the city.

It is an element standing out, wanting to be seen by all those searching for a change; all those who constantly have an eye out and never find a call to answer.

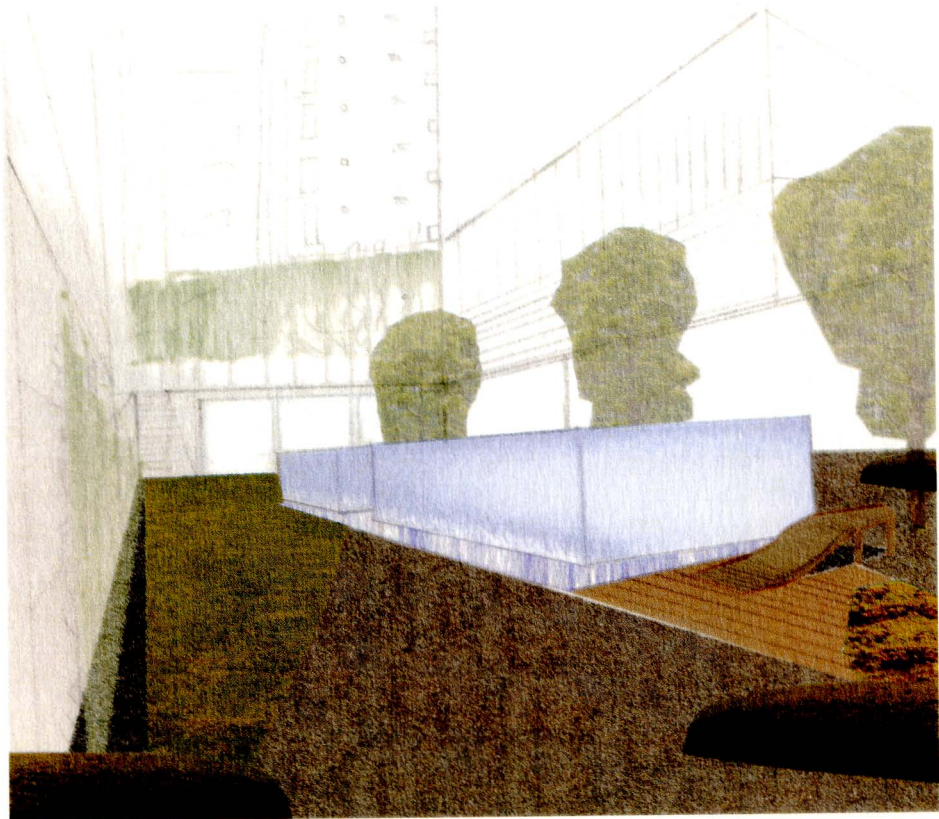
This element is compromised of the swimming pool and the hall. The hall is situated on the Hamra street level targeting the wandering eye of the pedestrians, offering them a multilayered combination of movements.

It starts off by water rushing down from the pool level onto the glass facade, creating a new spirit that would stand out from the other facades on Hamra Street. Concentrating even more, the eye would also notice silhouettes dancing in an interior hall, which in turn is framing a blurred image of a garden from the other side. Benches are placed in front of the screen of water, and on the edge of the garden so that those interested in the performance of water and man could enjoy it while massaging their tired feet in the moving water.

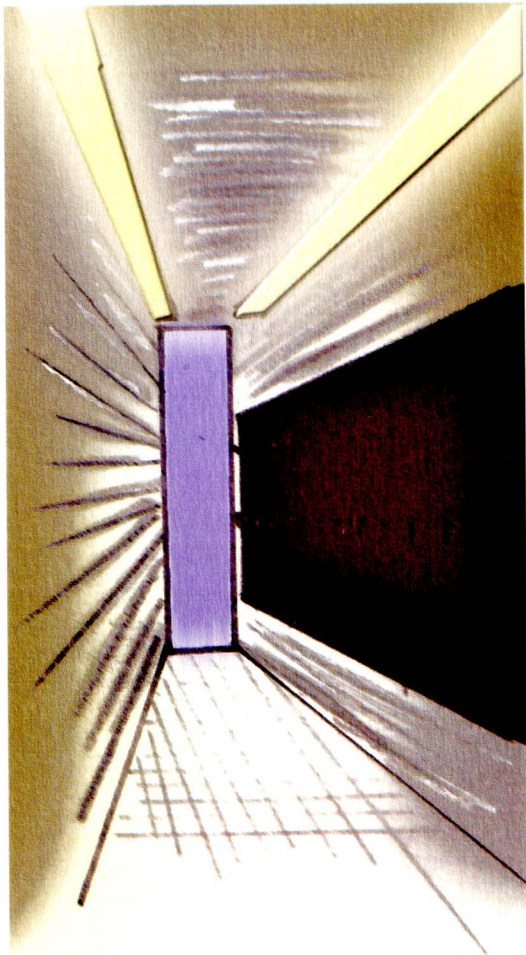


Stage 3: Contemplation

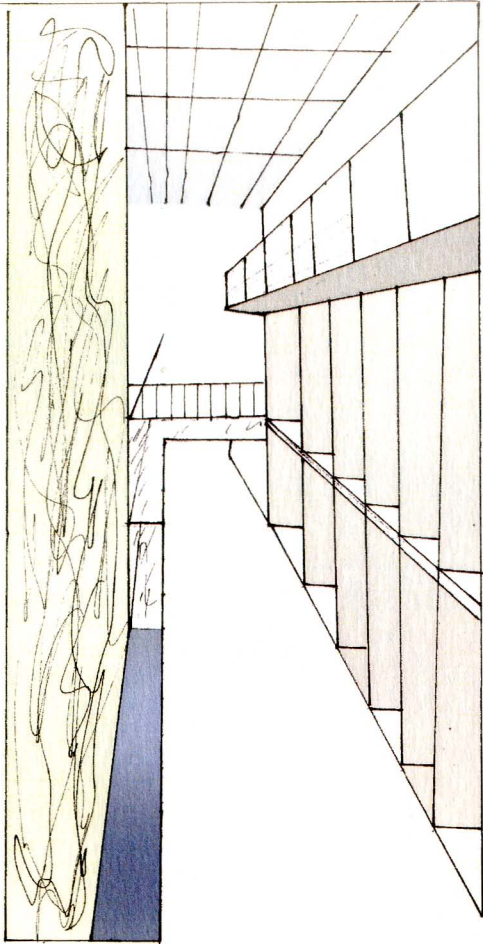
The Garden which is buffered by the hall on the south and the restaurant on the north, is an area where those whom have answered the call would be able to sit and ponder about the unusual silence that the buffer had created and has over powered the chaotic city noise. It is a place where all those who wish to be free from the hectic life and traffic jams, free from the neighbor that's always shouting, free from the boss that never stops demanding can Retreat to. This is a place that shifts their spirits up. It is a place that gets them close to their pure origin, it is a place that puts them in contact with water either visually or auditory, and even physically. It is a place that takes them spiritually away from the city although they are still in walking distance back to this routine. All they have to do is decide to walk back to this world or follow the alternate path that the Retreat will offer and continue the journey.



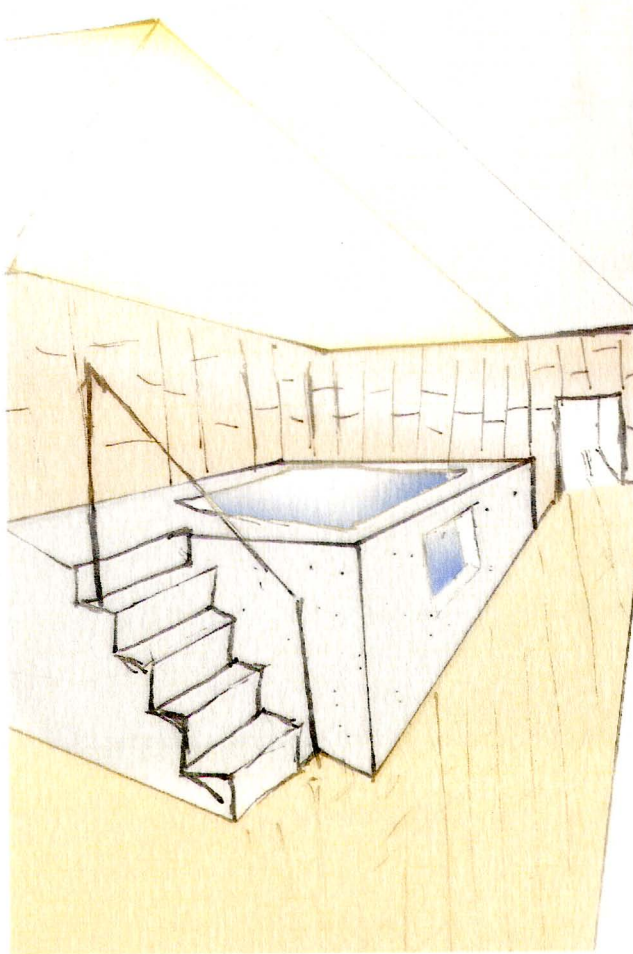
The Retreat is categorized as a wellness center; it is a place where you seek refuge from the life that is always behind you. Here you lock the past in a locker and with the help of the water running down the wall you get a feel that this entire burden has been washed away. You then have the choice of either heading to the gym or to a swimming pool in order to extract that extra energy that is trapped in your body.



The vertical columns on the gym's facade will be framing the neighbors' green wall. The Gym will share its source of light with the swimming pool which is one level below the gym towards the south side. the constant motion of the water in the pool will make individuals releasing the extra energy in the gym unsatisfied with only the view of the water, therefore luring them to descend to either of two paths; one leading them to the pool itself or another area where they can immerse themselves completely in the water baths, taking full advantage of the water experience.



A continuation of the wood planking of the garden floor will dress the walls that are flushed with the light penetrating the flowing water on top in the garden level. Here individuals will view the water patterns created upon the refraction of the light with the water above them, and will become fully immersed in the water beneath them. Here as well, they have a choice of entering either one of three types of full body baths: Mud bath, hot baths, and Cold baths.



With the completion of these whole body baths, they rinse off before heading to one of multiple paths.

Some will be out of time and head back to the lockers to change and move on back to the city. Others who have little more time can have a drink at the juice bar or visit the relaxation room for a cup of tea while reading a book.

And those who have plenty of time could ascend to the levels of the treatment rooms which range from individual rooms, to multi user rooms.

The massage rooms would be completely isolated from the gym but might have a slight view towards the swimming pool, since those individuals in the treatment rooms will be experiencing body massages and viewing the flowing water.

Subsequent to the completion of the massage course, they continue the path to the relaxation room, and then back to the outside world.

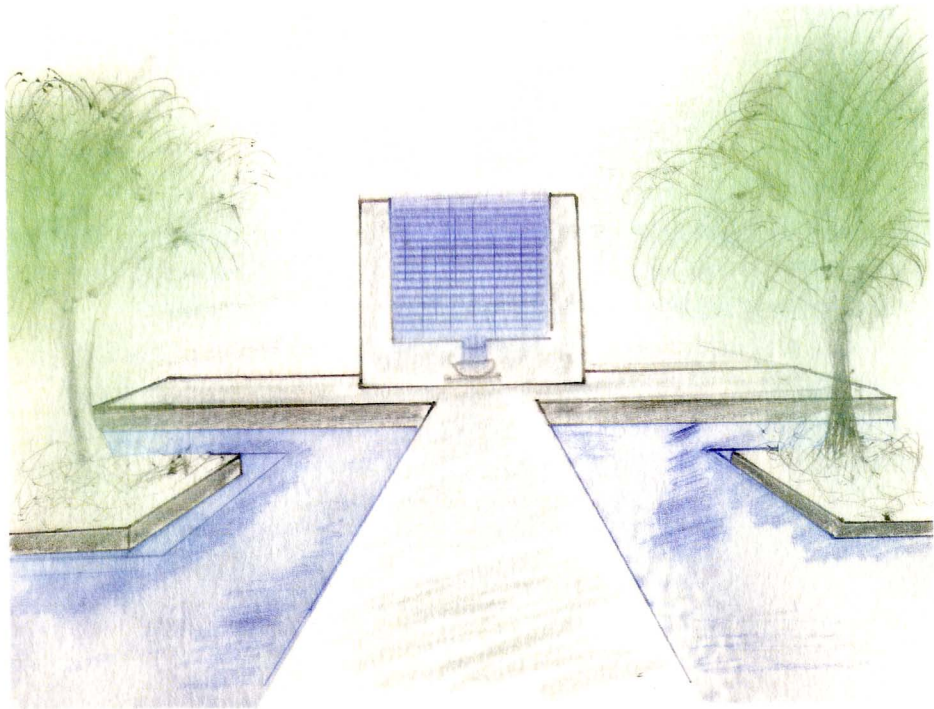


Stage 4: Meditation

During all the process, they always had the choice of visiting the meditation space.

But one must know that he/she has to be ready for this space in order to really experience it to the fullest.

This is what this Center also helps one achieve; the readiness of entering a Meditation Space.



And since the rejuvenating process should become a continuing healthy aspect in life so that one will constantly send out positive vibes, the Retreat offers a healthy Cuisine situated on the garden level.

It also has a Boutique where those wanting to take a part of the Retreat to their homes or work space in order to create an appropriate mood for them so as to keep sending out those positive vibes that they have learned to bring out in the Retreat.

CONCLUSION

The retreat is a space designed for you in a way that makes you feel the most comfortable and at ease. It's a place where you come in contact with nature, with water.

By only seeing water, you would want to be refreshed: revive your body and soul, rejuvenate from the inside out.

This space has the power to attract people, whether they want to eat in a healthy manner, benefit from body treatments, release excess energy, or simply spend some valuable time alone.

"Alone" does not imply loneliness, because in The Retreat, you'll be finding yourself. You'll enjoy self-contemplation; you'll have time to look inside yourself.

Leaving The Retreat, you will definitely sense a change within yourself; you will be at peace with yourself.

Because you have changed your mind positively, this will be reflected in your actions and in the way you will see the world starting with Hamra.

The elements are still the same. However The Retreat helps you in changing the perceptions.

REFERENCES

Photo Credits

Photos of Meditation Space:

Ando Complete Works by Philip Jodidio 2007

Photos of Water Under Microscope:

Masaru Emoto, Messages from Water Vols. 1-3. L.H.M.
General Research Institute

www.Flickr.com :

Pages: 38,40,48,71,73,75

All Other Photos:

Michel Azar

Bibliography

1. WIT Transactions on The Built Environment, Vol 86, © 2006 WIT Press
www.witpress.com, ISSN 1743-3509
2. Japanese Gardens, by David A. Slawson, Kodansha International 2006
3. Water And Architecture by Charles W. Moore 1994
4. The New Zen Garden by Joseph Cali 2007
5. Ando Complete Works by Philip Jodidio 2007
6. New waterscapes: planning, building and designing with water / edited by Herbert Dreiseitl, Dieter Grau ;
7. Water (mizu), publisher: kesaharu Imai 2007

8. Water
Publishing Director: Alberto Dragone 2007
9. Exhibition:
Water organized by 21_21 DESIGN SIGHT, The Miyake Issey
Foundation
10. SPAS AND THE HEALING POWER OF WATER By Dr. George
J Georgiou, Ph.D.,N.D.,D.Sc (A.M) Natural Medicine Practitioner
11. www.thespiritualhealth.com
12. USPA, Universal Spa Association
13. www.madoted.org

Masaru Emoto Reference:

1. Masaru Emoto, Messages from Water vol 1
2. What the bleep do we know!? Directed by: William Arntz, Betsy Chasse and Mark Vicente 2004
3. http://www.life-enthusiast.com/twilight/research_emoto.htm
4. http://www.spiritandflesh.com/Masaru_Emoto_water_crystals_consciousness_matter.htm
5. How water reflects our consciousness
by S. Sharp
<http://www.wellnessgoods.com/MESSAGES.ASP>
6. <http://unexplainedmysteries.yuku.com/topic/926>



