

not even jail.

- a Center for the Achievement of Greater Understanding

NOT EVEN JAIL

-A CENTER FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF GREATER UNDERSTANDING

A Design Thesis Submitted to the
Department of Architecture and Landscape Architecture
of North Dakota State University

by
Dan Benson

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Bachelor of Architecture

Primary Critic

Thesis Committee Chair

Dedicated to the promotion of the idea that people should think for themselves.
Jamie, thank you for all of your love and support.

this thesis is not a building

This thesis is an experiment, addressing the fundamental relationship that exists between people and the built environment. More specifically, this thesis seeks to understand the power of architecture as a means of social influence or change. To explore this relationship, a 77-unit retreat center, located in Western North Dakota was designed to promote an individual's level of understanding. *Not even jail: a Center for the Achievement of Greater Understanding*, is the existential vehicle in which I sought understanding of what it means design our environment.

not even jail

format

The format of this architectural experiment is as follows:

statement of intent	8
proposal identifies the issues addressed	9
the program document defines the depth and breadth the of exploration	21
process documentation specifies and articulates the conditions of the elements	71
solution presentation conclusion and evaluation of exploration	91
supplemental information	99

statement of intent

project typology

The typology for this thesis project will be a retreat center.

theoretical premise

The thesis will examine the individual's need for a greater understanding of their existential place in the world and the sources of the human condition. Design metaphors, analogies, and or tectonics will be developed from the examination.

project justification

All people should have a space to go that is free of the distractions and material influences. A space that encourages the individual to evaluate themselves and begin a personal, existential quest for greater understanding.

format

The format of this architectural experiment is as follows:

narrative	10
reconciliation	
user-client description	11
major project elements	12
site inventory	14
project emphasis	16
a plan for proceeding	17
thesis schedule	18
previous studio experience	19

reconciliation

People find comfort in things that they can describe. Labeling and categorizing provides them with a self-assured quality to their lives. If something has been labeled, it is taken care of and is ready to be stowed away in the back of their memory. It sits there until the next time it is needed. Often times this method of reconciliation is a deep enough level of understanding for a particular issue. For example, the amount of fuel in one's vehicle. People may not know the exact status of the fuel, yet they know that it is enough to get them home or to a gas station.

In today's over-worked, routine based lifestyle, this mentality of categorizing and filing as a method of reconciliation has seeped into other facets of people's lives; facets which are of much greater consequence than the amount of fuel in your vehicle. What happens when people start categorizing and filing away information about more important things, such as their spirituality?

Spirituality is a personal connection to a greater power. The understanding of this power can not be quantified, taught, learned, passed down, or taken for granted. There needs to be a deep, intimate relationship; one that only the individual is responsible and accountable for. There are various ways to fail in this reconciliation. Whether it is assuming that one's spirituality is reconciled because it was last time they checked, or if one assimilates a religion's ideals as their own spirituality without truly understanding it for themselves. Perhaps the individual has found complacency in their current routine and feels that any further understanding would cause them to relinquish control of their life. What happens when people fail to understand their spirituality? Where can people go to reconcile a gap or lag in their understanding?

This thesis will examine the individual's need for a greater understanding of their existential place in the world and the sources of the human condition. Through the typology of a retreat center, this thesis will provide individuals with an opportunity to understand themselves on a deeper, more meaningful level.

It should be stated that this thesis is not opposed to organized religion. The purpose of the Center for the Achievement of Greater Understanding is to help those people who are seeking a greater level of understanding, find it in the reconciliation of their own spirituality. It may be the case that the Center will only reaffirm the individual's current spiritual status or act as a supplement to an individual's spirituality with a greater sense of self-awareness. Either way, the Center is not there to replace anything, it is there to act as a catalyst towards a greater understanding whatever that maybe. The Center is not a destination; it is only a means. It is like a rehabilitation clinic. In that the individual values their time spent there but realizes that their life exists outside the Center. The benefits of this greater understanding can only be utilized with the application of it into an individual's life.

user-client description

So who is it that can benefit from attending this Center? The people that arrive at the Center will do so in one of two situations. The first situation includes people who maintain an affiliation with a religious group, but who have yet to achieve a personal understanding of why they are affiliated with a religious group. The second situation includes those that do not have an official affiliation with a religious group, but whom still realize the importance of seeking and maintaining a personal relationship with a greater power.

I don't believe that any single set of people should be targeted as the primary user group. In fact, marketing the Center directly towards any certain group of people could imply that the members of that group have not established that personal connection. The decision to attend must be left to the individual, for only the individual can evaluate their spiritual status and, whether or not they would be ready accept what is discovered.

With a demographic that is as broad as this it might be difficult to pin down a specific client. Starting with an inclusive marketing strategy that permeates the many sides of religious/spiritual community. Also, by employing a passive strategy allows the individual play an active role in the seeking this experience. Word-of-mouth will play a significant role in the how people hear about the Center. Although spirituality is a personal connection, when a friend or relative experiences such a genuine level of understanding, transmission of the Center's abilities by word-of-mouth cannot be ignored.

There is another key group of people that needs to be considered in determining the character of the Center, the management. In some situations in the private sector, the owner/manager becomes the figure head of the entire organization. The function of the organization and its facilities more closely resembles that of the owner's personality instead of that of the theoretical basis of the organization. Having a buoyant owner is not a negative thing in certain realms. Ted Turner, George Steinbrenner, and Michael Eisner are all powerful private owners whose respective companies have become associated with their powerful personalities. However, the internal, modest intentions of the clients must be reflected in the management of the Center. For this reason, it is recommended that a management team be composed of a small board of commissioners that are responsible for the management of the Center and maintaining with a low, public profile.

The Center will be open to clients year round. Unlike many other retreats, the Center will not associate with a recreation based environment that would make it more conducive to being open for only portions of the year. The scheduling of the length of visits will be flexible. The amount of time needed for each individual to experience the Center will surely vary.

major project elements

It should be stated that the success of the following project elements relies heavily on the success of the master plan. It is the purpose of a master plan to allow its subsidiary spaces to reach their full potential and add to the aggregate richness of the Center's experience. It is easy to fall into the trap of becoming too efficient and too goal oriented in the design of a retreat center's spaces. The master plan needs to be conducive to emphasizing the journey, not just the destination on both the macro and micro level.

Careful attention will also be paid to "attitude" of the master plan. It is important that the Center conveys a certain confidence and security that will further encourage the individual to let down their guard and be open to what they discover. On the other end of the spectrum, the Center should allow the individual enough freedom so to require them to take on an active role in their self-discovery. I believe that it is at this point that the success of the Center can be greatly determined.

The basic elements that will make up the master plan can easily fit into two categories: the functional needs of the Center, and the experiential needs of the individual. The areas where these two categories of elements interact will need to be carefully articulated as to maximize the purity of the experience for the individuals who come to the Center.

The functional requirements of the Center remain similar to standard architectural precedent of other retreat centers. These requirements include administrative spaces and services (for 8-12 employees), environmental services, and a parking service, which is based off site.

The experiential needs of the individuals will become clearer after an intensive research strategy which is described later in this proposal. A preliminary set of major elements include, a defined entry sequence, a residential complex, reflection and meditation areas for both individuals and groups, and an articulated walkway system around the Center.

An Articulated Entry Sequence – The goal of the entry sequence is to act as an equalizer. Before people enter the Center, they naturally stratify themselves based on various differences (i.e. nationality, age, social status, and religious affiliation). Once inside, any earthly affiliation will be no longer be associated with that individual. This is a key part of the sequence because it allows the individual to evaluate what is important to them objectively. This also allows the individual to assume only those certain titles or affiliations that they wish to maintain once they have left the Center.

The other function of the entry sequence will be to break people from the environment of their everyday lives. It is at this point where the constant barrage of our over-stimulated, commodity of their everyday lives will

end. There shall be no commercial or material influences once inside the Center. The **only** thing that is to enter the Center is the individual.

A Residential Complex – The aim of the residential complex is to provide the individual with the essential functions of living. This is where key design considerations need to be reconciled. Because these functions are so basic in nature, they can easily hearken back the individual's life outside the Center. The articulation of these basic functions such as washing hands, bathing, and using the toilet will need to be carefully navigated. The last thing these spaces should resemble is something that one may find at a standard hotel. The disconnection from the secular world must be maintained.

This complex will consist of many modest, self-sufficient units. The Center will not provide universal sleeping and eating accommodations. People should be afforded the opportunity to prepare their own meals, pump their own water, and generate their own electricity.

Reflection and Meditation Areas – There will be two types of reflection or meditation areas. One type will center on the inward reflection while the other type will be focused on an outward meditation. How these spaces encourage these actions will be determined by the research in the following months.

An Articulated Walkway System – The locations of the paths around the Center will be a key part of the master plan. It is important not to demote the duty of the path to be the shortest distance between two other elements, or to a mere connector of two experiences. Walkways need be an experience with in themselves. In fact, the paths will serve the primary means of physical activity. The individual should be allowed a healthy release from the reflection and meditation areas; a time for the individual to get up, get out and breathe fresh North Dakota air.

the proposal

site inventory

The site chosen for this project is a modest, grassy butte in western North Dakota. More exactly, a butte which lies to the northeast of the intersection of 120th Avenue Southwest and North Dakota State Highway 200, 16 miles due west of Killdeer. Just across the road from the Little Missouri National Grassland, this 175 acre site is amidst a spectacular natural landscape. The selection of this site may offer up some of the greatest challenges in the design. However, this specific location will prove to be one of the Center's greatest assets.



-north face of the butte

The most over-whelming feature this region provides is an extreme sense of isolation. Dunn County, in which the butte lies, averages 1.8 persons per square mile of land; while the average for the sparsely populated State of North Dakota is just under 10, at 9.8 persons (United States Census Bureau, 2000). Dickinson, North Dakota, the nearest major city, is 45 minutes southwest of the site. The Center's ideals are reinforced by the selection of a site in such a secluded region. The Center will be there to help those who seek understanding to achieve it. There must be a strong desire, on the part of the individual, to find and attend. The Center, and the understanding gained from it, must be actively sought. Attending the Center, should not be viewed as a temporary break, it should be complete diversion from one's routine; western North Dakota offers this.

The complete break from external stimulus gives the individual no other place to look for answers but from within themselves. An individual and their spirituality should have the ability to stand alone, free from earthly dependence, in a more self-sufficient manner. I believe that the Center can reflect this mentality and not rely on outside sources to operate. Because of this, site selection was not limited to areas that offer full access to modern utilities. There is nothing personal about drawing energy off of a grid or tapping into a water line.

With that restriction lifted, the selection of the site was allowed to focus on other desirable assets. This particular site was chosen because it

provides the Center with key geographical and topographical features. As I previously stated, the public perception of the Center should be carefully considered. An intimate place such as this need not broadcast it's presence to passers by. The butte is just north of the Highway 200, the predominant public viewpoint. The butte is capped off on the south by a soft, unassuming ridge that slowly tapers down to the highway. This subtle feature provides a natural mask to the rest of the site. The activities of the Center are not revealed to the casual observer. Once over the ridge the land drops off and the butte's natural brilliance is revealed.

Standing in breadth of the site, one gets a sensory experience that is truly magnificent. Scanning the horizon, one sees long stretched prairies, broken only by organically shaped rivulets that harbor the small collections of trees on the north facing slopes. The only thing you can hear is the sound of the wind rolling across the plains. Taking a deep breath in, one realizes that there is nothing to smell but the dusty land under foot, and sees a few sparsely placed oil wells pump in harmony with the waving grass which shines a golden lit up by the mid-afternoon sun.

This sensory experience was referred to by Theodore Roosevelt who states that the area "certainly has a desolate, grim beauty of its own, that has a curious fascination for me (The National Park Service 2002)." The North Unit of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park also lies only a few miles northwest of the butte.

Although it is very close in proximity to both the Theodore Roosevelt National Park and the Little Missouri National Grassland, this butte is not currently being utilized for its aesthetic qualities. The area around this butte is known less as place of sensual experience and more of for its utilitarian qualities such as drilling for petroleum, growing wheat, and functioning as pasture for cattle. The petroleum industry governs this area around the butte. The Little Knife Oil Field, discovered in 1977, is one part of the Little Knife Anticline, is one of three oil rich anticlines in the Williston Basin, (Heck LeFever, Fischer, LeFever 2002). Petro-Hunt Group currently owns and operates two oil wells within one thousand feet of the butte.

project emphasis

The emphasis of the research for the Center will be based on uncovering the relationship between the built environment and the individual. How is it that people can be enabled to achieve a heightened mental state through the mechanism of a retreat center? How can the design universally encourage self-reflection without the need for direction or proscription? I will investigate will be to look at what can be gained from being in an uncomfortable spaces and what it means to go below ground.

The benefits of the using uncomfortable spaces can serve as a way to encourage the individual to look within themselves for the answers. I will look at the complacency which has emerged from relative comfort in people's routine driven lives. Filmmaker David Cronenberg stated on a radio interview with Beth Accomando, of National Public Radio, that, "for a self-reflective kind of experience, comfort is not the way to go (Accomando 2005)." Cronenberg was talking about his movie *A History of Violence*, where he uses carefully articulated uncomfortable experiences and timings to allow the audience to gain knowledge from a sequence.

Utilizing the natural geologic features of the butte, I will look at the psychological effects of underground architecture. How are spaces below ground different from a similar space above the ground plane? What does it mean to the individual when they traverse the ground plane and enter the earth? Also, I will evaluate the environmental benefits of building underground.

The second area of emphasis that I will research will pertain to the way in which one builds a self-sufficient building in western North Dakota. What methods and materials can most efficiently be utilized in the construction and operation of the Center? Can the manner in which the Center is built emphasize self-sufficiency in the individual after emerge from the Center?

a plan for proceeding

I will be employing a mixed method quantitative, qualitative approach to my research over then next six weeks. The data collection will be directed with a concurrent transformative strategy. This strategy lets me to collect both quantitative and qualitative data at the same time while allowing me to evaluate the direction of the research at various milestones along the process (see Thesis Schedule). I will be relying on the ideals of the theoretical premise to guide the direction of the research.

The design methodology will be two fold in both a language and graphic based. Each method will be applied to both the parametric and the gestalt. The graphic analysis will consist of interaction matrixes, diagrams, charts, maps, and overlays.

The Center is about an experience and the knowledge gained from it. Because, of this heavy reliance on the experience and in order to find those universal qualities of a spaces, I will be using a phenomenological approach to the design methodology. Authors such as Alberto Perez-Gomez, and Edmund Husserl are to be utilized as a basis for this approach. This will allow the Center to be less about what it is being perceive and more about how it is being perceived.

Often times, the result of the project over shadows the process. For this reason it is important to document the design process. I will be employing various digital means to do this, such as photography, digital models, and digital drawings. Other means of documentation will include study models and sketches.

previous studio experience

Year	Semester/ Instructor	Project – Description
2 nd	Fall/ Palenzuela	<u>Architectural Vocabulary</u> – discovering the language of architecture i.e. corporeal metaphor, juxtaposition, datum, and spatial <u>Human Condition</u> – Students were encourage to define, locate, and evaluate the human condition
2 nd	Spring/ Aly Ahmed	<u>Low Cost Housing</u> – Design with resects to low budgets, finding new materials <u>Universal Design</u> – Designed a community for people living with physical handicaps <u>Hotel & Convention Center</u> – Created and fulfilled a large program
3 rd	Fall/ Elnahas	<u>Wood Bridge</u> – Experimented with structure in basic form <u>Art Gallery</u> – Created functional forms with respect to the buildings unique site opportunities <u>Cultural Center</u> – Designed within the bounds of an existing building and a real client
3 rd	Spring/ Hatlen	<u>Residential Project</u> – Designed a single family house that uses alternative building materials <u>Montessori School</u> – Researched a style of education followed by programming and <u>Mixed Use Development</u> – Used a masonry as a primary material to design a residential/commercial complex
4 th	Fall/ Kratky	<u>Urban Landscapes</u> – Researched, observed, critiqued, and evaluated urban landscapes <u>Urban Design</u> – On a macro scale, proposed a redevelopment of a multi block area on the edge of a major city’s urban core
4 th	Fall/ Faulkner	<u>High-Rise</u> – Researched, observed and designed a high rise building in the middle of a dense urban core and concentrated on the unique <u>Office Complex</u> – Marvin Windows competition, centered around program fulfillment and exclusive use of a client products
5 th	Fall/ Ganapathy	<u>Design Exercises in Form Creation</u> – Creating and optimizing form from different sources i.e. sound, water, heat, visual desire, and a

not even jail

format

The format of this program document is as follows:

section one: theoretical premise research	23
section two: case studies	33
section three: historical context	49
section four: project goals	53
section five: site analysis	55
section six: spatial allocation	65

Soren Kierkeggard

"I must find the truth that is true for me."

section one: theoretical premise research

Layers of meaning and metaphor can be added to a design with an appropriately reconciled theoretical premise. To do this, a few different steps need to be taken. First, one must expound on the true nature of the elements involved in the premise. Secondly, a comprehensive view of the premise should be sought in order to consider how aspects of the design appear in other fields. So much like the individual's that attend the Center, I have noticed gaps in my own personal understanding of certain aspects of this theoretical premise. In the following section, I will reflect on how these different areas can offer insight on to the essence of the theoretical premise. Also, in order to advance the experiential qualities of the Center, I will analyze the internetworkings of these ideas and draw conclusions from them in which to aid in the programming of the Center.

Theoretical Premise:

This thesis will examine the individual's need for a greater understanding of their existential place in the world and the sources of the human condition.

spirituality

At the heart of this premise lies the idea that at some point along a person's life, they will feel the need to ask and answer the question why they exist, and individually reconcile their spirituality. However, it is my contention that in order to understand the "why" one must first understand the "how." It is paradoxical to ask "why am I here?" and expect to understand without knowing where there is. One must reconcile the "how" of their existence in a **personal connection**, for it is obviously different for everyone. Spirituality is not something to do, it is something to be.

For many, when this issue arises it is promptly reconciled to the appropriate level of understanding required by their state. Others may have a more difficult time in the reconciliation process. For them, the how has not clear. The failure to sufficiently reconcile one's spirituality is due to the fact that their spiritual roots have been place down into the temporary soil of earthly means. People rely on the societal institutions for answers. Yet in this case, societal standards will not suffice. The fallibility of these foundations will eventually be felt.

The Center will provide a haven for those who seek the time needed to reconcile the placement of their spiritual roots. As a great wall, the Center will provide a cultural buffer zone between the environment that was not conducive to individual's reconciliation and an environment that promotes the individuals quest to gain a higher level of understanding. So how is the center different form other forms of spiritual safe havens that can be experienced in everyday society?

The crucial distinction between these two very different spiritual havens is realized when one looks at who the onus is put on. While other "spiritual" havens might offer an objective source in which to place one's roots, the Center's the existential backbone will hold the individual solely accountable for **way** in which they define their spirituality. Other venues in spiritual prowess is offered, often do so in a way that seeks to sell their own personal answers. External stimuli of forces cannot be trusted with and individual's spiritual roots. The individual has been given the ultimate freedom to define their spirituality, the essence of their existence. This is achieved when the individual surmounts the angst associated with the subsequent ultimate responsibility of consequences of their existence.

Conclusion:

Spirituality is a self-sufficient, personal connection to a greater power, relying solely on oneself for answers to their existence. It will be the primary duty of the Center to restore the accountability of spirituality back to the individual. Breaking the fallible reliance on the temporal and personally implicate the individual, for the proper understanding of their spirituality.

sociology

Society's quest for efficient living has led to the creation and implementation of the social institution. Institutions make maintaining order and levels of social control more easily achievable by relying on routine based living to guide people through their lives. People, individuals are objectified into a commodity which reinforces the idea of a subject-object relationship between man and the environment. Soren Kierkegaard, an existential philosopher said that "once you label me, you negate me." By objectifying the individual, society is saying that they are here for a purpose, to fulfill a duty, effectively negating free will.

Taken on face value, man seems happy with the place they are in, working productively and producing efficiently. It is unfortunate then that modern man seems to be satisfied with the terms of this disconcerting relationship in which society feeds off of the masses of objectified people. Blinded by a consent barrage of over stimulating sensationalist propaganda, society leads mankind to seek the "answers" to their own existence within the temporal, social institution (i.e. religion, education, economics). This deterministic relationship has lulled many people into a complacent state in which they refuse to acknowledge anything past the anxiety to their ultimate freedom.

It is considerably easier to take a back seat to society's driving institutional forces. Especially when confronted with the realization of their ultimate freedom and the inherent ultimate responsibility which follows. This causes mankind great anguish. Some are able to see peer through the blanket and reconcile their existence on their own terms without the need for a complete break from society. By the choice of the path without anguish, some people have set their roots down into a bed of social complacency from which there is not much hope for achieving a higher level of understanding. The existential roots flooded with information, yet deprived of knowledge, are quickly and ubiquitously being starved.

By virtue of the individual taking the first step towards seeking a higher level of understanding, by their decision to spend time at the Center, the next sequential step is for the Center to break the complacent comfort from the individual's clutches and present the angst in which they have been avoiding. The angst must be reconciled to understand their existential place.

Conclusion:

Social complacency is the reason why people do not feel the need to reconcile their spirituality. As a result, the comfortable ties to society must be broken. It is the duty of the Center's design to uproot the individual from the malaise of blindly following society.

the program document

existential psychoanalysis

According to Jean-Paul Sartre, psychoanalysis is used to determine the “empirical behavior patterns of man (Sartre 1957 page 68).” The goal of existential psychoanalysis is to determine the specific **choice** that is the precursor to a particular trait or behavioral characteristic exhibited by an individual. When referring a behavior back to a choice that was made in the individual’s life, it places the onus of responsibility, as to the reason why this individual has the behavior, squarely on the person who made it.

Compare this to various other methods of psychoanalysis that seeks to find the **state** of the individual and draw conclusions about behavior from it. The incomplete way in which one can describe this state is the reason why this method is ultimately flawed. The objective nature of describing this state is subjective to perceptual tendencies and moods that are not particular to the inquired state. It adds a gauntlet of opportunities for later interpretation to dominate the conclusion.

The Center will whole heartedly promote an individual’s quest for the gaining of a higher level of understandings. However, an individual cannot advance their level of understanding without first grasping the level of understanding of their own existence. When the individual can recognize that they are a product of their own choices, without any possible excuses of societal or environmental conditions, questions like “why am I the way I am?” then become astonishingly clear. There will be no expendable “crutches” from a societal influence for the individual to stand upon. The individual will rely on themselves and be thusly held accountable for their choices. The design of the spaces with in the Center will reflect these ideals. At the risk of being cliché, you don’t know what you have got until it is gone.

Sartre also states that it is difficult perform a psychoanalysis on oneself (Sartre 1957 page 88). To do this, it will take a large amount of honest, self reflective thought. The spaces and schedule of the Center need to be conducive to this practice. Sartre’s words have also caused me to reexamine my previous thoughts on only providing spaces for individual reflection and meditation areas within the Center. I believe that it can be beneficial for the individuals to be provided the opportunity to talk to other individuals at the Center, if they so choose.

I am aware that offering this opportunity could be detrimental to the desired outcome. In fact, I believe that if the any of the resources provided by the design of the Center are improperly utilized, failure will ensue. This decision allows for the transmission of thoughts and information between individuals, however, it can not allow for the transmission of knowledge or understanding, for they are only products of an individual’s meditation and reflection.

existential psychoanalysis

The way in which the communal areas are utilized will test the individual's social persuasion recognition and evasion techniques. If the individual is given the opportunity to experience this transmission of information it is the subsequent denial of that information as a form of understanding, a deeper, more meaningful lesson will be learned along with a stronger appreciation for true value of a higher level of understanding.

This existential emphasis on personal choice and accountability, fly in the face of many of the driving forces behind an efficient society, such as pluralism and determinism. Pluralism negates the individual's significant, by its preference for societal understanding over the understanding of the individual. Determinism denies the power of an individual's free will and the lack of personal control over the individual's existence. It is the breaking of these forces that is most important to the self-sustaining individual spirituality.

Conclusion:

Reconciling one's existence to be the product of a series of self-imposed choices promotes personal accountability. It is the revelation of choice that denies the shallow, societal power of pluralism and other deterministic forces over an individual's existence. It is the duty of the Center's design to cultivate the individual's realization of a choice based existence.

phenomenology

While contemplating what it means to an individual to gain a higher level of understanding, I have often found myself confronted with the similar idea of promoting a greater sense of self-awareness. So what is self-awareness? Through my research, I have found that self-awareness can be achieved through the successful reconciliation of the two levels of understanding, *choice* and *subjectivity*. Each one, alone, cannot spawn self-awareness. Together, chronological reconciliation of these levels will lead the individual to the goal of the achievement of a higher level of understanding.

These two **levels** of self-awareness will be accounted for in the design if the Center are direct correlations from Edmund Husserl's distinction between the two **types** of self-reflection. Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, states that the self-reflection can be performed in two different ways. The first and most easily obtainable level is entitled, *nature* (Zahavi 1999 page 183). This method of self-reflection is done by objectifying the individual and recounting historical states based off of intuitive, prereflective information. Followed by an analytical evaluation of the historical state, the individual is able to establish an accurate (to the extent that the individual's subjectivity was the basis of prereflective information) self-manifestation. The individual is able to separate the entirety of the historical experience into a series of individual perceptual acts.

However, self-awareness is more than just being conscious of one's self, in third person. This type of self-reflection is ultimately incapable of achieving an accurate level of self-awareness without the sufficient reconciliation of the second type. It is the second type of self-reflection, *transcendental* (Zahavi 1999 page 184), which seeks to account for the subjectivity of our interpretation of the experience by sterilizing and detaching the context from the experience. This purely phenomenological approach to self-reflection operates under no presumptions of the prereflective personal bias, which the individual has assimilated as perceptual fact by virtue of personally experiencing it, and instead focuses solely on the phenomena at hand.

It is only through these levels of self-reflection that a true sense of self-awareness can begin to be instilled in the individual. With a considerable amount of the experience of the Center being devoted to a self-reflective state. This phenomenological approach to self-awareness needs to be translated into the design of the existential experience. Not only does the design need to make people more aware of their choices, through the *natural* type of reflection, but also the individual's personal subjectivity, when considering the interpretation of the prereflective information, needs to be reconciled in the design. It is in this way in which a proper accountability for the achievement of a greater sense of self-awareness is can be truly be realized.

phenomenology

Conclusion:

Self-awareness is obtainable through the reconciliation of its two levels of understanding. It is the duty of the Center's design to provide an experience that makes the individual aware of their choices, along with the deeper, more transcendental reconciliation of their own subjectivity.

transcendentalism

With a solid background rooted in existential theory, the Center places the individual at the vertex of their own existence. It is through their choices that they define their essence. The next progression along this line of thought would be to look at how those choices are made. The transcendentalist would maintain that everybody has a natural intuition which serves as the basic guide to their life.

Henry David Thoreau, lived by Walden Pond for over two year to conduct an experiment in living. He discovered the ability and potential of an individual life. Thoreau stated, in his transcendental book *Walden*, that "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation (Thoreau 2004)." People are not allowed to use their natural intuition as their guide. They are not able to experience their a priori that lies with them. Instead, society provides the basis or the path from which to define their existence.

Although this is unpractical for clients of the Center, similar ideals can be capitalized in spending time in rural western North Dakota. Breaking so harshly away from one's often complacent lifestyle, that is associated with belonging to a large society, provides the clients with an opportunity to rediscover their intuition. The transcendental theory gives prudence to issues of social complacency that clients of the Center likely suffer from. Choosing to be in a place that deprives them of the comforts of routine and habit, allows that person an opportunity to sharpen their intuition and thus gain a better understanding of their own natural way.

It is this very ability to sharpen and hone one's intuition that ties directly to their ability to better understand their spirituality. Intuition can be defined as the knowing or sensing of knowledge without rational processes. It is my contention that when one is able to factor out all of the external stimuli social forces, such as religion, from their spirituality, one will find a very similar definition. Both intuition and spirituality are those intangible, internal senses of understanding, which act as a basic guide to life. Sharpening one's intuition, similarly to the means Thoreau set forth, provides an understanding of an individual's instinctive, self-sufficient spirituality.

Conclusion:

Answers to questions about the essence of existence can only be found within each individual. It is the duty of the Center's design to restore a sense of confidence with in the individual in regards to trusting their intuition. Thus, denying the importance of external stimuli as the source of answers to personal questions of the essence.

quietism

Some of the most heavily utilized areas of the Center will be the reflection and meditation spaces. As I consider the actions that the individuals of the Center will take in these spaces the overall feel of the spaces will be quiet, peaceful, and introspective. While researching some of these qualities I had stumbled across a fairly obscure form of Christian mysticism called Quietism which preached similar characteristics.

Quietism, beginning in the 17th century by Miguel de Molinos, preached that "perfection lies in complete passivity before God ()." This passivity of one's self was to be practiced to such an extent of ridding yourself of self and thus relinquishing command to the divine love. Quietists followed the ancient idea that a moment of contemplation can equal a thousand years of good works. After minor success in Eastern Europe, this "intellectual stillness" was ruled heretical by the Roman Catholic Church citing its extremist methods.

By relinquishing basic freedom of their actions, Quietists relinquished fundamental responsibility for their existence. It is not the Center's existential position to promote an individual's quest for irresponsibility of their own existence. It is the function of the Center to encourage personal reconciliation and responsibility. It is clear that when these ideas of passivity and quietness should be handled carefully with in the Center's spaces.

Perhaps my initial thoughts on how the reflection and meditation areas would be used should be reconsidered. With this purpose of not stereotyping the act of self-reflection to a peaceful, passive experience, it is here where the difference between the reflection and mediation areas can be realized. The meditation area will provide the individual with a quite, peaceful space to contemplate. While the reflection areas are to be designed in a manner that allows for more dynamic self-examination. As access to both spaces is provided equally, the focus of the Center turns to the individual's decision as to how to use the spaces.

Conclusion:

Quietist claimed that the power of spirit will act; all they would need to do was sit by and observe. This is not the doctrine of success for a sufficient reconciliation. Is the duty of the Center to allow for the individual to reconcile themselves beyond the prototypical quiet, passive reflection state.

theoretical premise summary

The goal of this research was to provide a knowledge base in which to make informed design decisions about the direction of this experiment. The theoretical background, in which this thesis lies, has been solidified by a comprehensive consideration from various related fields. Through the denial of complacent comfort offered by society, the realizing that one's existence precedes their essence put the onus of reasonability for their spirituality, squarely in their hands. Culminating in the idea of the importance of understanding one's spirituality, through reconciling one's existential condition. So it is at this point that I wish to revise my original theoretical premise to reflect this research.

Revised Theoretical Premise:

This thesis will examine the individual's need for a greater understanding of the sources of the human condition, through the reconciliation of their own existential condition.

section two: typology research

Insight into the character of the Center can be found beyond the realm of theory. The nature of this design thesis is intrinsically experiential. This is a retreat center that will rely on the spatial qualities and sequences to enable the individual. It is only through my own full reconciliation of this experience that the programmatic elements will be realized. As the design community should work collectively together. Case studies can provide this project with a background of architectural precedent about how the similar experiential elements have been treated. The following case studies provide an elemental look at how experience has been successfully manipulated.

Case Study

Key Elements

Onominese Retreat	-separation of function and experiential
La Tourette Monastery	-modest, self-sufficient community
Roden Crater	-creation of space with light
The Jerstad Center	-articulation of elements
Unite d'Habitation	-dynamic, efficient residential design
Walden	-self-sufficient living
Chichu Art Museum	-entry condition, subterranean construction

Onominese Retreat

Location: Leelanau Peninsula, Michigan
Architect: Betsy Williams, with Cornelius Alig
Client: Lee and Dorothy Alig
Date: 1998

Typology: retreat
Area: 1,400 square feet
Structure: wood framing
Features: separation of function and experiential

Other forms of retreats provide a simple get-a-way from daily life. They provide a chance to get way from the hustle of modern life and experience the more serene aspects of nature. This was the goal for the Alig family when they hire Betsy William, Architect, to design them a retreat along the shores of Lake Michigan. Wood Design and Building Magazine have recognized the tasteful material selection and natural wood textures and colors as deserving of the Citation Award. The site along the Leelanau Peninsula completes the serene nature of this retreat.

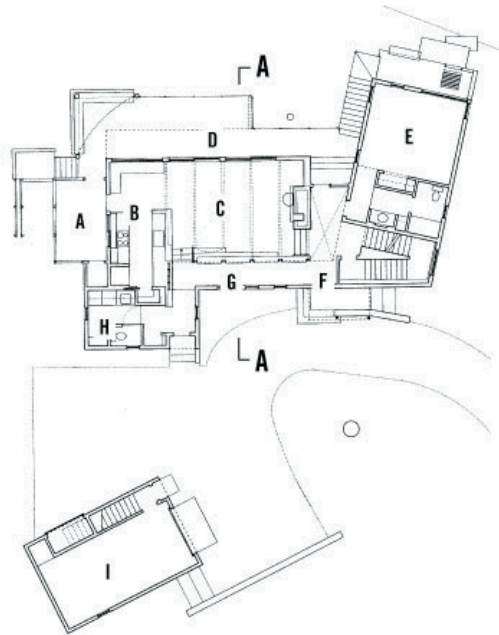
Although the design of this retreat is predominantly based on way to encourage relaxation, one can still find evidence of the need for solitary seclusion. That is the interesting part to the way in which the elements are arranged. The plan is split into two different buildings. The main structure houses the functional needs of living such as the kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom. Also in that portion of the design are some of the desired experiential elements (living area, dining, and deck). This collection of spaces allows for comfortable functioning of daily life.

The other smaller structure is programmed to include the garage and a second study. It is the detachment of these two buildings that suggests the importance of the study to contain a different nature to that of the very functional main building. The design creates a separate spatial entity in which the individual can seek personal refuge. Even though the person has disconnected themselves from the secular world by locating themselves further form the populous, there is still a need to find a more pure, solitary space in which to concentrate and reconcile. The space is not muddled down by the functional aspects of maintain life. In this space there is no other function than of that to study or reflect.

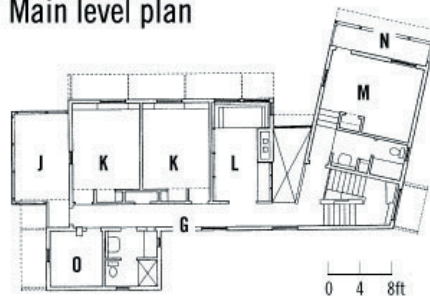
Acatamathesia is a medical term that is used to refer to a patient with a lack of faculty to understand. Operating under the assumption that we are affected by the environment in which we live. Perhaps, some peoples inability to reconcile has to do with a lack of the proper environment. This complete detachment of programmatic elements that can be seen here with the Onominese Retreat is an important separation that should be maintained in the design of the Center. In order to create as pure of experience as possible, the unique nature of these two different spaces

onominese retreat

must be maintained. Areas that accommodate functional aspects of the experience should reflect their nature. Thusly, the areas that are geared toward reflection and meditation should not take on the nature of the functional spaces.



Main level plan



Upper level plan

- A Screened porch
- B Kitchen
- C Living room
- D Deck
- E Guest bedroom
- F Entry
- G Hall
- H Laundry
- I Garage
- J Upper porch
- K Bedroom
- L Study
- M Guest bedroom
- N Loggia
- O Storage
- P Studio



above - north exterior view
left - main and upper level floor plan
below - view of garage from the south



Sainte Maria de La Tourette

Location: Lyon, France
Architect: Le Corbusier
Client: Dominicans of Lyon
Date: 1957-1960

Typology: monastery
Area: 20,000 square foot
Structure: reinforced concrete
Features: modest, self-sufficient community

The Dominican Order of Preachers was formed from the Benedictine Order in the 13th century. One of the founding ideals of the Benedictine, which Dominicans maintained, was the Rule of St. Benedict that included a requirement for monastic communities to be self-sufficient. To further the separation from secular life, the Rule decreed that only those things that are essential to life are to be possessed and such possessions can all be found or produced within the bounds of the monastery walls.

After a recent history that was muddled in liberal practices, the Dominican of Lyon sought to restore this connection to the past by construction a new monastery that more closely followed the ideals of their founding. Beyond the required level of self-sufficiency, the Order was founded on and that is the mendicant way of life which is one of an impoverished or poor lifestyle. It was the task of Le Corbusier to see this destitute goal into architectural fruition.

Le Corbusier thought of these programmatic and experiential challenges, not as a hindrance but was an opportunity to infuse his own artistic prowess into monastic life. It was with this attitude that he designed a self-sufficient community, responsible for the making of their own food and most of their own clothing. The level in which the Center follows this guide of La Tourette is a complex issue. The monks of La Tourette lived there for the larger part of their lives and were thus willing and able to devote a lot of time to, among other things, the growing of food; while the clients of the Center will probably not stay longer than a month. Concessions may be allowed in the level of self-sufficiency designing into the experience of the Center. Instead of being self-sufficient within the bound of monastery wall, the Center will adjust the limits of self-sufficiency as needed, to create the most comprehensive and practical existential experience. The attitude of Le Corbusier shall be continued as all options are explored to their fullest extent and the design relishes its self-sufficient nature.

The humble means of the Dominican Order is reflected in the interior spaces, however the exterior has taken on a completely different role, that of recruiter. Perched up off of the ground, along the side of a hill, the heavy looking monastery seems to be floating so divinely over the landscape.

Sainte Maria de La Tourette

Le Corbusier was able to achieve a relatively successful separation from the ground with the use of his signature pilotis. These columns gave the monastery a godly quality in elevation while broadcasting its presence along with the reemergence of the Dominican Order as the building seems to be boldly emerging out from the forest.

The site planning was exactly what the monks were looking for. Yet with regards to this thesis project, it is this is the exact opposite way in which the site should be handled. Instead of, broadcasting the presence of the space, the Center will seek the a modest, and humble view from both the clients perspective along with the publics perception. While the Dominican Order had an image of stable, godliness to project, it is the prerogative of the Center to operate in near silence to societal perception.

This is a key aspect that needs to be incorporated into the design. A minimally invasive public persona must be maintained. There shall be no obtrusive objects that draw unnecessary attention to this intimate place. Once out of public view, the spaces may be more expressive while still maintaining a humble nature.

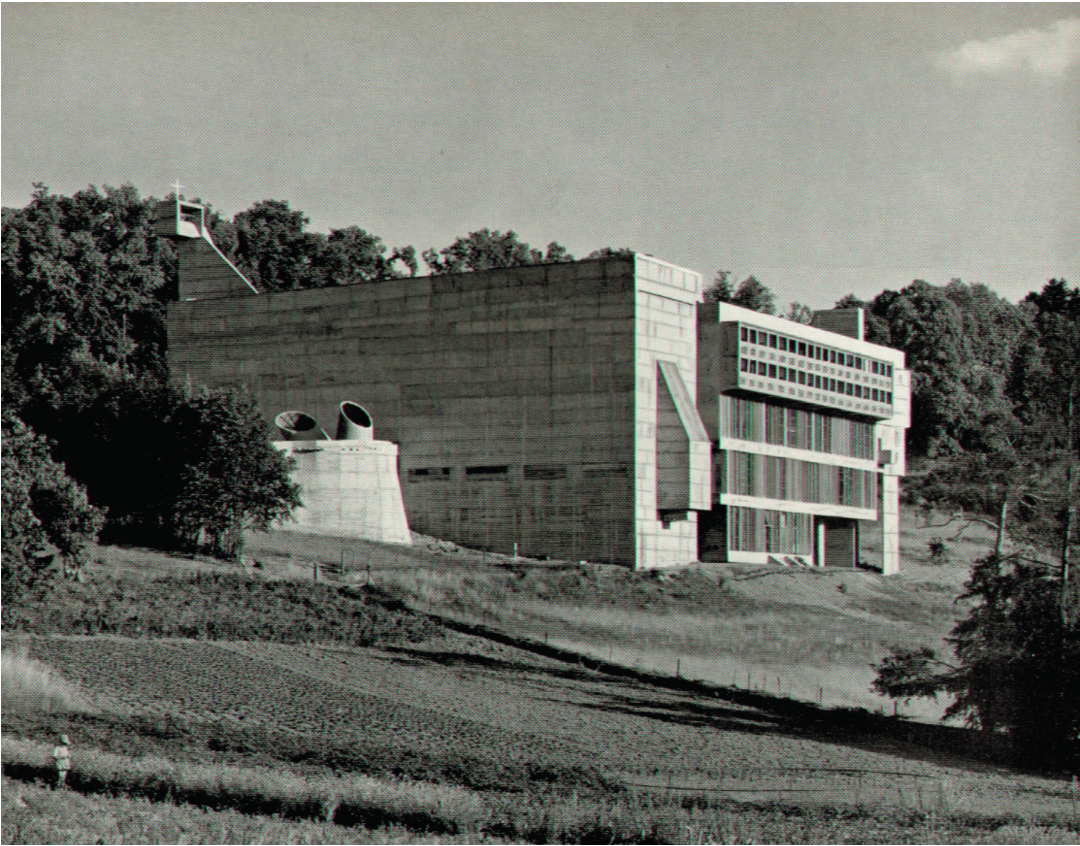
Le Corbusier sought to have very small amounts of light in the actual church. The light that was let in was to be carefully articulated. Le Corbusier developed "light cannons" that would bring light down into the space. The shape and placement of them gave an ambiguous quality to the light, a much better solution than more secularly recognizable forms. With extensive amount of the Center possibly underground, the benefits of ambiguous light form these light cannon should be realized.

below- south elevation

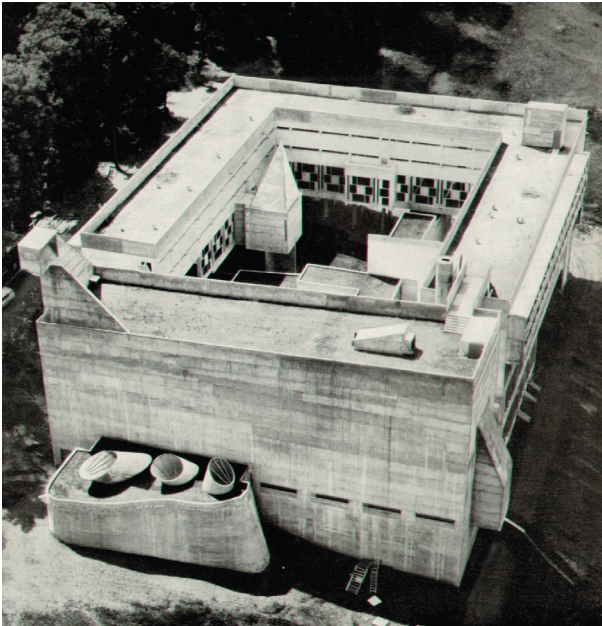


the program document

Sainte Maria de La Tourette



above- north elevation
left- interior view of light cannons
below- view from above, looking into the courtyard



The Roden Crater Project

Location: Roden Crater, Arizona
Designer: James Turrell
Date: 1978-Present

Typology: Observatory
Features: Blending of art and architecture with light

Minimal artist, James Turrell's latest installation seeks to satisfy mankind's fascination with celestial bodies while he continues to blur the line between art and architecture. Turrell takes his views about seeing and light, to a new level of experience by developing an observatory, northeast of flagstaff Arizona. Turrell's achieves this through the medium of light, a wonderful ubiquitous material that people often take for granted. In order to feel the power of light, it needs to be experienced in space. Turrell uses architecture to hold and isolate light.

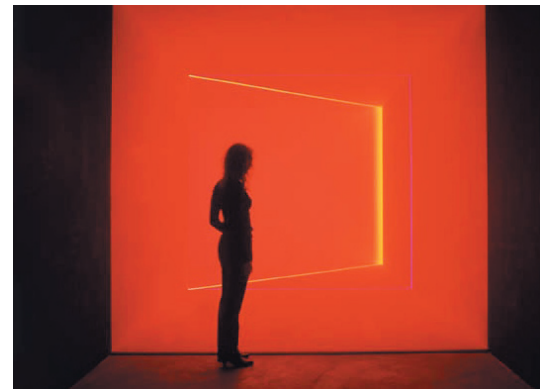
Four underground supplementary chambers will be placed in the cardinal directions out from the center of the crater. From the eastern chamber, a tunnel then leads gradually upwards over a 1000' to the bowl where the skyscape is seen. Visitor can then walk up the side of the crater to observe the celestial light show with in pure horizon provided by the rim (Adcock). Although this work is not yet completed, Turrell will use the bold style of design that he has become know for. This over purified, almost surreal visual experience adds multiple levels of complexity to a simple piece by invoking a sensory synesthesia. Such an encompassing use of color and space make the overwhelming visual aspect penetrate the view on a deeper level. Turrell successfully creates a sensory experience with the use of pure, bold design.

All too often architecture gets dubbed as a purely visual stimulus, as just something to look at. The spaces that are a part of this existential exploration must saturate the senses. This again will promote a higher level of understanding, in this case, of they built world and the effect it has on way in which a person experiences their life. This phenomenological evaluation of space can be exercises with in both means of expressing a sense, which is with either the celebration of it, or the denial of it.

below- plan and section of crater



below- a Turrell installation



The Jerstad Center

Location: Sioux Falls, South Dakota
Architect: Julie Snow Architects
Client: Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society
Date: 1998

Typology: retreat center
Area: 50,000 square feet
Structure: precast concrete
Features: articulation of elements

The Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society sought to bring their National Campus, in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, to the national level. Adding on to the existing office-based Hoeger Building proved to be just the right task for Julie Snow Architects, out of Minneapolis. The addition would be used to allow Good Sam employees from across the nation to gather together at their National Campus. The program called for a number of facilities to be added such as: a 34 unit residential complex, 10 classrooms, 2 chapels, and a central gathering hall. Completed in 1998, the Jerstad Center offers a sense of relief to both the citizens of Sioux Falls by curbing the sprawling south side as well as to the employees of Good Sam that now have a national identity (Cramer 100).

The success of this award winning design is due so the manner in which these elements were integrated together. Starting as the existing office space, the business programmed is carried thought, across the skywalk, to first spaces of the Jerstad Center. From there the communal spaces are organized at the vertex of the "L" shaped plan allowing the more quiet and private residential units to shoot off of this vertex the east. Although the plan does not physically close the Campus, it does "stabilize" the grounds of it by providing a true center to the building.

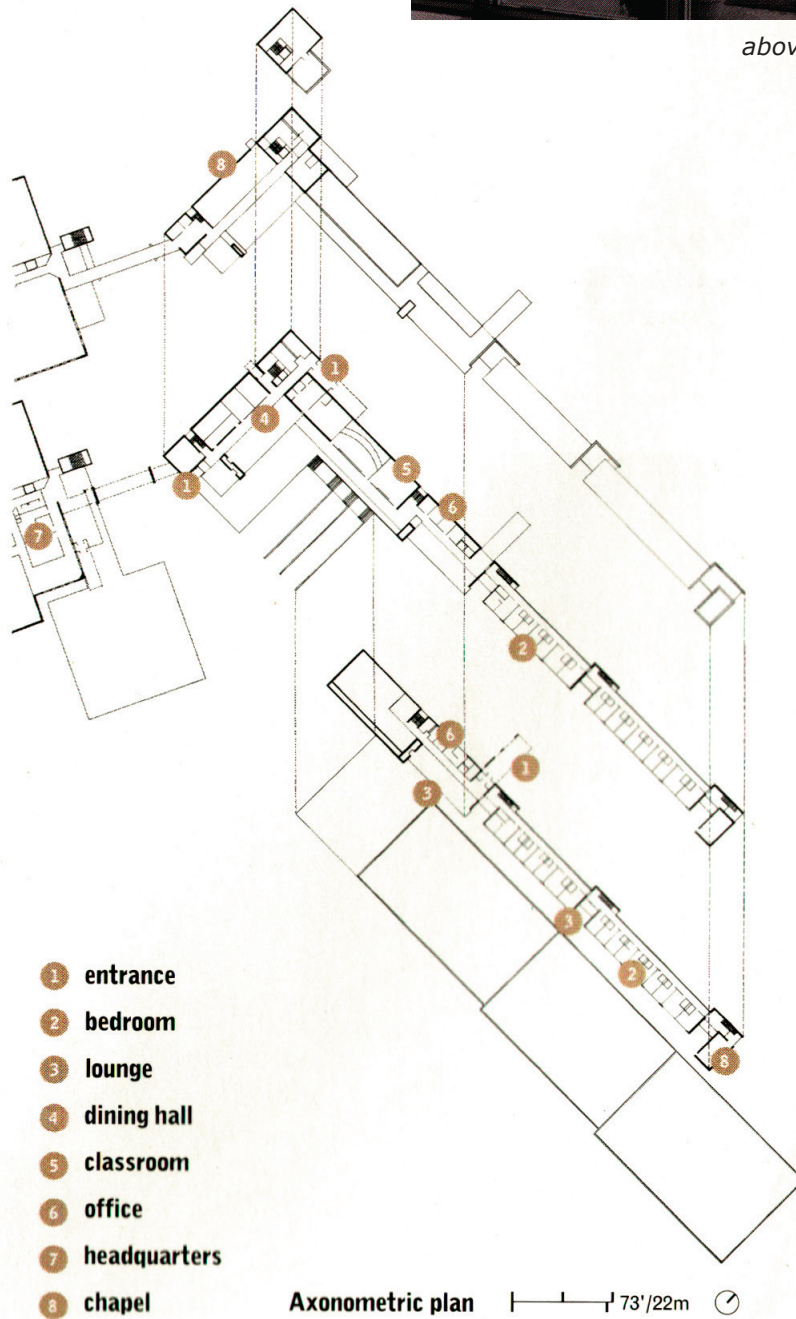
The Center also unites the employees to a common point with the use of a curtain walled colonnade that runs along the inside of the "L," which allows for sublime viewing of a reflection pond from anywhere in the center. From almost any place an employee is able to look out their window and see another part of their building, something that cannot be done with the use of singular, rectilinear forms that dominate this area. The simple act of bending the building at a point adds a sense of place to the design.

Although the act of reconciliation process is a very personal and intimate, the individuals that attend the Center for the Achievement of Greater Understanding should be aware that, no matter what physical place they belong, they still belong to a larger worldlier, metaphysical community. The residential complex is the perfect stage for this to be made known. From any individual room, there should be a sensible connection to other individual rooms. This should be achieved with much respect to anonymity and subtlety.

The Jerstad Center



above- view looking onto east wing
left- G, 1st, 2nd floor plans



Unite d'Habitation

Location: Marseilles, France
Architect: Le Corbusier
Client: City of Marseilles, France
Date: 1947-1952

Typology: multifamily housing
Size: 12 stories, 332 units, 1,600 person capacity
Structure: site cast ferroconcrete
Features: dynamic, efficient residential design

With post war housing in Europe hard to find, Le Corbusier was given the chance to express his modernist ideals in a series of housing projects across Europe. Most significantly was the design of Unite d'Habitation, in Marseilles, France. This style of building had not been attempted before and served as both a good and bad source, depending who one asks, of inspiration for future housing projects across the world.

The most intriguing aspect of this design was the achievement of incredibly dynamic living units that were fit into such a compact space along with other amenities such as shops and cafés. The mass of living space is fed by an intriguing series of corridors that run through the building. Occurring on every third floor, the longitudinal corridors acted as "raised streets" allowing the creation of two story residential units that spanned the width of the building (Le Corbusier).

This building illustrates the ability to integrate a relatively self sufficient community or mass of people into a single cohesive group. With both subterranean and energy efficient design being sought by other aspects of the design, the careful layout of masses will be crucial to grasp. Exterior walls, habitable space and circulatory spaces are all maximized.

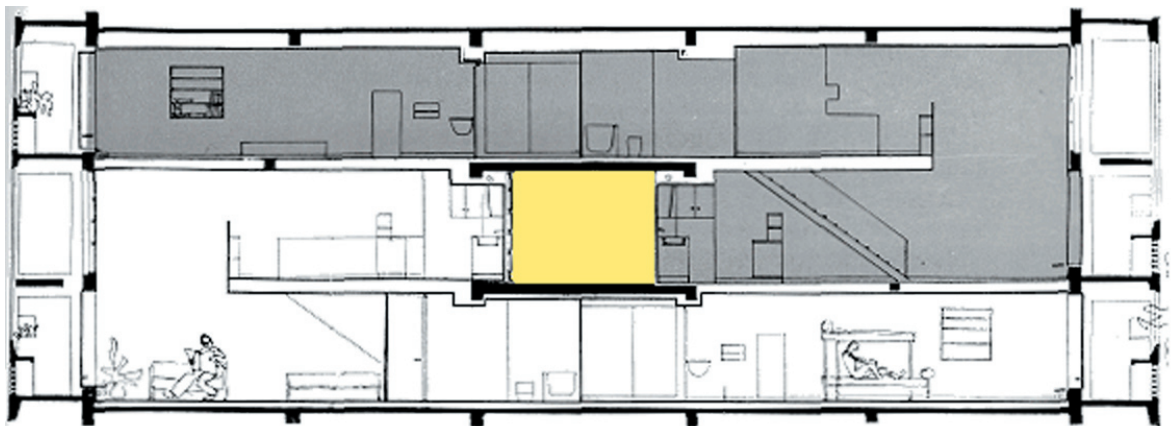
Le Corbusier designed the Unite d'Habitation to cleverly "store" large amounts of people in carefully planned layouts. The design is like "bottles into a wine rack" (Trachtenberg 1986 page 541). The corridor is used as a connector, like many other buildings. However, unlike many other buildings, the corridor is pushed to the limits in terms of efficiency. The entire sectional realm surrounding the corridor is maximized with habitable space, not by other corridors. This feature is the key reason why the efficiency of space is realized.

With economy of space in mind, do not overlook the design possibilities that can be found in section. With medium to large amounts of people at the Center at any given time, the use of singly or doubly loaded corridors is a feature that will have to be utilized. Yet potential for these supplementary spaces must then also be realized.

Unite d'Habitation



*left- formal view form south
below- typical section through
residential units*



Walden

Name: Walden
Location: Walden Pond, Massachusetts
Designer: Henry David Thoreau
Client: Henry David Thoreau
Date: 1847

Typology: retreat center
Area: 90 square feet
Structure: wood framing
Features: self-sufficient living

Henry David Thoreau after the death of his brother and with pressure from his fellow non-conformist New England Transcendentalists decided to hone his writing skills and reestablished a connection to nature. Writer and friend of Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson gave him a small plot of land on the banks of picturesque Walden Pond, just east of Boston. It was there where he built a single roomed cabin which would serve as his place of residence for the next two years. Although not hermetically sealed away from the public for the full two years, Thoreau was able to reestablish a connection to nature by adopting a level of self-sufficiency with nature. He learned the ability to sharpen his intuition. He reconciled himself by simply shifting the context of his existence to nature and to independency.

There was a physical synchronization that took place between Thoreau and nature. The meager existence within the cabin afforded Thoreau no modern conveniences such as running water and artificial lighting. Comfort is detrimental to reestablishment this connection with nature and the development of intuition. It was the relatively comfortable lifestyle that had prevented Thoreau from reconciliation and forced feelings of more shallow emptiness.

These are the situations in which the clients find themselves in before they arrive at the Center. They have taken comfort in their earthly existence and have been blinded from the true essence of themselves. It will be the duty of the Center's design, to strip away the things that bring people comfort. Without those objects, the individual will be forced to reconcile their essence from within. Increasing their connection to nature and the strength of their intuition.

Another key element to Thoreau's time at Walden was how he viewed his time there. Thoreau took an active role in his quest for understanding. Yet, Walden was not a place to live out his life in constant solitude. It is not viewed as a place to end. It was a place to go that allowed him to simply get away from this *normal* life and reprioritize and hone his essence. Walden was a place that allowed Thoreau to continue his life, in society,

Walden

on a deeper, more meaningful level. The Center needs to be viewed in a very similar way. The Center is a place which facilitates a person's ability to live **their** life.



right- Thoreau's house on Walden Pond

Chichu Art Museum



right- view for above the Museum
bottom right- relief of stairwell within the museum
below- entry condition



Chichu Art Museum

Location: Naoshima, Japan
Architect: Tadao Ando Architect & Associates
Client: Naoshima Fukatake Art Museum Foundation
Date: 1999-2003

Typology: Museum
Area: 27,700 square foot
Structure: Reinforced-Concrete
Features: entry condition, subterranean construction

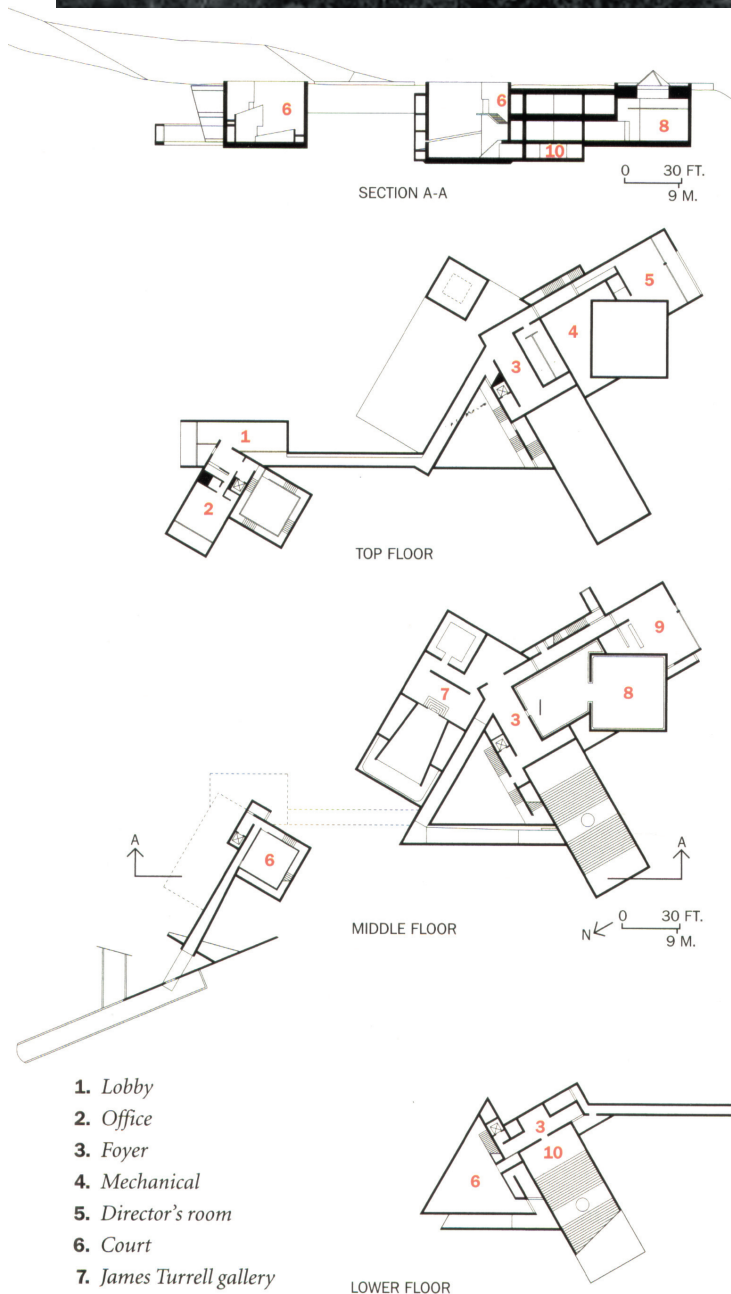
Tadao Ando continues his work with the Naoshima Fukatake Art Museum Foundation with a minimalist art museum on a small island southwest of Osaka. This Museum is designed to hold three separate installations from permanent artists. Chichu, which is the Japanese word for "with in the earth," was design to act a well integrated element into the islands body, connecting the art work to the island in an untraditional way. Ando's design of the Museum achieves the best of both worlds in terms of a dramatic, monumental expression that remains very personal and existential.

Burring the superstructure into the ground accommodates a very modest public perception of the space. In fact, it makes the public choose to experience it. The building does not call out to the public, inviting them in. It simply puts an opening into the island. People can then choose to investigate further.

For what lies inside is a dramatic shift of monumentality. The sterilizing entry sequence breaks connections to the outside world and makes the sole purpose to displaying and feeling the art inside. With all extraneous information of the secular world is filtered out of view by a unmistakable entry sequence, the bold use of material and light guide the visitors through the spaces.

This idea of a modest public view should be realized with the design of the Center. Much the same way that Ando viewed the withdrawn, private nature in which people view the art exhibits, the Center views the act of individual reconciliation. The purity of space that the Ando infuse into the museum is achieved because elements that do not need to be there are not there. . There is no need for extemporaneous information within the Center. There is no need for public acknowledgement of the experience. Another added feature to having the building underground is the way in which the Architect is allowed to design in negative space. Instead of adding onto the land, the architect takes land away. This process essentially negates the occurrence of *dead space* that occurs when building above ground. Acute angles are more easily achieved because the other side of walls or spaces is occupied with earth. A more organic form can emerge.

Chichu Art Museum



- 1. Lobby
- 2. Office
- 3. Foyer
- 4. Mechanical
- 5. Director's room
- 6. Court
- 7. James Turrell gallery
- 8. Claude Monet gallery
- 9. Café
- 10. Walter De Maria gallery

To ease costly, laborious process of building underground, Ando found a site that had strong natural features which would be conducive to this type of construction. The site, on the side of a mountainous island, provided Ando with a natural depression in which the building could be constructed and then later integrated back into the natural landscape. This provided the Museum with all of the desirable features of subterranean spaces without the cost.

Taking measures from Ando, the natural features of the butte can still be utilized without completely relying on the *negative* removal of land. The butte provides a perfect place to enter the earth, because it is raised and has a hollow depth. The opportunity exists to bring people into the butte and then back out other sides of it while still maintaining an underground quality to spaces that latch onto the side of the butte. These elements can then either be covered and integrated back into the natural landscape, or they can provide a relief to it.

above- view from above during construction
left- building section and floor plans

the program document

Soren Kirkegaard

“Life must be understood backwards; but... it must be lived forward.”

section three: historical context

There have been retreat centers that have claimed to offer similar features. So what make this one different? To better grasp the sociological condition into which the Center will be designed, I have asked a series of question aimed to illustrate the historical context.

Why this Center?

It has long been humankind's quest to achieve understanding. After asking the question why, people search for answer about objects, phenomena and most importantly about themselves. People seek finality in answers and universal truth when reconciling their personal connection to a greater power. Somewhere out there, there must lay a comprehensive answer to the mystery of their spirituality. Inventive people, look down a wide variety of paths in which to find this nirvana. People look at literature for other people's secrets to achieving this higher level of understanding. There are entire sections of libraries and book stores devoted to literature that sell spirituality by the page. BeliefNet, of beliefnet.com, an online source for spirituality, now offers the "Belief-O-Matic" which tells the user in which direction they can reconcile by simply answering 20 questions. Also, people look toward science and medicine to offer up comprehensive truths of existence. Deterministic theories offer final solutions that people need merely to wait until phenomena occur. Other times people stand next to their religious habits, as the connection to the greater power. They take an impersonal social institution and pass their affiliation off as a true measure of understanding.

It is upon these stages in which many people's quest stops. Although the aforementioned avenues offer an incredible amount of valid answers to many questions, yet they can not provide a valid basis in which to find spirituality. Alberto Perez-Gomez said it best in his book *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science*, "the atomic theory of the world may be true but it can hardly explain real issues of human behavior (Perez-Gomez 1984 pg 6)." There is no basic input-output datum in which we live in. These stages offer something abstract and objective to hold onto, an ultimate goal of reassurance. They sell ideas about great forces at work, controlling their lives; all they would need to do is buy in and go along for the ride.

It is the existential backbone of the Center's experience that separates this method of understanding from all others. For the Center will not provide people with answers to questions of spirituality. The Center will provide people with an experience in which the individual can find their own connection and develop it to a higher level of understanding, which increases the self-sufficiency that one's spirituality should have. The individual will not be along for the ride in this experience. They will decide to take an active role in this quest, for it is not as simple as going along with the idea presented. It must be felt and made personal; they must choose to make it their own.

In what form?

Architecturally, these stages, in which some people currently lie, have taken the form of confidence and commodity. Proudly displaying the strength of their social prowess, it is their function to sell themselves as possible means of understanding, just not of spirituality. There is no problem with the use of literature, science, or religion. It is the individual's improper reconciliation that is to be blamed. As social elements, they are simply transmitting information. It is the individual's less that through act of understanding has been the cause of this problem. So to help the individual understand this relationship between information and understanding, the Center will remove *information* from the list of possible sources of reconciliation to spiritual questions.

Why right now?

The ubiquitously spread of information has saturated our society. The fallibility of the reliance upon information based systems will soon be seen. Since the 1980s, there has been a movement towards pluralism (Richards 2005) and a massive view of society. People are searching for something more than information. They seek a transcendent experience (Adler 2005). It is no longer sufficient to simply know about the connection, one needs to experience it, to absolved the essence into themselves and make it their own. In his book, Perez-Gomez is relating the crisis to architecture and design, which is secondarily being address by this thesis project; yet the translation into other aspects of our modern life, can be drawn. It is his contention that the action must be taken against the imperfect reliance upon input/output, subject/object relationships in order to reconcile the meaning of life and understanding. The crisis is at people's doorsteps the failure to do so is already underway.

interpol

*When personality is scar tissue
It travels south with this use
I'm subtle like a lion's cage
Such a cautious display*

*Remember take hold of your time here
Give some meanings to the means
To your end*

section four: project goals

- **Better understand the relationship between an individual and the built environment and to exercise this relationship wholly with the design of an experience.**
- Demonstrate the ability to design a built form based the human condition.
- Demonstrate a high level of understanding as to know the nature of existentialism.
- Demonstrate the ability to design efficiently and succinctly.
- Demonstrate the ability to see critically, and think creatively.
- Effectively present the design solution in a manner that is appropriate to the nature of the project.

Theodore Roosevelt

"This area certainly has a desolate, grim beauty of its own, that has a curious fascination for me"

section five: site analysis

Even for someone like me who has been born and raised in the Upper Great Plains, it is it easy to regard the western half of North Dakota as nothing more than a bare, barren wilderness of wheat and oil. Yet it is this stereotype that the Center will play off of and will prove to be a most beneficial to the experience.

What is it to be desolate?

What is it to be completely alone?

To be desolate,
is to be free
Free to decide
Free to define

It is the greatest gift that any one can receive; the chance to be desolate is a chance to be completely free. Rebuking the reliance upon any other object or any other opinion, for in desolation, neither exists. When there is no one else, there is no subjectivity, there is no objectivity, there is nothing but one's existence, and the truth is theirs to define. Soren Kierkegaard's quote about truth in the beginning of the previous section is only applicable with regards to other people and their truth. Yet, on the grassy buttes of western North Dakota, there is no one else. There are no **other** truths. This little grassy butte offers this gift of desolation; an empty stage in which one makes themselves.

The butte is a stage for a rediscovery of oneself, an unveiling of an individual's true condition. This process stage is not always what it seems and it thusly inherently disconcerting. The grassy plains gently rolling across the horizon is like that complacent state of social compliance that individual's find themselves in. Softly being lulled asleep by their comfort, the person glosses quickly over the ground finding no reason to reconcile beyond what lies beneath, what lies within. Then, revelation! Falling over the edge of the unassuming butte, the grassy comfort falls out from beneath their feet, revealing the nature of the dynamic ground below, like the unsettling way in which one realizes the fallibility of the essence of they have created for their existence. No longer able to rest relax with their feet on solid ground; the individual is forced to reconcile in a new way. A way that is self-reliant and self-sufficient.

A wonderful modesty is found when visiting this butte. While driving by on Highway 200, there is no way to tell that a butte even exists there. There is just a softly sloping, grassy plane that shoots even so slightly upwards and out toward the horizon. It is this ordinary public perception that makes the wonderfully dramatic revelation that occurs within the butte so much more powerful. Spirituality is internal, private and personal; it is not to be worn on one's sleeve or proudly displayed for all to see. It is internal and thusly needs no social perception or justification to be deemed worthy.

the program document

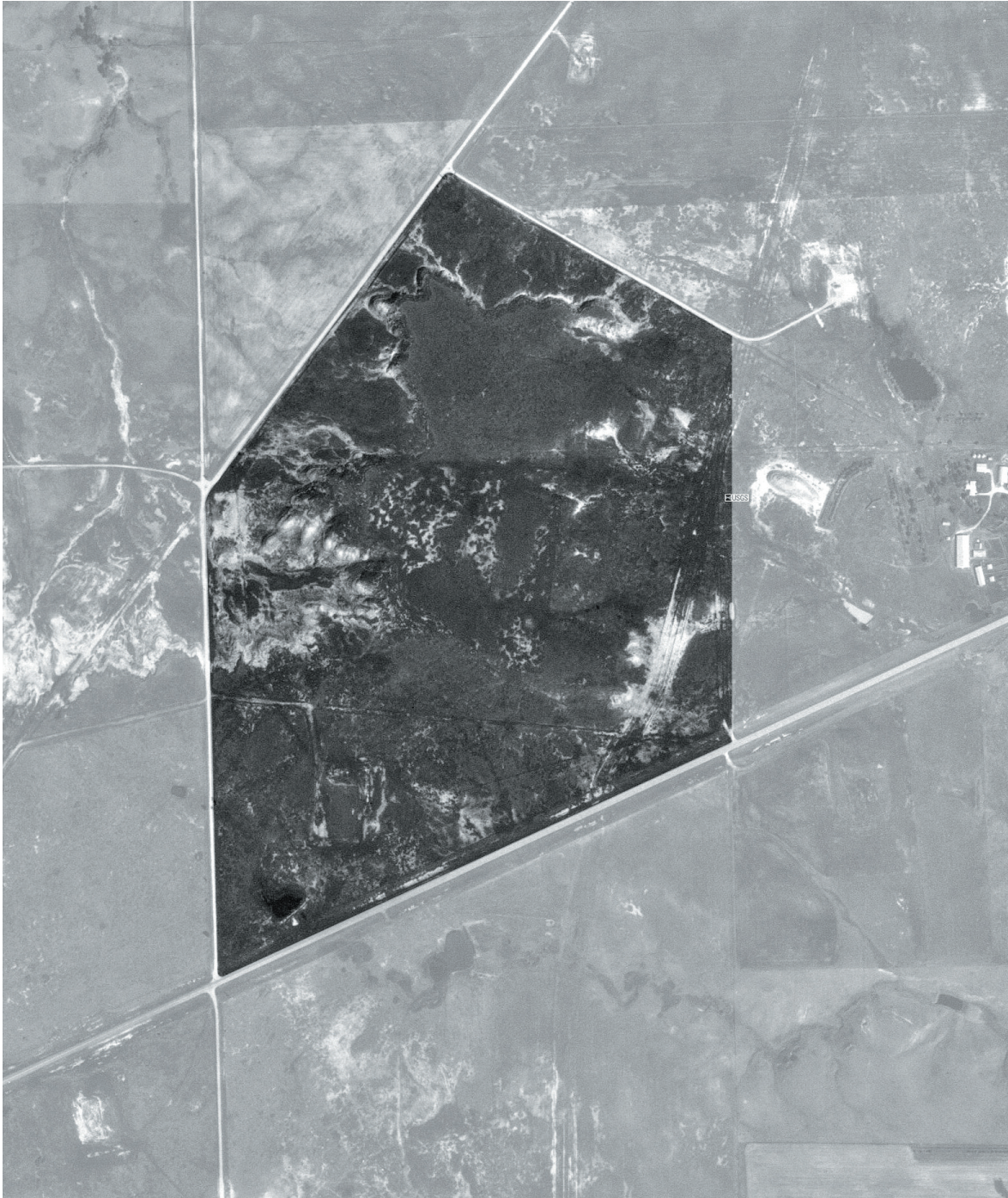
legal description

Privately owned land at-

T145N – R097W

Northern Section – south ½ of the southwest ¼ of section 19

Southern Section - northwest ¼ of section 30



north is up, no scale

prospective views

With a site in rural, western North Dakota, the views available to the site are largely determined by the land formations and less by other built forms. There are two distinct ends to this sentinel butte formation, the north and south, with their own viewing characteristics. The ends are separated by a ridge that runs from the west to the east. Connecting to the larger formations to the west, the ridge tapers slightly downward as it runs east across the site. On the eastern edge, the ridge hooks to the north terminating, within the site's boundaries, the larger ridge formation. This hook north also creates a more private, bowl-like space, extending beyond the site, towards the north and west.

South

Just across North Dakota Highway 200, lie large, flat expanses of land. More heavily perforated by oil wells, than other sides, the land rolls gently across the horizon.

East

The eastern edge of the site is bordered by a farmstead and acreage, providing this project with a very close set of obstructions. Beyond the farmstead the rolling of the hill picks up slightly from the south.

North

Just beyond the north edge of the site lie two oil wells, a small oil base and very softly sloping land. This mild terrain is interrupted as it falls off into the horizon by an sea of an extensive set of small valleys. The foliage is the main perceivable aspect of them.

West

The land to the west of the site is much like that of the site. The defining ridge of the site continues to its path while continuing to divide the north and south edges of the site. The south is reconciled by Hwy. 200 that curves back to the west; which leaves the north edge to be taken over by the valleys that continued northward.

Conclusion

The south side offers the challenge of an immediate, paved highway, and a larger amount of oil wells than other sides. In addition, the natural land formations do not offer much assistance to framing the views, for all of the land south of the ridge is obliquely sloped from west to east. The east side views are greatly hindered by the proximity of very secular obstructions that are associated with the farmstead. This makes any areas of visual desire most effectively achieved in the protection of the north and west sections. The northwest corner presents to most pure or unobstructed view out into the landscape. This area also coincides with the natural form and orientation of the butte, for it utilizes the existing geographic features that help framing pleasing views and offers northern light that is softer than that on the south.

prospective views

Besides the views that radiate out from the site, the views of the site that are accessible from the public way, must also be considered to maintain the essence of the space. Modesty and privacy must be maintained. The ridge through the site should provide sufficient level of privacy for spaces located on the north and west side. However, the east side of the site is in the direct line of Hwy. 200 which bends south just before the site and continues to run southwest. The east and south sides, since they are in the public view, can provide the modest public perception.

In order to maintain a low public profile, such things as parking requirements need to be reconciled. Placing a parking structure or a large parking lot would not maintain the experiential qualities needed. For this reason, it is recommended that the off site parking be utilized. From this satellite parking facility, clients would then be escorted to a more modest drop-off in before entering

proximity

It would not be incorrect to say that this site is disconnected. The desolate features that were mentioned previously are not achieved easily. With the selection of this particular site, the ideals of this project are reinforced. Considering the arduous measures that need to be taken in order to arrive at the Center, the experience there cannot be taken lightly. The Center is not for the casual visitor or for a nonchalant weekend rejuvenation getaway. It is for those that choose to take the time and truly reconcile themselves. Plus, experiencing the Center should not be something that needs to be done often. Properly utilizing the Center will provide the clients with an understanding of their existence that will last a lifetime.

The closest city or substantial size is just over an hour away from the proposed site. The butte lies on the northern side of North Dakota State Highway 200, 16 miles west of Killdeer, population 732. Then 34 miles south of Killdeer, along North Dakota State Highway 22, lies Dickinson, population 16,500. It is here, in Dickinson, that the easiest connection with the clients can be made. United States Interstate 94, which runs through Dickinson, provides a primary means of vehicular access. The two previously mention state highways are both 2 lane, paved highways that are well kept. Also, Dickinson's Theodore Roosevelt Regional Airport is on the outskirts of town which can accommodate those clients arriving by plane.

utilities

Again, with a site in rural North Dakota the availability of utilities needs to be dealt with. Fortunately, the site chosen lies on common paths with the major utilities. Even though the clients may not be utilizing these utilities, the employees of the Center will still have full access to modern amenities such as running water, data lines, and electricity.

Water

Currently there are no water lines that run near the site. In fact most of the water used in Dunn County is a result of drilling wells into one of four sandstone or lignite aquifers that lie beneath Dunn County. At the site, the most easily tapped is the Killdeer Aquifer. Water produce from this aquifer is hard and is available at the rate of 50-1,000 gallons per minute, at a depth that is usually around 200'. A 1974 survey of Dunn County's ground water, showed that the hydrologic cycle was intact and that the usage and replenishment of the aquifers was adequate.

Electricity & Communications

Killdeer, which east of the butte, is fed with electricity, communication, and cable lines that originate from distribution facilities from the west. The lines that feed Killdeer run both along Highway 200 and across the country side. There are currently lines that run both along the ridge and the northwest boundaries of the site. Montana Dakota Utilities, McKenzie Electricity, Consolidated Communications, and Midcontinent Communications can all be accessed as providers.

vegetation

The land around the site is known for its vegetation. The edge of the site borders the Little Missouri National Grassland to the west. These same prairie grasses dominate the vegetative make up of this area. While the primary use of this land is for the drilling of oil, the secondary use for this land is for the utilization of the large expanses of prairie grass. The flat areas around the site are used to grow the many varieties of wheat and oats that North Dakota I known for. The steeper area, in which farm equipment cannot safely cultivate, is used for raising cattle. This is the current function of the butte, as pasture.

soil

Woody plants are very sparse on the site. Primarily, the woody vegetation is found on the inside slopes of the gullies that wind around the region. The prairie portions to this area do not retain water long enough to sustain woody plants. The sandy composition of the soil draws the water down into the ground. It then seeks its way downhill which leads the formation valleys. Water percolates out along the valley's walls, providing a suitable place for a tree to grow. Understanding this process can reveal an important fact about the subterranean character of the site. It would be safe to guess that because there are no trees on the slopes of the butte there must not be a sufficient level of water in the soil to sustain a tree growth. There is so little water, that even in the geographically protected areas of the site no trees have grown.

Ability to go underground should not be effected by the water if the intrusion is done appropriately. Digging into the butte should not yield problems with the water table. The sandy soil drains fast, and the relatively small stature of the butte is not conducive to holding water up above in inside the butte when it is so easy to drain. There are still places that can arise if digging in the wrong location. In the southern corner of the site and just to the east of the site, in the farmstead, there are shallow ponds in these locations. Lying just below grade, these man-made ponds serve as sources of water for cattle that graze on the site. The water table that is feeding the abundance trees in the gullies to the north and west is clearly still active. Digging into the existing prairie will include opening a new box of issues about dealing with the water table.

That is not to say that digging into the dry sandy soil of the butte will be easy. The Theodore National Parks success is derived from the relatively easily eroding soil. So along with providing the butte with desirable characteristic of exposure or revealing, the erosion is simply compromising the edges of the butte. The structural integrity of the edge soil will need to be carefully reconciled. Also, if the structure of the grass on top of the butte is compromised, other efforts to slow the erosion will have to be made, for it is the natural grass on the top of the butte provides the most resistance to the effects of erosion.

climate

The site lies on 47 degrees north latitude and 103 degrees west longitude. Here, the sun is low for a lot of the year. The site also lies near the geographical center of North America, where the jet stream fluctuates. The climate is determined largely by these factors. The sun is very low in the winter creating cold conditions. Dry air also follows suite and drops down from Canada. There summers, where the sun can get as high as 80 degrees, are hot and there is no cooling effects form water.

With possibly achieving temperatures below zero in the winter months, serious consideration will need to be paid when it comes to determining whether or not to keep the center open year round. Besides the obvious health risks associated with being alone in extreme cold, what people where will need to be considered. As part of the transition into a place that is pure and without commodity, the branding of clothing needs to be tightly managed with the use of common clothing. Outdoor activities in the summer can be reconciled by modifying the provided garments. However, in the winter months more clothes would need to be added. This is where the problem of secular objects rears its ugly head. It is not acceptable to allow the people to contaminate the sanctity of the Center by bringing the commodity associated with wearing of a brand.

The winds at the site, most often arriving from the northwest or the southeast, provide many the sensible characteristics of the site. The seclusion of the site allows the wind to play a predominate auditory roll, for once one gets away from State Highway 200, there is not much else to hear. Also, the incredibly clean air in the area is due to the wind easily rolling over the relatively flat land renewing the air's freshness. As I mentioned before, wind also has a big effect on the temperature year round.

On the micro scale, the landform profile is conducive to efficiently drawing the wind land up, over and down the breadth of the site. With the wind that runs easily over the landform, the ridge can act like an aerofoil and thus create small pressure variations between the two ends of the site. Creating a unique phenomena in which the passive movement of air can aide in others experiential qualities of the site. This can be experienced if a space traverses through the ridge and connects both the side with high pressure and the area of low pressure.

industry

The western third of North Dakota is littered with natural gas and oil wells. The Little Knife Oil Field, discovered 1977, runs underneath this site. Within a mile radius out from the butte there are 10 active wells and 20 plugged wells, there is even one plugged oil well in the southern third of the site. All but two of these 30 wells were first drilled before 1980. And now with over two-thirds of the wells sealed, the oil in this immediate area is on the way down.



the program document

Jean-Paul Sartre

“Freedom is what you do with what has been done to you.”

section six: spatial allocation

The spatial entities are broken up into two different categories. They include the functional elements of the Center and the experiential elements of the client's experience. To expound as to the nature of how these elements should be designed the following space allocation should be followed.

the program document

functional elements

Although all elements of this Center are function, this section pertains to those elements that are required for the successful managing and maintaining the function of the Center. These are the elements that will facilitate the parts of the Center where the clients reside. These elements should be planned in a manner that is unobtrusive to the clients. Based on the site analysis, the eastern portion of the site is the most ideal for these more secular elements of the design.

office space

The management team of the Center will have offices on site. Office space will need to be provided for the allowance for 8 employees to work efficiently and effectively with very minimal contact with the clients. Spatial accommodations will need to be made for an intermediate contact room. This is where issues with clients can be dealt with in a private manner. Their primary duties will be to oversee the day-to-day operations of the Center, so multi-media accommodations will need to be made for the loose supervision of the Clients. Also, the employees will need to have full access to the internet and communication lines. As people request information both online and over the phone lines, employees will be responsible for servicing these requests.

living quarters

To handle issues of safety and security, there is a need for a staff member to be on site 24-hours a day. The design will need to allow for a permanent Resident Manager to live and work at the Center. Apartment-like accommodations will be made in an area that is centrally located, yet maintaining an appropriate level of privacy from both the employees and especially the clients. The nature of the space will be private and comfortable with modern amenities, electricity, plumbing, data and phone lines. Spatial requirements in this area will include a bedroom, bathroom, full kitchen, dining and living areas, along with a reclusive private garage. These elements could be accessed many times daily. Appropriate planning should be made as to not disrupt the overall natural characteristics of the site.

environmental services areas

Ten percent of the square footage will be allotted to these elements. Maintenance areas will be carefully and appropriately spaced throughout the Center. This will be performed in correlation with the places that exhibit the most need for upkeep (i.e. entry conditions, the residential complex).

experiential elements

The act of programming or planning a building is abstract. From the non-corporeal position above, the Architect plans out the required spaces and elements that will accommodate the people below. Viewing the design elements from any other point of view, besides that of the individual, would surely be detrimental to the success of the designed experience when considered phenomenologically.

So not only will the *nature* of the spaces be determined by the experience but the mere *existence* or *amount* of each experiential element will be determined by the design of the existential experience. To superpose my fallible, third-person presumptions on this key aspect of the design now would not be give sufficient respect to the qualities of the elements. The experiential elements will emerge *from* the design process as the Center is reconciled.

With regard to this methodology, the following section is providing a very basic a **framework** in which to design the experience from. The framework elucidated comes in the form of **basic** spatial elements that are needed to support the experience of a person throughout there stay at the Center.

off-site parking/preparatory space

This element is needed to keep the site as clean and unassuming as possible to public view. Also, beings that this is the first element that people will experience, it can serve as a place for the person to be prepared. Tasks such as registration and storage or appropriation of personal items would be performed here.

entry condition

The entry to the Center will serve as the barrier or the catalyst from the secular world. This transition should be appropriately dramatic and unmistakable. It should not be experienced more than once, for it is the final filter that separates and protects the sanctity of the Center. As this element is being experienced, there should be no doubt to the individual to the severed connection to the outside world.

residential complex

This element is basic responsibility for the accommodation of the fundamental needs of life for the individuals. These individual lodging establishments are to reinforce the idea of self-sufficiency and only provide the a basic means of existence. This is an area where the familiar connection to the outside world must remain broken. Careful attention needs to be paid to the way in which this fundamental element remains ambiguous to the experience.

the program document

experiential elements

reflection spaces

Reflection areas are to allow for the active expression and fulfillment of the reflective experience. Spaces should be dynamic and encourage manifestation of ideas. Giving credence to the presence of alterity as we reflect.

mediation spaces

This space will provide passive solitude in which to hone one's essence. These spaces are to be more point oriented than others, focusing on the self. Purity of space and performance will be a key to understanding the nature.

walkway system

Allowing the individual to synchronize themselves both physically as well as mentally, the walkway provide space that will be commonly used by any individual at the Center. The connection to the community at the Center will be primarily experienced with the use or disuse of this element.

exit condition

Just as the entry, uprooted the individual from their lives, the exit element should simply allow that person to seek out and venture back into the land they had left. This will be the first instance in which people will be experience their understanding and should thusly be treated with ease and reverie.

program document summary

The resources and bounds of this experiment have been elucidated. Again, the preceding is a ripe framework that will accompany me into the design phase. It provides the design with an information base ready to be molded into a knowledgeable, series of elements, conditioned to the articulation of an experience.

Jean-Paul Sartre

"We are condemned to be free."

format

The format of process documentation is as follows:

formal development the reveal	72
elemental development master plan entry condition residential brow office complex refleciton areas	74
environemnt treatment energy materiality	88
title development	90

process documentation

formal development

The first lesson I learned as an architecture student was that no design is experienced on paper. All projects have a site. They all have an already existing character in to which they are constructed. It should be the goal of any design capitalize on the features of the site and reconcile these elements and conditions of the site. This relationship between site and built environment must be considered first for any project.

For many building projects, especially in the midwest, the conditions of the site offer a relatively flat plane **on** which to construct an building of the type that I have dubbed, *objective*. These constructions dominate the site and exude strongly out into the community in which they exist. Yet, the conditions at the grassy butte are very different. In this case, the positive, objective form already exists. In fact, the form is natural and helps defines the non-built, natural environment. Such a gift for a modest project must not be ignored. To simply stick a building on top of this already completed mass would be fallible and redundant.

Instead, I found that designing in negative, from the dominant mass of the butte would be the best option to handle formal treatments. Much like that seen in the Chichu Art Museum, in Japan, by Tadao Ando, the Center will be removed from the site. This feature allows the architect to more precisely delineate this relationship between the site and built environment.

In Ando's case, he wanted to maintain the natural beauty and tranquility of the island that the site was located. In the case of the Center, the modest, self-confident image needed to for this type of reconciliation can be maintained. Other projects that seek this level of modesty need to rely on a man-caused barrier to offer privacy. The Center, because of the positive natural elements, could be shielded naturally and promote a more harmonious relationship with the already complete surrounding natural landscape.

A look at what it mean to existentially reconcile an individual's spirituality only reinforced this finding. It is my contention that to properly reconcile an individual's spirituality, one must understand that they are a product of their own choices. They must existentially reconcile. It is a promotion of this type of reconciliation that will be what the Center will offer to the clients.

It is the comfort that is found in a shallow reconciliation of their spirituality that has caused the lapse in a person who seeks the Centers understanding of their own spirituality. They must rebuke the power of deterministic, external forces that can be so easily developed in our lives. Truth is perception. To define within the bounds of the "self" creates a self truth whose validity can not be challenged by any other.

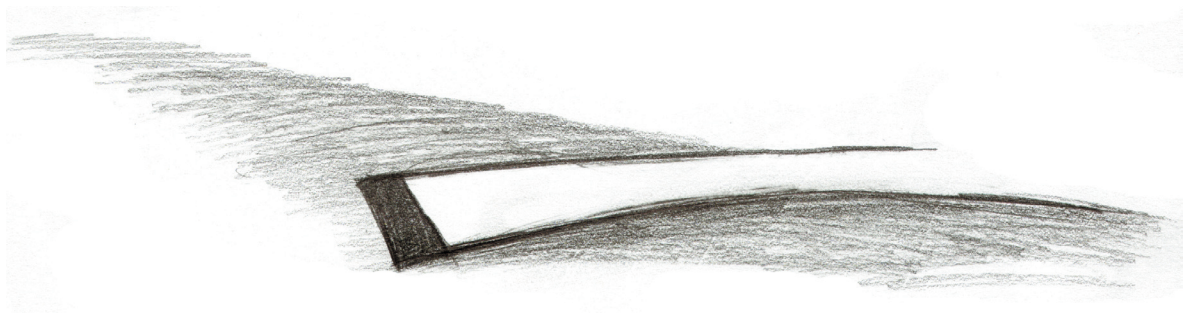
formal development

It was determined that the delineation of this *negative* design would best be achieved with the use of a "reveal."

The reveal takes for granted that there exists a positive form from which a reveal can take place. This is what makes the reveal so perfect for the Center's butte; it is also an area that I became aware of a limitation of the reveal. The reveal is a relative feature. How can the presence of the positive form be maintained as experience enters into the mass? Can the integrity of the reveal be maintained even as the positive mass of the butte is not readily distinguishable?

To answer this question, I articulated the formal palette to include two types of reveals. First, would be the surface reveals. Used where the human condition would be immediately aware of both the positive mass and negative void. Secondly, when the positive mass of the butte would not be readily distinguishable, a long, contiguous reveal would be used. The spaces created would rely on the visual transaction that occurred upon entering the reveal by maintain a visual link to the more identifiable surface reveal.

Articulated further, this solution yields two spaces that carry over to the next phase of development. The relief and the corridor complete the basic conditional development of the form.



above -the reveal at both the surface and contiguous conditions

elemental development - master plan

With the establishment of the reveal as the most successful treatment. The next consideration lies in the how this treatment is perpetrated to the various programmatic spaces that the Center needs to operate. Yet, first the desire experience must be identified in the form of a master plan and realization of all of the programmatic elements.

Programming provided a special opportunity for the Center to distinguish itself from other centers. When existential reconciliation is not the driving force behind achieving greater understanding, retreat centers offer external "supplements" to fill the void. It is the position of the Center not to offer anything else beyond the bounds of the individual for people to find understanding in. This calls for a dramatically edited experience and program. The Center will only provide the basic means of existence and experience. Doing this, it forces each person to take on the responsibility of their own reconciliation. Routine and proscribed tasks will not bring people the sublime comfort of following along.

It is crucial that the design of this experience be done from a phenomenological perspective. This provides a detailed, first person, experiential quality to the spaces it yields. To do this, I drew the human condition through the butte exercising my understanding of the existential condition. As this happened, opportunities emerged from the site. To the left, is a schematic layout of the edited program integrated in on the site plan.

Required Programmatic Elements

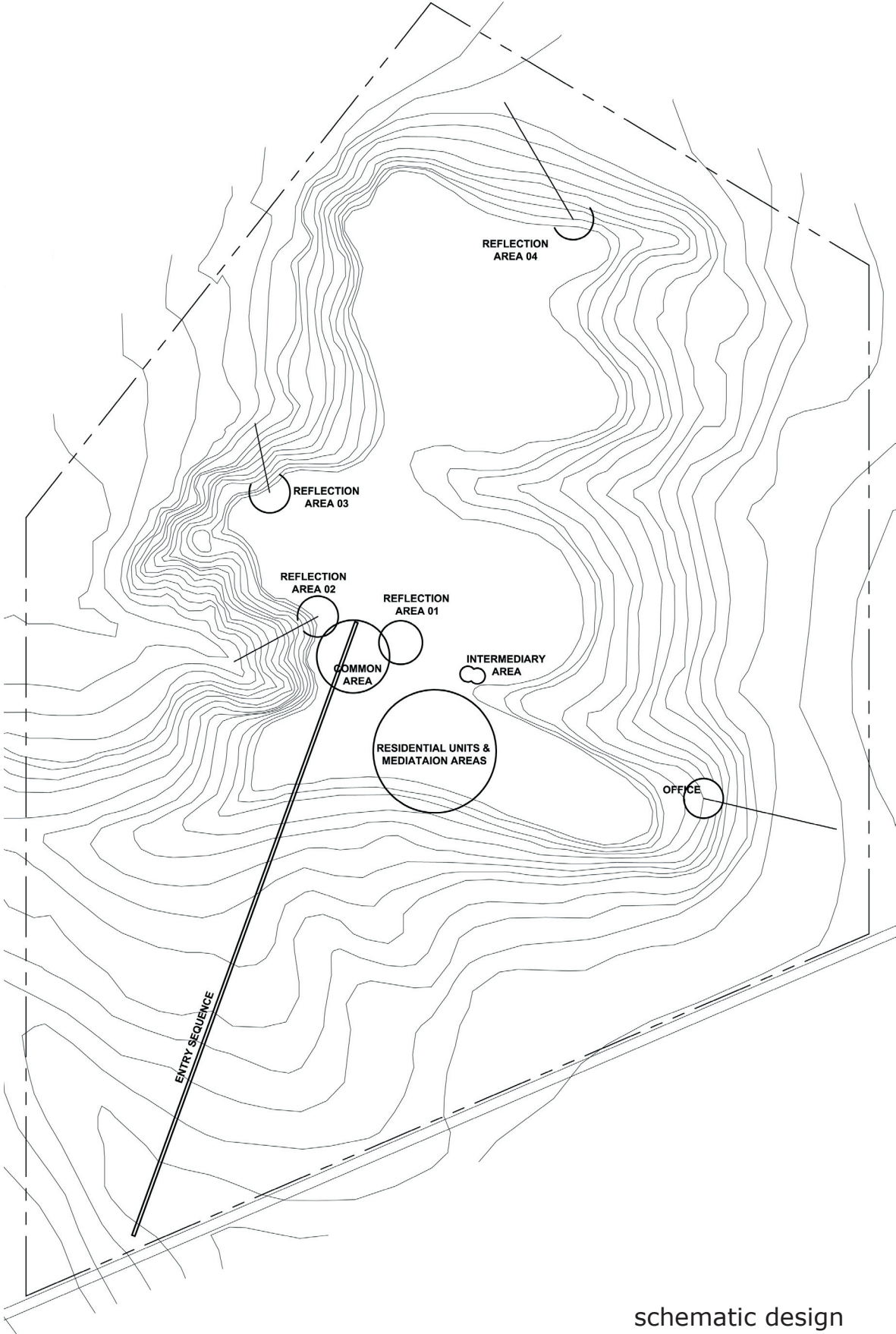
Entry Condition -to provide a barrier between the environment that was not conducive to reconciliation and the introverted area of the Center.

Residential Complex -to provide a self-contained private space to each individual to use as they see fit, along facilities that fulfill a basic means of existence.

Reflection Area -to provide area where people can gather. Separate and additional, the area are only used by those who seek that connection.

Office Complex -to provide security and maintenance to the spaces of the butte. A service entry would also be provided to maintain efficient use of the complex

elemental development - master plan



schematic design

elemental development - entry condition

Running east and west along the site, there is a ridge that defines the height and width of the butte. The southern end of the site is defined by North Dakota State Highway 200. The area between these two elements is gradually sloping upwards to the ridge. This natural barrier created that a good broad face in which to reveal the entry.

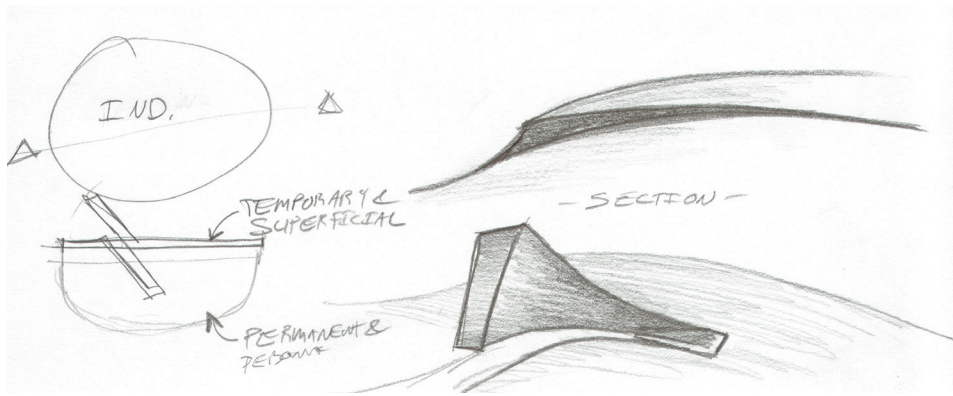
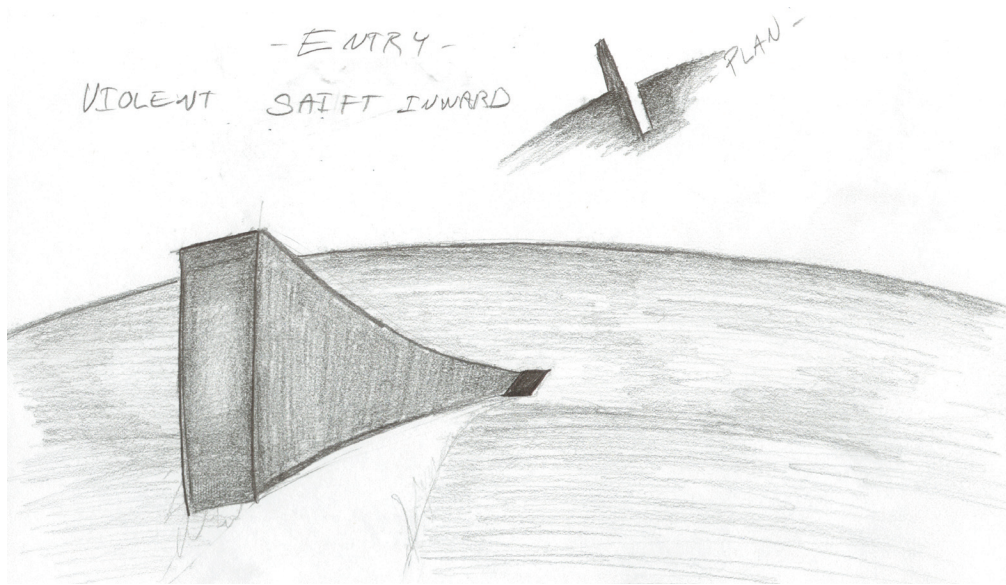
The entries to many building are often times a mere transition between inside and outside. They can also welcome the user into the structure and serve as a starting point for a variety of experiences to take place once inside. The entry condition at the Center needs to assume a slightly different role. Although it would need to function as a barrier between the inside and outside, the severely edited program and existential experience that the rest of the Center provides, makes the entries importance grow. Depending on how the Center is used by an individual, the entry condition could account for 50% of the articulated spaces they one experiences during the duration of their stay. For this reason, this element cannot be considered like other entries, it must be significant and unmistakable.

There are two ways of increasing the significance of an element. First one can extend the amount of time that an individual spends at it or, secondly, one can exaggerate the nature of the element making it more dramatic and pronounced. I have found that there is a cap to the duration an architect can elongate an entry sequence. Past a certain point, an entry evolves into another entity besides that of an entry. Needing to maintain the qualities of an entry, I decided to utilize the second option an make it undeniable and dramatic.

When considering the nature of the entry's reveal, I was confronted with a unique situation. Half of this element was going lie in the public realm. Should the portion of the entry that is public, reflect the nature of the public realm? Because of the now dualistic nature this element had taken on, I began to see the element as more of a reciprocal motion, than a simple, negative reveal. To illustrate this idea, I decided to equal the negative motion of the individual entering the Center with the addition of a positive element extending into the public realm.

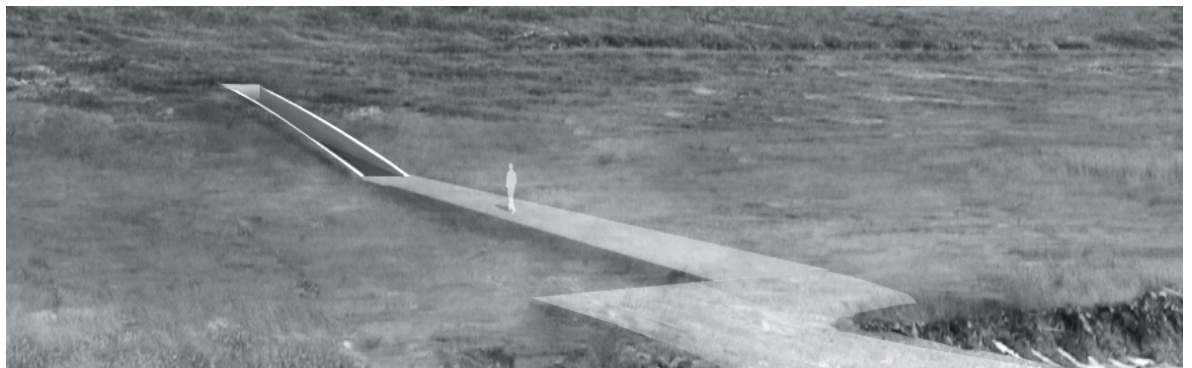
After further consideration, I reverted back to the conditions elucidated earlier in the formal development. Even though half of the entry lies in a different realm, treating it as a unified revealed element would create the most successful entry condition. Across the broad southern face of the butte, the human conditon delicately pokes it's way onto the massive butte. The element is comprised of a relief, sized anthropometrically to isolate the individual, and a long entry corridor, which provides a strong sense of confidence by both guiding and dominating the individual's condition.

elemental development - entry condition



above- developmental sketches

below- final elemental conclusion



elemental development - residential brow

It is a goal of the Center to provide a solemn environment in which to **allow** the clients to reconcile. This lends itself to the formation of self contained individual units; where an individual would be provided the time and space for their own private reconciliation. The next step would be to determine what would be include in these modest individual reveals.

Understanding the difference between reflection and meditation, I originally concluded that meditation areas need to provided each individual with a private, passive activities while reflection areas would be less personal and more active. Editing the plan down to a more distilled state, I found an opportunity to combine the private needs of meditation areas with that of the functional needs included in the residential units. Both could be more succinctly delineated in a single unit designed for the accommodation of a single individual. This lead to the creation of the individual residential unit. These two different functions would still need to be defined with each unit.

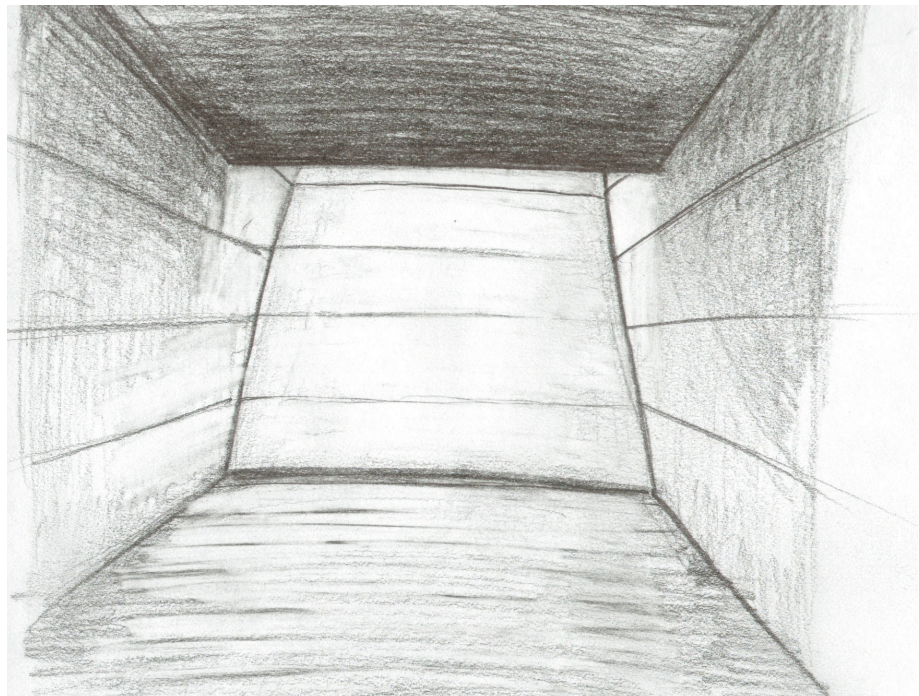
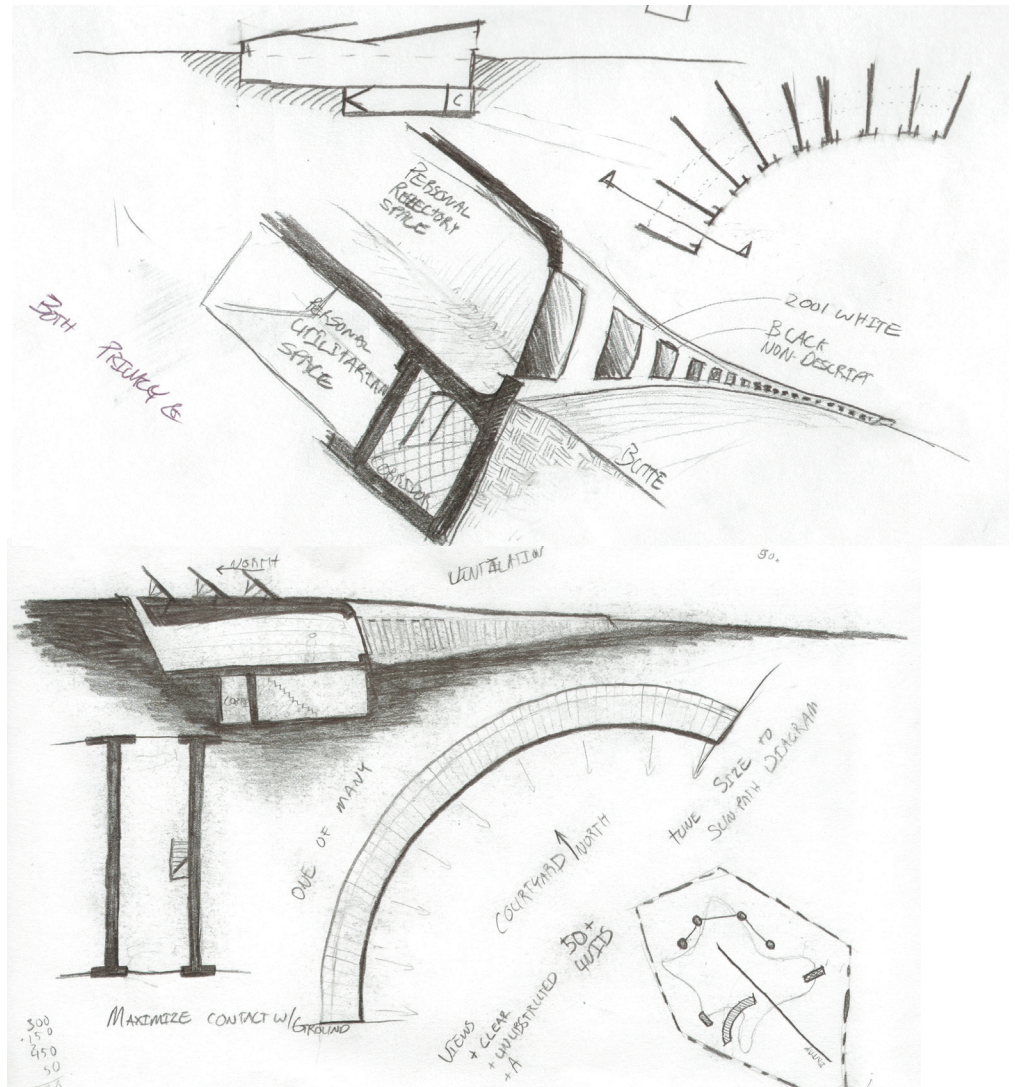
This task of creating two spaces with in one, self contained unit referenced me back to the work of Le Corbusier and the design of Unite d'Habitation. By making the unit two-tiered naturally created two distinct spaces in which to inhabit. It also, reconciles the means of conveyance with the used on an efficient organizational system that did not let the use of corridors limit the layout. By utilizing the areas above the corridors, more dynamic spaces could emerge without distrupting the individual's means of egress.

Being without natural light and enough space to relax, the bottom portion of the unit was designated as the functional space. A "no frills" area that, of very modest means, includes a bathroom, kitchenette, and dining table, all designed to accommodate a single person. It is so crucial to me that the private, sanctity of this space be maintained that I found no reason to put a door on the bathroom. This my attempt to communicate my intentions to the individual bluntly, that this is to be a private, one person space.

The upper portion of the individual unit was designated to provide a type of reconciliation "haven" to the individual. A bed and bench is all that is provided as the individual can configure the open plan as they desire. It allows for the practicing any variety of person medative techniques. It was at this time that I had identified an issue it would be important to reconcile considering that the nature of this space to be predominately sedentary. This sedentary label can be beneficial as long as it did not shift towards stagnant. To remedy this, the space needed to take on a more dynamic nature. One end of the space is visually open with a glazed facade. The opposite end would need to complete this dynamic datum. For this reason, the northern wall would be angled. This feature provided a sense of movement long the length of the space as light is showered

elemental development - residential brow

below- developmental sketches



process documentation

elemental development - residential brow

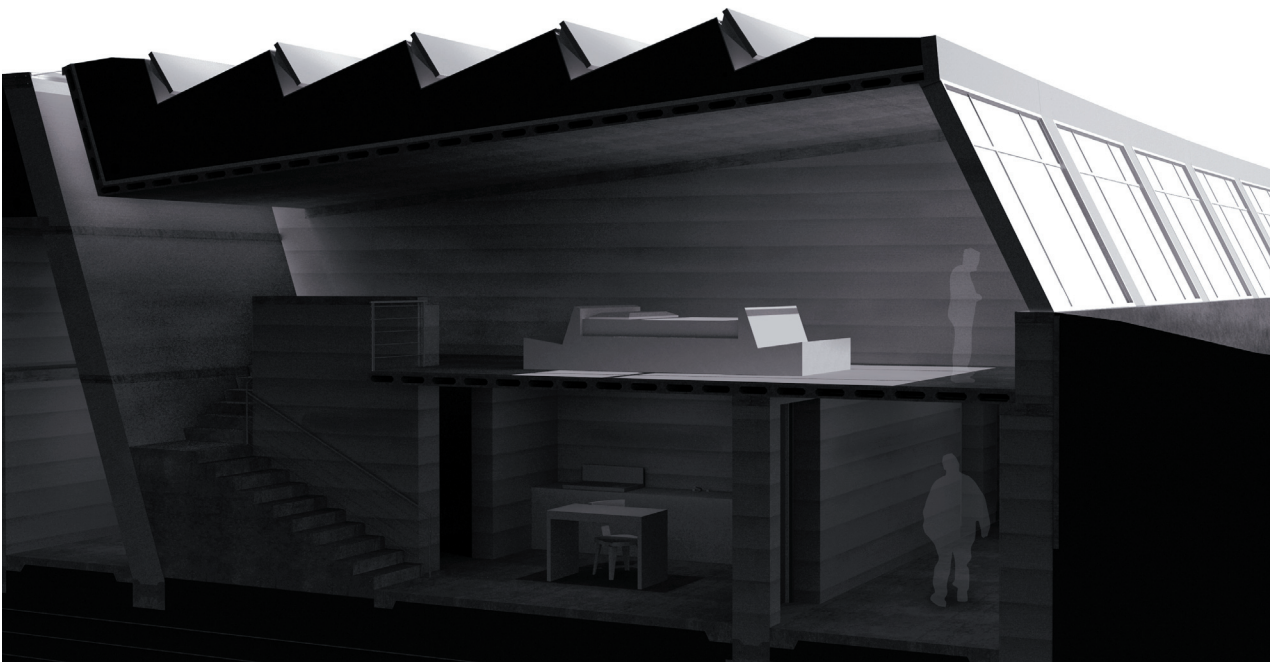
down from above.

With the individual units reconciled, links then needed to be articulated to unite them. For this, I reference the phenomena I observed when studying the Jerstad Center, in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Julie Snow Architects design an "L" shaped plan with large amount of glazing looking inward, on to a reflection pond. Users of the Jerstad Center are grounded and always given a sense of the community in all of the spaces. The ability of an individual to still reference the larger scale from their point is a concept that I brought to the design of the Center.

Divided into 7 sections of 11, all 77 individual units would be arrayed in around in a large arc, with the glazed facade referencing inwards. This allows the individual to not feel *as* isolated, while maintaining a very distant connection between each person.

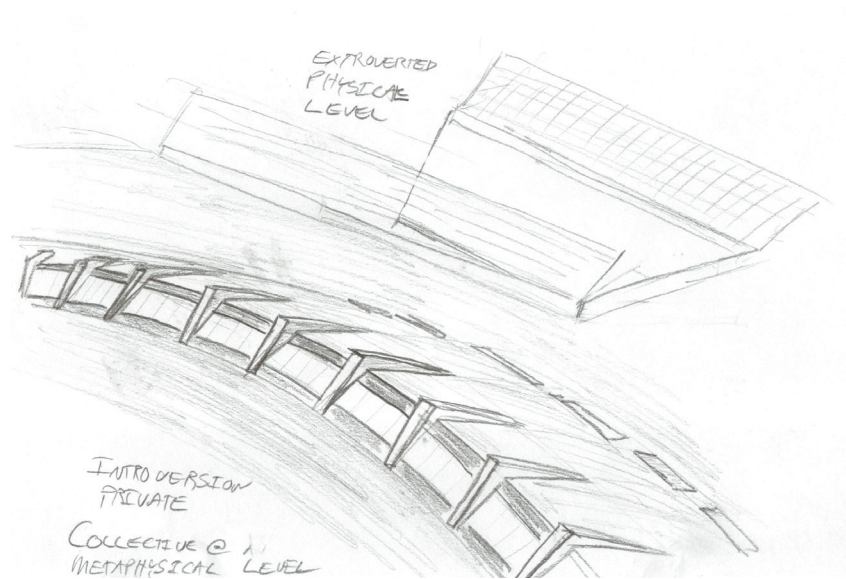
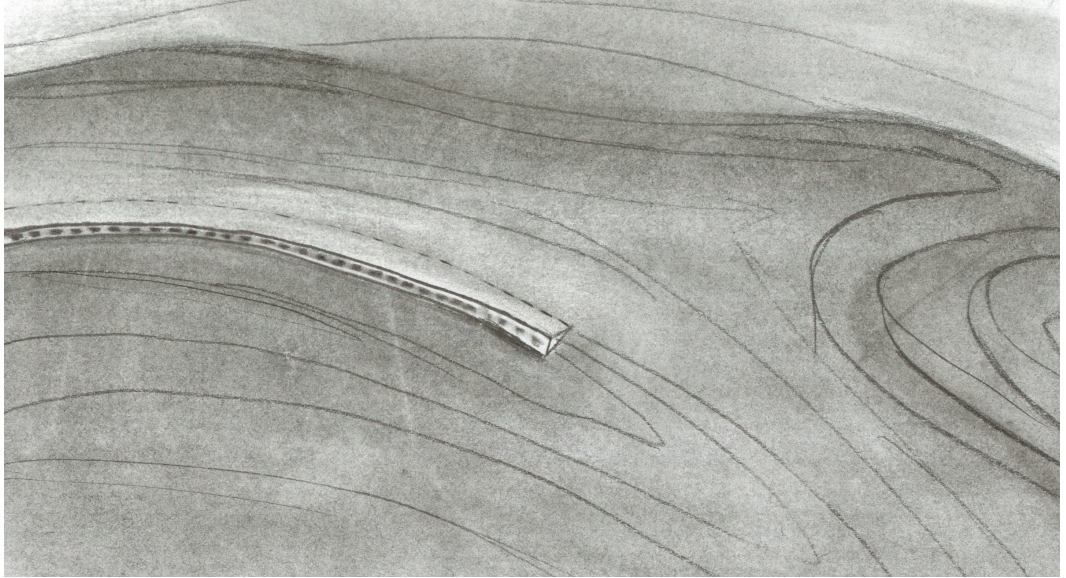
To make this arrayed layout a reveal, it was sunken into the south ridge that bisects the site. Besides allowing the soft curve of the layout to complement the form of the ridge, this action also provides the desired privacy for the individual units. As the program and experience is edited to force the application of meaning on to the individual, so to are the views from the individual residential units. Instead of looking out onto water feature or other picturesque landscape get lost in, the land is simply sloped back up from the base of the glazing up to meet the existing line of the ridge.

below- final elemental solution



elemental development - residential brow

below- developmental sketches



elemental development - office complex

Equalled in importance to the experiential elements of the Center are the office complex and servicing areas. When considering the nature of these elements, one must first consider the role of the people using them. That role is one that is accommodating and resigned. It is important that the staff be allowed to work efficiently and only encounter the clients when they are sought. The domineering feeling that can often times be affiliated with people in a position of power must be avoided. This can be done in two ways, either deny this class system and befriend the clients, or deny the relationship as a whole. The latter maintains the nature of the Center better and was thusly implemented.

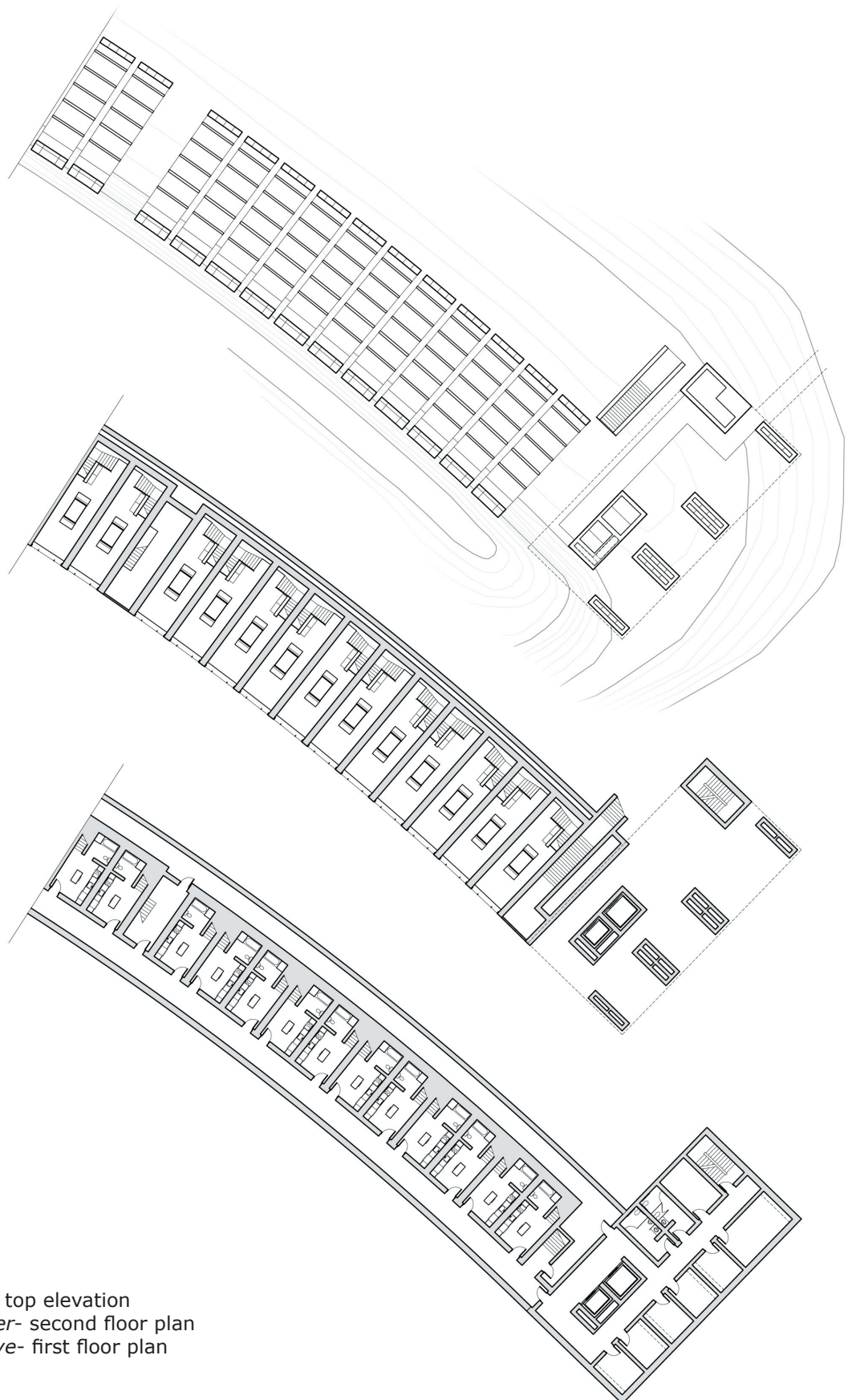
This need to be hidden and resigned lead directly to the elemental articulation of the three key components of the office complex.

First, a separate entry was used to provide direct access to the office and allow for the transportation of goods and services to the level of the clients. The east side of the butte would be used to accommodate this entry. This location provides efficient access to the office with out obscuring the tranquillity of the main entry condition.

The second element, pre pended on to the first, is a corridor that would be available to employees of the center only. It could be used for variety of different functions. To stock the service stations that lie between the grouped individual residential units with linen and food for delivery, or provide a space for the collection and distribution of mechanical services.

Anchoring these two elements and the residential brow, is the office. Located on one end of the brow, the office is the base point of all of the operations of the center. The nature of the reveals reflects this with narrow light wells that spread light down into the rooms that are completely buried in the mass of the butte making them the most ambiguous and nondescript spaces of the Center

elemental solution



*top- top elevation
upper- second floor plan
above- first floor plan*

elemental development - reflection areas

Defining the nature of the reveals that make up the reflection areas provided me the opportunity to utilize the reveals in a straight forward approach. With the nature of the individual units being tight and heavy, I wanted to provide those that sought a public forum, the opposite type of environment to better delineate the different functions. The reflection areas gave me an opportunity to articulate a more literal reveal. Besides the singularly encountered entry condition, the reflection areas were identified as opportunities where the individual could experience the first type of reveals that celebrates the mass of the butte by making the individual directly aware of their position within.

The sites chosen to host the revealed human condition were based on the dissipation of people as the said condition was drawn. The further away from the residential brow an area is located the less dense the people would be, for they naturally dissipate throughout the semi-private environment. I had originally identified the western edge of the butte to host these reflection areas because of the natural barriers offering the greatest amount of privacy.

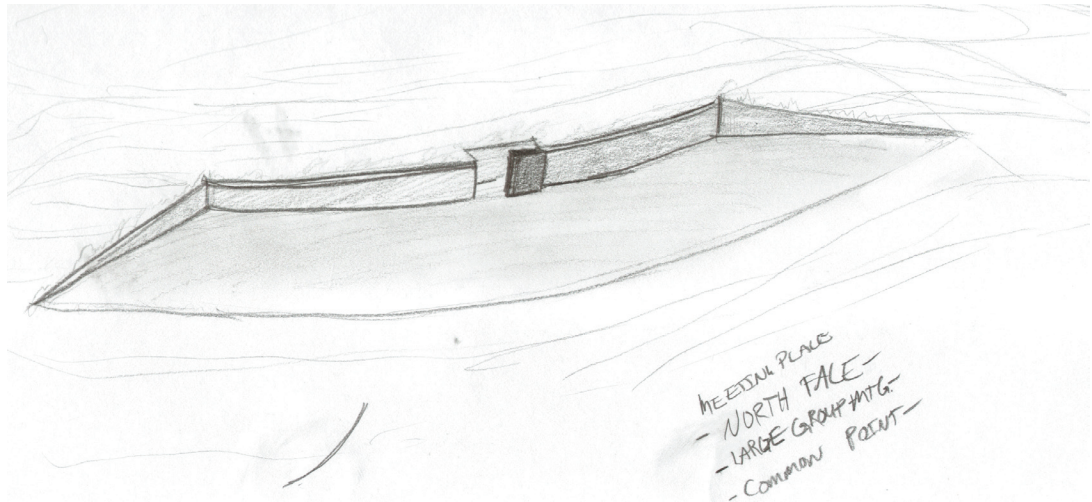
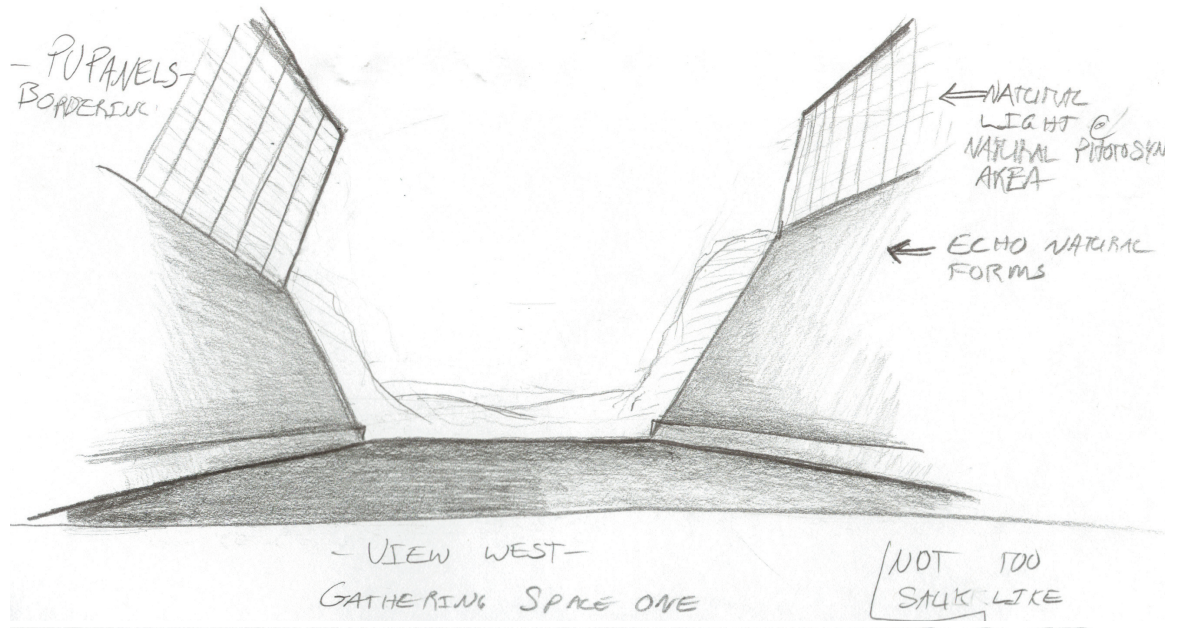
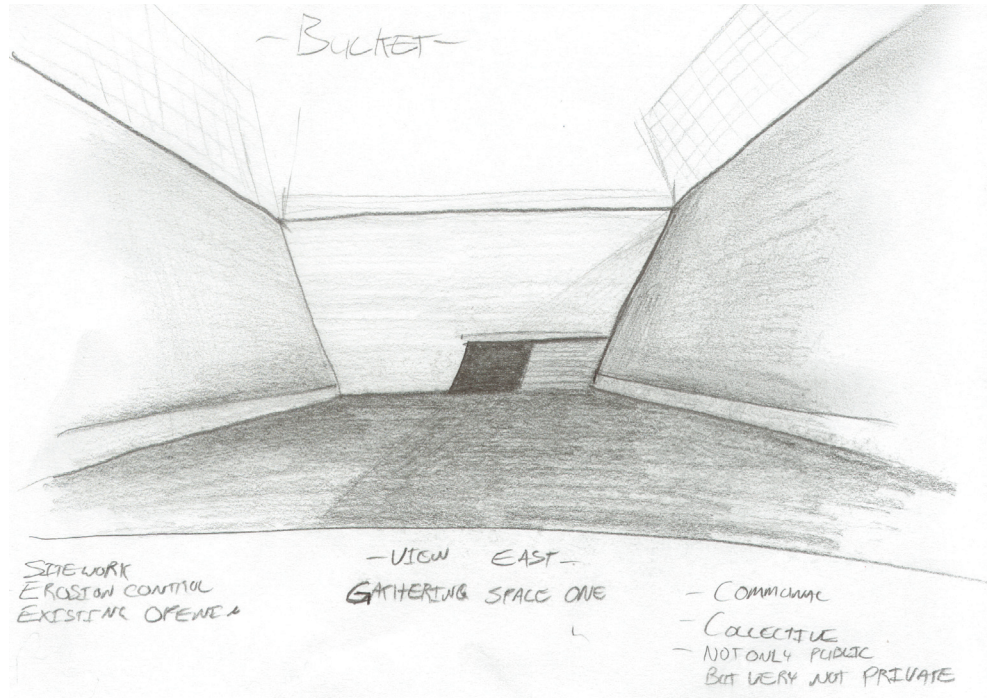
Starting from the brow, on the western edge of the butte, I identified three areas that would reflect condition of both the individual and the desolate environment onto which it looks.

When a vast expanse it presented to people, they become more timid and stay towards the boundaries of a space. Just north of the brow lies a dramatic, ravine that slices into the butte. Here a tighter, more vertical space was revealed that would be more conducive to accommodating higher amounts of people.

Continuing north, the human condition was drawn through an area slightly lower than the north and south ends of the butte. Nestled gently between these two masses on either side, the second reflection area, gently recesses back into the butte to providing a lower more shallow space in which to stop and reflect. This area also serves best as type of, static rest area as the distance from the brow becomes more evident. Minor amenities are offered along with the most amount of articulated group seating.

Again, to reflect the nature of the landscape it faces out onto, the third reflection space is wide and expansive. Perched above ground below, this view offers the widest and more sublime view of the desolate environment. A simple two-walled plan was used at an obtuse angle . It was my contention that the only way an individual would let themselves enter and utilize this space would be if there are fewer people around. To conclude this very, long draw threw the butte, the last space it the most final.

elemental development - reflection areas

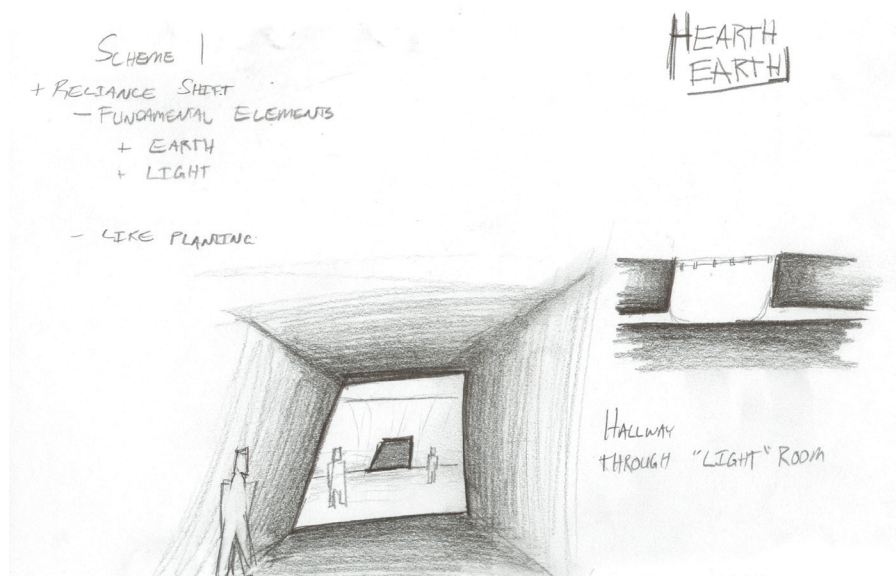


process documentation

elemental development - reflection areas

The corridor itself was to be poignant and simple, a path connecting spaces. Because of this over simplicity, the manner in which the corridor meets the reflection areas becomes an important condition to treat. At the first, and most tight reflection area, there is a very structured, narrow puncture from the corridor into the area. As the conditon pushes through on to the second reflection area, the entire left side of the corridor is revealed, providing the most access from the corridor to reflection area, which draws people into this, the most accommodating space. This is done to lure the more casual passer by into this space so to preserve as much of the serene nature of the third area as possible. Finally, to conclude the half mile long corridor, the transition to the third reflection area is the most abrupt. The left and upper portions of the corridor are removed entirely, effectively emptying the space of the corridor out on to the area.

Again, shallow and narrow light wells bring perforated glimpses of natural light down into the submerged corridor. As the sun goes down, electric lights are activate to light the way all night long.

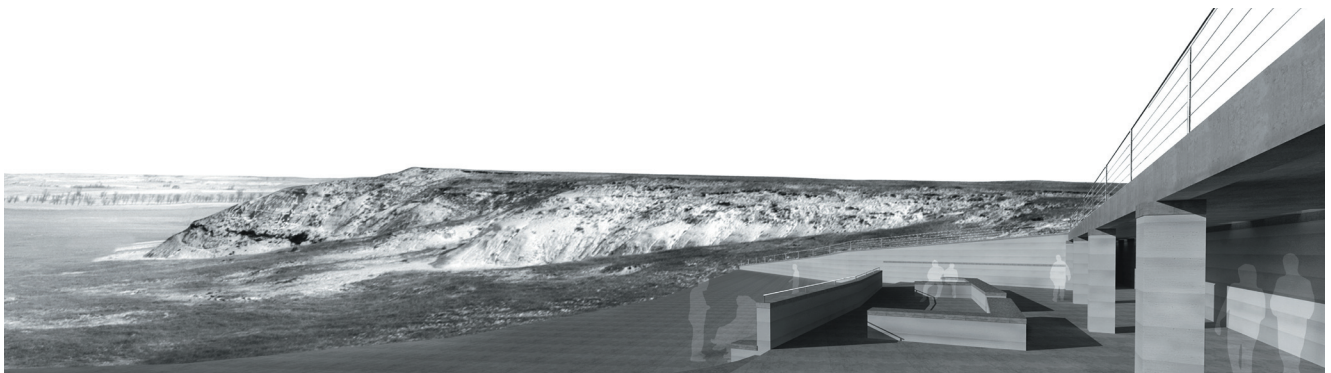


above- developmental sketch

elemental solution - reflection areas



above -final elemental condition (first reflection area)



above -final elemental condition (second reflection area)



above -final elemental condition (third reflection area)

environmental treatment

A common criticism of existentialism is that it is too self-centered and refuses to look beyond the individual's condition to issues of society. However, this is not the case. It is only through appropriate reconciliation of one's self, that any contribution to society is valuable. While promoting a level of reconciliation that does not extend beyond the individual, the Center too can reconcile itself existentially by decreasing the amount of reliance on the fallible. Instead, turning towards a stable relationship with the site and nature.

(please see page 106 for a paper I wrote, for a competition, further defining the connection between existentialism and sustainability.)

Issues of sustainability are reconciled on two levels, energy efficiency and materiality.

Energy

Energy use is the most important consideration of the overall wellness of a design. Issues of energy for the Center were met on two levels. First, to conserve energy and secondly to provide energy back to the grid.

Spaces revealed at the Center are done to increase the amount of surface area that is contacting the ground. The earth acts a massive heat sync that stabilize temperature swings within the Center. Coupled with a south facing, glazed facade, the brow profile is sized to allow for optimum sun penetration into the space.

Photovoltaic panels are implemented as a means of electricity generation that maintain the Center's low, public profile. Placed above the residential units in what would have been fill, the panels are sunken, protected from the wind running over the butte. This flow of wind over the profile of the butte provides an opportunity to implement a natural cross ventilation system, which decreases the need for mechanical equipment.

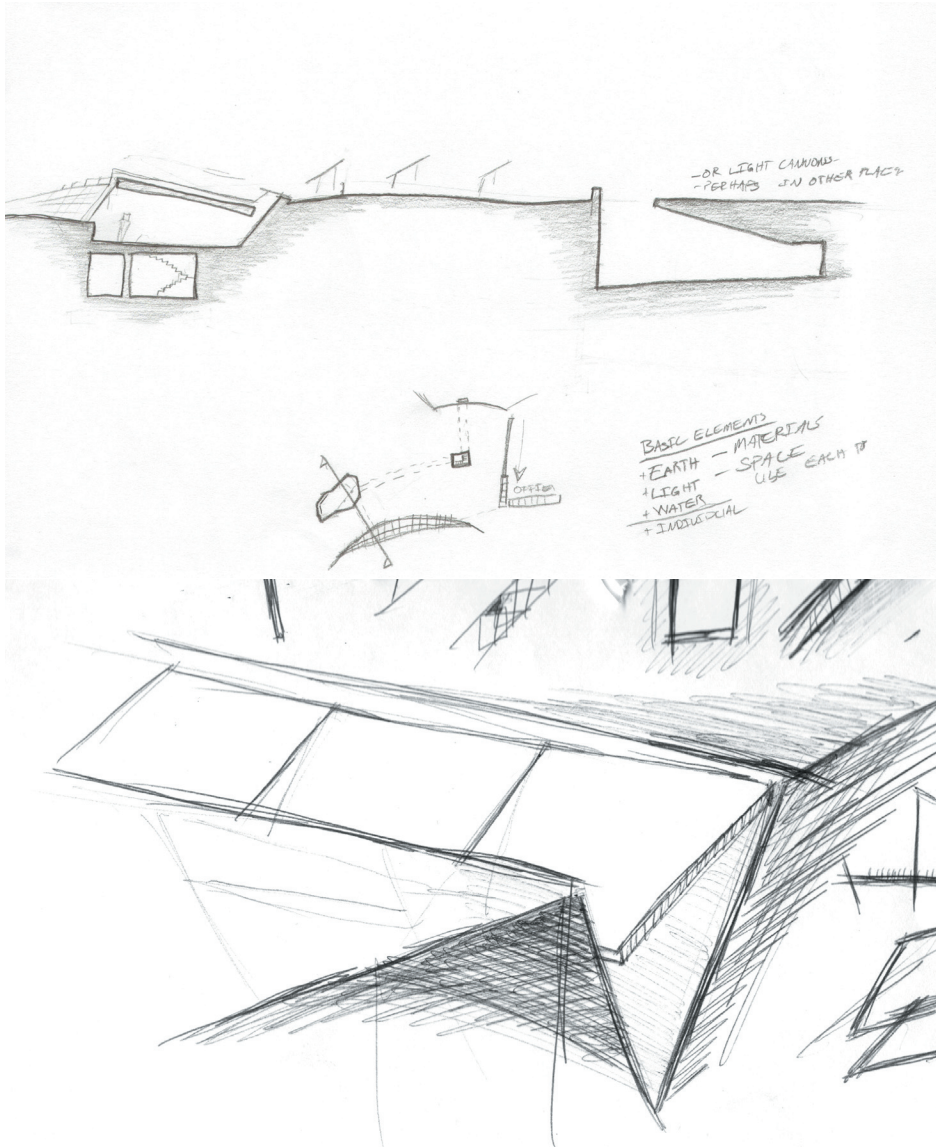
Materials

With the principal design feature, a reveal, involving large amounts of excavation, the Center was gifted with an abundant material from which to base the material palette. There are two types of earthen construction used at the Center.

First and most predominantly used, is the manually impacted rammed earth. Two sided formwork defines a wall cavity in which a precisely mixed layers of earth and cement are rammed to an appropriate level of compaction around a matrix of reinforcing bar.

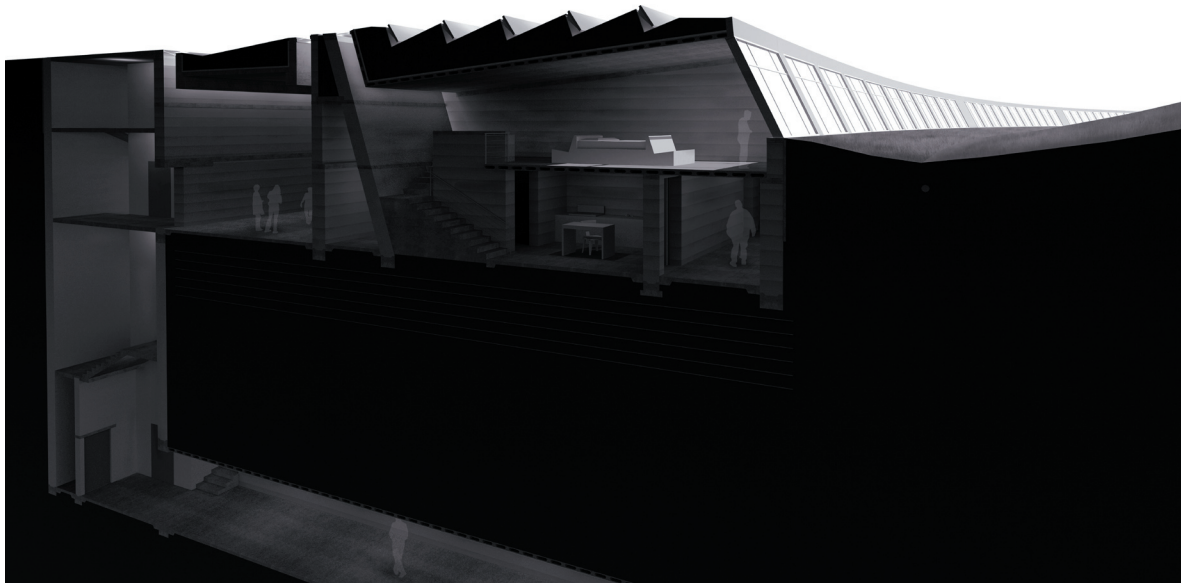
Second, is a type of rammed earth that is applied with an uncommon technique called Pneumatically Impacted Stabilized Earth. This technique only requires one-sided framework. The mixture is applied with highly pressurized air, which compacts the mixture as it is applied. This was utilized for the north wall in the residential units. It allowed the wall to be slanted as long as a bond beam was maintained across it's breadth.

environmental treatment



above- developmental sketches

below- final elemental conclusion



title development

As this project developed over the course of the semester, one of the most frequent inquiries about the nature of the project pertained to this project's title. People often ask me "what does it mean?" I answer their question with the same question, "what does it mean?"

I do understand that the role of an architect is to articulate their design and state that it is not arbitrarily added for a touch of flare or just to be different. Not even jail is the title of a song from the post modern band, Interpol. To me, it is about the personal responsibility one must take on to infuse personal reason or meaning in to their lives. For many others it is about something very different. It is this fact that makes it such a powerful art form. It does not proscribe meaning, it forces the user to infuse their own meaning and develop their own connections with it. It is this condition that I wanted to bring to the design of the Center, starting first with the project's title.

The Center cannot be understood without an active participation by the inquirer, a crucial element to the achievement of the theoretical premise.

Following along the same lines as the other elements of the Center, it is not enough to define an element, the design needs to specify the condition of the element. The same can be said for treatment of the title, it must be revealed.

not even jail.

format

The format of this design solution is as follows:

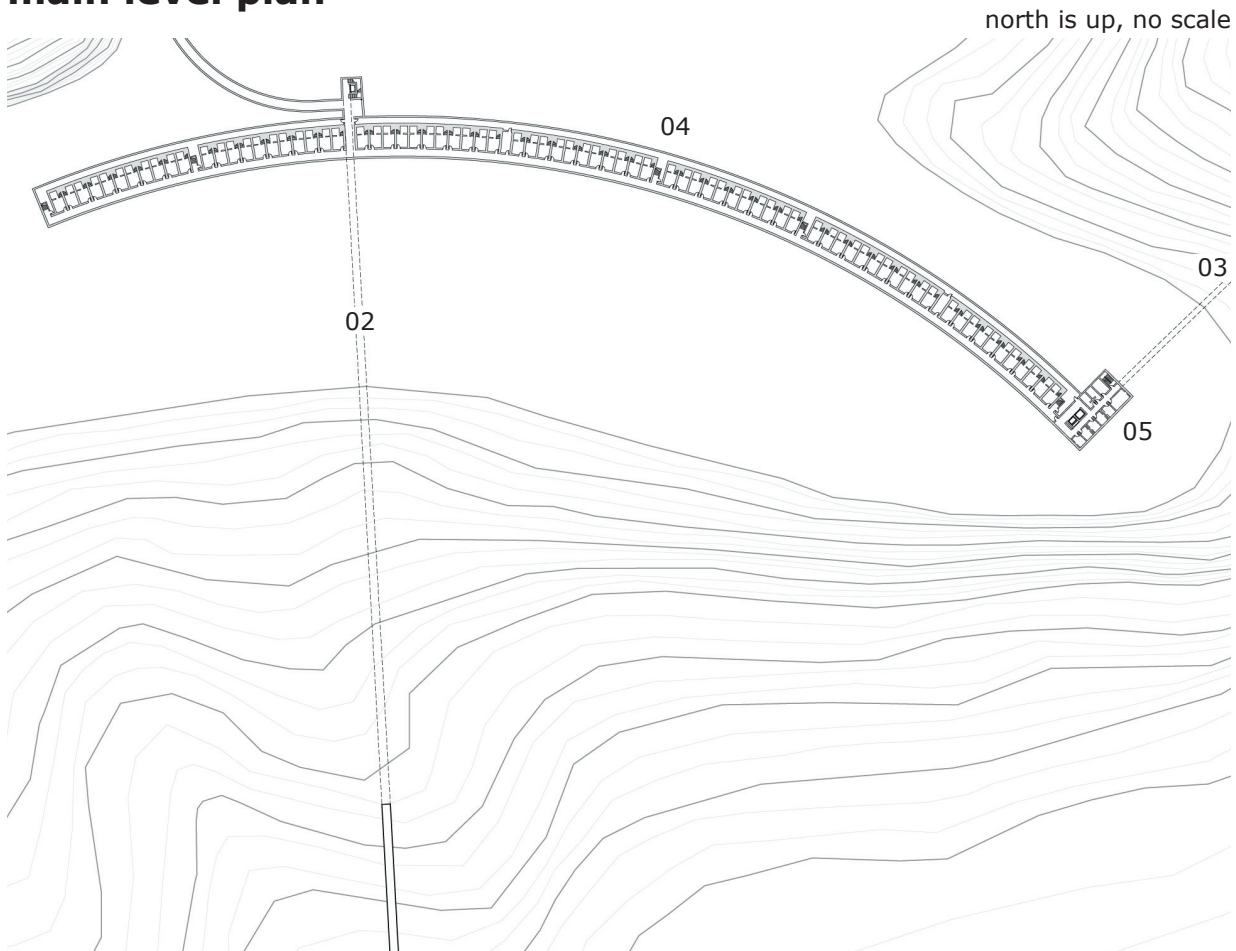
master plan	92
presentation boards	94
site model	95
conclusion	97
digital archive	98

design solution

master plan key

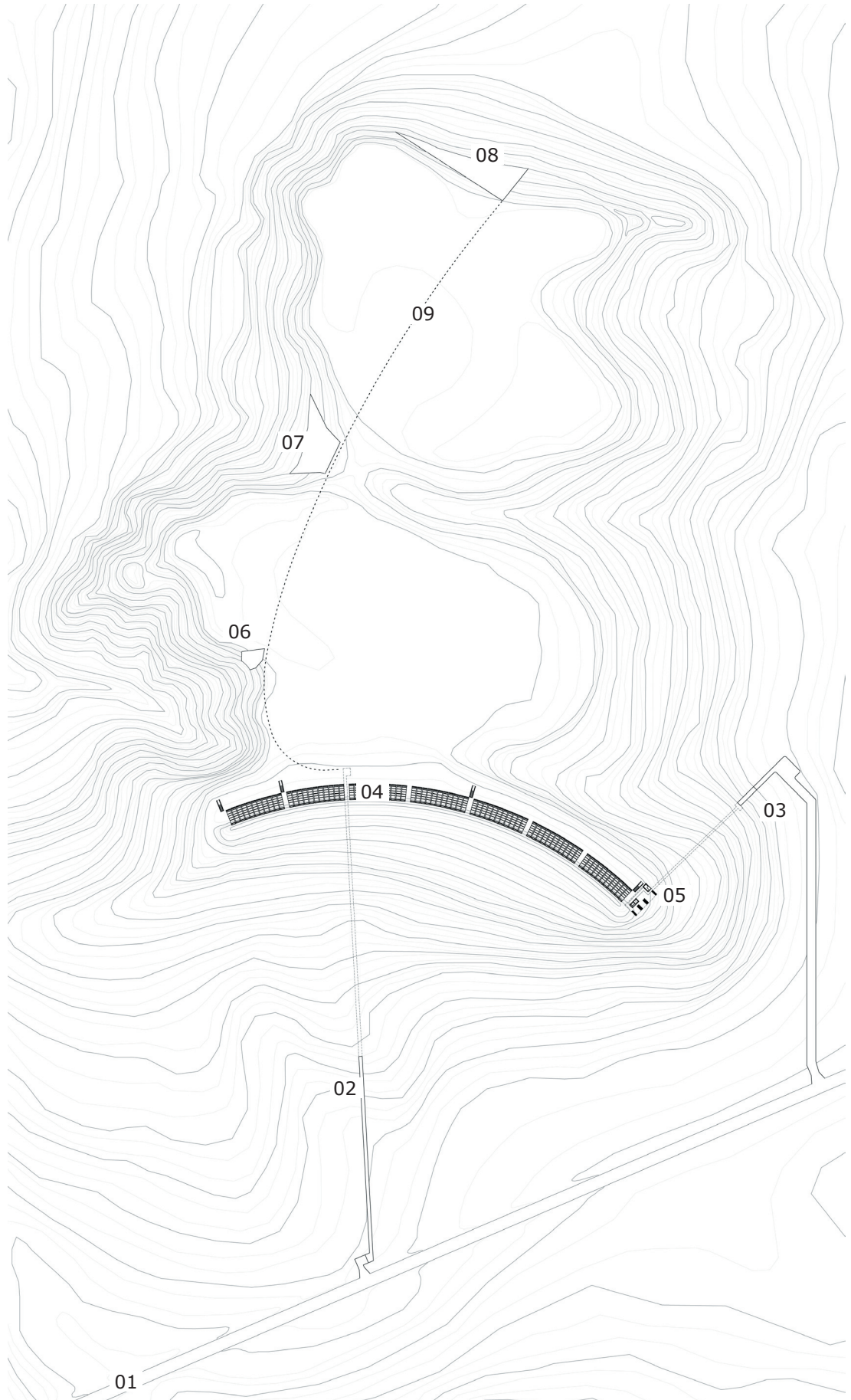
highway 200	01
entry condition	02
service entrance	03
residential brow	04
office complex	05
first reflection area	06
second reflection area	07
third reflection area	08
linking corridor	09

main level plan



master plan

north is up, no scale



presentation display



Third Reflection Area

Design Intent

To existentially reconcile an individual's spirituality, they must understand that they are a product of their own choices, releasing the power of inter-reflective, external forces that act as a duty made to our needs. It is the goal of the Center to provide the individual with an environment that more readily allows them to define their own truth.

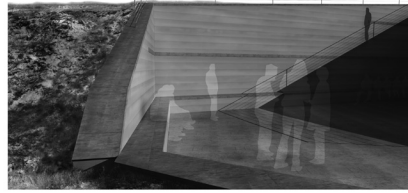
Following this existential methodology, a similar treatment was applied to the formal conditions of the Center's functional elements. These elements are defined within the bounds of the butte. Spaces are revealed from the butte as the human condition is drawn through it. No external, superfluous conditions need further define the nature of the Center.

The Reveal

The condition of the reveals reflect the environment in which they are set. Across the base of the butte, the entry condition reveals the individual through, into the Center. The residential units reveal a full and joyful capacity to complement the line of the ridge in which it sits. Each of the three distinct reflection areas are formed to act to complement the area in which they are positioned, from a light, narrow setting to one that is wide and expansive. Fully visible on the end of the residential brow, the narrow office reveals, above the space, allows light to wash down into the Center.

Second Reflection Area

First Reflection Area



not even jail.

- a Center for the Achievement of Greater Understanding

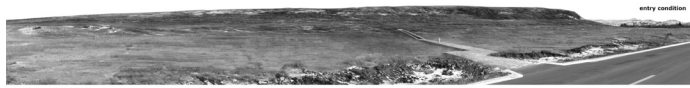
"I must find the truth that is true for me."
-Soren Kierkegaard, existential philosopher

This thesis is an experiment...

An experiment which examines an individual's need for greater understanding. Achieving specifically, the task in which an individual reconciles their spirituality. The facility associated with external reconciliation is required when an existential approach is employed, increasing responsibility of the individual for their own condition.

Can the design of a retreat center promote greater understanding? Achieving specifically, the task in which an individual reconciles their spirituality. The facility associated with external reconciliation is required when an existential approach is employed, increasing responsibility of the individual for their own condition.

A Design Thesis Submitted to the Department of Architecture and Landscape Architecture of North Dakota State University by Don Nelson



entry condition

Site Considerations

It is vitally important that the function of the Center not be confused with the, usually important, function of a religious institution. Religion is an end in a destination, for it is the aim of the Center to provide the seeking individual with a space for them to realize their faculty to reconcile the means of achieving an end, whatever it may be. For this reason, it is best that the site be removed from the everyday routine of the individual from the moment that was not conducted to an appropriate level of reconciliation. Also, because "the reveal" was to be the predominant design feature, the existing conditions of the site needed to allow the revealing to occur.

The Grassy Butte

The site that best met these considerations was a modest, grassy butte located in the vicinity of the Little Missouri National Grassland, 18 miles west of Killdeer, North Dakota. The elevation of this area is approximately a "grim, desolate beauty." The elevation of the grassy butte allows the individual to find their truth, yet a relative elevation allows that exist beyond the environment of the Center.

The natural butte formation provides a stable, well defined base in which the Center was revealed from. Gifted with a variety of natural features to captivate upon, the specificity of the design was realized.

Site Features

When designing an environment where the function is readily revealed and understood, the design must be carefully considered. The conditions on the southern end of the site, along Highway 200, is the area available for public perception. The design was called to attention to be revealed in the most modest of forms. Utilizing off-site parking facility, located in Killdeer, the Center maintains a low public profile, sure not to sell or project outward into the community's readability.

Limited use of the east side was maintained due to the close proximity of a forestland which currently utilizes the site for grazing cattle. To the west, the Little Missouri National Grassland, the Killdeer Mountains, to the west lies the Little Missouri National Grassland, the Killdeer Mountains, broken by organic ravines that wind over the land. These views most accurately capture the desolate nature of the site, which make these areas a prime place to draw the human condition to.

The Services

Anchor the ridge reveal, the office maintains minimal presence, while having easy access to the residential brow via the two corridors that curve concurrently. Connected to the ground below by a horizontal circulation shaft, the Center can be accessed without interrupting the hallowed nature of the Center.

The Residential Units

These 27, two-tiered units are arranged as the individual's private space for the duration of their stay. For it is quite possible to achieve existential reconciliation without leaving the site. There is no greater understanding of truth than that found by oneself. Most importantly, these units are the private sanctuary where personal reflection and meditation is required. Acting as a base condition, additional interaction becomes something that the individual must seek, setting the prescribed.

On the first floor, the basic functional needs of the individual are accommodated. Kitchen, bathroom and dining area maintain a modest level of experience while allowing meditation in the above bedroom.

The Programmatic Elements

The Master plan for the Center is comprised of three elements:
- residential brow
- office space
- reflection area
It was important, not to over program the Center. It is the duty of the Center to add the (self-imposed) pressure of that which is prescribed. Existential meditation that is encouraged to reinforce freedom by prescribing a narrow means to it.

Connected by a succinct series of corridors, the power of contemplation is negative to resist. With the quiet volume of the butte, the design need only delineate the relatively narrow path of the human condition.

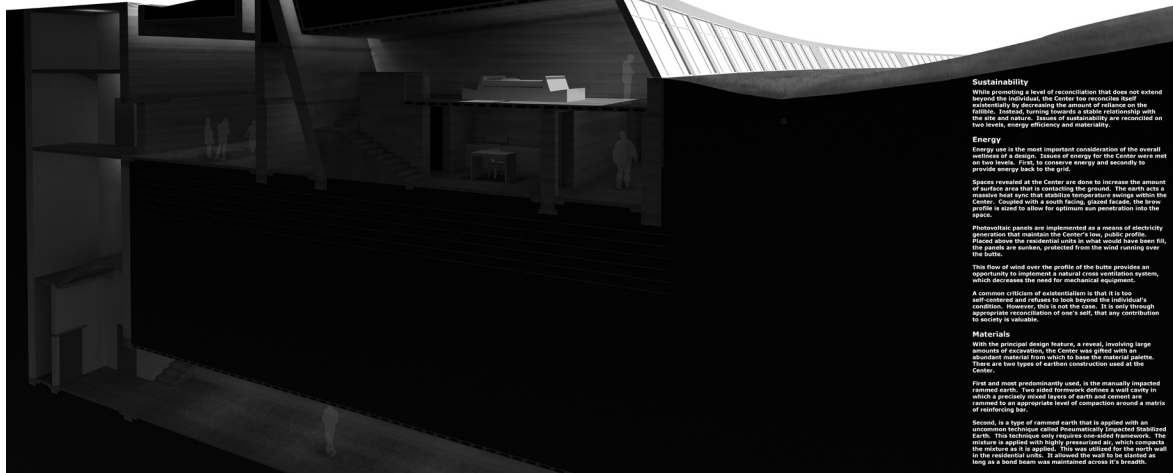
The Master Plan N
Scale 1" = 100'-0"

The Section
Through Residential Brow and Entry Condition

First Floor Plan N
Scale 1" = 20'-0"

Second Floor Plan N
Scale 1" = 20'-0"

Top Elevation N
Scale 1" = 20'-0"



Sustainability

While promoting a level of reconciliation that does not extend beyond the individual, the Center also reconciles itself by addressing the different elements on the fabric. From the building towards a stable relationship with the site and nature. Tasks of sustainability are reinforced on two levels, energy efficiency and materiality.

Energy

Energy used is the most important consideration of the overall wellness of a design. Issues of energy for the Center were met on two levels. First, to conserve energy and secondly to provide energy use to the site.

Spaces created at the Center are done to increase the amount of surface area that is contacting the ground. The earth acts a massive heat sink that stabilizes temperature during within the Center. Coupled with a south facing, glazed facade, the floor profile is lined to allow for optimum sun penetration into the space.

Photovoltaic panels are implemented as a means of electricity production that maintain the Center's low public profile. Placed above the residential units, well above tree-line, the panels are sunken, protected from the wind coming over the butte.

This flow of wind over the profile of the butte provides an opportunity to implement a natural cross-ventilation system, which increases the need for mechanical equipment.

A common criticism of existentialism is that it is too self-centered and refuses to look beyond the individual's condition. However, this is not the case. It is only through appropriate reconciliation of one's self, that any contribution to society is valuable.

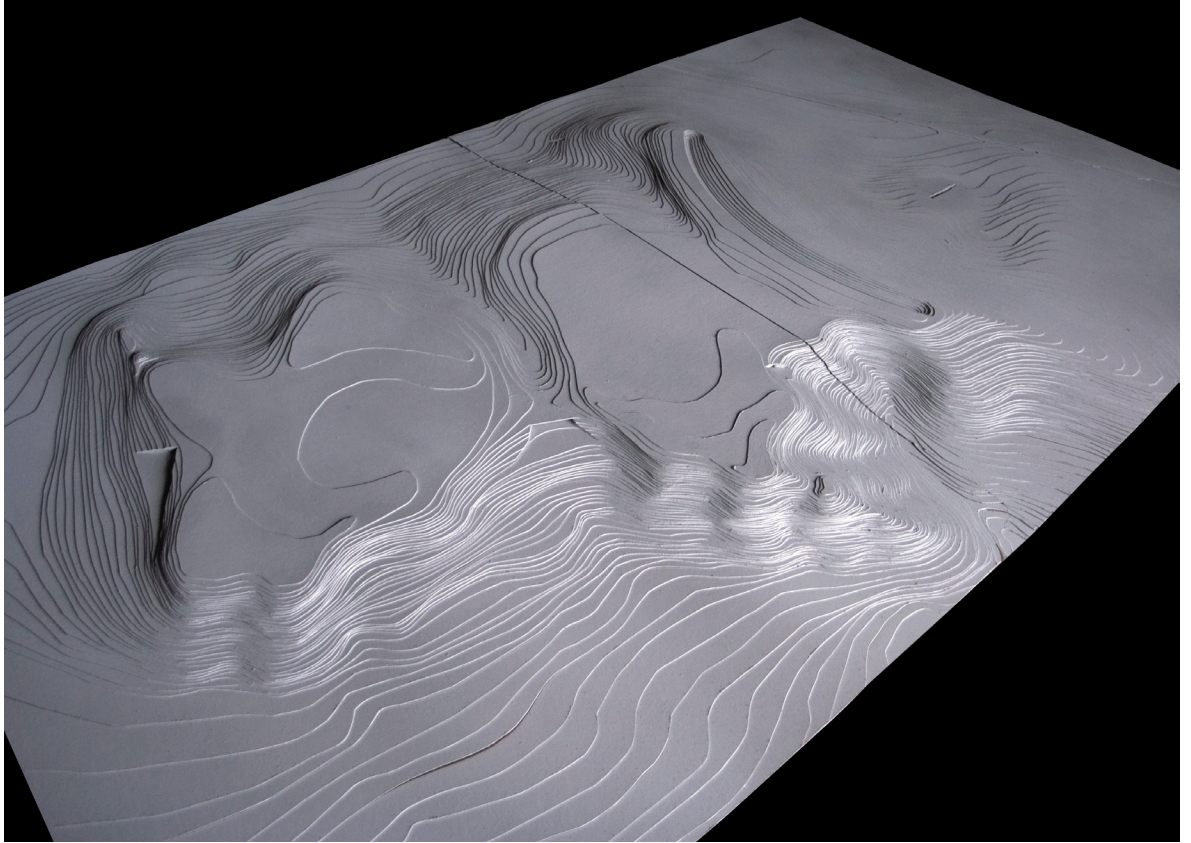
Materials

With the present design feature, a reveal, involving large amounts of excavation, the Center was gifted with an abundant material type which to use as material pieces. There are two types of earthwork construction used at the Center.

First and most predominantly used, is the manually impacted rammed earth. The solid rammed earth is well tested in which a precisely mixed layer of earth and cement are rammed to appropriate level of compaction around a matrix of reinforcing bar.

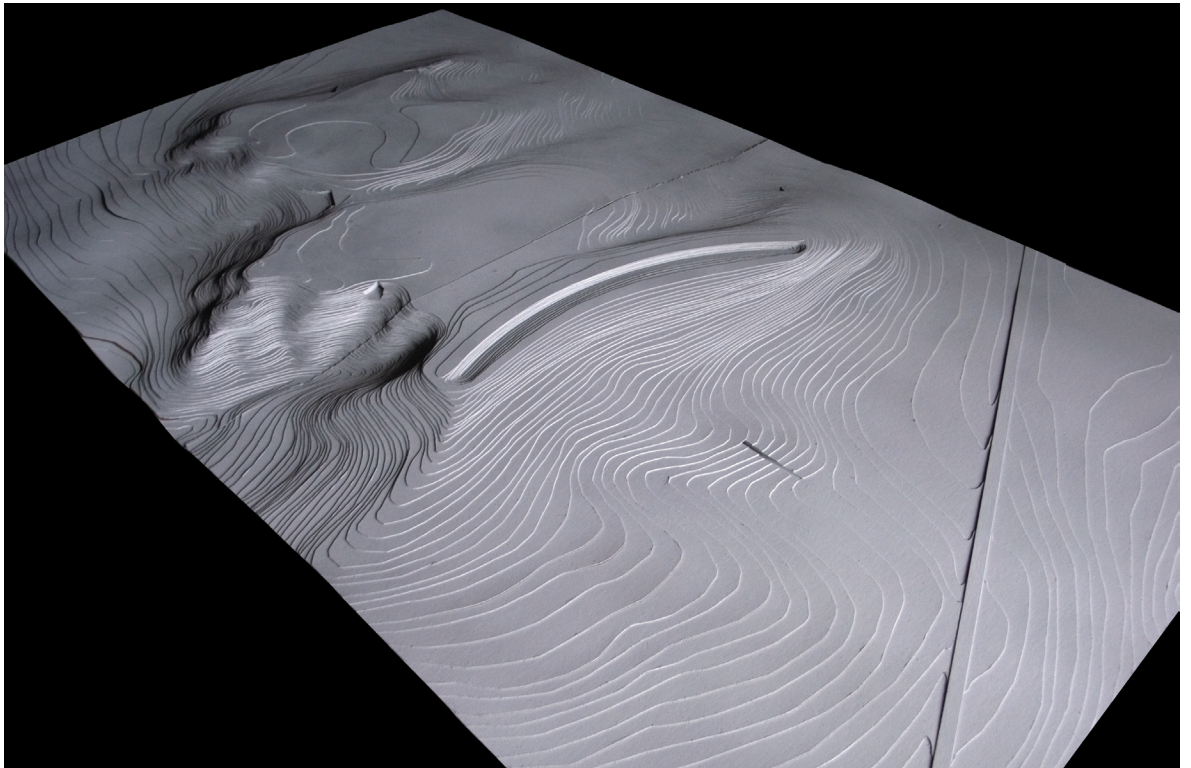
Second, is a type of rammed earth that is applied with an uncommon technique called Pneumatically Applied Shotcrete Earth. This technique only require one-level formwork, the mixture is applied with highly pressurized air, which compacts the rammed earth in depth. This was utilized for the earth wall in the residential units. A dense mix of earth is applied along as a bond beam was maintained across it's breadth.

site model



above- from the northwest looking southeast

below- from the southwest looking northeast



not even jail.

experiment evaluation

Yes, the Center can provide a space for existential reconciliation. Indeed, in an ideal setting, a space devoted to reconciliation would not be needed. However, I cannot escape the feeling that the function of the Center would be a useful tool in today's society.

Yet, despite my feelings, it is not the architect who defines the space as an element of social influence or change.

Architecture can only allow. It can create an elaborate experience that has deep, profound meaning, but it will always have to wait for the user's validation. The built environment is articulated by architects, but defined by the choices of individuals using the space.

not even jail.

format

The format of this supplemental information is as follows:

site photographs	100
LHB proposal	106
from the author	111
references	113

site photographs

format

-from the southwest looking northeast



-from the ridge looking southwest



-from the southeast looking west



-from the ravine looking west



-from the ravine looking west



-from the ravine looking south



site photographs

-from the northern half of the butte looking southwest



-from the northern half of the butte looking west



-from the middle of the butte looking west



site photographs

-from the base of the butte looking south



-from the northern edge of the butte looking west



-from the north looking south



site photographs

-from the middle of the butte looking northeast



-from the southern half of the butte looking northeast



-from the middle of the butte looking north



-from the northwest corner of the butte looking west



-from the northwest corner of the butte looking north



-the northwest corner of the butte looking northwest



existentially reconciled design

Design for a Sustainable World

As an architecture student, I am quickly becoming aware of the incredible influence the profession of architecture holds within the community. Occupying such an integral role, the actions of architects has far reaching effects on many facets of people's lives beyond the physical manifestation of a building. An architect's attitude towards life, energy, and the environment are reflected on to the community and can be seen in many facets of people's everyday lives whether they are aware of it or not. Because of this very dear relationship architects have with the populous, it necessary for an architect to not only consider what they design, but also the manner in which their designs interact with the community beyond. Although architects are hired by a client, their responsibilities reach beyond the client's bounds. Architects have a responsibility to a community on both the micro and macro level. On the micro level, a design must consider the interactions between the individual and the built form. While in the macro level, a design must reconcile the manner which the built form integrates into the natural systems.

Appropriately reconciliation at these two levels in is the key to designing for a sustainable world. More specifically, following an existential doctrine allows architects to design sustainable spaces that benefit the community on a scale greater than that of the physical building. Existentially reconciled design is mastering this reciprocal, symbiotic relationship between the natural systems found in the site, the new built environment, and the occupants of the spaces.

Existentialism, as a philosophy, is based on the idea of an individual possessing ultimate free will. It places the onus for defining one's existence squarely on the individual. Existence is shaped solely by the choices of the individual. It forces individuals to take an active role in the reconciliation of their own existence by promoting awareness of choices and personal accountability, free of deterministic forces. With existentialism, answers are found from within. Self-reliance and self-reconciliation are at the crux of both existentialism and sustainability. The marriage of these two worlds seems only natural.

To be sustainable is to be defined within the bounds of oneself, not needing contrived, foreign systems to facilitate existence. A design that is existentially reconciled need not look beyond the natural features found flowing over, through and under the site in which it is being built for sufficient energy and inspiration in which to derive the built form. It finds creative ways to capitalize on the integration of natural systems into a build environment.

So how can this goal of existentially reconciled design be achieved? Within existential theory, the common the first step to accepting the responsibilities of free will and personal responsibility are found in an

existentially reconciled design

individual's direct confrontation of the anxiety or angst associated with the awesome and overwhelming realization one's ultimate free will. This difficult step is clearly a hurdle for some members within the design community.

However, embracing technological advancements and more in-depth research into sustainable techniques, makes the aforementioned source of angst less pronounced in today's world. For those architects only following widely used or proven methods of design, material manufacturing and construction now have reliable, sustainable choices in which to choose. Systems have been tested and the technical data is now available to objectively evaluate the benefits of these new naturally based systems.

However, it is only through the existential reconciliation of those *sustainability* pioneers that laid the ground work for this upcoming shift towards designing for a sustainable world. Building a data base of information does alleviate the responsibility from the architect; in fact, it makes the task in front of the architect greater and more prominent. The onus of responsibility is now on the practicing architect to see the power of their choices realized and come into fruition.

This is not to presuppose that the design community has everything figured out when it comes to the amount of information currently possessed about sustainability. On the contrary, I simply contend that the next step for the architecture profession along the maturation process is not research, studies, or testing. Instead, the next step calls for the profession's ubiquitous acceptance and implementation of the body of information that we currently possess. Now more than ever, a wide variety of tools are available to an architect to define their existential existence.

Again, this confrontation is not comforting. Other forces outside of the architect's individual understanding, such as society, are renowned for resisting change. Then when considering the extent that sustainable design issues has on the design process, the magnitude of this paradigm shift can be easily realized. Designing for a sustainable world cannot be a superficial addition to a previously conceived design. It is a conscious decision (conscious, only to the extent that sustainable issues have not been universally accepted as a norm by the architecture profession as of the time of this writing) that encompasses every aspect of a design. There is not a single aspect of building design, material manufacturing or construction that is not affected by a shift towards sustainability. From the selection of a structural system to the selection of a finish, designing for a sustainable world changes everything.

Although smaller in scale, the last paradigm shift in the world of architecture was the movement towards universal design. Looking back

existentially reconciled design

on the issues of accessibility, now seem clear and obviously the correct choice for the standards that were set have been universally accepted. Designing spaces to be accessible is now second nature and should offer comfort to those architects that currently do not find it necessary to shift from their current comfortable role to a role of an existentially reconciled designer.

For many architects, safety and security can be found in following along traditional or familiar techniques. Not deviating from the known is the easy road to travel. Masked as *a standard of care*, provides a safe place to sit complacently. Yet in order to grow and achieve something greater than the status quo, the sense of security found in motion must be shed. For those architects who seek it, confronting this angst provides them with an opportunity to be a leader the community and exercise their role.

The close relationship that the architecture profession has with the community makes changes harder to be realized, profession wide. Powered by their mass, groups of people with in society are resistant to change and do not easily accept strong moves made by the architecture profession. Yet we can look to the next step of existential understanding for direction. When issues of sustainability have been confronted, it is not good enough to be a recluse and hide way in one's own utopian self-reconciled world. It is vitally important for an architect to maintain an active role in this reconciliation.

First and foremost, an architect should stay active by seeking to educate the client about the importance of dealing with sustainability issues. Clients (should) not hire architects to be mindless drafters that simply provide the client with a set of signed drawings and specification. Clients are not always familiar with their options, nor should they be expected to know what can be done. They seek the help of a professional to educate them. It is imperative that we, as architects, not neglect this chance to move the profession forward. So when we interact with clients, there is a prime opportunity to get some most valuable face time with those commissioning projects and spending the money.

Being an active member in professional organizations is another successful way of maintaining an active role in this reconciliation. The practical means of achieving profession wide change are always best handled in groups, instead of on one's own. Although seen as a formality by some, being active in this area is a key act that directly counteracts claims that critics of existential theory have made.

A determinists or pluralists claim that the strong inward focus of an existentialist's methodology is too reclusive to be practiced on a communal stage. Leaning so drastically inward existentialism does not promote the advancement of society or societal values. This superficial view of

existentially reconciled design

an existential methodology disregards the interpersonal relationship between sustainably designed spaces and the environment. Existentially reconciled designs intentionally “unplug” from external grid of temporal understanding that man has superimposed on to the landscape to rule over natural systems already in place. It instead turns inward to the perpetual systems of nature. This action should not be viewed as reclusive or unsocial. On the contrary, by tapping into the constant, renewable forces of natural systems, multiple existentially reconciled designs work together, passively forming a successfully sustainable environment.

Evaluating the success of existentially reconciled designs can be determined in many ways. Most apparently the parametric measurements of energy conservation and energy efficiency are excellent tools. They readily provide objective hard evidence that can indisputably convey the manner in which a building uses energy. Yet, the ability of a building to withstand the test of time is a more universal unit of measure when determining success. Withstanding the test of time proves a building to be efficient on various levels, as it transcends and become more than a warm, dry haven. Because of the perpetual roots that the building has sank, the building can adapt to changes.

Indeed, a malaise has settled in over parts of the design community when it comes to the way in which we value the longevity of our creations. Evidence of improper reconciliation can be found throughout the current fabric of the build environment. Structures that are not energy efficient or have not used materials or space in an efficient manner only reinforce the temporal nature of the incomplete reconciliation between the built environment and natural systems. We have become complacent within designing temporal structures that knowingly will be replaced after a relatively short service. Wasting more energy in the long run, we need to open our eyes and look beyond the bottom line of our wallets and properly reconcile the act and building.

Existentially reconciled design unplugs the community from this temporal, external support system, breaking ties to fleeting energy sources. Answers to design opportunities can be found within the natural systems at of the site. Just because we as architects have the ability to do define a building as widely as possible; it does not mean that it should be done. Trying to dominate the landscape, has proven unsuccessful, we must work with the natural systems at the site.

from the author

**learn from others,
think for yourself**

Dan Benson
originating from
Okabena, Minnesota



- Accomando, B. (2005). *Cronenberg's latest: 'a history of violence'* [Review of *A History of Violence*]. National Public Radio, All Things Considered, October 1 2005.
- Adcock C. (1989). *The Roden Crater Project*. Retrieved December 04, 2005, from web site: <http://home.sprynet.com/~mindweb/page38.htm>.
- Adler, J. (2005). *In search of spirituality*. Newsweek Aug 29 – Sept 05, 2005.
- Barrett, W. (1962). *Irrational man: A study in existential philosophy*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books.
- Dickinson, City of. (2005). *Dickinson, ND: Live here, work here, get your life back*. Retrieved November 28, 2005, from <http://www.dickinsonnd.com>
- Eckert, K. B. (2003, July). *Betsy Williams and the Aligs experiment with county elegance at the lakeshore Onominese Retreat*. Architectural Record, 101-107.
- Emerson, R. W., Mumford, L. (Eds.). (1968). *Ralph waldo emerson: Essays and journals*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc.
- Existentialism. (n.d.). *Wikipedia*. Retrieved December 02, 2005, from Answers.com Web site: <http://www.answers.com/topic/existentialism>.
- Heck T. J., LeFever, R. D., Fischer D. W., LeFever J., (2002). *Overview of the petroleum geology of the North Dakota Williston Basin*. Retrieved October 11, 2005, from http://www.state.nd.us/ndgs/Resources/WBPetroleum_H.htm
- "Heidegger, Martin." (n.d.). *Wikipedia*. Retrieved December 06, 2005, from Answers.com Web site: <http://www.answers.com/topic/marin-heidegger>.
- Hegel, G. W., & Weiss, F. G. (Eds.). (1974) *Hegel: the essential writings*. New York, NY: Harper Torchbooks.
- Henze, A. (1963). *La Tourette*. New York, NY: George Wittenborn, Inc.
- "Kierkegaard Soren". (n.d.). *Wikipedia*. Retrieved December 02, 2005, from Answers.com Web site: <http://www.answers.com/topic/s-ren-kierkegaard>.

reference list

- "Kierkegaard Soren". (n.d.). *Quotes*. Retrieved December 09, 2005, from thinkexist.com Web site: http://en.thinkexist.com/quotes/soren_kierkegaard/.
- Killdeer, City of. (2005). *Killdeer, North Dakota*. Retrieved November 28, 2005, from <http://www.killdeer.com>
- Klausing, R. L. (1979). *Ground-water resources of Dunn County, North Dakota*. Bismarck, ND: United State Geological Survey
- "Le Corbusier." (n.d.). *Wikipedia*. Retrieved December 03, 2005, from Answers.com Web site: <http://www.answers.com/topic/le-corbusier>.
- Mount Angel Abbey Library. (2005). *Life in a medieval monastery*. Retrieved December 07, 2005, from <http://www.mtangel.edu/library/subject/monastic.htm>
- National Park Service, The. (2000). *Theodore Roosevelt National Park: welcome*. Retrieved October 12, 2005, from <http://www.nps.gov/thro/home.htm>
- Norris, K. (1993). *Dakota: A spiritual geography*. New York, NY: Ticknor & Fields.
- Perez-Gomez, A. (1983). *Architecture and the crisis of modern science*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Phenomenology. (n.d.). *Wikipedia*. Retrieved December 02, 2005, from Answers.com Web site: <http://www.answers.com/topic/phenomenology>.
- Pollack, N. R. (2005, October). *Chichu Art Museum*. *Architectural Record*, 87-95
- Quietism. (n.d.). *Wikipedia*. Retrieved December 06, 2005, from Answers.com Web site: <http://www.answers.com/topic/quietism>.
- Richards, S. (2005). *Existentialism: Reflection upon the human condition*. Retrieved December 08, 2005, from Faith Net Web site: <http://www.faithnet.org.uk/Philosophy/existentialism.htm>
- Sartre, J. P. (1957). *Existentialism and human emotions*. New York, NY: Kingston Publishing Corp.
- Thoreau, H. D. (2004). *Walden*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.

- Trachtenberg, M. (1986). *Architecture: From prehistory to post-modernism*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Transcendentalism. (n.d.). *Wikipedia*. Retrieved December 02, 2005, from Answers.com Web site: <http://www.answers.com/topic/transcendentalism>.
- Turrell, J. (1989). *Roden Crater*. Retrieved December 04, 2005, from web site: <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/turrell/clip1.html>.
- United States Census Bureau (2000) *State and County QuickFacts: Dunn County, North Dakota*. Retrieved October 11, 2005, from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/38/38025.html>
- Vale, B., Vale, R. (1975). *The autonomous house: Design and planning for self-sufficiency*. New York, NY: Universe Books.
- Zahavi, D. (1999). *Self awareness and alterity: a phenomenological investigation*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.