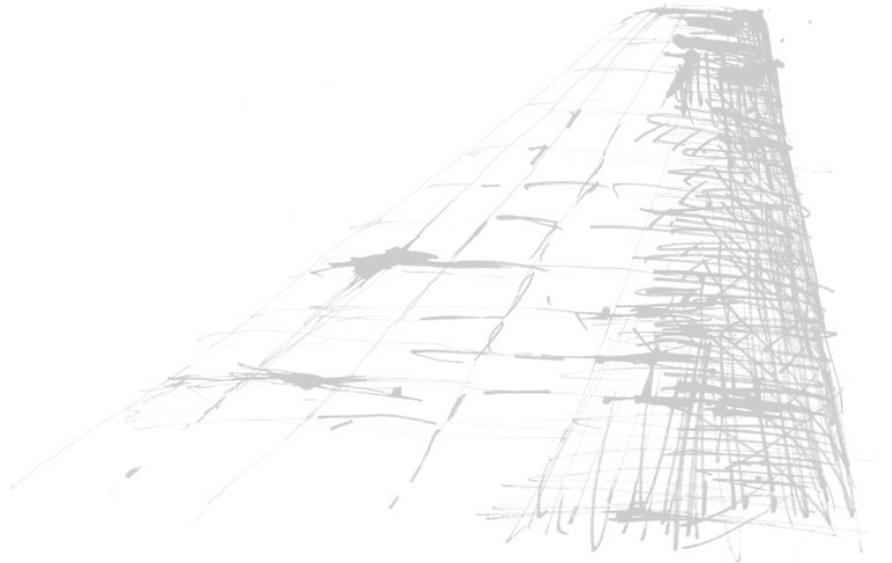


**"a good rain and a baby calf are
always welcome."**

graduate thesis by

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defended
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This thesis and book are dedicated to (in no particular order): my thesis committee; Gary Kurtz; Alex Chilton; The Saints; Vladimir & Estragon; Neil Gaiman; Toshiro Mifune; the staff of Cooper's BBQ in Llano, Texas, "Home of the Big Chop;" Jason Miller and his family; Bob Lindsey and his family; Aaron Marshall; Jason Santeford; Adam Smith (not the economist); Dan Butler and his wife; Yousef Nawas; Marcus Brown; Dawn Bushnaq; Doug Satteson; Derek Hudson; Betty Schoenberg; my parents; and my former dog.

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texas, heat, and water

The state of Texas suffers many stereotypes. Some are exaggerated and absurd, but one that is true is the heat. The heat there is very real; it is one stereotype that cannot be overstated. The modernity of its culture, and consequently the architecture, as well, relies almost entirely upon the air conditioner. (One learns early in the state: during the summer, upon completing a shower, one will never be able to fully dry oneself.)

Texas is hot.

By the end of a summer day, clothing clings to your skin magnetically. Working menial summer jobs in high school and college (even inside, no less) leaves one drenched. Every day I came home from standing at a cashier's stand, and I had to go swimming. It was not desire or relaxation--it was pure need, a rabid craving. Submersing oneself in that cool liquid creates more than just the sensation of temperature change or washing away beads of sweat. Neighborhood kids clamor to swim in my family's swimming pool. Their endless requests are typical of any child's desire to play in the pool, but their eyes say something else--they read like the eyes of a beggar for food. They must swim.



In most parts of the country, swimming pools are objects of recreation and entertainment--symbols of luxury, affluence. In Texas, they hold a similar position, but the water is viewed with a great amount of subconscious reverence. Its cooling properties make it more than a toy for "Marco Polo." Even people who cannot or do not want to swim (my mother, for example) will exert great effort just to dip their hands or wade their bare feet in a cool swimming pool.

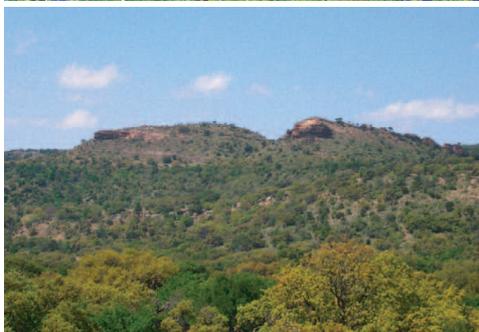
The act of cooling is relegated to concerns of comfort, survival, and mechanical possibilities. It plays such an important role in the daily life of a Texan, especially in the summer, yet we treat our swimming pools, air conditioners, and ceiling fans just as any other American. Should such a vital aspect of a Texan's daily life be realized so mundanely? So crucial a factor in our lives must be uplifted to some form more poetic than the noisy A/C unit under the kitchen window.

This weathered sign (above) expresses the nature of water in Texas. It is essential and prayed for, if not prayed to itself as something spiritual. It is not a stagnant mass of blue chlorinated liquid. It is a lifesaver. "A good rain and a baby calf are always welcome."

bluebonnets

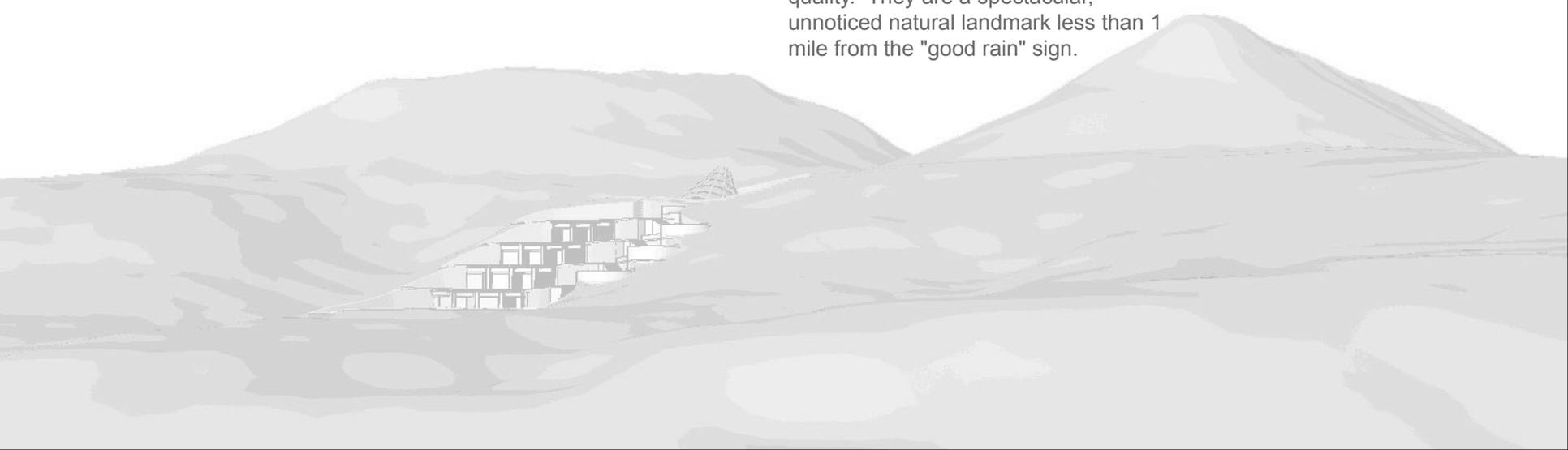


the Twin Knobs



In the Hill Country of Central Texas lies the village of Willow City, 1 ½ hours southwest of the capital, Austin. A sinuous road, known as the Willow City Loop, winds north from the forgettable village through an untouched, untamed, semi-arid wilderness. The area is a stretch of vast expanses of granite and limestone often exposed with little or no topsoil. For a brief period during the springtime, the road becomes a traffic-congested line of families hoping to see flourishes of the in-bloom state flower, the bluebonnet. At all other times, the road is completely deserted.

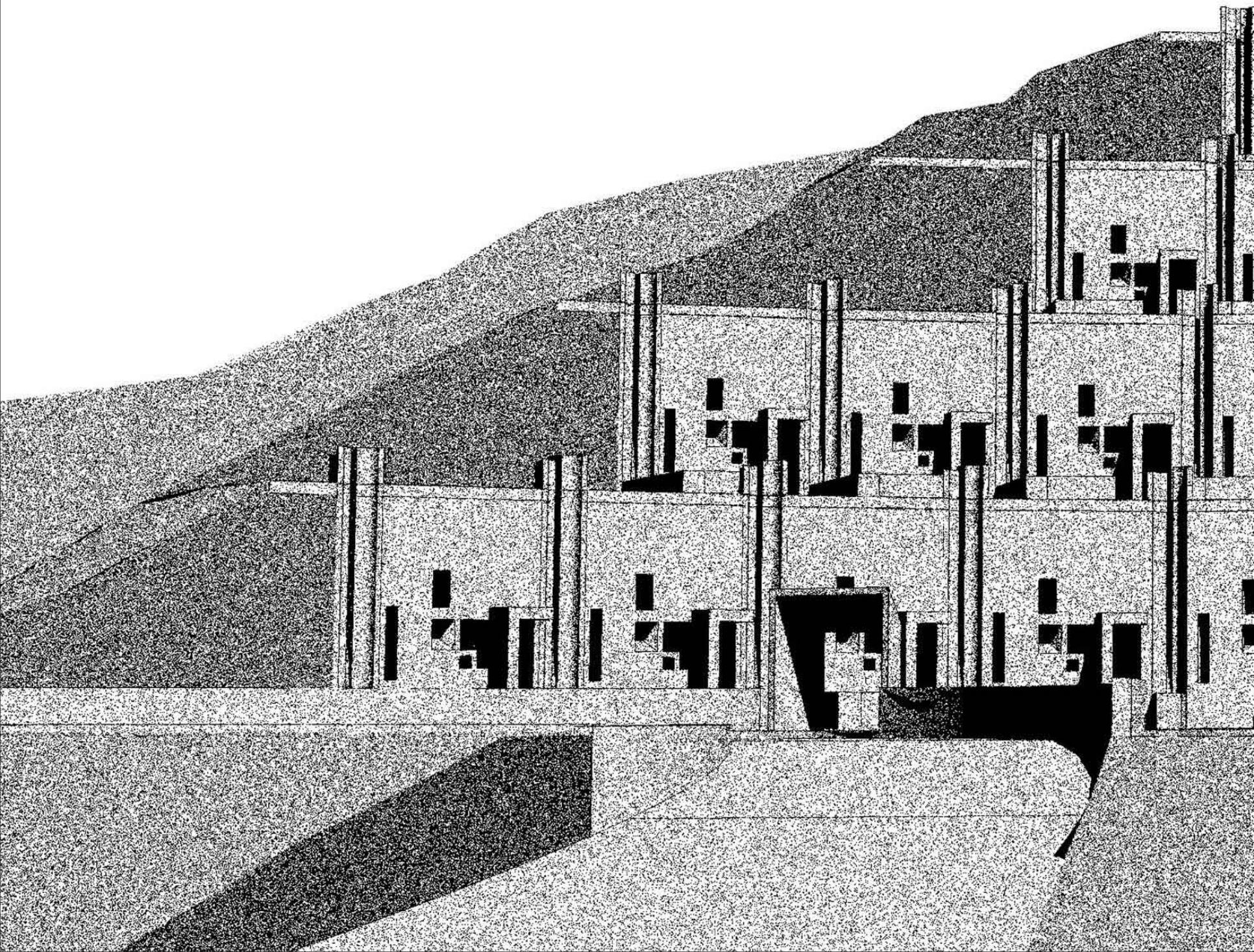
A field of alternating pink, orange, and rust-white stretches for miles with frequent interruptions of various shades of green from mesquite trees, live oaks, cedars, cacti, and lichens. The topography constantly changes. Boulder-sized shards of granite seem to just explode out of escarpments. In other places, horizontal bands of granite cantilever from the tops of hills, displaying the years and time of its formulation. Two hills in particular, the Twin Knobs, comprise a striking composition of great architectural quality. They are a spectacular, unnoticed natural landmark less than 1 mile from the "good rain" sign.

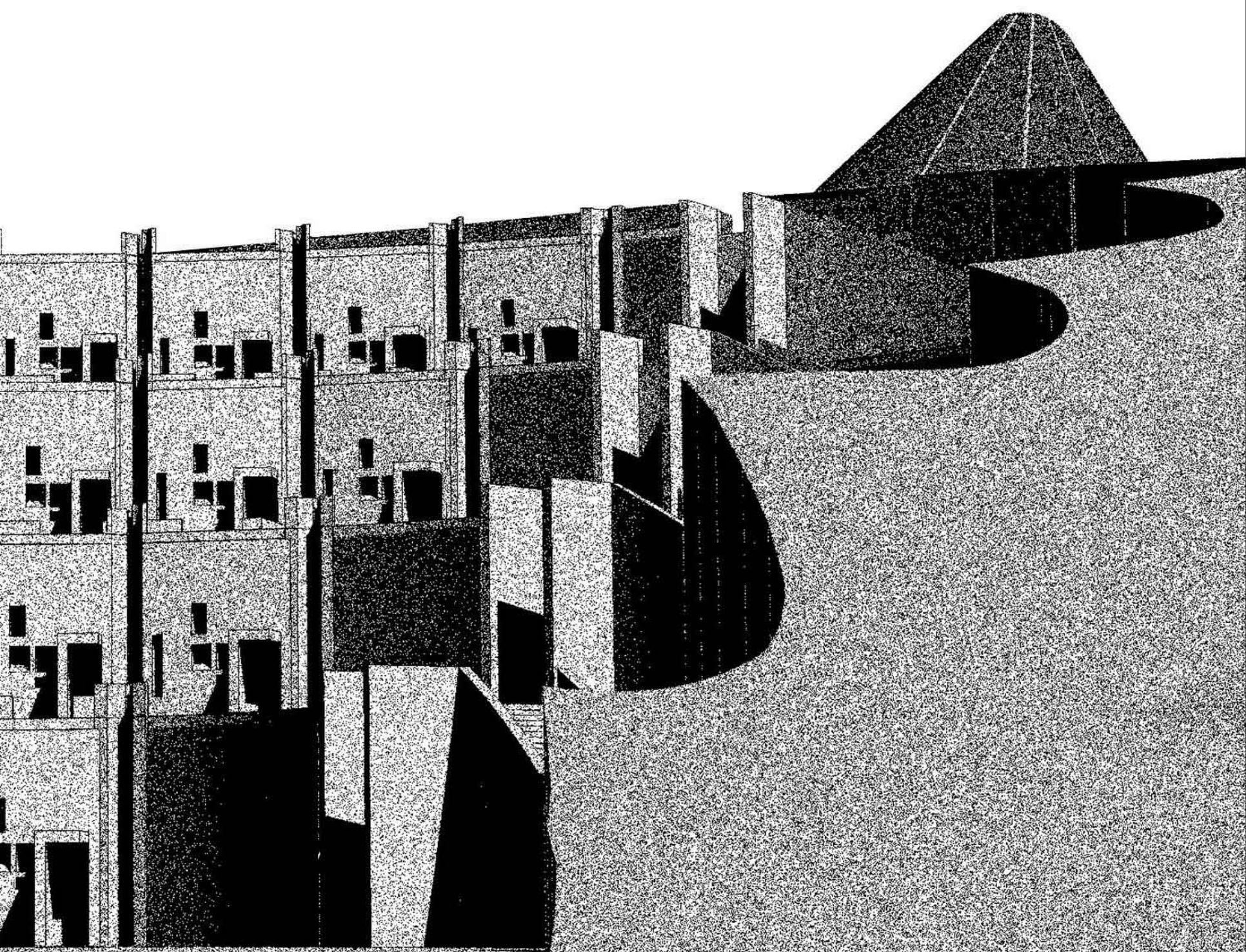


The architecture of the kidney-bean pool and the air-conditioner is inappropriate and inadequate when considering the significance of water in Texas. What is the architecture for the adoration of water in Texas? Where does one immerse oneself in water as a retreat from the sun and an act of tribute to that water? Furthermore, what is the form this architecture? How does such an architecture meld into a dynamic and varied topography? How does geometry generate or dictate such a form? Where do the geometry and formal expressions end and the architecture begin? Or, are they one? What is the nature of a human in such a place?

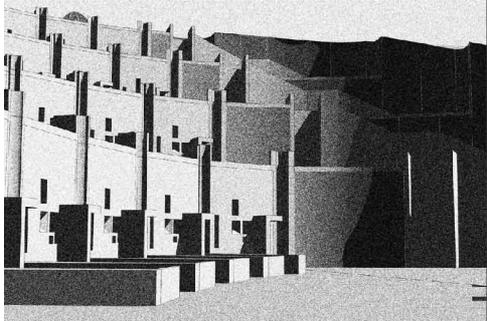
This book presents a retreat whose architectural focal point is a pool nestled in an excavated basin between the Twin Knobs. It is shielded by a great cone that forces the heat of the sun to yield to the repose of the pool and its water.

architecture, geometry, and water





the cabins and the stairs
in the distance



the complex situated
between the Twin Knobs

the complex melding
into the adjacent
topography

