



View of AIDS Quilt



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View of the National AIDS Quilt on the National Mall, Spring 1997



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Chapter I: Philosophy of Holistic Care

Inspiration

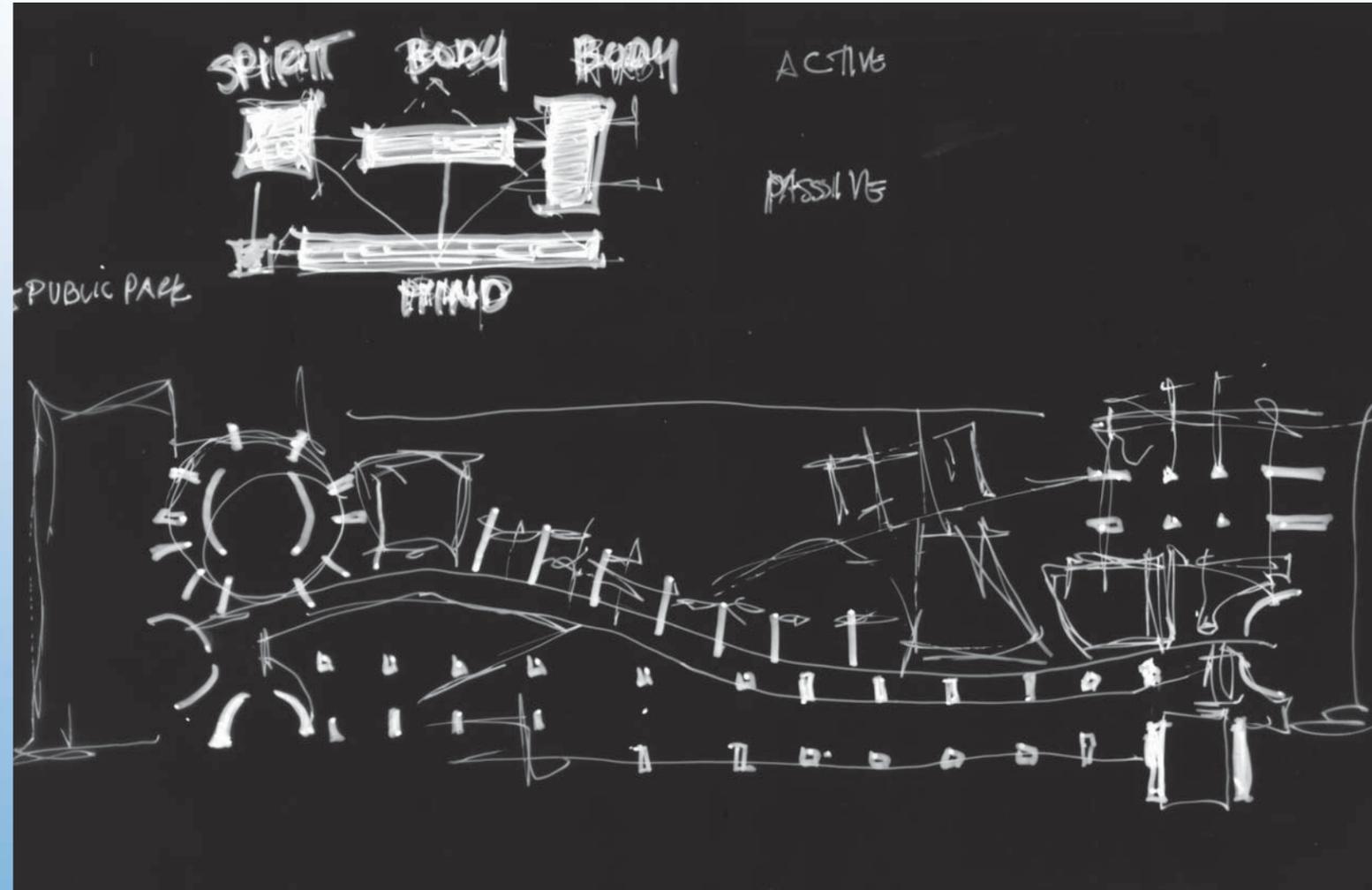
My reasons for choosing this particular thesis project are purely personal. My very close cousin passed away in 1993. He died of pneumonia brought about by the devastating attack of HIV/AIDS on his body. He spent several months in a small hospital in Southern Maryland and his final days at Southeast Community Hospital; neither hospital wanted to treat his illness nor were they equipped with appropriately trained staff to help him. He passed away surrounded by family, yet feeling helpless and hopeless. My cousin is my first inspiration. Every state, city and town is filled with others like him, with various terminal ailments, who find no comfort in the treatment they receive in hospitals.

I think of my cousin quite often and wish his last few days had been more dignified, more peaceful, more reflective of whom he was as a person. He was a kind, spiritual, intelligent man who loved the fine arts. He loved his family and had a great respect for all life.

My second source of inspiration was the National AIDS Memorial Quilt Project that came to Washington, D.C. in the spring of 1997. This incredible quilt was laid out on the National Mall. Each square of the quilt represented a human life lost to AIDS. The quilt stretched the distance between the Capitol and the Washington Monument.



Process Sketch: Anthropomorphic Form



Process Sketch: Development of Anthropomorphic Form

"Anyone with you today?" the technician asks before starting the CAT scan. I don't answer. I'm thinking of the 24 years I ran 18 miles a week, played on four softball teams, and how Christmas Eve I couldn't walk up my stairs. I'm thinking of the months of night sweats, blood tests and specialists, I'm thinking of banana-flavored barium and the radioactive iodine injection that makes me retch, sending the technician scurrying for a bucket. "Anyone with you?" she asks again. I answer "No." A word scarier than the lymphoma they're looking for.¹

I was so touched by the entire scene. I thought of my cousin Mike once again. Relatives and friends sat next to the square of their loved ones; they talked and laughed and cried. They remembered. It was the most powerful and touching experience I have ever had. For one day the National Mall was transformed into a sacred place. There were few dry eyes. No one played softball or Frisbee. The introduction of this quilt had the effect of turning the entire Mall area into a memorial.

Thankfully, HIV/AIDS is no longer a terminal illness - if the proper medication is taken. Researchers have made many important discoveries toward combating the disease. However, the medicine is expensive and has many side effects. Washington, D.C. has been listed as the city with the highest rate of new AIDS cases in the entire country. A study performed by the Whitman Walker clinic stated that 1 out of every 20 people in Washington, D.C. has HIV/AIDS. The District has 12 times the national average of new AIDS cases. On the continent of Africa, HIV/AIDS has reached epidemic proportions. Many Africans refuse to use protection during sex and medication for those already infected is not affordable. HIV/AIDS patients continue their struggle to live.

In Michael's honor, and for all the wonderful men, women and children we have lost to AIDS, I have designed a Holistic Center for the Terminally Ill.