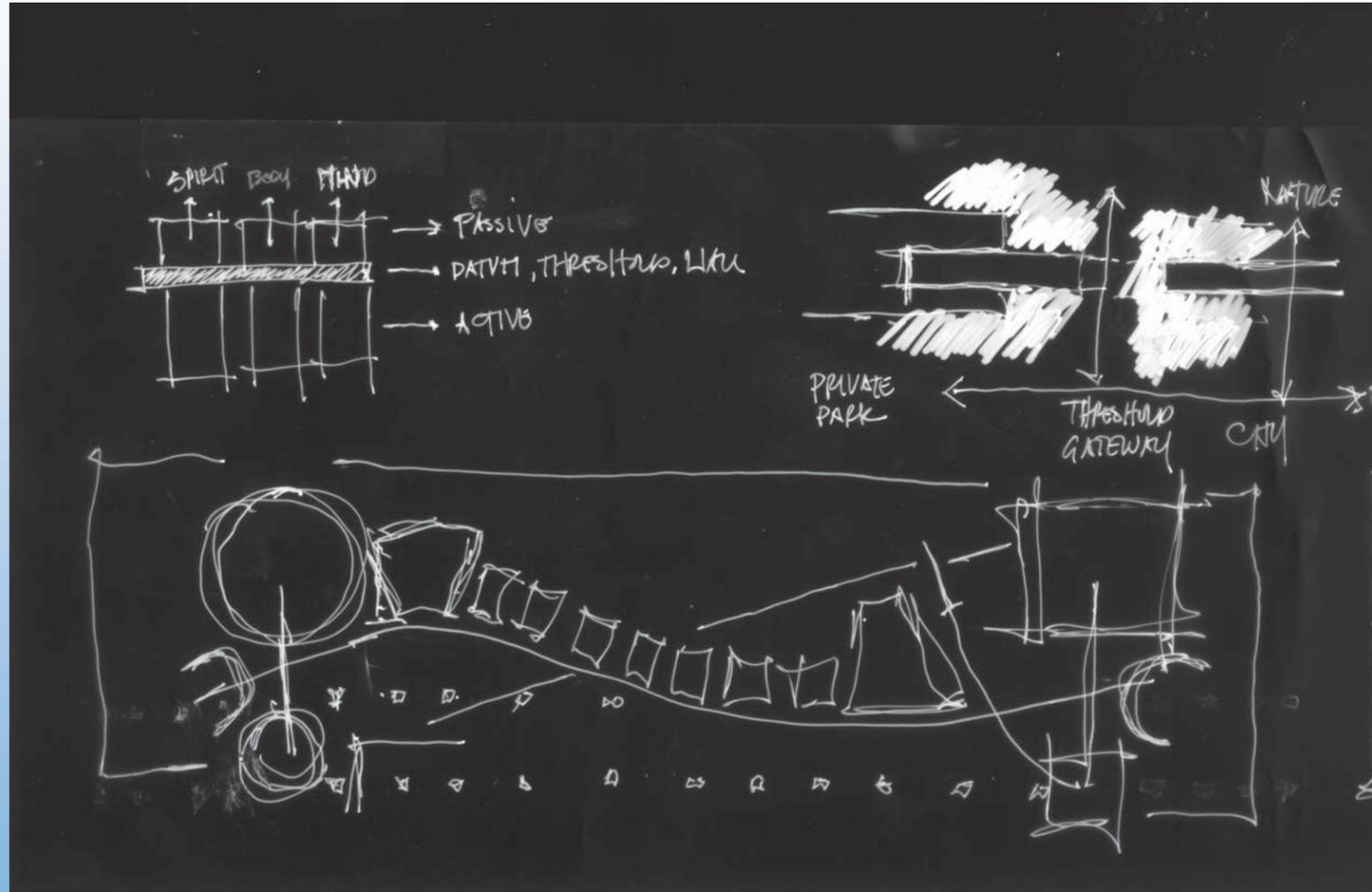


Process Sketch: Anthropomorphic Form



Process Sketch: Development of Anthropomorphic Form

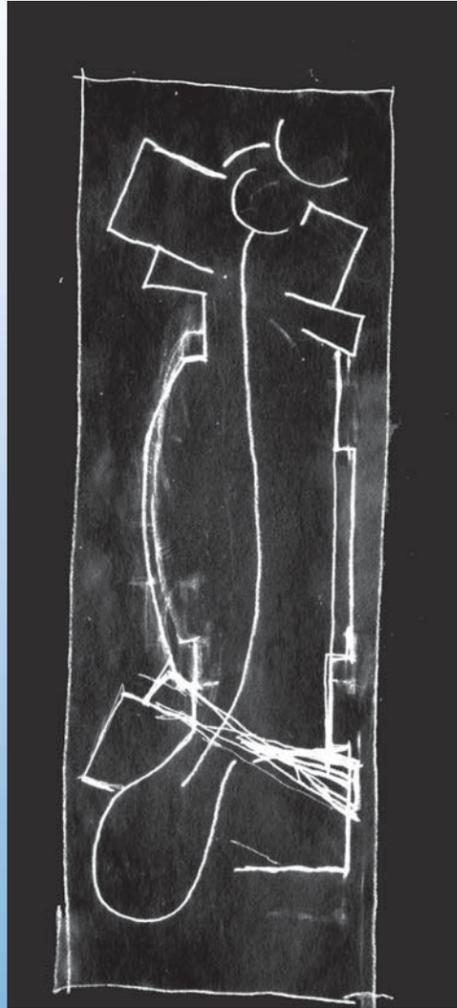
Breast Cancer Motivates. You clean out closets, nourish friendships, and travel. Over lunch last summer, my friend asked me if I had had an epiphany about life. I paused, thinking that at midlife I hoped I had been enjoying life all along. Don't I appreciate the view shared with my husband at the top of a ski mountain, a moment of humor with my sons, my students' satisfaction with just-developed photographs, or the smell of fresh-tuned garden dirt? I responded, "No." I thought I heard my friend sigh in relief. ²

Introduction

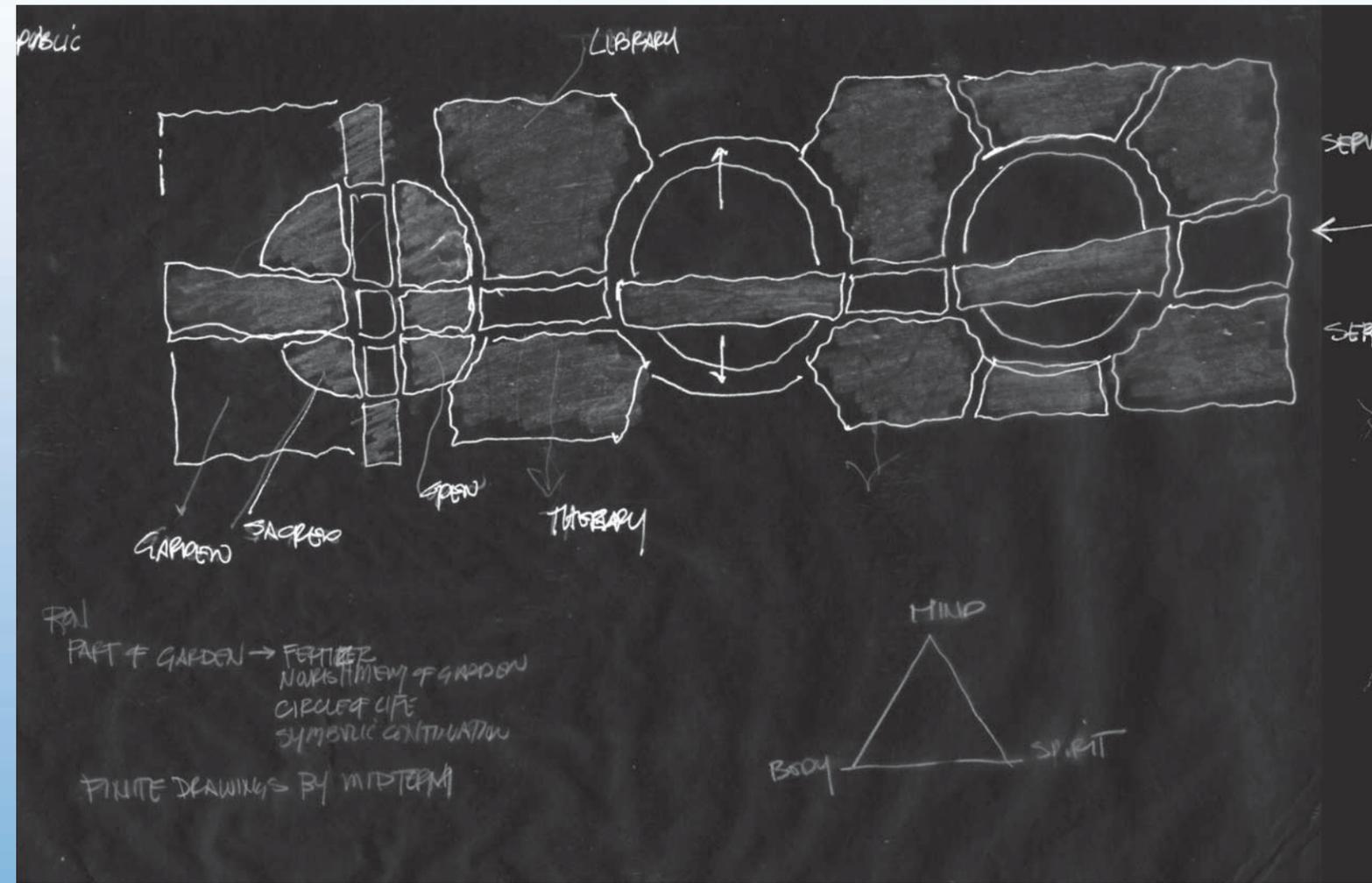
If Architecture can express the joy of birth and all the infinite aspects of human life, then Architecture can equally celebrate death as a final rite of passage. Every society of human beings has its own set of rituals and rites of passage. For most societies, these rituals coincide with the stages of life, the first of which is birth. Birth becomes a person's first rite of passage. Puberty, marriage, and procreation occur in the middle stages of life. The final rite of passage is death; when one moves into another plane of existence. In some societies this new plane of existence is reincarnation. In other societies there is an other worldly existence where the soul goes to live for eternity.

Architecture is a habitable threshold between this world and the next. Architecture celebrates all of life's experiences along with its human hosts. Many architectural building types have been created with life's rites of passages in mind. The birthing center as a building type, provides a comfortable and dignified shelter for a new baby and its family. The birthing center becomes the second womb. The miracle of that first rite of passage is celebrated within its walls. The child's life truly begins upon leaving the center and arriving home.

I suggest that this transition - the transition from life to death - should be celebrated as a new beginning, just as one would celebrate birth as a new life. I



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Literally and figuratively, death can be expressed as a transition. If the threshold can express this transition architecturally, then the threshold - as an element - is a celebration of death.

*Death = Celebration
Transition = Death
Threshold = Transition
Celebration = Threshold*

believe that the period before death should be a celebration of one's life. Our society needs to adopt a new building type that celebrates the transition between this world and a life that waits for us on the other side. The residents of this Holistic Center for the Terminally Ill are in a plane of existence that is "in-between". Mentally, they have already begun to prepare for their transition.

Death, as the last rite of passage, should be experienced as a celebration of life. Death is a transition between an earthly life and the afterlife. The hours, days, months or years approaching death becomes another threshold period. This transition period, like the birth period, should be spent in a comfortable and dignified environment. This new building type should provide much more than just shelter. It should allow for the preparedness of mind, body and spirit. Realizing that death is just the moment when dying ends, the Holistic Center would not focus on death but rather on the quality of life until the moment of death.

This thesis project is a study of threshold spaces in architecture and how they translate into human experience and a study of the celebration of transition by focusing attention on the threshold spaces, both outside and inside a building. According to Herman Hertzberger, threshold spaces are "in-between spaces" or "habitable spaces between things". These architectural features which represent transition are: gateways, doorways, bridges, vestibules, pathways, corridors, foyers, stairways, ramps, windows and balconies. These elements can create both a visual and physical transition.