MELANCHOLY & THE INFINITE SADNESS
A MENTAL THERAPY RETREAT

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In America alone, 19 million people live with depression. Untreated depression is the leading cause of suicide in the United States and the third leading cause of death between 18-25 year olds. The aim of the project was guided based on the idea that we could take sadness as a manifestation in order to allow the possibility of controlling and manipulating it. The idea was based on a well documented understanding that melancholia creates a permeable boundary between consciousness and unconsciousness. In melancholia there is an internalization of behaviors that insulate and isolate the individual. With this level of introspection also comes an underlying gift of deep passion, curiosity and cognition. This gift brings a deep understanding to the workings of the world. It is in this dual reality that lies a realm of complexity and possibility.

This understanding of depression led me to believe in how powerful and how necessary the simple yet essential feeling of hope was. The concept of hope seems like an illusion but sometimes it’s the only thing you have. The hope is what keeps you going and allows a tangible identity to sanity. How can architecture reflect hope and how can a space help the weary hearted? These questions pleaded for answers and this thesis is a result of the search. The search for a better place in our minds. The desire for a hope that we are not prisoners to our sadness. The quest for answers laid its journey on a cliff edge on the Olmsted Island of Great Falls, MD ; a site amplified with majestic soaring views and soundscapes of water and nature that accentuate the program of an alternative mental therapy retreat.
A point-up triangle may represent ascension towards a spiritual world. The point-down triangle represents descent into the physical world.
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HELL IS EMPTY AND ALL THE DEVILS ARE HERE.
The journey begins on a cold day, trying to find the words to aid the creation of the landscape and the character. These words were critical as they were to resonate throughout the entire project, a literal translation of an emotional perception. These imperative words give personification, identity and insight to the melancholic and the mental scenery. shadows, mystery, secrets that lie in darkness, tragedy, poetry, dreams, mysticism, tortured soul, anguish, literature, passion, destiny, moonlight, pain, intensity, subconscious, sombre, mood, haunting, ill, allure, suspense, hidden beauty, amorphous, hopelessness, desire

shadows, mystery, secrets that lie in darkness, tragedy, poetry, dreams, mysticism, tortured soul, anguish, literature, passion, destiny, moonlight, pain, intensity, subconscious, sombre, mood, haunting, ill, allure, suspense, hidden beauty, amorphous, hopelessness, desire.

THE INSTITUTION

The design of Mental Institutions pioneered by Dr. Thomas Kirkbride and in many following insane asylum concepts was the notion of private and tremendously long staggered wings that allowed light to penetrate into each facet of the building. The design approach intended to have a curative effect, lending the building to serve as a cure. Over time, however, the hierarchical concept often imposing in its exorbitant size and presence became largely discredited and eventually turned into overcrowded places of abuse and neglect. It wasn't until the 20th century where the development and further understanding of anti-psychotic drugs played a role in the slow removal of mental patient institutionalization. Most of the massive Kirkbride Insane Asylum facilities have now been abandoned and the method of institutionalized mental health treatment is being continuously reformed with different methodology and approaches to modern treatment.
With an understanding of the growing, changing and generationally adapting modernized mental illness treatment and the various facilities becoming established to focusing on specific patient needs, the program for an alternative therapy facility was conceived.

Based on a belief that there could not be a great talent without a sense of madness, I hoped to design a facility that focused on developing an architectural response to the 'treatment' of those suffering from deep clinical depression. The quote led me on a journey to discover the mad geniuses who have graced our world and brought forth out of their misery a beautiful and valuable gift to mankind. Whether from my personal inspirations of the writings from Hemingway, a self-proclaimed melancholic, or Edgar Allen Poe, to the art of Van Gogh and Rothko, to today's revolutionary and recently deceased designer, Alexander McQueen I stood to believe there is a twisted and provocative gift that is underlying in the dark shadows of depression.

**MELANCHOLY AND THE MELANCHOLIC**

**ALTERNATIVE TREATMENT**

"AND WHY A MISERY YET UNEXPLORED, STANDS IN THE WAY OF STIRRING LIFE"

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**AND WHY A MISERY YET UNEXPLORED, STANDS IN THE WAY OF STIRRING LIFE**

**GOETHE**

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**A LONELY ISLAND**

**THE SITE**
A LONELY ISLAND

THE SITE

There is a place unknown that calls for a place in your bones. It's an echoed muted buzzing from the radar signal that looks for the doors that lead to escape. The site needed to be the place that would greet you when you were running from your world and yourself. The site needed to create a penetrable threshold in comparison to that a melancholic experiences in their mind. The place needed to be tangible in that it could be readily accessible but lonely and secretive in it's approach and departure from reality. The patient would traverse through a winding path across the forest escaping the realm of their 'reality' and into another dimension. The edge of the cliff was to speak the last gesture of hope for those who may feel at the edge of their lives. The island would serve as a halfway moment between here and there. An interstitial space that is desolate and yet all the more at the center of the universe, closest to the spirit of the earth and it's properties.

SITE COMPOSITION

Olmsted Island in Great Falls, MD is a tremendously rocky and jagged terrain with a vicious force of water currents that are cascading throughout the surrounding site. The magnificent views of the landscape and water prove to be a beacon of hope and optimism with overwhelming awe.

The presence and profound influence of water plays a critical role in both the therapy and the healing of the patients, as well as the architectural gestures of the building.

The sound of the rushing water from the falls brings a constant hymn of soothing peace and cold, fresh revitalization. In ancient times people would rely on 'hydro-therapy' as a holistic approach to consoling those afflicted with mental illness. The site allows for two resisting much like that of one mentally afflicted. The resisting's: sane versus insane and the water versus the rock. The rock brings strength and rigidity, heaviness and power where as the water both in it's aggressive and passive nature allow for lucidity and clarity in its essence.

FIG. 05 - SITE MAP: GREAT FALLS, VA

FIG. 06 - CONCEPTUAL COLLAGE OF SITE

FIG. 07 - CONCEPTUAL SITE PLAN ON SITE

FIG. 08 - AERIAL VIEW OF OLMSTEAD ISLAND
A LONELY ISLAND
SITE COMPOSITION

"ONE MUST NOT COMPARE LIFE SORROWS WITH THOSE OF DEATH"
ALFRED DE MUSSET

Where does life ever scream as loudly as when you’re standing at the edge of a cliff facing a barreling waterfall? Raging water bludgeoning down the fall with a vengeance and you’re standing still as ice trying to grasp the magnitude of a majesty so far beyond a human scale.

The initial model was an attempt to recreate the orchestra of this voluminous surrounding and create an immense coalition between the two entities of water and rock. The white plexiglass is layered with text from the manuscript, The Anatomy of Melancholy. The words carry so much power, and with their darkness, they carry a muted connection to the black rock.

FIG. 12 - GLASGOW MUSEUM OF TRANSPORT
FIG. 13 - BUSAN OPERA HOUSE
FIG. 14 - RABAT GRAND THEATRE
Our human condition is constantly subjected to the presence of consciousness and unconsciousness.

The interactions that occur in our existence are effected deeply by our innate and programmed mental psyche. One of these influences that dominates our existence is the idea of prospect and refuge.

Our minds, whether consciously or unconsciously are constantly in the realm of prospect and refuge.

The theory contributes to our behavior in all aspects of our lives, whether in social situations, or private ones. We find ourselves at times seeking private and retreated protection in refuge and when there is a sense of confidence, courage and need for survival, the role of prospect is engaged.

The architecture and concept of my thesis began its development and maturity through the understanding of this confluence of entities that are continuously engaging our very existence.

Through research I had confidence to believe that the mind of those mentally afflicted are ones most severely in constant flux between these two realms. So much so that, the distinction between the realms were not just limited to prospect and refuge but sanity and insanity. Reality and Illusion.

It was necessary to accommodate and adhere to this critical juxtaposition of the space and the mind in the design of the program and architectural spaces.
CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

A GESTURAL MEANING

“AND IF YOU GAZE FOR LONG INTO AN ABYSS, THE ABYSS GAZES ALSO INTO YOU”

NIETZSCHE

FIG. 18 - DRAWING: THE CLIFF AND BEYOND

FIG. 19 - DRAWING/MIXED MEDIA: AN ENTRY

"AND IF YOU GAZE FOR LONG INTO AN ABYSS, THE ABYSS GAZES ALSO INTO YOU"

NIETZSCHE
There are various key elements of the theory of prospect and refuge that are related to architectural spaces which are listed: Ceiling Height, Transitional Spaces, differences between the sexes, Light and Season.

Ceiling heights tend to influence our perception of prospect and refuge due to the effect of expanse vs. narrowness. Transitional spaces allow sensory interaction with space in response to changing dimensions and intersitial spaces. Sexes are a common factor as an element in the theory where men tend to prefer prospect, while women are more inclined to seek refuge.

Light levels accentuate feelings of reclusion or expansion as well as the sea-

"THE REAL TRUTH ABOUT IT IS, THERE AIN'T NO END TO THE DESERT I'LL CROSS."

JASON MOLINA
The three-drawing series below represents a means of architectural identity in an attempt to establish form. These iterations of design development sketches explore the concept of prospect versus refuge and how both entities intertwined allow for a viable and meaningful architecture.

The gestures are formed decisions based on entry, circulation, and arrival. The anecdotes of the patient occupying the space inform a healing process that is underlying in the architectural gestures. The drawings depict moments of darkness and lightness, solitude, and togetherness.
The drawing above describes a subtle, conceptual sensory relationship between an emotional understanding and an architectural one. It is the process of healing and the architectural engagement that was attempted through a means of ground level.

When you enter the building, the entrance is below the grade of the earth. Essentially under the earth, which metaphorically is where the mental state of the patients lies at the time of entry. During the therapy process in the engagement and dissection of melancholy the building rises onto the earth. Greeting melancholy and rising above the hole of darkness into the potential prospect of light.

The last series of ascent is when the building rises above the earth and cantilevers over the water. This symbolic transition: under the earth, on the earth, above the earth correlates a suggestive path of ascent in the mind and mental treatment as well as physically in the architecture. The pain of depression is no longer a descent but an ascent.

The drawing to the left is a plan view of the site and a digital representation of the terrain.
"I was wondering why God created you. I was telling myself it was to hear all those who suffer."

Alfred de Musset
This model series development intended to deliver a response to the diagrammatic drawings and sketches compiled. The gestural forms were created based on the volumetric suggestions implied in the two-dimensional drawings. The movement and form implies a rigid sensuality embracing the cliff edge and the urge to fly off of it.
Early programmatic diagrams based off of the Series Three model development. The program accommodated for therapeutic spaces and subsequent living spaces. Such as: meditation space, group therapy, living spaces, kitchen and offices. The attempt of these drawings was to find an appropriate relationship and layout for the sensitivities between the patients and the building plan.
"SORROW FOUND ME WHEN I WAS YOUNG. SORROW WAITED, SORROW WON."

- The National
FACADE EXPLORATIONS AND INVESTIGATIONS

WINDOWS TO YOUR SOUL

The gestures on the facade emulate the emotional and complicated nature of pain and torment.

There is a feeling of being safe in a world that speaks how you feel inside rather than forces a regularity and rigidity to the unkempt mind.

Perspectives of the exterior are then unadulterated and voids grow from the wounds. The splintering facade that exposes gaping openings brings in light.

This model searches for a relationship between prospect and refuge in the facade representation. The windows are matted glass and the undulations signify a push and pull response to the need for hope and at the same time for privacy.

THE ART OF FENESTRATION

Fig 49 - The Louvre, Paris, France

Fig 50 - Denver Art Museum, Daniel Libeskind

Fig 52 - Taubman Museum of Art, Randall Stout

Fig 53 - Museum of Art, Washington D.C., I. M. Pei

Fig 54 - Museum of Military History, Libeskind

Fig 55 - Fenestration Model

MODEL SCALE 3/16"-1'-0"
Sketch iterations developing the plan and the program. The moves were made based on the journey of the inhabitant. Understanding the subtle motions of the patient allowed the light to show itself in the paths throughout the plan. The niches and corridors - the tight spaces and expansive ones; all are instrumental in creating experiential and melancholic spaces.
PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

PLAN ITERATIONS

FIG 68 - PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT a

LEVEL ONE

FIG 70 - PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT c

LEVEL ONE

FIG 69 - PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT b

LEVEL TWO

FIG 71 - PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT d

LEVEL TWO
PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

MODEL SERIES SIX

LEVEL ONE

FIG 72 - PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT 2a

LEVEL TWO

FIG 73 - PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT 2b

SKETCH MODEL: SERIES SIX | MODEL SCALE: 3/32" - 1'-0"

FIG 74 - SKETCH MODEL

FIG 75 - SKETCH MODEL 2
The material palette was governed by the concept of being born under the planet Saturn. It is said that those born under Saturn were given a divine gift of melancholy. It is with the properties of Saturn that suggested a template for the design. The units are wrapped in a cocoon like enclosure, almost like a heavy blanket with lightweight panels that are later painted over with a black silicone polyurethane laced with carbon particles to mimic the lead property of Saturn.

Black slate walls control the artery passages and corridors throughout the building representing the black stone property from the planet of Saturn.

The glass curtain walls in the building are cloaked with a sheer curtain of text transcribed from the text of the Anatomy of Melancholy. The text is translucent to the point where it is visible when sought out, but not where it would obstruct the views. The excerpts give a name and a tangible humanity to a malady. In reading the text, it allows the inhabitant the ability to view the text as a diagnosis and dissection of the torment. Where there is an identity to the pain, it becomes less of an unknown suffocation.

Bedroom floors are wide long planks of reclaimed wood taken from the site, washed and bleached to give warmth to the bedrooms keeping in rhythm with the nature of the site and its properties.

There are deliberate and profound scattered wound-like gashes that let in light to the spaces and at the same time reveal the structure to the outside - revealing an inner anatomy.
Upon entering the building, the entrance is magnified with a large chapel-like roof to speak a feeling of ascent and echo the sound of the water that comes in throughout the building. The retreat has a glass wedge that cuts off into and over the cliff which is to serve as a large meditation space. A central heart of the building will hold all the therapy rooms such as: Music Therapy, Art Therapy, & Literature + Writing Therapy.

In the therapy wing also exists the dining and living room. The building consists of two floors for private patient suites with the rooms facing the downspout of the waterfall. There are two doctors residences and two doctors offices along with additional shared public spaces for presentations or conferences to be used by all.
patient units
literature and writing room
music therapy room
art therapy room
kitchen & dining
living
group therapy room
meditation wing

LEVEL ONE
THE FINAL PLAN | LEVEL TWO

LEVEL TWO

- Patient units
- Doctors' offices
- Two doctor residences
- Conference rooms

SCALE: 1" : 20'-0"
THE END IS JUST THE BEGINNING
THE FINAL PLAN | LEVEL THREE

LEVEL THREE
peak of reflection

THE FINAL PLAN | LEVEL THREE

53
A welded light-weight rigid structural space frame. The triangulated truss-like system spans the facade allowing the large expanse without needing interior obstructing supports.

**THE FACADE SPEAKS**

In detailing the facade, a consideration was made to incorporate text onto the curtain walls. The text was chosen from a manuscript written in the 1600's as one of the first ever transcribed analyses of melancholy: the symptoms, cures and causes.

The opacity of the glass then becomes diffused with a slight shading from the text, yet translucent enough to see beyond. The text thus serves as a sheer glazed curtain providing a visual veil between the inside and out.
HANGING THE WALL. UNDERSTANDING THE WEIGHT OF HUMAN HEARTS

it is the wall that holds on for dear life. clamped and bolted to the floor - visible for the patients to see. Its mechanism and structure became beacons of strength and they say, “don’t let go. don’t let go.”

A CURTAIN WALL SYSTEM

a. interior wall
b. panel support system
c. visible floor connection
d. fire-proofing barrier
e. exterior light-weight panel
THE END IS JUST THE BEGINNING
FRAMING DIAGRAMS

FIG 92 - FRAMING GRID FLOOR TWO

FIG 93 - FRAMING GRID ROOF

FIG 94 - ABSTRACTED RENDERING 1

FIG 95 - ABSTRACTED RENDERING 2
THE END IS JUST THE BEGINNING

SECTION A-A

ANATOMY OF MELANCHOLY,
WHAT IT IS,
WITH
ALL THE SIGNS, CAUSES, PERILOTS, PROPORTIONS, AND several CURSES OF IT.

IN THREE PARTITIONS.
THE END IS JUST THE BEGINNING

SECTION C-C
THE END IS JUST THE BEGINNING

EASTERN ELEVATION

FIG 100 - EASTERN ELEVATION

SCALE: 1" = 20'-0"
THE END IS JUST THE BEGINNING
SOUTHERN ELEVATION

SCALE: 1" - 20'-0"

Fig. 116: Nature of Devils

SCALE: 1" - 20'-0"

There is no end to sensory delights, and our exposure to them is an ever-increasing process.
The building built on the rock will be primarily two floors. During the excavation process of the site, the chipped away stone will be used as aggregate to be mixed into the concrete flooring. The natural stone of the site will make appearances throughout the building exposing the earth to the interior.

The glass peak was designed as a passage that would require great determination. You would walk up two flights of stairs against a glass wall overlooking the water, to get to the viewing platform. At this point will reside the ultimate meditation and reflection moment in the building.

Structural elements in the glass peak animate the interior space with scattered light, diffused by a buffed matted glass hued to a dark grey to escape a harsh light.
THE END IS JUST THE BEGINNING

A PLACE TO READ AND WRITE YOUR DEMONS

DARK CORRIDORS, BATHED IN OBSCURE LIGHT

FIG 104 - LITERATURE WING RENDERING

FIG 105 - DARK CORRIDOR RENDERING
THE END IS JUST THE BEGINNING

RENDERINGS

FIG 108 - RESIDENCE FOR A PATIENT RENDERING

RESIDENCE FOR A PATIENT
THE END IS JUST THE BEGINNING

FINAL MODEL REPRESENTATION
Lightly, a melancholic can be someone who is boundlessly capable and insightful while at the same time, suffering a deep and tormenting anguish. In this dual reality of sanity and insanity exists a world of complexity and possibility. The architecture and program had to show suffering while at the same time project possibility and hope.
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