A MUSEUM OF BOOKS

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ABSTRACT

I think of a book as an act of human generosity. In its offerings are the treasures of a mind. The architecture of a library should celebrate the presentation of the book. In celebrating its presence, the library becomes a museum of books.

IN THE ORDER OF THE CIRCLE
GEOMETRY
WARM GARDEN   COLD GARDEN
GREEN GARDEN   STONE GARDEN
IN THE NATURE OF THE WALL
HOW TO FINISH THE LAND
AT THE WATER'S EDGE
INTRODUCTION

The circle was the beginning - its nature inspires my exploration and development of geometry in the language of architecture. An interaction between major elements gives an order of revelation. The linear elements become walls within which are kept the books. The geometry of these walls recognizes the presence of the circle, yet they stand alone from it. The circle is defined by an enclosing wall whose discovery is made after passing a series of thresholds. Between the two, the curved wall and the linear walls, is the ambulatory: a space between, celebrated by the light.

The walls of the books are primary. They give the structure to the building and generate the order for the display of the books. While bearing obligation to the open stacks, they accommodate the stairs and services for the building's circulation system as well.

Walking up the stairs from the main floor, one passes two balcony levels before reaching the second floor. The same arrangement exists on the way to the third floor and upwards to the roof deck. The ends of these circulation walls are punctuated with study areas on each floor. A progression in stepping back the floors and masonry bearing walls along the vertical dimension reinforces the treatment of geometry in the section as in the plan. The spaces created between these walls are utilized as reading areas.

The circular enclosing wall provides the counterpoint to the walls of books. At its base are carved niches for private reading and contemplation. Along the north side of the building is the entrance wall, creating a major threshold to entering the building. Within it are several study rooms as well as building service elements.

Along the entrance wall a rotunda element penetrates to foreshadow the organization beyond. The rotunda serves as a bridge to the three levels along each side of the entrance wall. A gallery area for exhibition marks the first level, reading areas are on the second level, and on the third are administration and scholar offices.

These elements that define the building form only one half of the circle. The completion is made with the warm garden: a garden of flowers. In this garden is celebrated the entrance to the place. In opposition to the warm garden lies the cold garden. It becomes an extension of the building's geometry across the site to the water's edge. Celebrating this edge is a garden a stone at the meeting point of the land and the water.
The site is situated at Haines Point, a prominent location on the Potomac River south of Washington, D.C.

_The hidden, unseen part of reality is no less important than the visible portion._
_Carlo Ginzburg_
Site Plan

A. Building
B. Warm Garden
C. Cold Garden
D. Parking
E. Walkways
F. Water
All is in repose.
Nothing is lost.
All change is a dance of eternal fidelity, a conserved composition within the infinite freedom of time without end.
The beauty of architecture is the presentation of the repose of light and material, a passionate poem of inseparability and coincident elemental origin; a passionate poem of repose that is the inevitable intent of all art.

— Jaan Holt
Second Floor Plan

D. Reading Areas
E. Stairs
F. Circulation Desk
G. Computer Catalogs
H. Elevators
J. Sitting Niches
K. Balcony
M. Open
d. Upper Reading Areas
e. Upper Study Rooms
Because thy garden
is a thief
of hearts
the spring
is in thy debt
for flowers
stay more fresh
in thy hand
than on
the branch

Taleb Amoli
(seventeenth century)
EARLY PLAN STUDY

Design is form-making in order
Form emerges out of a system of construction
Growth is a construction
In order is creative force
In design is the means - where with what when with how much
The nature of space reflects what it wants to be

Louis I. Kahn
THE DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY PLANS
STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GARDEN AND THE BUILDING

Sensible knowledge of this world, that is, the world of becoming, is a symbol of the intelligible knowledge of that world. The physical world is the symbol and image of the spiritual world.

Afḍal al-Dīn al-Kashānī, Musannafat (fourteenth century)
STAIRWELLS THAT CONNECT THE STACK LEVELS
Beauty is an all prevailing sense of harmony,
Giving rise to wonder, and from it, revelations.
It is in the beginning. In first thought, in the first sense
Of the means of expression.
A poet is in thought of beauty and existence.
Yet a poem is only an offering which to the poet is less.
A work of architecture is but an offering to the spirit Architecture
And its poetic beginning.
Louis I. Kahn
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EXTERIOR WALL WITH THE RELATIONSHIP TO RECESSED CARRELS
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