

Threshold to the Sacred

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Sacred . Mosque . Narrative . Water . Worship

Abstract

In designing a sacred space, the work should be a product not only of the mechanics of the mind but also a response of the heart, and therefore the spirit or soul that an architect must possess. For the soul is the harmony between the two. This is what gets infused into the work, the subjectivity of which gives it its reality. The work too can then become animate with soul. Mircea Eliade believed that through symbols, the world becomes transparent and transcendence becomes visible. The religious man therefore relies on symbols to recognize sacred reality. “Divine work always preserves its quality of transparency, that is it spontaneously reveals the many aspects of the sacred,” which is why the very existence of the cosmic system and everything within presents itself as a proof of divine presence.¹ For the construction of a sanctuary, the goal is to be able to perceive what is sacred in the mundane, and then bringing it forth, extracting it, distinguishing it to be experienced by the inhabitant. Sacred architecture is what identifies and then exposes these *hierophanies*.

The site is located on the intersection of Pennsylvania Ave NW and 26th ST NW in Washington DC. For the design development, the story of the first revelation of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, is used as a narrative through the project. His search for meaning and retreat into nature, teaches of Islamic monasticism, the path that leads completely inward to a place with no one but God.

“Every road will lead you to this sense of initiation – the light, the secret, are hidden in the place from which you set out. You are on your way not toward the end of the road but toward its beginning; to go is to return; to find is to rediscover.”²

Acknowledgements

This project is something that I have lived with since before I even pursued the field of Architecture. It has been an invaluable experience for me, has strengthened my faith and has given me a better understanding of my own self. It is truly a privilege to have had the opportunity to work on this for an entire year with such an exceptional faculty, staff and student body. I want to express my deep gratitude to my committee for their sincere involvement and support throughout my time here at the WAAC. I want to thank Professor Paul Emmons for being an endless source of knowledge, wisdom and inspiration for me. I have always left your lectures in awe, motivated to be a better architect and student. Your guidance and encouragement means everything. Thank you, Professor Marcia Feuerstein, for giving direction to the randomness of my work. The thoughts you proposed and resources that you provided have been the backbone of my project, and your constant reassurance and kindness is what keeps me going. Thank you, Professor Melinda Becker, for your clarity and willingness to offer a fresh perspective anytime the project came to a standstill.

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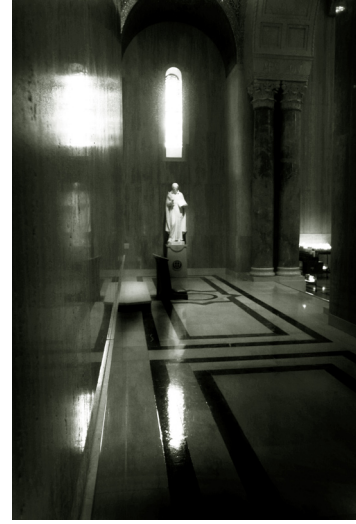
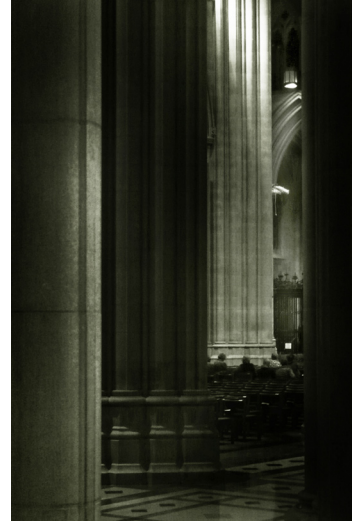


Figure 1 *left.* National Cathedral, Washington DC

Figure 2 *middle.* National Cathedral, Washington DC

Figure 3 *right.* Basilica of the National Shrine, Washington DC

“When the sacred manifests itself in any hierophany, there is not only a break in the homogeneity of space; there is also a revelation of an absolute reality, opposed to the nonreality of the vast surrounding expanse.”³

- Mircea Eliade

Section I Research

The American Mosque

The Mosque and the Sacred

The Site: A Threshold

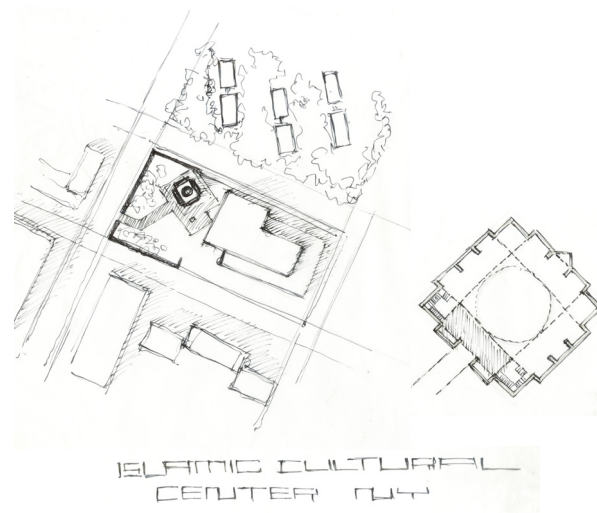
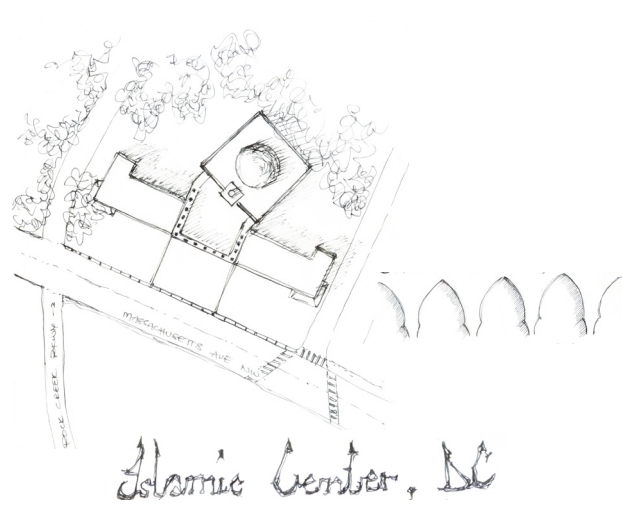


Figure 4 left. Sketches of Islamic Cultural Center in New York. Shows the relation of the city axis to that of Mecca. Besides the mihrab, the niche for the Imam, and the entrance opposite to it, there is no distinction in the walls or fenestration on all four sides.

Figure 5 middle. Sketches of Islamic Cultural Center in DC. Floor plan showing the tilt in axis towards Mecca. The plan is a traditional Mamluk design, with Ottoman decorative tiling and Andalusian arches shown in the sketch. The result is a mix of culturally influenced designs.

Figure 6 right. Sketches of Islamic Center of Northern Virginia showing the prayer space separated from the educational facility. The dome, colonnade and balconies are inspired by traditional Pakistani architecture.



The American Mosque

There are currently around 2000 mosques in the United States. Within the last 20 years, almost 1000 of these mosques have been surveyed and fewer than 100, less than 10%, were found to be designed as mosques. Most of the buildings were constructed for other purposes and were being used as prayer halls, community centers, recreation rooms, classrooms, funeral homes etc. From the 10%, the older mosques weren't designed by architects. Only mosques built in the last few decades, when "Islam has begun to feel at home in the United States" are designed by architects as mosques. From these mosques, are derived these three design categories.⁴



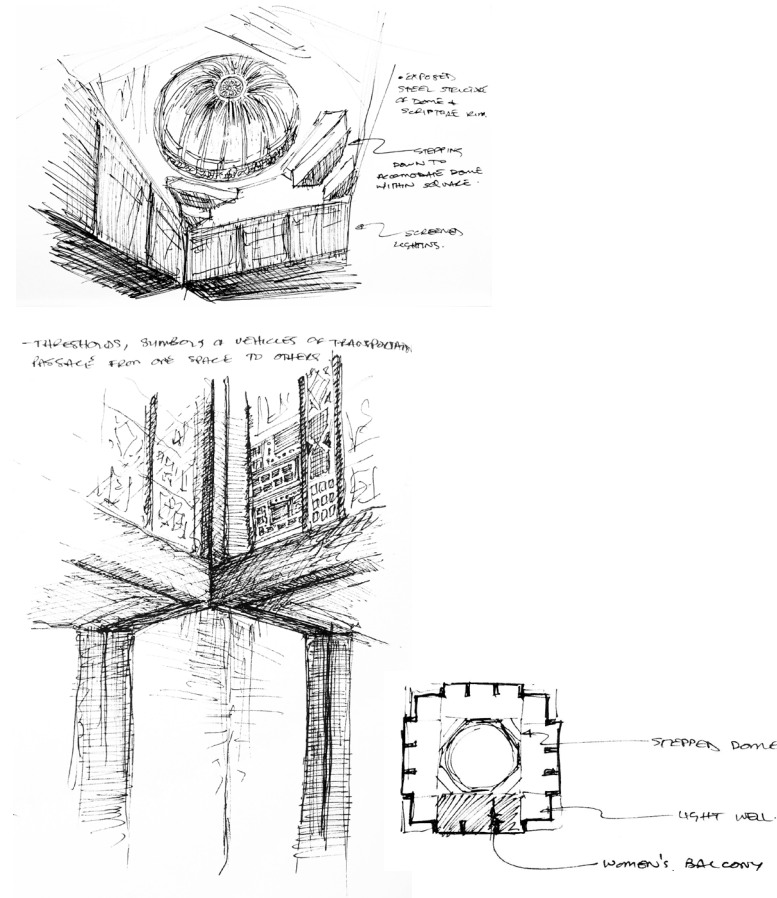
Imported Design

These are mosques that are inspired by traditional Islamic Architecture. They contain an element of nostalgia and familiarity and attract communities that can feel connected to their home through these spaces.



Figure 7 left. Islamic Center of Northern Virginia (1981)

Figure 8 right. Islamic Cultural Center in Washington DC (1957)



Adapted Design

These mosques represent a reinterpretation of traditional Islamic architecture. These are designed by mostly non-Muslim architects with the consultation of prominent members of the Muslim community. These buildings are usually a compromise between an Islamic stylistic mosque and a modernist building.

Figure 9 left. Islamic Cultural Center in New York (1991). The ring of lights suspended from the dome are a modern reflection of the chandeliers of Istanbul.
 Figure 10 top. Sketches of Islamic Cultural Center showing perspective of dome and light well. The plan shows a shaded balcony for women.



Innovative Design:

These buildings represent a conscious separation from the traditional Islamic style and have been reinterpreted through a modern lens. American Muslims should feel a sense of belonging to their time and place. For those that migrated to America, a mosque should be a source of connection to Muslims from around the world, creating a universality and unity which is the fundamental principle of prayer itself. For non-Muslims, it should be an open space that is inviting and identifiable. A mosque should fulfill the Islamic requirements without being hindered by cultural, historic or ethnic tastes but without losing its identity as a sacred place for all to submit to God.

Figure 11. Islamic Cultural Center in New York (1991).

The Mosque and the Sacred



The mosque in its literal sense is a place for prostration to God. The function of a mosque from the time of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) however goes beyond that of a place for communal prayer. It was a public place for gathering as well as the most transparent and visible symbol of Islam. It was not just a house of worship but also a house of learning. It was the center of all activities of the Muslim community. Today, Muslims around the world struggle to balance their faith with the diversity of their geography, politics and culture. Their mosque should provide them with a space where the main pillar of Islamic practice, prayer, is established five times a day. But it should also be a place for contemplation and congregation as well as an initiation to public coexistence and dialogue with the non-Muslim world. Today in the west, it is critical how Muslim communities construct their current identity. Their mosque mustn't solely be an Islamic building, but a physical representation of the Islamic ideology. In order to define its identity as a mosque however, certain design elements that are symbolic to Islamic architecture, such as minarets, domes, geometry etc. need to be revisited.

Figure 12. Suleymaniye Mosque, Istanbul, Turkey (1558).



Figure 13 *top*. Cordoba Cathedral, former Great Mosque of Cordoba, Spain.
Figure 14 *bottom*. City skyline from the Bosphorus, Istanbul, Turkey.



Figure 15. The Sultan Ahmet mosque or the Blue Mosque, Istanbul, Turkey (1616)

“In the evening suspends a luminous ceiling over the heads of the faithful; within the encircling band of windows now dimmed, never-ending wires climb toward the top of the dome and disappear in the obscurity of that immense space.”⁵
 - Le Corbusier

As an architect what I have derived from the dichotomy of the sacred and the profane, and the distinction of a hierophany from the homogeneity of its surrounding space, is that the sacred is not something that can be injected into a space at will. The entire cosmos is interlaced with layers upon layers of hierophanies. It is only a matter of being able to ‘see’ through the heart and the mind, in recognizing God through His manifestation into our mundane world, and being able to interpret what it is that makes the sacred distinct. Only then can we design spaces that can be infused with the honesty of our understanding and acknowledgment of the divine presence. They can speak with the soul of the architect, the force that can bring the distinct forth from the mundane. Leon Battista Alberti argued that the temple should be the most beautifully ornamented building in the city and its beauty should surpass imagination. It is this beauty that arouses sublime emotion among men and inspires piety.⁶

The sacredness of the mosque lies not in the walls of the mosque or the niches or the fountains. It is the sensory emotion that the spaces trigger that is the transcendent experience. The hierophanies that are hidden from view are brought forth through the beauty and poetics of the space and in this recognition of the manifestation of God can our journey to Him be complete.



Figure 16 left. Palace of Alhambra, Granada, Spain.



Figure 17 middle. The new cathedral addition to the Great Mosque of Cordoba, Spain.

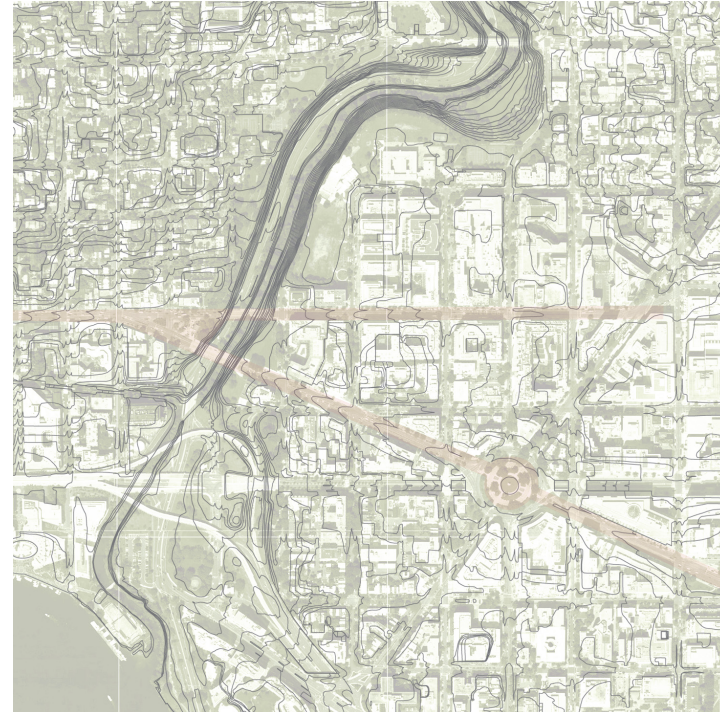


Figure 18 right. Ruins of mosque in Cordoba Cathedral, Spain.

The Site: A Threshold

Pennsylvania Ave NW and 26th Street

For Muslims in the west, it is imperative to demonstrate that we can respond to the challenges of modernity and the pluralism of the western world without compromising our religious identity. The mosque too should redefine Islamic vernacular architecture through its manifestation within a secular, contemporary and urban context while maintaining the articulation of its identity. While the integration of the mosque into the fabric of its urban environment is essential, it is important to keep in mind that religious diversity is a trademark of the American ideology and should be a fundamental element of the urban fabric. The mosque needs to provide visual continuity within its setting and reduce any barriers to the non-Muslim world. This site offers a transition between the public and the private as well as the city and the park. With architecture, it can also provide a dialogue between the Muslim and the non-Muslim world as well as a threshold from the human realm to that of the spiritual.



Source: "Alexandria, Virginia." Map. Google Maps. Google, 24 May 2012.

Figure 19. Map showing site, primary axes and the Rock Creek River.



Figure 20 top left. View of the park from the south east corner. Intersection of Pennsylvania Ave and 26th ST NW.
 Figure 21 top right. Pennsylvania Ave, facing north west.
 Figure 22 bottom left. M St NW, facing west.
 Figure 23 bottom right. Pennsylvania Ave, facing southeast.

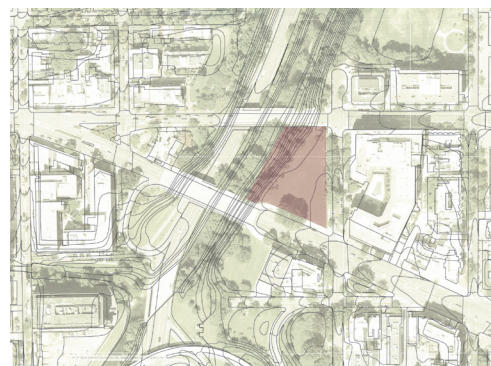
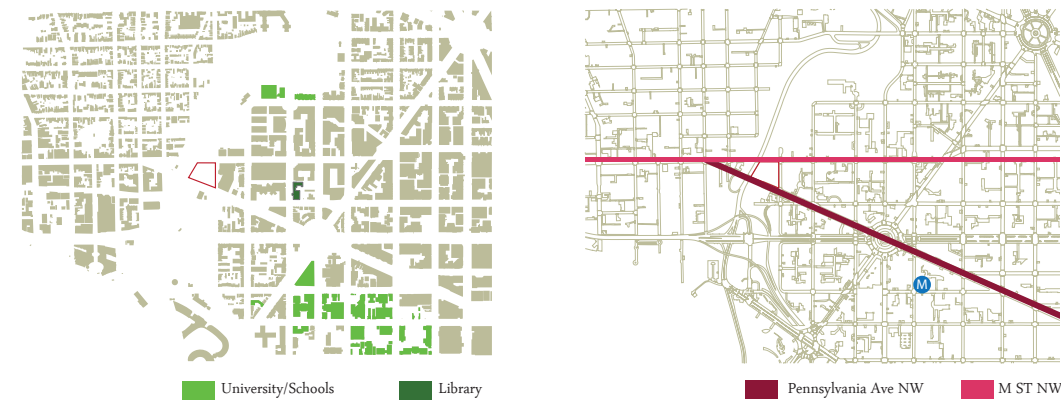


Figure 24. Site studies showing distribution of landuse and proximity to universities and commercial district, compared with the privacy of the residential area.

The site is located on the outskirts of Georgetown, in the heart of the commercial district of Washington DC, yet separated by a wall of trees from the Rock Creek Park. The north and south conditions are very public and commercial with a heavy pedestrian traffic. In contrast, the east and west are very private with residences on the east side and a barrier of trees on the west.



Figure 25. Site studies showing axes, relationship between the city and the park, boundary conditions and solar and wind analysis.

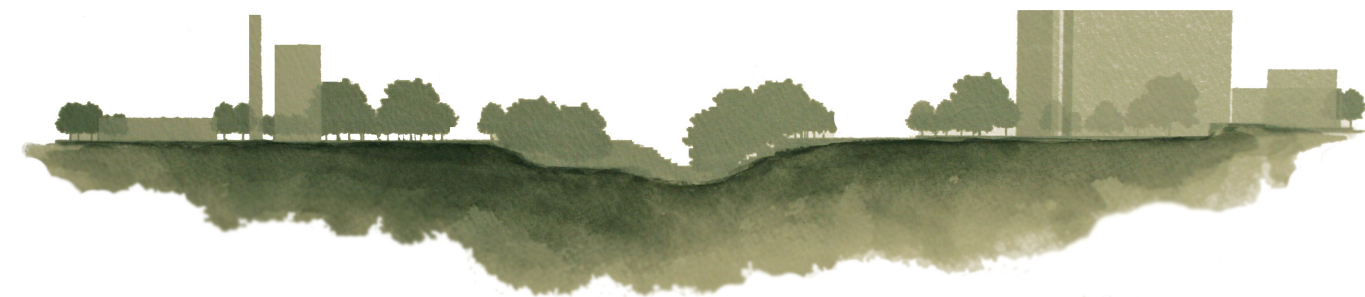


Figure 25. Section east-west showing the slope of the river valley.



"In the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of night and day; in the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of humankind; in the rain that God sends down from the skies, and the life which He then gives to the earth after it had been lifeless; in the beasts of all kind that He scatters through the earth; in the change of the winds, and the clouds that run their appointed courses between the sky and the earth; [here] indeed are signs for people who are wise."⁷

Figure 27 *left*. Palace of Alhambra, Granada, Spain.

Section II Narrative

Revelation

The Beginning

Water: A Hierophany

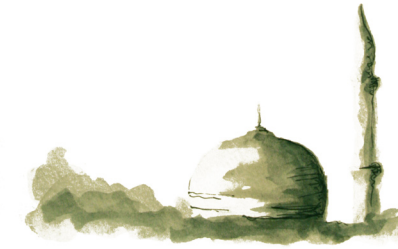
Call to Prayer: The Return

The Niche

The Partition

The Library: Extension of the Walls

Materials and Construction



Revelation

Longing for the truth, Prophet Muhammed, peace be upon him, often travelled to the cave of Hira, outside the city of Mecca, and meditated for weeks in complete solitude. It was there that the angel Gabriel appeared to him with a message from Allah. “Read,” was first word revealed to Muhammad. “I am not of those who read,” he replied. The angel held him tightly and repeated, “read!” “I am not of those who read!” The angel tightened his grasp till Muhammad could barely breathe and recited: “Read in the name of your Lord, Who created humankind out of a clinging clot. Read, and your Lord is most bountiful, He who taught you by means of the pen, taught humankind that which they did not know.”⁸

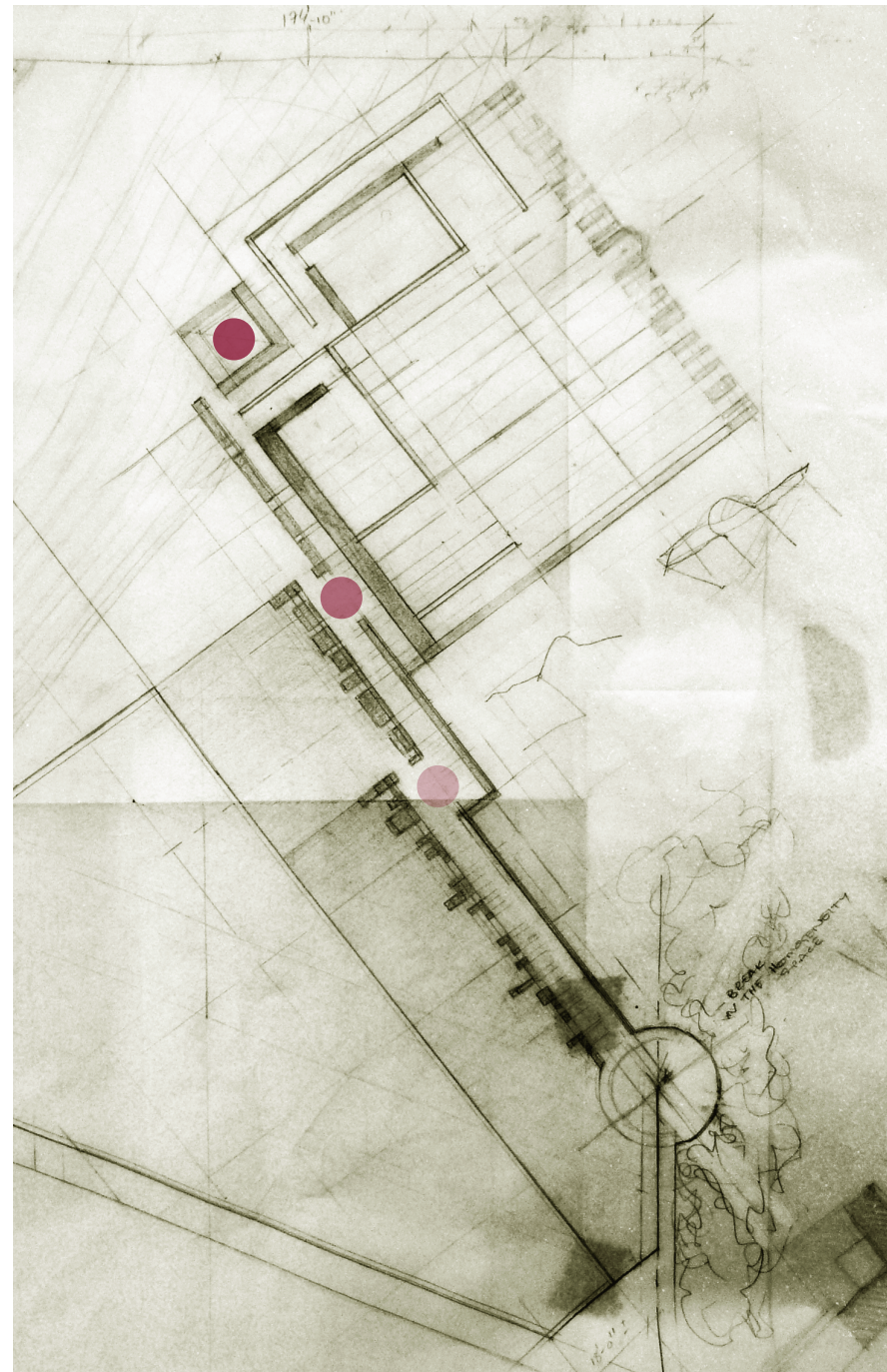
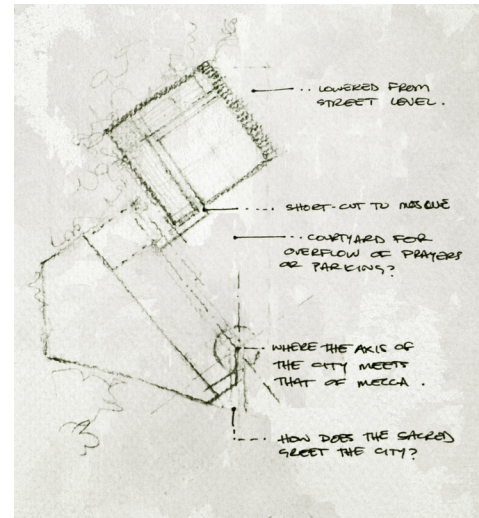


Figure 28 left. Early entrance study. The three paths lead to the ablation facility, which was the level below the prayer space. In this version, the paths get wider as one progresses through them.

Figure 29 top left. Early space layout. The circle is the critical point where the axis of the city meets the axis to Mecca.

Figure 30 top right. Primary entrance into the mosque. The highlighted steps lead down into the circle.



The Beginning

The walk begins with a circle which brings people in from all directions and orients them towards the project axes. The primary axis points towards Mecca, and perpendicular to it, the secondary points towards the park. Three paths lead towards the secluded extremes of the site, descending in elevation towards the river. The first path begins at the circle and is open to the elements, allowing weaving to and from the axis to suggest a quality of meandering. Through a narrow opening on the right begins the second path, wider but covered and darker. The path steps down into courtyards visible through a partial wall on the left, less penetrable. To its right, through a low, narrower door, the third path is larger yet, but without any openings, completely enclosed, is impermeable to light. Beyond another single door follows the ablation facility.

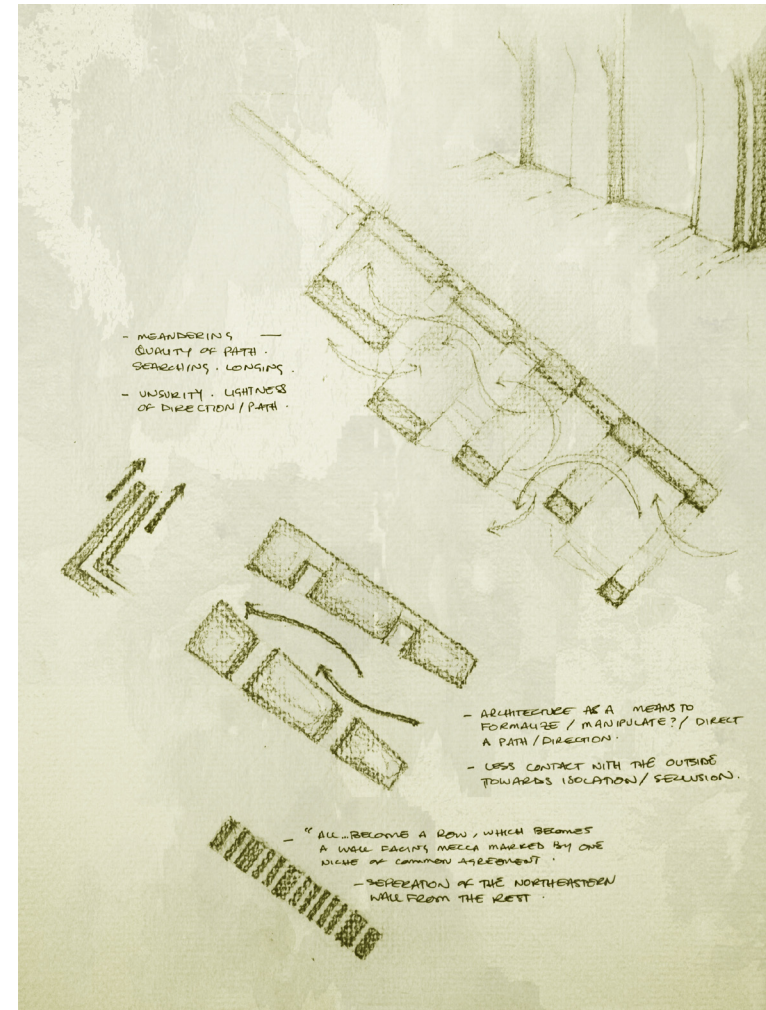
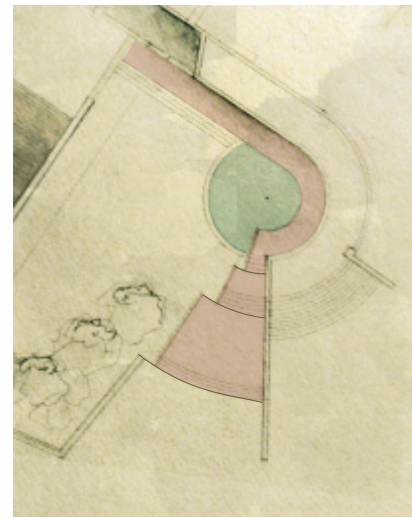
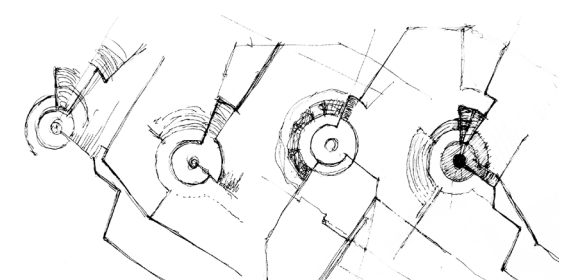
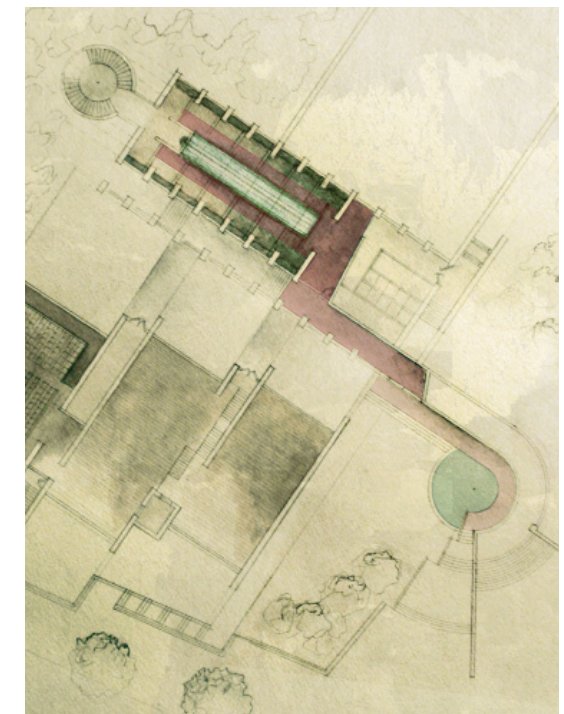


Figure 31 top left. Preliminary study of movement through passage with varying permeability and wall thickness.

Figure 32 top right. Path from the entrance to the ablation facility.

Figure 33 bottom right. Early sketches of circular entrance.



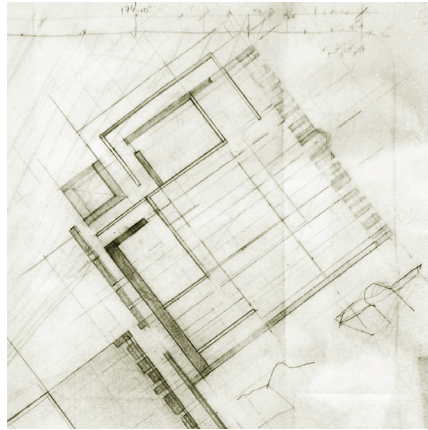


Figure 34 *left*. Early development of ablation facility. Square minaret uniting two rectangular spaces.

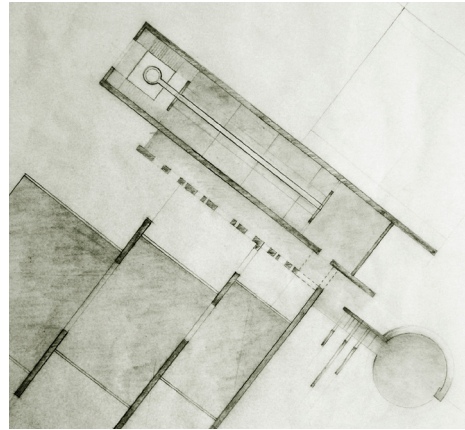


Figure 35 *middle*. Ablution facility incorporated into the three passages. Movement always continues forward.

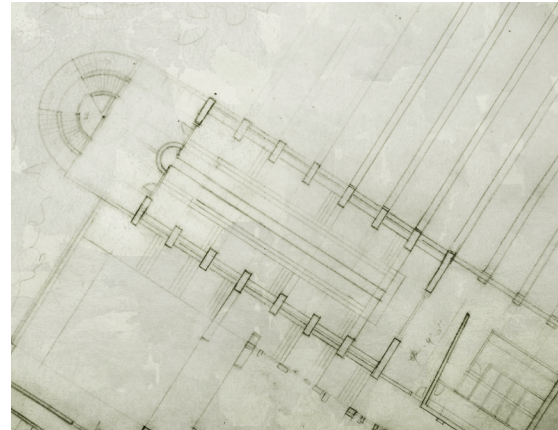


Figure 36 *right*. Circular minaret with spiral stairs rising to the prayer space.

Water: A Hierophany

Through the opening descends an iron partition, hovering a few inches above the surface of the water contained within a fountain below. The light pours into the fountain and through the angled openings of the partition it enters our space as well as the unknown space beyond the screen. The water from the fountain falls into a basin in a rhythmic hymn. The same hymn echoes from beyond the partition and there is a silent conversation between the two veiled worlds. There is an understanding of symmetry in the geometry of these spaces, an unspoken trust in the connection of the two worlds, and a faith in their balance. The water, no longer an element for the mere cleansing of a physical body, is here sanctified. It is a hierophany. It is the manifestation of God, in the world of the profane. At the touch of the water there is dissolution, dematerialization and regeneration. The systematic process of cleansing is no longer monotonous, but rhythmic; the repetition in motion no longer robotic, but a dance.

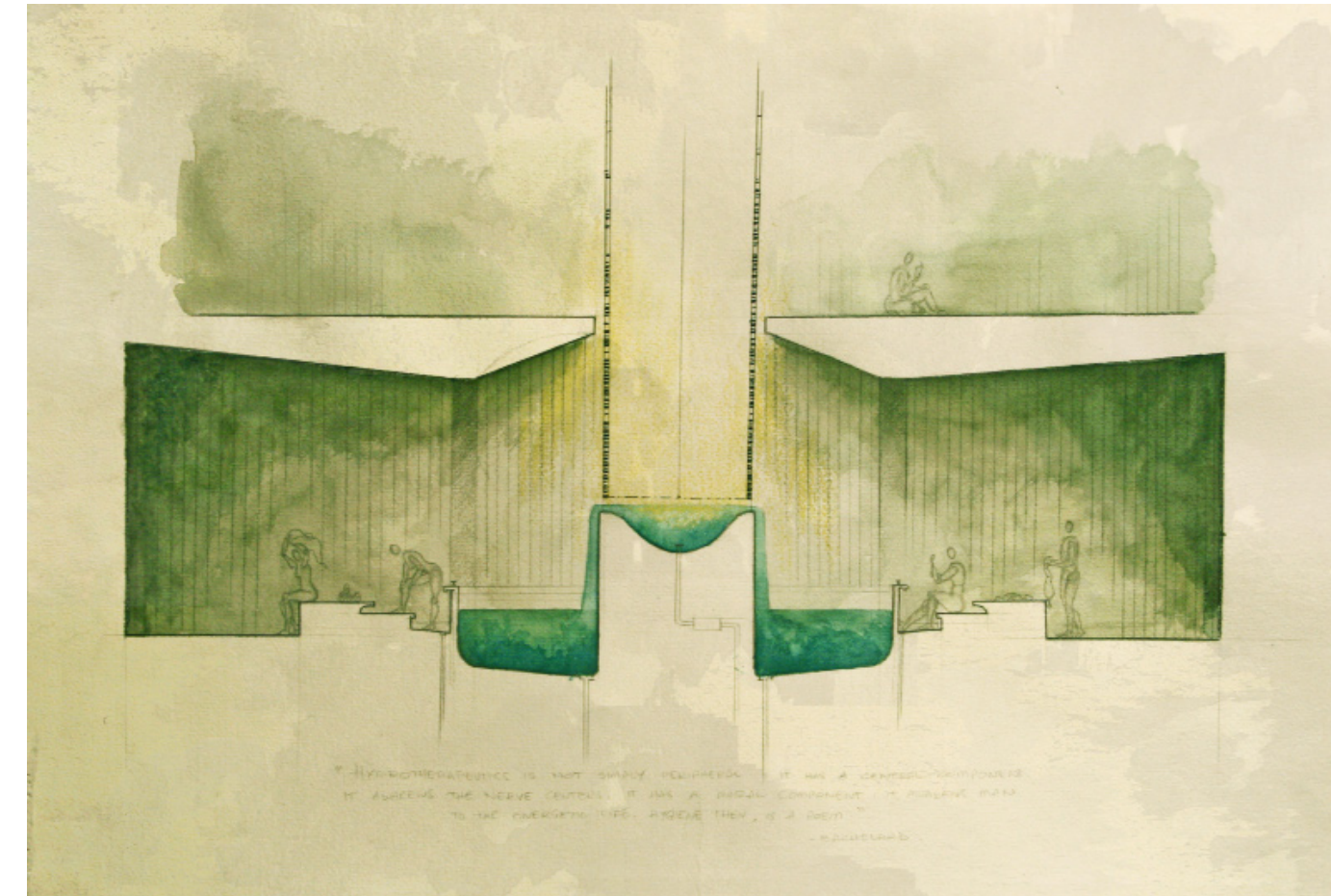


Figure 37. Early section through ablation facility. The partition divides male and female; the light, water and air is shared by the two spaces.

“Hydrotherapeutics is not simply peripheral. It has a central component. It awakens the nerve centers. It has a moral component. It awakens man to the energetic life. Hygiene then, is a poem.”⁹

-Gaston Bachelard

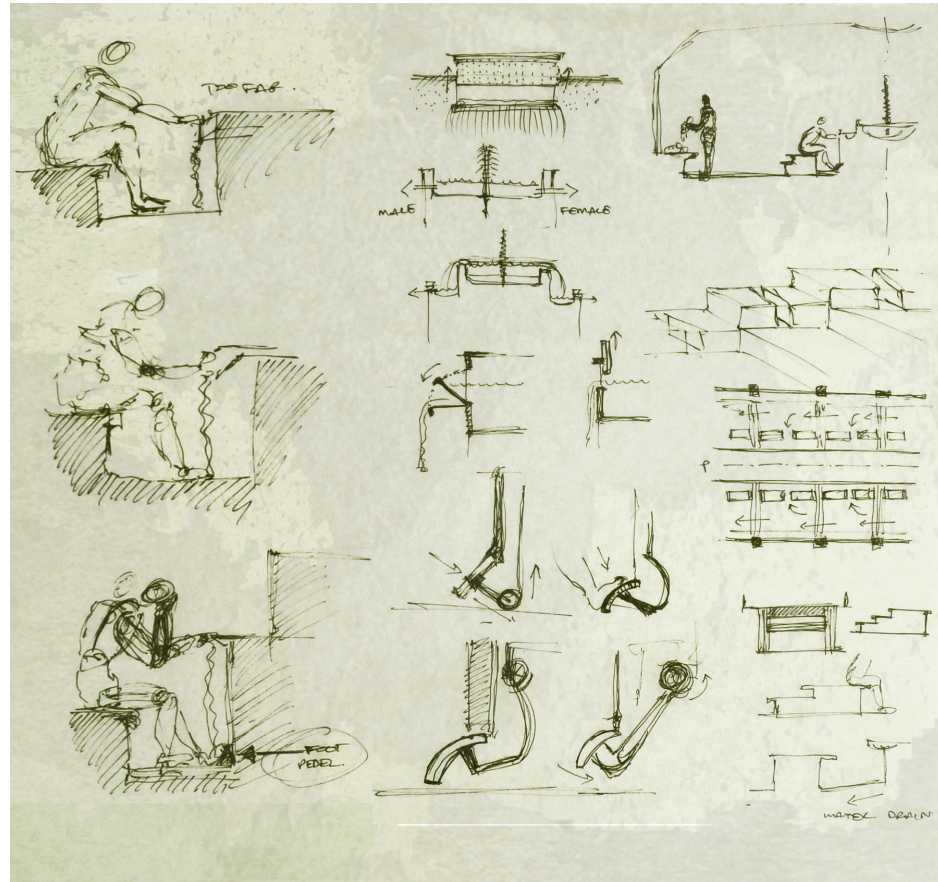


Figure 38 *left*. Studies of the ablation unit. Each unit is designed with a foot pedal that allows water, from the central fountain, to pour down through a narrow horizontal opening.

Figure 39 *right*. Space and posture studies. Each unit must accommodate the washing of the face, arms and feet.

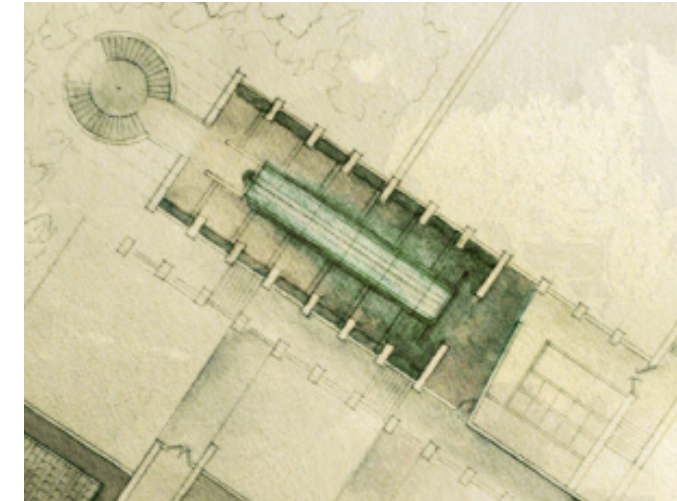
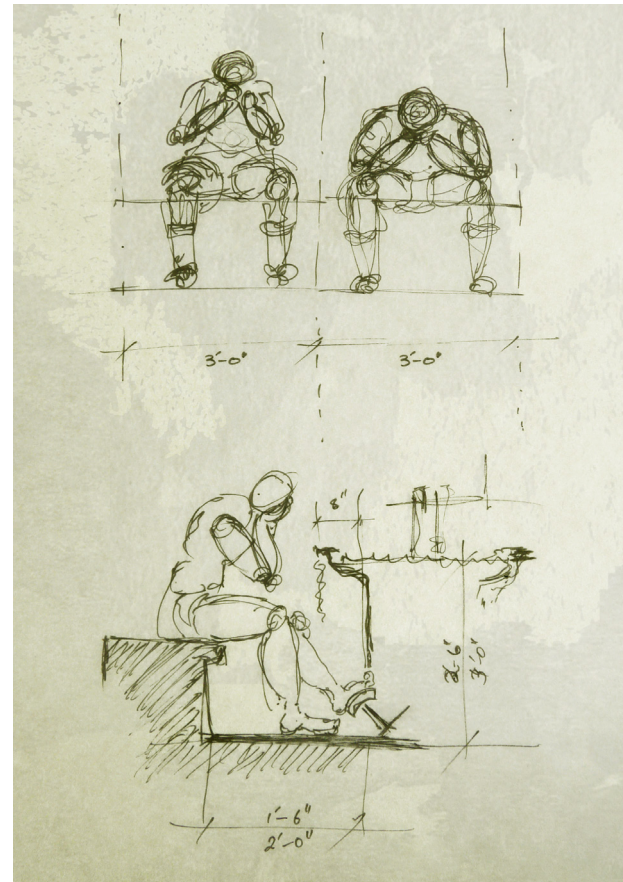


Figure 40 *left*. Plan of ablation facility. At each wall, the floor descends a few steps before the rise up to the prayer space.

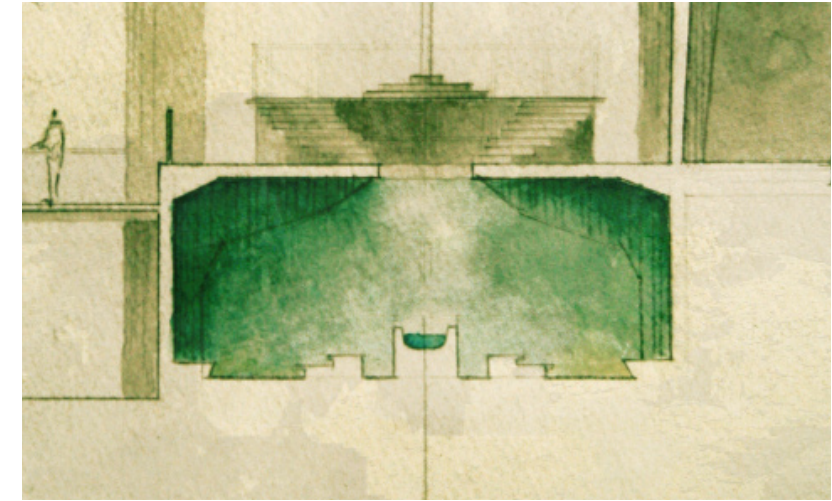


Figure 41 *right*. Section through ablation facility. Symmetry allows each of the two spaces to be treated as balanced parts of one whole.

Water is the element most easily accepted as a symbol of purity and virtue. This is why it is valorized in most religious cosmologies as more than just a tool for physical cleansing, but also a source of spiritual revitalization. Gaston Bachelard, in “Water and Dreams” says “however powerful purification rites be, they usually seek a matter capable of symbolizing them.”¹⁰

In Islamic tradition, the act of ablation, or wudhu, is required not just for physical purification but is understood to be the means to a centralized mind. It is believed that the concentration of thought can be achieved through the cooling of certain nerve-ends, the centers of the five senses, the hands and feet, nose, mouth, eyes and ears.

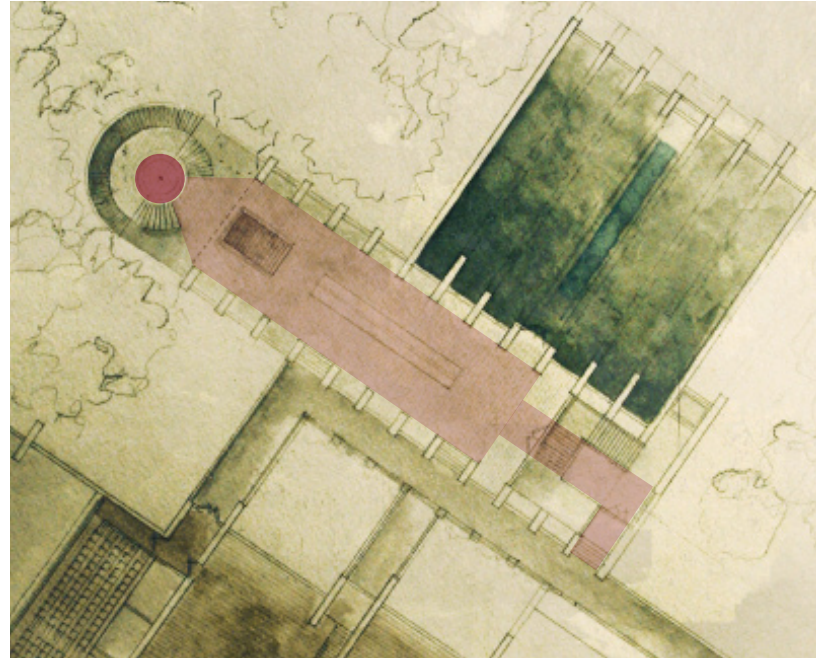
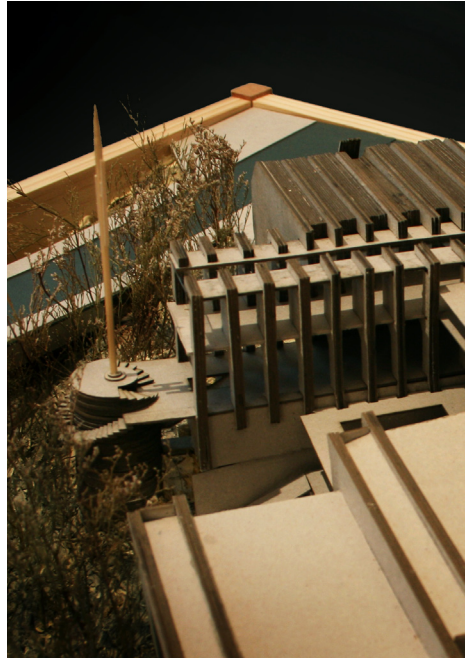


Figure 42 left. Model of the minaret.
Figure 43 right. Plan showing the minaret stairs leading up to the promenade level.

Call to Prayer: The Return

The minaret was not a part of the seminal mosques of the Prophet. The call to prayer, or *azan*, was given by Bilal, a freed African slave and a companion of the Prophet, from city walls or high rooftops of houses or mosques. The minaret was first introduced during the Umayyad dynasty in Syria, where Muslims came into contact with church towers which they used for call to prayer. This idea was spread throughout the Muslim world and has since become a characteristic form of Islamic architecture.¹¹ The scale of the modern city with its noise pollution and regulations does not allow for any calls to prayer to be made without relying on amplification. In the western world the call is made within the space of the mosque. Therefore in North American contemporary mosque design, the minaret is normally eliminated from the mosque. However, the minaret can serve as more than just an auditory means to call the faithful to prayer.

Early Muslims had a number of different terms they used to refer to the tower for *azan*, like *sawma'a* in North Africa and Spain, *midhana* or *satuma'a*, each describing their function or form. The most common however was the word *manarah*, which refers neither to the tower's form nor function. The word *manarah*, from which the English word minaret is derived, is 'a place or object that gives light.' *Menorah* in Hebrew means 'light-bearer.' *Manar* is specifically a marker or sign. It is believed by some scholars that the manara would also function as a lighthouse to guide travelers.¹² But most importantly the minaret has become a distinctive mark or symbol of Islamic architecture. Architects are reluctant to use the minaret in modern mosque design and dispose of one of the primary visual markers for all sacred spaces of spiritual transcendence. Here the minaret is used as a light tower that creates a vertical connection, a portal through which God can reach down to man, and man can ascend to the heavens.

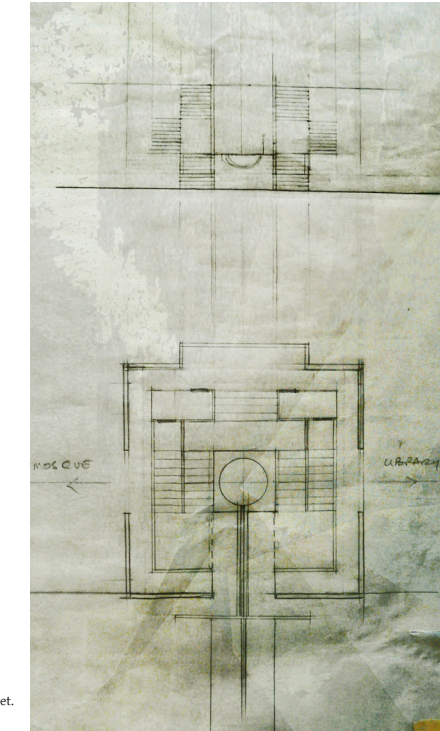
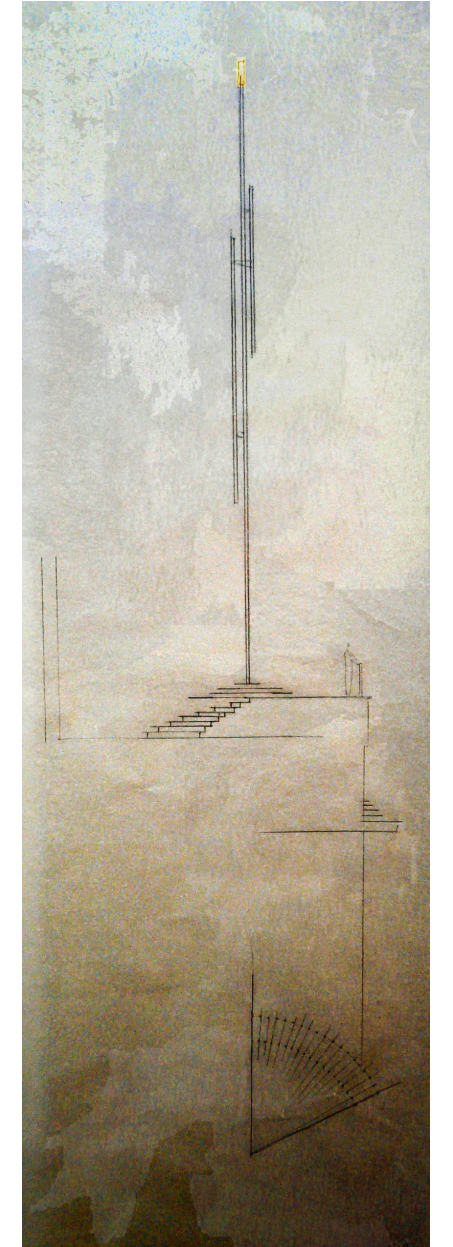
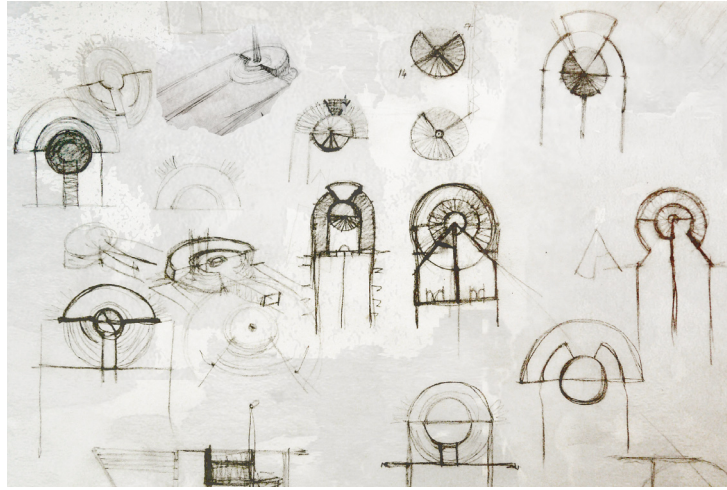


Figure 44 left. Early plan and section of a square based minaret.
Figure 45 right. Development of the minaret as a light-tower.





With the ablution completed, the body and the spirit revitalized, and the mind centered for prayer, begins the rise up to the minaret. There is a circular staircase within the base of the minaret, covered and enclosed. Through a door on the west lies the wooded park, the farthest extreme into the depths of the site, and a circular staircase, uncovered and open to the elements. Another door to the east leads to an enclosed staircase that cuts into the covered portion of the promenade.

The promenade leads to the prayer space. At the minaret begins the return towards the beginning. One of the fundamental principals of Sufism, or Islamic mysticism, is the journey for truth, the search for knowledge and the inevitable return to one's origins. The Ka'aba or the 'House of God,' is the center to which all Muslims face for prayer. The orientation to Mecca signifies an axis mundi for the Muslim world. It is a connection to the truth for when distractions draw the faithful outward. The path that leads us back to the source is what Muslims experience daily in the form of prayer. With the call to prayer, one is reminded of this journey back to the beginning.

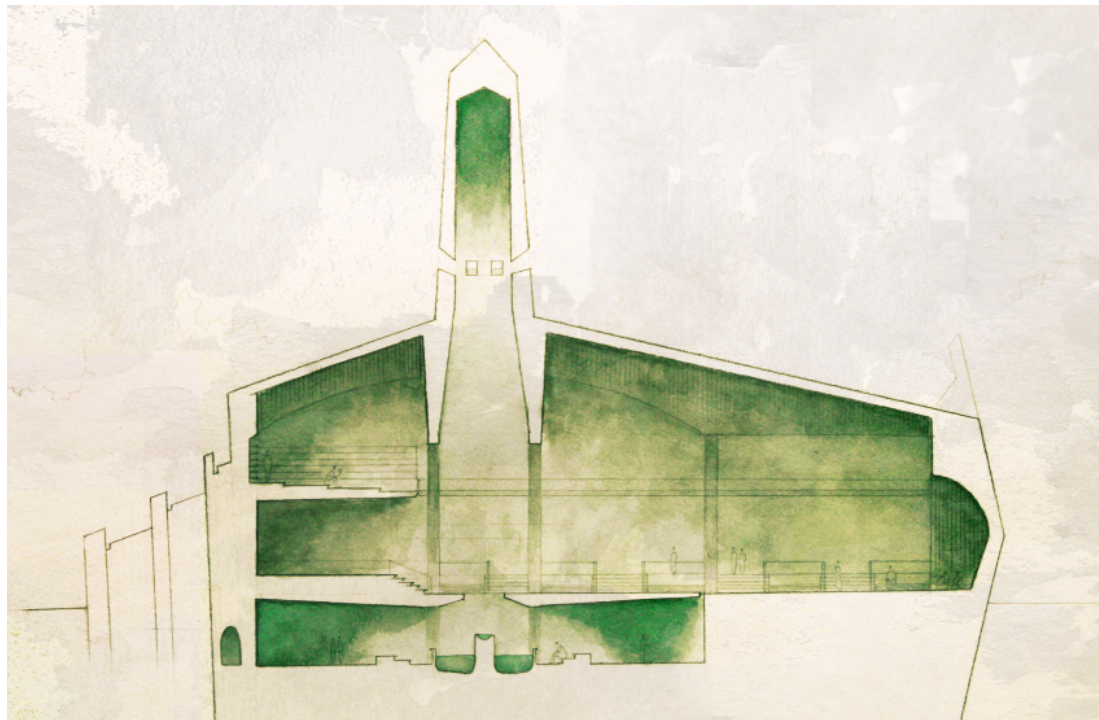


Figure 46 top. Development of the minaret

Figure 47 bottom. Early section of the minaret through the prayer space. A flood of light is brought in through the minaret into the prayer space and the ablution facility below.

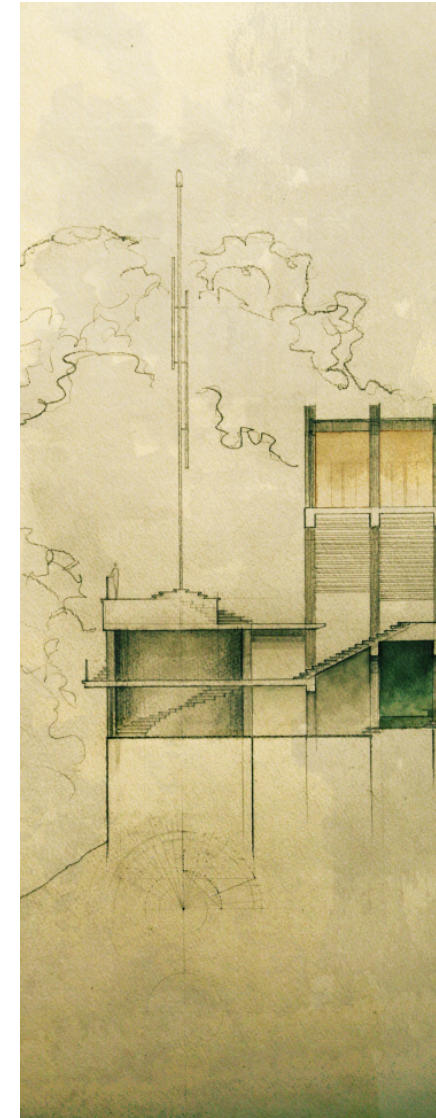


Figure 48 left. Section through minaret showing the primary, open, circular staircase rising from the ablution facility up to the minaret. A secondary staircase to its right brings people into the covered promenade.

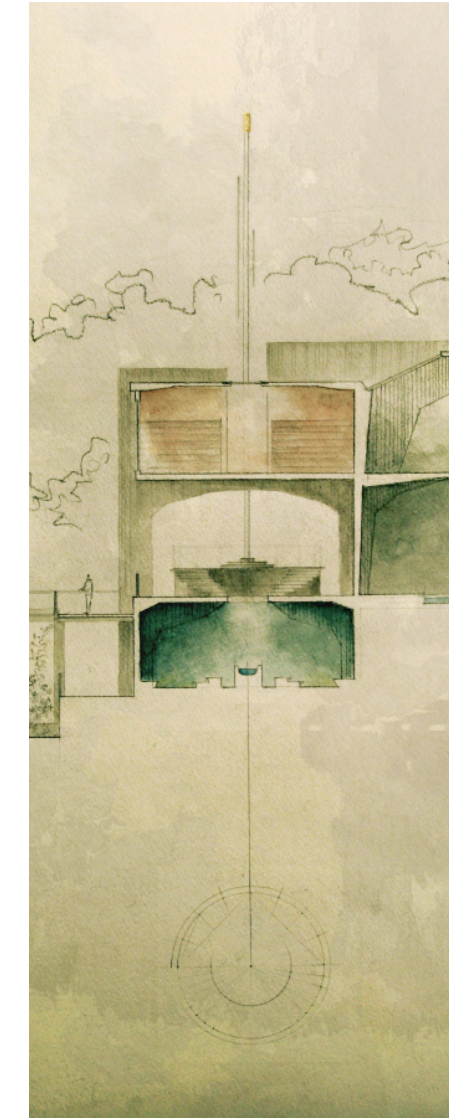


Figure 49 middle. Section through ablution facility, promenade level and library above.

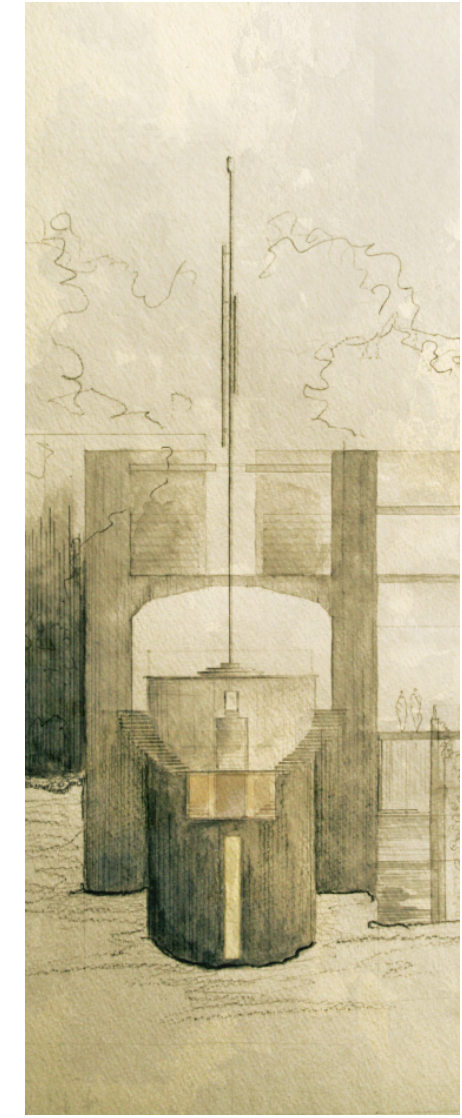


Figure 50 right. South elevation showing the open circular staircase going up from the ablution facility. The window below suggests a spiral staircase down from the ablution facility to provide a closer access to the river. This idea was not developed as part of the final design proposal.

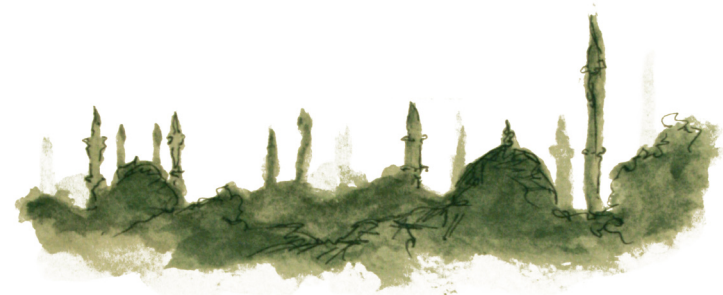


Figure 51. Skyline of Istanbul from the Bosphorus.

“The black austerity of their rigid and long-suffering silhouettes; their grooved trunks reveal how venerable they are. I would like to say something about the Turkish soul, but I will not succeed! There is here an unbounded serenity. We call it fatalism to disparage it: we should call it “faith.” A faith that I would describe as pink – or rather pink and blue, blue because the horizontal of the sea is blue and because the sky is blue. Here one never sees where the one ends and the other begins. As such, it is a boundless, radiant faith.”¹³

-Le Corbusier

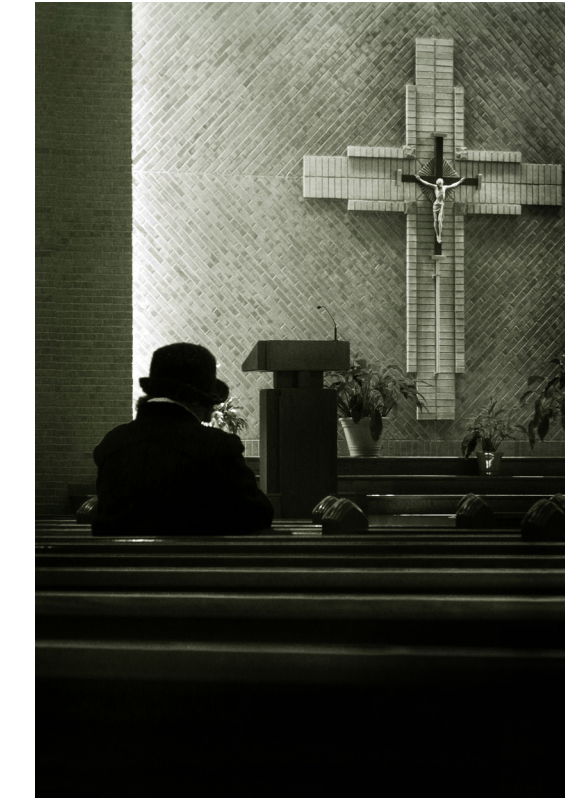


Figure 52 left. A place for congregation as well as private meditation. Christ the Redeemer Roman Catholic Church, Sterling, VA.



Figure 53 middle. Christ the Redeemer Roman Catholic Church, Sterling, VA

Figure 54 right. Christ the Redeemer Roman Catholic Church, Sterling, VA



The Niche

The story of the revelation teaches of the struggle in searching and longing for the truth and ultimately the finding of oneself. Our desire for solitude and seclusion as a means to reach the truth says something about the nature of man. The Prophet retreated into the natural world, the world unknown to him, as a physical separation of the self from the surroundings, the familiar. Upon receiving prophethood he returned to his people with the message of God, the truth in the balance of solitude with congregation. This is the essence of the mosque and in fact prayer itself. The five formal prayers are silent and personal, but preferably performed in a congregation, as a unified act, towards a single source, led by one imam, at the front and center. Other forms of prayer include *taqarub*, nearness, or *dhikr*, remembrance of God through meditation, contemplation, and studying of the text.¹⁴ The prayer space offers itself to the public as a place for gathering and communal prayer, where one surrenders the *self*. The niche is its counterbalance, the cave into which one can retreat for solitude with only the *self* and God.

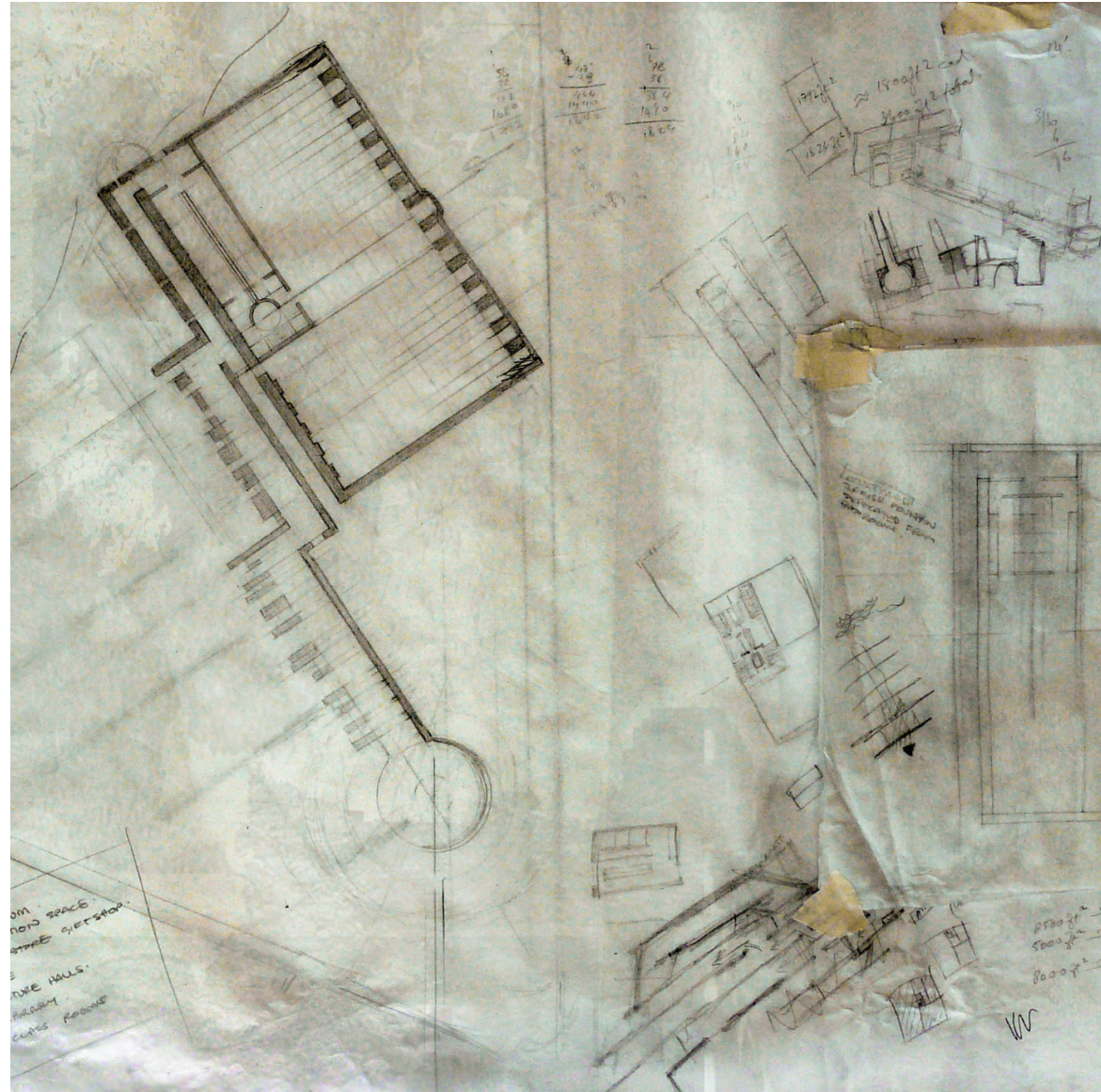


Figure 55. Early plan of prayer space. The rectangle was later changed to the perfect and sacred form of a square. The ablution facility was originally designed within the walls of the prayer space, but a level below.

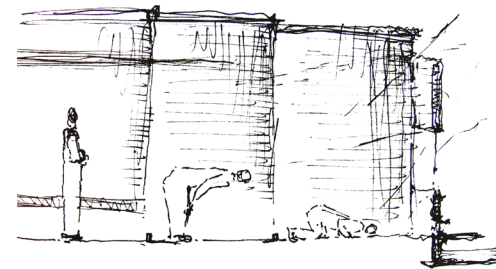
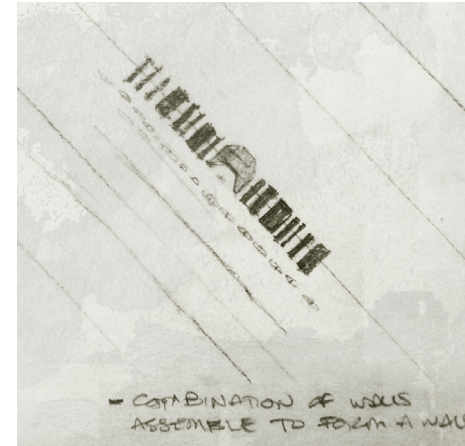
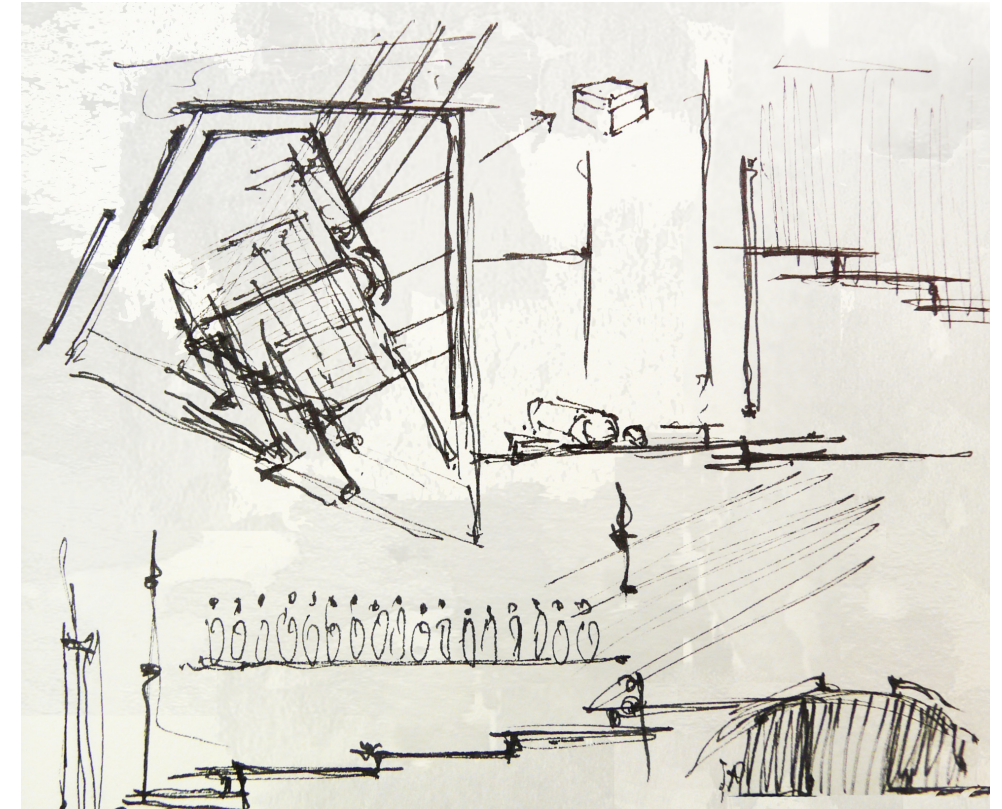


Figure 56 top left. Early study of northeast wall.
 Figure 57 bottom left. Space study in positions of sitting, standing and prostration during prayer.
 Figure 58 right. Early studies of northeast wall.





“But if we “listen” to the design of things, we encounter an angle, a trap detains the dreamer:
Mais il y a des angles d’ou l’on ne peut plus sortir.
(But there are angles from which one cannot escape.)”¹⁵
- Gaston Bachelard

Figure 59. National Cathedral, Washington DC.

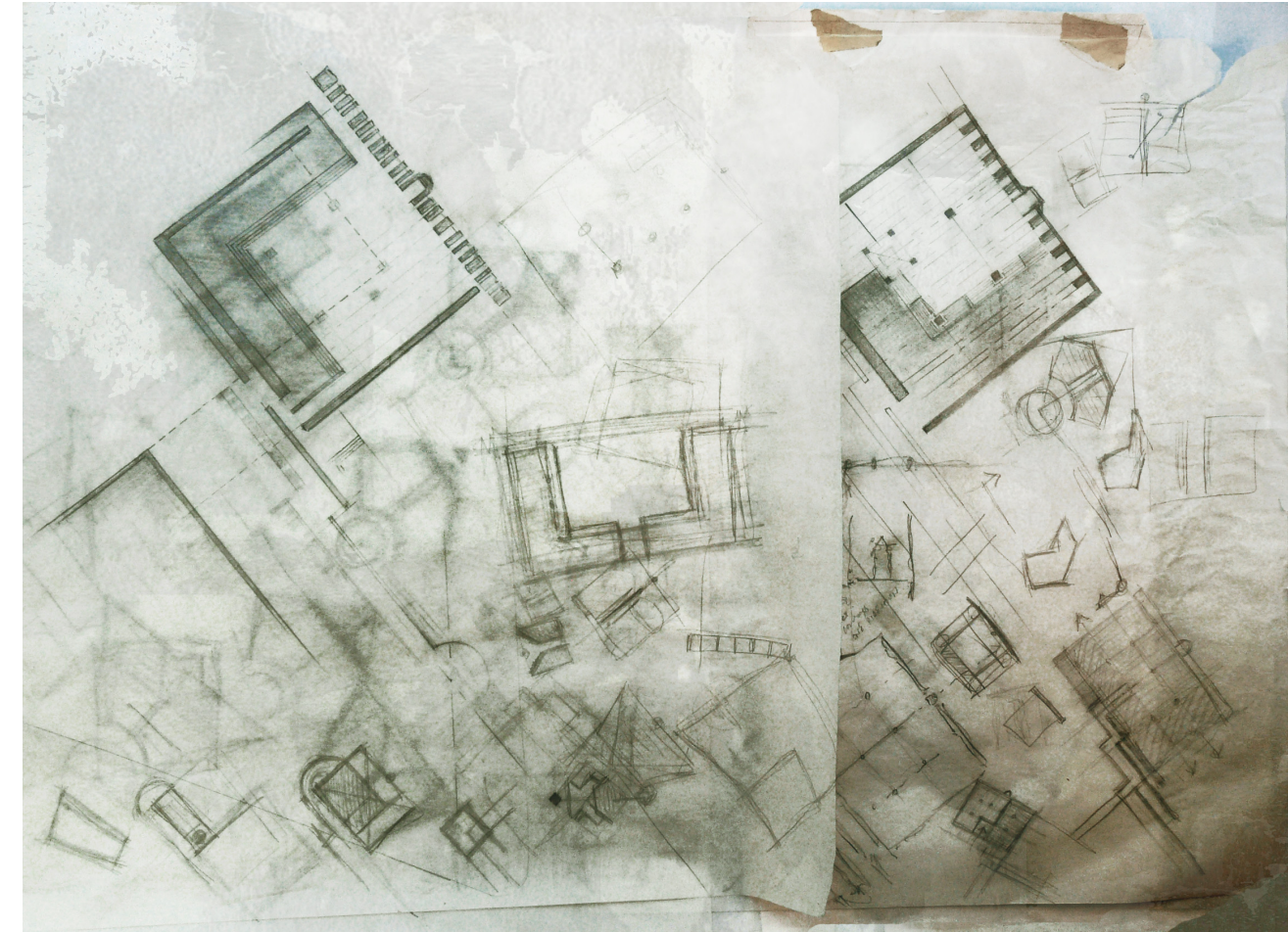


Figure 60. Preliminary design of prayer space. Shows the development of the northeast wall as a series of walls facing Mecca. This allows inhabitable spaces within the wall for private studying and meditation.

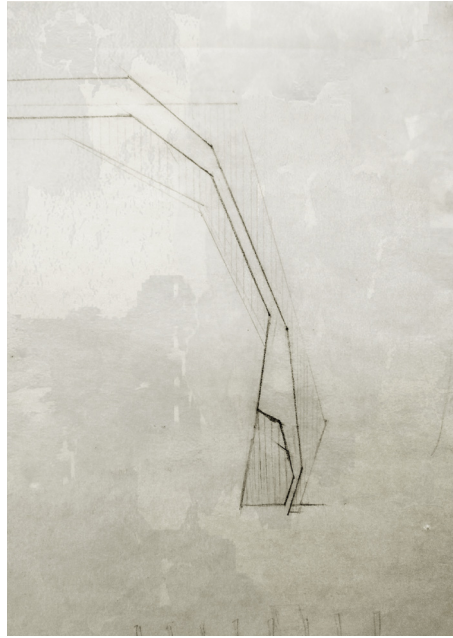


Figure 61 top left. Development of side niches.

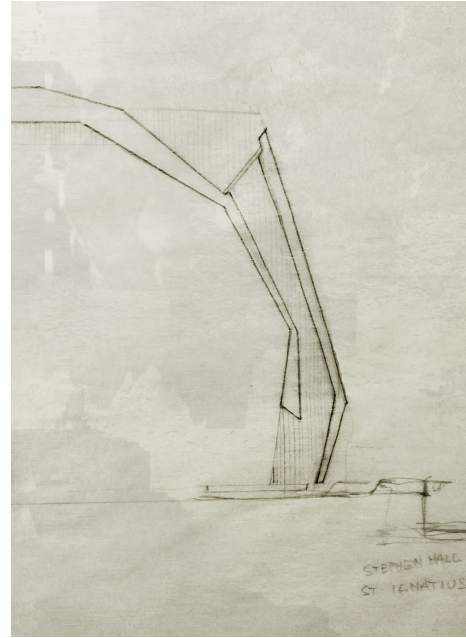
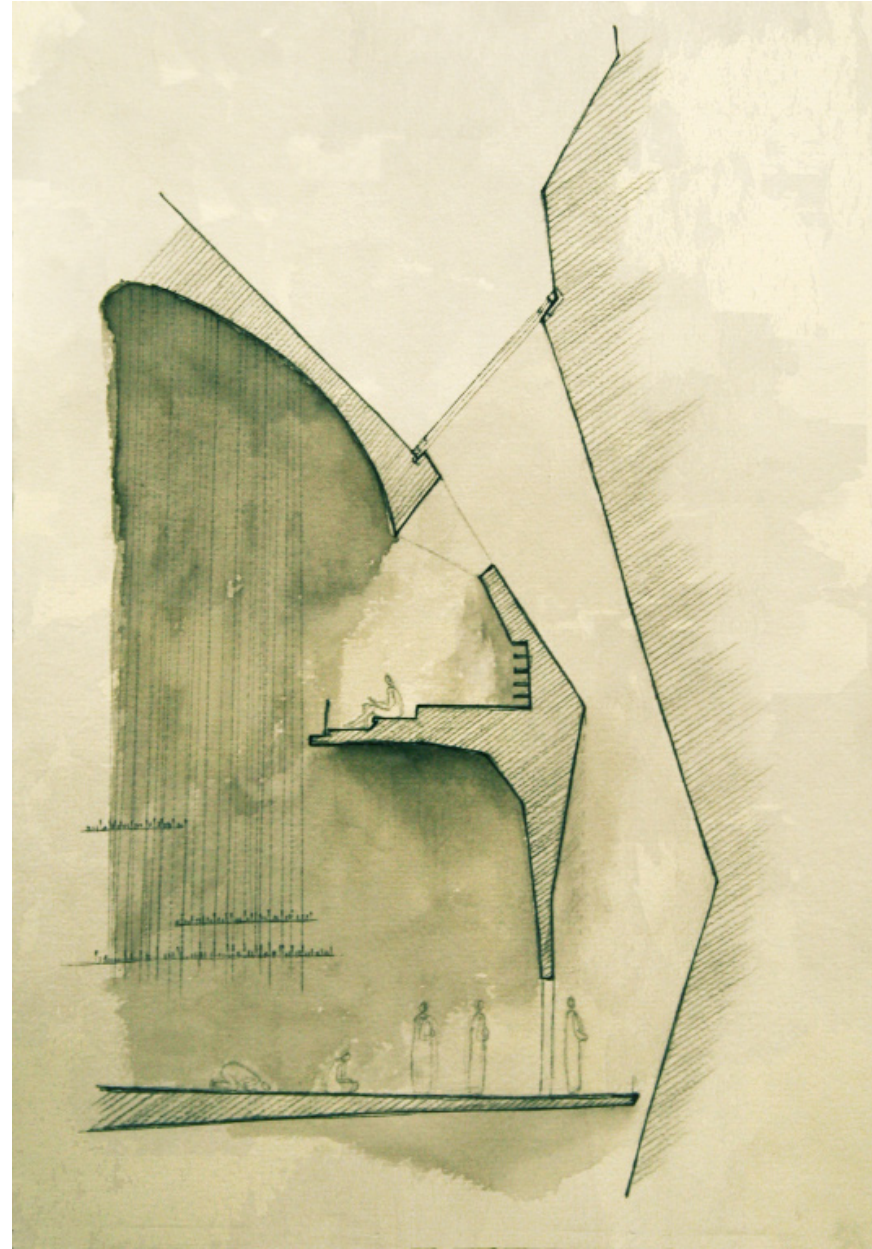


Figure 62 top right. Development of center niche. Shows opening in floor for rain water.

Figure 63 right. Early section through center niche. Shows balcony above that shares light and sound.



The northeast wall is designed not as one wall facing Mecca, but a series of walls pointing to Mecca. They stand in a row as though in prayer amongst the other worshippers and create a form rigid, linear and tall. Each wall is then carved into to create spaces within, more organic. At the front, the walls bow down and create niches of light.

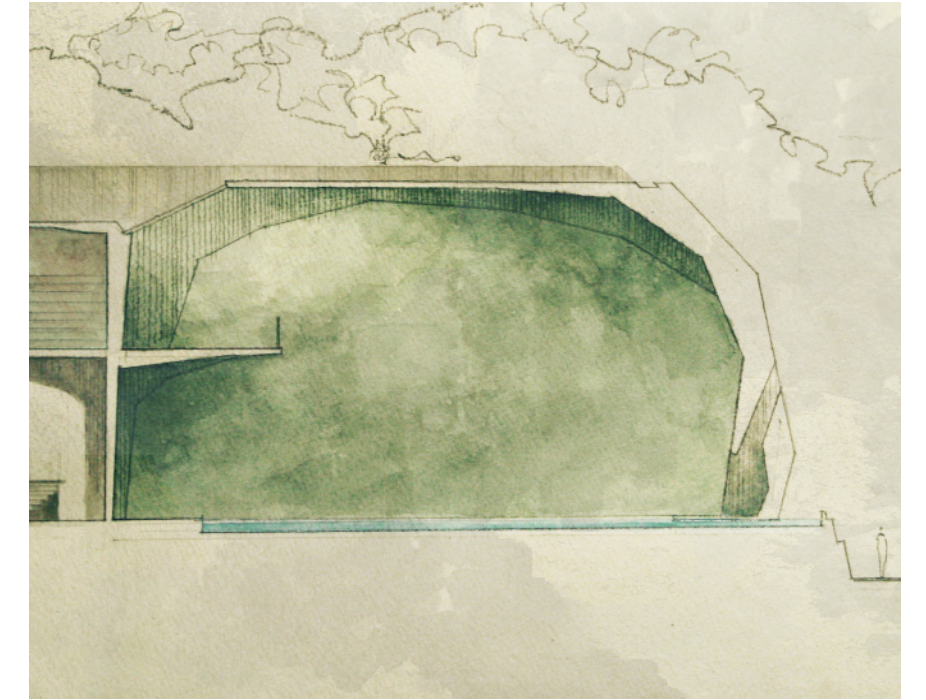


Figure 64 top. Section through prayer space. Rain water runs down the roof, between the walls, collects within a basin along the northeast wall and is brought in through the center niche.

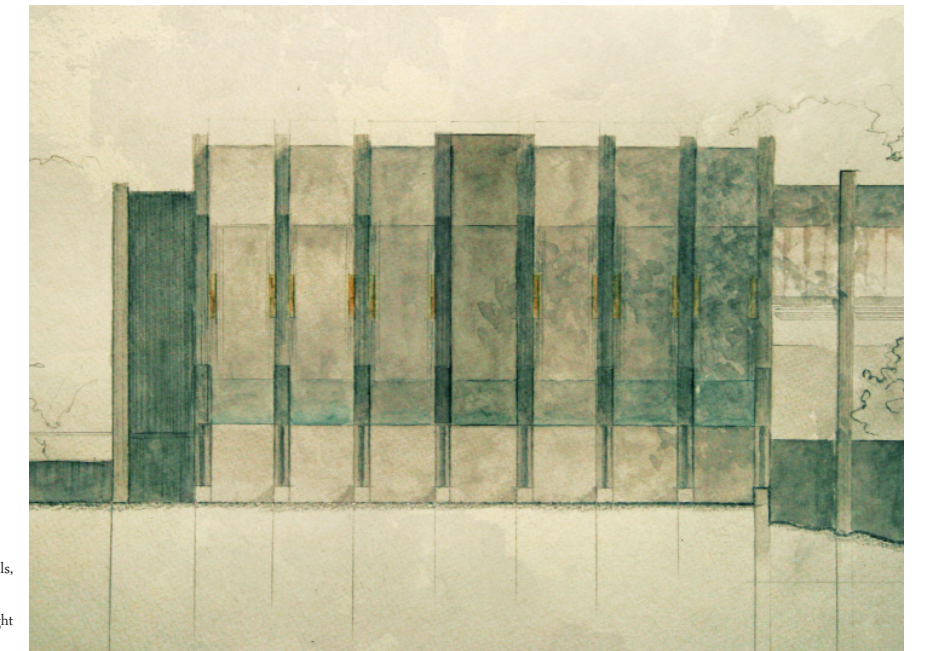


Figure 65 bottom. North elevation showing narrow pierces along each niche to bring northern light for reading. The center niche brings in southern light from the top.



Figure 66 from left to right. The colonnade in the courtyard leading into the men's prayer space, Islamic Cultural Center, Washington DC.
 Figure 67. The hallway in the basement leading into the women's prayer space, Islamic Cultural Center, Washington DC.
 Figure 68. Wooden partition separating the back of the prayer space for women, Mustufa Center, Annandale, VA.
 Figure 69. The back of the curtain that divides male and female, Islamic Center, Valencia, CA.
 Figure 70. Shows the contrast between the top entrance leading into the male prayer space and the bottom staircase leading into the basement for women, Islamic Cultural Center, Washington DC.

The Partition

Water is used in the ablution facility to separate male and female. This theme is continued in the prayer space to create a symmetric division along the center niche. This allows both spaces to access the northeast wall and provides men and women the opportunity to participate equally in the discussions led by the Imam. The spiritual experience must be equal if not the same.

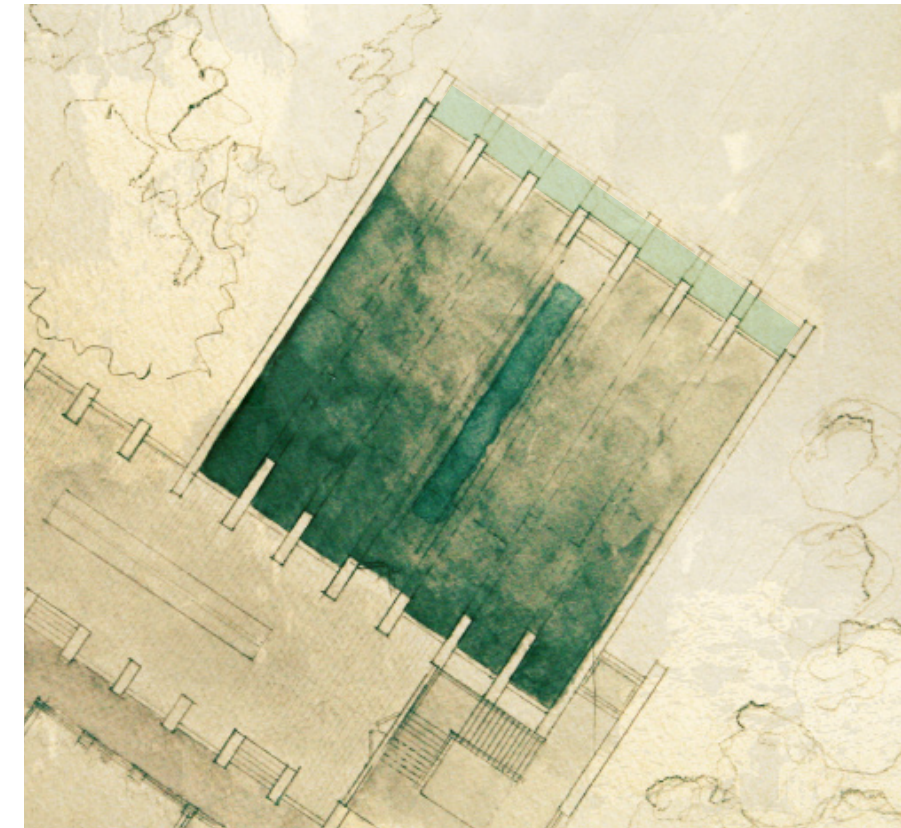
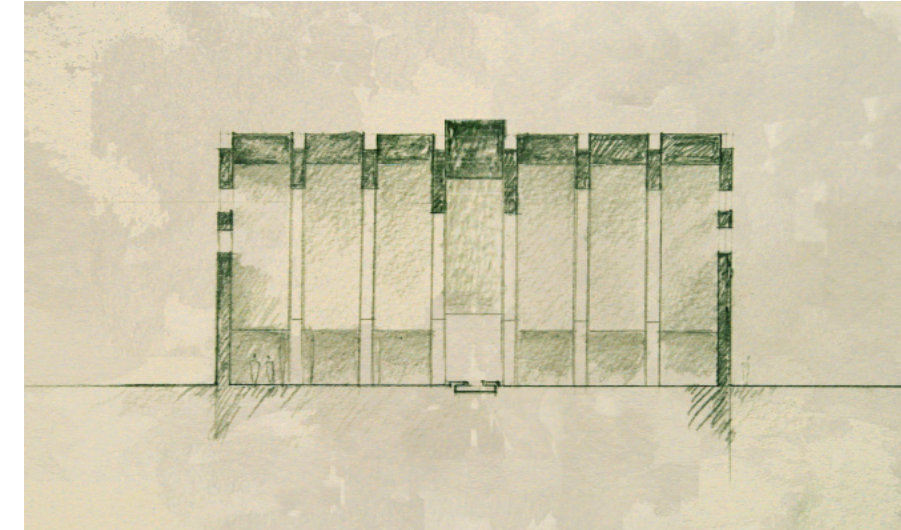
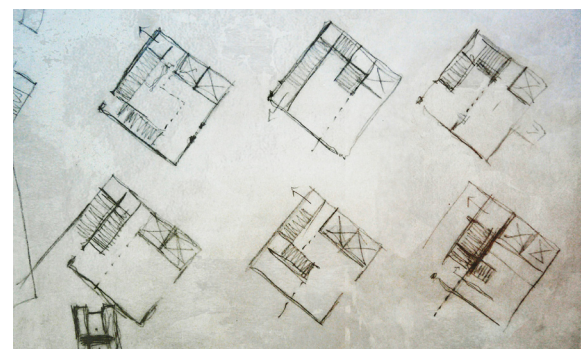


Figure 71 top. Early section through prayer space. Shows the division between male and female with the pool of water centered along the niche.
 Figure 72 bottom. Plan showing the collection of rainwater within basin beyond the northeast wall. The water is brought into the space through the center niche.



① DEPTH OF LINEMENTS OF BUILDING = COMANONIA
 = NUMBER, OUTLINE, POSITION, PROPORTION
 ② BEAUTY REALIZED IN MATERIAL THROUGH
 ORNAMENTS

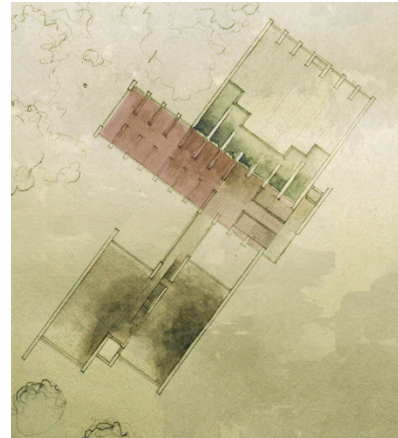
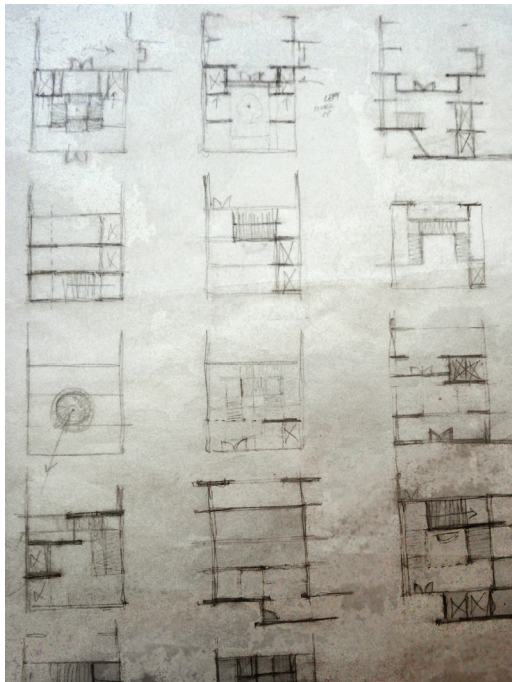


Figure 73 top left. Early sketches of library entrance staircase and elevator.
Figure 74 bottom left. Early entrance opening design.
Figure 75 middle. Development of entrance staircase.
Figure 76 right. Plan showing library with entrance staircase from promenade level.

The Library: An Extension of the Walls

The walls of the balcony hold Qurans for private study. These walls extend beyond the balcony to span the rest of the library and its reading rooms. The books are contained at the highest elevation in the entire mosque. Its dimensions lie within the third path of the narrative, aligned vertically with the ablution facility and the promenade. The library, open to all, is a vessel for our understanding of God, but also our understanding of one another. Only through a comprehensive study of other systems of beliefs can there begin a dialogue that is based not at the periphery of our faith but at its center.

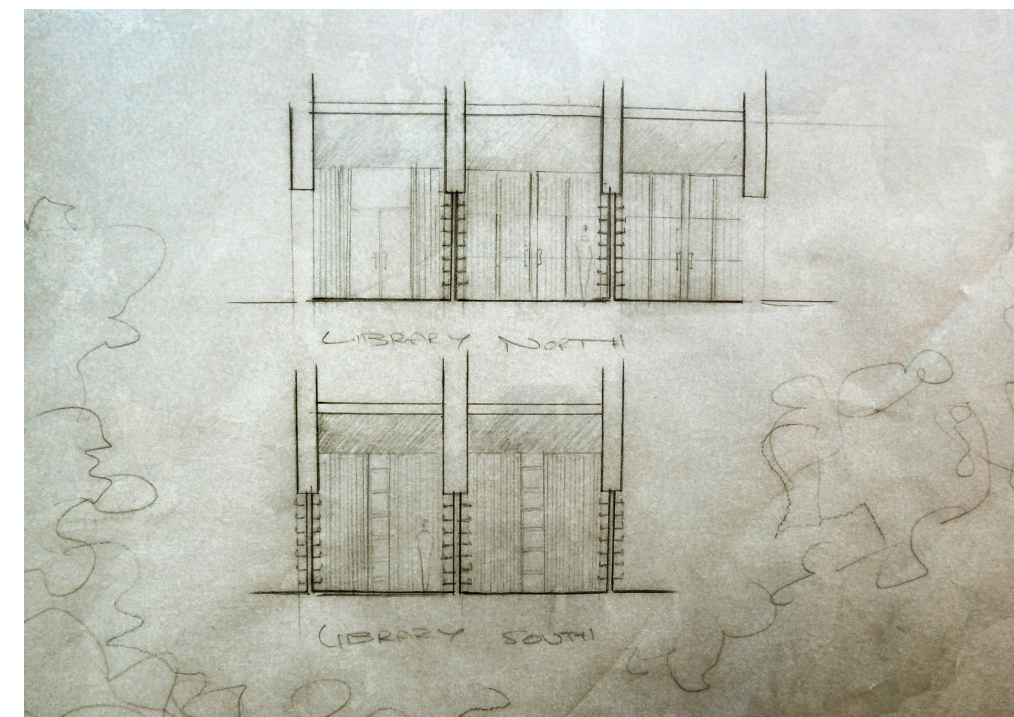
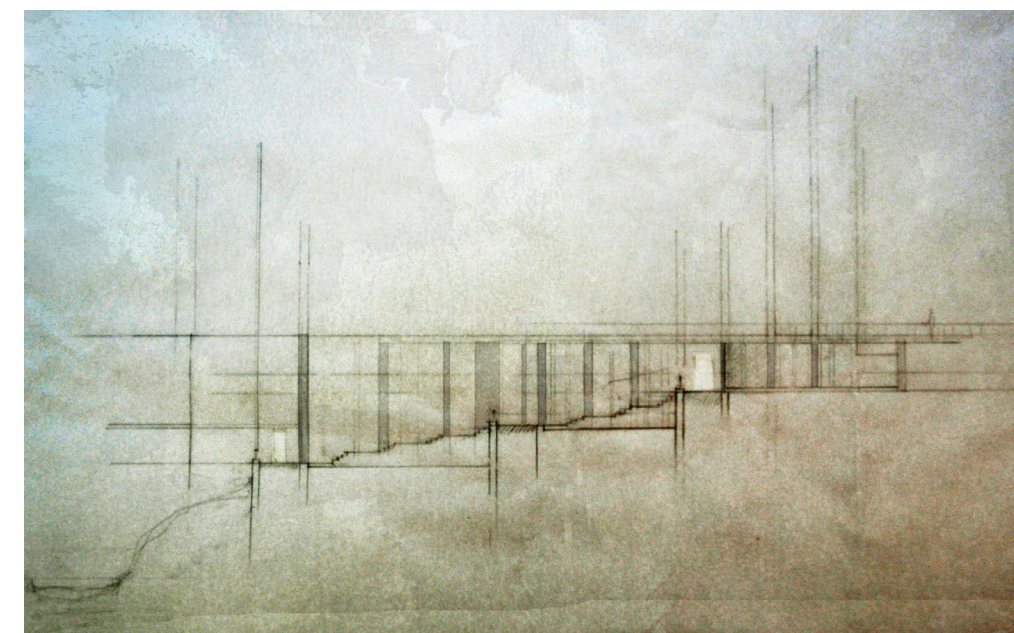


Figure 77 top. Interior elevations of the library. The north library wall opens into the balcony of the prayer space. The south allows screened lighting and view of the courtyards.
Figure 78 bottom. Section through courtyards. Shows the partial wall of the second path in the narrative.



“There can be no doubt that the most profound desire that fills the human soul, the most heartfelt hope, is the wish to be at peace with Nature and the Inscrutable spirit; nor can there be a doubt that the greatest Art Work is that which most nearly typifies a realization of this ardent, patient longing. All efforts, of the body, all undertakings of the mind, tend, consciously or unconsciously, toward this consummation, tend toward this final peace: the peace of perfect equilibrium, the repose of absolute unity, the serenity of a complete identification.”¹⁶
 - Louis H. Sullivan

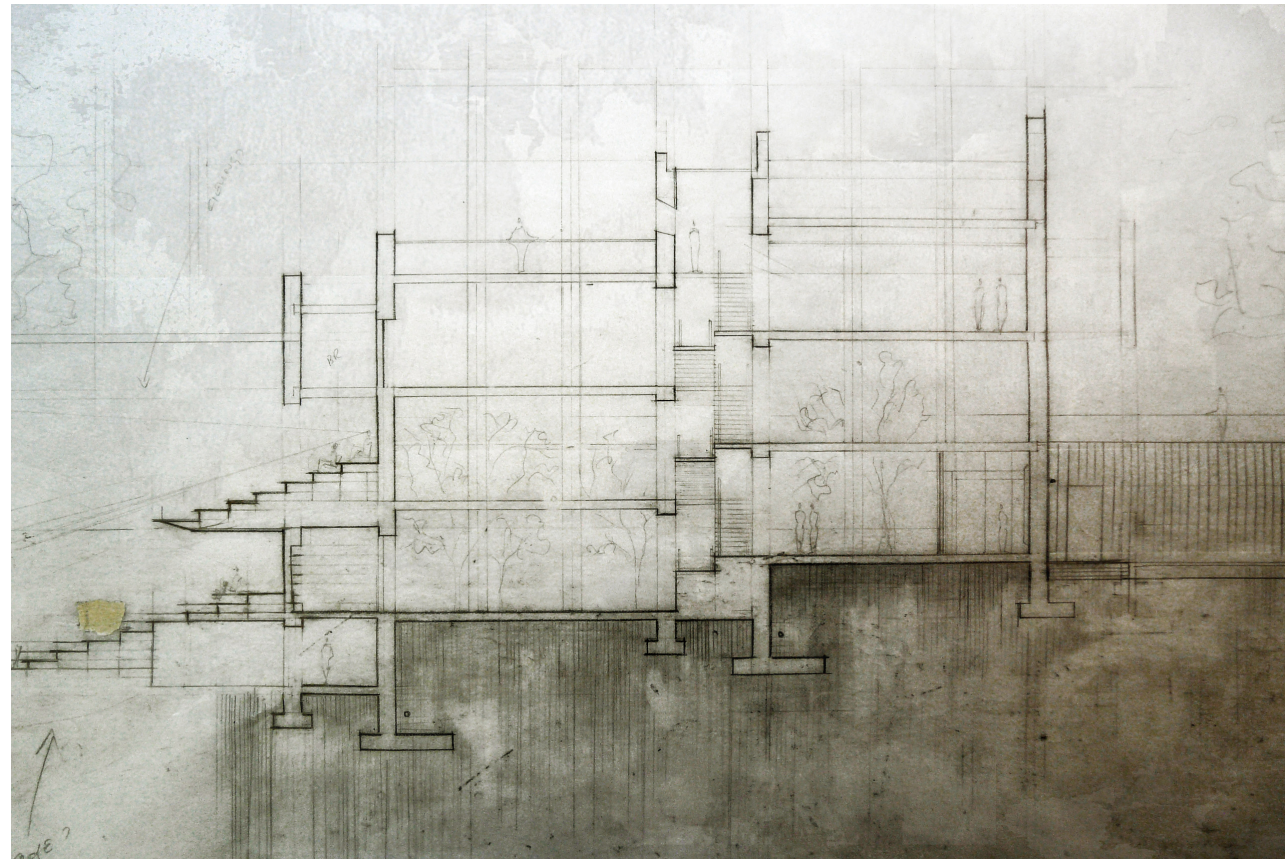


Figure 79 left. Development of the reading rooms. Shows the courtyards beyond.

Figure 80 top. Early study of the balcony floor responding to the human body.

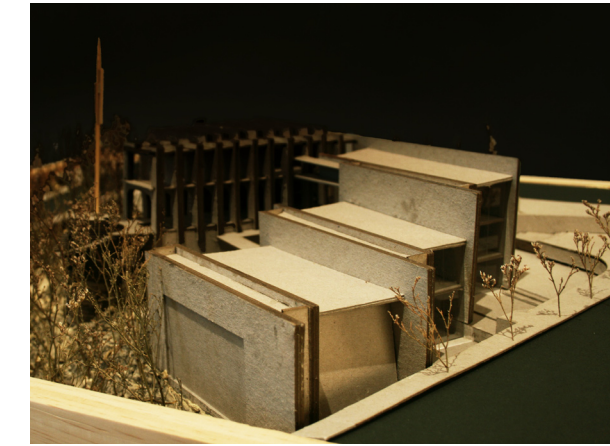
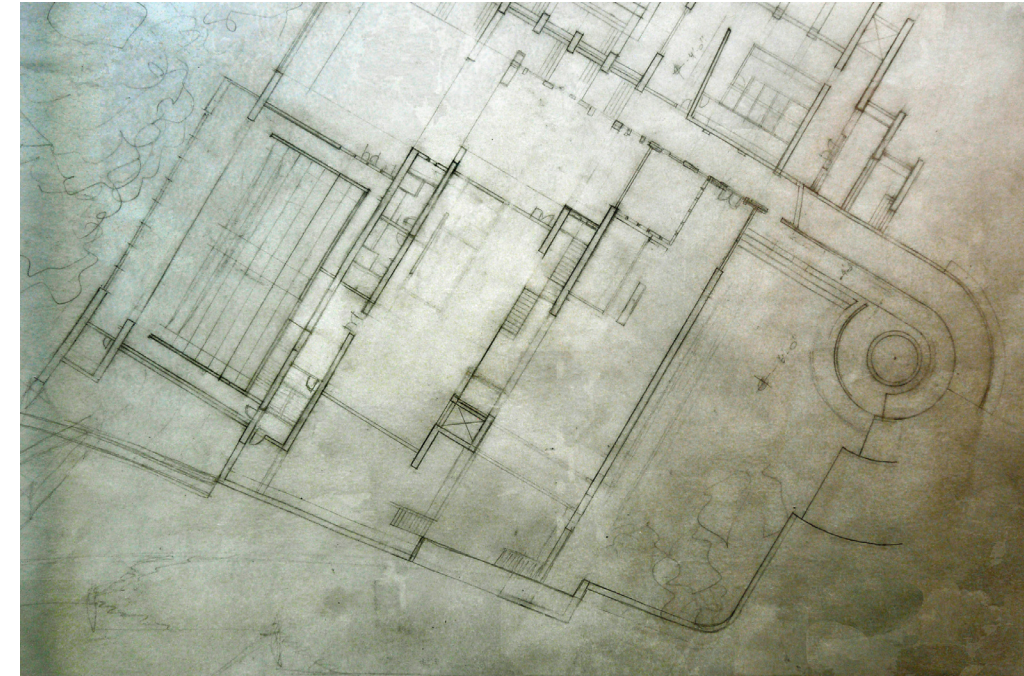
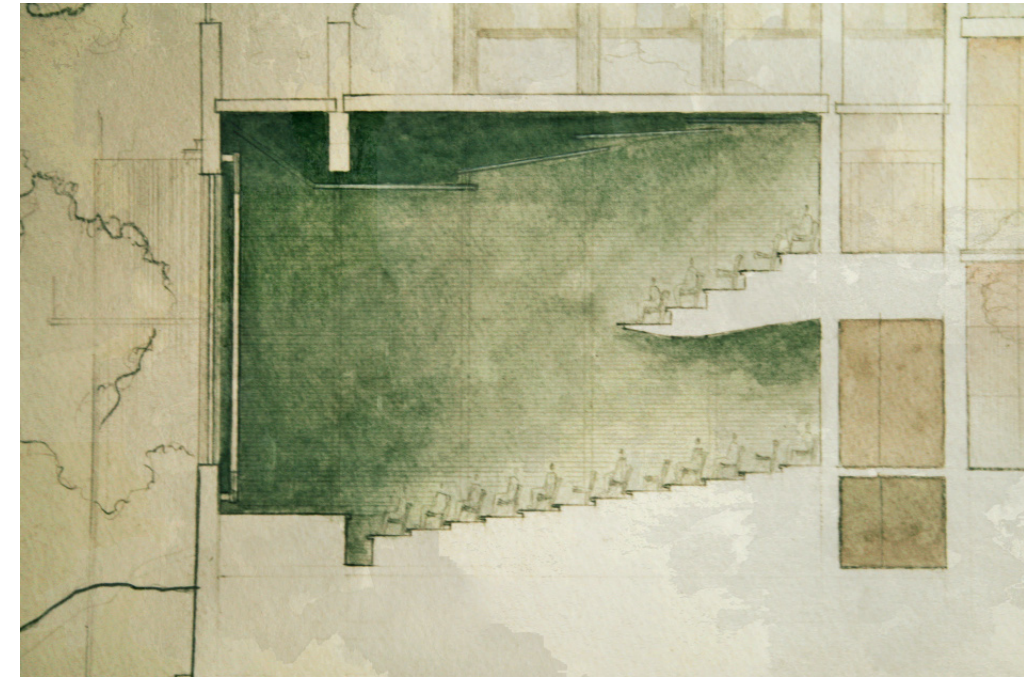


Figure 81 top left. Development of the reading rooms. Service spaces are held within the walls to keep the reading rooms open.

Figure 82 top. Model showing view of the reading rooms from Pennsylvania Ave.

Figure 83 bottom. Section through auditorium. The west wall has a large opening to allow a view to the park; it can be covered with a projector screen during viewings.



Materials and Construction

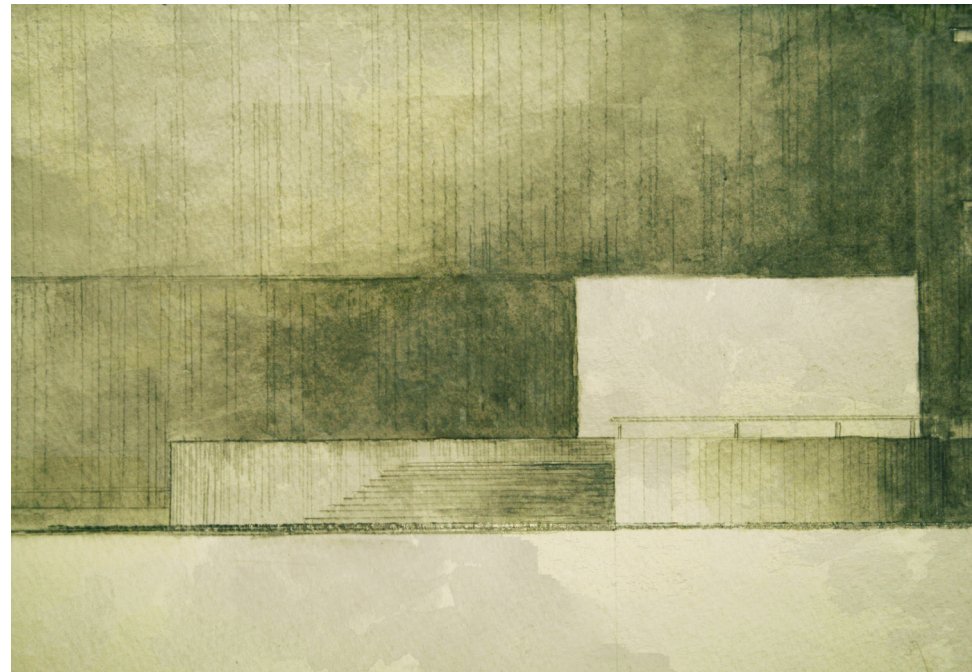


Figure 84. Entrance elevation with vertical concrete grooves.

The structural concrete walls are constructed using wooden formwork on the exterior. Narrow strips allow for vertical texture that complements the linearity of their span. The interior formwork of the wall is smooth, in the library and reading rooms. But this concept is reversed within the prayer space and the interior is texturized for the niches to be perceived more intimately.

Between the walls spans non-structural filler concrete. This is pierced within the niches to allow light to enter the prayer space. As the span between the walls widens in the reading rooms, exposed wooden beams support the floors.

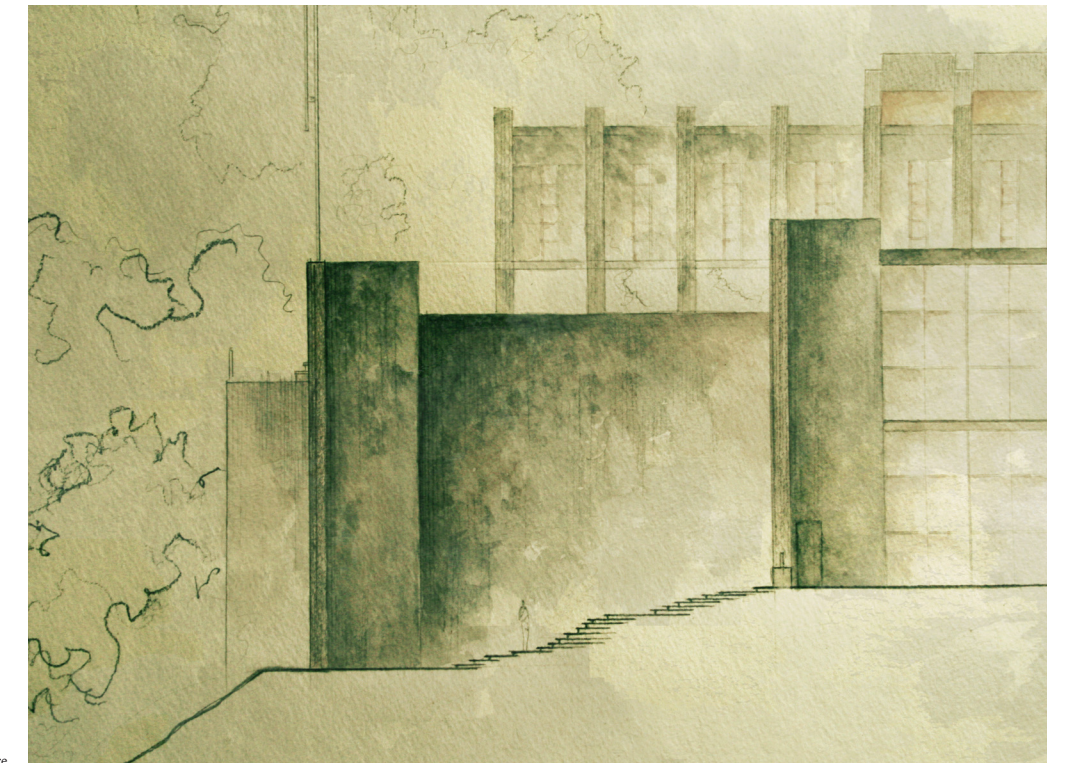
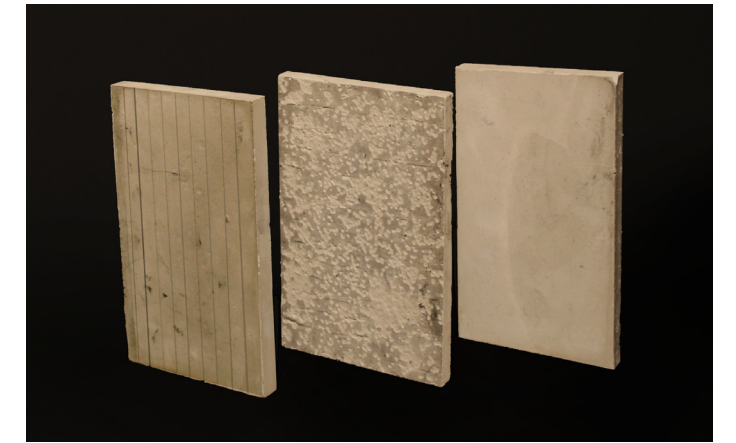


Figure 85 top. Concrete texture studies with rockite pours.
Figure 86 bottom. South elevation showing concrete wall texture.



Figure 87. Palace of Alhambra, Granada, Spain

“When such daydreams as these take hold of the meditating man, details grow dim and all picturesqueness fades. The very hours pass unnoticed and space stretches out interminably. Indeed, daydreams of this kind may well be called daydreams of infinity.”¹⁷
- Gaston Bachelard

Section III Final Design Proposal



Figure 88 left. Site Plan
Figure 89 right. Ground Level

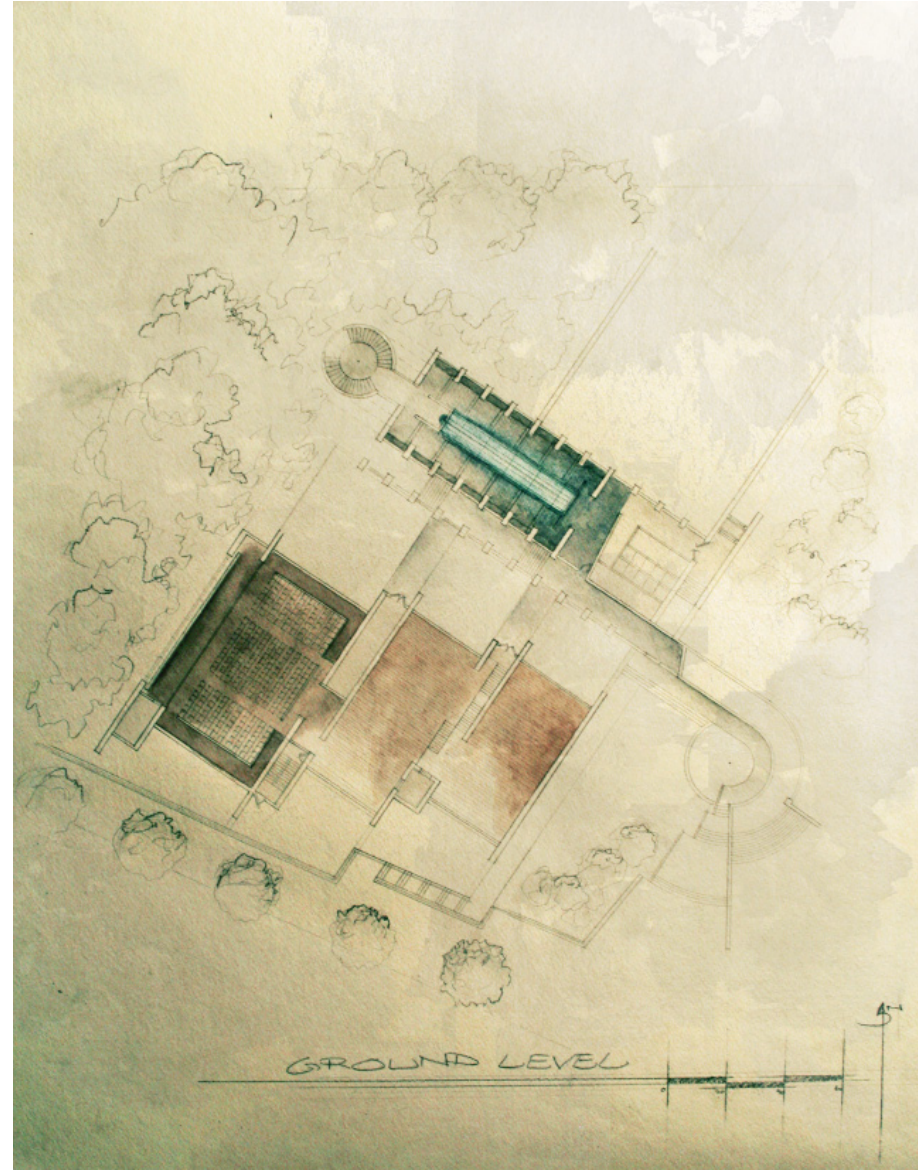


Figure 90 left. Level 1
Figure 91 right. Level 2



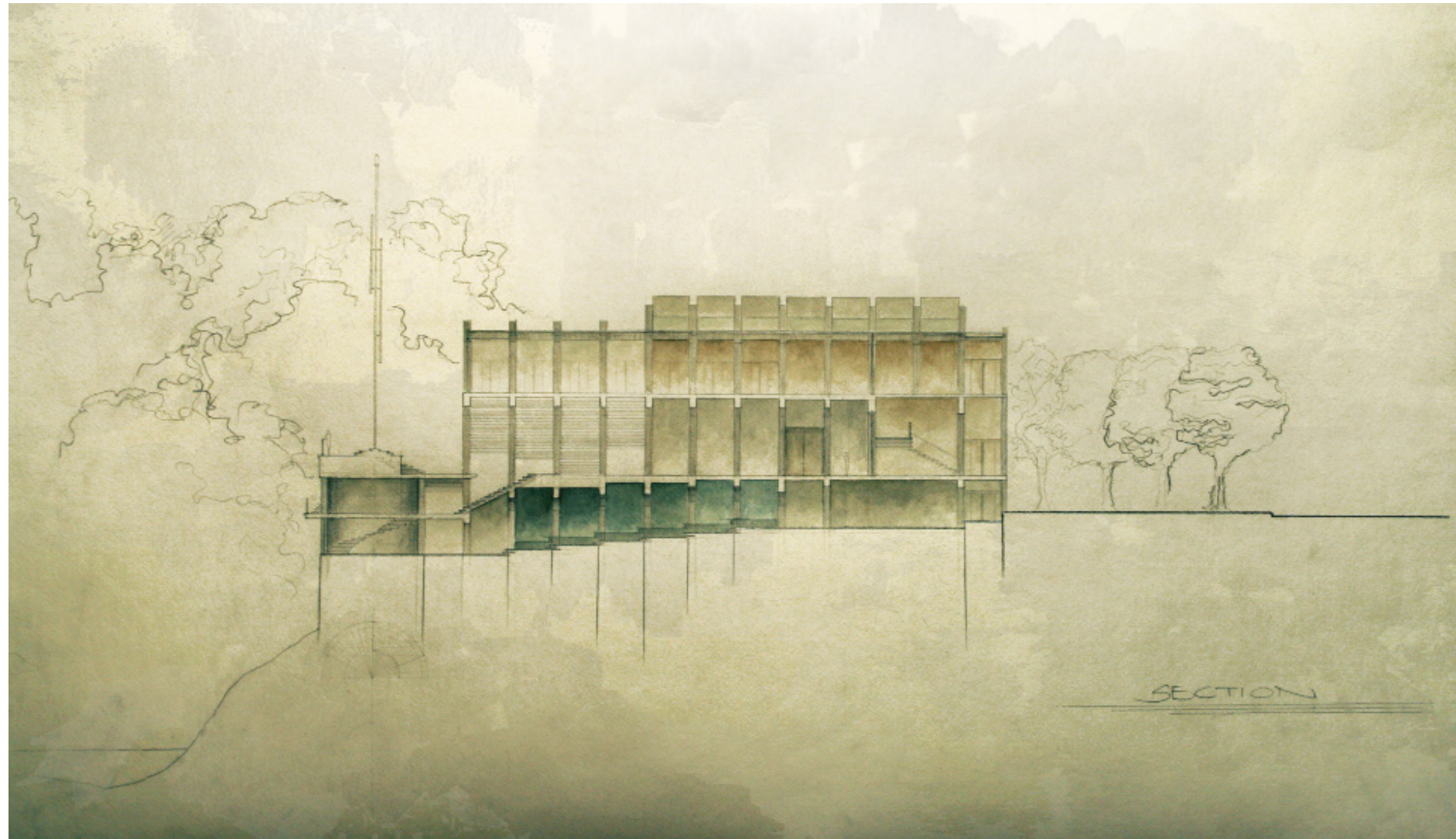


Figure 92. Section 1

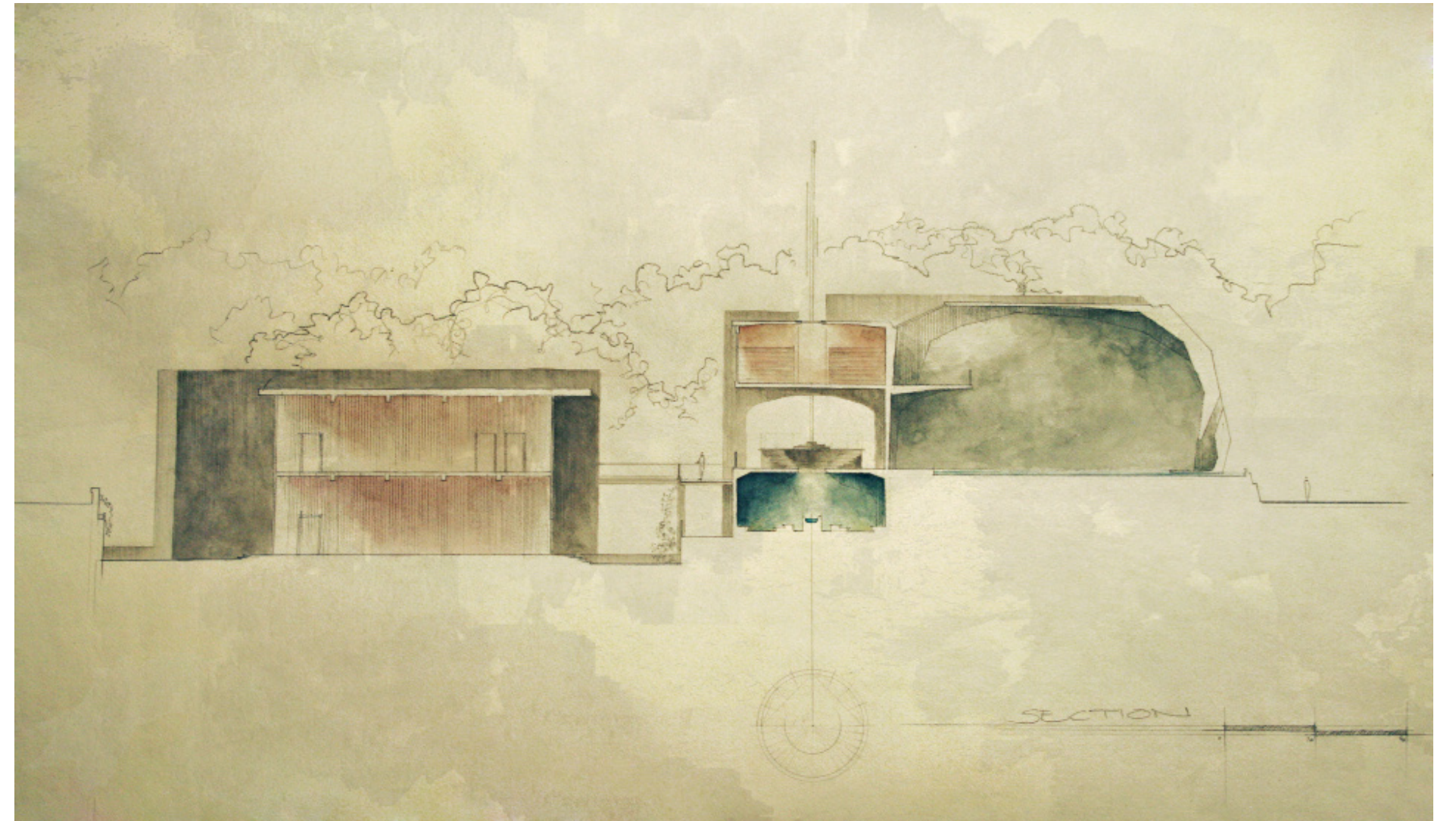


Figure 93. Section 2



Figure 94. Section 3

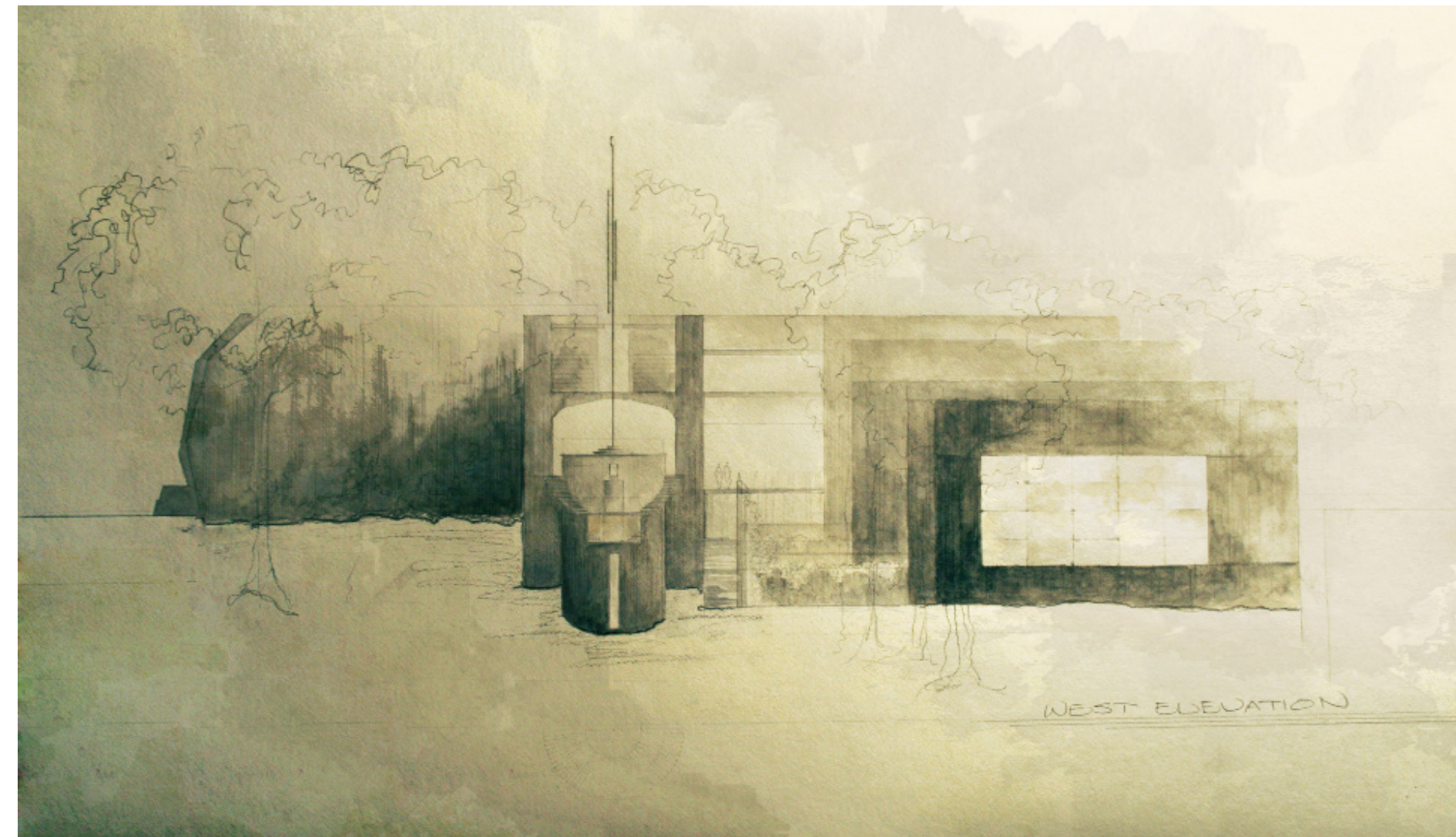


Figure 95. West Elevation

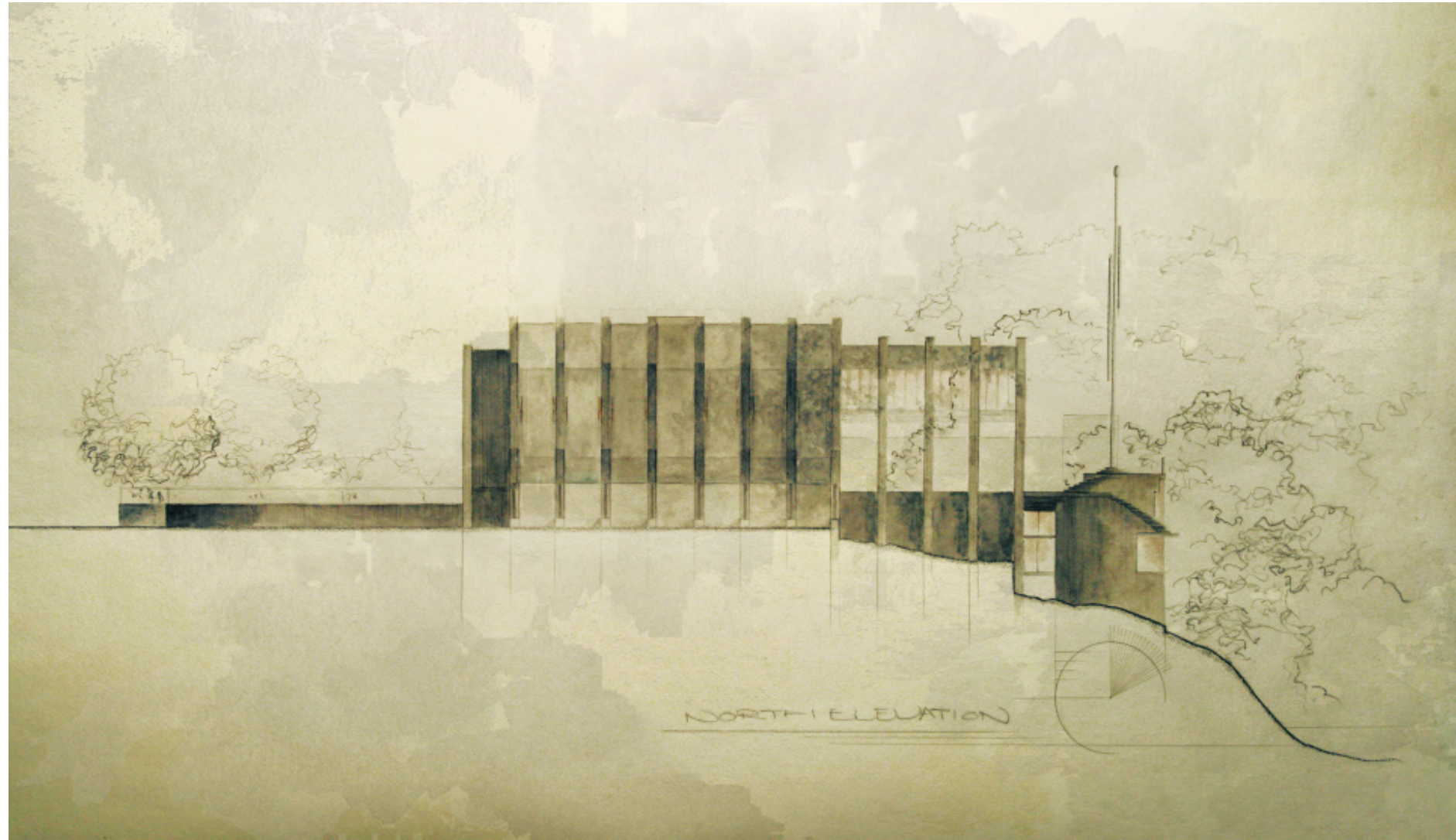


Figure 96. North Elevation

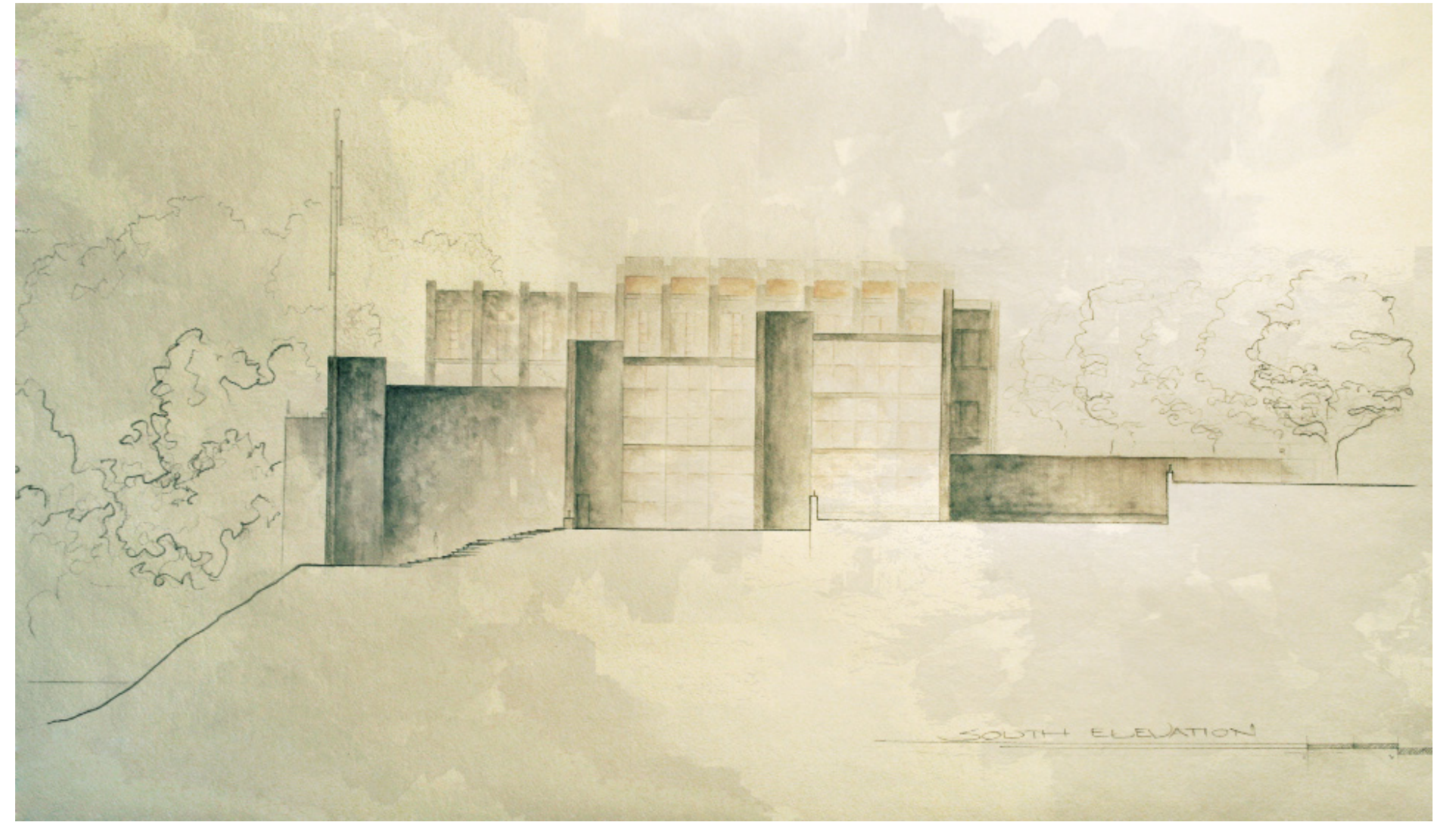


Figure 97. South Elevation

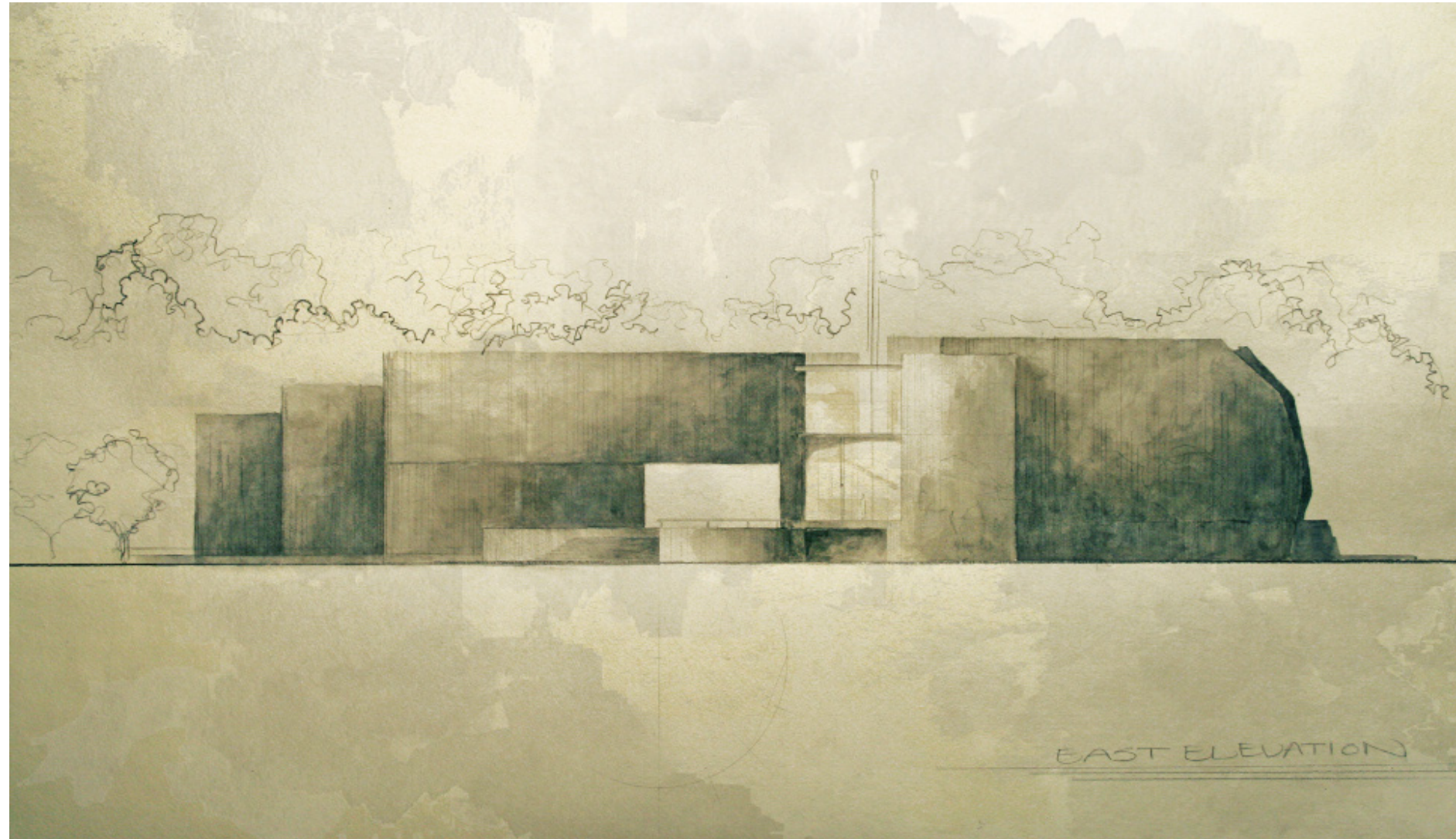


Figure 98. East Elevation

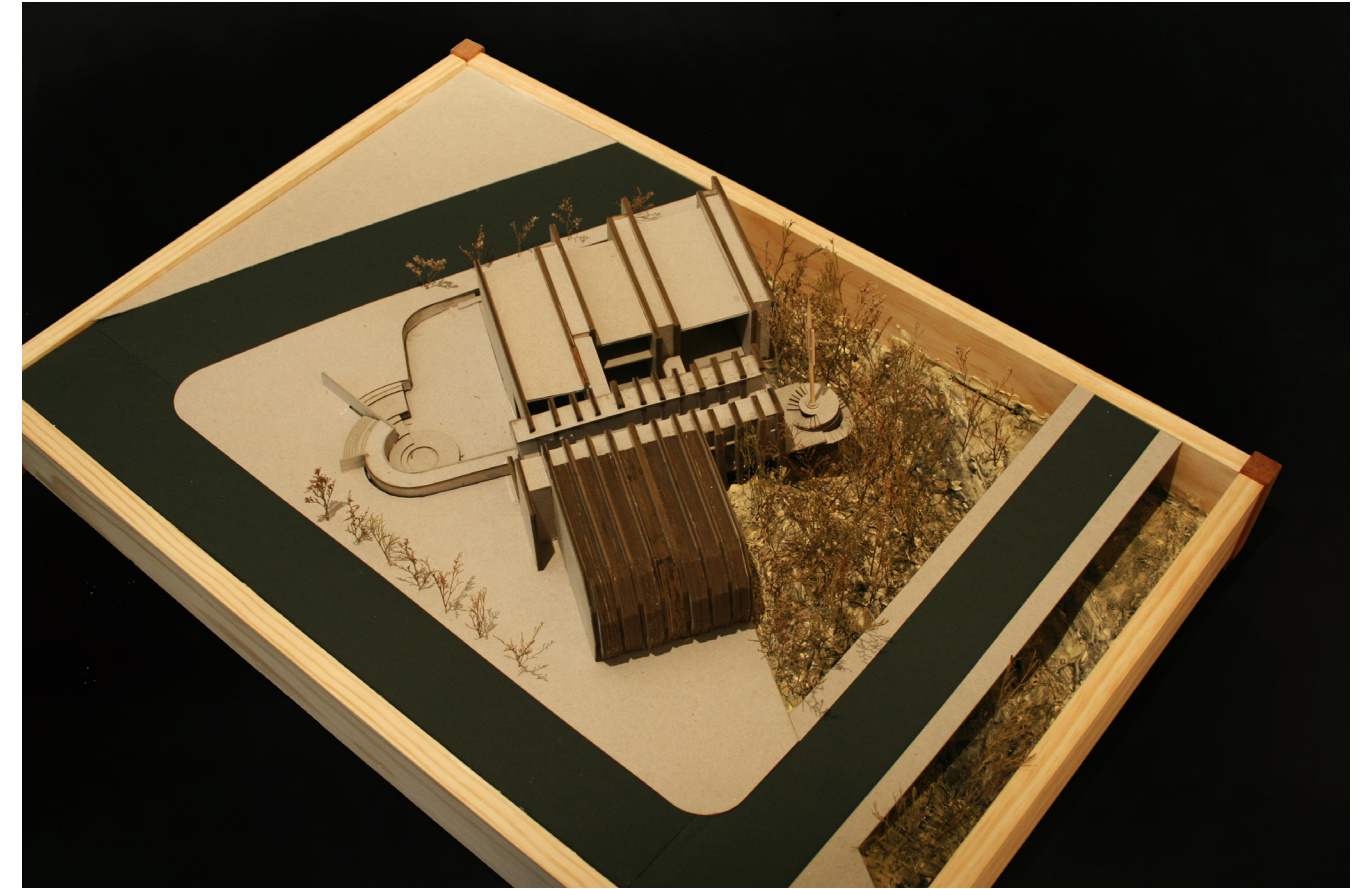


Figure 99. North east view of model.

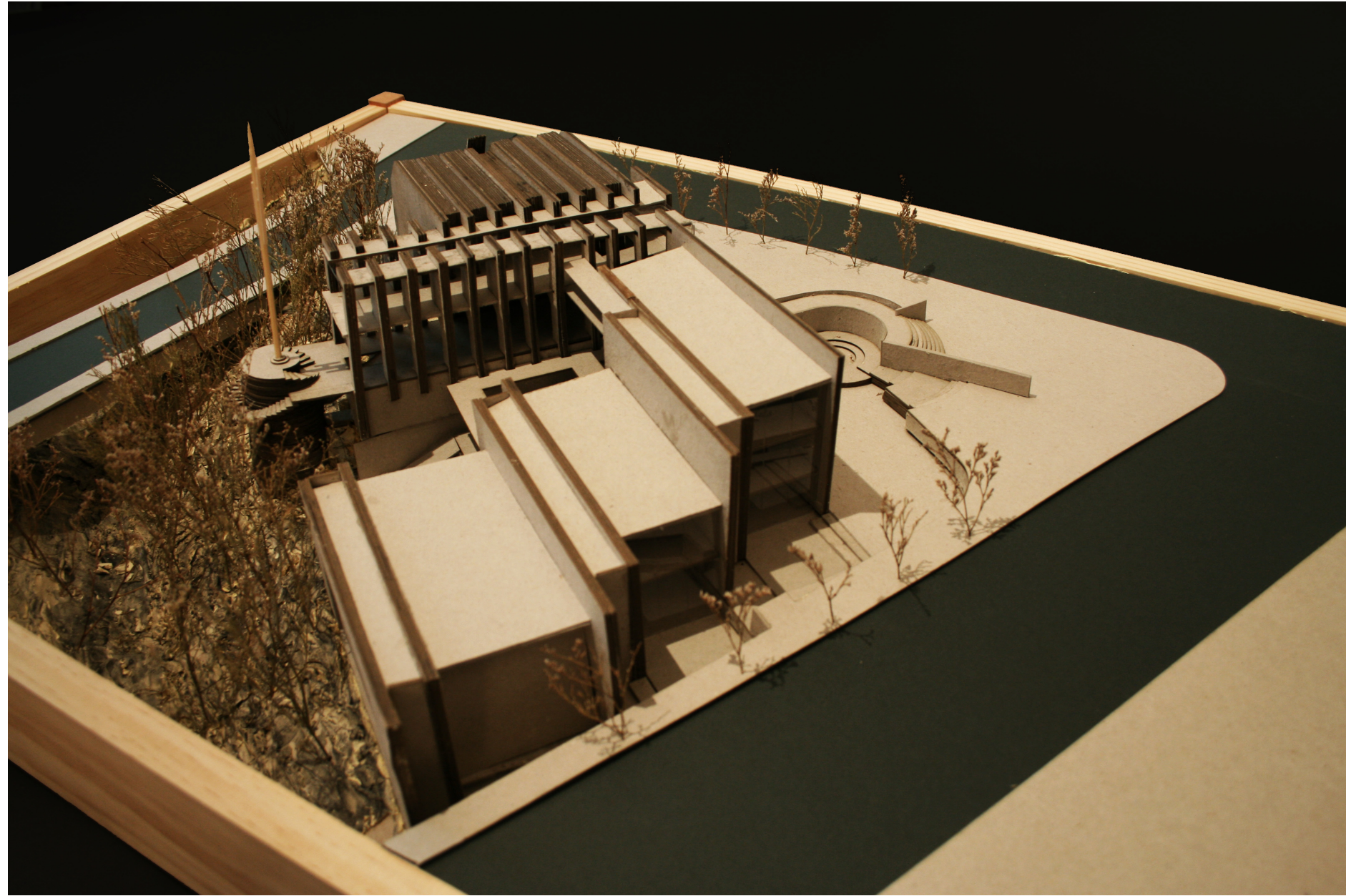


Figure 100. Southwest view.

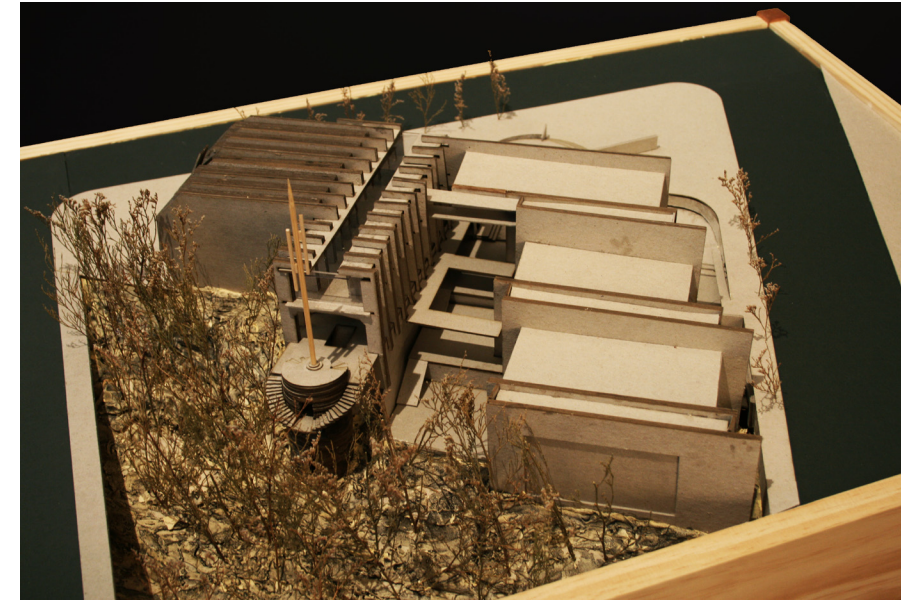


Figure 101. West view.



Figure 102. Southeast view.

“The Messenger believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the believers. Each one believes in God, His angels, His books, and His Messengers. We make no distinction between one and another of His Messengers. And they say: “We hear, and we obey: [we seek] Your forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the end of all journeys.”¹⁸

Notes

1. Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1957.
2. Ramadan, Tariq. *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. He speaks of Islamic mysticism and the fundamental principal of searching for the truth and ultimately returning to the beginning.
3. Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1957. Eliade defines hierophanies as being objects of our mundane world that become sacred with the manifestation of the divine.
4. Omar Khalidi's study on American mosques.
5. Corbusier, Le. *Journey to the East*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989.
6. Alberti, Leon Battista. *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*. London: The MIT Press, 1988. “I would deck it out in every part so that anyone who entered it would start with awe for his admiration at all the noble things, and could scarcely restrain himself from exclaiming that what he saw was a place undoubtedly worthy of God,”
7. Quran, 2: 164.
8. Quran, 96: 1-5.
9. Bachelard, Gaston, *Water and Dreams*. Dallas Institute Publications, 1942.
10. Bachelard, Gaston, *Water and Dreams*. Dallas Institute Publications, 1942.
11. Richard J. H. Gottheil in *The Origin and History of the Minaret*

12. Richard J. H. Gottheil also found that the relation of the word ‘manaratun’ to the tower of a mosque is derived from the light that is held by the Muezzin, or one who calls to prayer, as he recites the call to prayer at night which, to one viewing from below, gives the impression of a light-tower. But he deemed this suggestion to be far-fetched.
13. Corbusier, Le. *Journey to the East*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989. Le Corbusier as he travelled up the Bosphorus.
14. Tariq Ramadan on forms of worship.
15. Bachelard, Gaston. *The poetics of Space*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1958. He quotes from *Poemes a l'autre moi* (Poems to my other self) by Albert-Birot in reference to daydreaming in corners.
16. Sullivan, Louis H. *Kindergarten Chats*. New York: Wittenborn, Schultz, Inc., 1947. He speaks of the importance of harmony between man and nature as well as nature and design.
17. Bachelard, Gaston. *The poetics of Space*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1958. In reference to a state of reverie inspired by immensity.
18. Quran, 2: 285

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