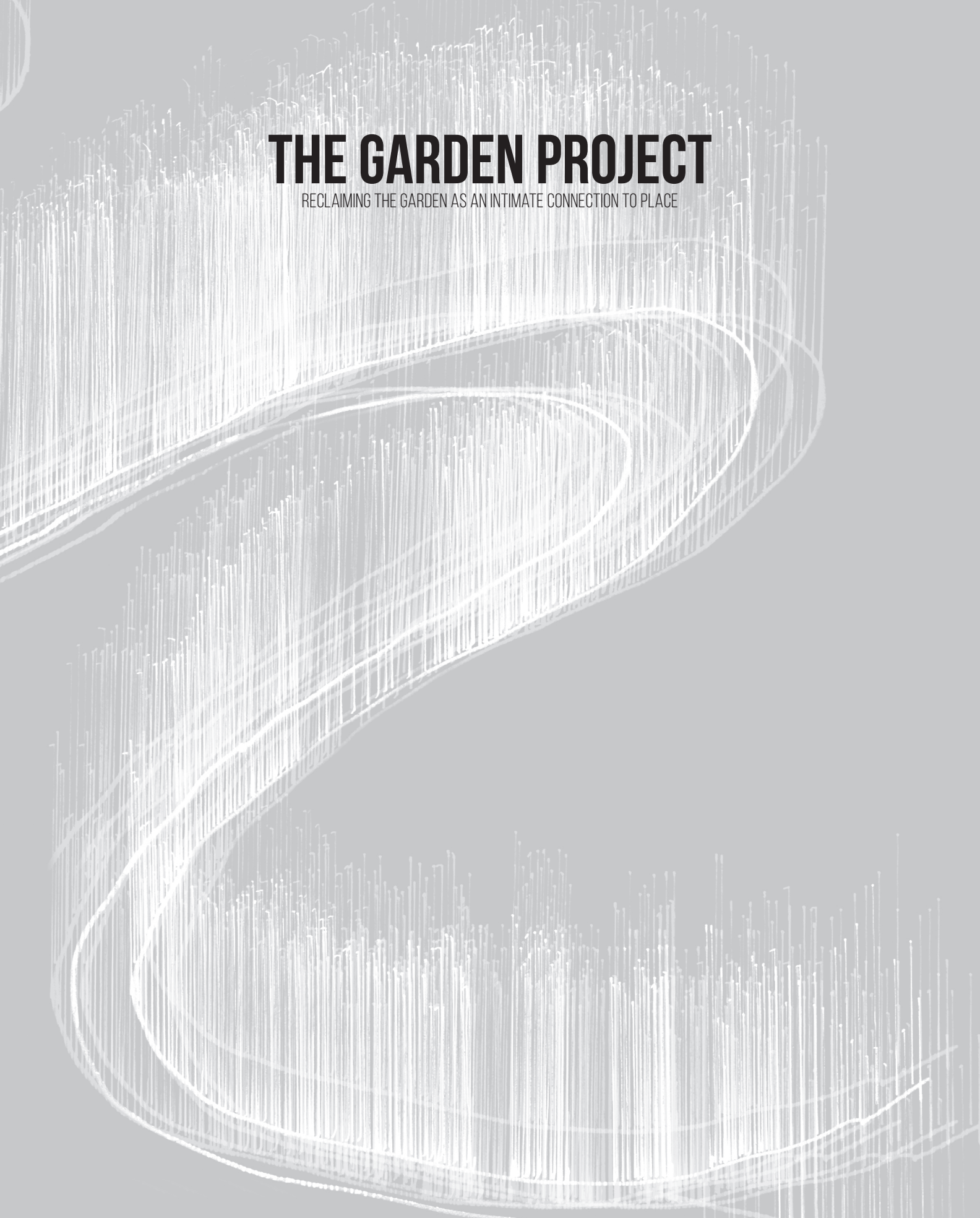

THE GARDEN PROJECT

RECLAIMING THE GARDEN AS AN INTIMATE CONNECTION TO PLACE

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RECLAIMING THE GARDEN AS AN INTIMATE CONNECTION TO PLACE

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DEDICATION

To my parents and sisters who have given me the world and taught me where true beauty lies. To my friends who listened to me ramble about plants and places when you didn't know what I was talking about. To my classmates whose passion made each day in studio better than the day before. To my Professors who believed in my project and could put it into words when I was lost. The success of one is always do to the support of many.

And most importantly, to the first garden designer. May every garden creation point to the ultimate Creator, who can do far more than all I could ever ask or imagine. To Him be the glory.

How can the garden be reclaimed within the profession of landscape architecture as an intimate relationship between a person and a place cultivated over time?

ABSTRACT

The garden is a relationship. It brings humanity into tension with nature, creating an assemblage of shared moments over time. *The Garden Project* is exploring the potential of the garden in the modern profession of landscape architecture. The garden is currently not often a part of the critical discourse of landscape architecture. Although gardens are being designed, they are not seen as a powerful tool for addressing the issues of the present age.

The Garden Project is asserting that the garden is more relevant to this age than ever before because it brings people into a direct relationship with a place. Many of the current issues of modern society are born out of our consumer culture, which demands instant gratification with the least amount of effort. The garden stands in direct opposition to personal disassociation by requiring both time and effort. But through time, the garden yields a relationship that is much more valuable through its ability to not only speak to the genius loci, the spirit of the place, but also the genius animi, the spirit of the soul. The key to activating the genius animi of a place is to infuse the design with a series of qualities that can evoke an emotional engagement from a person in the garden.

The Garden Project explores three qualities: light + shadow, movement + pause, and ephemerality + fixity. Each quality was explored by interrogating how they can be manipulated to achieve a certain effect within the garden. The findings of the study resulted in a manifesto, calling the profession of landscape architecture to reclaim the garden as a valuable tool for forging a personal connection to places through the humble moments of a garden.

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GARDEN DEFINED

> “Rooted in human responses to the environment in all historical cultures is a deep-seated recognition of the manifold imperfections of this world and a deep longing to re-create a lost place or time where and when life perpetually flourishes, death is unknown, there are no harsh extremes of climate, and no backbreaking toil to grow food and haul water, fear is replaced by law, chaos is vanquished by order, and warfare ceases forever in a perpetual reign of peace.”
>
> Elizabeth Barlow Rogers

The Garden. To define a garden is a bit like trying to put a cloud in a bottle. You can see its form, describe its qualities, but once you reach out to grab it, to force it into a bounded definition that always holds true, it seems to slip through the hands and drift away. It has meant different things to different people at different times throughout history. It has as many forms as there are people and places on earth. *The Garden Project* is seeking to unearth the qualities which make gardens a vital link between people and places. What are the qualities of a garden which tap into the deeply emotional part of the human spirit and captivate our affections for places?

Gardens are a relationship. It is through the collective experience over time that a garden reaches into the deeper part of the human heart and captures one's affections for a place. Relationships are created through a series of shared moments. In a garden this could be a variety of qualities. The sun streaming through the trees as the sun rises. The fog lifting from the ground in the early morning. The dusting of petals that skirt the bottom of a tree after a rain storm. The dew sparkling on the leaves before the sun covers that spot. The shadows of a tree dancing against the wall. The sound of the wind blowing through the trees. The transition between winter and spring when the leaves are halfway budded out and the garden smells like damp soil. The orange glow in the garden as the sun is setting. The power of a garden is in its ephemerality, its dynamism, its change. A garden is a relationship that grows richer as it is experienced over time.

Gardens are bound by time. They exist in memories, frame the passing moments, and cultivate hope for the future. A world without gardens would be a world lacking a vital link between man and his environment. They are a foundational expression throughout the history of human culture. Gardens change throughout the day as the sun moves and clouds drift by and weather comes and goes. Gardens change through the year as seasons change. They simultaneously anchor us to the present while revealing the passing of time. Parts of the garden grow and parts die. Parts are re-planted and re-imagined. A garden is alive, and through the human hands that life is directed and shaped into a particular vision.

Gardens are a work of art. However, it is not a static piece meant to be walled off and protected. It is a living, growing, moving creation, whose richness is in its dynamism. The artistic medium of a garden is nature itself. But, a garden is not merely a replication of nature. A garden is an abstraction of nature, an amplification of nature's qualities. A garden has the ability to frame a person's view, to draw attention to beauties which may go unnoticed. But within the boundaries of a garden, the mysteries of nature are brought within graspable view of man. Gardens are an artistic creation which allows us to reach out and grab what we know of the world, to mold with our imagination, and to point back out to the larger picture.

Gardens are the great mediator. It brings the most fundamental parts of our world, man and nature, into tension with each other. A garden is not only a creation of nature, nor is it only a creation of man. A garden is the intersection of human expression and nature. There is a vastness in nature which the human mind cannot fully comprehend. The garden is the place where the vastness of nature meets the human hands and is sculpted into something within the reach of the human mind. It reveals what is important to people within nature. The garden stands at an important hinge point between nature and culture.

Gardens are a product of a specific contextual fabric. Since the beginning of humanity, gardens have responded to man's views of himself and the world around him. A garden created in Alabama responds to a very different cultural and environmental fabric than a garden in California. Likewise, a garden in America responds to very different cultural values and world views than a garden in a developing country. However, all gardens will point towards this link between our human nature and the world around us.

The profession of landscape architecture today is faced with a large task. The world's population is larger than ever before, causing the rapid expansion of cities and increased consumption of resources. Meanwhile, technological advances fuel our culture's obsession with convenience. Our culture wants instant gratification with the least amount of effort. We buy our food from grocery stores where the large scale farms and factories have trucked in food from hundreds of miles away. Suburbs extend placelessly across the country. Cities are stacked with people in cubicles on computers. The conveniences of a modern society have caused us to slowly disassociate from the world around us.

Geoffrey Jellicoe, one of the greatest modernists of the 20th century, states, "While man's sense of time has diminished, his sense of space seems to have expanded beyond control. He has a command of it, both in microcosm and macrocosm, that would have amazed the ancients; but in filling it he is tending to become personally dissociated from it; it is too big and he is too small." The greatest threat to our environment is the disassociation of our culture from the surrounding environment. Unless people care for a place, they will not place value on taking care of it, especially if it "demands the rarest and most precious things in our society: time, attention and space," (Kienast).

With growing populations comes increasing diversity and creation of culture. As a modern society, how can we embrace the opportunities of our age while not losing touch with the sustenance found in the world around us? The answer is in the garden, where the synthesis of man and culture finds its expression.

However, the current profession of landscape architecture has reduced the meaning of the garden to a fraction of what it is truly worth. Jory Johnson states in the book *Transforming the American Garden, "*America garden design has not been widely regarded either as a fine art worthy of serious investigation and critical analysis or as fertile ground for psychological and metaphysical speculation. By describing the garden in sub categories such as walks, ground covers and walls, many garden publications have reduced the idea of the garden to a combination of ingredients which provide comfort, function and horticultural display." America has reduced the garden to merely parts of itself. There are rain gardens and butterfly gardens and white gardens and botanical gardens and rock gardens and demonstration gardens. These types of gardens are legitimized by the adjective that is placed in front of it. There are many landscape architects designing wonderful gardens. However, the issue within the profession is that gardens are not held as valuable tools in relation to addressing many of the modern issues landscape architecture faces today. The profession has allowed the garden to stay in the past, as something to be appreciated, but not central to the future of our world. Udo Weilacher, a German landscape architect and professor, states in an article addressing the relevance of the garden within landscape architecture,

"The current problems that landscape architecture is confronted with are too big and too complex and are within the context of a globally growing urban population and the destruction of the world's environment. There is no way these problems can be solved through the use of gardening methods, by protecting the microcosm of the private garden."

But at the heart of man's destruction of the environment is values. The garden is more valuable today than ever because it provides an essential link between man and nature. The garden stands in direct opposition to a world that has been hijacked by mass production, efficiency, and convenience. The garden values time. It is through the consistent experiences within a garden that a deep relationship is formed. A garden values the individual. Truly great gardens provide space for the imagination and personal connection. They tug on memories while generating new ones. A garden values attention and care. It is through the constant care of a person that a garden can grow. It is through the attention of visitors that a garden is brought to life intellectually. And a garden values space. Designating an area for a garden in a rapidly urbanizing world is a bold act of declaring the garden's value.

Yi-Fu Taun explains in his book *Space and Place*, “Intimate experiences, not being dressed up, easily escape our attention. At the time we do not say ‘this is it,’ as we do when we admire objects of conspicuous or certified beauty. It is only in reflection that we recognize their worth. At the time, we are not aware of any drama; we do not know that the seeds of lasting sentiment are being planted. Humble events can in time build up a strong sentiment for place.”

The power of the garden is not in one sweeping maneuver. Its power lies locked within the humble moments, which are moving into and out of the garden each hour of each day. The challenge to the designer is to provide a key to the visitor. To unlock the moments so that they can see what they otherwise might miss. The challenge to the profession is to see the humble moments, the individual connection of a person to a place, as valuable. In order to re-associate people with the world around them, a garden must jolt their everyday experience. It must draw a person in, ask them to linger, and provide an experience which goes deeper than appreciation, which means that one can place value on something. The goal of a well designed garden is to forge a connection, which is a tie or a bond between two things.

The first word many landscape architects will learn is genius loci, the spirit of a place. The genius loci is the condition of the place that a designer should work within and respond to. Genius loci anchors a site to a specific place, generating a work which has not been imposed, but born out of the site. However, the garden is not only a response to the site, it is an act of human creation. It is a form of personal expression aimed at connecting the individual to the larger whole of nature. A great garden is a response to the soul, the *anima*. The genius animi, the spirit of the soul, in a garden speaks to the very human part of a garden. A garden is not just a replication of nature, it is an abstraction of nature that has been shaped by the human mind to reveal a relationship to nature. Great gardens bring the genius loci into tension with the genius animi. They are born out of the site while being infused with qualities that grab the attention of a person and draw them into a connection with a place. *The Garden Project* is exploring how to unlock the genius animi of a garden, to provide a unique key to each individual who will experience a place over time.

Left: grid of moments at Winterthur garden from the summer of 2014.

I love gardens that are unique. Unique means exceptional. Exceptional for gardens always means personal. A garden could be the most simple or the most sophisticated, small or huge, but it should be a personal, private vision. What is important is its ‘anima‘, its soul, its character, its grandeur of vision, its essence. It might come from its creator, a hired gardener, the landscape designer, or the owner. When all are united, to bring together design, horticulture, style, originality, beauty, it’s a masterpiece.

Guy Hervais

GARDEN HISTORICAL

“The fact that human beings create such things as gardens is strange for it means that there are aspects of our humanity which nature does not naturally accommodate, which we must make room for in nature's midst. This in turn means that gardens mark our separation from nature even as they draw us closer to it, that there is something distinctly human in us that is related to nature yet is not of the order of nature.”
Robert Pogue Harrison

CULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS

The Garden Project's exploration of the meaning of the garden for the modern profession of landscape architecture must first begin with the history of the garden through time. Why has the garden been important to different cultures, what has it meant within different historical contexts, and what characterizes the garden in the profession today?

Spiritual Symbology in the Garden.

Gardens have been central to the history of human civilizations. It is how we mediate the tension between our human nature and the world around us. Central to any investigation in the garden today must first begin with what the garden has meant through time. Like Rogers states, as humans we innately understand the manifold imperfections of this world. There is disease and hunger and poverty and disasters and war, and death and hard work. Throughout history, the garden is a place in which man can, in a sense, cultivate hope. Mara Miller states in her book, The Garden as Art, “Every garden is an attempt at the reconciliation of the oppositions which constrain our existence; the act of creating a garden, however limited it may be, is not only an assertion of control over our physical surroundings but a symbolic refusal of the terms of our existence. As such it is always an act of hope.” By taking a piece of our environment and cultivating life and bringing imagination to the world, we are going beyond what the world simply gives to us and making something new. In this way, a garden has a deeply spiritual and intellectual function. It requires us to use our minds to imagine a small piece of earth as different than it already is. Once a garden is created, it is a continual reminder of the rhythms of our world. Life and death and rebirth.

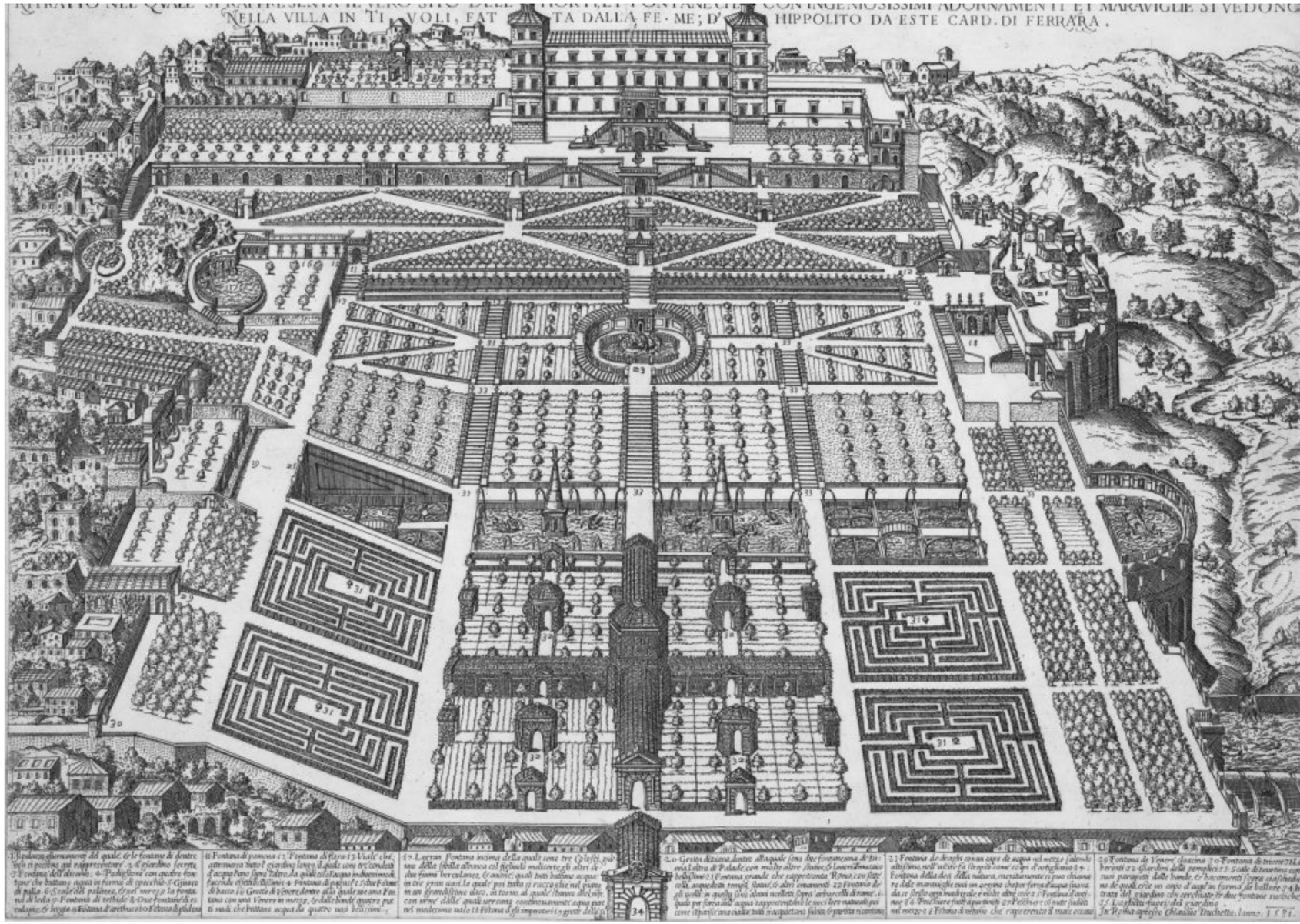
In the Bible, man was created in the garden. It was in the garden that man and woman first built a relationship with each other and tended the earth. It was a bounded and privileged spot on earth, and once they sinned they were banished. In Ancient Greece, the garden was where Plato began his academy. It was there that rigorous intellectual thought and philosophical ideals were taught. From man’s earliest history, the garden has always been a center for both spiritual and intellectual engagement.

The early Islamic gardens were visions of paradise. They were a green oasis in the middle of the harsh desert. They were symbolic of their beliefs of paradise with rills of water, fruit trees, and shade. They stood in direct contrast to the surrounding landscape, offering spiritual and physical respite. They were walled off from the wilderness, protected from the chaos of the unknown. Spiritual symbology in the garden allowed early civilizations to bridge the gap between the known and the unknown.

Humanism in the Garden.

The Renaissance would completely turn the tide of the garden from spiritual references to demonstrations of man's power over nature. As scientific knowledge gained considerable advancements, so did man's confidence in his knowledge of the world, and this new humanistic world view would be physically manifested through the design of their gardens. Organized by a central axis, those who visited the gardens of this time would often reach a pinnacle point that would overlook the entire garden. It was in this moment that the power of the owner was revealed in its full glory. Grand fountains and blankets of boxwood parterres were maintained by armies of gardeners. Although still contained within the confines of the wall, Renaissance gardens signaled an important change in the relationship between man and nature. Humanism would begin to pull the garden away from spiritual representation to displays of human achievement and power through the domination of nature.

In the Enlightenment period, the axis would break free by extending beyond the walls of the garden to the landscape beyond. The latest scientific and mathematical knowledge was utilized to force perspectives, to create fountains that were feats of engineering, and to manipulate plants in ways which had never been explored before. The star designer of the Enlightenment period was the Frenchman Andre Le Notre. His designs at Vaux-le-Vicomte and Versailles are the pinnacle of man's dominance over the landscape. These gardens are artifacts of society ruled by a king. However, it would not be long before the monarchy was overthrown, and with political revolution also came revolution within the garden.



The Landscape in the Garden.

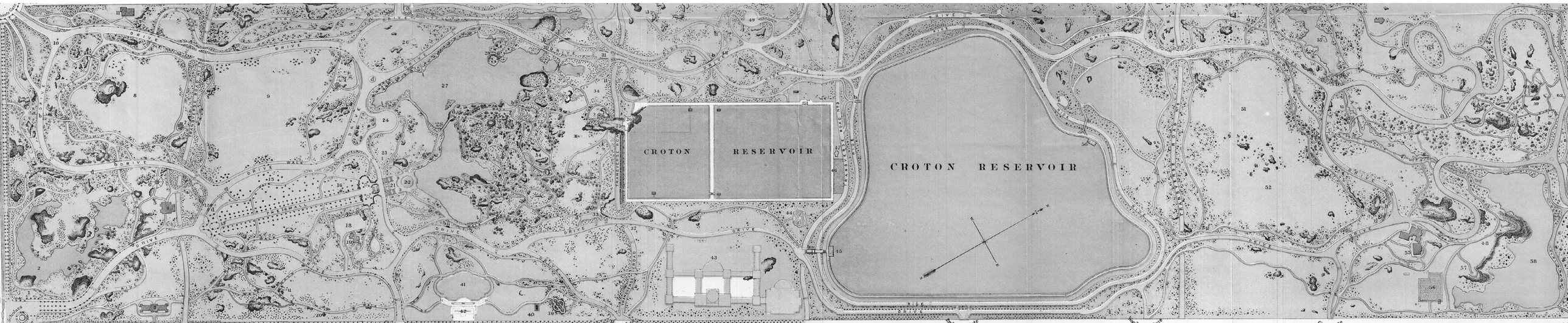
The English Landscape movement would once again mark a significant shift in man's relationship to nature. The first garden to "leap the fence" was William Kent's garden at Rousham. Here, the axis of the Renaissance is discarded for alluring curves and natural forms of the landscape. But the English Landscape movement gardens were anything but natural, they were completely contrived just like any other garden. The monumental shift was in man's posture towards the surrounding landscape. It was no longer something to be dominated, instead it was to be celebrated. "Capability" Brown would rise to fame during this era of garden history as his country estate creations became a must for the high society. In his creation at Chatsworth, Brown moved an entire village to the other side of the hill so that the views out from the garden would remain unobstructed. He planned gaggles of trees in the distance and built false eye catchers on the horizon to draw the eyes through the meadows to a distant hillside. Power during this age was largely based on land ownership, as opposed to previous eras in which power was held completely by the monarchy and the church. By drawing visitors out into the entirety of the landscape either visually or physically, owners of these large estates could reveal their wealth and influence. The English Landscape movement would not just stay in England, but would soon make its way into other parts of Europe, across the Atlantic to America, even reaching the East. This movement came right before the Industrial Revolution, and it would play a pivotal role in the future of public parks around the world. Countries would now concentrate their resources into the human dominance of the machine age.

The rise of consumerism.

The Industrial Revolution marks the rise of consumerism which still pervades our modern culture. Factories began mass producing commodities, and machines were designed to complete tasks at an ever increasing speed. Many works once done by the human hands were now a small step in the factory assembly line. People began to flood cities in search of work. From this influx, many sanitation and pollution issues began to emerge in highly populated areas. People in the city no longer owned land, providing no place for escape or respite from the city life. The individual expression in occupation and home was being lost to the industrial era. This revolution of technology would set the developed world on a trajectory of a slow disassociation with the surrounding world.

Democracy would now have fertile ground to take root within the landscape. In response to many of the sanitation and social issues which the industrial revolution caused, many cities began to realize the need for public space for all citizens of the city, not just the privileged. Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux would be chosen to design the largest scale public park of its day at the heart of the American industrial revolution in New York City. In order to push their design, the Greensward Plan, through the skepticism of the New York bureaucrats, Olmsted coined the term “Landscape Architect” in order to align himself with a profession that would give him ground to stand on. He stated in a letter to a colleague,
“I prefer that we should call ourselves Landscape Architects, following the French and Italian custom, rather than landscape gardeners following the English... because the former title better carries the professional idea. It makes more important the idea of design. ‘Gardener’ includes service corresponding to that of carpenter and mason. Architect does not. Hence it is more discriminating and prepares the minds of clients for dealing on professional principles,” (Major, 185). The Greensward Plan would become a reality in Central Park, and Olmsted would achieve something which had never been accomplished before on such a scale in a city. It was the green lung of the city, a natural antidote to the hardships of the city life. It was a place where all people from all classes could gather. Olmsted would go on to design and plan many parts of the landscape in cities from coast to coast.

The Industrial Revolution marks the foundation from which our modern culture has been built today. Consumerism pervades the developed world in every way. The history of landscape architecture in America begins with Olmsted, and his defining legacy set precedents that are still pervasive today.



MODERN CONTEXT

THE LANDSCAPE GARDENERS

Olmsted's allegiance with architecture was a decision that was met with some resistance. Julian Raxworthy states in his dissertation on the need for garden craft within the profession of landscape architecture, "The inheritance of an architectural practice from Olmsted in the nineteenth century defined landscape architecture distinctly from garden design, yet still requiring the garden foundation despite the craft of gardening being rejected in favor of the professionalism of architecture," (197). With the creation of landscape architecture came a rift in the garden heritage of the profession. Although she was in strong support of Olmsted's work, Marianna Van Rensselaer, a late nineteenth century architectural critique, advocated that the profession should be called landscape gardening instead of landscape architecture. Rensselaer was recruited by Olmsted to write for the *Garden and Forest* journal, founded by Charles Sargent of the Arnold Arboretum in Boston in 1888. The goal of the journal was to create sustained support of the environment through disseminating knowledge of horticulture, botany, landscape design and preservation, national and urban park development, scientific forestry, and the conservation of forest resources. In her seven part series in the first volume of *Garden and Forest*, Rensselaer walks through her argument for landscape gardening as the fourth of the fine arts. Instead of seeking to align the profession with an existing one like Olmsted, Rensselaer strongly believed that the work of landscape gardeners uses the unique medium of nature to create works which rival any work of painting, sculpture, or architecture. ASLA was founded at the turn of the century, creating a national collition of new landscape architectural professionals. Two of the first women to join the ASLA were Beatrix Farrand and Marian Coffin, both well respected garden designers of the early 20th century. The Garden Club of America would become the organization that sought to stimulate a love for gardening among its members. In England, Gertrude Jeykell became a strong advocate for creating gardens which produced a certain effect instead of just being a collection of plants.

THE MODERNISTS

After WWII came the rise of modernism. In England the movement was led by Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe, who would make waves in the profession not only with his park designs, but also with his garden designs. He sought to make designs which were not just correct, but tapped into the subconscience of a person to create an experience that was meaningful long after they had left. In America, the modernist movement was led by Fletcher Steele, whose work at Naumkeag would break the traditional style of the garden. Thomas Church, became a fierce advocate for the garden with his book *Gardens are for People*. His designs created the garden as an extension of the house, places to be lived in. Following his legacy came the trio of James Rose, Garret Eckbo, and Dan Kiley. James Rose wrote the book *Gardens Make Me Laugh*, which brought his sarcasm and fiery wit into chapters that called out many of the practices of garden design that were being challenged with modernism. One of Kiley's most famous works was at the Miller Garden, which he often said allowed him to explore ideas he had been dreaming of for more than a decade. Modernism would seek to push the boundaries of traditional design by reinterpreting old styles for a modern culture. After the war came the rise of the middle class in America. The suburb brought the promise of the American dream. The modernists set the profession on a trajectory of not just accepting tradition within the profession. Instead it was important to understand what had come before and accurately apply it for the needs of present society.

HORTICULTURISTS AND LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

The 1980's would see a renaissance of the garden in America. The New American Garden movement led by the office of Oheme Van Sweden took the typical American lawn of the suburbs and re-imagined it. The movement asserted that instead of gardens across America looking the same, they could be regional artifacts that used native plants to bring diversity and artistic expression to the garden. The 1990's saw the rise of the Dutch Wave, or New Perennialism movement, led by Piet Oudolf, where perennials are planted in large drifts that are designed based on the plant's qualities through its entire life cycle. Both of these movements were born out of the environmentally conscious context of the current profession. Aside from these larger movements, the profession of landscape architecture seems to still be separated from its gardening heritage. There is a large gap between landscape architects and horticulturists. There are many landscape architects who design gardens as a small facet of their firm, a miniature replica of their larger design style. There are also horticulturists who intimately know and understand plants and create gardens that respond to the natural environment of plants. However, gardens that function as a high art are created when rich design thinking is paired with an intimate knowledge of plant dynamics. The future of the garden must be at the synthesis of these two parts.

GENIUS ANIMI + GENIUS LOCI

The poetic synthesis of the garden comes with designers who are actively engaging genius animi and genius loci. Dan Pearson is a British designer who trained as a horticulturist. He began designing gardens out of a fascination with how plants naturally grow in the wild. His designs derive their form and qualities through the abstraction of how plants grow in nature. His designs are artistically expressed, and they point the visitor back out to the larger whole of nature. Tom Stuart Smith is a British Landscape Architect who also intimately understands plants. However, his designs tap into this knowledge by allowing the qualities of plants to contribute to the overall poetic expression of intellectual ideas in the garden. He consistently explores the relationship between juxtaposition and how the garden allows a series of tensions to stir the mind. Each garden is created from a narrative that knits the garden into a cohesive whole, yet allows room for the imagination. Louis Benech is a French Landscape Architect who also trained as a gardener. His designs are characterized by a deep love for not only plants, but for people. When talking about his gardens, he speaks of the quality of light and of movement. He speaks of stories that owners have told, the seasons changing, and of the story embedded within each design. Each of these designers brings a clear understanding of plants. However, they also bring a deeply poetic eye to the execution of the design. What sets these designers apart is how they are able to infuse each garden with qualities that speak to the human spirit on a much deeper level than just appreciating something well made. In order to create gardens which deeply connect a person to a place, the qualities of the place must take center stage.

GARDEN EXPLORED

> “It is effects that we see first when we are in Nature’s presence, that impress us most, and dwell the longest in our minds.”
> Marianna Van Rensselaer

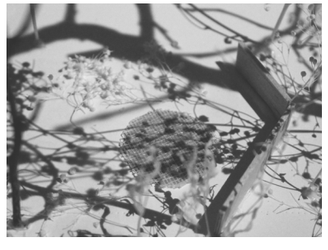
"Contradiction is life's mainspring and core, and if there was only unity and everything was at peace then nothing would want to stir and everything would sink into listlessness." - Schelling, German Philosopher

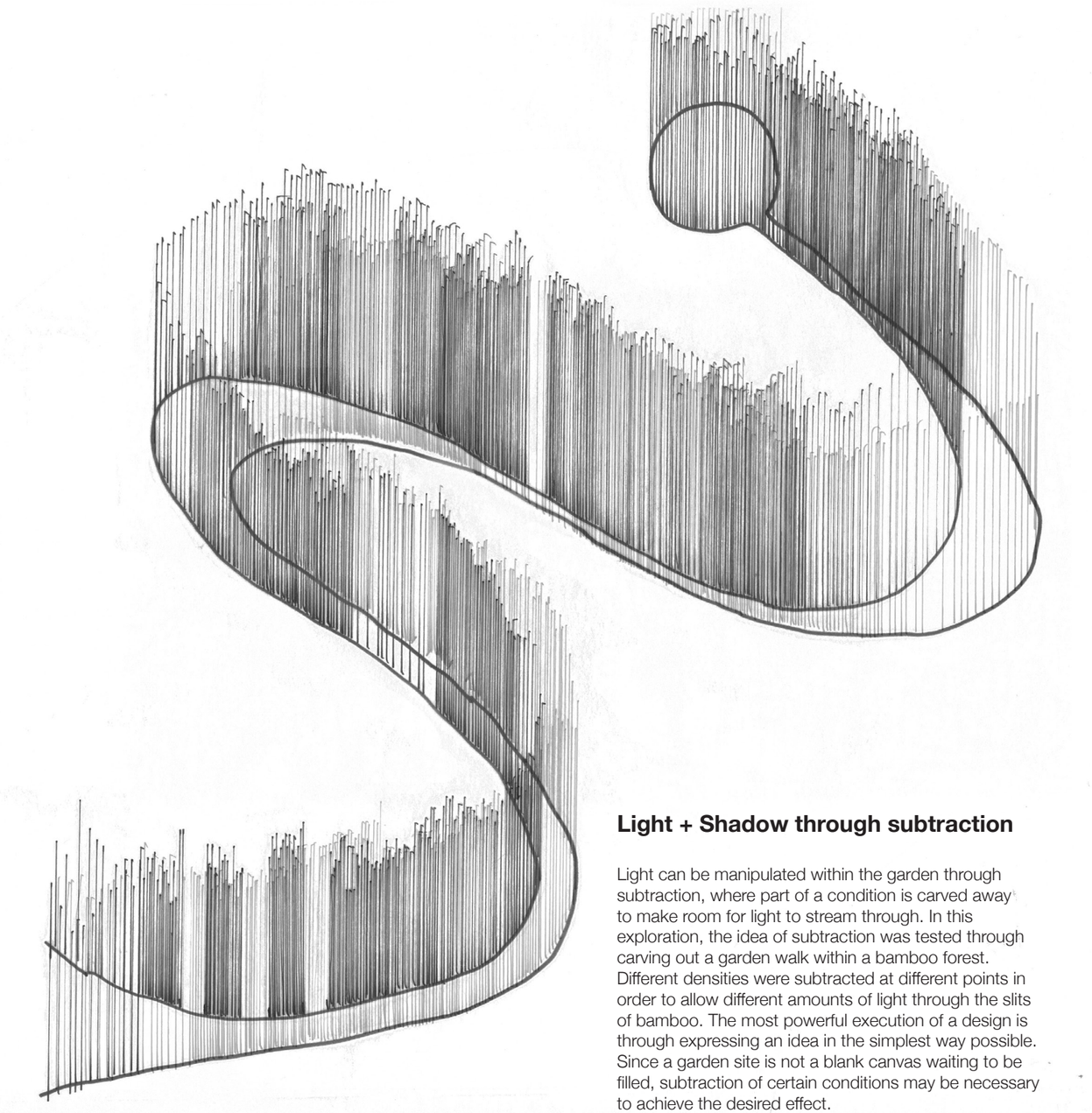
| A | QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

In order to understand how to activate genius animi in a garden, *The Garden Project* identified three main qualities to explore in relation to the personal experience of a garden. The first is light. How can the quality of light in a garden be tampered with by the designer in order to create the atmosphere or mood of a place? And how can the antithesis of light, its shadow, be actively engaged within the design? The second quality is movement. Movement is the way the body experiences a place, whether it is physical movement through the space or mental movement through the imagination. How can movement be choreographed by the designer to create a dynamic experience? And, how can the antithesis of movement, pause, allow for reflection and internalization of the experience. The final quality is ephemerality. It is through the collected experience found in the little details of a place that personal affections begin to take hold. How can the fleeting moments of a garden be framed for the visitor through the contrast of ephemerality and fixity?

|1| Light + Shadow

Light is the medium through which we see our world. Colors, form, and textures are perceived in our minds through the illumination of light or the absence of it. It is the quality of light that is the most transient quality of a garden. It changes with each passing minute. It is through light that a designer can create different moods and atmospheres. Fletcher Steele states in his book *Gardens and People*, "[The designer] lets the sun come where it will, and forces the shadows to fall where he directs by size and placing of the trees. North of a house and out of the sunshine he covers a lawn with sky, and pulls light down from above to get the cold indifferent clarity of a painter's studio. Over some nook he draws a dense leaf canopy, forcing all illumination to enter from the side, which is eerie, reminding one of thunderstorms when topside is black and only on the horizon is a streak of white. He uses woods to shroud trails with perpetual dimness. He tempers the glaring zenith spreading high overhead the lace of a locust grove," (14). The designer has the power to play with the mood of the garden through the use of light and shadow. Light and shadow can be manipulated through both additive and subtractive design.



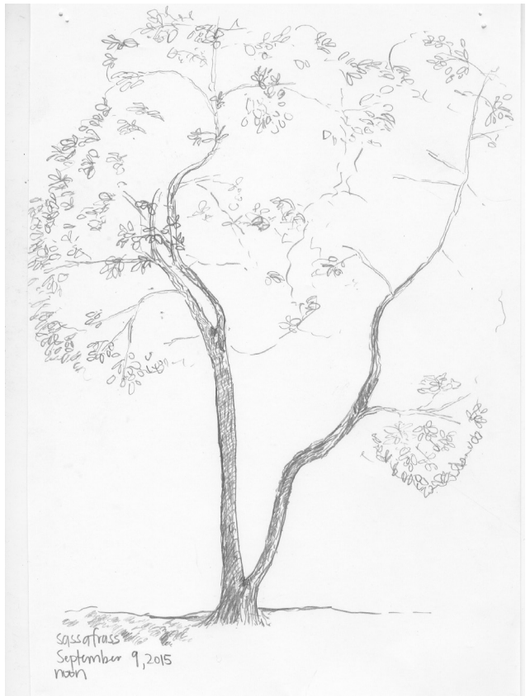


Light + Shadow through subtraction

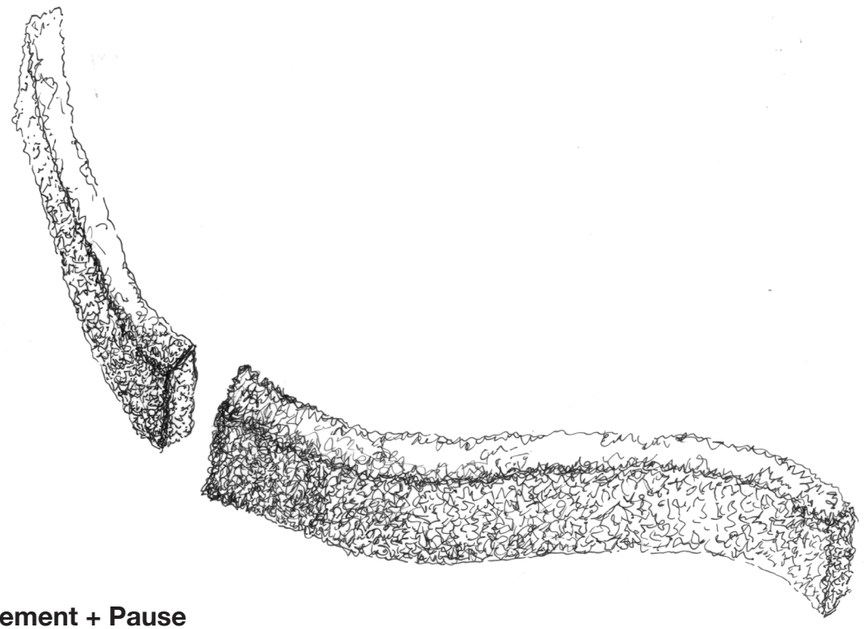
Light can be manipulated within the garden through subtraction, where part of a condition is carved away to make room for light to stream through. In this exploration, the idea of subtraction was tested through carving out a garden walk within a bamboo forest. Different densities were subtracted at different points in order to allow different amounts of light through the slits of bamboo. The most powerful execution of a design is through expressing an idea in the simplest way possible. Since a garden site is not a blank canvas waiting to be filled, subtraction of certain conditions may be necessary to achieve the desired effect.

Light + Shadow through addition

Light may also be manipulated through the addition of certain conditions in order to achieve a desired effect. The addition of a condition, like a tree, will not only change the quality of the light which is passing through, but also create a shadow. This exploration compiled a shadow library through photographing various shadows of different species at the same time of day. This exploration revealed two main factors in relation to the qualities of the shadow. First, the definition of the shadow is directly related to the distance of the plant to the ground. An object which is further from the ground will create a more blurred shadow. Secondly, the definition of a shadow is directly related to the density of the medium it is passing through. If light is passing through a white oak leaf, the shadow will be much more blurred since more light is able to penetrate. Understanding the full spectrum of effects a plant or material is capable of allows the designer to most clearly execute the desired effect.



Species analysis of form and texture

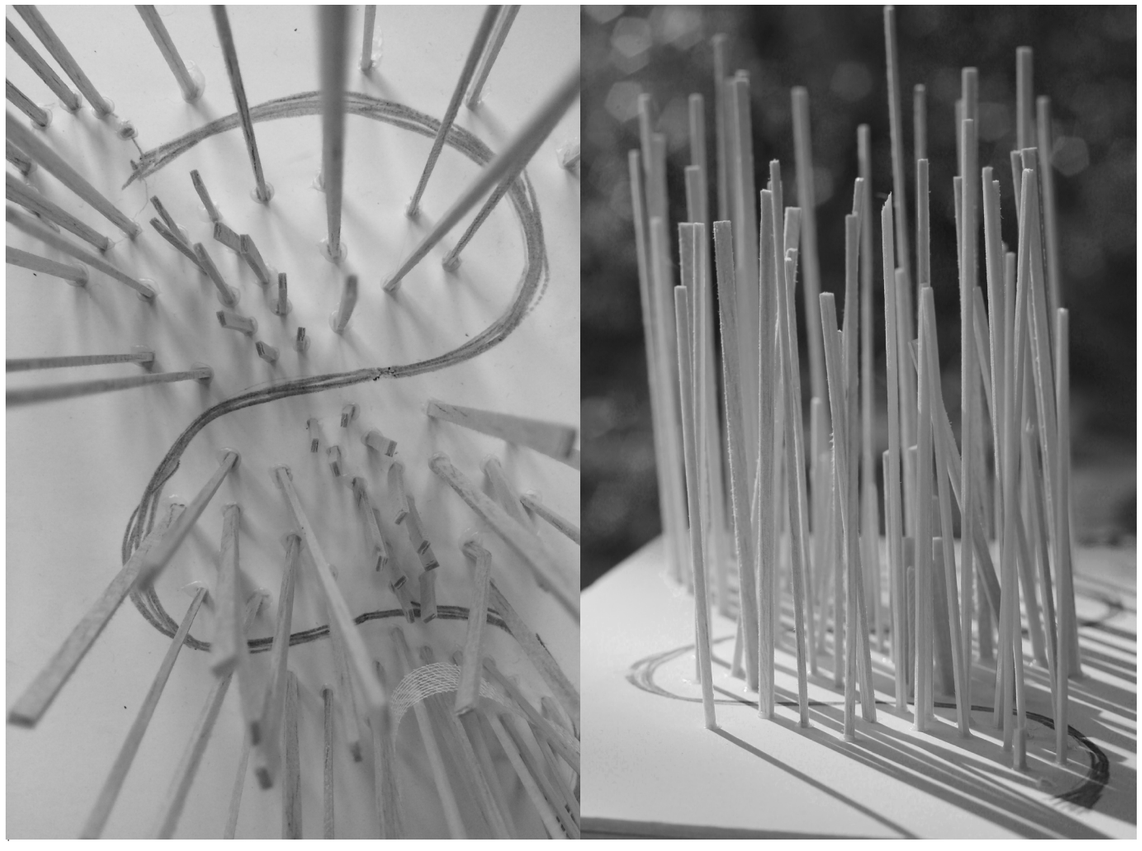


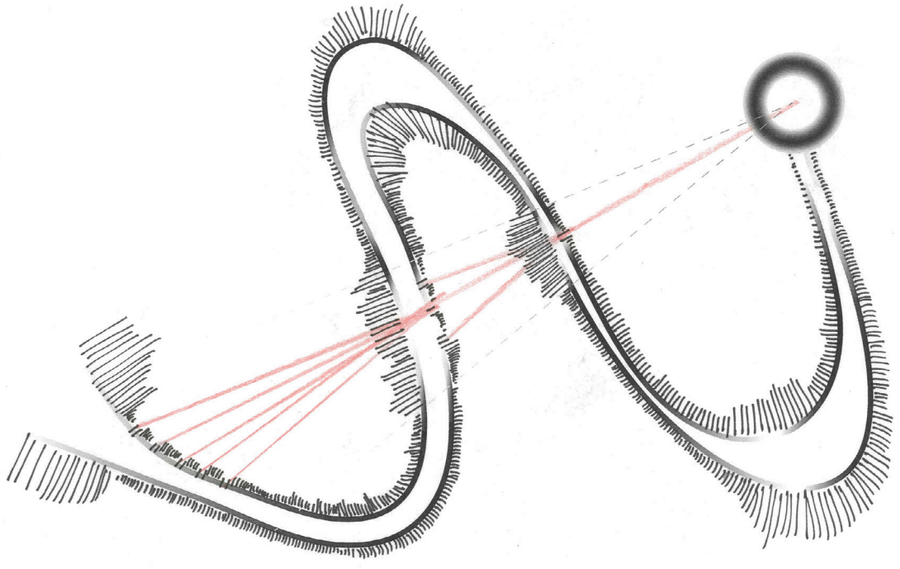
Movement + Pause

Movement is the way a space unfolds before the mind. Movement can be activated in the garden through the choreography of the paths, the sight lines into and out of the garden, and the rhythm of moving and rest that knits the different parts of the design into a collective experience. The map to the right illustrates the path system of the gardens at Rousham in Oxfordshire, England. This garden is credited for being the first English Landscape Movement garden since it broke free from the geometry of the formal Renaissance and embraced the whole landscape, resulting in a garden which is bounded on all sides while letting the mind pull in the surrounding landscape. There are over 1000 routes around Rousham, creating a new way of seeing the same garden through the movement of the visitor. The movement within the garden is not just in the physical path the visitor takes, but also in the path the eyes take. Across the fields of grazing sheep up on the hill, there is a fake facade of an old building, which was placed there by the garden's designer, William Kent, to draw the visitor's eye beyond the boundaries of the garden. Although the facade is not meant to be traveled to, it creates movement of the mind within the garden. Each part of the garden is like the scene of a play, yet the choreography of movement binds each scene together into a gripping plot that draws the visitor through the space using imagination, compression, and mystery.

Movement through imagination

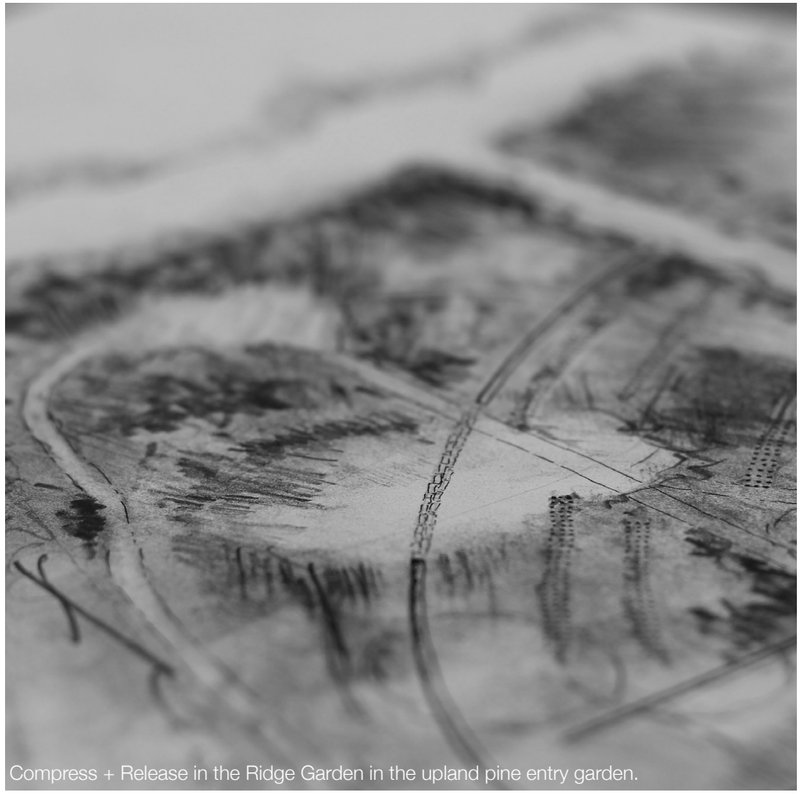
The most powerful tool a visitor brings with them to a garden is their imagination. The job of a designer is to set the framework and choreography of the experience, and allow the visitor to fold into the experience their own memories and interpretations. This creates a very personal experience, instead of an imposed design narrative which tells the visitor what to see instead of how to see it. In this exploration, a model was built to test how a dense field of bamboo could be manipulated to force the feet and the eye to travel different paths. A long sinuous curve was sliced through the bamboo field at varying widths. Smaller windows were cut through the bamboo at specific point to channel the eye to a single open space of light. However, the feet must travel around the curve while the eye is continually fixed on the opening of light. The model was constructed in order to understand spatially the implications of the drawing in the context of the entire field condition.



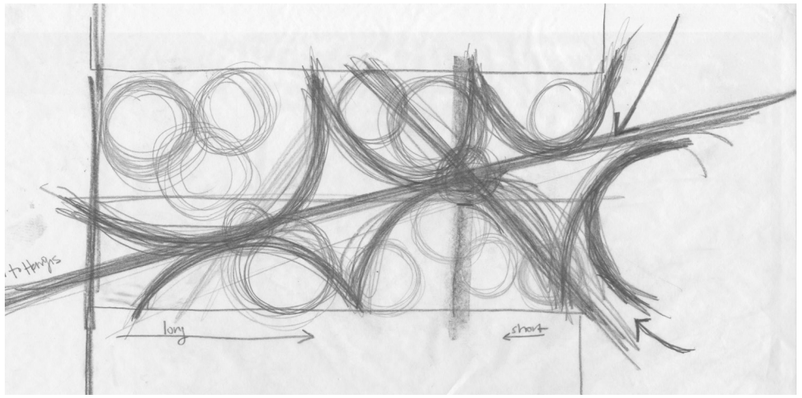


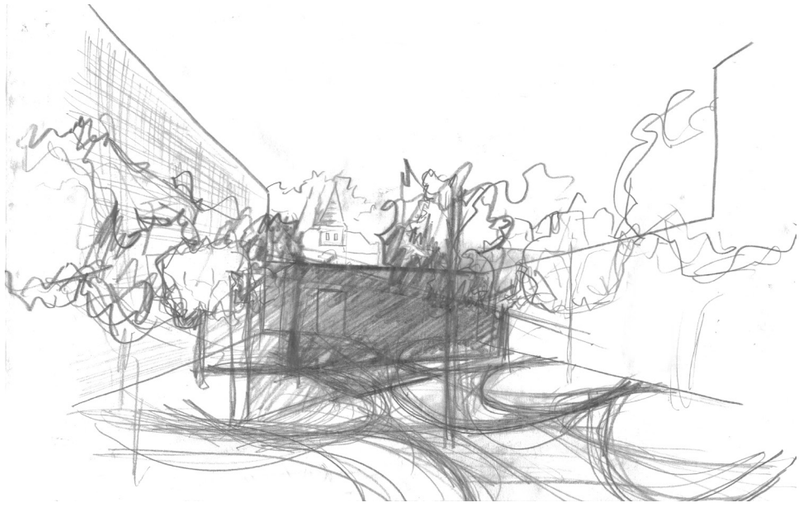
Movement through compression + release

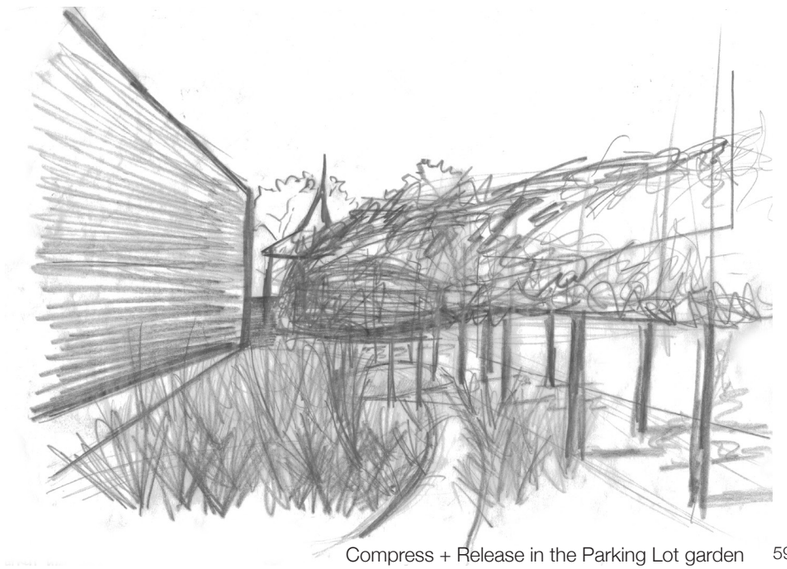
Forcing the movement of a person into a tight space and then releasing them into an open area, or vice versa, keeps the mind engaged. With a variety of spatial experiences, the body and mind cannot get fully comfortable in one condition. Olmsted utilized this tactic at the Biltmore House in Asheville, NC. On the three mile approach drive, he created a forest which gradually pushed closer and closer to the road. The compression of the space becomes its tightest at the top of the mountain before the road bursts out in front of the dominating figure of the house. Olmsted utilized compression and release to heighten the feeling of openness and grandeur when the carriage emerged from the forest. It is the interplay of the two qualities which makes its opposite experienced to its full potential. It is the balance of the two throughout the movement of the garden which the designer must carefully orchestrate.



Compress + Release in the Ridge Garden in the upland pine entry garden.







Compress + Release in the Parking Lot garden

Movement through mystery

Mystery captures interest and pulls a person through a space. Mystery also allows for discovery. By revealing and concealing at strategic times, the mind is constantly intrigued. The word mystery comes from the Latin word *mysterium,* which means a secret rite or religious truth. Mystery is not simply mysterious for the sake of being mysterious. Mystery points the mind back to nature itself, where the vastness of creation cannot be completely understood by the human mind in its entirety. With mystery also comes moments of clarity. Something that is given up too easily is not contemplated with as much thought. In order to create gardens which tap into the genius animi of a person, mystery must be executed physically or intellectually in order to actively engage the body and mind. Mystery can be created through a number of ways in a garden. First, the entire garden is not given up at once. Through the act of discovery a person takes ownership over the experience. If the whole scene is given up at once, the narrative has already been written without a person engaging with the garden either physically or mentally. By using mystery in the garden, the goal is to provide a moment of revelation that draws all the details of an experience into a collective idea.

Ephemerality + Fixity

A garden by its inherent nature is ephemeral. It must be cultivated in order to sustain its future. Without the hands of a gardener, the garden will cease to exist. Its ephemeral quality is also what makes a garden such a powerful work of art. It does not have a static number of details to be observed, but it has an infinite number to be experienced. The details of a garden are always changing within the framework provided by the designer. Just through the day, a garden will change in hundreds of ways as the sun moves or the weather changes. One of the most important generators of ephemerality within the garden is seasonal change. Each season brings with it its own moods, atmospheres, memories, and potential. Even from year to year each season comes and goes in a unique way depending on the climatic context. But seasons in their ephemerality provide a rhythm to the world. Through framing each season's unique qualities, the garden can connect the modern culture of disassociation back to the natural rhythms of the earth. An essential part of ephemerality within the garden is its opposite, fixity. Fixed points within the garden, such as trees, hedges, evergreen forms, paths, or walls allow the ephemeral qualities to be measured against a datum. The following exploration used the medium of collage to unpack the qualities of each season by amplifying certain characteristics. These collages could serve as a mood board for a future design proposals.

Image: The mystery of fog is used to capture the sunlight streaming through the canopy in a garden at Chaumont-Sur-Loire in France.

WINTER

Winter reveals the bones of the garden. Its days are cold, damp, windy, yet dynamic. Details which are hidden by the lushness of the other seasons are given a chance to take center stage. The forms of trees stand like statues in the garden, firm and promising. The bark of trees and shrubs brings diversity to the stark forms. Smooth, exfoliating, or furrowed bark that was once hidden under a blanket of leaves now emerges. Evergreen shrubs and trees contribute a deep green backdrop to the garden with their thick, coarse leaves. The entire spectrum of holly, pine, sweetbay magnolia, wax myrtle, boxwood, magnolia and camellia bring form when others have faded. The grasses and perennials have dropped their flowers and the foliage has turned the entire spectrum of brown. Dark seed heads droop their heads as the dead foliage sways. Dark black, purple, or red berries hang where flowers once were. A carpet of moss creates a carpet of green in the damp shade. Purple, brown, black, and deep green are the colors that signal the onset of winter. The sun sneaks into the garden at a sharp angle, gracing only certain privileged spots during the short hours of daylight. Underneath trees, the areas that were shady havens in the summer now provide warmth under the leafless branches. During this time is when the garden can be shaped by the gardener, as many of the inconsistencies are revealed. The gardener is pruning and planning, preparing the garden for the slow transition to spring. In January the camellias bloom, providing a taste of the spring flowers to come.

SPRING

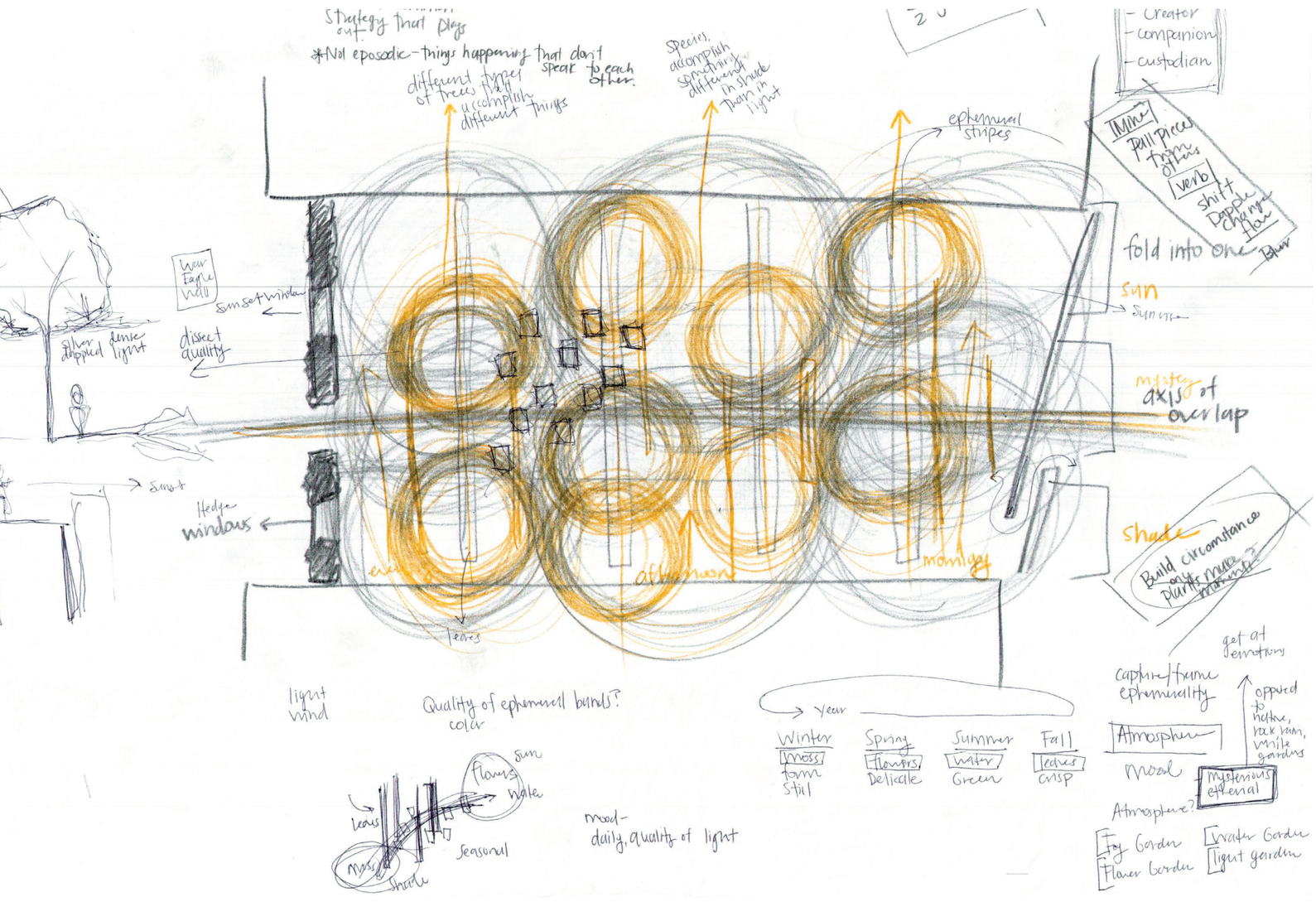
In spring the garden re-awakens. The sound of birds are the first to announce the transition from winter to spring. Bulbs are the first signal of life, coming forth from the ground almost unnoticed until their bright flowers open. First the snowdrops, emerging through the snow and ice with their dark green blades and perfectly white heads. Hyacinth fill the air with the sweet smell of spring, while daffodils and tulips signal that spring has moved in to stay. Yellow, white, purple, pink, red, and orange color little pockets all around. Seemingly overnight comes the first bloom of spring, where the buds of tree leaves unfurl and the dark hues of the winter are taken over by the lime green of new growth. Even the evergreens have a fuzzy top of leaves that will soon fade into a dark green by summer. Cherry blossoms begin to delicately grace the garden, only staying for days at a time and representing the fragility of this season. Dogwood flowers sit in tiers above the dark spreading branches. The weather is still unpredictable. Sunny days are interspersed with rain and cold snaps or the lingering snow shower. Each spring is completely different from the next as the flow of new life is determined by the flow of the weather. But spring marches on, and the fronds of ferns begin to emerge, slowly uncurling each part from its perfect spiral. Hostas stick just above the soil before their leaves widen, making a coarse green blanket among the vertical ferns. Irises dot the edge of the water. The shade is fresh with the delicate white flowers of Solomon's seal and lily of the valley. In spring the gardeners sees the work from the fall and winter taking shape. As rain showers bring life to the plants, it also brings life to the weeds. The continuous battle for dominance begins in the spring. As the bulbs die back and the leaves have all arrived, the garden begins to feel more stable. The threat of cold is now gone and the warmth has moved in to stay for the next few months.

SUMMER

Summer is characterized by fullness. The delicate spring flowers have faded and the towering growth of summer takes over. The humidity of the season is first to arrive, as the air becomes thick with moisture even before the full brunt of heat arrives. Insects gravitate to the garden. Bees are busy foraging among the flowers, and the leaves on the trees have reached their full growth. The shady perennials of spring are taken over by the boldness of summer. Echinacea stands tall above the grasses with its large cones protruding out of its pink petals. Vibrancy takes over the whites of spring with a blaze of color. Red, orange, pink, and yellow highlight pops of white. There seems to be something new in the perennial bed each day in the summer garden. But the dynamism of the perennials makes the steadiness of the trees and hedges a restful place. The shade is made cooler by the heat of the sun. The sound of water cools the mind. By the end of summer flowers will start to fade. The hum of insects becomes quiet and the transience of fall begins.

FALL

Fall begins to calm the quickening buzz of summer. The first indication of its arrival is the distinct crispness in the air, replacing the heavy humidity with lightness. Leaves on the black gum and dogwoods are the first to begin the change. Green mixes with reds and orange. There is a transience to fall as each plant is changing at a different rate. Some leaves change colors but hold on, like the translucent browns of the beech and hornbeam. Some leaves slowly drop their leaves, littering the ground with a constant mat of red or orange or yellow. Other trees like the ginkgo lose their leaves within a matter of hours. The rates of change are unique. The weather is unpredictable, sometimes warm and sunny, other times cold or rainy, caught between summer and winter. The form of trees begins to emerge. Grasses drop their flowers, and colors fade into browns and golden yellows. Evergreen plants move forward from the background, creating form against the change. The sun is drooping to a steeper angle, creating a brighter yet warmer light in the evenings. Soon there are more cold days than warm, and the crispness of the mornings turns to frost along the ground. Some leaves still hang on the trees, but winter is moving in to stay.



| B | SITE IMPLICATIONS

The design tests for *The Garden Project* were conducted on two sites, the Ridge Garden and the Parking Lot Garden. The sites are opposite in their existing conditions. The Ridge Garden is embedded within a lush woodland in northern Auburn, and the Parking Lot Garden is a flat plane of asphalt in the heart of downtown Auburn. The juxtaposition of these characteristics allows for a wide spectrum of analysis while exploring the qualities of a garden central to *The Garden Project*'s investigation. Each design is centered around a series of strategies that push the boundaries of the garden's meaning and interrogate the process of deriving form in the garden. The resulting designs have a framework that gives structure and rhythm to the garden. But there is also a narrative embedded within each design. As time passes, the moments of the garden flow through the structural framework, and it is through the contrast of the fixity and ephemerality that the moments are captured through time. The designs explore different mediums in order to understand how the ideas can be tested and represented. Each site will be analyzed through the lens of light + shadow, movement + pause and ephemerality + fixity. The final analysis is the writing of a design narrative that explores the moments which bring life to the framework of the design.

| 1 | RIDGE GARDEN

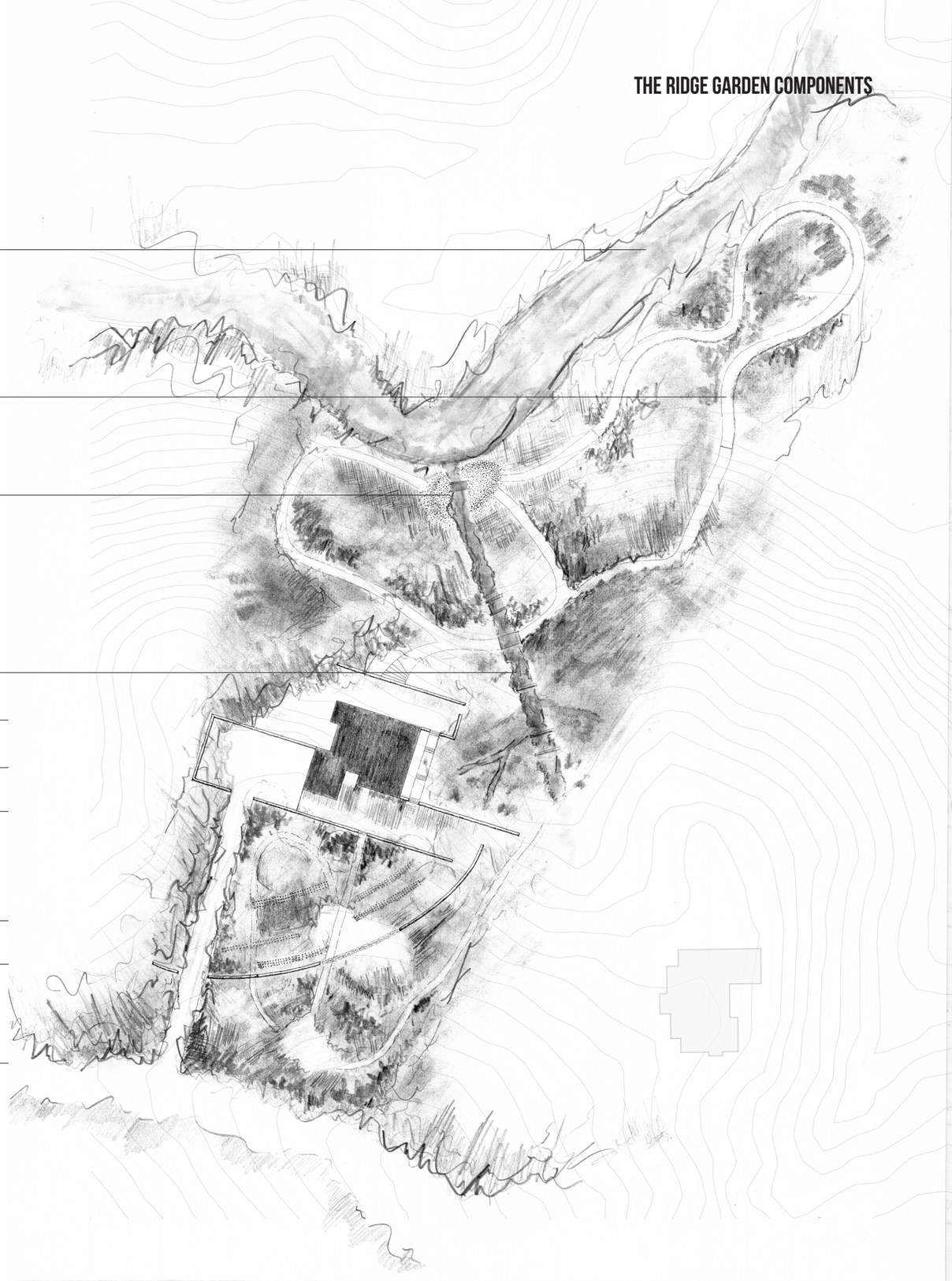
The Baker's garden is located in the northeastern side of Auburn on a ridge that borders the Saugahatchee Creek. It is 4.5 acres of Alabama woodland, and it is thought to have been used as cotton terraces in the early settlement of Auburn. Traces of the old terraces can still be seen down the hillside. Before the house was built in the 90's, the land was used as hunting grounds. It is bountiful with wildlife and a diversity of vegetation, from upland pine forest to mixed lowland hardwood forest. This site serves as a rich fabric to explore moments that are already happening, why the moments are important, and how to uncover, amplify, and explore how the design can actively abstract those moments for a specific design purpose.

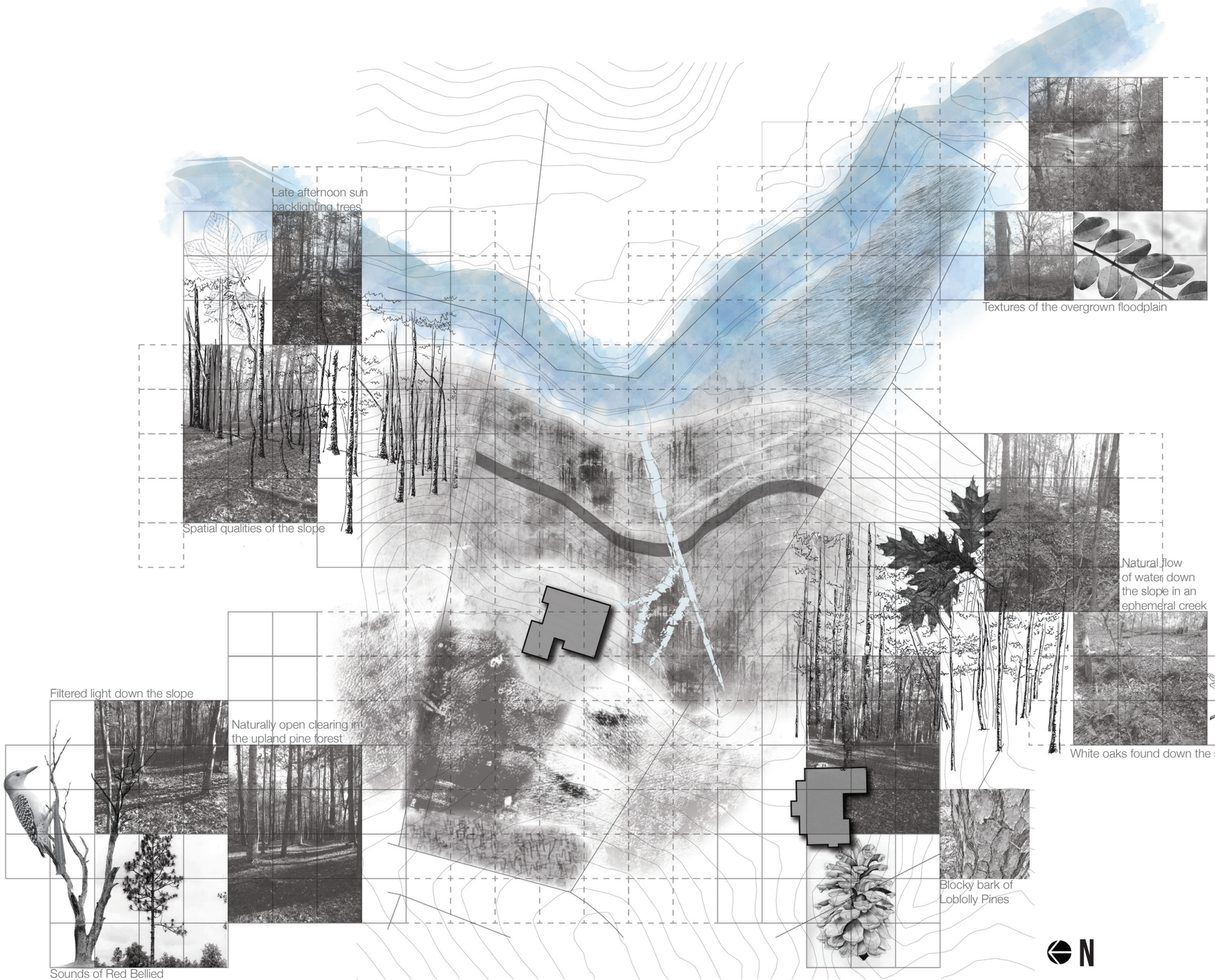
RIDGE GARDEN NARRATIVE

Spring Morning

It is a cool March morning, just as the sun has risen. Light is streaming through the woods to the left of the door outside onto the front terrace. There is a stillness in the garden, and the sounds of birds high up in the pines fill the space. In the planting beds next to the porch, strips of white daffodils are popping up through the dark green ground cover. Their flower heads are shimmering with water droplets from the rain shower the night before. The green moss between the cracks of the terrace stones is a vibrant green in the morning light. Through the far wall of the terrace, the white heads of more daffodils can be seen. Past the wall and up the steps is a tight thicket of azaleas that tower just above, a bright lime green in the middle of a dark pine forest. The eye is first drawn down along the central axis into the clearing in the middle of the woods, where large arcs of daffodils sweep through the woodland floor and disappear under more shrubs. The rhythm of the thick pine trunks now pulls the eye up through the space and into the tops of the canopies. The dogwoods around the edge of the clearing are striking in their form, their dark bark deeply contrasts with the white flowers beginning to take bloom down their limbs. Their branches slightly bend into the center of the clearing. Continuing down the straight walk, there is another dense thicket of shrubs, interspersed with gentle filtered light. Just beyond is a pocket of light. Entering this clearing, shadows of the understory trees are cast onto the white gravel. The sun is warm and the sound of crunching gravel fades back to the sound of birds. To the right there is a small opening between the dense green of camellias. A much smaller path disappears around the corner, curving back through pockets of filtered light and dense thickets. Following the arc of the stone wall, the pines recede and oak trees begin to feather in. A the top of the hill a small creek runs down the steep slope. Down the stairs to the back terrace there is a framed view of the Saugahatchee, and only a small glimmer of the sun's reflection can be seen. Moving across the hillside creek and through a tall thicket, the sculptural outline of a boardwalk is revealed at the bottom of the hill, and it hints at something worth seeing. At the bottom of the hill, the sound of gravel crunching abruptly stops, and the thud of footsteps on wood echoes. A carpet of ferns barely reach over the top of the boardwalk, allowing the eye to slice through the field of green along the wooden curve. The edge of the walk skirts the lowest point of the creek as it turns, drawing the eye back up through the beech trees and white oaks to the house up on top of the hill. Emerging from the fern gully, the gravel path disappears again into the wax myrtle that lines the bank of the creek. The sweetbay magnolias have a flush of bright green new growth. The older leaves lay overturned beneath the limbs, the backs creating a silver mat below. Where the smaller hillside creek and the Saugahatchee meet, the gravel path expands into an oval terrace at the creek's edge. The hillside creek is channeled into a thin, clean line between stones that cuts through the gravel. The sound of water trickling from the stone channel into the creek can be heard. Light, movement, water. One moment in time.

THE RIDGE GARDEN COMPONENTS





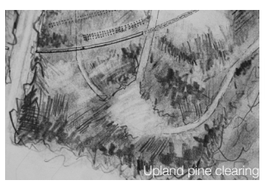
SITE IMPLICATIONS

|1| Light + Shadow

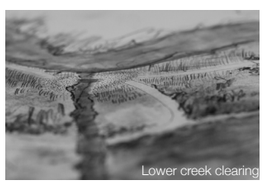
Critical to this design was an intimate understanding of what conditions are existing on the site. Extensive time spent on the site revealed where the light is coming through the dense canopy during each part of the day, what plants were naturally growing on the ridge, how the species change down the slope and next to the creek, how the upland pine forest feels compared to the mixed hardwood canopy at the bottom, and how the spatial qualities in these spaces change over the year. By understanding all of the big picture parts of the site down to the smaller details, strategic areas were identified to open up the canopy or highlight an existing condition. Light and shadow at the Ridge Garden used both additive and subtractive methods to create different light and shadow qualities.

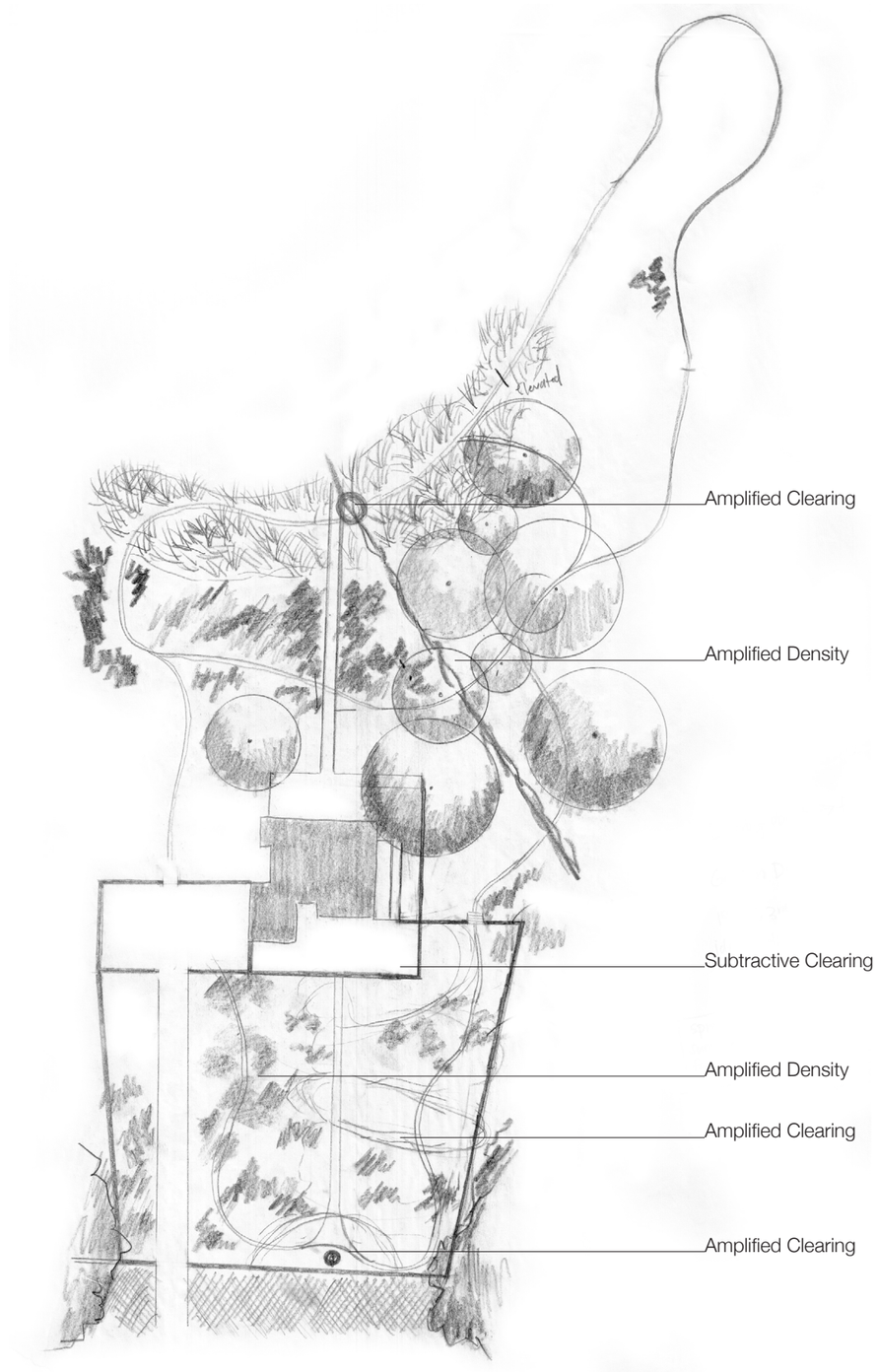
Collage of light on upland pine axis

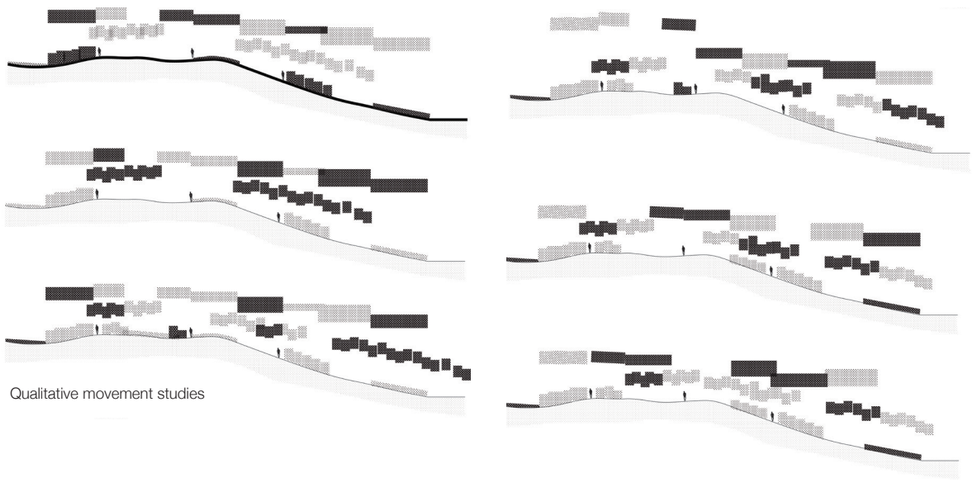
In the upland pine forest, two natural clearings were already present. The house sits directly within the thick canopy of where the pines meet the hardwoods on the slope. A terrace was cut out from the forest to creating a sharply contrasting open condition compared to the thickness of the forest. An axis from the entry terrace into the pine forest slices straight through the two clearings and dense canopy cover. The natural clearings are amplified and framed by thinning out strategic trees and allowing the white gravel of the path to widen out into the clearing. The white gravel serves as a canvas for the filtered shadows of the pines to dance. Next to the clearings understory trees are added, which amplify the contrast between the openings in the canopy and the density of the forest. Behind the house another terrace is cut out from the canopy on the hillside. Where the trees become thick on the southern side of the house, the planting was amplified in order to block part of the view down to the creek. The openness of the back terrace once again sharply contrasts with the density of the hardwood forest. Where the ephemeral creek meets the Saugahatchee, a natural opening of the canopy allows light to filter through in bright spots. No thinning of trees occurs at this point, only the expansion of the gravel path into a lower terrace by the creek.


Upland pine clearing

Loblolly pine shadow


Lower creek clearing

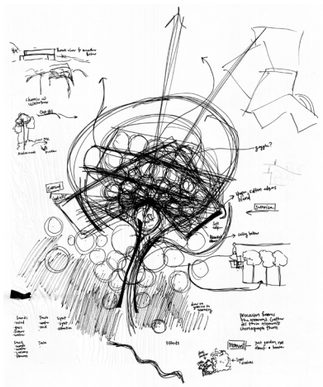




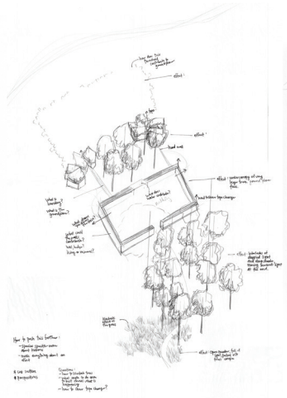
Qualitative movement studies

|2| Movement + Pause

Since the Ridge Garden covers a large area, movement through the site is essential for the experience to feel cohesive. The section to the right shows studies of how the spatial qualities change moving down the site towards the creek. It explored where the shrub layer is dense and where it is permeable or open, where the understory is thick and where there is a gap in the ground plane and upper story trees. The main exploration tests where views should be blocked and where views should be opened. There must be a balance of revealed and concealed. The lower section shows the spectrum of conditions moving down the site.



Site line study



Movement axon

Conceal/reveal study

Path choreography

By exploring movement through a variety of mediums such as plan sketches, collage, axon, and section, the full spectrum of the experience can be interrogated and inform future design decisions.

Below is a collage perspective of the Ridge Garden wetland. The sculptural board walk stands in direct contrast to the wildness of the wetland plants. The fixity of the path acts as a datum for the ephemerality of the plants to change against. The curved boardwalk is also concealed in certain parts so that the entire view is never perceivable from one point.

|3| Ephemerality + Fixity

Central to the Ridge Garden's design exploration is revealing the beauty of the ephemeral moments which were already happening on site, but could easily be missed. In order to create a garden that can be experienced as a relationship, these moments must not only be understood, but actively framed through the design in order to reveal the highest qualities. The contrast between the wildness of nature and human design were harnessed to reveal the ephemerality.

Gaggles of dogwoods bring striking signals of spring and fall. White flowers float on the limbs in early spring, and the bright red of their leaves are among the first to change in the winter. In the summer their leaves provide a strategic addition of density adjacent to open areas. Their dark, gangly forms contrast with the straightness of the pine trunks. The contrast through the seasons to their surrounding reveals the ephemeral changes of the dogwood over time.

Arcs of seasonal perennials run across the forest floor in the upland garden. In spring the daffodils bring light into the darkness of winter, signaling the onset of spring. In the fall the fronds of ferns turn a golden yellow and begin to die back. In the winter the lenten rose begins blooming, and the dark foliage still marks the arc with the ferns in the summer months after the bulbs die back. By using the same shape with the arc but allowing it to flux with the seasons, one can register the change as time moves.

Although seasonal change is the most tangible way for a designer to engage ephemerality, there are also many other sources of ephemerality in the garden. The sunset, sound of birds, shadows dancing against the smooth trunks of beech trees. All of the qualities of a site can be abstracted, amplified, and designed with to created a powerful experience.

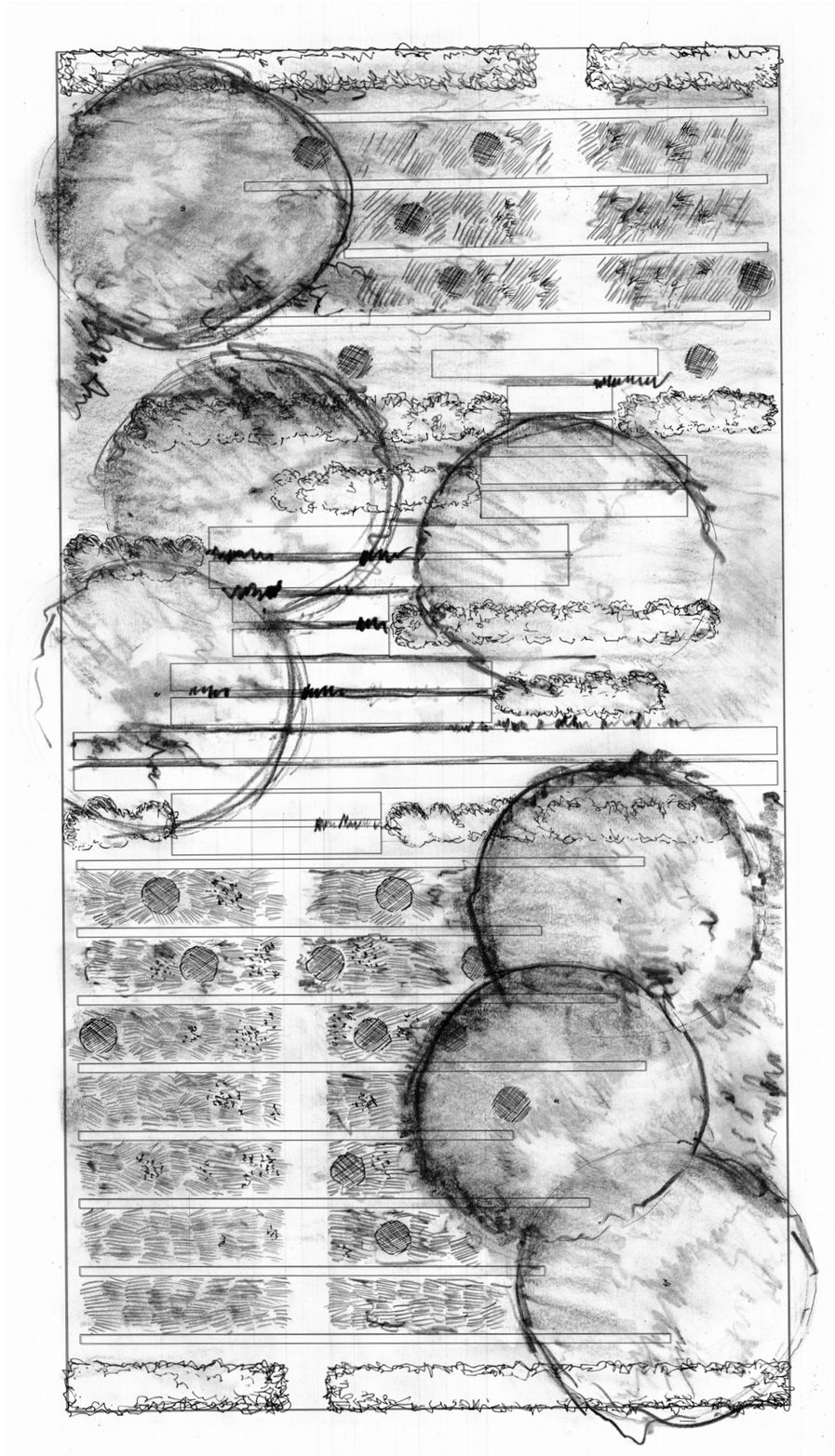
PARKING LOT GARDEN

The Parking Lot Garden is located along College Street in downtown Auburn. It is 50 feet wide and 100 feet long, completely paved with asphalt. Along the northern end of the site is the J and M Bookstore building, about 25 feet tall. The building on the south end of the lot is several floors and is around 40 feet tall. This site appears to be more of a “blank slate” than the Ridge Garden site. However, because of the lack of diversity in its existing conditions, it causes the existing site conditions to be significantly multiplied. Therefore, the movement of light became a diving force behind design decisions. The goal of this test site was to understand how the design can not just unearth moments in the garden, but create them.

PARKING LOT GARDEN NARRATIVE

Fall Afternoon

The leaves on the hornbeam hedge bordering the garden are stuck between green and brown. There is a slight translucency to the hedge, and the feet are drawn through the tiny gap to the left. Looking down the central axis, the form of a tree is perceivable though the gaps in the boxwood hedges. The mystery of what lies beyond pulls the feet down the first path. The setting sun is streaming in from behind College Street, and a great mass of perennials are glowing on their tops. The dark, coarse seed heads of the echinacea stick out above the fading greens and browns. Moving forward, the sound of gravel crunching echoes off the walls. The walk narrows into a tiny strip, about 2 feet wide, that cuts through the center in the mass of perennials. The echo of crunching gravel gets louder and nearer as the grasses push up against the body. The sound of the breeze mixes with the loud crunching underfoot. To the right is an even smaller path, a slight gap in the dense plantings that seems as if it could possibly lead somewhere. The perennials are not in one mass, but in a series of blocks with tiny paths cutting through. Intrigued, the feet turn from the main path and follow the narrow concrete strip. There is a slightly red glow at the end of the towering perennials as the light filters through the tops of the changing dogwood trees. The narrow concrete path disappears into an open ground plane of white gravel. The dark trunks of the three dogwoods come straight up out of the gravel, creating a rhythm across the flat plane and a sculptural form against the towering white brick wall. In the corners are gaggles of oak leaf hydrangea, their leaves turning an orange-ish red, drawing out the orange from the hornbeam and the red from the Dogwoods over head. Ferns and hostas line the bottoms of the hydrangeas, and the coolness of the shade provides a moment of pause. Between the wall and the boxwood hedge there is another small gap, large enough to indicate that there might be something beyond. Weaving between the shade plantings past the hedge lies two thick bands of concrete, stretching across a plane of gravel between two cloud boxwood hedges. The bands end into an open space of gravel where another dark form of a Dogwood tree stands. The sun casts its shadow against the white brick wall, the leaves dance in the breeze. The rest of the space opens up. It feels much more open and structured compared to the wildness of the entry garden. In the small gap between the concrete blocks there are spontaneous groupings of plants springing up. The wildness has still crept in. The concrete bands weave across the ground, pulling the eye to another opening in a hedge. Where is the tree that caught the eye in that very first glance down the garden? A new mass of perennials lay beyond the hedge, with their own tiny concrete strips slicing through the blocks of towering perennials. The sun is getting lower, sliding under the tops of the trees through the side in a blinding brightness. To the left the eye catches one of the concrete strips, and at the clearing is the tree, illuminated for just a second by the sun before it slips away. Light, movement, mystery, and discovery. One moment in time.



THE PARKING LOT GARDEN COMPONENTS

18” strips of concrete between the 10’ blocks of perennials

Sunny wild garden

3’ wide cloud boxwood hedges that break up space withnin the central terrace

2’ wide concrete bands with 18” gravel bands. Inverse of entry garden

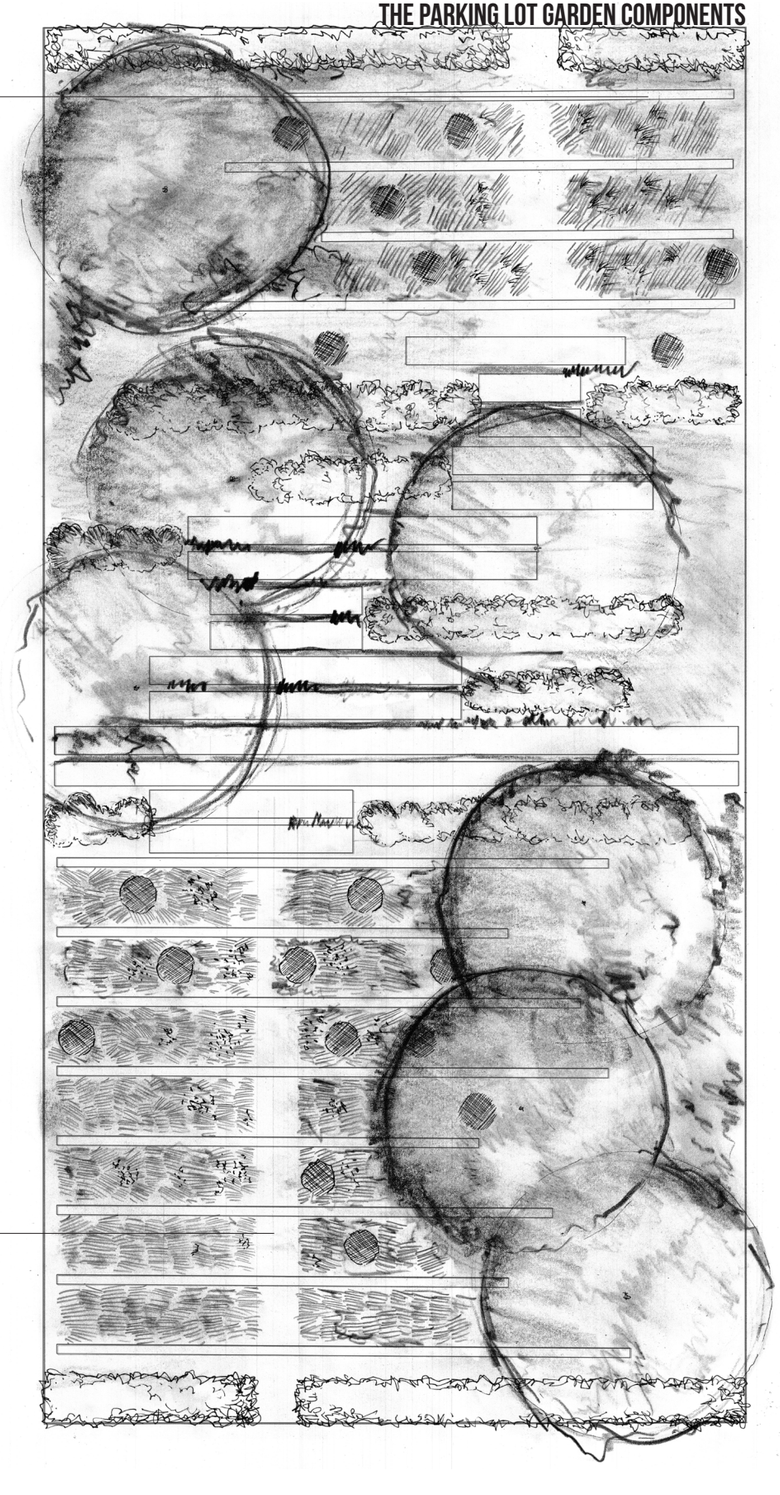
Boxwood Globes, creating forms within the perennial fluxes

18” strips of concrete inset in a flat plain of white crushed gravel

Central axis that expands and contracts as the perennial blocks grow through the year

10’ blocks of pennials broken up by the thin strips of concrete slicing through the gravel

Hornbeam hedge



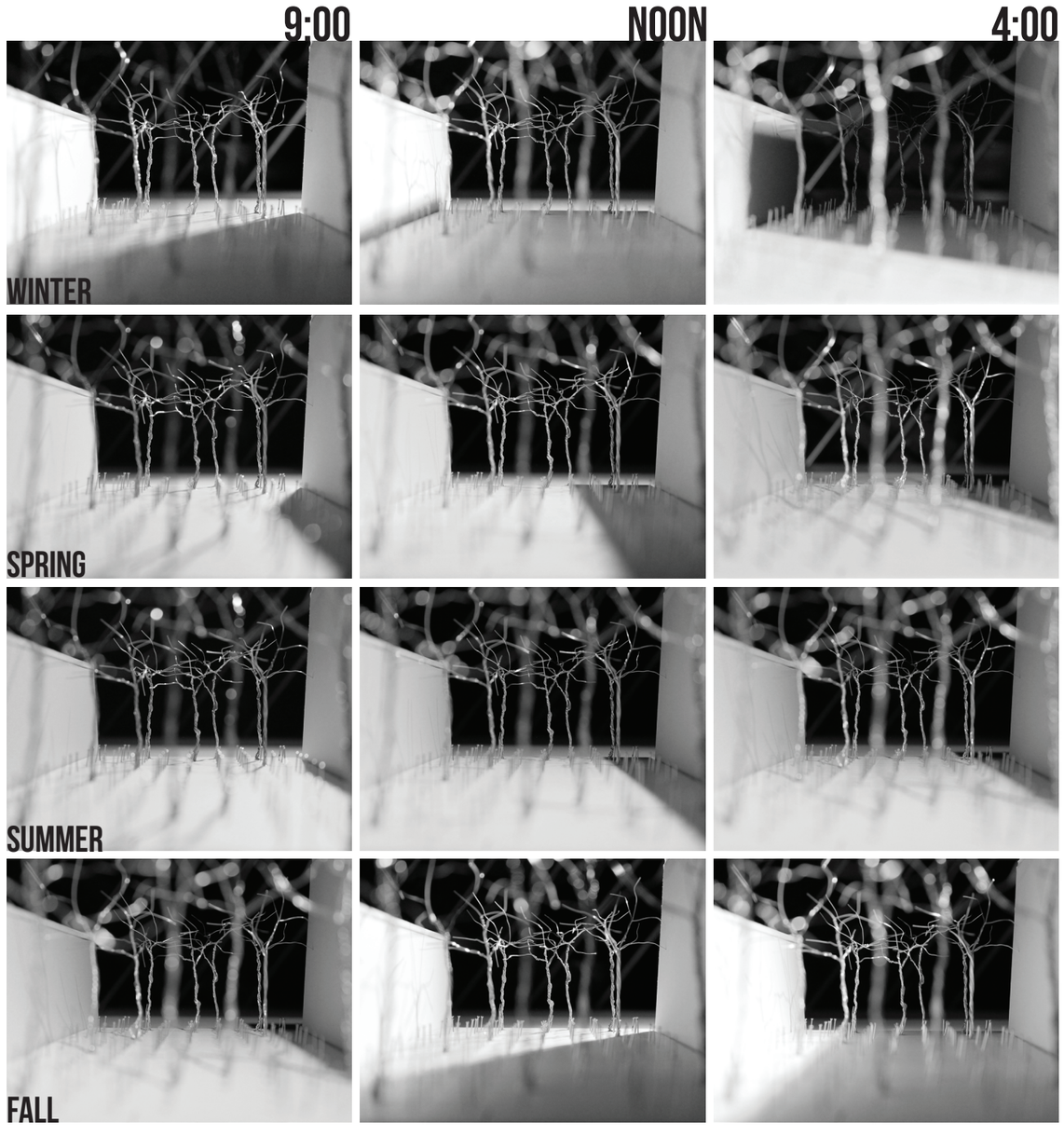
SITE IMPLICATIONS

|1| Light + Shadow

Light and shadow in the Parking Lot Garden was entirely additive since the only existing conditions which contribute shadow are the existing buildings. The site is a flat plane of asphalt with a 50'x100' boundary of buildings. Since the existing conditions are very limited, the light and shadow cast by the building become of central importance.

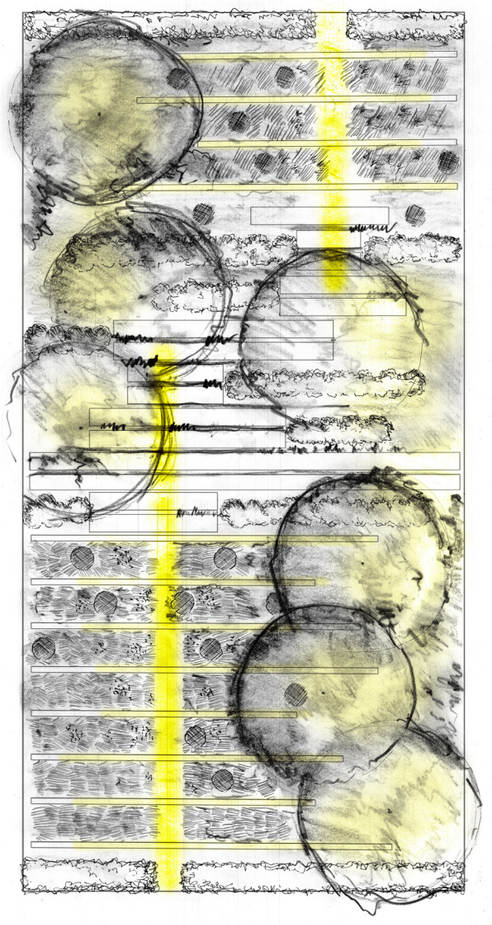
To explore the light conditions on the site, a model was built to scale and tested under the heliodon lights, which allows models to be tested by simulating the angle of the sun for the time of day in each month of the year for a specific latitude. This exploration revealed that the light is not only highly variable throughout the day, but at the same time of day throughout all four seasons.

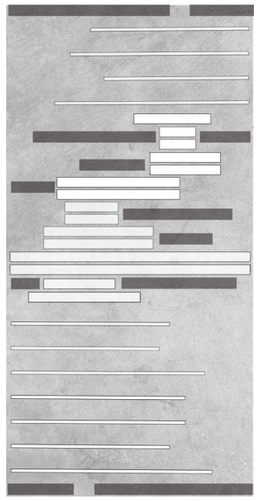
The site is east west facing, with the tallest building on its southern end. The shade is always cast from this building and the depth of the shade differs from season to season. The series of pictures to the left show how light changed through each day for each season. When comparing the same time of day across all four seasons, it is evident that the light within the site is always shifting, providing interesting design opportunities. The data collected during the light exploration helps inform what plants should go where when investigating seasonal change. The other main design decision this investigation informed was the placement of trees. Several trees are placed along the northern wall so that the trees' shadows are continually cast against the white brick of the building. In the summer the trees will provide shade from the heat, and in the winter the leaves will have fallen, allowing for a visitor to be in the warmth of the sun.



|2| Movement + Pause

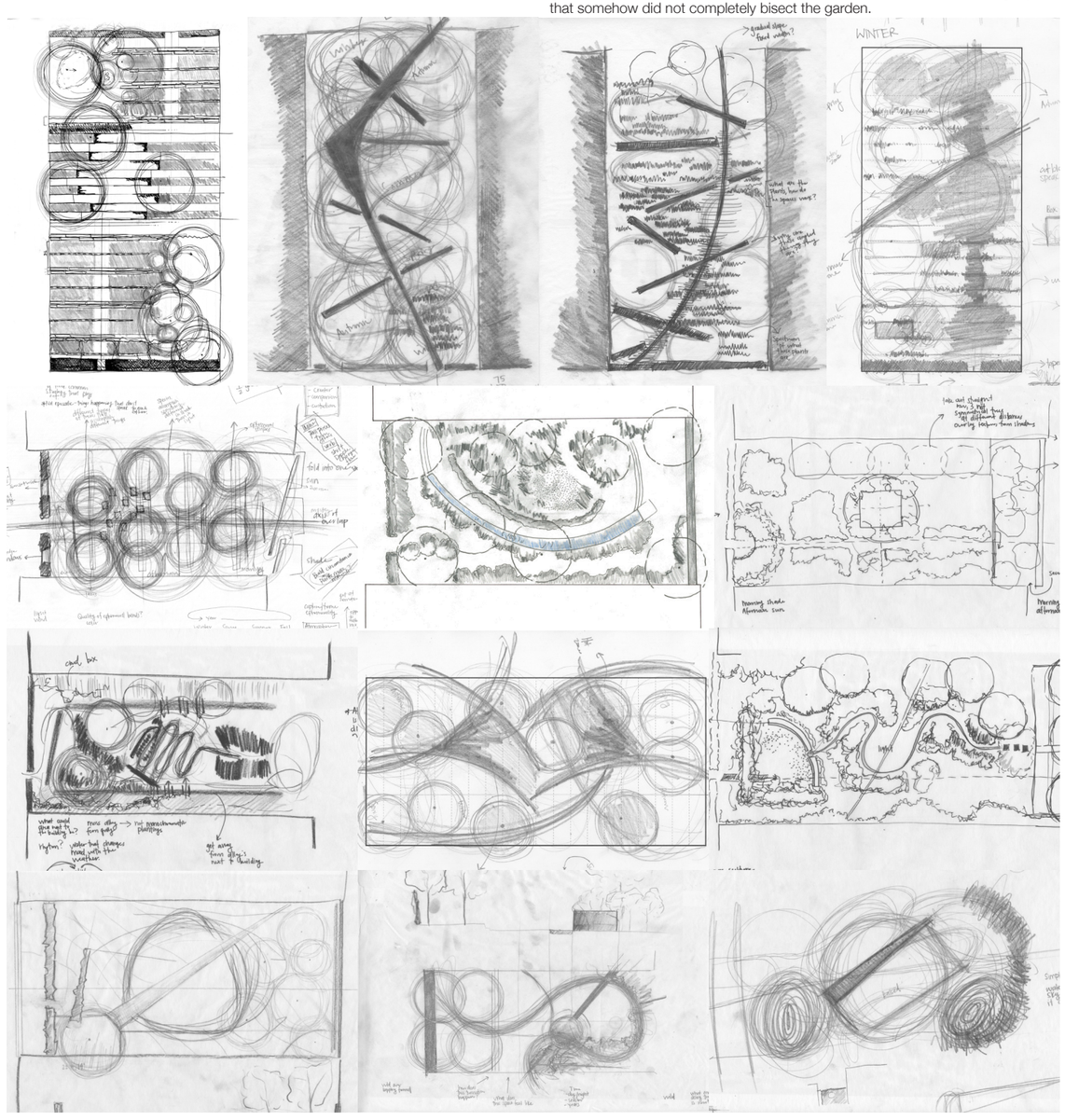
The Parking Lot Garden is a public garden. The goal of the garden is to create a place that draws people back again and again, allowing them to forge their own relationship with the garden as it is experienced over time. In order to accomplish this, the garden must draw people in while also providing a reason to stay and not just pass through. One of the most striking existing features of the site is the view of Hargis Hall behind College Street. In response to this, the Parking Lot Garden has an axis from the back of the garden which channels the eye through the site to the view of Hargis Hall. However, there is not a direct path down this axis. Another axis from the front of the site on the northern end also draws the eye through the site to the far back dogwood tree. This axis also does not continue through the entirety of the site. Both paths lead to a middle clearing in the garden where a series of hedges create seating spaces under trees, or break up the axis forcing the visitor to engage the other side of the site. The double axis simultaneously uses the imagination, compression and release, and mystery to pull a visitor through the site while also interrupting movement with times of pause.

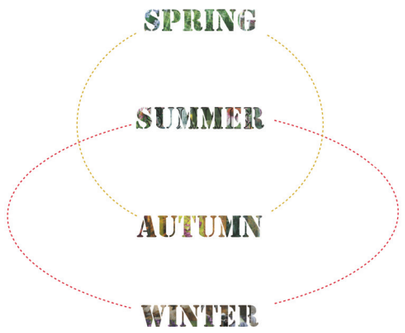


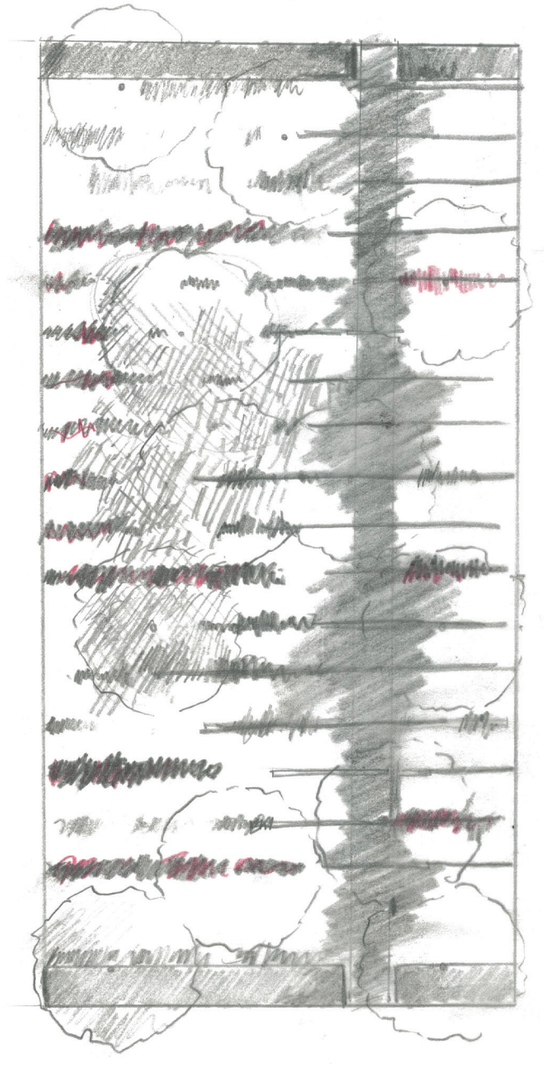


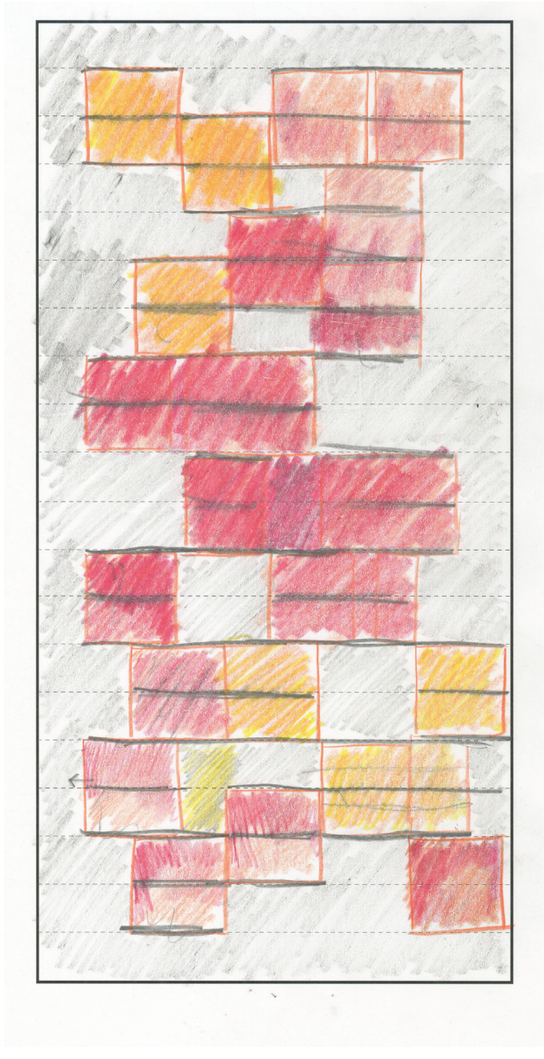
This diagram shows the paving pattern for the site. In the entry garden, a flat plain of gravel is sliced by thin stripes of concrete, giving rhythm to movement down the axis. The central part of the design inverts the paving pattern, so that the large blocks are concrete and the thin strips are gravel with plants. The pattern of the large blocks of concrete are disjointed, causing the visitor to engage the site, or pause under on of the dogwood trees. The paving is fixed, by contributes to the rhythm of movement in the garden.

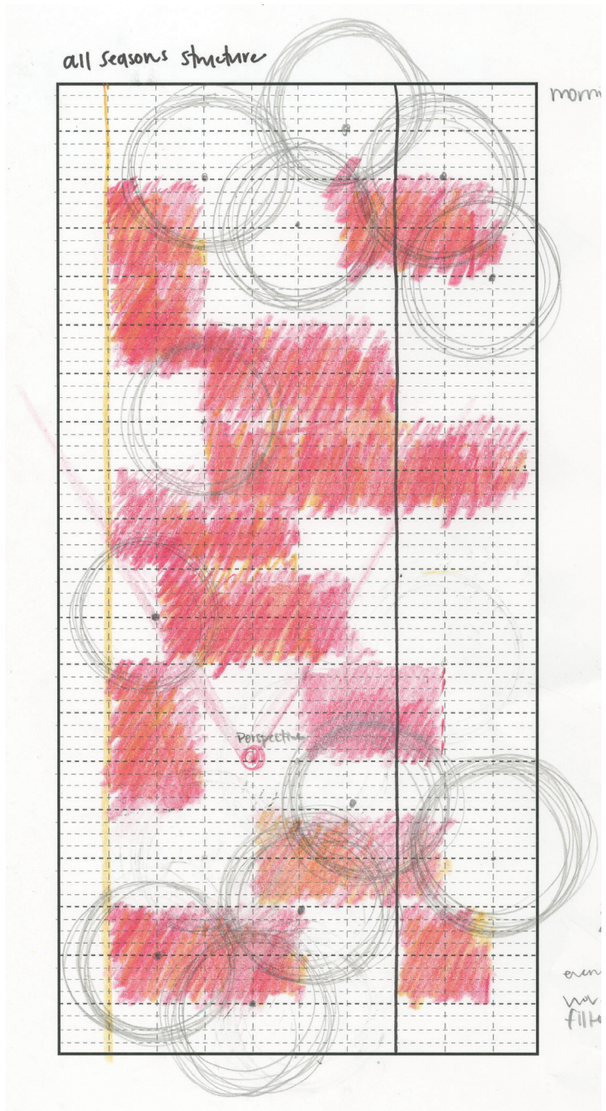
These drawings are iterations examining the choreography of moment in the garden. The iterations revealed that the best solution was to create a straight path that somehow did not completely bisect the garden.











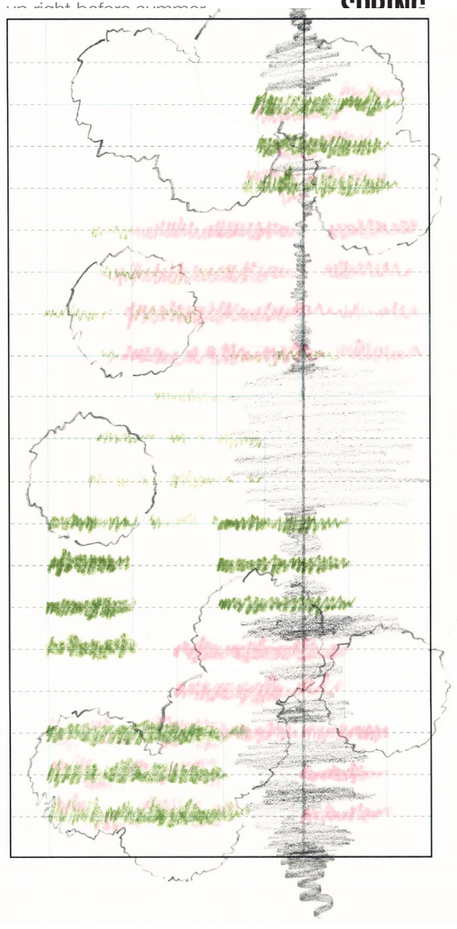
|3| Ephemerality + Fixity

The change of seasons is the main exploration of ephemerality within the Parking Lot Garden. The site is dominated by the contrast of light and shade. Since the movement of light throughout the year is so dynamic, the lot cannot be bisected into a sunny side and a shady side. Instead, the two sides of the site must be woven together to create a field condition that responds to the rhythm of time passing. From the idea of weaving came the “ephemeral strips.” Long bands of perennials offset every five feet would illuminate at different times of the year, creating ambiguity of space as plants came up and down through the changing seasons.

These early iterations of design explorations of the ephemeral strips were testing how space would change in relation to the season. The path expands and contracts as plants come up in the spring and die back in the fall. Areas which were dense with perennials in the summer sun would be cut back for open space in the winter. Where the open space was in the summer, late season grasses would grow that would last through the winter until spring.

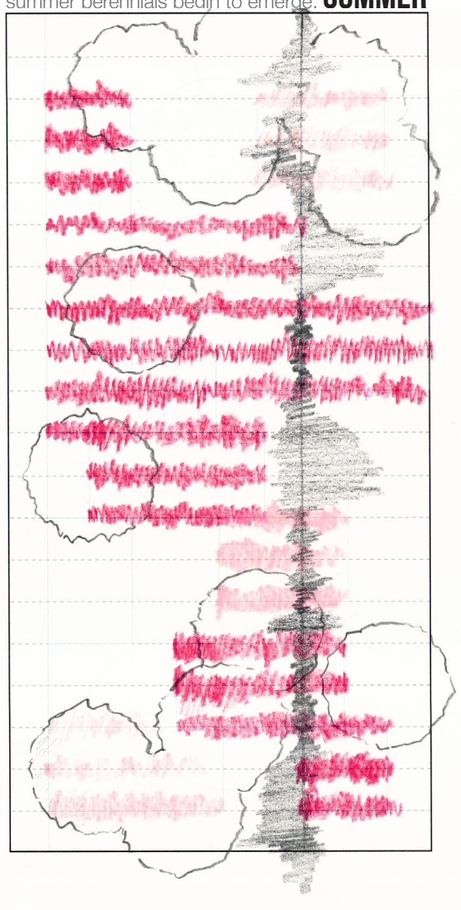
Spring is mainly activated in the shady parts of the garden (green) with the late spring season perennials coming

SPRING



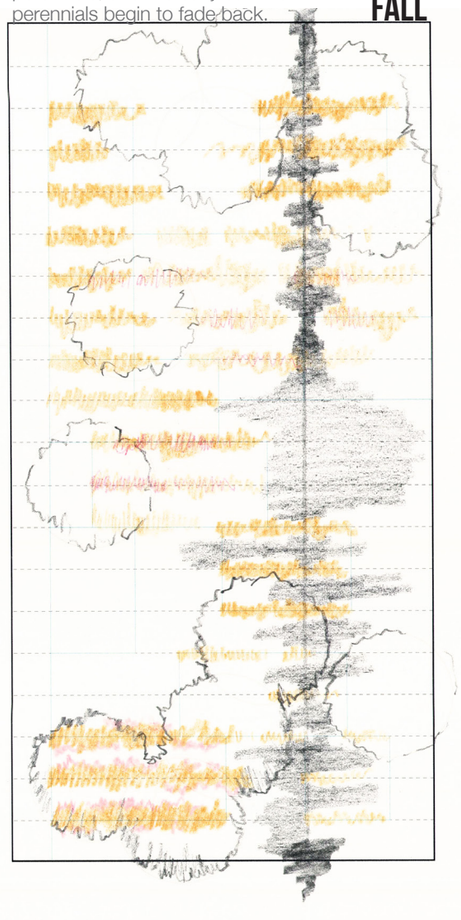
Summer (pink) begins to fill in creating an immersion in plants. Late season summer perennials begin to emerge.

SUMMER



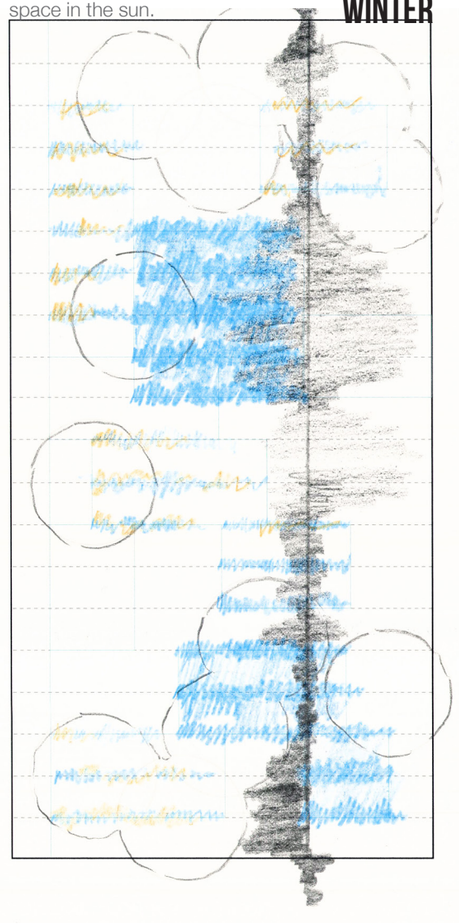
Fall fills in with the late summer season perennials, and the early summer perennials begin to fade back.

FALL



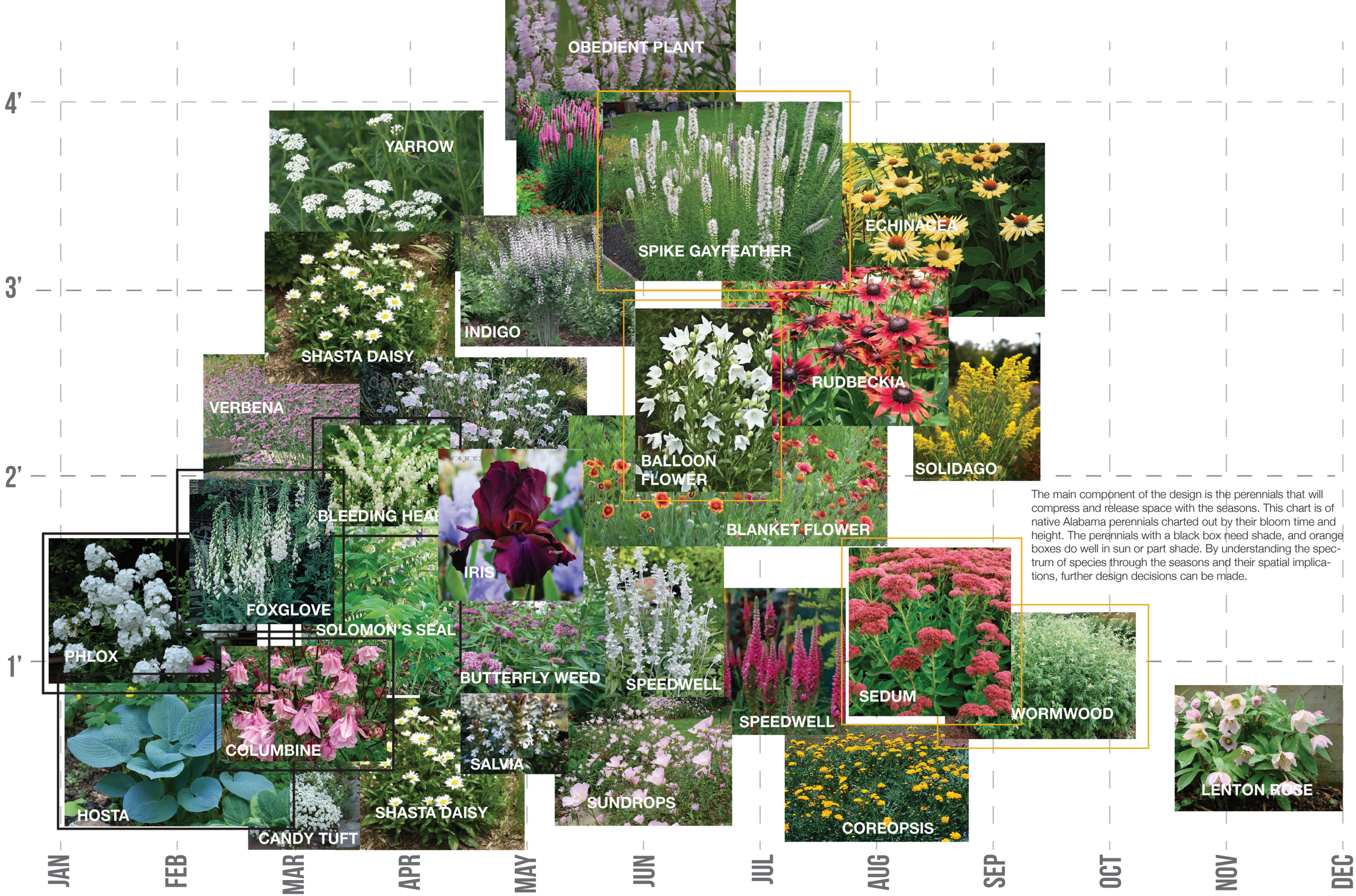
Where there was complete immersion in plants in the summer there is now open space in the sun.

WINTER

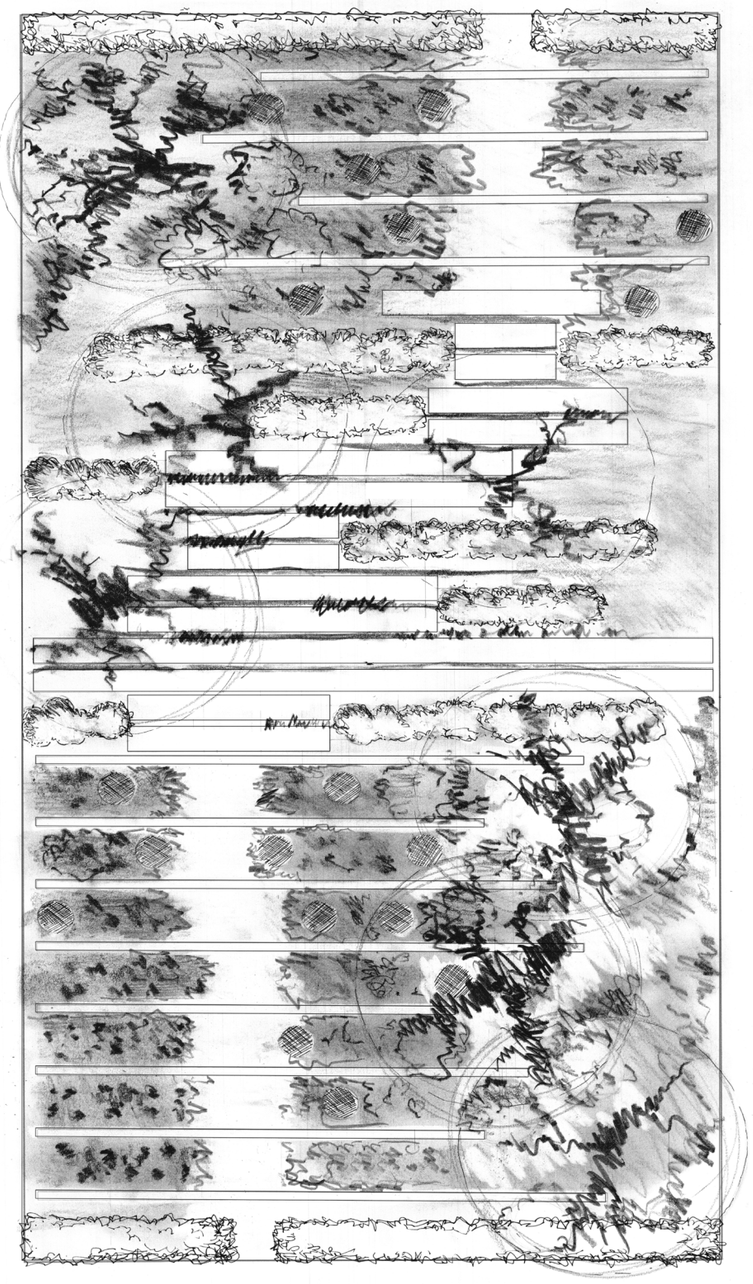


Cornus florida, Florida Dogwood

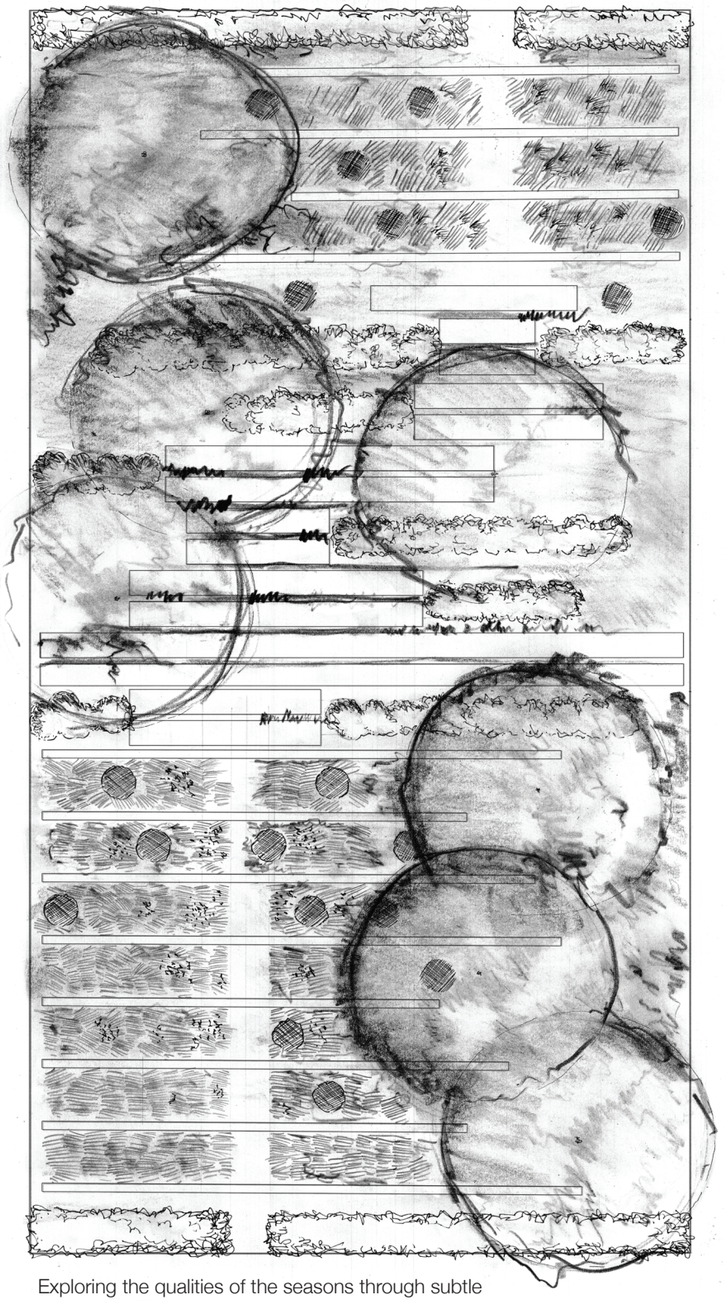
Early diagrammatic studies of the ephemeral bands set a framework to further explore the design. To fully investigate how the design would function, explorations centered on plant selection, which is at the heart of seasonal change. Since the space is so small, there is only one species of tree, *Cornus florida*, the Florida Dogwood. The dogwood was examined through each month of the year. In winter the form of the tree is most striking with the deep furrows of the dark bark and spread form of the the branches. In late winter/early spring, flower buds begin to swell on the branches. The dogwood flowers are one of the first signs of spring, normally arriving around Easter. They sit on top of the branches and cover about two thirds of the branch, creating tiers or layers. Before the flowers completely fade the leaves begin to emerge. As spring turns into summer the leaves lose their lime green color and settle into a deeper green. As summer transitions to fall, dogwoods are one of the first leaves to change. Leaves are caught halfway between green and red. By fall dogwoods are mostly red and orange, and leaves begin to drop. The leaves that hang on turn a deep red and purple. By the close of fall the bark and form of the tree has re-emerged. Dogwoods are firm forms during winter, the announcers of spring, a delicate bit of shade in the summer, and vibrant contributors to fall. By choosing one species with so much dynamism, the ephemerality of the tree is amplified against the formal structure of the garden.



The main component of the design is the perennials that will compress and release space with the seasons. This chart is of native Alabama perennials charted out by their bloom time and height. The perennials with a black box need shade, and orange boxes do well in sun or part shade. By understanding the spectrum of species through the seasons and their spatial implications, further design decisions can be made.



Exploring the qualities of the seasons through subtle transitions. The structure of winter is blurred by the onset of spring.



Exploring the qualities of the seasons through subtle transitions. The renewal of spring and fullness of summer.

GARDEN MANIFESTO

THE GARDEN PROJECT MANIFESTO

A Call for landscape architects to re-claim
the garden as a valuable tool for
the connection of people with places

|1| The garden is poised to be one of the most far reaching tools of sustainability in modern culture.

Stewardship of the land is directly dependent on the values of a culture. In order to ensure the longevity of the environment, a series of strategies must be used in order to address the root cause of environmental degradation, which is the disassociation of our culture from the surrounding environment. Changing values begin with the individual, and the individual is lost in the midst of large scale green washing tactics. The garden is the most intimate intersection of man and nature. It is through the garden that a re-connection and valuing of the environement can be re-forged.

|2| Engaging the tension between culture and nature in the garden is essential for the future relationship of people and places.

What separates us from nature is our soul, our *anima*. In order to capture people's affections for places, we must create gardens that speak to the very human part of each individual. The soul in a garden is captured through the poetic expression of qualities that speak to the deeply human part of our spirit.

|3| The large scale impact of a garden begins with a humble moment.

In an increasingly complex world, simplicity of beauty is one of the most powerful agents of change. It is through the quality of light and shadow that you see the forms, textures, and movements life in new ways. It is through movement of the body and activation of the imagination that you experience a place physically and mentally. It is through the ephemerality of the seasons that we are reconnected with the rhythm and wonder of the earth. Moments do not beg for attention, but are collected through time. Held within the humility of the moments is the power of the garden to speak to humble man in the midst of the vastness of nature.

|4| The garden requires one of the greatest luxuries of our modern age, time.

Gardens are an investment. In order for gardens to be re-claimed within the profession of landscape architecture as a powerful tool for capturing the affection of people for places, we must be willing to invest in their longevity both as a profession and a culture. Gardens not only require time from the designer, but also from the one who is experiencing it. The garden is a relationship that forges its deepest connection through the collection of moments over time. In order for people to develop this relationship, the garden must be experienced again and again as it is changing. Most importantly, the garden requires time from the gardener. It is through the humans hands that a garden is created and through the human hands that it must be sustained.

And in sustaining the garden, we simultaneously sustain the humble moments that
grip the anima of each person and bring the hope of life and renewal to come.

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To my family.
Thank you for making home the best place to be. You are my biggest cheer leaders.

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To my studio peeps.
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Image on page 30-31: Olmsted and Vaux. 1870. Map of Central Park. Retrieved from: http://untappedcities.com/2013/07/16/the-new-york-city-that-never-was-what-central-park-could-have-looked-like/

Image on page 28-29: Tillemans, Peter. 18th century oil painting. Photograph by Cristie's. Retrieved from: http://www.christies.com/LotFinder/lot_details.aspx?intObjectID=5584838.

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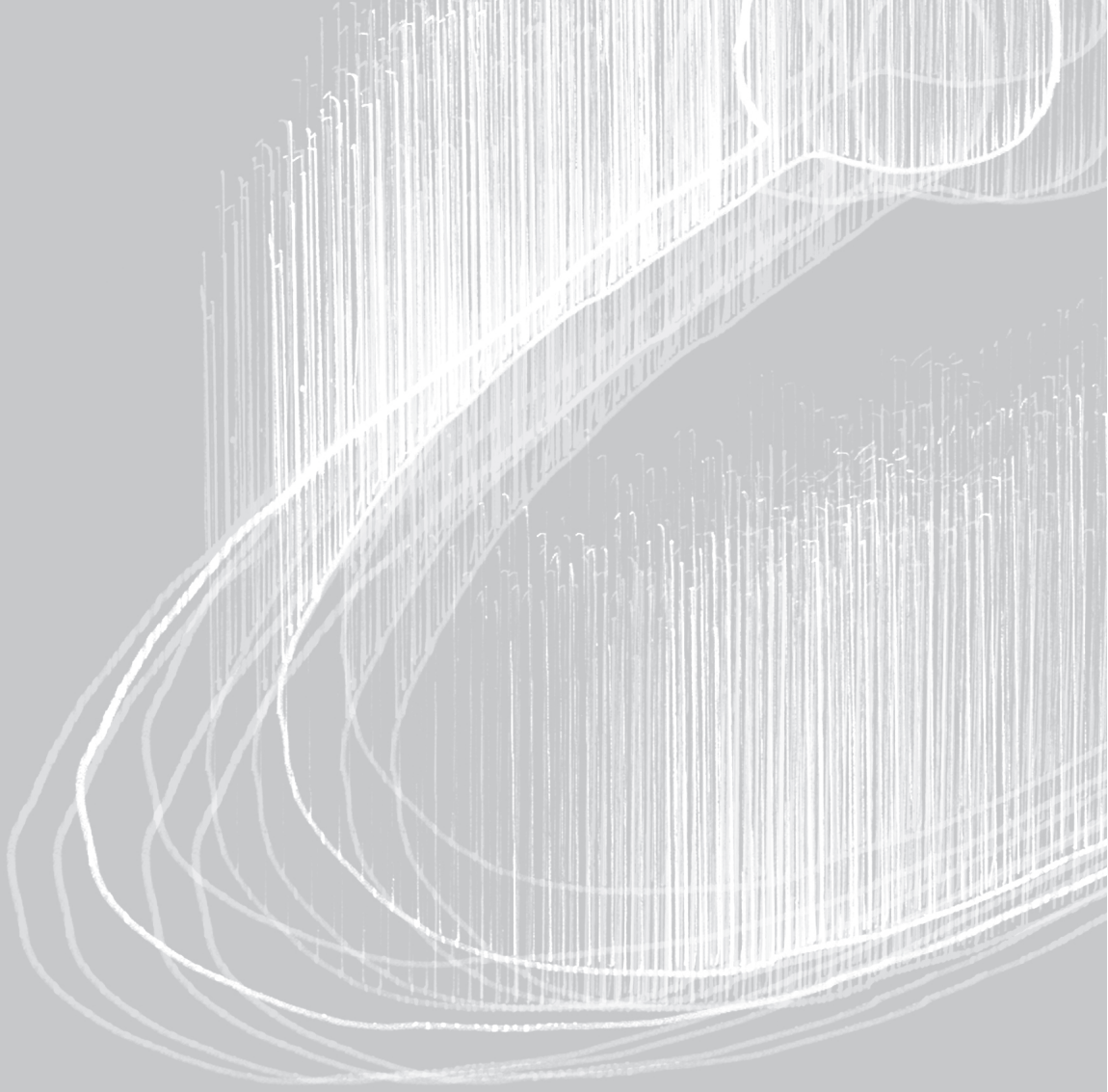
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