

Making a Memory Trace: Slow Time at the Windstar Retreat,  
Old Snowmass, Colorado

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**Abstract**

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This thesis explores the question of how architecture can alter the perception of time. The perception of time is critical in defining meaning and relevancy in life. The spaces in which we live, dream, work, explore, and remember can inspire altered moments of perception that enhance the quality of life. This thesis uses the two concepts of slowness and memory to investigate the relationship between time, architectural space and human experience. Presented are two interwoven parts, process and product. The process recorded is a journey

from ideas and explorations to program and site, and ultimately design. The design presented in the thesis is the Windstar Retreat in Old Snowmass, Colorado. At this place, one can have different experiences of time, allowing one to consider one's past, future and place in the world.



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## Introduction

This thesis has two interwoven elements. One addresses ways of thinking, designing and being in the world. The other proposes a place that engenders these ideas. This thesis is centered on the belief that the perception of time is critical in defining meaning and relevancy in life. Beginning with the concepts of slowness and memory, the thesis investigates the relationship between time and human experience in architectural space. The process of this thesis was not predetermined; instead it was a sequential unfolding of explorations that culminated in a project that was both discovered and invented. This document begins with a theoretical framework of the main concepts that sparked the series of explorations. The chapters that follow record the experiences, showing how exploration led to a program and site selection, and finally a design project. The design is both a result and a new beginning. It marks a step in my personal journey, and the final chapter suggests what may come next.



# Chapter 1: Concepts

March - December 2016

My process in this thesis began with readings in several bodies of literature addressing the questions of time and place. From these readings, I focused on four primary concepts which shaped both the thesis process and the design that emerged.

The four main concepts I explored are time, slowness, memory and space. In this chapter I present a personal synthesis of these ideas. This synthesis became the framework for the explorations described beginning in Chapter 2.



fig. 1.1 "time", taken on site

## Time and the Means of Measurement

The relationship that humans have with time is connected to measurement. While the primitive methods for measuring and tracking time were originally linked to the rhythms of nature, we now predominately depend on the human invention of the clock to measure and understand the time factor in our lives. Time is not the same thing as the clock, a simple truth fogged over as the ever present *tick-tock* reaches deeper and deeper, and becomes more ingrained in all interstices of our everyday lives.

At a larger scale, our experience of time begins at the planetary level. The day/night cycle experienced now is due to the rotation period of the earth in relation to the sun. As a culture, we have divided this cycle into 24 equal hours. The earth did not always rotate at this current speed, and has been progressively slowing down over time. Our day/night cycle is getting longer. This change of speed and duration is due to the

relationship that the earth has with the moon. The moon's gravitational pull creates tides that produce friction on earth's surface, which slows the earth's rotation. As the earth's rotation slows, the moon must move further away from earth's surface due to the law of conservation of angular momentum. The moon is currently moving away from the earth at the rate of two inches per year. It is predicted that in 225 million years, the earth will have a 25 hour day/night cycle.<sup>1</sup> Although the change in earth's rotation will not affect an individual during her or his lifetime, it puts our life controlled by the constant 24 hour clock into a different perspective, in that our "constant" means of measurement is constantly changing.

Within the 24 hour period, we have segmented time further by quantifying and dividing it into "every conceivable size: nanoseconds, milliseconds, seconds, minutes..."<sup>2</sup> As we squeeze time tighter and tighter, dividing it into units of smaller

and smaller duration, our focus on its passing, more often than not too quickly, dilates. There is a relationship here between the precision of measurement and the experience of time.

Prior to the mechanical clock, humans lived between the great realms of light and dark. In this primitive and simple system, the clock was the sun itself. The mechanical clock triggered a new pace of life. It was, “just after the first mechanical clock began marking the hours that the word *speed* first appeared in the English language”.<sup>3</sup> In addition to the increase in precision and accuracy of time-keeping, timepieces began to, “penetrate deeper and deeper into our personal space”.<sup>4</sup> The progression began with the clock tower in the public square during the Middle Ages, moved within the home, into our pockets, and now exists literally as extensions of our own bodies via wrist watch or i phone. Now, the idea of not have immediate access to a device that relays the exact time is a haunting relic of the past.

We live attached to segmented time, gripped within the nanoseconds of magnified moments passing. The tension between the natural time of our body and the regularity of clock time is felt pulsing from all directions in every surrounding device. With the advent of digital clocks, we no longer even see the revolution of the hands of the clock in relation to our earth’s rotation around the sun. In this digital age, we are disconnected from the past and the future, left with the rapidly changing numbers announcing the new present. In this reality it is clear why the moments pass so quickly and why the pace of events is felt to be more rapid than ever before.

The necessity of standard time within zones is sensible, but the opportunity to perceive time through more primitive measurements in today’s society, so dependent on precision, would certainly alter our sense of time and place. When alternative constructions of time can be realized, new options of understanding unfold. It is through the removal in precision of time-keeping and separation between natural time and clock

time that are “incorporated into the culture of slowness”.<sup>5</sup>

Similar to the sundial, other measuring devices such as sand glasses and water clocks have been used to keep the relationship between time and device less precise. Today, to live either with less precision and divisions, or with less dependence on the clock, would release the tight grip of segmented time and provide the opportunity for an expanded sense of duration. While our current clocks are primarily instruments for the eye, other devices used to measure time such as the burning of candles or incense sticks can activate the sense of smell, touch, and hearing. Although we do not have a specific organ to sense time, if more of our senses were engaged in measurement, or in the perception of change in events or matter over time, we would have a more rich and personal connection to its passing. Although time is a primal element, a seemingly constant mystery in life, our perception of it, and our experience with it, can change.

## **Duration and Ruin**

While architecture serves the practical and utilitarian purpose of shelter, it also mediates our relationship with time and the absolutes of human mortality and death. Architecture can frame our perception of the world, of what has come before and what is yet to come by expanding our sense of duration. Duration can be explored by changing how we measure time in space. Programmatically, elements and activities can transition ritualistically based on cyclical patterns. The change of season and quality of light are two examples that, if designed for, can transform experience in space. Formally, the relationship between mass and void can reveal different time cycles. Additionally, temporal layering in space is a tool to expand perception. Once the concept of time is separated from the means of measurement, time can be experienced rather than used.

Buildings are not permanent. They will, like all things, decay

under the forces of nature. This natural deterioration of built form is a record of the passing of time and can be designed for and accepted rather than resisted and fully maintained. The result of spaces that reject weathering in their attempt at continual newness is a lack in texture, depth and identity. Material plays a key role in the conditions of weathering and our experience of time in space. Wood, metal and masonry decay at different rates and offer possibilities for sensory stimulation. In *On Weathering: The Life of Buildings in Time*, Mohsen Mostafavi and David Leatherbarrow explain how, “greater thickness usually results in longer durability” and that the “erosion of a surface through weathering exposes newer surfaces of the same material in its depth” which is a “testimony to the time of a building”.<sup>6</sup> The use of materials, their qualities and levels of resistance to the natural elements and force of gravity, provide a backdrop and framework for narrative within space.

Marking the environment on and within a building provides a

physical record of “residual deposits that reveal through traces the coherence of ambient elements”.<sup>7</sup> From these markings, one can imagine and identify with the history of the building and the human life that occupied it. John Ruskin notes in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* that, “the greatest glory of a building is not in its stones, or in its gold. Its glory is in its age, and in that deep sense of voicefulness, or stern watching of mysterious sympathy...which we feel in walls that have long been washed by the passing waves of humanity”.<sup>8</sup> When we engage with weathered buildings slowly eroding into ruins, we are positioned in the present while we remember the past and contemplate our own future.

Ruined structures and landscapes provoke response, as they remind us of what once was that is no longer and of, “the future that never took place”.<sup>9</sup> By designing with materials of different decay rates and the passage of light, space can “concretize the passage of time” and form a dialogue between building and user.<sup>10</sup>

As historical beings, we are drawn to the romance of ruins and the building's "seductive stillness" as nature takes over.<sup>11</sup> Vegetation within decayed spaces sparks our interest because, "it represents the hand of time" and our place in relation to the time continuum.<sup>12</sup>



fig. 1.2 "slowness", taken on site

## The Counter to Speed

Everything seems to be moving faster than before. As we rush through life, we too often miss it. The determination to accelerate is leading to a less than opportune existence. Organizations all around the world, from the Slow Food Movement to Slow Architecture, are focusing on this emergent dilemma, this sacrifice of living for speed. This counterculture proposes to move forward slowly to live a more meaningful and consciously aware life. The pleasures of life take time to enjoy. With the practice of slowness, one's awareness heightens, stimulations register, and space can open to reveal new meaning. Living at high speed produces a smooth blur of life going by, where living slowly provides rich texture and framed moments that we can more easily remember.

In our consumer-based society, we are too often seeking more in less time. To cram more things into our lives, we accelerate the speed at which we do our daily tasks, how we live and

how we think. Fast thinking is logical, linear and analytical, but if we allow ourselves to think slowly, we are able to access our creativity and our intuition. Deceleration and a change in pace can re-connect us to the natural world while also connecting us back to ourselves.

Being slow, or going slowly, has too often had a negative connotation in modern society. Speed is rewarded, from standardized testing to competitive production in the work place. Quantity is a result of speed, but quality is a result of slowness. Granted, there is a time for speed, but this thesis argues that there is also a time for slowness: a time to watch the clouds change shape, to engage in meaningful work, to listen to the rain on the roof. When we allow ourselves the pleasure of focusing on one thing at a time, we can once again feel "at home" with ourselves.<sup>13</sup> Architecture plays a role in providing the opportunity for slow experiences in space.

## Slowness in Architecture

In music, the tempo is slowed to influence a dancer's movement. Architecture has the same potential to slow us down and alter our perception and experience of time. A "tempo gusto" in space can foster meaningful connections with others, with our work, with ourselves, and our place in the world. Juhani Pallasmaa argues that, "the incredible acceleration of speed in our age collapses time into a flat screen of the present, upon which the simultaneity of the world is projected".<sup>14</sup> When we speed up in space, we often lose and weaken our experience of time. Slowness embraces time, and the built environment has the capacity to slow time in space and connect us back to the world. When we experience the world, we can also truly experience ourselves within it. Architecture can enable this connection with the creation of environments that are full of texture, thoughtful transitions, and spatial relationships that prioritize experience.

When our experience of time is fast, without depth, we can lose our sense of self. Experience becomes flat, homogeneous and uniform; we experience an unnecessary "sensory impoverishment" with a lack of mystery and chance of discovery.<sup>15</sup> Architectural spaces that are "slow" can generate intimacy and enable us to participate in the process of life and the cycles of time that surpass our own. Juxtaposing different time cycles in architectural space can trigger reflection and contemplation. Where our current culture driven by speed favors the eye, the haptic and slow architecture of touch allows us to dream, to remember the past and to imagine ideas about our own future.

The experiences in architecture: working, moving, eating, exploring and so forth, and the emotions associated with those experiences, are the key components that stimulate and define our place in space. If these experiences happen at a

slower pace or for a longer duration full of tactility, their authenticity and essence will surface.

The production of architecture, along with the experience of space itself can develop at a slower speed. For example, the inclusion of hand drawing forces the designer to move and create more slowly. Markings are made more diligently; process is recorded through the qualities of media, and a true dialogue between mind and hand is evident and felt. The speed at which we design will be evident in the work we produce.

Slowness is a noun, but may also be considered as a verb. It is a process and a practice that takes time to realize and experience. When we slow down, new possibilities open in our psyche. We become more aware, and our senses can engage and reveal new feelings and findings.



fig. 1.3 "memory", taken on site

## Memory Traces

Human memory is the ability of our brain to encode, store, and recall past experiences. A card index or library filled with books on shelves is a common image of how memories are stored in the brain. Instead of these serial methods, memories are actually a collection of elements scattered throughout the brain and connected by neural pathways.<sup>16</sup> When we remember a past experience, our brain actively reconstructs the memory by firing the neurons that were involved in the original experience. There are different types of memory, each with its own rate of decay, and specific process by which the experiences in our lives exist beyond the experiences themselves.<sup>17</sup>

The three main types of memory are: sensory memory, short-term memory and long-term memory.<sup>18</sup> Sensory memory is the ability of the brain to retain and store sensory information. We detect stimuli with our senses and either perceive or ignore it. If we perceive the stimuli, the information is stored as sensory

memory. Sensory memories decay quickly (1/2 of a second) after the initial perception. Within our brain, the different types of sensory memory (iconic, echoic, haptic, olfactory) are all responsible for different types of perception, whether it be visual, aural, tactile, or olfactory.<sup>19</sup> Short-term memory lasts slightly longer than sensory memory with a decay rate of 10-15 seconds. Information in short-term memory is comparable to a scratch pad or post-it note in that the information is not a complete concept but rather points and links to connect full ideas. Forgetting short-term memories is the result when nerve impulses cease transition through particular neural networks. The information that we perceive gets passed from sensory memory to short-term memory and further to long-term memory. Long-term memory is the storage of information over a long period of time.<sup>20</sup>

Each memory goes through a process that begins with the

encoding of information. When we pay attention to a subject or event, neurons fire frequently that define a path in our brain. There are four main types of encoding: one for sound (acoustic encoding), one for images (visual encoding), one for feeling (tactile encoding) and one for meaning (semantic encoding). Since human memory is associative, information can be more easily remembered if we associate it with previously acquired knowledge or experience.<sup>21</sup> Each memory is encoded multiple times through the different pathways, which allows us access to memories in more than one way.

The transition of memories from sensory memory to short-term memory and finally to long-term memory occurs after the encoding process. The next stage is called memory consolidation, which begins with the creation of engrams or memory traces.<sup>22</sup> The memory traces are the changes in the neural network in the creation of pathways in the brain. Consolidation is the stabilizing of the path through repetition of signal transmission and the production of new proteins. The

strength of the memory trace is dependent on the number of signals transmitted along the same path. The more we re-play the memory, the stronger the path and the more easily we will be able to remember the original experience in the future. When we remember a memory, the process of consolidation repeats and the path becomes more and more familiar. When we don't complete the encoding process, often due to distraction in our fast-paced world, we forget the memory more easily.<sup>23</sup>

To recall or retrieve a memory, our brain replays the pattern along the memory trace from the original perception. Memories are brought from long-term memory up to short-term memory (working memory) where we can access the information. After we recall the memory, we re-consolidate the memory trace and it returns back to long-term memory storage. There are two main ways that we access memories, either through recognition or recall. Recognition is when we associate an experience or object with something previously encountered. Recall occurs when we remember something without recognition, directly

uncovering the memory without clues currently present. The question still stands whether memories ever completely decay and disappear, or if we just lose access to the memory trace. Lost access means that the elements of a particular memory simply sit dormant without connection.<sup>24</sup>

Information is passed through generations with documentation. We are defined by what we record, and without the record of personal memories, they exist only in our mortal minds. There is nothing more personal than our own memories, nothing that defines us more than our experiences and perceptions of life. When we record memories, they not only exist as tangible evidence of our lives, but we strengthen our memory traces, which grants us more direct access into our own past.

With the advancement of technology, diaries and journals have often come to be seen as archaic. The process of recording our memories and thoughts by hand is seen as either too slow or of little value. The computer is now the primary tool

that stores away our interests and *quick searches*. Our digital records are stored elsewhere in the cloud, or on the hard drive. All within a machine. Is this where our most personal pieces of ourselves recorded belong? The vast and sensory-less quality of the digital record suggests not. This thesis argues that architecture plays an important role, not only as built spaces that can store memories, but as devices that can inform and enhance them.

## **Architecture and Memory**

Architectural spaces are, “memory devices in three different ways: first, they materialize and preserve the course of time and make it visible; second, they concretize remembrance by containing and projecting memories; and third, they stimulate and inspire us to reminisce and imagine”.<sup>25</sup> As devices, buildings are records of personal and cultural happenings. They document the passage of time, and act as a narrative, telling the stories of habitation and use. An architecture that

acts as a memory device can reveal both semantic and episodic memories of space and personal histories. The beauty of episodic memory induced by architectural space is the heightened auto-noetic awareness that can stitch personal experience to a specific place and time.

Gaston Bachelard, in *The Poetics of Space*, along with others, has identified the home as a significant space of memory and meaning, a safe place for dreaming.<sup>26</sup> With its cellars and attics, our childhood home is potent with symbolic spaces that initiate states of reverie. While most leave this home behind, elements can be translated to future structures of work and habitation. The concept of a, "memory house" of which the, "collage of fragments, smells, conditions of light, specific feelings of enclosure and intimacy"<sup>27</sup> can be a framework for architecture beyond the private home. Architecture that embodies these qualities can inspire remembrance in space in addition to new perceptions that challenge the asymmetry and arrow of time.

Ordinary physical objects within spaces can evoke remembrance through recognition, and can connect different generations. Common objects such as, "tables, benches, chests, and chests of drawers...date to antiquity and possibly, prehistory".<sup>28</sup> It is the ordinary objects of use that relate us across time. When we interact with these objects we enter into a, "moments reverie - when we think of something else, inspired by the point of emotional contact -".<sup>29</sup> These objects within architectural space add contrast in scale, texture and narrative. Many of these objects, like a chair, sit empty and hold a space for the imagination to fill.

Speed and memory are directly connected. Milan Kundera argues that, "there is a secret bond between slowness and memory, between speed and forgetting...the degree of slowness is directly proportional to the intensity of memory; the degree of speed is directly proportional to the intensity of forgetting".<sup>30</sup> If we have slow experiences in space, we are more likely to be aware and remember them. If we rush through

them, the experiences are diffused without proper consolidation, and we forget. If we cannot recollect our past experiences, we lose our identities; we forget who we are.



fig. 1.4 "space", taken on site

## **Mystery in Space**

Space and time co-exist. Our experience of time is connected to our experience of space. Mysteries in space can change the perception of time because they offer an element of discovery. Discovery is the process of uncovering an uncertainty. Uncertainties in space provoke and challenge certainties about time. If there are elements to be discovered in architectural space, time can take on different meanings and oscillate at different durations. A sense of mystery sparks the imagination, creating an opportunity to explore different realms of thinking.

When we access different realms of thinking in space, we can connect with deeper levels of ourselves. Through this connection in the present, we can find the pockets of the past and portals to the future. This is an in-between condition that exists in both time and in space. Architecturally, formal sequencing and changes in level are tools that can grant access into this state, where duration can extend or contract

and time can change pace. Mystery in space can be achieved, for example, through a heightened sensory experience, or through the medium of light.

## **Variation and Comfort**

Variety in types of spaces that feel different from one to the next provide us the opportunity for choice. If all rooms feel the same, our ability to choose one or the other becomes irrelevant, and we lose a sense of personal connection to our surroundings. Certain spaces may appeal to an individual one day and not the next. The contrast from one space to another gives room for occupants to have different types of experiences. When we connect emotionally to a specific space, it communicates with whatever it is we bring to it that day; we remember this and experience the space more fully.

## Movement and Texture

Movement and pause set the stage for ritual. It is often rituals that unite us with a specific space anchored in time. Intimacy due to repetition and change may generate amplified emotion. Emotion transforms spaces into places of memory. Descending and ascending from the horizon shifts our perspective. Moving down into the earth can “stir powerful emotions” that separate the user from their daily cycles of life on the surface.<sup>31</sup> Burying portions of built form underground can, “make one feel in contact with the larger world of nature” and process of life and death.<sup>32</sup> When our focus expands beyond ourselves, through meaningful experiences of movement in space, we are able to access different realms of our psyches.

Superimposition of texture, and a four dimensional collage of, “recollections, dreams, and associations pries open... a psychic space in which memories of a seemingly insignificant past absorb a sudden sense of urgency when revisited through

the retroactive”.<sup>33</sup> The effect of temporal collage and layering in space creates a significant tension between the past, present and future. A user can participate in a series of in-between oscillations, charging one’s mental and emotional fields. By composing different characters of space that allow varied experiences in time, a designer can create an “ephemeral atmosphere” where “stories begin to take their diverse shape”.<sup>34</sup>

To create a layered space “of parallax, or perspective warp, while moving through overlapping spaces defined by solids and cavities”,<sup>35</sup> an architectural experience should be simultaneous and haptic rather than perspectival in nature. Pallasmaa argues that, “perspectival space turns us into outsiders and observers as it pushes us outside the realm of the object of focused perception, whereas haptic space encloses and enfolds us in its embrace, making us insiders and participants”.<sup>36</sup> Haptic

space can be thought of as space composed at different scales and time cycles, rich in sensory and periphery stimuli. This type of space leaves room for the imagination and for the perceivers' "mental worlds".<sup>37</sup> In life, often our most treasured moments of the sunlight on our cheeks, or the taste of good food, is paired with closed eyes. Haptic space takes cues from these phenomena by including rooms of bright light, and rooms of shadow and dimness. These are qualities that release us from the dominance of vision and allow the other senses to flourish.

### **Mood and Emptiness**

Similar to the buildings in Claude Lorrain's paintings, architecture that alters the perception of time must have a certain mood.<sup>38</sup> This mood is one that changes seasonally and becomes enriched over time. The quality of light and a sense

of scale in addition to the weathering of materials in these spaces contributes to the shifting mood and overall atmosphere. The significant transitions of sunrise and sunset can bring the still architecture into a moving art form. Illumination and shadow can be harnessed and manipulated to dramatize the passage of time, thus the building's position within the landscape relative to the sun's rays is critical.

Void space and emptiness are necessary in designing for altered moments of perception. There must be negative space to fill with human participation, reflection and projection. Similar to memorials, such spaces must be "essentially incomplete" so they cannot be "fully understood without the issues raised by human interaction".<sup>39</sup> Void spaces can take many forms, whether they are, "a cavity in the ground...or an opening in the floor that reveals a zone of space directly below"<sup>40</sup> or a hollow attic above, or even framed views out into the landscape.



## Chapter 2: Explorations

March - September 2016

This chapter, titled “explorations”, presents the exercises in which I engaged in response to the theoretical framework that is summarized in Chapter 1. At the time I began the explorations, I had neither a site nor a program. In undertaking the various explorations, I sought to engage different processes of thinking with the idea of allowing a thesis to emerge. Initially, I set no deadlines to try to allow my thinking to evolve, framed by a belief in slowness as a source of creative discovery.

My explorations include reading and writing, book-making, recording personal memories, role-playing, and travel to possible sites. While these explorations are presented sequentially, they took place simultaneously, each informing the other. From these explorations and those that are presented in Chapter 3, I discovered this thesis project.

## Reading

My exploration process began with reading both fiction and non-fiction books (fig. 2.1). I looked for texts that revolved around the main concepts of: time, speed, memory, and space. Prior to the research, I came into this thesis with an intent to focus on how slowness and time could be explored in architecture. As one resource led to the next, the other two concepts of memory and space also emerged.

By reading fiction and non-fiction books, I actively sought to stimulate both analytical and imaginative thinking. The types of books that I read were varied and determined by the time of day. In the day-lit hours, I primarily read non-fiction. Before sleep, I would read stories as the last activity of my day. During the research period, I developed a ritual that I carried out through the design process. I began reading the nighttime stories out loud. Through this exercise I engaged multiple senses rather than solely vision, to connect with the written word.

Reading the stories out loud often brought them from my waking world, into my dream world, where I sometimes found myself within the stories themselves.

A feeling of empathy is a direct result of reading fiction,<sup>41</sup> one that I experienced through the reading of other people's stories. Empathy is critical in architecture because, "to be empathetic is to feel *with* someone",<sup>42</sup> which allows us to understand others and to share ideas about the experience of space. Beyond empathy, I found that creativity can be sparked as the mind transitions from fact to fantasy. The fictional stories as much as the non-fiction texts inspired the final design. (All of the books I read are included in the bibliography).

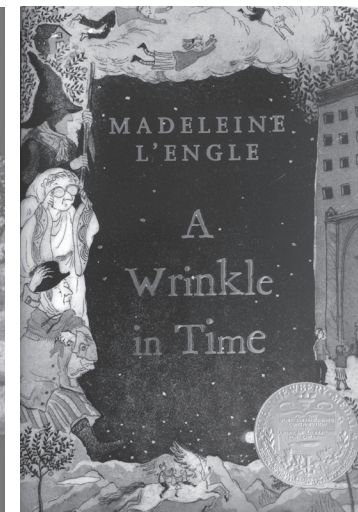
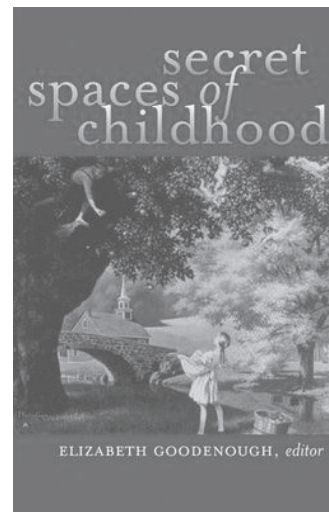
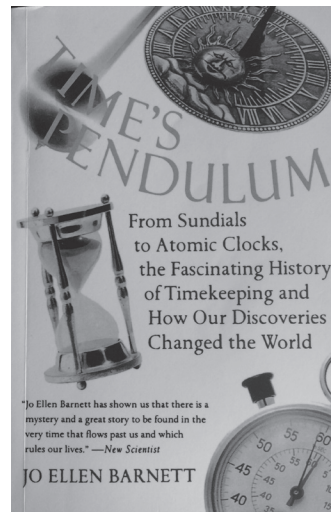
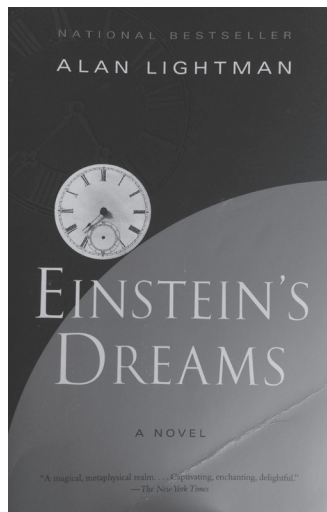
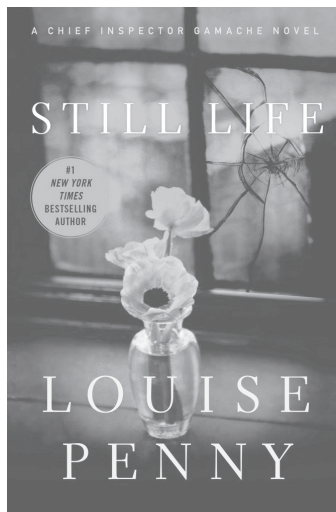


fig. 2.1 examples of books

## Writing

I extended my engagement with the non-fiction texts through the act of writing notes by hand. On lined-paper, I inscribed quotes from each text that I read, and then responded after each quote by suggesting my first thoughts about the significance that the text had to my thesis and thought process (fig. 2.2). Writing by hand was a conscious choice that forced me to digest pieces of the text slowly, in which I found particular value. By pulling the quotes out of their contexts for personal analysis and interpretation, I found room to understand the basics of their significance and the meaning that each specifically had in the context of my exploration.

In comparison to typing these notes, my hand got to experience the drag across the paper, the amount of pressure on the pen, and the flexibility to edit my own responses while keeping the process evident and alive. Through the analysis and interpretation of each quotation, I felt I engaged directly

with each author. Their words sparked my words, and page after page, the ideas began to weave together.

9-25-16

THE STATEN ISLAND SEPTEMBER 11 MEMORIAL - Jeffrey Ochsner  
CREATIVITY, MOURNING, AND THE EXPERIENCE  
OF LOSS

- "The process by which it was created, particularly in the development of the silhouettes, was an important part of the mourning process for those Staten Islanders who lost loved ones" (32).

↳ The process similarly in this project is critical - since it is about time. The process of the actual silhouettes - the visiting of the families - the sketching - the narrative could similarly be documented as a piece of the final 'product'

- "It owes its success to its essential incompleteness... it can be read as a 'holding environment' in the way it encloses, seemingly protects, but also allows us to look outward" (32).

↳ The person/people filling the void space between the wings completes the memorial. The structure frames the experience as it holds you in it. You are separated only by 2 simple walls from their everyday reality - these are enough with the view toward the tower site and the narrative of the event to create a meaningful experience.

① structure    ② view    ③ narrative    ④ human experience

- "...in fact more like an envelope, to keep a message personal or private. So he positioned the pair of 'post-cards' to create an empty space" (33).

↳ The 'private message' is the intimate experience of the moment. A public memorial which gave privacy to each individual experience. The message is possible because of the negative space and the orientation.

- "...randomness creates a clear sense of equivalence... their individuality would be minimized - reduced to points in an abstract system of letters and numbers" (37).

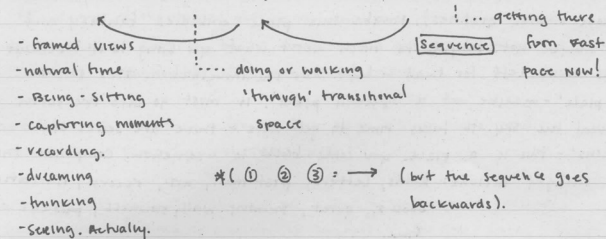
↳ random = equal = ?

↳ loss of individuality from a system that doesn't really mean anything  
↳ "random" - we make our own connections because it isn't too choreographed for us.

Speed

- "The view through the door of a moving railroad car or the windshield of an automobile is fragmented, ~~at~~ although at high speeds it becomes continuous the way continuity is created out of a series of stills by the cinema" (118).

① slow = stills    ② Fast = fragments    ③ Faster = Blur



- "If a man travels to work on a horse for twenty years and then an automobile is invented and he travels in it, the effect is both an acceleration and a slowing. In an unmistakable way way the new journey is faster, and the man's sense of it is as such. But that very acceleration transforms his former means of traveling into something it had never been - slow - whereas before it was the fastest way to go" (129).

↳ The fast defines the slow. By speeding up the tempo of existence (now) - the memory of our past (our identity) is turned into something slow. Fast for a split second transforms our past into something slower - our identity, or sense of is thus connected to slowness. To regain this + our connection to the world - we can slow down. Now - to slow the present - will we then re-define fast!? Slow down for a split second...!!!

- "there are thousands who preferred the way rivers wandered and the way barges drifted on them... the new technology; the new music, and the cinema had set the world rushing. But beneath there ran countercurrents." (130)

fig. 2.2 notes

## Making Books

While I read about slowness, tactility, and the making of architecture, I looked for an opportunity to experience and practice a slow craft as a method of exploration for this thesis. I found book-making, an art related to architecture. Like the making of architecture, the making of books is a kinetic process, that is based in experience, structure and time. Both books and architecture give shape and meaning to the world around us. I took two book-making workshops with Bonnie Thompson Norman, a professional book binder and book artist based in Seattle, in August and September of 2016. In the workshops I engaged with making in a new way. Folding and stitching paper, I created new physical forms to house ideas.

In the first workshop, I spent four days with ten other students of different ages and backgrounds, learning various methods of artist book construction. The books made in this workshop

explored the basics of origami and hand stitching (fig. 2.3). In the second workshop, I learned how to construct the type of book that would later be used as a model for the books created by people visiting the place designed in this thesis (fig. 2.4). The second workshop was more intimate, lasting for two days with four students, where we focused on craft in the creation of both a box to house the book, and the book itself. Working by hand, at this intimate scale with natural materials, was a rewarding personal experience. I learned a new design process in the creation of a layered object. I crafted a hand-made box that holds hand-bound pages, which provide empty space to be filled.

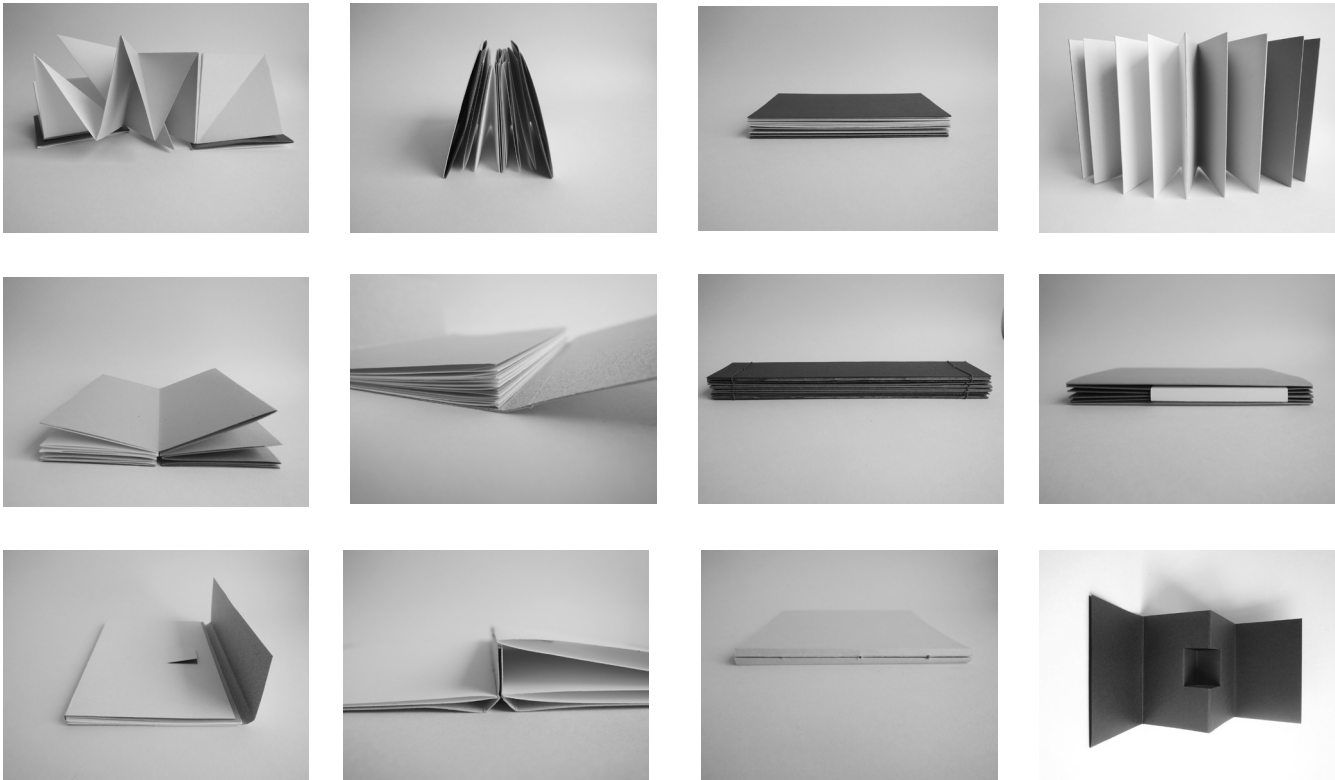


fig. 2.3 various products, workshop (1)



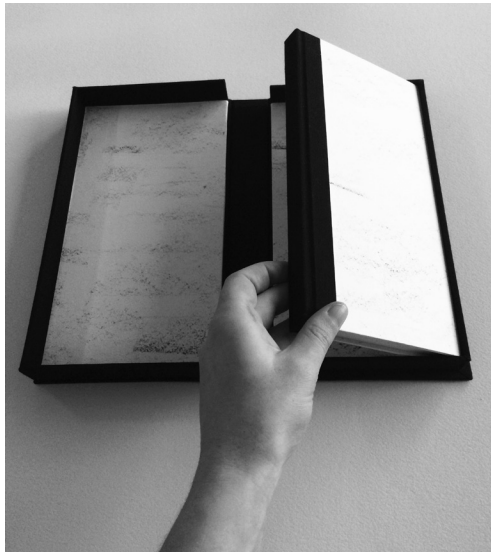


fig. 2.4 final memory book, workshop (2)

## Recording Memories

Through my research, I was particularly inspired by the writings of Juhani Pallasmaa and Milan Kundera regarding the concept of memory and its relation to slowness and to architecture. I began to keep a journal where I recorded my own personal memories. Similar to the writing exercise, I chose to record my memories by hand. I used a small journal with blank pages and a pen to translate recollections of my past into a permanent form on paper in the present. Working by hand removed the layer of the computer screen, the technology of spell check and auto correct, along with the waiting blink of the cursor. The words emerged and flowed at their own pace on the page, each word with its own distinctive weight and expression. My memories are thus original hard copies of evidence of who I am now recorded (fig. 2.5-2.7).

In this fast-paced present, it was necessary for me to engage in this exploration ritualistically by setting up a specific work

space and method of practice. Every time that I recorded my recollections, I sat at the small desk in my home next to the window. Each entry followed a similar process that began by first marking the date on the page, followed by the memory inscription, which I concluded with a horizontal line delineating one memory from the next. Often, while recording a recollection, my mind connected ideas from the past with the production of new stories and design ideas for the future. This dialogue between the past memories and the future design project is shown in the journal entries. During this period of recording, I continued to read non-fiction texts and fiction stories. These undoubtedly mixed as I imagined the spaces that could exist in this thesis. Through the recording of personal memories, I not only reconnected with myself, but I gained a new understanding and appreciation of my place in the world.

give. These words and sketches of ideas were the document of my voice on paper and would live on through the affect they had on another. I used to imagine while writing who would find them and what they would stir. I imagined my future reader smile or feel sad by my plotted out truth. I vowed to myself that if the house burned down - I would make sure to rescue my journals from the flames.

7-16-14

Up Little Cottonwood canyon, about 3/4 of the way up there is a small dirt pull-off to a well-known destination: Lisa Falls. Familyless and climbers park here to walk up the meandering trail through the trees to the base of a rock wall that carries spring runoff from the gulch to the forest floor. There are big rocks to sit and have lunch and listen to the water hit the ground. Exploring alone on one of those days, I found a secret path that led up and around the back side of the boulders and up into the gulch scrambling and suspended, exposed to the fall beneath. I made my way up and out of site. I found magic here. Pools of clear water and a framed view by the surrounding rocks & the blanket of trees on the other side of the canyon. I kept climbing upwards how far I would push my fear and enjoy my own adventure. I reached a steep face of slab rocks, slick from the water runoff. Looking for access, I found evidence that I was not alone, someone had been here before me. A rope dangled down the shadow line to support the crags as they journeyed upward.

I took the rope and walked all the way to the top of the gulch where I met a huge cliff face and cascading water fall. I found my special place. I returned back to this magic gulch many times. Once I sat at the lower pools, gazing out to the valley below and experienced a winter storm set in. All was quiet as the clouds lowered and the flakes speckled the canvas of green.

He had heard of this place before, and he was eager and nervous to arrive. The directions were a bit obscure: keep taking rights past the speed bumps and look for the small mailbox off of the road. He was surprised that mail was delivered and collected all the way up here, and he wondered who would ~~bring~~ if he wasn't given the address, who was? The road transitioned from pavement to gravel and in the simple gate he spotted a mailbox with one integer: 0. In the gate made of wood there were the most peculiar windows framed out - designed holes in the wall that let a glimpse of the road beyond peak through. He had lost cell service way back, and he knew he was going to spend the next chunk of time connected to something else.

Turning down the driveway at the mailbox was the best feeling. I had made it home. Framed with aspens on one side and pines on the other, the car rolled slowly over the gravel bringing the old wood home in sight. The radio turned off, the window rolled down, the familiar banking from the happy dog down the drive.

What kind of place is for documenting thoughts? You come here to work and to be and to uncover. But why?

fig. 2.5 memory recording (1)

Below can hear the footsteps above, but without the inside knowledge assume ghosts or natural creaks of the weathering home.

In the library where scent fills the time of day, one of the walls of books rotates open. One must know where to apply pressure. On a central pin a portion of the wall rotates to reveal a room beyond. This room of different material perceived from both the interior and exterior is cold. Completely introverted, the only sliver of light comes from a northern cleavage which provides a constant soft glow. At the center of the room is a hearth - but not your typical warm welcoming. Instead the massing of stones forms the boundary of a deep well, one that falls deep into the darkness of the earth. Although you can't see the bottom, sitting adjacent to the revealed depth makes you wonder - a certain type of reflection. How far does the well go? What is darkness? How much time has passed?

7-12-16

A brick wall is carved into the earth. Below grade it retains the earth and provides a sunberged space open to the sky. Use a red slice it grows on its ascent to its highest point at 6' from grade. Are there two walls that form a V? At the crotch is there a bench to sit back against the wall? The curving on the walls changes and becomes more opaque - letting in less light. sitting on the bench - the contrast of the red against the blue sky.



an old cabin up in the meadow of Hunter Creek rests slouched waiting. The windows are dark holes in the purple facade there is something teal, but I can't remember exactly what it was. A door perhaps? I entered in to the old cabin only once and found the hidden stair past the back wall. I took the stairs up the second floor and imagined the habitation that once occurred. As my head surfaced the hole in the floor, my eyes level with the wood planks I was caught in a tension between the past and the present in a forward ascent.

Some nights when I can't seem to fall asleep I imagine I am somewhere else. This location has changed over time, but a recurring destination is suspended over a dark well, comfortable in a slightly swaying white hammock.

7-14-16

The round green corduroy couch that sat knee high next to the fireplace was my favorite spot. I could curl up and sink in to all that was real. As the fire sparked and the darkness of night seeped in, I was safe. Many nights this was the preferred start to sleep. I would start the night's rest here in the living room under the vaulted ceilings in the quilt house and drift deep down and under. Hours would pass said the scripted clock and I would eventually roll out from beneath the blanket and make my way upstairs.

7-15-16

There is nothing more sweet than reading over ones thoughts and personal stories. In the green night stand by my childhood bed stood my most personal journals. I would record my thoughts and emotions to know me - but always new. The reward for the one who found them once I was

fig. 2.6 memory recording (2)

There was a trapped door down to the cellar in a room next to the kitchen. The doors would open in the floor to a cool and dimmed underworld. The stairway down is wide enough for 1.5 people, and the wood of the steps creates underfoot. The space below gets natural light from perimeter windows - so not all is dark. Down in this cellar goods are stored - canned fruits and vegetables, produce and grains to last the long winter. Wax from the bees is also stored down here, waiting to be formed into candles for the people. In the room that holds access to this place there are two work tables, on the surrounding walls are the necessary tools. Here the candles are made, food is organized and canned for storage. A double swing door leads from this space into the kitchen.

When I was little my family would go to a small Italian restaurant down the valley. We would go with my parents and my grandparents maybe once or twice a week. The restaurant was popular and there was always a wait. Outside the front door next to the path was a little stream and on the other side of the stream were tables used for outdoor seating. To keep my sister and me happy during the wait, my grandpa (papa) would take the daily newspaper from the surrounding tables, and sheet by sheet, he would construct paper boats out of the news for us to send down the stream. We would race down the bank following our paper boats all the way to the tunnel that would take our boats under the road and presumably spit them out the other side. We always tried to fish them out

before they escaped into the tunnel, and for us were lost forever. This memory makes me think of sending stories or letters down stream - a ceremony of sorts, a temporal document, a post office that sent letters to nowhere.

My dad has done many things, always creative and thinking. We had a barn by our old house on the property that he used to make stone sculpture and ~~was~~ whatever the current hobby might be. At one point my dad had a candle company called Aspen Candle works. As an artist he would screen print his drawings onto the waxy surface and sell them at the local grocery. In the barn was a large vat that heated the wax. On the side of the candle company, my dad would make little fire starters to sell and keep at our home. Some nights my sister and I would sit with my dad in the barn - he had high stools for us at his work table and we would stir the hot wax or mix together the sawdust and wax into the fire-starter balls. The light was always creamed yellow and dim, my toes were usually cold, but I was always happy.

Between the kitchen and the work room is a thickened wall. It holds secret stairs that ascend into the attic. Camouflaged by a pocket ~~door~~ discreet door, a narrow staircase bends up and around to the space above. The shaft is tight with an indirect source of light. At the top of the stair you turn right to face another door. This one swings into an open attic under a gabled roof. Light from the far end window draws you through as you cross different thresholds defined by the structural rhythm. Freestanding in the space is a full mirror and similarly placed elsewhere is a chest of drawers. People

fig. 2.7 memory recording (3)

## Role - Play

While the recording of my own personal memories started to generate ideas for the thesis program and site, it was important for me to try and understand the place I would design from perspectives other than my own. Through a change in perspective, I could discover what qualities other people would record or experience in a place that revolved around the main concepts of this thesis. In order to do this, I utilized a method derived from gestalt analysis, a role-playing exercise.

I imagined that I was four different people of various ages, genders, and different professional backgrounds, who came to this place at different times, in different seasons and in different locations. I wrote journal entries from these perspectives to gain insight into what this place could be in terms of a program, and where this program might take place. In each entry, I imagined a new place that had spaces to live, think, reflect, experience and leave behind pieces of one's presence. This exploration

required me to step outside of myself to find answers to questions that had not yet been fully framed. In order for me to embody the life of someone else, I began each role-playing session by writing a small poem to create room for a new story and experience to unfold. To keep the stories from overlapping, I extended this exploration over the span of a week to make time between each role and the next. Where I wrote my own memories by hand, these role-play journal entries were typed on the computer. I used the computer as a tool to add a layer of distance between myself and the roles into which I placed myself in. Once the initiation poem was complete, I fabricated an identity. I determined my new name, my age, my profession, and the date. The remainder of information came out as I wrote. I tried not to be intentional, but to free-associate, recording whatever came to mind.

The first role that I played (fig. 2.8) was from the perspective of a

45 year old woman named KP, who practiced art therapy and left her two children at home to come to this place for an extended period of time. From the perspective of a middle-aged woman who had left her family, I had to imagine what she would record for her children to one day read. In the second role, I transformed into a young 18 year old writer named Lou Brooke (fig. 2.9). Lou was at a major cross-road in her life where she was deciding if and where she was going to go to college. To help her decide, she came to this place to understand where she was coming from and where she wanted to go next. Through this role I began to understand the value of discovery that could occur from the relationships made between people and the relationships that the people had with the landscape. The third perspective (fig. 2.10) was from a 36 year old chef named Taylor Benjamin who was looking for new meaning in the cuisine he was cooking back home. Recording for Taylor was a challenge, and this helped me imagine different

programmatic elements that could be implemented to aid and inspire recall. The fourth and final role (fig. 2.11) in my exploration was from a 70 year old man named Colin Andrew who worked and lived at this place as an archivist, also known as a keeper. This role was important to play because it gave me access into the perspective of someone who had spent many years at this place as others came and went.

At the completion of this exercise, I re-read each entry multiple times and pulled out specific qualities, details or experiences to inform the final design. I have included in the pages below a sample of the journal entries and their initial poem from each of the four people.

I wake to the call of roosters. Half-light through the window. The silhouette of pine. We wash in the central pool. Handmade wooden bowls. The air crisp and fresh. One feels within the valley. Hinged neck, high tree. Wonder.

16 October 2012

*"It has been raining for two days and everything is gray. There is a constant, almost melodic drip from a small leak in the roof. We put down a tin bucket to catch the water just to amplify the sound. To warm our bellies this morning after the chilled night sleep, we made porridge. I needed something sweet, so I added blackberry jam preserve. The people who came before me picked the blackberries. On the jars are recorded recipes for different meals and treats. All the jams are stored in the [cellar](#) below. It always feels cool under the ground, and I have to remember my sweater. It is the green knit favorite that you must remember well. I love going down to pick a new jar as much as I love washing out the empties and returning them to the shelves. It is a [cycle](#) that I get to be a part of. They didn't know who would eat their jam, or make their meals, and I don't know who they were, but their [memories](#) will rest with mine in the [Archive](#)."*

*I am getting to know the others [slowly](#), but most are keeping to themselves. There are only five [residents](#), two men and two women besides me. Wade is the oldest with a head of white hair and a slight limp as he walks. Peter, a bit younger. He is handsome with brown curls and is very reserved. Marie and Sophie are around my same age. The [keepers](#), as we call them, are a couple, and they seem to have lived here forever. Together with the dalmatian (named Elle May), we are eight. I know that we are all here from different parts of the world for different reasons that are our own. Everyone has their own way throughout each day to live, perform their daily chores and write. Some of us work together tending the [garden](#) while others prefer to [work](#) alone. We [cook](#) in pairs of two and alternate each night. There are two tables for meals, one inside and one out, both made out of wood. The plates and bowls are simple ceramic, made and fired here in the small [studio](#) down the hill by the river. It gives me joy to look at the table at the various sizes of hand made creations. The silverware looks like it has been collected from different places over a long period of time, mismatched and perfected, stained from use."*

fig. 2.8 role play (1) - kp, art therapist, age 45

Wind chiming in the breeze. Fog filled mornings. Smoke from the night before left on my sweater. Life filled with music and color. This is it she says. The roosters are calling. Mint in the garden, bees in the air. A simple life, steady and pure.

5 September 2007

*"This morning I went for a walk down by the beach before breakfast. Jordie and I met by the twin rocks at the south of the meadow and started the slow decent down to the water. The roosters wake me up each morning, and when that fails, I can usually hear the other's footsteps out my door. Jordie is my first friend. She is older than me, and arrived 6 months ago. She is planning to stay one full year. She started inviting me on her morning walks a few days after I arrived, and I have to say they are the highlight of my days so far. I like it best when it's a bit foggy and I can only barley see the path ahead. The path transitions from gravel to dirt as it descends down and weaves through and past the archive. Try and imagine walking on a path carved through rocks that are millions of years old down to the sea. Sometimes you can spot little fishing boats out in the early morning bobbing through the mist. The horizon is somewhere in the distance and it smells like ocean, moist and rich. Within the rock walls on either side is where they keep the books of life. I have begun my first book, and one day it will rest here with the others. The rock surface turns to glass and as you walk by you can see into the caves that hold all of the stories. The cut in the rock wall we walk through is no more than three feet wide. There is a door on each side. I have not been in yet, but it is only a matter of time."*

fig. 2.9 role play (2) - lou brook, aspiring writer, age 18

Paper folded, creased through memory. Edges made.  
Pages full. Pages empty. The period remembered. All  
comes out. All set free.

26 March 1993

*"This must be the beginning. I have to start somewhere. I didn't realize how hard it was going to be. This page is very white. The paper is thick, the book hand-bound. It feels empty but heavy, without words... like me. I recently left my home, Mo the cat and my Dalmatian pup. I have been here as a resident for at least a week and I haven't written anything down yet since I arrived. I have tried, multiple times – that is of course one of the reasons why I am here, but each time I close the cover for another day. I can't believe I am here, honestly me out of all people. One day I am in the kitchen of the top restaurant on 9th and 9th, a week later, I am sitting on these steps, doing nothing but watching my breath on the air."*

fig. 2.10 role play (3) - taylor benjamin, chef, age 36

Floppy hat off the hook. Meander to the mailbox. Bare feet on earth. The extended textured path. Leaves everywhere. Hands in pockets. Steady rhythm. Shadow as company. Letters waiting. I will see them soon.

1 September 2058

*"Next stop Oz. That's usually where I start when I finish an entry. I close this [book](#), my eyes follow, I breathe in deep and exhale that. Oz.*

*I have been here a long while. I have been ready to go for some time, but something special is keeping me here. So I stay. I stay for her. It has always been her. If she stays, I stay.*

*Not much has changed in this [quiet valley](#); people seem to leave it alone. I grew up not far from here, not far from her all my life. We used to go climbing in these mountains and swimming in the river in the summer time. We decided to start this project together. Decided that [connection](#) and [records](#) were important things in life. The type of things that get recorded here are the personal things, the little things, the other things, the poetry in the margins, the thoughts that cross our minds. These are the things of our lives; these are what we [remember](#) and what define us, these things tell our story. These things are important. If not [recorded](#), the magic leaves untold. This [place](#) is for a rare breed, for those curious souls.*

*This land passed through many hands, and many other hands of greater wealth wanted it for worse things. But when we put our proposition together, after we finished college, the city granted us this treasure, and ever since we have kept its blood pumping. I love it here, its where I belong."*

fig. 2.11 role play (4) - colin andrew, keeper, age 70



## Chapter 3: Program

July - October 2016

This chapter presents the program that emerged from the explorations described in Chapter 2, particularly from the role-playing exercise. When I began the explorations I had no clear idea of what the thesis would be, but by the completion of the role-playing exercise, I had identified a series of activities and a series of qualities that the place I designed would have. I did not yet know where this would be located, but I had a sense of what it would be.

The program for this thesis is a place away where people go to record their memories. This program is the outcome of the explorations and the theoretical framework on which those explorations are based. This chapter explains the programmed spaces, the cycles of duration for visitors, and the designed activities in which they engage.

## Programmed Spaces

There are three primary building types in this program. There is a main house, a series of cabins and an archive. The main house holds the community spaces, the cabins provide private rooms, and the archive stores the records of memories. In response to their functions, each of these building types has a different relationship to the landscape. The project is a kind of retreat - a place where people can come and stay and engage with the landscape as well as with each other. It is a place of reflection, and the records of the reflections of those who came here before are available to those who come after.

In addition to the proposed buildings, there are six designed “moments” in the landscape that take the experience of the retreat outdoors (fig. 3.2). Each moment focuses on user experience in the aim of providing inspiration for recall. All programed elements of this thesis are designed for the various cycles and activities that will occur on site (fig. 3.1).

seasons  
stars  
moon  
light  
sunrise  
sunset  
weather  
site work  
migration  
harvest  
  
recording  
sleeping  
waking  
making  
eating  
cooking  
being  
arriving  
departing  
reading  
thinking  
dreaming  
creating

fig. 3.1 cycles and activities

### **Main House**

---

- Office ( 130sf )
- Great Room ( 720 sf)
- Room Beyond ( 300sf )
- Kitchen / Dining ( 950 sf )
- Cellar ( 570 sf )
- Attic ( 570sf )
- Studio ( 700sf )

### **Cabins**

---

- Rooms (8) ( 350sf )

### **Archive**

---

- Foyer ( 140sf )
- Memory Storage ( 1,000sf )

### **Moments in the Landscape**

---

- Stair in the Grove
- Bench Between
- Observatory
- Gravel Circle
- Meditation Platform
- Big Pond Loop

Total (8,730sf)

fig. 3.2 programmed spaces

## Cycles of Duration

The cycles of duration are based on the seasons. As an example diagrammed in fig. 3.3, a resident could arrive on the winter solstice, and stay until the spring equinox, the summer solstice or the following winter solstice. The minimum stay is one season, the common stay is two, and the maximum stay is for one whole year. An extended stay at the retreat provides the opportunity for the residents to transition from their daily lives into a new environment, and to live at a new pace in that new environment while they actively engage in meaningful work. The subtle transformations that occur on a personal level also occur within the landscape. By committing to stay for at least three months, each resident will experience the wonders that go along with the full transition from one season to the next. Adjustments take time, and in the slow reality of the retreat, the extended duration offers each resident time to explore his or her own personal journey.

At the retreat there will be three “keepers” who live and work on site year round. In fig. 3.4, these three people are shown in gray. At most, the retreat is designed for up to eight residents at any given duration cycle. In fig. 3.4, each color represents one resident’s duration cycle and shows the different relationships of overlap that can occur in a given year. A resident who comes from June to September (green) may overlap with two people who began their stay in March and share the same September departure date (purple). Additionally, these three people in this study will share time with someone who arrived in June who departs in December (blue) and one person who began in June and stays for the whole year (pink). Through the coming and going of different people over the course of ones stay, the community at the retreat will stay fresh and rich with an interchange of histories, personalities, and demographics.

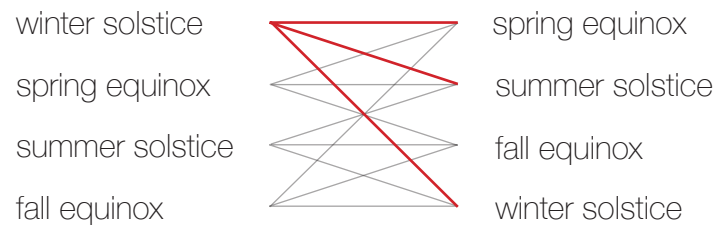


fig. 3.3 cycles of duration

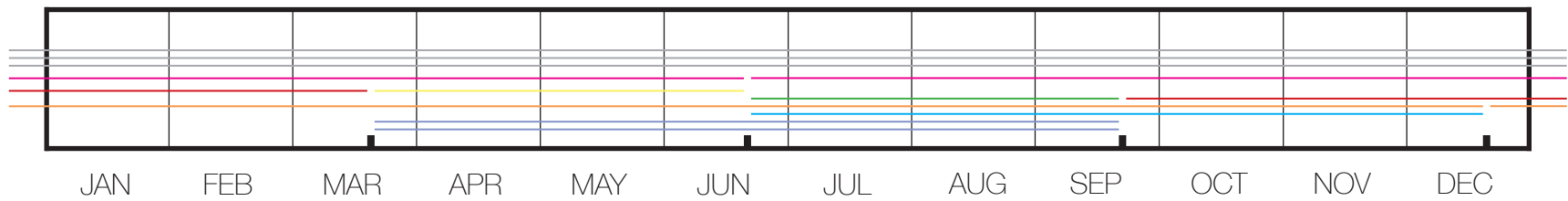


fig. 3.4 cycles of residents through one year

## **Book - Making**

Each resident who comes to the retreat will have the opportunity to engage in the process of hand making her or his own book to record their memories in over the course of their stay (fig. 3.5). At the completion of the residency, each person will leave the memory books in the archive.

The process of making each book will be guided by a keeper, and will take place in the studio on site. The book itself will be a collection of white signatures, of multi-purpose paper, hand-stitched together with a hard front and back cover. Each resident will also make a box for the book for safe-keeping in the archive.

By engaging in making, residents will develop a sense of ownership and connection to the object that will hold their most personal pieces of themselves. While everyone will have a different experience recording recalled memories, and

each memory recorded will be unique to the recorder, the books themselves and their placement in the archive will gather the memories into a collective whole.

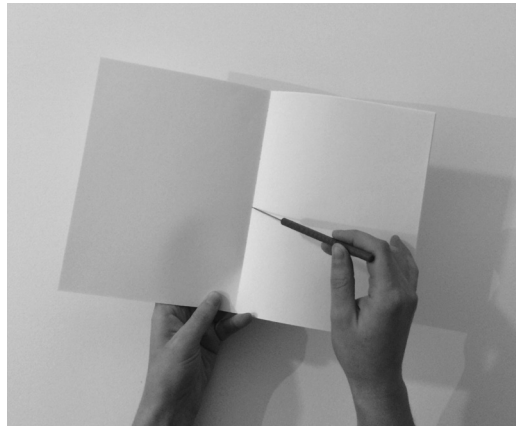
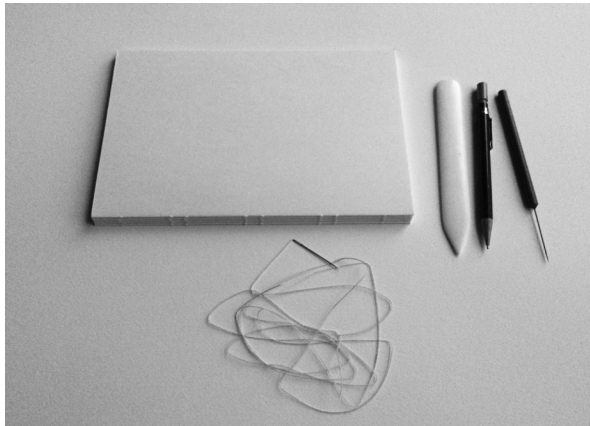


fig. 3.5 book-making process

## **Rotating Workshops**

In addition to the book-making, there will also be a series of rotating workshops as part of the program. Guest tutors (writers, artists, thinkers and others) come each month to hold various workshops and seminars for the residents. They bring different perspectives that can encourage different modes of thinking, remembering and recording.

The workshops range from two to seven days in duration, and each guest is provided accommodation in one of the cabins on site. The workshop topics (fig. 3.6) are planned in advance and are a product of the collaboration between the keepers and the guest tutors. While the tutors can apply to teach specific topics, the residents can, in turn choose their arrival and departure according to what workshop is being offered when and by whom. Memory recall can be challenging, and if the residents choose to participate, the workshops can offer inspiration and support.

time is circular. time flows like water. time is three dimensional, like space. two times: body and mechanical. time and distance. time is visible. future and past are entwined. time moves barely at all. time has an ending. stuck in time. time brings order. time stands still. there is no time. people have no memories. time is odd. time is even. time and motion. time goes backward. just one day. time is a sense. endless time. time as quality. time is discontinuous. time as a temple. local time. rigidity of time. time bounces. time is a flock of birds. time?

fig. 3.6 sample of possible workshop topics



## Chapter 4: Site

June - August 2016

This chapter address both my site search process and the site selection I made. I could not begin looking for a site until I understood what the place I would design might be. However, as the character of the place came into focus (as described in Chapter 3), I could begin to look for the place where this retreat might be located.

In some ways the criteria were simple (away but accessible, seasonal change, room for wandering), but locating the site was a process that was guided by more than just a checklist. I had to find a place in which I could imagine the people (roles) I had envisioned in Chapter 2 coming to experience the program, activity and site I imagined in Chapter 3. The site had to support the main concepts of the thesis, while providing a strong sense of place to enhance the program.

## Site Criteria

The impact that the site would have on the program and visitor experience of this thesis made its selection especially significant. While the site could have been in an urban setting to challenge the ideas of slowness and time, I chose to test the thesis in a rural setting that would support and foster the ideas being explored. In response to the program, and using cues from the role-playing exercise, I looked for a site that one could inhabit for a long period of time, that would offer new experiences to be discovered week-after-week or month-after-month, while recording one's memories.

The main criteria I used to find the right site included finding a place that: felt far away but was still accessible, that experienced seasonal change, and that could provide the residents of the retreat with ample space in the landscape to wander and explore (fig. 4.1).



away but accessible



seasonal change



room for wandering

fig. 4.1 site criteria, all taken on site

## Site Search

I started my search for this site in Washington. Over the course of six weeks, I went out looking. I began by researching short day hikes close to Seattle in hopes of finding a place with easy access for people of all abilities. Each adventure took me out of the city, through traffic, either over water or mountain passes, toward the woods and into the quiet landscape. I took most of these trips on my own and I gave myself both the time to explore and the room to get lost to find exactly what I was looking for. I usually had planned destinations, but I welcomed the adventure unfolding as I went. I pulled off the sides of roads at points of interest, and followed mysterious dirt trails just to see where they led. I was intrigued with the idea of discovery, of finding a place that felt as if it were waiting to be found.

I went to Vashon Island to test if this place belonged detached from land; I visited industrial ruins up Snoqualmie

Pass; I frequented the Mountain Loop Highway where I visited old town sites and picnic meadows. I searched in the Mount Baker Wilderness and in the Methow Valley, in addition to sites along Chuckanut Bay and on Lopez Island (fig. 4.2). When the method of using defined hiking trails as starting points did not deliver what I had hoped, I reached out to the Department of Natural Resources to gain access to logging roads and sites not open to the public. Over the course of these adventures, I used watercolor to record and reflect on particular places of interest (fig. 4.3).

Although many of these sites were good candidates for a place to record memories, none met all of my pre-set criteria. I could not fully imagine the people who I became in my role-playing exercise in any of these sites.

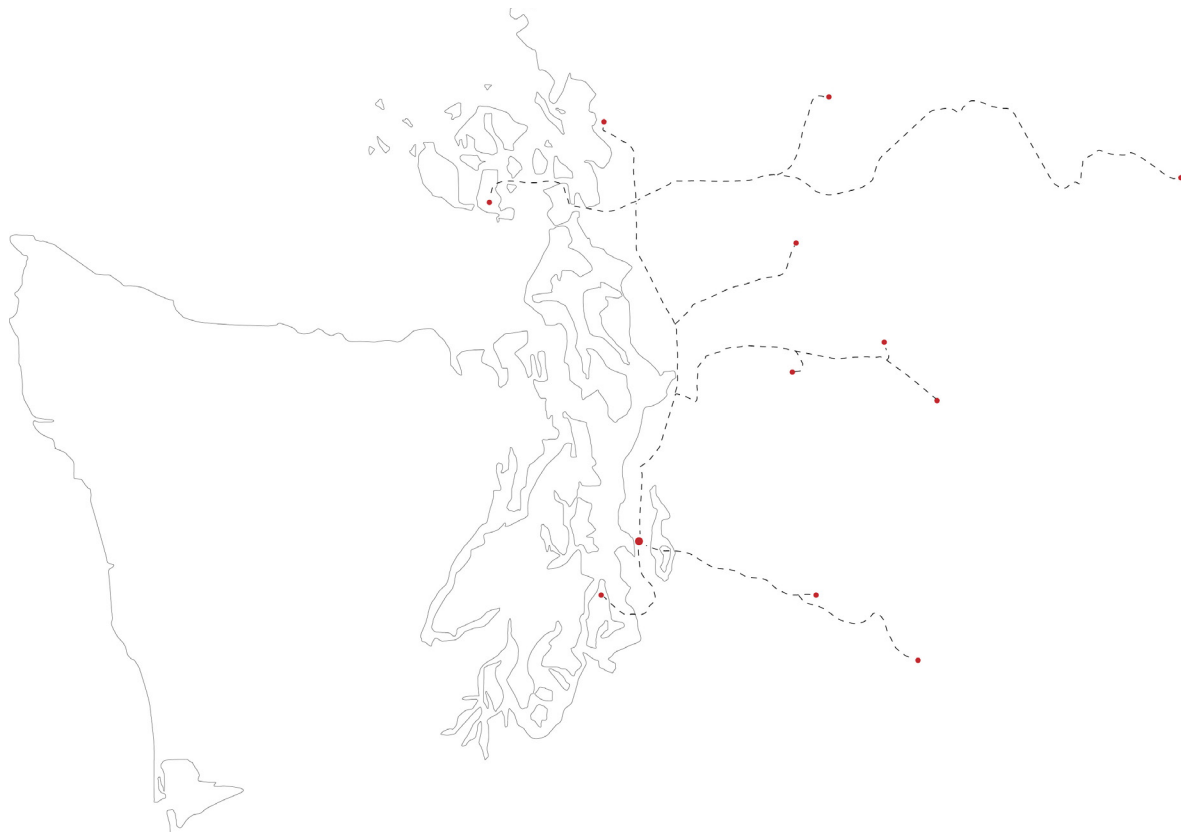


fig. 4.2 site search



vashon island



mountain loop highway



lopez island

fig. 4.3 potential site reflections

## **Finding Windstar**

At the close of the summer, I took a trip to Colorado, where I grew up, where I found what I was seeking. This is a place from my own childhood called Windstar (fig. 4.4).



fig. 4.4 windstar, photo by Dan Bayer, Aspen Journalism

## Windstar

Windstar is a 957 acre property located in the Roaring Fork Valley, three hours southwest of Denver and 15 miles northwest of Aspen (fig. 4.5). Centered in Old Snowmass, Colorado, Windstar is a site that feels secluded yet is accessible, experiences extreme seasonal change, and provides more than enough open space to wander and explore (fig. 4.6).

The Windstar Valley was patented in 1895 and was used as a private farmstead until the early 1960s. The St. Benedict's Monastery bought portions of the property and used the northern end as a retreat center. John Denver purchased the entire property in the late 1970s, donating the land to the non-profit organization of the Windstar Foundation. Partnering with the Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI) in 1996, Denver signed the Deed of Conservation Easement declaring the property as the Windstar Land Conservancy. This deed protects the majority of the Windstar site from development and ensures that most

of the landscape is open to the public for recreation. Currently, a private party owns the buildable portion of the property, while the public continues to experience the remainder of the landscape.



## **Windstar Characteristics**

The landscape of Windstar can be characterized as an open valley framed by rolling hillsides (fig. 4.7). The lowest elevation is around 7,000 feet with the high points ranging from 7,300 feet to 8,100 feet. Capitol Creek is the main water drainage that enters the site from the southwest, pools in four ponds, and exits the site on the northwest (fig. 4.8). This waterway leaves the valley fertile and green, providing a water resource for the wildlife population on site. There is a main dirt road that brings one into the site on the northeast, that transitions into the Walker Wonder Ditch Trail. All automobiles park at the entrance, and the dirt road functions as a walking trail (fig. 4.9), taking visitors through the valley, past the largest pond and into the southern end of the site.



fig. 4.7 windstar topography

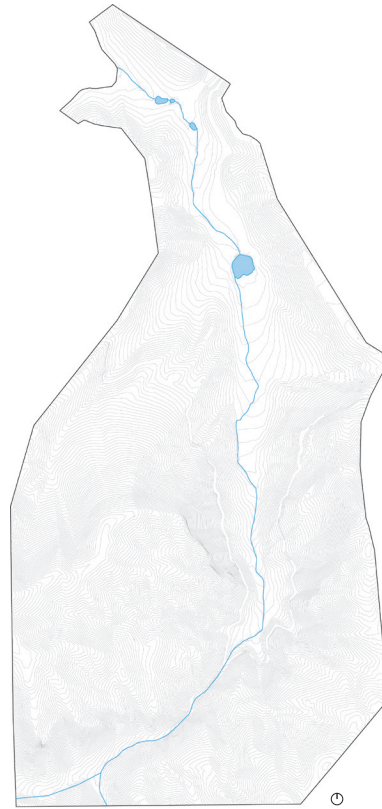


fig. 4.8 windstar water

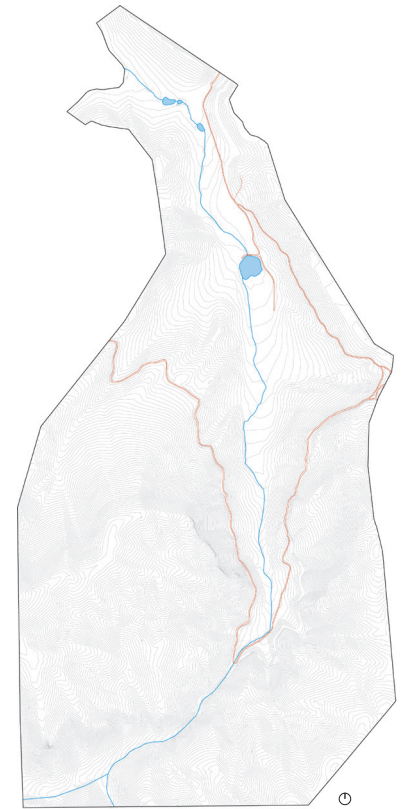


fig. 4.9 windstar roads

## Windstar Zones

The 957 acre site is broken into three distinct zones. Zone One is the buildable portion of the site, located closest to the entry (fig. 4.10). This area is the only zone not protected under the Windstar Conservation Easement. This is the location of the main program elements of this thesis. Zone Two (fig. 4.11) of the Windstar property was historically used for farming, and is now open meadow lands. These meadows surround Capitol Creek with tall grass and wild flowers. Zone Three (fig. 4.12) encompasses the remainder of the site which is primarily wild land showing little human impact.

Each resident who comes to stay at the retreat will have access to the entire Windstar site.

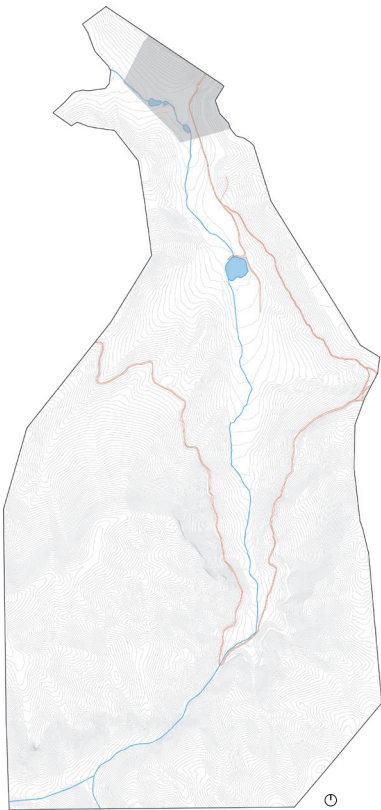


fig. 4.10 windstar zone one

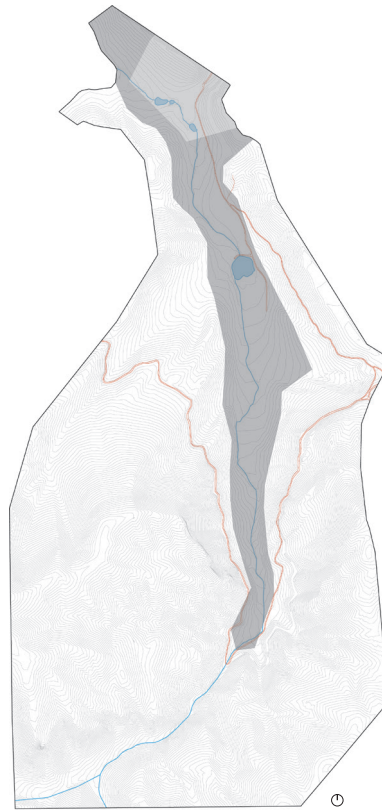


fig. 4.11 windstar zone two



fig. 4.12 windstar zone 3

## Climate

Windstar is located at 40° N and 107° W, experiencing large diurnal swings between daytime and nighttime temperatures in addition to season temperature change. The average annual high is in April at 63°, with an average annual low in December at 13° (fig.4.13). During the winter months, Windstar can receive up to 30 inches of snowfall, while the annual precipitation is relatively low (fig. 4.14). Located at a high elevation, the air is predominantly crisp and dry with low cloud coverage during the warmer months (fig. 4.15). The dry air, together with very little surrounding light pollution, gives clear visibility of the stars.

Residents who come to the retreat will experience all four seasons distinctively, from a snow-covered landscape in the winter, to the budding of aspen leaves in the spring, to the abundance of animal life in the summer, to the change of colors in the fall. In a landscape with such rich variation, the experiences can constantly change.

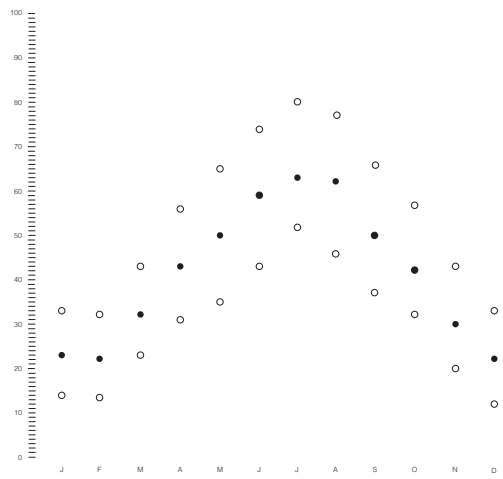


fig. 4.13 temperature

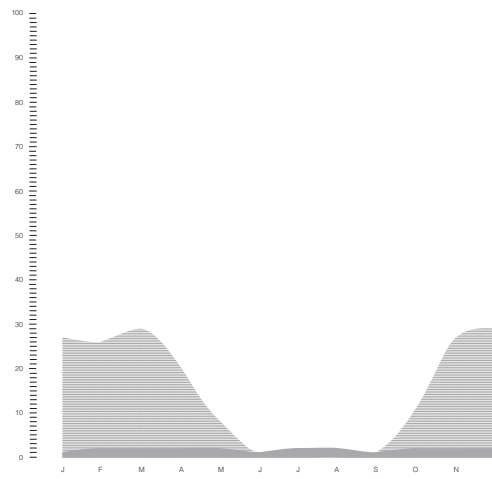


fig. 4.14 snowfall and precipitation

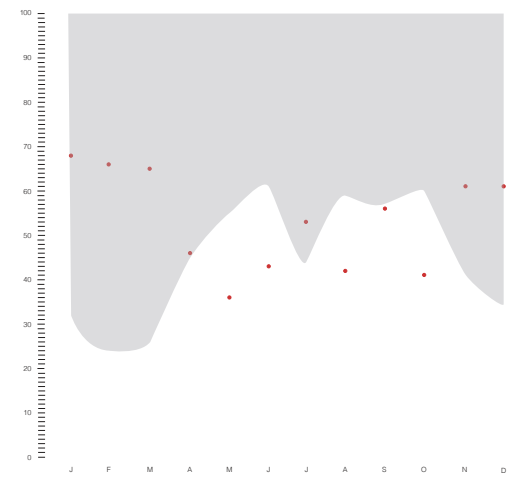


fig. 4.15 cloud cover and humidity



## **Chapter 5: Design**

September - December 2016

This chapter presents how the design came together integrating the ideas, explorations, program and site that have been discussed in the previous chapters.

My design process is briefly presented, followed by the site design, and then the design of the main house, the cabins and the archive. The chapter concludes with the designed moments in the landscape. The architectural description of each element is followed by a discussion of the experience it is meant to offer or the feelings it may evoke.

## Design Process

The design process began with drawing by hand. Working predominantly with pencil on tracing paper, I started to translate the design ideas based on the explorations into a graphically described physical realization. In designing the multiple components of the program, I moved back-and-forth from one to the next, slowly working each building type forward toward resolution. In the early stages of design, I focused on spatial adjacencies, user experience, orientation, prospect and refuge, and light and shadow. While I used perspective drawings to test the ideas, I began each iteration working in plan and section to address and understand scale and spatial hierarchies.

The slow process of designing by hand complemented the creation of a place focused on slowness, time and memory. I practiced the ideas that I was designing through hand drawing. Each marking was deliberate with the process and memory

recorded on the page. Through the method of alternatives, I developed a series of iterations for each building (fig. 5.1-5.3) before I moved the design into the computer.

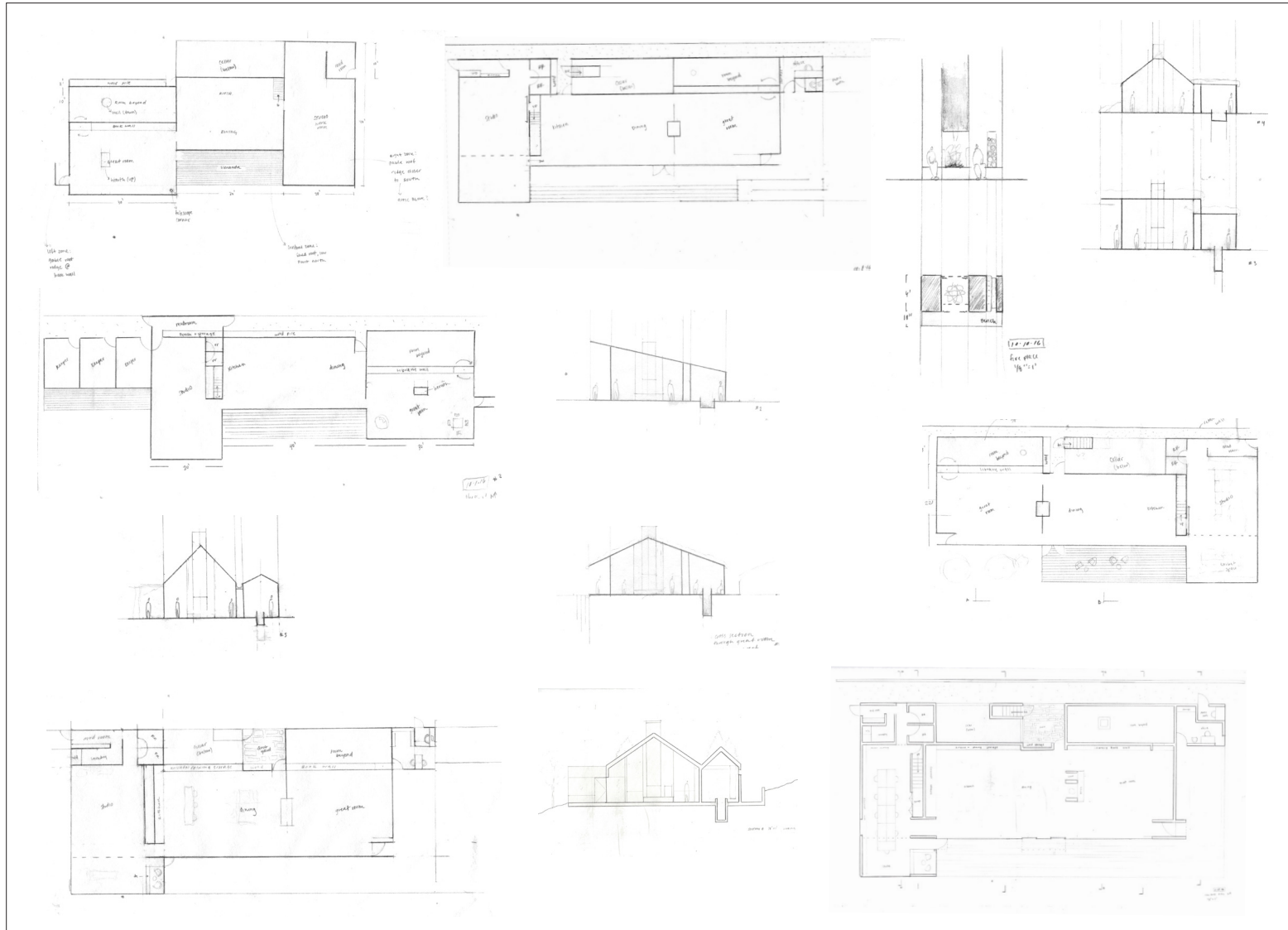


fig. 5.1 main house design process samples

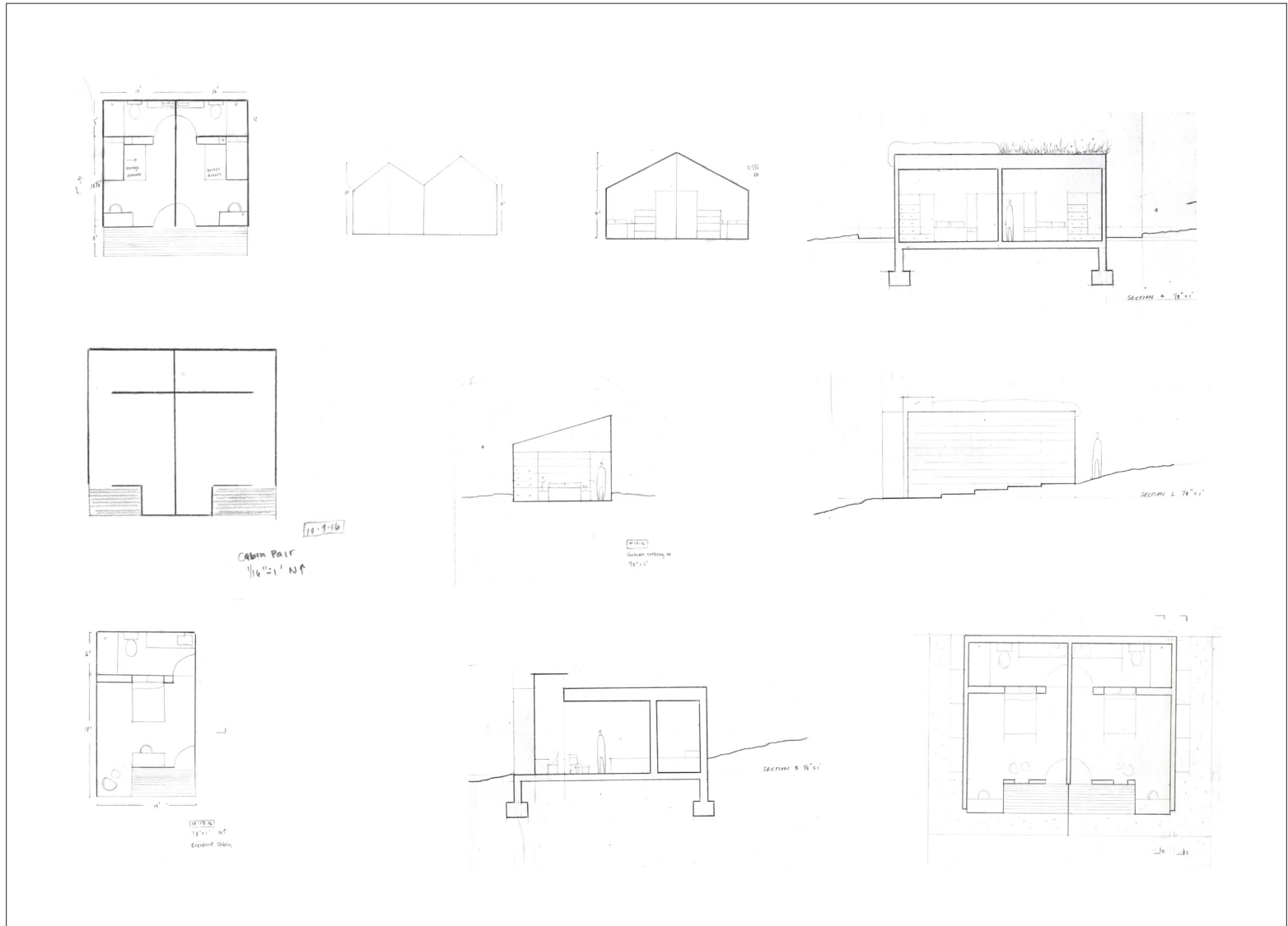


fig. 5.2 cabin design process samples

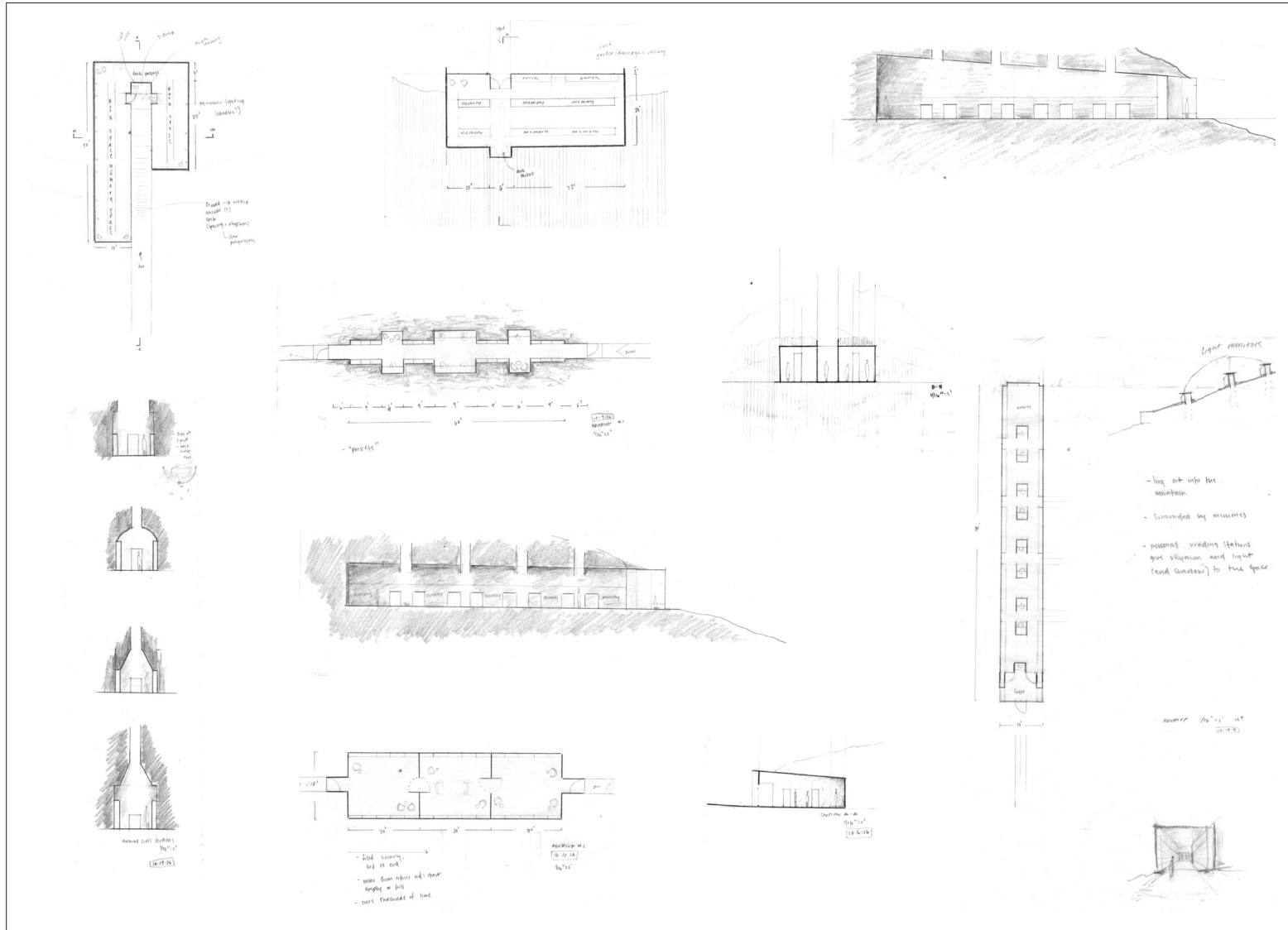


fig. 5.3 archive design process samples

## Site Design

The experience of Windstar begins at the entrance to the site at the northeast. From the point of entry to the southern end, the property is one of subtle shifts and transformations as the valley walls rise around the central meadows. Bird songs fill the air, and the scent in summer and spring is of fresh sage and warm dirt trails. There is a stillness and sense of quiet solitude that provides an expanse to dream, explore and discover. A sequence of four still ponds dots the landscape, pooling Capitol Creek for moments of pause and reflection. At different scales and distance from the main programmatic elements, each pond offers a different experience. The six designed moments in the landscape are highlighted in orange in fig. 5.4, each providing a special place of intimacy, each connecting people to the landscape and to themselves.

Zone One, illustrated in fig. 5.5, is the location of the main programmatic elements of the thesis. The central ideas that

guided their placement are: a sense of arrival, a sequence from public and communal space to private and intimate space that wraps the hillside, and the use of prospect and refuge to anchor the spaces into the land, while offering views south into the valley.

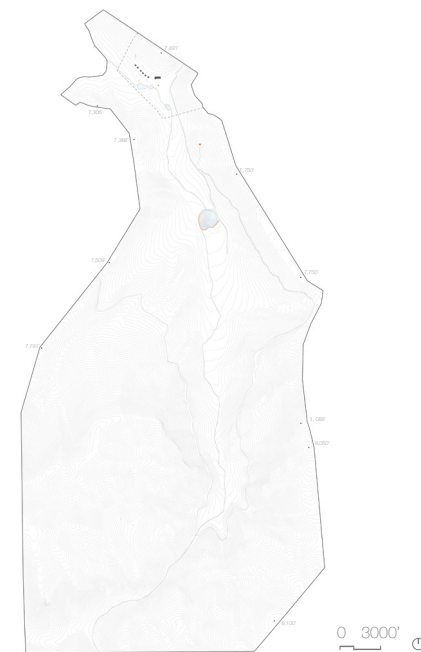


fig. 5.4 windstar site plan



- 1 Entrance
- 2 Parking
- 3 Main House
- 4 Cabins
- 5 Archive

0 90' 

fig. 5.5 zone one site plan

## Arrival

Arriving at the retreat is the beginning of a new life experience. The long dirt road that enters the site ends in a small dirt parking lot, which is oriented north. The sense of arrival begins on the path at the west end of the lot (fig. 5.6). This path is marked at its entry with a small stone totem that will slowly weather over time. The path curves through a series of existing trees and welcomes each resident with a view of the main house, providing a sense of home. The covered deck offers an experience of shelter even before going inside. If one arrives after dark, the sheltered porch is illuminated, signaling welcome. On warm summer days it provides a cooler space, and in cold seasons, a new arrival will see the fire in the central hearth and sense the warmth of the great room within (fig. 5.7).



fig. 5.6 approach



fig. 5.7 entrance looking south

## **Main House**

The main house is approximately 100'x 50' and is mostly single story with a partial attic and partial cellar. The primary spaces include: a great room, an open kitchen and dining area, a studio space, and a "room beyond" (fig. 5.8). The linear layout of the main house is a response to the site in terms of both the solar orientation and the public to private progression, as well as the daily use patterns of the residents during their stay.

These communal spaces of the main house are envisioned full of life. All of the rooms are designed to feel distinct from one another in order to offer a variety of experiences that can be chosen depending on what each resident brings to the main house each day. Choice in this architecture is significant because it establishes an additional layer of conscious awareness in the personal journey of recall.

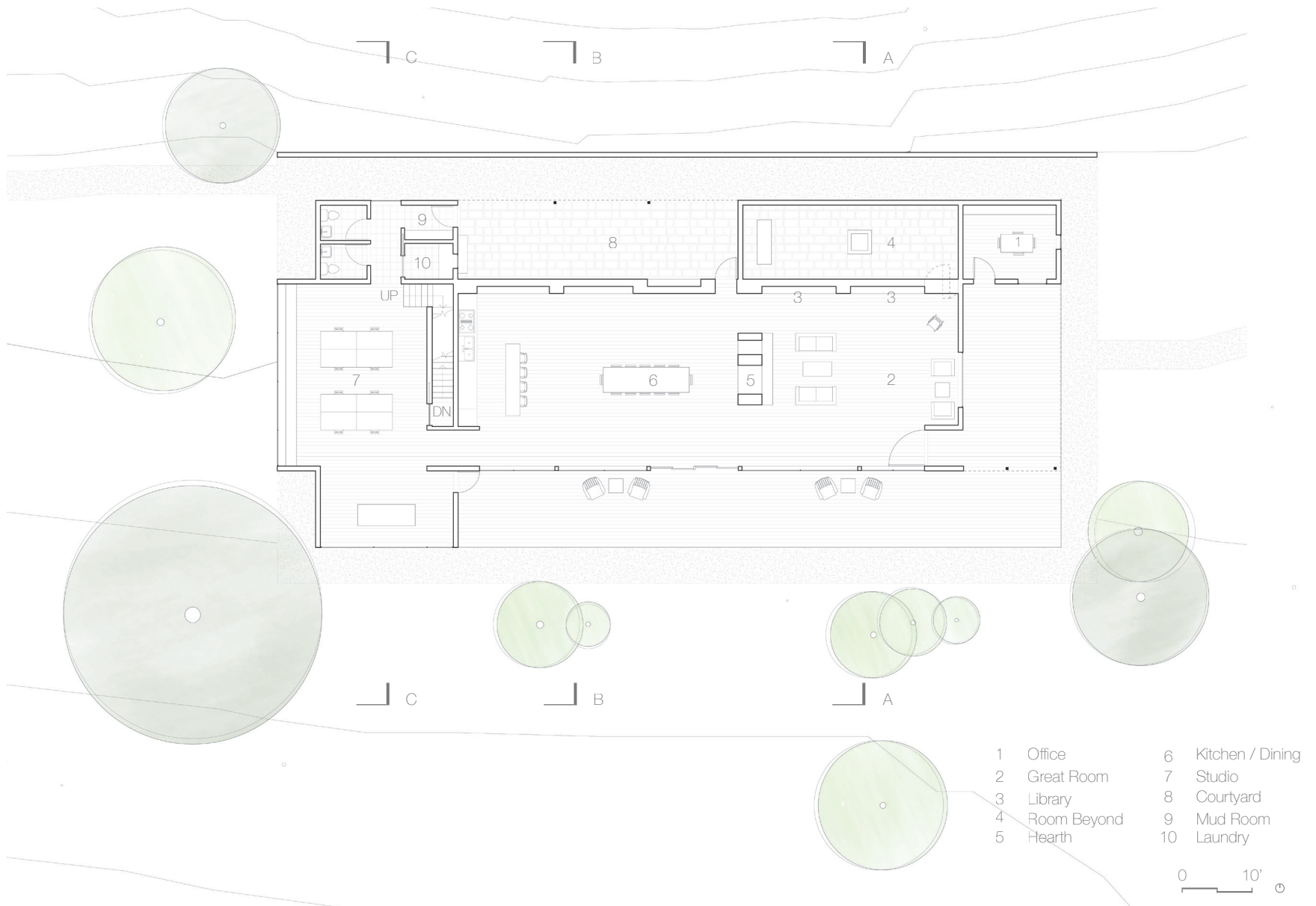


fig. 5.8 main house plan

The great room holds warmth from the hearth, serving as the community living room, a convivial space. While the prospect is out through the south-facing glazing into the landscape, this space is balanced and grounded with a degree of refuge. Within the thickened wall on the north side of the room are embedded book shelves - a library. The wall is a safe and weighted presence of knowledge and stories. The dichotomy of the solid wall to the north and the glazing to the south conceptually interweaves at the center of the gable roof and is brought down through the hearth into the main living space (fig. 5.9). A visitor who selects a book from the library shelves then turns toward the light. The wall of books and the glass wall with the view present two sources of learning, the record of human knowledge and the experience of nature. In summer one may choose to sit outside on the veranda. In winter one will more likely sit around the hearth.

In sharp contrast to the experience of the great room is the room beyond. The room beyond is a sacred space accessed

through a secret door within the library wall. The perception of time is altered through the blurring of threshold and sequential progression. Beyond the secret door is a shadow space of cold stone and half light (fig. 5.10). The room is anchored by the void space of a meditation well, which brings ones experience deep into the earth. A sense of mystery, a change in temperature, and the presence of depth offers a space for altered moments of perception to take place.

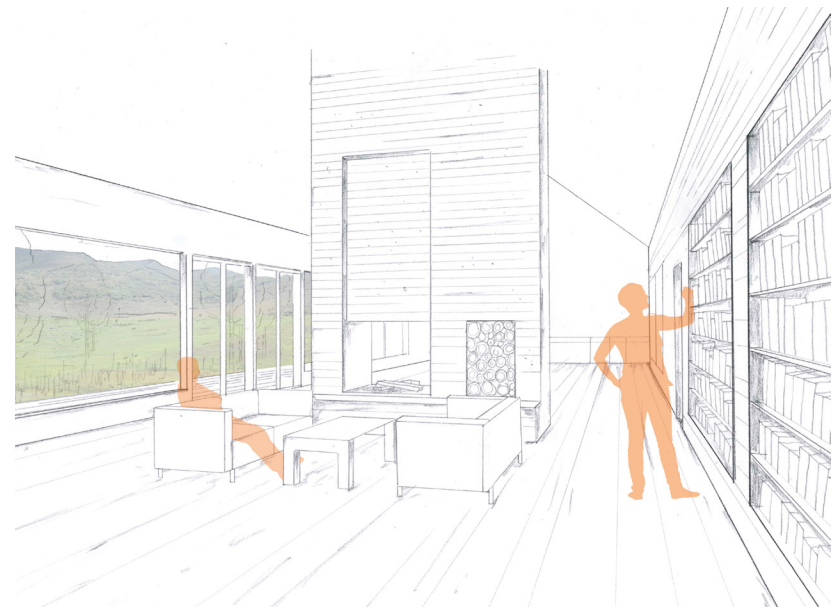


fig. 5.9 great room

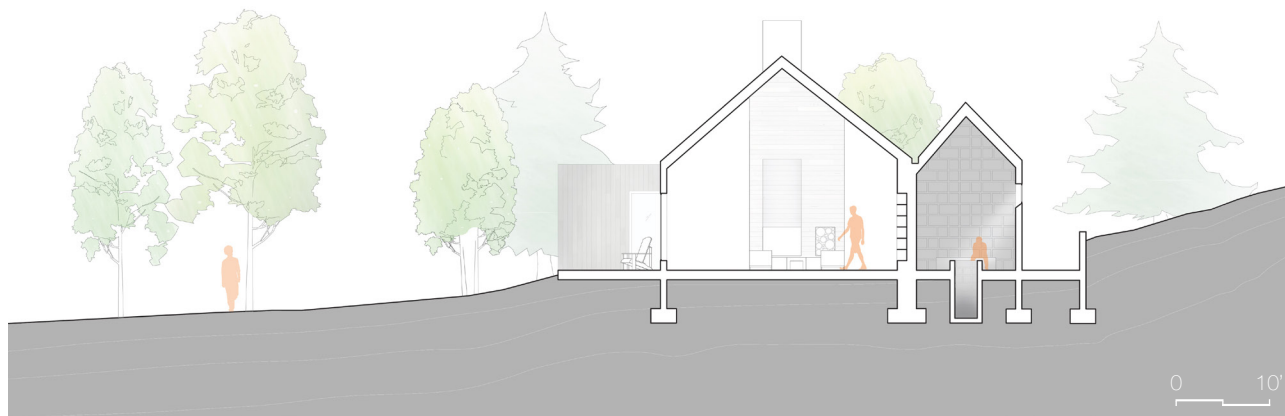


fig. 5.10 main house section A-A

The open kitchen and dining area is experienced through the cycles and rituals of cooking and eating. This space is centered between two programmed exterior spaces (fig. 5.11). To the north is the back courtyard which serves as the primary entrance for the residents on a daily basis. To the south is the wood veranda that wraps the main house and connects the interior spaces to the landscape beyond. This kitchen and dining area will come alive with smell and sound throughout the day. The room is designed for both communal meals and casual dining experiences.

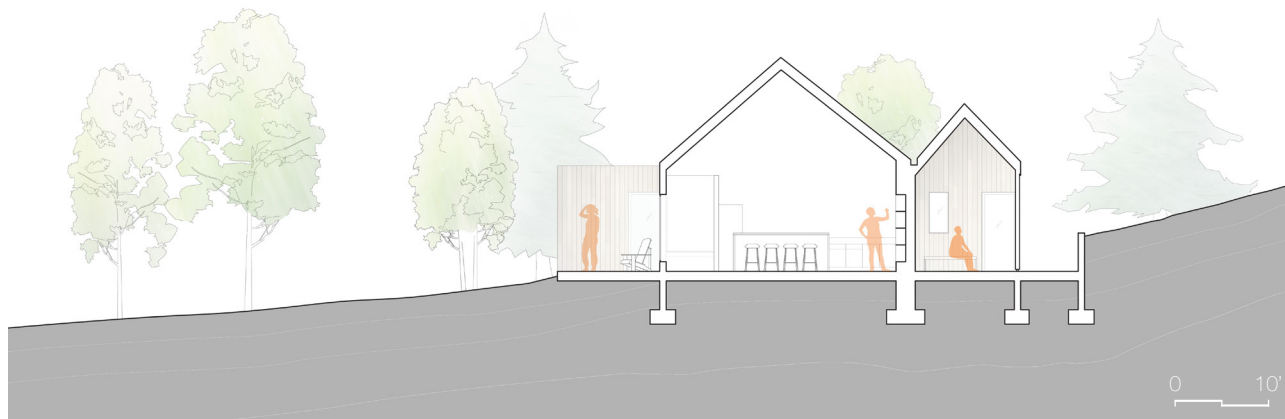


fig. 5.11 main house section B-B

The studio is an open environment equipped with work tables and supplies. This space is used for the monthly rotating workshops and holds all materials and media needed for book-making and for recording. While views from the studio look south toward the meadow, they also open west toward the cabins and the setting sun. Where the studio sits on grade, the attic and cellar are positioned above and below the horizon, offering different relationships with the landscape (fig.5.12). Both the attic and the cellar spaces are accessed via stairs through the working space of the studio.

Walking up to the attic leads to a “dream space” of open light. Here, the residents watch the sky and clouds. During the afternoon summer storms, this space will come alive with the sound of rain on the skylights. At night it will transform into an indoor viewing room to gaze at the stars.

Taking the stairs down to the cellar space offers another type of experience. Rather than meeting the sky, this space is

beneath the earth. The cellar is designed as a holding space where a variety of goods from the garden wait on shelves for use. While the cellar will be used cyclically through the canning of seasonal produce, it also offers a quiet environment for times in between. When the residents are working in their memory books, they might choose to sit in the cellar surrounded by all things kept.

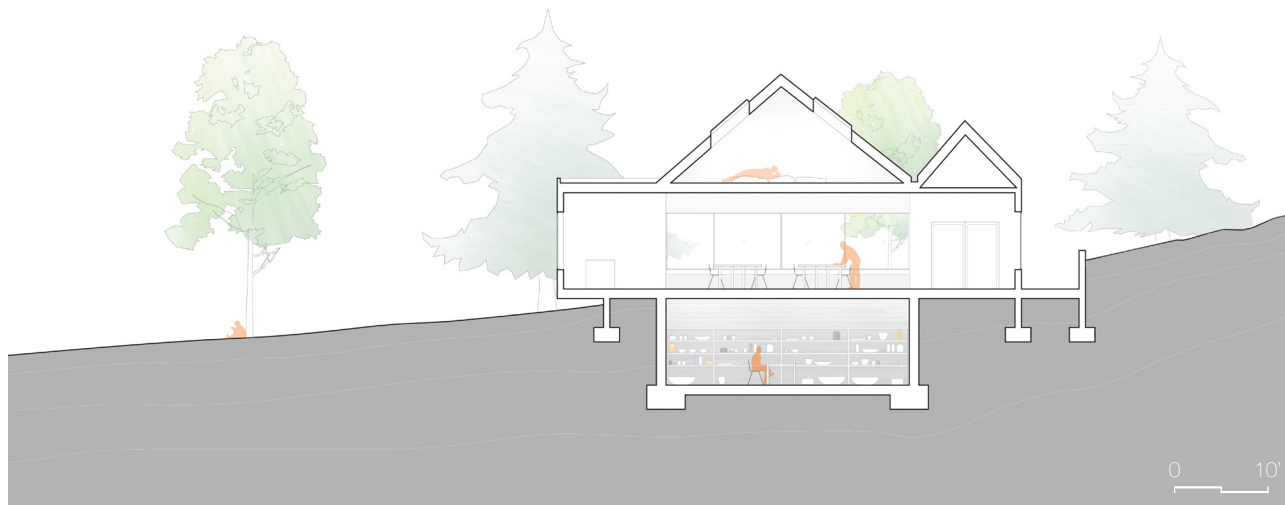


fig. 5.12 main house section C-C

## Cabins

There are 12 residences in 6 cabin structures on site for the residents, the keepers, and the guest workshop teachers. The cabins are designed in pairs of two to maximize a sense of community while retaining a level of privacy. Each cabin is approximately 24'x14' and is located off a connecting path. Each has a distinct view into the meadows (fig. 5.13). While the main house sits on the landscape, each cabin is tucked into the hillside, giving the occupants a sense of entering down and into their own private spaces of rest.

Each cabin has a special light box element that houses a private writing nook for the residents to record his or her memories. Within this space, one can feel as though they are surrounded by nature (fig. 5.14). The qualities of light in each cabin will be slightly different in response to the relation that each light box has with the orientation of the sun. Additionally, the occupants will be able to participate in the natural cycles of the

landscape as observers while the seasons change. An outdoor deck is one other feature of every cabin, designed as an open space of refuge enclosed by three sides. The cabins are designed with sod roofs that will winter, providing an extra blanket of natural insulation. (fig. 5.15). As a vertical element that extends beyond the roof, the light box functions as both a literal and figurative “lantern” in the landscape. At night the beacon of light will signify life within (fig. 5.16).

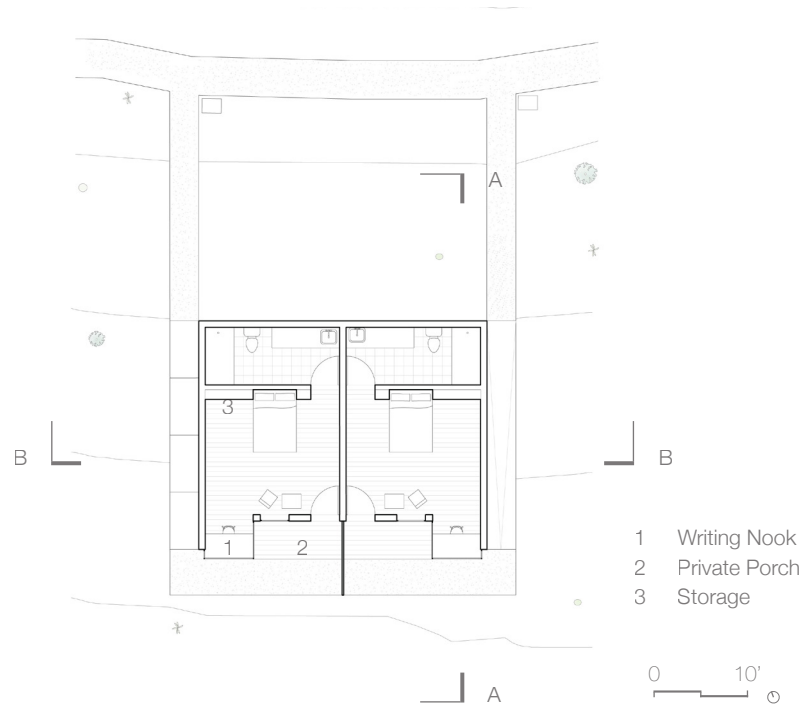


fig. 5.13 cabin plan: two private residences

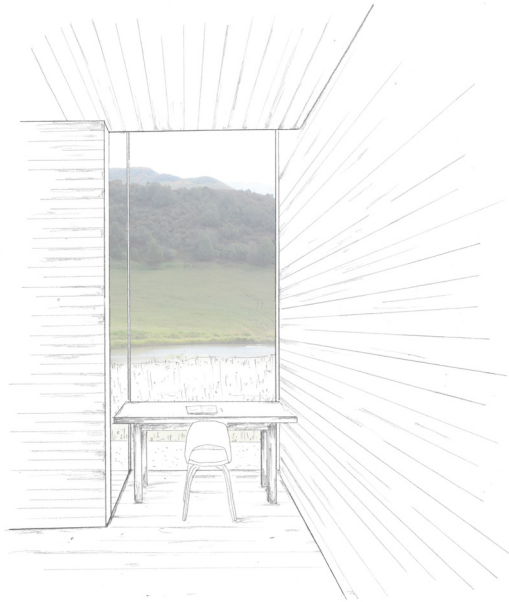


fig. 5.14 cabin writing nook experience

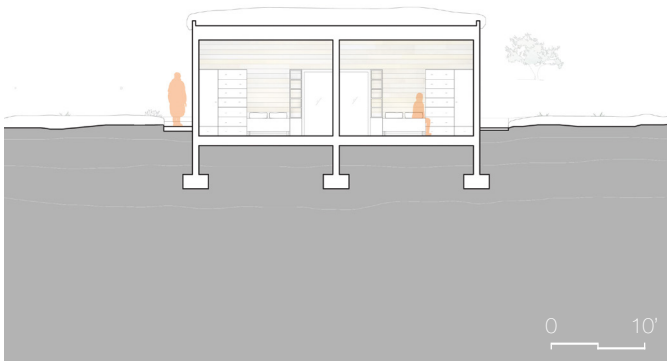
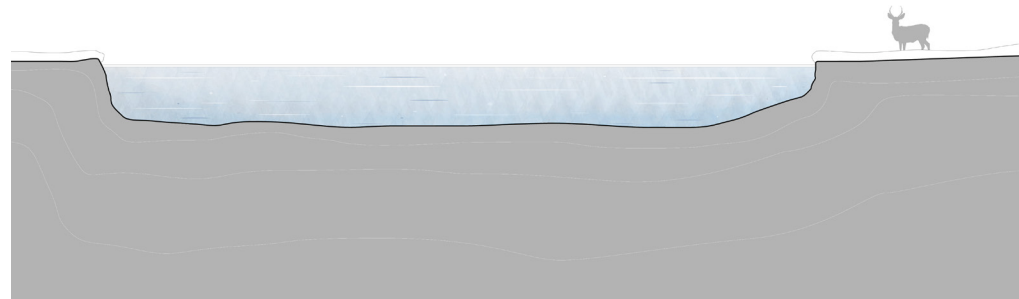


fig. 5.15 cabin section B-B



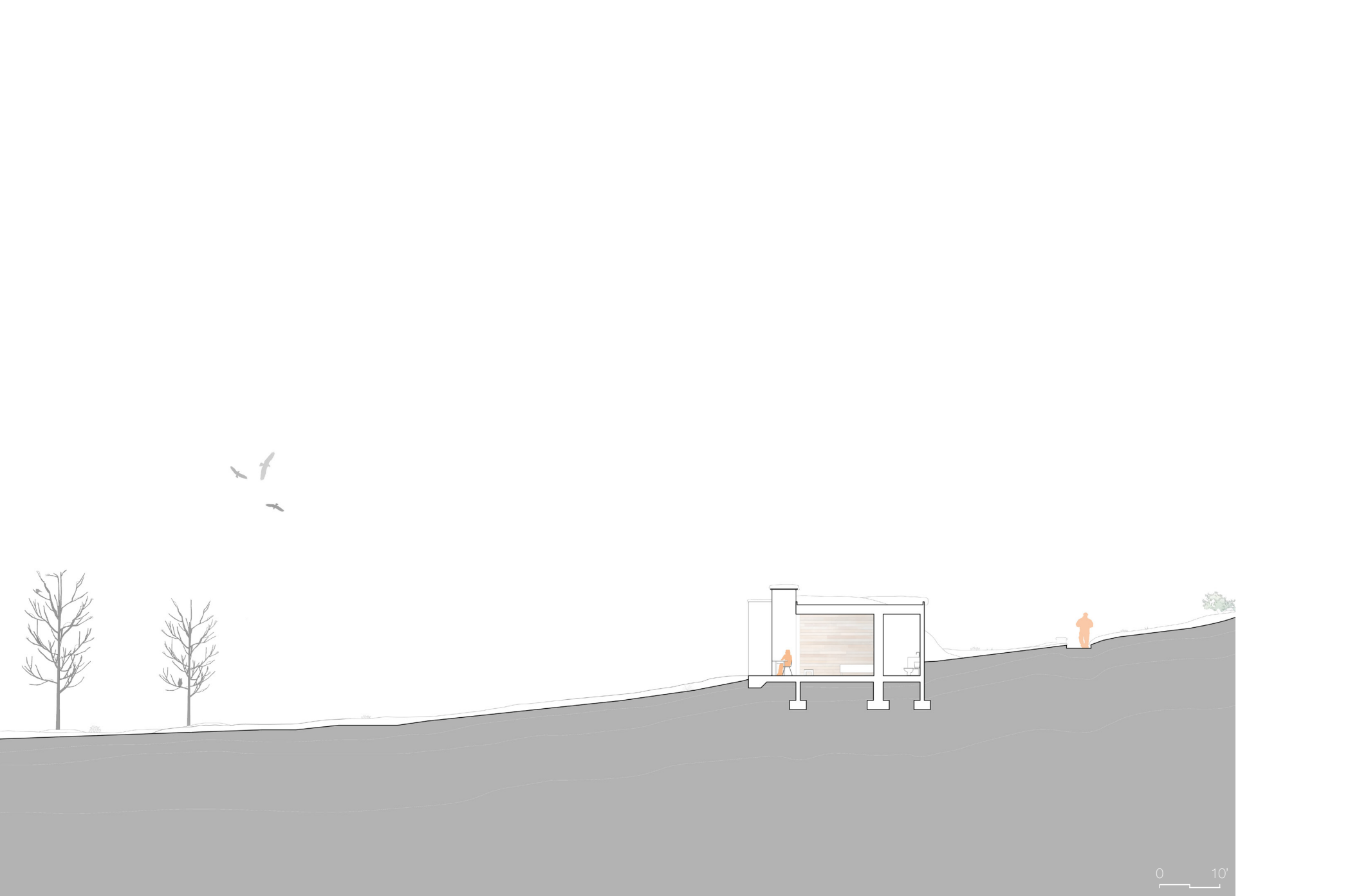


fig. 5.16 cabin section A-A

## Archive

Following the main path west, past the cabins and along the hillside, leads to the archive where all of the memory books are stored (fig. 5.17). While the main house sits on the landscape, and the cabins tuck into the hill, the archive is buried beneath the earth. At approximately 14'x80', the archive is a linear interior oriented north/south. The archive can be visited throughout one's stay at the retreat. One can read any of the memory books of people who have come here before, experiencing other lives while reflecting on their own.

The transition from the approach into the archive is through an entry foyer. In this intermediate space, visitors re-orient, preparing for the experience inside. Two doorways offer a

choice of entry into the main space which is organized with a series of individual reading carrels along the center line, and memory books lining the walls of either side. Each reading carrel is positioned beneath an opening to the sky, while the remainder of the space rests in shadow. When residents come to the archive, they find the memory books, then turn toward the light as they sit to read. The book wall in the main house and the book walls in the archive are similar but distinct. The book wall in the main house provides a sampling of human knowledge from all places and times. The archive provides memories and stories written here in books made here. As the archive fills with books left by residents who visited Windsar, it will offer a special kind of knowledge - ideas and memories

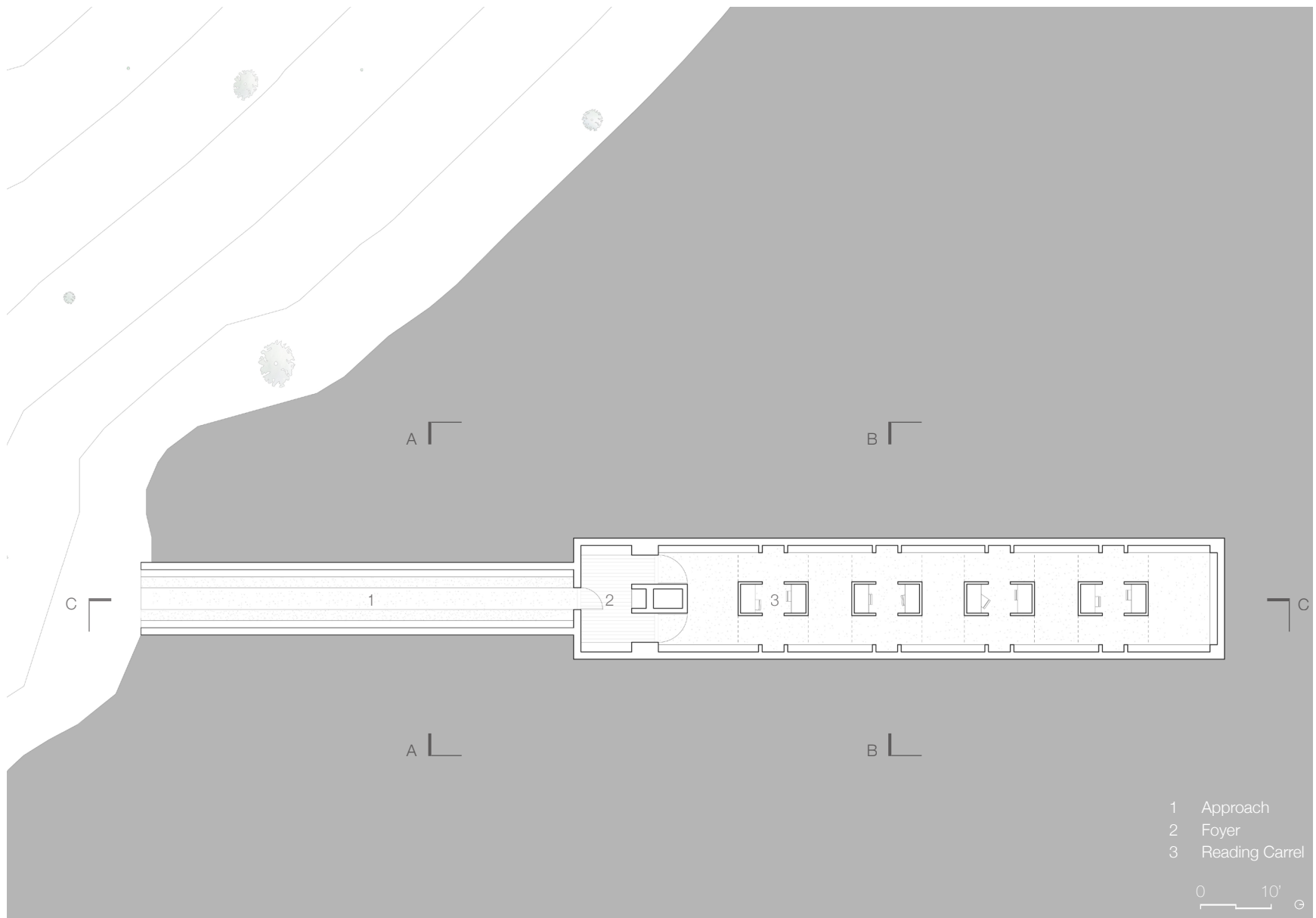


fig. 5.17 archive plan

and experiences all different, yet all tied to this place.

The slow descent into the archive (fig. 5.18) is amplified as one walks towards the entrance by the rising slope to either side. Angled concrete walls open to the sky, welcoming visitors inward and down. The slope of the walls allows for snow melt and other landscape debris to fall into the cavity in the earth. The path is held off from the walls with a drainage canal of dark pebbles on either side. The experienced movement here is a culmination of personal progression, in conjunction with the natural elements response to gravity and the shifting of seasons.

A cross section through a reading carrel (fig. 5.19) shows an individual's experience of reading in the archive under a light well. Each carrel is designed to individual human scale, providing enough room for flexible seating, while offering privacy through enclosure on three sides. In contrast to the perimeter walls, which are cast in place concrete, the reading

carrels are made of stacked horizontal wood panels that wrap the visitors in a warm embrace.

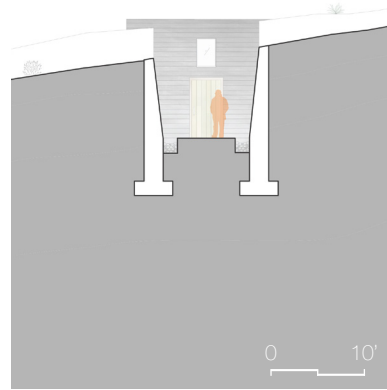


fig. 5.18 archive section A-A



fig. 5.19 archive section B-B

As one moves from the entrance of the archive deeper into the earth, the quality of light from above changes (fig. 5.20). Due to the orientation of the space, the light wells track the sun as it moves from the east in the morning to the west in the afternoon. Through the beveling of each well wall, the filtered light from above softens to illuminate without hard lines of shadow.

Visitors can experience a new sense of time in this space in multiple ways. The first is the disconnect from a visual horizon. By burying the archive, the only cue of direction, time of day, or season is offered from the light wells above. The second is the reality of being in the present moment surrounded by moments of the past. Additionally, the experience of the length in relation to the width of the space creates a sense of expanded duration. The experience of reading memory books from residents who have come before, merges the past and the present into one. To engage with another person's memories is to share stories of a life that may no longer continue. The archive is thus an architecture that provides the opportunity to mediate the

relationship that humans have with death.

Leaving the archive through the same series of thresholds used to enter presents a sequence that challenges the seemingly forward direction of time. Coming into the archive, one moves theoretically from the present to the past. As one leaves, the movement is out and back up into the landscape, a transition from the past into the future.

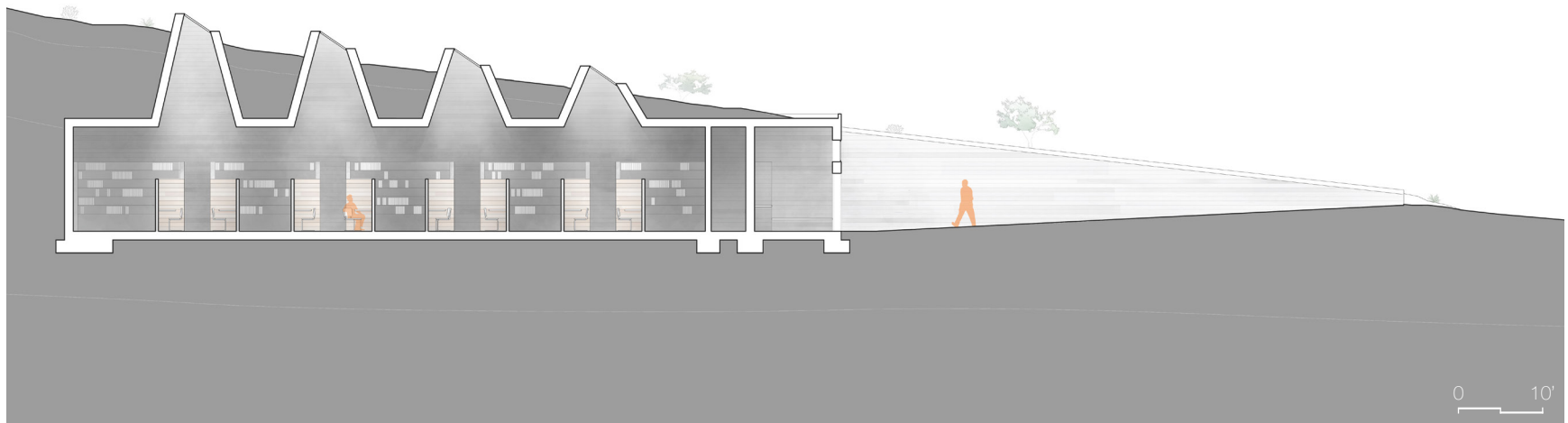


fig. 5.20 archive section C-C

## Moments in the Landscape: Stair in the Grove

The “stair in the grove” is one of four designed moments or experiences in the landscape that exist in Zone One on the Windstar property (fig.23). Five existing aspen trees enclose three concrete steps (fig. 5.21). The slender trees stand out as tall vertical elements in the meadow that signal a small oasis. Each stair riser is 18 inches in height to accentuate the feeling of verticality (fig. 5.22). At the top stair, a standing person’s head will be at the level of the lower branches. Once visitors find the short path of approach, they can engage with the stair through a forward and upward movement. Additionally, the stairs can be used as a resting place to sit, which requires each visitor to turn and face the path in which they came. The rustle of leaves of the aspens will change in autumn as the leaves wither and eventually fall, leaving the stair exposed to silent tree trunks in a white landscape of snow.



fig. 5.21 stair in the grove plan

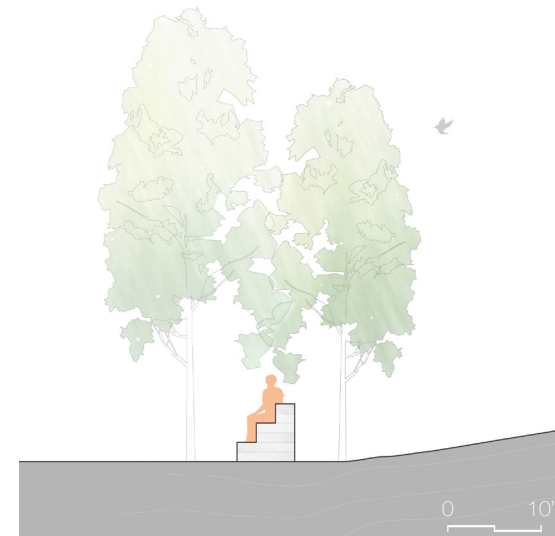


fig. 5.22 stair in the grove section A-A



fig. 5.23 stair in the grove experience

## Moments in the Landscape: Bench Between

The “bench between” is a small bench located between the two lower ponds on site (fig. 5.24). The bench is made of wood and concrete. The human body meets the bench at the warm surface of wood planks that rest on two notched concrete supports (fig. 5.25). Each wood plank is bolted independently to the concrete base for ease of maintenance and renewal. Visitors using the bench will experience the juxtaposition of two materials of different natural decay rates, giving this moment in the landscape a new sense of time (fig. 5.26).

A change in spacing at the center of the bench is aligned with a notch in each concrete support. This subtle void space splits the bench formally into a space for two people. When all turns to ruin, the memory of the bench will exist as two concrete supports overgrown with vegetation and natural life.



fig. 5.24 bench between plan

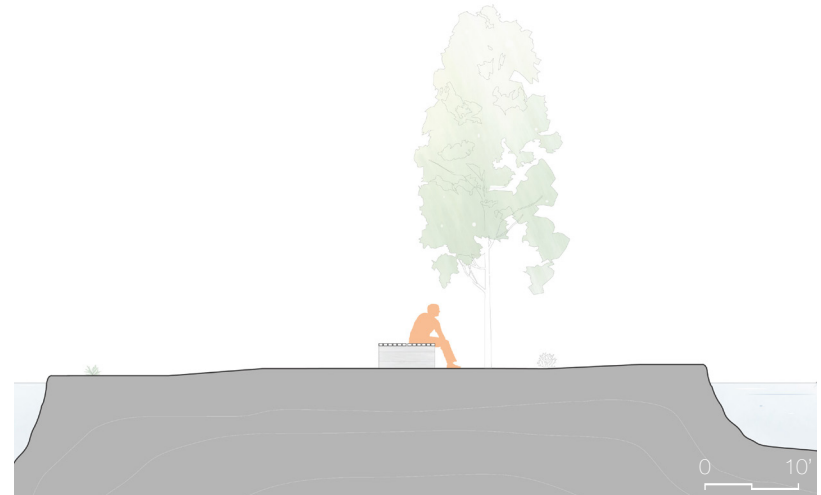


fig. 5.25 bench between section B-B

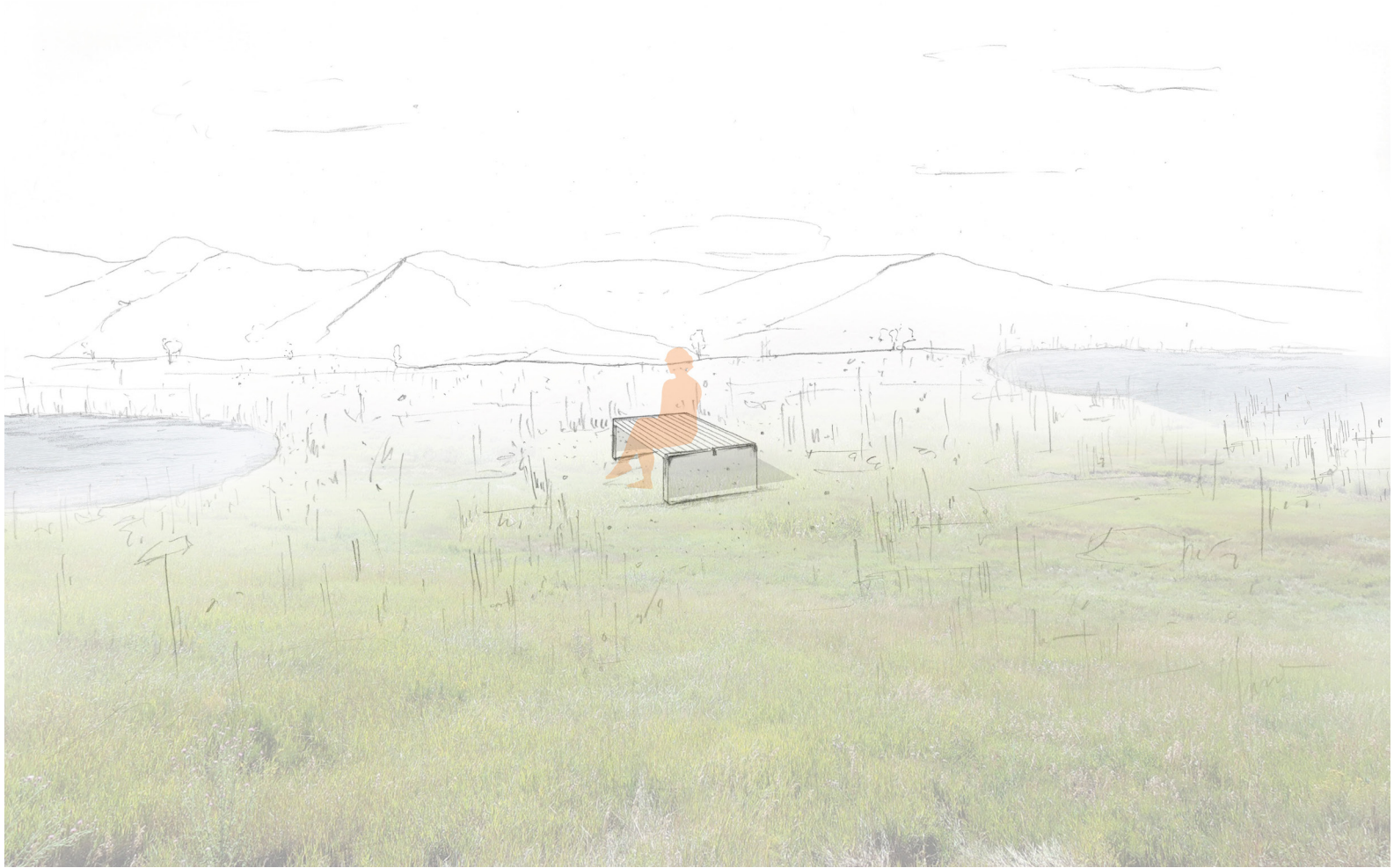


fig. 5.26 bench between experience

## Moments in the Landscape: Observatory

The “observatory” is a series of four concrete pits within the garden on site (fig. 5.29). Each pit sits within an individual garden plot. The gardens are different, potentially offering vegetables, flowers or herbs (fig. 5.27). The visitors can engage with the pits in multiple ways, and each pit can easily accommodate two people.

Entrance to any of the four pits is through a break in the garden plot and down two steps into the rectangular space in the ground. A notch within the concrete entrance wall adds a shadow line to visually lead visitors downward. Sitting in the pit positions a visitor at eye and nose level with the surrounding garden sensations (fig. 5.28). With room to lay down, visitors to the observatory can orient toward the clouds to watch the natural world unfold through a framed view.

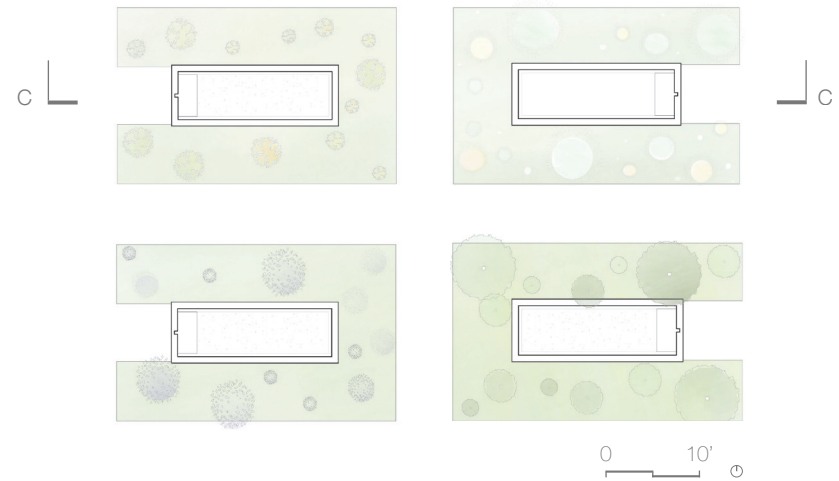


fig. 5.27 observatory plan

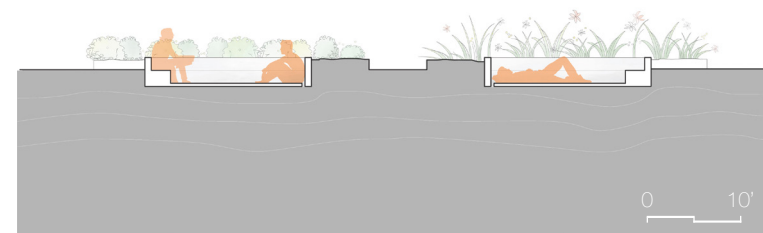


fig. 5.28 observatory section C-C



fig. 5.29 observatory experience

## Moments in the Landscape: Gravel Circle

Located on axis with the central hearth, the “gravel circle” is the moment in the landscape closest to the main house. Accordingly, it is designed as a space for communal gatherings. A gravel path leads to a steel ringed enclosure that opens at the north end. At the center of the circle is an additional bent steel piece where small bonfires can be safely ignited. (fig. 5.30). Here the primitive fire is celebrated as an element of warmth and connection. Eight movable rocks form the natural seating, joining each visitor with the earth while elevating them toward the heat (fig. 5.31). On the clear and dry nights at Windstar, the Milky Way will shine overhead as visitors share stories, histories and fantasies (fig. 5.32).

In addition to these designed moments in the landscape, with access to the full 957 acres of Windstar, the residents have an endless opportunity for exploration and discovery.

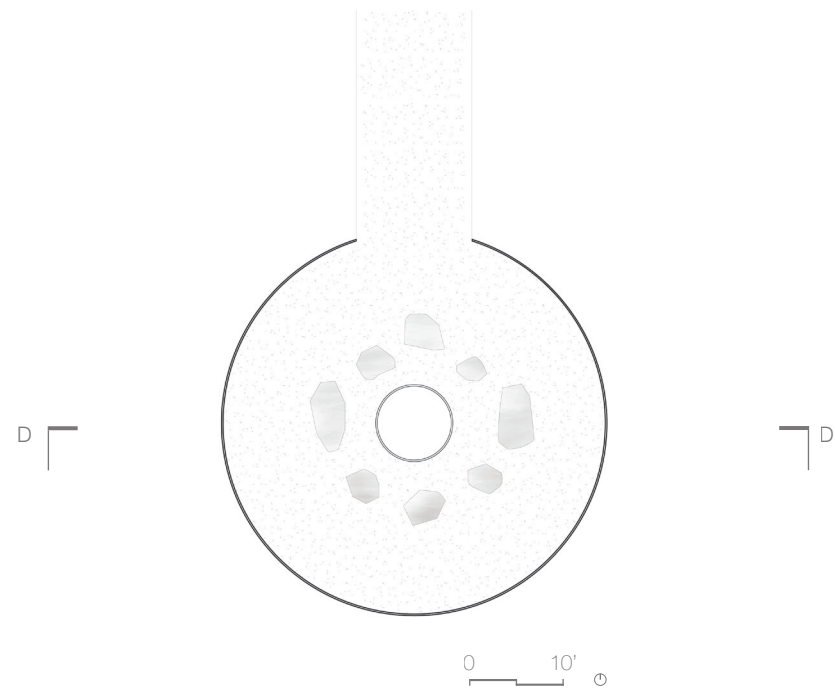


fig. 5.30 gravel circle plan

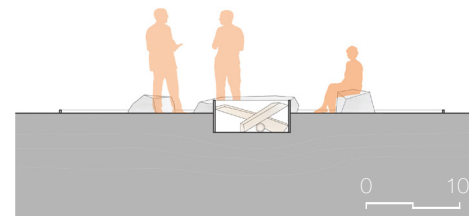


fig. 5.31 gravel circle section C-C



fig. 5.32 gravel circle experience



## Chapter 6: Intentions

December 2016

I presented this thesis on December 6, 2016, and completed the document before the end of the year. While completion of the thesis marks an endpoint in my formal education, it is only an intermediate point on the journey of life.

The final chapter of this thesis sets forth my intention for what will come next. This thesis is only a midpoint in a long process, most of which is still to come.

**The path ahead is no longer unknown.  
It is, and has always been, defined by my past.**

This thesis gave me the opportunity to reconnect with myself. Through all of the explorations in the discovery of a program, site, and design proposal, I engaged in a personal process that produced a body of work unique to who I am at this time in my life. In the practice of meaningful explorations inspired by a different way of thinking and being in the world, I uncovered the beginning of a journey that I will continue to explore in order to design in a way that I can believe in.

My intention for what follows this thesis is to engage with the world through the practice of slowness. I will continue to record my personal memories, a process that I know will both shape and enhance my future. I will continue to read, to write and to make things. I plan to continue to investigate the relationship between time and the human experience of space because I believe that our perception of time is critical in defining meaning and relevancy in life.



## Notes

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