

*Mindful Mediations at Three Anchor Bay*

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*Master of Architecture (Professional)*

by *Ludwig Gericke*

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I give form and expression to *truths* I discover.

I perceive many of these truths through mediums of *exploration* and *enquiry* which are removed from reality whilst approaching it simultaneously through a delicate dialogue between *process* and *design* that can uncover,

with strange precision,

that which I understand.



## *Contents*

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<i>p. 1</i>
<b>Note</b> .....	<i>p. 2</i>
<b>The Subconscious and Rationalised Theory</b> .....	<i>p. 3</i>
<b>The Conscious Stone</b> .....	<i>p. 7</i>
<b>Site Exploration, Process, and Design</b> .....	<i>p. 10</i>
<b>Architecture as Site specific Mediation</b> .....	<i>p. 11</i>
<b>The consciousness of Context, The knowledge of Milieu</b> .....	<i>p. 14</i>
The History.....	<i>p. 19</i>
Curiosity.....	<i>p. 24</i>
Exploratory enquiry.....	<i>p. 26</i>
Mindful Mediation.....	<i>p. 35</i>
<b>The Characters</b> .....	<i>p. 37</i>
Sea Point Contact.....	<i>p. 37</i>
The Peninsula Orogenesis.....	<i>p. 40</i>
“How am I doing, Wonder?” .....	<i>p. 46</i>
<b>On False starts, Failures and Accelerated learning</b> .....	<i>p. 50</i>
<b>The Formal Process</b> .....	<i>p. 67</i>
The problem of Boundaries.....	<i>p. 73</i>
Anchors.....	<i>p. 78</i>
Pattern.....	<i>p. 82</i>
The inside of outside.....	<i>p. 86</i>
The inside’s edge.....	<i>p. 89</i>
Platforms.....	<i>p. 91</i>
Entry.....	<i>p. 94</i>
Enclaves.....	<i>p. 97</i>
Familiarity.....	<i>p. 104</i>
Reflection.....	<i>p. 106</i>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<i>p. 109</i>
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	<i>p. 112</i>

## *List of figures*

*fig. 1 The multiple facets of a rock*

*fig 2 The very first two conceptual sketches for "the conscious stone"*

*fig 3 An "ensemble" of my interests was represented in the form of a "Turkish Map" which folds open revealingly*

*fig 4 The Cape Peninsula and the location of Three Anchor Bay (CT City Maps)*

*fig 5 The extent of the Promenade towards Three Anchor Bay, indicated with the arrow. 1960's (CT City Maps)*

*fig 6 A photo by Ed Suter of an encounter at the Sea Point public pools*

*fig 7 A look into Three Anchor Bay. Not a person in sight.*

*fig 8 A map of Cape Town and the surrounding suburbs. Notice the Railway line running all along the ocean. 1886 (CT City Maps)*

*fig 9 An aerial photo of Three Anchor Bay before the Seawall was built. Notice the shape of the bay, the extent of the rock formations, and the Battery on the beach. (CT City Maps)*

*fig10 Mr. Juritz aboard "Argo" 1898(Cape Archives)*

*fig 11 Boating at Three Anchor Bay 1892*

*fig 12 The Railway at Three Anchor Bay 1895*

*fig 13 A "snoek" Catch at Three Anchor Bay*

*fig 14 Fishing and Boating activities in the Bay*

*fig 15 Bathing in the Bay*

*fig 16 The wreck of the S. S. Vintra off Three Anchor Bay 1922*

*figs 17 A look at the development in Three Anchor Bay*

*fig 18 The storm erupting at Three Anchor Bay 2008 (photo courtesy of the "Sea Point" Facebook Group).*

*fig 19 The storm left the kayak sheds in a poor condition (photo courtesy of the "Sea Point" Facebook Group).*

*fig 20 An early exploration of the parameter-defining complexities surrounding the site*

*fig 21 Sketches of the Bay*

*fig 22 Double exposed photo investigation of concepts*

*fig 23 Sketches in pencil on site*

*fig 24 Abstractions in colour*

*fig 25 Early design sketches of "Cog and Gear"*

*fig 26 Photo of "Cog and Gear" installation*

*fig 27 I installed and built Motion Sensors*

*fig 28 The Violin Melody and Guitar Chords*

*fig 29 A sign at the "Sea Point Contact"*

*fig 30 The different rock types of the Peninsula*

*fig 31 The intrusion of molten Magma at the "Sea Point Contact" and the North West direction of Malmesbury slate*

*fig 32 Quaternary Coastlines*

*fig 33 Bathymetry around the Cape Peninsula down to a depth of 70m at 5m intervals indicating Sheltered and vulnerable regions based on wave set-up and wave run up.*

*I made some calculations regarding water height variance during tidal extremes, as recorded from the chart datum.*

*fig 34 The tap in the trunk*

*fig 35 Waterworks in Berlin (Daidalos, 1993. Underground Vol. 48)*

*fig 36 A sewer in Hamburg (Daidalos, 1993. Underground Vol. 48)*

*fig 37 The Star Axis by Charles Ross (Daidalos, 1993. Underground Vol. 48)*

*fig 38-39 The Casa Malaparte on the Island of Capri (Daidalos, 1997. Topographic Extremes. Vol. 63)*

*fig 40 Lava-Amulet by Mathias Goeritz, Mexico City (Daidalos, 1997. Topographic Extremes. Vol. 63)*

*fig 41 The Hermitages of Hans-Jorg Voth (Daidalos, 1997. Topographic Extremes. Vol. 63)*

*fig 42 The "Fosse Dionne" in Tonnere (Daidalos, 1995, Aquatic Arts, Vol. 55)*

*fig 43 The basin of Bagno Vignoni in Southern Tuscany (Daidalos, 1995, Aquatic Arts, Vol. 55)*

*fig 44 Between Sun Gate and Moon Court, Munich (Daidalos, 1993, Paths, Vol 47)*

*fig 45 Foam Model*

*fig 46 1:500 Model of Canal Scheme*

*fig 47 Drawings for Canal Scheme*

*fig 48 Early concept sketches for Canal scheme*

*fig 49 Model for breakwater, the turning point.*

*fig 50 The defining site parameters and incentives for design*

*fig 51 Small investigatory sketches of concepts*

*fig 52 Small investigatory sketches of concepts*

*fig 53 A more precise sectional drawing through the bay*

*fig 54 Marieke Rowe Prinsloo's sculpture installation*

*fig 55 Graaff's Pool*

*fig 56 Milton Pool*

*fig 57 A panorama of the promenade at Three Anchor Bay*

*fig 58 Splash!*

*fig 59 Few are capable of confidently kayaking beyond an otherwise parameter-defining promenade.*

*fig 60 The last curvature of the Promenade before entering Three Anchor Bay*

- fig 61** Annotations of site-specific stimuli
- fig 62** Lions Head from my first “anchor”: The last curvature of the Promenade
- fig 63** Notice the Ritz Hotel
- fig 64** The “anchor” of steps
- fig 65** Exploring the Concept of pattern along the wall
- fig 66** The mesmerising and compulsive patterns of water
- fig 67** Brief explanation of operation
- fig 68** First drawing and model of “Moon Phases”
- fig 69** A section of the threshold as one would see it from inside the relative enclave.
- fig 70** The concept of the “moon” even reveal itself in perspective. Notice the music pipes penetrating full moon.
- fig 71** The retainer wall and footpath
- fig 72** Sketches of enquiry into circulation and incomplete render showing undulating inside wall
- fig 73** A platform (under development)
- fig 74** An exploratory drawing for understanding the composition of elements
- fig 75** A submarine assembly – Bunker Valentin (Daidalos, 1997. Topographic Extremes. Vol. 63)
- fig 76** Model and sketch exploring first “anchor” which should be an “Overture” of events
- fig 77** Sketches exploring interventions suitable to illustrate the concept of the weight of water, the weight of rock, the sound of water and the shape of rock
- fig 78** A weighbridge (Education of an Architect. The Irwin, S.Chanin School of Architecture of the Cooper Union, 1988)
- fig 79** Fishing pitches in the port of Barcelona, Spain  
(Daidalos, 1997. Topographic Extremes. Vol. 63)
- fig 80** Fishing pitches in the Port of Barcelona, Spain  
(Daidalos, 1997. Topographic Extremes. Vol. 63)
- fig 81** Early sketches of the second and formal enclave, exploring levels and sightlines
- fig 82** The Channel
- fig 83** Swimming pools in Câmara de Lobos on the island of Madeira. Designed by Lisbon-based Global Arquitectura Paisagista, Lda.
- fig 84** The ramp leading from the outer side of the tidal pool through the “full moon” at the second enclave to end in front of sculptural showers breaking the level of an extended step.
- fig 85** The wave-organ in Zadar, Croatia, by Nikola Basic
- fig 86** The Promenade threshold will look more or less like this from Three Anchor Bay beach and the opposite sides of the Promenade.
- fig 87** A concept sketch for the roof-structure over the ramp.

## *Introduction*

This project is a synthesis of, on the one hand, the interventionist architect curiously and deliberately plotting form and visualising construction and, on the other hand, the human being often wilfully retreated and joyfully observing the uninterrupted and the conflicting. It is this dialectic – rather than immovable theoretical principles – that has informed not only my process, but also my design. In this sense this project represents what I believe to be the most important feature of my architectural education: the inexplicable joy in the constant re-evaluation of the imprecise nexus between the deliberately mediated and the uninterrupted.

This impulse is also what (perhaps unknowingly at the time) attracted me to Three Anchor Bay - a site of untameable swells, impenetrable rhythms, ebb and flow. It is a site that necessitates decisiveness in a counterintuitive form: boundaries. Any frontier, however versatile and accommodating, requires commitment (few are capable of confidently kayaking beyond an otherwise parameter-defining promenade). Drawing a line is not only the problem of the architect, but the human being.

Although this paper is largely a personal essay instead of a coherent treatise (I reserve the right to remain sceptical of every decision), it is important to make a few general observations. The first is supremely personal: I am decidedly fallible. Although harsh introspection is generally more valuable and courageous than the resolute defence of personal conviction, I often found myself passionately defending lines I have drawn (especially ones that I have spent a lot of time re-drawing and erasing). Redrawing can be a counterintuitive struggle and it has often been difficult to regard it as a necessary and unpredictable process rather than as emblematic of some sort of failure. Although common sense urges us to “*learn from our mistakes*”, it is never quite that simple. This project has, in short, caused me to constantly mediate between conviction and perpetual self-criticism.

Secondly, these ideas are by no means new and have been repeated (and often ignored) in various contexts. Karl Popper, for instance, believed that “*any idea of Utopia is necessarily closed owing to the fact that it chokes on its own refutations. The simple notion of a good model for society that cannot be left open for falsification is totalitarian*” (Taleb, 2004, p.128-129). The same is true of architecture – particularly those projects that are resolutely planted in a pre-determined style, ideology or “*balance*”.

Lastly, it is important to note that my observations are not aimed at exposing some nihilistic irony in the architectural profession. The point is simply that there exist very few theoretical imperatives (other than mindfulness) that are capable of rigid application. It is precisely by claims to the contrary that I can often quite confidently identify mediocrity. In some sense this project has not only been an attempt at finding my own architectural voice, but to not suffer loyalty.

As Jean Nouvel suggests:

*“The key is not in knowing in whose wake to follow, which master to worship, which architecture to impose, or which architects to excommunicate.... It is the role of architects to liberate their muse ...”* (Nouvel, J, 1997)

All I can hope to do in this paper is to describe the dynamics of the site (the “*problems*” informing my design) and *how* I have attempted to mediate some of them. I will attempt to explain *why* I made certain decisions and to provide some insight into the processes I believe to have been valuable in encouraging decisiveness. At the same time, I accept that my unconscious faculties remain mysterious. I will attempt to theorise and rationalise. But to ignore the role of the subconscious – often described as intuition or thin-slicing – is simply unscientific.

### *Note:*

I would feel uncomfortable continuing this paper (a project of rationalisation) without a cursory reference to a previous essay that I submitted during my tenure for this course: I investigated the heart of thought, of phenomena, of matter and of perception. I visited the rationalists, the phenomenologists, the scientists, the artists and the mystics, the Brutalists, Pre-Modernist, the Modernists and the Post-Modernists, “*because I wished... to front only the essential facts of ‘architecture’, and see if I could not learn what they had to teach... I wanted to ... drive ‘architecture’ into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms ....*” (Thoreau, 1854)

It took me on a journey with Joseph Conrad’s Marlow in his acclaimed novel “*The Heart of Darkness*” from the Outer Station, at the mouth of the Congo River, to the Inner Station; the heart of the dark continent. Metaphorically this becomes a journey from the transparent to the opaque - to the limits of his perception, the language through which to mediate it, and his comprehension;

from that which lies in front of his eyes to that which lies beyond, for which no code exists...where language is pushed beyond its limits of communicability.

I found comfort in and took to heart the efforts of others to articulate the seemingly unknowable. Einstein marvelled in the mysterious: "*The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and all science.*" Kahn agrees (Kahn, L.I. et al., 1957), and so did Nouvel: "*Architecture should address itself to the spirit more than to the eye*" (Nouvel, 1997, p.57). Indeed, '*On ne voit bien qu'avec le cœur. L'essentiel est invisible pour les yeux*', - One sees clearly only with the heart. What is essential is invisible to the eye. (De Saint-Exupéry, 2004). I enjoyed only temporary solace. I was awakened by the realisation that although I strongly empathise with these imperatives, I do not know why. The most important moment in my design was when I started to question not only how such principles can be applied to my design, but also what they really mean (how does one address the spirit or view with the heart?). The remainder of this paper is an account of how this process of questioning informed my design.

### *The subconscious and rationalised theory*

This demands a few words regarding the subconscious and its functioning as a decision-making apparatus. What is meant here is not the subconscious in the Freudian sense, but rather that mechanism by which we are able to seemingly leap to everyday conclusion, often referred to as "*intuition*". Although this process is continuous and involuntary, most of us attribute our ideas and decisions to well-reasoned cost-benefit analysis, common sense, taught principles and architectural theory.

This is simply unscientific. Investigations regarding the role of the adaptive subconscious has yielded surprising results in fields as broad as economics, sport, art, social interaction and, of course, sexual conquests. A compelling account of this evolutionary function (and the multiplicity of situations in which it finds application) is provided by the writer Malcolm Gladwell and it is perhaps best described by borrowing some of his examples drawn from clinical trials.

One of the most referenced examples comes from a study comparing height – particularly in men – and appointment to leadership positions. Whilst only 3.9 percent of men in the American population are six foot two or taller, almost 66 percent of a sample of Fortune 500-company

CEO's measured such a height (Gladwell, M., pp. 86-87). Yet most theorists and members of the electorate would insist - sincerely - that Corporations make such massively important financial decisions based on meticulous cost-benefit analysis – on tried and tested leadership theory distilled from rationalised conclusions – and would belittle (and be offended by) any suggestion of positive unconscious associations with arbitrary physical qualities.

A much more disturbing example of primed unconscious bias was developed by, amongst others, Mahzarin Banaji – a psychology lecturer at Harvard University. The point of the now famous Implicit Association Test (IAT) he helped develop was to illustrate the simple notion that “[w]e make connections much more quickly between pairs of ideas that are already related in our minds than we do between pairs of ideas that are unfamiliar to us” (Gladwell, M., p. 77). Particularly revealing are the Gender IAT and Race IAT tests. The distinction between an individual's sincere conscious attitude and how that individual acts is perhaps best understood by completing the test yourself.<sup>1</sup>

Gladwell also describes how one of the world's top tennis coaches, Vic Braben, can predict when a player (even one's he has never seen or heard of before) is about to serve a double fault. He describes Braben's torment – the sleepless nights suffered – due to the fact that he simply does not know how he is able to make such alarmingly accurate predictions of an otherwise rare event. His 50 years of experience coaching and competing at the highest level has undoubtedly contributed to this ability. The mere fact that he is unable to explain it does not make the skill less valuable. It does not make it less real. It does not make the time spent consciously and deliberately studying his subject matter worthless. The point is simply that – despite all the incentives to assert his expertise – he is willing to admit that he is unable to explain his insights, his exceptional gift, in terms of any coherent theory.

The point of repeating these examples is twofold. Firstly, it purports to illustrate why I am reluctant to describe with certainty – in terms of committed theory – *why* I have taken certain *decisions* in my design. As indicated above, I attribute it both to the unknowable influence of subconscious mechanisms and the fact that any attempts at rationalisation are far from being infallible (one could even go as far as saying that it is, scientifically speaking, necessarily fallible). In other words, the influence of my architectural education has been invaluable in improving my work as an architect, but I am unable to explain *exactly* why. This inability does

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<sup>1</sup> The test can be taken at <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/takeatest.html>.

not stem from a lack of intellectual effort. Just like Vic Braben I have spent sleepless nights trying to formulate my criterion for self-criticism. I have paced the parameters of my workplace and engaged myself in animated and lonely arguments. My *not knowing* stems precisely from the fact that I am in an endless struggle for understanding, not only of my architectural ideals, but also of what it means to ascribe certainty.

My second observation concerns *process* and requires the use of one final example. In order to explore the perceptiveness of people regarding their own decision-making processes, the psychologist Norman Maier hung two long ropes from the ceiling in a room filled with objects and tools (see Gladwell, M., pp. 68-70). Upon entering the room, the subject was instructed to devise as many means as possible to tie the end of the two ropes together (the ropes were strategically placed so that they cannot be simultaneously reached by hand). The available materials offered four possible solutions. Most subjects quickly identified the first three (using anchors, extension chords and raking devices, respectively). The fourth solution required the subject to “*swing the rope back and forth like a pendulum and then grab hold of the other rope*” (Gladwell, M., p. 69). Maier watched them agonize for approximately ten minutes (until they were sufficiently stumped). He then, without saying a word, casually walked past a rope, giving it the slightest of touches, causing the rope to sway subtly. The reaction of most was immediate. Suddenly they joyfully announced – within a matter of seconds – that they had figured it out!

As Gladwell notes, the value of the experiment lies not in the ability of the subjects, but rather the manner in which they reasoned their decision-making process. When asked to describe how they “*figured it out*”, most (or, more accurately, all except one) claimed that the idea “*just dawned on me*” or that “*perhaps a course in physics suggested it to me*” (Gladwell, M., p. 70). One subject, a professor in psychology, explained that he “*had imagery of monkeys swinging from trees*” (Gladwell, M., p 70). It is important to emphasise that these people are not lying, nor do they suffer from vanity. The hint – that which awakened the successful problem-solving process – was simply “*so subtle that it was picked up only on a subconscious level*” (Gladwell, 70). The subjects simply rationalised the process and attributed meaning to that which seemed most plausible.

This kind of innate human error (retrospective bias masked as the appearance of certainty) necessarily finds application in my work. The point is that I can attempt to provide what appear to be causally relevant stages in my process, but I am unable to definitively pronounce on causality,

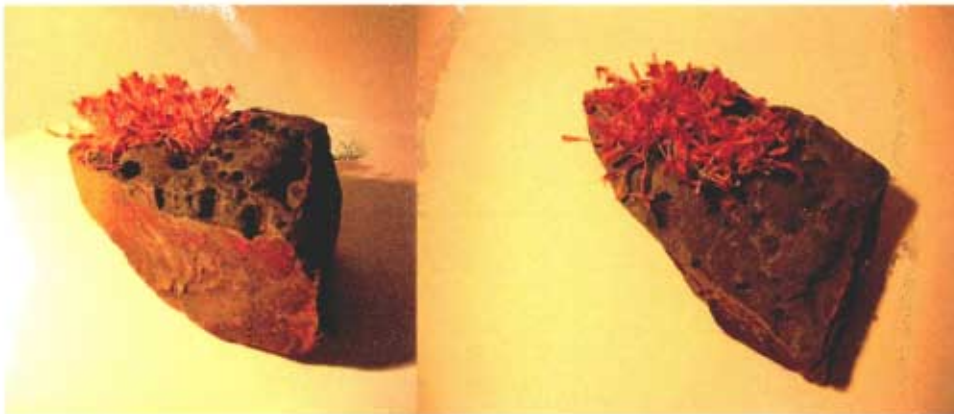
or the relative value of certain influences. Evidence of my progression represents distinct outcomes. The part played – what can be inferred – remains a matter of speculation.

## *The conscious stone*

*"He builded better than he knew*

*The conscious stone to beauty grew"* (R.W Emerson)

My meditations started with stone. Somehow, amidst all the activity above and below, the rock formations at my chosen site attracted my attention first. It is perhaps precisely because these heavy rocks are so often regarded as emblematic of apparent permanence (as a child I was often offered a metaphor featuring the wise man who prefers to build his house on rock), yet contains telling evidence of its own subjection to, and relocation by, powerful ancient forces. Understanding these forces requires one to sometimes retreat to higher ground and sometimes to come close enough to touch.



*fig 1 The multiple facets of a rock*

I intended on exploring the assimilation of one of these rocks into a manmade environment. Invisible and ever-present, gravity seemed an obvious starting point. My first impulse was to hoist the rock, to intervene in its commonly accepted immovability (the notion of a rock in a state of geographical rest), and observe its incredible force. The weight of a rock appears to be so obvious to many that it often suffers assimilation to common knowledge. Gravity is strangely taken for granted.

Such an intervention takes many complex forms. The point is not only to “defy” gravity (although this can be achieved by a variety of methods and forms each aimed at inspiring a variety of responses). My design was informed by seemingly contradictory imperatives: to defy gravity and, at the same time (by doing so), heighten the awareness of it. The rock was to be raised by a single solid stainless steel structure penetrating its centre of gravity. At eye level, the rock would meet me face to face. Lifting it – even with very necessary assistance – strained my muscles and, on occasion, cut through my skin. In many ways the rock is an important reminder of process.

Once elevated, I became obsessed with something newly discovered although previously anticipated: the many different faces of a single rock. It is a special privilege to view a rock from all angles, to move around it and constantly realign its contours poised in mid-air. I have spent many hours, almost involuntarily, orbiting the rock and sitting underneath it.

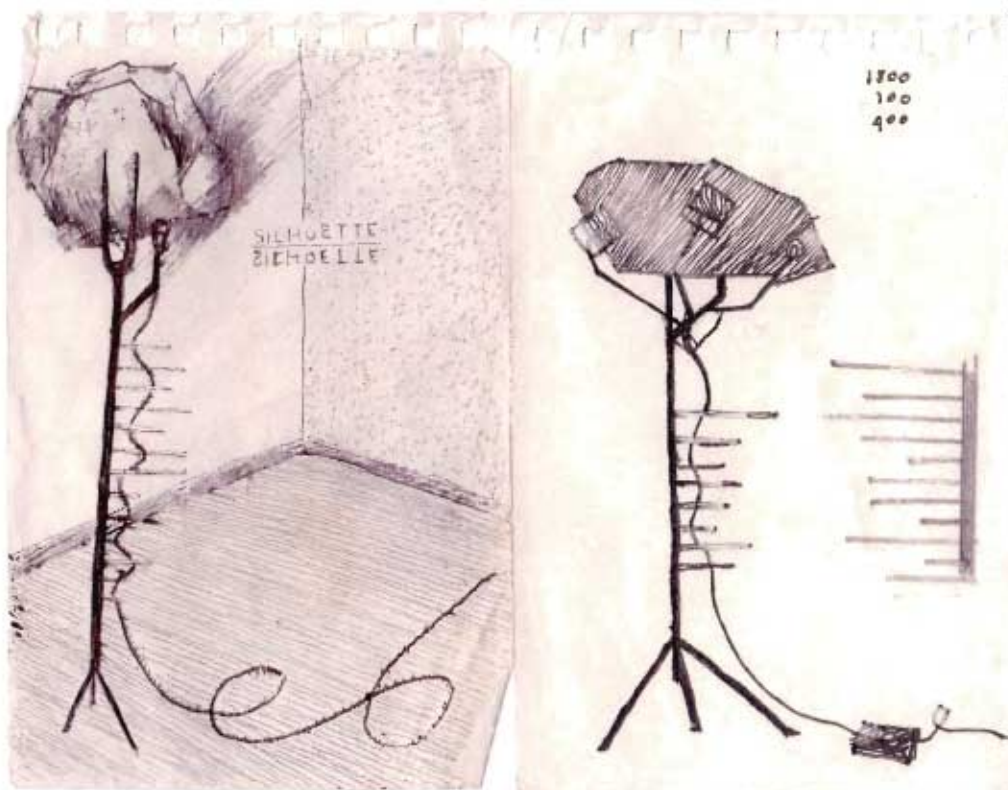


fig 2 The very first two conceptual sketches for “the conscious stone”

I was eager to continue mediating. I had become increasingly familiar with the different edges and scars of the rock. My next experiment was to explore these natural features by deploying light. I wanted through mediation to present aspects of its many forms and journeys. I decided on three lights – two behind the flat facet of the rock and one smaller, more intimate, light leaning towards a specific curvature. These lights are mounted on thinner steel structures stemming from the stainless steel fork in a parallel manner, until they twist to accommodate the light they bear. Furthermore, it was important to me that the lights can function individually as well as in symphony, causing me to install a rotary switch in a little timber box on the floor. The first three settings cause each light to (in turn) be individually lit. A third setting lights them all together. I installed a fourth setting to dim them all simultaneously.

The electric cabling required by these lights became another design challenge. Upon investigation I was told that each light required its own cable. I was immediately aware about how this could cause distraction. I did not wish for the lighting mechanisms to gain much relative prominence. I decided to weave all the cables together in a cotton cloth, allowing them to split only when necessary to reach out to their respective destinations. The cable, owing to its weight, needed some form of guidance down to its source. I built a support ladder of differentiating “*hardepeer*” timber dowels (which I turned on a lathe) to ease the cable to the switch. Mathematically spaced down the stainless steel spine, the last few dowels subtly rotate around the main structure to lead the cable away. I wanted to be precise in spacing the dowels to offset the rock’s imperfections even more. The fact that they are of timber is meant to compound this effect. The dowels seemed to be in need of a further “*soft touch*” – a carefully crafted “*flute*” at the end of each, tapering down.

It was decided to conceal the source of the light with the use of yet another natural and scarred – yet malleable and transparent – element: vellum. The vellum softens the light quality and its malleable characteristic provides countless possibilities for playful intervention. In short, the piece allowed me to confront mediations in many forms and with the use of many techniques. It taught me the value of process. What began as a gravity-intervention resulted in mindful attempts at arranging a host of materials, sometimes precisely and deliberately, sometimes simply providing support – each providing insight into its own characteristics and the character of that which surrounds it.

The use of local stone illicit an undeniably vivid sense of place in what Zumthor referred to as “*a primordial reaction to the rock mountain*” in Vals. Poole (Poole, S. 2007.) comments, rather poetically: “*The ancient, sensual qualities of stone quarried a short walk away from the thermal baths evoke the permanence of a place remote in time, even though the form is decidedly modern. This feeling is enhanced by the moistness of the interior atmosphere, the dim light, and the murmur of water— qualities experienced over time.*”

Michelangelo, too, did not take any arbitrary piece of stone to sculpt; he considered the stones, selected the stone and, comprehending its sense of being and poetic potential, took the responsibility to transform the stone’s being from one state into another. These stones spoke to him, and he knew what to make of them. (Maritain, J., 1953)

### *Site exploration, process and design*

My understanding of site, design and process all came to me in impulses. In other words, my method was not to firstly characterise all the aspects of the site, then to predetermine a strategic process and to design accordingly (although there were times when I craved such linearity). There are a few reasons for this. Firstly, my chosen site is extremely complex and properly understanding it required months of visits and rethinking possibilities. Secondly, I have found that – this is a personal note – my preferred process starts without a predetermined end in mind. This is what I hoped to illustrate in the previous passage (The conscious stone). An investigation that begins with gravity can lead to many unexpected discoveries – moments of mediation not anticipated at the outset (all architects know, or most would admit to, those unexpected realisations when an imagined design is put onto paper for the first time).

In an attempt to be true to my process, I will attempt to discuss my site explorations, design decisions and process all at once. My gut won’t allow me to separate what was (in this project at least) inseparable. I cannot provide a textbook-like account of what I saw, what it made me think and how I put it to design. I cannot promise optimal readability – I will prefer an account true to my process rather than one simply aimed at simplifying for the sake of easy understanding. As I indicated at the outset, understanding process is simply not that easy (although our ego sometimes urges us to create in others the impression of all-knowing expertise).

I still see architecture as the “*mother of the arts*” in close symbiosis with sculpture, music, dance, theatre and literature. At a time marked by a relapse into embarrassing egoism this is in no way in keeping with market trends, where espouse “*political correct*” theories are at variance with real true theories; indeed it is a very highly-set goal, alongside that of helping something like an architectural or urban culture come to the fore again. This is not done with the intention of following all the latest “*trends*”, manifestations and productions on the various markets of the world, but of counteracting the depressing complaints about the “*muteness*” of the human environment and the “*cracks*” in the minds of architects. And how can this be done in any other way than with a heightened and reasoned awareness of architecture’s origins and history, irresponsible acts of repression and troublesome heritages, in brief, by a reasoned awareness of architecture in its totality. Myself a medium in the overwhelming flood of media, myself a mediator in the midst of oppressive mediations, I have devoted this thesis to evoking the blessings and triumphs of architecture as a mediation itself.

### *Architecture as site-specific mediation*

Mediations occur in many forms, with or without architectural intervention. Architecture, to my mind, is concerned with mediating site-specific forces – whether such forces are natural or human, hidden or familiar. These necessary site-specific considerations are perhaps what attribute architecture a distinct place within the broader (yet vaguely defined) notion of “*art*”, which is often attributed “*context*” in terms of more abstract cultural meaning. These contexts are, of course, also present in architecture (as it is in all meaning-attributing activities of life). The point is that the architectural project is a synthesis of artistic ambitions, pragmatic requirements and the possibilities offered by the site (both that which already exists as well as that which *could* exist). Architects do not “*transform*” space – as it is often claimed – all by themselves. We also cannot control inevitable changes in meaning, difference in experience and the idiosyncratic preferences of others.

Dealing with the everyday calls for living curiously between invention (the realisation that more possibilities exist than previously thought) and an understanding of the existing. This is what I can only describe as “*intuition*”. It is precisely because this skill is not capable of fixed and coherent articulation that architecture is more akin to art than, say, rule-bound (yet intriguing) fields such as mathematics and engineering. Pallasmaa’s statement that neither utility, reason or

advanced technological tools can “*inevitably bring about a heightened awareness of the world*”, is taken to refer directly to the need to cultivate this intuition (Pallasmaa, J., 2003, p.203). “*The immediacy of intuition*”, says Poole (2007, p.10), with reference to its acquisition and its accessibility, “*is something [the architect] earns by his or her efforts to cultivate an imagination*”. “*Art generates ideas, it doesn't represent them - which means that a true work of art comes into being intuitively, without preconceived motives, because it is the motive and there can be no accounting for it a priori.*” (Brancusi according to Gale, 2004, p.133).

As such the architecture I explore, while engaging with the intellect, seeks a direct emotional response with its recipient and an inextricable link with its location in physical, social and historical terms. The character evinces certain neutrality. My architecture seeks to express an essential quality of a mediation (to draw conscious or indeed unconscious attention to it) which may then be interpreted personally. I use objects from everyday life only to encourage reflection upon ones' own relationship with the world, not to prescribe it. Some interventions are aimed at locating such mediations in the universal, some in the local. By engaging with what is around me I am able to make representations of the specific and universal conditions I observe. These observations generate the development of new objects which affect a transformation of the existing condition and offer a new potential to it. Through the rigorous transformation of seemingly modest conditions, therefore, something special is added to the here and now.

An important aspect of my design: allowing the “*other*” to investigate what the architect might not have anticipated. I take great pleasure in it. I want to let (sometimes require) others to engage their sense through participation. Atmosphere and participation are indistinguishable. The character of a building - the ideas of those who frequent it and the way it encourages participation (in many forms) - is more important to me than the mere fact that it accommodates any specific intended use. Function becomes the implicit “*shadow*” expression of a human need. “*Functional requirements are to be accepted as fact and rejected as truth - to be considered a posterior rather than a priori.*” (Levin, 1997, p. 43)

I am indeed much more interested in “*placemaking*” as a creative process to elicit programmatic features than searching blindly for programme. “*You must follow the laws, but in the end, when the building becomes part of living, it must evoke immeasurable qualities. The spirit of the building's existence takes over.*” (Kahn, L.I. et al., 1957) Architecture as idea, architecture as concept, made evident with but a simple gesture. “*Architecture nevertheless has limits.*



The problem of finding a site was not my first concern (and the premise of finding programme was my last concern). I fervently searched to understand and gain clarity of what it is that I wanted to say, architecturally. The site that I chose had to present me with a challenge to express my architectural values – values which I am only starting to uncover now and, as I have tried to emphasise, will never understand *completely*. When they stop *becoming*, the architect in me will be dead.

Each and every site is unique and argues for its own opportunities and parameters, and as such holds a unique fundamental situation for interpretation. But things are seldom what they seem. Every single space and place has a multi-layered depth of phenomena, and it is often the non-places that possess qualities that render them rich and ripe for imaginative architectural intervention. In other words, a site is characterised both by the presence of phenomena *as well as* by the absence of it. Both are equally interesting. The choice of site for this thesis came to me intuitively as an impulse that moved me through curious investigations in many mediums. I did not yet possess the language to articulate or understand why this was my site, but it felt right.

### *The Consciousness of Context; the Knowledge of Milieu.*

*“Only the consciousness of context, the knowledge of the milieu in which he constructs can give him [the architect] any real sense...the conscious possibility of evolution during the life expectancy of the proposed building and a human knowledge. (Nouvel, J. 1997)*

Alongside the southernmost urban centre in Africa, separating city from ocean, lies an unusual strip of land. The Sea Point Promenade forms a space unlike any other in Cape Town. Right here, slightly away from the hustle and bustle of the business area, life is paraded most unapologetically in all its forms...

Over-made-up power-walkers speed past homeless persons kissing above the rocks and rent boys waiting for the next pick-up. Trendy teenagers eat ice creams as elderly ladies parade dejected pet dogs on elastic leashes. Black, brown, white, young, old, locals, tourists, rich, poor, Jews, Muslims, Christians, stylish, tasteless – they are all here, arriving from apparently nowhere to join the ritual of walking a man-made path along the sea...



fig 4 The Cape Peninsula and the location of Three Anchor Bay (CT City Maps)

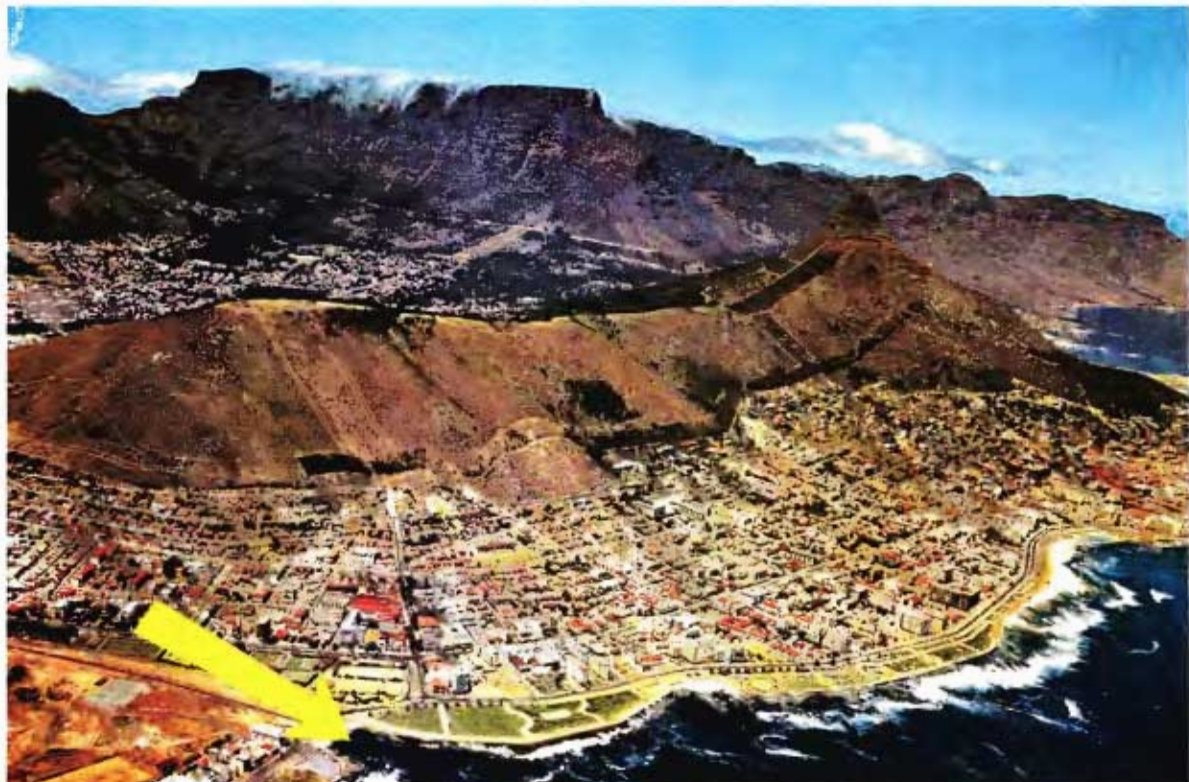


fig 5 The extent of the Promenade towards Three Anchor Bay, indicated with the arrow. 1960's (CT City Maps)

In *“Sea Point Days”*, a film by Francois Verster, we meet Law, a young boy who, with his mother, have been evicted from their home. Law loves nothing more than rapping and out-dancing the blind man on the street. We follow JP Smith, the ward councillor and head of the campaign to reform Sea Point, as he leads the middle-aged members of the Yellow Bib Campaign walking about the streets, Maltese poodles in tow, staring down prostitutes, drug dealers and homeless people. He is drunkenly accosted and told off by homeless street philosopher Aubrey Ruiters – yet Smith also elaborates the political complexities around the area.

At the one end of the Promenade lies the Sea Point Pavilion, a complex of municipal pools built over a large landscaped lawn during the 1920s. Those that go there regularly will adamantly insist that this is *“the best pool in the world”*. In a way the retreat to the pool is Sea Point’s answer to Clifton’s supremacy of the beaches. We listen to Abdoeragiem Field, the filtration man at the Pool, as he explains the life lessons he has learnt from water. Kaiser and Xoliswa, two street-savvy pool guards, reflect on the black experience of South Africa today and reveal white patrons’ prejudices.

Jean Jacoby, an almost-blind granny living at the CPOA happily attends concerts and exercise programmes, and reflects on a long fulfilled life. While another octogenarian sings nostalgic Yiddish cabaret songs underneath the shower thousands of Muslim men convene on the lawn in prayer awaiting the first moon after Ramadan. Marleen Steinberg, who lives in the apartment building overlooking the pool, believes that she no longer has a place in this country. Like other high rise apartment areas – Yeoville and Berea in Johannesburg; the Point, Berea and Morningside in Durban; Berea and Arcadia in Pretoria – Sea Point was the preferred retirement township of Jewish widows in Cape Town. Where the others have yielded to the forces of urban decay, Sea Point has averted the worst and seems to have turned the *threatening tides*.

If the Promenade is the place where people from all walks of life parade their identities, the Pool is where these are, in a sense, levelled. As clothes are removed, bodies of all shapes and hues are openly on display – and different races come into close bodily- contact. Bloated pink bodies splash close to small brown ones, visiting European models lie topless on towels close to carefully clad Muslim women overseeing family picnics underneath the stinkwood trees.

Even in the not-so-New South Africa, the type of proximity and interchange amongst very different people found on the Promenade is unique. Personal and interpersonal identities are still far from clear in this country – and here they seem to be negotiated or mediated in unusual ways

on a daily basis. In this everyman's land between ocean and city, the most bizarre and unexpected things happen every day.



*fig 6 A photo by Ed Suter of an encounter at the Sea Point public pools*

*I asked Ed Suter to explain how he got to take this photo of two marvelous, strong and fit-looking swimming regulars. This is what he said:*

*"The story behind the photo is that I had set up some lights and was photographing people who used the Sea Point pool. The guy in the photograph volunteered to be photographed. While he was posing for me, the lady entered the frame and gave him a hug. They were regular users of the pool and knew each other from early morning swims. At first I was annoyed that she had wandered into my picture and then realised it made a memorable image and got this one shot. A pure spontaneous moment but lit with artificial light. You don't get many of those."*

I experience, on the one hand the sheer joy and energy of a place that is brimming with possibility, humanity and great beauty - and on the other, the troubled social forces and ongoing pain that could still push the Sea Point Promenade in any direction...

However, at the other end of the Promenade, there is something distant about the relative closeness and intimacy of Three Anchor Bay which becomes the point at which the tapestry becomes unravelled. This contradiction urged me to investigate.



*fig 7 A look into Three Anchor Bay. Not a person in sight.*

## The History

The Architect “needs to acquire a ....historical knowledge of his milieu” (Nouvel, J. 1997)

My historical research of Sea Point suggests that this is the locality of some unforgettable events, numerous transformations and rich in collective memory. The investigation is represented here as a series of photographs arranged loosely around a timeline incentive. Most archival material was obtained from Cape Archives or Cape Town City Maps.



fig 8 A map of Cape Town and the surrounding suburbs. Notice the Railway line running all along the ocean. 1886 (CT City Maps)

Three Anchor Bay had a tramway station and battery on the beach long before the seawall was constructed. It was a popular boating bay where a *snoek*-catch was a common sight. Locals drifted from the bay in homemade sink floats to catch crayfish. The beach enjoyed many bathers. On 12 September 1899 during a voyage from Australia to London, via Cape Town, the Irish Steamer, Thermopolaye ran ashore just north of Three Anchor Bay. The seawall was built around 1920 and the land claimed from the pointy black rock by filling and flattening it on the constant contour of Beach Road to be laid out with lawn. The battery which was built on the beach was incorporated into the structure as boat sheds. These later became storage space for “*beach gear*” and only much later became kayak sheds owned by the municipality and rented by the kayak store across the road. I am told that after the Atlantic erupted into a massive storm in August 2008, the municipality strongly considered demolishing these sheds. The water apparently smashed the shed doors and filled these enclosures, threatening to lift the Promenade and the traffic intersection. The sculptural prominence of the seawall and the Promenade has since become the thin threshold which separates land and sea.

July 1965, Ingrid Jonker, an esteemed Afrikaans poet, committed suicide by drowning in the bay. The stranding of the S.A. Seafarer on July 1, 1966, is all but forgotten, except by the affected few, but it has been referred to as “*a tragic milestone*” in South African maritime history. Knowing the history of the site provided some new perspective on the present day situation and the growing nostalgia of many a Sea Pointer.



fig 9 An aerial photo of Three Anchor Bay before the Seawall was built. Notice the shape of the bay, the extent of the rock formations, and the Battery on the beach. (CT City Maps)



fig 10 Mr. Juritz aboard "Argo" 1898



fig 11 Boating at Three Anchor Bay 1892



fig 12 The Railway at Three Anchor Bay 1895



fig 13 A "snoek" Catch at Three Anchor Bay

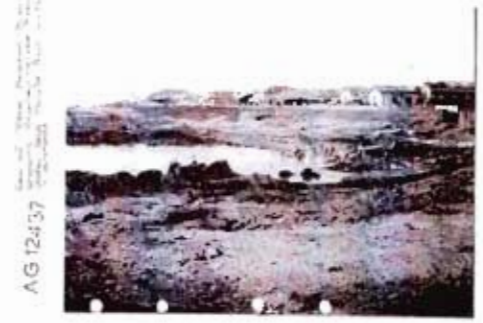


fig 14 Fishing and Boating activities in the Bay



fig 15 Bathing in the Bay

S. S. Vintra Three Anchor Bay 12.11.1922

Dr. J. 981



fig 16 The wreck of the S. S. Vintra off Three Anchor Bay 1922



What the Sea Point sea front would look like without the railway. This aerial view shows the narrowest portion of the promenade—from Mollin-road to the Pavilion.

The Cape Times 15 September 1927



BREAKING UP OF SEA FERRY LINE.—Workmen at the Pier Station are busy breaking the surface of the concrete pier proprietary on the removal of the tracks.



figs 17 A look at the development of Three Anchor Bay



*fig 18 The storm erupting at Three Anchor Bay 2008 (photo courtesy of the "Sea Point" Facebook Group).*



*fig 19 The storm left the kayak sheds in a poor condition (photo courtesy of the "Sea Point" Facebook Group).*

## *Curiosity*

I followed non-linear impulses stimulated by whatever inspired me at the time whilst keeping my mind “open” to new possibilities and patterns of thought. Nonetheless, Three Anchor Bay awakens an alienating discomfort in me. Perhaps it was the reluctance of people to enjoy this beach at sea-level – a harsh contradiction given the bay’s immediate presence and beauty.

Could Three Anchor Bay be the end of the reach of casual strollers emanating from Sea Point? Could it be the vertical segregation of levels? Could it be the threat of being trapped by the sea on the narrow beach and the Promenade wall, or by rascals and assailants or other nuisances? Or is it simply the stench - sea water trapped in rotten pools since the last spring tide two weeks ago, decomposing kelp or all kinds of human waste? Could it be the narrow stairways? Or perhaps the allure of the sea has given way to the appeal of Sea Point’s renowned pool and Clifton’s beaches?

The Bay is pinched between Mouille Point, Green Point and Sea Point. So tight in fact, that it is unclear as to where it really “begins” or “ends”. In that sense it is a non-place, full of contradictions.

However, the entry to Three Anchor Bay from Western Boulevard is the “gateway” to the Atlantic from the CBD after passing the new Green Point Stadium and Biodiversity Park. As Western Boulevard connects Beach Road abruptly, the Atlantic breaches ashore in a beautiful little bay, *stirring still* until the next Cape storm threatens to *devour* the intersection violently.

The Beach Road corridor opens up wide to accommodate Western Boulevard with a beautiful view of the stadium from the Promenade. On the Sea Point side of the opening, the CPOA building stands nine floors high and isolated, dwarfing and turning its back on the Sea Point Public Library and Hall in order to observe the setting sun over the Atlantic. The Mouille Point side of the opening bears the unsightly glare of the somewhat out of place consumerist yellow and red lights of the Shell petrol station. This “para-site” found its host in the ground floor of a three storey flat block called Bay Point. At the foot of Bay Point, opposite Stanley Road is an awkward “island” of lawn delimited by the busy intersection and dilapidated tennis courts. A failed attempt had been made to connect this island to the Promenade from the park over the intersection by paving a path and putting up a “bicycle-friendly” signpost. (The nearby Virgin Active rent out “stylish” bicycles to their members and this is becoming ever more popular).

## position & orientation

hypothetical scenarios



### considerations - programmatic opportunities

elements	programme	corridors & paths	perceptions	atmosphere
wind direction	tangible/real	nodes proportions	truth/deception	place
sun angles	fictional/theoretical	movement	people vs. me	sound
tides	time.	activity flow	everyday	mystery meaning
storms	function transcended	conceal/reveal	society/community	smell
oceanographic	mobility/rootedness	seam thresholds	history	recollection
day/night	permanence	grain	spiritual prejudices	temperature
slope/topography	active/passive	boundaries	beauty	dark presence
pollution	temporality	view focal points	social responsibility	light views
kelp	communality	cycles stop/still	denomination	memory
	commodity	sequence/rhythms	metaphors	history
	social	places of interest	intrusive	connotations
	stirring still	surface/cavity	obtrusive	conscious
	static	accessibility	forgetting/remembering	suggestive
	theory	zones		unconscious
				tension
				relaxed

fig 20 An early exploration of the parameter-defining complexities surrounding the site

On the opposite side of Beach Road, directly opposite Bay Point is a parking lot with a ramp which turns into a slipway/boat launch as it curls into the mouth of the bay. There are two staircases leading down onto the rocks from the adjacent Promenade, one from the vicinity of this parking lot and the other situated on the opposite side of the bay, leading down from the Promenade at the location of three storm water outlets which assumes rather “emblematic” identity. They are “*black holes*” carved out of the wall. Only one staircase leads directly to the beach; from the Sea Point side of the Promenade it ends at the foot of twelve kayak sheds. These sheds are tucked in underneath the Promenade forming the back edge of the beach. (This method of utilizing space became a powerful design informant).

The most interesting and underdeveloped relationship is that of the Promenade to the bay. It seems the path has lost direction and chokes on the vastness and inhuman scale of the “*opening*”, the absence of “*eyes from the flats*” and the intrusive intersection, unaware or unfazed or just too distracted to appreciate the beautiful beach, which it shelters (and hides) by the sculptural threshold of its edge, the Wall.

This node (though lacking nodal qualities), the bay, is ill-defined, understated and neglected despite its strong argument for placemaking. While the site offers the promise of a direct sandy beach experience, it instead signifies the turning point of an excursion rather than enticing to explore more.

### *Exploratory Enquiry*

One evening after business hours, I asked people within a radius of 300 meters of the beach to draw a “*tribute*” to their surroundings. I made sure not to give any hints of my specific enquiry. The results speak for themselves. All of the drawings reflect an admiration for the beauty and mystery of the bay and the beach from an elevated distance on top of the Promenade. However, observation proves that few ever feel invited or seems prepared to respond to an urge to experience this beach and its phenomena with their feet in the sand. None deny its aesthetic beauty or compelling presence, but few explore it up close. Somehow, the Promenade neglects its tangible presence.



fig 21 Sketches of the Bay

Only kayakers who, weather permitting, paddle out through the south-west swells curling into the mouth of the bay establish intimacy with the beach - for a brief moment - until they reach the ground-swells of the Atlantic where they ascertain their preferred lookout, from land to sea. I had to go out on one a kayak expedition.

*“And the bay was white with silent light  
Till raising from the same,  
Full many shapes, that shadows were  
In crimson colours came.”*

(Samual Coleridge)

Whilst in the kayak, I tried to construct in my mind a clear concept of the pattern-scale relationships of the waves and form a memory of their own architecture on my body as it moved in the kayak. I particularly noticed the relationship of waves to the hard edges of the crumpled rock and the behaviour of the water amongst them – the way water achieves form when meeting the sharp and hard edge of the shoreline. Sitting in the kayak one’s eye level is exceptionally low: rather unusual as one is partly sitting in water. The diminutive vertical scale module enlarges the dimensions of the surrounding objects so that the height of the waves grows enormously. The shapes of rocks assume mountainous proportions, the horizon more spacious, clouds mightier. The important lesson is in the juxtaposition between the dynamic properties and the stillness, the slowness of matter and space that cities/buildings inevitably have as well.

After the kayak expedition I took a couple of site photos, bearing in mind some of the site conditions I wished to explore, and double exposed them with photos removed from the actuality of site in order to cast new light on these concepts. Claim. Light. Memory. Reflect. Rhythm. Underground. I wanted to understand the character of the site by abstraction, through the manifestation of the phenomena of light and reflection and through the location of “virtual” spaces. They are a collection of moments experienced.

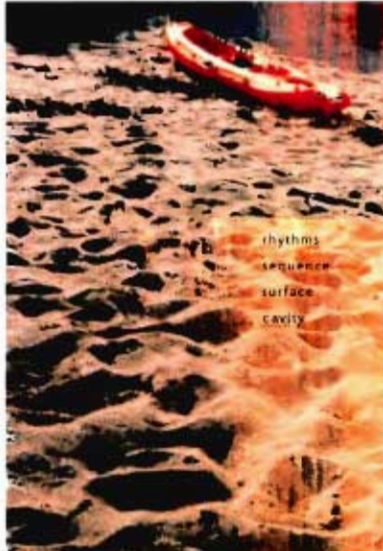
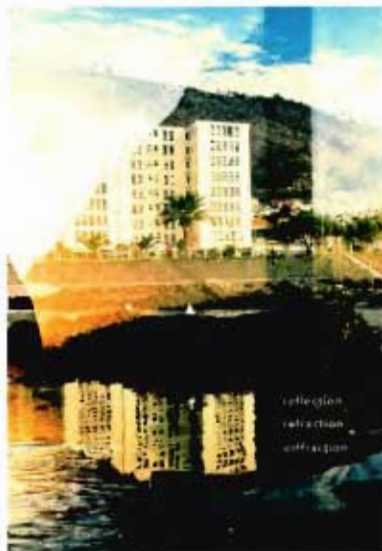


fig 22 Double exposed photo investigation of concepts

The drawings of the bay by the anonymous admirers along with my double exposed site photos assumed new meaning and perspective. So intrigued was I by these drawings that it inspired me to make some of my own. I spent one entire day on site to draw little perspectives in pencil from many vantage points looking over or onto the bay and beach.

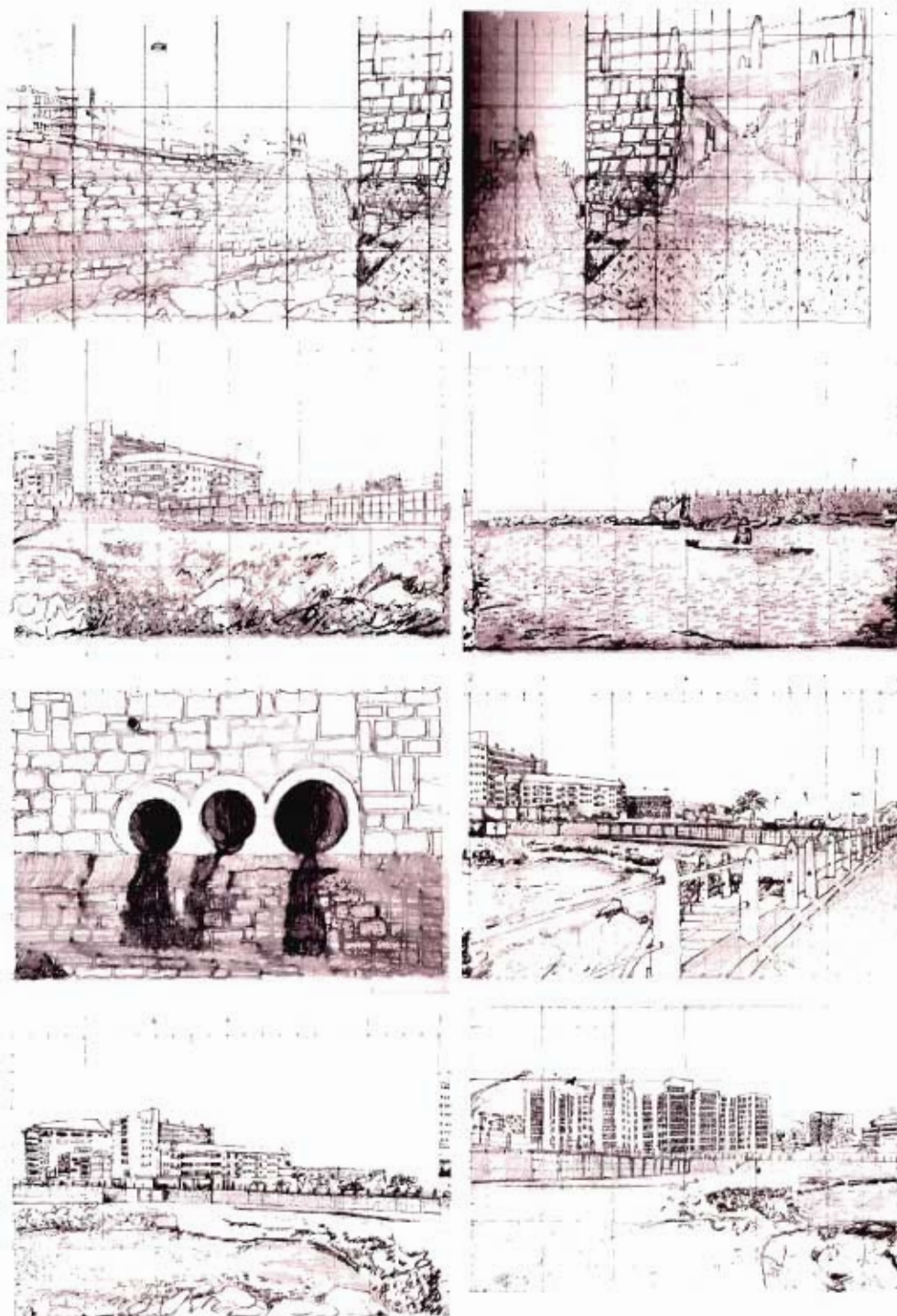


fig 23 Sketches in pencil on site

I used these sketches to construct abstracted collages out of different colourful textural brushstrokes which made me think of the bay as a series of abstracted congruencies and incongruencies. The main characteristics of the “*wrapped*” bay gradually started to reveal themselves. This was a milestone in getting to know the site. It is a place where day-to-day structures give way to a certain measure of unpredictability.



fig 24 *Abstractions in colour*

The power struggle between a range of different forces at play - which will reveal themselves as the explanation of this process unfolds - became my prime incentive for attempting to mediate them in interesting ways. One of the first principles of mediation was to engage the users of this site into the process in order to heighten their sensual appetite for curious explorations of the site themselves.

In order to illustrate my understanding of this principle, I designed and built a "cog and gear" mobile with three rotating site variables conceived of as "characters in a story" over a pulley system.

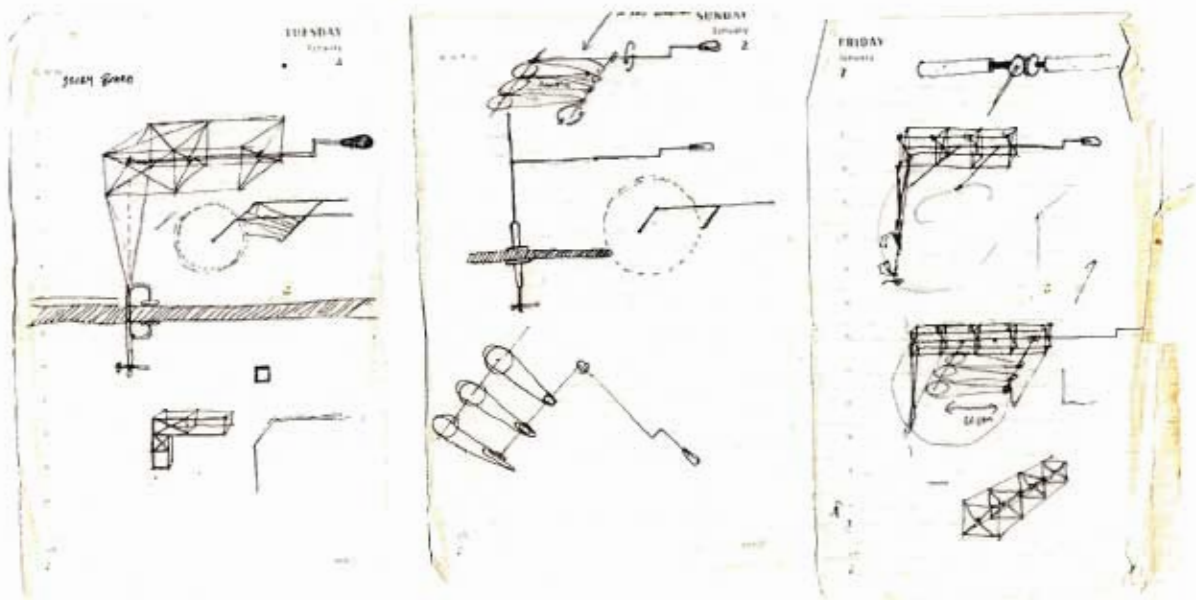


fig 25 Early design sketches of "Cog and Gear"

The point was to actively engage the user of this device to "write" the story, and as such mediate the characters, by turning the cog. The characters rotate around a light on their respective pulleys at different speeds, each time crossing paths at different angles. To gain more than the usual it is necessary for the audience to work harder! (*turn!*) The framework for this mobile was designed as a functional requirement and the light was added for some ambience. I welded together two door hinges and bolted them to an ordinary steel clamp in order for the mobile to be clamped to anything at an operative height. Working through concept, the process produced a functional, "poetic" lamp, freed from the ideology or structure of an "ordinary" lamp, clasped to my worktable as a reminder of the intricate characters defining my site. Turn the cog, "write the prose", understand the site.



*fig 26 Photo of "Cog and Gear" installation*

Another installation soon followed. Again I aimed at engaging subjects into “*setting up*” an interesting situation for mediation. This installation focuses on the same theme but through a much less rigid medium; sound. Through the triggering of motion sensors, different recordings start to play from tampered speakers. I recorded two musical parts for violin and guitar, triggered independently by two different motion sensors. I want to stipulate that the process of conscious “composition” was avoided from the outset as this was not the point of the exercise. Hence, I decidedly also added more character to the violin “soundbite” by making live recordings on site of seagulls and wave motion – sounds of which I had no control. I contrasted this ideal with a rigid and rhythmic, monotonous recital of short phrases of an Ingrid Jonker poem (this was the site of her suicide) and gentle tin drumming, added to the guitar “soundbite”.

The point of this installation was to illustrate how two very different characters of sound expressed through melody, phrasing and pauses can become *congruent* to make beautiful “*moments*” of harmony, each time at different intervals, triggered by the subject when passing a sensor. I experienced much difficulty in playing the instruments for the recording as the point was not to harmonise the two into any predetermined logic, but to rather be free from these types of structure, and let the instrument speak for itself through my intuition. I face the same problem when I want to record anything, because by pushing the “*record*” button, an immediate urge for rationalisation compromises intuitive sincerity. This realisation also made me think about drawing and designing in a very different way.

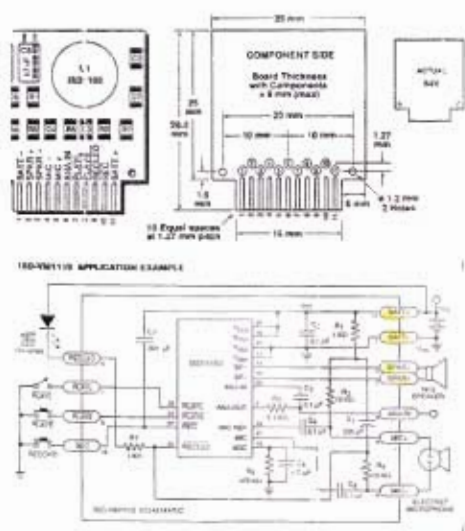


Fig 27 | installed and built Motion Sensors

## *Mindful mediation*

Maybe this is where I started to think of what it really means to be “*mindful*” and to mediate “*mindfully*”.

The craft of representation is mostly senseless. I am interested in the craft of poetic exploration. It is only through the continuation of the poetic exploration, through the integration thereof in the making, that the work will be able to reflect true authenticity and elicit the experience of significance and beauty. The product of architecture, as artful mediation, demands not only a careful transformation of material and form, inspired by creative insight, but also the consideration of its relationship to the whole, as a *gathering* or *holding* of these complex qualitative environmental “*totalities*”.

In a way it suggests to me the expression of a posture that sees the “*creator*” as a conscious, intellectual human being and less as an artist and formally motivated creator - to free oneself from the “*structures*” and “*styles*” and predetermined motivations and really consider looking at the act of creation in an imaginative or inventive or “*mindful*” way. According to Sartre, rationality suppresses finding meaning in freedom (Hancock, 1995, p.65). It is however prudent to remember this statement by Theodor W. Adorno: “*The relief of form (or “structure”) from excessive social-pedagogical demands, however, does not automatically mean capitulation to the banality of mass production, but rather the differentiated interpretation of its design potential.*”

For the recording of the violin, I had to be free from Mozart’s phrasing and Bach’s “*no-vibrato*” contrapuntal technique, rationales indoctrinated from an early age through formal training. It meant feeling the violin’s weight on my shoulder again, and playing the fingerboard by only listening to the sound that the violin wants to reverberate, without immediately categorising it. In essence, it meant “*enjoying*” the violin for its gift of sound to me by accepting it gracefully. “*I do not believe that beauty can be deliberately created. Beauty evolves out of a will to be that may have its first expression in the archaic.*” (Kahn, L.I. et al., 1957) However, I had to keep in mind: “*All that we desire to create has its beginning in feeling alone. But to rely entirely on feeling and to ignore thought would mean to make nothing.*” (Ibid. 1957)



fig 28 The Violin Melody and Guitar Chords

These creative and imaginative processes are all inextricably joined at the seams. Any musical fulfilment and new conquests within its creative sphere immediately finds application in my architectural design or drawing techniques. The results of this instalment reaffirmed my confident stance in mediation as an architectural principle of "note". It was an absolute joy to notate the music afterwards and realise its inherent relevance to my site. *"A man is always greater than his works because he can never fully express his aspirations. To express oneself in music or architecture, one must employ measurable means of composition or design."* (Kahn, L.I. et al., 1957) When personal feelings transforms itself to thought and philosophy, the mind opens to realisation of what Louis Kahn referred to as the "Existence Will" of any particular creative vision. This realisation is the merging of feeling and thought - *"when the mind is in closest rapport with the psyche"* - and leads to the beginning of form. *"Form encompasses a harmony of systems, a sense of order, and that which characterises one existence from another."* (Ibid. 1957)

From this point onwards I turned from *thought* to *feeling*. Thought would evolve out of feeling. I regarded each force as an implicit character in a constant state of mediation with one another.

## The Characters

### “Sea Point Contact”

*The Architect “needs to acquire a physical....knowledge of his milieu” (Nouvel, J. 1997)*

Probably one of the most prominent characters featuring in my design is the Malmesbury Slate rock formation in this area. At the time of Charles Darwin’s visit to Cape Town in 1836 a renowned geologist, Lyell, had just overturned the reigning theory that Granite was the “primary” rock formation. He had shown them to be later “intrusions”; colonists, so to say. In response, Sir John Herschel, a then resident of Cape Town, had posed to Lyell the provocative view – the “mystery of mysteries” - that God might have created life in interim steps. Darwin, thought to have been familiar with this correspondence, docked at Cape Town to, amongst others, visit the Sea Point Contact and attended a tea party with Sir Herschel. What transpired has never been minuted, but in the Introduction to his “*Origin of Species*” (1859) Darwin gives credit to this philosopher’s insights (the “mystery of mysteries”).



fig. 29 A sign at the “Sea Point Contact”

Malmesbury is indeed the oldest and thus “*original*” rock formation of the area. At Three Anchor Bay it has withstood the intrusion of molten magma about 360 million years ago. But south of Sea Point this intrusion of Cape Granite is the prevailing rock formation on the shoreline. Granite and Malmesbury meets at the “*Sea Point Contact*”. Contacts like this, where the granite has been injected into pre-existing sedimentary rocks, were key to Lyell’s arguments. A cruel irony, though, not to be ignored through all kinds of prejudices, is the narrow contact area where the pale granite and black Malmesbury actually fuses, and the uncomfortable distortions that emanated. The original Malmesbury Group deposits were metamorphosed and folded tightly in a North West direction – as if in flight - so that the rock layers are now almost vertical at Three Anchor Bay. More recently the colonists of Cape Town have built a retainer wall of concrete and pale granite (1920’s), keeping the sea’s incursions at bay and reclaiming land by covering the exposed black Malmesbury rock, as is the case at Three Anchor Bay. In another twist of irony, the retainer wall was constructed mostly by granite, at least at the most vulnerable areas, and the Malmesbury on the land-side were covered by filling. The plight of this “*original*” rock formation inspired my mediation in stone.



fig 30 The different rock types of the Peninsula



*fig 31 The intrusion of molten Magma at the "Sea Point Contact" and the North West direction of Malmesbury slate*



## The Peninsula Orogenesis

Some 5 million years ago sea levels were high. Table Mountain, extending to Cape Point was an island. For 90% of the last 2 million years Table Bay and False Bay were dry and covered by dunes. Sea levels were some 130m lower. Cool glacial periods of about 100 000 years long were interspersed by warm interglacial periods that have lasted only about 10 000 years. We are 6 000 years into the latest one, with the sea increasingly claiming land and man resisting it. Some 20 000 years ago, the land had reclaimed the sea. Rising sea levels have more recently reclaimed the land and projections suggest an increase in sea level of between 0.5 and 1m in the next 50 years.

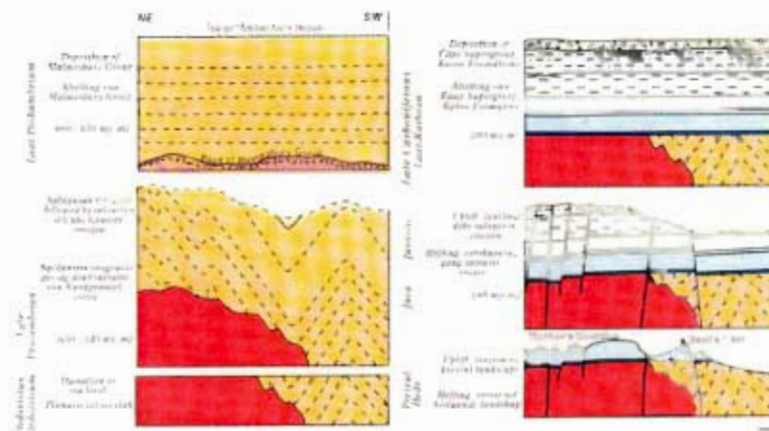
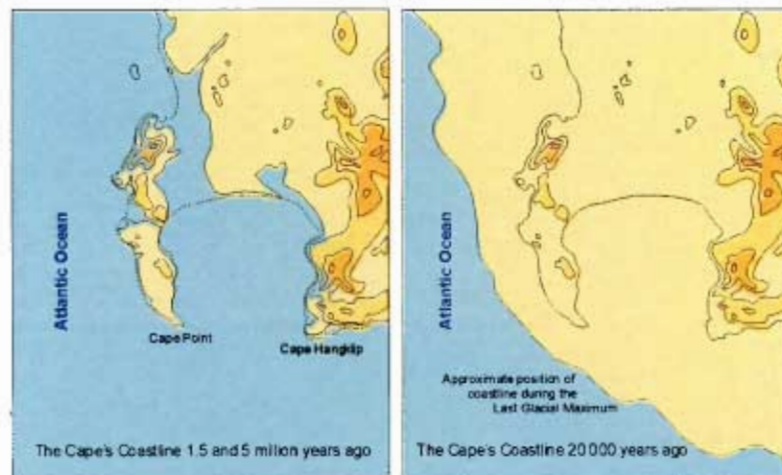


fig 32 Quaternary Coastlines

At approximately 12 year intervals the Cape experiences particularly high spring tides, coinciding with enormous swells that pound the coast line. This is expected to increase in amplitude and frequency.

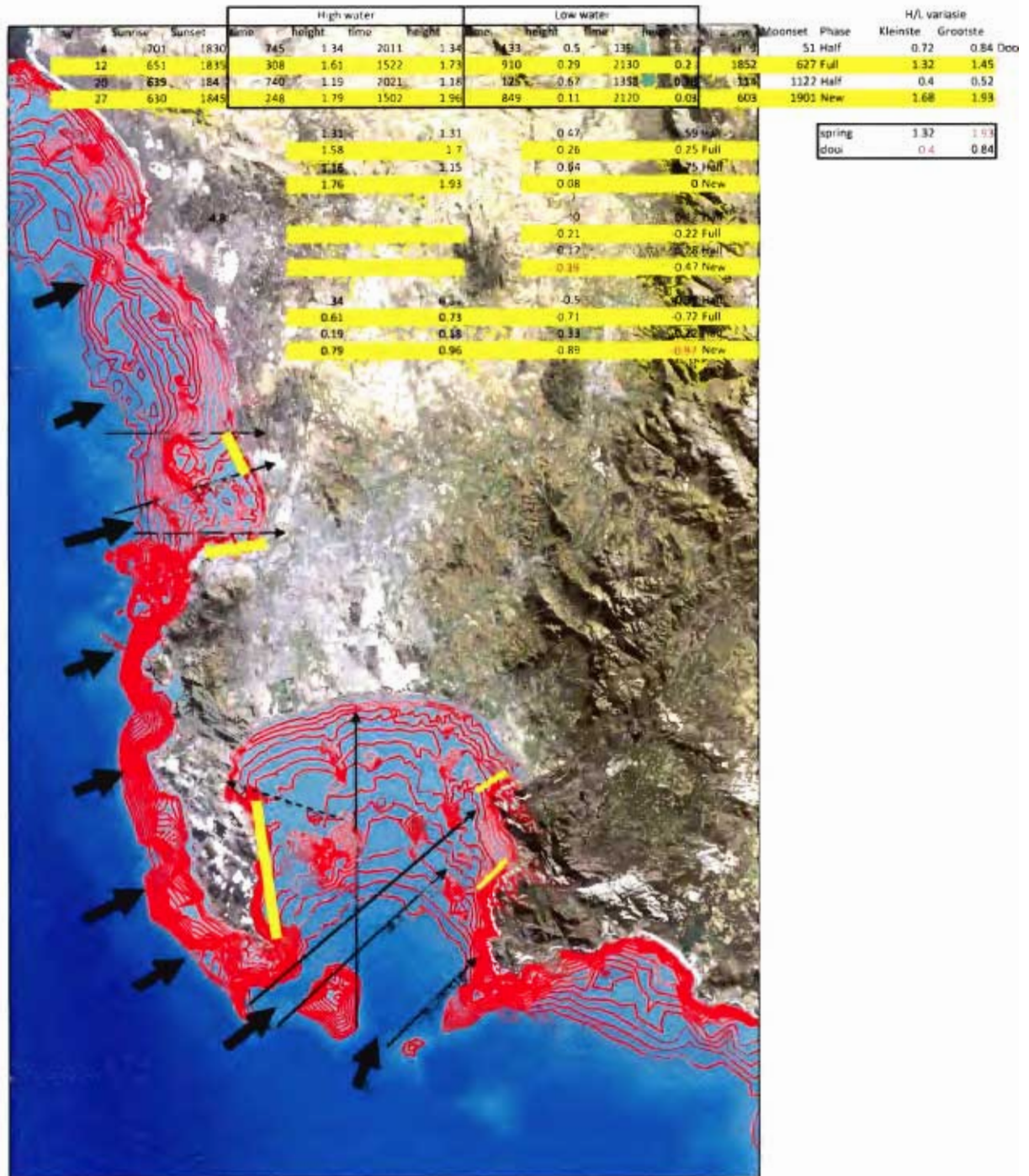
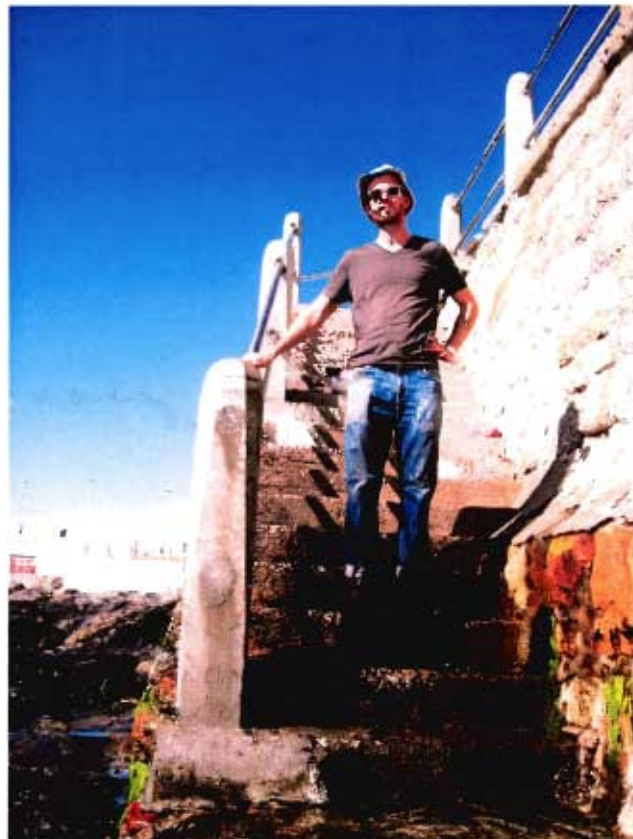


fig 33 Bathymetry around the Cape Peninsula down to a depth of 70m at 5m intervals indicating Sheltered and vulnerable regions based on wave set-up and wave run up. I made some calculations regarding water height variance during tidal extremes, as recorded from the chart datum.

When I studied the original formation of Sea Point and Three Anchor Bay I felt closer to understanding the character of natural elements and conflicting human interest in the taming thereof.

One senses that nature records the process of what it makes, so that in what it makes there is also the record of how it was made. *"In touch with this record, we are in wonder. This wonder gives rise to knowledge. But knowledge is related to other knowledge and this relation gives a sense of order, a sense of how they inter-relate in a harmony that makes all things exist. From knowledge to sense of order we then wink at wonder and say: "How am I doing, Wonder?"* (Kahn, L.I. et al., 1957)

God doesn't play dice, Einstein said, and Khan concurred: Nature creates and recreates on the same underlying order. The underlying harmony is the basis for our understanding of beauty, and the very standard by which we judge our own creations. (Tyng, Alexandra: Beginnings, p.29). I wrote a poem, which hopefully exemplifies my understanding of this "order" of my site.



## *Cape Orogenesis and Colonisation*

*"God grant the philosopher insight into what lies in front of  
everyone's eye" – Ludwig von Wittgenstein*

On the Cape Atlantic shore  
time and tide  
and wind and wave  
have lain bare  
an ancient struggle:  
a pre-Cambrian history  
    of land and water  
    of rise and fall,  
a prophesy of an instant to come  
after life's explosion;  
    of dark and light  
    and give and take,  
    resist and yield  
    cover and expose  
*unfold*

### *Pre-Cambrian Orogeny*

*In Three Anchor Bay*  
the dark grey  
Malmesbury group  
partially bleached black  
had settled from time immemorial  
on an ancient slumping continental slope  
metamorphosed  
by pressure and heat  
they tightly fold  
*northwest*

At *Clifton* pale and medium-grey  
fluid fiery alien magmatic intrusions  
invaded with intricate refinement  
in white or pink crystals  
glassy brown quartz  
and flakes of black mica  
engineered in distant depths  
by Prometheus' promise  
lifted, deformed, folded  
and displaced  
in drifting continental collisions  
Malmesbury's ancient hold

on this eroded surface bed  
of partially decomposed  
intermingled dark and pale  
was pre-Tafelberg composed  
the land reclaimed  
with deposits of sand, silt and mud;  
slowly covering the eroded bed  
giving birth to a new lithified generation  
eroded along faults cutting across  
only slightly folded rock layers  
and displaced  
hard, light grey  
pebbly quartz sandstone  
medium to coarse grained  
and pebble layers  
topped by multi-coloured sandstone and shale

*the sea regained*

wave upon wave

weathered, eroded

the soft and weak

scoured, suspended, absorbed,

transformed to drifting

and merging in the sands

exposed at *Three Anchor Bay*

more resistant layers,

dark sharp edge ridges

irregular jagged shiny black

*fleeing north*

but at *Clifton*

the pale imposes

a massive bold monolithic presence

of spheroids and geometry

shaped by industry

regularly cracked on jointing planes

and rounded by weathering

Then, at *the Sea Point Contact*;

the narrow zone where dark meets pale,

Slivers of dark

altered by intense heat

have intermingled and folded with the pale

to form a complex mixed rock

adorn with crystal in dark layers

And Darwin was struck by ...the geological relations of the present to the past inhabitants of th[e] continent

***“How am I doing, Wonder?”***

Scarpa would have commented: *“If they are roses, they will bloom.”*  
(Pietropolli, 1993, p.34)

The following quote from Louis Kahn (Kahn, L.I. et al., 1957) has particular significance for my design:

*“Man makes rules which are of the laws of nature and of the spirit. Physical nature is of law. The laws of nature work in harmony with each other. Order is this harmony. Without knowledge of the law, without a feeling for the law, nothing can be made. Nature is the maker of all things, the psyche desires things and challenges nature to make that which expresses the inexpressible, that which cannot be defined, that which has no measure, that which has no substance... love, hate, nobility. Still the psyche wants to express just that and cannot without an instrument. Law is the maker of instruments. The violin... beautiful out of the law, how the upper diaphragm of the violin lends itself to the stresses of a bow, and the vertical strip dividing the two membranes are in a sense a continuous column. Even the sound holes in the upper diaphragm are cut so that little of the continuity of the beam is lost. Laws lead to rules. A rule is subject to change, being manmade. Nature makes its designs through tenets of order. Nature does not know how beautiful the sunset is. Nature is of non-conscious existence, living things are of conscious existence. Rule is conscious. Law is non-conscious.”*



One day, intrigued by the progress on a certain construction site, I came across a copper tap *swallowed* by a tree trunk. This tap must have been tied to its host since it was a sapling. By now the two were inseparable! The tree had been felled, but the tap was still intact set deeply within a piece of the trunk. Construction workers would walk to the trunk lying in the dust when thirst called, manoeuvring it onto its flat facet, to operate the tap... After claiming the artefact, (I knew of its relevance to my work. This was “Wonder”!) I left it on site to go and buy a new tap for the one I would take (the site manager promised me that it would be there, intact, when I return).



*fig 34 The tap in the trunk*

After returning, excited to reflect on my discovery again, I found deep scars of a chainsaw in the trunk around the tap, the tap still firmly intact however. At first I was angry that the “*beauty*” of the “*object*” had been spoilt. But after thinking of the meaning and realising the deeper relevance this adds to my understanding of Mediation, I was thrilled by this act and took the trunk home. I realised then and there the implications of Louis Kahn’s “*Wonder*” and “*Knowledge*”, “*Rule*” and “*Law*” dichotomy. The trunk represents “*Law*” of nature and the tap “*Rule*” of man. Man challenged the trunk by its desire to install a tap on it. But “*Rule*” (the tap) is subject to change. “*Law*” (the trunk) restored “*harmony*” by engulfing the tap into itself. “*Nature makes its designs through tenets of order.*” Man made a conscious effort to *oppose* “*Law*” by trying to remove the tap with the chainsaw – luckily to no avail. Scars around the tap illustrate the act and tells the story of Mediation. I am privileged for having the “*Knowledge*” (quite possibly the *fruits* of a good architectural education) which awakened the necessary “*Wonder*” upon observing the tap in the trunk.

## *On False starts, Failures and Accelerated learning*

There have been many schemes for Mediation. “*Design*” knows no end. It is a process of discovery which is only terminated by the end of growth - death. I will start unpacking the rigorous anticipation of my project by reflecting on a range of painful “*false starts*”, all of which informed direction towards my final design.

The problem of mediation at the chosen site demanded the consideration of decisive parameters. It is a site that demands respect for the forces at play and an intricate understanding of their opportunities. One such force is an intimidating community very protective of *their* Promenade, sceptical of attempted interventions, and renowned for generally being reluctant to embrace change (sic.). And, of course, as the proposed Pavilion development has shown, sea views are sacred. Thus, the site demands a heightened sensitivity.

I initially contemplated numerous small and subtle interventions or “*moments*” along the promenade towards Three Anchor Bay in order to establish intricate relationships to the beach. My site investigations were considered to have taken too abstract a form, leaning towards music and art (which of course wasn’t the point, although it could well be a point) and I was urged to produce tangible architecture.

I always had a rather clear feeling and comprehension for what the site “*wanted*”, but was too intimidated to take it on a course “*less travelled*” to action. My initial musings were clouded by fear and I was looking for a project. I required new inspiration.



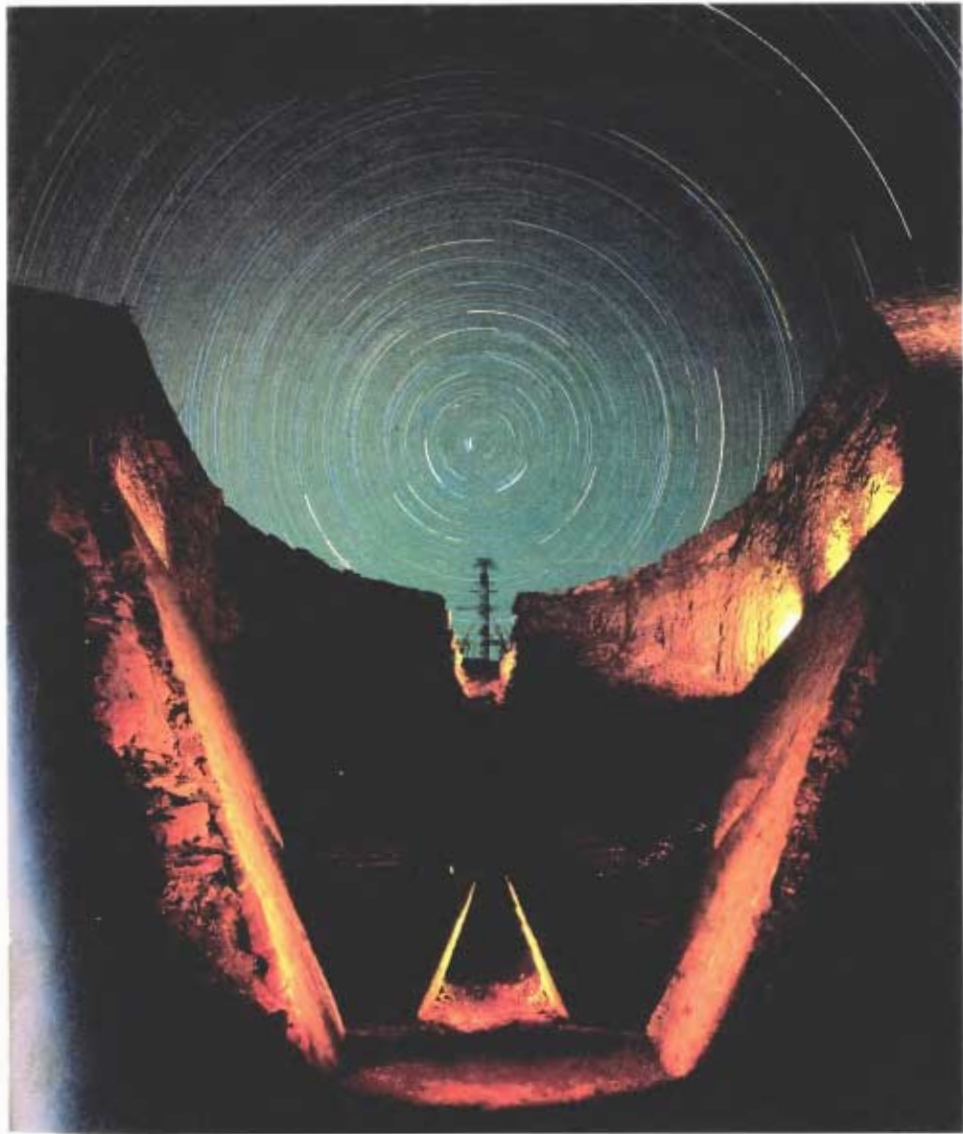
Friedrichshagen Waterworks  
in Berlin-Koppenick.  
Berlin's oldest waterworks plant  
still in operation located at the Muggelsee,  
is to the present day still the largest source  
of tap water for East Berlin.  
Between 1888-93 the English engineer  
Henry Gill supervised the construction  
of this enormous plant.

*fig 35 Waterworks in Berlin (Daidalos, 1993. Underground Vol. 48)  
I wish to achieve such a mesmerising effect, through the reflective  
qualities of water and sensible use of materials.*



Sewer in Hamburg, ...  
built in the years 1872 to 1924.  
In 1862 the English engineer William Lindley  
was appointed as the chief engineer  
of Hamburg's sewage plants.

*fig. 36 These brick vaults within a sewer in Hamburg  
inspired me to investigate formal applications  
for working "within" the Promenade.  
(Daidalos, 1993. Underground Vol. 48)*



Looking up into the Star Axis at night  
in relation to the Earth's axis of  
rotation. The stars are circling  
around the pole.  
The stars in the sky are  
in the north pole of  
the Earth's axis of rotation.  
Photo: Mark New

fig 37 *Star Axis* by Charles Ross.  
*I began thinking about excavating  
and framing views in interesting ways.*  
(Daidalos, 1993, *Underground* Vol. 48)

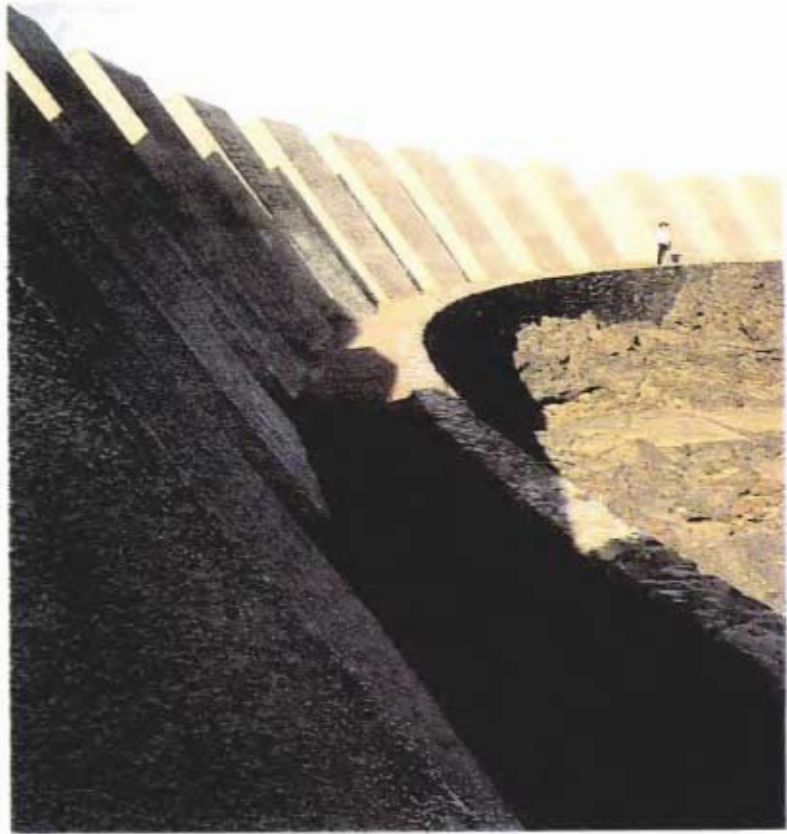


*fig 38-39 The Casa Malaparte on the Island of Capri (Daidalos, 1997. Topographic Extremes. Vol. 63)  
If the stairs create a kind of "amphitheater", the cliffs become a rocky "stage set" while the vast panorama of nature becomes one of the characters.*



*fig 40 Lava-Amulet by Mathias Goeritz, Mexico City (Daidalos, 1997. Topographic Extremes. Vol. 63)*

*The setting, comprising 64 identical concrete elements contrasts sharply with the jet black lava. It is "dedicated to nothingness" as the artist wished it.*



*fig 41 The Hermitages of Hans-Jorg Voth (Daidalos, 1997. Topographic Extremes. Vol. 63)*

*Voth's work distinguishes itself from Land Art in its utility value as a dwelling and work space. Yet far from any concessions to functionalism, it stands its ground as "autonomous sculpture".*

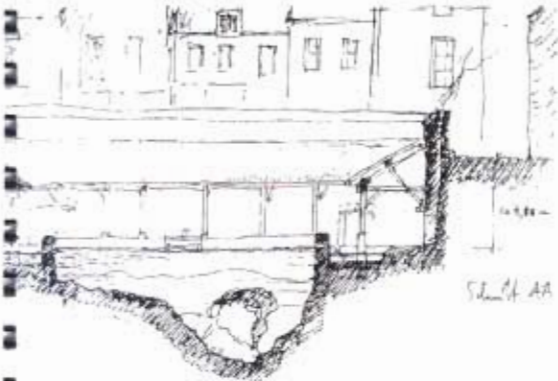


fig 42 The "Fosse Dionne" in Tonnere. Sketches by Jan Pieper (Daidalos, 1995, Aquatic Arts, Vol. 55)

In the city of Tonnere, a water source as large as a river emerges from a cavern. Cavern and spring are enclosed like a water sanctuary, by a circular wall around which stands in a ring-like bath-house.



fig 43 The basin of Bagno Vignoni in Southern Tuscany (Daidalos, 1995, Aquatic Arts, Vol. 55)  
The springs of the small Tuscan city were already used as thermal spas by the Romans.  
The regularised basin is chisled out of the bedrock.

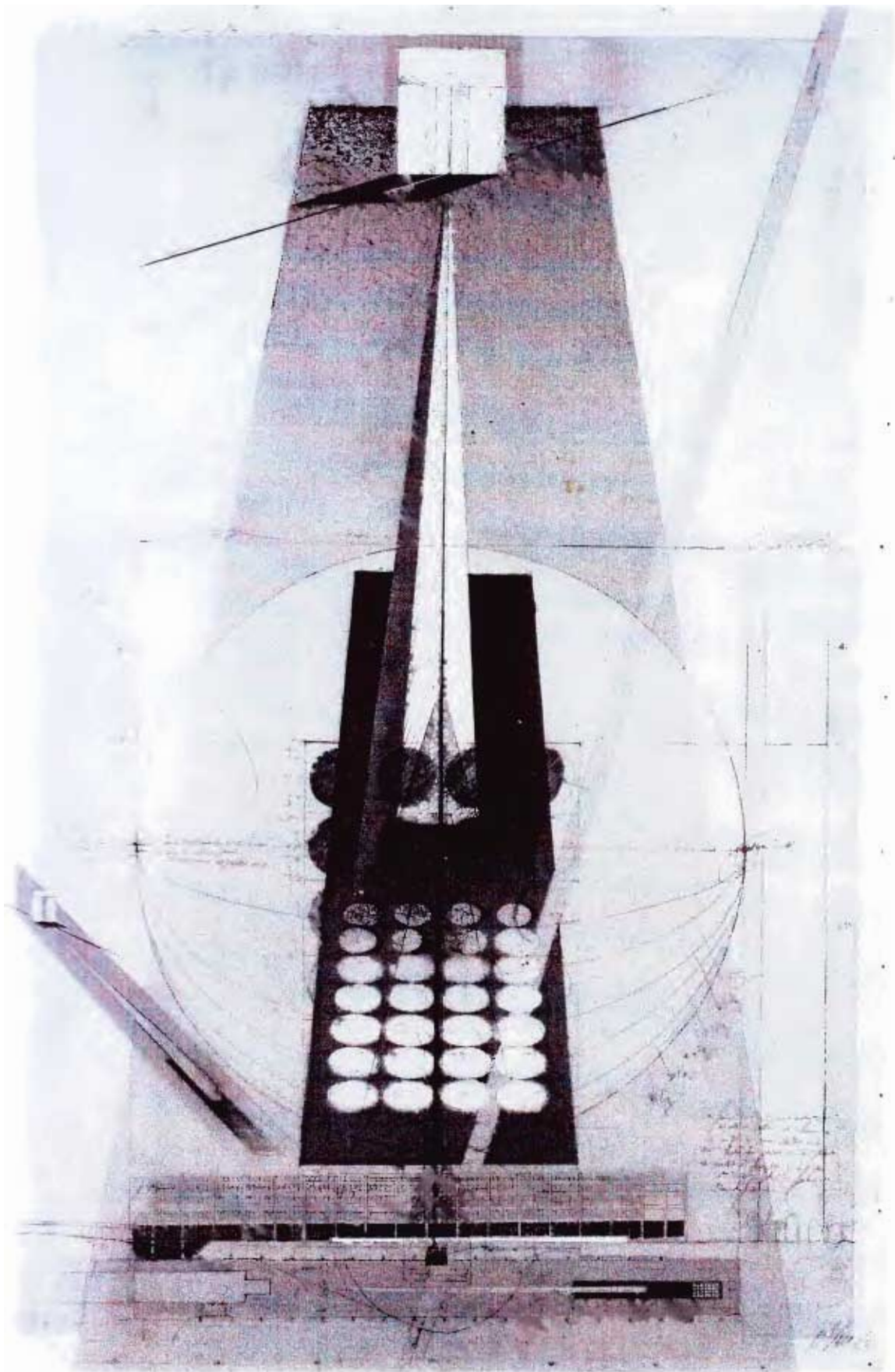


fig 44 *Between Sun Gate and Moon Court* by Hans Jorg Voth, Munich (Daidalos, 1993, Paths, Vol 47)

A long struggle with the site and some insecurities ensued. Questions whether to mediate “at all” at this precariously sensitive place clouded my mind with indecisiveness and cast doubt over my ability to establish a meaningful and thoughtful principle for mediation. I kept drifting between contradictions. On the one hand, a conviction to resist a specific programmatic approach was countered by the thought of not generating a “building”, which I considered to be architecturally “risky” and others consider “unconventional”. The possibility of also encroaching on the territory of engineering and landscaping – shunning an opportunity for a cross-disciplinary response to the conditions defining the contemporary city - finally paralysed me. On the other hand I spent aeons on schemes for theatres and public squares and other programmatic ventures in the bay, out on sea, opposite the bay on the grassy isolated stretches of “islands”, in the airspace traversing the road, in the underground of “claimed” land and “inside” the Promenade.

The problem of obstructing views from apartments, from the approach along Western Boulevard or to the Stadium always inhibited any verticality beyond the assumed ground-level. In a very early investigation I imagined a series of terraced steps excavated from the distinct triangular geometry of land conjoined by the Promenade at the beach and opposite the intersection delimiting the isolated “island” of lawn at the foot of Bay Point. This was to become a “pause” to admire the beach whilst at the same time providing access to it. I envisioned the Promenade to “fan out” into these steps, the ocean “stepping up” during different tidal conditions. I would even capture some of the seawater in excavated “caves” under the steps to reveal the slate rock formations and resulting in natural pools. This required some kind of “canal” to lead the water in. I never felt completely at ease with the scheme, for it did not involve any anticipation for it along the approaching Promenade, but rather focused bluntly and boldly (a word that I temporarily treasured) on only a specific diminutive area of land, trapped between the forces of Beach Road and the beach. I did not feel comfortable in breaking the “normal” assumed path of the Promenade. I had strong convictions in support of sustaining the current geometry and direction of the Promenade to function in its current state - with a heightened awareness of the beach of course - despite my goal of stimulating it. This scheme resulted in a foam model that I never completely finished.

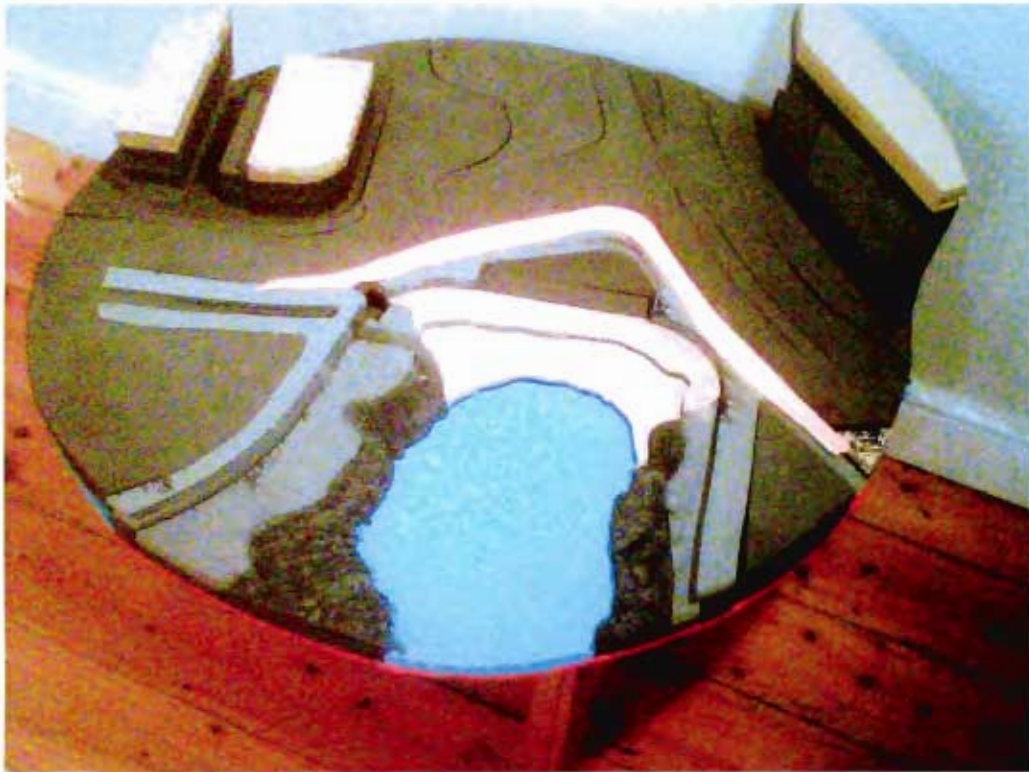


fig 45 Foam Model

Being bold, the notion of a “canal” became evermore enticing. I became very intrigued by the relation of the delimited “island” of lawn opposite the intersection and Three Anchor Bay, its relation to the bay and newly attained Green Point Stadium. I investigated ways of connecting the “fan walk” which, in a similarly disconcerting and uncomfortable manner to the Promenade, lose prominence as it steers into the direction of the Three Anchor Bay “gateway” to the Atlantic. It ends bluntly behind the CPOA at the Sea Point Library and Public Hall with no intention, so it seems, to acknowledge the presence of the bay or the Promenade. My next scheme focused on this contradiction. This fallow grass “island”, connected vaguely to the Biodiversity Park and on an axis following Stanley Road, past the Virgin Active to the Stadium presented me with the opportunity of turning it into an “urban beach and kayak experience” as the decisive end to the fan walk. I would re-align the fan walk to follow a straight axis to this piece of land, excavating everything under the delimiting intersection and adjacent Promenade to provide a direct line of

sight and access to the beach underneath. The awkward "island" would be transformed into a public hard-surfaced and terraced "square" for the enjoyment of beach-goers and fan-walkers alike, connected to the Promenade along a carved out canal following one or two curvatures underneath the road and the Promenade to connect to the Atlantic. As such, the awkward strip would be integrated into a lovely walk on the edge of a canal regulated by tide rhythm and enjoyed by bathers and kayakers along with the beach. Numerous working models were built to understand the excavation required, sea levels, breakwaters and geometry and flow of the canal. I was worried about the compromising effect of the canal on the natural system of the beach and the "spaghetti junction" resulting from succumbing to and tolerating the conflicting forces of circulation above the proposed excavation. This would incur an "unfair" mediation which could have disastrous effects, above and below. (I am particularly thinking about Look-out Beach near Plettenberg Bay which has completely disappeared...)



fig 46 1:500 Model of Canal Scheme

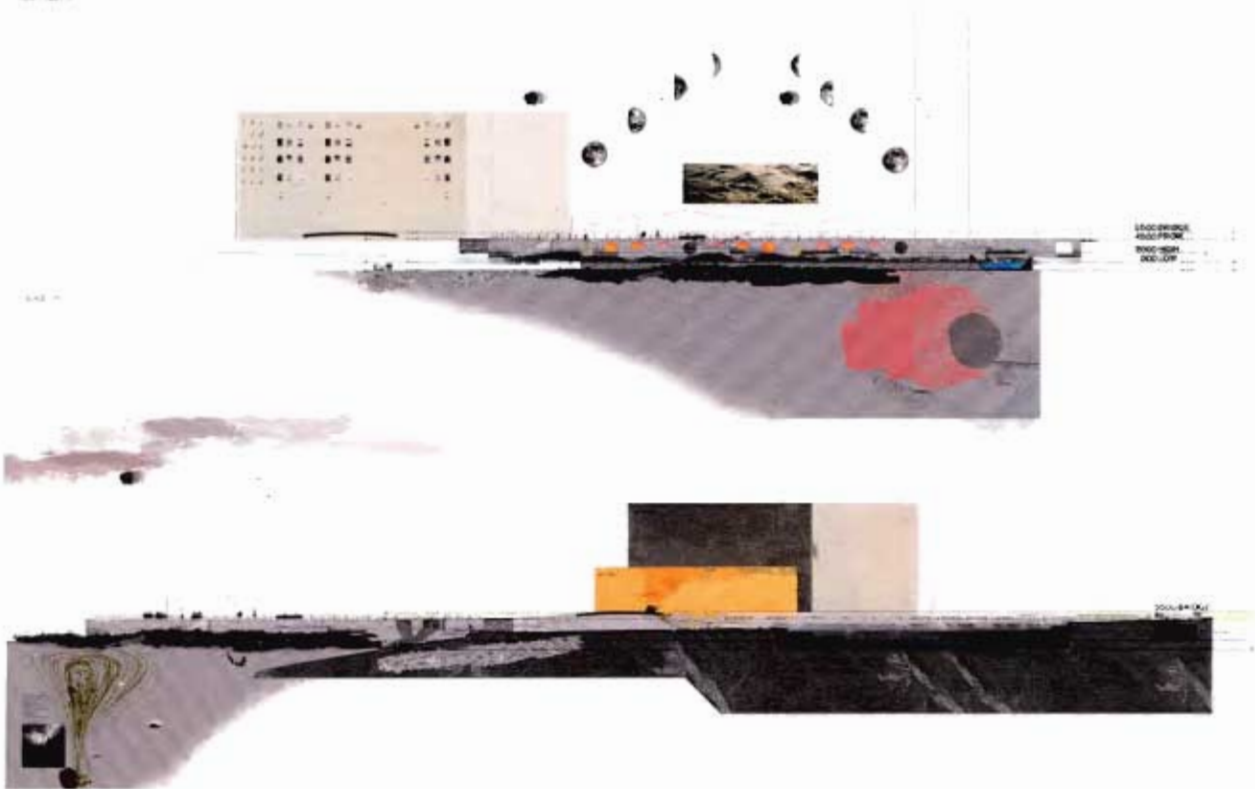
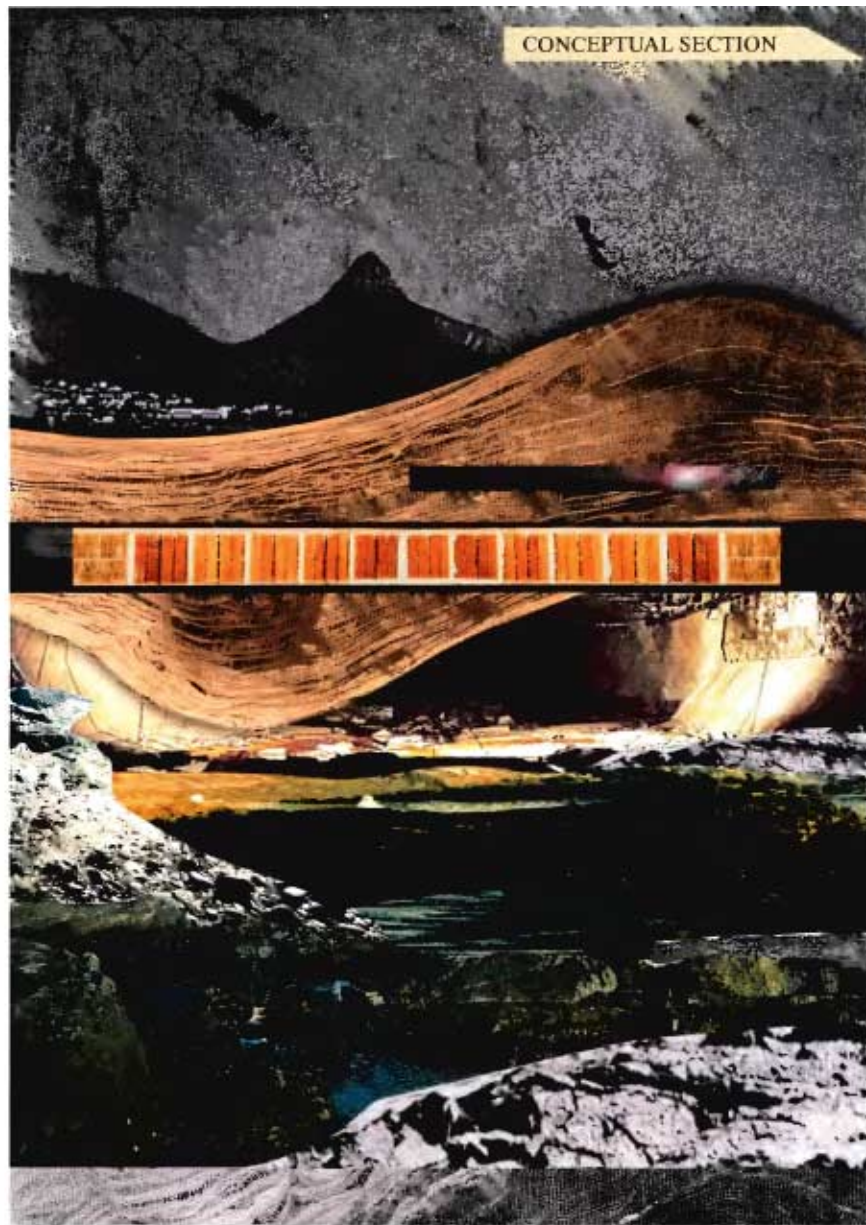


fig 47 Drawings for Canal Scheme



TEAL 200 / 1000 1000

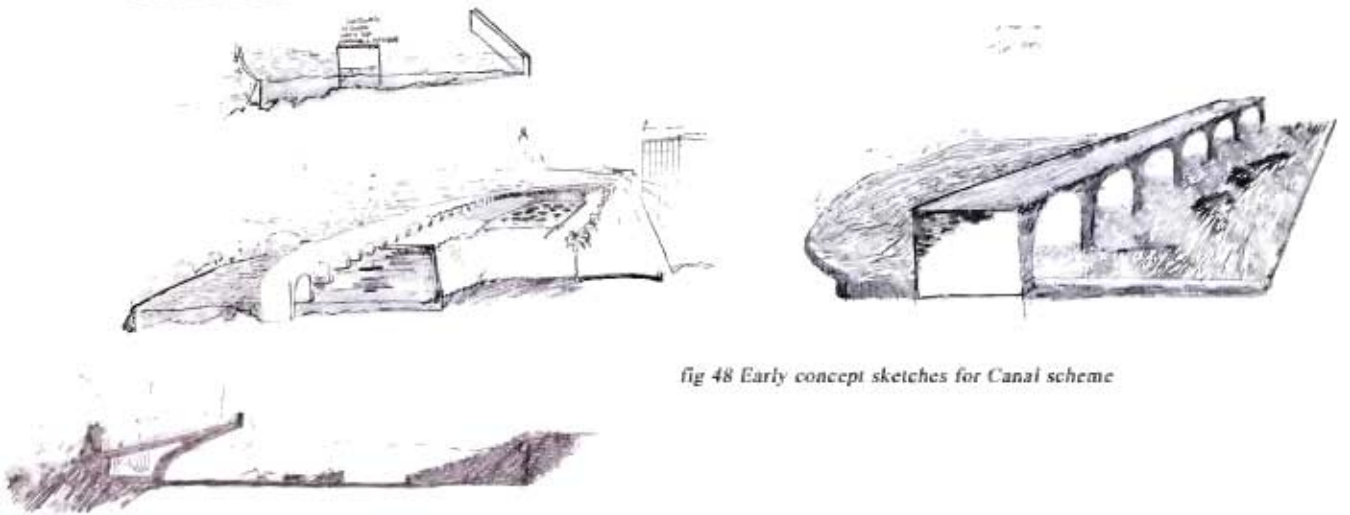


fig 48 Early concept sketches for Canal scheme

Apart from these reservations, I had a lot of trouble on the drawing board to understand the scale of such an intervention. Working on computer and the drawing board simultaneously and constantly shifting between scales by building working models at a too big or too small scale, I could not get a tangible understanding of the scope. I finally came halfway with a working model for a breakwater, designed to protect the opening of the proposed canal in scale 1:250 when I realised at once how absolutely inappropriate measure this scheme would take. By placing a human figure in relative scale on the model, the austere breakwater absolutely dwarfed the figure, not to mention its effect on the bay. This was the wrong approach.



*fig 49 Model for breakwater, the turning point.*

How then, will I visualise my design? I had a scheme that did little more than provide seating to admire the beach and a massive intervention which reduced the life on the promenade to subservient levels. I was stuck. For a month I worked in frustration to mediate the scheme more, to replace certain variables with others, and to understand the geometry and scale of the site. How “bold” or “sensitive” must my approach be? Is it even worth it to approach the design too sensitively? Is it a sign of fear and weakness? Should I design anything on this site?

After more agonising time spent recruiting all my creative faculties and skills, and feeling utterly uncomfortable with what I had to offer, I decided to retrace my very first impulses. It is important to understand that I had to go through this process of "war" with myself in order to discover anew and find confidence in my first intimations. We are often our own worst enemy, but I find solitude in knowing that I have deployed all my energies in a search for a worthy approach (which by now have stimulated fresh impulses, conscious and unconscious). My mother always advised: Nothing that is worth anything comes with ease. Employ your weaknesses (self-criticism); confront your fears. During a productive discussion, Jo Noero scribbled down four parameter-defining lines by which to stick. From here onwards I started to construct, in my mind, and through various pencil sketches and maths, through intuition and thought application, the design which I will be presenting at the final review.

- Site
- ✓ ① no buildings above ground
  - ✓ ② Mediator between sea and land.
  - ✓ ③ Small moves vs one big idea.
  - ✓ ④ Site use to inform program.
  - ⑤

Fig 50 The defining site parameters and incentives for design

The process was far from over (it is still not over) but I had developed a grip which would lead me through wonderful explorations of my mind and ability.

It was my first experience with a vast, infinite, open-ended site, and with that, one without a conventional architectural program. "*It is only in the world of objects that we have time and space and selves*", says T.S. Elliot (Quotes), and one of these objects is the boundary. In the boundless infinity of a world without borders by which to orientate, and define, differentiate and delimitate "*meaning*" and "*otherness*", man – a student at least - can be lost in space. I gave serious consideration to select a different site, but decided that it will be of more value to confront my fears and learn from it than to succumb to the lure of mediocrity and predictable representations.

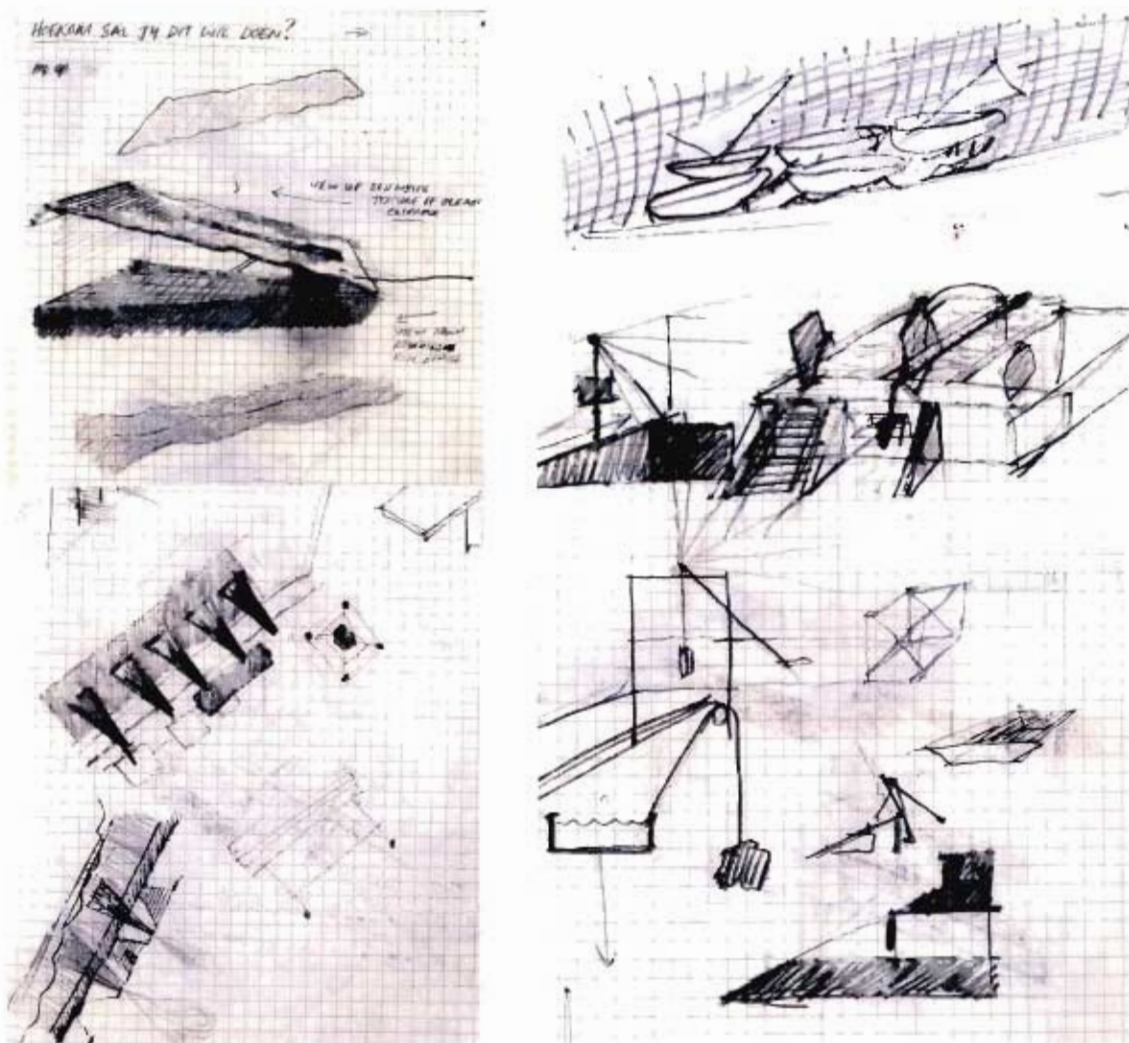


fig 51 Small investigatory sketches of concepts



## *The Formal Process*

*"Gathering information and verifying hypotheses in order to orient one's choices constitute the necessary condition for creating an architecture.... But this condition is far from being sufficient. Integrating the givens does not imply finding the solution. Refusing to integrate them implies refusing to answer to them."* (Nouvel, J. 1997)

The new approach called for a new and retrospective look at design informants. There were many hints; the stairs which run *along* the Promenade, the kayak sheds tucked in *underneath* it, the ramp slicing *through* it. Sightlines to Lions Head, Signal Hill, Green Point Stadium and the Lighthouse were analysed, amongst others, contours deciphered and rock formations plotted at different points and degrees of impact to the wall. Orientation, sun and shading had to be re-evaluated. Swell direction and formation lead to various experiments with the refractive quality of water and waves. Tidal charts, the "chart datum" and moon phases proved to be of critical importance. An attempt was even made to locate shipwrecks along this strip of land. I distinguished landmarks of perceptive experiential quality within the urban fabric and located various loci's along the Promenade. The social premise and restraints were re-evaluated and major opposing or complementing character-forces re-affirmed, which in turn stimulated programmatic musings and a feeling for the "*mediation equilibrium*" to be either corrected, rejected or provoked. The challenges of building vertically or excavating and stretching the horizontal scope were addressed decisively. I had to pin down the scope and limitations of my intervention and delimit the scale of the operation.

It was time to explore the site in a more formal and precise process in order to establish exact parameters and opportunities. After taking various measurements of the bay, I took to the drawing board. I decided to draw a 1:100 section through the bay, facing East. I wanted to comprehend the scale of the beach in relation to its urban context. I could not help but to draw on a little bit of imagination. "*I try in all my sketching not to be entirely subservient to my subject, but I have respect for it, and regard it as something tangible-alive*", says Kahn (Poole, 2007, p.2). Imagination strives for unity with reality, and the conceived location with that of the real locality. Another important milestone was reached at understanding the site geometry and scale.

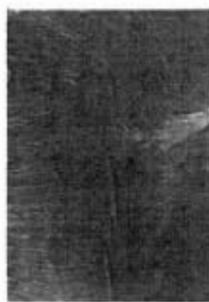


fig 53 A more precise sectional drawing through the bay

the sea is quiet & blue / green  
 the water is dark / through water  
 the sea is dark / blue / green  
 the sea is dark / blue / green  
 the sea is dark / blue / green  
 the sea is dark / blue / green

I believe that the Promenade as a social intervention owes its popularity to the fact that it enjoys the "power struggle" or juxtaposition of the urban fabric with its manmade structural logic and lively chaos, conscious and unconscious stimuli to a reminder of "life in the city"; and the leisurely after-hours recreational effect of the Atlantic. With its ebb and flow, brute force, moods and overwhelming scale it is a free and unpredictable force of higher order than all of us and our "things" which provides some perspective on the chaos of life. A complex and contradictory milieu, this is. This is no nature lover's getaway. It is this juxtaposition of two major masses or volumes, with all their internal forces, competing to reaffirm many human desires, which renders the Promenade a lively and successful urban intervention.

Formalising a walkway on the threshold between land and sea seems an obvious “*step*” in the *right direction* and a product of its time. Building a beautifully sculptural breakwall to tame the Atlantic’s force and making it safe to observe from rather close appears to be plausible. The question of coming into skin contact with the cool water and sensing the ocean rhythms at sea-level comes to mind – and yet, there are steps to beaches which enjoy regular admirers who find their way down from the pulsating Promenade. I get the impression that the success of these beaches is reliant on the engagement of the Promenade at each bay. These beaches are still tightly woven within the Beach Road *tapestry* and even feature various other suggestive and connective stimuli such as the sculpture installation by Marieke Prinsloo Rowe, depicting a narrative “*about learning to understand one another and walk alongside one another*”, jungle gyms on the lawn, one or two restaurants off Beach Road, and Milton and Graaff’s tidal pools. (Graaff’s pool have been demolished and filled by concrete but the austere concrete blocks are still a landmark and reminder of its glory days.) These all terminate before reaching Three Anchor Bay. In the case of Three Anchor Bay beach, the intimacy of the Promenade to the bay and beach is compromised.

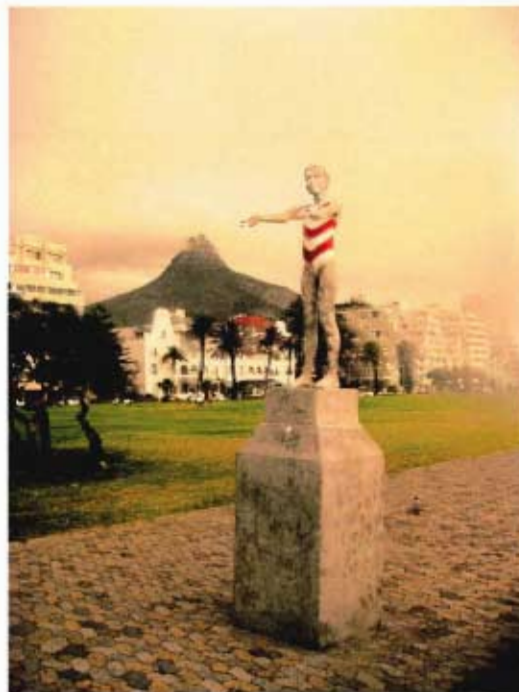


fig 54 Marieke Rowe Prinsloo’s sculpture installation



*fig 55 Graaff's Pool*



*fig 56 Milton Pool*



*fig 57 A panorama of the promenade at Three Anchor Bay*

My intervention aims at engaging Three Anchor Bay beach by mediating elemental forces at play, often suppressed or hidden by the power of one force over the other (one character is cast in a leading role) or simply by the lack thereof. In so doing, I wish to reveal or assert, in a playful, sincere, mysterious and often quite literal manner, some timeless truths about our relationship and fundamental dependence on these forces and how they are suggestive of human connections and relationships. When the Atlantic does decide to exert its power on the barrier wall, it becomes a symphony of splashes in rhythmic co-ordination and anticipation which appeals to and entertains everyone! I want to encourage the sense for depth of place. Today it is necessary to plan with nature, to understand cities as landscapes and to develop these ecosystems so as to enable sustainable development. Future urban life relies on the appreciation of existing qualities, cyclic conditions, movement patterns and mobilised diversity. I envision a sensual intervention that sparks the imagination and transcends cultural barriers.



*fig 58 Splash!*

I want to celebrate the unusual, magical public space of the Promenade: a space that not only actively reflects curious and entertaining social and racial dynamics, but also one that is simply beautiful and interesting. As with every other visitor, there seems to be a story to tell every time I go there: a question, perhaps, of people being unrestrained by cars or security gates and for once being unselfconscious in living out daily habits and rituals... and also of being able to look in ways that are not usually allowed or fully explored.

I allowed myself observation, exploration and reflection on these issues. Importantly, then, I try to explore whether there is scope for a form of "*salvation*" by means of a *voice* that is authentic and not immediately rejected, precious, spoilt, guilt-ridden, arrogant, blind or pathetic – in short, one that is aware of the past and present, the natural and manmade: one that is mindful of all the existing mediations and mediates all (or most) of them affluently. Architecture after all is Mediation.

I am taking an excursion to the senses, with my senses and sensual experiences, by linking them to the ideal of the evidence, an ideal that I am trying to reach with all my stirrings and consciousness.

Taken from the "*small moves verses one big intervention*" criterion stipulated at the last crit-session, I began to see my site as an installation of existing forces that I have to curate – as if in exhibition though it needn't assume a "*precious*" attitude. I intended for small, mindful gestures of mediation to be placed as if a curious, mindful being (this could well be a child, free from the need to create profound statements or making cultural references and free from the posture of formally motivated "*creative inventor*") had instantly placed them where he saw fit: A composition of pieces – arranged much like the order of Symphonic music, in dialectic of *Overture, Interlude* and *Finale*.

### *The problem of boundaries*

The material objects are our only reference to perceive space. The architect makes the world visible and spatial in form and material to enable "*dwelling*" on earth. Dwelling "*begins its presencing*" in the boundary (the wall) between the inside and the outside. To Heidegger the "*problem*" of dwelling lies in this threshold where "*meaning*" meets "*otherness*" (Norberg-Schulz, 1996, p.419). It is here that architecture, character and space, merge. In Western thinking

and architectural culture the wall or boundary is typically rigid and permanently compartmentalised whereas the threshold in Oriental thought processes and architectural culture is permeable and temporary, allowing greater flexibility and fluidity between “inside” and “outside”. As “meaning” is the fundamental existential human need, man needs to “dwell” *meaningfully* (qualitatively). Psychologically, “meaning” requires a facilitating spatial structure for “orientation”, and concrete, material objects of “identification”. But dwelling also consists of intangible “phenomena” -like perception. We are simultaneously located in space and exposed to the character of that space. This principle was my fundamental design informant.



*Fig 59 Few are capable of confidently kayaking beyond an otherwise parameter-defining promenade.*

The Promenade is separating two major forces; the “*order of Land*” and the “*order of Sea*” by the means of an 800mm thick wall. “*Meaning*” meets “*otherness*” in a tough struggle for prominence, by way of a very thin threshold condition which lends the condition very little expression. The edge condition is clearly a one-sided argument in favour of the land. We have claimed land, for the length of the Promenade, covering ancient rock formations and laying lawn. This flat-landscaped environment stretches out from the foot of the apartments along Beach Road on the same contour - for the length of the Promenade. This space is celebrated and enjoyed only at certain intervals by stimuli unrelated to any expression of the threshold (i.e. saying nothing of the intricate “*powerplay*” at work) - jungle gyms and restaurants along Beach Road livens up the surrounding greenery – but as soon as it stretches out of reach from the stimuli, it lies barren and is only a waste of precious space. Ironically, I read signposts on the lawn prohibiting any ball sports (though it seems where there is a need to kick a ball, people treat these with the necessary ignorance it deserves). The edge condition is rigid and does not deliver on the promise of expressing an augmented experience of the meeting place of two great forces at work. It does not respect even the opportunity – sometimes presented on a golden plate (as when the ocean splashes enthusiastically over the edge of the wall) – to give greater meaning to their meeting place.

Keeping this opportunity in mind, I turned my gaze to the barren beach of Three Anchor Bay, its lonely kayak sheds and the distracted and isolated plain of the Promenade running over it at paramount locality for a promising experience of the bay. The only activity on the triangular lawn separating the intersection from the Promenade at this point, is that of the flashing traffic lights. I notice the geometry of this separation, and the opposite stretch of land at the foot of Bay Point. It is awkward. In keeping with the premise that beach activity is reliant upon the engagement of the Promenade, it is easy to see why this beach lies deserted. What can I do about it? I think about my very first scheme, and realise that the intersection would have affected it in a very similar way as it does currently. People need to be put to ease and be left in peace to enjoy the bay on entering or traversing its surrounding space. This meant mediating this awkward triangle with the intersection and providing a connection across it to the “*tied up*” stretch of land on the opposite side. It also meant mediating it with the beach by, firstly, giving it prominence over the intersection and secondly, introducing it to the beach by creating a *familiar* situation introduced via a range of suggestive stimuli along the way. Movement of the human body requires obstacles to be able to express itself – the beauty of movement of the body depends on the diversity of the

In keeping with the established pattern in order to create familiarity of context at the locality of the beach, the threshold between my points of *anchorage* had to become less rigid in its assuming role, allowing for greater flexibility and fluidity between “*inside*” and “*outside*”, “*meaning*” and “*otherness*”, “*Land*” and “*Sea*” to mediate in a similar manner as the beach does. This meant “*puncturing*” the threshold at these areas to make it permeable. How will I achieve this?

If I was to puncture the wall between the established “*anchors*”, and as such create the opportunity for the ocean to “*come in*”, surely I must provide space to experience the mediation. I had the impulse to “*pull*” the land from the wall between the “*anchors*” in order to create space for the tangible experience of the mediation. I decided to “*literally*” pull land away parallel to the North-West direction of the rock formations and perpendicular to the swell direction which bends to follow the rock direction as it curls around the wall, established through early experiments of refracting water patterns and studying aerial photographs (this section of wall is also most protected from heavy swells, in contrast to the wall on the opposite side of the bay which is fully exposed).

This decision resulted in three enclaves and a fourth one at the edge of the beach. As such, I present the “*Inside of Outside*”. To my wonder and surprise, however much I wish to claim it to be a purposeful design decision (though it was an objective of the design) the geometry of these enclaves, created by following simple logic of phenomena on site, repeated the geometry of the triangular piece of land at the intersection – extending the pattern to incorporate the surrounding area of the beach! This discovery granted a *quantum leap* for securing further development of my conception for “*familiarity*” with context of the “*overture*”, in order to restore the beach to its deserving glory.

Fig 67 Brief explanation of operation



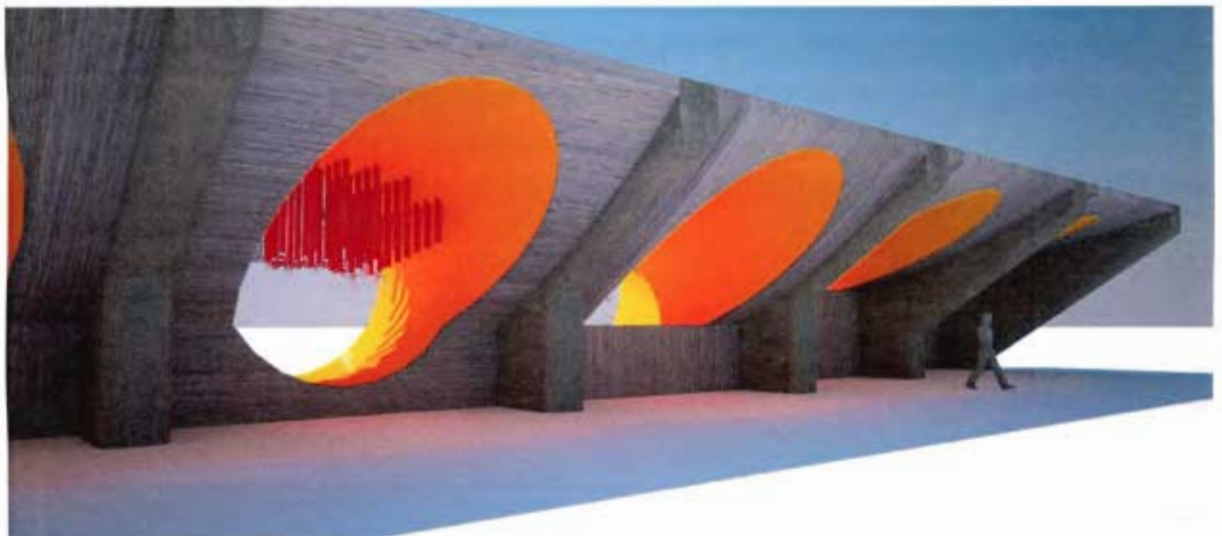


fig 70 The concept of the “moon” even reveal itself in perspective. Notice the music pipes penetrating full moon. The design is still in development.

The “Full moon” phase opening stimulated another idea: sound. I could penetrate each “Full moon” incision from a top of the Promenade with copper pipes – almost resembling a pan flute. These pipes are to be cut flush with the surface of the Promenade, but differ in length as they enter the “moon”. Whilst sea breezes push through the “moon”, so does the seawater, which (relative to different tidal conditions and ocean moods) exposes or closes the “whistling” edges of the pipes. Unique “music” emanates from a top the Promenade by oscillating tide and wind effects below. The “register” of the “music”, its “phrasing” and “tonal quality”, is different each time, controlled by wind and tide – mediating through sound.





*fig 69 A section of the threshold as one would see it from inside the relative enclave.*

### *The inside's edge*

The retainer walls run parallel and perpendicular to the rock and wave direction respectively as mentioned before. These walls merge to form one continuous wall angled towards the land at fifteen degrees, as if the force of the incurring ocean had pushed them over. This wall gives form to the enclaves. Each enclave differs slightly in form and depth of incursion, regulated by the angle of the Promenade. The retainer wall mediates in height, but is levelled with the Promenade at each point of "*anchorage*" to enforce the order of "*Land*" by enhancing the respective sightlines from the Promenade to "*Land*" features, as previously discussed. It grows in height towards the apex of each "*Full moon*" and the relative incurred depth of each enclave in keeping with the initial impulse of "*pulling*" land away. Hence, it also assumes a fluid form (as water would if we were able to "*pull*" it by hand). This wall supports a continuous concrete cantilevered footpath. It is cast on loosely packed slate stones, salvaged from the various excavations, to ultimately decompose over time, telling of the working forces of water upon it. The path runs all along the edge of the retainer wall, through the various enclaves and fluctuating between differing levels of safety, following the height of the cut of the respective moon phases. By these means, this path counters the height of the retainer wall by being at its lowest at each "*Full moon*" and highest at each new moon to allow constant views through the moons to the Atlantic beyond.

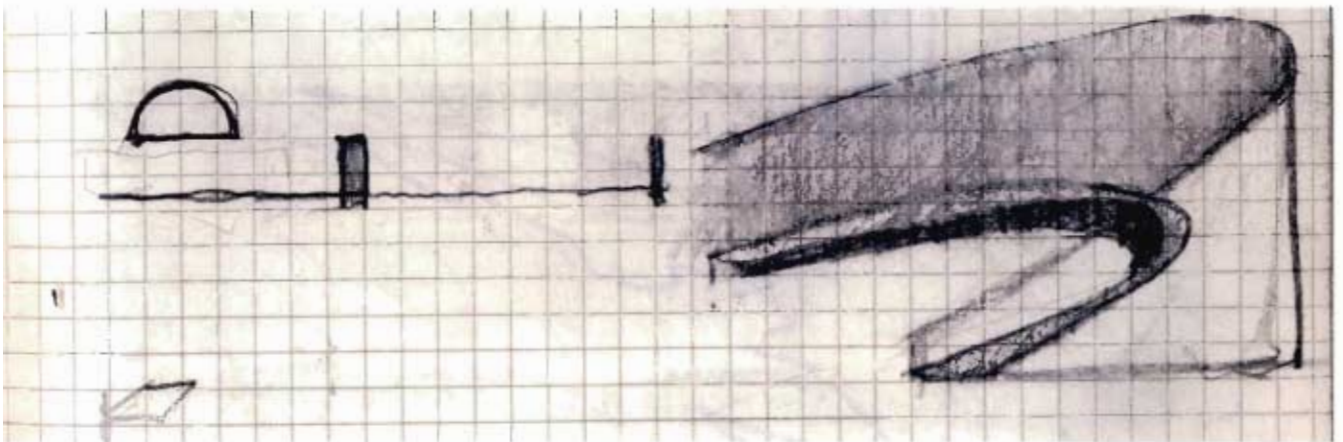


fig 71 The retainer wall and footpath

The retainer wall also possesses other intriguing characteristics. Above the footpath running along its length, I envision *supposed "archaeological discoveries"* (uncovered through the process of excavation), of small fishing skiffs represented in bas-reliefs of their bows in the concrete structure - The timbers of their bows, roughly imprinted into the wall, at places still present. In actuality, this would be achieved by doing exactly that. Furthermore, this retainer wall also extends enticing invitations to various excursions by means of steps from the footpath into it to achieve vantage points for "gazing" down yonder.

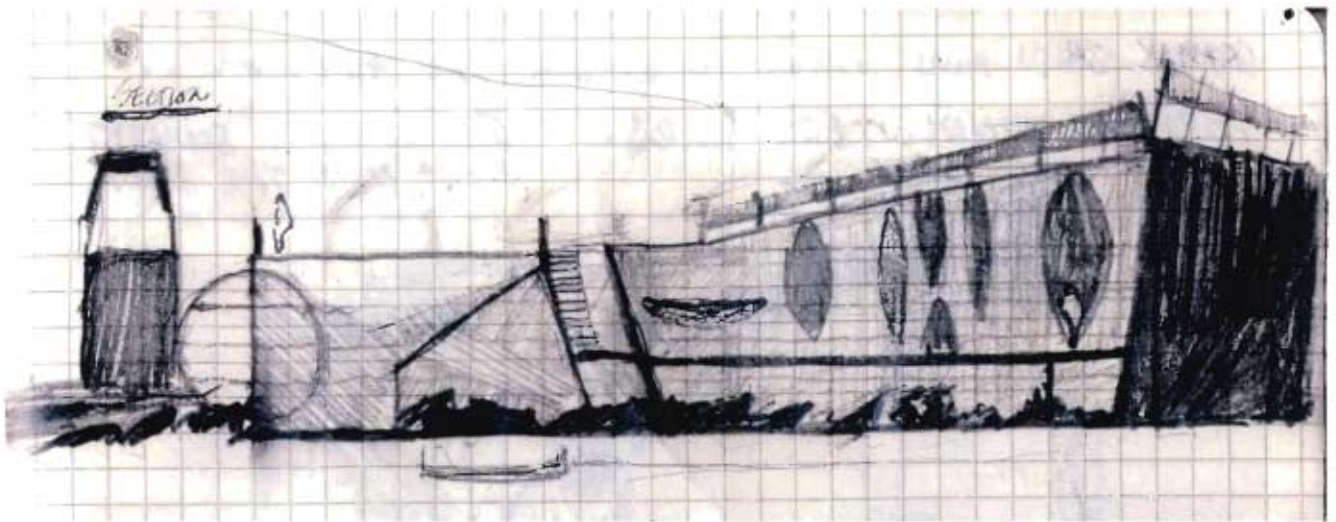
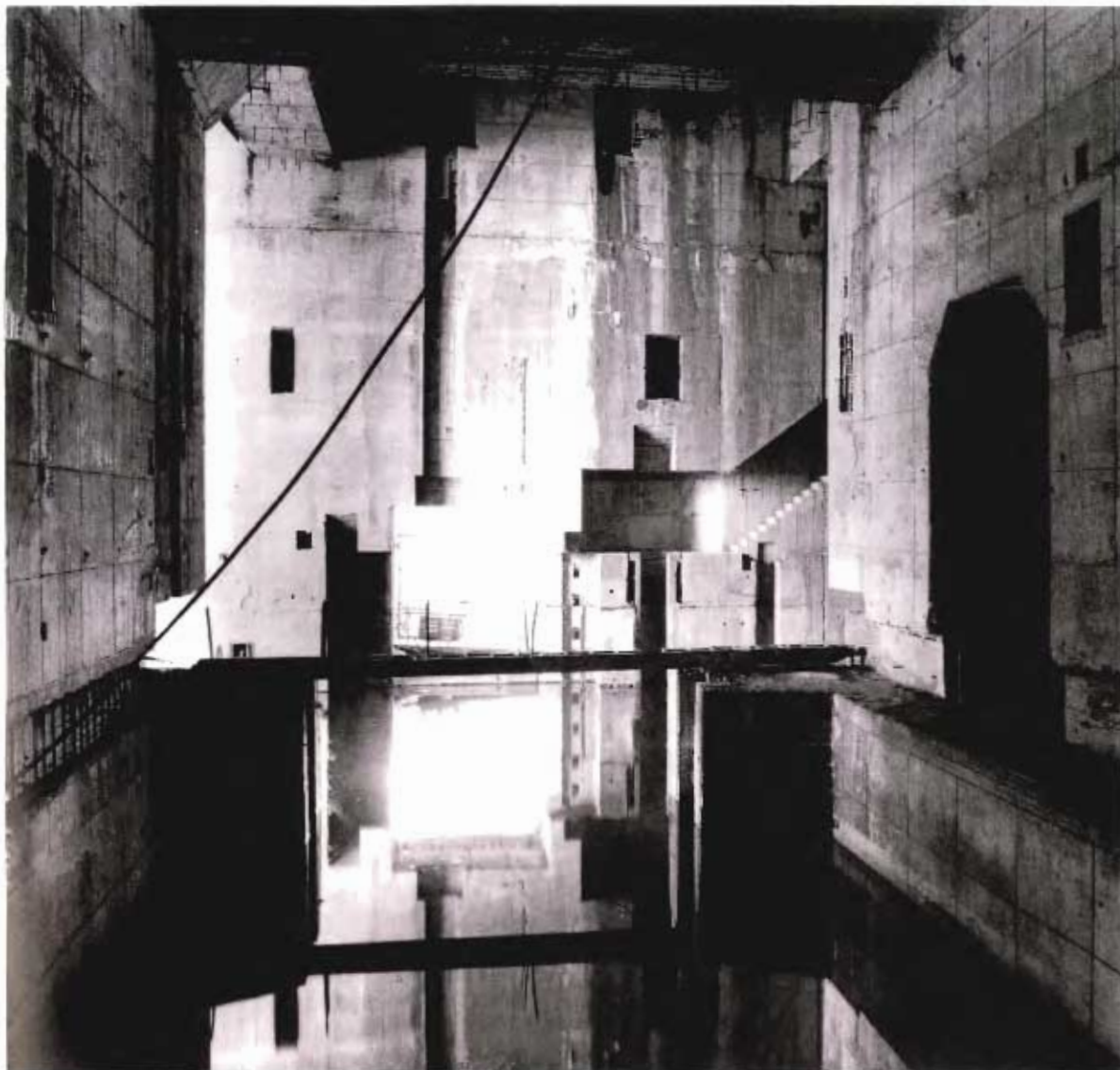


fig 74 An exploratory drawing for understanding the composition of elements



*fig 75 A submarine assembly – Bunker Valentin (Daidalos, 1997. Topographic Extremes. Vol. 63)  
I like how that back wall accomodates all kinds of movement.*

## *Entry*

The question of accessing the footpath arises. During business hours the average user of the Promenade is mostly elderly people. This informed the decision to lead a ramp down from each end of this intervention to connect with the meandering footpath. The ramp leads down from the Sea Point side just before the curvature of the threshold, in a gentle slope, *stealing* 2 m from the 8 m width of the Promenade. Before the Promenade curls around to the kayak sheds, the footpath has inclined with another gentle slope to meet it again.

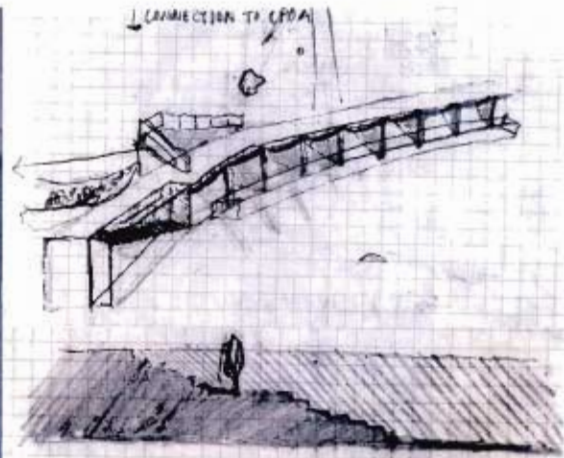
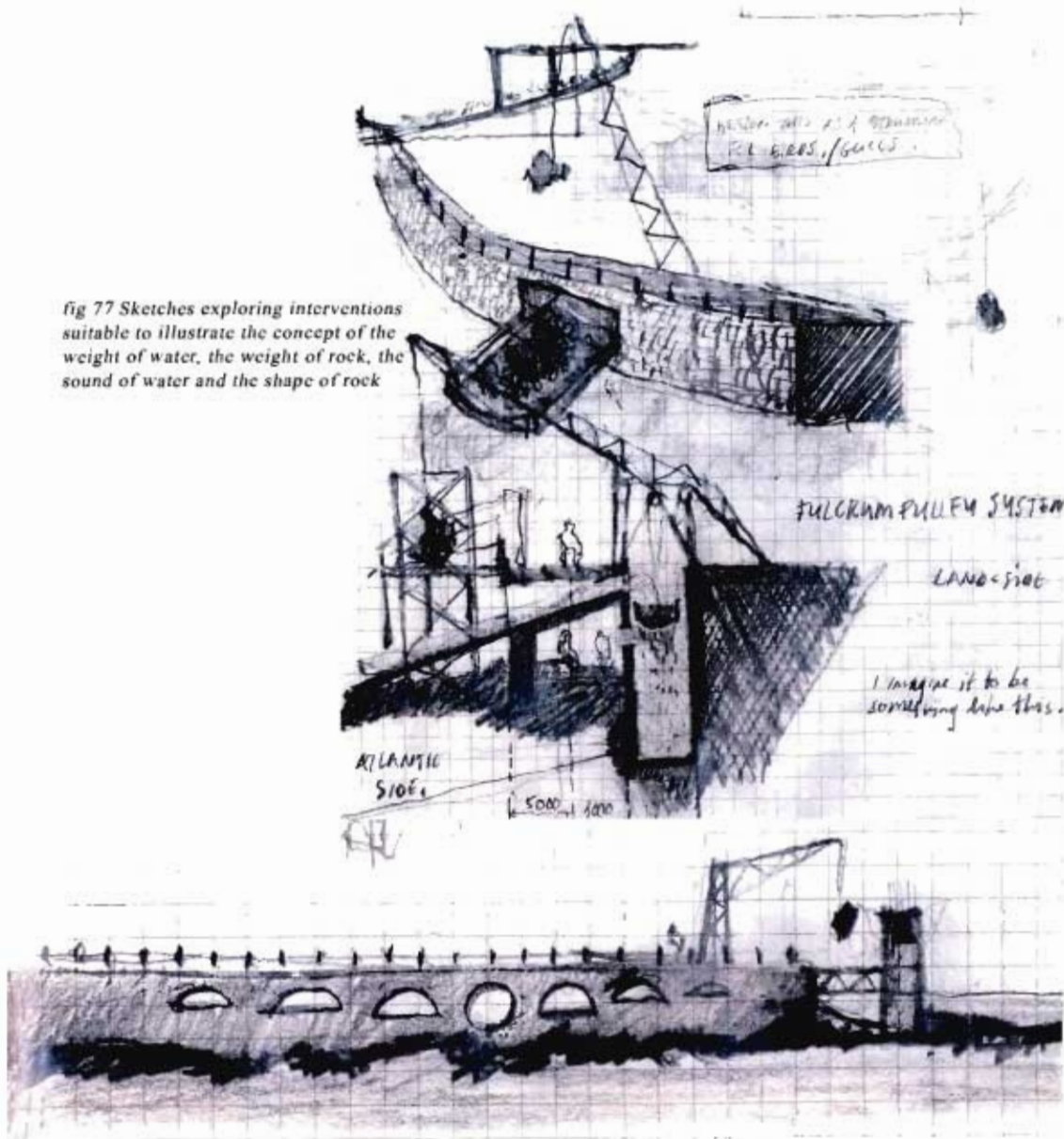


fig 76 Model and sketch exploring first "anchor" which should be an "Overture" of events

fig 77 Sketches exploring interventions suitable to illustrate the concept of the weight of water, the weight of rock, the sound of water and the shape of rock



At the Sea Point side entry to the intervention, on the curvature of the Promenade, the notion was entertained to signify that this is indeed the *first notes* of an "Overture"! This very first "anchor" belongs to the order of "Land" and "Sea" as stated previously. In another display and mediation of forces, the wave motion, at this point perpendicular to the wall, is employed to "grate" pale granite stones (not quite boulders) to sand on a bed of angled and textured Malmesbury, manipulated to form a kind of channel. This channel penetrates the Promenade here, close to the entrance ramp leading down into the first enclave. During high-tide, the water pushes up the channel as it rolls the granite over the "grate" to create the alluring sound of "rock on rock" at this entry. I had experienced this phenomenon on a pebble beach at Nature's Valley. Furthermore, the water then washes into an "aqueduct" on the edge of the ramp, following its gentle slope and spilling into a perforated container at the entrance of the first enclave.

This container carries 1 cubic square meter of water, equal to one ton in mass, for approximately 3 minutes – given the density and size of the perforations. The container is connected to a pulley system, which spans over the Promenade, stretching over the sea, and forms a type of fulcrum with a large Malmesbury boulder connected at sea. As the container lowers with the weight of the water into a “well” at the first enclave, the boulder is lifted out of the water to eyelevel from the Promenade. The water within the container drains from the perforations and the balance is restored within a matter of moments. The rock lowers to the rock-bed. It will only reveal itself again once the tide pushes through with enough force. In this mediation, I try to rouse awareness for the *weight of water and the weight of rock*, in relation and contrast to, *the sound of water and the shape of rock*. The fulcrum also signifies the “start” of the intervention of mediation. Also on the same curvature of the Promenade and the entrance to my intervention (at the first “anchor”), I decide to take a platform out to Sea wherefrom the views to Lions Head and the Lighthouse are compounded by framing them. When the boulder is pulled from the rock-bed by the fulcrum however, it closes the frame to Lions Head for a matter of moments. The powerful motions of the waves are captured by the sounds of the “grate”. As such I fulfil the promise of this “anchor” which is of the dual order of “Land and Sea” in great complexity and contradiction – the orders of “Land” are experienced from Sea, while the order of “Sea” is experienced on “Land”. An activity envisioned to take place on this platform is “fitness-rowing”. The Promenade is also a place of practicing “fitness”. It is one of the most preferred locations for this practice. Since the bay is also a popular kayaking location, the notion of “rowing” on a rowing machine, on a platform, with waves crashing underneath, is a playful intercession of this idea. A weighbridge stretching out from the Promenade connects the platform – “Land stretches out a helping hand” to the platform at sea.

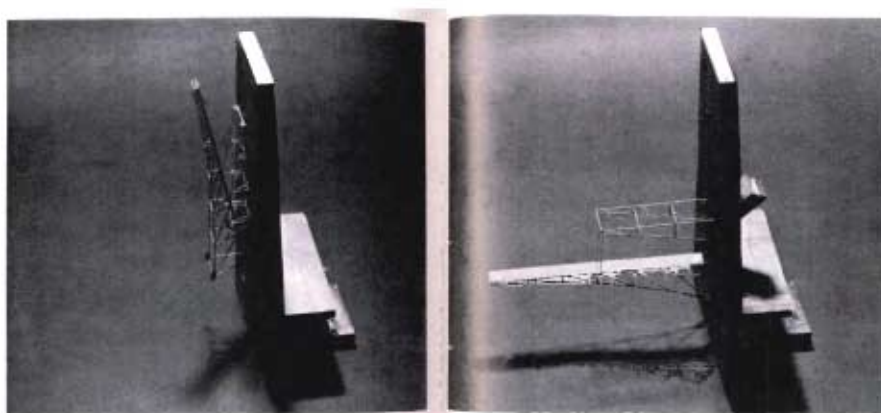


fig 78 A weighbridge (Education of an Architect. The Irwin, S.Chanin School of Architecture of the Cooper Union, 1988)

I imagine the bridge to have this kind of character.

## *Enclaves*

The four enclaves have different qualities. The pattern of structure, lending a new dimension of depth to Promenade as a mediatising threshold and the pattern of "moon phases" and "anchor" points as well as "platforms" generates enough "pattern" providing a sensible structure to work within. However, it would be senseless to render each of these enclaves in the same way. Since the first enclave is most exposed to the elements (swell direction in relation to angle of the threshold), it attempts at mediating the Sea with as little resistance as possible, celebrating its ebb and flow onto the exposed rocks (except of course at initial impact with the threshold of Moon phases). The footpath allows one to dangle your feet in the *stirring* water while observing "disconcerting" seas through the "moons". This becomes the enclave dedicated to the exploration of natural rock-pools and sea life. I envision it to acquire, in time, the "poetics" of various small platforms, stepping stones, and other sensitive applications (though sensitivity cannot be prescribed or enforced) in a range of materials, introduced by the will of those who care most. Clambering over the reclaimed rock formations is encouraged. This enclave belongs to the order of "Sea" and is essentially and necessarily free to *be*. This is a place for tantalizing introspection and delicate intercession by man, responding to the "mediation equilibrium" by always accommodating the order of "Sea" and taking an acquiescent *backseat*.



*fig 79 Fishing pitches in the port of Barcelona, Spain (Daidalos, 1997. Topographic Extremes. Vol. 63)*

*I imagine small interventions of this nature.*





*fig 80 Fishing pitches in the Port of Barcelona, Spain  
(Daidalos, 1997. Topographic Extremes, Vol. 63)*

*You could be sitting here, looking out through "full moon"  
at the rising tide at your feet*

As one would turn a *fluid* corner along the footpath to the next enclave, its incursion to land reveals its depth and new dimensions are established. The second enclave becomes the link to the third, both literally and conceptually. It assumes a far more formal nature. From the footpath along the retainer wall, runs series of long and gradual steps to the foot of the "moons" in phase direction and the direction of natural contours gradually lowering through the high - and low-water levels. These steps also reveal parts of the rock-bed below at places where the rocks point beyond their respective levels. Sitting on the "dark side of the moon" ships on the horizon can be observed. In the middle of the enclave one step tread extends to provide a flat surface for fresh-water showers. Protected from the prevailing wind conditions, these open-air showers break the surface of the step in sculptural gestures. Blowholes at the opening of the "moons" erupt, as the tide pushes up the stairs.

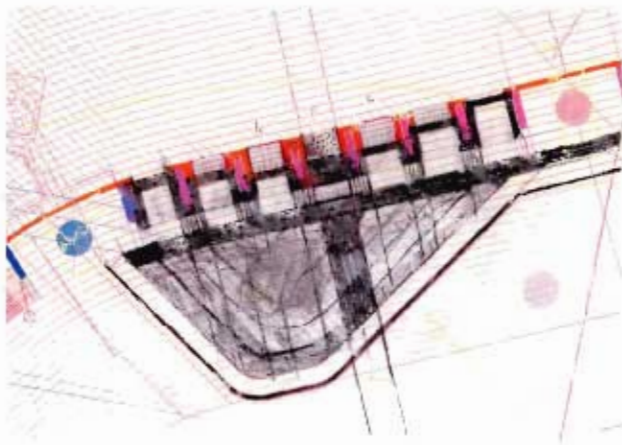
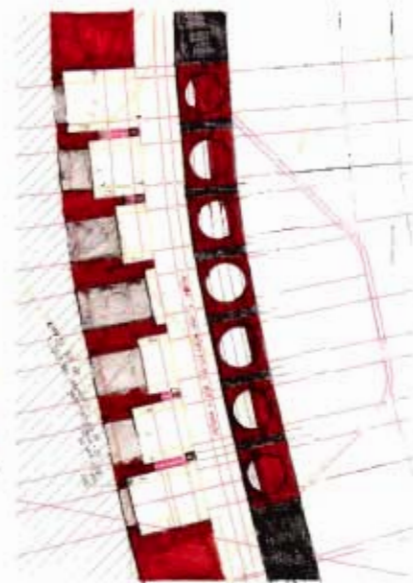
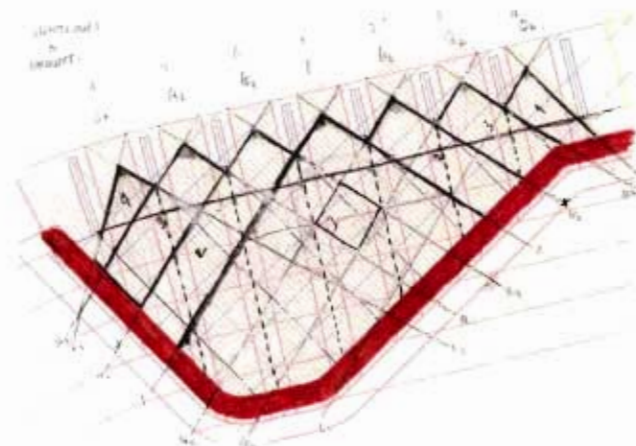


fig 81 Early sketches of the second and formal enclave, exploring levels and sightlines



The third enclave is situated side by side to a specific channel in the rock-bed adjacent to the wall. I previously encountered this phenomenon when locating the “anchors”. This channel leading water to rush into it to touch the wall unopposed is of the order of “Sea”. It is wide and stretches the length of the enclave. Upon closer inspection, during a spring-low tide I noticed austere concrete blocks at its mouth to the bay. I wonder what this could have been. It inspired my idea of turning this enclave into a tidal pool mediating through the incised threshold out into the bay. The rock channel provided the perfect opportunity for using and enforcing its sides to create a safe bathing area right next to the small beach. The tidal pool would have two natures - one of the order of “Sea” (though gently mediated by man) by stretching into the bay, and one of the order of “Land”, inside the enclave. I would mediate its geometry to break slightly at interference with the Promenade, assuming a rather orthogonal geometry in stark contrast with the natural elements surrounding it. This is meant to accentuate this contrast. People have the opportunity to swim through some of the “moon phases” or jump from the Promenade to either side of the pool to enjoy both *orders*.

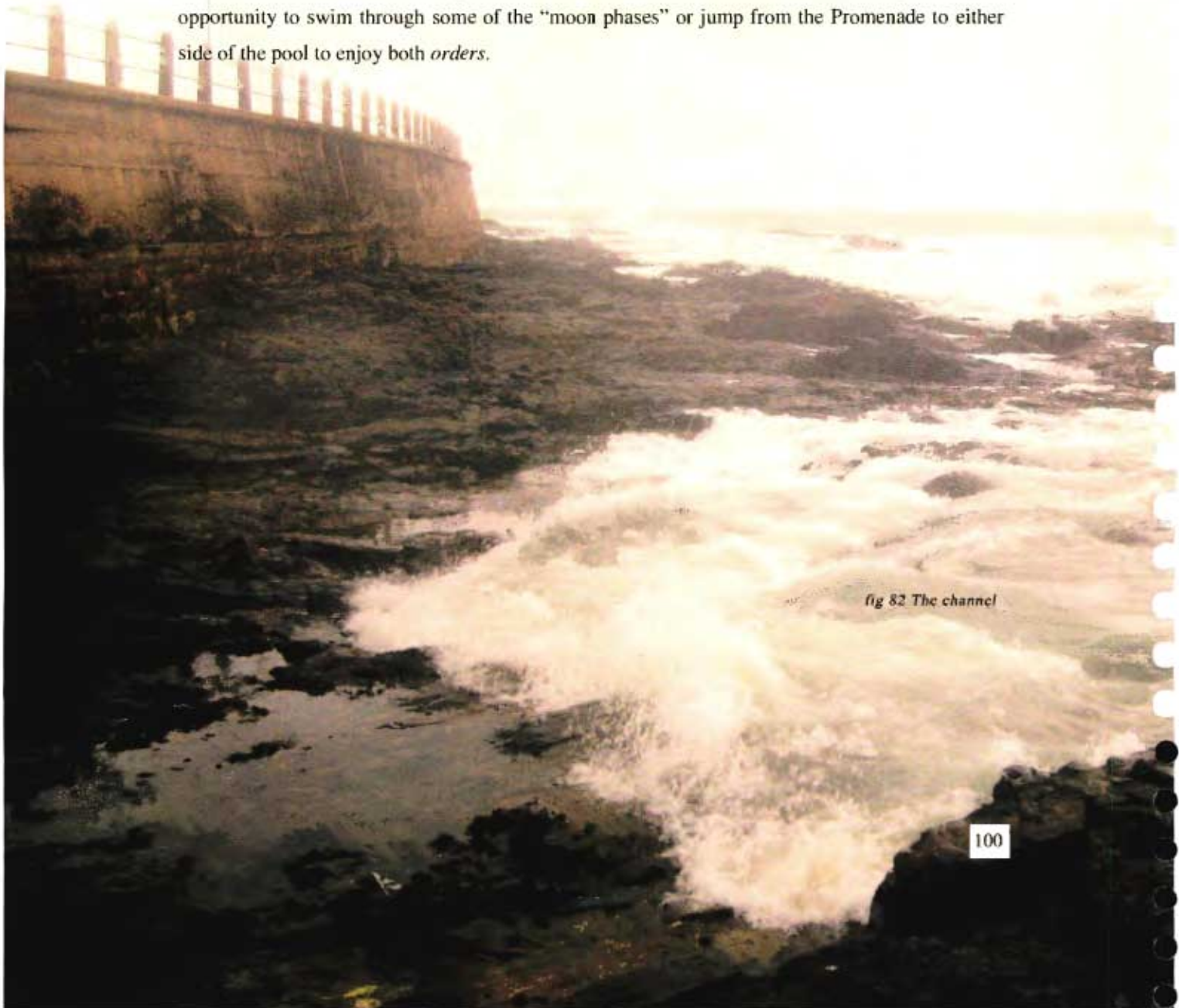
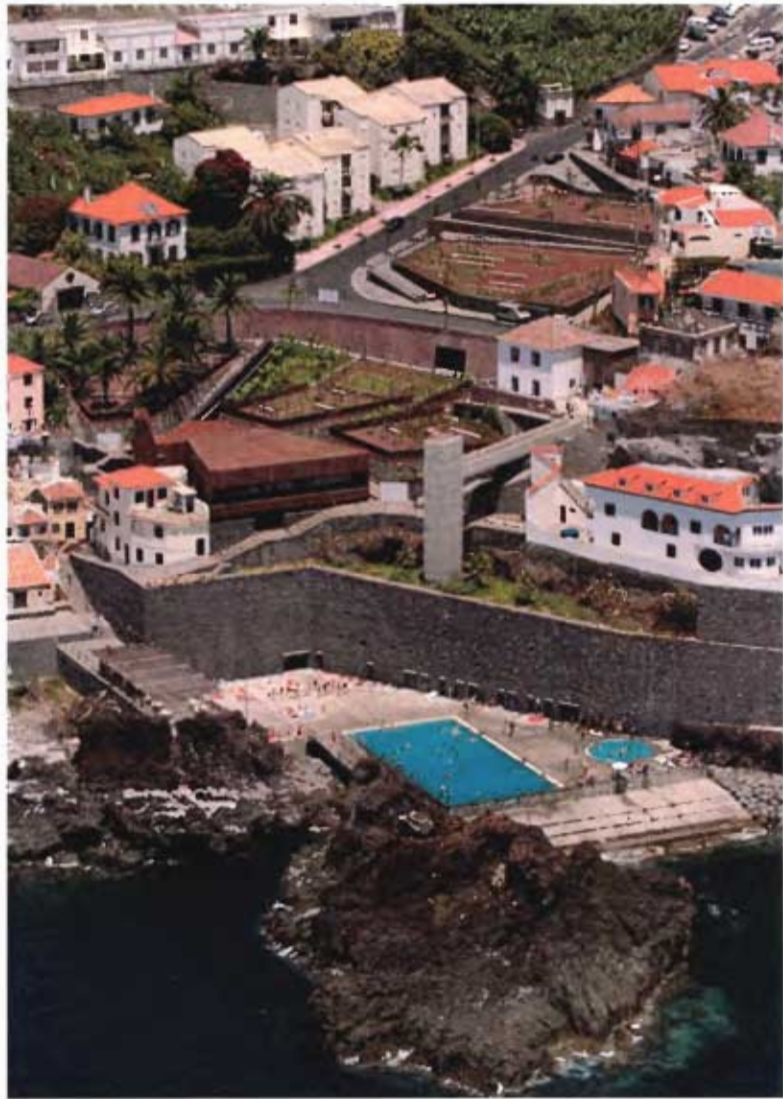
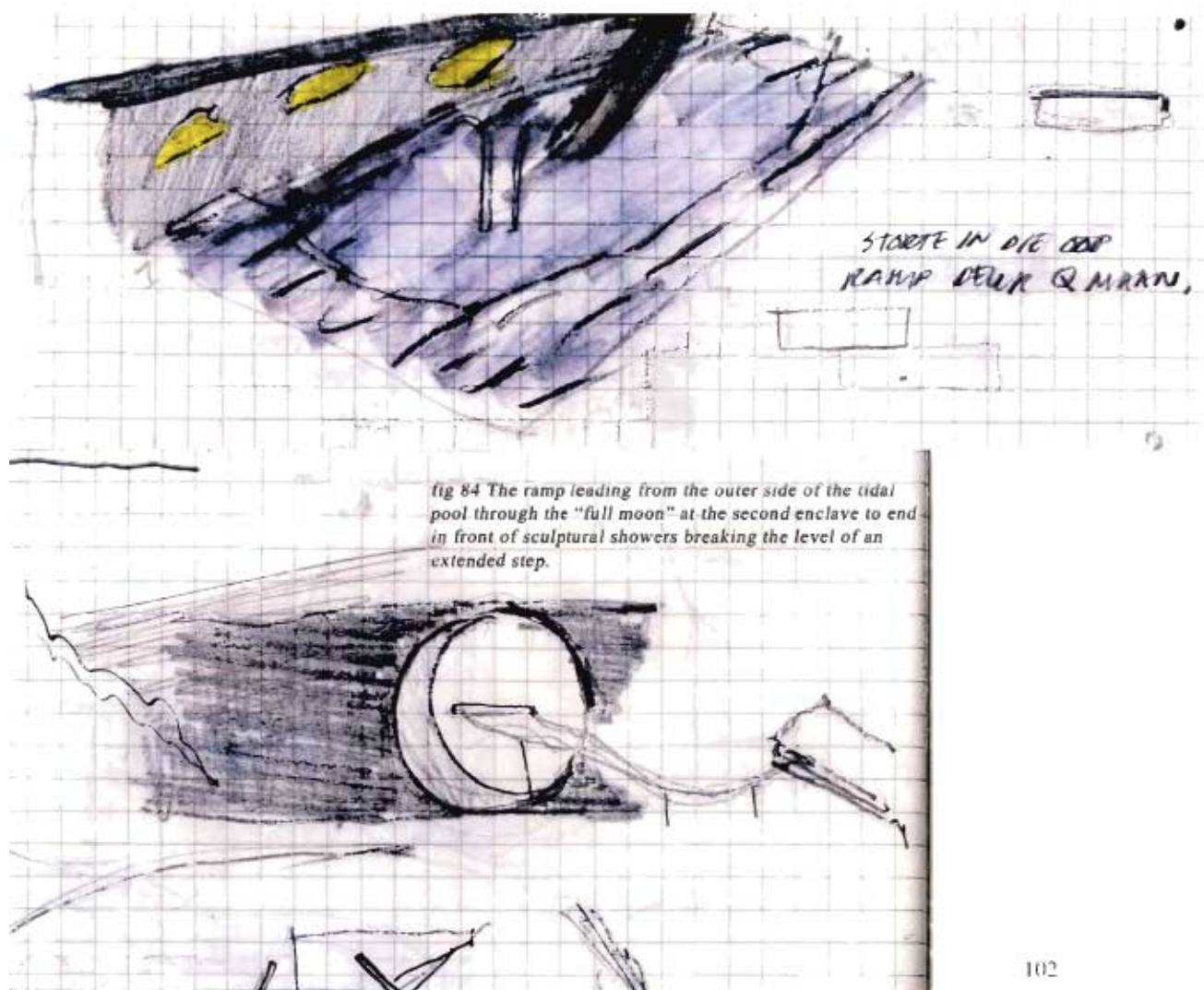


fig 82 The channel



*fig 83 Swimming pools in Câmara de Lobos on the island of Madeira. Designed by Lisbon-based Global Arquitectura Paisagista, Lda., they were shortlisted for the 5th Rosa Barba European Landscape Award.*

A decision was made to intervene the rocks adjacent to the pool into various flat surfaces of varying levels and inclining or reclining degrees, allowing the rocks that point beyond these levels to stick out, but, at the same time, to make it more trafficable and pleasant for people to sun-bathe and relax. The generated *slopes* of these surfaces accommodate the body in resting position, as does beach chairs, whilst providing the means of enjoying the enchanting views. I envisioned a small detail to be added – drilling holes into these surfaces of the size to accommodate the pegging of beach umbrellas. A tidal pool requires certain amenities – change rooms. These are located within the retainer wall at the edge of the pool, accessed via the footpath. Any fresh water showers are open-air showers, some of which are located in the second enclave. From the seaward side of the tidal pool runs a ramp, curving up and through the “full moon” incision at the second enclave, halting in front of those showers. I imagine children running up this ramp from the tidal pool, through the full moon for a fresh-water shower.



The fourth enclave is dedicated to facilitating circulation to the beach. Steps run down from the edge of the enclave to the foot of the last "full moon" providing direct access to the beach. An underground walkway from the CPOA terminates in a cut through these stairs. This walkway has extruded light shafts (I hope for these to provide more than enough light) in the Beach Road road-reserve opposite the CPOA and its entrance is protected within its borders for resident's private use only. Crossing Beach Road everyday to enjoy the Promenade requires much effort and strain, especially for an elderly person.



*fig 85 These steps were designed by Nikola Basic to play specific notes through pipes much like an organ. Located on the quayside of Zadar, Croatia, there are 35 musically tuned tubes with whistle openings on the sidewalk - depending on the size and velocity of the wave - musical chords are played.*

### *Familiarity*

The triangular section of land at the intersection becomes a last enclave, similar in *fluid* form to the others. The Promenade lends a tributary that encircles its edge, much like the footpath at the other enclaves. An important feature of the design is how I decided to handle the Promenade over the kayak sheds. As the contradiction of the kayak sheds belonging to the order of “*Land*” and yet signifying activity at “*Sea*” suggest, I decided to make a similar contradiction at this threshold. The structure of the wall takes the same shape as applied through the “*moon phases*” along the length of the “*overture*”, but the cantilever inverts to face the beach. Thus I propose converting the kayak sheds into a sculptural entreaty, visible from both sides of the Promenade. A person approaching the beach from Sea Point on the Promenade is never really aware of the sculptural quality of the edge condition unless he steps down into one of the various *platforms*. The kayaks are accommodated behind these “*Moons*” within the enclave and are visible from the steps leading down from the “*tributary*” along the enclave’s edge. The traffic intersection is hidden behind these steps. A wide opening in the steps at the foot of the “*Full moon*” leads one through a corridor underneath the road to connect the awkward section of land at the foot of Bay Point. This enclave, then, really becomes the adoration of the beach, causing one to pause on a step, and then sense the *gravitational pull* of the “*moons*” toward the beach, urging one to enjoy its treasures.



*fig 86 The Promenade threshold will look more or less like this from Three Anchor Bay beach and the opposite sides of the Promenade.*

I am considering providing a sculptural roof for the ramp running down into the bay from Mouille Point. This roof structure must be fluid and flexible as the ripples on the ocean surface and connect to the cantilevering *moon incisions* of the threshold condition at the back edge of the beach. This will ensure that the intervention is secured from the "overture" to the "finale" with the necessary "interludes". I wish for the beach to gain prominence in this "ensemble" again.

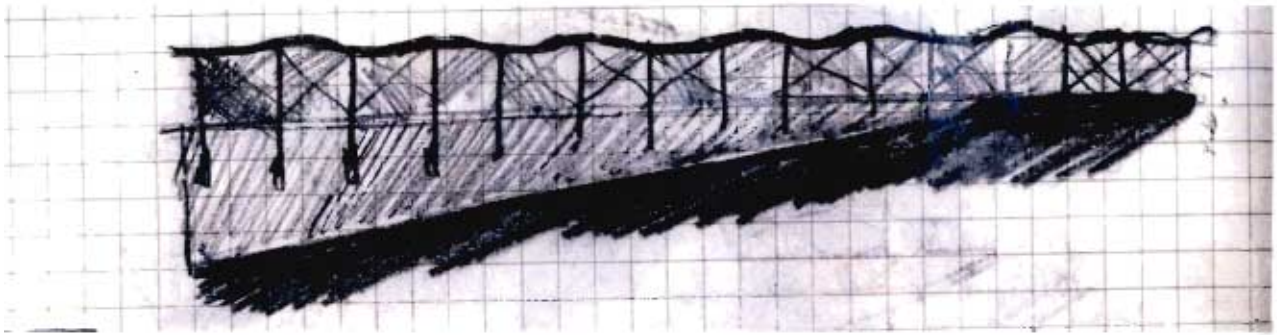


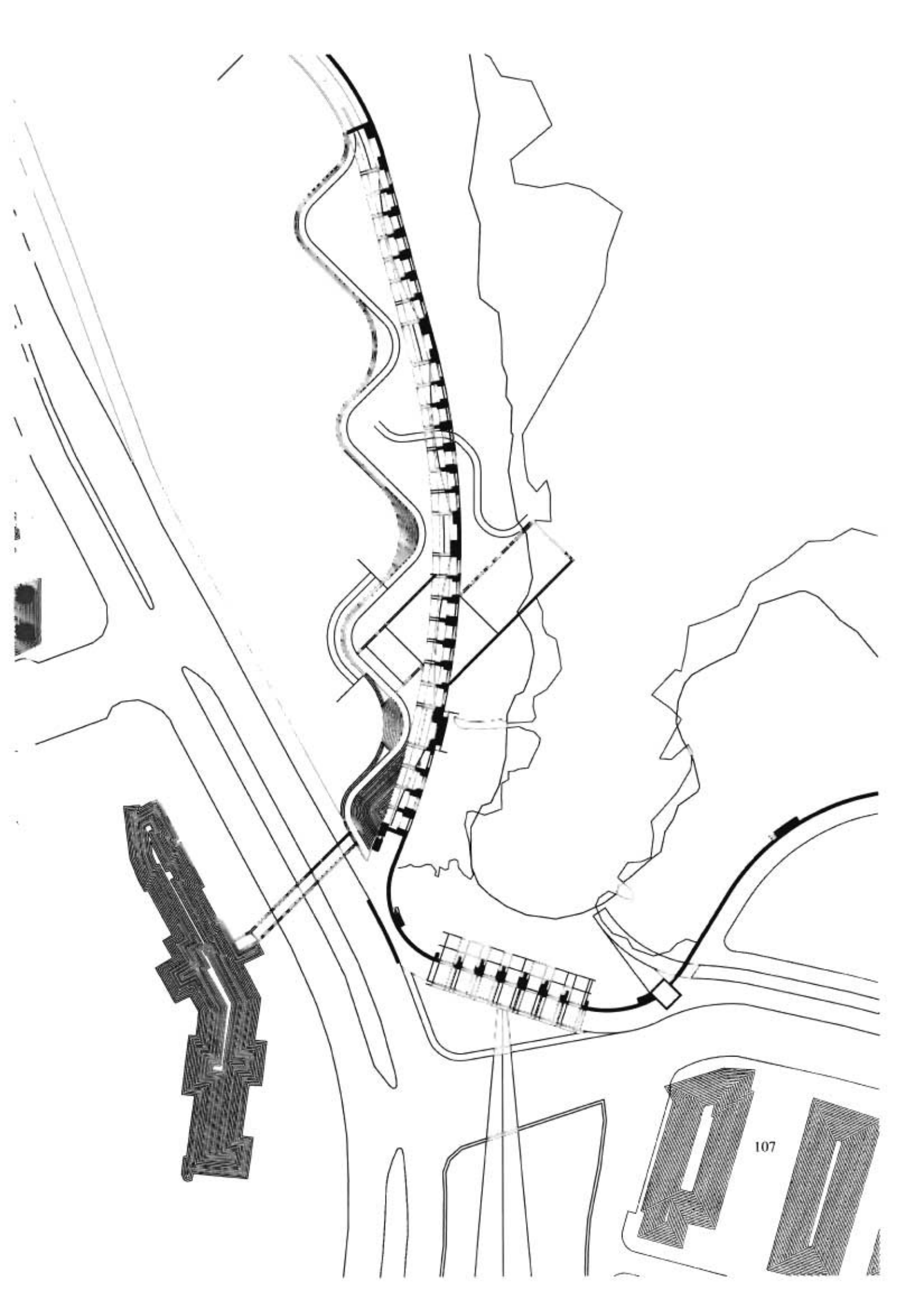
fig 87 A concept sketch for the roof-structure over the ramp.

## *Reflection*

The rocks below the stairs on the Mouille Point side of the bay are to be left in their natural state, so as to contrast the two different sides of the bay distinctly. Only one intervention takes place on these rocks: a narrowing staircase, attempting to “*pierce*” the sky, close to the edge of the water, providing an illuminating sight onto the whole intervention. This is a place for contemplation and “*Wonder*” and can only be traversed during certain tidal intervals. At other times it is a sinking vessel representative of our inability to tame natural forces, however hard we might try. At these times, the rock pools at its foot display the reflection of mere human ideals.

*“Ultimately we reach for the dream of a synergistic resolution of ‘technical, historical, and symbolic’ qualities in the actualisation of an envisioned ideal form that will ‘project permanence, integration, and continuity’. These are not objective ideals rigidly defined by society but evolving and shifting ideals shaped by contradictions constantly affecting our work routine. Form, today, should make visible the contradiction of society: the continually evolving nature of experience and the effectively unreachable ideals to which we nonetheless aspire. This again is the anxiety and joy of the incomplete.”* (Zambonini 1988, p.19)

Material has a critical role to play in the form-making process, and parallel to it, issues pertaining to “*skill and attitudes*” (labour) and making and use (tools). Understanding of material is pointless without support of the “*symbolic hand holding the tool or directing the machine*”. All makers of “*beautiful and systematic conceptions*” of material have had comprehensive knowledge of the processes of material transformation and the tool and machinery necessary to it - whether produced with their own hand. Such processes cannot occur nor be used without the implements (Zambonini, 1988 p.18).



*"Our objective remains to reach for the completion of the predicted form, a form aspiring to a superior resolution of technical, historical, and symbolic qualities. This may seem an ambitious goal. When we idealize form so as to project permanence, integration, and continuity we are resisting the thrust of the rapidly advancing economic world. We are returned to the notion of tension at work in the artisan's struggle - the tension felt in the pursuit of an ideal. It is clear that such ideals have ethical and ideological qualities."*  
(Zambonini, 1988 p.18)

## *Conclusion*

All too often simplification is not possible without severe distortion. I can think of no better way to conclude this paper than to revisit my introductory remarks. The purpose of this paper has been to describe architectural design and process as an inexhaustible enquiry. The site that I chose presented me with a challenge to express my architectural values – values which I am only starting to uncover now and, as I have tried to emphasise, will never understand *completely*. When they stop *becoming*, the architect in me will be dead.

As with the recurring phases of the moon and tide, I close with my opening remarks. They still hold true.

This project is a synthesis of, on the one hand, the interventionist architect curiously and deliberately plotting form and visualising construction and, on the other hand, the human being often wilfully retreated and joyfully observing the uninterrupted and the conflicting. It is this dialectic – rather than immovable theoretical principles – that has informed not only my process, but also my design. In this sense this project represents what I believe to be the most important feature of my architectural education: the inexplicable joy in the constant re-evaluation of the imprecise nexus between the deliberately mediated and the uninterrupted.

This impulse is also what (perhaps unknowingly at the time) attracted me to Three Anchor Bay - a site of untameable swells, impenetrable rhythms, ebb and flow. It is a site that necessitates decisiveness in a counterintuitive form: boundaries. Any frontier, however versatile and accommodating, requires commitment (few are capable of confidently kayaking beyond an otherwise parameter-defining promenade). Drawing a line is not only the problem of the architect, but the human being.





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Chuang-Tzu was an expert draftsman, appointed by a king to draw a crab. He demanded five years and an exorbitant price. But after five years he had nothing to show. Then he demanded another five years. *“At the end of these ten years, Chuang-Tzu took up his brush and, in an instant, with a single-stroke, he drew a crab, the most perfect crab ever seen.”* (Italo Calvino at the conclusion of his chapter on 'Quickness' in his book *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*).





*The conscious stone*

*"He builded better than he knew  
The conscious stone to beauty grew"*  
(R.W. Emerson)

A photograph of a spiral-bound notebook with a torn cover. The notebook is open, and the right page is visible. On the left page, a glowing lightbulb is attached to a metal stand. The background is a warm, orange and yellow gradient. The text on the right page is centered and reads:

*The conscious stone*

*"He builded better than he knew  
The conscious stone to beauty grew"*

*(R. W. Emerson)*

*"He builded better than he knew  
The conscious stone to beauty grew"*

*(R. W. Emerson)*



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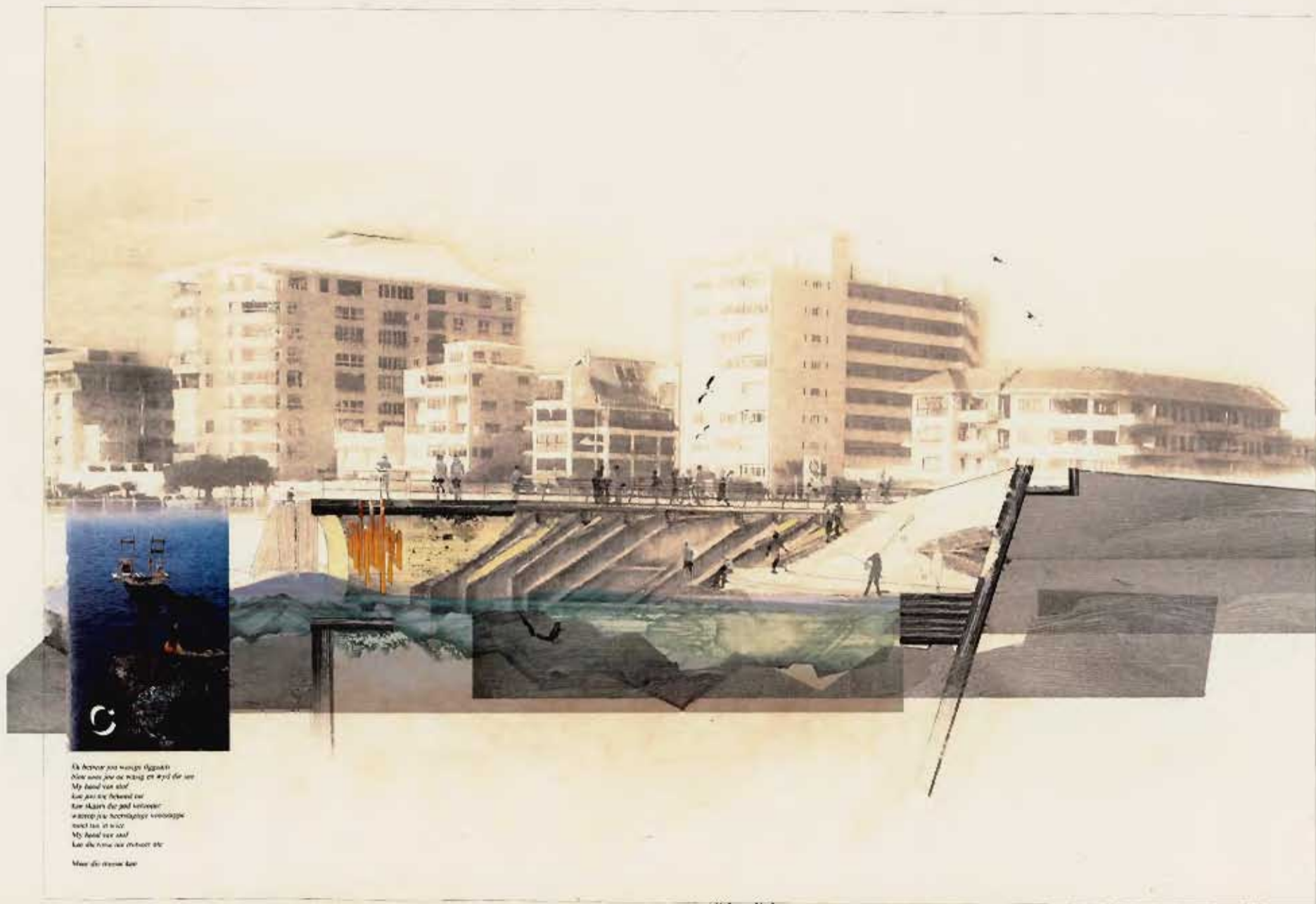


B 1:300



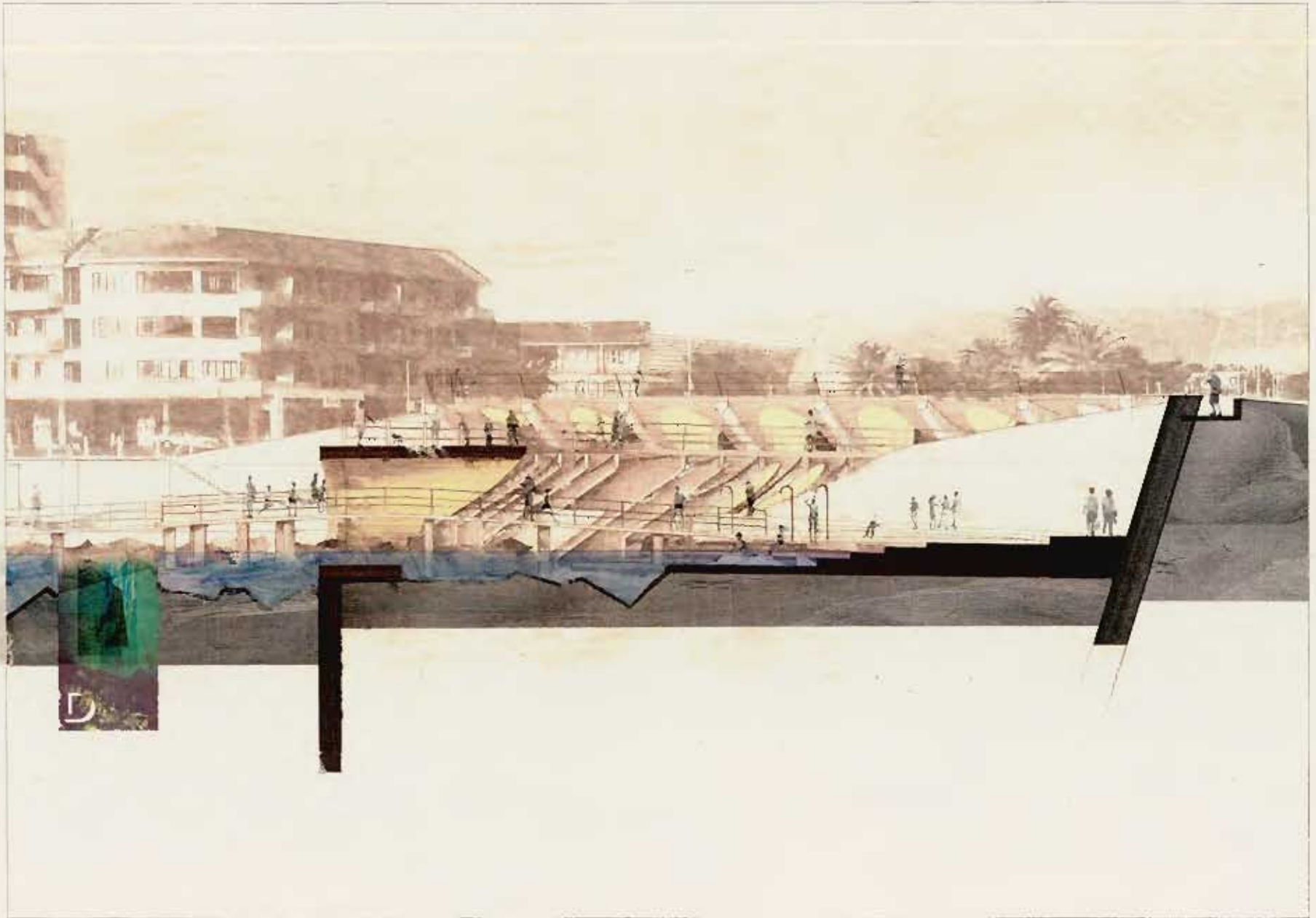


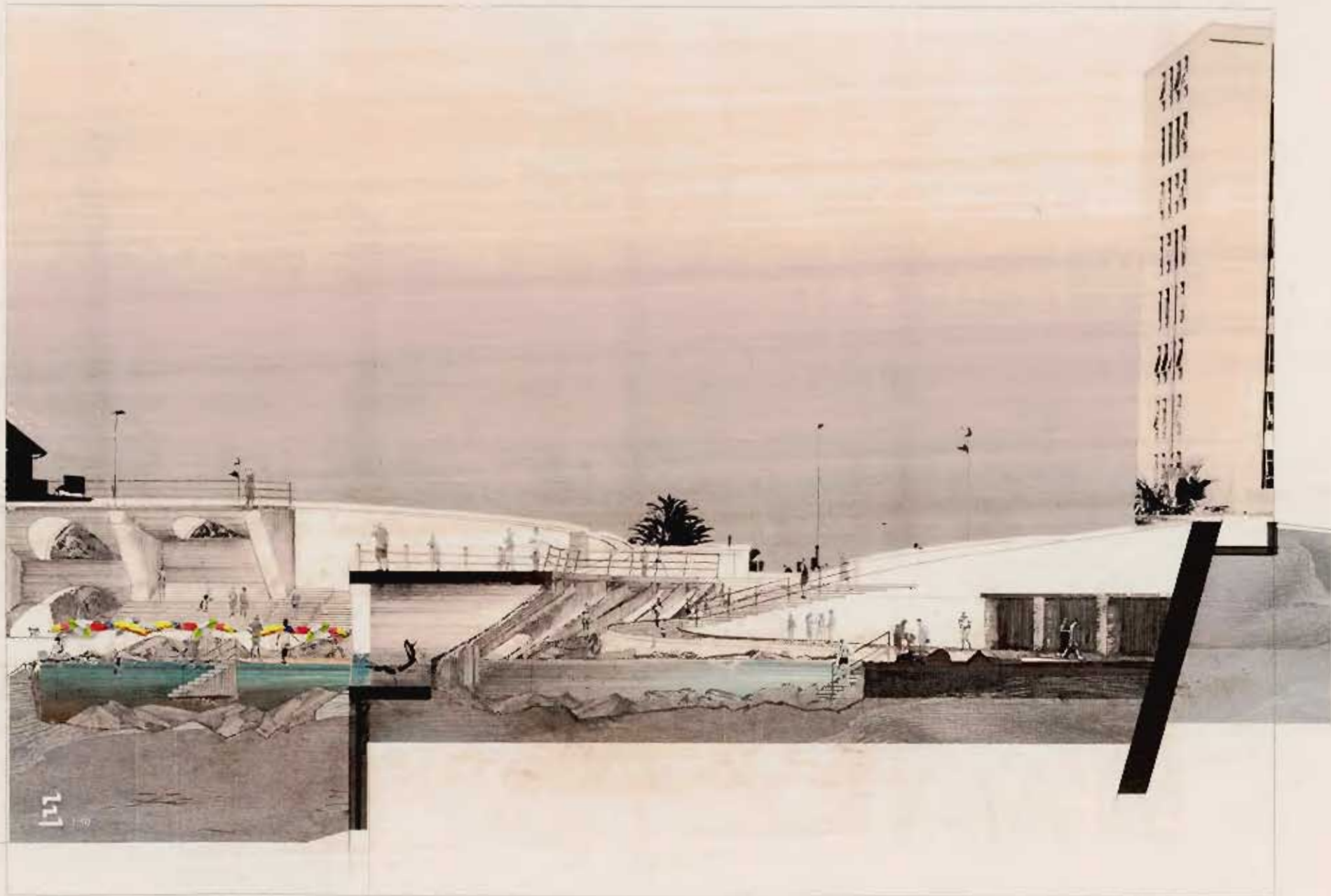
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Ik heb je zo graag gezien  
Niet om jou te zien en niet die see  
Mijn hand van jou  
Liefde is het beste wat  
Ik ooit heb gehad  
Want je is het lichtste  
Wat ik ooit heb gezien  
Mijn hand van jou  
Liefde is het beste wat  
Ik ooit heb gehad

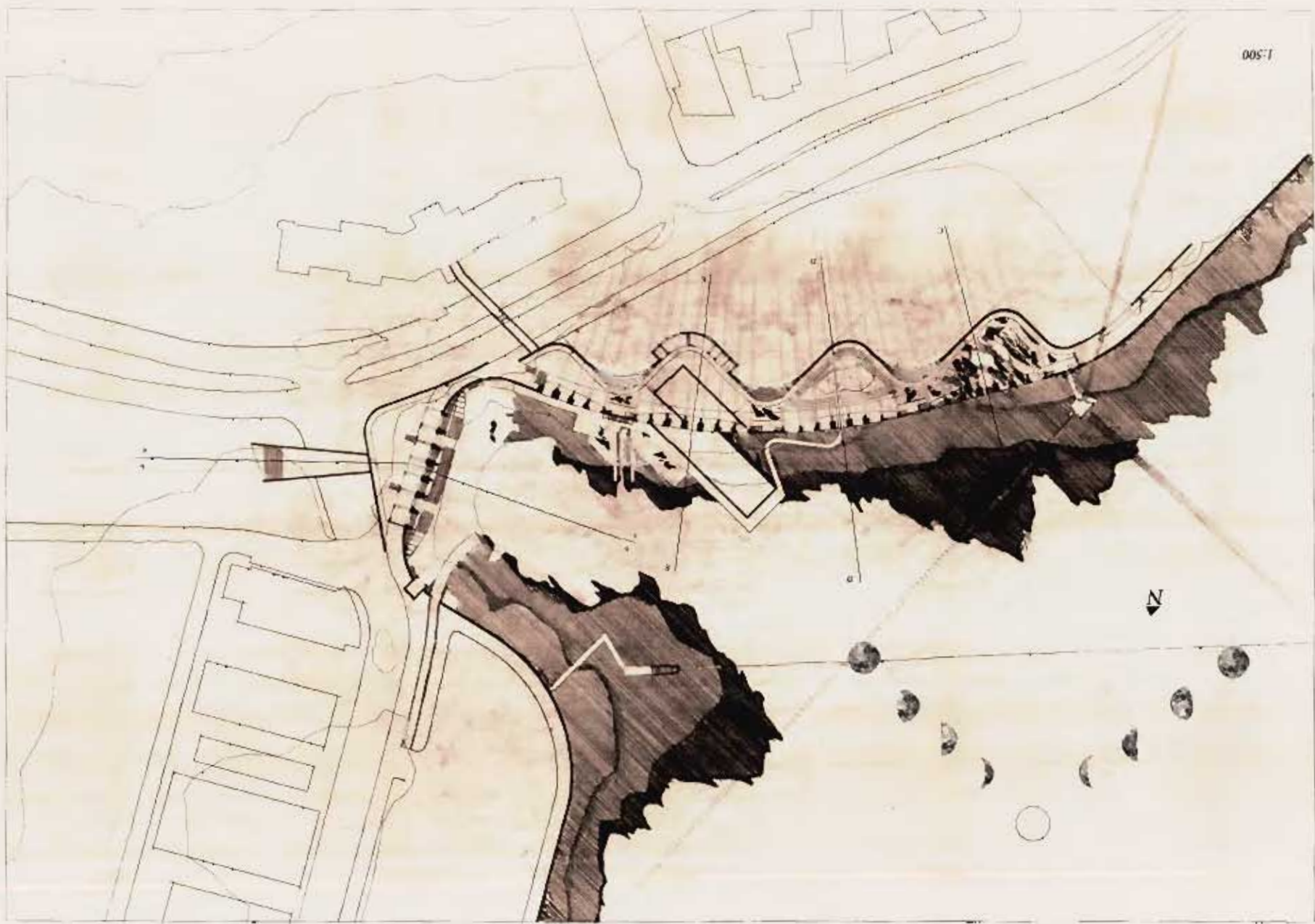
Maar die liefde kan

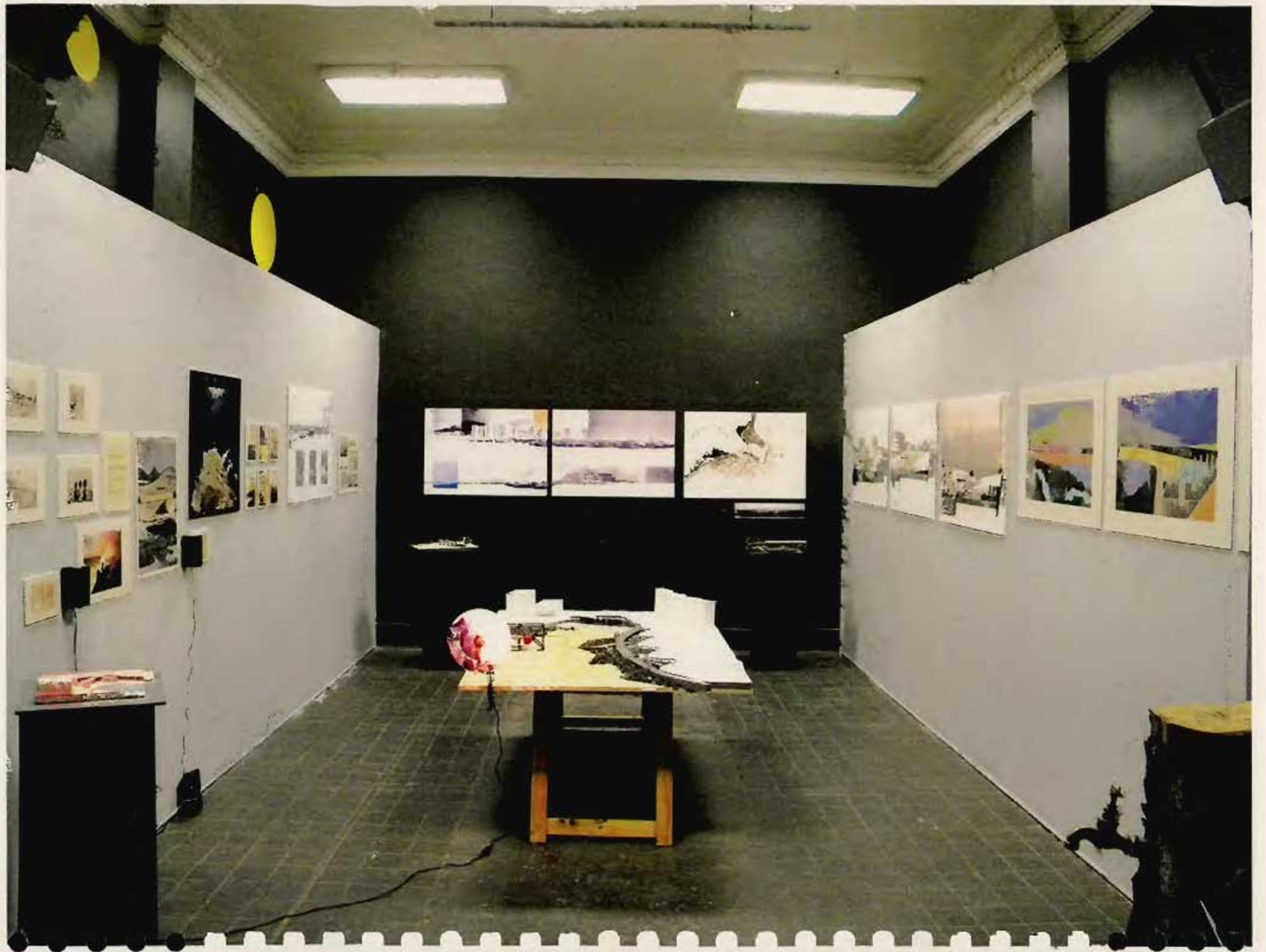




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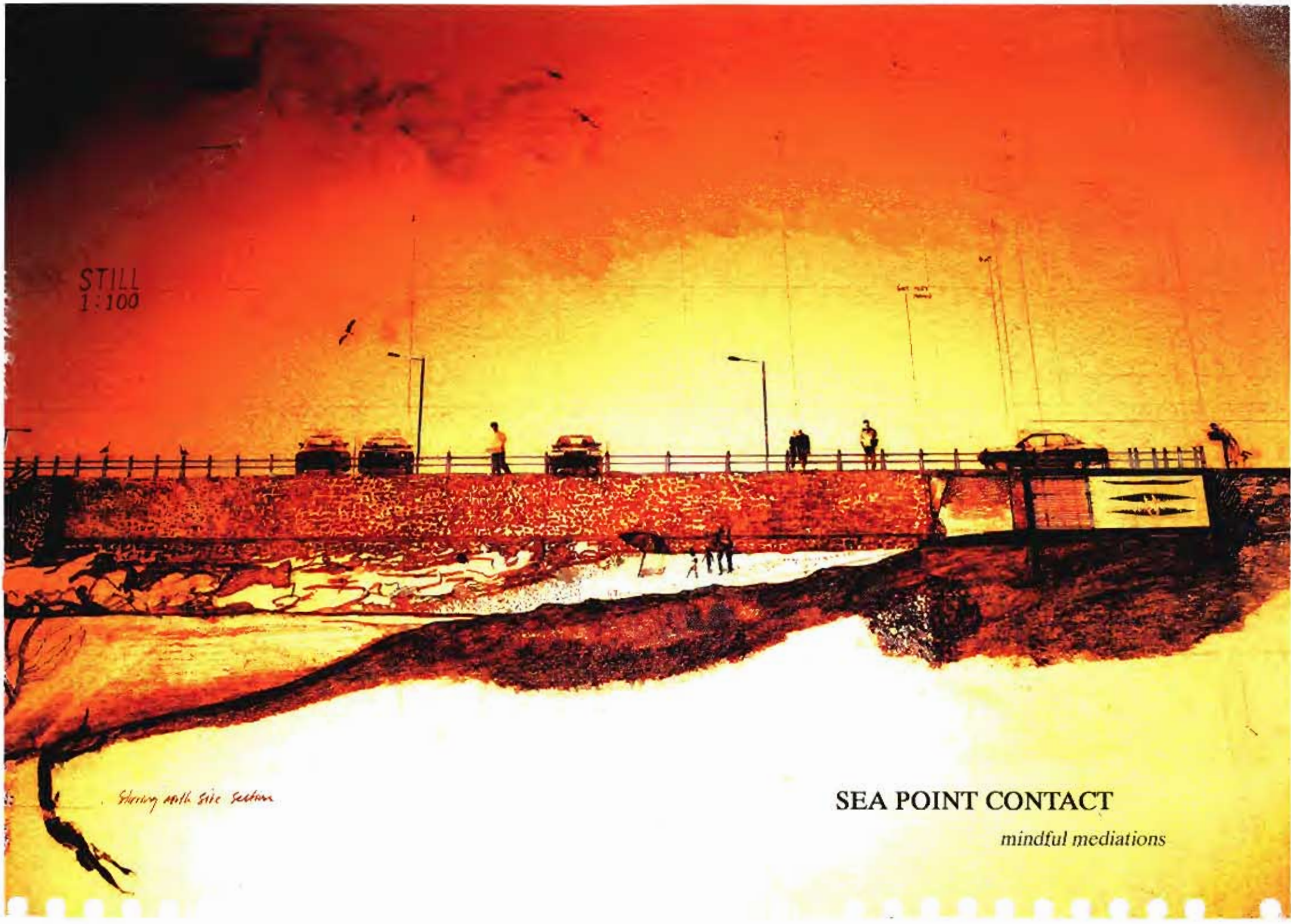








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*Shoring north site sections*

# SEA POINT CONTACT

*mindful mediations*

## CAPE TOWN NOVEMBER 2011

Day	Times of												Moon Phase
	Sunrise	Sunset	High Water				Low Water				Moonrise	Moonset	
			time	height	time	height	time	height	time	height			
1	0546	1914	0712	1.42	1934	1.27	0049	0.49	1335	0.61	1050	0013	
2	0545	1915	0827	1.34	2058	1.18	0154	0.62	1501	0.68	1151	0054	
3	0544	1916	0953	1.31	2231	1.17	0321	0.69	1632	0.68	1250	0130	
4	0544	1917	1108	1.35	2344	1.23	0448	0.69	1742	0.63	1347	0203	
5	0543	1918	1202	1.41	----	----	0552	0.65	1830	0.56	1442	0232	
6	0542	1919	0034	1.30	1244	1.48	0638	0.60	1907	0.49	1536	0301	
7	0541	1920	0113	1.38	1320	1.54	0714	0.54	1938	0.42	1631	0330	
8	0540	1921	0147	1.45	1352	1.59	0746	0.49	2007	0.36	1725	0400	
9	0539	1921	0218	1.51	1423	1.62	0816	0.45	2036	0.31	1820	0430	
10	0538	1922	0248	1.55	1453	1.63	0845	0.42	2105	0.29	1916	0505	
11	0537	1923	0317	1.58	1523	1.63	0915	0.41	2134	0.29	2011	0543	
12	0537	1924	0347	1.58	1554	1.60	0946	0.42	2205	0.30	2104	0626	
13	0536	1925	0418	1.57	1626	1.56	1018	0.44	2237	0.34	2155	0714	
14	0535	1926	0451	1.54	1702	1.50	1053	0.48	2313	0.39	2242	0807	
15	0535	1927	0528	1.49	1742	1.43	1133	0.54	2354	0.46	2326	0904	
16	0534	1928	0613	1.44	1831	1.35	1223	0.60	----	----	----	1003	
17	0533	1929	0708	1.39	1935	1.29	0044	0.53	1329	0.65	0005	1104	
18	0533	1930	0819	1.38	2056	1.26	0148	0.60	1452	0.66	0042	1207	
19	0532	1931	0937	1.41	2221	1.29	0307	0.63	1617	0.61	0117	1310	
20	0531	1932	1049	1.49	2332	1.38	0426	0.60	1726	0.50	0151	1416	
21	0531	1933	1149	1.60	----	----	0534	0.53	1823	0.38	0226	1523	
22	0530	1934	0031	1.49	1242	1.70	0631	0.44	1913	0.26	0303	1633	
23	0530	1935	0123	1.59	1332	1.78	0722	0.35	1959	0.17	0344	1745	
24	0529	1936	0211	1.68	1420	1.82	0811	0.28	2045	0.12	0431	1856	
25	0529	1937	0257	1.74	1507	1.82	0859	0.25	2129	0.12	0524	2005	
26	0529	1938	0342	1.76	1554	1.77	0946	0.25	2213	0.16	0623	2107	
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All times refer to SA Local Time



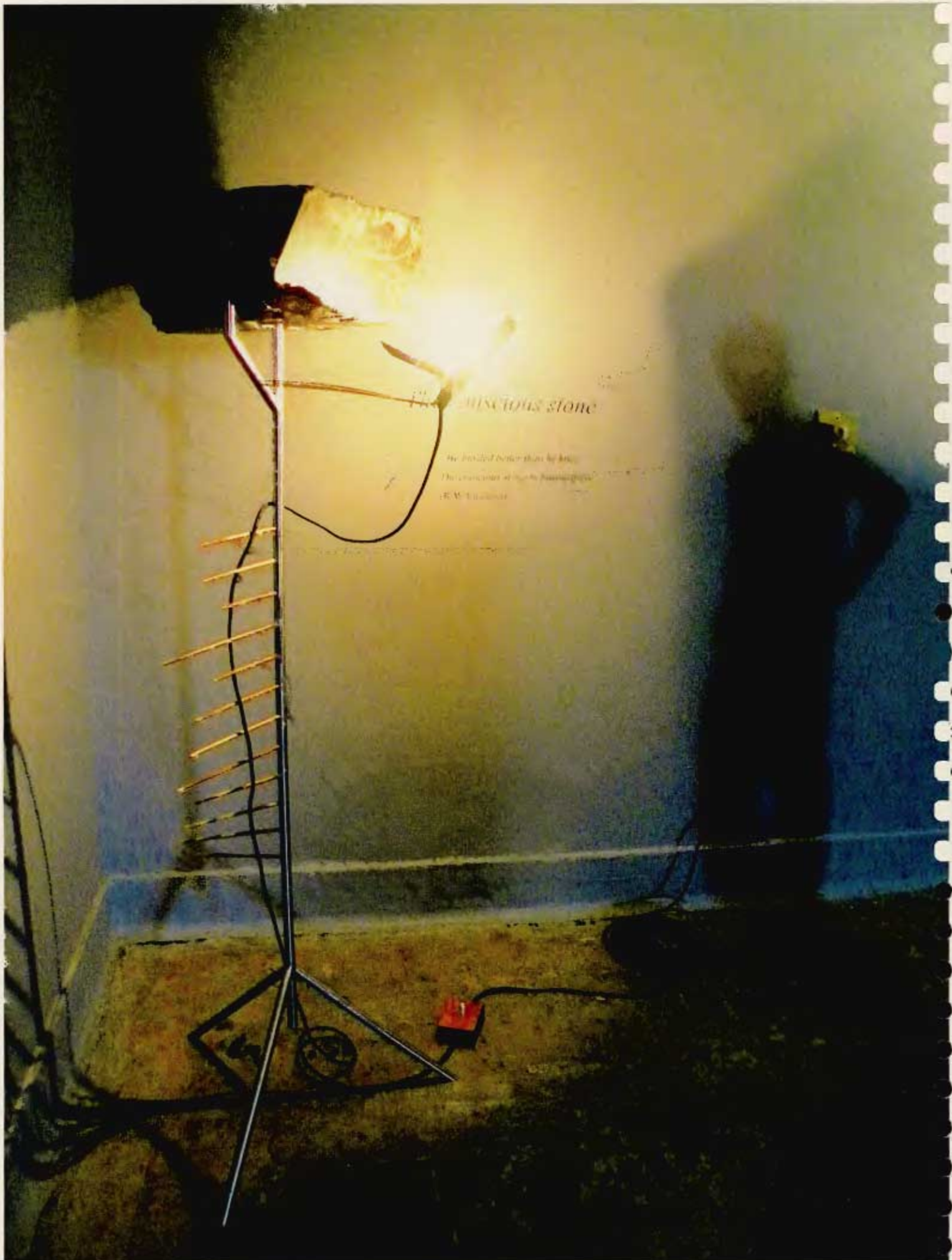
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*The Conscious Stone*

*by R.W. Woodard*

*The Conscious Stone is a sculpture*

*by R.W. Woodard*