Provenance of Place and Past: Designing a Bathhouse for Charlottesville (PRINT)

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In Architectural Design courses, we try to rethink the way that we as architects and everyday citizens imagine spaces as well as discover ways of making meaningful and original architectural form. In each of the main studio courses, our design process volleys between two- and three-dimensional forms of idea development; we employ this process in order to shake any preconceived ideas or forms we might try to impose onto the site, instead using research to develop a final proposal that physically and ideologically embodies the thematic elements of our project. The body of work shown below is comprised of the pieces I created for my third studio course, presented in chronological order.

For Studio III: SITE, our task was to transform the historic Albemarle County Jail in downtown Charlottesville, Virginia, into a bathhouse whose design was heavily place-based. The course structured our work around an investigation of the site and challenged our understanding of that term. Site, to an architect, should comprise not only the topographical and physical markers of the place, but also the cultural, historical, atmospheric, ritualistic, or intangible qualities of place. Therefore, the project served as an opportunity to question the ways that we think about a place and as an opportunity to design a project for a site out of the wealth of information that the place itself offers. It asked us to examine what has preceded the proposed architecture and invite it into the work that we place on a site—not ignoring the past, mowing it down, or covering it up—but allowing it to point us in the direction of an architectural intervention.

My bathhouse acknowledges several key elements in the Albemarle County Jail’s historical past and transforms them from negative aspects into a source of rejuvenation and renewal in the center of Charlottesville.
Figure 1: Page 1 of Typology Research Cards, compiling research about the hammam. This card set combines images, information, themes, and quotes from the research. For example, the third card in the top row overlays the basic organization of seven hammams, with grayscale circles to represent the intensity of the heat. This reveals a linear progression while approaching the caldarium, and then shows that smaller rooms typically surround the caldarium, into which bathers can escape the heat. The twelfth card (row three, column four) uses a similar language to show how the varying temperatures line up with a plan and section of an existing hammam, as well as offering a comparison of size in terms of the initial changing area and the caldarium. The photographs throughout offer views of the glass orbs that provide colored light below; others showcase the variety in floor plans, illustrate material textures, compile data, or provide anecdotal illustrations of the hammam experience.
Figure 2: Page 2 of Typology Research Cards, compiling research about Native American sweat lodges. This card set combines images, information, themes, and quotes from the research. For example, the first card in the second row combines information about materials used in sweat lodges. The image in the background is a photomicrograph of igneous rock, the type of rock used to create the steam in a sweat lodge, and in front of it is the silhouette of *salix laevigata*, a type of willow branch used in construction of some sweat lodges. Other cards highlight interesting phrases found while researching, including a poem and two quotes that offer creative ways of understanding a sweat lodge. Cards 8, 12, and 13 (counted from the top left) are images of the work of Chris Cornelius, a contemporary Native American architect whose work, though not historical, also offered a unique way of thinking about sweat lodges.
Figure 3: Page 3 of Typology Research Cards, compiling research about contemporary bathhouses. This card set primarily combines images as a visual catalog of what a bathhouse might be. The top eight images showcase the Lakeside Baths in Caldaro, Italy, with interior views of the spaces, as well as drawings and models of exterior views. The last five cards focus on a Japanese bathhouse, called Moku Moku Yu. These images also describe the quality of the interior spaces, as they illustrate the exterior appearance and overall layout of each circular building.

1. “Lakeside Bath, Caldaro, Italy, The Next ENTERprise”
2. “Wettbewerb Seebad Kaltern”
3. Fitz
4. Schaller
5. “Die Fiktion des Realen”
6. “Lakeside Baths”
7. “Lakeside Swimming Pool in Caldaro”
8. “Inspiration: Moku Moku Yu Baths”

9. “Moku Moku Yu” (Risonare)
10. “Inspiration: Moku Moku Yu Baths”
11. “Moku Moku Yu” (checkonsite.com)
12. “Inspiration: Moku Moku Yu Baths”
13. Lee
14. Unsal
15. Sibley & Fodil
Figure 4: Page 4 of Typology Research Cards, compiling research about contemporary spas. This card set combines images, information, themes, and quotes from the research into contemporary spas. In card eight, the fourth card in the second row, I compared a sketch of the floating spa in Amsterdam with an image of a cell; while this comparison is unrelated to Anne Holtrop’s project, it offered an opportunity to project the research I was uncovering into other realms. Here, my comparison might ask what similarities can be drawn, or offer a new route of investigation later in the process. The other cards present information about the type of technologies or materials used in the each of the two case studies and illustrate their very different relationships to their site.
THE BATHHOUSE: TYPOLOGY CARDS

Before undertaking any site-related research, we explored what the term “bathhouse” means—both in the past and today. Our first step was to construct a typology of bathhouses and convey that visual and textual information in a series of research “cards.” This method forced us not only to educate ourselves on the topic through traditional research, but also to begin compiling it visually, which helped us translate the themes of our research into a format that could be useful later on in the design process. My research focused on two historical types of “bathhouse,” as well as two contemporary ones: the Islamic hammam and the Native American sweat lodge, along with modern spas and bathhouses.

The Islamic hammam became an important precedent for my project, as hammams are not only grounded in ritual and social traditions, but are also incredibly atmospheric (see Figure 1). The hammam was a tradition born out of the Roman public baths, the Roman thermae, but it continued in the Islamic world long after public bathing fell out of fashion in the West (Williams). The practice of bathing was initially popular in the Islamic world because it fulfilled one of the important parts of the Islamic faith: ablutions before prayer (Rahim 672). Wudu was a form of this ritualistic washing, in which one cleanses portions of the body, such as the hands or face, but the more common form of ablutions in hammams was ghusl—a vigorous scrubbing of the entire body (Sibley and Jackson 155). Over time, the hammam evolved from a purely spiritual experience; it became a place of social interaction, cultural perpetuation, and relaxation.

Although hammams sometimes differed in spatial organization or size, each encouraged a standard sequence of movement. Bathers first entered the hammam from the street, whose exterior was typically plain or nearly unnoticeable (Boggs 64). Once inside, they changed from street clothes into a striped cotton wrap called a pestemal or fouta and into wooden sandals, nalin, to prevent from slipping on the damp floors. As the largest room—and as the only access point—this changing area was the place where people chatted, trading recipes, discussing news or upcoming events, or talking business and politics (Sibley and Jackson 155; Sibley and Fadli 108).

What then followed was a progression from room to room, through which the temperature of the steam steadily increased. Unlike what we might imagine of a Roman bath, the hammam did not feature swimming pools. Instead, the rooms were moistened by steam, requiring that bathers sit for prolonged periods of time in order to “soak.” In some hammams, people began in a frigidarium, a room with cool steam—although not every hammam included this initial step. Next came the tepidarium, a room with warm steam, and then finally the caldarium, the hottest room in the sequence (Petersen 108).

The caldarium was the central hub of the hammam, and in many cases it was physically located in the center of the building (Sibley and Jackson 161). Some hammams featured marble benches around the perimeter of the room, but it was most common to simply sit on the floor. While lying on the warm stone, or on a raised table under the central dome, bathers would be scrubbed by an attendant with a rough mitt made of camel hair, a kese. The room was also lined with secluded niches for more private washing because the bathers were never supposed to be fully exposed (155, 156). Once clean, bathers could rinse off by pouring water from a small, central basin over themselves, and sometimes light refreshments might be served, like lemonade (Sibley and Jackson 155; Sibley and Fadli 104). Despite the
variations in spatial organization, the caldarium was the final destination for any Islamic bather.

Architecturally, the caldarium is also important for its atmospheric conditions, primarily for the fact that each niche within it features a domed ceiling, into which large, rounded glass semi-circles have been set. These windows, ranging in color from blue to green to red, cast beams of colored light into the space below. Most rooms in the hammam featured selective lighting, but the caldarium enjoyed the most architectural emphasis. This interesting use of dim lighting, through circular windows, became an architectural detail—not simply a conceptual idea—that I carried through into my design.

However, I found myself most interested in the play between the negatives and positives within the hammam. In one account, author Magda Sibley recalls her childhood experiences of visiting the hammam. She describes it as a “tortuous itinerary towards the hottest and steamiest space, where the heat from the fire of the furnace is at its fiercest and where the steam from the water creates a thick mist” (Sibley and Fadli 108). It was a peculiar event—one that she feared and found uncomfortable but later “metamorphosed into nostalgic, happy memories” (104). Somehow, the painful scrubbing and unbearable heat was eclipsed by the joy of the social event itself, and it became a tradition she continued into adulthood. Despite the fact that Sibley’s language alone makes it seem like an unpleasant experience, her larger appreciation endorses the hammam’s enduring, beloved place in Islamic culture. Her gender also exposes a second conflict, as public bathing for women was somewhat controversial in Muslim society, despite being gender-segregated. While women were meant to remain fully covered in the public sphere, bathing was an essential part of purifying oneself before prayer (Semerdjian 261); this complicated matters and meant that hammams were oftentimes a morally disputed part of life in the Islamic world.

I then examined the general characteristics of sweat lodges across many Native American tribes in order to get the most holistic view of this type of bathing across Native American culture. The first commonality between my historic types was in their formal structure (see Figure 2). As in the hammam, sweat lodges emphasized the circle and dome shape, and again the experience centered around hot steam. Here, the shape takes on spiritual significance, mirroring the arc of the sky, or acting as ribs of the sweat lodge’s spiritual entity: sometimes in the form of a turtle, sometimes a bear, or sometimes simply as “the Creator” (Bruchac 30). It was also tied to the compass directions and the inherent circle therein. The circle became a common theme in both hammams and sweat lodges, and an element I returned to in my design.

The rituals for sweat lodges, however, were entirely different. Most sweat lodges were used for ceremonial purposes, particularly before rites of passage. Unlike the hammam, which was open to the public, sweat lodges were open only to a few people at a time, sometimes segregated by gender, sometimes not (Bucko, “Sweat Lodge”). The sweat lodge was predominantly a non-permanent structure set into a shallow pit dug into the ground (Bucko, “Sweat Lodge”). And in some cases, a cold plunge into nearby water followed the sweating session (Cohen 256). Additionally, there was a recurring theme of the sweat lodge as a source of rejuvenation, even a way to cast off the past—which was perhaps the most central theme in my later design. For example, the Lakota Sioux regarded it as the “lodge of the life-breath,” or “the place where they renew life” (Cohen 255). More literally, it was a form of medication to rid the body of sickness and, as with the rite of passage, a way to welcome in a new era in someone’s life (Cohen 257). Despite the
differences between hammam and sweat lodge rituals, both provided rejuvenation or renewal.

As with my research of hammams, I uncovered themes of juxtaposition—of an unexpected negative in what seemed to be a positive experience, of bad amid good—in sweat lodges, too. For example, a sweating session can be quite dangerous. Aside from the 107º temperature, which in itself can be a danger, the source of the steam can also pose a threat (Cohen 261). The steam is created by pouring water over a group of hot rocks in the center of the lodge—but selecting the rocks is a special task (Bruchac 36). The rocks must be treated with utmost respect with tobacco offerings, and only certain types of rocks can be chosen (Bruchac 36). Many types of rocks feature tiny pockets on their surface, which, when doused with hot water, can cause the rock to shatter. This explosion is powerful—hence the need for careful selection. The best rocks are round igneous rocks, like the volcanic rock used by Mesoamerican tribes, and can be as large as a human head (Bruchac 36). Despite these dangers, sweat lodges were commonplace and are still utilized today. This possibility for negative experiences amid a positive, cleansing experience, as in the hammam, became the direction for my later research into the Charlottesville bathhouse site.

My research cards also examined several instances of contemporary spas and bathhouses, which, unlike the historical information, helped expand my understanding of what a bathhouse could be. For my bathhouse precedents, I looked at the Lakeside Baths in Caldaro, Italy, by Next ENTERprise Architects and the Moku Moku Yu bathhouse in Japan, by Klein Dytham Architects (see Figure 3). For both of these designs, I considered their formal structure (their shapes), the qualities of the spaces, their materiality, and the activities they foster. The Lakeside Baths encourage activity with many places to walk, swim, and play. There are various sizes of spaces as well, each with different qualities of light: small, geodesic rooms with tiny pools; windows through the bottom of a pool to let light into submerged passageways; and open-air swimming pools. The whole building is done in assertive geometric forms of cast concrete, perhaps to contrast the soft forms of the landscape around it. Moku Moku Yu, on the other hand, is a modest series of circular buildings, wrapped in vertical strips of colored timber (see Figure 3). The shapes are meant to resemble a cluster of bubbles on the landscape, and each circle contains a single, separate function. The buildings are for “changing, showering, mixed or single-sex bathing, and indoor or outdoor bathing” (Fairs). However, the general mood, when compared to the baths at Caldaro, values stillness, relaxation, and calm.

For contemporary spas, I looked at the Hotel Terme Merano spa facilities in Italy and an unrealized project by Anne Holtrop for a floating garden/spa in Amsterdam (see Figure 4). Again, both of these designs suggested possibilities for a bathhouse in terms of materiality, shape, and function—whether that be a completely man-made island to house a buried spa retreat or a completely exposed pool complex that showcases the surrounding countryside.

This investigation into bathhouse design and compiling a typology was an exercise in design-based research, which allowed us to identify themes, compare information visually, and identify several case studies, as well as examine them in a way that could become active in the later design. As I worked through my own research, I uncovered the themes that would become central to my later work: the transformation of negatives into positives, an emphasis on the circle, a soak in hot steam followed by a cool plunge, and a resulting renewal from the experience.
Figure 5: Site Map of 409 East High St., Charlottesville, VA. This map takes the form of a timeline, which covers 200 years of history relevant to the former Albemarle County Jail. Important dates are marked in red along the timeline at the bottom of the page (1762, the founding of Charlottesville; 1876, the opening of the jail; 1905, the last legal hanging in Albemarle County 1974, the closing of the jail). The map highlights negative events in the jail’s or Charlottesville’s past, on the themes of death, disease, decay, and debt.
The Location: Site Map

We then turned our attention to the site of our project: 409 East High St., Charlottesville, Virginia. We were tasked with making a map, but the goal was not simply to act as cartographers. Instead, we were to map out the many elements that make a place unique. What about that location, that building, that city might be important to consider when redesigning a historical landmark?

Maps, as we typically understand them, try to capture or communicate the physical aspects of a place, so that any reader can quickly orient themselves where they are, or with where they’re attempting to go. But a place is as much about its history as its present physical features—arguably more so, since the past is what has caused whatever conditions now occupy a site. After beginning some initial research about Charlottesville, I discovered that many of the important facets of the site, or at least those that stood out to me, fell in vastly different periods of time. In fact, they seemed to come at almost even hundred-year intervals, around when the jail was founded. Particularly at this jail, its past seemed integral to the state that it is now in, so it seemed important to include those aspects (site-specific, local, and regional) in my map. Therefore, my map took the shape of a timeline, which extends across the two hundred years of relevant history in the story of the jail (see Figure 5). It starts at the left with the founding of Charlottesville, centers on the date of the jail’s opening, and ends with the year the jail was officially closed. I used the themes from my typological research to drive my study of Charlottesville by examining the negative elements of its past, both as a jailhouse (independent of its location) and as a part of the larger city of Charlottesville. This theme also resonated with the project because, as a jailhouse, the site is inseparable from certain unpleasantries.

For example, the jail was the location of the last legal hanging in Albemarle County—of the mayor of Charlottesville, no less. Having been accused of the gruesome murder of his wife, the mayor was housed and then executed at the county jail. His 1903 hanging is represented by the vertical bar, just right of center, with red notches to its left. Horizontally, the bar aligns with the year of the hanging along the main timeline across the bottom of the map. The red notches then mark four key locations from the 1904 murder, as they align with an 1877 Charlottesville map created just one year after the jail was opened (the Charlottesville map is the series of rectangles and squares at the very center of my map). In this case, my representation of the event was a purely metaphorical one; I have translated this powerful event as a sudden gash in the town’s history. Books were written about this event, the town was fascinated by the “whodunnit” mystery, and the murder was particularly painful because of the mayor’s involvement in the case. It was also a turning point, as it was the last legal hanging in Albemarle County; in this sense, breaking the timeline seemed fitting. I also took color into account. Rather than inserting a sudden black bar, I chose to make the rectangle white—indicating an absence of something, rather than a sudden addition. The white rectangle marks the loss of two lives, and the end of legal hangings. The four red notches, then, serve as a reminder that the event was a bloody one; while I have marked this event as an absence, it did leave a stain on the city.

When the jail was opened, it served primarily as a debtor’s prison, so I also included data about the levels of debt in the country at that time period. The thin horizontal bars drawn lightly in the center of the map, and the thin red line that approaches the center from the left, register a spike in debt just before the jail’s opening. This information was found in several statistical atlases from the 1860s to the 1890s, which also charted
information about death from disease in the form of circular calendars. These calendars marked spikes in certain diseases throughout the year for males and females. These graphs can be seen in pencil just right of center. In this instance, my representation was literal rather than metaphorical. I reduced the graphs to lines and shapes without translating their information as I had with the story of the hanging. Instead, I simply combined the male and female data and applied it to the portion of the timeline it most closely relates to, allowing the data to combine with other elements of the map.

These graphs also led me to thinking about diseases of another kind: invasive species. Because Virginia at the time of the jail’s opening was largely open land, I began thinking about how diseases of the landscape might also have had a significant role in the timeline of Albemarle County. Therefore, I included information about some of the most highly invasive species in the county: oriental bittersweet, Japanese stiltgrass, garlic mustard, tree of heaven, multiflora rose, Japanese honeysuckle, and kudzu (“Natural Heritage Committee”). On my map, I featured each plant as a photograph, locating them in conjunction with the date on the timeline when they were introduced in the United States.

Later, during our visit to the jail in Charlottesville, I photographed the peeling paint on the walls of the jail. This image is traced onto the end of the timeline at the right side of my map, suggesting how the jail has deteriorated over time and representing the theme of decay due to neglect. This line is then paired with a map of the vast area around Charlottesville that is affected by invasive species (their intersection is shown by varying degrees of cross-hatching at the right). Bringing the line and the map together is a reflection of how both of these elements jump from the historical past to today and offers new information related to their form by their combination.

Lastly, my map acknowledges the presence of Thomas Jefferson. While this may not seem to fit with the theme of “negative” historical events, our visit to Charlottesville and to the Charlottesville Historical Society (CHS) presented a unique view of Thomas Jefferson’s legacy. Our conversation with the CHS volunteer revealed that there are many other elements to Charlottesville’s history, and yet Thomas Jefferson tends to overshadow all other elements of the city’s past (or present). While his legacy is certainly not a bad one, I found this slant interesting: that Jefferson’s impact largely obliterates any other significant events or people from the area. I therefore gave a nod to his presence, but I left it rather subdued. I marked his impact with a horizontal black bar at the far left of the drawing and then nearly obscured the rectangle with a strip of white paper on top. The bar runs the length of his life, and at crucial years in his career, a small slot is cut out of the drawing. In this way, his impact is significant but understated. It could have been one of the most noticeable points on the page, but it is instead completely unmarked and covered by a smaller piece of paper.

I also included some speculative elements on the far right of my map where I overlaid the themes of my drawing into building plans of the jail itself, more so as questions or possibilities of what could be. This speculation was a way to begin projecting the information developed within the map into spatial design; I pulled themes, shapes, and ideas, into suggestions of interventions within the existing space.

Although my timeline is a non-traditional approach to a map, it allowed me to explore the intangible qualities of site that the course was meant to emphasize. This process was highly important in evolving both the way I think about a place and in expanding the way I think about drawing.
Figure 6: Site Map Image Fragments. This image compiles the smaller fragments of the site map from which models were later generated. For example, the horizontal image in the second row down at the right, with four red bars running across the bottom, was developed into the model seen in the center of Figure 7.
Figure 7: Fragment Models and Model Developments. This image shows eight of the twenty-five fragment models, at the left and center, and three of the model developments at the right. The models on the left were experimental in terms of material, process, and spatial quality, where at the right they begin to approach something more suggestive of space.
Figure 8: Section Development 1. This series of sections develops a model with the function of sauna/soak room. From left to right, I tested a variety of changes, most visible in roof height, interior wall thickness, and pool profile. The final design is most similar to iterations two and three.

Figure 9: Section Development 2. This series develops a model with the function of a changing area. From left to right, I tested changes such as roof height and room size. I also introduced an element of the hammam into the final iteration: the wall at the right is pierced by a grid of circular windows, similar to the roof of a hammam calderium. In the final design, this room is most similar to the fourth version, and the windows across the hammam-inspired wall also serve the purpose of holding fresh towels, so that as bathers arrive, the windows open up to allow in more light.

Figure 10: Section Development 3. These sections develop a model as the exercise area. Here, I established the exercise primarily as running through an obstacle course of tightly-grouped poles; I also considered yoga as a possible exercise in each image, although this did not remain for the final proposal. Furthermore, I adjusted how people might move from a lower level to an upper level, and I introduced a series of small windows through that floor surface to the area below.
GENERATING SPACE: FRAGMENT MODELS

After completing our 2D maps, we moved into the three dimensions—an important step in the process of designing architecture. We were told to single out small one- to three-inch squares or rectangles of our map to read as sections, or vertical cuts through a space (see Figure 6). We then constructed twenty-five models of these image fragments in a variety of materials, allowing the “cut-outs” of our larger site map to indicate layers of space (see Figure 7).

For my fragment models, I combined linear elements like chipboard, cardboard, colored basswood, and straight pins with flexible materials like embroidered fabric and sheets of beeswax. The resulting models are not meant to act as small rooms or buildings—they do not even need to make much spatial sense. Because the translation from two-dimensions, or even simply from thought, is often the most difficult for architects, it was important simply to make objects, with less emphasis on their logic. Instead, the initial models were a way of developing a relationship between materials and objects as a means of suggesting what a larger whole might become; they could resemble space, at any scale, but that is not necessarily the goal. After that first set, we selected our best fragments and developed three larger models. In order to develop their complexity, we combined models and re-examined our site maps for more information to include.

Several of my fragment models are included in the photograph, as well as my three developed models, at the right (Figure 7). The progression is most visible between the second model in the second row and the larger model to its right. I built my initial fragment model from the section of my mapping that references the murder and subsequent hanging that took place at the jail (note the four red “legs” that correspond to the four red notches on the drawing). I then evolved this model into the version just to the right by adding a roof piece and developing elements from the first iteration, like the the cut-out in the upper right-hand corner.

This method—pulling form straight out of a drawing—is a relatively basic design move, but it can be a simple way to develop form that is conceptually rich. We were able to develop form quickly and effectively, which saved time for more careful design revisions later. The approach also taught us to read drawings in an atypical way: instead of viewing them as two-dimensional compilations of information, we interpreted them as three-dimensional drivers that blurred the distinction between flat image and form.

TWO-DIMENSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: THE SECTION FRAGMENTS

Once again, we returned to drawing to accomplish what is usually more time-consuming in model-making: enacting small, subtle changes. Many elements can be worked through differently on paper than in three dimensions, which is why we switch back and forth between the two to develop our projects. Problems that are not visible on paper become clear when modeling and vice versa. Therefore, we drew and enhanced our section models on paper, which provided an opportunity to think both about the function of the space and the logic of its arrangement. Where before our sections didn’t need to make sense, it now became important for them to be coherent. I worked on three of the spaces in my developing bathhouse in a series of three drawings, each featuring four iterations from left to right.

In one section, I began to consider the portion of my bathhouse meant for the sauna and soaking area (see
The model had featured an arching sheet of beeswax, with a prominent black skewer pierced through it. In my development of the physical model, I had begun thinking that there were two zones: a shower/sauna area and a pool, separated by the aforementioned black rod. Across my four drawings, I made changes to the size of the space, the floor of the pool, the angle of the central rod, the proximity to surrounding walls, and the function of rainwater collection. I questioned indoor versus outdoor, and I tested the possibilities of having a shower or a sauna. I also began to bring in elements of my research: a hammam-style roof is visible at the left of the second and fourth section cut.

In the next section, I worked on the changing room of the spa (see Figure 9). We were also asked to question who the space was meant for within these explorations. Because I wanted the bathhouse to be a place that any person in Albemarle County could visit, not one specific group, I made my figures reflect the research that the work was influenced by—the hammam and the sweat lodge. In this section development, I also worked on the height and materiality of the space and considered which elements might be more open or more secluded, as in the hammam. I also began thinking about how the invasive plant life might play into my project, what the nature of the surrounding space might be, and whether there could be small foot-pools in the room. In the final iteration, I developed the idea that there would be a thick wall at one end, with small circular windows cut into it (as in a hammam), into which fresh towels would be placed. Then, as guests used towels throughout the day, the windows would slowly be revealed to allow in more light.

Finally, for the last section development, I explored how exercise could become a part of the experience, because both hammams and sweat lodges value sweating as a way to rid oneself of the bad (see Figure 10). Because of the layout of the jail, with a narrow grassy courtyard that surrounds the building, I decided my form of exercise would be in running laps around the building before re-entering the sauna/pool area. Therefore, I developed the idea that a series of tightly packed poles might serve as obstacles in the path of runners—thus increasing the level of physical activity and providing a unique method of physical exertion. I also tested adjustments to the terrain and methods for accessing an upper level. Finally, I used the hammam-style roof as a way of lighting the space below that platform by including a circular window where a pole meets the surface above.

The process of developing models through drawing allowed for experimentation with form and with programmatic elements by forcing us to view the sometimes strange objects we had modelled as feasible spaces. This kind of “what if” thinking is crucial in design, as it helps expand the realm of possibilities in terms of what we can create. The process of drawing out subtle changes also forced us to spend a long time making sense of the objects we had modelled and bringing in the conceptual drivers from our research.
Figure 11: Longitudinal Section. This section showcases the final design of the bathhouse. The main entrance falls between the right edge of the pool and the two dark gray lines just to the right. The changing area is at the rightmost side of the jail; bathers enter from the front of the building, progress to their right, and then out the back of the building (directly across from the main entrance). They proceed left and around the building, through the exercise area, and back into the building at the back left corner. From there, bathers pass into a sauna, which leads into the final room with a high ceiling and a shallow pool in which to recline.
Figure 12: Building Plan. This plan showcases the final design of the bathhouse. The main entrance falls between the right edge of the pool and the two dark gray lines just to the right. The changing area is at the rightmost side of the jail; bathers enter from the front of the building, progress to their right, and then back out to the back of the building (directly across from the main entrance). They proceed left and around the building, through the exercise area, and back into the building at the back left corner. From there, bathers pass into a sauna, which leads into the final room with a high ceiling and a shallow pool in which to recline.
Putting It All Together: The Plan and Section

The final plan and section drawing are where each of the separate elements from above meet each other, along with the existing jail (see Figures 12 and 11, respectively). Using plan and section drawings of the jail, provided by the Historical American Buildings Survey, we began working through where each of the elements might make sense within the existing structure—or in some cases, where the existing structure might have to be adjusted to meet the new elements we designed.

I also then developed the sequence of events in terms of the architectural experience—not only what order they ought to go in, but how this became placed in the jail (left to right, top to bottom, or in my case, spiraling counterclockwise through and around the jail). First, one enters through a small existing door just right of center in the jail. Here, a series of canted rectangular doorways on either side reveals the soaking area to the left (the final room of the bathhouse). Instead of moving left into the exposed pool though, bathers move to the right into the changing area. They pass under a ledge, off of which a vine hangs in reference to the invasive species in my site research. In the original jail, this section housed a central “cage” of cells, which housed prisoners at the center of the room and allowed a guard to walk around the perimeter. As the changing area, many of the bars still remain, with several new additions to divide the space into a male and female dressing rooms and to cordon off several smaller, more private areas within. I also repurposed the old metal mattress shelves from the preexisting cells as benches, underneath a translucent, undulating ceiling that allows light in from the upper floors. This ceiling is a loose reference to the hammam in that the room below is dim and lit diffusely from above. The thick exterior wall at the far end of the jail has become the towel wall of my previous section developments, which also provides the kind of light that harkens back to what one would experience in a hammam.

Once redressed in bathing suits or towels, bathers go back through the doorway of the changing area, again viewing the final room, but once more avoiding it by moving out through the back of the jail. To their left, they encounter the thicket of poles at the start of a running circuit at the start of a running circuit, through which they must dodge on each circle around the jailhouse in order to work up a sweat. This circuit can be repeated as many times as desired and at any pace—but when ready, bathers enter the jail through a new door at the back left corner. This circular path, which offers bathers a visual reminder of the destination of their journey (one can see the curving roof piece and a portion of the pool), also emphasizes the importance of circles within both the hammam and the sweat lodge. Bathers re-enter through an untouched jail cell in the back left portion of the jail and into another cell repurposed as a hammam caldarium. Benches line some of the walls, while in other places the surface of the roof piece wraps around and serves as also a place to sit. This roof piece is translucent and features the round glass windows of a hammam, allowing beams of light to be cast inward. Here, the bathers can rest for a time, soaking in the damp air and rinsing off, before entering the main space.

Finally, they arrive at the pool they have glimpsed multiple times throughout their circular journey. In my proposal, the floor above is removed, so the ceiling becomes double-height. Also, the windows that remain at the back of the old jail replace the circular windows of the steam room as a combination of the hammam’s precedent and the history of the site as it is (the jail windows now function as hammam windows). The bottom of the shallow pool is gradually sloped so that
there is a bathhouse in Charlottesville
and a steam room within it
dotted with colored globes,
which filter the light

a few steps farther, under the vaulted, translucent ceiling
a pool
the rubble of the past laying dormant in its shallow depths,
life crawling upwards in-between:
new imposed over old

this, in its quietude, is the tumultuous crescendo
a meeting of bodies—and of time
where the juxtaposition of gritty past and optimistic future
soak together

all of the death, disease,
debt, and decay
deteriorate in the mist

exchanged
by exertion—by sweat—
as one spirals inward

not as a “tortuous itinerary,” not as entrapment,
but instead circling
as the compass, as the clock,
as the rocks laid out before a vision quest

a continuous evolution—
revolution—
from hindrance to help

Figure 13: Project Narrative. This poem compiles the ideas that I had imagined halfway through the semester, and acts as an attempt to pin down the qualities of my imagined space.
Figure 14: Final Model. This model tries to demonstrate the most important elements of the final proposal, instead of capturing precisely what the full building would look like. As an act of further investigation (not only documentation), this piece pointed out moments that would need to be defined should the project continue: how exactly does the room piece meet the existing structure? Which parts of the front of the jail remain? These ideas would most likely become illustrated in drawings that zoom into portions of the jail to address these questions at a smaller scale.

Figure 15: Interior Views of Final Model. From left to right, these images illustrate the soak room pool, the exercise obstacle course, a view through the soak room to the far wall of the changing room, an opposite view through the bathhouse, and a view of the upper level above the exercise course. Again, they serve to communicate spatial qualities, and provide information about which spaces need further development or design.
bathers can lie on the floor itself, relaxing in the mild water, or float out in the center. And although the water isn’t icy cold, this plunge into cooler water reflects the tradition of sweat lodge experiences. The black rod from my fragment models remains in the center of the room; it too has a vine climbing up it, growing between the water and the ceiling high above. When bathers are ready to leave, they wade out through the final canted doorway, change back into their clothes, and exit through the same door they through which they first entered, thus completing the circle where they began.

OTHER ELEMENTS: THE SITE NARRATIVE, FINAL MODEL, AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Halfway through the design process—long before we had finalized any elements of our designs—we were asked to write a “narrative” about our space. In so doing, we were meant to characterize the feeling of these spaces in an effort to further realize them and to narrow down the “thesis” of our project (see Figure 13). For this assignment, I chose to write a poem; writing a poem in phrases seemed the only fitting way to talk about a place that I only knew in bits and pieces.

In my final model, I represented the important aspects of those final drawings three-dimensionally (see Figure 14). Since it was not possible to include all of my design changes at such a small scale, I created the model to give a general impression of what the new site would look like. I have also demonstrated the idea that these forms were built off of site-based, historical research by including elements of the drawing on its base and demonstrating the physical manifestations where possible. I then photographed portions of the model to give a better idea of what the interiors might feel like (see Figure 15).

These project elements were supplemental to the main design processes; they served to further my thoughts about the design and convey the finished proposal when presenting the project. The poem, for example, helped me clarify the purpose and central themes of my project, and the photographs captured the qualities of light or space that might, if there were time, suggest further revisions or additions to the design of each space. As with every other step along the way, each of these approaches not only communicated a static design, but also contributed in some way to my understanding of it.
WORKS CITED


WORKS CITED: GENERAL


WORKS CITED: HAMMAM CARDS


**WORKS CITED: SWEAT LODGE CARDS**


**WORKS CITED: CONTEMPORARY BATHHOUSE CARDS**


WORKS CITED: CONTEMPORARY SPA CARDS


WORKS CITED: SITE MAP


