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THE NECESSITY OF HALLWAYS: PATH MAKING AND THE RE-FORMATION OF A JAPANESE TEA GARDEN INTO AN E&H.3T TEXAS ROADHOUSE

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

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ABSTRACT

THE NECESSITY OF HALLWAYS:
PATH MAKING AND THE RE-FORMATION OF A
JAPANESE TEA GARDEN
INTO AN EAST TEXAS ROADHOUSE

by

J. Duncan Davidson

By identifying key events in the ceremonial movement of a person through a traditional Japanese tea garden and comparing this “event sequence” to a patron’s path through a rural American bar (a roadhouse) it is argued that (1) the tea garden and roadhouse are both examples of interactive environments that encourage specific behavior of visitors, (2) events experienced in a particular sequence defines (psychologically if not physically) a pathway between two places, (3) such “pathways” establish a sense of relationship amongst different locations and consequently tend to organize the fragments (elements) of a given landscape, and (4) within the study of “pathways” there are useful techniques to be learned for constructing “perceived geographies” of high complexity.
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The Necessity of Hallways

This project explores how path making and pathways modify our sense of place.

Although the focus is on a very small and self contained example, this project is considered an effort to better understand alternative methods for constructing order (or identifying order) across a vast urban landscape. It explores what is actually a very old model for structuring complex environmental relationships. In this case, the model is based on traditional Japanese ideas of how space is given a psychological topography.

Specifically, the starting point is the Japanese cultural tendency for ordering space as a system of concentric or “wrapped” layers. At the basis of this is the notion of oku, a sense of an inner most space that is psychological distanced from the surrounding territory. Through oku, the Japanese have constructed dense relationships between places of near proximity. 1

At its simplest, movement through a system of layers defines a physical/ psychological relationship between any two points. This relationship participates in giving definition to a given place. The "Wrapping" of a central place in layers in this way becomes an important conceptual model for ordering space and actually finds similar expressions in other areas on Japanese culture, e.g., language and various aspects of behavior. Spatial

wrapping implies a system of thresholds, acts of penetration and the notion of a perceived center - whether or not that center is meant to be inhabited or “discovered”.

The implication of this is that all places are related to each other in a system of embedded structures. The same system of organization operates at all scales from the mega-form of the city to the smaller conceptual structures of the district, the neighborhood, and the home respectively, down to the small interior display niches, tokonomas, once a standard feature of traditional houses. It is an organic system of relationships that can be extended to infinity in both the macro and micro direction.

One understands a city as a territorial group which envelopes numerous places of oku, sometimes public and sometimes private. Cities have developed as an aggregate of numerous territories of a social unit that protects the oku, and not as a place with an absolute center to cluster around. Japanese cities had at least until the beginning of this century maintained this principle structurally. ²

Through wrapping, a condition of psychological distancing is manufactured independent of the actual physical distance. Spatial wrapping performs the dual task of (1) managing the degree of connection (the distance) between adjacent parts and (2) giving definition to the connected points.

As a method to simplify what in the real world is a complicated system of overlapping and superimposed layers (Japanese territorial concepts appear highly complex and

ambiguous to non-Japanese analysis\(^3\) this project focuses on the isolated pathway defined here as the physical cut across a system of “wrappings.” It is the connection between two places that controls the psychological perception of each through the relationship it constructs between the two.

To limit the scope of study to something manageable, the traditional Japanese tea garden is analyzed as a highly specified and literal example of a pathway. The tea garden creates a particular relationship between two places - the mundane world of the street and the ritualized environment of the teahouse. The path winding through a tea garden from gate to teahouse is ultimately a tool of place making. It is thoroughly determined and loaded with symbolic cues that the initiated read and navigate by. The tea garden path has been chosen for this study because it is so extraordinarily specified and therefore provides some degree of analytic control since (arguably) it is similarly experienced by everyone using it.

This project attempts to understand the qualities of “path” and “path making” by re-forming the traditional Japanese garden sequence into an American typology - the rural bar or roadhouse. It is considered that the two programs, being of roughly similar scale, similar physical needs and (arguably) of similar variety (if not sophistication) of ritualized behavior set specific limits to the examination of path making. By analyzing and

reforming the sequence of events of this idealized path into the roadhouse, the
functional characteristics of this kind of pathway are demonstrated and shown perhaps to
have a certain universal application.

Whereas the Japanese garden (roji) separates street from teahouse, the roadhouse has
been designed to provide a specific experience in movement between highway and an
adjacent field. In both cases, the path not only moves a “guest” physically from point
“A” to “B” but also, through the chosen involvement of the guest in a system of ritualistic
behaviors, performs a psychological transformation on him or her as well.

This project is considered an opportunity to think of architecture not in terms of its object
value but in the way “places” are made through their inter-relationships.

Figure 1. Tea garden transformation
Strategy

The teahouse and garden sequence were analyzed and separated into a series of discrete principle episodes that map the experience (or behavior) of an imagined guest during movement from the garden gate into the teahouse. (The path under consideration takes someone into the teahouse but not into the heart of the tea ceremony itself).

These path elements were then translated into equivalent programmatic episodes that can be found in a roadhouse. These episodes were strung together and integrated into a continuous building environment. Certain programmatic characteristics of the roadhouse, were exaggerated, however, without changing anything fundamental about a “bar” environment.

The transformation has been conceived as a night time architecture. Given that a principle role of “wrapping” is its ability to create a sense of distance, this characteristic has been expressed in part as a method for controlling the amount and quality of information passed between two places. Wrappings create a system of thresholds that effect movement through them from the full opacity of walls (an extreme and limiting type of threshold) to any imaginable condition of screening up to the condition of complete transparency. Their ability to pass information - fully exposing, partially exposing, misrepresenting, etc.- has been explored in terms of “veiling,” object fragmentation, and temporal conditions that create soft boundaries between objects and places.
Both stationary and “accidental” lighting have been important tools in achieving these conditions. The goal has been to construct a temporal landscape made by (1) the intersection of people and their “utensils” and (2) still and moving light sources that interact with the people and architecture to create a sequence of episodes that enhances the experience of someone visiting a roadhouse.

The goals and methodology of this project are somewhat extracted from the Japanese sense of *oku*. The notion of the “voided center,” important in *oku*, has been an influential component of this exploration. To a certain degree this has been interpreted to allow a lack of specific focus for the project and instead the explorations have been free to somewhat orbit a notion of place making dependent on individual human perception but not tied down to any one thing.

This is not a project about style or the adaptation of specific elements of tea architecture. There was no conscious attempt to mimic a traditional aesthetic, only an interest to capture the tension implicit to the necessity of movement. The similarity between traditional post and beam architecture and the outcome of the design here, I would like to think, has more in common with the choices made in how the building interacts with the environment, i.e., through the materials, emphasis on the ambiguity of cast shadows (creating undetermined places) and how the roadhouse is situated in a similar hot and humid climate (which are, of course, all conditions of traditional Japanese architecture), than any interest in stylistic mimicry.
The Tea Garden
The Tea Garden

The Japanese tea ceremony (chanoyu) is well known as a ritualized aesthetic concerned with issues of etiquette, role playing and connoisseurship. It specifies a system of movement and behavior requiring intensive training. The architecture and landscaping of a tea garden have evolved to create an appropriate mood for the experience. Together they create a world psychologically removed from the street through material codings, symbology and a shared focus amongst participants. It is a subtle and complex environment, however, simultaneously minimal in that nothing extraneous to the desired affect of the host is present. Every element is calculated to enhance the meeting. Nothing is extra to this end.

Various schools of tea have emerged over the centuries which inevitably focus on different aspects of the ritual. For the purpose of this project, the chanoyu discussed is from the Urasenke tradition and specifically the teachings of Sen Rikyu, a 16th Century master, who emphasized integrity, meditation and wabi, a notion that is difficult to express but has the paradoxical meaning of “a purified taste in material things as a medium for human interaction transcending materialism.”

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From the Sen Rikyu school of *chanoyu*:

*Teaism is the art “of concealing beauty so that it may be discovered.”*

*Teaism is: “comfort in simplicity, . . moral geometry for it defines our sense of proportion to the universe.”*

*Within teaism: “not a color to disturb the [mood], not a sound to mar the rhythm, not a gesture to obtrude on the harmony, not a word to break the unity of the surroundings.”*

---

**Event Stages**

The tea garden became an indispensable part of *chanoyu* early on. Certain flexibility is found in the layout of the gardens especially since most were laid out within the site restrictions of a villa, however, the elements of their design became more strictly specified with increasing sophistication of the ritual. For the sake of this project, a more or less autonomous garden was chosen for analysis, which appears in Figure 2. Also, it has been assumed that the garden is being used for a noon time tea - the most formal of the different types.

This garden was designed by Yabuuchi Shochi, one of Sen Rikyu’s pupils, for a location in Kyoto. Its layout has been slightly altered here to accent specific “event” points.

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6 For a comparison of the various types of ceremony see Sen-oTanaka, *The tea Ceremony*, Kodansha International Ltd., Tokyo, New York, p. 140-144

along the route from the main gate at the bottom of the image to the tea house at the top.

The route has been divided into principle stages which relate to times and/or places of heightened interaction between the guest and the physical environment. A description of these episodes follows and Figure 2 identifies their location.

**Preparation:** The guests should take a bath and make a careful toilette and put on their dress of ceremony. They should not forget the trouble the host is taking to entertain them. It is customary for those invited to a tea function to arrive fifteen minutes early. This element of anticipation and preparation extends the experience of the *chanoyu* beyond the boundaries of the tea garden enclosure.

**Main Gate:** The tea gathering begins with the arrival of the guests at the host’s main gate. This is where ritual behavior starts and the guests assume learned and “extraordinary” attitudes toward each other. Symbolic communication also begins at the main gate.

**Yoritsuiki** (final preparation area): Within a vestibule guests can leave their belongings, change clothes if necessary or perform final preparations to their dress. It is customary for each guest to leave an envelope with a small contribution to help defray kitchen expenses.
Machiai (waiting area): The host, realizing that the right atmosphere will help put the guests in the proper mood for tea, carefully prepares the waiting area. Its decoration is subdued so as not to detract from that of the tearoom and chosen to suggest a theme for the event. If a scroll or other ornament is present, it will be of a light nature. Hot cups of water or a light tea is often served.

Koshikake machiai (waiting bench): The guests wait on a bench in a garden arbor for a signal from the host to proceed. Pausing here is a chance to enjoy the beauty of the outer garden while mentally preparing to move from the limited spiritual state of the machiai and outer roji to the state of suspended reality of the inner roji and tearoom.

The outer garden is usually landscaped with trees, bushes and stepping stones. It should never have a contrived or flashy appearance. A privy (setchin) is often located nearby but may be only for decoration.

Garden Gate: The tea garden is typically organized into inner and outer zones that are separated by a gate. In that each garden has its own aesthetic role, the threshold between them represents a significant point of transition that may not be obvious from the physicality of the gate.
**Inner Roji** (garden path): The walk through the inner roji facilitates the transition from the mundane to the ritual persona. It is appropriate that the garden should appear cool, mossy and natural but above all, simple and tidy. For all its simplicity, however, it is loaded with symbolism. As with the outer roji, spectacular shows of nature are out of place. One by one each guest takes the trip alone across the inner roji. Their pace is slow allowing for meditation upon the garden’s mood. Along the route is a crouch basin filled with water where one can rinse hands and mouth in an act of purification.

**The Teahouse:** Coming upon a teahouse should be like discovering a charcoal burner’s hut at the end of a mountain path. Guests enter by crawling through a low door. The awkwardness involved with this action is intentional and meant to inspire humility. The teahouse, in contrast to ordinary traditional Japanese domestic architecture, lacks openness. Windows are small and carefully placed to put light exactly where it will be most effective.

**Tokonoma:** The spiritual heart of the precinct is an alcove where a scroll, flowers, or other appropriate article is displayed for viewing and contemplation.  

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Figure 2. Tea garden plan and event stages
The series of marked thresholds in Figure 2 are a combination of physical and behavioral moments along the path. Physical barriers that the guest must pass through include the gates (which may be opaque and, therefore, literally hide the view ahead) or the foliage which merely screens the view and allows glimpses of the destination. “Behavioral layers” include any activity that diverts the guest’s attention from the immediate goal of the path and consequently alters the sense of procession through the garden.

It is convenient to explore the idea of a “behavioral threshold” in terms of something as specifically choreographed as the tea ceremony. In other situations a person’s interaction with the environment is too individualistic to discuss conclusively, however, in chanoyu, there are commonly experienced events across the ritualized landscape. Such behavioral thresholds would include any event that is scripted. For example, waiting at the arbor bench fundamentally alters a person’s frame of mind. Also, crouching at the water basin and ceremonially cleansing one’s hands and mouth is much more significant than walking by the bowel. Passing through the low door (“wriggling”) into the tea house itself is meant to inspire a sensation of humility, which in addition to movement through the physical threshold of the door, marks a psychic transformation that is arguably a more powerful gesture of threshold.
On Path Making
**On Path Making**

The path leads us from one condition to another - from one place to another, from one object to another, from one process to another. It provides points of entry and egress to a place and has the principle intention of making the traveler undergo a transformation of some kind. Along the route there are landmarks that guide us, signs to prepare us for the conditions found ahead. Or not. The path may provide only deception. In any case a narrative exists within the path that sets up a relationship between where you were and where you are going.

The pathway, as it is considered here, is meant to describe the "bridge" that connects two different places. It may be physically long or a single threshold.

The historical use of the pathway as a tool around which to organize a series of elements is as old as architecture itself and won't be discussed here with one exception. The Situationists in the 1950s invented a social-geographic model of the city based on a system of movements through it where the psychological relationship between city parts like neighborhoods was considered more important than other infrastructural elements, e.g., roads. The point of using an individual’s movement through the city as the preferred way to understand it comes very close to uncovering the sense of place making described in an "event analysis" of a tea garden. A brief history of the Situationist agenda also
describes the difference between seeing a landscape as abstracted objects or seeing a
landscape as a system of connected parts.

**Psychogeography and the Situationists**

Academic geography in France (a product of the 1870s) had the goal of taxonometric
description. Certain physical aspects of a given landscape were supposed to exist beyond
historical attachments or relationships. (for example, in urban areas, streets, etc.) And
these were ordered within the abstract space of the all-seeing eye. A conventional
spatial structuring of any city is based upon the common street map. It is arguable that a
street map is primarily descriptive, that within its homogeneous treatment of the cityscape
all roads are made similar in that they hold traffic, all space is made equal and
independent of any social condition that may exist and, consequently, the urban fabric is
commodified and sections made interchangeable.

In opposition, the concept of “social geography” replaces a “geography of permanences”
with “history in space.” The argument is geography is “not an immutable thing. It is
made, it is remade every day; at each instant, it is modified by men’s actions.” According
to notions of social geography, “space is a social product and, therefore, is inseparable
from the functioning of society.” It is noted then that an “affecting experience” must
somehow participate in the very construction of urban space.  

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In 1957 Guy Debord, then a French lettriste and member of MIBI (Mouvement Internationale pour un Bauhaus Imaginiste) authored a map of Paris that was simultaneously a critique of conventional space conceptualizing tools and a proposal for an alternative way for the individual to understand his/her relational position in the city. The same year MIBI, the French lettristes and the English Psychogeographical society of London joined together under the name “Internationale situationiste” (the “Situationists”) and this map, *The Naked City* became an iconic reference to the concerns shared by the group about the construction and perception of urban space."

The Situationists’ research into urban space evolved out of their socialist political stand which viewed the capitalist landscape as having been homogenized and commodified for the general functioning of commerce. Consequently, *The Naked City* was constructed to work within a socialist/capitalist dialectic. It is possible, however, to find similarities between this ideological environment and the conditions that have influenced conventional readings/critique of architecture during the 20th century.

"Social, concrete space (has) been completely denied in favor of mental, abstract space: the free space of the commodity. However, this thoroughly dominated capitalist space (is) not seamless, in fact, it (is) full of contradictions, hidden only by a homogenizing ideology. These contradictions (make) possible the struggle formulated by the Situationist project: the exploration of psychogeography and the construction of spaces that accommodate difference."^{11}

Research into this was conducted within the pseudo-science of psychogeography which explored the potentialities of desire that existed in the midst of an otherwise banal urban condition. Psychogeography re-imagined the city as a topography of different emotional states or "ambiances" (varying according to location, time of day and type of social interaction). The Situationists explored the effects of such environments on the emotions and behavior of individuals especially with regard to how potential interactions (desirous trajectories) operated to inform and constantly change the condition of any given urban space. In this respect the Situationist project involved the elaboration of social space.

"Our central idea is that of the construction of situations, that is to say, the concrete construction of momentary ambiances of life and their transformation into a superior passional quality. We must develop a methodical intervention based on the complex factors of two components in perpetual interaction: the material environment . . . and the comportments which it gives rise to and which radically transform it."\(^{12}\)

*The Naked City* is:\(^{13}\)

- A collage of nineteen fragments cut-out from the most commonly used map of Paris (the *Plan de Paris*). Each fragment is of a neighborhood or social condition that was considered to have some perceived cultural homogeneity.

- Where each fragment is considered the basic unit of urban structure in that within the geographic limits of the fragment there is single distinct character or "unity of atmosphere."

- A map where much of the city is left out possibly because the remainder does not possess an interesting enough "ambiance" but more likely because this omission is an attack on the "completeness" of a conventional map.

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\(^{13}\) Thomas F. McDonough, "Situationist Space," *October* 67, winter 1994, pp. 60-64.
• A map where the fragments are not organized by any rational ordering system.

• A map where red arrows link each fragment printed in black.

• A system of possible interactions where “The arrows describe the spontaneous turns of direction taken by a subject moving through the surroundings in disregard of the usual connections that ordinarily would direct the individual’s movement.

_The Naked City_ presents a trace of practices for inhabiting an urban landscape. It proposes the recognition of spaces that accommodate emotional differences and highlights the movement between them. It, therefore, focuses not on the static emotional state but on the change between states.

The map is “figured as a narrative rather than a tool for universal knowledge. _The Plan de Paris_ operates outside of time - it exists in a timeless present; this timelessness is imaged spatially by its (illusory) total revelation of “information.” _The Naked City_ replaces the God’s-eye view with the set of spatial possibilities (and, therefore, experiences). It presents a condition where meaning only comes from experience and, therefore, from movement and social interaction by a person between the fragments. Ideally these movements are simply part of the day-to-day living requirements of an individual. The self-conscious movements used as a tool by the Situationists for exploring urban space and (more to the point, on what Naked City is structured) were called _derives_.

Derives ("drifts") were a "purposeless yet attentive meander through the urban landscape" and were used to "uncover the city's emotional undercurrents." Their function is to give structure (assemblage) to the space and are the means that put into relationship the various fragments.

A person on a derive interacted as part of the crowd and, therefore, was different from the voyeur or flanerie who kept their objective distance. The derive was also somewhat different from the Surrealist "aimless stroll" in that the Surrealist notion of chance became suspect to the Situationists because it became a tool to protest against "means-end rationality."14 The Situationist project was to find new meaning within their wanderings.

"Naked City denies space as context and instead incorporates space as an element of social practice. Rather than a container suitable for description, space becomes part of a process: the process of "inhabiting" enacted by social groups."15

Qualities

In the context of the Situationists' derive, movement through a tea garden is also a particular "drift" through a field of physical elements that become associated through the


15 Thomas F. McDonough, "Situationist Space," October 67, winter 1994
sequential interaction of a guest. In an attempt to categorize the range of person-object interactions three general types of pathways have been identified that use different physical markings: (1) paths operating by movement from marker to marker - those based on cairns, (2) paths defined by a series of symbols or “signposts” and (3) paths that are completely deterministic - those operating as if they were hallways.

**Cairn**  
A pathway based on cairns is a linear sequence that periodically relies upon some indicator to tell the traveler they are indeed still moving in the right direction. The cairn is a directionless marker requiring the user to know what it is there for and what it means. It requires the traveler to have a fairly good idea of what direction they should be heading. A cairn’s function is to reset deviation from the path to zero.

Someone crossing perpendicular to a path marked by cairns would either not see a cairn and, therefore, not know they were crossing a path, or find a cairn but not know how to use it, i.e., they wouldn’t know where it would lead them even if they knew what direction to proceed. There is the interesting condition regarding this type of path: should you lose sight of the last cairn and not yet see the next one, there is no indication of a path at all and the only thing that makes it still a path is the traveler’s memory of a direction in which to proceed.

**Sign post**  
Pathways marked by signposts are similar to those marked by cairns but each point of contact with an object along the path provides more information to the
traveler, i.e., where they are, how much further they have to go and what direction to proceed. A sign post does not require any previous knowledge about the path to take advantage of it so that someone entering mid-path can ascertain where they are and which direction to proceed.

Signs can be anything that is interpretable by the traveler, e.g., symbols, a utensil whose presence implies a certain location in the sequence of an ongoing procedure. Signs are coded for use by specific individuals who know what they mean. Some codings are easily read by a majority of a culture, some are intended for a very specific sub-culture. As when ever symbols are relied upon, there is the opportunity to intentionally mislead someone or construct an ambiguous situation.

**Hallway**

- The hallway is the ultimate prescribed path. Because of physical restraints it allows no deviation from its specific course. There is no need for any type of place markers. The simplest hallway has a point of entry and a point of exit. There is limited need for interaction along this type of path.

Hallways don’t necessarily need hard physical boundaries to effectively operate as hallways. A road is considered a hallway, especially at night when the limits of perceived environment narrow to the zone of the headlights.
For the purpose of this project, pathways are considered to have the following characteristics.

- A path establishes a spatial environment which is directional and created by moments of experience.

- A path is a composition of elements used for navigation. A system of signs that may or may not be readable by everyone. The path may be invisible to even those who travel it by accident.

- A path implies a high degree of concentrated order within a particular zone. Elements that mark direction may be as near as under one’s feet or the landmark of a distant mountain range.

- A path is a condition of repeated thresholds of various qualities. At a minimum there is an entry threshold and an exit threshold. “Episodes” along the path construct additional thresholds.

- A path has event densities/gradients along it that distort linear time through moment by moment involvement with local conditions.

- A path creates a memory that lingers after leaving it.

- A path prepares the user for what lies ahead and/or distances the user from the condition left behind.

- A path regulates time. It constructs a sense of time through experiences.

- A path is not always about promenade, or creating views. It is about creating a relationship between the starting and ending points. This relationship may as well be created by cairns or words or memories.

- Ultimately all space can be mapped as system of paths (relationships), intersecting, overlapping, branching. It is merely assumed that conditions change moment to moment and are unique for each person.

- Paths may be intentionally constructed and used, or they may be a particular route that someone chooses to take simply because of that person’s individual “reading” of elements in the landscape.
A path, as defined here, is established not only from interaction with physical elements but from other interactive “events” as well. The following image, Figure 3, suggests that paths are simply a series of “events” experienced in a particular order. They may be defined by a series of physical landmarks, where “place B” follows “place A.” They may be based on the sequential use of, e.g., utensils, as in the second diagram or they may simply be a set of behavior related movements acted out in order.

Movement through the tea garden demonstrates these three conditions. (It is interesting to speculate how well the mood of a tea ceremony might be produced in, for example, an open parking lot by simply having participants go through the ritual without benefit of architecture or utensil. In this case a new “place” would be created for the participants out of what only moments before was an undifferentiated car park.
Figure 3. Paths defined by (a) architecture, (b) utensil usage, (c) behavior
The idea that a path’s primary function is to somehow establish a connection between two points suggests that there are simple paths, which create clear relationships between start and end points, and more complex paths that correspondingly establish complex, perhaps ambiguous relationships.

Specific “characteristics” that effect the nature of a path (which were helpful in expanding the conceptual definition of what a path is) are discussed below.

**Difference:** The sensation of difference allows for the perception of movement. This may take on the effect of a repeated physical element that consequently establishes a meter, or it may be some non-repetitive change over distance.

Metering presents a situation that is much like a series of cairns. The meter itself doesn’t give any indication of location within the path but simply marks movement. If the meter is not evenly spaced, the sense of time becomes indeterminate. We can only navigate by our perceived relative position to things conceived as different. Movement, position, self awareness only comes through the perception of difference.

The notion of difference takes many forms. It can be made explicit or used to create ambiguity. It allows for the sense of something emerging from a fog where the
relationship between object and ground progresses towards the explicit, or as it fades
into gray, tends toward the hallucinatory.

A sensitivity to difference is culturally conditional. An unrelated social example can be
related to the physical realm: Kari Weil argued androgyny “is the denial of difference.”
Since the word “denial” implies an awareness of the standard gender roles, it seems more
likely that to affect androgyny requires a hyper-awareness of difference to the point that
the gender role codings are either neutralized or subverted so there is either no reading or
a controlled ambiguous reading. Androgyny practiced by a group has its own signals and
codings easily interpreted by the group’s members but pass to others at large. Androgyny
creates a tribalistic coding system intentionally meant to subvert the reading of
conventional viewers while allowing those “in the know” to read and access the meaning.

It is an interesting point that a fundamental component of the tea ceremony is
connoisseurship, the appreciation of subtle differences between, e.g., tea utensils. In
chanoyu, there is significant but to the untrained eye small variation amongst tea cups but
it could be argued that it is the very subtlety of this difference that actually heightens the
sense of movement through the ceremony and in part operates to tie one tea together with
another.

**Layering / Wrapping:** It has been discussed earlier how the very notion of path
making is dependent on creating a system of layers that separate place “A” from “B.” At
the point of moving from one layer to the next is the location of a threshold which may take any form from something physical and opaque to something completely transparent but experiential. Layers are recognizable because in moving from one to the next they show some degree of change.

**Fragmentation / Veiling / Screening:** A characteristic of layering is the possibility that movement across thresholds (or at least the view across) is somehow blocked or provisional. Reducing this to a condition of “information transfer” begins to suggest that layering can be come explicit through the act of veiling or screening.

Whenever there is a visual relationship between two places the degree of “veiling” effects the sense of separation. Pure atmosphere or white noise is the condition of an infinitely deep threshold since nothing is there beyond to connect with. At any point along a pathway techniques that fragment or cloud the perception of an object (or event) effect the relationship of the participant with the environment. Consequently, the sense of place, as it is defined against neighboring places, takes on a characteristic of imprecision.

Veiling, when it allows for the ambiguous reading of a situation begins to suggest the notion of *oku*. In this case there is an interior space that is difficult to really know and never meant to be occupied.
The opposite of a veiled condition is where the specific, the rational, the quiet or the objective truth is expressed.

**Adjacency / Discontinuity:** In its simplest configuration, a system of layers is modeled much like an onion with concentric skins. A specific path penetrating these “skins” has an inherent logic that makes it legible and gives a cohesiveness to the path. In the more complicated and real world condition of multiple centers with overlapping adjacent territories the onion geometry becomes fractured and a condition arises where dissimilar pathway sequences abut one another, intersect, etc. In this case when various logic systems butt up against one another a special condition is created where there are regions of discontinuity. These discontinuities are not part of a path but always exist as an edge condition to them.

Figure 4 shows how a single-center domain gains complexity as more centers are added. Each center point is surrounded by a set of concentric rectangles that suggest a system of protective layers. Any line perpendicular to these layers denotes a specific path. As the diagram gains complexity, the various layering systems fragment and fall into some relationship with their neighboring fragments. An interesting spatial condition is created at the point of discontinuity between adjacent fragments as shown in the blow-up at lower right.
Creating Geography: Naming creates a topography out of an otherwise neutral landscape. The wilderness is placeless until someone applies an ordering system to it which may be as simple as given names to prominent landmarks. An example from the tea garden: three rocks surround the water basin which look identical to the untrained eye. The first rock, however, is named the “Front Stone” and is for crouching upon. The rock to the right is called the “Hot Water Vessel Stone” and the one to the left is called
the “Lamplighting Stone.” The informed reading of the elements in the landscape not
only constructs order but tells one how to behave within it.

The Narrative: Path making is closely tied to the construction of a narrative. The “story”
gives individuality and presence to any place. It informs one how to use the place, what the
perceived relationships are. What one expects from a path, therefore, may be as rich as what one
expects from simple conversation. It may contain “facts”, “half truths”, lies, gossip, a
mathematical formula, a story.

A pathway, or perceived connection is made between two places through the narrative. In the
extreme case a relationship is sustained between two places even if there is no physical
connection.

Back doors: Any path that is porous to cross movement has “backdoors” - points of
entry and exit on the path that undermine or break an otherwise prescribed sequence.
People, who use “backdoors” may inhabit the same space as someone else but not the
same place. They arrive at similar locations but are not prepared to share it in the same
way as someone who arrived there with different experiences.

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The Roadhouse
The Roadhouse

The roadhouse is a rural American bar, a building that more often than not is an air conditioned shed that offers an escape from climate and work-a-day concerns - with a marquee out front and neon beer signs in the window. Typically buildings of this type turn their back on the road and are completely internalized. It is a place to get a beer and hang out after work, maybe hear some local music and dance on Friday and Saturday nights. The roadhouse proposed here offers the same opportunity for withdrawal and entertainment.

The East Texas roadhouse is:

- A light weight, possibly temporary structure of little value.
- A raft upon a tall grass sea. (A place where birds might want to nest.)
- A building with soft edges. (The night darkness becomes the walls.)
- Open to the air, Open to the late summer buzz of cicadas and the buzz of bug zappers. The occasional breath of air that blows through is welcomed but never seems to be enough.
- A place for drinking cold beer in the humid night air before dancing.
- An organ to sense climatic variation. It sheds rain. It is open to the breezes and views of the dark trees silhouetted across the field.
Within the bar there are very specific rules of behavior that are unique to this location. The way people greet each other, order a drink, gossip, or ask someone to dance is all treated differently in the roadhouse setting than another public place. The kind of behavior that is perhaps the most prescribed and has the strongest “expectations” has to do with flirting or cruising, in other words, the social interactions that people go through to show attraction and desire. Chanoyu and flirting/cruising both share the need for (ritualized) language, which in the latter case may be suggestive and teasing. Both take advantage of code words, body language and careful attention to what meaning is exposed and what is hidden. At the roadhouse this begins in the parking lot, builds over drinks and climaxes (arguably) on the dance floor.

There is a poetic similarity between the tea garden and the roadhouse. In both, behavior is specified without being necessarily self conscious. The first exemplifies the highest expression of cultivation while the second is more like a folk tradition. In both, coded phrases convey meaning. In both, anticipated behavior propels the “ceremony” forward. A built-in condition of veiled behaviors are as explicitly interpretable in the formal introductions of a tea ceremony as are flirtations in a bar.

The elements of the tea garden become contextualized in the roadhouse. “Moon viewing” windows become neon signs and car headlights. The charcoal embers illuminate like cigarette lighters. Connoisseurship in chanoyu becomes the appreciation of erotic gesture and the subtle codings of dress. The garden path becomes the pick-up
zone. In both there is programmed behavior between guests and host (bar keep). In each there is increasing ritualized behavior the deeper one penetrates into the precinct.

If the tea garden is the open space between the main gate and the teahouse, the diagram is inverted with the roadhouse so that it becomes expressed as the enclosed space between a perceived front gate and the open patio in back.

The roadhouse developed for this project is diagrammatically a hallway that acts as a deep threshold to separate the road from a back patio region. The hallway has been programmed with a sequence of episodes that parallels those identified in the tea garden. The back deck, dark and open to the night sky, is the destination of the pathway. It is raised above a grass field with views out across the empty plain to a line of trees silhouetted in the distance.

**Site**

Because of the emphasis on temporal conditions, the site is situated in time, climate, mood and culture but not necessarily place. It is located in night time darkness somewhere along a two lane highway (what is called a “farm to market” road) passing through flat coastal Texas farm land. It exists only for the people traveling on the highway. At night, the road becomes endless and the distinctiveness of the individual farms is lost as they are reduced to passing points of light. Likewise, the infrequent
automobile traffic is reduced to similar oncoming headlights. The personality of the landscape is washed away into a general sameness.

The site is the side of the road, the boundary condition between roadway and a field of tall grass. The roadhouse occupies the line of discontinuity between the two opposing logic systems. The road is directional, one dimensional, corresponding to a hallway where movement is completely prescribed. The field, on the other hand, is directionless, an unmapped sea - lit by stars and the distant light pollution of small towns and refineries. At night the roadhouse has a convincing role to play in configuring the landscape. During the day, however, the structure is shallow, empty, static, meaningless because its generative narrative doesn’t operate.

At night from the highway the roadhouse is a dark body. A few lights mark its location and the main point of entry, but these aren’t meant to attract attention. Car headlights periodically wash deep into the interior. Someone not planning to stop will pass by without noticing it. The roadhouse is hidden to those not knowing it is there.
The project siting was chosen because of the opportunity to construct a bridge between
the road and a dark field. A night time field, for all intent and purposes, is a thing to gaze
upon, appreciate its calm, but not inhabit. It is not coincidental that the diagram
presented here is similar to that of the relationship of old Japanese villages to their local
highway and shrines. As described in Maki’s article:

*As Yuichiro Kojiro points out in his study of Japanese communities, I find the original pattern of village communities - where pastoral fields and houses compose a hamlet with the mountains in the background - quite important as it graphically emphasizes the existence of oku. Such a village is often arranged in a linear way along a highway at the foot of a mountain, overlooking the paddy fields developed around it. Perpendicular to the spine of the village, there is established a religious axis connecting the shrine at the foot of the mountain and the okumiya (remote shrine) recessed deeper in the mountains.*

*The above pattern is exactly the basis of the formation that can be seen everywhere throughout the country, where there is a shrine slightly off a road and backed up by a grove of trees. The act of setting up an okumiya deep in the mountains where people would not normally go establishes an idea giving importance to an unseen place. For this purpose one could get to the okumiya only along a winding mountain trail. This pattern is quite in contrast with that of Western society where the church, the symbol of the core of faith, is designed to be seen.*

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**Event stages**

To those not stopping, the roadhouse is a minor light along a dark road without meaning
or sense of place. However, to those who know it, the light indicates a point of access.

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The arrival from the highway begins the sequence of the prescribed path that leads one off the road and into the calmer expanses of the field.

The following event stages are the same as those described for the tea garden. They are contextualized for the roadhouse program.

**Preparation:** In going out to a dance bar, it is customary to dress in a way that is both casual but at the same time enticing. Arrangements may or may not have been made to meet people at the bar.

**Main Gate:** The “main gate” of the road house is a “soft threshold.” It is conceptual barrier that is spaced over a large distance. It is assumed that “guests” arrive by road in which case the initial act of entry into the precinct occurs as one decelerates from the highway and changes to the more intimate scale of the parking lot. Whereas in the tea garden, ritualized behavior begins upon entering the garden itself, bar patrons begin to adopt a “bar attitude” in the parking lot.

Additional thresholds comprise the entry sequence in order to create a greater sense of separation from the road. By locating the parking on the opposite side of the highway patrons must cross the road to enter the bar. In so doing they are confronted with passing cars which both act as a barrier to navigate through.
A bright light shines at a low angle across the road from the entrance of the bar. It locates the entry for the initiated who know what it marks but because the interior lighting is subdued, it blinds the guest to the physical conditions soon to be encountered. During the street crossing the guest moves from one sharp, direct light to another. Their body is repeatedly exposed and hidden from view of other people. The headlights of oncoming cars subsequently play an important role in the temporal experience of crossing the street and entering the bar.

The final threshold are the steps that lead up under the roof onto the interior decking. There are no exterior walls. Another way of considering the “main gate” is the experience of stepping down out of the car and stepping up into the roadhouse.
The lighting is important throughout this stage of the sequence because of the way it fragments objects and makes a somewhat ambiguous environment to walk through. Harsh lighting throws deep shadows, creates silhouettes and acts to temporarily blind a person. The entry experience could also be considered the sense of disjointedness that occurs between the clarity of being on the road and the clarity being inside.

**Final Preparation:** Final preparation usually takes place in the car’s rear view mirror or in the bar’s bathroom upon entering. Although final work to one’s “look” or dress is often a part of the socializing that occurs in a bar, it is inappropriate to do this on full public display. Upon stepping up onto the covered decking, there is a screen wall that blocks the view deeper into the bar. This acts as an equivalent to the vestibule in the tea garden.

**Waiting Area:** Beyond the screen wall is the location of the actual bar itself where drinks are served and people congregate to socialize, relax and prepare for moving deeper into the precinct. A mood is set for the evening through alcohol, decoration and lighting. It is the only place in the roadhouse where soft ambient lighting is in use. The intention is to create a sense of people coming together around a campfire beyond which everything is dark. The bright central light makes the surrounding areas difficult to see into. From the entrance, a guest walks out of the shadows and into this light.
To make a stronger connection with the tea garden's _machiai_, it would be appropriate to decorate this area with images that enhance role playing - car posters, sports images, virile models selling cigarettes. The TV might be showing CNN - really, anything already typically found in a casual bar.

**Waiting Bench:** The primary feature of the roadhouse is a long passageway oriented parallel to the road. At one end is the bar and at the other is an entry on to the back patio. One side of the passage is more or less open while the one on the street side is walled off. Along the open side the structure acts to screen the view outside. Built into the structural elements are rails to lean against and place drinks upon which further screen the view out. This is an area meant for intimate conversation or "posing" alone, waiting for someone to come and join you. The long open wall has dividers built in that screen most of the body from people looking down the passage while creating intimate areas for social intercourse.

People stopping here have the opportunity to watch the activity around them. It is as if they are looking across a garden at the attractions of the landscaping which in this case
are probably other people they have some interest in. Like in the tea garden, stopping here is a chance to mentally prepare to move deeper into the precinct.

The lighting here is from small downlights that throw small columns of light. People are constantly moving in and out of these beams giving the view down the hall a staccato rhythm.

In areas that are otherwise unlit, the cruise ritual of lighting another person's cigarette creates momentary zones of unambiguity. The match light temporarily creates a place inhabited only with those two people who are blinded to anything outside the match light. However, it also gives everyone else the opportunity to better see in. The match lightings become momentary center points around which are organized their own set of layers defining connection between someone outside and the activity within.
**Passage and Control (Inner Roji and Garden Gate):** The above passageway is in effect similar in function to the inner roji of the tea garden. It is the zone that most physically separates the street from the deeper interior. It is simple and uncluttered so that the visual emphasis remains on the people inhabiting it. The people, in other words, are both the subjects and the objects in this landscape.

The congestion around the service bar creates a physical barrier to passage and effectively restricts movement between the table area of the bar (which could be considered the outer garden) and the inner space. This becomes the equivalent to the garden gate. The “guests” themselves in this case become a temporal part of the architecture as they block easy movement along the hallway.

**Transition (Crawl in Entrance):** The point of egress from the passage is designed to bring a degree of self awareness to the sequence of movement through the roadhouse. This is the final threshold encountered before reaching the goal of the path. It is marked by a right angle turn off the passage, a movement from darkness to brightly lit white walls before returning back into night time darkness. (The lighting anticipates a period of time required for the eyes to readjust to darkness which extends the experience of the threshold while simultaneously softening its edges.)
Destination (Tea House): On the backside of the roadhouse is a dance deck raised up above the field. The few lights are tiny point sources mounted in no particular order. Here dancing may or may not be going on. The particular type of dance, rigidity of rules and how one joins or does not join in define the extent of the ritualized behavior here.
Display (Tokonoma): Another reason for coming to the back deck is to view the night sky or experience the lush animal noises of the dark field. The guest’s focus throughout the roadhouse up to this point has been internally directed but is now projected out into the environment at large. Around the perimeter of the deck is narrow shed roof that frames the view or, when live music is performed, a place for the band to stage itself. Views out provide a contemplative access to a place that is not meant to be inhabited and reinforce the idea of the roadhouse as a pathway and not necessarily a goal in itself.

Backdoor: The roadhouse bar allows many different trajectories across its territory. Of these there is the single one that has been prescribed as being equivalent to the tea garden. However, it is only relevant if the “guest” chooses to participate in the programming of the path. At any point the path may be deserted and left behind.

Architectonics

The event stages identified above were assembled into a unified building. Figure 5 presents the overall floor plan of the roadhouse and shows its relationship to the street.
As described earlier, the building is configured as passageway that runs parallel to the street which acts as connector between the street and the open field. A system of layers is set up parallel to the street which are sequentially penetrated. The layers proceed as: road, shoulder, passage, cleft and deck. Walls are only used as screening devices and, therefore, each responds to the local requirements of the path with varying degrees of opacity and complexity. Other tools for establishing separation when there is no need for a visual barrier include a change in deck height, breaks in the decking and variation in ceiling height.

Parking is across the street requiring patrons to walk across traffic to the point of entry at the south end of the building. Stairs lead one into the building where there is an open area separated from the rest of the building by a screening wall. Passing this wall the guest enters an area where the bar is located. This area is large enough to accommodate tables and chairs but the main feature is the bar itself. Chain link security shutters that swing down to protect the bar when closed are otherwise tied up in a horizontal position to create an island in the landscape defined by a low, more intimate ceiling. This is in contrast to the rest of the roadhouse where the ceilings are tall and designed to disappear into the shadows cast by the structural system.

Next to the bar there is access to the back deck. This is an explicit “back door” since it is intentionally located to short circuit the prescribed pathway. It was included in the design
Figure 5. Roadhouse Plan
to simply acknowledge that no one can be made to participate in a given series of events (the prescribed pathway).

Movement along the bar continues into the main passageway. Between the passage and the street is a buffer zone that protects the passage without isolating it. The support functions like toilets and storage are located here.

At the end of the passage a bridge connects over to a free standing back deck. The deck is open to the sky except for one area where a shed roof runs perpendicular to the street. Throughout the building, tiny jogs and changes in floor elevation mark points of transition between the episodes.

External walls are un-necessary. As with the Japanese climate, coastal Texas is hot and humid throughout most of the year. The primary climatic response of this architecture is
to protect from rain and allow whatever cooling breezes there are to pass through. The night darkness creates the only boundary needed around the open structure. The night’s contextual elements of smell and noise are free to enter, pass through and exit.

Where there are walls, they create contrast through their determined configuration with the darker voids. Wood is used throughout. Structure is exposed, possibly redundant, overlapping, and ambiguous. The light casts shadows that creates places of unknown qualities amongst the rafters.

The structure is straight forward, unpretentious, lacking any degree of sophistication. The materials are cheap, easily obtained and easy to assemble. There is nothing clever about the mode of construction. Any detail that deserves a second look has been located to heighten the involvement between a guest and the building at that location.
The structural bay dimension changes along the length of the building and is sized to the “intensity of the local event.” That is, in areas where variation in the experience of moving through the building is small (e.g., walking down the main passageway) the structural bay is large so that there is as little as possible in the way to complicate the simple rhythm of walking. In other areas where there is a high degree of interaction with the building, e.g., around the bar zone or in crossing the threshold onto the back deck, the structural bay is smaller, more strident and necessitating greater involvement.

Different structural systems operate throughout the building so that there are zones where they overlap. At the macro scale, the multiple different rhythmic patterns engage one another creating a controlled “noise.”

The way this building is configured, it has no “object” value. It is not meant to be seen as a single, logical entity either from the street or in the mind’s eye. Its presence is meant to
People, weather, street traffic are all considered important features of the architecture.
The experience of the building, therefore, is constantly changing. The landscape it creates
organizes in one configuration and then re-organizes into another. It is always in a state
of movement with only temporary relationships developed between key parts.
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It was an original interest in this project to compare the spatial implications of ritualized behavior in the tea garden with how space is ritualistically used in male cruise bars and/or sex clubs. Although these two programs seem to have nothing in common at first glance with a closer look it can be argued they are merely only extreme examples of the same thing. They both construct precincts that are psychologically removed from the everyday world and they both rely on movement through an environment to satisfy the goals of the “ceremony.”

The following two descriptions are meant to be contrasted to show similarities in the path like qualities of the two different programs. The first describes movement through a Urasenke tea garden and the second describes movement through an early 1980’s New York gay sex club.

**Ceremonial Movement Through a Tea garden**

Those invited to a tea function should take a bath and make a careful toilette and put on their dress of ceremony. It is customary for guests to arrive fifteen minutes early. The tea gathering begins with the arrival of the guests at the host’s main gate. This is where ritual behavior starts and the guests assume learned and “extraordinary” attitudes toward each other. Symbolic communication also begins at the main gate.
The guests enter the vestibule (yoritsuki), where they leave their belongings, change clothes if necessary or perform final preparations to their dress. Those wearing kimono generally bring a change of tabi, the split-toed socks worn with kimono, while those in Western dress usually bring a pair of white socks. It is customary for each guest to leave an envelope with a small contribution to help defray kitchen expenses.

The guests then move into the waiting room, where they await the arrival of all those invited and collect their thoughts. The host, realizing that the right atmosphere here will help put the guests in the proper mood for tea, has carefully prepared the waiting room. Its decoration is subdued so as not to detract from that of the tearoom; if a scroll is displayed, it will be of a light nature. Hot cups of water or a light tea is often served by the host's assistant. When all have arrived and are rested, the guests step outside into the straw sandals the host has provided and proceed to the waiting arbor.

In the waiting arbor, the guests find a stack of round straw cushions - one for each person - with the top cushion turned upside down with a smoking set on top. This is a pause in which to enjoy the beauty of the roji garden.

The host now presents himself to the guests to signal that all is in readiness. Having made sure that the tearoom is spotlessly clean and added incense to the hearth, he exits through the room's crawl-in entrance, walks over to the water basin, and purifies himself
by rinsing his hands and mouth. The guests, seeing the host, rise, take a few steps forward, and all silently bow their heads in unison. The host then turns and walks back to the crawl-in entrance. When the host has disappeared, each guest in turn takes leave of the others to purify mouth and hands at the basin before going to the crawl in entrance.

At the crawl-in entrance, each guest in turn crouches on a stepping stone and briefly views the interior. Then, ducking through the entrance, he or she places the straw sandals next to those of the host, out of the way of the next guest. Once in the tearoom, each guest proceeds first to admire the scroll and flower arrangement of the tokonoma.\textsuperscript{18}

\textbf{Ceremonial Movement through a Late 70's Sex Club.}

In gay culture certain locations offer an environment in which cruising for anonymous sex occurs. Over time ritualized behavior has evolved that organize the movements and interactions between men who compete for sex in these locations. Just as with \textit{chanoyu} each participant has a role. Each participant is educated in what his role requires. The environment ultimately is important only in that it enhances an individuals desirability. The need to suspend exterior realities creates an inner precinct where ritualized behavior is the norm (in a secular condition without, e.g., the religious hierarchy).


**Main Gate**  
“Last night I dreamed I went back to the Mineshaft. I knew I had come home even before entering the unmarked door and climbing the flight of stairs to pay my five dollars. Outside, on the sidewalk - where I’d sometimes linger and survey the street action that was often hot enough to induce me to skip the bar entirely - I savored the exhaust that was being sucked out of the bar’s downstairs suite by powerful industrial fans. Beer, piss, poppers, leather, sweat - the smells blended into a perfume more reassuringly familiar than the *Bal a Versailles* I remember from my mother’s dressing table.”

*(primary threshold, where signs are posted easily readable by the initiated.)*

**Vestibule / Preparation**  
“The first beer at the upstairs bar was just a formality. I gulped it down and immediately asked the tattooed bartender for another, the second one to sip - a prop, really, to keep my hands occupied until something better came along. Inside, a typical evening was underway: someone in the sling, ingeniously concealing someone else’s are up to the elbow; onlookers rapt, then moving on causally, to survey some of the other attractions that were taking form in the shadows; assorted human undergrowth here and there, some of it inert and some gently undulating like deep-sea flora. On the platform toward the back, a tall blond man was getting blown. I stood nearby for a while and watched - evaluating his musculature with a touch, scrutinizing his gestures for a flaw in that impeccable attitude, observing the degree to which his arched posture expressed a belief in this kind of recreation - then I turned and went downstairs.”

*(Stopping at designated place to prepare for what comes ahead by taking an initial beverage and looking out upon a contemplative scene.)*

**Passage**  
“I always spit in the back stairway, as a sort of a ritual of purification, I suppose. Below, things were getting steamier, and I adjusted my fly accordingly. The piss room was packed, un navigable, with dense clumps of flesh around each tub and growing outwards from the corners. I walked past the posing niche and entered the club’s farthest recess, the downstairs bar.”
(Act of purification while passing through a series of transitional landscapes inspiring meditation before entering the ceremonial heart.)

Viewing Alcove  “There, on his knees, was Paul. Known more widely than seemed possible as the Human Urinal, Paul had installed himself in one of his favorite spots for the early part of an evening, a relatively open and well lighted place that invited inspection but did not permit extended scenes. Paul is immobile as I as I pass, but I see by his slowly shifting eyes that he knows I’ve arrived. And He’s glad: even in the dark I sense that his pupils have dilated a fraction when he notices I’m carrying a can of beer. I raise it slightly in his direction in a kind of toast. He understands. I stop for a moment opposite his, the constant flow of men between us. Then, because I felt I should follow through with a sympathetic gesture, I bring the can to my lips while pissing, almost incidentally, in my jeans.”

(Inside the most inner zone is a still more distant place to look upon only. A visitor does not need to enter this place but its contents express the mood and reason for coming at all.)
APPENDIX 2

The Teahouse/Roadhouse project is very much part of an ongoing exploration into issues of how paths define places and thereby order landscapes. Four older projects are described below to suggest a body of work on this topic. In each case, the intention and focus shifted somewhat but together they suggest the foundations on which this thesis project is based.

Phoenix Day Care Project (Spencer Parson's studio)

A very small project... A day care building with classrooms on a large site in the hills outside of Phoenix. The program was satisfied by locating a massive barrel vaulted bar building across a ridge line. Perpendicular to the bar and cutting through it is a broken path with program fragments scattered along as needed. The path has no necessary logic. It rises and falls, cuts right or left on whim. Points of access to the various program elements are marked in the pavement in elaborate inlaid murals. From the high point of the path, coinciding with the location where it cuts through the bar building, it becomes apparent these “signs” are positioned in a precise straight line (with various distances between them). The ordering of event points contrasts with the path’s seeming arbitrariness. And this armature is in contrast to the externally ordered bar building which, in fact, is entirely disorderly and maze like on the interior...
The Urban Campground  (Bill Sherman studio)

Fiction:
I'm road tripping. 70 mph for 16 hours straight and I stop for coffee at a convenience store. The counter person is talking to a man buying cigarettes about local news. I stand there and I think I could be at any one of a hundred convenience stores I've passed in the last 3 days. They look at me and don't see me. I look at them and don't see them. I feel I exist in a rift and feel lonely for the person I shared a glance with 10 miles back as he sped by me.

In the heart of Houston is a forgotten place. A casualty of poor development plans and a turned economy, a large tract of land has been taken out of use and fallen (so to speak) between the cracks of the city fabric. It is proposed here that the land be re-inhabited for overnight camping by people coming off the interstate that runs just to the north. The community of fellow long distance road travelers shall share a place in the city of Houston that is really not part nor wanted by the city. The road travelers share the memory of the homogenous interstate landscape where everywhere is no place and everywhere has equal access to the same franchised support services that make hundreds of miles of road travel equal. By coming to the urban campground, the sense of anonymity is retained in terms of a "guests' relationship to the city at large, but a community of "others" comes together, in self recognition.

Although two major local arterials flank the site to the east and west, it is imagined that the acreage at night disappears from view and memory of the people passing by on their nightly errands. In this way a vast area becomes a conceptual rift - a bubble of non-city, non-place flanked by the otherwise continuous city fabric. It is only on closer inspection
that it is understood that the city everywhere is fundamentally made up of these rifts.

The inhabitants of each have there individual stories. Each can look out from within their particular rift or pass across the boundary into conventional city space but it is only when someone is receptive to the place that an outsider might see in.

The Urban Campground requires that the roadsides of the local arterials be developed with commercial strips, as found anywhere. Behind the strips the vast empty area is to be paved. A utility spine of light poles, RV hookups, toilets/showers, stall markers and sleeping platforms is laid out in a large oval. By itself it has almost no mass and no presence but as campers join into it, as a reef attracts all forms of life, a mega structure emerges that is determined moment by moment by the needs and number of the people using the services.

The Wrecking yard (John Casbarian studio)

On a south east edge of the city a spur of development in the post war years laid out square miles of cheap track houses and early commercial strips. Almost as soon as it was built the area went into decline and the neighborhoods around Cullen Blvd. have since taken on the patina of older “bones” covered in a patchwork of small additions and repairs.
Because there have been no large scale redevelopment projects in the area, the Cullen strip is somewhat unusual in terms of its density and small scale. It presents a tattered but complex street landscape which strongly contrasts with the residential neighborhoods it cuts through. It is especially apparent in this region that there was a homogeneous logic to the layout of the suburbs (i.e., the detached houses on small lots on a gridded street system) and a second logic for the development of the commercial strip. The strip simply cuts through the suburban fabric without any effort to bridge or mend the conflict in logic systems.

The project studied the threshold condition as one moved from Cullen Blvd. into the neighborhoods. The perception of threshold was put into context of direction of travel. In other words, it was recognized that the threshold was only experienced when one turned at right angles to the direction of movement along Cullen. The logic system of the strip requires parallel movement to maintain coherency. Deviation from this leads one into a threshold condition. The existing buildings along the strip address this situation by ignoring it. The street side facades are made into billboards, the depth of the building is left mute.

Along Cullen is an existing auto wrecking yard. It is proposed that a new garage be built to serve this yard but which also addresses the threshold it straddles. This was done by (1) “crashing” in a second program - adding a dance practice studio to the building so that there would be a natural mixing of people coming in from the surrounding neighborhoods
with those who might be arriving from other parts of the city to use the garage (an intentional habitation of the threshold zone) and (2) configuring the building in terms of an “event density gradient” so that activities and interactions with architectural elements pull one across the threshold from the street to the neighborhood and back again. The notion of a building configured as a landscape of “events” serves to inform the architectonics.

The Meriada Cathedral Transformation (Amy Anderson studio)

Fiction:
From a square cathedral four doors lead out to the cardinal points. The door to the south opens off a dense market street. (The village people enter here to pray after pushing through the crowd of vendors, high stacks of wares, thick smells and brash noises). The door to the north opens off a quiet plaza where the expensive tourist hotels are located. (Tourists wander in to sight-see with the same enthusiasm as if they were entering one of the adjacent restaurants.) The door to the west opens off a cramped corridor that connects to a labyrinthine system of small rooms, hallways and stairs. (Here the Zapatista rebels enter to solicit sanctuary as political refugees.) And the door to the east opens off a long garden arcade that connects to the bishop’s palace. The villagers, the tourists, the rebels and the priests all inhabit the body of the cathedral but it is fundamentally a different place for each of them.

In late 1993 The Chiapas Rebels began a popular uprising against the Mexican government. By January, 1994 the Zapatista’s had been so succesful they had touched the imagination of struggling peoples around the world and left the federal government no choice but to begin settlement negotiations. These original talks took place between Subcomandante San Marcos, rebel leader, and representatives of the government. (The silent but arguably most important participant in these negotiations was the CNN news
crews who provided the access to public opinion making.) The original talks took place in the Cathedral of San Cristobal. This project begins by projecting a situation in the near future when, rather than being resolved, government suppression leads to the uprising to spread throughout all southern Mexico. At some point there is fighting in the streets of Meriada in the Yucatan state and as the federal government takes an offensive position, Zapatistas take sanctuary in the Meriada cathedral.

Given this possible condition, it was imagined what different reasons people would come to visit the cathedral of Meriada. All would be sharing the same room but the place would be fundamentally different for each. In this case, on a given day, town’s people would come to pray, tourists would come to photograph, the clergy would be there to preach and a small rebel population have take up some semi-permanent residence amongst the column bays. For each of these groups the cathedral would be a very different place.

The project explored notions of perceived difference in “place” by trans-figuring points of access. Four different entry sequences were designed to suggest the nature of the different “paths” that bought each group into the building. As the project evolved, the cathedral went through several transformations so that the interior great volume was reduced to a mere crossroads of over determined pathways. As a final part of the transformation, and in reaction to the notion that pathways themselves are less about their physicality than the psychological role they play, the paths themselves went through a series of transformations finally becoming represente by fields of abstracted patterns.