Department of Architecture
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The Gestalt Institute
A Learning Center for Holistic Healing

Bachelor of Architecture Degree Program
Thesis Project

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- Drum Circle A.D.
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### Appendix
What is the position of our being?
What is it that sustains us?
Can we survive without the release?
How does the release sustain us?

Would architecture seek to destroy itself?

Space is as Space is.

It destroys itself only to bring us back to a point.
Would space defined create itself for the purpose of undefining itself?
Can I create a piece of architecture that by its own doing makes itself useless?
But what level creates this undoing and what is there to sustain this?
Is there a return?
Do we jump without the secret knowledge that must return us to safety.
Architectural suicide or time granting us a brief second of limitless pleasures?

Is this just a glorified form of meditation?
What makes this unique-it is a cohesion-a sap that came dripping from the seams of rafters, splashing on cymbals (symbols) breaking every law and sending us forward-one unit no longer three-one force unified grasping at unfamiliar territory, gasping at the ease at which it is lost.

What is the Mediator?
What brings back reality?
Where did it go?

There is a light that I orient myself with - whatever happens the light will guide.
Perhaps you flounder aimlessly upon a stage searching for the sound if it has escaped you. It seems to signify the end of a ride, the arrival safe and snug, hopelessly lost. Is there a guide that not only bridges, but engages and transports. Light is transport it is waves.
Light:
There is a ritual. A dance toward entrance. There need to be visual clues identifying the key of the path. The chords. The passages all intertwine into a culminating force, the breath of life, a power source tapped into only under mystical conditions. Can these conditions be controlled? What is the nature of the trance? How is that we supplement this activity? How does light help to penetrate? Is it the strobe flash, a frequency that engages the subconscious to sublimate our bodies to a universal force? You have no control, yet somehow understand that you are in control or perhaps it is the simple realization that you are at least safe, for the moment. I don't know that either of these two actions took thoughts.

I have emptied my mind and left a grey haze,
cool grey 50%, with a touch of french grey at the bottom,
bleeding up catching the last glimpse of paradise as the grey transforms into the watercolour fat swirls,
a stuttering film projector caught on a memory- a thought about light.

For in all my trances, I can rely only on one thing, light in some form, diffused usually away from my face, not above, usually at or below my eye level. How about a moving pattern to induce the trance. Is there a sequence that begins to reconstruct nothingness. Does nothingness- the superconscious reveal itself visually? Not in my experience, not yet, but I would like to continue the investigation, but maybe this is the wrong avenue. I shouldn't try and recreate the trance in terms of its drum counterparts. Maybe I should examine those aspects of drum or music induced trance and carry this over to an architectural investigation. What are the emotions involved? What about the suppression of the consciousness that identifies time. Can I define a timeless space? Blocking out the image that speaks about time. Light is random or constant, but it is not recognizable in terms of the passage of time. If you move light to a controlled medium, as long as you never leave then you get into sync with your true sleeping and living patterns- up for 36 hours and then sleep for 19 hours. You are no longer bound to day and night- forced to relegate your existence on perceived time. Time always exists but it becomes subconscious, it is itself, you are not aware of the time.

Death:
The ultimate awakening, the point at which time disappears and the answers are revealed. There is an idea of seclusion, you are alone, you are dead, yet you are not alone, you are eternal and as eternal you are one. You become forever connected to the universe and become the universe- do you separate from the eternal consciousness? Do you become a part of the eternal consciousness? Do you still embody a certain power that is your own- or do you become a part of the chemistry? Or is there no action? Is there a connection, can you feel it? Do we believe this or are we merely furthering our ego as to say we are immortal.

Is this a clinic?
Do I need to be healed? [Yes]
Can I heal you with this?
Do you have to play the drums- How do I transform my beauty, my key, into a universal gift? Maybe only one person can access. Is that meaningful? Is it contributing? Do I need to bury myself to be reborn? Was this a fluke? Was I not supposed to experience this? I was and I do because of my continued commitment. But how can you hope to accomplish this. What does architecture do? Why do I care? Light- mood- atmosphere- gentle aromas masks that begin the process. Does this become sacred? What does it mean to be sacred? AM I entering a church acknowledging the procession, the genuflection- the blessing. Does this heighten my emotions to super status? If I do not take part in this process do I invalidate the space, does it become profane, do I lose my connection, my portal?
My connection is rooted in music. The sublimation of the mind to the subconscious— the release of years of searching only to have it found. The music transforms— a wave, a circle. You become forms of images, slow crashes of midnight. Time has its place or does it? Was it necessary to start your journey with time? How does one jump without fear? How does one engage without seeing the result? I don’t understand yet I thirst for its presence. But its presence cannot be seen. Do I need to be somewhere for this? Can I explode in one space and merely survive in another? What can heighten [strengthen] me? What is the process? What can break you down to feel the infinity of trance.

Place.
Perhaps there is fear. I am afraid at times within the trance. You fall from a ledge, a swoosh, the lights kick up under you, the room tilts, spins downward blurry with the flicker of a candle which transforms into a fatty tissue, watercolour of reds separated in fields of yellow, the yellow mustard glow of the candle, surrounded by brown stains that pull the light, focus the light onto my emotions, it causes terror because I cannot focus, my mind scrambles to reconstruct the image but what was I looking at? Where was my mind— what are these images like spells that weave below the skin a tight murmur just beyond my reach. There is terror in looking, like a death wish, taunting, testing fate but yet I arrive free of.

Time.
Can the aspect of time be placed on a harsh surface? Time constantly reminds us that it exists—an overbearing presence. Let up, move it farther away to acknowledge that it must be moved away, out of the trance realm, it is a facet that is no longer needed, your services are not required. Does this become an abandoned shack in the valley of an old mining town? It exists because we thought we had to have it at one time, yet now it becomes absurd, obscure, we pass it along the highway— wonder what life must have been like and then proceed on, forgetting in time yet forever remembering. Can we escape time?
Yes!
So what would this shack look like?
Can it mark time?
Perhaps it is not an enclosure or shelter, as it is something to avoid, we pay no tribute to greeting time, there is a simple mark on the ground signifying time.
Do you know what time is?

Your body responds to different set of time constraints, are they genetic? What does time really mean, how aware is the body of time? Cells exist for a time— we must examine that which is timeless. Architecture has timeless properties— it becomes a time in space or space in time that is fixed— there is a notion of the preserved understanding of time, but only that particular time or period— does it becomes universal? No it seems to face itself into history but not forever reaching. There seems to be some drawbacks to timeless spaces. But what if the space voids time? This could April 26, 1972 or 101 b.c.e. Sunday Morning.
Meditation.

Orientation becomes key, it becomes a catalyst to freedom- a closeness in some ways to death. It is a trance that places the world into a timeless pleasure, a limitless pleasure, one that no longer relies on the physical. Yet meditation in some ways needs a set and setting, a time. It is universal, but not universally obtainable. It is something we look for consciously and subconsciously, we need it in order to survive- i need it in order to survive. It places the external world into a small container that is kept by my side, waiting to be reopened, yet for the time of meditation it is concealed- hidden- the external world becomes hidden- we no longer rely on it for existence, the brain maintains the essential physical manipulations. The brain does this without our conscious effort, we suspend ourselves, but do we know when this occurs? Can we perceive the limitless investigations that exist while in a trance or do we go with the flow embracing the trance as the ends to be attained? Where does one go from there?

Tent.
So would the enclosure hide the visitor like death, but with a perceivable entry? The entry should hide the visitor within, so that once enclosed, the external visual clues that we base much of our existence on become void. Yet a hypnotic trance could be beneficial - here is where the idea of the flapping panels comes into play. They create an awareness but intended to be as white noise- intended to motivate the hypnotic trance, it becomes a focal point, like the swaying watch, or the void of the blackboard as I used in grade school- it becomes a means to unclutter the mind to free at least part of it to pure thought- eternal space, while still maintaining the mundane functions that sustain us.
Energy.
The flicker of a candle, the blurring waving hand pulsing up and down, picking up rhythms of the music as the energy connects. Because the light if the candle is so basic, primitive, it responds to its environment, consciously it greets every motion as life, every second as immortality.

The light is no longer under your control.

The small twin entombed in a crypt of wax must also acknowledge its end or does it end? What bends up? Picks and carries the arms, feet of poor hopeless souls giving them a cue, guiding down the hallway, smoke masking our deep breath floating limbs basking in glowing light flexing our journey.

I have spoken to these friends.

They tell me that.

Like a little freedom, it is enshrined in fuel. Letters gain to build on the ridge, perhaps we’re not all going to die, perhaps i will be spared. What if they stop me? Who will free me again?
-Letter from a Friend. R.G.
The pathways are electric current, sound, energy, flowing and stopping, reversing like the rhythm. Like the trance. There is still that call and response the flow and recession, the movement and the static, balance and imbalance. Could the spaces serve as the static, balance? And the pathways that connect the spaces are imbalance. They are movement-energy flowing and receding-as the light penetrates through the skin of the windows, the paths grow and climax. They recede cooling themselves, restoring, refreshing. It is a connection with the movements of humans on a daily life cycle and on a more intimate level-really at any level of investigation there is fundamental exploration, compression, expansion, high, low, yin, female, it is the continuous struggle to attain balance, all the while struggling with imbalance. But that is the journey, it is inevitable. Certain small steps can lead closer to realizing the balance, like the trance, it is the smallest imperciieveable step towards balance- balance of what?

The spirit, the body, the mind, the physical material world providing a foundation for the freedom to balance the mind and spirit, but you must call to mind the imbalance in order to realize and understand balance, one does not exist without the secret knowledge and understanding of the other.

The paths become a response to the challenge of the trance, because it is what trance is, a pathway, an exploration of altered states of consciousness. The path of the trance can be varied as life itself- I do not believe any one form can exist, indeed it has been shown that trance can potentially take place anywhere at any time. But invariably there is the potential to make it easier to induce the trance, to aid in the preparation- I think it is more a matter of culture and mind set that begin or allow one to experience trance. In some cultures trance is part of life, part of ritual, part of a life journey. Like a rite of passage, ascension into adulthood, passing on into the spirit world, these connect the person on a daily basis with trance and ritual.

But again the trance is a path, a beginning point, a journey that crosses over from the physical/material world into spiritual/super consciousness. A path suggests both a beginning, a mind set that has allowed you to proceed further and also the possibility of an ending whether or not the notion is the attainment of some goal. Trance as a path is somewhat unique in that the "end" or ultimate goal, like life, is unknown, it is a mystery. The goal begins to unravel itself as time and experience play out. But is there a time when the goal is understood? Or is there a goal? I assume that because I find benefit in trance that there is a larger issue that may or may not reveal itself. But this is only an assumption. But there is benefit found in the trance. It is a therapy that is better than any headache pill or potion can ever accomplish.

So in terms of my design, I have created a journey that begins to respond to the journey of the trance. I have attempted to create or rather recreate a ritual for the inducement of trance in terms of drumming. There is an acknowledgment of a readiness, a state of mind, this is a private space and a sacred space, it is not open to anyone at any time. You have to understand the potential benefit in order to benefit, as part of the learning process. But the journey prepares, frames the body and mind for the spiritual journey about to take place. But there are other journeys to paths and spaces within. The learning center. Going to the dance studios, what kind of journey takes place here? The meditation spaces, the private rooms.
Healing:
We begin to identify these qualities, aspects which give us pleasure, and conversely identify those aspects which we find frustrating, stressful. In this way healing becomes a 24 hour a day process, and not just one hour a day or ten seconds every week. In identifying the pleasing aspects we begin the continual process of healing and in identifying the negative aspects, we diffuse the amount of stress with which we are subjected to. Ultimately one would hope for a continual healing atmosphere, but is that what we really want? If it were possible to block out or remove all the negative aspects we would still desire a counterpoint to positive healing, which fortunately or not, we have in abundance. I don’t believe that we can eliminate all negative aspects, to do so would mean death, the removal of our body and soul into the infinite consciousness. It does seem plausible that we can experience infinite consciousness for extended periods, days, weeks, perhaps longer. But at least in our culture we are forced to return to the reality of unhealthy living.

This [the gestalt institute] could be seen as a wellness center, helping people identify problem areas such as diet, physical health, mental status, in order to help obtain a healthy body and soul. It may not be necessary to be completely fit in all areas in order to help yourself, but it would be a step in the right direction. So assessment of the patrons becomes key both for the individual and the staff. Perhaps you don’t realize that the Factory spewing out sulphur dioxide 10 miles away is causing tension headaches from the moment you wake, in fact you haven’t had a good nights sleep in two years & you can’t figure out what to do.

Retreat:
A means to heal the body- a learning center to teach about healing techniques for the soul. In western culture we don’t place importance on this quality. Should the architecture then reflect the misunderstandings of our culture, so as to bring attention to the cause? Can you then make a building which displays the quiet, ignored, forgotten, latent image of the soul. Perhaps a satire, a play that mocks the sensibility of “modern” medicine. This play can take place within this building and the people themselves. The participants are acknowledging at some level that this is a vital part of their lives, they respect their bodies so as to want a completely healthy “body”. They are willing to forget or perhaps are unaware of the goings on of modern medicine, and yet they are no worse off. In fact in many ways they are better off. How does the spatial organization communicate this? How do the materials speak of this quiet power. There is a sensual, seductive power in realizing your connection to a larger system. At one level your connection and communication with people, realizing that you are part of a larger race, species, animal, world, universe, consciousness. Can’t then the architecture communicate this idea with clarity? Connections and materials, people, spaces. But what of consciousness? How does one communicate this infinite and undefinable reality? Or does this become defined through time, for each one of us, at our own pace? Therefore does architecture reflect this growth in mass and complexity as its simple parts communicate the possibilities of connections to a larger whole? Or does it become less defined as we find our needs lessening, our connection to the earth has become less significant and our shift has caused the center to no longer need to exist, because the goals have been attained or perhaps the center is diminished, spread out, diffused, so as to symbolize our growth. Do pieces of the whole dissolve leaving only that which is left, the hole? What of these pieces, do they travel into “far away” places, secret caverns of a sacred gathering. Calling to mind the experiences of a race of people so long past that only this piece of architecture remains as a testament to the quest for health and in doing so become a symbol for all time.
Each space is defined. Given its own enclosure to help recognize the different spaces as unique, having unique needs—lighting needs that separation can provide. Since I am dealing with light and the effect that different light qualities can have, it would be beneficial to have a variety of surfaces to gain indirect/direct sunlight.

The pieces [the initial site model] are also a very early attempt at the idea of interconnectedness, the pieces are part of the whole, they have an individual spirit, character, yet they are also part of the whole without each piece the whole would not exist?

Journey
The pieces also deal with journey, from the moment you step into the site you begin a journey, crossing into another world—the end result of the journey is the trance space which then transforms into an infinite journey. So one proceeds from varying degrees of control in the journey.

The initial journey starts with your decision to join this group in this building. You are in control and have many options to take. Once you begin the journey you are stripped of control? The entrance is narrow, focused, vision controlled, your senses are being subverted. Once you enter the courtyard from the compression of the hallway you enter into an oasis, your vision is returned, but still controlled, your other senses are given new pleasures, reinvigorating them. Smells permeate from the fragrant plantings, perhaps there is something in the kitchen and you embrace and follow that smell. You are free to wander. No longer do you hear the sounds of urban life, but the gentle wash of water as you cross the river threshold into this space. You are at its heart and soul. The path changes textures, you start to notice how it feels to walk again, you take off your shoes and sink your toes into the sand, or rest your feet on the springy grass. You are ready to follow the smells again as your stomach excites with the thought of fresh healthy food. You enter the building, again you are compressed, but it doesn't have the same feeling as before, you are in control. You sit yourself with a fresh sandwich and enjoy the others who have come to share in a dinner. You notice a small gathering of drummers going down a set of stairs to the basement, you wonder where they are going and if you can join them.

You wait realizing your time has not yet come, this is obviously a different kind of restaurant, you are starting to get the feeling that many activities take place—a door opens a wave of laughter enters as the dancers burst into the room. Dancing, Drumming? What else goes on here? You had come here on the understanding that this place served great food, now you begin to question what takes place in the rest of the building, if you can call it that. It really looks like a whole bunch of buildings each one separate yet connected, its like a tiny village, or community and from the looks of things that's what it appears to be. You question a person behind the counter of the kitchen and they tell you a secret, a stream of excitement catches your breath as you wish you had heard of this place years ago.

The journey may stop here for many people, perhaps food and a pleasant view are all that is needed before going back to work or home. But what happened to the drummers, you didn't hear the music—at least not yet.
The Light Factory

This experiment takes another step towards a brief understanding of light and diffusion. The purpose was to photograph a series of filters, fabrics of different textures and smells, noting the variety of diffusing qualities based on distance, order, density, etc. In conjunction, colored filters were placed over the lights in order to explore the opportunities of color and diffusion. While this experiment was taking place, another experiment was also being tested. After each filter change, I photographed a person's face to begin a psychological exploration of the nature of light and emotion. It was my hope that the model [person] would express unconscious reflections of light. After the experiment it became clear that the study of the model did not provide any clear, useful results. This is due partly to the environment and the lack of control I have on the model. It is impossible to expect a person to react only to the light without also responding to their baggage of emotions that they already bring with them. The end result is one that pointed towards controlling the setting, which set up the next experiment, the drum circle.
drum circle A.D.

This project began as an extension of the earlier light factory study. I wanted to test my theories on the effects of light with respect to trance inducement and drumming. My theory was that using multiple layers of cloth, as in the light factory, one could create different layers of opacity which would in some ways mimic the rustling leaves of a summer tree. I always found the swaying of the leaves to be a hypnotic movement and wanted to utilize this in my project. The project itself was a series of tent structures arranged around the cardinal directions, each symbolizing a different aspect that I associated with the trance and drumming. There was a center tent structure that housed the drummers and provided a shelter from the intense sun. It was in this center that the music was created and that the experimentation took place. The exterior of the tent was composed of a series of fabric and paper panels, which could be moved in order to facilitate different combinations of opacity and, conversely, transparency. My hope was to find what combination of panels would create or be more conducive to drumming. Was a total blocking of the sun the best arrangement, how open should the structure be to the outside? What happens to your sense of security, when you can see the people watching you on the outside? Briefly, the other tents were the tent of death, which consisted of paper panels, but the tent had no entrance, it did not welcome you, and you could not experience it. The other tent structure, (the other two structures were removed by the grounds crew the night before) was the welcoming tent, it was placed at the entrance to the center tent [to the east] and blocked off the view to and from the center tent interior. But this tent was meant to serve as a viewing area for the audience, but it was never used.

The end result of this project turned out to be different from when I started. I could not move the panels and solicit a response from the drummers in a quick enough manner, so the panels and their movements weren't really tested to their fullest degree. However it was very clear that direct sunlight was not of benefit to drumming, it broke the concentration or meditative state of the drummers, an important lesson-the role of light in drumming and trance. Another interesting development came from the panels themselves. Due to the high winds, the panels flapped and created their own rhythm which increases in intensity as the winds increased. The result was a unique interplay between the wind and the drummers who matched the intensity of the wind- another important lesson- the role of architecture and drumming. How can architecture begin to facilitate or enhance the drumming experience?

eternal thanks to the drummers:
stacy, brandy, shawn, chris, nick, matt, a.j.
The play:

At the beginning of this semester (spring 1997), I decided it would be a good idea to write a play that would in some ways put into words the experiences of my internship and my eventual defining of my thesis project. In some ways, the play was a means for me to vent my frustrations of my internship experience, but it also played a key role in helping me understand how I came to choose this project and site. The characters are all real, these are people I met and played music with. The conversations are real, some are direct quotes, others are paraphrases that serve as an odd reminder that humanity is a unique and wonderful creation.
I don't ever trust those welfare agents! Whores of America! They're no better than prostitutes!

I've got a gun
I can kick, I've got muscles!
I've gotta do this.
I've gotta feel this just once, stop it, stop it!
YOU'RE hurting me.
Stop teasing. Do it.
Do it. I can't taste you now. I need to clean somethings just won't come off the road and I'll be safe, just turn here, it will be alright, right here STOP Stop? stop I don't belong here, I don't BELONG!

Tarif
A play written by James Toris
With a foreword By Scott S.

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It's all pretty nebulous stuff, hey you want to try some?
Don't judge me too hastily. I'm really not that bad of a guy, in fact one person likened me to Frank Zappa which I take as a compliment. Anyway I didn't know it at the time but my friend Dizney was taking a record of my establishment and its oral history as told through the ages in the walls, sometimes carrying a message often though it just appears as a rambling, of which I am good at. Needless to say when diz came to me with the idea of a play of sorts using my house as the setting, it sounded pretty nebulous. I have always seen my house as a center, a gathering place for friends and lovers. A place to jam. A place to hang out. A place to vent your frustrations after a long day of work at the boring mindless job with incompetent managers telling you where to go and what to do. I enjoy my work, but I'd rather be making music. I hope this play will show you what a typical day in the life is like at my home. I hope it will also tell you what concerns us, what makes us live.

Peace,
Scott S.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Role Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scott</td>
<td>Owner, musician, entertainer, structural engineer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherry</td>
<td>Wife of one year to scott. Painter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>Friend of scott's, girlfriend of frank. Social worker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Longtime friend of scott, met through mutual friend todd. Office worker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Todd</td>
<td>Drummer of lightning speed. Friend of scott's for many years. Sales rep for an automotive supplier.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrator</td>
<td>Unknown figure who occupies stage right. Sheds light on activities and personalities in the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policemen</td>
<td>Five representatives of Minneapolis' finest.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The play is set in Minneapolis in the spring of 1996. The snow has finally melted and grills cooking smoky flesh abound. The home is a two story four bedroom house, located in a middle to upper middle class Longfellow neighborhood.
Act I Scene I: period of exchange, the attempt to solidify.

[the play begins in the back porch of Scott's house, a white screened beauty, with a door to the outside where the smells and aromas from the grill drift their way lazily into the porch]

[the room is not full, scott and his wife sherry are sitting, dizney (a friend) has come along too, just arriving a short moment ago.]

Scott: [graciously to dizney] Need some food? We've got lots of food, you want some of this barbecued chicken? Sometimes you've just gotta have your chicken, you know what i mean?

Dizney: [looks around seeing a charcoal lump that would appear to have once been chicken] Ah no thanks chief, I brought my own food.

Scott: Not those god awful muffin cheese things? You're not going to put those on my grill! Honey, remember those muffin pizzas, they sure didn't look very good.

Sherry: Ya [she's not sure if she remembers] those.....

Scott: So diz, you want any of this? [scott packs in a small amount of marijuana into a metal bowl which is a part of a nice glass bong, which unfortunately lost the base to it. Glass bongs were notorious for breaking at the base]

Dizney: [sits down on the patio carpeting- circa 1942] When are other people coming over?

Scott: Oh anytime, you're the first to arrive. [he hands dizney the bong]

Sherry: [to Scott] So did you remember to get the new filters for the furnace?

Dizney: [while busy with other activities, he still raises an attentive eyebrow in the direction of Sherry]

Scott: Yeah, we shouldn't have to worry any more. [to diz] Sherry has been having some allergy problems so we went to the doctor last week and she suggested to change the filters in the furnace, and see if that won't help. They say that if the filters aren't changed regularly then certain impurities start to wander the house and could be compounded by the blowers.

Dizney: [while still busy, he nods his head in a produced understanding]


[someone still unknown to the narrator is entering from the front door (center stage), it's a male of mid thirties time period]
Scott: T-Ross what's happen'n my man.

Taross: [expressionless] I just killed a small family of drunks.

Scott: Great! Say do you remember Diz? Diz this is Taross the Magnificent. [two hands reach out and shake, a bond has been made] Did you talk to Todd? What's his story?

Narrator: [todd enters center stage making excited jumping motions as if he just killed a small family of drunks][spotlight on narrator, stage right]. His story is like a dreamcicle, dripping with the ripe juices of a wasted youth. He has the power and he knows it, he's egoistic but only to the point of insanity. If you met this man you would swear his was a coke addict- nothings short of a frontal lobotomy could slow this man down. He plays the drums with the dexterity of a speed typist in a marathon race for their life. Nothing can ever slow this guy down. He knows everything there is to know about drums and won't stop until you've heard it all. It's not just bragging, he wants everyone to feel the rhythm and glow of drumming. After some bong hits he'll calm down enough to play. [narrator pauses as todd takes some bong hits] He is mellow now. He is todd. He is sitting next to dizney as we return to the back porch.

Sherry: So dizney where are you from?

Scott: Diz is from my work. Good old setter leach. Huh diz?

Dizney: [switching on the public relations tape that he had recorded just prior to Christmas][tape is played over speaker system] I am doing my internship at setter leach, i'll be done sometime in july and then i'll be going back to school for one more year. [the tape then pauses to allow the solicitation of standard question 5A]

Sherry: Where do you go to school?

Dizney: [tape now responds to answer the woman's question] I go to school at Ball State University, that's in Muncie Indiana. I study architecture. [with that said the tape must now be turned off or else it will go into the next section, which concerns grades and classes, which is of no interest here]

Scott: So Todd you ready to blow a load tonight?

Todd: I could drop a bomb the size of Rogaine and you'd never even know it! Let's cheese it!

Scott: Cool, Cool. Let's wait for some more people to get here, were not quite ready.

Todd: What's happening Diz? Did you get the Malfuff or 6/8 yet?

Dizney: Oh I've got the Malfuff, like a bad case of herpes, but that 6/8 is still creamin' my jeans.
Todd: Yeah you've got to watch your hands, that crossover is tight, especially when you get smokin'.

Dizney: Speaking of which, is general smacks coming over?

Scott: [confused] General smah? Oh Yeah, he should be over, probably later, it takes him a while to waddle over here.

Todd: I'm going to check out the basement for a while, get loosened up, know what i mean?

Scott: Take it easy man. Don't get carried away.

Todd: [to diz] Let's fry some bacon!

Dizney: [excitedly] Mmmmm Mmmmm don't mind if i do..... lead the way.

[todd and dizney exit back porch to house, leaving taross to fend for himself.]

Taross: You know what i got last night? Civilization Phase III! Have you read the liner notes? It's all about the alien occupation and the revolution and the.. [raving]

Scott: They're not letting anyone get away! [taross attempts to interject but scott is too quick.] So you want anything to eat/drink? I can throw some brats out on the grill? A beer? A bowl?

Taross: YES, YES and YES! and I mean YES.
[scott rises]
So have you read the liner notes?

Scott: [without hesitation moves toward the back door to the house] Yeah pretty nebulous! [scott moves into the house quickly, taross decides to follow, sherry is alone for the first time.]

Taross: [as he follows scott into the house] Remember the quote about the pathologist in Reno? I was there man, I was there! [voice fades away]

Sherry: [sherry now sits in a small chair suitable for an elementary school desk][to audience] I don't play music. Scott told me I wasn't musically inclined, i believe him. I'm a painter, I have a studio space upstairs and one in the basement. I like my studio upstairs because of the large window that floods in sunlight & the views aren't bad either. The spring and summer are so green. We live in a nice neighborhood, we are lucky. We have so many friends, people coming over and visiting. [sneezes][Pause]My allergies have been giving me troubles, it's the pollen in the air. The doctor said we should change the furnace filter and that should help. I don't see a doctor often, unless I'm really sick.

[enter frank and sally [friends of scott and sherry] from side gate]
Frank: [as he passes the grill] Something sure smells good!

Sherry: [standing up] It's chicken. Would you like some? Scott's going to put some brats on.

Sally: [before frank can answer] Hi Sherry, how are you feeling?

Narrator: Frank is the spitting image of a mid thirties glamour model/ wannabe jock straight out of J. Crew. Sally is nothing to catch the eye, she is unassuming and blends easily into the wood work.

Sherry: Scott just bought some filters for the furnace, the doctor says it will help.

Sally: Oh really? Must be a good doctor. Most of the ones I know just want to push more drugs into you. Doctors are just glorified drug dealers. You want to fight the war on drugs? You should start in the medical profession. You know its the biggest scam in america. Kickbacks from pharmaceutical companies are dispensed to doctors [out of side of mouth](and every political concern in-between) to deal drugs, their drugs whenever deemed "necessary". I'm surprised they didn't prescribe darvacet or synthomesc. They're only in it for the money. They're no better than the drug lords and gang bangers!

Sherry: [confused] Yeah? Scott said it should help.

Frank: So where's Scott?

Sally: He's in the house. [pause] Come on in.

[sally and frank enter the back porch. she sits in the chair and frank sits on the floor]

Sherry: How's your job Frank?

Frank: It's [cut off by scott and taross entering the room]

Scott: Sally! Frank my man! What's happening?

Sally: We were just discussing the state of the medical profession.

Scott: [nodding] So Frank how's your job?

Sally: [under her breath] Fucking drugs

Frank: [in unison with sally]Good

Sally: [in unison with frank, still under her breath] Won't ever take anymore drugs

Fuckin' thieves
Act I Scene II: who controls You?

[scott leaves and puts brats on grill a light sizzle is heard in the background. taross goes back inside and heads to the basement where the thumps of drums and hiss of cymbals can vaguely be heard. scott watches envious of taross but still needs to entertain, there is always that need. how can a man be lonely when surrounded by friends?]

[conversation continues with sherry, sally, and frank, but the voices are muted. the focus has turned to scott standing at the grill in his leather knee high medieval boots he bought at the renaissance fair, shorts, and a frank zappa t-shirt (from the ill fated movie 200 motels). the lights dim and a spotlight focuses on scott. the beam is intense, piercing, leaving him alone and stranded]

Scott:

[singing to himself] Big ones! Wet ones! Big wet ones! [turns to audience] Really dig Zappa. Some say my style of guitar playing is just like Zappa, but I think of it as a kind of stevie ray, Hendrix, Zappaesque kind of thing with a little Beck and Val thrown in. I wish I could play my guitar all the time, but it just doesn't pay the bills. I'm not really into my job so much, it can weigh me down. I've worked at the same place for 13 years. It's good pay it supports my habits. [pause] I sit on my ass all day at a computer station. Occasionally I get up to talk to another person, but no one really likes to talk too much. People used to call me "fat" to my face, now they do it behind my back. I like the days when we have a thunderstorm. Then when I look outside, which is only when I get up, I notice how dark it is outside. The inside never changes. It's the only time I notice the outside world. When I am working I no longer connect with anyone, which drives me crazy. I like to talk to people, I'm [we're all] a social being. But when I sit at my desk the only thing I connect to is my computer, the lifeless faceless machine that makes my work 20 times faster. Sometimes I listen to a radio, with headphones to block out the noise, the humming hurky jerk of the copier machine and fax machine. You don't realize how loud the office is until you put on the headphones and try to block out the noise, it really makes you aware of what a noisy world we live in. Lately I've been having problems with the computer screen. After looking hypnotically at the screen for seven hours I get a headache, because the screen is too dim. Next week I am going to move to one of the dark corners of the office, where the overhead lights have been turned off. [looks up, imagining the space] My screen is bright now, I am connecting with my computer. It's a good feeling I guess. I work for a while and then I can come home and do what I really want to do. I turn down the lights, [spotlight reduced to 1/3 intensity] I've had enough of them today. My mind is allowed to wander, I begin to relax. One more day over, one more day closer to......[voice trails off at end of sentence]

[scott enters back porch and sits down in his chair located in the corner or the room, a location that enables him to watch over the goings on of this small room. the lights go back to an evenly distributed overcast sunlight. we join the conversation between sherry and sally in mid journey.]

Sherry: I don't mind the homeless and low income people, but it's the ones who abuse the system who seem to be....
Sally: I'll tell you who's to blame. [voice steadily increases in volume until she is the only one who can be heard] It's the fucking welfare system! Whores of America, the WHORES OF AMERICA! They're just a giant prostitution ring, you thought the medical profession was fucked up, try the welfare system. The rich get richer, it's the law of the land.

[scott and frank are exchanging bong hits during the conversation]

Sherry: Yeah? I think some of the people on welfare are just using it to get money so they don't have to work.

Sally: [excited/borderline psychotic] That's exactly what I'm talking about. Whores of America, that's all it is. Don't you see what I mean. Open your eyes! How can we call this a democracy when this kind of SHIT is going on? Who's letting these people get away with this? Who's responsible for the rape of our country? Fuckin' democrats, liberal freaks. Clinton is just the pimp of a glorified prostitution ring. These people are sponging off my tax dollars, getting welfare and medicare instead of getting a real job. Don't get me started on this one, I'm liable to start throwin' punches!

Scott: [slightly disturbed/ annoyed] What the fuck are these people supposed to do? Get a job at minimum wage to support a family of four? Minimum wage won't support one person! Then if they take the job, to work instead of sponging off your tax dollars, they lose their welfare benefits because they're making too much...

[Frank cautiously nods in agreement]

Sally: That's the exception, not the rule. I bet you donuts to dollars most of these people don't want to work. Christ I've seen them on the corners hanging out during the day, why don't they get a fucking job, no they'd rather live off of someone else's sweat.

Scott: [sensing no resolution, turns to frank] Say frank you ready to crank the stain?

Frank: [confused] Sure.

[the conversation between sally and sherry fades as scott and frank enter the house and head downstairs. the lights fade and the curtain falls.]
Act II Scene I: the destruction of time.

[curtain rises. the lights are very dim, it take a while to get used to the lighting in the basement. two large fish tanks and a bulb at the bottom of the stairs provide the only illumination. the fish tanks are arranged to provide a lounge area separate from the other spaces, although there are no walls. the other spaces include sherry's studio, laundry area, and scott's studio area. scott's studio area contains a drumset, synthesizers, seven electric guitars, three bass guitars, a drum machine, amplifiers, microphones, and various other percussive instruments. carpets cover most of the concrete floor. the rafters are exposed. the walls are painted white, but covered with paintings created by sherry. eclectic oil paintings with a touch of elementary school charm. the studio space is dark enough to get lost in. the space is primeval, ripe for the picking, it has an energy that binds us forces each of us to listen and respond to one another. todd, dizney, and taross are in the lounge enjoying a cigarette and conversation. general smacks has also entered the scene, having proceeded immediately to the basement upon arrival. he is warming up his saxophone.]

[while scott, sherry, sally and frank are upstairs. todd, diz, and taross are in a philosophical conversation and are unaware of the person in the studio]

Todd: [excitedly] Could you imagine what it would be like if we could all move in unison, just from the sound of our drums?

Dizney: [smoking a rolled cigarette] Are you talking about a darkened space, ah, like a cave?

Todd: Yes exactly! No visual clues, just people swaying and moving as the rhythm flows through them.

Taross: What does it mean psychologically when the lights are turned off?

Dizney: Imagine the freedom that would give every individual. You could run around, you could just listen..

Taross: [interrupting] Or you could take off all your clothes and stand in the company of friends with nothing but your drum.

Dizney: [smiles]

Todd: What if you could somehow track the movements of the players..

Dizney: You could use heat sensitive film, I don't know if they make this for video, but you can get camera film at any camera shop.

Todd: That would be so cool, to track the patterns of the people. When we have no visual clues, how do we act and react to one another as a community of sound?
Dizney: That would be a crazy experiment. To see how the sounds begin to inform us about where others are located, no visual clues, just sounds. We could run around in circles and never hit anyone because we could hear them. [softly almost to himself] What do you figure people would do in a situation like that?

Taross: Don't you wish you take everybody and squeeze into one ball, so we can all hear our rhythms simultaneously, we become one cacophonous sound.

Dizney: Imagine the ability then to react immediately to each change, the rhythms become so tight so instantaneously symbiotic......wow that would be my idea of heaven.

Todd: Well what if we could provide the perfect space, equally distributed sound, so that at the right decibel level you can hear everyone perfectly.

Taross: Is that possible?

Todd: I don't see why not. What if you miked everybody and then listened to the perfected mix through headphones, I mean its what they do in professional settings, so everyone can hear all the players.

Dizney: But then what happens to the feel of the rhythm? What about the pounding reverberation in your chest? How do you recreate that in headphones?

Todd: Ok. Ok. Well then create the perfect room, hey you're an architect design us a room!

Dizney: [surprised that todd knew he was an architect] What if you could create a room that was not only perfect acoustically, or as near as possible, but it also contributed to the sound of the performance. I mean most studios mask sound, block out sound and prevent internal sounds from bouncing around. The walls are lined with absorptive material, but what if the materials not only absorbed the sound, but act as a resonator for the sound, when a certain natural harmonic frequency is reached. The volume then becomes three times as loud. Imagine what it would be like if there were multiple materials each containing a different resonant frequency. The room could then almost perform itself. Each frequency would set off a thunderous boom, the levels of polyrhythmic playing would be mind blowing!

Taross: [excitedly] Let's do it! That would be so incredible, how come no one has done it?

Dizney: [taking the last drag from his cigarette] Oh I'm sure someone has done it, it's just a matter of finding out where it is.

Todd: I like the way you think! Man I don't know about you but I'm ready to burn!!!

Taross: Like a freak show on acid!
Scene II: moment in <truth>

[as dizney puts out his cigarette todd and taross turn and find charlie just fiddling around with his saxophone. they begin to stand and move towards their instruments. at this time the four musicians occupy their space and begin to get warmed up. todd is typically the one to start out playing, setting down a rhythm from which the others build upon. the purpose here is to create new music with every performance. there is no set music for this scene, it is improvisational. they play for roughly five to ten minutes before scott and frank enter from the stairs.]

[scott walks confidently down the stairs. he smiles and greets everyone as he heads for his guitar. frank is not a musician so he wanders around the stage, eventually ending up in the lounge area watching. the initial rhythm stops and this gives time for some talk before the real performance.]

Scott: So you guys were going to start without me, huh?

Todd: Oh chief we knew you'd be down in good time, don't worry there's plenty to go around.

[at this point any or all of the musicians may start playing although typically it is todd or scott would begin the music. the jam session can last for anywhere from a half an hour to an hour. each musicians will have an opportunity to lead and solo within the framework of the rhythm. todd, and dizney pay close attention to one another attempting to merge their playing into one beat.]

[at the beginning of the playing, somewhere around five minutes into playing, the music is quieted enough to allow the narrator to speak.]

Narrator: [to audience] [spotlight on narrator] Your in for a real treat ladies and gentleman. Tonight sounds like a good night. This isn't just about the music. It's about the feeling. These people aren't here because they care about the welfare system or the medical profession, that was just a clever ploy by the author to throw you off track. These people are here to play music, they're here to bond with one another through the creation of music. It's a very special bond, one that is more profound in many ways from any normal conversation. You're listening to everything that your friends are playing. You are communicating with them, you are talking to them with a sensitivity that few friends share. It can be so intimate, feelings of love and passion are be expressed just through sound. What we would like for you to do is concentrate on the performance. This is not rehearsed. This is just for you. Listen for the way the players weave their music, close your eyes and drift along the currents of the sound.

[music then gradually increases in volume and the performance continues]

[after a few minutes into the performance, the lights go out, leaving the stage and audience completely dark]

[as the performance ends and the music begins to quiet two shots from a pistol are fired. the lights are turned back on to the same level as in act I. five policemen with pistols drawn surround the musicians.]
Policeman 1: [shouting] Everybody hands up!

[the musicians set down their instruments and raise their hands in surrender.]

Policeman 1: Who lives here?

Scott: [shaken] I do officer, what's this all about?

Policeman 1: We have reason to believe that you are harboring two criminals wanted in connection with a hit and run two hours ago by lynndale and lake streets.

Scott: Holy shit guys, you weren't fuckin' kidding! Jesus Christ!, holy fucking..

Policeman 1: All of you are under arrest until we sort out who is responsible. All of you could be facing some serious charges.

Policeman 2: [holds up a bong and plate with marijuana]

Policeman 1: Well, well it looks like we've just added possession of a controlled substance to our list of offenses. [to policemen] All right boys cuff'em and stuff'em.

Scott: But, But.....it's not mine, I didn't do it.....

[policemen cuff the musicians and take them off stage]

[lights fade to black and curtain drops]

the end.
Notes on Production:

Scenery and Setting:

The scenery needs to be recreated to a certain high level of detail in terms of spatial qualities. In general, the back porch scenes need not be exact, it is the dialogue and the body language of the characters that is important. While the back porch scenes need not be exact, the basement scenes need to maintain a similar arrangement (see plan B) in order to recreate the unique qualities of this space. Lighting is of great concern to mimic the feel of the actual basement. Since there is a live performance taking place it should be of concern to maintain a tight close knit feeling of the studio space. The ceiling may be omitted if the lighting is brought down to an 8' level.

Act I Scenes I & II

This scene takes place in the back porch. There need to be three chairs, an end table, some food on a plate, and a "bong". All three chairs should be of similar type, preferably lounge chairs with armrests. A piece of patio carpeting should be placed on the floor. Wall partitions should be white, with the indication of wood panelling and large windows. The ceiling is not important and may be omitted in order to provide adequate lighting in the space. There needs to be background scenery of a yard with bushes around the perimeter. The yard also contains the grill which is used mainly in scene II.

Act II Scenes I & II

This act takes place in the basement. Close attention should be paid to ensure that the proper feeling and ambiance of the room is reproduced. There need to be four chairs and a coffee table in the lounge, as well as, two fifty gallon fish tanks which serve to divide the space between lounge and studio. Within the studio there is a variety of equipment. A drumset, synthesizer, bass, electric and acoustic guitars, saxophone, trumpet, and a variety of hand drums and percussive instruments are needed for the performance. Likewise the amplifiers will be required to provide proper volume for the guitars, synthesizers and brass instruments. Every attempt should be made to duplicate the arrangement as show in plan B. The staircase should also be provided as it acts as a divider, an enclosure of the studio space. Lighting here is key. Please note the lights as shown on plans B, which include one incandescent bulb, hung approximately 8' high and located near the bottom of the stairs, and lights from the fish tanks. Other stage lighting may be used to increase the light level to illuminate the musicians at the beginning and end of the performance. Carpeting on the floor would be useful in creating a more defined space, but it is not required. Paintings may be hung to provide basement foundation wall definition, but it is not necessary to duplicate the walls themselves, as it would detract from the performance. The other spaces (i.e. sherry's studio and laundry area) need not be duplicated, merely represent a partition for sherry's studio as shown in plan B. The partition should be a blind or screen preferably made of bamboo.
Notes on Costumes:

Costumes should be everyday casual wear, such as a t-shirt and jeans, except where specified otherwise. Scott needs boots, preferably knee-high, and a Frank Zappa t-shirt (preferably one from the movie 200 motels, but any Zappa shirt will do). Policemen need to be in police uniforms with guns. Frank should be dressed in appropriate J. Crew attire: khaki shorts, a white polo shirt, and leather loafers. Charlie should dress more formal with dress slacks and dress shirt (tie optional). The narrator should dress in all black so as to blend in with the background.

Notes on performance:

Act I has some very excited moments so the characters need to be upbeat and have the potential to become raving lunatics, especially Sally and Todd. Taross is very dead pan in his delivery and Sherry is quite reserved in her speaking. All of the musicians obviously need to be real musicians of a professional quality, as the purpose of the performance is the creation of improvisational music and exploration of the relationship of each musician to one another and to the audience.
For the point of clarification, the thesis project I undertook was the creation of a retreat/learning center for holistic healing, or more specifically healing the soul. The idea was to create a retreat in the middle of an urban center in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This seems an unlikely choice for the location of a retreat, but it is designed to help people reassert a certain level of control over their environment. The people who come to use the retreat are seen as people who are "sick" in some way but may not understand why or how they got this way. The urban environment provides endless stimuli that is consciously blocked out, but sometimes it affects our subconscious providing headaches, ulcers, any number of health issues. This retreat will help people realize that they can have a certain level of control over their environment, even if they are within the city. In this way the retreat serves as a learning center for these and all other guests. The architecture is designed to block exterior sound, as best as possible, and to control the views and sunlight. The ultimate intention is that the people who inhabit this space will take with them a piece or scrap of knowledge which they will use, in turn, to create a better living environment, be it at home or work. The idea of holistic healing recognizes that the body can not be healed solely by the intake of pills or medications. In many cases these cures only provide more problems. Holistic healing utilizes any number of healing arts, diet programs, and philosophies designed to promote the human as a healer. I do not pretend to know anything about these programs, despite my research, these arts and beliefs take more than one semester to learn and understand, they take a lifetime. I merely present to you that I wish to incorporate these practices within my design.
The site is surrounded to the east and west with one to two story brick and stucco buildings. To the east, behind the site are single family residences. Across Lyndale Avenue, to the west, are two to three story brick buildings. The vacant spaces to the north and south of the site can serve as parking for the guests and owner, however there is also parking available on-street, and in other parking lots located nearby.
Western Culture possesses technologies that constantly barrage the body, mind, and spirit with pollution, toxins, noise and light. Not all of these problems are deemed harmful to us, if taken in small amounts. Indeed as long as the toxins or pollutants are within government standards we should only expect to take 20 years off of our lives. Our society has become disenfranchised, turned off to having any control over their environment, be it in the home or at work. The urban environment does not empower us. There are few dues or means to control our environment. The lighting is uniform and dull. The air is dehumidified, ionized, and conditioned for maximum comfort. The variety and vitality of life has been removed from our everyday spaces. In its place is a manufactured, evenly distributed comfort. But is this really comfortable? Or does this comfort really create stress and anxiety from the monotony it exudes. In the city, the effect of harmful stimulus can become quite concentrated to the extent of sensory overload and complete shutdown. No longer can we rely on modern western culture and medicine to cure our stress and relieve our anxiety. Western culture relies on instant cures for our pain, a pill or sedative to calm us. We need to acknowledge that healing and maintaining a healthy body is a continuous process and not a quick fix. We have created a stressful world in our architecture and in our city planning. We should be “healing” ourselves everyday. We should be engaging our environment, seeking healthy spaces to empower us. If we don’t our stress and anxiety will continue to grow and fester.

As designers we need to address healthy and unhealthy practices that we as a profession have fostered. We need to take into account the profound spiritual, psychological, and physiological effects that the designed environment has on the individual. I would like to design a retreat/learning center that teaches how to heal with emphasis placed on healing through the built form, its materials, volume, color, and light qualities. Emphasis will also be placed on the manipulation of spaces, adjusting the spaces to suit your individual needs. There will be programs, classes, and seminars to help reconnect the individual/retreat guest to their spirit. We must acknowledge that architecture can have a profound affect on revitalizing the spirit, nourishing the soul, and acting as a catalyst towards reaching higher levels of consciousness. Heightened states of consciousness, like the trance, can then be used as a form of healing on a daily basis.

The center is to be located at a major intersection in the heart of Minneapolis, Minnesota. The community is rich in diversity and acceptance of traditional or holistic means of healing. I would like to approach this project from the aspect of trance inducement or on a related level, meditation. Providing architecture that can help to induce the trance or meditative state. As a drummer, I realize the power of the trance with its healing, life giving qualities. The Gestalt Institute should likewise embody life giving qualities, connecting us with ourselves, providing a refuge from the urban chaos around us.
In essence, this building and the activities contained within are for everyone who is concerned with their health, pertaining to the mind, body, and/or soul. These are people who perhaps consciously or subconsciously recognize an imbalance within their lives. However, these individuals may not know what is causing the imbalance or unhealthy state nor do they know how to correct or counteract its effects. The users of this space are broken into three categories: the daily, weekly, and occasional user.

The daily user is seen as someone from the community or in close proximity who uses this space for meditative purposes, to eat lunch, or just to relax. They would be the individuals who would potentially benefit the most on a long-term basis, allowing repeated visits to help understand the building and its services.

The weekly user is seen as someone from the community or from around the state (also people from Wisconsin who commute) who come to this center for a weekly class in dancing, drumming, or healing arts. They benefit from the classes and from the building but don’t have the long-term connection with the building like the daily user. But there is still the possibility to create a lasting impression on the person. So the performance/meditative spaces need to focus the users’ attention on healthy building design (natural lighting, the ability to control/manipulate the light, the shape of the space, the scale, the materials used, the colors, etc.).

The occasional user is seen as someone from anywhere in the world who came for the purpose of a retreat. They will be given an intensive immersion into the programs and philosophy of the center (as established by the owner/operator). They will be given the opportunity to identify their healing needs. However, due to the shorter nature of the stay (anywhere from a weekend to two weeks), there may not be the proper development and the overall work may be diminished somewhat from an overload of information. To help alleviate this action, the programs (services) should be broken into smaller areas of interest so different people can concentrate on different programs as it suits their needs.

The idea is to help people, but more specifically help the community organize itself for the purposes of healing. Giving a place for everyone to enjoy the benefits of healing through the architecture and classes.

This organizational chart identifies two traits desirable and obtainable from this center: higher states of consciousness and level of experience. The daily users would typically be thought of as more interested in higher states of consciousness than the weekly or occasional user, but they still lack experience to induce the trance or need assistance in assessing their desires for a healthy spirit.

The line through the diagram represents states or levels of consciousness. The users are typically at a lower level of consciousness, presumably one of the reasons they want to use this facility. The staff and operators have the capability of experiencing higher levels of consciousness and, therefore, are of value to the users. The community as a whole possesses individuals at all levels of consciousness.
The intersection of Lynndale and Lake Street is one of the major nodes of Minneapolis, and certainly the major node of this neighborhood. A dense urban center, it catered to the community with a variety of retail and commercial spaces. In the 1960's and 1970's the area experienced an upheaval of sorts due to economic instability. This was caused by population decline, which had moved out to the suburbs. The intersection and neighborhood in general, was left to decay with little hope for improvement. Up into the 1980's this area was still trying to recover, build an economic and community base with which to draw from. Towards the late 80's to the present time, the Lynn Lake neighborhood has experienced a tremendous upsurge in activity. There are many reasons for this activity, one being the development of the uptown area, which is only a few blocks down Lake street. This has begun to trickle down Lake street and help revitalize the Lynn Lake area. The community also appears to find need and interest in the services provided here. There are some restaurants like the Falafel King, the Ethiopian, which cater to a diverse ethnic base, which is why this area is thriving. The neighborhood is quite diverse in terms of economics, race and religion. This is not a predominantly white middle class neighborhood. This is a neighborhood with crack houses and mansions, synagogues and mosques. That is what makes this neighborhood so vital because there are all these people with different backgrounds who want and need a community center and will patronize this center.
The site fronts Lynndale Avenue, a busy two lane street. The facade facing the street should acknowledge the street, but not cater to it. Meaning it should be welcoming in terms of view to the interior through the dance studio. But it should also be seen as a refuge from the urban chaos. There needs to be separation from the environment visually and acoustically. Parking can be provided on street or behind adjacent buildings. The buildings adjacent to the site are one to two stories, however there are three story high buildings across the street. In keeping with the context of the site, the Gestalt Institute should not exceed two stories.

The surrounding context does not contain a unified building type or style. There are old turn of the century loadbearing brick commercial buildings and converted home shops. There are also several storefront buildings with little architectural or aesthetic quality built within the last fifty years. The point is that there is a diverse building vocabulary. However many of the buildings, especially those at the intersection of Lyndale and Lake street are composed of brick. I submit that a straw bale building (with wood cladding on the second floor and plaster finish on the first floor) would not be out of context with this neighborhood and intersection.
Community: Defined as those individuals who live in the neighborhood and participate in the strengthening of the community. It can also be broadened to include the Twin Cities or anyone concerned with healing the spirit. But also I equate community in terms of geographic location, defined by somewhat ambiguous boundaries. These boundaries are as follows: Dupont Ave. to the west, which then begins the Uptown area. To the south it would be 36th street, which then starts another small commercial center. To the east the neighborhood extends to Highway 65 or Stevens Ave. To the north it would be defined by 26th Street. These boundaries are up to your own interpretation. Individuals living within and without these boundaries may or may not consider themselves part of the Lyn-Lake neighborhood.
The journey:

The design is broken up into a series of journeys based on the user and type of activity. There are five main journeys associated with this design. The first is the exterior journey, the procession into the heart of the site and into the building. The second is the journey to the dance studios. The third is the procession to the meditation spaces. The fourth is a journey reserved for the retreat guests to their private rooms. The final, and most important journey from my point of view, is the journey to the trance space.
The Journey to the Interior:
The beginning. As one approaches the building, one notices that this building is set back from the rest of the world, it is its own refuge. The buildings in this area contain no strong contextual language, and there is no need to maintain the strong line of building mass along the sidewalk, as long as I do not destroy it. I think setting the building back creates an invitation for people, as well as distinguishing this building as unique from its neighbors. The journey continues as one decides or tries to decide where the entrance to this building is located. Surely the entrance is in the front, where this large concrete facade piece is located. This element screams “front entrance” just as we have been conditioned by years of Wallmarts and low budget architecture that spoon feed your brain, relieving you of thought and telling you where the front entrance is located. I offer no such opportunity. The front facade piece is actually over an exterior courtyard intended for those who wish to sit outside and enjoy the dancing within. This is an enticement, to get you into the building, but it is not the entrance. This is a tease, but it forces you to reevaluate your notions on what is a front door, and ultimately architecture. There are clues helping those who actually look to discern that this is not the front entrance. The sidewalk here is too narrow, and the one right next to it is much wider, but how can that be the entrance? I don’t even know where it’s leading me too. The sidewalk leads you around the side of the building, under the second floor, and from here you have begun to enter into the building.
The Journey of Dance:

Potentially the journey can act as a preparation for the activity about to take place, in this case dance. Dance needs a physical body that is warmed and lubricated [stairs and sun]. If the heart rate can be elevated perhaps then the dancer will be physically more ready. Is there a smell, a scent that prepares the dancer or drummer [as a drummer I enjoy the smell of the cedar or maple shell of the drum]? I guess it depends on the mode of dance. About the only thing I can rely on is the raised heartbeat and controlling the view, preparing the mind and body for dance. A level change, stairs could prove interesting and provide a unique journey, warm materials, something that can stretch the feet? A wooden slat walkway, heated below. But the sun and windows can also warm the body. I wanted to reflect light to surround the body, providing a warmth all around. I also wanted to create a rhythm that can be identified and realized. A visually audible rhythm.

The path to the dance studio is actually broken up into three paths. Two are flat, designed for accessibility and quick movement to and from the dance studios. The two flat paths are separated by a transparent screen. One path is intended for the dancers to use to access the changing rooms. The other flat path is intended to view out into the courtyard space.

The flat path is scaled down, restrictive so as not to compete with the stepped path. Basically, I wanted the stepped path from becoming an unused novelty. Perhaps the sun does not penetrate onto the flat path, only the stepped path receives warmth so you have the rhythm of the steps physically and audibly. In conjunction, the sun provides warmth and the wood slats provide a means to stretch the soles of your feet. The sun then separates or signifies the difference between the public and private path as the flat path has access to the changing rooms which are a more private activity/space. The flat path is more utilitarian, but it should still respond to warmth and perhaps physical stretching.

The dance studios are composed of one space that can be separated via a movable partition wall in order to have two spaces.

One dance studio "faces" the street with a large glass opening to entice people to watch the dancers. The second studio "faces" the exterior courtyard, for people to watch from this space.
The Journey of Meditation:

This journey in some ways runs in opposition to that of the dance studios. Instead of warming up the body, we are preparing for a quiet reflective period. But not all using this pathway are going to the meditative spaces, others may be proceeding to the conference room or private quarters of the owner/proprietor. Therefore, in addition to preparing the meditator, one must inform others that this is a special area, an area to be quiet. The use of sound and light in conjunction with volume becomes of great use and benefit. The sound will call to attention the loudness of the individual, calling to mind, the need for quietness so as not to disturb those in meditation. The light can be used to alternate between loud areas.

The light spaces have carpeting to block or muffle the sound of footsteps so the user in the meditation space is not continuously aware of people moving outside. The lit areas are in front of the meditation spaces, the entrance, the steps up, but the light is tightly controlled so as to focus the light only in these areas and not in the dark/loud spaces. The central loud space in addition to having hardwood flooring will contain a reflector space that will redirect the sound back to the user. In affect the space becomes a small echo chamber. The spaces that are categorized as being loud are visually dark. This seems to be a contrast to a feeling of a loud space, that is, bright and lively. A dark loud space calls more attention to the sound.
building was set back from the rest; it is a unique place; it is a refuge. The courtyard presents many different opportunities to enjoy, you do not have to walk any one direction, you are free to choose, the direct opposite of coming through the tunnel. Your vision is controlled, to the extent that it is focused on the courtyard and not the surrounding community, reinforcing the sense of refuge. Your senses are now noticeably different then when you entered the site. Aromas are drifting through the air, sweet fragrant flowers mixed with the bitter flavor of coffee from inside the building. You are drawn towards the entrance, even though you may not fully understand where this entrance is. The ground is covered in grasses, leaves, wood, sand, stone, unique textures that give your feet and imagination a boost. Your hearing is now supplanted by the sound of flowing water and gentle chiming. The mass of the building and the location of the courtyard cut off your hearing from the surrounding chaos. Water flows through the courtyard, you're not sure where it began or ends, it just flows past you, you cross it allowing the water to spray your feet. It’s cool and inviting, you notice that the water drops off into a large pool just before it hits the building. Surely this could be a wonderful place to bathe. Along the paths and in the corners of the courtyard are benches, seats to relax and enjoy the environment. You proceed to the interior; taking a path that leads you to the main entrance.
The mediation space has light control device similar to that of the private rooms. The single louver can be turned, via a crank, to control the light intensity. The louver is also colored so the one side will provide a "normal" cast, whereas the other side will provide a purple tint. The room provides a variety of light intensities with the light shelf. Under the shelf one finds a dark secure place where one can hide. The sunlit areas provide a space to read and reflect, feeling the warmth of the sun. The other windows give views towards the private courtyard space, and also acknowledge the rising and setting sun.
Journey of Privacy:
Their is a central staircase that splits off, one set for the public, and another, smaller, enclosed set for the private rooms. Their [the retreat guests] journey is separate from the start. Once within the private area, there are washrooms which one must proceed through in order to reach the public areas again. There is always this subconscious reference to cleansing as you walk to and from the private areas. The hallways are smaller, and the stairs provide visual clues that perhaps this area is for a specific user.

The journey is indicative of quiet reflection, sanctuary from the rest of the world. The lighting should be subdued in comparison with the adjacent spaces. Views are small controlled openings, allowing in morning sun, but during the day the spaces receive only indirect light. The journey is unique to each room, not just a straight hallway that connects two spaces without event or notice. You want to feel as though this is truly your private space, your private room.
The interior spaces have horizontal panels that can be moved up and down in order to create your own space. Perhaps you want to move the panels up for shelves or down for a bed. The panels themselves contain glass pieces which act as a filter for the skylight above. The idea with the panels is one of empowerment. The users of these spaces, more than likely feel as though they have no control over their environment, hence why they are here. The panels offer some measure of control over their environment. The control of light is a major concern within all the spaces, why not allow the retreat guests to fully control the light. The skylight can be controlled to the extent that it can be opened to ventilate the space and their is a "louver" that can control the amount of light coming in from the skylight. The other windows, those that look out onto the courtyard have quilted shades that help keep in the heat and control the light. The heating system in these spaces is radiant heat from the floor slab. Each room has its own sink for washing. The idea of cleansing is again introduced.
Trance Space:

final drawing: trance space and lower level axon.

final drawing: section of trance space.
The journey has just begun. They entered the basement and found a small opening that led to another small room. From the room one could sense a long corridor, just wide enough for one person. The drums are silent, they are preparing for the music yet to be created. Slowly they reach the end of the corridor and find a small staircase which appears to lead up two floors but it is so dark, it is not clear where the stairs lead. One thing is clear this is a sacred journey. The music that will be created will have that sense of sacredness. The craft and caring that comes with the acknowledgment of the sacred. They climb the stairs and enter into what appears to be a black void in the ceiling. No one knows if there are more stairs, or where they are, all they know is that they are a community bound together and now feel the connection that this ritual or sacred journey has afforded. No one has spoken since arrival, energy is seeping out of every limb. Anxious to reach the end. Everyone enters what can only be intuitively felt as a massive, infinite space. Small sounds become so crisp. Without talking, their hearing is so hypersensitive that they can react instantly to sounds, changes. From somewhere the spell begins, one of them begins clapping, a rhythm erupts, slowly the community begins to weave their individual brand of music to the whole, but with incredible sensitivity! They are so in tune that the music is flowing without effort, it is a pure creation of music. Pitch black, no inhibitions, no competition, just playing what you think [or don't think], what you feel. Here is where the journey begins, although for some it may end here. Some of the players will lose themselves in the music and volume and begin to express themselves without thinking. Unconscious to their body, the music becomes them, they fall into a trance and begin a journey into infinite space.

sketch of sound control device as a diaphragm that can be opened and closed to absorb/reflect sound

sketches courtesy of John McCreery

the journey: the trance space
The trance space is composed of three basic sound devices. First is the vaulted ceiling used to bounce the mid to high frequencies back, but not directly to the players. The second device is the shaft [echo chamber], theoretically 250 feet into the ground, in order to reflect or echo the very long

[low] frequencies. The idea is to have a variety of rhythms working in tandem with one another, a cacophony of sound. The third device is a series of resonating boxes, fixed to the walls. Each box is a different size, "tuned" to a specific frequency. When that frequency is played it will cause the box to resonate and therefore dramatically increase the volume of that frequency. With just one drummer, it could sound as though there were ten. The resonators have controls to allow the box to either absorb or reflect the sound back out. The idea is that the room can be tuned to a specific frequency or set of frequencies depending on the needs of the performers. The shaft is concrete and the rest of the space is wood paneling, similar to that of hardwood flooring. The resonator boxes are covered with a synthetic fiber skin to avoid the problem of warping due to changes in humidity.
This is a sketch of resonator boxes and the louvers to reflect or absorb sound. The louvers would be tied to one another based on frequency. That is to say that all resonators tuned to 5000 hz will be connected so that one or two levers can open the louver or close it. When the louver is open the sound is absorbed and conversely when the louver is closed the sound bounces back.

Construction:

The Gestalt Institute is designed to use straw bale construction for its walls. Due to the fact that building codes do not currently allow load bearing straw bale construction in Minneapolis, the building would in reality have to use the bales as infill between the studs. The reasons for using straw bales are numerous: including acoustic isolation, thermal insulation, ease of construction, low cost, thick, uneven walls. The last reason is more of a personal reaction to the way straw bale walls have the look of a hand crafted home, unlike the standard gypsum board walls. I like the look and feel of straw bale walls, I think it creates a more unique atmosphere, perhaps more home like. The other reasons are self explanatory, except for ease of construction. It was my intention to use straw bales in order to get the community involved in the building process. This not only creates a strong tie between the community and the Institute, but it also dramatically cuts the cost of labor. In the trance space, since it is technically not a load bearing wall construction, the bales serve the acoustic and thermal benefits, and the structure is really wood framing.
The journey alternates from control to no control, to loss of control, to control on an infinite level, which could be seen as no control, you become part of the whole. You were and are a piece, an individual, and at the same time you are the whole, you belong, connected with the whole. But it alternates with different levels of compression and openness which corresponds to your level of control. It is an attempt to utilize architecture to control your mind. In order to clear the mind to prepare you for meditation, reflection, trance, healing.
The Kitchen and Dining Space:

This area is located on the first floor just as you walk in the main entrance. The idea was to use this area as a meeting place, so I wanted to combine the activities of eating and drinking with the socialization. The kitchen has a cooler and two separate cooking areas, for those people who have restrictive cooking practices, i.e. Orthodox Jews. There is also a loading area located to the right of the cooler for the unloading of food goods. There is a central counter space for teaching classes in cooking healthy foods. The kitchen also contains a serving area for the sale of healthy foods to the community. The dining area and the kitchen area are separated from the lobby area by a step. This step reinforces the separate functions of each space, but allows the spaces to bleed into one another and maintains visual connections.
Owner/Proprietors Quarters:

This space is located furthest away from the main entrance, to give the owner some sense of separation. The apartment contains two separate spaces, the living and the sleeping spaces. The living quarters include kitchen and dining areas. The sleeping space includes the latter and some desk space for office work. The two spaces are separated by a wall, but this wall does not connect with the ceiling. The sleeping space is designed to be dark, the window openings are small and controllable, in terms of light intensity. The living space is bright and open with windows on the east and west walls. Both spaces have access to the exterior deck which overlooks the courtyard. The sleeping space is separated by three steps to signify that this is a more private space, perhaps just for the owner.

Office Space/Conference Room:

These spaces are located on the first floor, south of the lobby area. The office area serves an information center and takes care of the mundane administrative tasks. Both offices have windows that look out towards the courtyard space, to connect them with the outside world. The conference room is located at the end of the hallway, and is meant to be a private screening area for retreat guests and other interested individuals. The intention of this space is to allow privacy but still let in sunlight, so the windows are placed high to block the view, but let in light.
The stairway:
The central staircase is seen as a social center for the building. Therefore I wanted to have landings on the staircase that could serve as stopping points for people to stop and talk. The stairway also splits into to separate journeys. One set of stairs are for the public to use and the other set of stairs are for the private guests. The public stairs are open and wide. The private guest stairs are smaller in scale and enclosed.
Bibliography:


