Fluidity & the Design Process

Is there a connection between our mind’s creative process and the creative forces inherent in the dynamic nature of water?

In order to exercise creativity, an architect’s belief system and design methodology must be flexible, internally cohesive, and continually pressing forward in new directions - it should retain all the characteristics of a substance. Substance or liquidity in thinking may penetrate hard to reach places and dissolve unchallenged presumptions.

Substance also allows creative ideas to flow from one to the next. It binds fragmented ideas like a common glue or leads ideas forward towards a common direction like a current of water.

While a system of thought helps to organize and clarify ideas, a healthy imagination allows one to reflect on things and contemplate the unseen. Similar to the blurred edges of a sky’s reflection on the surface of a serene lake, a creative mind yearns to contemplate the mystery of what is beyond in the darkness, or what is unseen but only felt in spirit. A healthy imagination is similar to a substance that underlies the surface of reality, or what is immediately perceptible. Thus our mind’s processes often display the metaphysical properties of water, the dreamlike qualities working side-by-side with the substance’s physical characteristics.

During the design process, this method of thinking and creation was incorporated into the development phase. I wanted to allow the concept to grow and change with fluidity like the movement of water towards a final destination.

Water & Spirit

In addition to its physical structural properties, water’s adaptive nature can also be defined in terms of its metaphysical properties, or its spirit and yearning to express itself through its reflection of the environment around it. The universe continually yearns to express a will of its own, whether it be the glaring eyes on a peacock’s feathers, the reflection of the stars on calm water, or the yearning for people to look deep into space at the stars whose dust they are a part of.

Water is a natural example, of a primal element that continually searches to express its own will. Water senses the slightest vibrations, and responds - it reacts to the rhythms of the heavens like a sensitive organ by instrumentally playing notes through pulses of tidal waves. It also mediates between the hardened earth below and the sky above, by constantly rising and dropping through the cyclic nature of evaporation and condensation. Can the adaptable nature of a building recreate this connection between local site conditions and the greater cosmos above?

A key to spiritual manifestation of water is through its movement. Through currents of water, forms of life are created while containers are molded and shaped to house these life forms. Entire organisms such as the jellyfish are molded by the movement of water, or the pulsing of one current of water into another current. The forms of organs like the eye are also molded out of the sensitive barrier between two moving currents. During the formation of an eye, one current of water flows into another. The balance between each of the two forces is created by a static boundary surface. The form reacts to any pressure between the currents, and eventually this boundary condition becomes molded into the sensitive membrane of the organ itself. For a system to continually evolve and persist, this delicate balance, or boundary, must be maintained. Is it possible for the membranes between spaces of a building also serve to sense and react as a mediator between the two environments, or be thought of as an interface between people and meaning of the building itself?