

DETACHING FROM *BUSY-NESS*: EMBEDDING [A PLACE OF] CONTEMPLATION INTO AN URBAN FABRIC

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Living today is defined by a state of continual busy-ness – whether we are commuting to work, grabbing coffee or simply at home—our days are measured in terms of productivity, it has become a 24/7 obsession. As a result, little time exists within the day for one to step away and reconnect. How individuals manifest this separation is a critical aspect of everyday life; it gives individuals the necessary mental and physical stability, however there are few spaces which address this urbanistically. Individuals therefore become more fragmented, stressed and socially distant.

To understand the spatial relations necessary for an individual to detach and simply stop to be, both tangible and intangible methodologies are proposed as tools; therefore, to achieve this architecturally, individuals need to be supported experientially, spatially, materially and everyday activity. It is through this exploration that one can detach and reach a state of contemplation through architectural means directed at the mental and physical state.

In a programmatic and contextual sense this is manifested as a hybridization of public plaza, urban retreat and individual sanctuary; however it is this juxtaposition of conditions (light and shadow, chaotic and calm, individual and collective, floating and grounded, solid and void, spatial continuity and discontinuity) that activate and elevate the space(s). To test this thesis the insertion must be situated within an active and populated urban context, as it is one place which offers the necessary juxtapositions. Therefore, Chinatown DC serves as a test site for this thesis, as the location sits between multiple foci points within the city which insure the area to be constantly populated and active.

To mentally support the individual, the ritualistic experience is used to alter an individual as the spaces appear to be arranged in a chaotic manner, which disrupts the typical notion and allows the individual to find their unique meditative process. Light and materials support this ritual; light is utilized to suggest the level of activity and create the atmospheric qualities while the physical materials begin to guide individuals through and to certain spaces.

Within this experience, the individual is supported spatially as spaces are designed to promote individual solidarity yet connection. The individual is manifested through the cell, as it provides the physical boundary for individuals and the essential separation from the individual to detach from the everyday. On the opposite spectrum individuals can collectively gather in a centralized space for yoga, tai chi or other traditional meditative methods. The insertion utilizes meditative pedagogies as a base but the building as a whole acts as sanctuaries for the individual to gather, celebrate, decompress (or express) and cleanse; it is directed towards individual actions, which can be experiences individual or collectively.

It is through this mental and physical support that individuals can utilize architecture as a contemplative tool; as a result the architectural insertion becomes an urban amenity and serves as a place to detach and reconnect with oneself, in order to serve as a place of opposition to the everyday busy-ness.