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Revisiting the Picturesque the preschool building as garden

Master's Programme in Architecture and Urban Design
Chalmers University of Technology

Revisiting the Picturesque:
the Preschool Building as Garden

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Stowe, Palladian Bridge and winding path to Gothic Temple
(Pettitt, 2010)

Abstract

Research suggest that the natural environment supports children's development, both by providing a wealth of objects to aid in knowledge formation, and also in providing a stimulating, dynamic setting that engages children emotionally. In recent years nature preschools, where children spend more time outdoors, are increasingly common. However, the preschool buildings that house the indoor activities of nature preschools largely correspond to those of conventional preschools.

Framing this project is the thought; might it be possible to create a built environment that has the qualities, and benefits, of the natural environment?

A natural appearance was important in the 18th-century picturesque landscape garden. The style was marked by asymmetry, irregular shapes, partially concealed views, oblique movement, and individual "scenes" with varying characters. The specific approaches to making space in the landscape garden were meant to stimulate movement, curiosity, and imagination.

This thesis explores how some of the qualities of nature may be reproduced in architecture by engaging the 18th-century landscape garden as a limited milieu of the larger natural environment.

The project begins with a literature study of 18th-century writing on landscape gardening. The study focuses on how the properties of view, movement, character and variety were used in the landscape garden, to create picturesque space.

The second part of the project is concerned with finding and developing tools for configuring space, to create architecture that retains the qualities of picturesque space.

At last, the tools are tested in a design project—applied to the program of a preschool, on a site in Gothenburg—with the aim of transferring the qualities of space in the picturesque landscape garden to the built environment. Ideally, this would serve as a supportive backdrop to children's development; through sparking movement, curiosity, and imagination.

Keywords: Landscape gardening, picturesque, preschool, movement, imagination, nature, history



Stourhead, Pantheon obscured by trees (Eichmann, 2004)

Thesis Questions

What practices of the 18th century landscape garden are relevant to architecture?

How can these practices be adapted to architecture?

How can these practices inform the design of a preschool?



Stowe, Octagon Cascade (Pettitt, 2010)

Method

Read relevant text from 18th-century sources on landscape gardening. Select passages that display a particular approach to space in the landscape garden.

Search for tools for creating architectural space that may create results that capture the qualities of space in the landscape garden.

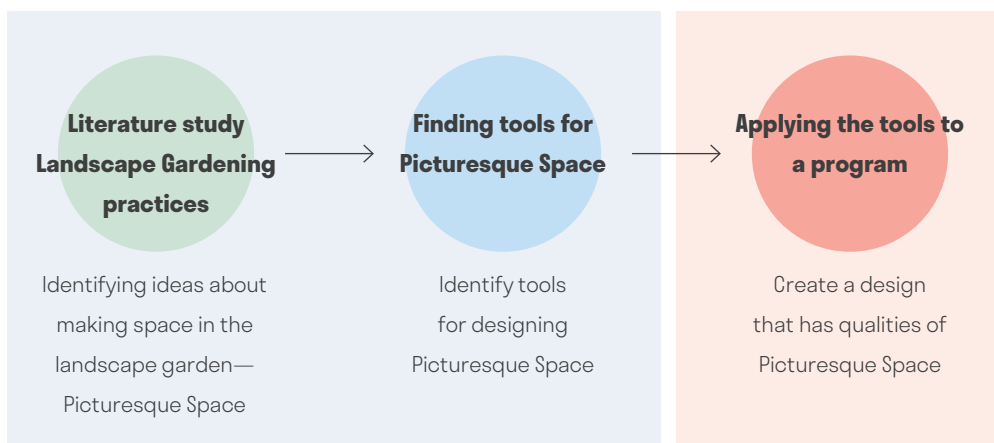
A site in Gothenburg and the program of a preschool will be used to test the tools from the previous step.

Delimitation

While the project uses landscaping as a starting point to inform the creation of architectural space, the intention is not to design a landscape or a garden.

Research for design

Research by design



Background

On drawing inspiration

From history

In this thesis I will engage with history as a source of inspiration, a fount of approaches for making, experiencing and imagining our external environments. We are all influenced by that which precedes us. However, it is possible to engage more or less actively with historical precedent.

Lucas (2016) argues that architectural history needs to be explored not only as a smaller subset of the whole field of history, but also in a manner that serves in the design of buildings, using historical precedents as source material for present practice. This engagement with history has had a fluctuating importance in architectural practice over time. Hill (2012) identifies a spark of romanticism (which includes reimagining the past) being ignited in the 18th century, and being reinvigorated in the mid 20th century as a means to understand modernism in a new way. Looking to the past provided an instrument to imagine the future, serving as a catalyst to creativity. The idea was not to replicate the past, but to reconfigure and transform it—to find the relevance of history in the present. Beardsell (2019) writes on being informed by history

In the afterlife they [ideals] start emitting call signs, of varying strengths, some faint, but most on the whole long-lasting, which sooner or later compel us to reinterpret, to reconfigure them, or in one way or another, to rub against them. But if attention to the past helps free us from ‘temporal provincialism’, it is only imaginative attention that can release tradition in ways that provide the seriously modern.

Similarly, Geers (CCA, 2017) says that using history helps establish a healthy distance from the present, while also pointing out that it can serve as a constraint, along with the more typical concerns of the clients needs, site, context and program. In conversation with Geers, Hasegawa adds that using history can help push one beyond ones personal experience and context to discover something new.

From other disciplines

I feel that drawing inspiration from other disciplines than building architecture can serve the same purposes as those mentioned earlier in borrowing from history. It may provide relief from a “disciplinary provincialism”, provide constraints, provide cues for design, or aid in discovery of new approaches to making, experiencing and imagining built space.

Garden History

The landscape garden

The English landscape garden was developed in the 18th-century as a reaction to earlier gardens (the French style in particular), which had asserted domination over nature through the use of straight lines, geometric shapes, symmetry, and artificially shaped topiary, and in which views had an unbroken, linear composition. The new style instead embraced a natural appearance, achieved through the use of features such as grass lawns dotted by clumps of trees (allowed to grow to their natural shape) and irregularly shaped bodies of water. (Brittanica, n.d.)

The Picturesque

Many of the qualities of the English landscape garden was present in a, similarly new, aesthetic category—the picturesque. The picturesque was an often mentioned idea in travel guides in the 18th-century. One writer of such guides was William Gilpin, whose illustrated guidebooks to picturesque landscape destinations in England were complete with instructions on how to sketch the scenery. In his *An Essay Upon Prints*, first published anonymously in 1768, Gilpin defined picturesque as “that peculiar kind of beauty which is agreeable in a picture” (Fay, n.d., Gilpin, 2014).

Picturesque has sometimes been placed between the beautiful and the sublime, containing the artistry of the former, and the wildness of the latter (Tate, n.d.). Uvedale Price's *An essay on the picturesque, as compared with the sublime and beautiful* expands on the idea. He considered the previous definition given by Gilpin too vague; pointing out that all things that are depicted in a painting would fit the definition of the picturesque by this definition. His placement of the picturesque gives it the properties of being scaleless (being able to be expressed in both the large and small), asymmetric, and intricate. (Price, 1794).

Romantic thought

Romanticism is a movement named after the practice of romanticizing something—meaning to make it mysterious, opaque, charged with wonder. Aesthetics was seen to have this power, and the practice of romanticizing nature, in particular, was highly regarded. As a movement, it has been practiced in various locations and over time, and as such has been variously interpreted—what does tie the movement together is the belief that aesthetics should permeate and inspire life (Gorodeisky, 2016).

Modern and contemporary visions of the landscape garden

Promenade architecturale

Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye shares some qualities with the English Landscape Garden. “*In this house occurs a veritable promenade architecturale, offering aspects constantly varied, unexpected and sometimes astonishing*”.¹ (Samuel, 2010) Both in Villa La Roche and the English Landscape Garden, the intended effect was achieved by stringing picturesque scenes together. (Kleine, 2017) According to Samuel, the ultimate purpose of Le Corbusier's promenade architecturale was to sensitise people to their surroundings, to create realignment with nature, to learn to appreciate that which is available. Le Corbusier wrote “*You enter: the architectural spectacle at once offers itself to the eye. You follow an itinerary and the perspectives develop with great variety, developing a play of light on the walls or making pools of shadow*”.² Samuel writes:

Le Corbusier's later work is intensely picturesque...the latter works share in those flights of memory, imagination and movement that is so often associated with picturesque.

1 Samuel is quoting Le Corbusier and Jeanneret, *Oeuvre Complete* Volume 2.

2 Samuel is quoting Le Corbusier and Jeanneret, *Oeuvre Complete* Volume 1.

The garden in motion and emotion

Bruno (2007) writes that in the 18th-century, movement became linked with emotion—this connection receiving its ultimate realisation in landscape design. Motion exposed the mind to the changing stimuli of the landscape, which stirred the imagination, and imagination in turn conjured emotion. As Bruno writes, the garden itself was asymmetrical, creating a fragmented experience of successive and disparate views, a shattered representational terrain. Bruno continues:

A memory theatre of sensual pleasures, the garden was an exterior that put the spectator in touch with inner space. As one moved through the space of the garden, a constant double movement connected external to internal topographies. The garden was thus outside turned into an inside, but it was also the projection of an inner world onto the outer geography. In a sensuous mobilisation, the exterior of the landscape was transformed into an interior map — the landscape within us — as this inner map was itself culturally mobilized.

This idea of the landscape garden as a space that excites motion, imagination and emotion is particularly relevant to this project's objective of making space for children, while the notion of “outside turned into inside” suggests a possible approach.



General Plan of Hagaparken, Stockholm (Piper, 1781).

Hagaparken is an example of the landscape garden style. This plan shows the natural appearance of this type of park, dotted with trees, with winding paths, and partial views connecting various points of interest.

Children & relation to nature

The origin of the preschool— Children's Gardens

The word kindergarten came into being as a metaphor for the school as a garden, a place where children grow and blossom. It is believed that Friedrich Fröbel (1782—1852), the educational pioneer¹, came up with the term, along with founding the first kindergarten. Fröbel saw in the kindergarten a mystical quality and considered it an allegory of nature in miniature (Dudek, 2015).

Contemporary preschools

Happily coinciding with its beginnings, nature has again begun to become a presence in the preschool. One increasingly common type of preschool pedagogy is the outdoor or nature preschool (I Ur och Skur being one specific pedagogy common in Sweden). In these preschools, children spend a lot of their time outside. I Ur och Skur-preschools usually have a built environment equal to that of a regular preschool but are located in proximity to nature, where the children go most days of the week (Änggård, 2012).

Nature & childhood development

Experiences of nature may have a positive effect on children's development. Kellert (2002) categorizes three types of experience of nature; direct, indirect and vicarious (symbolic), see fig. 1 for characterizations.

Development is categorized as Cognitive development, Affective development and Evaluative development.

Cognitive development and affective development are believed to be most likely to be affected by nature experiences. Cognitive development is believed to be positively influenced by the wealth and diversity of objects in nature to name, categorize and classify, contributing

¹ Besides founding the first kindergarten, Fröbel is perhaps most recognized for his educational toys, commonly known as "Fröbels Gifts". Besides at one time being on the path to becoming an architect, Fröbel's legacy has repeatedly brushed upon the discipline; his methods were taught at the Bauhaus, and Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier and Buckminster Fuller all played with the gifts as children. (99percentinvisible.org, 2019)

to knowledge formation. For affective development, in which the first skill to develop is the ability to receive information, the properties of the natural environment seems to improve responsiveness and receptivity towards learning. The natural environment has qualities of being dynamic, varied and surprising—which provides delight and engages the child emotionally. (Kellert, 2002) Cobb (1977) writes about the child's inherent sense of wonder;

Wonder is, first of all, a response to the novelty of experience (although not to the totally unexpected, which tends to arouse anxiety). Wonder is itself a kind of expectancy of fulfillment. The child's sense of wonder, displayed as surprise and joy, is aroused as a response to the mystery of stimulus that promises 'more to come' or, better still, 'more to do' — the power of perceptual participation in the known and unknown.

This suggests that children may benefit from vicarious experiences of nature via the "medium" of architecture—if it can engender the qualities of nature that make it a stimulating environment. The landscape garden has a smaller subset of those qualities, making it a viable basis for exploration in the area.

	Direct	Indirect	Vicarious
Physical contact	Yes	Yes	No
Planned activity	No	Yes	No
Exemplary locations	Parks, backyards, forests, meadows	Home, zoo, vegetable garden, museum	Film, TV, print or electronic media
Exemplary objects	Wild animals, wild plants	House plant, pet	Depicted natural object
Human control	Low	High	High

Fig.1 Types of nature experience, characteristics. Compiled from Kellert (2002).

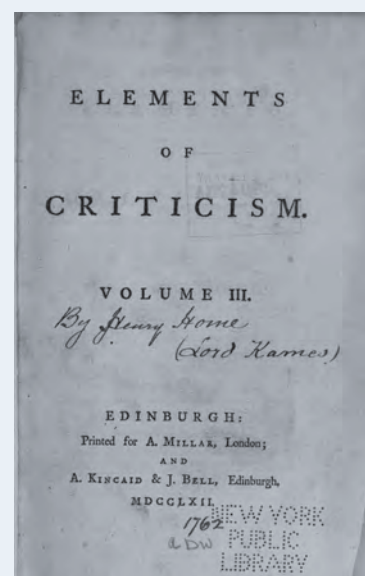
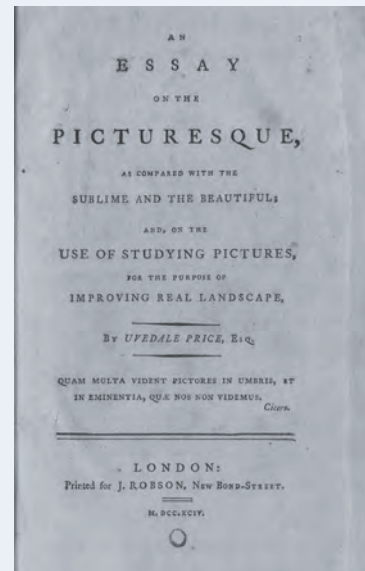
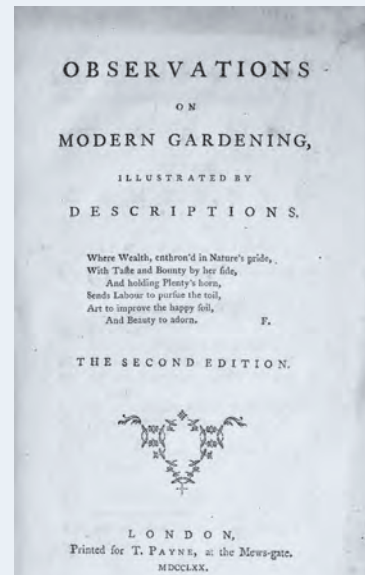
Works of Interest

The main source for the literature study is Thomas Whately's *Observations on Modern Gardening* (1770). It is a practical guide to the design of gardens in the contemporary manner, with descriptions of several gardens in England that embody different aspects of the style.

I have also used material from William Shenstone's *Unconnected Thoughts on Gardening* (1764), Henry Home's *Elements of Criticism* (first published in 1762, while I have used an 1830 edition), and Uvedale Price's *An Essay on the Picturesque, as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1794). I have used a slightly modernized spelling in my transcriptions of the texts (replacing the archaic 'long-s' with a modern 's'), and have also edited them for brevity (marked as such when significant parts have been omitted).

In my readings of the texts I have selected passages that show certain ideas to making space that I find relevant to architecture. I have tried to include examples that display both a general attitude, and examples that suggest more concrete ways of designing space. Sometimes the parallels between architecture and landscaping may seem obvious, at other times the connection may be looser, prompting a more imaginative interpretation.

Specific ideas about how to adapt or interpret the ideas and practices of the landscape garden into architecture will come in a later section, consider this part instead an inventory of ideas and practices as they existed in the 18th-century, filtered for the purposes of this thesis.



Title pages (Hathitrust)



interpretive illustration

*an oblique is sometimes better than
a direct view; and they are often less
agreeable objects when entire, than
when a part is covered, or their extent
is interrupted (Whately, 1770)*

(The Partial & Delayed) View

The view is an important aspect of the landscape garden, as illustrated by the multitude of words connected to views used in gardening landscape texts. Lines of sight, scenes, home-scenes and prospects are common concepts in landscape gardening that have to do with the view (Grillner, 2000).

Whately (1770) writes on arranging ground as to guide the path of the eye

The eye must not dart down the whole length immediately, but should be conducted towards the point with some circuitry and delay.

and also of the placement of buildings in the landscape

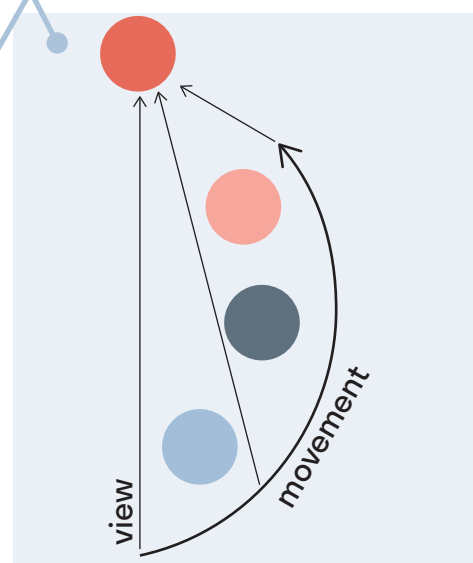
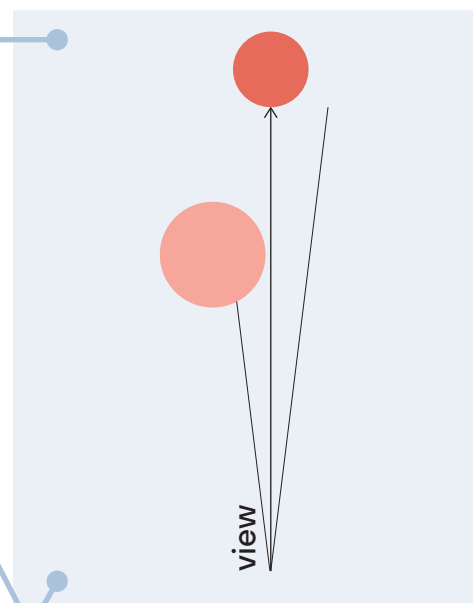
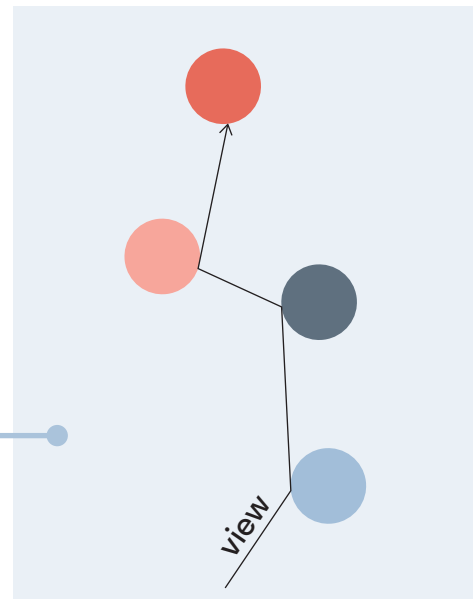
...an oblique is sometimes better than a direct view; and they are often less agreeable objects when entire, than when a part is covered, or their extent is interrupted; when they are bosomed in wood, as well as backed by it; or appear between the stems of trees which rise before or above them: thus thrown into perspective, thus grouped and accompanied, they may be as important as if they were quite exposed, and are frequently more picturesque and beautiful.

as well as views in a garden generally

In a garden, if the views be sometimes interrupted, they may still be caught from many points; we may enjoy them there whenever we please; and they would pall if constantly in sight.

Within the narrow compass of a garden [in this case, as opposed to a large park], there is not room for distant effects; on the other hand, it allows of objects which are striking only in a single point of view; for we may stop there to contemplate them; and an obscure catch, or a partial glimpse of others, are also acceptable circumstances, in the leisure of a seat, or even in the course of a loitering walk.

To sum up; the views in the landscape garden may be said to be characterised by *delay* and *partial concealment*.





Scene, noun [Latin scena; Gr. Heb. The Greek word signifies a tent, hut or cottage. In Latin it is an arbor or stage. The primary sense is to set or throw down.]

2. The whole series of actions and events connected and exhibited; or the whole assemblage of objects displayed at one view.

A charming scene of nature is display'd.

Webster's Dictionary (1828)

Line of sight (noun phrase)

1. a line from an observer's eye to a distant point

Merriam-Webster (n.d.)

Prospect, noun [Latin prospectus, prospicio, to look forward; pro and specio, to see.]

1. View of things within the reach of the eye.

Eden and all the coast in prospect lay.

3. That which is presented to the eye; the place and the objects seen.

There is a noble prospect from the dome of the state house in Boston, a prospect diversified with land and water, and every thing that can please the eye.

6. Place which affords an extended view.

Webster's Dictionary (1828)

(The Oblique) Movement

According to Middleton (2017) the word “movement” was rarely used between the 14th and the 18th-century, and when used it concerned the movement of celestial bodies, of the body and the soul, and dancing, as exemplified by the Oxford English Dictionary. When it comes to architecture, there is actually not much to be found, even though we might expect it. While the works of architects before the 18th-century does show a high degree of consciousness in relating the body to its location in space, that same consciousness is not apparent in their writing. Middleton writes that Whately’s *Observations on Modern Gardening* was the starting point for English language writing that related movement to architecture.

Notably however, Whately never uses the word “movement”, writing instead “walks are conducted”, “communication”, “leading to”, “the walk continues”, and so on. Reading his texts today, though, it feels clear to me, that movement is essential to the gardens Whately and contemporaries speak of; one can move on many paths, the eye moves between objects, one may move oneself to look down a hill, one might see the same object from several locations while on the move, in movement one experiences different spaces with different effects, and the movement itself has a certain property, distinct from that in other gardens—it is indirect, oblique.

Oblique

1. In a line deviating from a right line; not directly; not perpendicularly.

*Declining from the noon of day, the sun obliquely shoots
his burning ray.*

Webster's Dictionary (1828)

A garden affords many and varying opportunities for movement. Whately (1770) writes about the gardens at Hagley

Gravel walks are conduced across the glens, through the woods, the groves, or the thickets, and along the sides of the lawns, concealed generally from the sight, but always ready for the communication; and leading to the principal scenes

Whately also points out that the garden, as opposed to landscape painting, provides a larger scope of possibilities in composing a scene

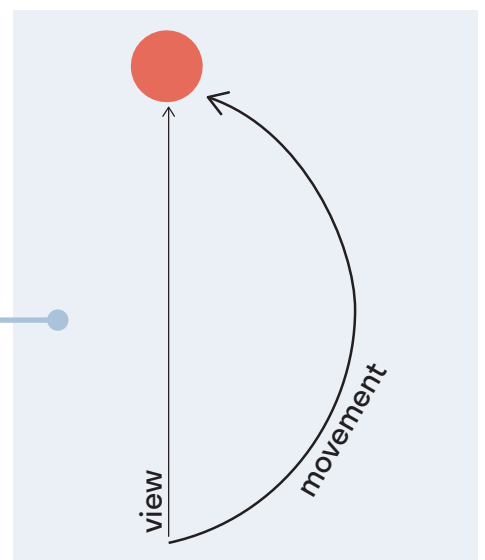
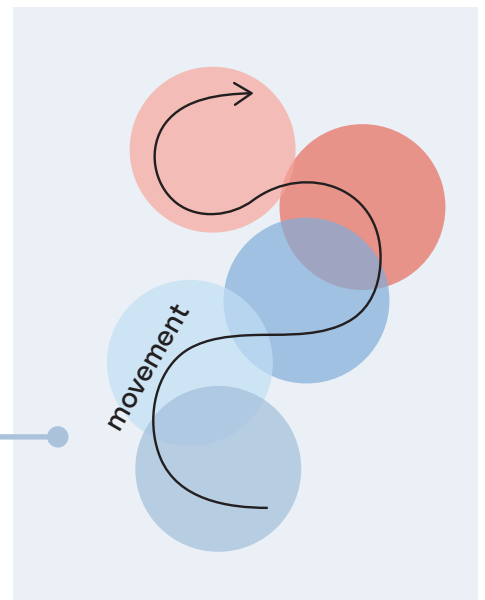
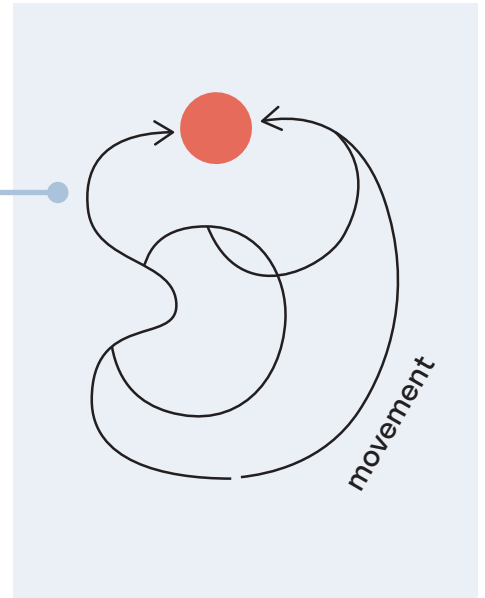
Painting, with all its powers, is still more unequal to some subjects, and can give only a faint, if any, representation of them; but a gardener is not therefore to reject them; he is not debarred from a view down the sides of a hill, or a prospect where the horizon is lower than the station

Kames (1830), writes that gardening has one particular advantage—due to the potential expansiveness of a garden, scenes of various emotions may be brought in succession

Gardening indeed possesses one advantage, never to be equalled in the other art: in various scenes, it can raise successively all the different emotions above-mentioned. But to produce that delicious effect, the garden must be extensive, so as to admit a slow succession; for a small garden, comprehended at one view, ought to be confined to one expression it may be gay, it may be sweet, it maybe gloomy: but an attempt to mix these would create a jumble.

Shenstone (1764) prescribes a certain way of moving in relation to the line of sight

When a building, or other object, has been once viewed from its proper point, the foot should never travel to it by the same path, which the eye has travelled before. Lose the object, and draw nigh, obliquely.



(The Emotional) Character

The word character was introduced to architectural discourse in the 18th century, writes Forty (2004), who remarks that the theme of equating the sensations experienced in nature and in architecture would be the main preoccupation of late 18th-century discussion of character, the theme being introduced by Kames and Whately. Previously, the discussion on character had centered on how to design edifices that by their outward appearance communicated their use. As we will see, Whately wrote that the garden could be the host of *original characters* — characters able to excite (distinct) emotions based purely on the properties of objects of nature and their arrangement. This thought would later be developed, writes Forty, by French architects, among them Le Camus de Mézières, who wrote “Each room must have its own particular character. The analogy, the relation of proportions, decides our sensations; each room makes us want the next; and this engages our minds and holds them in suspense”.

From this point on, the garden was considered to have the power to stir both emotion and imagination, through the use of character. Whately (1770) writes

But the art of gardening aspires to more than imitation; it can create original characters [...] the scenes of nature have a power to affect our imagination and our sensibility; for such is the constitution of the human mind, that if once it is agitated, the emotion often spreads far beyond the occasion; when the passions are roused; when the fancy is on the wing, its flight is unbounded; till we rise from familiar subjects up to the sublimest conceptions, and are rapt in the contemplation of whatever is great or beautiful, which we see in nature, feel in man, or attribute to divinity.

These *original characters* are to Whately scenes composed of objects of nature with certain properties, in certain dispositions, that can excite particular ideas and sensations. For him, the character of a wood is greatness, and that of a grove is beauty, while a rocky scene is always wild, but may also inspire dignity, terror or fancy.

Kames (1830) suggests three ways of arranging a garden, the closest to perfection being; to assemble objects that produce particular emotions, like grandeur, sweetness, gaiety, gloom, melancholy, wildness, surprise, won-

der, etc. If these characters are then put in succession (through experiencing scenes in movement) their effects can be further heightened.

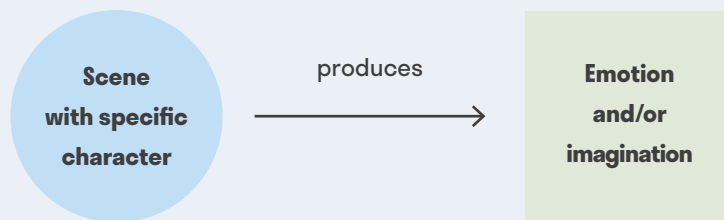
The completest plan of a garden ... [requires] the several parts to be so arranged as to inspire all the different emotions that can be raised by gardening. In this plan the arrangement is an important circumstance; for it has been shewn, that some emotions figure best in conjunction, and that others ought always to appear in succession, and never in conjunction. It is mentioned above, that when the most opposite emotions, such as gloominess and gaiety, stillness and activity, follow each other in succession, the pleasure, on the whole, will be the greatest; but that such emotions ought not to be united, because they produce an unpleasant mixture. For this reason a ruin, affording a sort of melancholy pleasure, ought not to be seen from a flower-parterre which is gay and cheerful. But to pass from an exhilarating object to a ruin has a fine effect; for each of the emotions is the more sensibly felt by being contrasted with the other. Similar emotions, on the other hand, such as gaiety and sweetness, stillness and gloominess, motion and grandeur, ought to be raised together; for their effects upon the mind are greatly heightened by their conjunction.

The picturesque is a new aesthetic category in the 18th century, a particular character that could be found in a garden scene, distinguished by properties of intricacy, roughness, asymmetry, incompleteness, and imperfection, Price (1794) writes;

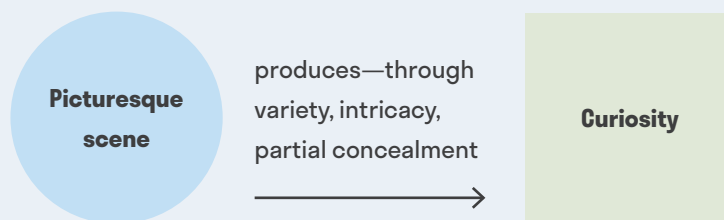
the effect of the picturesque is curiosity; an effect, which, though less splendid and powerful [than the beautiful or the sublime], has a more general influence. Those who have felt the excitement produced by the intricacies of wild romantic mountainous scenes, can tell how curiosity, while it prompts us to scale every rocky premonitory, to explore every new recess ... Again, by its variety, its intricacy, its partial concealments, it excites that active curiosity which gives play to the mind, loosening those iron bonds, with which astonishment chains up its faculties.

Meaning, the character of picturesqueness inspires curiosity—movement of the mind—and prompts movement of the body.

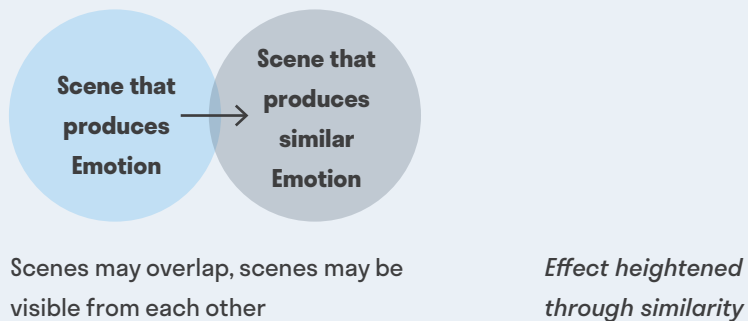
The effect of character on the mind



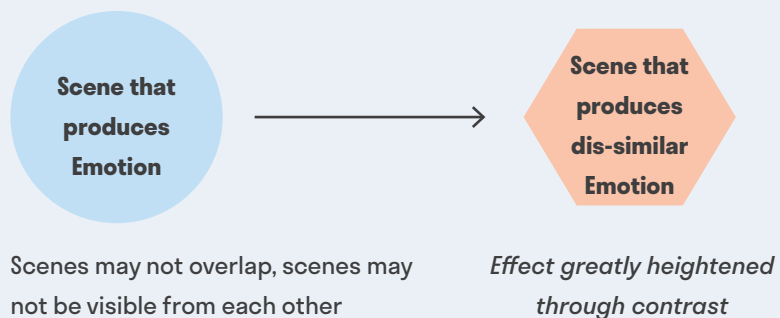
The effect of picturesque character on the mind



Heightening effect, in conjunction



Heightening effect, in succession



Variety

The design of the landscape garden was meant to closely resemble nature. To that effect, variety was an important quality to include in designs. Variety (as appropriate to the circumstances and intended character) was to be employed in the shape of ground, in the outlines of woods, ponds and lakes, in the winding of rills and rivers, and in the colors, shapes and placement of trees. Whately (1770) writes

Ground is seldom beautiful or natural without variety; and the precautions extend no further than to prevent variety from degenerating into inconsistency... Variety... improves the general effect. Each distinguished part makes a separate impression; and all bearing the same stamp, all occurring to the same end, every one an additional support to the prevailing idea: that is multiplied; it is extended; it appears in different shapes; it is shewn in several lights; and the variety illustrates the relation.

On using variety as appropriate to the character of a scene, Whately again

If the scene be mild and quiet, he will place together those [forms] which do not differ widely. In ruder scenes, the succession will be less regular, and the transitions more sudden. The character of the place must determine the degree of difference between forms which are contiguous.

Kames (1830) writes

In forming plans for embellishing a field, an artist without taste employs straight lines, circles, squares; because these look best upon paper. He perceives not, that to humour and adorn nature is the perfection of his art; and that nature, neglecting regularity, distributes her objects in great variety with a bold hand. A large field laid out with strict regularity, is stiff and artificial. Nature indeed, in organized bodies comprehended under one view, studies regularity, which, for the same reason, ought to be studied in architecture: but in large objects, which cannot otherwise be surveyed but in parts and by succession, regularity and uniformity would be useless properties, because they cannot be discovered by the eye. Nature, therefore, in her large works, neglects these properties; and, in copying nature, the artist ought to neglect them.

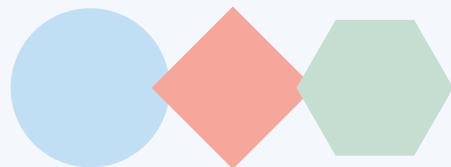
While a natural appearance was demanded for landscape, the same was not required, nor desired, in architecture. Kames, and contemporaries, believed that architecture did not need the same kind of variety as a garden did, but should instead strive for order, regularity and symmetry (garden follies in some cases being exempt, depending on their intended character).

Mild scene



There may be a small amount of variety

Wild scene



A larger amount of variety may be suitable

Conclusion Literature Study

In my inventory of landscape garden practices I have focused on those that demonstrate a particular approach towards the concepts *view*, *movement*, *character* and *variety*.

Views are marked by their partiality, circuitry and delay—the whole is not served up at once, but in pieces, and the understanding of the scene, and of the full landscape, is gradual.

Movement is similarly deferred—once the view or the end-goal of movement has been sighted—one approaches it not straight ahead, but obliquely. View and move-

ment have a special, interdependent relationship in the landscape garden.

The character of scenes in the landscape garden were meant to stimulate emotion and imagination. Variety was in the landscape garden a means to reach a result that felt natural, and in a picturesque scene, to promote curiosity.

To make the move into architecture, I should have to find the tools or approaches that allow me to design spaces that have the qualities of space in the landscape garden—what I suggest we call *Picturesque Space*.

Suggested Elements of Picturesque Space

View

- May be circuitous, delayed and/or partially concealed

Movement

- There are a variety of ways to move—there are different paths, but there may also be different modes of moving, such as running, crawling, climbing

Character

- Spaces have their own characters, suitable to their use (degree of activity, desired emotional state, function etc.)
- Picturesque character is an available option—has properties of variety, intricacy, and partial concealment—encourages curiosity and movement
- The effect of spaces may be heightened by their relation to each other

Variety

- Variety is used, to a degree fitting to the character of spaces

View & movement

- Allow experiencing an object/view/scene differently from different vantage points
- The position of the body may allow a view to be directed in various ways—up/down, looking in/out, close/distanced, in front/behind
- There are opportunities for oblique movement—the line of sight and the path diverge

Walmer Yard

*Peter Salter, Fenella Collingridge
(2016)*

Walmer Yard is a housing development with four units in London's Notting Hill. It might be considered an example of a project that “just so happens” to have qualities of the landscape garden. While the architects have not explicitly referenced the landscape garden, these buildings still have aspects that may inform my interpretation;

- Going between dark and light, at times even “seeking gloom”.
- An organization that appears asymmetric, undulating, and irregular.
- A variousness of form and material, that still results in cohesion.
- Short sightlines, or longer sightlines coupled with “oblique movement”

Beardsell (2019) writes both about taking inspiration from historical ideals, interpreting the natural world in architecture, and about Walmer Yard's connection to landscape. Beardsell writes that the influence of landscape in Salter's work has always been abstracted, an imaginative equivalent — avoiding plagiarism of the natural world through separation, selection and emphasis. On Walmer Yard in particular he writes

Each house is very different in configuration and relation to light, and no two spaces are the same. There's a vestige of the natural world, of course, in such cohesive variousness. Light inside these spaces isn't regularised by repeated form, while something of the diversionary approach to progress, the going from here and there played by English landscape architecture, is probably present. Always to go directly leaves too much out.



The Kid Gets Out of the Picture

LADG (2016)

LADG has taken a playful approach in interpreting Gilpin's writing. The installation conveys a play-ground-like impression — it is *clump* that invites moving in and on top of it, climbing and crouching.

The picturesque vocabulary of *swells and hollows* is apparent in the shape. Indeed, the shape is varied, containing several different materials and forms, rounded, soft, straight, hard.

In Whately's writing straight shapes are reserved for architecture, being intolerable to landscape — perhaps the LADG wants to comment on this relationship.

The composition is asymmetrical, disorderly. The views are restricted, like the long tube that, by its geometry, directs the view into the bushes. At times we find ourselves peering in, at other times peering out — but always lacking the complete view.

Forest Kindergarten

Junya Ishigami (2015)

Situated in densely forested area in the countryside of Shandong. The intention is to connect children to the natural environment.

A loosely organized spatial composition has been favoured, to allow children freedom in their play. The scale is largely based on children's scale, while classrooms are made to also fit adults—but there is also a play in scale—some places cannot be reached even by crouching or crawling children.

Collages of images of animals, plants and children's drawings, have been worked into abstraction to form the shape of the roof. With its openings, and swelling and dipping forms, the architecture is conceived as a landscape (Puente et al., 2019)

What I take from the reference; I admire the playful attitude to shape and scale. The idea of connecting to nature, and building as a landscape are important parts of my project too, and this reference provides one approach to that—the swelling and dipping forms can be conceived to have a connection to landscape gardening.

*See Image List on page 75 for links to images for these references.

Gathering the tools

What we see while we inhabit, how we move in, how we experience architectural space—this depends not only on the characteristics and structure of the space itself, but also on how the space relates to other spaces.

In this chapter I will present a (non-comprehensive) set of tools for composing spaces that have a potential for use in an interpretation of the landscape garden—for the construction of Picturesque Space; space that has the qualities of partial and delayed views, oblique movement, that uses character, and has variety.

The tools are selected from the book *The Drama of Space* (Kleine, 2017), which focuses on the experience of space as dependent on the organization and relation between spaces, through the lens of spatial dramaturgy.

In this chapter I also begin to explore potential ways to use the tactics in the context of a design project that interprets the landscape garden.

Configuring spaces

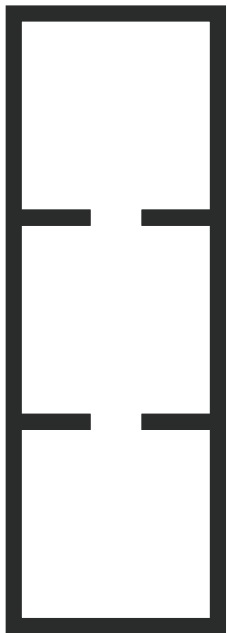
In the context of landscape gardening; the relation between adjacent spaces decides what we can see from a vantage point (a full, direct view or a partially concealed, delayed view), how we move in and between spaces (moving straight or obliquely), and to what degree the character of a space is affected by adjacent spaces.

Kleine divides the modes of configuring adjacent spaces as Enfilade, Visual Continuum, Flowing Space and Volumetric Continuum. Interlocking Space is one further way of configuring space, where the comprising spaces overlap.

Enfilade and Visual Continuum have qualities of symmetry, and are perhaps therefore less suitable to create *oblique movement*, than a sequence with Flowing Space, Volumetric Continuum or Interlocking Space. However, if the symmetry is broken up, the Enfilade and

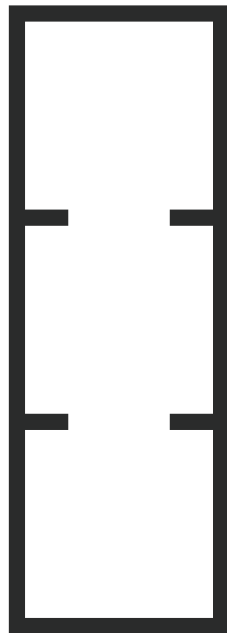
the Visual Continuum might also be appropriate to be used for creating picturesque space. For example, the Enfilade might be useful for creating a *partially concealed view*.

To be clear, I do not see any of these tactics of configuring space as unproductive to the goal of creating picturesque space—however, they may need to be adapted in different ways, to create the effects of *partial and delayed view* and *oblique movement*.



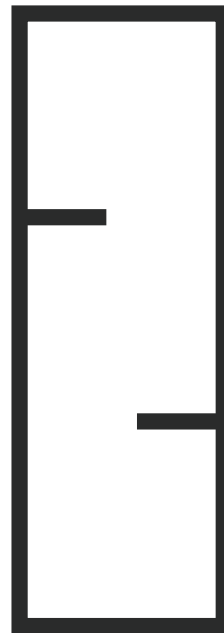
Enfilade

Symmetric
Partial view
Separation



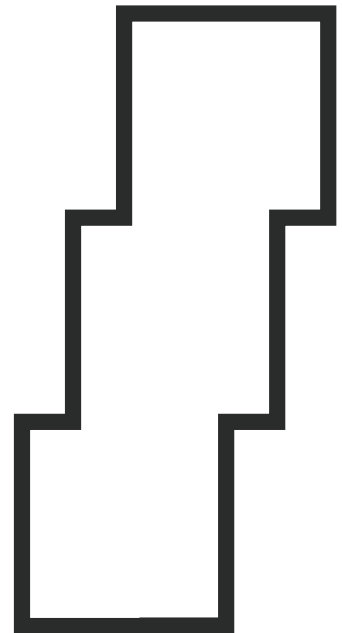
Visual Continuum

Symmetric
Semi-partial view
Unity



Flowing Space

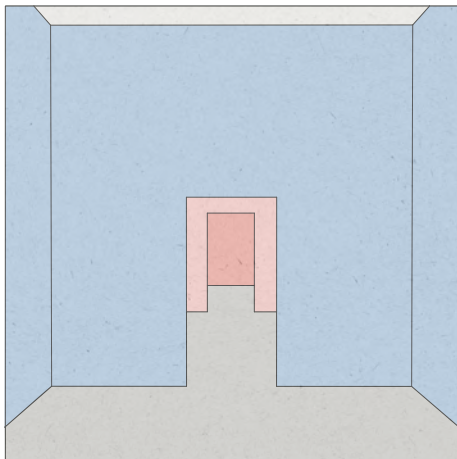
Asymmetric
Partial view
Separation & Unity



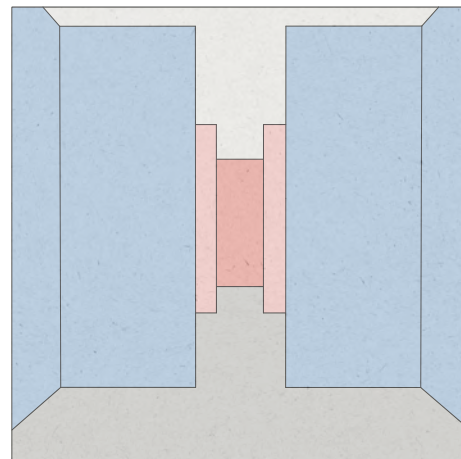
Volumetric continuum

Symmetric or Asymmetric
Partial to Semi-partial view
Separation & Unity

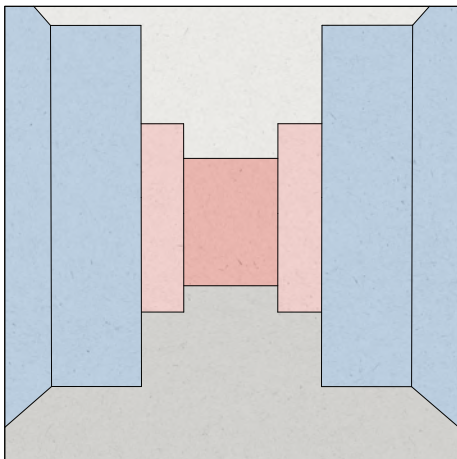
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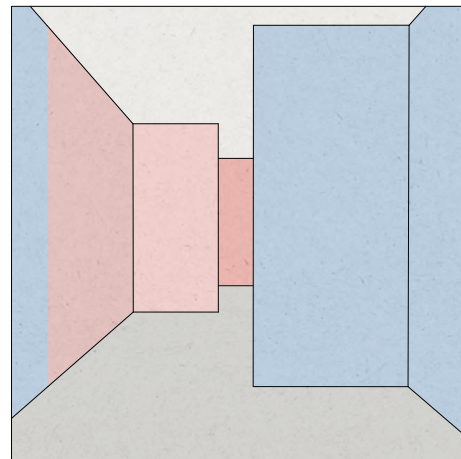
Enfilade - small opening



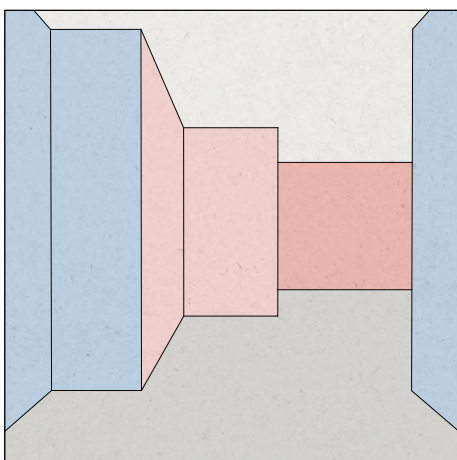
Enfilade - full-height opening



Visual Continuum



Flowing Space

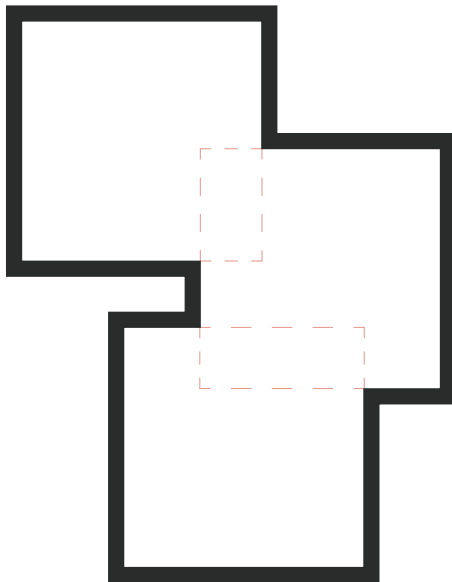


Volumetric Continuum

Interleaving spaces

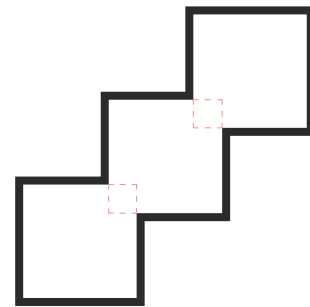
I see interleaving space as a particularly promising way to configure Picturesque Space.

Interleaving spaces have a quality of duality between enclosing and opening, and depending on *how* the comprising spaces are combined, there are endless possibilities of directing view and movement. Additionally, interleaving spaces allows for creating many layers of spaces, making it a rich tool for *framing views* (p. 40). Interleaving space allows for creating views that are *partial* and *delayed*, particularly through creating complex *inward views* and *through views* [see following pages for information on framed views].

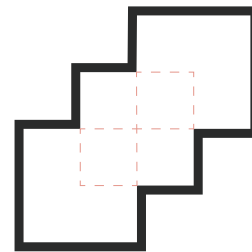


Intereaving space

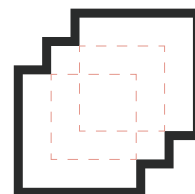
Symmetric or Asymmetric
Partial to Semi-partial View
Separation & Unity



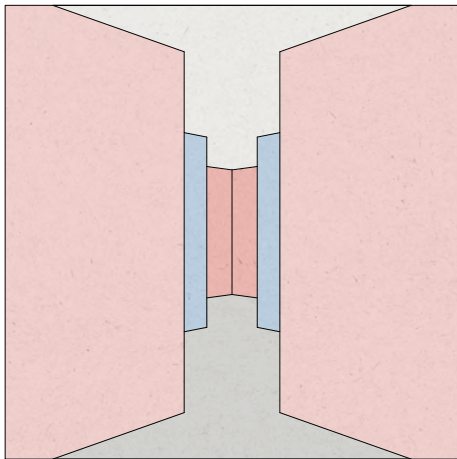
Low degree of interleaving



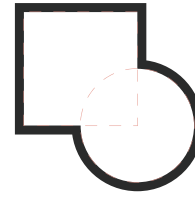
Medium degree of interleaving



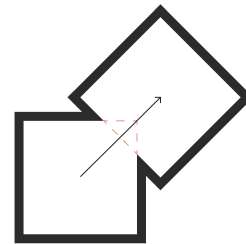
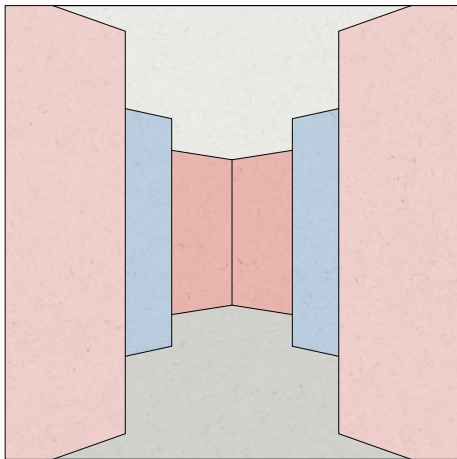
High degree of interleaving



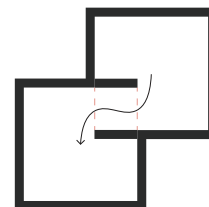
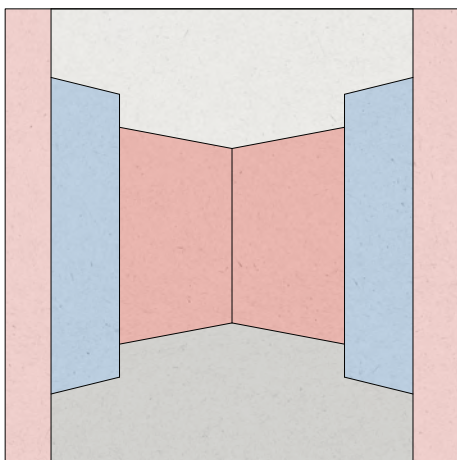
Variations on Interleaving Space



Differently shaped spaces can be combined

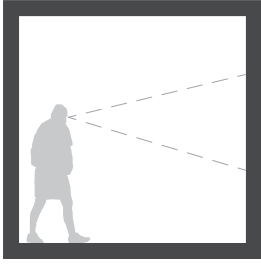


Rotation of combined forms

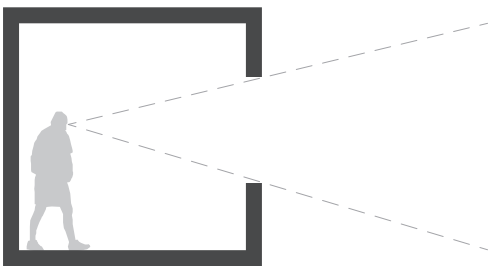


Parts of the interleaving forms can remain, or new structures can be introduced

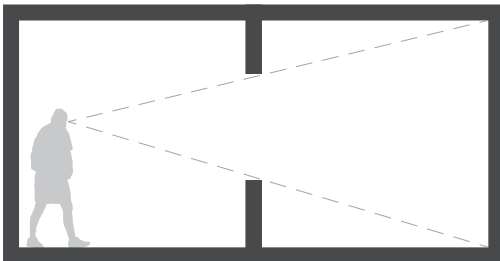
Framing views



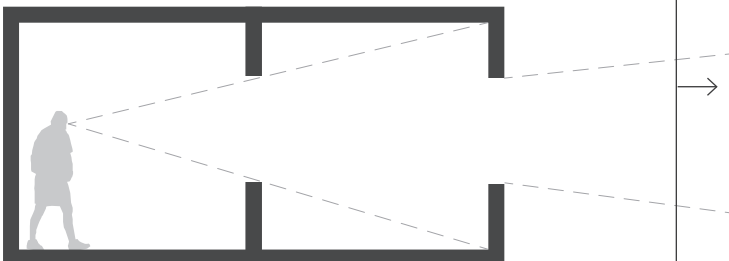
Direct View



Outward View



Inward View



Through View

These are probably the most relevant types of view to our discussion of the landscape garden, allowing us views that are *partial* and *delayed*. Specifically, it is possible to imagine *through views* that are comprised of many layers, framing the view in a complex way, allowing a partial view of both the spaces in between and the final view.

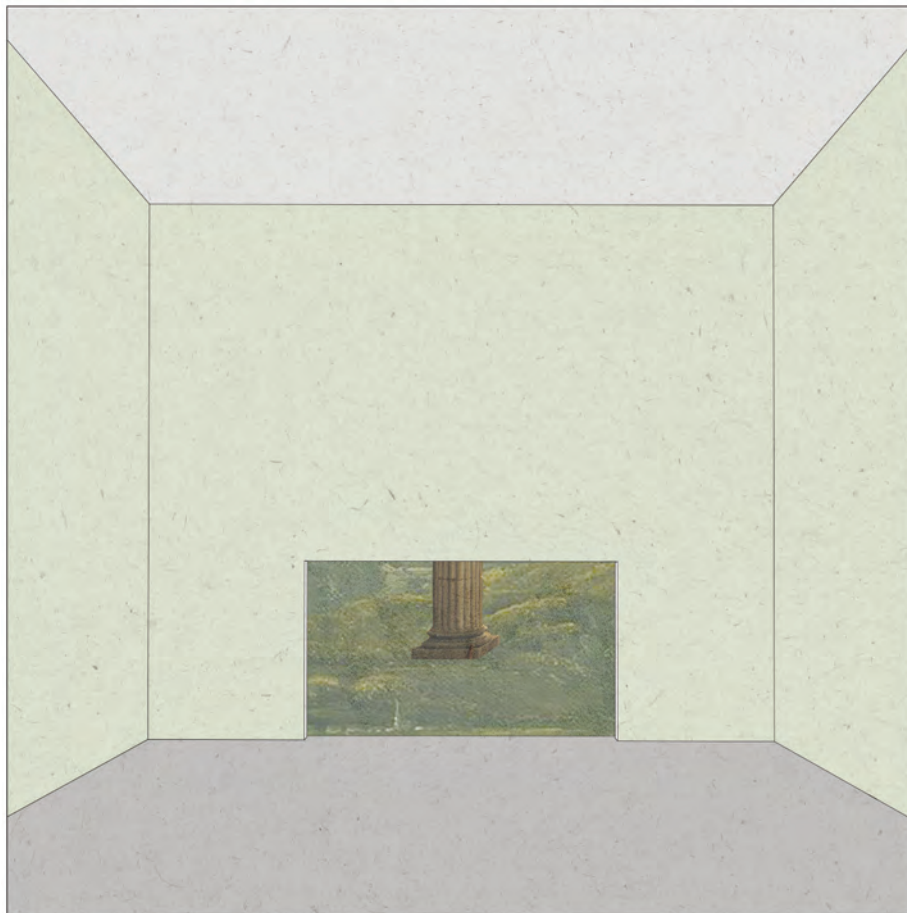
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Partial view & Oblique Movement

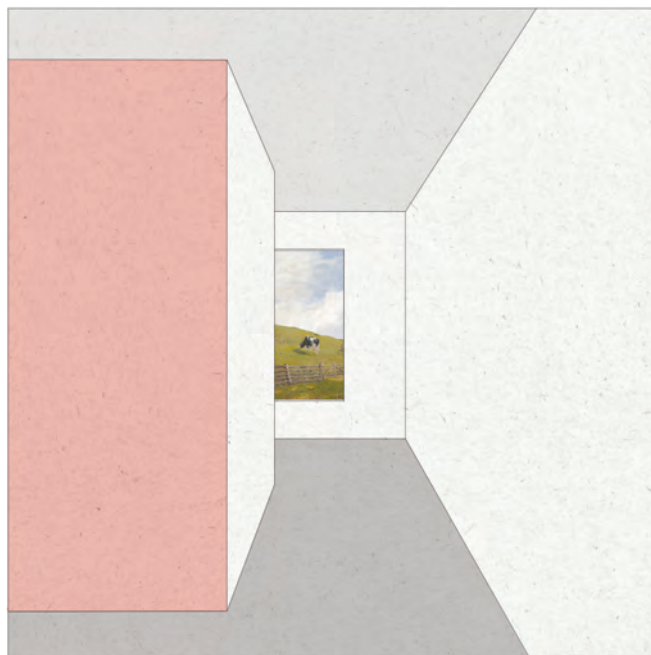
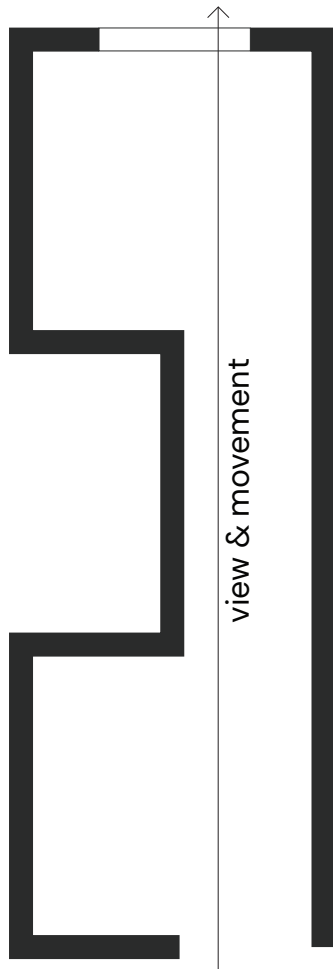
In landscape gardening, the view is *partially concealed* or *delayed*. Meanwhile the movement is oblique—the body does not follow the path of the eye.

Through configuring space, we can create spaces where the view is partially concealed or delayed, or where the movement is oblique.

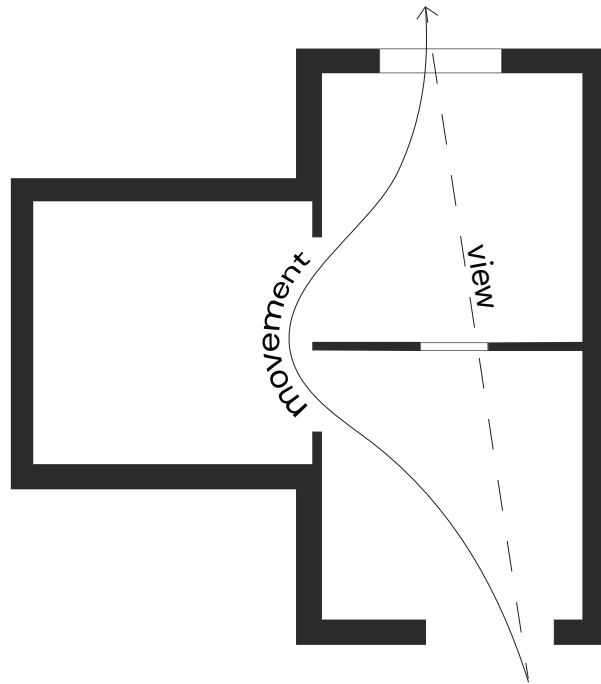
These are some simple examples that illustrate the effect.



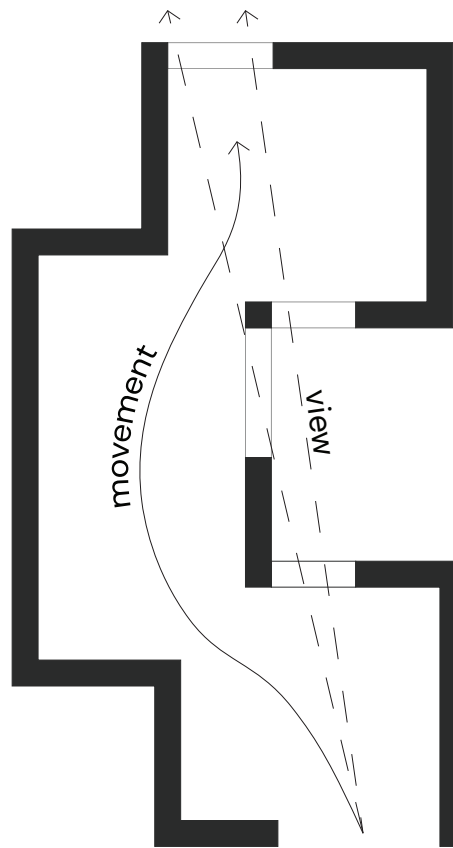
This opening shows a *partial view*, created through placement and proportion of an opening.



The view is *partially concealed* behind a wall. An eye-catching colour in the foreground may *delay* the view for a moment.



The view is glimpsed through an interior window, creating a *through view*, which frames the view, and *partially conceals* it.



Several layers of structure *obscure* the view, while framing a *through view*, creating *partial concealment*.

Sequences of Spaces

The character of scenes in the landscape garden were meant to stimulate emotion and imagination. In an architectural context different parts of a program can use the idea of character in a similar manner.

The character of a room may be influenced by a number of properties, such as, size, shape, proportion, light, material and texture, colors, degree of openness, sound, views etc.

Different rooms will benefit from different characters, and here it is a matter of finding the combination of properties that achieve the intended result.

In a larger garden or a park the character of scenes and views could also be varied, providing a string of different impressions to amuse on a walk. The ordering of characters on a walk could be used to heighten the experience by contrasting different characters, or by coupling similar characters, this by necessity requires some amount of variety.



Contrasting proportions & Contrasting light

Moving from a long, sun-filled room will heighten the experience of moving into a high-ceilinged, dark room. If the room before is experienced as a happy room, the latter may by contrast be experienced as mysterious or contemplative.



Growing scale & Growing light

Moving from smaller through successively larger, brighter rooms may provide a feeling of opening up and lifting.



Rectilinear to free-form

Moving from a rectilinear space to successively more free-form spaces might create curiosity and playfulness.

Program

The program chosen to apply the interpretation of picturesque space to is a pre-school, with two groups of 15-20 children each, divided by age. The basic program for each unit is a home room, meant for dining and gathering the group, play rooms, a room for naps and story time. The two units share a music & drama room and an atelier. The program also has supporting rooms for staff and the functioning of the building.



small
mountain

views of
park

views
mountain

wooded area

sound of water
rill

trees

stone slab
bridge

path

path

trees

Entrance, delivery
best location

1:750

0 1 5 10 15



Site

Fjällbo Ängar, North East Gothenburg

The site chosen is a plot south of the nature area Fjällbo Ängar, located in the North East of Gothenburg. The south part of the area (close to the plot) is characterized by hilly meadows, growing into rocky cliffs further north. Furthest north in the area is the lake Bergsjön. The lake has outlets into small rills, one of which runs out onto the plot where the project is placed.

Topography

Elevation from 26–30 m over ocean level.

The slope has its aspect to the south-south east.

Biological context

Grassy field on the middle of the site. Messy thicket of trees east of the brook. Mountain north of the site.

Mature trees are found on the outer parts of the plot, many on the eastern part, and a few in the middle of the plot.

One large rock on the north part of the site. Some smaller rocks close to the bridge over the brook. The bridge is without handrails, made from large blocks of stone. The brook makes pleasant noises, with the water falling from a low height in some parts.

Transportation & Utilities

Opportunity for this on the southern part of the plot.

Visibility

View to the mountain in the north, the park north of the plot with gently sloping hills and clumps of trees in foreground. Hills can be seen in the far south.

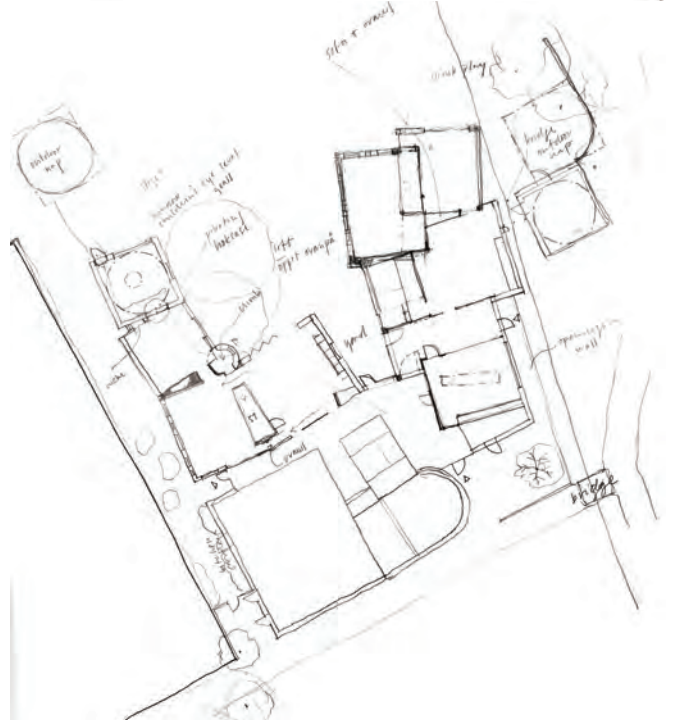


View from south-east, January



View from south, May

Process



Small sample of intermediate steps

1. Quick sketch - collages with approximate room sizes.
2. Iteration on collages, testing interlocking spaces, view, movement.
3. Further iterations, here; interlocking space briefly abandoned, testing alternative tools
4. Sketch close to final composition, further iteration on interlocking spaces with view and movement, more subtle rotation introduced.

Final composition



The diagram shows how the final composition has been developed with *interlocking spaces*.

Dashed images show views with *partially concealed, delayed view* or *oblique movement*, see pages 63–69 for illustrations.

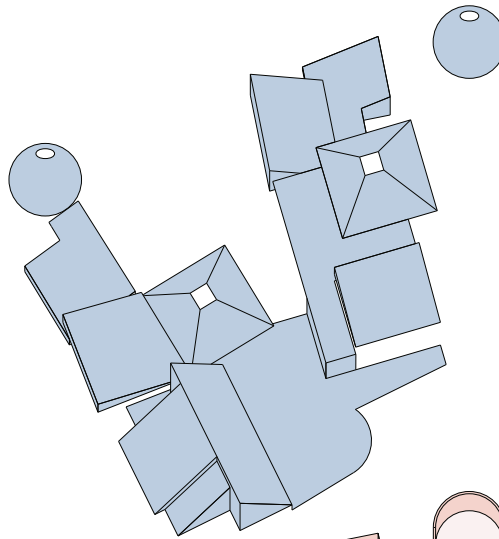
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0 1 5 10



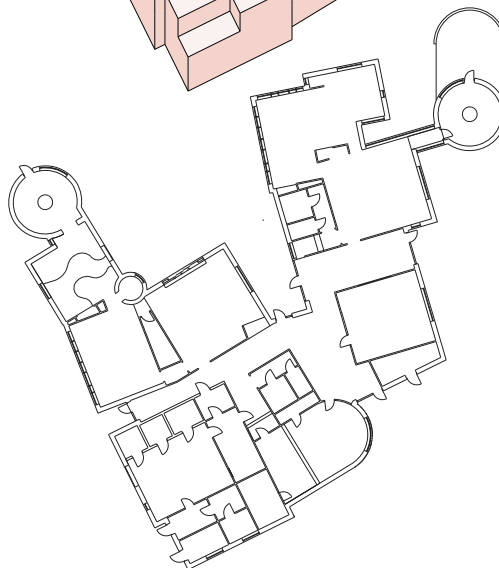
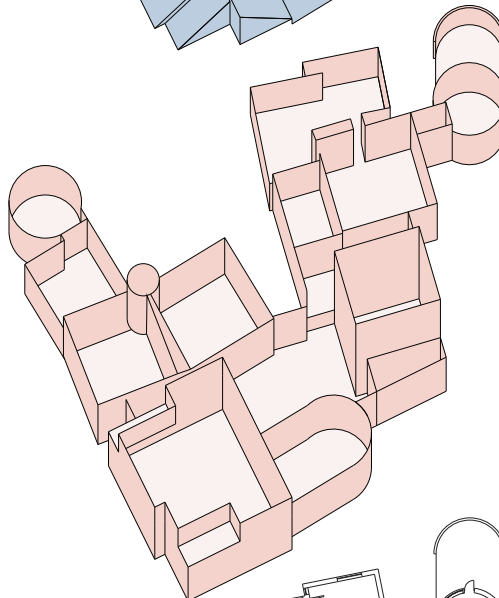
Roofs with different shapes added.

Roofs of different shapes are added to suit the character and use of internal rooms. Here there is a balancing act to have in mind—to find character and variety, without creating disorder.



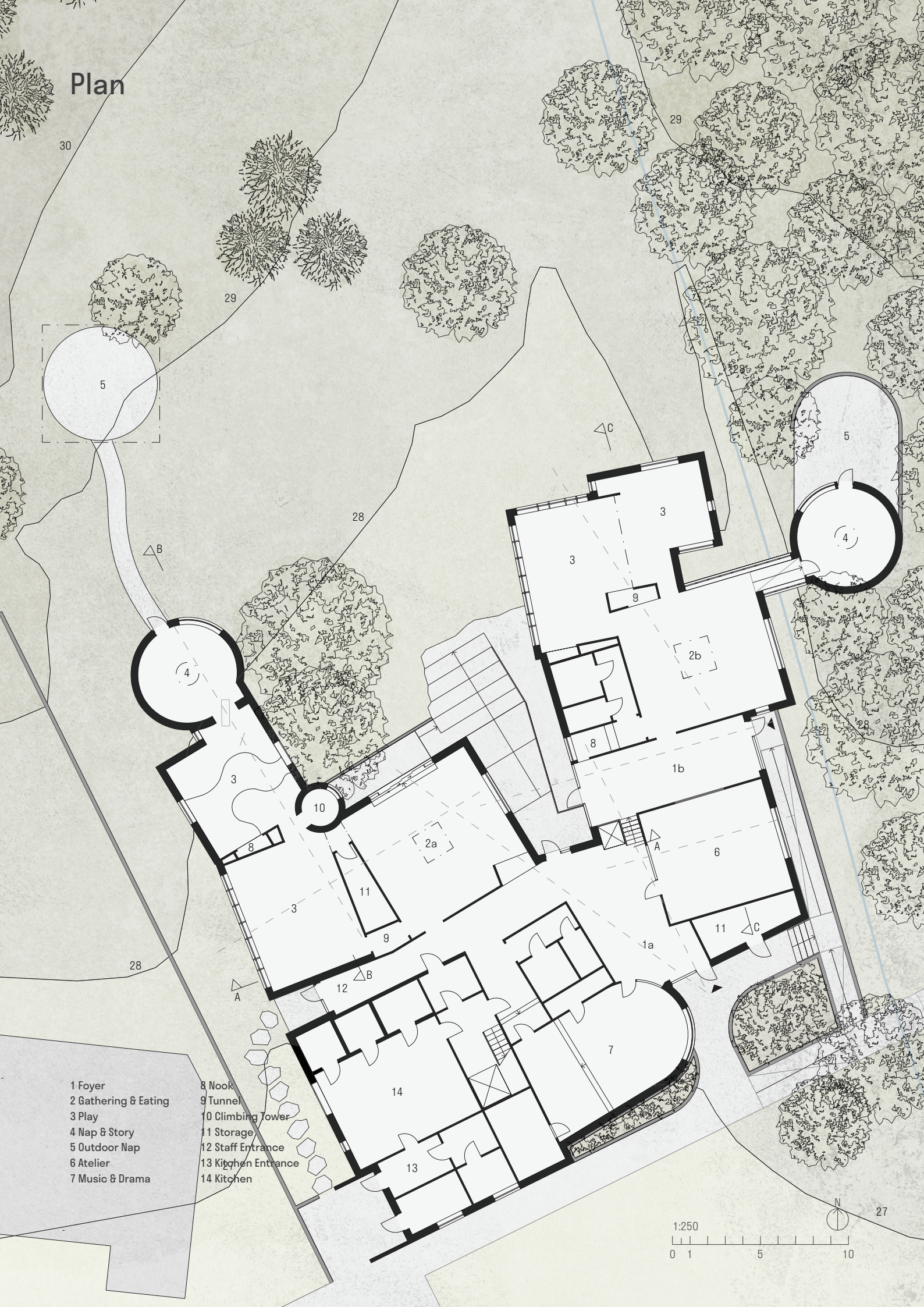
Rooms with varying heights

The height of the space can be configured to suit the character and use of the room. The experience of moving between spaces can be strengthened by a considered change of height of rooms, using similarity and contrast.





Plan



- 1 Foyer
- 2 Gathering & Eating
- 3 Play
- 4 Nap & Story
- 5 Outdoor Nap
- 6 Atelier
- 7 Music & Drama

- 8 Nook
- 9 Tunnel
- 10 Climbing Tower
- 11 Storage
- 12 Staff Entrance
- 13 Kitchen Entrance
- 14 Kitchen

1:250

0 1 5 10

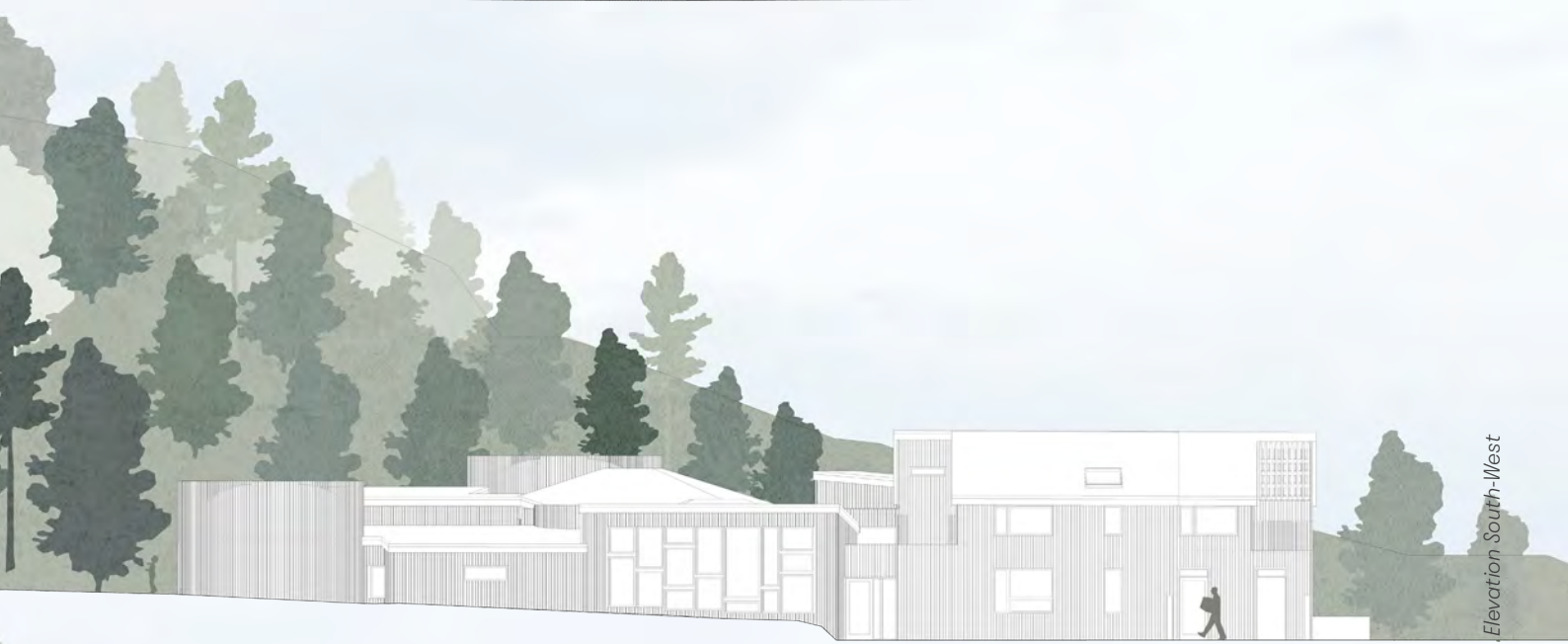


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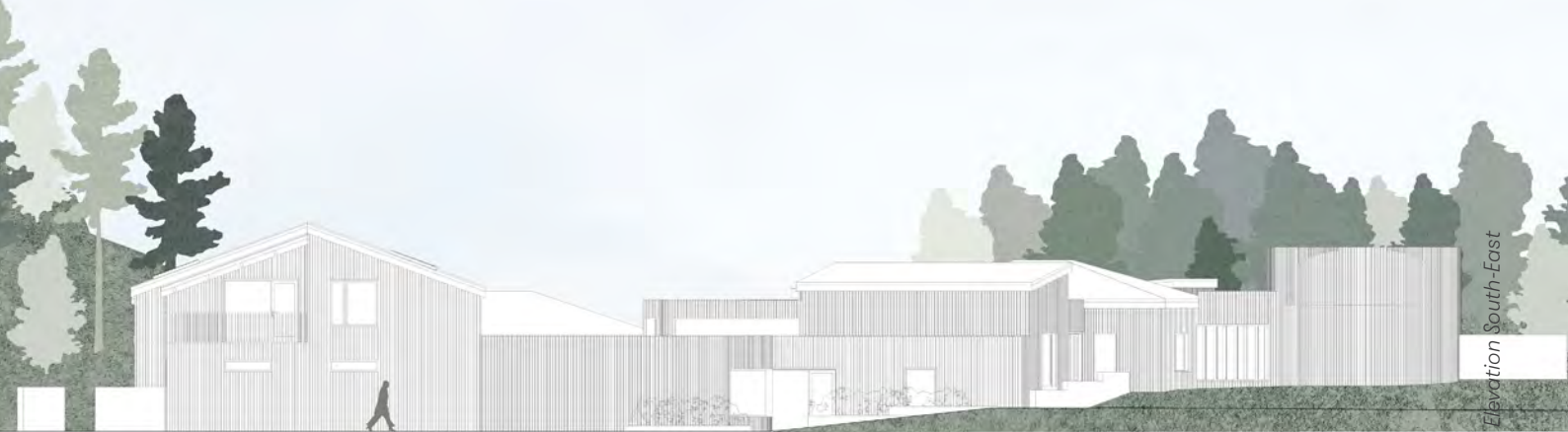
Elevations



Elevation North-West



Elevation South-West



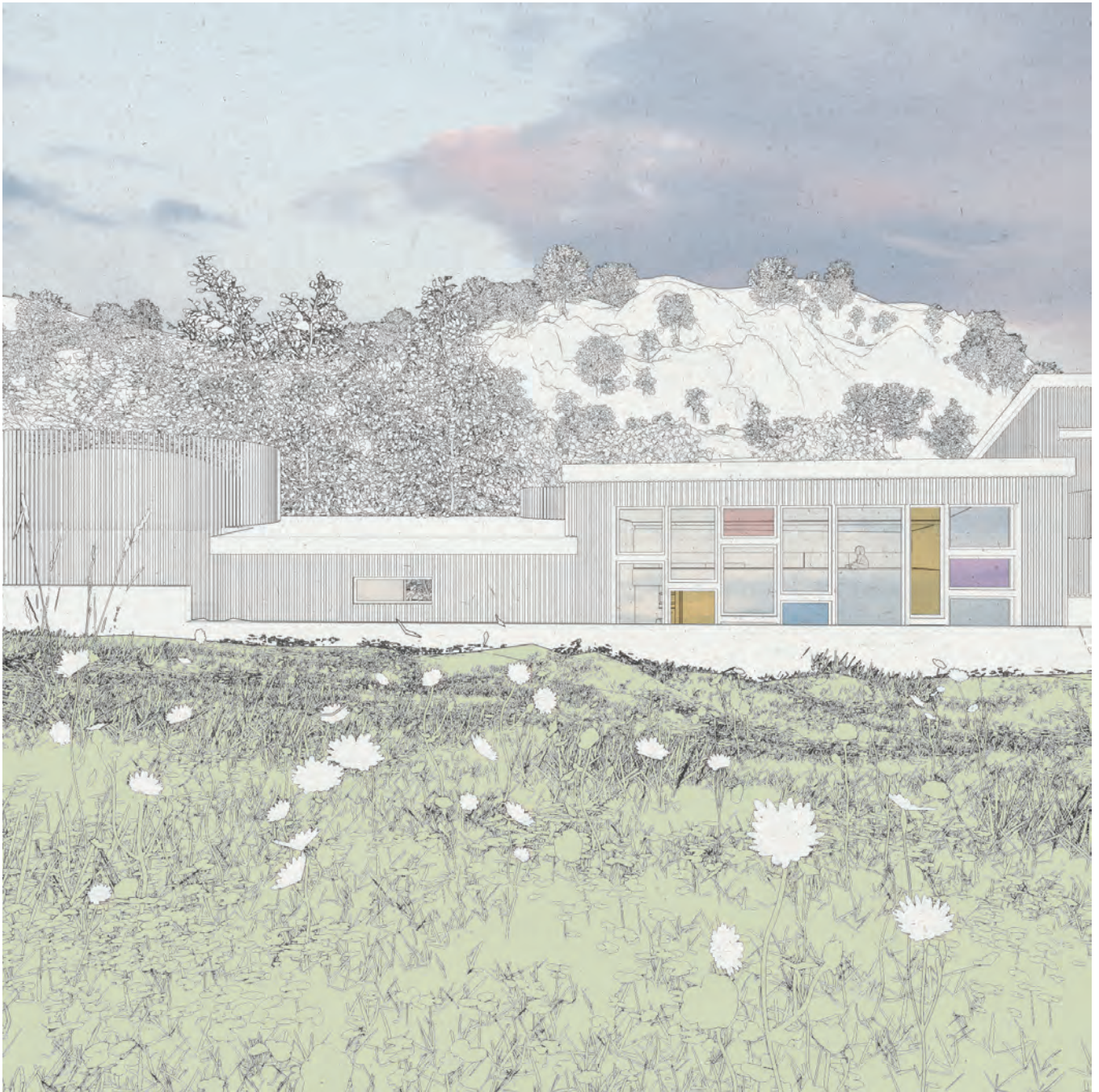
Elevation South-East



Elevation East



Perspective North-West



Perspective South-West



Perspective South-East



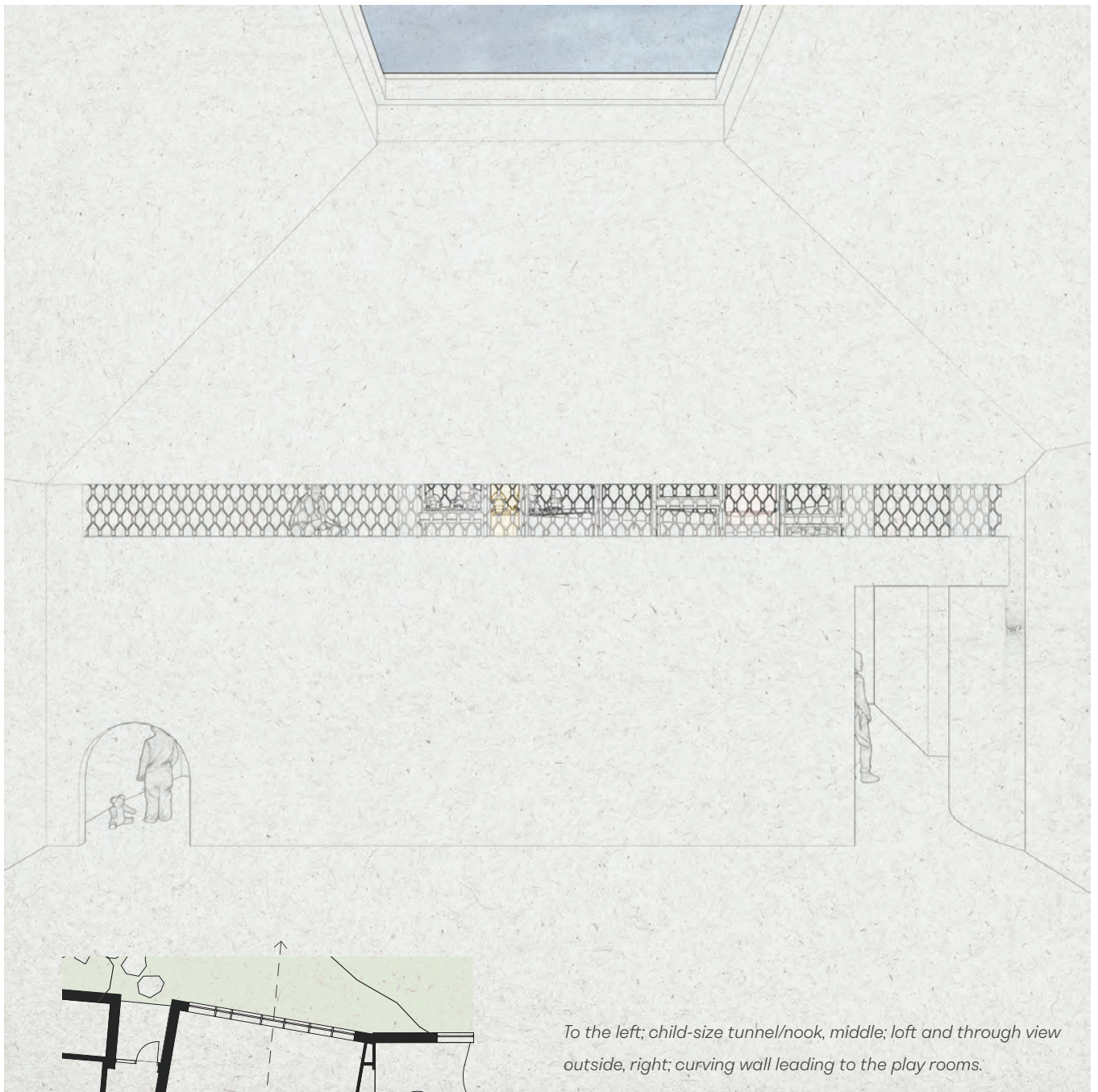
Entrance South-East



Introduction, displaying multiple possibilities; gathering room, entrance to yard, mountain, the other unit of the preschool.

Foyer a





Section A

Gathering Room a



Section B

Light	→	Dim	→	Dark
Spacious	→	Low	→	Subterranean / Rising
Clarity	→	Curiosity	→	Restfulness

Sequence of spaces; the eye is delayed by the coloured windows, the passage-niche is marked to draw the eye, it travels over the levels on the floor, is stopped or moves past the hidden door/bookcase.

Play Room 1



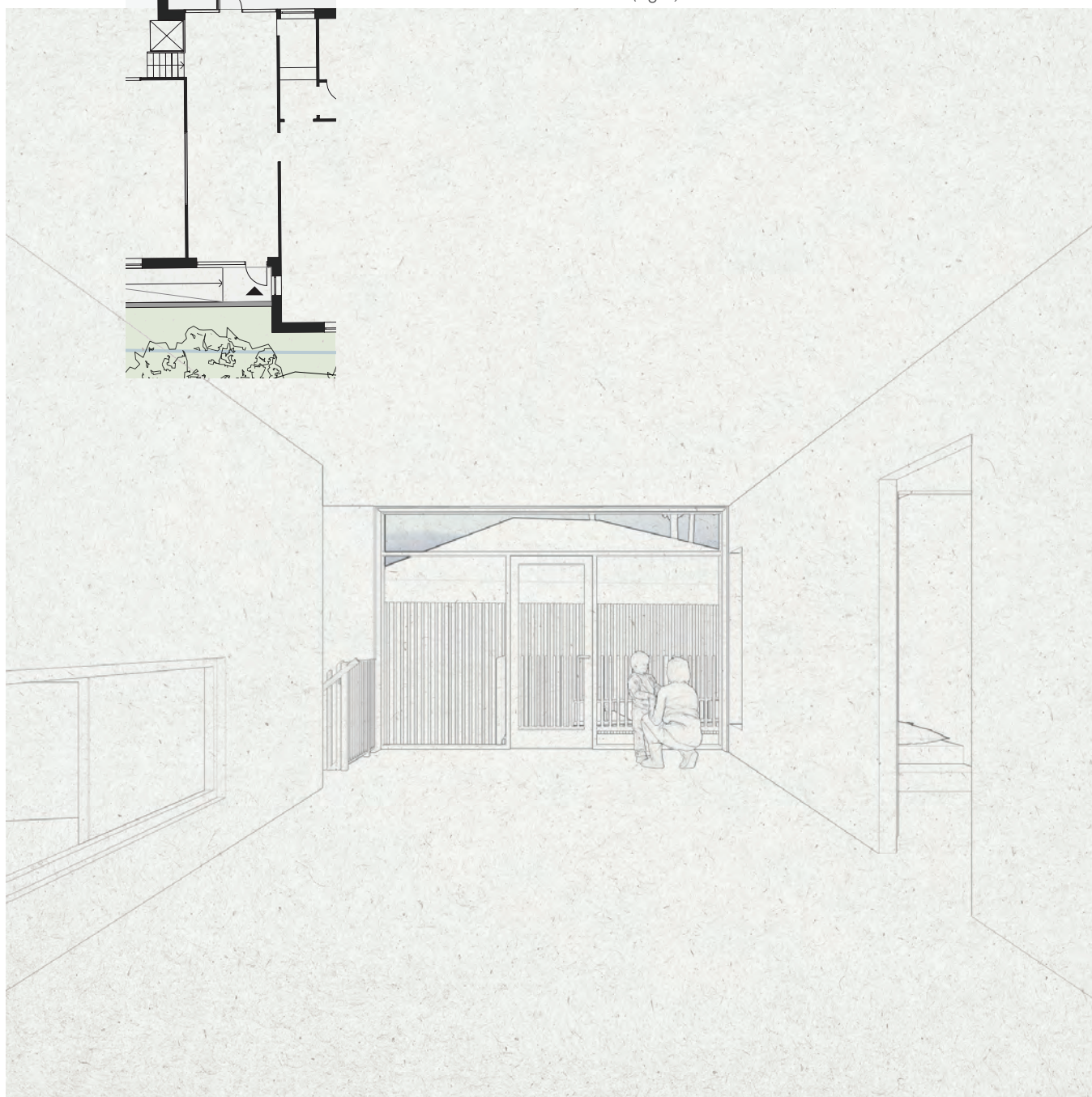


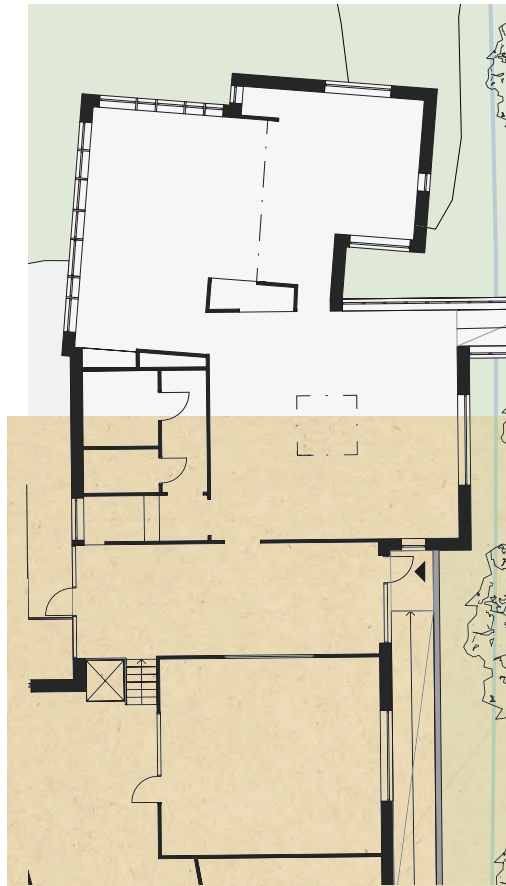
Nap & Story Room

The ground rises from children's eye level. The character of the room is simultaneously subterranean and rising, due to the combination of sunkenness and dome with oculus.

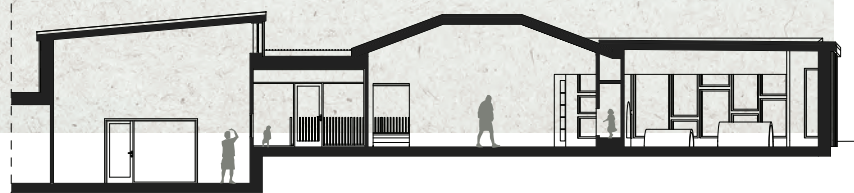
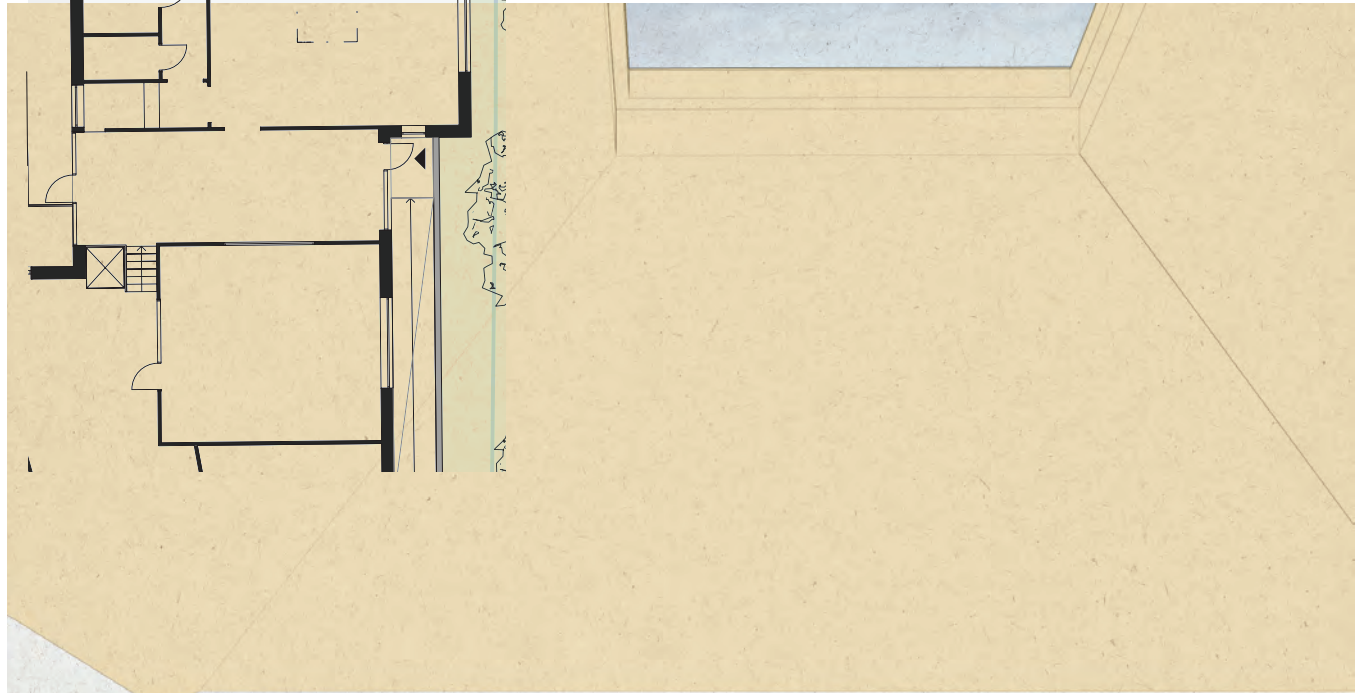


Entrance to the yard allows views both above and inside the gathering room of the first unit. Inside there is communication with the atelier (looking down, left) and a raised niche with outlook (right).





The gathering rooms and play rooms inside this unit have a semi-open connection. In the intersection between the rooms is a raised tunnel with overlapping arched openings, allowing a duality of opening and closing, and a changeful through-view.



Section C

Gathering Room b

I'd like to begin this reflection by looking back on the questions as set out at the beginning of the project, and then have a more general discussion.

Q: What practices of the 18th century landscape garden are relevant to architecture?

The ideas and practices that I picked out to focus on in the literature study—and to bring forward into the rest of the project—are a limited selection of what landscape gardening is. In the practice of landscape gardening there are many avenues that I have not explored. My choice of method, a literature study focusing on guides to landscape gardening and general commentary on landscape gardening and the picturesque has of course affected the direction of the project. Focusing on writing and documents relating to one specific garden, or a project based on site visits to gardens would likely have yielded different results. As always when dealing with history, we can never have the full picture of a time, place or event, but only a selection—affected by the method, the sources available, and the person writing the history.

Q: How can these practices be adapted to architecture?

In this project I have mainly been working with configuration of spaces as a means to achieve the effects of space in the landscape garden.

I believe the task could have been interpreted in various ways, and do not believe that I have achieved a definitive answer, but have only scraped the surface of possibilities.

Q: How can these practices inform the design of a preschool?

The ways of organizing space, “tools”, brought forth by the previous question were used to design a preschool.

It could have been interesting to develop the project more in “3-dimensions” rather than in plan, which was my main focus during this project. The tools I chose could have been used in this way too.

The focus of the thesis would come to be directed primarily on the view and movement inside the preschool, with the properties of character and variety becoming more secondary.

I would have liked to work more with material and building details, as I believe this could have been a productive way to explore the concepts of character and variety.

On a more general level, in this project I have wanted to find new ways of working with nature, a perennial subject of discussion and inspiration in architecture. I have found in my previous work that in dealing with nature, the subject can be broad and undefined, and thus difficult to work with. Using the landscape garden for this project has been helpful—it is an artificial construct that has defined practices and purposes while also retaining natural qualities.

Whether using the spatial qualities of the landscape garden in architecture actually encourages curiosity, movement and imagination, or if such a space is beneficial to children's development, this thesis will not tell us. I hope however, that this thesis contains viable methods for, or ideas about working with historical source material and the natural environment within the discipline of architecture.

One thought that I have had on the back of my mind while working on this thesis is what Peter Beardsell (2019) wrote in his essay on Walmer Yard; “*it is only imaginative attention that can release tradition in ways that provide the seriously modern*”, regardless of whether my project would be able to achieve that lofty goal, I have tried to embrace that practice of imaginative attention in my work.

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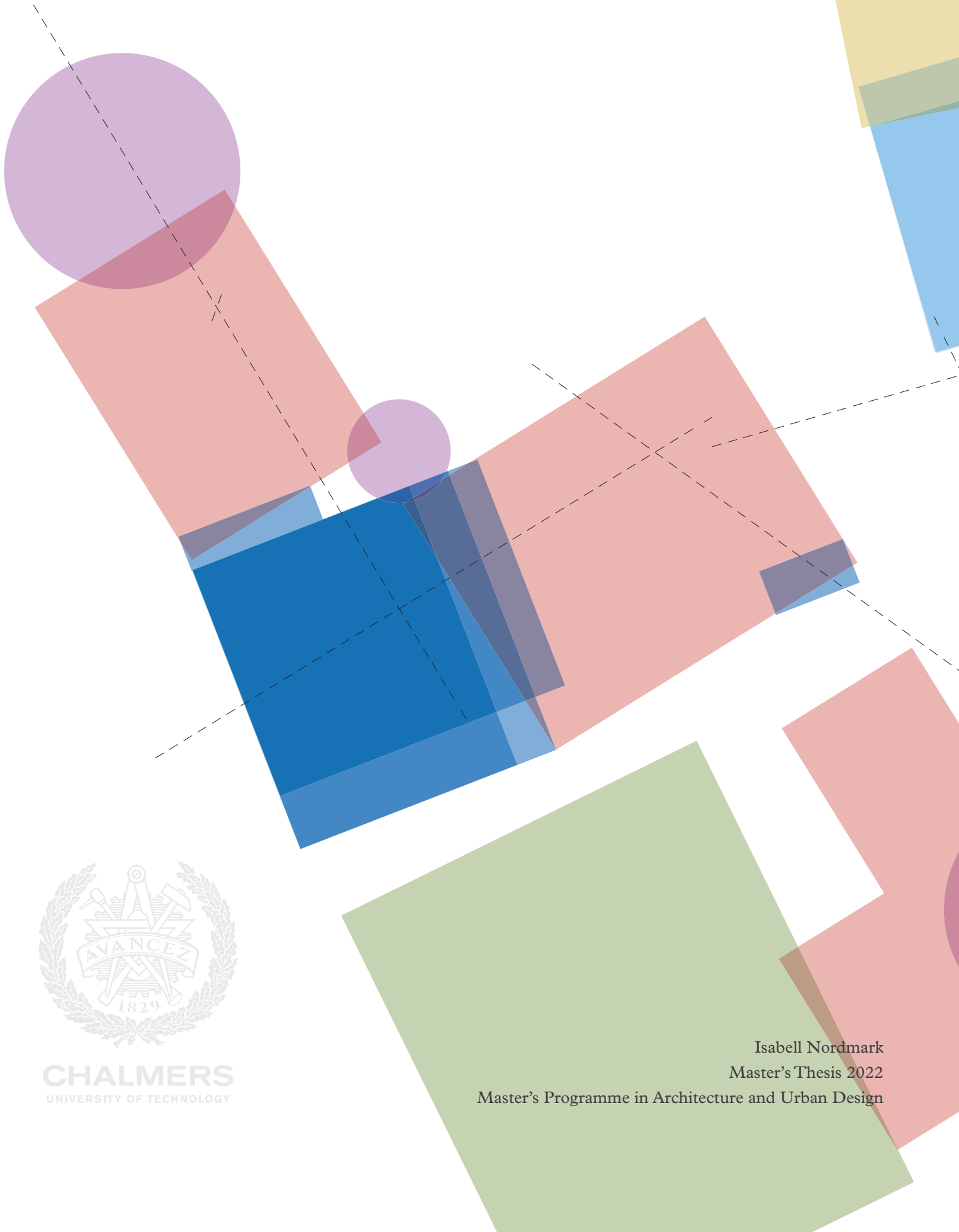
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