

LOCATING SHAMBHALA: A PILGRIMAGE COMPLEX FOR KALAPA VALLEY IN  
THE HIGHLANDS OF CAPE BRETON, NOVA SCOTIA

by

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For the Dorje Dradul of Mukpo, the eleventh Trungpa tülku.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores the relationship between landscape, sacred space and dwelling in the non-theistic spiritual tradition of Shambhala. Through the design of a pilgrimage complex for Kalapa Valley in the Cape Breton Highlands in Nova Scotia, Canada - the most sacred Shambhala site - the community's unique relationship to the physical and cultural landscape of Nova Scotia is examined. The investigation reexamines the architectural framework of critical regionalism and the concept of dwelling through Shambhala culture and proposes abstraction as a method by which landscape and cultural context can become essential elements of a non-theistic sacred architecture for a global spiritual community with fundamental place-based narratives.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

When human beings lose their connection to nature, to heaven and earth, then they do not know how to nurture their environment or how to rule their world - which is saying the same thing. Human beings destroy their ecology at the same time that they destroy one another. From that perspective, healing our society goes hand in hand with healing our personal elemental connection with the phenomenal world. (Trungpa 2003, 147)

It has been said by Alvaro Siza that the whole history of architecture is contained within a study of the history of religious buildings (Cavarra Britton 2010, 15). The chapel or church has come to express our most fundamental ideas about who we are and how we experience space as human beings, societies, families and individuals. Perhaps the only other instance in which these ideas are articulated with the same clarity is in the design of the house, however often with an individualistic flare.

Despite this affinity in recent decades the hegemony of modernism has resulted in an over-secularization and neglect of sacred space by the dominant architectural discourse. The rush towards modernization resulted in the view that the cultural specificity of religious architecture was regressive. However, the history of modern architecture is rich with examples of innovative and moving religious buildings. Various scholars have attributed this secularization to the soulless quality that characterizes so many of our architectural and urban environments (Sheldrake 2007, 250). The writings of Juhani Pallasmaa tackle the same heartless quality of architecture from a secular point of view through advocating for architecture that is primarily related to the experience of our bodies in space and the engagement of all five senses (Pallasmaa 2012, 44-49). In more recent years sacredness and religious experiences are reclaiming ground in academic disciplines, including architecture, as an essential aspect of our social, psychological, emotional and cultural identity (Cavarra Britton 2010, 9). This thesis examines the relationship between sacred architecture and place in Shambhala - a non-theistic spiritual tradition that has fundamental ties to Nova Scotia.

Shambhala is an international, non-theistic spiritual tradition based on the fundamental principle of basic goodness and the practice of meditation. The international headquarters and the official seat of the lineage holder are located in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Currently the international organization supports 220 centres and groups, four major retreat centres, a monastery and an accredited university. Members are present on six continents and the teachings are regularly translated into fifteen languages and presented via the internet through Shambhala Online. The Shambhala teachings were first presented by the historical Buddha in approximately 500 BCE as the Kalachakra tantra in which he set out a path to enlightenment that did not rely on monastic renunciation and expressed a vision of an enlightened society based on the fundamental conviction that human beings possess an inherently awake mind. Though the Shambhala tradition is rooted in ancient Tibetan Buddhist culture, it is intended as a primarily secular, Western custom.

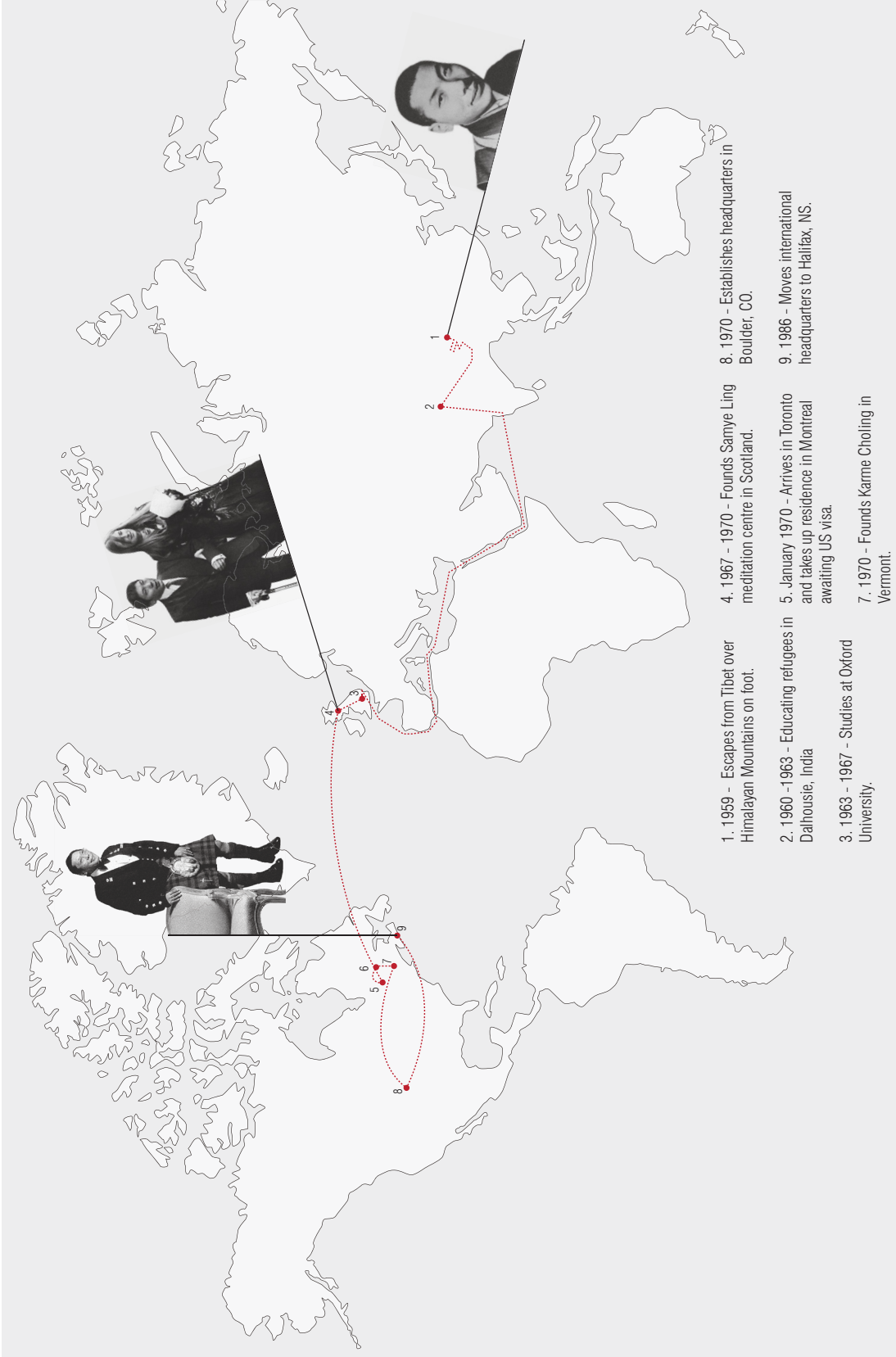


Trungpa Rinpoche wearing the family tartan of his wife, date and photographer unknown (Celtic Buddhist Lineage 2010)

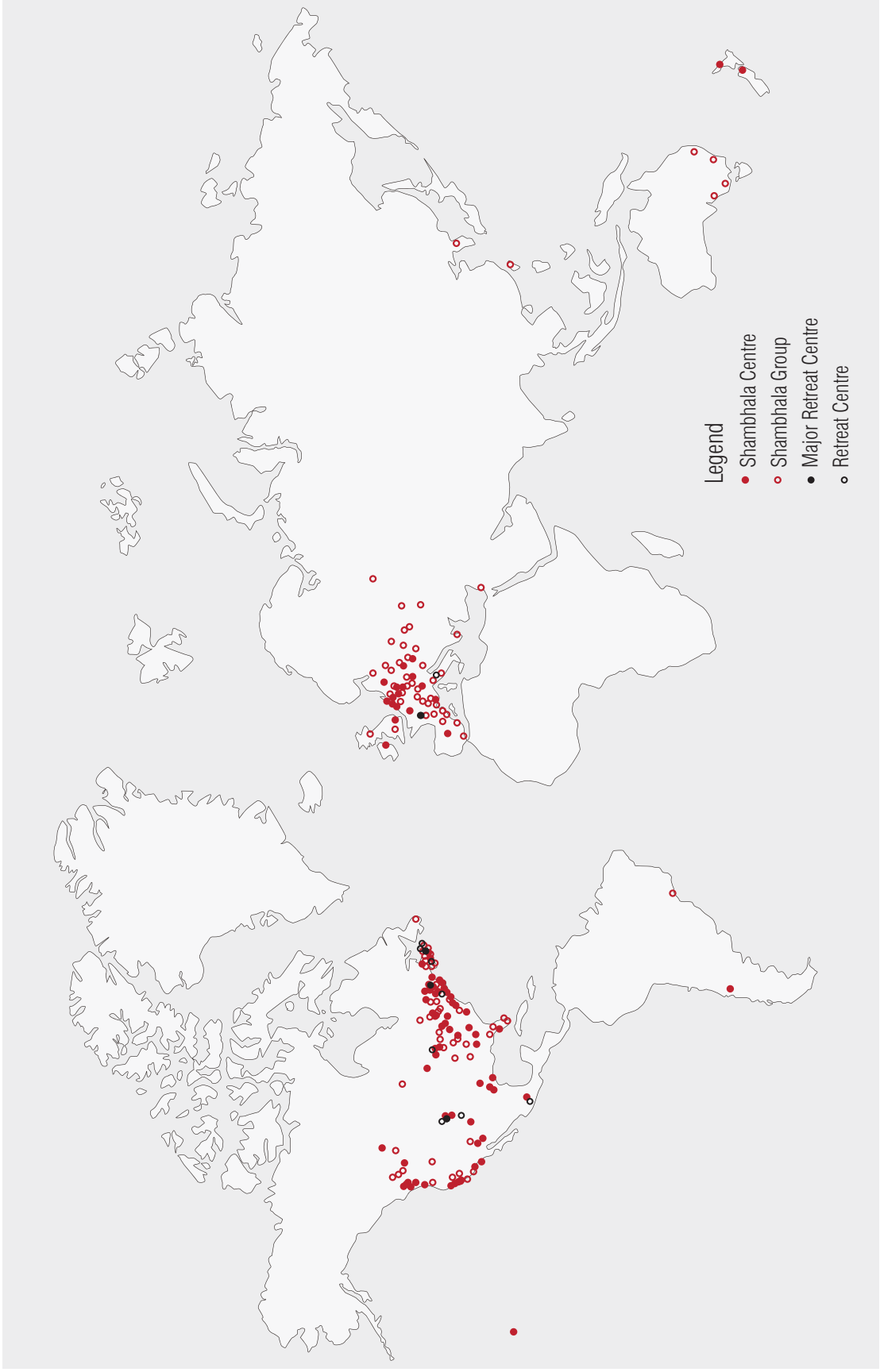
The Dorje Dradul, the Venerable Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, beginning in the late 1970s, presented the contemporary expression of Shambhala. Trungpa Rinpoche was a highly revered Tibetan teacher and early pioneer of Buddhist wisdom in North America. In 1959 he escaped Tibet and eventually immigrated to the United States via India, England, Scotland and Canada. In the late seventies Trungpa Rinpoche made several trips to Nova Scotia with his students and developed a deep appreciation for the people, the landscape and the culture. He proclaimed Nova Scotia as sacred ground - a place in which a future enlightened society would manifest - and began efforts to move the organization to Halifax from Boulder, Colorado. In 1979, on a trip to Nova Scotia, he “discovered” what was then known simply as the Ingonish river valley, and proclaimed the site to be Kalapa, the capital of Shambhala. In 1986 he moved to Nova Scotia himself, and died there shortly after, in 1987. Kalapa Valley represents the most sacred place in the global Shambhala tradition.

During his second journey here in 1979, the holy man [Trungpa Rinpoche] at one point got out of his car and knelt down to put





Trungpa Rinpoche's timeline: Tibet to Nova Scotia 1959 - 1986



his palms to the earth. He could feel a gentleness welling up, a genuine connection he had never experienced elsewhere, except in Tibet when he touched the side of a mountain. During his travels, he felt that the province was connected to Tibet. After extensive travelling and meeting warm, hospitable people, he proclaimed Nova Scotia as a sacred place. (Armstrong 2012, 17)

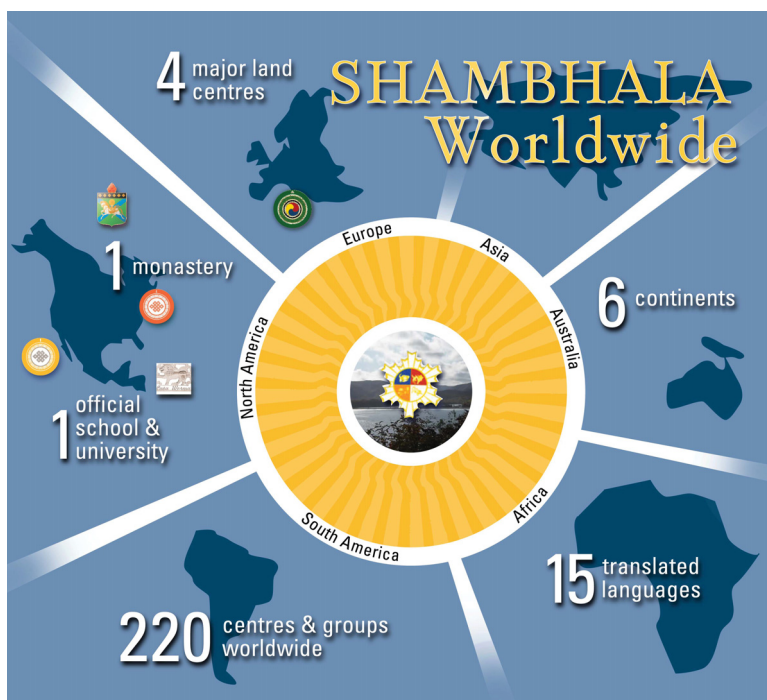
Though the Shambhala tradition is rooted in ancient Tibetan Buddhist beliefs, it is intended as a primarily secular, Western tradition. It is well established throughout Buddhist history that as it spread across Asia it adapted and assimilated aspects of the existing cultures. This is not viewed as a dilution of the ideas contained within the Buddhist canon and today has resulted in a rich variety of authentic, Buddhist lineages. Shambhala represents the efforts of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche to translate Buddhist wisdom for a Western audience in their own context. He fully immersed himself in Western culture, studying, mastering and then adapting all aspects of Western culture, including dress, language, art, poetry, design, politics and military customs, to name a only few. He arrived in North America in 1970, when spiritual seekers and “hippies” were abundant. He was highly critical of both Eastern teachers and Western students who would travel far and wide collecting teachings and empowerments without making a meaningful commitment to anything in particular or adopting mysterious cultural practices from the East. He referred to this as “spiritual materialism” and his early book, *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, became the entry point for many students. Trungpa Rinpoche’s decision to proclaim Nova Scotia the capital of Shambhala and the seat of a future enlightened society was a clear statement of his absolute trust in his Western students.

The natural conclusion of this view is an architecture that expresses the value and wisdom of the local culture and landscape and the depth of Trungpa Rinpoche’s appreciation of it. However, to date the small amount of building that occurs within this Nova Scotia community demonstrates a vague, Asian influence that disconnects the architecture from the site and relies on a sense of nostalgia for a foreign and mysterious culture.



Trungpa Rinpoche teaching, date and location unknown, used with permission of the Shambhala Archives

Shambhala is a diverse, global network with a wide range of both Eastern and Western influences. There is a strong connection to traditional Tibetan culture, and the members each come with their own cultural heritage and become involved in the Shambhala community to varying degrees. For many people, Halifax, let alone Cape Breton, is a far-away mysterious or romantic place to which they have little connection; yet, it is depicted at the very centre of the Shambhala network. The architectural challenge is to create something meaningful to a wide range of people, connected to its site and still specifically Shambhalian. Too much reliance on the vernacular would be equally inappropriate, as it often relies on a similar sense of nostalgia to create a meaningful or familiar atmosphere. The theory of critical regionalism offers the foundation for the design work, and from its genesis has been investigating the importance of place in an increasingly globalized world. Kenneth Frampton explains critical regionalist architecture as drawing inspiration from “such things as the range and quality of local light, or in a tectonic derived from a peculiar structural mode, or in the topography of a given site” (Frampton 2002,



Kalapa Valley at the centre of the Shambhala world (Shambhala 2014)

82). It can also be seen in the way that a designer selects and manipulates particular materials and details based on local availability and climatic considerations. Taking this as a starting point, this thesis investigates the role of abstraction, landscape and cultural context in the design of sacred space for a global, non-theistic spiritual community with fundamental place-based narratives.

### **Question**

How can architecture express sacredness and place in a global, non-theistic spiritual tradition that has fundamental place-based narratives?



Kalapa Valley

## CHAPTER 2: SHAMBHALA CULTURE

### Historical and Mythical Context

The Shambhala teachings were first presented by the historical Buddha in approximately 500 BCE at the request of the King of Shambhala, Dawa Sangpo (Stick 1989, 8). The traditional story explains that Dawa Sangpo asked the Buddha if it was possible for him - a king who had worldly responsibilities - to attain enlightenment without becoming a monk and renouncing his obligations. In response the Buddha offered the Kalachakra Tantra, which is still practiced today. Dawa Sangpo then returned to his kingdom, achieved enlightenment and established an enlightened society.

Today, the Shambhala story is generally understood to be myth - an analogy that speaks to the potential of human society to manifest with wisdom and compassion - however, some maintain the belief in the physical, historical existence of the kingdom.

The traditional representations of Shambhala depict a large kingdom surrounded by mountain peaks and further subdivided into eight regions by smaller mountains. In the centre is the capital city, Kalapa, which is the seat of the ruler.

### Expeditions to Nova Scotia

In the late seventies Trungpa Rinpoche began a series of “expeditions” to Nova Scotia. During one of his earliest trips in 1977 he composed a poem, “Whycocomagh?”, titled after a community along the Cabot Trail. The poem describes in his own words the qualities of simplicity and ordinariness that he appreciated so deeply.

#### **Whycocomagh?**

Sometimes there are trees.

Sometimes there are rocks.

However, occasionally there are lakes.

Always, to be sure, there are houses.



Gas station on the Cabot Trail, 1979, photographer unknown, used with permission of the Shambhala Archives



Canso Causeway, 1979, photo by Chögyam Trungpa, © Diana J. Mukpo, used with permission (Shambhala Archives)



Explorers on the Cabot Trail, 1979, photographer unknown, used with permission (Shambhala Archives)



Englishtown Ferry, 1979, photo by Chögyam Trungpa, © Diana J. Mukpo, used with permission (Shambhala Archives)



To be sure certain, there are views of a certain gentleman being crucified.

Nevertheless, the deep-fried food is very decent,  
So good that one almost forgets bourgeois cuisine.

The coastal sky seems to frown at us

With its benevolent threat;

We receive plentiful rain.

In green valley pastures brown cows graze.

Tibetan-tea-like rough rivers carry the highland soil.

Occasional mist and fog bring wondrous possibilities.

Naive hitchhikers laugh and scrutinize our convoy.

The highlands are beautiful, free from pollution,

The lowlands regular, telling the whole truth:

There is nothing to hide.

Harmonious province hangs together,

But for occasional economic panic.

Men of Shambhala would feel comfortable and confident in the province of no big deal,

Flying the banner of St. Andrew adorned with the lion of Scotland, red and yellow.

We find it beyond conflict to fly the banner of the Great Eastern Sun.

It is curious to see their flags strung on yellow cords,

Nice to watch the children cycling in the ditch,

Nice to discover all the waiters serving on their first day,

Nice to see that nobody is apologetic,

Good to see alders taking root after the forest fire of pines.

(New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, June 1977)

©Diana J. Mukpo. Used with permission. (Shambhala Archives)

During one of these trips in 1979 Trungpa Rinpoche and a number of students drove the Cabot Trail in Cape Breton. It was during this trip that Trungpa Rinpoche and his travelling party “discovered” Kalapa Valley (Shambhala 2007). Richard Peisinger, a community member involved in the maintenance of the valley, describes the trip:

While lunching in Cheticamp, on the northwestern coast of Cape Breton Island, the Druk Sakyong relayed to his travel companions that he sensed the presence of a significant place for Shambhala nearby. He indicated that it might lie somewhere across the expanse of the interior Cape Breton Highlands. Later that afternoon the Druk

Sakyong directed the cars of his motorcade to pull off the road in front of a locked entrance to a secluded private property. The valley behind the locked gate was situated where the Ingonish River flows into a protected cove of the Atlantic Ocean. Standing by the cars and unable to proceed into the valley, the Druk Sakyong told his amazed students that this was Kalapa, the capital of Shambhala. (Peisinger 2011)

A year and a half later Trungpa Rinpoche returned to the valley with his son, the current Sakyong of Shambhala, to perform a ritual purification offering ceremony at the entry to the valley. In 1993 the property became available for sale and a small number of members purchased the site to hold until such a time that Shambhala could take ownership. In 2003 the land was donated to Shambhala and members of Shambhala worldwide performed ceremonies and celebrations in honour of the transfer. In a statement to the international community, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche said, "We should use the Valley as we make the Maritimes known as the centre of Shambhala International - a global community. While the capital is in Halifax, the secret heart centre is in Kalapa Valley.... Its energy is essential to propagating Shambhala. We are enthusiastic" (Shambhala 2007).

In 2005 the Sakyong undertook the first phase of the Scorpion Seal retreat, the most advanced Shambhala Buddhist teachings, and is specifically associated with Kalapa Valley. At this time he was first person to undertake the retreat. Ever.

## Sacredness and Non-Theism

Sacredness means that everything, as it is, is exactly true. ... Sacredness doesn't mean preciousness, such as thinking, "Oh, how wonderful, how beautiful, how fantastic, how great!" Sacredness means that the way you live is an expression of that realization of things as they are." (Tenzin 1986)

The Shambhala tradition holds a particular view of sacredness that differs from the typical Western, Judeo-Christian belief. The main distinction is that Shambhala, and Buddhism in general, are *non-theistic* traditions. Non-theism is distinct from *atheism*; Shambhala doesn't not-believe in God or gods, but rather in things one can find to be true through experience.

This fundamentally changes the perception of the world in that there is no concept of a creator. Heinrich Engle describes the Buddhist view as conceiving of a “universe that evolved by itself...The universe itself then, is the ultimate reality, self-creating and self-governing” (Engel 1964, 366). In the Shambhala tradition this understanding is contained within the fundamental view of Basic Goodness. Basic Goodness is not *good* as opposed to bad, “basic goodness is good because it is unconditional, or fundamental” (Trungpa 2003, 29).

The natural law and order of this world is not “for” or “against”... The four seasons occur free from anyone’s demand or vote...We often take for granted this basic law and order in the universe, but we should think twice. We should appreciate what we have. Without it, we would be in a total predicament. If we didn’t have sunlight, we wouldn’t have any vegetation, we wouldn’t have any crops, and we couldn’t cook a meal. So basic goodness is good because it is so basic, so fundamental. (Trungpa 2003, 29)

This view of sacredness appears to be distinct from Mircea Eliade’s description of the heterogeneity of space. Eliade makes important observations about the fundamental ways in which humans experience sacred space. In “The Sacred and the Profane”, he describes sacred space as a “break” in the homogeneity of the profane world (Eliade 1959, 21). According to Eliade this break is not a theoretical question, but a question of primary human experience, “for it is the break effected in space that allows the world to be constituted, because it reveals the fixed point, the central axis for all future orientation” (Eliade 1959, 21).

To understand this comparison it is necessary to understand absolute and relative truth. This is traditional Buddhist logic that recognizes a discrepancy between the way things *are* and the way things *appear*. It can be described like two sides of a coin: both possess distinct qualities but are still one and the same. The description of sacredness in the Shambhala tradition is from the point of view of absolute truth. Absolute truth is more difficult to explain with words and relies on experiential understanding. Mircea Eliade’s observations represent the relative truth of the experience of sacred space, which is equally applicable to Shambhala tradition.

Eliade's heterogeneity of space finds its counterpart in Shambhala culture in *container principle*. Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche has said:

Environment is really important for these teachings to occur. You can't just walk up to someone at a train station and say, "Hey, do you want to know the nature of your mind?" These teachings have to occur in an environment. (As quoted by Carolyn Mandelker, Executive Director of Shambhala, personal communication, 2014.)

Container principle describes the qualities of the boundary between the sacred space, or the space in which the teachings occur, and the exterior. The boundary function of the container can easily be overemphasized, focusing too much on excluding what is undesired. However, a genuine container, "by regulating flow from inside to outside, creates an environment where undesired forces can either be excluded or accommodated and transformed" (Gimian 2005, 103).

## CHAPTER 3: NATURE AND ARCHITECTURE

Kalapa Valley is located in Ingonish, Cape Breton. The 113-acre site is bordered by Crown land and offers visitors hiking trails and forest paths to waterfalls and swimming holes. To the south is Cape Smokey Provincial Park and a short drive to the north is Highlands National Park, which brings thousands of tourists to the area to explore the wilderness of the Cape Breton Highlands and experience the rich culture. The atmosphere and culture of the region are thick with the idea of nature.

William Cronon points out in "The Trouble with Wilderness" that the idea of "wilderness" is a human construction of particular cultures and particular points in history. He establishes the idea of wilderness as one half of a false dichotomy that splits humans from the natural, a refuge from the urban-industrial environment of cities, and "the one place we can turn to escape from our own too-muchness. Seen in this way, wilderness presents itself as the best antidote to our human selves, a refuge we must somehow recover if we hope to save the planet" (Cronon 1996, 69).

The foundations for this fabricated image find their footing in the influence of the development of Judaeo-Christian beliefs in North American culture. If we go back to the late eighteenth century, connotations for "wilderness" were clearly negative. The strongest associations were found in the King James Bible in references to places of moral confusion and despair. Paradise, depicted as a Garden, which clearly implies cultivation, was surrounded by a wilderness that could only be redeemed by the labour and pain of Adam and Eve. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, romanticism and the notion of the sublime had come to such prominence that the idea of wilderness had done a complete about-face (Cronon 1996, 69-72).

At this time, areas across America were given special designation in order to facilitate a growing number of citizens that were visiting these sites.

Niagara Falls was among the first to be given special designation and Yellowstone became the first National Park in 1872. Through the “doctrine of the sublime,” romanticism bestowed nature and wilderness with sacred status. This served the development of the environmental movement of the late 20th century, whose discourse relied on the idea of a pristine wilderness romanticism helped create. By now, wilderness was becoming a place in which one could escape in order to be closer to god (Cronon 1996, 72). Cronon writes:

In the wilderness the boundaries between human and nonhuman, between natural and supernatural, had always seemed less certain than elsewhere. This was why the early Christian saints and mystics had often emulated Christ’s desert retreat as they sought to experience for themselves the visions and spiritual testing He had endured. One might meet devils and run the risk of losing one’s soul in such a place, but one might also meet God. (Cronon 1996, 73)

For the romantics, proof of a sublime landscape lay in the emotional feeling that it evoked. Remnants of this attitude are certainly still present in our secularized society where a sublime experience of nature represents the closest we come to a universal experience of sacredness (Cronon 1996, 73-77). We see similar relationships to the environment in traditional Tibetan culture. In Tibet, much like the early Christian mystics, there is a long established tradition of monks and nuns undertaking long retreats on high mountaintops where the only shelter was a small cave. This tradition is continued in Shambhala today, though retreats are often shorter and completed in small cabins with varying degrees of amenity.

The prevalence of these attitudes to wilderness in different cultures suggests that, though it may be a human construct, there is still something authentic about the experience that has a powerful effect on the human psyche. We should resist the urge to disregard these ideas about nature and wilderness as invaluable because of their constructed nature, as this is still operating from the point of view that humans and nature are diametrically opposed. However, it is important to understand the origins of these ideas.

As a Western tradition Shambhala has inherited many of these ideas regarding nature and wilderness and so a critical approach to ideas of nature is important in developing an architectural position. Our constructed idea of wilderness has resulted in a distinction between humans and nature in which any intervention is seen as, at best, foreign and, at worst, destructive. Of course, this view can easily be justified as examples of human interventions that destroy or exploit the environment far outweigh those that do not. However, in examining the Shambhala texts an approach that incorporates a deep respect for nature and the recognition of building as a fundamental act of society is evident. This will be seen as the spatial ideas contained within the Shambhala tradition are explained in subsequent chapters, but for purposes of the current discussion two particular passages come to mind.

When human beings lose their connection to nature, to heaven and earth, then they do not know how to nurture their environment or how to rule their world - which is saying the same thing. Human beings destroy their ecology at the same time that they destroy one another. From that perspective, healing our society goes hand in hand with healing our personal elemental connection with the phenomenal world. (Trungpa 2003, 147)

This quote addresses the same dichotomy between humans and nature that Cronon points out in his analysis. Trungpa Rinpoche is making the argument that this split enables society to dissociate from the natural world, to the point where we no longer see our place within it, and from that, social, ecological and personal strife ensues. Here, nature should not be mistaken for a romantic notion of returning to some lost paradise. Nature in this context is understood as the phenomenal world, which includes the entirety of human experience, whether that is urban, rural, and natural.

In order to begin to unpack what a connection with the phenomenal world may be, we turn to the second passage:

If the horse has no saddle,  
There is no dignity in riding.  
(Mukpo 2000, 14)

The commentary on this passage explains:

When there is communication between rider and horse, the magnificent saddle becomes the confirmation of the two...it is said that if a person rides a naked horse, without a saddle, it is bad for the horse and bad for the rider. Too much communication spoils the unity of horse and rider...it actually means that in order to bring together heaven and earth, people need some substance to work with. That is to say, the horse of earth and the rider of heaven must be joined together with the saddle of a king. (Mukpo 2000, 14)

In traditional Buddhist iconography and in the iconography of Shambhala the central figure is often depicted as sitting on a throne or mounted on a horse with a saddle. While this could be seen as an indication of disconnection, I propose that this represents an active relationship and communication between humans and the environment. If we take the image of the saddle to represent architecture, or built form, the commentary indicates that there may be a particular role for architecture in establishing ties to a place. As we will see in the following chapter, this discussion of heaven and earth could be understood in terms of Christian Norberg-Schulz's discourse on phenomenology and dwelling.

Shambhala vision does not reject technology or simplistically advocate for going "back to nature." But within the world that we live in, there is room to relax and appreciate ourselves and our heaven and our earth. We can afford to love ourselves, and we can afford to raise our head and shoulders to see the bright shining sun in the sky (Trungpa 2003, 147).



## CHAPTER 4: ABSTRACTION AND ATMOSPHERE

In the field of architecture the word “abstract” is often approached with a sense of scepticism, as it is often used as a means of disguising poorly conceived ideas in ambiguous terms. However, Juhani Pallasmaa rejects that, saying, “abstraction is a condensation of meaning or imagery, a pregnant symbol” (Pallasmaa 2005, 80). In this way, abstraction is a means by which the essential elements of architecture - geometry, form and scale - can be choreographed into a coherent spatial experience, forming a narrative. While the specifics of a given narrative may be evident only to the initiated, the physical experience of the space is available to all. Merriam-Webster defines “abstract” in two ways. The first definition, “difficult to understand, or insufficiently factual” (Merriam-Webster 2014) is how abstraction is often understood; however, the second meaning, “expressing a quality apart from an object,” comes closer to Pallasmaa’s understanding of abstraction.

### Art and Shambhala Culture

Within the Shambhala tradition the sense perceptions are not considered to be problematic; in fact, they are sacred. They represent the ability to communicate with other humans and the phenomenal world and as such allow for the possibility of society to take place (Trungpa 2003). Trungpa Rinpoche was deeply interested in the arts, their role in society and their ability to convey complex concepts through direct experience - or atmosphere. Many of his students were accomplished artists, including Allen Ginsburg and Joni Mitchell. He himself was a prolific poet and photographer as well as a calligrapher, painter, filmmaker and designer. Trungpa Rinpoche was fascinated by many forms of Japanese style including flower arranging, tea ceremony and *kyudo* and incorporated these forms into Shambhala culture (Trungpa 2008, xi-xxi).

During his lifetime [Trungpa Rinpoche] took an active role in design. I believe his personal involvement with design was due in part to the great joy he derived from the arts – he loved to design



Photo by Chögyam Trungpa, © Diana J. Mukpo, used with permission (Shambhala Archives)

– and because of the essential message the arts hold. “The path is the goal” – it is not just what we do, but how we do it... [he] paid as much attention to his dinner venue as he did to deciding how his organization should be governed. His direct hand in design springs also from the significance he gave to this activity as direct dharma teaching – an emanation of [awake] mind. (Trungpa 2008, xii)

Trungpa Rinpoche’s photography serves as a useful example for a discussion of abstraction and atmosphere. He developed a contemplative approach to photography that often depicted ordinary objects or scenes in a way that was unusual. These photos evoke a strong sense of atmosphere and often cause one to pause and appreciate a very simple, yet beautiful detail that could easily be missed. These photos are not abstract in the sense that they use mainly recognizable objects from everyday life; however, the framing and composition express an atmospheric quality beyond the conventional understanding of the subject. In this way he used photography as a “pregnant symbol” to reveal something extra-ordinary about the “essence of things as they are” (Trungpa 2008, xiii).



Photos by Chögyam Trungpa, © Diana J. Mukpo, used with permission (Shambhala Archives)

...things are appreciated because of their distinct characteristics, their intrinsic qualities, their essential nature. In non-theistic traditions, symbols are symbols of themselves, because they are so much what they are, rather than because they point to something else: you are the best caricature of yourself. Reality is so distinct that each thing, every thing, begins to take on archetypal dimension, unifying macrocosm and microcosm. Relative and absolute truth are co-emergent, or mutually dependent: the essence of a material and its use are inseparable. In one rock one could capture the beauty of a mountain...In one drop of water, the meaning of water is available. Form has power in non-theistic cultures not because it points to something else, but [because] it captures reality in the things itself, on the spot. It is not that the thing is invoking cosmic world: it is that the thing has within it cosmic meaning. Phenomena is by nature egoless, the relative expression of absolute space. (Stick 1989, 13)

Poetry and writing also possess an ability to evoke atmosphere and are inherently abstract. Trungpa Rinpoche's poem "Whycocomagh?" for example, captures the extra-ordinary-ness of Cape Breton that he appreciated so much. The words evoke individual images and thoughts in the reader's mind and create a particular atmosphere. Similarly, a good book can transcend the boundaries of space and time, creating entirely new worlds for the reader. This is the epitome of the dictionary definition of "abstract": *expressing a quality (atmosphere) apart from the object (word)*.

In architecture, atmosphere is perceived instantly at a fundamental psychological level. For Peter Zumthor it is related to our animal instincts in which we make immediate, emotional decisions essential for our survival (Zumthor 2006, 13). Simply stated, form affects mind. If it didn't, architecture and our environment would have no significance for us at all.

In the Shambhala tradition the atmosphere of an environment has the ability to transmit a powerful message. Whether that message is the direct experience of awake mind or an environment of aggression and discursiveness depends on the vision of those involved in the design process. Transmitting an atmosphere of awake mind in architecture often presents a challenge to the user as opposed to comfort. "It is not a place to flop; rather, to raise one's awareness: to heighten sense perceptions and contact with nature, rather than insulate from them" (Stick 1989, 33).



Trungpa Rinpoche creating a traditional Japanese flower arrangement, used with permission of the Shambhala Archives

## CHAPTER 5: DWELLING AND THE SHAMBHALA TEACHINGS

At their essence both Shambhala - as a meditative and spiritual tradition - and architecture are fundamentally concerned with how to be in the world - or, how to dwell. Within the architectural discourse these ideas are thoroughly explored through the writings and work of Christian Norberg-Schulz, Juhani Pallasmaa, and Charles Moore; as well as philosophers aligned with phenomenology, particularly Martin Heidegger. The Shambhala understanding of dwelling is equally rich and highly sophisticated, the full understanding of which is beyond the scope of this exploration. This thesis will focus on four fundamental principles: the principle of *heaven, earth and human*, which describes the basic structure and order of the universe; the *drala* principle and *lha, nyen and lu*, which describe how humans orient themselves within this structure; and the *four dignities*, which describe the path to enlightenment, understood here as the apex of human dwelling.

### Heaven, Earth, and Human

The cosmic order of natural hierarchy is the communication process between these primordial constituents or patterns. Reality manifests as a dialectic between the polarities of heaven and earth; the third principle, man, is that which is able to appreciate and join the two and that which brings harmony within contrast. Heaven, earth and man describes the three realms in which man must find home in order to dwell. (Stick 1989, 15)

Both Christian Norberg-Schulz and Charles Moore describe the basic character of the human experience as being between earth and sky (Norbert-Schulz 1984, 18; Bloomer 1977, 77) . This understanding relies heavily on the work of the German philosopher Heidegger, whose text “Building Dwelling Thinking” is often cited in architectural discourse on phenomenology (Heidegger 1997a). According to Norberg-Schulz, it is within this “existential space” that dwelling occurs and it is the role of architecture to embody meaning through expressing this fundamental aspect of existence (Norberg-Schulz 1984, 25).

Similarly, in the Shambhala tradition, the potential of humanity and the possibility of an enlightened society is contained within the principles of heaven, earth and human. Trungpa Rinpoche used this concept to describe the way in which human beings and society can be integrated with the natural world and how one should “take his seat in the sacred world” (Trungpa 2003, 143).

As in Norberg-Schulz’s description, these principles can be understood literally as the sky above, earth below and humans inhabiting the space between; however, in Shambhala each has a more symbolic meaning. Traditionally heaven is associated with the most sacred, so symbolically it represents “any lofty ideal or experience of vastness and sacredness... the grandeur and vision of heaven are what inspire human greatness and creativity” (Trungpa 2003, 144). Earth represents practicality and receptivity. It is the ground that supports life. In the writing of Norberg-Schulz earth is the infinite plane on which human actions take place. (Norberg-Schulz 1984). In short, heaven represents vision and inspiration, earth is raw material and potentiality, and the principle of man is the active force that joins these two together in an act of expression, or dwelling.

In her thesis, “Dwelling in Oriental Architecture” (1989), Gina Stick provides a particularly eloquent explanation of these principles:

Heaven is vast, earth profound, man that which appreciates the two. Heaven is prospect, earth refuge, man the ability to find home between them. ...

Heaven is sky, space, openness, vision, virtue, aspiration and creativity. ... Without heaven principle, man is a drone unable to see beyond life’s hassles. Without heaven principle architecture is reduced to square footage requirements and the quality of life goes downhill. Dwelling in heaven means to find home in *space*, the natural dwelling place of original mind. Heaven principle is concerned with providing reference point and orientation to a cosmic dimension of order: to original purity. Cosmic does not mean other worldly; it means vast, beyond the petty. ...

The principle of earth is concerned with making a relationship with the dirty dishes of daily life and seeing goodness and power in simple experience. To dwell on earth means to connect with practical reality which is the *stuff* of sacred world. The whole

meaning of non-theism is to annihilate the attitude that spirituality, goodness, god, etc., is different or beyond or better than ordinary reality. This attitude is considered the main obstacle to appreciating and understanding life. The theistic attitude is always looking for alternatives to what we have and to being where we are. While heaven is vast and open, earth brings poignancy and depth. To dwell on earth means that vision manifests *through* rather than in spite of the details; details are the relative expression of absolute truth, unconditionally good and soaked with meaning ... Dwelling on earth means overcoming life as a hassle and finding dignity in daily ritual as the place of practical wisdom. ...

In the middle, between the two, is the place of dwelling and of joining. Man is literal man who lives in harmony and between the vastness of heaven and the realities of earth. ... Man is the *principle* of communication and joining: the vision and practicality could be synchronized. In Western theism, literal man is often placed on earth, removed from the knowledge and “blessings” of heaven. In Oriental culture, it is man, not God, who has the potential and responsibility to find wisdom. Without the ability to recognize both aspects of heaven and earth and bring them into alignment, man experiences tremendous frustration; he can't relax, and he can't dwell. “Man” *is* dwelling, which happens when heaven and earth are joined, prospect and refuge balanced, and the sacred integrated into the mundane. (Stick 1989, 16-17)

In the Shambhala tradition the monarch is used to symbolize the action of joining heaven and earth. This was touched on in the discussion of the saddle analogy in the previous chapter. This can be seen in the Chinese character for “king”, which is depicted as three horizontal lines, which represent heaven earth and man, joined by a single vertical stroke. Traditionally this represented that power of the king to join heaven and earth and create a good human society. In Shambhala the monarch is a metaphor, which represents each person's ability to join heaven and earth (Trungpa 2003, 146).

It is said that if the relationship between heaven, earth and man is out of balance, then social chaos and natural disasters ensue. This isn't understood to be a mystical process or the result of some theistic deity punishing humans, but a very real result of the consequences of not relating properly to the environment. Without a connection to the principles of heaven and earth, humans do not know how to care for the environment or society. In contemporary society the connections between the social,

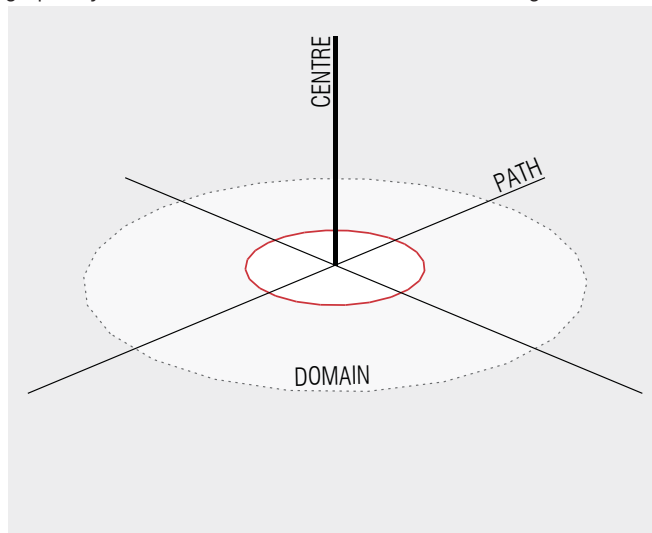
environmental problems are becoming more and more clear (Trungpa 2003, 147).

Dwelling can be understood as the identification of a space where human presence and life assumes a complete meaning (Norberg-Schulz 1984, 19). Norberg-Schulz describes two aspects of dwelling as identification and orientation. Identification is related to form, to particular things, which includes objects, buildings or landscapes – the physical “stuff” – while orientation relates to the spatial order or relationships between these things.

“To dwell implies the establishment of a meaningful relationship between man and a given environment,” writes Norberg-Schulz in *The Concept of Dwelling*. He goes on to explain that humans establish this relationship through the act of identification with a particular place. Universally, humans conceive of identity in relationship to particular places and landscapes, which are used as a point of reference; however, identification also requires an act of interpretation in which meaning is embodied and expressed (Norberg-Schulz 1984, 17). Heidegger said:

Poetry is really what lets us dwell. Poetry does not fly above and surmount the earth in order to escape it and hover over it. Poetry is what first brings man onto the earth, making him belong to it, and this brings him into dwelling. (Heidegger 1997b, 111)

Though poetry is that which allows one to dwell, Norberg-Schulz suggests



The structure of existential space, after Norberg-Schulz 1984

that by “embodying existential meanings, making the world stand forth as it is,” architecture is the means by which this dwelling is achieved (Norberg-Schulz 1984, 19).

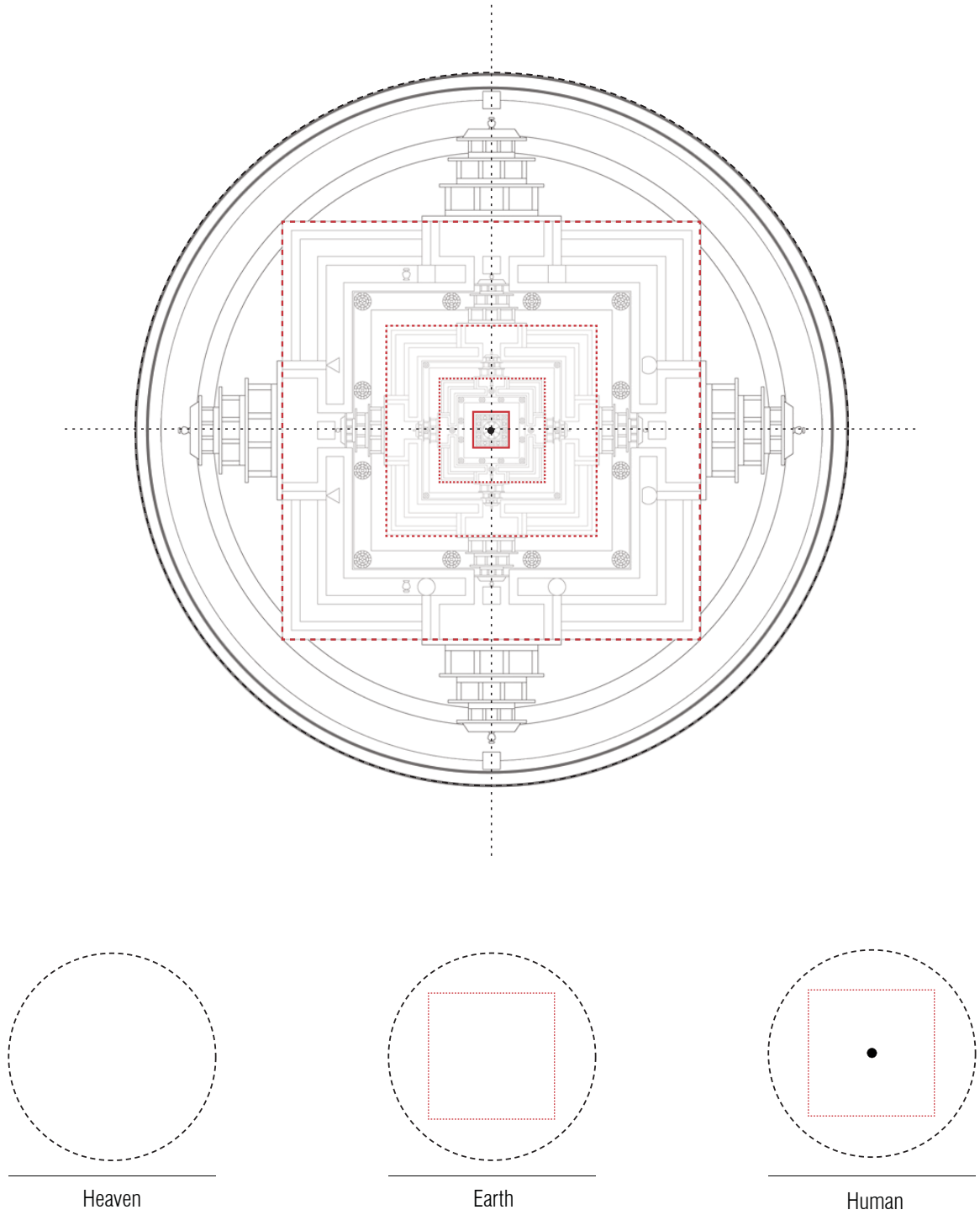
Orientation has to do with how we understand the environment in which objects of identification exist. The structure of this environmental image, or domain, is organized according to two basic constituents: centre and path. Centre represents a place where actions of importance take place. This could be represented by a settlement within a landscape, a public square within a settlement or a home at the centre of personal life. This is the point in space where humans orient themselves or “acquire position in space” (Norberg-Schulz 1984, 22). The centre indicates an end to horizontal movement and as such establishes a connection between earth and sky, becoming *axis mundi*. In the same way, joining heaven and earth establishes a vertical axis and a particular point in space which is referred to as the “king’s seat” in Shambhala culture. According to Norberg-Schulz and the historian of religion Mircea Eliade, the centre represents what is known in contrast to what is unknown and therefore establishes a boundary; the establishment of this fixed point is analogous to the creation of the world (Norberg-Schulz 1984, 22; Eliade 1959, 21). Eliade writes:

It is the break effected in space that allows the world to be constituted, because it reveals the fixed point, the central axis for all future orientation. When the sacred manifests itself in any hierophany, there is not only a break in the homogeneity of space; there is also a revelation of an absolute reality, opposed to the nonreality of the vast surrounding expanse, in which no point of reference is possible and hence no orientation can be established. (Eliade 1959, 21)

It is interesting to compare this to a similar passage in the commentary on the seminal Shambhala texts:

There is no such thing as East-West-North-South. The only thing is the king’s seat, which faces East. In this understanding, East is the unconditional direction, from which the rest of the directions are dictated. When East exists, there is West, which is the back of East; and when the back of East exists, there is a right side, which is South, and a left side, which is North. East remains the unconditional direction, without determination. East can be said to





Comparing the structures of space (diagrams after Trungpa 2008; base image by Mandalas Para Todos 2014)

exist as the pointless point. Therefore, it can be called the one and only cardinal point.

If you have East, you must have vision or experience of the East. When you look at the East, you do not let your eyes flinch to the back or right or left. You look straight forward. Therefore it is East. If something happens at your back, you turn around and face forward to it to find out what it is. Similarly, any human consciousness begins with the East, the direction you are facing towards. (Mukpo 2000, 1-2)

The natural conclusion of centre is path, which is implied in the discussion of direction in the previous quote and the activity of arrival and departure suggested by the establishment of a fixed point and boundary. A path also introduces the notion of axis or direction, which is a fundamental property of the world and is reflected physiologically in our bodies through our eyes. Le Corbusier declared the axis as the first human manifestation and the means of every human act (Norberg-Schulz 1984, 23). Both of these qualities of direction and activity are explicit in the Shambhala commentary. Establishing directional axes creates a “plane of infinite extension” (Norberg-Schulz 1984, 23) or a ground, to use a gestalt term, upon which humans choose and create paths, which lend particular structure to space. This particular structure establishes domains that fill out the network of paths and centres and lends atmosphere, or character, to the environment. These domains are distinguished by particular characteristics and activities. Together centre, path and domain make up the structure of existential space as described by Norberg-Schulz and show clear similarities to the Shambhala tradition. The previous diagrams depict an adapted version of the diagrams Trungpa Rinpoche used to explain the principles of heaven, earth and human, and a speculative proposal about their relationship to the traditional Buddhist understanding of the structure of space as manifested in the Kalachakra mandala. Within the structure of the mandala the outer circle represents the environment (heaven), the squares represent a series of courtyards (earth) with the central deity in the middle (human). The walls that create the courtyards also contain gates which establish clear the cardinal axis (path) and four quarters within the space (domain).

## *Drala*

In some religious traditions, sense perceptions are regarded as problematic, because they arouse worldly desires. However, in the Shambhala tradition...sense perceptions are regarded as sacred. They are a natural gift, a natural ability that human beings have. They are a source of wisdom. If you don't see sights, if you don't hear sounds, if you don't taste food, you have no way to communicate with the phenomenal world at all. But because of the extraordinary vastness of perception, you have possibilities of communicating with the depth of the world...When we draw down the power and depth of vastness into a single perception then we are discovering and invoking magic. By magic we do not mean unnatural power over the phenomenal world, but rather the discovery of innate or primordial wisdom in the world as it is. (Trungpa 2003, 107)

Within the Shambhala tradition atmosphere is connected to the *drala* principle, a Tibetan word that means "above the enemy" (Trungpa 2003, 109). "Drala is the unconditioned wisdom and power of the world that are beyond any dualism; therefore drala is above any enemy or conflict" (Trungpa 2003, 109). The *drala* principle is a necessary constituent of environments that transmit the qualities of awake mind and a fundamental aspect of the Shambhalian perception of sacredness.

Drala is a place-based phenomenon and directly related to the relationship between our sense perceptions and our environment. In this way it is directly related to the question of *dwelling* and our relationship with a particular place. Christian Norberg-Schulz's description of *genius loci* is helpful in understanding the *drala* principle. He refers to the particular characteristics of a place as *genius loci*, or the spirit of a place. These characteristics simultaneously rely on a general feeling of a place, and the specific physical qualities: "On the one hand it denotes a general comprehensive atmosphere, and on the other the concrete form and substance of the space defining elements" (Norberg-Schulz 1980, 13). He goes on to quote Lawrence Durrell as saying in 1960, "As you get to know Europe slowly, tasting the wines, cheeses and characters of the different countries you begin to realize that the important determinant of any culture is after all the spirit of place" (Norberg-Schulz 1980, 18). The atmosphere is created by the moment of contact between our sense faculties (sight,

touch, smell) and the sense object (image, texture, scent). While this is an automatic and very ordinary occurrence in human consciousness, the *drala* principle operates on the idea that these ordinary perceptions allow one to access wisdom, power and the ordinary magic the Trungpa Rinpoche describes above.

Here I am. Sitting in the sun. A grand arcade - long, tall, beautiful in the sunlight. The square offers me a panorama - the facades of houses, the church, the monuments. Behind me is the wall of the cafe. Just the right number of people. A flower market. Sunlight. Eleven o'clock. The opposite side of the square in the shade, pleasantly blue. Wonderful range of noises: conversations nearby, footsteps on the square, on stone, birds, a gently murmuring from the crown, no cars, no engine sounds, occasional noises from a building site. I imagine the start of the holidays making everybody walk more slowly. Two nuns waving their hands in the air, trip lightly across the square, their bonnets gently swaying, each with a plastic carrier bag. Temperature: pleasantly fresh, and warm. I am sitting in the arcade on a pale green upholstered sofa, while the bronze figure on its tall pedestal in the square before me has its back turned, looking across as I am, at the twin towered church. (Zumthor 2006, 15)

The above passage from Peter Zumthor's *Atmospheres* infers an experience of *drala*. He goes on to say:

I remove the square and my feelings disappear. I could never have had those feelings without the atmosphere of the square. It's quite logical really. People interact with objects. As an architect that's what I deal with all the time...The real has its own magic. Of course, I know the magic that lies in thought. The passion of a beautiful thought. But what I'm talking about here is something I often find even more incredible: the magic of things, the magic of the real world. (Zumthor 2006, 17)

The writings of Juhani Pallasmaa reveal a similar reverence for the sense perceptions and their relationship to establishing a connection with the phenomenal world. For Pallasmaa the over-emphasis on the visual faculties has resulted in a disconnection from our world.

Instead of experiencing our being in the world, we behold it from outside as spectators of images projected on the surface of the retina. . . .As buildings lose their plasticity and their connection with the language and wisdom of the body, they become isolated in the cool and distant realm of vision. . . .our culture at large seems to drift towards a distancing, a kind of chilling, de-sensualization and de-eroticization of the human relation to reality. (Pallasmaa 2006, 29)



Material study in concrete and wood

For Pallasmaa, material qualities are important in developing a fully sensual appreciation of architecture. Materials such as stone, wood and brick encourage an active relationship with the eye, drawing the viewer in, as opposed to the passive, distant viewer described above. The gaze penetrates the surface of the material and “enable[s] us to become convinced of the veracity of matter” (Pallasmaa 2006, 29). A material such as wood is also particularly adept at communicating a sense of history and time through weathering and wear, while expressing signs of its “birth and human use” (Pallasmaa 2006, 29). Within the Shambhala tradition places and objects possess the power to connect us with the present moment through the senses. The connection with the present moment is not only a temporal experience, but spatial; through the senses you develop a connection with a particular place, in a particular moment. This spatial/temporary experience is the way in which *drala* enables dwelling and is connected to *joining heaven and earth* by establishing a meaningful relationship with the environment.

An academic understanding of *drala* is challenging, as it is, in essence, an experience; however, it is also an fundamental, natural part of human perception, which allows anyone from any cultural background to make a connection with it. Trungpa Rinpoche often used poetry and literature to evoke the atmosphere of *drala* as opposed to verbose, conceptual explanations. In *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior*, he referred to the following passage from *The Little Prince* to illustrate this point:

“What does tamed mean?”

“It’s something that’s been too often neglected. It means ‘to create ties’...”

“To create ties?”

“That’s right,” the fox said. “For me you’re only a little boy just like a hundred thousand other little boys. And I have no need of you. And you have no need of me, either. For you I’m only a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But if you tame me, we’ll need each other. You’ll be the only boy in the world for me. I’ll be the only fox in the world for you...”

...“if you tame me, my life will be filled with sunshine.

I'll know the sound of footsteps that will be different from the rest. Other footsteps send me back underground. Yours will call me out of my burrow like music. And then, look! You see the wheat fields over there? I don't eat bread. For me wheat is of no use whatever. Wheat fields say nothing to me. Which is sad. But you have hair the colour of gold. So it will be wonderful, once you've tamed me! The wheat, which is golden, will remind me of you. And I'll love the sound of the wind in the wheat..."

..."The only things you learn are the things you tame," said the fox. "People haven't any time to learn anything. They buy things ready-made in stores. But since there are no stores where you can buy friends, people no longer have friends. If you want a friend, tame me!"

"What do I have to do?" asked the little prince.

"You have to be very patient," the fox answered. "First you'll sit down a little ways away from me, over there, in the grass. I'll watch you out of the corner of my eye, and you won't say anything. Language is the source of misunderstandings. But day by day, you'll be able to sit a little closer..." (Saint-Exupery 2000, 58)



Las Arboledas, Mexico City, 1962, Luis Barragan, photographer unknown (Barragan Foundation 2015)

Similarly, from an architectural point of view, the drala principle can be understood through Kahn's famous declaration: "The sun was not aware of its wonder until it struck the side of a building" (Louis Kahn, quoted in Sauter 2012, 189).

## Natural Hierarchy

I tried to find what order is. I was excited about it, and I wrote many, many words of what Order is. Every time I wrote something, I felt it wasn't quite enough. If I had covered, say, two thousand pages with just words of what Order is, I would not be satisfied with this statement. And then I stopped by not saying what it is, just saying, "Order is." And somehow I wasn't sure it was complete until I asked somebody, and the person I asked said, "you must stop right there. It's marvellous; just stop there, saying, 'Order is.'" (Louis Kahn, quoted in Lobell 2008, 18)

As was described by Engel, the non-theistic view holds that ultimate reality to be none other than the universe itself, "self-creating and self-governing" (Engel 1964, 366). There is an undeniable order to the universe - birth and death, the seasons, gravity - without which existence would be impossible. This is called *natural hierarchy*. Winter is winter, up is up and down is down, sky is sky and earth is earth. One is not better than the other, but they are distinct, and because they are distinct they inhabit distinct places (Stick

1989, 14; Trungpa 2003, 158). These differences constitute an order, or *hierarchy*, and it is *natural* because it exists without any intervention by human or divine will: it is self-existing.

Natural hierarchy is reflected in the principles of heaven, earth and human, but is more literally described through the principles of *lha*, *nyen* and *lu*. They describe the way in which humans can align themselves with the “texture of basic reality” and invoke the drala principle (Trungpa 2003, 154).

*Lha*, *nyen* and *lu* play a role in every situation in life. Every object you handle is connected with one of those three places. For example, in terms of clothing, the hat is in the place of *lha*, the shoes are in the place of *lu*, and shirts, dresses, and trousers are in the place of *nyen*. If you mix up those principles, then you instinctively know that something is wrong. For instance, if the sun is beating on your head, you don't put your shoes on your head as a visor to protect you from the sun. And on the other hand, you don't walk on your sunglasses...and, for that matter, you shouldn't put your feet on the table, because it is mixing up *lu* and *nyen*...I'm afraid it is as literal as that. *Lha*, *nyen*, and *lu* are quite straightforward and very ordinary. (Trungpa 2003, 154)

The following is Trungpa Rinpoche's description of the qualities of *lha*, *nyen* and *lu* from *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior*.

### *Lha*

*Lha* refers to the highest points on earth, the peaks of snow mountains, where glaciers and bare rock are found. *Lha* is the highest point, the point that catches the light of the rising sun first of all. It is the places on earth that reach into the heavens above, into the clouds; so *lha* is as close to the heavens as the earth can reach. Psychologically, *lha* represents the first wakefulness. It is the experience of tremendous freshness and freedom from pollution in your state of mind. In the body, *lha* is the head, especially the eyes and forehead, so it represents physical upliftedness and projecting out as well. Personal items that are associated with *lha* include hats, glasses, earrings, toothbrushes, and hairbrushes. (Trungpa 2003, 151)

### *Nyen*

*Nyen* begins with the great shoulders of the mountains, and includes forests, jungles and plains. A mountain peak is *lha*, but the dignified shoulders of the mountain are *nyen*. In the Japanese samurai tradition the large starched shoulders on the warriors'



The Pantheon, photo by Peter Sigris (Sigris 2014)



The Acropolis, photograph by Socratis Mavrommatis (College of Architecture at Texas A&M University 2015)

uniforms represent the *nyen* principle. In the Western military tradition, epaulets that accentuate the shoulders play the same role. In the body, *nyen* includes not only your shoulders but your torso, your chest and rib cage. Psychologically, it is solidity, feeling solidly grounded in goodness, grounded in the earth. So *nyen* is connected with bravery and the gallantry of human beings. Personal items that belong to the category of *nyen* include rings, belts, ties, shirts and blouses, cuff links, bracelets and watches. (Trungpa 2003, 151-152)

## *Lu*

*Lu* is the realm of oceans and rivers and great lakes, the realm of water and wetness. *Lu* has the quality of a liquid jewel, so wetness is connected here with richness. Psychologically, the experience of *lu* is like jumping into a gold lake. *Lu* is also connected with freshness, but not quite the same as the freshness of the glacier mountains of *lha*. Here, freshness is like sunlight reflecting in a deep pool of water, showing the liquid, jewel-like quality of the water. In your body *lu* is your legs and feet: everything below your waist. Items belonging to the place of *lu* are shoes and socks and underwear. (Trungpa 2003, 152)



Carlo Scarpa, Brion Cemetery, 1969-1978, photograph by Seier+seier (Seier+seier 2014)

## Natural Hierarchy and Architecture

“What do you want to be, brick?” Brick says back to you, “I like an arch.” If you say to brick, “Arches are expensive, and I can use a concrete lintel over an opening. What do you think of that, brick?” Brick says, “I like an arch.” (Louis Kahn, quoted in Lobell 2008, 40)

The principles of *lha*, *nyen*, and *lu* also have their architectural analogies. Ceilings, roofs and qualities that enhance light and the sky are associated with *lha*. Walls, columns and other means of enclosure are associated with *nyen*. Details, material qualities and features that incorporate water are associated with *lu*. However, this list is not a definitive categorization of architectural elements. The concept of *embodied energy* is a more general way of understanding how natural hierarchy is expressed in architecture. Louis Kahn’s Exeter Library could serve as an example: in this case, the spatial volumes, material qualities, general aesthetic and structural system are unified. The structure acts according to its physical properties and is expressed as an intrinsic part of the spatial experience of the building. The large, circular opening on the level of the stacks provides a human scale to large objects and the material details of wood, concrete and travertine are specifically choreographed to interact with the hand. The whole



composition hangs together and provides a sense of harmony and quiet elegance. Contrast this to a building such as Zaha Hadid's King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Centre, where the steel structure is seemingly tortured into place and must be completely concealed to provide any kind of coherent spatial experience, obscuring any kind of honesty about its nature.

In the Shambhala tradition natural hierarchy is related to discipline, mindfulness and precision, not oppression, bigotry or rigidity. Because the concept of sacredness is founded on *things as they are*, everything is included and appreciated for what it is. The principles of *lha*, *nyen* and *lu* are about celebrating differences, as opposed to making everything the same.

Living in accordance with natural hierarchy is not a matter of following a series of rigid rules or structuring your days with lifeless commandments or codes of conduct. The world has order and power and richness that can teach you how to conduct your life artfully, with kindness to others and care for yourself...The discovery of natural hierarchy has to be a personal experience - magic is something you must experience for yourself. Then you will never be tempted to put your hat on the floor, but more importantly, you will never be tempted to cheat your neighbours or your friends. (Trungpa 2003, 158)

## The Four Dignities

The four dignities represent the complete path to enlightenment with the realization of egolessness and the nature of mind; or of the "universal monarch" as the pinnacle achievement (Trungpa 2003, 186). The path of the four dignities is somewhat paradoxical in the sense that it is a process that allows for the development of authentic presence; however, it is the experience of this authentic presence that enables one to progress along the path. Trungpa Rinpoche resolved this seeming contradiction by explaining that "egolessness is both the ground and the fruition of this journey" (Trungpa 2003, 187), meaning that unless we are able to let go of ourselves, it is impossible to even begin the journey, though, on the other hand, once we have let go we see that we can incorporate increasingly greater vision (Trungpa 2003, 187-188).



Louis Kahn, Exeter Library, photography by Dashrath Patel (Kries 2012)



Zaha Hadid, King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Centre, photo by Zaha Hadid Architects (Building Design and Construction 2014)

Though the path of the four dignities is an advanced stage along the path of Shambhala, everyone has some experience of these principles; as such, they will form the structure of the Kalapa Valley pilgrimage path contained within this thesis.

The four dignities are *meek*, *perky*, *outrageous* and *inscrutable* and are associated with the tiger, snow lion, garuda and dragon respectively.

Meekness is basically experiencing a humble and gentle state of being, while perkiness is connected with uplifted and youthful energy. Outrageousness is being daring and entering into situations without hope and fear, and inscrutability is the experience of fulfillment and uncontrived, spontaneous achievement. (Trungpa 2003, 188)

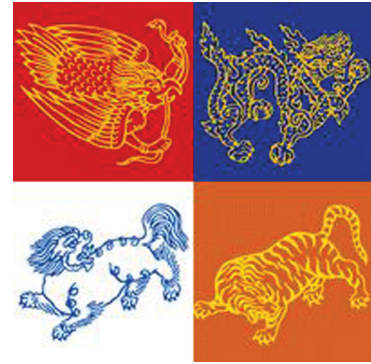
## Meek

Meekness is the first dignity. Meek here does not mean being feeble; it just means resting in a state of simplicity, being uncomplicated and, at the same time, approachable. The first principle of meekness is that, because the warrior is modest, his mind is never bloated by poisonous arrogance. Modesty does not mean thinking of yourself as tiny or small. Modesty here means feeling true and genuine. The warrior's awareness shines out with tremendous inquisitiveness, a keen interest in everything around him. You begin to see things as natural messages, rather than as reference point for your existence. The difference between ordinary inquisitiveness and that of the warrior's path of meek is that the warrior's awareness is always joined with discipline. (Trungpa 2003, 188-190)

The dignity of meek is associated with a sense of mindfulness and awareness in general, and mindfulness of body in particular. The tiger of meek moves slowly with great inquisitiveness but also experiences great vision and a vast mind. The opposite of the dignity of meek is described as bloated and arrogant and is associated with the enlightened activity of pacifying and the direction of east.

## Perky

The principle of perky is symbolized by a snow lion who enjoys the freshness of the highland mountains. The snow lion is vibrant, energetic and also youthful. He roams the highlands where the atmosphere is clear and the air is fresh. The soundings are wildflowers, a few trees, and occasional boulders and rocks. The atmosphere is fresh and new and also has a sense of goodness



The four dignities of Shambhala (Shambhala 2014)

and cheerfulness. ... Perky does not mean that one is perked up by temporary situations, but it refers to unconditional cheerfulness, where comes from ongoing discipline. Just as the snow lion enjoys the refreshing air, the warrior of perky is constantly disciplined and continuously enjoys discipline. For him, discipline is not a demand but a pleasure. (Trungpa 2003, 191-193)

The vision of perky develops on the mindfulness of meek and includes a greater field of perceptions. However, because of discipline they are do not distract from the path but are enjoyed as a display of sacred world. In this sense of joy there is an implication of society and community which are foundations of the Shambhala path. The opposite of perky is slothful and without humour and is associated with the enlightened activity of subjugating and the cardinal direction of north.

### Outrageous

Outrageousness does not mean being unreasonable or, for that matter, wild. Outrageousness here refers to possessing the strength and power of warriorship. ...

Outrageousness is symbolized by the garuda, a legendary Tibetan bird who is traditionally referred to as the king of birds. The garuda hatches full-grown from its eggs and soars into outer space, expanding and stretching its wings, beyond any limits. Likewise, having overcome hope and fear, the warrior of outrageous develops a sense of great freedom. So the state of mind of outrageousness is very vast. Your mind fathoms the whole of space. You go beyond any possibilities of holding back at all. You just go and go and go, complete expanding yourself. And like the garuda king, the warrior of outrageous finds nothing to obstruct his vast mind. (Trungpa 2003, 194-195)

The practice of offering, or generosity, is a way to overcome ego, attachment and hope and fear, as such it is associated with the dignity of outrageous. Outrageous is not a license to act unreasonably or disregard the feelings of others, but relies on a sense of fearlessness. It's opposite is overly solemn and afraid of making a mistake and is associated with the enlightened activity of magnetizing and the direction west.

### Inscrutable

Inscrutability is represented by the dragon. The dragon is energetic, powerful and unwavering. But there qualities of the dragon do not stand alone without the meekness of the tiger, the perkiness of the

lion and the outrageousness of the garuda. ...

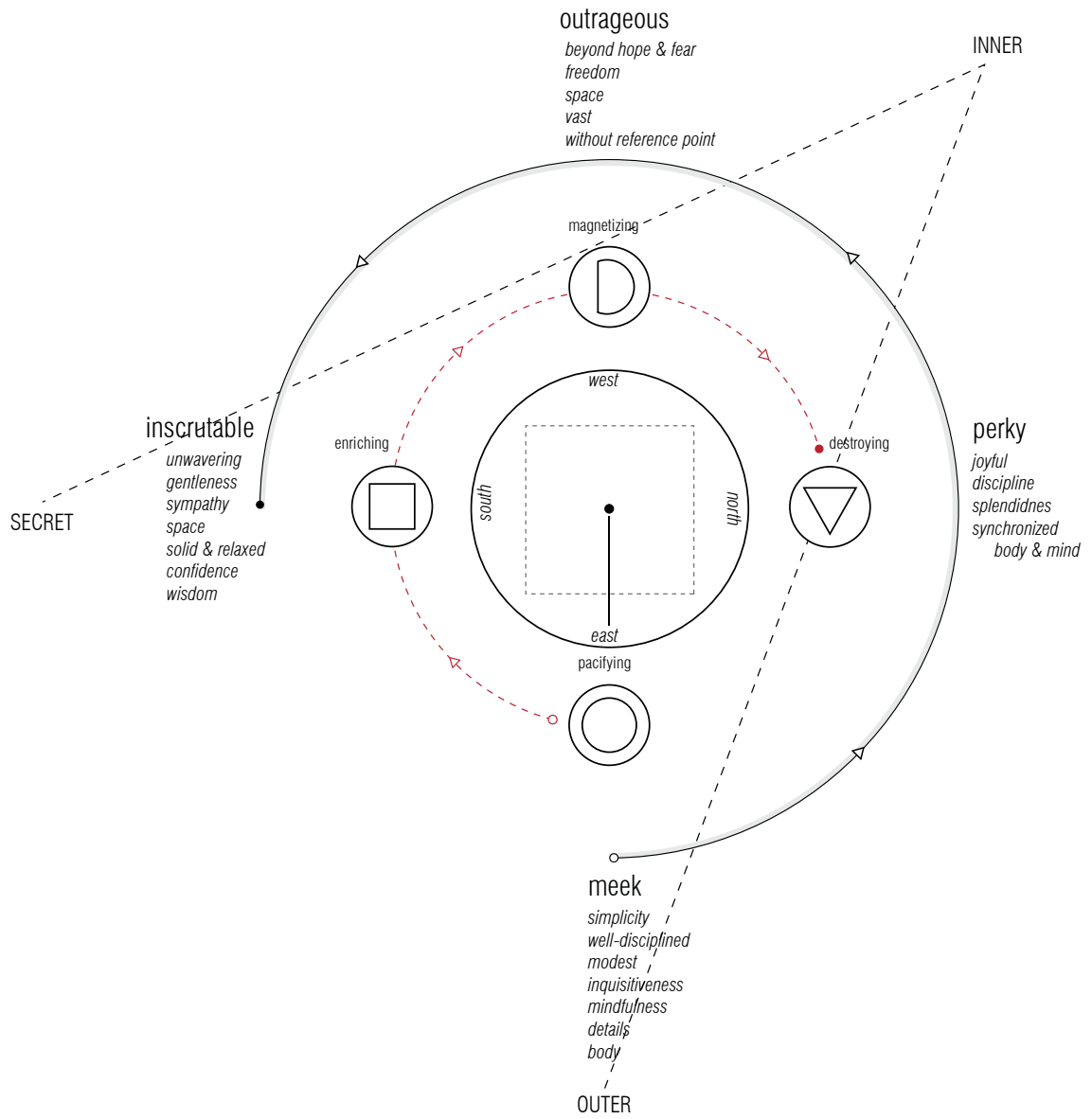
The cultivation of inscrutability is to learn to be. It has been said that everyone possesses the potentiality to be confident. When we speak of confidence here we refer to enlightened confidence - not to confidence in something, but just to being confident. This confidence is unconditional... When the warrior feels a sense of leadership and order on earth, that appreciation brings some kind of breakthrough. The closed poverty-stricken world begins to fall apart, and from that feeling of freedom you begin to appreciate natural hierarchy; you are a part of it...When we talk of hierarchy, we refer to the structure and order of the universe - a sense of heritage that the warrior must appreciate. But appreciating it is not enough. There is a need for discipline, and that discipline comes from realizing that such a world as this was created for you, that people expended energy to bring you up, that in your weak moments you were helped, and that, when you were ready for inspiration, you were inspired. So the discipline of genuinely working for others comes from appreciating hierarchy...With exertion and delight you can lift yourself up, in order to achieve authentic presence and, ultimately, the state of being of the universal monarch. (Trungpa 2003, 196-201)

The dignity of inscrutable represents the culmination of the path and a sense of complete dwelling. Here this is described as authentic presence or the state of the universal monarch. The opposite of inscrutable is a sense of scheming and one-up-manship and it is associated with the enlightened activity of enriching and the direction of south.

### **Mandala of the Four Dignities**

Both the four dignities and the four karmas, or enlightened activities, have specific progressions, though they move in opposite directions when mapped against the cardinal directions. In the Shambhala texts and commentaries left by Trungpa Rinpoche, this peculiarity is not addressed.

The following diagram maps out the relationship between the cardinal directions, the dignities, and the four karmas with the diagrams for heaven, earth and human at the centre. The final outer layer relates the path of the dignities to the divisions of outer, inner and secret present on site which will be discussed in a following chapter. This diagram is an attempt to describe the basic structure of space as it relates to the path of the four dignities.



The mandala of the four dignities

## CHAPTER 6: CRITICAL REGIONALISM

Critical regionalism developed as a response to the trend toward globalization rampant in the 1980s and emphasized place as the driving force of architecture, accepting the challenge to simultaneously “become modern and to return to sources” (Paul Ricoeur, quoted in Frampton 2002, 78). The label of critical regionalism is often invoked to lend credibility to architecture in the vernacular style, however this is a simplistic reading of the intent. Critical regionalism finds inspiration in the climate of a place, or the ways in which the culture expresses itself through the built and material culture. This is particular relevant to a tradition such as Shambhala, which has a sacred bond with Nova Scotia - not only the physical landscape, but the cultural, and social as well. However, Shambhala simultaneously exists as a culture spread across a vast geographical area and accommodates a diverse community with a wide range of cultural backgrounds.

Furthermore, critical regionalism represents a resistance to the cool, distant and flat qualities of the contemporary architectural and social climate. Here we begin to see an allegiance with the *drala* principle. As with critical regionalism, *drala* establishes ties to a particular place, in order to engage the *drala* principle, architecture, as the means of communication, should be aligned with its context. In very practical terms this could be understood as being responsive to climate, the local culture, or using local materials, and technologies. As Frampton said, critical regionalism finds “inspiration in such things as the range and quality of local light, or in a tectonic derived from a peculiar structural mode, or in the topography of a given site” (Frampton 2002, 82). But the *drala* principle helps to reveal the more intangible implications of critical regionalism and the role of culture, material, and human sense faculties in achieving dwelling.

Shambhala culture is a relatively young tradition and a community of limited means. As a result the architectural strategies employed have been largely informal. The major retreat centres were established by adapting



Rigden Lodge, Shambhala Mountain Centre, Red Feather Lakes, Colorado, architect unknown, photographer unknown (Silvertip Consultants 2013)



Sacred Studies Hall, Shambhala Mountain Centre, Red Feather Lakes, Colorado, architect unknown (LorenzoLorenzo 2014)

existing buildings on site to fit the community's particular needs. The first major retreat centre, Karmê Chöling in Vermont is particularly interesting. Existing structures, including a barn, have been adapted and renovated over the years resulting in a complex that feels well grounded in its place, incorporating original features of the built structures and the physical landscape.

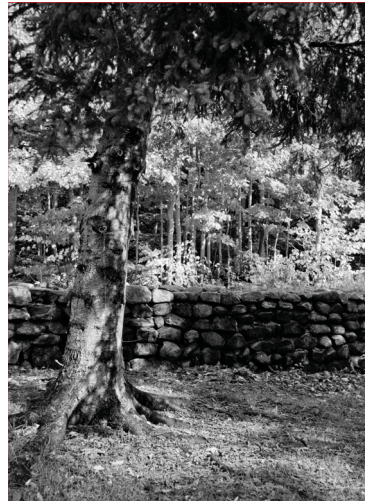
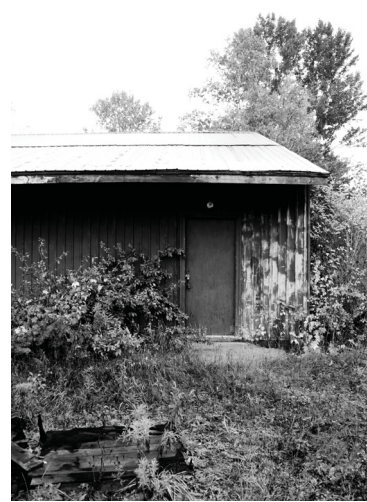
In more recent years there has been a small number of building projects completed at various locations throughout the Shambhala world. Generally speaking, the newer buildings seem to be disconnected from their site and often have a vaguely Asian quality to them. In order to fully embody the *drala* principle, any architectural intervention needs to have a relationship with the environment. In this sense the architectural discourse on critical regionalism offers a valuable contribution to a Shambhalian approach to architecture. Frampton was equally critical of “nostalgic historicism” and the “glibly decorative” as he was of the “Enlightenment myth of progress” (Frampton 2002, 80). As such, a nostalgic application of the vernacular is equally as inappropriate as the nostalgic application of Asian decorative elements. Through the lense of critical regionalism a truly Shambhalian architecture could be achieved, situating the buildings in their site while incorporating elements of material, proportion and procession from the Asian cultures which form an important part of Shambhala heritage.



Karmê Chöling, Barnet, Vermont (Felton 2008)



Aspects of the physical landscape are incorporated into the architecture of Karmê Chöling (Lo 2009)



Photos from the site and surrounding area.



## CHAPTER 7: SITE AND CONTEXT

Shambhala is another layer in the cultural landscape of Cape Breton, which already is home to the history of the Mi'kmaq as well as Portuguese, French, English and Scottish settlers. The Scottish heritage is particularly well preserved in Cape Breton, is a major part of the tourist draw to the area and was of particular interest to Trungpa Rinpoche.

Beginning in the 18th century, farmers living in the Scottish Highlands practising small-scale agriculture were displaced as the result of a shift to large-scale sheep raising initiated by the aristocratic landowners. What is now referred to as “the clearances” became renowned for their abruptness, brutality and the devastating effect they had on Gaelic culture in Scotland. As a result, many Highlanders emigrated to Cape Breton, where Gaelic culture flourishes today.

When the Scottish emigrated to Cape Breton, they largely abandoned the traditional Crofter’s hut, which was prevalent in the Highlands of Scotland, in favour of wooden cabins, for which the raw materials were much more readily available. The development of the Cape Breton vernacular followed a similar path as much of the rest of Nova Scotia, and is mainly comprised of gabled roofs and wooden cladding. Today there are a few examples of Crofter’s huts in Cape Breton, but these were constructed as some form of memorial or symbol of Scottish heritage and did not serve as dwellings. However, there is some evidence of stone houses being constructed by Scottish settlers in the Cape Breton highlands as seen in the photos to the right. Stonewalls are also present in many locations throughout Cape Breton and though there some element of nostalgia in these, many are used for practical purposes. The interesting quality that can be drawn out of these practices is a particular relationship between stereotomic and tectonic elements.



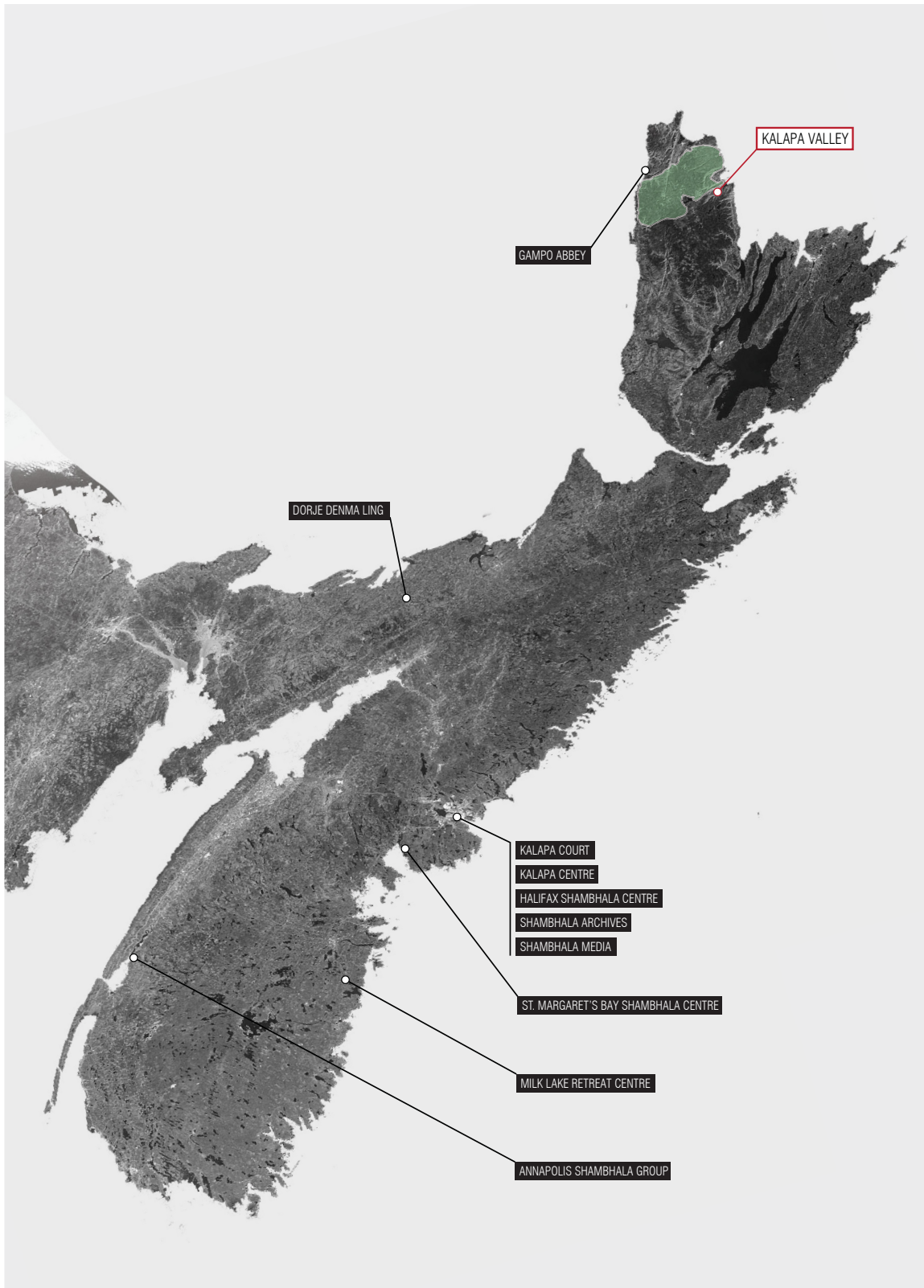
Front elevation, MacRae-Bitterman House, Middle River, Cape Breton, NS, 2004, photographer unknown (Nova Scotia Dept. of Tourism, Culture and Heritage 2004)



The Parsons, Cape Breton, NS, 1848 (Kipping 2014)



Shale house on the Yankee Line, Big Baddeck, Cape Breton, NS (Kipping 2014)



The regional Shambhala network (aerial imagery from European Space Agency 2015)

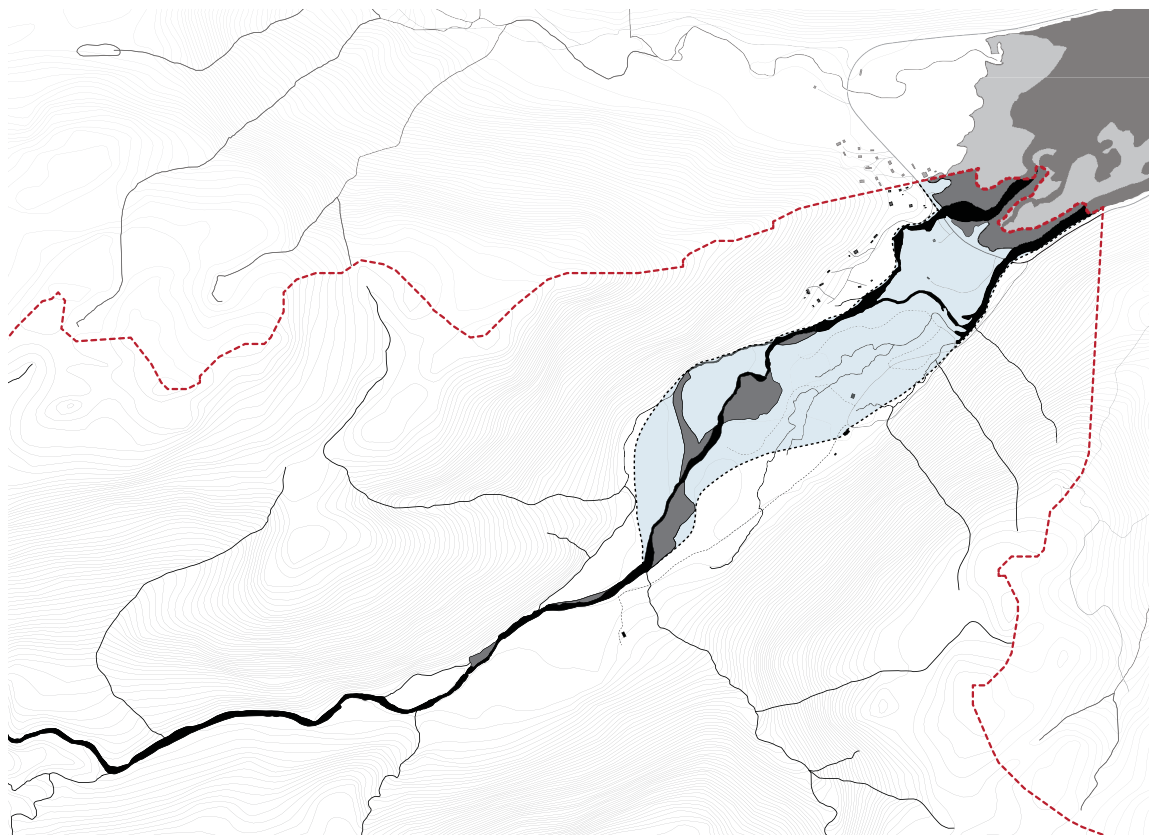
Kalapa Valley is located on the east coast of the northern peninsula of Cape Breton Island and is part of a larger network of Shambhala centres and organizations present in Nova Scotia. The valley is located within the Nova Scotia Highlands eco-region in the Cape Breton Escarpment ecodistrict, which is characterized by late, cold springs, moist summers, and snowy winters, and is exposed to strong winds from the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the Atlantic Ocean (Webb 1999). Steep mountains bound the site on either side, and to the north is a small grouping of private homes. The prevailing wind direction runs through the valley from the Highlands but the steep mountains provide protection and the wind speeds within the valley are reduced. The Ingonish River is a collector for a large watershed originating deep in the highlands which runs through the valley. As a result each spring the valley is subject to annual flooding - at times quite intense. Though the flooding is powerful and can be damaging, it is this constant cycle of renewal that contributes to the energetic importance of the valley.



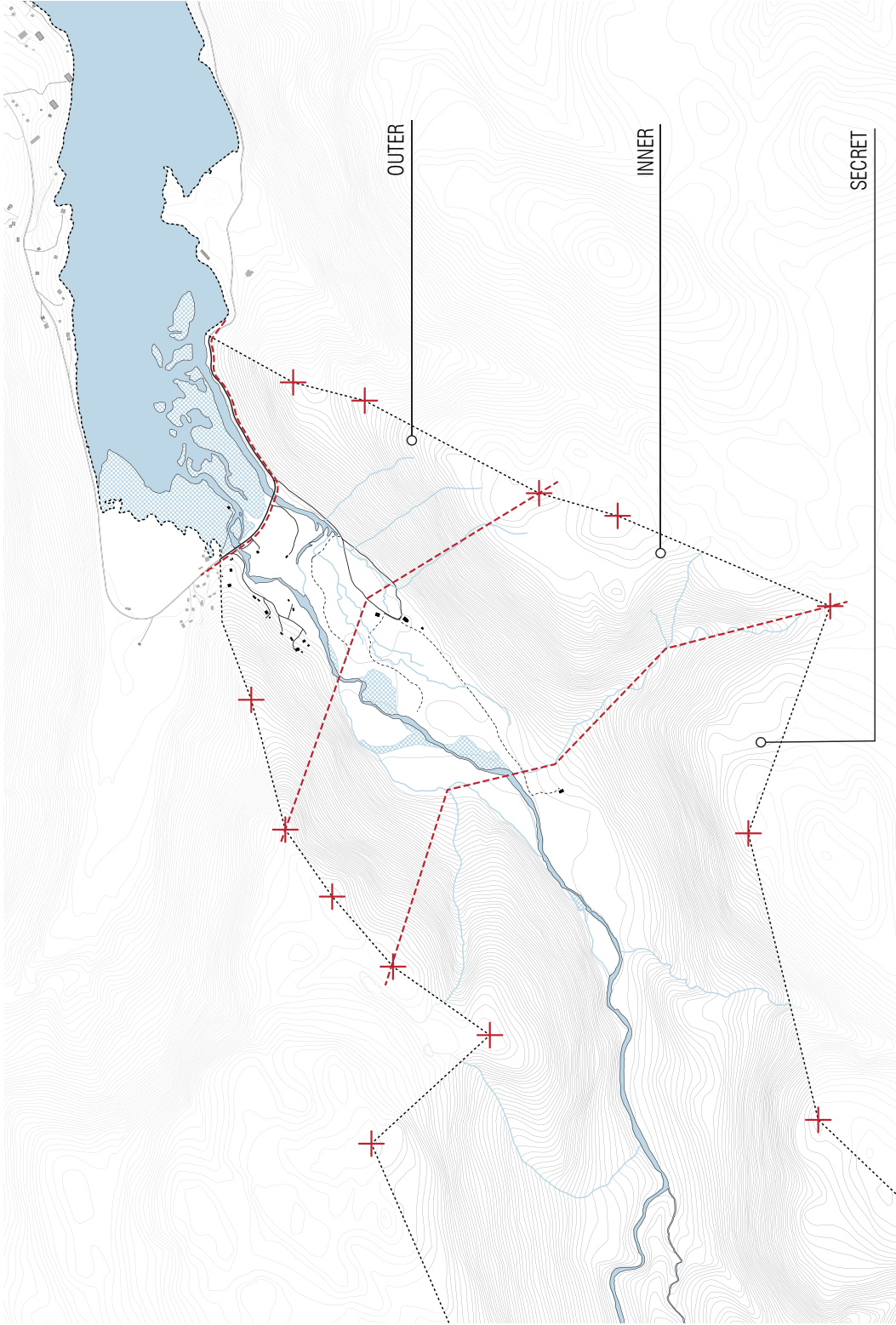
Aerial Image of the site, 1984 (Nova Scotia GIS Service Centre 2014)

This history of the site is not well known; however, some information is available through aerial photography, visiting the site, and speaking with the caretakers.

It is assumed that the property was used for farming prior to 1969. There are spots on the land where fruit trees are still found, along with clearings and young forest that was once cleared; however, no foundations have been found. Following 1969 the site was used as a campground and eventually as an RV park. The largest clearing had many roads and paths and was also home to a swimming pool. There was a large amount of underground infrastructure in place to serve the RVs. There is a kind of wonderful symbolism in the fact that this valley, the most sacred place in the entire Shambhala world was at one time, and quite possibly when it was “discovered”, an RV park.



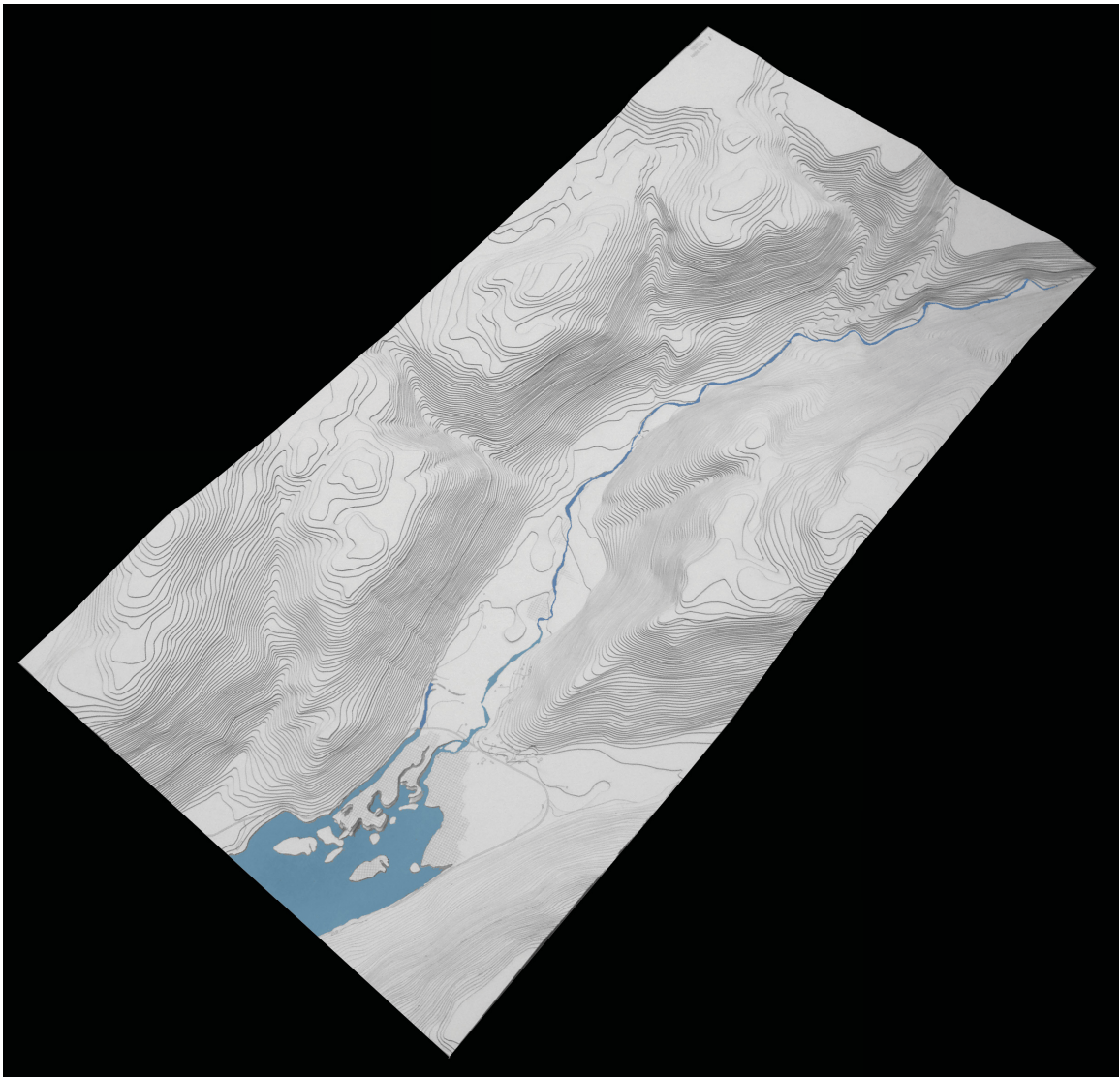
Speculative flooding area (topographical data from Service Nova Scotia 2009)



Three domains (topographic data from Service Nova Scotia 2009)

Information about when the RV park closed is not available, but by 1984 the site seems to have been re-naturalizing. The roads are less evident and some reforestation has occurred. Most noticeable is the change to the path of the river where a new highway was built at the entrance to the valley.

The morphology of the valley divides the site into three distinct areas, or domains. First is the outer or public domain. This is the first part of the valley you enter. Here, the ridgeline lowers down to the valley floor and opens up into Ingonish Harbour. The view is directed out towards the water and the area is in close proximity to the private homes.



Physical site model, 1:10,000

The inner or semi-public domain is located between the highest points of the north and south ridge. The steep slopes feel almost vertical, but instead of imposing they create a strong container in which one is able to relax. The contrast between forested and cleared areas reinforces the sense of a room.

The threshold of the secret or private domain is marked by a stream that cuts the path. Beyond this point there is little structure or organization to the environment and the valley begins to close in. The forest, made up of mostly maple and birch, dominates and the sound of the river is ever present. Within this space is the Scorpion Seal retreat cabin, which is used to perform a specific, month-long solitary meditation retreat associated with the valley. This part of the valley is focused on an individual experience of the environment.



The outer domain



The inner domain



The secret domain



## CHAPTER 8: DESIGN

The design of the pilgrimage complex consists of a series of structures that provide a continuous, choreographed experience of the landscape. The sequence and qualities of the experience are based on the progression of the Shambhala path as described by the four dignities; however, the architectural forms provide an abstract experience that can be appreciated by any visitor, regardless of affiliation.

The strategy at each scale of intervention is to express the relationship between the earth and the sky, thereby providing a sense of dwelling through a human reference point within the impressive landscape. Earth and sky are brought together by the human horizon of a roof or wall, or the space between floor and ceiling; society and nature negotiate a balance in the unexpected presence of elements in the forest or in the clearly expressed relationship between stereotomic and tectonic objects.

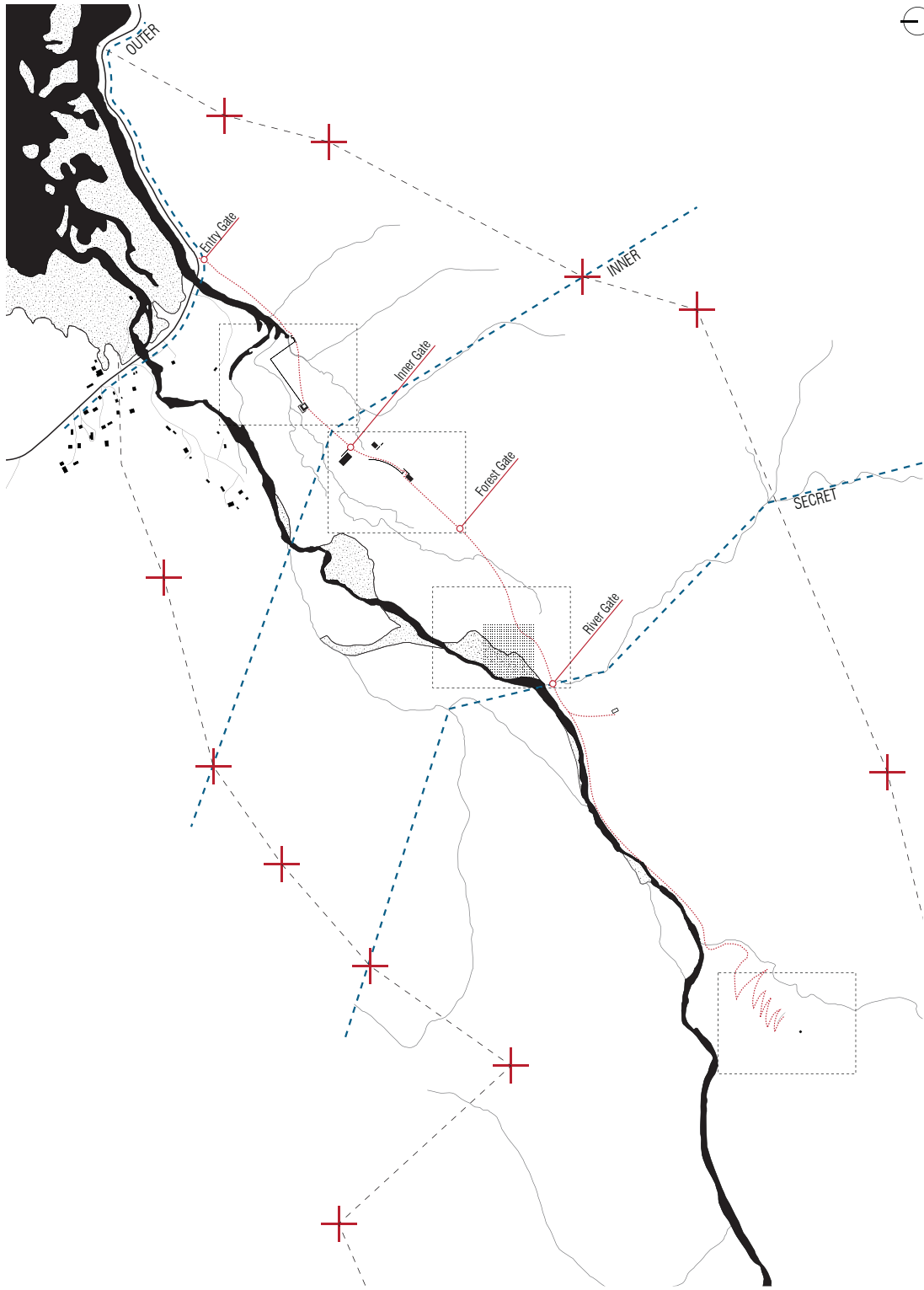


The unexpected presence of humans

Generally the architecture presents a plain exterior, being deferential to the landscape while not resorting to clichés of “light on the land.” It makes a clear statement, but the statement serves to make the landscape more present and potent. As in Magritte’s *Problem of the Rose*, where the rose and the dagger create a tension that reveals something new about each distinct object (Torczyner 1977, 90), the architectural interventions in this project create a dynamic tension between building, or object, and landscape that creates something new.



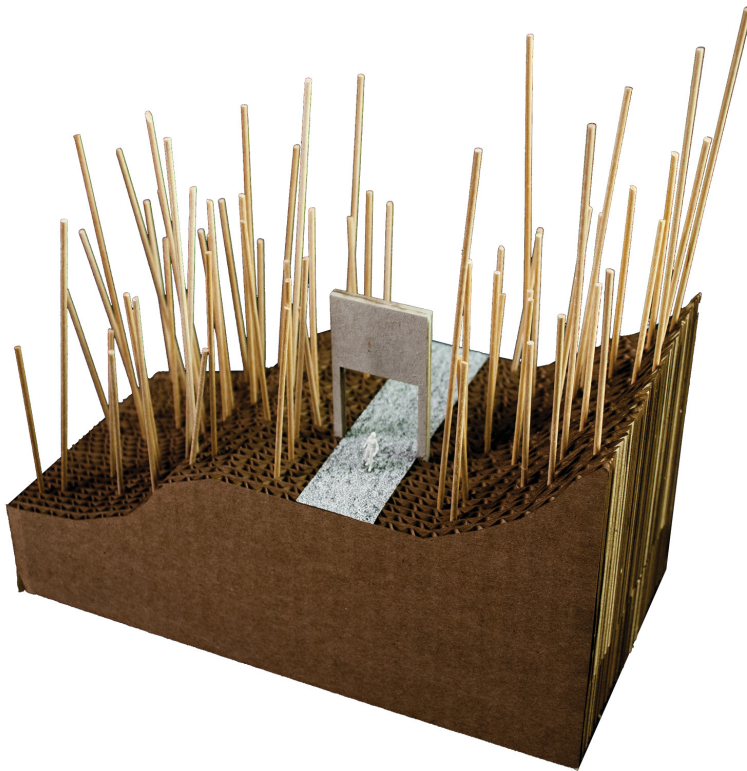
A wall provides a contrasting horizon line



Valley site plan

## Entry Gate

The entry to the site is marked by a small gravel parking lot at a sharp bend in the Cabot Trail. Visible from the road and located at the end of the small gravel lot is the entry gate which marks the boundary of the site. The challenge of this gate is to provide a clear boundary and threshold experience, but maintain an open and inviting atmosphere. Shambhala maintains a desire for the valley to be highly accessible to all visitors, welcoming hikers and cross country skiers. The gate blocks the entry of vehicles, but allows for easy access for visitors on foot. The elevated mass of the gate provides a clear transition to the beginning of the path that leads into the site.



Entry gate model

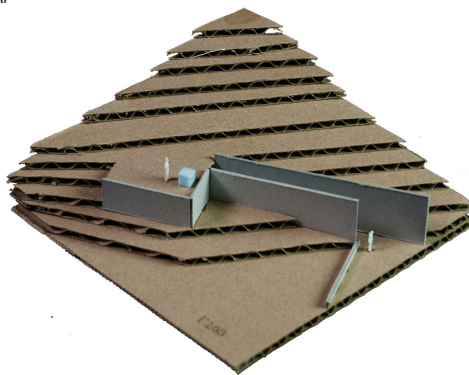
## Path and *Lhasang* Platform

The entry gate marks the beginning of the outer domain and the portion of the site associated with the dignity of meek which is described as disciplined and mindful. The traditional analogy is the tiger who moves mindfully through the jungle. The existing topography and foliage provide a strong sense of enclosure and directionality, with the mountain rising sharply to the left, and a row of trees to the right. The design intervention is minimal, with hand tooled granite pavers containing a gravel path. The ground materials literally force you to be mindful of your step, and the sound of the gravel underfoot brings attention to your body moving through space. By focusing on the ground the experience of compression is heightened.



Entry path

At the end of the entry road the path descends the river bank, providing an elevated point which allows a view into the valley. This moment stands in contrast to the previous experience of the path. The visitor is able to see deep into the valley, provoking a feeling of vastness and projecting out, which are qualities related to *lha*. Here there is a small platform on which visitors may perform the *lhasang* ceremony, a traditional purification ritual involving the offering of Juniper smoke. By available accounts, this place is near the location that Trungpa Rinpoche performed the first *lhasang* on the site in 1980. The architecture provides a place in which visitors can recreate that occasion. Departing the platform, the visitor descends a narrow stair, reintroducing a moment of compression before entering the clearing below.



Study model: *Lhasang* platform



The view of the *Iha* from the proposed platform

## Entry Pavilion

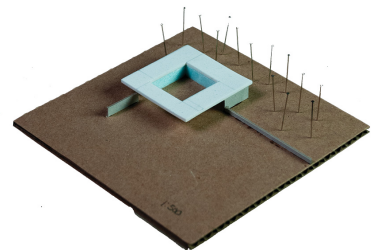
After descending the stairs, the path leads across an open field, the limits of which are inscribed by a low concrete wall. This wall provides a sense of enclosure to the clearing while maintaining the open quality of the area. The path deviates from the wall, allowing the visitor to experience the volume of the space created by the clearing, and terminates at the entry pavilion.

The pavilion is a low, hemlock-clad building nestled into the concrete wall which wraps around the building. As the visitor ascends a small stone step they enter a semi-enclosed arcade that offers obscured views to an interior courtyard. Throughout the building the courtyard remains inaccessible but visually present. The inward focus and inaccessibility represent the qualities of mindfulness and discipline.

The circulation revolves around the courtyard in a clockwise manner. The enclosed portion of the building contains a small office and washrooms and terminates in a hall that will provide information about Shambhala culture, and the history and importance of the site. This space contains large windows that open to the concrete wall, providing diffuse light and a sense of being contained. As the visitor exits the hall, two windows align and a view past the concrete wall to the forest is offered. The visitor would then continue their circumambulation and continue through the west exit to the next portion of the site.



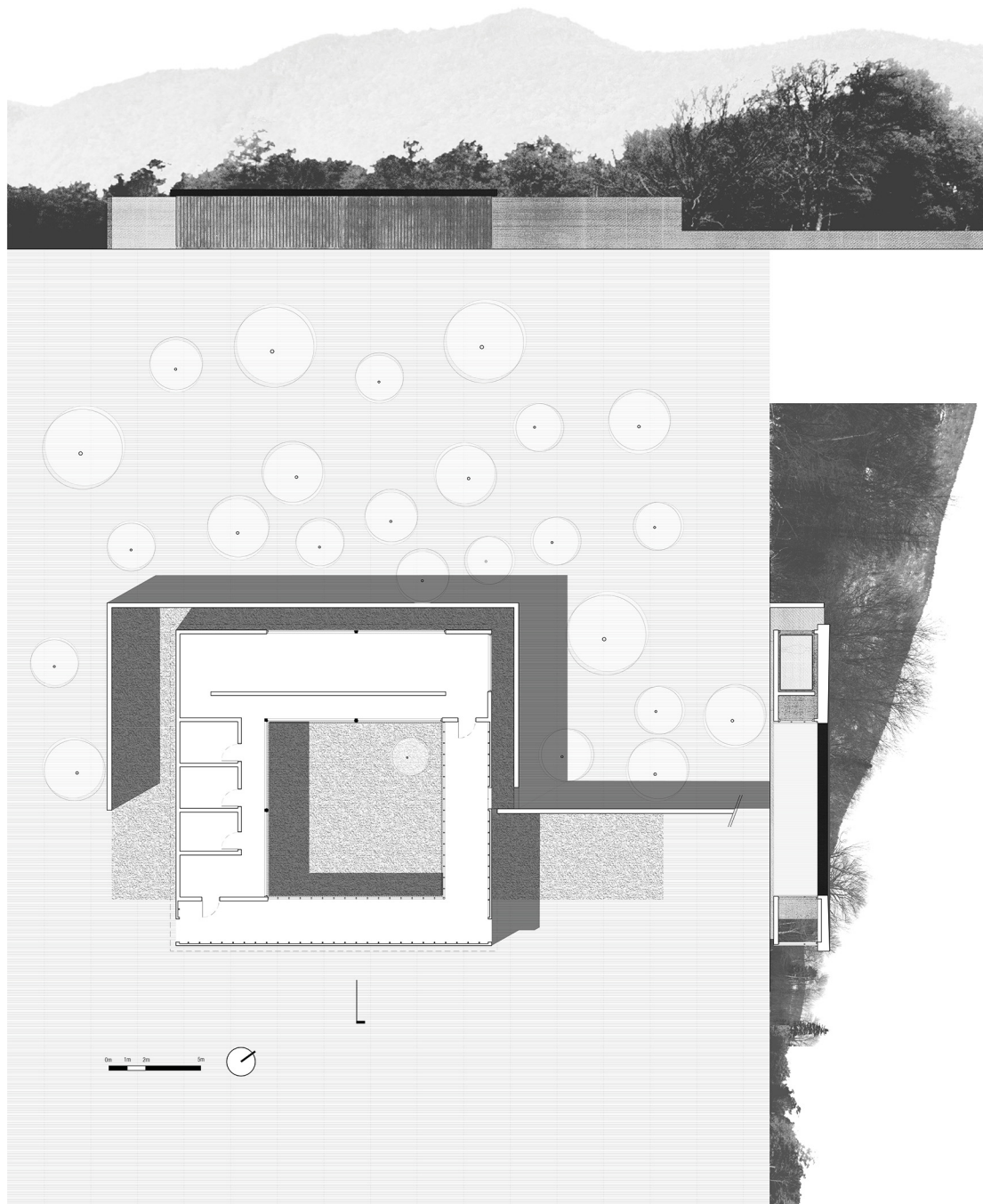
The clearing as seen from the path



Study model: entry pavilion

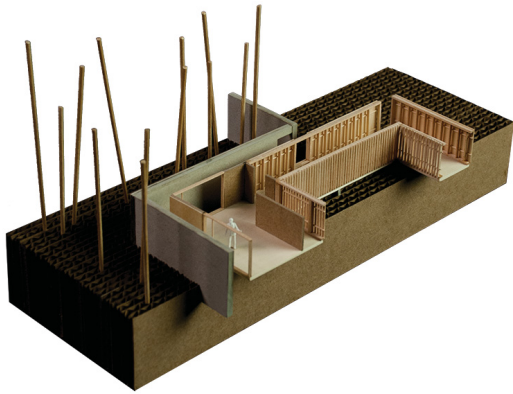


Site plan: entry pavilion

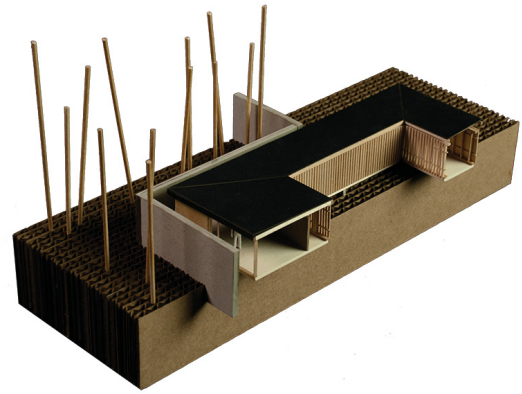


Plan, section and elevation: entry pavilion





Sectional model: entry pavilion



Approaching the entry pavilion



The view to the forest

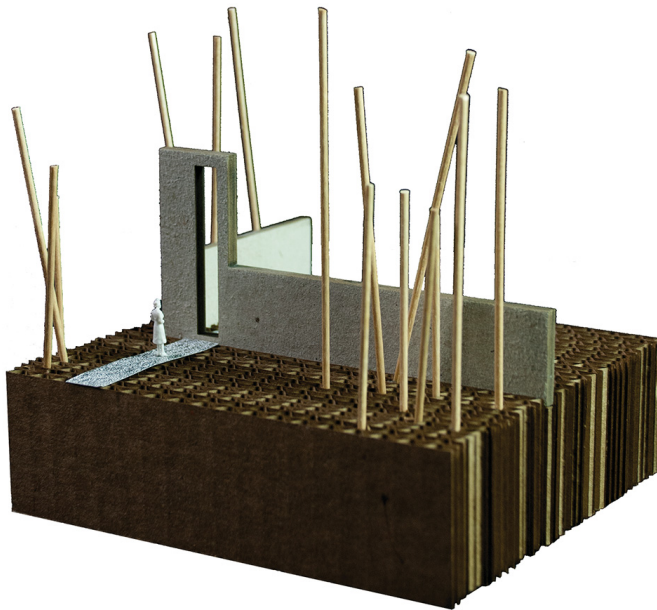
## Inner Gate

This gate marks the entry to the sacred, inner domain of the valley and the portion of the path associated with the dignity of perky. While the outer domain is contained within the site it feels external to the rest of the valley. Beyond this point the landscape itself supports the activity of dwelling, through a clear sense of enclosure and containment.

At the end of a short path bounded on both sides by thick trees, the visitor encounters another concrete wall. This wall is 8' high, obscuring the space beyond. The path terminated at a tall, slender wooden door in a concrete wall. The tall, slender opening is compressive in plan, but extends significantly in the vertical direction. One is also required to step over the door threshold, requiring an intentional physical act to pass through the gate.



Inner gate collage



Inner gate model

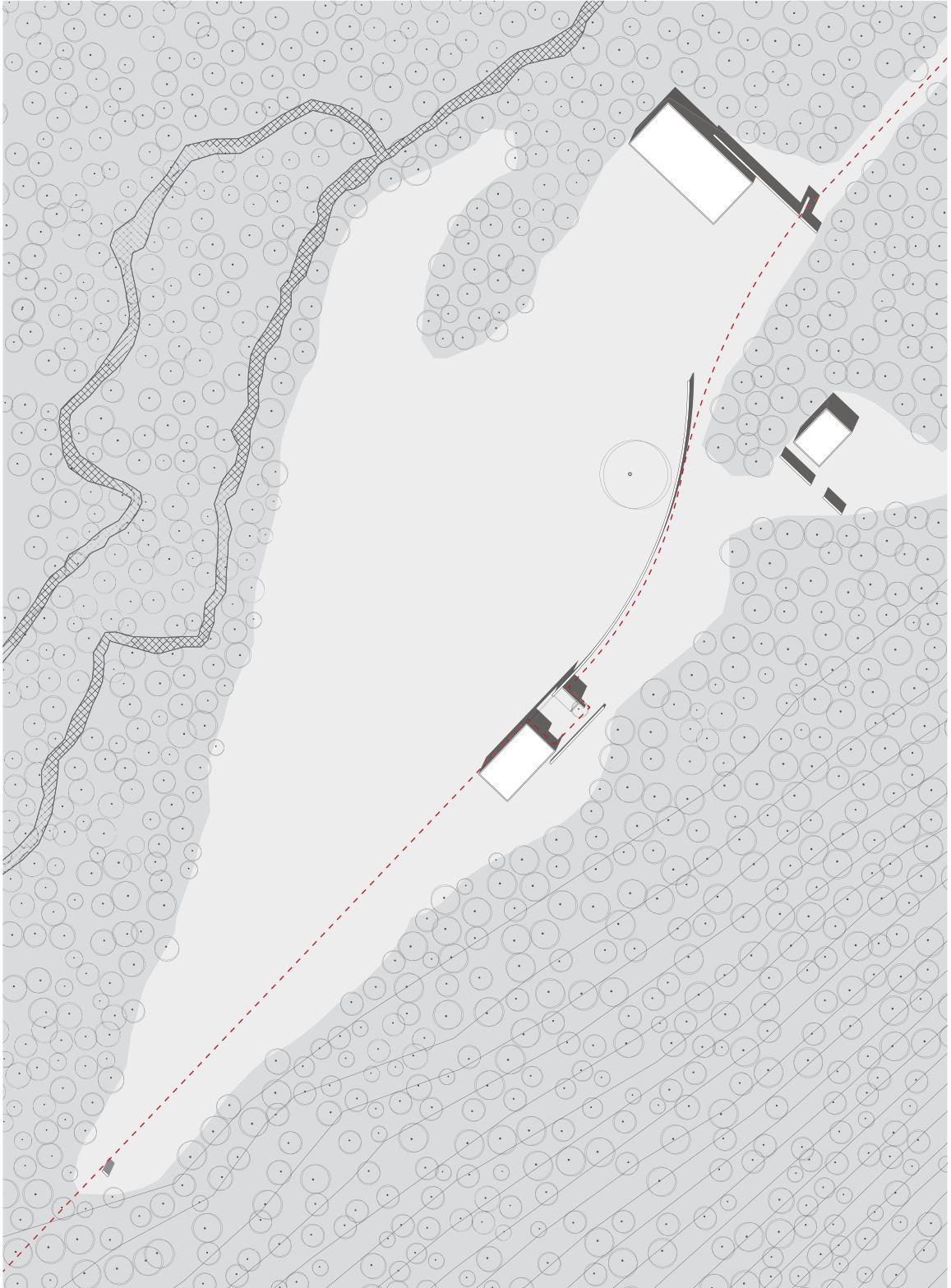
## Shrine Hall

The dignity of perky is also associated with discipline; however, the emphasis is a sense of delight and joy that comes from that discipline. Through the mindfulness and discipline developed with the dignity of meek, one's vision is able to expand allowing the appreciation of a larger world. Located in this area is the Shrine Hall, a simple structure providing space for a group of approximately 30 students to gather for group meditation practice and intimate teaching sessions. The building is along the southern edge of the clearing, allowing for an unobstructed view of the field and gaining slightly higher ground to protect from potential flooding. A small dormitory residence is located to the right as you pass through the gate, and a barn, or service building, is located to the left on the opposite side of the wall. It maintains a connection to the overall arrangement of buildings, yet is clearly outside the formal space.

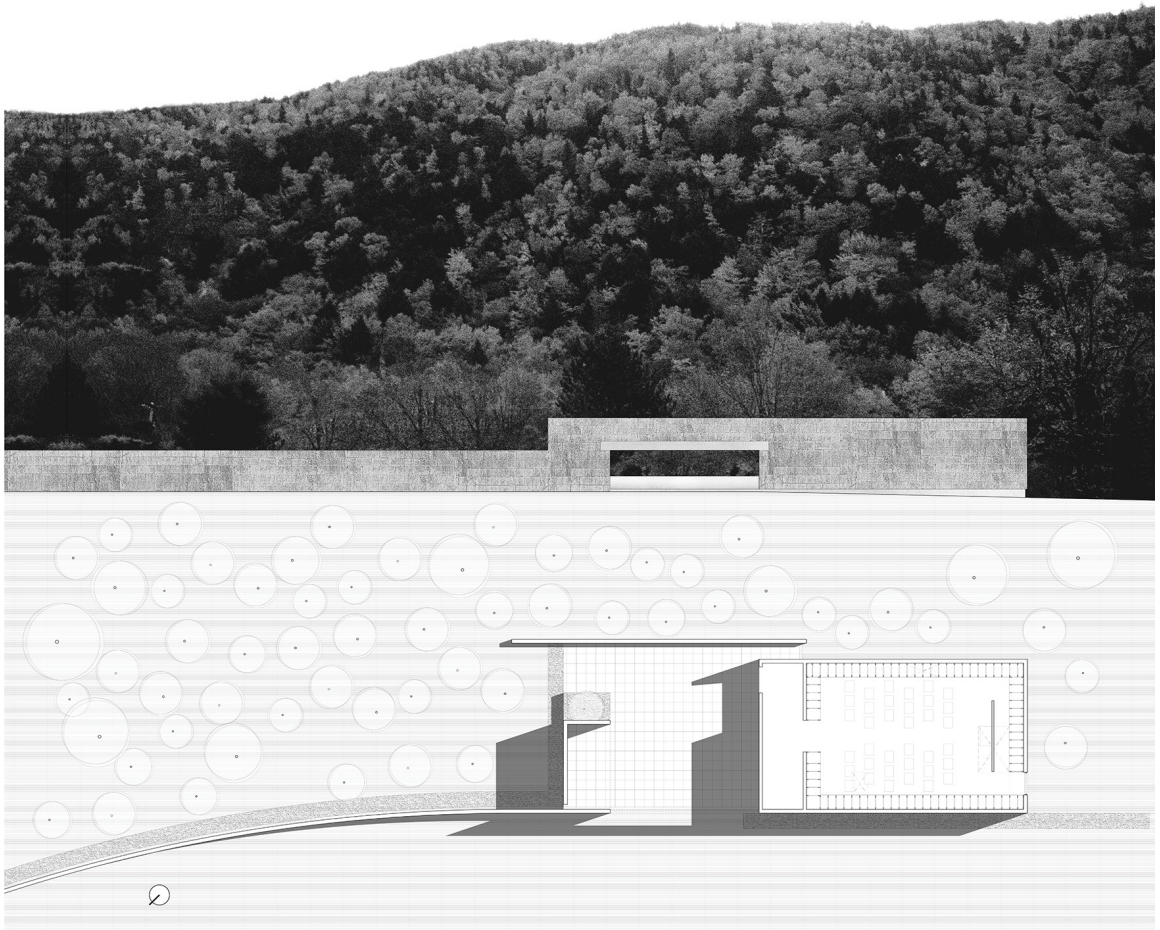
The path follows the edge of the forest until it intersects a curved concrete wall that encloses the path that leads to the shrine hall. The gentle arc of the wall enhances the sense of the room created by the clearing. The path slips between the wall and the forest, withholding the view of the clearing, and leads the visitor into the entry courtyard of the shrine hall. From a distance, the concrete masonry units of which the building is constructed could be a luxurious stone, but the visitor approaches the banality of the material becomes evident.



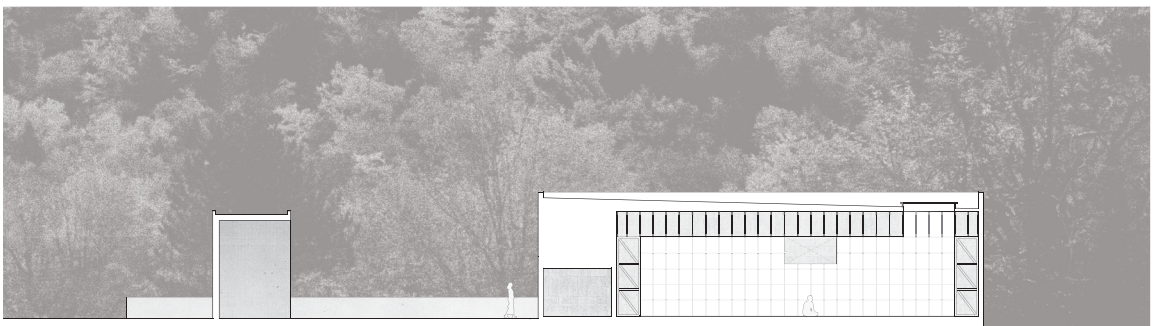
Site photo: the inner clearing



Site plan: shrine hall

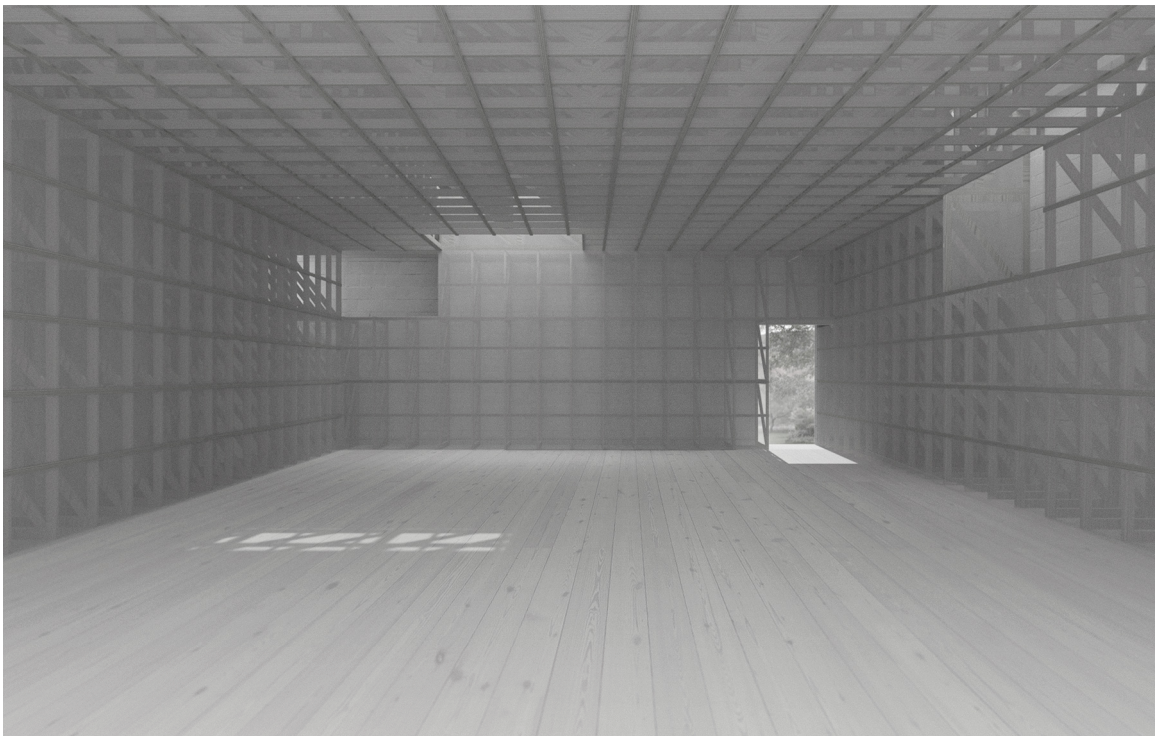


Plan and elevation: shrine hall



Section: shrine hall

The first interior space provides a preparatory experience for the shrine room. The ceiling is low and openings to the outside are minimal, making the space dim. The shrine room contrasts starkly with this space. It is bright white, with high ceilings, and ample natural light. The boundaries of the room are soft, blurred by a fabric scrim that is applied to the gang-nailed truss structure. Beyond the structure is the concrete masonry unit envelope which is painted white on the interior. This plenum space between the fabric and the exterior skin allows for playful penetrations in the ceiling and upper walls that allow a diffuse light to enter but withhold views of the outside. One singular window is provided in the southwest corner that allows a controlled view of the landscape.



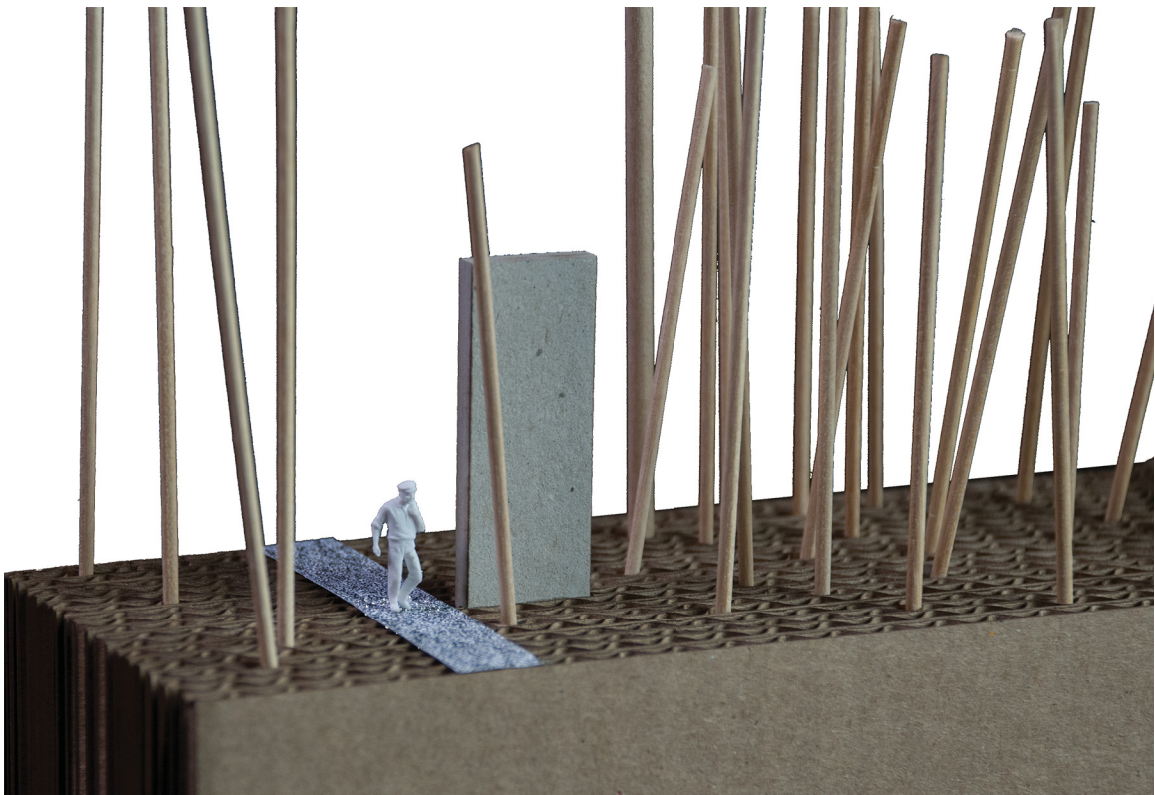
Rendering of the shrine hall interior

## Forest Gate

The point where the path transitions from the clearing into the forest is marked by a simple concrete plinth. This marks the transition from the area associated with the dignity of perky to the area associated with outrageous. In this sense, this gate isn't a gate at all. The concrete plinth simply marks the transition from the formal, manicured grounds to a forest path in which little structure is provided.



Forest gate collage



Forest gate model

## Offering Grid

Outrageous is associated with vastness and the quality of being without reference point. Its opposite is described as solemn and afraid of making a mistake. The traditional analogy is of a Garuda which is hatched from its egg fully developed and flies into outer space beyond any limits. There is a quality of fearlessness and abandoning attachment.

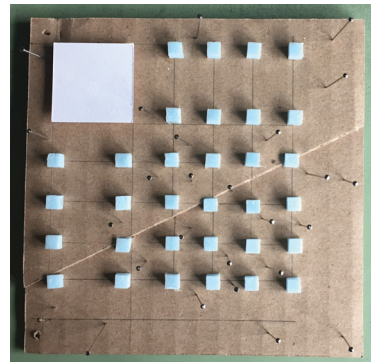
At this point in the path, the influence of the river becomes present. Not only is the sound of the water heard, but the area is frequently flooded in the spring.

As in many cultures it is traditional in Shambhala and Buddhism to make offerings, and leave marks in the landscape that indicate significant events or places. The proposed grid is comprised of concrete cubes that contrast the natural spacing of trees and infers an infinite extension of space and lack of reference point. Each concrete cube would contain precious substances, relics and aspirations in accordance with Shambhala traditions. Community members would be invited to sponsor the placement of a cube, allowing the grid to grow over time and providing the global community to make a connection with Kalapa Valley.

Visitors to the site would also have an opportunity to interact with the grid and partake in the ritual of the landscape by placing offerings of river stones and other objects on the cubes. Each spring, when the river floods, these items would be washed away.



According to a caretaker of the site, there is speculation that this rock was left here by spring flooding.



Study model: interaction between the rational grid and natural spacing of trees





Site plan: offering grid



Offering grid

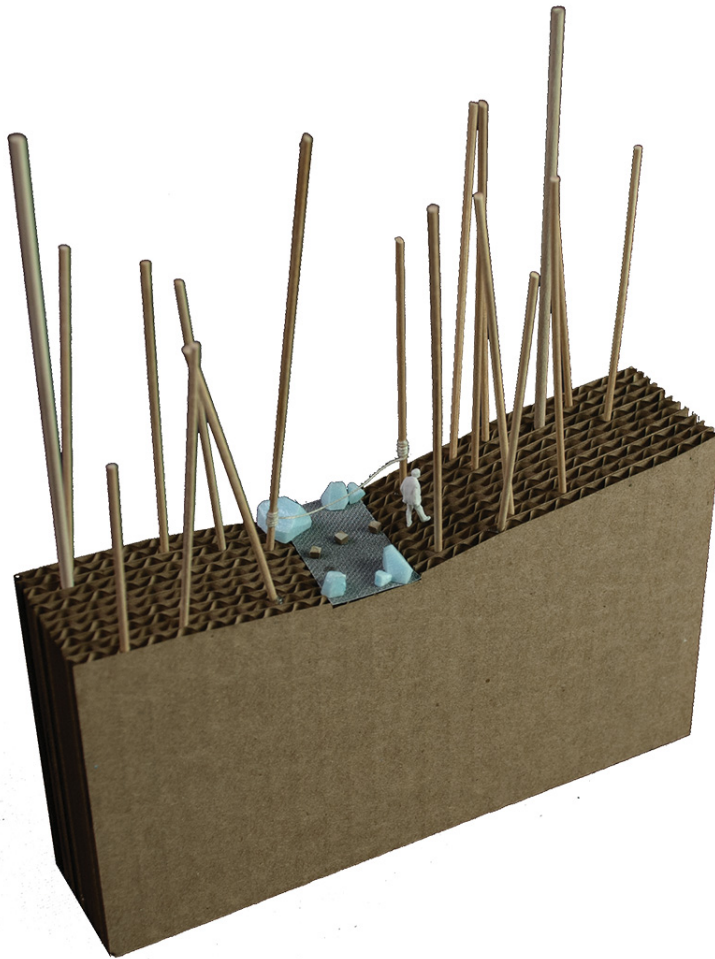
## River Gate

Deep in the valley a river cuts the path. Beyond this point the forest path becomes a narrow trail that follows the river and the walls of the valley close in. This marks the transition into the secret domain and into the portion of the path associated with the dignity of Inscrutable.

This gate consists simply of four concrete steps that cross the river. The level of effort required for the crossing marks the occasion of moving into the most sacred part of the valley.



River gate collage

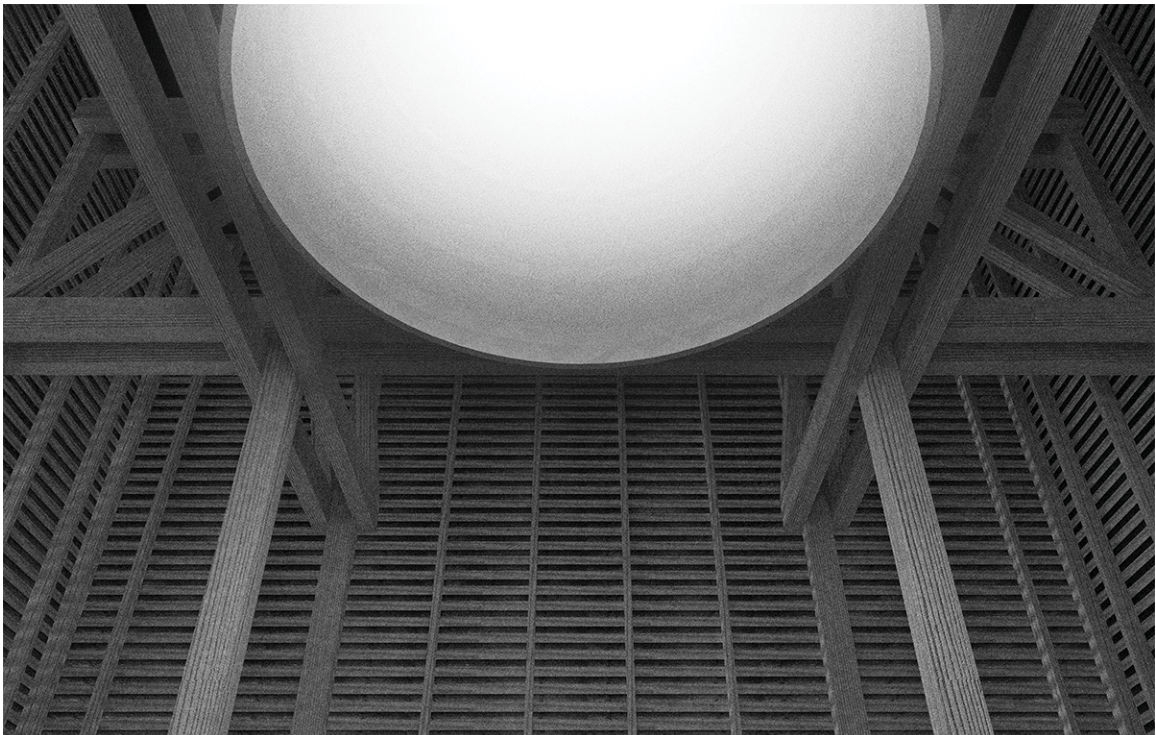


River gate model

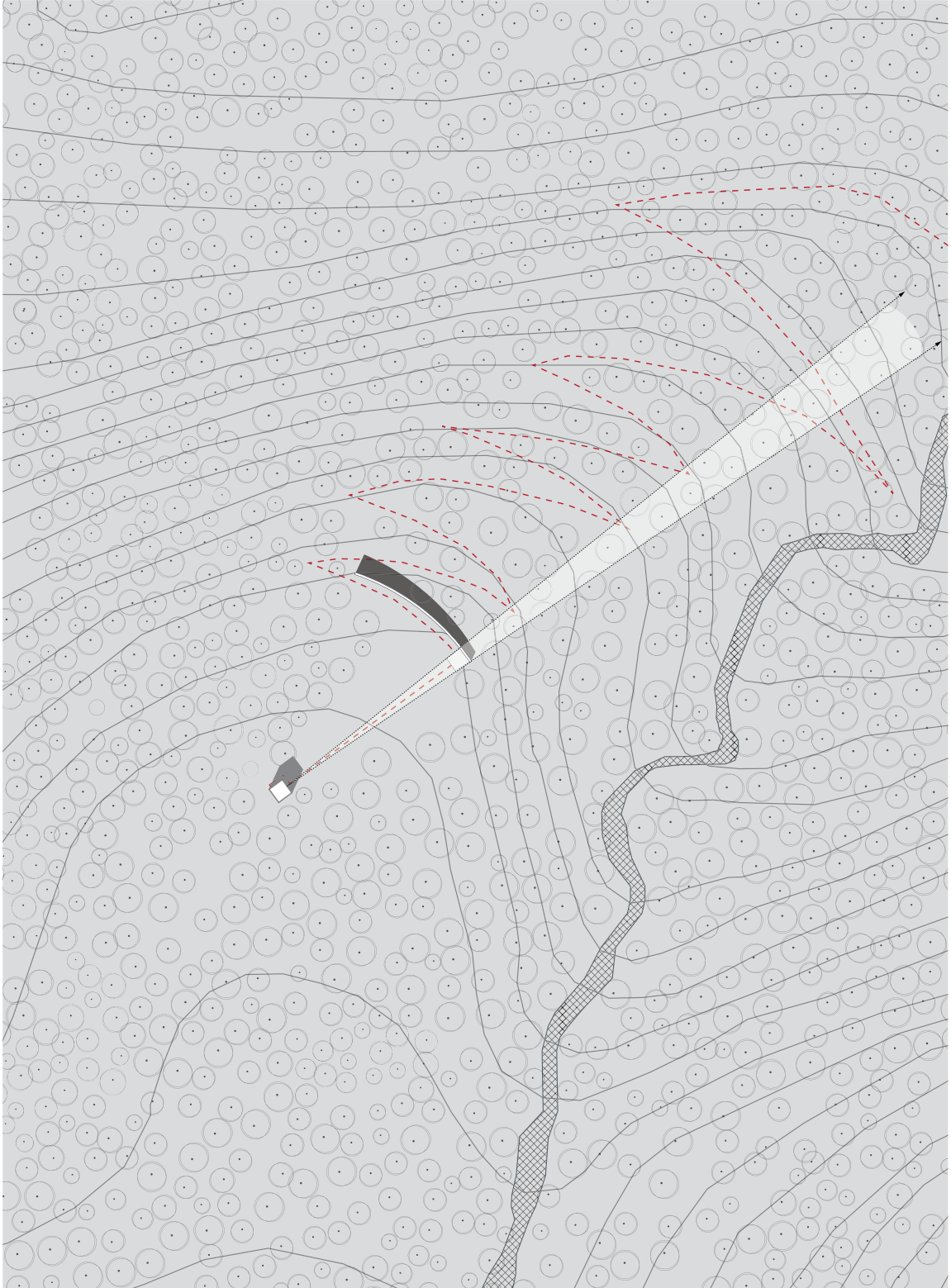
## Forest Shrine

The shrine is the culmination of the path. It is located on an elevated shoulder of the valley that offers a view west towards the source of the valley and east, towards Ingonish Harbour.

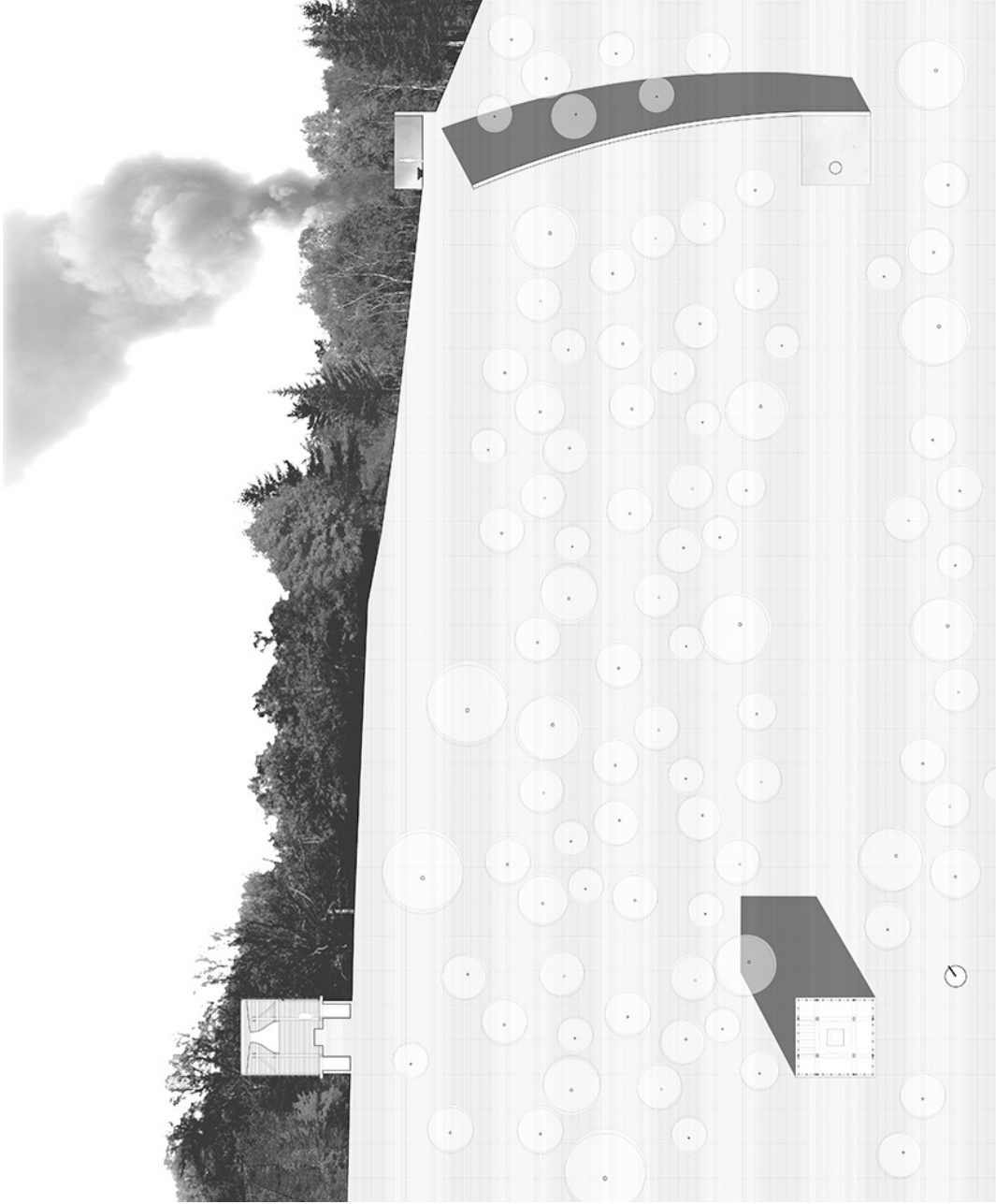
The path winds up the hillside, eventually encountering a curved concrete wall, the centre point of which is the centre of the shrine. Moving along the concrete wall, the view out of the valley is withheld. At the end of the wall is another small platform for the performance of a *lhasang*. This platform is aligned with the chapel and the axial path that leads to it. The visitor continues to ascend the hill and enters the concrete base, climbs the stairs and arrives within the interior volume. Inside is a polished, black stone plinth that reflects the sky visible through the opening above. The relationship between the plinth and the oculus establishes the *axis mundi*, or throne, upon which a visitor to the chapel can sit up and meditate, or just experience the space. In the eastern wall there is an opening that, when opened, reveals the view down the valley and out into Ingonish Harbour.



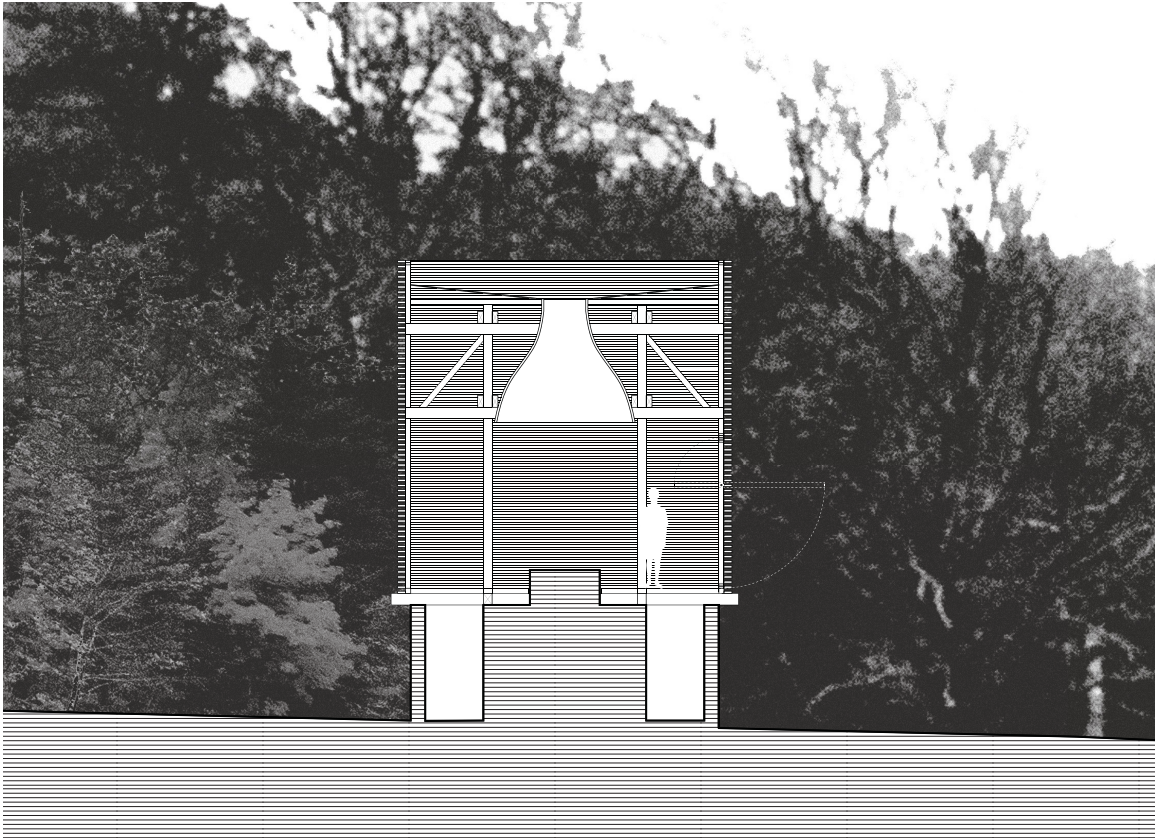
Interior rendering of the oculus



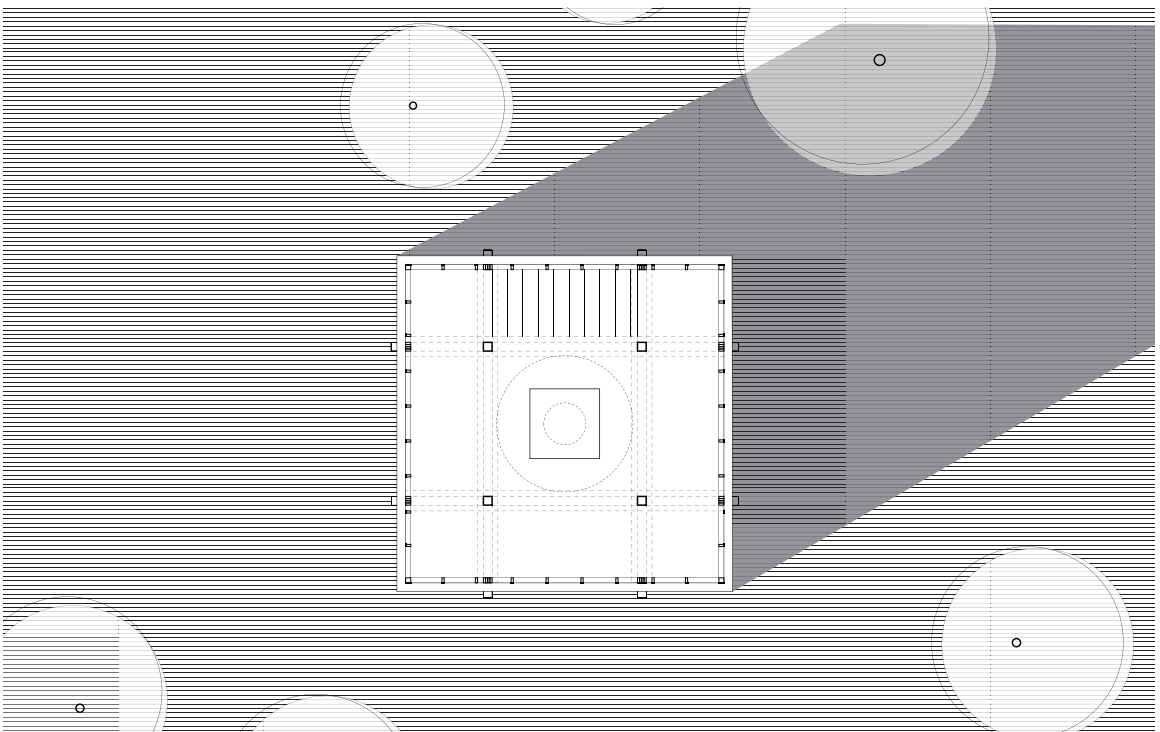
Forest shrine site plan



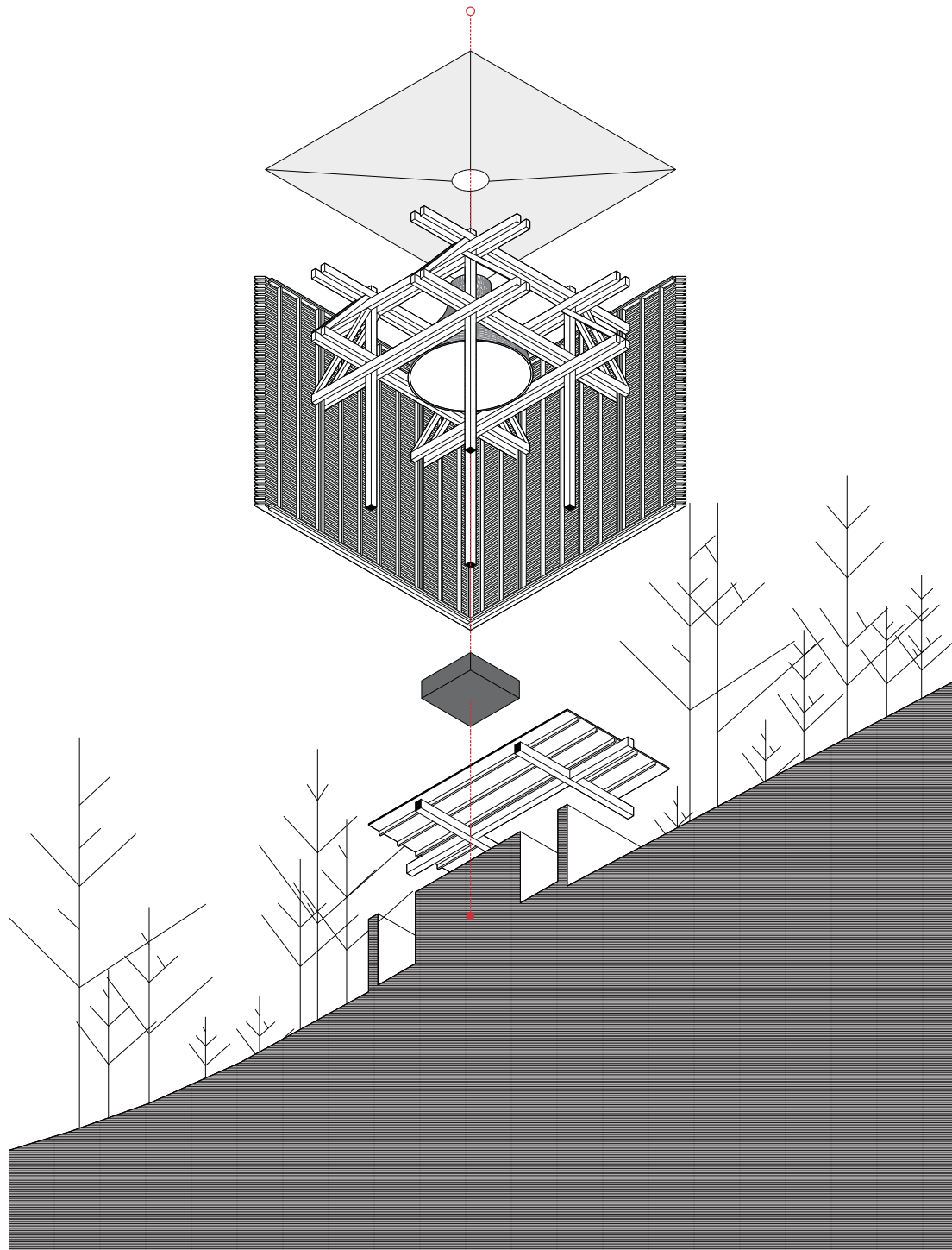
Plan and section: forest shrine



Section detail: forest shrine



Plan detail: forest shrine

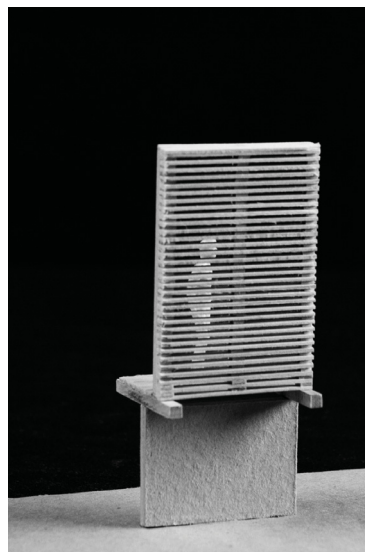
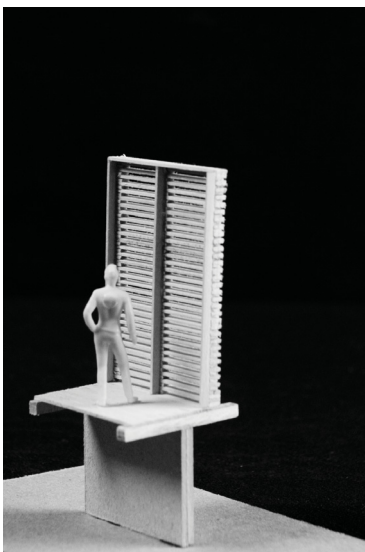


Worm's eye axonometric: the forest shrine



From this vantage point the visitor is able to see the extent of their journey (about 4 kilometres) and reflect on the entirety of the path. The view of the four dignities is such that each successive stage builds upon the last and is never abandoned. This moment begins the preparation for the return journey.

The main volume of the forest shrine is constructed of a timber structure and clad in horizontal, hemlock slats, which are charred on their underside and exterior. Placed on their narrow end, they act as louvers that filter the light and allow the building to appear both solid and transparent. Approaching the shrine, the depth of the louvers make the building appear solid, but once inside the visitor is able to see through the horizontal slats. This allows the building to have a sufficiently weighty presence in the forest, but provide an experience of panoramic awareness from the inside.



Study model: horizontal cladding



Forest shrine

## CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

This investigation began with the desire to address a split between the sacred connection the Shambhala community has to Nova Scotia and the current approach to architecture within the community. Additionally, the synergies between the essential Shambhala teachings described in the seminal texts, and established architectural theories provided the potential for a unique perspective on sacred architecture. While sacred architecture has a long, rich history the implications of a non-theistic view of sacredness have not been fully examined.

The research question is designed to address the two primary tensions present in Shambhala. First, the tension, or potential, between “sacredness” and “non-theism”; and secondly “place” (or local) and “global.”

As discussed, the non-theistic view of sacredness in the Shambhala tradition emphasizes a simple appreciation of the way things are, and the experience of the world through our sense perceptions. In the absolute sense there is no distinction between sacred and profane activities - the potential for realization is equally present in the mundane activity of washing the dishes, as in performing the most advanced meditative practices (Trungpa 2003, 93-170). Despite this attitude, the relationship to sacred space is anything but casual. Trungpa Rinpoche devoted a great deal of energy to presenting the principles of heaven, earth and human; *drala*; natural hierarchy and container principle as a means of explaining the nuances of this view. The design proposal interprets these principles through the careful consideration of the relationship between the architecture, the landscape and the fundamental elements of material, form, proportion and procession. Particularly in the shrine hall, the possibilities of finding sacredness in the banal are tested through the use of materials and structural systems that are often disregarded.

While Shambhala has a unique relationship to the place of Nova Scotia, and Kalapa Valley in particular, the community is increasingly global. In such a global context, what meaning does “place” hold?

The proposed structures form a relationship with the landscape through their form, placement and arrangement of openings; and, in the case of the offering grid, allow the visitor to physically interact with the most powerful physical forces on site. The relationship between stereotomic elements, such as concrete walls, and the largely tectonic buildings gives a sense of weight and permanence to the proposal while referencing the prevalent Gaelic culture and traditional stone houses. The material and structural palette, largely relying on small dimension lumber, platform framing and gang-nailed truss systems, is based on what is typically available and employed in Nova Scotia. This allows the physical material and detailing of the building to reflect the climate it is located in; while the attitude towards the treatment of the materials, and the spatial compositions can reflect the important Japanese and Chinese heritage within Shambhala.

Paradoxically, while we are more connected than ever, we are also more atomised and dislocated. From Houston to Hanoi, you can be cosseted in the same experiential cocoon of global brands and lifestyle. This makes the humanising impetus behind Critical Regionalism even more relevant, but how can it be reframed for the current age? (Slessor 2013)

In the summer of 2013, the *Architectural Review* published a short article by Carlo Ratti, Antoine Picon, Alex Haw, and Matthew Claudel titled “The Power of Networks: Beyond Critical Regionalism.” In the article they propose *network specificism* as the contemporary answer to the questions posed by critical regionalism, which are “more urgent than ever” (Ratti 2013). Though the article seems to misunderstand the intent of critical regionalism, reducing it to a mere fascination with the vernacular, network specificism address the unique, networked quality of contemporary society by arguing for architectural productions that not only rely “on the building’s place but also on the networked community that contributes to it” (Ratti 2013). While this doesn’t quite constitute the claimed “redefinition”

of critical regionalism - more a reexamination of its original intent - it does bring attention to an aspect that is often overlooked, and of particular relevance today, and to this thesis.

The reality of a culture and economy dependent on vast, largely intangible networks is undeniable. However, "place" will always be primary to human experience, the fact of our physical body requires that we experience things "in place." "Place" maintains an essential role in the cultural identity of Shambhala; whether that be the strong connection someone may feel with one of the major retreat centres, or the sacred position held by Nova Scotia. However, a strong place-identity in the contemporary Shambhala community has been elusive. Nova Scotia is the spiritual and administrative capital of the international organization though for many, Nova Scotia means very little. The proposal within this thesis is intended to assist in *locating* the Shambhala community. Much like Mecca provides a point of reference and orientation for the global Muslim world, this proposal aims to provide an architectural reference point that can provide a sense of place-identity and orient the Shambhala community within its global and local contexts. Heaven and earth; society and landscape; and the sacred and the secular are joined allowing the pilgrim, and by extension the entire community, to dwell. May it be of benefit.

## APPENDIX: TRUNGPA RINPOCHE'S NOVA SCOTIA POEMS

The following is a selection of poems by Trungpa Rinpoche written at Keltic Lodge, a well known hotel and resort on the Cabot Trail located only a few kilometres from Kalapa Valley. Trungpa Rinpoche held retreats there with groups of his close students. The copyright is held by Diana J. Mukpo and is used with permission.

### Mantric Keltic Incantation

When man's heart is weeping for pleasure,  
 There comes a sore point which looks for leisure;  
 Thirdly, we find ourselves cultivating laziness.  
 The turmoil of the sky and the ocean  
 Waits for the land to pronounce on their argument.  
 Here we are caught in the middle of a threesome -  
 The infamous Cape Breton of Nova Scotia.  
 Joy and pleasure are one for the fishermen;  
 Happy and sad may be different, because of their individuality.  
 In the thickets of fog,  
 In the turmoil of weather,  
 We find ourselves unable to land on this ground  
 When we are riding the eagle or the aeroplane.  
 In the midst of their conflict with each other,  
 We always hear the argument between atmosphere and earth.  
 The earth in Nova Scotia, at least in Cape Breton, is somewhat innocent,  
 But we are still waiting for the occasional punch line.  
 The earth has to be drilled for oil,  
 Or any kind of excavation,  
 So that local fish become pieces of gold or of diamond.  
 However, Cape Breton is psychological:  
 The hope and fear constantly build and disperse,  
 Along with the waves of the ocean.  
 Cape Breton is emotional:  
 Whether we can hold a seat or build a city.  
 I wonder - it might be advisable to plant a few crocodiles on the coast  
 of Cape Breton!

Or should we place a vajra storm by working with heaven's wrath!  
 Do you think there are such possibilities at all?  
 On one hand the Cape Breton doesn't deserve extraordinary pleasure,  
 But on the other hand it might certainly be good for the Cape Breton,  
 Which brings land and sky together  
 So that heaven and earth can join in Nova Scotia at all.  
 Let us see.  
 Let us do.  
 But do before we see.  
 On the other hand, see before we do.  
 Good luck to the Nova Scotia vision.  
 Rejoice! The Great Eastern Sun arises!  
 (Keltic Lodge, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, 27 November 1980)  
 [The Keltic Lodge is located five minutes from Kalapa Valley]

## Merrier than the Maritimes

Nova Scotia as seen at its best:  
 How the earth and sky can relate with mist and rain and the frustrations of fishermen.  
 Cape Forchu at Yarmouth brings us eye-opening possibilities of Pembroke Shore,  
 Kelly Cove introduces us into Darling Lake,  
 As we reach Port Maitland we discover the possibilities of Cape St. Mary which brings  
     us to Meteghan River,  
 By way of Bay of Fundy we find ourselves in Digby,  
 As we approach further, we find ourselves realizing Port George,  
 As we begin to look forward to Cape Split,  
 Our journey goes further:  
 How should we enter into the country –  
 Whether it should be by way of Cape Blomidon or elsewhere –  
 Evangeline Beach is tempting –  
 But should we ride on a horse to conquer Dartmouth across land –  
 Or should we sail around by way of Cape Sable –  
 We are inspired to be in Halifax;  
 Gentlemen from Glen Haven might have something to say about our trip altogether,

As we sweep across the peninsula,  
 We find ourselves cultivating Cape Capstan,  
 And cutting the tie with the mainland at Amherst,  
 Including pylons and electrical systems and all the rest of it;  
 As we reach Heather Beach,  
 We might be tempted to be in Fox Harbour.  
 The eastern sunrise trail becomes questionable at that point:  
 Whether we have eastern sunrise or not,  
 Our only reference point is Pictou,  
 Where we stayed before:  
 There the land and heaven are joined together,  
 Seemingly we enjoyed ourselves;  
 New Glasgow is a fantastic area,  
 As to relating with luscious earth,  
 As to bringing general prosperous outlook overcoming industrialism,  
 We are attracted to Cape George;  
 Depth of the earth could be brought out by means of Big Marsh,  
 Local vision can be brought together in the County of Antigonish,  
 By working together with Guysborough County,  
 So we have a chance to bring together the mainland and build big city,  
 In the name of Pictou-Guysborough,  
 We could invite any potential prosperous and elegant situation as possible London, Paris,  
     Rome blah blah blah;  
 The County of Inverness,  
 We will continue to the top point of Cape St. Lawrence,  
 We will build high point of sane society,  
 With the courtesy of Victoria County, Keltic Lodge and Ingonish are included,  
 Thus we go further:  
 In County of Cape Breton we raise the morale of Sydney,  
 With the help of Richmond County,  
 The total vision of Nova Scotia should be based on Capital of Sydney.  
 When Sydney is raised to its highest level,  
 The rest of the peninsula can be brought up at its best.  
 Thus we partly conquer the Atlantic Ocean.



Victory to the true command.  
 Take pride in our peninsula.  
 (Keltic Lodge, Cape Breton, 29 November 1980)

## La Conférence du Soleil du Grand Est

So timid but good  
 So genuine but trying too hard  
 So woolly but not having enough sheep  
 So thorny but not having enough thistles  
 So cloudy but not having enough rain  
 So wavy but not having enough wind.  
 Jolly good show that we have Canadian Dharmadhatu.  
 It is so moving that we can almost cry.  
 To say the least, we can cry.  
 So wavy we have lots of wind  
 So cloudy that we might have snowstorm  
 So woolly that we can catch lots of fish –  
 Catching the four maras,  
 The first dharma taught in Canada is victorious.  
 On the boundaries and at the center we found numerous gossips;  
 At the same time it is nice to be in an environment where the only gossip is the  
     chattering ocean beating the rocks.  
 Canadian conference is so good that we find ourselves gasping with ordinary mind.  
 Good mind is allowed to speak for itself in Cape Breton without borrowing Esalen  
     pseudo-wisdom.  
 With natural dignity as subjects of the Queen of England,  
 Canadians take lots of pride as traditionalist triple-lion-ist  
 Harpist  
 Single lion-ist  
 And triple fleur-de-lis-ist.  
 We take pride in the triple maple leaves.  
 Dharma comes to Canada with a dot in space  
 As Tiger Lion Garuda Dragon and three-jewel principle.

Dharmadhatu Canada has woken up lots of sleepy Canadians and slowed down  
lots of busy Canadians.

Dharmadhatu Canada has created the crown jewel of Vajradhatu as Canada deserves.

Vajradhatu Canada is certainly the king's ransom.

Obviously, the Vajradhatu Canada is the best crown jewel,

Sitting quite self-snugly on top of Canada,

With the three jewels and their flame permeating the ten directions,

Sitting on the throne of Les États-Unis d'Amérique du Nord.

Réjouissez-vous! le soleil du grand Est se lève.

Le point dans l'espace,

L'armure de la vie,

Manifestent le courage.

Le voyage vers l'est est périlleux,

Néanmoins nous le trouvons extraordinaire.

Par accident, nous découvrons le Soleil du Grand Est.

Hé ho! Mesdames et messieurs,

Approchez et joignez-vous à l'expédition du Grand Est.

Nous avons trouvé le Canada par pure coïncidence,

Nous avons découvert qu'il est le Soleil du Grand Est.

Déclarons le Canada première découverte du Soleil du Grand Est

En l'honneur de la vision Shambhala,

Enlaçons-le, embrassons-le.

O Soleil du Grand Est Canadien,

Nous t'avons trouvé au Keltic Lodge.

Venez et célébrez!

[English dictation for the French portion of the poem.]

The dot in space,

The armour of life,

Manifests fearlessness.

The journey to the east is treacherous;

However, we find it is extraordinary to do so.

Accidentally we discover the Great Eastern Sun.  
Hey ho! Ladies and gentlemen,  
Come and join the search for the Great East.  
Accidentally we found Canada,  
We found it as the Great Eastern Sun.  
Let us declare Canada as the first discovery of the Great Eastern Sun.  
In honour of Shambhala vision,  
Let us hug it and kiss it.  
O Canadian Great Eastern Sun,  
We found you in the Keltic Lodge.  
Let us all celebrate!

(Keltic Lodge, Cape Breton, N.S., 4 December 1980)

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