

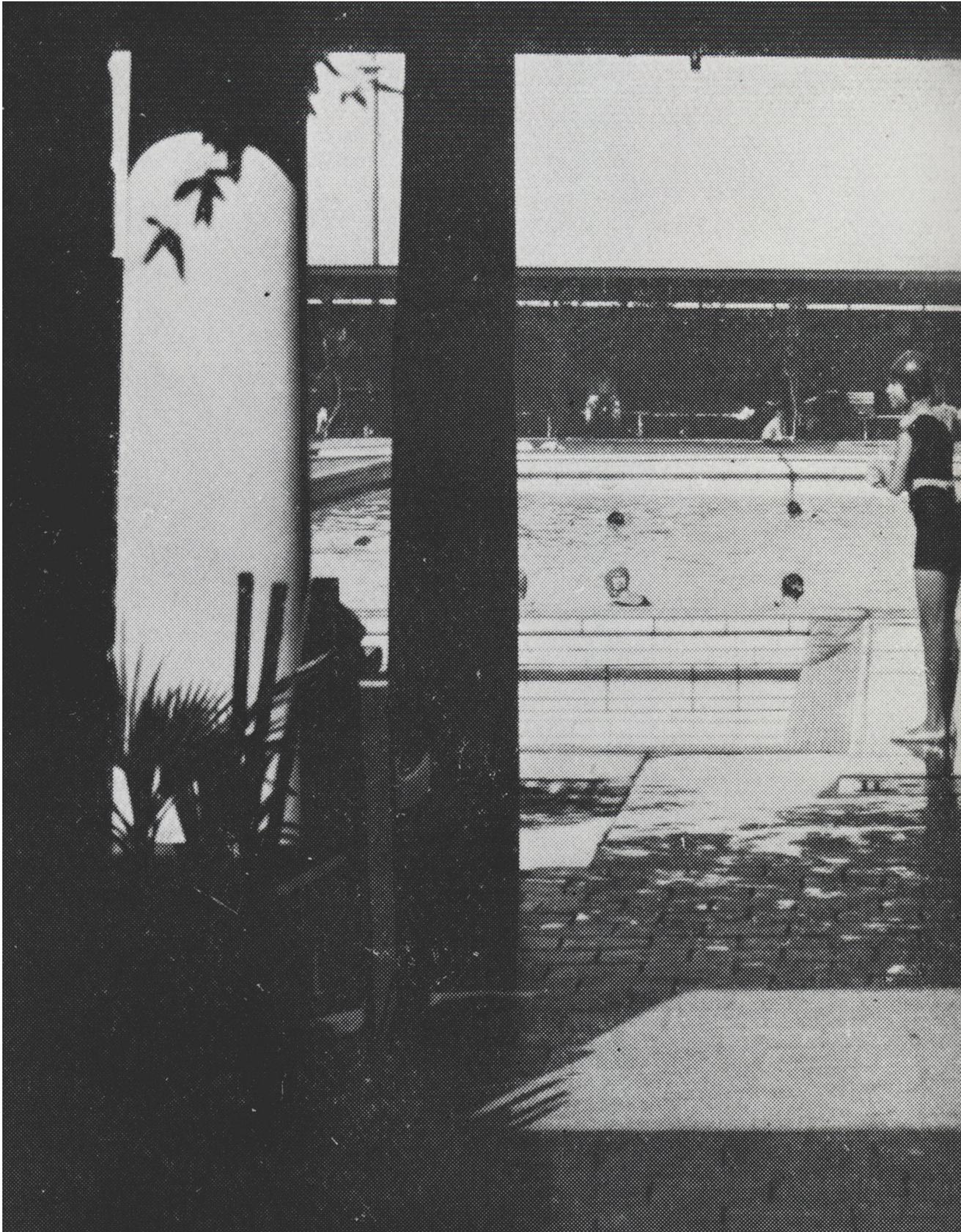
2

AQUAPOETICS

WATER AND EXISTENCE

Intersecting the “Poetic Reality” of Water

This chapter outlines a study into the poetic reality of water and existence’s intersection with it. It describes the qualities of the water from the Warmbaths fountain and portrays the author’s mapping of the intersection at the Warmbaths Forever Resort in Bela-Bela. It concludes with a spatial synopsis and response to the existing spatial fabric and architectural theme of the resort.



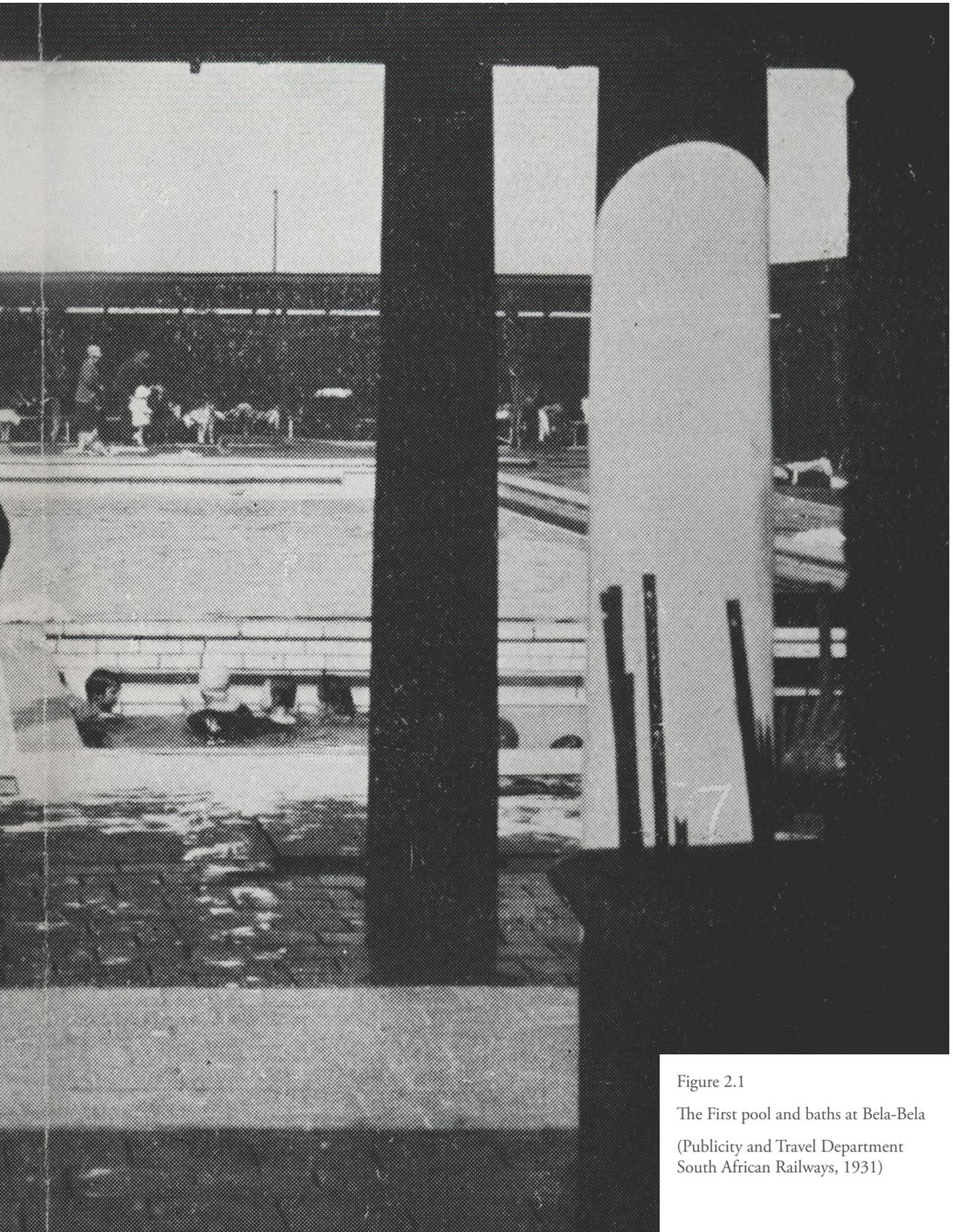


Figure 2.1

The First pool and baths at Bela-Bela

(Publicity and Travel Department
South African Railways, 1931)



EXISTENCE

The fact or state of living or having objective reality (Oxforddictionaries.com, 2015).

THE POETIC REALITY OF WATER

Bodies of water and their enveloping fertile soil have been the settlement genesis to many an urban settlements. They serve not only as physical sustenance to life, but also as metaphysical and emotional sustenance to *place*, referring to home or origin. “When an environment is meaningful, man feels at home” (Ibid: 23). Subterranean and terranean water bodies and water conduits, such as rivers and streams, embed an integral emotive image into Existence by its physical manifestation. The presence of water gives identity to the land (ibid: 35). Its presence is made visible through an absence of the ground that man resides on – a “world not world, but that which is not world” (Eliot, 1944: 6)

Water is an essential part of the earth and the planets’ biosphere. It gathers on the surface of the earth and below in bodies that are naturally filtered by the transversal of earth surfaces driven by cyclic condensation and percolation. This continual process sustains existence and water thus becomes an inseparable part thereto.

Water concretises as “phenomena” in the world of our everyday life (Norberg-Schulz, 1980: 6). It is meaningless to conceive of any event without reference to the locality of the happening, as it is common usage to say that act and happenings *take place* (Ibid: 6). H₂O manifests in solid (frost), liquid (water) or gaseous (steam, mist) form. The form it takes is interdependent on its environment and the presence of an external stimulus. It becomes an integral and interdependent part of a landscape and a metaphorical part of the phenomena of *place*.

Suggesting that water is a being that possesses a body, a soul and a voice, Gaston Bachelard postulates that “more than any other element, water is the complete poetic reality” (Bachelard, 1983: 15) (Tymieniecka, 1985). Water is an emotive being with which humankind intersects evocatively (Bachelard, 1983: 15). Water has a voice that animates its surroundings, and is mirrored by human languages’ liquid quality, emulating the “flow in its overall effect, water in its consonants” (ibid: 15).) (Brereton , n.d.). The liquidity, he notes, causes a distinctive psychic excitement that, in itself, evokes images of water.

Figure 2.2

A waterfall in the Waterberg region

(Publicity and Travel Department South African Railways, 1931)

INTERSECTING A POETIC REALITY

THE SENSES

“My body is truly the navel of my world, not in the sense of the viewing point of the central perspective, but as the very locus of reference, memory, imagination and integration” (Pallasmaa, 2005: 11). It is through architecture that we articulate a sensory experience of space. “Architecture is essentially an extension of nature into the man-made realm” (Ibid: 41). Through the senses, the interplay of space and the elements evoke an emotive response in the being and guides a sensorial exchange. (Fig.)

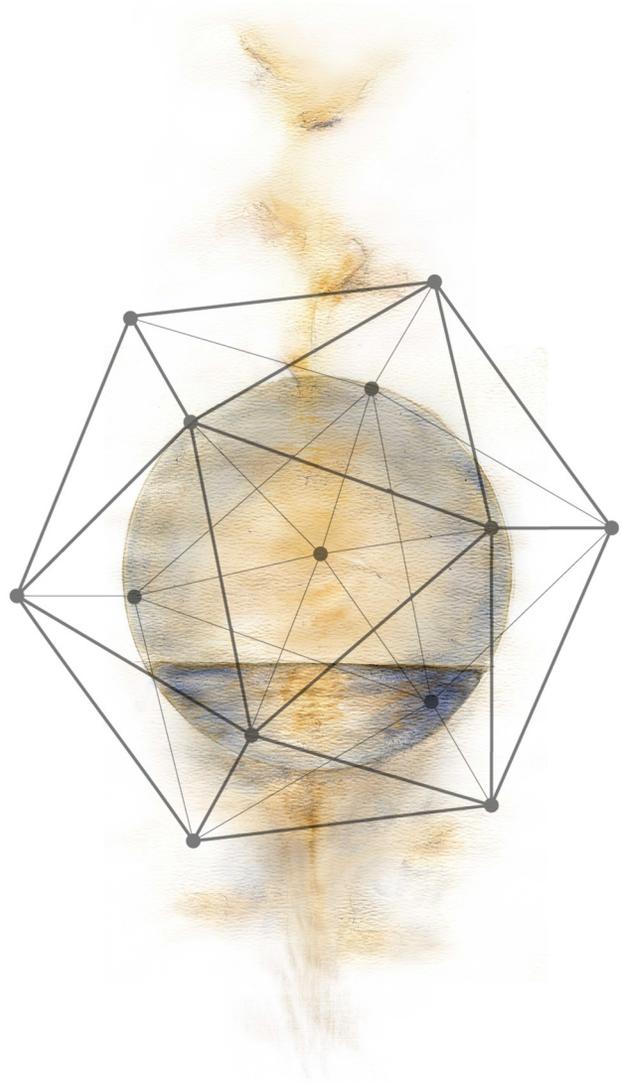


Figure 2.3

The interconnection between water and the being through the senses

(Author, 2015)

THE RITUAL

“Architecture is defined by the actions it witnesses as much as by the enclosure of its walls” (Tschumi, 1996: 100). (Fig.) Human existence has developed rituals since the beginning of time that relate to their individual and collective identity. Architecture concretises the rituals and habits of societies in relation to their environment as ritual implies a “near frozen relationship between space and event.” (Ibid: 163). Architecture, and sequentially, urban environments, inherit and incorporate these rituals into their structure and articulate the sensorial engagement.

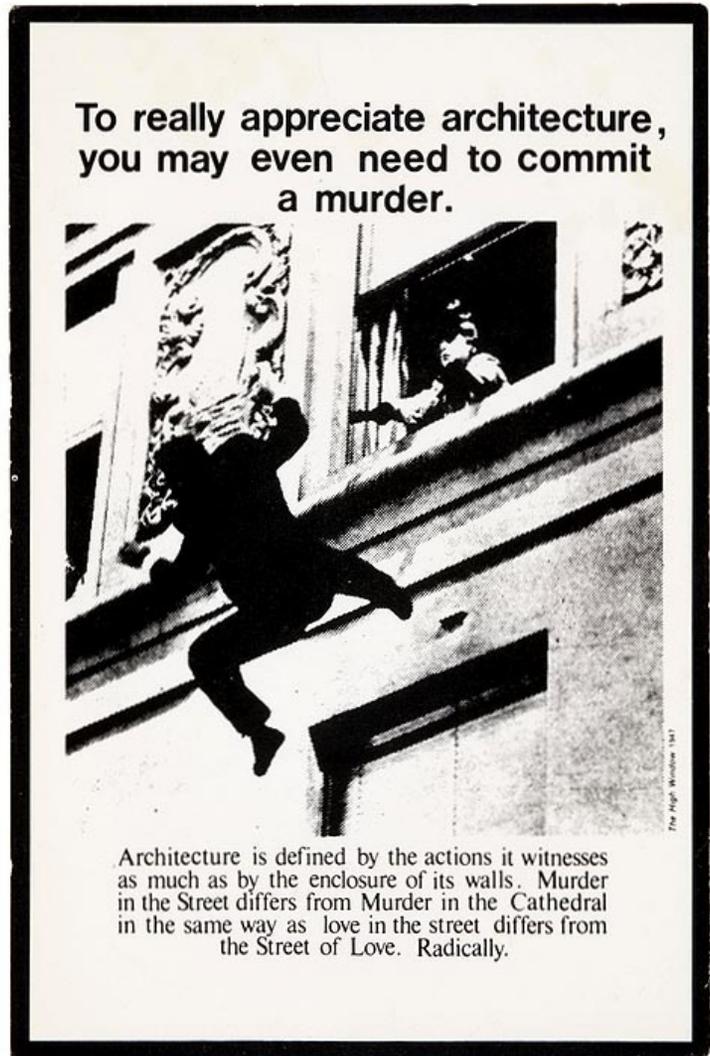


Figure 2.4

“Architecture is defined by the
actions it witnesses”

(Tschumi, 1996)

TO CLEANSE

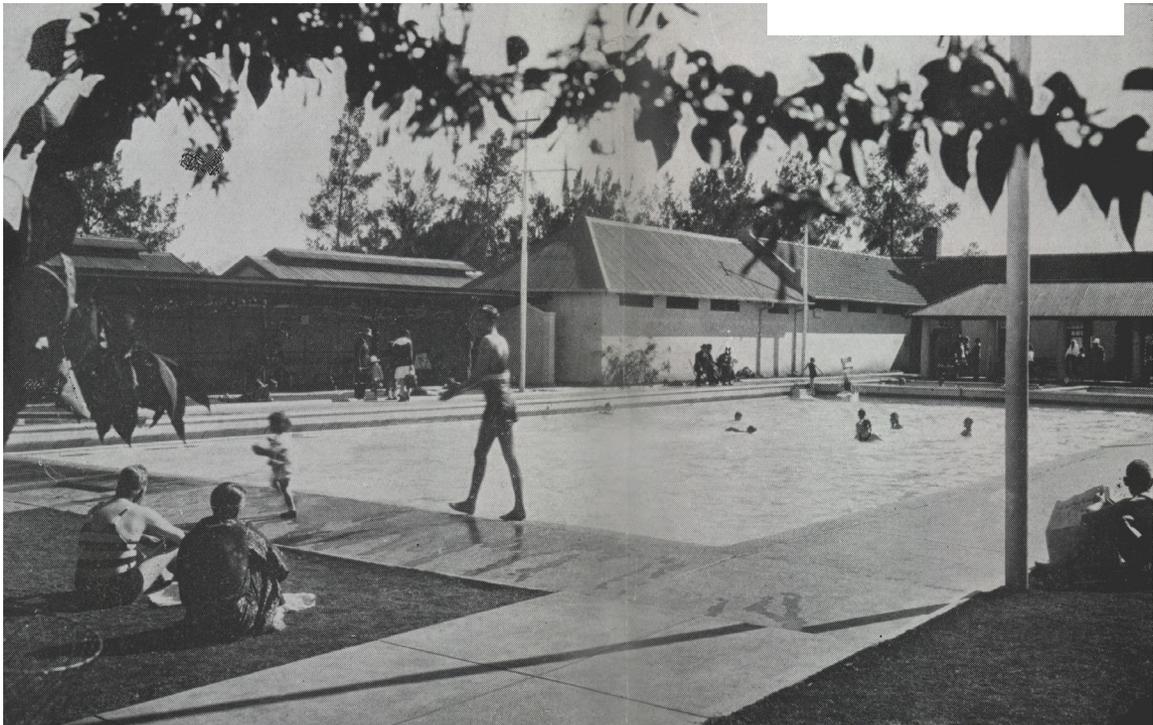
To Cleanse and to purify synonymous. There is a ritualistic association that human existence makes towards water's purity and fluidity. Early African cultures believed in the ceremonial cleansing of the soul through bathing (Bachelard, 1983: 140), as others believed in the renovation of the soul, as suggested by Bachelard (Ibid: 144), when "one dives into water in order to be reborn and changed". Apart from only physical cleansing, i.e. to cleanse the body, humankind makes a metaphysical connotation with bathing, and intersects with water as a method to purify and cleanse the soul.

TO BATHE

Intersecting with water rejuvenates the mind and the body and brings about a state of relaxation. Physiological changes in the body are triggered initially by the body's buoyancy in the water and the transference of heat to the body (bodymindandsoul.com.au, 2015). Through intervention these effects are heightened – water of higher temperatures have a seductive effect on nerve endings, while the buoyancy reduces gravitation to ease the joints and create freedom of movement (Ibid, 2015). Circulating the water breaks the 'wetsuit' effect to stimulate heat transference and blood flow, which allow tense muscles to relax (Ibid, 2015). Jet pressure enhances one's ability to release endorphins (Ibid, 2015), stimulating the body and mind.

Figure 2.5

The first outdoor pool at Bela-Bela
(Publicity and Travel Department
South African Railways, 1931)



TO SWIM

Swimming is practiced either for fitness or relaxation. It is an essential part of being, as it relates to a primitive survival instinct. The art of swimming envelops many ritualistic practices in itself and is a universal dialect.

TO DREAM

“The ebb and flow of my soul are in perfect harmony with the absolute reality of my mind.” Liquidity is felt, not as metaphor, but as lived experience (Artaud, 1983) (Brereton, n.d.). The fluidity of water mirrors a fluidity of thoughts. The emotive state of the being that results from their intersection with water and its presence is a transcendental state. It reflects that of the foetus in the amniotic fluid and thus speaks a universal dialect of calmness that does not pertain to time. Reverie in and around water becomes part of this universal dialect - the subjective being interacts with water as with art to produce an internalised response.

A FORCE

The fluidity and heat of water are means for humanity to sustainably provide an alternative to our fossil fuel-dependent needs. The heat can be used to generate electricity whereas the mineral solvents can be treated to foresee potable water. Water is a life force that is inseparable from human existence.

Figure 2.6

A detention dam in the
Bela-Bela region

(Publicity and Travel Department
South African Railways, 1931)



THE WARBATHS FOUNTAIN

THE FOUNTAIN

Thermal groundwater surfaces at the Warmbaths fountain at 52°C, at a rate of 22 000 litres per hour (accommodation-warmbaths.co.za, 2015) and owes its mineral rich chemical composition to water-rock interaction, crystallisation, and isotope exchanges between the soil's CO₂ and the aquifer matrix (Olivier and Jonker, 2013: ii). The state in which it surfaces promotes bathing and swimming in the spring for its medicinal and recreational qualities (Appendix A), but it is also currently successfully employed for irrigational purposes from a runoff dam that is host to biological habitats (Basson, Personal communication. 2015). Intersection with the spring's water soothes arthritic and muscular conditions and aids in the relaxation of joints. The fluidity and buoyancy allow the being to transcend to a state of relaxation.

Supportive to the thermal spring, another large local borehole extends into a natural aquifer that services the resort and the facilities with fresh potable water. The current demand leaves an excess capacity of 20 000 l/h that can be used (Basson, 2015 Pers comm.).

Figure 2.7

The Warmbaths fountain, 1888

Booyens, B. 1981

Figure 2.8

The Warmbaths fountain

(Author, 2015)



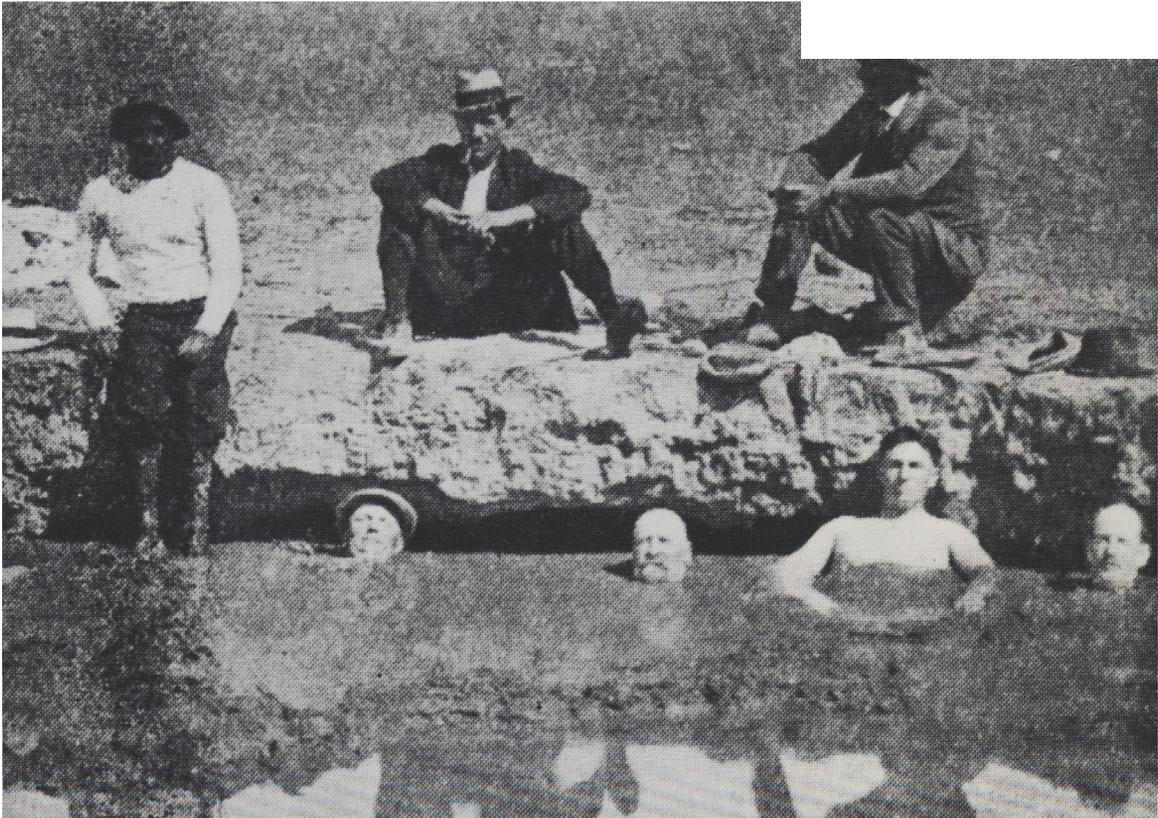


INTERSECTION

PRE-MODERNITY

The fountain was known to the indigenous Tswana people of the area as “Bela Bela” which translates to “Hy wat vanself kook” (Booyens, 1981: 86) or in English, ‘He who boils automatically’. They associated the smoking waters with the “spirits of the great chiefs of the past” (Northern Transvaal: 15), and the fountain was internalised as integral to their place. By 1850, the Waterberg region had attracted the Trekboere, who intersected with the water from the fountain for its health-restoring and recreational benefits (cited elsewhere). Visitors readily tapped water from the eye down large drainage channels from which smaller channels led the water to private hand-dug pools enclosed by thatch screens wherein bathers bathed (Ibid: 86). Even after the formalisation of facilities for a body’s intersection with this water, the Boers preferred to dig their own holes in the ground where they would bath for hours on end (Ibid: 87) as preferred method of intersecting these waters.

Figure 2.7 & 2.8
Mud bath therapy ca. 1888
Booyens, B. 1981



The “warmmodderkuur” or mud bath therapy became a popular attraction in the town of Bela Bela (Previously Warmbaths) and later on facilities were erected and developed for a more formalised use of hot mud and the bathing therein. In 1895 there were forty-eight baths, of which twelve were reserved, and the rest were “Vrije baden” or free baths that could be used free of charge on certain conditions. (Ibid: 88). These baths were accessible to the public who could, at certain times of the day, make use of them for one hour per person per turn, and after each turn the custodian would be granted half an hour to clean the baths. (Ibid: 88) The “Badopsigter” or Bath-Custodian was bestowed with the care over the water from the fountain by the Volksraad in 1895 (Ibid: 88). His duties included ensuring that the water for use was clean and pure, and managing the facilities at the “Bronhuis” (House at the Oar) and the “badhuisjes” (personal bathhouses). When visitors preferred to dig their own “badkuilen” or bathing holes, the custodian was to show them a spot from where the drainage of the hole would not make an impact on load-bearing structures downstream. The Bath-Custodian had to be on duty during the bathing season, from 1 May until 1 September.

The Boers extensively patronised the baths and visited them often for the health restoring and medicinal properties of the waters (Ibid: 87). Old President Paul Kruger and his wife, Siena Kruger frequently visited the warm baths and after his induction as President, new bath stalls were erected at the fountain at his wishes.

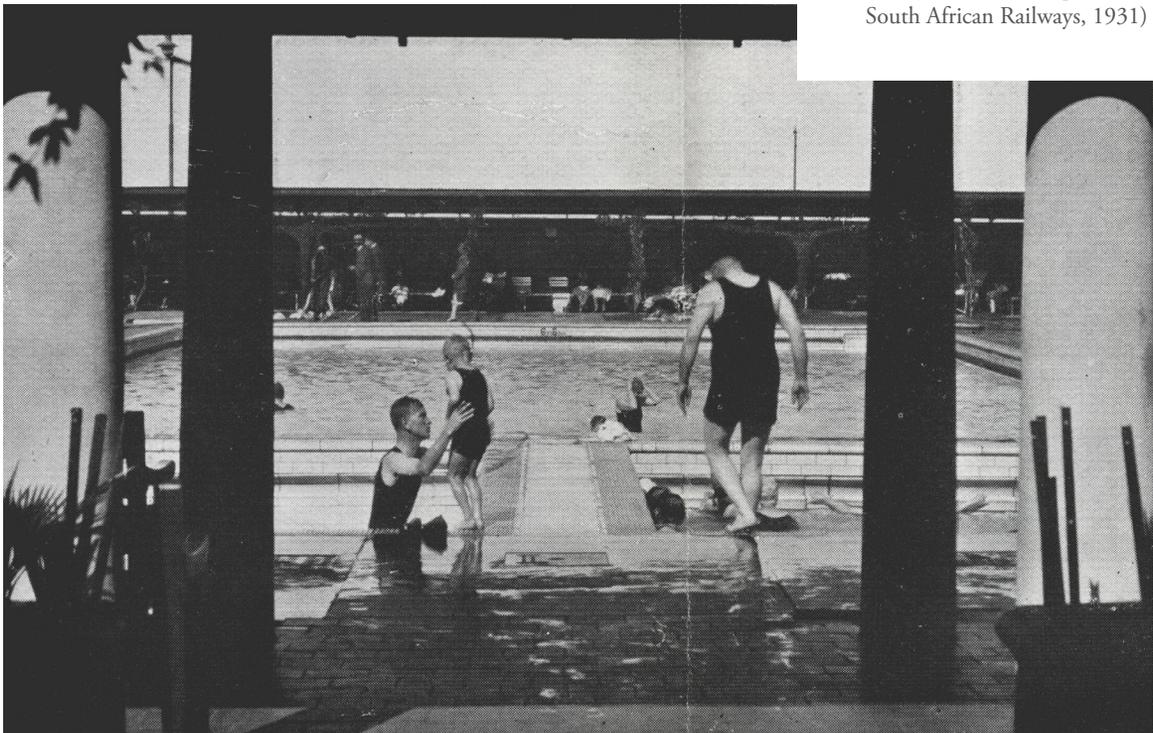


MODERNITY

The early developments around the spring were formalised into the first resort in 1921, and planning of the new swimming baths and a great hall (Lacovig, 2003: 174) clustered in the central gardens, started. The servient facilities to the baths unfolded symmetrically along an axis and promenade, extending from the gardens to the north to the centre of the main loggia overlooking the baths. The servient spaces flank the baths and loggia by shaping an internal courtyard to provide a sense of privacy.

Figure 2.9 & 2.10

The first public pool at Bela-Bela
(Publicity and Travel Department
South African Railways, 1931)

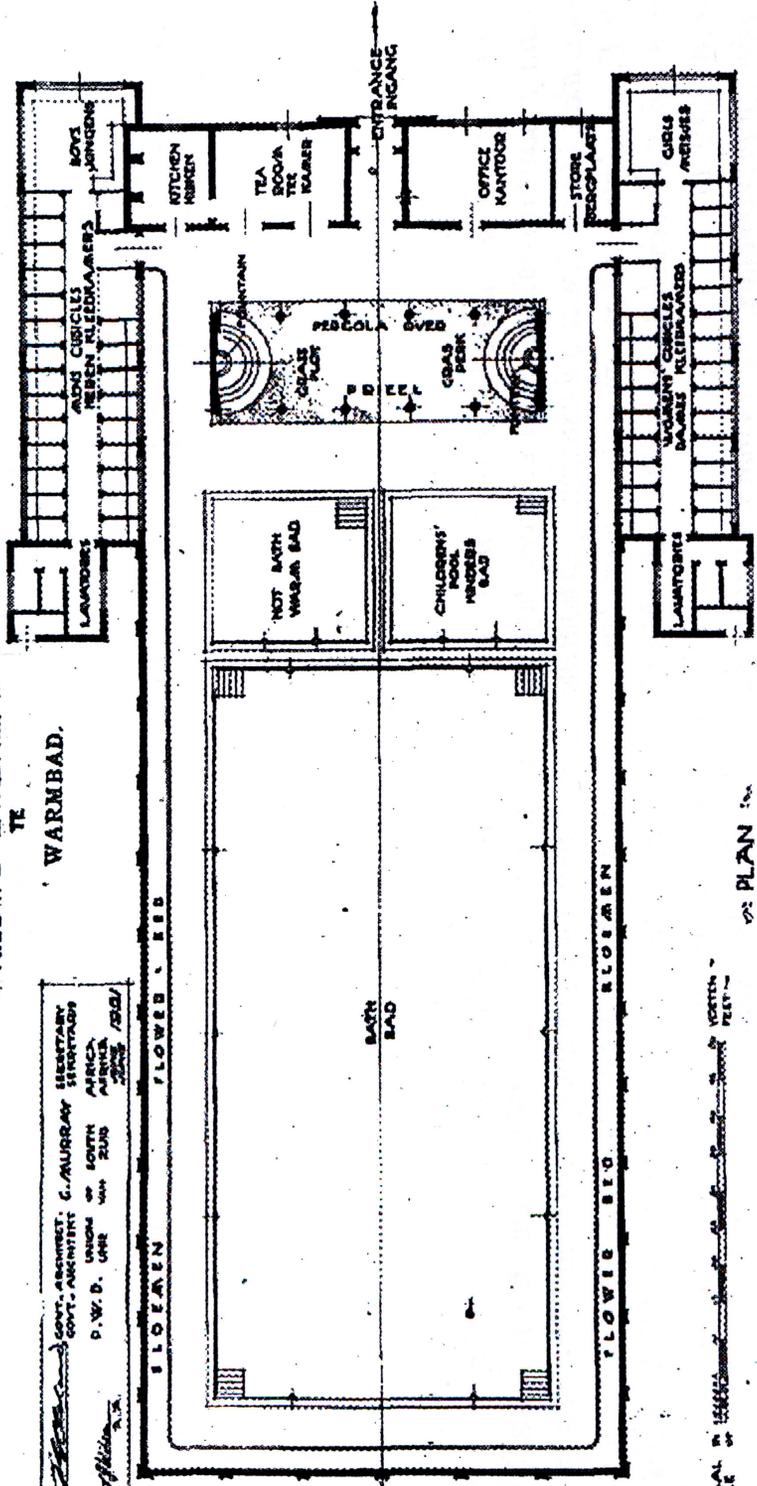


THE NEW SWIMMING BATH AT WARMBATHS IN
TRANSVAAL PROVINCE

DE-1914-13 4083

DE NIEUWE ZWEMBAD IN
TE WARMBAD.

GOVT. ARCHITECT: G. MURRAY
GOVT. ARCHITECT: G. MURRAY
UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA
D. W. D. ONE 1914-13 4083



SCHAAL 1:1000
SCALE 1:1000
PLAN

An interplay between private and public bathing promoted a reciprocity between outside and inside and between water and landscape. Private bathing enclosed landscaped courtyards where public bathing was enclosed by servient spaces and porticos. The formal bathing facilities intercepted the route from the fountain to a garden setting, and to the south you could find a diving pool, a cold pool and “spelekamer” or playroom. Beyond this setting a road divided the landscape to the south where servient spaces to the resort and baths for “non-whites” were located. The gardens extended into the town grain and facilities, inextricably connecting it to the town.

Planning commenced to upgrade the scale of the resort when above-mentioned expansions proved insufficient for its popularity by the mid 60’s (ibid: 174). Through an adaptation of European models to local context, a master plan was developed which entailed an outdoor pool area in a garden setting, as well as the Hydro Complex containing indoor and outdoor pools (Ibid: 176) that resembled European models. The planning and construction of this master plan saw its major contribution, the Hydro Spa, opening to the public in 1978 (ibid: 176). This facility adopted a symmetrical approach of unfolding servient spaces which the visitor descends lightly past to the main pool. The pool is enclosed by a double volume coffered slab with skylights and serves as an oculus. A mezzanine lives out onto this space that serves as a loggia and is connected to the first floor of the building, which hosts water and mud therapy rooms and its servient spaces. This first floor again retracts from a double volume shaft to an oculus in the foyer. The pool extends outwards into a garden setting where porticos ring the garden. From the fountain, the more public gardens are banked up against these porticos to become walkways with which to cross the enclosures.

Figure 2.11
The Hydro Pool
(Author, 2015)



The early 80's saw the development of a master plan for the outdoor pool area in the garden setting that opened to the public in 1986 (ibid: 184). The garden setting hosts a hot outside pool with a central Jacuzzi and oculus within the semi-enclosed space. A cold wave pool resides to the south that morphs into the embanked landscape that provides privacy from the town. This embankment subsequently morphs into channel waterslides going down to the garden, but retracts to allow for a towering waterslide that coils a central structure. Water spouts and fountains invigorate the garden along with netted shading canopies and piping that run to and from heat exchangers within the facilities' individual service rooms, and to the boiler and service yard hidden beyond the public interface of the hotel. The gardens descend to the south with many recreational facilities amongst the water dams. These dams fill with runoff water from the baths, supply irrigation to the gardens, while excess water is released into secondary bodies of water and subsequently into the nature reserve (Wimpie Basson, Personal communication). It becomes a natural filtration system of retention dams and wetlands. Beyond the gardens to the southeast, is the ski-dam that hosts water-skiing by utilising the fountain's runoff water (Ibid). A local borehole services all the servient facilities to the baths and accommodation with potable water replenished by the natural rain cycle (Ibid).

Figure 2.13
The Garden pool
(Author, 2015)

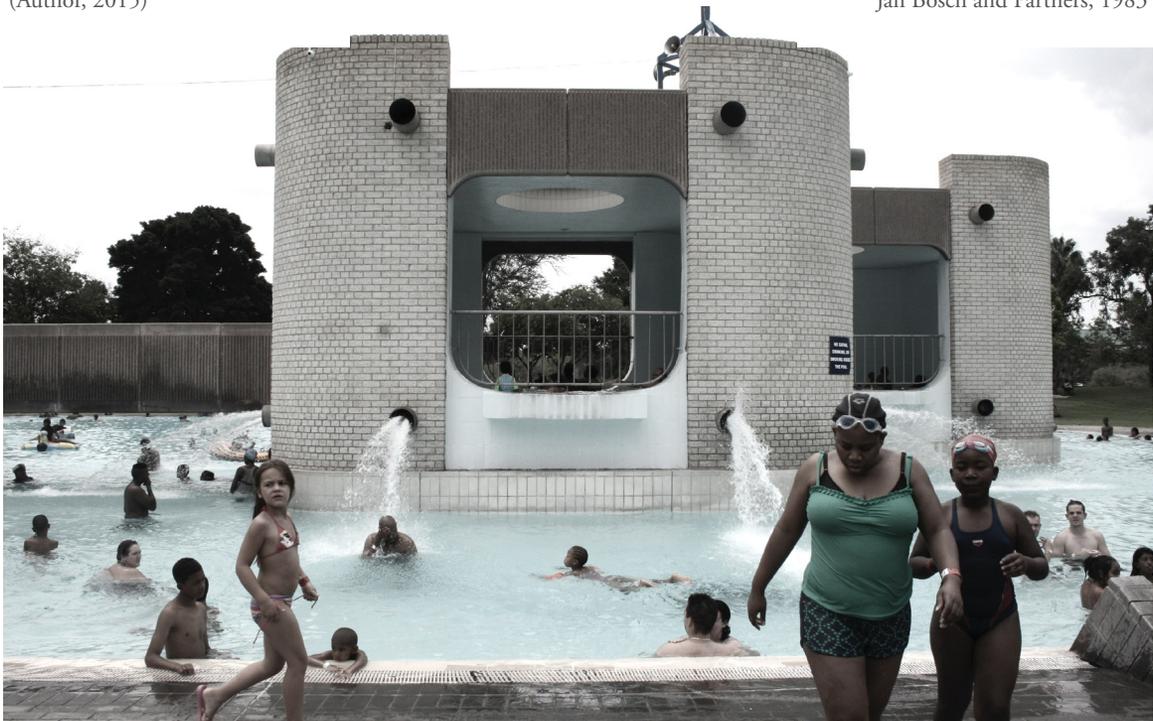
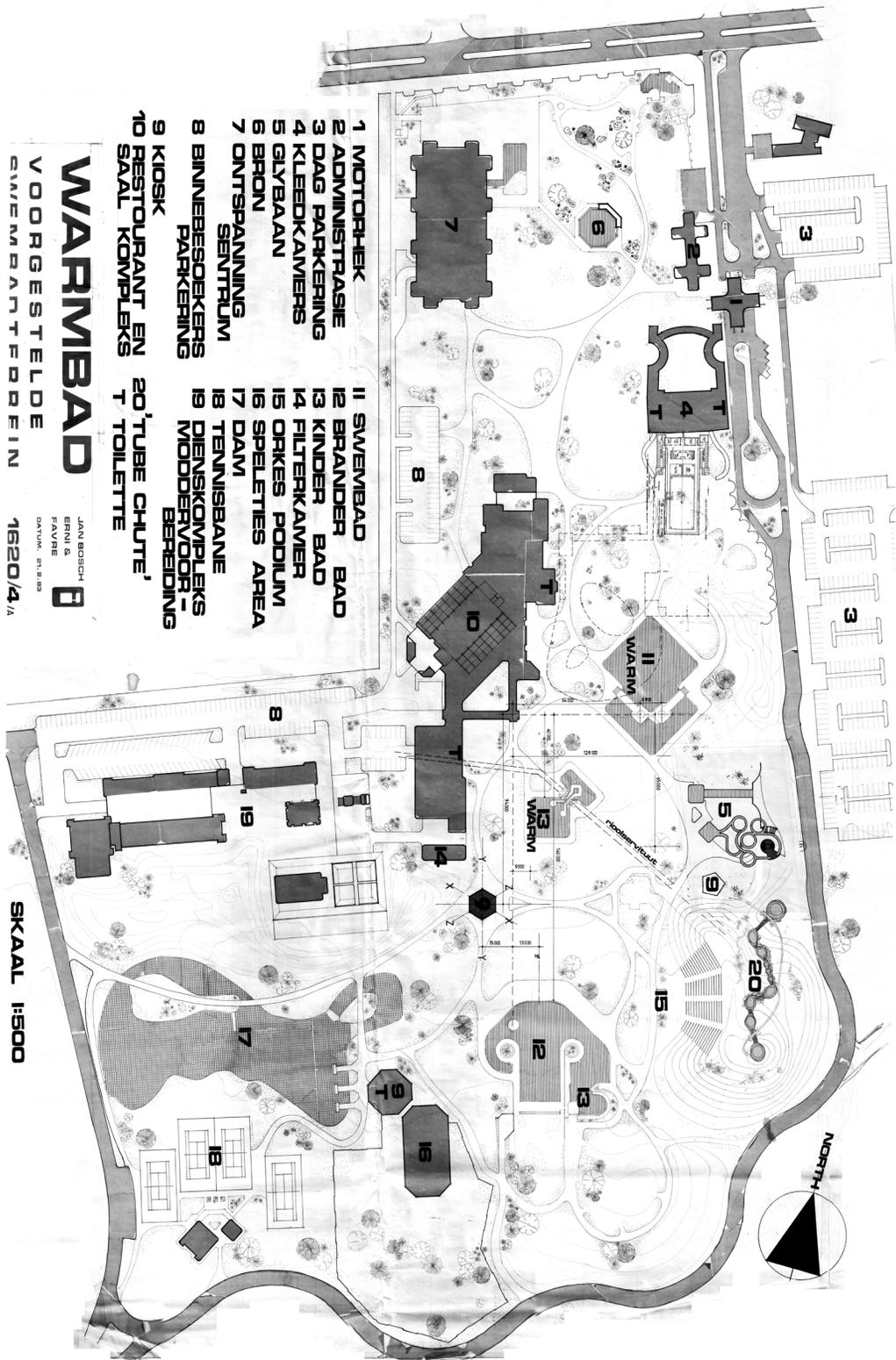


Figure 2.14
The 1983 Resort plan
Jan Bosch and Partners, 1983



- 1 MOTORHEK
- 2 ADMINISTRASIE
- 3 DAG PARKERING
- 4 KLEEDKAMERS
- 5 GLYBAAN
- 6 BRON
- 7 ONTSPANNING SENTRUM
- 8 BINNEBEOEKERS PARKERING
- 9 KIOSK
- 10 RESTOURANT EN SAAL KOMPLEKS
- 11 SWEMBAD
- 12 BRANDER BAD
- 13 KINDER BAD
- 14 FILTERKAMER
- 15 ORKES PODIUM
- 16 SPELETIES AREA
- 17 DAVI
- 18 TENNISBANE
- 19 DIENSKOPPELS WOODSERVOORBEREIDING
- 20 'TUBE CHUTE' TOILETTE

WARMBAD
VOORGESTELDE
GEMEENTEPREIN

JAN BOSCH
ERNI &
FAVRE

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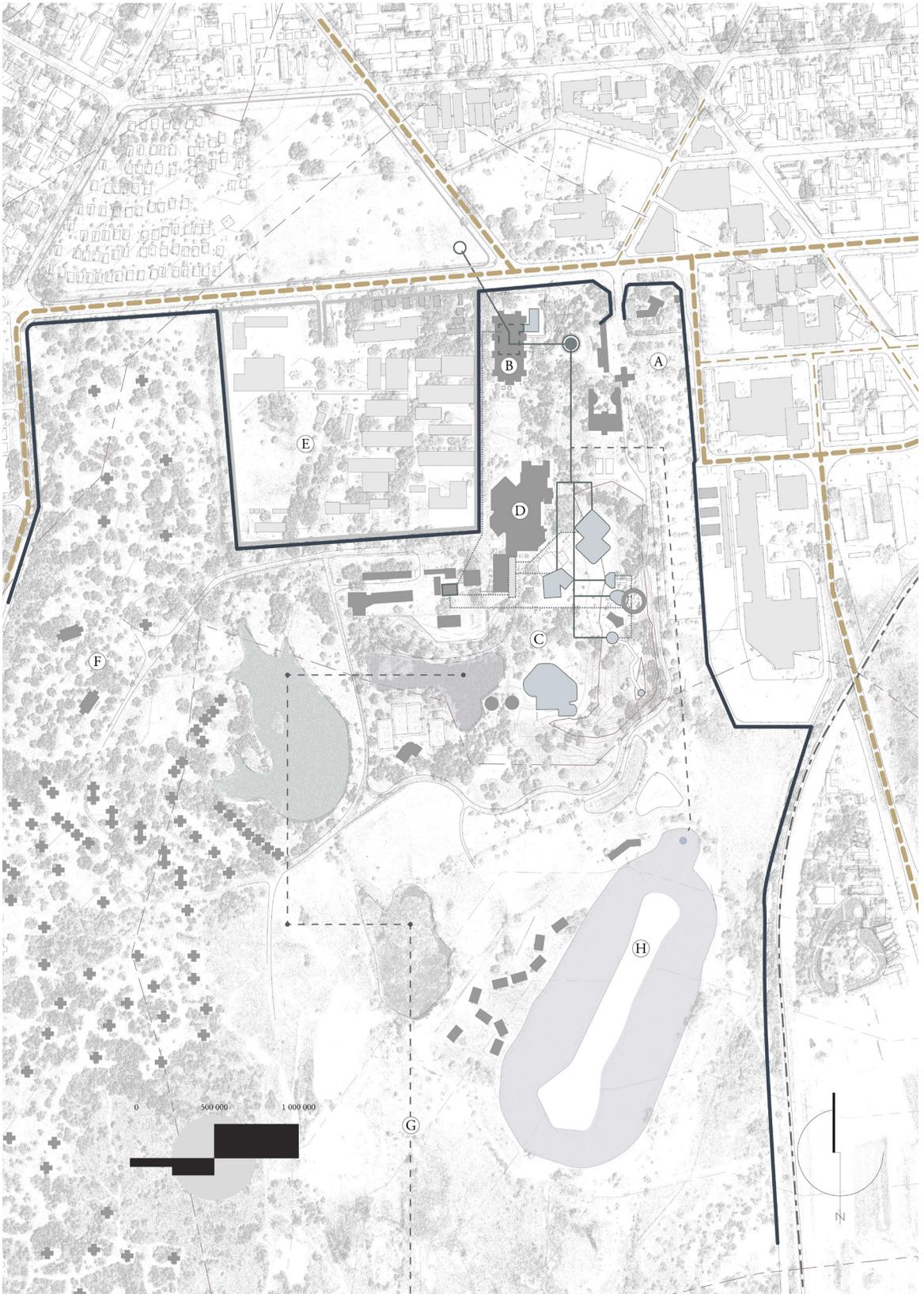


Figure 2.15 & 2.16

The Resort plan

(Author, 2015)

A: Resort Parking

B: The Hydro Spa

C: Garden Pools and Water Facilities

D: The Forever Hotel

E: Bela- Bela Public Hospital and township

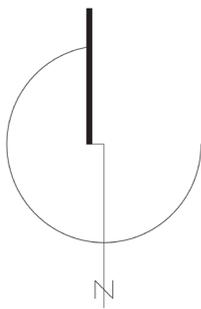
F: Chalette and Camping Accomodation

G: Water filtration and irrigation system

into the nature reserve to the south

H: Ski-boat dam and challette accomodation

- A: The fountain
- B: The Hydro Spa
- C: Hot Water Garden Pool
- D: Kids Splash Grounds
- E: Water Slides
- F: Boiler and service yard
- G: Wave Pool
- H: Paddleboat dam
- I: Fountain overflow
- J: Ski-boat dam
- K: The Forever Hotel
- L: Ablutions and admission
- M: Resort administration, reception
and vehicular access control
- N: Managerial residence
- O: Town of Bela-Bela
- P: Parking
- Q: Bela-Bela public hospital
- R: Bela-Bela Municipality



0 500 000 1 000 000





Figure 2.17
Light shaft in the foyer
of the Hydro
(Author, 2015)

THE LOGGIA AND THE OCULUS

THE LOGGIA AND THE OCULUS

All the facilities express a reciprocal relationship between the water and the sky through oculi whilst privacy and engagement is separated by loggias which become large pieces of lawn under trees or netted canopies at the pools in the garden setting. The structures are modern in character with dramatic classical spatial unfolding through rhythm between volumes and symmetrical approach. Though relationships occur between outside and inside, one is predominantly outside or inside of enclosure.

A Loggia is an open-sided, roofed or vaulted gallery, either free-standing or along the front or side of a building, often at an upper level. (Oxforddictionaries.com, 2015). It provides, through an interplay on levels, a spatial continue to overlap a boundary, where the boundary animates both spaces. Through an articulation and animation of this boundary, the condition becomes to animate both spaces whilst differentiating between engagement and privacy. The oculus provides the same condition, but along the axis-mundi between earth and sky.



Figure 2.18

Breakfast In The Loggia
- John Singer Sargent

(Sargent, 1910)

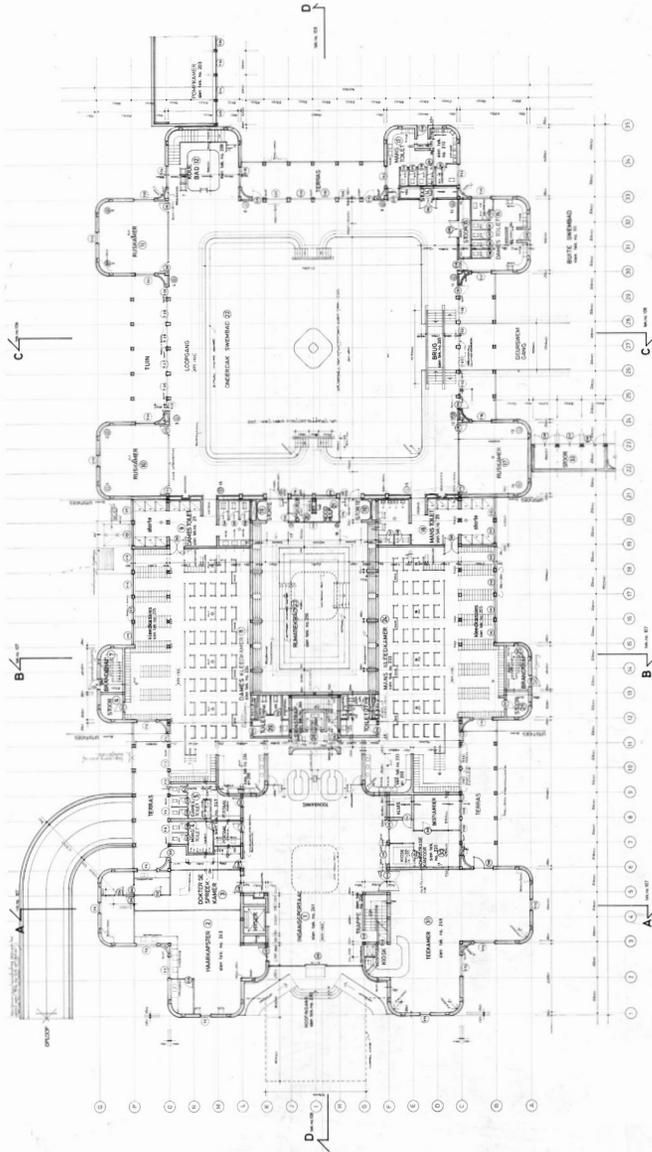


Figure 2.19
The plan and cross section of the Hydro Spa
(Jan Bosch and Partners, 1973)

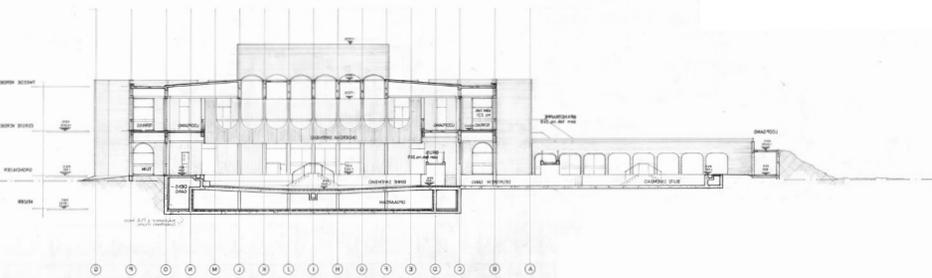
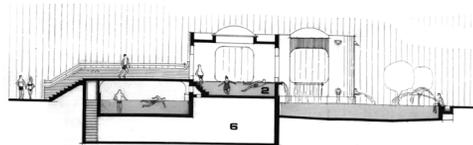
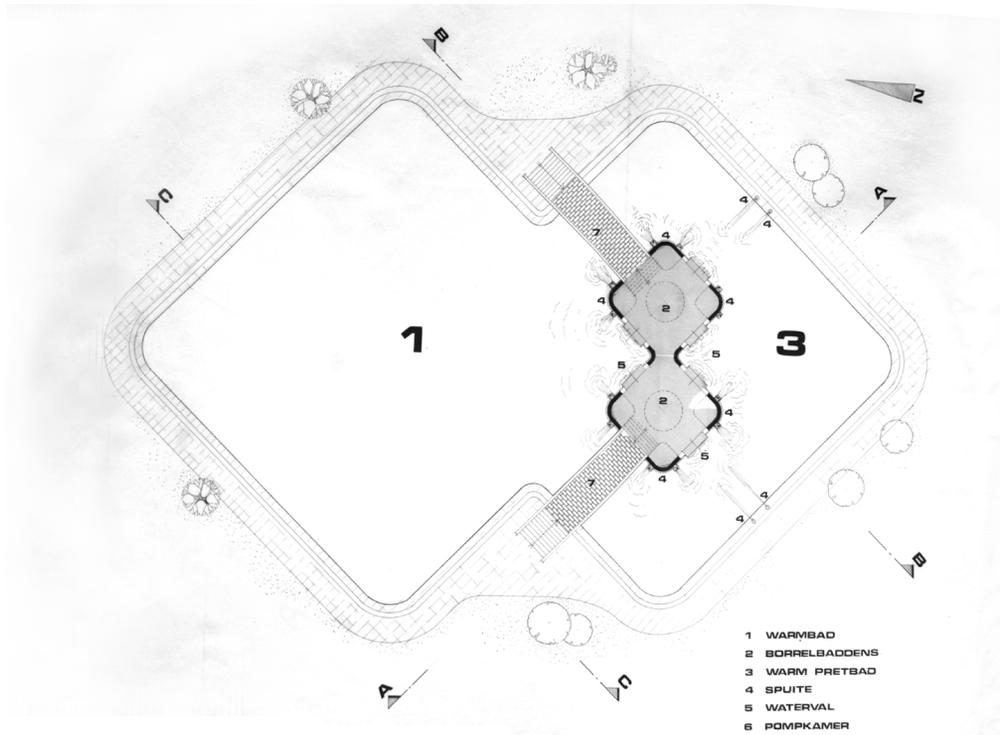


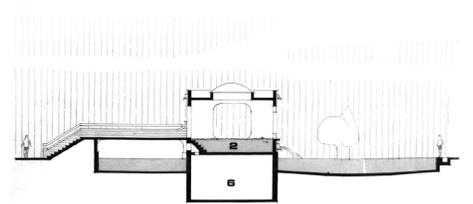
Figure 2.20
The rheumatic pool in the Hydro spa with a light shaft or oculus above in the centre
(Author, 2015)

Figure 2.21
The continuous pool flows to the outside where it is ringed by a loggia. The gardens beyond are sloped upwards to become a pathway over the enclosure.
(Author, 2015)

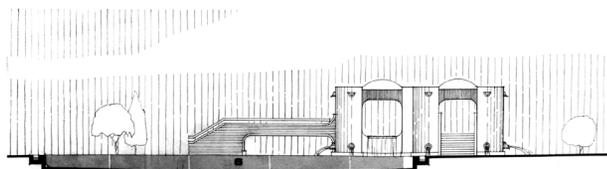




SNIT A-A



SNIT B-B



SNIT C-C



Figure 2.22 (above)
The hot water garden pool
(Author, 2015)

Figure 2.23 (top left)
Plan of the hot water
garden pool
(Jan Bosch, Enri & Favre
Architects, 1983)

Figure 2.24 (left)
Sections through the hot
water garden pool
(Jan Bosch, Enri & Favre
Architects, 1983)

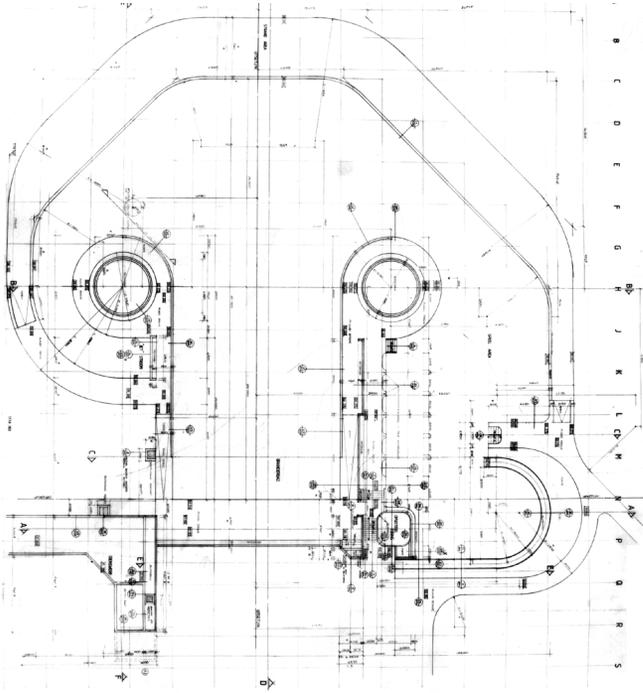
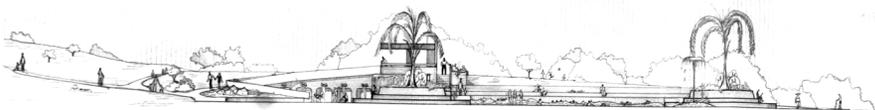
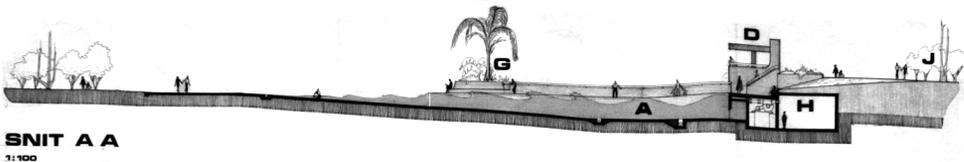


Figure 2.25 (left)
Wave pool plan
(Jan Bosch, Enri & Favre
Architects, 1983)

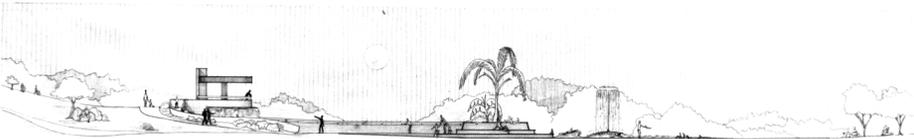
Figure 2.26 (below)
Sections through wave pool
(Jan Bosch, Enri & Favre
Architects, 1983)

Figure 2.27 (right)
The wave pool
(Author, 2015)

Figure 2.28 (right below)
The garden setting along the
paddleboat dam
(Author, 2015)



NOORD AANSIG
1:100



OOS AANSIG
1:100





Figure 2.29
The Waterslide
(Author, 2015)





Figure 2.30

The tower slide and resort below

(Author, 2015)

Figure 2.31

An embankment to east of the garden setting provides privacy from the enveloping town.

(Author, 2015)



