LIBRARY OF WONDER
The Story of Me, Books, and Libraries

by Chang Liu

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Abstract

In 2008, we tore all our books from the past three years into pieces. It was a celebration of graduating from high school and longing for a new life. Yes, we hated books. We were forced to stay in the classroom 10 hours every day, our eyes switching between books and the blackboard. We were filled with tasks from books. Directed by the running countdown on our blackboard, we were spurred on by those slogans surrounding us. Soon, we forgot how to read books and we forgot the joy of reading.

Unfortunately, most of the libraries in China were designed to represent the sanctity of knowledge and the dignity of the nation, a clear symbol of national pride and knowledge. We found ourselves too small to embrace it. The joyful experience we were after did not exist here. However, we did have some amazing discoveries when we escaped our classrooms of book-counting. A new

world composed of three secret gardens was there waiting for us, as long as we had the patience to look for it.

My thesis reads from Chinese gardens clues for the libraries of the future, and arrive on the principles to create a new kind of library, one that emphasizes personal emotions and experiences, forgets the authority of books and nations and blurs the boundary between story and reality. To read in the garden library is to simultaneously sense the physical surroundings with the body, observe the beautiful view with the eyes, and get carried away in a story unbounded by time and space.

The library of the future will transcend its environment and present experiences as perception, perceptions as stories, and stories as experiences. Who knows what can come from such a playful practice of knowledge?
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DEEP IN MY MEMORY

The Story of Me, Books, and Libraries
Hi, my name is Chang, this thesis is about me, books and libraries.
In 2008, we tore all of our books from the past three years into pieces. It was a celebration of graduating from high school and longing for a new life.

Yes, we hated books. We were forced to stay in the classroom 10 hours every day, our eyes switching between books and the blackboard. We were asked to memorize every single character from ancient prose and poetry. We were expected to give the same answer as the author did. We were filled with tasks from books. Directed by the running countdown on our blackboard, we were spurred on by those slogans surrounding us. Soon, we forgot how to read books and we forgot the joy of reading.

Unlike others, I was sleeping, not reading, as always. I was dreaming about the osmosis of all the books, jumping between different imaginary worlds.
距高考10天
From swimming in the clouds
To diving into dark pools
When I was awake, I spent time with my friends searching for beautiful refugees for reading books and looking at things.

The first place we tried was the library. We were looking for the kind of paradise imagined by Jorge Luis Borges.

We went to the National Library of China. The building was stunning: a grand public reading space in the form of an inverted pyramid. It represented the sanctity of knowledge and the dignity of the nation, a clear symbol of national pride and knowledge. However, we found ourselves too small to embrace it. The joyful experience we were after did not exist here. Instead, we found rows of people looking at their laptops, smart phones, or sleeping. Very few were reading books from the library.
Today, it seems we do not need the large archive surrounding us. Or do we?
"In ancient Alexandria, the library was more of a tomb than a space of imagination and learning. With librarians as priests, the ghosts of knowledge fortified the thick walls that separated the library from the public street. Becoming both fortress and temple, the library contained and expressed the lessons of the dead, concentrating their energies inside the theca, a vessel whose walls sheltered outsiders from the power held within."

*The Library Beyond the Book*

Schnapp T. Schnapp and Matthew Battles
We imagined ourselves as the energy trapped inside the vessel. Its smooth curved walls hugging us close, we explored every nook and cranny, unfazed by the dimness, the dustiness, and the endless unanswered questions.
I imagined being inside Kahn's Exeter Library. In my imagination, the building continuously rebuilt itself as I moved through it. It reminded me of the atmosphere of hopelessness in the libraries I visited in real life.
Even though most real libraries were disappointing, I eventually found some wonderful corners to read books.

Like this corner in our Hayden library—the couch is comfortable and the wall to my side gives me the privacy I need. But it's the huge window that floods my page with natural light, connecting me with nature and living things outside that makes me love this library. I sit there reading for half an hour and then look outside across the changing scene of trees, shadow, sky, river, and people, and then back into the book for more stories, and back outside again.

The beautiful corner of Hayden Library reminds me of some amazing discoveries we made in high school when we escaped our classrooms of book-counting. A new world composed of three secret gardens was there waiting for us, as long as we had the patience to look for it.

The roof top with its city views and warm sun demanded us to forget about our bookbags. Here, time turned to liquid. I could have spent years watching the tiny houses with their tiny people, each one with her own tiny story.
The lovers hill with vine-covered paths reminded me that not everyone wants to be inside when they read books. Sitting on the soft grass or on a bench in the shade, whole worlds unfolded among the smell of plants and the crunch of leaves underfoot.

The lotus pool, with frogs, insects, and rippling reflections of the sky offered a book-reading spot in which openness structured a private world. With the breeze rustling our hair and the wooden dock scuffing our clothes, we were alone, deep in our stories.

Maybe, we can read from these gardens clues for the libraries of the future?
PRINCIPLES

Learn from Traditional Chinese Gardens
Back in high school, we were forced to learn how to perceive the world in a specific way, through memorizing and testing, which is generally believed to be the fastest way of learning. I am not interested in discussing in depth the problems of our education system; rather, tearing the books makes a clear manifesto for students like myself. What I enjoy doing is to design a new environment for people, especially for students, to really enjoy their experience of reading, and encourage them to discover their own stories both in physical world and books.

The connection between the two might derive from what we called sensory synesthesia. As James Turrell explained, "You probably have seen or handled a lemon and suddenly felt the taste in your mouth; I mean, it suddenly floods your mouth — the perception through vision actually creates the sensation in taste." The similar transformation can happen between imagination from books and experience from physical environment.

To do that, I start to study the theories and technics from the traditional Chinese gardens, which manipulate people's perception by designing experience, and the sequence of experience in an extremely intelligent way. They suggest a new kind of library, one that emphasizes personal emotions and experiences, blurs the boundary between story and reality and connects the joy of place with the joy of reading.
"The Craft of Gardens, written between 1631 and 1634, is the first surviving-and possibly actually the first-general manual on landscape gardening in the Chinese tradition. It is very unlike what a westerner would expect of a gardening manual, since it rarely mentions any particular plant by name and gives almost no advice on how to grow anything. By contrast, it pays close attention to architecture, an inseparable part of the Chinese concept of garden design, and to the selection of various kinds of rocks to form part of the landscape."2 The foundation of the Chinese garden is really about the organization of architecture and landscape based on the individuals experience and imagination. When designing, the gardeners always imagined how to build the environment to guide the viewer's perception in space. What these cultivated visitors would have appreciated above all was a garden that made them fall in tune with nature.3 In those gardens, they sometimes read in pavilions with great views, sometimes going outside to discover the nature.

"There are strong connections between the Chinese garden design and Chinese landscape painting. It is impossible to see a garden through Chinese eyes without having some appreciation of Chinese landscape painting,"4 explained by Maggie Keswick. To appreciate the drawing on the right, you have to look at it not from the top as a whole, but imagine yourself in the drawings. Moving through the path deliberately designed by the painter, you will go through a sequence of different spatial experience. Then, the story of the drawing will be unfolded upon your imagination. In Maggie's words, "as he walked and paused, the landscape unfolded around him as if he were taking a three dimensional school from right to left. Thus he could create a paradox in the garden: for the walls that enclosed and limited his space also served to extend it magically beyond all bounds."5

Based on the theories and technics from Chinese gardens, I developed the following principles to help me design the new garden library.
ANTITHESIS

In the balance of nature and building, one becomes dominant and the other becomes spatial.
SIMULTANEOUS VIEW

One position can simultaneously observe different conditions, environments and atmospheres
INDEPTH VIEW

Multiple depths overlay to form one composition
FragmenTED VIEW

Revealing a fragment of a scene
suggests something larger exists in
what is hidden
FORCED VIEW

A forced perspective frames reflective water
DIVIDED MOVEMENT

A corridor connects one side to open to nature and on the other side creates distance from the living space on the other, dividing one location into multiple experiences.
MOVEMENT IN HORIZONS

Horizons of varying heights suggest movement
COMPRESSED MOVEMENT

Compressed paths lead to other worlds
ZIG-ZAG MOVEMENT

Paths that zig-zag around obstructions enlarge the scale at which the garden is perceived
Still moments punctuate a path of motion
RESTING IN MOUNTAIN

An artificial mountain shelters space, creating caves and platforms
After analyzing the principles from Chinese gardens, it comes to the question of how to transform those principles into architecture space. I designed six architectural elements.

For the Serenity Room, two principles are employed: Fragmented View and Forced View. The small opening at the corner, revealing a fragment of the book hill, welcomes the reader to a peaceful world. Going through, another opening on the corner of the hill top reveals tips of the nature behind it. The fragmented view allows viewers to imagine what is hidden. As Ji Cheng described in *The Craft of Gardens*, "A mighty rock welcomes the visitor to a magical other world. Fine bamboos play with their shadows, as if to the music of pa-pipes from over the water. Grand views should be enjoyed, but the common world of dust can find no entry."  

Inside people sit together in the sunken reading areas, working quietly, and others perch on the mountain made of bookshelves, watching everything happening below. Spacious and peaceful, the tilted ceiling, distributing light in unexpected ways, forces people's view down to the water that comes in under the wall from the outside casts beautiful reflections around the room.

Lawrence Weschler wrote of his experience viewing the *Veils the Whitney in Light* installation, "the room itself seemed to stand up and hum. Things that had always been there—the even modular hive of the ceiling; the dark, rectangular reflective water grid of the floor—you noticed as if for the first time." In this room, everything comes to your eyes in a surprising way that makes you enjoy the serene reading experience and forget the common world of dust.
“The word ‘pavilion [ting]’ means ‘to stop [ting].’ It is a place for traveler to stop and rest.”

“The word ‘tie [gazebo]’ means ‘to borrow [jie].’ Gazebos are made to ‘borrow’ or take advantage of the scenery.”

The Horizontal View Pavilion is a place for you to stop and rest with magnificent horizontal view surrounded. In The Craft of Gardens, Ji Cheng suggested that windows and doors should give an unimpeded view. He refused to be restricted to the conventional sizes of windows, but argued to use any size as long as appropriate. He also mentioned that visualizing the balustrade as if they were in a painting, following the lines of their surroundings. Following the very simple yet extremely thoughtful instructions, this pavilion essentially utilizes two principles: Movement in Horizons and Forced View.

Even though the pavilion is for resting, the location, which is really critical, has a lot to do with the movement, especially moving in different horizons. After traveling through different horizons, the view that appears to you becomes even more stunning. In Ji Chen’s words, “Why not build it in the midst of hills and waters so that it can be described as being both two stories and three stories? From below, looking up, it is a high tower; from halfway up the hill it will resemble a one-story house, but if you “ascend another story” you will really be able to “see for a thousand miles.”

In the Horizontal View pavilion, the opening at the roof top gradually distributes indirect light through the tilted ceiling from the back, making the room more comfortable to read, yet without interrupting with the view at front. You will sit down with the others to enjoy the view at the top of bamboo forests, the branches swaying to and fro in the breeze. The peace of the stillness of the room and the gentle motion of the trees is mesmerizing. You may sit on pillows with your friends on the floor, quietly talking or reading. Up in this canopy, the birds that fly by become fish swimming in the tank of water.
"My most memorable experience, in fact, was at Pomona College, hearing a concert by John Cage. I didn’t know what to expect when I went to hear him—I was a Pasadena boy and in my freshman year—and I went to this concert and I didn’t know what the hell was going on, but I knew it was important. I knew there was something I had to find out about it. It wasn’t that I had any appreciation of it, but I did have that recognition of this being something that I didn’t know about and I really knew I needed to. That was that first quality of...not too dissimilar from being disoriented, pleasurably."

— James Turrell

The main challenge of designing the Mountain Read is to create an environment that makes people feel “pleasurably disoriented”. Then, they will have motivation to discover, both in the physical environment and the imaginary world of books. The key for doing this is what Chinese gardeners called “the Zigzag Movement”. It is constructed by the two key elements: paths and obstructions. By strategically hiding, opening and framing, zigzag path can enlarge the scale at which the garden is perceived, as well as create surprises.

For enlarging the scale, Ji Cheng beautifully described that “Precipices, peaks, caves and gullies should look as if they were boundless, and streams, valleys, slopes and promontories should be as majestic as the real thing. As you wander wherever your feet take you, you may doubt that there is any boundary to the place; as you raise your head to gaze around, deep emotions will be stirred in you. The narrow paths should be long and winding; the lofty peaks should be glorious and venerable. The magnificent scenery on every side, the mountains and forests a hand’s breadth away—their subtle attraction all springs from one man’s imagination, and their elegance derives from a mere heap of earth.”
MOUNTAIN READ
Zig-Zag Movement | Compressed Movement | Resting In Mountain

For creating surprises, he also concluded that “for it to be a proper walkway it should be both winding and long. The winding walkways which I build now bend like the letter S, curving with the form of the ground and bending with the lie of land. They may curl round the middle of a hill or run down to the water’s edge, pass among flowers or cross a moat, endlessly twisting and turning.”

On the next step, two more principles can be added to the maze: Compressed Movement and Resting in Mountain. By narrowing down and opening up, Compressed Movement will enrich visitors’ experience. Where you think there is nothing more to see, the scenery should suddenly open out, and low-lying areas should unexpectedly slope upwards. Then Resting in Mountain can be applied by first making the wall oblique, to create shelters for people to rest. Then, building on top of the other two principles, the spatial quality of caves and platforms can be achieved. Eventually, the three principles merge with each other to create the Mountain Read that becomes “a refined and complex maze with unfolds itself only when, lured on by glimpses of further delights just beyond the next enclosure, the visitor makes his way gently along its zigzag paths.”

Following a path, you may sometimes find a secret spot to read under the mountain quietly, sometimes wandering in the valley or along a stream to discover what you have just read in books.

As Jeffrey Schnapp puts it, “libraries have always been mix-and-match spaces, and remix is their most plausible future scenario.” This is the kind of experience that you will never understand by only staring at pictures from books. As Robert Irwin stated: “with pictures, with paintings inside frames, maybe, they’d be prepared to invest that suspended aesthetic attention. But paintings are like what you can barely make out through a keyhole compared with the richness of perception that’s just waiting there in the world to be experienced all the time.”
The Craft of Gardens gives clues for how to design and locate intimate reading spaces. “When siting a study in a garden you should not strictly separate inside and outside, but should choose a secluded site and give easy access to and from the garden; yet this should be done in such a way that people strolling in the garden will be unaware of its existence.”

The space of Sun and Moon Chamber I is equally divided with interior and exterior always next to the other. The opening at each corner blurs the boundary between inside and outside, and lures you to wander through the space. The openings create uncanny views by overlaying multiple depths. Not only the stairs allow you to rest and read at different heights, but also form the cave-like space to provide more intimacy. You will be sitting in the shade or near the plants, reading books. It’s a comfortable room, where anyone can find a spot suitable for getting lost in a book. It eliminates all the nonessentials and presents you the pure subject of experience, overlaying with the other kind of experience you absorb from books. As Robert Irwin puts it, “to make you a little more aware than you were the day before, of how beautiful the world is.”
Irwin also argues that moving away from the literate, conceptual rationale to reestablish the inquiry on the perceptual, tactile level. Nobody quite understood that at the time, because they were still thinking in image terms and in terms of literate connotations. When they talked about a painting, they translated it into subject matter, in a way, but it’s not only about that. It’s about presence, phenomenal presence. And it’s hard: if you don’t see it, you just don’t see it; it just isn’t there. You can talk yourself blue in the face to somebody, and if they don’t see it, they just don’t see it. But once you start seeing it, it has a level of reality exactly the same as the imagery — no more, no less. And basically, that’s what I’m still after today. All my work since then has been an exploration of phenomenal presence.

The Sun and Moon Chamber II is a place for the remixing of “phenomenal presence” and literature. Not like Robert who explains it on the theoretical level, instead, Ji Cheng gives solid instructions: “wooden walls should have many window-openings so that one can secretly enjoy looking through them in to different worlds, as if in a magic flask.” Through the wide windows at each corner, you can simultaneously observe different atmospheres. Equally surrounded by books and views, the reading room is a small space with vast possibilities for observing many things happening at once. And you will feel you are on the threshold between many worlds. Windows open into different rooms, each with a horizon of a different type, and full of books with their own stories. The central bench offers a comfortable place to browse through books that are discovered accidentally.
Different from the previous two, the corners of the Sun and Moon Chamber III were cut off. Passing through room and corridor from corner to corner, you start to lose track of the difference between inside and outside. The corridor is covered by tilted roofs leading from one room to another, from compressed to open, and back to compressed again. The space is scaled based on kids and designed to be more playful. They can build blocks on the grass or read books inside under the oculus of light, while the teacher can easily see through the entire chambers to observe their activities. The in-depth views looking all the way to the mountain, trees and pond outside, It's a sanctuary for playing, with children in the day care running from room to room, enjoying a space that indulges in the uncanny. While not quite the same, it reminds me Ned Smyths' description for the art works by Gordon Matta-Clark, "it was like watching a movie on a shaped screen. You looked through dark faded rooms, each with its own artifacts, colors and wallpaper, to the natural light outdoors. If the frame of the cut hole was sighted on the raised track of the subway, every few minutes or so you could see a train move across the frame."
To read in a garden is to simultaneously sense the physical surroundings with the body, observe the beautiful view with the eyes, and get carried away in a story unbounded by time and space.

Together, these principles can help to construct a new type of library that will connect the joy of place with the joy of reading. The library of the future will transcend its environment and present experiences as perception, perceptions as stories, and stories as experiences. Who knows what can come from such a playful practice of knowledge?
LIBRARY OF WONDER

A Library that Connects the Joy of Place with the Joy of Reading
Today, very few libraries were designed for individuals' reading experience. The National Library of China, for example, represents the sanctity of knowledge and the dignity of the nation, a clear symbol of national pride and knowledge. However, we found ourselves too small to embrace it. Orhan Pamuk's argued for his Museum of Innocence, "big museums with their wide doors call upon us to forget our humanity and embrace the state and its human masses. This is why millions outside the Western world are afraid of going to museums. We don't need more museums that try to construct the historical narratives of a society, community, team, nation, state, tribe, company, or species. We all know that the ordinary, everyday stories of individuals are richer, more humane, and much more joyful. It is imperative that museums become smaller, more individualistic, and cheaper. This is the only way that they will ever tell stories on a human scale." Forgetting the authority of books and nations, the design of this new library emphasizes personal experience and individuals' stories.

Applying the Chinese gardens principles on multiple scales to the site, the new library disperses the land into separate parts that connected with each other. While each part is a complete world with its own stories, the sequence of spaces within the library follows a curated set of principles that connect each visitor - and their book - to external views; transporting them to an imaginary new world.

The library fills in an empty plot of land that exists between a high school to the north-west and a university to the south-east. The new library is organized according to its neighbors, with archives and reading rooms on both edges and a large open garden space in between. People from high school, university, and residential communities will check out books from their own archives and enjoy their reading time with each other within the central garden. By constructing a new library here, the site is activated as a dramatic new center for reading, imagination, and knowledge sharing.
The sequence of spaces within the library follows a curated set of principles that connect each visitor - and their book - to external views; transporting them to an imaginary new world.
As Maggie Keswick puts it, “In essence they are secret gardens, enclosed, even in country sites, by walls or wattle fences that reveal only the tips of their pavilions and trees to the world outside. Within they are just as hidden; walls enclose walls, and courtyards, still smaller courtyards, until the whole garden becomes a refined and complex maze with unfolds itself only when, lured on by glimpses of further delights just beyond the next enclosure, the visitor makes his way gently along its zigzag paths.” In the principles of Chinese gardens, architecture or landscape is never standing alone. All the intelligence is aimed to manipulate the relationship of the two in multiple scales, from the design of windows, to the layout of the entire garden. However, all of the principles were based on the experience of human body and the perception of mind.

What the Chinese gardener did actually falls into the same category with some of the contemporary artists, who have been working between the physical environment and the limits of perception, such as Robert Irwin, who concluded that “It is not just the fact that you are bringing the cosmos down into the space where you live, but that your perception helps create that as well, so that you really are this co-creator of what you’re seeing.” The gardeners worked with the physical limits to create the sense of infinity, expressed in Wang Wei’s line, “the river flows beyond the edge of the world,” and in harmony with his words, “The prospect of the mountains lies between being and non-being.” As the mood takes you, you can gaze into the distance over the flourishing plain, or look far away to lofty peaks for a more impressive sight. High mounds can be further heightened and low-lying places should be dug deeper still.

In terms of the overall strategy, Ji Cheng argued that Buildings in gardens must have order in variety and yet their orderliness must not be too rigid: even this orderliness should have a pleasing unpredictability, and yet at their most diverse there should be an underlying consistency.

According to Robert Irwin, “art should be conditional to its surroundings and enhance a viewer’s perceptual experience.” The experience is the vital part of the design of the new library. Principles are applied to achieve richness and control the orderliness of the way people perceive the space. The open garden space is the connective tissue that glues the library together. It serves primarily as a public gathering space for readers to share and converse in a natural setting - while also being something to view, discover and contemplate from within the reading spaces. Eventually, the library will become to “a world where the physical and the virtual blend with ever increasing intimacy.”
HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARY
SUN & MOON CHAMBER | GARDEN
MOUNTAIN READ
MY DREAMS

I imagine myself in the library of the future, looking for that perfect corner to read in, and discovering other worlds.
After school, I depart from the world of memorizing and reciting, and look for something else, anything else. Passing between two long ponds full of lilies, I notice something at the bottom of a narrow staircase. Is it a secret library? I go down to find out.
Inside, I find the kind of book paradise I always searched for. The winding staircase leads me up past many levels filled with bookshelves that make small, intimate rooms within a repository of knowledge. It seems like the kind of place where fact and imagination cohabit.
As I climb the staircase new horizons emerge at each new level, and a shaft of sunlight pours down to indirectly infiltrate the underground storehouse of written ideas. It seems that the world is unfolding again and again as I ascend.
Others too, are engrossed in their worlds of the page, as well as the complex one playing out in front of them.
I like how many are alert and watching others as they climb the stairs and read books.
Emerging from the subterranean labyrinth, I find a shady path on the edge of a grassy courtyard.

I am reminded of the lovers hill as I look around at the people reading and chatting nearby, and the vines growing over the paths give a feeling that nature and building have made an unspoken agreement.
The long shadows that move slowly through the slits in the trellis echo the silent turning of pages of the many books in the hands of people scattered around the courtyard.
I see many of my friends passing through the corridor as I sit in the partial shade. Some stop and talk, and others keep going, rushing to the next appointment. It's nice to have a place of repose next to a place of movement—there is always something to watch.
As I continue, I pass through several sunlit arcades and rooms into the high school library.
The students sitting together in the sunken reading areas are working quietly. Spacious and peaceful, the tilted ceiling distributes light in unexpected ways and the water that comes in under the wall from the outside casts beautiful reflections around the room.
Students sit together in the sunken reading areas, working quietly, and others perch on the mountain made of bookshelves, watching everything happening below. I kneel down, mesmerized by the swimming fish that can cross from inside to outside without even noticing the difference.
I imagine myself inside an enormous clock, with all of its pieces turning and clicking in a great mechanical celebration. This is a different kind of clock, one that is quiet and that is never the same day to day.

Leaving the high school library, I pass through a sheltered courtyard with a single strip of sunlight slowly making its way across the water.
Passing into the next room, vision gives way to sound, as the simple space is filled with the metallic tings of water falling on a metal surface. Pattering on the plantain, the rain is playing her own music.
Sitting and listening, I think about time, and how it can be measured by different elements—light, noise, the ritual of turning pages, or by a satisfying nap in the sunlight.
On the way out, the sound is gradually muted by the stone walls that take me to a great mountain. As I climb, the extent of this library starts to be revealed. From the peak, I can see the buildings of the world I just came from, with its classrooms and homework assignments. Wanting to discover what else this world has in store, I continue on my way.
Finding another stairwell, I head down past the singing wall and a sheltered, water-filled courtyard. Passing through a narrow corridor, I find myself just on the interior side of outdoors. It is a room for books next to a place to read them.
Many people relax and read on the other side of the glass wall, in view of the place they found their books. The oblique wall that almost encloses the outdoor room makes it feel like the inside and outside are one space, with only the softness of the grass underfoot telling you that you are outside. I decide to follow those relaxing in the shade.
Stepping down off the pathway, I notice it is supported by bookshelves. As I flip through the books, I can see people's feet walking by out of the corner of my eye.
An opening in the wall above me looks into another window, framing a world within a world, a stacking of scenes that plays out in the background of stories.
Getting up, I travel to the next space where I am faced with a pool of water, and another mountain at my back. This mountain, small and encased in a green, roofless room, has a special focus. From the top of the mountain, you can see the sky by watching the surface of the water.
Sitting for a moment, I look down and watch the clouds traveling across the sky. I exit through a dynamic space filled with people and ramps.
Many windows frame this space, with paths going up and places to sit and rest. It is a mix of people moving and pausing, a partnership of action and observation.
I go down the path and lose myself in the many turns.
I emerge into the roofless room I had just come from, but this time at the entrance of a narrow path across the pool at the foot of the mountain. Stepping out onto the path, I notice a square window in the tangle of vines on the wall.
Through it, there seems to be a path that travels up an endless mountain that is hidden by the walls of the outdoor room.
I follow my own path upward and emerge onto a space that reminds me of my school rooftop. This rooftop, different from the one of my school, is a secret meeting place at the center of the library. Surrounding by the pure atmosphere, we forgot the common dust of the world.
Under a locust tree, students are enjoying their stories after lunch. There are people reading, lounging, waiting, watching.
Passing along the tops of trees and looking down over the bookstacks, I am happy that this rooftop isn't a secret.
Climbing up again, I am pulled along by the sound of the singing wall getting louder. I see its top behind a row of generous benches, and I pause to look down on a familiar space from a new perspective.
I'm not the only one with this idea - many others are watching and listening to what's happening below.
Finding my way back to ground level, I see a small, funny-shaped building that seems like its corners were cut off. Passing through room and corridor from corner to corner, I start to lose track of the difference between inside and outside.
The strips of light and shadow create shifting patterns on the child-scaled space.
It's a sanctuary for playing, with children in the day care running from room to room, enjoying a space that indulges in the uncanny.
They build blocks on the grass or read books inside under the oculus of light, while the teacher can easily observe their activities.
Leaving the day care, I come into a plaza. Keep walking, I see a series of translucent walls. The walls, just like screens made of fabric hanging under the roof, separates the space into many layers. Passing through, I enter a room that seems as if it’s floating in the canopy of trees.
I sit down with the others to enjoy the branches swaying to and fro in the breeze. The peace of the stillness of the room and the gentle motion of the trees is mesmerizing.
Individuals and small groups sit on pillows on the floor, quietly talking or reading. Up in this canopy, the birds that fly by become fish swimming in the tank of water.
Leaving, I pass through more translucent walls, between rows of windows that peek into different kinds of spaces. People watch me as I descend into the central area of the Sun and Moon Chamber.
The path takes me down this time, between two pools supported by thick stone walls, into a square courtyard with an open roof.
A garden in the center benefits from the sunlight streaming through the large opening, casting a spotlight that moves slowly throughout the day. From here, I see many paths to take, and so I go up to the public library book stacks.
On the stairs I feel I am on the threshold between many worlds. Windows open into different rooms, each with a horizon of a different type, and full of books with their own stories. As I move, I can see many stories happening at once.
I go up to the first room, which overlooks the courtyard and has a mild breeze flowing through an intimate space.
The central bench offers a comfortable place to browse through books that are discovered accidentally.
Equally surrounded by books and views, it is a small space with vast possibilities for observing many things happening at once.
Back in the courtyard, I notice many people sitting in the shade or near the plants, reading books. It's a comfortable room, where anyone can find a spot suitable for getting lost in a book.
Looking around the courtyard, I find another stairway. I take it through more translucent walls, watching through the windows as I go.
Passing through a long corridor, I am stunned by the magical effects creating by the combination of light, windows, trellis and changes in viewpoint. As I reach the top, I come into the largest room I've been to yet - a great, public reading room, but that still feels inviting and comfortable.
The horizontal view makes the garden and the buildings beyond look like a rugged landscape. It seems like those are mountains in the distance. People spread out in the room, enjoying the quietude of a public space.
As I leave, I pass through more book stacks and a narrow hallway, and enter the landscape to find it enclosed and gently sloping.
Finding some nice shade beneath a grove of bamboo trees, I sit down for a rest next to the stream. I reflect on the experience I've just had.
Retracing my steps in my mind's eye, I feel as if I have traveled to the farthest reaches of all the lands. Up and down, around and through,
I've seen a lot in this library. Now all I need is a good book to truly take me there.
Bibliography