

# DREAMS OF PARADISE

by

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Mountain face at Takht-e Jamshid, near Shiraz

## **THE PERSISTENCE OF MEMORY**

Memory is what shapes us. Memory drives our aspirations and our search for happiness, for paradise.

This project is situated within the architecture of memory, where it explores issues of journey and migration, reminiscence and desire, and the transformation that results when emotions overlay physical experiences of place. Its structure is the juxtaposition of the journey of paradise with a personal life journey, with memory as the driving force. In explorations and re-formations of paradises, it examines the internalization of place through memory and emotion, and extrapolates the powerful desires thus formed into new expressions of paradise.

Paradise – this powerful construct - has endured millennia, manifesting in painting, pottery, tiles, poetry, stained glass, carpets,....and in architecture. As a place, Paradise is about contrast and tension : outside versus inside, lush garden versus arid desert, abundance versus desolation, growth versus stasis. It is about the sanctuary of a garden in contrast to the desert. Transformed into concept, it is about the promise of the ultimate sanctuary of happiness, a sanctuary against death and oblivion.

The journey of dissemination and transformation of Paradise is testament to the potency of memory as it propels change, interpreting physical space as we project the dreams of our internal architecture to re-fashion our world.



## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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For Daria and Misha

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Persistence of Memory  
(Abstract)

### 1.0 Pairi Daeza

Introduction

Thesis

Questions and Intentions

Background Information

Geography and Climate

Pairi Daeza

The First Garden

Before Walls

Why Paradise

Manifestations

### 2.0 The First Garden (Literature Review)

Origins of an Idea

Origins of a Place

Significance of Key Elements

Realm of Influence

Passage and re-formation

Memory and Interpretation

### 3.0 The Architecture of Memory (Precedent Review)

Gardens (and Parks)

Buildings (Manifesting the Paradise Parti)

Houses

Hotels

Sacred Architecture (Mosque, Shrine, Tomb)

Public Architecture (Square, Bazaar, Museum)

### 4.0 Architecture of the Heart

A Journey

Intentions

Site & Program

Parti

Materiality

### 5.0 The Persistence of Memory (Project)

### 6.0 The Medium is the Message

Bibliography

Images





## 1. PAIRI DAEZA

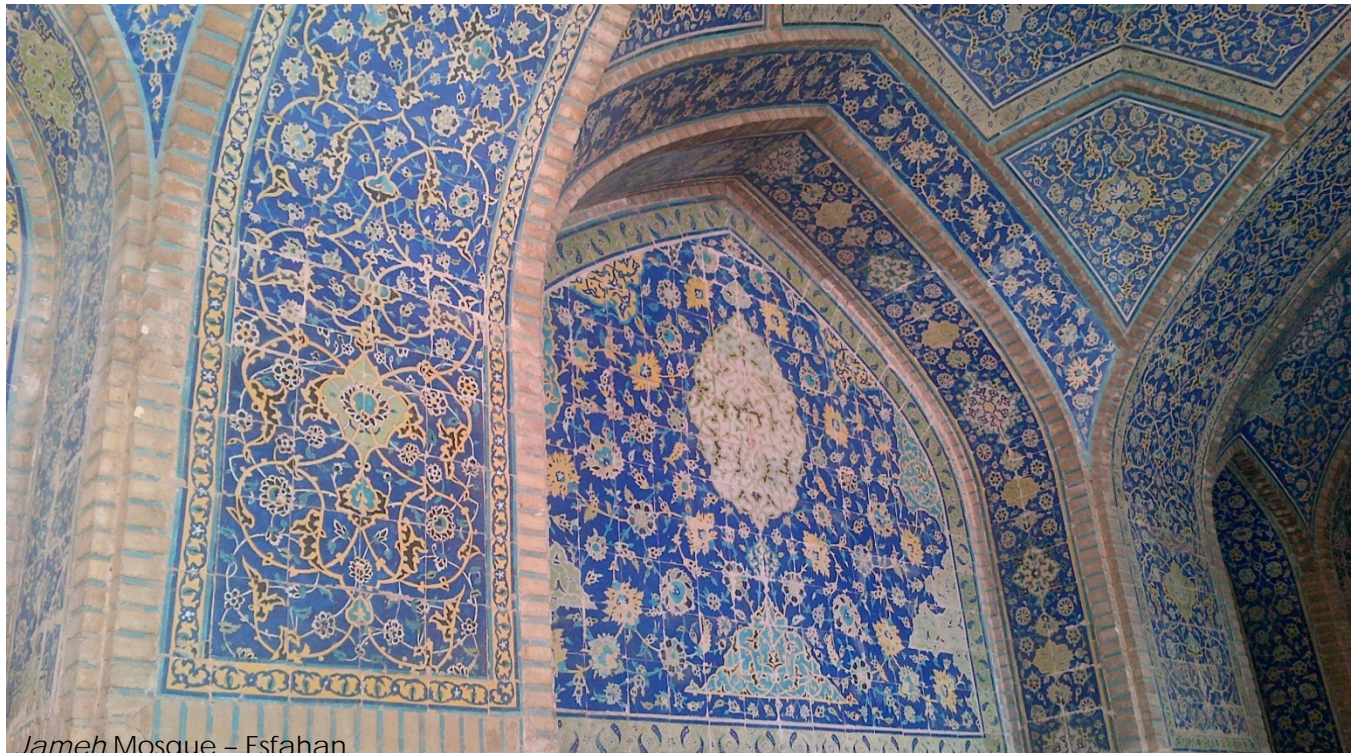




## INTRODUCTION

*"Architecture exists as a physical entity and therefore registers as a place that we come to remember... architecture, whether or not it still stands, can exist or be found beyond the physical site itself in our recollection of it. We function always with what I call, an 'architecture of the heart', or a place within us that holds on to the emoting memory of a place. That is the symbolic construction that connects our idea or image of a place to its physicality."*

(Hornstein, 2011. P.3)



Jameh Mosque – Esfahan



## **Thesis**

Memory is what shapes us. Memory drives our aspirations, and our search for happiness - for paradise.

Pairi Daeza – a garden enclosed by walls – was a simple response to a harsh desert climate and the need for the respite of shelter. The passing of millennia, and encounters through journey, memory, re-telling, and re-creating refracted this simple notion and manifested it in many locations and through multiple media. This process ultimately transformed “Paradise” into a potent aspirational concept overlaid with powerful emotions and desires for redemption and reward. Today, the word conjures images of peace and happiness, of eternal sanctuary.

In this thesis, I intend to look at how the forces of journey, migration, memory and desire transform a place into a powerful concept. Paralleling a personal journey with that of Paradise, I will examine a reading of the paradises encountered along my travels, coalescing the memories into an internal dream garden of visions.

As an immigrant, I face the challenge of reconciling the rupture at the core of continued existence, of bringing into alignment memories of the conflicting worlds I inhabit. For this reason, the project is positioned in the realm of memory as it seeks to honour the past while illuminating the possibility of future paradises.

## **Questions and Intentions**

In the beginning, there are only questions - spanning miles and millennia.

What is Paradise? Where and why did it originate? What was Paradise intended to be, and what did it transform into? What are the journeys it has taken as a concept as well as a place? And most important - is there still paradise – and what does it look like now?

There is also a paradox : a place that originated as a climatic response in a moment of triumph hundreds of years before the advent of Judaism, Christianity, or Islam has transformed into a potent dream to which all souls aspire, a universal concept overlaid with desire and passion. Disseminated through gardens, architecture, art, poetry and

the interactions of the two most influential courts (Canepa, 2009) of the ancient world, the Paradise Garden was a major influence not only within Iran and the conquering Islamic dynasties, but also throughout Asia and Europe.

My intention is to understand Paradise at its origins as well as through its journey of transformation and myriad manifestations. To explore its essence as place as well as promise. Along the way, I will examine its current meaning through a search for personal relevance. Ultimately, I will undertake to translate a construct originating 2600 years ago in an arid plateau to the lush lakeside of Toronto now.



Some of the forces at play are ancient, having to do with pomp and pageantry, the rituals and privileges of royalty, expressions of power and circumstance. Others deal with adaptation and transformation, resilience and resourcefulness in the face of invasion. The trajectory of transformation is tied to the history of a nation and its interactions as conquerors and under occupation, and thus, tied to the advent of globalization. All is propelled by memory - the stories we tell to and of ourselves – and

the overlay of desires and projections. The nebulous and disjointed realm of memory, its mysterious operations and formidable power, is the language through which the journey is narrated.

Secondary questions concern themselves with the significance of a number. Why seven? It is a number believed to represent perfection and plenty by the ancient Greeks(Wikipedia, 2012). Seven is a significant number throughout history and theology – and in numerous other fields. (In fact, a search for book titles using the number yields 2339 results in the Ryerson Library catalogue!) There are seven days of the week – the number of days it took to create the universe. There are seven seas, seven heavens, seven virtues, and seven deadly sins. Seven is a prominent number in Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. There is a seven year itch, seven dwarves, seven wonders of the world, and even seven lamps of architecture. So, seven it shall be.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION



Map of Iran  
(The Circle of Ancient Iranian Studies, 2011)

## Geography and Climate

*"The Iranian plateau is not an auspicious place for a garden."*  
(Moynihan, 1979. p.14)

Contrary to the popular conception of Iran as all desert, it is a land of innumerable mountains. The geography of present-day Iran is comprised of plenteous mountain ranges surrounding an interior plateau which is primarily salt desert. Roughly two-thirds



of this ancient plateau constitutes Iran (Pirnia & Ashtiani, 2007), with the balance extending into Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Iran is also a land of complex climates spanning everything from arid desert to humid gulf seasoned with snow-clad mountains and misty sea-side villages. Its climatic complexity notwithstanding, the development of habitation and civilization has been primarily concentrated in and around the arid interior. Mountain ranges which extend along the Caspian to the north and much of the Persian Gulf to the south cut off the moisture traveling inland from these bodies of water, creating narrow zones of green on the water side of the Alborz range in the north and the Zagros range to the south. Thus, while annual rainfall on the Caspian coast averages 1355 mm (53 inches), rainfall on the plateau averages around 126 mm (5 inches) a year (Beazley & Harverson, 1982). In contrast, annual precipitation in Toronto averages 830 mm (32.7 inches)(Wikipedia, 2012).



Aerial view of *qanat*  
(Bastani Parizi, 1978. cover)

The development of an ancient civilization in co-existence with the desert was enabled by ingenious climate management solutions. These included the *qanat* (hand-dug underground channels) to bring water from the foothills into the desert, *ab-anbar* (cisterns) to store the hard-won water in, *bad-gir* (wind catcher) system for cooling – often combined with underground streams or pools – along with the use of the plentiful dust to make bricks and thick walls with a high thermal insulation value (Beazley & Harverson, 1982).

The development of *qanat* was the single most decisive factor in the settlement of the Iranian Plateau. Around 1,000 B.C., the ancient Persians and Medes created a painstaking system to bring snow melt from the mountains to the dry interior. They first excavated a shaft or mother well (which could be as deep as 150 feet) into an underground stream at the base of a mountain, whence they tunneled outward on a shallow gradient to direct the water towards the plains. At regular intervals, vertical shafts were dug to excavate the dirt displaced along the route of the *qanat* (Beazley & Harverson, 1982). The rhythm of these mounds of earth is a reverse foot-print of sorts, marking the hidden journey of water below the desert floor as it flows to enable life.



*Char-Badgir* Water Cistern – Yazd, depicting an *ab-anbar* surrounded by four cooling *bad-gir*

### **Pairi Daeza**

" *Garden of Eden*" and " *Heaven*" are two first (and for our purposes most significant) definitions of " *Paradise*" listed in *The Concise Oxford dictionary of English etymology*. These are followed by additional meanings such as " *park*" , " *pleasure ground*" , and the explanation that the word was " *first used of the parks of Persian kings and nobles...*" (Hoad, 1986. p.335).

The " *Etymonline*" website entry also begins with " *Garden of Eden*" as the first definition, referring the origins of the Old French " *paradis*" , Late Latin " *paradisus*" , and Greek " *paradeisos*" (meaning park, paradise) to Iran and derived from the Avestan " *pairidaeza*" (Etymonline, 2011). The entry indicates the word to be a "compound of pairi- "around" + diz "to make, form (a wall)" , and proceeds to note that Modern Farsi and Arabic both contain the word " *firdaus*" (again meaning " *garden, paradise*" ). The entry closes by stating that the Greek word " *was used in Septuagint* (ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (Wikipedia, 2011) ) *to mean "Garden of Eden,"* and in New Testament translations of Luke xxiii.43 to mean " *heaven*" (Etymonline, 2011) . Modern Farsi also contains the word *piramoon* – meaning perimeter – whose roots may likely be traced to the ancient Avestan word *pairi*. Nasr dates the origins of the word to 3,000 years ago, when it denoted the gardens surrounding – forming the perimeter – of many Iranian houses (Nasr, 2010).



## The First Garden

*"On the great plain of Marvdasht east of the Zagros mountains lie the scattered remains of the earliest garden of which we have a record."*  
(Hobhouse, 2004. p.7)



The origins of Paradise as a place date back to 550 BC, when Achaemenid king Cyrus the Great ruled over ancient Iran. Cyrus had overthrown the Medes and united the various regions and dynasties of the Iranian Plateau to create an Empire – which would grow to include much of Asia and parts of Europe at its peak (Hobhouse, 2004).

Following defeat of the Medes near Pasargad in central Iran, Cyrus proceeded to build his capital at the location where he had triumphed (Hobhouse, 2004). During this period of prosperity and potential, there was time for the enjoyment of gardens – enclosed gardens which served not only as respite but also as pageantry. Some of these paradise gardens were expansive enough to be stocked with and serve as sites for royal hunts (Allsen, 2006). Such amenities were essential components of the majestic setting against which the ritual and grandeur of the Achaemenian Dynasty would be staged (Shahbazi, 2005).



While there are no remains of these first gardens (Hobhouse, 2004), the ancient ruins of Persepolis still beat against the barren expanse of Marvdasht. The massive columns and fantastic relief carvings simultaneously evidence the grandeur of aspiration while they manifest the dust from which paradise was wrested. Thus, it is perhaps ironic that those endeavours of which no material evidence remains should have had such lasting and far-reaching influence :

*"These first ideas of a garden as a paradise were to be as vital in the history of the spiritual Muslim garden and the Indian gardens of the Mughal Empire as they have been influential in the gardens of Renaissance Europe and Western civilization."*

(Hobhouse, 2004. p.7)



Shiraz

Walkway at Narenjestan Garden.

These walled gardens combined architecture with plantings, and were organized around water for practical as well as symbolic purposes. The geometric organization of the layout originated in part from the need to conduct water throughout the garden, leading to a four-part plan which could be adapted according to the scale and extent of the garden. Animals were often added to the abundant plantings with profusions of

flowers and trees - especially fruit bearing trees. Many of the plant and animal specimens were collected during crusades in other territories (Moynihan, 1979). Therefore, in these places of sanctuary, *"The space inside the enclosure was deliberately glorified in contrast to the hostile world without, confirming the Persians' in-built attitude toward nature in a land where habitation depends on the availability of water."* (Hobhouse, 2004. p.9)

### Before Walls

*"The earliest gardens were desert oases, fenced to keep out drifting sands, as well as human and animal marauders."*

(Hobhouse, 2004. p.45)



Desert – near Tabas

Long before the conquest of kings occasioned the creation of formal grandeur in the form of palaces and walled-in gardens, oases sprung from the desert floor, nourished by



natural springs (Hobhouse, 2004). A chance encounter by a delighted nomad roaming for the next stop, or dusty caravans of travelers looking for respite led to a camp being struck and the beginnings of settlement. It follows that walls would be erected to safeguard the oasis from sand and predators animal and human (Hobhouse, 2004).

The desert which was capable of producing these inspirational oases also dictated the often harsh terms of survival. The necessity of co-existing with the desert led to the development of ingenious irrigation, construction, and air circulation methods which have endured for centuries (Beazley & Harverson, 1982). These techniques are what enabled the transformation of the chance oasis into the planned paradise. Some of these natural climate control systems and approaches, such as *bad-gir* (wind catcher) have been adapted for use in western buildings in recent decades (in the form of wind towers and the growing emphasis on natural and cross-ventilation).

### **Why Paradise?**

A Paradise Garden is a sanctuary. A place of respite, a break from the world outside its walls. It is a chance to contemplate and marvel at the abundance of nature, a passive reverie of contemplation. According to poet and author Vita Sackville-West who visited Iran in the early part of the twentieth century, for an Iranian the garden

*"...is not a place where he wants to stroll; it is a place where he wants to sit and entertain his friends with conversation, music, philosophical discourse, and poetry; and if he can watch the spring rain pouring down, so much the better, for he knows it will not come again for months and months and months."*(Moynihan, 1979. p.18)

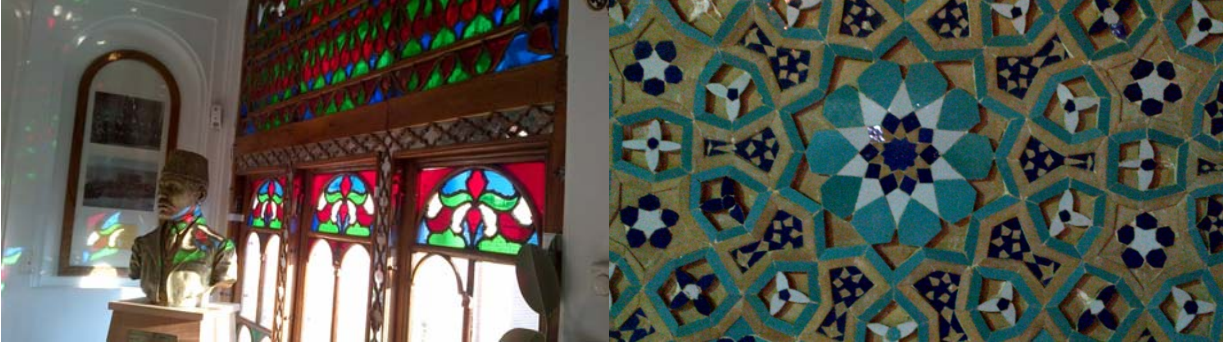
The layout is simple, and unvariable. The "*Char Bagh*" (Four Gardens) standard layout for Persian Gardens is comprised of two axes, one longer than other (Khansari, Moghtader, & Yavari, 1998). Depending on the size and complexity of the garden, this essential parti can be repeated multiple times, resulting in a very rectilinear and geometric layout.



*Golshan Garden – Tabas*

## **Manifestations**

In addition to gardens, Paradise has been manifested in a multitude of other constructs. There were the sizeable gardens during the Achaemenid and Sassanian dynasties which were stocked with animals encountered during wars or travel and served as parks for royal hunts (Khansari et al, 1998). There was the public architecture of the squares and caravanserais (such as in Esfahan during the Safavid Dynasty), the numerous mosques and shrines throughout the Islamic world, and of course residential architecture – of which early 20<sup>th</sup> century Qajar houses are a prime example. All of these typologies use the Paradise parti of a perimeter encircling an internal event.



Stained glass windows, *Qajar House-Tabriz*

Tile work, *Seyed Roknoldin Mausoleum-Yazd*

Beyond architecture, Paradise has manifested itself in the beautiful hand painted tile work which adorns mosques, mausoleums, palaces, and shrines. The glories of Paradise are represented in rich riots of colour - the turquoise blue of the sky, the lapis lazuli of water, the green of spring leaves, the bright yellow of the sun, and all the colours of plants and flowers. Due to the Islamic belief that representation of the human figure is a sin against God because it promotes idolatry (Wikipedia, 2012), tiles, mirrors, and stained glass in mosques and shrines often employ stylized geometries and arabesques which emulate the natural world. Elsewhere, plants and flowers predominate, with the occasional animal figure, and the very rare human.

Carpets are a thousand and one stories again, each the handiwork of years of painstaking effort, each relating a tale of joy through dancing arabesques and beautiful colours. Kasraian and Naderi speak of the similarities between Iranian Gardens and rugs (Kasraian & Naderi, 2003) , and Curatola and Scarcia describe Persian carpets as "Flowers of wool" (Curatola & Scarcia, 2007. p.217) - veritable gardens, riotous with plant forms, animals, and colour. Then there is the brightly hued stained glass of Qajar era architecture which uses colour and sinuous lines to represent nature. The multifaceted brilliance of glass and mirrors in shrines with their geometric abstractions of garden themes and colours dazzle visitors as they create otherworldly visions of refraction.





Wool and Silk Carpets - Esfahan

In the arts, poetry and painting both abound with representations of Paradise. Images of gardens, flowers, water, and nightingales proliferate in centuries of Iranian poetry. A prime example is *Ferdowsi's* epic *Shahnameh* (book of kings). This epic is one of the best known, loved, and widely read books in Iran since its creation in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century. It ranks alongside *Hafez's* volume of poetry (he was called *Hafez* – the keeper – for his memorization of the Koran in its entirety), and the holy Koran. *Shahnameh* was a masterpiece, influential in mythologizing and celebrating Iran's ancient royal history and traditions. Over a period of 30 years, *Ferdowsi* collected primeval legends and epic tales passed from one generation to the next, and set the exploits and battles of pre-Islam royalty in verse. In re-telling the stories of kings and wars and conquest - often in lush settings and parks - *Ferdowsi* documented and made vivid a way of life, reinforcing the connection between paradise and royalty through his vivid depictions of palaces and gardens. And as an interesting aside – *Firdowsi's* name means "of paradise", being derived from the word "*Firdaus*" discussed earlier.

*Ferdowsi's* *Shahnameh* is a vivid example of what Gianroberto Scarcia was referring to when he spoke of finding "...in the ""perennially Persian" features of Islamic culture an historical reconquest of Muhammad by Zoroaster." (Curatola & Scarcia, 2007. p.8) Later printings of the *Shahnameh* incorporated intricate "miniatures" – a style of painting

which employed a flattened perspective, vivid colours, and gold leaf – executed in intricate detail. These small illustrations created an entire universe within a few centimeters of drawing by depicting gardens, palaces, lovers, warriors, jinns, and hunters in meticulous and elaborate detail. This style of painting was popular in Iran and India, used primarily for the illustrations of text (Kasraian & Naderi, 2003). Wood carving, plaster and glass reliefs, stone work, and metal grilles are some of the other instances of joyful expressions of paradise incorporated into a variety of building types.





## 2. THE FIRST GARDEN



*Golshan* Garden – Tabas



Because this project occupies the realm of dreams - memory, interpretations, and parallel realities appear to be suitable topics of inquiry. Accordingly, while the literature surveyed includes writings on Paradise – as a spiritual and theological concept and later as an earthly reality in the form of gardens – there is emphasis on research on the significance of memory in shaping our identity and the internal architecture of our dreams(Hornstein, 2011), in sparking the act of creation (Bastéa, 2004).



St Petersburg, Florida

The dreams we project have included the rituals and pageantry of kings and emperors, the imagery of royalty and power. Dreams of earthly aspiration have combined with the primeval human longing for an afterlife. It is the passage and re-formation of these dreams, and the ways in which memory re-interprets powerful visitations which have transformed Paradise.

## Origins of an Idea

The beginnings of notions of higher power, reward and retribution, and the promise of afterlife are as old as recorded time,(Moynihan, 1979) and quite possibly predate it. The struggle to make sense of the world, of natural elements (upon whose wanton mercy existence depended), of the mysteries of seasons and the star filled universe prompted the formation of systems of belief and ritual as a way to control the uncontrollable. Remarkably, the ideal of Paradise was a shared concept - common to disparate, unrelated societies (Moynihan, 1979).

This ancient idea persisted and flourished throughout the millennia. The earliest recorded instance of the Paradise myth appears in the first known writings of mankind (Moynihan, 1979. p.3) in Mesopotamia, and later in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* which describes the titular ruler's life and adventures 2700 years before Christ (Moynihan, 1979). The *Avesta* – the holy book of the Zoroastrians – talks of a paradise promised by the Prophet Zarathustra (around 600 to 400 BC), describing it as a place “ *with paths of burnished gold, pleasure pavilions of diamonds, and filled with fruit and flowers.* ” (Moynihan, 1979. p.4) The Old Testament makes mention of “ *pardes* ” - from “ *Pairidaeza* ” in Old Persian - to denote a garden, followed by the identification of Paradise with the Garden of Eden in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, and the Bible's equation of Paradise with Heaven (Moynihan, 1979).

## Origins of a Place

*“ The idea of Paradise as a garden is one of man's oldest ideals...  
Belief in the myth has lessened the pain of life and fear of death.”*  
(Moynihan, 1979. p.2)

Manifestations of the idea of Paradise as an earthly garden first appeared in Sumer and Babylonia as the “ *Garden of the Gods* ” (Moynihan, 1979. p.3) in which Gilgamesh wanders, and in the writings of Homer as the “ *Elysian Fields* ” (Moynihan, 1979. p.4). Such “ *Dreams of Happiness* ” (Delumeau, 1995. p.1) were the hopes and aspirations which religion tapped into to create constructs such as “ *Gardens of Delights* ” (Delumeau, 1995. p.1) as the proverbial carrot with which behavior could be governed.



The logical extension to the idea of Paradise as a physical garden inhabitable by humans, is conceptualizing the means of habitation. Speculation on how the functions of eating, drinking, and sleeping could be accommodated leads to the conclusion that some form of shelter would have to exist (Rykwert, 1972). Rykwert's inference from this line of thinking is that the beginnings of architecture were engendered by Paradise as a physical place (Rykwert, 1972). Medieval scholars speculated about the corporeal location of Paradise, and explorers sailed the ends of the earth in search of its whereabouts. Some of the greatest minds of the Renaissance endeavoured to recreate the Garden of Eden, and even the dawning of the Enlightenment only served to transfer the longing for the discovery of its physical location to projecting and embodying the ideals in gardens (Delumeau, 1995).

This progression illustrates the manner in which the ancient idea of Paradise as a promise for the afterlife transformed into and overlaid the reality of Paradise Gardens, and earthly location serving as a "celebration of life" (Moynihan, 1979. p.12).



## Significance of Key Elements

*"The reverence for water, the mystical feeling for trees, the symbolic division of the earth into quarters by the four rivers of life and the significance of a mountain are among the most ancient and enduring traditions of the Near East, but to us the most important is yet another – the Paradise myth, the vision of Paradise as a garden."*

(Moynihan, 1979. p.2)

The significance of the three key elements of a Paradise garden - water, trees, the quadripartite geometry - can be traced back earliest days of civilization in Mesopotamia (Moynihan, 1979). The power and primacy of these recurring themes accretes from their universal existence – instances of which can be found throughout time and across our world.

The primacy of water – its power to give life as well as to destroy – led to its veneration. Trees represented re-birth as well as immortality – and aspiration to heaven – with the "*Tree of Life*" a significant symbol in early Mesopotamia (Moynihan, 1979. p.6). Belief systems such as ancient Indian Brahmanism and Upanishads as well as Central Asian Shamanism refer to sacred trees, considering them in some instances "*the symbolic axis of the world.*" (Moynihan, 1979. p.6) Major religions such as Islam and Christianity also make mention of sacred trees, as do Kabbalistic writings of medieval times.

Finally, the idea of the "*four rivers*" which divide the earth is again ancient – the first known instance documenting it was pottery found in the prehistoric artifacts of the city of Samarra (Moynihan, 1979) in present-day Iraq dating back to 5500–4800 BC (Wikipedia, 2011). The four rivers also appear in ancient Indian beliefs, are made mention of by Akkadian kings of Mesopotamia in 2500 B.C., and in Christianity in the book of Genesis (Moynihan, 1979). This is how myth and symbolism generated the geometry which governs layout : "*In the Paradise Garden, the crossing of the watercourses represents the four rivers of life .*" (Moynihan, 1979. p.9)



*Narenjestan Garden - Shiraz*

## Realm of Influence

The Paradise Garden originated during the reign of the Achaemenid Dynasty, which was "*considered to be the world's first powerful empire (under the reign of Cyrus the Great...), it was also the largest empire of the ancient world, stretching from the Balkans and Turkey in the west to Pakistan in the east*" (Curatola & Scarcia, 2007. inside cover).

Through travel and war, commerce and conquest, ritual and pomp, the Paradise Garden spread in retelling from the arid center of Iran to India, throughout the Islamic world, to China, to Greece and Rome and points beyond – at times surprising the visitor with its unlikely presence. During a trip to India, Moynihan was amazed by her first experience of a Paradise garden: "*These geometrically laid out, enclosed water gardens are so foreign to the Indian environment that they are almost startling*" (Moynihan, 1979. p.vi).



While Iran's location along the silk road provided exposure to travelers and created a web of influence through commerce, its critical position between Europe and Asia ensured a steady stream of attacks and conquests – from Greeks to Mongols, Romans to Arabs. For a period of 400 years (642 – 224 B.C.) – before Iran was over-run by Islam and the Roman Empire fell, the powerful Sassanian Dynasty of Iran and Imperial Rome were rivals as well as exemplars of supremacy, projecting their empires' splendor through displays of courtly ritual, the architectural grandeur of palaces and gardens, and the visual arts. Such was the intensity of this exchange that the collapse of the two Empires in the 7<sup>th</sup> century sent aftershock waves of influence rippling east and west (Canepa, 2009).



## Passage and Re-formation

*"Persia collects artistic examples and reworks them in its own autonomous and shaded language, its extremely original, precise, and unmistakable manner, and then disseminates the whole with its generous cultural imperialism."*

(Curatola & Scarcia, 2007. p.7)

Because Iran has been subject to conquest, occupation, and imperialism for much of its history, it is astonishing to think of it as an agent of cultural imperialism. This paradigm can be understood through the importance of "passage" to the development of Iranian art and architecture – being located along the Silk Route Iran was possessed of the *"...capacity to attract and influence adjacent worlds..."* (Curatola & Scarcia, 2007. p.6)

Astonishing also, is the survival and persistence of Paradise gardens through centuries of conflict and the rule of foreign powers (Moynihan, 1979). While some marveled at this resilience across time and vast distances - *"A truly remarkable aspect of these gardens is their uniformity of design throughout the centuries and across so large an area of the world with so unsettled a history"* (Moynihan, 1979) - others such as Vita Sackville-West found this consistency repetitive, noting that visiting a single example was equivalent to seeing many (Hobhouse, 2004).

The exploration of and discovery of new lands across the oceans was a moment of transformation for the long-consistent Paradise Garden. Originating as vehicles for the projection of imperial power, thriving as cultivated oases painstakingly wrested from the desert, they now faced a cultural migration across the oceans. Alongside the cultivation of gardens, post-enlightenment explorers sought new lands anticipated to be a physical Paradise where some of the promises of Edenic Paradise could be fulfilled (Delumeau, 1995).

The drive for adventure and discovery which propelled the search for new territory with the qualities and potential fulfillment of Paradise is significant. This compulsion for discovery is key to understanding the divergent architectural approaches to





## Memory and Interpretation

*"Are the cities we believe we know and understand simply a reinterpretation of our own Venice, encountered again and again under different guises?"*

(Bastéa, 2004. p.4)

*"he'd never known before that migration wasn't one unbroken forward movement; it was sideways, backwards, forwards, a passage enlivened by indecision in the face of real and imagined danger."*

(Hay, 2007. p.306)

While attitudes towards and experiences of the act of migration can differ, the powerful nostalgia for what one imagines to be homeland is consistent. Also consistent is the manner in which experiences of the place one has re-located to are tinged with memories of the past (Aciman, 1999). It is in fact, as if the memories of the old home become the prism through which one is able to vision the new.

In my own case, (and that of many contemporaries who left Iran under similar circumstances and with similar - or no - notions of what this leaving signified) I can relate that nearly 35 years on, my memories of Iran are the most vivid and powerful of the cache I have accumulated. Any sight, smell, or sound that evokes Iran finds a direct path to my heart, and it in fact feels at times that the further I travel, the more unyielding the bonds grow. This, perhaps is what Sassen anticipates when she writes of the intensification of an immigrant's bonds with the home country through repeated voyages back and returns to the new land (Sassen, 1998).

The accretion of physical memories enables deepening experiences of place - attesting to the powerful role of emotion in the corporeal act of presence (Bloomer & Moore, 1977). Inasmuch as we may only occasionally acknowledge our physical selves, the body never lies. The successive layers of memory empower our experiences and creativity : *"Why do we visit significant buildings whenever we can, wherever we are, if not to imprint them in our memory, to learn their spaces by passing our body through*

*them, to make them part of us in some ways, and maybe to draw from them in our own designs?"* (Bastéa, 2004. p.3)

This line of thinking leads to a question : what happens if that site, once experienced and now enriching experience, is no longer – or is no longer accessible (Hornstein, 2011)? Does this impinge on the immigrant's ability to re-construct experience? I believe this paradigm explains the urge to document – in words, images, memory - significant moments of physical experience as a means of transporting "*architecture back and forth (in a sense) from its physical site to locations in the imagination...losing site, and finding it again in the many different places where architecture exists.*" (Hornstein, 2011. p.1)

So it was that each visitor, court emissary, or chance traveler came away with memories and emotional responses to the Paradise Gardens. Each poem extolling Paradise, letter describing it, carpet representing it, or painting depicting it was another layer of interpretation, of the magical replay of memory and emotion transforming experience. As accretion of memories enabled internal architectures of the psyche, expressions of such memories overlaid with desire transformed the original physical place into a potent concept. The powerful core of the place as sanctuary, and its genesis as the perimeter of stark contrasts made it a natural vehicle for spiritual aspirations. So it is that "*Paradise*" today has the dictionary definitions of "*Garden of Eden*" and "*Heaven*" (Hoad, 1986. p.335).



Takht-e Jamshid, Shiraz

There is an internal landscape within each of us where all the places we've ever visited, seen, or dreamt of reside as virtual parallels to the physical constructs – with the physical serving as a point of departure for the layering of real and manufactured memories (Hornstein, 2011). This paradigm illuminates my impulse to capture the images of paradise as I encountered them in my travels this year. Formally documenting the memories as digital images allowed an easily reviewable archive through which to *"explore the relationship between memory and place, and ways in which architecture triggers memory"* (Hornstein, 2011. p.1). Architecture not only triggers memory, it shapes and influences its development - and the identity of self. Therefore, architecture is not limited to the realm of the physical, it simultaneously inhabits the imagination and the heart (Hornstein, 2011).

For these reasons, this project situates itself within the realm of memory in order to explore *"the question of what it means to live in a world of material objects and physical place, yet be conjoined to the metaphysical"* (Hornstein, 2011. p.7).



We are defined by memory. Memory is the imprint of our journey through life, of the emotions attached to physical experiences. Memory describes the architecture of our psyche, from which flow our projections and creations. Consequently, the passage and re-formation of dreams and the ways in which memory interprets powerful visitations are the forces which have shaped this project.





### 3. THE ARCHITECTURE OF MEMORY

*Takht-e Jamshid, Shiraz*

*"Uprooted and dispersed, these (former neighbours) constantly refer back to the architecture of the home itself, which...structures their memories"*  
(Google Book Review, 2012)

I have spent sizeable portions of the past year traveling – and pondering paradise. Most significantly, in October and early November of 2011, I travelled throughout Iran in search of Paradise in gardens and elsewhere. Looking back at the trip and how I have represented it here, I am struck by the compulsion to see and faithfully relate as much as possible. To validate my home of origin – and thereby myself - by bringing back and sharing memories.

Guided by Bakhtiari's *Road Atlas of Iran* (Bakhtiari, 2010), within whose orthographic rendition of my country I scratched out the roads used to traverse its geography, the physical journey began. We set off from the north eastern city of *Mashhad*, Iran's most popular pilgrimage destination with the shrine of *Imam Reza* at its heart - and the city where I was born. In this sense, the journey was a reverse pilgrimage, its intention as much exploration of the past as resolution of the future.

I travelled south-west through the *Binaloud* mountains, through *Gonabad* with its budding fields of saffron, and down to the desert city of *Tabas* – whose outskirts feature a husk of a US military helicopter displayed in commemoration of the US's failed 1979 attempt to free its hostages - and site of a 7.8 earthquake in 1978 (Wikipedia, 2012) which destroyed much of the city.

From *Tabas* I continued along the salt desert to the ancient city of *Yazd* at the very center of Iran – narrow *kutcheh* (alleys) intricately woven along mud walls, tall *bad-gir* (wind catcher) reaching up to air currents, and blue tiled domes set against the dun of the dust. Journeying south-east found Kerman - with the *Shazdeh Gardens* in nearby *Mahan* a green oasis in the midst of desert. And always, stately layers of purple and grey mountains stood sentinel alongside the black ribbon of road. Receding into the horizon in majestic tiers, the mountains sanctified the journey.





Downed US Chopper – near Tabas

Southwest to *Shiraz* – city of wine (pre-Islamic Revolution) and poetry – and in the plains nearby the historic ruins of *Persepolis* (used as a backdrop by the Shah for a multi-million dollar pageant staged with the intent to legitimize his sovereignty to the world and to his subjects). Thence the journey swung north to Esfahan with its fabled bridges dancing across the ironically dry *Zayandeh Rood* (river of life) – courtesy of the Islamic Republic's irrigation plans - and a detour to the city of *Kashan* to visit the *Fin Gardens* where a threatened *Qajar* era king exiled and later put to death his progressive and nationalist prime minister (Burke & Elliot, 2008).

As the mountains closed in and multiplied, we climbed north-west along their flanks to Hamadan – site of the ancient city of *Hegmataneh* (Burke & Elliot, 2008) - and to the Turk city of *Tabriz* whence the *Qajar* dynasty (late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century) - infamous for relinquishing large parts of Iran's territory in various treaties in order to subsidize their lavish lifestyles - originated.

*Tehran* (Iran's capital since 1795 (Wikipedia, 2012), and its largest city) was the terminus of this journey – and the city of my childhood. It was from Tehran's *Mehrabad* Airport that I flew west all those years ago. It was at this same airport that I touched down a life-time later, furtively bending down to smell and kiss the asphalt of the tarmac while attempting to maintain the unfamiliar *hijab* (the protective garb all women must wear in public).

In Tehran I visited the park-like grounds of the Saad Abad complex, site of several Pahlavi-era mansions and palaces and now a complex of museums, and peered down at the city through the smog surrounding the recently inaugurated Milad (birth) Tower. As the clouds of smog shifted, it was easy to imagine the layering of other cities, other experiences of reality onto that particular instance of presence.



Top and Bottom - *Milad* Tower, Tehran



## Gardens (and Parks)



*Chehel Sotoon* Palace – Esfahan



*Ganj-nameh* -Hamadan



*Abasi* Hotel Esfahan



*Ganj-nameh* - Hamadan

Paradise Gardens are very formulaic – as noted by travelers such as writers Vita Sackville West and Penelope Hobhouse (Hobhouse, 2004). Often rectangular in configuration, they are organized in some multiple of the quadripartite *char bagh* (four-garden) plan. The geometry is rectilinear due also to the paramount dictates of water distribution.

The resultant layout is strongly axial, usually with a primary central axis spanning the length of the garden. The main approach, water features, and important buildings and pavilions are organized alongside this axis. Secondary axes lead off the main axis, and flanking planting beds featuring rows of tall trees – poplar, plane, cypress, or date palm – march alongside for emphasis.

There is a profusion of flowers and greens and sights and textures, and of course, water everywhere – the extravagance of its presence within flouting its absence without. Channels, streams, reflecting pools, waterfalls, and fountains all attest to the miracle that makes such verdant abundance possible in defiance of the desert. Its movement, stasis, leaps and falls create a symphonic backdrop layered over the hush of desert and mountains.

The rhythm of repeated elements is striking – exhibited in the tall trees which accentuate avenues and prospects as well as the architecture of the buildings included in the construct. Views framed by and seen through elements – openings, archways, a brick screen with a pattern punched out of it – are given emphasis.

A transitional entrance building is mandatory as the portal delineating the sacred within from the profane without. The visitor passes from blinding sunlight into shadows to emerge into the cool mystery of the garden. The architecture can include additional feature buildings, pavilions, and occasionally entire wings spanning one or more sides of the garden.





*Golshan Garden – Tabas*  
(Google Maps, 2011)



*Dowlatabad Garden - Yazd*

There are numerous distinct exemplifications of this formula throughout Iran. I visited *Golshan* Garden located within the city of *Tabas*, *Dowlatabad* Garden around which the city of *Yazd* has grown, *Mahan's Shazdeh* Garden located an hour south-east of *Kerman* and set in the foothills of the *Saheb Al-Zaman* mountains in the midst of a salt desert, *Kashan's Fin* Garden just outside of the city, the small *Narenjestan* Garden within the city of *Shiraz*, and (a less consistent example) *Shiraz's Eram* Garden. Located within, on the edges, or outside of major cities, they are all deep green oases where the temperature perceptibly drops and the concerns and conflicts of the world outside recede.

First on our route was *Golshan* Garden - re-built after the massive quake in 78 – resonant with the sounds of rushing water and featuring white pelicans solemnly wandering the paths alongside visitors. Situated along an east-west axis, the main entrance is at the west end of the garden. At the opposite end, ripples of heat emanate beyond the perimeter wall at whose foot a wide stream emerges from under the stone paving. Rushing into the garden in a wide channel, it quickly bifurcates to run the length of the garden on either side of the main prospect.



Shazdeh Garden – Mahan  
(Google Maps, 2011)



Eram Garden – Shiraz

While *Golshan* Garden features only an entrance building (it was always a public garden), the much larger *Dowlatabad* Garden in *Yazd* features a complex of buildings. The entrance building is situated along a secondary axis, itself part of a smaller walled garden through which visitors pass in order to access the main garden. The terminus of the primary axis oriented north west-south east is a series of buildings. These feature a centralized and ornate series of rooms, balconies, and pavilions cooled with the tallest (Beazley & Harverson, 1982) *bad-gir* in Iran. The rooms are decorated with fantastic stained glass screens representing nature in geometric patterns.

*Shazdeh* Garden was built as the summer residence of a *Qajar*-era prince (hence the name – *Shazdeh* meaning prince), and is easily the most spectacular of the gardens I visited. Set against the panorama of mountains beyond its high walls, the main garden is accessed through a smaller secondary garden along the same axis. The main garden steps upwards along the north-east – south-west axis, with large pools, fountains, and waterfalls heightening the dramatic sense of ascent. Tall poplars line the walks, and excited clutches of starlings chatter in and out of their green abodes.

*Eram* Garden is the anomaly in this batch of Paradise Gardens. It adheres to the formula in one section of the central layout where an ornate main building is reflected in a large pool facing it and both are part of an axial organization of a portion of the rambling park. Affiliated with the adjacent University of *Shiraz*, it is a teaching and horticultural garden as well as a pleasure ground. Unlike the others, this sprawling



garden does is not organized along pools and channels of water. As befits the city of *Shiraz* (in whose outer edges the garden is located), I met a poet gardener who recited his poems for me as I avoided the spray sprinklers.



*Narenjestan Garden – Shiraz*

The other garden I visited in Shiraz was *Narenjestan* – the private garden of a residence that was used for years by the archeologist and Persian historian Arthur Upham Pope as office and research facility. The basement of the main building features a museum dedicated to Pope and his work. The smallest of all the gardens due to its function and mid-city location, it featured rows of *narenj* (bitter orange) trees – whose scent must bewitch in springtime. The entry buildings feature intricate and colourful tile work including –uncharacteristically – human figures (photo) as well as plant and floral motifs. The pools and channels of water along which profusions of potted plants are arranged were nearly dry. But the worn hollows of the flagstones along the central axis retained puddles of irrigation water, capturing reflections of the sky underfoot.





*Narenjestan Garden – Shiraz*  
(Google Maps, 2011)



*Fin Garden - Kashan*

Famed for its hand-woven carpets, the city of *Kashan* is just north-east of *Esfahan* and *Natanz* – in Iran's nuclear heartland. *Fin* Garden lies on the western outskirts of the city and just off of the *Qom-Kashan* Freeway (*Qom* is Iran's second holiest city and erstwhile home of *Ayatollah Khomeini*). The garden is filled with tall ancient trees, with channels and streams and pools woven throughout. It is a large complex containing multiple buildings – library, museum, and the infamous "*Fin* Baths" where *Qajar*-era prime minister (Pirnia & Ashtiani, 2007) *Amir Kabir*'s death sentence was carried out by opening his veins to the warm waters.

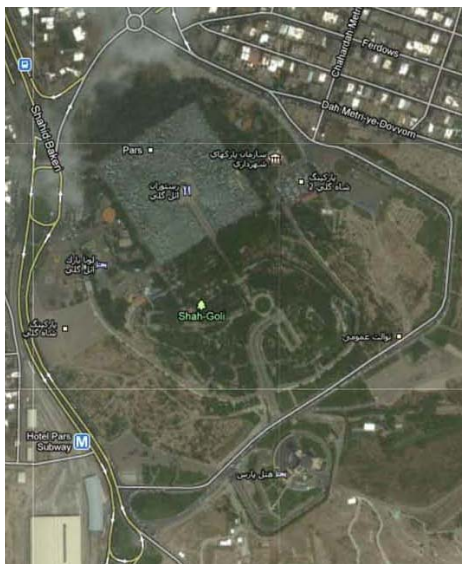


Left and Right – *Fin* Garden, *Kashan*

I include Il Goli Park and the Saad Abad Complex in this category as points of comparison. Bounded by roads on all sides, Il Goli aspires more to wilderness than Paradise, and if anything exhibits a reverse-paradise parti : a building set in the middle of an artificial lake. Saad Abad Complex is a small forest of trees and rivers enclosed by



a wall. Nestled at the foot of the Alborz mountains, it is dotted with the palaces and mansions of the Shah and his family.



*Il Goli Park – Tabriz*  
(Google Maps, 2011)



*Saad Abad Complex – Tehran*



*Il Goli Park – Tabriz*

## Buildings

### (Manifesting the Paradise Parti)

The building typologies influenced by the paradise parti include houses, mosques, shrines, hotels, public squares,... The architectural expression ranges from the simple vernacular style of a mud-hut in the desert, to decorative residential examples of *Qajar*-

era affluence, to the rich, almost baroque explosion of naturalistic decoration in buildings such as *Esfahan's Abasi Hotel*, and the ostentatious architecture of major Islamic shrines such as *Mashhad's Shrine of Imam Reza*.

What these buildings have in common a layout which diagrammatically translates into a central courtyard or plaza, around which the functions of the building – rooms of a house, lobby and restaurant and guest rooms of a hotel, spaces for prayer and congregation in a mosque – are arranged : "*In many Iranian buildings, it appears that the designer's first consideration was the central courtyard and its proportions, followed by the organization of various spaces around it.*" (Kasraian & Naderi, 2003. p.17)

There is also the modern re-interpretation of this parti in high rise buildings in Iran and elsewhere : an atrium occupying the center of the building and stretching upwards to the sky, housing an arrangement of plants and flowers below a glass roof.



## Houses



*Boroujerdi House – Yazd*  
(Google Maps, 2011)



*Nazari Garden – Hameadan*



*Qajar House - Tabriz*

I visited the *Boroujerdi* House in *Yazd*, *Nazari* House and Garden in *Hamadan*, and *Qajar* House in *Tabriz*. The *Boroujerdi* and *Qajar* Houses (museums now) both follow the paradise parti of a perimeter building and/or wall surrounding a central garden with a water feature sited along the central axis of the garden.

The more formally organized *Qajar* House features an outer main garden (*birooni*) accessed through an entry building off the alley as well as a smaller inner garden (*andarooni*) reached through the house. Such residences often featured two gardens – a *birooni* and an *andarooni* – inner and outer or private and public yards to observe the religious dictates of modesty for women. Even houses not large or wealthy enough to afford the two gardens were equipped with two knockers of different designs and weights – which would issue different warnings according to the gender of the person requesting entry.

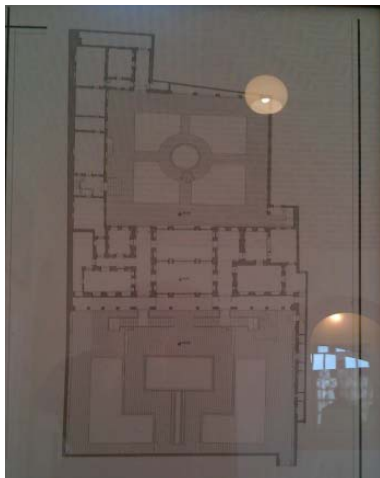
*Qajar* House's *anadarooni* (outer) garden is organized in a quadripartite geometry, with a small pool at the crossing of the two axes. While both houses feature decorative stained glass, tile and plaster work, it is interesting to note their differences in the expressions of climate in the architecture. Located in the dry heat of the desert, *Boroujerdi* house features several *bad-gir*, a partially enclosed terrace with a high barrel-vault ceiling, and a raised platform erected above the large pool – features to mitigate the heat, capture breezes, and use the large water surface for cooling. In contrast, *Qajar* House's Tabriz is located in the cooler foothills of Sahand mountains in north-eastern Iran, where mitigating heat was clearly not a concern.





*Borujerdi House – Yazd*

Strictly speaking, *Nazari House and Garden in Hamadan* (now government offices with the house off-limits to visitors – although I wheedled access by walking along the wrap-around portico to enter from the back) more closely fits the garden typology than the house. It is an enclosed garden with an entry building leading off the street, and you pass through the garden to reach the house – which is not built as part of the perimeter wall as is normally the case.



*Qajar House – Tabriz. plan and birooni view*

*Nazari* and *Qajar* houses' tectonics as well as their use of neo-classical elements such as pediments, columns, and porticos, exhibit the European influence of their early 20<sup>th</sup>



Century era. In contrast, *Borujerdi* house retains the classic Islamic architectural language of pointed arches expressed in the traditional mud-wall construction of *Yazd*'s desert ancestry.



Left and Right - *Nazari* House and Garden – *Hamadan*

And a closing note of wonder and awe : the small *kalleh ghandi* (sugar cone) houses carved into the stone peaks of the mountains west of *Tabriz*. Although they do not embody the paradise parti, they are regardless set in paradise – unintentionally exemplifying a more western manifestation of paradise as shelter set amidst wilderness.



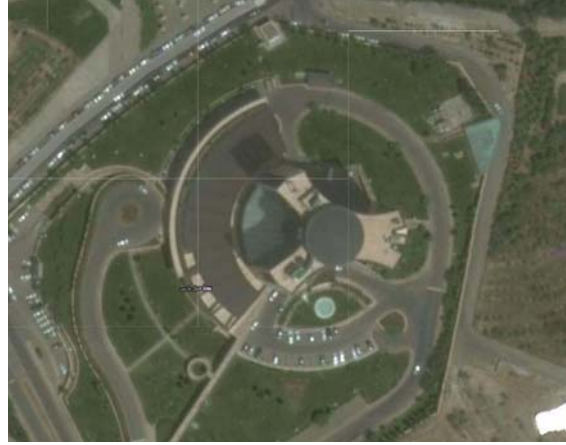
Above and following page, Village of *Kandovan* – near *Tabriz*



## Hotels



*Abasi Hotel – Esfahan*  
(Google Maps, 2011)



*Il Goli Hotel - Tabriz*  
(Google Maps, 2011)

While the majority of hotels in Iran are built in some (usually non-descript) variation of modernism, two of the hotels visited on this trip are noteworthy. In the case of *Abasi* Hotel in *Esfahan*, it is for the authenticity of its adherence to the paradise parti and the uniqueness and extent of its architectural decoration. In the case of Hotel *Il Goli* in *Tabriz* it is for the unexpected (and belated) realization that it embodies a very different expression of the same parti.

Although manifesting the same parti, the two buildings hark from very different eras, are located in contrasting contexts, and could not be more different in their architectural expression. The *Abasi* is located in the dense urban center of *Esfahan*, near the intersection of *Char Bagh* Avenue (yes, the same *char bagh* referencing the four rivers of life which generated the geometry of the axial layout for the gardens), and is the renovated and expanded reincarnation of a three century old *Safavid* era caravanserai (Burke & Elliot, 2008). It is built in the traditional Islamic style of the period, and is situated to the ancient *Char Bagh* seminary whose blue tiled dome and minarets can be seen from the lush garden of the hotel's central courtyard.





*Abasi Hotel, Esfahan*

The *Il Goli*, located on the outskirts of *Tabriz* is a recently built glass and steel high-rise - much as you might find in any modern city, anywhere. Looking back at the photographs, the only clue as to location afforded someone merely seeing the image is the tall poplars planted alongside it.

*Abasi Hotel*'s most salient feature is the main building's inner courtyard around which guest rooms are arranged, along with the lobby and several restaurants. The traditional cross-axial organization neatly divides the courtyard into four equal quadrants. The lobby and a traditional tea-house anchor the north-south axis and are connected by the central promenade, with a secondary (though equidistant) axis featuring two long reflecting pools. Fruit trees (quince, persimmon), date palms, flower beds which are re-planted each season, and borders and hedges abound .





Left and Right, // *Goli Hotel – Tabriz*

This lovingly tended garden paradise is the epitome of the best of Iran. Colours, textures, sounds and scents of paradise surround the senses. The turquoise blue of the clear sky echoed in the colour of multiple pools and the tiles of the *Char Bagh* seminary adjacent, plays off the lush green of trees and shrubs, accompanied by the music of splashing fountains in the background. I have spent many sunny Iran afternoons on a balcony overlooking this garden, watching birds wheel around the blue dome as twilight falls, the fountains come to life, and the call for prayer sounds from the minarets. My children know of where my ashes shall go.

The *// Goli* meanwhile plays extrovert to *Abasi's* introvert. Its location affords magnificent views of the adjacent *// Goli* Park, the city, the mountains and plains. It is a prototypical high rise with central atrium featuring plantings – which is the point of its inclusion under precedents as it strikes me that the atrium is a vertical paradise expression of the Paradise parti.

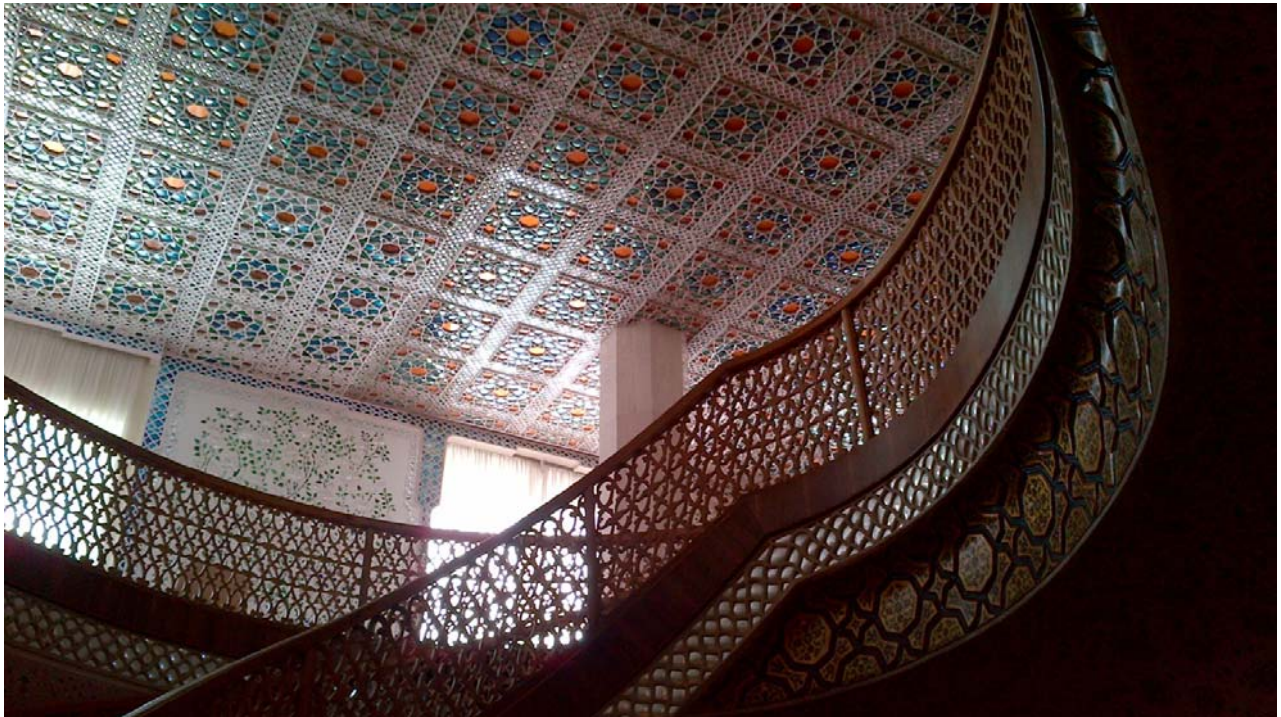


*Abasi Hotel, Esfahan*

I think of *Abasi* Hotel as a multi-layered – perhaps even seven tiered - paradise. Location, layout, spatial organization, the garden sanctuary with its plantings and water features, and the dizzying detail and intricacy of its architectural decoration all conspire to intoxicate and bewitch. Nearly every possible expression of Paradise has been employed in this building's execution.



A dazzling profusion of plaster and glass pomegranate trees, cypresses, plants and flowers cover the lobby and corridor walls, the ceilings are tiled with coloured mirrors worked with intricate geometric patterns in plaster, the wooden banisters are a screen of tracery, and colourful tiles clad the stringer and floor opening faces.

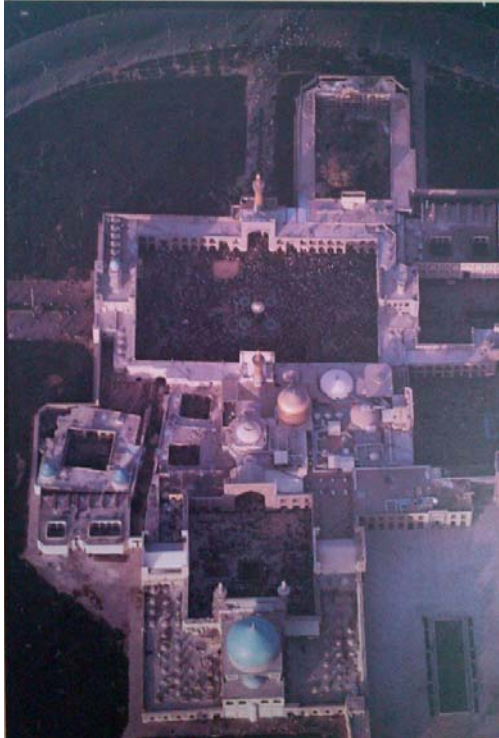


*Abasi Hotel, Esfahan*

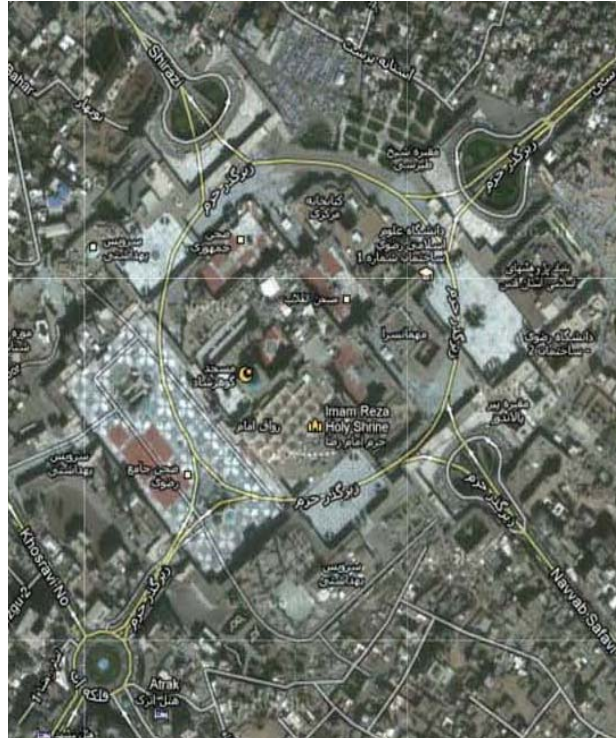
## Sacred Architecture

### (Mosque, Shrine, Tomb)

As commemorative architecture and objects of pilgrimage, the examples I've included in this section are all located within the closely knit fabric of the cities they are located in. Indeed, because they attract visitors, they are often responsible for stimulating the growth of their settings.



Shrine of Imam Reza – Mashhad, Iran  
in the 1950's



current view (Google Maps, 2011)  
)

A prime example of this phenomenon is the northeastern city of *Mashhad* – where an entire city grew into being around a shrine. *Mashhad* means place of martyrdom, in this case that of the 8<sup>th</sup> Shiite Imam Reza who was designated regent and sent into exile by the Caliph in order to neutralize the threat of his growing popularity. He was forcibly sent on a hejira from *Medina* to the city of *Marv* in the north-eastern province of *Khorassan*. Although he was transported via a route intended to minimize his exposure followers, *Imam Reza's* exile caused enough uproar that in the end he was poisoned (with grapes) and buried in the village of *Sanabad* in 823. *Sanabad* is now one of the multitudes of neighbourhoods that comprise sprawling *Mashhad*.



Today, the vast expanse of the *Shrine of Imam Reza* is located at the crossing of four of *Mashhad's* major streets (the *char bagh* parti at work again), and comprises multiple mosques and courtyards – external buildings arranged around a central space within which water and plantings occur.

While water is necessary for the performance of ritual ablutions required before prayer, plantings in mosques tend to be sparse. These are often limited to pots lining a reflecting pool - though when used in abundance and arranged with zeal – as is the case in *Shiraz's Nasiralmolk Mosque* – they are a highly effective means of relieving the expanses of brick paving). (add photos of potted plants) What they invariably possess in abundance are stretches of paved ground necessary to accommodate large religious gatherings – as for Friday prayer or during the holy months of *Ashura* and *Tasua* which commemorate *Imam Hossein's* (the 3<sup>rd</sup> Shiite Imam) martyrdom. The intensity and pitch of religious fervour during these months is such that that a first-time witness of a festival would be justified in thinking the *Imam* had only just been killed (De Bellaigue, 2005). Even for a non-believer, the pageantry and intensity of the rivers of humanity pouring out their desire and grief is moving.



*Shrine of Imam Reza - Mashhad*

In very large (and profitable) mosques such as the *Shrine of Imam Reza*, the paving is marble, and enormous (10x12m) Persian carpets line the entrances into the buildings – suggesting planting beds lining the promenade of a garden. On these wool gardens, pilgrims rest, pray, camp out, or as is often the case when I visit - watch in awe (and trepidation) as the enormity of faith unfolds before their eyes.



Left and Right, *Shrine of Shah Cheragh* - Shiraz

The paradise theme is also explicitly expressed in the elaborate mirror, tile, plaster work, and wood carvings which cover every available surface centimeter attesting to the success of religion as a lucrative enterprise. These decorations employ flowing figurative lines or stylized geometries to depict trees, plants, sun, sky, water. The mirror work in the *Shrine of Imam Reza* and (coincidentally) his brother's Shrine at *Shah Cheragh* in Shiraz is astoundingly intricate, casting delicate refractions of light and images in all directions. The scent of rosewater and the pilgrims' passions energize the detailed depictions of beauty, making devotion a very attractive possibility.



*Nasiralmolk Mosque* – Shiraz  
(Google Maps, 2011)



*Shah Cheragh Shrine* – Shiraz  
(Google Maps, 2011)





This Row, *Nasir-ol-Mulk Mosque* – *Shiraz*

Such buildings also feature fantasies of colourful ceramic tile worked into a symphony of arches and pendentives. *Shiraz's Nasir-ol-Mulk Mosque* features particularly dazzling tile work whose arabesques amplify the geometry of the pointed arches – causing the heart to contract with their unfathomable beauty.

Among this group, the tombs of the renowned poet *Hafez* in *Shiraz* and (to a lesser degree) the Islamic mystic *Shah Nematollah Vali* in Mahan are destinations more spiritual than religious. This absence of the need for formal congregation helps explain why these two sites are more garden-like, feature inner courtyards and plantings developed in accordance with the traditional Paradise Garden layout. The multiple gardens in the tomb of *Hafez* are separated by brick walls with a punched out pattern – a common device seen in walls, parapets, and guards. Such details are as decorative in their tracery and shadows as they are practical in allowing the transfer of scant breezes while providing privacy. The tension of the field/ground contrast creates a screen which in the case of the gardens surrounding *Hafez's* tomb intensifies the mystery of the adjacent garden as well as the desire to experience it.





*Shah Nematollahi Vali Tomb – Mahan*  
(Google Maps, 2011)



*Hafez Tomb – Shiraz*  
(Google Maps, 2011)

## Public Architecture

(Square, Bazaar, Museum)



Square - Yazd  
(Google Maps, 2011)



Naqsh-e Jahan Square – Esfahan  
(Google Maps, 2011)

The grand public piazza and the incidental square, the mud tunnels of bazaars punctuated with the cadence of domes whose oculi glow with the rays of the sun, and the grounds of a palace turned museum populate the inquiry of public architecture manifesting the paradise parti and themes.

The grandeur of *Safavid* era *Naqsh-e Jahan* (pattern of the world) Square prompted 16<sup>th</sup> century French poet Renier to describe *Esfahan* as "*half of the world*" (Burke & Elliot, 2008. p.232). This 512m long by 163m wide plaza (second largest in the world – first is China's Tiananmen) is surrounded by some of the finest examples of Safavid era Islamic architecture (Burke & Elliot, 2008). It features a grand basin which by day languidly reflects - the rhythmic arches of the bazaar at its perimeter, the blue and gold dome of the *Jameh* Mosque, and the passing of clouds, birds, and airplanes. By night, the fountains come alive and Esfahanis join tourists in enjoying the dramatic setting.





Left and Right, *Naqsheh Jahan Square – Esfahan*

The grand reflecting pool is centered on a cross axis anchored by the *Ali Qapu* Palace and *Gohar Shad* Mosque along the east-west and the *Jameh* Mosque and the Great *Bazaar* in the north-south direction. Plantings surround the pool, and the central “garden” area is encircled with alternating bands of walkways and trees. Groomed globe cedars line the paths, separating the pedestrian lane from that used by horse-drawn carriages which trot visitors around the plaza. The *Safavid* king *Shah Abbas* the Great held military processions and marches as well as polo games in this plaza, which he could survey from the vantage point of *Ali Qapu* 's grand terrace.



Bazaar and *Ghanjali Khan Square – Kerman*  
(Google Maps, 2011)



*Chehel Sotoon Palace - Esfahan*  
(Google Maps, 2011)

Constructs such as the squares which intermittently punctuate Kerman's Bazaar and *Esfahan's* *Chehel Sotoon* Palace Museum (*Chehel Sotoon* means forty columns – so called because of the reflection of the twenty columns of its entrance portico in the



elongated reflecting pool leading up to the palace) are clear replications of the Paradise Garden layout. So to a lesser degree is a seemingly incidental pocket of space left over from the mad labyrinth of *Yazd's* old city. The narrow mud-walled alleys open into space enough to allow one to regain bearings by seeing the sky or a distant dome. The square defined within the respectful distance of the mud walls is not grand – some uneven stone paving, a few benches, a small pool of water painted the traditional turquoise, a few scraggly trees struggling against the intensity of the sun. Still, it is a small moment of refuge – a chance for respite, and a second wind.

*Yazd's Amir Chakhmagh* Square is a convincing instance of the occasional failure of planned plazas – Paradise elements notwithstanding. Despite the it axial layout, water feature with fountains, and plantings, the absence of an immediate edge to separate its grass and walkways from the busy streets adjacent make it unwelcoming – indeed a place to seek refuge from. The evening I visited, the presence of forbidding militia throughout the square added to the sense of unease.



#### 4. ARCHITECTURE OF THE HEART





*"At times all I need is a brief glimpse, an opening in the midst of an incongruous landscape, a glint of light in the fog,... I will put together, piece by piece, the perfect city, made of fragments mixed with the rest, of instants separated by intervals, of signals one sends out, not knowing who receives them. If I tell you that the city toward which my journey tends is discontinuous in space and time, now scattered, now more condensed, you must not believe the search for it can stop."* (Calvino, 2002)

*"...a narrative of the universal process of design and construction – which is to say, the age-old story of how dreams get turned into drawings that then get turned into wood and stone and glass, finally to take their place in the palpable world...Architects do their work on the frontier between the ideal and the practical, translating wisps of ideas into buildable facts..."*(Pollan, 2008)

So it is that the investigation I have conducted – including extensive field research - has been as much about understanding Paradise and its journey as about understanding the implications in my own life. My personal journey has paralleled that of Paradise in its east to west trajectory, and in the tension of the attending contrasts.

While notions of journey and transformation are central to the project, issues of contrasts (such as desert vs. paradise, inside vs. outside, memory vs. dream, the arid plateau of Iran with its underground dreams of water vs. the lush lakeside of Toronto with its dreams of sanctuary), and parallels (of various types of journeys and realities) set against the pervasive presence of memory all shape the landscape of the project.

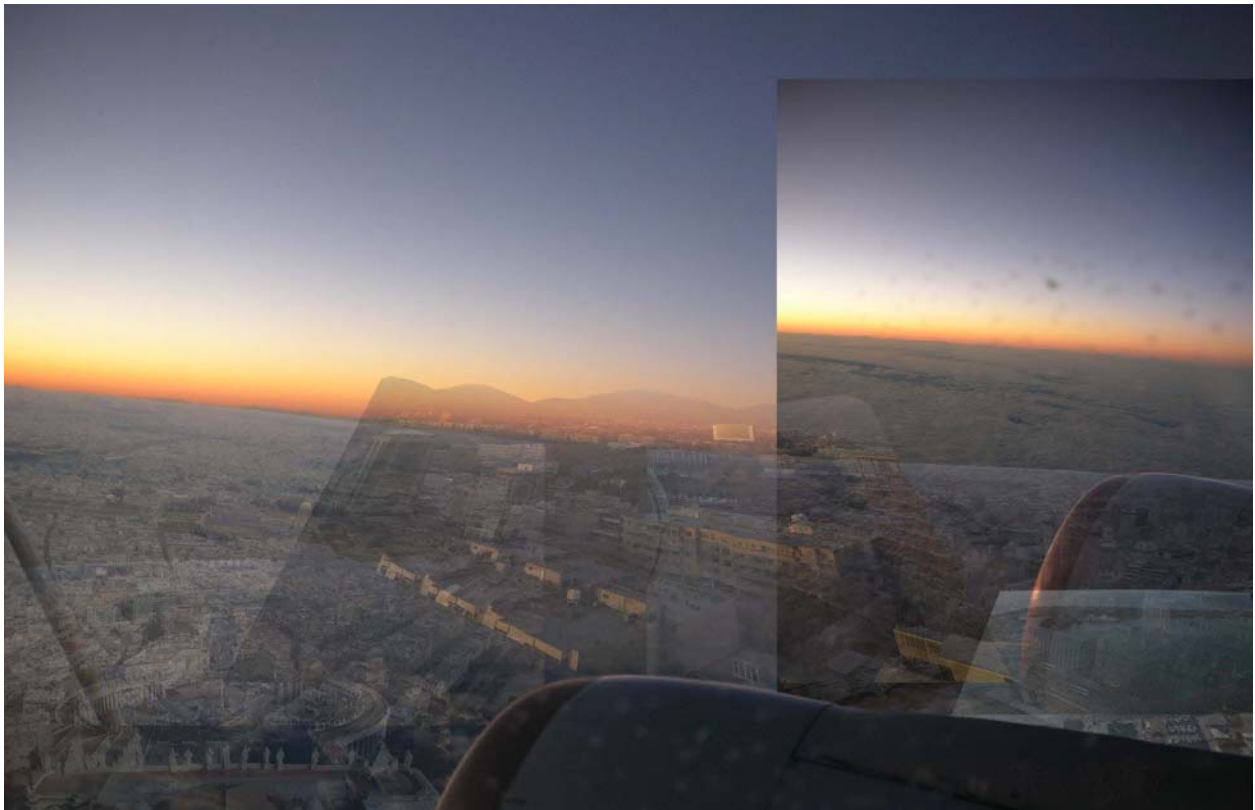
## A Journey

*"...memory becomes the construction of a social and cultural identity whose symbolic terminology tends to challenge the experience of the current reality. The past becomes a strategy for legitimating the present. The house, as it is remembered and described in great material detail, represents a symbolic entrenchment into a human and geographical environment that has vanished. Memory unfolds as a symbolic denial of migration, separation, and cultural strangeness..."*

(Bahloul, 1996. p.2)

*"Our very existence as individuals depends on the faculty of memory, to recall or maintain all that we are and offer an ever-changing prelude to all that we will become."*

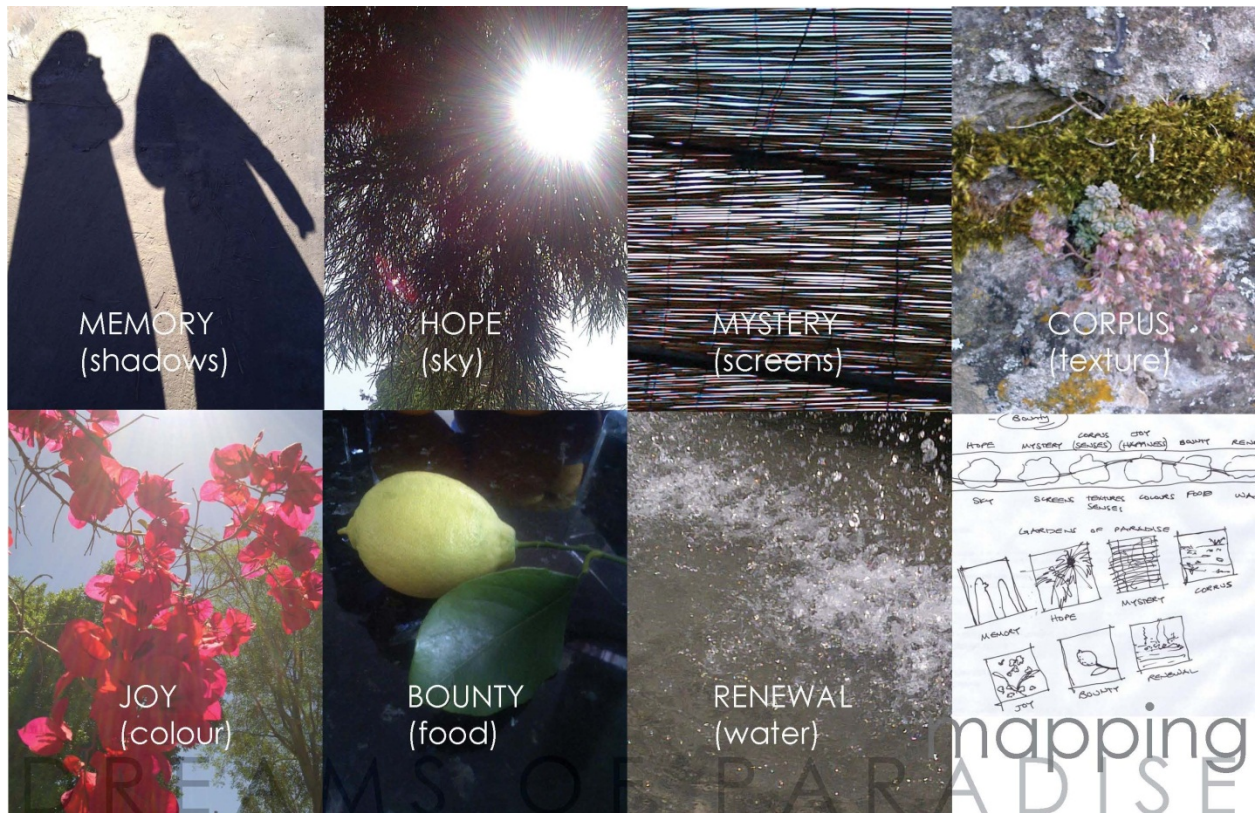
(Kuberski, 1992. inside front cover)



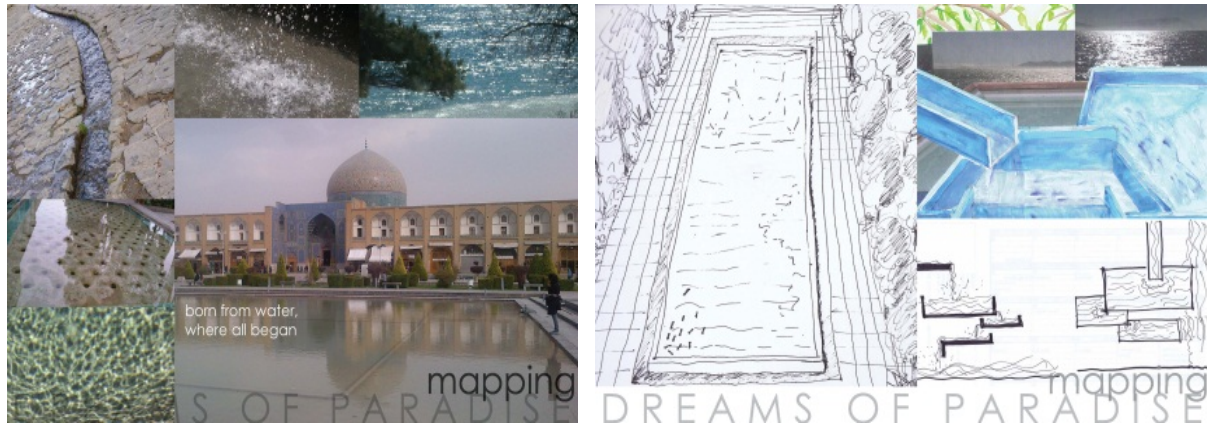
This project has used Paradise as the topic, and memories as the language through which dreams are explored. If memory is what defines us – forming the sanctuary of the psyche – then dreams are what give flight to our aspirations, what impel our journey. Thus, while paradise the garden is about the stasis of sanctuary provided by perimeter, paradise the dream is about journey. A journey propelled by thousands of memories, new layering on the old.

My journey in search of paradise was carried out over the course of many travel adventures as well as the humdrum of the daily trip along familiar roads. In the beginning, I thought about paradise and looked around – finding it everywhere. Water splashing in a fountain, blue sky through new leaves, a plate of olive oil, light playing on the heft of concrete piers marching below the Gardiner. It seemed imperative to capture and keep these images because the photographs which document this journey are memories : virtual representations of the physical experience and its accompanying emotions. Re-viewing the photographs later brought additional layers of emotions and memory : *"...we bias our memories of the past by attributing to them emotions or knowledge we acquired after the event.....emotions are closely linked with perception and registration of incoming information, which in turn influence the formation of new memories."* (Schacter, 2001. p.9 & 10)





The design process began with analysis of memories of the journey in search of paradise as reflection on the growing array of images, and questions of what was poignant and why led to a taxonomy of seven themes: water, sky, colour, food, texture, screens, and shadows. Further analysis and mapping developed physical attributes, and probed the attending emotions to get at the symbolism associated with each theme.

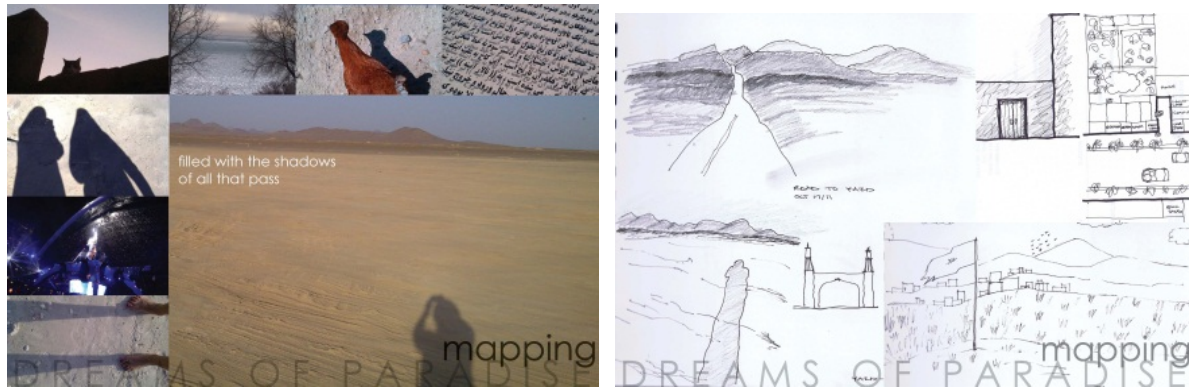


Water is physically ambiguous and malleable. Water is omnipresent as it flows, rushes, dances against the sky, puddles obscurely underfoot -always serving as reflection. Water evokes calm as well as sorrow, as it symbolizes not only birth and beginnings, but eternity. Therefore, it is also a reminder of the finite interval of life.

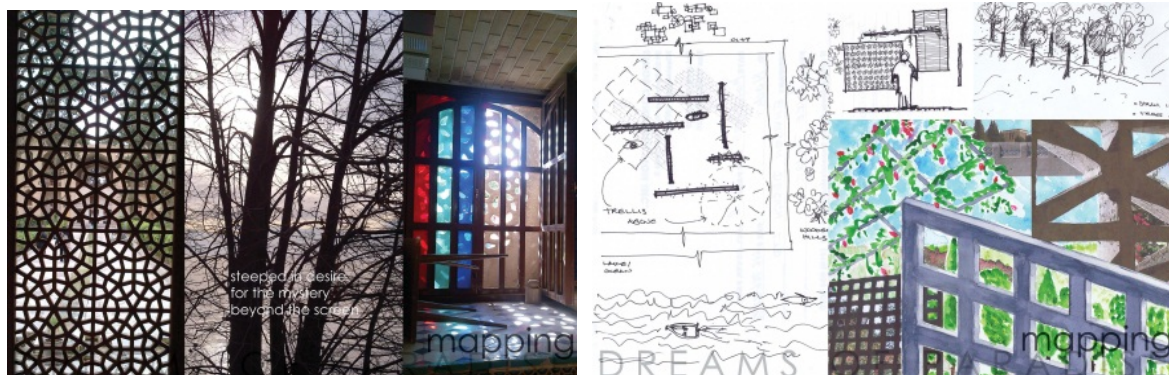


Texture speaks to the here and now, to the tactile awareness of being alive. It represents the physicality of body as the fragile enclosure for the spirit.





Shadows are intangible, defined only by what has passed. Because they are the imprints left behind, shadows are about looking inward, about contemplation of the past. Shadows are memory.

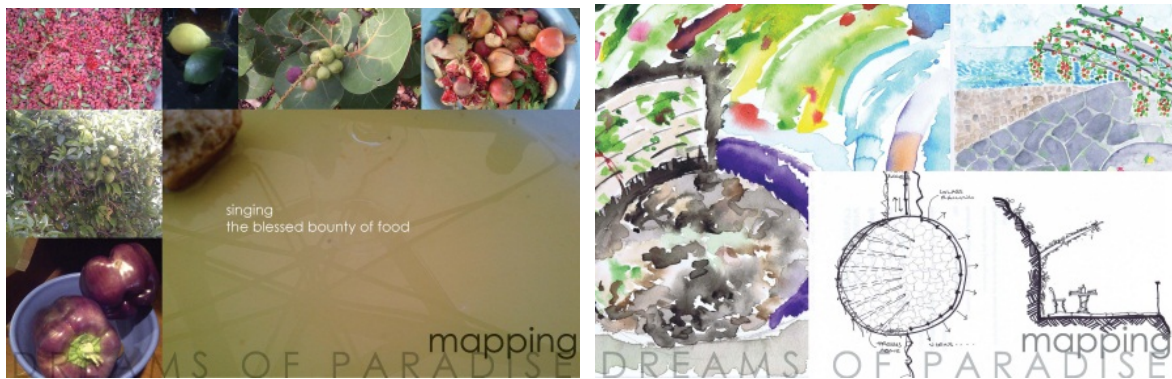


Screens are planar, layered, and semi-opaque. They are the veil of desire through which the mystery just beyond is contemplated : a garden, a dream, another world.

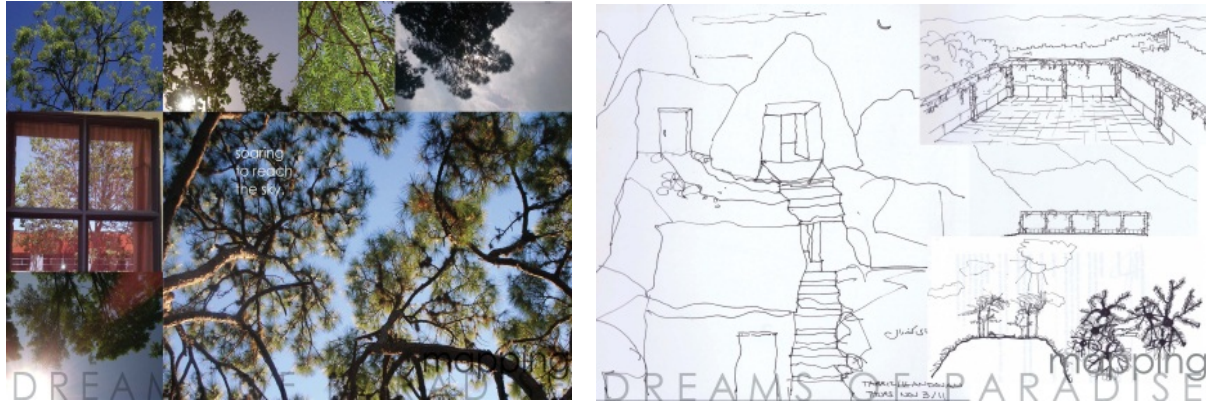




Colour is open and innocent, it is movement. Colour is the madness of joy, the energy of motion, the emotion of exhilarated abandon.



Food is looking inward in contentment, and out in celebration. The comfort of feeding the body gives flight to the soul in gratitude.  
Food is holy, the vital ritual of maintaining life.



The openness of sky naturally speaks to a physical direction. Sky is also a hierarchy, referring to ceiling and roof, spires and airplanes, mountain top and crescent moon. sky is about ambition and aspiration. It is the search to find and learn, the yearning to be more.

Grappling with the meaning and place of these myriad images, I was convinced that they formed the core of what I was seeking – yet uncertain as how the accumulated archive of images would play into this attempt to translate a thousand and one memories of paradises into new dreams of paradise. The idea of photographs as a way of seeing was a clue - as photographs speak to the interactions between current physical reality being shaped by, and in turn shaping memories as well as our inner emotional landscape.

Juxtaposing the need to honour memory with the idea of Paradise as a Garden, collage represented a means of bringing the two together. Thus began a series of investigations into the meanings of the images representing the seven themes of Paradise. Working in 4'x6' format, I made initial explorations into the themes of shadows (memory), water, and sky. The collages served as a starting point, a vehicle to connect the visual images to the deeper meanings of journeys, ambiguities, parallel realities, and dreams as visions.

## Intentions



Toronto

To re-phrase intention, I have taken a central idea, and used it as a prism as it makes a shift from Iran to Canada. I have investigated the translatability of concepts between countries, climates, and cultures. Ultimately, I have undertaken the translation of one journey into another. And in translating paradise through journey, I have retained fidelity of the imprints of memory.

Thus, the taxonomy of 7 themes generated by memories of paradise served as the structure for the design of seven dream visions – each dream a journey of exploration, discovery, and transformation. A translation of one reality into another.

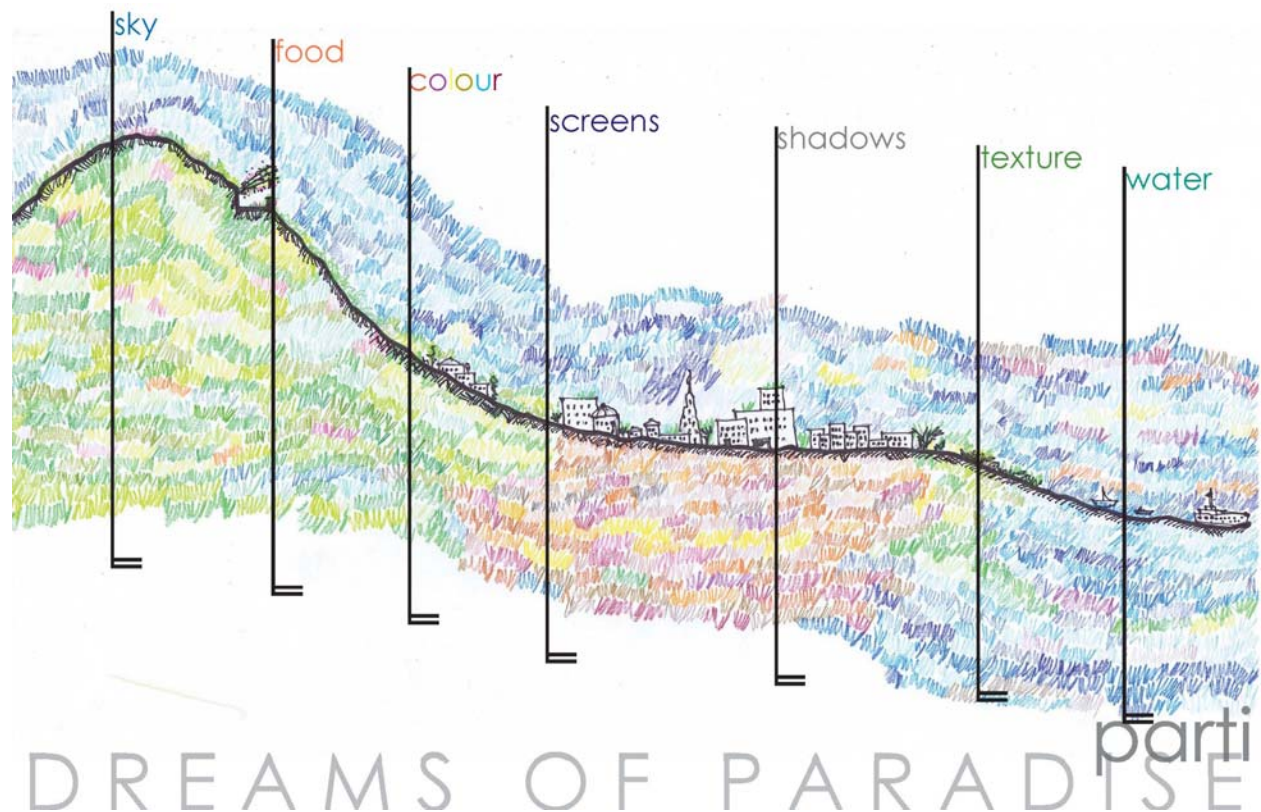


## Site & Program

As previously discussed, Paradise in the west is less about the physical perimeter providing sanctuary and more about the intangible perimeter of the self. This intangible perimeter bounds the psyche, the imagination – the site where the dream visions play out.

Simultaneously, the physical site paralleling the intangible realm of the imagination is the evocatively named Gardiner connecting east and west. The Gardiner is a physical journey which serves as metaphor for the spiritual journey of seeking. I am not interested in urbanism or infrastructure issues of whether the Gardiner is good or bad, whether it should stay or go, or how it should be intervened with – only in how its traversing can enable dreams of paradise.

This site within a site mirrors the construct of a story within another story which structures this paper, and serves as a journey which facilitates the fragmentation of experience into memory and the coalescence of memory into visions of desire.

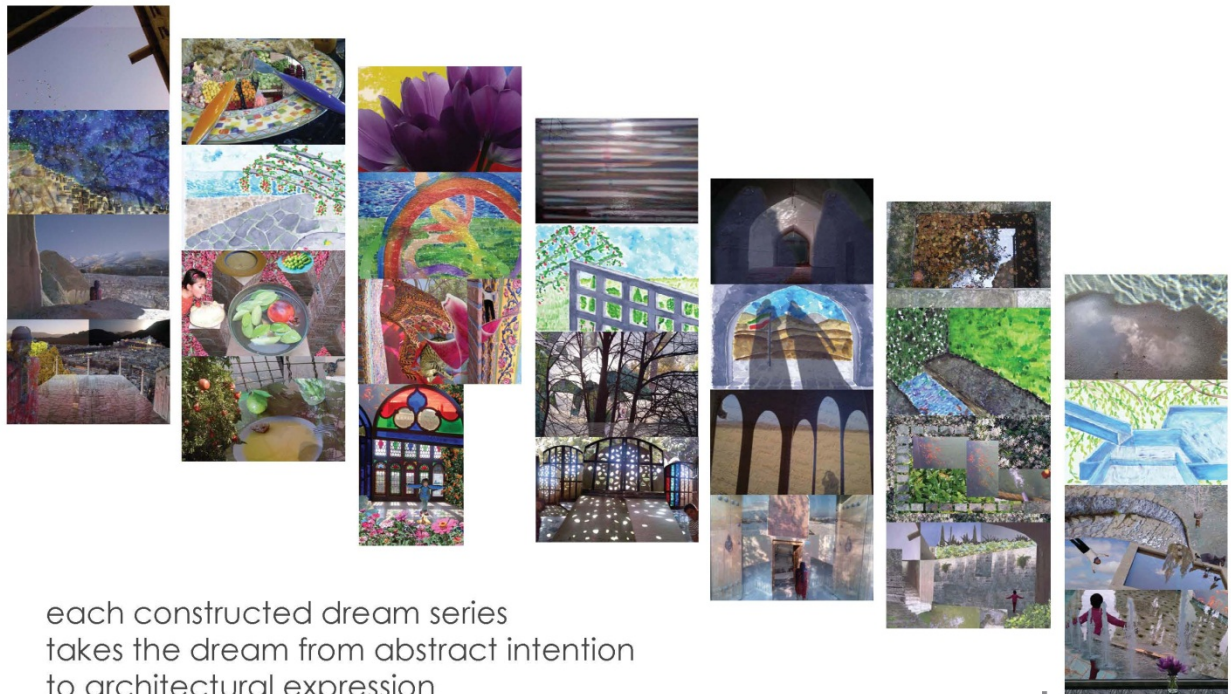


## Parti

The dreams are situated as episodes along the journey, with each constructed dream series comprised of a series of snapshots taking the dream from abstract intention to architectural expression. The first set of dreams are initial explorations of vision for the themes : water, texture, shadows, screens, colour, food, sky, while the next tier designs are flattened, abstracted representations which initiate a search for architectural expression.

The third tier is about the beginnings of coalescence, as the overlay of desire intensifies the images, and the final series presents seven tangible spaces charged with emotion, each an architectural expression of the theme, its emotions and symbolism using memory overlaid with desire.

While the dreams are fragmented by nature, each series maintains a consistency of intention in approach, exploration, colour palette, formal language and architectural expression. Each series also expresses dualities, the tension of alternate realities.



each constructed dream series  
takes the dream from abstract intention  
to architectural expression

to architectural expression

DREAMS OF PARADISE design



## Materiality

The metaphoric building material for the construction of these dreams is memories (the photographs). Overlaid with desire, the constructed dreams exemplify the themes while moving from past to future as memories transform into aspirations and projected visions. Taken from travels back to my old home, around the world of possibilities, and the stasis of Toronto which is my current home, memories of the past embrace the present and are given flight to envision a world of future possibilities.







## 5. THE PERSISTENCE OF MEMORY



## WATER



The architectural language of water is ambiguous – because of its malleability and the multiplicity of its states. The water dreams address this changing nature of water, depicting many of its physical possibilities. Reflection and opacity, movement and stasis, flow and stillness are depicted. Ultimately, the joy and innocence of the children inhabiting the dream speaks to water as the source of life, while the reflections of clouds, sky and trees are reminders of its eternal nature impervious to our own finite tenure.

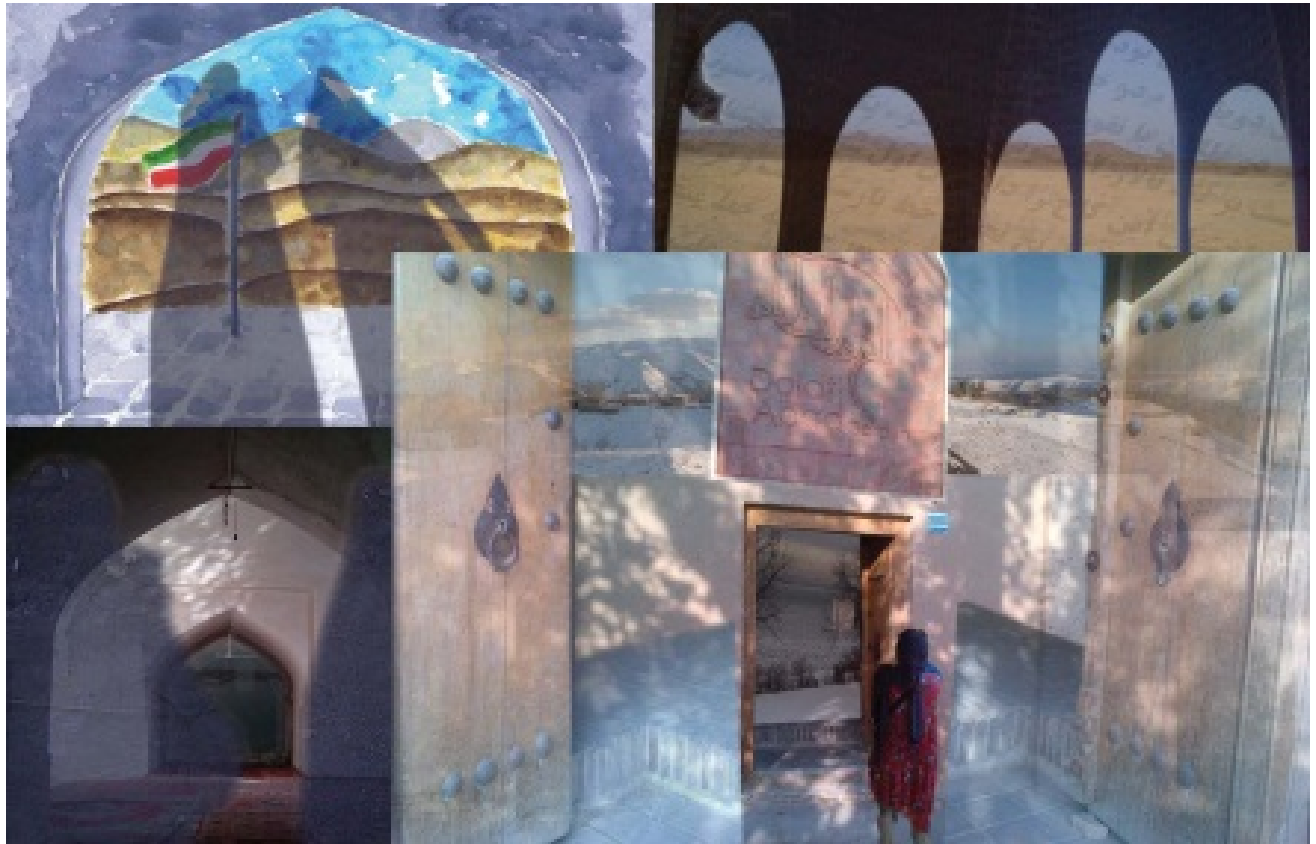


## TEXTURE



The dream of texture speaks to enclosure and focus, the astonishing detail which renders and defines each physical being. Planes and surfaces expressed through minute and tactile textural components are used to delineate an enclosed space. The eye is directed to look inward and marvel at the miraculous and painstaking construction of the vessels that contain life.

## SHADOWS



If shadows are about darkness, they cannot exist without light. The light in this dream series not only casts shadows, it illuminates the spaces they occupy. There is repeated use of arches and doorways to express the threshold of memory, the framed opening through which we can look back, the possibility to choose a direction of movement . The views framed by the archways and doorways fluctuate between different worlds – the world of sand and dust or the world of water and green, the world of the past or the world of the future. The twin shadows evoke parallels, as well as divergences – the choices we make along the journey of life.

## SCREENS



Planar and layered, the snatches of alternate realities revealed by screens illuminate illicit desires and anxieties for the other, and the yearning nature of what it is to be human. Peeling back one reality to reveal another in search of the answer to which world to occupy, which reality to seek?



## COLOUR



Colour is high energy, sinuous in the forms employed . A joyful dance carried out across meadows and through walls. The consistent use of intense, bright hues, the repeated arches and curving shapes, and the joyful innocence of the children exulting in the dreams among riots of colour are expressions of the excited delirium of exultation.

## FOOD



Rounded curves of plates, terraces, bowls and tables express the circular, cyclical nature of food. Bounty, the celebratory and holy aspects of food, and the quiet contentment of sustenance are expressed through the architecture of the dreams. The final vision is a semi-enclosed meal setting which overlooks a lakeside metropolis. It speaks to the balance between feeding the body and nourishing the soul.

## SKY



The unguarded posture of throwing the head back to gaze upward, the open hilltop, the unbounded plinth projecting from the side of a mountain express the vulnerability of exposure together with the physical tension of reaching for something not quite within grasp. Birds circling overhead, the inky softness of sky spilling tiny seeds of bright white light, a pale sliver moon floating above mountains – are all expressions of ambition, aspiration, longing. In the final vision, the tension between two worlds is expressed in the juxtapositions of the architecture which takes shape within it, as well as the division of the horizon into contrasts of dark and light.

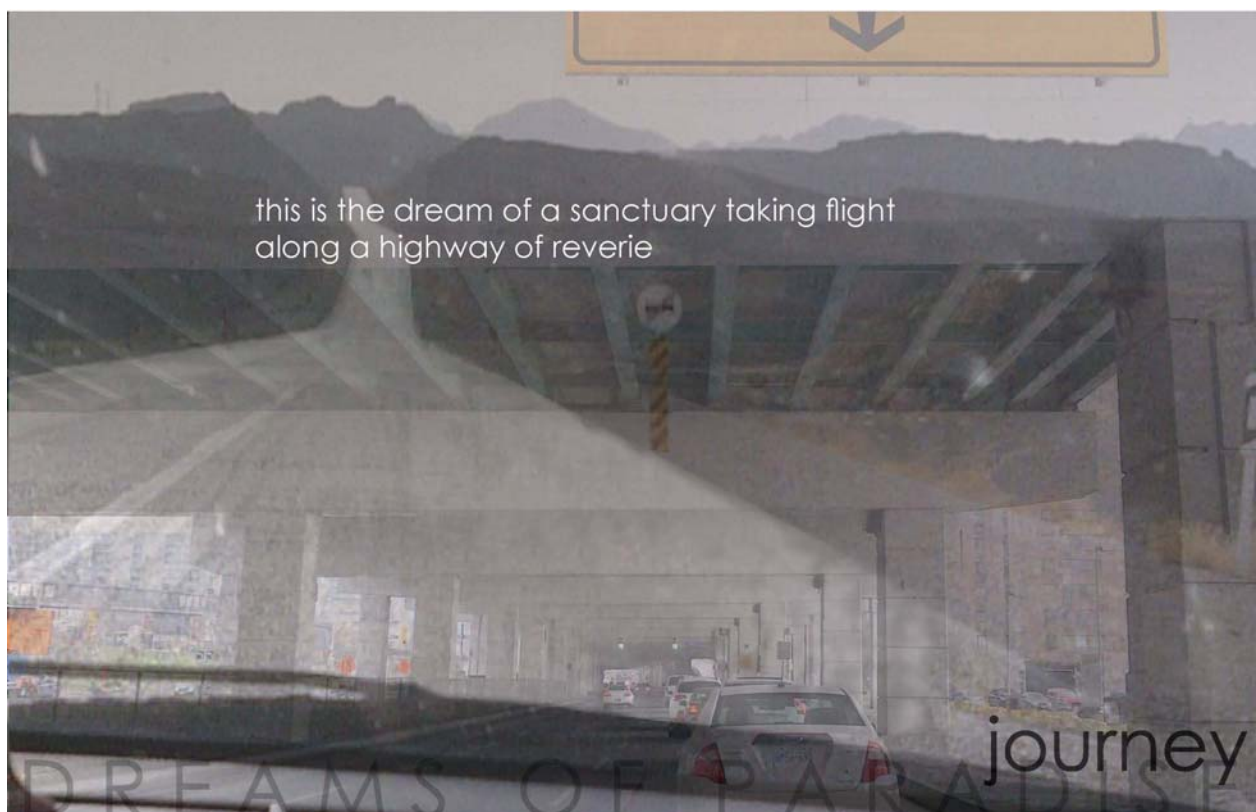


As a journey comprised of many adventures, this dream cycle speaks to parallels between a personal journey - migration of an individual, and that of paradise - migration of a construct, while referencing the greater journey of life.

As paradise transformed from a garden to a projected ideal, so have the marks of its passage enabled a transformation of memory into dreams which vision possibilities.

The project site is the nebulous perimeter between perception and reality, between the interiority of a personal architecture and the exteriority of other.

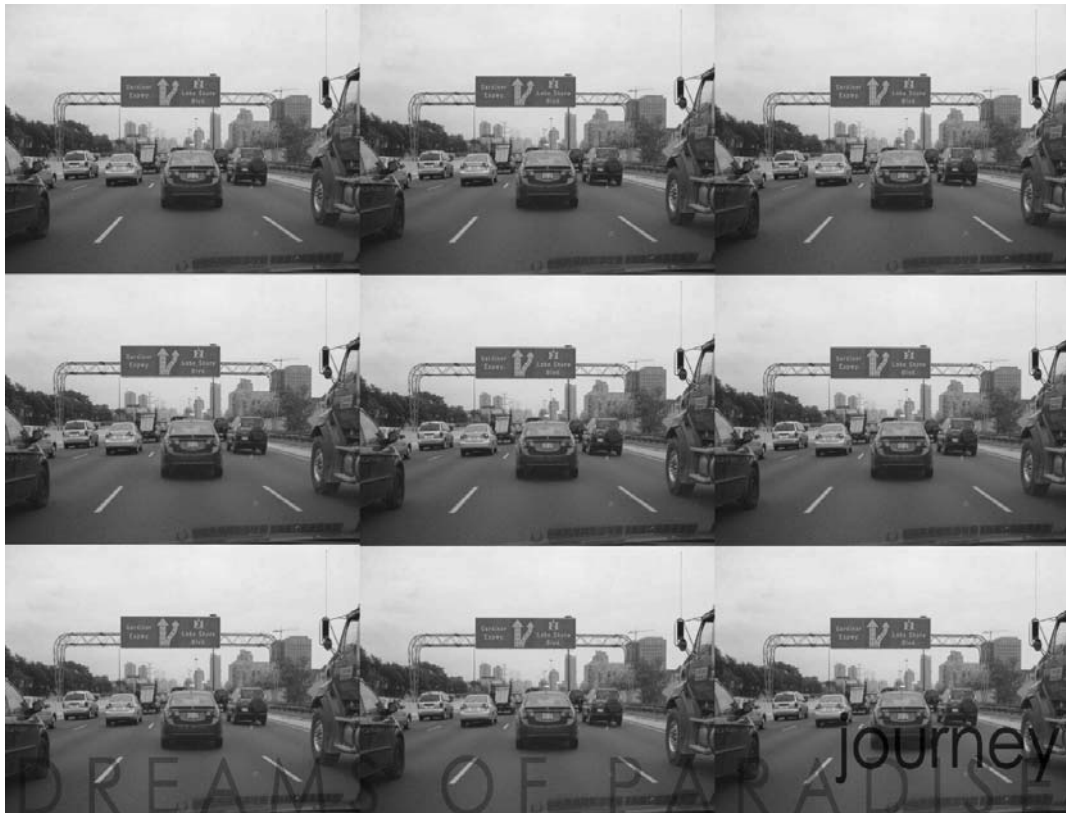
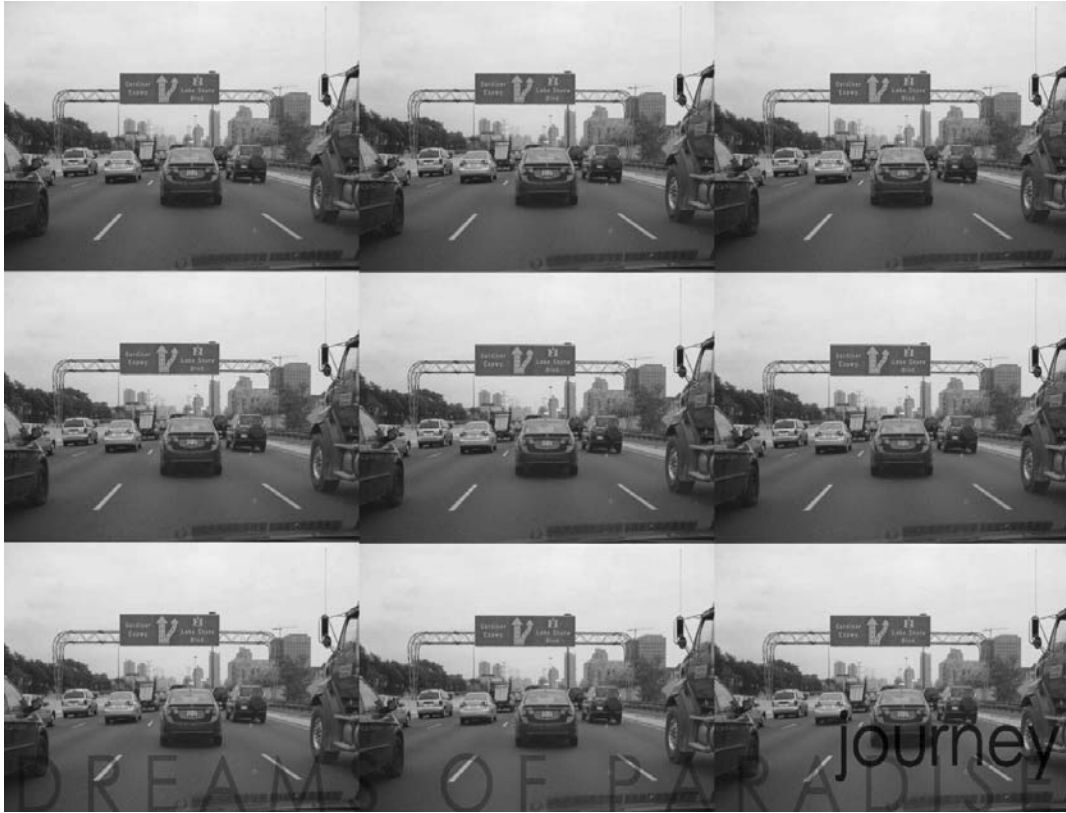
Simultaneously, the site is the mundane, repetitive journey of every day – which is paralleled, yet transcended by the contrast of the dreams of possibilities.



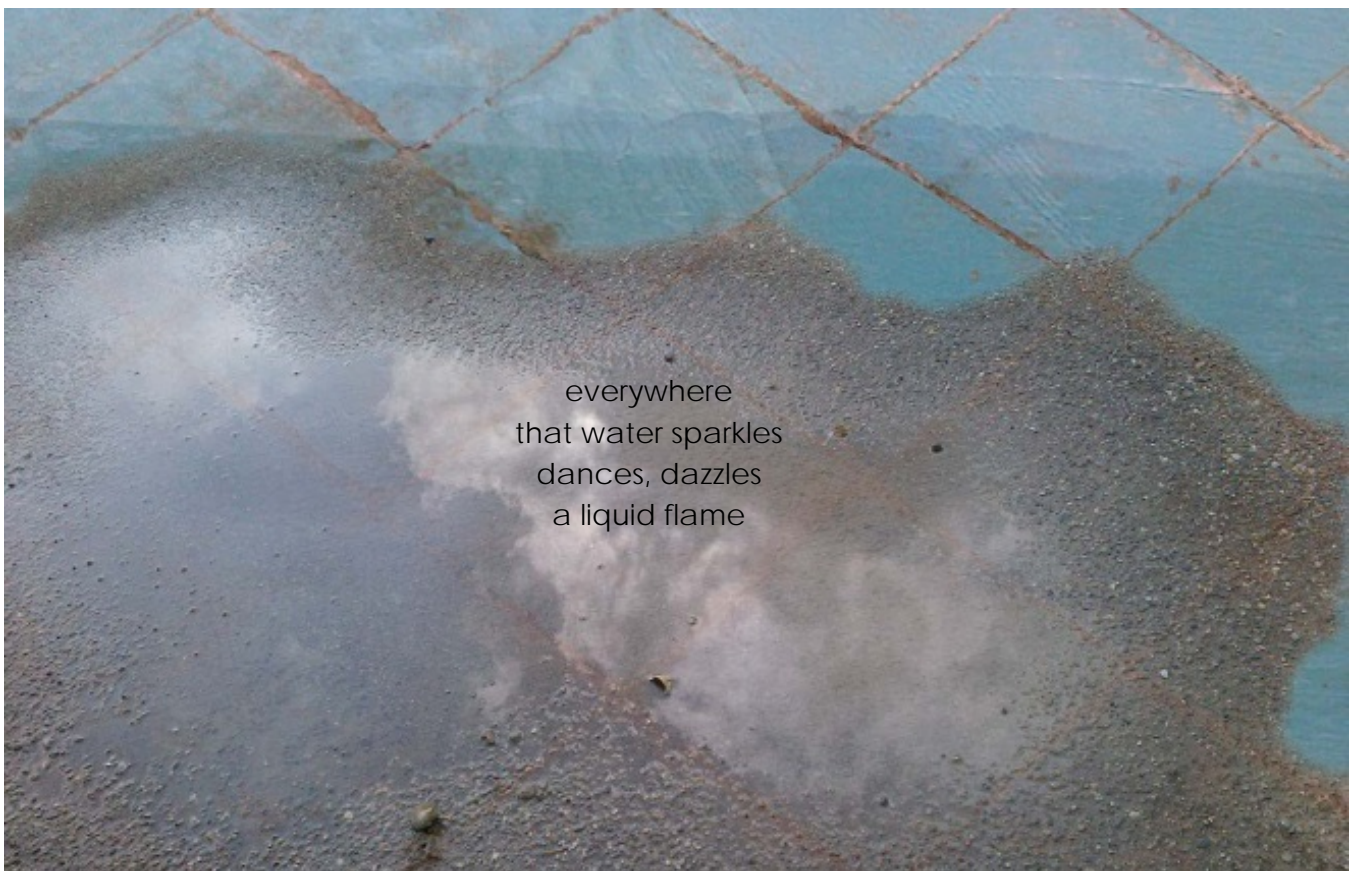
The Gardiner is my quotidian journey.

The film which concludes the design is intended to bring the viewer along on this journey, the mundane nature of the physical trip along the Gardiner freeing the imaginations to roam memory and formulate desire. Alternating between the speed and rhythm of the quotidian seen in flashes of black and white, the dreams intervene as colourful visions of possibilities. The speeds, rhythms, sounds and visions of one journey serve to cast into relief and amplify the other. While the Gardiner segments are loud with the noises of the roadway and speed, the dream visions are set to the sounds of water and narrated with poems that offer some possible interpretations of their architecture.

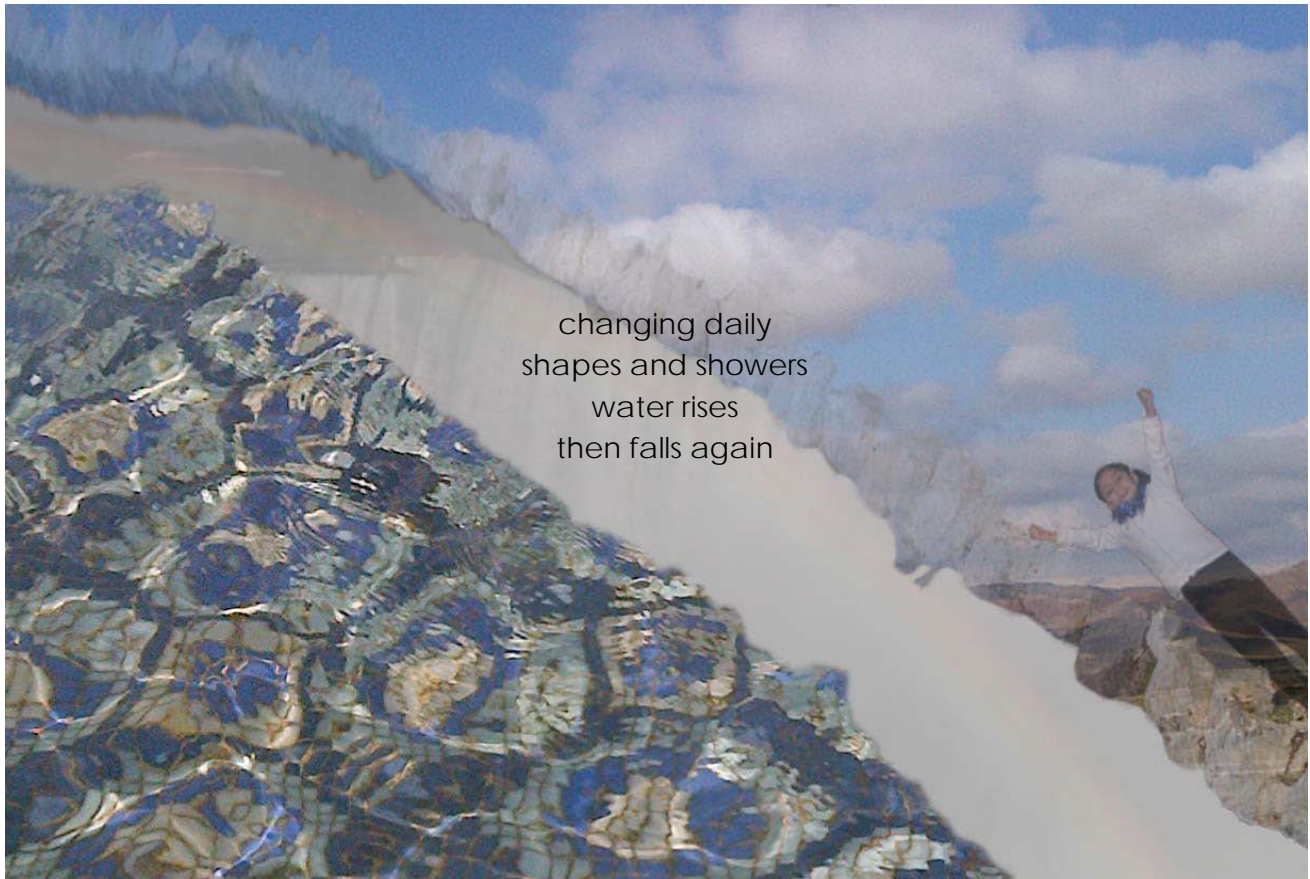
The following pages are intended to simulate the experience of the film.











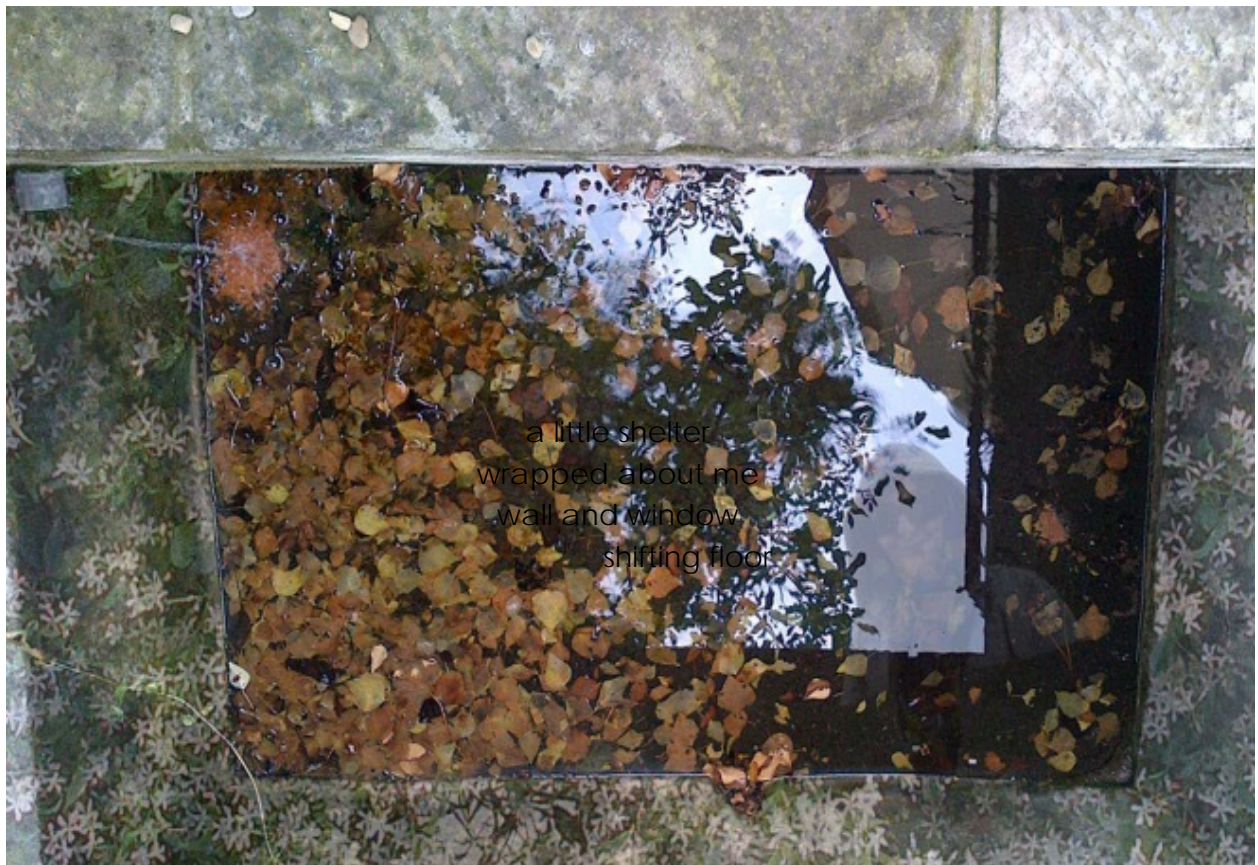
changing daily  
shapes and showers  
water rises  
then falls again



on all the floors  
and all the curtains  
hymns are written  
in its name









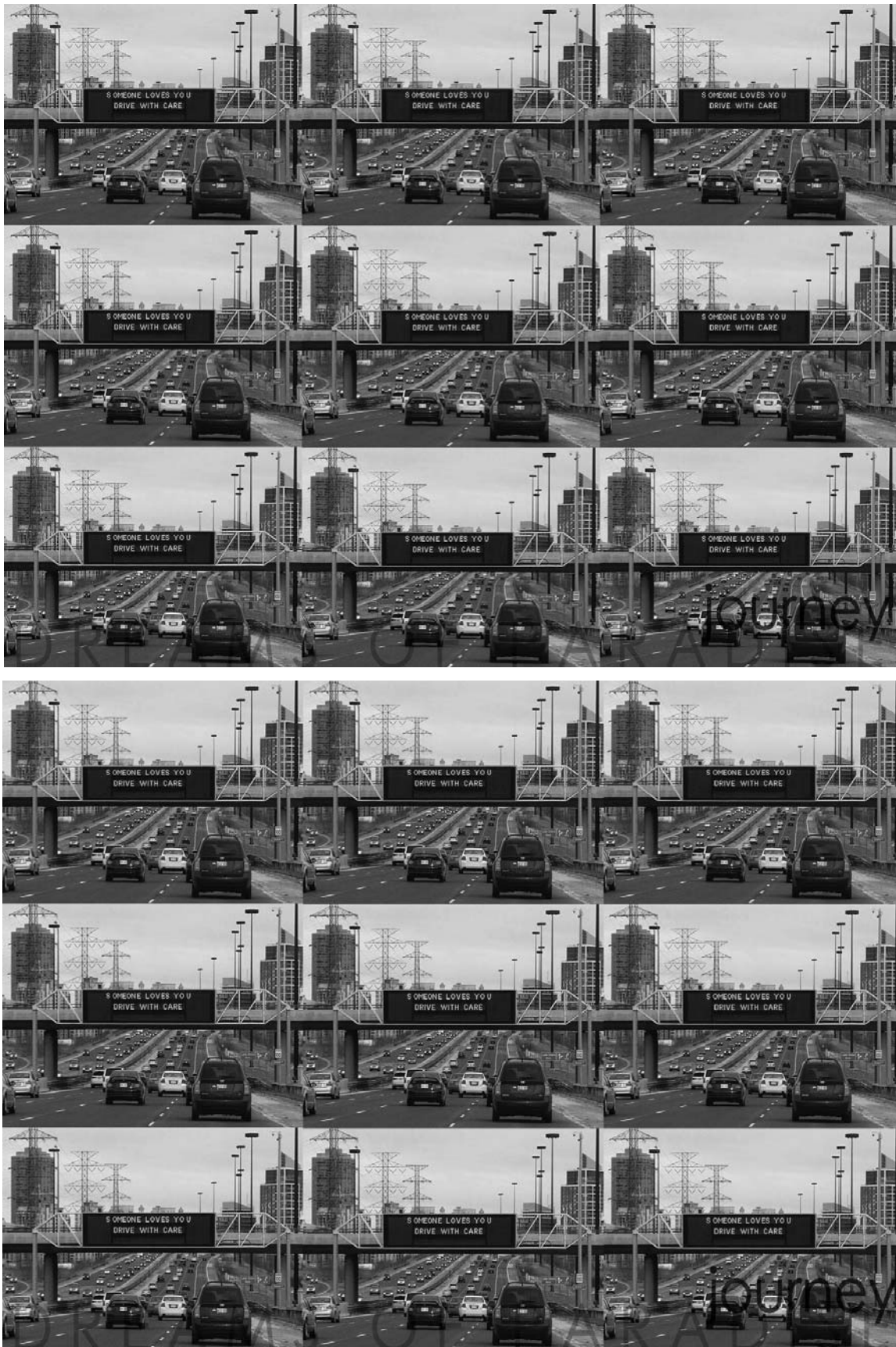


the salty ocean  
crunching round me  
as tiny grains dance  
under foot

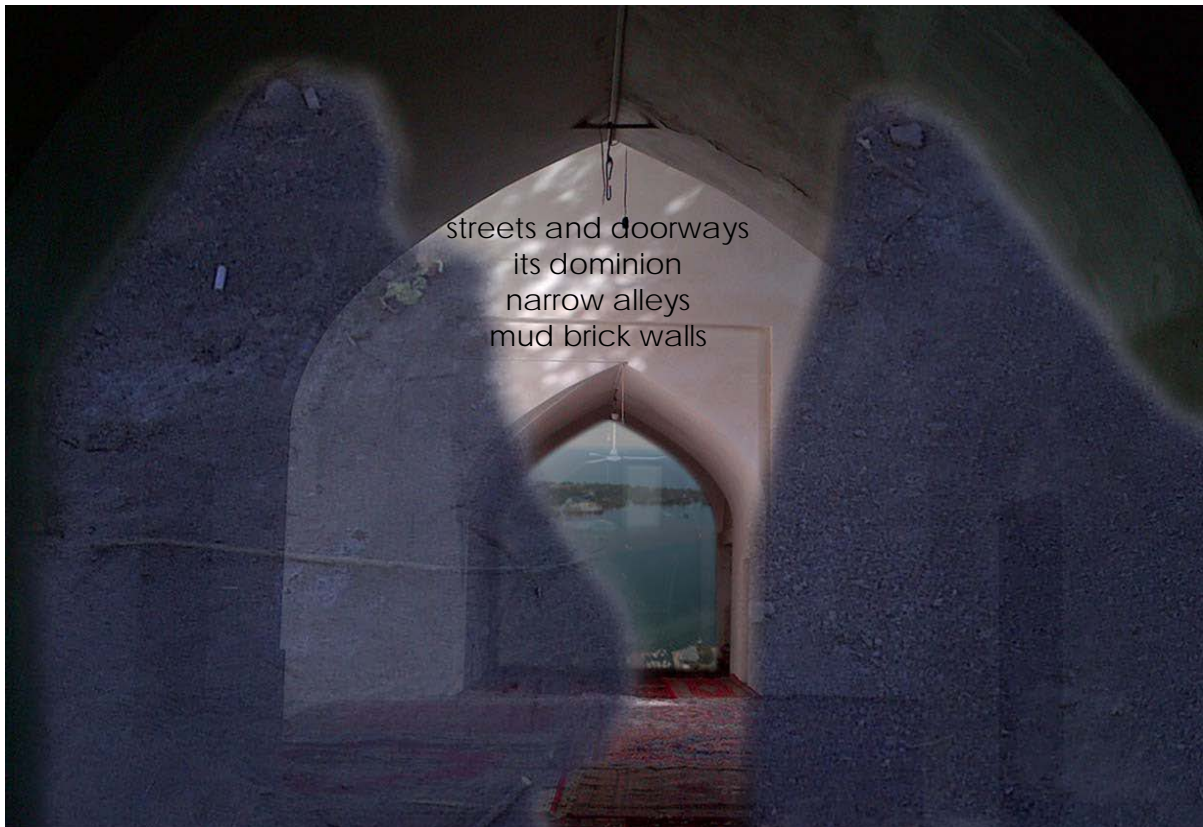


the waves of ivy  
hang in flutters  
gently rolling  
through my eyes

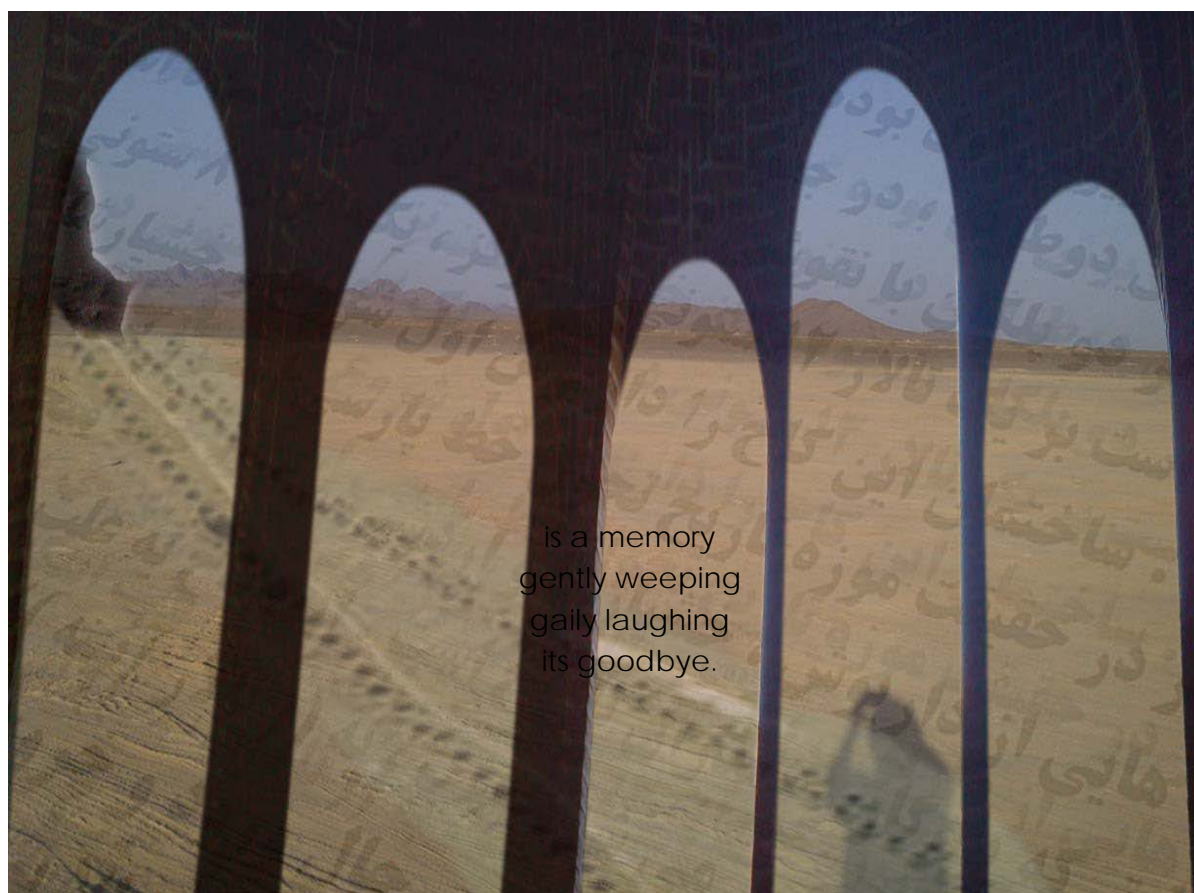














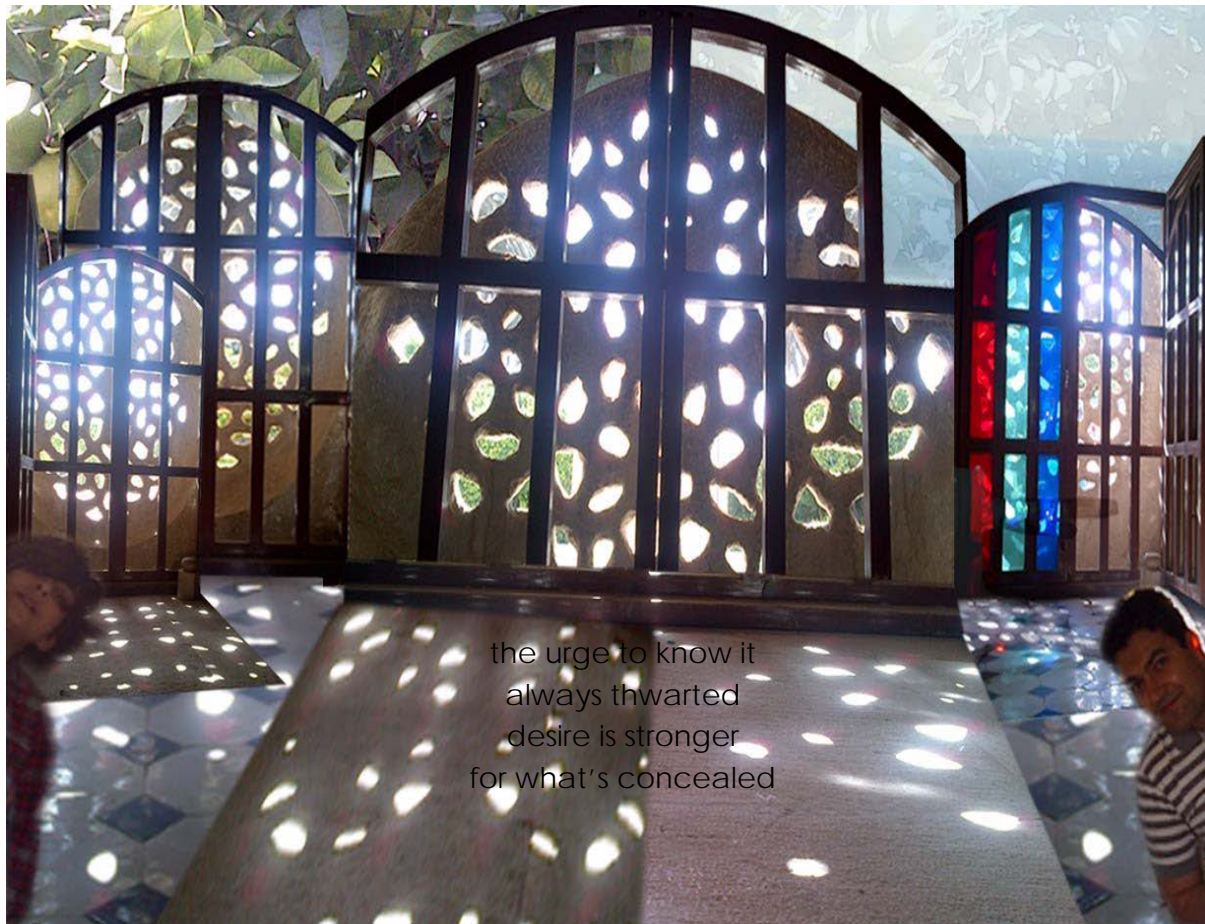




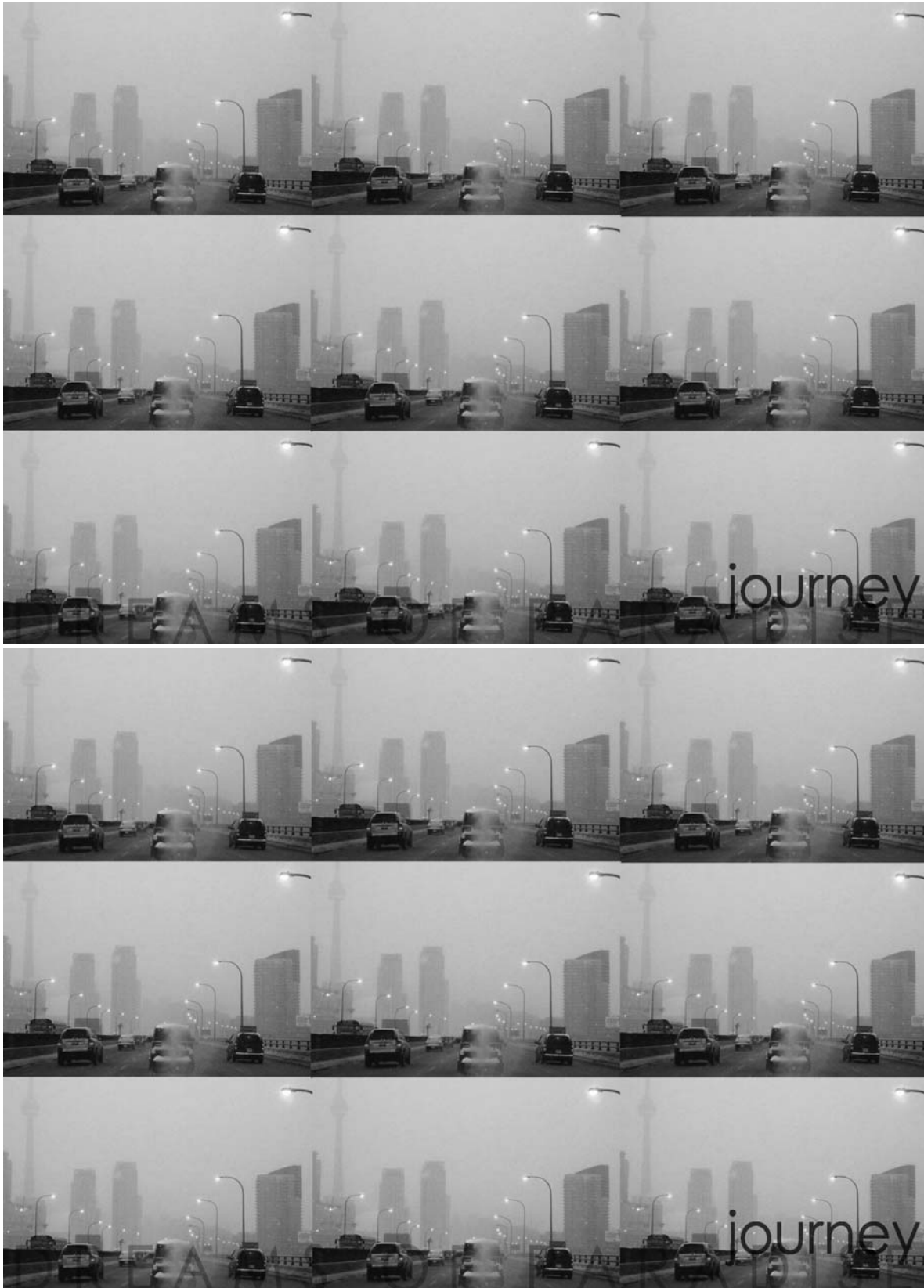


walls are open  
still they hide it  
more completely  
than reveal

the



the urge to know it  
always thwarted  
desire is stronger  
for what's concealed











song of life

food is joy  
a crimson passion  
a blissful, lilting

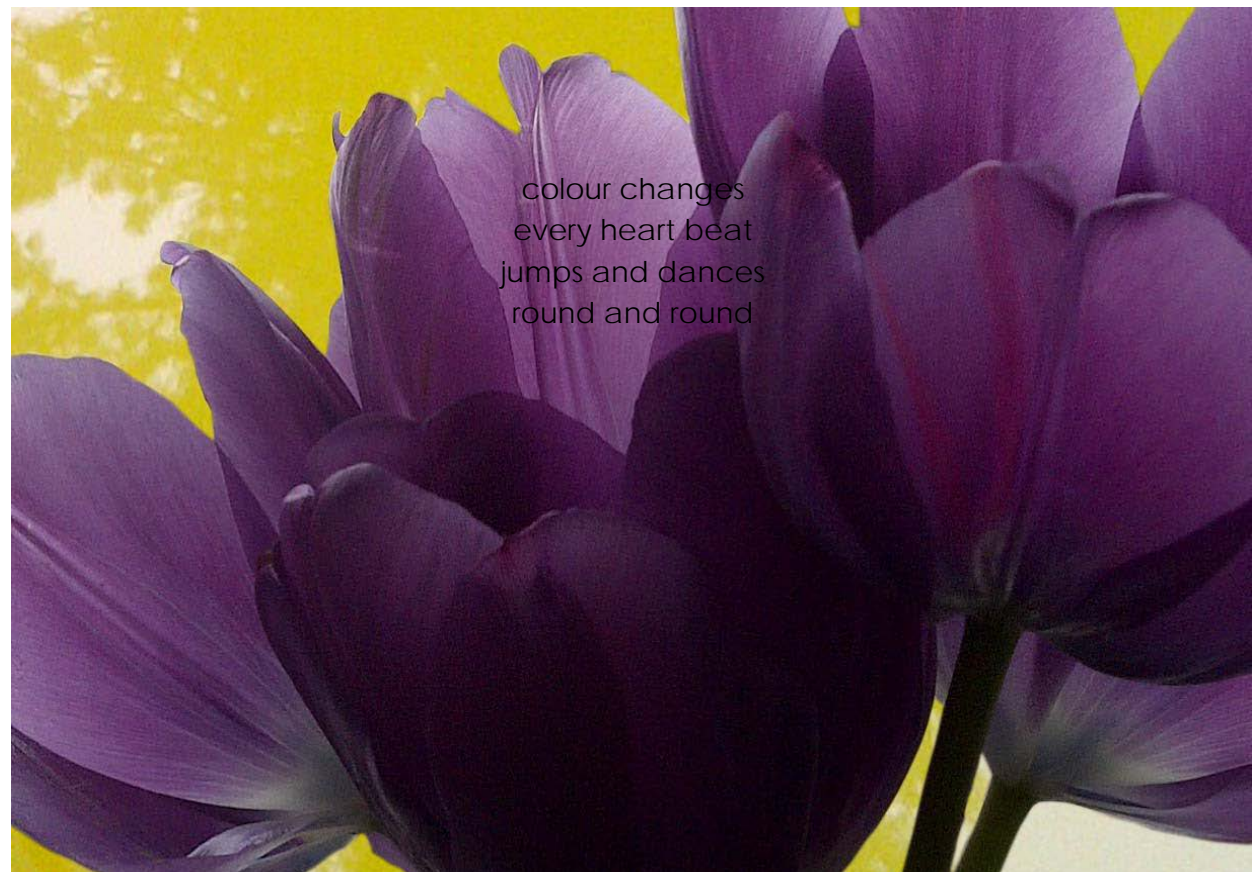
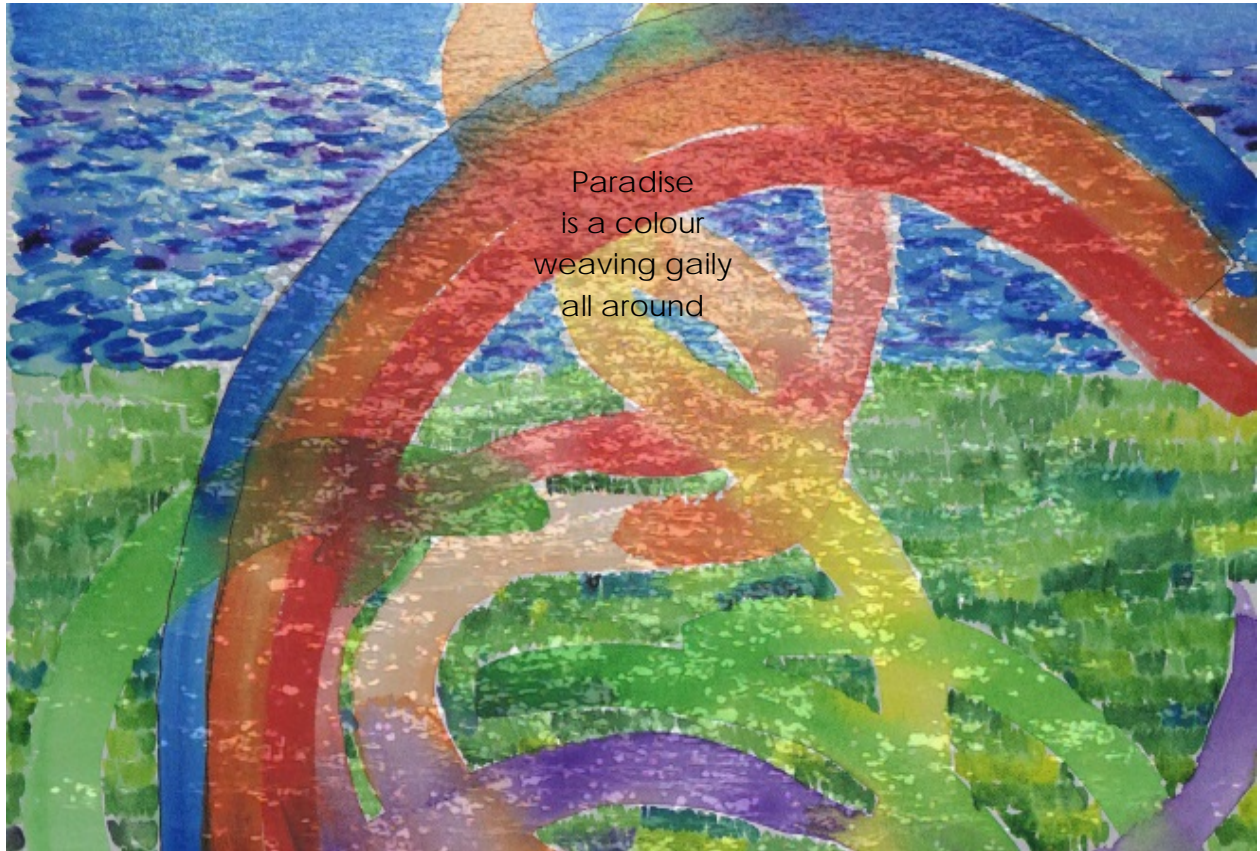


another day

as I feed it  
and I keep it  
beating through

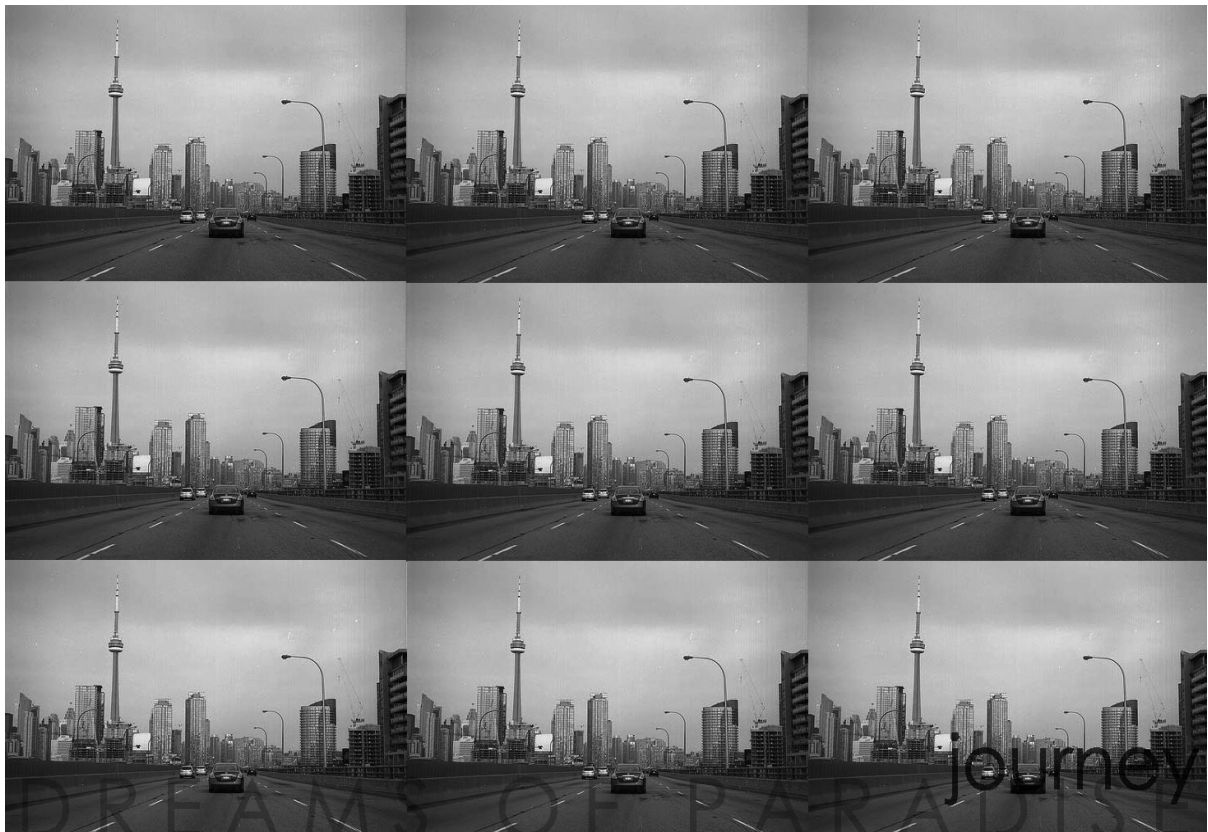




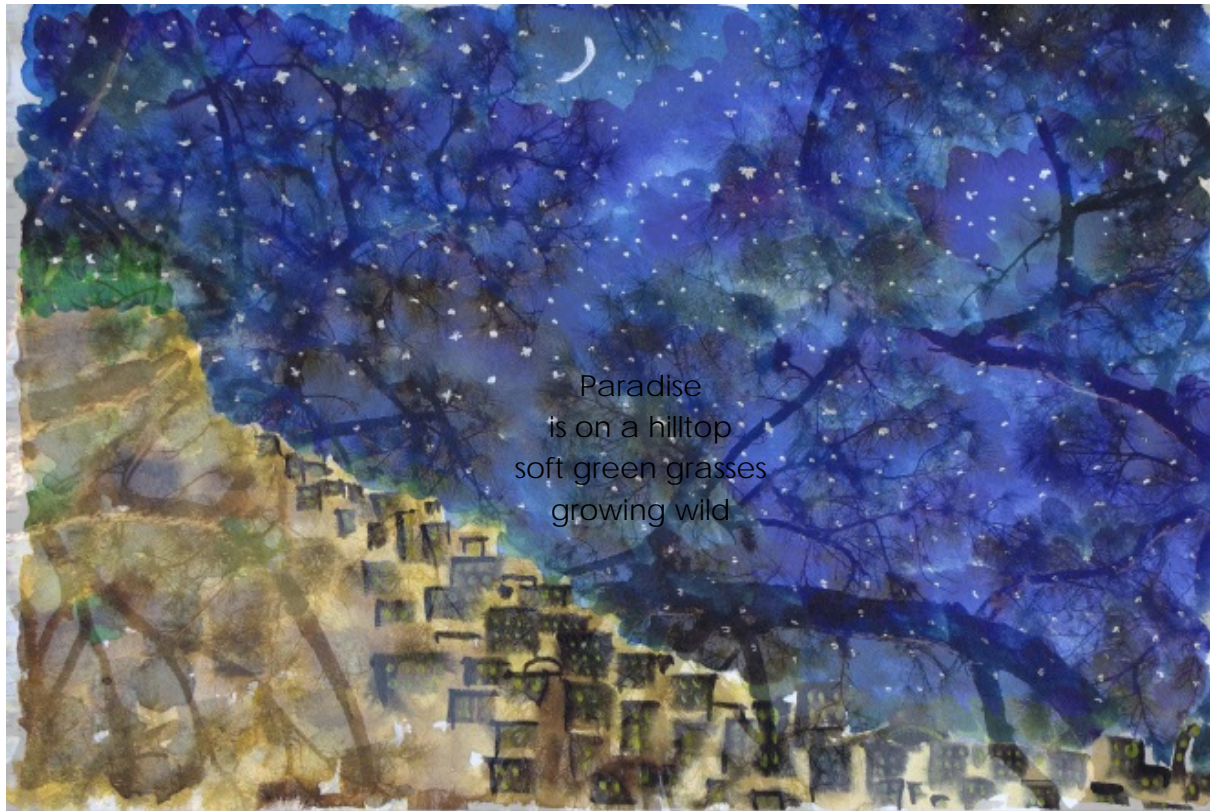










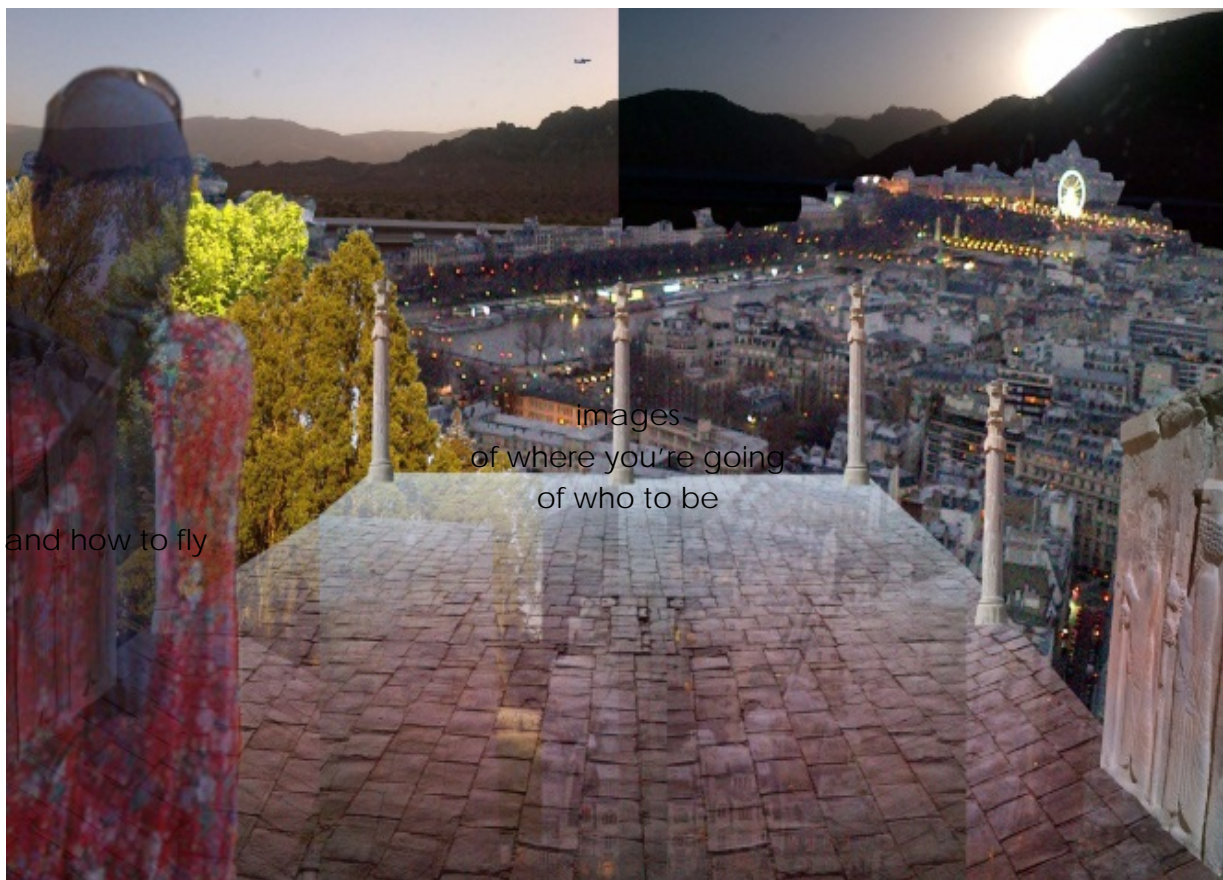


Paradise  
is on a hilltop  
soft green grasses  
growing wild



trees for walls  
all around it  
above a roof  
of only sky











## 6. THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE



*"Media come in pairs, one "containing" the other. The contained medium is the message of the containing one, but the effects of the latter are obscured for the user, who focuses on the former. Because those effects are so powerful, any message, in the ordinary sense of "content" or "information," has far less impact than the medium itself. Thus, "the medium is the message"."*

(McLuhan, 1964. p. xv)



*"My purpose... has been to dramatize and illustrate the ways in which memory functions through associations, leaps, or other dislocations out of time or space and how the more profound of these occurrences can give us a new understanding of our relation to the world." (Kuberski, 1992. p.2)*

There has been a kind of heart-breaking comfort in sitting 10,000 kilometers away and being able to navigate my country with the flex of a finger via Google Maps – the scale expanding and contracting like a beating heart. Now seeing the green of North America, Russia, China and Europe contrasting with the dun of the Middle East and North Africa, now finding the house I spent childhood vacations in lingering by the desert.

The odyssey of the search for paradise has been a journey with parallels, its resolution a metaphor for a personal resolution. As I travelled thousands of years back in time to understand the origins, so did I attempt to make sense of my own crossing from Iran to Toronto. Both journeys were burdened by decisions, choices, and consequences. Both had migration as their impetus, and memory as their agent of transformation.

Memory has been the magical elixir enabling the alchemy of hope, from whose nebulous surface visions of promises shimmer. Significantly, even as the memories transformed into visions of new possibilities, they have retained their identity as imprints of what has passed. Containment of the design investigation within the realm of memory-collage honours those images that made its architecture possible while validating their dominion through the fidelity of the medium.

I have memories of commonplace trips within Toronto during the years before travel back home and elsewhere in the world became a beacon illuminating and clarifying the landscape of what was ostensibly my home. A walk to the store in which I would suddenly and acutely become aware of my displacement. Where the ache of where I found myself placed had no rhyme or reason, where the sense of alienation from my immediate physical surroundings transported me to a purgatory of permanent placelessness, the displacement of not belonging anywhere.

Journey, the accretion of memory, and its transformation through desire have been the agents of moving from the purgatory of placelessness to the paradise of possibilities. This project has served to illustrate how the act of migration, of travel to new locations, with new ways of understanding the world and my place in it, has enabled a transition from



displacement to sanctuary. This is my architecture of the heart – memory transformed into vision through the journey of desire.



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