A space for taking the water: designing a contemporary public bathhouse

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A space for taking the water:

Designing a contemporary public bathhouse

by

Yu-Lin Wang

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

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Program of Study Committee:
Richard Becherer, Major Professor
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2004

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This is to certify that the master's thesis of

Yu-Lin Wang

has met the thesis requirements of Iowa State University

Signatures have been redacted for privacy
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A SPACE OF TAKING THE WATER: 
DESIGNING A CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC BATHHOUSE

Introduction

Located in the westernmost tip of San Francisco’s coastline, the site of Sutro Bath Ruins is famous for its magnificent natural setting (see Figure 1, 2). The Baths were recognized as one of the greatest public baths in the early nineteenth century. This place was a pleasure destination intended for San Franciscans: a spot to partake in saltwater swimming as well as enjoy social life. Unfortunately, the baths were destroyed by a fire in 1966. Since the 1970s, the National Park Service became the owner of Sutro Bath Ruins and kept the area as a wild field for seaside recreation. Today, the Sutro Bath Ruins, standing with the Cliff house and Sutro Heights Park, are part of San Francisco’s Sutro Historic District inside the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

In 1993, the National Park Service completed a Comprehensive Design Plan and Environmental Assessment for the Sutro Historic District (see Figure 3). Based on recommendations from the Plan, the National Park Service is rejuvenating the Sutro Cultural Landscape. According to the plan, a new visitor center will be built on the eastern border of Sutro Bath Ruins at the Merrie Way Parking Lot. However, the program of a new visitor center fails to embody the cultural context of the site and reflect the specific history of the place.

Furthermore, many unique landscape elements such as dramatic contours, ocean, rocks, cypress forest, steep cliffs and existing
ruins are not presently integrated into the design of the new visitor center. Therefore, it is my intention to design a new public bathhouse that incorporates the natural and cultural significance of the place.

However, there are challenges in developing a new public bathhouse in the territory of this National Park. The bathhouse has a special importance to San Francisco’s gay culture, for which the bathhouse has a special sexual association. Since the 1960s, public bathhouses were the gathering places for gays in the city, where illicit sexual activities often overshadowed the bathing and other recreational events. Meanwhile, as the property of the National Park Service, the new public bathhouse should be developed and managed under the mission of the National Park Service which is to preserve the natural and cultural resources and afford far-reaching opportunities for public recreation and education that are compatible with the preservation of park resources. Therefore the new bathhouse can not be a place for casual sex. In this essay, I will address the issues of usage and occupancy, creating an appropriate architectural program, space planning and circulation arrangement, which can solve these problems.

I will first study the site inventory of Sutro Bath Ruins to understand the history, environmental setting and original architectural features of the old Sutro Baths. I will then address the challenges of designing a public bathhouse on this specific site and propose an appropriate architectural program. The following
section will review and analyze the architectural characters of public bathhouses to help the space planning of my design. Based on the former study, I developed the design criteria for the project and designed a new public bathhouse.

Figure 1. Aerial Photograph of Western Quadrant of San Francisco

Figure 2. Bird’s Eye view of Sutro Baths Ruins and the Cliff House
Figure 3. The Comprehensive Design Plan, Sutro Historical District National Park Service, 1993
Site Inventory Study

Before proceeding to the design for the project, a brief site inventory study is necessary. The location where the structure will be built is one of the most telling elements of an architectural design. Studying these considerations not only helps to identify the characteristics of the site and program of the project, but also helps to discover the strengths of the place to further support the design goals, material composition, structural form, design functions, and the interrelationship between the building and the environment. The inventory study includes three topics: site location, historical analysis of site, environmental settings analysis.

The project will be located in the northwest quadrant of San Francisco next to the Pacific Ocean, inside the Sutro Historic District between the Cliff House Complex on the south and Lands End to the north. It is bordered by Point Lobos Avenue to the south and the Merrie Parking lot to the east, including the areas of Sutro Baths Ruins and its vicinity (see Figure 3). It is approximately eleven and half acres. This place affords visitor the costal access to the Pacific Ocean. It has been a popular place for scenic and recreational experiences since the 1850s. Today, the area is part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and is administered by the National Park Service.

There are concrete and steel foundational remnants of Sutro Baths lying in the midst of the seashore. The old baths were built
by San Francisco entrepreneur and Mayor Adolph Heinrich Joseph Sutro in 1894 and opened to the public in 1896. The swimming pools of the Baths were the largest of their kinds in an era when there were many indoor saltwater establishments. Moreover, Sutro Baths were not only a saltwater swimming establishment, but also a resort complex including restaurants, museums, amphitheater and other facilities. They were the place for public entertainment and social activities. Despite all the glamour and excitement, the Baths were not commercially successful. They were remolded into an ice-skating rink in 1937. In 1964, developers bought the site with plans to replace the Baths with a high-rise apartment building. But a fire in 1966 quickly finished the demolition work and thus ended the 80 year history of Sutro Baths. Today, Sutro Baths are predominately a landscape of ruins.

For the purpose of making sense of the place, it is necessary to investigate the history of the ruins. Sutro Baths were designed in a period when new building technologies that were developed by the industrial revolution were best known to the public through the architecture of railroad stations and world's fairs. As Sutro made his dream to build a splendid bathhouse on the wild seashore, the building had giant dimensions, which preserved a harmonic relationship with the natural environment, the force of the Pacific Ocean and the cliffs (see Figure 5, 6). Visitors were impressed by its size at once, but it was not oppressive owing to the lightness and airiness of the glass covering the structure. There were also
great challenges to construct such a massive building blasted into the rocks and to receive sea water from the Ocean to fill the swimming tanks. Inside the building, Sutro built the "California’s Tropical Winter Garden" by setting a balmy temperature and planting abundant plants in the interior space (see Figure 7). The baths were not only the modern version of the famous ablution resorts of Titus, Caracalla Nero or Diocletian, but also a great building in terms of technical achievement.

Sutro Baths are located at the foot of Point Lobos, the promontory which divides the Pacific Ocean from the Golden Gate—the key to the Golden Gate—the terminus of street car lines—the Mecca of Tourism—forty minutes from the hotel center of San Francisco.

Replica of a Grecian Temple (on the street level) welcomes those who love swimming, as well as all tourists and sight-seers. It is the artistic index to what the visitor sees as he proceeds down to the baths.

**Figure 5.** Site Plan and Details of Sutro Baths, 1915
Johnston-Ayres Company
Figure 6. Aerial View of Sutro Baths and Streetcar Barn
Marilyn Blaisdell Collection

Figure 7. Grand Stairway Looking East, Sutro Baths
Marilyn Blaisdell Collection
Today, these great baths have been turned into modern ruins. The impressive feature of the site is the combination of the bath ruins and natural areas around dramatic coastal cliffs. The ruins, including the original great salt water pool, are located at the base of a steep hillside on the edge of the Pacific. It is a wild, beautiful area: crashing waves, labyrinthine structures, wild lilies, cliff-lodged cypress trees bending away from the ocean. The cliffs are characterized by dark, tortured rock emerging from a crumbly, decaying light granite. There are an abundance of interesting plants, struggling with the seawater, wind and fog. The large cypress forest displays traces of the competition between life and environment. And the surf is so violent here that it tends to carve caves into weaker points of the rock. Owing to the individual location, the expression of the topography from the soil, the plants or the man-made building ruins, keeps visitors abreast of the daily evolution of the land. Here, nature presents itself forcefully.

Sutro Baths was a revival of the ancient Roman bathhouse for modern times. The building expressed the respect for both people and nature. It realized the dream of Adolph Sutro to invite people whether rich or poor to the scenic seashore, to appreciate the views of the natural environment, to enjoy the sensual bathing in the seawater, and to find fascinating subjects in the encircling galleries, fantastic stages and mazy staircases.

What type of architecture can truly represent the social and cultural meaning of Sutro Baths? The old baths were the symbol of
the metropolis of San Francisco. The character-defining feature of this site is recreational use. Continued recreational use and interpretation of historic recreational use can be a better strategy to improve the value of the place. Therefore, recalling the civic life during the early twentieth century, the new project will create an urban space utilizing the power of its history. I believe a revival of a public bathhouse associated with the functions of exhibition, performance and education will be a strong architectural intervention. The new project will be an accessible, recreational and educational facility for the general public as the old baths were in the past.

The new intervention should also be integrated into the landscape, identifying, protecting and enhancing the natural setting as well as the historical and cultural significance. The National Park Service proposed the General Management Plan for the Golden Gate National Recreational Area in 1980. The stated purpose was to rejuvenate the unsightly development and to "green up" the landscape and recapture the spirit of another era when San Franciscans and area visitors came to the site.5

The Occupancy And Program Challenges In The Design

To create a better understanding for approaching the design of the new public bathhouse as a benefit to the public I will look closely at the history of public bathhouses in San Francisco and their social and cultural impact on the lives of San Franciscans.
The American modern public bathhouses were born in the late 1800s under the influence of the public bath movement in Europe. Before that, because of widespread promiscuity and epidemic diseases, public bathhouses had vanished from the urban scene in Western Europe by the end of the seventeenth century. It was not until the industrial revolution, with the expanding urban population, the growth of urban slums, the exploration of epidemic diseases, and rising middle-class standards of personal cleanliness, that the public bath movement occurred in Europe.

In America, industrialization and waves of immigrants made cities outgrow their capability to serve their residents. The absence of sanitary facilities was perceived as the threat to the society. Inspired by the European movement, the American bath reformers also established regulations relating to public baths. These public baths were opened to the public as the municipal facilities to improve the public health and to assist in creating "civic civilization".

In the late nineteenth century, San Francisco had a number of freshwater swimming facilities existing in the Bay area and other bathing spots, such as a large public bathhouse in Oakland and Lurline Baths at Bush and Larkin streets opened in 1894 which operated until 1936. In 1896, Sutro Baths were opened to the public, providing its visitors with recreational as well as educational opportunities.

While the city governments, bath reformers and philanthropists
built more and more public baths, the education of cleanliness to the public resulted in the change of housing standards that required each apartment must have a private bathroom. Soon thereafter, public bathhouses, which had been owned by the cities as municipal facilities for public health, were closed gradually. And the function of some public bathhouse buildings changed dramatically. Since the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, gay men had been meeting for sex in bathhouses at a time when homosexual acts were illegal. The architect and educator, Aaron Betsky pointed out that the bathhouses offered respite from the world, and thus became escape valves for society as a whole and became a domain affording these people the opportunities of escaping from men cruising and refusing to accept the city’s strictures. The bath space is a realm with less order, which escapes from constrictions of appearance and screen out the social identity of the participants. As associated with populist democracy, the bath houses became affirmative settings for the gathering of gay men. By the 1930s, these bath houses had been established as places of gay community-building. In the 1950s exclusively gay bath houses appeared in America. In the late 1960s and 1970s gay bathhouses, now primarily gay-owned and operated, became fully-licensed gay establishments soon becoming major gay institutions. These bathhouses served as informal gay meeting places, places where friends could meet and relax. And they were also the site of sexual encounters.

San Francisco, a magnet for America’s counterculture, was one
of the cities which were known for its gay culture. Nan Alamilla Boyd described her perception of the city in the book *Wide Open Town: A Queer History of San Francisco*,

Perched on the edge of a continent, its beautiful vistas, eccentric characters, and liberal politics reflect both the unruly nature of its frontier-town beginnings and the sophisticated desires of an urban metropolis.

Sociologists Howard Becker and Irving Horowitz pointed out that San Francisco is a culture of civility, "deviance, like difference, is a civic resource, enjoyed by tourist and resident alike." The city attracted large numbers of gay men to the Castro district in the 1970s. The public bathhouses were turned into private gay bath houses and flourished in the 1970s and early 1980s. But due to the bath houses' suspected role in exacerbating the AIDS crisis, San Francisco temporarily shut down these bathhouses in 1984 as a public health threat.

Therefore, to avoid sexual activities happening in the new public bathhouse, I have been challenged to analyze the problem of the occupancies and decide the user groups before planning the program of the new public bathhouse. I will first look into the ancient bath traditions to find the methods used to control sexual activities. I will also study the spatial characters of gay bathhouse as the counterpart of the new design.

Roman baths were monumental examples of public baths in the Western world. Taking the bath was an important and essential part of Roman life, and formed part of the daily routine for all classes
in Rome. In the early days of the Roman public baths, the *thermae* were used by men. As women gained more financial power and thus more stature, the baths were made available to them too. At that time, men and women used separate facilities or women used the full establishment at a time earlier than men. But late, mixed bathing became acceptable. Many people went to the baths because they found bathing to be a stimulant for eating and having sex (see Figure 8). As a result, bath houses began to become centers of promiscuity. Finally, the Roman emperor, Hadrian issued a decree to separate the sexes in the *thermae* sometime between A.D. 117 and 138. The layout of Roman baths reflected the way Romans used the bath. If the bath did not have separate establishments for men and women, time regulated its usage by different occupants.

In Turkey, the Islamic nation had its religion prescribe the practice of ablutions and the usage of bathing. Moslems essentially adapted Roman *thermae* to their Islamic culture. In their public bathhouses, the *hammam*, the sexes were always kept separated and women were not permitted to enter the *hammam* until the twentieth century. The general layout of the bath house was two adjoining baths for each gender surrounding a central heating space. The men’s *hammam* provided a special place of masculine comradery (see Figure 9). The women’s *hammam* were the most important space for their social and religious activities (see Figure 10). It was the only time women could leave their homes or harems and have contact with their friends. After the bathers experienced hours of being cold and
warm bathing, they would get together for coffee or conversation.

Figure 8. Painting of the Baths of Caracalla
Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, 1899
Another great Eastern public bath tradition was developed by the Japanese, under the effects of Buddhism and other eastern philosophies. Bathhouses became part of Japanese social life around the seventh century. Different from other bath traditions, Japan was one of the few places in the world where groups of people bathed
together. The Japanese communal bath houses had separate entrances for different classes, but had few separated sections for men and women. Although the bath experience is communal and enjoyable, it was approached with a serious attitude. It should away from the mixed bathing in Roman baths which led to scandal, causing it to be revoked finally. It was not until the Meiji period (1867-1912), that mixed bathing disappeared as a symbol of civilization. Today, Japanese public baths have become the destinations of regeneration, and the modern Japanese public bathhouse is an important type of public bathhouses.

I chose a public bathhouse, Spa Hyakumangoku Yokuden, to study space planning and use programming. Spa Hyakumangoku Yokuden is a large-scale public bathhouse built in 1980s. The layout of the bathhouse reflects the basic scheme of Japanese resort public bathhouses. The plans are designed with consideration of genders (see Figure 11). Men and women share the same entrance, lobby and lounge. Both genders have separate dressing rooms and the bath spaces where people can be either dressed or undressed. The men’s and women’s sides are very similar. They have the same bathing sequence except the bath spaces for each gender have different motifs. The separate bath spaces have only one access to the dressing room which has gated entrance to the public space. This strategy helps eliminate unacceptable behaviors in the public domain. Besides the respective bath spaces, there is a large public bath pool on the first floor sharing by both genders who are dressed.
Figure 11. Plans of Spa Hyakumangoku Yokuden, Japanese
After having surveyed the methods of how the public baths dealt with genders, I wanted to find out what are the architectural characteristics distinguishing gay bathhouses. The new bathhouse should avoid creating such special spaces offering opportunities for sexual activities. Two cases will be posited here.

The first place is the Saint Mark Baths in the early 1980s. Located on the Lower East Side, New York City, it was constructed in 1913 as a commercial bathhouse. It was first a Turkish bath and then turned into a gay bathhouse. The baths had five floors (see Figure 12). As the shelter protecting gay men from the outside world, the spatial layout of the Saint Mark Baths indicated this extreme division between “inside” and “outside”, between an external world of heterosexual surveillance and an interior one of hedonistic freedom. The street entry led up a flight of stairs to the first floor, where the admissions/registration window, offices, locker room, restaurant and a group sex room were located. Another set of stairs led down to the basement, which housed the swimming pool, steam room and showers. A sauna and whirlpool were added in the early 1980s. The three upper floors held as many small, partitioned rooms as possible. There was a sun roof as well. The impressive spaces were the individual cubicles, in which anything might occur. The partitions were designed to create the maximum number of “private” rooms in the least amount of space. These cubicles were the rooms for dressing, resting, sleeping and, of course sexual activities. The narrow hallways created a mazelike layout, defining
not only the spaces, but the bodily experience. Many gay bathhouses like Saint Marks were best known for their mazes. It is obvious, the spaces intended to ample opportunities to engage in various levels of intimate contact.

Another case is the Ariston Bathhouse in New York City at the beginning of the twentieth century. A policeman drew a diagram of the Bathhouse after a raid (see Figure 13). Again, the dressing space had been divided into many small rooms, within which people could establish more private relationships. The little spaces became the most irreducible abstraction of bedrooms within this miniature city of desire.18
The labyrinthine interior is the most salient feature of the spaces inside gay bathhouses, which stylizes the architecture and implies the events taking place inside the baths. The maze-like spaces "frustrate 'normal' use and detection by providing multiple barriers to intervention or observation". These unobservable spaces in the bathhouses are the cubicles. Moreover, the darkness is the desired condition, that, in and of it, the walls and other constraints are dissolved. In such a realm, people could concentrate on the pleasure of the body.

Figure 13. Plan of Ariston Bathhouse, New York City, 1903
Two general design principles relating to the occupancy and spaces came into my design. First, the new project will serve both genders, establishing separate bathing facilities for men and women. This strategy can help avoid the problems caused by occupancy (i.e. sexual activities including both heterosexual and homosexual activities.

Furthermore, I noticed there is another user group - children who had been overlooked in many baths. Since the new public bathhouse is the property of the National Park, it is necessary to consider the participation of children. Usually, children may bath with people of the same gender, or with his or her family. To create more options for children, the new public bath house will serve three types of occupants: men, women, and families. There will be bath spaces for each group respectively as well as public bath spaces and other facilities shared by all three groups.

The second design principle is to avoid creating spaces which explicitly provide possibilities for sexual activities. Open, visible spaces eliminate such unwanted events. Therefore, my design will exclude the private changing rooms or guest rooms, the labyrinthine interior and semi-dark or dark spaces typical of gay bathhouses.

The question of how the new bathhouse will serve its occupants, led to the study of the architectural program of bathhouse in the past. As already noted, the new bathhouse, as a public bathhouse, combines the functions of bathing, exhibits, performances and
education. To propose a well-developed program, I selected a Roman bathhouse, a Turkish bathhouse and the old Sutro Baths themselves for case studies. By observing how these public institutions fulfilled their functions, I will establish a proper program supporting the mission of the National Park Service based on its capability to serve the public and reinforce the culture of the site. Then, the new public bathhouse can be a strong design project to rejuvenate the Sutro landscape culture.

The general layout of Roman bathhouses comprised of a large open garden surrounded by subsidiary rooms; a block of bath chambers either sitting in the center of the garden or around the garden (see Figure 14). The bathers entered their dressing rooms after excising in the *Palaestra* (gymnasium). Then they would move to the *tepidarium* (luke-warm hall) to acclimate their bodies to the heat, and then take a hot-water bath in the *caladarium* (hot-warm hall). After that were a soaping, a massage, and a plunge into the swimming pools of the *frigidarium* (cold-water). Once relaxed and refreshed, the bathers could socialize and make use of the libraries and other facilities.\(^{21}\)

The Turkish baths were similar to the Roman baths in layout and sequence (see Figure 15). They retained the sequence of hot and cold rooms, but discarded other elements (gymnasium and library) of the Roman baths.\(^{23}\) The ministration of the bath proceeded as: the bathers first entered the divesting room (the dressing room), then walked through the *tepidarium* which had become a mere passageway.
The bathers would enter the caldarium, the domed hot-air room, where limbering and special massage were administered, and then to the steam bath. Finally, the bathers would take a soap massage, and return to the maslak (the combination of dressing room and rest hall) for a rest. The main activity zones were the dressing rooms and the washing areas, which became places for socialization. They were provided with stone benches around the outside where mattresses and cushions would have been spread where people would have sat and relaxed. Compared with the Roman baths, the Turkish baths were a place of withdrawal, where a little energetic movement would disturb the tranquillity of the psychospiritual climate.

**Figure 14.** The Bath of Diocletian, A.D. 302, Rome
The bathing sequences in the Roman or Turkish bath are similar; the bathing began in a space where people could socialize, took the hot-water bath to the cold-water bath in order, then the bathers would participate in communal activities. The Romans lavished the greatest luxury and the largest share of space upon the tepidarium (luke-warm hall). It was the focus of the Roman baths. The tepidarium is the center space for the bathers; from it, the bathers could head for the bath spaces, the gymnasium, the libraries or
other facilities. The program has a radial structure with the tepidarium in the center. Compared with the Roman baths, the Turkish baths gave more importance to relaxation. Their bathing experience was designed in a circle: it began in the apodyterium (the maslak), then the bath area, finally, went back to the apodyterium. The bathers sojourned in it at the beginning and at the conclusion of the refreshment cycle.

The Roman baths and Turkish baths had an important impact on later bath cultures. The design and layout of classical Roman baths influenced the design of nineteen-century baths in the United State. The Sutro Baths, a modern swimming facility, adopted the scheme of three influential models, the Roman baths of Titus, Caracalla and Diocletian.

The public could access the entrance of the Sutro Baths' building from Point Lobos Avenue. The foyer was a small classic temple in the Doric order. From here people stepped down a broad stairway lined with palms and reached the museum gallery. From the gallery the visitors could proceed either by elevator or down the grand staircase, to a stupendous building containing a series of basins blasted in the rock, which received the water from the Ocean's briny caverns, and supplied and drained both hot and cold water to the swimming tanks. There were six swimming tanks, which were heated to different temperatures by live steam. Adjacent to the bath area on three sides there were bleacher-like seats. Above the baths were three levels of alcoves, balconies and balustrades, a
restaurant on each of the three floors, galleries, an amphitheater, and a promenade.

Like the Roman baths, Sutro Baths combined many functions. Serving the public as a center of civic life in the early twentieth century, they had become a historic landmark. To recall this history is an important aspect of my design. The program of the new architecture reflects various activities happening at the site, fulfilling both physical and spiritual experiences. The new baths will tell the historical significance of the place and afford new spatial possibilities. Functional and symbolic meaning needs to inspire a new generation of public bathhouses, which recalls the old bathhouse, and also creates new bathing experience for visitors. In addition, located at the crossing area of the Sutro Height Park, the Cliff House and Lobos End, the project can afford spaces for acquiring information about the Sutro Historic District and function as a civic facility providing a visitor center, theater and a museum. The museum will highlight both local natural and cultural resources, introducing indigenous habitats and historic landmarks. It can also serve as a museum, presenting the history of baths, or as a gallery for works of art.

With the objective to make the new bathhouse a public institution, I will consider two main types of users in the design: the bathers who enjoy the regenerative experience; and the visitors who are interested in touring the Sutro Historical District.
Due to the different requirements of visual and spatial privacy of activities accommodated in the project, the architecture will be divided into two domains: public bath spaces as well as other civic places, including the visitor center, museum, store, café and banqueting rooms.

The new public bathhouse will accommodate 40-80 bathers. The bathhouse will have its own entrance, lobby and reception area. From the entrance hall, bathers of different groups (men, women and families) can proceed to their dressing rooms. Each group will have its own bath spaces and rest area. The new bath will also provide public pools, rest space, sauna, massage, fitness and a styling salon. The program of the visitor center and the museum consists of an entrance hall, an information center, a souvenir shop, a café, banqueting rooms, an auditorium and amphitheatre as well as galleries. Besides these public spaces, there are staff offices, storage, kitchens, mechanical rooms, restrooms and other supporting spaces.

Design Solution

Foremost on my agenda, I have imagined the new building as a new social institution. It accommodates multiple facilities: a public bathhouse, a museum, an information center and a small theater. These spaces are connected by staircases, elevators and corridors.

In order to describe its architectural and design features, I
have included drawings and images to accompany my narrative. As I map out each floor, these plans and cross-sections can be used as a guide illuminating the relationships between one space or floor and another. (see Figure 16-23)

The project is a road-side building, standing along the Point Lobos Avenue. Walking over a bridge, visitors reach the entry square from the avenue. This is the main entry area for the information center and museum. Visitors will find the souvenir shop on the west square. Beside the shop, there is an entrance which leads visitors to the café and the vertical transportation core on the first floor. The main entrance to the information center is located on the east square. The center occupies the east area of the first floor.

On this level and above, the building is perceived as a narrow strip along the avenue. It is designed as a thin layer inserted into the site’s natural environment. The outdoor experience is not interrupted abruptly. The indoor space is a sheltered viewing locus enriching the viewing experience. Standing on the square, visitors can look through the glass curtain walls on both sides of the building. The remote cliffs and cypress forest are presented as a framed picture, compelling visitors to enter the building and have a closer look. Inside the architecture, they can choose either to sit in the café affording them a static viewing, or they may walk along the corridor to catch dynamic views of the surroundings. The building invites comfortable opportunities for appreciating the view.

By taking the elevator or the staircase, visitors rise to the
lobby of the museum on the second floor. The museum occupies the second, third, fourth and fifth floors. Away from the traffic, this is a quiet space. The galleries and staff office sit on the south part of the building. Long ramps and wide corridors occupy the northern part. When visitors walk on the ramps, the viewing experience becomes more exciting with the changes of viewers' location. The views of the ocean, waves, rocks, beach, vegetation, cliffs, birds, seals and the Cliff house and the horizon capture the hearts of the visitors. If they are feeling tired, people can sit on benches along the corridors to have a rest. There is a bridge on each floor connecting with an outdoor staircase, which leads down to the banqueting rooms and bath spaces. When stepping down the staircase, visitors enjoy a broad, sweeping view of the ocean and its confluence with the land up and down the coast.

On the western lower terrace, there is another outdoor open space. It is the main outdoor viewing platform and space for activities. An amphitheater is located at the center. From it, proceeds a long staircase for people to walk down the terrace to the main entry of the theater, then to the original pathway of the site. This provides a new approach to the ruins from the avenue. On the northern part of the square, there is a pathway leading to the main entrance of the bath house and banquet rooms. Here, on the lower level of the building are the public recreation facilities: the bathhouse and theater.

After people enter the building, they will turn left and head
for the banquet rooms. These rooms are designed for small parties. The eastern hall can be divided into two small rooms with movable walls at the space’s center. The exterior walls around this area are glass curtain walls, which highlight the connection of the interior and the outdoor setting.

From the entrance, visitors take a flight of stairs to the lower floor, which houses the bath house and private spaces for bathers. The stairs lead bathers to the lobby area. Here, the bathers can have a seat or enjoy a small stroll in the courtyard. The reception area is under the staircase. Here, bathers will pay a small entry fee, get directions for the bathing programs, pick up the towels or make appointments for the massage and styling salon. It is the beginning of the bathing experience. The bathers will find the respective entrances to men’s, women’s, families’ bath areas and public bath facilities.

Bathing Program

The pages that follow, then, will describe the individual bathing experience of the three types of occupants: men, women and families. The men’s bath area is at the southwestern corner. First, men enter the dressing room. Here, they change, and then go directly to take a shower before they enter bath pools. Unlike the dressing room in the Turkish bath which was the locus of socializing, the dressing room here is more functional. A small room sits between the dressing room and communal bath area. It is used for acclimating
bathers' bodies to a warmer temperature. The bathers are now prepared to enter the hot-water bath pool, much like the caldarium in the traditional Roman and Turkish baths. The curved thick solid walls bring a sense of quiet and seclusion. There are seats at the corners. If the bathers like a warmer environment, they can enter the sauna room. After loosening their bodies in the warmer rooms, the bathers may now go back to the dressing room to take a shower or continue to walk through a small room and have a plunge into the cold-water pool. After cooling down their body temperature, the bathers can have coffee or a conversation in the tea room where the glass wall brings in the outside landscape. In these spaces, the bathers would wear towels and bath suits.

The bathing procedure of women is similar to men’s. The bath areas take up the southwest corner of the floor and extend to the underground of the existing restaurant. After sweating in the hot-water room and sauna, women can refresh themselves by taking a plunge in the cold water or take a shower as in the men’s section. Their relaxation will be in the lounge room.

Compared to the regeneration experience of men or women, families pay more attention to communication with each other. The bath program designed for the families is intended to create an alternative setting for their family activities. The focus of their bath is the family living room. As a group, the family will enter their bath unit at the reception area. There is a small pool in each unit. After bathing, the family will take a flight of stairs, and
then gather in the lounge room, which are on the higher level. Skylights introduce indirect sunlight into these bath units.

Beside these individual bath facilities for different occupants, there are public facilities shared by all bathers. They are required to take showers before using these facilities and they remain fully dressed in these spaces. A public relaxation pool is located in the center of the main hall. There is a rest area on the pool side; a courtyard is adjacent to the main hall filled with bright light. The glass curtain walls bring the bathers close to nature. Crossing the main hall, at the northeastern corner are the massage rooms, fitness room and the styling salon. In the courtyard, there are three cylindrical bathrooms where individuals take a shower. Connected to each other by a path, they are incorporated into the courtyard as landscape elements.

Design Criteria

In order to present a better portrait of the new public bath club, I will discuss the design criteria I used and explain how my design supports them. These criteria were developed with the reference to the design criteria of the Cliff House and environs, 2000. The National Park Service recommended these criteria could also be applied to other redevelopment projects in the Sutro Historic District. They are an effective means of protecting the unique character of the site and creating compatibility with the environment.
The new design will enhance the sense of place by highlighting the natural environment and the historical ruins. The wildness of the environmental setting is the critical defining element here. The outdoor space is characterized by the ocean, unique rock formations, weather and diverse flora and fauna, all of which architectural intervention want to appreciate.

The new building sits on the southwest edge of the site. The visitors just need to walk a short distance from the entrance to the north edge of the building, which has a glass curtain wall, facing the ruins, the ocean and the cliffs. It creates a strong connection between the indoor and outdoor spaces. Two entry spaces provide direct experience with the views of the magnificent environment. The design also creates a small creek trickling down as well as the overflow of the bathers themselves to the ruins from the new building. The small pedestrian's square of the theater extends into the ruins themselves. These linkages with the remnants recall the old sea-water swimming bath house, bringing the visitor's imagination to the past and giving it a sense of history.

The new project should deal with landscape elements carefully. One objective seeks to strengthen the site/building relationships. The project is located at the junction of the city and nature. Here, the grid-framed city pattern and the irregular natural contours meet. The transition from a formal, urban-style built landscape environment to an informal, natural landscape is solved strategically. The design integrates its built axes into the
geometry of the site, and creates a synthesis between the architecture and the site. The plans have their long sides along the avenue and extend a short distance from the edge of the avenue, which reduces the impact on the original setting. The built spaces are arranged in rectangular axes which are adopted from the city pattern.

Another important task is to emphasize and preserve the site. The project's site context and environment are as important as the architecture itself. Indeed, site features may be the predominant characteristics shaping the spatial experience. As noted before, the building is fitted into the natural topography and occupies a narrow strip of land to the south, which reduces the need for land modification. The new structure and built form also accentuate the landscape. For instance, glass and steel that were so prominent in the design of Sutro Baths are used to recall that history. In the layout of the building, the fragmented spaces call attention to the natural elements of sea cliffs and rocks.

Since the landscape dominates the site, opportunities for viewing, overlook, and perspective are crucial design objectives. Site organization and building orientation maximize viewing opportunities, and create different types of viewing experience from both indoor and outdoor locations. The new architecture has moderate dimensions, which help to protect the quality of the views that the site provides. The outdoor open spaces provide viewing platforms for broad, sweeping views. The building also offers viewing
opportunities from the indoor spaces. The façades facing the ocean, ruins and forest are covered with glass. The visitors can view the outside from different floors and thus have multiple perspectives. The building will enrich the indoor-outdoor experience, contribute to the scenario and enhance the spatial experience of users. The connections between inside-to-outside, outside-to-inside, inside-to-inside and outside-to-outside create variety.

In addition to the strategic planning of spaces, the new design is also intended to make the built landscape a counterpoint to the natural environment. I projected the images of the predominant natural features through the building’s structural form and architectural details. The forms of the floors and columns are derived from the figure of seaside vegetation – the cypress. These artificial "trees" support the new architecture as if the building grew up from the cliffs naturally. (see Figures 24-27) The gaps between the "trunks" are used for the electricity, plumbing, ventilation and other facilities strategically.

The design also pays attention to lighting. A light well penetrates the ground of the entrance square. Indirect sunlight brightens the underground family bath units. To introduce natural lighting into the galleries, which have a solid exterior façade, natural light strips are created on the roof and floors of the galleries. Several pieces of the floors and the exterior walls are displaced from their normal positions. This deliberate irregularity summons up the associates with the projecting rocks, which extrude
out from the building.

As a seaside destination for San Franciscans and visitors, the project provides opportunities for diverse activities. The new development enriches activities, viewing, socializing, playing and learning. The design project affords comfortable spaces for usage. According to the varied spatial requirements of bathing, education, socializing, functions are arranged as followings. The public bath house is on the lower level setting into the cliffs. Hence, there is less interference from outside. The roof of the auditorium and women’s baths becomes a large square and platform for viewing, where there is an amphitheater. Here is the main location for outdoor recreational activities. The visitor center is on the entrance floor and easily accessible. The museum occupies the quiet spaces on the second floor and above, away from the noise of the traffic.

More than creating comfortable spaces, the design also supports a range of ages and abilities. The entry spaces minimize the traffic congestion and improve visitor safety. In addition, developing seating and gathering space, they provide safe and static spaces in the wide environs aims at increasing the time of lingering on the site.

In the following pages, various perspectives images of the new building will be presented to illustrate my solution (see Figures 28-31).
Figure 17. Plan Lower Level
Figure 26. Section 3
CONCLUSION

The solution of designing a new bath house in a public park - Sutro Bath ruins - lies in understanding the physical and spiritual significance of public bathhouses. Long overshadowed by industrialized private baths of the present day, public baths gradually lost their importance within Western culture. Private bathrooms took the place of public bathhouses. Furthermore, a controversial transition also happened inside public bathhouses. These spaces became the separated terrain for gay people's community life, and for intimate encounters. Therefore, the challenge is to rediscover the value of public baths as a mirror of physical, social and cultural ideals, shared by all men (gay and straight), as well as women and families. My intention in designing this project was to recapture the essence of a bathhouse as a public non-sexual space by using appropriate architectural intervention.

The study of the history of public baths enabled me to read through the built forms and programs of bathhouses of the past, and to discovery the spirit of baths spaces. It is my feeling that an architect should readily explore such architectural spaces in a comprehensive, social frame of reference.

In addition, the design process involved in the project provides a model for finding design solutions. It begins with establishing project objectives, finding design potentials, studying problems and challenges. It then moves on proposing appropriate approaches, setting up design criteria, culminating in the creation
of a workable design solution.

Using this thesis study as a model of project design, I recommend readers to focus on a more social approach to architecture, understanding the different meaning accredited a certain type of architecture for different ages. Following this approach, the architect will find better answers to design challenges.
END NOTES

1. The Comprehensive Design Plan for the Sutro Historic District is a conceptual document describing the management goals and overall development. Besides the building, a new visitor center at the Merrie Way parking lot, the renovation of the Cliff House is phase one of the implementation process which began in January 2003. Online, cited 10 December, 2004. Available from World Wide Web:
(http://www.nps.gov/goga/clho/project/background/map.html).

2. The mission of National Park Service is stated as,

The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country.

Online, cited 3 March, 2004. Available from World Wide Web:


6. The generic term “public bath” in the Public Bath Movement
referred to a bath-house built, either by a municipality or charitable organization or an individual, specifically to serve the poor for free or a little charge. Municipal baths were those built by city governments, usually called public baths. Private bath house were commercial enterprise that also were open to the public but they were too expensive for the poorer classes. After the Public Bath Movement reached its peak around 1900 to 1910, the standards of housing for the poor had begun to change. During the New Deal, the Public Work Administration housing standards required a private bathroom in each apartment. The cities gradually closed the public bath houses. From Marilyn Thornton Williams, "Introduction" and "The Gospel of Cleanliness", in Washing "The Great Unwashed": Public Baths in Urban America, 1840-1920, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1991), 1-2, 137-138. Today, most public bath houses are owned by individuals.

7. Williams, 7.

8. Tolman William, Public Baths: The Gospel of Cleanliness, (New Heaven: Yale Review 6, 1897), 51. The advocates of American Public Bath Movement insisted improving the cleanliness of the poor was a civic responsibility. They asserted that the provision of public bath facilities could guarantee the bodily cleanliness among the poor and safeguard the public health. They also believed the physical cleanliness would also purify the morals of the poor. Therefore, public bath became a contribution for "civic civilization" out of "urban barbarism".

10. Swimming is a special type of baths. According to the shape and dimension of baths fixture, baths can be categorized into two types: single and common baths. Common baths include small swimming pool, or piscinae, large swimming baths, river and sea baths, the air and sun. From WM. Paul Gerhard, "The Different Forms of Baths", in Modern Baths and Bath Houses, (New York: John Willey and Sons, 1908), 27.


12. Betsky, 12, 150.


17. Tattelman, 229


23. Giedion, 637.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX A  THE CLIFF HOUSE AND ENVIRONS
DESIGN CRITERIA

Available from World Wide Web:
http://www.doiu.nbc.gov/orientation/nps2.cfm.from)

Design Criteria

The design criteria listed below will continue to be used by the National Park Service to identify issues and opportunities related to design proposals, and to evaluate prospective designs in the area.

1. **Highlighting Natural Environment**

   Opportunities to experience the natural environment surrounding the Cliff House should be highlighted

2. **Drawing on the Past**

   The character of the Cliff House as a road house, recreational public gathering place, and as a San Francisco icon should be maintained

3. **Enhancing Sense of Renewal & Nostalgia**

   The character of the Cliff House and environs should enhance people’s enjoyment of the site as a place of renewal and nostalgia

4. **Making it Fun!**

   The Cliff House should continue to provide activities and spaces that provide for fun, entertaining

5. **Accommodating all Ages and Abilities**

   The Cliff House should support a range of ages and abilities

6. **Providing Shelter/Protection**

   This site should provide places for shelter and protection from wind and rain
7. **Maximizing Views**

   Site organization, renovation, and new development should maximize views from the Cliff House and provide opportunities to experience different types of views.

8. **Preserving View Corridors**

   Important view corridors to the Cliff House should be respected and preserved.

9. **Balancing Uses and Activities**

   A balance of both active and passive uses and activities should be available on the site.

10. **Creating Pedestrian Connections**

    Site circulation should support safe and efficient pedestrian access to important linkages.

11. **Calming Traffic**

    Coordinate with the City to implement an attractive solution to calming traffic through street design and traffic management; aiming to minimize congestion, slow the speed of traffic, and improve visitor safety.

12. **Developing Landscape Counterpoint**

    Create a landscape that provides color and textural counterpoint to the structures, terraces, and the native landscapes of surrounding spaces.

13. **Emphasizing the Site**

    The Cliff House site itself, rather than the Cliff House structure/built form, should be emphasized as the predominant site feature.

14. **Strengthening Site-Building Relationship**

    Cliff House site organization and building orientation should highlight relationship to the ocean, the beach, the Sutro Baths, and Point Lobos.

15. **Reflecting Site Geometry**

    New development should accentuate the natural and previously developed geometry of the site.
16. **Creating Contextual Fit with Mass & Scale**

The mass and scale of the new addition should fit within the context of the site and the existing Cliff House building.

17. **Acknowledging Existing Building Style & Character**

The character of the existing Cliff House might be celebrated.

18. **Creating an Indoor-Outdoor Experience**

Remodeling the Cliff House and new additions should retain and enhance the strong indoor-outdoor relationships of the building and surrounding spaces.

19. **Strengthening the Entry Experience**

Create building entries that provide and create a welcoming experience.

20. **Incorporating Sustainability**

Design, construction and operation of the Cliff House should rely on sustainable practice.
APPENDIX B BATH TRADITIONS AND BATH SPACES

Bathing has traditionally been a vital part and is a long tradition in the development of civic civilizations. It reveals a complicated system of customs governing body activities. Paul Gerhard, the American leader of the public bath movement in the early twentieth century, explained bathing from the physical perspective. He stated, "Bathing signified the immersion of the body, or parts of the same in, or its exposure to, a liquid, generally water, or else the application of running or falling water, or other liquid, to the entire body or to parts of the same". While humans created different ways of making contact with the water, they also incorporated the philosophy and temperament to their environment. The cult of the bath reflected their attitudes toward their bodies, nudity, sin, relaxation, religion and nature generally.

Prior to recorded history, people took the bath in natural water bodies for purposes of cleaning their bodies and healing their wounds. Hygiene and therapy were basic reasons for bathing. Later, with the advent of religion, people took baths sometime for spiritual pursuits and worship in streams, lakes and rivers. The cleaning of the body was the symbol of washing away impurities inside the body as well as humans washed away their sins, thus achieving moral purity. When civil engineering technologies were advanced, water became more transportable, and bathing structures far from sources of water were erected to encourage regular bathing. Bathing, then became a yearlong activity; various bathhouses were
established all over the world, different nations developed their own, bath cultures. In the nineteen century, development of new technology brought industrialized bathing facilities to people.

The Greek Bath Tradition

Based on available archeological records, the Greeks structured the prototype of the bathhouse in the Western world. Bathing for the Greeks was considered as cleanliness as well as a requisite for a developed mind. People bathed in a circular pool after a strenuous physical workout in the palestra (gymnasium) and prior to a philosophical discussion at the exedra (places for philosophical discourse). Vitruvius described the laconicum, the bath space, as usually a circular room with niches in the axes of the diagonals and was covered by a conical roof with a circular opening at the top, operated by chains. The laconicum, a hot bath room, was adjacent to a gymnasium, sitting between the palaestra, and the semi-circular exedra.

The Roman Bath Tradition

In ancient Rome, the bath tradition and bath structure achieved a high level of sophistication. The Romans took bathing to a magnificent and ritualized scale in their lives. Inherited from the Greek baths, Roman baths drew upon a combination of spiritual, social, and therapeutic values. The baths were also exalted into an art form.
In the early age of Roman history, the Romans seldom used baths for health and cleanliness exclusively. By the time of Cicero (106 BC-43 BC), baths (both public and private, using warm water and hot air), had become generally popular. As the Roman Empire's wealth grew through the imperial expansion of their territory, Roman bathhouses became more luxurious and elaborate. Romans derived the structure of bathhouses from the Greek architectural invention, and developed aqueduct and central heating system including hypocaust (underfloor heating system) and tubuli (wall heating system), which enabled them to structure bath houses in a massive scale. The Roman public bathhouses, the thermae, were often built by and named in honor of the Emperors, such as Titus in 81 AD, Caracalla in 217 AD and Diocletian in 305 AD. In the book, *Etruscan and Roman Architecture*, Ward-Perkins described these vast bathing establishments, known as thermae, as built on large terraces, surrounded by gardens, and with central halls, palaestra, etc., and planned with strict axiaility".5

These magnificent public bathhouses were usually divided into two parts, the balneae (the communal part) and the balneum (the private bath). The general scheme consisted of a large open garden surrounded by subsidiary rooms and a block of bath chambers either in the centre of the garden, as in the Baths of Diocletian, or at its rear, as in the Baths of Titus. The main block contained: three large bath chambers, the frigidarium (cold), tepidarium (Luke-warm), and caldarium (hot); smaller bathrooms; and courts which were
surrounded by other public facilities.

Roman bathhouses were all-encompassing establishments serving as social, recreational, and cultural centers. Paul Gerhard pointed out,

In these magnificent public buildings the real object of bathing was almost forgotten, for they became rather public resorts, provided with gymnasium, amphitheaters, gardens and courts, libraries, reading rooms and places for public orators, where Roman citizens went to spend a large part of the day.  

Alev Lytle Croutier also stated in her book, Taking the Water: Spirit, Art, Sensuality, that “these architectural edifices were the natural consequence of an essentially hedonistic approach to life” and bathing activities “facilitated excessive sensuality, and public bathing went the way of the Pax Romana”.  

The fall of Rome in 467 A.D resulted in the decline of the bathing tradition. During the Middle Age, the lack of personal cleanliness and unsanitary living conditions led to serious public health problems. Late in the seventeenth century, the Industrial Revolution compounded this situation when increasing number of people came to the cities. People gradually became aware of the impact of filth upon public health. Consequently, bathing started to return to the Europe, and public health in the great cities gradually improved.

The Turkish Baths Tradition

The Turkish baths were representative institutions of Islamic
culture. These bath facilities were first attached to the religious building complex. It was not until the sixth century that the Turkish bathhouses, the hammam, operated independently of a religious purpose.

The Turkish baths merged from the bath tradition of Romans and Byzantines. Although there were differences between Islamic culture and Roman culture, Moslems essentially adapted Roman theaemae to their society. First, the relaxed bathing practice was conceived to enlighten bathers' meditative and social aspects; later, the Turkish bath became an institution, the Islamic water temple. The hammam had a similar bath plunge rooms as Roman baths, but it discarded such other elements in Roman baths as the gymnasium, the library and other intellectual facilities. These were replaced by massage, musical and contemplative spaces. The buildings of the hammam became smaller and less conspicuous than the Roman baths. After the bathers experienced hours of cold and warm bathing, they would finally congregate over coffee or conversation. Today, the hammam is still very much part of the social matrix of Turkey and other Islamic countries.

The Japanese Baths Tradition

In the Far East, the Japanese were famous for their bath culture. The history of the bath in Japan dates back to 5 A.D., when Japanese developed their bath tradition upon their own Buddhist and other Eastern philosophies. Buddhists believed that bathing would
rid seven illnesses and bring about seven different orders of luck. Hence, personal hygiene and spiritual purification played an important part in Japanese culture and became part of Japanese social life around the seventh century. Bathing in Japan began as both a means to soothe the body tired from traveling, and to prevent illnesses. Therefore, many Japanese bathhouses were located in sacred spots where they could use springs believed to be holy. People could socialize and relax in the bath houses.

The design for Japanese bathhouse focuses on the experience of various ways to take the water and on ways to enjoy water. Today, the Japanese continue to enjoy the pleasure of communal bathing. Many bathhouses are established as resort facilities, emphasizing the connection between humankind and nature.

Bath in the United States

In America, before early Europeans settled in American, Native Americans believed in the rejuvenating powers of water, seeking hot springs and water of all kinds to heal their ailments and wounds. Their "sweat lodges", religious "sauna", were one of the basic components of life. They also completed a purification ceremony in the lodges in a ceremony of rebirth.

In the New World, early European settlers inherited the bath culture of Europe where the public and private bathing had been revived as people enjoyed an affluent type of bathing: the "spa". The "spa" began as an acronym originating in the Roman Emperor
Nero’s words, “Sanitas per aquas” (health through water). A Spa has the function of hydrotherapy. Using water for healing is an important aspect of any spa’s functioning. It also helps men find harmony with nature, soothing body and mind, thereby escaping from life’s pressures. Some spas today use natural resources like mud containing certain types of minerals, herbs as well as hot springs.

While the expensive spa became popular among the upper class, the working class was facing the absence of bathing facilities. The demands for hygiene arising from the rapid urbanization were also addressed by the Industrial Revolution. Public bathhouses, therefore, came into people’s life on a wide scale, bringing sanitation and hygiene to the masses. New York was the first state to pass a legislative act relating to public bathhouses in 1895, making the establishment of public baths and keeping them open the year around. Because the users were working class, these bathhouses adopted an efficient, economic and simple form. However, as private bathrooms gradually arrived in every American house in the early twentieth century, public bathhouses gradually lost their popularity.

Bathing - A Social Activity

Bathing embodies part of the culture of a society. As the historian, Siegfried Giedion observed a half-century ago, writing in the book, Mechanization Takes Command, the role that bathing plays within a culture reveals the culture’s attitude toward human relaxation. It is a measure of how far individual well-being and
leisure is regarded as an indispensable part of community life. Culture directly projects its dominant ideas and values into the fundamental life-giving and healing elements of the waters.

When Giedion wrote about the bath and its purposes, he referred to two types of baths: one was the private bath, the other was social bathing. The sociological invention lies in communal bathing made public bathhouses as a space for regeneration into a social center. The Greeks used bathhouses for the process of hygiene and treated bathing as the foreplay to intellectual discussion. For Romans, bathing was the central social institution. Baths were places of social activity and social intercourse where people exercised, amused themselves, engaged in conversations, did all kinds of things that we might associate with some forms of social clubs today. It was intimately bound up with everyday life, a place where people of every rank and station, young and old, rich or poor, could come freely. For the Ottomans, bathhouses afford a space for associating in a cultural context of seclusion; it also meant an important chance for social communication among Islamic women. Today, bathing sometimes is used as a setting for business negotiations and other official or social occasions as well as associated with sport or medicine.

The Character of Bath Spaces

The bath space is sensual space. It goes without saying that bathing combines a highly regarded for mental activity with the
body's relaxation. Water, the main material inside the bathhouse, was defined by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel as,

The element of selfless contrast, it passively exists for others... water's existence is thus an existing-for-others... Its fate is to be something not yet specialized... and therefore it soon came to be called 'the mother of all that is special.'

The experience of touching, soaking and drinking the water gives people a most perfect pleasure. Louis Aragon wrote in his book, *Paris Peasant*,

At the baths, a very different kind of temperament tends towards dangerous daydreams: a twofold mythical feeling that is quite inexpressible comes to the surface. First, there is the sense of intimacy in the very centre of a public place, a powerful contrast that remains effective for anyone who has once experienced it; secondly, there is this taste for confusion which is a characteristic of the senses, and which leads them to divert every object from its accepted usage, to pervert it as the saying goes. It is not easy to decide what motivating factor is uppermost here: which is the first urge to seize the customer of hydrotherapeutic establishments. Undressing, under whatever pretext, may be a symptomatic act. Or a mere imprudence. What seems certain, though, is that when a man, used to seeing himself to a more or less appreciable risk of being unable to resist the temptation to use it for pleasurable purposes. Thus, baths would appear to be the ideal site for physical relationships and, even more, for the improbable adventure of a true love affair.

The bathhouses have the independent and the overlap spaces of the public and private, which make the bath space accommodate different activities. Aragon stated that,

No architectural detail permits the inexperienced passer-by to confirm his suspicions about the irregularity of such a building: BATHS is all the facade says, and this word conceals an infinite range of truthful signs, all the pleasures and maledictions of the body, but who knows?
Romans believed that bath spaces mirrored the body as a social continuum, both real and sensual. Bathing led to the establishment of social relations. The governors established these spaces in the grand orders as public works, necessarily opening their public architecture to innovation. Fikret Yegül has pointed out,

Not only were the baths an effective testing ground for new ideas, but because of their position between purely utilitarian structures and the more conservative, traditional forms of religious and public architecture (such as temples and basilicas), they were instrumental in bringing widespread acceptance of new ideas and revolutionary styles into the realm of architecture proper. In the grand interiors of the baths, Greek orders were combined with Roman vaults. By accentuating and defining the immense vertical height and curved surface to the walls with hard, horizontal cornice lines, by bridging cavernous vaulted expanses with rows of columns and tightly stretched, straight entablatures — in such ways did accessible and familiar forms contain and tame the inaccessible and unfamiliar.13

In America, since the beginning of the twentieth century, bathhouses had been established as places for the activities of gay men. Arrom Betsky described the relationship between bath structure, bathing activities, and the shape of the body in his book, Queer Space: Architecture and Same-Sex Desire,

The drama of the baths was unmistakable. Their vaults were so large, and the steam from the water so intense, that they created a dream world where the strict orders defining the public spaces of the rest of the city disappeared. Instead of columns and pediments, there was surging spectacle of curved spaces that arched far overhead. Instead of a functional floor divided into many different spaces, there were pools of eater, massage tables, niches, and benches built into the structure. It was as if architecture, at the very point that human ingenuity could make it larger than life, dissolved into a new kind of nature. As it did, it liberated the body in an environment that seemed to take on its characteristics at a
public scale: the half-seen forms of body and building matched each other in curve and bulge, in attention of reach and muscled defiance of gravity.\textsuperscript{14}
Appendix End Notes


3. Croutier, 77.

4. Marcus Vitruvius Pollio was a Roman writer, architect and engineer, active in the first century BC. He was the author of *The Ten Books of Architecture*. In this book, he introduced the architecture of Roman and Greek.


7. Croutier, 79.

8. Croutier, 83.


Appendix Bibliography


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