

*A Landscape,
a Ledge, and
a Shadow*

Ghania Shams
Khan



Fig. 1. A prayer space at a rest stop in between the beautiful landscapes of Balochistan.

In December of 2023, I travelled to the western province of Pakistan called Balochistan. Due to the lack of tourism infrastructure and general political unrest, it is an unexplored part of the country where people rarely travel. The landscapes of Balochistan are distinct to the region and move into the neighbouring countries of Iran and Afghanistan, where the colours of the land and the shape of trees change. I travelled by road, commuting between two cities, Quetta and Ziarat. While pausing at a rest stop, I found a prayer space that sat gently at a descent from the stop. Pausing outside the prayer space for a while, I observed its orientation towards the *Qiblah*,¹ and witnessed the light filtering into the large windows — casting a shadow of its ledge inside the space. My eyes witnessed the landscape again, and the lips uttered — *SubhanAllah*.² A word that glorifies God in the beauty of His creation. In this act of utterance and remembrance of *Al-Khaliq*,³ I witnessed three interconnected things: a landscape, a window ledge, and a shadow the window ledge casts. In the unique landscape of Balochistan, I witnessed the beauty of the *Al-Khaliq*'s creation. In between the landscape, a moment of reflection became anchored by a simple prayer space defined by its very ordinary window ledge.

Wujud...

...is everything. This sentence is rooted in the philosophy of *Wahadat-al-Wujud* (Unity of Being), by Ibn Arabi, an eleventh-century philosopher, scholar, poet, and mystic.⁴ Ibn Arabi has

1 *Qiblah* is the Arabic word for direction. Every Mosque or the act of prayer is directed towards the Holy Kaabah in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

2 Arabic for 'Glory be to God'.

3 The Arabic invocation of God as the creator.

4 William Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn al-'Arabi and the Problems of*

had great intellectual implications on Islamic traditions, and with this particular philosophy, many influences have been within the Sufi traditions of Islam. In this philosophy, our physical world has no existence but the only existence is the Divine existence. Ibn Arabi discusses that the world of forms exists only to *know* him.⁵ A form in this context represents a meaning which is the Divine existence and in this phenomenon, *form is annihilated*.⁶

The window ledge that I begin with is seen in the light of the day which casts a shadow of its ledge into the prayer space. Here, I see it with my physical eye, and I witness the shadow of a window ledge. In the relationship of form and meaning rooted in Ibn Arabi's philosophy of *Wahadat-al-Wujud*, there is another way to see the relationship between light and shadow. One of the ways to remember the Divine in Islam is as the Divine Light — *An Nuur*.⁷ When Ibn Arabi speaks of the *annihilation* of form — everything physical that is perceived in this word is perceived as *a shadow of the Divine* and the only real Light is the *An-Nuur*.⁸ Our physical eye sees a light that cannot be known until it casts a shadow of an object — a shadow that can only come from this light. Placing this relationship in parallel to Ibn Arabi's philosophy, the Divine Light exists with or without the shadow. It is only when *An-Nuur* wants to be known, that He is known

Religious Diversity (Suhail Academy Lahore, 2001), pp. 15–23.

5 Cyrus Ali Zargar elaborates on this idea of witnessing through a famous Hadith which Ibn Arabi refers to quite frequently. 'I was a Treasure — I was Unknown, so I loved to be known. Hence I created the creatures, and made myself known to them, so they knew me.' This Hadith is important to understand the context of *Wahadat-al Wujud*. Further, scholars like Henry Corbin and William Chittick have been a great resource in understanding this philosophy and how every physicality of the world exists only as a way to *see* or to *witness* the Divine Existence. See: Cyrus Ali Zagar, *Sufi aesthetics: Beauty, love, and the human form in the writings of Ibn 'Arabi and 'Iraqi* (University of South Carolina Press, 2011).

6 Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, p. 59.

7 One of the ninety-nine names used to invoke / remember the Divine. *Al-Khaliq* is the Arabic word for 'The Light'.

8 Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taosim: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* (Suhail Academy Lahore, 2005), pp. 89–98.



Fig. 3. View of the mountain range, towards the north.



Fig. 2. View of the mountain range, towards the south.

through His shadow, which is the physical world.⁹

Everything in this world exists as His shadow — in this philosophy and a way of seeing the world, one can contemplate how we perceive the materiality and the physical manifestation of a window ledge. The shadow that falls from a window ledge is not just a shadow of a ledge — it is ‘the shadow, of a shadow, of the Divine’. *How does one perceive a window ledge in this phenomenon?* This question addresses the phenomenal enquiry posed in this paper where the physicality of the world is not the only way to perceive a reality; it can also be perceived through a world of spirit which is a far greater reality in Islamic cosmological beliefs.

The Space of Imagination

One way to begin rendering this phenomenon can be rooted in ‘Imagination’. In *Fihi Ma Fihi*, a book of discourses by Maulana Rumi (R.A.), he writes that imagination is a space where one perceives a *reality*, and the consequence of this perception is a physical manifestation — which is our materiality. Materiality is first perceived in the space of imagination before it manifests into its physical form and Maulana Rumi in his discourse confirms this foundation: ‘*Dunya khayaal par qayam hai* — the world is built on imagination.’¹⁰

The material existence as a result of imagination, can be understood through the discourses of Ibn Arabi who has a stance on what the reality of this world is. In Ibn Arabi’s philosophy, the spiritual reality — the Divine existence — is the only reality. Reiterating the concept of *Wahdat al-Wajud*, physicality is only a means to *know* the spiritual reality and *the space of imagination* exists as an intermediary space that helps one perceive the

9 Ibid.

10 Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi, *Discourse of Rumi (Or Fihi Ma Fihi)*, trans. by A.J. Arberry (Omphaloskepsis, 2020), pp. 217–218.

spiritual reality.¹¹ As sensory beings, we perceive through our senses, through the haptics of a thing.¹² Ibn Arabi's discussion of the world as a world of shadows takes this perception a step back into the space of imagination that Maulana Rumi has spoken of — it is here that we are to perceive a *reality*. This is an intermediary space between the material and the immaterial, also called the imaginal realm by Henry Corbin.¹³ This intermediary space embodies two kinds of worlds — the spiritual world which Ibn Arabi defines as the only reality and the physical world, through which the spiritual world is known.¹⁴ The space of imagination is an essential space of perception where one can perceive between the two worlds, and it may help us illustrate the following question: *Can the space of imagination perceive the window ledge as a shadow, as described by Ibn Arabi?* This question places this research within a phenomenological grounding. Based on this grounding, I can perceive the physicality of a window ledge through the shadow of a ledge and the ledge itself as a shadow.

11 Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, p. 70. 'As already noted, imagination can be considered on three basic levels: as the cosmos itself, as an intermediate macro-cosmic world, and as an intermediate microcosmic world. Its outstanding feature is its inherent ambiguity. On whatever level it is envisaged, it is always a *barzakh* — an isthmus or interworld-standing between two other realities or worlds and needing to be defined in terms of both.'

12 Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*, 3rd ed. (Wiley, 2012).

13 'Mundus Imaginalis or the Imaginary and the Imaginal – Association Des Amis de Henry et Stella Corbin', Association des Amis de Henry et Stella Corbin, 2021 <<https://www.amiscorbin.com/en/bibliography/mundus-imaginalis-or-the-imaginary-and-the-imaginal/>> [accessed 10 June 2024].

14 This premise of defining the physical world is rooted in the previously mentioned philosophy of Ibn Arabi where '*form is annihilated*'.

A drawing reveals a meaning which may be hidden...

Henry Corbin is a French philosopher and a Sufi whose philosophical enquiries sit between Martin Heidegger and Shihab Al-Din Suhravardi, bringing together Western thought and philosophies from the Iranian Islamic tradition.¹⁵ Corbin defines a phenomenon of revealing something hidden as follows:

In philosophical and religious disciplines, the phenomenon is found in technical terms containing the Greek root *phany*: epiphany, theophany, hierophany, and so on. In Persia, the phenomenon, *phainomenon*, is the *zahir*, the apparent, the exterior, the exoteric. The thing that reveals itself while hiding itself in the *zahir* is the *batin*, the interior, the esoteric. Phenomenology consists in ‘preserving the phenomenon’, preserving the appearance while disengaging or unveiling the hidden thing that reveals itself beneath that appearance. The *logos* of the phenomenon, the phenomenology, is therefore the hidden, the invisible thing beneath the visible. It allows the phenomenon to reveal itself as it does to the subject to whom it is revealing itself.¹⁶

In architectural praxis, drawings are a way to negotiate between the form that exists in our imagination and the physical world. Like Corbin’s definition of phenomenology, a drawing becomes

15 ‘From Heidegger To Suhravardi: An Interview with Philippe Nêmo’, Association des Amis de Henry et Stella Corbin, 2017 <<https://www.amiscorbin.com/en/biography/from-heidegger-to-suhravardi/>> [accessed 10 June 2024].

16 Henry Corbin, ‘The Question of Comparative Philosophy’ in *Spring 1980: Annual of Archetypal Psychology and Jungian Thought*, ed. by James Hillman (US: Spring Publications, 1983), pp. 1–19.

an important tool in mediating tensions between meaning and form by revealing *or* visualising meaning, through its ability to exercise intuitive marks on a paper. The meaning which may be hidden in the form can be brought forth with the help of a drawing tool while also acknowledging the phenomenological position that is taken here: meaning precedes the form as we see the window ledge as ‘the shadow, of a shadow, *of* the Divine.’ In the philosophical context of Ibn Arabi, we are presented with a starting point for a drawing practice — *how does one draw a form when it is annihilated?* This question is a foundation for the drawing process that unfolds in this research exercise and with this foundation, the attempt is always to draw *beyond* the physical form.

In this question, the word *form* can be interchanged with the *zaahir* defined by Corbin as the exterior and the outward form and meaning with the *baatin* which is the interior and the inward form. In this research, I will also place these two words in parallel with Ibn Arabi’s philosophy, ‘Unity of Being’. Here, the *baatin* is the spiritual world which is the *only* reality that he speaks of and the *zaahir* is the world of forms that exists only to know the *baatin*. With these two terminologies, a question that is also threaded through the unfolding drawing practice is — *how does one draw the zaahir from the baatin?* Drawing the *zaahir* from the *baatin* is a rethinking of form and perceiving it not just through our physical senses. But from this space of imagination where meaning comes first and the manifestation of meaning takes place through form.

Cyrus Ali Zargar, a scholar of Islamic studies, in a chapter, ‘Perception according to Ibn Arabi’, from his book *Sufi Aesthetics* writes:

This reexperiencing of meaning through the medium of matter and form is precisely the experience of shuhud/witnessing. Thus matter, according to Ibn ‘Arabi, since it allows for form, makes perception

through the human faculties possible; each of the faculties (comprising imagination, reflection, memory, form-giving, fantasy, and reason) has a certain type of ‘matter’ that corresponds to it. Knowledge acquired outside of matter is profound, overwhelming and pure, but — lacking any reference point in the known world — it cannot be expressed.¹⁷

Materiality corresponds to meaning and serves as a reference point for meaning to be articulated. A drawing practice that unfolds in this research constantly negotiates while looking at the *zaahir* as a reference point for us to articulate meaning. This rethinking of form can also help us understand that something as ordinary as a window ledge and its shadow holds together the experience of a landscape of Balochistan. The question of ‘How does one draw the *zaahir* from the *baatin*?’ sets the premise that ‘form’ is not the only subject of drawing, instead, the articulation of meaning that comes before the form of a window ledge becomes an aim for this exploration.

This study is not a spiritual experience enacted by symbols or rituals, or to find a transcendental definition of meaning. This meaning is rooted in a subjective experience of my belief as a Muslim who is interested in looking at the details of the world around me through a phenomenological lens, where phenomenology does not just begin from the Western, Heideggerian canon. As a spatial thinker and an architect, drawing is the most immediate tool I have to communicate and understand a space. The drawing practice explored in *Drawing Exercises I, II and III* offers a way to rethink how we visualise space. In the *aesthetic experience* of drawing, the process moves between two mediums — architectural drawings and the printmaking studio.¹⁸ It is through this movement that the window

¹⁷ Cyrus Ali Zargar, ‘Perception according to Ibn ‘Arabi: God in forms’, in *Sufi Aesthetics: Beauty, Love, and the Human Form in the Writing of Ibn ‘Arabi and ‘Iraqi* (University of South Carolina, 2011), pp. 17.

¹⁸ On aesthetic experience, see: Jacques Rancière, ‘Prelude’ in *Aisthesis*:

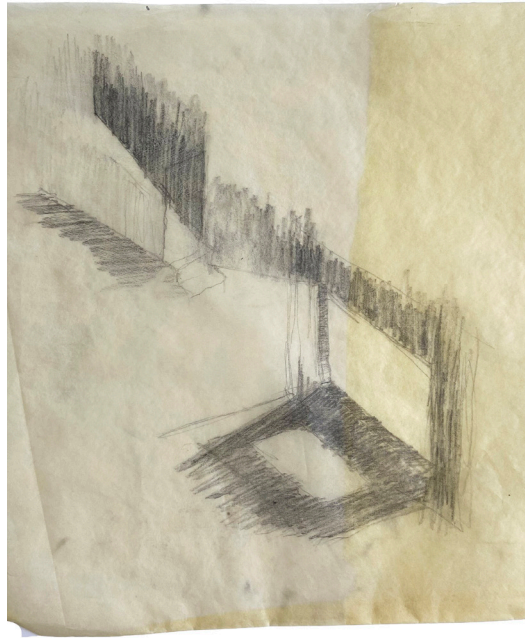
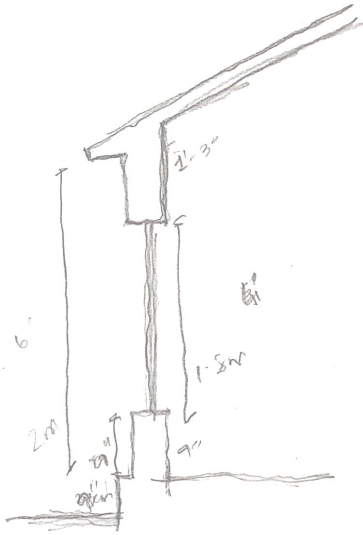


Fig. 4. (Left) On-site sketch and documentation of the window ledge of the prayer space. (Right) On-site sketch shadow studies of the thresholds to the prayer space.

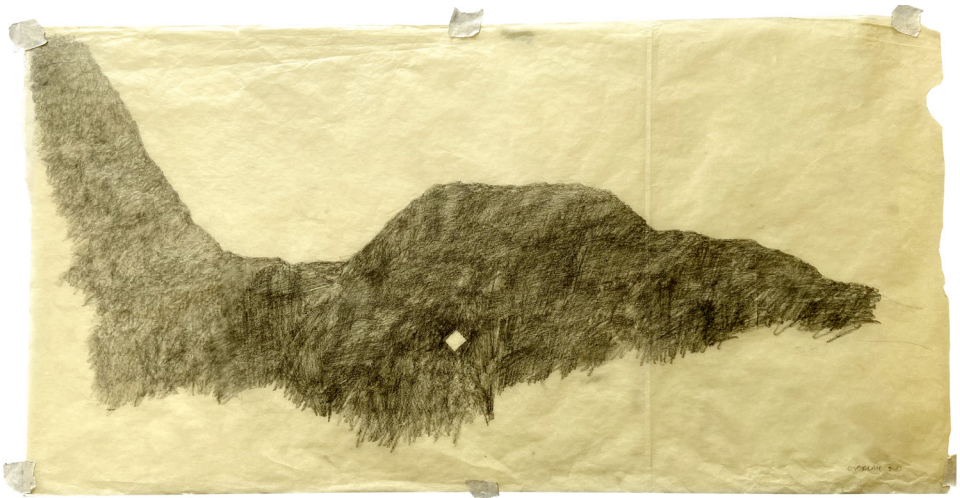


Fig. 5. In an intuitive drawing, I recall the experience of the contoured landscape around the prayer space whose window ledge was witnessed. The contours are not physically measured. They are recalled from the way I had walked across the land and here manifest in an imaginary sectional drawing to communicate an experience that was felt.

ledge is [re]presented, opening and disclosing that which is hidden, the interior.

The Opening of Architectural Drawing

The window ledge as ‘the shadow, of a shadow, of the Divine’ — this visual analogy is explored throughout the research as a drawing practice in three drawing exercises. *Drawing Exercise - I*, brings measured documentation and photographs into the printmaking studio. This studio evoked my curiosity due to its many different techniques used to create a mark and the emphasis laid by its instructor on the affects of mark-making. Every line in an architectural drawing implicates a certain meaning and every mark made in the process of printmaking adds information to the image. This technique allowed me to think of the line as not just a tool to ‘draw’ a space, but a mark that will implicate and give meaning to the space. In the printmaking studio, the control of an architectural drawing is relinquished to the methods of printmaking, and here new forms of knowledge emerge that help illustrate the different tones, details, and intensities of a shadow.

In *Drawing Exercise - II*, the measured drawings are critiqued through oblique representations of these drawings. With this layer of critique, shadows are rendered and I begin working with ‘the shape of a shadow’. Measured ways to draw are woven with intuitive drawing practices and both of these methods are hinged together by the shape of a shadow.

Drawing Exercise - III is a coming together of the different techniques developed between the two spaces of the printmaking studio and the architectural drawing board. Lines become shadows on paper, and shadows become the line that guides an intuitive way of measuring a space. Working between the two has created openings for a pedagogical tool to be developed for the practice of architectural representation and education.

The exercises are accompanied by reflective ‘Drawing Notes’ that speak of new forms of knowledge learned through the *experience* of the drawing itself. In the representation process, a drawing exercise tends to become purely a print — yet, still lies in the realm of architectural drawings. The aesthetic experience of the drawing allows me to open up the space of architectural representation itself.¹⁹

Drawing Exercise - I

The first exercise begins with documentation and photographs brought into the space of my university’s printmaking studio. Every printmaking process involves a *matrix* that has been worked on for some time. A matrix is a chosen surface that is worked on through different techniques and materials. This surface is then inked and printed onto paper or another surface. In printing the matrix, the image that was created on the matrix is reversed onto another paper or material. With this reversal, the printmaker has to harmonise their imagination, the hand that assembles and draws, the heart, and the mind that rationalises ideas with the reversal of this matrix into a mirror image. It is this process of reversal that drew me into the printmaking process. This inclination is in a very simple way connected to the idea of the whole world that in a spiritual belief exists as a reflection of the Divine Existence.²⁰

I approach this printmaking studio as a complete beginner. Here several more iterations of the drawing practice unfold as I begin to familiarise myself with new techniques. In the first exercise, I started to experiment with *image transfers* as a method of drawing. Photographs are taken of different anchors on the site that are indicative of different points of *intensity*. These points of intensities are where a *hierophany* is felt and meaning manifests

19 Ibid.

20 In a personal belief, in the larger context of Muslim belief, and in many Sufi practices, the whole world is seen as a reflection of the Divine Existence.

itself into a form.²¹ A point of intensity on this site is an opportunity to address the question mentioned earlier, ‘How does one draw from the *baatin*, the *zaahir*?’

The images taken on two trips serve as constant references. To make these references a part of the drawing process, image transfers become a starting point. An image transfer negotiates where the drawing begins. I am not starting the drawing with a line, but a whole image of the site being transferred onto paper. It negotiates the start of an architectural drawing by placing consciously the first mark on paper — the first mark in this case is the photograph that was captured on site. The whole scene appears at once on the paper, without any of the markings that I would make of my own.

Drawing Notes 01

A new medium brings with itself new techniques, new tools and new materials. The space of the printmaking studio is shaped by its tools and the way the medium works. In the studio, there is a surface for every step of each technique. A surface for working on a selected plate, a surface for inking the plate, a surface for tearing up paper, and the surface of the printing press which is used in most techniques as the last step.

To these surfaces, I bring with me a theoretical grounding and a pre-existing architectural drawing practice.

21 Mircea Eliade speaks of a hierophany as an appearance of a meaning. This acts as a fixed point or an ‘Axis Mundi’ around which a sacred space can manifest. See: Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (Harvest, 1968).

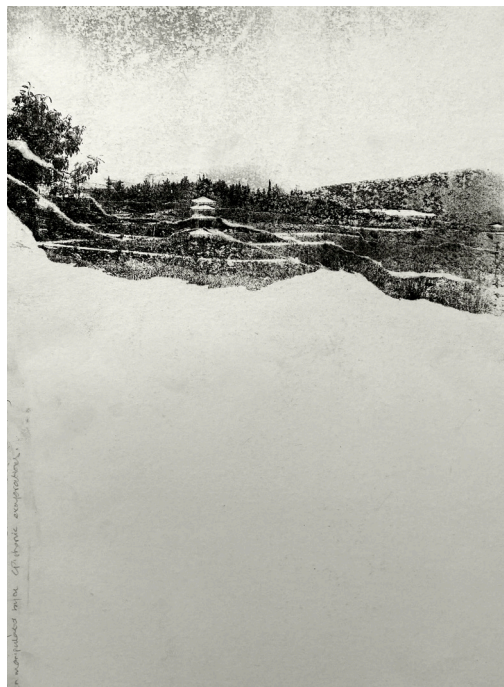


Fig. 6. Image transfer of the prayer space seen while approaching the rest stop on the way back from Ziarat.



Fig. 7. Image transfer of the prayer space

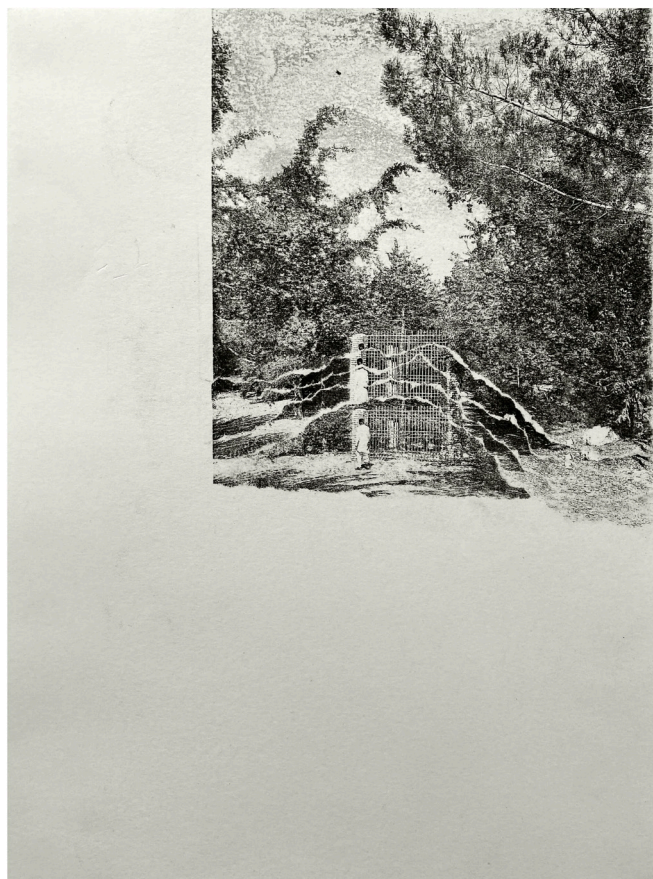


Fig. 8. Image transfer of a gate to a juniper grove.



Fig. 9. Image transfer from between the grove. A slope and a water reservoir in the clearings of the juniper trees.



Fig. 10. Image transfer
from between the grove.
A small water channel
opens up towards the
trees.

The different surfaces have allowed me to inevitably slow down the process of creative representation, providing pauses for reflection as I move from one surface to another, from one technique to another. The technique of image transfer requires one surface for laying out the photocopy of the photographs that need to be transferred. On another, I tear up the photocopies according to the image I desire to transfer onto a blank paper. The tears that I make are intuitive and grounded in the felt experience of the particular place that has been photographed.

The image transfer is completed on the printing press.

As I move between multiple surfaces, beginning from where the images are laid out to finally the printing press, I keep thinking about my experience of the site in these images that I contemplate between three different surfaces.

A transfer is simple.

It is the same image that was taken on the site, crisp in its quality as a black and white photograph, having taken on the grainy quality of a sketch made with a pencil, transformed in its representation on paper through the transfer.

Architectural drawing methods include the plan, section, elevation, and oblique projections to convey information about a particular space. These methods are also an important part of architectural pedagogy where spaces are drawn and communicated through such methods. Drawing methods are spaces of thinking in-and-of themselves — there is always an intention behind the marks made on paper that communicate the physical details of a space. In the usual practice of architectural representation, as we know it in design schools today, the intention is to represent the space with as much clarity as possible. A sectional drawing of a window ledge (see Fig. 4) can show the details of how the ledge sits within the measured contours of the site. It can show the relationship between light and shadow that the eye can witness. But how can such a drawing represent the experience of a window ledge which is the ‘shadow, of a shadow, of the Divine’? This question reiterates the previously mentioned question of ‘How does one draw a form when it is annihilated?’. Within these drawing exercises, this question urges me to rethink the line drawings that are always aimed at the clarity of communication of physical space and to think of the ways a drawing exercise can become rooted in the phenomenological enquiry of the *baatin* and the *zaahir*.

In the second drawing exercise, parallel projections serve as an important method of drawing to represent the interventions on the site. In an axonometric drawing, one can see all the information on a single plane.²² With all of the

22 Ray Lucas, *Drawing Parallels: Knowledge Production in Axonometric, Isometric and Oblique Drawings* (Taylor and Francis Group 2019), p. 310. ‘It is important to remember, however, that unlike axonometric drawings, isometric projections do not preserve any “real” angular dimensions. Furthermore, a “residual” observer is always present, as orientation seems to change the “nature” of the represented object. Jopling was fascinated by the fact that each of the objects in his treatise may be viewed in at least six different ways, so that the diagrams “may be considered equivalent to about one thousand representations of different objects.” He emphasised that appearance “depends entirely upon the orientation



Figs. 11 and 12. The first attempt to do the image transfers for my drawing practice was done on a printing press. I am completing the transfer here by passing it through a press.

information coming onto a single plane, the drawings also remain measurable.²³ This measurement can be more than just a quantitative measurement, but also has the space for a qualitative measurement, in this premise an imaginary narrative. An example to understand parallel projection representations can be Persian miniature art. In this practice, manuscripts are illustrated to create a certain narrative, while using architectural representation in oblique methods to expand on the narrative.²⁴ These narratives draw on the imaginative ability of the illustrator and what they wish to show, by working on planes in multiple directions coming together on a single surface to represent a narrative across time and space.²⁵ The Persianate practice speaks of a representation that is a ‘visual description of the built world as it was experienced and imagined through time and space, rather than an objective snapshot’.²⁶ The following folio from the *Shahnama*, depicts a story titled ‘Haftvad and the Worm’ (see Fig. 13). The architectural clusters are drawn over multiple oblique angles to move the eye across the page depending on the narrative of the story which begins from the bottom left depicting Haftvad’s daughter in red.²⁷ The use of parallel projection allows

of the image in relation to the observer” and the representation often flips from concave to convex, transforming the image from a space to a mass.’

23 Lucas, *Drawing Parallels*, p. 4. ‘As a genre of engineering drawing, it is clear that parallel projection solves certain problems of representation. Parallel projection shows a three-dimensional image whilst being measurable, making it an easier working drawing than a perspective, for example. Parallel projections in an oblique convention are used in the West from the Middle Ages in both mathematical treatises and military engineering [Filippo Camerota, ‘Renaissance Descriptive Geometry’, in *Picturing Machines 1400–1700*, ed. by Wolfgang Lefevre (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), pp. 175–208], coming to particular prominence in the sixteenth century.’

24 Margaret S. Graves, ‘Inside and outside, pictures and page: The architectural spaces of miniature painting’, in *Architecture in Islamic Arts: Treasures of the Aga Khan Museum*. (Geneva: Aga Khan Trust for Culture, 2011), ed. by Margaret and Benoit Junod, pp. 293–305.

25 Graves, ‘Inside and outside, pictures and page: The architectural spaces of miniature painting’, pp. 293–305.

26 Ibid.

27 Graves, ‘Haftvad’s Daughter and The Worm’ in *Architecture in Islamic Arts: Treasures of the Aga Khan Museum* (Geneva: Aga Khan Trust for Culture,



Fig. 13. Attributed to Dust Muhammad, *Haftvad and The Worm*: Folio from *The Shahnameh (Book of Kings)* of *Sah Tahmasp* (ca. 1540), opaque water-colour, ink, and gold on paper, 45 × 30 cm. © The Aga Khan Museum.

for a narrative to be visually traced according to the story.

Axonometric drawings — a selected method of parallel projections — allow me to represent a narrative that draws from the imaginal realm. This method allows for the planes of the object represented to be revealed on a selected angle which results in perspectival depth manipulating the measured surface. For example, at an angle of $36^{\circ} 50'$ and $36^{\circ} 50'$, the planes on the x-axis are revealed on a 1:1 proportion which is true to the measured surface. The y-axis is also on a 1:1 proportion, true to the measurements. On this angle, the surface drawn on the z-axis becomes skewed and is drawn on a $3/4$ th proportion of its actual measurement (Fig. 14). Working with different angles to reveal the measured surfaces can allow for new openings to become part of the drawing.

The decision to choose an angle for the axonometric projection is based on the experience of walking through the site, the directions taken and the forms revealed throughout the walk. This decision also allows for the shadows that are traced onto these axonometrics to change shape. Through these shapes emerging from a measured drawing, an intuitive decision becomes rooted in the logic of an axonometric drawing.

The most important aspect of an oblique drawing is to bring multiple kinds of information onto a single plane of drawing without making a singular aspect of space the objective. Oblique drawings have a way of challenging the one-point

2011), ed. by Margaret and Benoit Junod, p. 178. 'Haftvad's daughter (in red) holds up the apple from which the story will grow. Behind, a walled town, tiny but containing all the elements of urban life and decorated in jewel-like splendour, appears to grow before our eyes. Food is sold in a shop; men gather wood and bring it to the town for sale; sages read and write in a tower; women converse inside a room, and a muezzin performs the call to prayer. The architectural aggregate clusters together a massive dome, *pishtaqs* (arched portals) with tile revetments, a minaret, a city gate with towers, windows with *mashrabiyya* (latticed screens), and walls of plain and patterned brickwork. The disconcerting two-dimensionality of the structural elements, a common feature of Persianate miniature painting that is seen most clearly here in the shop-front that projects from the right of the town wall, contributes to a sense of impermanence that is in this case quite appropriate, for the town and its prosperity will not last.'

perspective of Renaissance methods, where this method is a commonly practised way to add *depth* to the image. This depth here is about what the eye sees as depth in a perspective. Yet, the depth that I am looking to render exists *in the whole world measured through the space of shadows*. This conversation begins to critique the one-point perspective and Cartesian ways to represent a space.²⁸ This critique unfolds in the following drawings where axonometric tools are used to represent four selected points on a site and different oblique angles come together to see what the drawing reveals according to the chosen angle.

As discussed, shadow does not mean the absence of light. A shadow in Ibn Arabi's analogy is the *form* of the whole world. As an example, my drawing exercise extends into experimentation. The axonometric drawings that I create are overlaid with shadows. As an exercise, I separate the overlay of the shadows from the axonometric drawing which gives us a form that is the shape of the shadow itself. The form here has a reference only when it is overlaid onto the drawing and has no reference when separated from it. The shadow is reduced to a form in itself without any reference to the measured drawing. This new form in some ways is derived from the physical form, but it has no physical implications on its own.

28 Alberto Pérez-Gómez, 'The Space of Architecture: Meaning as Presence and Representation', in *Questions of Perception: Phenomenology of Architecture* (William Stout Publishers, 1994), p. 16. 'Renaissance artists, as is well known, developed an interest in geometrical perspective, or *perspectiva artificialis*. In painting, the visible rendering of reality soon represented geometric space to display the mathematical structure of depth. This event was invariably an ontological disclosure, always given with a "thickness" resistant to monocular vision and homogenization.'

The shape of a shadow drawn on a trace and overlaid on a line drawing reads as part of the same. One can find its reference in the base of a measured axonometric drawing.

I remove the trace from the base drawing, and the shape of the shadow becomes an ambiguous form. In my drawing practice, I have the comfort of knowing where this shape comes from, yet in its monolithic and ambiguous form, how can I anchor this ambiguity into a reality?

I find a need to give some porosity to this shape, to let the references come through. To let lightness become a part of this form. To let this stark shape of a shadow become a little softer.

To signify the world as a shadow, *witnessing* the world is not of the shadow but *through* the shadow.²⁹ The shape of the shadow that I am working with is an intermediary layer in the act of witnessing. Thinking through this layer, which is the shape of the shadow itself, and in between the two ways of drawing the shadow is hinged. The first method is the measured and scaled axonometric, which allows intuitive decisions to be rationalised at scale. The second method in this experimental exercise is image transfer. The shape of the shadow becomes a protagonist in the drawings as it becomes a way to think about the image that I am rendering on a surface.

29 Cyrus Ali Zargar, 'Perception according to Ibn 'Arabi: God in forms', in *Sufi Aesthetics: Beauty, Love, and the Human Form in the Writing of Ibn 'Arabi and 'Iraqi* (University of South Carolina, 2011), p. 14. 'This description of *mushahadah*/witnessing parallels the definition of *ilm* (knowledge) by classic Islamic philosophers as the "presence of a thing's form in the intellect." Just as (for the philosophers) things and the relationships between them leave traces of their forms in the intellect, so too, according to Ibn 'Arabi, does that which is witnessed leave a trace of its form in the soul.'

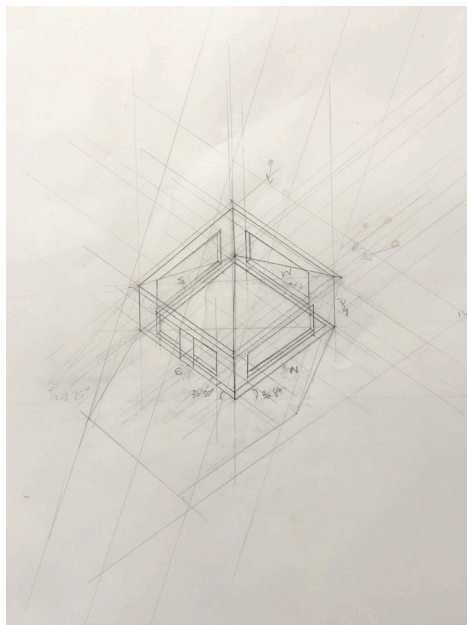


Fig. 14. Axonometric drawing of the prayer space on a chosen angle of 36° $50'$ and 36° $50'$.

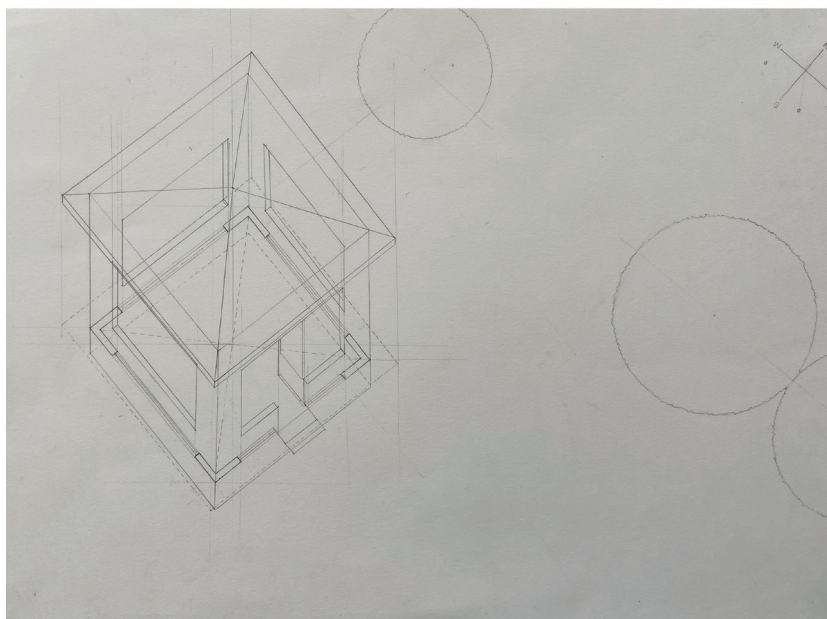


Fig. 15. Axonometric of the prayer space. Drawn at an angle of 45° and 45° .



Fig. 16. Shadows of the space traced onto a parchment, without the base drawing.

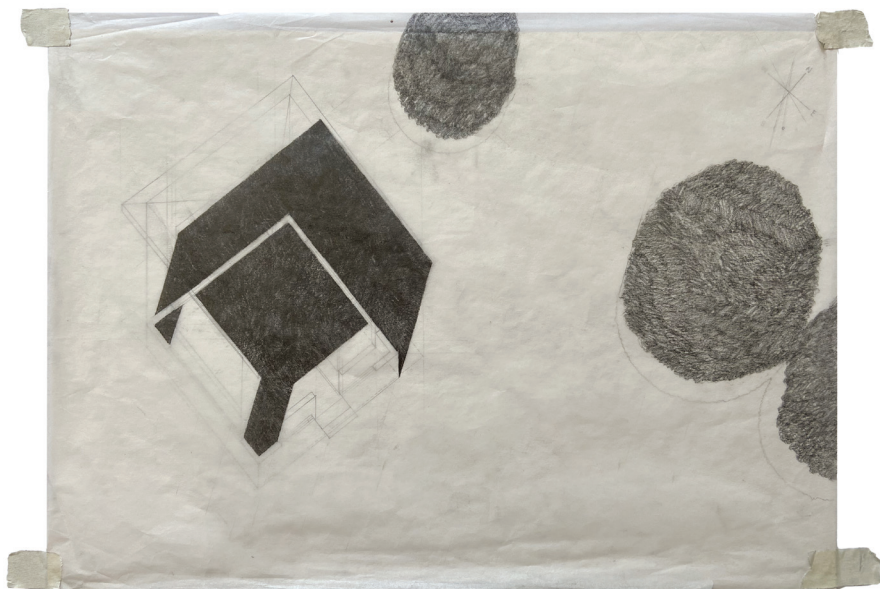


Fig. 17. Shadows of the space traced onto a parchment overlaid on the base axonometric drawing.

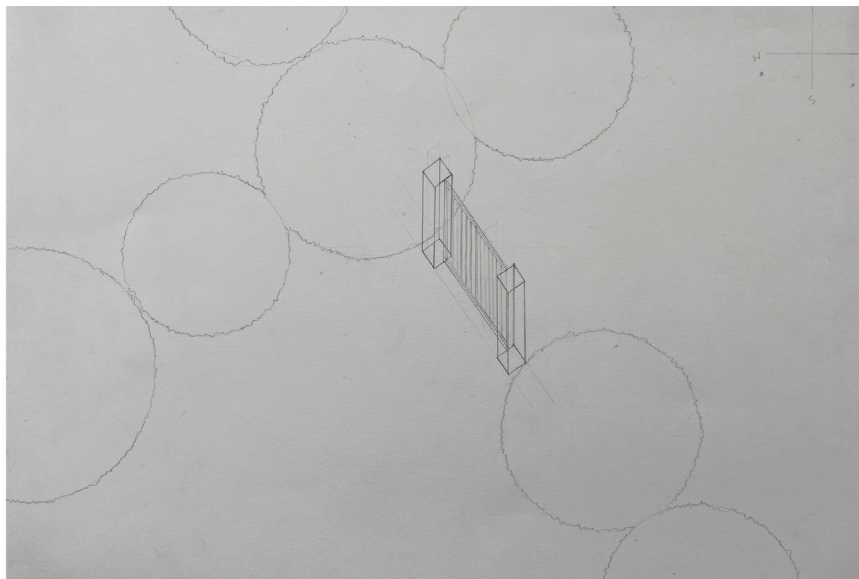


Fig. 18. Axonometric of the gate leading to a juniper grove. Drawn at an angle of 45° and 45° .



Fig. 19. Shadows of the space traced onto a parchment, without the base drawing.

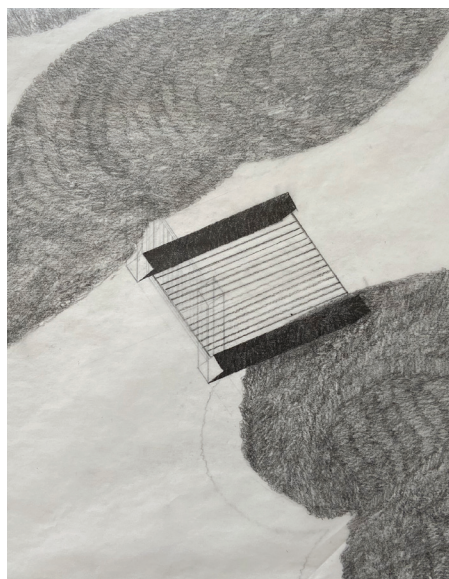


Fig. 20. Shadows of the space traced onto a parchment overlaid on the base axonometric drawing.

Drawing Exercise - III

In the third drawing exercise, three kinds of drawing methods come together: the architectural drawing board, the embossing on a piece of wood ply (a thin wooden sheet), and image transfers. Each method in the space it occupies and in its technique creates a thinking process for the drawings and as the exercises unfold, these spaces and techniques overlap with each other to bring new knowledges and insights to the fore.

The architectural drawing board, and the tools which are used to make the drawing, constantly refer to a physical space which can be measured in quantitative ways. In such a way, the drawing offers scientific clarity to the experience of a space. On an architectural drawing board, we can create plans, sections, and elevations as line drawings that represent the physical details of the space. This training as an architect is also rooted in the Western tradition of Descartes's way of separating the mind from the body.³⁰ The lines can depict what the eye sees and what the mind attempts to rationalise. To critique this way of drawing, in this space of an architectural drawing board, axonometric representation can bring forth a way of drawing that sits between quantitatively measured representations and qualitative representation.

The second space of drawing that comes together in the third exercise is the space of embossing the lines of an axonometric drawing — the line is relinquished to the medium of printmaking. A line is only seen when the paper is placed under a light source and the emboss casts a shadow on the paper. The drawing is placed under different angles of light sources, and

³⁰ This conventional way to represent space comes from the Cartesian ways of separating the mind and the body. In a larger framework, it is an idea rooted in colonisation which gave way to industrialisation and high modernity — science becoming the highest form of thinking. See: Robert S. Nelson, 'Descartes's Cow and Other Domestications of The Visual', in *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance* (Cambridge University Press, 2000) pp. 1–20.

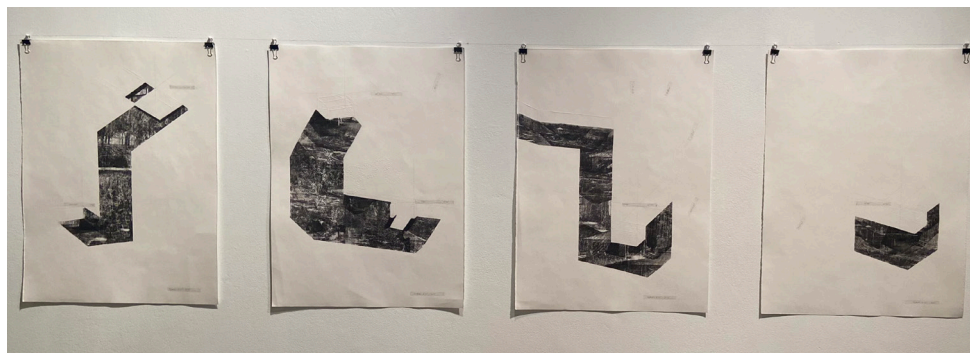


Fig. 21. Four drawings of the 'Shapes of A Shadow'.
 Emboss and image transfers on acid-free paper.
 15 in. × 20 in.

Right to left

Shape of A Shadow: *A Prayer Space*.

Shape of A Shadow: *A Descent from the Rest Stop*.

Shape of A Shadow: *The Juniper Grove*.

Shape of A Shadow: *Clearing in A Juniper Grove*.

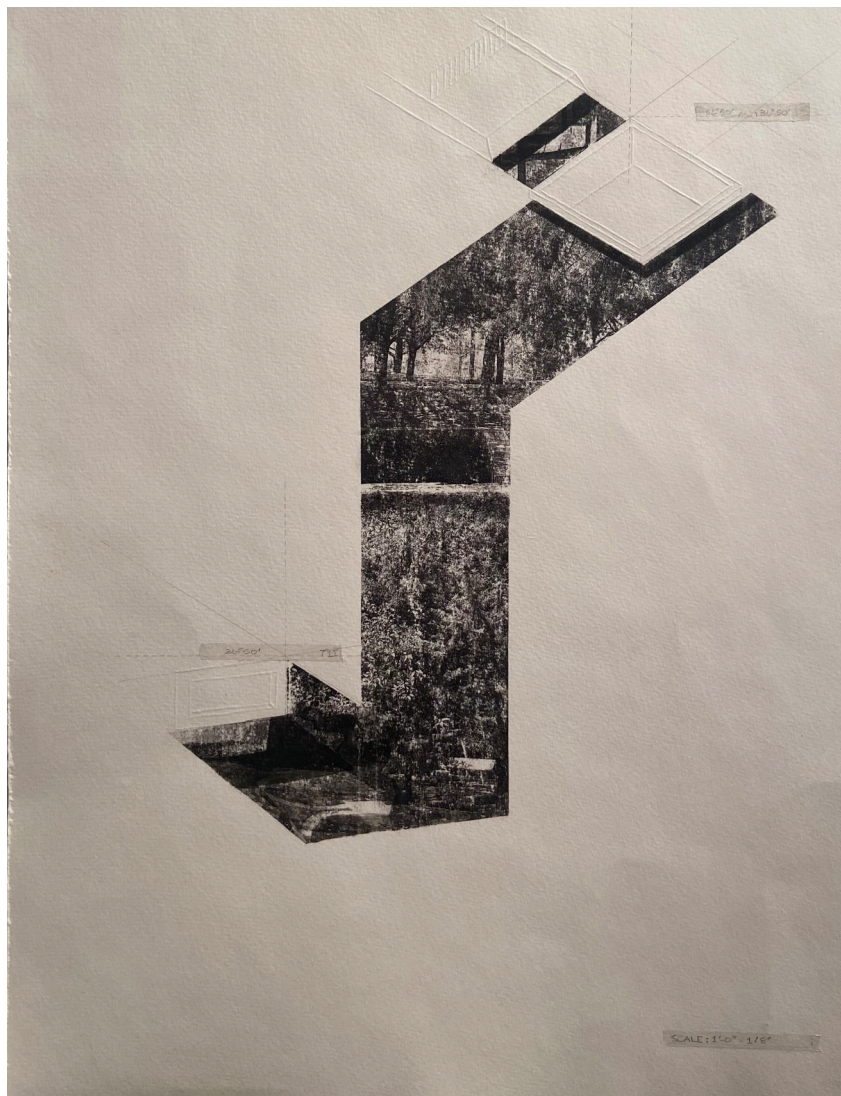


Fig. 22. Shape of A Shadow: *Clearing in A Juniper Grove*.
Emboss and image transfers on acid-free paper,
15 in. × 20 in.

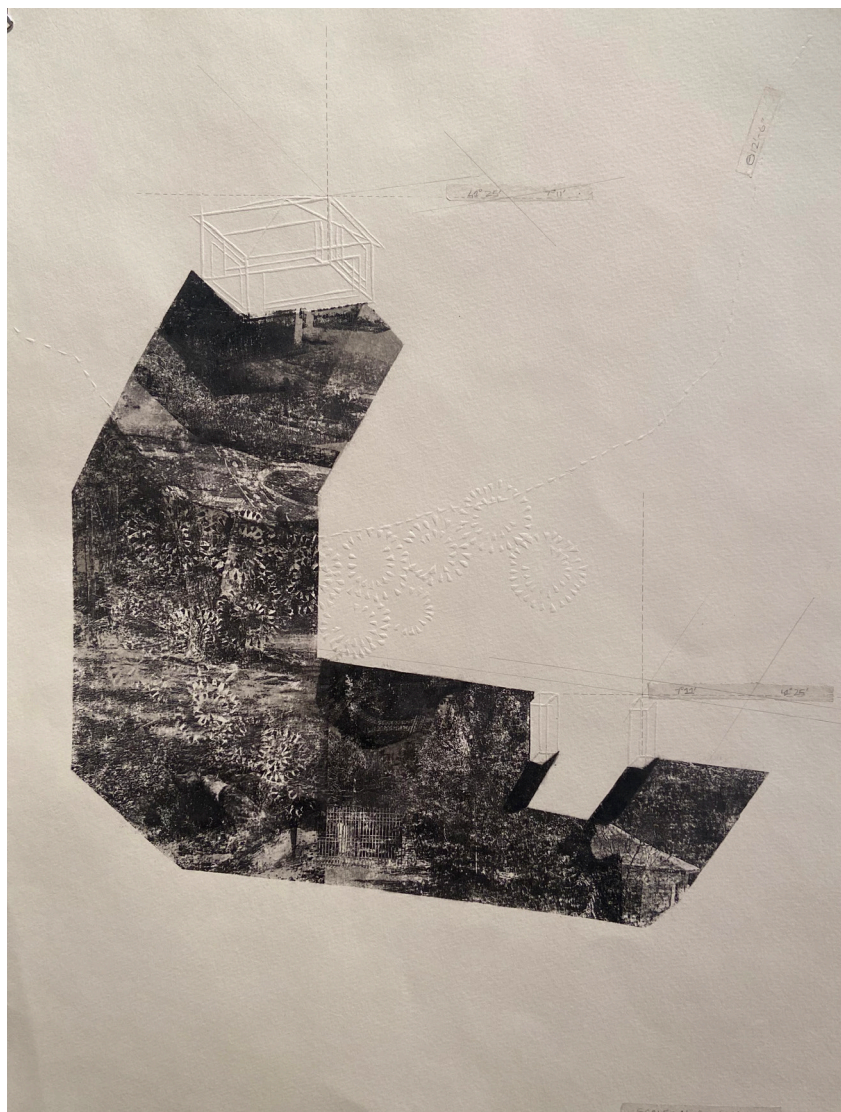


Fig. 23. Shape of A Shadow: *The Juniper Grove*.
Emboss and image transfers on acid-free paper,
15 in. × 20 in.

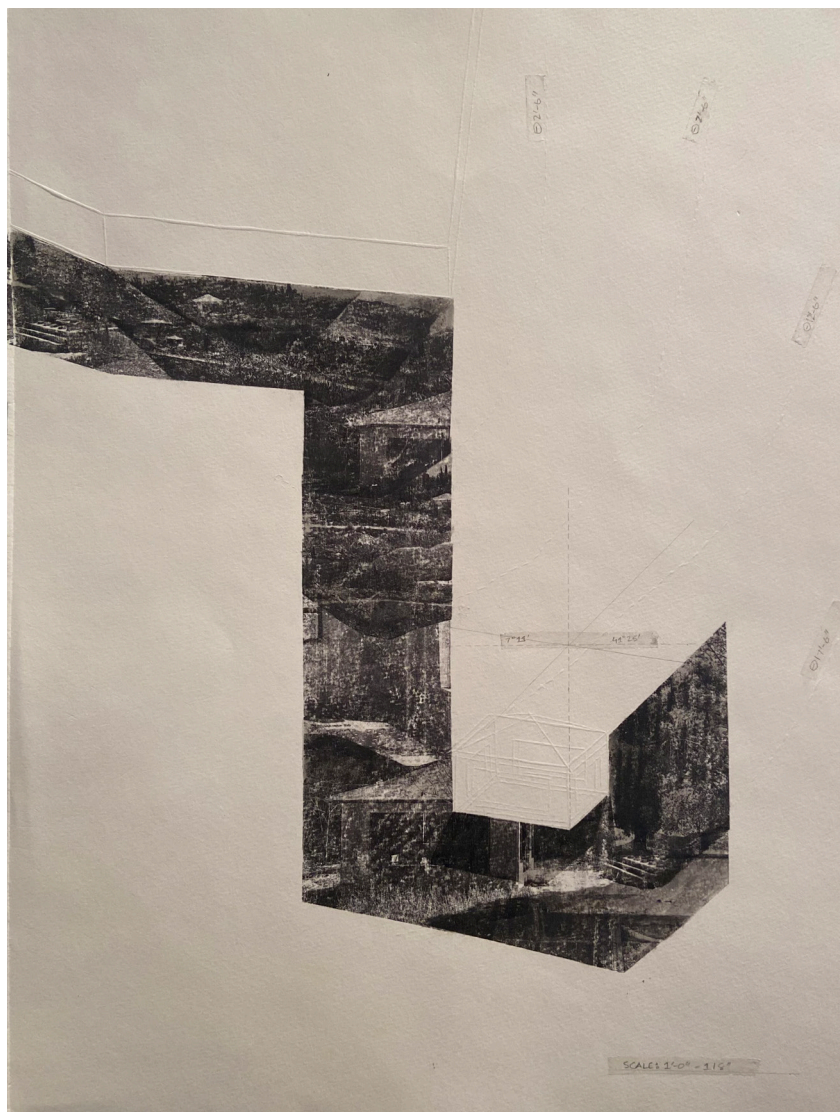


Fig. 24. Shape of A Shadow: *A Descent from the Rest Stop*.
Emboss and image transfers on acid-free paper,
15 in. × 20 in.

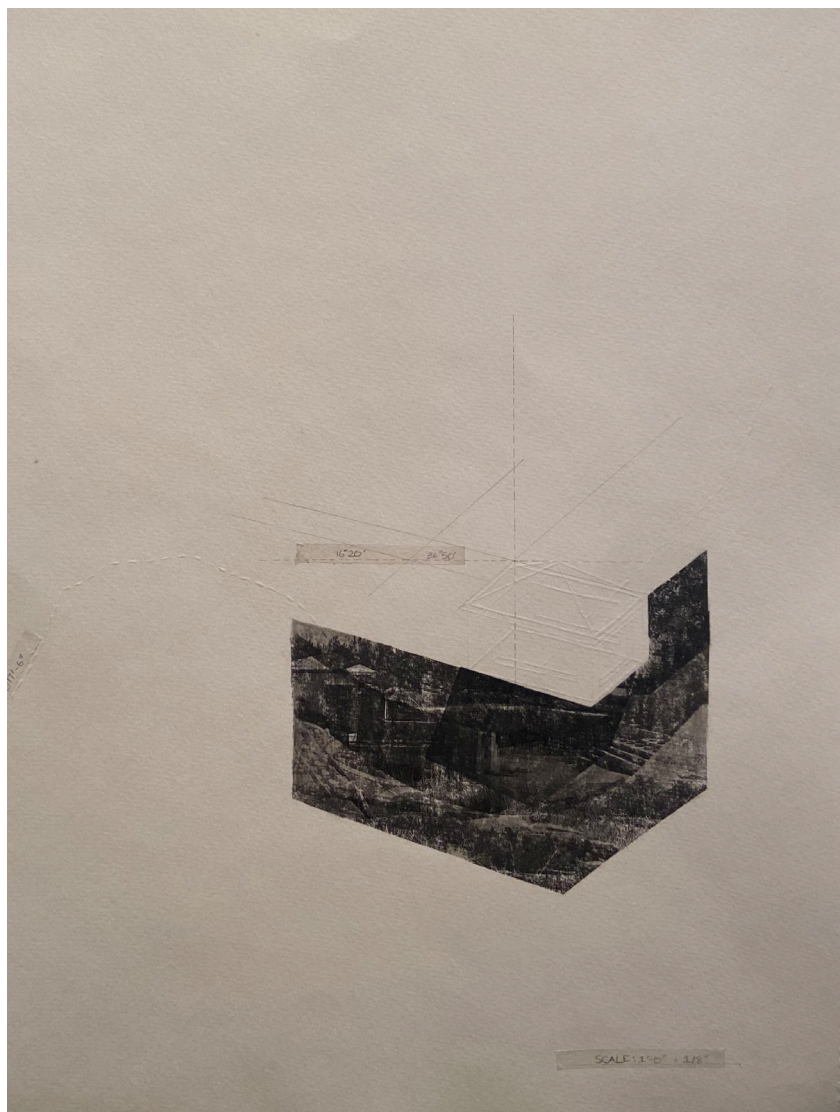


Fig. 25. Shape of A Shadow: *A Prayer Space*.
Emboss and image transfers on acid-free paper,
15 in. × 20 in.

with every change of direction, the quality of the line also changes. The line — while visualising a space — is subject to forces outside of the surfaces of the paper. This makes me pause and consciously decide the way that I chose to draw a line as a *mark* made on a piece of ply. Embossing slows down the process of the line drawing and this slowness allows for one to reflect over the lines that are made. The intention of bringing such attention to the line and placing it in the action between light and shadow is to find visual ways of letting the *baatin* come before the *zaahir*.

The third space of the drawing is the space of image transfers. This is the first technique I was introduced to in the printmaking studio and it has served as a constant companion throughout the drawing process. Sometimes it is fully present on the surface of the paper, and sometimes it remains in conversation with new techniques as I open up the process of an architectural drawing. In this drawing exercise, the image transfer is burnished by hand which allows for some control over the parts that I chose to transfer. The parts chosen point to my experience of the site, particularly those anchor points where architectural forms have a sense of presence and affect. The images transferred are of the context around the architectural forms.

The embossing of an axonometric drawing as part of the negative space of the paper helps me decide where to place an image transfer as a reference for the transfer. The images are transferred around the emboss and sometimes seep into the tactile surface of the emboss. In the previous drawing exercises, I had traced the shape of the shadow from the axonometric drawings as well. Where the axonometric cast this shape of the shadow, I have chosen to transfer the same image multiple times. In doing so, a shape emerges from within the transfers of the images of the site.

A line made on a surface tells one what to see. It translates what one visualises in their imagination for others to see on a surface. A line is a mode of communication. A line visualises what we imagine.

A line in an architectural drawing is a tool that can give clarity to the drawing when a crisp and clear mark is made with a sharpened pencil. A straight line is drawn with the help of an architectural scale that measures up to fifteen feet. The line tells us that these fifteen feet can be turned into a three-dimensional intervention. When perpendicular, parallel, and angled lines measured along the scale meet, they come together in the form of plans, sections, and elevations.

The same line, which can be measured by a scale, is embossed onto the surface of a paper. The line that helps one measure a surface, the line that helps one give clarity to an architectural drawing, is a line that can only be seen in the way in which light that onto the surface of the paper, and the shadow that the emboss casts onto that surface.

The shadow measures the space. The forms of shadows created in image transfers begin to appear as spaces in themselves. On a closer look, one can see the line that anchors the shadow. The image transfer is always referenced in the measured sensory space.



Fig. 26. Three working spaces that have developed while working in the prin-making studio. On the right, image transfers were made. On the left is an architectural drawing board on which the measured drawings were made. In between the two is a desk which was used for embossing pieces of ply. The space photographed is from the printmaking studio at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture.

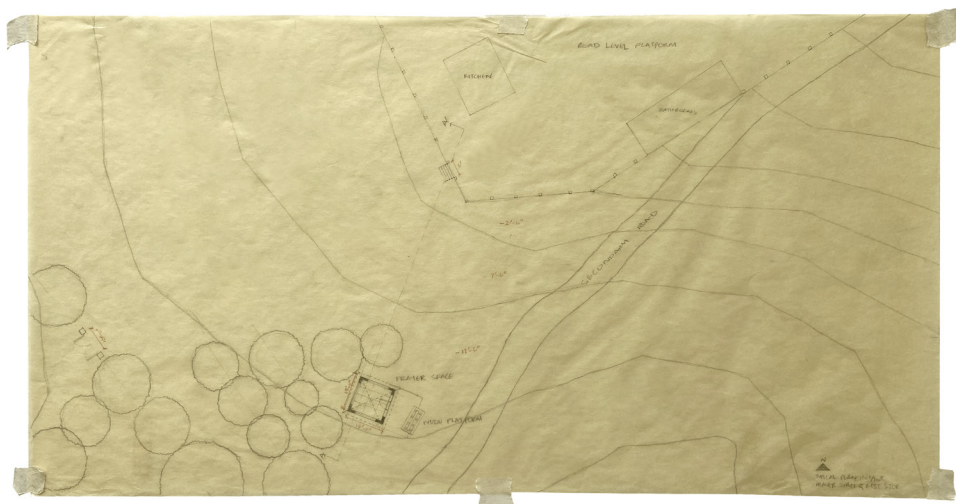


Fig. 27. An architectural plan of the rest stop and the prayer space sitting at a small descent from the platform of the rest stop.
Scale: $1/16"=1'-0"$



Fig. 28. Emboss of a wood ply. I have used a V-tool (woodcarving tool) supported by a scale to carve the lines in the ply

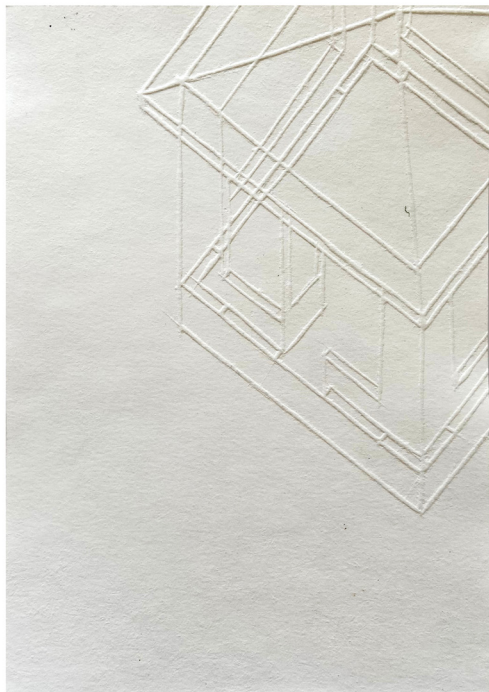


Fig. 29. Emboss of the prayer space on paper. 4 in. × 5.5 in.

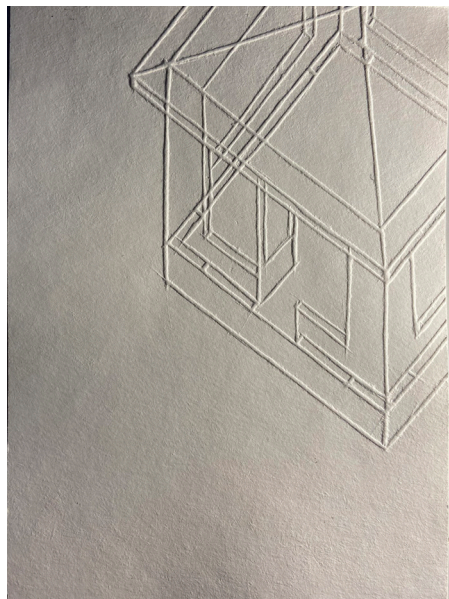


Fig. 30. Working with different light sources under which the embossed axonometric is placed.

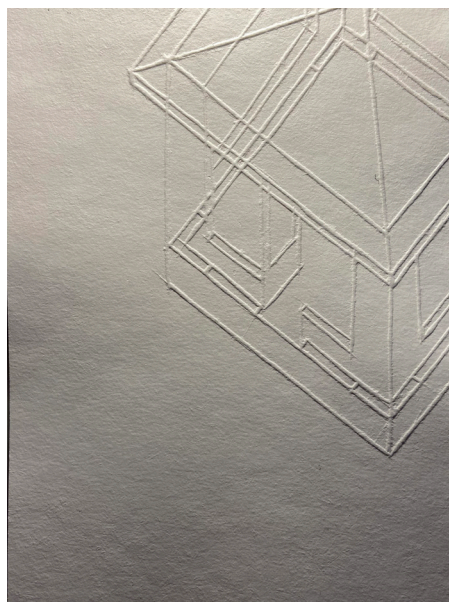


Fig. 31. Working with different light sources under which the embossed axonometric is placed.

A Window Ledge as an Opening

The [re]presentation of the *experience* of a window ledge in the landscapes of Balochistan has opened up the space of architectural representation to allow mindful practice and slowness to become a part of the visualisation of form. As spatial thinkers, we think of the materiality of the built in the light of the day which casts a shadow. In the three drawing exercises, this act of visualisation is taken a step back into the space of shadows. In the first exercise, image transfers bring photographs onto paper as shadowy renders made of graphite. This straightforward technique becomes a *starting point* for the drawing process. To have a starting point does not mean that the process is linear. As the practice takes its course, image transfers make their way back into future methods. In the second exercise, I start to render *the shape of a shadow*. This shape — rooted between the measured axonometric and intuitive ways of rendering a site — becomes a mediator between the different drawing methods. In the third exercise, image transfers become extensions of the shape of the shadow and expand a shape into a space itself. A space that comprises references from the site — the *zaahir*, the physical forms. The representation of the measured physical forms are the lines embossed onto the paper which can only be seen upon a close reading of the visual — when a light is cast onto the paper. Multiple techniques coming together on one surface, they begin to create details that are connected in an intimate relationship, where every relationship elaborates on the idea of the world as a shadow of the Divine Light.

Architectural practices focus on how a form may look, and the drawing practices revolve around the complete clarity of a physical form. Are our representational practices *enclosing* and *coercing* the thinking opportunities that a drawing process allows? This research is a '*disenclosure*' of our constant attempts

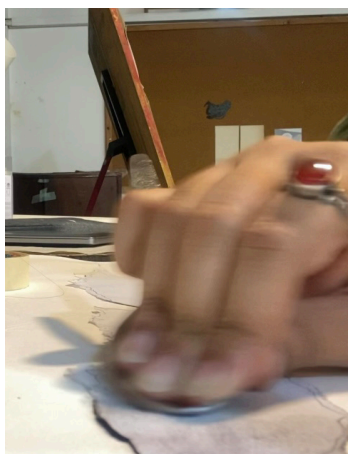


Fig. 32. The process of transferring the image: applying acetone to the back of the photocopy and burnishing the image with a spoon.

to render every physical detail into a linear result of spaces as *products* to be *seen*.

The phenomenological premise of the *zaahir* revealing the *baatin* defined here as per Henry Corbin is carried out in the aesthetic experience of the drawing process. The drawings, beginning from the images of the site, traverse the question of representing the forms through line drawings. From the rethinking of representing forms, the drawings begin to *reveal* a shadow in various ways, in the shape of the shadow, in the shadow of the emboss and the many layers of image transfers. The phenomenal *baatin* is rendered in the process and it *reverses* how we see an ordinary physical object, a window ledge. It opens up a coerced linear way of representing space by rendering the shape of a shadow as a protagonist of the drawing — which in the architectural documentation might have been drawn after the line drawings were made. This reversal is significant in that it critiques architectural representation in both practice and architectural education today. As a studio instructor, I urge my students to communicate the realities of the site in not just its concrete existence, but through the intangible aspects which may lead to a more mindful design conversation. In the drawing practice exercised here, non-existence is where meaning lies in an architectural intervention: a window ledge. To reduce architecture to its quantities, to ignore the shadows, impoverishes our conceptions of space and the ways that we make meaning from it. The world of shadows, in the phenomenon of *the whole world as the shadow of the Divine*, gives us a way to open up a space for the extraordinary meanings that even such an ordinary intervention holds.

Acknowledgements

This paper is an outcome of a year-long MPhil thesis in Art and Design at the Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture. The articulation of thoughts, outcomes and learnings in this thesis could not have been possible without the guidance of my advisors Currim Suteria and Dr Valerie Gonzalez. They have always pushed me to pursue new ideas with a shared passion and dedication. I will always be thankful to them and to dear friends who have been an important part of my research journey.



Fig. 33. The slight contours of the rest stop in which a juniper grove is present, photographed on my way back from Ziarat. I caught a glimpse of the prayer space anchored within the contours.

