

CAMERA OBSCURA: RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Cairn Gorm Mountain, Scotland

Developing the Camera Obscura within the context of an art project presented the opportunity to go beyond the recognised architectural process of place making, towards examining the theme of architect and artist. In response, the evolution of the conceptual design focused on how to reconcile the need to pursue a spatial interpretation of the programme whilst integrating the visual imagery from the camera obscura lenses with the film material of the artists. The outcome of this generalist thinking was to engage each respective discipline within clearly defined lines of enquiry towards achieving a balance between architecture and installation art.

A 'reading' of the sites geography - the topographical and textural qualities of the surrounding terrain - identified the potential for connecting the physical and the visual qualities between adjacent mountain garden areas and surrounding land-forms. The structure which holds the Camera Obscura traces an existing path as a form of 'architectural cartography'. This completes a public engagement with the mountain garden by using its presence to transfigure the landscape context of path and outlook. In contrast the 'dark chamber' provides a place to view the 'internal landscapes' of the wider local and regional contexts - the world without and the world within, as Patrick Geddes¹ clearly demonstrated with his famous Outlook Tower in Edinburgh.

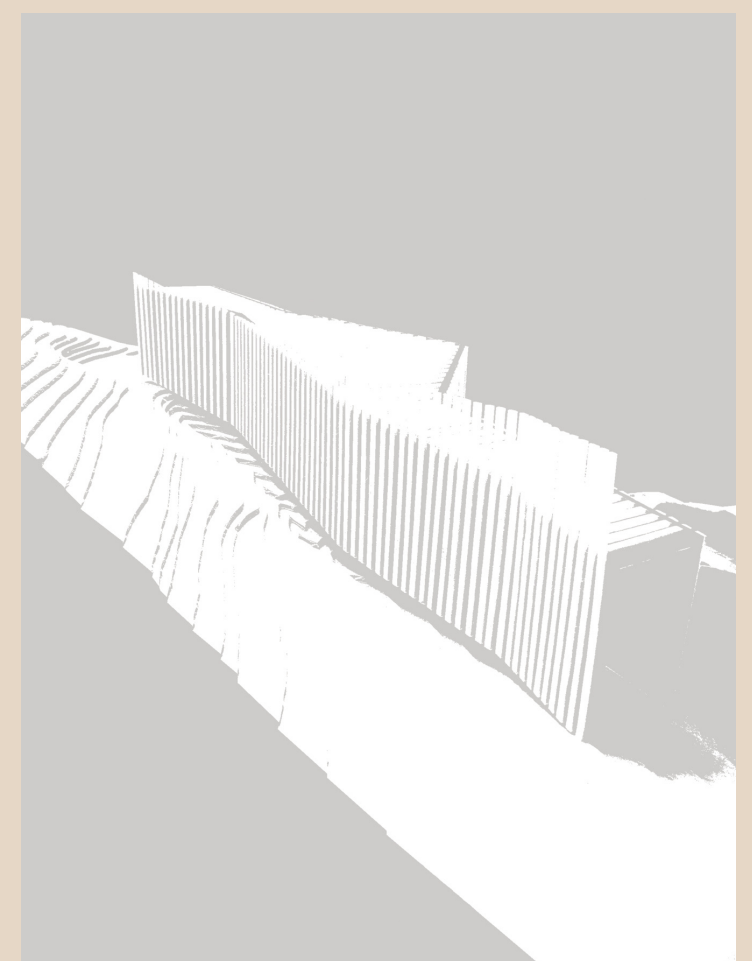
This defined path and destination within the landscape clearly establishes the place at which the mountain garden ends and visual connections towards a range of panoramic views begin. The concept of the 'light passage' (incorporating the 'dark chamber'; camera obscura, instrument and film) is essential in providing a heightened experience of the garden through path based design with an emphasis on looking and learning within a quiet moment of reflection.

Part of Cairn Gorm: Reading a Landscape

Architect: Fergus Purdie

Concept and video installation: Mel Woods & Lei Cox,

Lens engineering and design: George Keene



¹ The Worlds Without and The World Within.
Sunday Talks With My Children, by Patrick Geddes, 1905