

## The Vertical Transmutation Knowledge Through Act of Reading Traditional Architecture

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**ABSTRACT:** The architectural education along the way of creativity has often involved with the formal and physical aspects of design as an effort to read architectural artifacts through its mere external appearances. This article, however, aims to step beyond the manifestation of conventional perspectives on visual aspects of built environment. That is, an act of interpreting the architectural spaces through representing the hidden dimensions that lead us towards a critical knowledge perceived by the spontaneous conscience pertained to the past. The approach toward history in this research is not a mere historical description; rather it is aimed to discover a methodology of design on the basis of contextual reflections. Accordingly, the process of architectural transmutation has been analyzed through reading the Persian historical city of Kashan in successive urban scales so that the continuity of design process correlating the virtual times of past, present and future would be conceived as a methodology distinct from the prevailing innovational preoccupations.

**Key words:** Design education, Visual code, Critical conscience, Spontaneous conscience, Kashan, traditional, architecture

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### INTRODUCTION

The book of history has always been a reference for architects even when they regard it as something undesirable. Modern art and architecture was an effort to be liberated and surpassed the limitations of the past. However, Modern architecture acquired its very essence from the Classical form and concept, something that is evident in Le Corbusier's earlier sketches and his preoccupations with platonic volumes.

In his *Cities of Artificial Excavation*, Peter Eisenman acquired the modernity of his time through studying historical elements. The superposition technique was applied to combine historical readings of the site into material that forms the basis of his design. In this way, Eisenman was looking for complexity in material related to the history of the site; he regards the site as a 'palimpsest' – an old parchment with traces of previous texts (Achten, 2003). These texts provide

an important reading into the building and its configuration. Eisenman believes that the introduction of past images and the extension of distant grids into the site provide a ground for the building to occur (Bédard & Balfour, 1994). Intra-city natural structures have always had a key role in creating sustainable urban greenspaces. Adapting to natural features and relating the intra-city greenspaces to such natural structures as river-valleys, hillsides, lakes and forests, guarantee the endurance, sustainability and longevity of the natural quality of city (Irani Behbahani and Shafie, 2007).

The essential role of tradition is well recognized in Hassan Fathy's beliefs being illustrated primarily in his gouaches paintings: walls and gardens as well as walkways and pools shown in plan and elevation at the same time to assist the viewer in a total understanding of the work. These surrealist paintings express the utilization of an Ancient

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Egyptian technique of multiple perspectives within a single painting, subsequently configured Fathy's architectural concepts which meant nothing less than a whole new architecture. In this regard, the contextual potentialities and complexities from which the meanings are revealed have been interpreted constantly by architects in order to apply in current architectural debates. The concept of innovation in the process of design is, then, superseded by the act of interpretation.

Over the last decades, design education methods can be seen as a challenge between formal/ physical design-based approaches and intangible/ nonphysical design-based approaches. The latter have been principally developed in the context of virtual reality and imagination, while the former have been mostly applied in tangible domains. Both approaches share a basic conception of innovational design strategy in which visual features are essential interacting components. This study, however, tries to introduce a progressive version of the tangible/intangible design approach in which the imaginal existence would be transmuted on the vertical level of cognition as the educatees, namely the interpreters, enter the space of horizontal properties in order to conceive the coexisting complexities of the physical and virtual domains.

Therefore, the historical city of Kashan has been adopted, as it is still an objective place encompassing the virtuality of the society, with the aim of attaining a thoroughgoing recognition in the fields of natural, cultural and spatial, being rich in the temporal sources of generations. Thus, in order to represent the essence of architecture in the city, an appropriate visual code has been exploited. As the Persian architectural spaces are not complying with the Modern representational tools, the search for visual codes has initiated within the empirical spaces of Kashan with a special concern to the art of miniature.

### **The Act of Interpreting Art Object**

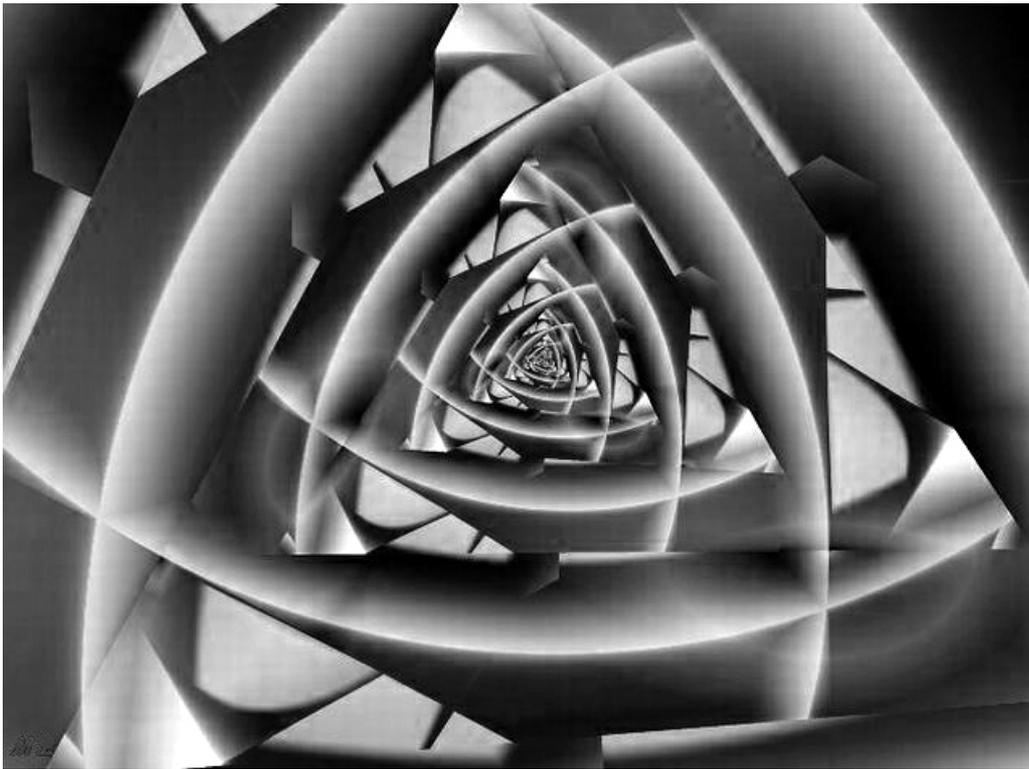
Interpretation, according to Jacques Derrida, is the manner of oscillating among multivalent contexts including time and space, a dialectical vacillation of past and present. Through this transition the present interpreter constantly experiences the origins in the past via his

contemporary standpoint. The interpreter, then, reads the past in order to represent the dynamism of the society in its internal equilibrium or as a sign of image rather than reproducing a model. Thus, contemporary interpretation is believed to be an approach trying to uncover the meanings within a context on the way towards creation.

For Heideggerian hermeneutics, the whole context and its parts must constantly oscillate in a hermeneutical circle in which wholes and parts are constantly and mutually interrogated and reconciled. This notion has its prolonged history in Eastern cognitive methodology on which the parts are consummately inspired by the whole: One in all and all in one. In this respect, the subjective domain of the parts spiraling the whole objectively, a seemingly vertical ascending with a simultaneous, constant focusing on the internal goal, appeared as an invisible entity encompassing the whole and the parts in every round of ascent. Thus, the internal meaning is attained through being immersed into the coiling movements inside the spiral of truth (Fig.1).

The process of interpretation as a subtle meditation in whatever existed is considered as a search for discontinuities and respites having long been disregarded for many reasons. To take a reversed journey from present to past would seem to be an alternative introduced by Michel Foucault as a cognitive methodology of interpreting the past. This method does not search for unvarying essence of tradition; in turn, it seeks for those gaps and openings that seemingly would lead the interpreter towards the realm of essential spirits and inconsistent paradigms of present era.

On the immutable way of transforming images into words, followed by the transition of language through the passage of thought, the art-object is superseded by the active mind of the interpreter who is determined to go beyond the boundaries of the creator's mind. In search of an interaction among living context of the artwork and the interpreter, the primary concept on which the work is brought forth is overlooked. The presupposed conceptions and judgments are, then, replaced by the invented meanings, establishing a free interactive realm on which the following critiques would be founded. Therefore, the act of interpretation does not speak of the preceding



**Fig. 1. A Hermeneutical Circle of Whole & Parts**

experiences, but it is a process of perpetual experience in essence. This is well illustrated in Persian art of miniature in which the hermeneutic of painting and literature is translated into image and word creating a virtual space purposely designed by the Persian artist to welcome the interpreter in a suspended aura of form and color rather than merely conveying his idiosyncratic sensations to the observers.

Every interpretation is a moment of acquiring knowledge, as it is based on the cultural beliefs, desires and intentions and last but not the least the unconscious mind of the interpreter. This kind of knowledge, though, has a relative, open characteristic and never seeks to confine itself to the ultimate core of the internal meaning. As Nietzsche posited, there is no absolute truth, but only is there infinite interpretation. Therefore, the context as an active entity interferes with the process of reading since the context of the artwork is not supposed to be a closed, complete existence ready for disclosing. Yet, despite its inflexible physical appearance, architectural edifice remains still alive. Thus, on the continuing process of creating new implications, the context of built structures would turn into a dynamic internal

stimulus proceeding towards innovation. In search of the interrelation between architectural theory and practical knowledge of the past in the context of Persia, the present interpreter aims to attain an approach through addressing the architecture itself. Since the sustainable values and patterns seem to be dependent on the outlook of the interpreter, a comprehensive model or theory would not be prescribed, as long as the design process deals with the individual sense of revealing in order to discover the timeless values of their own. Therefore, it has been tried to interpret the perception of traditional architecture through visual representation as a basis for universal educational methodology.

### **Design Process**

The architectural design has to be conceived as a process of revealing rather than the instant culmination of a creative mind. In view of the fact that design process requires a reflective knowledge at the initial stage, it seems highly significant to understand the mutual presence of the designer as a thinker and the environment as a studied subject. This initial knowledge is genuinely acquired from act of practical reading of the previous

experiences as a basis of the designer's book of history for succeeding efforts in designing.

The process-oriented concept is derived from the contextual mind in postmodern philosophy that emphasizes on contextualism for construction of meaning, as opposed to the result-oriented notion ascribed to modernists. As there are diverse interpretations for a single phenomenon in this content, there exist different routes needs to be examined; that creates a fluid situation of intersubjectivity- the state of being within subjects- leads to a domain of multiple perspectives.

In this context, the designer disappears gradually in between, as his mental imageries start to be activated. Therefore, the absence of the designer coincides with the presence of conceptions creating a sense of dynamic, multidimensional existence. The artisan, in fact, having abandoned himself to the virtual mediums of the unconscious faculties which was exalted with the meanings revealed through interpreting experienced spaces, consciously establishes a design method having its root in traditional structures.

Having considered the sources of uncertainties on the way of designing, one is encountered with a contradiction in branches of knowledge. Context, external demands and internal desires, existing along with envisaged possibilities and history as an instrument for recognition of original patterns are among diverse parameters managed to define the domain of decision making. This domain would orient the entire factors in subtle relation to each other; besides, it contributes to the realm of creativity as a mediator to consciously analyze and determine the extent of the unconscious intervention on the design process. Therefore, the designer as a present interpreter is simultaneously immersed in the process of context-content interaction, perpetually moves through the passage of reticulated relations ready to be unconcealed. In this respect, the contextual features of culture and tradition would cultivate the essence of architecture that is not a spontaneous act anymore. In fact, the role of interpretation is to encompass the existing heterogeneous entities in the context from collective memories of the inhabitants along with their imaginative desires to the natural and physical

attributes of the environment in order to enliven the design process. Probing into the communal activities and behaviors, the designer establishes a relation with the context from which the conceptual images comes forth.

As long as the representational instruments are being invented to critically interpret the acquired images, the expression of individualistic features is coming to broach. That's the time when the logical critical thinking stage is initiated so that the engendered images arisen from contextual qualities find their way toward principles, patterns and meanings in the process of decision making.

### **The Changing Outlook: Vertical Transmutation**

When it comes to previous cultures and traditions in the field of architecture, one ineluctably gets involved with the horizontal layers of cognitive relations pertained to the past as well as a simultaneous inquiry into the futuristic knowledge along the way of unveiling the truth (Heidegger, 1971). That will certainly lead to a domain of inter-subjective mind seeking to enter the inter-layered of interpretation, a postmodern conception that tries to define the meanings which are beyond its realization. Thus, it is the time to accede to the appearance of a vertical transmutation as a clear rupture on the horizontal level of our cognitive domain rising beyond the stolid imageries, as the concept of time and place is inversely transmuted. As a result, the vertical state becomes a genuine way of seeing the hidden entities in general and global perspective along with the contemporary horizontal method of networking those combinatory values originating from the local cultural context. In fact, the in-between concept transforming the horizontal to vertical state becomes the matter of consideration. The transposition occurred from the horizontal to vertical state is wholly emphasized in Persian cognitive domain which is thought to be as an inter-space encompassing contrasting viewpoints in an ascending order. Constant change is the main characteristic of this state in every level, so as the perpetual unveiling of the invisibles in the transparent field of tonalities subtly interwoven. This is well interpreted in Eastern Ontology as a winding spiral or another recent illustration, the mobius strip, enabling the dual transference of

internal and external qualities in time and space reconciling the different states of events and presence lately introduced as simultaneity in current architectural debates; the events that, according to Derrida, have immersed in the domain of creativity.

Therefore, in the space of vertical transmutation diverging interpretations, as the subjective spirit of our age, are conventional, and consequently the essential cause of art-object invention. As Bernard Tschumi states, the architecture, as a form of artwork has nothing to do with the hierarchical order of spatial events juxtaposed anymore, yet it should imply the simultaneous, complex conceptions overlapped and superposed (Tschumi, 1996). Thus, the inchoative projection of the vertical state could be recognized primarily in the theory of superposition introduced to relinquish the concept of classical hierarchy in architecture, even though the theory is still associated with the horizontal method of layering. The contemporary architecture, then, seems to approach a multivalent entity; however, it has just taken off from those qualities cohered to the horizontal level of networked relations.

It has also to be considered that the act of interpreting the architectural space in a certain historical era is time-free, although the contemporary mediums adopted by the interpreter are time dependent. What we learn from the history of architecture, according to Manfredo Tafuri, is not its internal function, but rather it is thought to be as a probe into the new horizons capable of exalting the essence of architecture (Tafuri, 1980). Therefore, the more we plunge into the ocean of valuable patterns of the past, the more we grasp the future far-reaching implications, as though past and future meet at an unknown point of infinite.

Thusly indicated, it seems necessary to initiate the design process through studying the cultural values pertained to the context, for diving into the past would ascertain the attainment of horizontal knowledge. Historical sense, according to T.S. Elliot, does not merely embedded in the perception of the past, but also requires individual presence in the past which its sense of timelessness and transience shall inform the interpreter about his standpoint in future.

Therefore, the horizontal contemplation related to the natural and cultural aspects would contextualize the design process on its way toward ascending with recourse to the imaginal concepts and the spiritual potentialities of the designer.

### **Critical Methodology Versus Spontaneous Conscience**

The shift away from the art-object towards a discourse about art is not to replace art with theory, and to reduce the objects of art merely to instances of theory, yet the design process is a matter of weaving through the subjects of theory and practice simultaneously. It is the main purpose of this research to emphasize on the horizontal knowledge as a basis for creative implementation while setting out to the space of vertical transmutations. In this case, both stages would be initiated at the same time, provided that they receive immediate and appropriate feedbacks necessary for their mutual development.

Since the transition from a paradigm toward the other shall exalt the inner qualities of both, the architectural domain, likewise, get influenced from the other domains, as far as the interpretation is concerned. *Strangifiction* is an idea proposed by Wallner, which means taking a scientific proposition system out of its context and putting it in another context to see the implicit presuppositions of the given proposition system by means of the new understanding arising out of the application of this procedure (Wallner, 1998). Besides, it is also supposed that the concept of *Strangifiction* can be translated into the perpetual journeys from the horizontal toward the vertical regions within the design process itself. The shift will broaden the interpreter's perspective along with the structural change occurring within the system conceived as a live phenomenon. Thus, the horizontal level of conscience encompassing the contextual layers of physical, natural, technological and cultural issues reconciles the interpreter to the origins, so as his imageries and intuitional perception unite him to the preeminent global and critical conscience.

The spontaneous conscience, as it is defined, has been originally adopted by the traditional designer as a behavioral method compatible with his natural and cultural environment. In this case, the possible choices and alternatives were not his

concern. The architectural elements were comparable to words in language suffices for any creative combination and consequently the prevailing communication. There was no need for regenerating new definitions, as the recognized patterns developed through centuries formed the continuous chain of every civilization. The traditional designer knew well what to choose and where to apply. Every thing was prepared in the framework of tradition. Through establishing a relationship with his cultural context, the designer experienced a spontaneous and synthetic comprehension while constructing an edifice. Traditional habitat designs used to be organized with no regard to any school of thought; instead, they behaved according to their cultural and natural context in a specific historical moment. It was only after the crisis of civilization that man dissociated with his internal, self-generated structural designs. From 15th to 17th century a crisis initiated in collective memory of the society. Meanwhile, the architecture of innovation brought forth; the individual was made to choose. This kind of choice, though, was not a sign of intellectual maturity, but rather a kind of uncertainty of what is true or false. The contemporary architecture, in fact, is the confrontation of our critical conscience with spontaneous conscience of the tradition. The critical knowledge has to perceive the continual mechanism of the spontaneous conscience pertained to the culture (Caniggia& Maffei, 1979). Thus, in order to enliven the latent collective behaviors in actual art-objects known as architecture, the present interpretation shall enter an in-between process, which correlates the horizontal layers of the context with the critical knowledge related to the interpreter's visionaries. Therefore, the phenomenon of innovation in architecture will receive a more lofty conception providing a ubiquitous identity colligating past, present and future in a multivalent process. Then, the architecture will not assumed to be created from nothing; on the contrary, it is accredited to ruminate on the immutable values, norms and patterns of the tradition with the fluid, chromatic critical vision of the interpreter.

### **The Unveiling Process of Visual Codes**

The act of interpreting architectural spaces requires a methodology of reading, embedded in

the nature of the space. In this process, the interpreter comes across the represented space as a sequence of imaginal screens. Meanwhile, there seems to exist infinite relations among the screens, as long as the interpreter engages with the process. Since the architectural space actively interferes the process of reading by illuminating the course, it implicitly conveys the inner qualities of self, affecting the interpreter's act of thinking. Therefore, the interpreter would enter a domain of interrelations among spatial and imageries, subjective and objectives, and subsequently between the presents and invisibles. As a result, the inter-space from which the contradictions arise is the field of outstanding artistic creativity. Within the suspension of qualities in an in-between space, the interpreter experiences the similitude of virtualization, the very feature of contemporary era (Shayegan, 2001). That is the space of revealed qualities proceeds towards the realm of creative perception.

As soon as the interpreter, in the architecture domain, perceives the spatial qualities of the sequential, fluid imaginal screens, he begins mapping them in accordance with certain methodology of representation. It is of great significance to distinguish the representational instruments indicating the end product from the invention of such instruments during the process. While the latter emphasizes on the innovation concept along the process-oriented act of reading, the former follows the prevailing idea of representation as an ultimate way of illustrating the attained object. According to Walter Benjamin, the drawings and illustrations are part of an open process, a process of production. As a result, the most appropriate approach towards the application of representational instruments in the course of innovative reading is to adjoin to the mode of thinking in a particular context.

It is well recognized that mapping in architecture shall transform the conceived spatial qualities into the measurable quantities. The interpreter, then, tries to map the infinite relations among the spatial screens, which are in perpetual suspension. There appears the role of the interpreter in merging the represented space with the world of his imageries, ideas and concepts related to the context.

Considering the overall effect of philosophical framework pertained to a context on the branches of knowledge, it is pertinent to coalesce the interdisciplinary fields of art and architecture, since there is a common spirit among different methods of artistic revelation. Art is a symbolic language, which reveals the philosophical foundations of a civilization (Nasr, 1987). Accordingly, in order to read the traditional architecture of Persia it looks plausible to conceive an interface between architectural space and the art of miniature since they would seem to have features in common. In fact, the broad understanding of Persian art of miniature would come forth the architectural visual codes (Fig.2).

In point of fact, the Persian architectural space is organized as a progression of two-dimensional screens in a labyrinthine network of complex relations; the continual challenge of imaginal

spaces with reality. Miniature, likewise, follow the same route in order to represent synchronous images in constant motion. Persian architecture values the space from the observer's point of view, in that, his perceptual experience inside the space would gradually unveils the secrets of unknown regions, as he moves within the labyrinth. There is no absolute visual point of reference for the beholder in which the unbounded imaginal screens are constantly overlapped and juxtaposed, so the observer is free to pursue his intuitional promenade within the space. It goes without saying that the art of miniature would attain representational methodology eminently translatable into the domain of architecture. Not only does it lead to a new approach to the representation of architectural spaces, but also it would pave the way towards the invention of visual codes within a process. The spatial perception of Persian architecture on the basis of intuitional discovery properly complies with the two dimensional dynamic approach in miniature.

### Interaction between Nature, Architecture and city in Kashan

Now that a methodology of representation has been defined in the realm of traditional architecture, the act of critical reading should be initiated through introducing the structure of the studied context and its long tradition of philosophical reflection on the interrelation between the built environment and the nature. The representation, then, would articulate the concept with the context through spatial sectioning from which the meanings in the space would be illuminated. That certainly leads the way to innovational ideas required for prospective design strategies.

Therefore, the historical city of Kashan has been adopted regarding its unequalled features of inner complexity in different urban scales pertinent for pursuing design methodology. However, Kashan's internal urban continuity has been undermined due to a number of radical inappropriate planning decisions at the advent of modernization in the country. Whereas the previous developments occurred mainly in continuity with the traditional structure of the city, the 20<sup>th</sup> century changes have been in total conflict with the past.

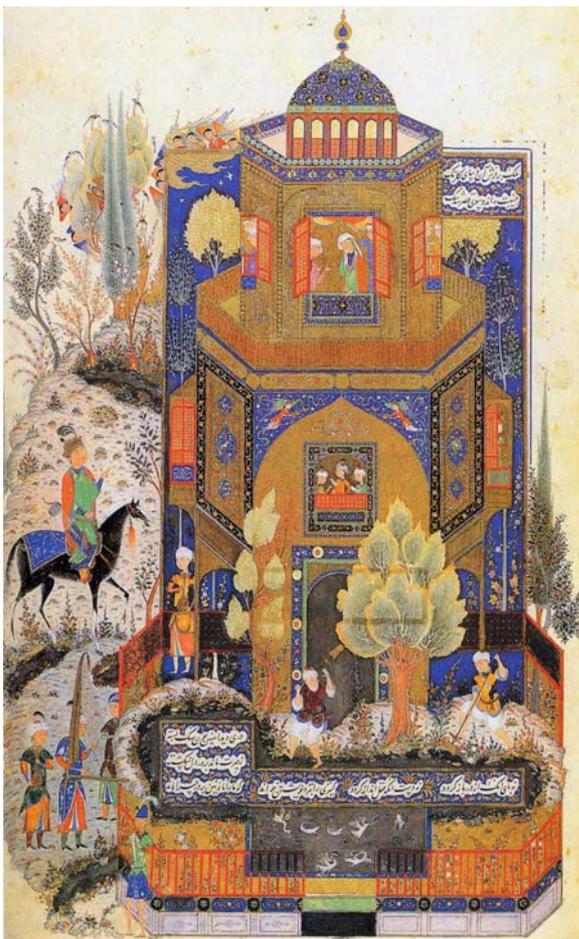


Fig. 2. Two-Dimensional Screens of the Miniature: Khosro & Shirin

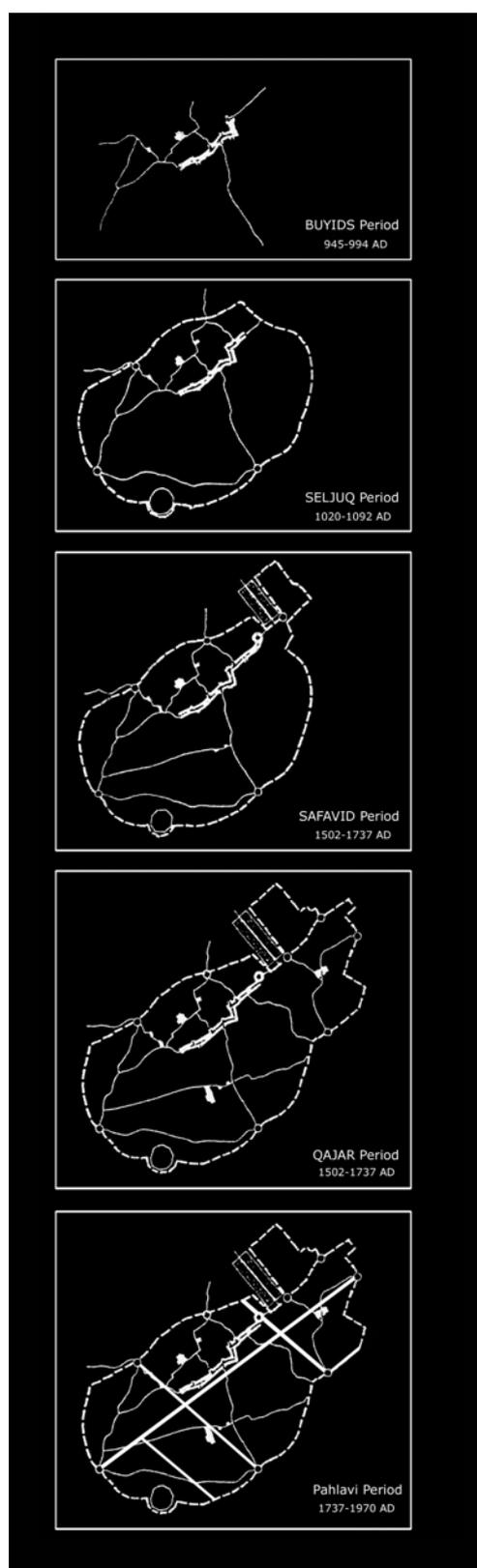
As a matter of fact, the organic urban texture of Kashan experienced numerous straight cuts within itself as a major network of new streets suitable for vehicular traffic, regardless of the fact that the city had preserved its persistence during centuries. Therefore, the dynamism and the spirit of life in the city are thoroughly dependent on the recognition of those sustainable patterns of value by the act of reading.

### **Integration and Disintegration in natural-cultural structure of Kashan**

Kashan is the first of the large oases, which runs along the edge of the Great Desert. Its charm is, therefore, mainly due to the contrast between the parched immensities of the desert land and the greenery of the well-tended oasis enclosed by the Karkas mountain ranges. However, Kashan is being opened at the two sides toward the glorious mountain of Damavand into the far distance. In fact, the natural and environmental context of Kashan has provided a basis for spatial structuring of the urban fabric. The original spatial structure of the city dates back to 6<sup>th</sup> millennium B.C., in Sialk hills as the cradle of Persian civilization. The city progressed and developed during Islamic period especially in Seljuk and Safavid eras. The main nucleus of the city formed in a linear structure typical of Islamic urban organization (Fig.3).

The construction of elliptical enclosure walls for defense purposes, the extension of the main bazaar and the square as well as the erection of monumentally structures of shrines are among the essential elements that determined the main scheme of the city during Seljuk period (11-12<sup>th</sup> cent.), a pattern which has preserved its major characteristics until now (Fig.4).

However, it was only during Safavid period (16-17<sup>th</sup> cent.) that Kashan experienced its golden epoch, when the harmonious relation between man and nature reached its highest perfection (Fig.5). The spontaneous conscience of the traditional man in accordance with his natural environment brought about the notion of cultivating the nature as a way for regenerating the city. Actually, the city developed enormously while it was complementing its great old structure. Accordingly, the spatial integration of the city reached its highest point, since a preconceived comprehensive master



**Fig. 3. Nature-Culture Integration and Disintegration through Time**



Fig. 4. Kashan General View Looking toward Ancient Citadel (Source: Ghasemi, 1996)

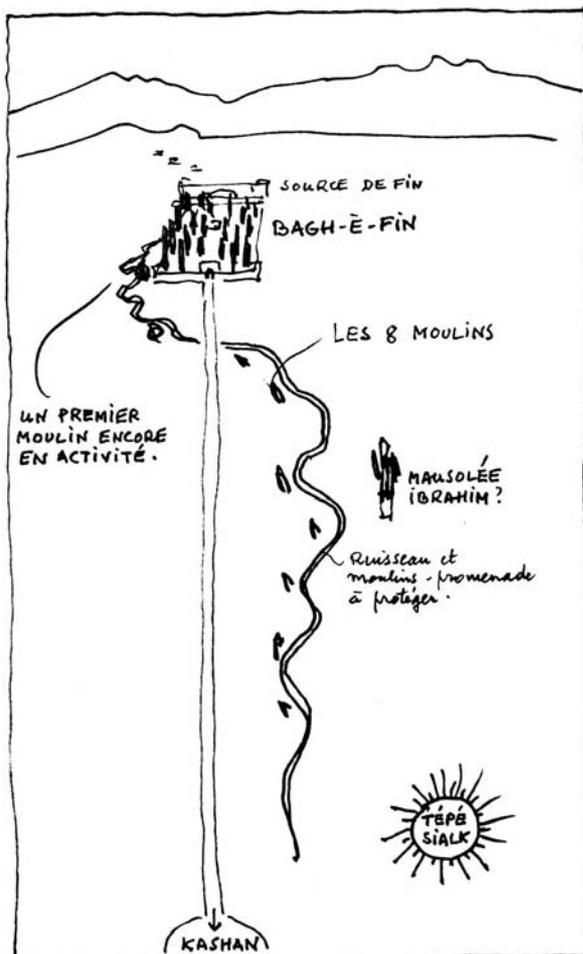


Fig. 5. Mountain, Spring, Garden and City (Source: Pechere, 1973)

plan prepared to enhance the city far beyond its old borders through creation of a new street, *Chaharbagh* (Four Gardens), a typical Persian boulevard (Fig.6). Unlike most of the old street in Kashan, this avenue was a wide, straight boulevard with four rows of large trees and a stream in the middle. However, unlike most of the Haussmann style boulevards in Paris, *Chaharbagh* was not cut through the fabric of the old city. Yet, it was created as a north-south extension of the old city, continuing to the north, where an extensive complex of Safavid gardens existed (Karimi, 2002).

Furthermore, the interaction of cultural and natural forces in this era best revealed in the enhancement of “Qanat” technology - the subterranean aqueduct canals carrying water from mountains to the city- which made the emergence of Persian garden conceivable as a manifestation of this hybridization in the middle of the desert. Therefore, a futuristic vision of Safavid urban planners is realized in the interrelation of the old and the new. Since the route of these underground canals determined the outgrowth of the city, it plays a significant role in organizing the spatial identity of Kashan. Its paths and movement flow life into the vein of the city inevitably had a clear morphological effect on the urban structure of

Kashan (Fig.7). Thus, the inner potentialities of the natural context perfectly harmonized with the critical knowledge of the man, creating a cultural environment at the horizontal level. Then, the

stratified layers of horizontal cognition are best realized in the interwoven matrix of invisible layer of water movement under the tangible layer of urban fabric.



Fig. 6. Chaharbagh & Persian Garden, Safavid Period, 16-17th cent. (Source: Javaherian, 2004)

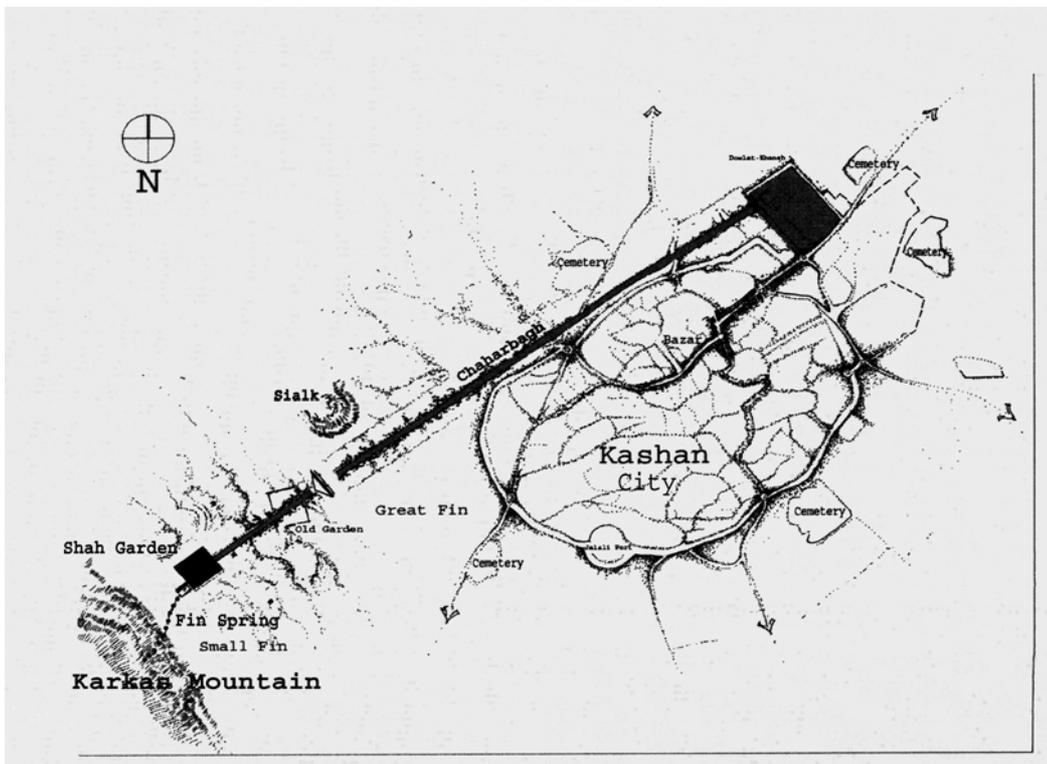


Fig. 7. Natural-Cultural Interaction (Source: Javaherian, 2004)

On the other hand, the spatial qualities of a Persian city is only gained through consecutive screens perceived by being present within the space, so as internality is the major essence of Persian architecture. There appears the imaginal existence in the vertical level interferes with the process of spatial perception. As a result, the morphological, spatial and functional attributes of the city adjoin the vertical process of imaginal transmutation providing a dynamic everlasting vision for the interpreter. The intuitional perception achieved through recognition of a spatial complexity inside the Persian space would lead the interpreter toward a minimal silence of perpetual creative discovery.

Therefore, only the imaginary urban sections would represent the inner quality of the city as an illustration of the homogeneity of city in different urban scales. The very first feature that is recognized in the section is the recurrence of the voids. Indeed, the deep concern to the voids in Persian architecture is for diminishing the effect of materiality. The void is configured, as the virtual forces of culture and technology intermingle with the natural forces of water and greenery, creating a paradise inside the hot and dry climate of the land. Actually, the lively atmosphere of this almost compulsory halt, the restful shade and its coolness make it as a garden miniature inside the habitats. This internal courtyard, namely the little paradise, has become a sustainable element of urban design. Through the act of sectioning, another characteristic of the Kashan urban spaces come forth that is the three interlocking geometry in the vertical level. The Euclidean geometry of the voids and its surrounding spaces, the non- Euclidean geometry of the urban roof structures, and finally the organic geometry of the mountain ranges at the background. As a matter of fact, the city of Kashan would reveal those sustainable patterns of values and meanings, which are the subject of inquiry for the adventurous interpreter. The existence of void, indeed, as an essential characteristic of design in different scales, has been recognized through the act of interpretation.

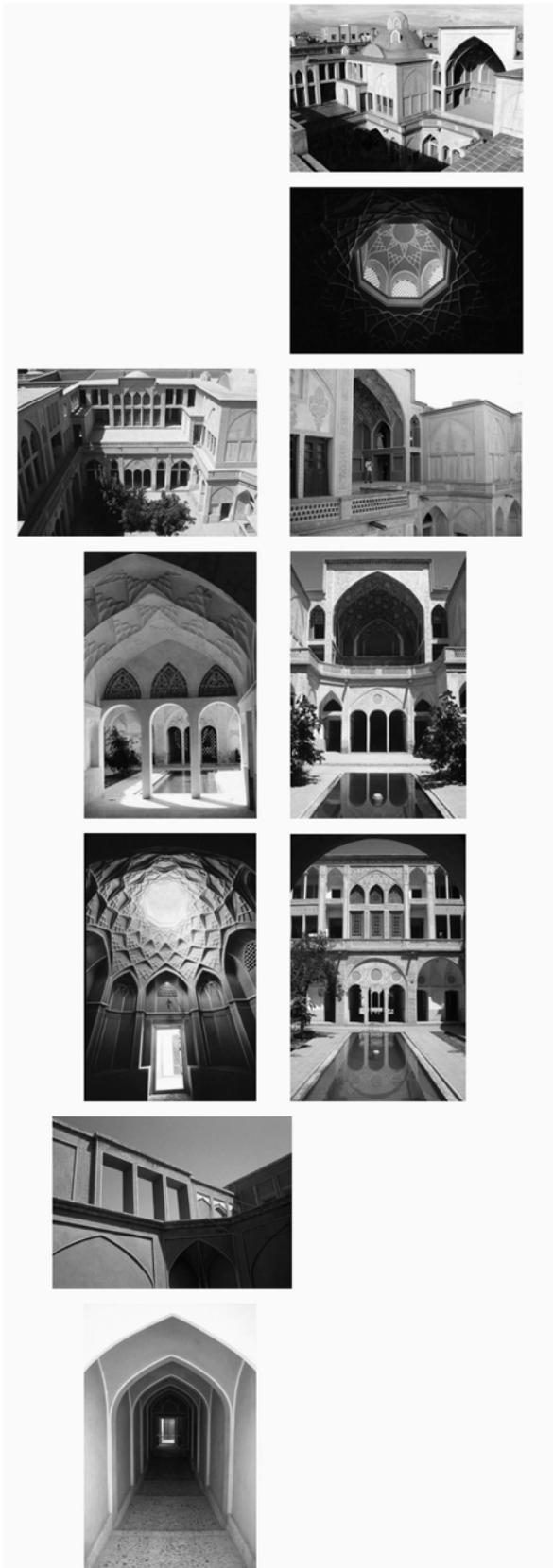
### **The Architectural Promenade in Different Urban Scales**

Thus, in search of hidden features in an urban fragment, above its physical appearance, an

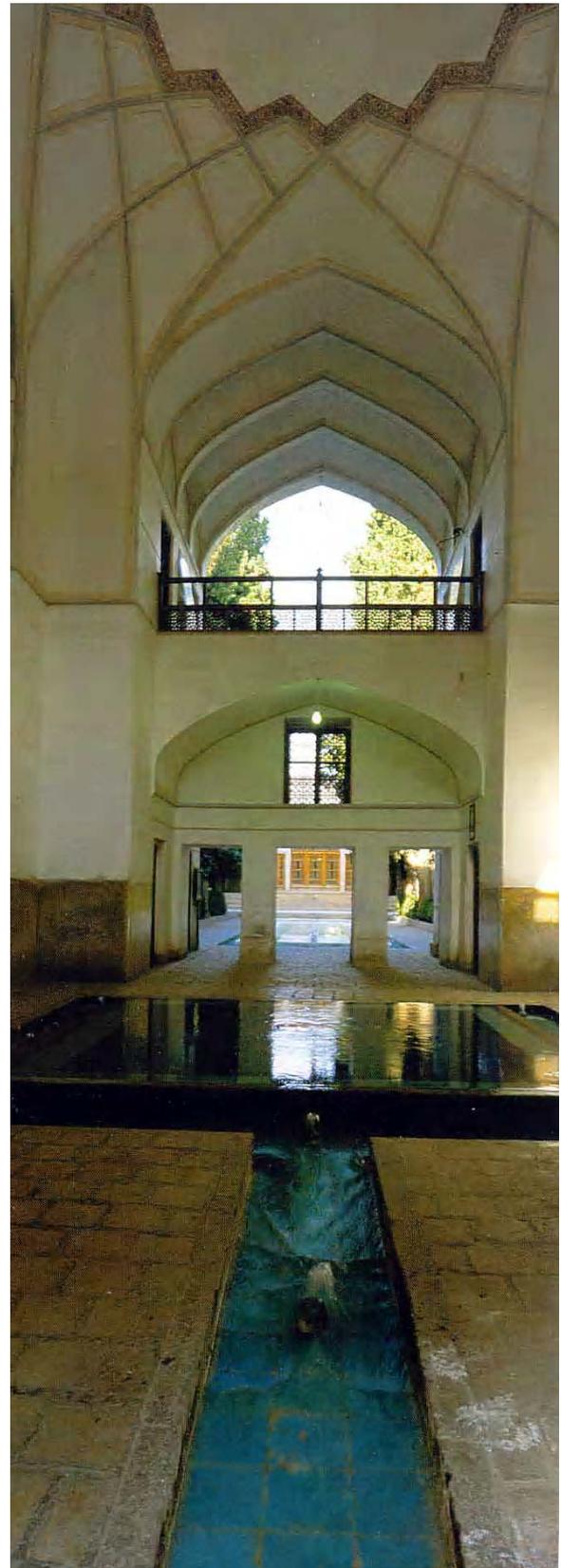
architectural promenade has been devised inside the historical layers of Kashan. The chosen urban fragment is the place of historical dwellings composing of residential complexes and few celebrated single unit houses. In fact, the urban fabric of the organic genre has lost its integrity through the modern implementations resulted in fragmented architectural edifices. To reunite the aforementioned spatial disintegrity necessitates reading the preexisting traditional architecture by immersing into the context.

Through this journey, the simultaneity of events conveying spatial images will accompany the interpreter, as he enters a new space. The preeminent concepts and imaginings provide an atmosphere of perpetual discovery during the act of perceiving the space. The prevailing perception in a Persian space is well demonstrated tangibly in the art of miniature as overlapping imaginal screens at the flash of emotion. That is exactly why the representation of Persian space is inconceivable through the separated layouts of plans, sections or even a single perspective view. Miniature, from a broader perspective, has been considered to introduce ubiquitous character for the interpreter to experience the spatiality of the picture through being present in every position at a time. That's why there exists the simultaneity of places from roof view and facades to floor plans and surprisingly the sections as an uncovering process of inward illustration. Therefore, the simultaneous presence of two- dimensional planes fades away the concept of time intervals and spatial distances in the picture. This mode of perception could converge with the essential character of Kashan architecture as internal continuity that prepares the implicit presence inside the space. Each spatial field is a threshold for the next, since it beckons the interpreter of the following event (Fig.8).

The art of miniature, indeed, simplifies the world and its many dimensions into merely two dimensions contoured by lines and colors, devoid of atmosphere, depth and shadows. Thus, it places a high value on the issue of surface (Ardalan & Bakhtiar, 1979). Miniature, as an art of surface generator, finely relates to the spatial arrangement of architecture in Kashan, which is rendered through imaginal planes free from time and place, as though they reflected well upon a mirror (Fig.9).



**Fig. 8. Architectural Promenade in Abbasian Mansion, Kashan**



**Fig. 9. Spatial Screens within Screens in Suspension (Pavilion, Fin Garden, Kashan)**

The simultaneousness of imaginal screens is perceived and then illustrated in a series of conceptual representations of the city and the house (Fig.10-11). The co-occurrence of the images in mind and on the paper resulted in a continuous creation of such screens in a seemingly endless process. As the images are engendered by a sudden simultaneous force, the existence of place is dismissed. That's the main cause for the uninterrupted production of spatial representations.

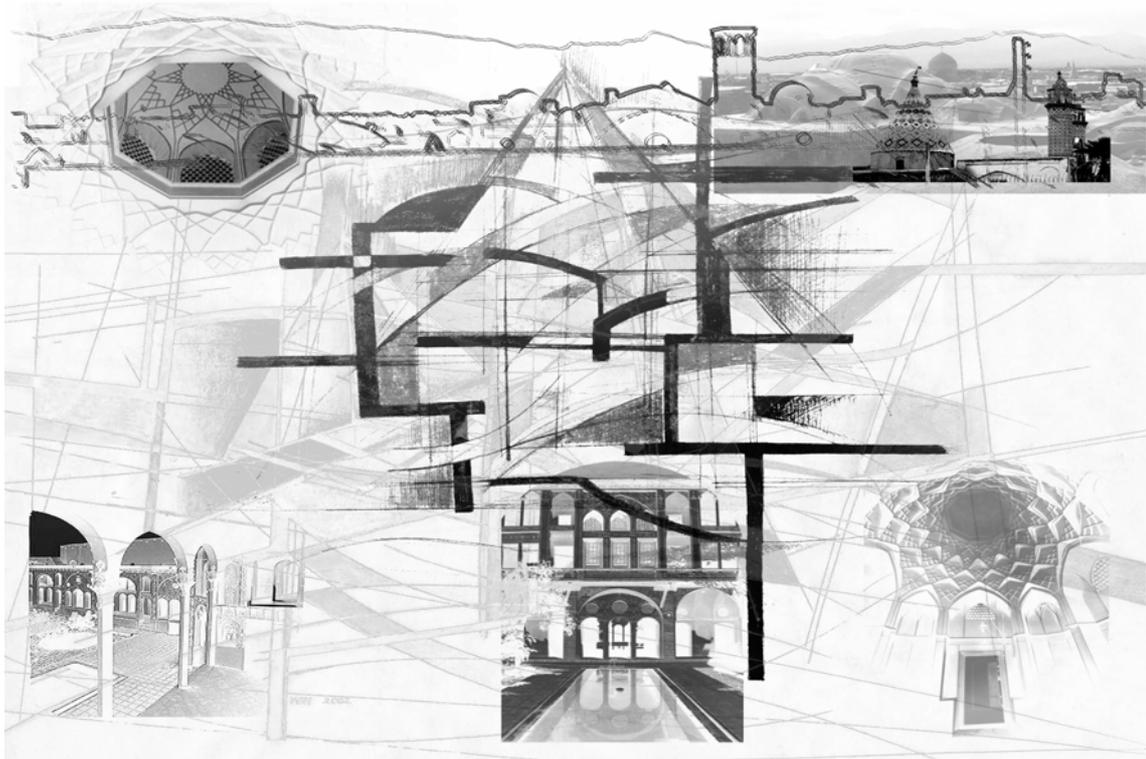
Suddenly the images transforms into noble, spatial existences, when the interpreter attempts to control his unconscious faculty. Then, the imaginal screens merge with material-like phenomenon like light, water, greenery, wind or other noble spaces: the material embraces the non-material. The place is reconceived and the contextual properties begin to intermingle with the domain of interpreter's imagination. Through the process of unification, the non-material forms the material. The spatial distance vanishes, as though they have stuck together while they have apparent, isolated identity. Therefore, the process of reading the space will produce infinite qualities necessary for rejoining the dispersed fragment.

The horizontal layers articulate with the verticals creating design conceptions. Actually, the proposed conceptual design is only one from hundreds of interpretations made at a time.

## CONCLUSIONS

Through act of interpreting the traditional knowledge, namely the spontaneous conscience, a critical framework is constructed upon which the design process would be oriented. Once the methodology of traditional recognition is acquired, the futuristic knowledge toward the spatial development starts to be configured with the goal of responding to the contemporary life requirement in its vision. Along this process, the model acquisition is not an objective; however, it is the methodology of reading that is decisive in perceiving the spatial complexities of the designated context. Thus, the spatial properties being perceived would be illustrated on the basis of the representational codes received from the context.

Since the images are the essential core of the representation, they generate an in-between existence of materials and non-materials transforming the process of reading. The infinite interpretations, and consequently the endless representations would heighten the quality of the



**Fig. 10. Spatial Images through the Act of Reading in Abbasian Mansion**

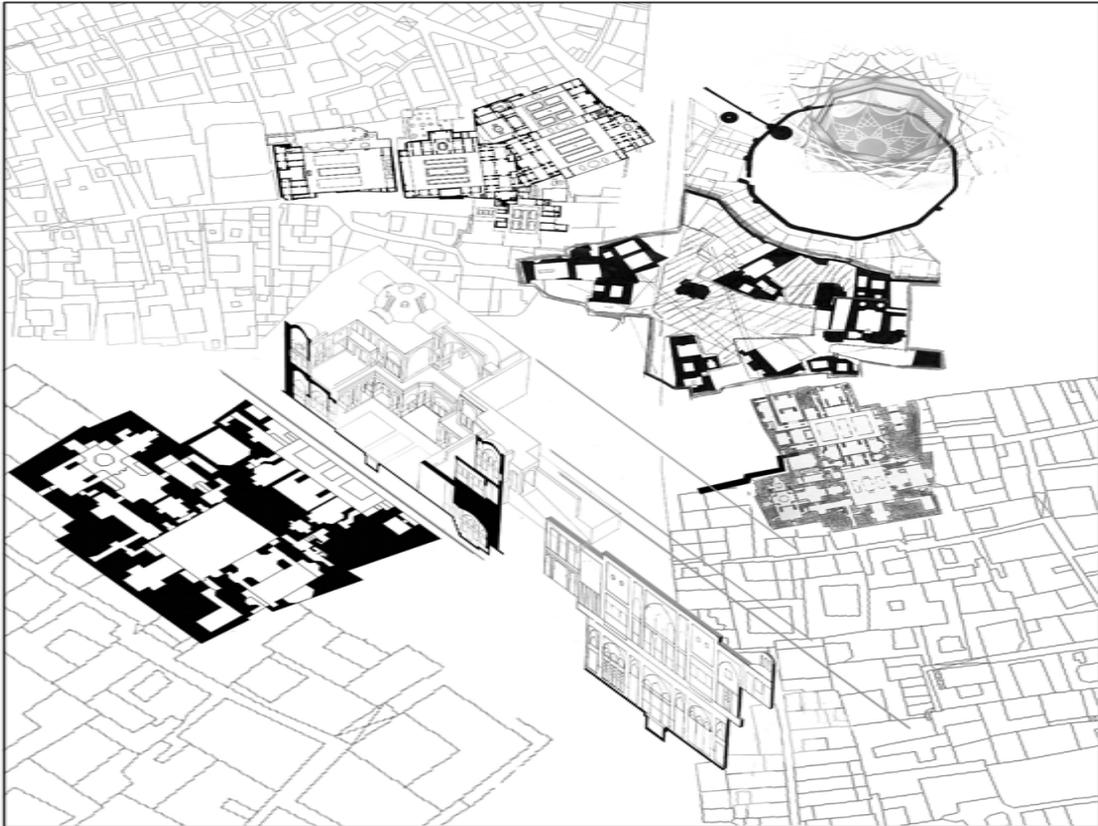


Fig. 11. Act of Reading In Urban Fabric, Kashan

process. Therefore, a methodological framework is required for design educatees to be oriented on their own chosen realm. Then, an individual discovery is intended rather than following a predefined route. Finally, the design process is a matter of discovery rather than innovation, a process of revealing not an instant creation.

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