

# Wellness of architecture

*études d'études*

*Volume VII*

Exploring Wellness within architecture encompasses a broad scope, eliciting numerous inquiries:

- *What is the impact of architecture on well-being?*
- *Does Feng Shui contribute to this impact?*
- *Does well-being within architecture extend beyond its intended function?*
- *Can the innate qualities of materials or environments contribute to this?*

and so on,

To initiate our investigation, we delved into identifying the spaces within our studio where we each experienced what we felt as wellness :

SC :

The beach, on holiday, being by the water, alone or with people.

My bedroom in the flat-share, which is on one level, the space is contained, cocooning.

NW :

My living room at home, for the natural light and the feeling of solitude.

BM :

On my covered terrace during a heavy storm, protected from nature but close to it.

In my bedroom, against a large wall-to-wall window that gives you the impression of being outside without being outside.

On a dance floor, late at night, when you're facing yourself.

KS :

A museum in Japan, to be visited alone, a marble pebble floor (bare feet), a room with no clear outline, a painting by Monet all around you. Abstraction from the outside world, all your senses focused on yourself.

LT :

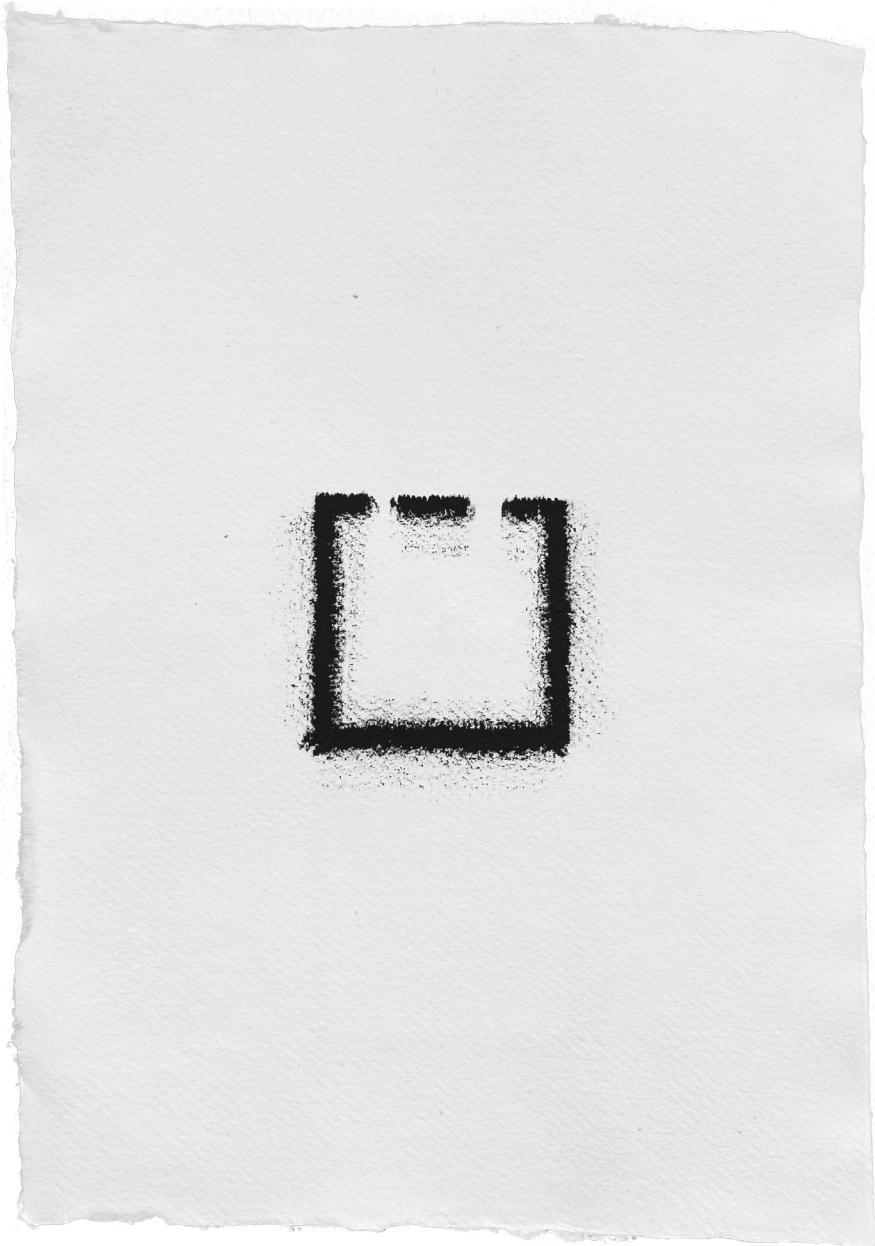
I feel at my best when I'm free to move around - no closed doors, no limits, fluidity of movement.

A space that doesn't tell you what to do with it.

What truly is wellness of architecture ? Is it a place where one can fully inhabit, offering freedom and the ability to disconnect from one's situation, the space itself, and the architecture that surrounds it?

While these initial contemplations prompted an examination of well-being and its shared attributes, our focus shifted towards scrutinizing the well-being experienced within constructed, architectural spaces. Subsequently, we opted to analyze four specific locations where we experienced a sense of well-being :

- Argentière Hut, *Chamonix, France*
- Santa Maria Nuova Closter, *Monreale, Italia*
- Monet's room, *Chichu Art Museum, Naoshima, Japan*
- The Matter of Time, *Richard Serra, Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain*

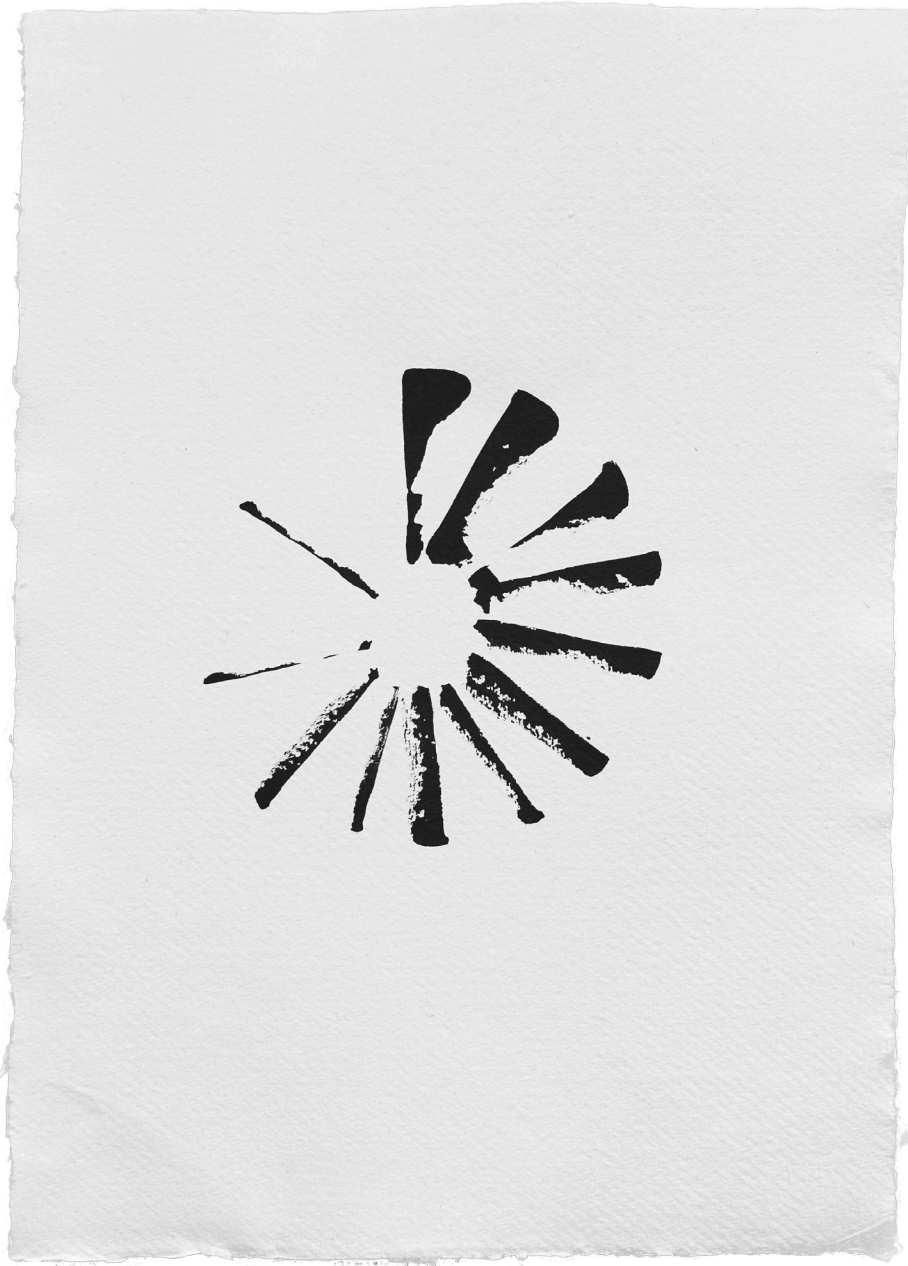


Ascension

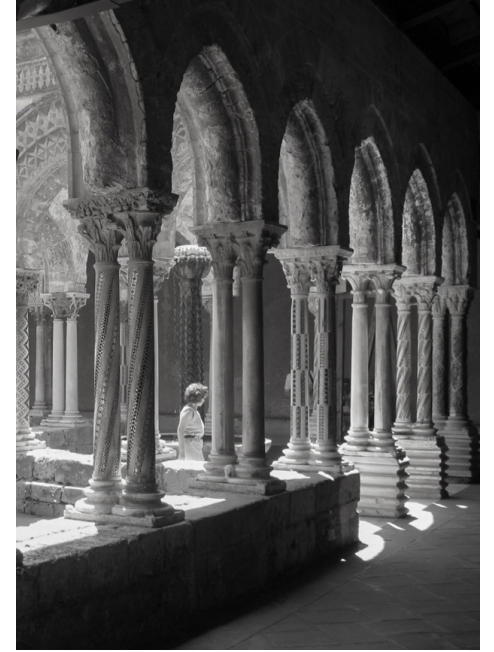


Argentière Hut,  
Chamonix, France

The refuge d'Argentière is a mountain hut facing a crest of iconic peak. Traversing the glacier, you can see it from afar flanked on a steep slope. In winter, only the lower part is accessible and consists of four connecting rooms to respectively enter, store equipment, eat and sleep. The raw stone walls of the first two rooms create a transition from the outside as if one were entering a cave to seek shelter. Turning around, the view opens through two narrow windows overlooking aiguille d'Argentière, reflecting the moonlight on its white coat. The shelter is heated with a woodstove around which everybody gathers to share the stories of their day or talk about the projects of tomorrow. The artificial lights of the different groups create a ballet of shadows illustrating the stories told.



Mouvance

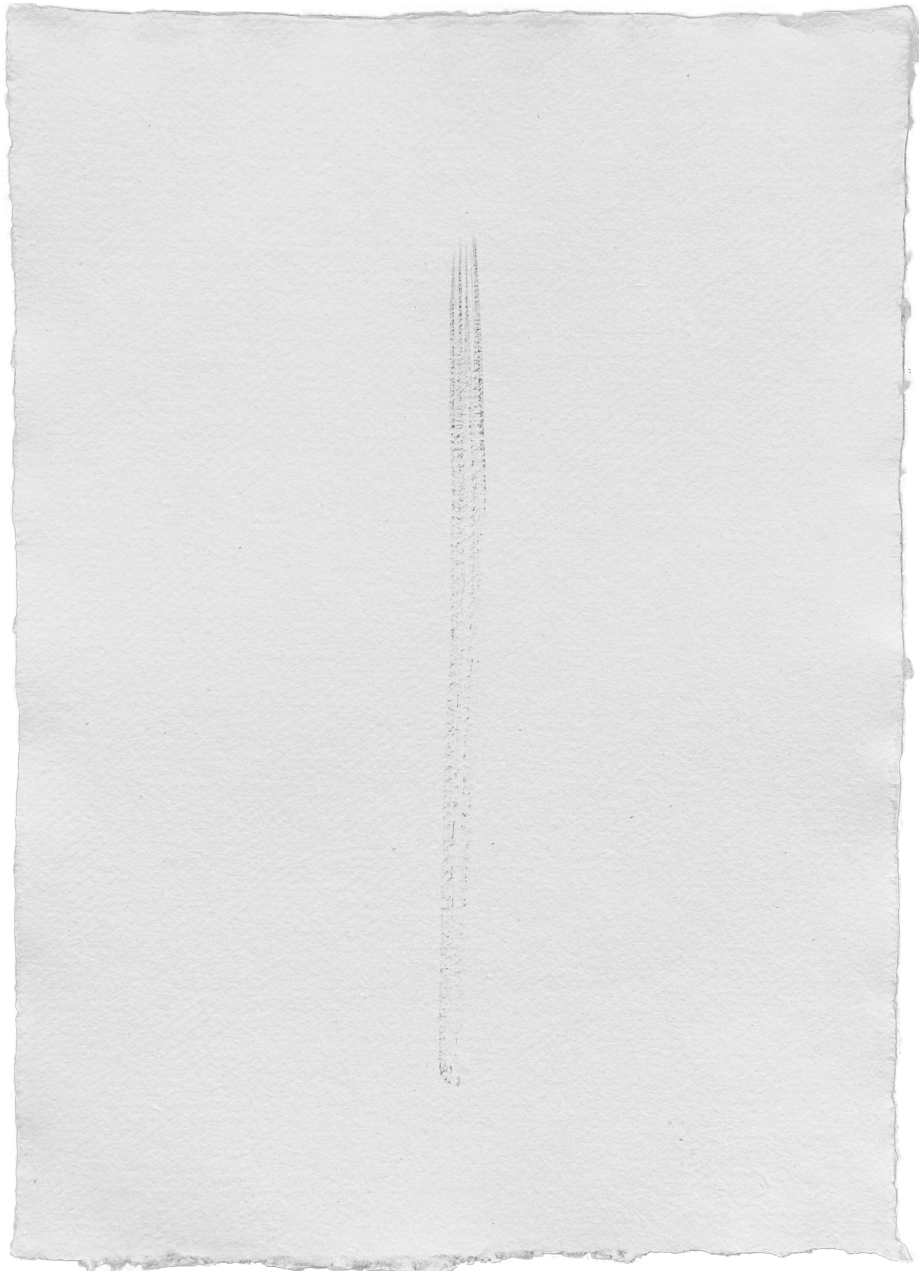


Santa Maria Nuova Cloister,  
Monreale, Italia

It was a rainy day; the bus stopped in front of the Duomo di Monreale. Noisy as a group, we entered the Cathedral. I moved forward, walking through the aisles, distancing myself from the group. Ahead of me, lost in a dark corner of the dome that seemed to absorb all the heavy glints of the surrounding gilded decorations, was a carved wooden door, even darker.

I pushed it open, and then silence.

Before me, a multitude of colonnades covered in Byzantine mosaics formed a perfect square around a garden. I strolled alone in the peristyle, exploring the fountains where water flowed delicately, as if time were suspended. Sunbeams pierced through the already fading gray clouds, casting a few distinct spots of light that caressed the porch. The light danced on the walls, and as it crossed paths with me, it embraced my skin. Something fascinated me; I felt good, serene, wishing I could wander there for hours. I remained there, forgetting myself, walking in a cyclical manner, discovering new details at each corner upon which my gaze landed.

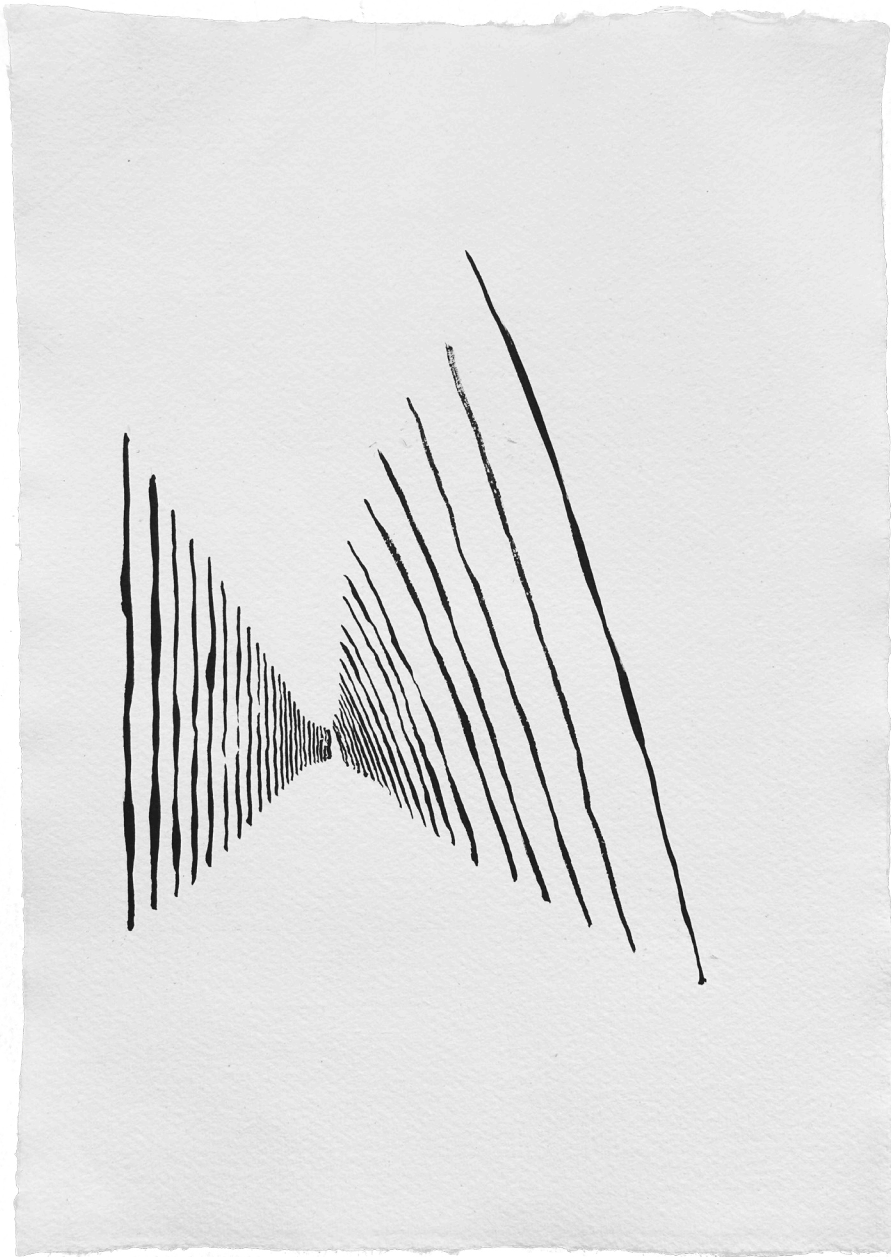


Elevation

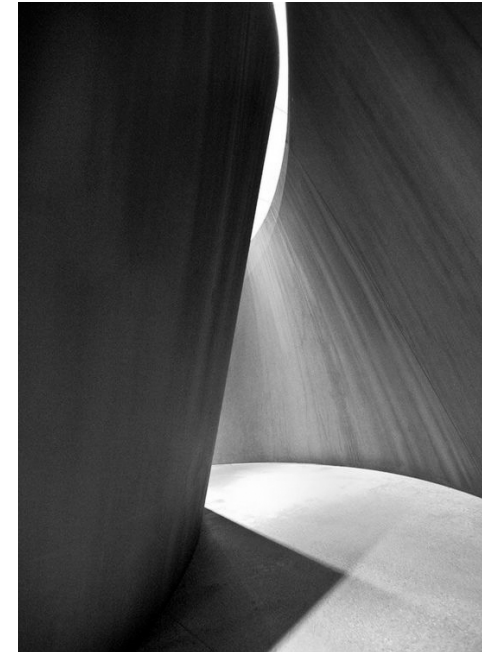


Monet's room, *Chichu Art Museum, Naoshima, Japan*

A place to think about nature;  
As you approach Claude Monet's room, the viewer is asked to leave his shoes, bag and cellphone behind and experience the room alone. Undressing from the unnecessary, leaving room for introspection and reflection. Touch is the first sense that is triggered. Bare foot, you walk on the irregular stone mosaic placed by hand, feeling the unevenness, the rawness of the floor, giving you a glimpse of nature. As you lay eyes inside the room, a sense of infinite space surrounds you as well as an overwhelming feeling of calm and quiet. The Claude Monet room, while underground, is illuminated only by natural light, and through the artworks and atmosphere of the space, you experience the way the room and the paintings change depending on the time, weather, and season. Monet's paintings become an infinite window on natural beauty.



Guidance



*The Matter of Time, Richard Serra,  
Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain*

The feeling of well-being can be found within a space whose layout, the journey through it, and the awakening of the senses occur naturally. It could be the allure of a material one desires to touch, a soothing sound, a comforting scent, or even the light that lends a particular ambiance to the space. It is also through the journey, the functionality of the place, and its usage. A path that piques our curiosity, offering freedom of movement and that sensation of choice within a ultimately well-defined space.

There's a desire to discover the space, to experience it, to sense it, to linger within it, to traverse it. Everything seems fluid, natural; we're encouraged to continue our path mechanically while our minds get lost in daydreams. And in the end, without quite being able to explain it, it's after the experience, upon revisiting it, that we realize how good it felt.

Drawing insights from our examination of these architectural spaces, we endeavor to formulate a comprehensive definition of what we perceive the essence of architectural wellness to encompass.

Following our consultation with ChatGPT, here's a condensed overview highlighting the key points we've gathered:

Wellness in built spaces refers to the quality of a physical environment that promotes a sense of well-being, comfort, and a connection to nature and one's surroundings. It is characterized by spaces that are open and inviting, allowing individuals to feel safe and unburdened. Key elements of wellness in architecture include:

. **Human Connection:** Wellness in built spaces is achieved when the environment connects with people, allowing them to be themselves and feel a sense of belonging. It should facilitate emotional and sensory connections between individuals and the space.

. **Natural Elements:** Incorporating elements of nature, such as natural light, ventilation, and materials, plays a crucial role in enhancing well-being. These elements create a sense of harmony with the natural world and can evoke positive emotions.

. **Unconstrained Freedom:** Wellness spaces do not restrict or confine individuals; instead, they guide without imposing constraints. These spaces offer freedom of movement and exploration while providing a sense of security.

. **Human Scale:** Spaces designed at a human scale, which provide a sense of comfort and protection, are key to well-being. They allow individuals to feel at ease and connected to their environment.

. **Connection to Nature:** The built environment should offer a visual connection to the outside world, allowing occupants to see and connect with nature. This connection enhances the well-being of the space's users.

. **Use of Senses:** A wellness space should engage all the senses, including sight, touch, sound, and smell, to create a holistic experience that fosters well-being.

. **Natural Logic:** The arrangement of the space should follow a natural logic that is intuitive and easy to understand, promoting a sense of harmony and order.

. **Embracing Nature's Randomness:** Wellness spaces can incorporate elements of randomness and natural accidents to capture the spontaneity and unpredictability of nature.

In summary, wellness in built spaces is achieved when the environment is designed to connect with individuals, provide a sense of freedom, incorporate natural elements, and engage the senses. It should create an atmosphere that fosters relaxation, emotional well-being, and a connection to the natural world.



## CONCLUSION

In contemplating the historical context of human existence, where the necessity of self-preservation and protection against vulnerability has remained constant, the architecture of well-being can be perceived as a conduit for individuals to gracefully lower their defenses and shed the trappings of safeguarding, thereby enabling a return to a more primal and unburdened state.

THANK YOU