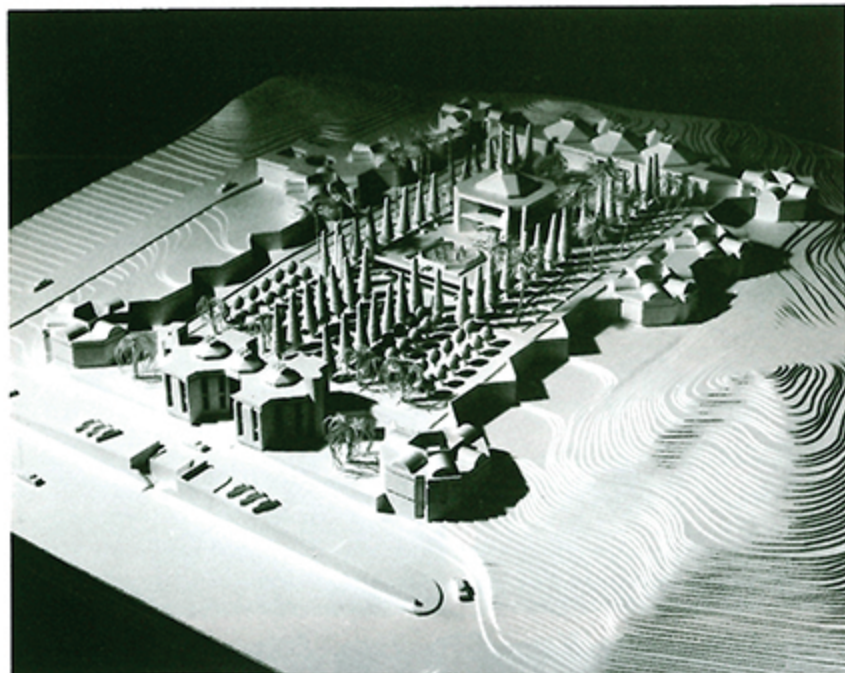
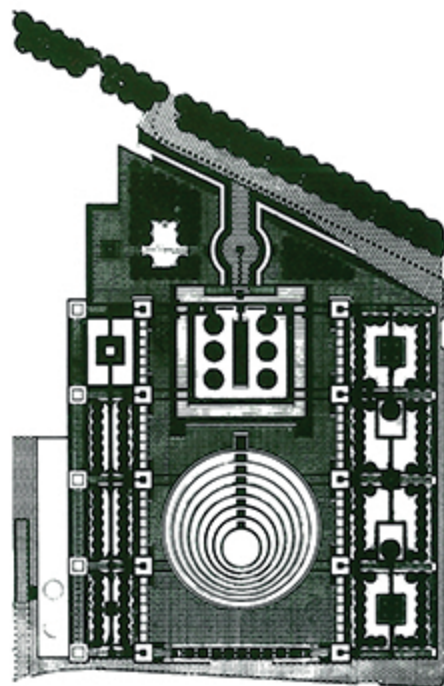


MAN transFORMS



1.



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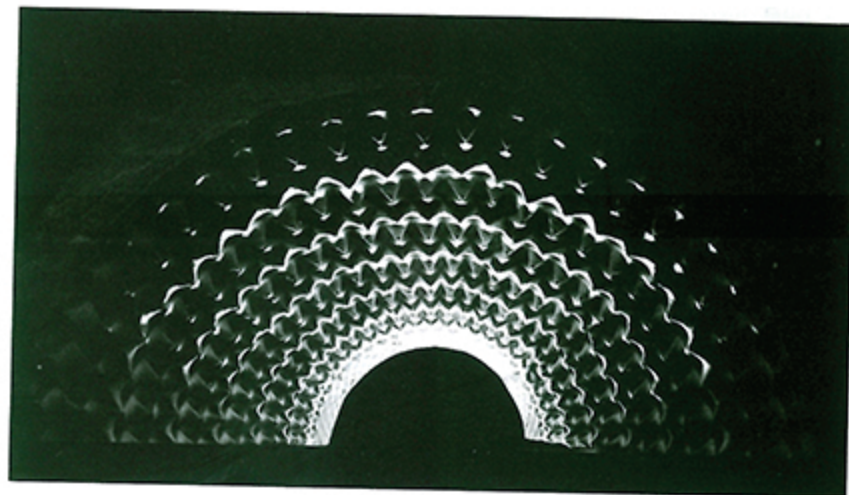
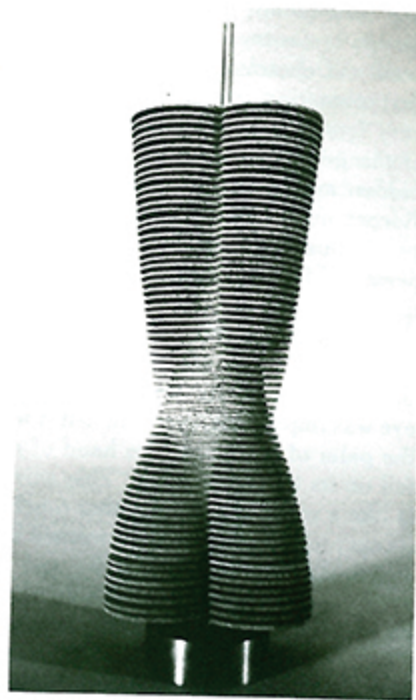


3.

1. Iran Center for Management Studies, Tehran  
 2. Tehran Center for the Performance of Music  
 3. Bu Ali Sina University Hamadan, Iran

Nader Ardalan, 37, architect/lecturer, is the principal design partner of the Mandala Collaborative in Tehran, a group which strives—through painting, sculpture, interior design, architecture, planning, sociology and philosophy—to integrate traditional Persian values and contemporary needs. He has written a book (with Laleh Bakhtiar) on the Sufi tradition in Persian architecture, "The Sense of Unity."

Karl Schlamminger, 41, sculptor/painter, has had several one-man shows in Europe and the Middle East. He is a design consultant to the Mandala Collaborative in Tehran, where he has lived for the last eleven years.



## Hamdami

Design is a witness to our perception of reality. Dependent upon the scope of that perception, the idea of "reality" can vary from the limited, tangible aspects of things perceived to include the most hidden and apparently intangible considerations. The 12-century Persian poet, Rumi, amusingly illustrates this point in his story about the elephant in the dark room.

Some Hindus brought an elephant, which they exhibited in a totally darkened room. As seeing it with the eye was impossible, everyone felt it with the palm of his hand. The hand of one fell on its trunk; he said, "This animal is like a water spout." Another touched its ear; to him, the creature seemed like a fan. Another handled its leg and described the elephant as having the shape of a pillar. Another stroked its back, "Truly," said he, "This animal resembles a throne." Had each of them held a lighted candle, there would have been no contradiction in their words, (for, the total form would have been comprehended).

Now comprehending elephants does not have to be our life aim, but certainly getting the "total idea of things" is very much every designer's main objective. The successful examples of such broad-based designs have come to be known as the masterpieces of the creative imagination. The Pyramids, the Parthenon, the Friday Mosque of Isfahan and the Ise Shrine, to name a few, resonate with a primordial sense of validity; for each is a witness to the resolution of complexity within a new vision of Unity.

In Iran, the term *Hamdami* (literal meaning: breathing together) has traditionally been used to denote such a state of perfect physical and spiritual accord with nature. In this presentation, *Hamdami* is referred to as the ultimate goal of a purposeful design process that attempts to encompass the spectrum of considerations that contribute a holistic sense of reality. If the design statement is valid, it should resonate with the essential vibration that pulsates in the universe—it should "ring true"

Traditionally wisdom, which forms the basis of traditional art, can help in understanding this design process. In this particular approach, four concepts play a generative role: unity, complementarity, triplicity, and solidity. Each of these principles can be briefly summarized as follows: Unity is seeing the oneness of all creation and is the prime objective of all expression. It is most easily understood through the study of nature and its mode of operation. Of note here is that man is viewed integrally with nature and does not stand apart from it. Thus those designs that resonate with the orders of nature are

actively sought and those in dissonance rejected. The aim here is to create that which will put man into a perfect state of harmony with the essential order of the universe and cause a sense of unity between the part and the whole. *To seek unity in multiplicity is the fundamental purpose of expression.*

Complimentarity, on the other hand, is a conception concerned with the resolution of apparent contradictions. It postulates that an either/or philosophy stems from a lack of adequate breadth of vision—step back and see, it says, that the night-versus-day paradox is resolved as two polar necessities of a cyclical unity called one *day*. Use *and* instead: sacred *and* profane; quality *and* quantity; contained *and* container; hidden *and* manifest; continuity *and* change.

The concept of triplicity provides a metaphysical interpretation of life that is based upon a specific structure of existence. This mode of comprehension forms part of a world view in which the universe is composed of a macrocosm (the manifest world) and a microcosm (the hidden world in man himself) each containing three great divisions: the body, the soul and the spirit. It is the mandate of any significant expression to recall this trifold structure; and the world of symbolic forms has provided the principal language for such expressions. A circle, the radii and its center provides one such symbol.

Solidity is the last of the primary generative principles, and naturally so, for by now we have moved from the concept of unity (one) which concerns the world of essences and infinite possibilities to this fourfold, temporal world of coagulated essences and finite possibilities. Here the idea of four, in its three-dimensional form represented by the tetrahedron (nature's primary stable structural shape) and its two-dimensional form represented by the square, provide in either case, four vertices which conceptually allow the principal components of phenomenal order to be organized, i.e., the four qualities of nature (hot, cold, wet and dry); the four cardinal directions; the four seasons; and in the unfolding of the cumulative mind of man, the most recent contribution of C. G. Jung, the fourfold functions of the human psyche (intuitive, sensate, feeling, thinking).

The perfect number ( $1+2+3+4=10$ ) has been derived and the surfaces of these fathomless, eternal springs of creative sustainence but touched upon. Between the shadow of these thoughts made manifest and the light of true knowledge that lies hidden, a profound modesty motivates a new creation of *hamdami*—one specific architectonic expression—that of room and more specifically the four-arched sacred room or *chahar taq*.



"'Twas a fair orchard, full of trees and fruit and vines and greenery. A sufi there sat with eyes closed, his head upon his knee, sunk deep in meditation mystical. "Why," asked another, "dost thou not behold these signs of God the merciful displayed around thee, which He bids us contemplate?" "The signs," he answered, "I behold within; without is naught but the symbols of the signs."

Jala-Al-Din-Rimi, 12th century, A.D.

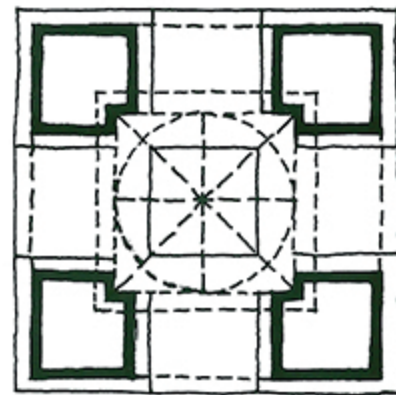
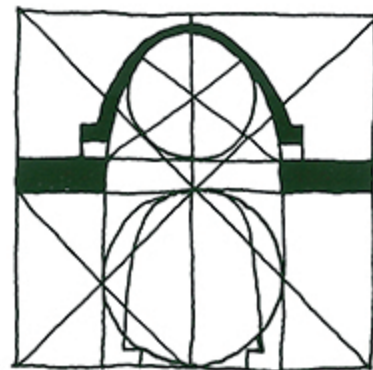
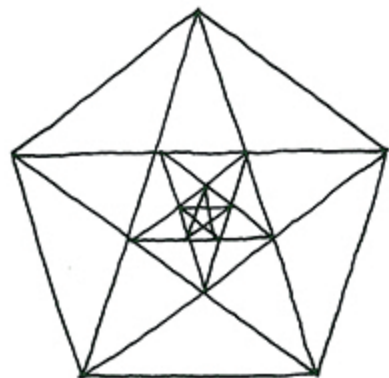
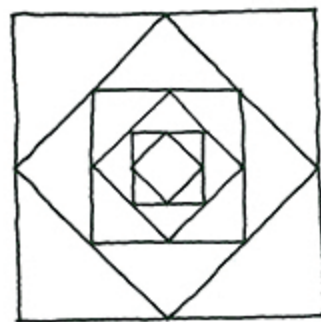
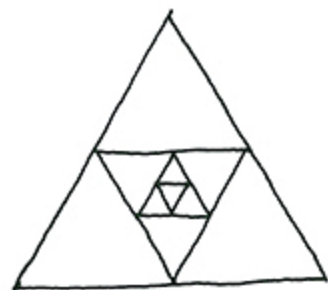
### The Mandala

The most significant expression of the interaction of the circle and the square in traditional art is the mandala or cosmogram, which has been represented in many forms throughout the cultures of man. The word "mandala" itself comes from Sanskrit meaning "circle" and can relate to any regular geometric shape concentric with regard to its center. The mandala diagram as both symbolic object or spatial form has the transcendent power to focus the contemplative mind upon Unity.

As the reflection of the cosmos and the cosmic processes with all things, the mandala works through numbers and geometry, beginning with Unity at its center, moving through manifestation and coming back again to Unity at its perimeter. It recapitulates at one and the same time the permanence of Paradise as an idea and its impermanence as a temporal reality.

In the Islamic perspective, the concept of the mandala came to relate to the dimensions of the universe and the world of Divine Archetypes.

When the Prophet described his ascent to heaven, he spoke of an immense mother-of-pearl dome resting on a square, with four-cornered pillars on which were written the four-part Koranic formula: "In the Name of God-the-Compassionate-and-the-Merciful" and from which flowed the four rivers of beatitude. This mandala form, known as the *chahar taq* or four arches, has dominated the plan conception of Persian architecture for centuries, providing a vital, strong, and sacred diagram for the potential reintegration of diffuse parts to the whole, be the parts water, gardens, buildings or the psyche of man himself.



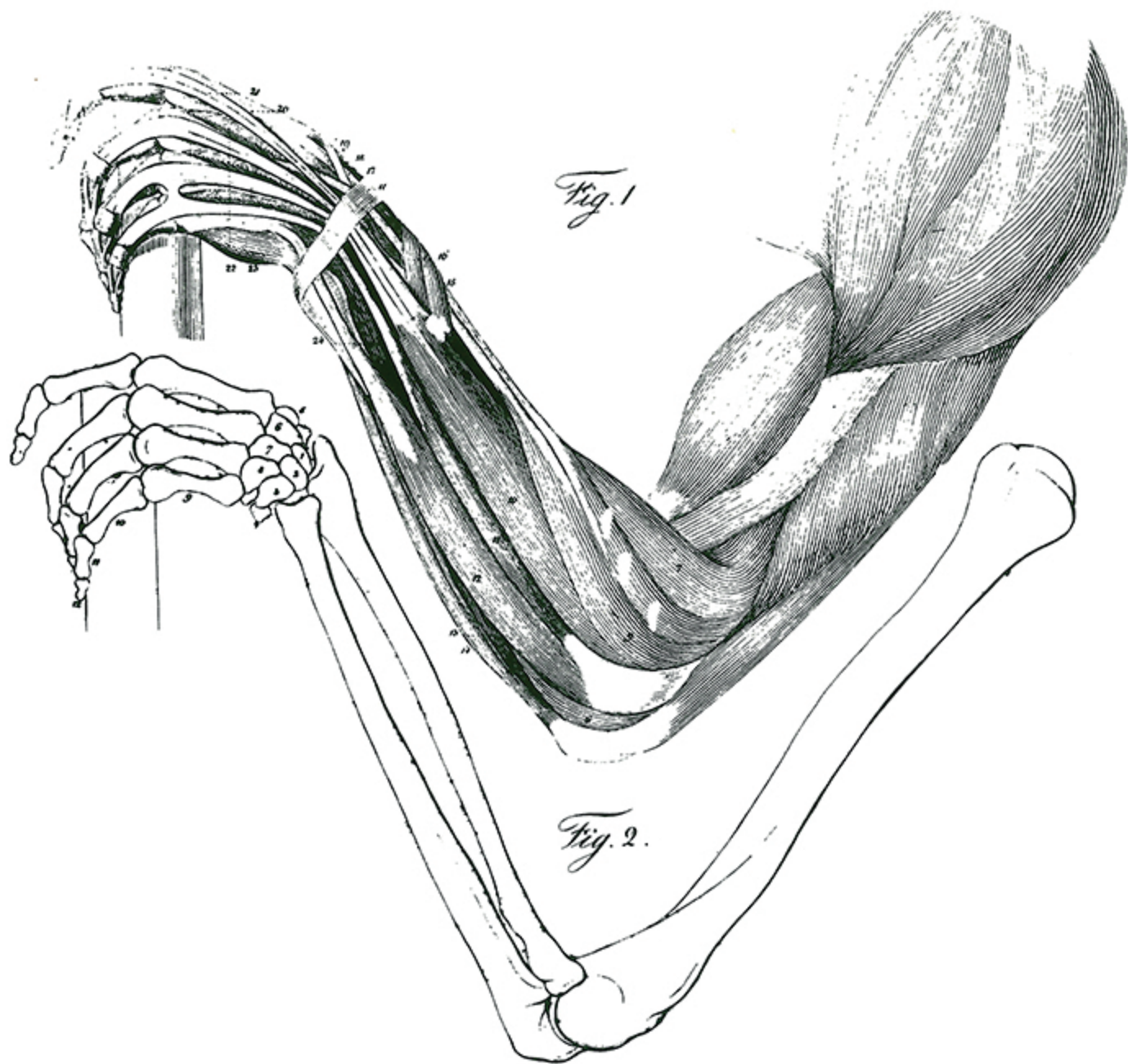
### Chahar Taq

The place of worship of the sacred fire, the *chahar taq*, has existed on the Iranian plateau since mythical times. Its mandalic form-thought alone persists, without specifically recalling any quantifiable aspects of size, material or technique. This metamorphic constancy is a testament to its primordial validity and it remains today as the most powerful integration of traditional forms and symbols put together by man.

The cubical volume of the base, viewed as man or the earthly Paradise, is the supreme symbol of solidity and the most externalized manifestation of the Creator. By its four pillars it evokes the four elements, the four directions, the four seasons and the four colors.

Superimposed upon this cubic space is the spherical dome, representing the world of pure quality. Symbolizing lightness and total mobility of the Spirit, the dome is a form that has beginning and no end. Its sole point of reference is its center, through which develops the metaphysical axis that links it with the axis of the square resting below it. This vertical cause unites the two forms qualitatively, and the transformation of the circle into the square represents a quantitative unification.

Within the space that witnesses this resolution and echoes to the cosmic rhythm of the transformation, the architect can place his sacred symbol. In the *chahar taq* mosque, the symbol is the *mihrab*; in the *samakhane*, it is the red-dyed sheep-skin; in the garden pavilion, it is the central font; and in the mausoleum, it is the tomb. The *chahar taq*, therefore, can shelter man's place of spiritual birth, life, and ultimate death.



#### *Mathematics, Nature and Man*

Man shares with nature a commonality of structure and proportion that is most appropriately quantifiable through mathematics. All of his creations and that of nature can be viewed as forms observable through mathematical laws of similitude, symmetry and geometry. The beauty observed in a snow crystal, a DNA molecule, a plant, a man or a star system depends as much on their geometrical order as on their ability to reflect a higher and more profound order operative in all creation.

The sphere is the most evident symbol of Unity and its division by inscribed regular polygons constitutes the basis of all traditional laws of proportion. One of the most profound man/nature proportional systems is that of the golden mean which develops in a proportional series of whole integers, and gives the harmonic progression (known as the Fibonacci scale) of 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, which exhibits the characteristic that any two successive integers is equal to the following integer.

Man exhibits such a Fibonacci series of proportional relationships in his anatomical structure while his capacity to fill, perceive, transverse and define space is a direct extension of it. Thus numerical correspondences within the body, taken individually or corporately in accordance with an anatomical unity (such as the inch), allow man to create in resonance with nature and to perpetuate the harmonic beauty that he archetypically manifests.

