Concept

Revista de Investigación e Innovación en Diseño

González Casares, J.A.; Durán Vaquero, M.J.
An international Summer School for designers. Adaptive reuse of a
chapel in Alpujarra. The Nomad's Sanctuary.

Interior Design

AN INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL FOR DESIGNERS
ADAPTIVE REUSE OF A CHAPEL IN ALPUJARRA. THE NOMAD'S SANCTUARY.

González Casares, J.A.[(*)]; Durán Vaquero, M.J.[(2*)]; Taddonio, S.; Karabağ, E; Psiopoulos, A.;
Karabağ, Ö.; Gómez Vélez, C.M.; Moira, M.

1. INTRODUCTION

This article stems from a joint project between Yaşar University in Turkey, the University of West Attica in Greece and ESADA School of Design in Spain, carried out within an Erasmus BIP framework. The initiative focused on an adaptive restoration workshop for a disused chapel in the village of La Cebadilla, located in the municipality of Capileira in the Alpujarra of Granada.

The workshop involved practical work by international teams of students and lecturers from the three institutions. Participants researched the following subjects:

- **History of the Alpujarra:** the region's historical development, major events and influence on its current identity.
- **Water and landscape:** the link between water resources, geography and daily life in the area.
- **Architecture:** the evolution of traditional and contemporary Alpujarran design, integrating modern elements while preserving local identity and sustainability.
- **Culture:** traditions, festivals, music, gastronomy, and how these have been maintained over time.
- **Tourism and contemporary change:** the effects of tourism on the economy, society, culture, environment, heritage, social dynamics, sustainability, and the rise of digital and post-pandemic tourism.

An online phase featured contributions from professionals, including architects Fernando Ortega, María José Durán Vaquero and former Alhambra architect Antonio Ruiz Sánchez.

The chapel, built in the 20th century for hydroelectric workers, is intended to become a space for work, meetings and social interaction, blending its historical character with contemporary uses suited to its natural surroundings. The project responds to rural depopulation by positioning La Cebadilla as a hub for digital professionals wishing to live in nature, encouraging sustainable repopulation.

Research into potential users' ergonomic, technological and social requirements aimed to ensure an inclusive, accessible design. The project not only restores a historic building but also contributes to La Cebadilla's economic and social revival, merging tradition and modernity within a sustainable entrepreneurial context. Five projects have been developed.

This initiative builds on the experience gained from previous international workshops, such as the one held in Nantes in 2024 (Delannoy & González, 2024), and previous experiences incorporating the methodologies, collaborative approaches, and best practices developed in those events (Karabağ et al., 2023). Thanks to this prior experience, participants were able to optimise research, cultural integration, and adaptive design, applying established knowledge to the restoration of historic spaces and the creation of sustainable, functional environments.

Keywords: adaptive reuse, interior design, digital nomads, Alpujarra, BIP Erasmus+.

[(*)]**Corresponding authors:** josegonzalez@esada.es[(1)]; mariaduran@esada.es[(2)]

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PROJECT 1

ART TO THE CONQUER

Gökçe İrem Bozkurt, Ceren Çamlıca, Afroditi Valsamaki, Sara Tepra Darmach & Raúl Fernandez-Espartero Escudero.

Abstract. In Cebadilla town — located in the Alpujarra Granadina — we are proposing an adaptive reuse project based on art and craftsmanship from the Alpujarra and keeping it alive. Using the church of the Cebadilla as the heart of our project, we aim to spread art throughout the village creating an exposition. The exhibition will follow the path from Capileira to Cebadilla, creating a natural experience for visitors and artists alike. The main village will serve as the habitat for artists and the centre of the exhibition.

1. INTRODUCTION. OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

The project aims to create an exhibition on the town of Cebadilla and the surroundings. The Alpujarra holds a long heritage of culture, craftsmanship and art. La Cebadilla is an abandoned town located in a natural space, using this abandoned space we also epitomize the fact that the culture is slowly disappearing. Although La Cebadilla is a challenging site, we embraced its natural constraints and used them to our advantage.

- Revive the craftsmanship of the Alpujarra and transform it into other arts.
- Strengthen the tourism in the Alpujarra and bring people interested in the arts and artisans into the area.
- Provide a platform for international and local artisans that want to collaborate with each other.
- Using ephemeral architecture and exhibitions as a method of adaptive reuse in the preexisting architecture of the village.

In the Alpujarras, vernacular architecture and traditional architecture have long served to showcase local culture, spatial organisation and traditions (Espigar y López, 2000). That is the reason why we established abandoned villages as a way of keeping tradition alive and to preserve architecture. Having this abandoned town as a blank canvas, the concepts of "adaptive reuse" and "ephemeral architecture" were the ones that caught the essence of the project. These two concepts have gained increasing attention as key strategies in architecture, particularly in the contexts of culture, sustainability and art (Armada, 2012). Therefore, using adaptive reuse as a process of extending the life cycle of this village and ephemeral architecture as a way to protect this architecture was the main focus. It is known that protecting rural spaces is not enough for them to revitalize. While tourism has often been blamed for depopulation, introducing it thoughtfully into these rural areas can help strengthen local traditions, craftsmanship and industries (Signes-Pont, 2022).

2. METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

The team gathered in Capileira and explored the village of La Cebadilla and its surroundings. The focus was on collecting information regarding the spatial conditions, material heritage and the natural habitat of the area. This gathering was the nucleus of the project. Thanks to that, the team carried out a targeted research into the craftsmanship of the Alpujarras - such as weaving, ceramics and woodwork - and why it had to be preserved. This research was documentary and consultative, serving as an organised source of information. When the concept and the research were solidified, the team developed conceptual proposals and design "possibilities" for potential art installations, workshops and exhibition routes in the area of La Cebadilla and the habitat surrounding it. Activities of this design activity included sketching, making diagrams, generating images of the church with alternative scenarios of what artisans could do and the landscape art path. All outcomes were presented as visual proposals and imaginative scenarios of what the space could look like and be used as, not as a proper executed work.

With the preservation of craftsmanship of the Alpujarras and the need to bring tourism surrounding art into La Cebadilla, a final concept was developed for La Cebadilla's church and its surrounding landscape. The result of this project concluded as a scenario plan of what the concept of massified exhibition and craftsmanship could look like in the area, everything is provisional, ephemeral and changeable. Possible site-specific installations (both inside and outside the church, as well as in its surroundings) were proposed, illustrating how artisans could engage with the Alpujarras' traditional craftsmanship and local heritage.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Overall, this conceptual project, Art to the Conquer, shows a carefully researched and collaborative design process that respected local crafts and tradition while opening a rural space for international artistic dialogue. The concept developed as a combination of design 'possibilities' that could be expanded into a tangible international crafts exhibition. Ultimately, the project aimed to create opportunities and artistic connections between the church—the central focus—the village, and the surrounding natural environment.
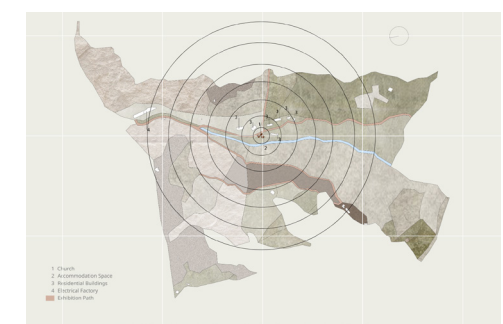
Figure 1
Inspiration moodboard.

Figure 2
Art's colonisation of the environment.

Figure 3
Distribution of the art along the area.

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PROJECT 2

ECLIPSE

Göktuğ Yiğitol, Jesús José Castillo Vílchez, Laura Moya García, Sevim Çankaya, Nikolaos Ninos.

Abstract. The project proposes the restoration of the old church of La Cebadilla, transforming it into a space for meditation and sensory experiences. The intervention unfolds on two levels that symbolise an inner journey: an upper floor filled with light, purity and serenity, and a lower floor, which is darker and more introspective, accompanied by the sound of flowing water. Through the use of natural materials and the contrast between light and shadow, the design aims to create an emotional and spiritual experience—connecting the visible with the invisible, and the earthly with the transcendental.

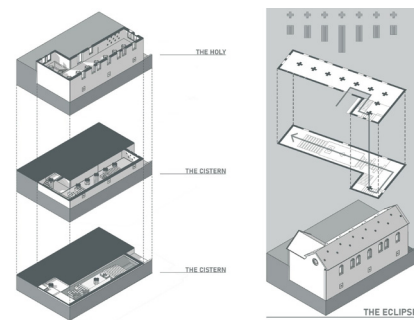## 1. INTRODUCTION. OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

La Cebadilla Route is a circular historical and cultural trail (PR-A-69) of medium difficulty, located in Capileira. It connects the village with the former settlement of the hydroelectric power station. The route offers stunning views of the Poqueira Gorge and the peaks of Sierra Nevada, combining nature, traditional architecture and high mountain landscapes.

Key references include the Meditation Cave in Taipei by StudioX4: a room with a dark, vaulted ceiling featuring an LED oculus that provides a bright, spiritual point of light contrasting with the surrounding darkness (Chen, C. A., et al., 2024)); and the Church of Light by Tadao Ando: a concrete rectangle in near darkness, pierced by a luminous cross that focuses attention towards meditation and spiritual experience (Kristeller, J. L., & Jordan, K. D., 2018).
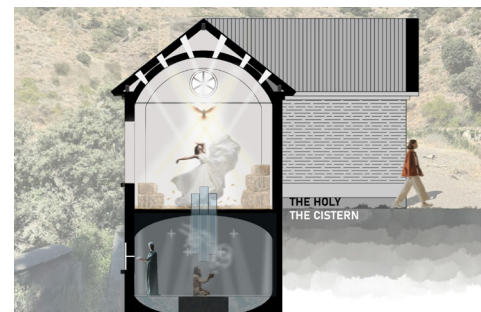
2. METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

The restoration project of the church in La Cebadilla began with defining our goals and brainstorming ideas. We consulted with teachers for feedback and divided tasks based on each member's strengths: some focused on 3D models and plans, while others undertook drawings, research and the presentation. This collaborative process resulted in a well-rounded and thoughtful proposal. As a result, the project has produced a space for meditation comprising two areas, each offering distinct sensory experiences.

Figure 4
Explosive and connections.

The renovation of the old church involves interventions on both the main and ground floors. The main floor will remain structurally unchanged, becoming a bright, white space symbolising peace, featuring extruded polycarbonate crosses that bring light to the lower level. A path of esparto mats and straw guides visitors downward. The ground floor will be a dark, introspective space with water on the floor and light filtering through cross-shaped openings. Visitors move through uneven steps to a central platform for meditation, symbolising a journey from mental stress to inner calm.

Figure 5
Section and uses.

3. CONCLUSION

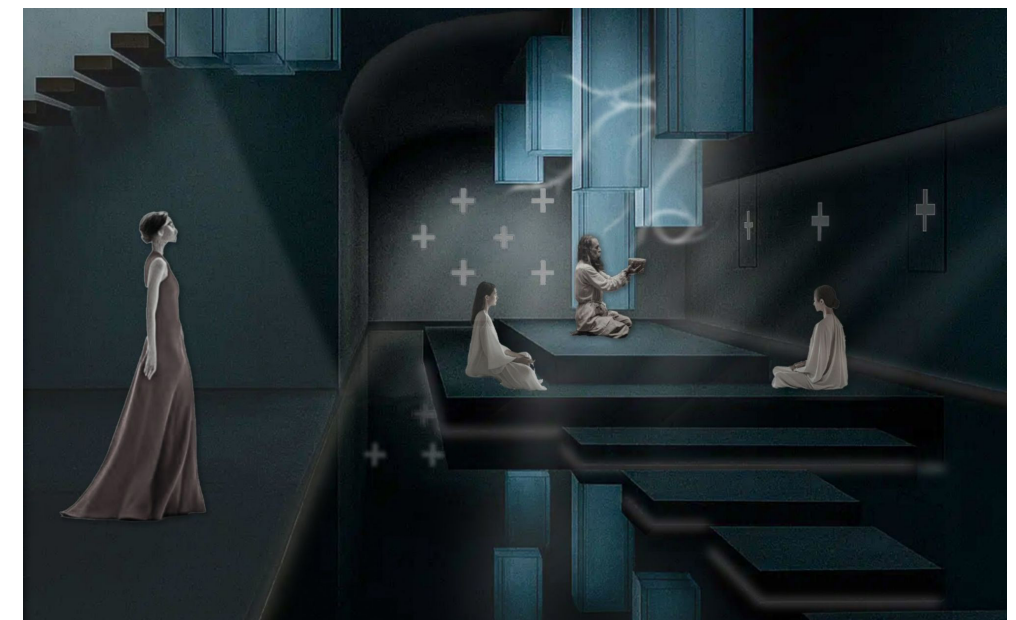In conclusion, this restoration project for the church in La Cebadilla has been a proposal that combines respect for heritage with a contemporary vision. Through careful design, we have sought to transform the space into a place of introspection and spiritual connection, using symbolic elements such as light, water, the cross and traditional materials such as esparto grass.

Figure 6
Ground floor.

Figure 7
Basement.

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PROJECT 3

THE DIGITAL CHAPEL OF LA CEBADILLA

Aycan Dede, Gamze Eneş, Isabel María Garzón Vargas, Lucía Sancho Arrabal, Stefania Floraki.

Abstract. The project transforms the former church of the abandoned village of Cebadilla into a "Digital Chapel" where tradition and technology are critically intertwined. The intervention introduces artificial intelligence as a new spiritual and community mediator, replacing classical religious iconography with screens, projections and interactive installations. The route includes a digital prayer space, a lower floor devoted to dialogue with AI and an expanded area for collective experiences through holograms and multimedia rituals. The proposal explores how technology redefines faith, memory and social bonds, inspired by the dystopian scenarios of television series Black Mirror. The intended users—digital nomads, hikers and believers—reinterpret the site according to diverse needs for contemplation, work or communal activities. The choice of materials combines local stone, traditional textiles and digital media to balance identity, sustainability, and innovation. The chapel is conceived as a hybrid laboratory that explores the boundaries between spirituality and digital culture.

1. INTRODUCTION. OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

This project centres on Artificial Intelligence (AI) due to its deep impact on daily life, from work and education to art and communication. The objective is to integrate AI into a religious context, like a church, allows us to explore how technology can reshape traditional faith and community practices.

Popular AI forms include conversational models (ChatGPT, Bard), recognition systems (Siri, Face ID) and creative tools (DALL·E, Midjourney), which influence communication, art and daily routines.

Inspired by the television serie Black Mirror (Brooker, C., & Jones, A., 2011 – present), the project uses the church as a metaphor for shifting devotion from the divine to technology. Digital media—screens, holograms, interactive experiences—connect memory and contemporary digital culture. Conversational AI acts as a "new mediator," raising questions about AI's role in reshaping human relationships with faith, community and spirituality.

2. METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

The Digital Chapel offers an immersive journey blending tradition and technology. Outside, LED screens introduce the church,

regional history and cultural heritage, providing a 'digital welcome'. Inside, the Prayer Hall features a central digital screen replacing traditional sacred imagery, allowing visitors to engage in ritual through technology. The Lower Level fosters community and dialogue with AI through interactive screens, maintaining the church's role as a gathering space. An Enhanced Digital Space extends this with holograms, projection, and multimedia installations for shared digital rituals and global connectivity. Inspired by television serie

Figure 8
Cross section.

Black Mirror, the project explores how technology and AI are reshaping devotion, ritual and human connection.

The Digital Chapel's materials blend tradition, technology and sustainability. The exterior uses slate, reflecting local Alpujarra architecture, alongside durable digital screens for information and heritage connection. Inside, traditional jarapa textiles provide warmth and cultural identity, while bright orange accents and screens symbolize technological innovation. Overall, the materials create a dialogue between past and present, combining functionality, durability, aesthetics and interactivity to support both ritual and digital experiences.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The Digital Chapel of Cebadilla combines tradition, technology and community, raising questions about the role of spirituality in the digital age. The integration of Artificial Intelligence into a religious context opens new perspectives but also presents challenges, including acceptance by the local community and the sustainability of its technological infrastructure.

In the future, the project could be strengthened through greater community involvement, educational and cultural activities and more sustainable energy solutions. In this way, it may evolve into a hybrid center of culture and technology that unites different users, offering an experience where past and future meet.
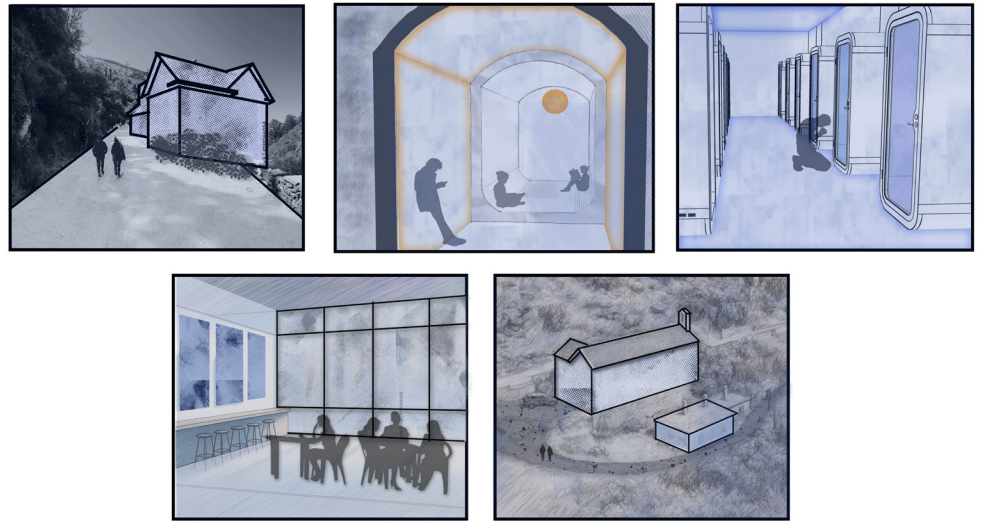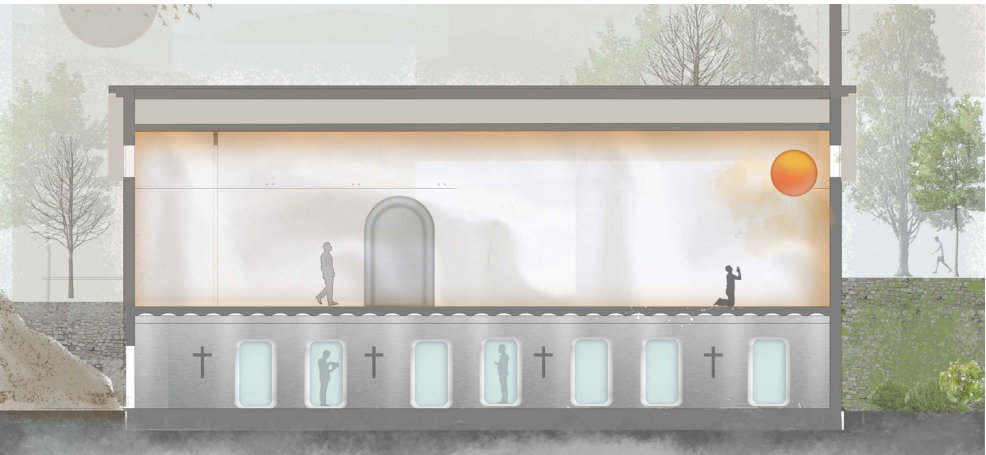
Figure 9
Storyboard.

Figure 10
Longitudinal section.

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PROJECT 4

YOUR BODY IS YOUR TEMPLE

Ina Naydenova, Paola Barbero, Ellie Noitaki, Ayten Güner, Türkay Korkusuz.

Abstract. Our workshop project integrates well-being, physical spirituality, and community connection in perfect harmony, drawing inspiration from the Baths of Caracalla and the Basilica of Siponto, with their metal grid structures. It is aimed at both residents and potential visitors. It is a kind of sanctuary. where the body takes center stage, and nudity is not frowned upon. The project provides a protective and restorative space within the village, offering users a moment of pause and self-connection.

1. INTRODUCTION. OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

The objective of this project is to create a space for tranquillity and exploration of the body for both nomads and potential visitors.

The project is inspired by the work of Edoardo Tresoldi (2016), the Basilica of Siponto, which invites visitors to witness the resurrection of imposing archaeological remains and to walk through the main arches, columns and Romanesque ceiling that crowns the building and by the structural transparency of the Pompidou Center in Paris (Danies, 2020), where the construction itself becomes the protagonist. The work reflects both the monumentality of Roman architecture and the social and almost ritualistic nature of bathing.

Inside, we find equally powerful references: the Baths of Caracalla (Oetelaar, 2014), as a space for water and social gathering; the metaphor that "the human body is a temple," which guides the entire experience; and the Princess Diana Memorial Fountain, whose fluidity and circularity evoke water that unites, purifies and accompanies. In our case, the latter inspires us to see water not only as a physical element, but also as a symbol of continuity, life and emotional connection.

2. METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

We decided to turn the church into a space for well-being, physical spirituality and community connection under the slogan "Your body is your temple," where the body would be the main focus and nudity would not be frowned upon.

Figure 11
Concept of the body temple.

"THE HUMAN BODY IS A TEMPLE"
SACRED IN FAITH, PROFOUND IN PHILOSOPHY, AND AN ARCHITECTURE OF FLESH WHERE SPIRIT AND MEANING DWELL.
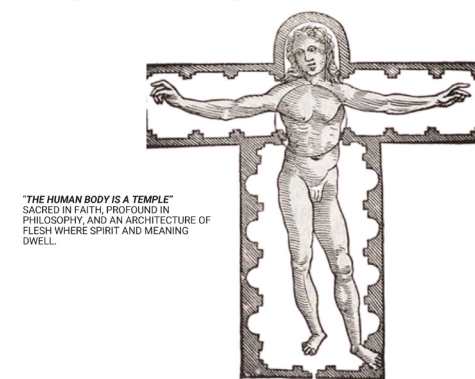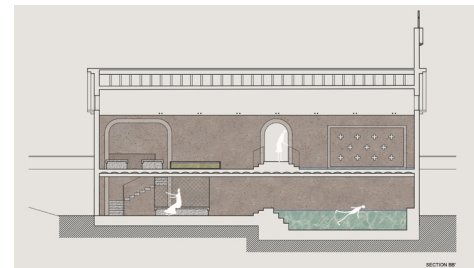
Figure 12
Cross-section.

The main idea is to play with water and its properties so that people who visit this place can feel free and experiment. The role of water in this proposal is to allow visitors to relax and disconnect from the outside world, creating an experience in which they can purify themselves and perceive their body as a true temple.

The building will retain its original façade, without major alterations, but will be surrounded by a metal mesh structure along its sides, inviting visitors to enter the interior or continue along the hiking trail to the abandoned village.
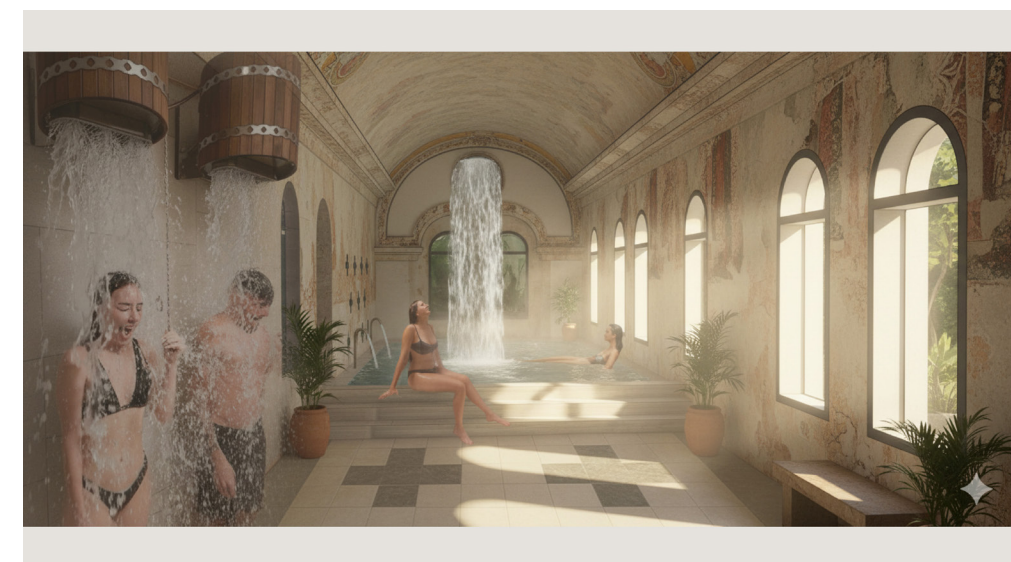
The church will be transformed into a sensory spa with a cold and hot water circuit with the following route:

- **Reception:** upon entering, a space to leave clothes and accessories that should remain dry.
- **Purification showers:** to cleanse the body before beginning the experience.
- **Exfoliation area:** where you can massage your own body or someone else's with natural exfoliants available in the space.
- **Pressure shower:** after descending some stairs, an intense rain will remove any remaining exfoliants and impurities.
- **Large hot water pool:** a place to completely relax.
- **Chill-out area:** a space to sunbathe, rest and escape from the world, accompanied by the sound of the Poqueira River.

Figure 13
Entrance perspective.

Figure 14
Ground floor.

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3. CONCLUSIONS

The proposal to transform the abandoned church of La Cebadilla into a spa circuit is an original and appealing idea, capable of combining history, nature and well-being. The project could turn this forgotten space into a unique place for visitors, where water, relaxation, and the body become the real protagonists. At the same time, it recovers the connection with the Alpujarra tradition, deeply linked to its rivers and irrigation channels, thus reinforcing its cultural identity.

However, it also poses certain challenges. The church, as a sacred space, may arouse conflicting opinions when used for such a different purpose. In addition, the intervention must be respectful of the environment, ensuring responsible water consumption and using sustainable materials.

True success will depend on balancing respect for the past with the ability to offer something innovative, special and in harmony with the environment.

Figure 15
Basement.

PROJECT 5

TOUCHING SOUNDS

Arvanti Smaragda, Ciray Deniz, El Ouafi Rania, Turker, Laura Le Peuch Gutierrez.

Abstract. Our workshop project reimagines the abandoned church of Cebadilla as a central point of encounter and decompression for digital nomads choosing to inhabit the village. The church, once a symbol of community gathering, is transformed into a living mechanism mediating the relationship between humans and nature. It offers a transition from screen-based tension to sensory reconnection through air, touch, smell and visual escapes. The project provides a space where digital nomads can offload daily pressures, find inner silence, and connect with the surrounding environment. It respects the church's architectural heritage and its patina of time—graffiti, decay and hay—as elements of continuity. The intervention fosters a dialogue between the past and the present, inviting newcomers to experience an initial tactile connection with the place.

1. INTRODUCTION. OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

The project assignment was to explore the church of Cebadilla as a means to attract not only digital nomads who will inhabit the village but also visitors passing through, as the site serves as a crossing point. The church is treated as a cultural heritage: a) through its architectural form, b) through its accumulated patina over time (decay, graffiti, hay).

Within this framework, our goal is to create a machine mediating the relationship of the digital nomad with the place—a mechanism of welcome and connection.

Objectives:
- To attract digital nomads and offer them a moment of decompression.
- To enable disconnection from screens and reconnection with nature.
- To use sensory channels (air, touch, smell, sight) as mediators of this relationship.
- To preserve and reinterpret the existing materiality and history of the church.
- To establish the church as a living landmark of the village's revival.

2. METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

The church, beyond its architectural presence, carries symbolic meaning for the community that once inhabited the village. Our approach was to maintain its character, both as a monument and as a memory of a living past. By preserving existing materials and features such as graffiti, we created a framework for a new sensory experience that connects humans with nature. This methodology resonates with contemporary architectural practices that respect heritage while introducing new layers of meaning. Instead of imposing foreign elements, the project embraces the site's own qualities -sound, light, air and texture- transforming them into experiential triggers for the user.

On the first level, we created a "machine of first encounter" between the digital nomad and the place they have chosen to inhabit. It consists of metal vertical rods suspended from the ceiling, capable of moving either with the airflow entering the church or through the passage of people among them. This movement acts as a first caress, a tactile and sonic handshake with the site. The floor pattern includes openings that allow communication between the upper and lower level. Through these voids, the sound waves generated above flow downward with a softer intensity, producing a subtle sense of continuity and resonance. On the ground floor, certain wooden boxes are suspended from these voids. Visitors can pull them down and place them over their heads, isolating themselves in complete silence. By blocking both sound and vision, these boxes offer the experience of absolute emptiness for as long as the user needs. At the same time, we extended the space with a glass volume projecting towards the forest, offering a direct visual escape and enhancing the experience of calmness. Hay was introduced to provide

olfactory stimulation, reinforcing the connection with the local environment, while also forming resting corners where one can pause and relax. The connection between the two levels is achieved through a spiral staircase that hovers in emptiness. By destroying the floor, we wanted to emphasise the feeling of void and suspension. The staircase is surrounded by thin, elongated chains, allowing both tactile engagement and the production of delicate sound when moved by air or human touch.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The project succeeds in transforming the abandoned church into a living machine that respects the site's history and materiality while opening it to new forms of inhabitation. Unlike other interventions that might disregard local context, this proposal cultivates continuity with the village's heritage. It is a mechanism of recognition and self-awareness: a visitor may stay or leave, but the experience of silence, air, smell and sound ensures a meaningful encounter. Ultimately, the church becomes not only a landmark but also a living threshold between technology-driven life and human reconnection with nature.
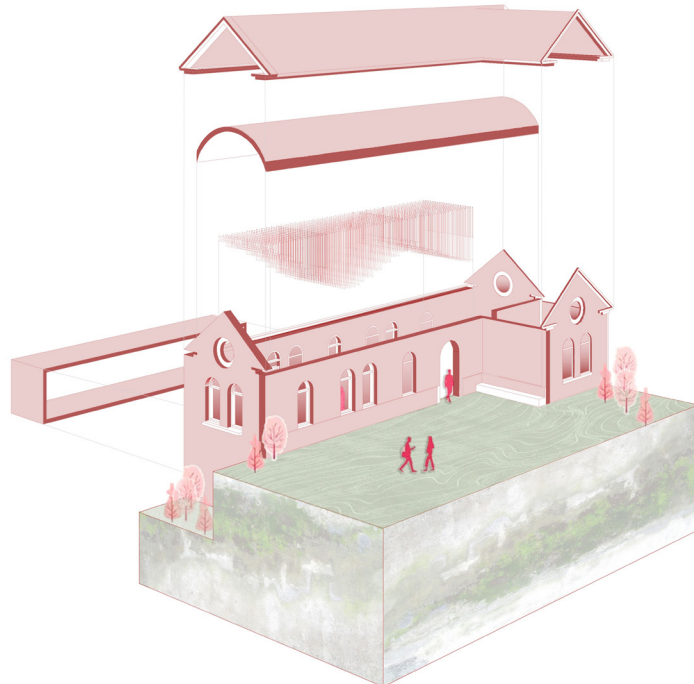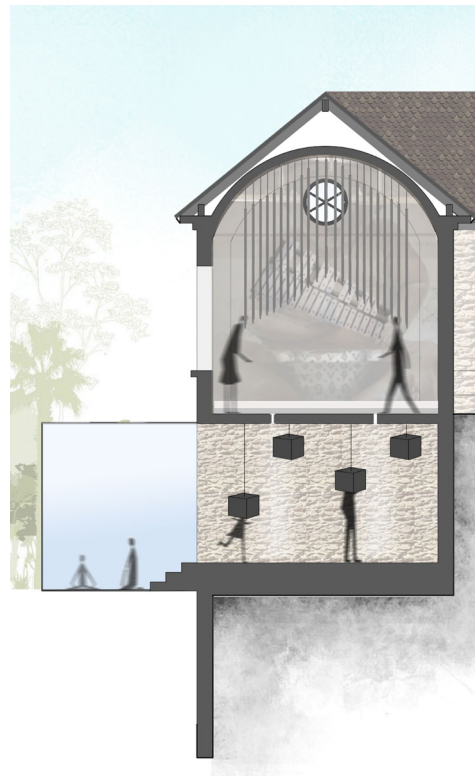
Figure 16
Cross section.

Figure 17
Explosive perspective.

Figure 18
Interior ground floor.

Figure 19
Interior basement.

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