Crafting a powerful entry experience allows for users to enter the site with a preliminary awareness for their encounter with the HCA. The circular pathways attest to the cyclical nature of thought and refinement of action and their intersection suggest a crossing-over of ideas or states of mind. The trees that border the pathways serve to evoke the feeling of being in a medieval cloister, a place of contemplation, enlightenment, and shelter from a chaotic world. Visitors entering from the Welcome Center will be guided through an interweaving water pathway that encourages them to explore throughout the entire site. A shaded plaza at the entry’s center is open for gatherings, performances, or reflection and grounds the entry with its mass of native, gray basalt amidst a golden field of undulating grass intended to mimic the crashing of the waves along the Headland’s shores.

EXHALE

A new welcome experience for the Headland Center for the Arts
Isabella Jimenez | LDA 184 | Senior Capstone 2020

Located 5 miles north of San Francisco’s iconic Golden Gate Bridge lies the formidable Marin Headlands, a national recreation area of sublime views and terrain. With a history of military occupation, the Marin Headlands has transformed into a public open space with trails, camping sites, beaches, educational centers such as the Marine Mammal Center, and even extant battery infrastructure. A special metamorphosis has also found its place in the rolling hills of the headlands - The Headlands Center for the Arts (HCA). Founded in 1982 by local artists, activists, and civic leaders, the internationally recognized artist-in-residence program has made its home in the historic Fort Barry near Rodeo Beach on the western shore of the peninsula. The HCA facilitates interdisciplinary public programs and subsidized studio rentals for San Francisco Bay Area artists of all disciplines, encouraging opportunities for reflection, dialogue, and exchange that build understanding and appreciation for the role of art in society.

Fort Barry is nestled at the base of a large, forested hill and immediately offers relief to the eyes with panoramic views of the San Francisco Bay and the Pacific Ocean at its summit as well as a verdant, cleared open space at its base which the surrounding buildings are nestled about. Upon coming across this unique, calm spot in the challenging landscape, one can’t help but feel anything but a deep sigh of relief and repose. The word ‘exhale’ leads the concept of the site design to preserve and enhance the site’s inherent genius loci. To exhale presupposes a period of inhale to come before and after and so the land crescendos and diminishes through various walkways outlining sequentially larger and smaller spaces. The keep is effectively endless like the rhythm of the crashing tides upon the promontory to the south and west of the site, establishing a sense of process over final form or destination. Important to observe at HCA’s mission “to engender an unparalleled environment for the creative process and the development of new work and ideas.” Effectively, the purpose for the program is for artists to iterate upon their work and immerse themselves in the creative cycle. The form of the walkways creates an infinite loop for the mulling of ideas and provides multiple options for direction, thus embodying the creative process.