DAR AL-ISLAM MOSQUE, IN THE HIGH SONORAN DESERT PLATEAU NEAR THE ANCIENT PUEBLO INDIAN VILLAGE OF ABIQUI, NEW MEXICO, COMBINED TRADITIONAL ADOBE CONSTRUCTION WITH ELEMENTS FOUND IN SIMILAR ENVIRONMENTS IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD.

It is still under development; progress is slow in the desert. The house is a small structure adapted to the climatic extremes of its setting. Its walls are constructed of straw bales, a waste material with extremely high insulation value. It is passively solar heated and naturally cooled with roof forms that reach upward for light and heat and to guide warm air out of the building. South of the structure, a system of shallow swales traps runoff water moving downward and northward. Some of this water soaks into the ground while a portion follows the slight slope of the swale into a small drainageway on the eastern edge of the site. Some trees native to the area, primarily oaks, will be planted in the drainageway where water concentrates. Some of the water is diverted to a small vegetable garden while the rest continues moving downhill. Lower down, a series of check dams, similar to those built by the local Indians, traps small volumes of water, primarily to create a gathering place for wildlife. Nearer the house on its south side is a series of small, semi-circular water traps made of stone with cottonwood trees located to use the water. Adjacent to the house will be three circular basins designed to catch and hold water running off the roof. These will function like the vernal pools common to many parts of the West. A rich and dense mix of flowering native

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desert plants visible from inside the house and from the outside terraces is taking shape in these depressions. So far, no planting has been necessary. In the desert, where conditions are right, especially those related to water, the plants will find them. Thus, for at least a few weeks in the spring the view out to the desert will be framed in vibrant colour. These basins also provide infiltration to ground water.

Other than these small areas of concentration, the landscape of the Quinn residence will remain in its natural state, minimally altered. The natural plant cover is simple and scattered with a varied sculptural character.

My next archetype is larger in scale and plays a larger role in the overall pattern of desert ecology. This is the dryland river, a ribbon of life in a landscape otherwise sparsely populated by plants and animals. These rivers usually collect little water from the lands through which they flow. They serve primarily to move water from mountain watersheds with higher levels of rainfall to the sea. Historically, dryland rivers like the Tigris and Euphrates, the Indus, the Nile, and the Colorado have been important to the development of civilisation. Some of the world's first cities flourished on their banks over 5,000 years ago.

In the American West, we have treated rivers with a disdain they do not deserve, especially the smaller ones and most especially where they flow through cities. Typically, we encase them in concrete to prevent flooding, thus killing the ribbon of life.

The Santa Clara River is the last free-flowing unchanneled river in Southern California. But with its course winding through the rapidly suburbanising area north of the city of Los Angeles, its future is seriously threatened. What I want to discuss next is a plan for the Santa Clara where it flows through the newly incorporated (and mostly newly developed) city of Santa Clarita. Most of the people of Santa Clarita want to see the river remain in its natural state, and