

A Lesson in Circulation:
Spiritual Oases in the Concrete Jungle

by
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New York City is home to countless fountains...

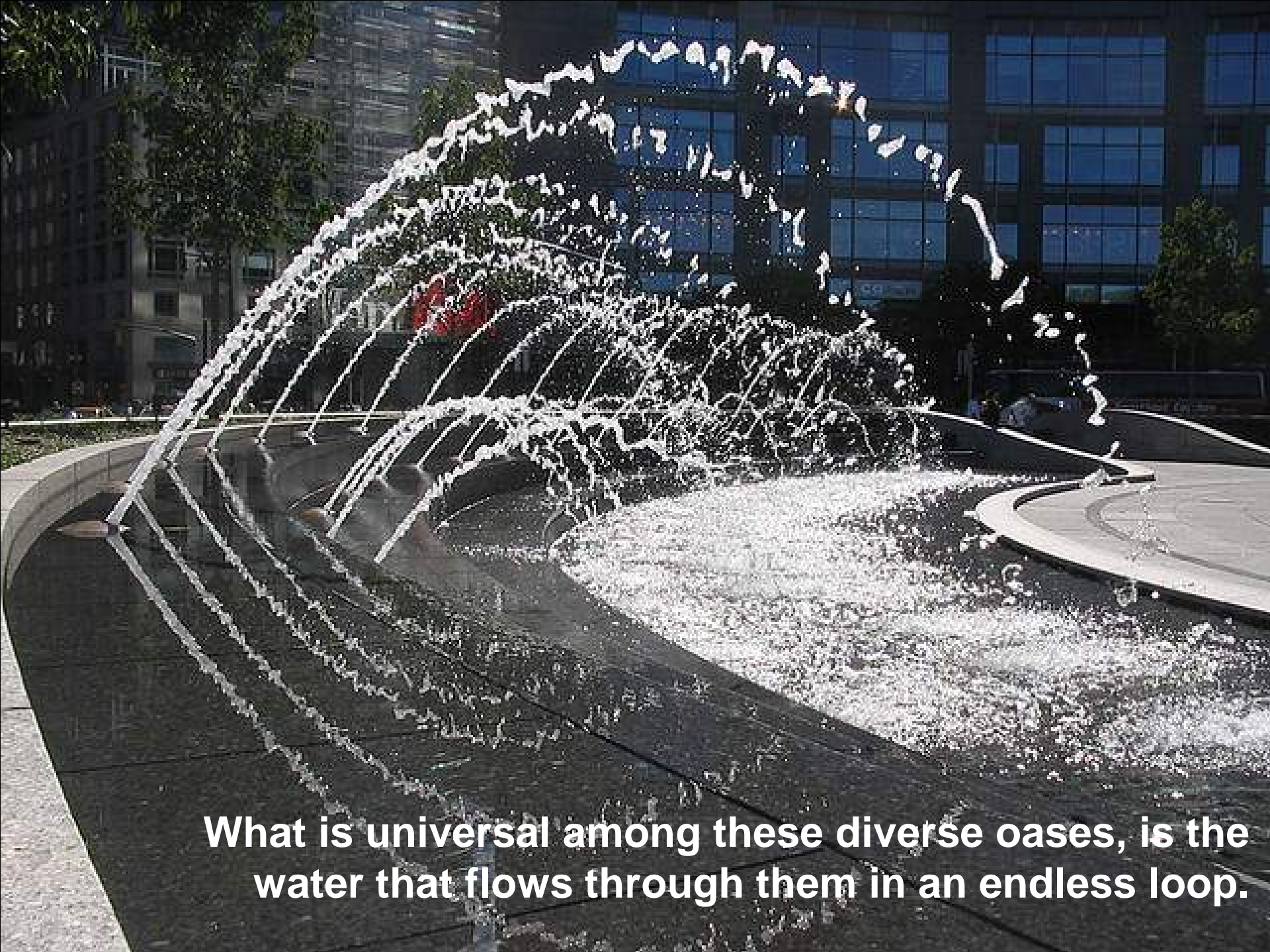




...many of which are hidden gems...

...while others are well known celebrities.

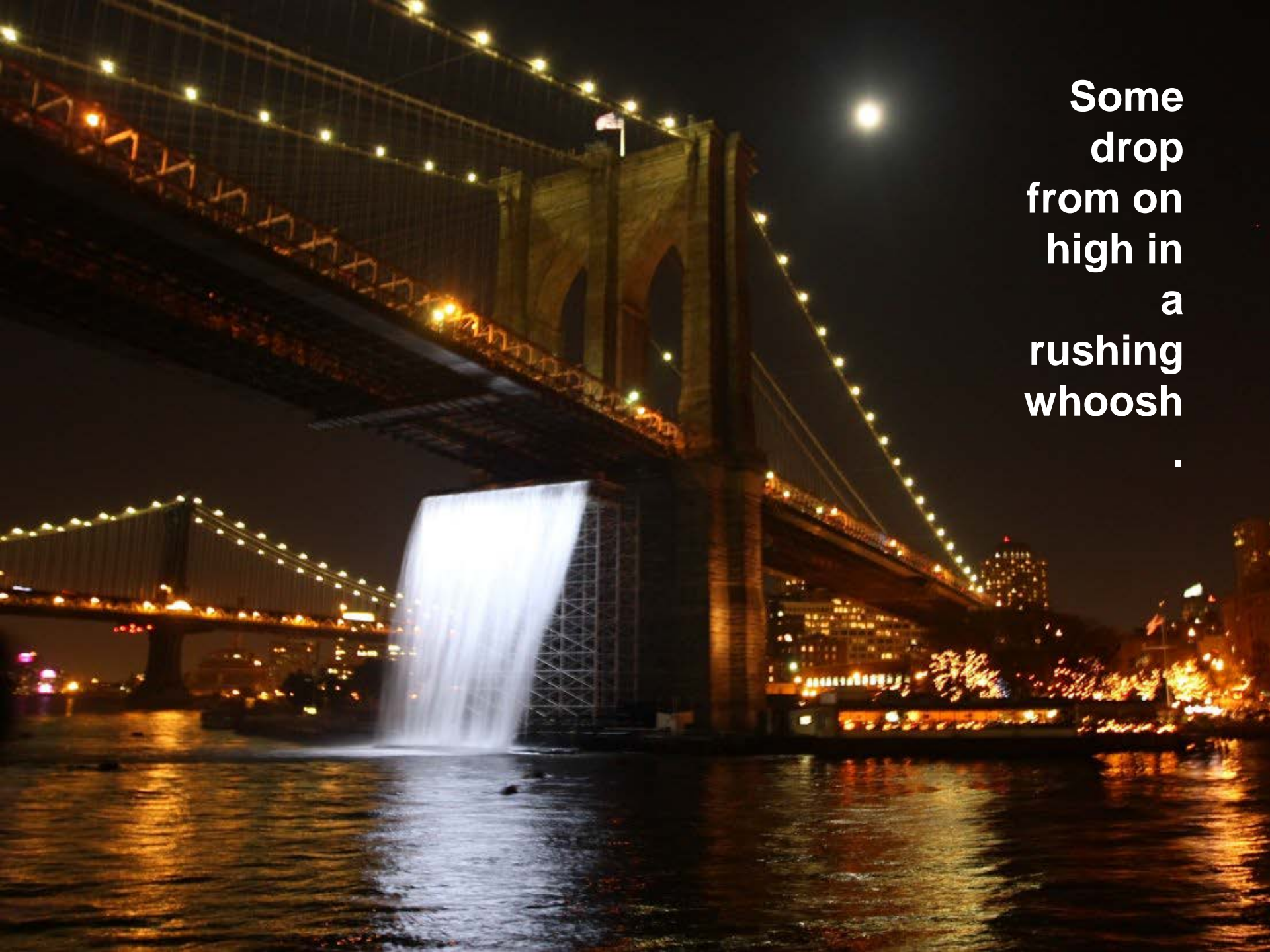




What is universal among these diverse oases, is the water that flows through them in an endless loop.

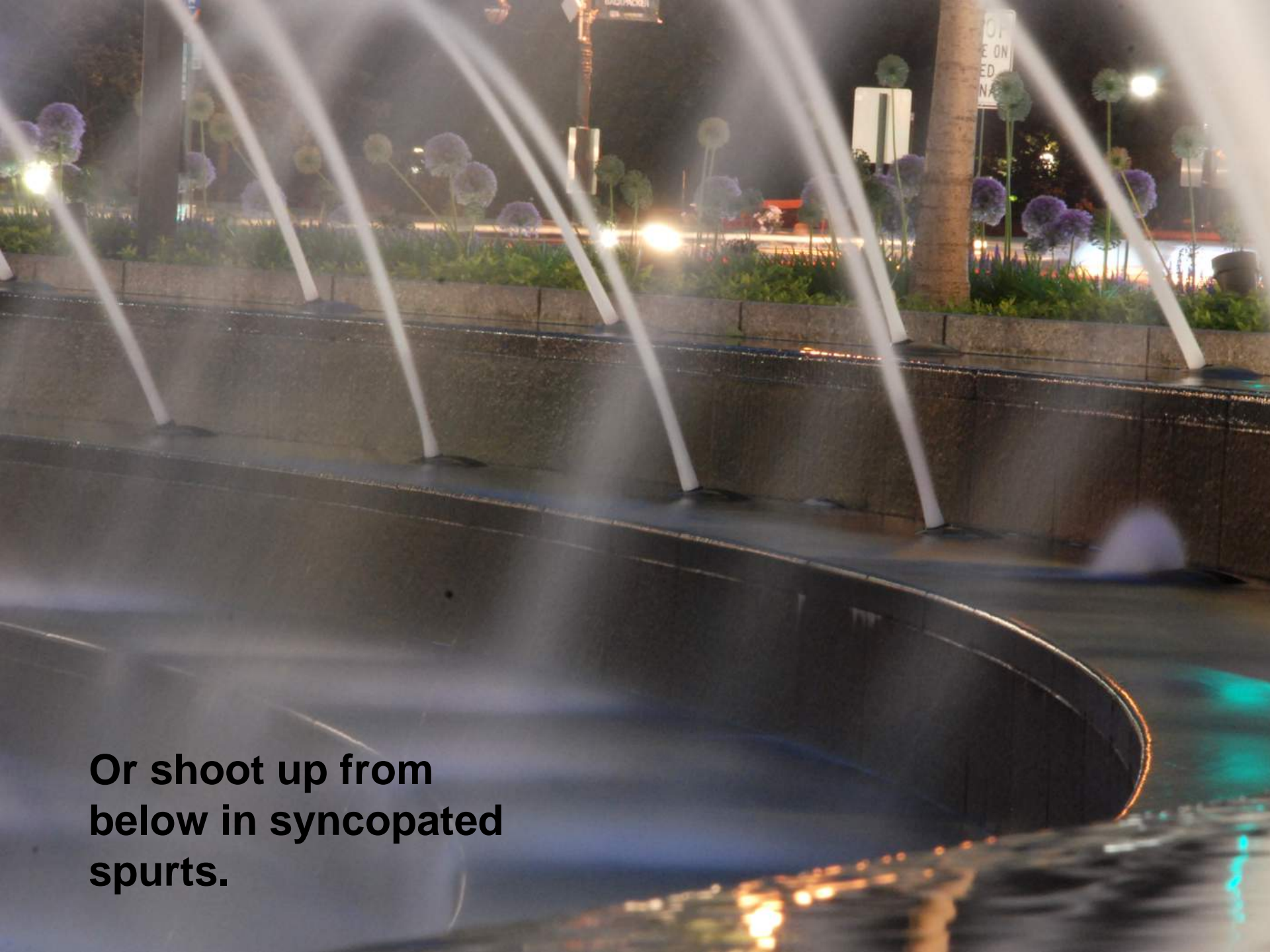


Each fountain performs its unique dance. One might even call it poetry.



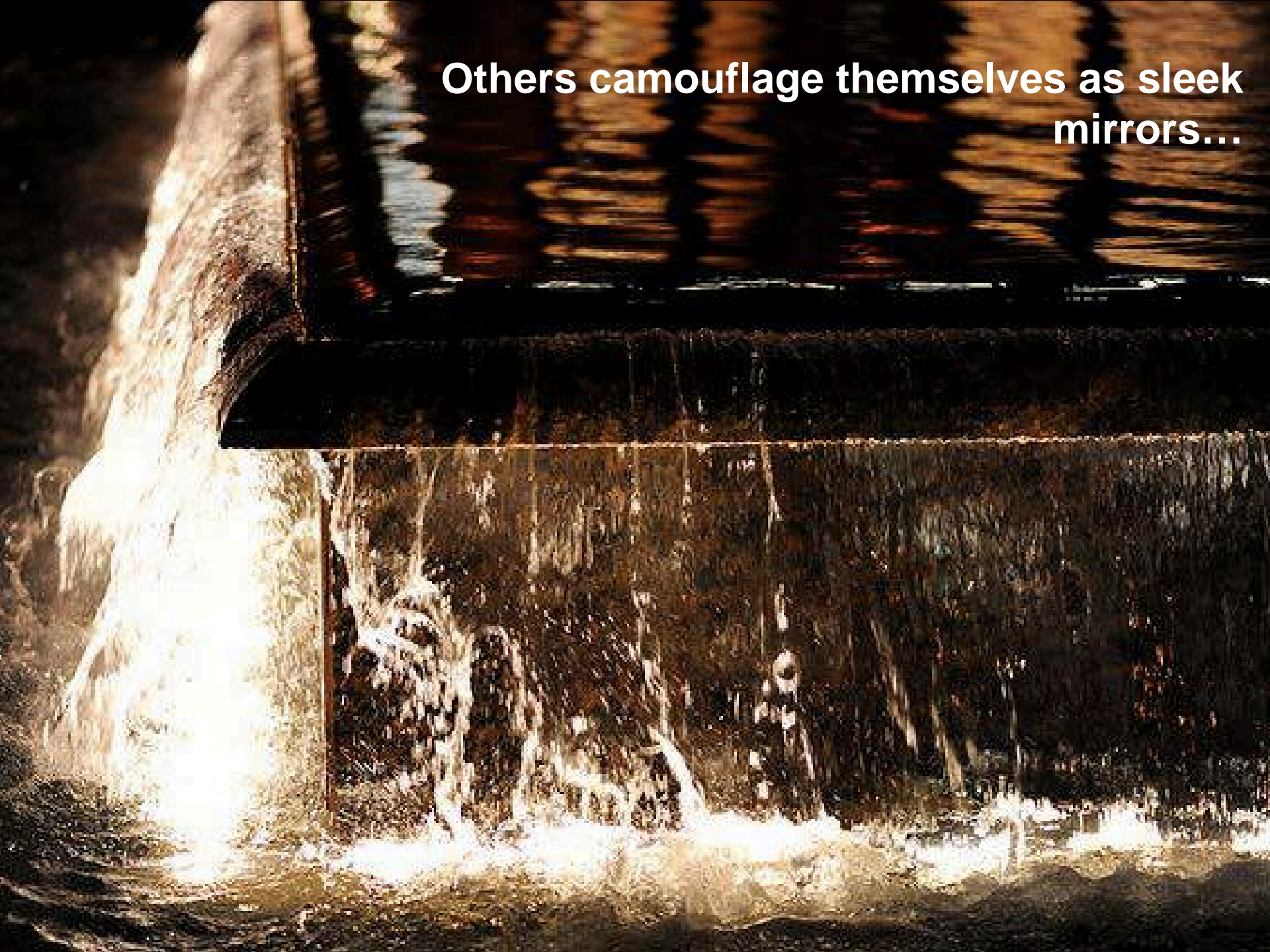
Some
drop
from on
high in
a
rushing
whoosh

.



Or shoot up from below in syncopated spurts.

Others camouflage themselves as sleek mirrors...



**...or pose as
flowers**





The largest weeps endlessly in memoriam.

**The fountain's message is
an irresistible one,
beckoning us to draw
near...**

...especially in warmer weather.



Fountains speak to the thirst of the parched psyche yearning for renewal of, "meaning, creativity, or joy" (ARAS, 2010)

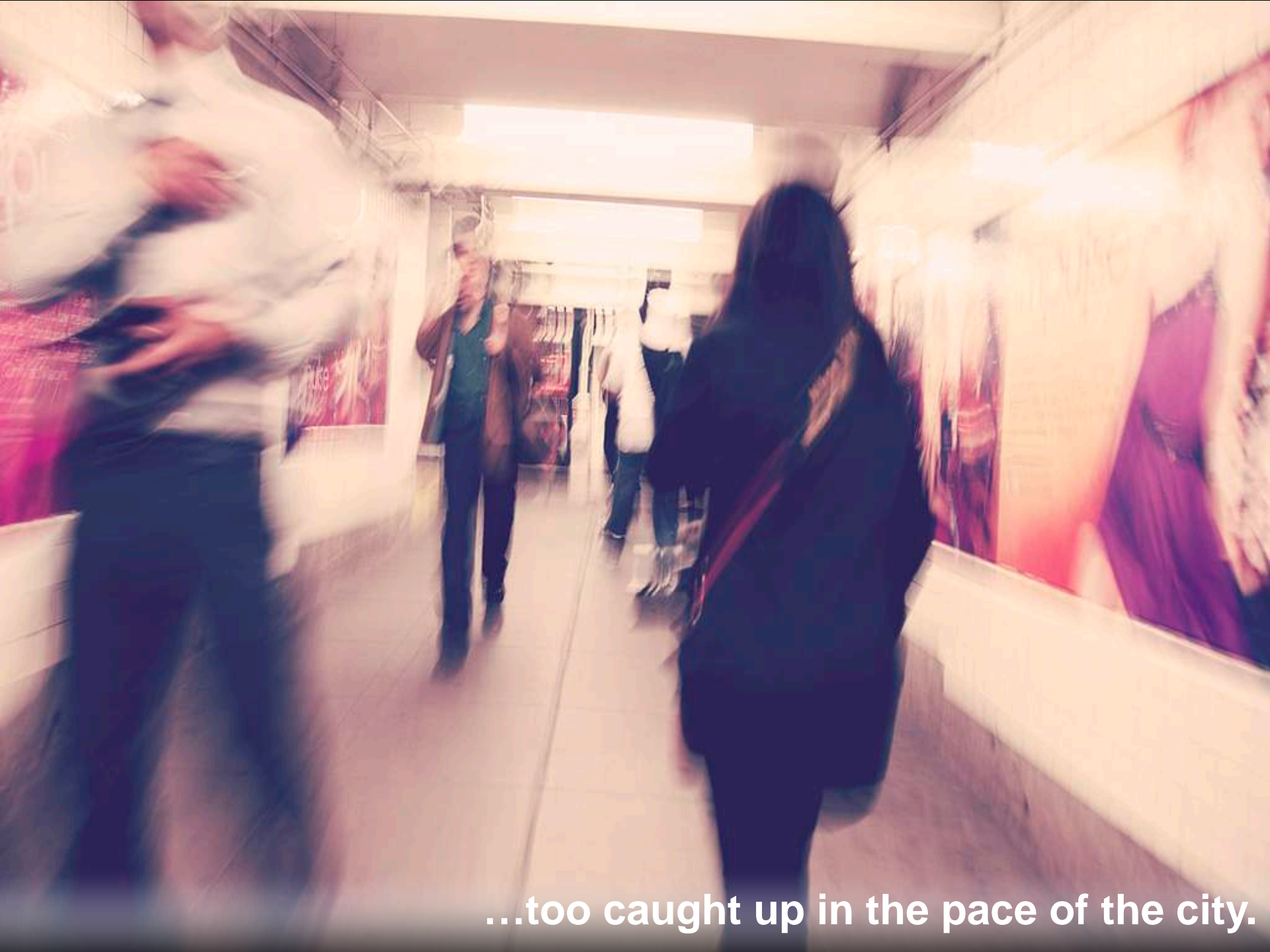
They arrest our imagination asking us to stop, watch, listen, breathe...



... and bathe in their spray.



Many of us walk by without noticing.



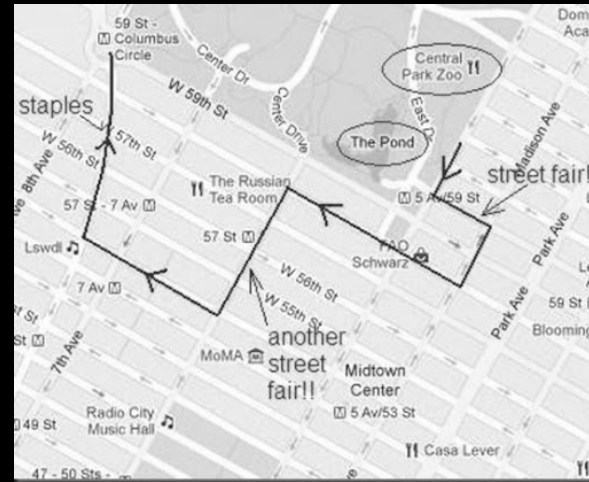
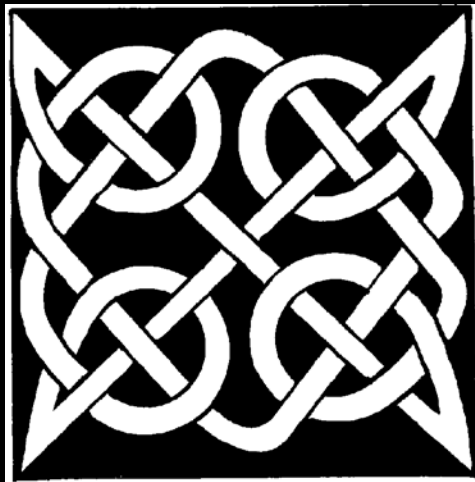
...too caught up in the pace of the city.

Nested in the tall
midtown towers of
the midcentury...



**...these liquid sculptures and the
architects who designed them
renewed my faith in the field of
psychology.**

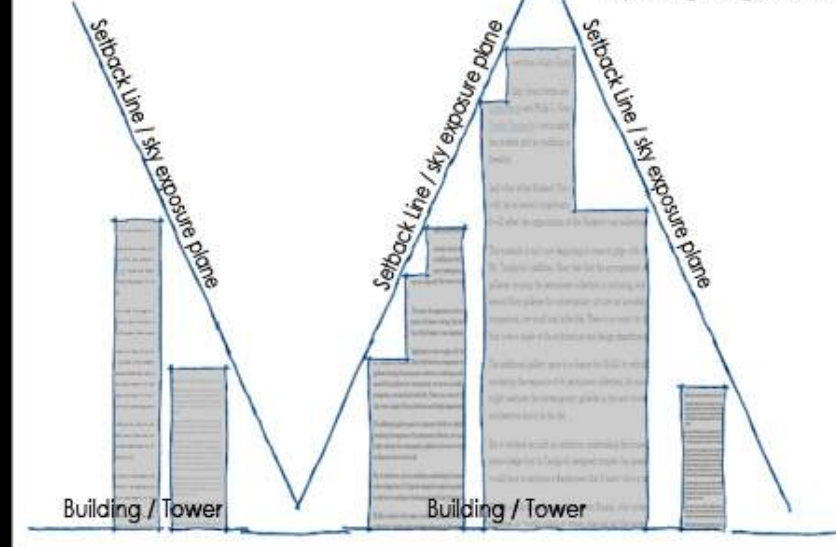
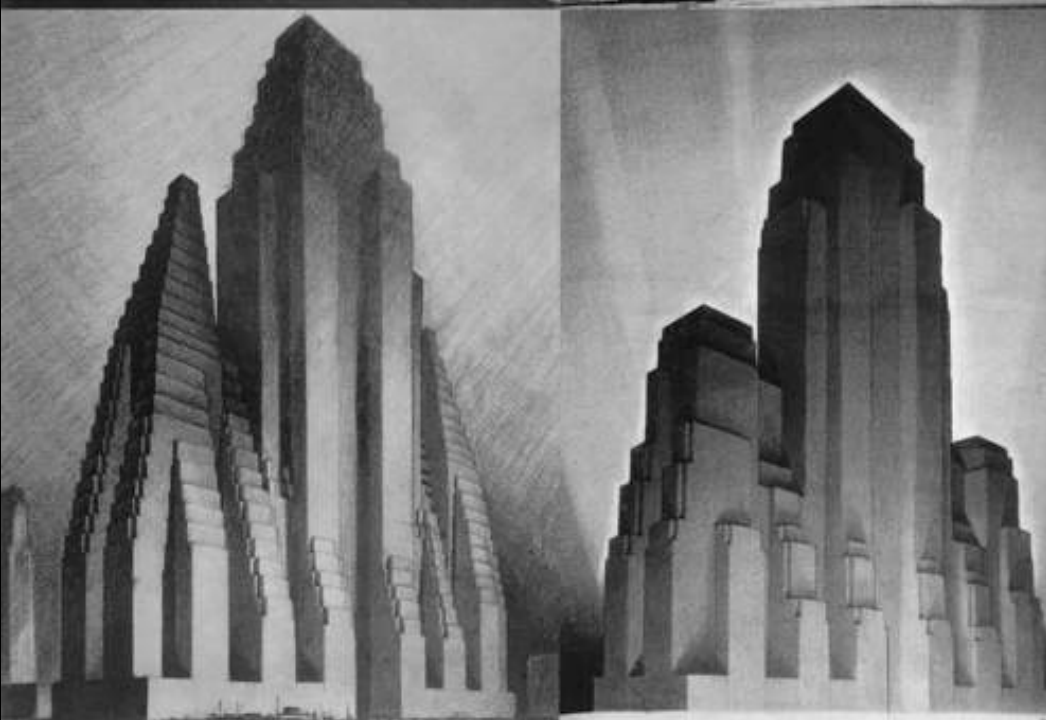
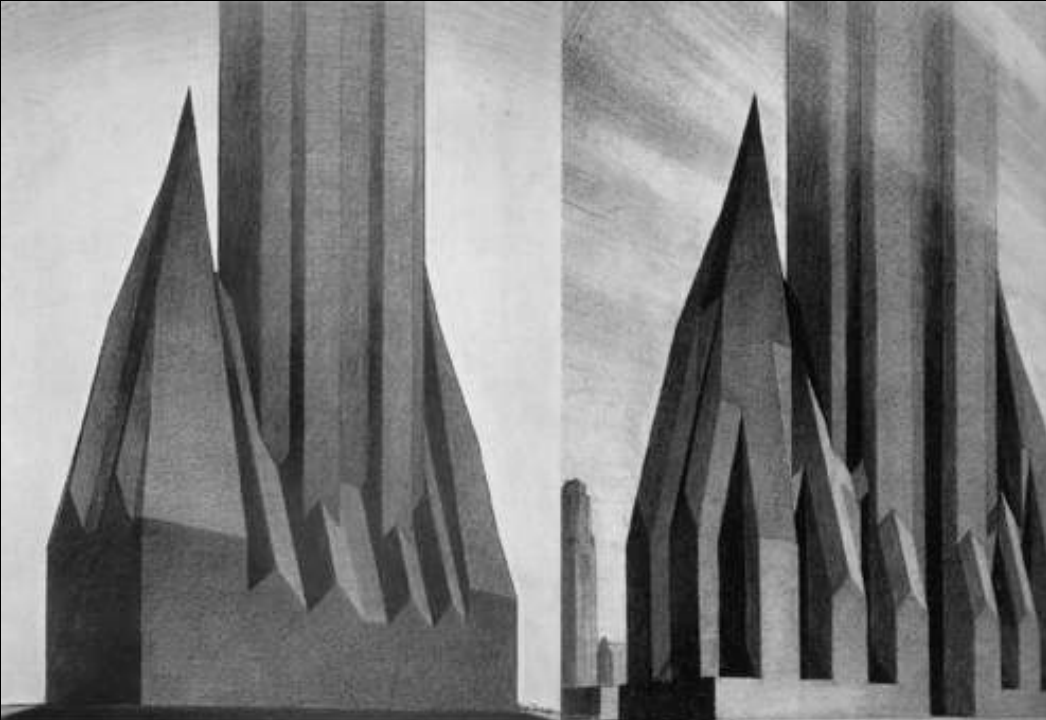
For one year I dutifully walked from ARAS at the C.G. Jung Institute to my supervision with a Jungian analyst 20 blocks away.



**Every week I chose an alternate route...
and every week a new fountain found me.**

The abundance of fountains dispersed throughout East Midtown led to a discovery of New York City's "fountain renaissance."

The 1961 Zoning Resolution for urban planning offered major incentives to developers...



**...to build
“higher and higher”
towers with street-
level plazas that
allowed
“light and air”
to filter to pedestrians.**

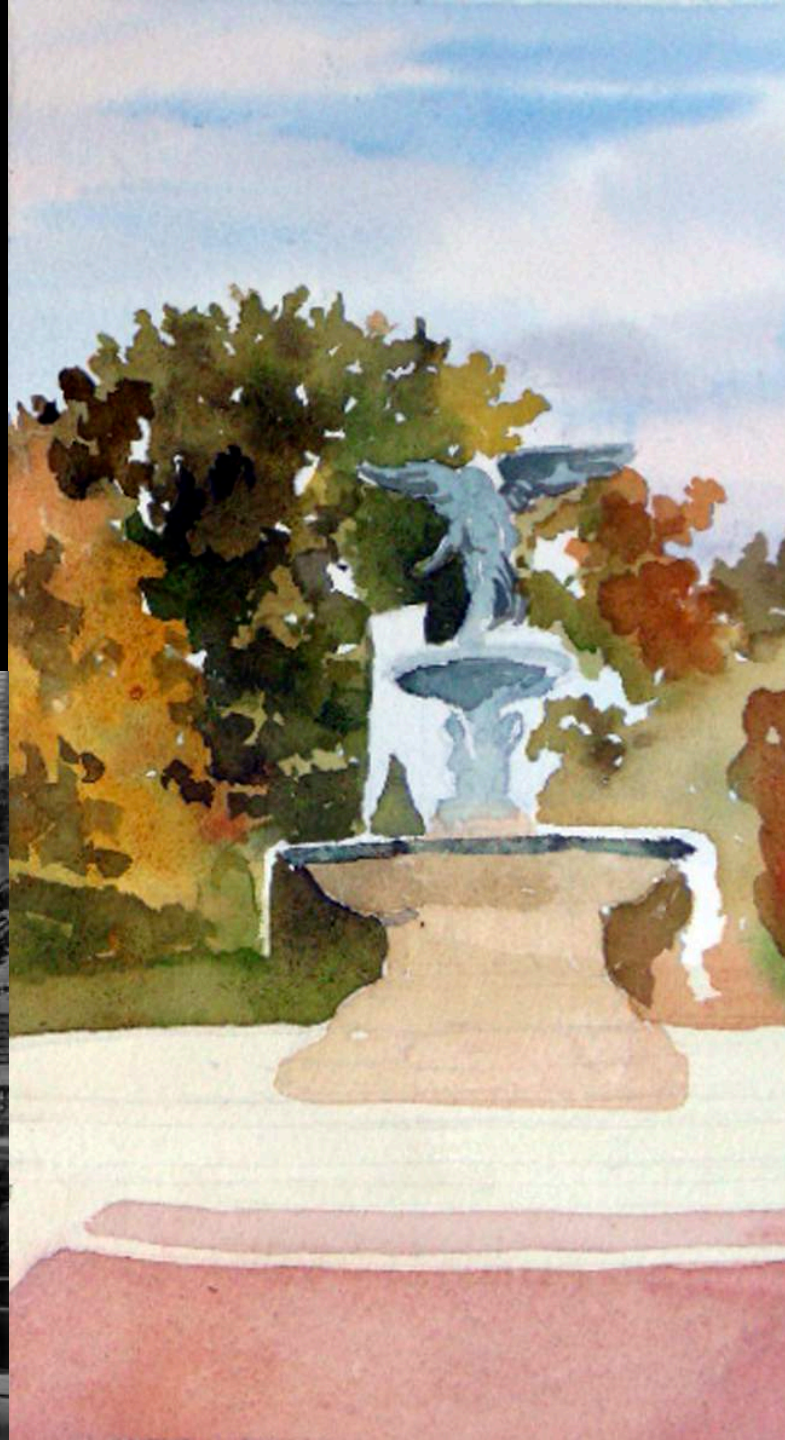


**There are over 531
“Privately Owned
Public Spaces”
strewn throughout
the city– many with
fountains within
them...**



Those found in “*POPS*” are often rectilinear and angular reflecting the corporation’s orthogonal ethos to maximize rentable office space and to rationally organize chaos.

The public landscape designs of the turn of the century instead focused on including “ornamental fountains”...



**...to bring the
natural world
closer to us...**

[Bryant Park, 42nd St./6th Ave.]





...to intentionally disrupt manmade grids with soothing circular forms....

...and to remind the urban dweller of the symbolic Abundance given forth if we remember to orient towards Her.

[Pulitzer Fountain, 5th Ave./59th St.]



**Both public and private fountains
became my refuge for quiet
contemplation, during a trying year
testing my limits of performance
and comprehension of what was
ultimately healing and therapeutic.**

Even the simplest ones had their offering.

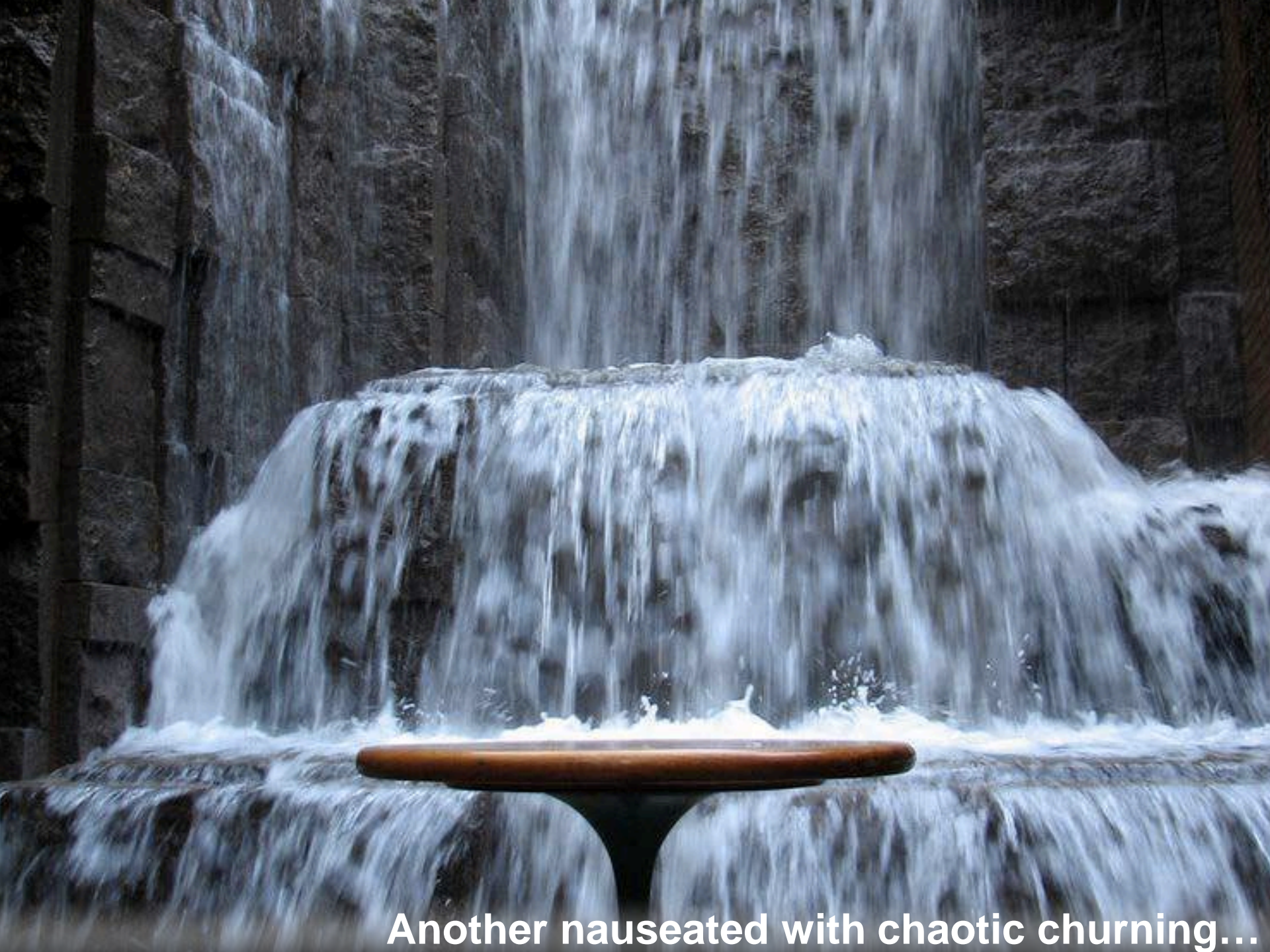


**My task was to commune long
enough with a fountain for it to
reveal its secret.**

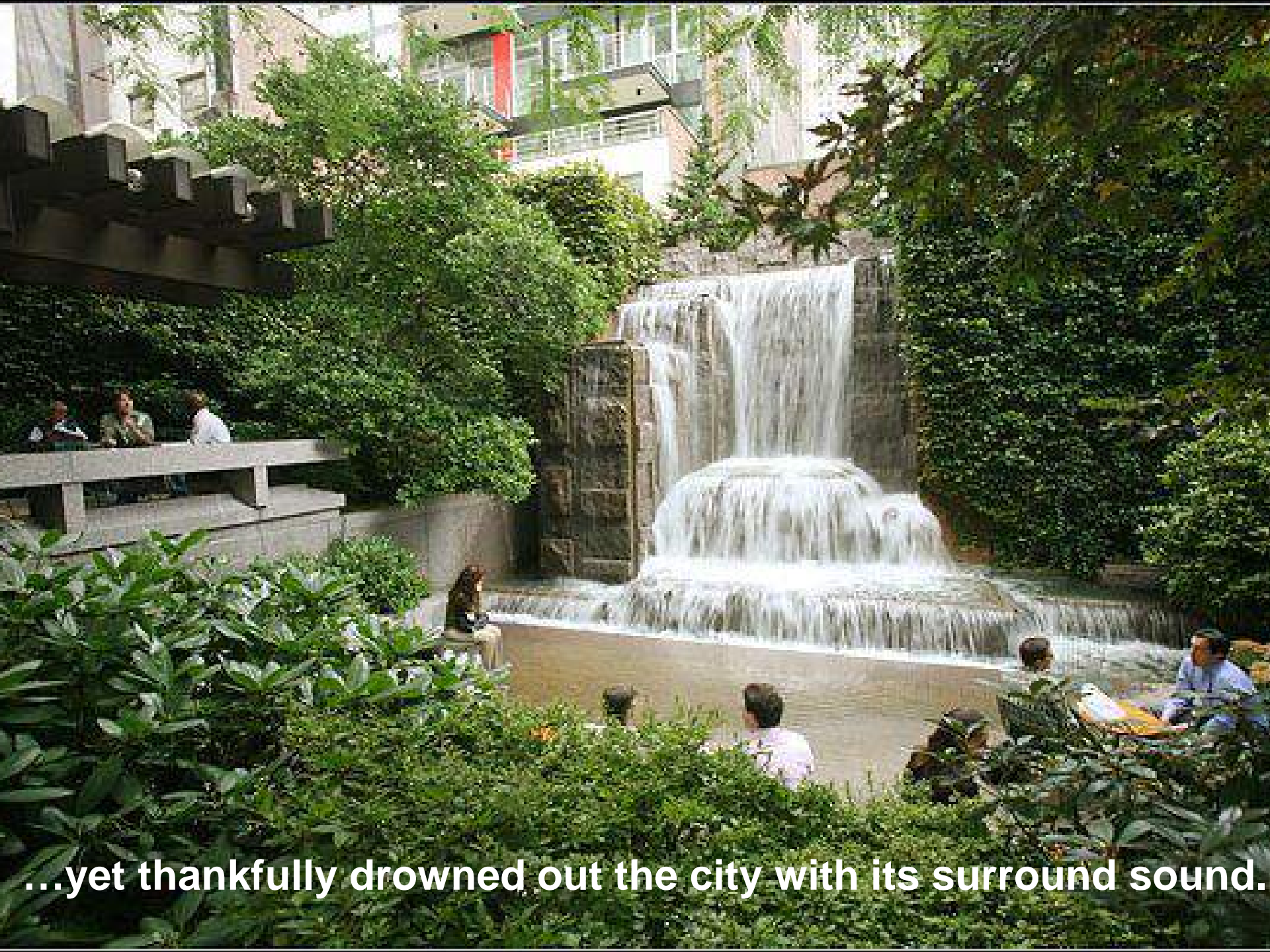
To deeply listen.



One peacefully murmured to me.



Another nauseated with chaotic churning...

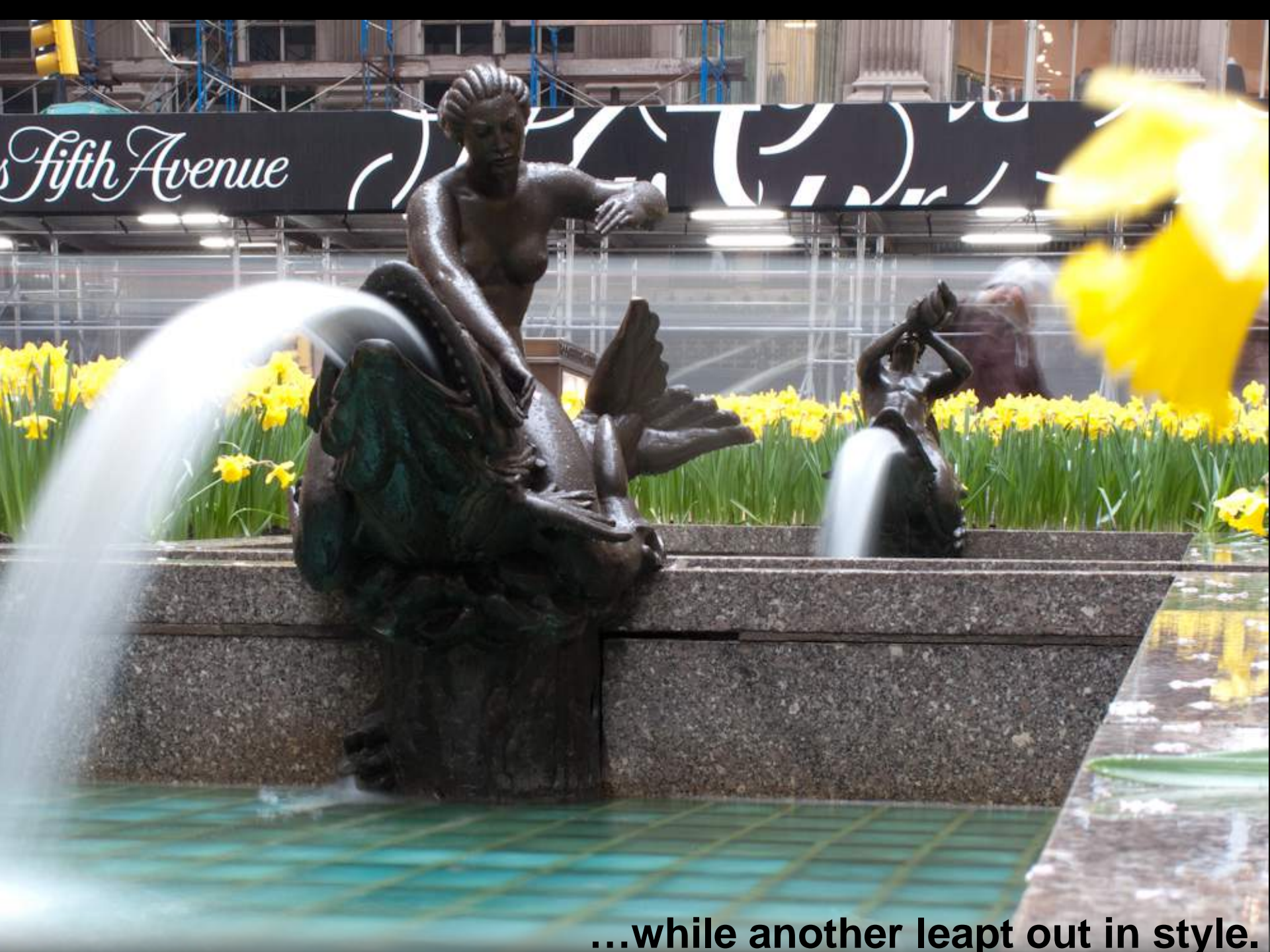


...yet thankfully drowned out the city with its surround sound.



One bubbling cauldron never attained lift off...

Fifth Avenue



...while another leapt out in style.



...the worst languished in neglect...

**A profound insight soon dawned upon
me...**



...the existence of an eternal principal of renewal.



**This inner wellspring resides
within us, upwelling, and calling
to be attended to.**



**I came to see that our wellbeing
depended on the urge to taste the
waters of the Self and irrigate our lives
with its vitality.**

In times of stagnation, dis-ease, or a creative block...



**...how might we turn inward and
drink from our ever-flowing
spring?**



**The spiritual font required the same
devotion I had been showing my literal
fountains.**

**I saw that the city too must renew itself
with open, fluid spaces.**

Washington
Square Park
Fountain
from NYU
vantage
point.



Fountains offer life-saving respite in the midst of the hustle and bustle.



A pleasant interjection of nature...



...in an otherwise unnatural environment.

Water and cities have always been inextricably linked.





Without an adequate supply of water, early communities could not have been established.

Water was prized and safeguarded as a singular necessity.



Fresh water is the essence of life common to all creatures.



“Even the smallest courtyard or enclosed garden can be transformed into a sacred paradise once the burble of water is heard and the air becomes cooler.”

(Hopwood, 2009)



Fountains create an intangible, not easily defined difference in the spaces they occupy.

Like their larger, wilder counterparts... they create their own climatic zone.

The Ancients knew this too well, and respected their water deities.



After a long, arid summer, the emergence of cold, pure water from a source hidden within the earth could not help but seem miraculous!



... as if the Spray of Life had emerged from some Subterranean womb.



**The first fountains or
“Nymphaeions”
were built to
appease gods who
brought flood or
drought.**

**Once merely piles of
rocks, fountains
expanded their
decorative role and
were elaborated
into...**



...artful ensembles of water for ritual, religious, and political demonstration.

**The symbolism of water extends far
back into antiquity but remains as
powerful today.**



From Psyche's perspective so too is soul connected to the life sustaining properties of water and its fountain-like containment.

Psyche at a Fountain,
Guillaume Segnac (1870-1924)

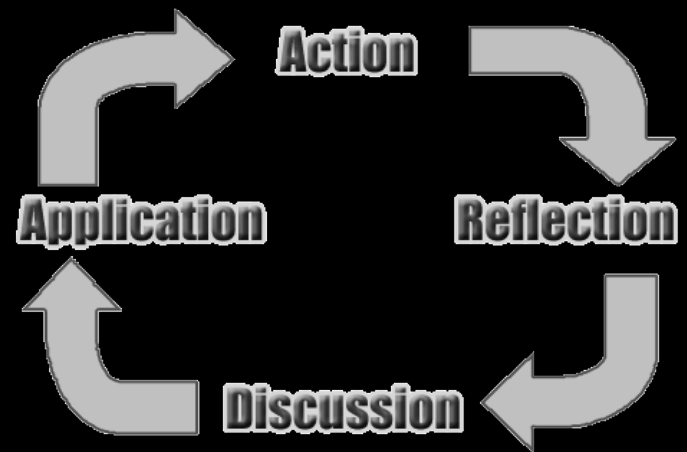
**A verse inscribed nearby a fountain at
the Alhambra Palace in Granada, Spain:**

**“Whosoever comes to me thirsting I will
lead him to a place where he will find
clean water cool sweet and unpolluted”**

(Hopwood, 2009)

The parallel process of engaging this restorative symbol played out in the cyclical provision of my own psychotherapy, that of my patients', and its oversight in supervision.

The repeated reflection and circulation of our feelings, fantasies, and insights animated what was once inert and potentiated a sense of movement and fluidity in all parties who participated.



Critical events that occurred in sealed treatment rooms, spilled out onto streets.

Synchronicities increased in intensity and frequency as if the very cosmos was enlivening alongside us.

...a new quality of awareness emerged.



**Via this circulation of psychic material
from below to above, inner to outer...**

Healing began to take place through the refreshing, tidal flow of unconscious-to-conscious content, rising and returning back to Source, clarified, transformed and integrated.



By the year's end I had experientially confirmed the concentric ecology...



...of our humanity's collective evolution embodied...



**...in the humble
image of the
Fountain.**

**Now whenever I walk, as I hope you will,
through New York City, I peek excitedly
around every corner to see if a fountain
resides.**

**When I catch one out of the corner of my
eye I sing to myself:**



Loop-de-loop we all turn 'round...

...evolve, and spiral together, in one magnificent, interconnected, cooperative reservoir of Life.





Thank you
to my original
Fountain...