A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT
INCARCERATION: DOING - AND KEEPING - TIME

At the moment of incarceration, time is at standstill. The world continues at its fast pace as the inmates struggle with a daily routine so repetitive that all days blur into one.

The prison, located along Arizona's Route 160, is built on the San Juan River's tributary known as Chinle Creek. The surrounding topography is designed to redirect the water and prolong its journey throughout the building while utilizing its healing powers for a more rehabilitative approach through exposure of the elements. The movement of the water runs from West to East, whereas the prisoners' movement is from East to West as an intended collision of man and water.

The water collected from the river, runs into the time tower, that sits on a low density wooden structure. The more water flows into the building, the higher the tower floats. It is held by spring loaded pistons which pull it back down. The pressure created by this carries water up through the pipes and begins its journey throughout the building.

Furthermore, inspired by ancient water clocks, the building serves as a giant clock that allows the prisoners to define time in their own sense; be it the way the sun beams dance in the chasm, or the way the water falls down the water stairs that fill up hourly every day and are reset.

The water that is collected throughout the building is then used to generate electricity with a small scale hydro-electric generator that can generate enough power to run the building.

Water enters the building and light reflects off the water and onto the surface of the cell tower. This, as well as the sounds of water brings a soothing effect to the prisoners.

A simple camera obscura is generated to project an image of their surroundings onto the walls of the prison. This allows them to feel more connected with their surroundings without providing them with the freedom of roaming outside.

The chasm of dancing lights marks the beginning of the incarceration time of the prisoners. It acts as a time-telling device where the dancing lights portray to the prisoners the rough time of day and allows them to pass their time in less conventional ways that the prison environment would not allow.