



## 6 / ANOTHER CASE OF THE SURPRISING NATURE OF COLOR THAT UNFOLDS

A third case. CES built a small spa for George Sarlo in Sonoma. It is a beautiful place, a green lawn on a hill with big oak trees, and below it a shrubbery, looking over vineyards and the valley. Out in the shrubbery, we built a platform of white marble with two pools, one hot and one cold, overlooking the vineyards.

Originally, we thought the pools ought to be blue. George wanted them blue. And we too thought they ought to be blue. But once we had built the tubs in rough concrete, we began doing experiments and found a different thing.

Blue looked artificial, too strong and crude in that place. It did not have the subtle harmony of the place. It was all right as an idea, but not as a reality.

Eleni Coromvli and I began trying different colors. First we tried yellow. The yellow had very good interaction with the white. Small amounts of yellow had a harmony there.

But then, to subdue the yellow and to complete it, we needed green. We found a blueish green, very pale, for the tubs themselves.

So in the finished place, the white platform has yellow dots on it, in groups of three. And the tub is surrounded by a frieze of yellow leaves on white, with a wavy line of green above it, and a solid zone of green below.

Once again, we had started out thinking blue was right. Convention would have said so. But careful experiment—paying attention to what was needed to extend the life of that place and its actual structure, to make a harmonious unity—showed us pale green and yellow.

Again it was something quite unexpected. This unexpectedness often impresses itself on us



*The Sarlo hot tubs visible against the vineyards and hills of St. Helena, California, 1986.*

clearly and autonomously. Especially clear in the case of color, this is typical of all structure-preserving transformations. The fundamental process, with its emphasis on structure-preserving transformations sounds conservative. To some people it may even sound as if you don't "do" anything, But the real process is quite different. It almost always produces beautiful, yet startling and often highly unexpected, results.

COLOR WHICH UNFOLDS FROM THE CONFIGURATION



*Green and yellow watercolor sketch for the Sarlo hot-tubs.*



*Green and yellow terrazzo, as we built it in the Sarlo tubs. Christopher Alexander and Eleni Coromvli, 1986.*