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PENYAL

aka: the aura laundry
village of deia,
mallorca, spain

These photographs depict the the restoration of an ancient underground stone vaulted acequia, or water-course. Built by the Moors, possibly as early as the 9th or 10th century, it had collapsed where it emerged at the surface of a retaining wall bordering a public thoroughfare. As is customary in Europe, the repairs were made without attempting to match the material or style of the earlier work - like the earlier work, however, the repair was built without mortar. The stone, freshly quarried limestone, was a joy to work with. It rang like a bell and responded well and truly to the tools. The restoration work was accomplished during [and subsequent to] a stone masonry workshop in 1991. As the workshop director, I was fortunate to be allowed to undertake the project - and to be given the artistic license to take advantage of the constant and copious flow of water to create a fountain. The setback, a design feature often associated with fountains in the area, enables a person, or persons, to sit and listen to the water sounds [hence the subtitle] and enjoy the view of the village church on its wooded hilltop across the valley.

There is of course more to the story. I had returned to this picturesque village where I previously lived for many years, regarded, rather affectionately, by the villagers as an oddball artist. Reappearing after a long absence and professing to be not only to be a stone mason but a maestro, an instructor of stone masonry was one of the most audacious acts I have ever performed. After all, the island of Mallorca is remarkable for the quality and extent of its stone work, the most skillful examples of which are to be found in Deia and its environs. The local masons surreptitiously inspected the progress of the work but were silent until its completion when, I am happy to report, their approval was bestowed.

Tomas Lipps

