1968, January: Paolo designs an installation to host an exhibition under the Banyan tree:

Paolo is asked (probably by Roger) to conceive an installation to be created under the Banyan tree so that an exhibition on Auroville may be held there during Auroville’s Inauguration Ceremony (on 28th February). On 4th of February Paolo finalises the two drawings below. They are blessed by Mother and passed on to Nata (Alberto Grassi) who, with his team, executes this and all other preparation works.
1969, December: Paolo and Nata convince Satprem to speak to Mother on the need to start building Matrimandir at the earliest:

31.12.1969: Satprem advocates to Mother Paolo and Nata’s concern to build Matrimandir at the earliest.

1.1.1970: Mother asks Roger Anger to start working on Matrimandir at the earliest.

2.1.1970: Mother has a clear vision of Matrimandir’s Inner Chamber.

3.1.1970: Mother describes her vision to Satprem. Paolo is present during part of their conversation and interacts a little with Mother.¹

During this conversation, thinking that Roger was already too busy, Mother tells Satprem that she would like Roger and Paolo to work together on Matrimandir. But, during the following two conversations she will have with Satprem, she won’t speak anymore of Roger and Paolo working together.

On the same day, Mother explains her vision to Udar and asks him to produce a measured drawing of it. On the same day he hands to Mother his drawings made on 2 thick sheets of drawing paper.²

4.1.1970: Roger meets Paolo his place.

10.1.1970: Mother comments to Satprem Udar’s drawings of the Inner Chamber.

1970, mid January, Paolo produces a set of drawings expressing his concept for Matrimandir:

17.1.1970: Satprem presents and explains to Mother Paolo’s 2 sheets of drawings of Matrimandir.³ At first, she is reluctant, but when Satprem tells her that Roger and Paolo spoke together and have the same idea, Mother agrees after clarifying some points.

Among other things, Mother tells Satprem: “With Paolo’s ideas, I saw a mixture straight away. His ideas are all mental ideas, I can assure you because for me that’s very easy to see.”

¹ Many years ago, Paolo told Gilles G. that this was his ONLY CONVERSATION with Mother on Matrimandir.
² Udar’s drawings on two thick sheets of paper are now kept at Auroville Archives.
³ Paolo’s drawings on two thick sheets of paper are also now kept at Auroville Archives.
Paolo’s drawings of Matrimandir, dated mid January 1970.

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3
1987, 3rd quarter: Paolo proposes a solution for Matrimandir’s outer skin:

At that time, the space-frame (consisting of hundreds of precast concrete beams joined in nodes cast in situ) was almost complete and a decision had to be made on how to cover it with a beautiful and weather-proof outer skin.

On 18.12.1975, Roger Anger had written a letter announcing his “withdrawal from all Auroville activities” because the dispute between the Executive Committee of the S.A.S, (of which Auroville was a project at that time) and the bulk of the Auroville community had become very nasty and public. Development had come to a standstill because of this dispute.

During Roger’s absence, Piero together with the scientists from S.E.R.C. (Madras) and the team of Aurovilians working at Matrimandir had opted for the type of space-frame which has been realised. The idea was to attach to this space-frame hundreds of prefabricated concrete panels whose joints would then be cemented and waterproofed and to lay on this solid flattened sphere white ceramic tiles (relatively easy-to-clean).

Roger visited again during the celebration of UNESCO’s International Youth Year in Auroville, held during the last week of February 1985. Probably feeling that he still had a lot of support from a large section of our community, Roger started visiting regularly again.

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4 Roger Anger had passed by briefly a few times during the past 9 years but, as development was at a stand-still and as he had officially withdrawn, he wasn’t involved in any decision – be it on the future town or on Matrimandir.
For some months in 1986 and 1987, Roger worked at Bharat Nivas together with a team of Aurovilians on a revised model of Matrimandir – taking into account the structure that was already built.

During the 3rd week of October 1987, a series of very well attended meetings were held at the Planning Office (at Bharat Nivas). This decision-making process ended in a vote at the end of a marathon meeting held on 19th. The Aurovilians present were asked to vote for either of the following two proposals:

- Roger Anger’s proposal had golden discs (along a pattern different from the original one in order to adapt to the now existing space-frame and two rows of petals (but not as high as originally). Roger was also keen on having a transparent or translucent skin but as yet he didn’t know how to realise it.
- Paolo Tommasi’s proposal (depicted in a model made in Pondicherry by “Auroform”) was to cover the space-frame with large triangles of white marble. As Paolo always disliked this kind of discussion forum, he didn’t attend any of these meetings but had asked Piero to present his proposal.5

Paolo’s model in the foreground and Roger’s model in the background.6

The outcome of this vote was that Roger was put back in charge of completing the Matrimandir and Piero was to complete its Inner Chamber (whose concrete structure was complete but everything else needed to be done.)

* * *

5 Years ago, Piero told Gilles G. that he wasn’t supporting Paolo’s proposal for the following reasons:
- Procuring so many and so large pure white marble slabs would be extremely difficult. (Piero had already experienced the difficulty of procuring pure white marble slabs for Matrimandir’s Inner Chamber).
- Because of the triangular shape of these slabs, there would be a lot of marble wastage.
- Ways would need to be found to attach solidly the marble slabs to the space-frame and to waterproof their joints.
- Marble being a relatively porous material, ways would need to be found so that – despite the pollution – they remain immaculately white along the many decades to come.
6 John Harper and a carpenter are sitting on the floor between the two models.
1997, January 4th: Roger and Paolo sign an agreement to collaborate:

In order to achieve harmony and consensus at Matrimandir and to establish a clarity in the work we are resolving to work together in the following manner:

1) The collaboration and the future work can only be achieved by a true surrender to the Mother, which means to try and realise the integral yoga.

2) Since the Mother has given the responsibility of Matrimandir to Roger, he will be in charge of architecture and design.

3) Paolo will offer his advice in aesthetic matters.

4) Piero will be invited to collaborate with Roger and Paolo bringing in his capacities on the technical aspect.

* * *

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* * *
1975-2008: Paolo advised Piero on some architectural details – particularly on how to complete the Inner Chamber. In particular, they discussed together the proportions between the (70cm diameter) crystal ball (which weighs more than 400 kg) and its cube stand (which consists of 4 gilded symbols of Sri Aurobindo). Reducing the size of the cube stand was necessary in order to reduce the pressure at the 4 points where the crystal globe is supported by its cube stand.⁷

![Crystal globe on its cube-stand](image)

* * *

2000-2002: During two years, Paolo produces a series of paintings of his proposal for Matrimandir gardens. These include paintings of each one of the 12 gardens.

Roger having agreed that Paolo could make a proposal for Matrimandir gardens (he may even have drafted a Brief to this end). Paolo spent two years producing this series of paintings. He said he had felt very inspired during this painting process. (Large photos of these paintings are kept at Auroville Archives. Paolo kept the originals).

On 15th August 2002, the Matrimandir Coordination Group (MMCG) opens an exhibition of Paolo’s drawings and distributes the card reproduced on the following page on the occasion of the Darshan. This is very badly perceived by Roger and his supporters, as they take it as a challenge to his authority. Roger discards this proposal. (He would have said that it didn’t follow his Brief for the gardens – such as its contouring.)⁸

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⁷ As the globe is supported by its cube-stand without being anchored to it, the force the cube-stand applies to the globe (to hold it in place) is perpendicular to its surface at the 4 contact points. At present, it is of some 110 kgf, whereas in the case of a 60cm wide cube-stand, it would have been of some 200 kgf.

This perpendicular force has a vertical component of 100 kgf (which counters the weight of the globe) and a horizontal component (which prevents the 4 upper parts of the cube-stand from opening up). At present the horizontal component of this force is of 48 kgf whereas with a 60cm cube stand it would have been of 170kgf. The smaller the angle between the vertical and the perpendicular to the surface of the globe, the smaller the horizontal component of the force will be.

(Masses are measured in kilograms while forces are expressed in Newtons (N) or in Kilogram-force (kgf).

⁸ Note that Paolo’s design respects Roger’s layout of 1971, but not it’s contouring, whereas the accompanying text dates from June 1965.
Roger and a group of his supporters produce a model depicting the kind of gardens he has now in mind for Matrimandir.

In order to understand what is at the root of this garden controversy, one has to remember that, on 23.6.1965, Mother had told Satprem:

“This central point [of the town] is a park I had seen when I was a little girl (perhaps the most beautiful thing in the world with regard to physical, material Nature), a park with water and trees like all parks, and flowers, but not too many (flowers in the form of creepers), palm trees and ferns (all species of palm trees), water (if possible, running water [— it must be running water]) and, if possible, a small waterfall [— running water].  From a practical point of view, it would be very good: at the edge, outside the park, we could build reservoirs that would provide water to the residents. [...]

9 “It must be running water” was omitted in the Agenda.
10 The Agenda omitted again this “running water.” Mother’s insistence on running water is to be noted. Water shouldn’t stagnate.
I am not concerned about the details at all, there is only that Pavilion that I would like to be very pretty – I see it. Because I saw it, I had a vision of it, so I’ll try to make him understand what I saw. The park, too, I saw – those are old visions I had repeatedly. But that’s not difficult.”

Two days later, Mother described to Huta the Matrimandir and its gardens, which she had “repeatedly seen”. Years later, Huta published this description in two books: “Matrimandir – Mother’s Truth and Love” and in “The Spirit of Auroville”.

The fact is that in February 1971, Mother approved Roger’s concept for Matrimandir and its gardens as depicted in the “rosewood model”11 which is presently exhibited at the Visitors Centre and that this 1971 concept is completely different from Mother’s description to Huta on 25.6.1965. Note that, originally and for several years, everything in wood in this model was to be covered with red-colour tiles and that, as can be seen, the gardens were supposed to be extremely small and to consist mainly of flowers (in pots or in vats) exhibited next to small water bodies.

Roger’s 1971 rosewood model for Matrimandir and its gardens.

The fact is also that Mother always allowed Roger do what he wanted. There was no “reason” for her support because Mother didn’t operate from the mind (that is “rationally”). She was always totally surrendered to the Divine, confident that if some modifications were required there would be some instruments who would make sure that they are made.

*   *   *

Conclusion: Paolo’s main contribution to Auroville – by far –is that he convinced Satprem and then Mother to start building the Matrimandir at the earliest. We should all be very grateful to him for that.

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11 As the rosewood model was too large to be carried up to Mother’s room through its narrow staircase, Roger presented her a model in thermocole depicting the same concept.