

ELISE CLOUTIER

PORTFOLIO

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HARLEM MEMORY CLINIC

This clinic heals memory across multiple scales.

A daycare facility for dementia patients addresses the scale of individual memory. A delicate addition maintains the memory of the building. The memory of the district endures via support for the Heritage Rose District of NYC. The memory of architectural theory - Modernity meets Dirty Theory.

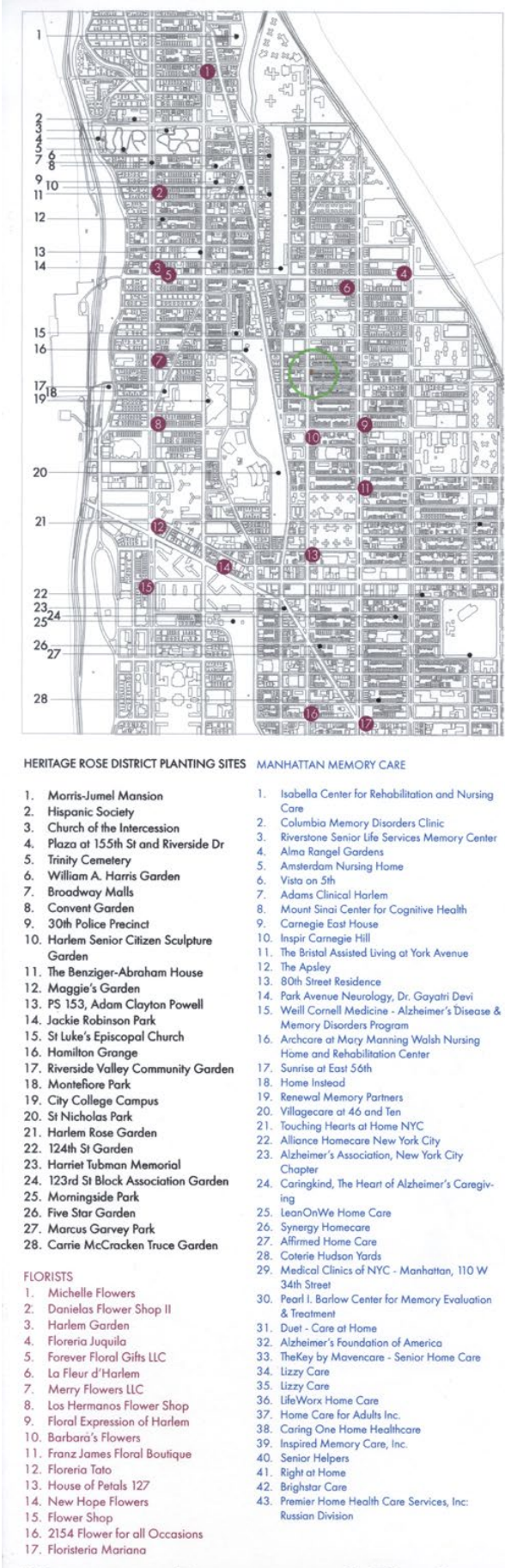
Advanced VI Studio
Hilary Sample
Harlem, New York
Spring 2026

Individual Work
Photography by Joseph Min



Dédié à grand-maman Pierrette





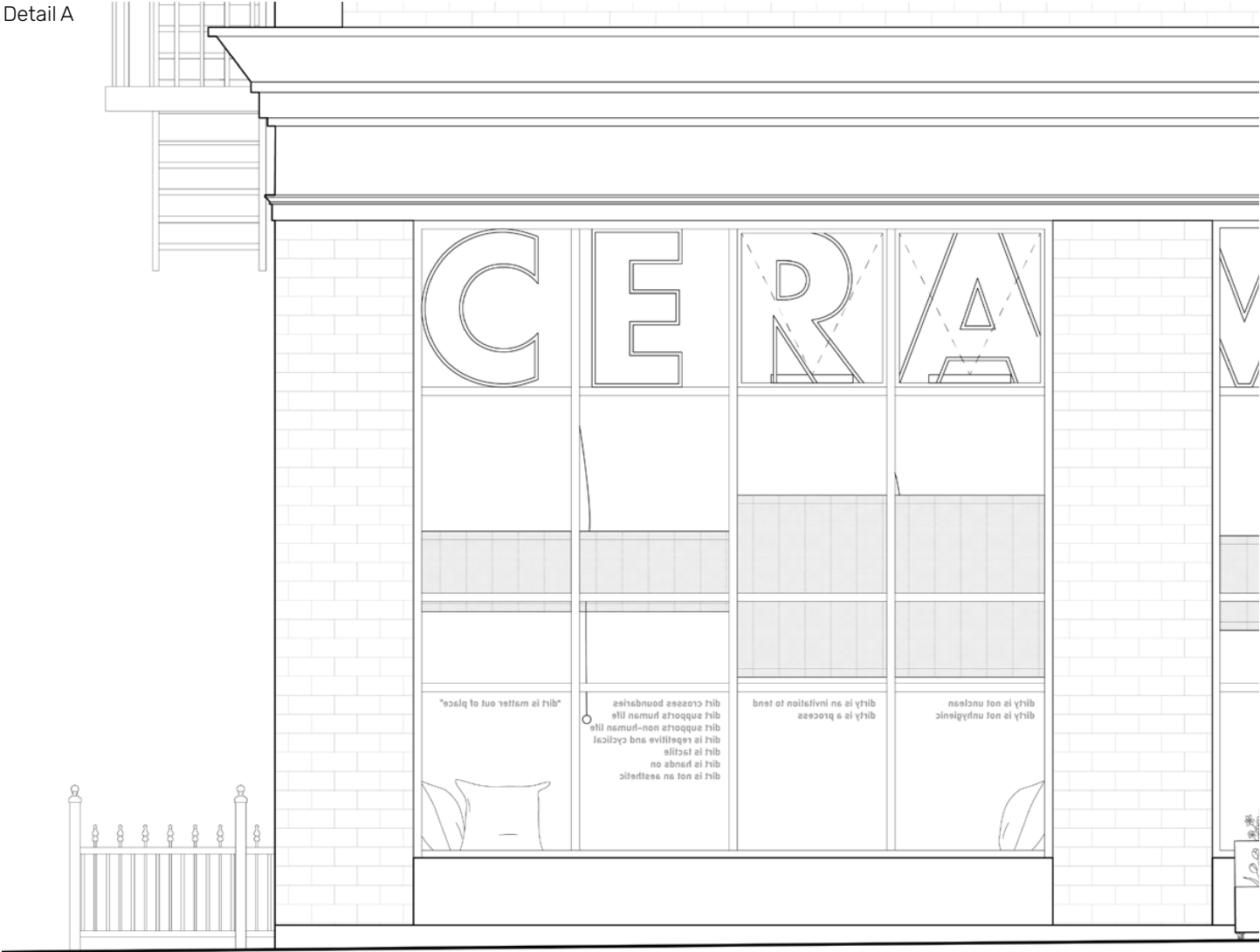
Dementia is a progressive decline in memory, thinking and behaviour which affects daily life. Dementia cases in the US are expected to double by 2060. Rates among Black individuals are expected to triple. Healthcare in black communities is disproportionately underfunded, and this is evident in the distribution of dementia related resources across Manhattan. Upper Manhattan, and Harlem specifically, is severely lacking in resources, especially considering the impact on this community.



Repetitive tasks via daily tending are generally very good for dementia patients, as they can provide a sense of purpose, reduce anxiety, and offer comfort through familiar, routine, and "failure-free" actions. This project embraces hands-on experiences - gardening, ceramics, floral arranging, tending - to benefit the elderly with dementia, the community, and a network of gardens.

Through the ceramic studio, patients make clay tiles which are used in the building, and clay pavers which are distributed to the network of surrounding community gardens. Clay pots are made to hold bouquets which are sold at the florist sharing the space.

Detail A

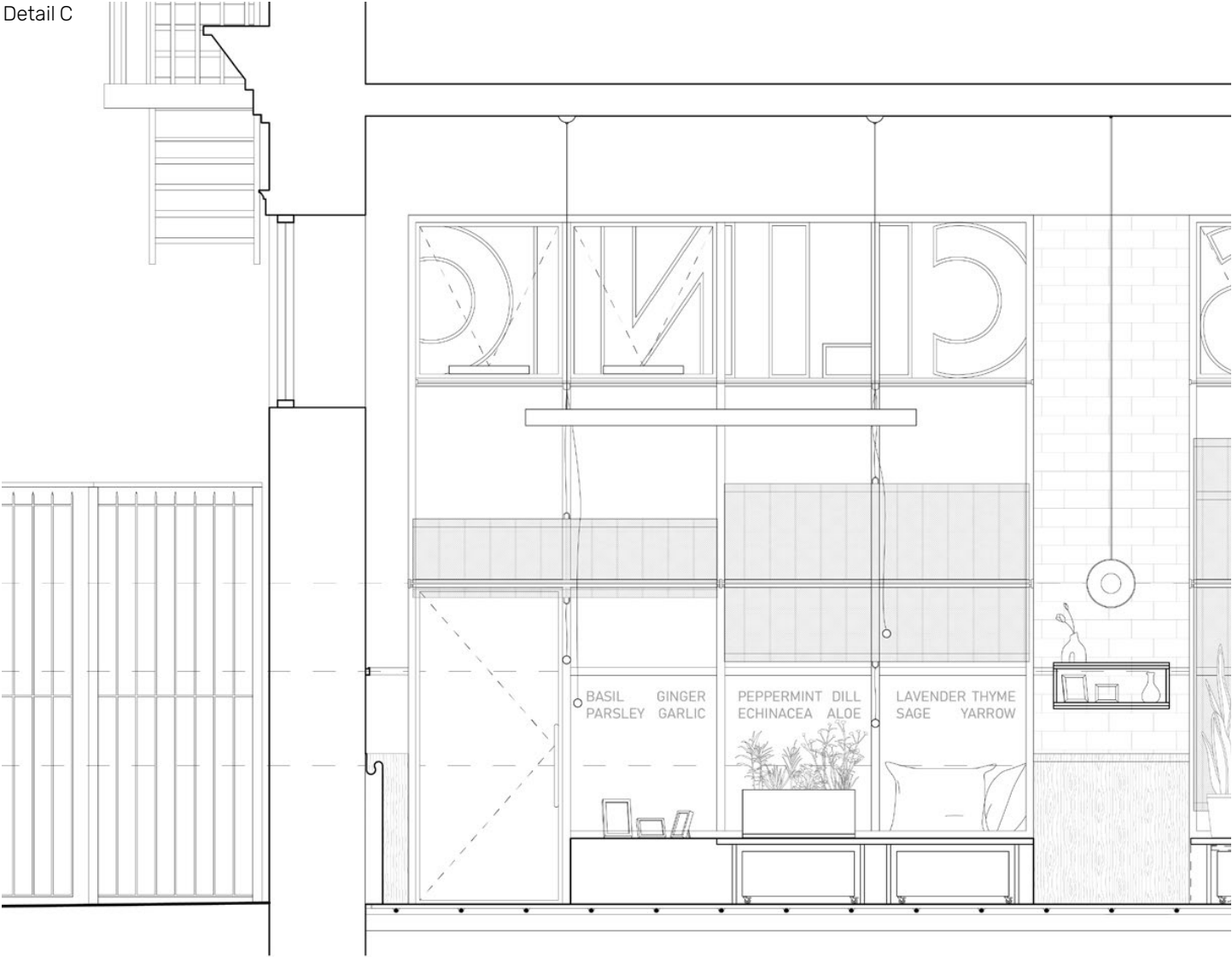


Detail B

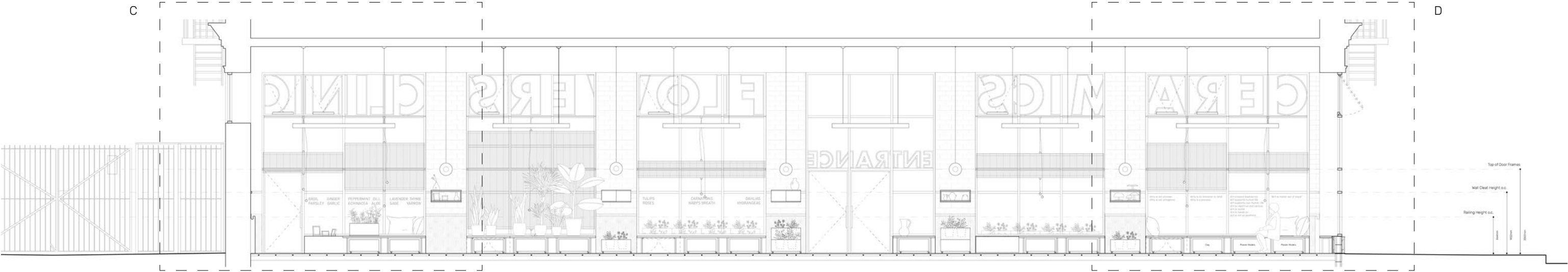
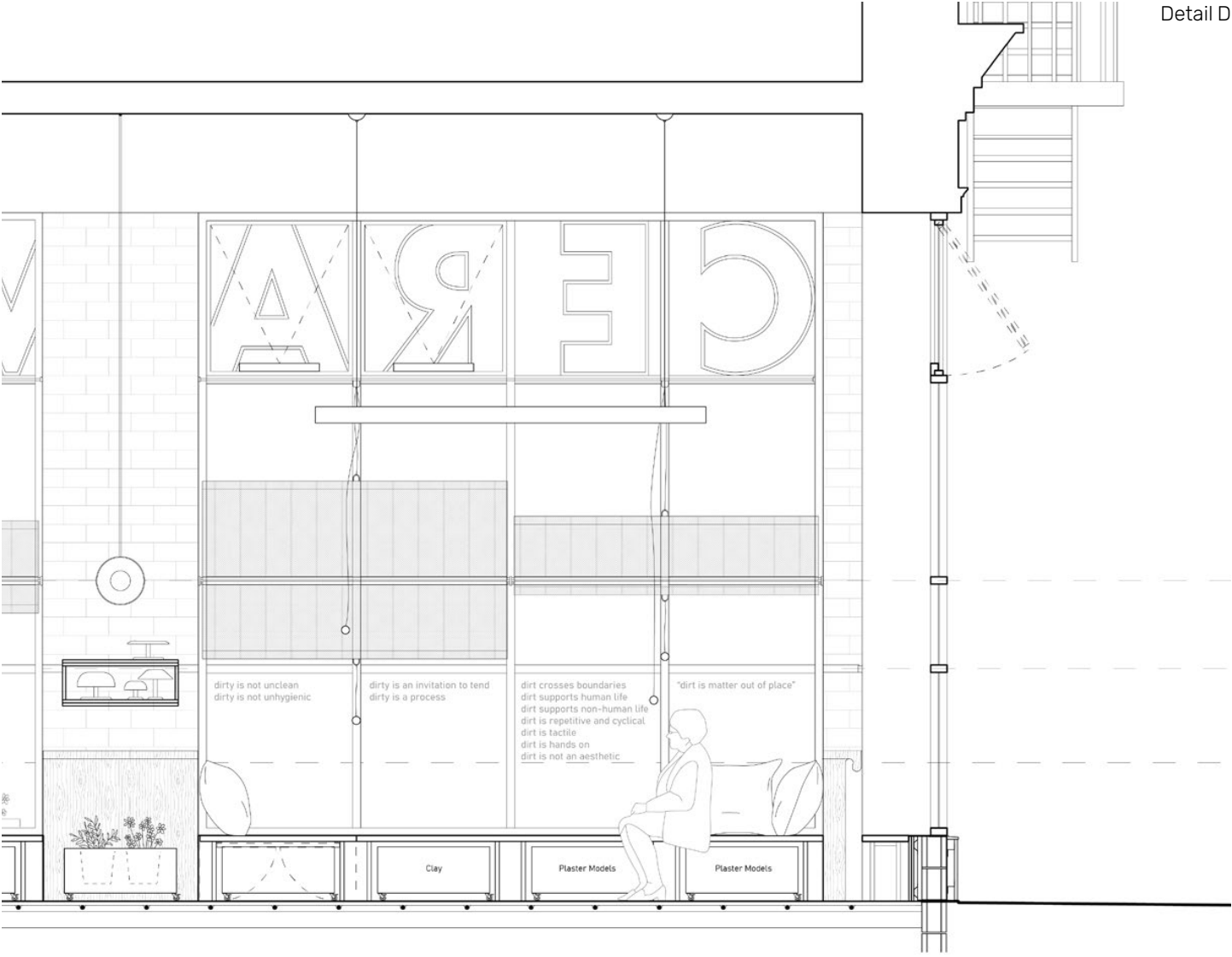


Storefront Elevation

Detail C



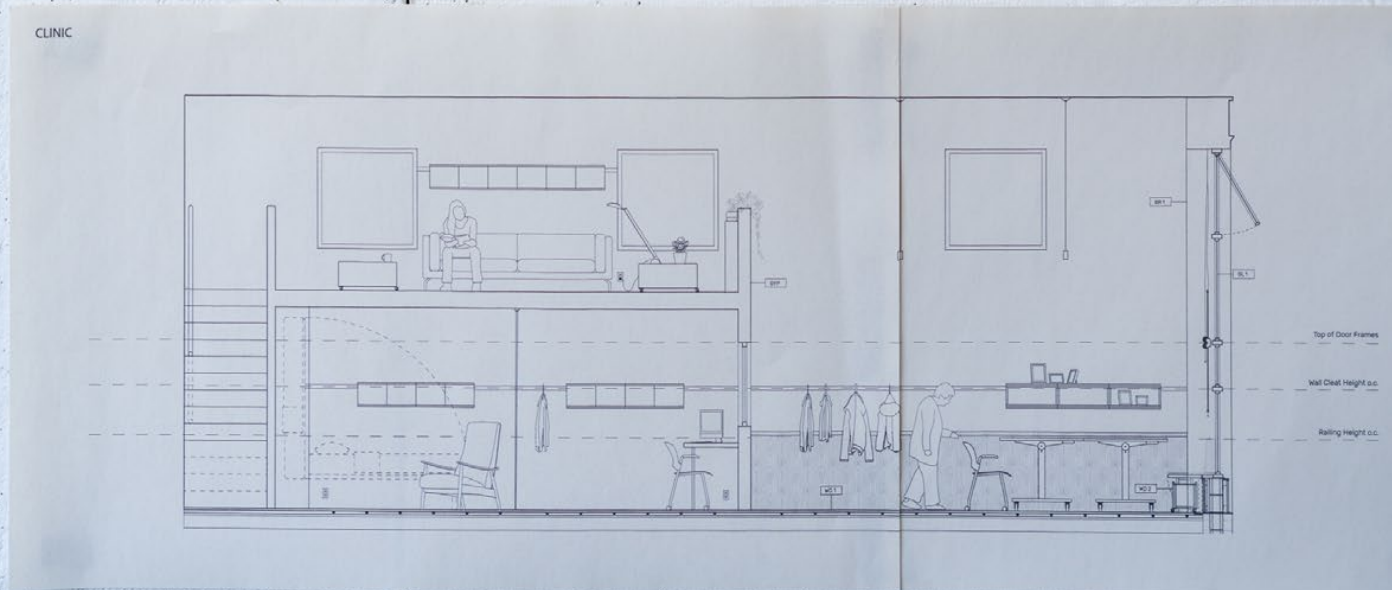
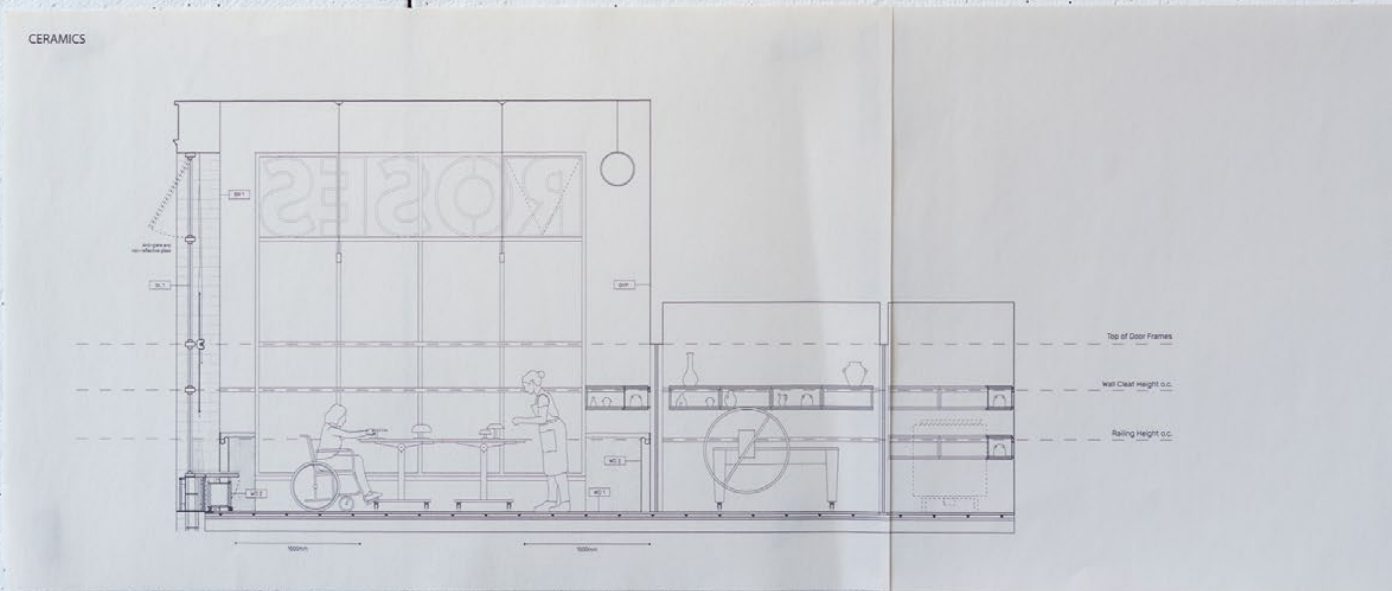
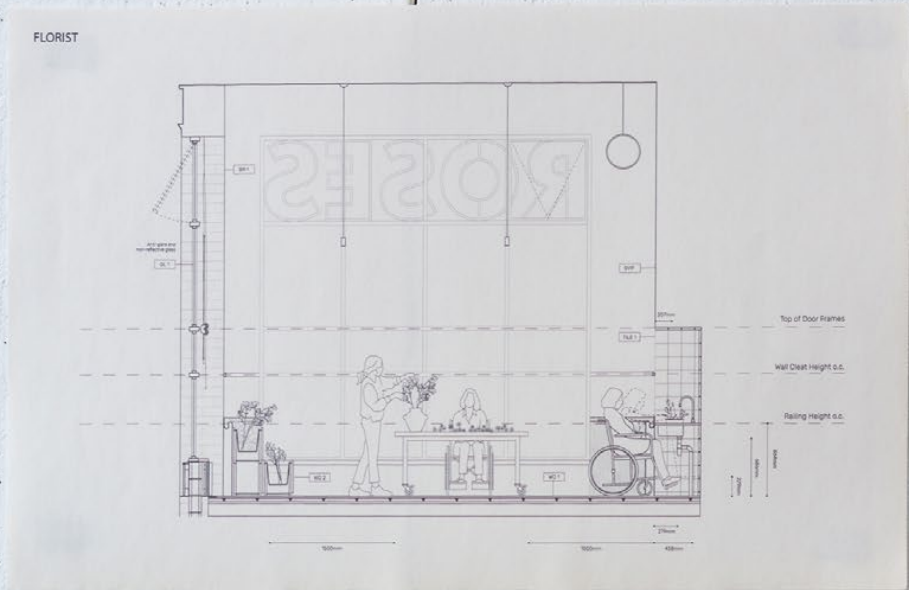
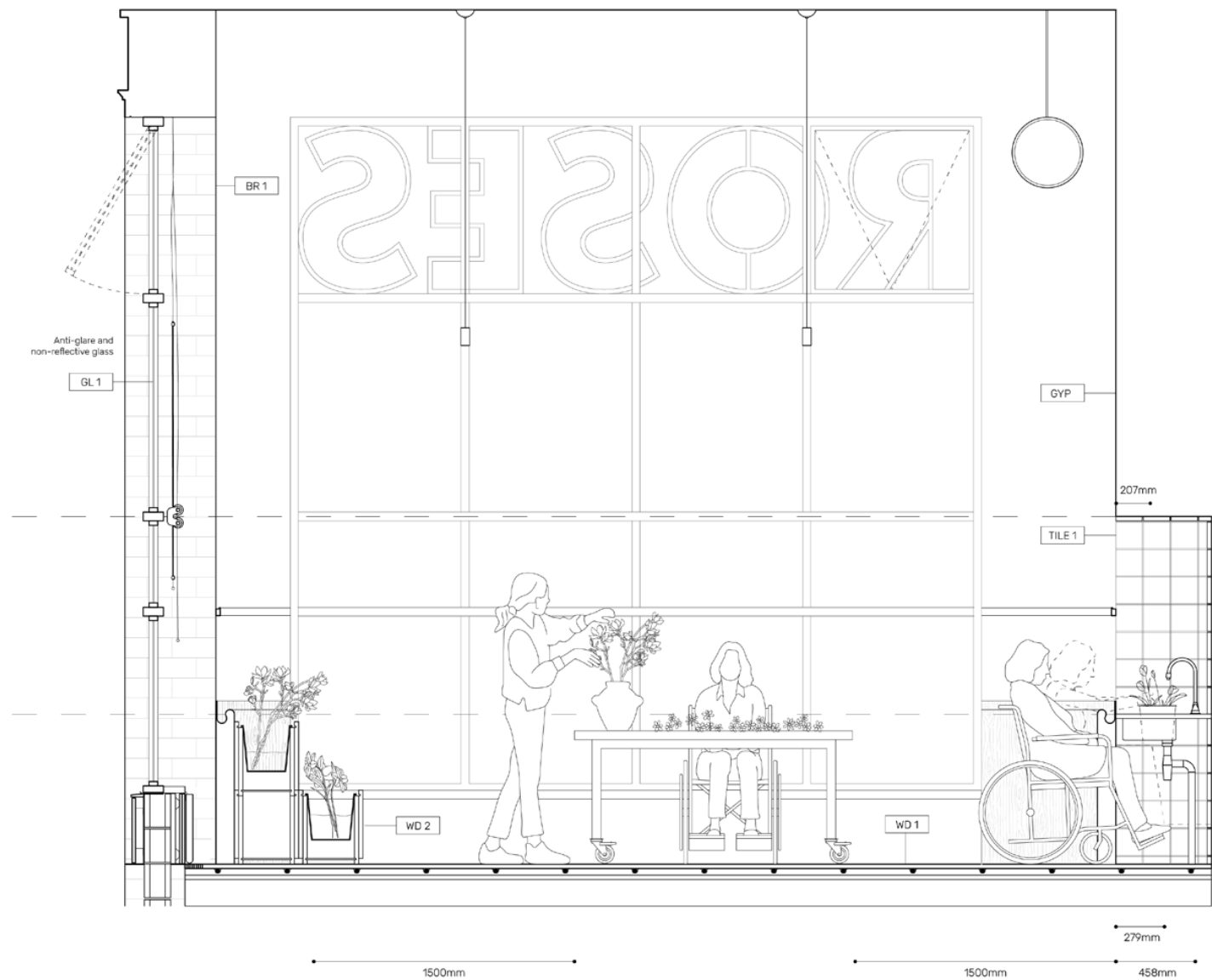
Detail D



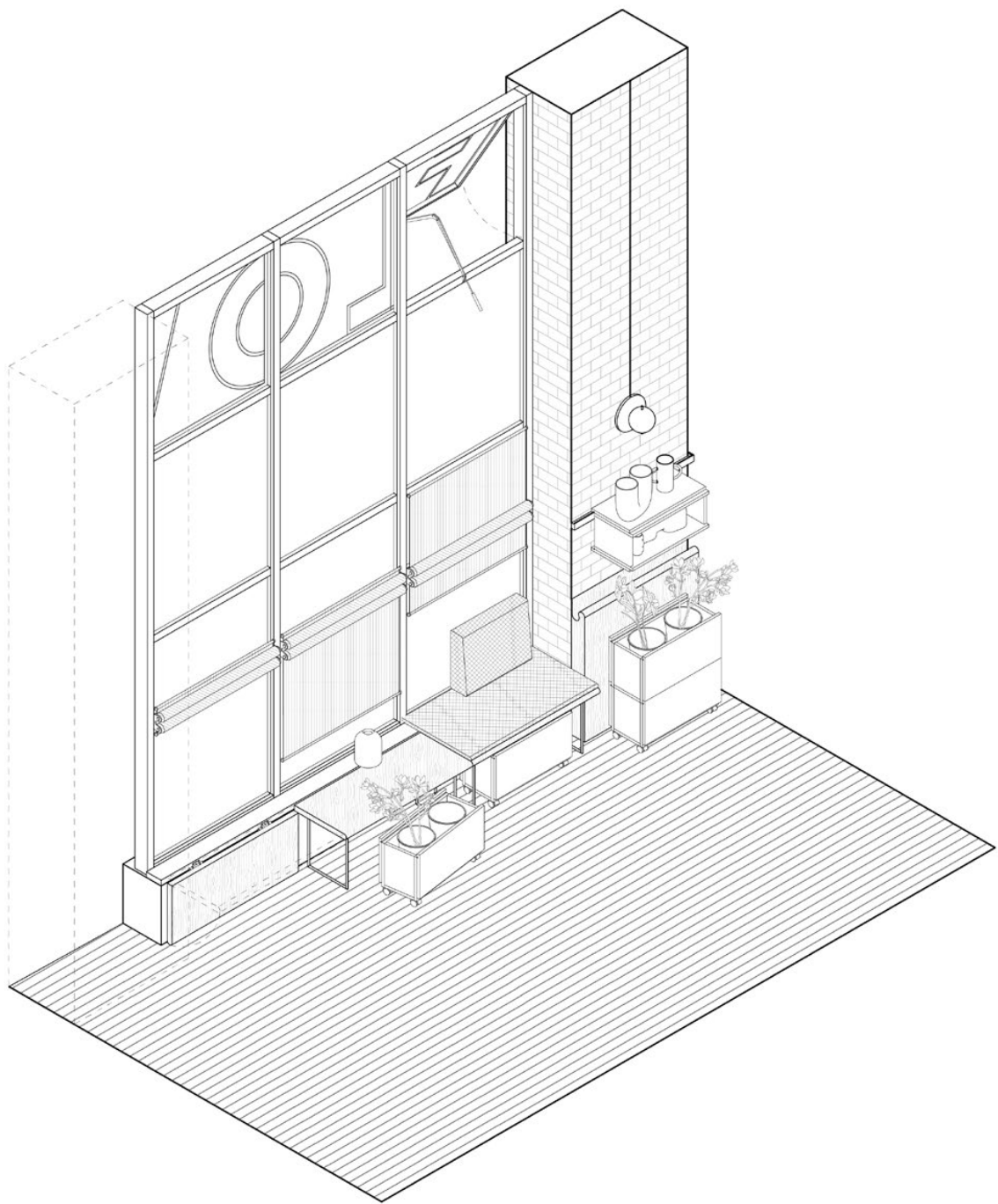
Interior Elevation

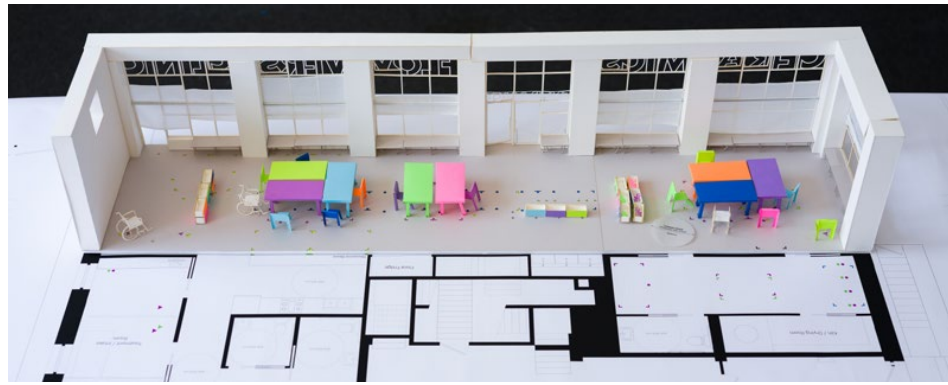
Section Through Florist

Spanning West Harlem and Washington Heights is what has been designated the Heritage Rose District of New York City. This designation is intended to preserve the species of old roses which have become associated with the area. There are several planting areas and public gardens which arise from the district designation. These are all outdoors. This proposal supports the network by offering a space for evening programming.



272 West 139th Street falls within the St. Nicholas Historic District, also known as 'Strivers' Row'. Mismatched brick, a broken bulkhead, rusted steel framing, a crumbled cornice. The proposal tends to the building rather than replaces it. A delicate addition maintains the existing building, preserving its character and the memories contained within it. A smaller footprint.





9am



12pm



7pm

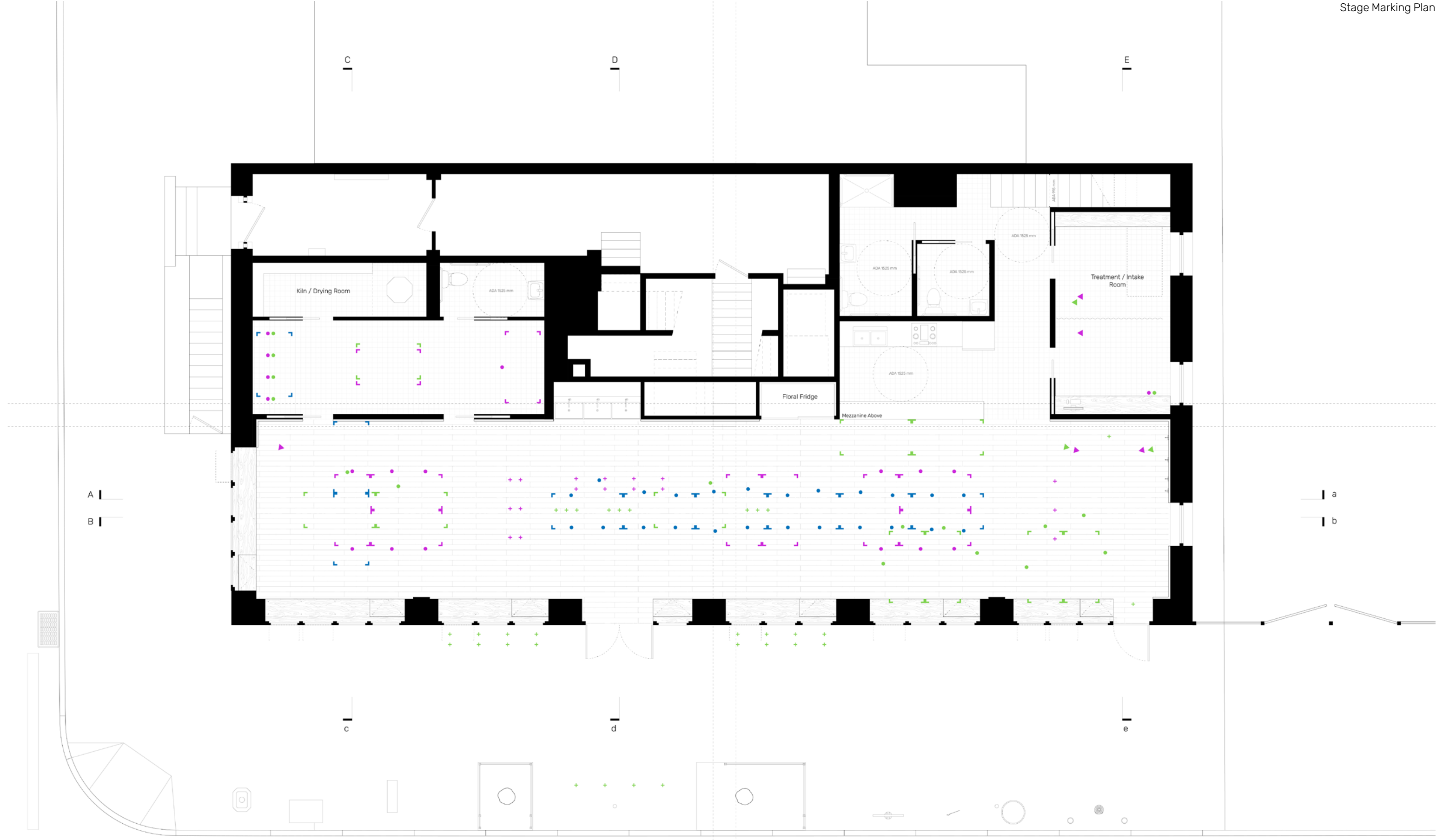
Stage markings indicate a choreography. A schedule is followed, and moveable furniture is wheeled into position based on need. Tables, chairs, boxes are shared amongst the programs and users.

9am: Patients enter through the clinic door, and are greeted by staff preparing coffee and tea in the kitchen. Patients can either join the group for breakfast, or be brought to a quiet room for intake, or a moment alone.

12pm: Noon is lunchtime. More tables are brought to the clinic for a shared meal. There is space for both patients and nurses. A few local artists use the ceramic studio, staff load up the kiln to fire another batch of work.

7pm: The Rose Heritage District committee holds their annual fundraising event. Most patients have returned home. One or two who are on the committee remain for the event. Fixed spaces become back of house for caterers, dinner is prepared in the kitchen, tables are set for shared dining.



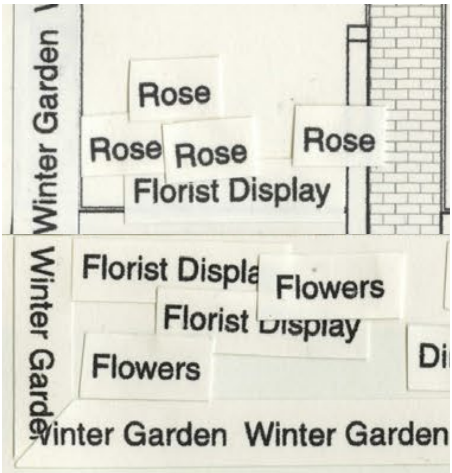


Health and hygiene were key topics influencing the development of modern architecture in the 20th century. Catalyzed by the tuberculosis crisis, buildings became “machines for living” as demonstrated by the design of sanatoriums, reverberating to offices, housing, urban design.

Sterilization, minimalism, and HVAC have social repercussions. The architecture that was supposed to make us healthier might be making us sicker. Over sterilization of the spaces we inhabit might be weakening our immune systems.

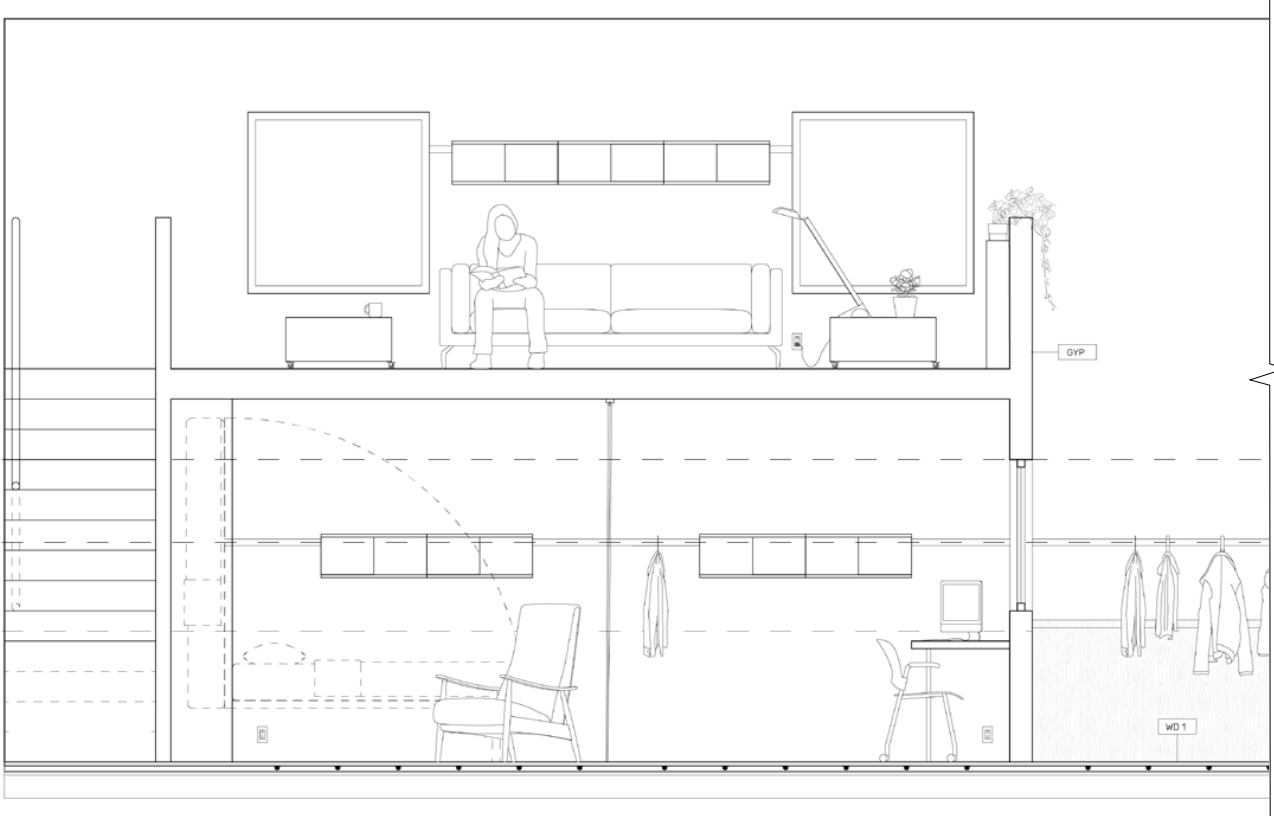
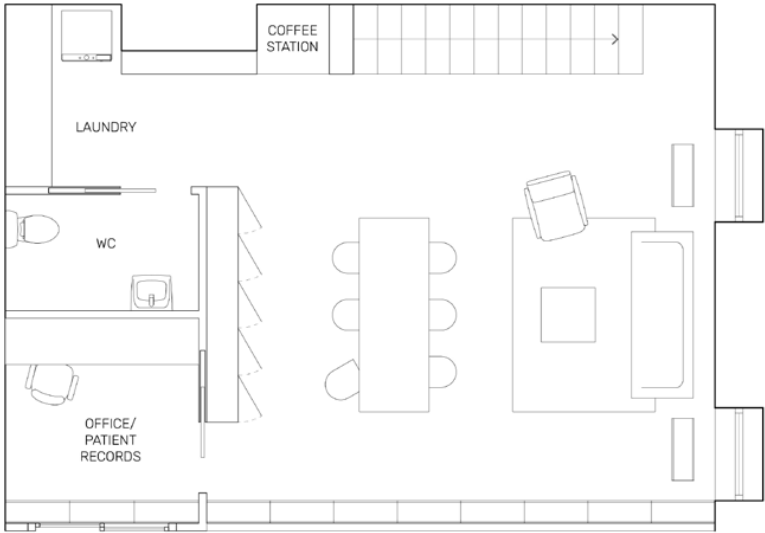
Dirty Theory is a method of practice, where “distinctions between low and high culture are easily undone”, where messmates, or more-than-human relations are embraced, where dirt is used as a metaphor to embrace the contravening of norms. For me, Dirty Theory manifests as: dirty drawings, which embrace collage and the mixing of disciplines; collections and lists of information; a centering of care, repair and maintenance.

Detail of Text Drawing (Below)
Text Drawing (Right)



Elderly daycares also provide care for caregivers. “The invisible second patients” experience high rates of burden, social isolation, physical ill-health, and financial hardship. Daycare facilities allow for the commoning of resources and group support to offer respite to caregivers, and a stimulating environment for dementia patients, integrated into the existing community.

Mezzanine Plan (Above)
Section Through Clinic (Below)





AN AMBIGUOUS SPACE FOR QUEER BODIES

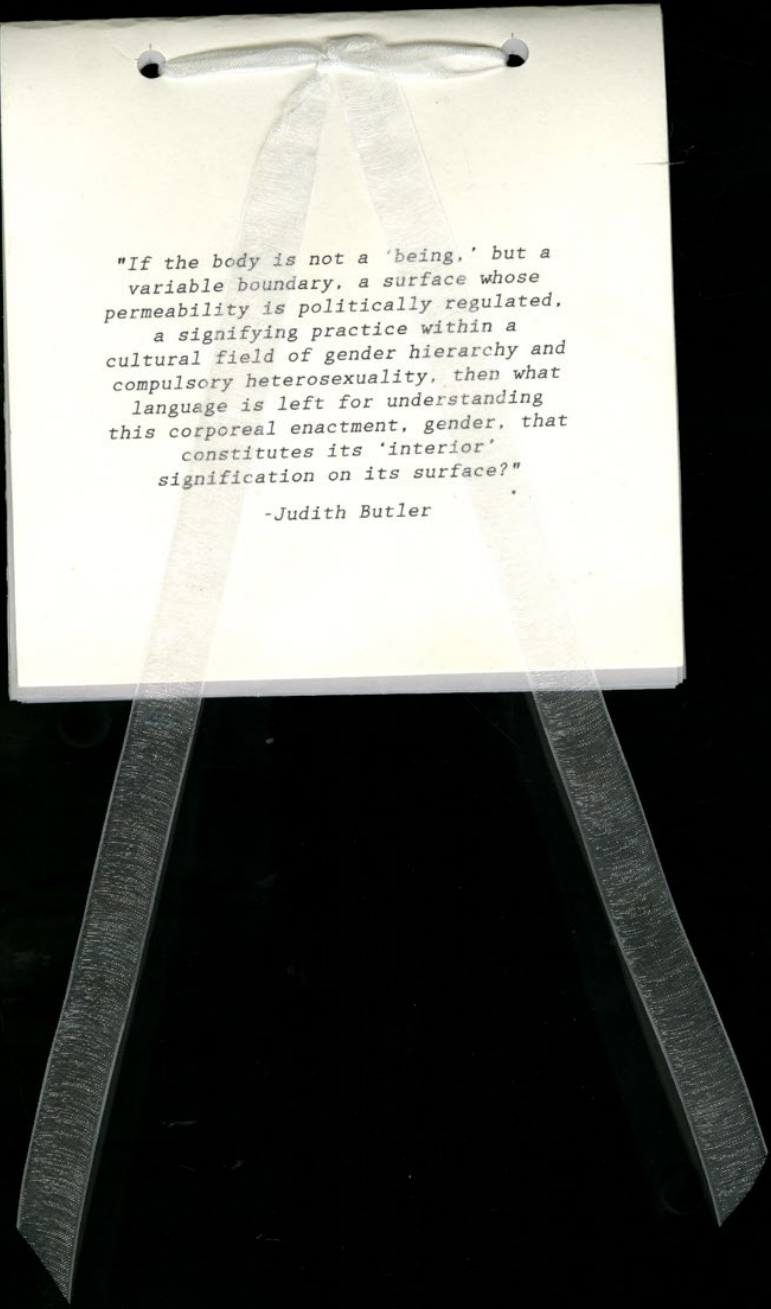
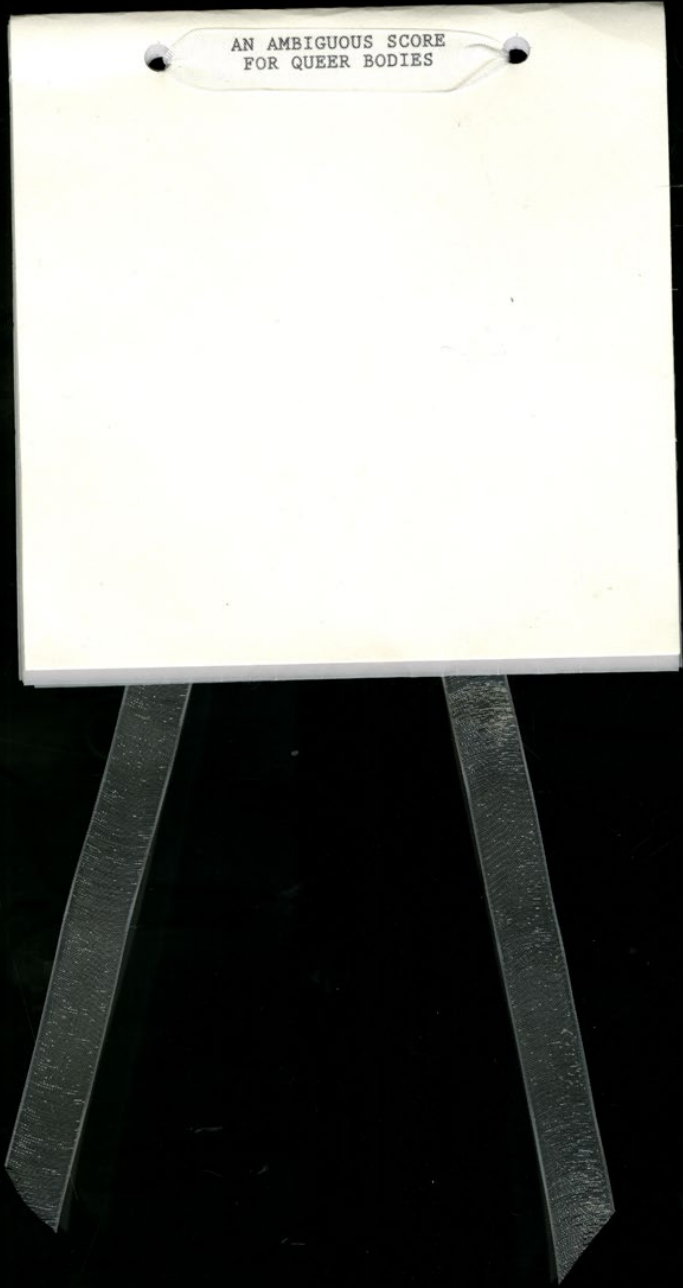
What is left of Clit Club is fragmented, scattered, blurry. Its former site in the Meatpacking District has been sterilized, commercialized. This project borrows Clit Club's strategies of operation – mutability, intimacy, obscurity, repulsion, community, dissemination – to create a space which serves and benefits anyone who falls under the umbrella term of “queer”. To be queer is to transgress. Curtains skirt around the existing structural grid, working around and pushing against. The ground and basement levels are collapsed, creating opportunities for voyeurism and connection.

The only fixed program of the site is that of a laundromat. Other programs include art exhibits, film screenings, performance, parties. More intimate programs are also accommodated – counselling, prayer, hookups. While this project proposes a configuration of spaces, the curtain railing system is intentionally mutable. Spaces are temporary and can easily be transformed via the layering, collapsing, tying, and moving of curtains.

Advanced V Studio
Sumayya Vally / Adnan Kasubhai
Meatpacking District, New York
Fall 2025

Individual Work



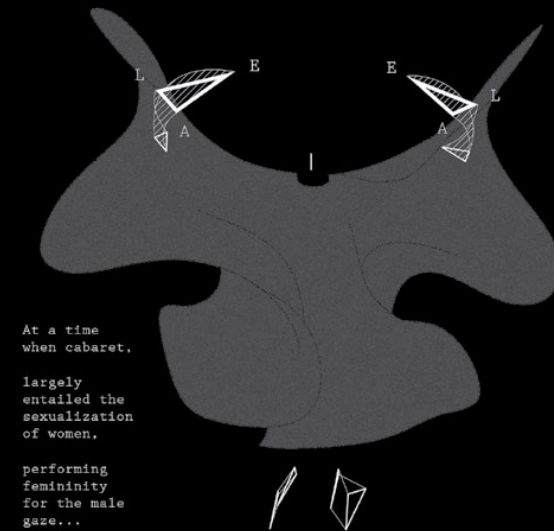


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A queer body is "a body that challenges societal norms and heteronormative structures regarding gender and sexuality".

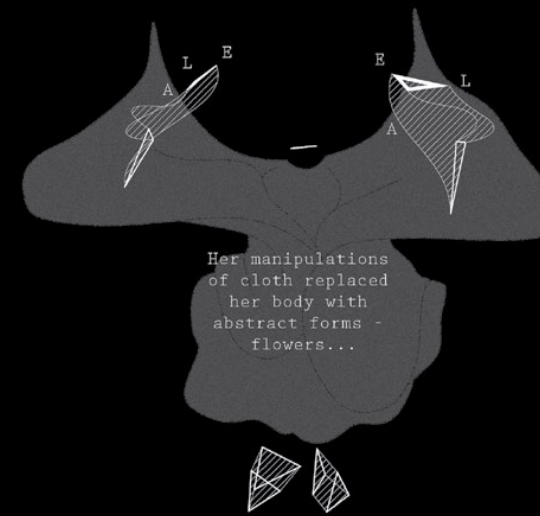
Loie Fuller is a queer body.

+



At a time when cabaret, largely entailed the sexualization of women, performing femininity for the male gaze...

+



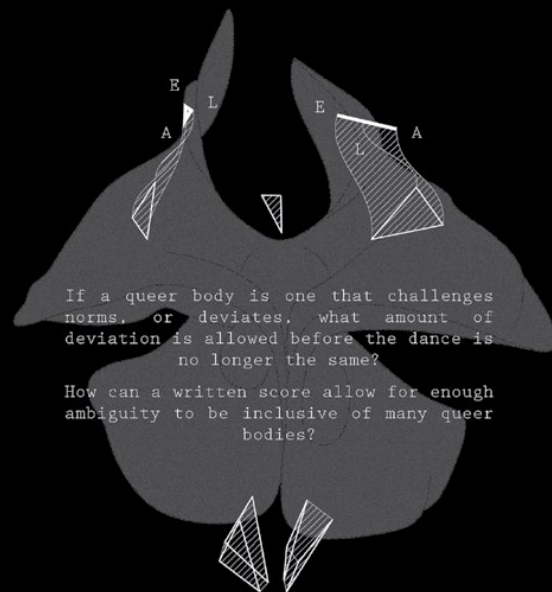
Her manipulations of cloth replaced her body with abstract forms - flowers...

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- the Serpentine Dance was unpatentable. It was imitated by many.

+

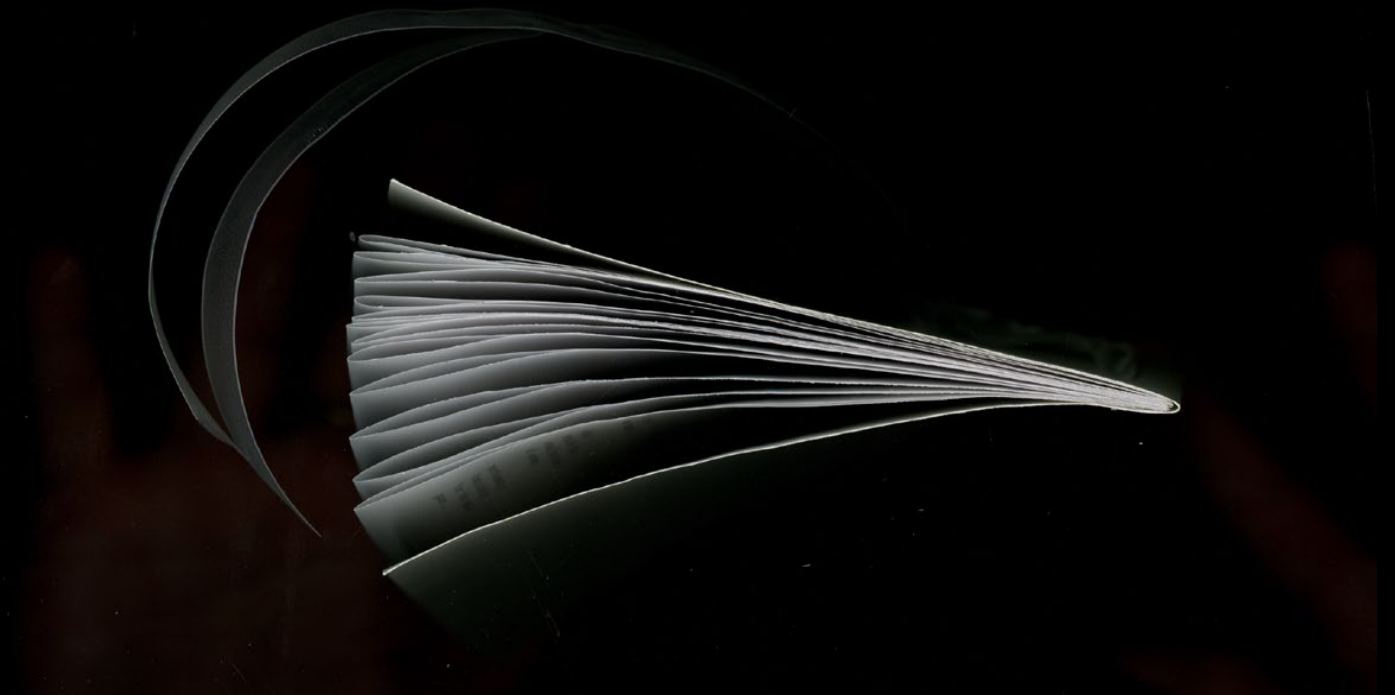


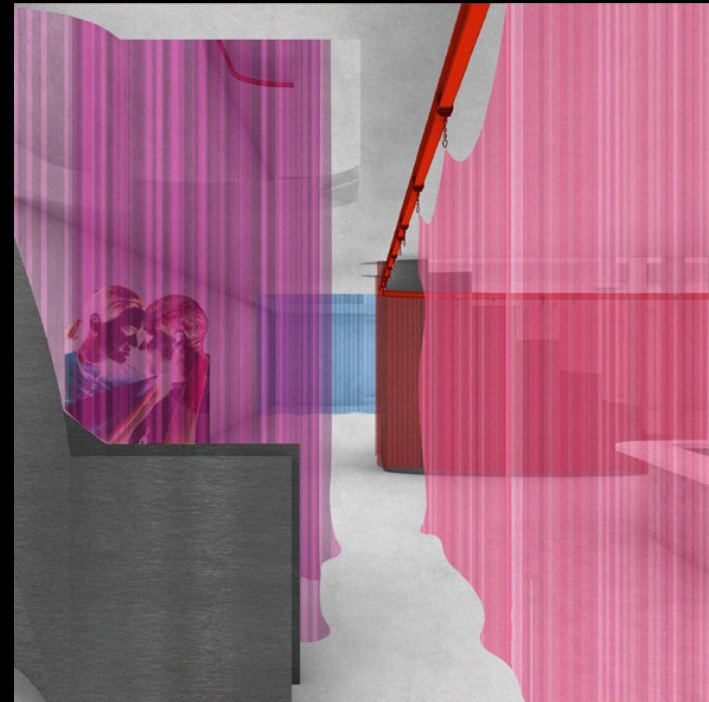
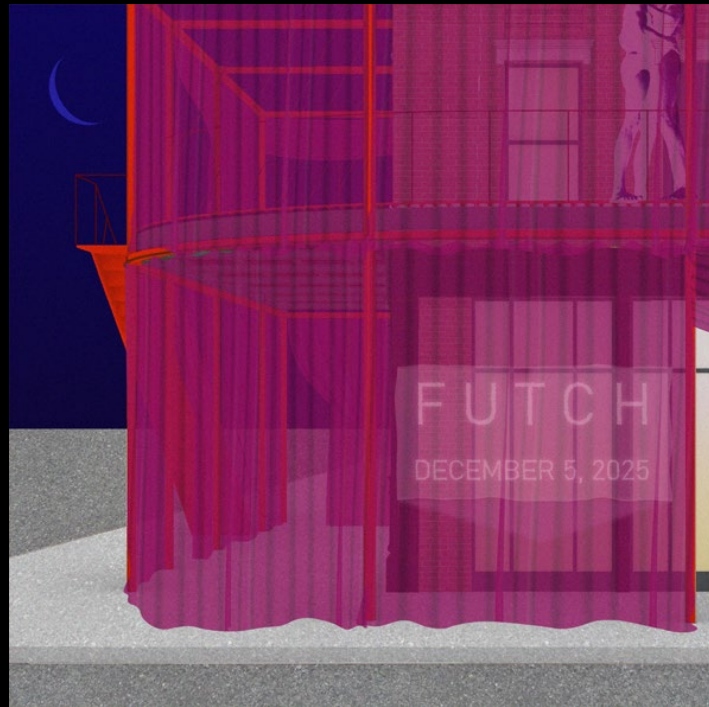
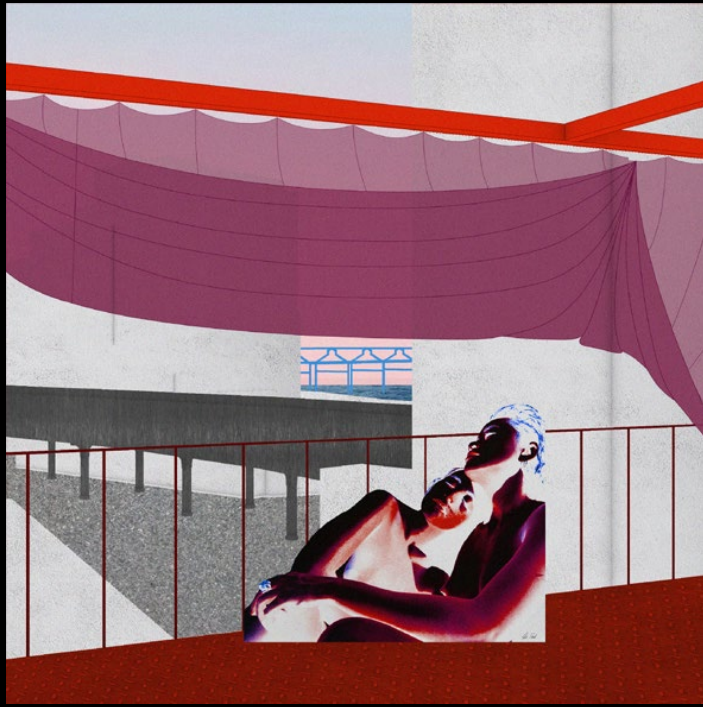
If a queer body is one that challenges norms, or deviates, what amount of deviation is allowed before the dance is no longer the same?

How can a written score allow for enough ambiguity to be inclusive of many queer bodies?

This set of drawings plots the motion of three queer bodies. Each scene is taken from a freeze frame of the dance, and captures the current position of hands and feet (the only body parts visible from behind the silk), and the motion of each move in the sequence. These points are connected to express a range of motion.

The book is bound via French fold, the outline of the fabric caught between pages, existing only as a shadow. It is a reversal of what is seen. Foregrounding the bodies instead of the fabric. Revealing the mechanics of the dance. Revealing what is hidden.



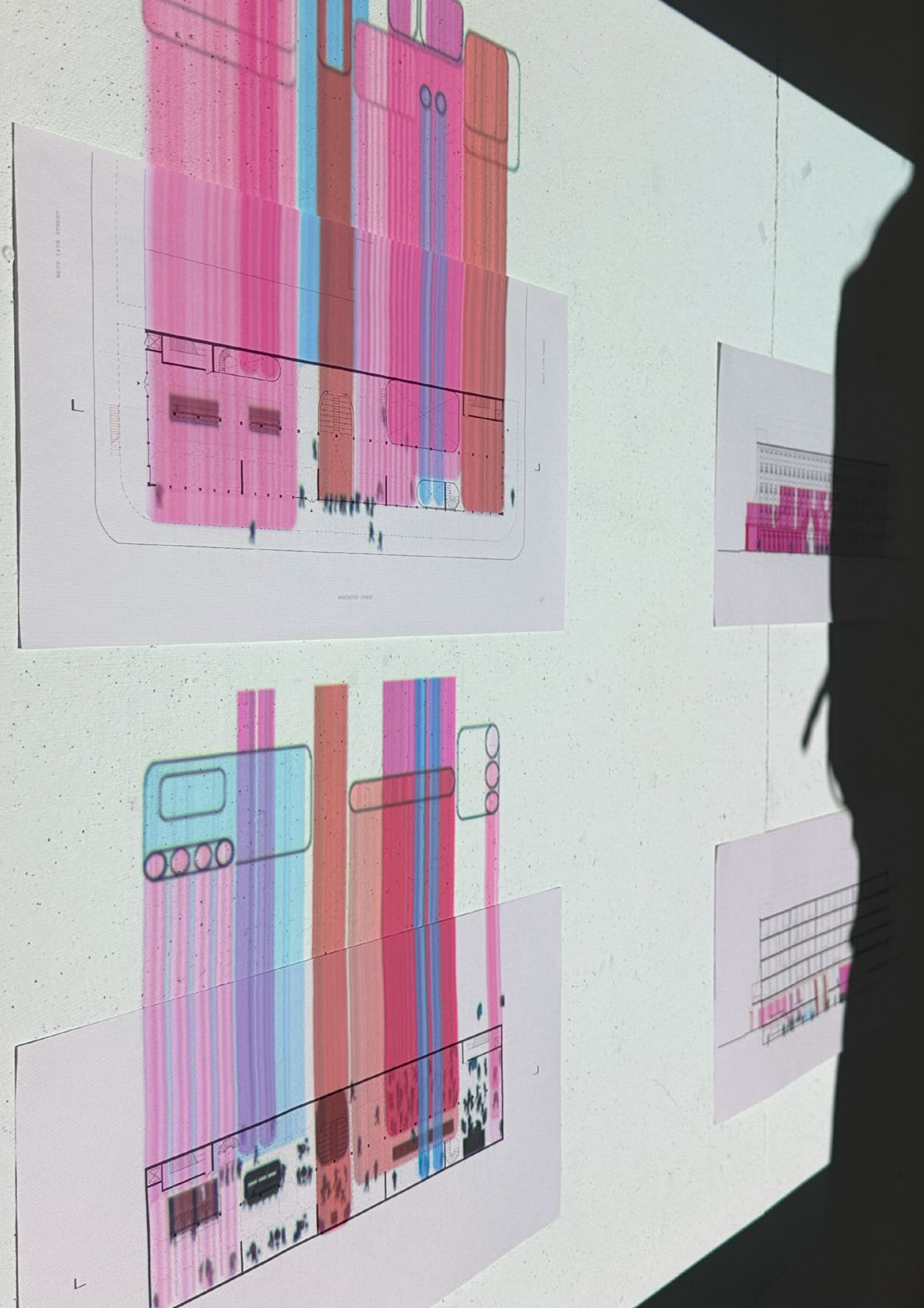


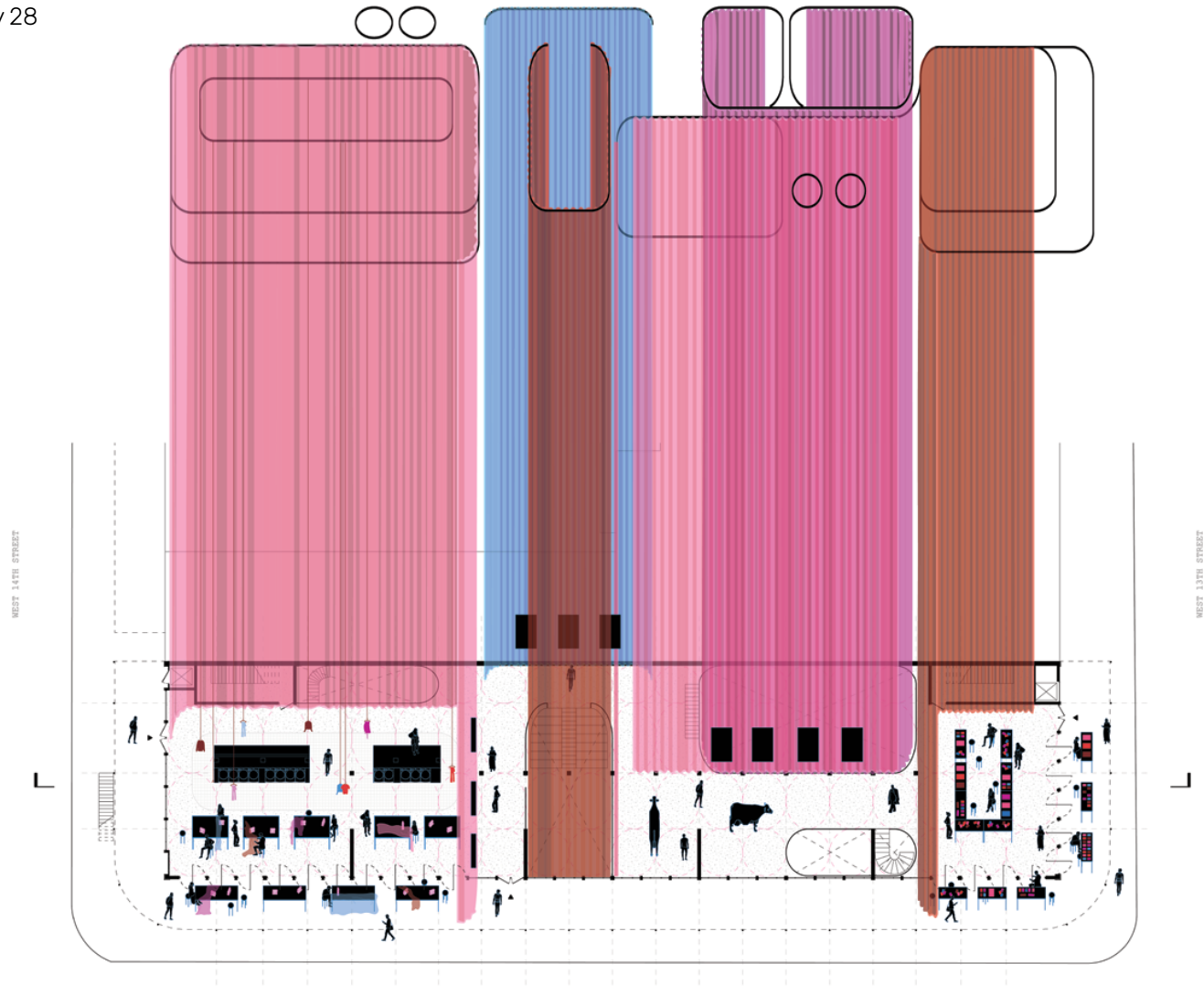
432 West 14th Street is queer space. The building becomes Loie Fuller's dematerialized body, enveloped in shrouds of fabric, bits of life revealed from behind curtains. This project borrows Clit Club's

strategies of operation - mutability, intimacy, obscurity, community, dissemination - to create a space which serves and benefits anyone who identifies as "queer".

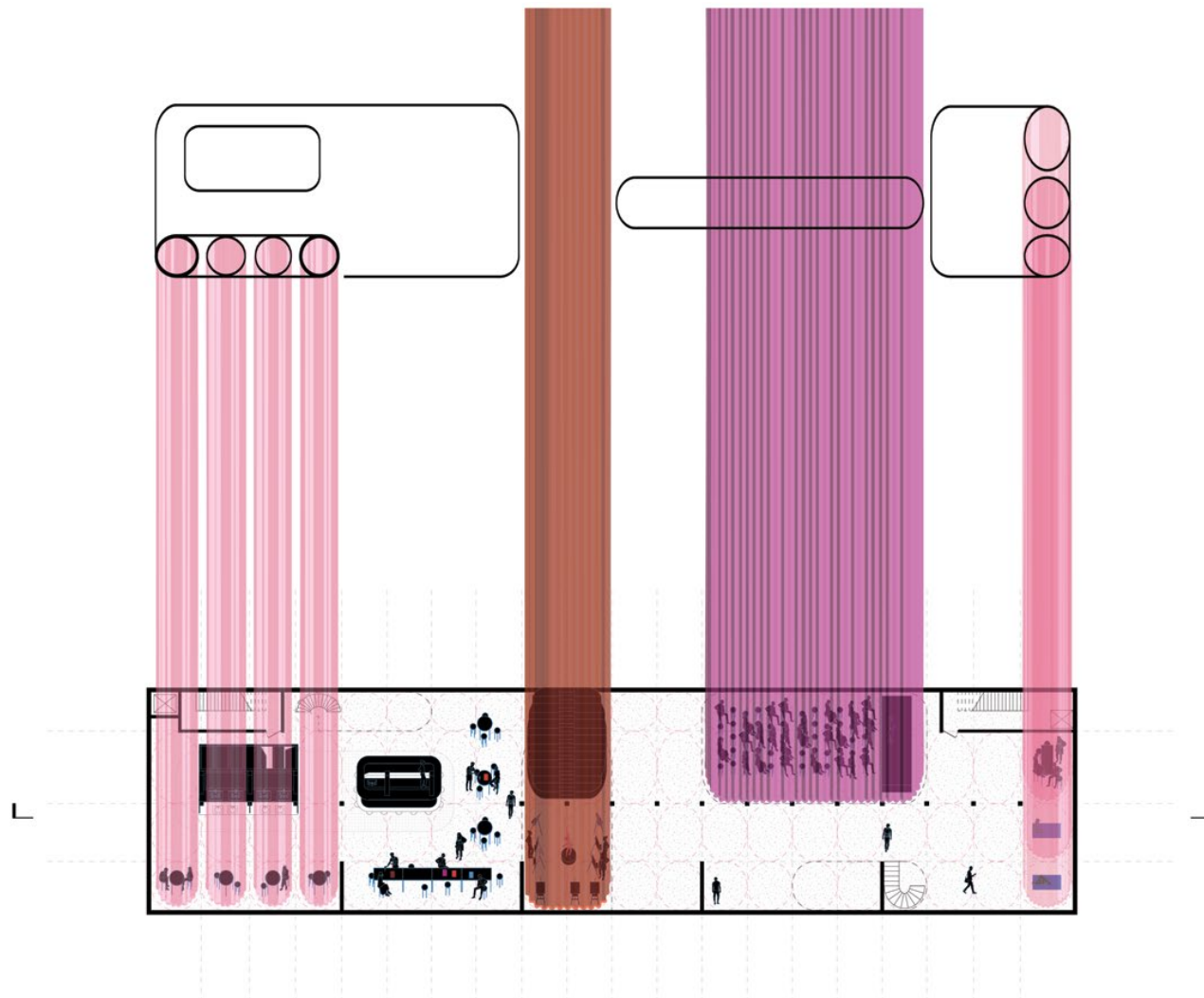
Vignettes (Above)

Projected Drawings (Right)

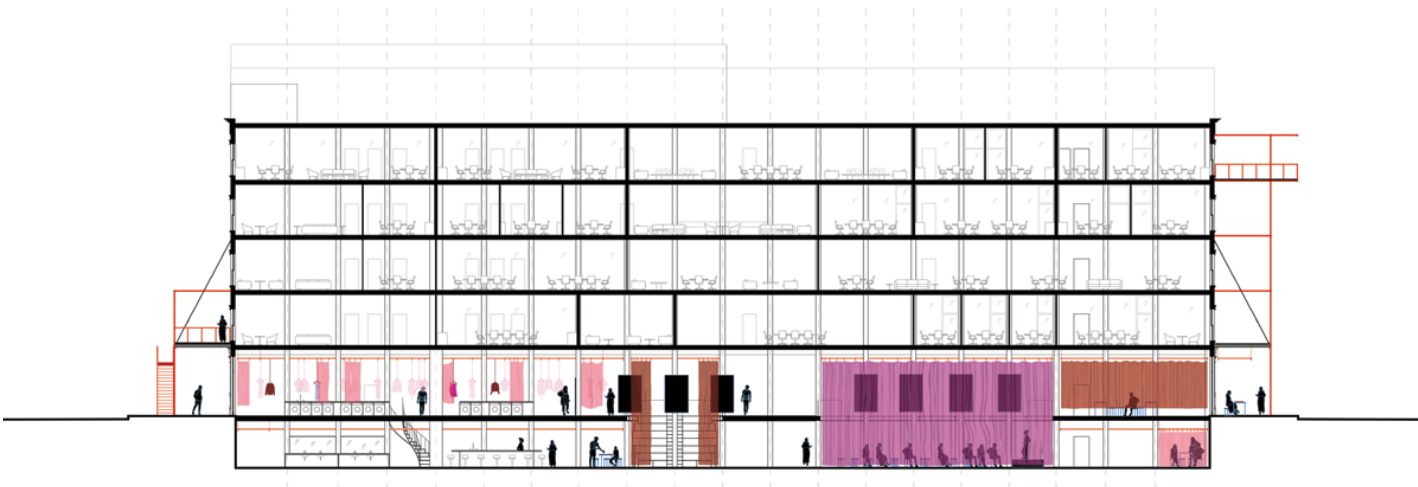


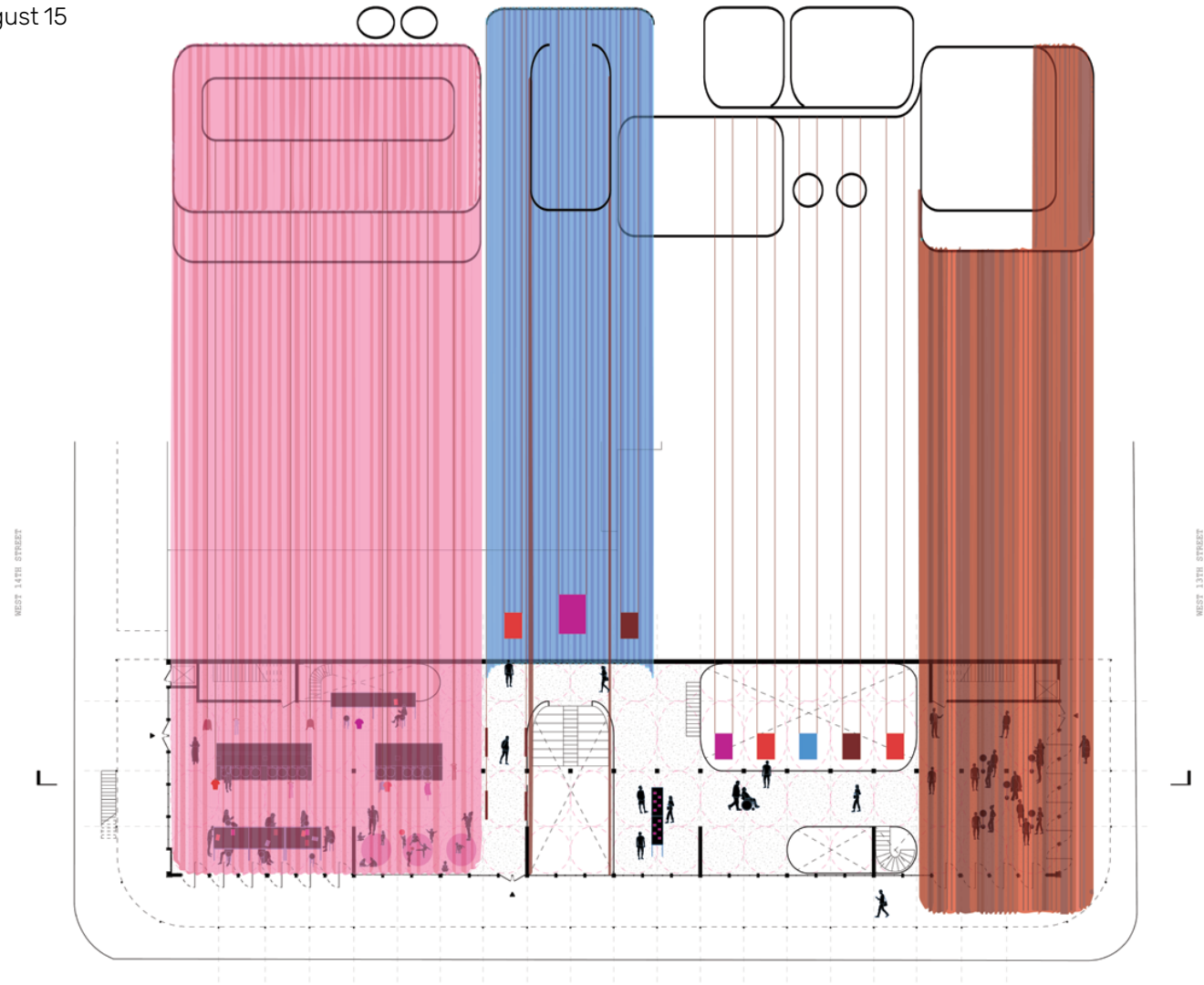


A mending workshop is underway. We are fixing any curtains that need repair, and fabricating new ones for an upcoming art show. There is a new solo artist, Ariel Schneider, exhibiting their work in the gallery. He makes cows out of salvaged leather. A zine fair spills out onto the sidewalk to catch the attention of passerbys.

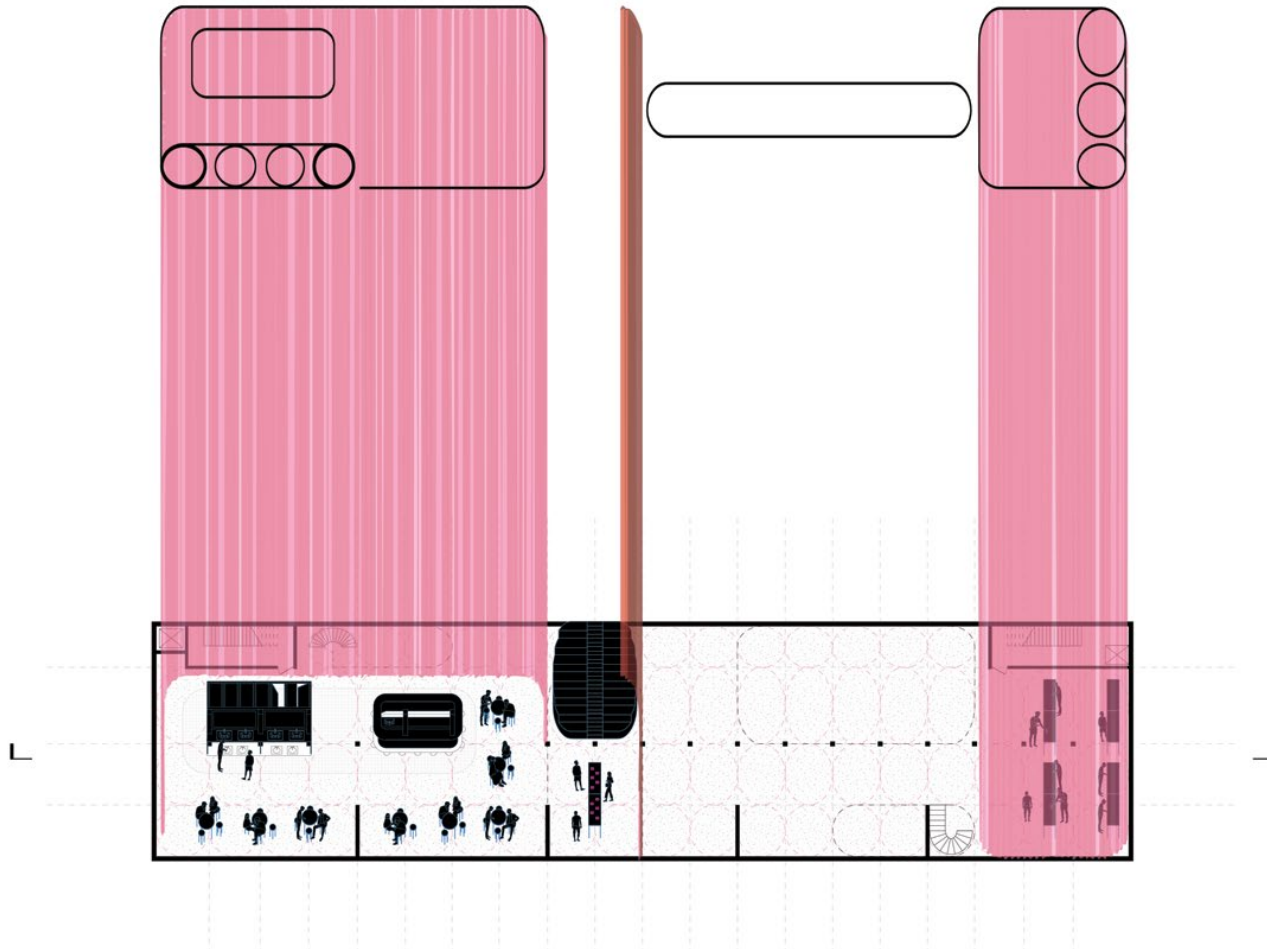


Downstairs the cafe is open and a few people are coworking. Curtains have been drawn in the corner for one-on-one counselling. Jack Halberstam is having a lecture on the anarchitecture of Gordon Matta Clark. A figure drawing class. Someone from the offices upstairs is praying. A few individuals are cruising.

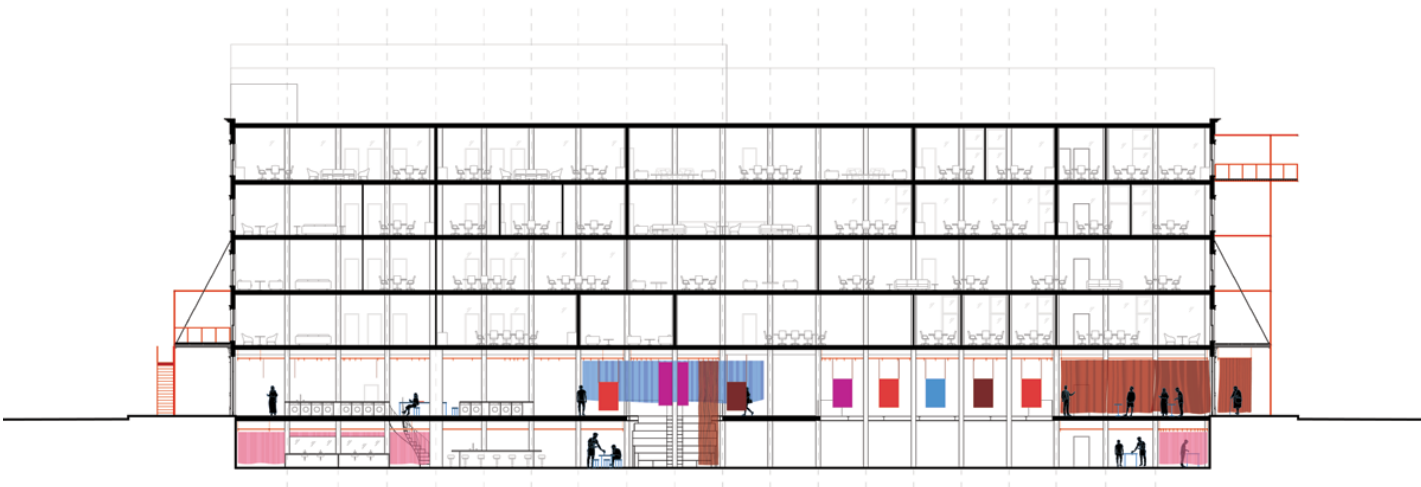


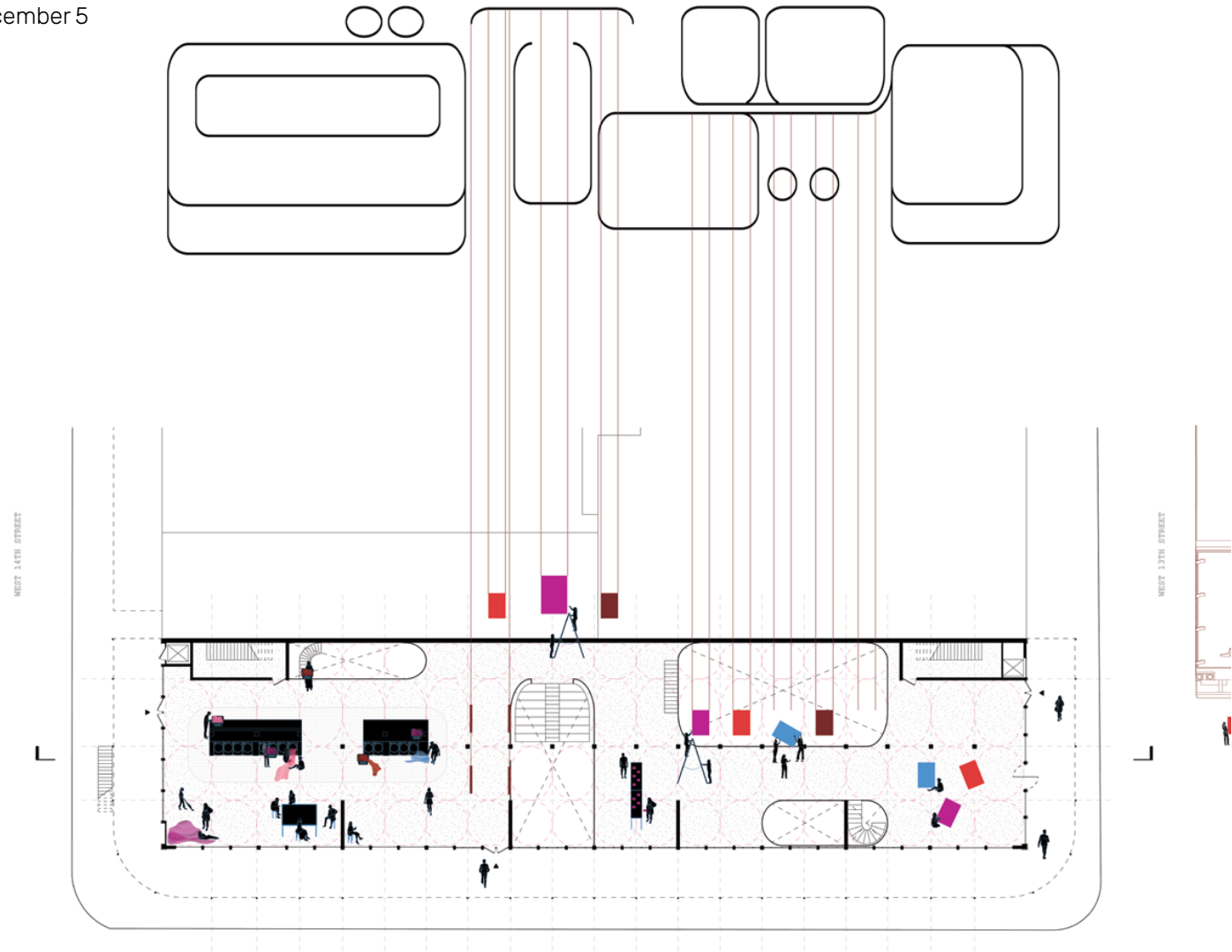


A few families are in to do their laundry. The teenagers have a corner to themselves for homework. The younger ones have their own space to play and the parents take turns supervising. Tonight is the opening night for Lola Flash's photography exhibition, focusing on their cross colour work.

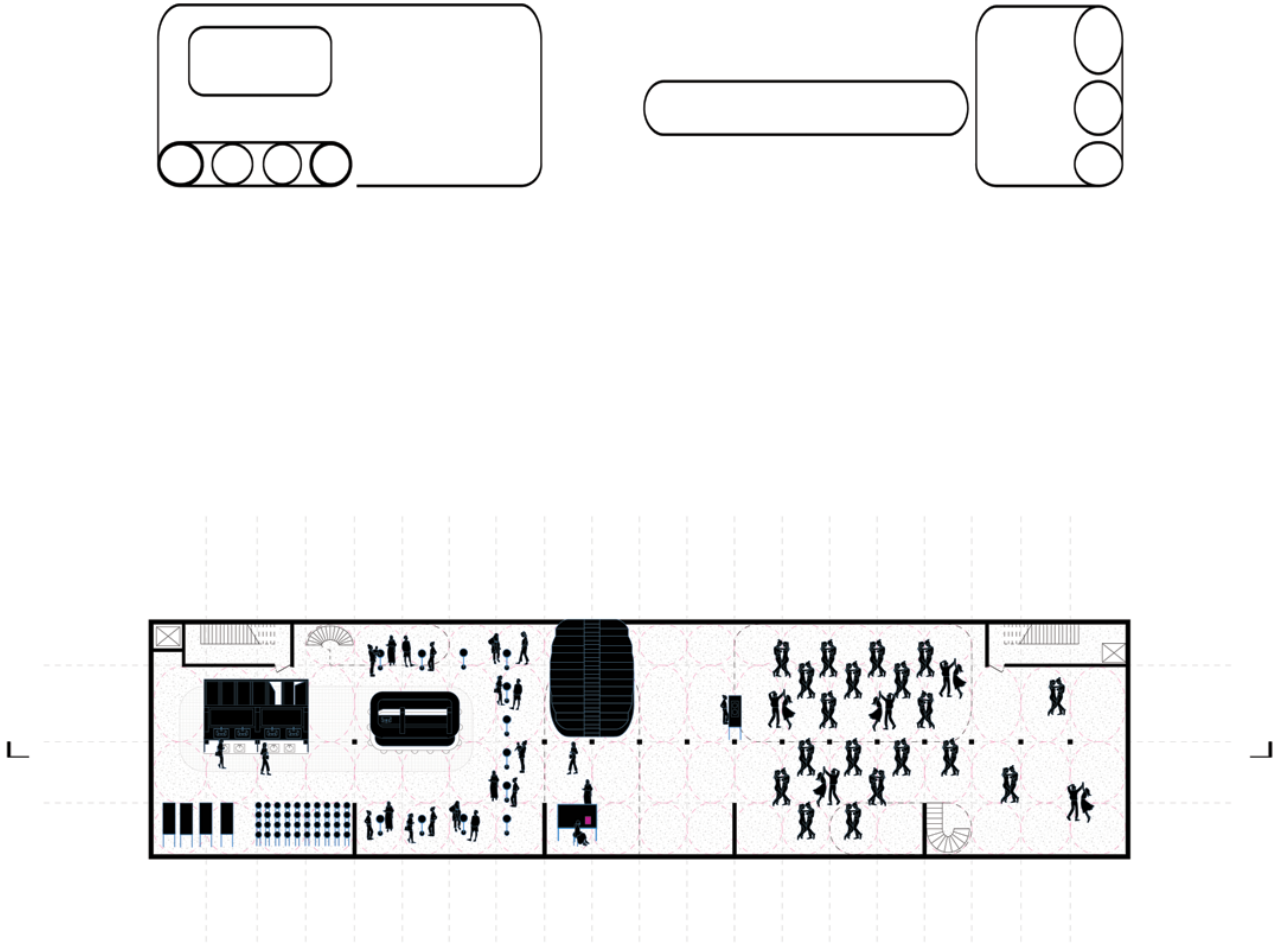


Catering is set up downstairs and they have their own staircase for shuttling food to the event. A few visitors for the art show are in the bathroom, they exchange opinions and talk about the work when they meet at the sink. A corner has been reserved for an after work support group.

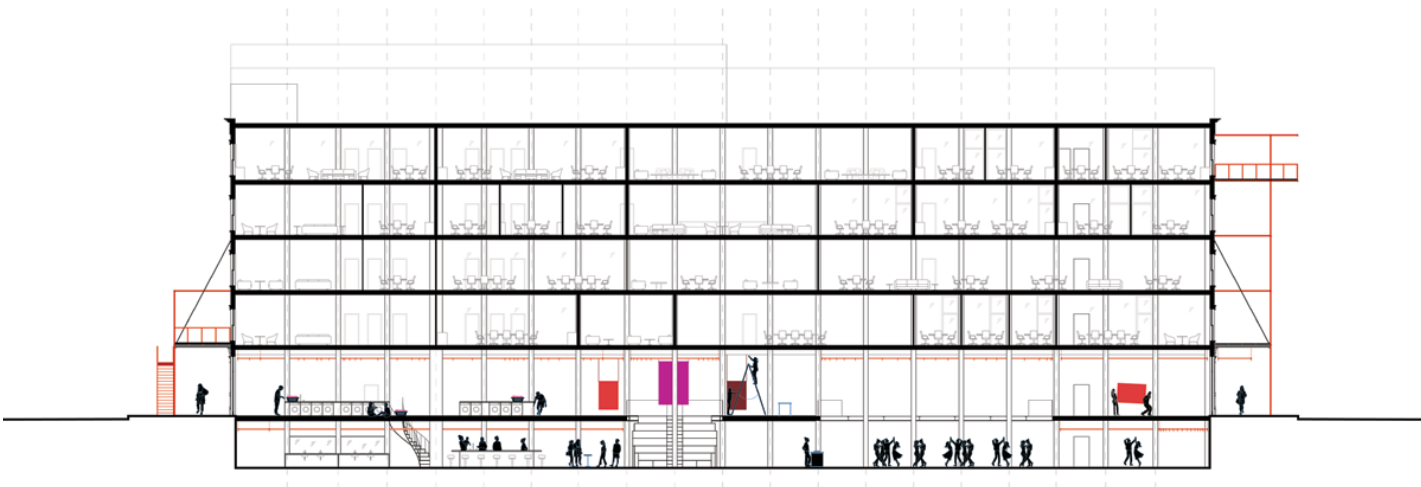


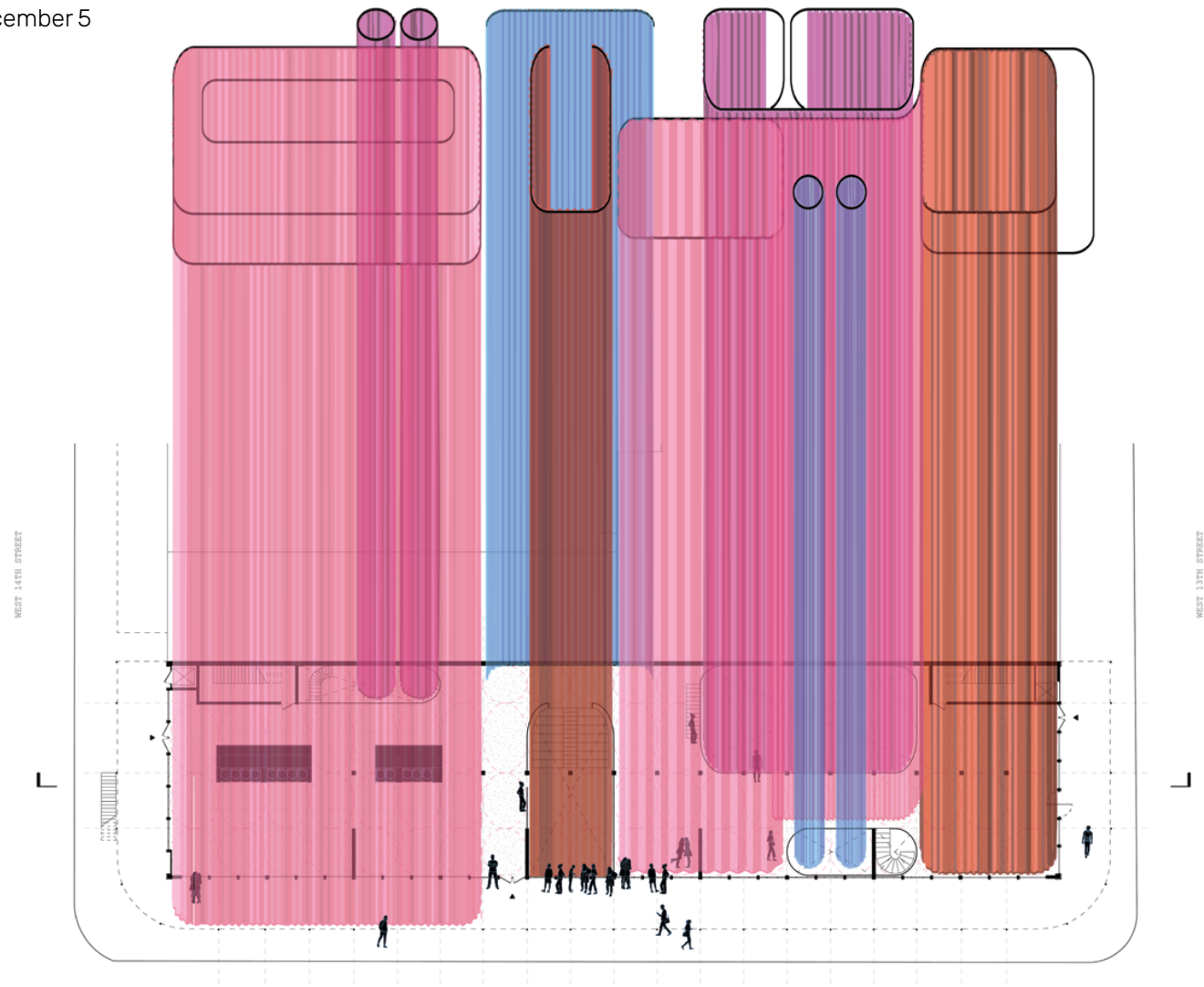


Today is curtain cleaning day, so volunteers have taken down all the curtains and have brought them to the laundromat. A few people are having a break and people watching. The last art show is also being taken down. Photo frames hung from the curtain rails are unhooked and brought to a truck waiting on West 13th Street.

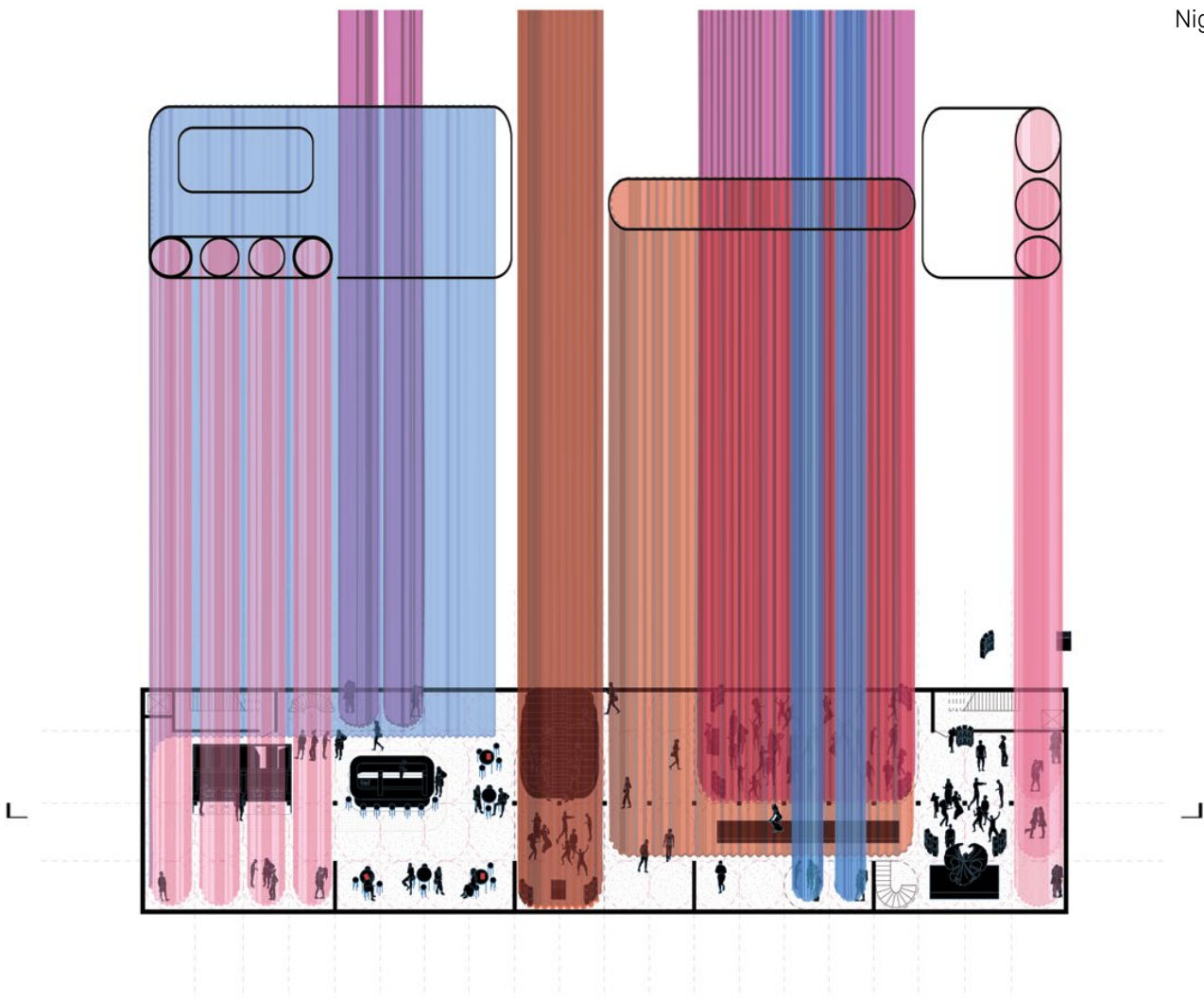
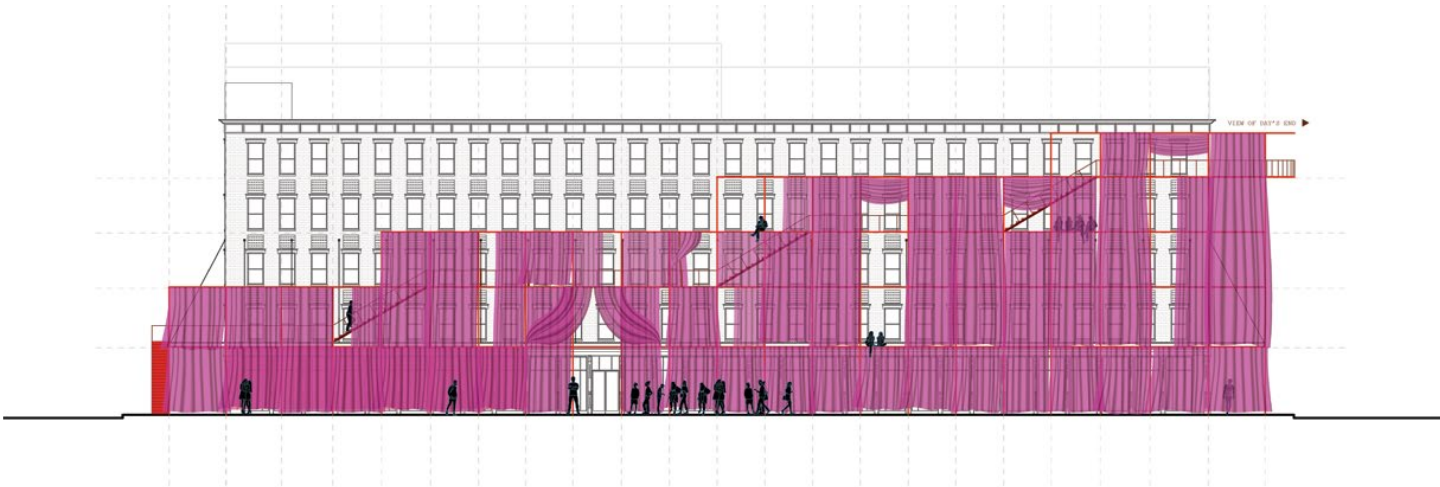


Lesbian speed dating is happening downstairs, as well as queer ballroom dance classes. Some furniture is being stored for another event next week.

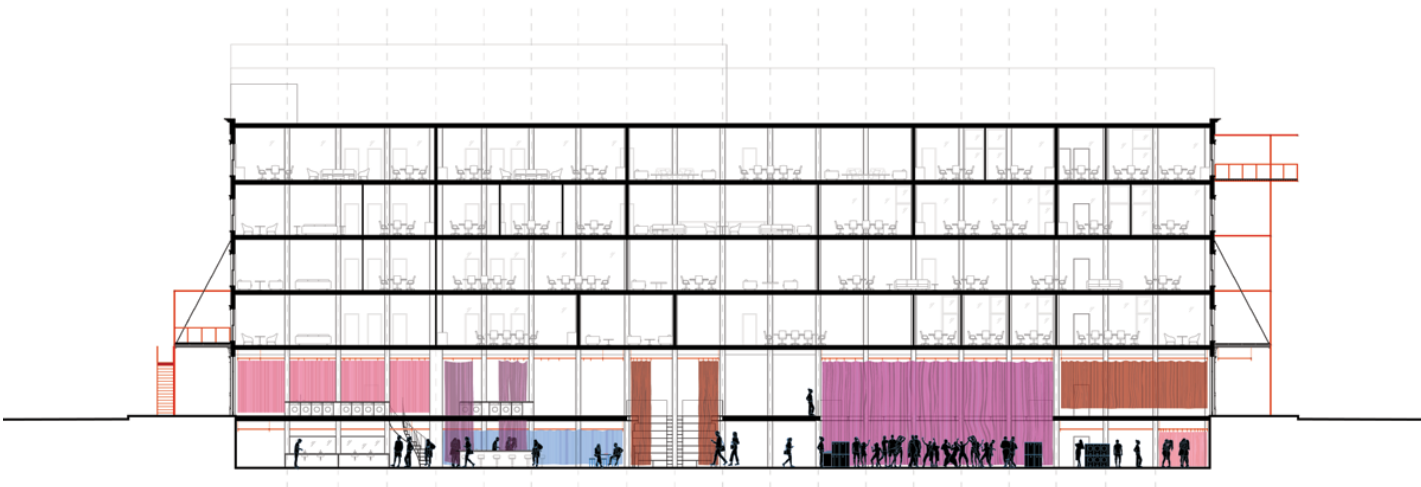




A butch is manning the front door, checking IDs. Downstairs, Clit Club is in full swing. Curtains have been closed to create multiple focal points, different music sets. A drag queen is performing on the runway, Loie Fuller is contorting her dress into infinite new shapes.



A few groups are gathered by the bar, catching up. There's a line at the bathroom, couples are having sex in the stalls. And in different corners of the club. And behind curtains. And on crowded dance floors.



STONES ALSO DIE

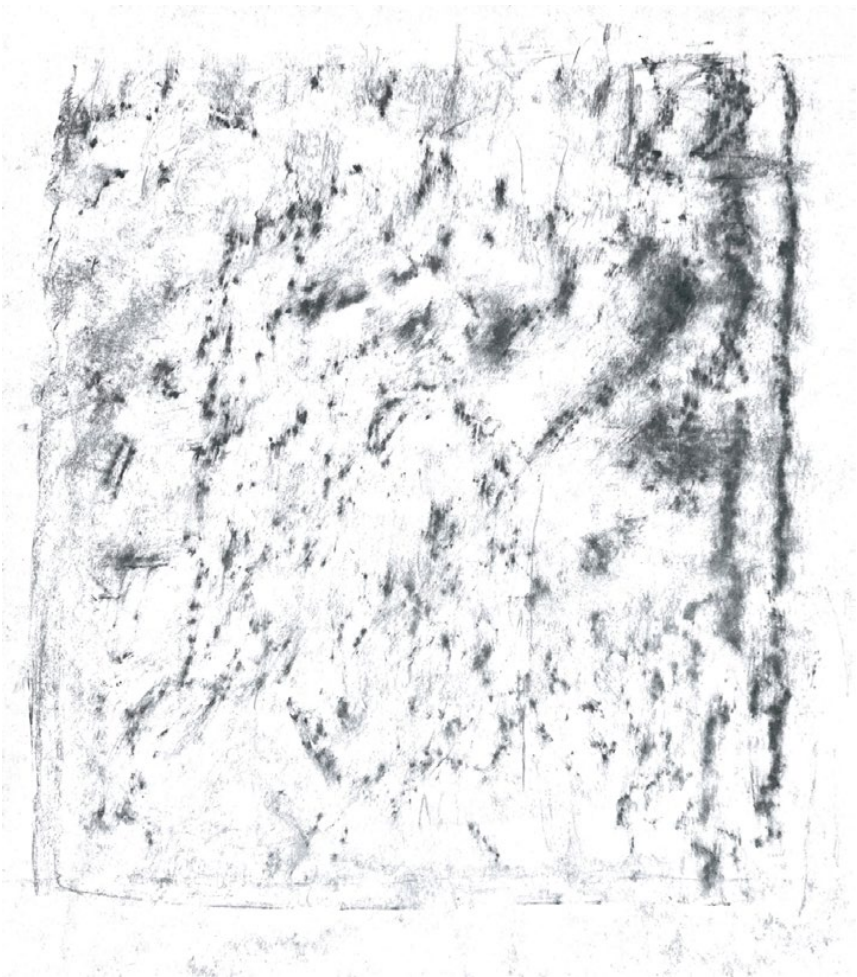
The Waqf is a legal document based on the concept of waqf charity in Islamic societies. Through the waqf framework, I identified a “ruined” site (the unbuilt National American Indian Memorial at Fort Tompkins, Staten Island), a charitable program, the community of users, the administrator, assets for long term maintenance, and imagined futures to adapt with time to continue its charitable obligation.

“We make Waqf the 1876 blocks of granite, brick, and sandstone, which constitute Fort Tompkins at Fort Wadsworth, Staten Island, and the land on which the fort sits. Any and all salvaged materials from the site of Fort Tompkins carry their Waqf through their repurpose and movement.”

(Title references Lucia Allais’ chapter, from Designs of Destruction.)

Advanced IV Studio
Ziad Jamaledine
Staten Island, New York
Spring 2025

Individual Work
Waqf with Didier Lucceus



Charcoal Rubbing of Fort

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.
Praise be to God alone,
and may God bless her after whom there is no prophet, her family and her Companions and grant them peace.

[1] Waqf "object" or Waqf "property"

We make Waqf the 1876 blocks of granite, brick, and sandstone, which constitute Fort Tompkins at Fort Wadsworth, Staten Island, and the land on which the fort sits.

Any and all salvaged materials from the site of Fort Tompkins carry their Waqf through their repurpose and movement.

The Waqf of the material of the Fort, and the identification of beneficiary parties, are brought in solidarity with one another through their commonality of erasure.

As such, the disassembled material of the Fort will be shared with relevant beneficiary parties sited at 1460 Forest Avenue Staten Island, New York.

[2] Waqf Assets

In the spirit of reciprocity, Santander Bank Branch ID: 2137 will share its revenue 50-50 with the Ramapough Lunaape community in exchange for half of the disassembled fort material, and ongoing maintenance, care, and handling of said material.

Santander Bank Branch ID: 2137 sits on the now heavily degraded remains of the Cherry Lane Cemetery.

Drivers will incur a \$3.75 fee for driving on the portion of Forest Avenue between Livermore Avenue and Eldridge Avenue and Barrett Avenue, during weekdays from 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm excluding holidays.

Additionally as the bank branch sits on and incurs revenue due to its location along a primary road for the area, all future profits will incur a service fee of 12%.

Any use of the parking lot of the Angiuli family shopping center will be charged.

[3] Original Donor and Administrator

The Ramapough Culture and Land Foundation, with some support from the National Park Service (limited to the use of NPS equipment, including but not limited to forklifts, cherry pickers, and other tools to assist in the disassembly of the fort).

Religious, cultural, and research institutions clearly and positively connected to supporting the preservation of memory for the described beneficiary parties.

Including but not limited to the Rossville AME Zion Church, The American Graveyard Documentary Team - Heather Quinlan, Caroline DeVoe, Kelly Sheehan, Donald Thoms, Anthony Q. Artist, Crockett Doob, Peggy King Jorde, Debbie-Ann Pige, Dr. Michael Blakely, Lazarus Nazario, Ruben Sibiri - the descendants of the interred at the Cherry Lane Cemetery.

[4] Beneficiaries (Community of users)

The roughly 300 Ramapough Lunaape tribal members who continue to live on Staten Island, and the extended Lenape community which was forcibly dispersed across the "United States", their kin, their kins kin, so on and so forth.

This waqf is intended to benefit communities who have been faced with denial of identity, racism, and displacement. It is for victims of "paper genocide", an ongoing attempt to erase people through their removal or exclusion from historical records. This pertains to an intersectional community on Staten Island.

The Waqf material is designated to those who have been deprived of memory and memorial. Any of the Waqf material disassembled from The Fort should be used in sites which meet the following criteria:

1. In churches, schools, community spaces (nail salons, barbershops, public parks) near or along major roads or highways which were intentionally or unintentionally designed to split, segregate, or divide neighborhoods.

2. At the site of unfairly or improperly obliterated cemeteries, graves, or sites of community identified historical importance.

The fourth benefit is the **impossibility of memorialization** (i.e. a counter monument).

Staten Island is unceded land of the Lenape. The continued use of Fort Wadsworth as a "National Park" is predicated on the dis-possession and displacement of Indigenous peoples. The enduring presence and territorial claim of Indigenous peoples on this land is indisputable.

The American Indian Monument of Staten Island - planned for the site of Fort Tompkins - was conceived to commemorate a "dying race". A seemingly well-intentioned project, albeit misguided and harmful to Indigenous people. A people who have been, and continue to be, living. This Waqf seeks to disable any opportunity for this project to be realized, by dismantling the base on which it was meant to sit, and returning the land to its rightful stewards.

The disassembled fort material will remain under the care and guardianship of the Ramapough Culture and Land Foundation. Their team (compensated using the waqf assets) will operate the processing facility, so that anytime a material needs to be repurposed, it will be disassembled, than documented, tagged, cut, or shaped as necessary at the Fort.

Anytime a material's use, purpose or location changes, it will be tagged. A living archive, this is a system which allows for the preservation of memories by documenting the ongoing activities and evolving needs of two living communities.

The first benefit bestowed by this waqf is a **supply of material** used for land reclamation, protection, and repair. Specifically, this refers to the 1876 stones composing the east wall of Fort Tompkins, which will be disassembled as a condition of this waqf.

As the stones of Fort Tompkins have been made Waqf, the Fort's disassembly yields a considerable amount of building material. All disassembled material will be available for use by the beneficiary parties or those acting in solidarity with the beneficiary parties (with the unanimous consent of the beneficiaries).

Each stone will be tagged, inventoried, and tracked. This allows for each stone to exist in constant circulation, remaining under the care and supervision of the beneficiaries.

The second benefit bestowed by this waqf, is a system of **land reclamation**, by returning the land of Fort Tompkins to its original stewards, the Ramapough Lenape people, and the Cherry Lane cemetery to the Black Americans interred, and their descendants.

The third benefit is a **processing facility** for the ongoing care, maintenance, documentation and repurposing of the waqf material.

The fifth benefit is a **living depot**. As the material moves from the fort to appropriate sites around the Island, it can be used for construction projects which support the beneficiary communities around the Island. Each of the stone assemblies should be constructed without the use of mortar. Stone can be cut to create interlocking joints. However the stone disassembled from the fort should in no circumstance be assembled in a manner which would compromise its future disassembly and reuse by the beneficiaries. Doing so would violate the terms of the Waqf. As such, each assembly exists as a living depot and material bank.

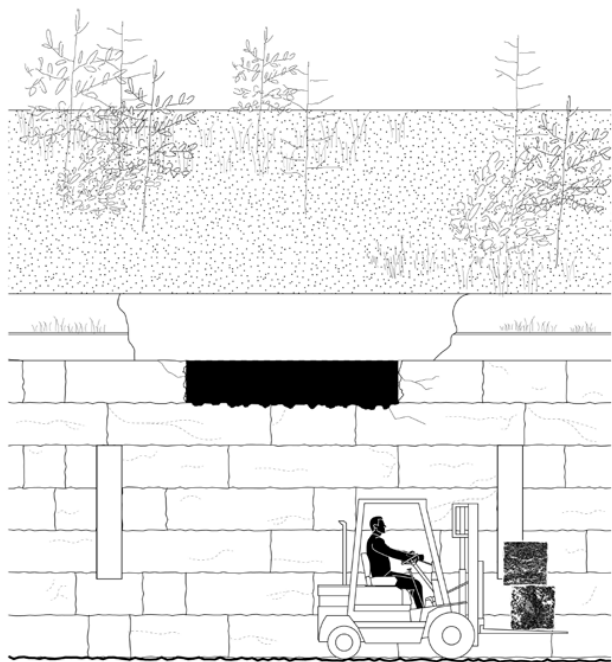
As the beneficiary parties have been identified as those who have been historically or currently denied the sanctity of remembrance, the aforementioned stone assemblies must be used in the construction of spaces which support the formation of memory. This includes, but is not limited to, a toll house for the unjustly destroyed burial sites i.e. former site of the Cherry Lane cemetery.

[6] Imagined Future

The fort may continue to be disassembled should either party require more material to meet the evolving needs of the beneficiaries. For every additional stone passed from Lenape ownership to Cherry Lane, an additional 0.03% of the collected revenue may be collected by the Lenape community. The additional income will be used to pay the labourers processing each stone a livable wage, and to maintain the overall function of the processing facility.

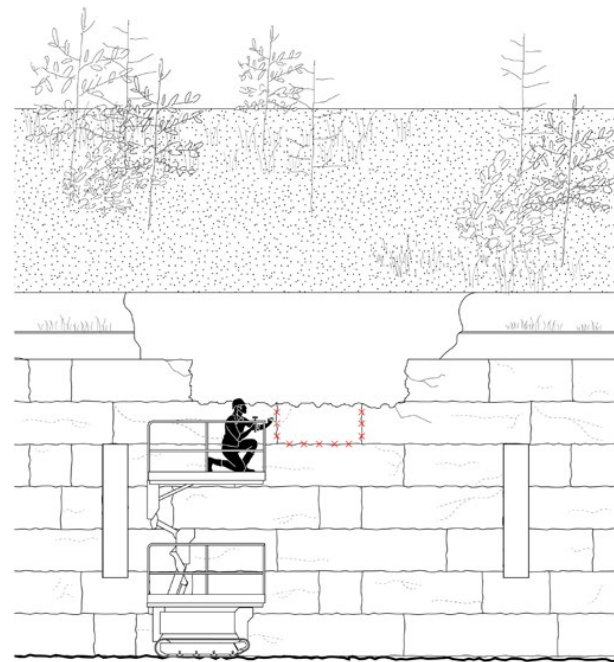
As mentioned, any use of the stone must not utilize mortar or any construction technique which would compromise future disassembly and reassembly in subsequent appropriate sites.

Only with the unanimous consensus of all beneficiary parties can these stone assemblies be disassembled. Once tagged by the operators of the Fort, the stone can be moved and reassembled at another appropriate site on Staten Island.



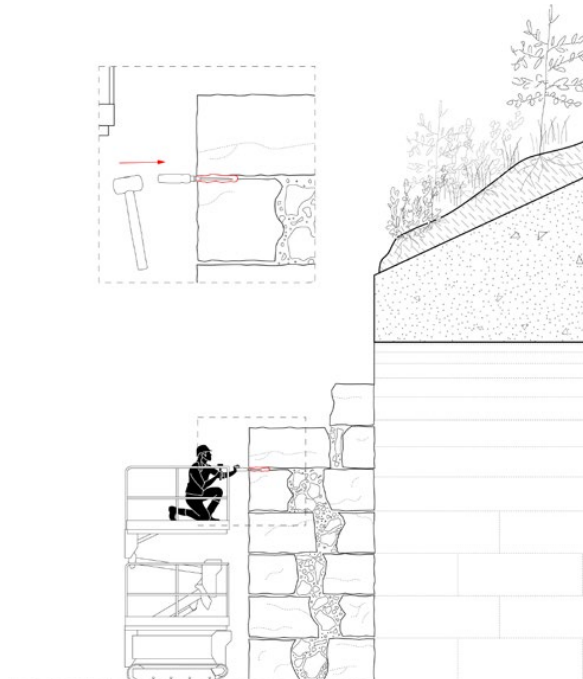
1_Deconstruct Above

1:35



2_Mark

1:35

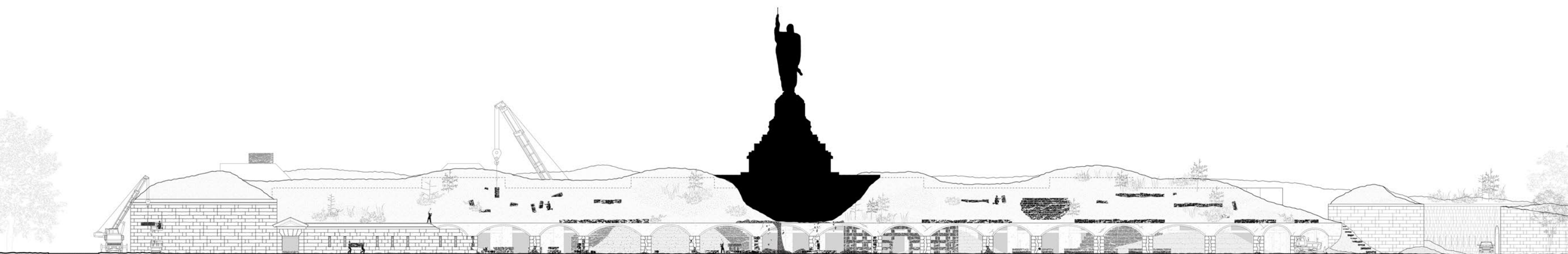


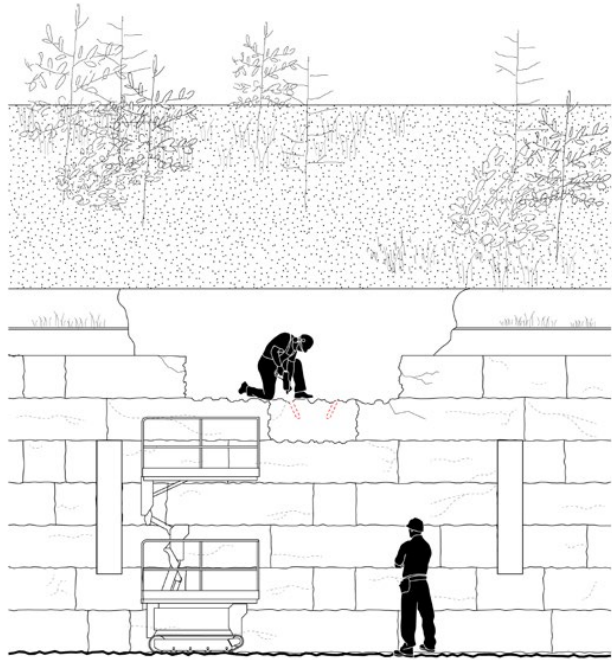
3_Chisel

1:35

Staten Island is unceded land of the Lenape. The continued use of Fort Wadsworth as a “National Park” is predicated on the dispossession and displacement of Indigenous peoples. The enduring presence and territorial claim of Indigenous peoples on this land is indisputable.

The American Indian Monument of Staten Island – planned for the site of Fort Tompkins – was conceived to commemorate a “dying race”. A seemingly well-intentioned project, albeit misguided and harmful to Indigenous people. A people who have been, and continue to be, living. This Waqf seeks to disable any opportunity for this project to be realized, by dismantling the base on which it was meant to sit, and returning the land to its rightful stewards.



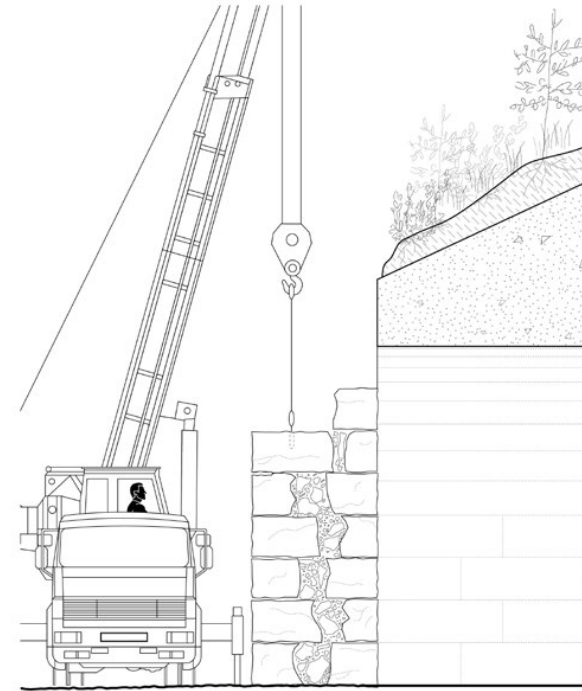


4_Drill

1:35

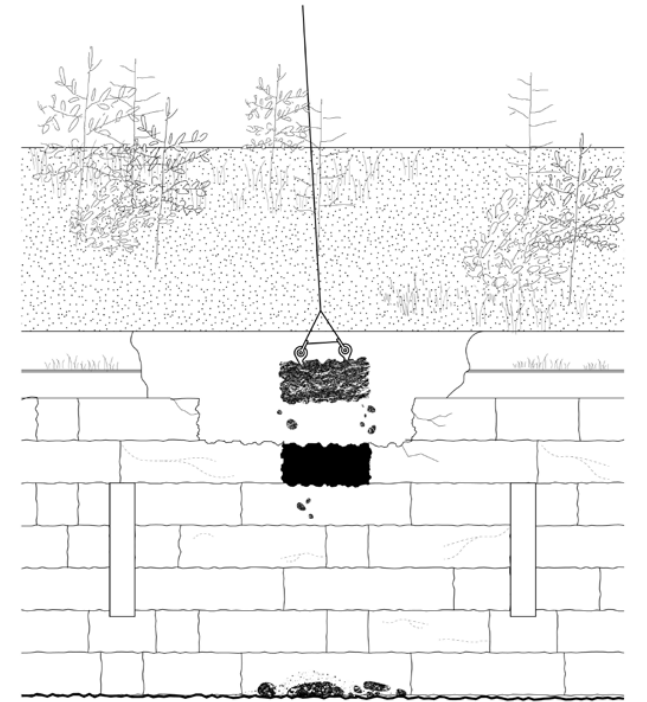
The disassembled fort material will remain under the care and guardianship of the Ramapough Culture and Land Foundation. Their team of labourers (compensated using the waqf assets) will operate the processing facility, so that anytime a material needs to be repurposed (i.e. a new building program is required), it will be disassembled, then documented, tagged, cut, or shaped as necessary at the Fort.

Anytime a material's use changes, it will be tagged by the Fort team to document its journey. Similar to a living archive, this is a system which allows for the preservation of memories by documenting the ongoing activities and evolving needs of two very much living communities.



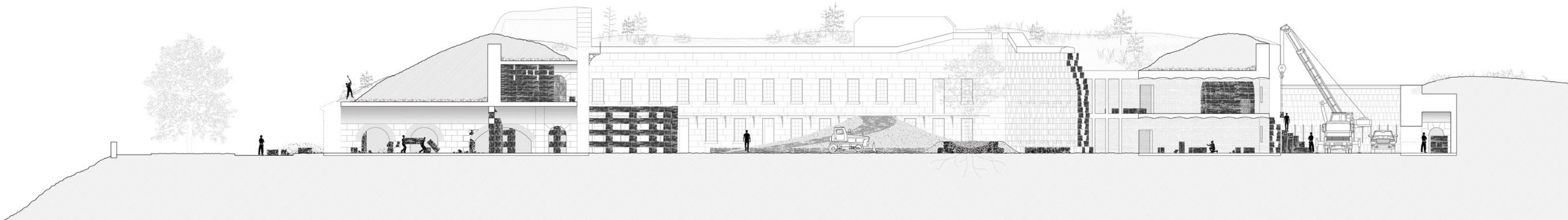
5_Connect

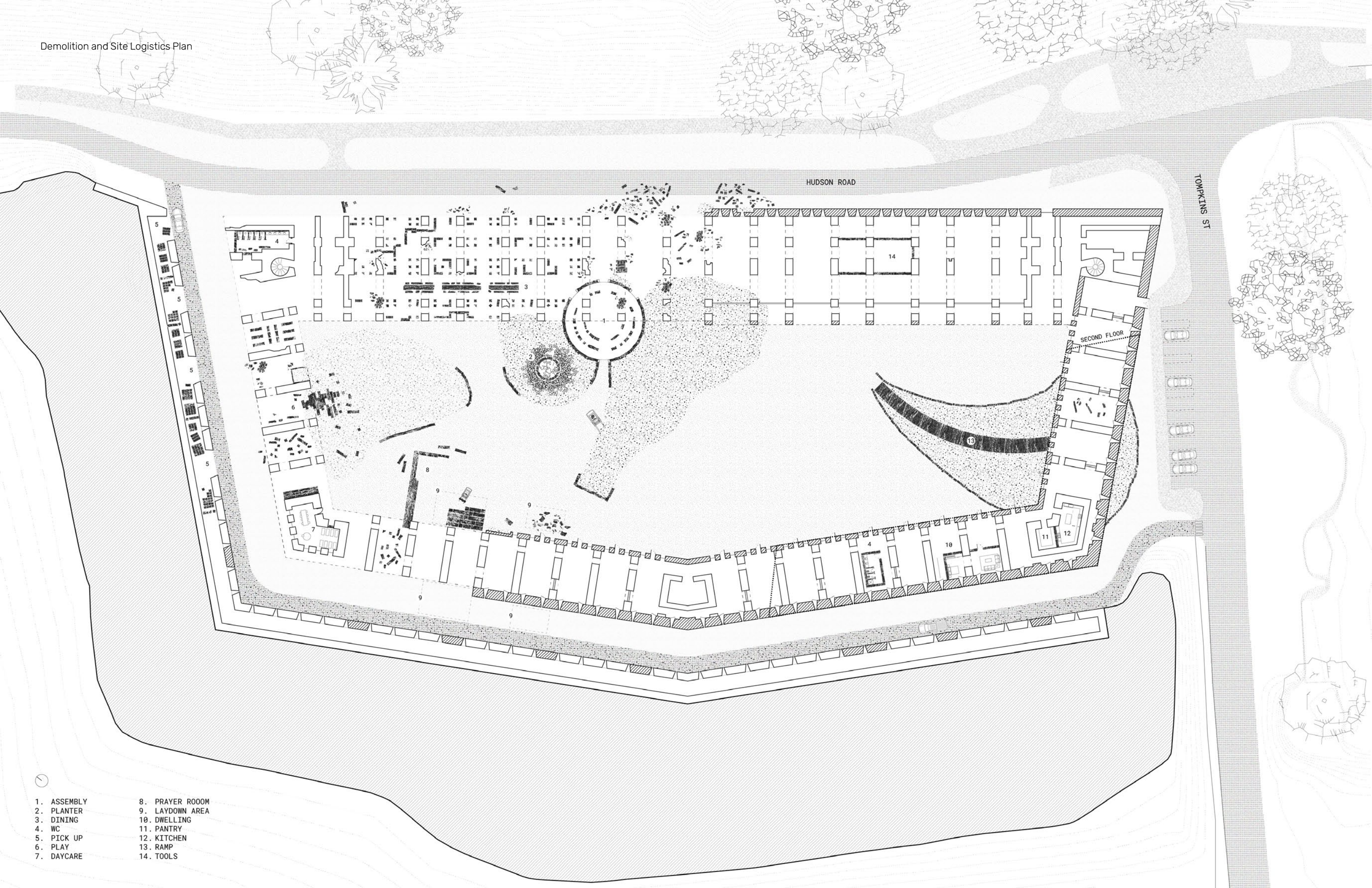
1:35



6_Lift

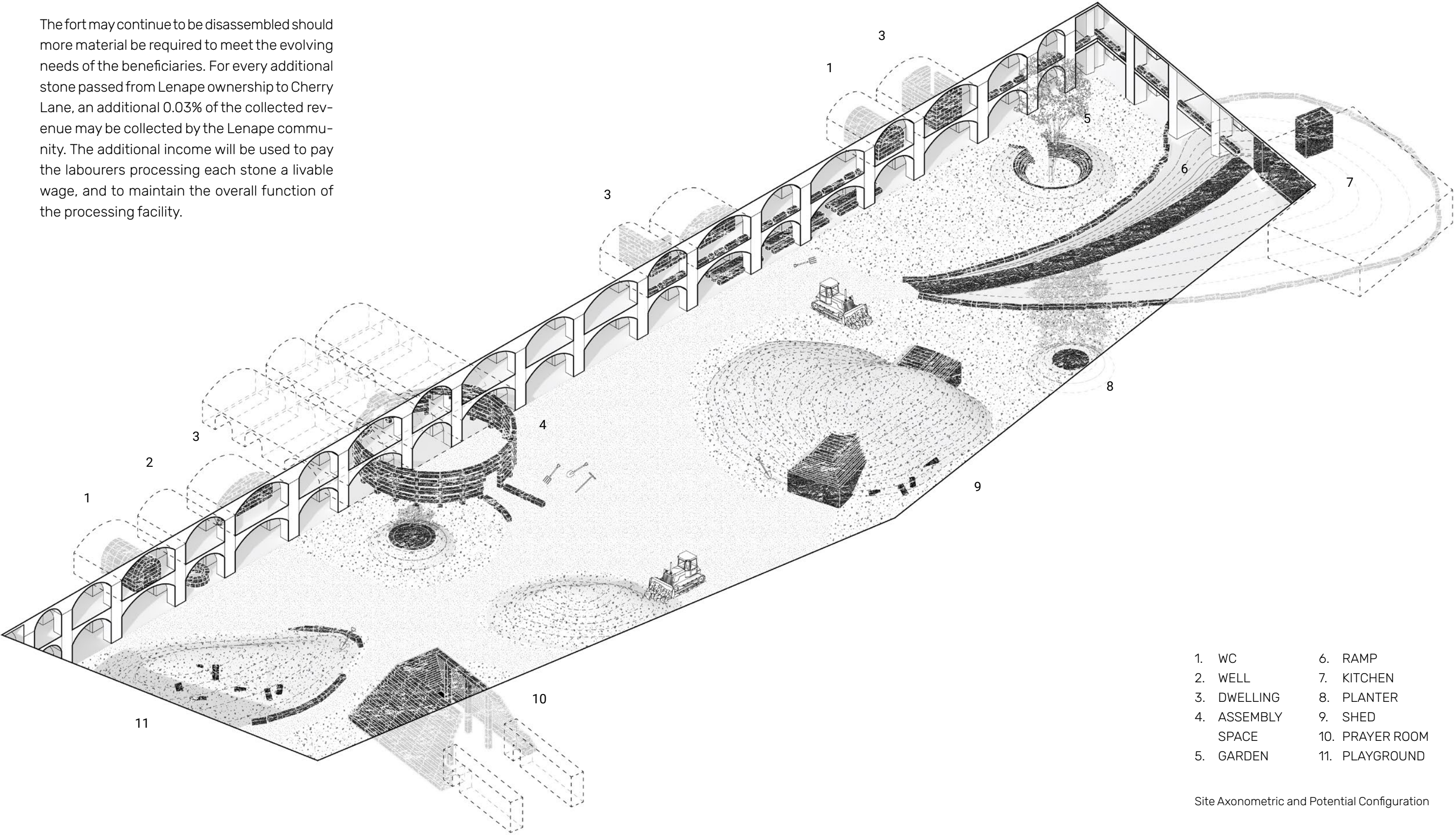
1:35





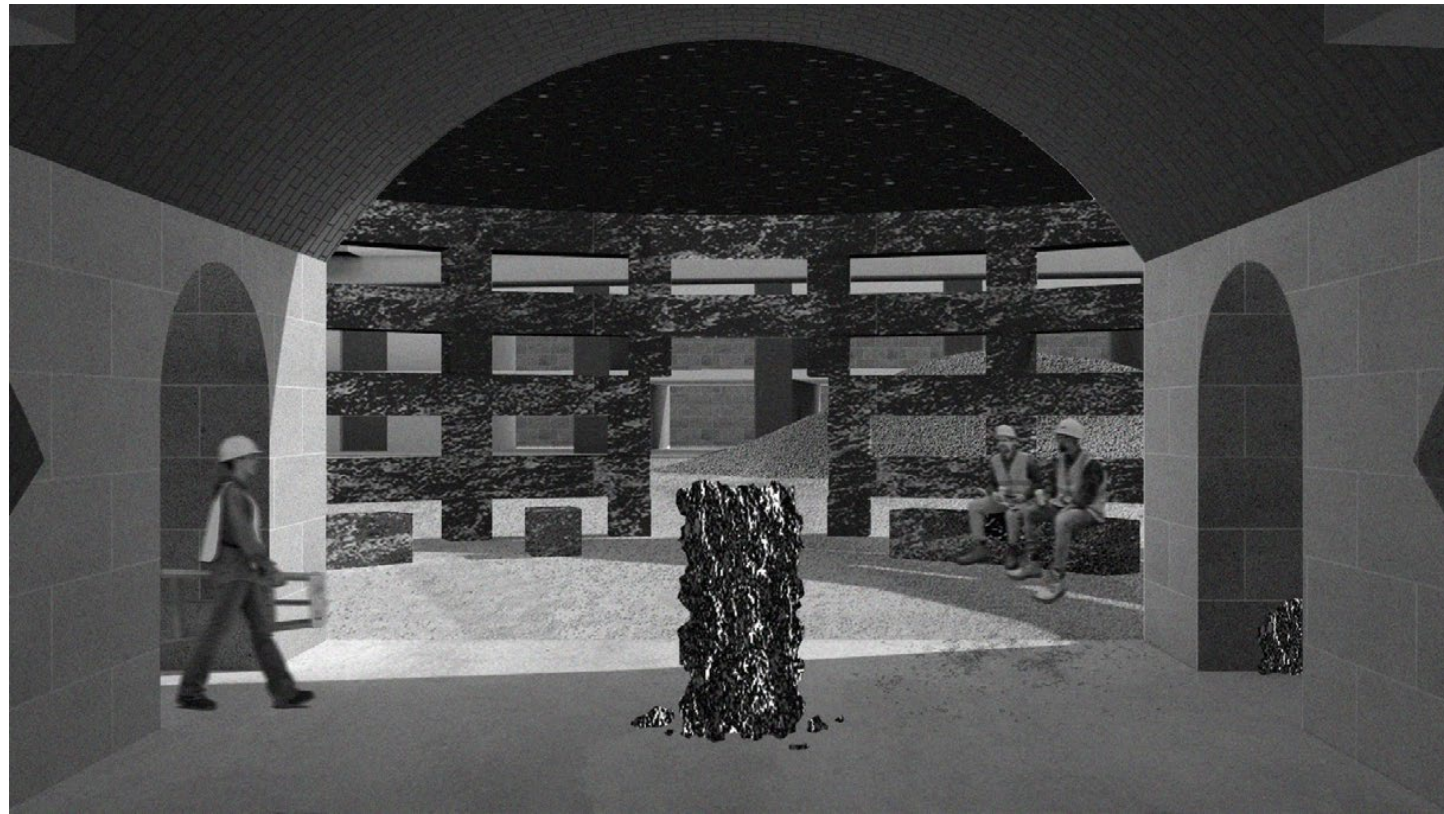
- 1. ASSEMBLY
- 2. PLANTER
- 3. DINING
- 4. WC
- 5. PICK UP
- 6. PLAY
- 7. DAYCARE
- 8. PRAYER ROOM
- 9. LAYDOWN AREA
- 10. DWELLING
- 11. PANTRY
- 12. KITCHEN
- 13. RAMP
- 14. TOOLS

The fort may continue to be disassembled should more material be required to meet the evolving needs of the beneficiaries. For every additional stone passed from Lenape ownership to Cherry Lane, an additional 0.03% of the collected revenue may be collected by the Lenape community. The additional income will be used to pay the labourers processing each stone a livable wage, and to maintain the overall function of the processing facility.



- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1. WC | 6. RAMP |
| 2. WELL | 7. KITCHEN |
| 3. DWELLING | 8. PLANTER |
| 4. ASSEMBLY SPACE | 9. SHED |
| 5. GARDEN | 10. PRAYER ROOM |
| | 11. PLAYGROUND |

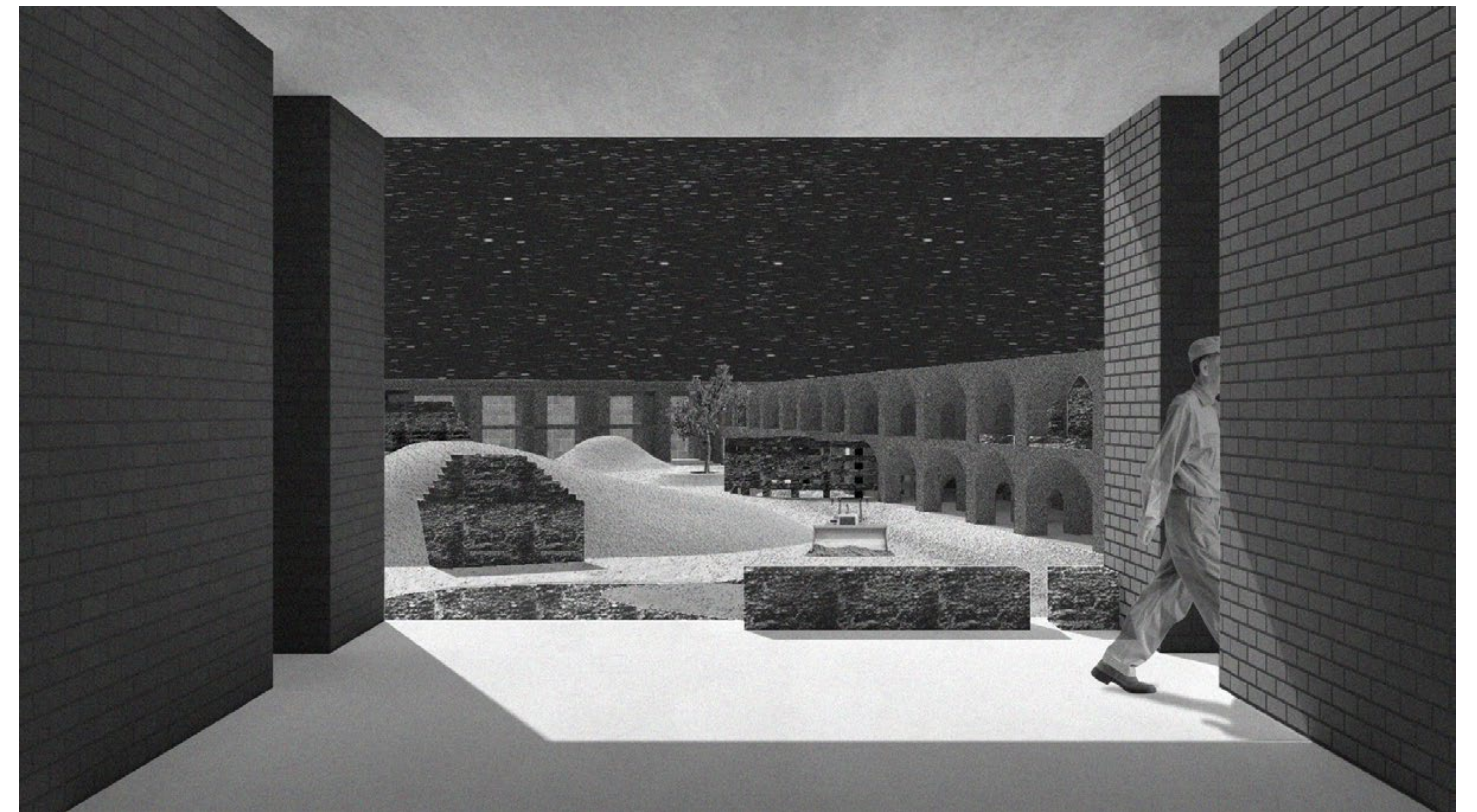
Site Axonometric and Potential Configuration



The first benefit bestowed by this waqf is a supply of material used for land reclamation, protection, and repair. Specifically, this refers to the 1876 stones composing the east wall of Fort Tompkins, which will be disassembled as a condition of this waqf. As the stones of Fort Tompkins have been made Waqf, the Fort's disassembly yields a considerable amount of building material. All disassembled material will be available for use by the beneficiary parties or those acting in solidarity with the beneficiary parties (with the unanimous consent of the beneficiaries). Each stone will be tagged, inventoried, and tracked. This allows for each stone to exist in constant circulation, remaining under the care and supervision of the

beneficiaries. The second benefit bestowed by this waqf, is a system of land reclamation, by returning the land of Fort Tompkins to its original stewards, the Ramapough Lenape people, and the Cherry Lane cemetery to the Black Americans interred, and their descendants. The third benefit is a processing facility for the ongoing care, maintenance, documentation and repurposing of the waqf material. The fourth benefit is the impossibility of memorialization (i.e. a counter monument). The fifth benefit is a living depot. As the material moves from the fort to appropriate sites around the Island, it can be used for construction projects which support the beneficiary communities around the Island.

Ritual Sequence Vignettes



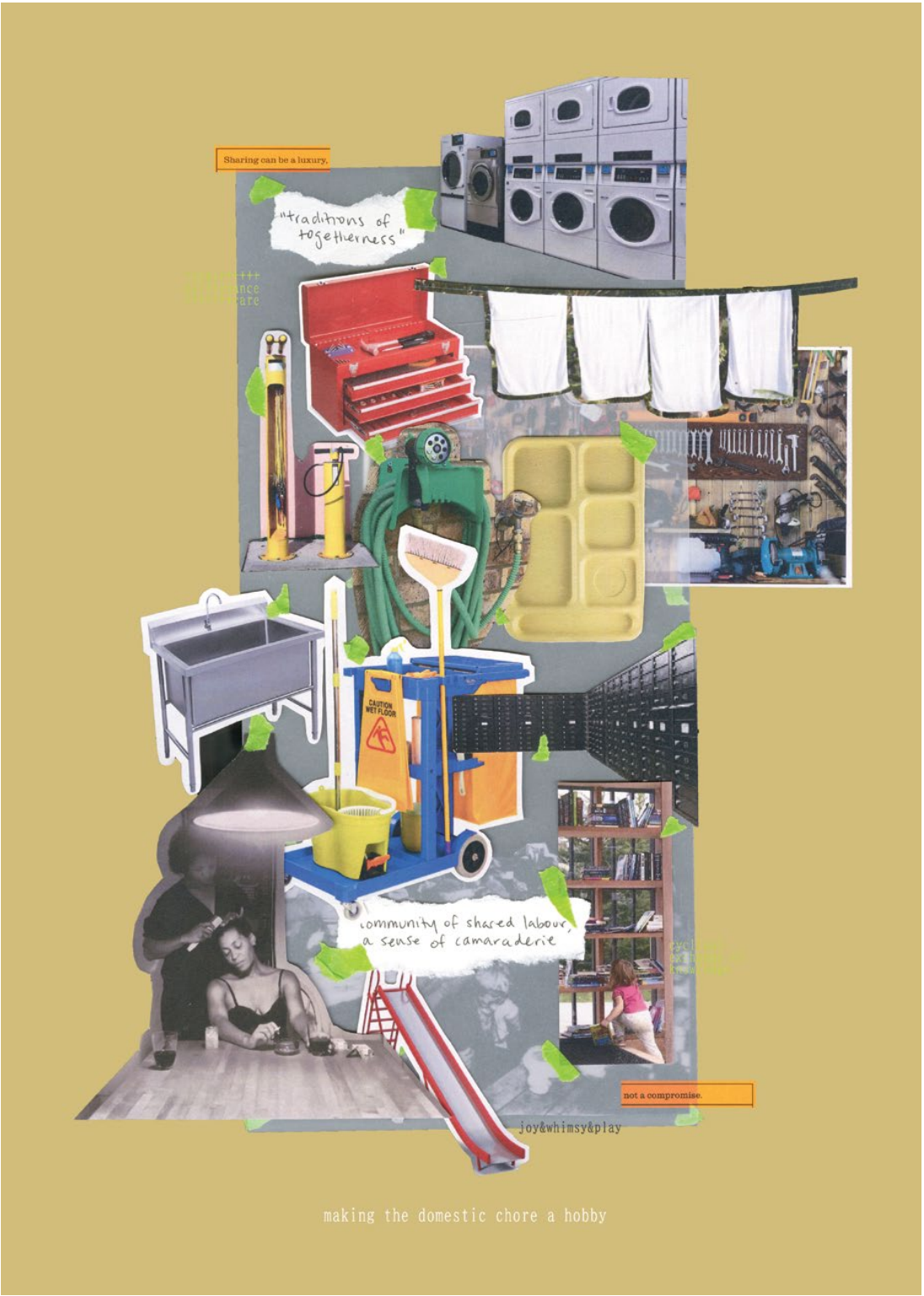
TILE, TILING, TILLING

We imagine a mop bucket, a utility sink, gardening supplies, a washing machine, a clothesline, a toolbox, as being part of the architecture. We are interested in making the domestic chore a hobby. An important tenet of our project is creating housing that equips people with both the tools and skills necessary to perform labours of love, and in turn generate a love of labour.

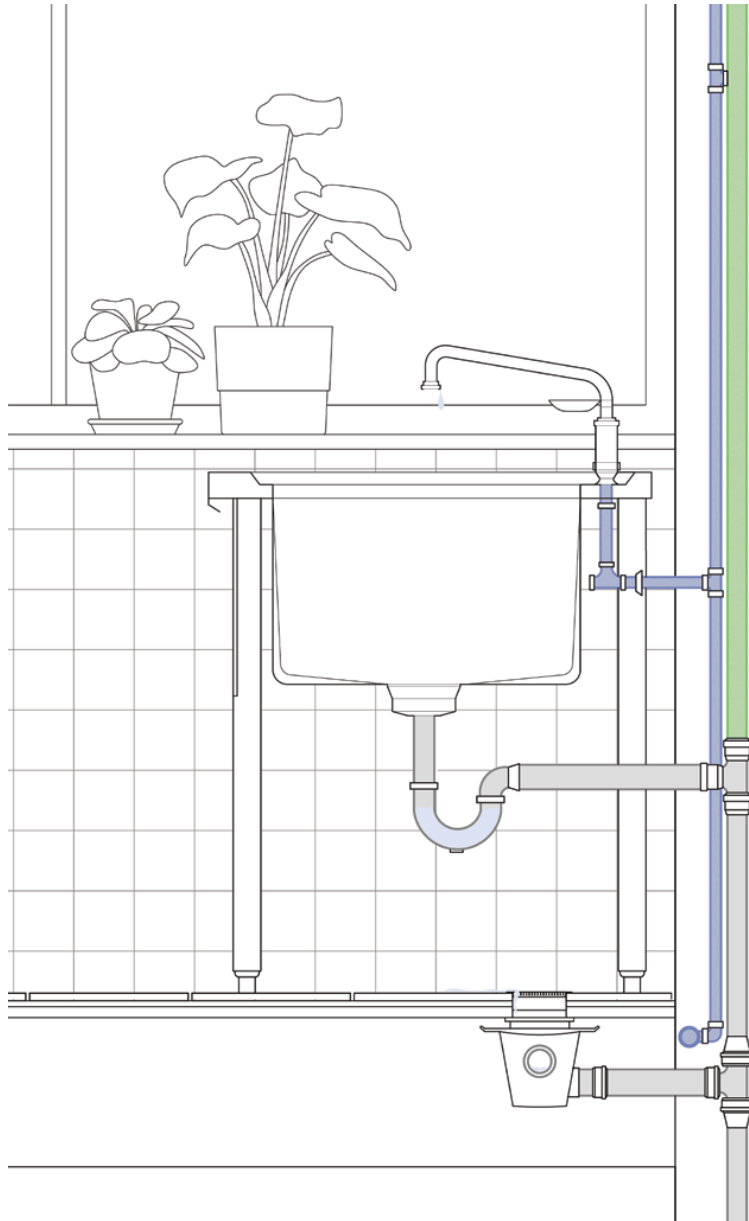
What emerges from the effort of a community to pool its resources and share them equitably is commoning. This practice prioritizes the creation and maintenance of social relationships and collaboration over the individual. We believe that there is a way to share, but also to govern common resources in a way that ensures their reproduction or renewal. The practice of commoning implies a need for stewardship and care, ensuring that shared resources survive into the future. Maintenance is thus a core theme, and driver of our design.

Core III Studio
Jelisa Blumberg
Harlem, New York
Fall 2024

In collaboration with Esther Su

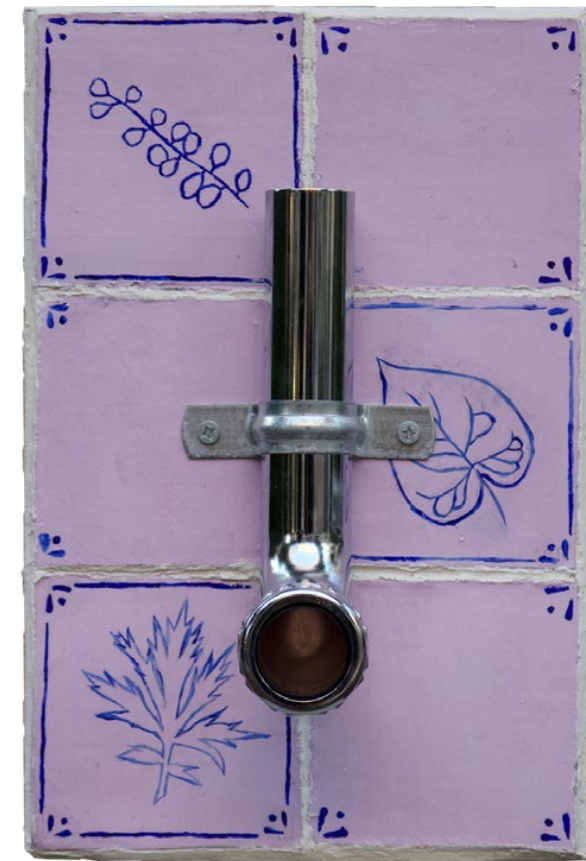


Parti Collage

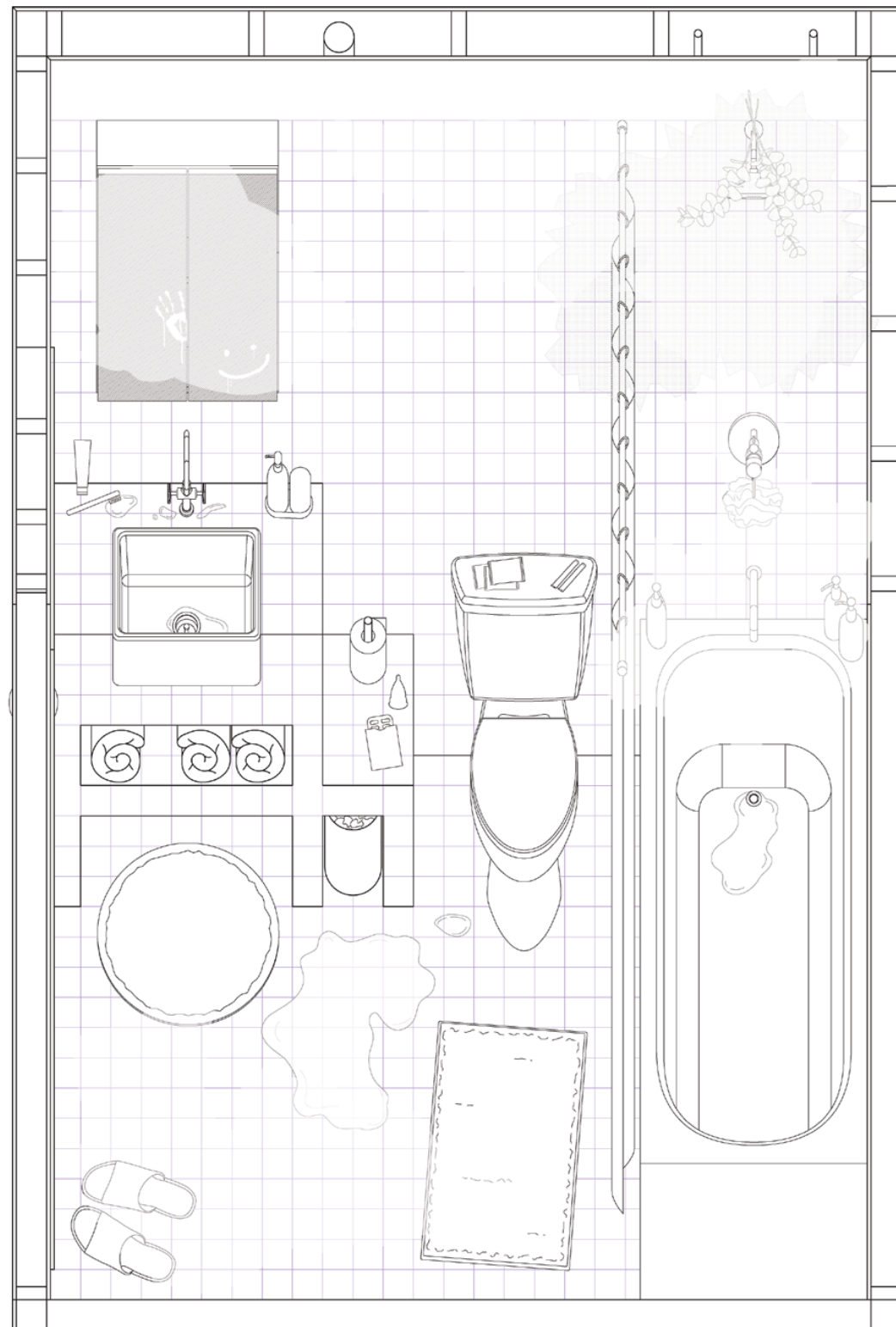


Utility Sink in Hallway

A utility sink can be used to do laundry, dishwashing, water plants, fill up a mop bucket, rinse produce, clean a dog, rinse dirt off hands. A utility sink is multifunctional and ubiquitous - yet it is often banished to a basement or dark closet. We want to celebrate the utility sink.

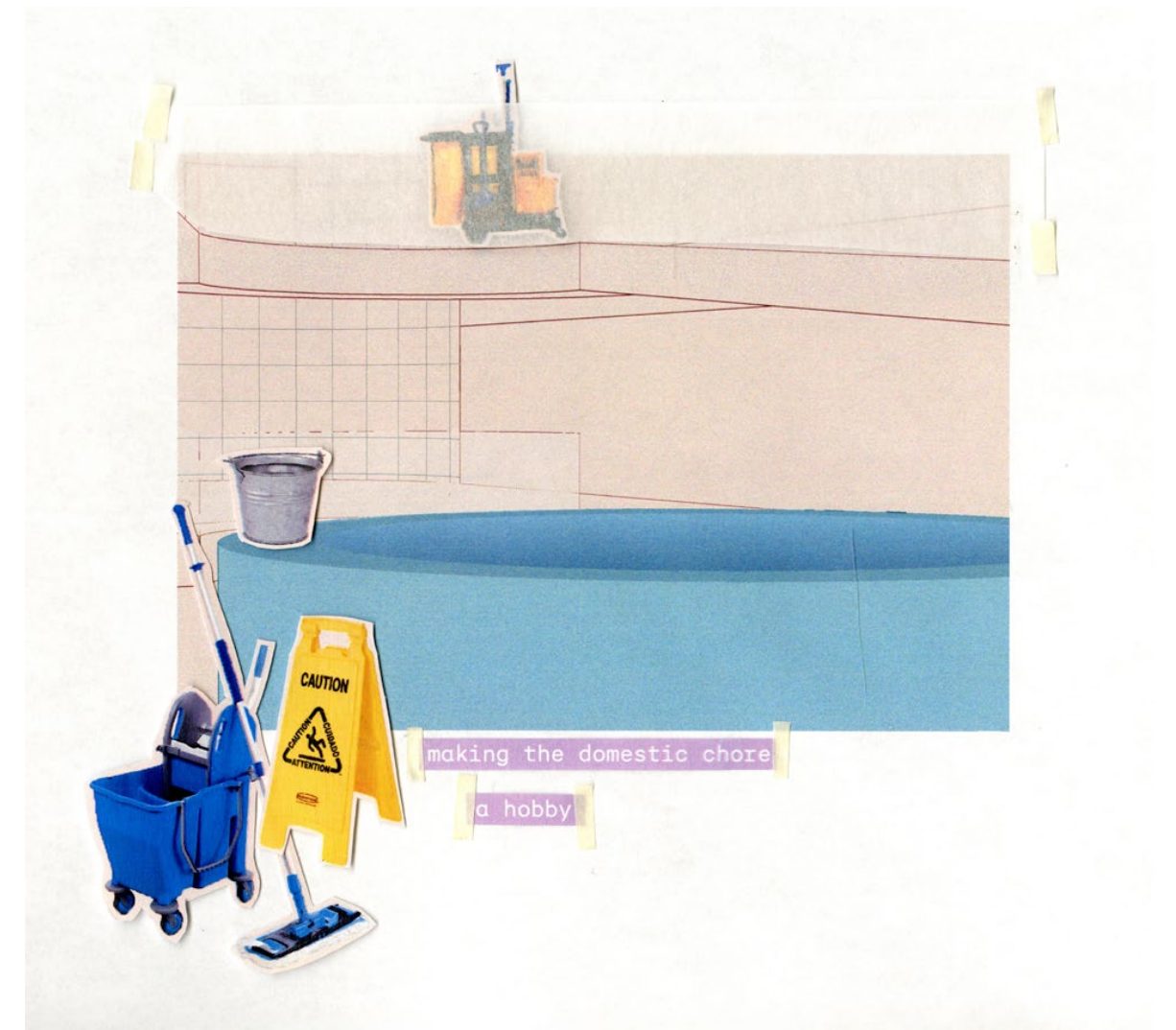


Exposed Pipe Detail (Model)



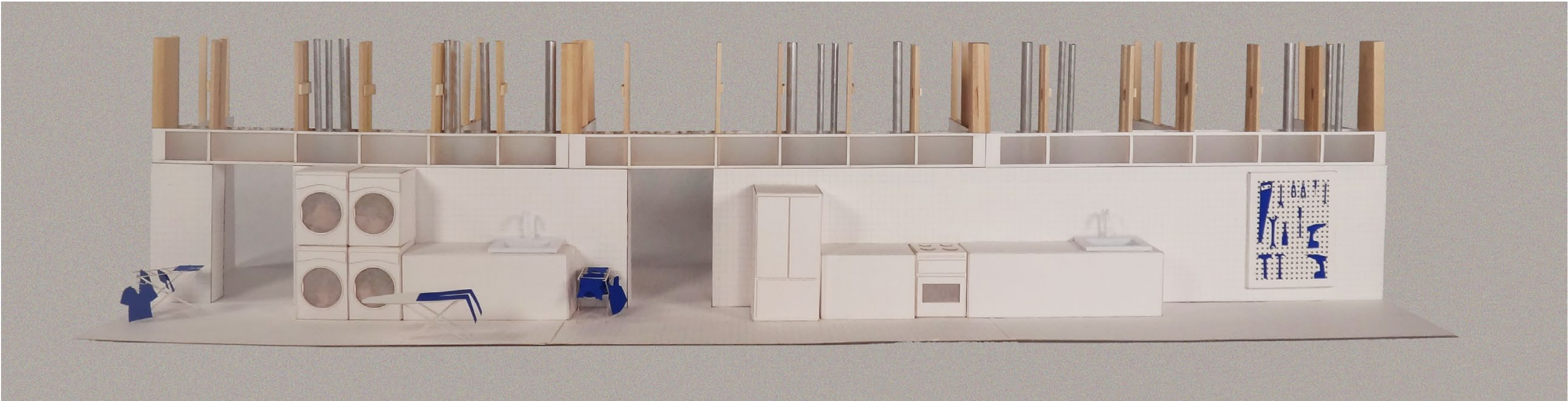
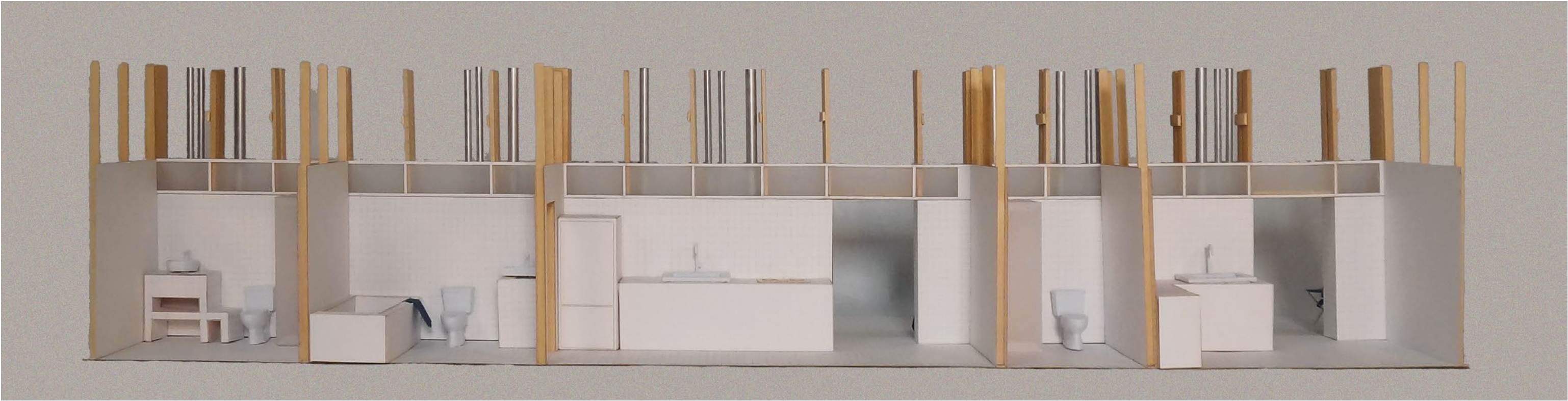
Steamy Bathroom Plan Oblique

Water is the lifeforce of our project - it is the fundamental infrastructure required to support many acts of care. Thus, the plumb wall is dominant in the plan configuration. It is shared between the unit and hallway, servicing both the private and public. We imagine the hallway to be an extension of each unit, challenging notions of private property in which space beyond the limits of an apartment is unusable and liminal.

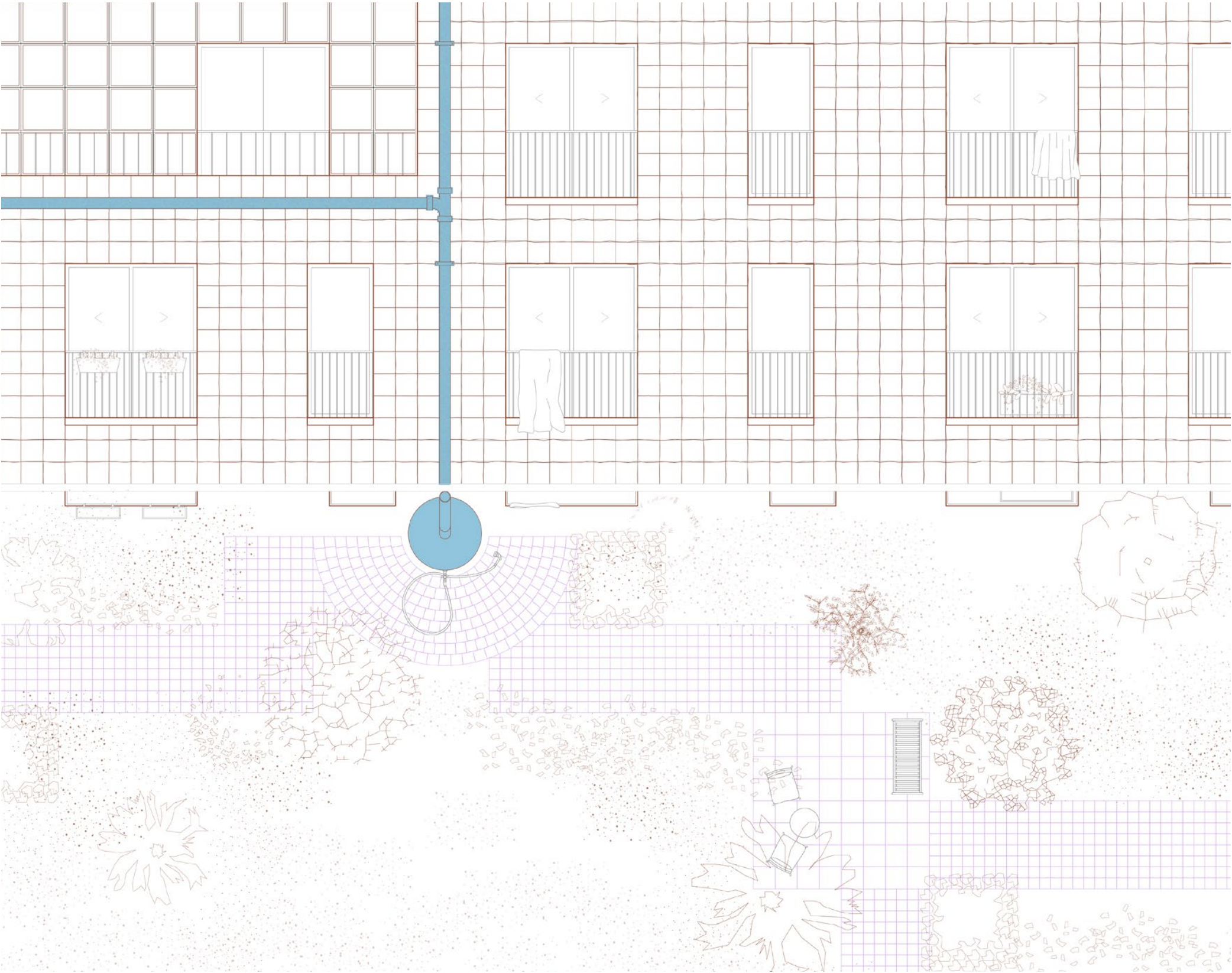


Vignette 1 of 9: Communal Well on Ground Floor of Shared Space

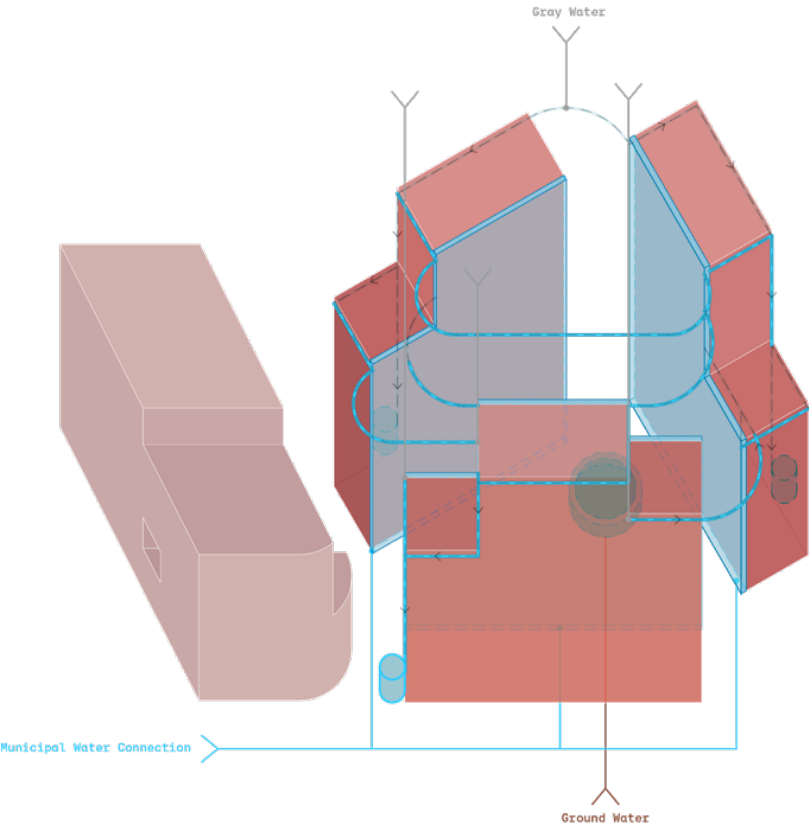
Plumb Wall Model: Side A (Private/Apartments)

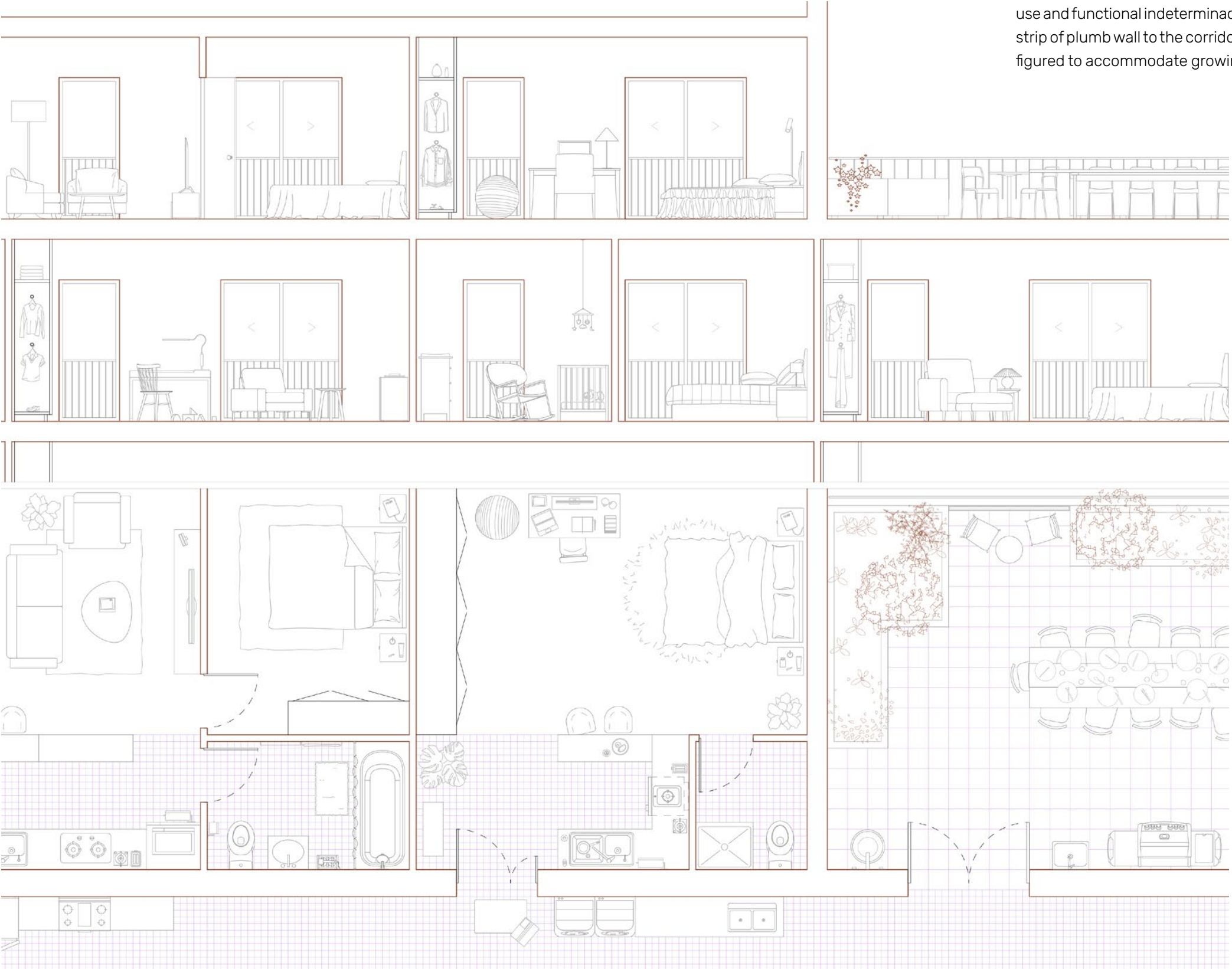


Plumb Wall Model: Side B (Communal/Hallway)

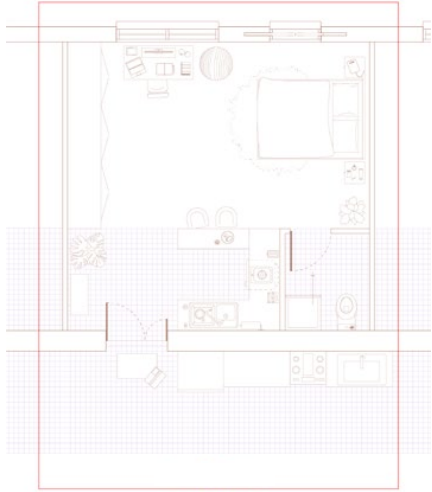


In the spirit of stewardship, we have planned a water collection system across the site, directly serving the gardens found on site. New York City's recent drought warning may be a more regular occurrence in the future, and so making use of rain and groundwater is a way in which we proactively plan for future stewardship.

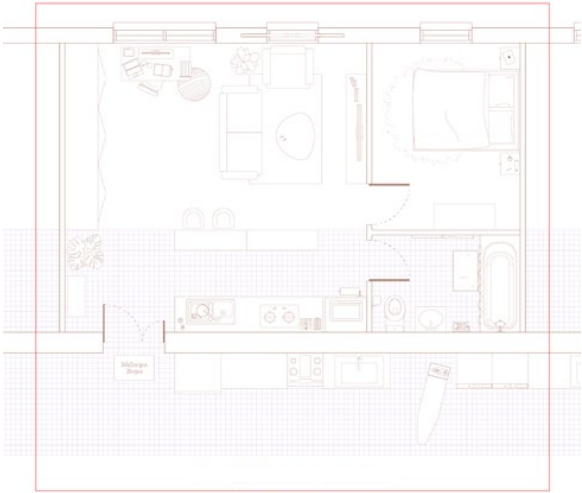




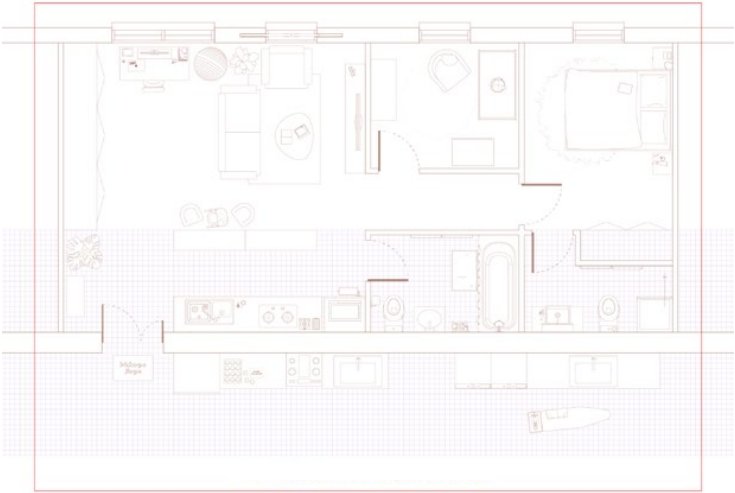
The unit plan is designed to accommodate different occupant profiles, and changing family sizes. The intentional ambiguity of use and functional indeterminacy of each room, as well as fixing the strip of plumb wall to the corridor wall, allows for units to be reconfigured to accommodate growing and shrinking needs for space.



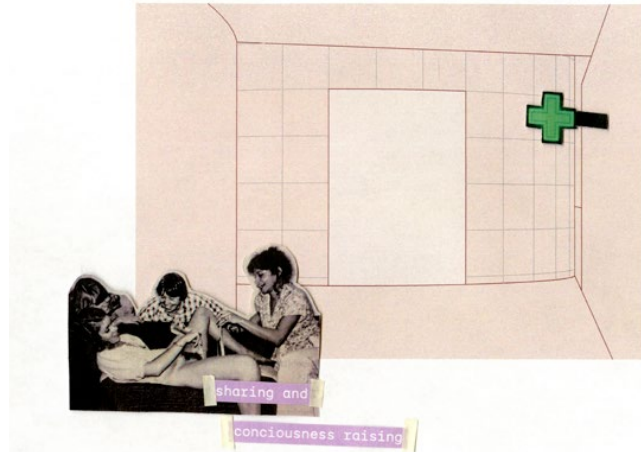
This is a **Studio** for a Doula



This is a **One Bedroom** for a Doula, and their partner



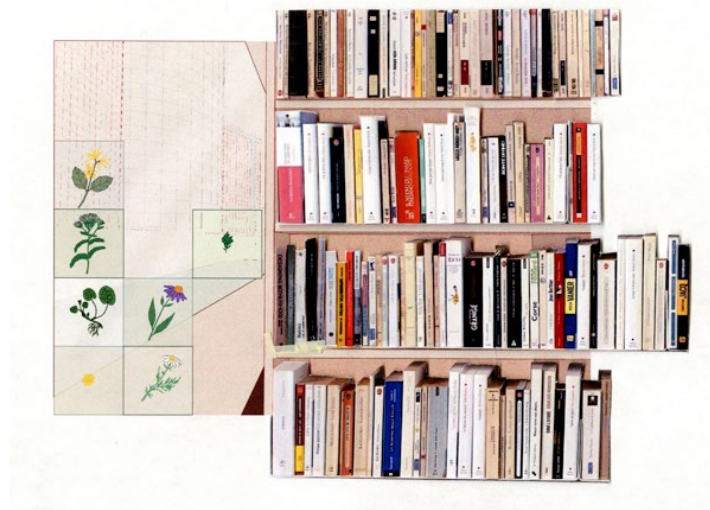
This is a **Two Bedroom** for a Doula, their partner, and their newborn



Vignette 2 of 9: Passageway to Housing through the Center



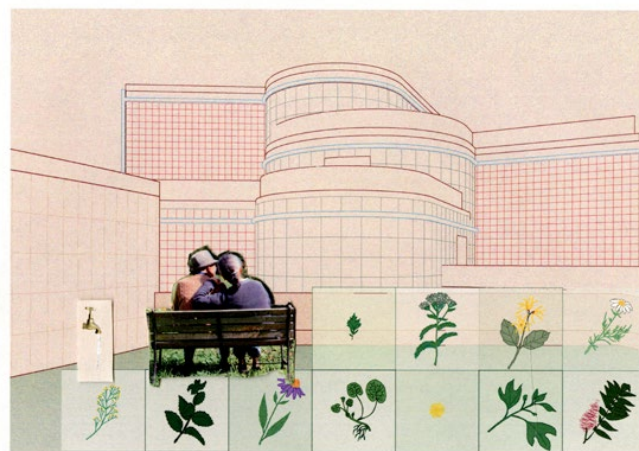
Vignette 5 of 9: View of Communal Hallways from Central Ramp



Vignette 3 of 9: Education Center and Library in the Center

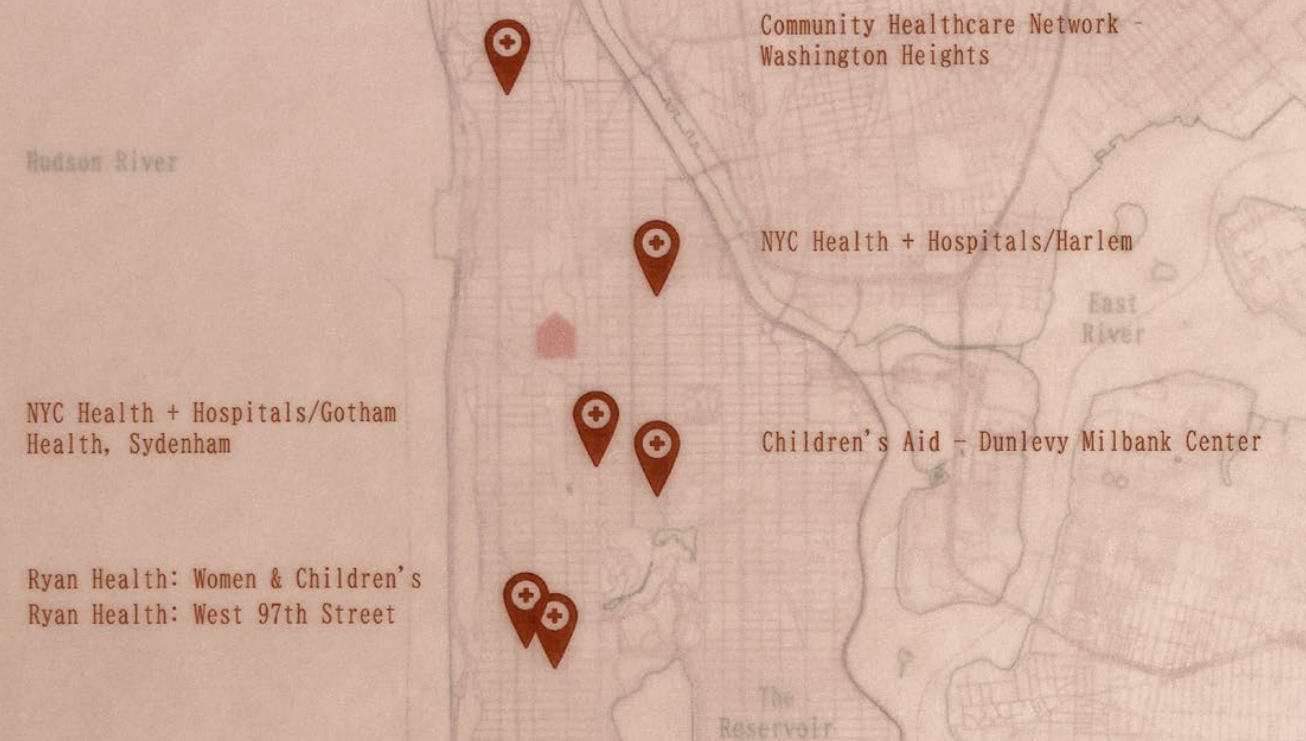


Vignette 6 of 9: Entrance from 128th Street



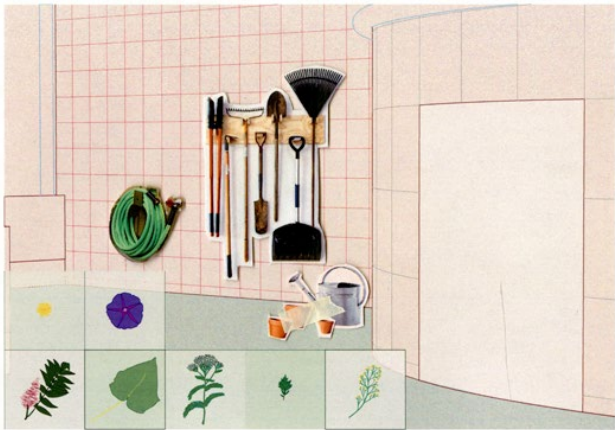
Vignette 4 of 9: Recovery Garden on the Center's Rooftop

Following the theme of reproduction, our secondary program proposes a Center for Reproductive Justice. Harlem does not have a nearby Planned Parenthood or similar organization - the neighbourhood is medically underserved. Especially given the changing political context, it has become so much more pertinent to provide access to sexual health resources. Tying hand-in-hand with reproductive freedom and sexual health, our housing intends to accommodate a wide range of family types.

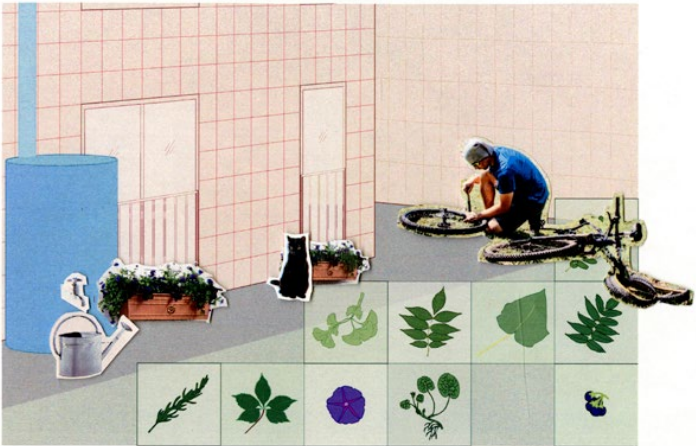




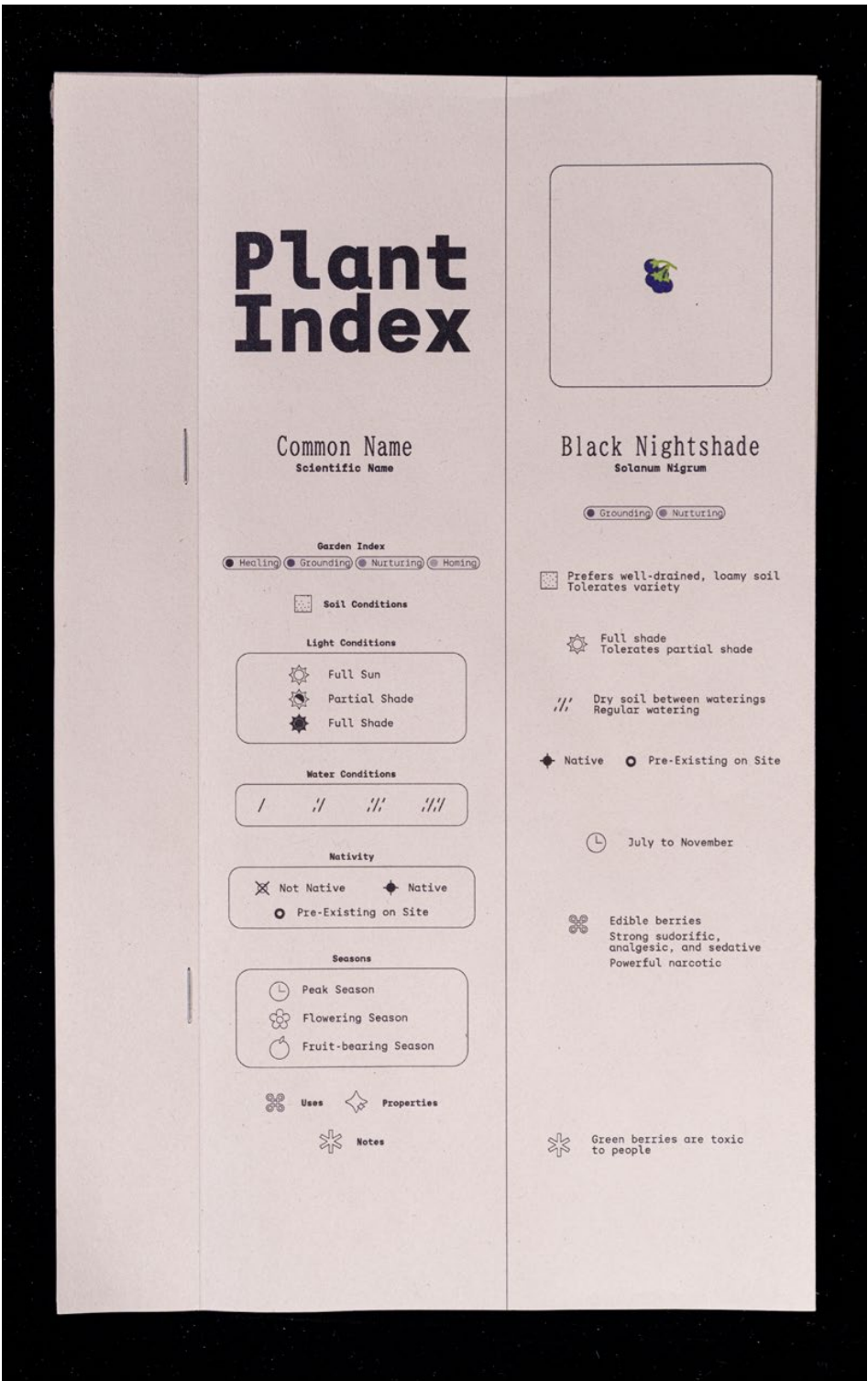
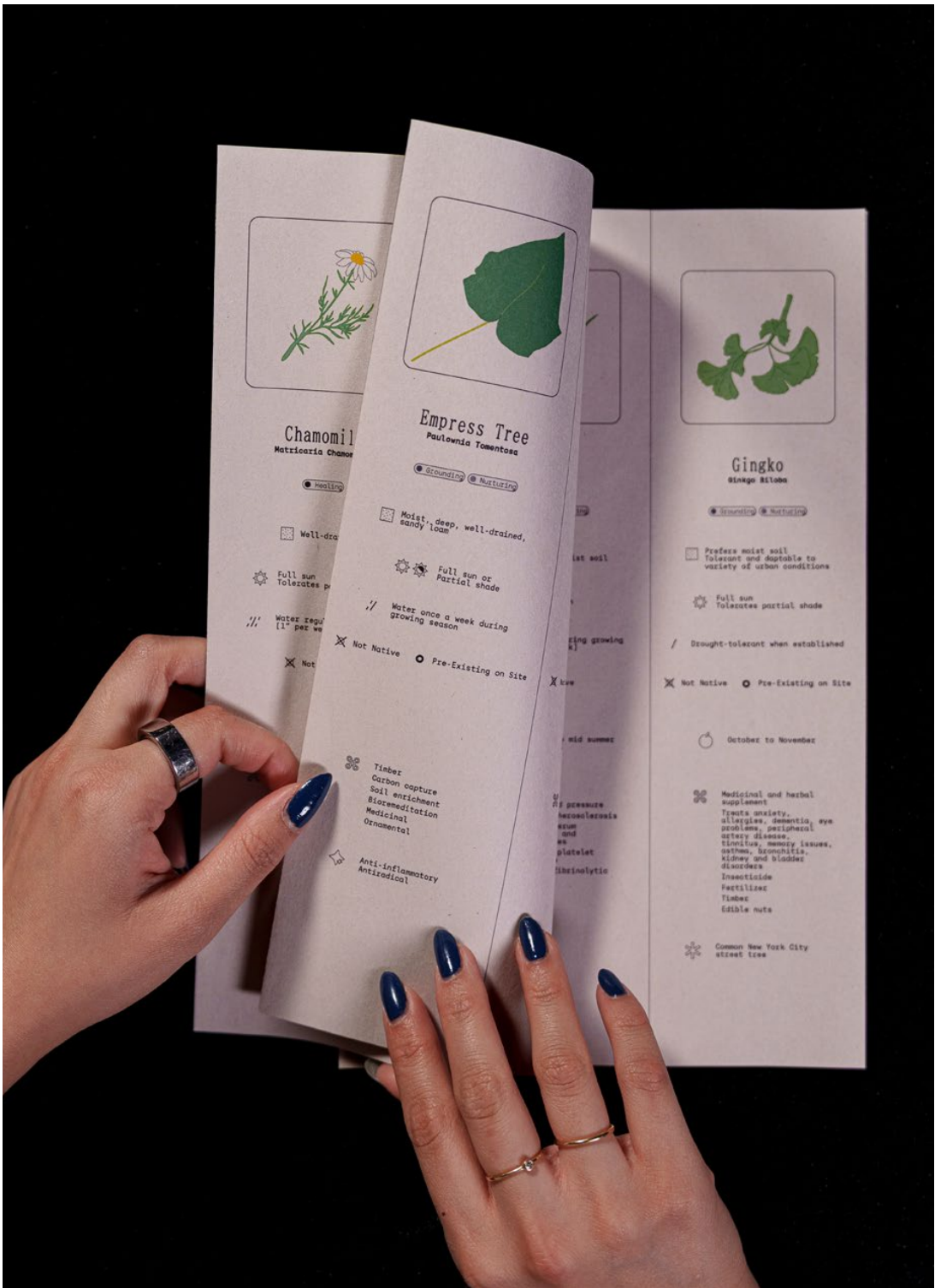
Vignette 7 of 9: Nurture Garden on Roof of Existing Taxi Garage



Vignette 8 of 9: Sharing Garden on Roof Terrace

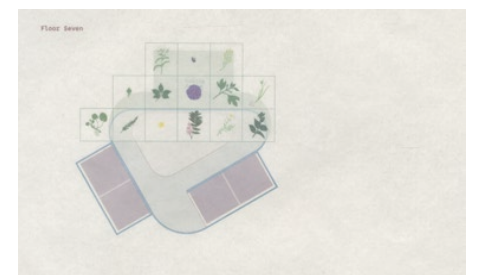
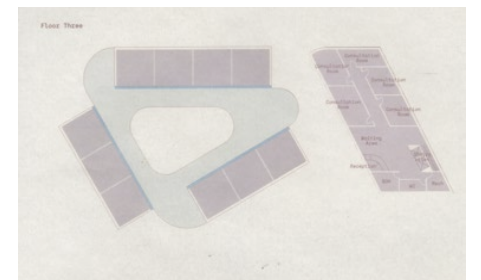
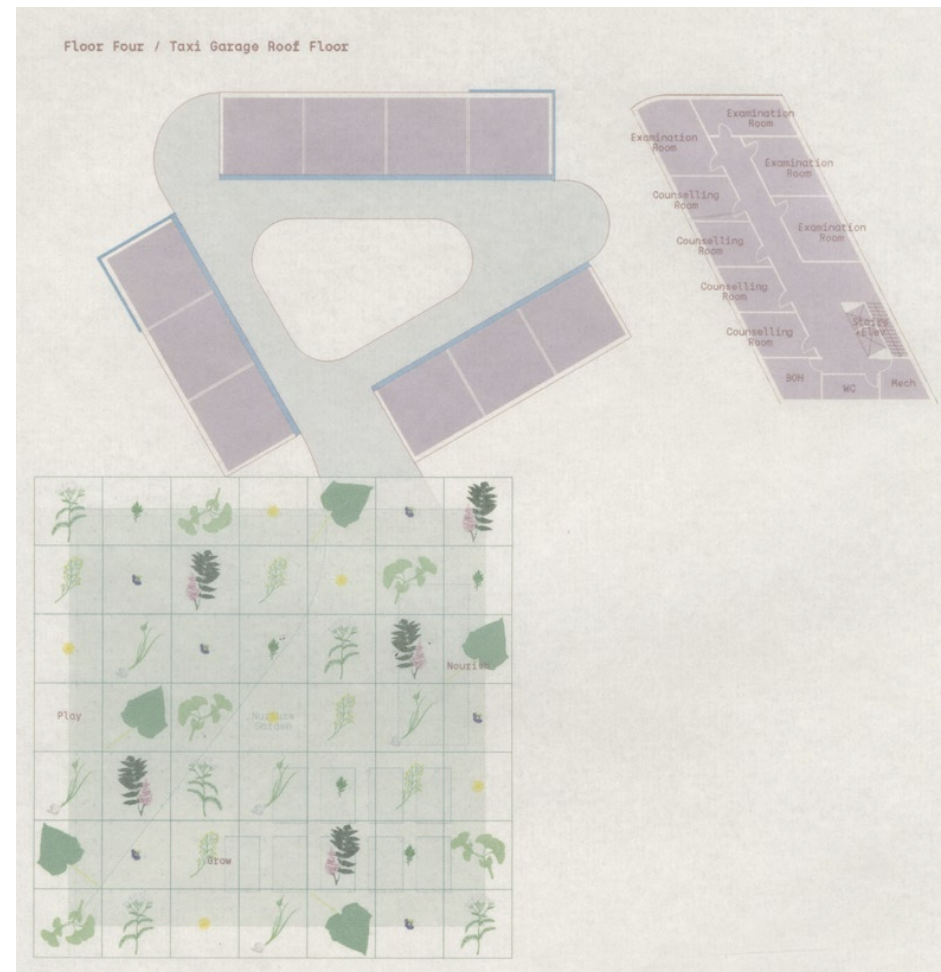
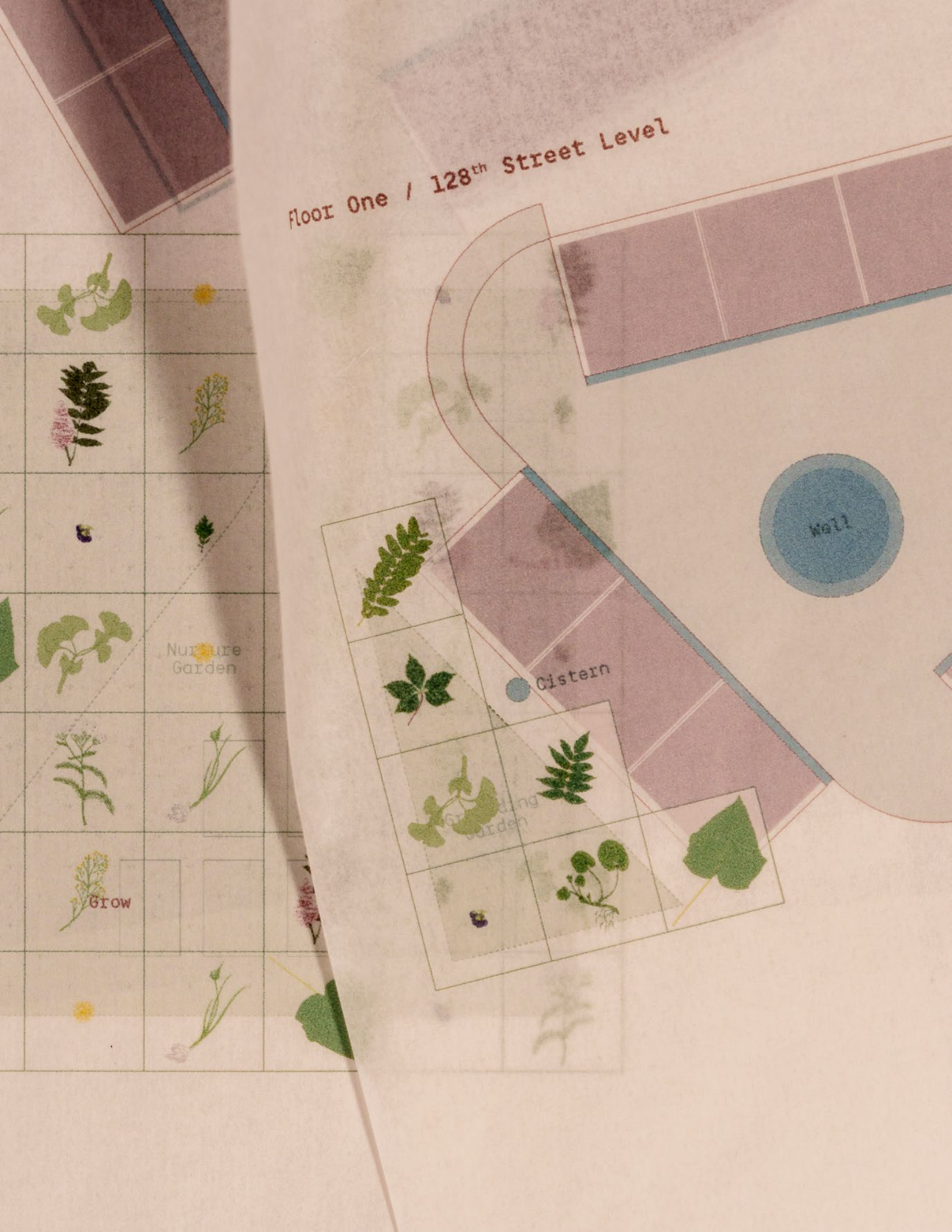


Vignette 9 of 9: Ground Garden Behind East Housing Block



Medicinal herbs which already exist in Harlem's ecosystem, as well as newly introduced species, can be used by the clinic and patients.

Plant Index Sample Pages

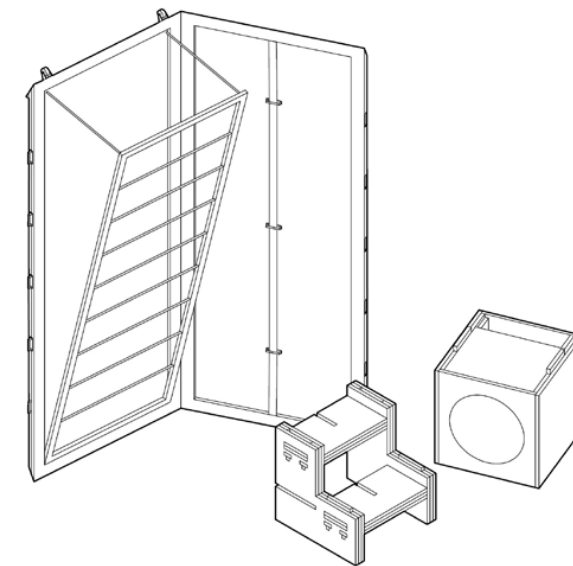


Gardens are curated based on the plants' lighting needs; grounding gardens being more shaded. Pre-existing plants on site such as the honey locusts, goldenrod, tree of heaven, morning glory, empress tree can survive in typically inhospitable conditions. The nurture garden on top of the existing taxi garage receives direct south light, ideal for produce. These green spaces also serve as recovery gardens, carving out therapeutic spaces where individuals can find solace and healing during their treatment journey.



We believe that care is everywhere, that care scripts space, and space scripts care. Through the sink, the plumb wall, and the garden, our project proposes the recon-ception and celebration of care, the redefining of the social rituals of maintenance, and encourages stewardship through education and commoning.



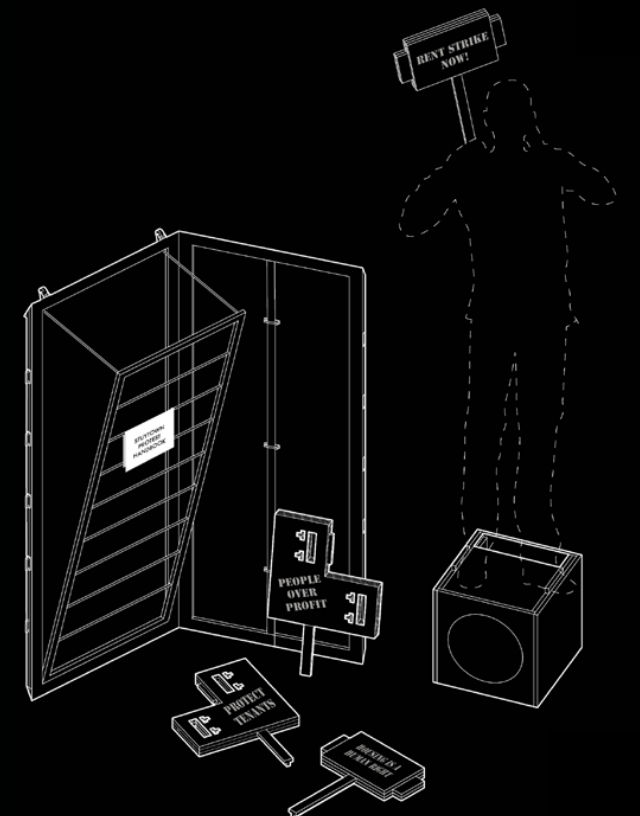


WELCOME TO STUYTOWN

Welcome to Stuytown! A neighbourhood with a rich history of protest: anti-segregation, anti-eviction, rallies for rent control. The Tenant Welcome Package includes a collection of furniture and accompanying handbook. When read one way, the handbook outlines how the collection can be used as innocent furniture. In the middle, the handbook can be flipped inside out and becomes a protest manual, describing the many ways the system can be adapted to support all aspects of a protest: spectacle, acts of care, organizing, fundraising, direct action and publicity. It is formatted intentionally to be covert, so that its true purpose, to protest, remains a secret from “public safety”.

Core II Studio
Emily Ruopp
Stuytown, New York
Spring 2024

In collaboration with Esther Su



STUYTOWN TENANT HANDBOOK

STUYTOWN TENANT COOPER
VILLAGE TENANT ASSOCIATION

WELCOME TO STUYTOWN

Dear Tenant,

The Stuyvesant Town-Peter Cooper Village Tenant's Association would like to welcome you to your new home! We are thrilled to have you as a our newest neighbour.

We have prepared a welcome package for you - a collection of furnishings to make your stay in Stuytown more comfortable. This handbook will walk you through how each item can be used to make life a little easier.

Here in Stuytown, we believe in the value of creating a strong sense of community. That is why this handbook will also show you how to combine your collection with that of your neighbours, facilitating a collaborative and lively social environment. We encourage you to introduce yourself!

Please take a moment to review the contents of this handbook **thoroughly**.

If you still have questions after looking through the handbook, please feel free to call or send us a letter. We will be happy to answer any questions.

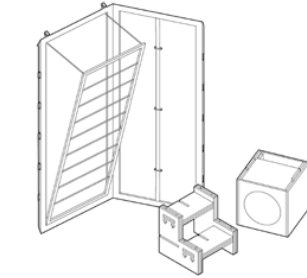
We are thrilled to welcome you to Stuytown, and **please let us know if you have any concerns**.

Best,

The Stuyvesant Town-Peter Cooper Village Tenant's Association

P.O. Box 1202
New York, NY 10009-1202

1 (866) 290-8036



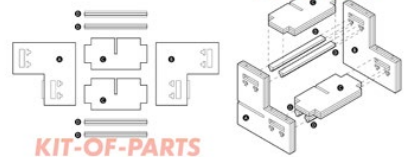
STEP STOOL

X1



can't reach the Campbell's soup your roommate moved to the top shelf to make room for his animal crackers? time to get your step stool!

ASSEMBLY



KIT-OF-PARTS

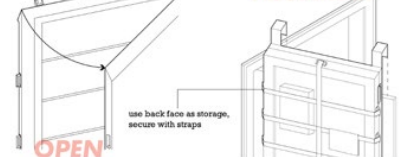
DRYING RACK

X1



laundry day is the worst when you have no place to hang your clothes. But drying rack takes up no floor space and holds away discreetly when not in use.

ASSEMBLY

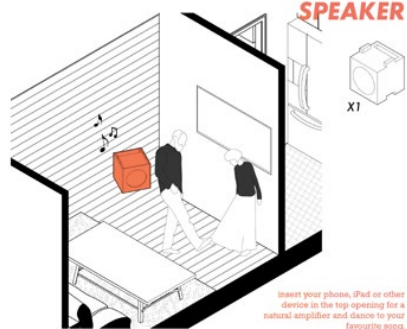


OPEN

use back face as storage, secure with straps

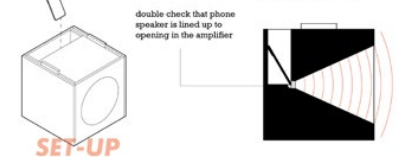
SPEAKER

X1



insert your phone, iPad or other device in the top opening for a natural amplifier and dance to your favourite song.

AMPLIFY



SET-UP

double check that phone speaker is lined up to opening in the amplifier



ROOM DIVIDER

X1+



need more space from your roommate to study? your room divider can double as a room divider!

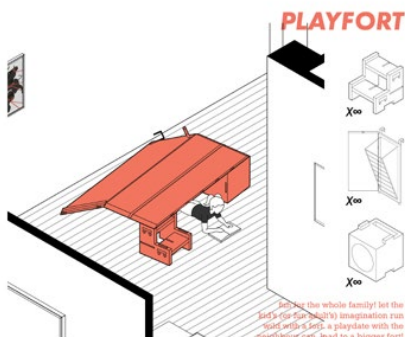
ASSEMBLY



swing hanging hooks upwards to use as stand

PLAYFORT

X100



helping the whole family! let the kids (or dog) play! imagination run wild with 4 walls, a playplate with the 'omni-bus' cat, head to a bigger fort!

COMBINE



PLAY

with your neighbours, you can get even more creative with your fort-building

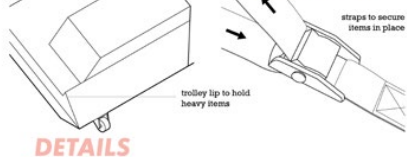
TROLLEY

X1



groceries made easy - your drying rack can double as trolley so need to keep your granny cat.

ASSEMBLY



DETAILS

trolley lip to hold heavy items

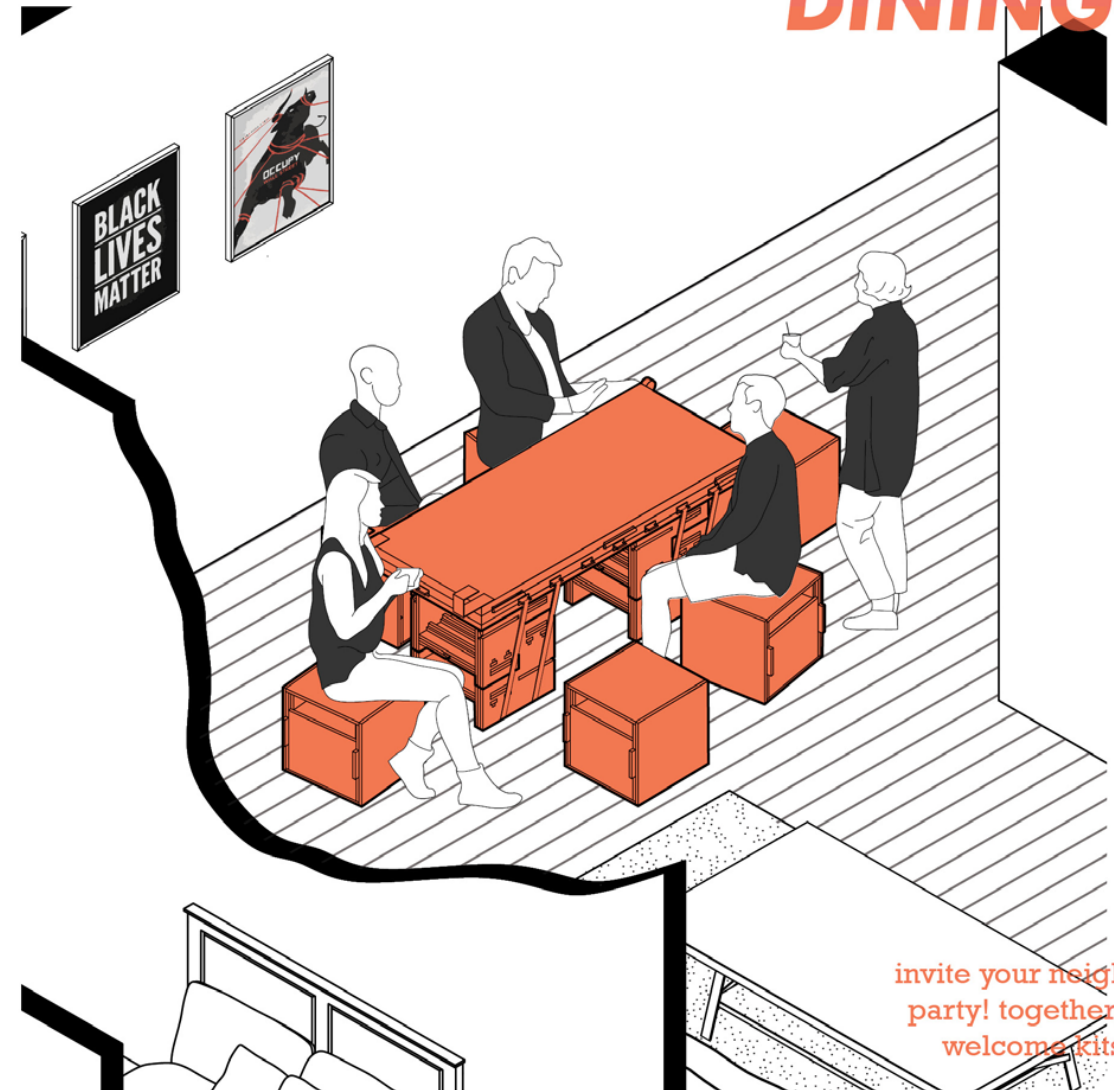
straps to secure items in place

DINING TABLE

X4

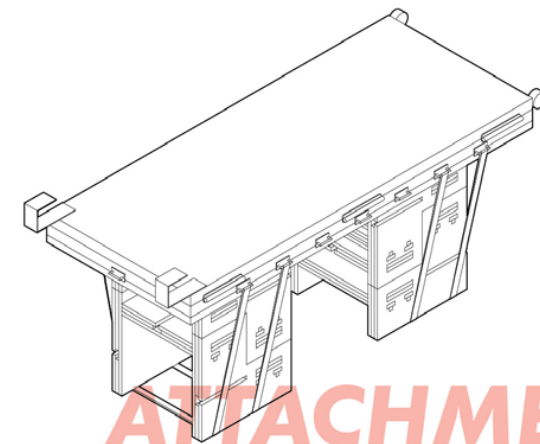
X1

X6



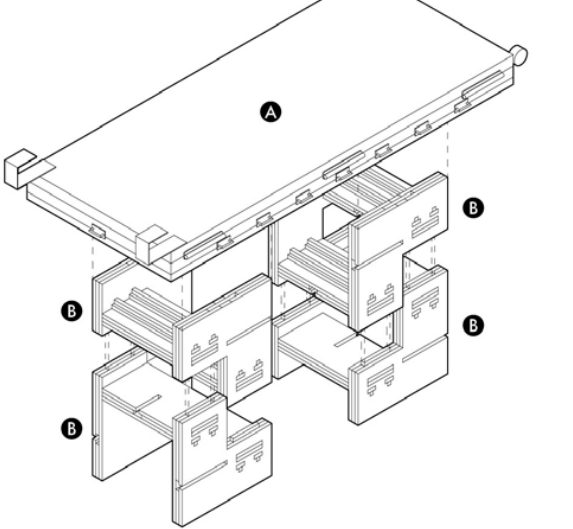
invite your neighbours for a dinner party! together, using each other's welcome kits, you can make the perfect dining set.

use tie down straps from drying rack to secure the tabletop to the base



ATTACHMENT

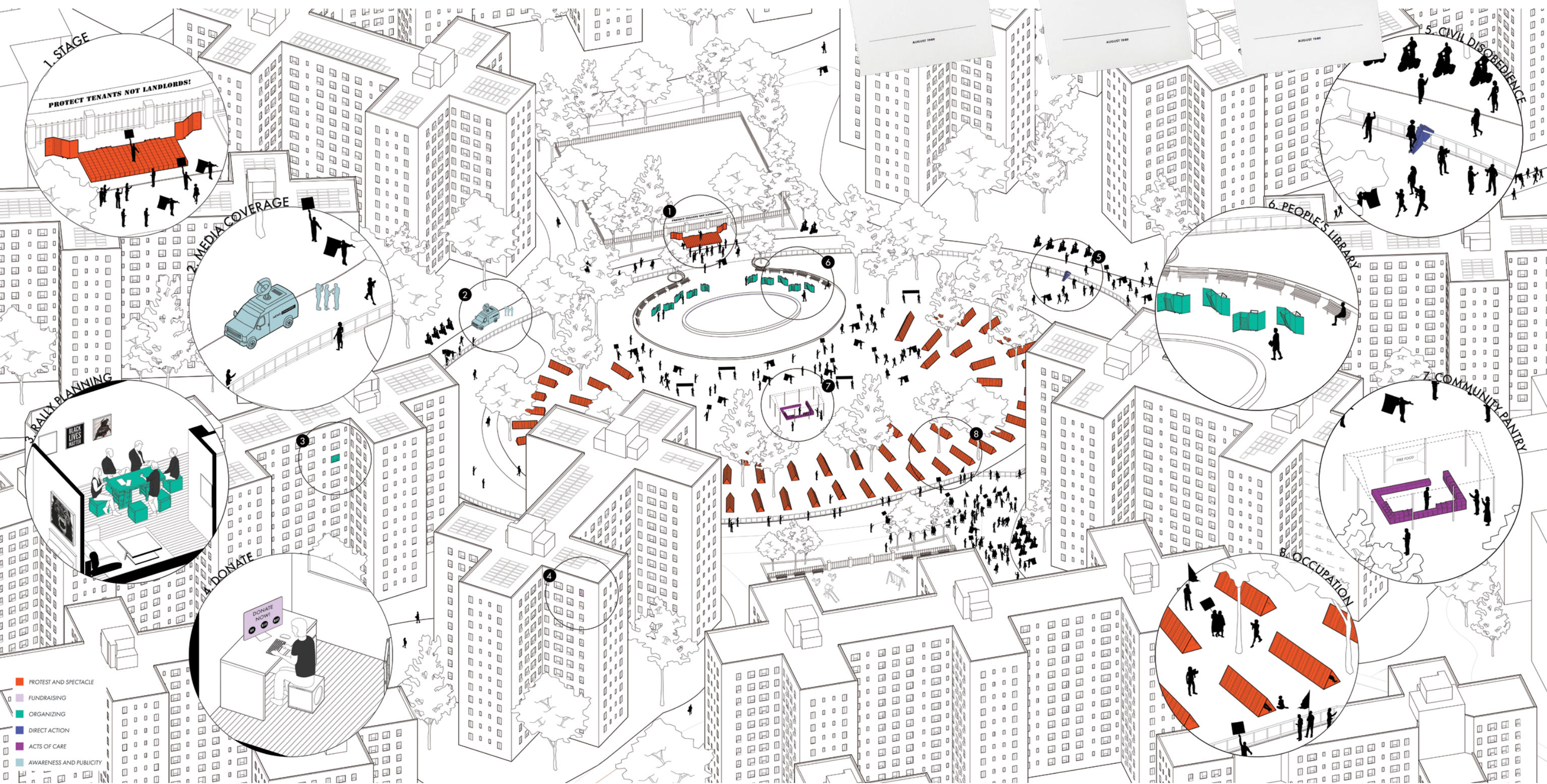
ASSEMBLY





The system can be used to occupy, barricade, educate, picket and care. It is flexible to be able to adapt to the nuance and specificity of future protests. Protesting is often a community activity: there is strength in numbers, and so the system can perform different functions when aggregated with others.

Furniture Welcome Kit Deployed Across Stuytown for Protest



SYLVIA RIVERA MEMORIAL

We met Sylvia at the Christopher Street piers, where little traces of her live on – a street name here, a poster there. But information was missing. We knew her name, but nothing about her story, her legacy, her meaning.

In our search to get to know Sylvia, we began to fill in these gaps. Too many stories go overlooked, like Sylvia's. We wanted to develop a framework to assist in the uncovering of erased stories, and to reclaim public memorialization.

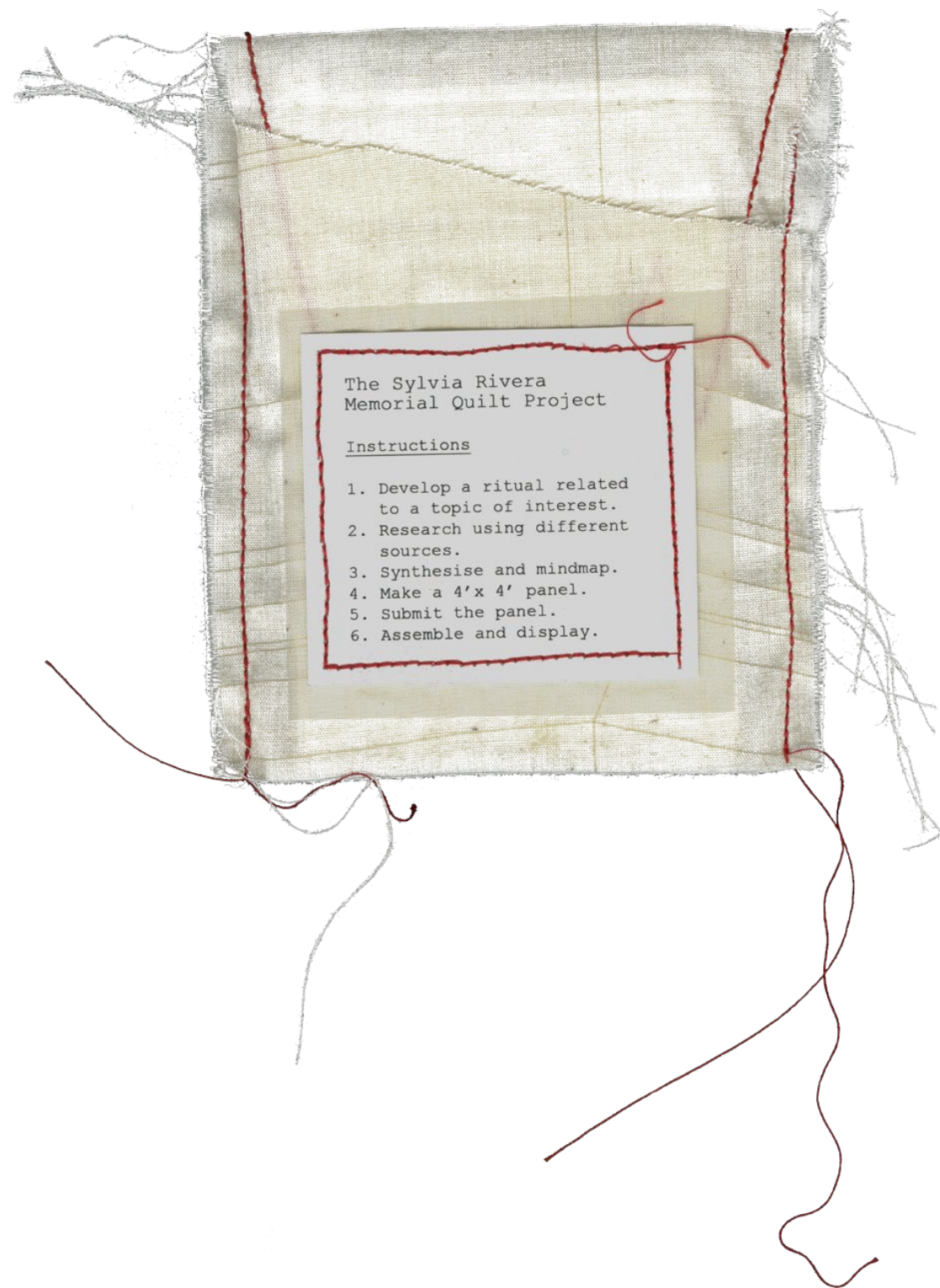
The Sylvia Rivera Quilt Project is a framework to memorialize LGBTQ+ histories and peoples.

Core I Studio
Carlos Medellin
West Village, New York
Fall 2023

*In collaboration with Esther Su
and Jihyun Lee*



Parti Sketch



1 / Embodiment

Choose a topic or person of interest.

Develop a routine to build a relationship with the chosen subject.

Example-

Write a contract and commit to at least one clause daily.

Sample Clause:

We will run an errand each time we visit so as to understand how inhabitants of the space operate

2 / Knowledge

Broaden your understanding and knowledge of your subject. Embodiment is the starting point of research.

To ensure a well rounded understanding of the chosen topic, we encourage you to use a variety of resources.

Some of our sources included:

- NYC Trans Oral History Project
- Lesbian Herstory Archives
- Public library
- Blogs/Vlogs
- Digital Transgender Archive
- Video interviews
- Documentaries
- Films

The creation of the quilt is guided by our manual. The manual is based off of our process of creating our quilt from start to end, with Sylvia as our chosen subject.

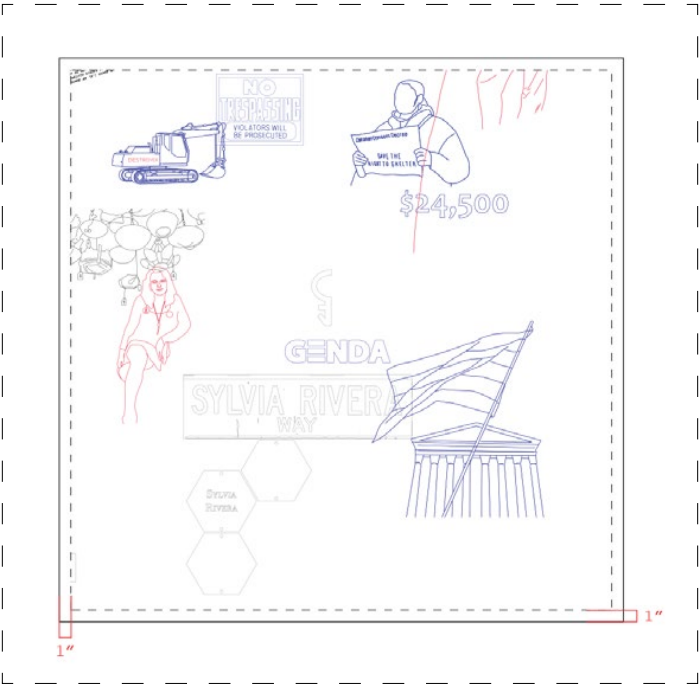
3

3 / Perspective

An individual or group of people gather together to make a 4'x4' panel.

Develop a blueprint that synthesises and illustrates your point-of-view and relevant themes.

Panels are sewn together to form the final quilt. It is thus recommended to have at least 1" of allowance around the edge of the panel without any design elements to ensure all of your design is visible when the panels are sewn together.



4

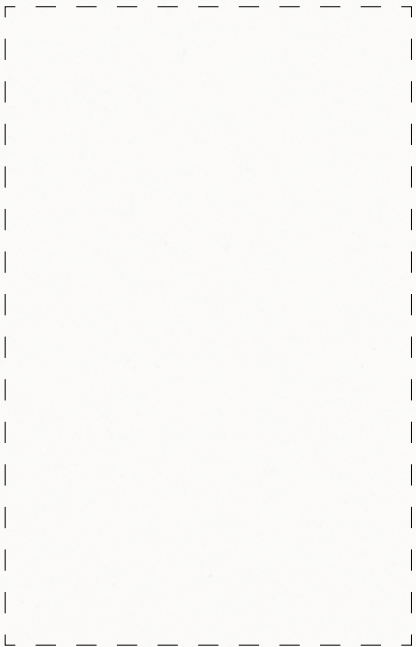
4 / Detail

Select durable and medium-weight, non-stretch fabric for the base.

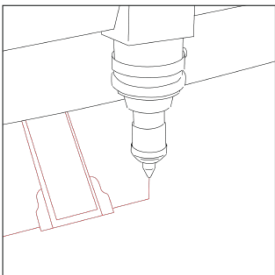
A variety of techniques can be used, and creators are encouraged to use a mixed media approach.

Any 3D element that is incorporated should be limited to a maximum height of 2".

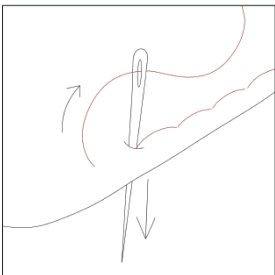
When designing the panel, please ensure materials are durable and designs are securely attached.



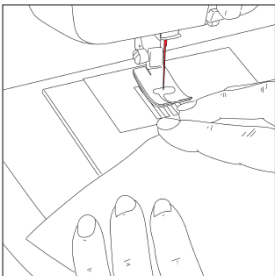
Common assembly techniques:



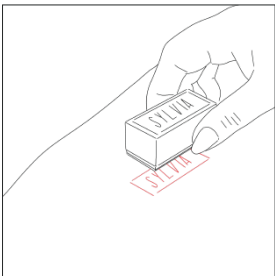
Laser Etching



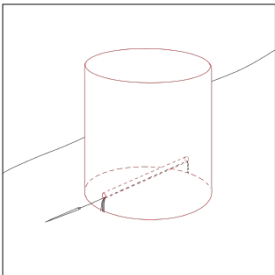
Back Stitch



Sewing Machine



Stamping



Mixed Media

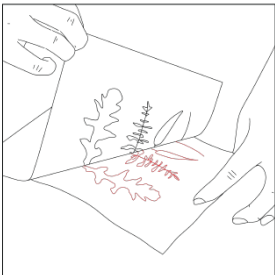


Image Transfer



5

5 / Submit the panel

Submit your panel to:

The Sylvia Rivera Memorial
Quilt Project
446 W 36th St
New York, NY 10018

Please include the information form along with a short description and/or photographs of the event or persons the panel is dedicated to.

The panel and any accompanying information will be documented in our archives, which are located at the Metropolitan Community Church of New York.

Each submission will be documented and digitally archived using a tagging system.

6

6 / Mobility + Reclamation

July 2 marks Sylvia's birthday. On this day each year, a selection of panels will be assembled into a quilt and publicly displayed on Christopher Street Pier.

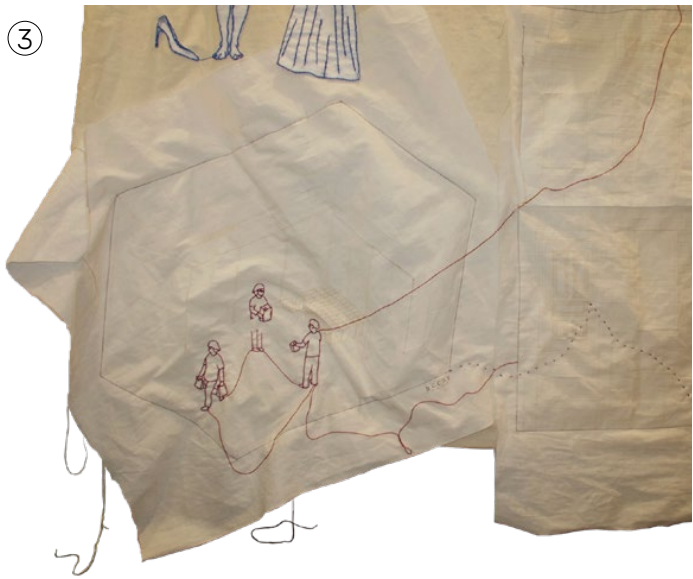
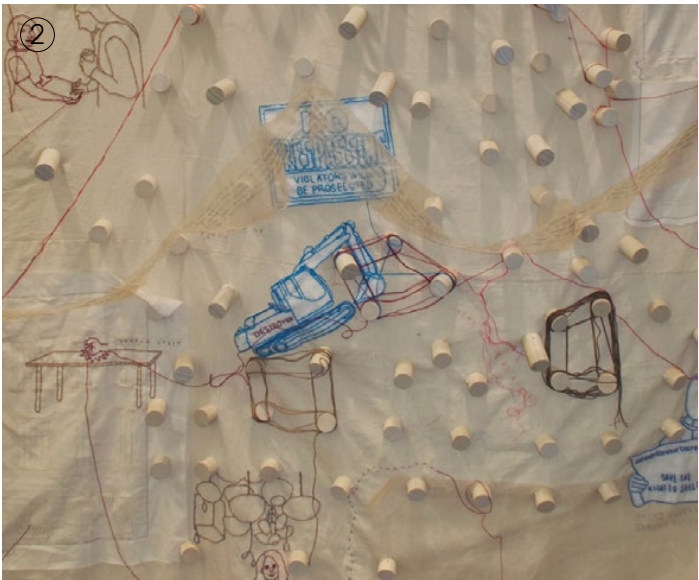
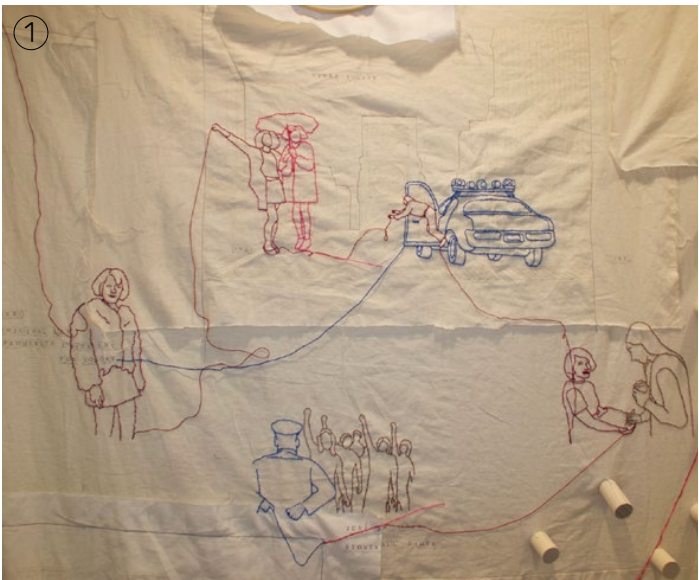
Volunteers are invited to assist in the curation of the quilt for that year's events.

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact us at volunteering@sylviasquilt.com

The framework encompasses a voluntary curatorial aspect which, alongside the panel system, enables the quilt to exist as a dynamic, non-fixed, fluid assemblage.



The final product is a quilt: a community-produced form of memorialization that honours people and events and their complex natures. There is a move away from reductive, biased, or idealized representation that is often characteristic of memorials.



Quilt Details



Projector Slides. Project In Situ

RENAMING, REFUNCTIONING, RECLAIMING

Commemorations evolve: Bard Hall was renamed, as not to honour the slaveowner Samuel Bard; a Names and Inscriptions Index, 1960s-1980s found in Columbia’s Rare Book and Manuscript Library reveals a list of “Former Names No Longer in Use”; a Land Acknowledgment Plaque was installed in 2016 outside of John Jay Hall “In honor of the Lenape People”. These changes reflect evolving values of the Columbia community. This begs the question, who is responsible for these changes? Who decides which names are commemorated on campus? This research is interested in alternative means of commemoration which challenges the typical top-down approach of memorialization practices.

How are on-campus commemorations renamed, refunctioned and reclaimed (in both sanctioned, and unsanctioned ways) across Columbia’s Morningside campus, by students?

*University + City: The Columbia
Campus After 1945
Reinhold Martin
Columbia University
Spring 2025*

Individual essay



Columbia Archives

Introduction

In July 2020, Columbia University began a university-wide review, with one focus being on “symbols and representations on campus”¹ in response to the George Floyd protests and subsequent rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. In an announcement titled, “Columbia’s Commitment to Antiracism”, then-President Lee Bollinger promised: “we will soon announce a process to consider the symbols on our campus that have an association with enslavement, racial hierarchy, and other forms of systemic injustice”². The result was a pilot project of digital historical presentations, on view in select residence halls on campus, to reveal the “complex connections to histories of enslavement and racism” associated with the buildings and their namesakes.³ As Bollinger writes, “We all understand how careful we need to be in shaping the environment, symbolic as well as physical, in which we ask our students to live and to call home”.⁴ The pilot project revealed several untold stories of racial violence which occurred on Columbia’s campus, such as the 1924 Cross Burning at Columbia’s Furnald Hall, giving new meaning to the commemorative names and inscriptions on campus.⁵

Commemorations evolve: Bard Hall was renamed, as not to honour the slave-owner Samuel Bard; a Names and Inscriptions Index, 1960s-1980s found in Columbia’s Rare Book and Manuscript Library reveals a list of “Former Names No Longer in Use”⁶ (Figure 2); a Land Acknowledgment Plaque was installed in 2016 outside of John Jay Hall “In honor of the Lenape People”. These changes reflect evolving values of the Columbia community. This begs the question, who is responsible for these changes? Who decides which names are commemorated on campus? This research is interested in alternative means of commemoration which challenges the typical top-down approach of memorialization practices.

How are on-campus commemorations renamed, refunctioned and reclaimed (in both sanctioned, and unsanctioned ways) across Columbia’s Morningside campus, by students? This question will be investigated through three case studies: Uris Hall, Alma Mater, and the Lenape Land Acknowledgement Plaque. These examples represent a range of commemoration types which exist on Columbia’s campus – I am interested in how students challenge the top-down nature of memorialization, finding both sanctioned and unsanctioned ways to assert agency over the built environment.

In the Names and Inscriptions Index, 1960s-1980s, it is clear that commemoration is typically awarded to donors – individuals and families with financial influence who wish to memorialize themselves. It is students who find innovative ways to honour the marginalized, erased and undervalued people and movements that have shaped the campus.

1 Lee Bollinger, “Our Accelerated Faculty Diversity Efforts | Office of the President,” Columbia: Office of the President, October 29, 2021, <https://president.columbia.edu/news/our-accelerated-faculty-diversity-efforts>.

2 Lee Bollinger, “Columbia’s Commitment to Antiracism,” Columbia: Office of the President, July 21, 2020, <https://president.columbia.edu/news/columbias-commitment-antiracism>.

3 “Residence Halls Historical Markers | Columbia University Libraries,” Columbia University and Slavery, accessed March 8, 2025, <https://columbiaandslavery.columbia.edu/historical-markers.html>.

4 Lee Bollinger, “Announcement Regarding Bard Hall,” Columbia: Office of the President, August 28, 2020, <https://president.columbia.edu/news/announcement-regarding-bard-hall>.

5 “Residence Halls Historical Markers | Columbia University Libraries.”

6 “Names and Inscriptions Index, 1960s-1980s” (Columbia University), Buildings and grounds collection, 1755-2011, bulk 1880-2000, Box 18, Folder 2, Columbia University Libraries Archival Collections, accessed March 8, 2025, https://findingaids.library.columbia.edu/archives/cul-7201471_aspace_a500391a6d8a4159a5c65fa8cb7a1782.

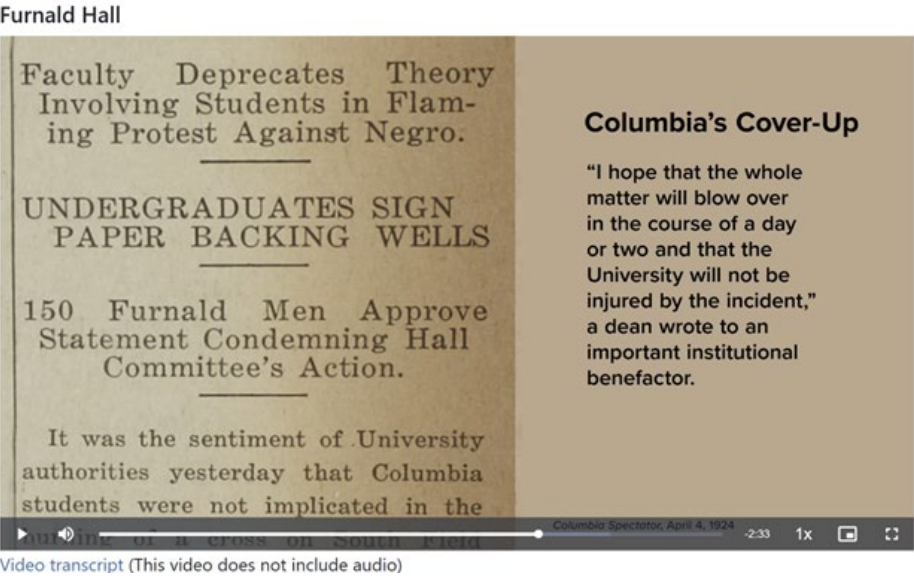


Figure 1: Screen capture of frame from Furnald Hall Residence Digital Presentation, result of 2020 project (<https://columbiaandslavery.columbia.edu/historical-markers/residence-hall-digital-presentations.html>).

Uris Hall

The naming of buildings is arguably the most pervasive type of commemoration, since it becomes part of our day-to-day lexicon. Buildings are named after historical figures that are deemed significant or representative of the schools’ values, selected by the Board of Trustees and administration. They are also named after important donors, as is the case for Uris. In a letter from the Board of Trustees to President Low in 1891, the importance of asking donors to purchase buildings, rather than support a general fund, is emphasized (Figure 3): “These suggestions are only important at the present time as they have a bearing upon the acquisition of the needed funds, a request for the gift of a particular building offering a greater prospect of success than an appeal for any general fund”.⁷

The Uris Brother’s Foundation, Inc. was established in 1956 to direct their donations to Cornell, Columbia, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.⁸ Percy Uris served as a Trustee of Columbia University, “special advisor to the President for new construction, and was a member of several alumni councils and associations.”⁹ A \$2.5 million donation from the Uris brothers funded a large part of the construction of the Columbia University Graduate School of Business, which was named Uris Hall in their honour.¹⁰ The brothers’ contributions were not limited to financial – as prominent New York real estate developers, the Uris brothers were also able to offer their building expertise. According to historian Victoria Sanger, the brothers selected the architecture firm in charge, “Percy exchanged sketches of floor plans with his friend Courtney Brown, dean of the Columbia School of Business”, and “Harold oversaw construction, chose the contractors, and proposed measures that cut costs by half”.¹¹ Percy’s business acumen also enabled him to “raise the total cost of the building, \$7 million, from other trustees and business associates”.¹² Given the significant role the brothers had on shaping the building of Uris, the naming of the building in their honour seems natural. That said, do the Uris brothers represent the values of the institution, or are they commemorated solely for their monetary donations? Contestations and student disagreements over Uris Hall may speak to this.

The design of Uris Hall was the recipient of much controversy. Students and faculty both criticized the design for its similarity to the “canned space” of the Uris’ downtown office buildings.¹³ In protest, students buried a beer can which was later unearthed by Percy at the building’s ground-breaking ceremony.¹⁴ At the 1964 dedication of Uris Hall, architecture students picketed the new business school for its “ugly” design. Students were not protesting the naming of Uris perse, but rather the design, largely influenced by the building’s namesakes. That said, this disagreement does suggest a tension between the Uris Brothers’ vision, and the values of the student body.

7 “Letter from Trustees to President Low,” 1891, Buildings and grounds collection, 1755-2011, bulk 1880-2000, Box 27, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

8 “Guide to the Percy and Harold D. Uris Papers, 1901-2003,” Columbia University, accessed May 10, 2025, <https://www.columbia.edu/cu/libraries/inside/projects/findingaids/style/ldpd.6033444.001.f.html>.

9 Ibid.

10 Victoria Sanger, “The Impact of Real Estate Developers on Mid-Twentieth Century New York: The Case of the Uris Brothers,” in Postwar Modernism in an Expanding World, 1945-1975 (VIIIth International Conference, Columbia University, New York: Docomomo US, 2004), 470.

11 Ibid, 470.

12 Ibid, 470.

13 Sanger, “The Impact of Real Estate Developers,” 470.

14 Ibid, 470.

LIST OF NAMESAKES -- Columbia University-Related Properties (def / July 1988)		page 5
Former Names No Longer in Use	Named for	
Bryson Library (now Milbank Meml Library)	Peter M. Bryson	[donor's husband]
Crocker Institute (later East Hall)	George Crocker	[donor]
Green Memorial Building (later West Hall)	John C. Green	
Hewitt Lounge (now Ferris Booth Cafe)		
Lincoln School (now P.S. #165)		
Livingston Hall (now Wallach Hall)	Robert R. Livingston	[student, signer of Declaration of Independ.]
McMillin Academic Theatre (now Miller Th.)	Emerson McMillin	[donor]
Macy Villa (now Buell Hall)	William H. Macy	[donor, president of NY Hospital]
Moses Lounge (now computer room)		
Noble Building (now Intl Affairs Building)	Edward John Noble	
Reed Hall	-	
Speyer School (now inactive)		
Thompson Pathological Bldg (Cooper Bldg)		
Van de Graaff Building (now Pegram Labs)	[Van de Graaff particle acceleration machine]	

Figure 2: “Former Names No Longer in Use” (“Names and Inscriptions Index”, July 1988, Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Buildings and grounds collection, 1755-2011, box 18).

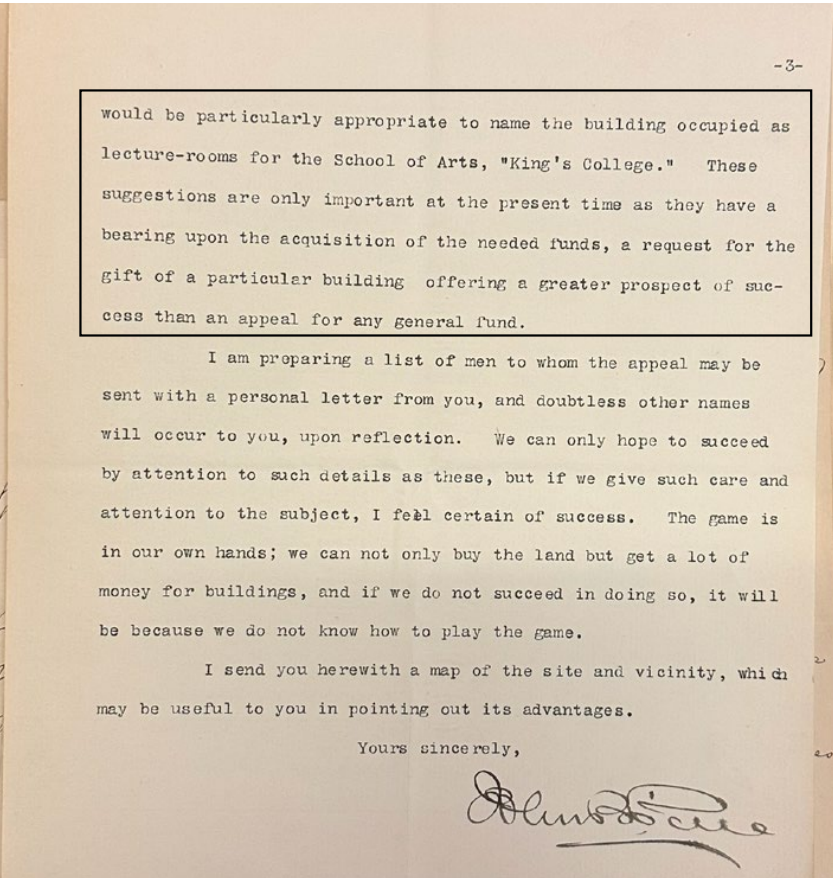
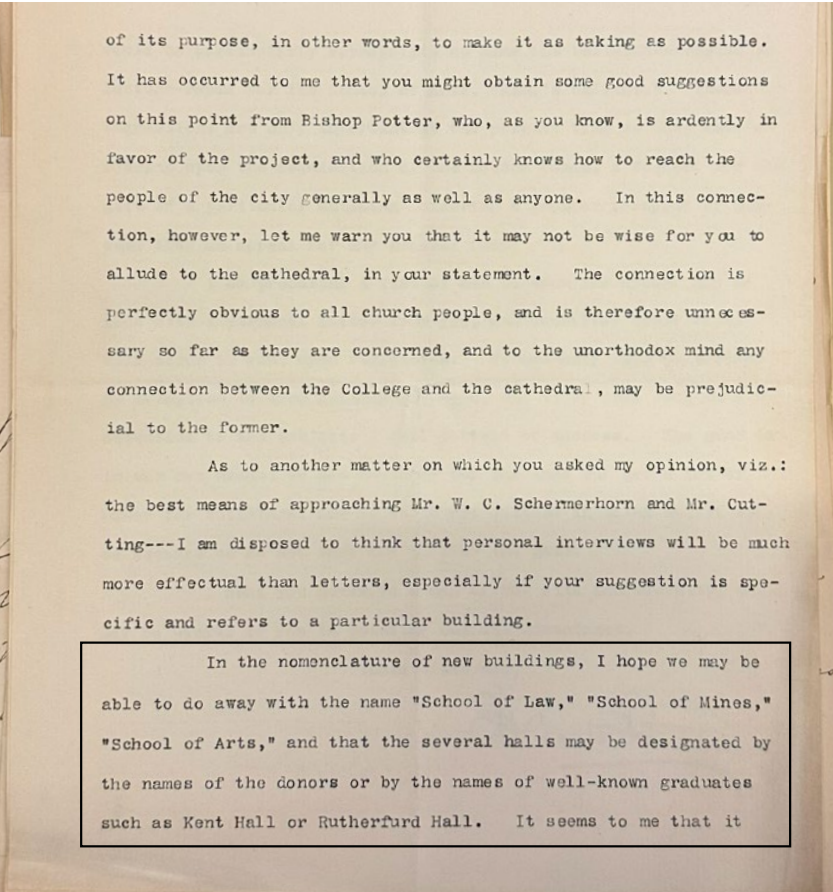


Figure 3: Letter from Trustees to President Low in 1891 ("Morningside Heights Site -- Miscellaneous, 1890s-1900s." Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Buildings and grounds collection, 1755-2011, bulk 1880-2000, Box 27).

Although the naming of Uris Hall may not have been directly objected to, there have been times on Columbia’s campus when students have challenged the institution through temporary, unsanctioned renaming. During the 2024 protests, pro-Palestinian students occupied Hamilton Hall and renamed it Hind’s Hall, in honour of a young Palestinian killed in Gaza. This event catalyzed a national debate regarding the university’s role in Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the use of police force on students. At the time that this is written, protesters occupy the main room of Butler Library’s second floor, renaming the space “the Basel Al-Araj Popular University”, gaining immediate media coverage.¹⁵ An Eye article titled, “What’s in a Name? The Controversies of Butler Library”, describes the moment a group of students hung a banner from the roof of Butler Library, covering the names of the men engraved on the limestone façade with the names of female authors, on Commencement night in 1989.¹⁶ Although Uris has not been the site of an explicit renaming such as these examples, precedents exist.

The sanctioned renaming of buildings on campus tend to follow a major renovation, in which a new donor invests a large sum of money, “one-upping” the original namesake (Figure 2). For example, Wallach Hall was built by the trustees and named Livingstone Hall, in honour of Alumnus and American revolutionary, Robert Livingstone. In 1979, serial donor Ira Wallach paid for the building’s renovation, and so it was renamed in her honour.¹⁷ Butler Library (South Hall, donated by Edward Harkness), Wien Hall (Johnson Hall), Miller Theatre (McMillin Theatre) share similar histories. According to a November 4, 2021 article in the Spectator, a private donor pledged \$40 million to the renovation of Uris Hall, matching the Central University Administration’s \$40 million, “for which they will receive naming rights to the building”.¹⁸ The potential renaming of Uris Hall begs the questions, what is the time frame associated with naming of building? What warrants a name change? Who advocates for their preservation?

The construction of Uris Hall was completed at a time when business education valued its direct relationship to the professional field. The goals of Columbia’s new graduate business program were made explicit by Acting Dean Orchard in 1948: “The objectives of the school are clear. We are a professional school educating students for careers in business”.¹⁹ This is reflected in the design of Uris Hall, literally replicating the Uris Brothers’ downtown office buildings with an escalator in the lobby, drop ceiling panels, cubicles for the school’s PhD students, a large entry plaza, curtain wall and steel structure (fig. 4-5). The entrance of Uris Hall mirrors an office lobby, with its tiled floors, clocks showing the times in different cities, and even the school’s own centrally displayed logo (fig. 6). The Uris Deli is also reflective of downtown New York’s deli culture and its quick, on-the-go offerings for the busy businessman.

This design is stark contrast to the new Columbia Business School Manhattanville campus, designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro and FxCollaborative. As DS+R describes, “Whereas Columbia’s iconic McKim, Mead and White Beaux Arts

15 Sharon Otterman, “About 80 Pro-Palestinian Activists Arrested in Columbia Library Takeover,” The New York Times, May 7, 2025, sec. New York, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/07/nyregion/columbia-protest-library-occupied.html>.

16 Lilienne Shore Kilgore-Brown, “What’s in a Name? The Controversies of Butler Library,” The Eye, September 6, 2022, <https://www.columbiaspectator.com/the-eye/2022/09/06/whats-in-a-name-the-controversies-of-butler-library/>.

17 “Wallach Hall,” Columbia University Historical Justice Initiative, accessed May 10, 2025, <https://www.cuhistorical-justice.com/tour-stops/wallach-hall>.

18 Dylan Andres and Adam Frommer, “Faculty of Arts and Sciences Plans Renovations, Departmental Transfers for Uris Hall,” Columbia Daily Spectator, November 4, 2021, <https://www.columbiaspectator.com/news/2021/11/04/faculty-of-arts-and-sciences-plans-renovations-departmental-transfers-for-uris-hall/>.

19 Thurman W. Van Metre, “The Graduate School of Business,” in A History of the Graduate School of Business, Columbia University (Columbia University Press, 1954), 98.

Figure 4: Installing steel column during construction of Uris Hall. “Uris under construction” Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Graduate School of Business Photographs, 1954-2005, bulk 1980-2000, Box 2.



Figure 5: Structural grid of Uris Hall. “Uris under construction” Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Graduate School of Business Photographs, 1954-2005, bulk 1980-2000, Box 2.



Figure 6: Lobby of Uris Hall, circa 1980. “Uris under construction” Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Graduate School of Business Photographs, 1954-2005, bulk 1980-2000, Box 2.



campus plan puts up a wall against the world outside, the Manhattanville campus invites the city in: a transparent, permeable, and public ground level extends the existing street grid inside its lobbies, seamlessly integrating town and gown”.²⁰ They go even further to say, “In contrast to traditional business schools, which mirror the hierarchies and divisions of enterprise in order to prepare students for entry into the “real world,” the next-generation business school must aim to dissolve existing models”.²¹ This is done by “resist[ing] the segregation of its populations. Faculty and students are shuffled together like a deck of cards, each group given space on alternating floors”.²² Again, this is a stark contrast to Uris Hall, in which PhD students and faculty are given the top floors of the tower, and graduate students below. The exact hierarchy DS+R is opposed to repeating. Values in the business world seem to be shifting dramatically from the boundless accumulation of wealth, to “a framework that can be more about flourishing, not just profit”.²³ So, one could argue that the renaming of Uris Hall is warranted, given the significant pedagogical evolution, establishing new values which are no longer reflected by the legacy of the Uris brothers. Similar reasoning was used to justify the renaming of Bard Hall, as previously mentioned. Samuel Bard’s legacy as a slaveowner no longer reflects the values that Columbia University now seeks to uphold. On the other hand, memorials can also act as historic checkpoints for us to look back on, providing a visual marker of progress. In Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò’s article, “Looking Back, Facing Forward”, Táíwò analyzes an extract of text by Attoh Ahuma, saying “to look back is to face forward; Intelligent Retrogression is the only Progression, while Backward Movement is synonymous with the highest conception of progress and advancement”.²⁴ Evaluating whether Uris Hall’s name should be preserved is beyond the scope of this investigation, so the following questions remain: Should the naming of on-campus buildings change with the evolution of values? Or should names be maintained despite evolving ideas, as a reflection of past thinking and benchmark to current thought?

20 Columbia Business School,” DS+R, accessed May 10, 2025, <https://dsrny.com/project/columbia-business-school>.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 James S. Russell, “At Columbia’s \$600 Million Business School, Time to Rethink Capitalism,” The New York Times, January 5, 2023, sec. Arts, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/05/arts/design/columbia-business-school-diller-scofidio-renfro-kravis-geffen.html>.

24 Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò, “Looking Back, Facing Forward: (Re)-Imagining A Global Africa,” The Black Scholar 45, no. 1 (2015): 54.

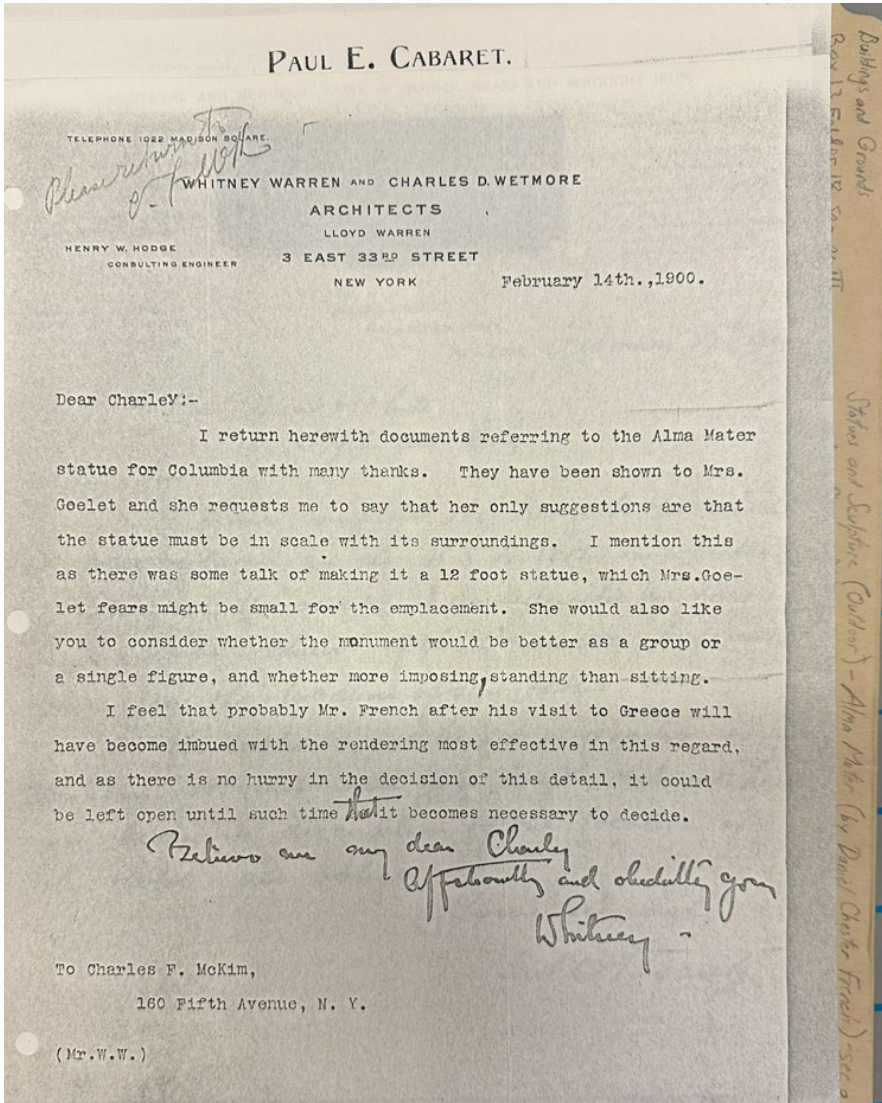


Figure 7:
Letter from architect Charles McKim explaining Mrs. Goelet’s instructions for the statue (“Statues and Sculpture (Outdoor) – Alma Mater” Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Buildings and Grounds Collection, Box 13, Folder 18).

Alma Mater

Alma Mater is an example of a typical top-down approach of memorialization which is reclaimed by students. The statue was paid for by Harriette Goelet, gifted in memory of alumnus Robert Goelet, a prominent New York lawyer and real estate mogul.²⁵ Goelet describes her vision in her proposal to the trustees: “a bronze statue representing ‘Alma Mater’ to be placed upon the pedestal in from of [Low] Library, bearing the inscription: ‘In Memory of Robert Goelet, Class of 1860.’”²⁶ Charles McKim, chief architect of the Morningside Campus, had planned for a statue on the steps of Low Library in his 1897 campus plans, and had built its foundation, a granite slab. However, the exact vision and subject matter of the statue was originally proposed by Harriette Goelet in 1900. She offered to cover the cost of the statue up to \$25,000, and correspondences found in Columbia’s Rare Book and Manuscript Library reveal her direct involvement and supervision of its design: “They have been shown to Mrs. Goelet and she requests me to say that her only suggestions are that the statue must be in scale with its surroundings. I mention this as there was some talk of making it a 12-foot statue, which Mrs. Goelet fears might be small for the emplacement. She would also like you to consider whether the monument would be better as a group or a single figure, and whether more imposing, standing than sitting.”²⁷ Although execution of Alma Mater was a collaborative effort between architect McKim, sculptor Daniel Chester French, the Board of Trustees, President Low, and Mrs. Goelet, the latter ultimately had final say over the end product as the sole funder of the project. An individual with financial means can thus have a significant impact on the campus’ built environment, and the symbols and values which are on display. This differs from the naming of buildings, in which the architecture itself is prescribed, with little room for personal flair as dictated by McKim’s master plan. In reference to Columbia’s Faculty buildings, “McKim was determined to establish a syntax for these buildings, despite their role as background elements, so that each might be given a subtly different expression both to underscore its place in the larger composition and to allow, through ornamental details, variety as well as reference to the specific functions and donors of each structure”.²⁸ Although some personalization was allowed, this was limited to “projected porches”, small material differences, and variations in “quoining and trim” to maintain the unity of the masterplan. Uris Hall is an exception to this, as it differs significantly from the original masterplan.²⁹

Alma Mater is one of the few - albeit fictional - women immortalized on Columbia’s campus. Her sponsorship and conception by a woman are difficult to overlook. Although a long-standing symbol of the University, whether she would have such a prominent place on campus if sponsored by someone else is questionable. Alma Mater’s construction between 1900 and 1903 was also a time when women’s enrollment and presence on campus was fiercely debated. Robert McCaughey broaches the subject in his book, “Stand, Columbia”. Frederick A.P. Barnard, 10th President of Columbia College (1864-1889) actively sought to extend educational privileges at Columbia to women, but this sentiment was not matched by the trustees: “the trustees rejected President Barnard’s call for the admission of women to Columbia College in 1883”.³⁰ Seth Low, one of the trustees at the time and Barnards successor as President, likely voted against

25 Julie Golia, “Alma Mater: Early History,” Columbia University Archives, accessed May 10, 2025, <https://library.columbia.edu/libraries/cuarchives/resources/almaearly.html>.

26 Ibid.

27 Paul E. Cabaret, “Letter from Foundry to Architect McKim,” February 14, 1900, Columbia University. Buildings and grounds collection, 1755-2011, bulk 1880-2000, Box 27, Folder 7, Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

28 Barry Bergdoll, Mastering McKim’s Plan: Columbia’s First Century on Morningside Heights, 51.

29 Ibid, 51.

30 Robert A. McCaughey, Stand, Columbia, 187.

31 Ibid, 187.

the enrollment of women since no other minority votes were recorded, other than Barnard’s.³¹ This attitude is further exemplified by the trustees 1885 rejection to offer courses on pedagogy and to open a Teachers College (despite proven interest) since “doing so would inevitably bring women in numbers onto the Columbia campus”.³² Low’s response to the “Woman Question” was to enact a “separate but equal” stance through the establishment of Barnard College. In June 1900, Low made an agreement with the Barnard trustees and Barnard’s Dean Smith, “to formalize a long-term intercorporate agreement”.³³ This relationship between Columbia and Barnard “perpetuated the disinclination among Columbia trustees, faculty, and alumni to admit women to Columbia College”.³⁴ Although Mrs. Goelet was not a student herself, and the purpose of the statue was to commemorate her late husband, a woman’s shaping of the Columbia’s built environment in such a significant, symbolic position is unfortunately unique. Her direction and oversight of the project which has become synonymous, and representative of the institution suggests that despite’s Low’s best efforts, women were in fact present on Columbia’s campus.

A September 1903 article in the Columbia Daily Spectator describes Alma Mater’s iconography:

“The design of the statue is an idealization of the University seal and represents the figure of a woman seated in a curule chair or throne. [...] The figure is characterized by a queenly dignity and repose and expresses the highest type of intellectual womanhood. In pose and gesture she invites the student of the University and gives him the welcome of Alma Mater”.³⁵

Given that Columbia College’s first fully coeducational class did not exist until 1987, the use of a female expressing “the highest of type of intellectual womanhood” to become the face of an all-male institution is curious.³⁶ The concept of a “nourishing mother of studies” is not unique to Columbia, the term previously used to honour mother goddesses, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, in Catholicism.³⁷ The motto of the University of Bologna, the oldest university in continuous operation in the world, is Alma Mater Studiorum (“nurturing mother of studies”) emphasizing its role in originating the modern university.³⁸ Alma Mater seems to be both a reflection of the institution’s values at the time in which women’s role should be relegated to one of nourishment of male students (“gives him the welcome”), as well as a subversive act asserting women’s necessary and central role in the institution. The placement of the statue along the campus’s central axis, in from of the prominent Low Library, makes Alma Mater not just the only female figure on campus at the time, but also the most prominent figure.³⁹

Alma Mater differs from other symbols and commemorations across campus, since the symbol has been used to represent the school since its founding in

32 Robert A. McCaughey, Stand, Columbia, 191.

33 Ibid, 189.

34 Robert A. McCaughey, Stand, Columbia, 189.

35 “UNIVERSITY OPENS TO-DAY Address by Professor Peck-Statue of Alma Mater to Be Unveiled,” Columbia Spectator, September 23, 1903, Volume XLVII edition, Columbia Spectator Archive, <https://spectatorarchive.library.columbia.edu/?a=d&d=cs19030923-01.2.2&sr-pos=20&e=-----190-en-20--1-byDA-txt-tx-IN-alma+mater----1903-->.

36 Caroline Somers and Nour Kandil, “A Brief History of Women at Columbia - Columbia Spectator,” Columbia Daily Spectator, April 25, 2022, <https://www.columbiaspectator.com/spectrum/2022/04/25/a-brief-history-of-women-at-columbia/>.

37 “Overview: Alma Mater,” Oxford Reference, accessed May 10, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095404722>.

38 “Una Europa Partner | Alma Mater Studiorum - Università Di Bologna,” Una Europa, accessed May 10, 2025, <https://www.una-europa.eu/about/alma-mater-studiorum-universita-di-bologna>.

39 Caroline Somers and Nour Kandil, “A Brief History of Women at Columbia - Columbia Spectator,” Columbia Daily Spectator, April 25, 2022, <https://www.columbiaspectator.com/spectrum/2022/04/25/a-brief-history-of-women-at-columbia/>.

40 Julie Golia, “Alma Mater: Early History.”



Figure 8: Original drawing of King’s College seal (1795, Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Historical Photograph Collection).

Figure 9:
Ruth Bader Ginsburg, spontaneous memorialization (Photograph by Deborah Shapiro, The Iconic Statue, September 25, 2020, <https://deborahshapiro.photos/2020/09/25/remembering-ruth-bader-ginsburg/>).

Figure 10:
2024 Protests (Photograph by Fox News, September 3, 2024, <https://www.foxnews.com/us/masked-anti-israel-protesters-columbia-university-demonstrate-students-check-first-day-classes>).

Figure 11:
Bombing of Alma Mater ("Statues and Sculpture (Outdoor) - Alma Mater" Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Buildings and Grounds Collection, Box 13, Folder 18).



1754.⁴⁰ The image of the “nourishing mother” was used on the school’s original seal, designed by first president of the university, Samuel Johnson, and has been a part of the institution’s identity since. Johnson’s seal design is described in a 1755 Trustee’s meeting: “The College is represented by a Lady sitting in a Throne or Chair of State, with several children at her knees to represent the Pupils...One of them She takes by the hand with her left hand expressing her benevolent design of Conducting them to True Wisdom and Virtue...Out of her Mouth over her left Shoulder, goes a label with these words in Hebrew Letters - God is my Light...”⁴¹ Alma Mater “has served as a human representation of the university’s mission”.⁴² The statue was commissioned and built during a time of exceptional growth for Columbia – the opening of the Morningside Campus, the official switch to Columbia University from College. As McCaughy puts it, “Columbia became today’s Columbia in the 1890s”.⁴³ No wonder that the statue, built in 1900, has come to symbolize the institution. Since she has become a symbol of the University, Alma Mater has become the frequent subject of acts of reclamation, with students using the statue to express their differing, often overlooked, values.

The statue has been the site of several unsanctioned acts of commemoration and reclamation – an informal, student memorial for Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg in 2020; a dousing of red paint during the pro-Palestinian protests of 2024; a 1970 bombing whose damage remained visible for eight years. As Columbia’s most iconic and centrally located monument, Alma Mater serves as a symbol of the institution and its values. Thus, its modification by students imbues it with new meaning, often exposing tensions between their values and those of the administration. These types of unsanctioned events are often met with immediate dismantling, disciplinary action, and sometimes police force, further revealing the institution’s disapproval. In March 1970, both Uris Hall and Alma Mater were sites selected by demonstrators demanding that the university pay reparations to the Black Panther Party, “to make up for the “exploitation” of black and Puerto Rican people in the Morningside Heights neighborhood”.⁴⁴ Red paint was splashed on Uris Hall and windows smashed.⁴⁵ What do these two sites of commemoration share in common? Why were they selected as sites for protests? They share a typical, top-down approach to their creation. Both were funded by a private donor, with influence over the final result and thus have direct involvement in shaping Columbia’s built environment. In other words, both sites reflect the values of the institution, which are often incongruent with the values of the student body. Thus, the chosen sites reiterate and reinforce the message that students try to convey through reclaiming commemorations: our values differ from the institution’s.

41 Julie Golia, “Alma Mater: Early History.”

42 Ibid.

43 Robert A. McCaughey, *Stand, Columbia*, 178.

44 Paul L. Montgomery, “MILITANTS OCCUPY COLUMBIA SCHOOL,” *The New York Times*, March 14, 1970.

45 Ibid.

Lenape Land Acknowledgement Plaque

The Lenape Land Acknowledgment Plaque is one of Columbia’s most recent memorials, installed in 2016 after four years of student-led advocacy.⁴⁶ The effort was led by Julian Brave NoiseCat, a Columbia College student who first brought up the idea to the Native American Council. In April 2013, “students from the Native American Council petitioned Columbia to install a plaque acknowledging the Lenni Lenape people, who we have a responsibility to remember because we live, learn, and prosper on lands that were originally theirs”.⁴⁷ The following is from an article written by NoiseCat called “A poignant plaque” – NoiseCat wrote for the Spectator to gain publicity for the project, and in doing so was able to garner a thousand signatures for the Change.org petition. In the same article he states, “we call on Columbia to recognize this petition that is aligned with the University’s stated mission – to advance knowledge – as well as the values of recognition, responsibility, and action instilled in us through the Core Curriculum”.⁴⁸ NoiseCat’s call-for-action critiques Columbia’s existing commemorations, similar to those discussed thus far: the school’s colonial heritage highlighted with the words “King’s College” inscribed on the frieze of Low Library, the “Greek charioteers”, the King’s Crown logo.⁴⁹

The plaque reads: “IN HONOR OF THE LENAPE PEOPLE / The Lenape lived here before and during colonization of the Americas. This plaque recognizes these indigenous people of Manhattan, their displacement, dispossession, and continued presence. It stands as a reminder to reflect on our past as we contemplate our way forward”. The importance of on-campus commemorations is summarized perfectly by the plaques writing: “to reflect on our past as we contemplate our way forward”.

The lack of representation of Lenape history on campus points towards the problems associated with the top-down approach to memorialization such as the naming of buildings and single donor statues. The limited perspectives create a strong bias, prioritizing the perspectives of the dominant group. This means that the voices of marginalized communities, such as the indigenous students of Columbia, are excluded. This is evident by the monotony of the Morningside Campus’s commemorations – mainly white men such as Hamilton, Jefferson, McKim, Mudd, Lafayette, and even Le Penseur (Figure 13). NoiseCat explains the importance of diverse representation perfectly, “Surely the indigenous experience deserves celebration or at least acknowledgment at an institution of higher learning that has declared its responsibility to represent and promulgate truth”.⁵⁰

The formal adoption of specific practices of memorialization, such as the erection of memorials, are often preceded or accompanied by official decrees of recognition and institutionalisation.⁵¹ A formal plaque, who’s groundbreaking was attended by then-President Lee Bollinger and other University officials, marks a formal recognition of the history of indigenous people, and their claim to land. Although an important acknowledgement, whether this plaque marks long-term change or sufficient reparation is debatable. Then-President of the Native American Council, Lakota Pochedley, acknowledged the limitations of the plaque; “while it is symbolic in nature, [the plaque] can lead to a larger discussion of incorporating Native studies into the Core Curriculum”.⁵² A plaque

46 Ann Vettikkal, “The Lenape of Manahatta: A Struggle for Acknowledgement,” Columbia Daily Spectator, September 6, 2022, <https://www.columbiaspectator.com/the-eye/2022/09/06/the-lenape-of-manahatta-a-struggle-for-acknowledgement/>.

47 Julian NoiseCat, “A Poignant Plaque,” Columbia Spectator Archive, October 14, 2013, <https://spectatorarchive.library.columbia.edu/?a=d&d=cs20131014-01.2.15&srpos=1&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN-a+poignant+plaque----->.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Martin J.M. Hoondert and Gemma Varona Martínez, “Practices of Memorialization & the Process of Social Reconstruction after Large-Scale Human Rights Abuses and Violations,” Instituto Internacional de Sociología Jurídica de Oñati, January 24, 2018, <https://www.iisj.net/en/workshops/practices-memorialization-process-social-reconstruction-after-large-scale-human-rights>.



Figure 12:
Columbia University’s Lenape Land Acknowledgement Plaque. Courtesy of author.

Figure 14: NoiseCat featured in the Columbia Spectator (Photograph by Alice Breidenbach, May 1, 2013, Columbia University Spectator Archives,, <https://spectatorarchive.library.columbia.edu/?a=d&d=cs20130501-01.2.2&sr-pos=1&e=-----en-20--1--txt-tx-IN-plaque+native+land----->).



can indeed start conversations but given that a review of the current core curriculum reveals no changes to incorporate indigenous studies, and no conversations regarding this are publicised, the actual effectiveness of a plaque of this nature is questionable. Why is it that Alma Mater garners attention from visitors, graduate photoshoots and spontaneous reclamation, but the Lenape Land Acknowledgment Plaque has not gained such popularity?

Several factors might help explain: The plaque measures roughly 12 by 18 inches. It is a metal plaque with gold lettering, mounted on a small stone pedestal angled towards passersby. The plaque is easy to miss. Located across from Wallach Hall in a garden bed, the small stone pedestal is frequently obscured under plant overgrowth, or under a pile of snow. No matter the season, the plaques visibility is compromised. The irony that a group of people, once labelled as a “vanishing race” despite their ongoing existence and rejection of erasure, now have their acknowledgment continuously erased with the changing seasons, is not lost.⁵³ Its location across from Wallach Hall is a relatively quiet corner of campus, infrequently visited other than residents, diners at John Jay Dining and Columbia clinic patients. Both its location, unremarkable formal attributes and size make the plaque easily overlooked. It is a stark contrast to Alma Mater, which is frequently described as “regal” and “majestic” in its enduring press. I do not want to suggest that the school should construct a massive monument in the plaque’s place. This too feels like a repeat of colonial practices which may not be reflective of the Lenape people’s message. Rather, the intent of this essay is to instead provoke new ideas for commemoration, as exemplified by the unsanctioned acts of memorialization previously described.

This is the only commemoration discussed in this essay paid for exclusively by the school, with no private donor contributions. This likely explains the scale and unambitious, uninspiring quality of the plaque. This begs further questions: were there no donors interested in contributing to the commemoration of Lenape people on Columbia’s campus? How much was invested in the plaque? What other things was the budget spent on? The Columbia Spectator echoes my own experience searching for information regarding the plaque, and the Lenape in general, in Columbia’s archives: “despite the library archives’ singular goal of preserving the history of Columbia through official University record and other related materials, the archives do not provide many easily accessible or substantial answers when it comes to the University’s role in the departure of the Lenape people. Nor does Spectator’s archive – in fact, there are only two brief mentions of the Lenape people in Spectator during the 20th century”.⁵⁴

Not only is there a lack of documentation, but there are also several other obstacles in creating a student-led memorial. It took four years of student-led advocacy before the Lenape Land Acknowledgement plaque was installed. This means that it would take an undergraduate student their entire time in school to make such an impact. Graduate students, most degrees which are one to three years, may be even less inclined to embark on such a mission. Articles in the Spectator also highlight the complex bureaucracy associated with the process, including the necessary approval from the Board of Trustees. A Spectator article writes, “Many NAC members said they feel that Columbia has been slow to recognize and initiate means of support for its indigenous students”⁵⁵, exposing the challenge of acquiring the attention and approval of the institution.

52 Tracey Wang, “Petition Calls for Plaque Recognizing Native Land,” Columbia Spectator Archive, May 1, 2013, <https://spectatorarchive.library.columbia.edu/?a=d&d=cs20130501-01.2.2&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN----->.

53 “Photographs of Native Americans,” Massachusetts Historical Society, accessed May 12, 2025, https://www.masshist.org/photographs/nativeamericans/essay.php?entry_id=75.

54 Ann Vettikkal, “The Lenape of Manahatta: A Struggle for Acknowledgement,” The Eye: Columbia Daily Spectator, September 6, 2022, <https://www.columbiaspectator.com/the-eye/2022/09/06/the-lenape-of-manahatta-a-struggle-for-acknowledgement/>.

55 Ann Vettikkal, “The Lenape of Manahatta.”

Conclusion

“Not only would the grid plan of the city and the master plan of the city and the master plan of the campus remain in a state of continual negotiation, but Columbia’s trustees themselves would move back and forth between generating wealth from the city, often in real estate, and providing stewardship for campus, set apart as a monument to their cultural and educational values”.⁵⁶

Columbia’s Morningside campus can be seen as a monument in and of itself. As Bergdoll states, the campus reflects the institutions cultural and educational values. An 1847 article in American Literary Magazine echoes this sentiment, describing the new Gothic library at Yale and declaring “a college must have buildings...because there must be something to give the public a pledge of the permanence of the institution”.⁵⁷ This essay seeks to investigate the types of commemorative practices often overlooked in discourse, whether this be because they are too small, unsanctioned, or inconsequential. In reality, the assemblage of these various types of memorials all contribute to the collective memory of everyone at Columbia University. “Historical narratives and collective memories are frequently cited as requirements or components that help constitute a nation”.⁵⁸ That which can be said for the nation can also be said of an institution like Columbia. As seen through the examples explored in this essay, commemorations reflect the values of a particular program such as the business school, a microcosm of the city and nation at large. They also reflect the long history and deeply rooted symbolism of school, its origin values, as is the case for Alma Mater. They can sometimes express the voice of the marginalized communities on campus, and reveal historic truths which have been ignored, not acknowledging the harm caused by the institution. Although the physical boundaries of Columbia are quite rigid, particularly the Morningside Campus, its commemorations reflect the values of a lineage of people and timeframe which extend beyond the campus’s current physical limits.

Memorial culture refers to the way a society or group remembers the past, encompassing various practices, rituals and symbols which construct a collective memory.⁵⁹ “Memorial culture does not, in the first place, refer to the past, but to the current processes of memorialization in the present and comprises social, material and mental or cognitive dimensions”.⁶⁰ Through this investigation of Columbia’s memorial culture, I would like to underscore that these practices of memorialization are often contested – tensions exist between those commissioning memorials, the supporters, those being memorialized and diverse individuals. Where top-down approaches to memorialization fail, spontaneous acts of commemoration are enacted. As exemplified throughout this exploration, top-down produced commemorations can result in impressive, iconic forms. They are generously funded, carefully planned for, and are maintained. They reflect the values of institution, which lacks diversity. Their stagnant presence is often reclaimed by student-led interventions, imbuing new meaning and challenging the authoritative voice. If the mission of an institution like Columbia is the advancement of knowledge and growth, it seems that fixed nature of traditional commemoration is in opposition to this mission. From the examples provided, students uphold the mission of the school by resisting stagnation of Columbia’s built environment. It is through the actions of renaming, refunctioning, reclaiming, and advocating, performed by students, that memorial culture begins to more accurately reflect the collective memory of Columbia.

56 Barry Bergdoll, Mastering McKim’s Plan: Columbia’s First Century on Morningside Heights, 21.

57 Ibid, 27.

58 “Nationalism, Memory, Memorials,” Nationalism Studies (blog), February 24, 2016, <https://nationalismstudies.wordpress.com/2016/02/24/nationalism-memory-memorials/>.

59 “Cultural Memory,” National Geographic, accessed May 10, 2025, <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/cultural-memory>.

60 Martin J.M. Hoondert and Gemma Varona Martínez, “Practices of Memorialization & the Process of Social Reconstruction after Large-Scale Human Rights Abuses and Violations.”

CORNERSTONE INSCRIPTIONS -- Columbia University-Related Buildings (dqf / July 1988) page 4	
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY MORNINGSIDE HEIGHTS CAMPUS	
Columbia University Morningside Heights Named Campus Buildings	
The Annex	-
Armstrong Hall	[none]
Avery Extension	[none]
Avery Extension Vault	[none]
Avery Hall	CORNER STONE LAID JUNE SEVENTH MDCCCXCI
Buell Hall	[none]
Burgess Hall	[none]
Butler Hall	[none]
Butler Library	CORNER STONE LAID OCTOBER THIRD MDCCCXXXII
The Carlton	[none]
Carman Hall	[none]
Casa Hispanica	1827 1842 Delta Phi ERECTED 1906
Casa Italiana	CORNER STONE LAID AVGVST V MCMXXVI
Center for Engr & Phys Sci Rsch	[none yet]
Chandler Laboratories	CORNER STONE LAID JUNE THIRD MCMXXV
Computer Center	[none]
Computer Science Building	[none]
Dodge Hall	CORNER STONE LAID DECEMBER EIGHTEENTH MCMXXIII
Dodge Physical Fitness Center	1974
Earl Hall	[none]
Engineering Terrace Building	[none]
Faculty House	CORNER STONE LAID JUNE SEVENTH MCMXXII
Fairchild Ctr for Life Sciences	[none]
The Fairholm	[none]
Fayerweather Hall	CORNER-STONE LAID MAY SECOND MDCCCXCVI
Ferris Booth Hall	1959
Furnald Hall	CORNER STONE LAID DECEMBER SECOND MDCCCXXII
Greene Hall	[none]
Hamilton Hall	HVIVS COLLEGII OLIM REGALIS NVNC COLUMBIAE DICTI REGIO DIPLOMATE AN DOM MDCCCLIII CONSTITVTI IN I HONOREM DEI OPTIMI MAXIMI ATQ IN ECCLESIAE REIQ PVBLICAE EMOLVMENTVM PRIMVS HIC LAPIS POSITVS EST SEPT DIE XXVII AN DOM MDCCCVC
Hamilton Hall Annex	[none]
Harmony Hall	1928
Hartley Hall	CORNER-STONE LAID OCTOBER THIRTY FIRST MDCCCIV
Havemeyer Extension	[none]
Havemeyer Hall	CORNER-STONE LAID NOVEMBER FOURTH MDCCCXCVI
Havemeyer Vault	[none]
Hogan Hall	A D 1898
Hudson Hall & Heyman Center	[none]
International Affairs Building	[none]
International Affairs Extension	[none]
John Jay Hall	CORNER STONE LAID OCTOBER FIFTH MCMXXV
Johnson Hall	CORNER STONE LAID JANUARY SEVENTH MCMXXIV
Journalism Building	CORNER STONE LAID JULY SECOND MCMXII
Kent Hall	CORNER-STONE LAID OCTOBER FOURTH MDCCCIX
King's Crown Hotel	[none]
Law Building	1960
Lewisohn Hall	CORNER-STONE LAID OCTOBER THIRTY-FIRST MDCCCIV
Low Memorial Library	CORNER-STONE LAID DECEMBER SEVENTH MDCCCXCV
Mathematics Building	CORNER-STONE LAID NOVEMBER FOURTH MDCCCXCVI
McBain Hall	[none]
McVickar Hall	SCHWARTZ & GROSS ARCHITECTS 1908
Mudd Building	[none]
Pegram Laboratories	[none]
Philosophy Hall	CORNER STONE LAID JULY ELEVENTH MDCCCX
Prentiss Hall	[none]
President's House	[none]
Pupin Physics Laboratories	CORNER STONE LAID AUGUST SEVENTH MCMXXV

Figure 13: Cornerstone inscriptions for CU’s Named Campus Buildings (“Names and Inscriptions Index”, July 1988, Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Buildings and grounds collection, 1755-2011, box 18).

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LIBRARY OF LABOR

<https://liboflab.cargo.site/>

Library of Labor is where Representation of Labor meets Labor of Representation.

[EC] I am interested in themes of maintenance, cleaning and repair. [ES] I am interested in themes of collection, narrative, and the mundane.

Who performs the labor of maintaining? Are there new rituals or daily practices that can be created to render the labor of cleaning more visible, or to make this labor more equitably distributed? Cleaning and maintenance have gendered connotations – is there a way to de-gender the two forms of labor?

Library of Labor is an open source, online resource. It is an inventory of drawings and photographs. Started by us but growing based on submissions. It includes a CAD library of people performing acts of maintenance in unexpected, subversive ways; tools which challenge our relationships with cleaning; dimensional guides; reference layouts of new ways to configure space for maintenance.

Waste Works
Amelyn Ng
Spring 2025

In collaboration with Esther Su

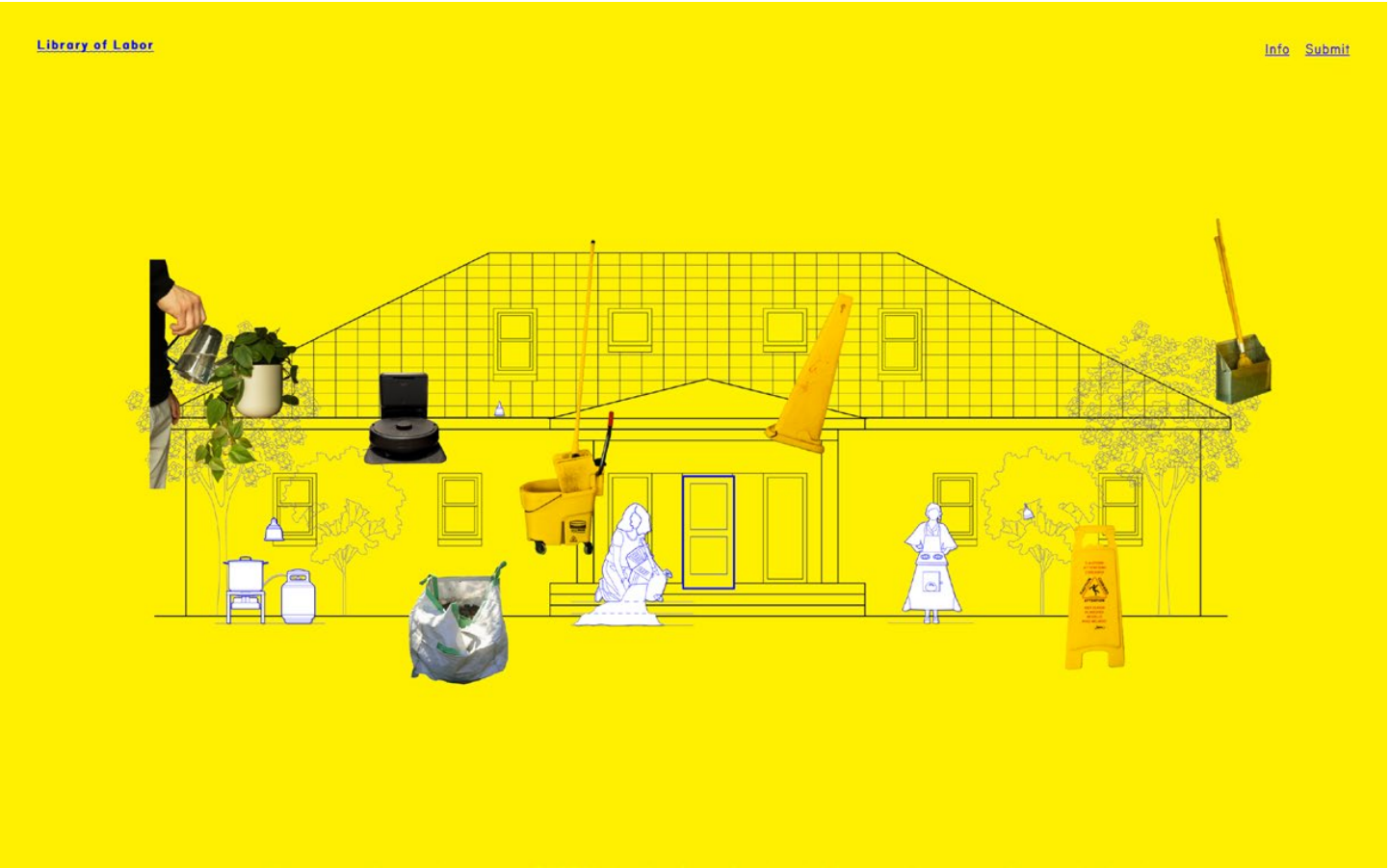


Mop Bucket

The landing page. To enter the site, click the house icon.

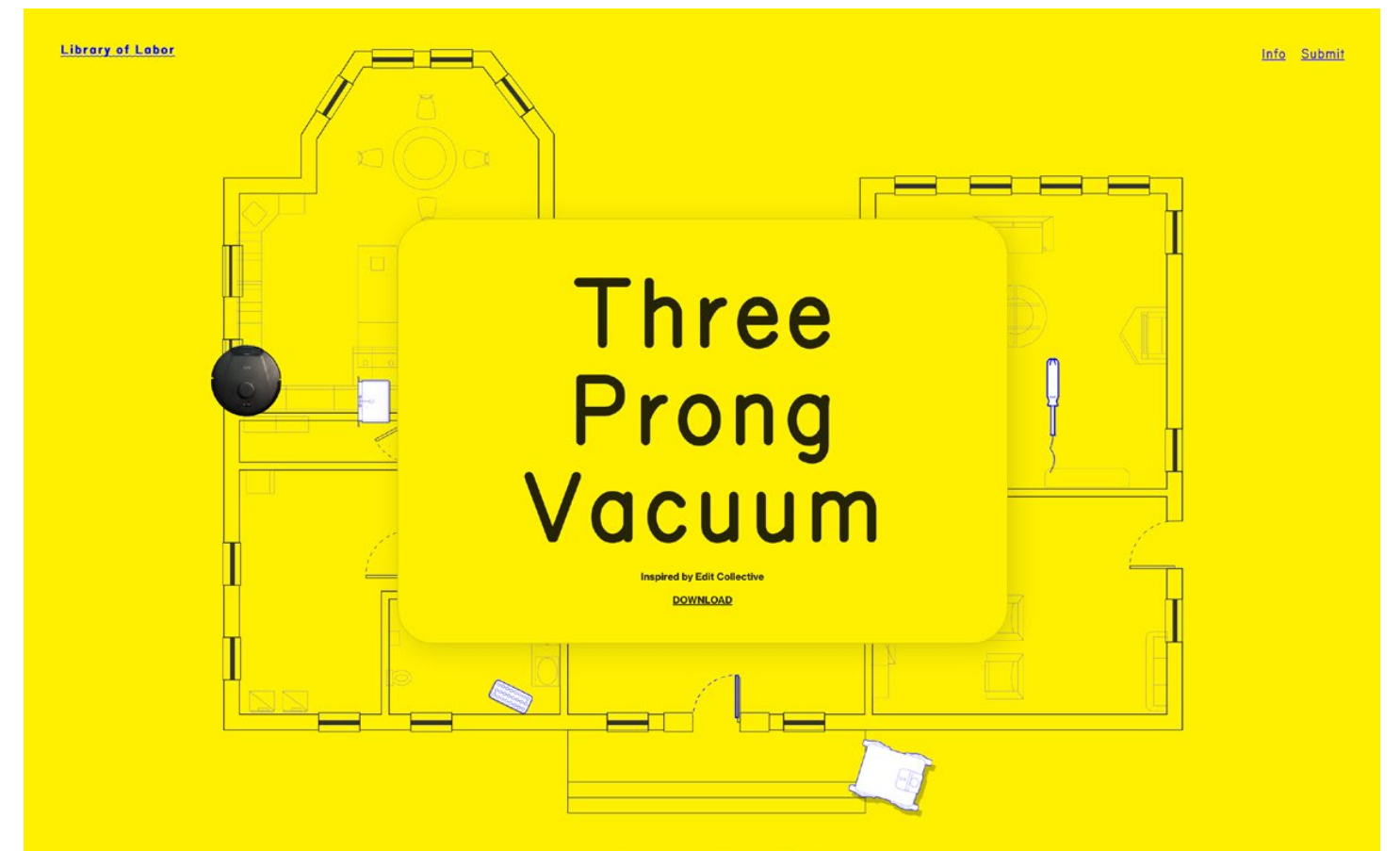
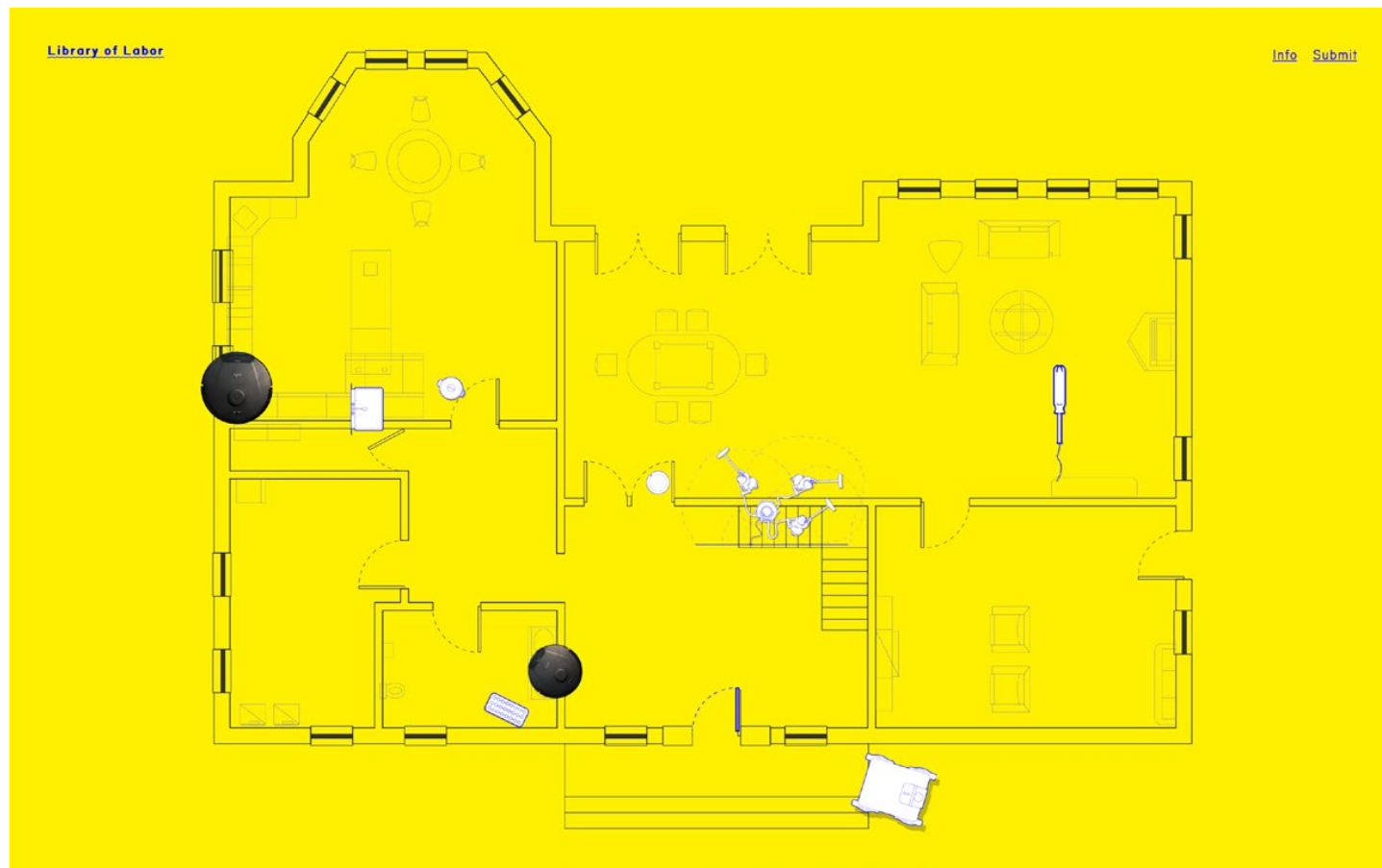


This leads you to an elevational view of a house. You can start clicking around to discover downloadable files. When you click on the door...



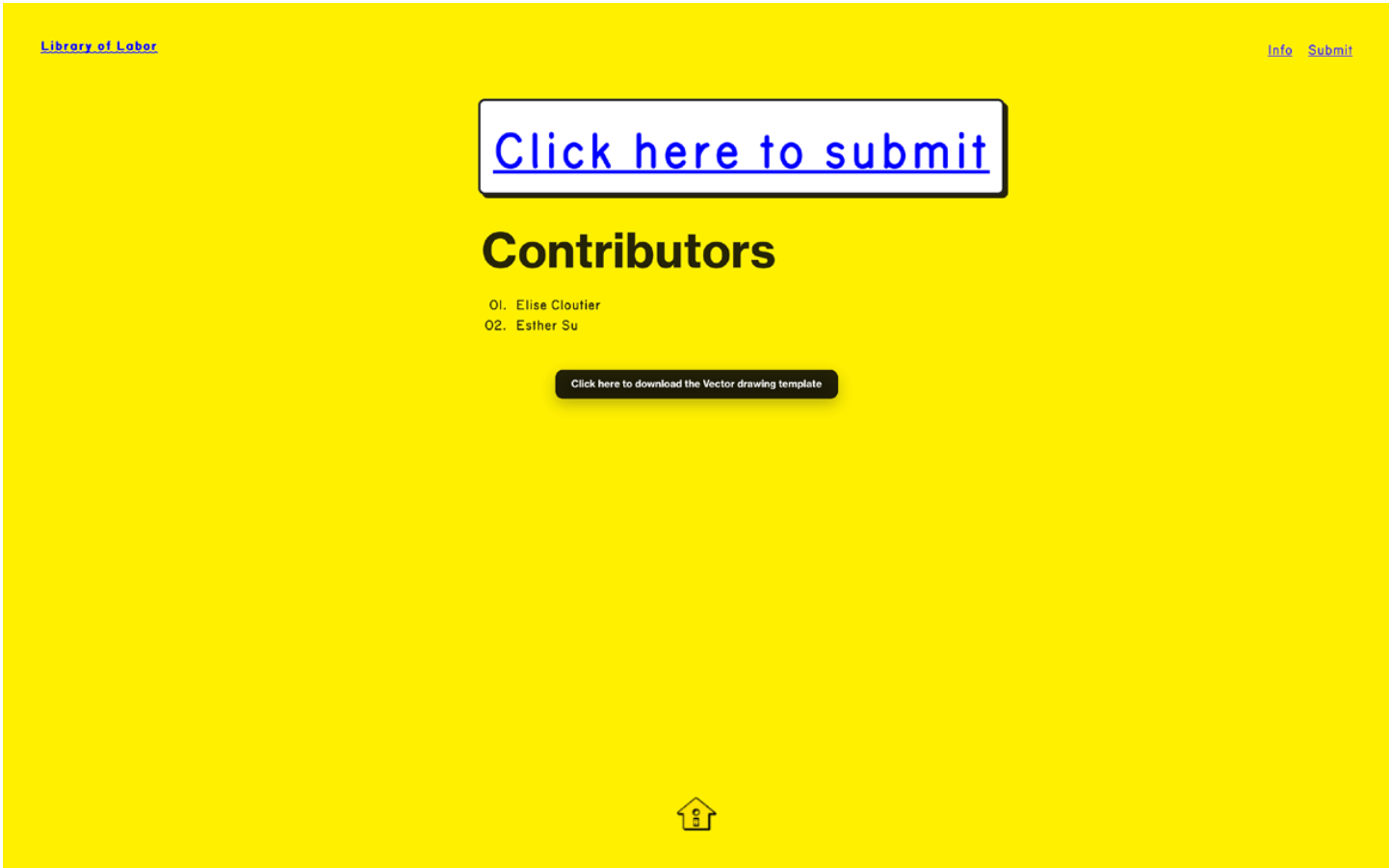
...you are led to a plan view. Clicking on the front door in plan will lead you back to the elevation. Assets are organized by their mode of projection.

One example of an elevational CAD object is this three-person vacuum, designed by Edit Collective.



This is an open source, online resource. As such, in tandem with drawing an initial set of CAD blocks and raster photos, we have a submission form and templates that enable people to add to the library themselves. Part of this framework includes a vetting/ approval/ filtering process, administered by us.

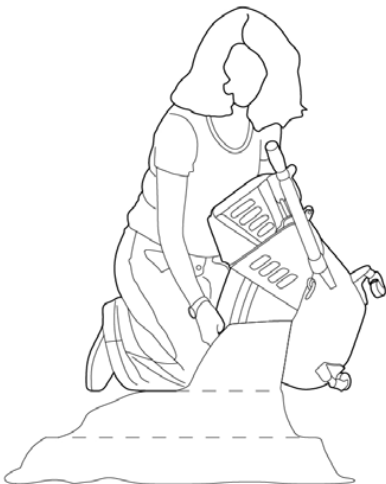
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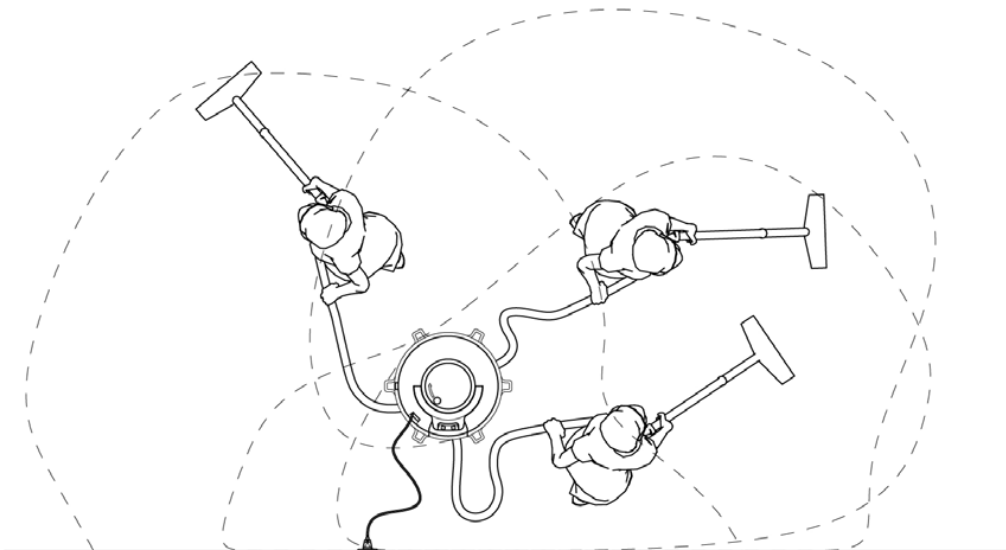
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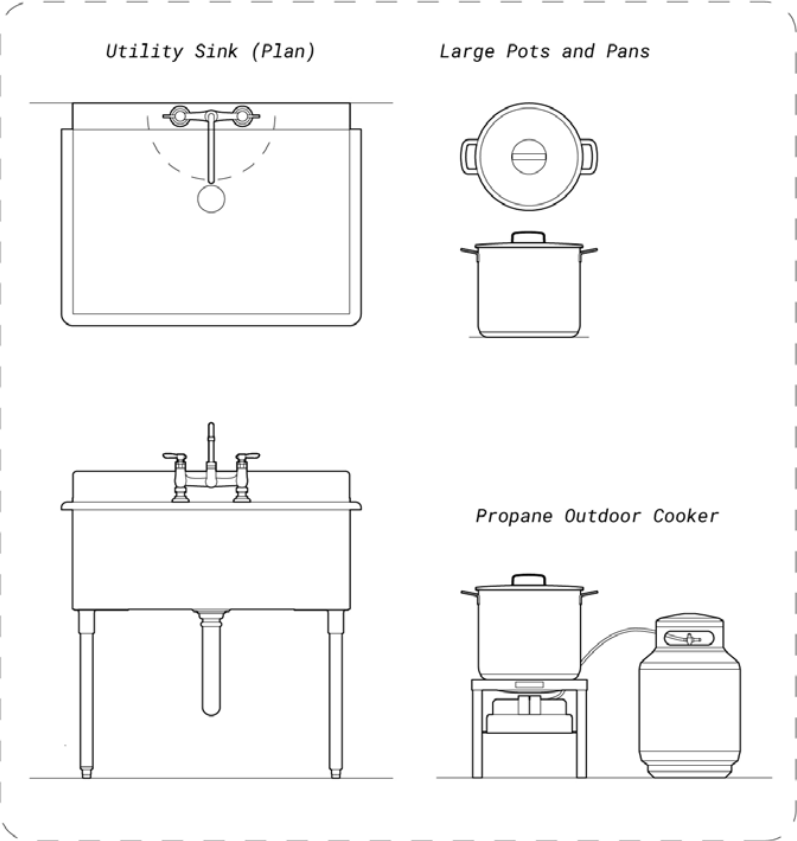
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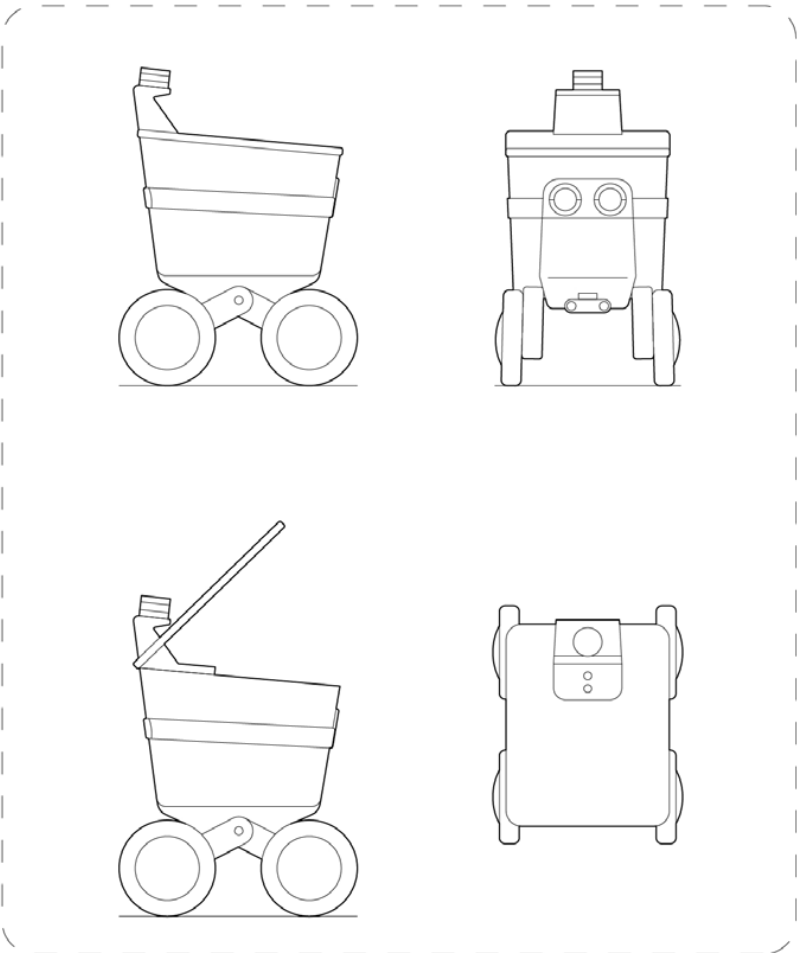
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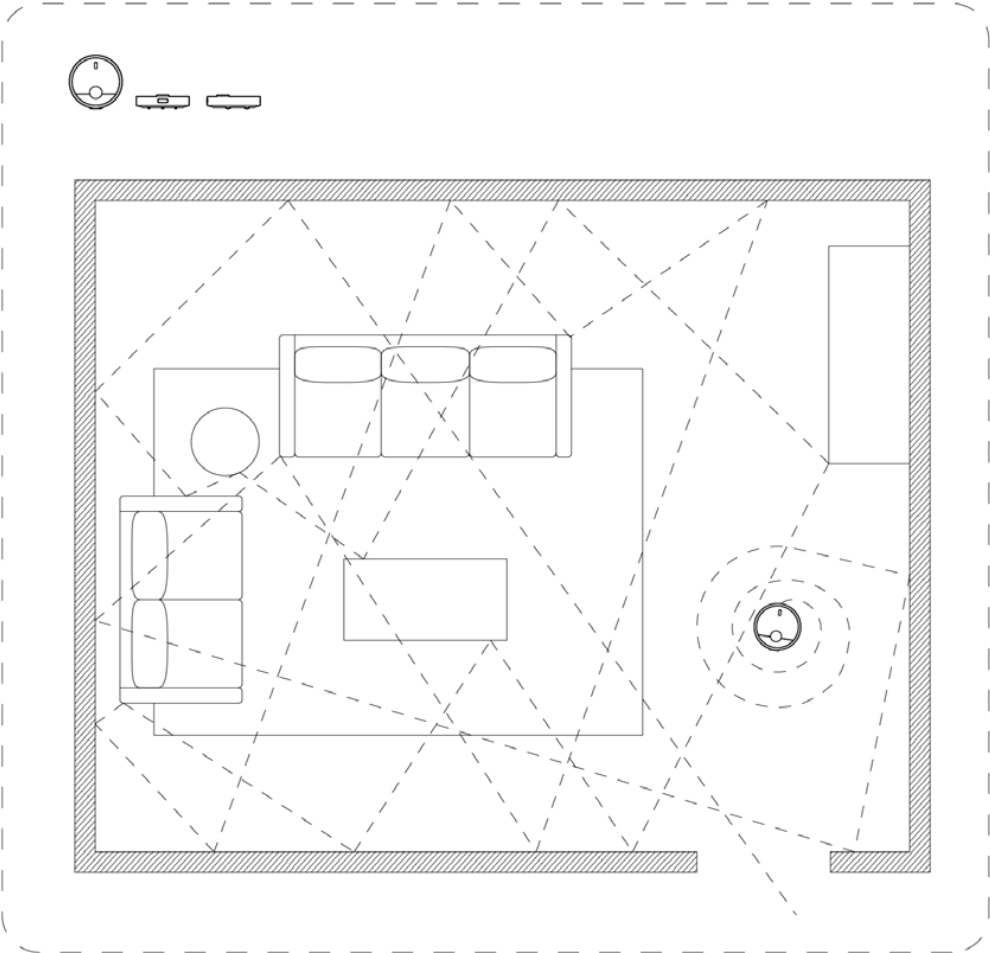
COMMUNITY KITCHEN



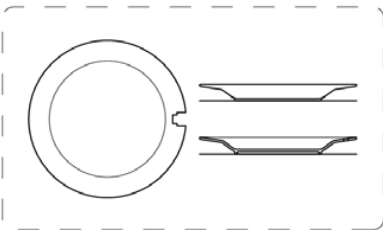
SERVE ROBOT



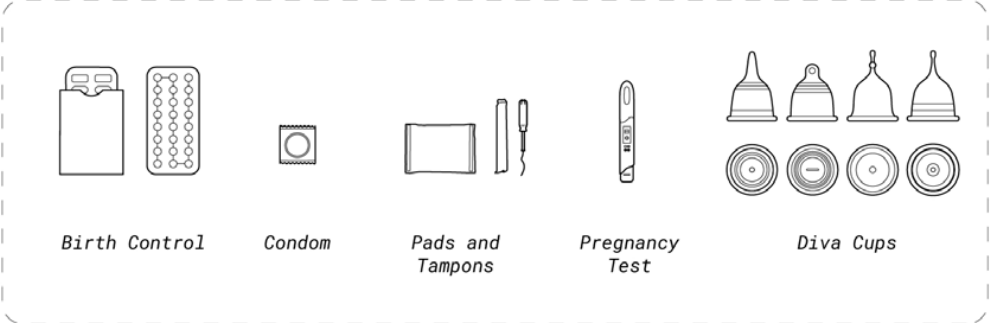
ROOMBA



PLATES FOR
ROBOTS



REPRODUCTIVE LABOR



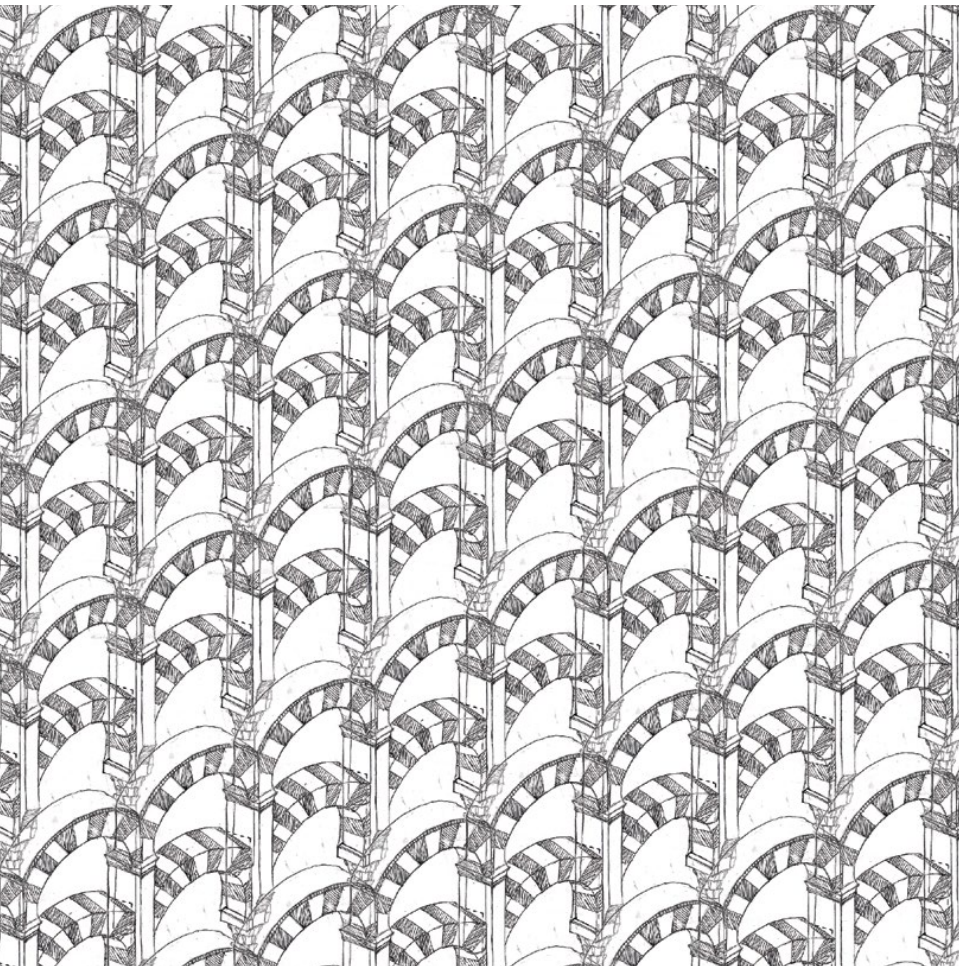
CÓRDOBA

The Mosque-Cathedral of Córdoba has stood the test of time. The repeated column module defies time and appears in every expansion of the building over centuries. To show its degradation over time, I cast the module in the same mold of kinetic sand, over and over, letting each cast get progressively more obscured, falling apart over time.

I am interested in ways that designers can represent their own labour and process in their work. Taking inspiration from the mosque, which has an entire Roman ruin beneath it, I placed the remnants of my experiments - various molds, material tests, failed 3D prints - below the plane of columns. They exist as their own archeological site.

ADR II
Genevieve Mateyko
Córdoba, Spain
Fall 2024

Individual Work



Column Sketch



Closeup of Archeological Site



Overall View

TUPPERWARE PARTIES

This essay will discuss the question, what kind of modern female subject did the at-home business model of Tupperware Parties create?

The question will be examined through the lenses of three key characteristics of modernism – individualism and independence, efficiency, and rapid urbanization and transport – to evaluate whether Tupperware’s business model enabled women to “modernize” in the way the New Woman model predicted, and in what ways the reality of the emerging modern woman may have differed.

QAH II
Ateya Khorakiwala / Lucia Galaretto
Spring 2024

Individual Work



1950's Tupperware Party Ad

Introduction

1 "Le Corbusier - Architect, Designer, Artist, Pioneer and a Unique Personality," Les Couleurs, accessed May 8, 2024, <https://www.lescouleurs.ch/en/the-colours/le-corbusier/>.

2 Erin Blakemore, "Tupperware Parties: Suburban Women's Plastic Path to Empowerment," *History*, March 1, 2019, <https://www.history.com/news/tupperware-parties-brownie-wise>.

3 "Parties for Plastic: How Women Used Tupperware to Participate in Business," March 15, 2016, <https://americanhistory.si.edu/explore/stories/parties-plastic-how-women-used-tupperware-participate-business>.

4 Alison J. Clarke, "The Story of Tupperware Parties in Pictures, 1950s - Rare Historical Photos," <https://Rarehistoricalphotos.Com/> (blog), February 9, 2021, <https://rarehistoricalphotos.com/tupperware-parties-pictures-history/>.

5 Ibid.

6 “Tupperware, Inc.,” Reference for Business, accessed February 22, 2024, <https://www.referenceforbusiness.com/businesses/M-Z/Tupperware-Inc.html>.

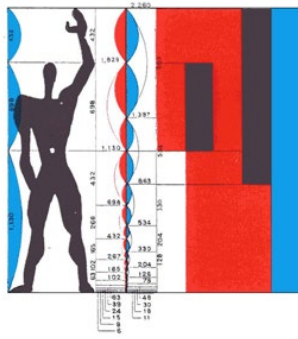


Figure 1: Le Corbusier's Modulor. Courtesy of ArchDaily.



Figure 2: Page from Tupperware's 1964 catalog, claiming Tupperware Parties as "the modern way to shop". Courtesy of Tupperdiva.

The Modulator Man is a recurring motif and measurement system developed by Le Corbusier, considered a pioneer of modern architecture, to put man at the center of architecture and design.¹ Although meant to be a universal system of proportions, The Modulator was arbitrarily assigned a height of six feet, biasing male measurements. If man was to be the center of modern architecture, what did the modernization of women look like?

During World War II, many American women had taken on the manufacturing jobs left behind by men, working in these positions until forced to return to the role of full-time homemakers after the war.² In the wake of women's short-lived experience in manufacturing jobs, there was a growing desire from women to enter the workforce. Earl Silas Tupper's 1946 invention of Tupperware, a line of food-storage containers, saw this as an opportunity to provide women with a business model that allowed them to make money, without leaving the domestic sphere which they had been relegated to.³ Tupper intended to reshape the domestic identity of women by enabling the preservation and storage of food, in theory simplifying and optimizing the duties of a housewife.⁴ Brownie Wise pioneered a system of selling, exemplified by her "Tupperware Parties" and social selling business model, which recodified the domestic identity of women by creating a new type of consumer-led marketing labour, eventually leading to the product being removed from all retailers, only sold through the social networks of women.⁵ This type of business structure appeased society's expectations of women as housewives, while providing the framework for them to achieve economic autonomy and self-realization. The method offered was flexible, fitting unobtrusively into the existing housewife lifestyle, allowing women to become the face of the brand. While an empowering business model which enabled women to independently generate profit, this system concurrently reinforced women's relationship with traditional home life and domestic obligations by limiting the site of transactions to their own homes, and by promoting a product that supported their labour within the home.

This essay will discuss the question, *what kind of modern female subject did the at-home business model of Tupperware Parties create?*

The company positioned themselves as a modern business model, clearly calling themselves “the modern way to shop” in Tupperware’s 1964 catalog (Figure 2). The product itself is a direct result of industrialization, a defining feature of modernism. In 1946, shortly after the end of World War II, Earl Silas Tupper invented Tupperware. Using his understanding of industrial plastic from his time developing gas masks and parts for the navy, Tupper used advancements in material technology instigated by the war to develop a line of consumer goods marketed towards women and marketed *by* women.⁶

A key development during the modernist period was the creation of immediate, transglobal communication. This period marks a shift towards commodity capitalism and consumerism, which was made possible by rapid communication and the transportation of goods globally. Although situated within this context, Tupperware depicted itself as a proudly American company: Tupper had developed the technology and manufactured the product in the United States, as advertised in Tupperware catalogs (Figure 3). Exclusively white, American women and families are shown in the company's marketing material, but the product and business model spread globally. Anath Ariel De Vidas explores one

example in "Containing Modernity: The social life of Tupperware in a Mexican indigenous village".⁷ This modern, global connectedness is implied in advertisements which promise women "a world of opportunity" and incorporate images of the Earth, depicting Tupperware as a worldly product (Figure 4). That said, the company's primary market and influence in the 50s and 60s was on American, suburban housewives. Although women were able to engage in a business with a global market, the scope of their contributions was limited to the domestic realm, through the home party business model. This allowed for a superficial sense of connectivity to the rest of the world through consumerist goods, while reinforcing their role within the domestic realm.

The New Woman is a concept that emerged in early 20th century America as a feminist ideal representing a contemporary, modern understanding of femininity.⁸ The New Woman emerged from social and cultural changes associated with modernism - rapid urbanization, industrialization, growing consumerism, technological advancements, structural changes of the labour force.⁹ When evaluating the Tupperware business model's contributions to a modern female subject, this essay will use the New Woman as a benchmark. The New Woman is independent, exercises control of her own life, is a member of the workforce, educated, economically independent and mobile.

The question will be examined through the lenses of three key characteristics of modernism – individualism and independence, efficiency, and rapid urbanization and transport – to evaluate whether Tupperware’s business model enabled women to “modernize” in the way the New Woman model predicted, and in what ways the reality of the emerging modern woman may have differed.

Individualism and Independence:

Brownie Wise, inventor of Tupperware's home party business model, embodied many qualities of the New Woman. A single mother, Wise worked as a salesperson for Stanley Home Products, where she became familiar with the party plan marketing system. It is this business model she used to begin selling Tupperware products independently, providing demonstrations of the products in people's homes and eventually setting up Patio Parties, her own company which distributed Tupperware through home parties (Figure 5). Witnessing Wise's success, Tupper then invited Wise to be vice president of Tupperware Home Parties in 1951.¹⁰



Figure 4: Spreads from Tupperware's 1964 catalog. Courtesy of Tupperdiva.

7 Anath Ariel De Vidas, "Containing Modernity: The Social Life of Tupperware in a Mexican Indigenous Village," *Ethnography* 9, no. 2 (2008): 257–84.

8 Einav Rabinovitch-Fox, "New Women in Early 20th-Century America," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History*, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.013.427>.

9 Ibid.

10 "Brownie Wise," American Experience, accessed May 8, 2024, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/tupperware-wise/>.



Figure 3: Headquarters of Tupperware manufacturing in the USA. Courtesy of Tupperdiva.



Figure 5: Wise's independent Tupperware business that she opened in Florida, 1950. Courtesy of Bob Kealing.

11 Bob Kealing, Life of the Party: The Remarkable Story of How Brownie Wise Built, and Lost, a Tupperware Party Empire (Crown Archetype, 2016), 108.

12 Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique (W. W. Norton & Company, 2010): 26.

13 “Le Corbusier - Architect, Designer, Artist, Pioneer and a Unique Personality.”



Figure 6: Cover of Business Week magazine, with Brownie Wise on the cover. Courtesy of America Comes Alive.



Figure 7: Tupperware Party invitation, provided by the company and filled in by hosts. Courtesy of Hip Postcard.

Wise quickly became the face of Tupperware and embodied a standardized personality that the company used to promote its business model, inspiring women to become party hosts themselves thereby increasing the company’s labour force and ability to sell more product. As Gary McDonald, a Tupperware executive stated, “we could position her as [the leader of this company] and build her up totally. Get great press on the fact that she’s the leader of a company and that it’s a company of women all across the country”.¹¹ It is evident that Wise’s ambassadorship was a calculated, intentional tactic employed by Tupperware, which profited of her entrepreneurial experience to promote their business model.

As ambassador, Wise was more active in the public eye than Tupper himself. She trained women to be hosts, organized the Tupperware Jubilee which she would address with a motivational speech, and became the first woman on the cover of Business Week magazine. Appointing a female entrepreneur, who had pioneered Tupperware’s selling strategies independently, to represent the company presented housewives with a role model, embodying what could be achieved if they too hosted Tupperware parties. This can be seen as a predecessor to what is now an integral business strategy, brand ambassadorship, which dominates social media.

In her book, A Feminine Mystique, Betty Friedan challenges the belief that a successful domestic life is the only way women can feel fulfilled: “[Women] got all kinds of advice [...] on how to adjust to their role as housewives. No other road to fulfillment was offered to American women in the middle of the twentieth century”.¹² This text explores the widespread dissatisfaction of American women in the 1950s with their roles as housewives, which was often overlooked in favour of promoting traditional family values. The book was published in 1963, about the same time as Tupperware’s peak popularity. Given this context and Friedan’s insight, it is clear why Brownie Wise would make an alluring role model at the time, and why her ambassadorship was necessary to Tupperware’s success. Wise represented a happy, fulfilled businesswoman, offering an alternative to domesticity and success outside the home.

This is exemplified by the April 17, 1954 issue of Business Week magazine, in which Wise became the first woman to be featured on the cover (Figure 6). She is pictured holding a polyethylene block, the material used to create Tupperware products. No other member of the Tupperware team is mentioned, and it seems that the magazine credits her alone for the company’s business success. The image is captioned with a quote from Wise: “If we build the people, they’ll build the business”. This is indicative of the company’s business strategy to elevate hosts and the promise of upward mobility, of which Wise embodies the end goal. This may have been an attractive business strategy at the time since it appeals to a modern, individualistic mindset with its promise of personal growth. A parallel can be seen between this and modern architecture’s centralization of a “modern subject”, like Le Corbusier’s Le Modulor, in which the individual is the central focus.¹³ In this sense, Tupperware’s business model effectively contributes to the creation of a New Woman, by seemingly putting women, represented by Wise, at the forefront of their business model, allowing women to engage in the workforce and gain some financial independence.

This individualism is further exemplified by Tupperware’s postcards and invitations, in which first person language is often employed to emphasize the sense of entrepreneurship accorded by the home party business model: “my Tupperware party”, “join me”, and “I thought of you” are phrases typical of Tupperware invites,

despite them being produced by the company, and not the individual hosts themselves (Figure 7). Although women appeared to be presented with an opportunity to run their own business from home, the scope of their participation was limited, as demonstrated by the mass-produced invitations and postcards provided by Tupperware. Did housewives contribute meaningfully to the company as independent labourers, or were they merely tools used by Tupperware to infiltrate existing social networks, while exerting a patronizing control and micro-managing the operation? Alternatively, Tupperware’s postcards, which are part of a wider range of standardized, administrative paperwork, can also be seen as a way of simplifying the jobs of hosts, while simultaneously maintaining a unified brand identity. This will be explored further in the following section, which discusses the ways in which efficiency was embedded in Tupperware’s business model.

In his text “Commodity Signs”, Frederic J. Schwartz explores Peter Behren’s work for AEG, and analyzes the importance of logos as an essential branding tool which led to AEG becoming a household name, like Tupperware. Situated in a pre-World War 1, industrial Germany, Schwartz relates the “visual form to a modern economy”¹⁴ and argues that Behren’s greatest contribution to modern architecture is his pioneering work regarding trademarks. Tupperware and AEG both minimized the role of third-party retailers or “merchants”, generating a need for a new type of selling labour to be performed by the producer, in the case of AEG, and by Wise and customers, in the case of Tupperware.¹⁵ Brownie Wise was the face of the Tupperware company, and a role model to housewives who could become local ambassadors by hosting their own parties. Through Wise, Tupperware was able to establish a brand identity associated with an inspiring, trustworthy role model. In “Commodity Signs”, Behrens describes the importance of AEG’s logo to establish a brand identity and customer trust, much like Wise’s ambassadorship.

Efficiency:

With the development of new technologies which would make work more efficient (such as Ford’s assembly line), leisure and downtime became characteristic of the modernist period, and of the New Woman. Modern architects became occupied with the task of simplifying housework by designing efficient kitchens, such as Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky’s “Frankfurt Kitchen” and the USDA’s “A Step-Saving U-Kitchen”, so that housewives could be as efficient in their homes as their husbands working manufacturing jobs. Similarly, Tupperware products were designed for long-term food storage, aiming to reduce the amount of time women spent in the kitchen, thereby making housework more efficient.¹⁶ This would provide housewives with more leisure time, as depicted in Figure 8, a Tupperware ad which shows a housewife next to a table full of Tupperware, enjoying the newspaper. In the same image, Tupperware situates itself alongside a modernist icon, Eero Saarinen’s Tulip Table, reinforcing the company’s alignment with modernity. In another advertisement, Tupperware states: “Less work – more leisure! That’s what Tupperware stands for! These light, bright modern plastic containers go all out to give women new kitchen freedom” (Figure 9). The language used by Tupperware certainly reflect qualities of a New Woman – leisure, modern, new, freedom.

Not only does the product reflect modernist principles of efficiency, but so does the at-home party business model. Tupperware streamlined paperwork and bureaucratic elements of running a business to allow women to engage in entrepreneurship without sacrificing the domestic labour expected of them

14 Schwartz, “Commodity Signs: Peter Behrens, the AEG, and the Trademark”: 153.

15 Ibid, 159.

16 “Tupperware, Inc.”



Figure 8: Tupperware Advertisement 1962, featuring an Eero Saarinen Tulip table. Courtesy of Mariana on Flickr.

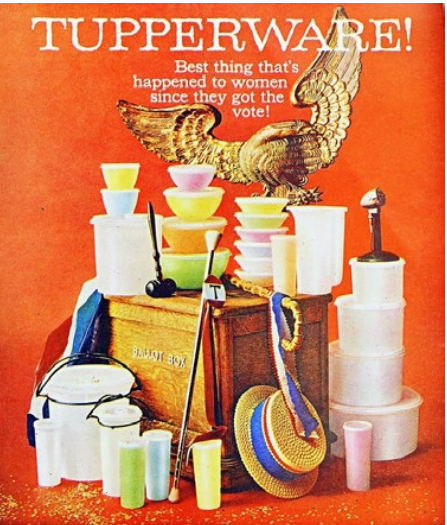


Figure 9: Tupperware Advertisement, comparing product to women's right to vote. Courtesy of Ami Magazine.

17 Michelle Murphy, *Seizing the Means of Reproduction* (Duke University Press, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv125jmpm>, 25.

18 Ibid, 30.

19 Ibid, 31.

20 Alison J. Clarke, "The Story of Tupperware Parties in Pictures, 1950s - Rare Historical Photos."

21 Madeleine Morley, "Tupperware Was the Original Social Network of 1950s Suburbia," *Eye on Design*, accessed May 9, 2024, <https://eyeondesign.aiga.org/how-tupperware-became-the-original-social-network-of-1950s-suburbia/>.

22 Ibid.

23 Anthony Gigantino, "Suburban Sprawl: The Greatest Social Change of Post-World War II America," *The Histories* 5, no. 1 (n.d.).

24 Parija Kavilanz, "So This Is How the Tupperware Party Ends | CNN Business," *CNN*, April 13, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2023/04/13/business/tupperware-history/index.html>.

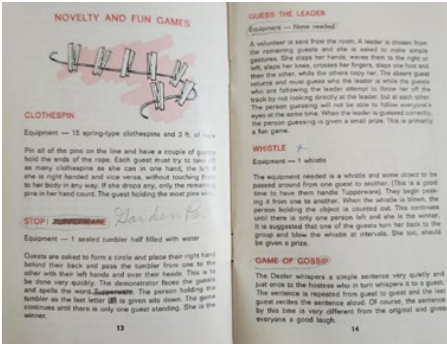


Figure 10: Pages from Tupperware Party Games reference book, 1960. Image from: Cassandras-Notebook on Etsy.



Figure 11: Spread from Tupperware's 1959 catalog, featuring a typical suburban home. Courtesy of Tupper Diva.

at home. At the same time, this allowed Tupperware to maintain a consistent brand identity, while offloading the work of marketing to its hosts. In the first chapter of "Seizing the Means of Reproduction", Michelle Murphy describes the various, paper-forms of information sharing which supported and enabled the feminist self-help culture she describes: mimeographed lists, handbooks, sets of instructions, how-to-flyers, pamphlets. As Murphy states, "a self-help clinic was not locatable within the physical walls of a medical facility. Instead, it was a mobile set of practices, a mode for arranging knowledge production and health care, [...]"¹⁷ Murphy describes how, "Feminist self help focused on practices that could be done by lay people routinely, suitable for a living room, and constructed out of common items".¹⁸ She continues, "Feminist self help as a protocol feminism drew together and reacted to already extant practices, infrastructures, commodities, epistemologies, and subject positions available in the landscape of its emergence".¹⁹ Similarly, Wise's Tupperware Party framework was developed to accommodate the lifestyles and responsibilities of housewives. Wise's system can also be seen as a "mobile set of practices", which allowed women to participate in business from the limited physical radius from which they were able to operate. Limited by lack of transportation in the suburbs, the responsibility of caring for young children at home, and other domestic duties, the corresponding paperwork provided by Tupperware made it easy and efficient for housewives to learn and execute home parties on their own time, and within their own spaces.

Efficient systems associated with modernism typically look like an assembly line, developed during the industrial revolution to support modern manufacturing. The home parties executed by housewives, although a scripted event with streamlined bureaucratic infrastructure thanks to Tupperware, required a certain amount of inefficiency to be effective. Although the company attempted selling its products in centralized locations such as malls (another modernist invention), this proved ineffective and Tupperware withdrew its products from shelves, and completely depended on the home party selling model.²⁰ Although a very prescriptive event, to build trust and friendships took time. The friendly, lively atmosphere was fostered with games like Waist Measurement, Game of Gossip, and Chatter (Figure 10).²¹ While the themes of the activities reinforced gender stereotypes, they also involved physical touch, swapping personal secrets and gossiping, all methods of building intimacy and trust among the group.²² So, while efficient in the sense that bureaucracy was streamlined and the system eliminated the need for middlemen to perform business transactions, the work performed by women themselves was not inherently efficient. The labour of housewives fundamentally depended on a certain amount of inefficiency, requiring time to build the trust on which the business model depended on.

Rapid Urbanization and Transportation:

Although modernism is often characterized by rapid urbanization and city living, many American families moved to the suburbs after World War II due to the mass production of suburban, single family homes courtesy of wartime technology and the low cost of this housing type (Figure 11).²³ Tupperware's products were suited to the spatial capacities of suburban life: large fridges and lack of transportation infrastructure to travel to supermarkets created a need for long-term food storage, which Tupper's technology provided.²⁴

The home party business model was also well suited to this socio-spatial context, which simultaneously depended on the existing social networks of suburban housewives and provided a system to strengthen these relationships.

Tupperware parties were both a space for conversation, and a space for sales.²⁵ Tupper originally attempted to sell his product in dense areas, like urban centers and malls, but this ultimately failed. Because of the novelty and unprecedented nature of Tupperware technology, the business needed a way of educating consumers and building trust.²⁶ Brownie Wise's home party model enabled the company to perform product demonstrations in the homes of housewives, who had limited mobility and time for traditional shopping experiences, building the company's credibility through word-of-mouth (Figure 12). By allowing women to become both the consumer and the merchant of its products, Tupperware was able to cut out middlemen distributors and build a direct connection with its consumers, while enabling housewives to engage in the workforce. This parallels Behren's use of branding and trademarking to market AEG's products, allowing the owner to communicate directly to consumers and minimizing the need for third-party retailers. As Tupperware self-proclaims, this can be considered "a modern way to shop!" (Figure 2).

Tupperware Parties contributed significantly to breaking down the isolating bounds of the domestic sphere to create a lively social event for housewives. Welcoming guests into their homes for the purposes of buying and selling Tupperware depended on existing social networks to work, while simultaneously strengthening relationships through mutual support and upliftment. The fun, convivial atmosphere of the parties was necessary to create a sense of familiarity and trust which would encourage the purchase of Tupper's new, alien invention. As described by Dolores Hayden in *The Grand Domestic Revolution*, "The private home was the spatial boundary of woman's sphere, and the unpaid domestic labor undertaken in that space by the isolated housewife was the economy boundary of the woman's sphere".²⁷ The at-home party business model ensured that the financial success of the housewives part-time work would be accepted by society, allowing them to operate within a patriarchal society which would otherwise disprove of women's participation in the cash economy.

Suburban planning created an isolating environment for housewives. With no public transport, and typically one family car for husbands to take to work, the suburbs were designed to limit the mobility of women: "Women's access to paid employment was also limited by their suburban location, because women were less likely than men to own care and had difficulty arranging childcare in suburban tracts with no community facilities".²⁸ Although the Tupperware Party business model depended on the fixity of housewives and their established social networks to build trust with consumers, the company's reward system created opportunities to increase mobility. Prizes were offered to Tupperware's



Figure 14: Spread from Tupperware's 1964 catalog. Courtesy of Tupper Diva.

25 Morley, "Tupperware Was the Original Social Network of 1950s Suburbia."

26 Smithsonian Magazine and Kat Eschner, "The Story of Brownie Wise, the Ingenious Marketer Behind the Tupperware Party," *Smithsonian Magazine*, accessed February 22, 2024, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/story-brownie-wise-ingenious-marketer-behind-tupperware-party-180968658/>.

27 Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution*, 13.

28 Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution*, 25.



Figure 12: Wise throwing a Tupperware bowl filled with water across the room to demonstrate its seal. Courtesy of Archives Center at the National Museum of American.



Figure 13: Cover of Tupperware's Sparks magazine, November 1952. Courtesy of National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

29 Bob Kealing, *Life of the Party: The Remarkable Story of How Brownie Wise Built, and Lost, a Tupperware Party Empire* (Crown Archetype, 2016), 117.

30 Christina E. Bax, "Entrepreneur Brownie Wise: Selling Tupperware to America's Women in the 1950s," *Journal of Women's History* 22, no. 2 (2010): 176.

31 "Brownie Wise," *American Experience*, accessed May 8, 2024, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americalexperience/features/tupperware-wise/>.

32 Ibid.

33 Magazine and Eschner, "The Story of Brownie Wise, the Ingenious Marketer Behind the Tupperware Party."



Figure 15: 1966 advertisement for Tupperware. Courtesy of GoodEnergyTreasures on Etsy.

most successful hosts, including one of its top prizes – a car (Figure 13).²⁹ In this way, Tupperware gave women access to opportunities which were otherwise non-existent. The reward system enabled some mobility to women, although this was reserved only for top sellers, and can be seen primarily as a method to motivate hosts to sell more product, rather than to create widespread mobility for housewives. As seen in Figure 14, a Tupperware advertisement from 1964, the company associated women with the indoors, while a male figure is used to show the product in use outdoors. Clearly, the company still associated women with a domesticity and immobility, suggesting that the extent of Tupperware’s contribution to women’s movement was limited.

Another limiting quality of the reward system is that although some economic autonomy was achieved by selling products, significant compensation was provided through consumer goods, rather than a liveable wage. Hosts were gifted Tupperware products, provided discounts, and could work towards larger rewards such as household appliances. The nature of many of these rewards reinforced women’s role as homemakers – cutlery, serving platters, tea sets, toasters and stoves all reaffirmed that a woman’s main occupation was that of homemaker.

Conclusion:

In 1958, due to conflict with Earl Tupper, Brownie Wise was fired from Tupperware.³⁰ After this, Tupperware’s advertisements began to reinforce traditional family values much more forwardly. Phrases like “For the man of the house” and “Mrs. Homemaker”, as well as images of brides and women serving cake to their husbands and young children began to dominate Tupperware’s catalogs (Figure 15). This is a dramatic change from advertisements released during Wise’s time at the company, which emphasized the home party business model, female entrepreneurship, and individual women enjoying the benefits of Tupperware. Although the product was advertised as a way of modernizing the female subject – promising leisure time, individual entrepreneurship, global connectedness, mobility – later catalogs reveal the reality, which is that the business model depended on a traditional understanding of femininity. Many of the promises made by Tupperware only allowed women to modernize superficially.

From successful manager, the next step forward within the company was to become a distributor, who would be given exclusive rights to sell Tupperware in a specific region and oversee the work of dealers and managers.³¹ Offers for distributorship were only offered to top managers and their husbands and required husbands to be committed full time. Banks rarely made bank loans to women at this time, and few had their own bank accounts.³² Even as hosts, when women began to achieve a certain level of success, husbands would often join to form husband-wife teams.³³ This suggests that the independent, freeing nature of housewives work for Tupperware was an illusion: upon reaching a certain level of expertise, women still required a male figure to be taken seriously or continue moving up. That said, there were other factors given the sociocultural context – such as banks not providing loans to women – which may have imposed these restrictions, and Tupperware can be understood as operating within this system, pushing its limits.

A recurring tension throughout this exploration of Tupperware Parties is that although portrayed as a modern product, it depends on the domesticity and fixity of housewives, and is more suited to a traditional lifestyle. This tension can be seen in advertisements such as Figure 16, which show large kitchens

in traditional-looking homes with ornate trim, whose cupboards are filled with the bright, plastic Tupperware. This juxtaposition is reflective of the paradoxical relationship between Tupperware the product, which makes the lives of housewives more efficient, and therefore modern, and Tupperware the business model, which depends on the traditional, nuclear family values which limits women to the domestic realm.

As demonstrated by his Modulor Man, Le Corbusier imagined the modern subject to be a standardized, idealized, male individual which could be mass produced much like the industrialized production of goods developed during this time. Industrialization’s impact on women, who were excluded from the workforce and thus experienced industrialization’s impacts from an entirely different socio-spatial context, is summarized by Esther Da Costa Meyer in her piece, *La donna è Mobile*: “With the advent of industrialization, economic pressures caused severe strains in the traditional value system of American society. The transformation of the home from a place of production to one of consumption had great impact on women’s personalities and led to a drastic change from the Protestant values of thrift and self-denial to one of self-indulgence and self-fashioning [...] With the spread of consumer ideology, the boundary between house and marketplace was eroded. Hence the need for an ideology of domesticity: middle-class women were encouraged to consume but also to stay out of the labor market”.³⁴ Divergent from the concept of the New Woman, perhaps Meyer offers a more accurate description of the reality of a modern woman. While the New Woman was a hopeful, forward looking model, this was not fully achieved during the 1950s. Instead, the modern woman that resulted from Tupperware Parties may align more closely to Meyer’s definition: through Tupperware’s business model, women were encouraged to consume as a means of entrepreneurship and mutual support. The system depended on women’s desire for self-fashioning, participating in Tupperware parties and the company’s culture by following their dress code (skirts and stockings were mandatory) and using home parties to facilitate social interaction. Although some characteristics of the New Woman were promoted by Tupperware – efficiency, mobility, and independence to varying extents - the model was unrealistic and made complicated by the spatial limits and relegated domesticity of women in 1950’s America.

34 Ruth Bankey, “La Donna é Mobile: Constructing the Irrational Woman,” *Gender, Place & Culture* 8, no. 1 (2001): 11.



Figure 16: 1957 Advertisement for Tupperware’s catalog. Courtesy of Tupper Diva.

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GRATITUDE

Special thank you to

Yonah Elorza
Ziad Jamaledine
Carlos Medellin
James Nanasca
Amelyn Ng
Hilary Sample
Esther Su
Maman
Papa
Seester

