

# Mariam Alothman

## Portfolio

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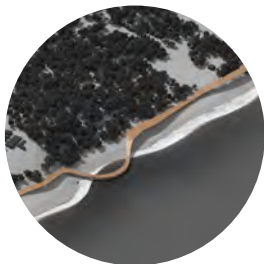
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# Routes of Return

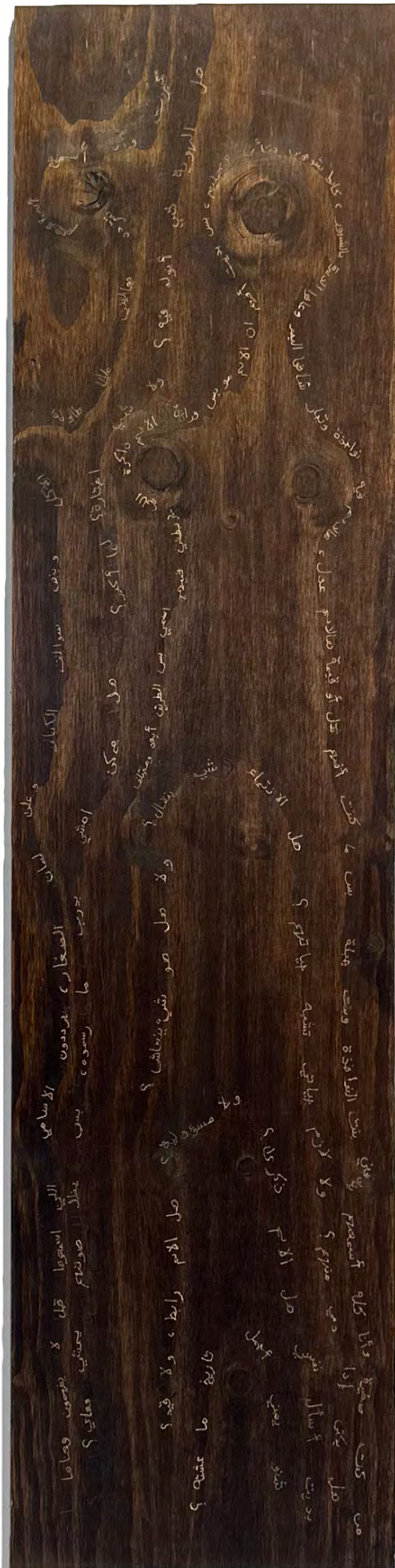
Studio *Moments to Cross: The Architecture of Overcoming and Coming Together*

Instructor: Jayden Ali & Chloe Munkenbeck

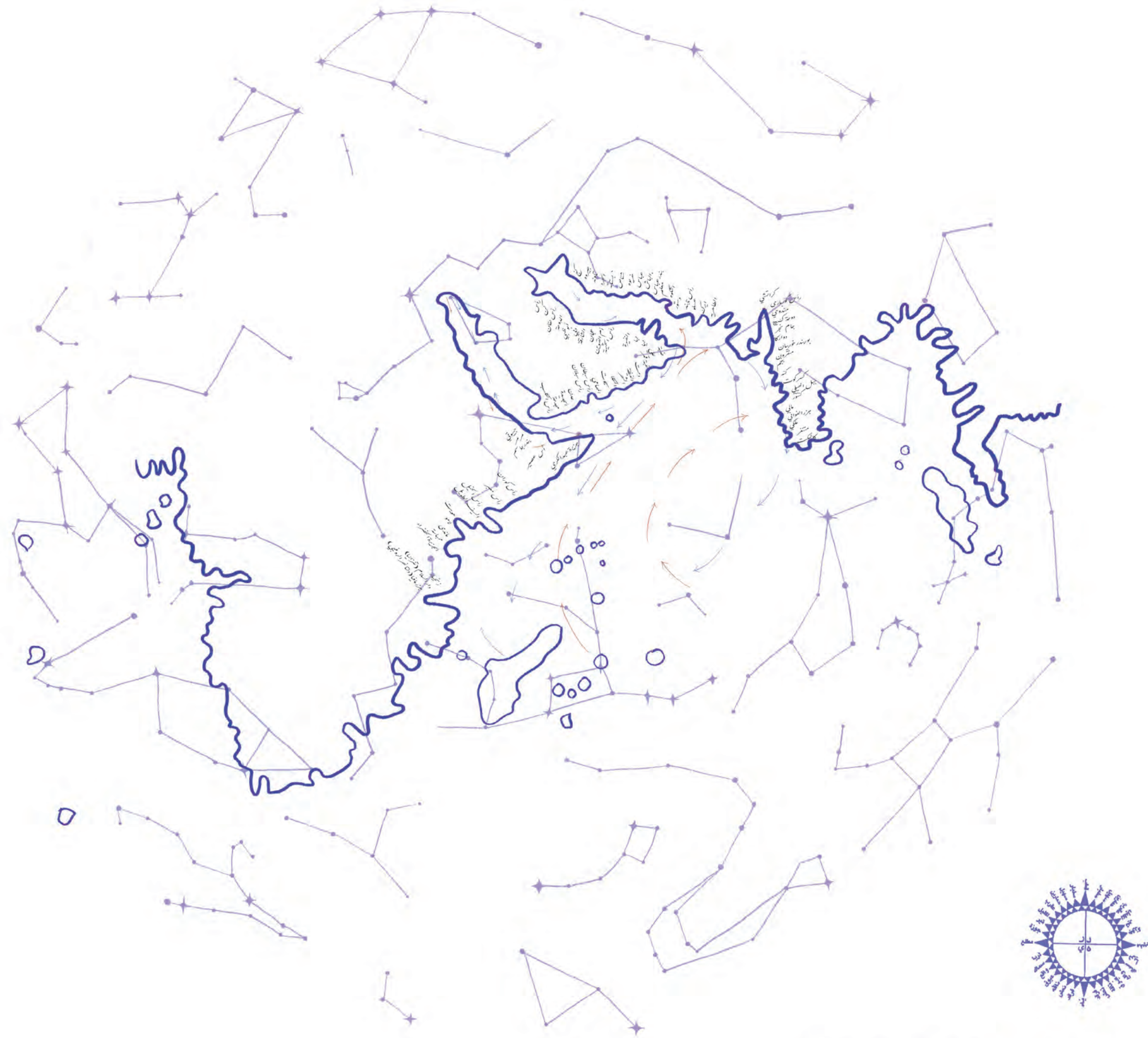
This project is a personal and architectural exploration of identity, inheritance, and transformation across time, space, and material. Structured around four hand-carved wooden panels and a series of freehand drawings, the work serves as both a narrative and a spatial archive of memory. Rooted in my Kuwaiti ancestry, descended from maritime traders known as nawakhtha, the project investigates how identity is carried, reshaped, and re-authored across generations.

The journey begins with inherited names, *bint il-nuwakhtha*, *bint Jibla*, *bint tujar*, which spoke of a past tied to sea trade, pre-oil geographies, and familial professions. These names, though once distant and abstract, became the catalyst for a deeper search into belonging and authorship. Living abroad deepened the distance I felt from my family’s past and pushed me to find new ways of reconnecting to this legacy. Wood, once traded by my ancestors to build doors, ships, and windows, was reimagined not as a material of construction, but as a communicator, a medium through which memory, identity, and inheritance could be carved, carried, and expressed.

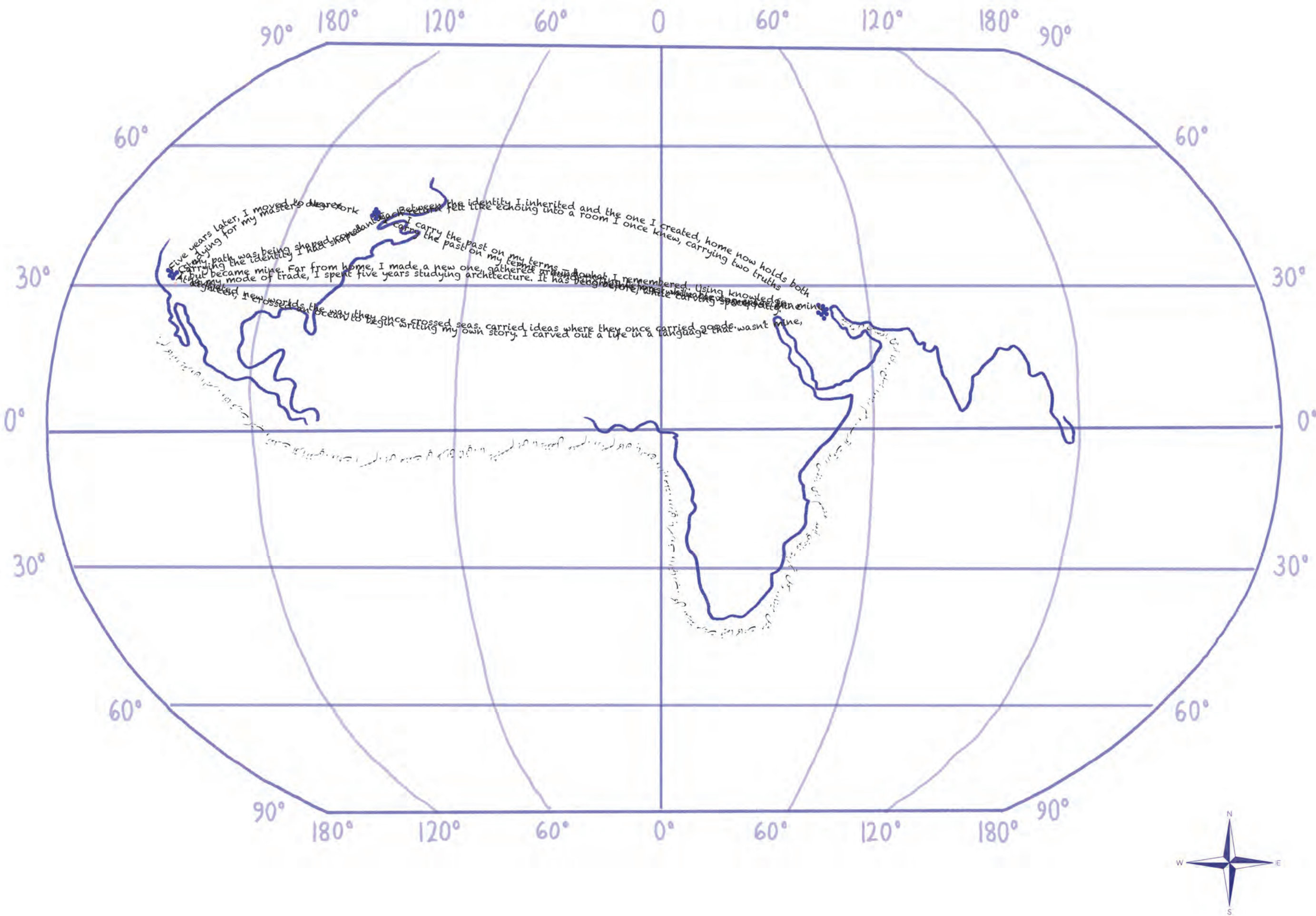








Kuwait City - August 24, 1900 - 4:30 am







Earlier in my work, I explored memory through material: Sadu, palm straw, wood. Each tied to a landscape in Kuwait, each holding traces of a cultural identity I was still learning to claim. I was working to make sense of how identity can be inherited but also re-authored.



"She carries the name of the sea she's never seen"

Wood



"She carries the name of the village she's never seen"

Palm Straw



"She carries the name of the desert she's never seen"

Sadu



Each wooden panel marks a chapter

The first one is grounded in the city of Jibla in Kuwait, where my family built their lives. It speaks to rootedness, to a place that existed before I did, but still lives in me.



The second block captures the tension, the friction I've felt in carrying this identity. It's an honest acknowledgment of distance, and the discomfort of belonging to something I didn't choose, but still feel responsible for.



The third is a reconciliation. My own journey. It marks the threshold I've crossed, from inheritance to agency. From memory I received, to meaning I make. I, too, have crossed seas, from August to May. But my journey took me farther, to a different kind of port. I left home to pursue higher education in Los Angeles and New York, spending six years away from my family, in places where I was unknown. Knowledge became my form of trade. I carried questions instead of goods, returned with ideas and experiences instead of cargo, and carved meaning from the distance between where I come from and where I've chosen to go.



The fourth is a return. A conversation. It speaks to recognition of the paths they walked and the echoes I now follow. It's where I thank them for the names they passed down, the doors they opened, and the parallels between our journeys. My own journey led me to architecture, which, almost inevitably, returned me back to wood. Not as cargo, but as a medium. Not to build ships or doors or windows, but to build understanding. To carve, to question, to connect. Through architecture, I found a language to speak with the past.





Rather than preserving the past, this project engages it, carving meaning into absence, transforming inherited weight into gestures of authorship. Each piece is a threshold, an invitation to cross.



Routes of Return - SPRING 2025

## Sacred Turn

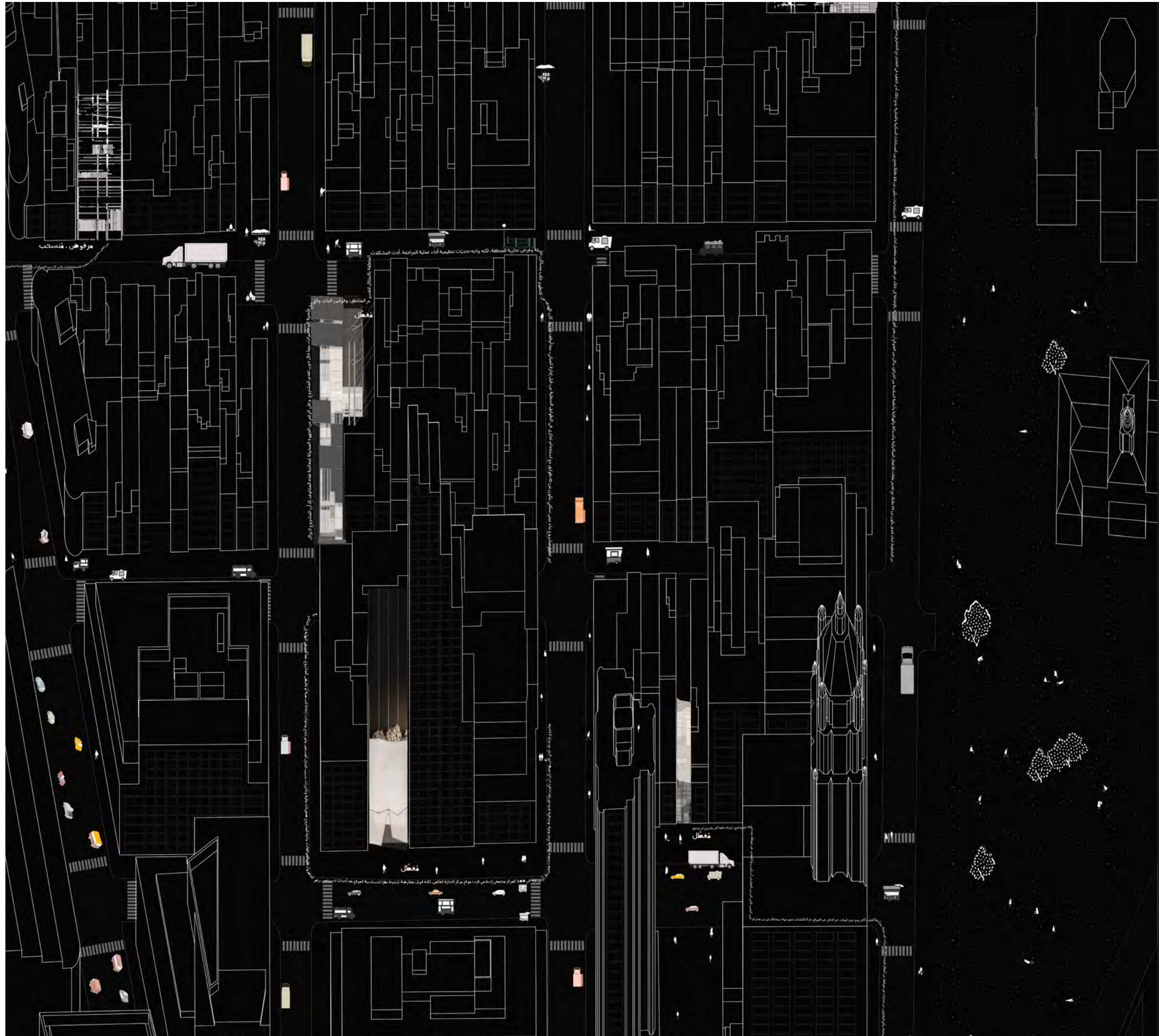
Studio *Sacred Turn*: Investing in architecture's unstable, yet persistent, notion of the sacred

Instructor: Ziad Jammaleldine

Partner: Sherefah Alhamdan

This project explores how sacredness, community infrastructure, and urban resistance intersect through the Islamic tradition of waqf (charitable endowment) in contemporary Manhattan. Drawing connections between the “cursed” archaeological site of AlUla in Saudi Arabia and stalled development lots near Ground Zero, specifically the Park51 Islamic Cultural Center, this project reimagines abandoned and suspended urban spaces as opportunities for spiritual and communal reclamation. Through temporary scaffolding structures, the waqf intervenes in three key sites, 65 W Broadway, 51 Park Place, and 25 Park Place, providing essential services such as solar power, rainwater collection, ablution and prayer spaces, and storage facilities for halal cart vendors. These flexible, mobile infrastructures “uncurse” neglected land by transforming it into active, sacred, and community-serving space.





## Waqf

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Praise be to God alone,

and may God bless him after whom there is no prophet, his family, his Companions, and grant them peace thereafter

When the lands across Manhattan succumb to a curse, and development work to ‘upgrade’ these sites becomes stalled or denied, it becomes clear that a cleansing of these cursed spaces is necessary to release them from their misfortune.

The waqf identifies three primary sites for this uncursing (65 W Broadway, 51 Park Place, and 25 Park Place). Flooding these lands with scaffolding from nearby construction sites initiates a ritual of renewal, putting the space in a state of active transition and communal, public use until it becomes restored. With the support of the local community, particularly that of halal cart vendors across Manhattan, this waqf is sustained, assigning the benefit to halal cart vendors themselves, along with their customers, through temporary infrastructural support and provision on abandoned and unused lots, once cursed, now given a sacred space. This waqf is developed with two non-profit organizations: the Cordoba Initiative and the American Society for Muslim Advancement. These redeemed sites will serve the beneficiaries by providing vital resources, namely water, energy, and storage. Each location is designed to fulfill a specific function based on the site’s context. Scaffolding not only designs the space architecturally as a quick and temporary spatial strategy that is already frequently deployed across the city, but also plays a dual role as a storage solution, distributing itself beyond the primary storage space. Located on 65 W Broadway, the site harnesses solar power to generate energy, recharging the batteries that power the halal carts while providing shaded dining areas. A second site on 51 Park Place collects rainwater from sloping roofscapes and utilizes it for ablution facilities for the prayer spaces below. The third site on 25 Park Place is a primary storage space for the scaffolding materials that move between temporary sites and has designated resting areas for the workers.

This waqf will evolve, incorporating more cursed sites into its expanding network. Each new addition adopts its own distinct function and temporary form.

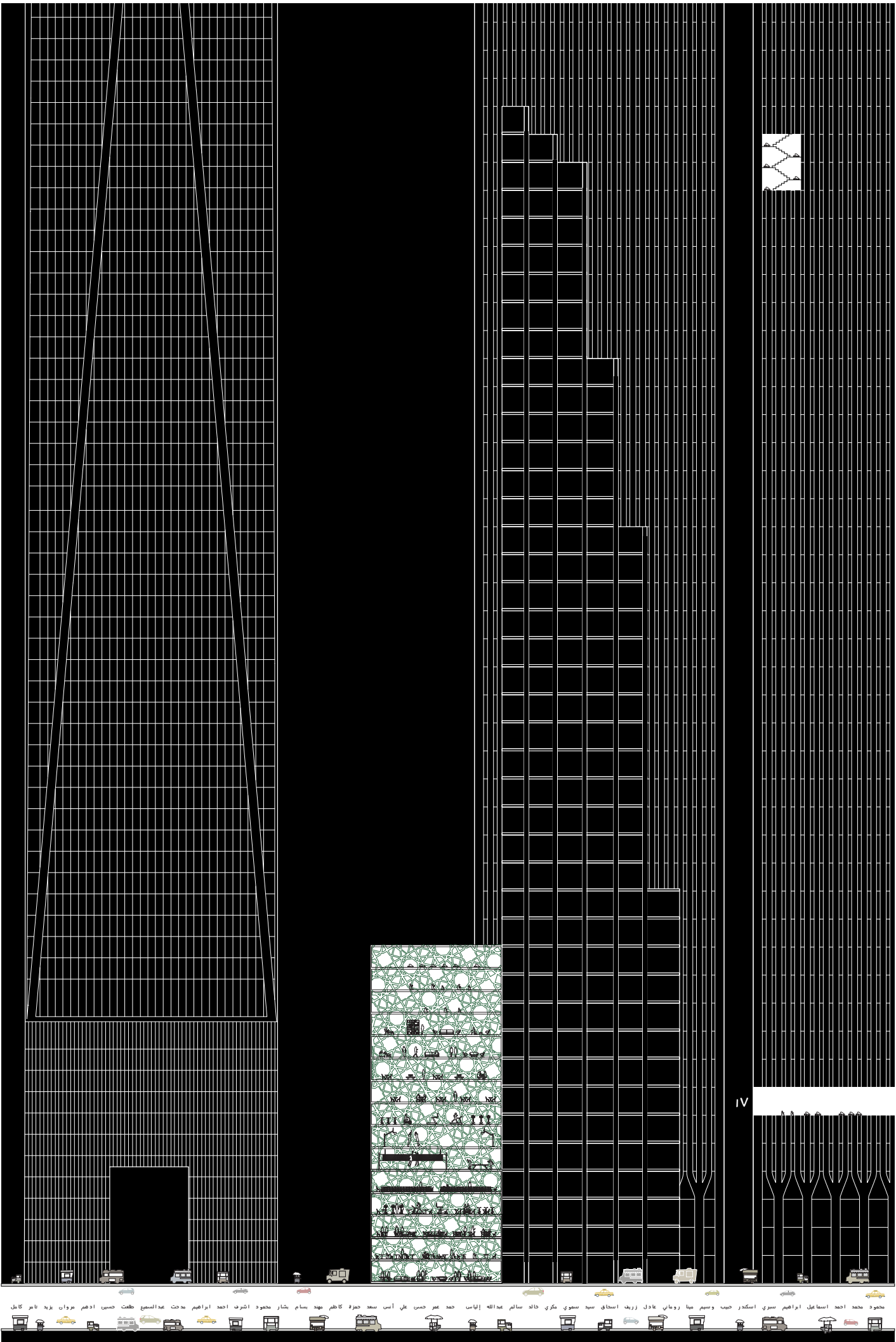
To that, it will continue to reinforce its mission to remain a relevant and sacred entity, preserving its purpose of space purification.



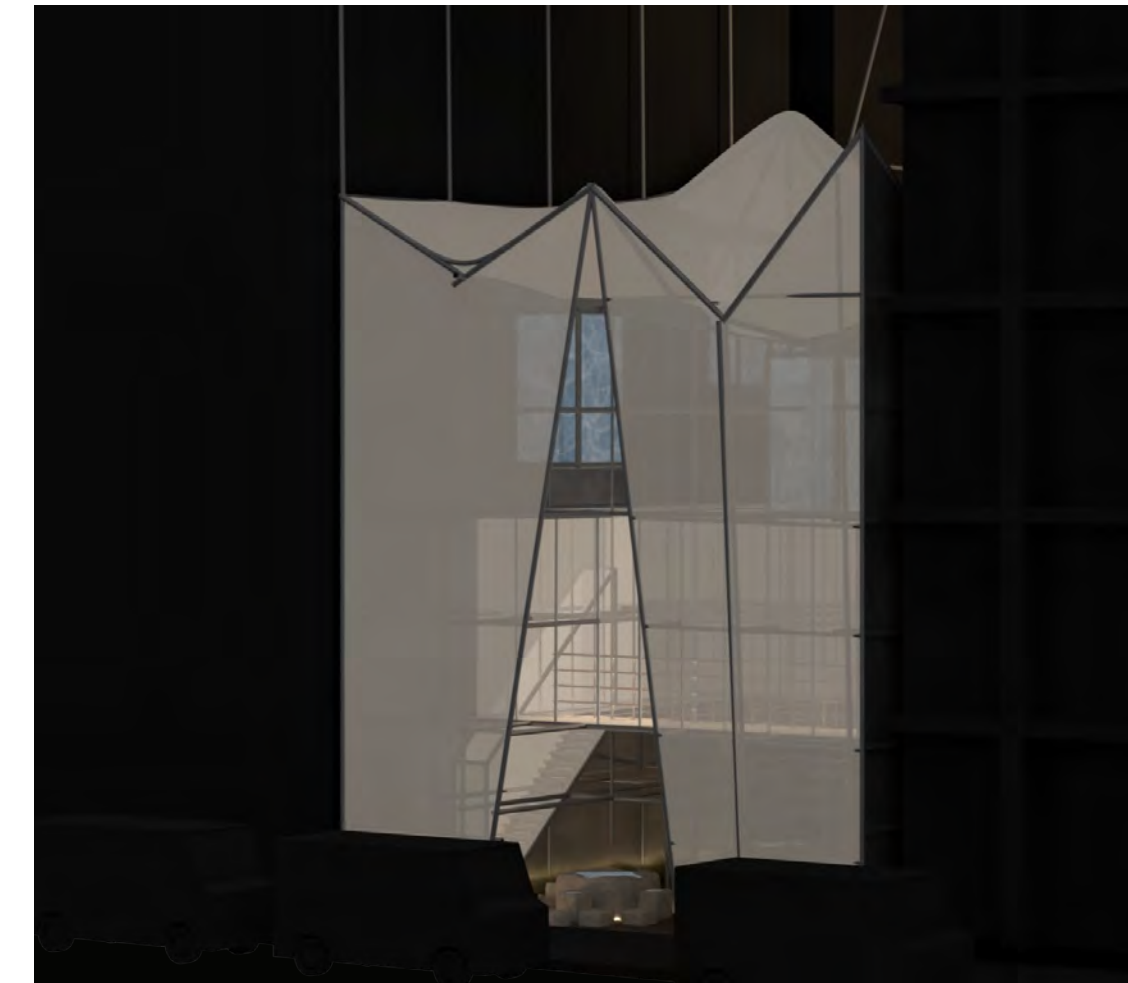
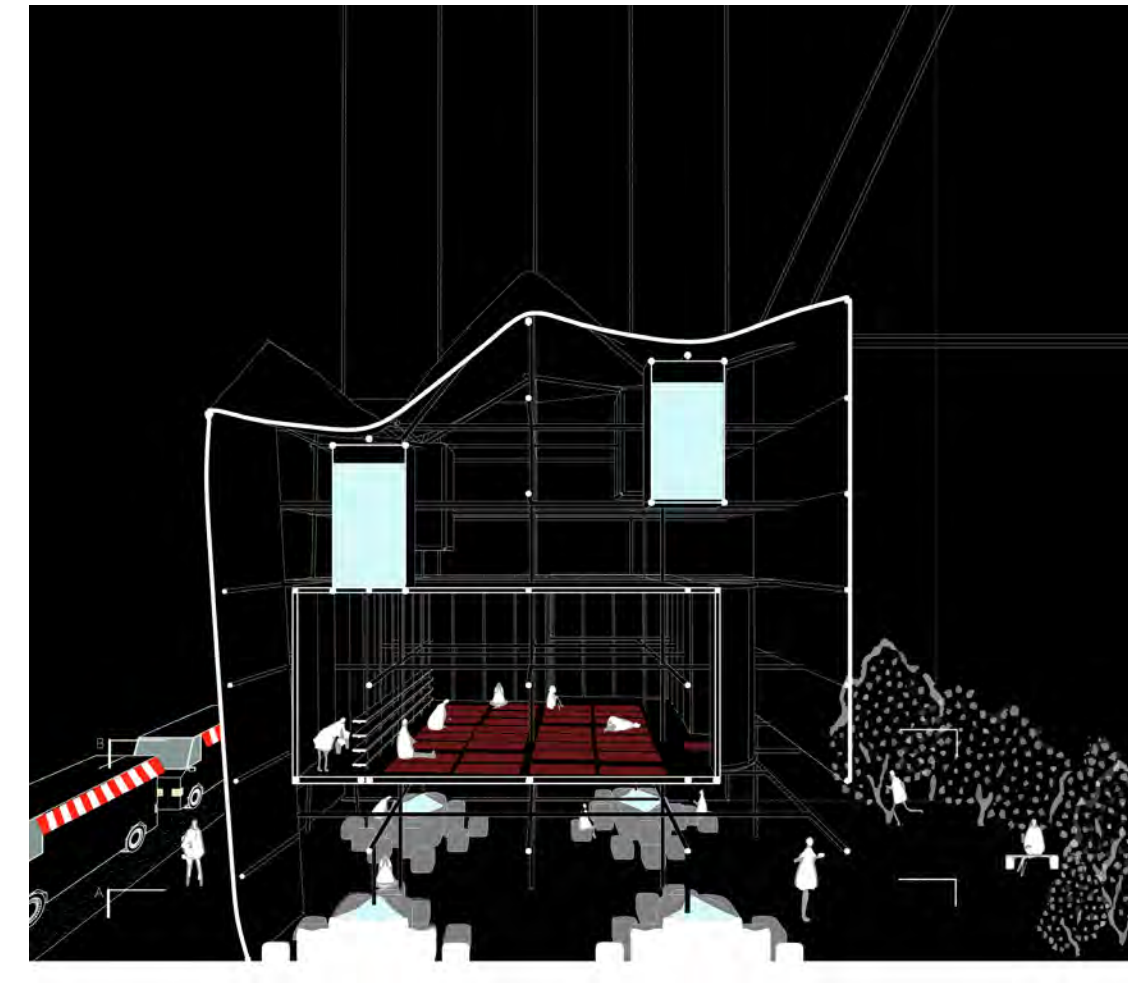
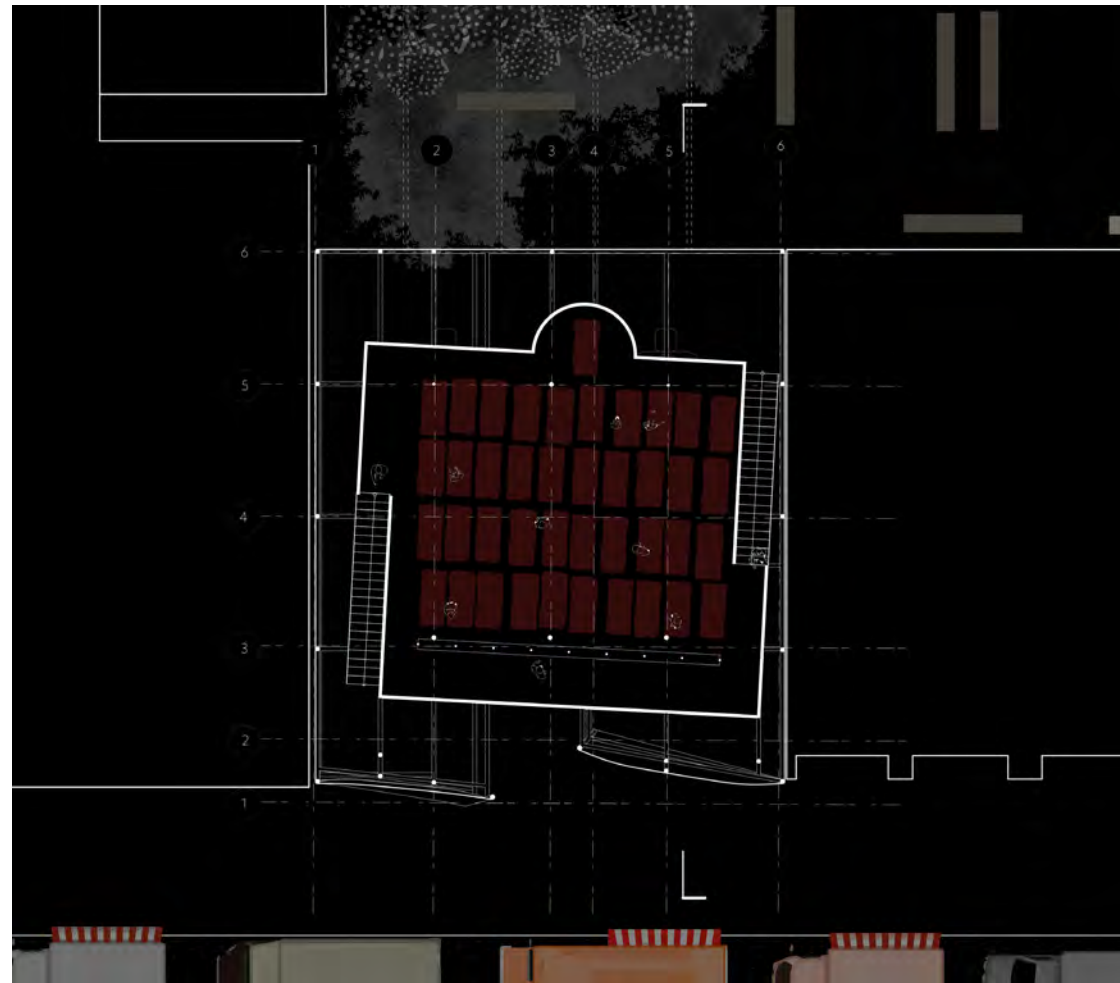
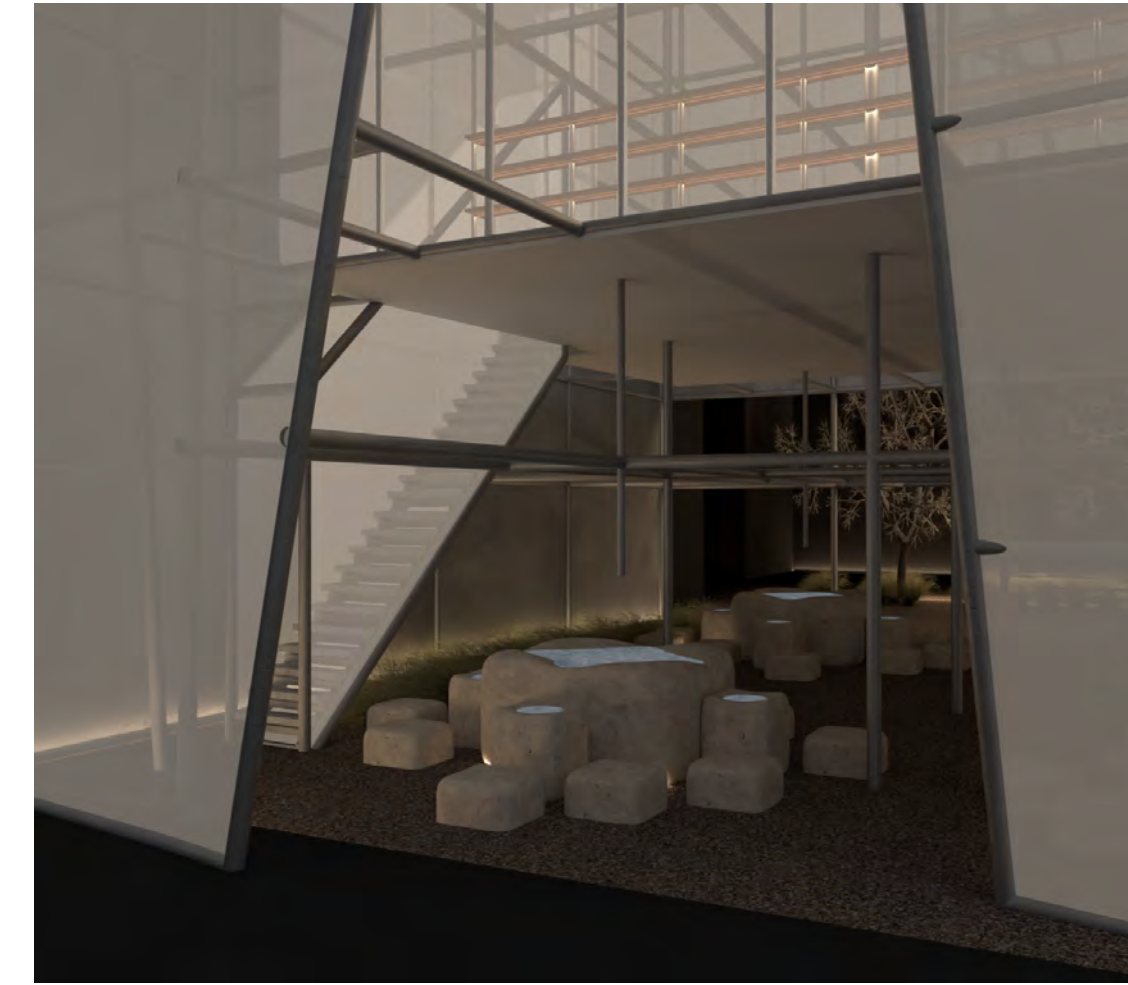
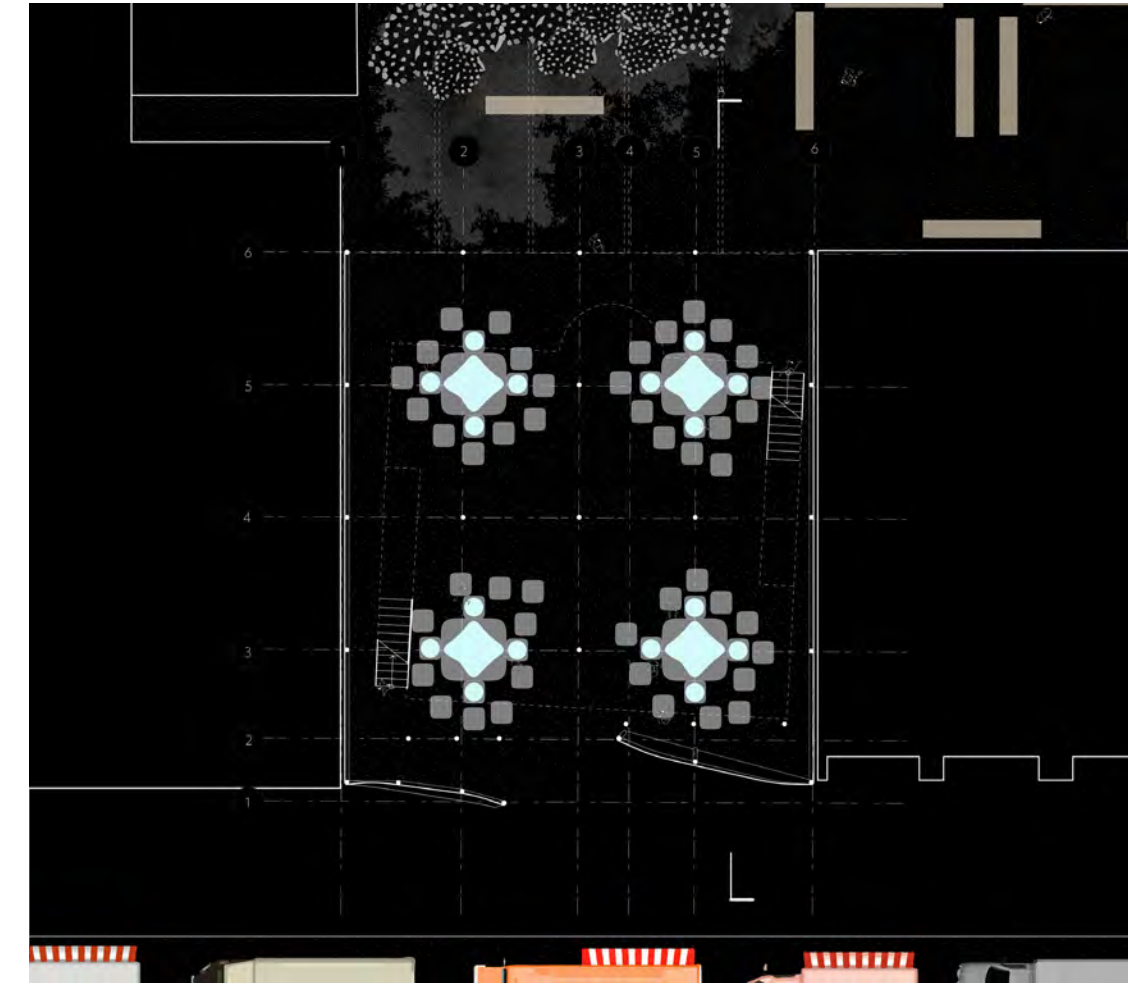
In the early 1970s, a fatwa (religious legal opinion) declared the site of Hegra cursed, halting its development and leaving it untouched for generations. This project explores how AlUla's transition, from a feared and abandoned landscape to a preserved archaeological and touristic site, occurred not through direct opposition, but through a gradual shift in perception. By mapping stories of fear, belief, and memory onto the physical terrain, the project treats these narratives as spatial knowledge, offering insight into how people once navigated, avoided, and later re-engaged with the land.



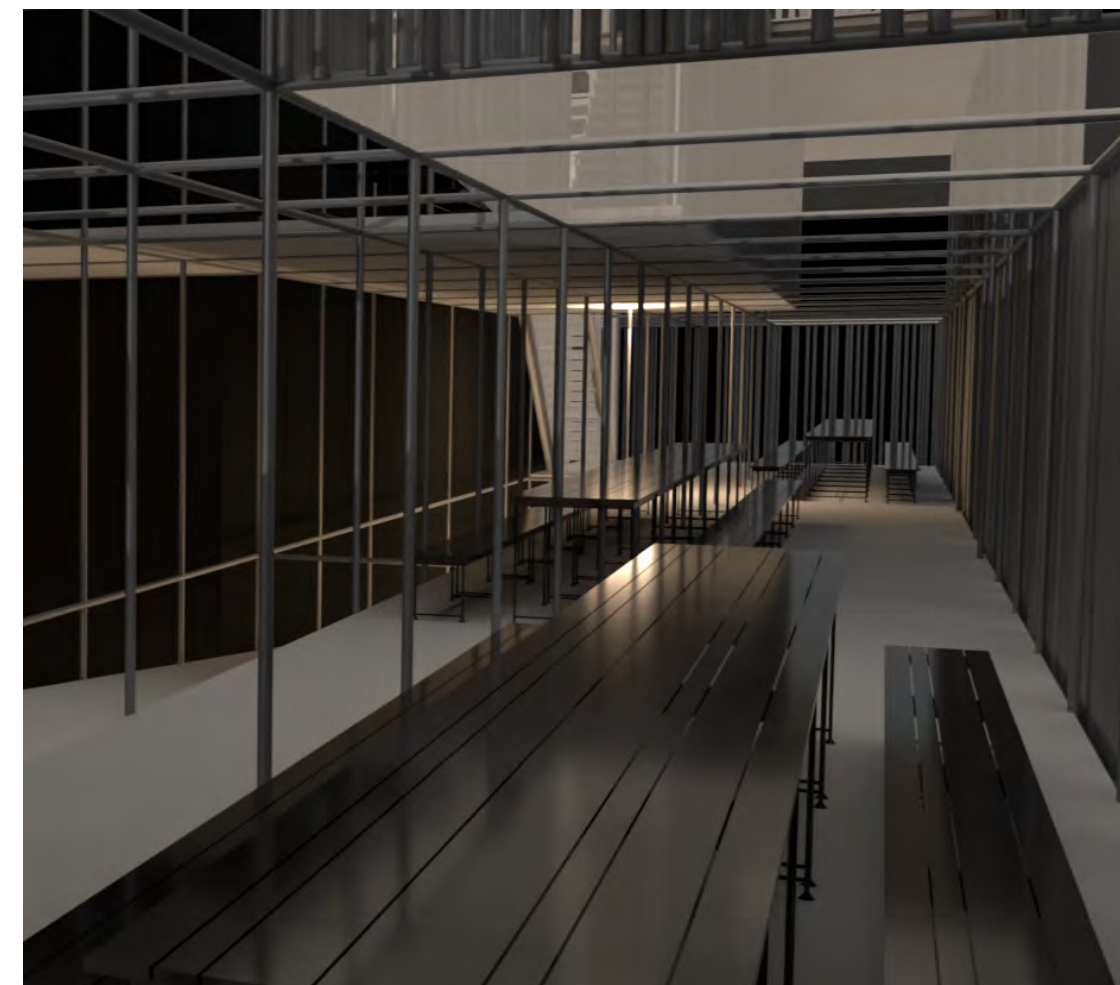
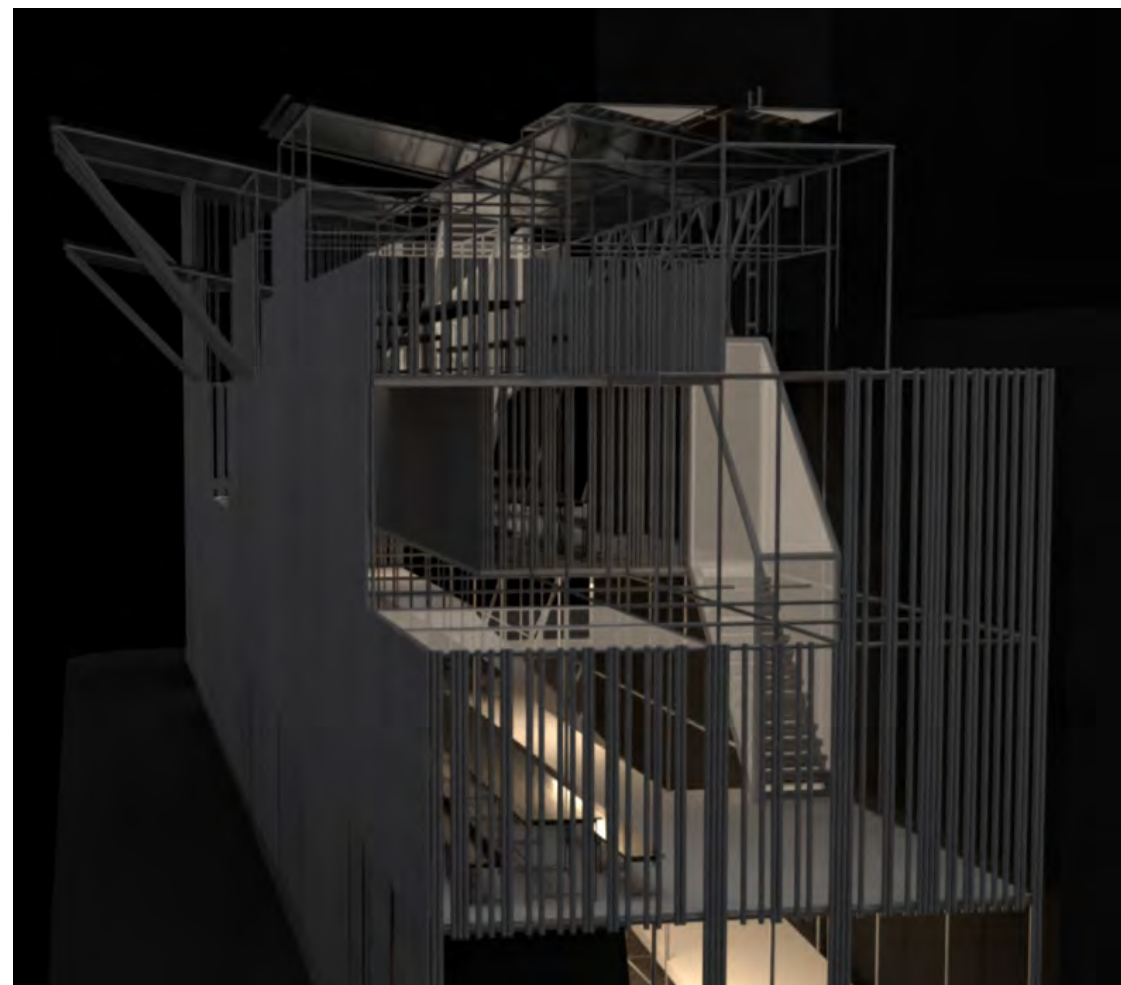
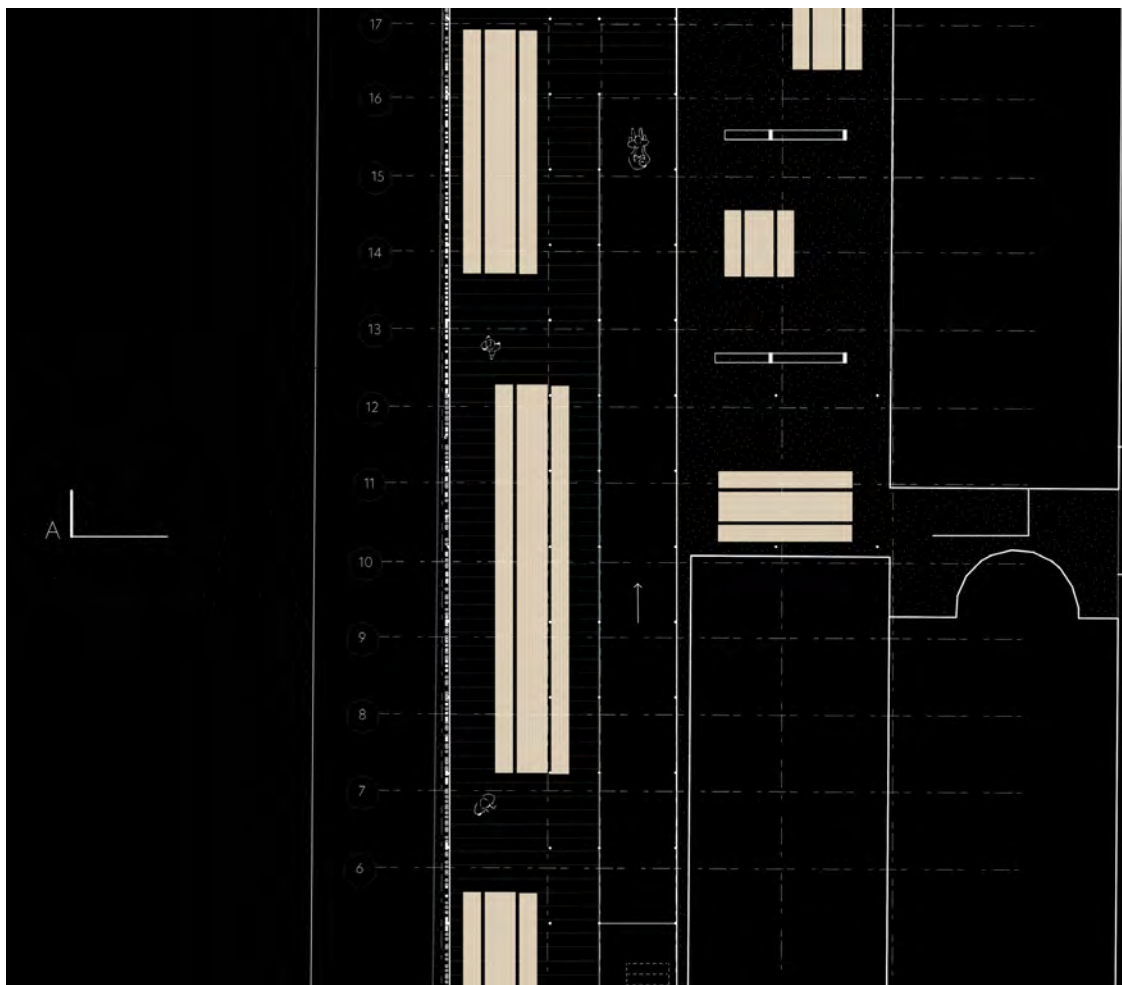
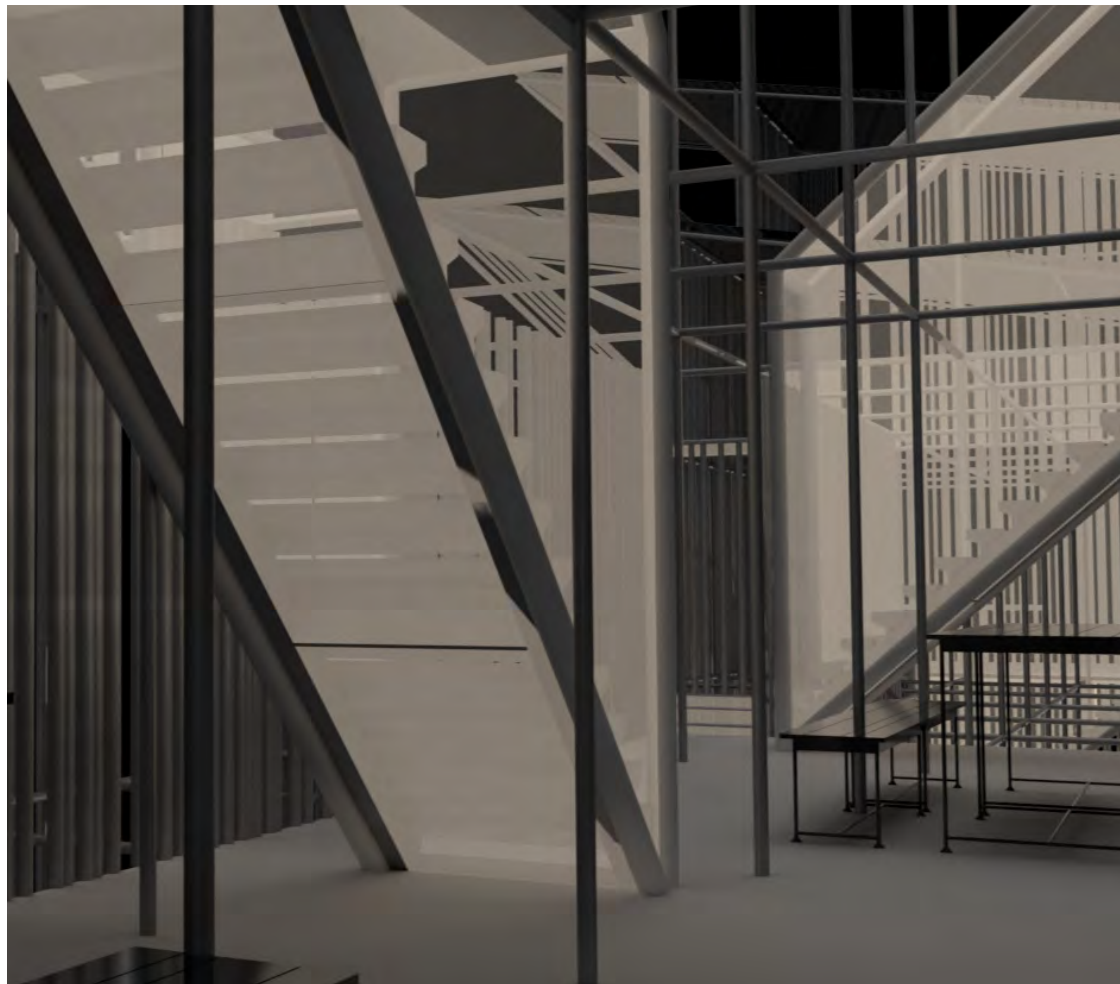
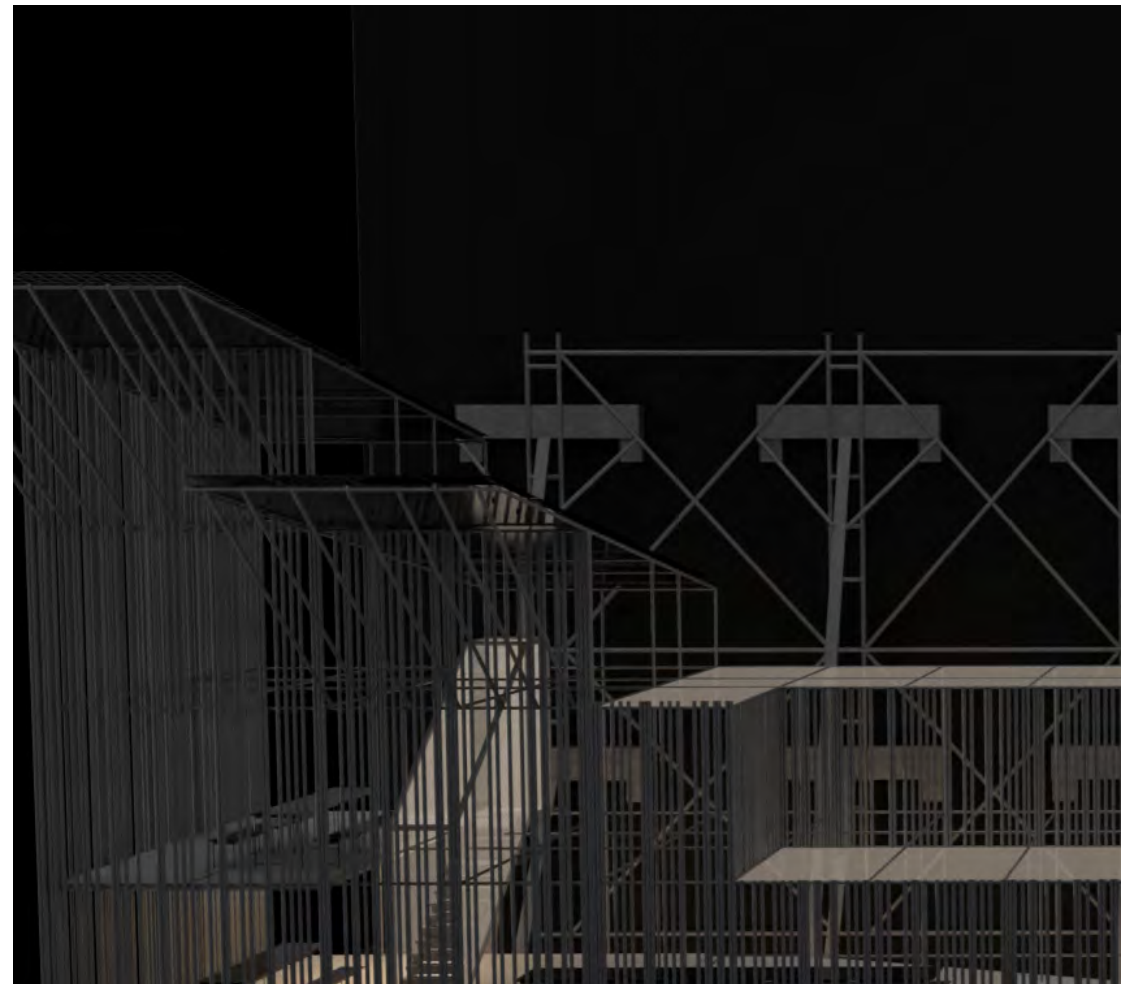
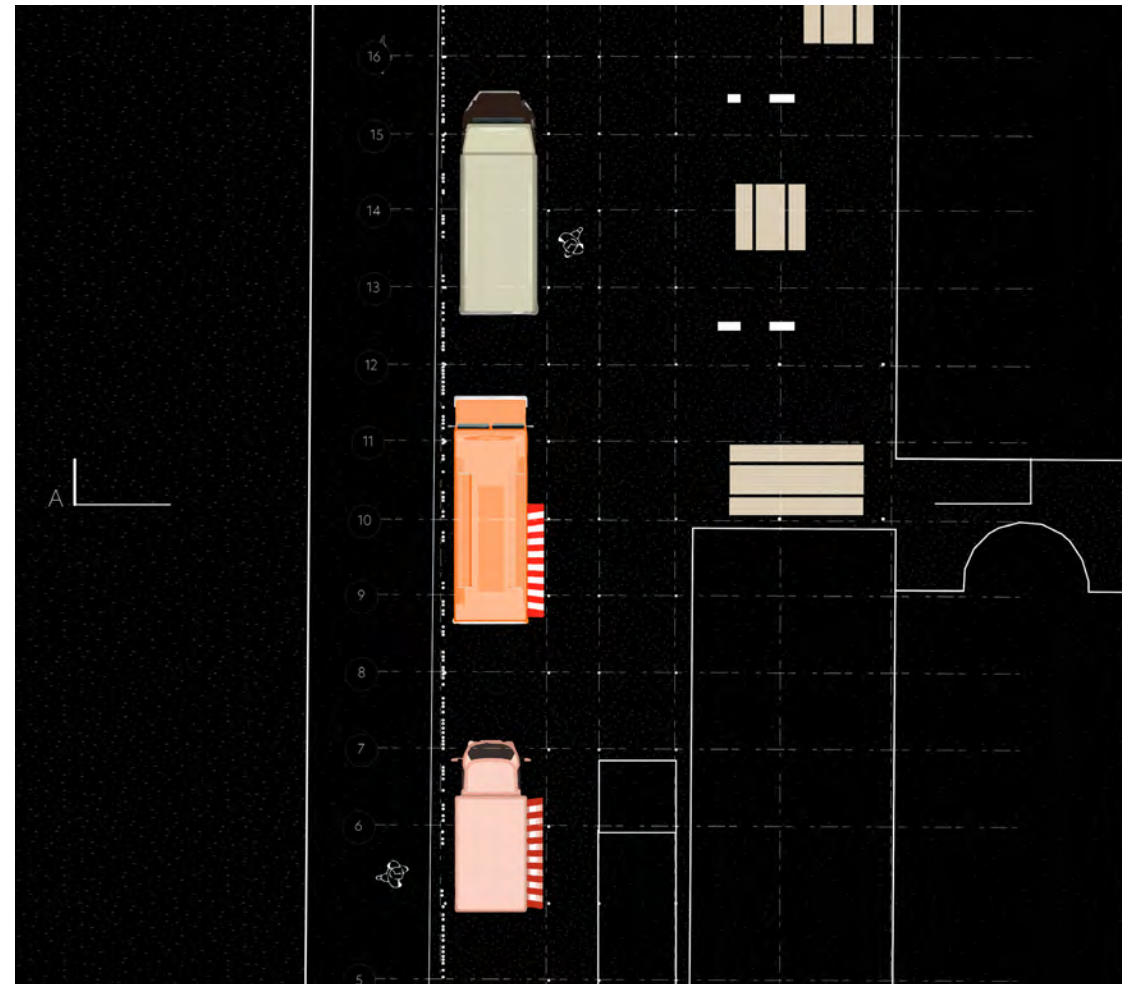
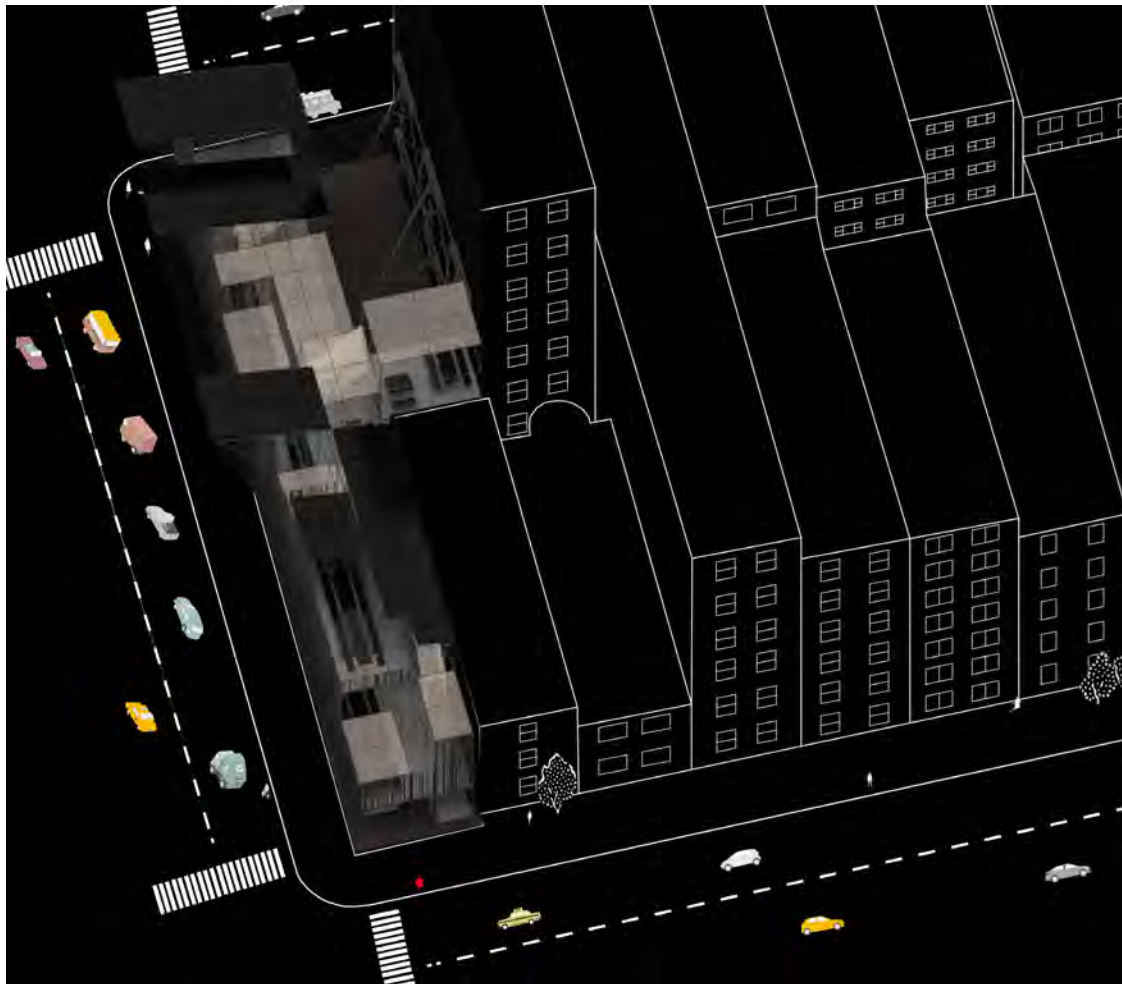
Located just two blocks from Ground Zero, Park51 was proposed as an Islamic cultural center to serve the local Muslim community with limited access to prayer spaces. Though framed as a civic and spiritual project, it faced intense public backlash and was ultimately scaled down. The project reframes Park51 as one moment within a broader, ongoing history of Muslim sacred spaces, many of them invisible in the neighborhood, including unofficial prayer spaces that once existed inside the Twin Towers. Through a new waqf (Islamic charitable endowment), the project reclaims the site using scaffolding structures that support halal cart vendors with electricity, water, and quiet spaces for prayer, transforming stalled, "cursed" developments into sacred, functional infrastructure rooted in everyday urban life.



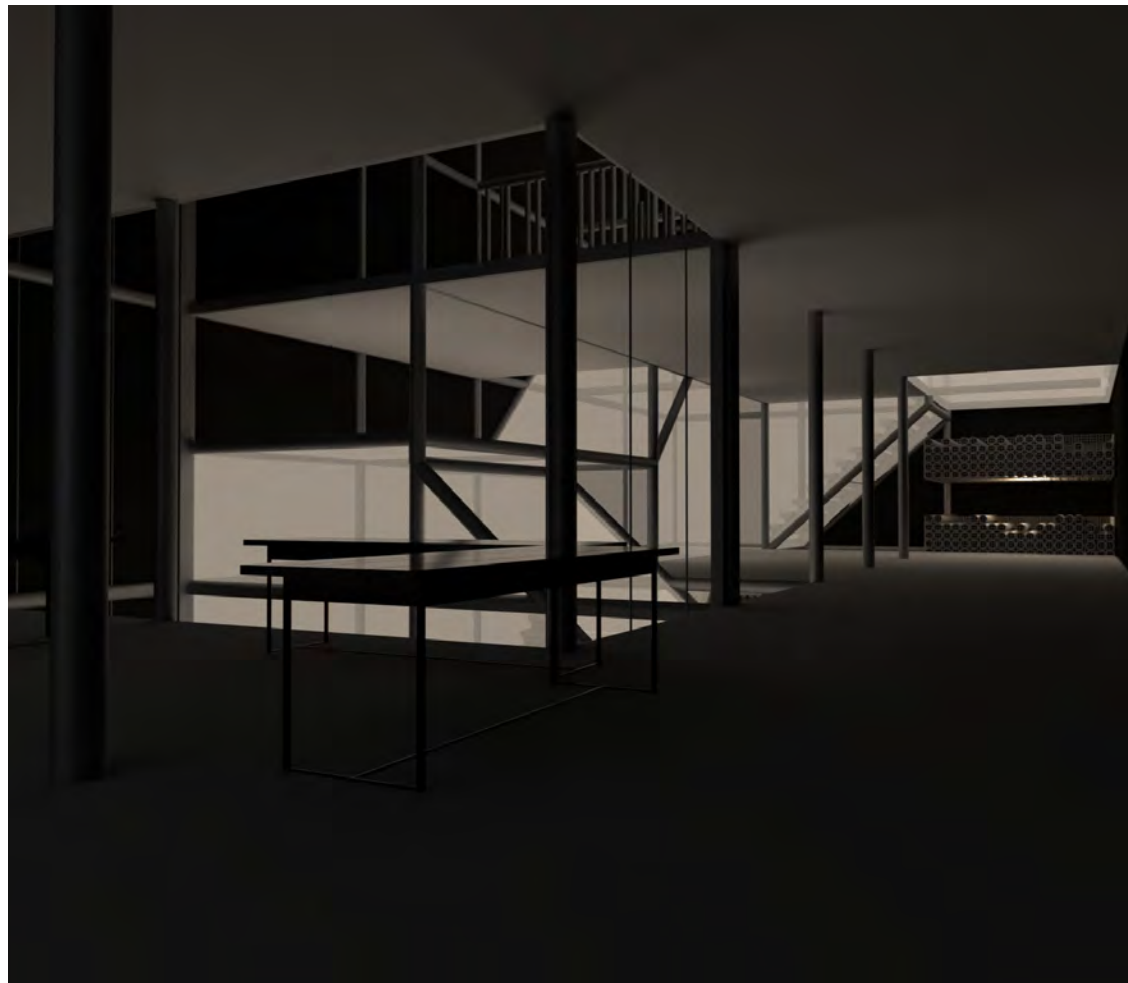
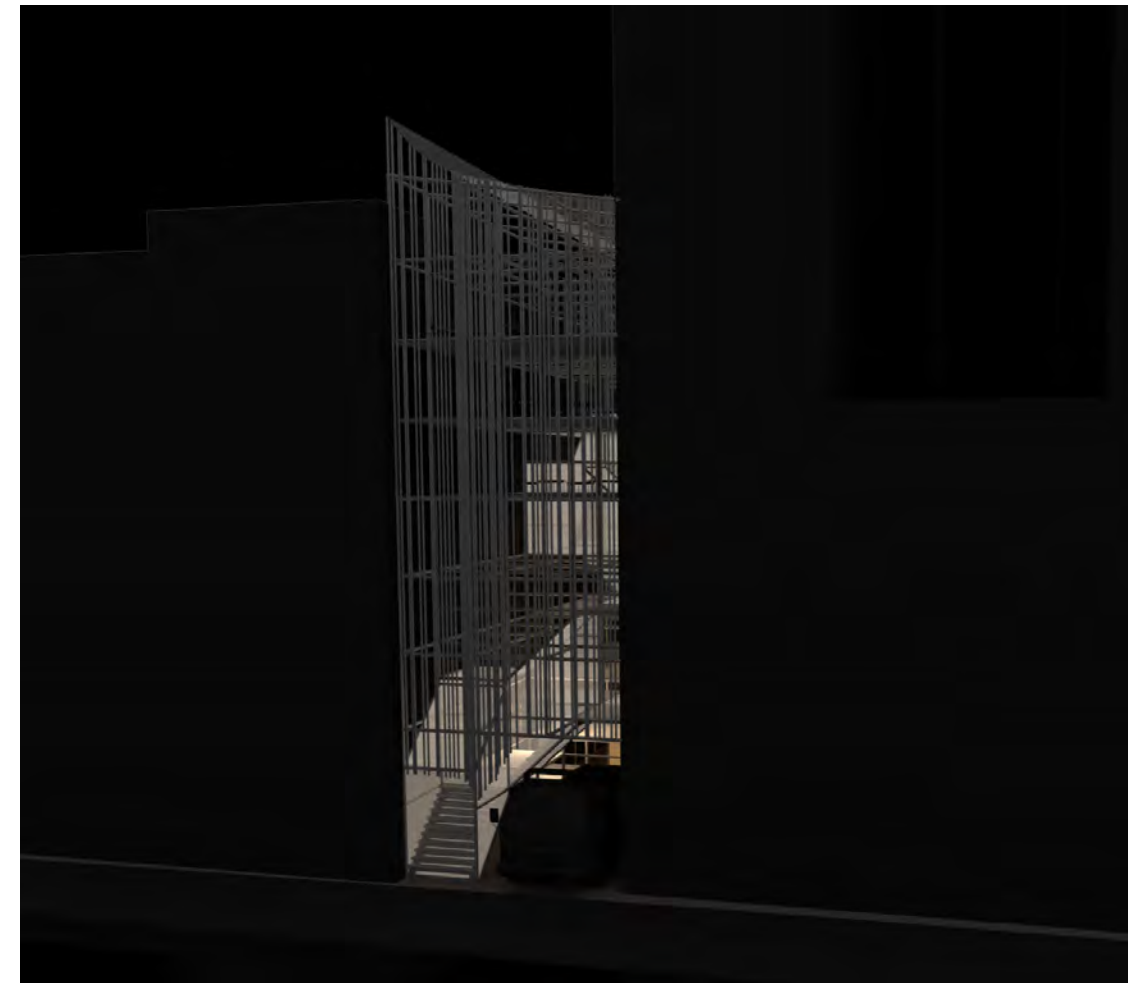
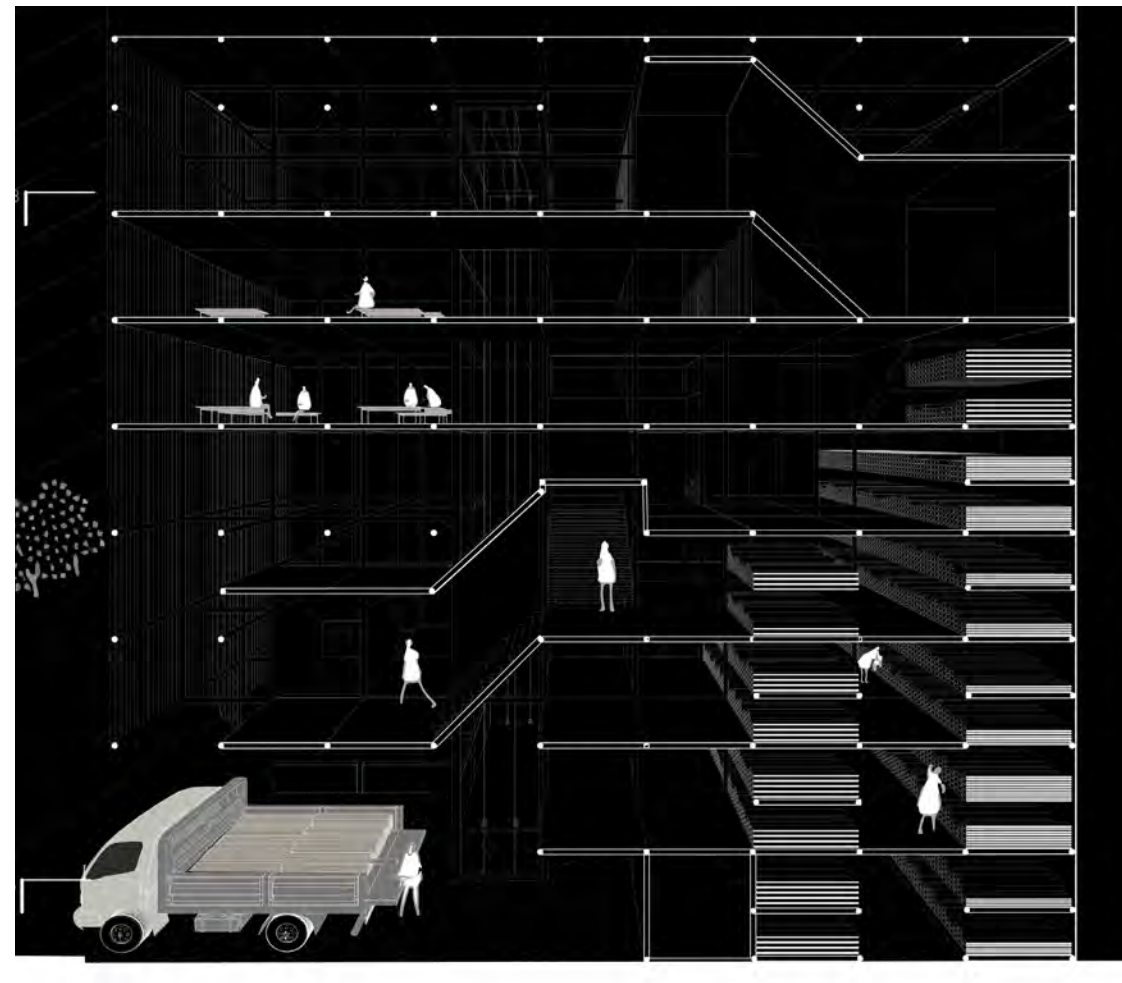
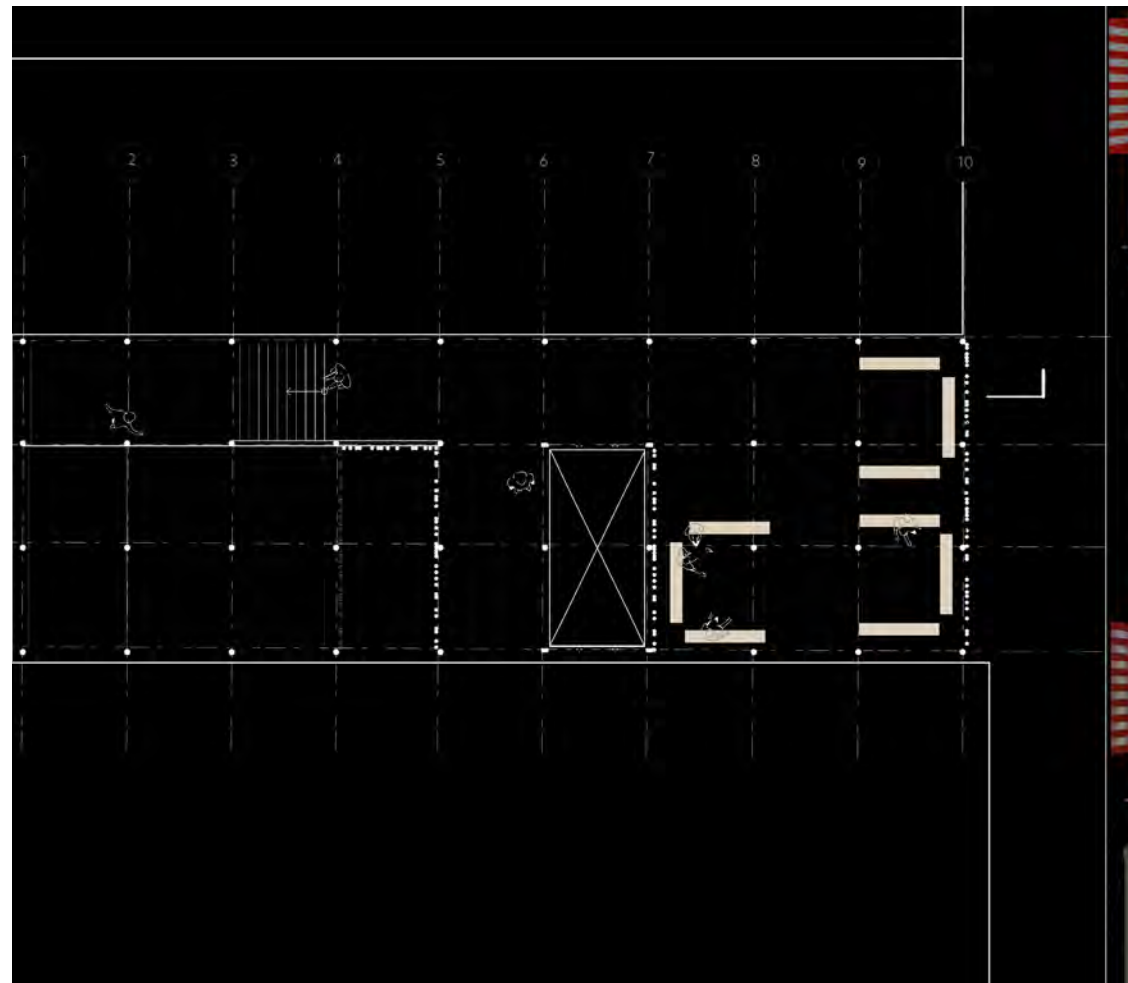
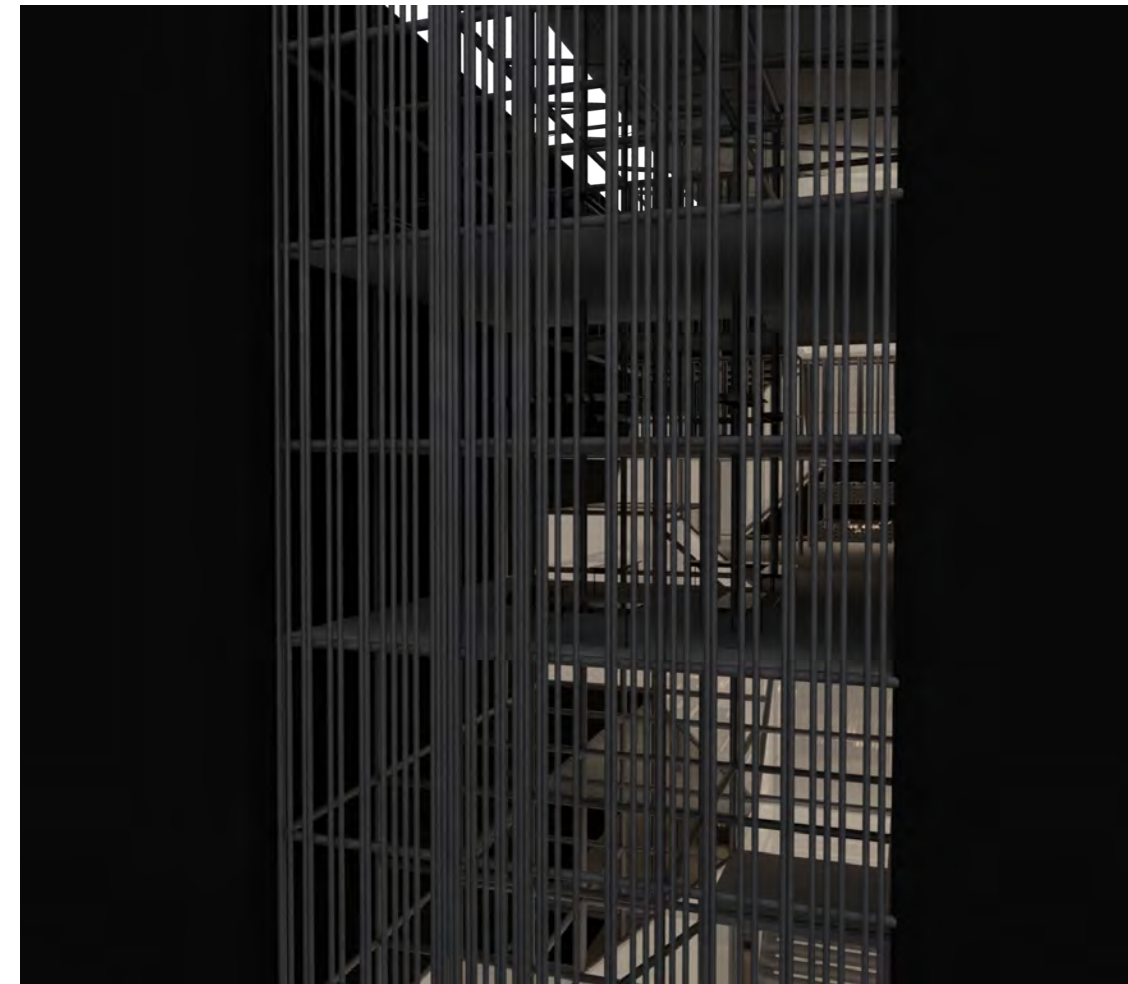
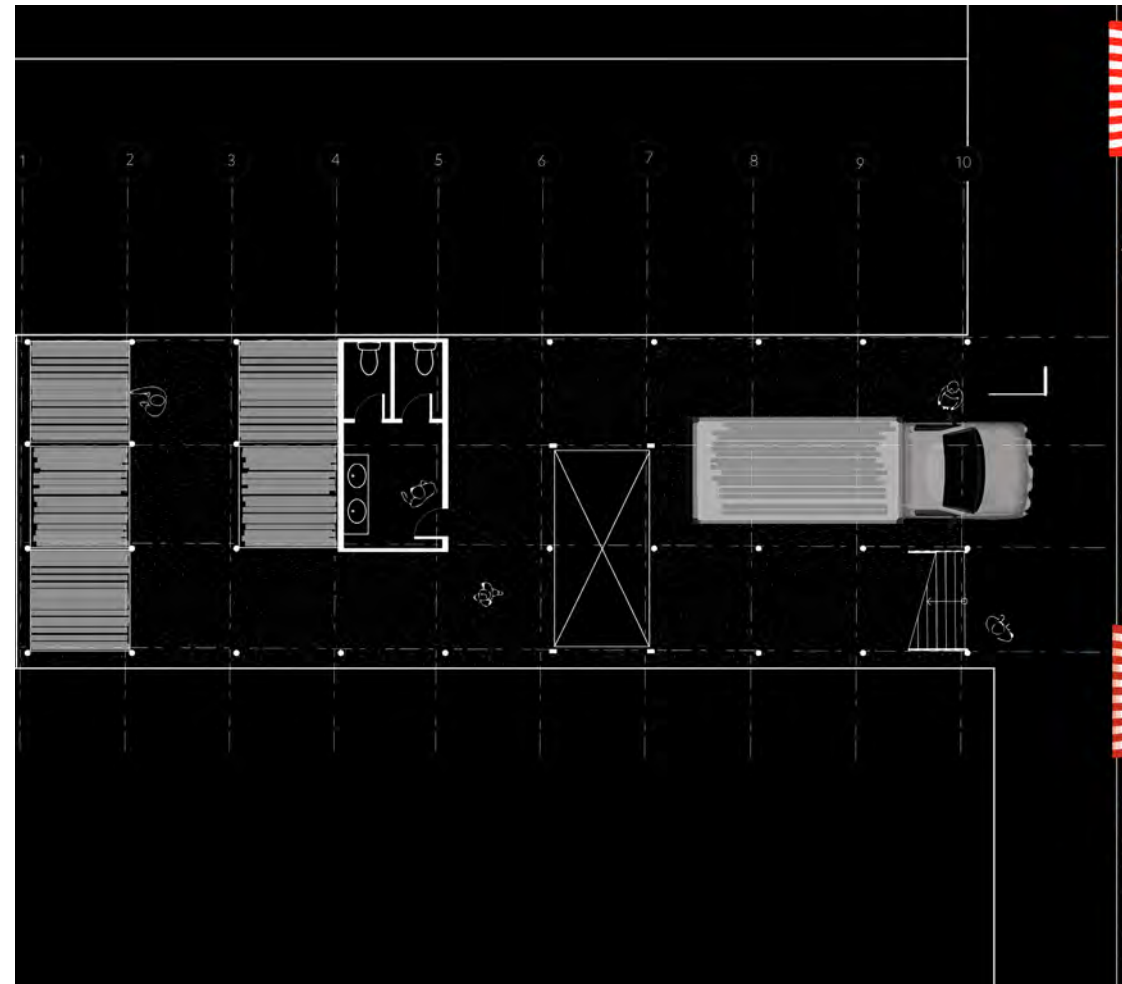
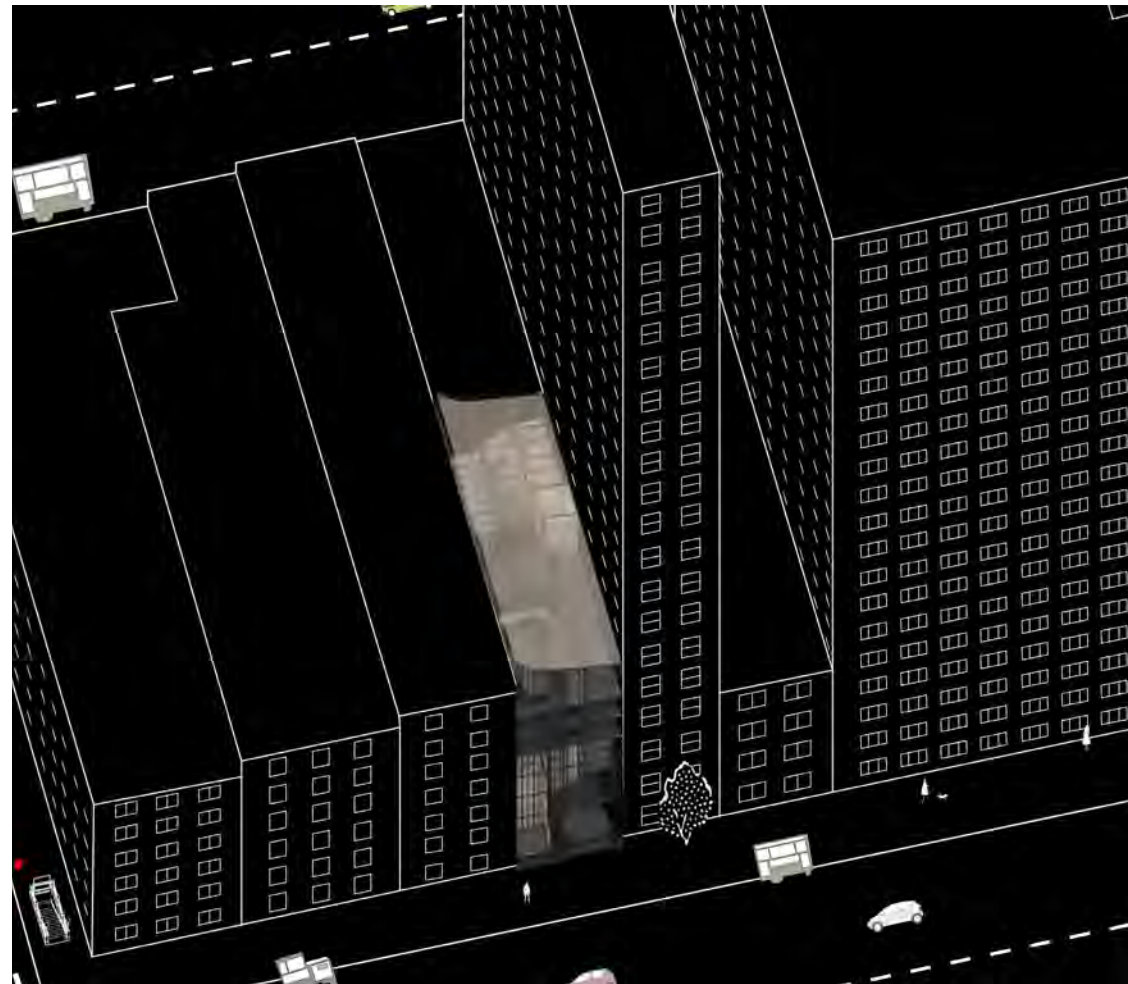














# Negotiating The First Shoreline

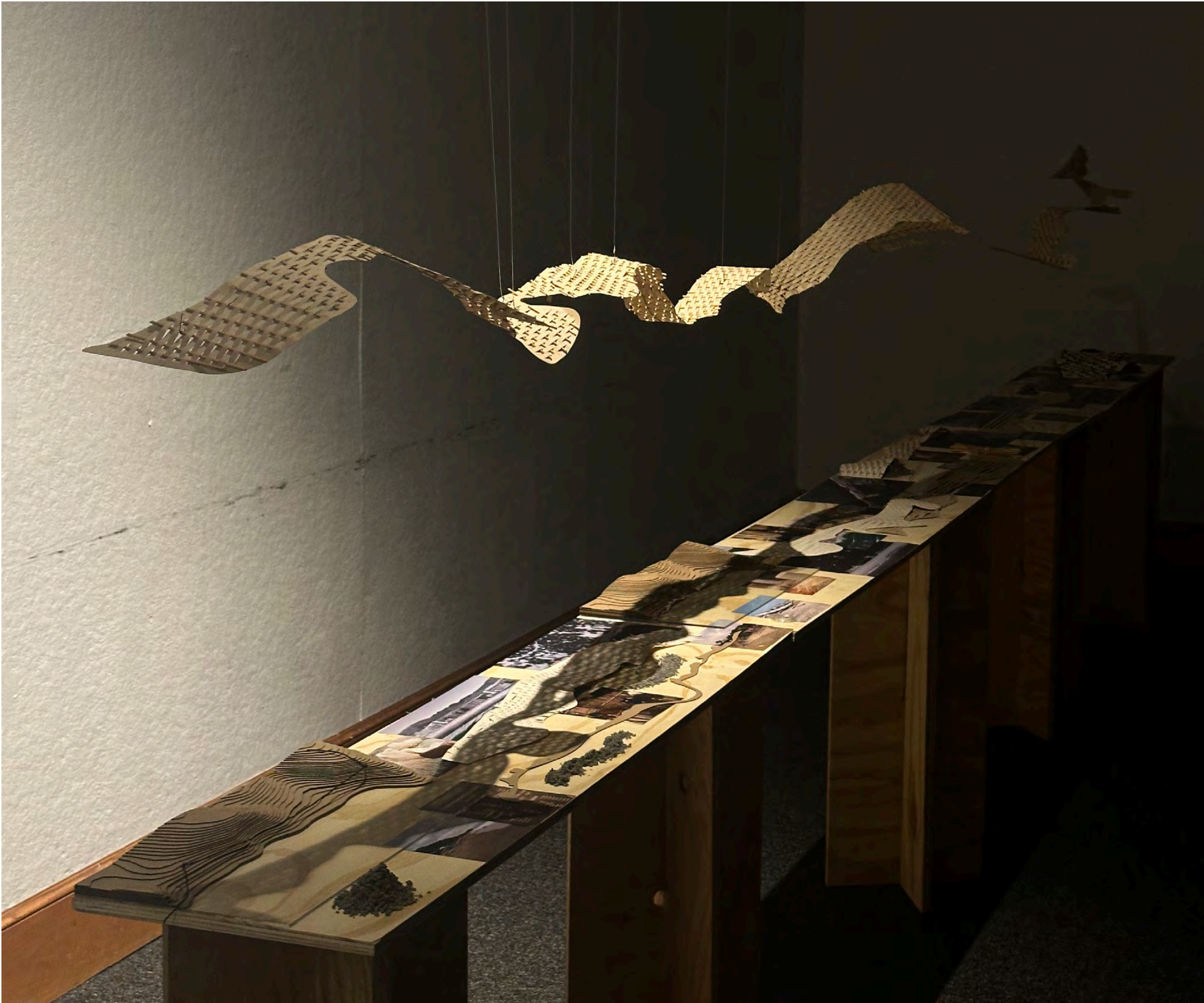
Studio *THE RIGHT TO THE BEACH: Sustainable Communities in the Ecuadorian Coast*

Instructor: David Barragan

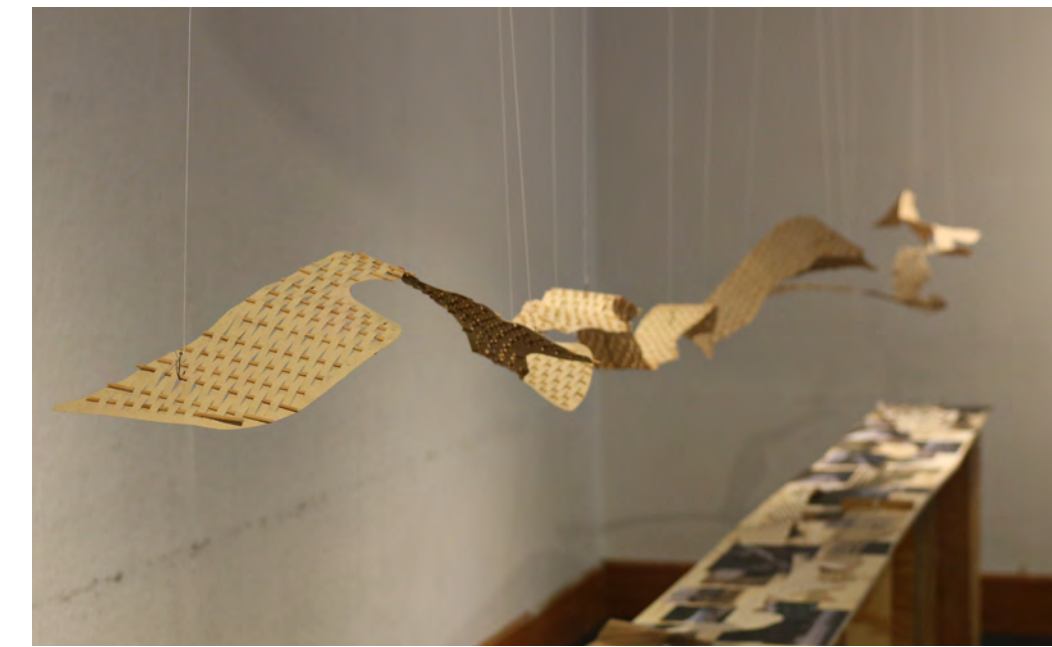
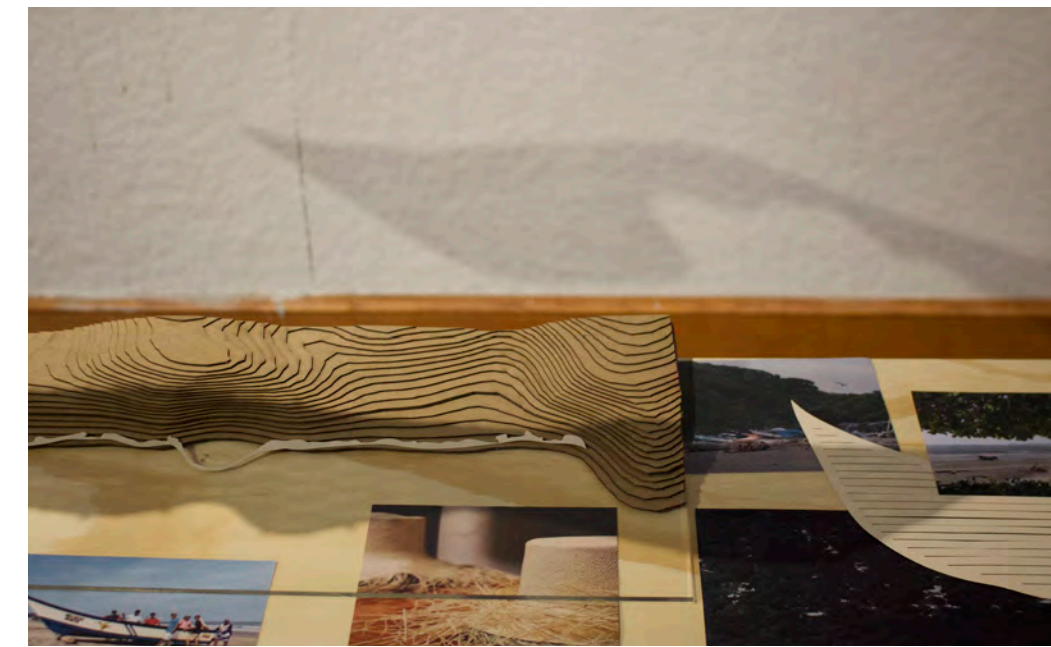
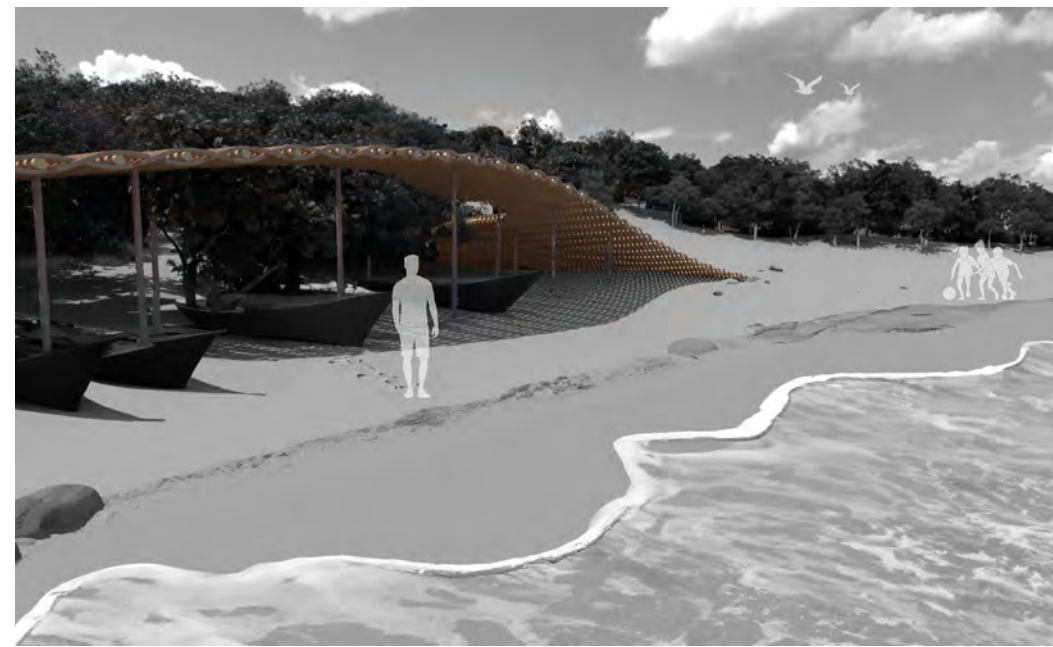
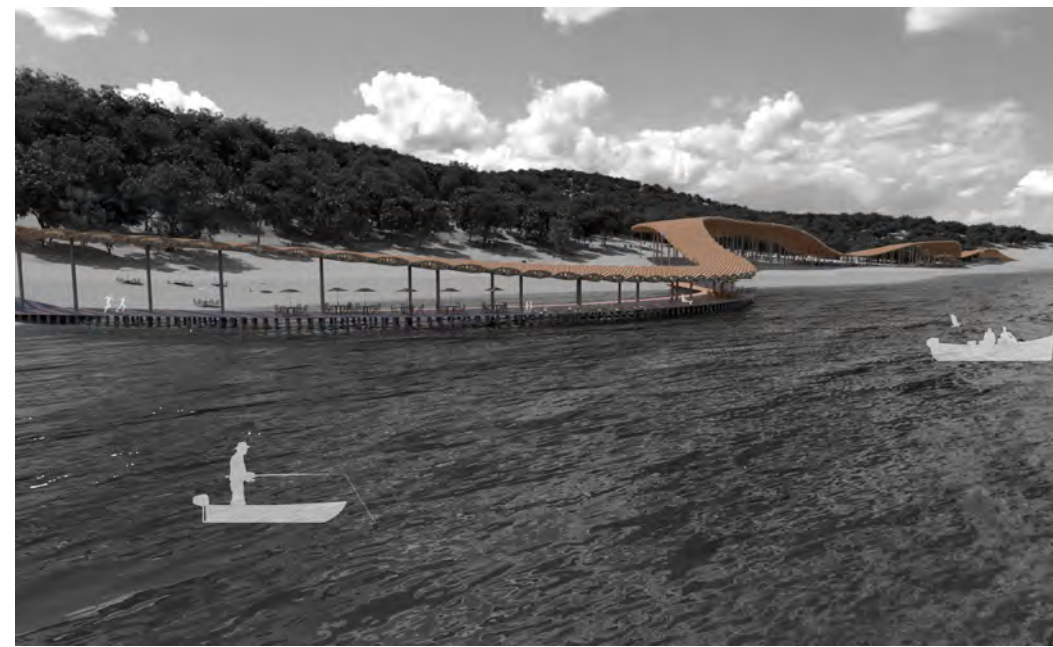
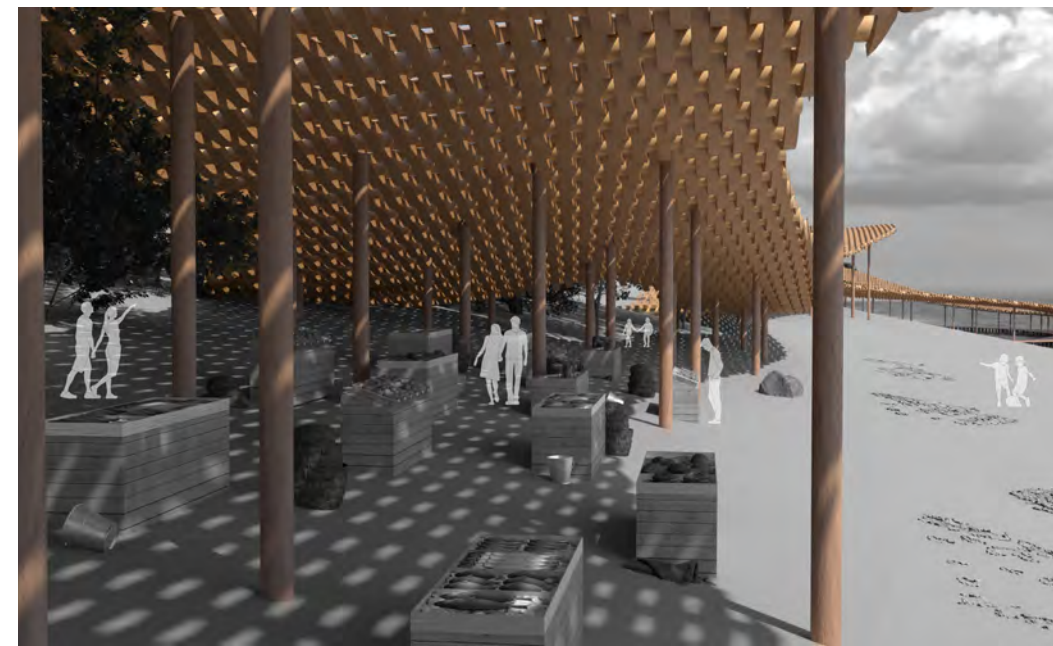
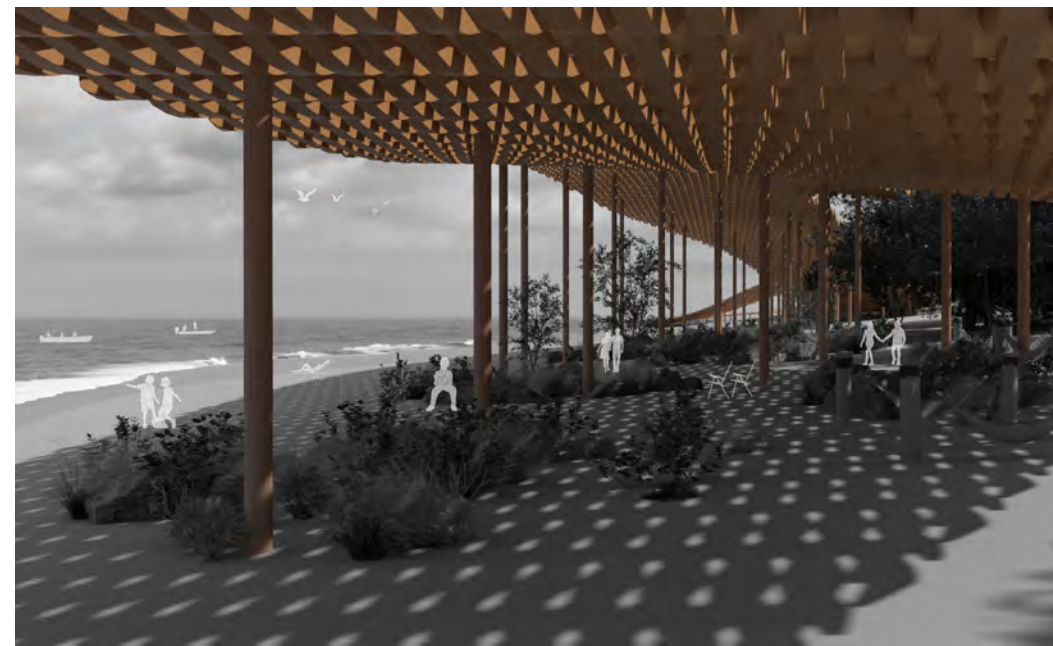
Partner: Sherefah Alhamdan

Within the serene shores of Punta Blanca, a close-knit community gathers on the beach for fishing excursions and dine at their local seafood restaurant. However, this way of life faces a threat, as the beachfront plots have been privatized and will dominate the beach.

We propose taking back control of the first shoreline, creating a space for negotiation and gathering links the private and the public through a large woven community shade spreading across the 1km shore.







Under this proposed shade lies a self-sufficient space that will promote trade between landowners and locals that guide future programs.

The utilization of local materials such as palm straws and bamboo sticks for one large roof exemplifies the notion of simplicity and is connected to cultural practices.





Throughout the day, the shade adapts to the model of sundials. The shape of the shade varies in width, and depending on the sun’s position, determines the amount of sunlight coverage.



The first shoreline promotes inclusivity and interactions between the ocean, sand, and forest. A space of fluidity is created that easily supports different functions. It’s not just about preserving a beach, it’s about preserving a way of life, a culture, and a community.



# 1:1 Crafting and Fabrication of Details

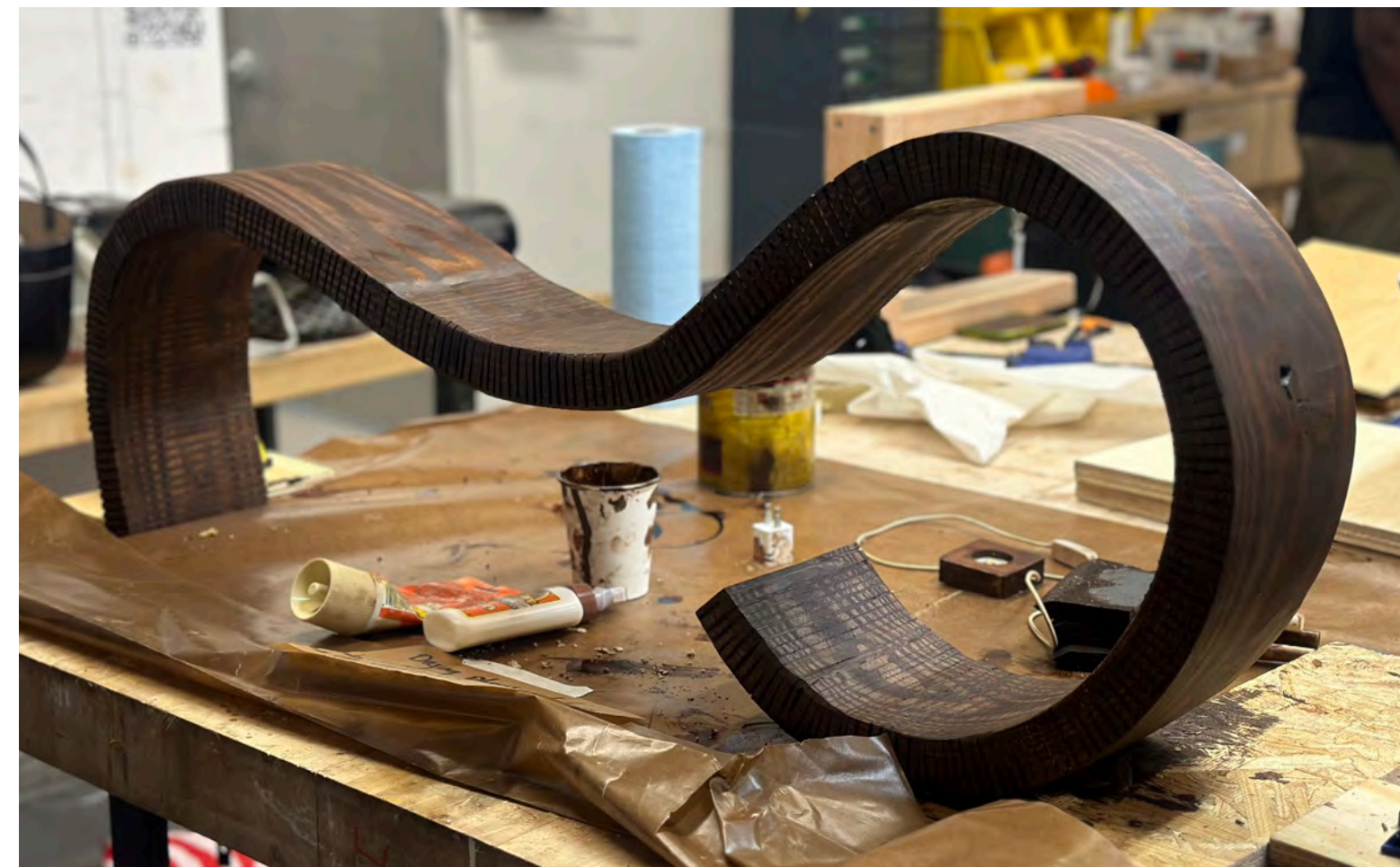
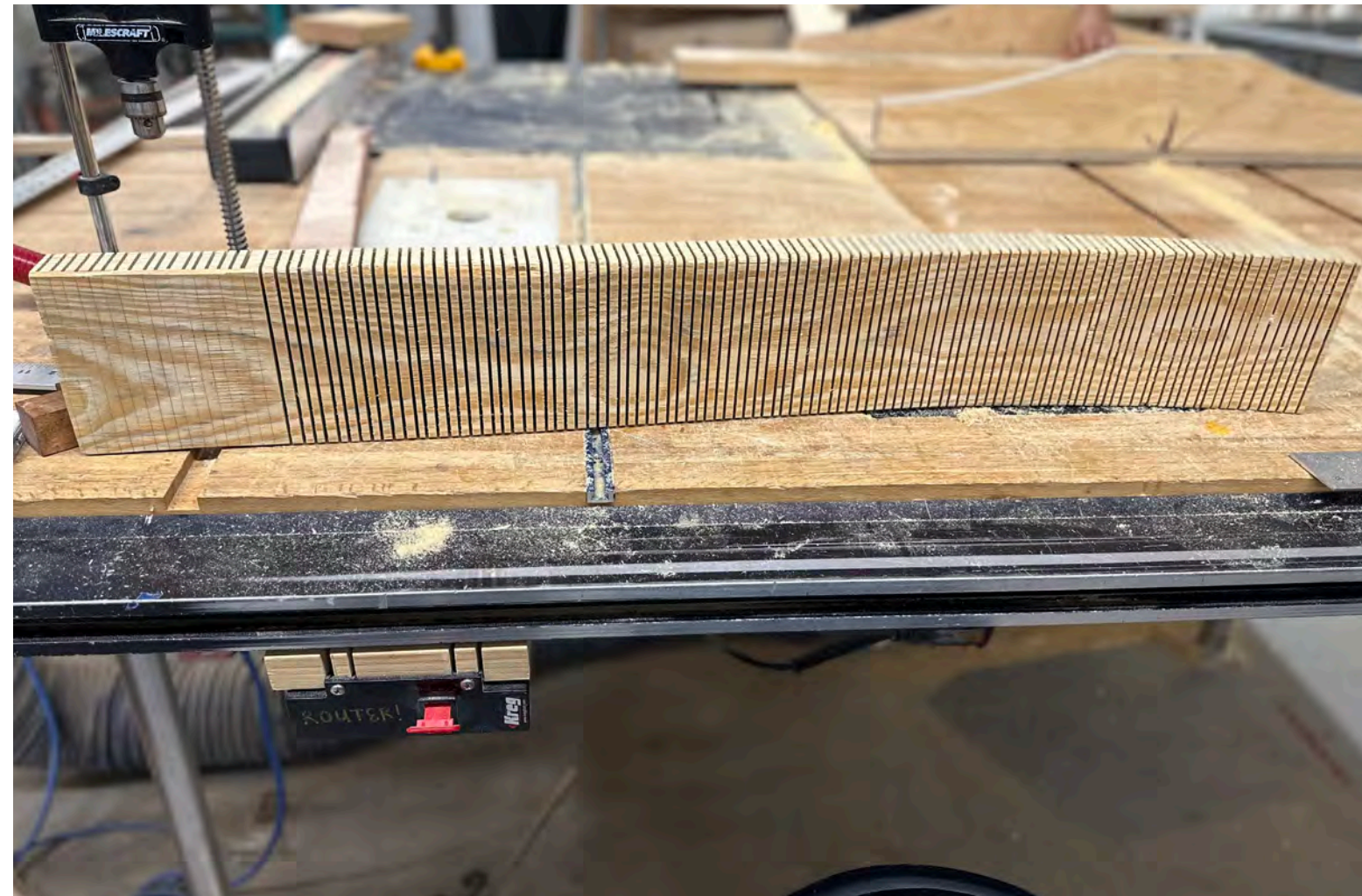
Instructor: Zachary E. Mulitauaopele

Partner: Sherefah Alhamdan

Designed and fabricated in collaboration, this sculptural furniture piece merges a coffee table, shelf, and lamp into one fluid form. Using fir dimensional lumber, we applied kerf-cutting techniques guided by a curve-bending calculator to bend rigid wood into organic curves. The panels were carefully scored, bent, glued, and stained to a warm finish. The result is a multi-functional object that explores material transformation, spatial dialogue, and full-scale craftsmanship.







The final piece extends beyond function, it becomes an interactive object that responds to its environment. Its gentle curves create moments of rest, light, and storage, inviting a quiet dialogue between user and object. Through its layered form and hybrid utility, it embodies the poetic contrast of structure and softness, rigidity and flow.

