



# Maya Yildirim

Master of Architecture  
Columbia University GSAPP

Portfolio, 2023-2026

Ecological Systems

- i.      **Advanced VI Studio**  
Spring 2026, Critic Karla Rothstein
- ii.     **Advanced IV Studio**  
Spring 2025, Critic Alessandro Orsini
- iii.    **Core III Studio**  
Fall 2024, Critic Hilary Sample
- iv.     **Core II Studio**  
Spring 2024, Critic Regina Teng
- v.      **Seminar**  
Spring 2026, Instructor Andrés Jaque

Narrative Exposures

- vi.     **Advanced V Studio**  
Fall 2025, Critic Amale Andraos
- vii.    **History/Theory**  
Fall 2025, Instructor Ziad Jamaleddine
- viii.   **Representation**  
Fall 2025, Instructor Amelyn Ng

Collective Rituals

- ix.     **Core I Studio, Final**  
Fall 2023, Critic Carlos Medellín
- x.      **Core I Studio, Assignment 1**  
Fall 2023, Critic Carlos Medellín
- xi.     **Design Seminar**  
Fall 2023, Instructor Karla Rothstein



# Beyond Capacity

Burial Ground, Garden, & Market

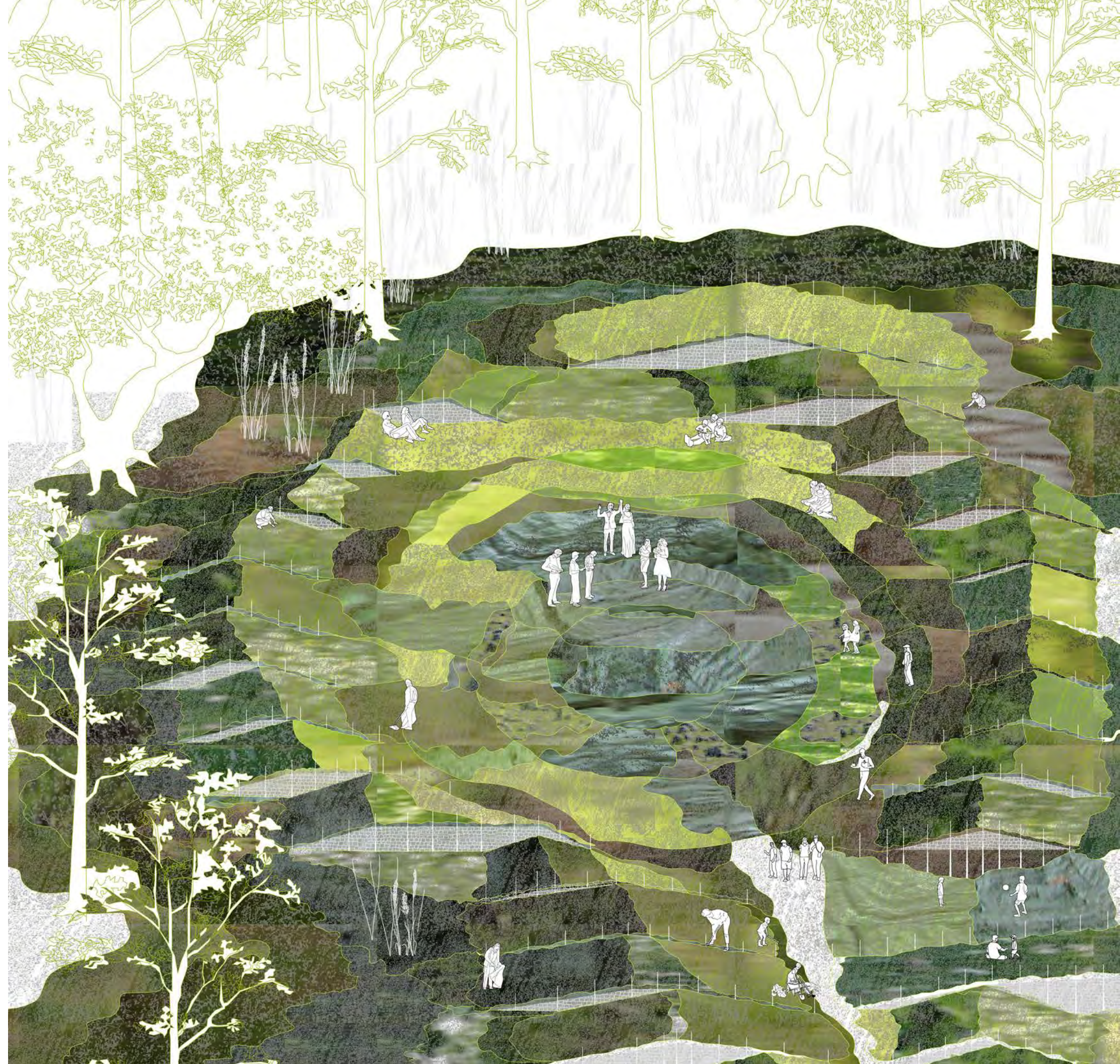
Advanced VI Studio

Karla Rothstein, Critic

Hayden St John, Collaborator

Beyond Capacity manages living and dying in states of crisis: intersectionally quotidian, extraordinary, collective, generational, and discriminatory. The capacity of existing systems to respond to crises is revealed at full saturation, necessitating exchange and negotiation. Saturation, the uneven distribution of resources and demands that cause pressure on existing systems, necessitates creation.

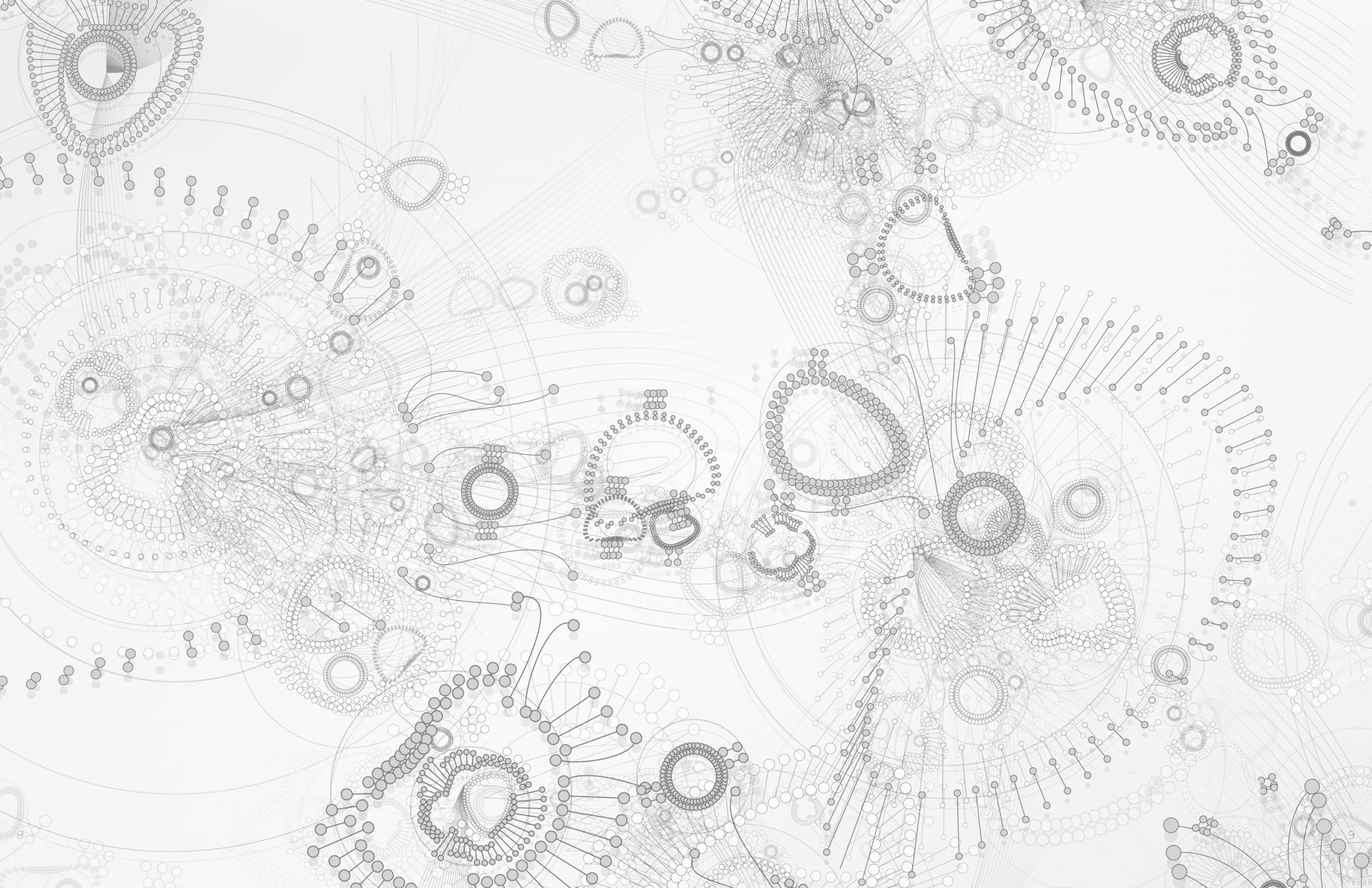
Our intervention exists as a public commons. We intervene at Van Cortlandt Park, and our proposal is prototypical for the fifteen municipally owned golf courses throughout New York City that drain resources and pollute surrounding communities. The intertwining of burial mounds and agricultural fields confronts death as a process in living and returns matter to the earth to sustain life. These conditions are seen as the new grounds for the city's municipal cemetery that collapse the infrastructures of prevention, response, and reflection. Beyond Capacity is both a pragmatic infrastructure and a landscape of collective living, healing, and dying.











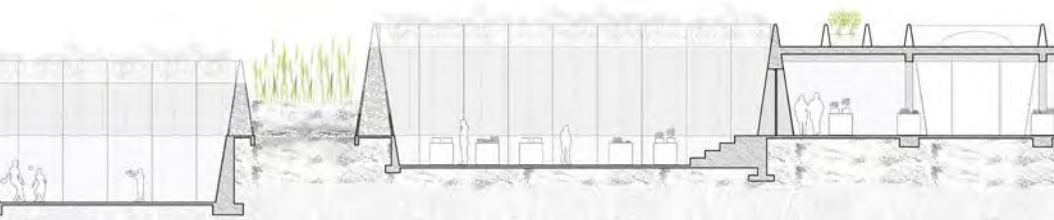




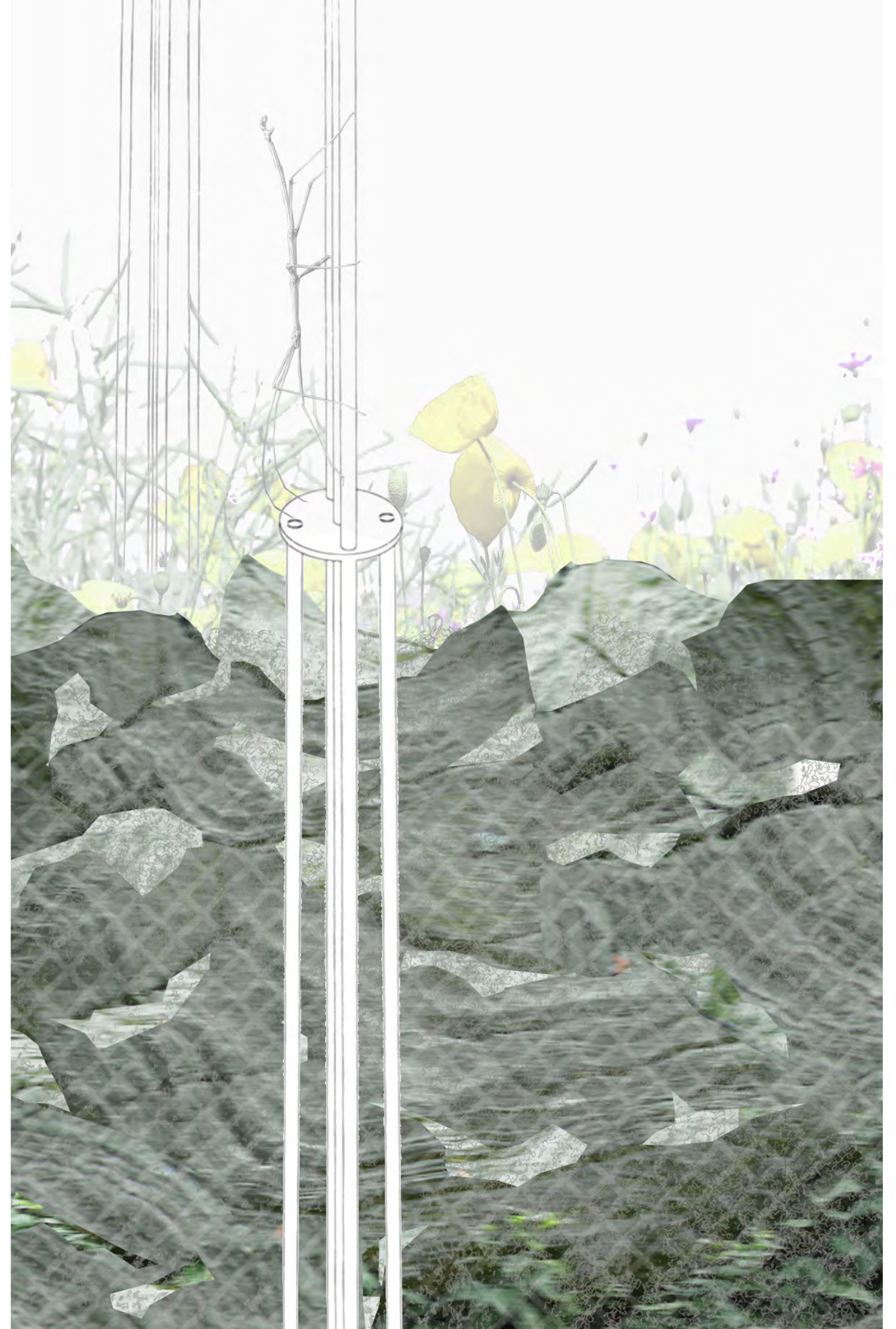
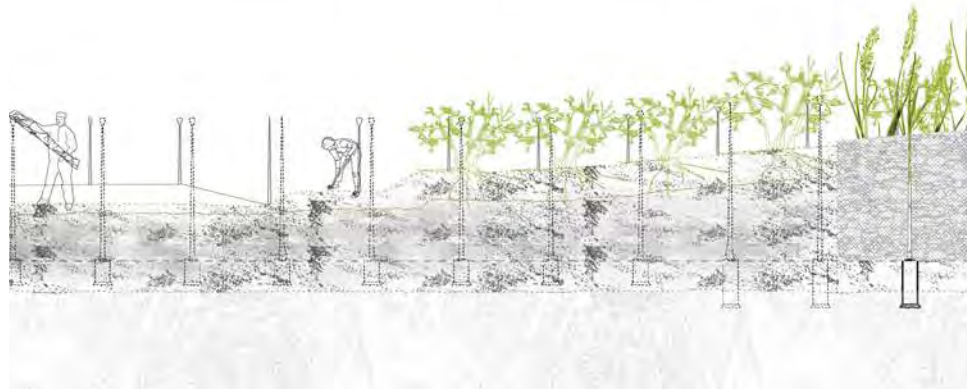
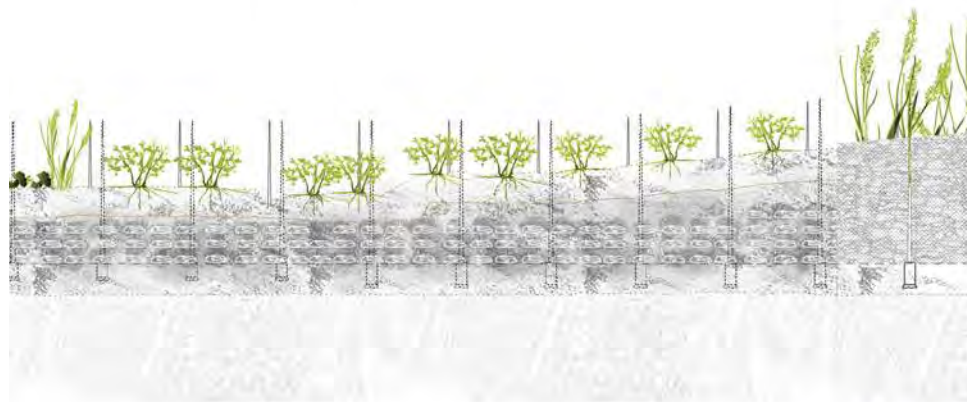
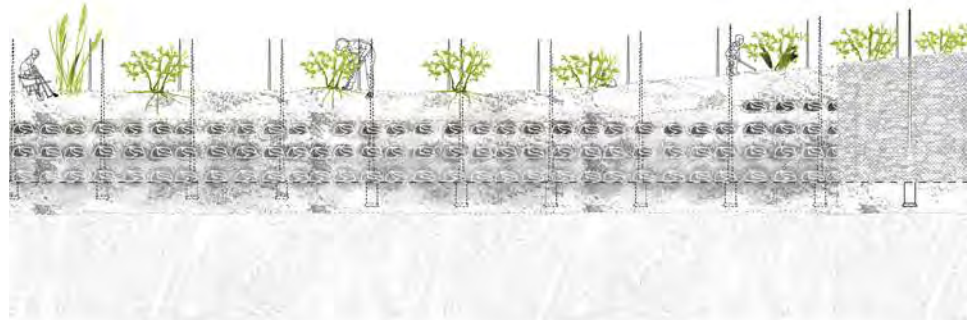
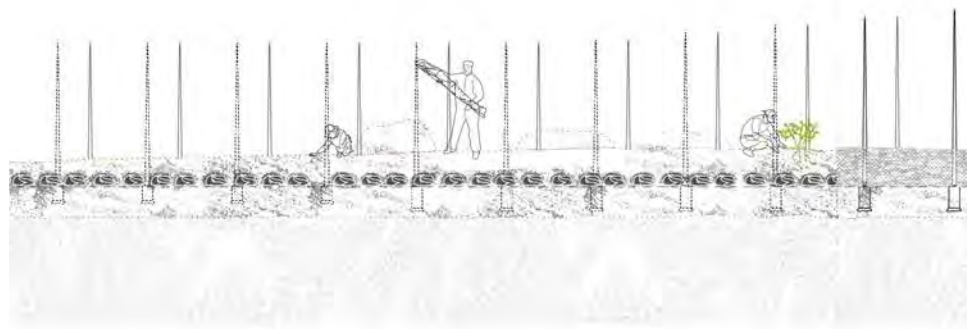




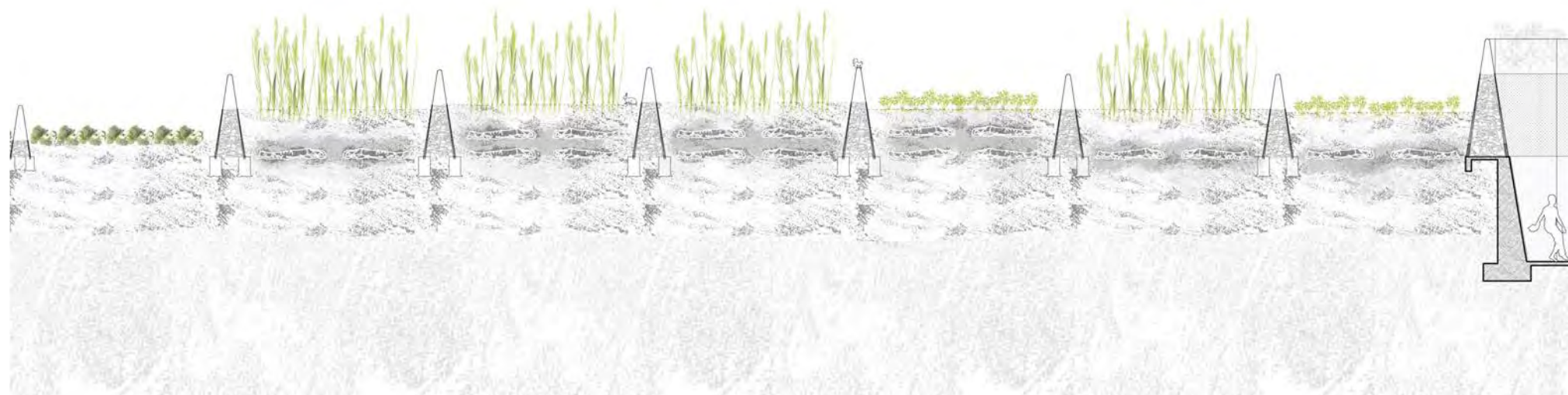




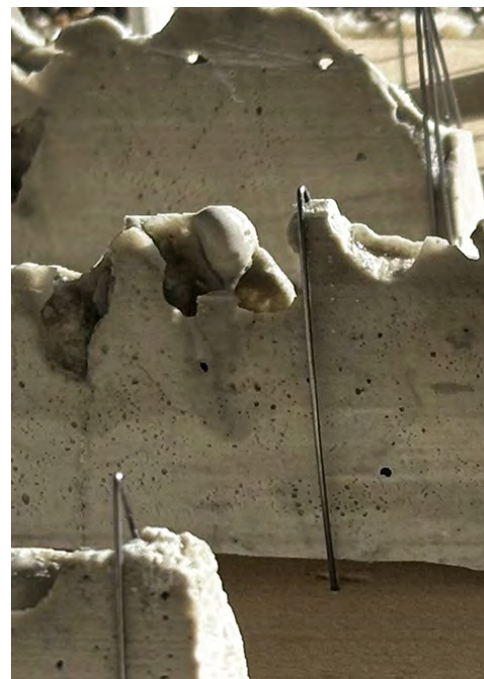
















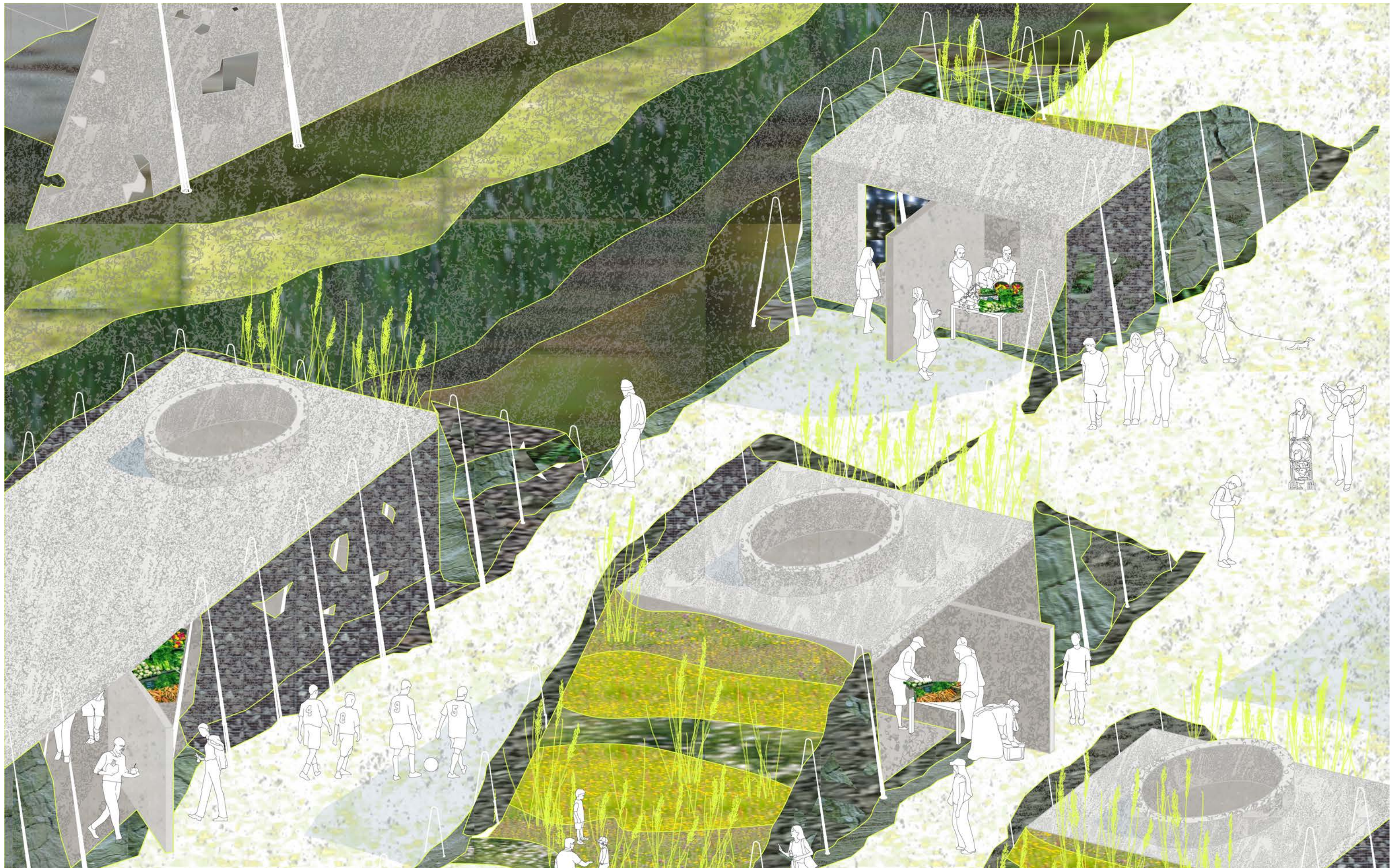














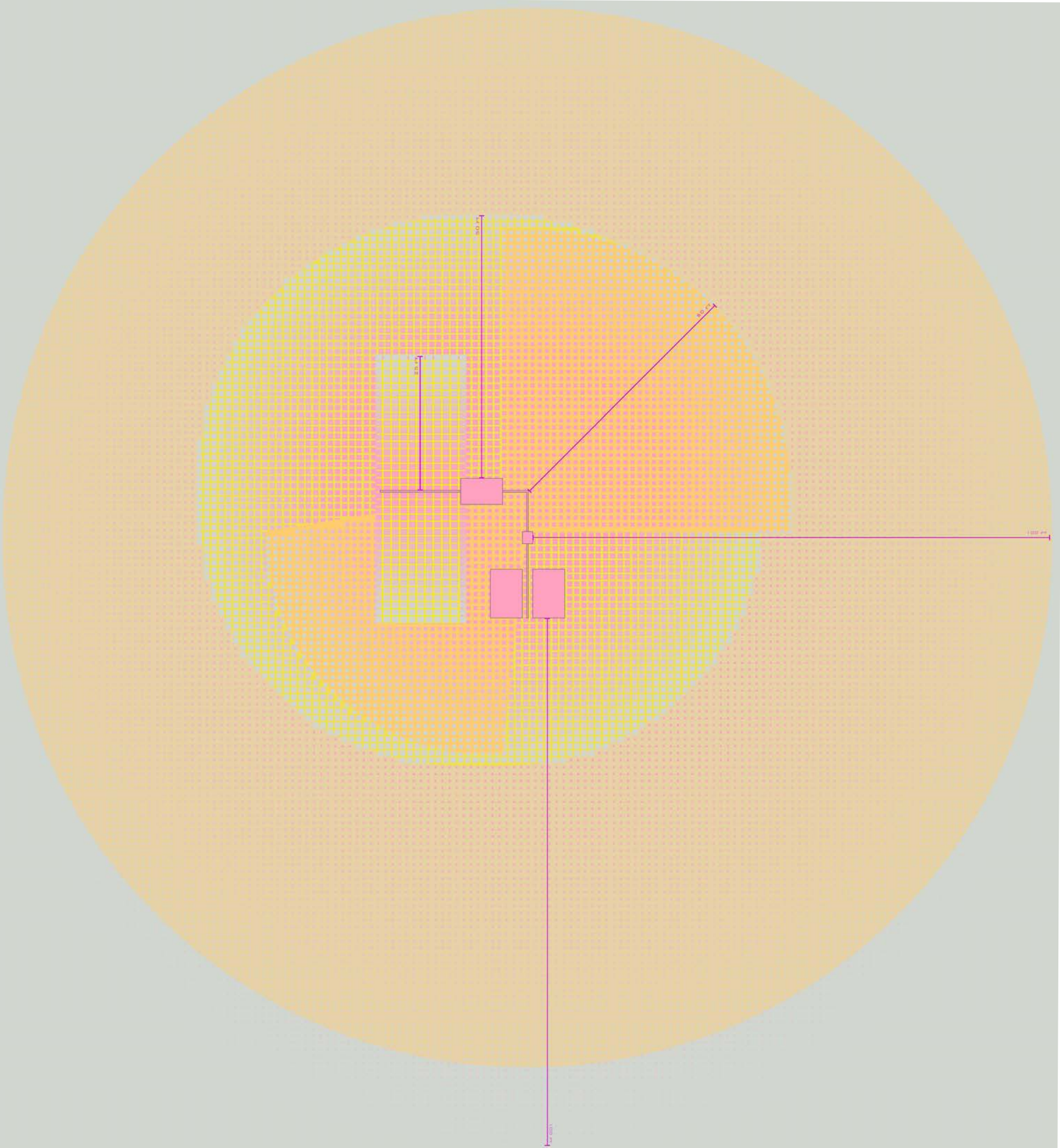
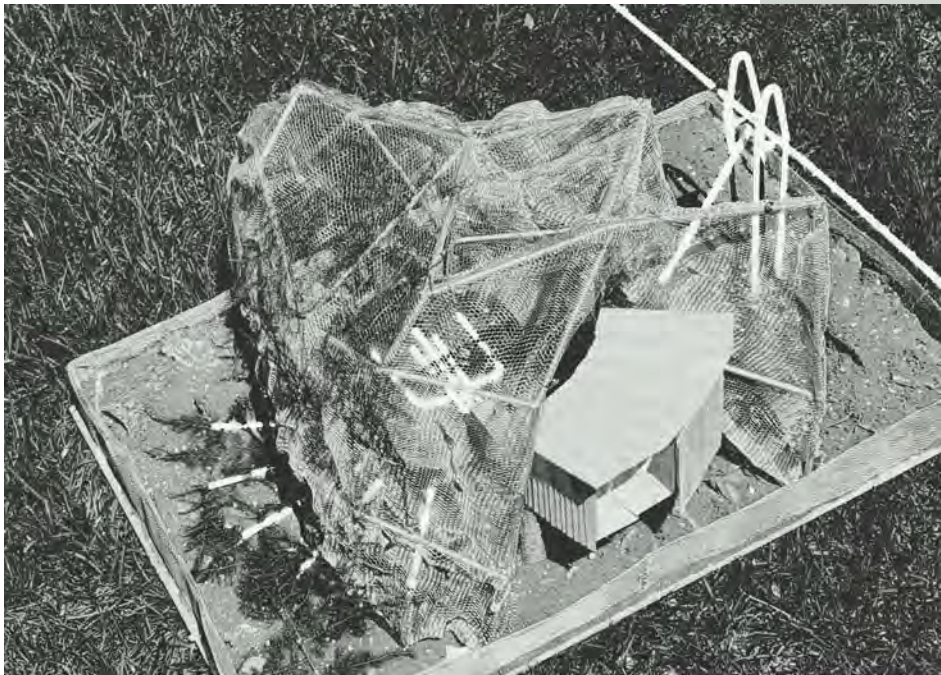
# The Garden of Bodily Fluids

Septic Tank, Garden, & Kitchen

Advanced IV Studio  
Alessandro Orsini, Critic

New York City's freshwater source, the Ashokan Reservoir, was engineered into its environment, displacing rural communities and continually extracting from local resources. The contentious relationship of the urban and rural communities is examined at the scale of the septic system, which is heavily regulated by the city in the watershed of the reservoir to protect the water. In reimagining this relationship, this project creates a place for commoning, making waste water the shared resource. The project's continuous and elevated pipe encircles the Ashokan - flipping the city's distance-based regulations on itself to prevent the reservoir from further encroaching on the rural community. Along the network of the pipe, community gardens pop up to process and make accessible the waste water.

The septic tank, garden, kitchen, and bathroom are the programs that the water cycles through. The resources are consumed and produced by people, plants, and animals.





The garden retains the common resource while the pipe protects the common land.

"The City shall provide up to Seventy Five Million Dollars (\$75,000,000) ("New Infrastructure Funds") for a program to construct and install WWTs or community septic systems together with related sewerage collection systems, or to create and fund septic districts, in villages and hamlets in West of Hudson where the Villages or appropriate Towns are Parties and that may be experiencing water quality problems due to failing septic systems in close proximity to streams and other watercourses or where such failures are likely to occur in the future."<sup>1</sup>

The Ashokan Reservoir has been the site of an inequitable and imbalanced relationship: urban powers financially dominate, physically displace, and extract resources from the rural landscape and communities the reservoir is situated in. Located in upstate New York, the reservoir is a source of freshwater for New York City residents. Its construction began in 1907, under the direction of the New York City Board of Water Supply, and the engineering, soil dams, weirs, a network of aqueducts) were orchestrated at the expense of the displaced, relocated, and flooded towns. The contentious relationship between the urban and the rural continued as each generation brought new forms of control and extraction. To understand this

relationship and to serve as an entry point, the research and project, I analyze and archive the Memorandum of Agreement (or MOA) of 1997, Article 122.

The MOA was written in collaboration between rural and urban entities: the residents of towns and villages of the watershed, NYC, state representatives, and federal agencies.<sup>2</sup> The writing of the MOA was spurred by a series of regulations, growing environmental consciousness, and financial threats to the city. The formation of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the late 1960s was followed by the passing of the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act. The latter required water suppliers serving over 100,000



1. NEW YORK CITY WATER SUPPLY BOARD (1907-1910). 2. NEW YORK CITY WATER SUPPLY BOARD (1907-1910).



3. NEW YORK CITY WATER SUPPLY BOARD (1907-1910).

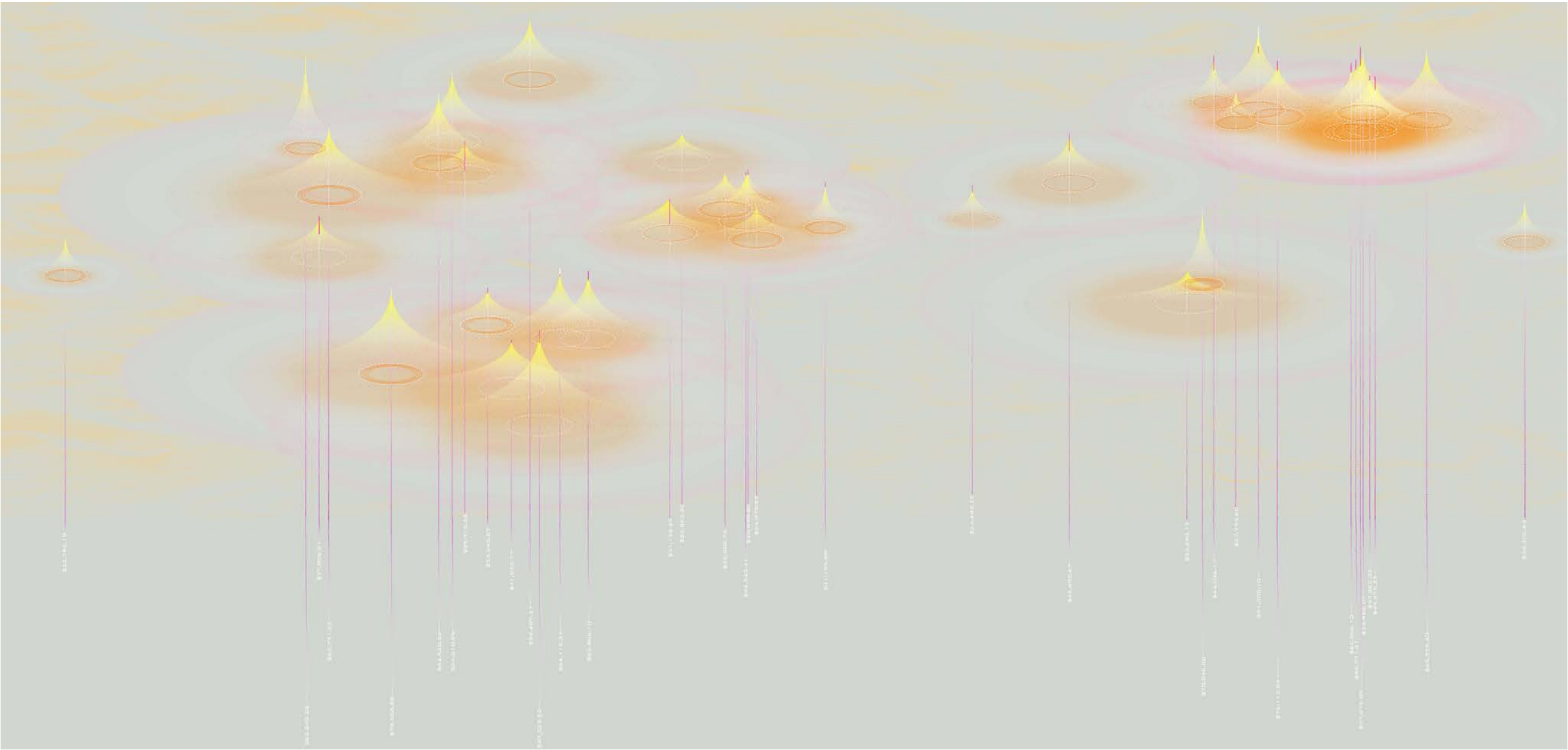
consumers to filter their drinking water. The construction of a filtration plant would have cost the city \$6 billion, with continued maintenance costs. This was too great a cost, so as an alternative, the city pursued a Filtration Avoidance Determination (or FAD), issued every five years by the EPA, and later the New York State Department of Health.<sup>3</sup> The FAD was obtained by maintaining a high level of water quality in the reservoir. The first FAD was issued in 1992, and by 1997, the city began to exert greater control in the watershed: communities to keep the water quality high for the second FAD. This included the Watershed Regulations of 1997<sup>4</sup> which intended to minimize pollution, erosion, and phosphorus discharge, and were endorsed by the New York City Department of Environmental Protection<sup>5</sup> and the Land Acquisition Program<sup>6</sup> which let the city take more land from the already displaced towns around the reservoir. The rural communities leveraged the threat to the city of losing the FAD and having to incur the cost of a filtration plant to get the city to negotiate with them, rather than continue to dominate and displace them. The MOA was the result of the negotiations, but even though it was a collaborative document, the uneven power dynamics persisted. The first knowledge brings these uneven power dynamics to a rural form.

Article 122 of the MOA established new comprehensive infrastructure in the watershed communities for septic tank installation and maintenance, as well as other forms of wastewater treatment, paid for and operated by NYC. The wastewater of the rural community is what affects the drinking water of the urban beneficiaries. By controlling the construction of individual septic tanks for households around the reservoir, the city protects its resource from contamination while also limiting development around the reservoir. The funding of septic tanks by the city does relieve watershed communities of burdensome costs, but the result is still a landscape that is owned and operated by the outside entity.<sup>7</sup> The control of a landscape is shown in the second assemblage.

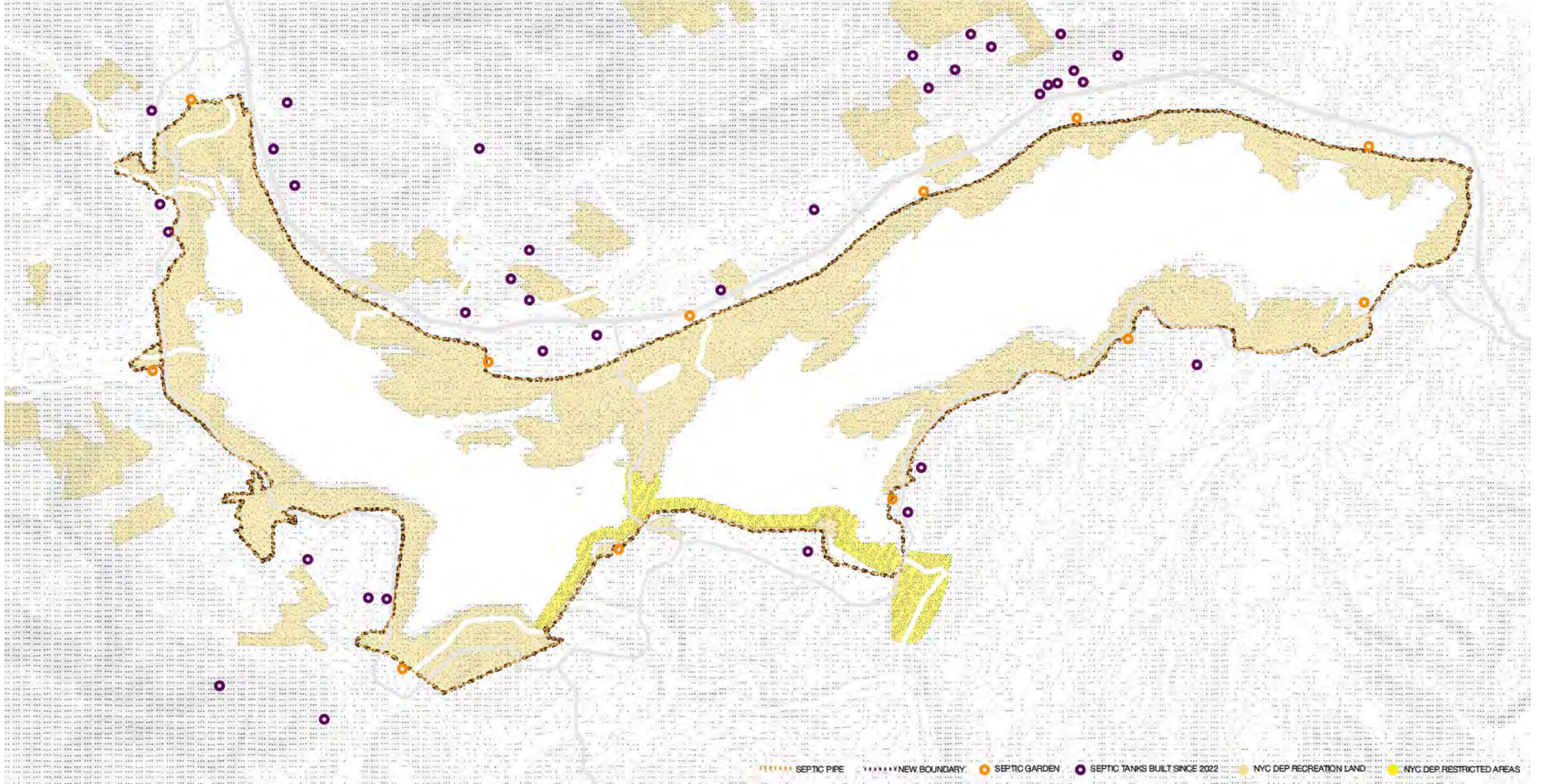
The city's control of the rural community is documented in the meeting minutes of the Catskill Watershed Corporation (CWC). The amount of money the city has paid individual households to install and maintain their septic systems is recorded and approved of during CWC meetings. By reading the past two years of CWC minutes, I made a table of the addresses getting tanks installed or maintained, the amount of bedrooms they had, the amount of gallons in the septic tanks for each

4. NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (1997).

5. NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (1997).



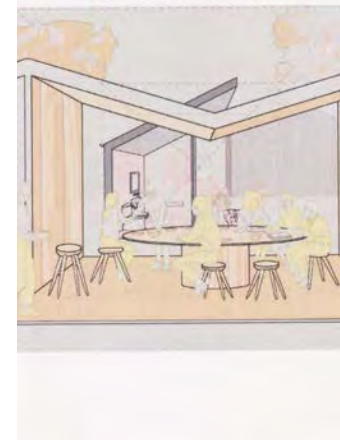
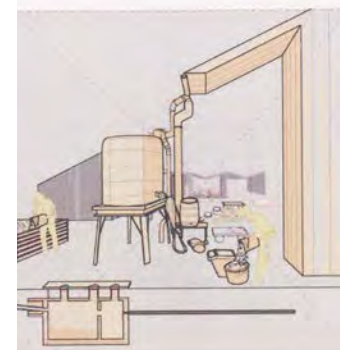
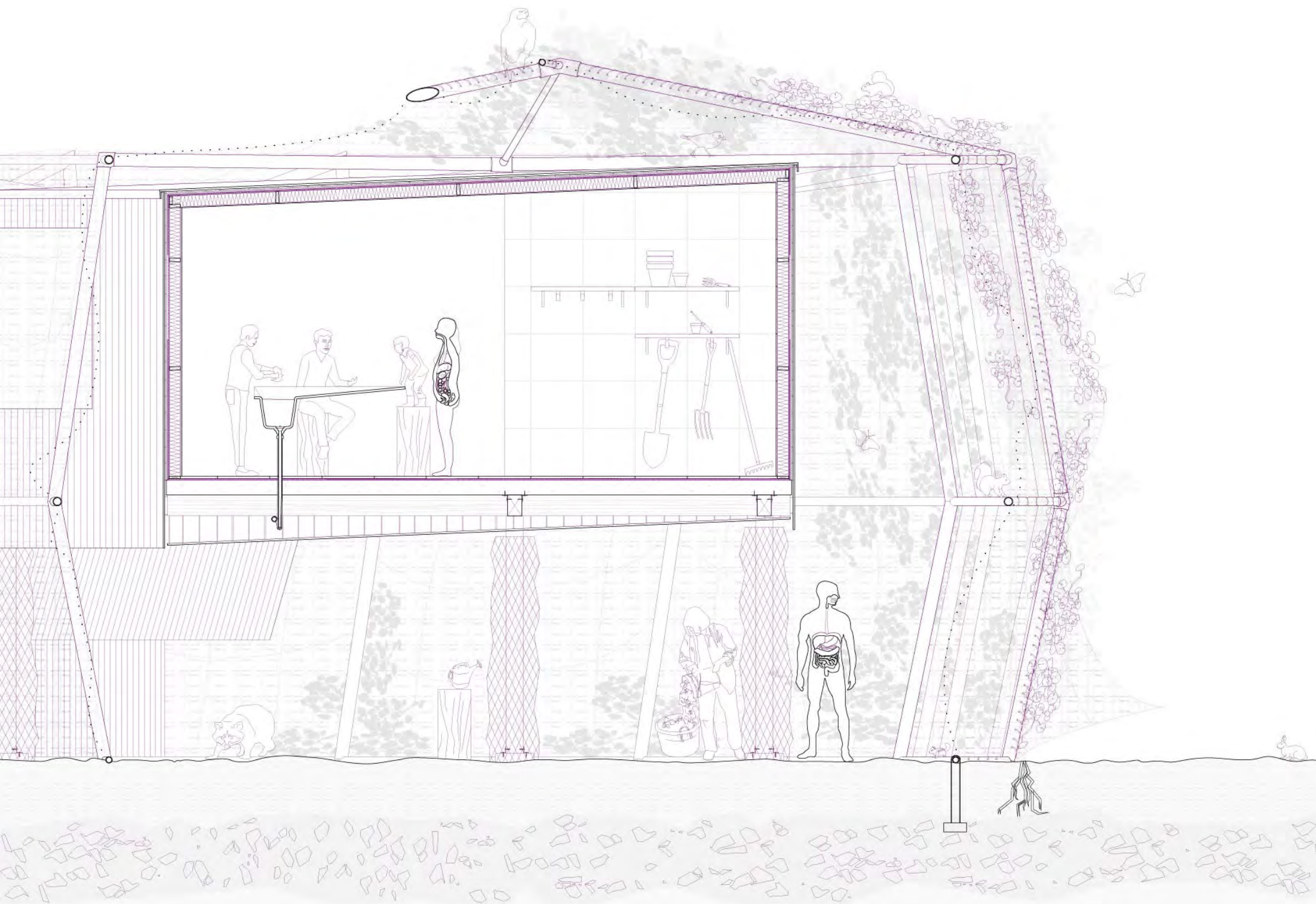




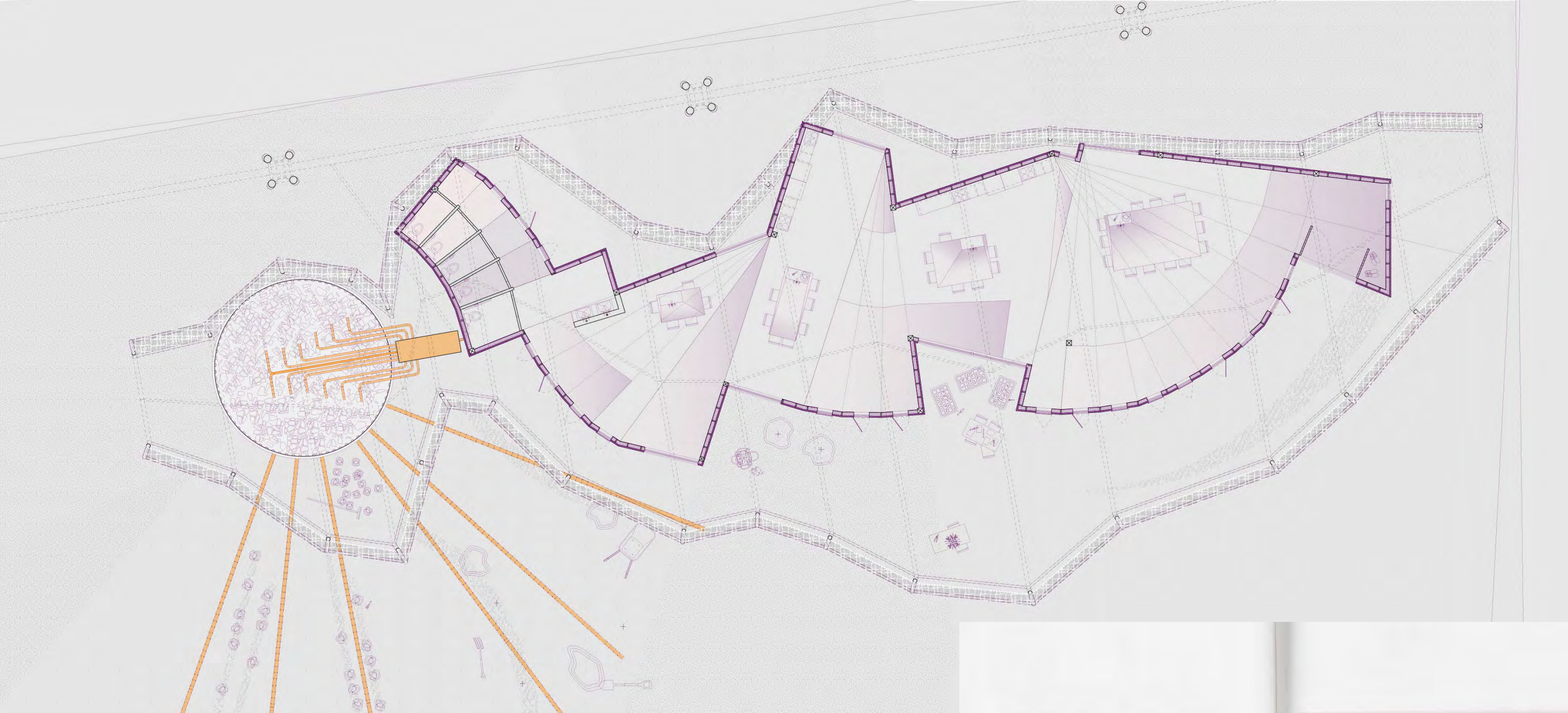












resture. The next is to grow and to nurture. And the fourth is to gather and to sustain. These are the functions of a community garden, which require the participation of all species. Human fluids and plant life pass through these scenes together. The micro scale is also activated, with the processing of fluids occurring within the bodies of those participating in the garden.

The garden is one unit of a network that circles the entire reservoir. The pipe that transfers wastewater to the garden for processing is set 10 feet away from NYCDEP property lines, as per the regulations. The regulations are then used against the city; by creating this ring around the city-owned land, the city is no longer able to encroach on rural land because it can't get closer to the system. The reservoir must be at most 100 feet away, preventing any future growth that would displace the community further. The less apparent goal of the septic network is a defensive

measure. The garden retains the common resource while the pipe protects the common land.



section of the garden and kitchen





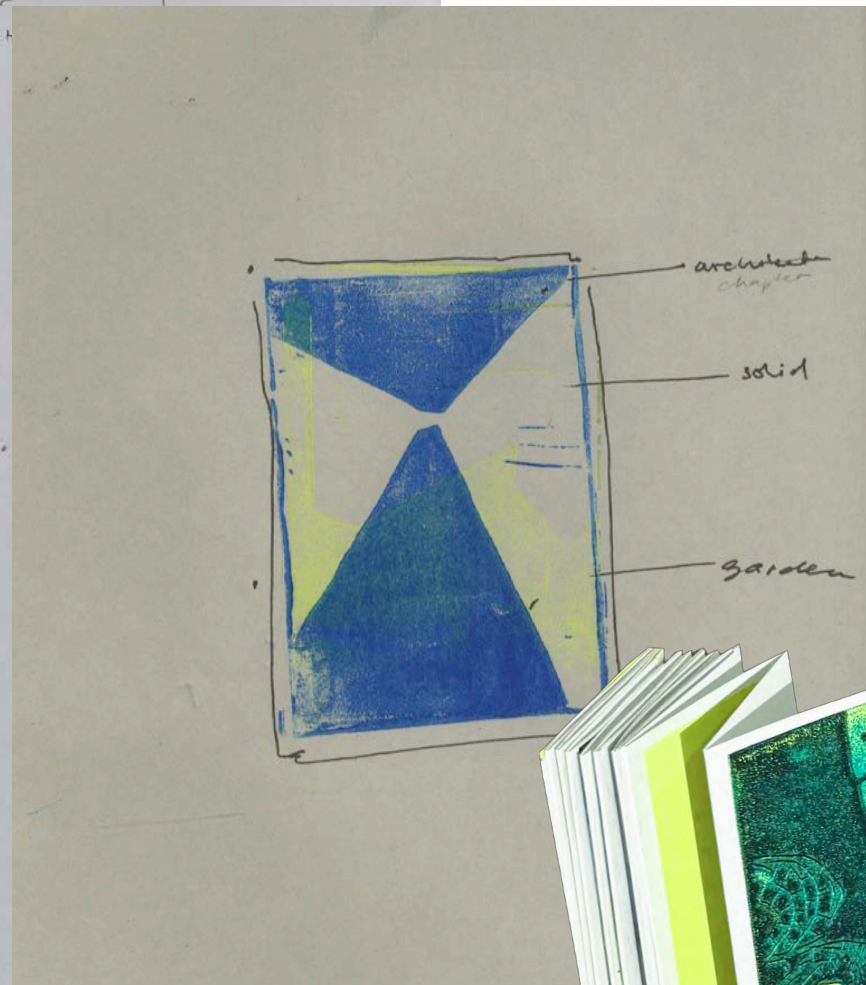
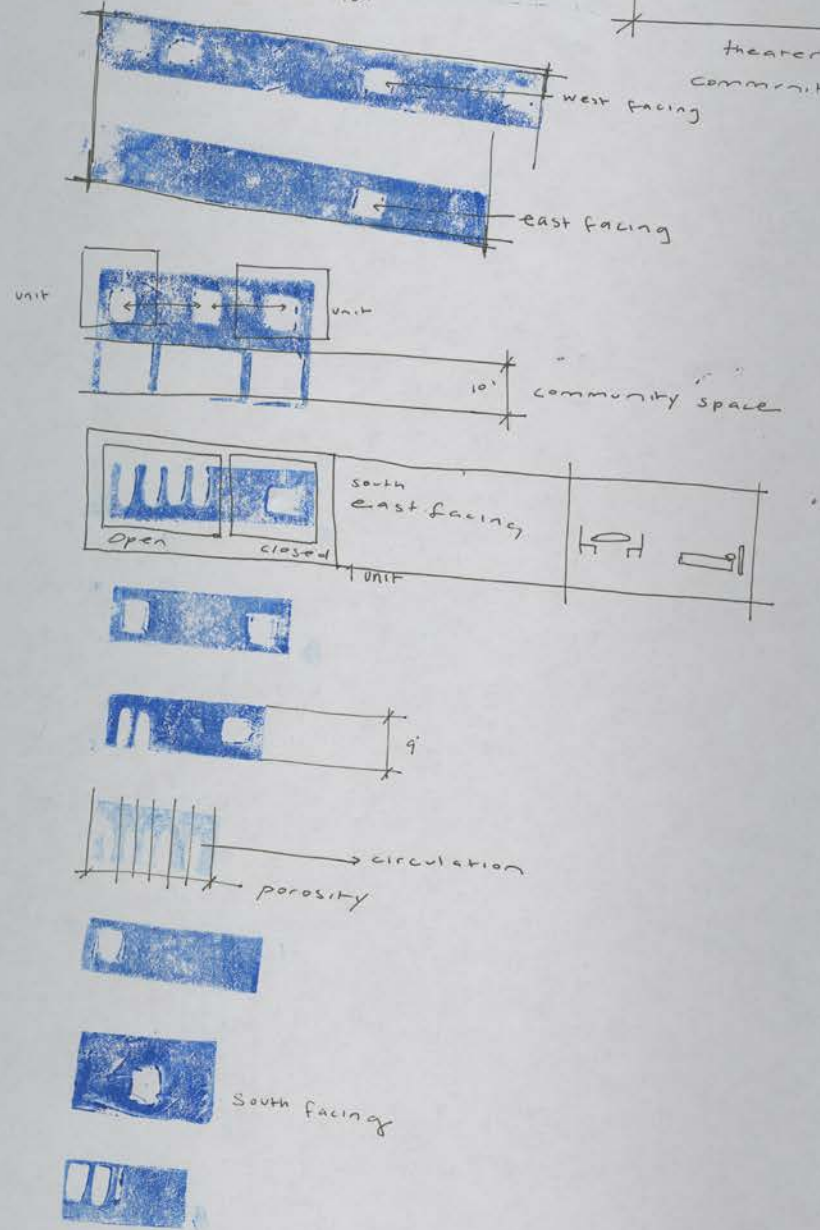
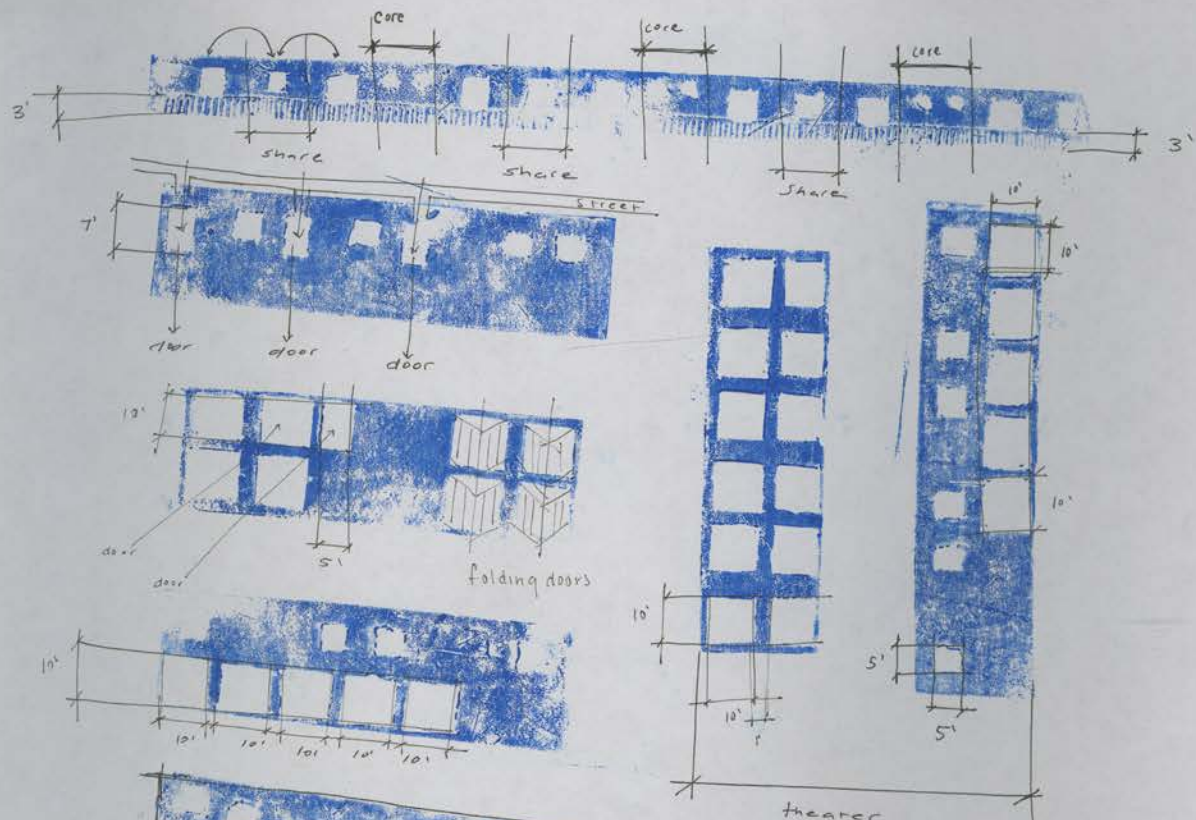












- 1 The Julia Gabriel People's Garden  
1039 Amsterdam Avenue  
Size: 4841 square feet  
Owner: NYC Parks
- 2 Gatehouse Garden  
1195 Amsterdam Ave  
Size: 6350 square feet  
Owner: NYC Parks
- 3 Harlem Grown P.S. 125 Community Garden  
425 West 123rd Street  
Size: 3300 square feet  
Owner: Jointly Operated Playground
- 4 Grant Shade garden- Grant House (NYCHA)  
550 West 125 Street  
Size: 1296 square feet  
Owner: New York City Housing Authority
- 5 Jenny's Garden  
669 W 138th Street  
Size: 4800 square feet  
Owner: NYC Parks
- 6 Hope Steven Garden  
1656 Amsterdam Avenue  
Size: 3421 square feet  
Owner: Manhattan Land Trust
- 7 Frank White Memorial Garden  
505 West 143rd Street  
Size: 5624 square feet  
Owner: Department of Parks & Recreation / Privately Owned
- 8 Serenity Gardens  
522 West 146th Street  
Size: 3766 square feet  
Owner: Manhattan Land Trust
- 9 Mo' Pals  
545 West 147th Street  
Size: 1944 square feet  
Owner: Manhattan Land Trust



- 10 Maggie's Garden  
564 West 149th Street  
Size: 3417 square feet  
Owner: New York Restoration Project
- 11 Lucille McClarey Wicked Friendship Garden  
Size: 1499 square feet  
Owner: New York Restoration Project
- 12 Sugar Hill Hope Garden  
475 W 152nd Street  
Size: 17831 square feet  
Owner: DEP (DPR)
- 13 William A. Harris Garden  
869 St Nicholas Ave  
Size: 4605 square feet  
Owner: NYC Parks
- 14 Edgecombe Avenue Garden Park Sanctuary  
339 Edgecombe Avenue  
Size: 4874 square feet  
Owner: NYC Parks
- 15 St. Nicholas Miracle Garden  
330 Saint Nicholas Avenue  
Size: 1595 square feet  
Owner: NYC Parks
- 16 Clayton Williams Garden  
303 W 126th Street  
Size: 5587 square feet  
Owner: Department of Parks & Recreation / Manhattan Land Trust
- 17 William B. Washington Memorial Garden  
325 West 126th Street  
Size: 3720 square feet  
Owner: NYC Parks
- 18 Sugar Hill Garden  
333 Edgecombe Avenue  
Size: 2895 square feet  
Owner: NYC Parks





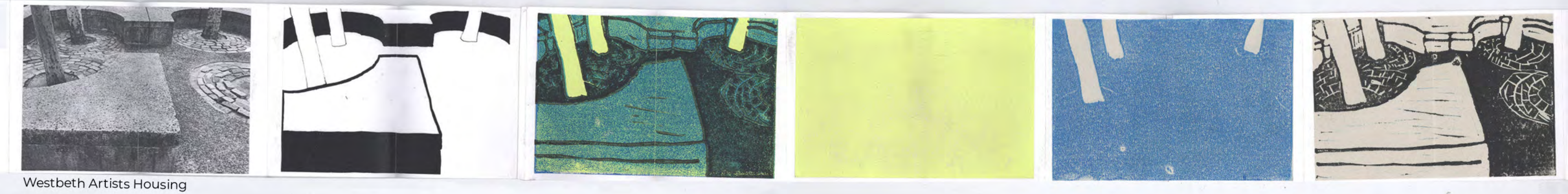
W 127th St.

Westbeth Artists Housing



Sugar Hill Development

W 129th St. and Convent Ave.



Westbeth Artists Housing



W 129th St. and Convent Ave.

Westbeth Artists Housing



What is a Garden Room? As a conversation between Maya and Levan.

Garden rooms are shaped by plants, which are shaped by people, which are shaped by plants. "Its very nature is unnatural, not given, not fixed, but forever transitioning and transforming itself. Electrons (re)birth themselves in their engagement with all others, not as an act of self- birthing, but in an ongoing re- creating that is an un/doing of itself." (Barad 401) Maybe it's helpful to define what a garden is and what a room is. Walls enclose a room; cultivation and maintenance define limits for a plot of land which is a garden. A garden room isn't the combination of the two. It is not a garden in a room or a room in a garden. It is a third distinct and independent space. The garden room is any and could be every space. Transcalar and trans species cultivation, harnessing the environmental and social conditions of a space.

They are ambiguous in whether they are interior or exterior spaces. A threshold between inside and outside. They are not contained by architecture; architecture grows out of garden rooms; therefore, a garden room is an oxymoron.

The garden room is a space between living spaces, a void within a solid. A room without a name. It is a courtyard, a balcony, a break between a kitchen and a living room.

If you give people space, they will find a way to fill it.

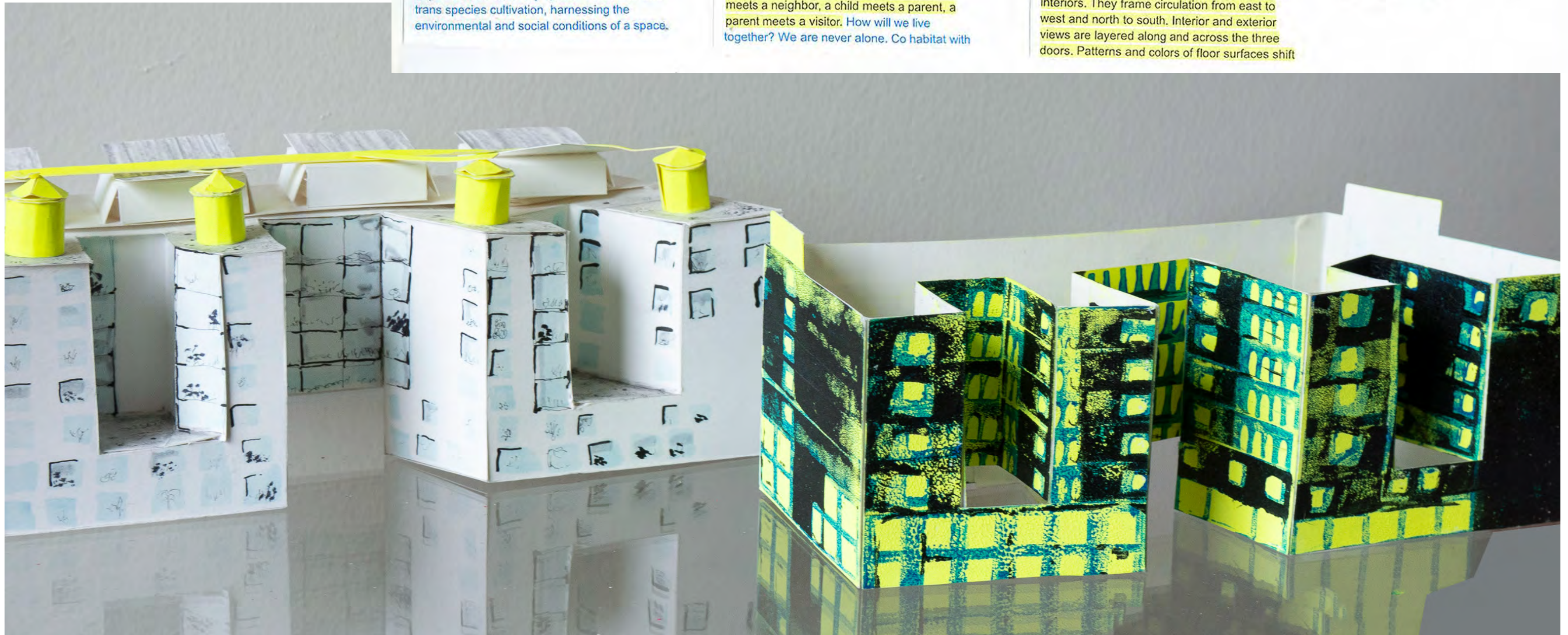
Could there be a shared document or a manual of sorts for maintaining this life? Is the knowledge oral or written? What are the protocols of care? This is where a neighbor meets a neighbor, a child meets a parent, a parent meets a visitor. How will we live together? We are never alone. Co habitat with

other bodies, human and non. Cohabitation and maintenance form the garden room. At Sugarhill, the convergence of life, programmatically and spatially and across species, created a garden room. A series of trees lined up against three doors facing St. Nichola's Street. Three doors, three programs, a museum, residences, and an early childcare center with a courtyard in between. A courtyard connects the museum with the childcare center. Both spaces open up to the garden, a series of potted plants—a collection of native life tended by the residents, staff, and children. Cultivating people, neighborhoods, businesses, plants, songbirds, children.

A hallway of windows cuts through the courtyard connecting the museum, offices, and childcare. The windows divide up exteriors and interiors. They frame circulation from east to west and north to south. Interior and exterior views are layered along and across the three doors. Patterns and colors of floor surfaces shift

from one layer to another, from gray, tiled, and rough to flat, green, and reflective. They appear and disappear while remaining continuous.

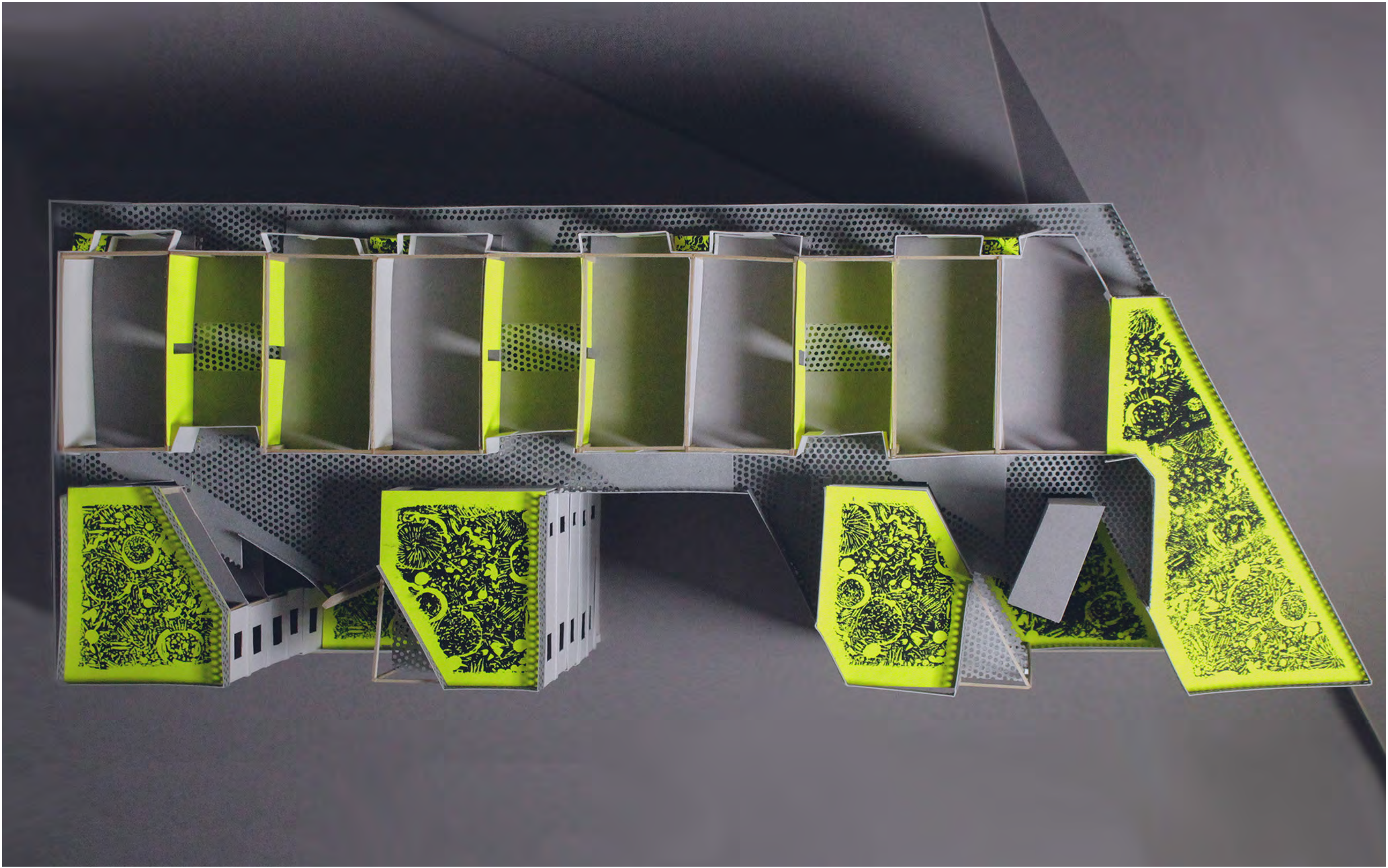
The garden room is space, not just a space but open space, to be cultivated, taken care of, maintained, shaped, and transformed by humans and non-humans. The space is shaped by care, rather than control. "...she took a cutting...(really she just broke off a shoot with her bare hands) or the seed (separating it from its pulpy substance and collecting it in her beautiful pink mouth) and brought it into her own garden and tended to it in a careless, everyday way, as if it were in the wild forest, or in the garden of a regal palace. The woods: The garden. For her, the wild and the cultivated were equal and yet separate, together and apart" (Kincaid, 35).















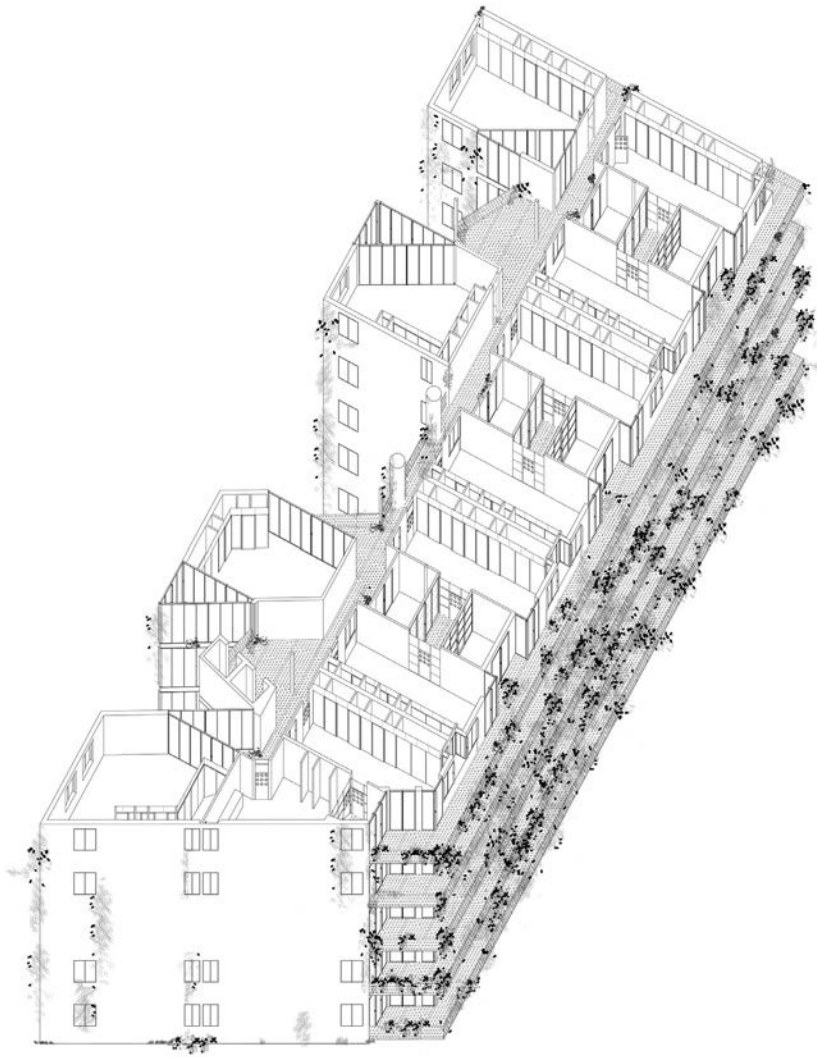












The garden room isn't ordered, rigid, strict, or programmed. The courtyard reappears on the ninth floor. "In this sense, materiality is always 'in process,' and our understanding of it is always contingent by a particular perspective, not always human." (Munuera, 210) It can fill and shift and overgrow and disappear. The tectonics of the room are not what is altered, but instead, the life that is contained within is dynamic, changing when the wind blows, the sun rises and sets, the seasons change, the pollinators migrate, the people come and go.

The garden room needs to breathe. So the garden room must be porous. The solidity of the garden room is softened by voids, openings, punctures. Windows crawl up the facade in all shapes and sizes. Their arrangement, seemingly irregular from the outside, is carefully framing the outside for the inside. A window frame, large or small, is suddenly mistaken for a

frame of a painting as one looks across the living room from the kitchen or walks into a bedroom—much like frames in Matisse's rooms that can be easily read as windows or paintings within paintings. Within a garden room, the traditional distinction between spaces is blurred. The identity of interior and exterior space is questioned by porosity. The windows connect the interior spaces, disrupting divisions between, erasing their names, many programmatic needs share one window. Maybe we don't count rooms, but we count windows. How many windows do you live through?

Buildings are selective filters, acting as a barrier between interior and exterior, defining the two, but a garden room is a convergence. Through the awareness of environment conditions existing on the site, the tectonics of the architecture control the effect on the lived experiences of residents, creating refreshing and nurturing space. Light, air, water are the basic principles that are amplified and removed

from differing parts of the structure to allow different programmatic elements to make use of that space. The circulation of people throughout a garden room building is as important as the circulation of the elements: air, water, heat, light, etc. Air should be pulled through the rooms. Cross-ventilation.

Human and non-human organisms converge in the garden room. "This obsession, however, departs from the human-centric bias of Freudian or Nietzschean genealogies, forging relationships between multiple living beings (humans, plants) and nonliving agents (objects, designs) as well, drawing on Anna Tsing's approach, in which interspecies relationships produce collaborative entanglements that shape and are shaped in return by multitudinous collaborations" (Munuera, 210) Plants and humans are not so different. The

conditions that we both require for health and wellness are an adequate amount of sunshine, access to clean water, fresh air to inhale, and shelter from too much of any element. The garden room nurtures humans and plants and other organisms.

Garden like a carpet slid under a building as tall, as old, and industrial as Westbeth. 11 storey industrial brick construction from 1925. Like objects hidden under a carpet make it uneven, ramps, stairs, parking, columns, fences, and large tree pots, stagger the garden. But imagine a non-object driven architecture, body as individual human confinement and garden room as the extension of the body. And how does the garden room extend? The garden bleeds through the gallery, three theaters, an auditorium, elderly care, and residences above. Making the spaces continuous, the garden extends the programs beyond the building mass by framing the Hudson and fragments of Bethune Street. Large industrial windows with

compositions of paint tubes, brushes, and various dishes staggered by the kitchen sink, display work and life within residences. Near the ground, punctures become larger and the objects displayed become larger with them. Compositions of objects become living collections much like a garden.

Compositions of objects become living collections much like a garden. There is an urge now to categorize, label, control, and create a taxonomy of things in order to exert control over those things and claim ownership of them. This urge to collect and categorize is rooted in colonial traditions and would enable the control of non-human organisms (such as plants) by designers. Using and placing them like objects. The non-human organisms, when taxonomized, become objects. But a non-object driven architecture calls for a different method or different relationship with non-human

organisms. Rather than reducing them to a thing, the "living" thing must be embraced. And in understanding what makes it living, we understand what makes us living too. Or the conditions we all require to live. And that our architecture should be based on the existing conditions. When we release the non-human organisms from the confines of collecting and objectifying, we learn from them. The garden room supports living things and is designed for life sustaining environments.

So little is required to create a great change. A small design move can accommodate a greater vision and lived experience. And relabeling rooms is a part of this. The garden room is a label, but it is also a democratization of space when everything is designed to be one. In that way, it is labelless or nameless. Rooms become nameless. Life should and can occur in each space, with no priority or restriction made by the architecture.











# Saline Network

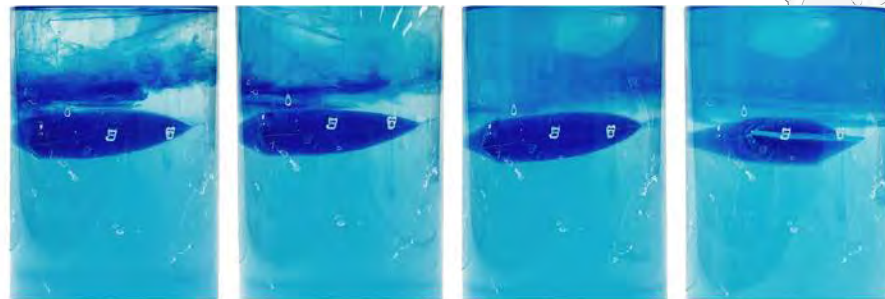
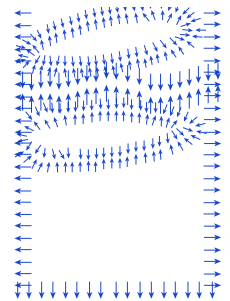
Wave Dampening Landscape and Infrastructure

Core II Studio

Regina Teng, Critic

The wave dampener brings visual form to the changing salinity levels of an estuary environment while also protecting the coastline from forceful waves. The environmental condition of salinity is demonstrated by the natural phenomenon of density. The plastic pockets are filled with water of differing salinity levels so that they have different densities. When tides bring salt water in twice a day, the pockets float and the network expands. As more of the surface of the water is covered by the plastic network, the greater the effect of the wave dampener, making it most useful during the high tide that also activates it. The restful waters allow for recreation and ecological development.

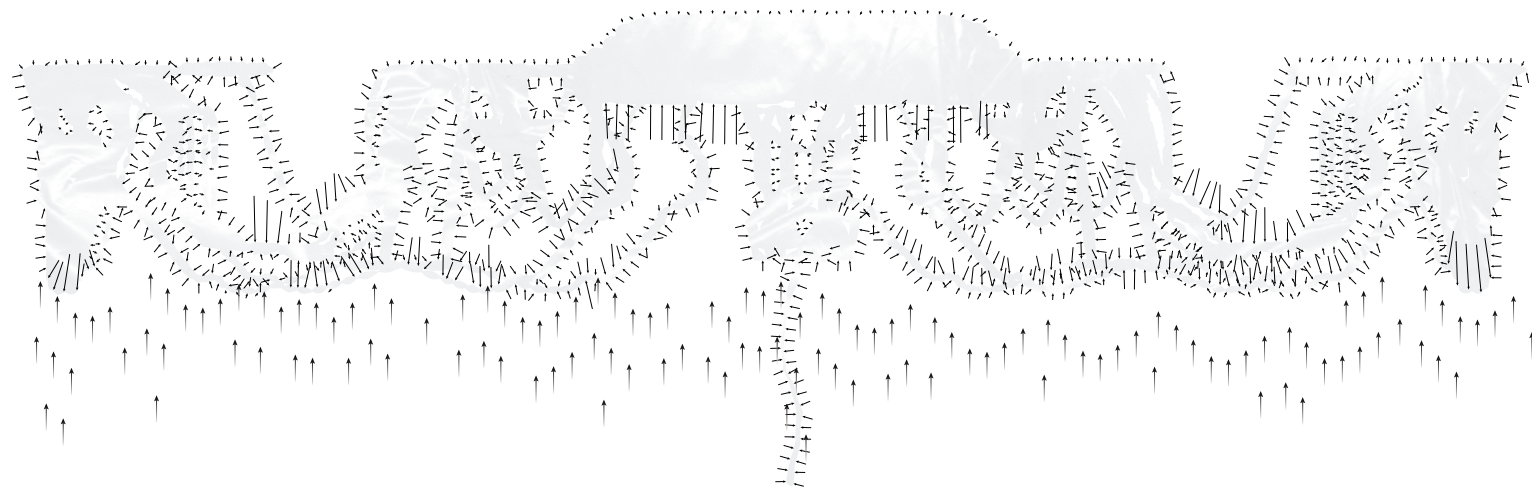
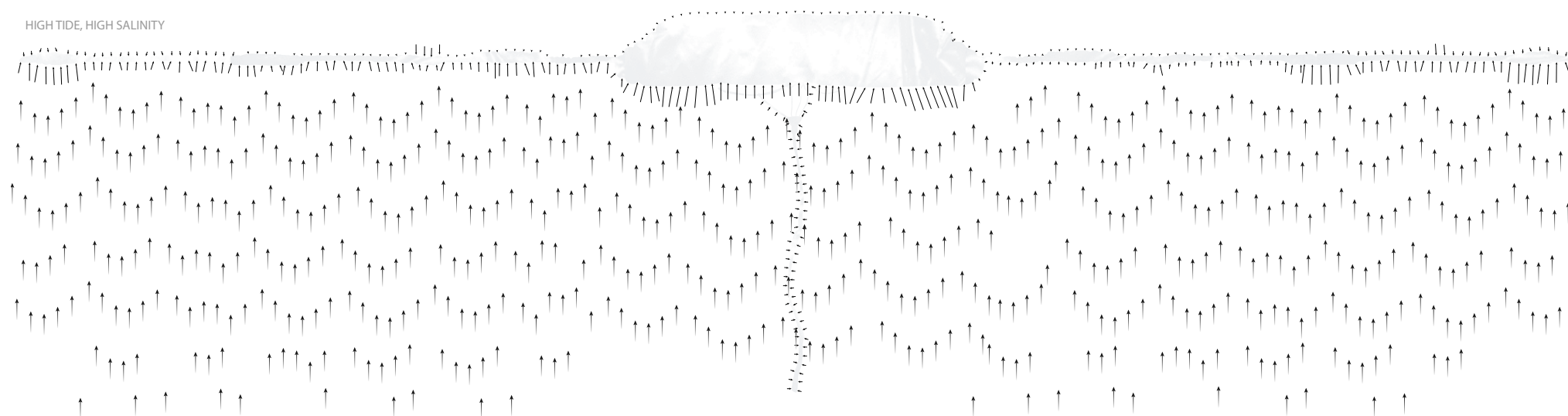
The network creates a landscape for ecological development and recreation off the Manhattan coast, extending the shoreline park into the estuary. The unseen pattern of tides entering the Hudson River from both directions acts as the controlling force.







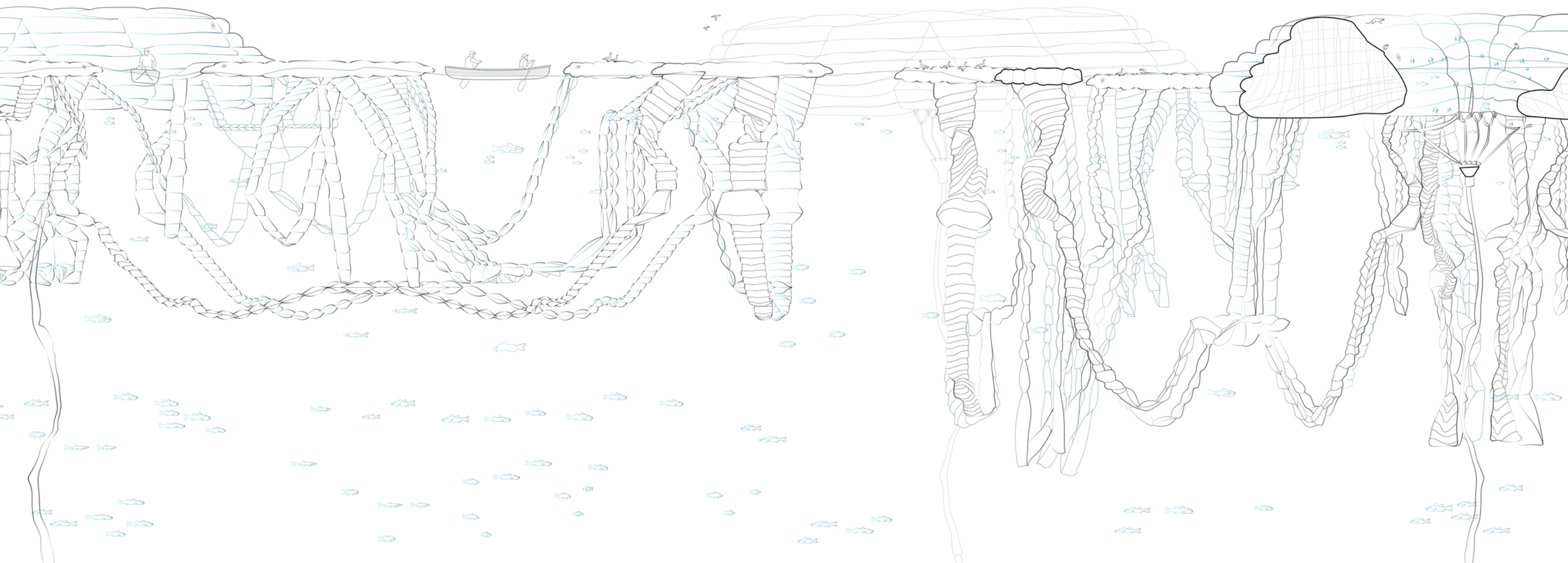
HIGH TIDE, HIGH SALINITY



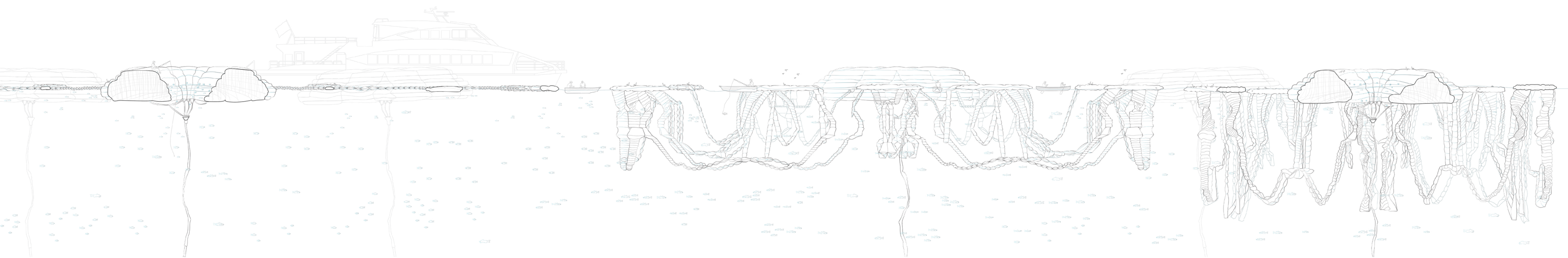
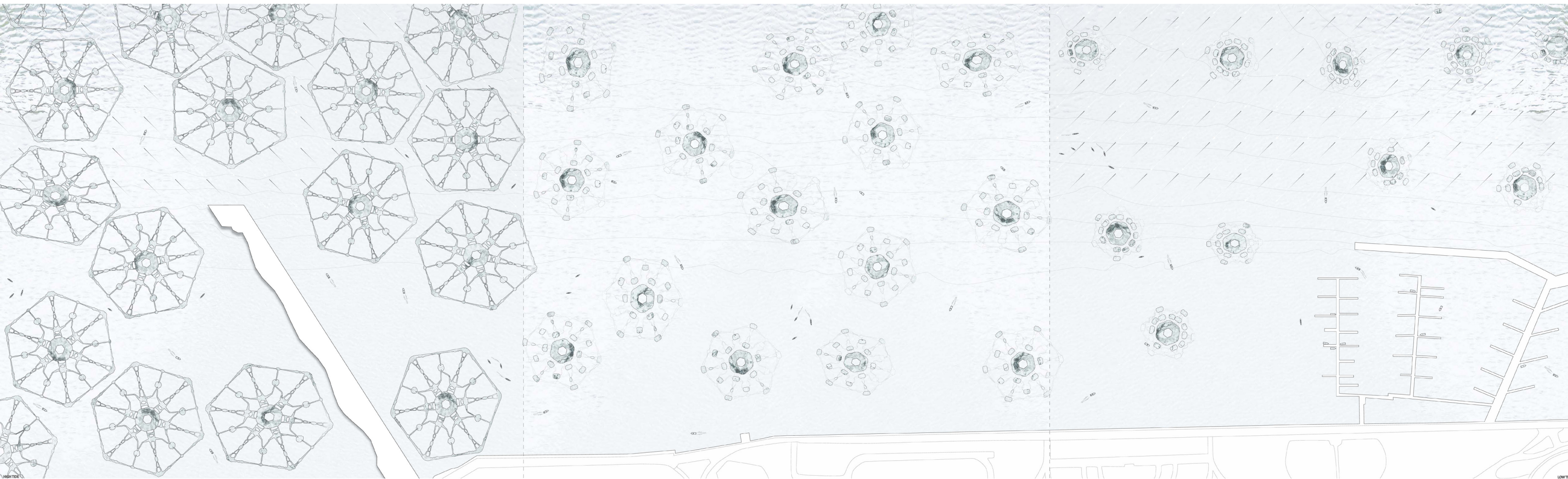
LOW TIDE, LOW SALINITY





















# Nature in Detail

Paper

Seminar, Transscalar Architecture: Construction Details as  
Cosmopolitical Enactments  
Andrés Jaque and Himil Ramani, Instructors

“DETAIL OF LIGHT FIXTURE  
IN SLOPING CEILINGS,”

reads the text under a plan drawing. The detail depicts a repeating light fixture at the John Gillin House in Dallas, Texas, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1956.

The source of light - not drawn, not revealed by the architect, not obvious to the detail - is concealed within a wooden structure that frames, controls, and manipulates its passage. The mystery light will appear at the three corners of the triangular fixture, the triangular detail. The drawing shows the effects of illumination, but not its origin.

The ambiguity of the light source is a question of what is natural. Where is the line between nature and synthetic, artificial, manufactured? Is there a line when both are controlled through design? The importance of differentiating between artificial and natural is secondary to the importance of the designed control of the light.

Wright's commitment to “organic architecture” hinges on the belief that buildings should emerge from and harmonize with their environments. Usonian houses were meant to be democratic, integrated with the landscape. Yet the Gillin House complicates this claim. If the house is “of” its environment, our understanding of that environment must extend beyond the immediate landscape of Dallas towards the broader geographies that sustain it, namely those of oil extraction. The light fixture, in its careful concealment of source, performs this contradiction: it presents light as if it were natural, ambient, and unmediated, while depending entirely on systems that are anything but. The claim of an “organic architecture” is contradicted by the extractive infrastructures that pillage the environment to situate the building within it.

Where the light will pass through is given a sketchy outline in the detail; unpressured lines overlap and meander to outline the three diamonds at the three corners. The material is ambiguous, but stands in contrast to the drawing of the wooden features, which are made of straight, measured lines. The lines are darker and assured, with a painterly thinning out and thickening.

The light fixture controls nature whilst imitating it. If the source is assumed to be an artificial, electric lightbulb, then it is dependent on oil extraction and consumption, burning fossil fuels to brighten the domestic space.

Yet the detail doesn't clarify this source, imitating the form of skylights that hone in sunlight. The ambiguity is further complicated by the array of light fixtures on the ceiling of the living space. Similar light fixtures emerge in repeating patterns and intertwine skylights with artificial light sources. The repetition and arrangement confuses the perception of what is natural light by transforming the ceiling into an atmospheric system rather than a surface with punctures. The ceiling is a field condition of light modulation.

The diffuse and indirect light enters through translucent materials or is bounced off of the dark wood ceiling so that the body is further disoriented by which is the true skylight. The triangular light fixture fractures and displaces the light source - the light is not centered, but appears at the three edges of the fixture so as to center the wooden frame. When the wood ceiling is made up of a field of wooden frames, the lights appear as disassociated specks, decentralizing the space. The domestic space ranges under the field of light rather than organizing under a predominant source.

The light is not an isolated endpoint, the detail is not a singular object. Rather, the question of what is natural allows the light to be considered as a part of a system that unfolds across scales. The missing information of the detail is the lightbulb that screws into an outlet that connects to the electrical circuit of the house. The electrical circuit is connected to the grid, the grid to power plants, the power plants to oil extraction, and the extraction to land transformations. The sequence creates a built environment by necessitating space. The pipelines operate as hidden infrastructural frameworks and the refineries function as distant extensions of the house. The ceiling becomes the field where this expansive territorial system is registered and made perceptible. The artificial light bulb originates in nature, harnessed through the extraction of a landscape. The house is a product of its situation in this greater landscape, fueled by Texan oil that had become abundant by the 1960s. For this reason, the house can be understood as a product of greater spatial and cultural transformations occurring in Texas following the second World War, where domestic life was shaped by energy, climate control, and suburban growth.

The postwar boom in Texas was driven by the oil industries. Dallas became a major center of the national and global energy economy, spurring the development of surrounding suburbs, highway expansions, and new forms of architecture that relied on the cheap and abundant petroleum-

“The ambiguity of the light source is a question of what is natural ... The importance of differentiating between artificial and natural is secondary to the importance of the designed control of the light.”

“The claim of an ‘organic architecture’ is contradicted by the extractive infrastructures that pillage the environment to situate the building within it.”

based energy. Extraction, capital, and technology reorganized the region spatially and Wright's awareness of this transformation caused him to seek clients in this area. During the last decade of his life, Wright sought clients with more established capital to fund his dreams for expanding the Usonian typology. The typology he had conceived of in the 1930s was intended as a functional and affordable housing solution for the middle class. The Gillin House was an exception to this typology, with its greater budget and size allowing for Wright's experimentation. Many others had toyed with the idea of entrusting Wright with a budget beyond what was deemed conventional for a Usonian House, but it was two Texas millionaires that finally granted him this opportunity: John Gillin of Dallas and William Thaxton Jr. of Houston. The two costly homes were the largest Usonian homes, proving that “everything is bigger in Texas.”

Gillin's wealth, which enabled the construction of a non-typical Usonian home, was also inextricably linked to the extraction of nature. A 1940 copy of The Sooner Magazine boasts the title “O.U.'s Part in Building the Oil Industry,” with John A. Gillin - Oklahoma University class of 1933 - listed as beginning the geophysics department of Champlin Oil Company in Enid, with classmate William Hogg. Together, the pair designed, built, and operated the equipment before they joined the Western Geophysical Company. The magazine continues on to announce that since then, Mr. Gillin became the executive vice president of the National Geophysical Company of Dallas. Gillin's company became involved with oil exploration and the pioneering of seismic technology.

Wright's detail of the light fixture is situated in a greater system of environmental controls that the abundance of resources in Texas enabled. Air conditioning as well as electrification altered how interior spaces were inhabited, allowing architecture in Texas to detach from pre-existing climatic constraints that had historically informed built forms. Instead of thick walls, shaded courtyards, and cross-ventilation, the introduction of new and affordable technologies sealed interior environments. Yet, the newly sealed interior remained inseparable from continuous flows of energy. The light fixture at the Gillin House doesn't simply illuminate space, but it is a participant in the production of a fully conditioned interior atmosphere. Suburban living space and the new lifestyle it enabled was dependent on the physical transformation of a more distant landscape, one where infrastructural networks funneled resources into a seemingly closed off and isolated space to ensure an experience of comfort.



he postwar Texan home is therefore not an elimination of nature, but rather the control of nature through technological means of reorganization and redistribution. Oil becomes light, electricity becomes a cool breeze, and the surrounding landscape becomes a view. The Gillin House doesn't stand in harmony with its surroundings the way Wright describes organic architecture to do. Instead, the house is entangled with processes that are far-removed from the site spatially and temporally, so the building's situation isn't dependent on the immediate surroundings. There is no need for a sunny day when nature is captured at an oil refinery and redirected to the light fixture from miles away.

Oil is maybe the most natural. If nature is understood as unmodified and existing prior to human intervention, the oil which lights the Gillin House existed long before humankind. The fossil fuel was an organic product in cycles of life. Meanwhile, the light fixture itself could never be of nature; it depends on human production, direction, and filtration through layers of design. A second definition of nature that further corroborates oil as the most natural is that it must originate in the earth. Prior to its extraction from the (presumably) Texan landscape, the oil that fuels the light within the fixture was sourced geologically. Finally, another definition of natural is that which is perceived as effortless, ambient, or given. The detail is effective in supporting this definition, with the concealed source of the light almost proving it must exist. Rather than be actively generated, the three unexplained apertures insist that there will be light, that it must simply exist. The abundance of extracted oil allowed for this natural assumption to be made.

The missing information from the detail drawing reflects the hierarchy of what is designed versus what is intentionally ambiguous. The contour lines of the wooden frames indicate assured, calculated attention during the design of the passage of light. The source of the light is deliberately ambiguous, with loose lines and minimal labeling. A few sketches are on either side of the main drawing; they might be sketches of the section that also don't convey a source beyond the wooden frame, or they might be practice drawings of the angular geometry of the wooden frames. Either way, there is no attempt at foregrounding the technology or materiality of the light. The detail is misleading by design, both in drawing and in built-form. Rather than making the electrical, territorial, and extractive logistics of illumination apparent, the drawing and the built light fixture redirect attention away from the mechanisms that produce light and toward the controlled effects of illumination.

The light fixture consumes natural resources to produce an environment that confuses our senses of what is natural. Extraction is the foundation of domestic comfort; through the manipulation of light and air, a comfortable environment is produced. The process of producing this environment is rendered invisible by the architect. The detail obscures energy use so that the realities of infrastructure, labor, and technology are left out. What is missing from the detail is designed. The John Gillin House extracts, controls, and obscures nature in the name of fitting into it.

Bainbridge, John. "The Super-American State-IV: You and Non-You," The New Yorker, April 1, 1961.

Floren, Sigfrid. "O.U.'s Part in Building the Oil Industry," The Sooner Magazine, March, 1940.

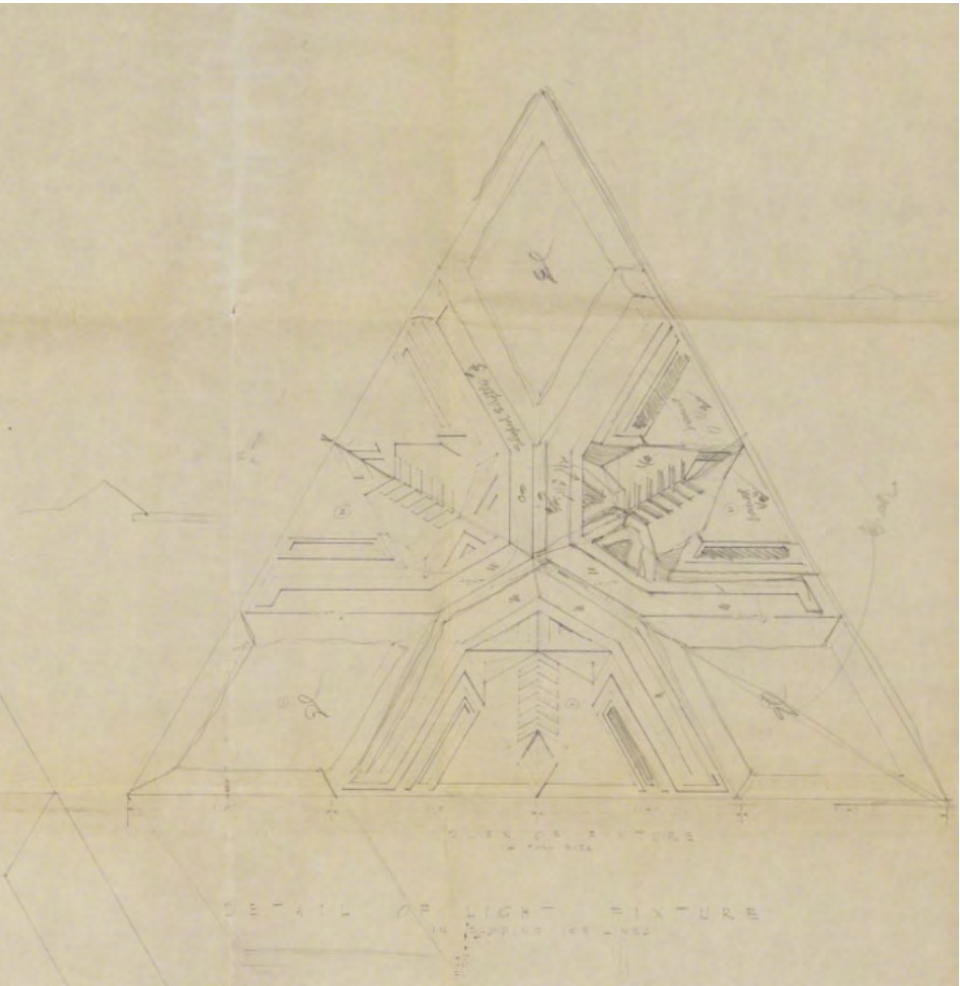
Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives : specifications, ca. 1890-1960.

Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives (The Museum of Modern Art | Avery Architectural; Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York).

“The ceiling becomes the field where this expansive territorial system is registered and made perceptible.”

“The postwar Texan home is therefore not an elimination of nature, but rather the control of nature through technological means of reorganization and redistribution.”

“What is missing from the detail is designed.”





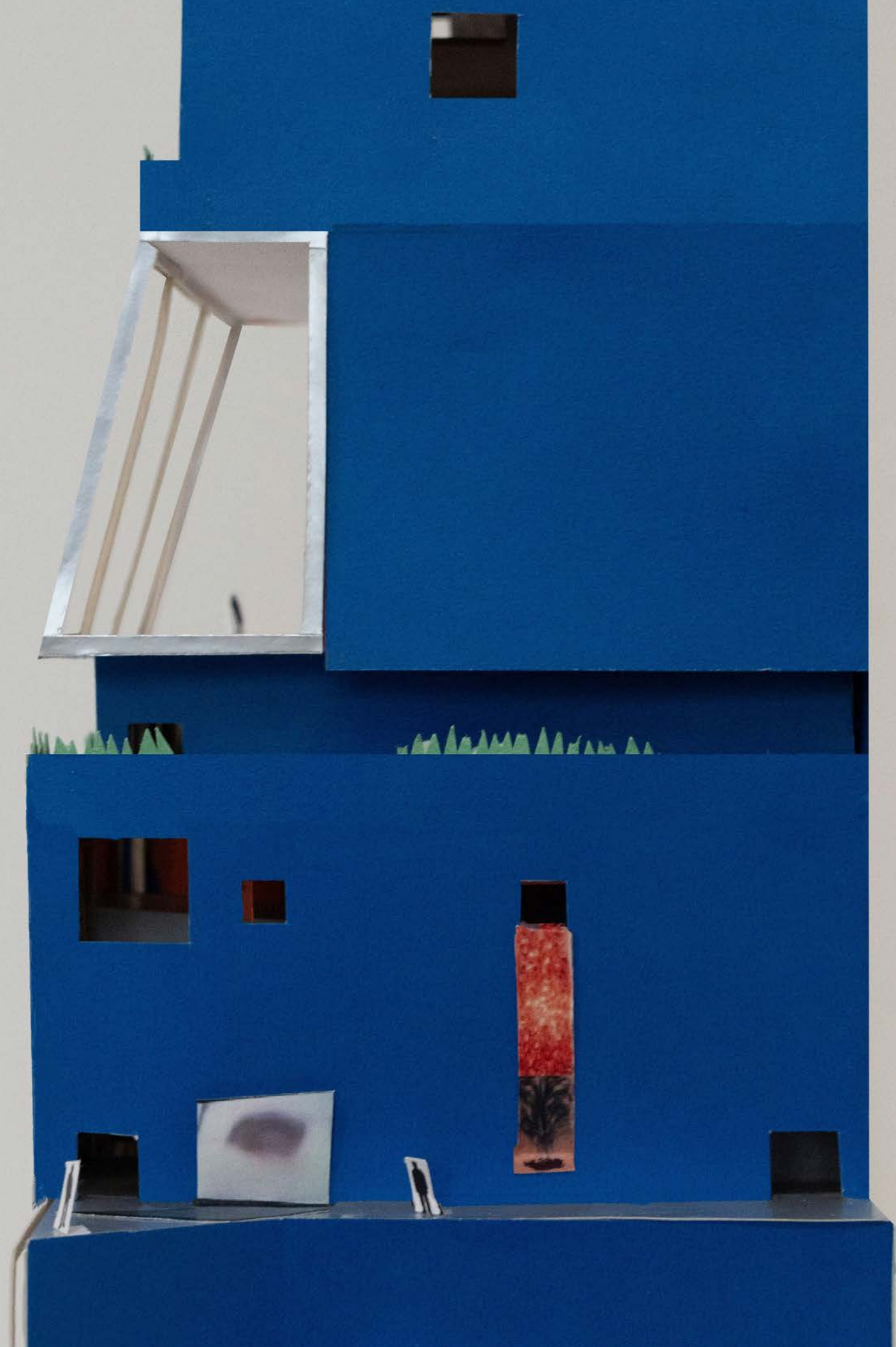
# To Reveal the Future Museum

Museum

Advanced V Studio

Amale Androas, Critic

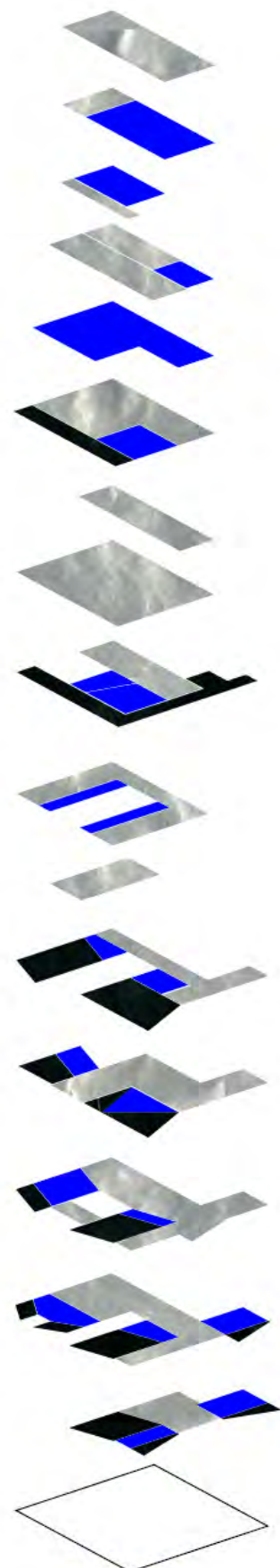
The Contemporary Arab American Studio Museum proposes the reveal as an architectural strategy to surface histories and cultural production often obscured within Manhattan's urban fabric. Organized around past, present, and future programs, the project deploys sectional cuts, framed gaps, and mediated facades to stage dialogues between Little Syria's historic structures and contemporary Arab American artistic practices. The history of Little Syria is navigated and revealed to contemporary art displays, with space for the community to reflect and make in the framing gaps between these past and present programs. Both the interior and exterior of the museum operates as an evolving, participatory framework in which architecture reveals, negotiates, and re-centers Arab American presence in the city.







PAST



FUTURE

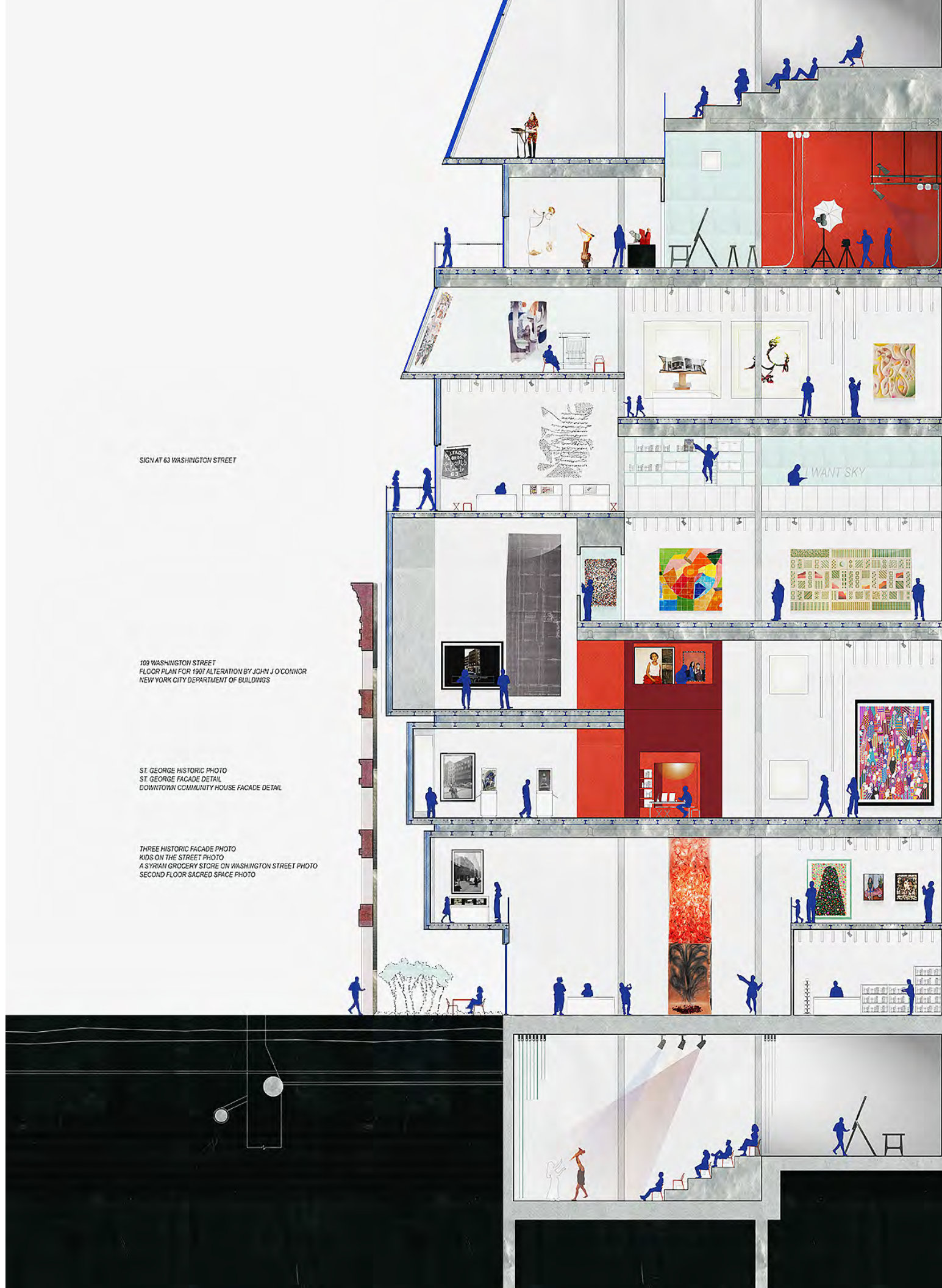
PRESENT











SIGN AT 63 WASHINGTON STREET

109 WASHINGTON STREET  
FLOOR PLAN FOR 1991 ALTERATION BY JOHN J O'CONNOR  
NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS

ST. GEORGE HISTORIC PHOTO  
ST. GEORGE FACADE DETAIL  
DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY HOUSE FACADE DETAIL

THREE HISTORIC FACADE PHOTO  
KIDS ON THE STREET PHOTO  
A SYRIAN GROCERY STORE ON WASHINGTON STREET PHOTO  
SECOND FLOOR SACRED SPACE PHOTO

AMANDIA EKERY

HAWAAL-NAJAR  
HAWAAL-NAJAR  
HAWAAL-NAJAR

ANEESA SHAM ZIZO  
ANEESA SHAM ZIZO

HAWAAL-NAJAR  
KATHERINE TOURHY  
RANIA ABDALLA KADAFOUR

ABDEL KEBIR KHATIBI & MOHAMED SUELMASSI  
ABDEL KEBIR KHATIBI & MOHAMED SUELMASSI  
ABDEL KEBIR KHATIBI & MOHAMED SUELMASSI  
AL-RABITA AL-QALAMIYYA (THE PEN LEAGUE)  
BAZEED

ANEESA SHAM ZIZO  
ETEL ADNAN  
JORDAN NASSAR

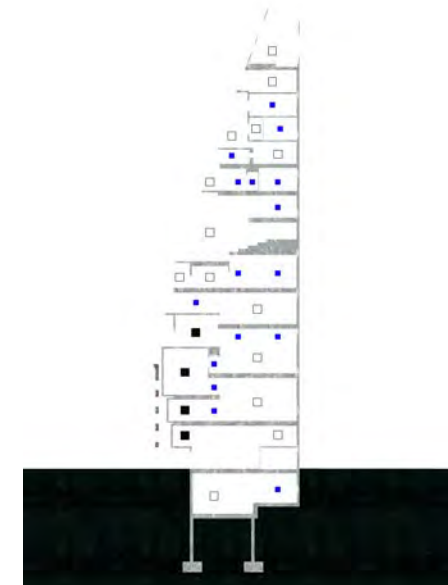
ATHIR SHAYOTA  
ATHIR SHAYOTA

HELEN ZUGHAB

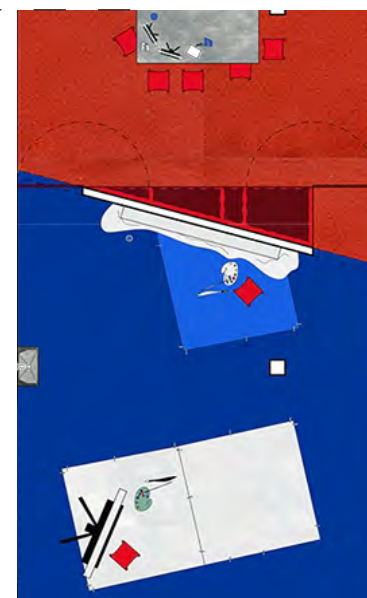
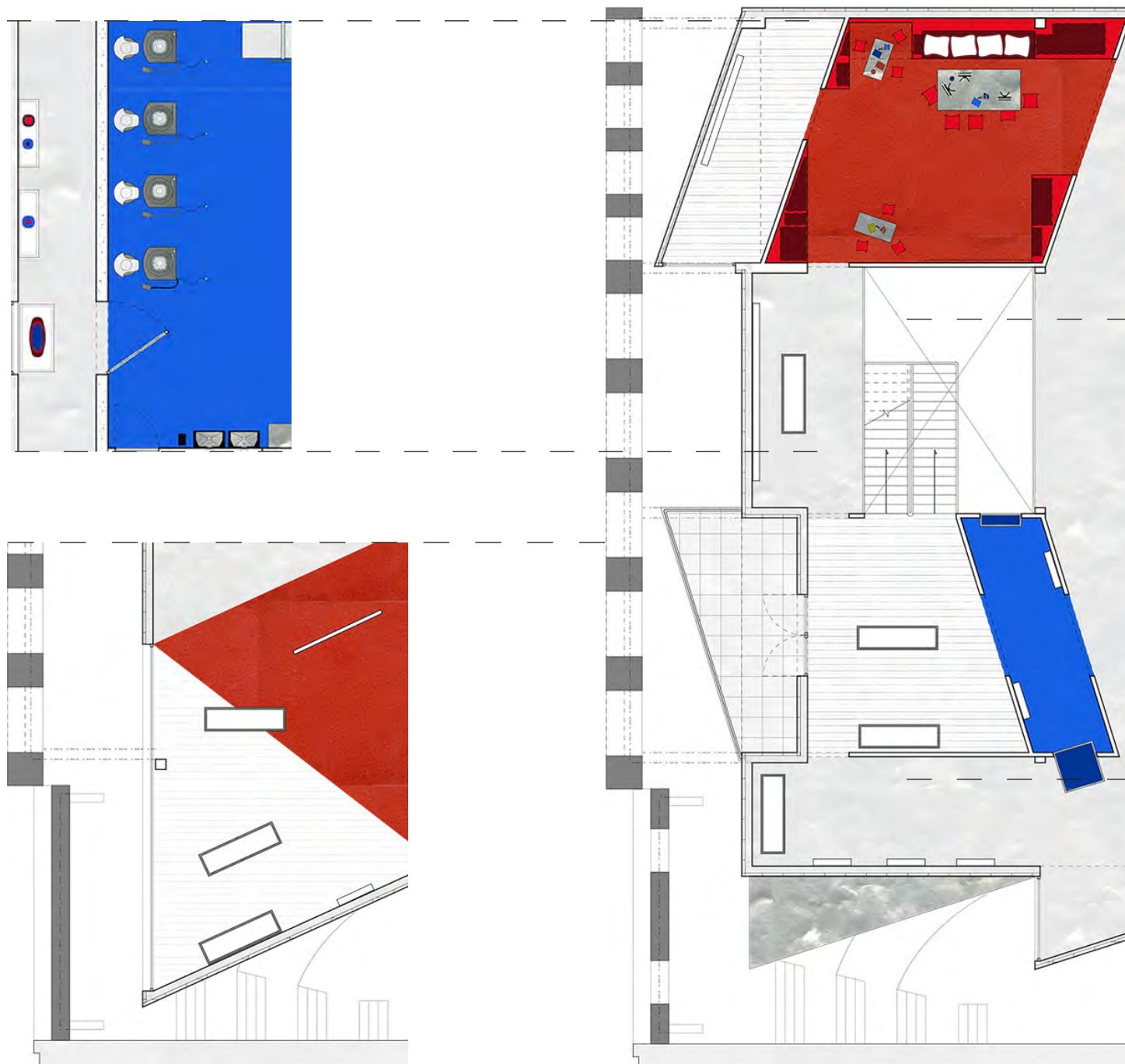
HELEN ZUGHAB  
ATHIR SHAYOTA  
MANAL DEED

KATHERINE TOURHY

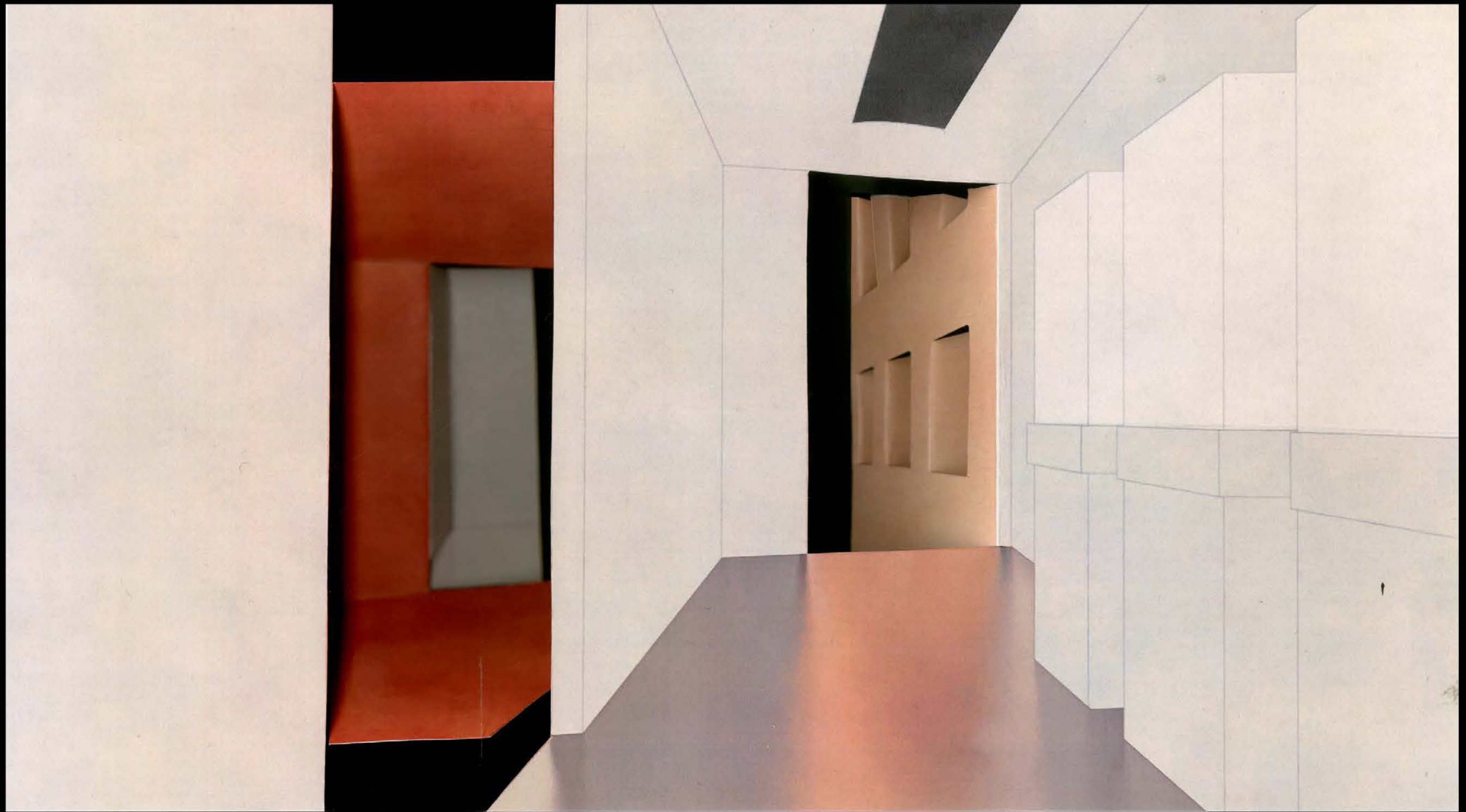
KATHERINE TOURHY



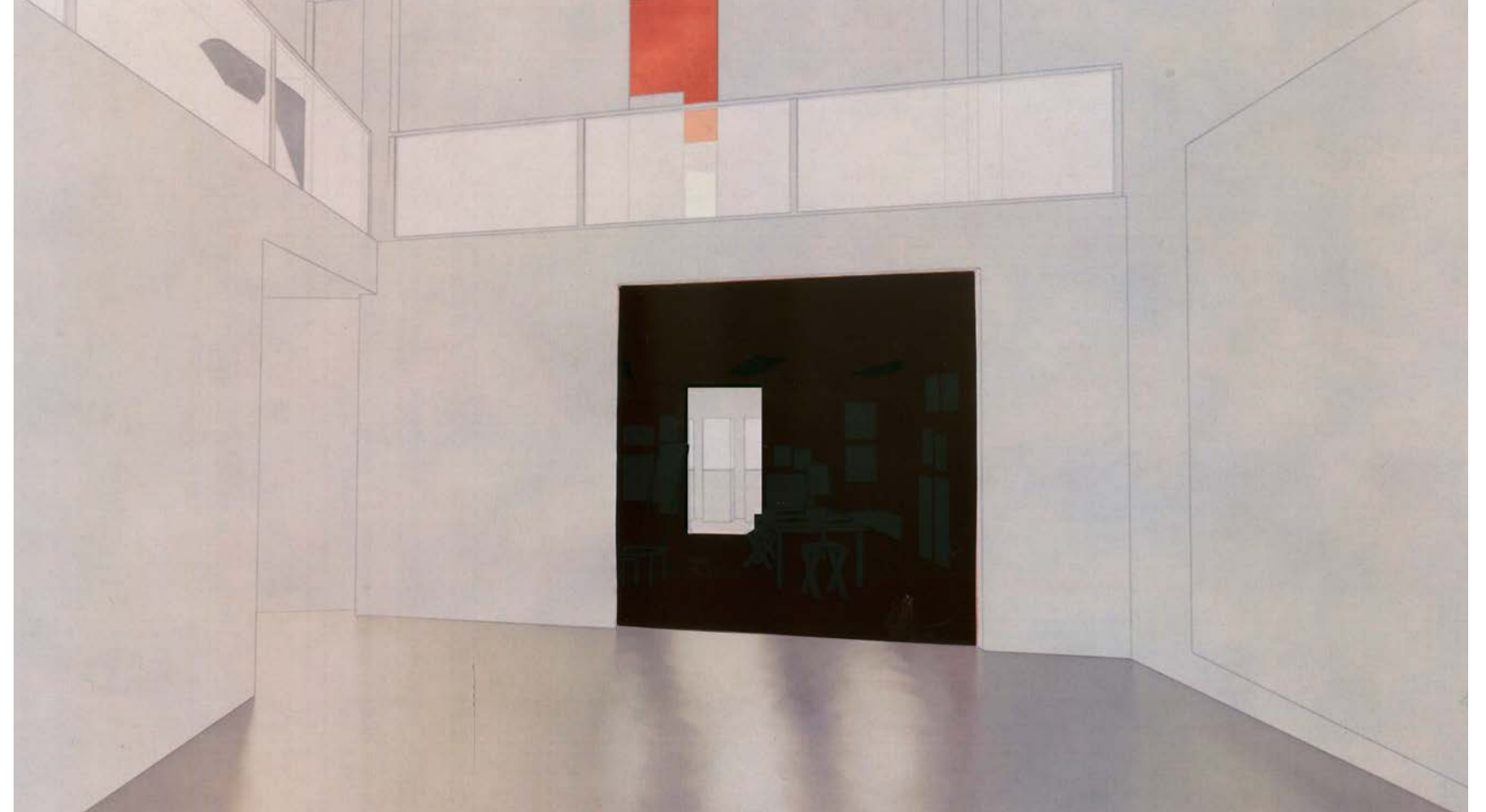
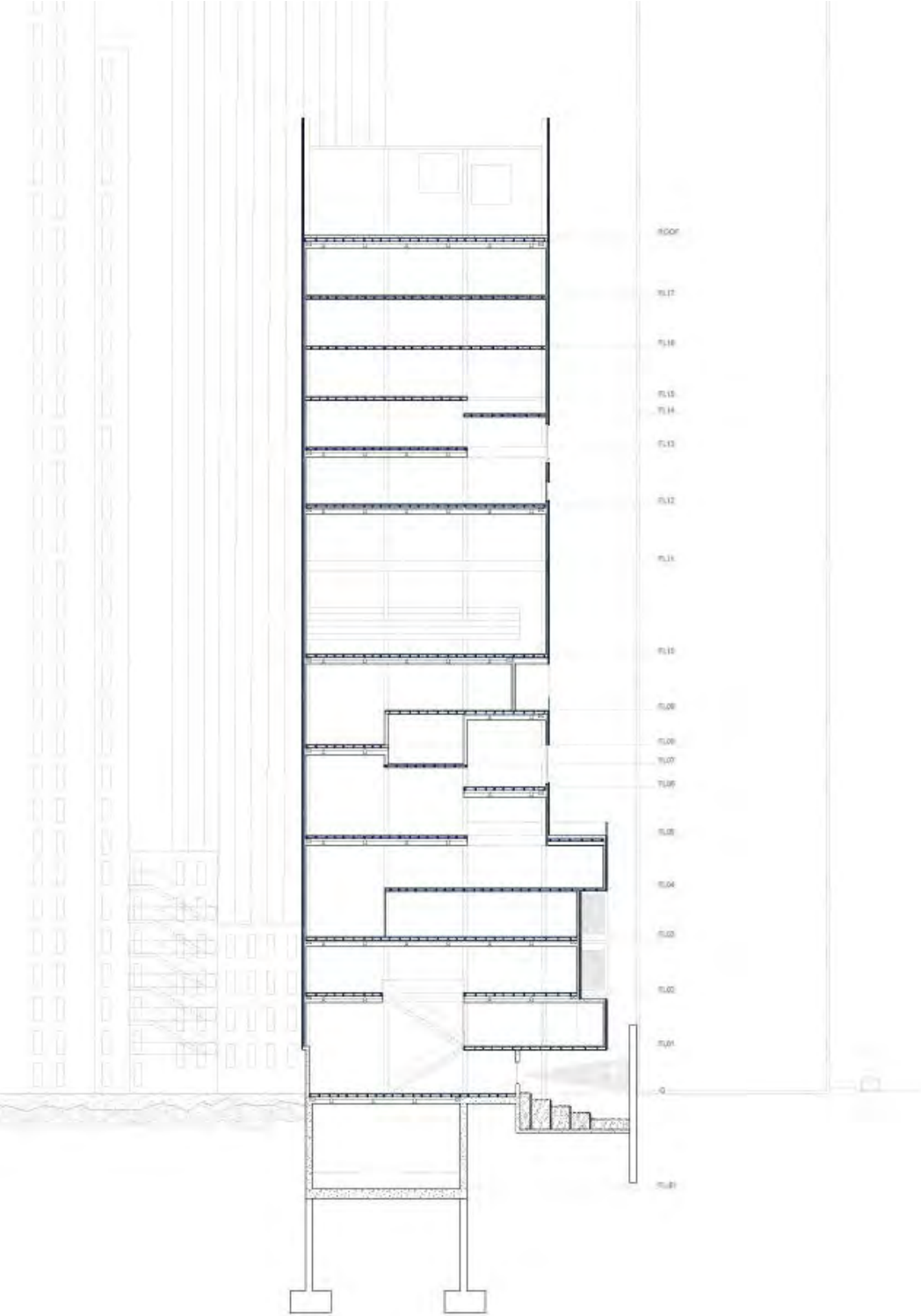




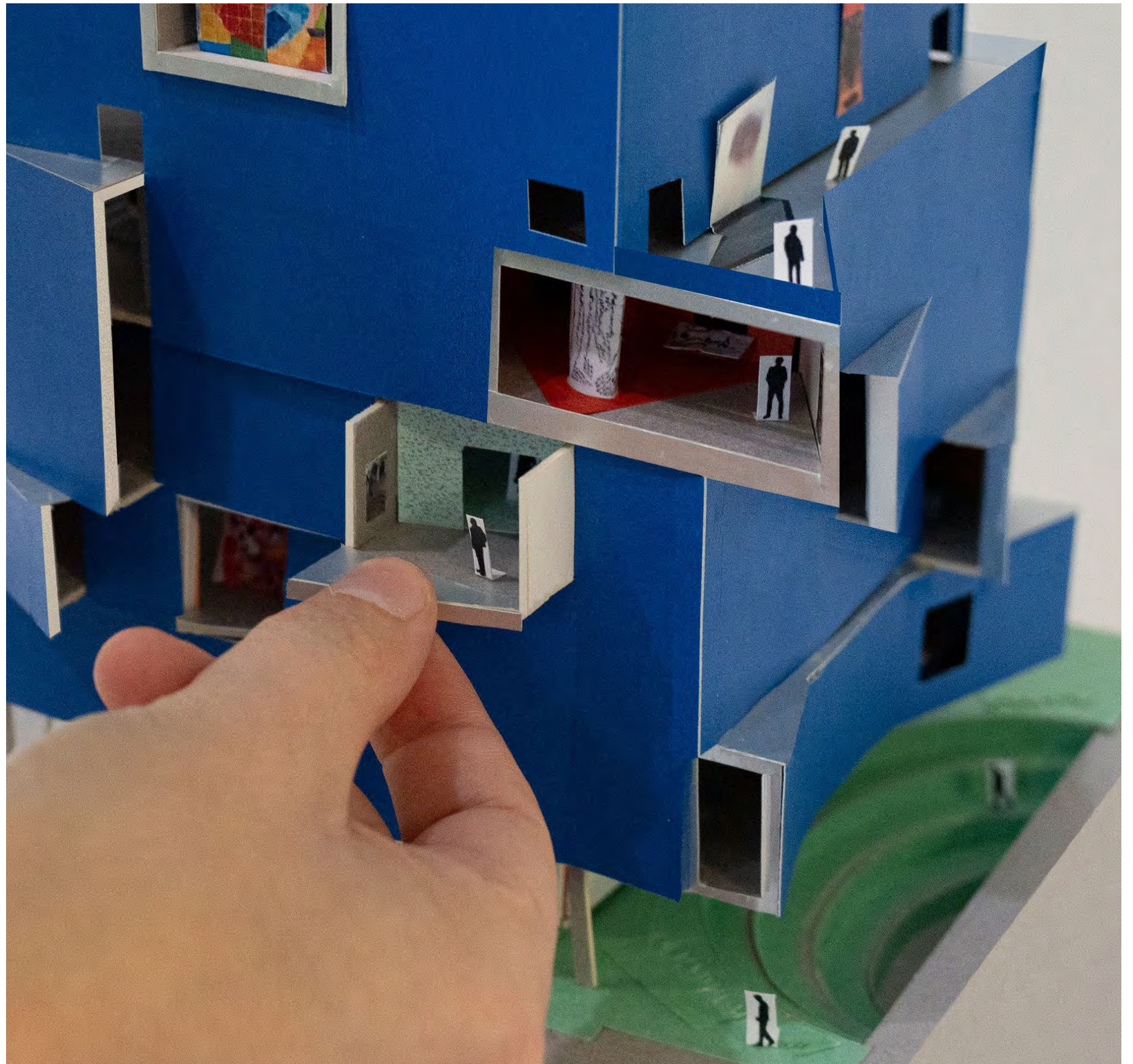














# Morphology, Memory, and the Oriental Imaginary: Architectural Transformations in Manhattan’s Little Syria

History/Theory, Cities of Knowledge: Orientalizing Manhattan

Ziad Jamaledidine and Avinoam Shalem, Instructors

## I. Introduction

Little Syria was an Arabic-speaking immigrant enclave in Lower Manhattan, existing from the 1880s to the 1940s. During the existence of the enclave, an architectural transformation of the existing site occurred. Through tenement conversions, shopfront modifications, and religious motif additions to existing secular buildings, the neighborhood embodied a social negotiation between self-orientalization and assimilation. Vernacular adaptation served multiple purposes: creating a self image for the immigrant community, venerating American architectural precedents, managing urban density, and creating a sense of nostalgia.

Three buildings from this time period exist on Washington Street, serving as the final material embodiments of Little Syria, even though they have continued to undergo physical and functional transformations. The buildings (a former tenement, community house, and St. George’s Syrian Catholic Church) are the primary points of investigation for this paper. The architecture of Little Syria serves as an archive of the Oriental imaginary in New York, offering counterpoints to the exoticised displays of the Orient in exhibitions and museums around the city. The spatial history of Little Syria is indicative of lived adaptations, everyday orientalism, and immigrant survival. Architecture in Little Syria functioned as a negotiation between self-orientalization and assimilation, using vernacular adaptation to balance identity, nostalgia, and American urban conditions.

“Architecture in Little Syria [was] a negotiation between self-orientalization and assimilation, using vernacular adaptation to balance identity, nostalgia, and American urban conditions.” from Introduction

“Architecture functioned as a performative representation tool; the facades and shopfronts of Washington Street were an interface mediating immigrant life and American spectatorship. The Orient was displayed as legible, consumable, and economically productive. Unlike displays at fairs, Little Syria was shaped by immigrant survival, urban pressures and necessities, and proximity to financial opportunities, rather than existing as an imperial spectacle. The self-orientalizing practice of the Little Syrian community was an everyday, lived orientalism. The production of the Oriental imaginary was therefore affected by the lived orientalism of the Syrians emerging through daily urban practices...” from Theoretical Framework: Self-Orientalization and the Performance of Identity

“Morphology is a study of form, transformation, and spatial sequence that allows buildings to be read as material records of social behavior. Architecture is not an isolated object, but a convergence of systems over time. Understanding building form, sequence of modification, and typological change can reveal social behavior. Each change to the existing building stock of Little Syria is a specific moment of adaptation... Buildings can be treated as archives materially; they preserve traces of under-documented practices, such as overcrowding, informal economies, religious gatherings, and social hierarchies.” from Theoretical Framework: Morphology as Method

“The facade was completely replaced by a full-height, terra-cotta facade. The historic design language of the neo-Gothic style was adapted to the existing structure, which was narrow and five floors tall. The style emphasizes verticality. The facade is split to have a lower portion where ornamentation, iconography, and material texture is concentrated to be read easily from street view... The choice of a neo-Gothic style expresses the assimilation of the Syrians, as it was considered a more Western style that reflected the ‘Latinization’ of the Melkite Church, or its adoption of Western Catholic practices. The desire to Americanize was therefore an architectural design choice; the identity of the community is upheld by the sacred space, the Syrian priest, and the ability to practice, while the facade is amended to meet American standards for acceptance.” from Three Surviving Buildings: St. George’s Melkite Catholic Church

“The remaining three buildings on the site of former Little Syria act as archives of a people over time, tracing the changes in living, assimilation, converging of cultures, and representations of identity through material. Through morphology and documentation, the architectural remains survive as a counter-archive to dominant Orientalist spectacles. The spectaclization of the Syrians occurred through fairs and displays before they even settled in Little Syria... A study of Little Syria instead shows the importance of assimilating to the American lifestyle through the built environment, as well as the adaptation of the streets, homes, and businesses to capitalize on Orientalist tropes. The daily negotiation produced an everyday orientalism. The immigrant self-fashioning was rooted in survival unlike the elite-curated exoticism. Architecture was therefore a tool rather than a site of exhibition and spectacle.” from Conclusion



# Unflat Translations

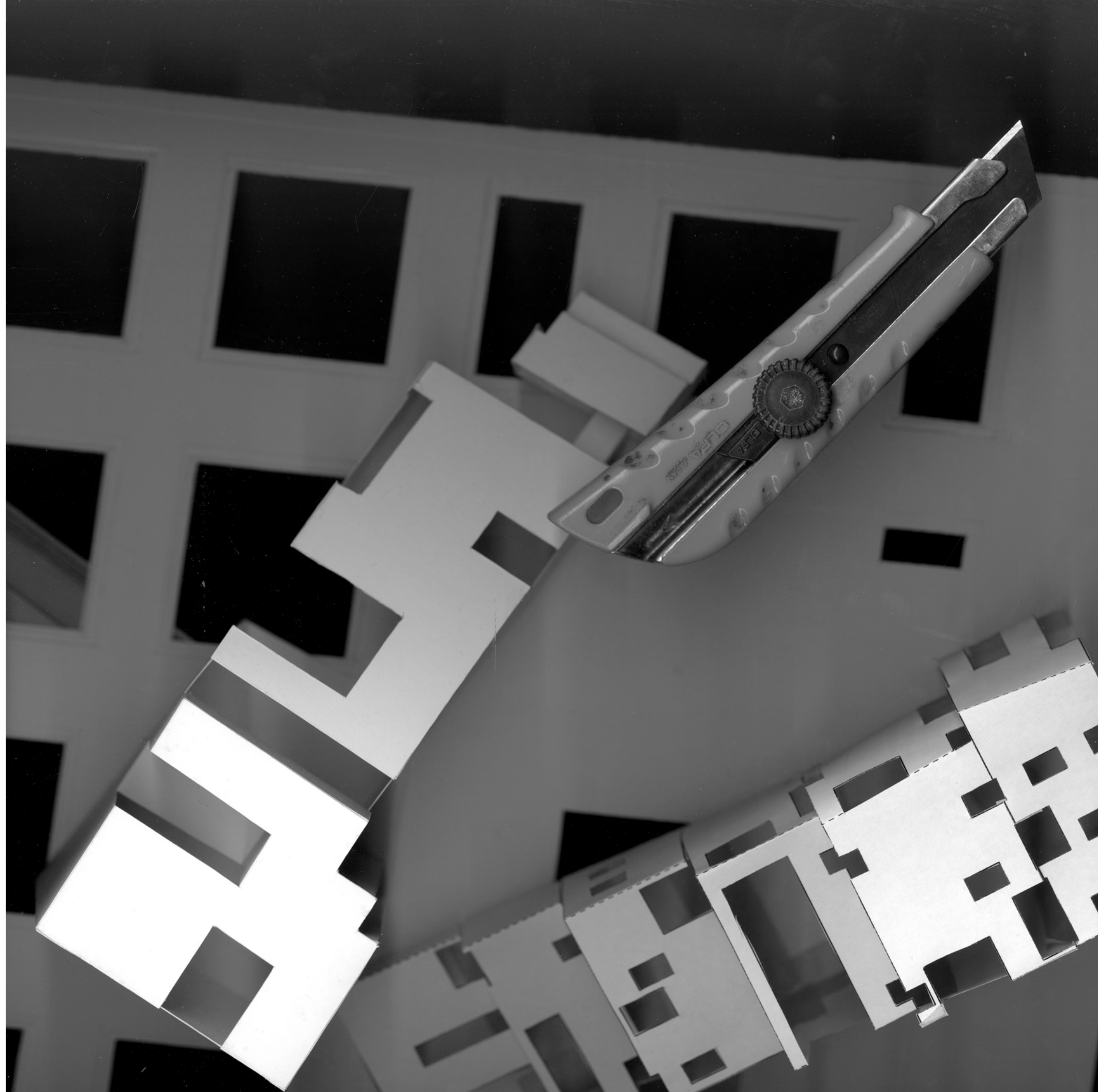
Depth Ruler

Representation, Information Richness

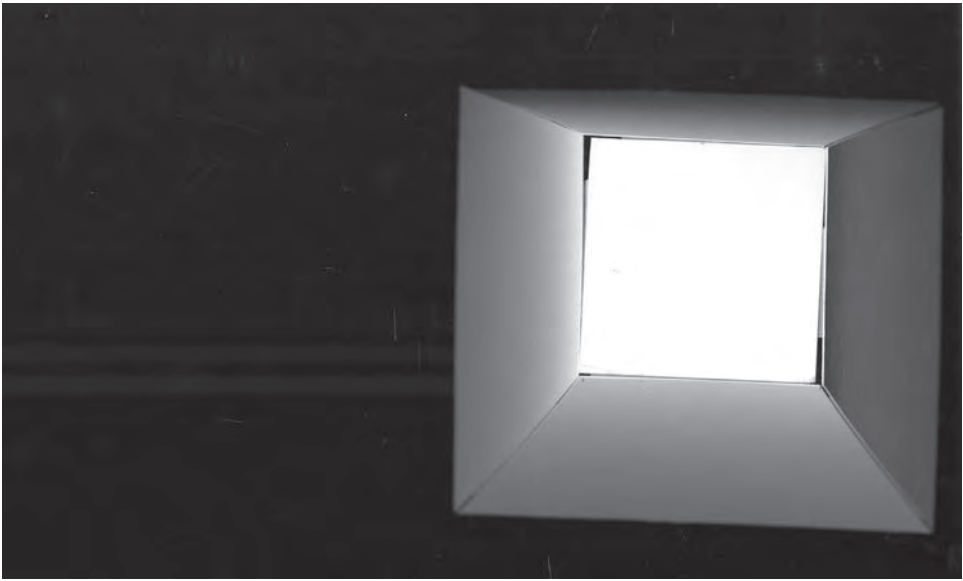
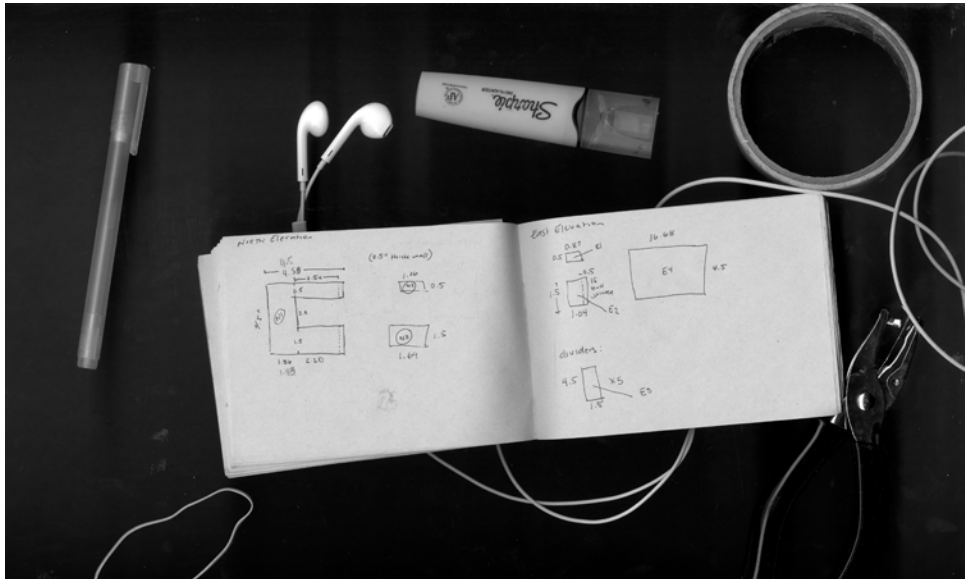
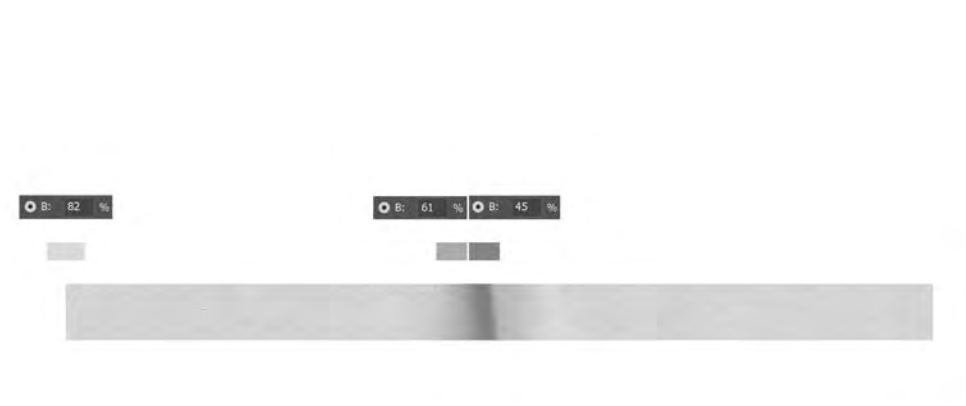
Amelyn Ng, Instructor

The project explores the latent third dimension of the flatbed scanner by introducing unflat surfaces, three-dimensional objects, and vertical motion into a system premised on perfect contact and parallelism. When the flat surface of the scanning bed meets objects that resist full contact, the scanner becomes a site where depth is not only recorded but misread, distorted, and ambiguously translated. The work searches for the limits of legibility in this encounter, examining how three-dimensional form is compressed into a two-dimensional image and how flattening produces space as residue.

Flatness is defined here as having no three-dimensional space, containing no depth, having no form. The condition of flatness is only apparent in the digital image produced by the scanning process; no object in the material world is fully flat, making the scanning bed an interface for 3D-to-2D translation. Colloquially flat objects (books, papers, journals) are described by this project as unflat, to argue that flattening is a process that requires an instrument (in this case the flatbedscanner), that transforms the material into a flat digital image. Tone becomes a primary register of depth, with light acting as the medium through which distance is measured. Drawing on the inverse-square law, the project treats tonal gradients as imperfect measurements of depth, revealing the instability of precision once light is translated into a compressed digital image.









# Just Enough

Block Party & Community Center

Core I Studio

Carlos Medellin, Critic

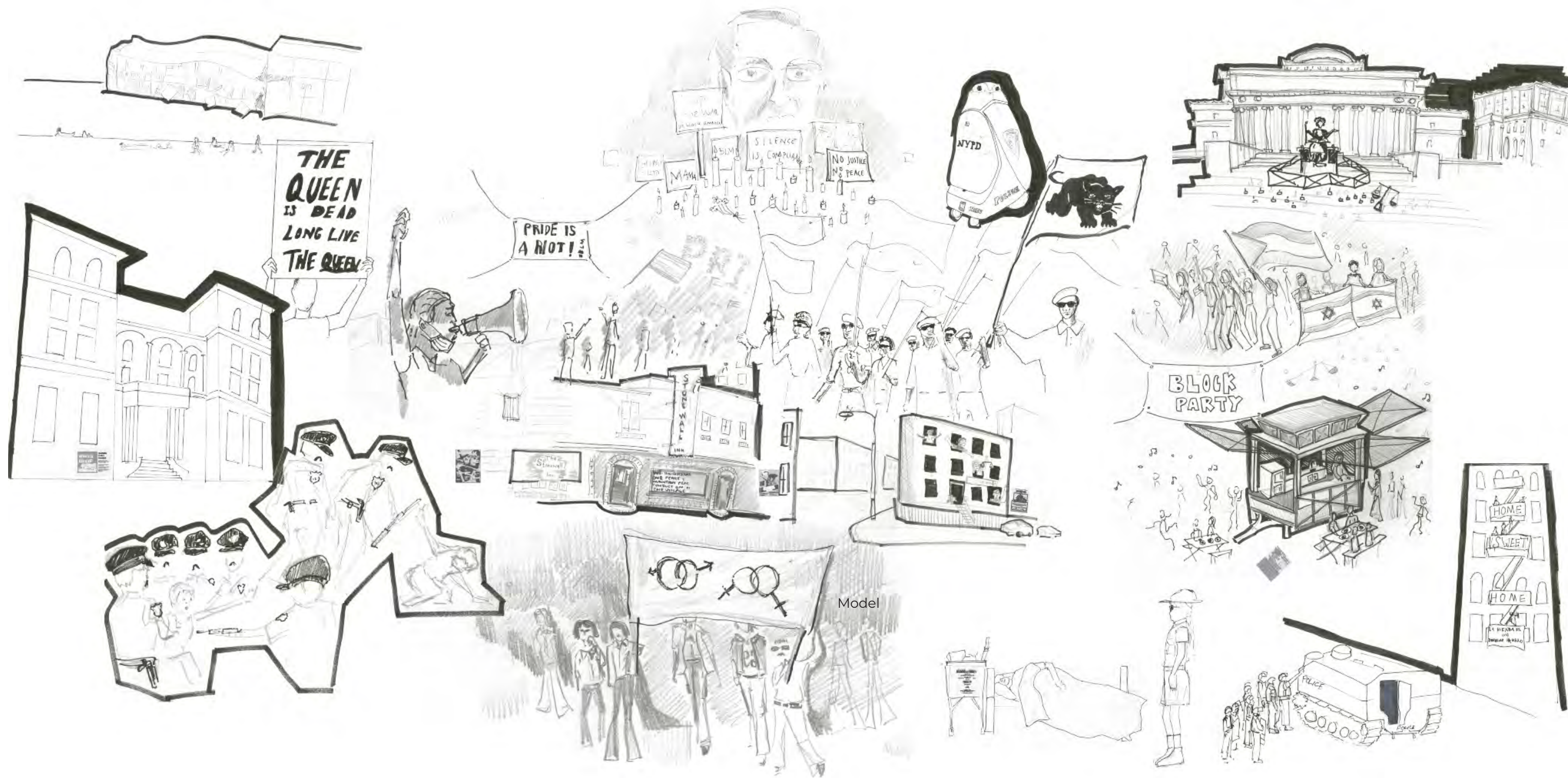
Zach Poncher, Collaborator

Done in collaboration with Zachary Poncher, the project is a speculative future of New York City without police. The project, based in a study of the Stonewall National Monument and the criminal justice system, critiques the policing of oppressed and marginalized communities. The 6th Precinct of the NYPD is transformed into a community center that self-organizes, reorganizes space as well as existing power structures, and transforms throughout the day and different seasons to meet different programming requirements.

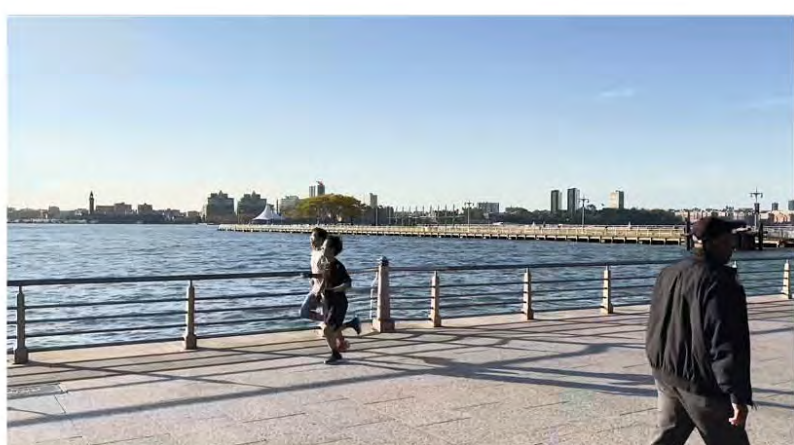
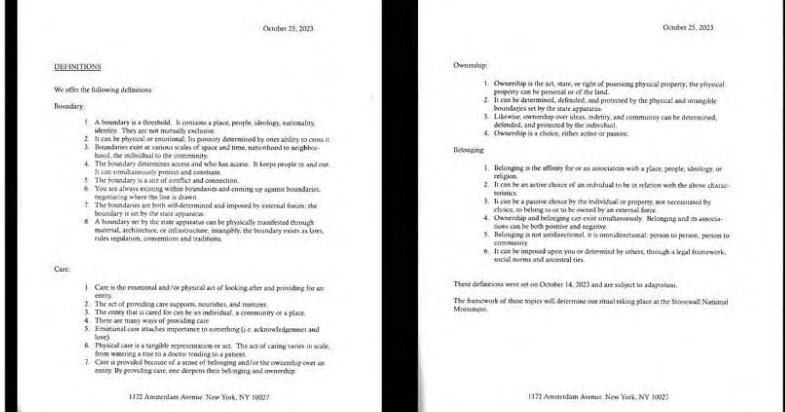
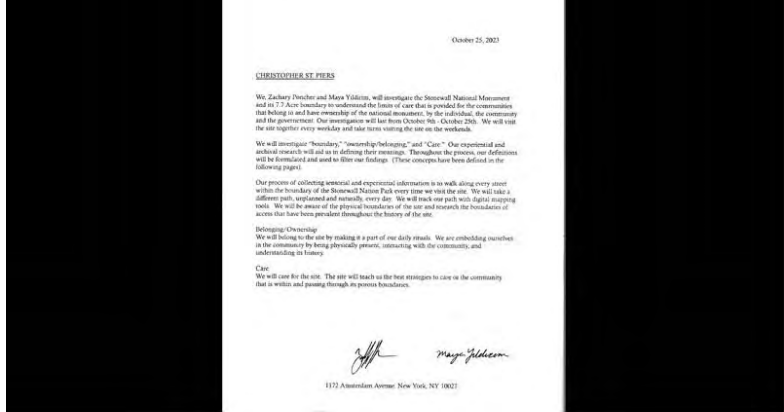
The concepts of transformation and self-organization are crucial to the ethos of the project, as well as its physical manifestation. With the current facade of the police station on the outer doors, the box is opened to reveal a reimagined future. To showcase different uses of the spaces, the model rotates. Markers on the ground indicate different suggested uses of the space. The final project was informed by the midterm project, BLOCK Party, which reclaims the streets as an architectural intervention.



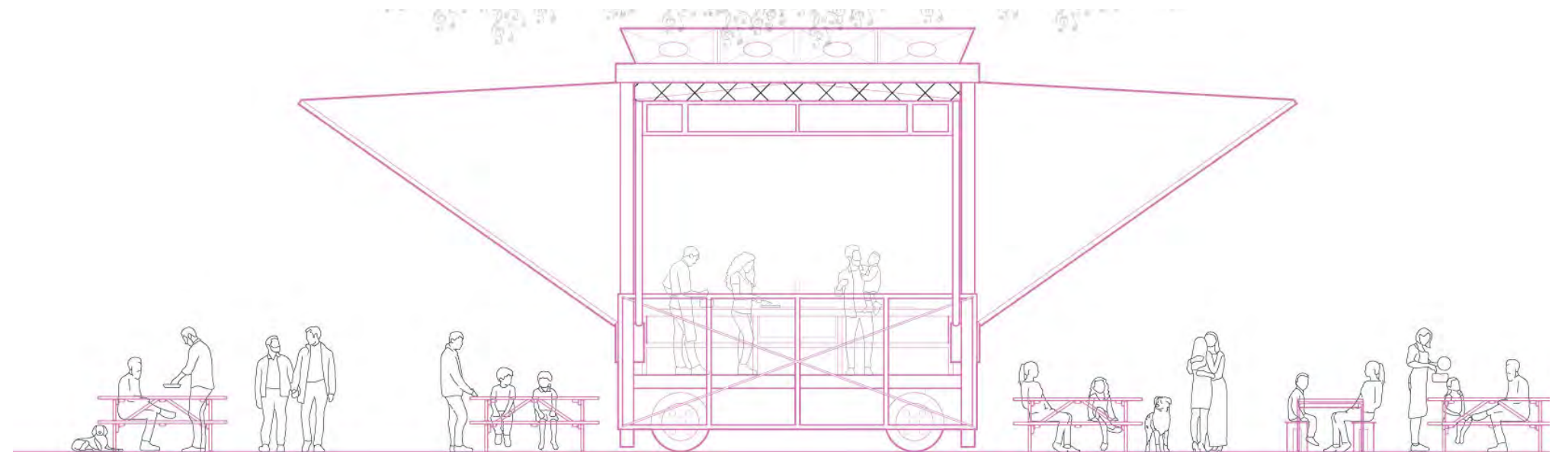
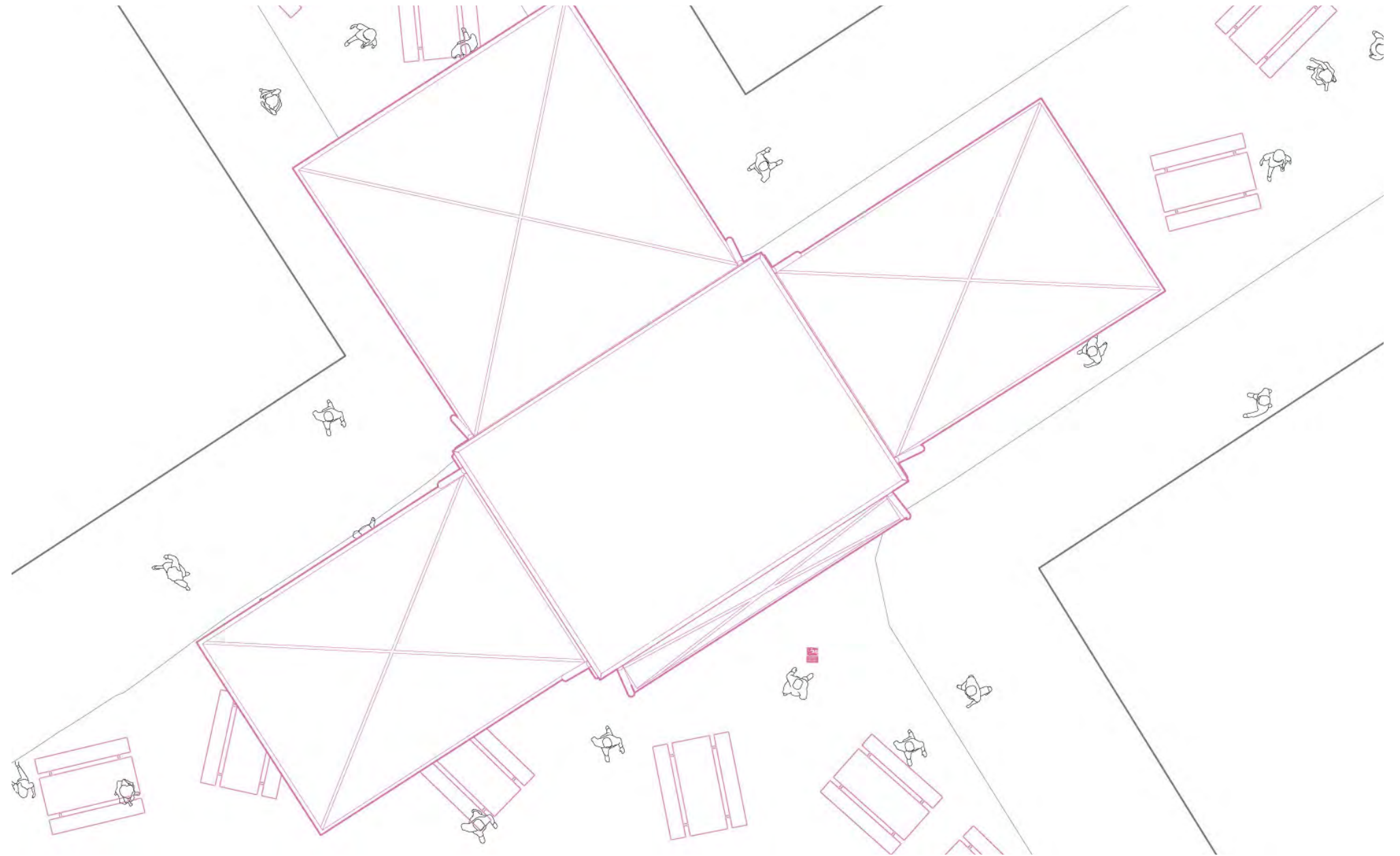




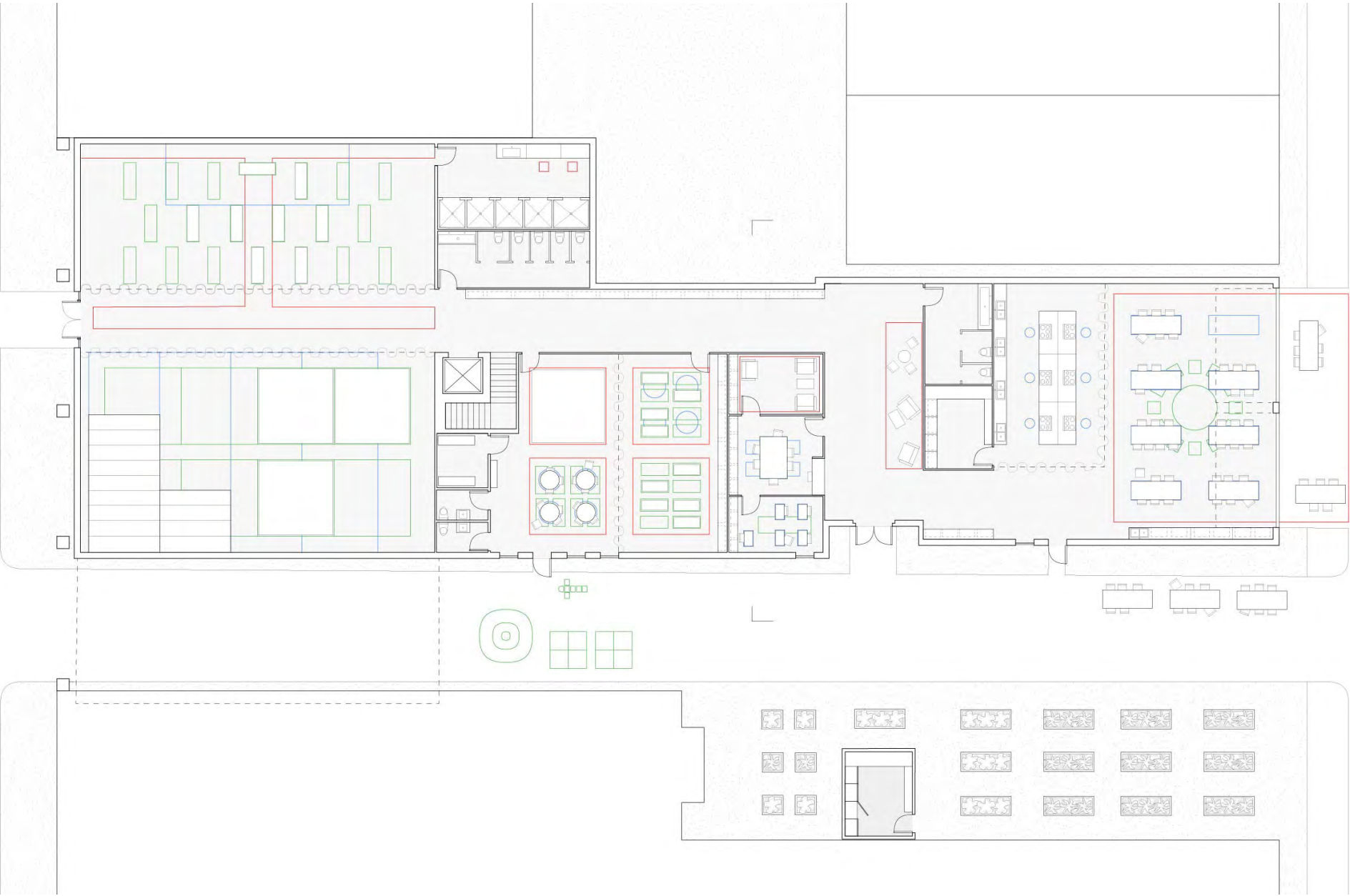
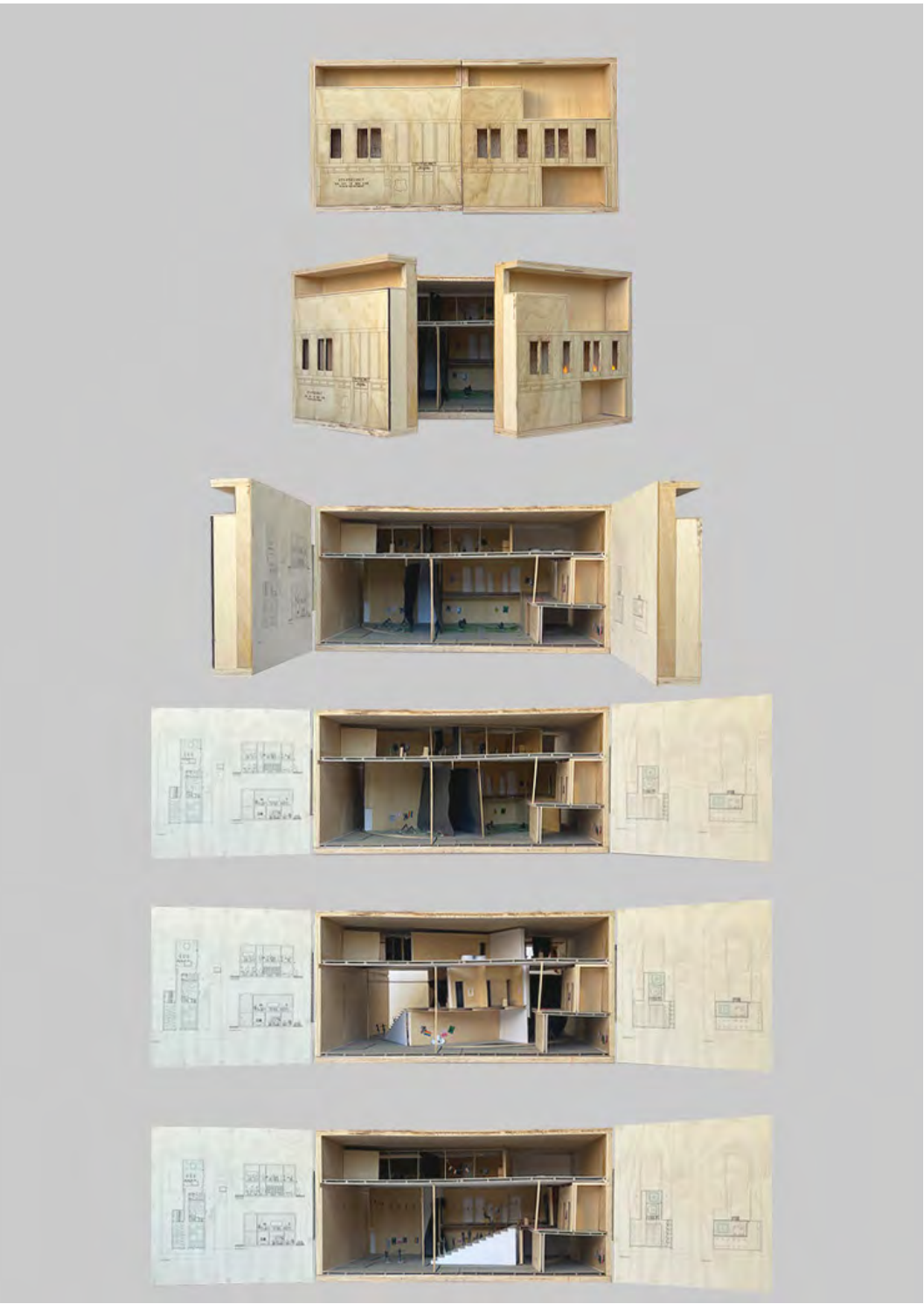






















# Family Ties

Table

Core I Studio

Carlos Medellin, Critic

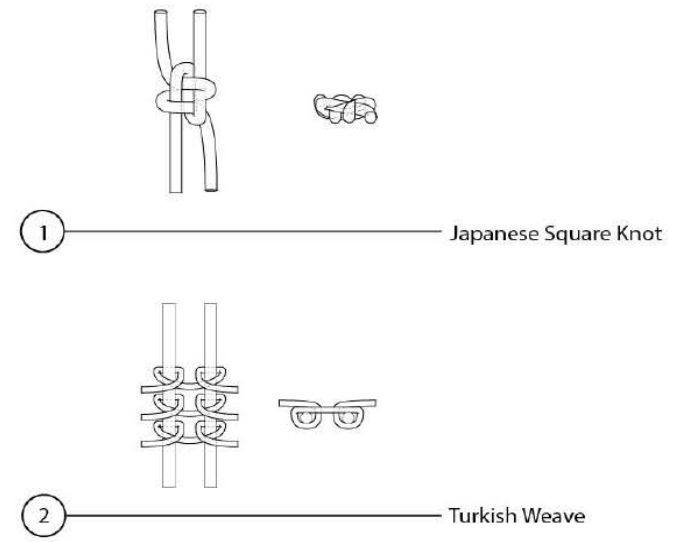
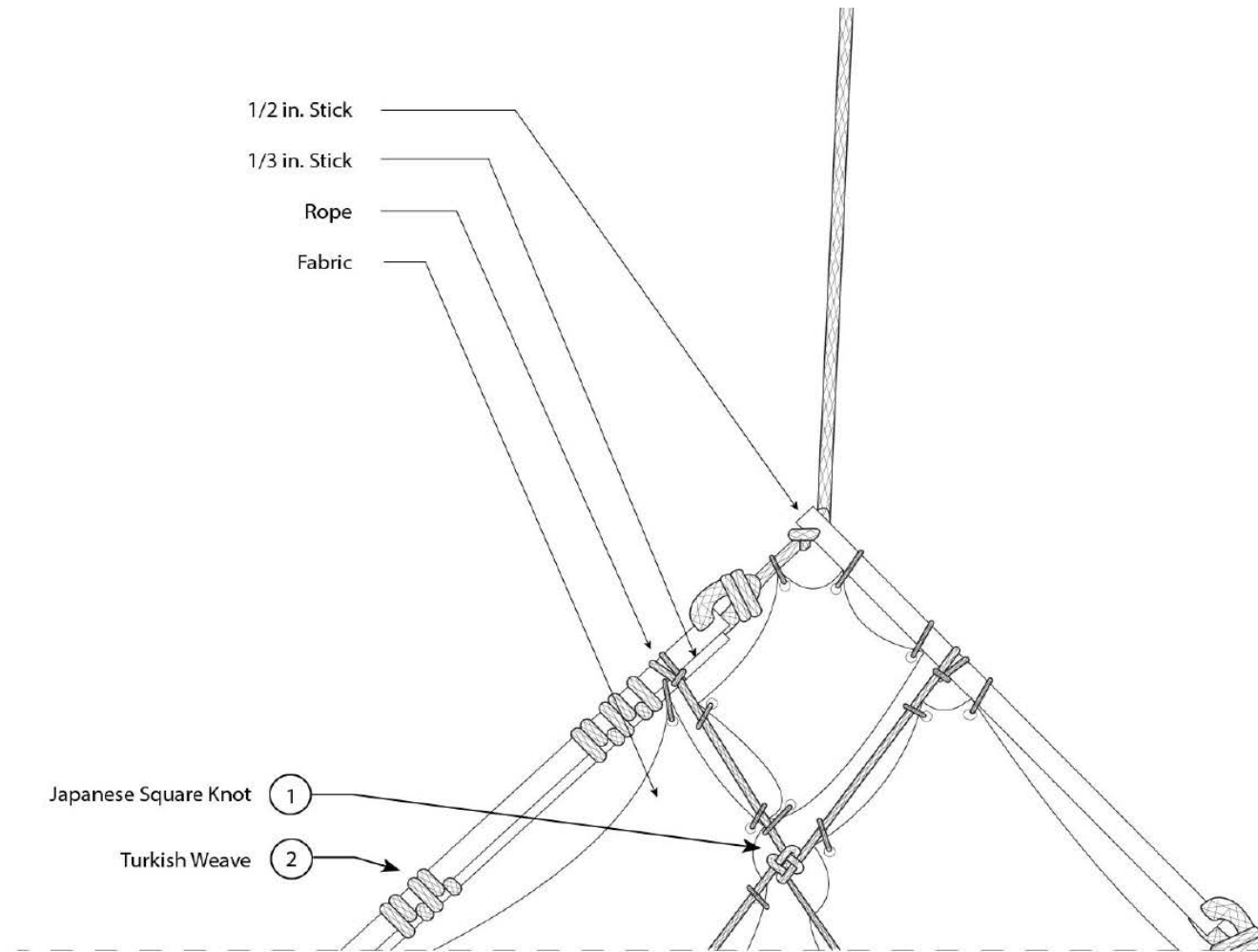
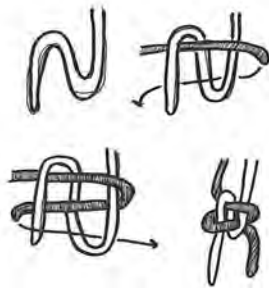
Zach Poncher, Collaborator

Done in collaboration with Zach Poncher, the project is a table that renegotiates space and human interaction. Collaboration and ancestry were the key concepts in developing the table. The detail - knots from our ancestral lands - forms a linked network representing the ancestry we have chosen for ourselves, weighed down by generational guilt and trauma. The process of making the table in collaboration celebrated our partnership.

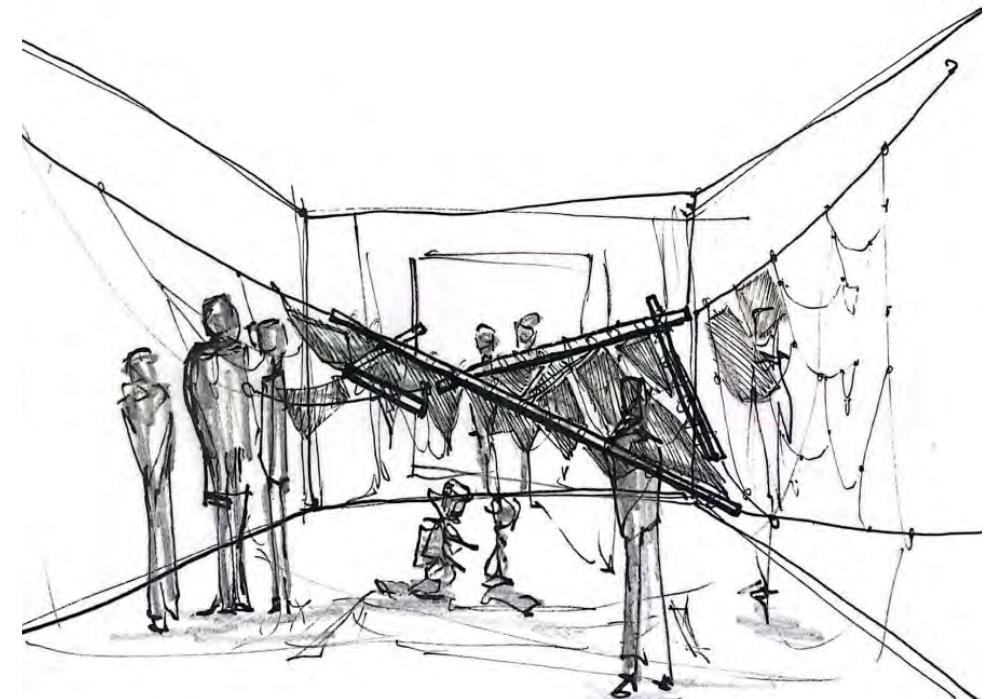
The table is an uneven space of negotiation. The traditional table form forces static interactions limited to a central node and enables social hierarchies. The ancestry of the table is therefore called into question by our project, which disrupts space, circulation, and lines of vision.







Family Ties





# Ritual Folds

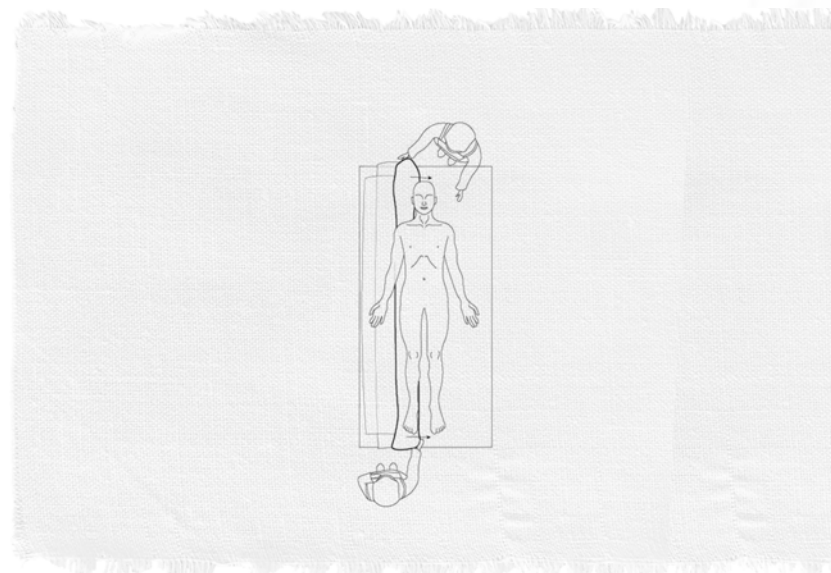
Burial shroud, ritual process

Design Seminar, Interlaced Existences

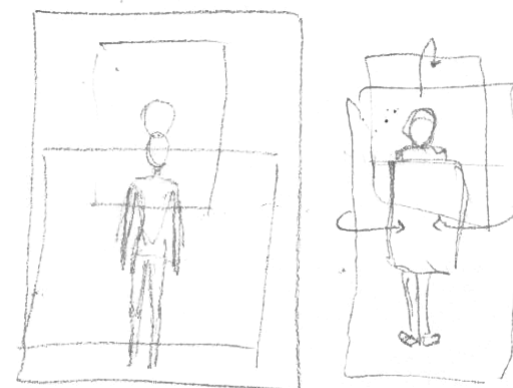
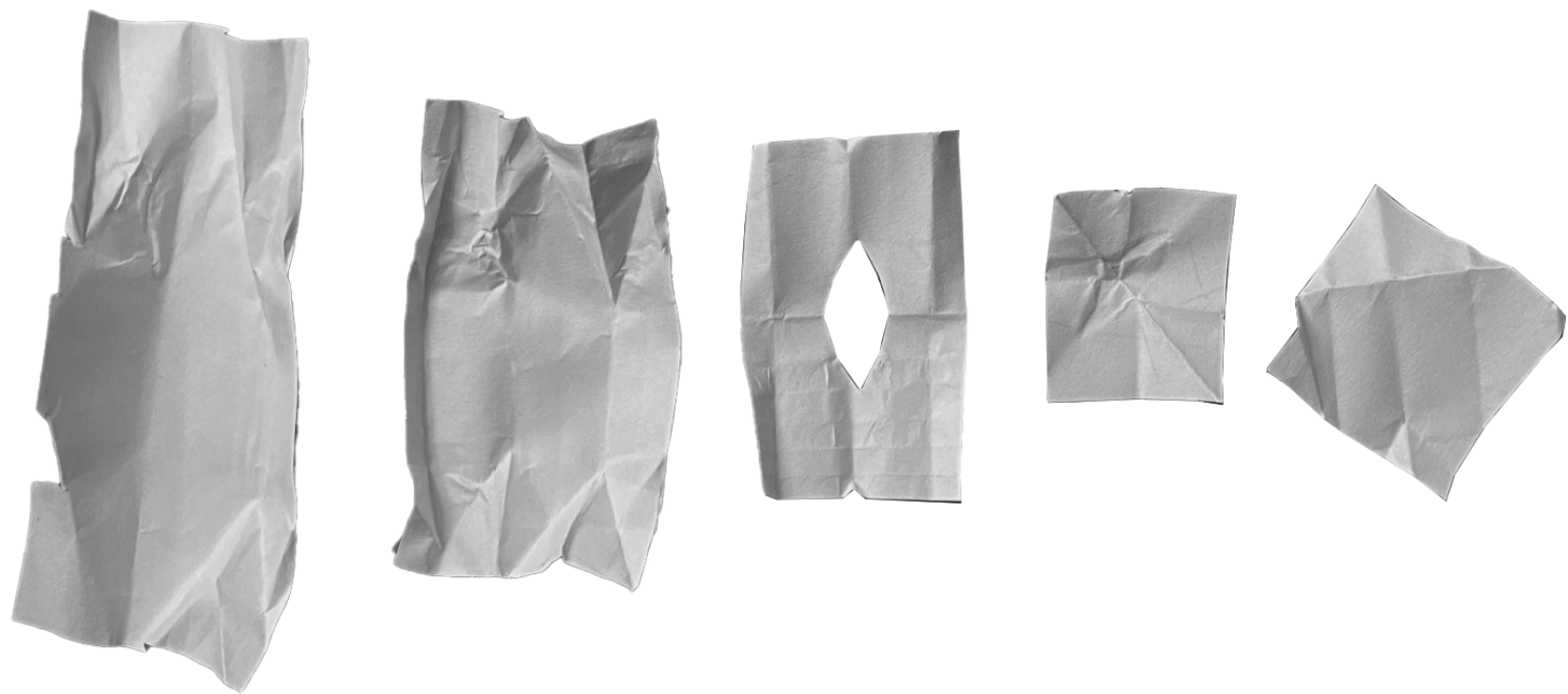
Karla Rothstein, Instructor

The project transforms the ritual process of shrouding corpses in Turkey into a designed object. The roles of the living participants and the corpse are analyzed by practicing the ritual and drawing the folding process. Through the use of material, geometry, and tension and compression, the participatory act is converted into a folded network. The material study is actualized by ironing and sewing cotton strips of varying sizes, representing the many sizes of corpses that require different amounts of material.

Shrouding corpses ritualizes participation. The living participants transform the dead through a liminal state. The involvement of living participants and the transformation of the dead are embodied by the folded material study.







MEN - 3 parts  
WOMEN - 5 parts









