



SIVILLA SIMMONS
ACADEMIC PORTFOLIO
COLLEGE ESSAY 2024

renewed safe haven

activating wellness

takes a village

reclaiming water

capas del taco

nomzamo, strength in softness

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renewed safe haven

Core 1 : First year M.Arch, Fall 2021

Project Type : Urban Intervention

Location : West Harlem, New York, United States

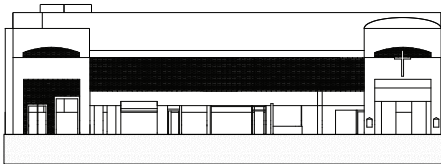
Critics : Alessandro Orosini

CONCEPT

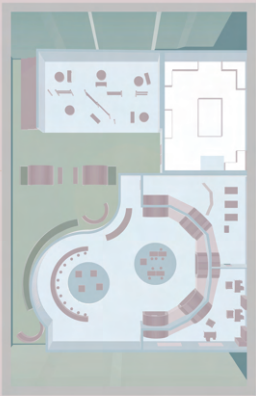
Mental Health Equity through Art therapy

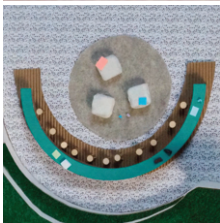
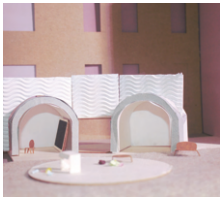
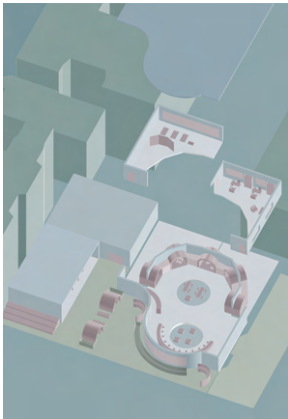
Due to the original proposal of repurposing this land into transitional housing with a newly built church at the street level falling through, my intervention seeks to reclaim the core attributes of the Black church through providing mental health equity and wellbeing spaces for the Black and Brown youth of Hamilton Heights. With a goal of evoking an atmosphere to heal, grow and connect, this project draws from the rich creative and vibrant culture of Hamilton Heights and proposes a program incorporating art therapy, communal gathering spaces, a healing gallery and intentional spaces to connect with nature. By unearthing some of the past of the site, this space will enhance not only the awareness of mental health struggles within the Black and Brown youth community but also enable the individual to unwind, recharge, and express oneself in order to be heard, seen, and understood.





Prior to demolition in 2017, this vacant lot between 147th and 148th on Amsterdam Avenue was the Child's Memorial Temple Church of Christ. Built in 1951, when Dr. Alvin A. Childs bought the lot, this church was a pillar for the Hamilton Heights Black community. Historically Black churches have and continue to be, safe havens, a basis for unity and togetherness, a space for self expression, self respect, racial pride, as well as emotional support. The Black church has historically been a place that creates change within the community, and this church was no different.



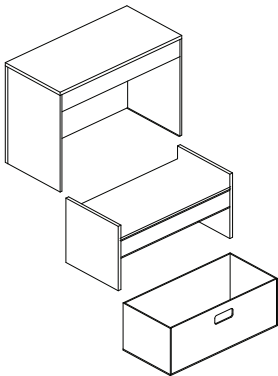
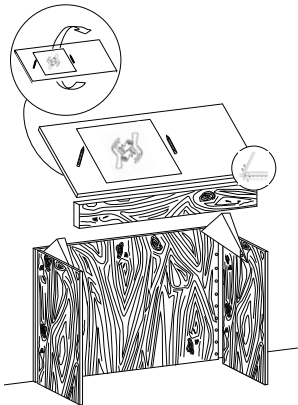




The art therapy spaces for the youth feature individual pods where one has the freedom to be creative and express themselves artistically on their own. These pods are designed with custom child-sized compartmentalized drafting tables with pull out benches and storage.











ACTIVATING WELLNESS

Core II : First year M.Arch, Spring 2022

Project Type : School, Adaptive Re-use

Location : Lower East, New York, United States

Critics : Amina Blackaber

CONCEPT

The development of a k-8 school designed for a conscious activation and flow of energy from the mind to the body in order to foster full and healthy individuals both physically and mentally. Emanating from a kinetic analysis of the 'Pose of Auset', a yoga posture native to Smai Tawi. Smai Tawi is an ancient African/Egyptian yoga sequence that centers around the breath. Throughout this slower sequence of yoga, there is an emphasis on the 'Rule of 4 Breaths' which enables a more calming, restorative and relaxing yoga experience. Looking to reconnect individuals with the outdoors, the school aims to redefine what wellness means for a building, the individual and school curriculum.

YOGA: Something for Everyone



Even growing number of
those enjoying yoga
for tranquility of mind
by Nancy Wilson

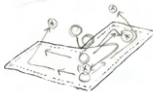
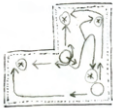


body breath being



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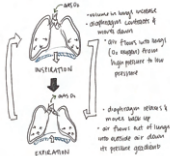




From the analysis of the *Pose of Auset* and the *Rule of 4 Breath*, the building's circulation and layout look to explore fluidity. Asking the questions of what flows in and out of the building, what is being breathed in and being intentional about anchor spaces versus open spaces.

The ground floor proposes an 'air cavity' of gardens and vertical vegetation in the exterior of the school that serves as a breathing barrier between the outdoor conditions and the internal conditions of the school. This vertical expansive forest extends to the top floor of the school and extends into the rooftop garden spaces.

Breath is seen as a life force for wellness, health and restoration that fuels and restores the school, as well as, the individual.

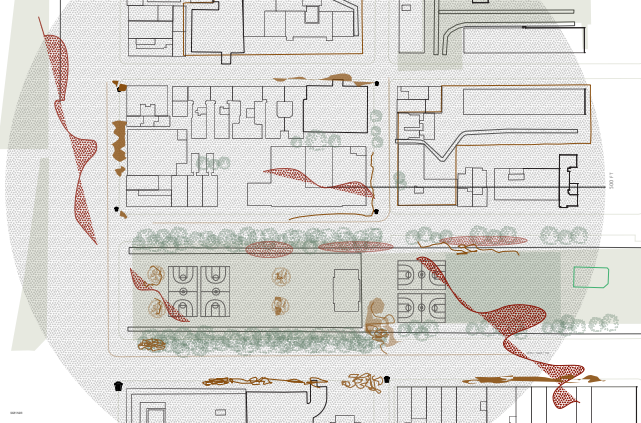


Rule of 4 Breath Breakdown

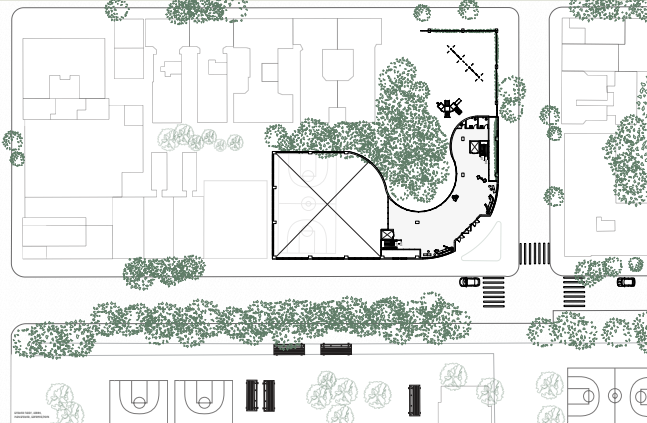
Inhale / Gets energy flowing & activated
 not pause / Engaging that energy flow

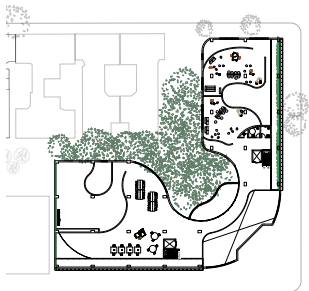
Exhale / Letting the engagement flow, sink in, release out
 and pause / Resting & Resetting for the next inhale



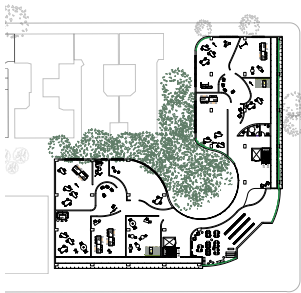


500 FT





1ST FLOOR / 1ST FLOOR PLAN



2ND FLOOR / 2ND FLOOR PLAN



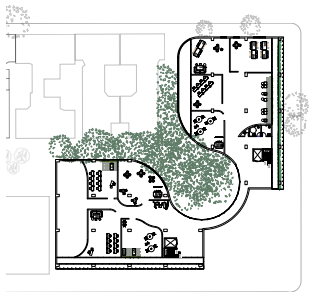


FIGURE 1 5TH FLOOR WYANDALE HIGH SCHOOL

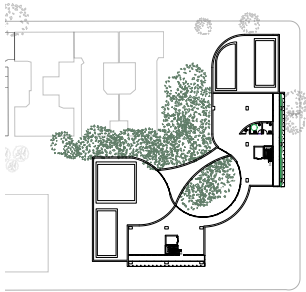


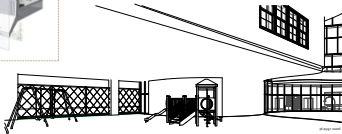
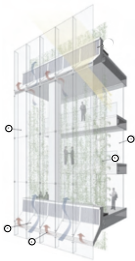
FIGURE 2 6TH FLOOR WYANDALE HIGH SCHOOL





Double facade detail

- 1 / Three-story untempered space providing a thermal buffer
- 2 / Pin-supported facade with vertical glass fins
- 3 / Horizontal louvers with operable damper to control outside air intake / exhaust
- 4 / Openings for air intake / release
- 5 / Ivy growing on tension cables to provide natural solar control by blocking harsh summer gains and shedding foliage in winter to allow for solar gains in the winter



IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Core III: Second year M.Arch, Fall 2022

Project Type: Housing, Apartments

Location: Bronx, New York, United States

Collaboration: Kayla Parsons

Critics: Mimi Hoang

CONCEPT

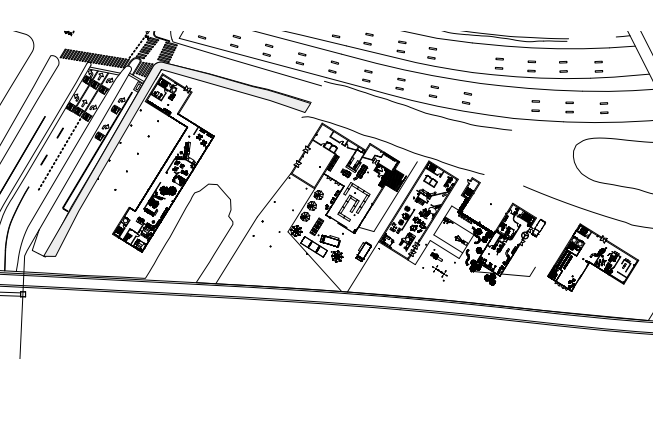
Home is a blend of people, stories, ages, lifestyles, interests - a place where generations of different cultures and identities weave into spatial qualities, choices and form. Home is located in space but is not tied to a fixed space, it doesn't need brick and mortar, nor to be a large space but can be a how, a who, a when.

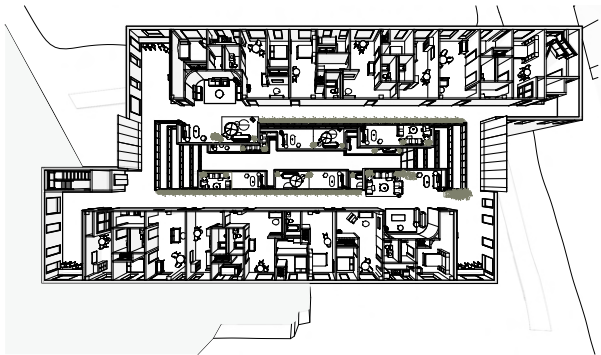
We believe home is a series of rituals - meeting recurring conditions of organization at various scales. It's a multi-peaked, rationally integrated system that attends to the needs of its members. The home is beyond the concept of your immediate relatives, but is composed of extended family members, neighbors, your school, sports and religious communities and more. The South Bx and region of Mott Haven are infused culturally with a sense of pride and identity that is reflected at various scales across the site.

Essentially we believe home is an iteration of a village and reflecting on the saying "it takes a village" we're looking at different scales of collectivity in order to strategically foster community and have been thinking through placing programs intentionally and rethinking generic elements of housing. At our site we are thinking of home conceptually as a collection of various scales of extensions of home, looking at these extensions of home at the individual scale, family scale, the neighborhood scale, street scale. Different environments produce a feeling of acceptance, identity and belonging. The project seeks to reestablish the ratio between private enclosed space and shared space through dividing the site into four villages that interlock with one another through blended shared spaces, outdoor circulation, outdoor program and exterior terraces and bridges.

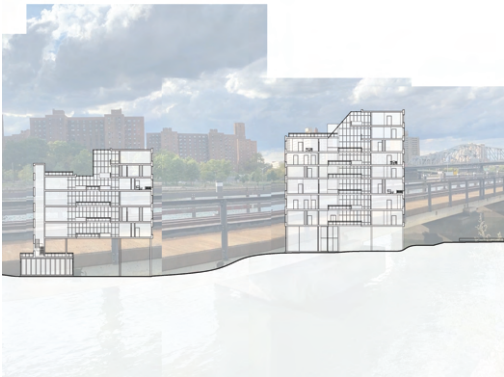














reclaiming water

ADV IV : Second year MArch, Spring 2023

Project Type : Memorial

Location : Poughkeepsie, New York, United States

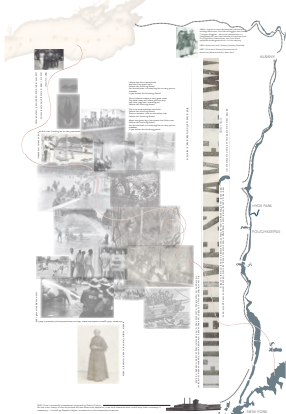
Critics : Nina Cooke John

CONCEPT

A quote that resonated me was "Follow the footsteps of those who broke the chains of enslavement in New Guinea but found expression of their new found freedom elsewhere" Historically this site was a space of transition. It was were early Black settlers transitioned. Water similarly has gone through many transitions in relation to the black community across time and I believe dealing with trauma is transitional. we move through resume and mental health we never fully get over it but we work through it.

Water has a complex relationship with the African American community over time. It's been both a tool to harm and control as well as to heal and aid. Water was utilized as a form of communication through Songs of freedom, such as, Wade in the water, Sweet Chariot and Follow the Drinking Gourd were lyrics encoded messages that led fugitives to safety, community, and ideally emancipation. Water was a hiding strategy, a way to escape the hunting dogs and to erase their footsteps and cover their tracks as they journeyed to their next home or individual

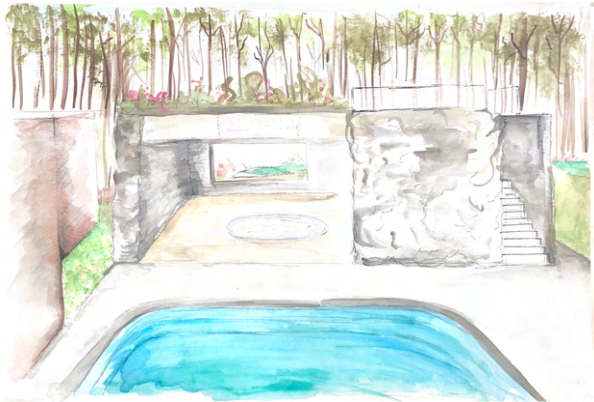
Traveling along water supported fugitives by providing sustenance and nourishment, a place to rest and rejuvenate. The trees along these bodies of water would sometimes have a red ribbon tied that signified safety. Water became a safe space in of itself which was heightened with the invention of the steamboat in 1807 which enabled fugitives to arrive in Canada in a week due to African American captains and stewards who could assist in hiding runaways in ships. Simultaneously, water was a symbol of harm, fear and at its extreme, death. From African American men and women being viewed as excess cargo and thrown overboard, to water being weaponized by police post emancipation through their use of hoses to shoot high pressure water at black bodies to inflict harm on them, as well as water being utilized to instill fear into black people through the segregation of pools, bath-rooms, water fountains etc. Water is also a tool to foster joy and leisure, an example being youth in the Bronx and elsewhere in NY busting open fire hydrants to cool off and have water fun.

















W. W. W.

CAPAS DEL TACO

ADV V : Third year M.Arch, Fall 2023

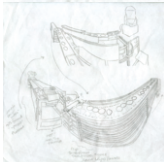
Project Type : Urban Intervention

Location : East Harlem New York, United States

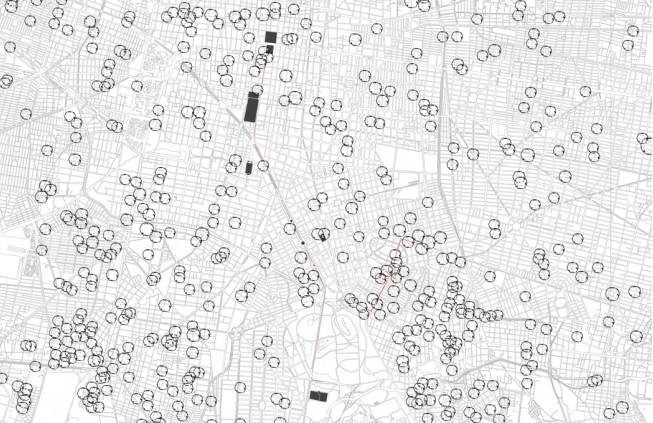
Critics : Rozana Montiel, Thomas De Monchaux

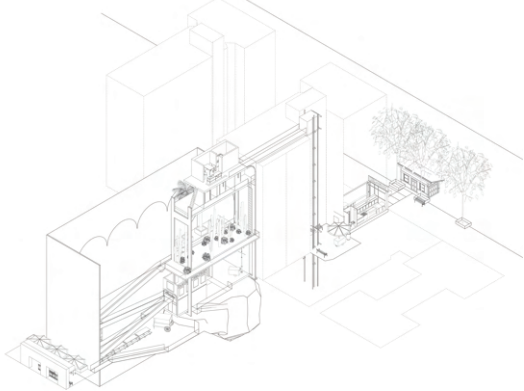
CONCEPT

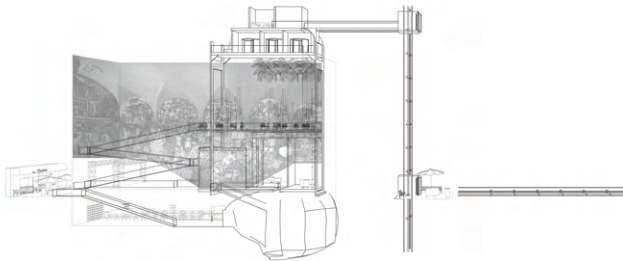
Layers of the taco relate to layers of culture, layers of history and generational layers of collective memory. Traveling from West to East, from Columbia to Little Mexico along 116th Street, the storefronts selling tacos evolve along the way. From mapping the anatomy of these various tacos across 116th street, one can observe how the layers of the taco alter and become more authentic as you head East. Restaurants, as well as the sidewalk vendors aim to bring a taste of Mexico street-style food to New York. In contrast, Mexico City is filled with an influx of taquerias, there's access to tacos on essentially every corner of the city. Across both New York and Mexico City, the taco tells a people's story. It blurs the border between the cities, blending them into NYCDMX. One of the most vital ways people maintain the taste and traditions of their hometowns is through food. By bringing over recipes and spices and dishes with them. Food is cross cultural and the taco tells the story of migration, culture and history.

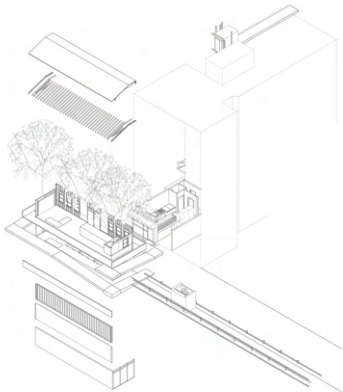


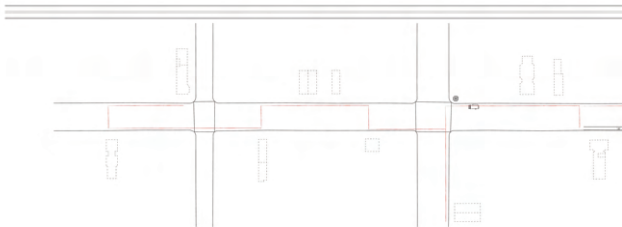


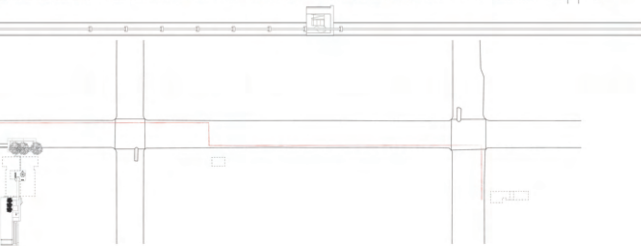














nomzamo, strength in softness

ADVVI: Third year MArch, Spring 2024

Project Type: Film, Restorative & Spatial Justice

Location: Cape Town, South Africa

Critics: Ilse Wolff, Lafina Eptaminitaki

CONCEPT

On softness overcoming hardness

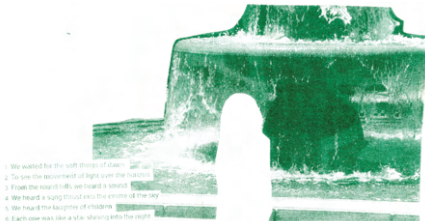
There are numerous ways of responding to oppression. In an interview, Abdullah Ibrahim explains one of his guiding principles. It holds that "softness overcomes hardness. If you look at water, for example, it is nourishing but it can also be forceful, it can erode what is in front of it. So even in that horrendous system that we lived under in South Africa, we learned from our parents and our grandparents and our teachers that softness will overcome."

On the practice of storytelling

The tradition of storytelling is a deeply rooted practice in Africa. It functions as an instrument to connect us to our roots, to pass down knowledge, and retain culture. It keeps the spirit of someone or something alive by preserving a memory of a place, habits of people. Ibrahim produces healing melodies that tell stories of the ancient ones, of wisdom, pain and joy. His music aids in the quest for self-understanding and identity.

As a Black woman, storytelling enables me to acknowledge the history before me, the history happening in front of me and within myself. Through the medium of film, the blending of oral archives, song, and music come together in one piece. Fragmented narratives of colonialism, apartheid, oppression, liberation, self-understanding, and healing make up this collection of stories, which are produced from found footage, field recordings of digital and analog interviews, documentaries, and songs from Abdullah Ibrahim, Sathima Bea Benjamin and various others.

Softness overcoming hardness enables the freedom of the soft black girl. Her strength is in softness. The act of gathering to listen, reflect and participate in history becomes an act of restorative and spatial justice.



- 1 We waited for the soft things of dawn
- 2 To see the movement of light over the horizon
- 3 From the round hills we heard a sound
- 4 We heard a song thrust into the crease of the sky
- 5 We heard the laughter of children
- 6 Each one was like a star shining into the night
- 7 Each one spoke the joy in her eyes
- 8 We saw the palm tree playing with the cloud
- 9 We heard the poems of the wind
- 10 Dawn came, and hung on a broken house
- 11 And put her hands there to rest
- 12 Perhaps to touch with her fingers the growing things
- 13 These are those who are born of the sun
- 14 Who, by their lips give life to the withered leaf













traditional African storytelling
Zhuo and Zulu

ZULU

Zulu word meaning

"to see with the eyes"
"to tell one a story"
"to sing one a song"

...the Zulu word for 'to see with the eyes' is 'zulu'. This is the same word as 'Zulu', the name of the Zulu people. The Zulu people are one of the largest ethnic groups in South Africa. They are known for their rich cultural heritage, including their traditional storytelling and music.



Zulu





