

BACKSTAGE

For designers,
the whole world is their backstage.

Raven Huang



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I have always been captivated by the theater—not as a literal construct of timber and stone, nor as a mere platform for ballet shoes and scripted dialogue. To me, the "stage" is a meticulously choreographed collision of intense conflict—a densely populated, highly volatile form where infinite spatialities overlap within fleeting temporalities. Who could resist the seductive lure of such a spatial-temporal spectacle? Cinema is a stage; my cluttered desktop is a stage; even Avery Hall, with its relentless flow of students in transit or repose, is a stage.

Yet, beyond the ornate proscenium visible to the public eye lies the vast, hidden apparatus: the wings, the backstage, and the flying lofts—spaces that are often exponentially larger than the primary stage itself. It is within these obscured corners, coiled behind the velvet curtains, that explosive transformations, crowded flows, and the "magical props" of reality reside. They wait for the precise, scripted moment to emerge into the spotlight, setting the audience's pulses racing.

For the designer, a curious inversion occurs: the entire world acts as their "Backstage," while the "Stage" is confined solely to the singular site of their intervention. This paradox is profound: how a designer perceives the backstage—the invisible mechanics of the world—dictates exactly what they are capable of manifesting upon the stage.

This portfolio documents my process as a designer: closing my eyes to imagine every granular detail of an unbuilt stage, conducting fictional rehearsals through the synthesis of mind and tool, and crafting the raw matter of the world into specialized instruments of production.

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Fall 2025 Eelective: Power Tools
Critic: Seth Tompson
Design: Raven Huang



Spring 2026 Elective: Power Tools
Critic: Jelisa R. Blumberg
Design: Raven Huang & Shiki Xu



01

"The Site of Specters" interrogates the 1964 New York World's Fair not as a static historical relic, but as a potent symbolic apparatus operating through the dual mechanisms of The Mask and The Specter. The research first dissects "The Mask"—a functional landscape where power and capital synthesized a global hegemony. Through iconic monuments like the Unisphere and corporate pavilions, the Fair manufactured a "unified consensus," utilizing the consumerist mask of progress to claim a monopoly over the trajectory of human civilization. This was a "Serious Theme Park" of Pax Americana, where corporations like IBM, Ford, and Disney acted as the chief designers of reality, using spectacular visuals to define "The World" as a singular, ordered path driven by automation and corporate stewardship. In this stage, the site functioned as a spatial tool of authority, dictating a future that felt inevitable and certain.

However, as this orchestrated utopia failed to materialize in reality, the Fair transitioned into a state of Hauntology. Borrowing from Jacques Derrida, the project explores how the site persists in a liminal "middle state" between its physical closure and its "second death" of total oblivion. In this "out of joint" time, the Fair's iconography has detached from its historical origins to become a "meta-symbol" within



02

Notes:

02. This is Herman Bollmann's 1964 pictorial bird's-eye view of the grounds of the 1964 New York World's Fair. Despite the contentious origins and questionable financing of the fair, it was fondly remembered by attendees for its distinctive Space Age futuristic aesthetic.

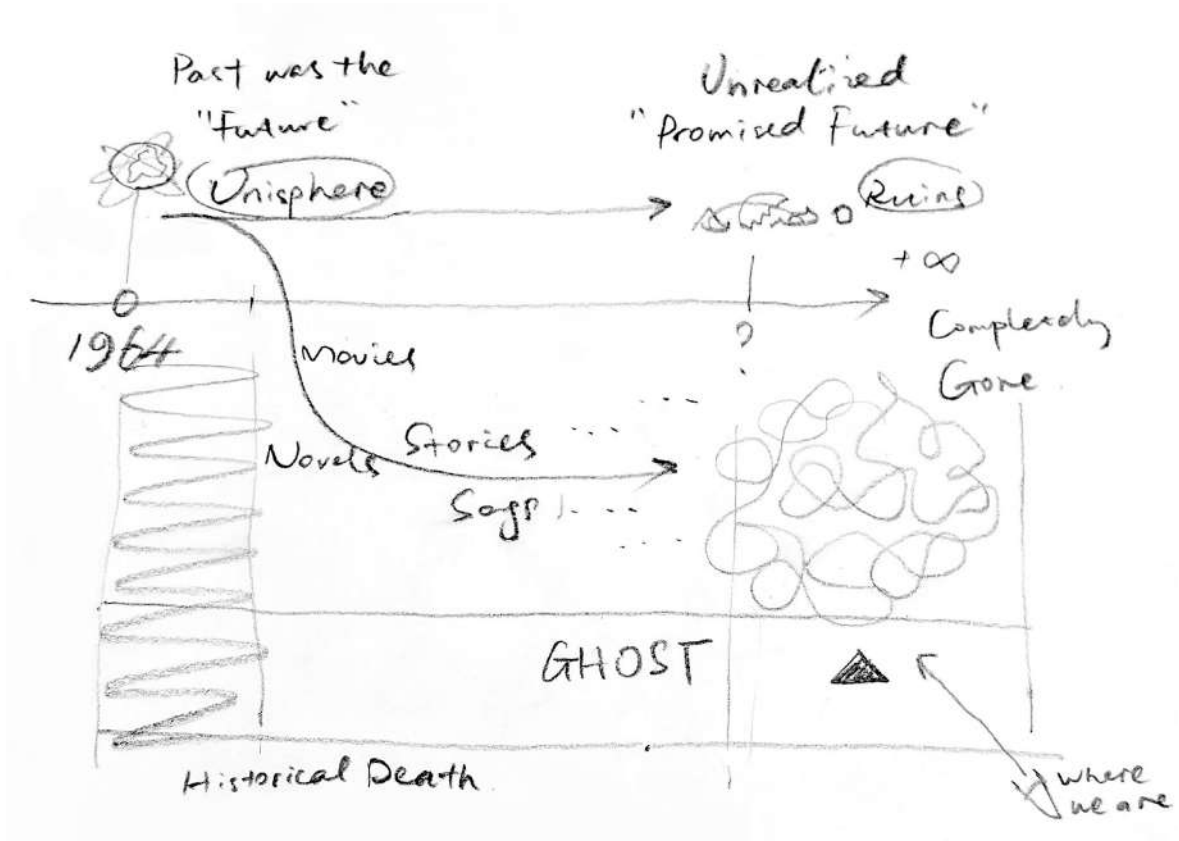


01

Notes:

01. Jacques Derrida

The term "Hauntology" (hauntologie) was first introduced by Jacques Derrida in his 1993 book, Specters of Marx. It is a philosophical pun: in French, hauntologie is pronounced almost identically to ontology (the study of being). Derrida uses this wordplay to suggest that "being" (what is present) is always haunted by "non-being" (what is absent).



02

Notes:

02. Baudrillard's most famous thesis is the "Precession of Simulacra." He argues that in the postmodern world, the map (the simulation) now precedes the territory (the reality). We no longer produce things that represent reality; instead, we produce simulations that generate their own reality. The original "real" has been replaced by a system of signs.

The diagram identifies the 1964 World's Fair as a temporal singularity—a fracture point where the "Promised Future" and our "Actual Reality" split into two distinct universes. In one universe, the techno-utopian vision of Pax Americana achieved its climax and continued into an idealized era. In our universe, however, 1964 marked the beginning of an endless entropic decay. The diagram maps this divergence: the "Future" we were promised has been relegated to a static image in the past, while our actual future feels like a hollowed-out "Past" that failed to progress.

Following Jacques Derrida's hauntology, the diagram explores the "Interval"

between two deaths. The First Death occurred in 1965 as an objective historical conclusion—the physical dismantling of the Fair. The Second Death remains pending: the total oblivion of its symbolic legacy. Between these two deaths, the Specter emerges. This diagram functions as a diagnostic tool to locate this specter—not as a relic of history, but as an active ghost that continues to haunt our cultural imagination. We are performing a spiritual salvage, attempting to decipher the mechanics of this phantom before it vanishes into the second death of absolute silence.





01

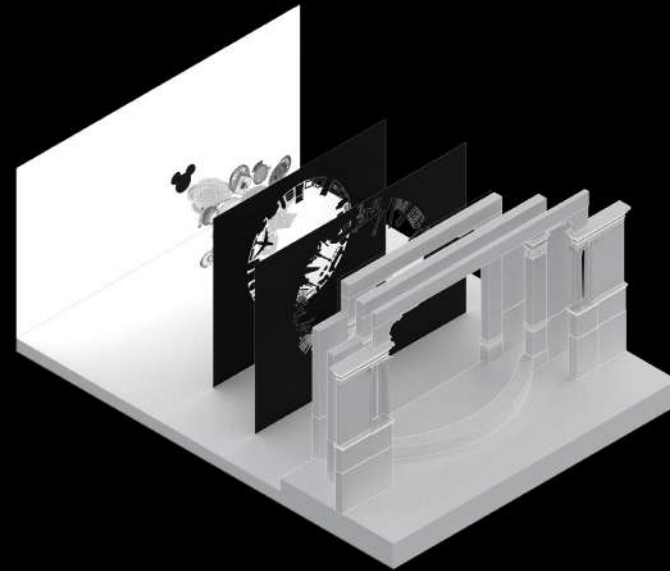
Notes:

01. The most iconic feature of the Bayreuth Festspielhaus is its "Mystic Abyss" (Mystischer Abgrund):

The Disappearing Orchestra: Wagner broke the convention of placing the orchestra between the audience and the stage. Instead, he recessed the pit deep beneath the stage, completely concealing it with a massive, curved wooden cowl. Neither the musicians nor the conductor's movements are visible to the spectators.

The Double Proscenium: The theater utilizes two proscenium arches. The interstitial space between them—the "Mystic Abyss"—creates an optical illusion of immense depth. It establishes a total spatial rupture, separating the auditorium (the "real world") from the mythological narrative on stage (the "world of illusion").

Dematerialized Sound: Rising from the depths and filtered through wooden reflections, the sound appears to emanate from the heart of the stage—or even from a total void—rather than being perceived as the output of specific, localized instruments.



This project re-evaluates the 1964 New York World's Fair as an "Architectural Masque"—an ideological tool for calibration disguised as technological optimism. Drawing on John Hejduk's theories and hauntology, it dissects the "two deaths" of the Fair: its physical erasure and its spectral afterlife within contemporary consumerist desires.

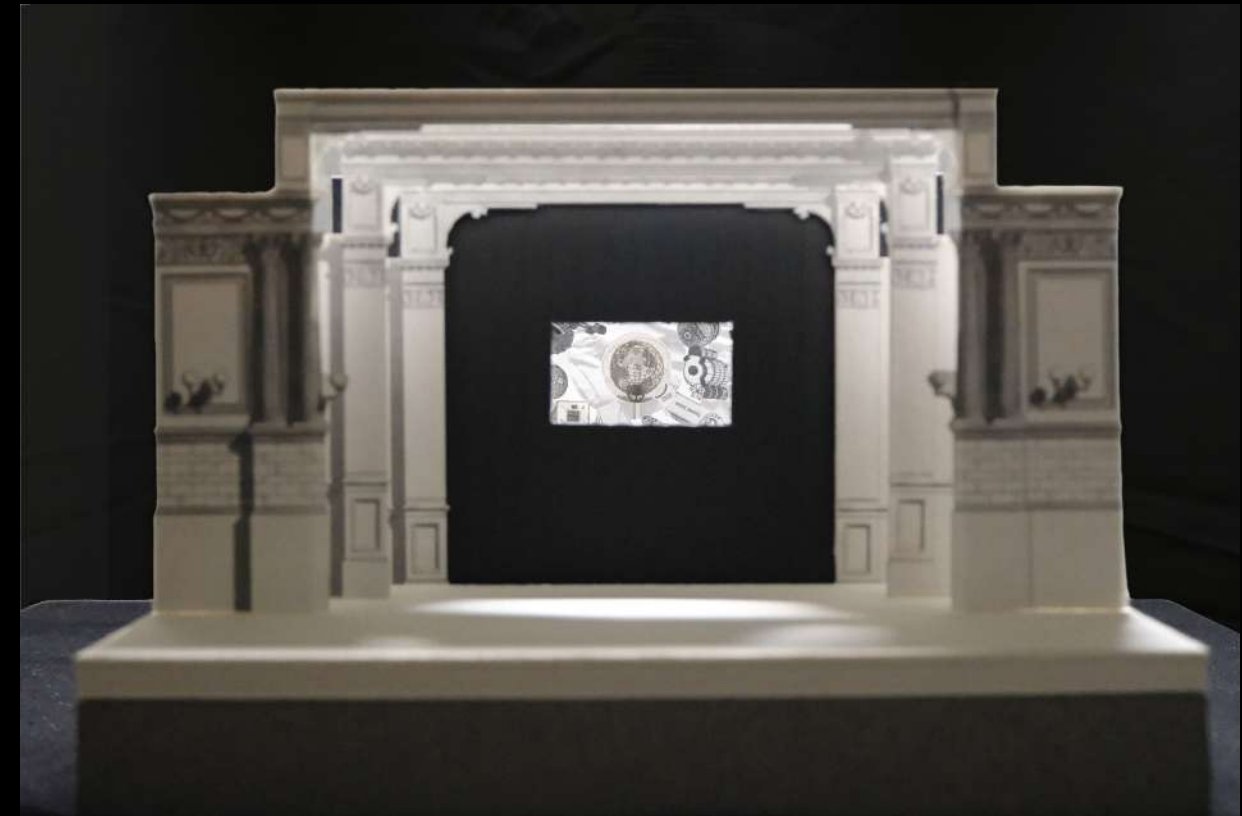
The conceptual model, a vertical concentric section, functions as a Baudrillardian theater of "Simulacra":

The first layer representing the military-industrial complex of the Cold War. Utilizing heavy black museum board, bunker-like sections, and chaotic scaffolding, it exposes power in its most primitive, violent form—a physical substrate locked in gravity and nuclear anxiety, buried beneath the utopian narrative -- the brutal world.

The middle layer is no longer a factory of goods, but a factory of meanings. It functions as a capitalist assembly

line that dehydrates social crises and reassembles them into 1970s commodity fetishes (cars, televisions, credit cards). As Baudrillard posited, the sign precedes the reality; here, complex societal contradictions are transformed into alienated silhouettes of consumer objects, acting as a "Masque" for visual dominance.

The Innermost Layer holds the core fragile, intangible "Ghostly Future." As the Unisphere collapses within the flames, the grand narrative of technological salvation undergoes an implosion. Mirroring the Phantom's disappearance in the burning Opera House, this destruction completes a historical reckoning.



Notes:

The screen window masking in the first image serves as a metaphor for the technological apparatus of control deployed during the 1964 World's Fair. In this state, the observer is confined to witnessing only the "beautiful promises" veiled beneath the architectural masque.





01

Notes:

01. In 1936, fire consumed Great Britain's massive Crystal Palace, a cast iron and plate glass structure built for the Great Exhibition of 1851

The fire persists as a profound metaphor, echoing the night in London when the Crystal Palace—the world's first iron-and-glass Expo structure of 1851—succumbed to a catastrophic inferno. As the flames incinerate the last vestiges of modernism, the model's innermost depths unveil a primal specter: the silhouette of Mickey Mouse, a ghost birthed in 1964 and now haunting the Disney Empire.

This revelation aligns with Baudrillard's assertion that "Disneyland exists in

order to hide that it is the 'real' country... that all of America is Disneyland." It signifies that the specter of the World's Fair has not perished; rather, through total "virtualization," it has erected a perpetual, reality-less cycle of consumption atop the debris of history.

Fall 2024 Adv V Studio Critic: Teaching Associate: Design: Peaceable Kingdom Michael Wang Amy Suzuki Raven Huang & Shiki Xu



01

Notes.

01. Cube-Corner-Reflector

Collaborated with total station for canal water level supervision

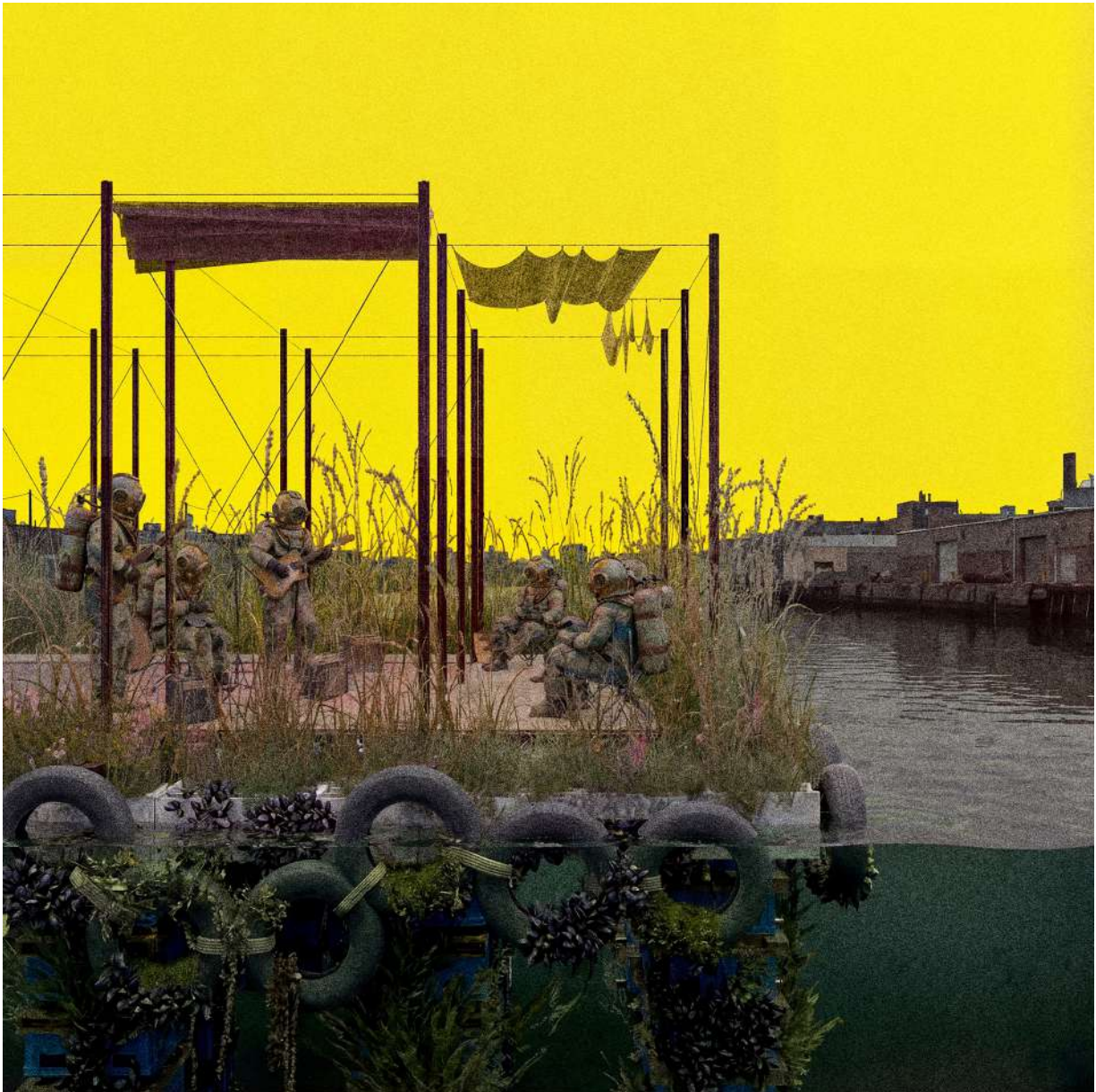
There are hundreds of prisms along the riverside of Gowanus Canal used to monitor the sinking of the canal. In 1853, the Brooklyn government officially launched PROJECT GOWANUS CANAL as the ports developed in Brooklyn.

During the last 200 years, significant amounts of tar, coal, chemical wastewater, New York CSO overflow and landfills are directly put into the canal, leading to soil and water pollution and a 5-meter-thick layer of underwater black mud.

Humans are good at building. Our industry system is the best proof of this. Outside of our daily attention, there is a massive volume of productions discarded by humanity's vast industrial system (they might be parts unnecessary in the production chain, they might be trash at the end of the production line, or they might simply be products forcibly scrapped due to overproduction).

And in this unnoticed world, the built environment as a human creation can be seen with an independent life, inevitably proceeding with the generation and evolution steps more—and even, conversely, surprise humans with its unexpectedly slipping control and producing distractions.

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Observer

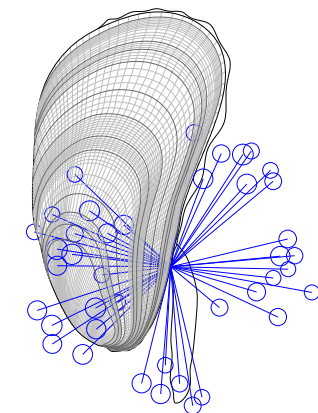
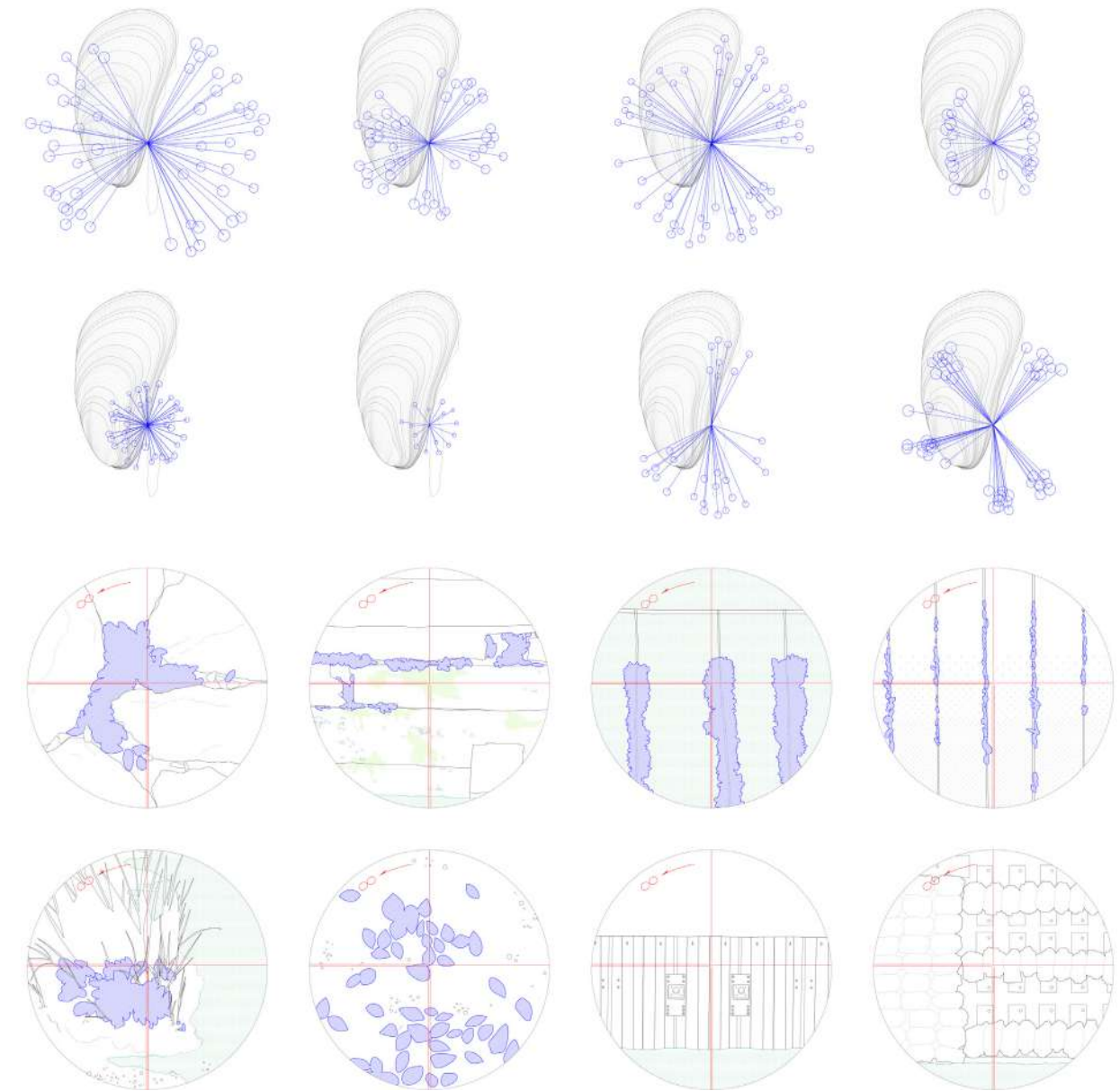
Notes.

A total station or total station theodolite is an electronic/optical instrument used for surveying and building construction. It is an electronic transit theodolite integrated with electronic distance measurement (EDM) to measure both vertical and horizontal angles and the slope distance from the instrument to a particular point, and an on-board computer to collect data and perform triangulation and position resection and intersection calculations.

01



Peaceable Kingdom



Mussel Built

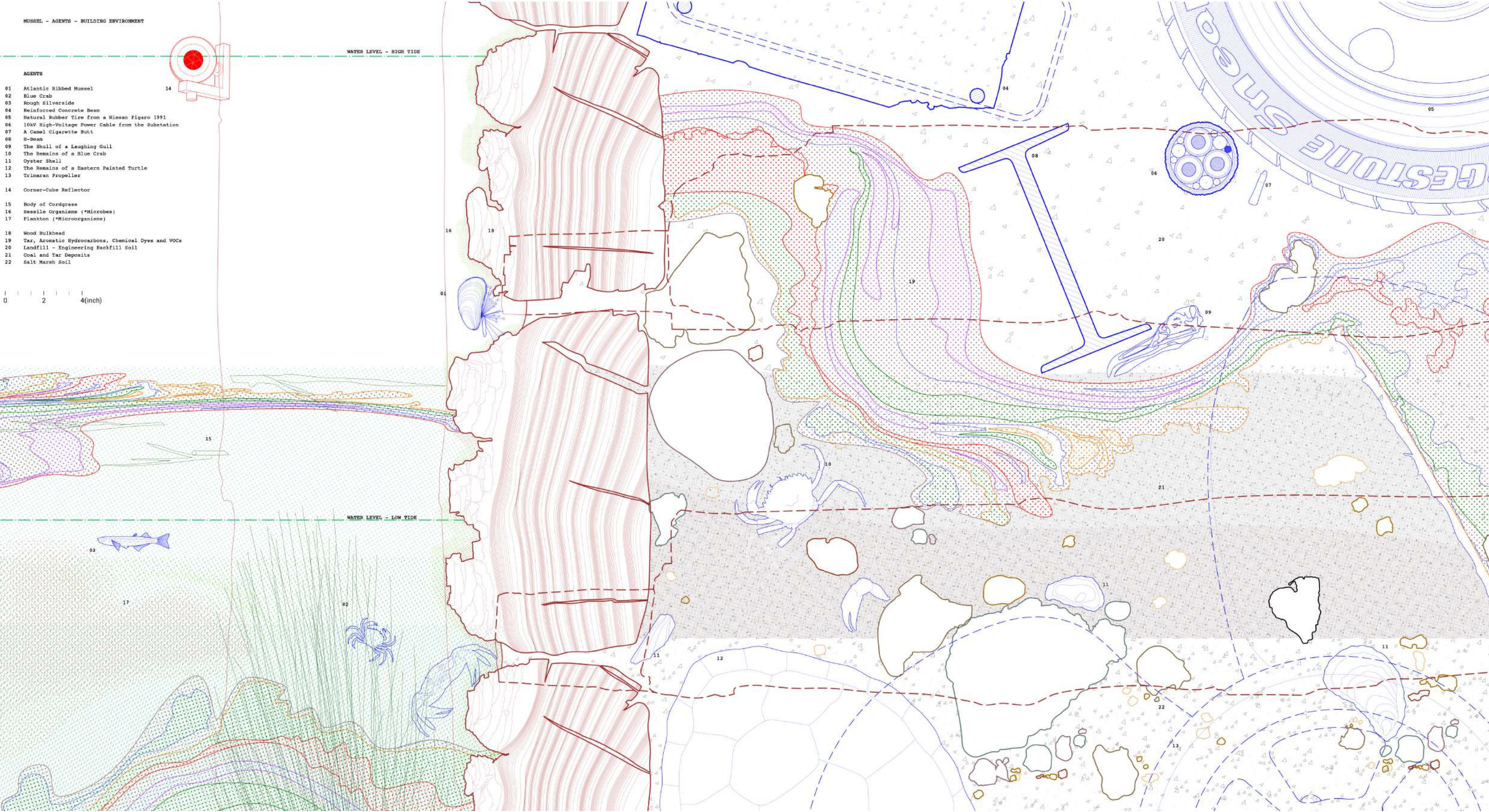
Fall 2025
AAD



Atlantic Ribbed Mussel

The project treats building as an ongoing process of material transformation. Decay is employed as an operational mechanism, informing how structures change through erosion, accretion, and decomposition rather than remaining fixed in form.

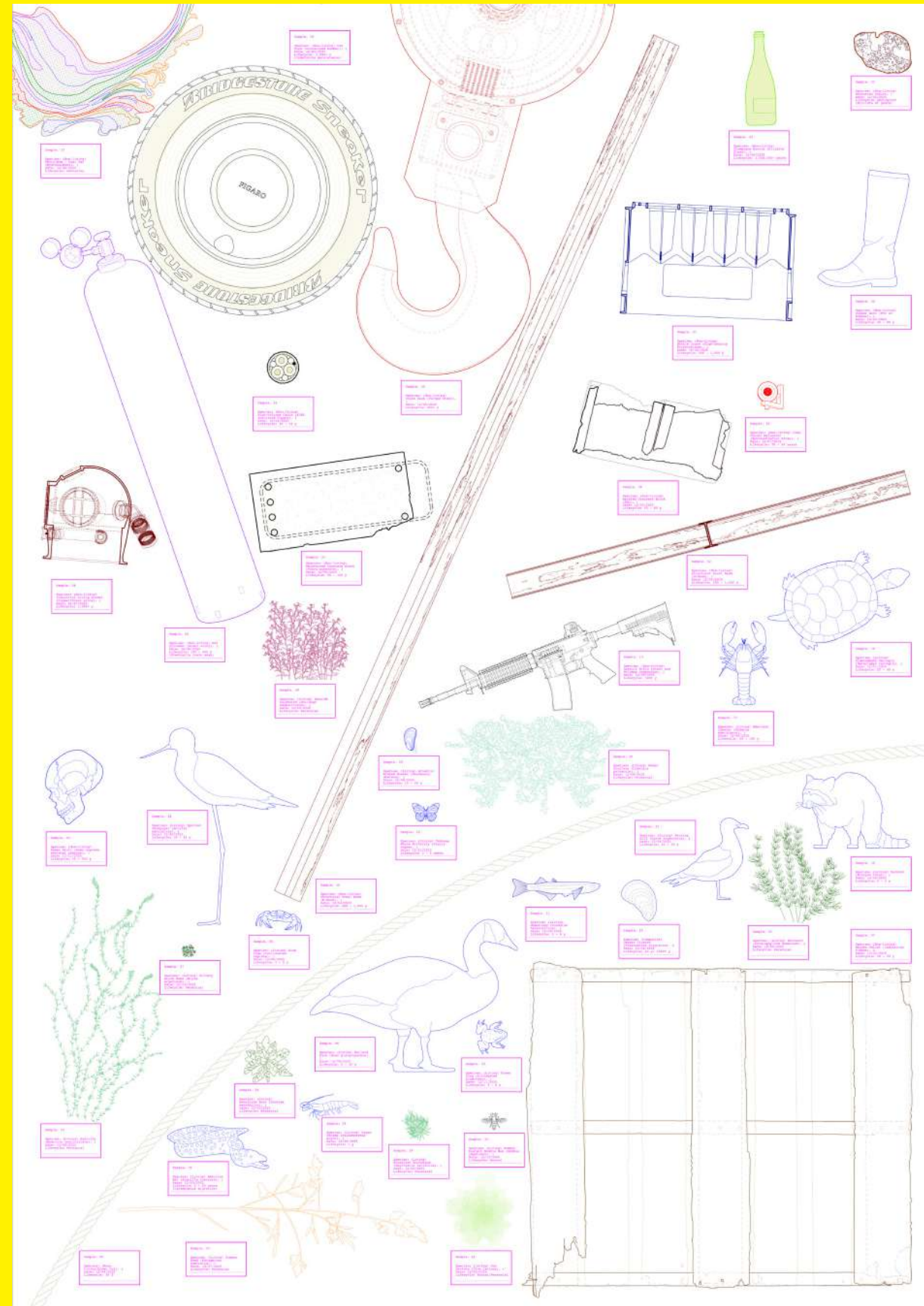
Mussels and allied actors are reorganized along the canal's "murderer-dredger" edge, forming a floating Coupling Body, an evolving architecture that grows, erodes, and rebuilds itself within the canal's long ecological timeline and continuous building process.





Mussel Murderer

An optical instrument composed of three mutually perpendicular reflecting surfaces (like a corner of a room). No matter from which angle the light enters this corner, after three reflections, the outgoing light will remain parallel to the incoming light. The reflector on the Gowanus riverbank is used to monitor the settlement of the embankment.



Ironically, these interventions, originally intended for ecosystem restoration, have killed many aquatic organisms already stressed by human activity, notably mussels.

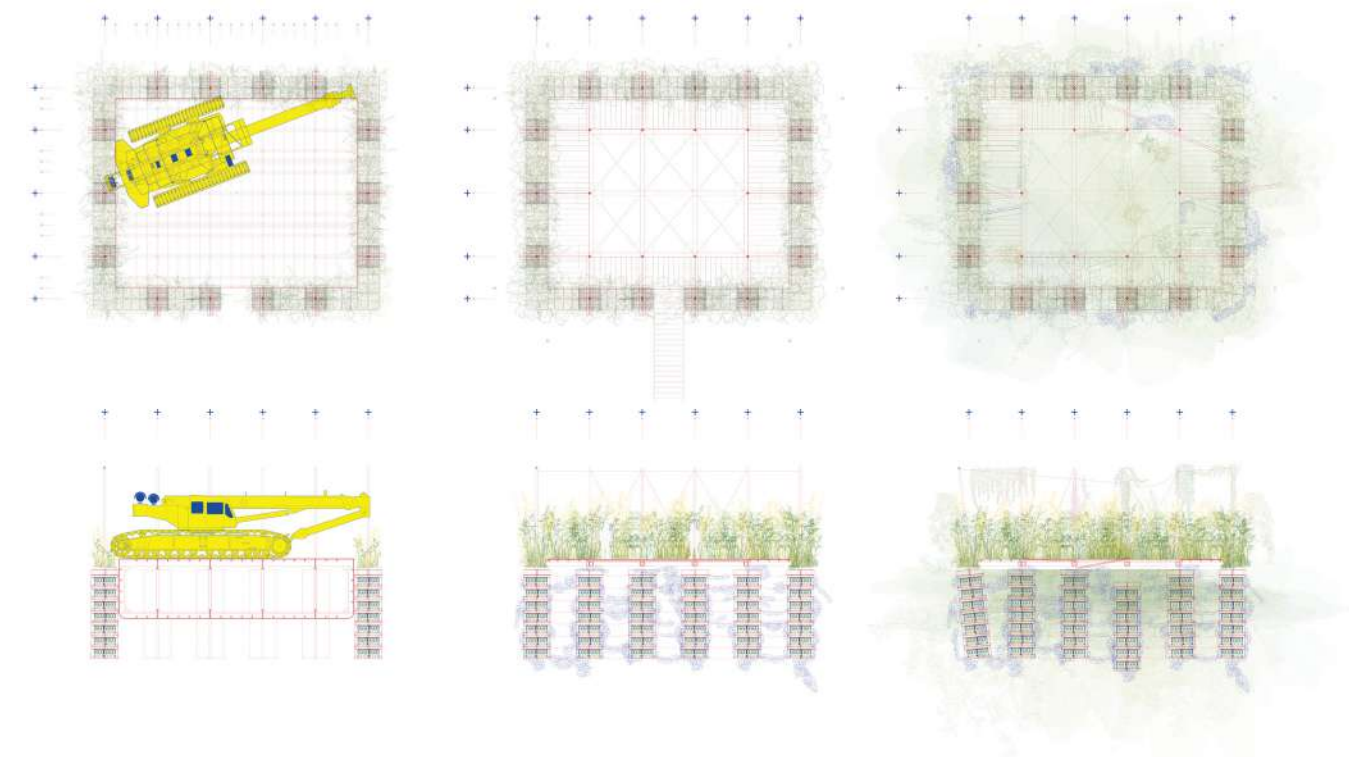
Since the 19th century, human creations have been like a surging monster, spreading its limbs everywhere.

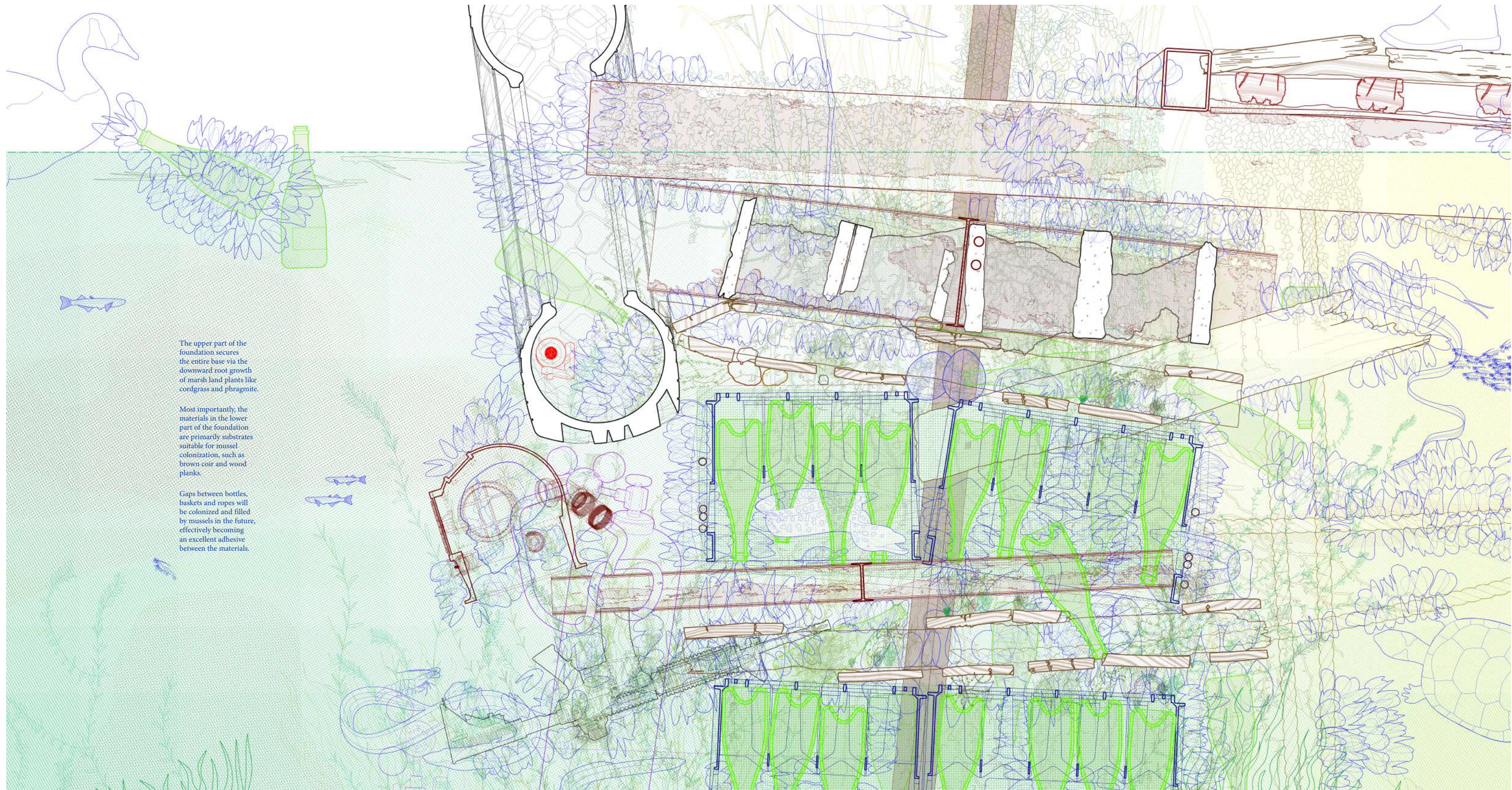
In the year 2020, one of those limbs, advancing in a massive surge, inadvertently brushed against the ribbed mussels barely surviving in the Gowanus Canal.

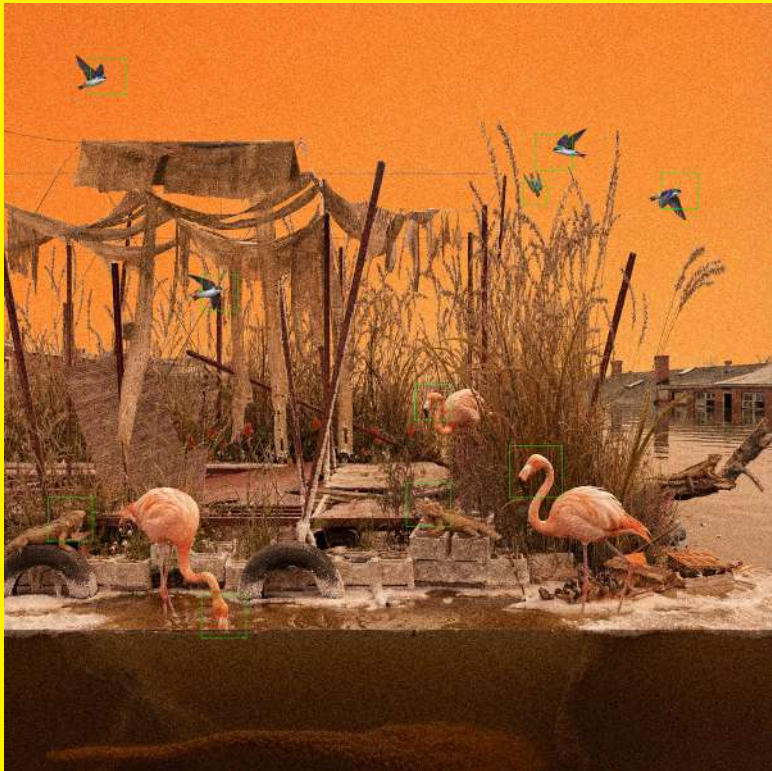
The mussels retreated relentlessly, while the creation remained stubbornly immobile. But humans did not even

spare a glance at mussels, it was just an accident caused by humans' creation, and we just happened to be noticing the accident scene.

We can imagine that similar accidents are playing out, day after day, in places where unnoticed.







- 01 Snow Storm Surge
- 02 Survivor Camp
- 03 Aquatic Farmland
- 04 North American Ecology
- 05 Rainforest Ecology
- 06 Salt Marsh Ecology
- 07 Tundra Ecology



The whole building process can be divided into three stages.

The first stage of building is to surround the barge with foundations, and in the last of its life, plants and mussels slowly colonize the barge and bound together to form a robust floating system. In 2050, the barge is removed and a new platform is constructed for other species(including humans).

In the second stage, 2100, extreme climate has changed the global environment and the human industry system has collapsed and human society has regressed to a pre-modern state. Floods have submerged the entirety of Brooklyn, and arable land has become an extremely precious resource.

This floating platform, built fifty years ago, has been preserved until now precisely because it was part of an eco-built system. It has become a valuable piece of land squeezed out from the floodwaters. People establish strongholds, cultivate crops, and fish and hunt upon it.

Another 100 years later, we come to the third stage where the human species perhaps has vanished, and other native species have once again become the masters of Brooklyn, thriving and dwelling upon this platform. While parts of the artificial platform are fragmented and broken.

The mussels, aquatic grasses, roots system, and other aquatic animals have coupled with these fractured components, sustaining the buoyancy system's operation.

After centuries, the platform has long transformed into a kind of ecological aggregate, continuing its long building process.

The Ruined Temple and Oberrealta Chapel

Fall 2025 Eleective: Rendering System
Critic: Seth Tompson
Design: Raven Huang



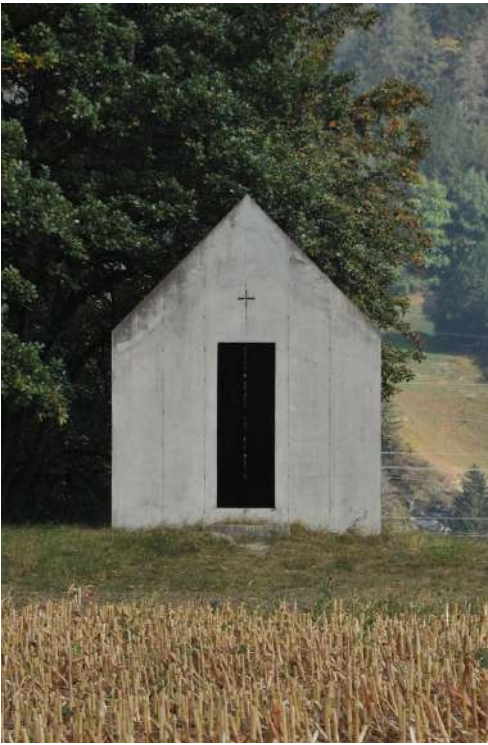
Rendering System



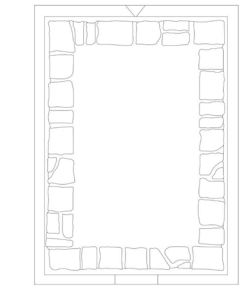
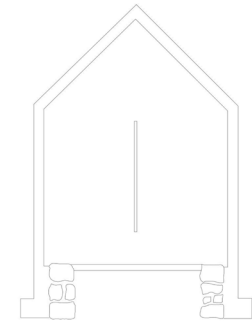
03

The Ruined Temple and Oberrealta Chapel

Fall 2025
AAD

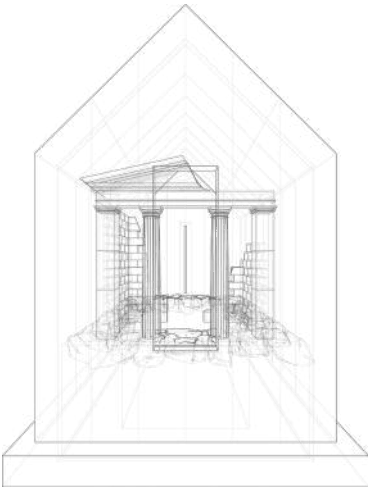


04



05

Notes:
04. Oberrealta Chapel
Section and Plan drawing
1:50



Rendering Systems proposes that the computational image is a window into a simulated and systematized representation of reality. To create a rendering is, in effect, to create and frame a model of the entire world, from a single grain of sand to the most complicated urban environment.velop an image series that explores the inner workings of a slice, section, segment, or layer of an existing architectural or urban site.

We use novel rendering techniques, special material, lighting, and optical effects, and a variety of procedural experimentation tools to probe their model from new vantagepoints and show something through rendering which couldn'totherwise be seen. We will depict their model as a sequence of images that show a dynamic system in motion.

Conventional renderers can only output pixel information of mesh/bubbles in the same image, while Blender's powerful freestyle feature provides the possibility to simultaneously present pixels and lines, outputting "non-existent ghost line drafts of ruins" with correct perspective and occlusion relationshipsThe plans of the Ruined Temple and Oberrealta Chapel were drawn nearly two hundred years apart, and yet they both speak to the Ruskian timelessness of the ruin.

Both drawings attempt to master the

effects of time, to fabricate the ruin. The Ruined Temple does so by highlighting time in the contrast of the walls' poché, the Oberrealta Chapel by the method of conflating the new and old into one line weight. While the Ruined Temple is a literal depiction of ruin (or a plan for the construction of ruin as folly), the Oberrealta Chapel constructs itself as an already-ruin. Despite its singular line weight, it is not the straight lines of the walls that dominate, but the uneven pattern of the foundation stones that jump forward. The new recedes into the old, and the old emerges as new. The effects of time are inverted by the singular line weight, which stands in place of time, and acts as time, as that which 'connects forgotten and following ages'. A new construction is literally in ruins.

The goal of this course is to use the mastered renderer technology to express and understand that rendering is essentially the coupling of information from multiple layers. The relationship between The Ruined Temple and Oberrealta Chapel aligns with the core objectives of the course, so I explored presenting my thoughts and new extensions of their relationship through a visual language with the powerful tool Blender.

The Oberrealta Chapel was built on top of the ruins of St. Nepomuk Kapelle (as can be seen from the plan and section, only the foundation masonry remains today). Based on the previous discussion of the ghost of ruins, the project aims to create a visual conflict that allows the church ruins to exist not only as a narrative of ghost studies, but also as a tangible representation of its predecessor ruins through the newly poured concrete church, while also metaphorically symbolizing the destined fate of this concrete church as a ruin. The most important issue is how to make visual presentations in ghost studies.

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Notes:

01. Christian Kerez, Oberrealta Chapel, constructed view. Source: Divisare. com/projects/333469-christian-kerez-oberrealta-chapel.

02, 04. Christian Kerez, Oberrealta Chapel, construction view. Source: Divisare. com/projects/333469-christian-kerez-oberrealta-chapel.

03. Unknown Italian, Ruined Temple, c.1810. Black ink with coloured washes on laid paper, 287 × 428 mm. DMC 1896.



01



02



Notes:

01. Unknown Italian, Ruined Temple, c.1810. Black ink with coloured washes on laid paper, 287 × 428 mm. DMC 1896.

02. Christian Kerez, Oberrealta Chapel, construction view. Source: Divisare.com/projects/333469-christian-kerez-oberrealta-chapel.

03. Christian Kerez, Oberrealta Chapel, constructed view. Source: Divisare.com/projects/333469-christian-kerez-oberrealta-chapel.



01



02



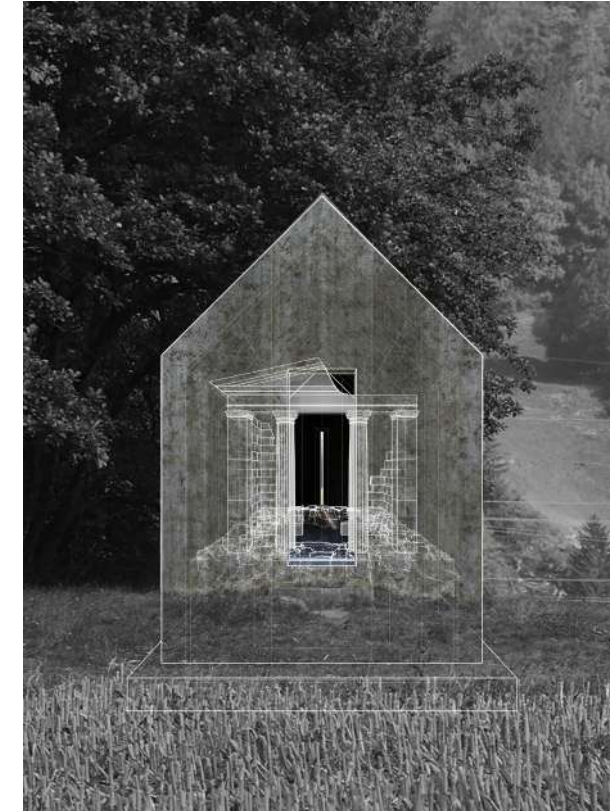
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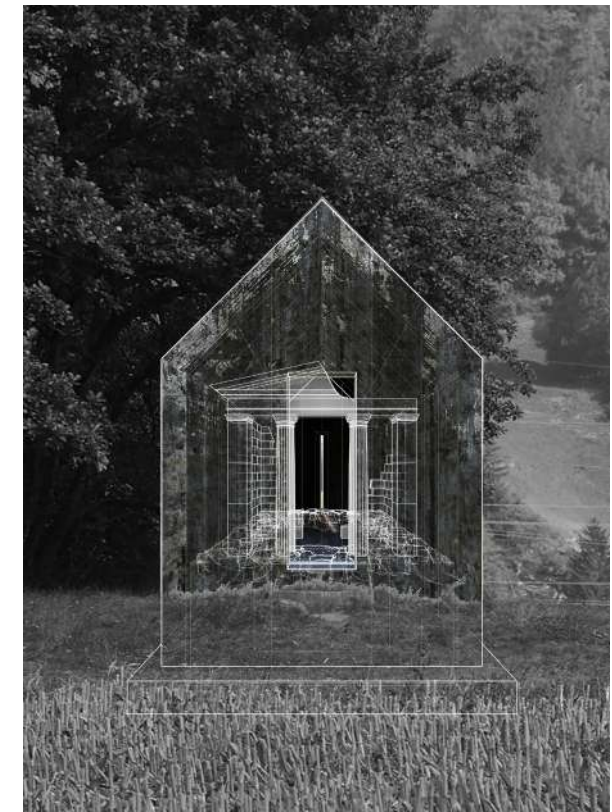
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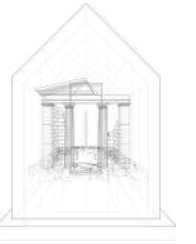
06



07



08



Spring 2026 Studio: OIKONOMIA: Crafting Collectivity
 Critic: Michael John Raftopoulos
 Design: Alejandro Marin
 Raven Huang



*What can you make at home?
 What is the life of the things you make?
 Does it form a craft?
 Does it produce intimacy?
 Does it make a home?
 Is it part of a community?
 What tools do you use?
 Are your tools part of a network?
 What space do the tools need?
 Is a home a tool?
 Can you craft a moral order?*

Rooted in the etymological origins of OIKONOMIA—the management of the household—this research interrogates domesticity within the Anthropocene. It challenges the modern paradigm that banished labor for bourgeois accumulation, as work returns to the interior "with a vengeance," rendering neoliberal residential typologies obsolete. The home is no longer a static sanctuary but a messy, material site of production, requiring a radical reevaluation of domestic organization and social function.

The study focuses on the inhabitant's agency, exploring how domestic production can be revitalized as a "craft" that fosters intimacy. By investigating tools and their spatial demands, the studio reimagines the home as a tool itself. The objective is to move beyond isolated units of consumption, transforming the residence into a vital node within a community network where productive labor crafts a new social order.

Within this framework, I selected Bakery as the core craft, reimagining



01

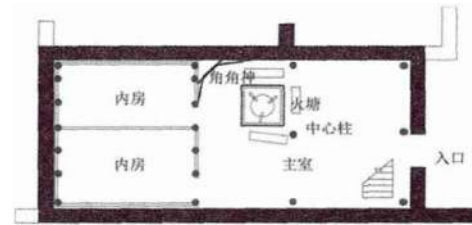
the Athenian Polykatoikia as a precise "machine for food production." The project envisions a metabolic engine that dissolves boundaries between private kitchens and public life. By creating an open container for making and sharing food, the intervention catalyzes spontaneous interaction and transforms invisible domestic labor into public cohesion, using bread as a medium to reconstruct community bonds.

Through a "thinking through making" methodology, the project reinterprets the Polykatoikia through manual craft and conceptual research. By dismantling rigid boundaries between private utility and public life, the design fosters an inclusive "vertical metabolism." Ultimately, the work revitalizes collective housing as an engine for social transformation, where the act of making drives a more resilient and interconnected urban fabric.

Notes:

01. Polykatoikia (Greek: "multi-residence") is the dominant multi-story apartment building typology that defines the urban landscape of Athens and other Greek cities. Developed primarily from the 1950s to the 1980s, these concrete buildings served as a fast, affordable housing solution, blending modernist, functional design with unique, democratic urban growth and dense living.

Brief 1 - Monocell Study Huotangwu/Fire Hearth Cabin



01



02

Notes:

Sun, Y., Suolang, B., Li, H., Xiao, Y., & Zhang, Z. (2017). Research on Contemporary Construction of the Main Room Space in Qiang Traditional Dwellings. *Journal of Southwest University for Nationalities (Humanities and Social Science)*, 38(06), 170-174.

01. Exploded axonometric analysis of the Qiang "Main Room" (Tangwu) spatial hierarchy.

02. Transverse section analyzing the thermal metabolism and the spiritual axis (central pillar) of the fire-pit.projects/333469-christian-kerez-oberrealt-chapel.

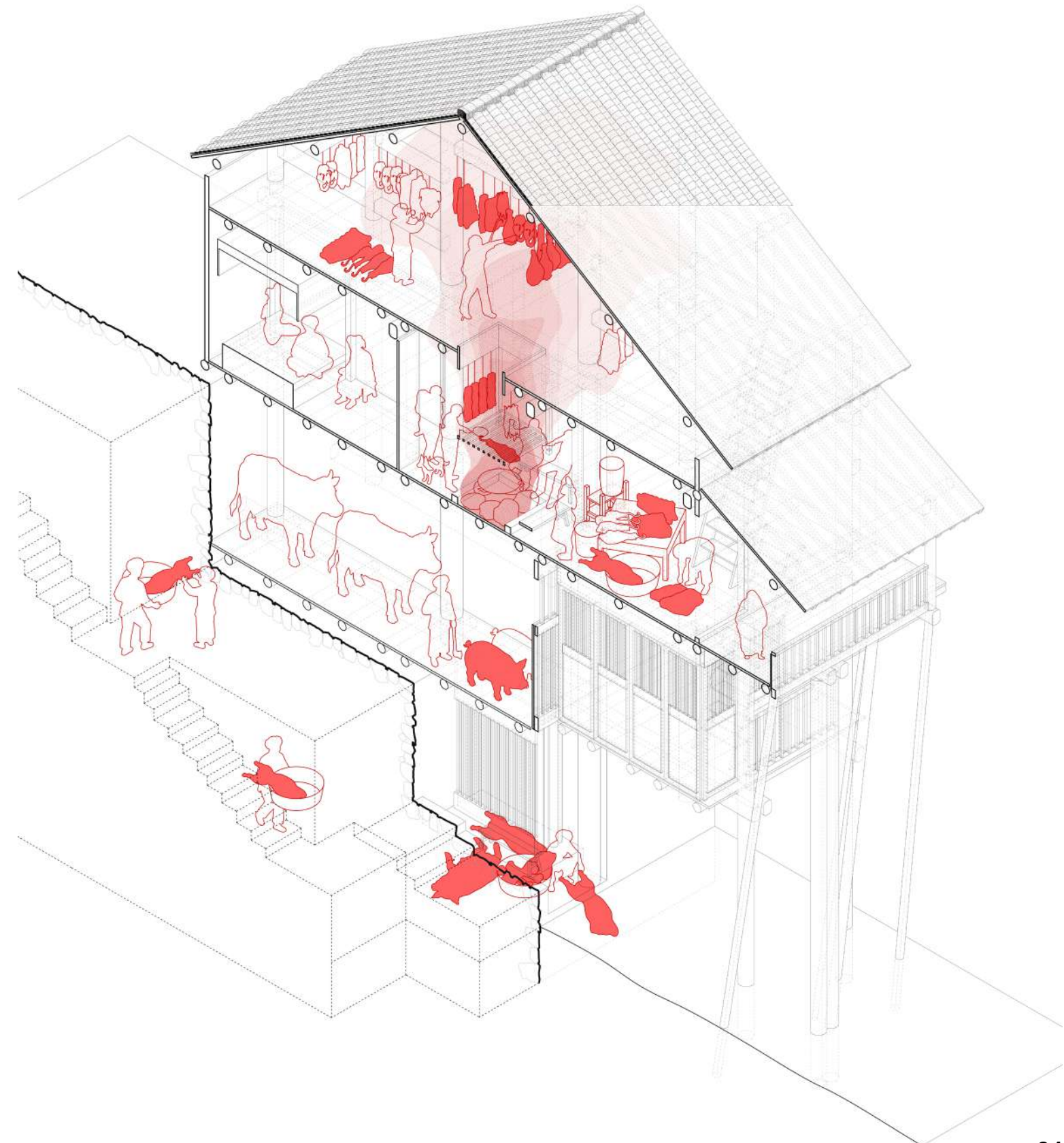
Within the intricate vernacular of Qiang traditional dwellings, the "Main Room"—commonly designated as the Tangwu or Huotangwu (Fire-pit house)—functions as more than a mere architectural center; it serves as the profound spatial and conceptual anchor around which the entire domestic apparatus is organized. Adopting a clear hierarchy of "served" and "servant" spaces, the Qiang dwelling prioritizes this expansive volume, relegating secondary programs to the periphery while consolidating the vital forces of the home within a single, high-ceilinged interior domain.

Programmatically, the Tangwu operates as the primary theater for the complexities of Qiang daily life. It is a space of radical functional hybridization, where the contemporary distinctions between the "living room" and "kitchen" dissolve into a unified field of activity. Here, the domestic labor of food preparation and communal dining coexists with the social rituals of reception, ceremonial banquets, and multi-generational gatherings. This concentration of program transforms the room into a dense metabolic engine, where the heat of the hearth facilitates both physical survival and social cohesion.

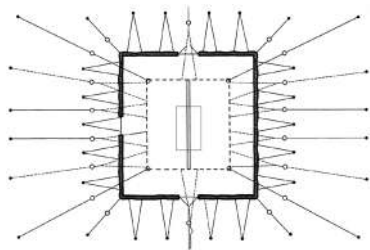
However, the architectural significance of the Tangwu extends far beyond its utilitarian capacity. As a pantheistic

society, the Qiang imbue their built environment with a sophisticated religious cosmology, and it is within the main room that this transcendental belief system achieves its most potent spatial synthesis. Every architectural element is charged with liturgical agency: the central hearth (Huo-tang) is not merely a source of warmth but a sacred site of spiritual mediation; the central pillar acts as an axis mundi, bridging the terrestrial and the divine; and the Jiaojiao shrine (corner shrine) serves as an anchor for ancestral presence.

In this sense, the Tangwu functions as a "monocell"—a self-contained architectural unit where the boundaries between the mundane and the sacred, the domestic and the cosmic, are entirely blurred. It represents a total spatial synthesis, where the architecture does not simply house a family, but actively constructs a microcosm of the Qiang universe.



Brief 2 - Monocell Study
Black Tent



01



02

OIKONOMIA: Crafting Collectivity

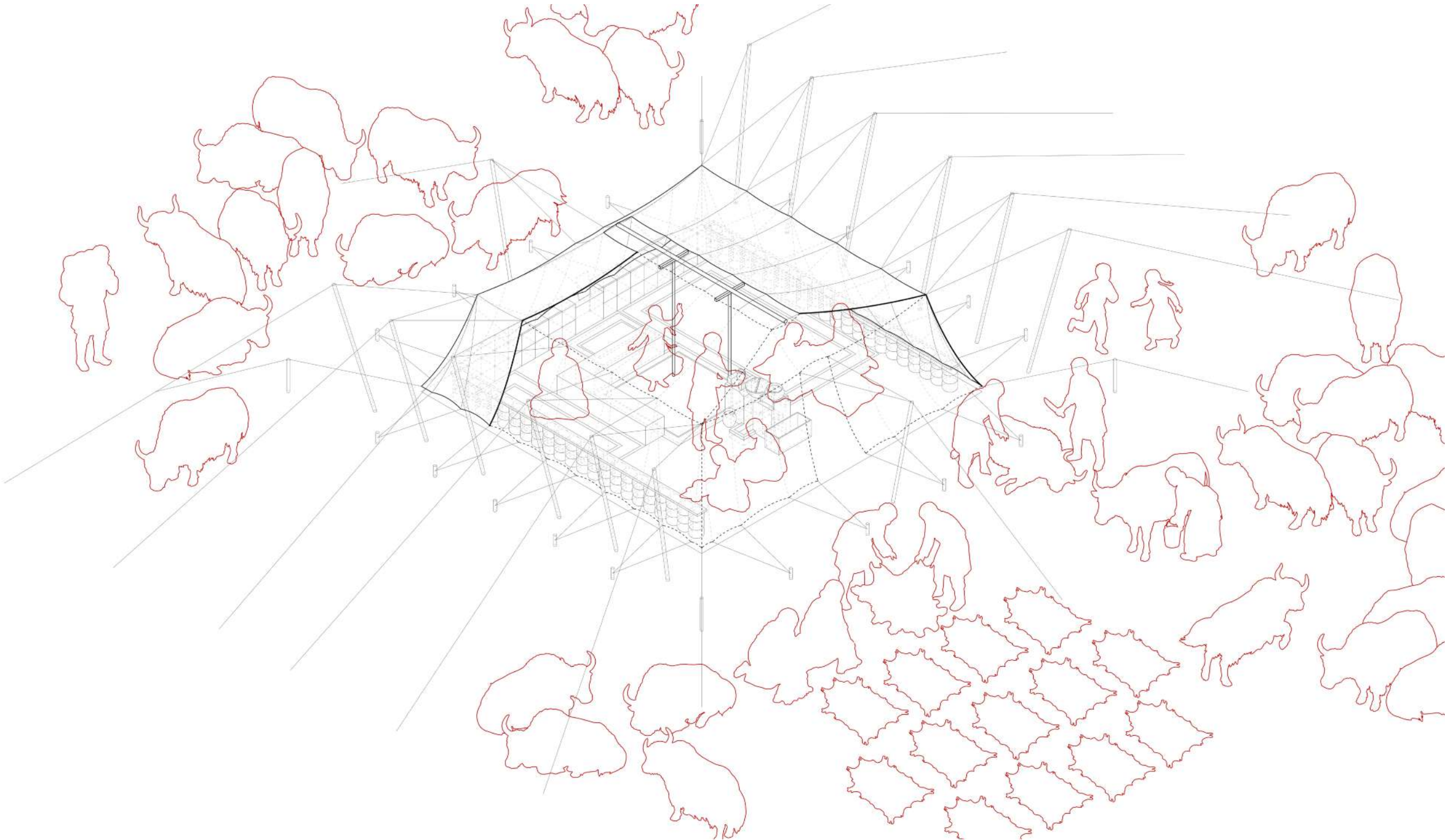
The black tent is the traditional mobile dwelling of Tibetan nomads and has prevailed on the Plateau up to now. Tibetans call their tents sBra-nag (literally, tent black)
The interior of both black tent types in question is similar. Seen from the entrance, a fireplace divides the tent into 2 halves. The left side is mainly used by women and children (mo) and

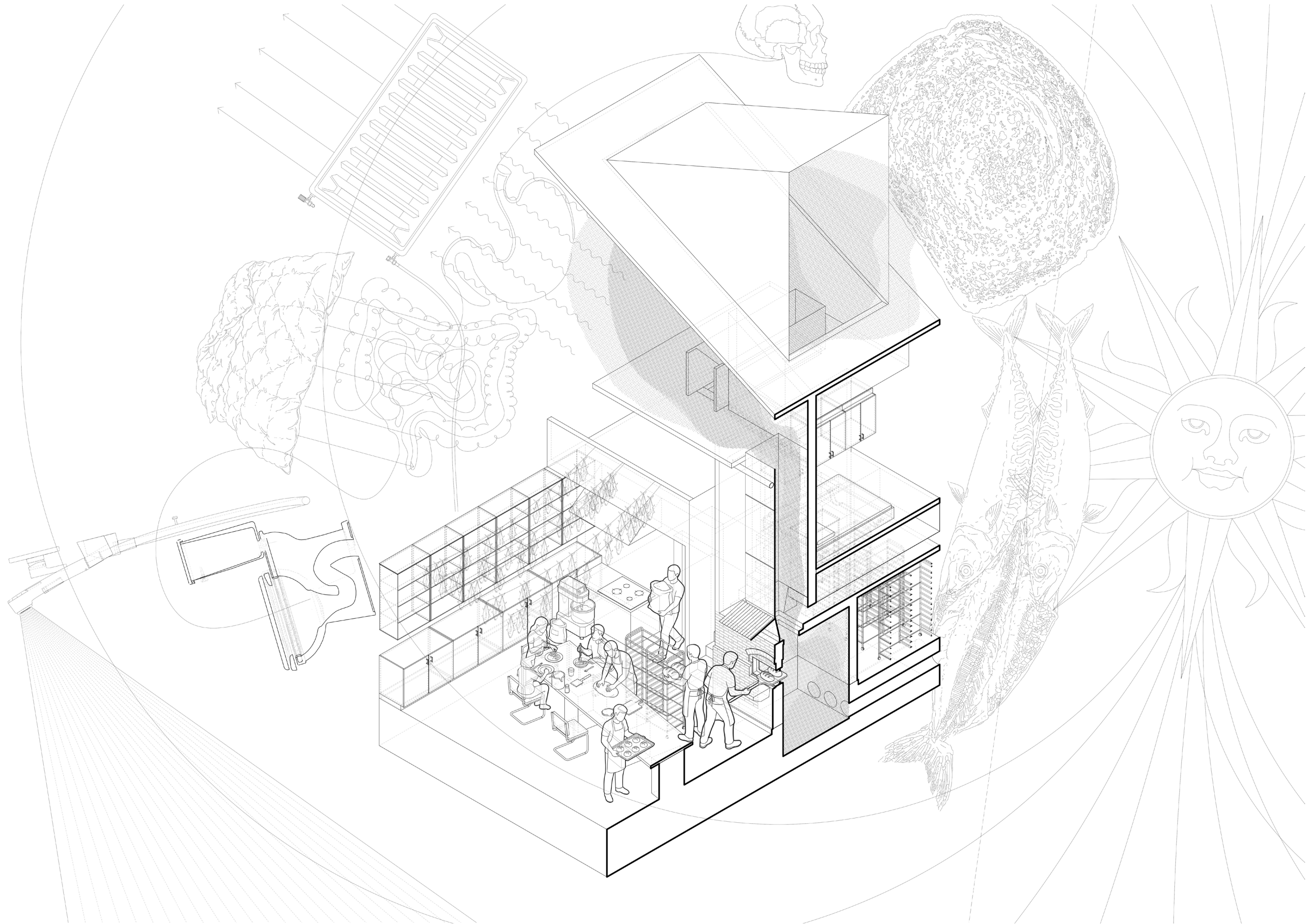
Alimentary Agora

the right side by men and guests (pho). The fireplace consists of 3 stones and an iron tripod or a stove made of clay or iron. In Dzam-thang, the clay stove is usually spread out, and yak dung is commonly burnt.

Spring 2026
AAD

- Notes:
- o1. Plan drawing of Typical Tibet Black Tent
 - o2. Photo of Tibet Black Tent





Challenging the Kitchen



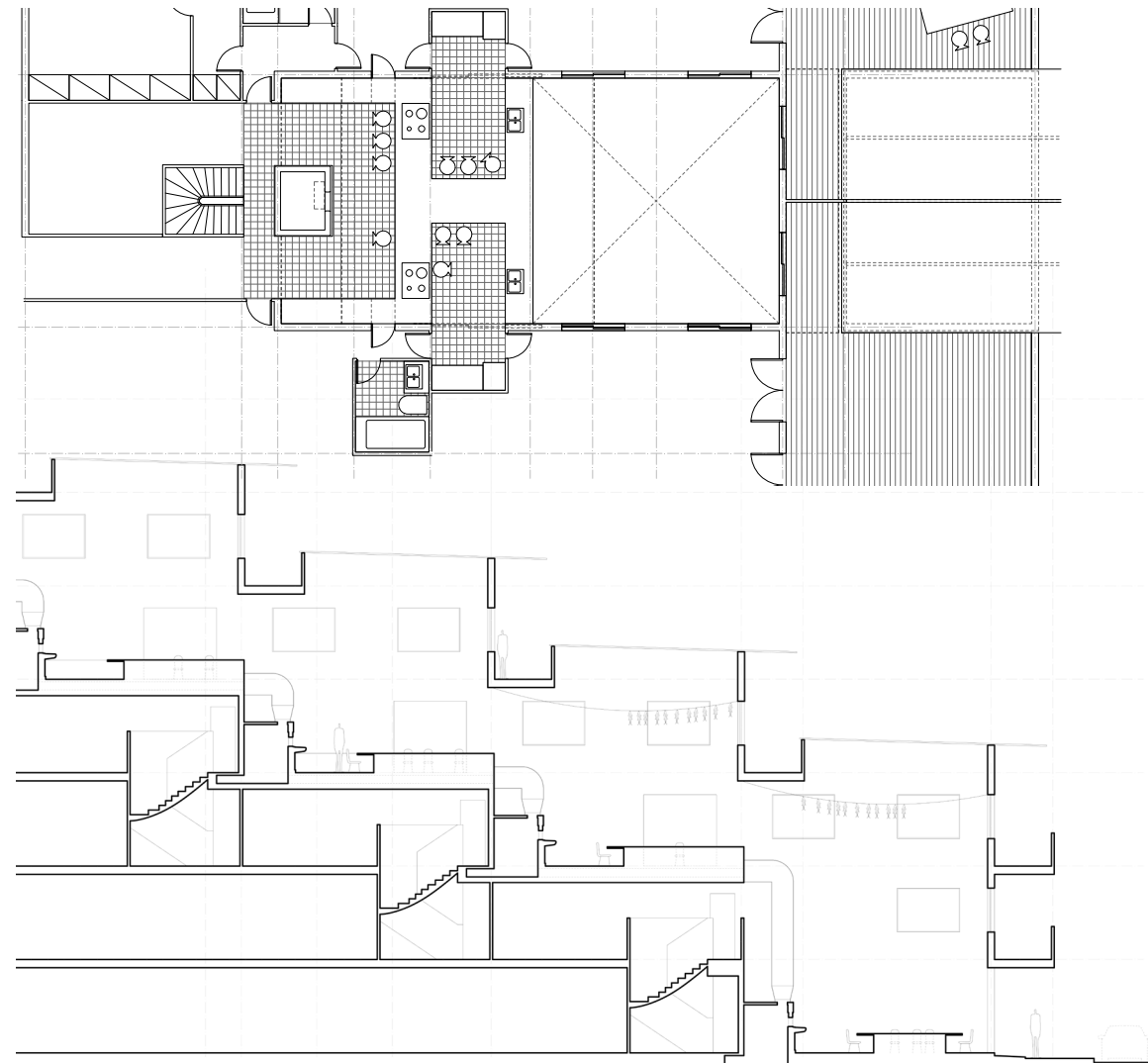
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Notes:

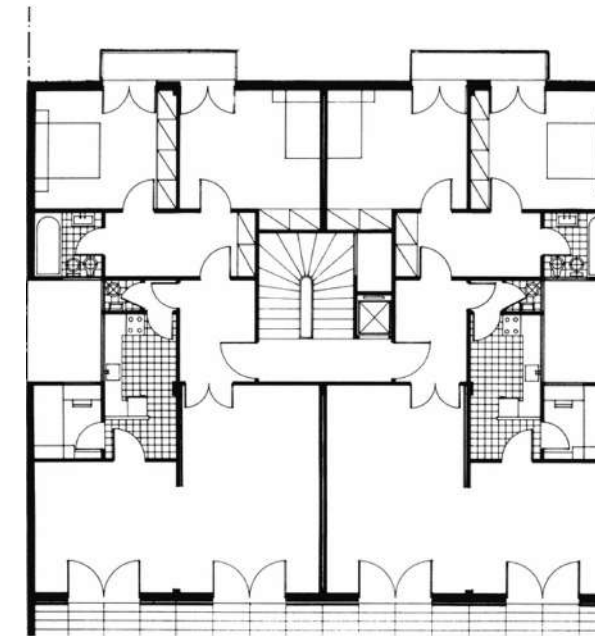
02-03. Politakis, A. (2025). Reinventing the Athenian Polykatoikia: Contemporary Approaches on an Urban Legacy. [Master's thesis, Politecnico di Milano].



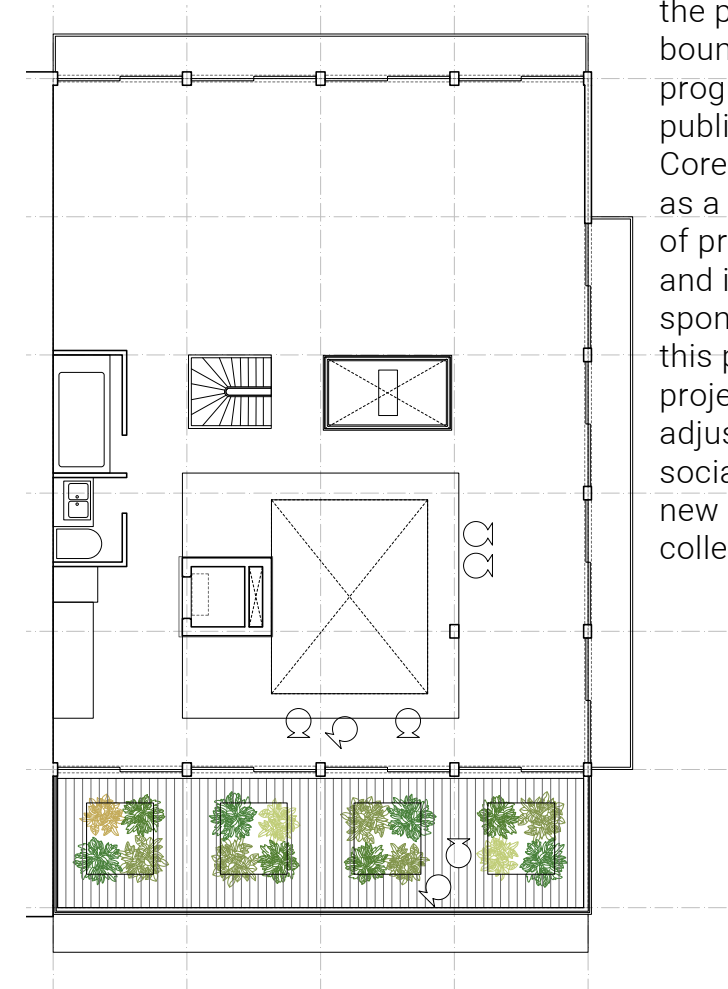
02



OIKONOMIA: Crafting Collectivity



03

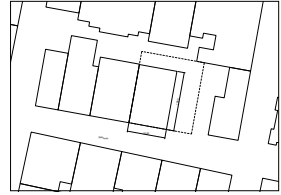


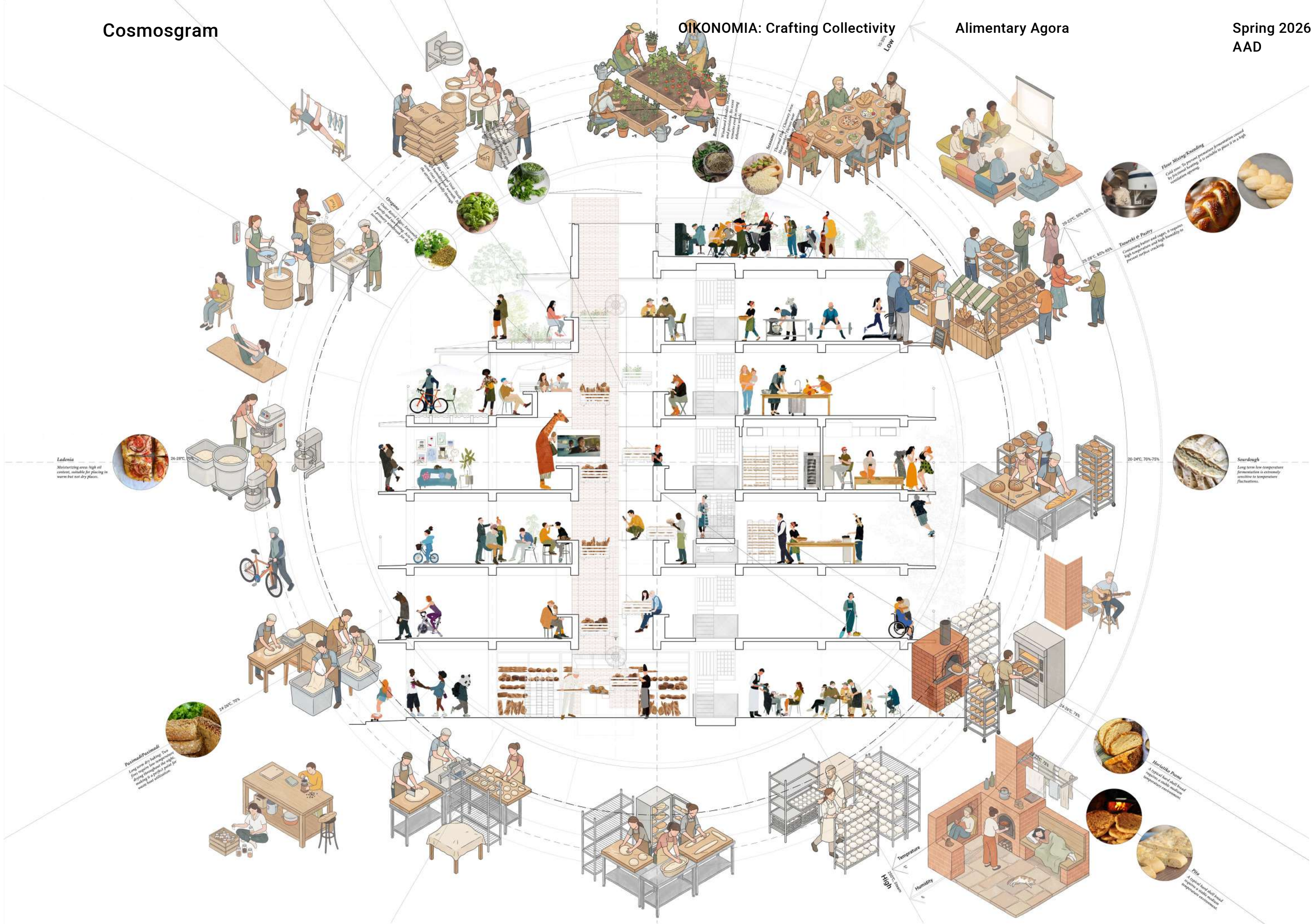
Alimentary Agora

The classic Athenian Polykatoikia stands as a testament to a specific era of urban densification, yet its internal logic often enforces a rigid separation between the private and the public. In the traditional floor plan, the kitchen is relegated to a secluded utility zone—a space of hidden labor—while the vertical circulation remains a purely functional "non-place" for transient passage. This research seeks to subvert this typological inertia by identifying the potential synergy between these two disparate elements.

My early design intervention proposes a radical synthesis: the fusion of the vertical circulation core with the domestic kitchen. By dissolving the physical and programmatic boundaries, a portion of the culinary program is externalized into a semi-public shared zone. This "Kitchen-Core" nexus reclaims the staircase as a social condenser, where the act of production—traditionally private and invisible—becomes a catalyst for spontaneous interaction. Through this preliminary exploration, the project moves beyond a simple layout adjustment, aiming to reorganize the social fabric of the building and foster a new form of vertical metabolism within collective housing.

Spring 2026
AAD









Alimentary Agora reimagines the Athenian Polykatoikia not as a static stack of domestic cells, but as a vertical metabolism where the production of sustenance serves as the primary engine for social and physical exchange. By internalizing the ritual of bread-making, the project disrupts the isolated privacy of the urban block, turning the "act of making" into a powerful catalyst for collective life.

The Vertical Machine: Gravity and Convection The architecture is structured by a rigorous thermodynamic gradient that choreographs a continuous loop of matter and energy. This is a building that breathes:

This building breathes through a dual metabolism of descending matter and ascending energy. At the summit, high-altitude winds and the Bernoulli effect stabilize the Dough Lab, where gravitational chutes allow dry flour to descend and transform into hydrated dough. Simultaneously, the ground-level Hearth acts as the building's thermal heart, driving a central stack-effect void that captures rising heat and moisture to naturally proof pastries in the mid-levels. Integrated setbacks serve as air-regulators, filtering Athenian winds through vertical gardens of oregano, rosemary, and basil to infuse these rising convective currents with a rich olfactory narrative.

The Social Piston: Production as Generator The core of the Alimentary Agora is a "spatial generator" designed to lure residents out of their private Monocells and into a shared sensory experience.

The centerpiece is a kinetic, semi-open platform—a "social piston"—that navigates the central void. This platform is the building's primary interface: it is a moving cooling rack, a delivery mechanism for fresh loaves, and a mobile counter where the baker and the resident meet. As it moves, it physically bridges different heights, temporarily aligning with communal benches to create spontaneous nodes for interaction.

The Urban Ritual: Spending Time Together

In this project, "spending time together" is not an abstract goal but a mechanical necessity. The warmth of the ovens, the "snowfall" of flour dust in the sunlit atrium, and the shared labor of the Communal Bench act as magnets. Residents are invited to linger within the thermal pockets of the hearth or gather on the cooling terraces, transforming the daily necessity of food into a collective urban ritual.

The Alimentary Agora ultimately proposes a new domesticity: one where the boundaries of the "home" are defined by the reach of scent, the gradient of heat, and the shared pulse of a productive engine.



01

Notes:

01. The Cigar Lake mine in northern Saskatchewan, Canada, is the world's highest-grade uranium mine, supplying roughly 11% of global demand. Operated by Cameco, it began commercial production in 2015, using specialized underground jet-boring technology to extract ore 450 meters deep.

Black refers to secrecy, fear, the color of uranium, opacity, a lot of things.

Under the title *Manhattan Black*, this project studies nuclear legacy as a continuous industrial and spatial system shaped by human mastery over nuclear technology. It begins from the real-world site of the Cigar Lake Uranium Mine in Canada, known as the highest-grade uranium source globally, and extends into a broader investigation of how uranium is mined, processed, circulated between military and civilian uses, and ultimately handled as waste. Through mapping over 200 related agents—from government agencies and multinational companies to geological strata and atmospheric systems—this study traces how nuclear materials move through extraction, enrichment, deployment, recycling, and storage. It critically examines existing nuclear waste management practices: from deep geological repositories to surface-level storage, revealing long-term political and technical challenges such as unclear responsibility, cost externalization, and environmental risk. Historical nuclear disasters like Chernobyl, Fukushima, and the Trinity Test are positioned not as isolated accidents but as points along an ongoing nuclear life cycle.

of complete removal or sealing, the former

mine is transformed into a Nuclear Legacy Pavilion, operated by a fictional post-2050 multinational named NUCAMECO. Unlike traditional hard containment strategies, NUCAMECO introduces bio-engineered shielding materials—fungal membranes, microbial films, and composite biopolymers—to adaptively reconstruct irradiated spaces without erasing existing infrastructure. The pavilion showcases these technologies as part of a broader planetary governance model, demonstrating how post-nuclear environments might be stabilized and inhabited. Through this, Manhattan Black connects technical history, material flow, and architectural speculation into a single study of nuclear legacy as a complex, unfinished chapter of human industrial civilization.

Mine Accident, Injury and Illness Report											
U.S. Department of Labor											
Mine Safety and Health Administration											
* Section A - Identification Data MSHA ID Number CIGAR001		Contractor ID NUCAMECO		Approved For Use Through 12/31/2004 OMB Number 1219-0007							
Report Category ☒ Metal/Nonmetal Mining ☐ Coal Mining		☐ Check here if report pertains to contractor									
Mine Name CIGAR LAKE URANIUM MINE		Company Name NUCAMECO									
* Section B - Complete for Each Reportable Accident Immediately Reported to MSHA											
1. Accident Code (circle applicable code - see instructions) ☐ 01 - Death ☒ 02 - Serious Injury ☐ 03 - Entrapment ☐ 04 - Inundation ☐ 05 - Gas or Dust Ignition ☐ 06 - Mine Fire ☐ 07 - Explosives ☐ 08 - Roof Fall ☐ 09 - Outburst ☐ 10 - Impounding Dam ☐ 11 - Hoisting ☐ 12 - Offsite injury											
2. Name of Investigator [REDACTED]		3. Date Investigation Started <table border="1" style="display: inline-table; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td>Month</td> <td>Day</td> <td>Year</td> </tr> <tr> <td>07</td> <td>30</td> <td>2035</td> </tr> </table>				Month	Day	Year	07	30	2035
Month	Day	Year									
07	30	2035									
		4. Steps Taken to Prevent Recurrence of Accident									
* Section C - Complete for Each Reportable Accident, Injury or Illness											
5. Circle the Codes Which Best Describe Where Accident/Injury/Illness Occurred (see instructions)											
(a) Surface Location: ☒ 01 Surface at Underground Mine ☐ 02 Surface at Preparation Plant, etc. ☐ 03 Strip/Open Pit Mine ☐ 04 Surface Auger Operation ☐ 05 Cull Bank/Refuse Pile ☐ 06 Dredge Mining ☐ 12 Other Surface Mining ☐ 17 Independent Shops (with own MSHA ID) ☐ 99 Office Facilities											
(b) Underground Location: ☐ 01 Vertical Shaft ☒ 02 Slope/Inclined Shaft ☐ 03 Face ☐ 04 Intersection ☐ 05 Underground Shop/Office ☐ 06 Other											
(c) Underground Mining Method: ☒ 01 Longwall ☐ 02 Shortwall ☐ 03 Conventional Stopping ☐ 05 Continuous Mining ☐ 06 Hand ☐ 07 Caving ☐ 08 Other											
6. Date of Accident <table border="1" style="display: inline-table; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td>Month</td> <td>Day</td> <td>Year</td> </tr> <tr> <td>07</td> <td>17</td> <td>2035</td> </tr> </table>		Month	Day	Year	07	17	2035	7. Time of Accident ☐ am 09:00 ☐ pm		8. Time Shift Started ☐ am 08:00 ☐ pm	
Month	Day	Year									
07	17	2035									
9. Describe Fully the Conditions Contributing to the Accident/Injury/Illness, and Quantify the Damage or Impairment. On 07/01/2035, at Cigar Lake Uranium Mine in Canada, the ice barrier failure led to large scale nuclear contamination. Groundwater, crops, the atmosphere, and the biosphere within dozens of kilometers were polluted. As a miner, I was exposed to severe radiation, and ingested nuclear contaminated gas and water. This caused serious damage to my body, including acute radiation sickness, damage to multiple internal organs (such as liver, kidney, and bone marrow), and long term risks of cancer and genetic mutations.											
10. Equipment Involved MINING DRILL		Manufacturer XYZ MINING EQUIPMENT CO.		Model Number DRILL-2020							
11. Name of Witness to Accident/Injury/Illness [REDACTED]		12. Number of Reportable Injuries or Illnesses Resulting from This Occurrence 3									
13. Name of Injured/Ill Employee [REDACTED]		14. Sex ☒ Male ☐ Female		15. Date of Birth <table border="1" style="display: inline-table; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td>Month</td> <td>Day</td> <td>Year</td> </tr> <tr> <td>[REDACTED]</td> <td>[REDACTED]</td> <td>[REDACTED]</td> </tr> </table>		Month	Day	Year	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Month	Day	Year									
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]									
16. Last Four Digits of Social Security Number [REDACTED]		17. Regular Job Title SENIOR TECHNICIAN		18. Check if this Injury/Illness resulted in death. ☐							
				19. Check if Injury/Illness resulted in permanent disability (include amputation, loss of use, & permanent total disability). ☒							
20. What Directly Inflicted Injury or Illness? NUCLEAR - CONTAMINATED GAS, WATER, AND RADIATION DUE TO ICE BARRIER		21. Nature of Injury or Illness ACUTE RADIATION SICKNESS, MULTIPLE ORGAN DAMAGE, AND LONG TERM HEALTH RISKS INCLUDING CANCER									
22. Part of Body Injured or Affected WHOLE BODY, WITH SPECIFIC SEVERE DAMAGE TO INTERNAL ORGANS LIKE LIVER, KIDNEY, AND BONE MARROW		23. Disorders (physical agents) [REDACTED]									
24. Employee's Work Activity When Injury or Illness Occurred UNDERGROUND MINING OPERATION, INCLUDING DRILLING AND ORE EXTRACTION		25. Experience in This Job Title 5		26. Experience at This Mine 5							
		27. Total Mining Experience 5									
* Section D - Return to Duty Information		Answer 30 & 31 when case is closed									
28. Permanently Transferred or Terminated (if checked, complete items 29, 30, & 31) ☒		29. Date Returned to Regular Job at Full Capacity (or item 28) <table border="1" style="display: inline-table; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td>Month</td> <td>Day</td> <td>Year</td> </tr> <tr> <td>N/A</td> <td>N/A</td> <td>N/A</td> </tr> </table>		Month	Day	Year	N/A	N/A	N/A	30. Number of Days Away from Work (if none, enter 0)	
Month	Day	Year									
N/A	N/A	N/A									
				31. Number of Days Restricted Work Activity (if none, enter 0)							
Person Completing Form (name) [REDACTED] Title SENIOR TECHNICIAN		Date This Report Prepared (month, Day, year) 24/03/2036 Area Code and Telephone Number +1- [REDACTED] -4135									
MSHA Form 7000-1, Feb 00 (revised)											

For Official Use Only

Degree **MAJOR**

Accident Type **CONTAMINATION**

Accident Class **CLASS A**

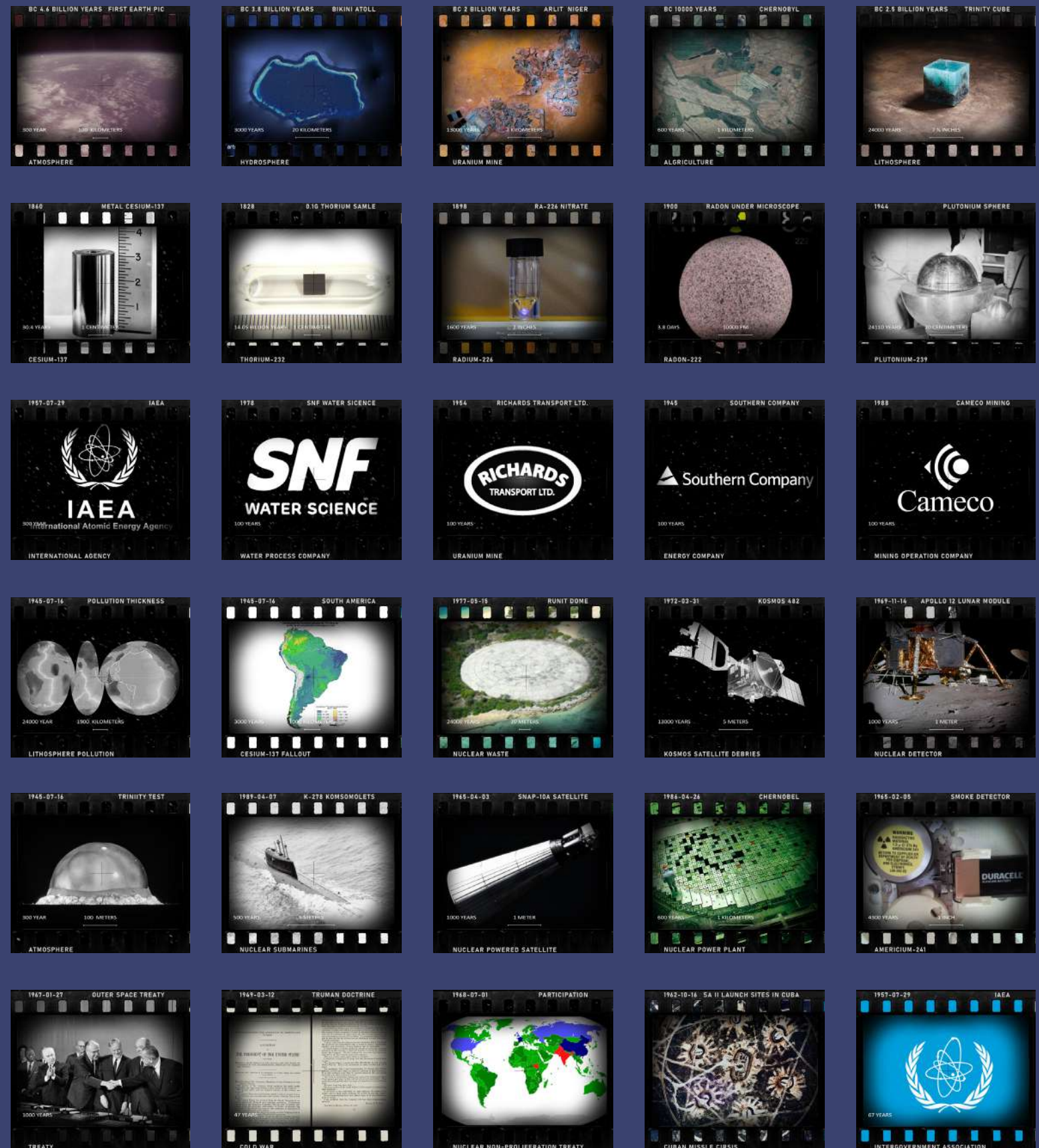
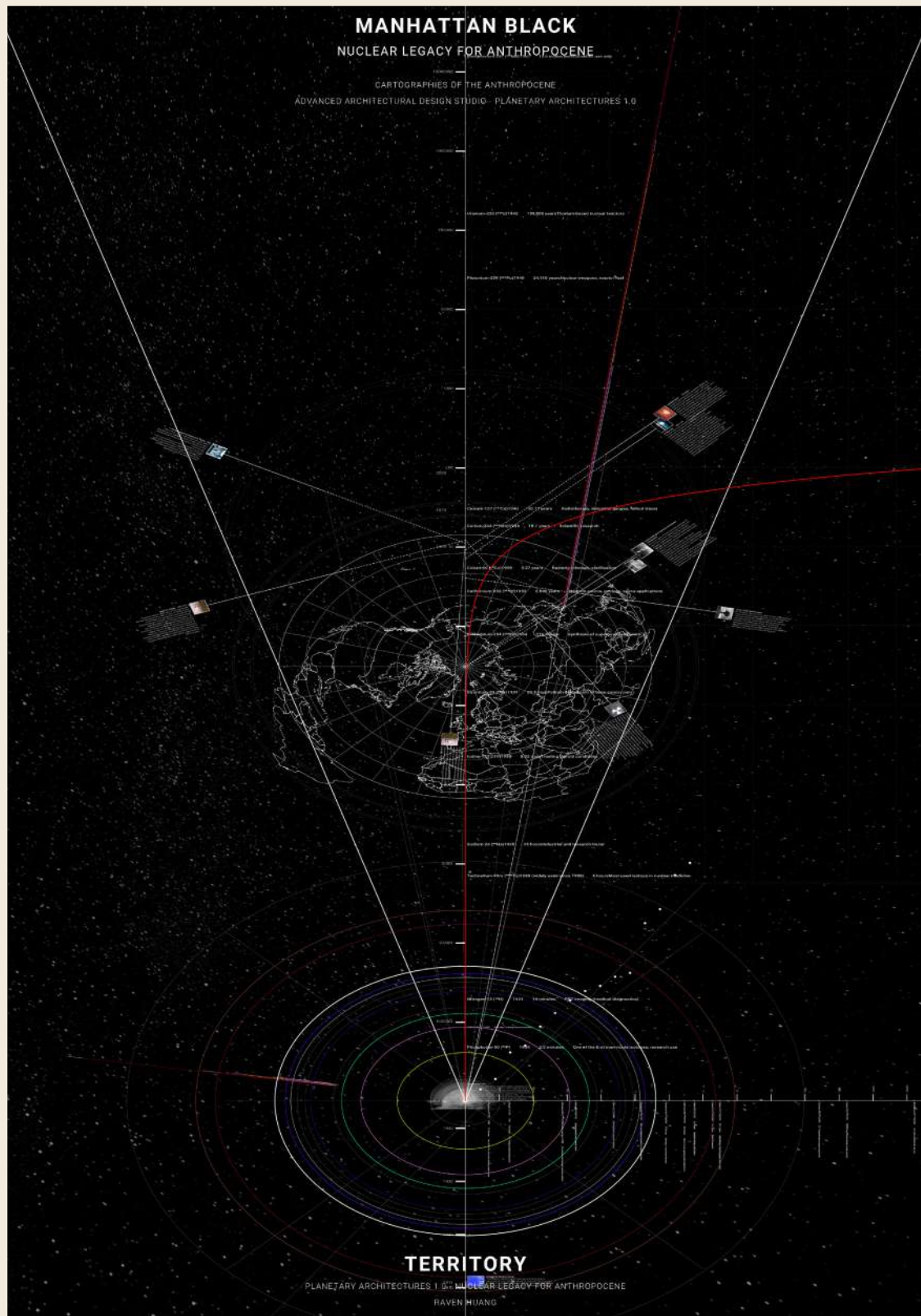
Scheduled Change **[REDACTED]**

Keyword **NUCLEAR, MINE, CONTAMINATION, ICE BARRIER, CANADA, CIGAR LAKE**

Notes:

Speculative US Dept. of Labor incident report for "Cigar Lake Uranium Mine", from a miner working in Cigar Lake Mine for company CAMECO in 2036.

Notes:



Cover:

Under the title *Manhattan Black*, this project studies nuclear legacy as a planetary industrial and spatial system shaped by human mastery over nuclear technology.

Mine:

It begins from the real-world site of the Cigar Lake Uranium Mine in Canada, known as the highest-grade uranium source globally,

Agents:

and extends into a broader investigation of how uranium is mined, processed, circulated between military and civilian uses, and ultimately handled as waste.

Networks:

Through mapping over 200 related agents from government agencies and multinational companies to ecosystems, this study traces how nuclear materials move through extraction, enrichment, deployment, recycling, and storage in a deep time scale.

Shaft drill:

Based on this perspective and understanding, the backdrop for this project is that after 2030, due to climate change and accidental factors.

Disaster:

Human uranium activities will almost inevitably face the risk of losing control and accidents. A fictional nuclear leak accident occurred at the Cigar Lake Mine, caused by the failure of the ice barrier (in fact, this is an almost inevitable risk in

the close future, as mine operations will only last for a few decades, but the pollution risk spans hundreds of thousands of years, and humanity currently lacks the ability to permanently manage nuclear waste. Who will address this visible threat in the future?).

Report:

The capital, political, and ecological factors involved in this accident force the surrounding environment and residents to confront a harsh reality: how to live in a world where nuclear risks are normalized? Mining companies and the public must reflect on

the conflict between our pursuit of nuclear energy and the black opacity of nuclear technology.

Archive:

To document, commemorate, and serve as a warning about this history, the corporation NUCAMECO rebranded from old mining company established this nuclear footprint archive at the very site of the Cigar Lake Uranium Mine, 500 meters underground.



My STUDY provides a starting point for the development of my PROJECT in three dimensions, perspective and UNDERSTANDING.

Firstly AGENTES, AGENTS can be recognized in terms of TIME RESOLUTION, SPACE RESOLUTION, which provides an opportunity to EXPAND my view to the whole.

The second is NETWORKS, which are entangled in a particular way and together form the planetary nuclear architecture, as Dennis Polh puts it. These networks emphasize two features:

1. nuclear is naturally opaque in a way that is contrary to the transparency that modernism proposes, so how to think about secrecy and security needs to be carefully considered.
2. nuclear is naturally two-faced, and people's quest for and fear of immense energy are like two forces pulling human beings as they enter the Anthropocene. The third is PERSPECTIVE, which is the same as the other two forces that have been pulling mankind into the Anthropocene.

Thirdly, perspective, unlike all other human activities, the nuclear footprint is the only human activity that has been able to affect the planet for much longer than human civilization, which is why many believe that the first atomic bombs marked the entry of mankind into the Anthropocene: the beginning of a continuous process of ejecting into the atmosphere, the hydrosphere, and the lithosphere radioactive materials that will remain for millions of years. Therefore the deep time scale perspective must be taken into account. the duration of the existence of the pavilion should be taken into account to be able to match the deep timescale of the nuclear footprint.

The "Manhattan Black" initiative envisions a fictional archival project led by NUCAMECO corporation, completed by 2050 locating at the original shaft of Canada's Cigar Lake uranium mine- 500 meters underground.

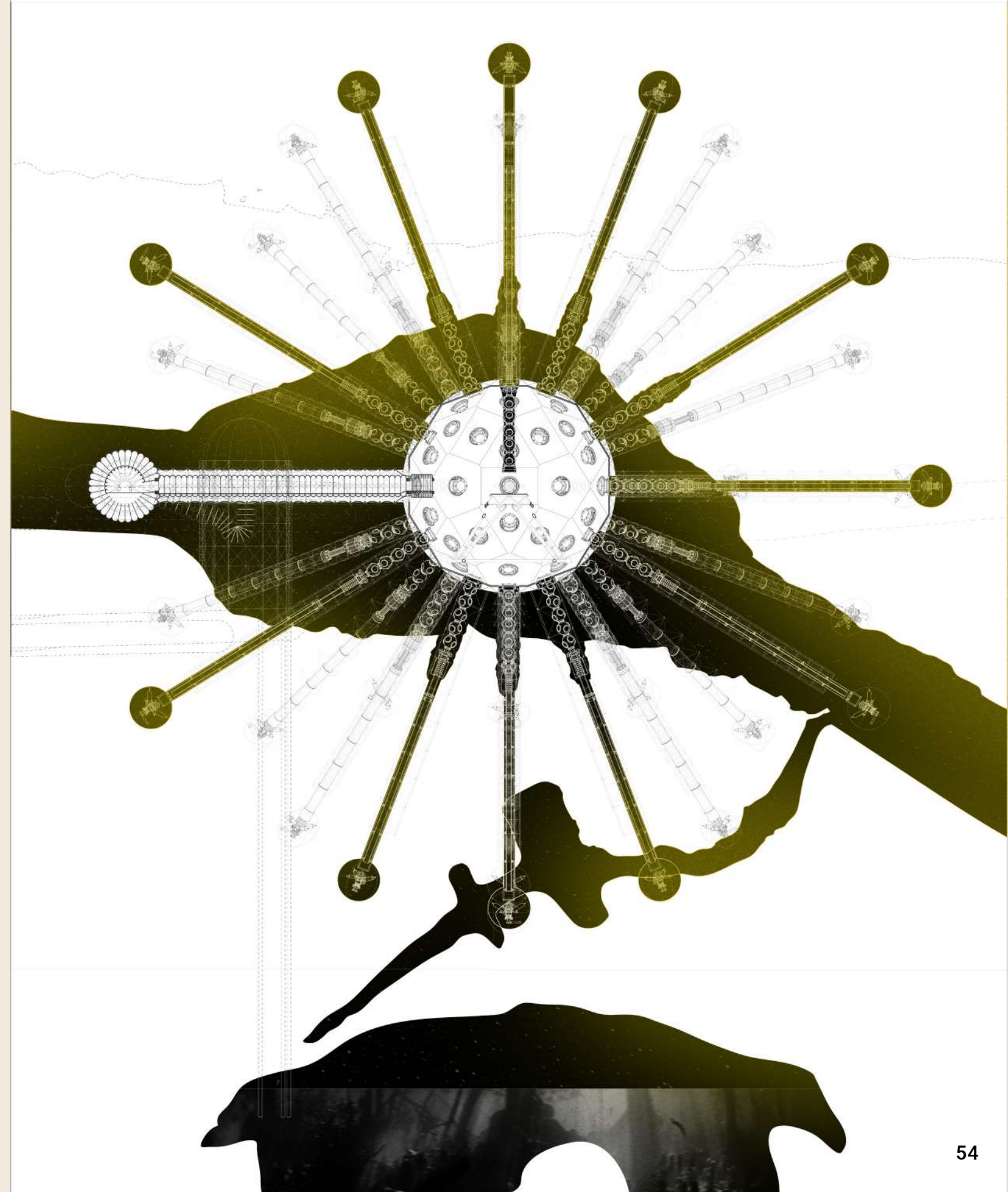
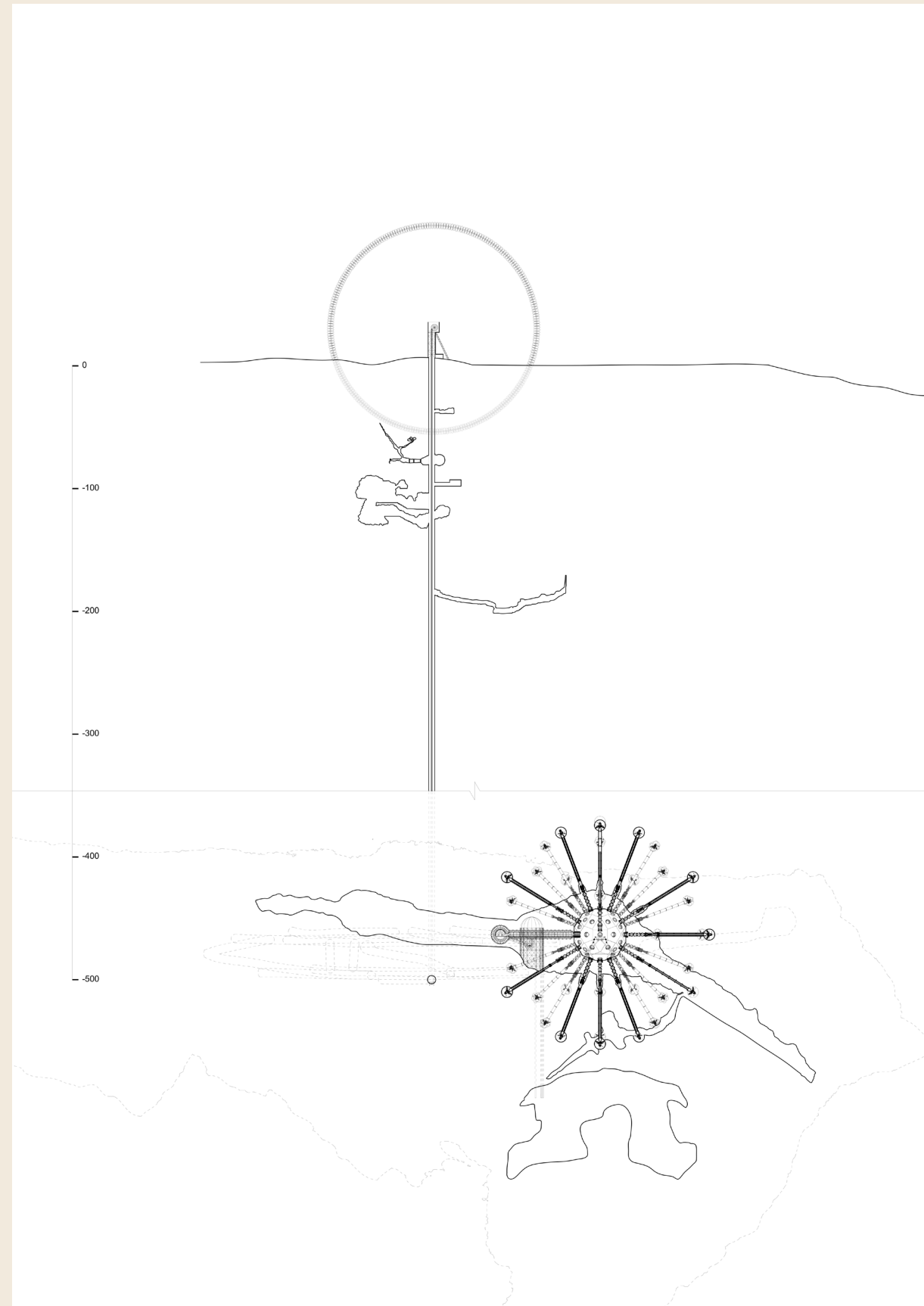
So what is the crisis?

By the 2030s, climate change, political conflict, and technological failures have rendered the containment and handling of nuclear waste and radioactive operations unavoidably effect Earth's atmosphere, hydrosphere, biosphere, and lithosphere.

Chernobyl, Nuclear Dome, Fukushima.... For the first time since the Trinity Test, the concept of "nuclear heritage" has entered global consciousness as a normalized condition- marking humanity's collective reckoning with sustained nuclear pollution and our evolving strategies for co-existing with its consequences.

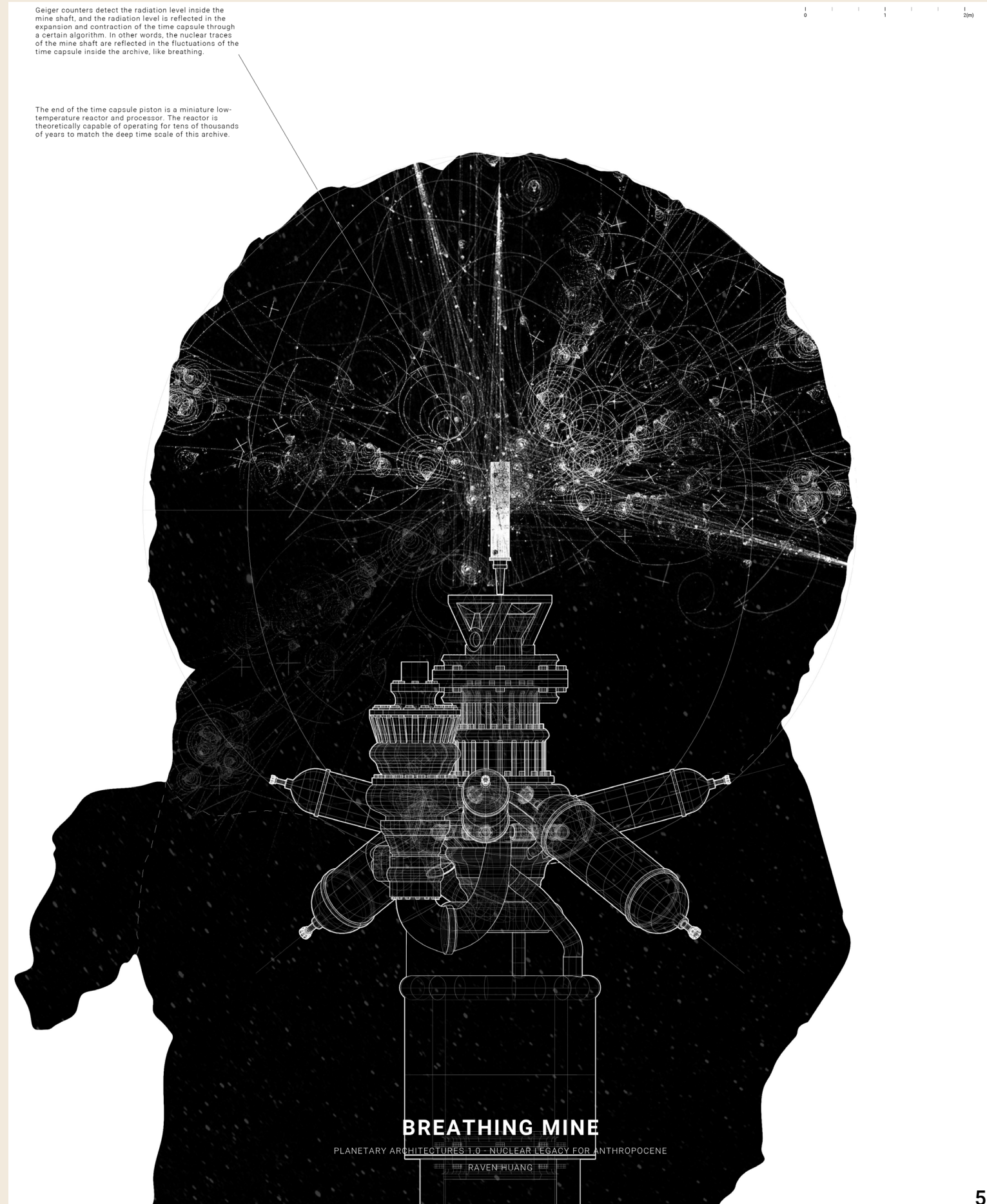
As the temperature going up and future global warming is solid, cigar lake uranium mine is confronted with the risk of *ice barrier* failure. Therefore the project is based on a fictional disaster in 2035 that caused serious pollutions to its surroundings due to technical failure.

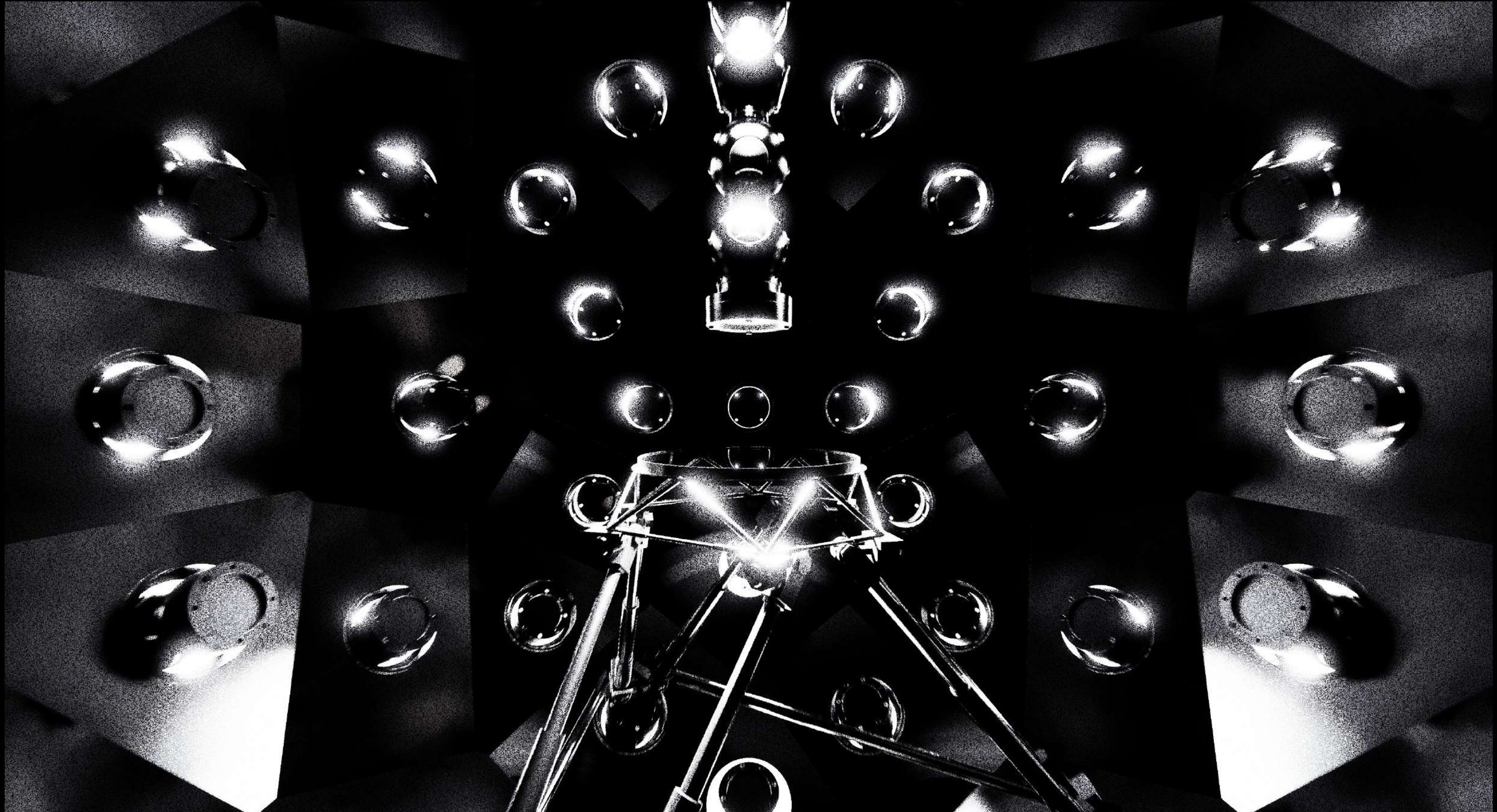
Notes:
01. Ice Barrier: Ice Barrier technology freezes underground water or soil to form an "ice wall" that blocks radioactive waste from spreading -used for pollution control in radioactive or underground mining zones.



In the wake of the 2035 "Ice Barrier Failure" at Canada's Cigar Lake, NUCAMECO pivoted from resource extraction to a mandate of ecological transparency and social responsibility. As the uranium mine reached exhaustion in 2050, the company transformed the site into "Manhattan Black"—a planetary archive documenting humanity's nuclear footprint.

Located 500 meters underground within the hollowed ore body, the archive is centered around a suspended spherical core. Radiating structures, reminiscent of historical drill shafts, extend into the rock to house chronological capsules. Visitors descend via converted shafts, undergoing rigorous decontamination before entering this "Climax" space. Here, the archive "breathes": an algorithm translates real-time radiation fluctuations into the physical expansion and contraction of the capsules. Powered by a millenary low-temperature reactor, "Manhattan Black" serves as a permanent repository of nuclear artifacts—from contaminated medical waste to the records of victims—preserving the warnings of the Anthropocene for deep time.





CISURA

Spring 2026 Elective:
Critic:
Designer:

Multigraphic Design
Wael Morcos
Raven Huang

The Cisura typeface is a formal experiment in Boolean excavation, designed to bridge the gap between architectural mass and typographic legibility. Rather than following the additive logic of calligraphy, Cisura treats each letterform as a monolithic slab subjected to a single, unified subtractive operation: the circular incision.

The project's primary challenge was to establish a universal geometric protocol that could govern the entire alphabet. By utilizing a consistent curvilinear void to "cut" through solid rectangular volumes, the typeface achieves a rhythmic cohesion. This minimalist constraint—using one type of subtraction to define every character—ensures that the visual language remains systemic rather than decorative. It is not about drawing letters; it is about uncovering them through the removal of material.

The design employs an architectural "Egyptology"—the ancient art of excavating space from within a solid. Mirroring rock-cut architecture, each letterform is a lithic entity where space is "discovered" through subtraction rather than construction. Surgical incisions hollow out the mass, transforming the alphabet into a series of miniature excavated chambers.

The visual impact relies on the Gestalt principle of Reification (Closure). The experiment explores the threshold of recognition: how much of a letter's mass can be subtracted before it loses its identity? By pushing the boundaries of the Figure-Ground relationship, Cisura strikes a delicate balance between high legibility and a strange, uncanny presence.

The "fissures" create an estrangement effect, forcing the viewer to pause and reconstruct the familiar symbols. This tension—the struggle between the solid slab and the elegant, surgical arc—transforms a utilitarian tool into a provocative spatial experience, where the "missing" space is as communicative as the remaining mass.

ELECTRIC STATIC SCRE
ABAINETHEROULETTH
NEONMEINSOFAELTC
HINCEUNIVERSSEERAM
TYSALIDESOLDRYTHE
COFFEEBACCHINEVIE
ARETHECOBARBUSTION
OFATHOUSANDDISTO
RTHESSUNSCRASHING
INTOAPLASTICCOCEAN
FEEDTHEVOLTAGETO
THEBASSSELTARLUNT
LTHOESKYCRACKSLIK
EACRYSTALLEEENORBR
AKESNOAPOLOGIDES
LSTHERAVREVERBO
FTHEENDLESVOIDV
MISPERINGINTHUNDER
TSOLDBYTHECOFFEE

The Crystal Goblet, or Printing Should Be Invisible

Author: Beatrice Warde (1900 -- 1969)



01

Notes:

01. This photograph shows Alfred Hitchcock directing James Stewart and Grace Kelly on the set of the 1954 thriller Rear Window

Construction: The entire set for the film was constructed on a soundstage at Paramount Pictures, modeled after a Greenwich Village courtyard in New York City.

02. The construction of the Oberrealta Chapel in Switzerland, a minimalist structure designed by the Swiss architect Christian Kerez.



02

Imagine that you have before you a flagon of wine. You may choose your own favourite vintage for this imaginary demonstration, so that it be a deep shimmering crimson in colour. You have two goblets before you. One is of solid gold, wrought in the most exquisite patterns. The other is of crystal-clear glass, thin as a bubble, and as transparent. Pour and drink; and according to your choice of goblet, I shall know whether or not you are a connoisseur of wine. For if you have no feelings about wine one way or the other, you will want the sensation of drinking the stuff out of a vessel that may have cost thousands of pounds; but if you are a member of that vanishing tribe, the amateurs of fine vintages, you will choose the crystal, because everything about it is calculated to reveal rather than hide the beautiful thing which it was meant to contain.

Bear with me in this long-winded and fragrant metaphor; for you will find that almost all the virtues of the perfect wine-glass have a parallel in typography. There is the long, thin stem that obviates fingerprints on the bowl. Why? Because no cloud must come between your eyes and the fiery heart of the liquid. Are not the margins on book pages similarly meant to obviate the necessity of fingering the type-page? Again: the glass is colourless or at the

most only faintly tinged in the bowl, because the connoisseur judges wine partly by its colour and is impatient of anything that alters it. There are a thousand mannerisms in typography that are as impudent and arbitrary as putting port in tumblers of red or green glass!

When a goblet has a base that looks too small for security, it does not matter how cleverly it is weighted; you feel nervous lest it should tip over. There are ways of setting lines of type which may work well enough, and yet keep the reader subconsciously worried by the fear of 'doubling' lines, reading three words as one, and so forth.

Now the man who first chose glass instead of clay or metal to hold his wine was a 'modernist' in the sense in which I am going to use that term. That is, the first thing he asked of his particular object was not 'How should it look?' but 'What must it do?' and to that extent all good typography is modernist.

Wine is so strange and potent a thing that it has been used in the central ritual of religion in one place and time, and attacked by a virago with a hatchet in another. There is only one thing in the world that is capable of stirring and altering men's minds to the same extent, and that is the coherent expression of thought. That is man's chief miracle, unique to man. There is no 'explanation'

Multigraphic Design

whatever of the fact that I can make arbitrary sounds which will lead a total stranger to think my own thought. It is sheer magic that I should be able to hold a one-sided conversation by means of black marks on paper with an unknown person half-way across the world. Talking, broadcasting, writing, and printing are all quite literally forms of thought transference, and it is the ability and eagerness to transfer and receive the contents of the mind that is almost alone responsible for human civilization.

If you agree with this, you will agree with my one main idea, i.e. that the most important thing about printing is that it conveys thought, ideas, images, from one mind to other minds. This statement is what you might call the front door of the science of typography. Within lie hundreds of rooms; but unless you start by assuming that printing is meant to convey specific and coherent ideas, it is very easy to find yourself in the wrong house altogether.

Before asking what this statement leads to, let us see what it does not necessarily lead to. If books are printed in order to be read, we must distinguish readability from what the optician would call legibility. A page set in 14-pt Bold Sans is, according to the laboratory tests, more 'legible' than one set in 11-pt Baskerville. A public speaker is more 'audible' in that sense when he bellows. But a good speaking voice is one which is inaudible as a voice. It is the transparent goblet again! I need not warn you that if you begin listening to the inflections and speaking rhythms of a voice from a platform, you are falling asleep. When you listen to a song in a

Rear Window Project

language you do not understand, part of your mind actually does fall asleep, leaving your quite separate aesthetic sensibilities to enjoy themselves unimpeded by your reasoning faculties.

The fine arts do that; but that is not the purpose of printing. Type well used is invisible as type, just as the perfect talking voice is the unnoticed vehicle for the transmission of words, ideas. We may say, therefore, that printing may be delightful for many reasons, but that it is important, first and foremost, as a means of doing something. That is why it is mischievous to call any printed piece a work of art, especially fine art: because that would imply that its first purpose was to exist as an expression of beauty for its own sake and for the delectation of the senses.

Calligraphy can almost be considered a fine art nowadays, because its primary economic and educational purpose has been taken away; but printing in English will not qualify as an art until the present English language no longer conveys ideas to future generations, and until printing itself hands its usefulness to some yet unimagined successor.

There is no end to the maze of practices in typography, and this idea of printing as a conveyor is, at least in the minds of all the great typographers with whom I have had the privilege of talking, the one clue that can guide you through the maze. Without this essential humility of mind, I have seen ardent designers go more hopelessly wrong, make more ludicrous mistakes out of an excessive enthusiasm, than I could have thought possible. And with this clue, this purposiveness in the back of your mind,

Fall 2025 AAD



03

Notes:

03. The photo documents a "happening" organized by the Provo movement, a Dutch counterculture group active in the mid-1960s that used non-violent provocations to challenge authorities.

Notes:

01. Comparison between traditional Chinese painting and transparency experiment.

Content is Beyond the containor.

it is possible to do the most unheard-of things, and find that they justify you triumphantly. It is not a waste of time to go to the simple fundamentals and reason from them. In the flurry of your individual problems, I think you will not mind spending half an hour on one broad and simple set of ideas involving abstract principles.

I once was talking to a man who designed a very pleasing advertising type which undoubtedly all of you have used. I said something about what artists think about a certain problem, and he replied with a beautiful gesture: 'Ah, madam, we artists do not think--we feel!' That same day I quoted that remark to another designer of my acquaintance, and he, being less poetically inclined, murmured: 'I'm not feeling very well today, I think!' He was right, he did think; he was the thinking sort; and that is why he is not so good a painter, and to my mind ten times better as a typographer and type designer than the man who instinctively avoided anything as coherent as a reason.

I always suspect the typographic enthusiast who takes a printed page from a book and frames it to hang on the wall, for I believe that in order to gratify a sensory delight he has mutilated something infinitely more important. I remember that T.M. Cleland, the famous American typographer, once showed me a very beautiful layout for a Cadillac booklet involving decorations in colour. He did not have the actual text to work with in drawing up his specimen pages, so he had set the lines in Latin. This was not only for the reason that you will all think of; if you have seen the

old typefoundries' famous Quousque Tandem copy (i.e. that Latin has few descenders and thus gives a remarkably even line).

No, he told me that originally he had set up the dullest 'wording' that he could find (I dare say it was from Hansard), and yet he discovered that the man to whom he submitted it would start reading and making comments on the text. I made some remark on the mentality of Boards of Directors, but Mr Cleland said, 'No: you're wrong; if the reader had not been practically forced to read---if he had not seen those words suddenly imbued with glamour and significance---then the layout would have been a failure. Setting it in Italian or Latin is only an easy way of saying "This is not the text as it will appear".'

Let me start my specific conclusions with book typography, because that contains all the fundamentals, and then go on to a few points about advertising. The book typographer has the job of erecting a window between the reader inside the room and that landscape which is the author's words. He may put up a stained-glass window of marvellous beauty, but a failure as a window; that is, he may use some rich superb type like text gothic that is something to be looked at, not through. Or he may work in what I call transparent or invisible typography. I have a book at home, of which I have no visual recollection whatever as far as its typography goes; when I think of it, all I see is the Three Musketeers and their comrades swaggering up and down the streets of Paris.

The third type of window is one in which the glass is broken into relatively small leaded panes; and this corresponds to what is called 'fine printing' today, in that you are at least conscious that there is a window there, and that someone has enjoyed building it. That is not objectionable, because of a very important fact which has to do with the psychology of the subconscious mind. That is that the mental eye focuses through type and not upon it.

The type which, through any arbitrary warping of design or excess of 'colour', gets in the way of the mental picture to be conveyed, is a bad type. Our subconsciousness is always afraid of blunders (which illogical setting, tight spacing and too-wide unleaded lines can trick us into), of boredom, and of officiousness. The running headline that keeps shouting at us, the line that looks like one long word, the capitals jammed together without hair-spaces---these mean subconscious squinting and loss of mental focus.

And if what I have said is true of book printing, even of the most exquisite limited editions, it is fifty times more obvious in advertising, where the one and only justification for the purchase of space is that you are conveying a message---that you are implanting a desire, straight into the mind of the reader. It is tragically easy to throw away half the reader-interest of an advertisement by setting the simple and compelling argument in a face which is uncomfortably alien to the classic reasonableness of the book-face. Get attention as you will by your headline, and make any pretty type pictures you

like if you are sure that the copy is useless as a means of selling goods; but if you are happy enough to have really good copy to work with, I beg you to remember that thousands of people pay hard-earned money for the privilege of reading quietly set book-pages, and that only your wildest ingenuity can stop people from reading a really interesting text.

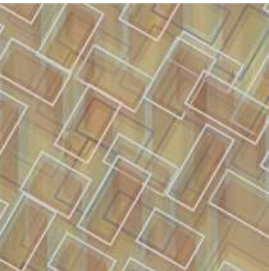
Printing demands a humility of mind, for the lack of which many of the fine arts are even now floundering in self-conscious and maudlin experiments. There is nothing simple or dull in achieving the transparent page. Vulgar ostentation is twice as easy as discipline. When you realise that ugly typography never effaces itself; you will be able to capture beauty as the wise men capture happiness by aiming at something else. The 'stunt typographer' learns the fickleness of rich men who hate to read. Not for them are long breaths held over serif and kern, they will not appreciate your splitting of hair-spaces. Nobody (save the other craftsmen) will appreciate half your skill. But you may spend endless years of happy experiment in devising that crystalline goblet which is worthy to hold the vintage of the human mind.



02

Notes:

02. Four irrelevant images indicating similar impressions.



01



Notes:

Michael Rock (born 1959)[1] is an American graphic designer and recipient of the National Design Award.

In *Designer as Author* I argued that we are insecure about the value of our work. We are envious of the power, social position and cachet that artists and authors seem to command. By declaring ourselves “designer/authors” we hope to garner similar respect. Our deep-seated anxiety has motivated a movement in design that values origination of content over manipulation of content.

Designer as
Author was
an attempt to
recuperate the act

of design itself as essentially linguistic—a vibrant, evocative language. However, it has often been read as a call for designers to generate content: in effect, to become designers and authors, not designers as authors. While I am all for more authors, that was not quite the point I wanted to make.

The problem is one of content. The misconception is that without deep content, design is reduced to pure style, a bag of dubious tricks. In graphic-design

circles, form-follows-function is reconfigured as form-follows-content. If content is the source of form, always preceding it and imbuing it with meaning, form without content (as if that were even possible) is some kind of empty shell.

The apotheosis of this notion, repeated ad nauseum (still!), is Beatrice Warde's famous Crystal Goblet metaphor, which asserts that design (the glass) should be a transparent vessel for content (the wine). Anyone who favored the

ornate or the bejeweled was a knuckle-dragging oaf. Agitators on both sides of the ideological spectrum took up the debate: minimalists embraced it as a manifesto; maximalists decried it as aesthetic fascism. Neither camp questioned the basic, implicit premise: it's all about the wine.

This false dichotomy has circulated for so long that we have started to believe it ourselves. It has become a central tenet of design education and the benchmark

against which all design is judged. We seem to accept the fact that developing content is more essential than shaping it, that good content is the measure of good design.

Back when Paul Rand wrote “There is no such thing as bad content, only bad form,” I remember being intensely annoyed. I took it as an abdication of a designer’s responsibility to meaning. Over time, I have come to read it differently: he was not defending hate speech or shock or banality; he meant that the designer’s purview is to shape, not to write. But that shaping itself is a profoundly affecting form.

(Perhaps this is the reason that modern designers—Rand, Munari, Leoni—always seem to end their careers designing

children's books. The children's book is the purest venue of the designer/author because the content is negligible and the evocative potential of the form unlimited.)

So what else is new? This seems to be a rather mundane point, but for some reason we don't really believe it. We don't believe shaping is enough. So to bring design out from under the thumb of content we must go one step further and observe that treatment is, in fact, a kind of text itself, as complex and referential as any traditional understanding of content.

A director can be the esteemed auteur of a film he didn't write, score, edit or shoot. What makes a Hitchcock film a Hitchcock film is not the story but a consistency

of style, which winds intact through different technologies, plots, actors, and time periods like a substance of its own. Every film is about filmmaking. His great genius is that he is able to mold the form into his style in a genuinely unique and entertaining way. The meaning of his work is not in the story but in the storytelling.

Designers also trade in storytelling. The elements we must master are not the content narratives but the devices of the telling: typography, line, form, color, contrast, scale, weight. We speak through our assignment, literally between the lines.

The span of graphic design is not a history of concepts but of forms. Form has evolved dramatically from one year to the next, and suggests

a profession that continually revises and reshapes the world through the way it is rendered. Stellar examples of graphic design, design that changes the way we look at the world, are often found in service of the most mundane content: an ad for ink, cigarettes, sparkplugs or machinery. Think of Piet Zwart's catalogues for electrical cable; or the travel posters of Cassandre or Matter; or the New Wave work of Weingart, Greiman and Freidman; or the punk incitations of Jamie Reid, in which the manipulation of form has an essential, even transformative, meaning. At a 1962 conference at the Museum of Modern Art, conservative art critic Hilton Kramer denounced Pop Art as "indistinguishable

Notes: 01

"Due East through Chimney Spring Ranch" by Amie and Matthew Rangel.

Notes:

"Version" (2009) by artists Sinta Werner and Markus Wüste.

Notes:

Oberrealta Chapel Plan drawing, 1:50.

Notes:

ONCO HAVEN, created by Michael Yoshimura as part of his Master of Architecture thesis at Carleton University in 2020.

Notes:

A Gyotaku fish print, a traditional Japanese art form used to record catches by inking a real fish onto paper.

Notes: 26

"Willem Dafoe: A Life in Pictures." part of a 2023 editorial for GQ Italia.

Notes: 31

"Qiao's Laugh" taken on November 15, 1971, at the United Nations General Assembly Hall in New York.

Notes: 02

SAMS KITCHEN_ AXON designed by June14 Meyer-Grohbrugge & Chermayeff.

Notes:

Moore-Turnbull offices in New Haven, Connecticut, MLTW

Notes:

Modernist polykatoikia apartment building on Patisision Street in Athens, designed by Dimitris Fatouros, 1957.

Notes:

Thomas Harriot's lunar maps from 1609, produced by telescopic observations.



22

Notes: 27

Plan of *Hyperreality Studio Project*.

Notes: 32

Sweet Dreams, Physical translation of the hotel in *The Shining*.

Notes: 03

A Grandma's Kitchen, Measured by Lara Agosti, created, 2012.

Notes:

The layout of stones at Stonehenge, specifically identifying key components of the central sarsen and bluestone.

Notes:

behind-the-scenes view of the elaborate indoor set for Alfred Hitchcock's 1954 film, Rear Window.

Notes:

The Apollo 12 Lunar Module, Intrepid, on the lunar surface in November 1969.

Notes: 23

Photograph by Pia-Paulina Guilmoth titled "i'd look like a flower if i could".

Notes: 28

Scottish Catsles.

Notes: 33

Early air conditioners were bulky but effective [Breez-o-Mat 500, 1912].

Notes: 04

The greenhouse, created by the French multimedia artist Bernard Moninot during the 1970s and 1980s.

Notes:

Urban Druid performing spirit sorcery in park, around year 1900.

Notes:

The first map comes from the post - Age of Exploration and colonial expansion.

Notes:

blueprint displaying the structural engineering design of the Statue of Liberty.

Notes: 24

Plan drawing of Disney World, LA.

Notes: 29

"Pine Trees screen" (Shorin-zu byobu) by the 16th-century Japanese master Hasegawa Tohaku.

Notes: 34

Stage Design as a Narrative Device: Norman Bel Geddes' Stage Set for The Divine Comedy (1921).

Notes: 05

A water merry-go-round is used to assist boys learning to swim, Cincinnati school, 1914.

Notes:

Shelter for Roman Ruins, Peter Zumthor.

Notes:

Florilegium. Or the probity of language as creator of space, created by Razvan Login

Notes:

exhibited work "Mickeyverse" by Zigeng Wang.

Notes: 25

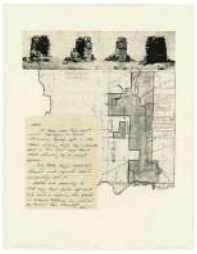
Story board of *Hyperreality Studio Project*.

Notes: 30

"The Muse with Branch from Mulberry Tree", by the Bulgarian photographer Arslan Ahmedov.

Notes: 35

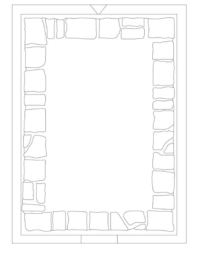
The Architecture of the Workspace: Axonometric Drawings by Peter Judson.



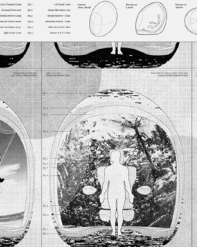
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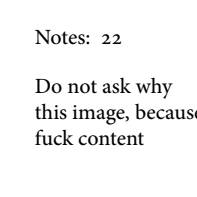
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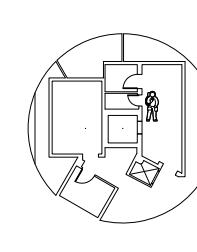
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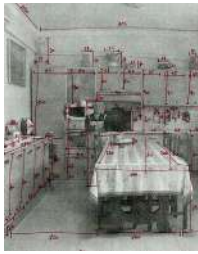
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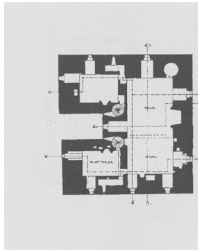
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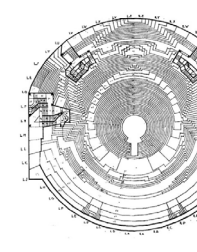
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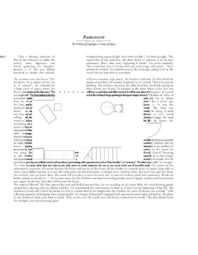
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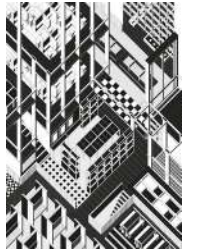
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Which Craft is Content?

from advertising art” because “Pop Art does not tell us what it feels like to be living through the present moment of civilization. Its social effect is simply to reconcile us to a world of commodities, banalities and vulgarities.” But perhaps the content of graphic design is exactly that: an evocation of “what it feels like to be living through the present moment of civilization,” with all its “commodities, banalities and vulgarities.” How else can we discuss the content of a typeface or why the typography of a surfing magazine suddenly becomes relevant?



Or how a series of made-up or ‘self-initiated’ posters—already a medium of dubious functionality— can end up on the wall of a major design museum? Work must be saying something, which is different than being about something.

Because the nature of the designed object is limited, individual objects are rarely substantial enough to contain fully rendered ideas. Ideas develop over many projects, spanning years. Form itself is indexical. We are intimately, physically connected to the work we produce, and it is inevitable that our work bears our stamp. The choice of projects in each designer’s oeuvre lays out a map of interests and proclivities. (I use the singular designer in the categorical sense, not the individual.) The way those projects are parsed out, disassembled, reorganized and rendered

reveals a philosophy, an aesthetic position, an argument and a critique.

This deep connection to making also positions design in a modulating role between the user and the world. By manipulating form, design reshapes that essential relationship. Form is replaced by exchange. The things we make negotiate a relationship over which we have a profound control.

The trick is to find ways to speak through treatment, via a range of rhetorical devices— from the written to the visual to the operational—to make those proclamations as poignant as possible, and to return consistently to central ideas, to re-examine and re-express. In this way we build a body of work, and from that body of work emerges a singular message, maybe even what it feels like to be living now. As a popular film critic once wrote, “*A movie is not what it is about, it’s how it is about it.*” Likewise, for us, our What is a How. Our content is, perpetually, Design itself.

Notes:

01. This famous quote by film critic Roger Ebert means that a film’s subject matter (the plot summary) is less important than its execution (direction, acting, tone, and style). A compelling “how” can make a simple story great, while a poor “how” can ruin a profound topic.

Multigraphic Design

Rear Window Project

Spring 2026 AAD



01



Theaters Series of Photography Works by Hiroshi Sugimoto



Notes:

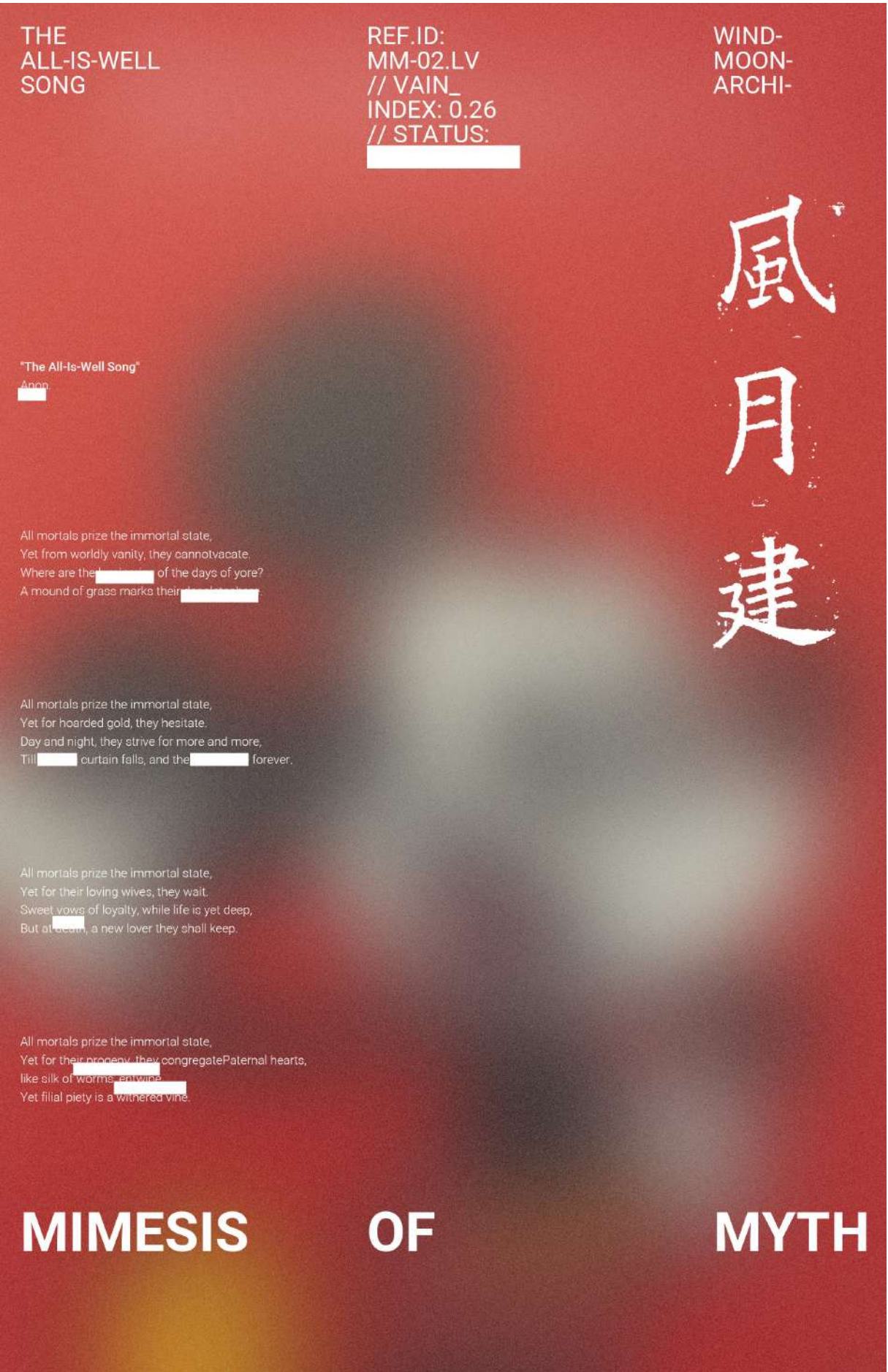
01. Sugimoto began making these works in grand American movie palaces (the Cabot Cinema was also the site of a long-running magic show), and expanded to include drive-in screens, abandoned theaters and Italian opera houses. Works like this one reflect Sugimoto’s interest in the architecture of such spaces, as well as exploring the relationship between photography, imagination, memory and the passage of time.

We often think of photography’s capacity to freeze time or to “capture” a moment, but film might be understood as starting the clock again or as reanimating our world.



REAR WINDOW PROJECT

Content is Witchcraft



Notes.

In designing this poster, I approached the familiar Mickey symbol not as an icon of joy, but as a rigid biological shell constructed by consumerism that restricts individual identity.

To translate this critique visually, I applied a heavy Gaussian blur to the background image, liquefying the icon's clean vector lines and turning it into an ambiguous, fading artifact. I then counteracted this visual dissolution with the precision of architectural drafting. Utilizing a modular grid in InDesign, I structured the English translation of "The All-Is-Well Song" into rigid, technical columns, mimicking spatial specifications. To heighten the sense of a redacted archive, I used white blocks to obscure key phrases, while the metadata and custom-coded serial numbers impose a cold order over the blurred red canvas. This direct collision between rational geometry and liquefied imagery embodies my continuous process of measuring and dissecting

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