

AMORAVIDA  
MCCONNELL  
GRADUATE  
ARCHITECTURE  
PORTFOLIO

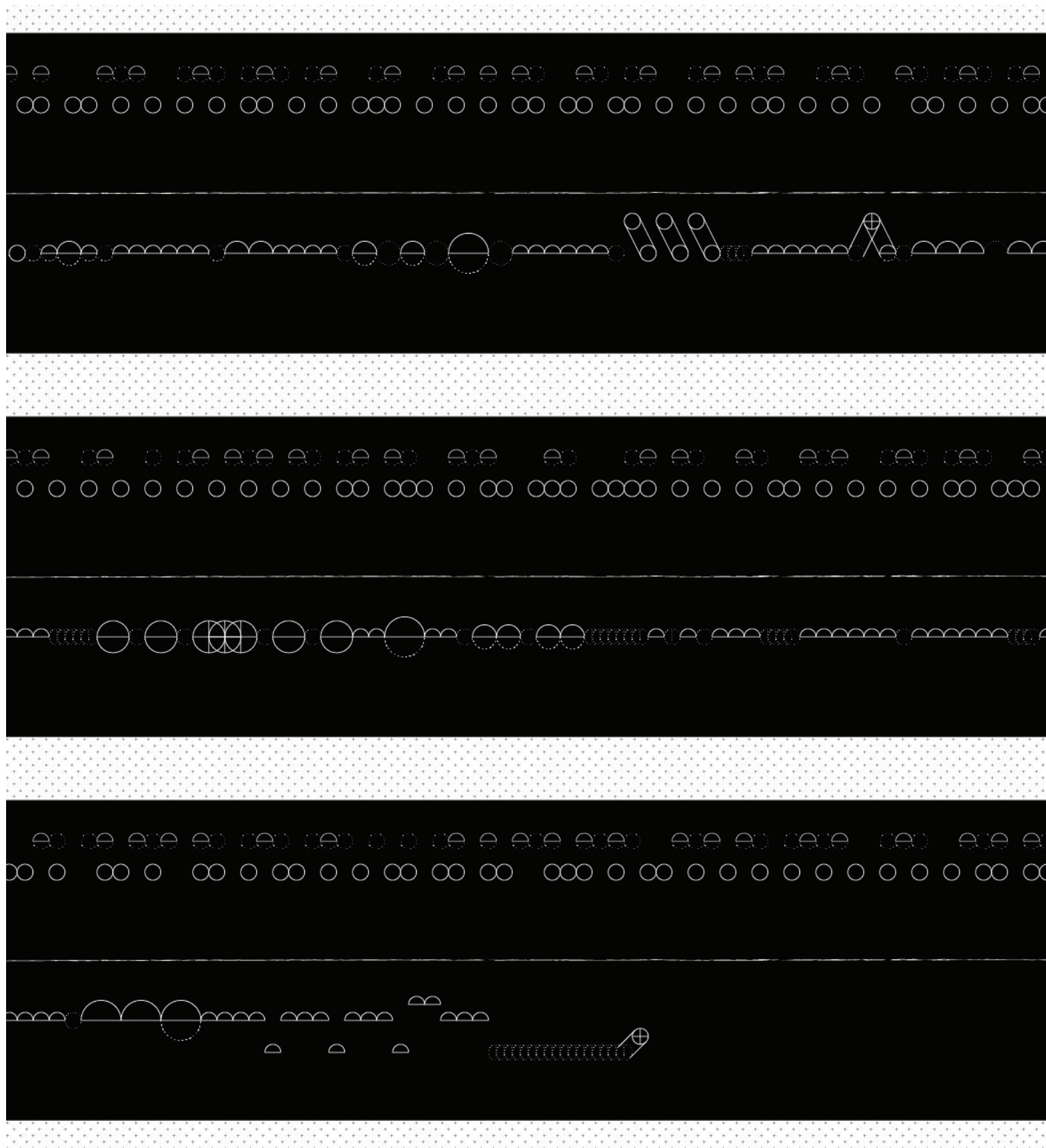
COLUMBIA  
GSAPP 2025

M.ARCH + M.S.CCCP

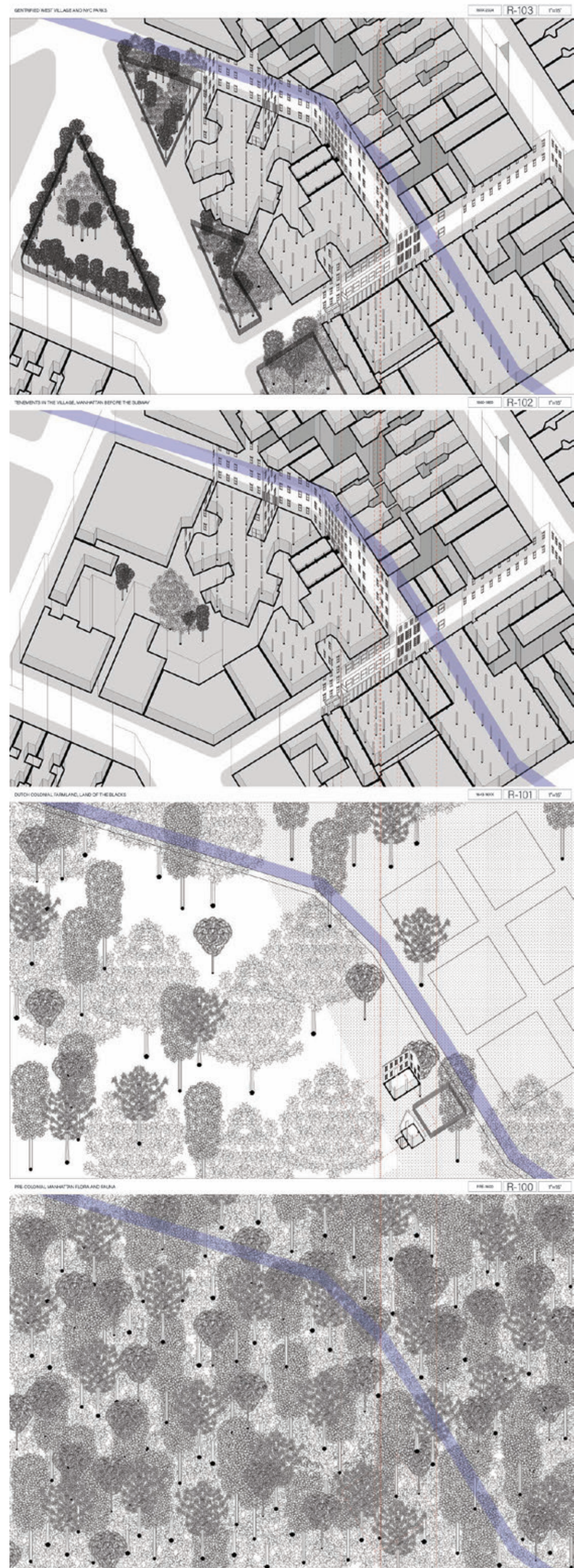
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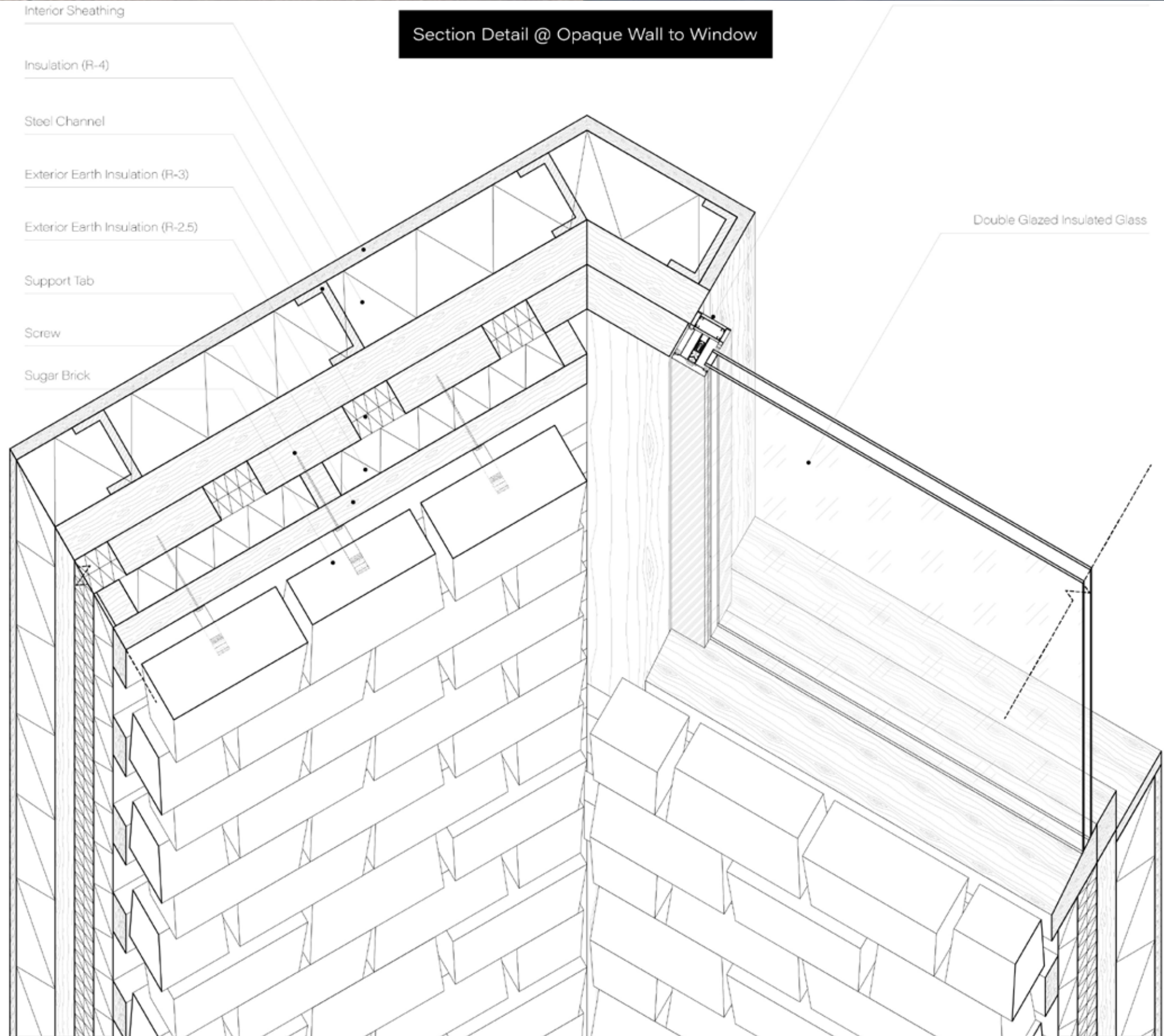
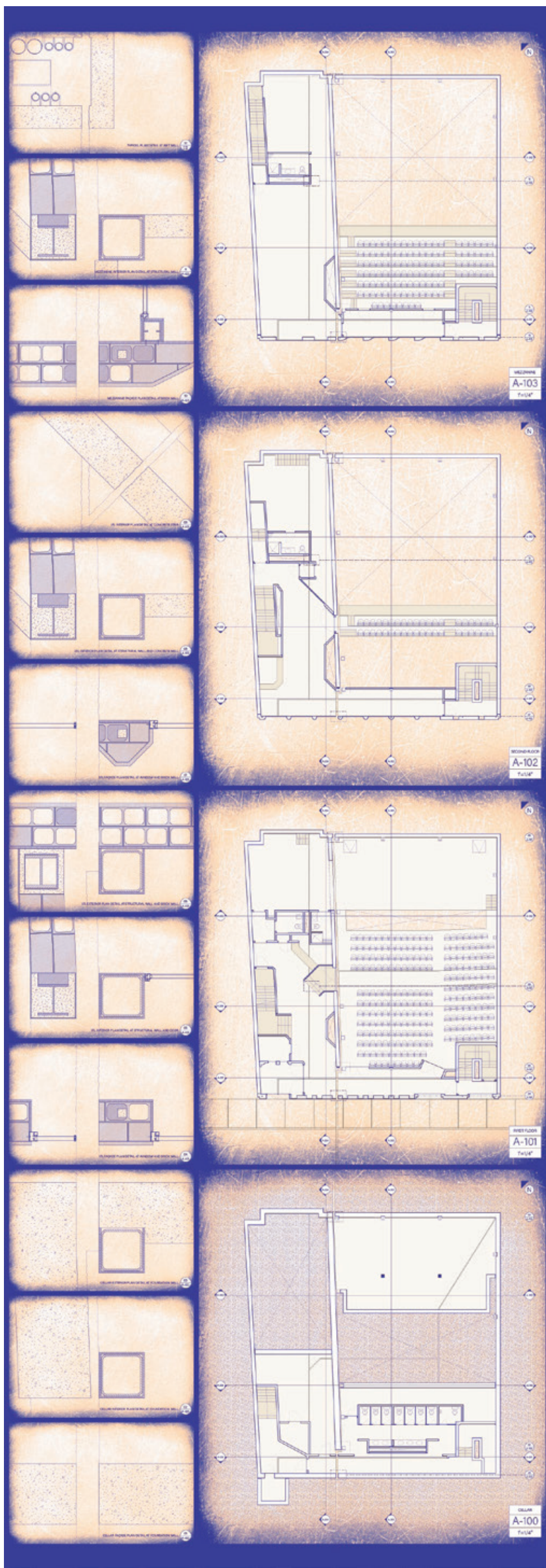
Advanced V  
Mario Gooden + Raven Chacon

*exhibition*



# Tracing Transpecies Counter Cultures





Tracing Trans-Species Countercultures uncovers the elusive histories of Minetta Brook, a marshy creek buried below feet of wretched ground, dense with archeological objects of historical violence. What remains of this history

is a crooked road in Manhattan called Minetta Street. The street's non-orthogonal form has created a counter cultural zone that disrupts authoritarian spatial realities of the Manhattan grid, while the promiscuous resilience of water

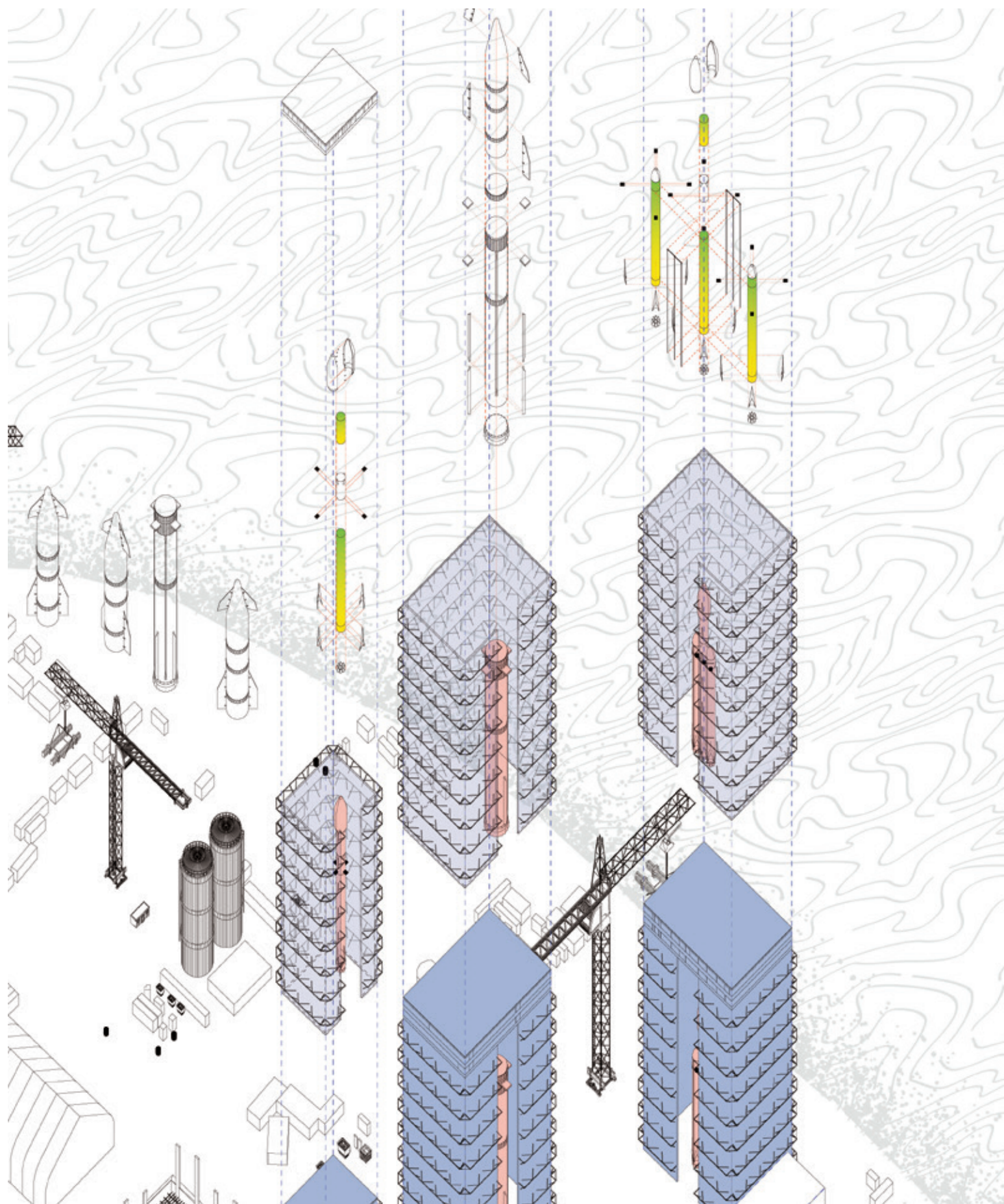
— or wetness — below the surface resists the infrastructural permanence of coloniality inevitability, promoting the wild and wayward between the cracks of an otherwise hegemonic city. This intervention seeks to sever and reverse

the passing of time, by enabling architectonic transformations that transpose the past with the future, restoring ecosystems from below. The Minetta Lane Theater has been intricately split, extending and assisting the natural

process of decay. The cuts are promiscuous, peeking inward and outward, above and below, evoking a curious desire of the cavity and of the permeability of a surface. Sounds from earth's waterscape creep to the surface

at the permeable boundary of land and sky. Echoing the rhythms of those species that once cohabitated, in a building's own decay you may find a restoration of these ecosystems emerging from the gaps.

## *cultural geologies*

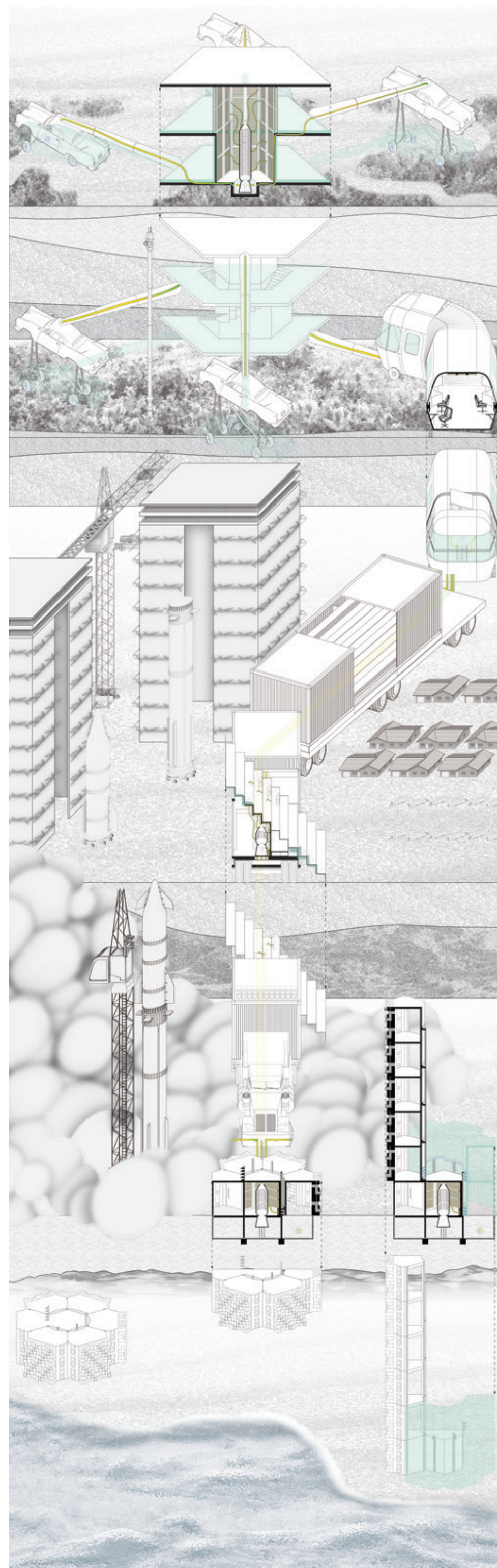


# Lithium Commons

The unique water-based ecology of the Middle Casamance remains a key asset to the area and Senegal as a whole. Despite this, lack of potable water, hyper-salination, less predictable flooding, and pollution have made water more of a threat, promoting dependencies on imported foods, Dakar-based expertise, or expensive-to-

maintain medical and infrastructural technologies. Reestablishing the community's agency in its relationships with water is thus essential to the self-sufficiency of the village. By providing an innovative education that engages students' learning as part of the water cycle, the Water School helps students not only with success in Dakar and abroad, but also as

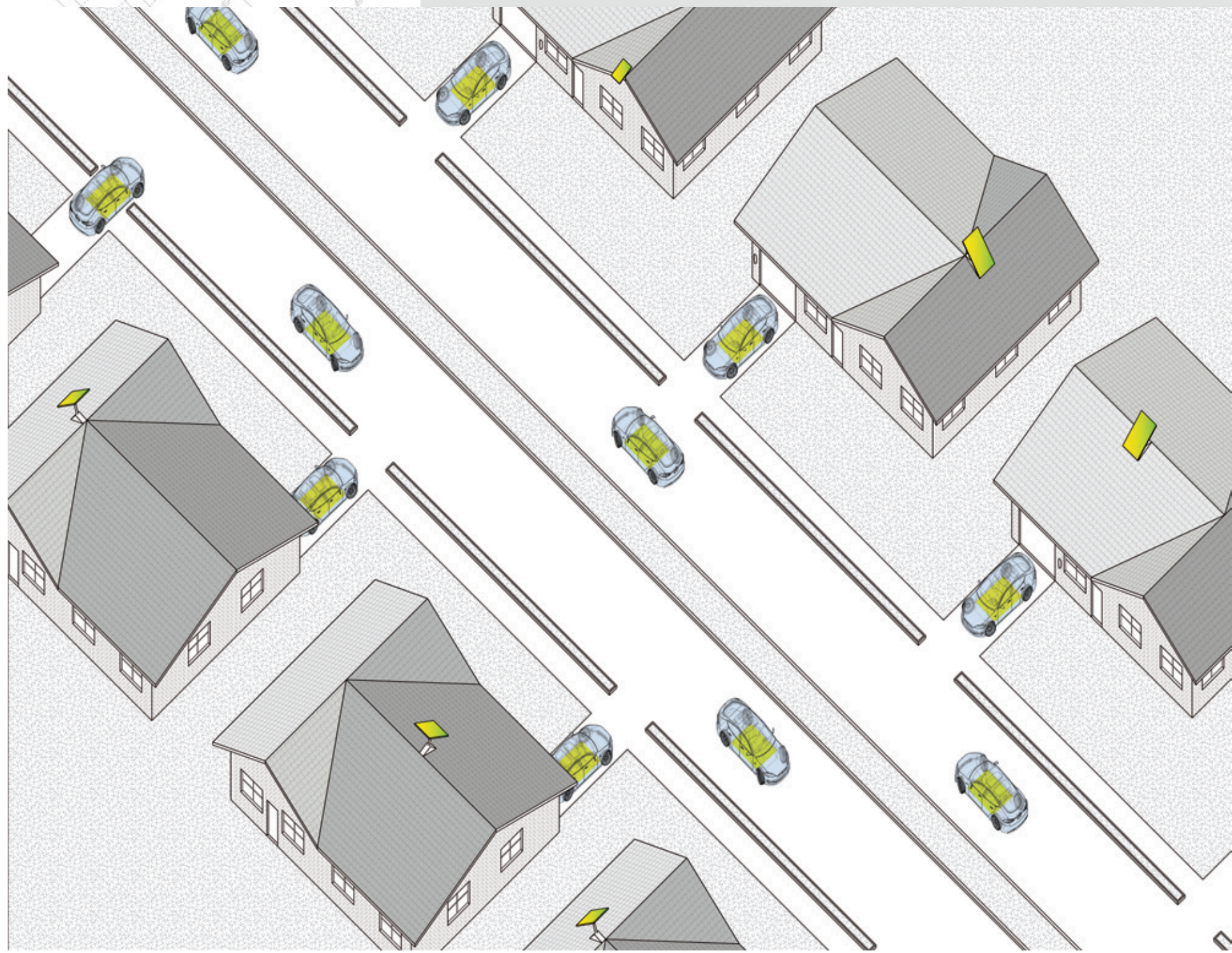
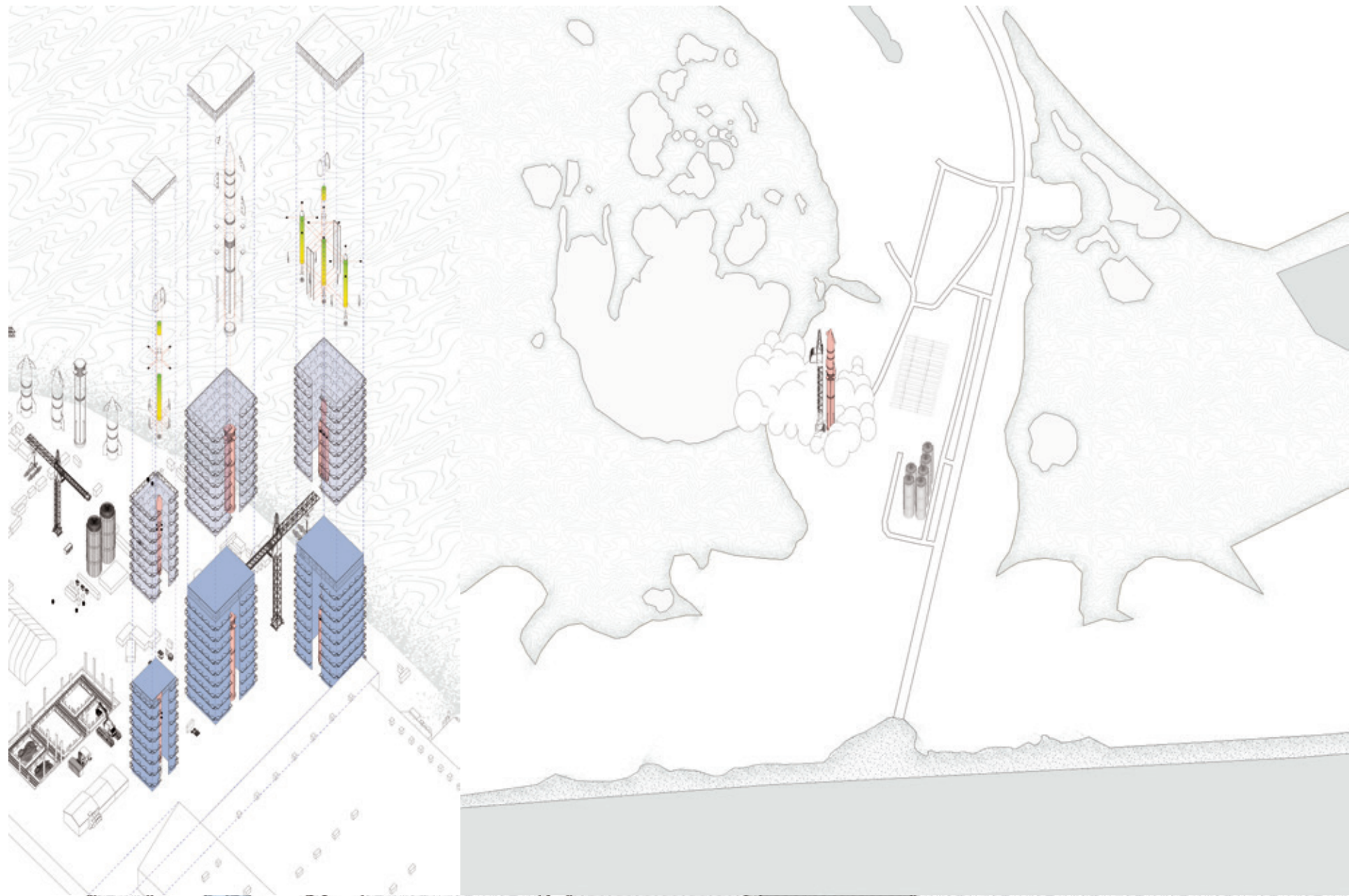
future leaders of the Middle Casamance. The school integrates ongoing efforts to provide potable water infrastructure to Tanaff and neighboring communities by allowing students to learn from and construct their own interventions within this ecosystem. Given fresh water's importance as a communal gathering site, this area serves as the heart of the community.



This project entitled Lithium Commons, intervenes in the cultural geologies of the lithium supply chain by deconstructing electric vehicles and other lithium-based products and repurposing their parts for counter-corporate activism in an effort to deprivatize access to stored/ green energy. + These interventions reveal the weaponization of green virtue by private companies, federal and local governments in order to acquire land and reinforce the police state. + It navigates the blurry – yet rapidly closing gap – between neoliberalism and political conservatism by exploiting these tools to counteract capitalist exploitation of marginalized peoples and instead uplift communities and dismantle systemic oppression. + The project began by examining the supply chain of lithium architectures, the scale of extraction, and its relationship to geological processes. Despite performing the aesthetics of green virtue, Tesla and its affiliated companies continue to depend on the tactics of expansion and exploitation preceded by the fossil fuel industry.

Around 2012 Tesla's sister company SpaceX began preparations for their own factory site, purchasing properties under the company name Dogleg LLC at the site of Boca Chica Village, a formerly small residential community surrounded by acres of 'protected' wildlife preserve. (explain damages). The company's presence on the site has been met with animosity from environmentalists witnessing the deterioration of wildlife as a result of this development, by locals who feel the looming possibility of displacement via eminent domain, and by the hundreds of residents of the nearby town of Brownsville who have faced limited access to a culturally significant beach due to frequent road closures during rocket launches.

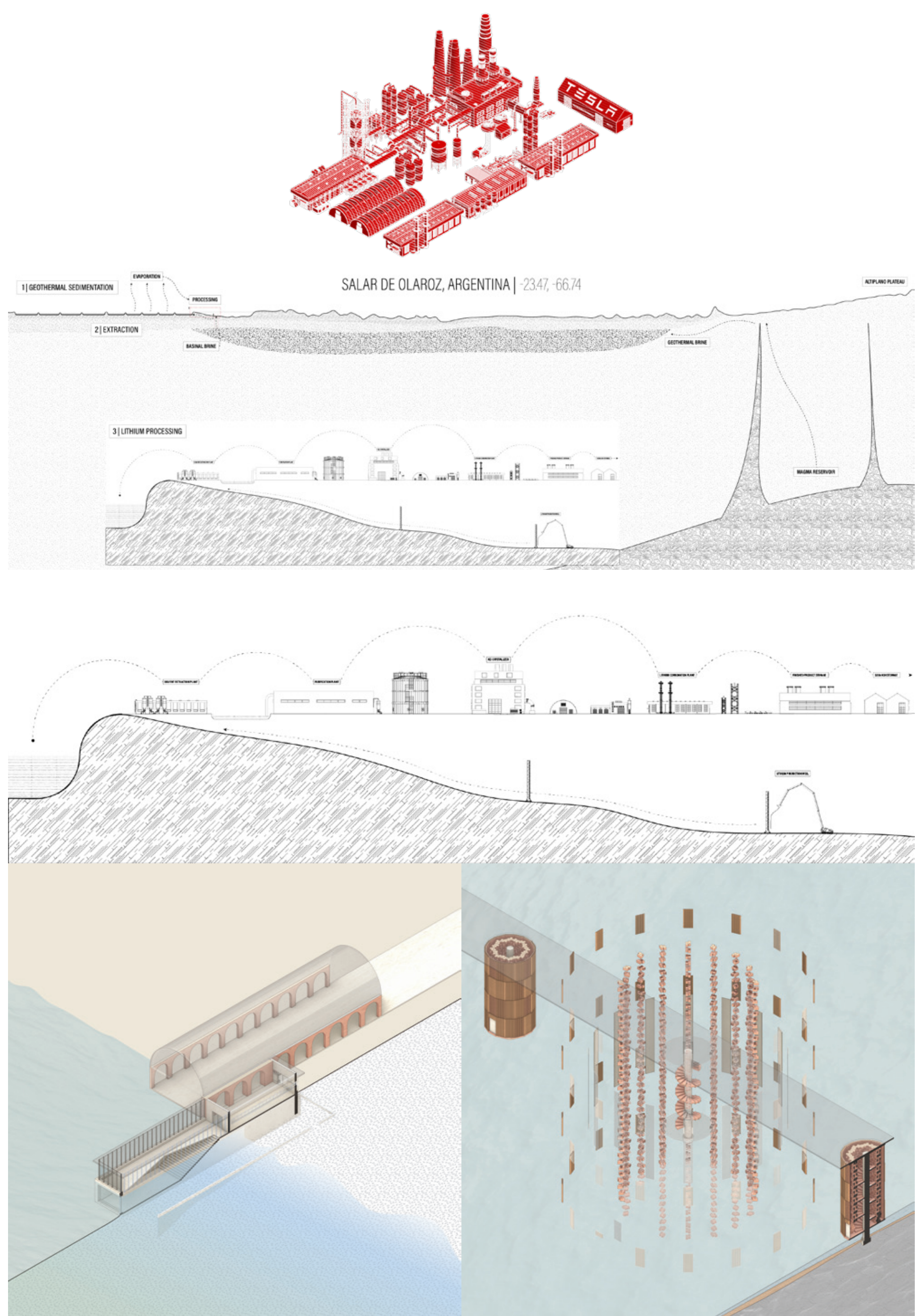
From top to bottom:  
+ An archive gallery (memory archive) displaying a collection of home videos and digitized images of visitors to Boca Chica beach (poor-peoples beach)  
+A VPN zone that allows visitors to connect to devices or via bluetooth without the threat of police, ICE or employer surveillance  
+A worker's collective providing education, information and resources including calls with lawyers and provides seating for union members and their representatives to organize events  
+A turtle sanctuary/incubator/ charging station that regulates the temperature and noise levels of its interior to protect birds, turtles and other wildlife from rocket blasts and tourist disruption.



Leaning in to the car-dependent culture of rural america, this operates as a series of mobile architectures reconfigured from common working class and industrial vehicles, exposing

the country's lack of public transportation infrastructure perpetuated by the glamorization of 'green living' advertised by the producers of electric vehicles.

In its place emerges a infrastructure that mobilizes the energy grid. With the expansion and popularization of green technologies, our connection to extracted minerals such as lithium becomes



increasingly abstracted into a series of objects removed from the landscapes and labor that produce them.

The geologies of energy production

have been driven by a privatized and individualist consumer culture but this proposal suggests an alternative to consumption that utilizes these geologies to preserve memory, regain

collective autonomy and form new social relationships from both human and non-human encounters.

= 1/2"

LIQUID ASSET 05.2024

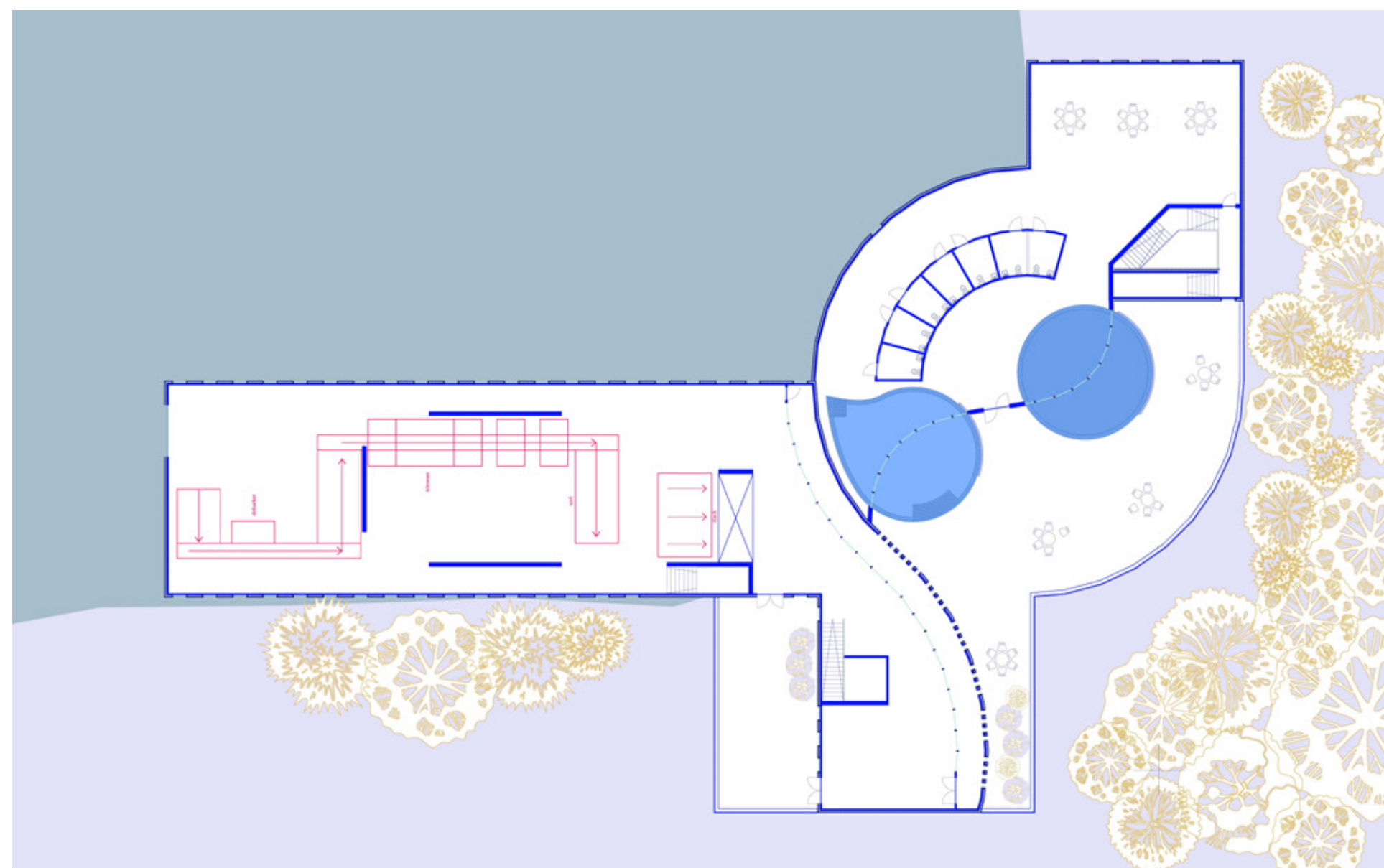
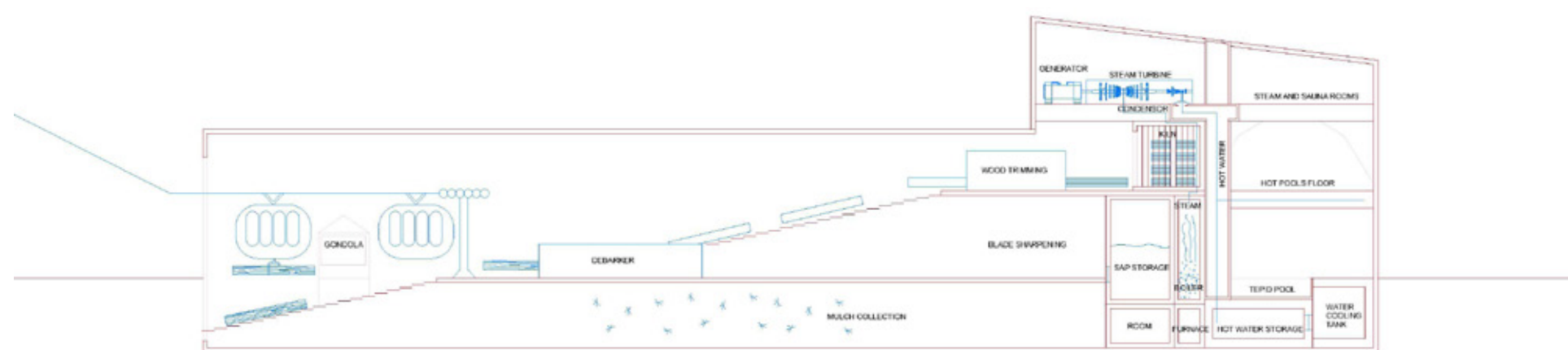
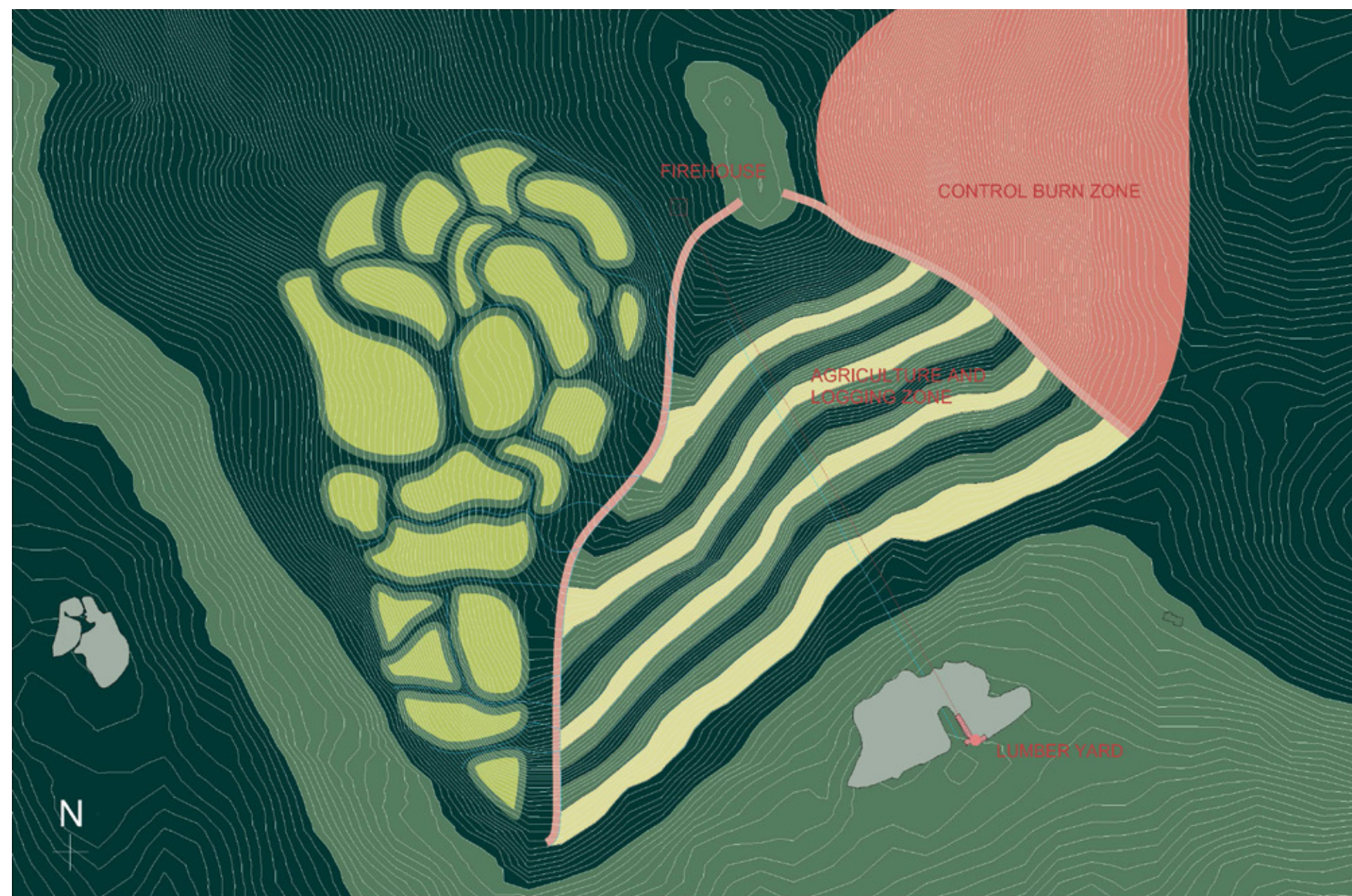
Advanced IV Studio  
Alessandro Orsini

*industrial*

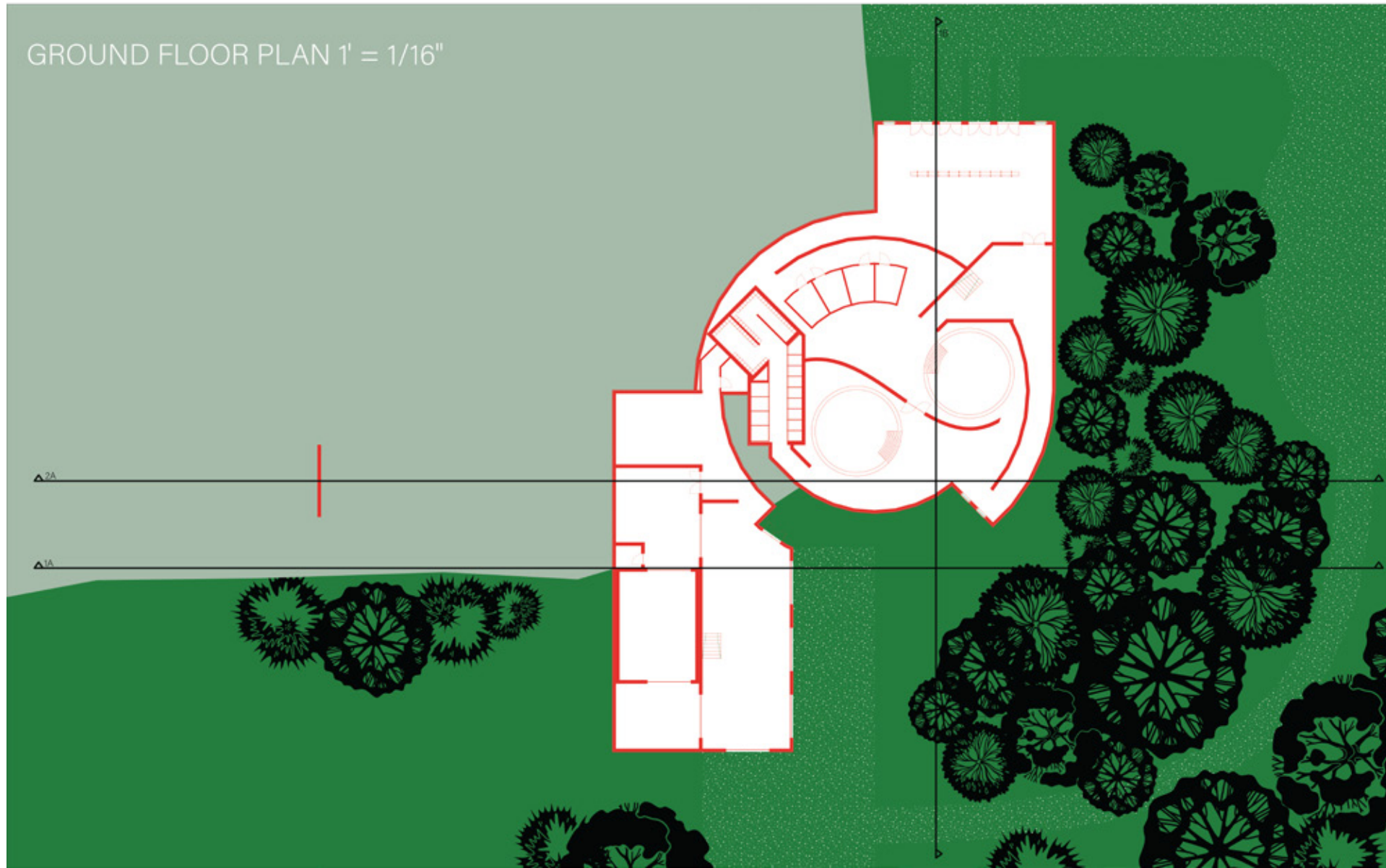
SECTION DETAIL 1' = 1/2"



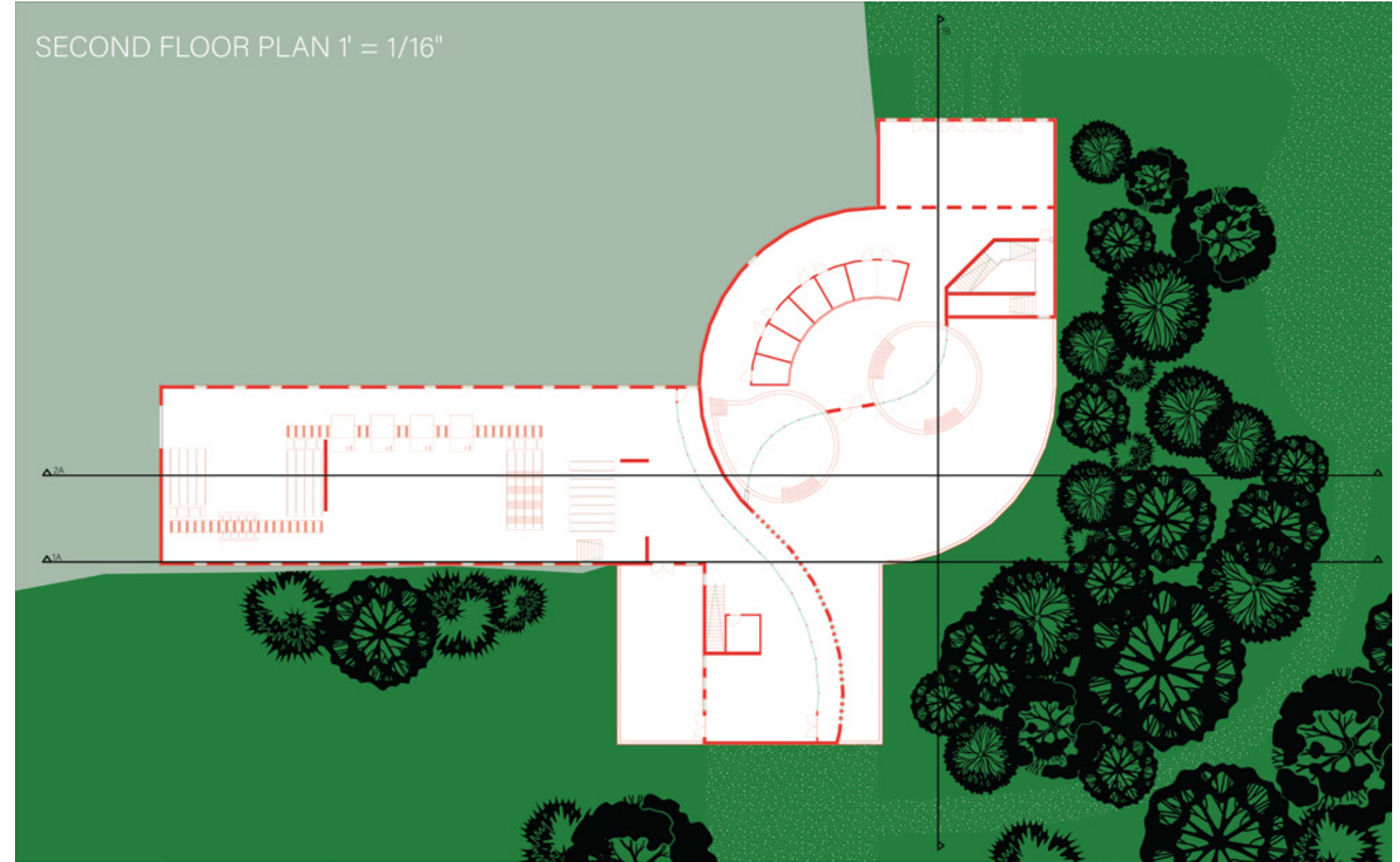
Foliage and  
Follies



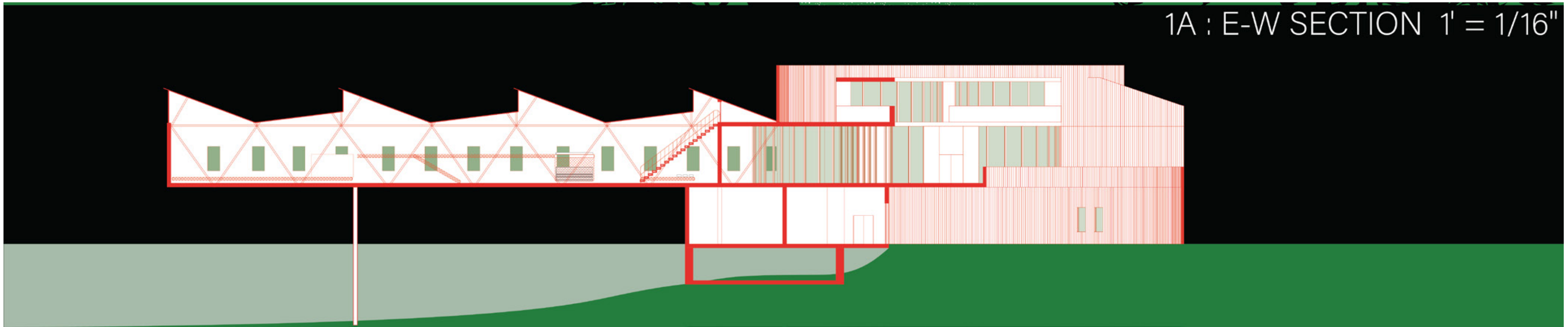
GROUND FLOOR PLAN 1' = 1/16"



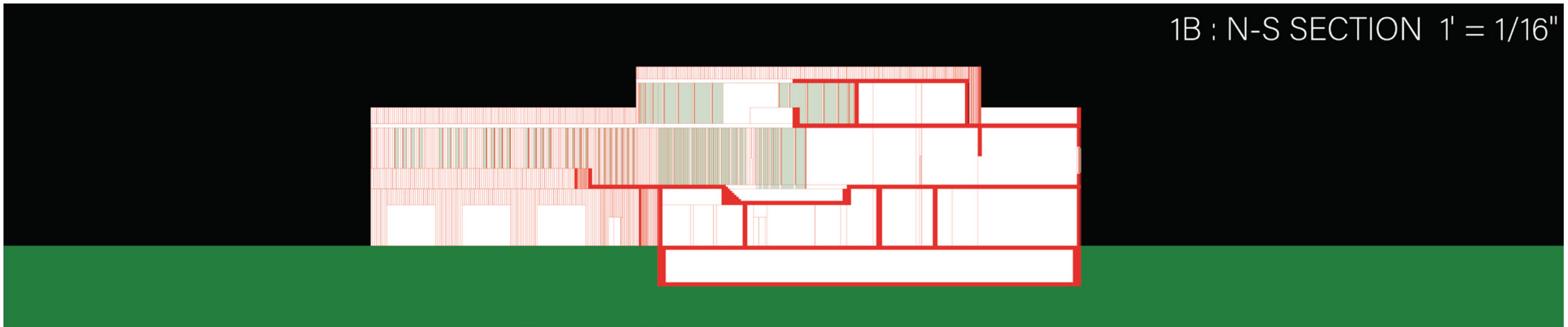
SECOND FLOOR PLAN 1' = 1/16"



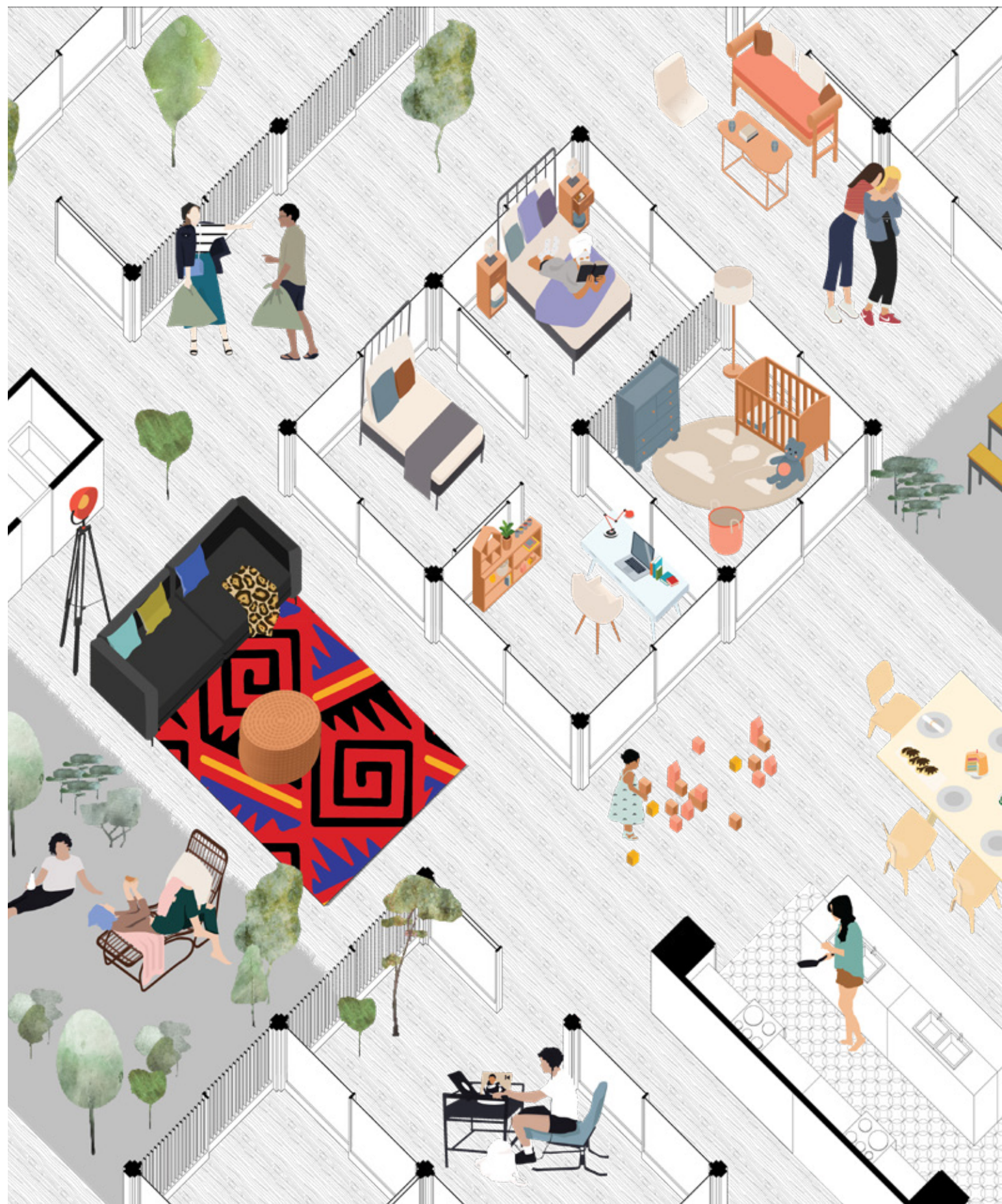
1A : E-W SECTION 1' = 1/16"



1B : N-S SECTION 1' = 1/16"



## housing

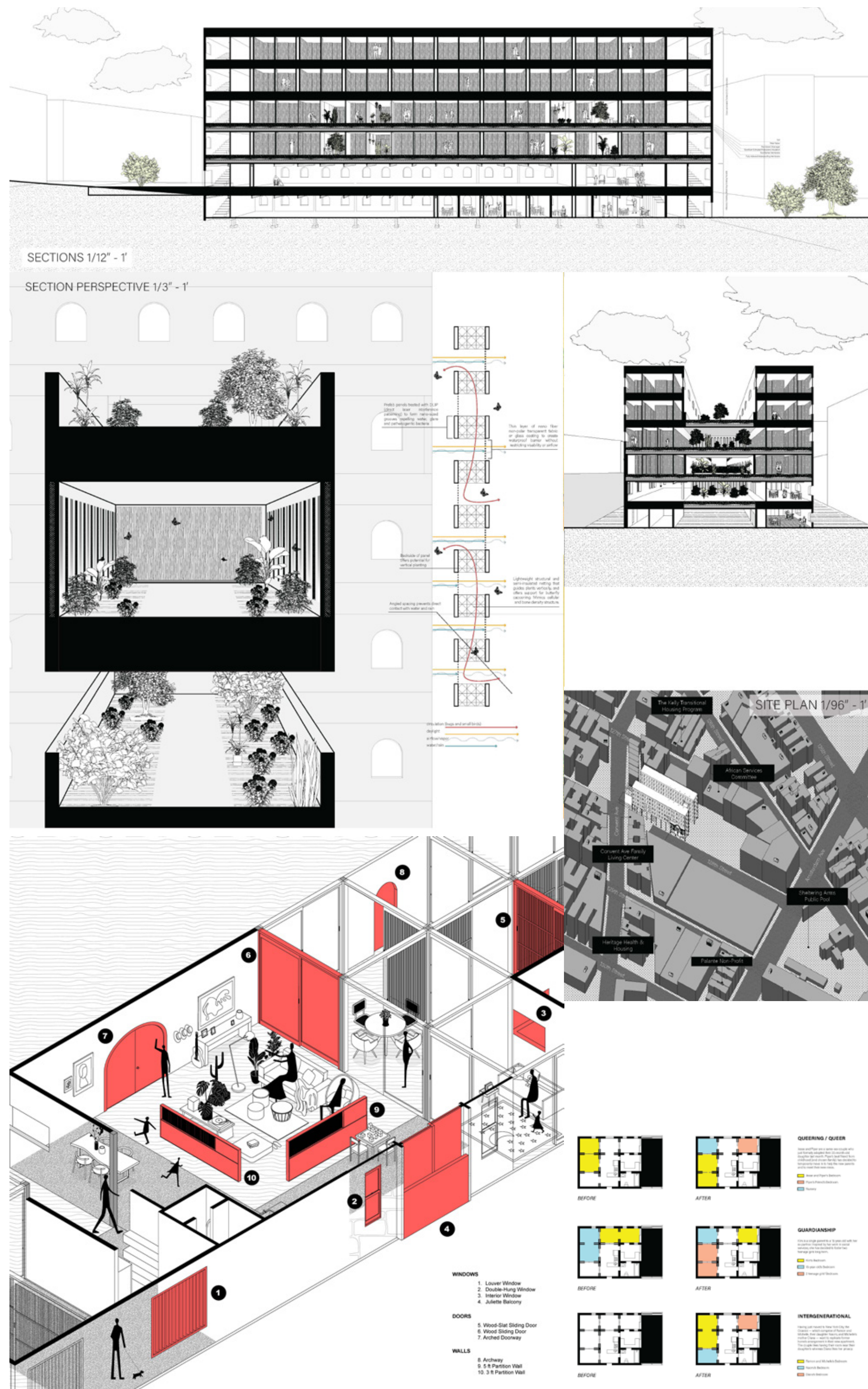


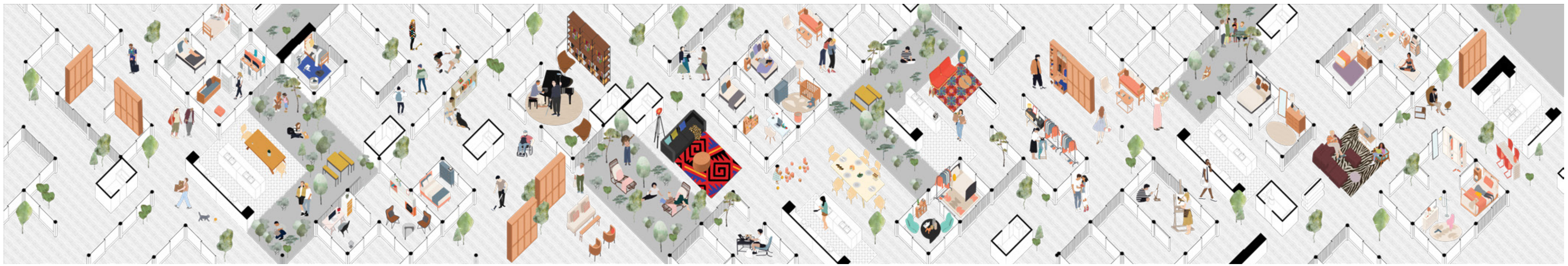
## Wild Way

Our studio in particular — dubbed “Pet Plants” — asks us to speculate on new opportunities in housing design by thinking about and with plants. From this mindset do we start to consider the configurations of air, water, and earth

and how architecture can facilitate a more thoughtful/mindful interaction — if not relationship — between plants and people. Tasked with researching different types of engagements people have with plants, we as designers selected an ornamental

garden to feature at our building in order to contribute to a larger conservation project. In general, ornamental gardens are comprised of plants that are primarily grown for their beauty, their scent, and/or how they shape physical space.





SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

0 1 2 4 8 16 32



Through our methods of representation, we have identified the aesthetics of the object. In the case of housing, objects come to transform a space or building into a 'home'. Opportunities

for ornamentation give families the ability to see themselves reflected in an otherwise neutral space. Sometimes this ornamentation is a reflection of cultural resilience, sometimes a creation of a

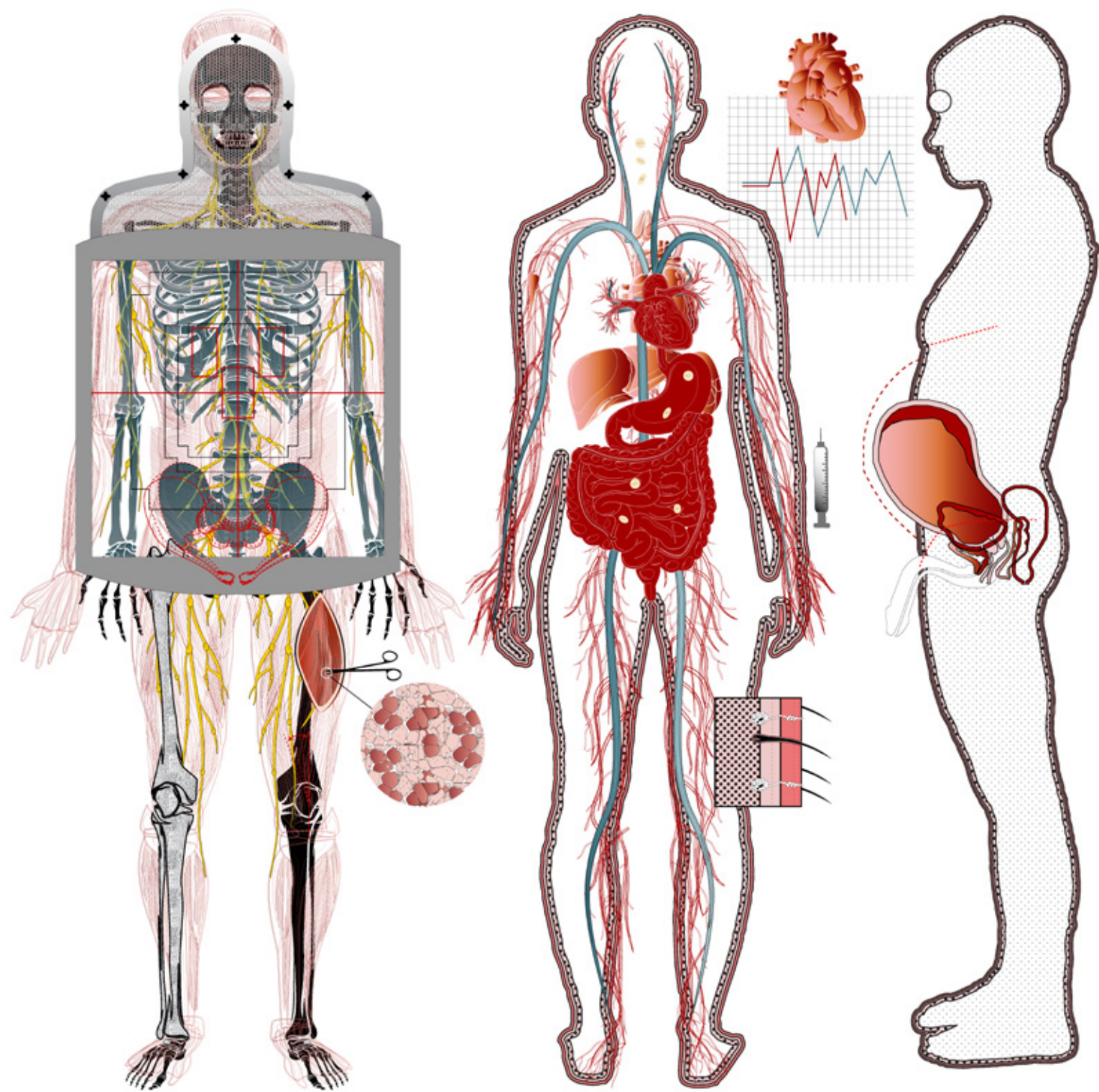
sacred or spiritual space, and oftentimes can represent an expression of one's identity both individually and within a family or community. These objects are visible throughout these visualizations

and drawings, and are completely out of control of the overarching architectural hand. Ultimately we decided to embrace this lack of aesthetic control, and have the objects

be the figures that define the program and boundaries of this transforming space. To accommodate the non-traditional family, the representation of the space should be one that looks

'lived in' thereby the object has a level of imperfection, a level of disorder in contrast to the highly sterilized renderings of NYC market housing.

## public works



## MOBILE TENSIONS

This project addresses the recent influx of anti-trans legislation across the U.S. in recent years. Using a number of adaptive reuse sites across I-90, this project proposes a temporary living facility, nested within a public arts

space, to provide those who are traveling for medical care with a safe and free place to stay along their route. These 'roadside attractions' seek to protect local and transient LGBTQIA+ communities by providing a central space for obtaining

resources and information, a temporary living facility for those traveling to receive medical care or permanent relocation, and a space for the public to explore positive and curious relationships between themselves and those around them.

Conceptual Model

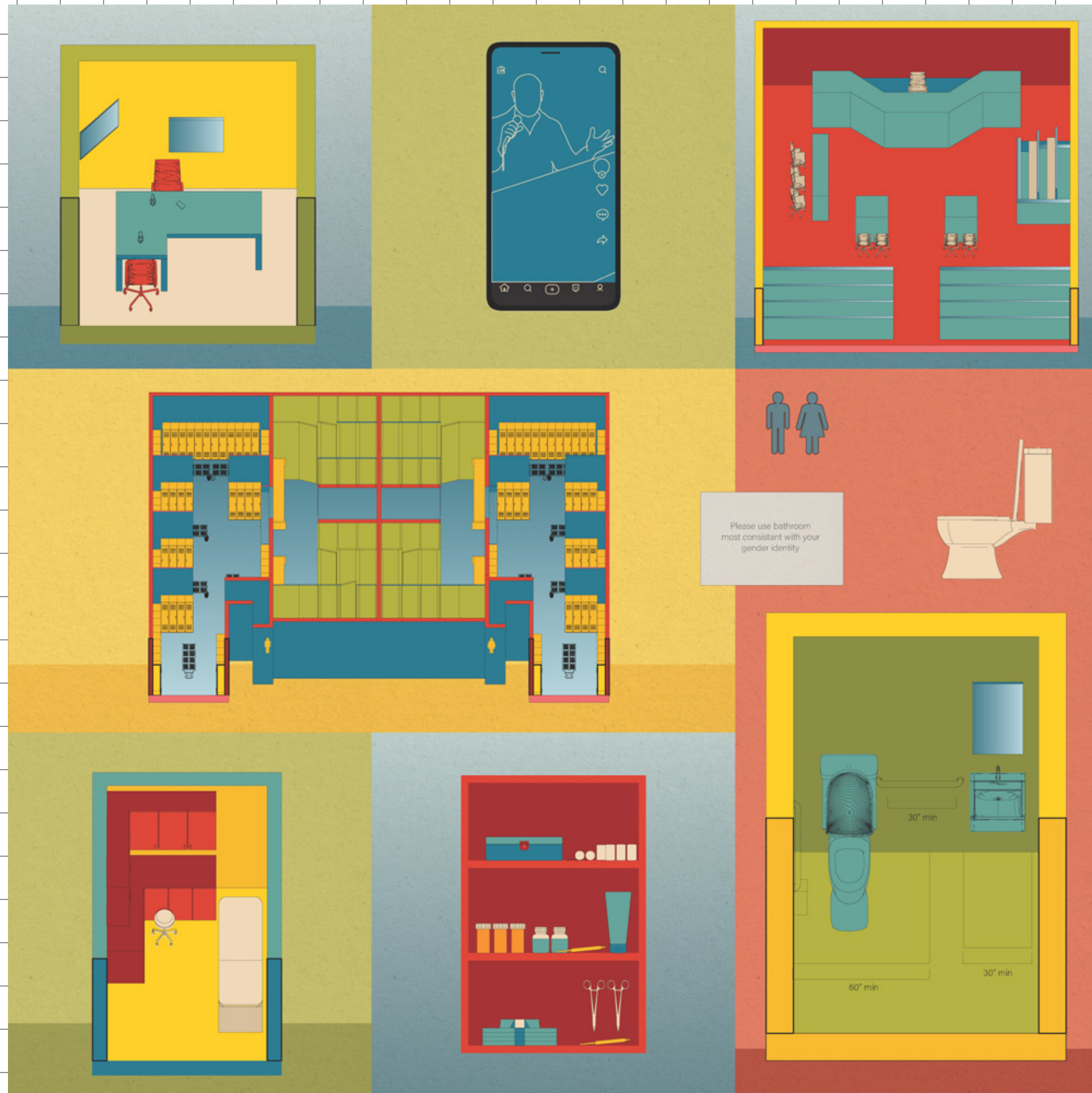
I have identified these metrics by which the body is scrutinized according to sports' regulations. First through the invisible and unseen physical attributes – such as bone density, muscle mass and fibers, joint angles – and secondly, through the physiological conditions such as hormones, that most often affect perceivable differences but are also a critical factor in the capacity for trans people to participate in sports across the nation. The second layer, overlaid on mylar paper, displays the procedures, machines, tools that either invade and/or enhance the body at this scale.

This analysis led me to the second stage we're I was able to assess the different timelines associated with sports participation as a trans person in the U.S. Across legal (pink) and medical (blue) barriers one must identify the correct path toward transitioning. The paths demonstrated in this model begin at the home, and continue out through a series of stairs, hallways and doors. Seeming to have a fixed end point, the maze continues to mislead and misguide the participant into the various components of what it means to be trans, paradoxically demonstrating that there is no single path and no destination point to the trans identity.

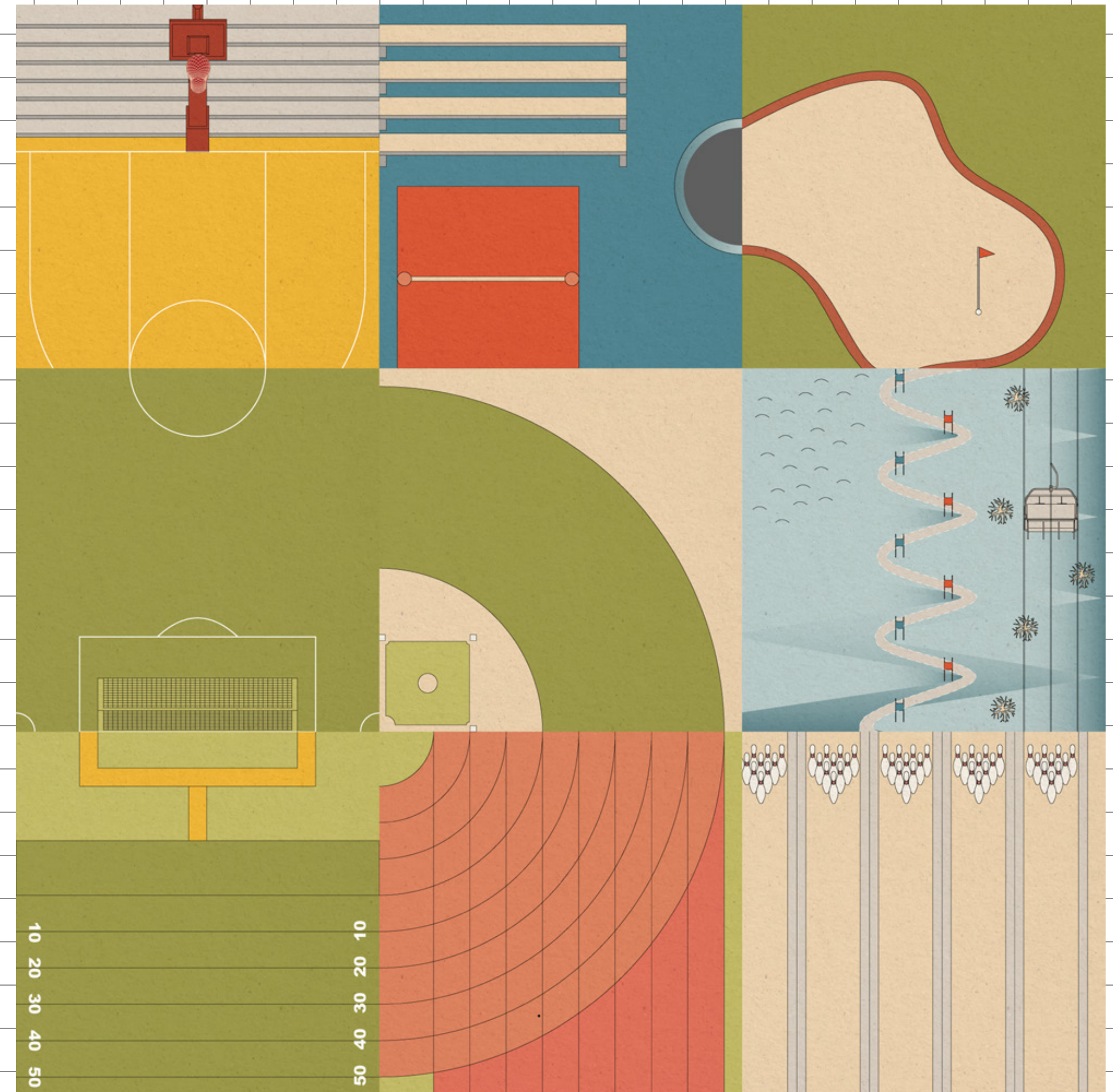


### Model description

Kitchen Table at Home | Parent Permission Slip  
Psychologist's Office | Letter of Affirmation  
Insurance Office | Telephone  
Clinic | Hormone Replacement Therapy  
Surgeon's Table | Surgical Supplies  
Courtroom | Judge's Hammer  
Vital Statistics Office | Birth Certificate



Sites of Damage



Sports Fields and Design

#### Sites of Damage

**1** | Joe Rogan's podcast room where he comments on trans athlete Fallon Fox's participation in the UFC. He loosely states that "if you were born male no

matter the physical transformations, you still have the bone structure that comes with being a male." **2** | TikTok of Joe Rogan on a smartphone. **3** | The courtroom in Idaho where one of the first cases of anti-

trans legislation began. *Hecox v. Little*, was a fight against the state to allow a trans woman to participate in track and field at the University level. **4** | A traditional gendered high school locker room. **5** |

Signs that delegate that your gender must be consistent and fixed. **6** | The medical clinic where one receives a physical, prior to their participation in school sports. A place where sex is determined via a

number of procedures often to undermine the person's gender identity. **7** | The cabinet at the clinic displaying a number of gender affirming products, among other objects to assess the body. **8** | A gender neutral

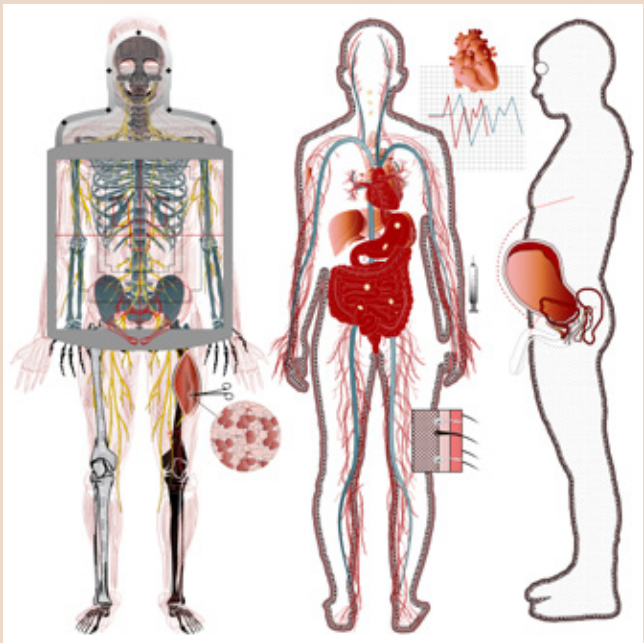
bathroom on Columbia University's campus, located outside of the architecture building, identifying the APA standards and other codes that determine what is needed for a single person bathroom.



Concept

This project addresses the recent influx of anti-trans legislation across the U.S. in recent years. Using a number of adaptive reuse sites across I 90, this project proposes a temporary living facility, nested within a public arts space, both operating as a monumental communal space of the town, while providing those who are traveling for medical care with an appropriate and free place to stay along their route. These 'roadside attractions' seek to protect local and transient LGBTQIA+ communities by providing a central space for obtaining resources and information, a temporary living facility for those traveling to receive medical care or permanent relocation, and a space for the public to explore positive and curious relationships between themselves and those around them.

At the start of this research, I focused on those bills that ban or regulate trans people and mainly trans youth, from participating in sports at the high school and university level. The U.S. government's interest in intervening in the regulation of bodies is not by any means new, and when it comes to the history of sports and competition, the conditions get even more political. Theories of Darwinism have conditioned the metrics by which we have measured, categorized and over rationalized, race and sex-based differences, especially in terms of athletic or physical capacity, which has been appropriated to fixate identities into a specific labor force. Sports are guilty of this same practice. Countless studies of biological difference have set the standards and metrics that reinforce binary difference, and trans, nonbinary and intersex people are constantly pulled



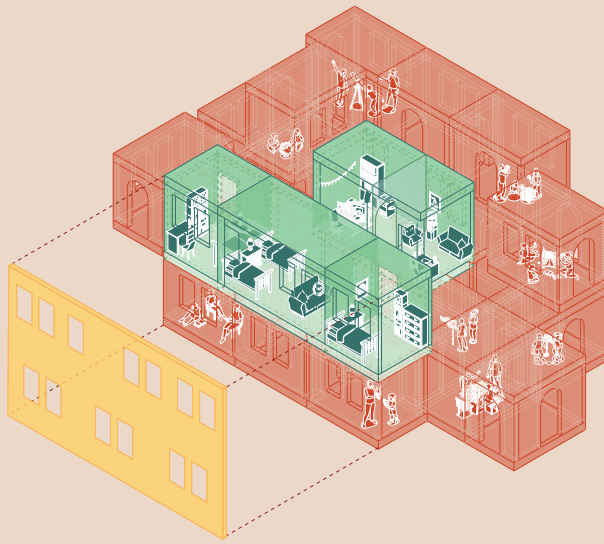
between this binary. My first analysis was to identify the metrics of the body at an anatomical and physiological level to criticize the ways that trans bodies are policed in sports and question if there are alternative ways to organize healthy competition without the use of gendered categories. I have identified these metrics by which the body is scrutinized according to sports standards. First through the invisible and unseen physical attributes – such as bone density, muscle mass and fibers, joint angles – and secondly, through the physiological conditions such as hormones, that most often affect perceivable differences but are also a critical factor in the capacity for trans people to participate in sports across the nation. The second layer, overlaid on mylar paper, displays the procedures, machines, tools that either invade and/or enhance the body at this scale.

My second analysis is a series of case studies that examine the rooms and objects (aka sites) that have contributed to this damage. These sites demonstrate that

the public and its infrastructures contain knowledge of how bodies are policed and regulated at an anatomical and physiological level, and use it to justify a kind of 'natural' method to the gendered spaces we are accustomed to. Through this research I was able to assess the different timelines associated with sports participation as a trans person in the U.S. Across legal and medical barriers one must identify the correct path toward transitioning. The paths demonstrated in my conceptual model begin in the home, and continue out through a series of stairs, hallways and doors. Seeming to have a fixed end point, the maze continues to mislead and misguide the participant into the various components of what it means to be trans, paradoxically demonstrating that there is no single path and no destination point to the trans identity. Using transparency within my conceptual model, I have sought to make visible the bureaucratic and medical systems of transitioning that are misleading or made hidden.

This project selected a number of buildings that could be repurposed as temporary living facilities for people seeking healthcare, and who may be traveling long distances to receive it. A number of adaptive reuse buildings were chosen along I-90, the longest interstate highway in the U.S. crossing through a total of thirteen states, with the understanding that I-90 is accessible by a number of bus services including Greyhound, and would be the primary road traveled between these states. I-90, operates as a site of high tension, at a time where travel between states may be critical for LGBTQIA+ and

other cis-women to receive medical care outside of their state of origin. This interstate crosses through high variance in laws and regulations including abortion, LGBTQIA+ discrimination in housing and public space, medical care for trans youth and more. The map identifies the locations of existing CenterLink LGBTQIA+ community centers and has highlighted zones where there is a large gap in available resources. This is to identify where a temporary living facility would be most necessary as people may be traveling up to 10 hours by car and 24



hours by bus. By repurposing existing buildings, the aesthetics remain accessible to the community, without revealing any obvious indications of the housing facilities, in the interest of the safety of LGBTQIA+ participants. The notion is that these projects will work in conjunction with CenterLink LGBT community centers and upon calling one of these centers, they will direct you to the best location to stay along your route.

The project is meant to operate as both a public arts exhibitions space and a temporary housing facility for LGBTQIA+ and cis-women seeking medical care outside their state of residence. This programming is imagined to be deployed in all of the sites located, however, my case study building is located in Livingston, Montana. A town that I lived in as a closeted trans person for the majority of my childhood. This abandoned old agricultural mill building is transformed into a resource center, unlike that of traditional LGBTQIA+ resource centers across the U.S. Rather than providing health care directly, it provides information regarding locations of care across state lines, and informs people of their rights and each jurisdiction. In order to be able to fund this project, a majority of this space will open to the public. As an exhibition space, this public area will guide people through a series of rooms, ultimately leading to a larger gathering area where people can join together for various events. This part of the programming is to facilitate an exploration of curiosity of one's body and its relationship to others. As one moves through the series of ramps, one is made aware of the fragility of the building's form. The ramps, supported by tension cables, suspended on either side of the façade, almost seem to float in thin air. This space employs the use of tensegral forms to examine the relationship between interior and exterior, and creates a constant negotiation of forces between their structural relationship. Based on the theories proposed by Lucas Crawford in the book Transgender Architectonics, rather than describing transness as one gender replaced by another, trans bodies are the consistent negotiation between the exterior and interior tensions. In this design, there is a constant

negotiation of tension and compression, facade and interior. The alluring nature of the tensegral structure leads the common passerby toward the exhibition. However, an immediate entry to the basement level elevator from the ground floor leads a visitor directly to the resource center on the top level. Nested within this space lies a number of temporary living facilities right below the resource center. Upon entering the building, one believes that they are entering the entirety of the exhibition and its interiors, however, almost as if hidden in plain plain sight, these temporary living facilities are nested in such a way where its visitors remain safe yet visible. The entire system is held together by its heart and core; the resources and temporary housing facilities that assist LGBTQIA+ in their travels to receive healthcare and other gender affirming needs.

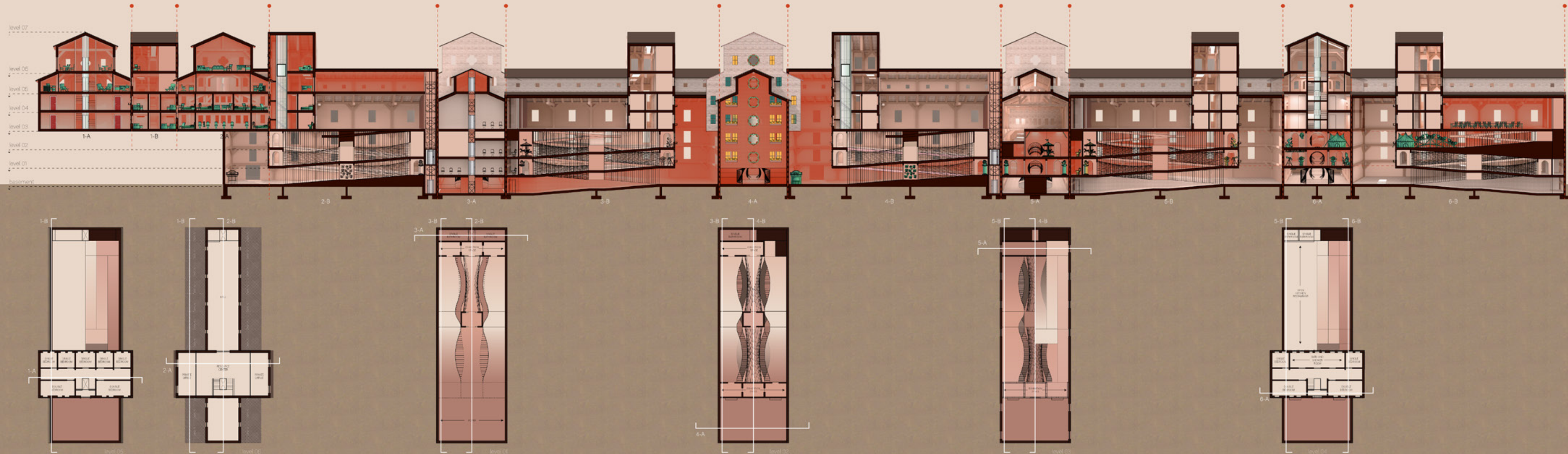
Sources

CenterLink, The Community of LGBTQ Centers [lgbtqcenters.org](http://lgbtqcenters.org)

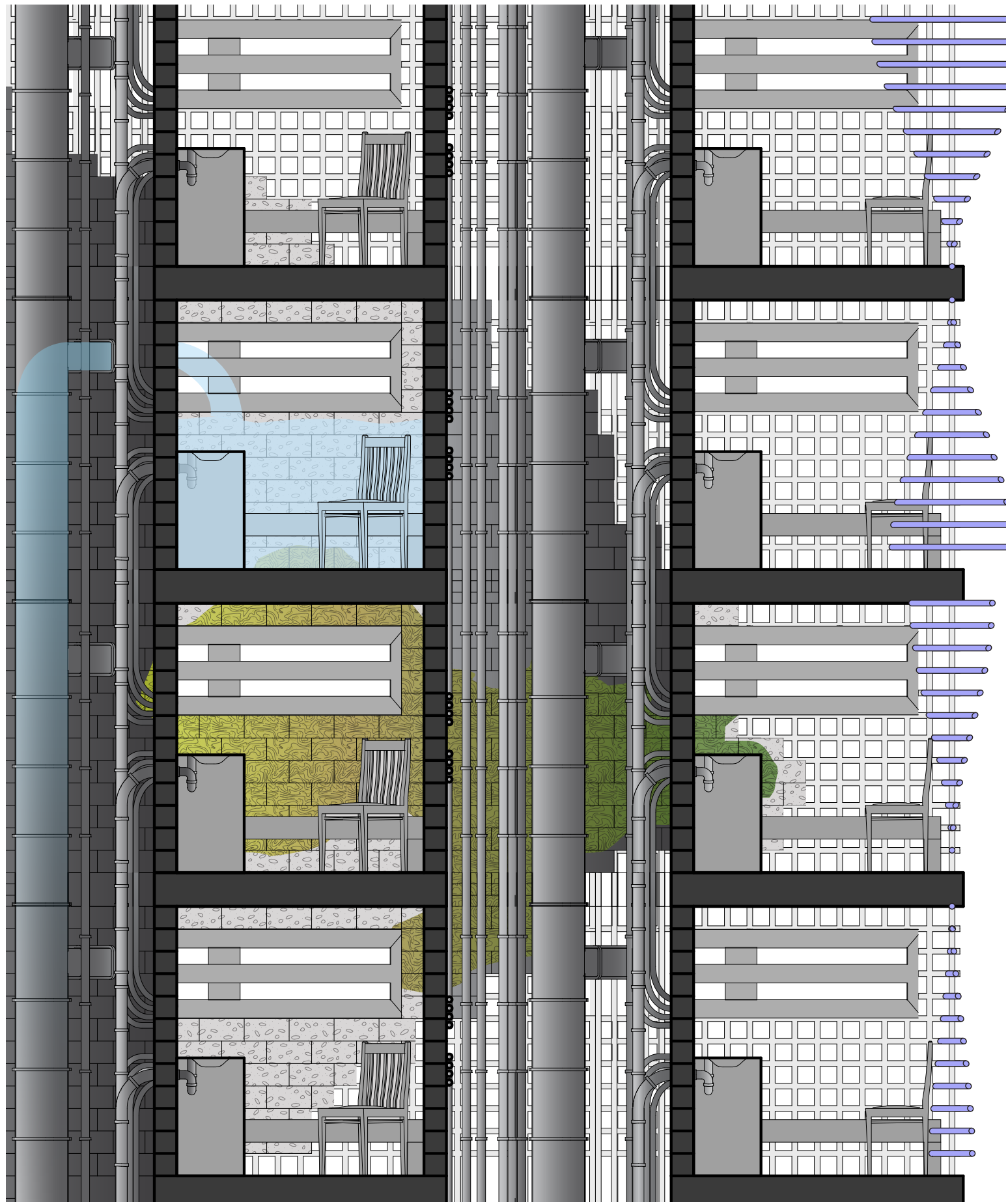
Movement Advancement Project, Mapping Transgender Equality in the United States, Equality Maps

Trans Athlete Tracking, [transathlete.com](http://transathlete.com)

Lucas Crawford, Transgender architectonics : the shape of change in modernist space, Farnham, Surrey : Ashgate Publishing Limited, [2015].



*(un)building*

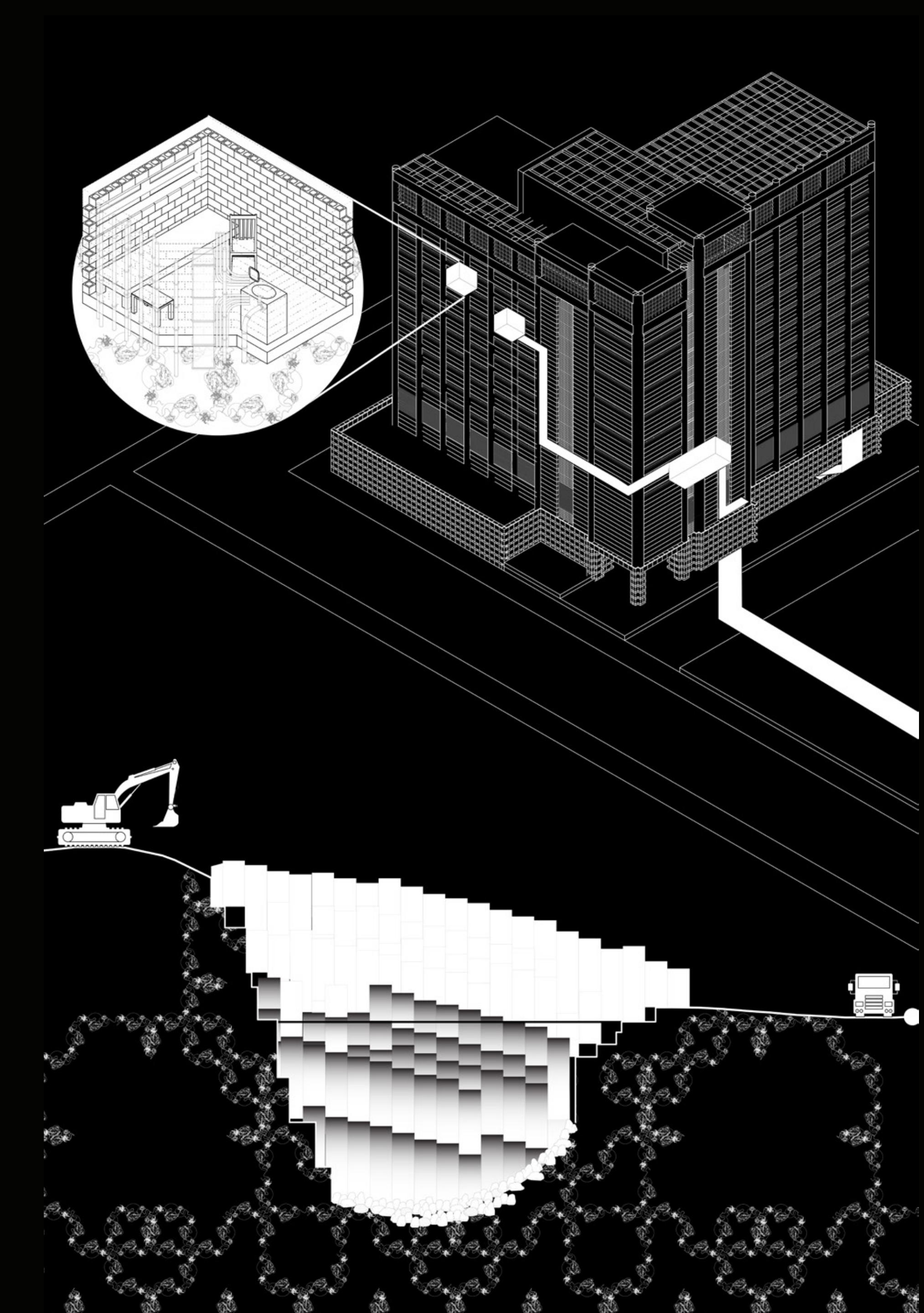


# FRACTAL IMAGINARIES

This project traverses geological and biological timescales in a scalar module to formulate imaginative decarceral building practices of the Post-Anthropocene. Through experimentations in chemical decomposition and simulations of rapid

deterioration across climates, this project demonstrates an ideological shift from processes of extraction to bioadaptive modules. Through examining the structural and material properties of an existing jail in lower Manhattan across these timescales,

this project redesigns the methods of demolition or (un)building — and their broader social and cultural implications — to embrace humanity through restorative justice and our connection to geological space and time.

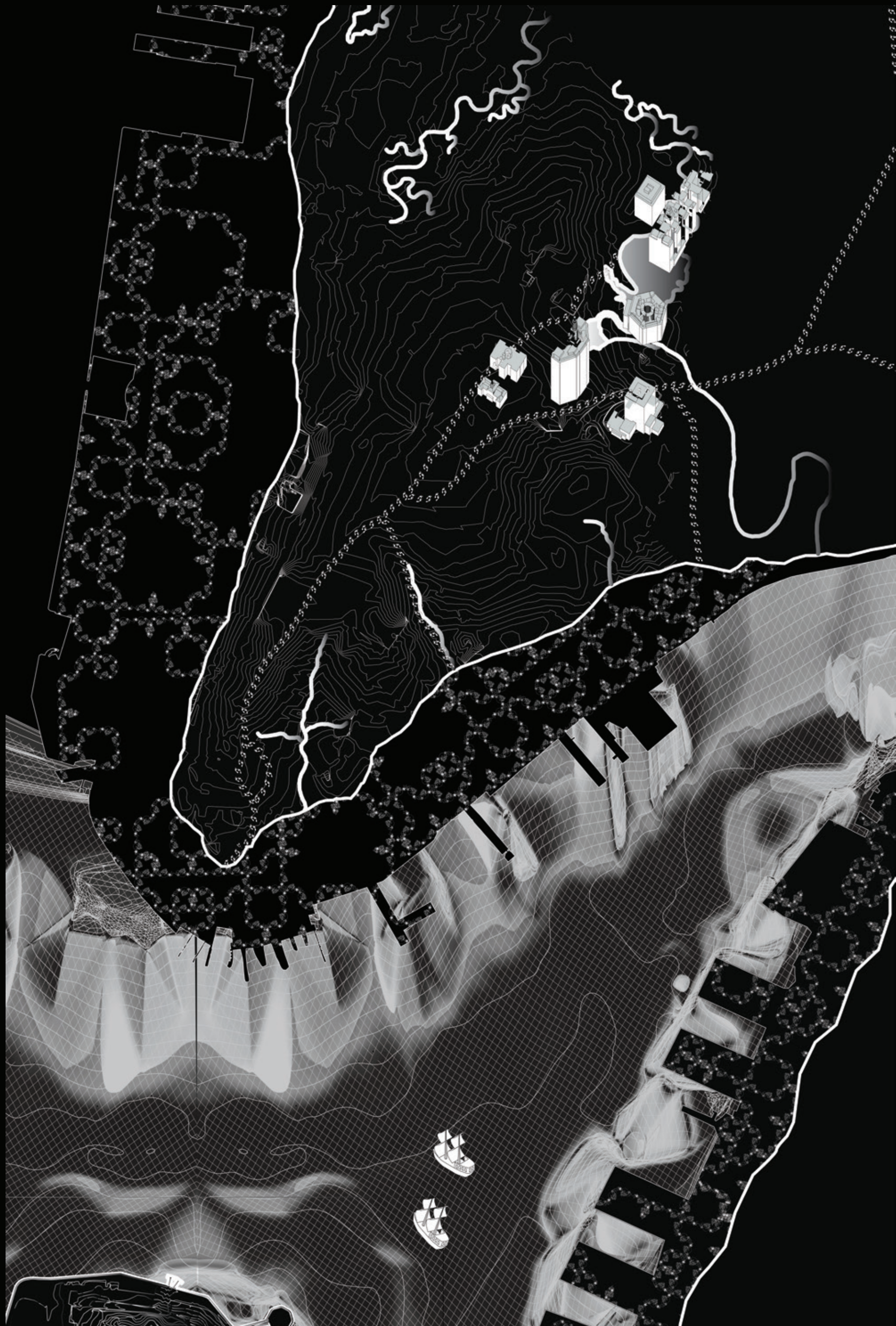


The initial research for this project identified an existing jail in lower Manhattan, called the Manhattan Detention Complex. Because no plans are available of this building for security purposes, the building's interior was reconstructed using a series of images, oral histories and mathematical calculations to make

visible the experience of those contained within its cell walls. The jail, constructed in 1838, is primarily built out of concrete and granite to express the permanence and strength of the carceral system. At the time, many of the buildings in lower Manhattan were constructed from materials extracted from quarries up north

including Stone Creek Quarry. Materials from the earth were displaced at long distances to ensure that the people within these buildings were, by contrast, to remain trapped in a fixed location.

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The jail was built by filling in an existing freshwater pond, known as Collect Pond. This pond was used by the Lenape prior to the colonization of New York City by the Dutch in 1609, and connected to a series of other rivers across the island that were eventually absolved by the extension of the

Manhattan shoreline. Throughout these drawings lies evidence of a moment of extraction or addition to the ecological landscape. This includes coastlines or borders, jail cells and quarries. The moments when earth material has been used to propagate pain and suffering in the carceral sphere.

This map juxtaposes the indigenous and native geological landscape of Manhattan prior to colonization, with the existing infrastructures of incarceration and territorialization in the present day. To demonstrate the ecological and cultural transformations of the expanding shoreline and the



influence of time across different scales, the fractal static fills the space between these two border lines. And as sea levels rise, it suggests that history at every scale may have the capacity to repeat itself. In the image on the right, I have reimagined New York City's Civic Center, reclaimed by the

natural landscape, almost in a state of ruin. This image simultaneously represents the era of urbanization, as the natural landscape disappears, and the imagined era of a city in decay, creating the illusion that this image is not just fixated in one time or place. At the very top of the image you can see a single unit of

the fractal static — representing one epoch— that has been repeated over 30,000 times to create the fractal timeline. These images are in dialogue with each other as they both transcend fixed time periods, and rather focus on the constant eb and flow of landscapes across time.

Concept

The Manhattan Detention Complex, constructed in 1838, is primarily built out of concrete and granite to express the permanence and strength of the carceral system. At the time, many of the buildings in lower Manhattan were constructed from materials extracted from quarries up north including Stone Creek Quarry. Materials from the earth were displaced at long distances to ensure that the people within these buildings were, by contrast, to remain trapped in a fixed location. The jail was built by filling in an existing freshwater pond, known as Collect Pond. This pond was used by the Lenape prior to the colonization of New York City by the Dutch in 1609, and connected to a series of other rivers across the island that were eventually absolved by the extension of the Manhattan shoreline. This project sought to analyze the relationship between the evolution of geological landscapes and the development of carceral architecture in the Anthropocene. To compare to vastly different timelines, a nonlinear approach to time was necessary, and to do so I employed the use of fractal logic with the idea that fractals at no matter which scale are replicable. So while someone may be

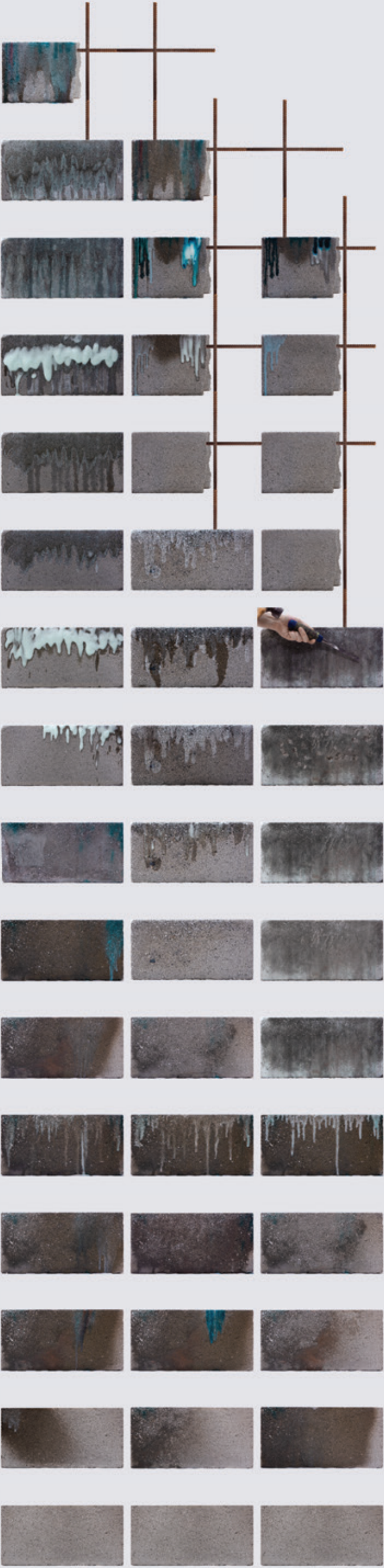
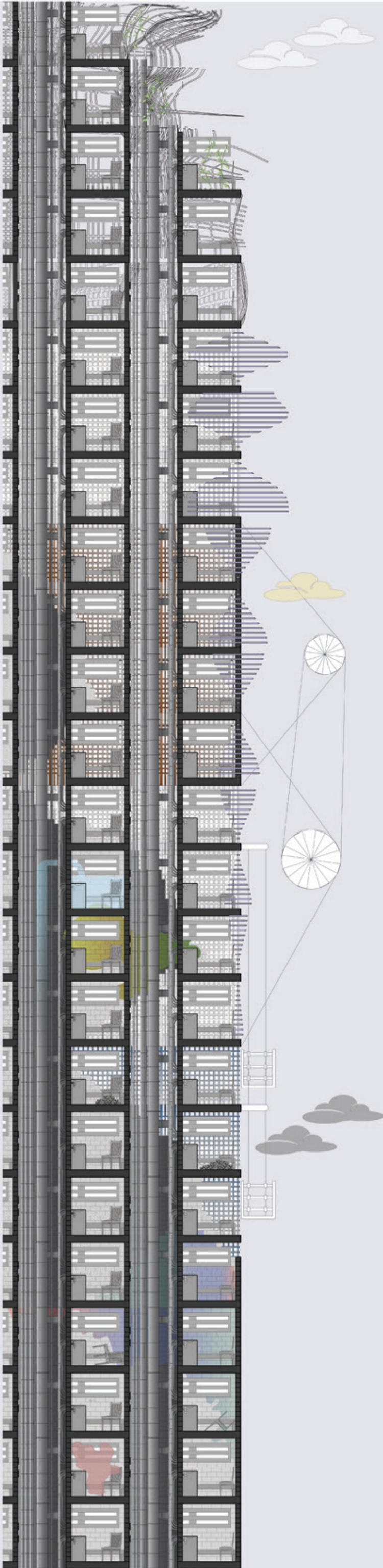
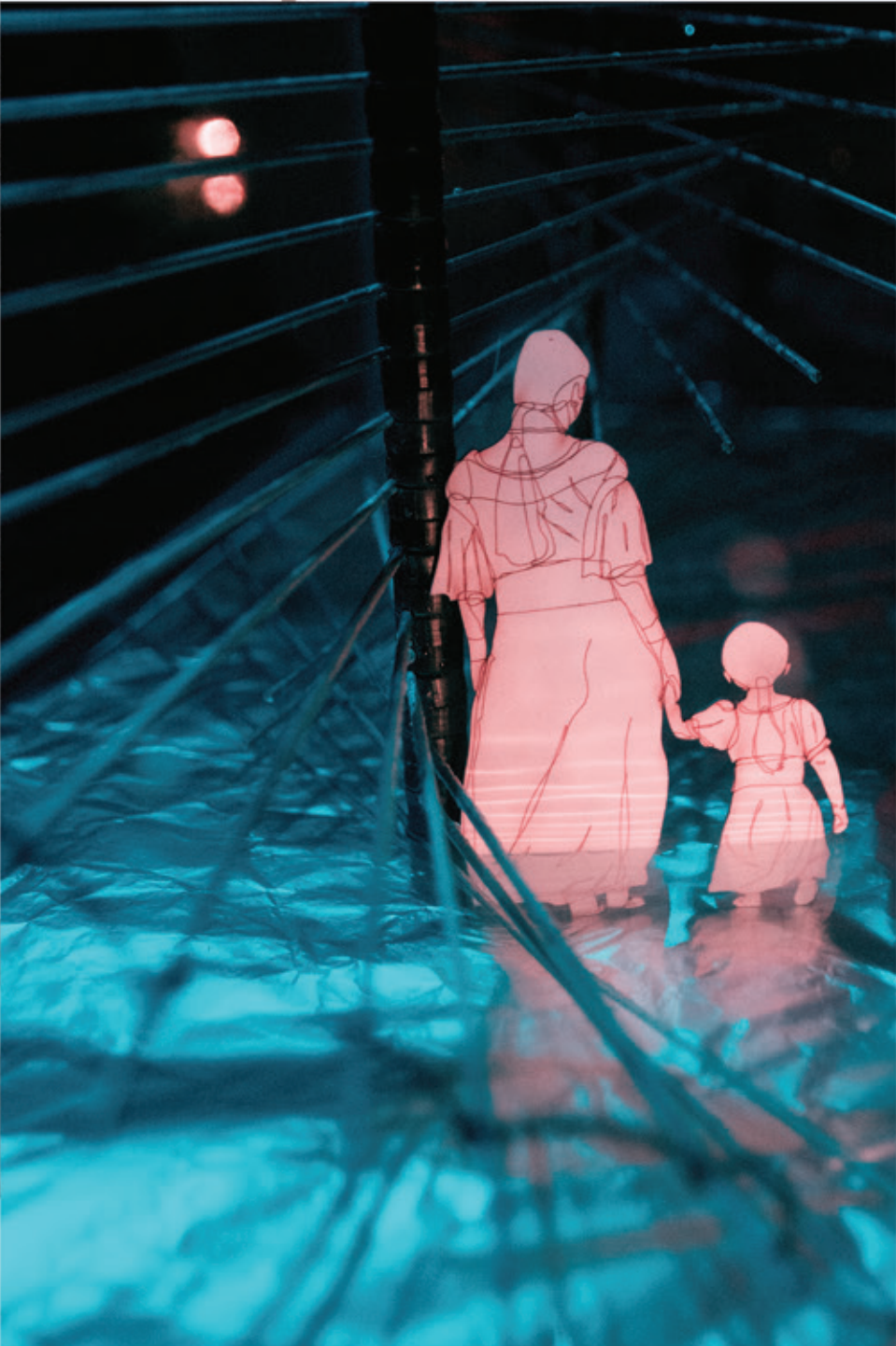


and natural processes. Using chemical, biological and mechanical processes of erosion and deconstruction, I tested the ability to disassemble CMU bricks back into their original forms of sediment and aggregate. This suggests that those captured within the jail cell will have the tools to deconstruct the walls around them. Simultaneously, a series of climate, catastrophes and changing ecological conditions will contribute to the deterioration of the concrete material. These drawings create a disillusionment of strength in the prison industrial complex, and the systems of power that reinforce it. Despite having used material language as a way to propagate power and dominance over the landscape by using perceivably unbreakable materials, this project suggests that by eroding the shell of material that is concrete, you expose the true form that holds the structure in place (ie rebar), demonstrating that, without their structural counterparts, these systems of power are weakened. These model images, built from a series of found materials demonstrate the process of exposing the rebar and bending it to form new geometries. Over time, the structure becomes nothing but a series of chemical and ecological processes by which the landscape has been transformed, allowing its previous residents to exist in a now decarceral future. A Post-Anthropocene where humans coexist regeneratively with nature, rather than by extracting from it.

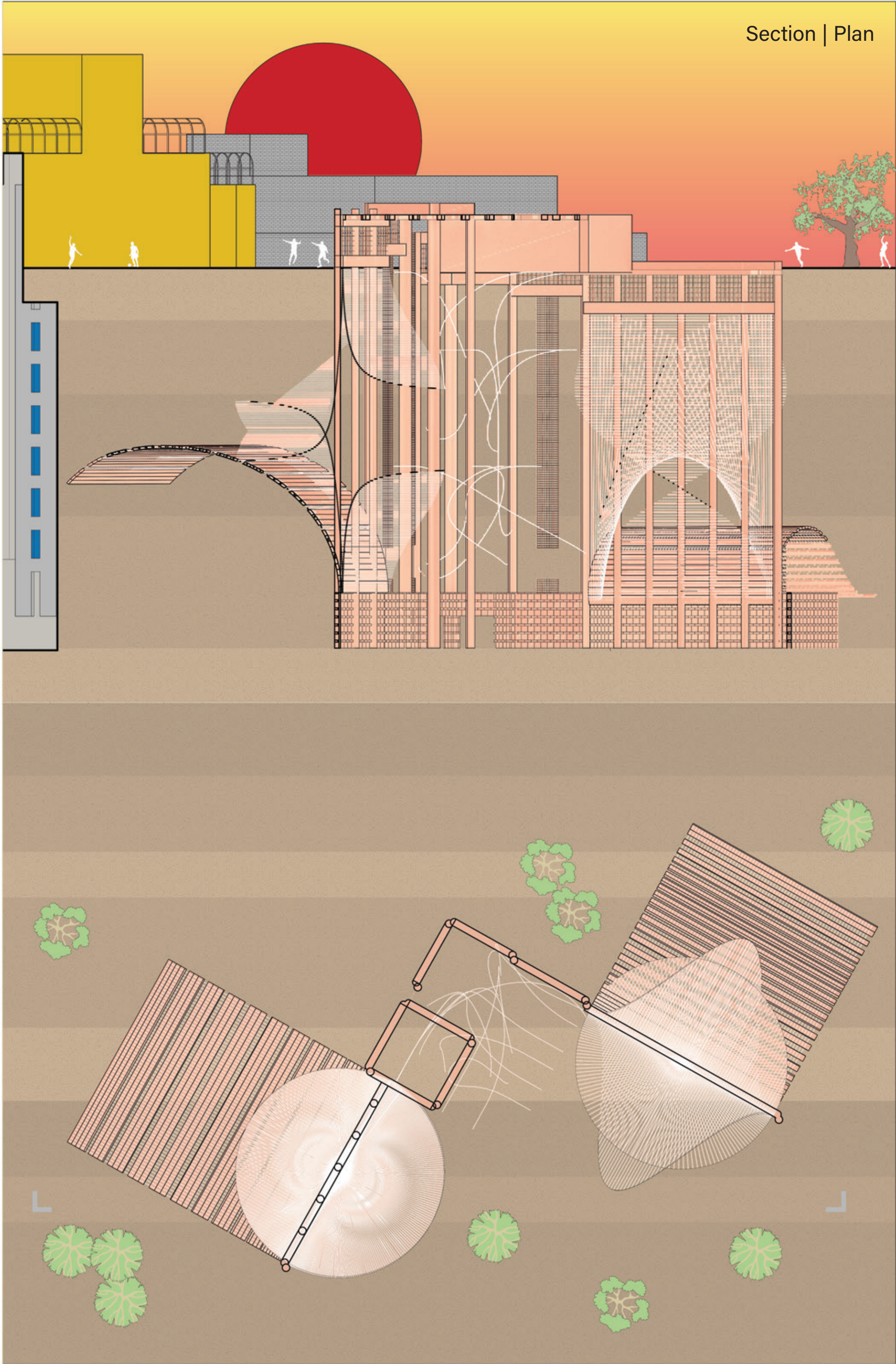


incarcerated for a lifetime, or even a year, may experience time differently than how we've come to calculate it as a human race. To compare the perception of time to the vast timeline of a changing planet, this fractal represents the ways that time is experienced, perceived, and repeated. Throughout these drawings lies evidence of a moment of extraction or addition to a moment in fractal time. This includes coastlines or borders, jail cells and quarries. The moments when earth material has been used to propagate, pain and suffering in the carceral sphere.

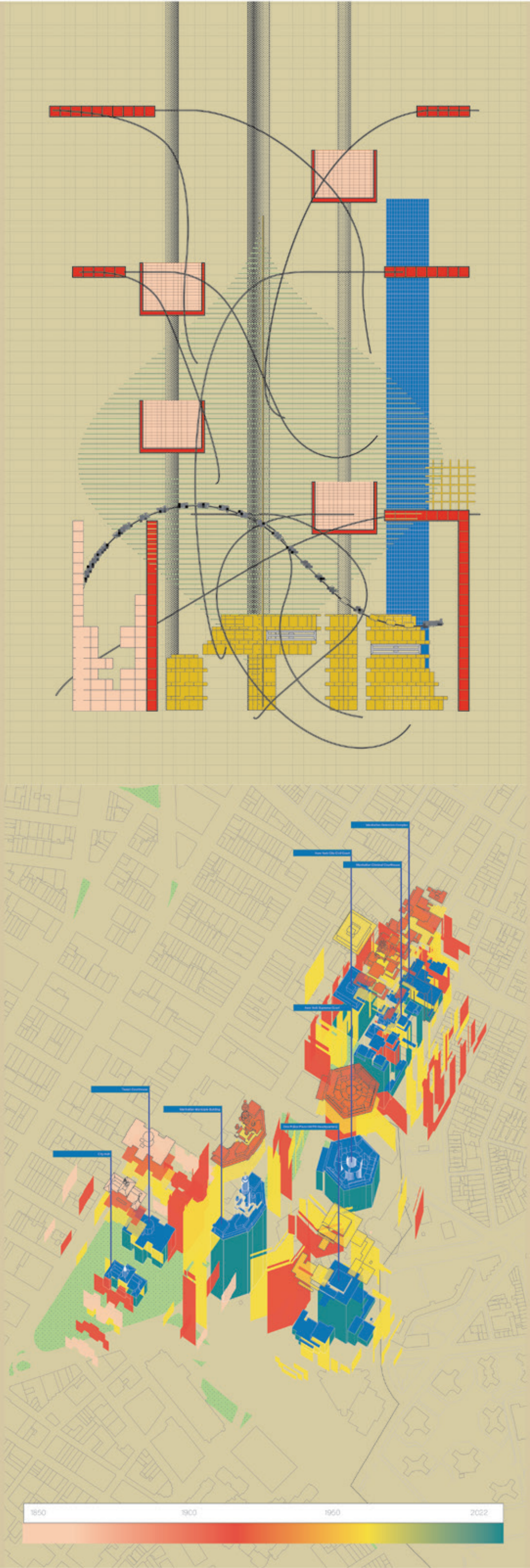
As a proposal, this project instead suggests a type of (un)building of the carceral infrastructure both by synthetic



Section | Plan



Material Bank



Site Map

**Material Bank**

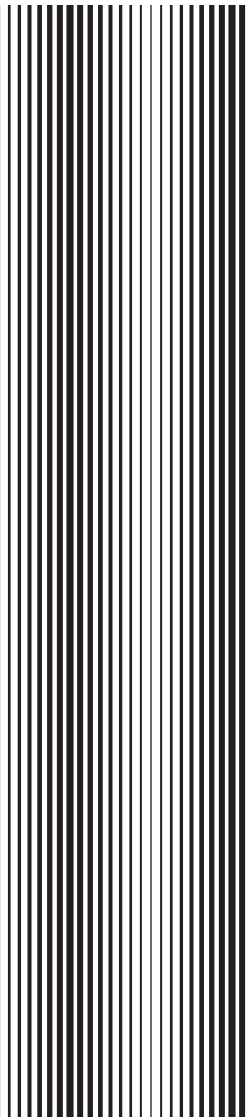
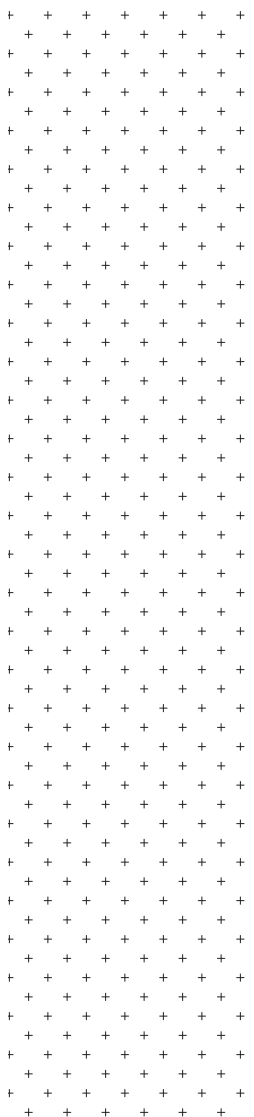
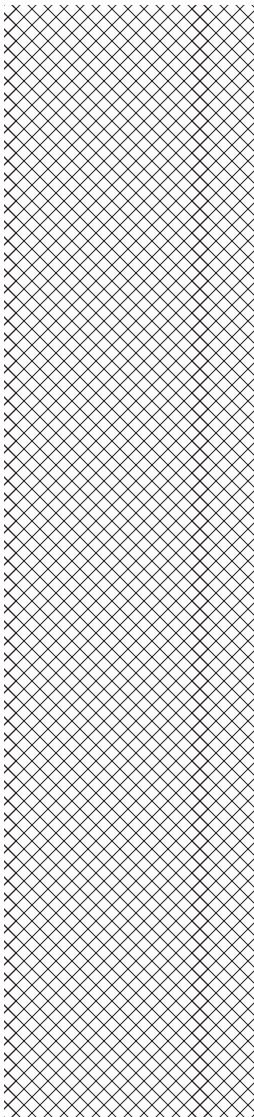
This drawing takes a count of all the materials used in the Manhattan Detention Complex, and imagines them in a state of deconstruction and disarray.

**Site Map**

An analysis of the buildings in lower Manhattan's Civic Center that play a role in incarceration. The layers of the buildings correspond to the duration of time that they have been present in their current location.

**Section | Plan**

This image imagines a post-carceral future when the buildings have been covered by a number of sedimentary layers following years of flooding and other climatic transformations. What remains are simply the structural components of the infrastructure that was once used to incarcerate, and now remain as the bones and fossils of the Anthropocene.



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