PORTFOLIO

ANGELA LEE

COLUMBIA GSAPP I Master of Architecture 2026

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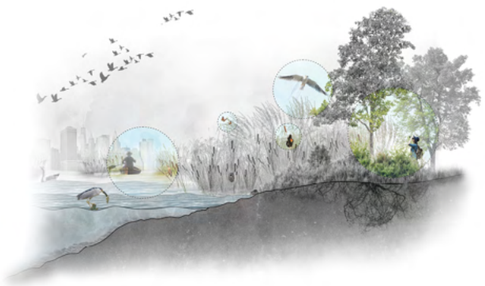
01

STALK EXCHANGE

A Cycle of Unbuilding and Rebuilding

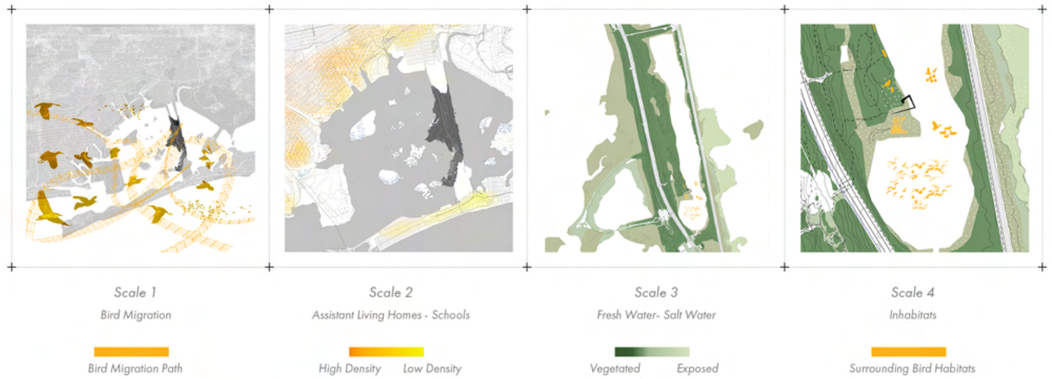
Jamaica Bay | New York, New York
Fall 2025 | Columbia GSAPP, Advanced V
Instructor: Marc Tsurumaki
In Collaboration: Swezya Joshi



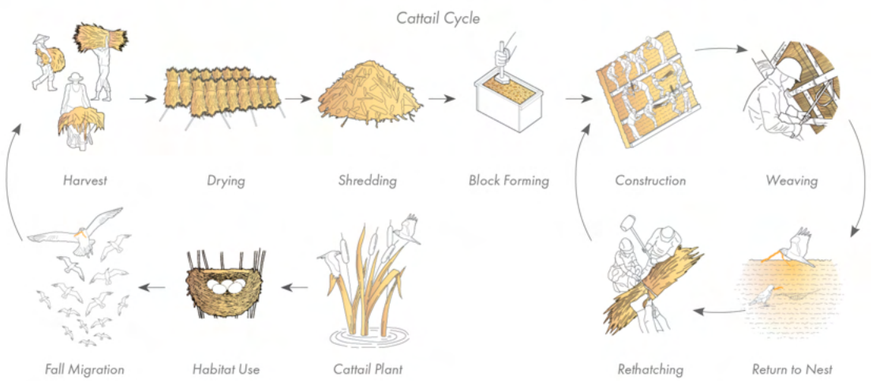
Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge is a critical avian habitat, home to over 350 species of birds, supported by an abundance of saltwater and freshwater ecologies. Conservation efforts such as nesting platforms and regulated water levels in manmade ponds actively create and sustain bird habitats. The refuge is also a site of observation, where birdwatchers conceal themselves within vegetation, establishing a spatial relationship of distance, camouflage, and quiet occupation between human and bird.

Exploring the spatial relationship between the two revealed the significant presence of cattails in the area. Many birds depend on cattails for food and camouflage, as fishing platforms, and most importantly, as nesting material and shelter. It uses cattails the same way we build houses- the fibrous stalk as structure and envelope, and the fluffy head as insulation. This led to a series of investigations into cattails as a biogenic material, examining how birds use cattails for shelter. The section model is a result of a series of investigations that represent how different parts of the cattails are utilized from mats and thatch bundles to fluffy and fiber insulation with a variety of binders.

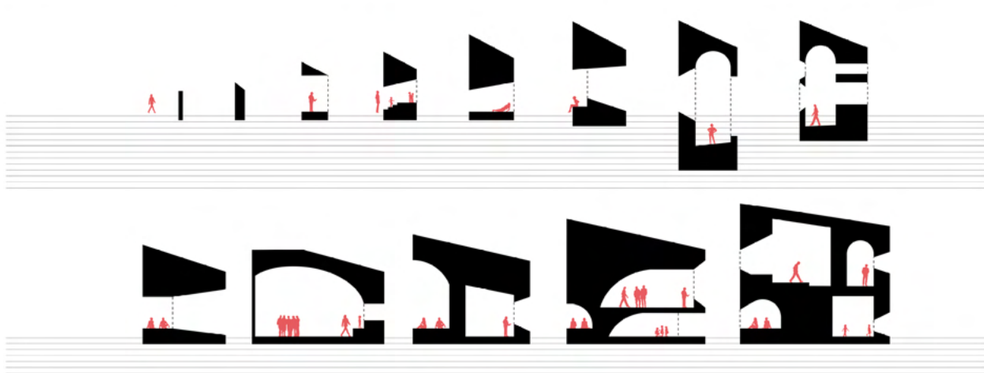
Surrounding assisted living facilities, rehabilitation centers, and youth programs identify the project's primary users, framing birdwatching as a shared activity that supports physical, mental, and social well-being.

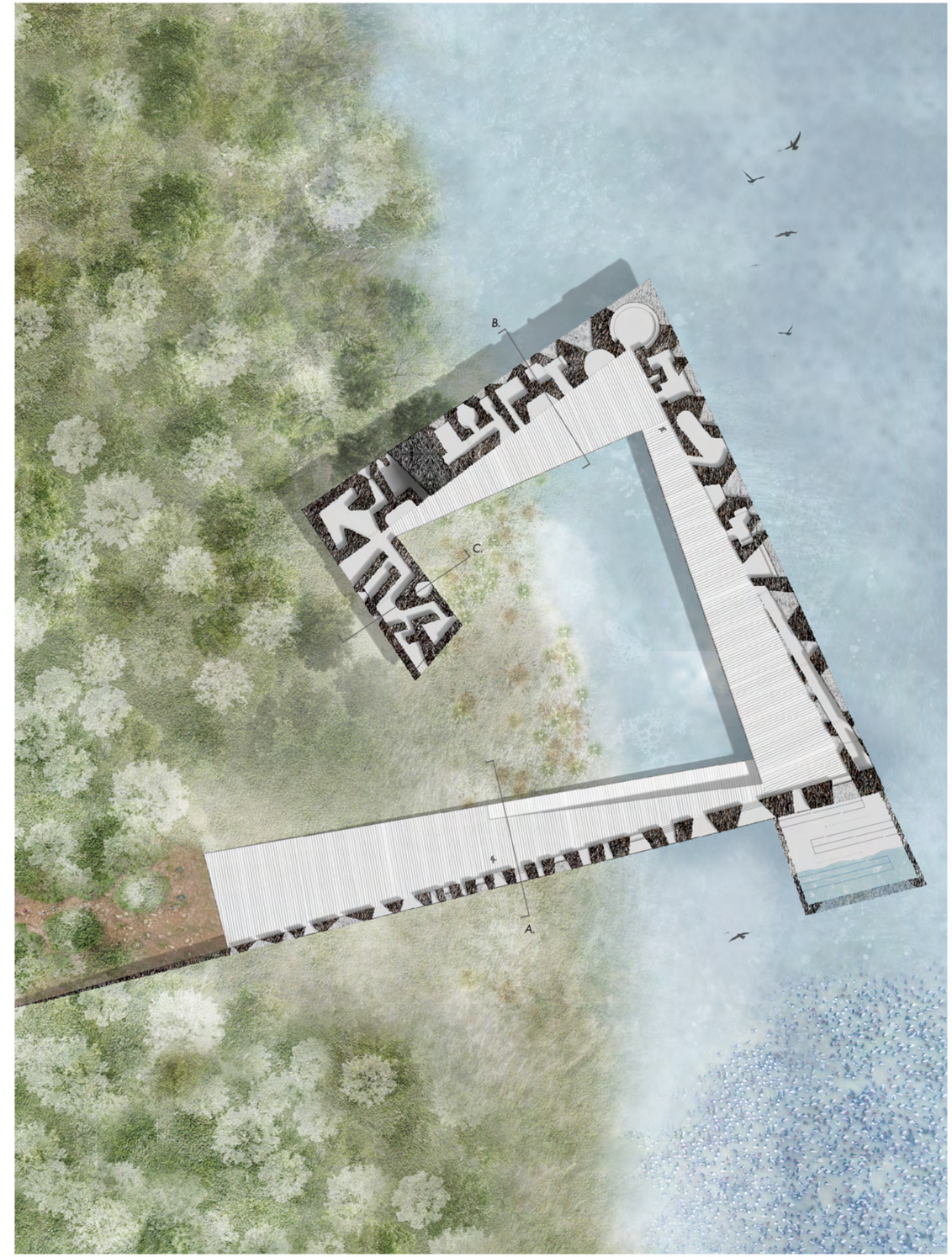


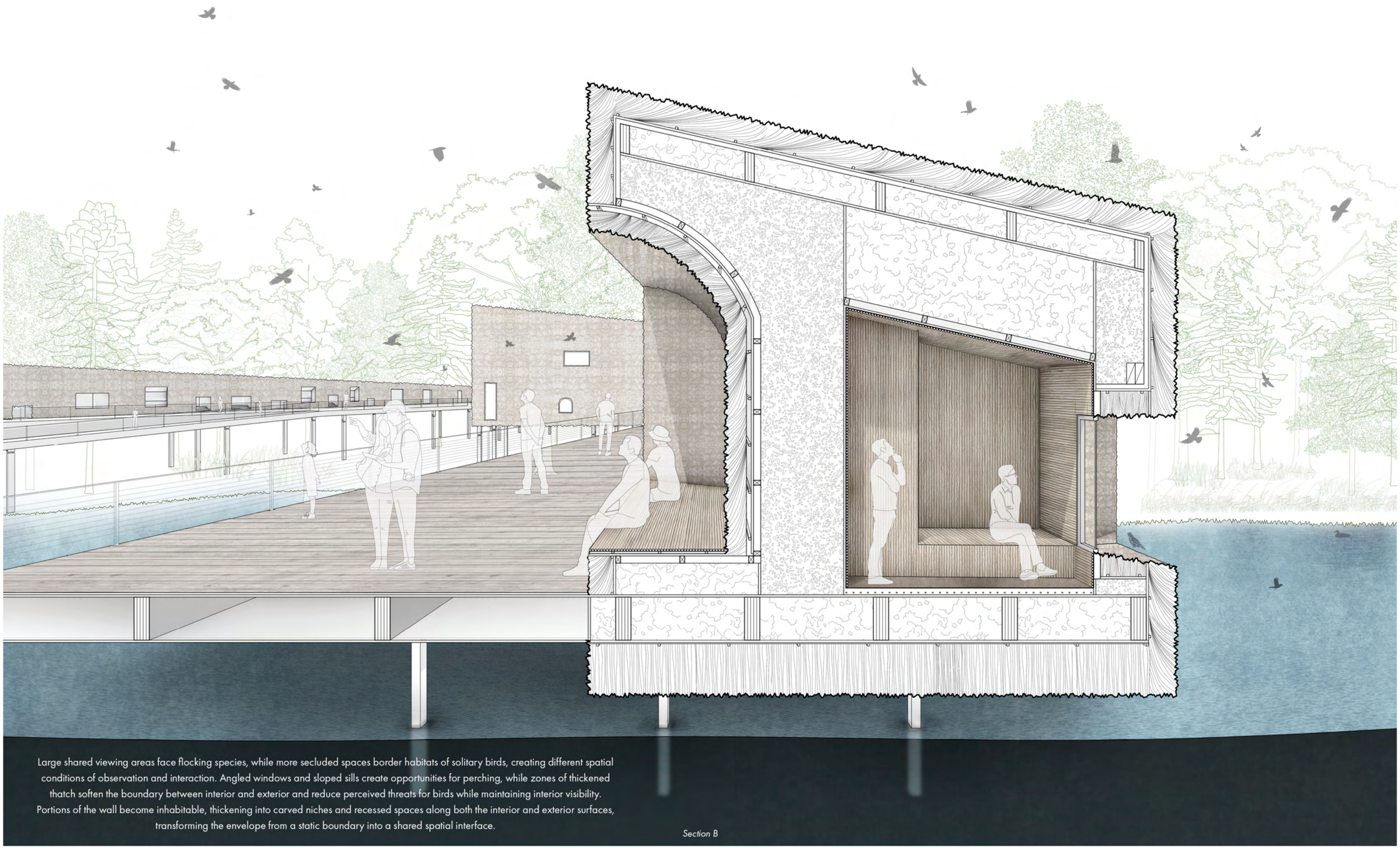
The relationship between human and non-human inhabitants is negotiated through a façade of varying thickness. Constructed from locally harvested cattails, the thatched envelope operates within a cyclical process of harvesting, construction, occupation, and renewal, allowing the building to register seasonal change and ecological use over time. Rather than functioning as a static boundary, the façade performs as an active interface: mediating light, air, visibility, and access between interior space, birds, and landscape.



Birds appropriate the thatch for nesting, gradually thinning the façade, while seasonal rethatching by local birdwatchers restores its density. This continual process of unbuilding and rebuilding positions the façade as a sacrificial layer, while simultaneously serving an environmental function: by sequestering carbon within the harvested cattails, the building stores biomass that would otherwise be burned and released into the atmosphere.

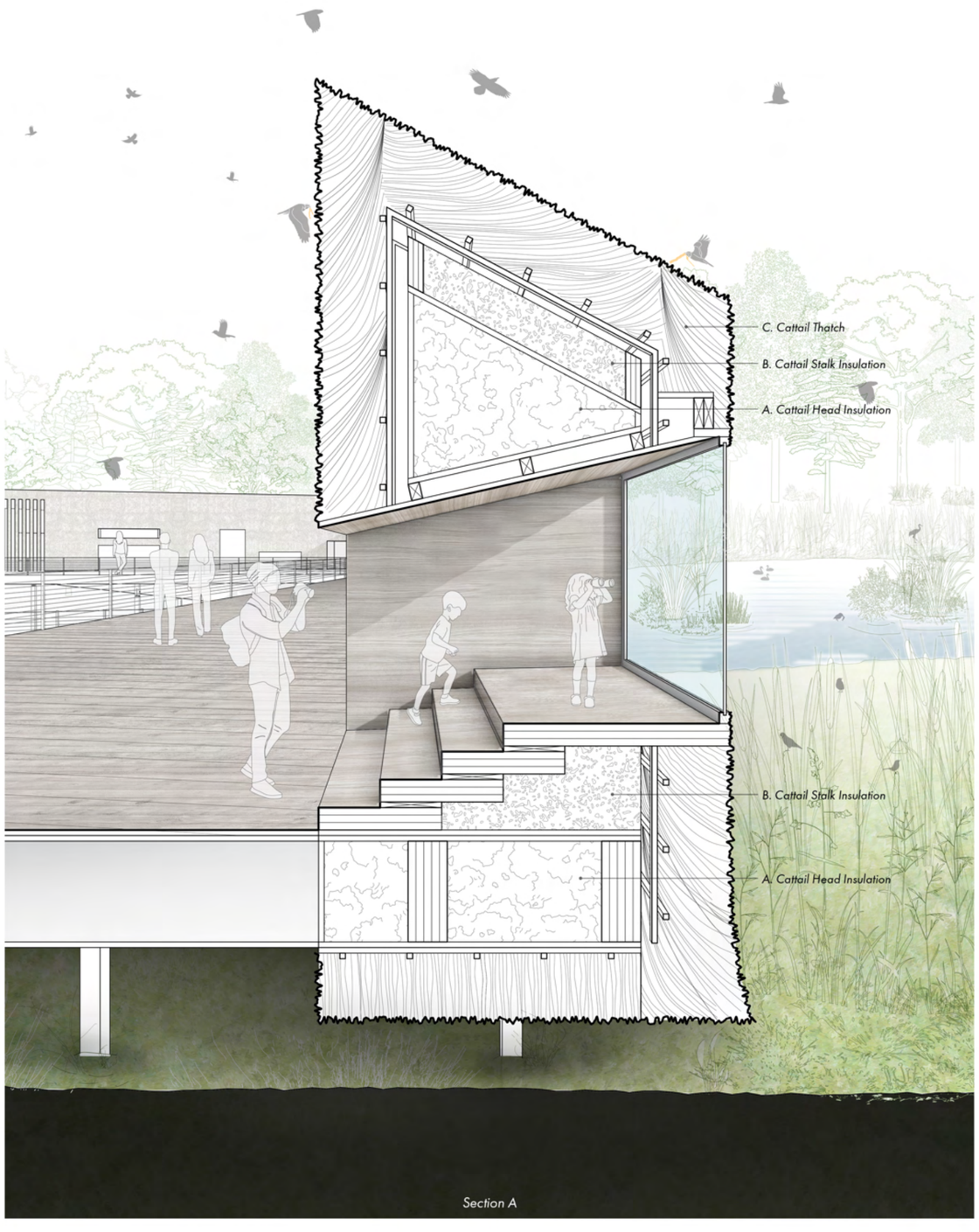






Large shared viewing areas face flocking species, while more secluded spaces border habitats of solitary birds, creating different spatial conditions of observation and interaction. Angled windows and sloped sills create opportunities for perching, while zones of thickened thatch soften the boundary between interior and exterior and reduce perceived threats for birds while maintaining interior visibility. Portions of the wall become inhabitable, thickening into carved niches and recessed spaces along both the interior and exterior surfaces, transforming the envelope from a static boundary into a shared spatial interface.

Section B

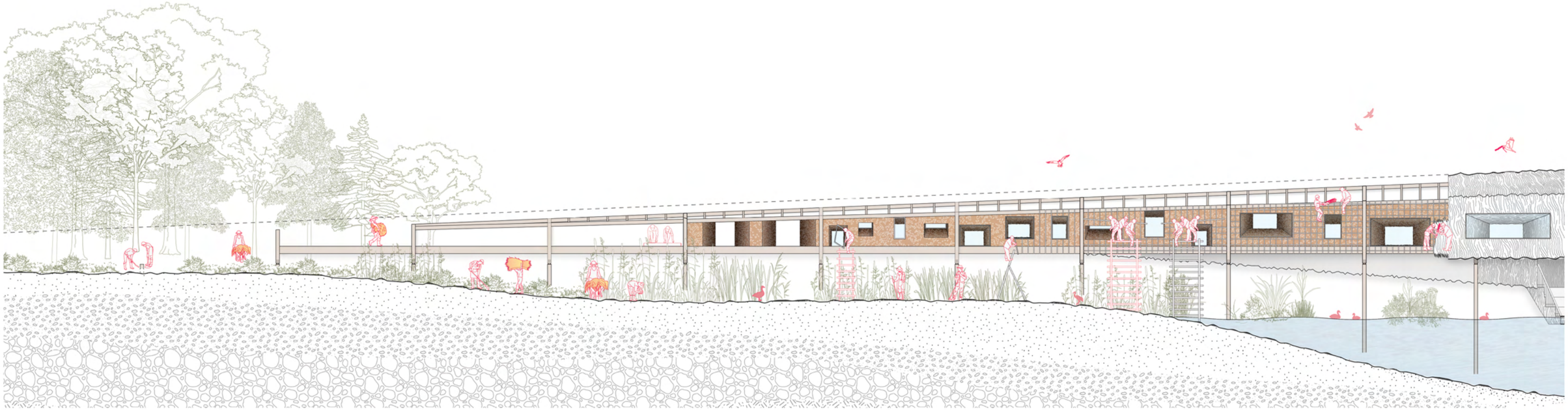


As a loop, the project captures the transition from land to water, organizing the plan around an interior courtyard. Movement through land, water, and forest is guided by the concept of cattails thickening: from a permeable screen to a dense wall. Thresholds extend to form acoustic buffers or amplify sound, shaping both perception and experience along the journey.Research into local bird behaviors informs the placement of programmatic spaces.

1. Boardwalk

2. Birdwatching Unit

3. Water Plaza



1. Harvest

2. Construction

3. Return to Nest

4. Rethatching

The thatched envelope itself serves as a sacrificial layer, inviting birds to borrow materials for nesting while seasonal rethatching by local birdwatchers restores its density. The intentional impermanence cycle of the material creates the opportunity for building maintenance to function as a collective practice, preserving both structure and community in tandem.

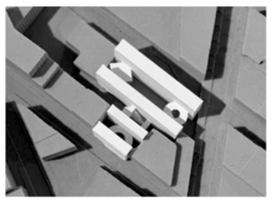
Section C

02

LAYERED LIVING

Transforming and Connecting Layers

Harlem | New York, New York
Fall 2024 | Columbia GSAPP, Core III
Instructor: Eric Bunge
In Collaboration: Jaewon Kim



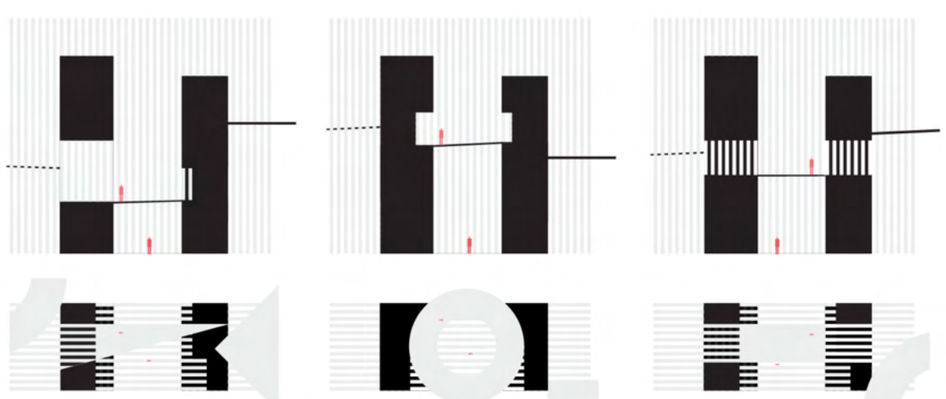
Architecture transcends boundaries - between public and private, individual and collective, functional and expressive. This project emerges from an exploration of layers: layers that connect, transform, and create opportunities for interaction. More than physical divisions, these layers generate rhythms of engagement, acting as connectors between the urban scale, the building, and individual units. By embracing this approach, the project seeks to blur rigid separations, fostering a more fluid and interconnected living environment.

Harlem, a vibrant cultural hub in Upper Manhattan, has long been a center of African American art and expression. Talent shows and jazz, especially during the Harlem Renaissance, extended beyond performance, fostering community and giving voice to the marginalized. Music and movement permeated everyday life, creating spaces where culture thrived. Beyond formal venues, tenant-organized jazz shows in courtyards and basements transformed homes into cultural spaces, strengthening social bonds while raising privacy concerns. This project reinterprets these informal performances at an rchitectural scale, shaping shared spaces into dynamic arenas for interaction, performance, and collective living, echoing Harlem's legacy.

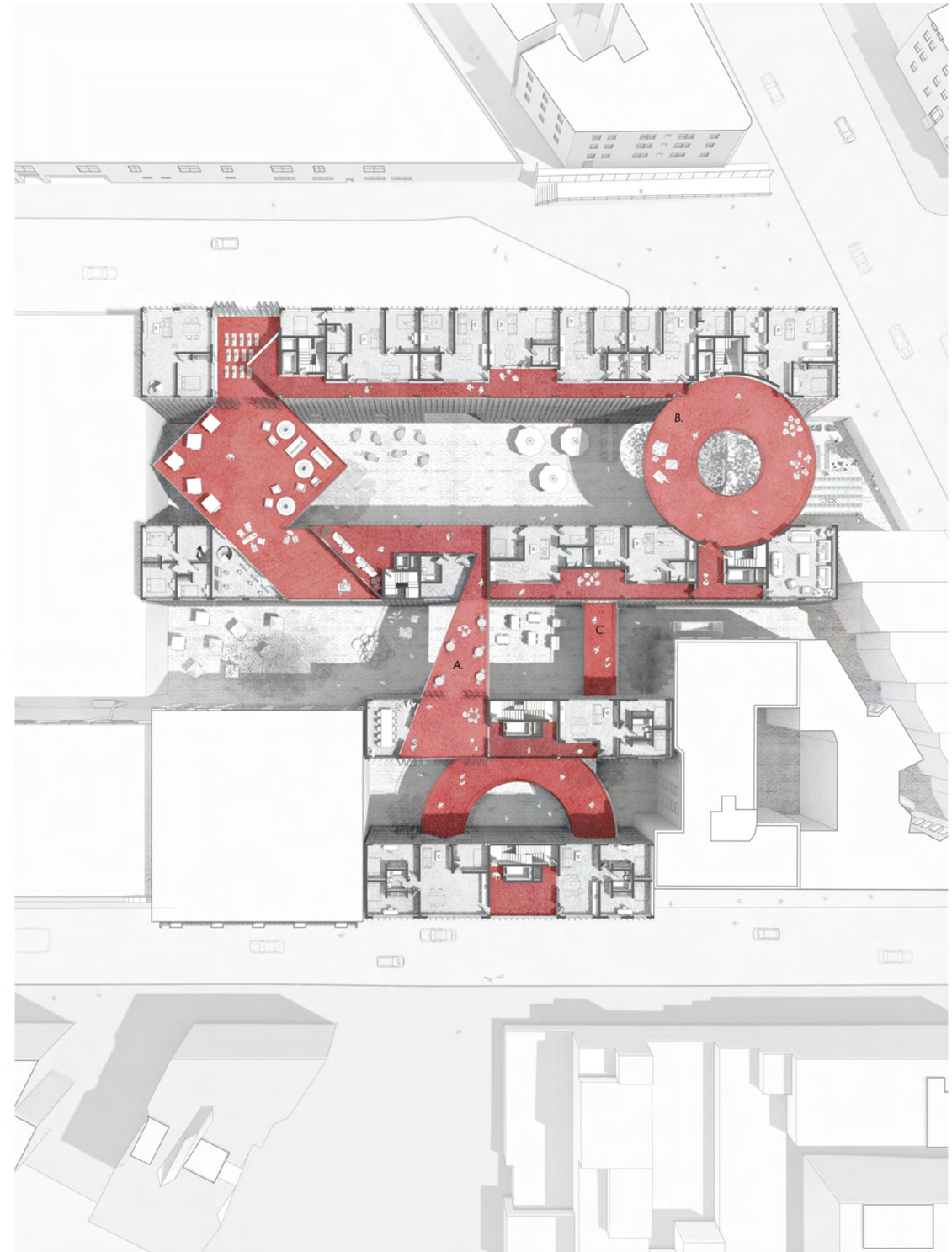
Inspired by Harlem's rich cultural legacy, where jazz and talent show united communities, we saw architecture as a medium for shared expression. Just as these performances turned everyday spaces into vibrant stages, our design transforms transitional spaces into dynamic realms of activity and connection by the composition of overlapping layers. Each layer is intentional, weaving together the individual and the collective. By stacking, shifting, and interweaving these layers, we redefine housing as a stage for everyday life- a place where culture, creativity, and connection come alive.

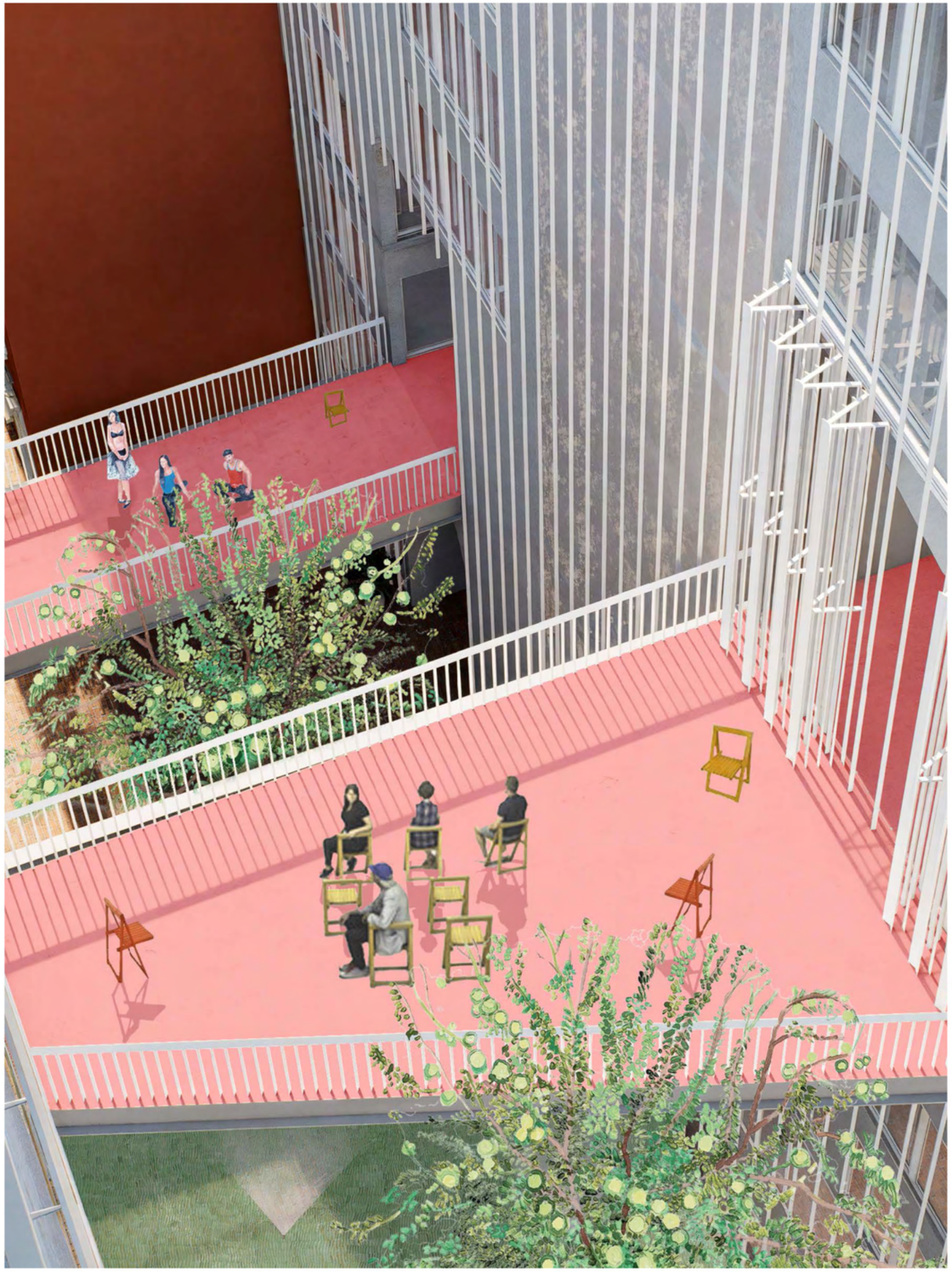
Layered Slabs

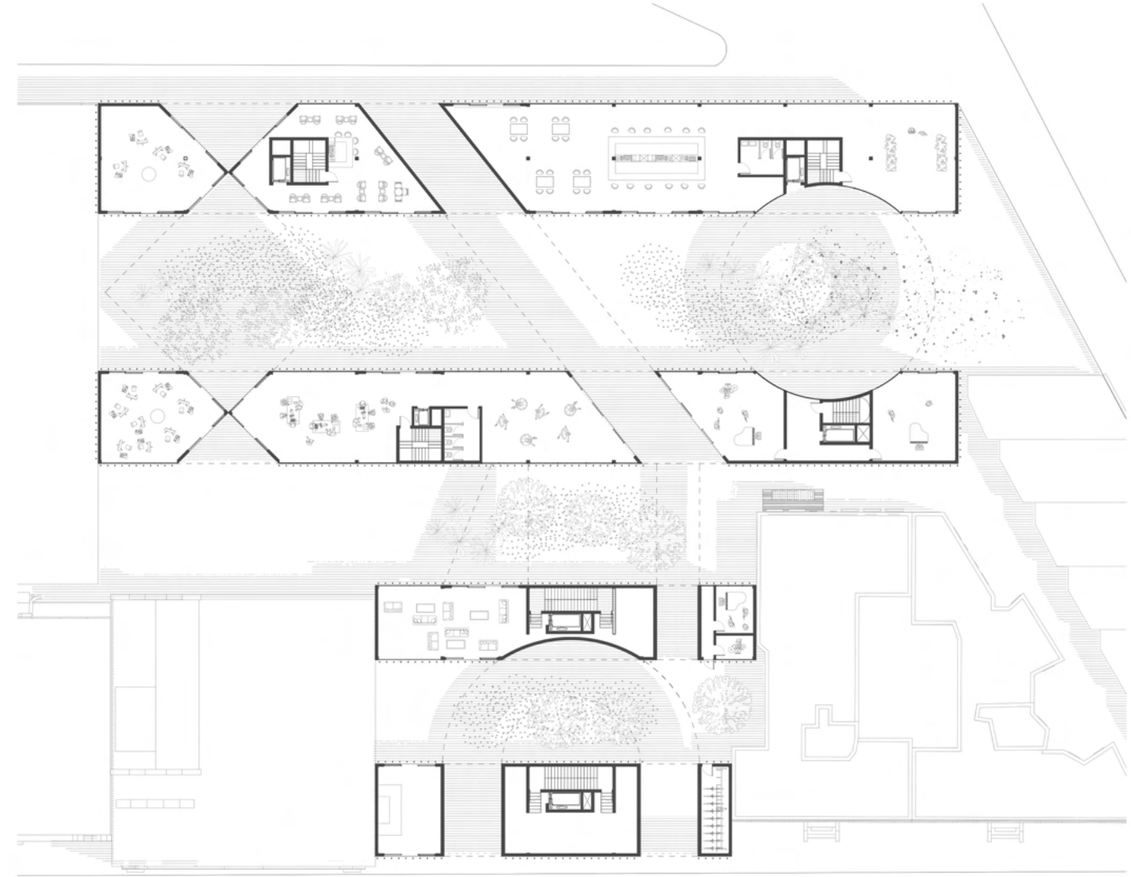
Drawing from the characteristics of the surrounding buildings, the design began with a composition of four slabs, recreating the experience of walking through the city streets within the building. Six figural shapes weave between these slabs, creating dynamic connections and elevated plazas. The distinct forms of these connections interlace with different areas of each slab, where structural interruptions provide opportunities for a blend of interior and exterior conditions, further expanding throughout the building.



A. B. C.







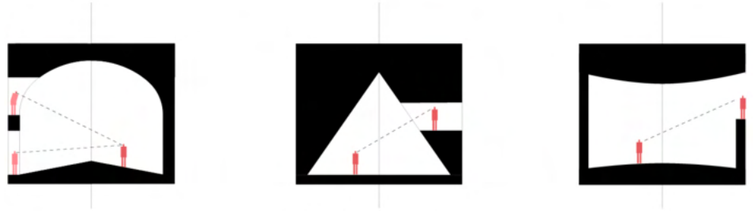
Ground Floor Plan

The in-between spaces, shaped by the repeated and staggered movement of units, serve as conduits that connect individual units with public areas. Beyond functioning as mere transitional zones, they become extensions of each unit, seamlessly integrating with the surrounding public realm. Inspired by Harlem's rich jazz culture, these spaces take on a theatrical quality- dynamic arenas for interaction, performance, and communal engagement that enrich the experience of shared living.

1. Elevated Plaza Landing

2. Unit Corridor

3. Ground Floor Plaza



Elevated Plaza Landing Typology

The lower levels, 1st and 2nd floors, serve as public space for both the general public and residents where programs such as artist studio, kindergarten, dance and music practice rooms are positioned. The figural connections located on the upper level mirrors to its ground floor, puncturing to each of the slabs. This movement creates this semi-enclosed space to the ground floor programs through its curved out alcove and plazas above functioning as a roof. The urban plazas that connect the strips are positioned at various levels throughout, incorporating diverse landscape features that foster a range of public programs and create vibrant, multi-functional spaces for social interaction, recreation, and cultural activities.

A

B

C

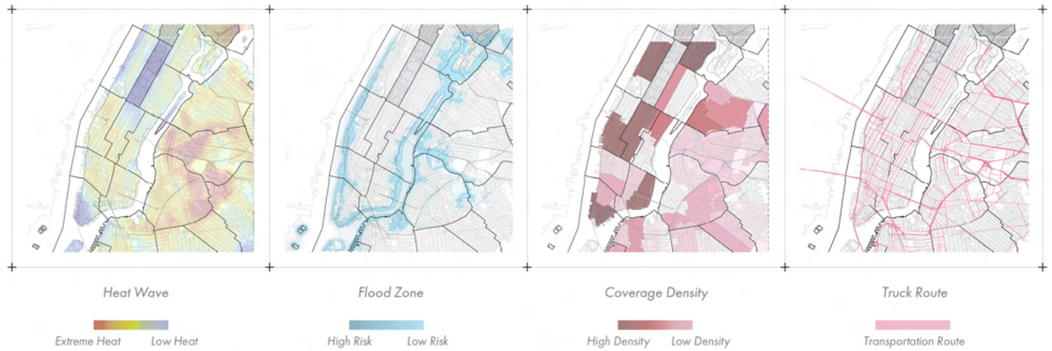
03

ROLLING RELIEF

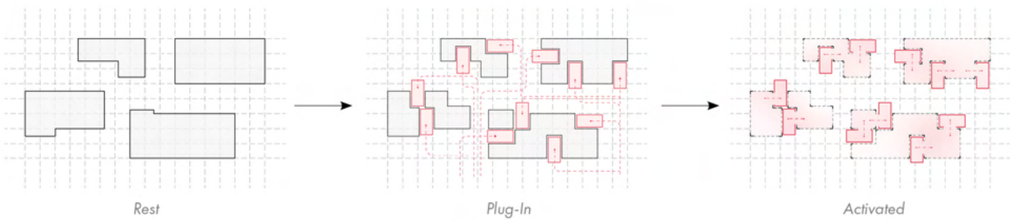
A Fixed and Mobile Relief Network

Midtown East, Manhattan & Long Island City, Queens
Spring 2025 | Columbia GSAPP, Advanced IV
Instructor: Haavard Breivik-Khan
In Collaboration: Ciara Wade

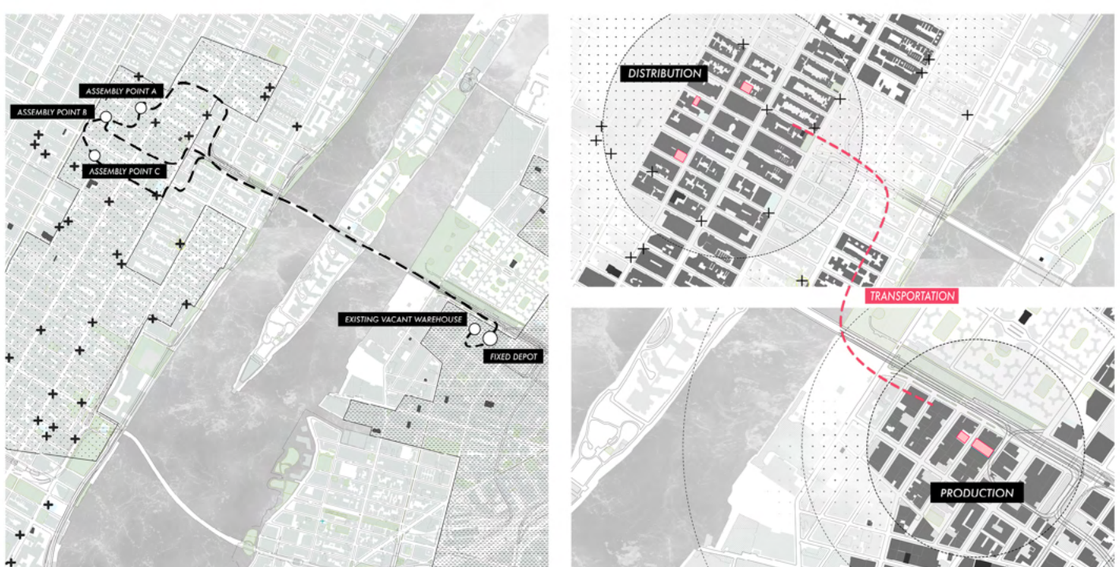
In New York City, emergency infrastructure is largely rigid and disruptive, unable to coexist with everyday life. Most city- designated evacuation centers are schools, temporarily suspending daily operations rather than supporting them. As climate change, public health crises, extreme heat events, and displacement intensify, the built environment must operate as an active and adaptable system. This project proposes an architecture that integrates daily urban life with emergency response by leveraging one of New York City's most ubiquitous infrastructures: the food truck. This proposes an approach that integrates both fixed and mobile systems.



Food trucks function as mobile plug-in masses that slot between fixed building volumes, shaping each site's spatial logic. In everyday conditions, the architecture remains compact, with truck bays reading as residual or public space. During emergencies, trucks dock into the infrastructure, extending interior spaces and redefining thresholds between inside and outside. This transformation allows the architecture to expand when needed, enabling a dual-use system that remains dormant in daily life and is activated during crisis.

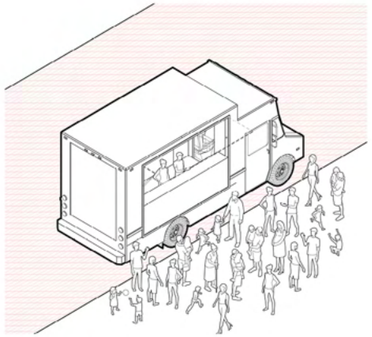


The system unfolds in three stages: production, transportation, and distribution. Food is prepared at a fixed depot in Long Island City, transported into Manhattan via existing truck routes, and distributed at assembly points where food trucks dock into fixed infrastructure to serve both daily needs and emergency relief.

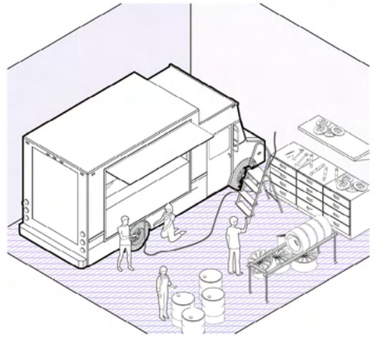


Activated Food Truck Typology

Stage 1

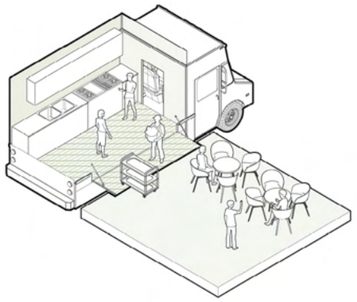


Food Truck Vendor

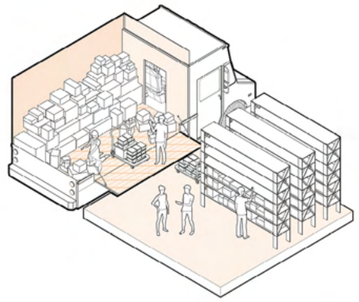


Fuel & Repair

Stage 2

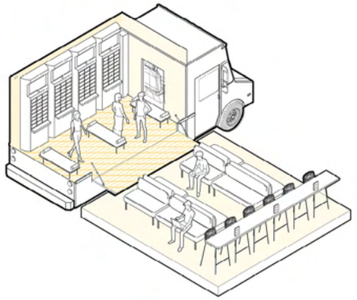


Commissary Kitchen

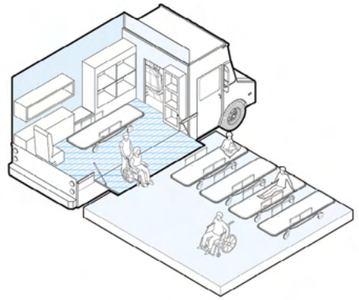


Stockpiling

Stage 3



Power Charging Station

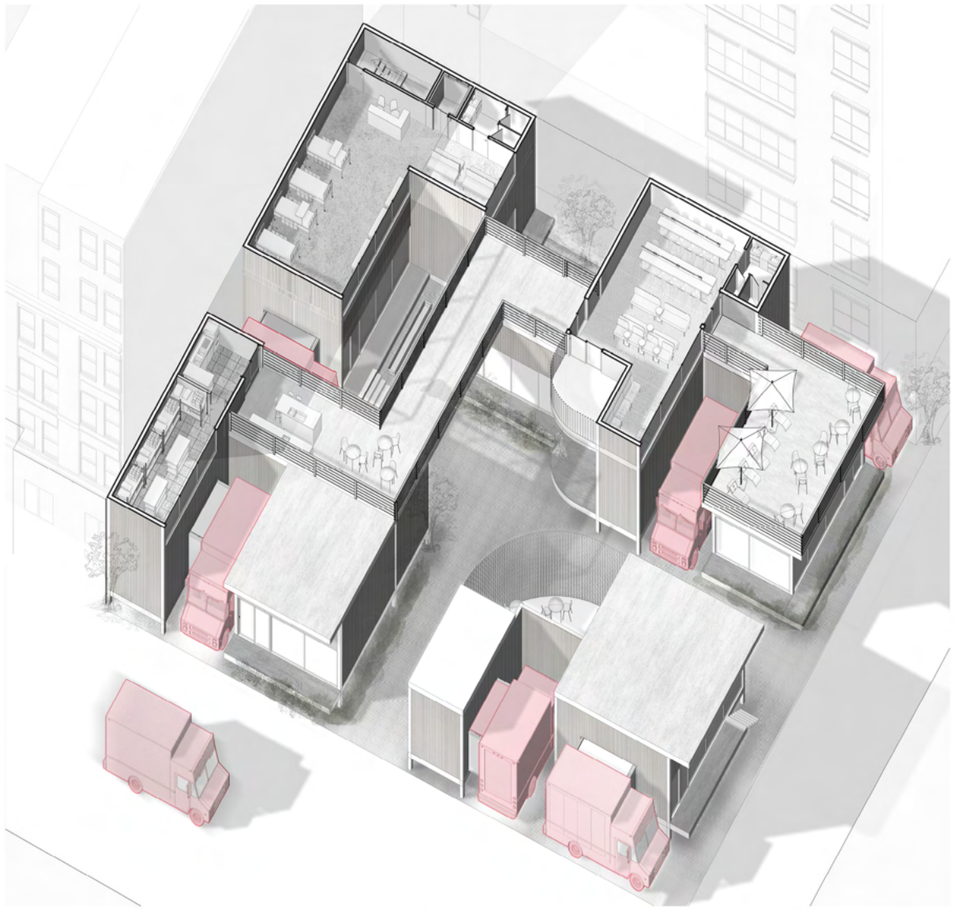


Medical Clinic

Assembly Point A Section

Serving as both a mobile food vendor and a tool for crisis response, the food truck connects production to distribution, offering flexibility and mobility to reach areas in need. Designed for both everyday operation and disaster relief, each truck is equipped with self-sustaining systems, such as portable power and water, and is refueled and maintained at the depot. Beyond daily food service, the truck supports activated typologies including food relief through commissary kitchens, supply stockpiling, charging stations during power outages, and mobile medical clinics.

Assembly Point A



Assembly Point B

Assembly points serve as public plazas with indoor relief zones in daily use. During crises, food trucks dock into bays, expanding interior and exterior space through operable doors and platforms. Varying in scale, each assembly point responds to its urban context. Assembly Point C, tucked between skyscrapers, features an A-frame roof over a shaded plaza, with a second floor providing seating, restrooms, conditioned space, and sleeping pods for vendor recovery.

Charging Station

Courtyard

Charging Station

During power outages, the food truck activates the infrastructure to supply electricity as a power charging station, providing essential services such as phone charging at designated sites in Midtown.

Courtyard

Indoor and outdoor spaces interweave throughout the building, blurring boundaries. This fluidity extends to the truck plug-in zones, enabling both interior and exterior activation.

Assembly Point C

04

MULBERRY FACADE

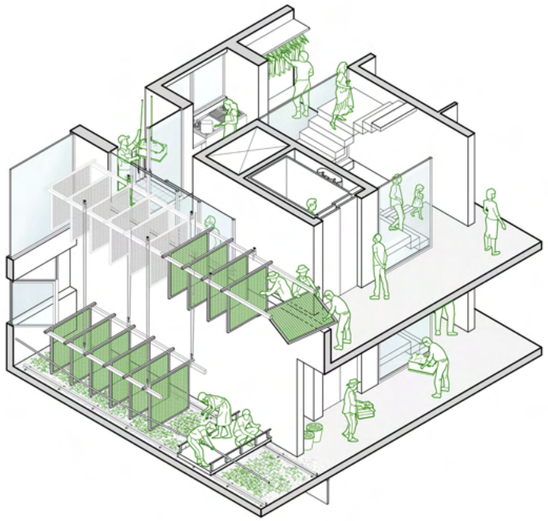
Collective Living through Silk and Spoon Sweet making

Athens, Greece
Spring 2026 | Columbia GSAPP, Advanced VI
Instructor: Michaeljohn Raftopoulos, Alejandro Marin

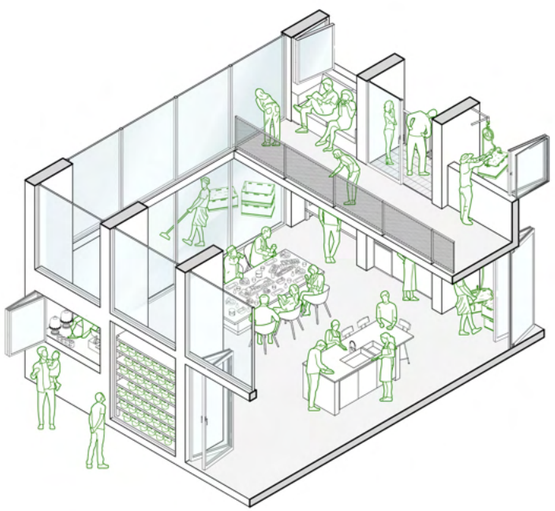
The project begins with a single urban organism: the mulberry tree in Athens. Not an exceptional object, but an existing municipal resource already present in courtyards, streets, and parks, quietly producing fruit, shade, and seasonal labor. What interests me is its resilience. The mulberry is not a fragile ornamental species, but a tree with an aggressive and adaptive root system that spreads deeply through urban soil, cracks, and residual landscapes. It persists without invitation, forming an informal infrastructure of care, maintenance, and harvesting within the city.

From this one tree, the project unfolds through two intertwined domestic crafts: silk production through silkworm cultivation, and glyko tou koutaliou—the traditional spoon sweet made by boiling mulberry fruit. One produces material, the other nourishment and hospitality. Together, they establish a shared ecological and cultural system rooted in harvesting rather than imported production.

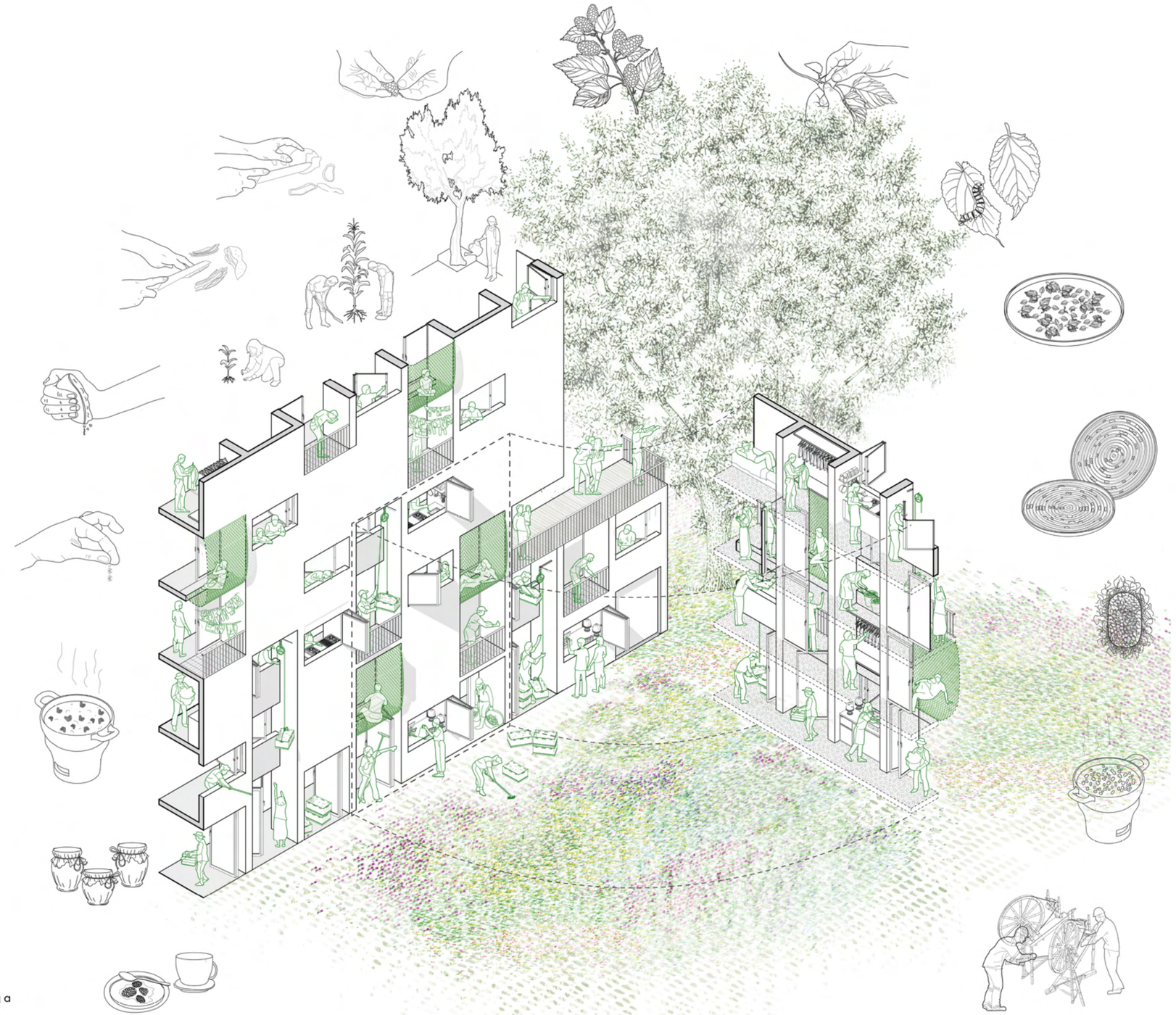
Within this framework, community is redefined not as a fixed domestic unit, but as a network of interdependent actors: silkworm cultivators, cooks, caretakers, and residents. Human and non-human actors participate together in cycles of feeding, collecting, processing, and making.



Silk Production

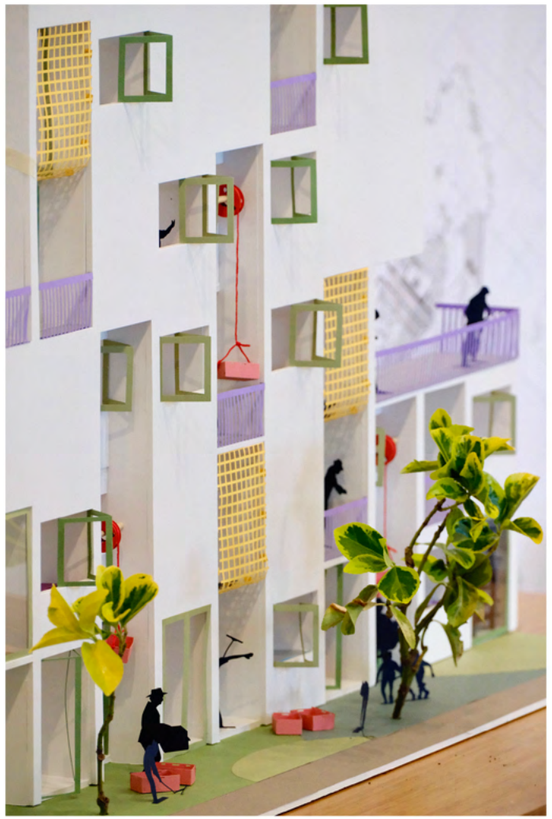


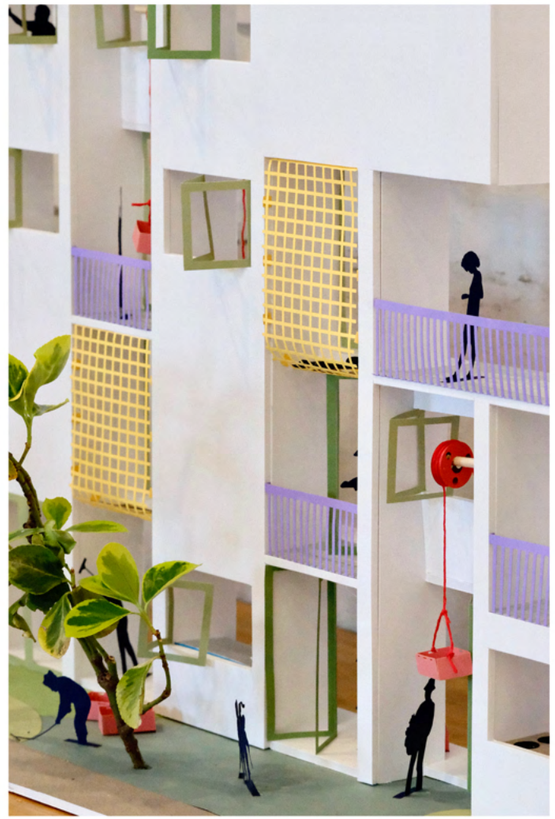
Spoon Sweet Production



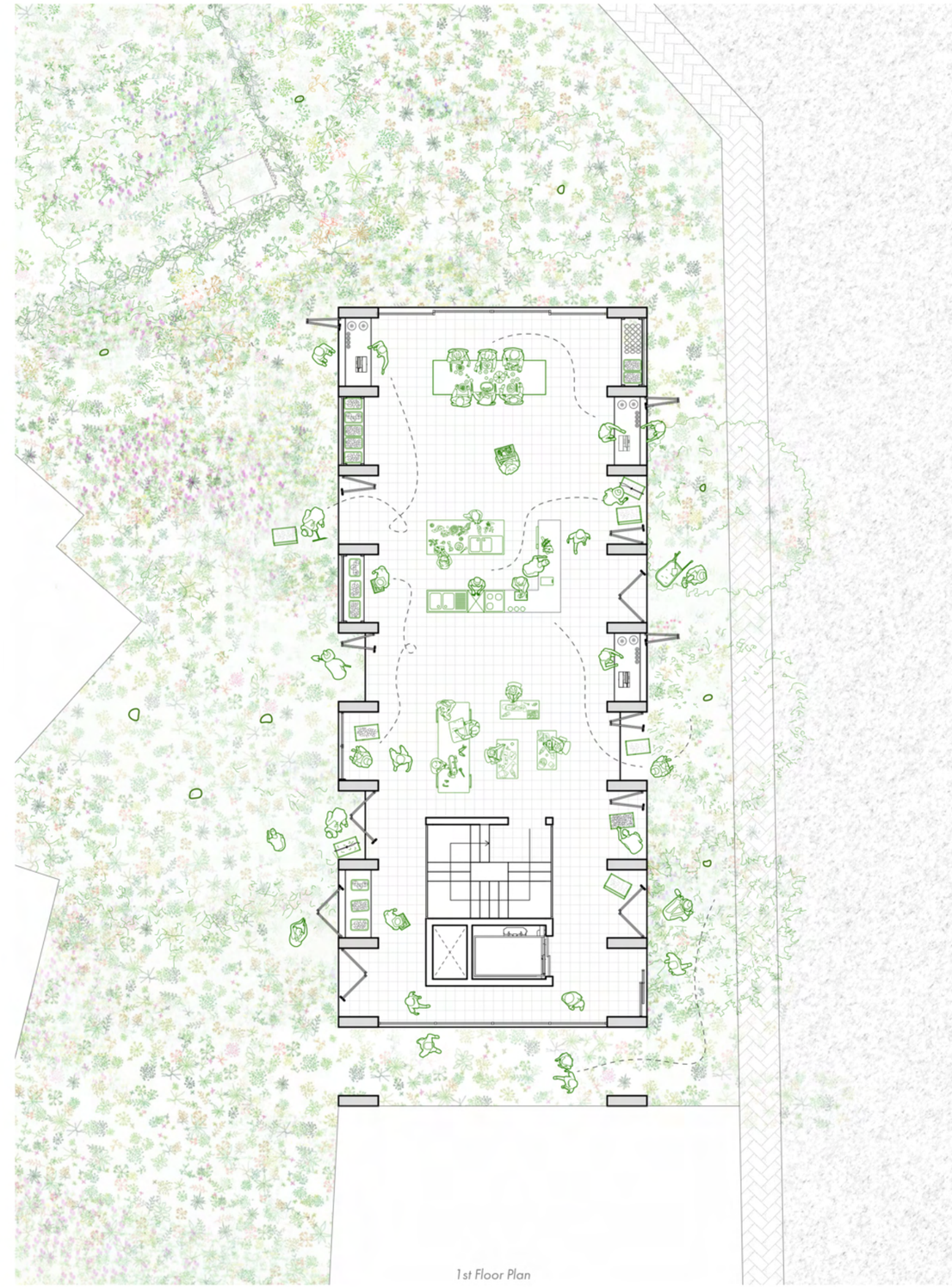
The site extends an adjacent park in Athens where mulberry trees already exist. Rather than introducing a new system, the project amplifies an existing one. The building becomes a continuation of the landscape, allowing the mulberry canopy to infiltrate domestic space and structure everyday life. Maintenance itself is repositioned: pruning, harvesting, and care are embedded into daily domestic activity, transforming municipal upkeep into a shared productive system.

2nd Floor Plan





Architecturally, the project reinterprets the typology of the polykatoikia through balconies, circulation, and stacked units as spaces of collective production. The facade shifts from a thin envelope into a thick infrastructural surface organized through a system of structural "bays" between column and slab. Each bay becomes a calibrated zone of occupation- bed, sofa, kitchen, storage, balcony- where domestic life overlaps with acts of making. Across the project, the facade operates simultaneously as structure, machine, and landscape interface, organizing agricultural cycles, domestic routines, and material transformations vertically. The polykatoikia is no longer a stack of isolated apartments, but a vertical ecosystem structured through the facade, where each bay becomes a point of contact between living, making, and growing.



1st Floor Plan

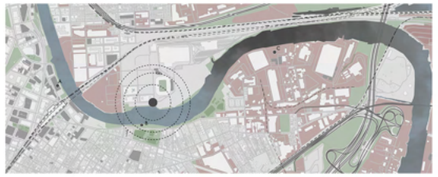
5th Floor Plan

05

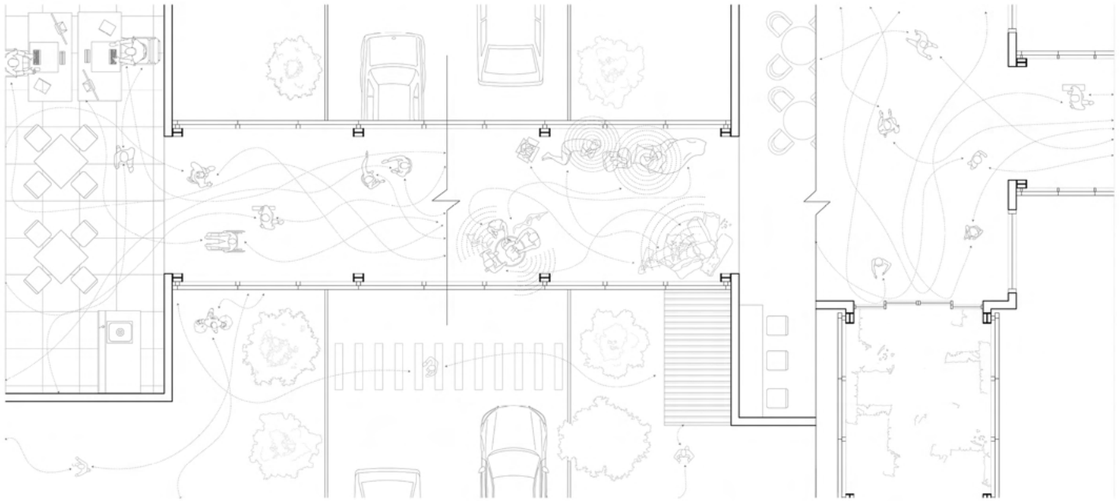
TRASH DETOUR: REVITALIZING NEWARK'S PAUSE

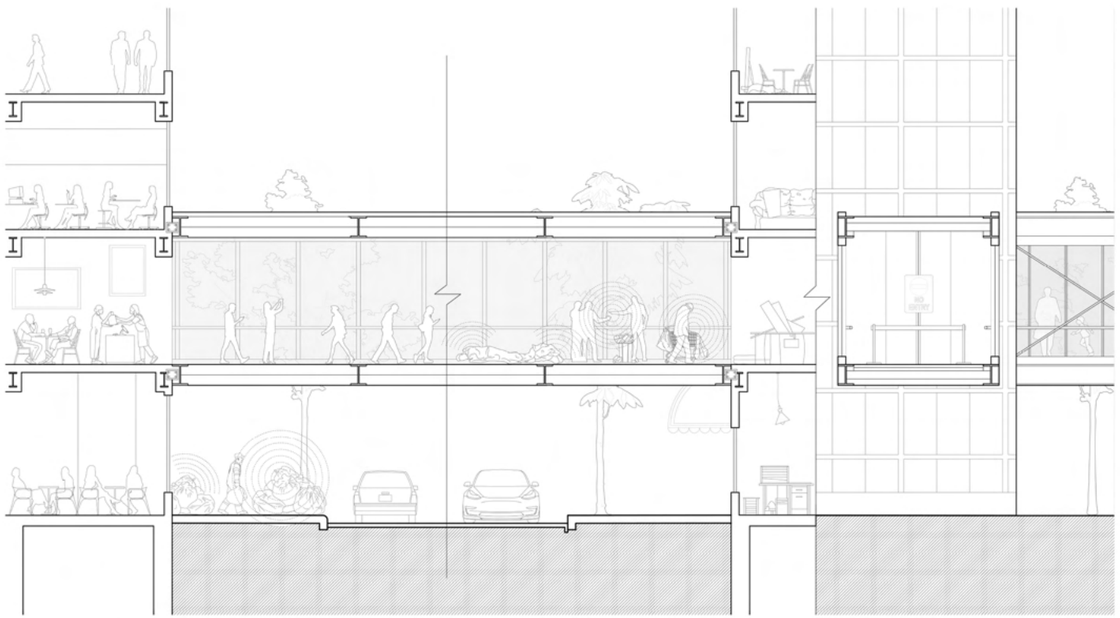
Passaic River's Detour Pier

Newark Penn Station & Newark Streetwalks | New Jersey
Spring 2024 | Columbia GSAPP, Core II
Instructor: Josh Uhl
Individual Work



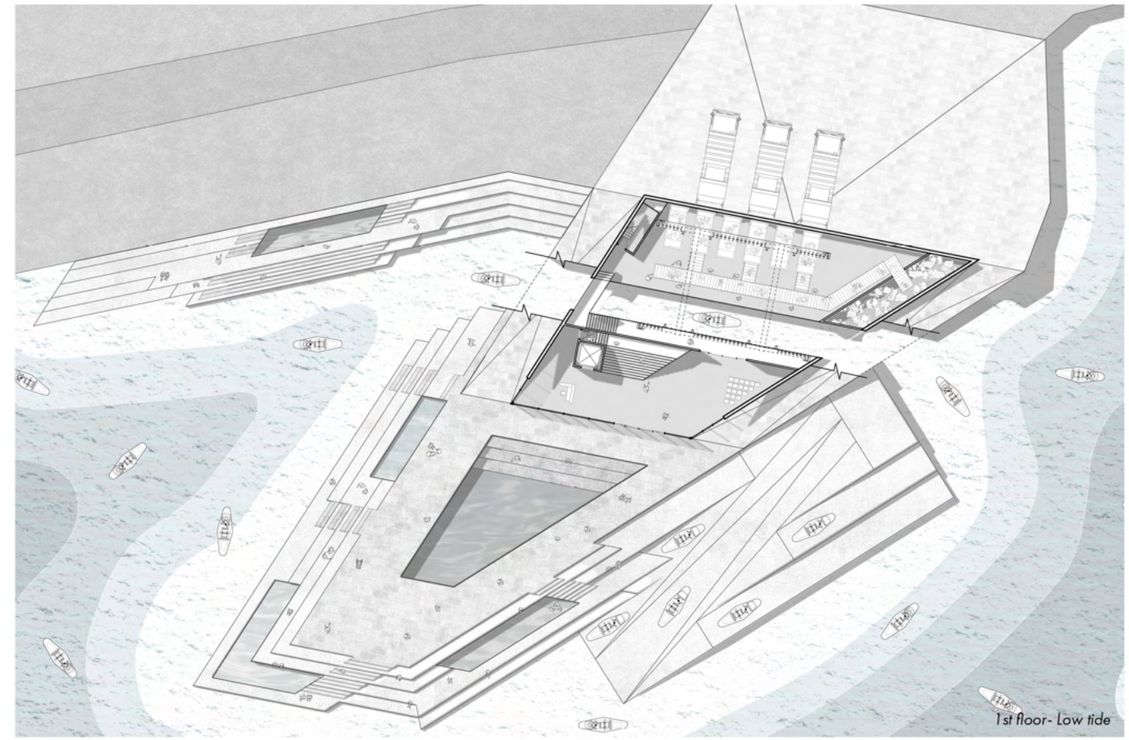
Located in the heart of Newark Penn Station, The Junction/The Gateway project is a network of interconnected skyways linking the station to the Hilton hotel and two expansive office and retail complexes. Serving over 75,000 weekly commuters and visitors from the New Jersey and New York metropolitan areas, these enclosed walkways have been a vital part of the city's infrastructure since their construction in 1972—the first major development in Newark following the riots. The walkways' slots and dividers frame shifting scenes of street life, reflecting the passage of time and urban change. However, they also reveal signs of neglect and misuse, including litter, drug use, and homelessness, highlighting how parts of the space have deviated from their original intent



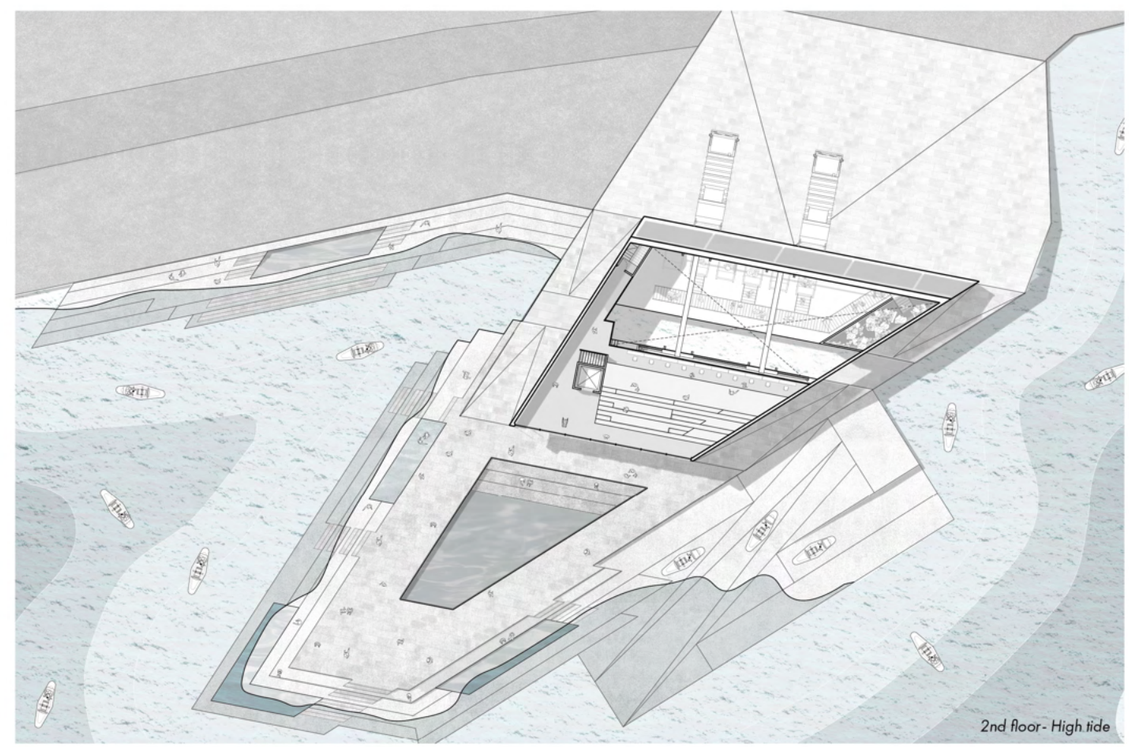


Case Study: Minneapolis Skywalk

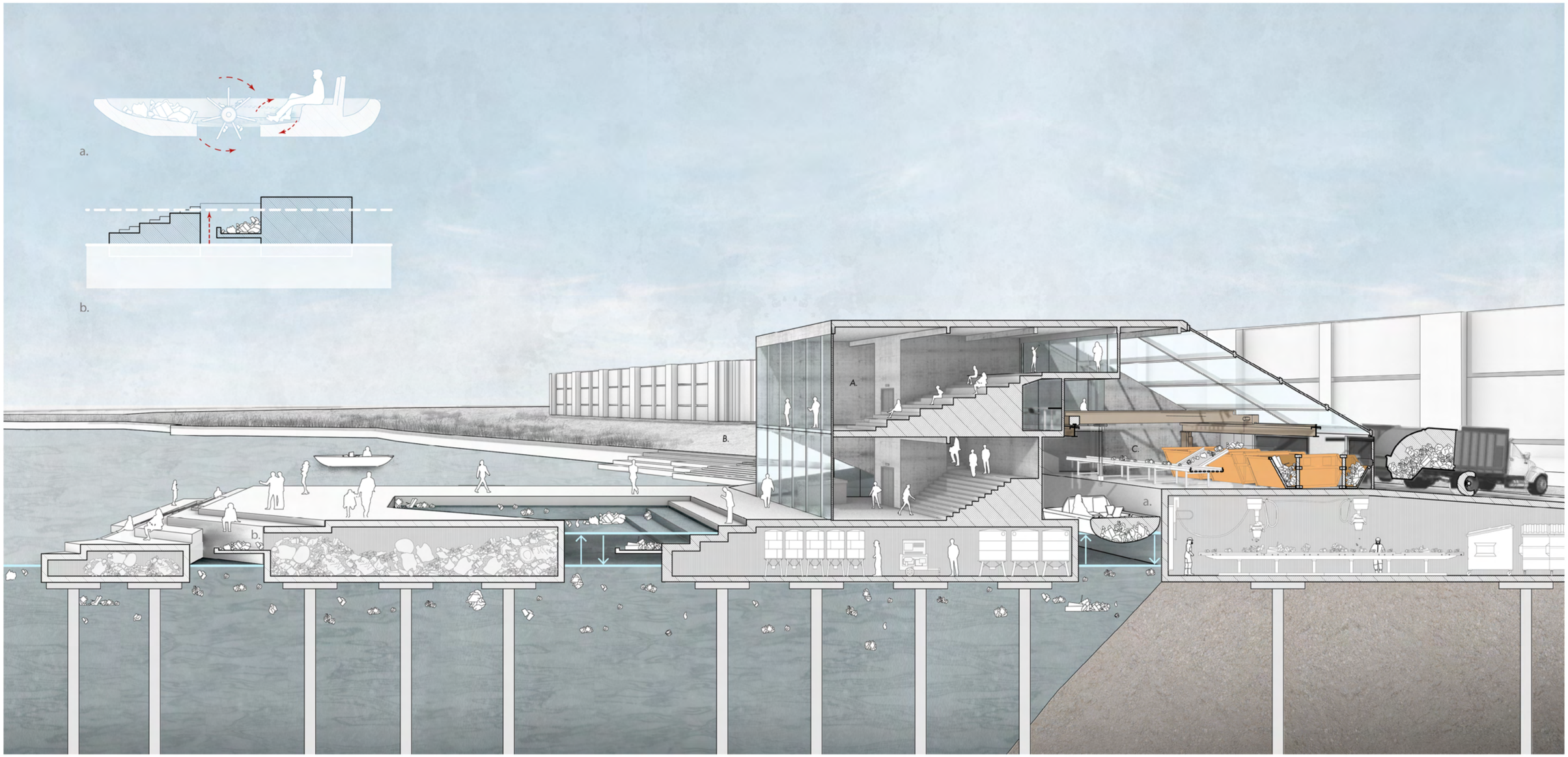
Downtown Minneapolis boasts the world's largest continuous system of enclosed, second-level bridges-known as the skywalk. Originally designed to reduce street congestion, improve traffic flow, and provide shelter from harsh winter conditions, the skywalk inadvertently shifted attention away from street-level activities. This led to unintended consequences, including litter accumulation and diminished social interactions. Inspired by this, the project explores the concept of "detour" and creating moments of "pause" within the urban fabric. Newark presents a similar challenge but on a different scale. As a critical transportation hub, Newark connects highways, the largest container port, Newark Liberty International Airport, and Newark Penn Station. While these infrastructures offer extensive connectivity for travelers and commuters, they have also turned Newark into a 'layover' city—where people pass through rather than stay.



1st floor- Low tide



2nd floor- High tide



A. 2nd Floor Look Out

B. Exterior Facade

C. Trash Organization

Pause and Detour: Navigating Trash Detours with Paddle Boats

The Passaic River's tidal fluctuations of up to 11 feet inspire a project designed to intercept trash using natural tidal patterns. Located near Riverfront Park and Red Bull Arena, the project features a pier with a pollution collection facility, tidal pools, and paddle boats equipped with trash-collecting mechanisms. As participants navigate the river, debris is lifted into onboard bins, then sorted at the facility. The design harnesses river eddies and cascading stairs to guide and remove trash, while tidal pools serve as natural collection points during the ebb and flow of tides. Beyond addressing pollution, the project creates a space for public engagement and recreation, fostering a deeper connection between the urban landscape and the river while raising awareness about environmental stewardship.

06

DETOXIFICATION OF INVISIBLE TOXIC SURFACES

Role of Toxic Surfaces Across Scale

125th St, Harlem | New York
Fall 2023 | Columbia GSAPP, Core I
Instructor: Virginia Black
Individual Work

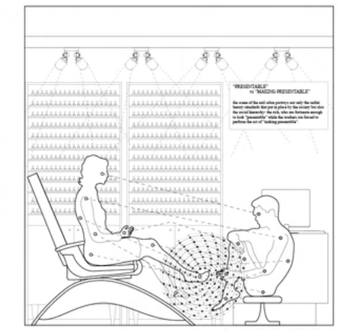
The project examines the role of the surface in mediating social, political-economic relationships across scales. It started with my sweaty hands. When I am in a nervous setting my palms start to get sweaty as my biological body responds. I normally do not mind, but when I am situated in a business setting where I have to shake another person's hand, I hesitate as I do not want to be presented as "unpleasant". So, I either go wash my hands in cold water or wipe my hands down as a social body response. But I wonder, why do I have to respond to my body response in a certain way in the first place? Why are there certain social aspects that require us to portray a certain body response? Why is it "my fault" for reacting to a certain biological body response and having to perform in a different way to meet society's standards?

"Presentable" vs "Making Presentable"

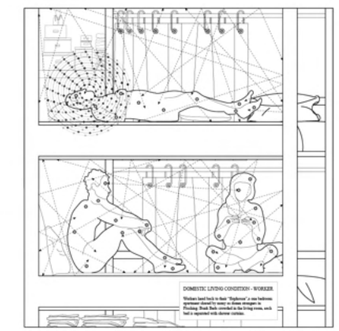
Society created categorical social expectations as rules for certain contexts that manipulate us to perform distinctly in response to a body response. In particular, societal beauty standards pressure women to conform, leading many to invest significant effort into their appearance—one example being visits to nail salons. However, the nail salon is more than just a place of self-care; it reflects the deeper inequalities embedded in society. It highlights not only the rigid beauty standards imposed on women but also the social hierarchy at play—the wealthy can afford to appear "presentable," while salon workers are tasked with creating this presentability for others. This seemingly simple scene exposes discrimination based on race, immigration status, and socioeconomic class. The wealthy benefit from these beauty rituals, while low-wage workers—often immigrants—labor under difficult conditions, struggling with basic needs like food, shelter, and education.

These beauty standards, and the actions taken to uphold them, illustrate how systems of power and violence are transferred from one group to another. My investigation explores the role of violence in beautification—the link between surface-level appearance and the underlying systems that sustain and reinforce it. The term "effortless look" typically describes a style that appears natural, relaxed, and unforced. However, achieving this look often requires significant effort—effort that is carefully concealed to maintain the illusion of ease.

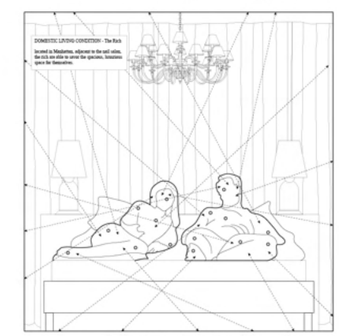
Reversed Social Status



1. Workspace- Nail Salon



2. Domestic Living Conditions- Worker



3. Domestic Living Conditions- Customer

Toxicity Exposure in Living Conditions

Embodied Dexoficiation: Reimagining Surfaces in Labor Spaces

The intervention is a form of act where agents with hazmat suits, a personal protective equipment designed as a barrier to outside surfaces, visit nail salons in a mobile vehicle and purify contamination that exists in the nail salon. Here, I define the body/the surface of the body of people with hazmat suits as architecture that recreates/redeploys the surfaces between the consumer and the person who performs the labor. The process of detoxification is invisible because it happens at a molecular level. So the architectural intervention is to design a performance that makes evident at the building embodied scale that detoxification process and also presences these sites of extraction.

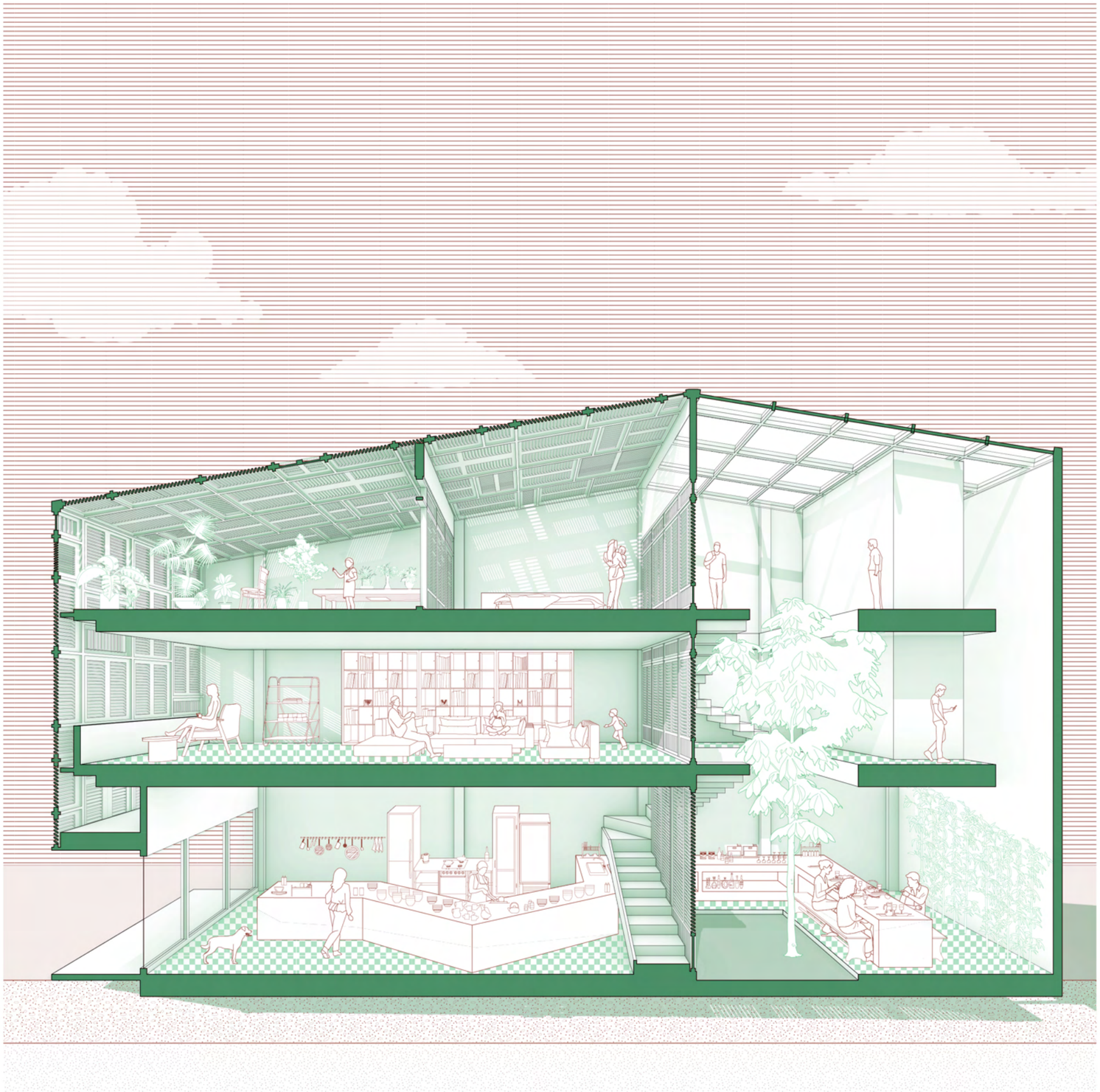
The performance holds a bioremediation action which is a plant-based approach involving the use of plants to extract and remove pollutants from contaminated sites. The performance is categorized into four types: toxic suction, ceiling garden, modular phytoremediation panel, and transportable living wall panels. Based on the tier of household income the nail salon is located at, the hazmat suit agents will perform according to its needs. The plants in the phytoremediation approach can absorb and accumulate pollutants from the air. For example, plants like trees absorb pollutants such as VOCs and nitrogen oxides, contributing to detoxifying the indoor air quality. The living wall system also purifies the air quality by increasing the surrounding humidity. This occurs through the plant's cooling process, known as transpiration, where water vapor is released through surface pores on the underside of the leaves. Humidity can greatly reduce the negative effects of aridity such as dry eyes, fatigue, and respiratory problems, which are problems nail technicians face daily. Additionally, each panel contains a monitoring process that visually amplifies the molecular level of toxicity shown in the image here, disclosing the toxicity behind the scenes to the audience.

07

TAPESTRY OF TRADITION AND LIGHT

Vegan House

Ho Chi Minh City, Ho Chi Minh | Vietnam
Fall 2023 | Columbia GSAPP, ADR 1
Architect: Block Architects
Instructor: Zachary R. White
Individual Work

Located in the heart of Ho Chi Minh City, Vegan House was once a traditional residence but has been transformed into a cultural venue celebrating Vietnamese heritage and cuisine. Guests can prepare and enjoy traditional dishes together, fostering connection and shared experience.

Its distinctive façade, made of repurposed wooden shutters arranged in a vibrant patchwork, honors the area's architectural history while allowing natural light and ventilation for a comfortable, energy-efficient space.Blending history with sustainability, Vegan House embraces the charm of Ho Chi Minh City's past while serving as a dynamic space for cultural exchange and a testament to adaptive reuse.