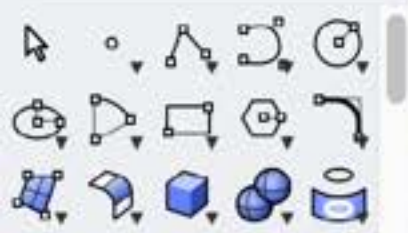


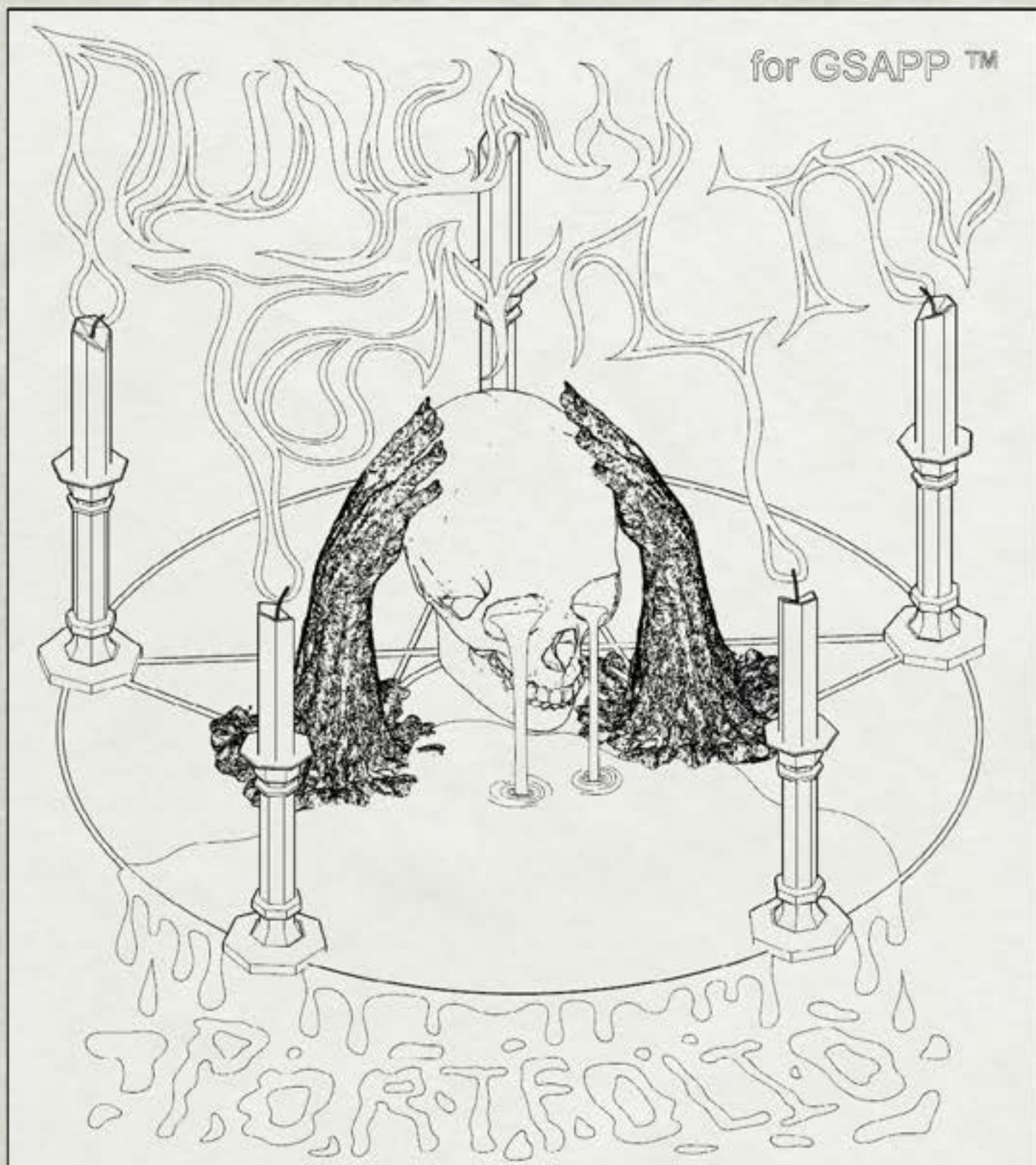


Cover Page - Detail (iso skull)\* (Locked)

Command



- Persistent
- One shot
- End
- Near
- Point
- Midpoint
- Center
- Intersection
- Perpendicular
- Tangent
- Quadrant
- Knot
- Vertex
- On curve
- On surface
- On polysurface
- On mesh
- Project
- SmartTrack
- Disable all



Properties: View

Detail

Title  
Locked  
Projection

Scale

Layout  
Model

Camera

Lens length  
Rotation  
Camera X  
Camera Y

Panels:



Name

- Cover Page
- Layout
- Layer 02
- Layer 03
- Layer 04
- Layer 05
- Layer 06



Duncan Tomlin  
GSAPP MArch Candidate  
Class of 2024

## A Comprehensive Portfolio: On *The Image Imaginary*

The Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation (GSAPP)'s request for the submission of a comprehensive graduate portfolio anticipates the collection, curation, and presentation of student work previously performed in fulfillment of the individual course requirements of the MArch degree program. Assembled in a single, authoritative electronic document, this work will represent each student's achievements realized in the field of architectural study during their time in the program. The request for this document further suggests that the work be organized in such a way that it facilitates easy future reference through the channels of the school's website and the *End of Year Show* exhibition, and it advocates the adoption of graphic standards that enable comparisons to be drawn between students and their peers, serving the explicit purpose of assigning merit in the dual evaluation of intra-school awards and external benchmarks nominally related to licensing board standards yet more precisely indicative of GSAPP's presumed competitive standing among similar educational institutions.

All of these attributes of the expected comprehensive graduate portfolio submission align with the tenets of GSAPP's core pedagogy insofar as they constitute guidelines for the reproduction of standards of image-making that conform to existing modes of the valorization of architectural design labor. Unlike other non-professional graduate degrees in academic disciplines, the MArch degree program produces participants qualified to enter a governmentally-regulated professional field. The expectation of conformity to standards is therefore transferable from the broader network-system of architectural practice to its attendant nodes in the sphere of American university education. GSAPP's educational mission, according to this formulation, can be expressed as an effort to grant individual students the capacity to demonstrate their potential value to prospective employers in various industries associated with the built environment. By this same logic, the school's existential mission can be described as a need to demonstrate its own potential value to prospective students. Accordingly, the production of images for architecture school becomes, in furtherance of its own internal logic, the production of graduates, and the production of graduates becomes, in turn, the production of institutional marketing.

If GSAPP were to frame the reproduction of images in a comprehensive portfolio according to specific graphic standards as an absolute requirement in exchange for the conferral of an MArch degree, I would immediately comply, as I do, for example, in rendering tuition payments. This framing of requisite exchange, however, is not presented in GSAPP's MArch program degree requirements.<sup>1</sup> Rather, this framing is merely suggested, and even then only circumstantially, within the scope of a larger and more theoretical conceptualization of student work termed the "Graphics Project" and conceived, in language borrowed from

<sup>1</sup> "Degree Requirements," Columbia GSAPP, accessed May 7, 2024, <https://www.arch.columbia.edu/programs/1-master-of-architecture/degree-requirements>.

academia, as a "series" of "explorations."<sup>2</sup> Crucially, the stated aim of the "Graphics Project," in reference to the graduation portfolio, is to "help students build a successful" one, and thus the development of graphic standards for the portfolio is most precisely and literally an effort in voluntary cooperation: students provide assistance in the exploratory project of image-making, and the school then offers them assistance in making a portfolio that will "successfully" support such ends as may be determined by the students themselves. In the present document, which will become my comprehensive graduate portfolio submission, I aim to assist GSAPP in exploring its own superficial obsession with the reiteration of standardized models of the valuation of image-making, a project I will call *the image imaginary*. To do this, I will provide some informal personal observations made during my three years in this institution and some reflections on current events. I will accept, in return, whatever support this document may provide towards my future pursuits because GSAPP has graciously offered to transmute this writing, through the institutional power of buying up server space to host web pages, into a comprehensive portfolio.

So here I go... \*ahem\*...

*The image imaginary* is characterized primarily by the belief that image-making as a functional outcome of GSAPP's MArch degree constitutes critical design thinking. This is a falsehood. In reality, GSAPP's prescribed mode of image-making generally only reaffirms standardizing logics that value the architectural designer according to the metrics of industry. Chiefly, *the image imaginary* is a form of willful misapprehension. In my experience, symptoms of *the image imaginary* may be observed outwardly in, among other signs, a congregation of self-obsessed career climbers scrambling over each other to proffer the latest totemic allusions to uncommitted political leftism or greenwashed eco-techno-escapism, desperate to scoop up subsidies from not-for-profit institutions despite working in a field where they're technically supposed to be able to earn their own living. I ascribe my physical and mental exhaustion to *the image imaginary* because I am sick and tired of being told to abolish private property by rich people who accept contracts for lucrative private enterprise and who wear goofy designer shoes and ¾ length pants to show off the former at expensive, student-funded, circle-jerking, starchitect-enabling symposia. I've had all I can take of *the image imaginary* and its favored social scene, a cabal that has rallied around the technological capacity to build such structures as "temporary cooperative pavilions," or whatever they're called, out of mushrooms, inflatables, mud, and other stuff like that. I'm ashamed that I didn't have time to learn, on my own, how thick a beam ought to be because I was too sleepless from drawing shapes on the computer that "make sense in a grid system" or "demonstrate shareable spatial massing" for the sake of *the image imaginary*. Mostly, I'm dubious of the suggestion that any of this qualifies as academics, and I suspect that these pursuits demand so many resources and occupy so much time that they categorically preclude the pursuit of meaningful efforts to engage critically with the built environment.

Arriving at the inevitable and timely question of GSAPP's engagement, or lack of engagement, with the horrors of international humanitarian crises with immediate relevance to

<sup>2</sup> "Graphics Project," Columbia GSAPP, accessed May 7, 2024, <https://www.arch.columbia.edu/graphics-project>.

the built environment, including, most visibly and recently, the genocide perpetrated against Palestinians by Israel, I would like to examine *the image imaginary* in service of a search for an explanation for the institution's inaction. If, as in the contradictory assertion that students ought to be solely responsible for meeting the image-production standards the school claims to be interested in helping them determine for themselves, and if, as in the habitual abuse of the university forum for pretentious claims to scholarship by non-scholars operating in adjacency to architectural practice, the present failure of GSAPP to engage meaningfully with global crises results from a disjuncture between its own stated values and its enacted policies, then these discrepancies and the fantastical delusions they perpetuate can perhaps be attributed to the same systemic symptoms that characterize *the image imaginary*, primarily an inability to think critically. If it is discovered, as I fear, that *the image imaginary* has insidiously inserted itself at the root of GSAPP's pedagogy, then these outcomes are not only to be expected in the future but moreover must be inherent in the institution, which can not help but to feed them as a host feeds a parasite.

Architects don't build, they draw. This is a funny thing people like to say when they really mean to express, through sarcasm, how important drawing is. Perhaps more accurately, however, it should be said that architects don't draw, they imagine images. My understanding is that the imagination of images is insufficient to aid, for example, in critiquing the deliberate perversions of the architectural arts and the university's financing apparatus to the ends of massacre. By definition, *the image imaginary* functions to supplant the means of production with the means of self-promotion, and therefore detracts from architects' ability to do anything at all about any of the aforementioned issues. Certainly, I would argue, when it comes time for GSAPP to defend its students, the entities it construes as its assets, from Columbia University's usurpations in denying scholars the right to academic freedom and students the right to both personal safety and freedom of expression, then GSAPP will find that a commitment to *the image imaginary* prevents it from acting. In this way, defaulting to complacency because of preexisting commitments to the imagination of images, GSAPP becomes an even more inhibited and ensnared institution than the larger university system on which it depends, its accustomization to comfortable fantasies of image-making paralleling the university's deep and abiding love of neoliberal systems that entrench the militarization of capital.

It is my belief that a comprehensive portfolio will fail to shrug off the coercive machinations of *the image imaginary* unless it manages to develop and defend an intellectual position that operates in opposition to inaction and complacency regarding the tragic realities of contemporary global events that are undeniably relevant to any critical engagement with the built environment. For this reason, and without much certainty in the likelihood of my success, I'm making the active choice to reject GSAPP's representational tropes and image-making standards, and I'm choosing to produce this document, admittedly a near-meaningless form of protest, to accompany any additional letter of solidarity or protest which may be found enclosed. What I'm saying is that this document is representative of all my schoolwork, and all my schoolwork leads to this document.

y  
x

DUNCAN  
TOMLIN

SOME

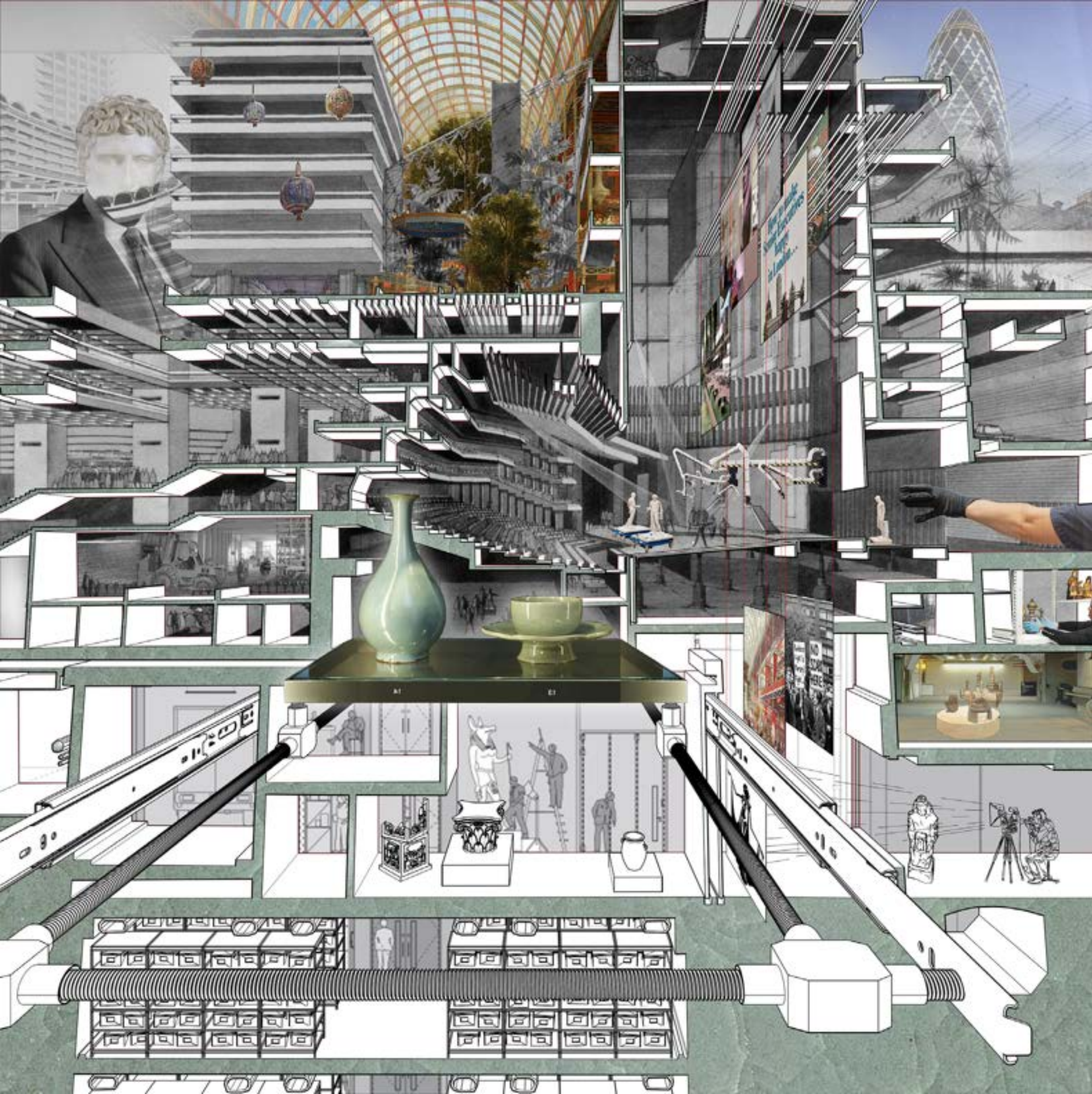
WORK

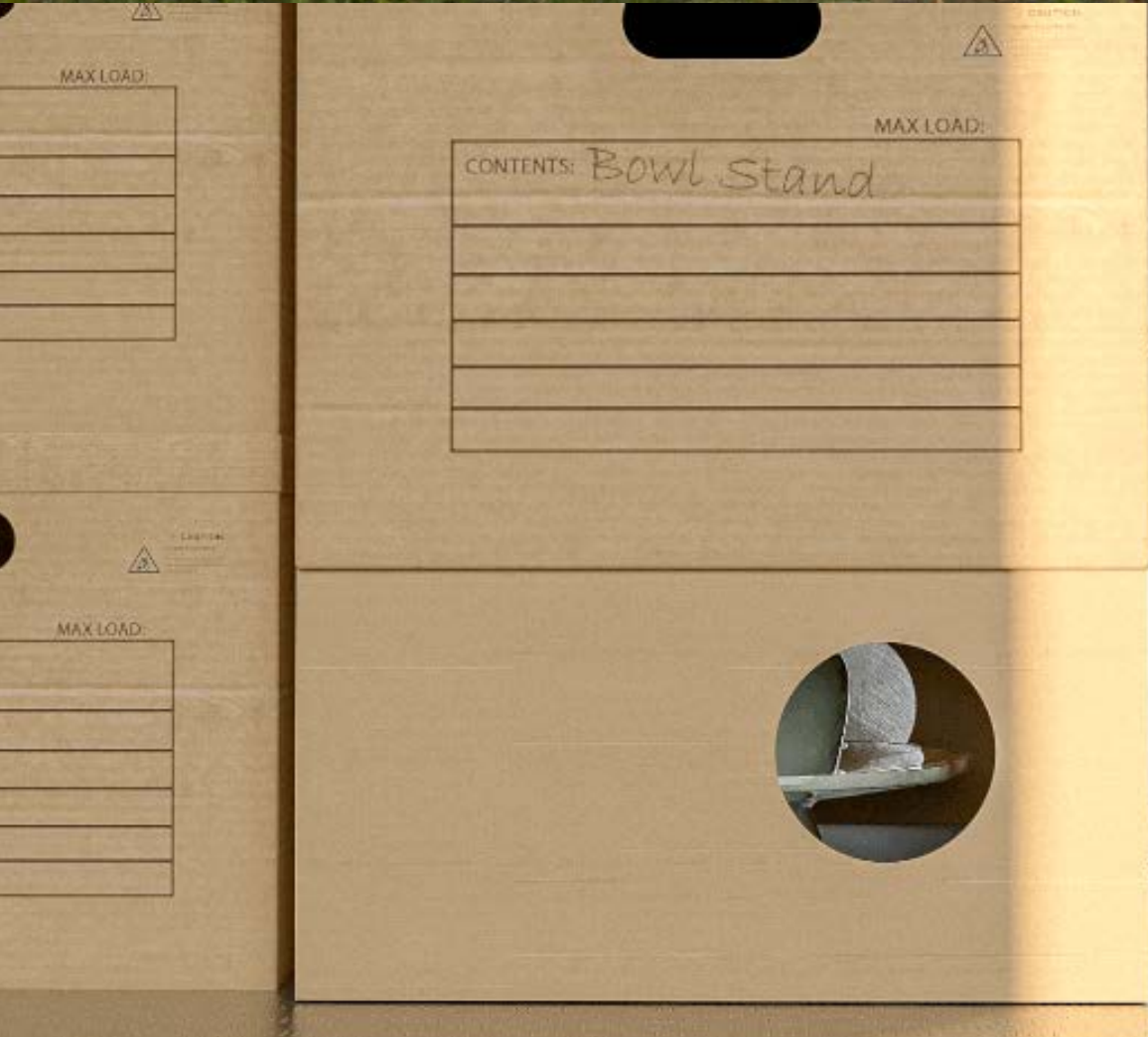
# BARBICAN

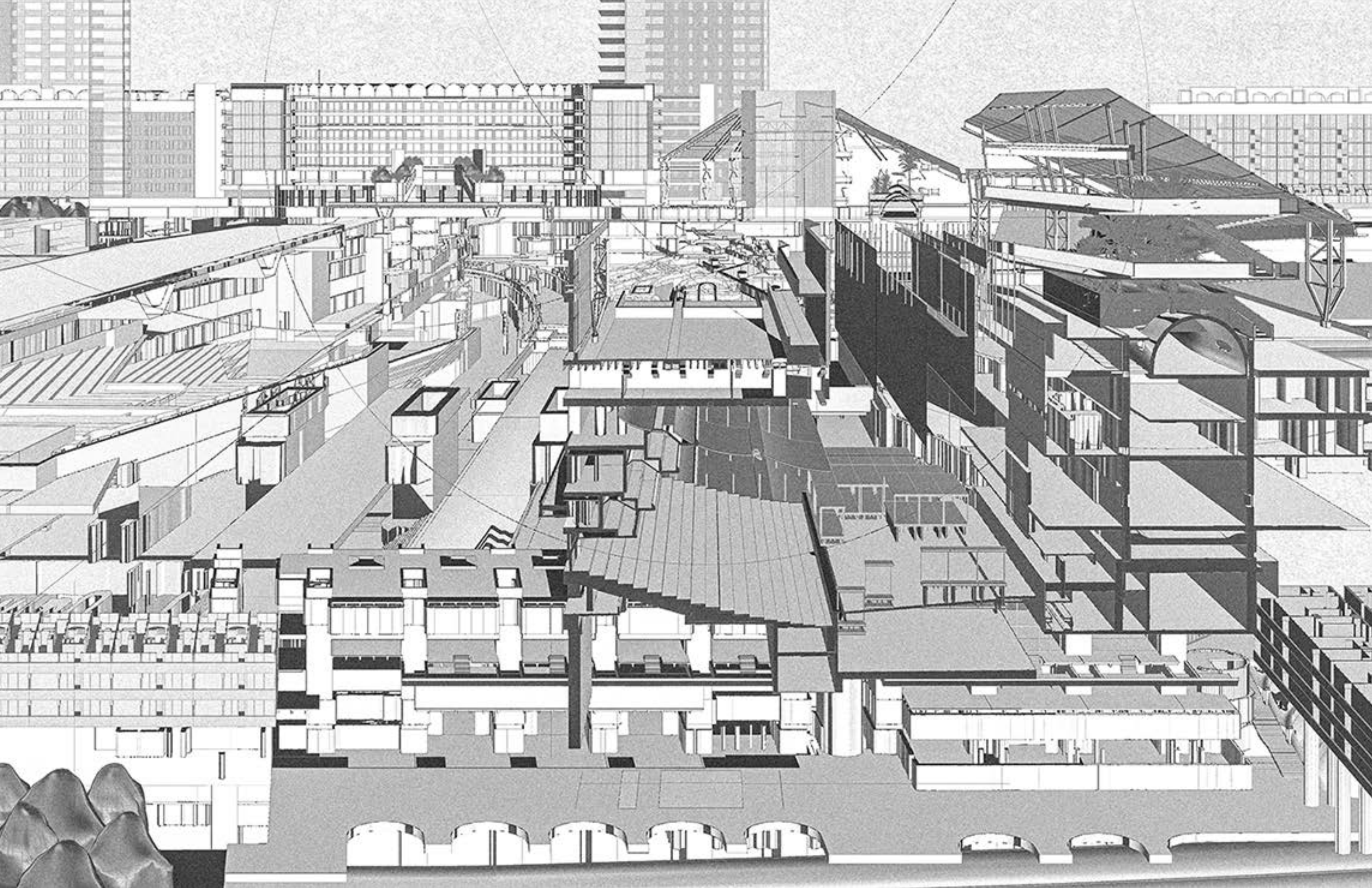
Afterimages Vol. III vs. The British Museum — Restitution at the Barbican?  
A.K.A. “We Put a Dragon Kiln in the Barbican Estate”

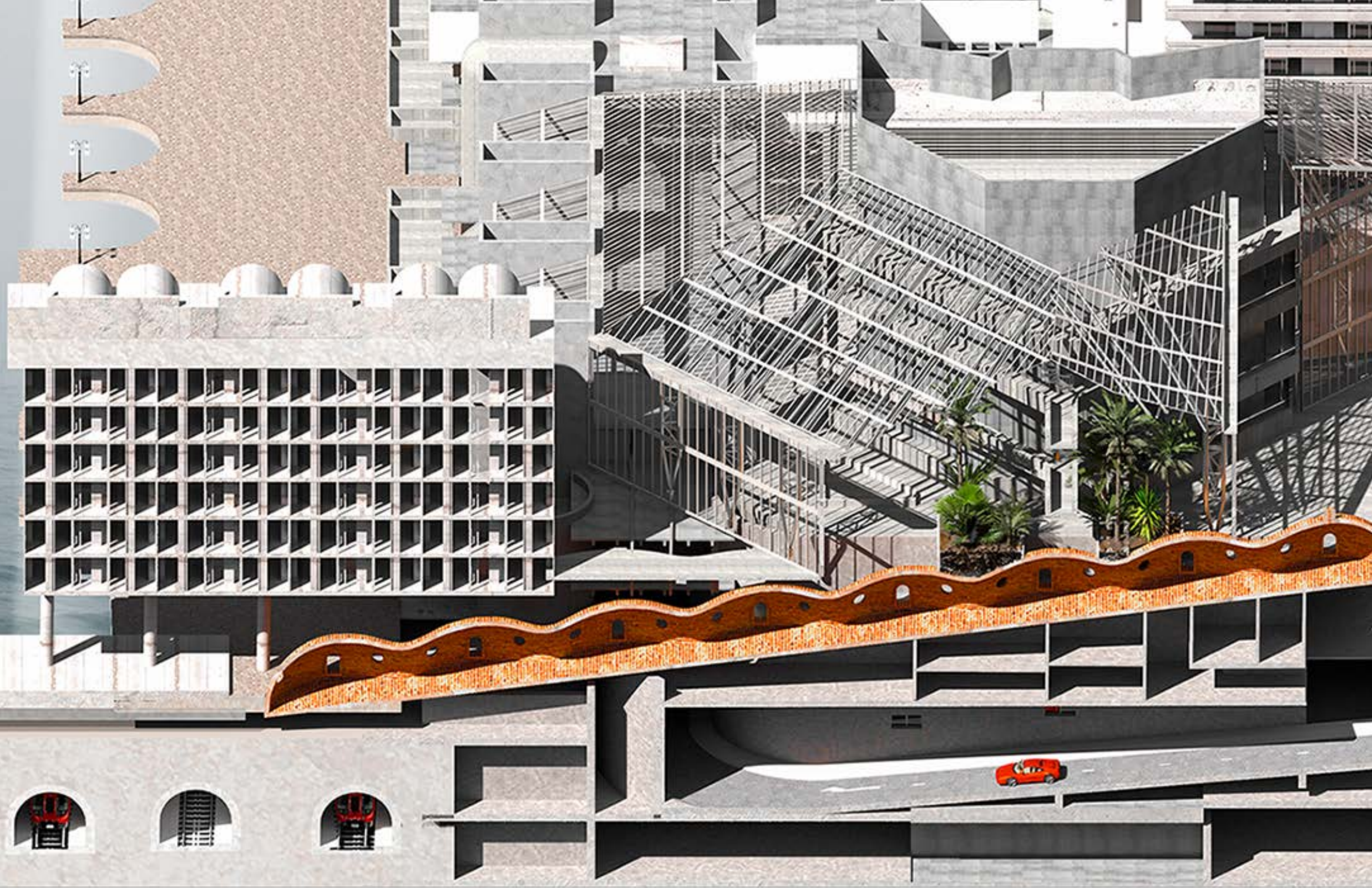
Seeking a means of architectural intervention to transform the Barbican Center/Barbican Estate into a vehicle of restitution for looted artifacts currently held by the British Museum, we investigated traditional ceramic-making techniques from East Asia in conversation with the commercial network of the historic British Empire to uncover various ways in which a reimagination of “use value” and cultural production might facilitate a critique of Western museums’ collecting practices. Basically, we punched a traditional dragon kiln through an existing parking garage ramp within the the Barbican’s maze-like underground complex to dismantle the divisional sectional logic of the site’s multi-datum master plan, which was designed, in part, to surreptitiously segregate the functions of property-based capital accumulation and cultural consumption for the reason of consolidating the City of London’s political power through a demographic manipulation of their MP constituency, in turn forming an ideal breeding ground for the type of racialized neoliberal urbanism that would emerge from Thatcher’s “Right to Buy” scheme. We also earmarked housing units within the Barbican complex to afford diasporic craft/creative communities and their broader networks of daily care a place of home within a system formerly intended to exclude them. The idea is that the Barbican Center would thereby incorporate the material and economic means to perform its own upkeep and repair within its residential footprint, the labor and knowledge embedded within the British Museum’s looted artifacts becoming the basis for a system of patching up the leaky pipes, conservatory glass, and whatnot that cumulatively characterize the brutalist building’s accelerating dilapidation, especially in light of the extreme exertions and workplace hazards to which its original builders were subjected in order to achieve the iconic concrete surface treatment.



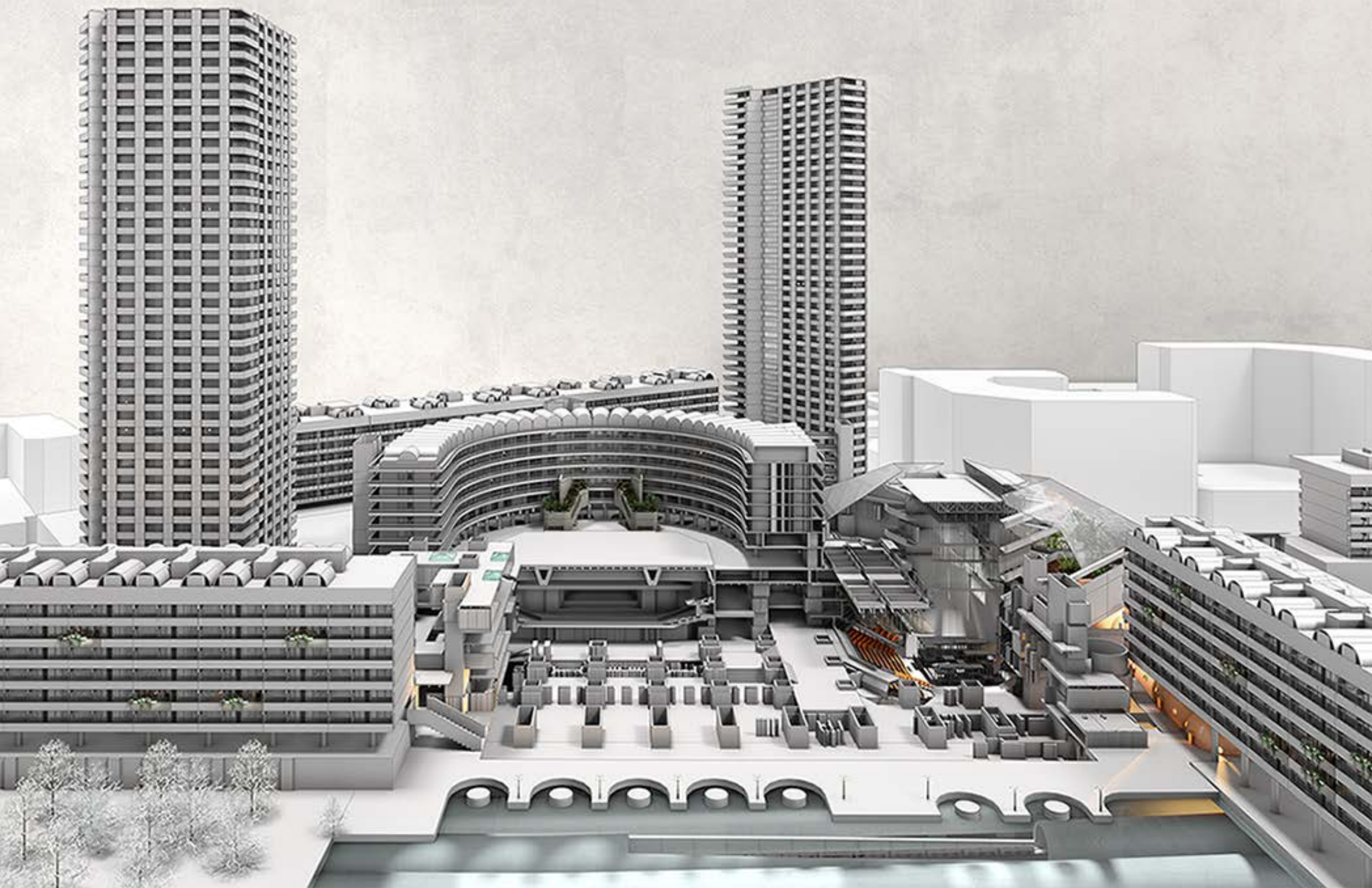




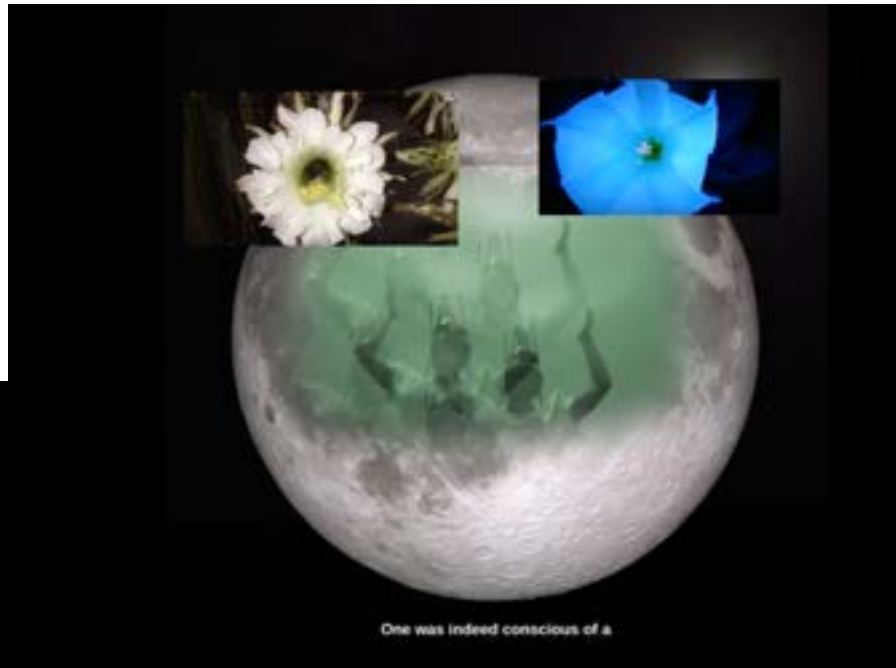








# PIGEONS & MOTHS



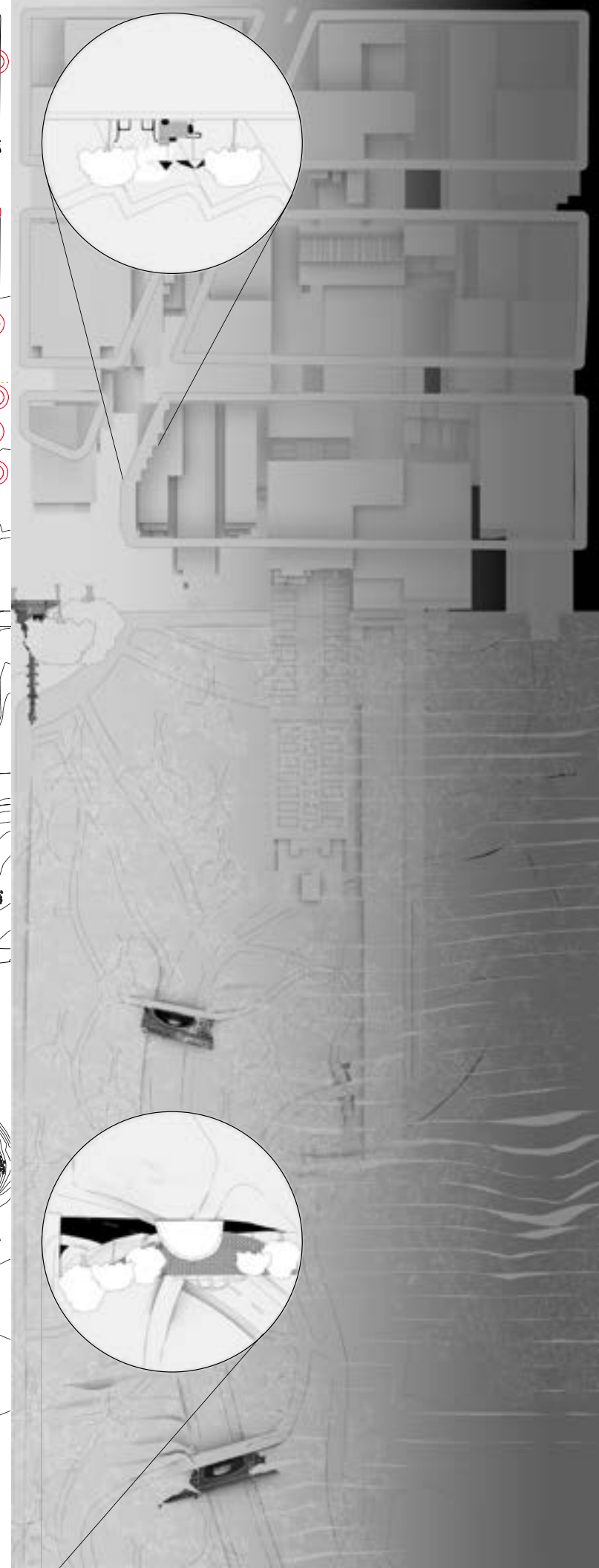
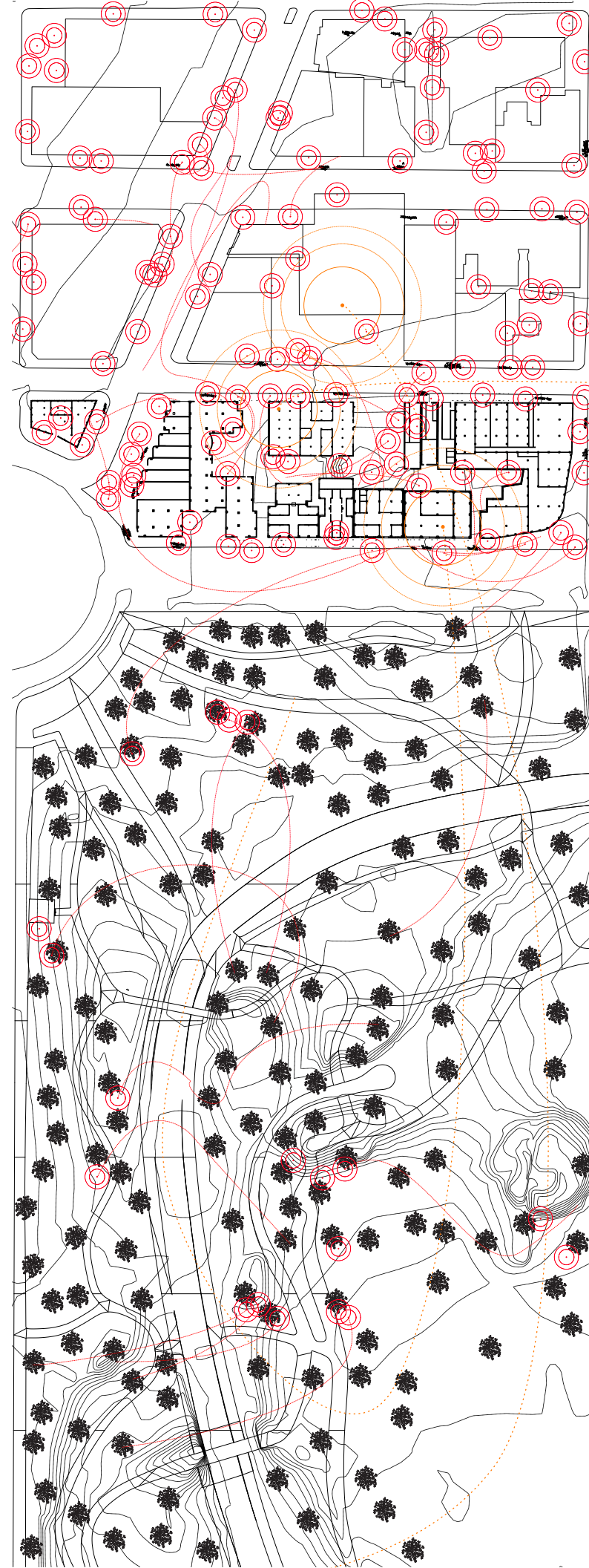
One was indeed conscious of a



queer feeling of pity for him.



The possibilities of pleasure seemed that morning so enormous



GSAPP Advanced V Studio  
Critics: Yussef Agbo-Ola and Cory Archie  
Partners: Yuna Li, Omer Gorashi, Hanouf AlFehaid

# CURIO (CEAN) CABINET

I walked from Inwood to South Ferry with a curio cabinet containing a map of the city's coastline. I made little models with trash too.



Imagine a museum that looks out. The museum looks out, people don't look in... what does it see?

It sees the rising seas. It sees the city. It takes it all in and collapses under the weight because it's junk in its own way.



Why is this formatted like a comic book? I can't rightly say... Felt appropriate.



I stopped in all sorts of different places and I took rubbings and collected rubbish. Documenting it, and listening to it, you see?



When I got to South Ferry, the walls were up. They were preparing for the big storm... Battery Park won't be the same... nor will the cabinet (it broke).



So What!?  
Who Cares?!

OK, but I made a video.  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sDMcfQZqufgbz-fA2Ccxq1GkCinb28ez5/view?usp=sharing>





CABINET

GSAPP Advanced V Studio  
Critics: Yussef Agbo-Ola and Cory Archie



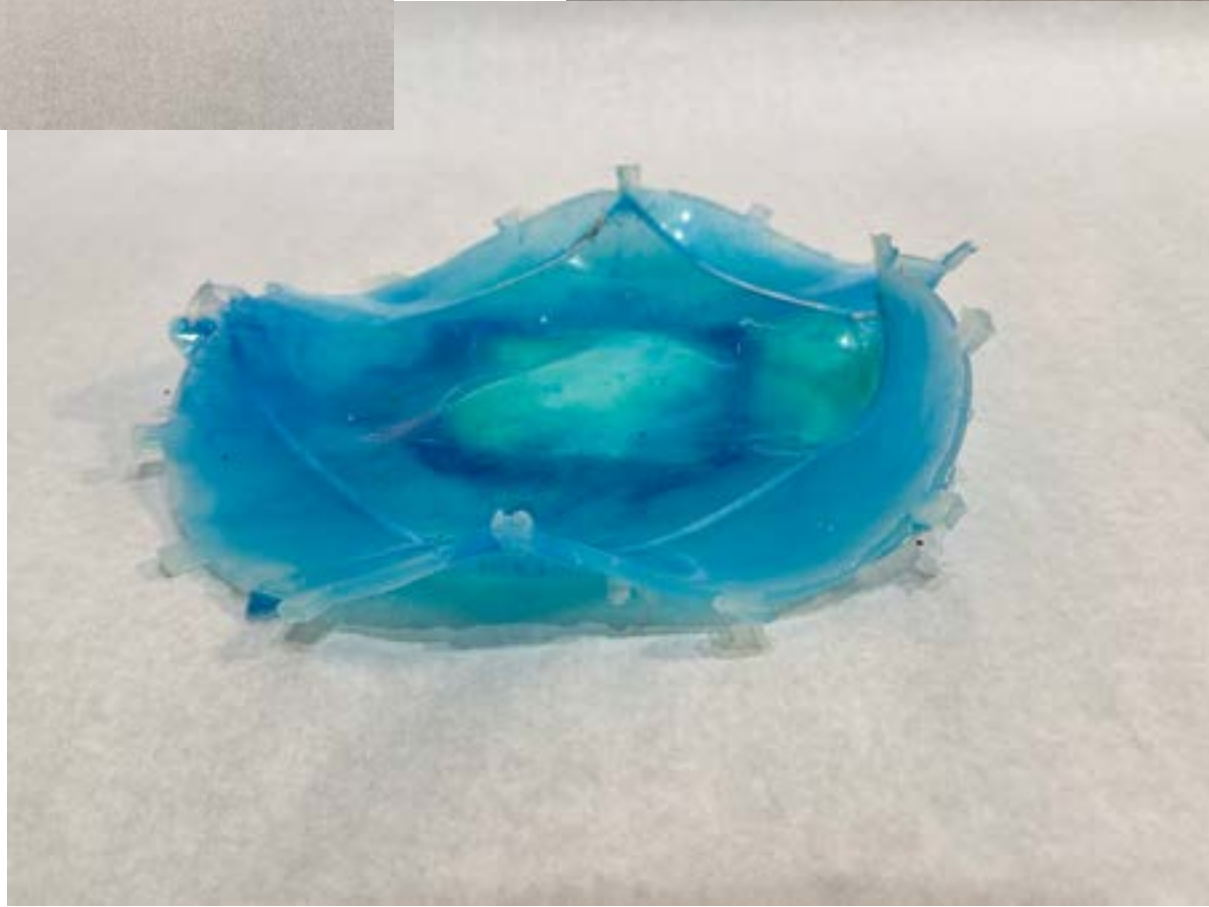
IMF  
ana  
Pr

**NOTICE:**  
and Beyond This Point  
to First or Second Place

Wagner Park is closed for construction that will protect the park and the adjacent community against more severe and more frequent storm

owns and gardens; education, community, dining is; beautiful views; and access for all. The Resiliency Project is part of the plan which will protect our shoreline from flooding. [Click here to learn more.](#)

# TENSILE STRUCTURES

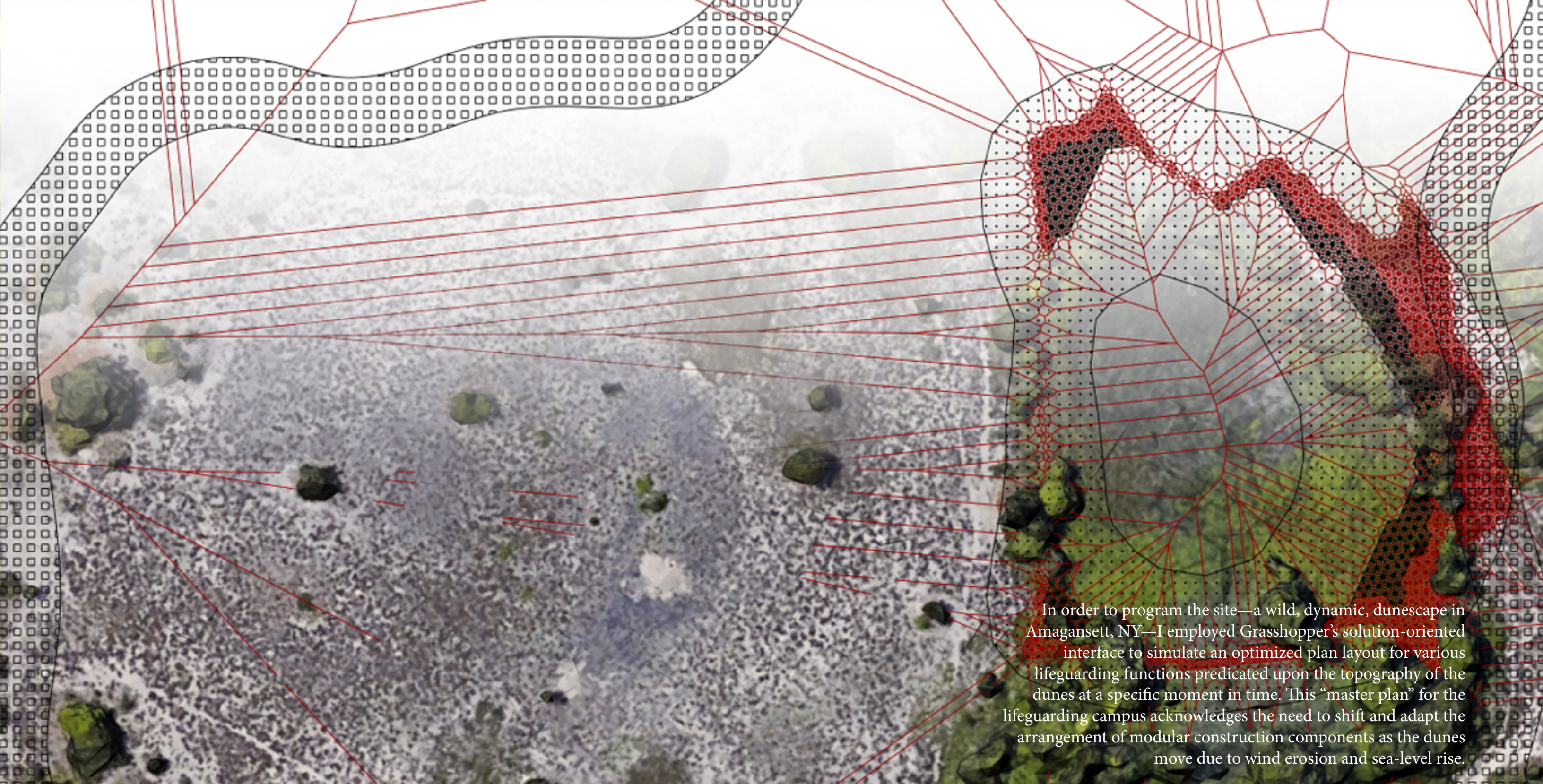


# LIFEGUARDS

## Project Proposal: Modular Construction for Lifeguard Infrastructure

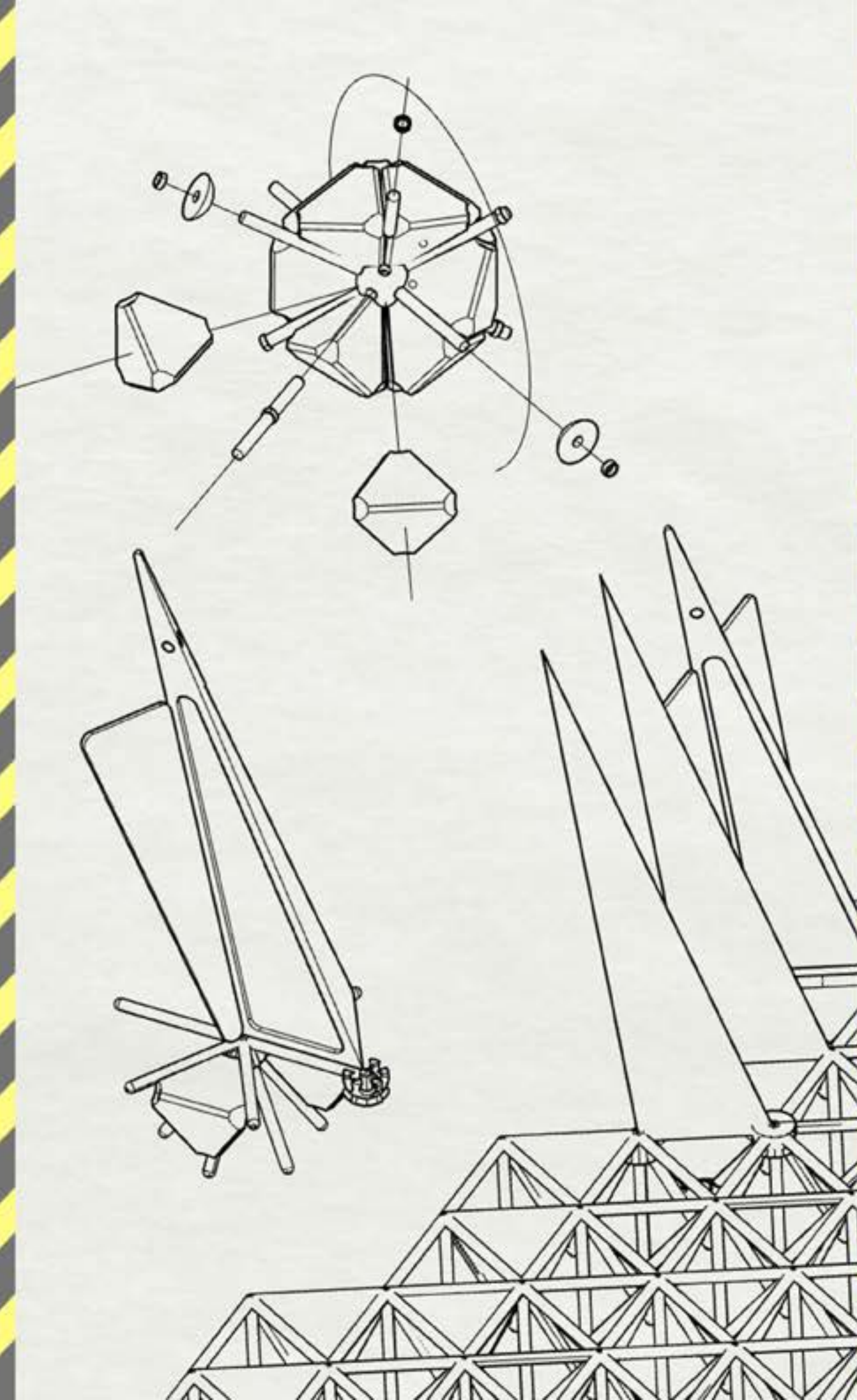
The lifeguarding occupation is always positioned on the precipice of feasibility, torn in competing directions by the socio-political and ecological conflicts of the coastline. No one wants an ill-equipped lifeguard service, and yet no one wants to pay taxes. Everyone wants a healthy tourist economy and yet everyone wants their private land ownership sacralized. Lifeguards embody the superheroic on a moment's notice and then fold back into the anonymity of bureaucracy. At the core of each conflict, there is an even more primal battle between the raw unpredictability of the ocean and the hyper-technical systematization of the rescue procedure. Designing for lifeguarding implies an impossible optimization—an equation with no global maximum. This project reimagines the impossible perfect lifeguard station as knotted material provocations twisted down to the scale of the human body where they become both ruthlessly practical and whimsically ambitious. Historically, lifeguards have always balanced whimsy and practicality, as when they invented the breeches buoy, a grappling hook fired from a cannon at a foundering vessel, towing a lead line for pulley-mounted trousers... With that ethos in mind, every piece of the proposed project is interchangeable, operable, and can be broken down for reassembly by a single guard in a single truck in a single day.



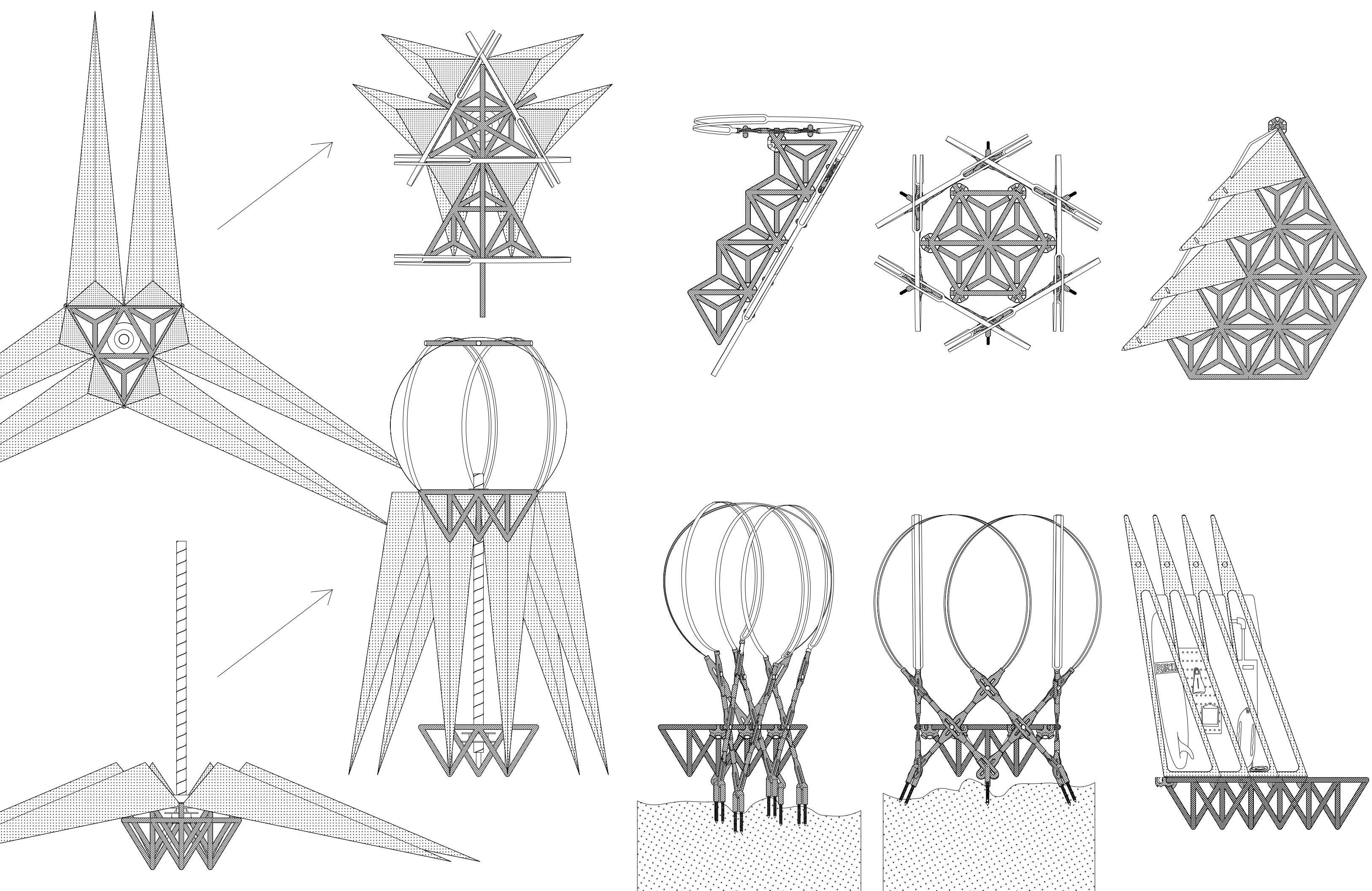


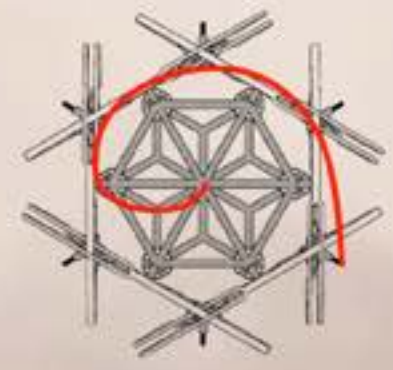
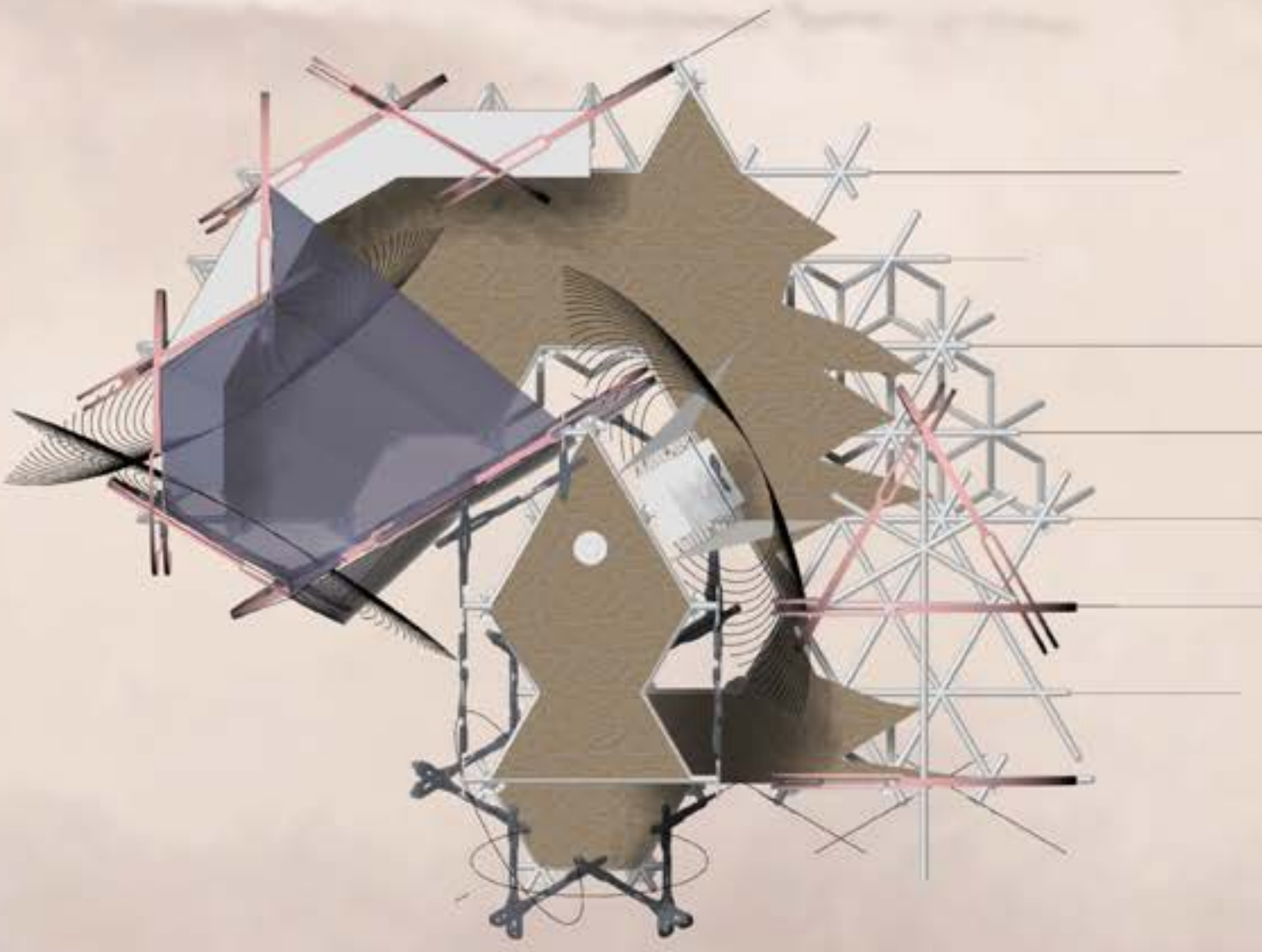
In order to program the site—a wild, dynamic, dunescape in Amagansett, NY—I employed Grasshopper’s solution-oriented interface to simulate an optimized plan layout for various lifeguarding functions predicated upon the topography of the dunes at a specific moment in time. This “master plan” for the lifeguarding campus acknowledges the need to shift and adapt the arrangement of modular construction components as the dunes move due to wind erosion and sea-level rise.

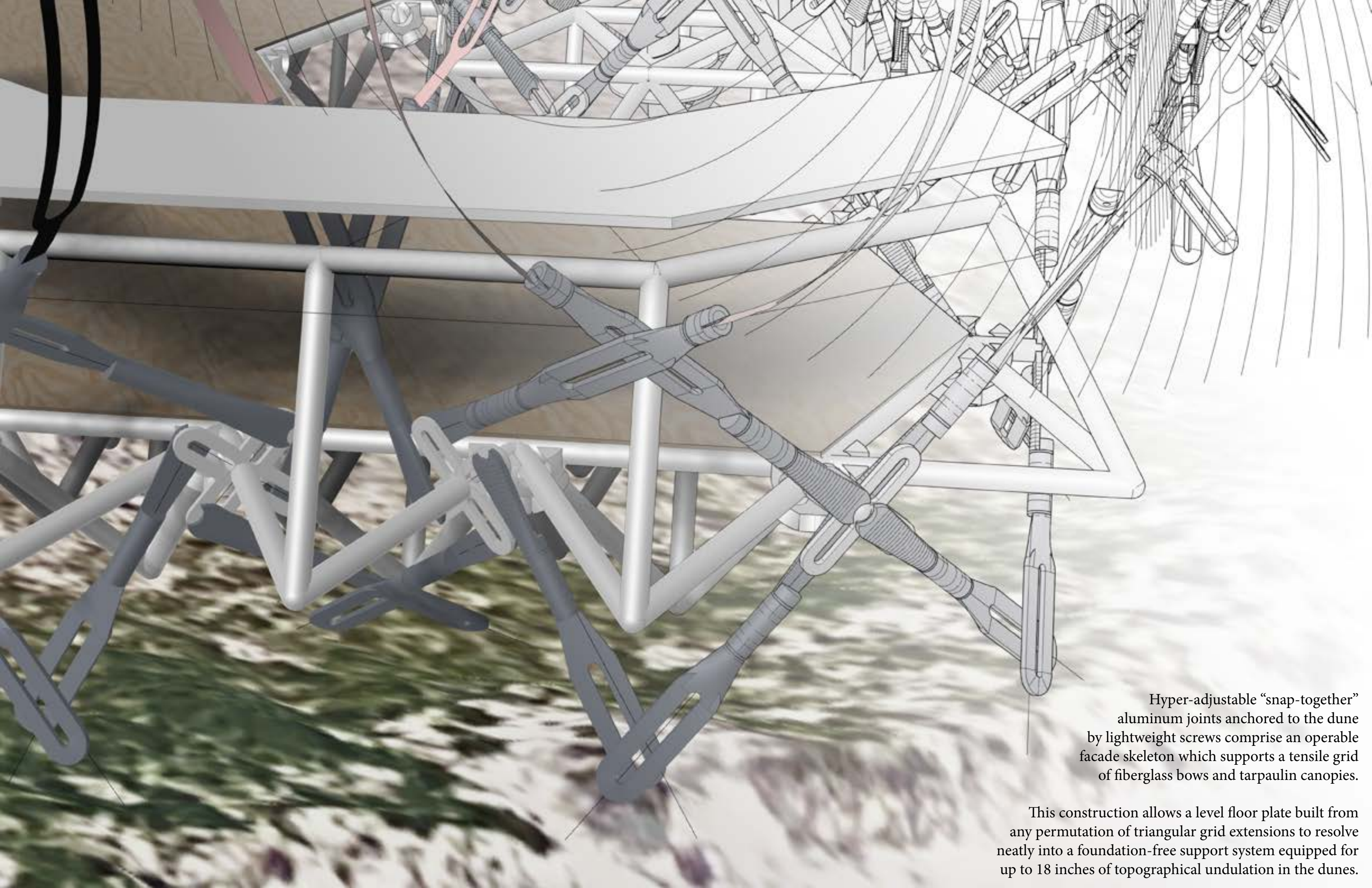












Hyper-adjustable “snap-together” aluminum joints anchored to the dune by lightweight screws comprise an operable facade skeleton which supports a tensile grid of fiberglass bows and tarpaulin canopies.

This construction allows a level floor plate built from any permutation of triangular grid extensions to resolve neatly into a foundation-free support system equipped for up to 18 inches of topographical undulation in the dunes.

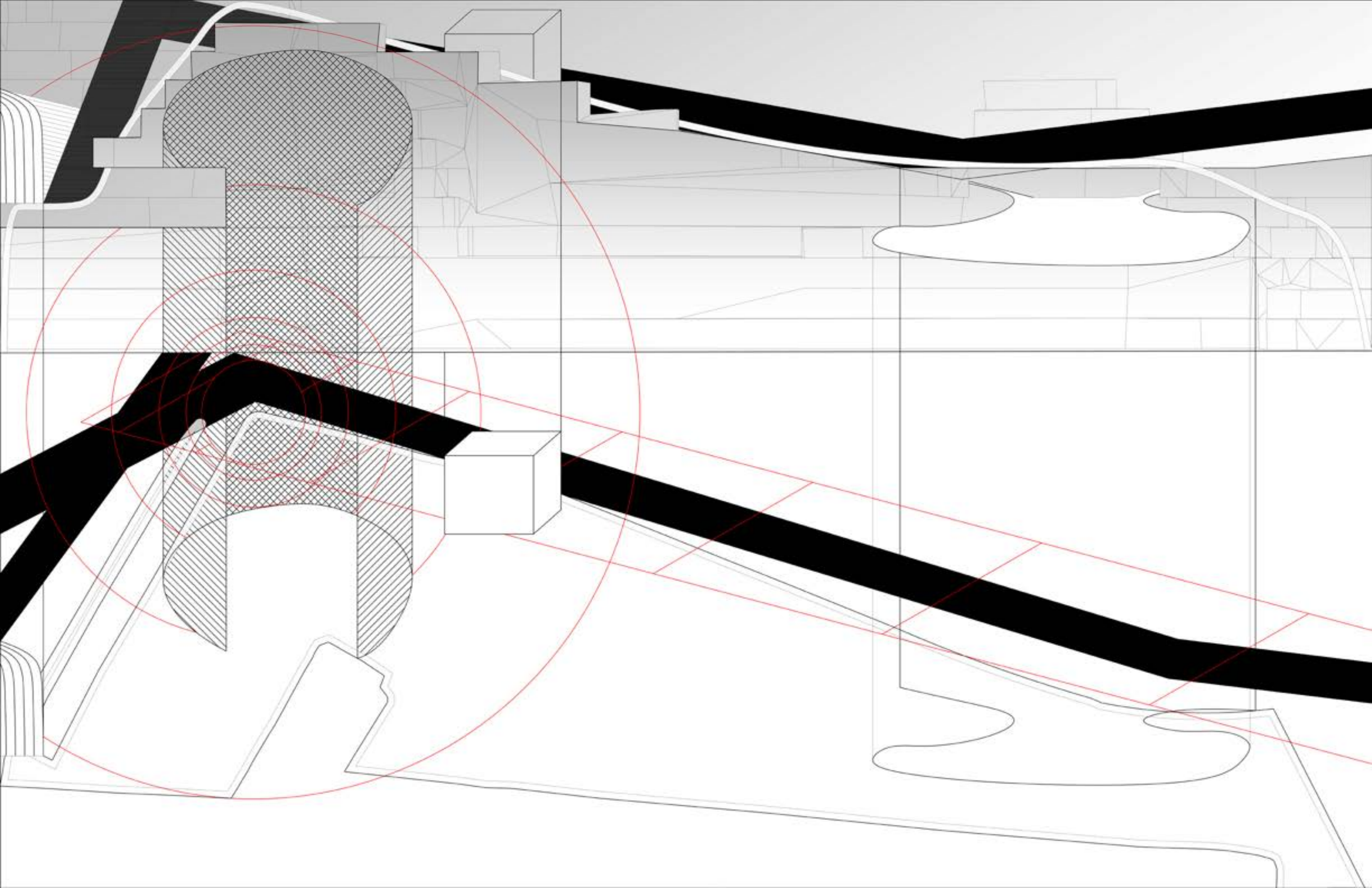


# HOUSING

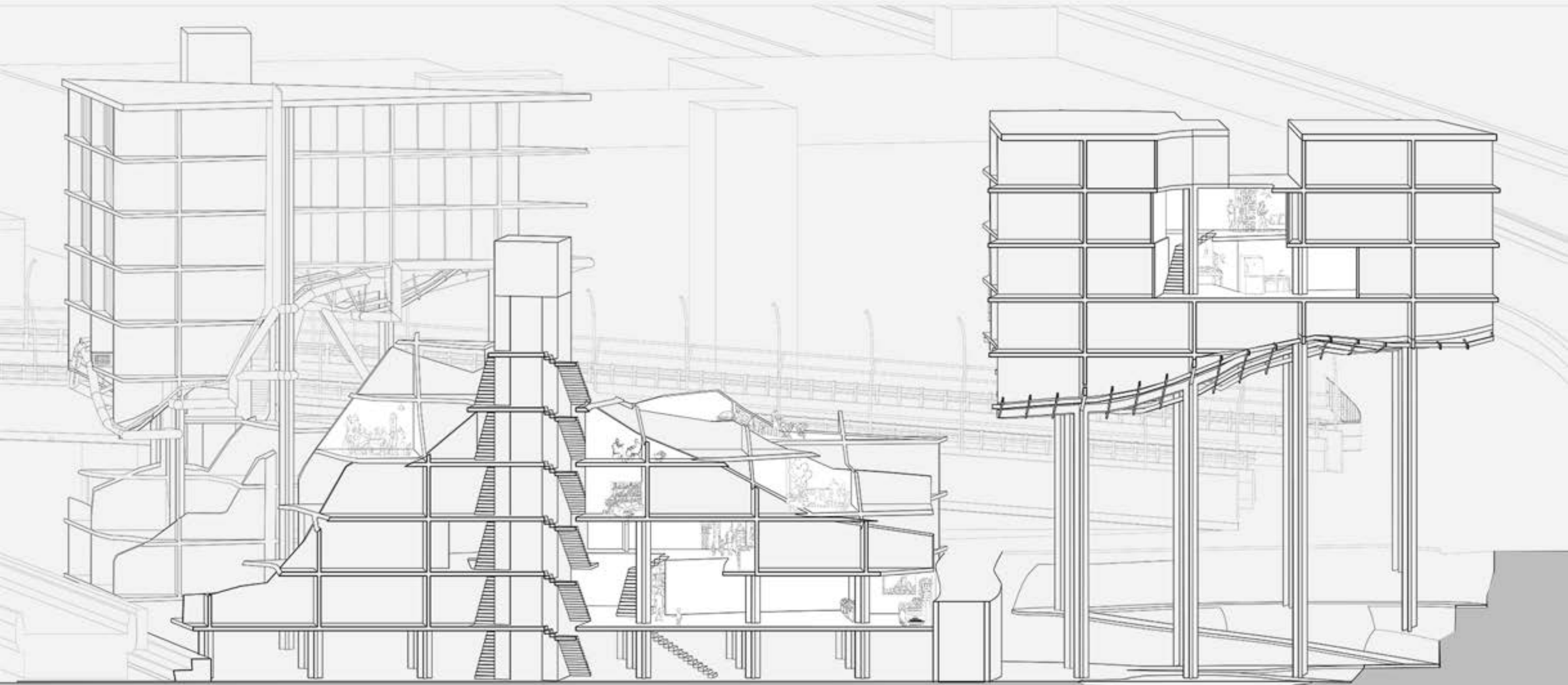


## Project Proposal: Cutaway City

A sturdy, affordable construction of stacked high-aggregate concrete units, each 20' x 20' x 10', forms the skeleton of a 500-resident development. The resulting mass is carved away vertically and horizontally, leaving open volumes of shared space that augment the livable area of the adjacent units. The process of cutting away unnecessary structure to make room for communal amenities creates an interconnected framework of public and private areas without relying on wasted spaces, such as double-loaded hallways.

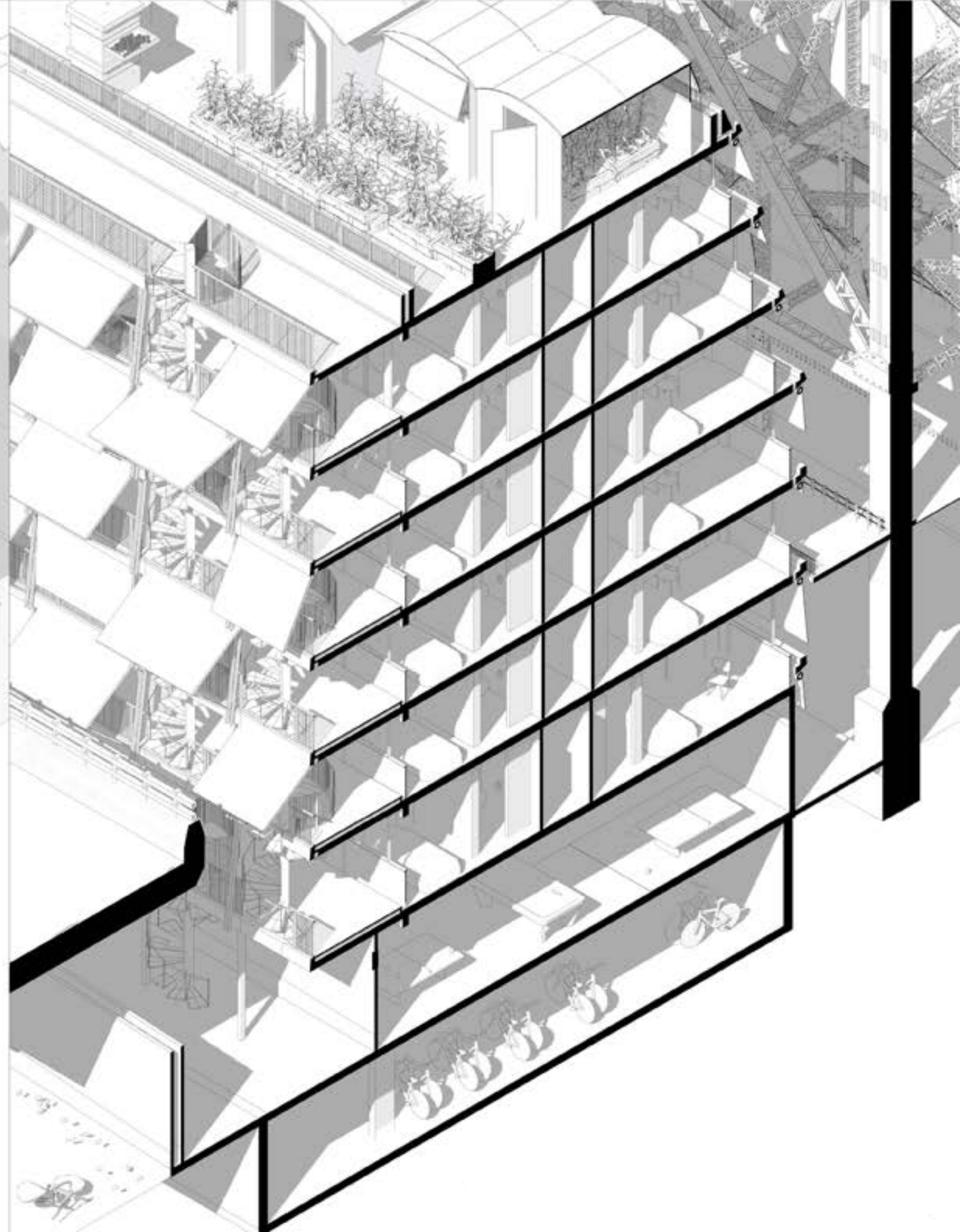
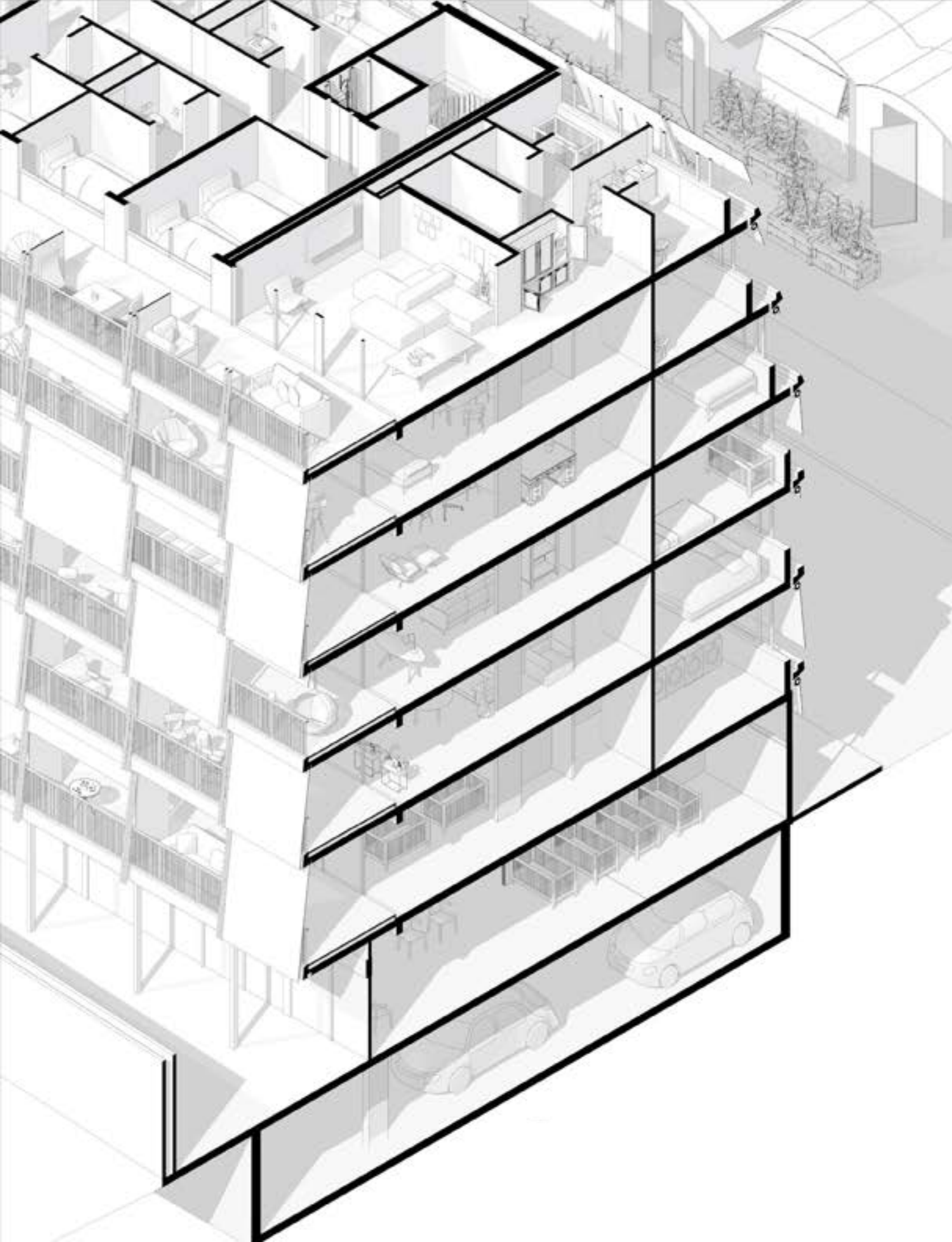


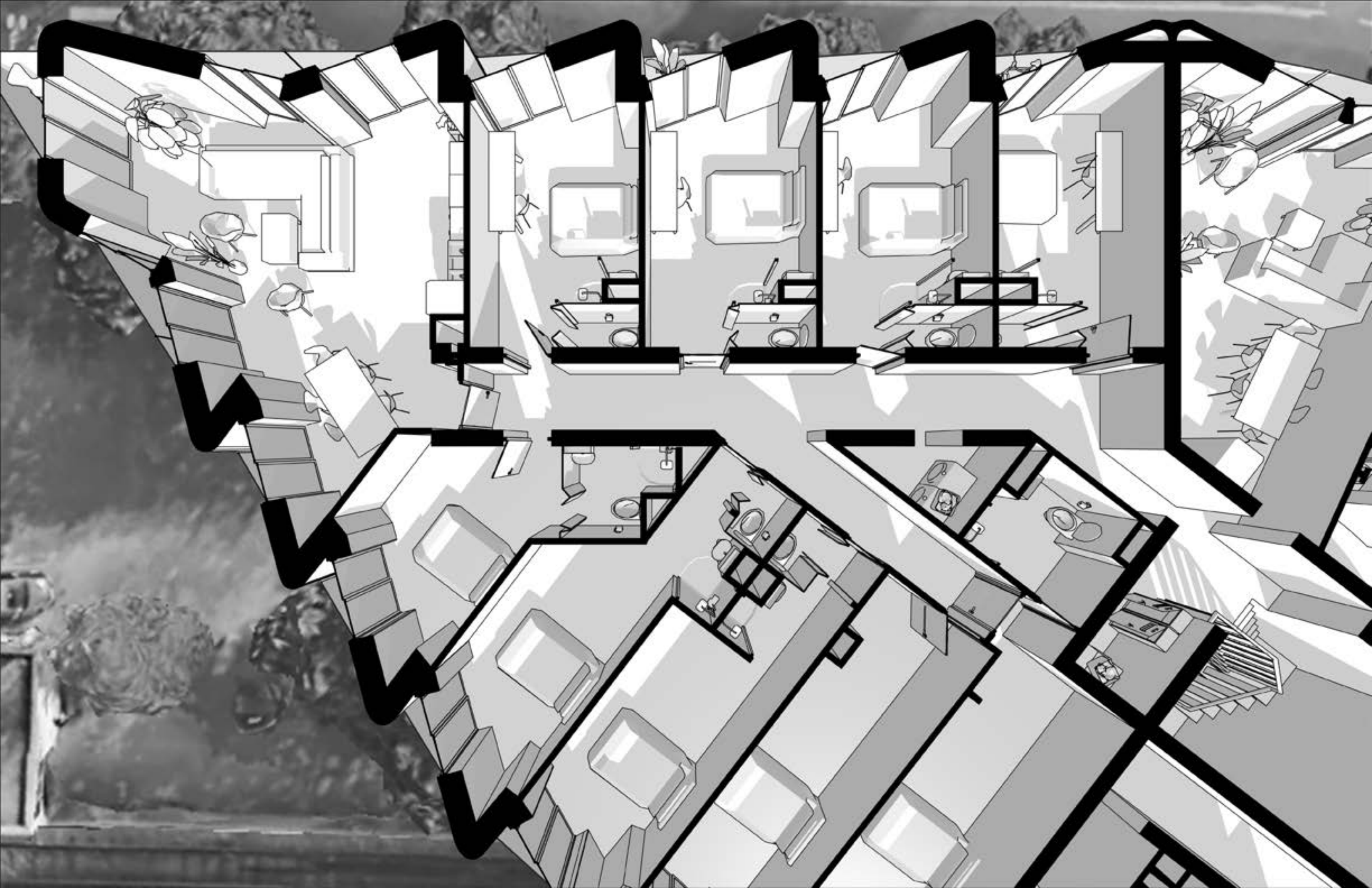


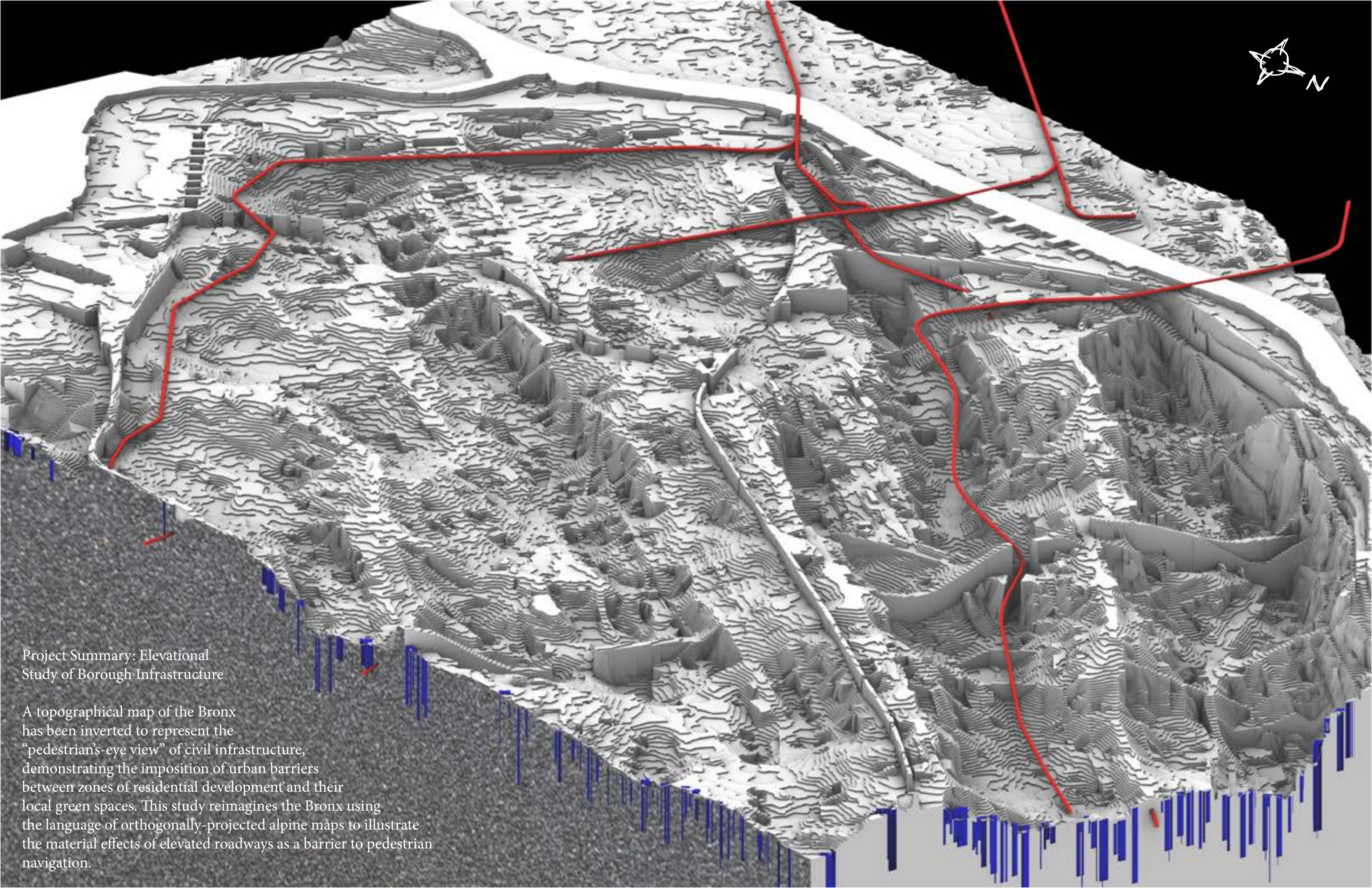






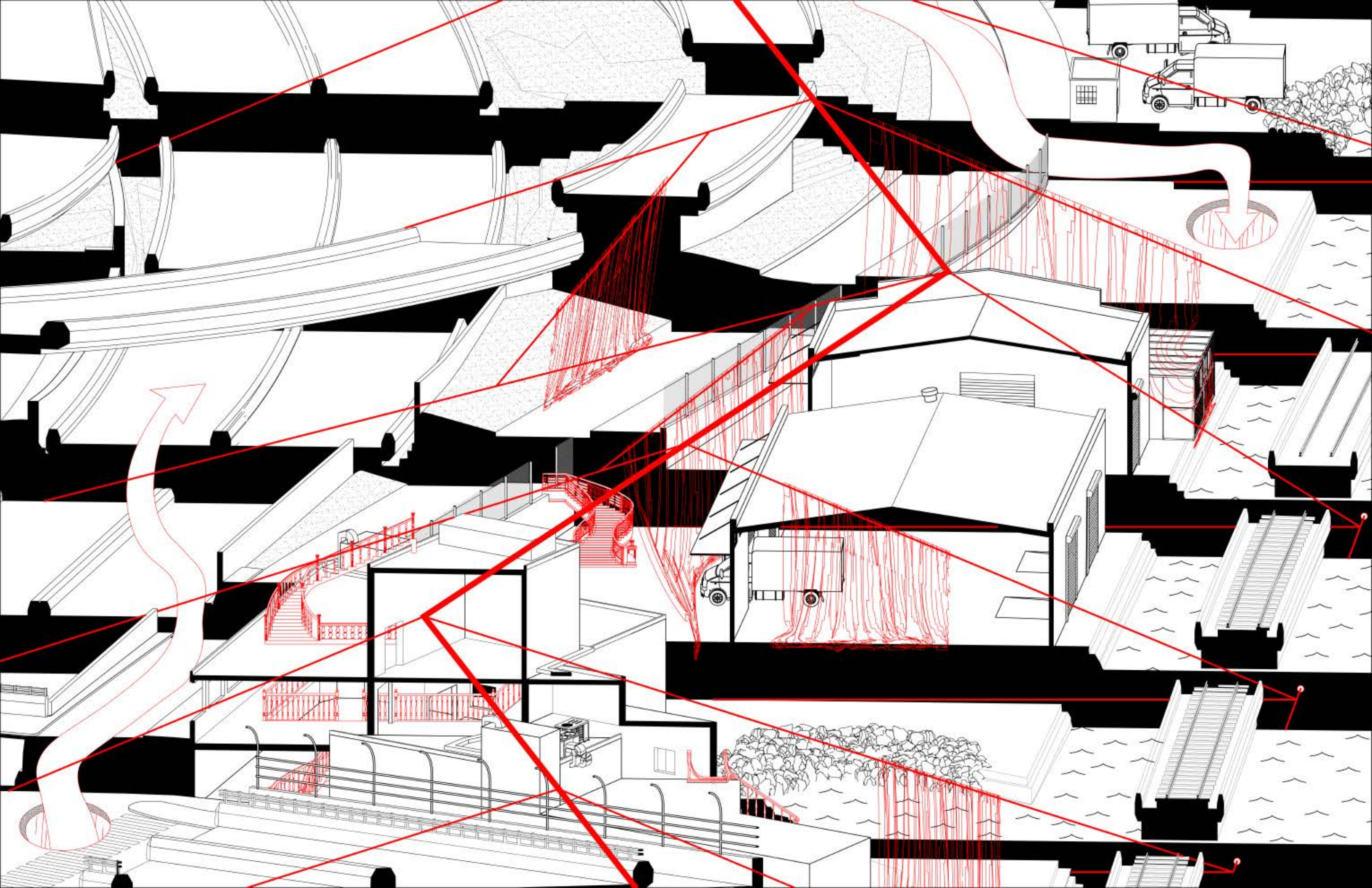






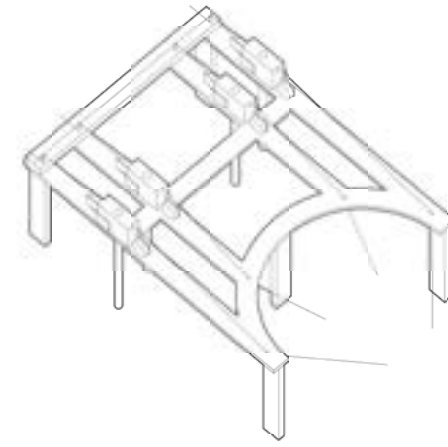
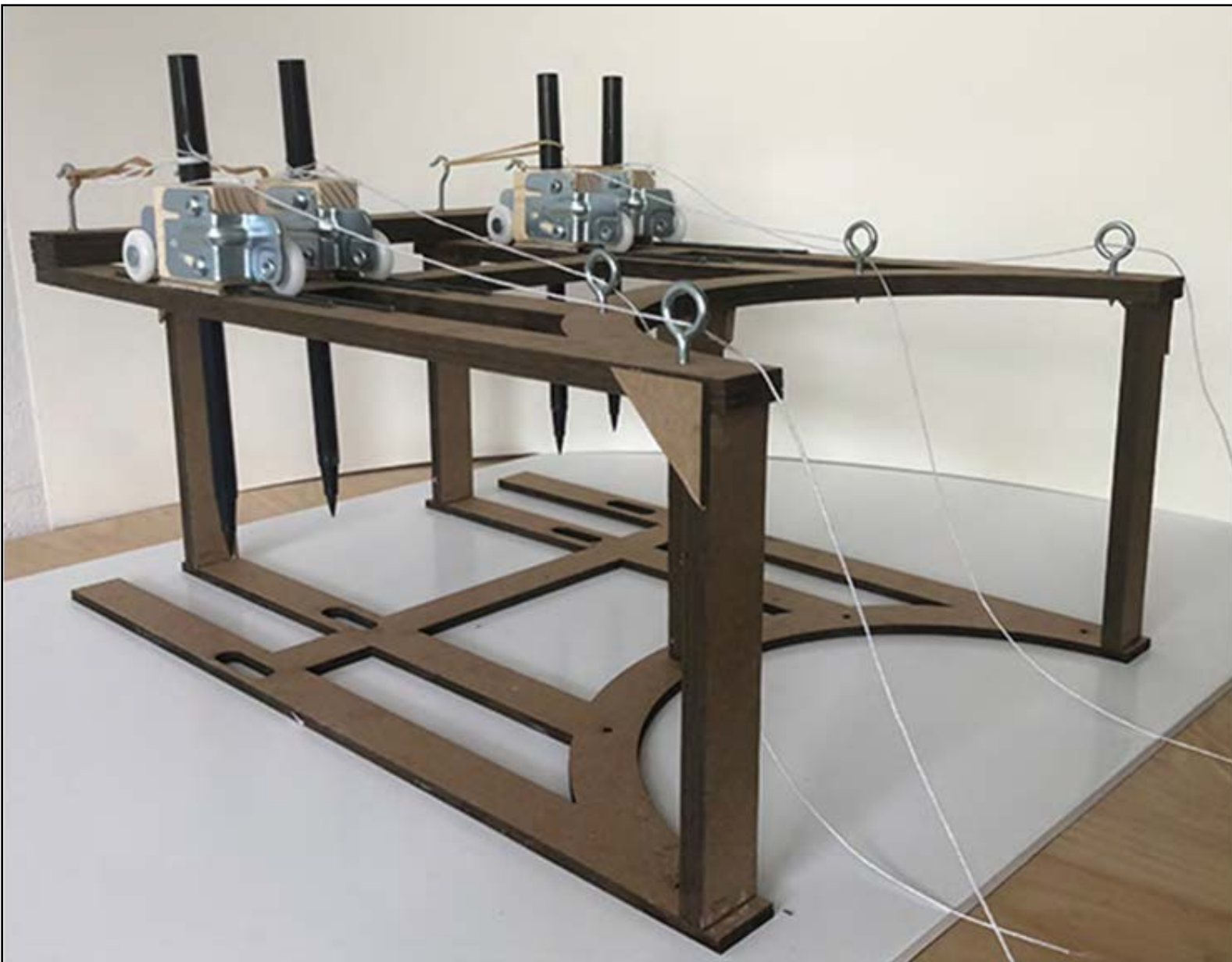
Project Summary: Elevational  
Study of Borough Infrastructure

A topographical map of the Bronx has been inverted to represent the “pedestrian’s-eye view” of civil infrastructure, demonstrating the imposition of urban barriers between zones of residential development and their local green spaces. This study reimagines the Bronx using the language of orthogonally-projected alpine maps to illustrate the material effects of elevated roadways as a barrier to pedestrian navigation.

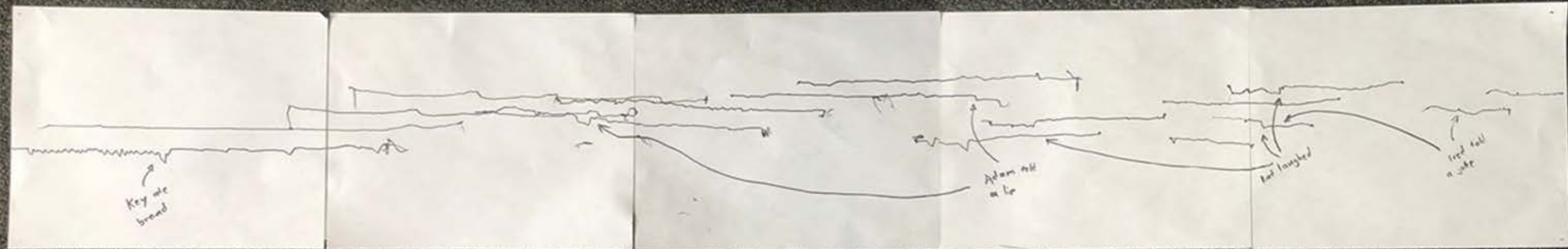
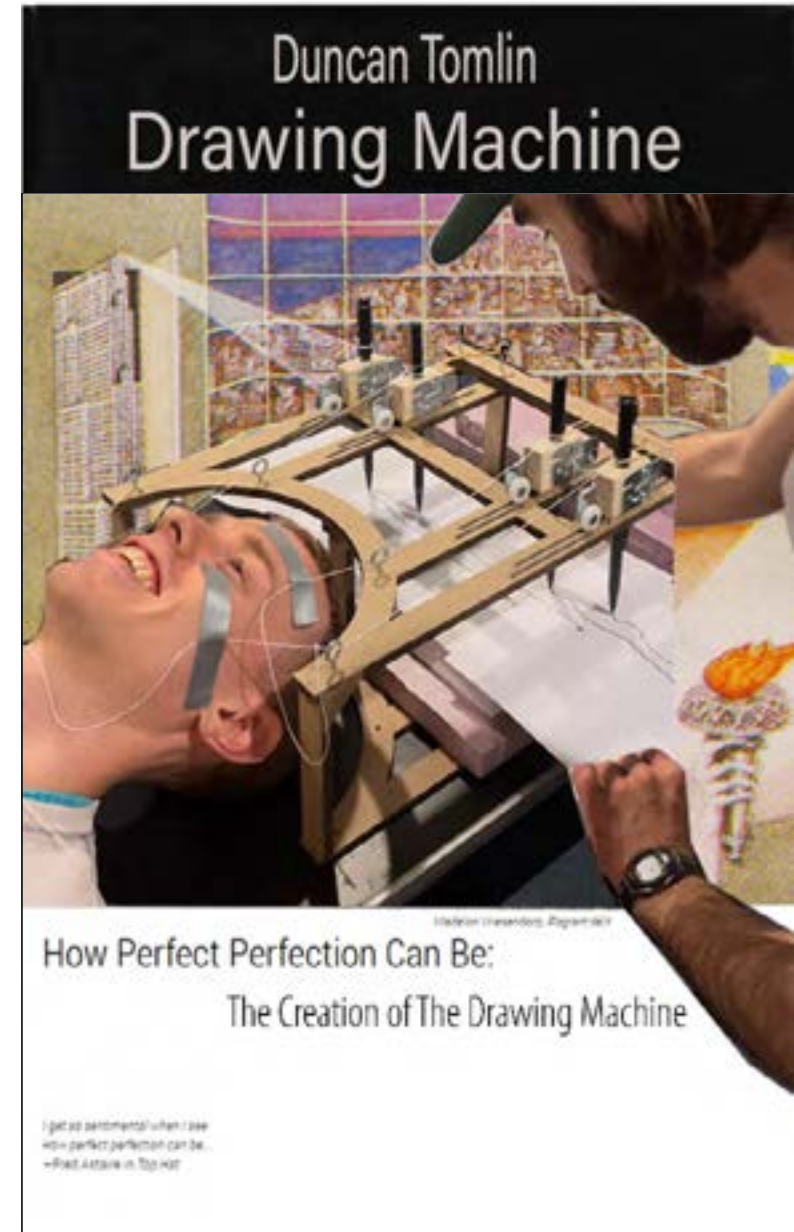
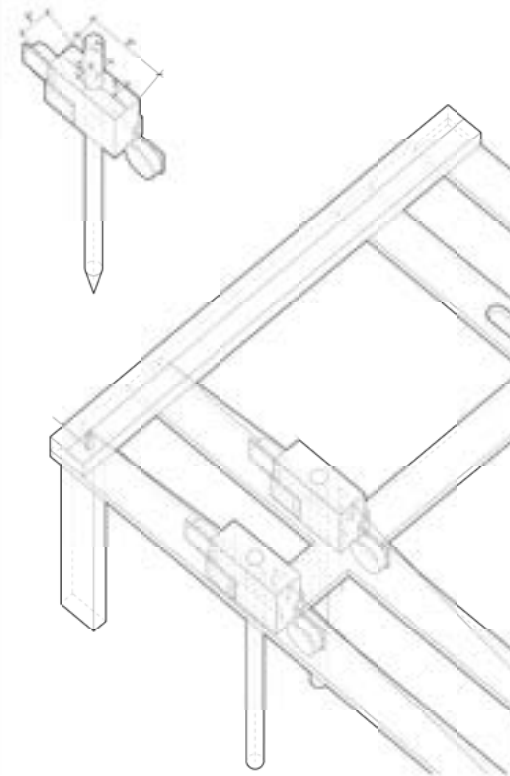


# DRAWING MACHINE

GSAPP ADR II  
Critic: Violet Whitney  
Partner: Chris Deegan



Reads Faces!      Draws Emotions!

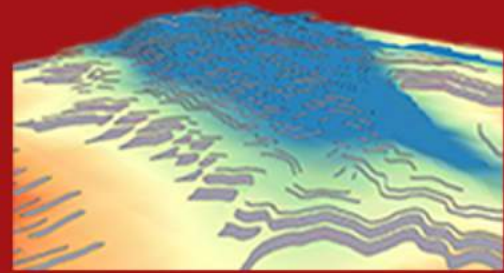




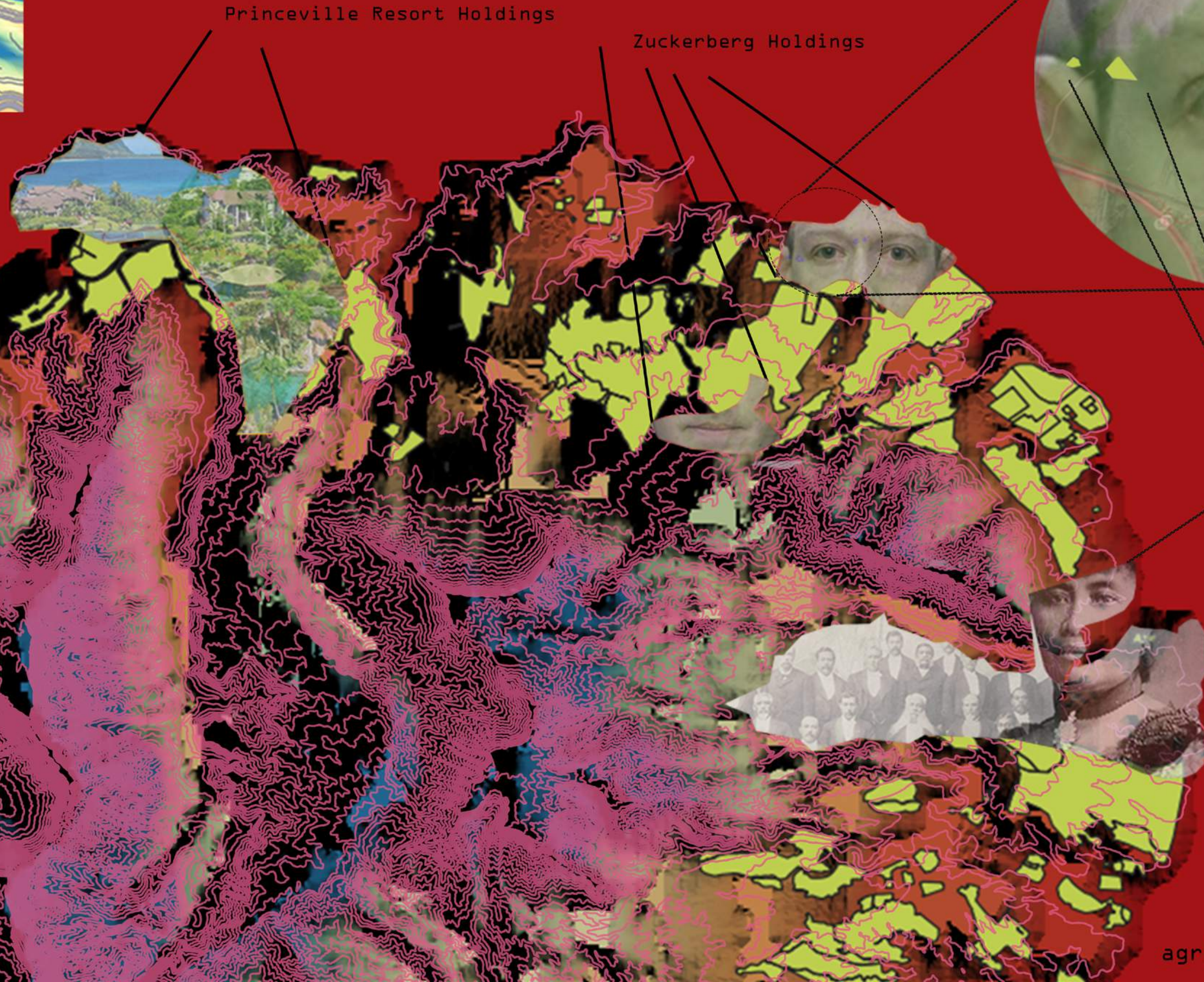
# Agriculture and Real Estate - An Analysis of Contested Land use on the island of Kauai

Topography: 5' rise per line

■ = agriculturally suitable



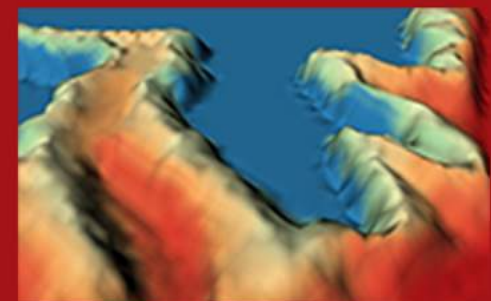
model height:  
elevation



Princeville Resort Holdings

Zuckerberg Holdings













Department of  
Hawaiian Homelands  
Repatriation Land  
Holdings



model height:  
agricultural suitability

# SCHOOL



 Cascades High School (01M650)	 Lower East Side Preparatory High School (01M515)	 New Explorations into Science, Technology and Math High School	 Bard High School Early College (01M696)
 64%	 65%	 99%	 95%
 26%	 43%	 89%	 95%

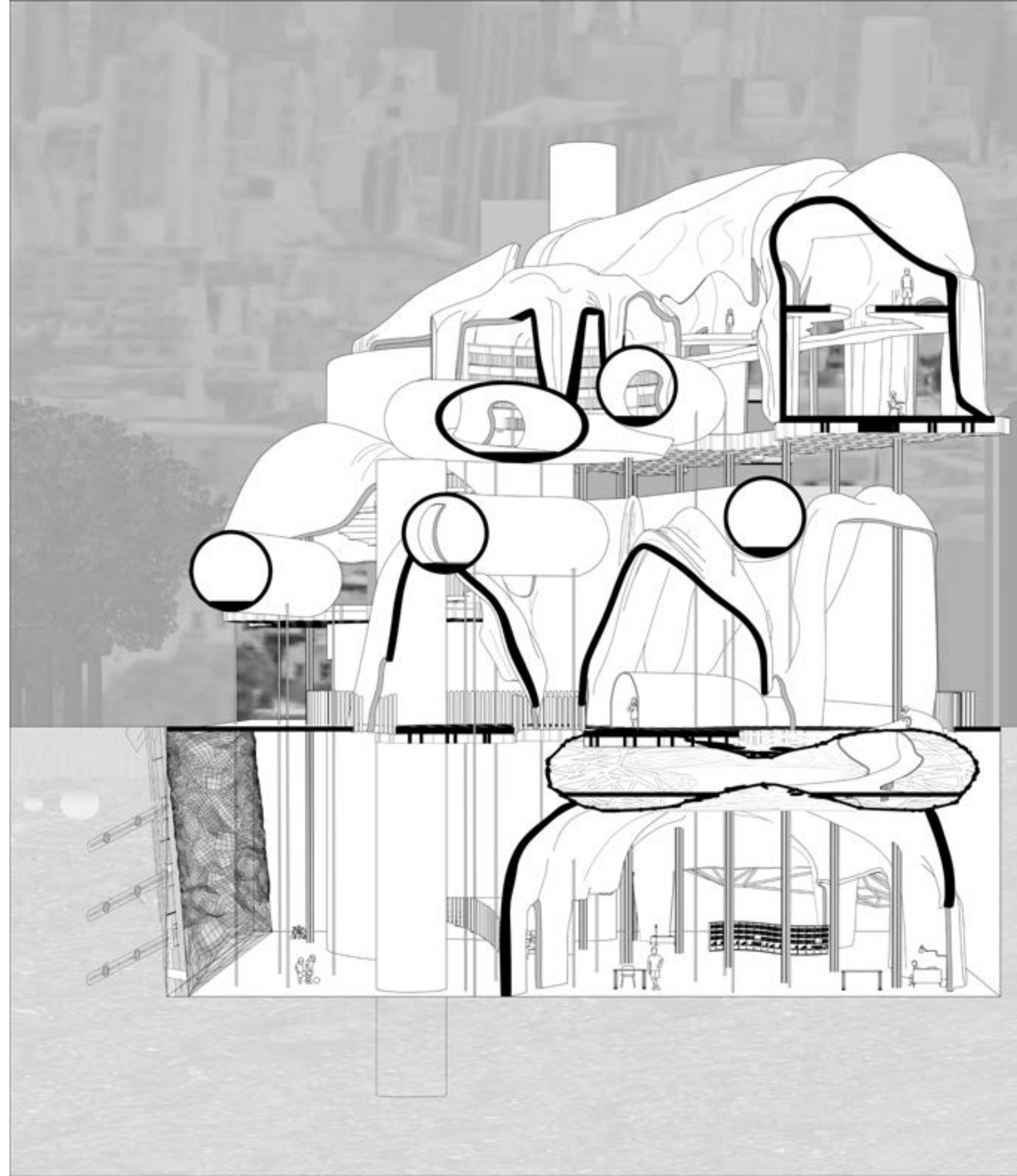
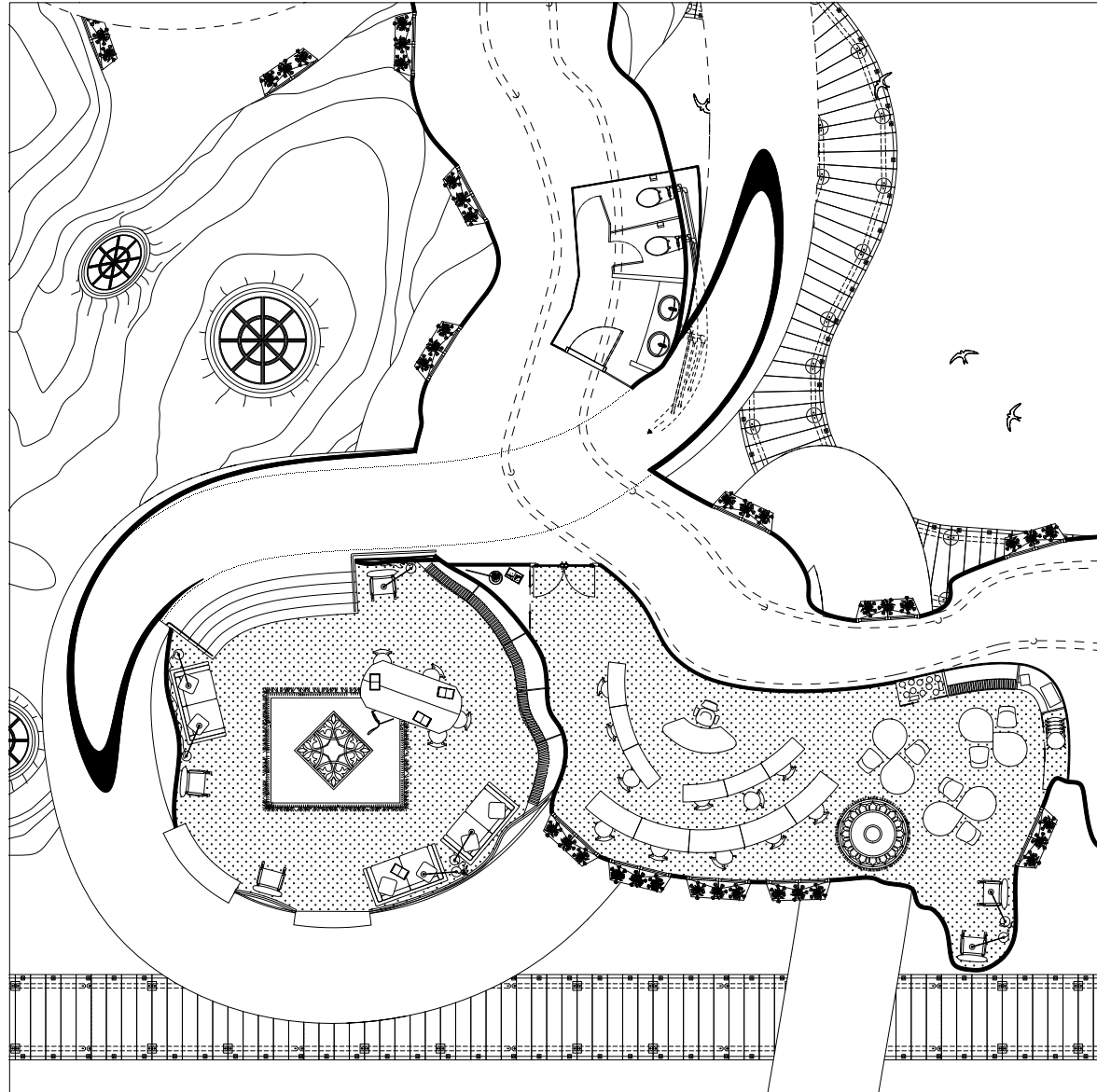


## Project Summary: Topography of Education, LES

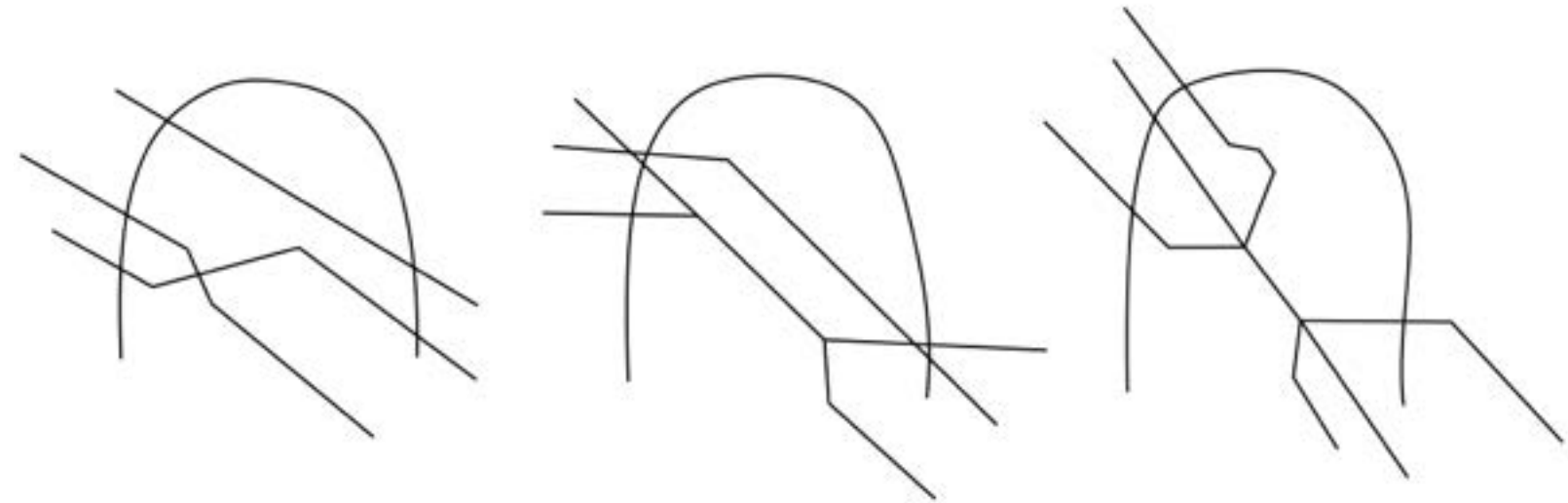
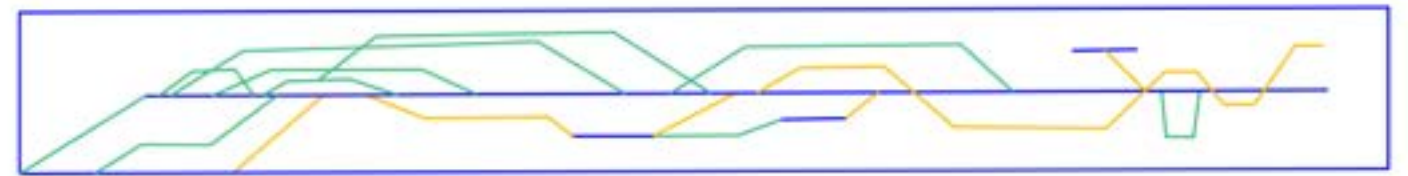
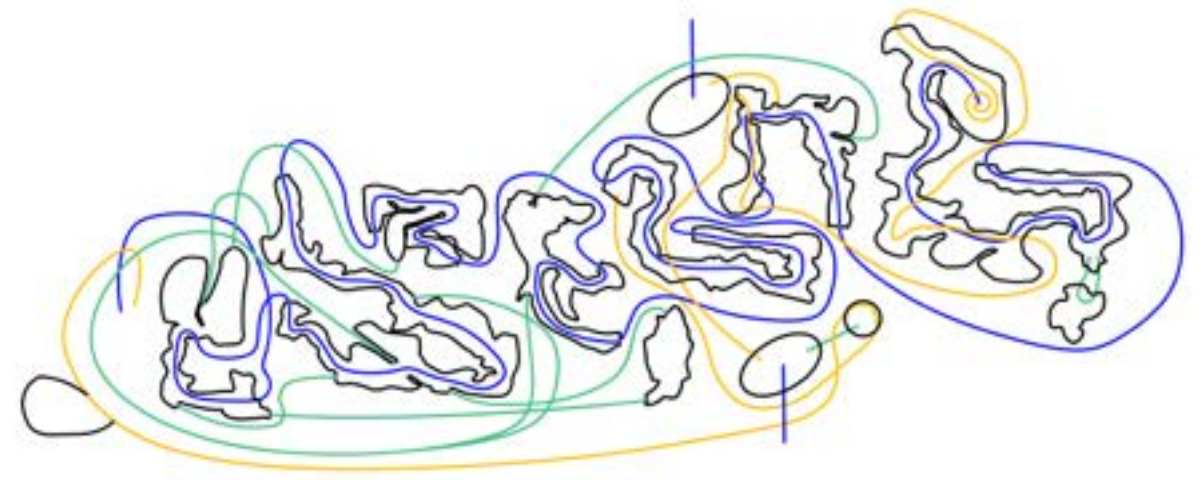
A spatial and demographic analysis of the public school system in Manhattan's Lower East Side reveals that differential rates of graduation and university matriculation correlate with race and ethnicity on a school-by-school basis. Mapping these statistics over the geography of the region facilitates an investigation of the urban interface between historically subsidized public housing projects and gated charter schools where the implementation of non-numerical admissions criteria correlates with instances of particularly high demographic representation of White students. Average commute times as reported by the selected schools (represented in shadow) begin to indicate the degree to which an observed racial segregation of Manhattan neighborhoods may be reflected also in the public school system, albeit geographically dislocated such that community funding for local school districts can be argued to be unrepresentative of the interests of the local population.

## Project Proposal: Archive of Meanders

The enormous hole dug for the building's foundation delineates a wondrous, vast place where students develop practical skills in an impractical environment. Subterranean areas privilege private exploration. Undulating hallways hold the "library," a river delta of ruins continuously re-excavated. Classrooms emerge as eddies where the library widens, ensconced across multiple levels—waystations, not destinations. Ancillary programming emerges organically according to the building envelope. The school is a landscape of knowledge through which students chart their course.







One Hallway: Library — Two Hallways: Classroom — Three Hallways: Assembly Area

See above for plan and section diagram





# SENIOR CENTER

Project Proposal: Above Median

Issues affecting the health of seniors in the Hamilton Heights community are inherently social, and therefore demand a multifunctional intervention. The proposed design acknowledges the complex and interconnected web of needs and challenges facing senior community members, including basic non-physician health attention, spiritual services, and communal recreation. The entire system of spaces is designed to be contained within the footprint of the Broadway median, a public area already popular as a place of gathering in the community, but underdeveloped and dangerous due to an imbalanced relationship between park and roadway.

GSAPP Core I Studio  
Critic: Alessandro Orsini





