

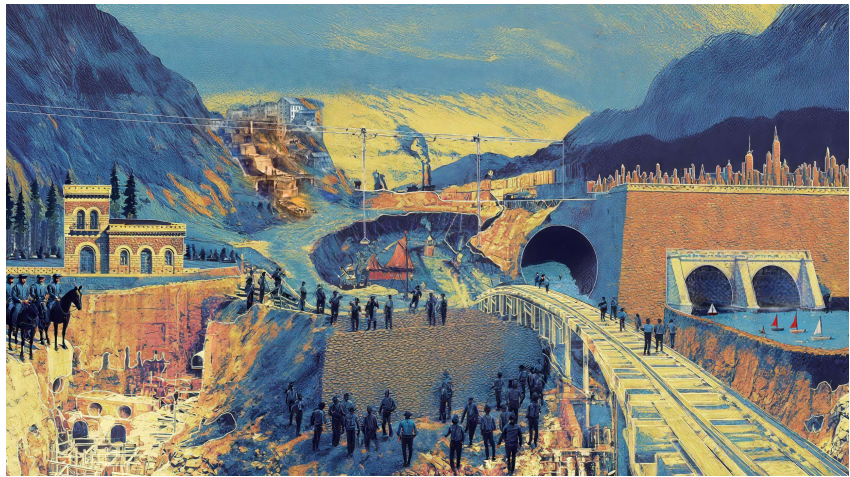
# Portfolio

GSAPP Selected Work

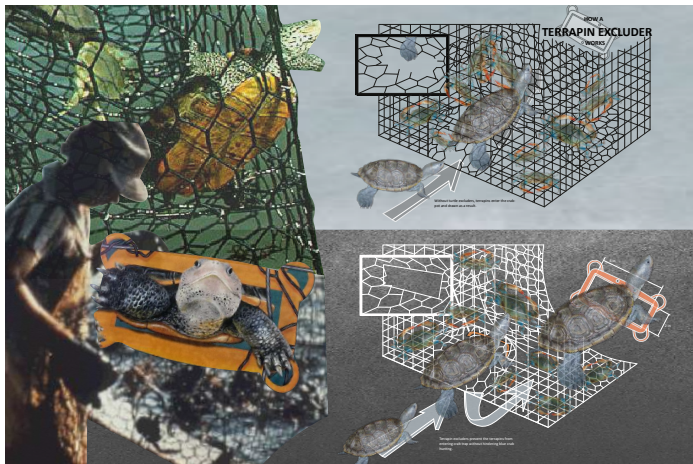
2025-2026

*Bin Tang*

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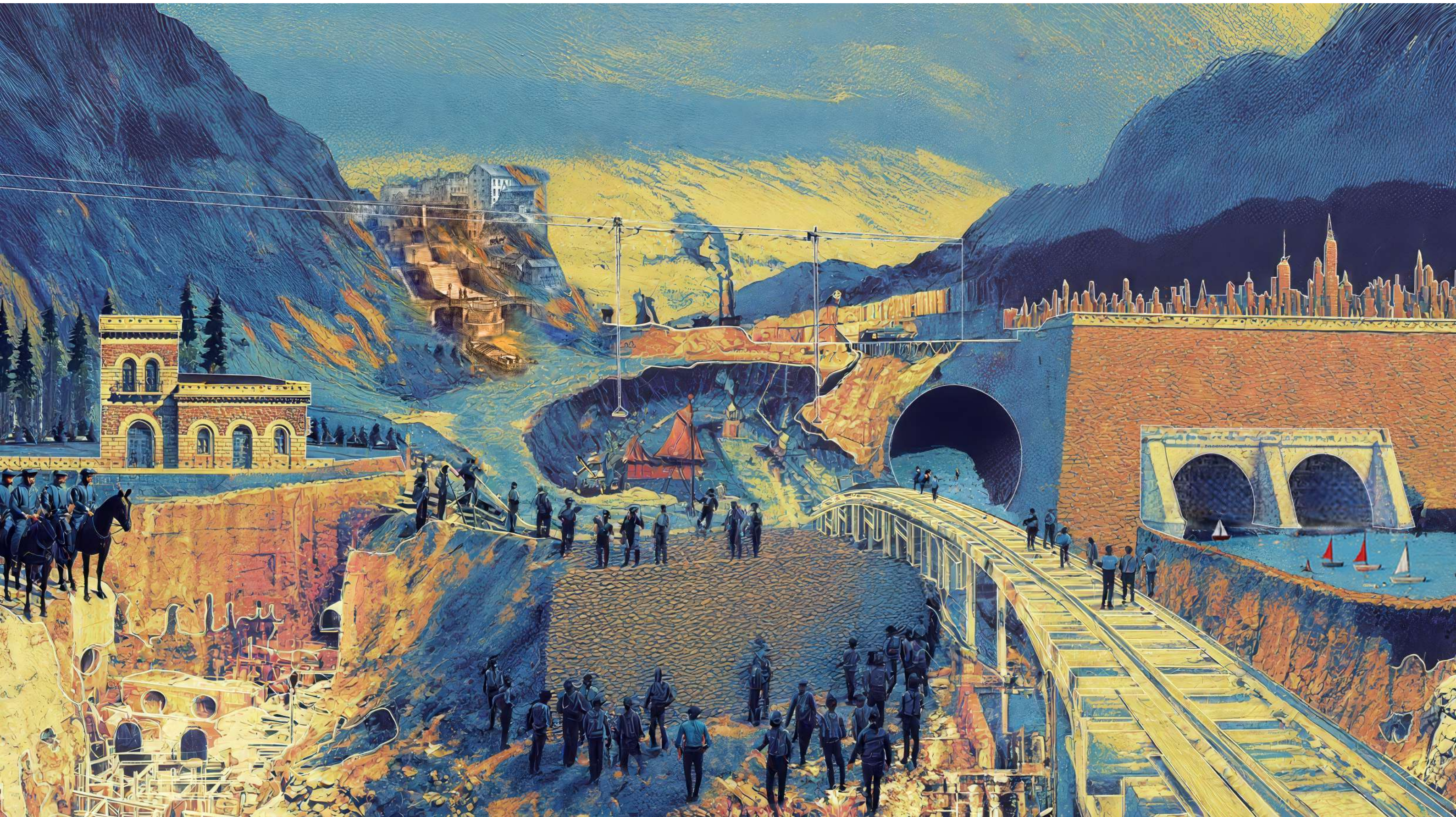


2.Tidal Thresholds: Reconnecting  
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- KEY
- X.1X: Actors
  - X.2X: Props
  - X.3X: Landscapes
  - X.4X: Infrastructures

**II Act II: The Flow Beneath - The Myth of Otherness**  
Location: Beneath the Hudson River - Catskills Aqueduct

**Act Description:**  
In this scene, two voices unearth the buried history of the aqueduct-built by hand, by immigrants and Black laborers, under brutal conditions and near-total invisibility.

**Infrastructures:**  
2.42.The Catskills Aqueduct and Olive Bridge Dam:  
Dug by hand through granite from 1837 to 1842, the aqueduct moved water over 90 miles using only gravity-an elegant system built on brutal conditions.

**Landscapes:**  
2.31.The Town of Olive:  
The town center and the majority of the town's residents were forced from the rich Esopus Valley and relocated to the nearby foothills.

**Actors:**  
2.11.Armed Guards:  
In 1900, armed guards were sent in to end a strike that turned violent

2.12.Workers:  
nearly 1/10 th of the workers were killed or injured each year during the construction of Catskill Aqueduct.

**Props:**  
2.21.Smoke -Excluding Mask:  
allow people to survive inside a smoke-field smoke-filled environment such as a burning building.

2.22.The Muntz Respirator:  
a full head-covering mask with a sponge- and a carbon-based filter

**I Act I: Mirror Mirror: The Myth of Clean Water**  
Location: Jackie Onassis Reservoir, Central Park

**Act Description:**  
In the quiet shimmer of the Central Park reservoir, two figures walk and wonder-what was lost to make this place feel so clean? Beneath the still water lies a history of dammed rivers, flooded towns, and forgotten labor. What looks like peace is really a performance, with the reservoir as its polished stage. This act pulls back the curtain on the myth of clean water, revealing the cost hidden just beneath the surface.

**Actors:**  
1.11.Laborers (not honored nor present):  
who built the reservoirs-often conscripted, underpaid, and unremembered-form the play's silent chorus

1.12.The displaced residents of the Catskills:  
from towns like Olive Branch, Glenford, and Boiceville-are the ghostly cast members written out of the script.

1.13.NYC planners, engineers, and city officials:  
Orchestrators of the mise-en-scène infrastructure built for "all" under the banner of "public health"

**Landscapes:**  
1.31.Hudson River Valley, via H.R.S. painting "Course of Empire I, by Thomas Cole:  
The reservoir, posed in front of this image, appears not as nature preserved, but as nature rewritten. In our act, this contrast sharpens the illusion: what looks like calm water is actually a post-conquest landscape, where the wild has been disciplined, labor erased, and history edited into silence.

**Props:**  
1.21.The Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis Reservoir:  
The still water becomes a prop of innocence-designed to suggest peace, cleanliness, and civic care.

1.44.Beneath Broadway and Fulton:  
layers of infrastructure quietly power the city-subways, sewers, water lines-all hidden from view, taken for granted.

**V Act V: The Boat and the Surface**  
Location: Rochester, Erie Canal

**Act Description:**  
This scene takes place along the Erie Canal in Rochester, where the canal-once hailed as an engineering marvel-reveals its roots in exploitation, environmental control, and erased labor.

**Props:**  
5.21.Floodwaters:  
a recurring, destabilizing prop that resists control and reveals the fragility of the engineered system.

5.22.Canal boats:  
vessels designed to transport goods across the Erie Canal, symbolic of trade, movement, and engineered flow.

5.23.Lock - chambers:  
The canal locks- chambers with gates at each end and manually operated valves.

**Infrastructures:**  
5.41.Lock and aqueducts:  
mechanical structures that managed water flow and elevation changes, allowing boats to move across varying terrain without engines.

**Actors:**  
5.11.Irish immigrant laborers:  
who dug the Erie Canal by hand under brutal conditions, paid in whiskey and scrip, and faced disease.

5.12.Rochester residents:  
particularly those impacted by the 1865 canal flood-victims of infrastructure once praised as miraculous.

**Landscapes:**  
5.31.The Erie Canal:  
corridor a narrow, engineered waterway carved through New York State, transforming natural terrain into linear system of trade and control.

**IV Act IV: A Forest That Floated Away: The Myth of Eternal Growth**

Location: Bank of Hudson, Poughkeepsie, NY.

**Act Description:**  
This act reveals how the Hudson River became a channel for ecological extraction, carrying timber, labor, and erased histories downstream.

**Props:**  
4.21.Timber rafts:  
used to float massive loads of cut white pine, cedar, and oak down the Hudson, turning the river into a transport system for profit.

4.22.Axes, saws, and logging booms:  
the basic instruments of forest removal, symbolizing manual labor and ecological violence

4.23.Horses:  
main tool for carrying and transporting logs.

**Infrastructures:**  
4.41.River transport systems:  
the Hudson itself as infrastructure, along with rafts, barges, and docks that moved timber downstream to urban markets.

4.42.Logging infrastructure:  
networks of roads, timber camps, and sawmills used to extract and process trees.

**Actors:**  
4.11.Timber barons and colonial landowners:  
(such as Frederick Philipse), who profited from large-scale landholdings, timber extraction, and slave labor along the Hudson River.

4.12.Merchants and shippers in Kingston, Albany, and New York City:  
who turned the river into a trade artery for timber, wealth, and exploitation.

4.13.Logging crews and enslaved laborers:  
whose physical work felled the forests and floated the timber downriver-often unrecognized and erased from the record.

**Landscapes:**  
3.31.The altered river valley:  
once a living rural landscape of forests, farmland, and flowing water-gradually or reshaped by the dam's construction.

3.32.The dam face itself:  
a towering wall of stone, performing permanence and control, standing in stark contrast to the softness of the displaced terrain.

**Props:**  
3.21.Steam engines and smokestacks:  
Used in the construction of the dam. Represent industrial power and extracted energy.

3.22.Cranes and pulleys:  
Lift heavy materials like stone blocks.

3.23.Wooden trestles and temporary bridges:  
Carey monument or redirect water, built temporarily during construction.

**Actors:**  
3.41.Laborers and stone workers:  
often immigrants, who built the dam under harsh and dangerous conditions.  
3.11.State officials and engineers:  
who designed and enforced the dam's construction.  
3.13.The dam:  
as a monumental actor silent while concealing the violence that made it possible.  
3.14.Displaced rural communities:  
farmers, millworkers, millworkers-whose homes, livelihoods, and histories were erased to make way for the dam.

**Landscapes:**  
4.31.Hudson River Valley:  
In the valley, the forest was believed to be endless- an abundant, renewable resource bounty bestowed by nature, ready to be harvested

**Infrastructures:**  
3.41.The New Croton Dam:  
The central structure of the scene, a massive masonry dam completed in 1906 to supply water to New York City. It serves as both a functional hydraulic system and a symbolic monument to control, conquest, and erasure.

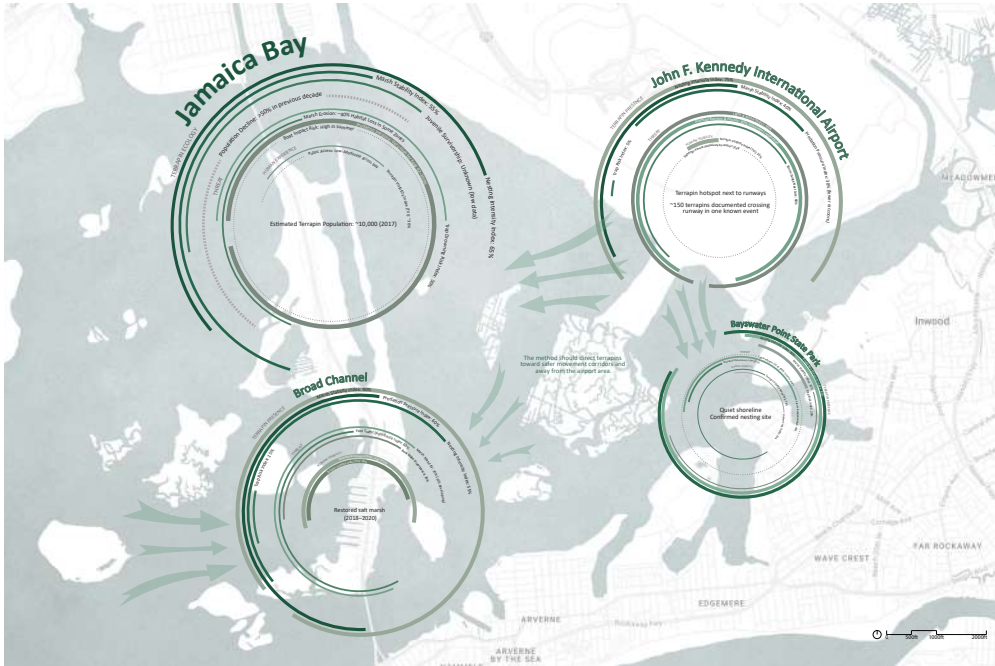
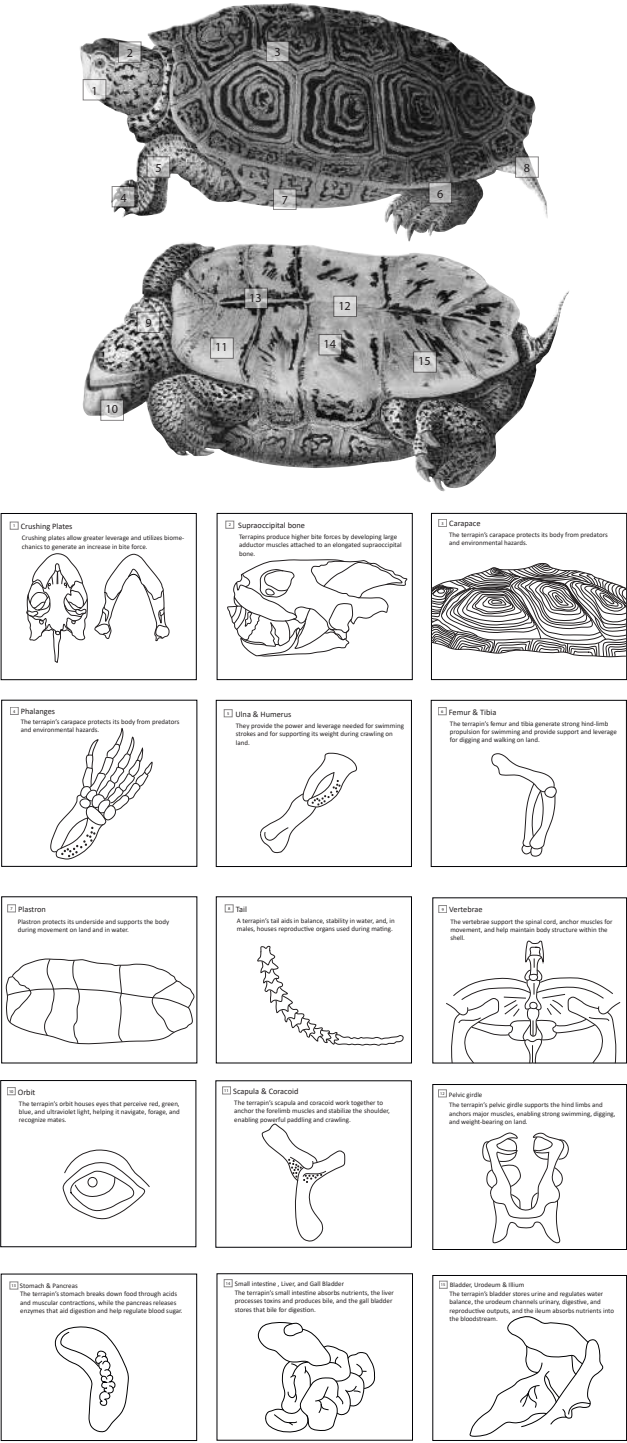
**III Act III: Vision of Stone: An Infrastructural Epic**

Location: New Croton Dam

**Act Description:**  
The dam stands not just as a feat of engineering, but as a silent monument to the Plantationocene-a structure that celebrates triumph while quietly erasing the histories beneath it.



TERRAPIN ANATOMY

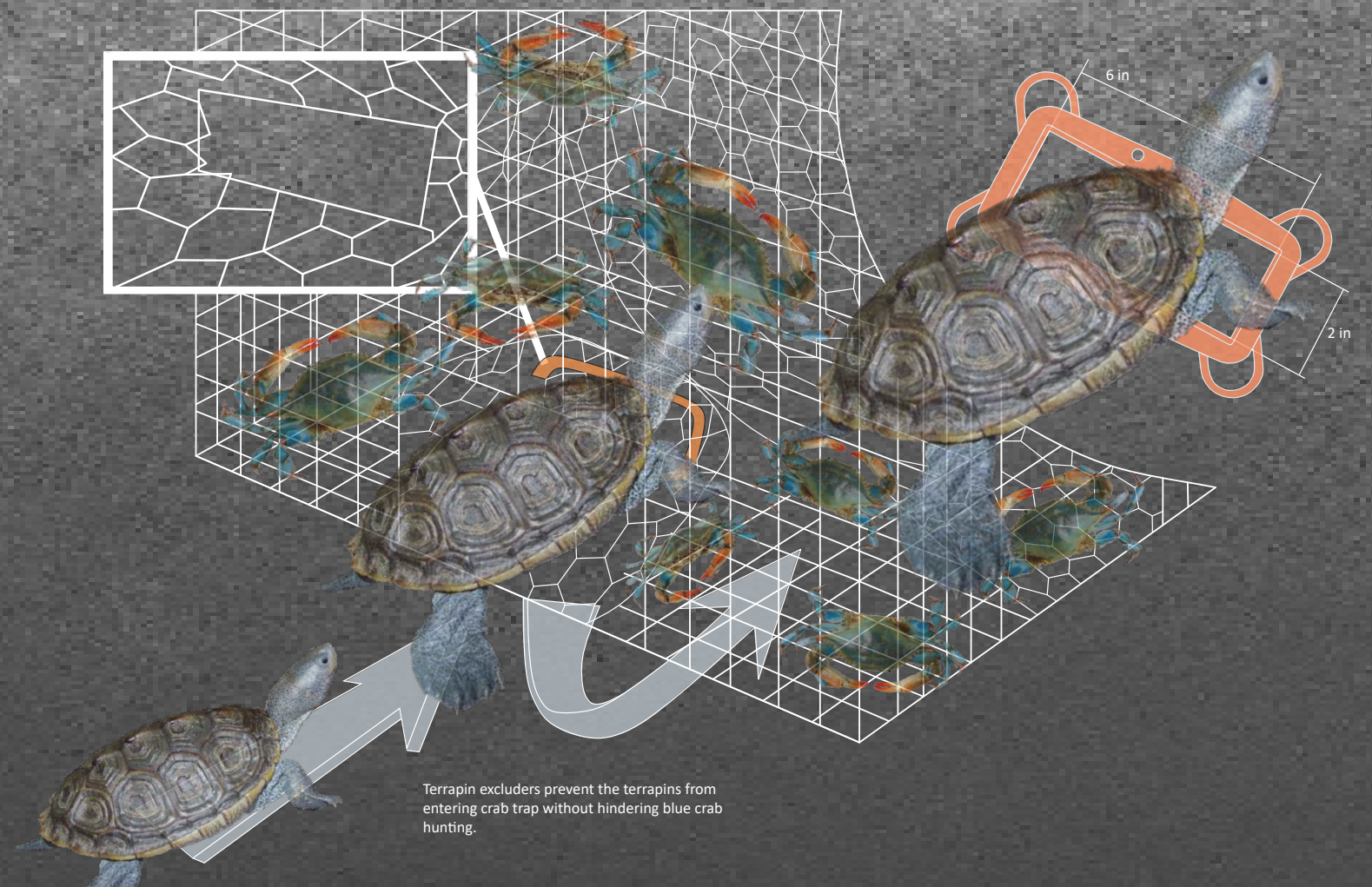
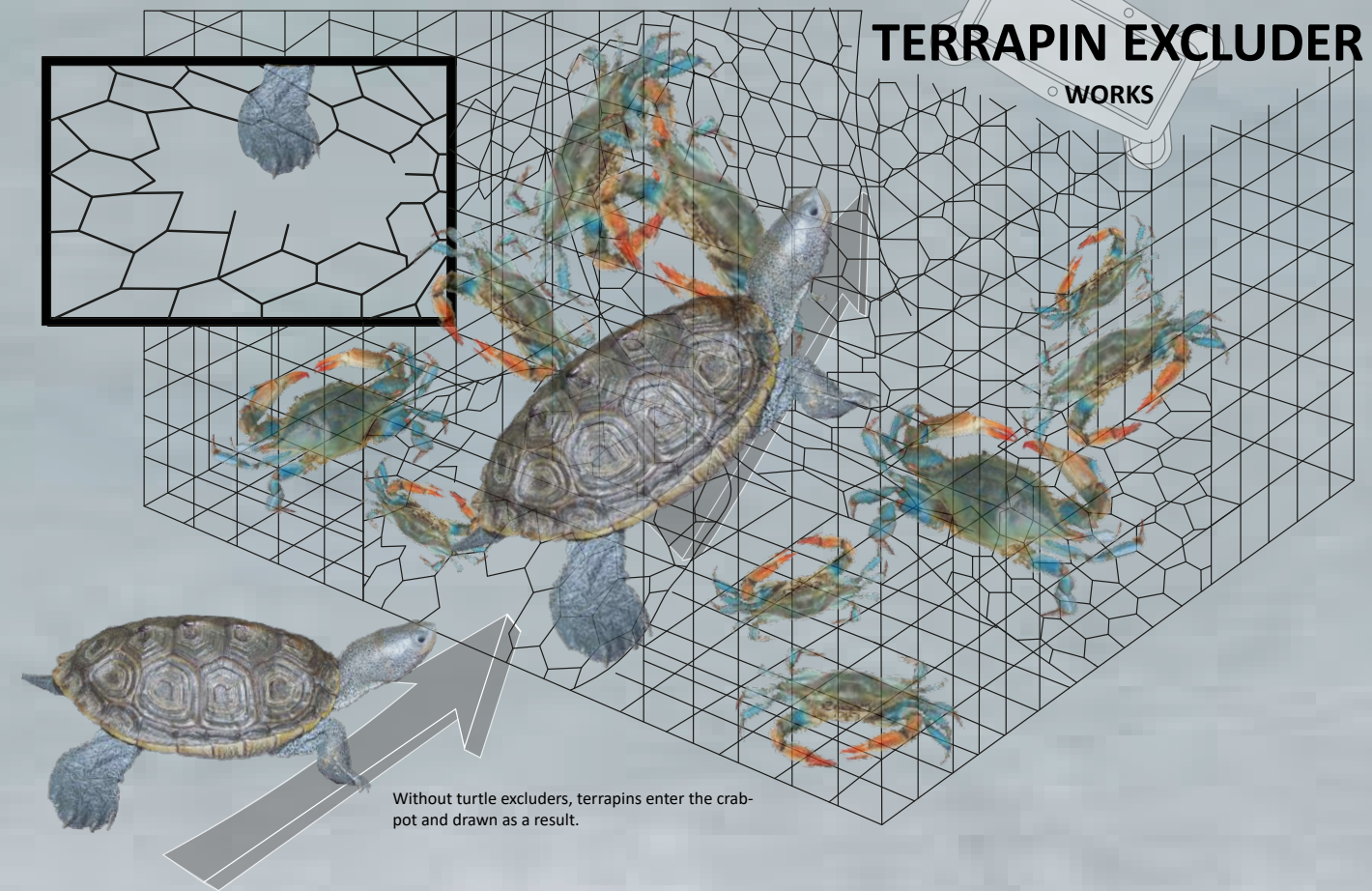


Tidal Thresholds is an ecological and architectural proposal centered on the survival of the diamondback terrapin in Jamaica Bay. As urban expansion, roads, airport infrastructure, predators, and recreational activities increasingly fragment the terrapin's habitat, the project investigates how spatial design can mediate conflicts between human systems and nonhuman migration routes.

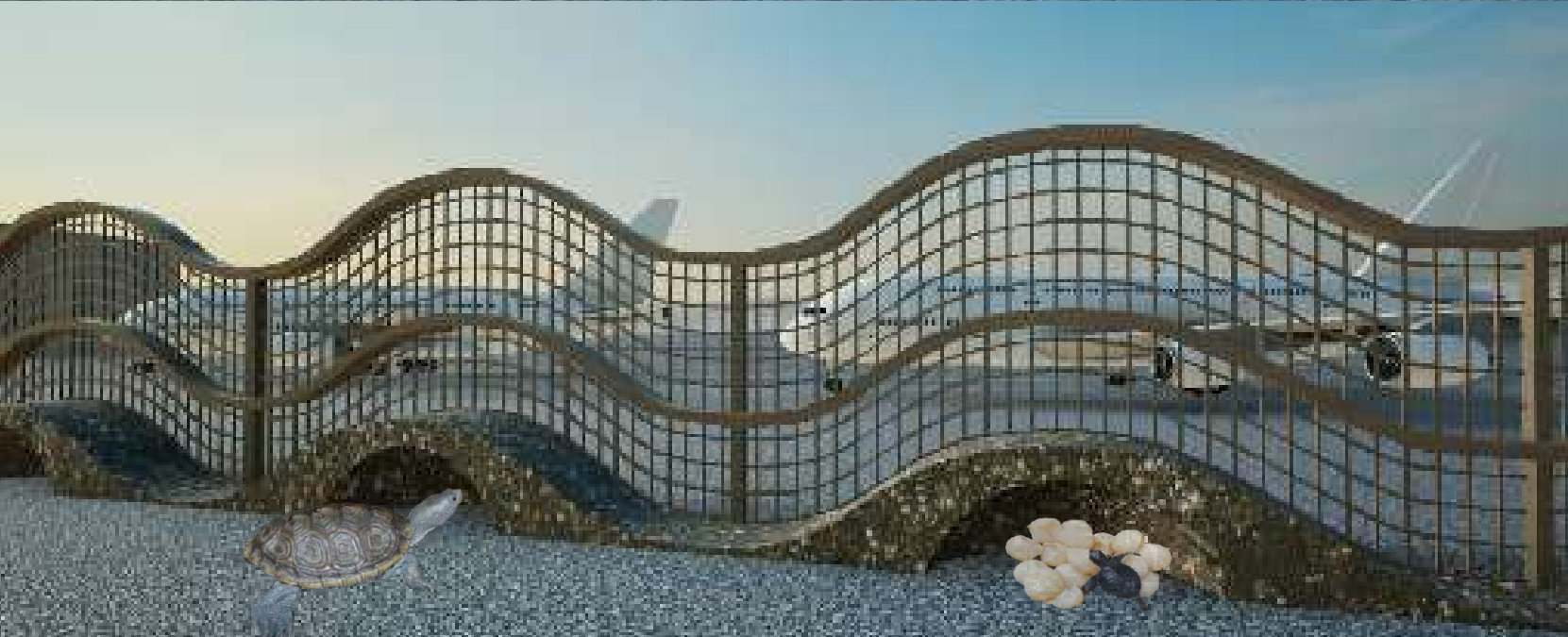




## HOW A TERRAPIN EXCLUDER WORKS

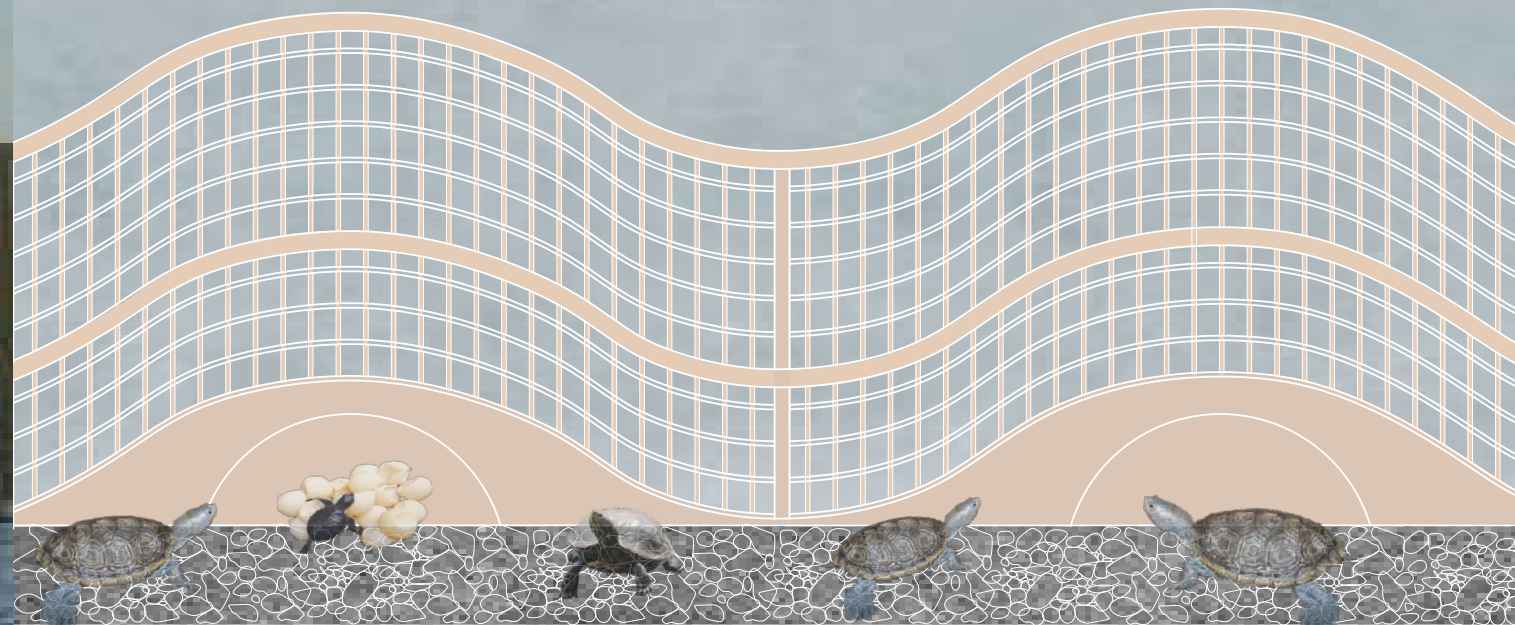






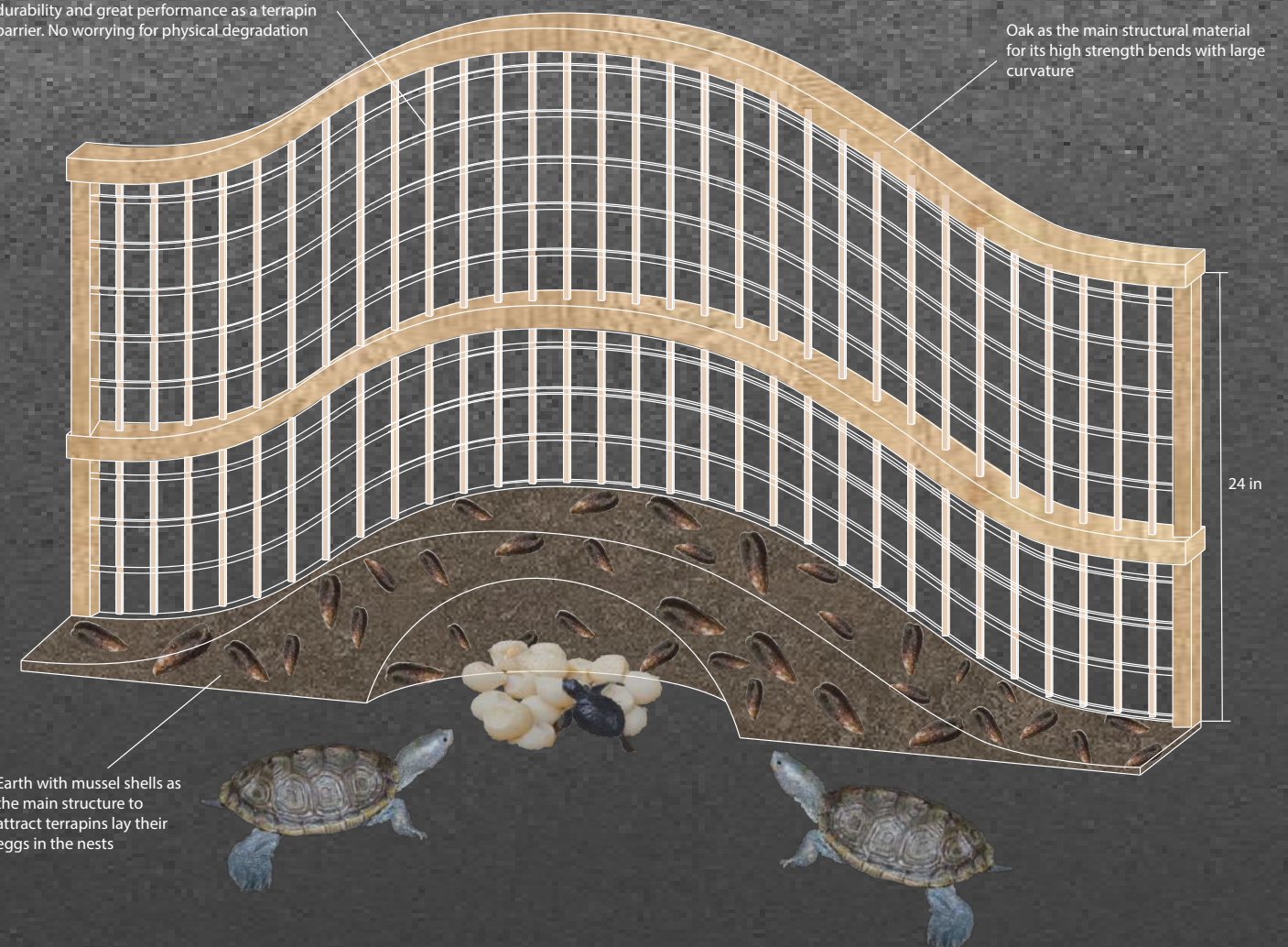
# TERRAPIN BARRIER

At John F. Kennedy International Airport



Tenax Hardware Net which has year round durability and great performance as a terrapin barrier. No worrying for physical degradation

Oak as the main structural material for its high strength bends with large curvature



Earth with mussel shells as the main structure to attract terrapins lay their eggs in the nests

24 in



TERRAPIN PASSAGEWAY & RAMP  
At Broad Channel



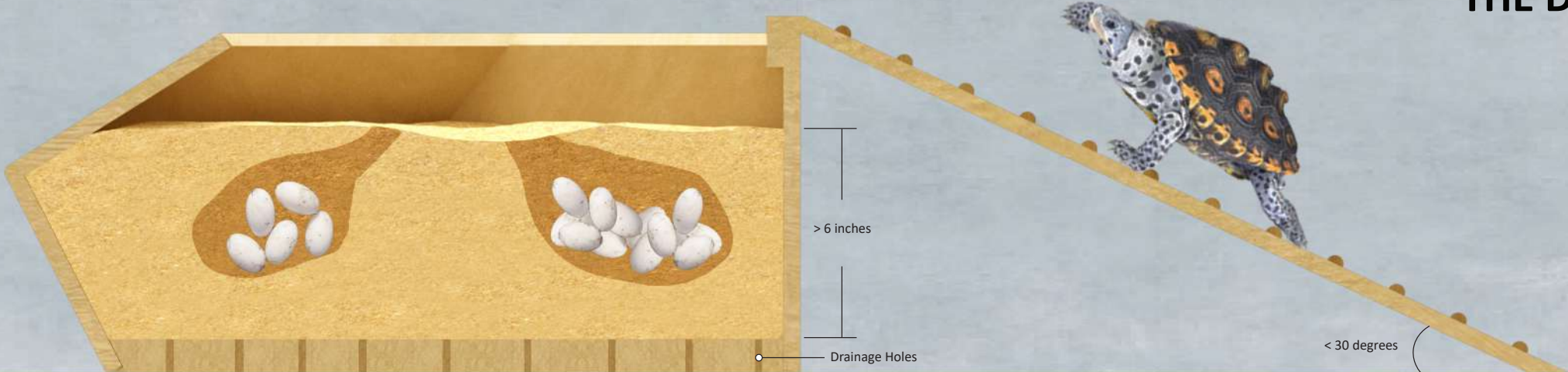


# THE DOMESTIC NEST

For Every Family

Some residents have converted their front and back yards into paved surfaces, using concrete or brick. This significantly reduces the available nesting habitat for terrapins in Jamaica Bay.

The Domestic Nest is designed to provide a small, dedicated nesting space for terrapins while still allowing homeowners to use their property as they wish. The shells attached along the slope and at the base of the nest are intended to create reflective cues that help attract terrapins to the structure.



Section



## DIY Domestic Nest

It is feasible for anyone to build one at home. The container should be at least 6 inches deep, with a width and length approximately three to four times larger than the body size of an adult female terrapin. The slope leading into the container should match the container's width, and its angle should not exceed 30 degrees. Most importantly, the container must be filled with sand that maintains suitable humidity for nesting. For outdoor installations, drainage holes at the bottom are essential to allow rainwater to escape.

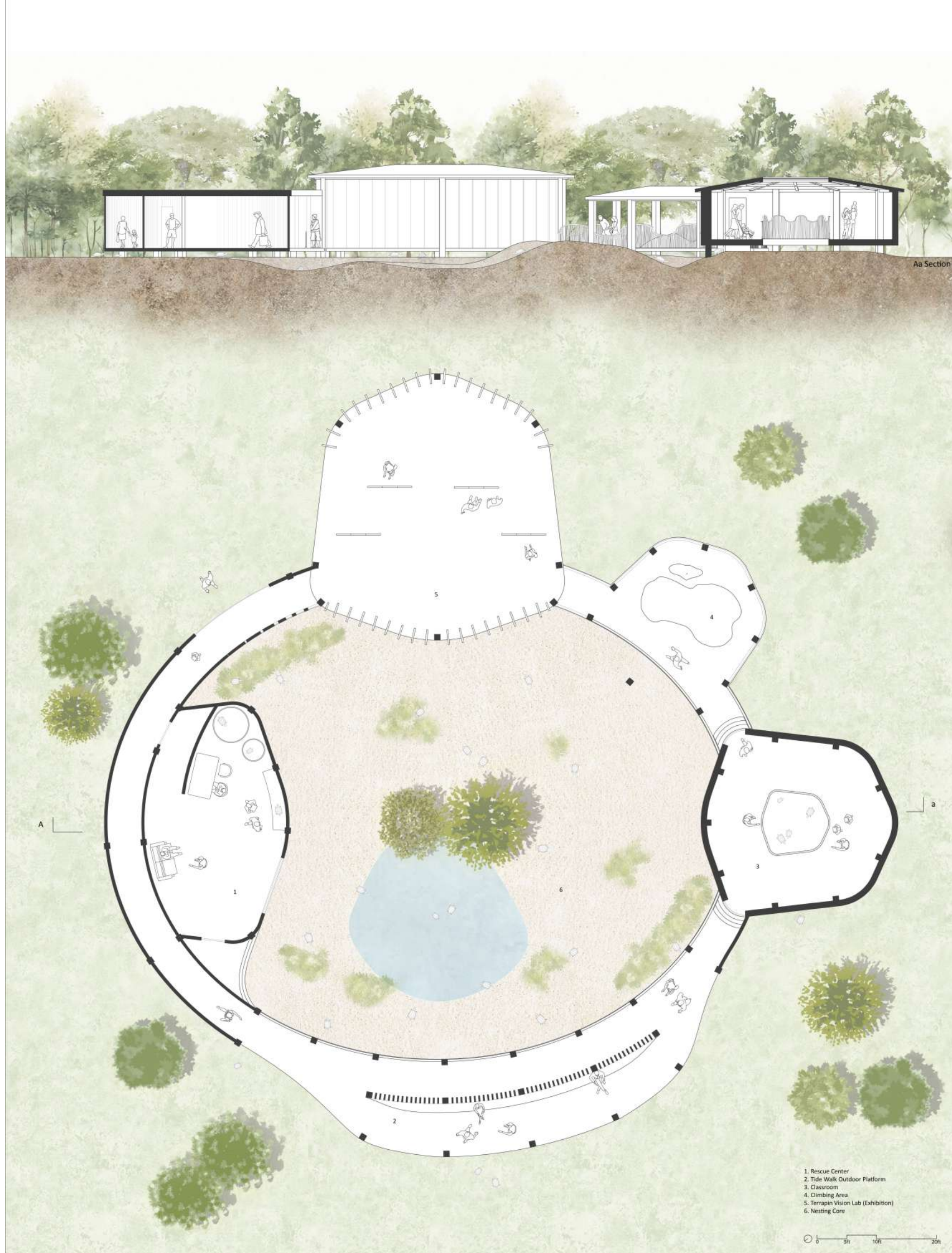
Residential Backyard



Terrapin In the Nesting Area

Terrapin View





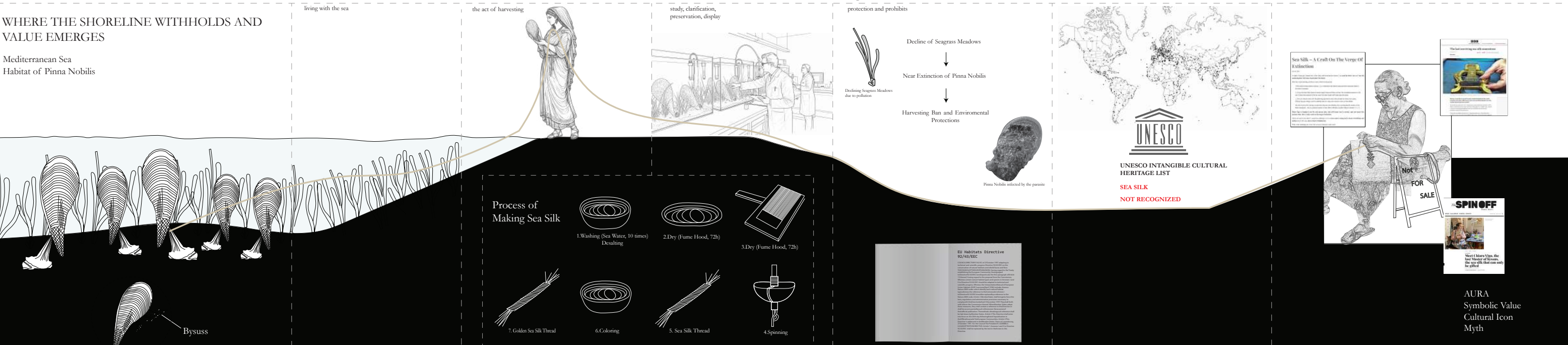


FROM TEXTILE  
TO AURA

WHERE THE SHORELINE WITHHOLDS AND  
VALUE EMERGES

Mediterranean Sea  
Habitat of Pinna Nobilis

- 01  
ECOLOGICAL ORIGIN  
sea as origin
- 02  
SHORELINE THRESHOLD  
extraction and encounter
- 03  
HISTORIC STUDY & RESEARCH  
from material to knowledge
- 04  
ECOLOGICAL COLLAPSE &  
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION  
regulation and loss
- 05  
UNESCO NON-RECOGNITION  
selective visibility
- 06  
MEDIA CONSTRUCTION &  
CHIARA VIGO'S RITUALIZED DEMONSTRATION  
the last seamstress / narrative amplification



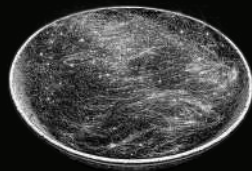
SYSTEMS  
ACTING ON  
ON THE  
MATERIAL

LEGEND

MATERIAL  
TRANSFORM-  
ATION



living organism



extracted byssus



material



object of study



preserved specie



heritage object



cultural symbol



aura/narrative



# Pinna Nobilis

Pinna nobilis, commonly known as the Mediterranean fan mussel, is the largest bivalve mollusk in the Mediterranean Sea. Sea silk is an extremely rare textile made from the silky byssus fibers of the Mediterranean mollusk Pinna nobilis. Unlike conventional silk, sea silk comes from fine protein filaments that the mollusk secretes to anchor itself to the seabed.

Size  
Range  
60cm  
to  
100cm

Pinna Nobilis can grow up to 1 meter long and lives partially buried in sand.

In 2016, a parasite outbreak began infecting Pinna nobilis, causing rapid tissue damage and mass mortality across the Mediterranean Sea. The outbreak spread quickly through coastal populations, leading to mortality rates exceeding 80–90% in many regions and pushing the species to the brink of functional extinction.

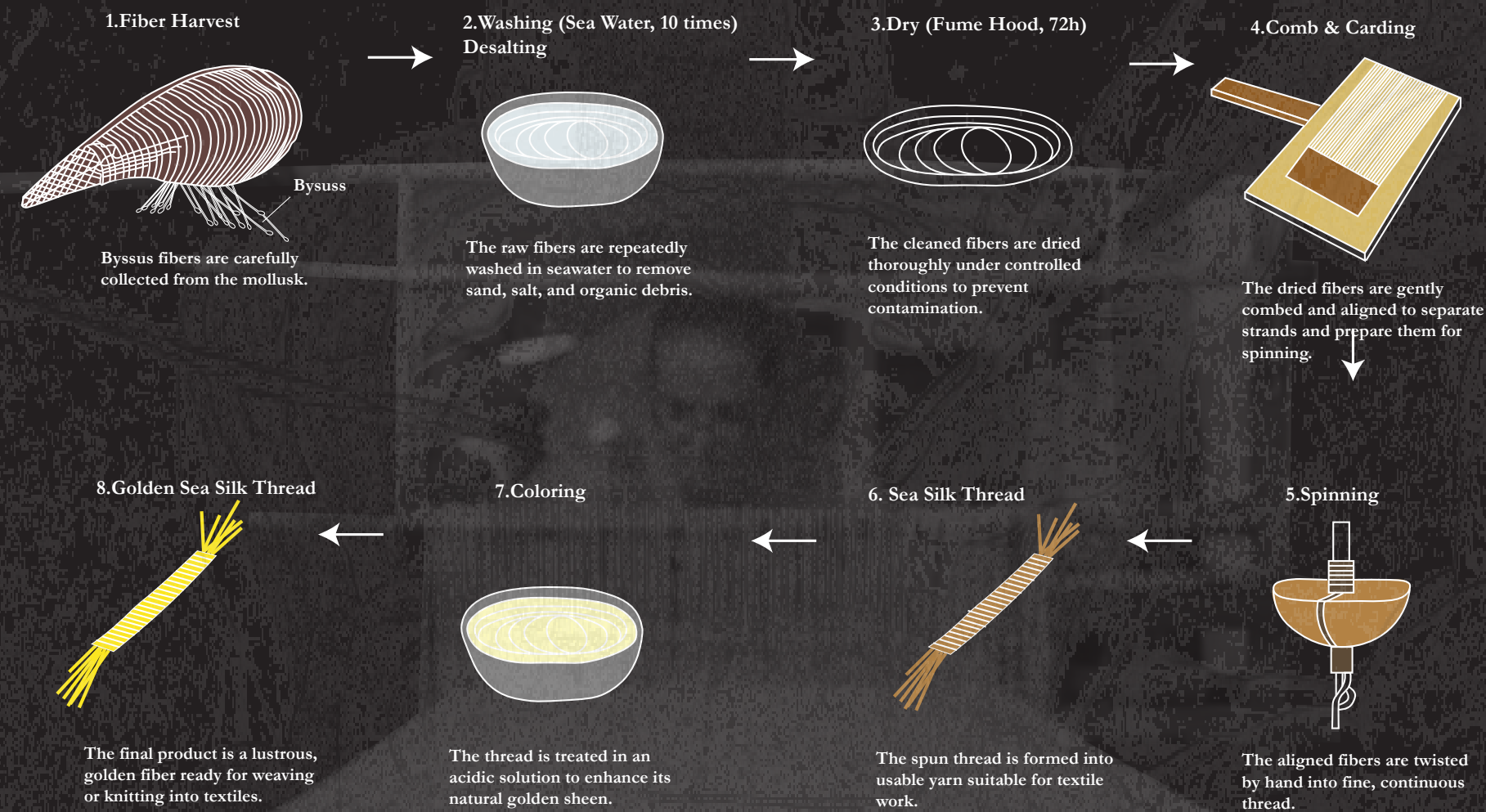
Pinna nobilis anchors itself to the seabed using fine, silky filaments called byssus threads. These byssus fibers are the raw material for sea silk.

Along the Italian shoreline—particularly in regions such as Sardinia, Tuscany, Campania, and Apulia—coastal urban runoff, untreated sewage discharge, and agricultural fertilizers have degraded nearshore waters where Pinna nobilis lives. Because it inhabits nearshore seagrass meadows, pollution weakens its immune system and has worsened the species' dramatic decline.



# Sea Silk

Sea silk is made from the fine byssus fibers secreted by the Mediterranean fan mussel, *Pinna nobilis*. The fibers are carefully collected from the living mollusk, repeatedly washed to remove salt and impurities, then soaked, dried, and gently combed to align the strands before being spun by hand into thread. The thread is sometimes treated to enhance its natural golden sheen, producing a lightweight, lustrous fiber that can be woven or knitted into small, delicate textiles.

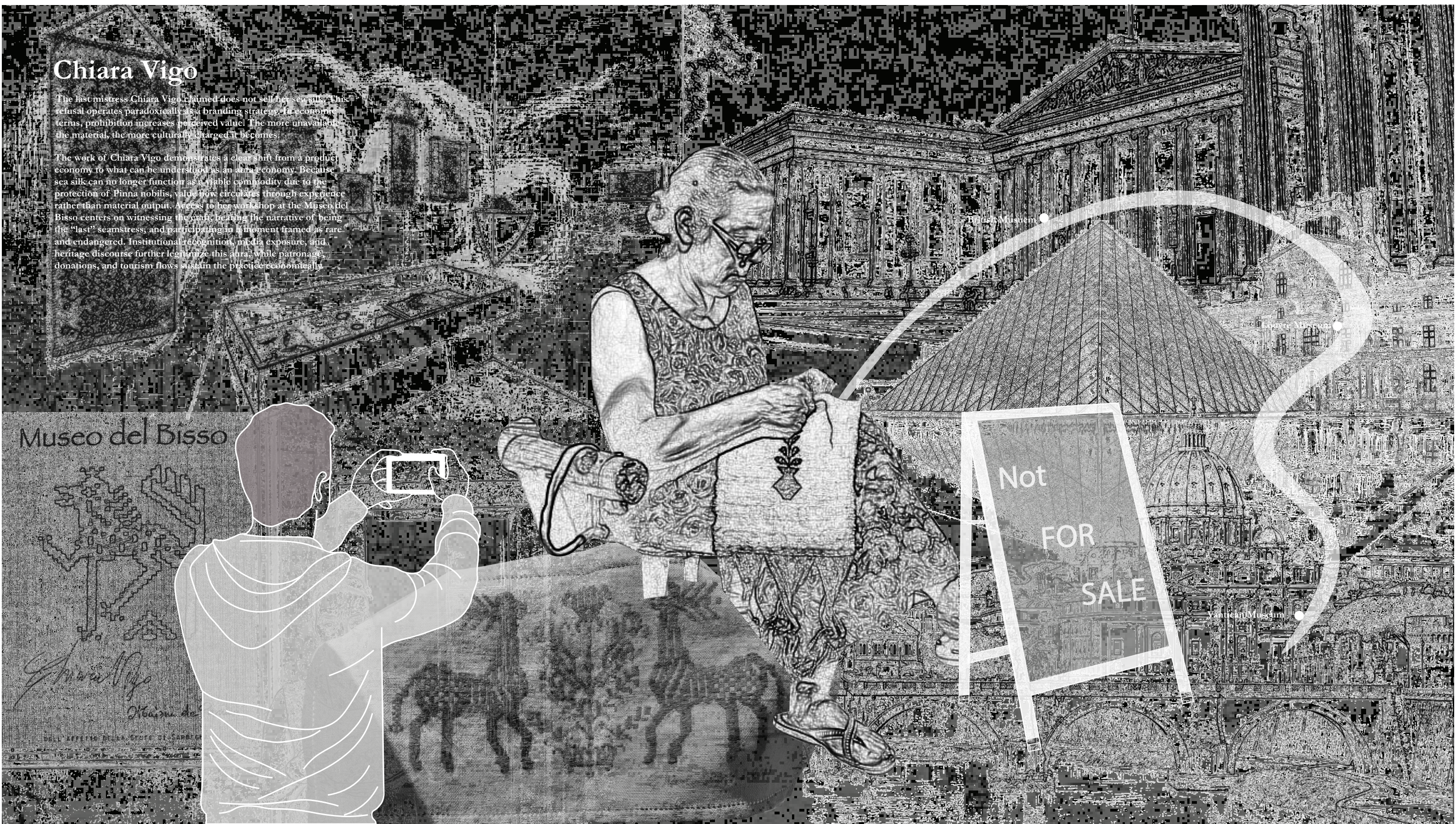




## Chiara Vigo

The last mistress Chiara Vigo claimed does not sell her sea silk. This refusal operates paradoxically as a branding strategy. In economic terms, prohibition increases perceived value. The more unavailable the material, the more culturally charged it becomes.

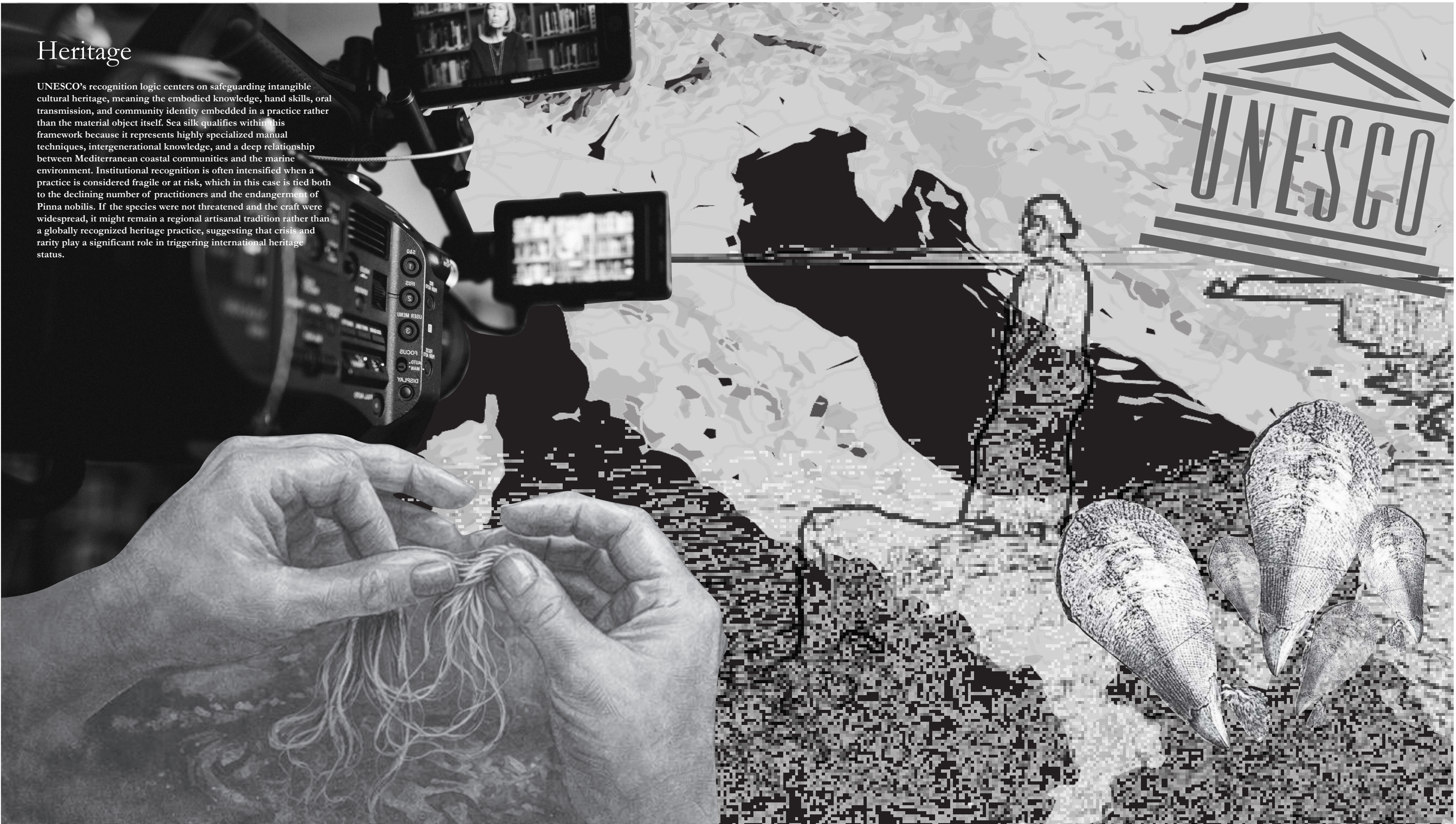
The work of Chiara Vigo demonstrates a clear shift from a product economy to what can be understood as an aura economy. Because sea silk can no longer function as a viable commodity due to the protection of *Pinna nobilis*, value now circulates through experience rather than material output. Access to her workshop at the Museo del Bisso centers on witnessing the craft, hearing the narrative of being the “last” seamstress, and participating in a moment framed as rare and endangered. Institutional recognition, media exposure, and heritage discourse further legitimize this aura, while patronage, donations, and tourism flows sustain the practice economically.



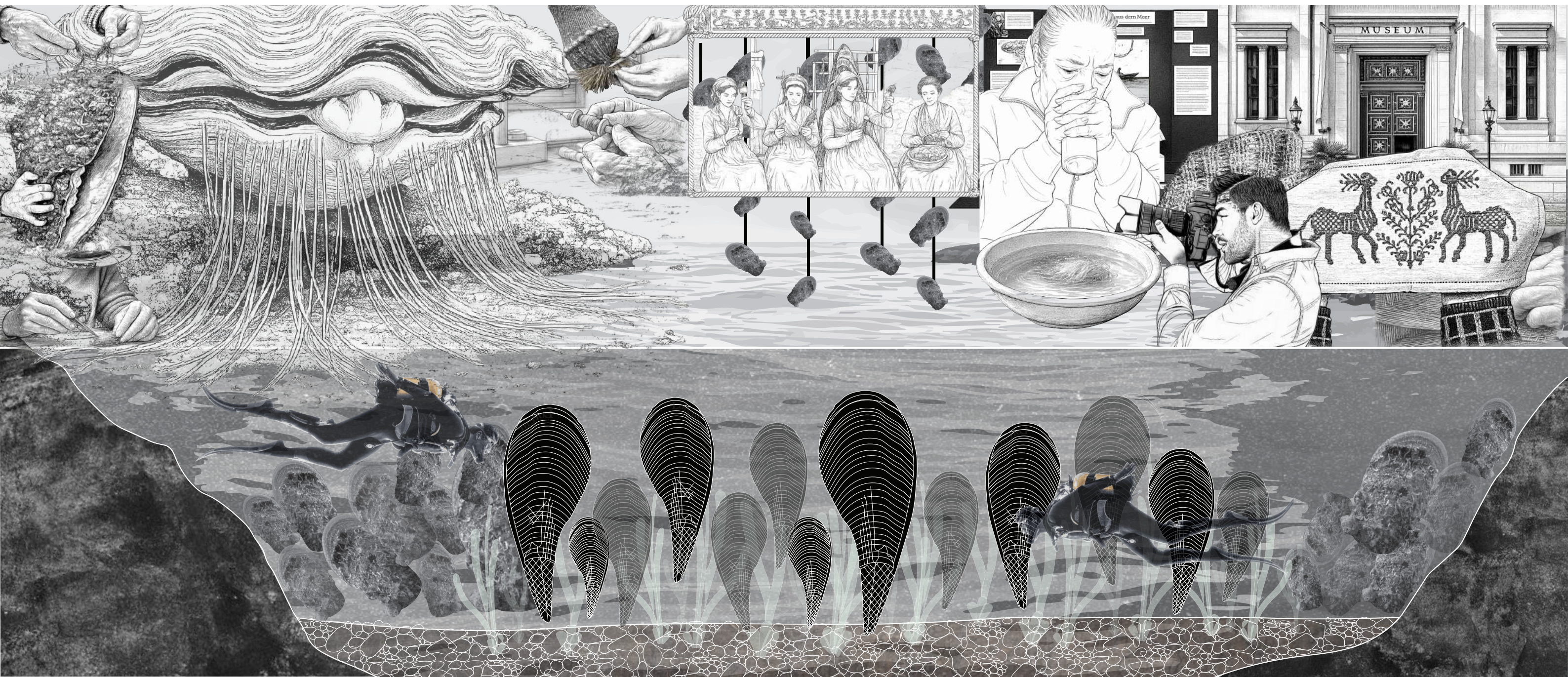


# Heritage

UNESCO's recognition logic centers on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, meaning the embodied knowledge, hand skills, oral transmission, and community identity embedded in a practice rather than the material object itself. Sea silk qualifies within this framework because it represents highly specialized manual techniques, intergenerational knowledge, and a deep relationship between Mediterranean coastal communities and the marine environment. Institutional recognition is often intensified when a practice is considered fragile or at risk, which in this case is tied both to the declining number of practitioners and the endangerment of *Pinna nobilis*. If the species were not threatened and the craft were widespread, it might remain a regional artisanal tradition rather than a globally recognized heritage practice, suggesting that crisis and rarity play a significant role in triggering international heritage status.









**Thank you!**

*Bin Tang*