Interspecies Picnic
Making Learnscapes

The Well School | Radical Pedagogy

GSAPP, Columbia University
New York, NY | Fall 2024
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Collaborators:
Adi Klein
Martina Hollmann

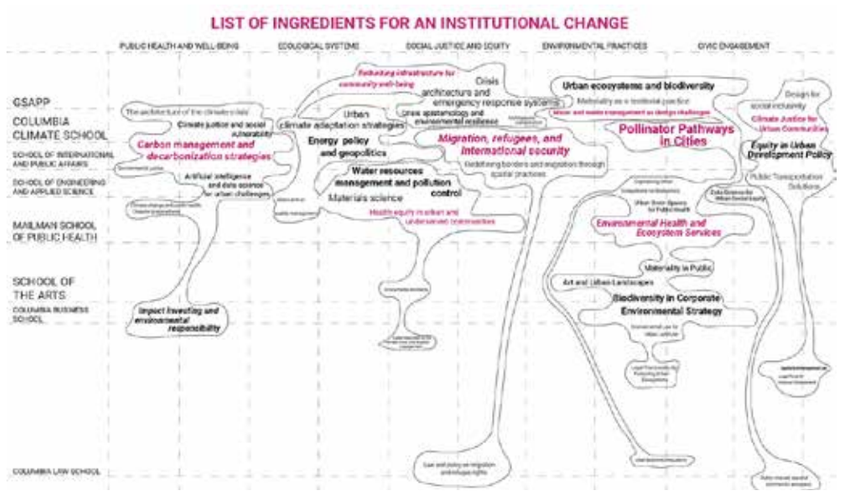
Mapping Landscape

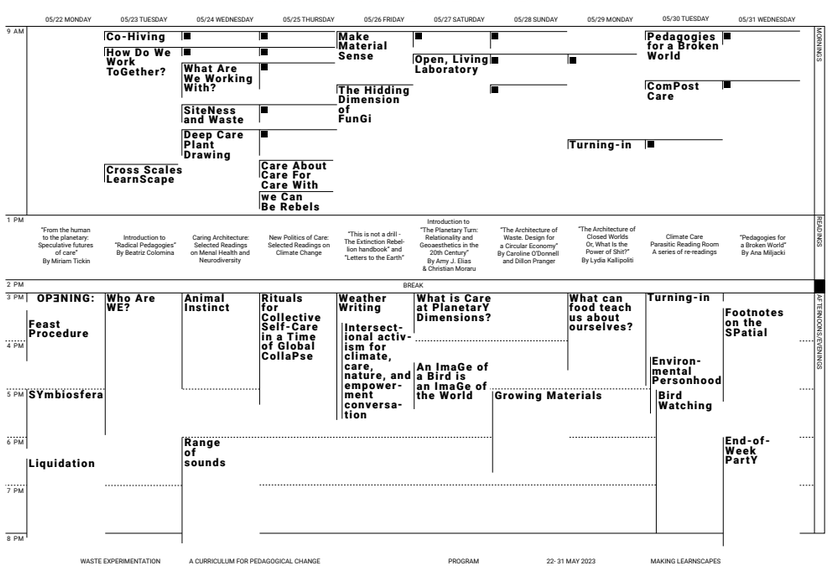
Architecture pedagogy has evolved slowly since its beginnings in the rapidly changing world. In schools, the work environment and settings often lead to a lot of stress, deeply affecting mental health and well-being. But does it have to be this way?

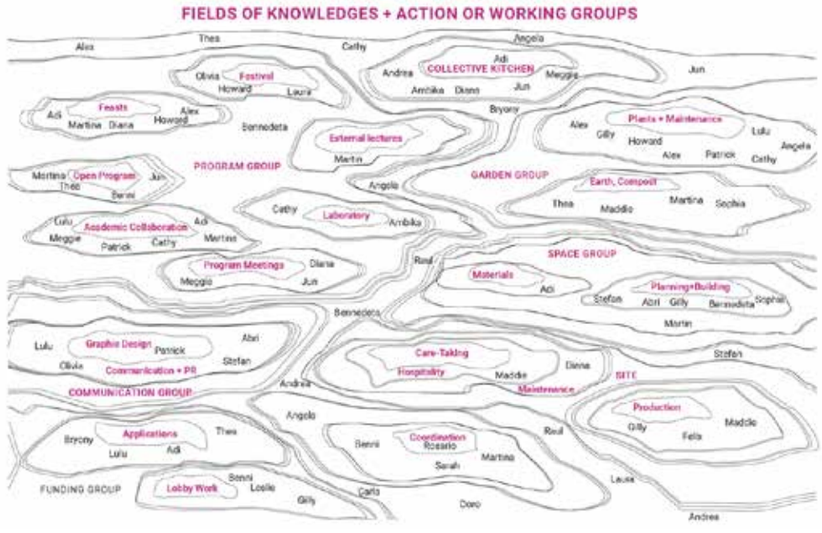
Our new program reimagines education as a tapestry of collaboration, weaving connections into a learnscape where everything is interconnected. By celebrating shared moments of joy, this new setting enhances emotional well-being and deepens our relationship with the earth beneath our feet.

Final Review Presentation Board

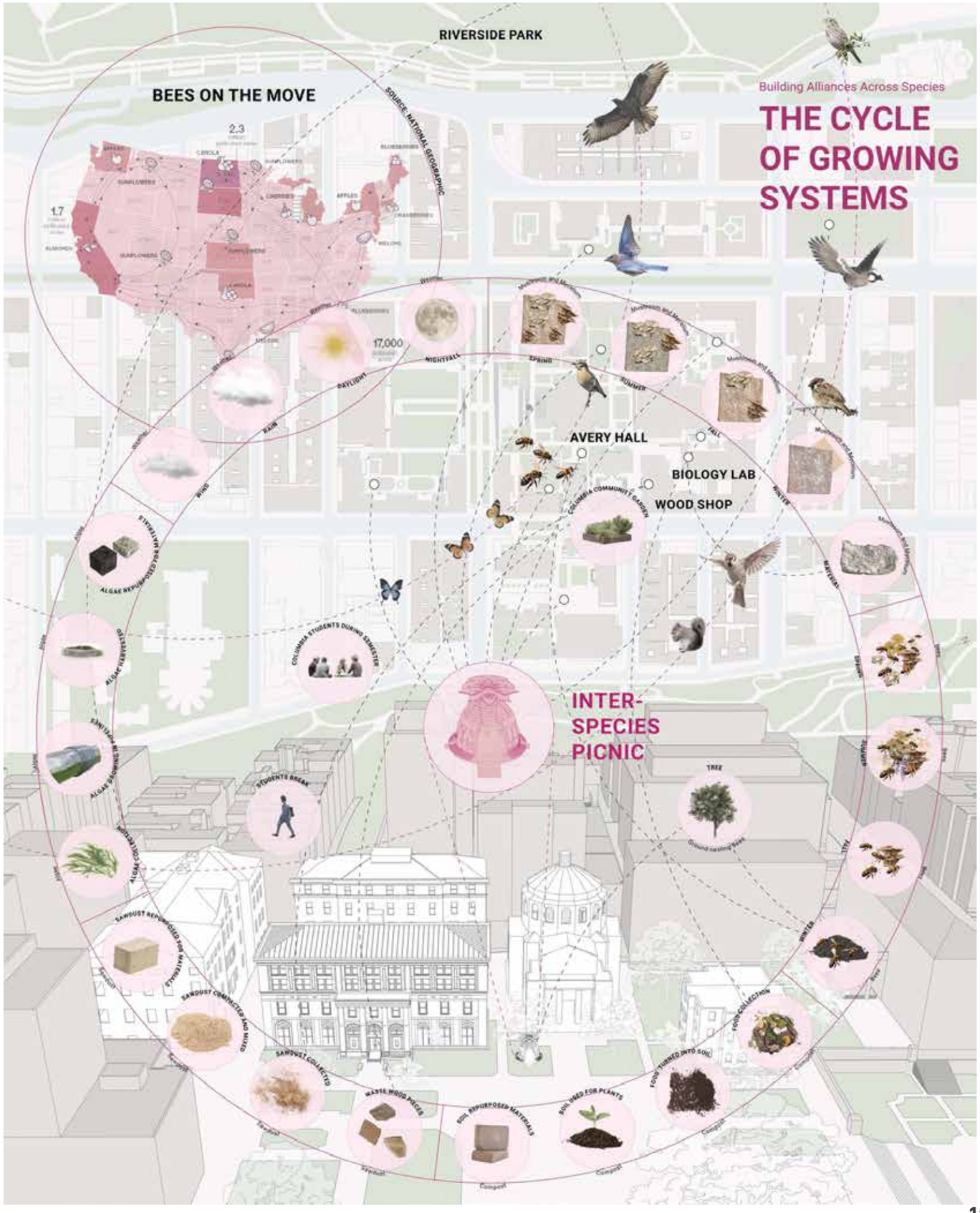
New Pedagogy - Learning by Doing







Pedagogy Example - Research



RADICAL PEDAGOGY TIMELINE

WHAT happened WHEN?

FOSTERING ENVIRONMENTAL CARE

MAY

1st RADICALS MEETING

RAISING TRANSSCALAR QUESTION

RESEARCH

JUNE

SPRING

- Siteness and Waste
- Co-hiving
- Animal Instinct
- The Hidden Dimension of Fungi
- Compost Care
- Living Lab
- What Are Algae?

JULY

INTERDISCIPLINARY LAB

AUGUST

(Break)

SUMMER

How can we document THIS?

SEPTEMBER

Experimenting with Materials

Materials such as food waste, wood, mycelium, and soil are found all around the campus. The students start questioning materials cycles. These materials are processed in the lab to create new ones.

Community Building Device

Structure pieces crafted at the wood shop, the kitchen pieces crafted from reclaimed wood, everyone invited to participate in the construction process of the device.

OCTOBER

FALL

A Garden For a New Radical Learning

- Collective kitchen
- Learning by doing
- Gathering space
- Meditating
- Experiencing Senses
- Being one with nature

What if waste isn't the end of the story?

#FUTURES

#MODELLING

Transcultural Collective

NOVEMBER

Seasonal Adaptability

Preparing the device for fall and winter activities

DECEMBER

(Break)

JANURARY

WINTER

Its flexibility allows it to adapt to different seasons, making it a versatile and dynamic space.

The device travels around the campus depending on weather conditions and the specific gathering needs.

FABRUARY

Space to find care and intimacy

The winter season, cold and breezy, is filled with fabrics and cushions that create a warm atmosphere, while wind spinners generate electricity to power small, warm lights both around and inside the device, ensuring it operates effectively during winter.

MARCH

(Spring Break)

FOOD for thoughts

WE WERE HERE

SUNSET PARK MATERIAL RECOVERY FACILITY

472 2nd Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11232

APRIL

Collaborative Work

CARE FOR CARE WITH CARE ABOUT

This device serves as a framework for growing materials, which are then used to create future devices. The device can either remain unchanged, adapt, or be disassembled, allowing the materials to return to the earth. Meanwhile, new participants arriving in May will contribute to the expansion and development of a new device.

The device itself serves as an example of future architectural production.

Living in harmony with nature, appreciating the ecosystem in all its diversity, acting as gardener and guardian.

Where to gather, meditate, or have a picnic.

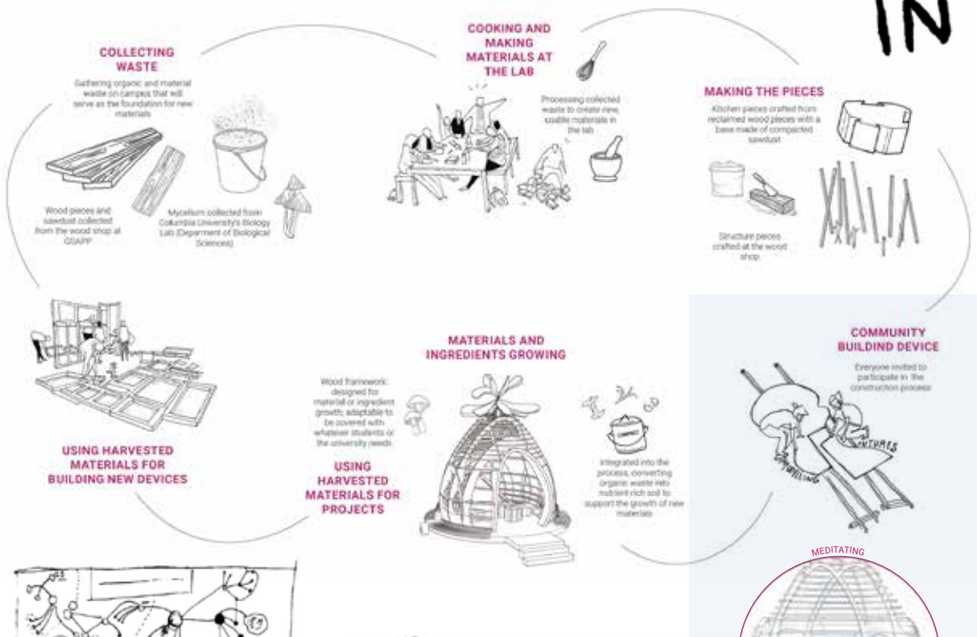
Calling into the new

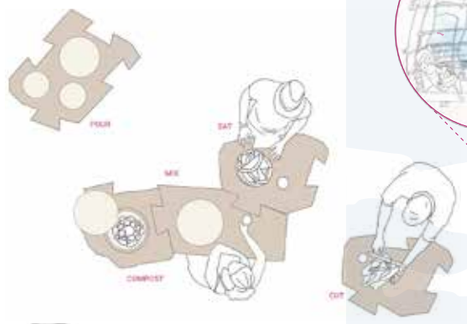
RADICAL PEDAGOGY

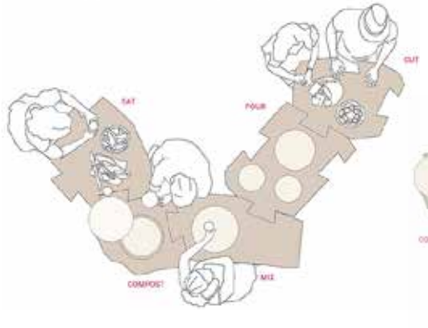
Cathy Yinhui Dong yinhuid21@gmail.com

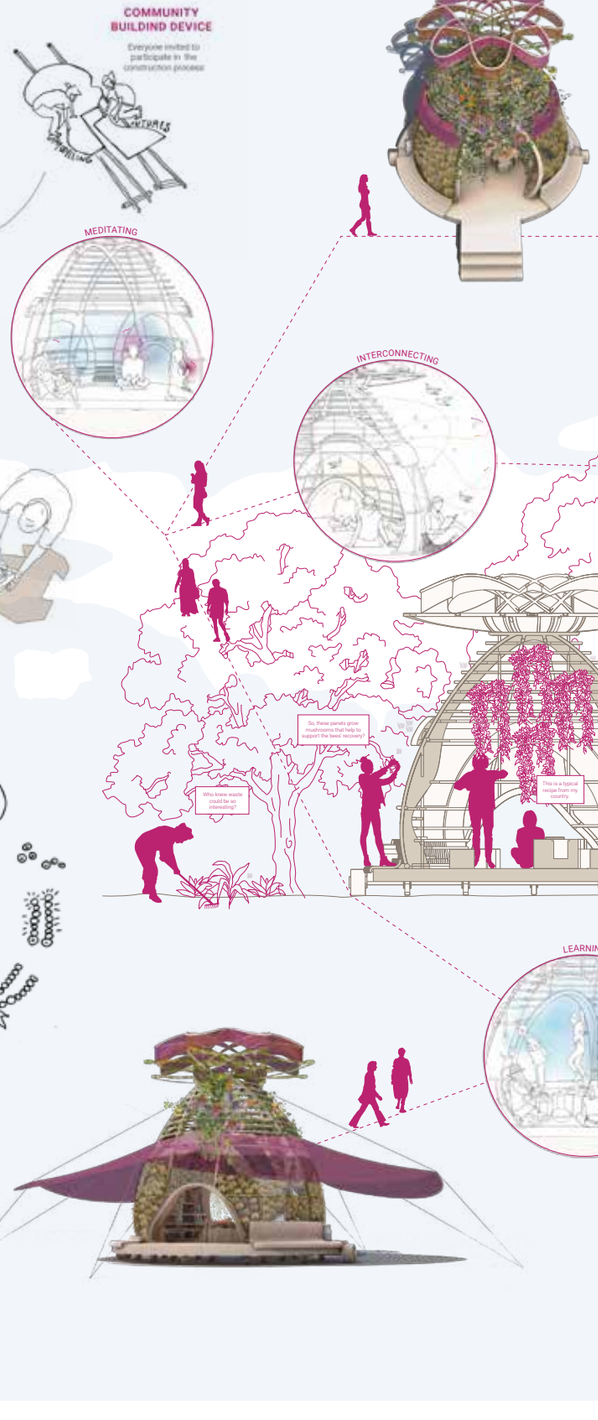
INTERSPECIES PICNIC

MAKING AS LEARNING









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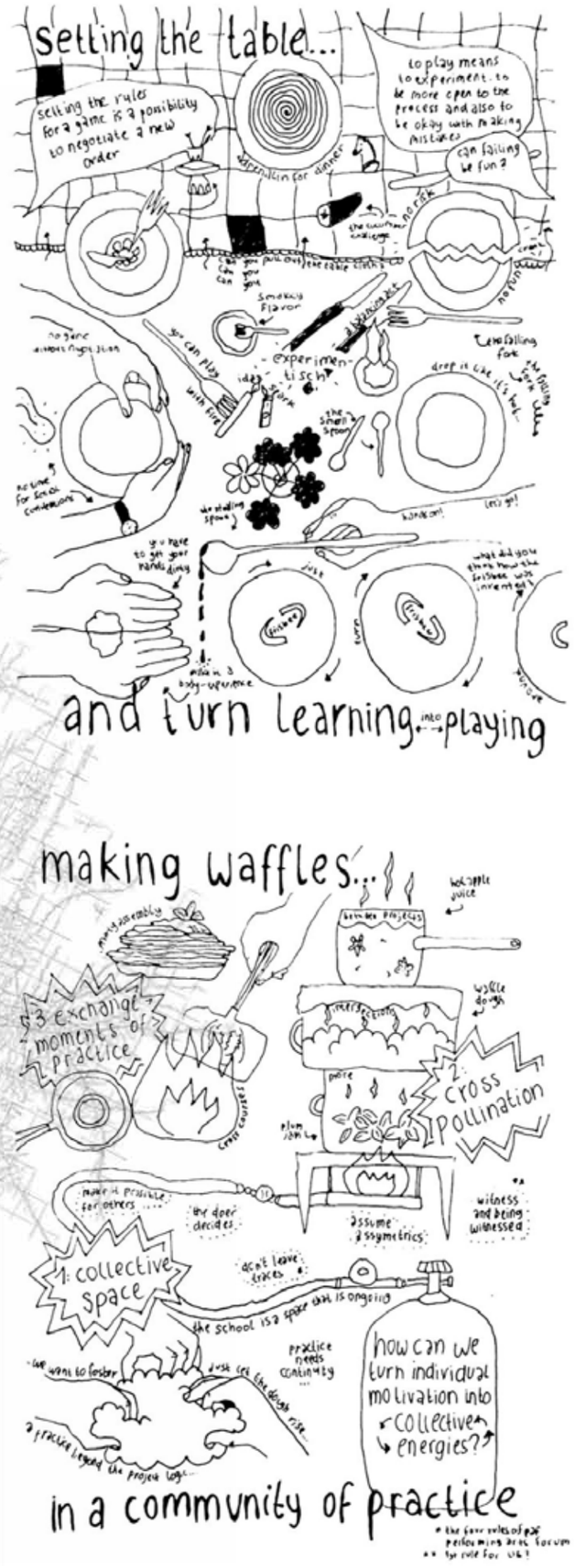

setting the table...
setting the rules for a game is a possibility to negotiate a new order
to play means to experiment. to be more open to the process and also to be okay with making mistakes
experimen- ti sch
and turn learning into playing
making waffles...
53 exchange moments of practice
cross pollination
1: collective space
how can we turn individual motivation into collective energies??
in a community of practice

Immersive Landscapes
Artificial Images

Cinematic Architecture | Complicit Images
Navigating Post-Digital Media Ecologies

Multiple Sources | Summer 2024
Profs. Michiel Helbig & Corneel Cannaerts

Collaborators:
Jasmine Hong
Victoria Chen

Project Video:

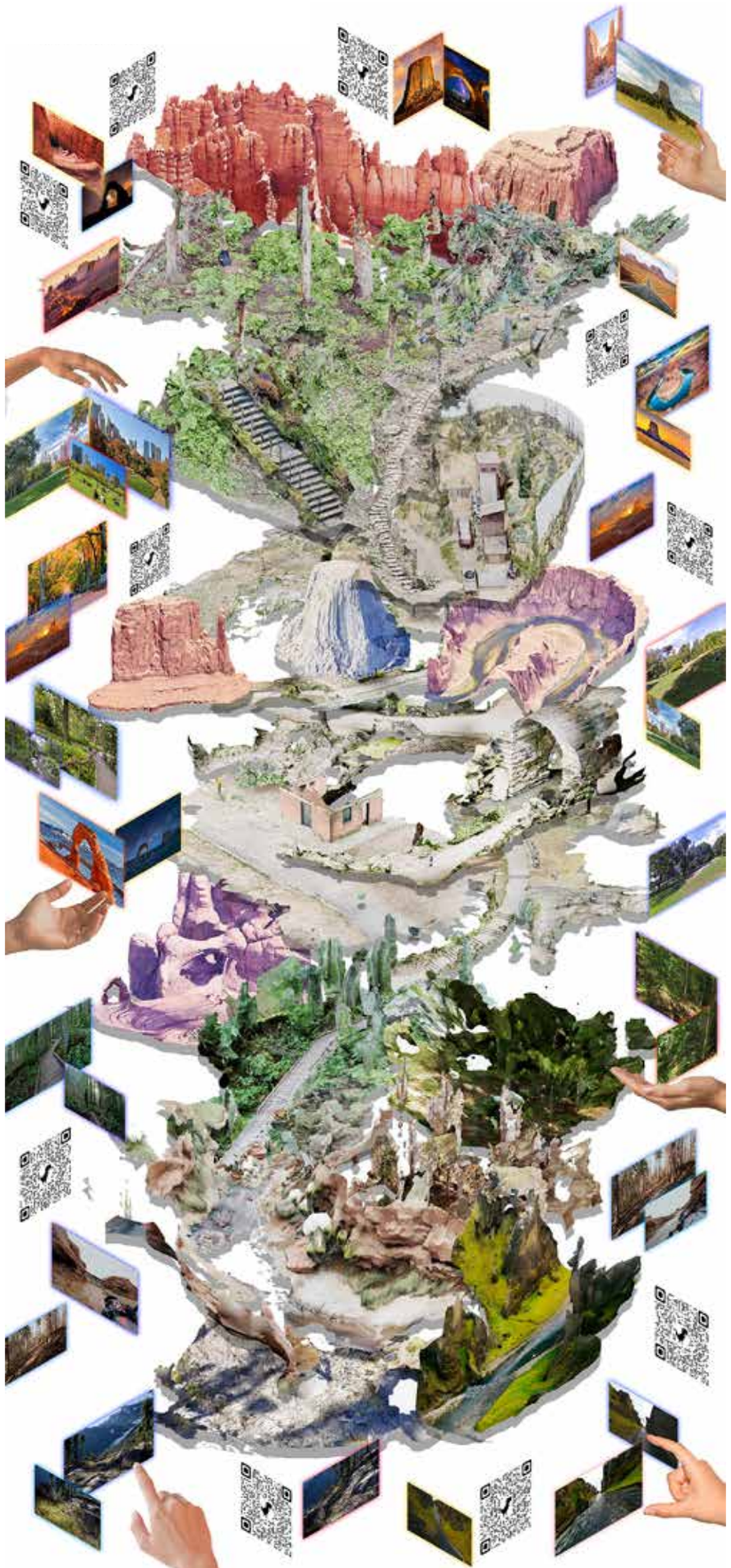
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJ95hCyTMeo

The current ecological crises urge us to rethink the foundational dichotomy between natural and artificial, the grown and the made, and the wild and the controlled. This blurring of seemingly opposite notions is further strengthened through the developments of digital technologies, which work across scales, questioning the difference between local and global, interior and exterior… Going beyond dichotomies opens up the in-between as a messy, fertile ground for novel hybrids. In our field guide, we looked at this blurred boundary between natural and artificial through the lens of landscapes. The notion of landscapes refers to the territory and the image, i.e., the view produced by this terrain, whether observed in person or captured in a medium such as a painting or photograph. Through digitalization, architectural images become more and more artificial, i.e., they are not drawings constructed line by line but are images synthesized through algorithmic processes. We looked at landscapes in the continuum between artificial and natural and how they are imagined physically and digitally in several media, such as modeling and rendering software, image editing, game engines, generative AI, and virtual and augmented reality.

Landscape 001.01 - Reserved Landscape | Navajo Loop Trail

In contemporary societies, there is a widespread perception that natural and green environments are inherently better and healthier. People seek out nature to retreat from their stressful daily routines and actively design and construct artificial landscapes within urban environments to foster a connection with nature—the traditional distinctions between natural and artificial blur as landscapes become increasingly dominated by human and machine interactions. Landscapes are no longer natural or cultural entities but have evolved into digital landscapes - vast, engineered eco-technical terrains assembled, maintained, and imagined through computational processes. Simultaneously, the growing integration of technology into our daily routines amplifies ecological crises. When picturesque natural scenes are posted on social media platforms such as Instagram, they attract crowds of visitors to nature, placing excessive pressure on the natural environment. Over time, specific iconic perspectives become widely photographed and sought after, attracting people to visit nature primarily for these particular viewpoints.

However, human activities contribute to climate change, pollution, and disasters. Animals lose their natural habitats, oceans are polluted by debris and chemicals, and beaches are covered with trash. National parks and preserves, such as Arches National Park and the Wave, responded to this surge, implementing lottery systems to limit the number of visitors. These systems help regulate and limit the number of visitors, thereby reducing overcrowding and minimizing the environmental impact on these fragile ecosystems.



Immersive Landscapes

Our vision for this project involves a future where artificial images contribute to social transformation and environmental stewardship. Advancements in media technologies, such as augmented reality, virtual reality, and other cutting-edge technologies, allow us to extend our spatial experiences. We explore how media ecologies can assist nature conservation by establishing novel boundaries between human activities and natural habitats. Rather than physically entering landscapes, humans interact with and appreciate nature through digital recreations and simulations in virtual spaces.

We collected resources through 3D scanning, scrapping Google Maps data, and creating data clouds from video footage, games, drones, 360 cameras, etc. The data found were then used to reconstruct new landscapes and envision the proposed virtual experiences. These landscapes' carefully selected sources and locations illustrate contemporary human-influenced environments. These advanced interpretations of "Imagined Landscapes" question traditional representations and expand the idea through modern digital media's immersive, interactive, and customizable capabilities. The resulting “Imagined Landscapes” are technical images that can be immersively experienced in response to the need to explore and discover landscapes.

Google Maps

Landscape 001 - Reserved Landscape

3D Scannings

Landscape 002 - Constructed Landscape

3D Models

Landscape 003 - Staged Landscape

Video Game Scenes

Landscape 004 - Simulated Landscape

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Landscape 003
Staged Landscape

Landscape 004
Simulated Landscape

Project Statement

This project began unexpectedly with a YouTube commercial. In it, a young woman said, “People think those of us with schizophrenia can’t have a life. But we can.” That line stuck with me. I realized how little I knew about schizophrenia beyond clinical definitions and stereotypes. Out of curiosity, I started researching. What I found was not just a mental health condition, but a systemic failure to support people at one of the most fragile and formative times of their lives.

Schizophrenia often begins in a person’s early 20s, a period already filled with transitions: moving out, starting jobs, forming identity. The onset of schizophrenia during this time can be disorienting not only for the individual but also for their caregivers, who are suddenly navigating a new reality. This project is for both the individual navigating the early onset of schizophrenia and the caregivers standing beside them, unsure of what to do next.

What I’ve learned is that architecture plays a quiet but influential role in shaping those early experiences. A building can feel institutional and isolating, or it can provide comfort, clarity, and a sense of control. Through design strategies like soft boundaries, proximity between support spaces, and access to sensory elements like wind, water, and vegetation, space can reduce overstimulation while still fostering autonomy.

This project isn’t just about designing a facility; it’s about shifting how we think about care, transition, and presence. I hope it prompts architects and non-architects alike to see design not as a solution to schizophrenia, but as a way to create environments that honor the dignity, complexity, and potential of those living with it.

Barrier

A barrier is not just a physical wall. It is exclusion made real. It is the locked door, the unspoken rule, the quiet isolation. It is knowing that no matter where you stand, you are on the outside looking in.

Fewer barriers make space more continuous. Thresholds widen, steps soften, and sightlines stretch farther. Boundaries remain but no longer resist; they guide, filter, and allow. Walls become transitions rather than stops. Movement flows without pause, and spaces begin to speak to one another. The environment is no longer divided; it connects.

Disorganization

Disorganization is the loss of order, not just in space but also in thought. Actions feel disconnected from intention. The world moves unpredictably, and nothing stays in place, not even time.

Space begins to hold itself together, causing less disorganization. Paths emerge where there was once chaos. Rooms speak with clarity: this is for rest, that is for gathering. Walls no longer press in; they guide. Light moves with intention. Boundaries soften, but they hold. The world, once scattered, begins to map itself gently around the body.

Detachment

Detachment is a numb, weightless drift, like floating just outside of reality. The world continues, but you are no longer part of it. Words sound hollow. Movements feel automatic. Emotions fade, leaving only emptiness.

Less detachment is when space begins to resonate again. Surfaces feel real, grounded underfoot. Walls are no longer just boundaries. They hold warmth, sound, and memory. Objects regain weight, and placement starts to matter. Presence returns, slowly, as space invites engagement instead of withdrawal.

Paranoia

Paranoia is the certainty that something is wrong. That someone is watching. That danger is close, even if you can’t see it. Every glance is a warning. Every noise is a message. The world is hostile, and there is nowhere to escape.

Less paranoia is the softening of threat, not by erasing the world but by quieting its intensity. Corners no longer surveil. Sounds make sense. Space stops signaling danger and begins to hold still. Sightlines open, and surfaces settle. The environment no longer speaks in codes; it simply is.

Proximity

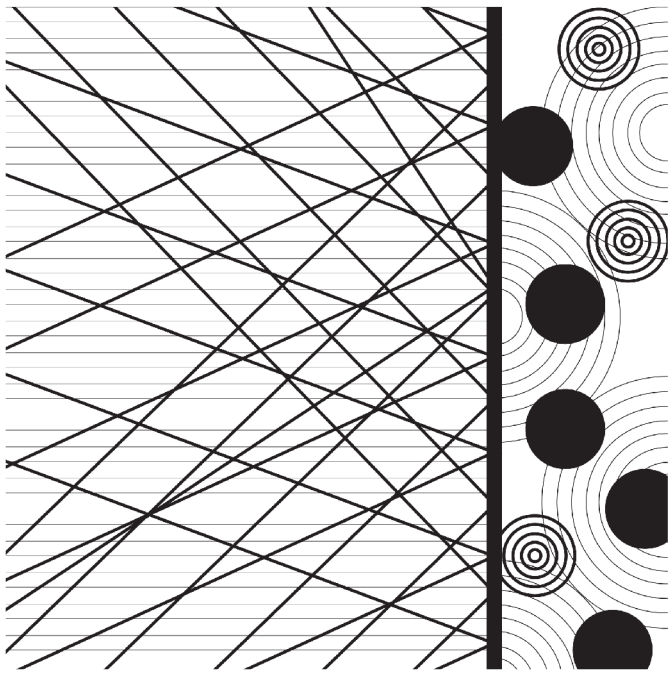
Proximity is safety. It is the warmth of familiarity and the feeling of being near something you trust. It is a room that doesn’t need to be navigated, a routine that makes sense, a space that welcomes you rather than confuses you.

Proximity is the nearness of what matters. Spaces align—rest near care, solitude near community. Accessory programs are not tucked away but folded in, visible and reachable. Paths shorten, thresholds thin. Support is close. The environment draws things closer until daily life no longer feels out of reach.

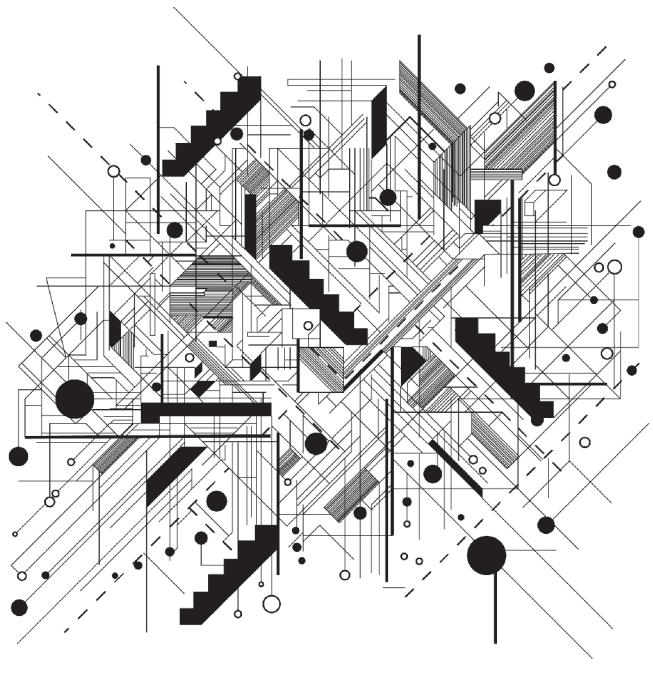
Autonomy

Autonomy is freedom, not just of movement but also of thought, decision, and control. It’s knowing you can step forward without fear and exist without restrictions. Without autonomy, you become dependent, trapped by forces you cannot control.

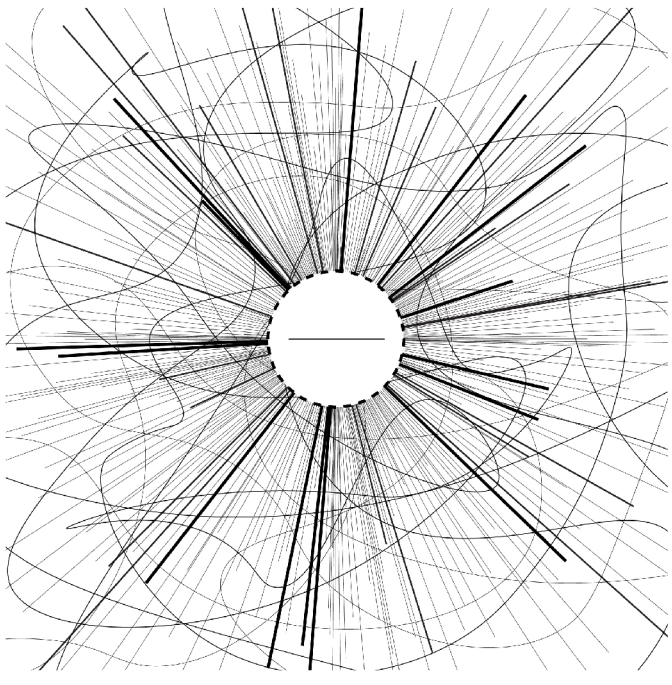
Autonomy is space responding to choice. Paths diverge without pressure. Furniture moves, light shifts, and routines shift. Boundaries exist, but they don’t confine. The body leads, and the environment follows. Control returns as space becomes something to navigate, not endure.



Barrier



Disorganization



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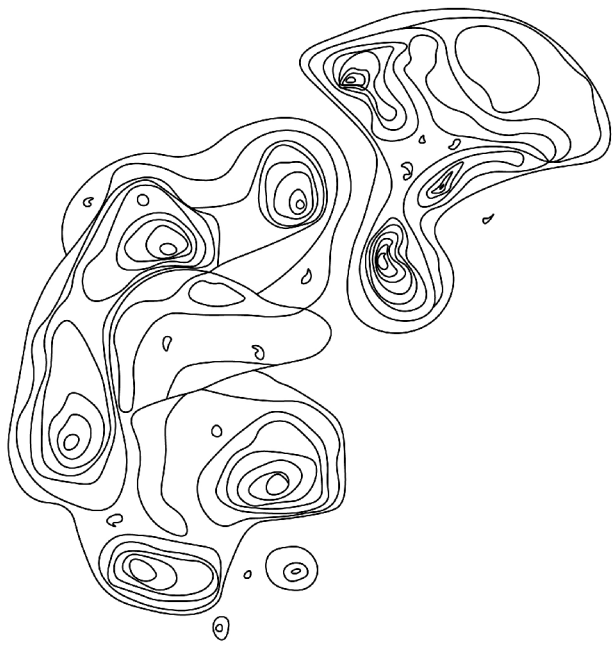
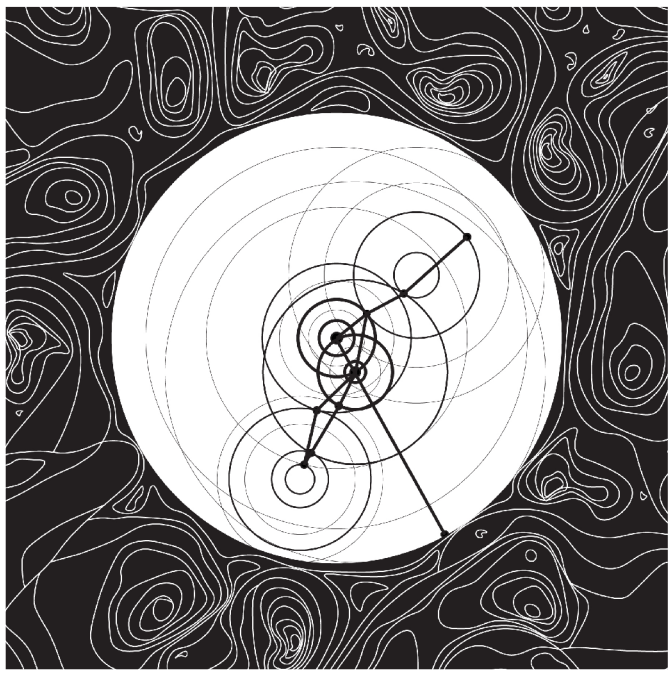
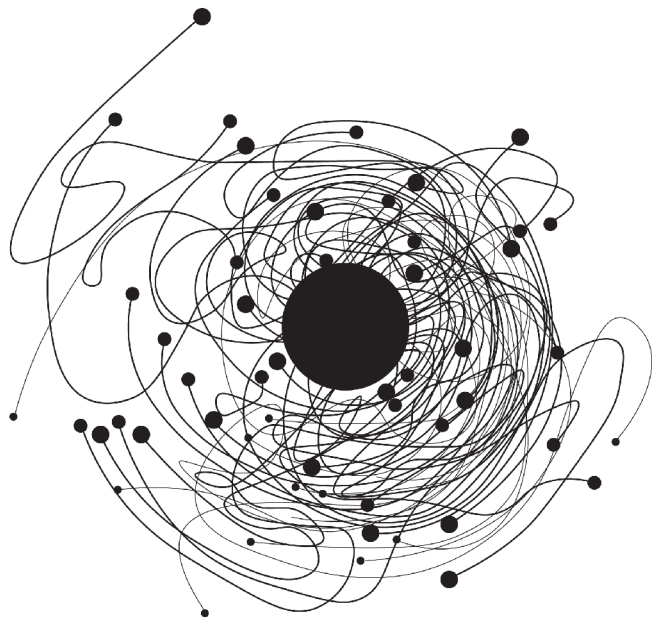


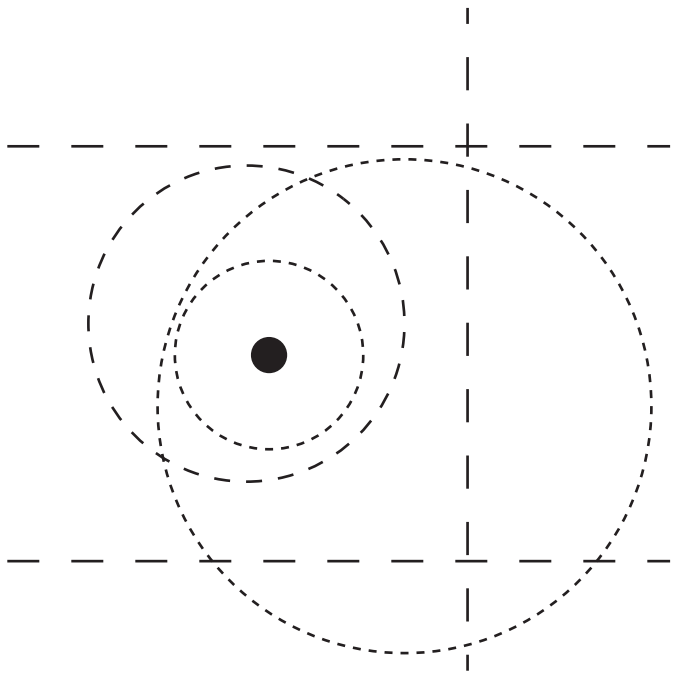
Paranoia



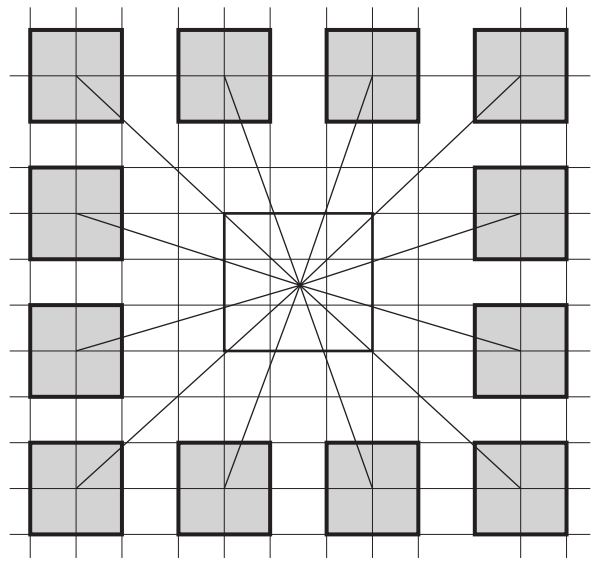
Proximity



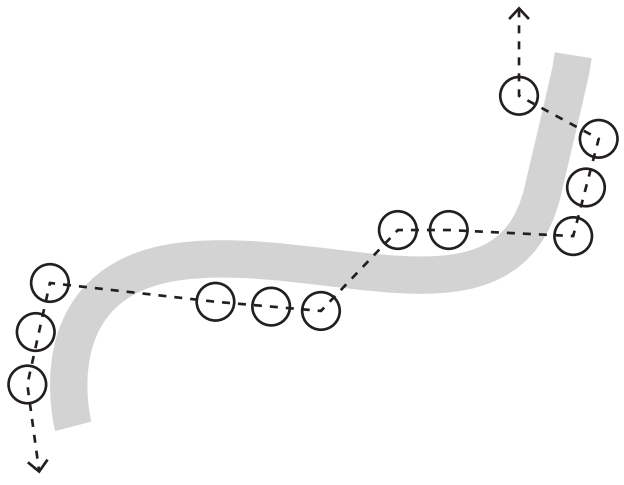
Autonomy



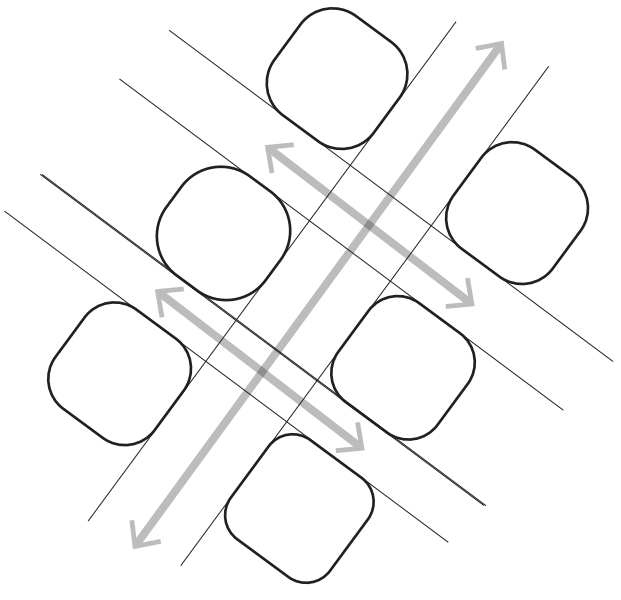
Fewer Barriers



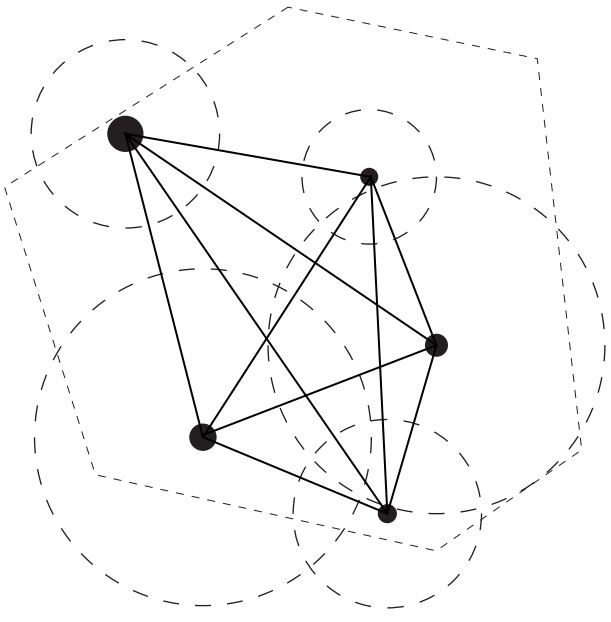
Less Disorganization



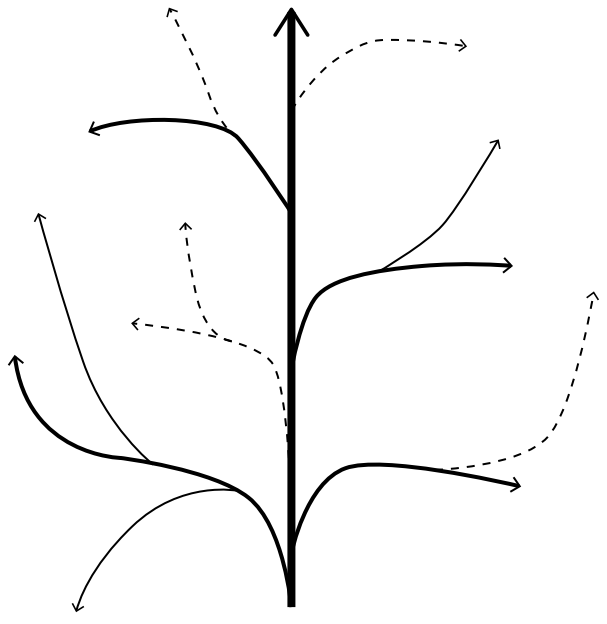
Less Detachment



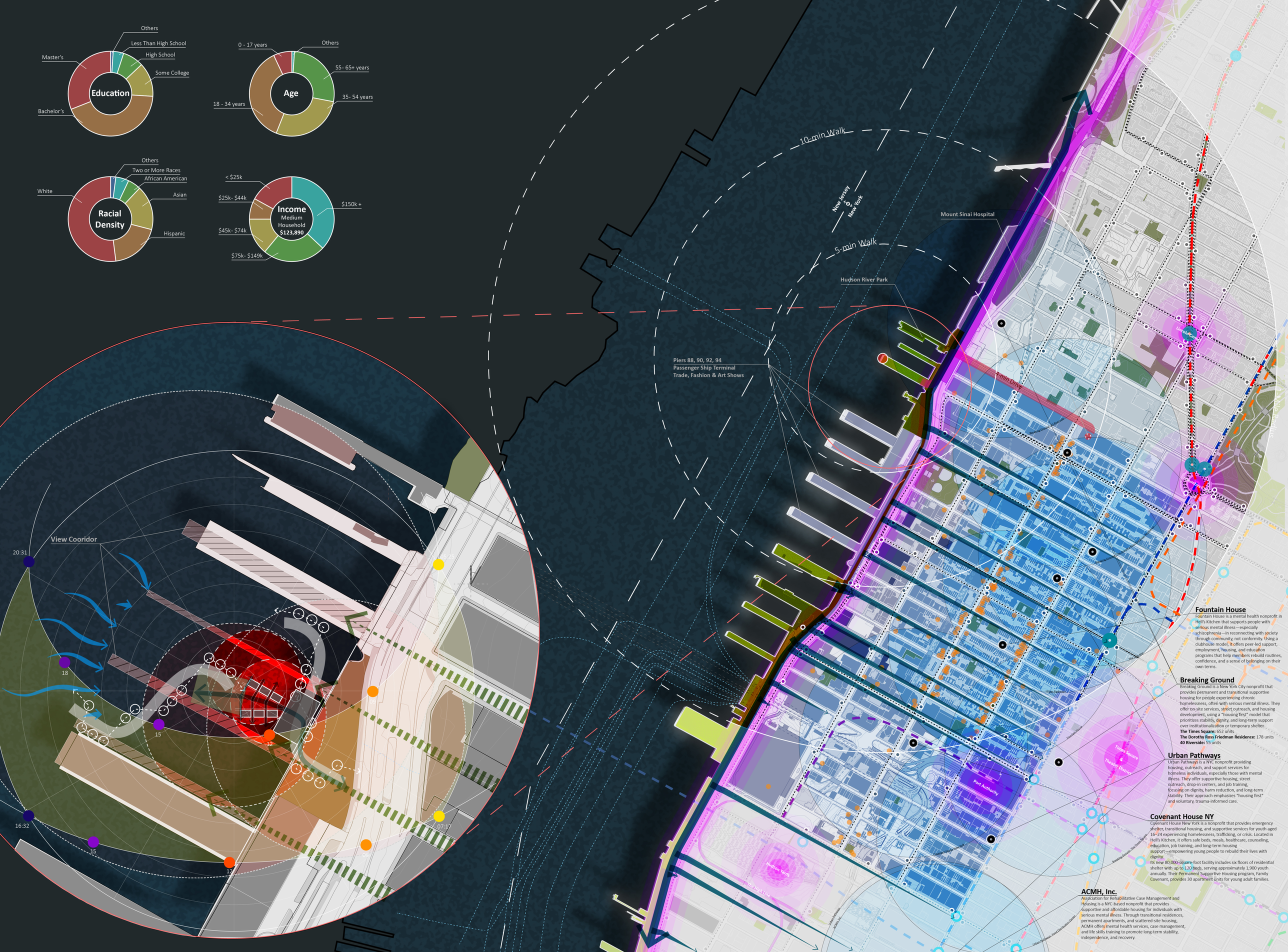
Less Paranoia



More Proximity



More Autonomy



Fountain House

Fountain House is a mental health nonprofit in Hell's Kitchen that supports people with serious mental illness—especially schizophrenia—in reconnecting with society through community, not conformity. Using a clubhouse model, it offers peer-led support, employment, housing, and education programs that help members rebuild routines, confidence, and a sense of belonging on their own terms.

Breaking Ground

Breaking Ground is a New York City nonprofit that provides permanent and transitional supportive housing for people experiencing chronic homelessness, often with serious mental illness. They offer on-site services, street outreach, and housing development, using a "housing first" model that prioritizes stability, dignity, and long-term support over institutionalization or temporary shelter.

The Times Square: 652 units
The Dorothy Ross Friedman Residence: 178 units
40 Riverside: 55 units

Urban Pathways

Urban Pathways is a NYC nonprofit providing housing, outreach, and support services for homeless individuals, especially those with mental illness. They offer supportive housing, street outreach, drop-in centers, and job training, focusing on dignity, harm reduction, and long-term stability. Their approach emphasizes "housing first" and voluntary, trauma-informed care.

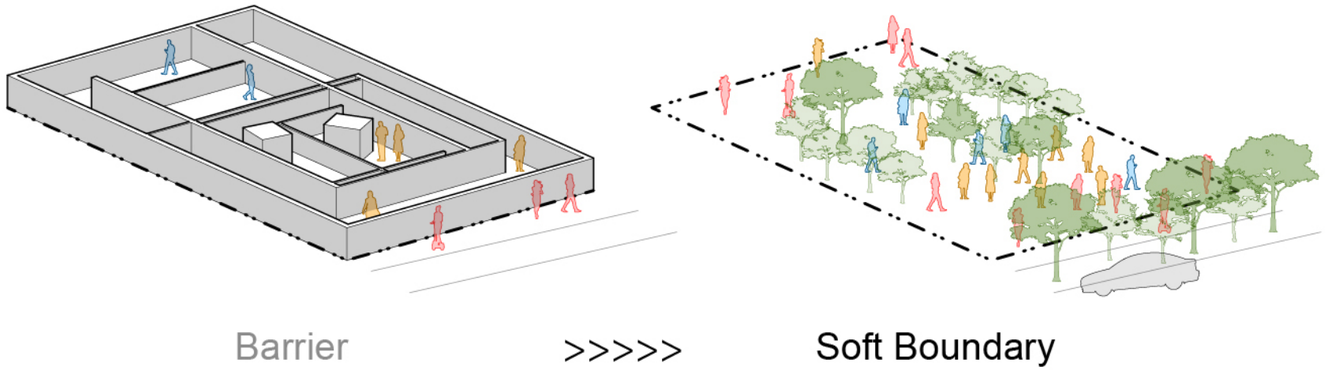
Covenant House NY

Covenant House New York is a nonprofit that provides emergency shelter, transitional housing, and supportive services for youth aged 16–24 experiencing homelessness, trafficking, or crisis. Located in Hell's Kitchen, it offers safe beds, meals, healthcare, counseling, education, job training, and long-term housing support—empowering young people to rebuild their lives with dignity.

Its new 80,000-square-foot facility includes six floors of residential shelter with up to 120 beds, serving approximately 1,900 youth annually. Their Permanent Supportive Housing program, Family Covenant, provides 30 apartment units for young adult families.

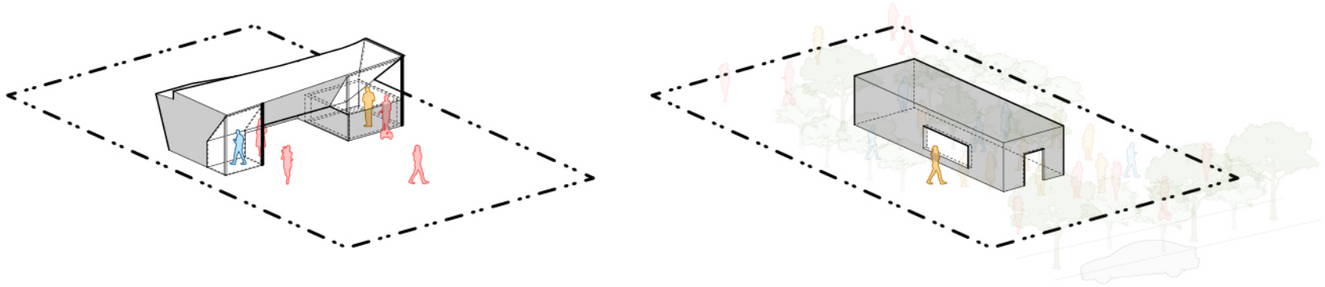
ACMH, Inc.

Association for Rehabilitative Case Management and Housing is a NYC-based nonprofit that provides supportive and affordable housing for individuals with serious mental illness. Through transitional residences, permanent apartments, and scattered-site housing, ACMH offers mental health services, case management, and life skills training to promote long-term stability, independence, and recovery.



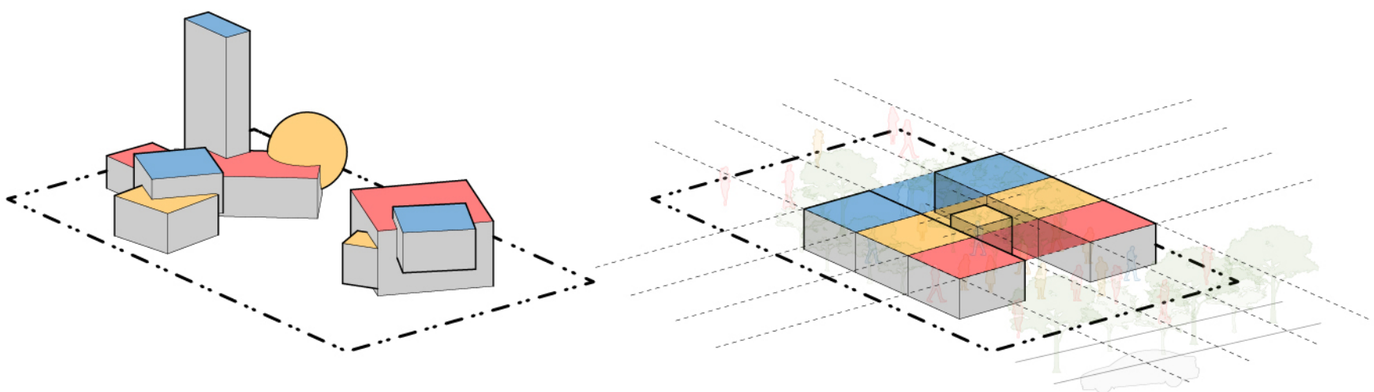
Barrier >>>>> Soft Boundary

Soft boundaries within the same zone, such as low vegetation, material changes, or lighting variations, create subtle separations without imposing physical barriers. These transitions define programmatic areas while preserving openness and clarity, making spaces feel more welcoming, less overwhelming, and easier to navigate.



Paranoia >>>>> Clarity

Avoid irregular or overly complex forms. Instead, regular shapes and predictable layouts provide visual stability and reduce spatial confusion. Soft edges, introduced through elements like lighting shifts or material changes, can still offer gentle transitions without disrupting legibility. Every space should feel expected and intentional, supporting orientation, comfort, and a sense of control.



Disorganization >>>>> Organization

The spatial layout should be clear, legible, and easy to navigate. Spaces should be grouped based on programmatic function, with intuitive relationships between zones. For individuals with schizophrenia, this organization reduces cognitive strain and fosters a sense of orientation and control within the environment.

BEACH & KAYAK LANDING
(E) KAYAK LANDING
(E) BOAT HOUSE
PICNIC
YOGA & EXERCISE
COMMUNITY GARDEN
WINTER GARDEN
MULTI-PURPOSE
FOOD TRUCKS
BED 1
BED 2
BATH 1
BATH 2
RELIEF
RETREAT
MED 95 SF
PACKAGE MAIL 95 SF
NURSE 245 SF
PSYCHIATRIC 260 SF
LAUNDRY 250 SF
HOUSING & MANAGEMENT 330 SF
VOCATION 150 SF
WORKSHOP/ PEER SUPPORT 330 SF
COMPUTER 270 SF
STOR. 75 SF
DONATION & THRIFT STORE 400 SF
CAFE 375 SF
ELEVATOR LOBBY
HOUSING STORAGE 155 SF
PANTRY 185 SF
COMMUNITY KITCHEN 95 SF
LOCKERS 50 SF
GYM 410 SF
COMM. 250 SF
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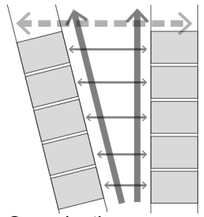
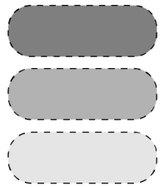
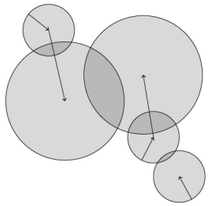


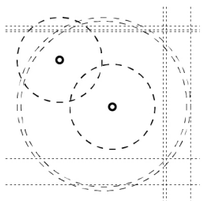
Organization



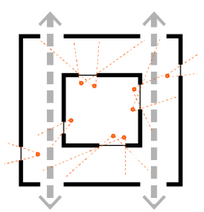
Hierarchy



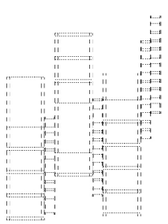
Access



Soft Boundary

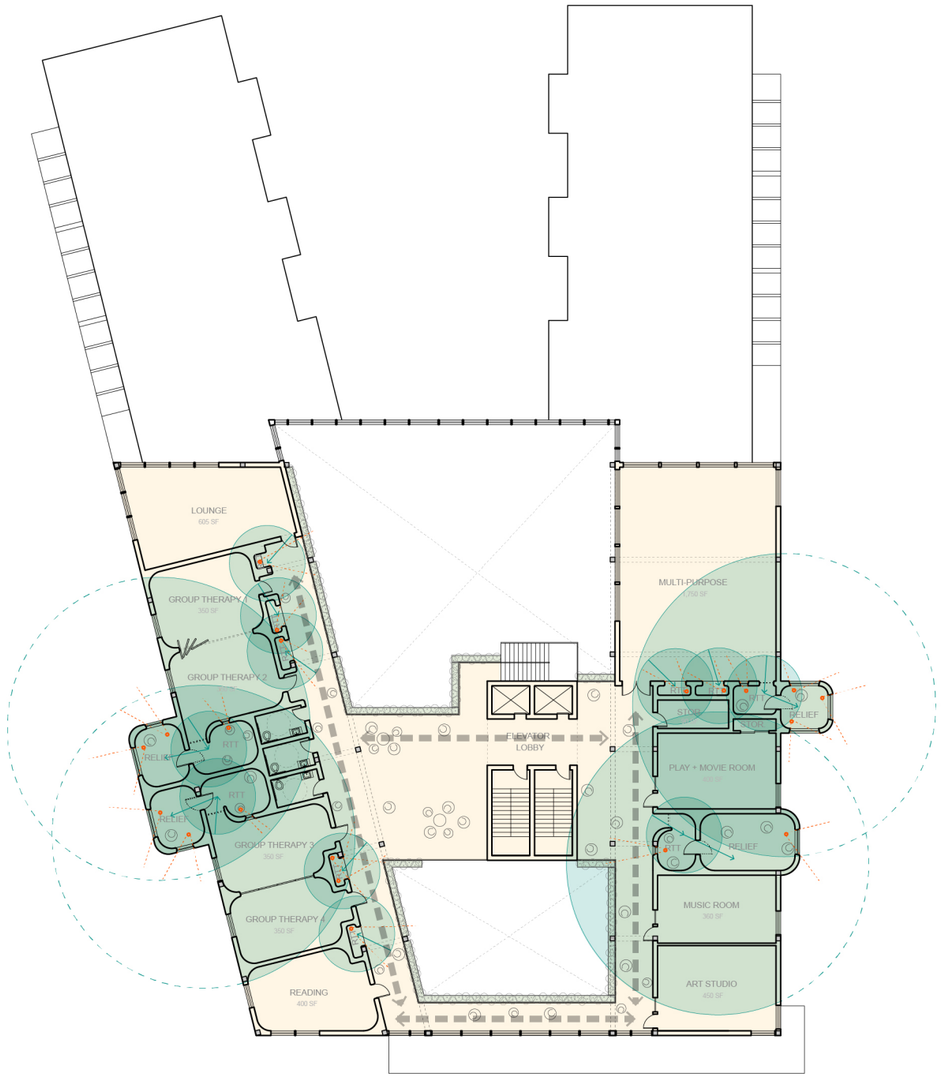


Security



Rhythm

Level 1 Plan



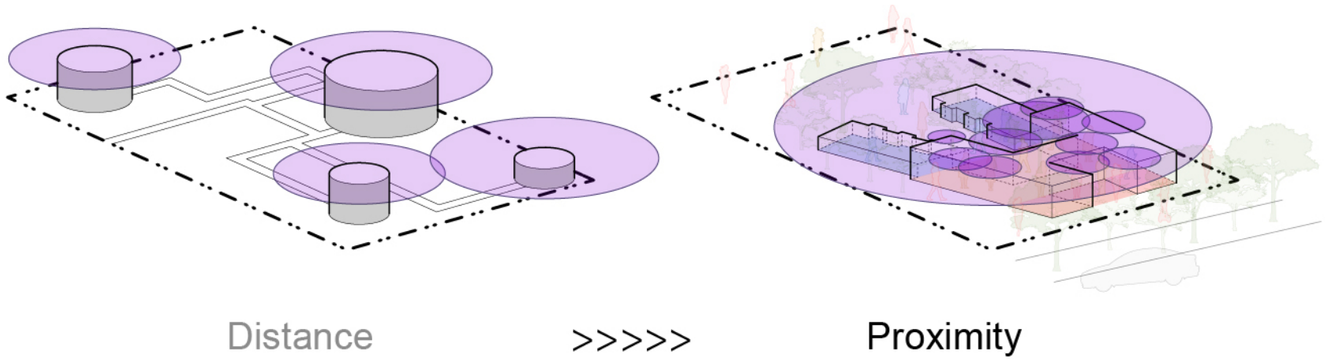
Level 2 Plan

Community / Public Suppot Hub / Semi-public Crisis Homes / Private Nature

1” = 32’ - 0”

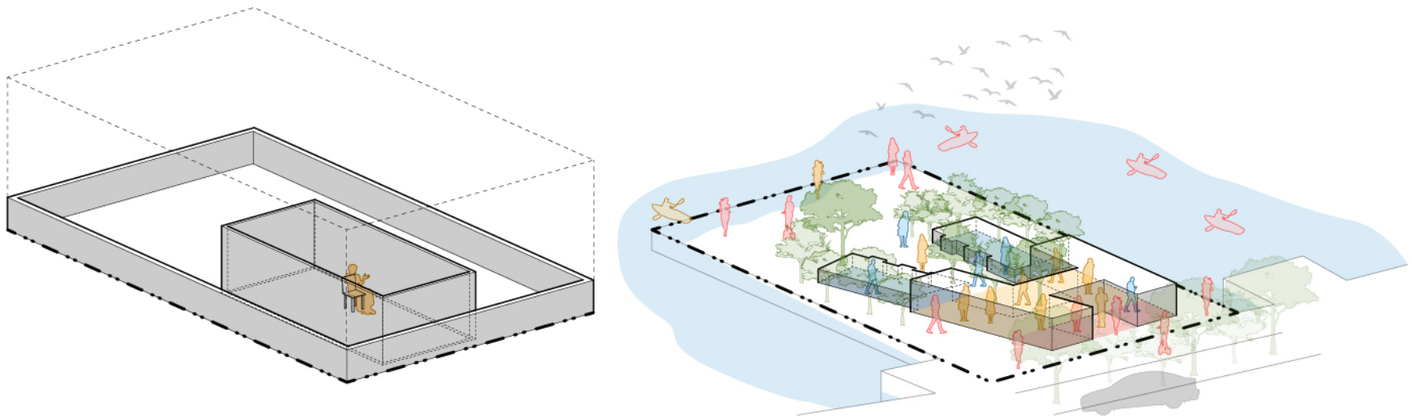
0 4 8 16 32

N



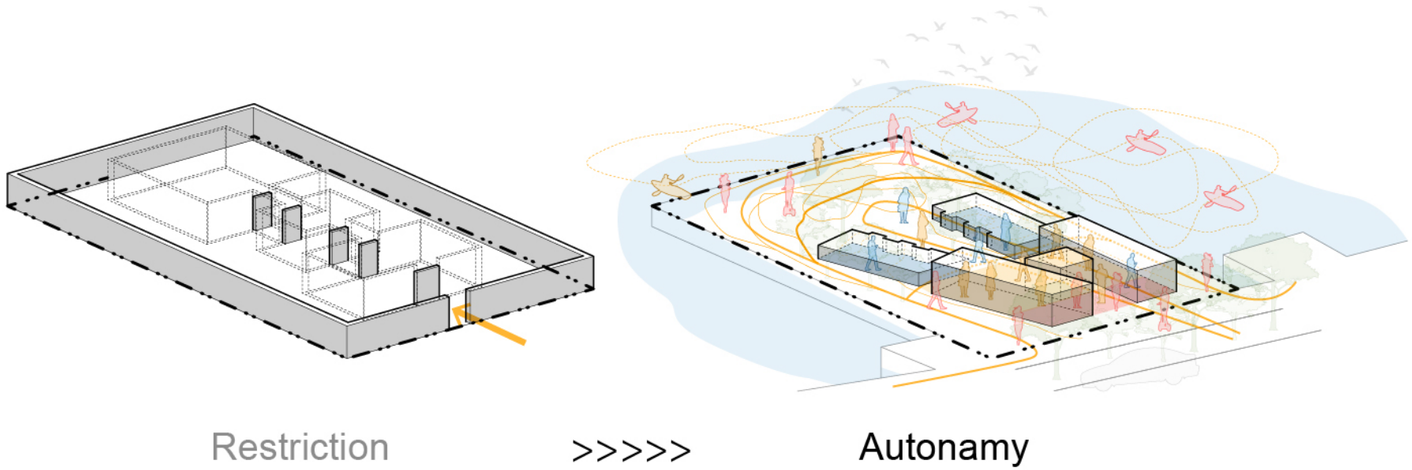
Distance >>>>> Proximity

Proximity supports both emotional comfort and ease of access. For individuals with schizophrenia, it's essential to keep related programs, especially support services, within close reach. Relief and retreat spaces should be strategically scattered and positioned adjacent to zones where overstimulation may occur, ensuring immediate access to calming environments without disconnection from the larger program.



Detachment >>>>> Connection

The project should be woven into the fabric of daily urban life to prevent detachment and social isolation. Individuals with schizophrenia should remain connected to their surrounding community while also accessing calming sensory experiences, such as the sound of plants rustling in the breeze, birdsong, and the presence of water. These gentle natural cues offer moments of grounding and emotional regulation within an urban context.



Restriction >>>>> Autonamy

The space should avoid feeling restricted or institutional. Instead, it should promote autonomy through multiple circulation paths, clear visual access, and flexible seating. These elements support choice, reduce anxiety, and offer individuals with schizophrenia a sense of control and dignity within the environment.

EDA