

# JIACHEN LIU

| PORTFOLIO

Columbia University  
GSAPP

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Kris. Jiachen Liu

M.S. Advanced Architectural Design  
2024' II GSAPP

Columbia University  
New York, NY 10027

# Architecture in Between



( Nakorn Rachasima (Korat), THAILAND )

## “Framing & Farming”

Jim Thompson Farm - Cultivating Artist Residence

**PARTNER:** Haoran Wu

**Advanced Design Studio VI |**  
PERMANENTLY in PROGRESS

**Professor.** [Rachaporn Choochuey](#)

**Assistant Professor.** [Lucy Navarro](#)

- During our exploratory trip, we observed a fascinating blend of structural columns in village houses and surrounding trees, highlighting a natural integration of architecture with the environment. This led to our design project at the Jim Thompson Farm, focusing on "Framing / Farming: Natural and Artificial." We explore the relationship between man-made architectural elements and their natural counterparts, inspired by the Thai concept that building a house is similar to growing one. Our project challenges the traditional separation between nature and architecture, proposing a symbiotic relationship where structures evolve organically within their landscape. The Jim Thompson House, known for its gardens that intertwine with architectural structures, illustrates this potential harmony. Our design for the artist residences at the farm extends these ideas into architectural forms that grow in sync with the local ecological and cultural context. We aim to explore materiality, tectonics, and spatial organization in ways that merge the natural with the artificial, embracing principles of growth, decay, and renewal. This approach seeks to create adaptable, resilient architecture that is deeply connected to its surroundings.



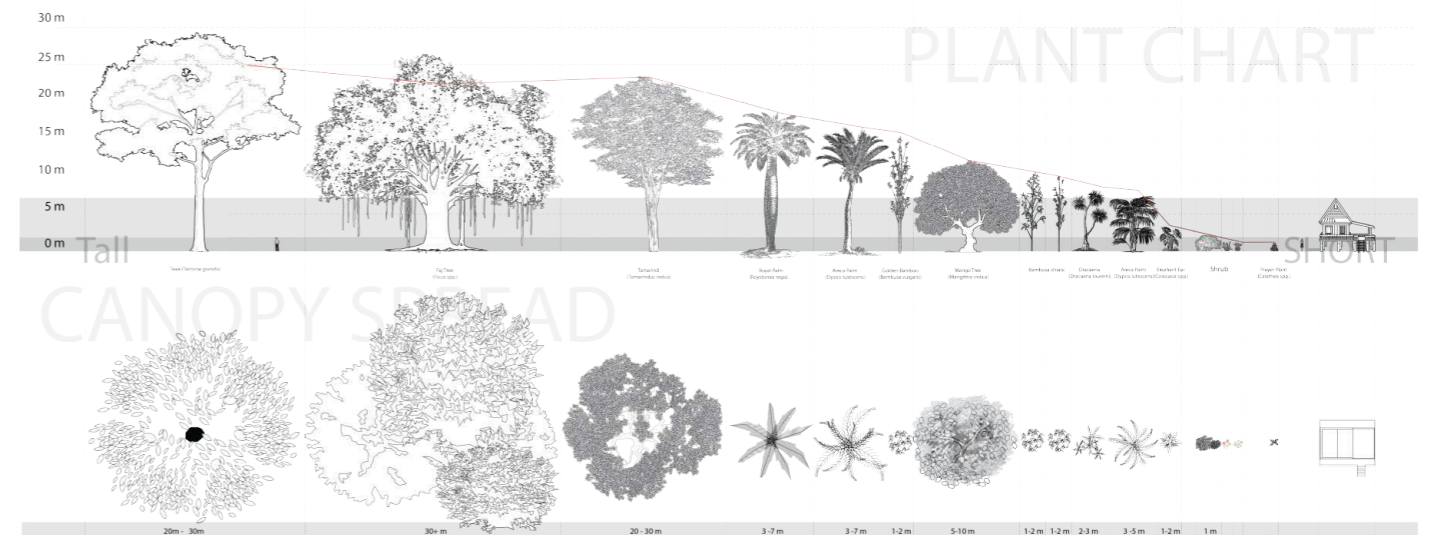
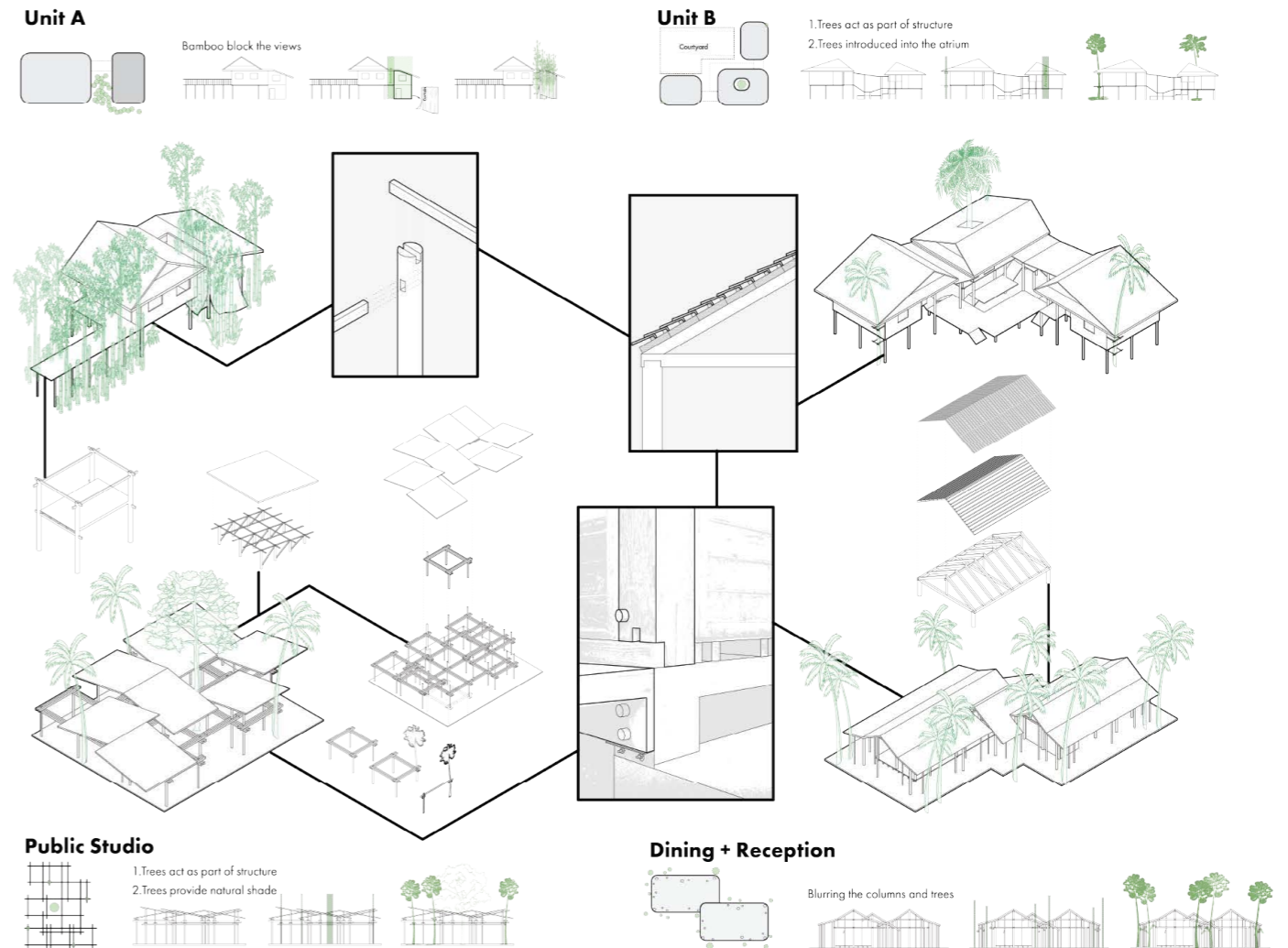
SITE PLAN  
ISAN VILLAGE & JIM THOMPSON FARM



SITE DIAGRAM



Concept Collage





## LONG SECTION & PLANS

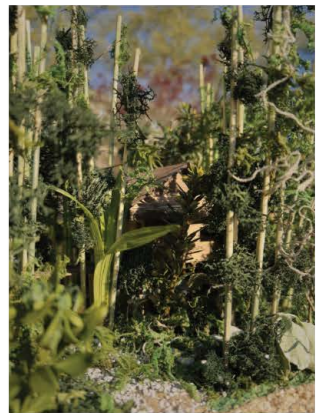




UNIT A Model Display



Screen Display



UNIT A Model Detail



( Manhattan, NY )

## “Glacial Nexus Gallery”

SubterraArctic Hub

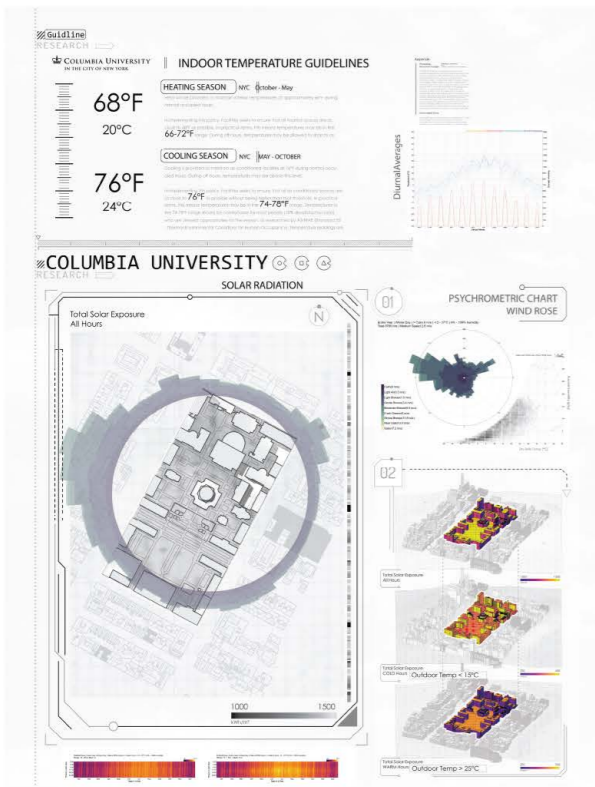
**Advanced Design Studio V |**  
MOUNTAIN AVEN HOUSE

**Professor.** Philippe Rahm

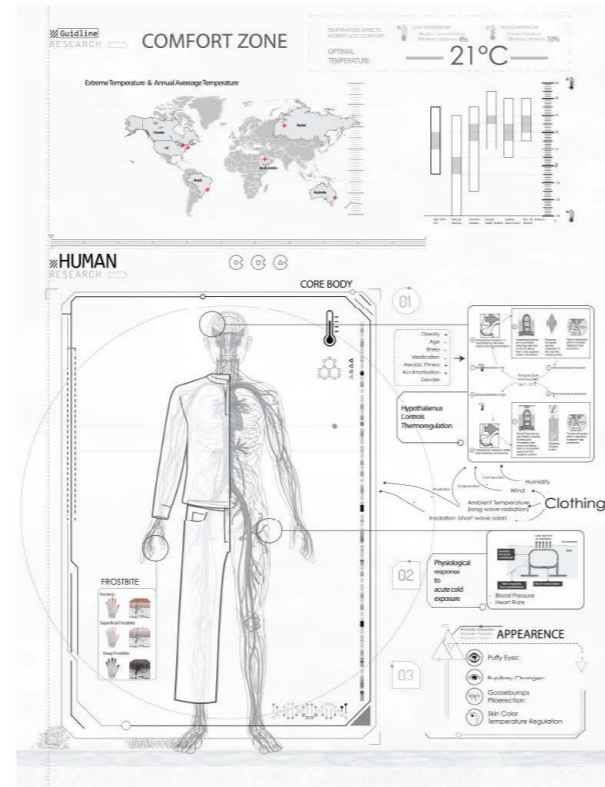
**Assistant Professor.** Mariami Maghlakelidze

- “Glacial Nexus Gallery: SubterraArctic Hub” nestled beneath the heart of Columbia University’s campus. At its core lies a captivating arctic room, meticulously crafted to replicate the awe-inspiring Arctic landscape and house a diverse array of Arctic flora. This groundbreaking project ingeniously incorporates passive cooling techniques, harnessing the principles of conduction and convection to maintain the arctic room’s temperature. It features a subterranean ice house, , and an intricate underground ventilation system that ensures a consistently cool environment within the arctic room. During the winter months, this facility efficiently stores cold energy from the snow and frigid weather, transforming it into ice reserves.

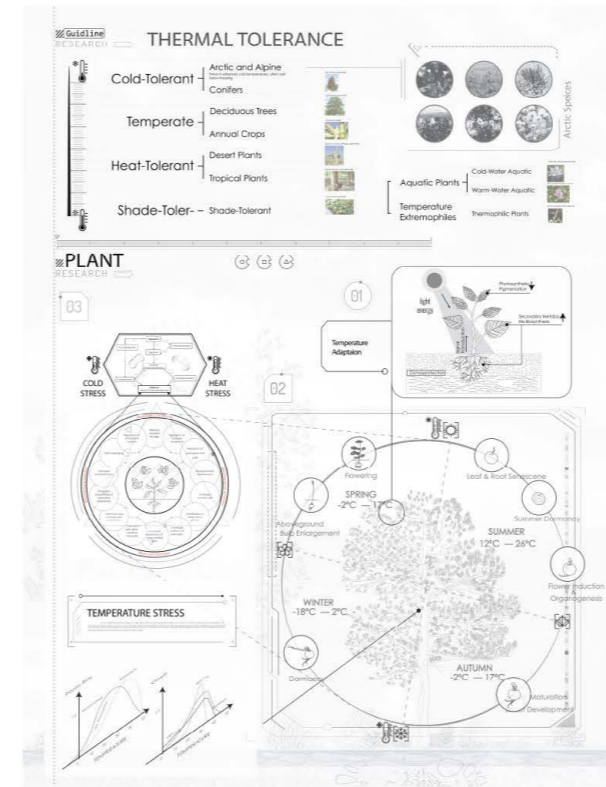
Beyond its climatic wonders, the arctic room also serves as a versatile venue, ideal for displaying plant collections, hosting art installations, and nurturing creativity. “Arctic Oasis” is a pioneering, educational, and environmentally conscious endeavor that bridges art, nature, and innovation.



Environmental analysis of Columbia University Air Temperature



Research about the atmospheric environment of humans Temperature and Humans



Research into the atmospheric of cold plants Temperature and Plants

**A. Air temperature research**

- Solar diagram
  - Most heated zone
- Wind rose diagram
  - Air direction
- Fully use the strong air to cool down the heated zone
- Hence the site is chosen.

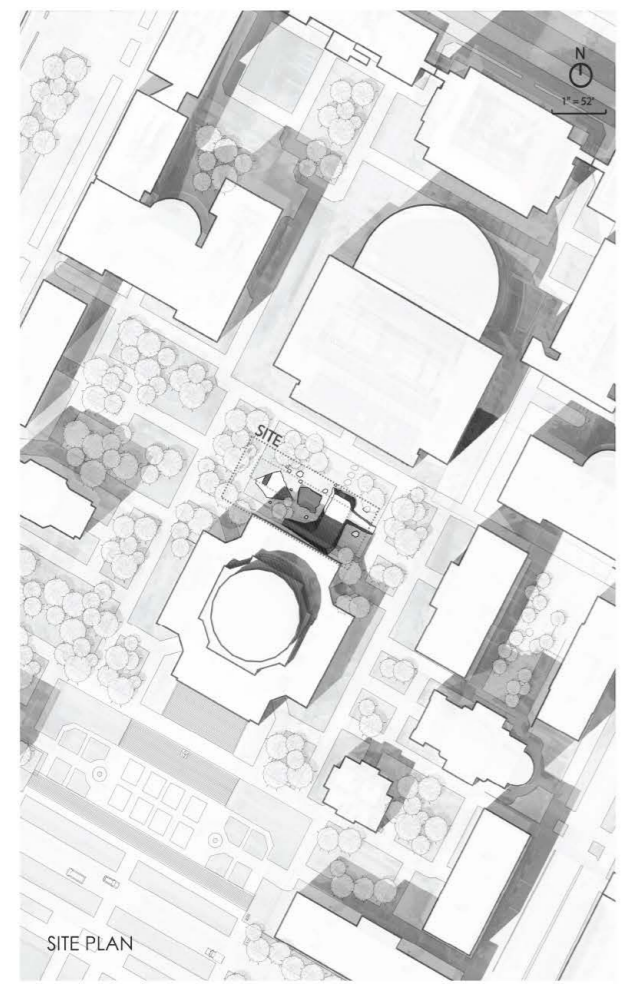
**B. Temperature and humans**

- Comfortzone
  - Official guide is 21 celcius
- Students from all around the world
  - Different city has different annual temperature and comfortzone range
- Human body temperature adjustment system

**C. Temperature and plants**

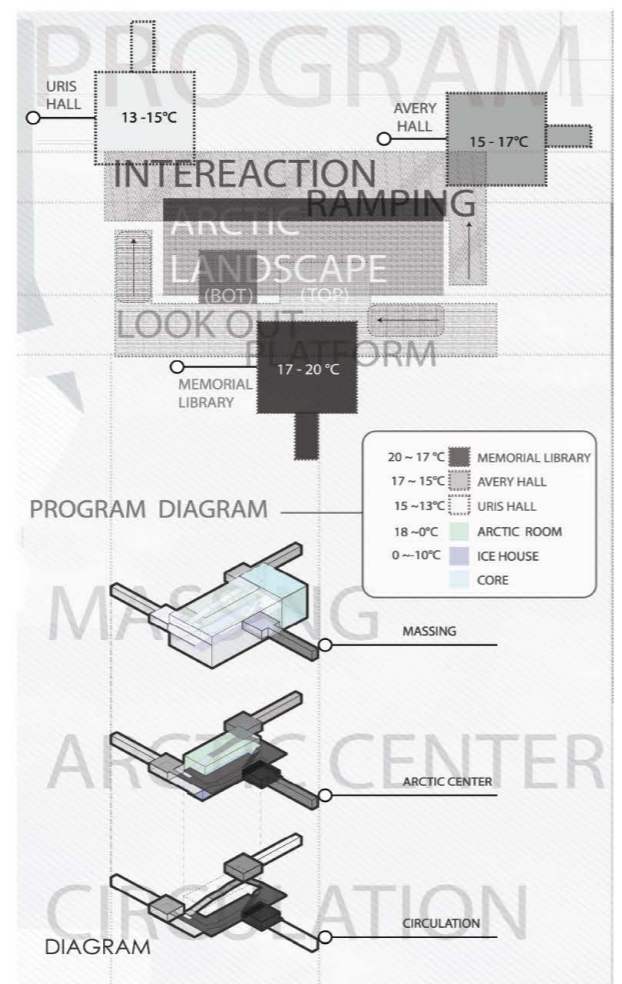
- Thermal tolerance
  - Cold tolerance - arctic plants
- Temperature stress

**A.**



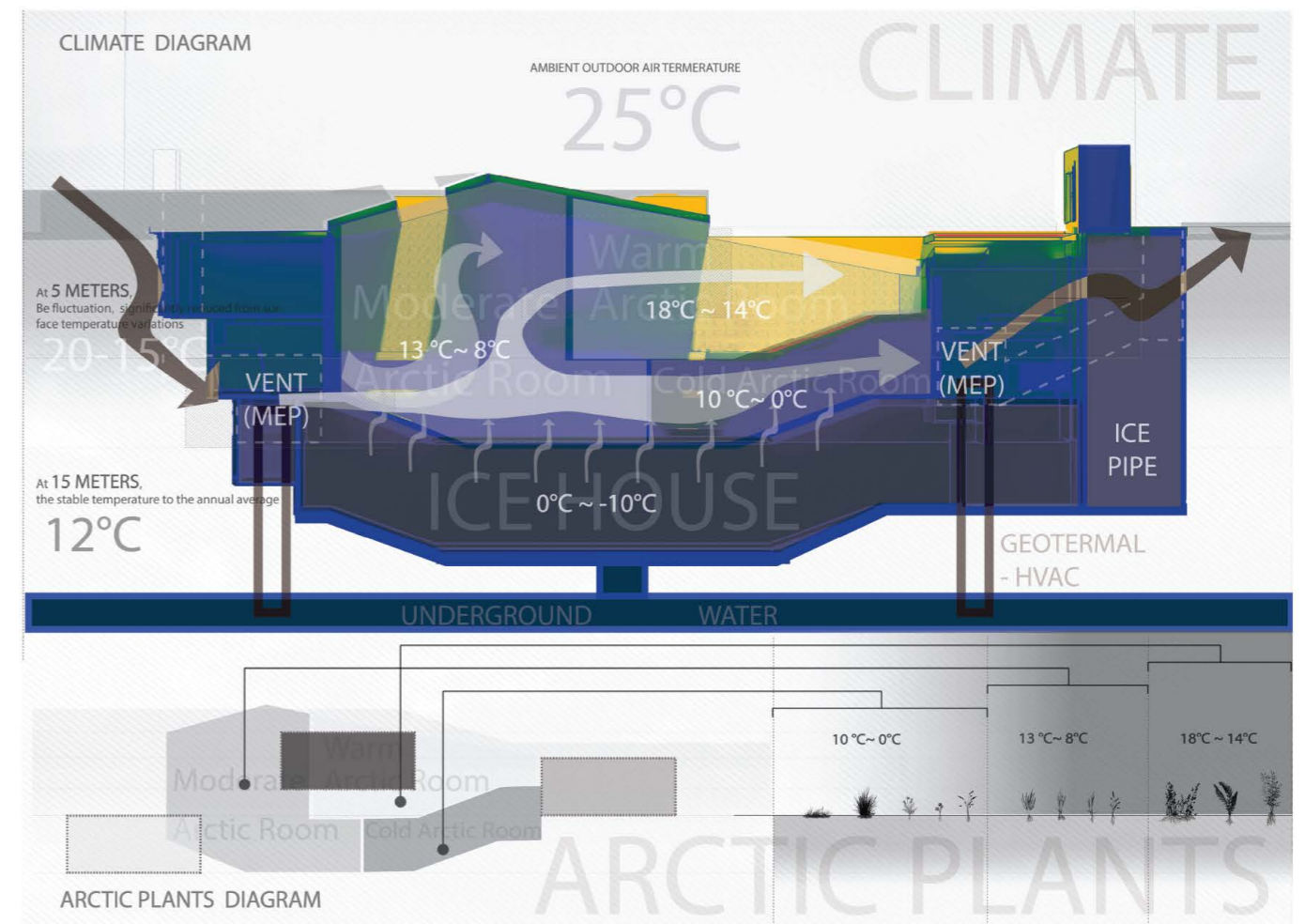
Site Plan

**B.**



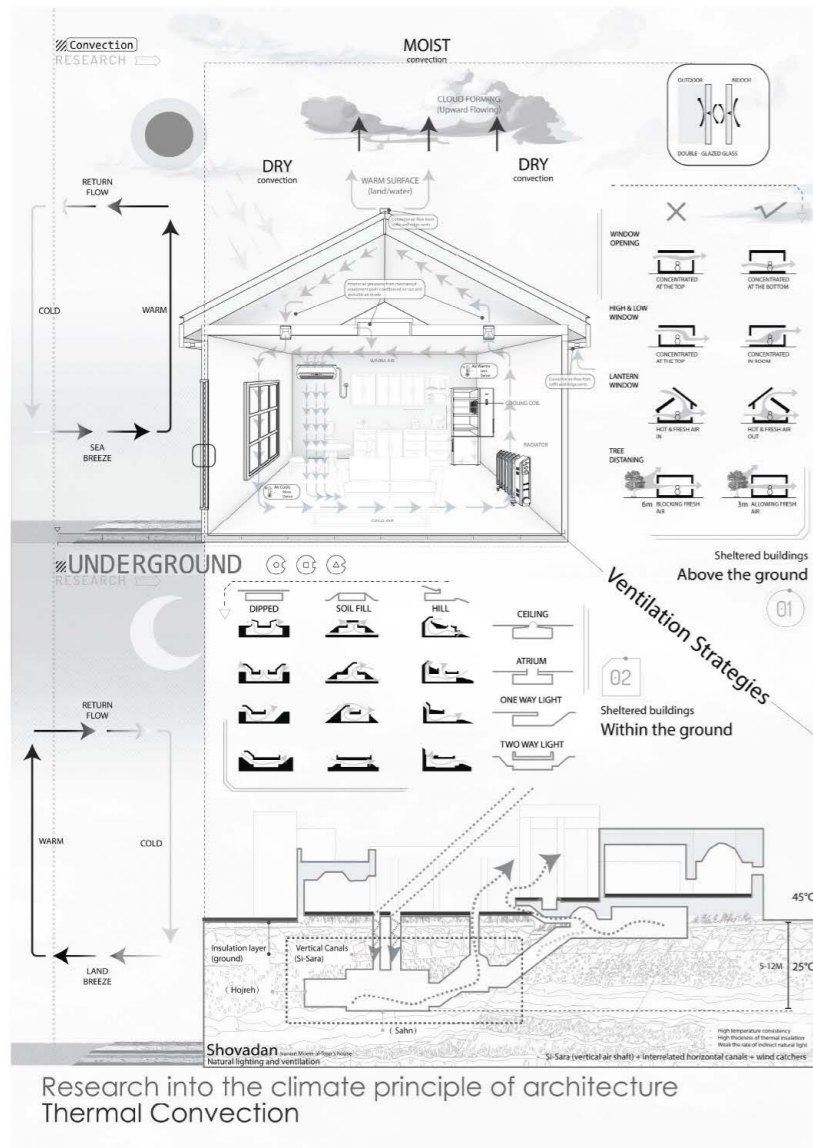
Program Diagram

**C.**



Climate Diagram & Plants Diagram





Research into the climate principle of architecture  
Thermal Convection

### Thermal Convection

- Convection cycle at different scale
- Underground convection
  - Avoid the overheated on the ground
  - Stable underground temperature
- Different underground convection situation Example : Shovadan

### SNOW SEASON FOR ICE HOUSE COOLING

Snowfall/Raining Event:

Snow Removal:

Snow Collection:

Snow Storage:

Ice House Storage:

Melting Snow for Water:

Ice Cube Production:

Transport to Project:

Hudson River Ice (Plan C):

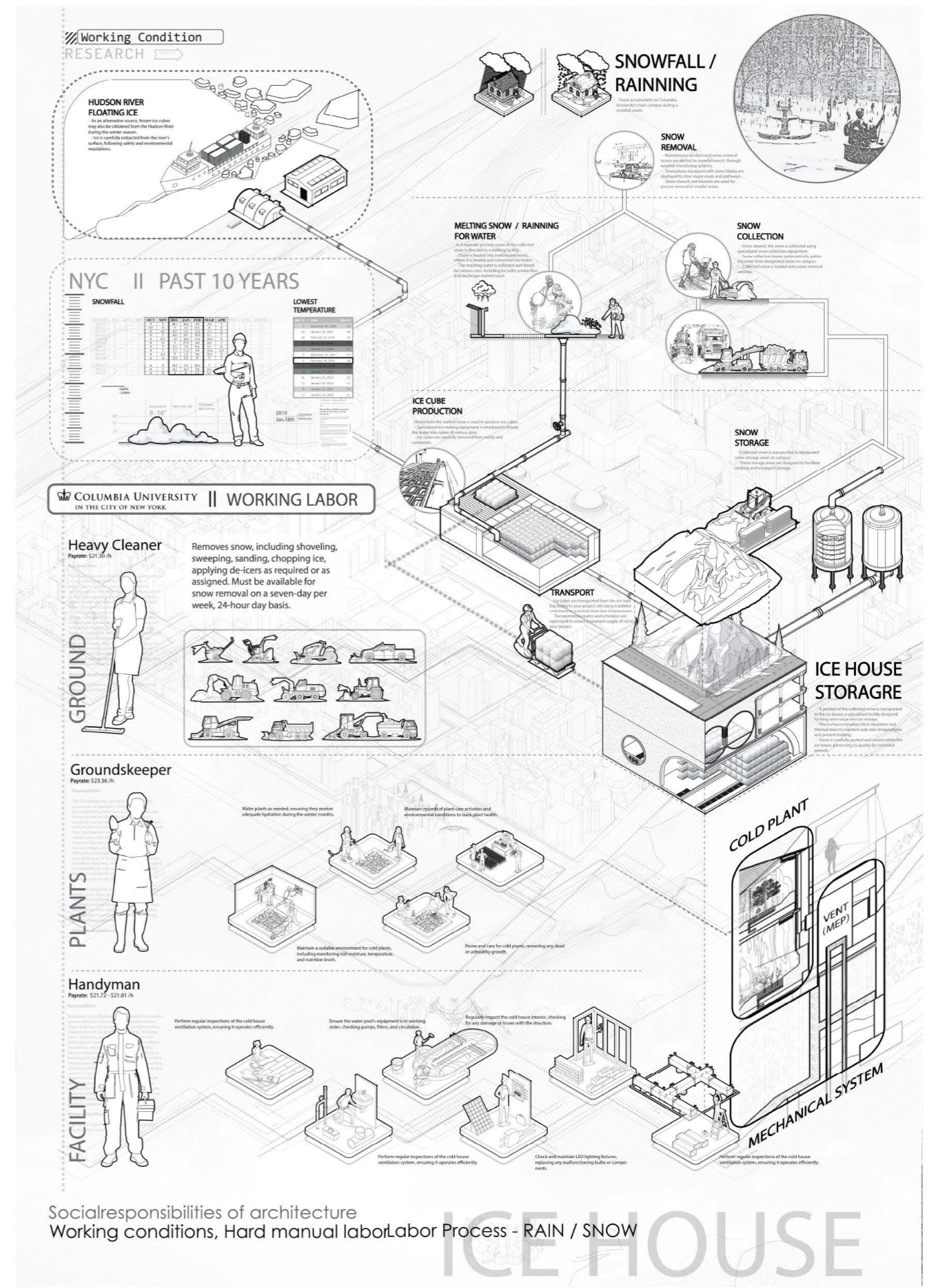
### THREE LABOR PROCESS

HEAVY CLEANER  
- GROUND(SNOW PROCESS)

GRUNDSKEEPER  
- PLANTS (TAKING CARE OF PLANTS)

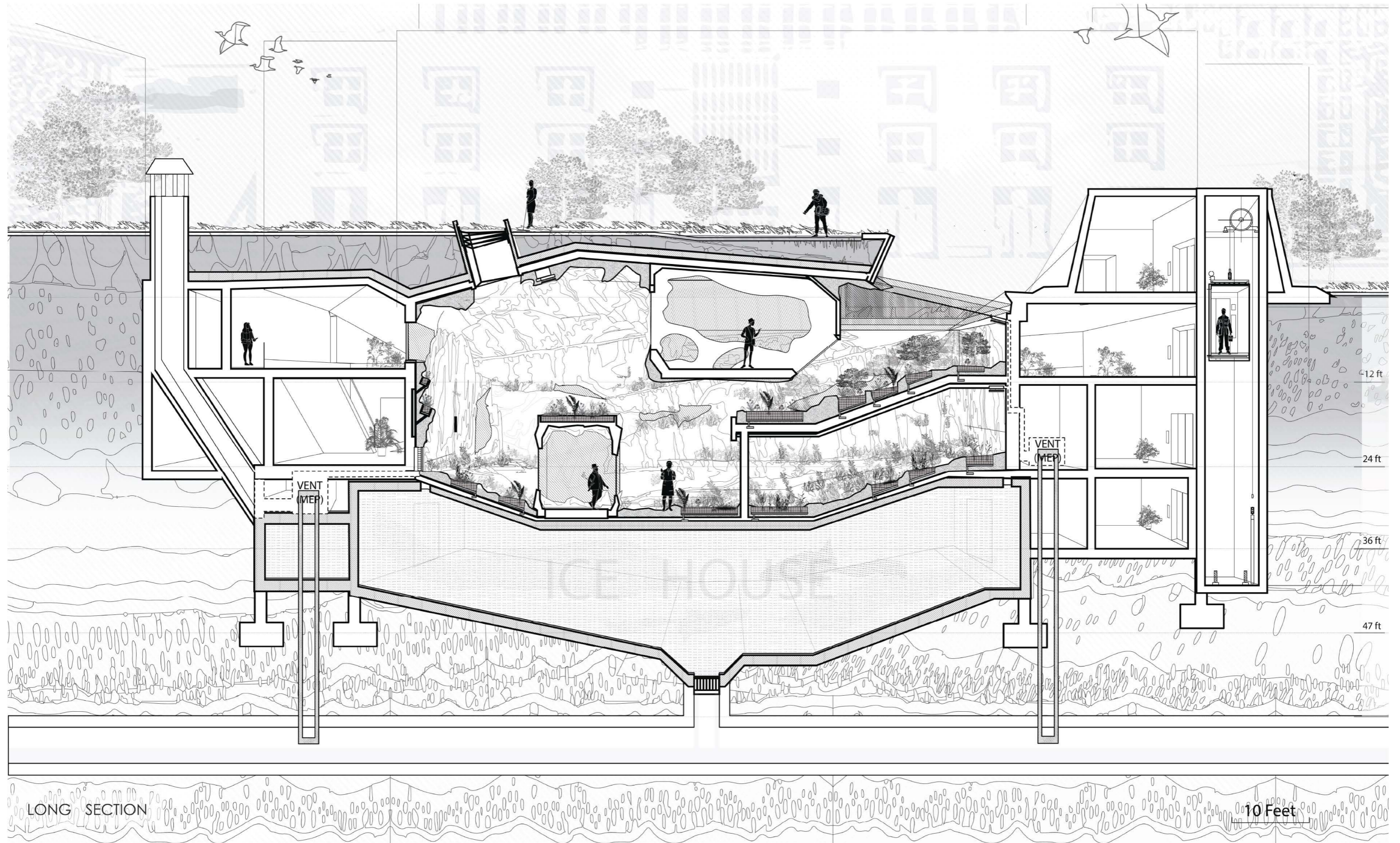
HANDYMAN  
- FACILITY(VENTILATION AND MECHANICAL MAINTAINNESS)

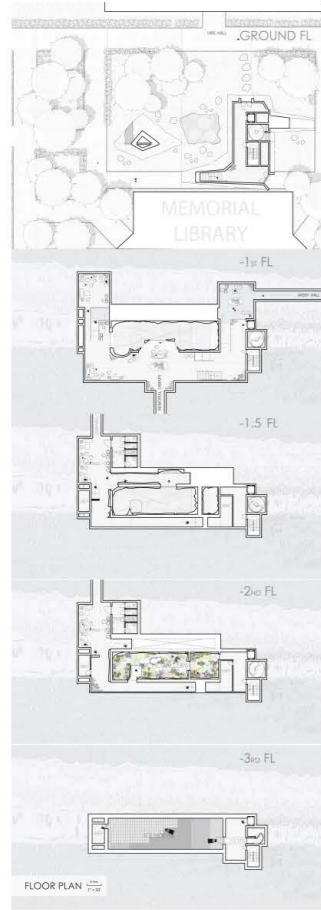
Columbia University Working Condition in Hard Labor & Working Condition in



Social responsibilities of architecture  
Working conditions, Hard manual labor Labor Process - RAIN / SNOW

# ICE HOUSE



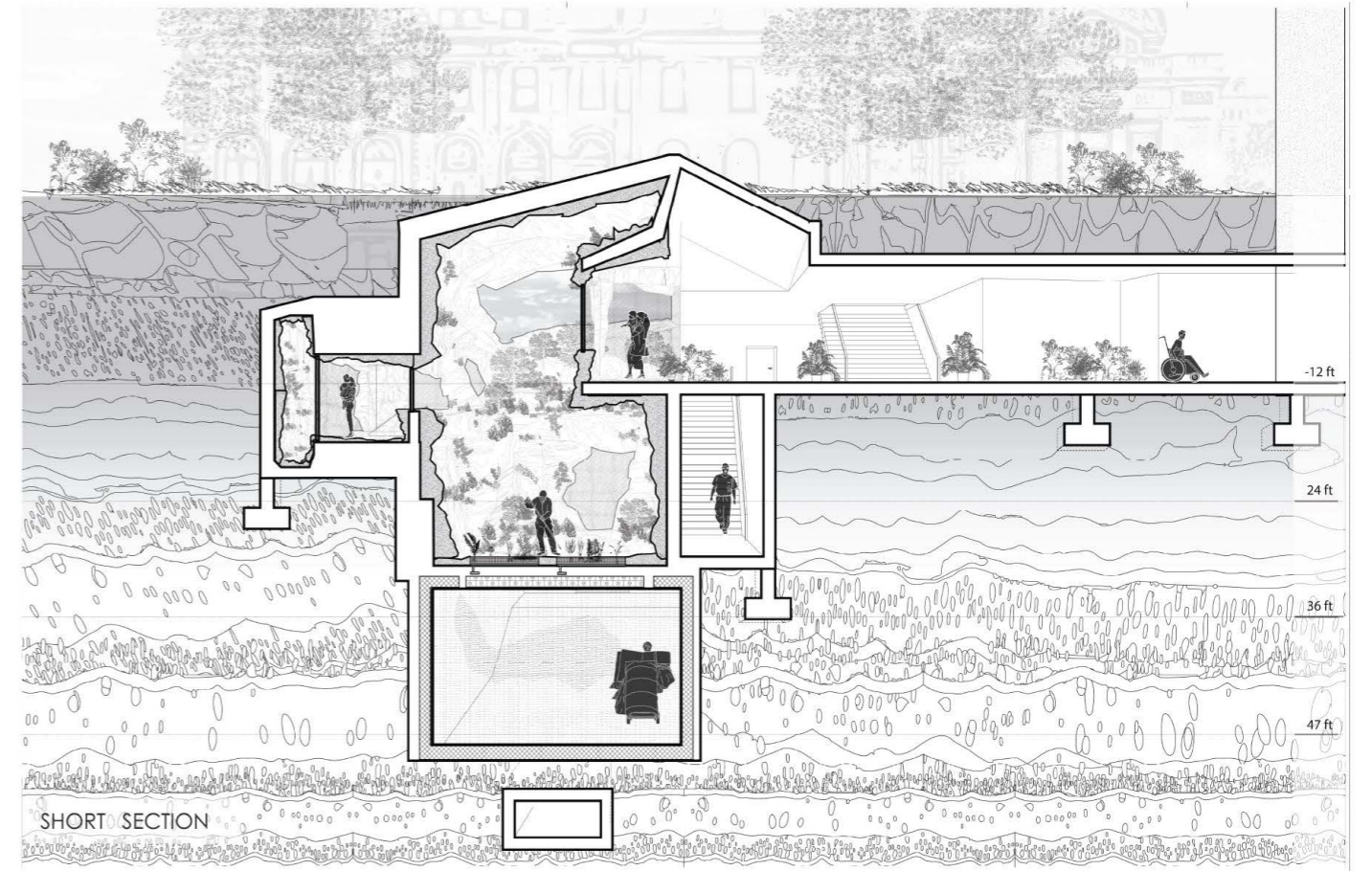
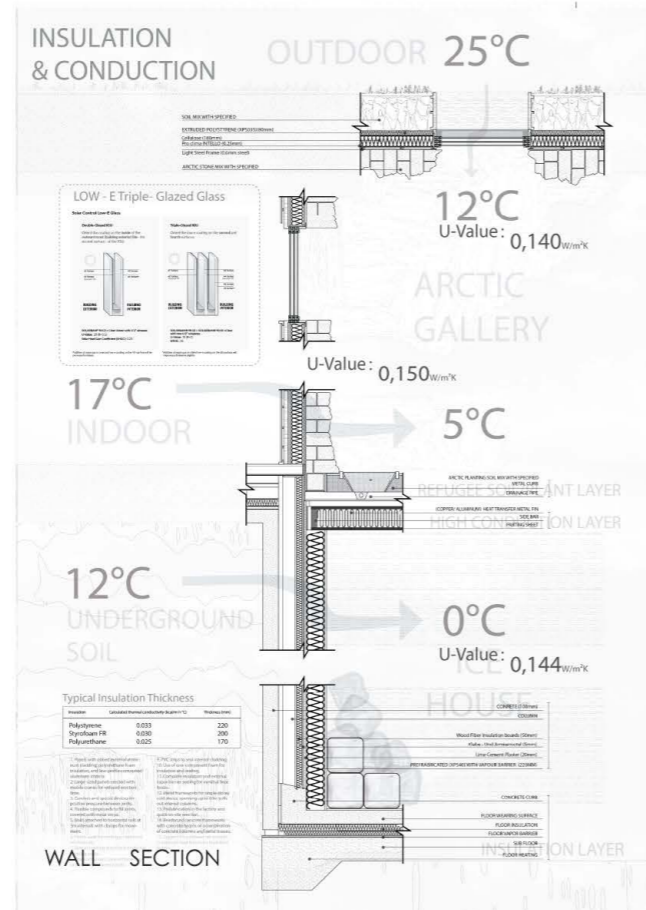


The project features a unique circulation system that encircles the arctic room, offering various levels of interaction and engagement with this captivating environment.

One side of the circulation serves as a gradual ramp, providing panoramic views of the arctic room, while the other side offers two distinct lookout rooms at different levels.

Additionally, the circulation seamlessly connects to a network of underground campus buildings, serving as a vital transition hub. As visitors move through the project,

they experience a gradual transition in thermal comfort, from the outdoor warmth to the ultimate coolness of the central arctic room, making "Thermal Transition Nexus" a dynamic and educational space for all.



Incorporates passive cooling techniques, conduction and convection to maintain the arctic room's temperature.

It features a subterranean ice house, and an intricate underground ventilation system that ensures a consistently cool environment within the arctic room.





( Long Island, NY )

## “WHISPERS OF THE CORRIDOR”

A MANUAL OF RECLAIMING COLONIAL INFRASTRUCTURES

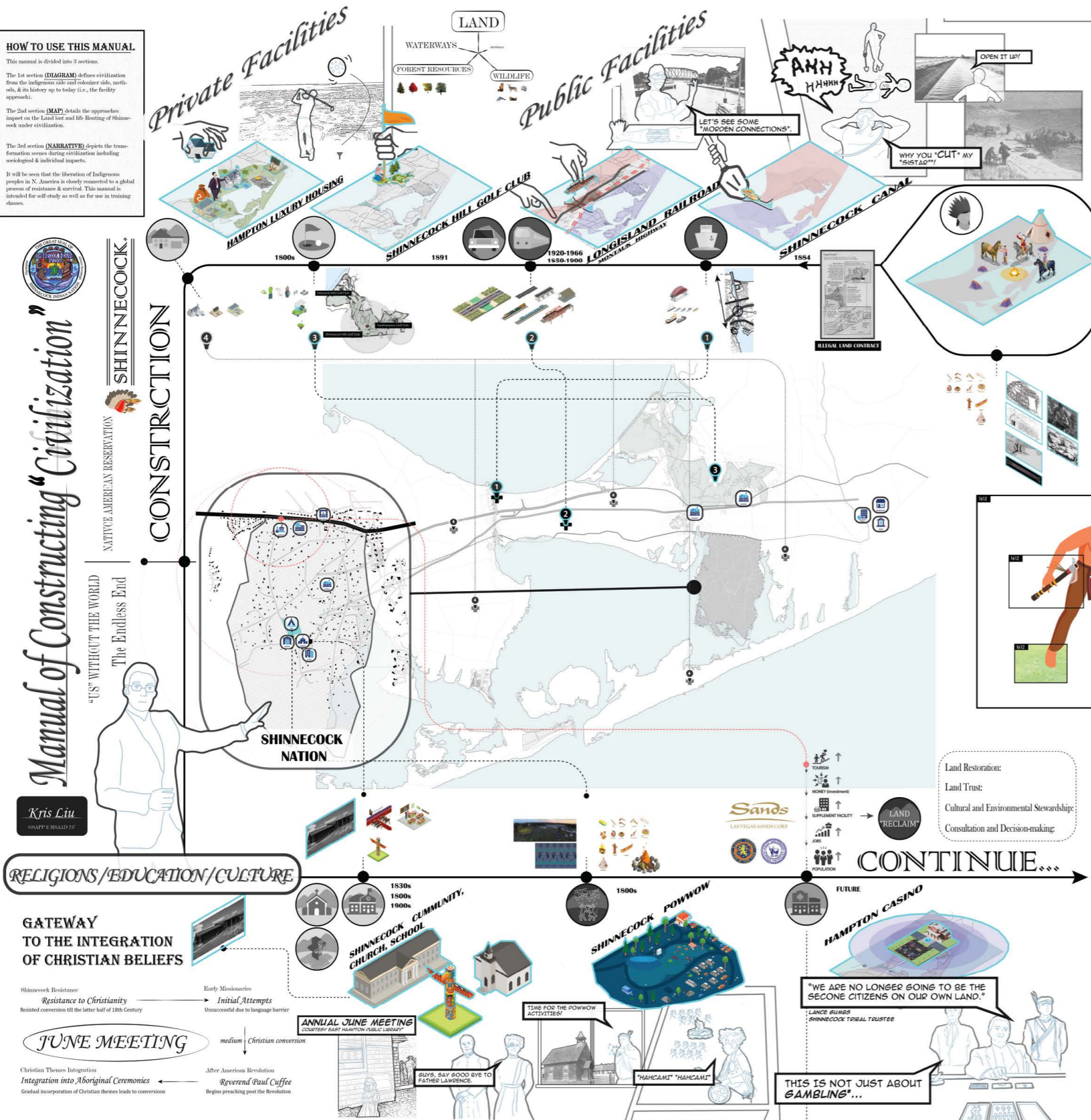
Advanced Design Studio IV |

ATLAS OF ARCHITECTURES FOR THE END OF THE WORLD

Professor. Uriel Fogué

TA. Niriksha Vasdeva Shetty

- aims to transform existing civilization facilities in South-ampton into thought-provoking spaces that inspire contemplation about the future of the Shinnecock Nation. The project begins by revitalizing the Shinnecock Canal Lock, a vital gateway to the Shinnecock land and connected to the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR). The objective is to incorporate Shinnecock cultural elements into the bridge, enhancing the tribe's cultural influence and promoting forward-thinking. By strategically selecting this location, the project redirects attention and energy to the Shinnecock community, facilitating the reclamation of their cultural impact and ancestral land. Through innovative design interventions, the revitalized space encourages dialogue, reflection, and the exploration of new possibilities for the Shinnecock Nation. Engaging the public in thought-provoking experiences, the project raises collective awareness of the Shinnecock people's cultural, social, and environmental aspirations. Ultimately, the vision is for architecture to act as a catalyst for societal transformation, fostering cultural pride, resilience, and the reclamation of ancestral lands for indigenous communities.



# SHINNECOCK INTERVIEW

SHINNECOCK

INTERVIEWER

**Shinnecock Member (Terry):** Hi, my name is Terry. I am from Shinnecock culture and community center, what can I help you with?

**Shinnecock Member (Kris):** Oh, nice to meet you, Terry. My name is Kris.

**Shinnecock Member (Terry):** OK, hi Kris. Nice to meet you too.

**Shinnecock Member (Kris):** So, first, I'd like to introduce about my project, I'm an architecture student, and I'm working on a cultural intervention to address some of the problems and crisis faced by the Shinnecock community. I'm planning to incorporate Shinnecock elements into certain facilities by the Canal, such as the railroad bridge and the station. The goal is to promote cultural interaction and raise awareness about important issues. What are your thoughts on the significance of territory for the Shinnecock people?

**Shinnecock Member (Terry):** Territory means everything to us. It represents our sovereignty and freedom. What we have here is unique and invaluable. It's not something you can find outside. It's priceless.

**Shinnecock Member (Kris):** And what does the country mean to you?

**Shinnecock Member (Terry):** Culture is who we are. It defines us and what we stand for. Many people come here to learn about our culture. We have powwows in September, where you can experience our dances and spirituality. Well, you got to remember it's not a dream, it's happening. So, to speak to what you're referring to right now.

**Shinnecock Member (Kris):** "When people go through the Canal, they don't know what they're going through. They don't understand the deep cultural component that exists for the Shinnecock people and indigenous people all over the world. It's like walking and driving through spirituality without even realizing it. These houses are built on ancestral burial grounds, and the train stations are passing over skeletal remains."

**Shinnecock Member (Kris):** These conversations need to be brought to the surface so that people can better understand the culture of the Shinnecock people and indigenous people in general. It's about the difference between cultural and non-cultural people, those who have traditions and those who don't. People whose traditions revolve around money and material possessions won't be able to comprehend this. But those who have empathy and understand this different world can grasp the truth and gain more insight into these two different worlds.

**Shinnecock Member (Kris):** Exactly, it's about capturing the reality and understanding that the distractions around us shouldn't prevent us from seeing the existence of that reality. The veil between reality and illusion is thin, and those who pay attention can see the truth behind it. The Shinnecock people hold the truth, the documented history and traditions that are often overlooked or rewritten by those who create history. It's not something that can be easily captured or understood. It requires deep conversations and relationships with individuals who can truly comprehend these concepts. It's not about surface-level discussions but diving deeper into understanding the truth of our existence and the importance of cultural perspectives.

**Shinnecock Member (Kris):** I completely agree. It's crucial to build relationships and spend time with individuals who can help us understand and capture the essence of these conversations. It's not just about asking superficial questions but delving into the meaning behind them. By taking the time to truly understand, we can document the truth and convey it to others effectively. That's why I'm here today, to start building those connections and hearing different voices. I appreciate the caution and the need to ensure that the conversations are authentic and genuine.

**Shinnecock Member (Kris):** Yes, it's important to consider the end result and the message we want to convey. We need to create an understanding of what we're trying to achieve and the attention we want to bring to these important cultural aspects. It takes time and meaningful conversations to get there. The project you're working on aims to visualize and conceptualize these ideas, but it's essential to have a clear understanding and a relationship with those who can truly grasp the depth of these concepts. It's not something that can be achieved overnight.

**Shinnecock Member (Kris):** I understand the significance of building relationships and taking the time to truly comprehend the depth of the culture and history. It's not just about creating surface-level designs but about capturing the essence and provoking thought. I will definitely look into the artists you mentioned, such as Courtney Leonard, who uses abstract art to convey history and activism. It's important to engage with the artwork and delve deeper to understand the message behind it. And I agree that designing something for the Canal should go beyond surface-level aesthetics and convey a sense of respect and understanding for the Shinnecock area.

**Shinnecock Member (Kris):** Absolutely, there's a lot of history tied to the Canal, both positive and negative. Designing something that provokes thought and conveys a continuum of respect is important. Recent events in the Canal have shown how harmful behaviors can impact the journey of those who value their culture and spirituality. It would be wonderful to have something in place that signifies the significance of the area and encourages respect. Taking inspiration from the journey of the canoe and the importance of the Canal in the history of the Shinnecock people could be a valuable starting point.

**Shinnecock Member (Kris):** I appreciate your insights and the perspective you bring to the project. It's crucial to understand the design meaning and to create an authentic representation of the culture and history. I'm also aware that this is just the beginning of my journey, and I will take the time to build relationships and continue my research. The project deadline is approaching, but I'm committed to doing justice to the complexity and depth of the Shinnecock culture. Thank you for your time and guidance.

**Shinnecock Member (Kris):** You're welcome. Remember, this is a continuous process, and building relationships takes time. I wish you the best of luck with your project, and if you have any further questions or need more guidance, don't hesitate to reach out. Safe travels and take care.

**Land Restoration:**

**Land Trust:**

**Cultural and Environmental Stewardship:**

**Consultation and Decision-making:**

**CONTINUE...**

- "The Shinnecock people fondly remember accompanying their parents to the shore and spending joyful times catching lobsters. However, today they are required to pay heavy access fees to step onto their ancestral beaches."

# ON THIS SITE

ON THIS SITE - JEREMY DENNIS

On This Site is an art-based photography project by Shinnecock artist Jeremy Dennis. The purpose of this project is to preserve and create awareness of culturally significant Native American locations on Long Island, New York.

**Matinecock Traditional Land**  
The Matinecock Indians, a Manicungo group, are the oldest and most established of the Long Island tribes. They lived in the Matinecock region, which included the area around the present-day village of Huntington. They were known for their pottery and their use of the bow and arrow.

**Unkechaug Ancestral Land**  
The Unkechaug Indians were a small tribe that lived in the Unkechaug region, which included the area around the present-day village of Unkechaug. They were known for their pottery and their use of the bow and arrow.

**Shinnecock Ancestral Land**  
The Shinnecock Indians were a small tribe that lived in the Shinnecock region, which included the area around the present-day village of Shinnecock. They were known for their pottery and their use of the bow and arrow.

**Manhasset Ancestral Land**  
The Manhasset Indians were a small tribe that lived in the Manhasset region, which included the area around the present-day village of Manhasset. They were known for their pottery and their use of the bow and arrow.

**Montaukett Ancestral Land**  
The Montaukett Indians were a small tribe that lived in the Montaukett region, which included the area around the present-day village of Montaukett. They were known for their pottery and their use of the bow and arrow.

**Corchaug Ancestral Land**  
The Corchaug Indians were a small tribe that lived in the Corchaug region, which included the area around the present-day village of Corchaug. They were known for their pottery and their use of the bow and arrow.

**Setauket Ancestral Land**  
The Setauket Indians were a small tribe that lived in the Setauket region, which included the area around the present-day village of Setauket. They were known for their pottery and their use of the bow and arrow.

**Nissequogue Ancestral Land**  
The Nissequogue Indians were a small tribe that lived in the Nissequogue region, which included the area around the present-day village of Nissequogue. They were known for their pottery and their use of the bow and arrow.

**Secatogue Ancestral Land**  
The Secatogue Indians were a small tribe that lived in the Secatogue region, which included the area around the present-day village of Secatogue. They were known for their pottery and their use of the bow and arrow.

**Massapequa Ancestral Lands**  
The Massapequa Indians were a small tribe that lived in the Massapequa region, which included the area around the present-day village of Massapequa. They were known for their pottery and their use of the bow and arrow.

**Merrick Ancestral Land**  
The Merrick Indians were a small tribe that lived in the Merrick region, which included the area around the present-day village of Merrick. They were known for their pottery and their use of the bow and arrow.

**Canarsie Traditional Land**  
The Canarsie Indians were a small tribe that lived in the Canarsie region, which included the area around the present-day village of Canarsie. They were known for their pottery and their use of the bow and arrow.

**Rockaway Traditional Land**  
The Rockaway Indians were a small tribe that lived in the Rockaway region, which included the area around the present-day village of Rockaway. They were known for their pottery and their use of the bow and arrow.

**Unkechaug Indian Reservation**  
The Unkechaug Indian Reservation is a small reservation that is located in the Unkechaug region, which included the area around the present-day village of Unkechaug. It is one of the few reservations that remain on Long Island.

**Shinnecock Ancestral Land**  
The Shinnecock Ancestral Land is a large area of land that is located in the Shinnecock region, which included the area around the present-day village of Shinnecock. It is one of the largest areas of ancestral land that remain on Long Island.

**Shinnecock Indian Reservation**  
The Shinnecock Indian Reservation is a large reservation that is located in the Shinnecock region, which included the area around the present-day village of Shinnecock. It is one of the largest reservations that remain on Long Island.

**Calverton**  
Calverton is a small town that is located in the Shinnecock region, which included the area around the present-day village of Shinnecock. It is one of the largest towns in the region.

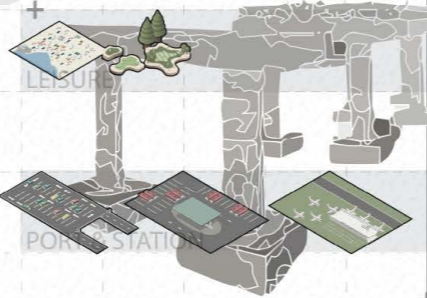
**Longue-Jumelles**  
Longue-Jumelles is a small town that is located in the Shinnecock region, which included the area around the present-day village of Shinnecock. It is one of the largest towns in the region.

**Shinnecock Bay**  
Shinnecock Bay is a large body of water that is located in the Shinnecock region, which included the area around the present-day village of Shinnecock. It is one of the largest bodies of water in the region.

# COLONIAL DEVICES

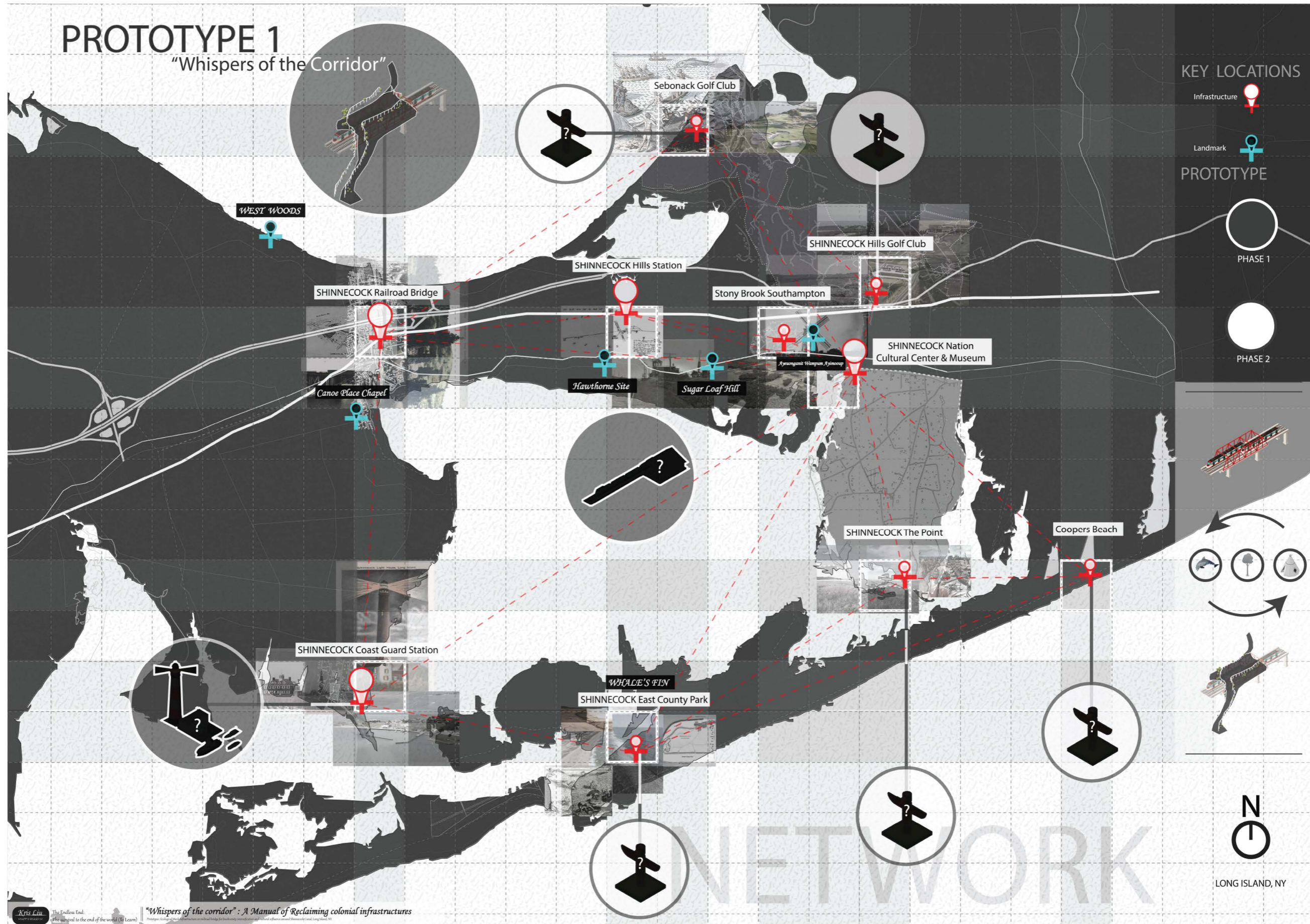


**"Whispers of the corridor": A Manual of Reclaiming colonial infrastructures**  
The survival to the end of the world (To Learn)

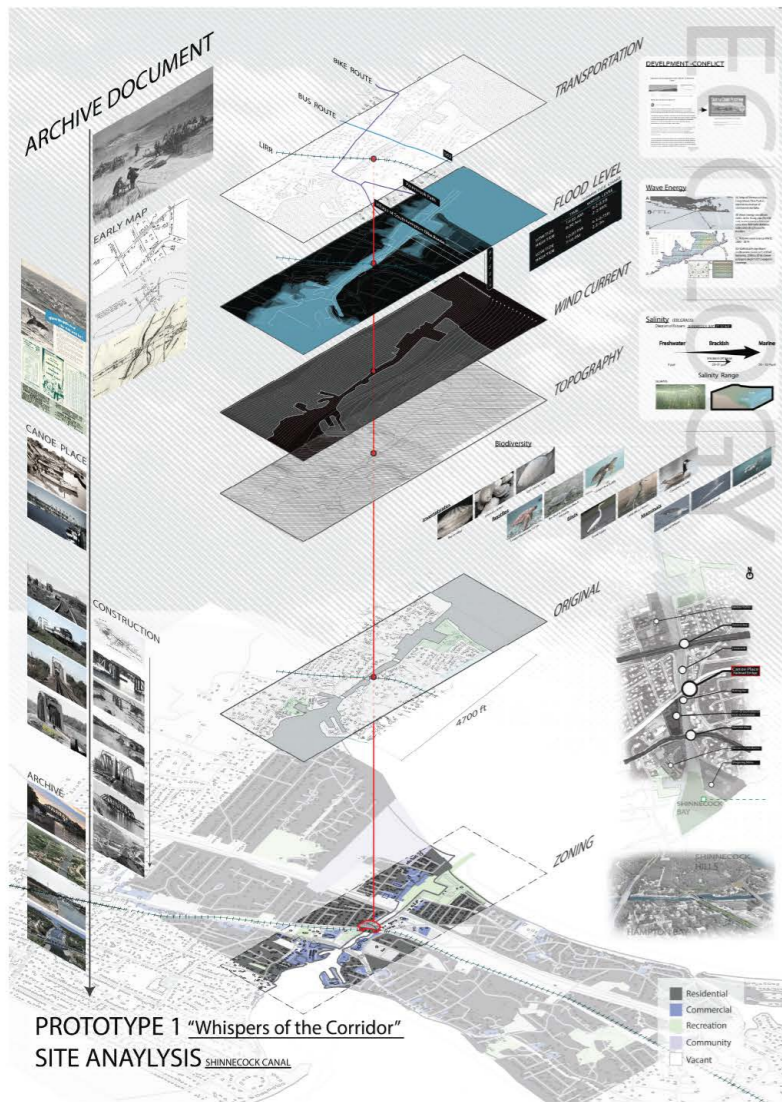


# DISPLACEMENT

# PROTOTYPE 1 "Whispers of the Corridor"



Kris Liu | The Endless End: From the original to the end of the world (To Learn) | "Whispers of the corridor": A Manual of Reclaiming colonial infrastructures | Prototype 1: A Manual of Reclaiming colonial infrastructures | A Manual of Reclaiming colonial infrastructures | Long Island, NY



PROTOTYPE 1 "Whispers of the Corridor"  
SITE ANALYSIS SHINNECOCK CANAL



1893

*Kris Liu*  
GSAPP '18, MS.AAD '24

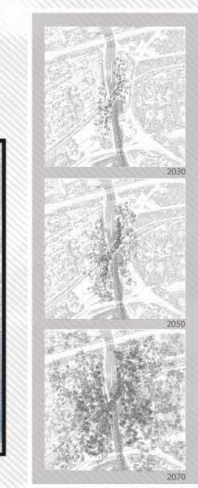
The Endless End:  
The survival to the end of the world (To Learn)

A MANUAL OF RECLAIMING COLONIAL INFRASTRUCTURES  
ATLAS OF ARCHITECTURES FOR THE END OF THE WORLD

GROWTH



2030



2017



2017

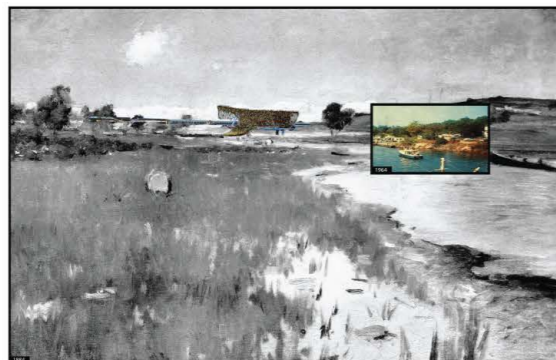
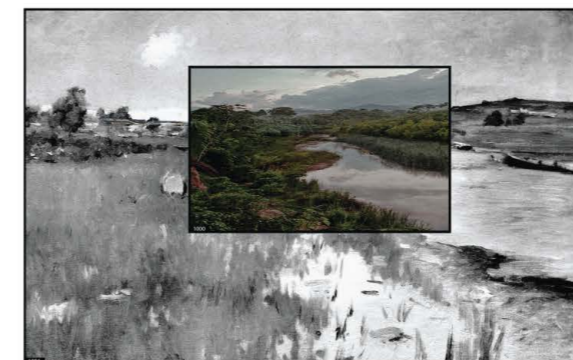


1640

"WHISPERS OF THE CORRIDOR"

THROUGH TIME FRAME

- 1000 - Brutal scene generated by AI
- 1640 - David Bunn Martine shinnecock people life by Shinnecock Artist
- 1884 Base - William Merritt Chase
- 1893- Landscape - William Merritt Chase start to erase land for city planning
- 1964 - Canal side structure
- 1984 - Road planning
- 2019 - Highway structure
- Future - AI - collapse thinking controversy - Blend in the environment
- END - dissolving





# GUANGZHOU MAYLAND KINDERGARTEN

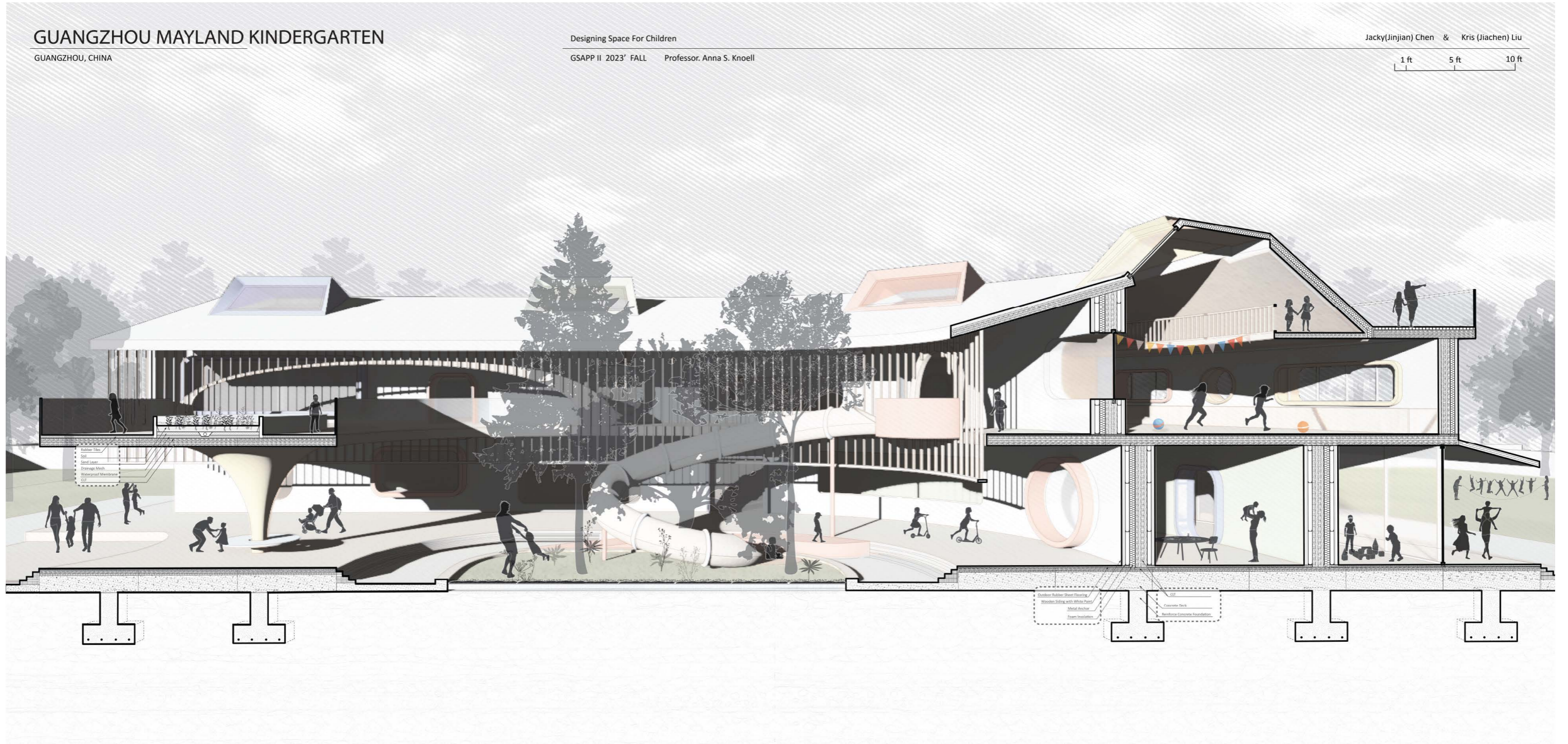
GUANGZHOU, CHINA

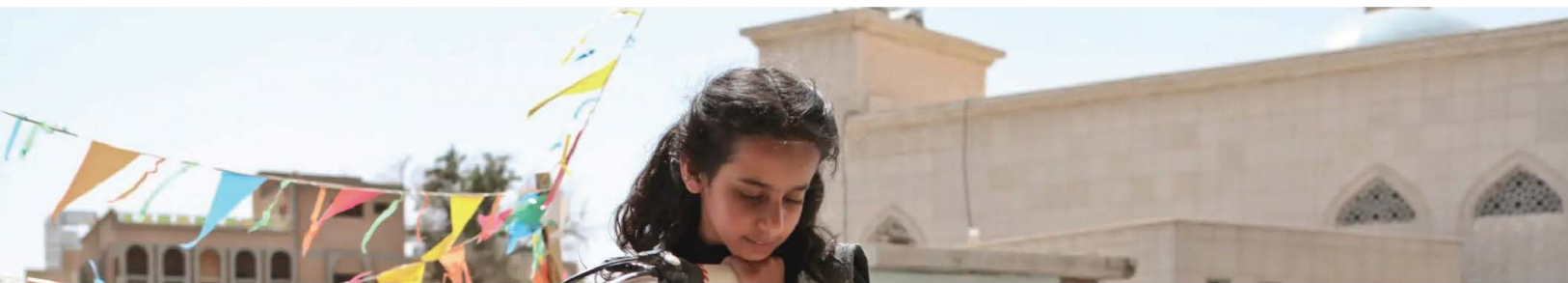
Designing Space For Children

GSAPP II 2023' FALL Professor. Anna S. Knoell

Jacky(Jinjian) Chen & Kris (Jiachen) Liu

1 ft 5 ft 10 ft





Film

The Arab City

**2012 "Wadjda"**  
 2019 "The Perfect Candidate"

-Haifaa al-Mansour

&

**RIYADH**  
 SAUDI ARABIA



Redefining Boundaries:  
 Women Navigating Riyadh's Transition from Tradition to Modernity



Prof. Yasser Elsheshtawy

— MSAAD —

Kris (Jiachen) Liu  
 Cedric (Zhuorui) Li  
 Zhihan Guo

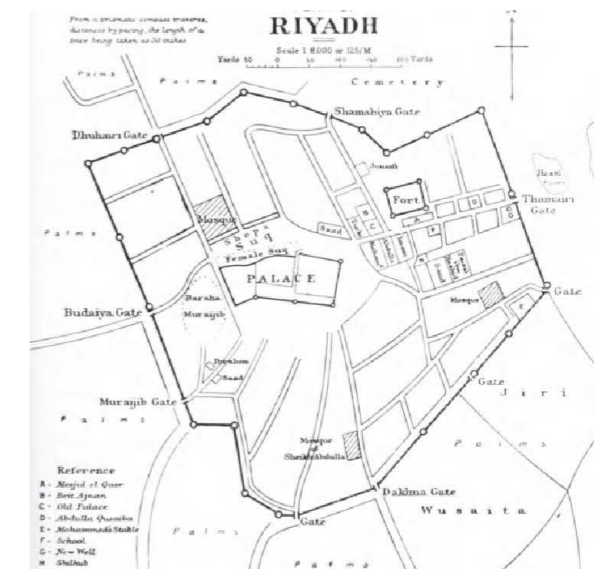
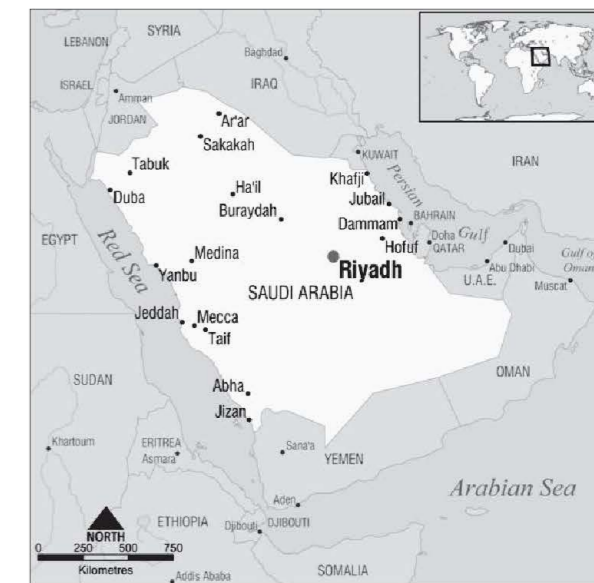
"Redefining Boundaries:  
 Women Navigating Riyadh's Transition from Tradition to Modernity"

critically examines the interplay between Riyadh's urban transformation and the evolving roles of women, as depicted in "Wadjda" and "The Perfect Candidate." This narrative analysis portrays the restrictions on female mobility and space as a metaphor for the broader transformation of Riyadh from a traditional society to a modern urban landscape, underscoring the simultaneous deconstruction of old norms and construction of new societal paradigms."

Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, has transformed remarkably from its origins as a small oasis town. This transition began with the unification of Saudi Arabia in 1932, which marked Riyadh's emergence as the capital. Historically, Riyadh was known for its palm trees and mud-brick architecture, but the discovery of oil in the 20th century dramatically altered its landscape. The city's rapid development brought highways, skyscrapers, and modern infrastructure, leading to explosive population growth. As Riyadh evolved, it became a center for political, economic, and cultural change, embodying the tension between modernization and cultural tradition. This balance is evident in the city's architectural evolution from traditional structures to modern designs, symbolizing a shift from its past to a future-oriented vision. (Al-Oteibi)

This physical metamorphosis mirrored a gradual shift in societal norms and gender dynamics, especially following political leadership changes. The initiatives under King Abdullah and later King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, particularly through Vision 2030,

INTRO  
 HISTORICAL CONTEXT + POLITICS



1922\_map\_Riyadh\_by\_Philby (wikipedia)

propelled the city into a new era of economic diversification and societal reform. These changes sparked debates, balancing modernization aspirations with cultural heritage preservation.

# INTRO

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT + POLITICS



These interpretations, influenced by cultural and historical contexts, manifested in various restrictions on women's rights and freedoms. These restrictions have historically encompassed various aspects of life, such as limitations on traveling, and driving, and the requirement of a male guardian's permission for certain activities. These practices have been in place for decades but began to change significantly in the past few years, particularly under Vision 2030, which aims to modernize Saudi society and economy. The changes, including lifting the driving ban in 2018 and easing guardianship laws, reflect a shift towards greater gender equality and are part of broader societal reforms.

Concurrently, the kingdom has opened up to entertainment and cultural events. However, the reforms, while progressive in some areas, have also faced scrutiny over human rights issues and the challenges of implementing Vision 2030 amidst global economic shifts. As the International scrutiny over the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018.

The concentration of power under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, with concerns over transparency and accountability, limited political freedoms, and suppression of dissent, including crackdowns on activists and critics have also been raised into a series of social issues.

The films "Wadjda" and "The Perfect Candidate" capture these dynamics, portraying how women navigate and interact with changing public spaces amidst Riyadh's urban and social transformation. The essay thus presents a multifaceted view of Riyadh's evolution, offering insights into the complexities of a society striving to reconcile its rich historical legacy with contemporary realities.

From the political perspective, Under King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Arabia's leadership has embarked on significant reforms, most notably through Vision 2030. This ambitious plan aims to diversify the economy, develop public sectors, and reduce oil dependency, with projects like NEOM and the Red Sea tourism initiative.

Women's rights have also seen historic advancements. The history and religious reasons for gender inequality in Saudi Arabia, particularly in Riyadh, are rooted in traditional and conservative interpretations of Islamic teachings, which have emphasized distinct gender roles and segregation.

# TIMELINE

## Early History and Foundation + Progress in Women's Rights Amidst Urban Expansion

Early History and Foundation

### Pre-1902:

Riyadh as a small, walled oasis town with traditional architecture.

### 1902:

Abdulaziz Ibn Saud's reconquest marks the beginning of modern Saudi Arabia. Establishment as Capital and Early Urban Development

### 1932:

Riyadh becomes the capital of Saudi Arabia, initiating its urban transformation.

### 1938:

Discovery of oil, catalyzing economic growth and urban development. Rapid Urbanization and Infrastructure Growth

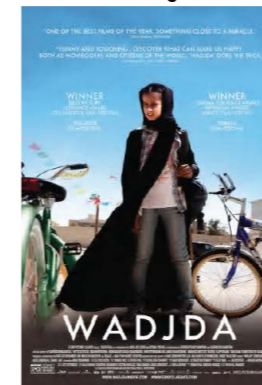
### 1950s-1960s:

Start of major infrastructure projects, modern roads, and buildings.

### 1970s-1980s:

Further expansion with modern highways and skyscrapers.

## 2012 "Wadjda"



## 2019 "The Perfect Candidate"



Progress in Women's Rights Amidst Urban

Bleiker, Carla, et al. "Women's Rights in Saudi Arabia: A Timeline - DW -"

### 1955: First school for girls.

Girls have not always been able to go to school like these students in Riyadh. Enrollment at the first school for girls, Dar Al Hanan, began in 1955. The Riyadh College of Education, the first higher education institution for women, opened in 1970.

### 1970: First university for women

At the start of the 21st century, women could get personal ID cards for the first time. The cards are the only way for them to prove who they are, for example, in disputes relating to inheritance or property issues. IDs were only issued with the permission of a woman's guardian, though, and to the guardian instead of directly to the woman. Only in 2006 were women able to get IDs without permission.

### 2001: Introduction of ID cards for women.

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### 2005: End of forced marriages on paper.

Saudi Arabia banned forced marriage in 2005, but marriage contracts continue to be hammered out between the husband-to-be and the father of the bride, not the bride herself.

### 2009: First female government minister appointed.

In 2009, King Abdullah appointed the first female minister to Saudi Arabia's government. Noura al-Fayez became the deputy education minister for women's affairs.

### 2012: First female Olympic athletes.

Saudi Arabia agreed to allow female athletes to compete on the national team for the Olympics for the first time. One of them was Sarah Aillar, who ran the women's 800 meter race at the 2012 Olympics in London wearing a headscarf. Before the Games, there was speculation that the Saudi Arabian team might be banned for gender discrimination if they didn't allow women to participate.

### 2013: Women allowed to ride bicycles and motorbikes; first women in Shura Council.

Saudi leaders allowed women to ride bicycles and motorbikes for the first time in 2013-but only in recreational areas, wearing full Islamic body covering and with a male relative present. In February 2013, King Abdullah swore in the first 30 women to the Shura, Saudi Arabia's consultative council. This allowed women to be appointed to these positions, soon they would be allowed to actually run for office.

### 2015: Right to vote and get elected.

In Saudi Arabia's 2015 municipal elections, women were able to vote and run for office for the first time. By contrast, New Zealand was the first country to give women the vote, in 1893. At the 2015 Saudi polls, 20 women were elected to municipal roles in the absolute monarchy.

### 2017: First female head of Saudi stock exchange.

In February 2017, the Saudi stock exchange names the first female chairperson in its history, Sarah Al Suhaimi.

### 2018: Women permitted in sports stadiums; driving ban lifted.

On October 29, 2017, the country's General Sports Authority announced that women would be allowed into sports stadiums for the first time. Three previously male-only arenas will soon be open for women as well, starting in early 2018.

Significant reforms in women's rights, including more freedom of travel and relaxation of guardianship laws.

### 2019: Law for women to be notified by text if divorced.

The new law, designed to protect them from having their marriage ended without their knowledge, will allow women to check their marital status online or visit a court to get a copy of divorce papers. Human rights defenders say the law does nothing to address the fact that Saudi women can only obtain divorces in exceedingly limited cases - such as with her husband's consent or if he has harmed her.

**2018-2020s:** Continued urban projects and modernization; growing focus on public spaces, cultural events, and sustainable development..

**2020s:** Ongoing reforms in women's rights, reflecting and contributing to Riyadh's evolving urban and social landscape.

# FILM INTRO

## The Enlightenment and Development of Feminism: A Comparison between Two Movies Based on Characters' Behavior

Wadjda is a 2012 Saudi Arabian drama film, written and directed by Haifaa al-Mansour (in her feature directorial debut). It was the first feature film shot entirely in Saudi Arabia and the first feature-length film made by a female Saudi director. The heroine, Wadjda, a spirited 10-year-old living in Riyadh, dreams of owning a green bicycle, but Wadjda's mother refuses to buy one for her, fearing repercussions from a society that sees bicycles as dangerous to a girl's virtue. When Wajada tried her best to raise money to buy a bicycle herself, she broke many established rules for women in society and also witnessed the struggles and confusion of other female characters in the face of conflicts between human nature and rules.

I use colors to evaluate the degree to which characters adhere to or break rules and categorize the main characters by gender (#6), as they exhibit different attitudes in the film. Male characters remain indifferent as guardians of rules, even if they witness the plight of women; However, most female characters exhibit contradictions and changes in attitudes, such as the principal, who initially appeared to be a staunch supporter of rules, but later was discovered to have an affair with a stranger.

Seven years later, Haifaa al-Mansour made her fourth feature film, The Perfect Candidate, in

2019 which was the first feature film to be supported by the new national Saudi Film Council. This film is about a determined young Saudi doctor's surprise run for office in the local city elections sweeps up her family and community as they struggle to accept their town's first female candidate. Compared to Wadjda's innate pursuit of freedom and equality, which has not been infected by social values, and the awakening and initial exploration of female consciousness by other characters in the film, the female protagonist of The Perfect Candidate seems to be more aware of her social environment and decided to make changes.

Wadjda's mother's singing talent buried by social rules

Wadjda tried to stick her name on the family tree with only male family members, although it was eventually taken down

WadjdaShe often doesn't cover her face

Her mother also complains that wearing a Hijab in a car without air conditioning is uncomfortable

Wadjda has been wearing a pair of canvas shoes instead of the black ones required by the school

**Indifferent**

- Abdullah
- Driver
- Father

**Exceptions**

- Ms. Hussa
- Leila
- Mother
- Wadjda
- Classmates

**Contradiction**

- Abcer

**Rule Breaker**

**Rule Keeper**

**Character Analysis of Wadjda:** Different attitudes of different characters towards rules. Women are more conflicted with existing rules and tend to break them, while men are more likely to serve as guardians of the rules.

# Mobility

## Women's Spatial Experiences in Riyadh

In the context of Riyadh's evolving urban landscape, significant changes have taken place over the last half-century. The city's transformation from a traditional Arab Medina into a modern metropolis has been accompanied by shifts in socio-cultural norms, particularly impacting women's experiences in public spaces.

The lifting of the women's driving ban in 2018 marked a pivotal change, empowering women with greater independence and mobility. This shift had substantial implications for women's participation in the workforce and in public life. Prior to this, the absence of driving rights for women not only imposed financial burdens due to the need for private drivers but also restricted their social and economic freedom.

The gendered nature of urban spaces in Riyadh is prominently evident on Al Tahlia Street. Despite sidewalks being public spaces, cultural norms and societal expectations significantly influence women's visibility and accessibility in these areas. Women's presence in public is often conditional, accepted only when exhibiting purposeful behavior.

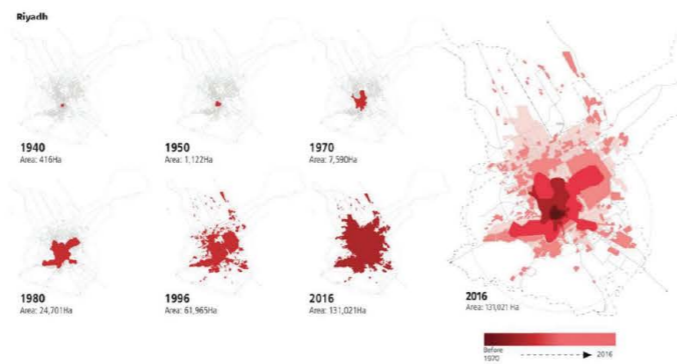
To a certain extent, Sidewalk is the only gender-mixed space where men and women may meet spontaneously, but women are still subject to social and cultural norms. Women, especially in socially conservative societies, need to justify their presence in public urban spaces in order to be socially accepted, which can be observed through their purposeful spatial behavior such as shopping, carrying something or moving quickly towards a destination (Phadke, 2012). In an analysis of the behavior of men and women on Al Tahlia Street in Riyadh, Almahmood M et al. (2018) found that women's spatio-temporal behavior is self-regulated to avoid unpleasant encounters as well as externally regulated by gender norms through the socially conceived 'appropriate' behavior for women. It is more respectable for women not to appear on



82% of women tend to have a purposeful pattern of movement (from car to shop); taking the fastest and shortest routes.

-Al Tahlia Street at night as this may lead to verbal or behavioral harassment from men. This phenomenon is also reflected in the plot where Wadjda is harassed on the Sidewalk home from school.

This phenomenon is also indirectly reflected in the urban development of Riyadh, where the city planning process seems to rarely consider pedestrian throughways in urban spaces, and even less so the spatial experiences of women in these transit spaces.

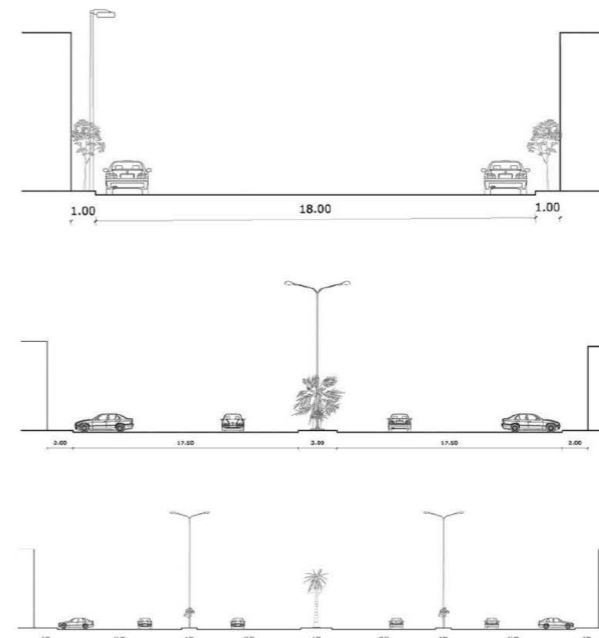


Over the past fifty years, Riyadh has evolved from a traditional Arab Medina into a sprawling international metropolis covering over 2000 square kilometers. This growth, shaped by modernist planning like grid layouts, has unfortunately prioritized motorized vehicles, leading to traffic congestion and a lack of pedestrian zones. The city's car-centric planning has not only increased traffic problems and pollution but also contributed to one of the world's highest rates of traffic fatalities.

# Mobility

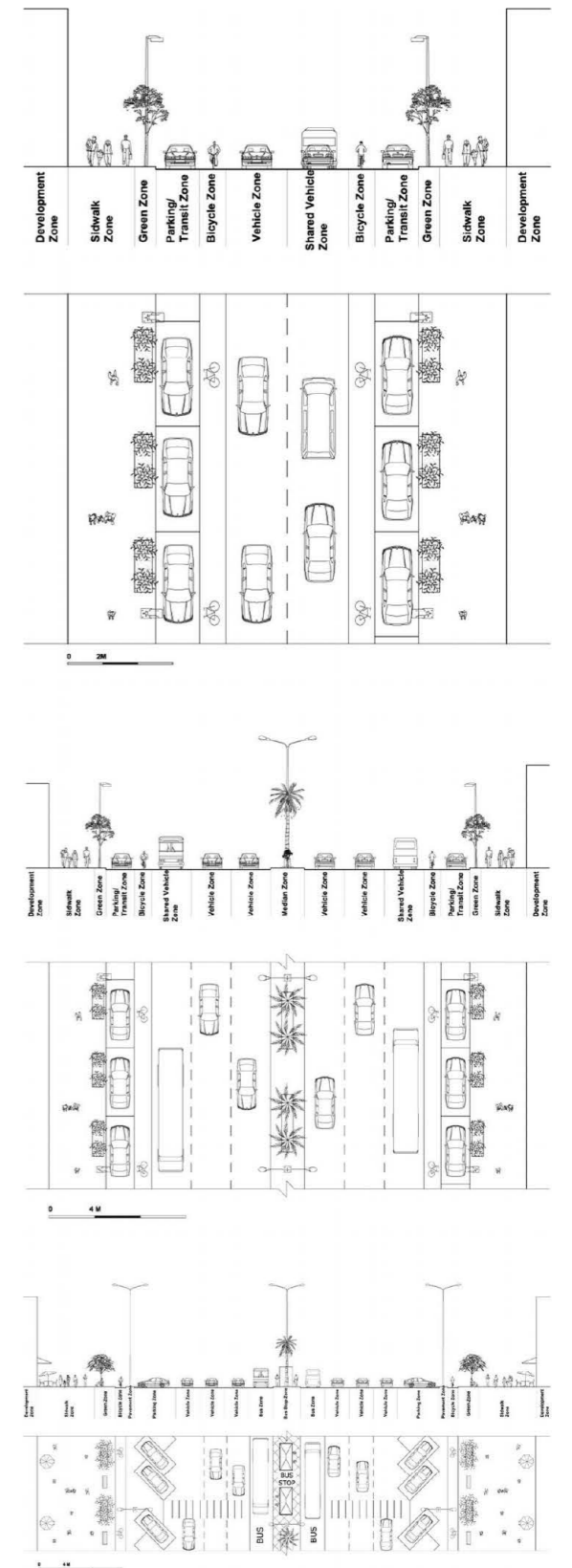
## Women's Spatial Experiences in Riyadh

Addressing these challenges, the Riyadh Municipality launched 'Humanising the City' to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment. This initiative focuses on optimizing pavements and rethinking urban layouts to enhance public safety and reduce traffic congestion. The concept of 'complete streets' is integral to this plan, aiming to balance transportation needs with environmental, societal, and economic considerations.



A key example of this new approach is the Al Khaldiah pavement, part of a broader strategy to integrate pedestrian accessibility into Riyadh's road network. This project is geared towards enhancing infrastructure in line with Expo 2030 preparations, aiming for a city that supports both vehicular and pedestrian traffic harmoniously.

These developments highlight the growing recognition of the need for inclusive urban planning in Riyadh. The city's evolution underscores the importance of addressing gender dynamics and ensuring equitable access to urban spaces, reflecting a broader commitment to social and economic progress for all residents.



# Empowering Change

The film "Wadjda" offers a vivid portrayal of the day-to-day life of its eponymous young protagonist, Wadjda, as she navigates her way between school and home, subtly depicting the diverse realities of Arab women within the societal fabric. Despite the constraints of deeply entrenched class concepts and a male-dominated society, Wadjda emerges as a beacon of courage and independence, symbolizing the potential of Arab women. Her mother, another central figure in the narrative, embodies the complexities faced by many in adhering to devout Muslim beliefs while grappling with personal tribulations, such as her husband's decision to marry a second wife.

The director adeptly captures a sense of warmth and humanity within the film, while concurrently highlighting the stark gender divide that has historically characterized Saudi Arabian society. The depiction of public spaces, including mixed roads and the chaotic urban planning of Riyadh, serves as a metaphor for the societal order and its gender disparities.

This gender segregation, deeply ingrained in the Saudi interpretation of Islam, has historically led to the creation of extensive separate spaces exclusively for women. Scholars have noted how the design of religious institutions and public spaces has reinforced this separation, perpetuating the "Glass Wall" between men and women. However, recent developments, such as the Saudi government's 2019 announcement ending gender-segregated entrances in restaurants, mark a significant societal shift. This change is part of a broader initiative to modernize and liberalize the ultra-conservative kingdom.

In the realm of employment, the role of Saudi women has evolved markedly. The General Authority for Statistics reported in 2021 that women comprised 33.8% of the workforce, a notable increase indicative of their growing presence in the labor market.

The trajectory of female labor force participation reflects a broader societal change. Before the Arab Spring, women's employment was largely confined to gender-segregated spaces. However, there has been a steady increase in their participation, with the latest data from The World Bank indicating a rise to 27.8%. This trend, although not yet meeting the Saudi Vision 2030 target of 30%, shows promise. The introduction of the first anti-harassment law in 2018 further underscores the changing landscape, offering greater protection to women in the public sphere.

Despite these advances, the transition towards gender equality in Saudi Arabia is not without its challenges. The traditional social structure, where men are viewed as providers and women as caregivers, still holds significant sway. As women's roles evolve, there is a gradual shift in attitudes, yet resistance remains, particularly among some male family members who view these changes with skepticism.

The path to women's emancipation in Saudi Arabia is complex, marked by a mix of opportunities and obstacles. Some conservative elements within society, adhering to religious feminism, have staunchly opposed the liberalization efforts. This resistance underscores the varied viewpoints within Saudi Arabian society regarding women's rights and roles.

In summary, the journey towards women's empowerment in Saudi Arabia is multifaceted and ongoing. The government's reforms, societal shifts, and the increasing participation of women in the labor force are collectively reshaping the landscape, gradually dismantling the barriers to gender equality.

# Empowering Change



Female customers in a coffee shop  
BY: Al-Dabbagh for The New York Times

Women have been able to attend sporting events  
BY: Al-Dabbagh for The New York Times

A female barista.  
BY: Al-Dabbagh for The New York Times

The women's Saudi Driving School  
BY: Al-Dabbagh for The New York Times

A female market research manager  
BY: ATasneem Al Sultan for The New York Times

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