

# 'ROUND MIDNIGHT'

# CONTENTS

---

INTRO: ARCHITECTURE AND FICTION 001

CHAPTER 1: CARNAVAL 005

CHAPTER 2: INTO THE WOODS 031

CHAPTER 3: THROUGH THE HEART OF IT 065

CHAPTER 4: THE BOOGIE DOWN 081

Portfolio submitted as requirement for  
the Master of Architecture degree.

Published Columbia University GSAPP

Title: Round Midnight  
Author: Stephanie McMorran

Copyright 2022.

ISBN: 1-234-5-6-7-89

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

# THE INTRO:

## ARCHITECTURE & FICTION

(SPRING 2020)

In an analysis of architecture and fiction, the works of Rem Koolhaas already have a certain literary quality. Before choosing architecture, he had a career as a journalist, and his love of storytelling not only permeates his textual contributions to architectural practice but also his architecture. *Delirious New York* (1978) was his first text, and arguably what won him renown in the late 1970s.

His manifestos aside, what distinguishes Koolhaas and OMA from other architectural firms is an ability to both explore and exploit the generative aspect of the architectural process. What becomes clear in an analysis of his works in the latter half of the 20th century is that he, too, is fascinated with a notion of architecture as fiction.

The difficulty with writing a manifesto in the twilight of the 20th century is that the age is “disgusted with them”. Koolhaas claims that the fatal weakness of these manifestos is “their inherent lack of evidence” [1]. Yet the freedom allowed within the process of the artistic manifesto allow Koolhaas to make his point using techniques of storytelling without having to explicitly state it. In some ways the idea of *Delirious New York* as a manifesto is misleading because while it professes to explore the idea of Manhattanism, or the idea that the ideal condition for cities is congestion, what he is actually exploring is the fiction inherent in the architectural object.

Koolhaas’s manifesto moves from Manhattan’s prehistory—covering not only the arrival of the Dutch, but also the development of the grid system. If every story—including “pre-history”—is fabricated (see Young, 39), what Koolhaas makes clear in the first chapter of *Delirious New York* is that the context in which the architectural development of Manhattan takes place is also fabricated. The Manhattan Grid, “authored” by a group of people driven by speculative financial interests, is “the most courageous act of prediction in Western civilization” (Koolhaas, 18).

It is a mental exercise, a “conceptual speculation” (Koolhaas, 19) in how best to facilitate the “buying, selling and improving of real estate” on the island of Manhattan (Koolhaas, 18). The grid also limits the conventional growth of Manhattan because the city is already fixed in place. The planning of the grid can never “describe a specific built configuration that is to remain static through the ages; it can only predict that whatever happens, it will have to happen somewhere within the 2,028 blocks” available (Koolhaas, 21).

The fabricated system of roads means that the only growth that can happen in Manhattan is a layering of different “episodes” that “contest each other through the medium of the Grid”. In other words, the grid is Manhattan’s primary manifesto. It becomes the prescribed text upon which the story of Manhattan will play out (Koolhaas, 21). If the architecture of Manhattan is fantasy, then the grid is the guiding framework for its development. When the system of the grid was being devised, the land it divided was “unoccupied”, the population it imagined was “conjectural”, the buildings it conceived of were “phantoms” and any human activity at the time of the 1811 plan was “nonexistent” (Koolhaas, 19). He writes,

The Grid’s two-dimensional discipline also creates undreamt-of freedom for three-dimensional anarchy. The Grid defines a new balance between control and de-control in which the city can be at the same time ordered and fluid, a metropolis of rigid chaos. (Koolhaas, 20).

The Grid as part of the prehistory makes it clear that fabrication is integral to the development of New York. The Manhattan grid is also indicative of the complexity of the notion of architecture as fiction. The Grid is a “conceptual speculation”, an architectural imagining that when actualized not only impacted peoples’ lives and the way they conceptualized and moved through space, but also a fiction which gave rise unto another fiction--the rise of the development of the skyscraper...

1. Rem Koolhaas. *Delirious New York*. The Monacelli Press, New York, 1994, p. 19.

*...which in turn raises the question of what the implications are for architecture that exists in a fabricated environment.*

C H A P T E R

ONE

C A R N A V A L



**VEJIGANTE:**  
BLACKNESS IS NON-MONOLITHIC



**CABALLERO:**  
DE-CENTERING THE EUROCENTRIC



**VIEJO:**  
CENTERING THE ELDERLY IN THE COMMUNITY; DESIGNING FOR ACCESSIBILITY



**L\*\*\*A:**  
QUEERING SPACE



**BOMBA:**  
CREATING A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE PUBLIC & PRIVATE

## THE CARNIVALESQUE AS TECHNIQUE: A MANIFESTO

At the end of July, the town of Loiza Aldea celebrates the Festival of Santiago Apostol. Although not technically Carnival, as the Festival does not take place in the week before the start of Lent, it is “Carnival” or carnivalesque in the way the Festival explores social taboo.

It is my understanding that historically, Carnival in Europe was a way to relieve social tension by allowing the more taboo aspects of public life a “period of license” or a “period of expression”. In the New World, this translated to periods where those made other by the colonial system could openly practice traditions under the guise of religious festivities.

The project asked, what if Carnival were permanent?

What if “transgression” and “taboo” were formally codified into public space? What if the “period of license” were to be made permanent?

PART 1

R I C A N  
S T R U C T I O N

*“Una nacion flotante  
entre dos puertos de  
contrabandear esperanzas...”  
-Luis Rafael Sanchez,  
La Guagua Aerea*



The Puerto Rican archipelago. The blue dots represent my two case studies.

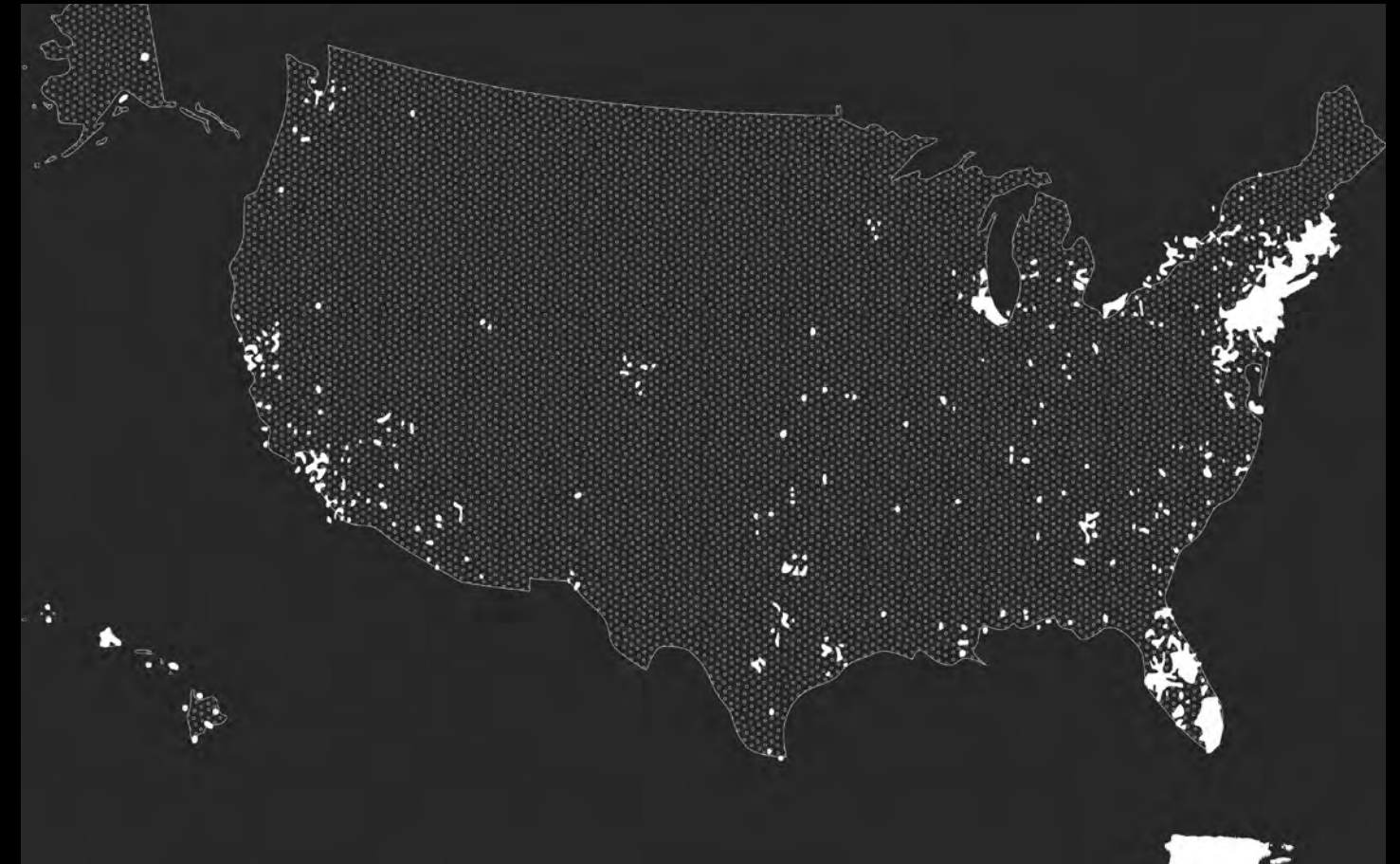


## IS DECOLONIZATION AN UNMAKING OR REMAKING?

This was the central question of a project which aimed to raise more questions than it could possibly begin to answer. The loose-endedness of the project was deliberate, an acknowledgment of the right for Puerto Ricans to make their own decisions with regard to their future as they so choose.

An acknowledgment, in other words, of the architect's limits.

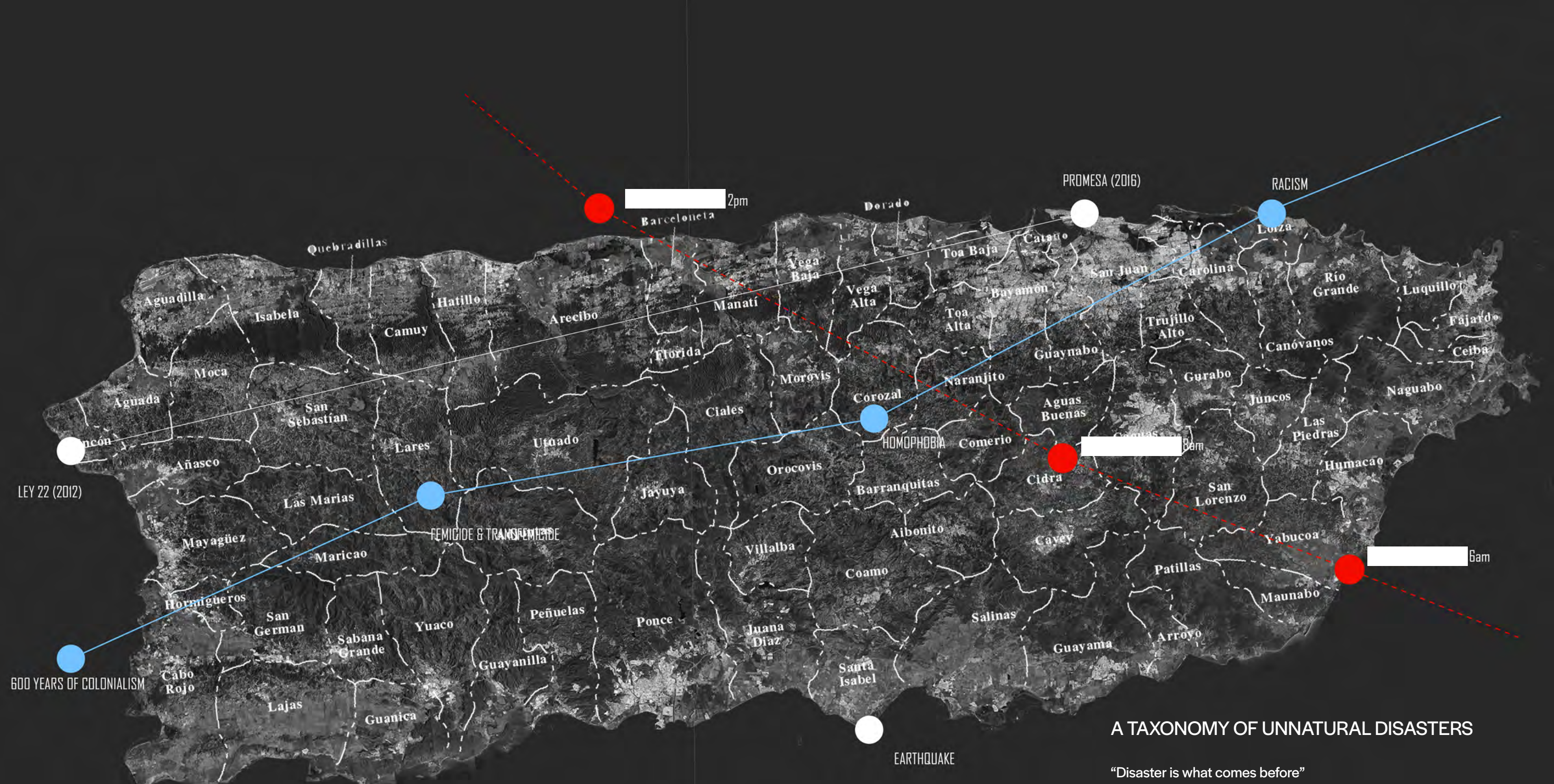
The project focused on using the diaspora as urban system, and under the question proposed above, the second main question was to interrogate the idea of a deterritorialized urbanism...



Map of the Puerto Rican diaspora across the 50 states.



The Puerto Rican archipelago. What happens to a map when lines are removed?



### A TAXONOMY OF UNNATURAL DISASTERS

“Disaster is what comes before”  
 -Kat Sibel, MSUP Graduate ‘22

If anything, the Hurricane unmasked the damage that the most unnatural of disasters, colonialism, has created over the course of 600 years. The next two pages outline, in collage, the different layers of disaster unmasked by the Hurricane in 2017.



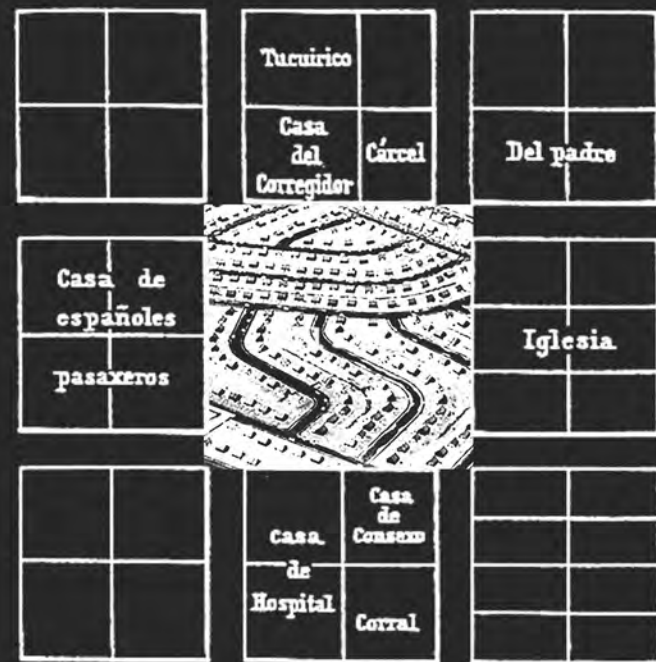
After Juracon. Nature as decolonizing force.



OPERACION MANOS A LA OBRA (Operation Bootstrap).



Who left? The great exportation of Afro-Indigenous Puerto Ricans.



The colonial imaginary writ large-- urbanism and colonial violence.

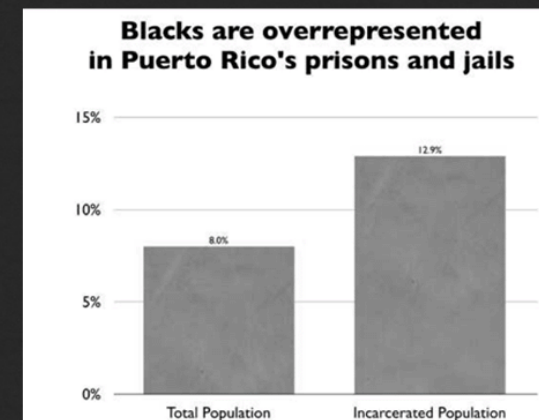


The colonial imaginary writ small - American-style suburban home

STORY | [the guardian](#) | OCTOBER 16, 2017  
 'They Believe We're Criminals': Black Puerto Ricans Say They're a Police Target

Dominicans in Puerto Rico allege police brutality

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS  
 OCT 17, 2018 AT 3:00 PM  
 SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Dominican immigrants face police brutality, discrimination and other rights abuses on a daily basis in Puerto Rico, a Dominican diplomat said Sunday on the island, where many migrants come seeking jobs or a path to the U.S. mainland.  
 The number of abuses has risen as more migrants cross the 80-mile (50-kilometer) strait from the Dominican Republic, the more affluent U.S. territory, Dominican Vice Consul Franklin Gudiño told [The Associated Press](#).

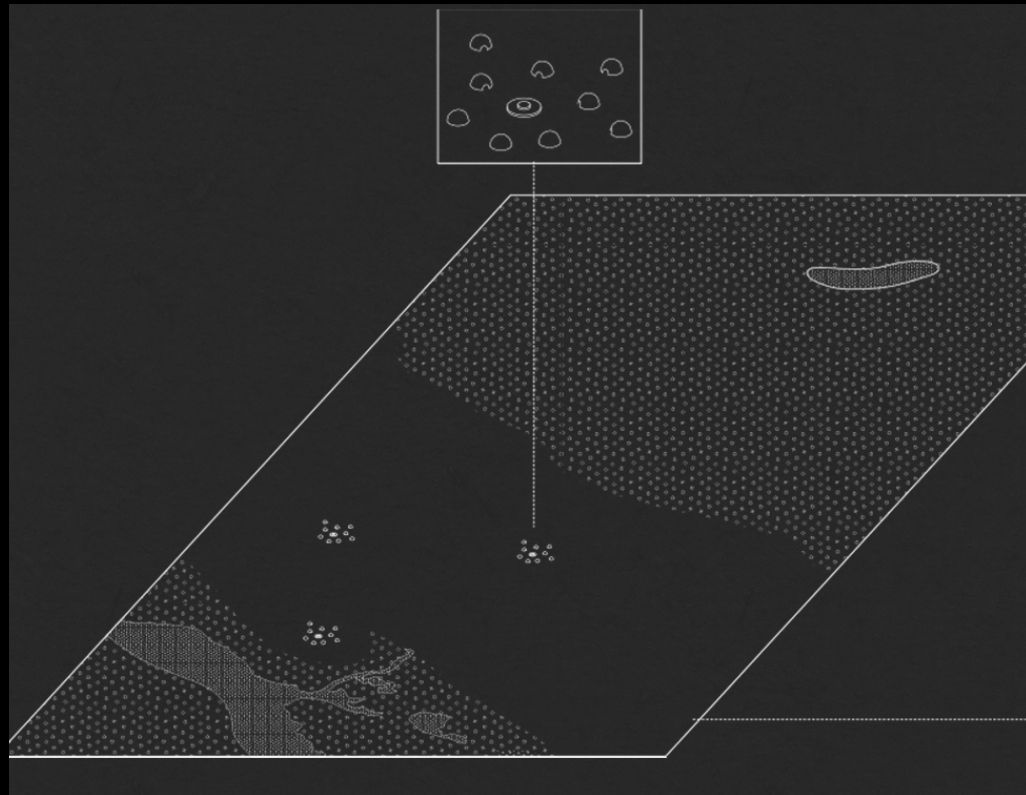


7 personas transgénero asesinadas en Puerto Rico

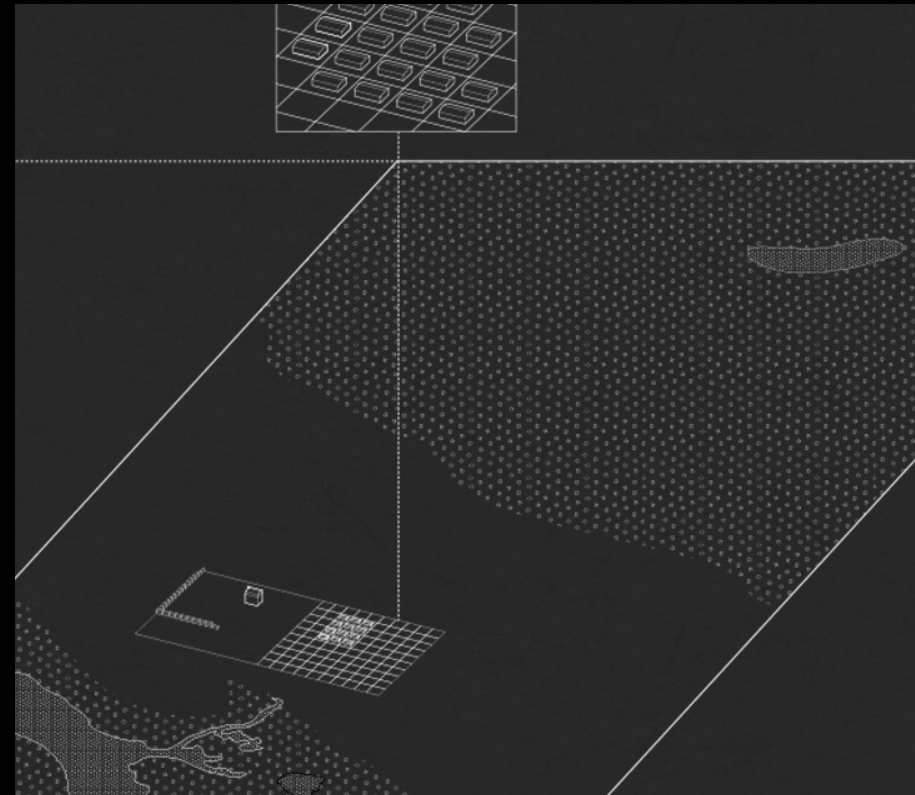
Estas muertes estremecieron a la comunidad trans en la isla, en menos de un año, según los casos que trascendieron públicamente entre febrero de 2020 y enero de 2021.



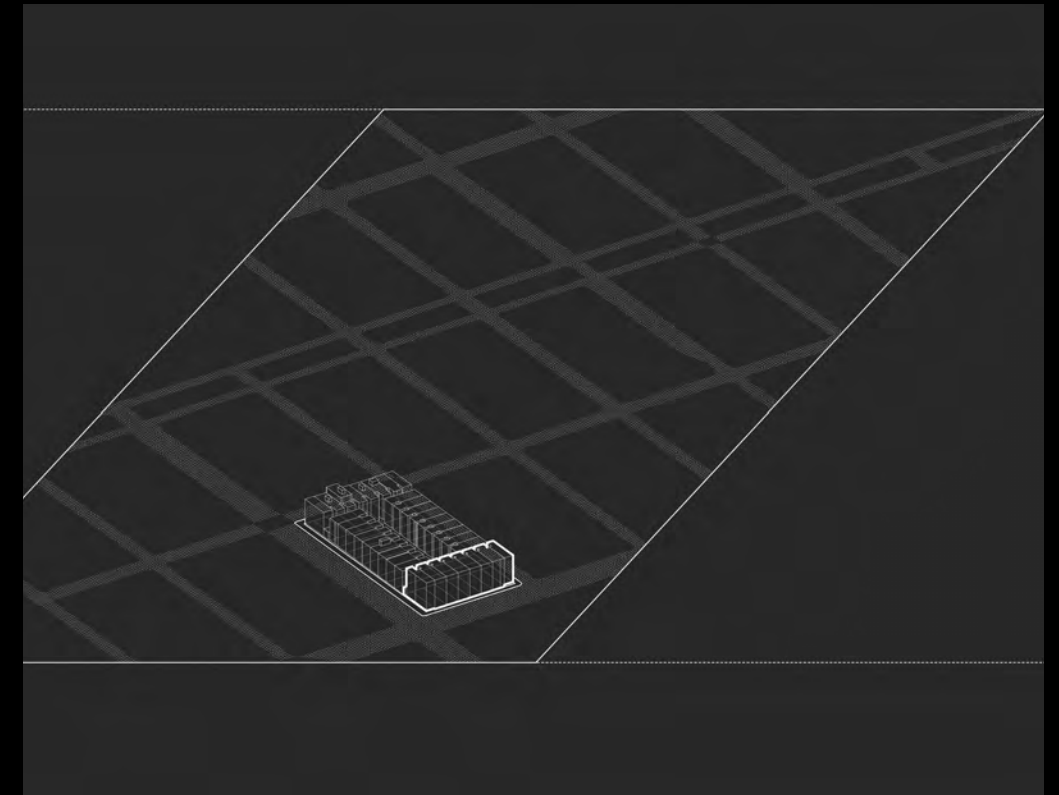
The consequences of marginalization



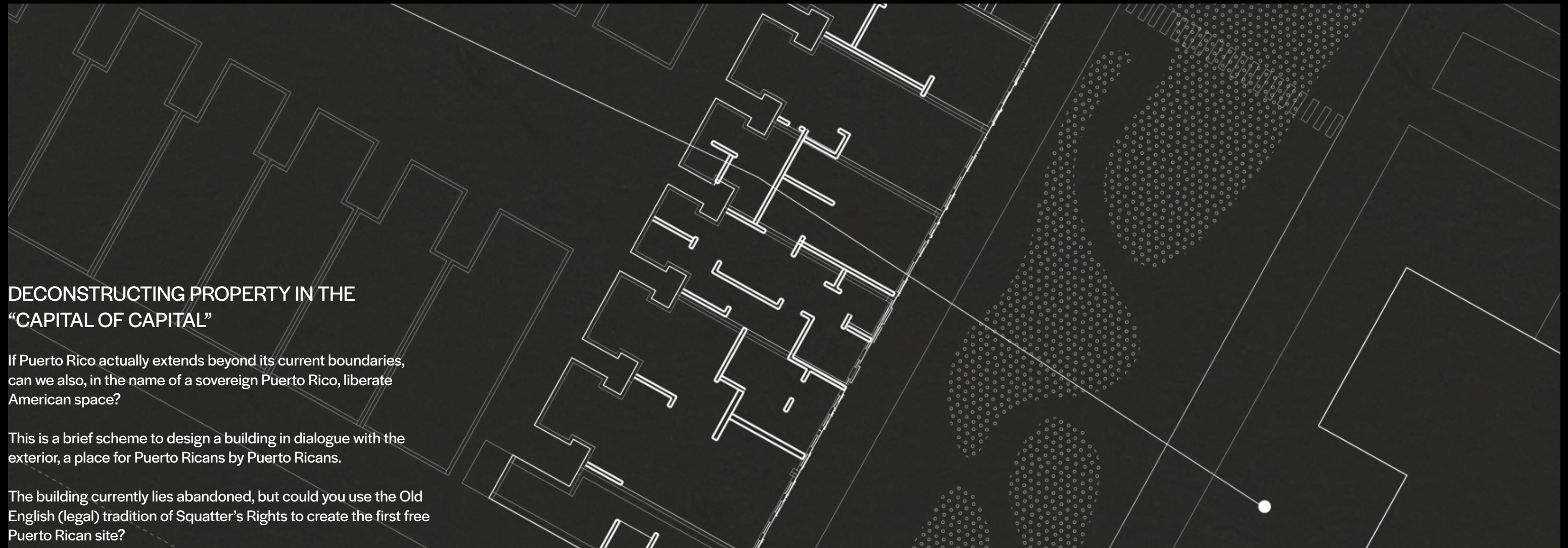
What existed before private property?



Where did the idea of property come from? Manorialism in NYC.



How has the evolution of private speculation shaped public space?

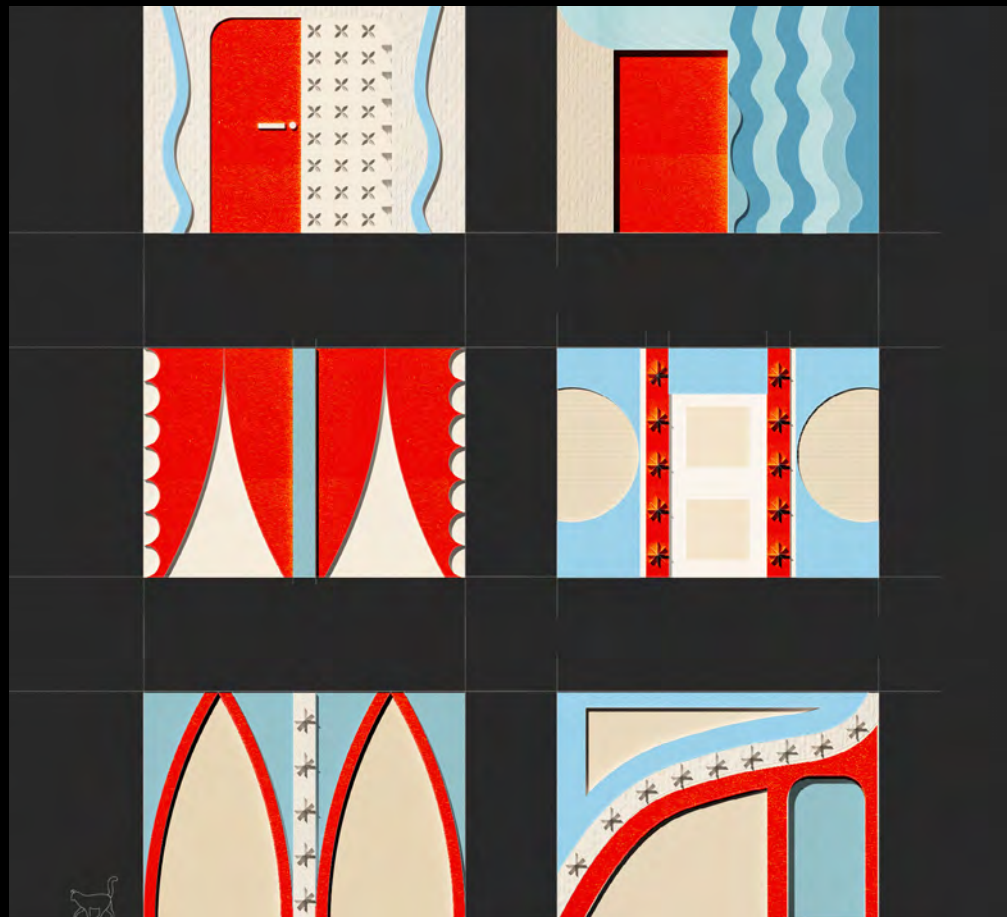


## DECONSTRUCTING PROPERTY IN THE “CAPITAL OF CAPITAL”

If Puerto Rico actually extends beyond its current boundaries, can we also, in the name of a sovereign Puerto Rico, liberate American space?

This is a brief scheme to design a building in dialogue with the exterior, a place for Puerto Ricans by Puerto Ricans.

The building currently lies abandoned, but could you use the Old English (legal) tradition of Squatter’s Rights to create the first free Puerto Rican site?



Challenging Western ideas of ornament & symmetry in details. Loiza, PR.



Plan view.



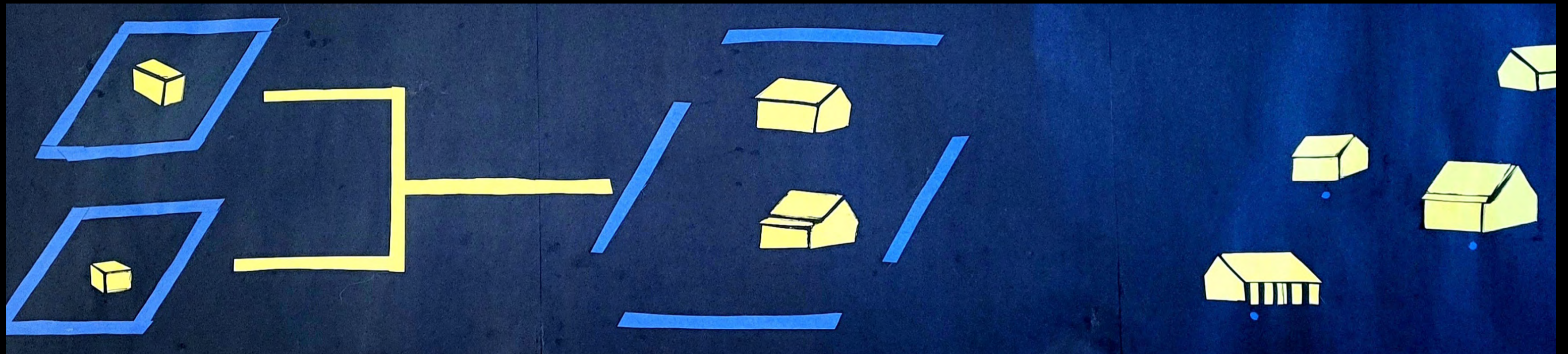
The section through the Lakou. Analysis of the lakaye-lakou relationship.

## A NOTE ON THE USE OF HAITIAN CREOLE

The spatial setup of my proposed urban scheme was as follows:

LA CALLE - LAKAYE - LAKOU - LA BATEY

The use of Haitian Creole was deliberate. The “Lakou” in particular was instrumental in resisting capitalism and the reinstatement of slavery after Haitian independence in 1804. The language itself often gets knocked as “pidgin” French, but is very close to African languages and also was central in the successful slave rebellion which led to the creation of the first free black republic.

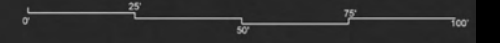
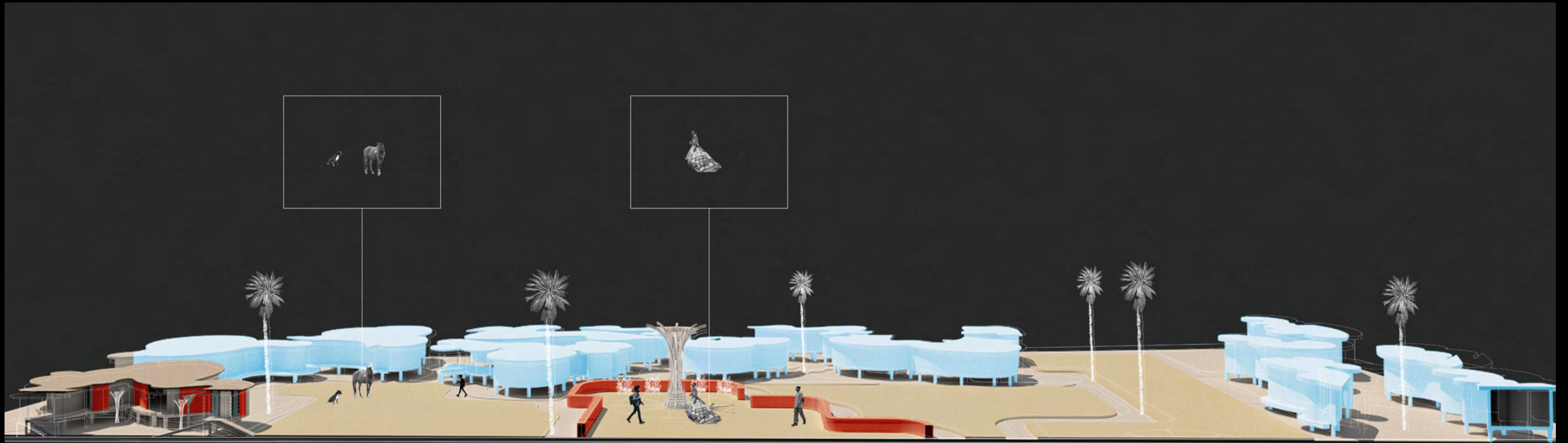


## A NOTE ON THE MAKING OF THE DRAWINGS

A crucial part of the project was a recognition that I, too, was colonized and when prompted by a critic as to what space might look like without private property, I also could not envision it.

As such, I turned away from drawing and started to do experiments with construction paper. The drawing above goes through the process of manually deconstructing private property in Loiza.

The “making” pictured above was the inspiration behind the style of representation as was Haitian pointillisme.



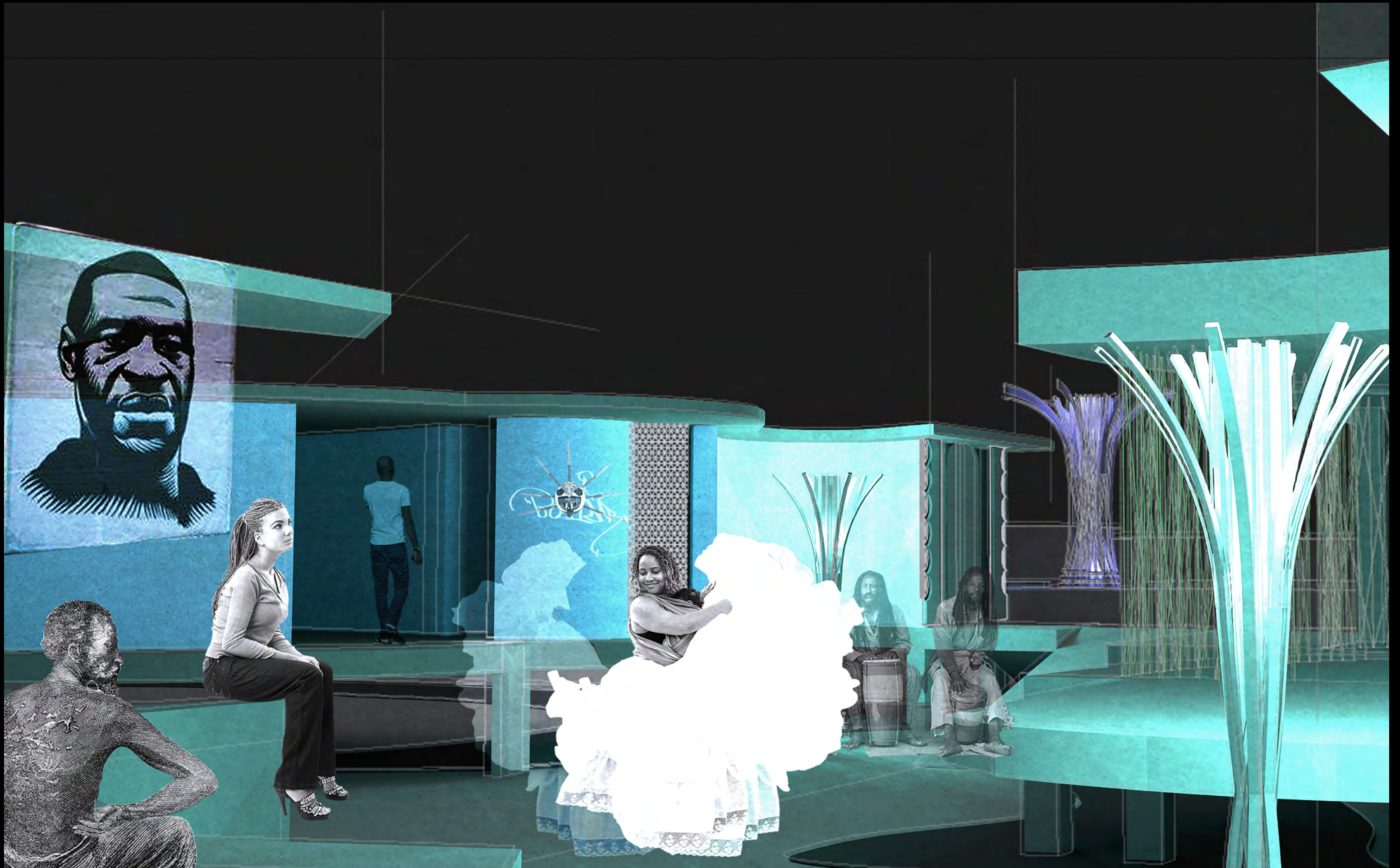
SECTION 2



Site Section. Parcelas Suarez, Loiza Municipio, PR.







C H A P T E R

TWO

I N T O  
T H E  
W O O D S

PART 1

A N O T H E R

A M E R I C A N A

*A magic rock.  
The Black Atlantic.  
Our protagonist goes roller  
skating in  
DutchessCounty...*

## ANCESTRAL // PRACTICE

It has been my experience in this country that you are either forced to choose a side when determining your racial identity or that the label is forced onto you.

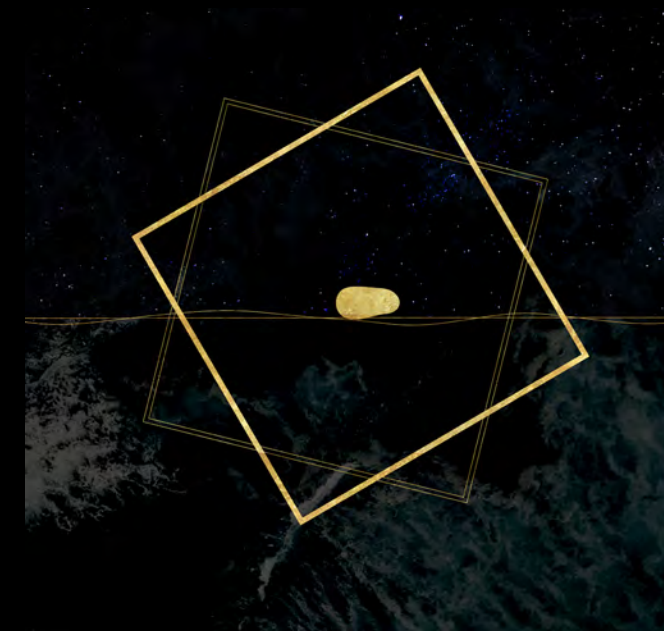
As someone whose ancestors come from many different places I wanted to find connections - a way to celebrate every part of my heritage - and by extension to disrupt the racial binaries.

My ancestral practice was to decolonize ways of knowing; to develop an "epistemology of the Atlantic", or the ocean that connects all of my ancestors - from Europe to the Caribbean - and my own family's migration from New Jersey to Massachusetts.

An epistemology of the Atlantic is one that is purely imaginative - that embraces the mystery of the way the world works rather than seeking to understand it.

Inspired by the work of Torkwase Dyson, the collages represent my own mental exercise in trying to decolonize the way I thought of myself and my ancestors' journey across the Atlantic.

Using a small rock that I stumbled upon at the beach, I pretended that it was a way to get in touch with the spirits of people who had gone before me.

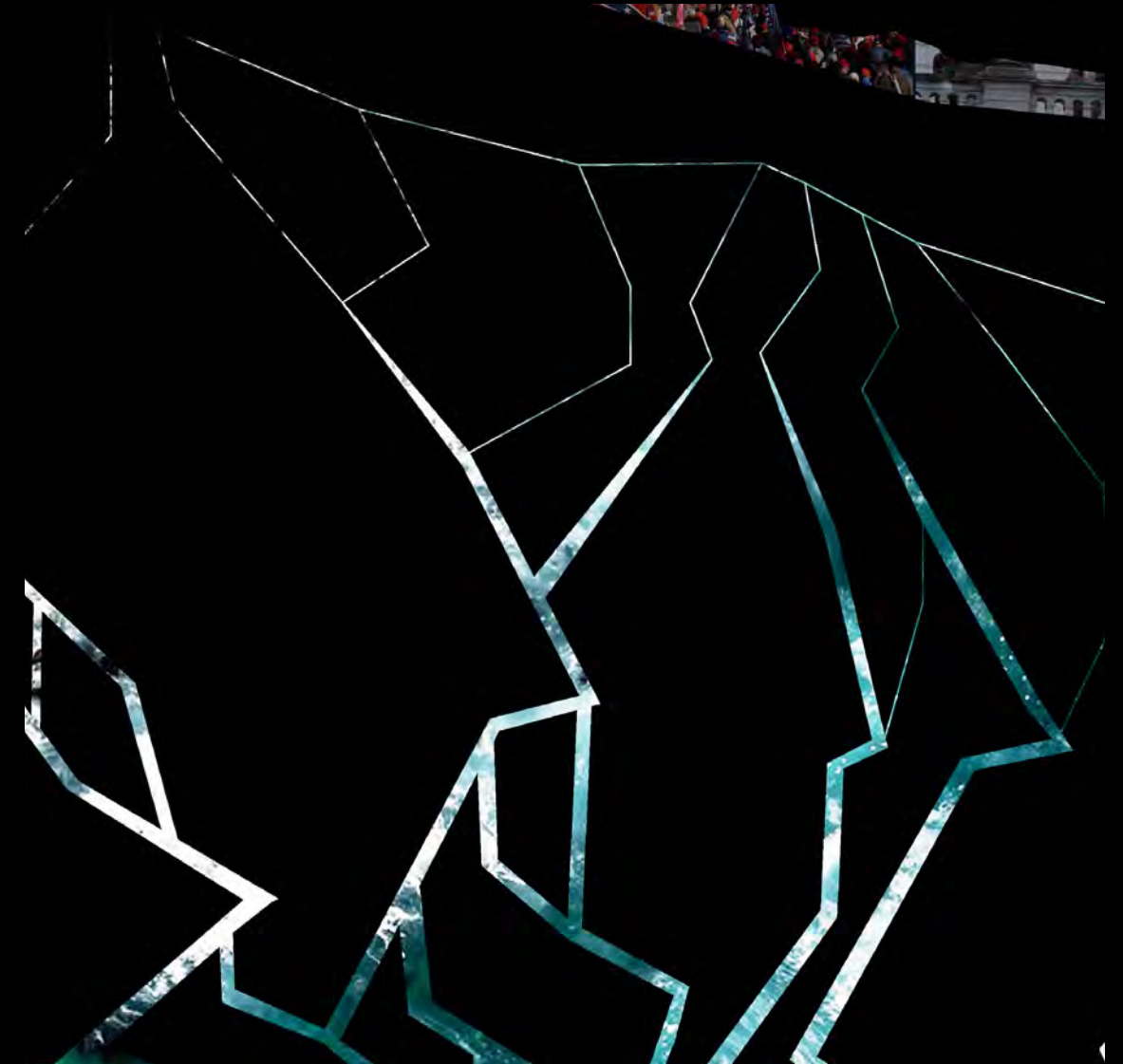


As I went through the collages, the focus started to turn away from my own ancestry to the idea of water as a means of liberation.

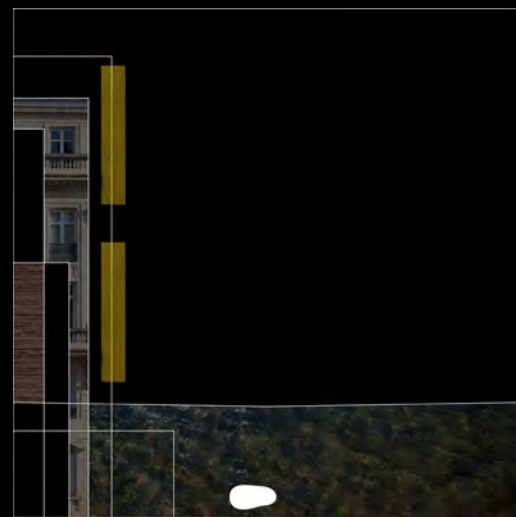
I was also trying to think about the commonalities found in my heritage- the common thread of once having been property - as part of the African and Jewish diasporas.



Water as liberation



Water and its potential to erode what seems to be permanent.



Urban Atlantics



Re-memory.



Convergence of diaspora.



Weaving sweetgrass.



Oyster shell angels.



Thanksgiving

**ANCESTRAL PRACTICE & RE-ROOTING IN THE  
LANDSCAPE // KYLIE WALKER**

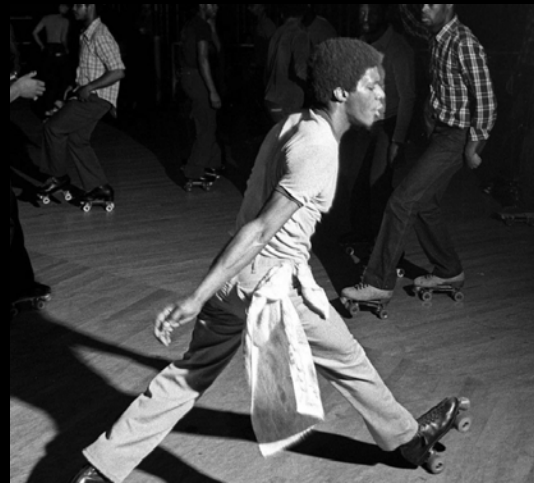
Ancestral Practice exercises by Kylie Walker exploring her familial ties to the landscape of the American South.



Above: Black recreation in the rural environment [Drawing by Kylie Walker]. Below: Black recreation in the urban environment. The project looked at roller skating as ancestral practice.



@NYTimes



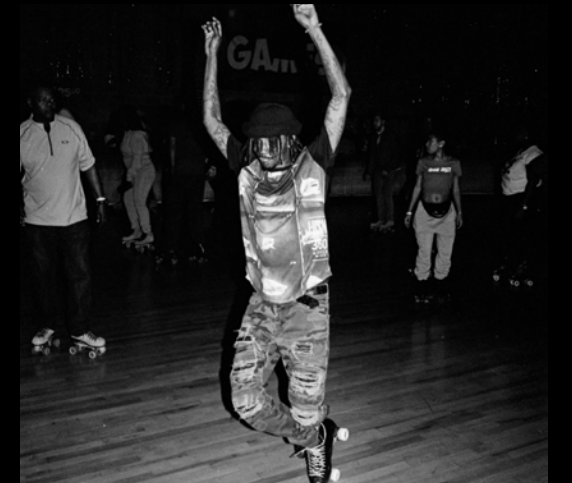
@NYTimes



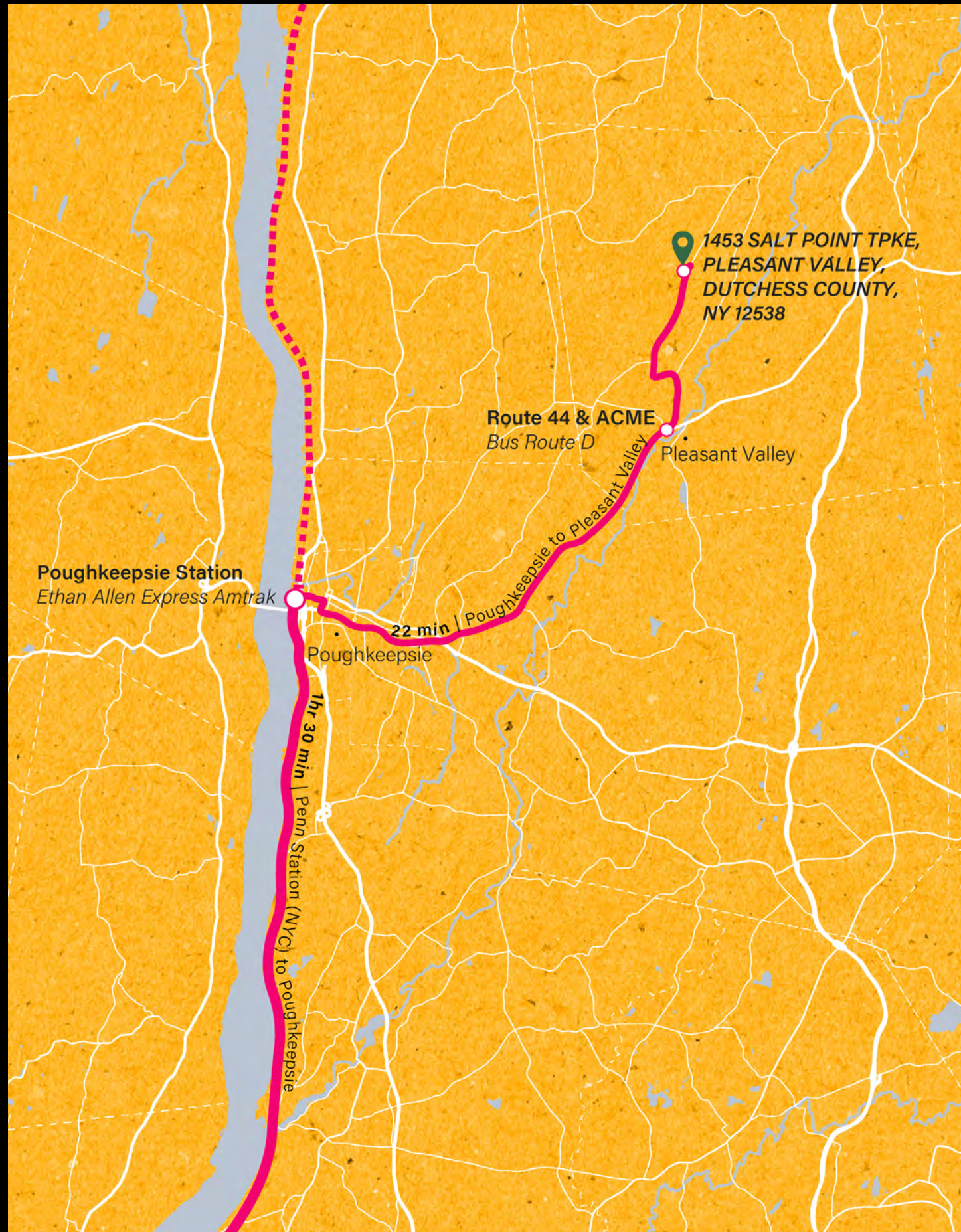
@NYTimes



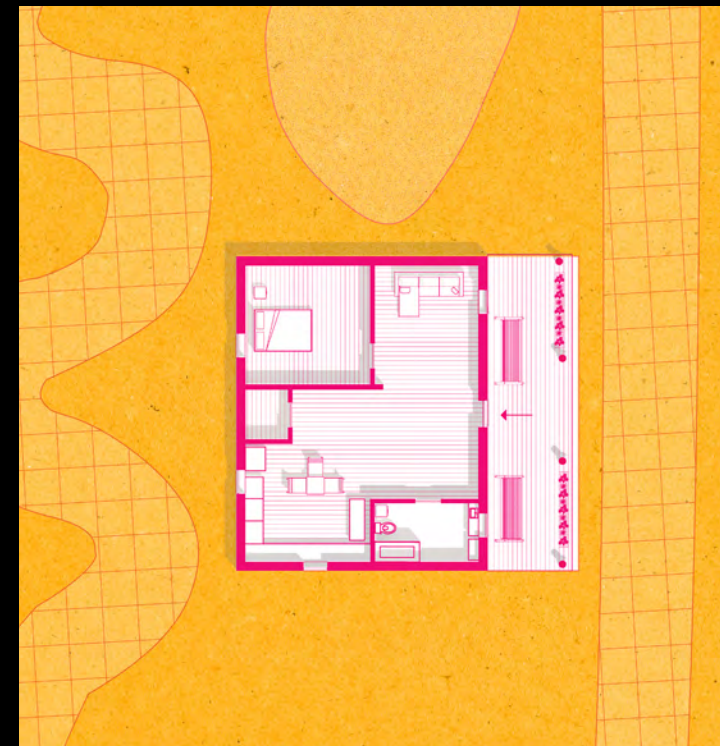
@NYTimes



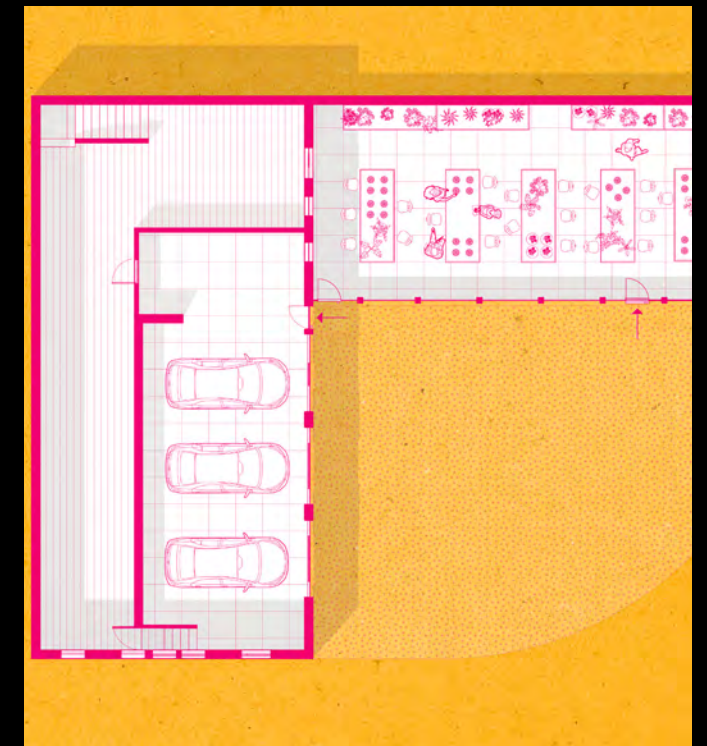
@NYTimes



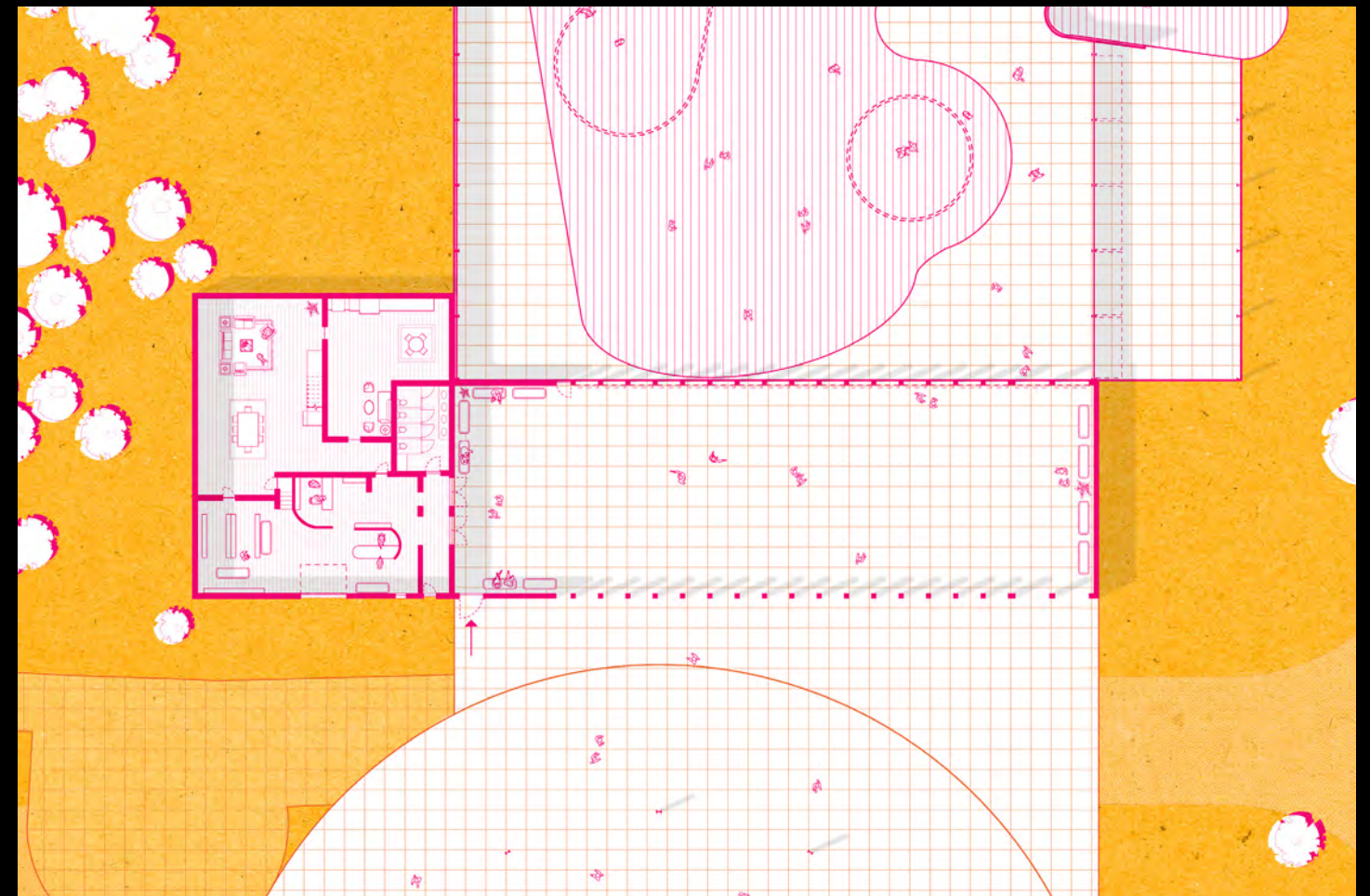
A proposed route to the project site from the nearest Metro-North rail station.  
Drawing by Kylie Walker.



Redesigning the houses on site for use by maintenance and a small community of skaters. Drawing by Kylie Walker & Stephanie McMorran.

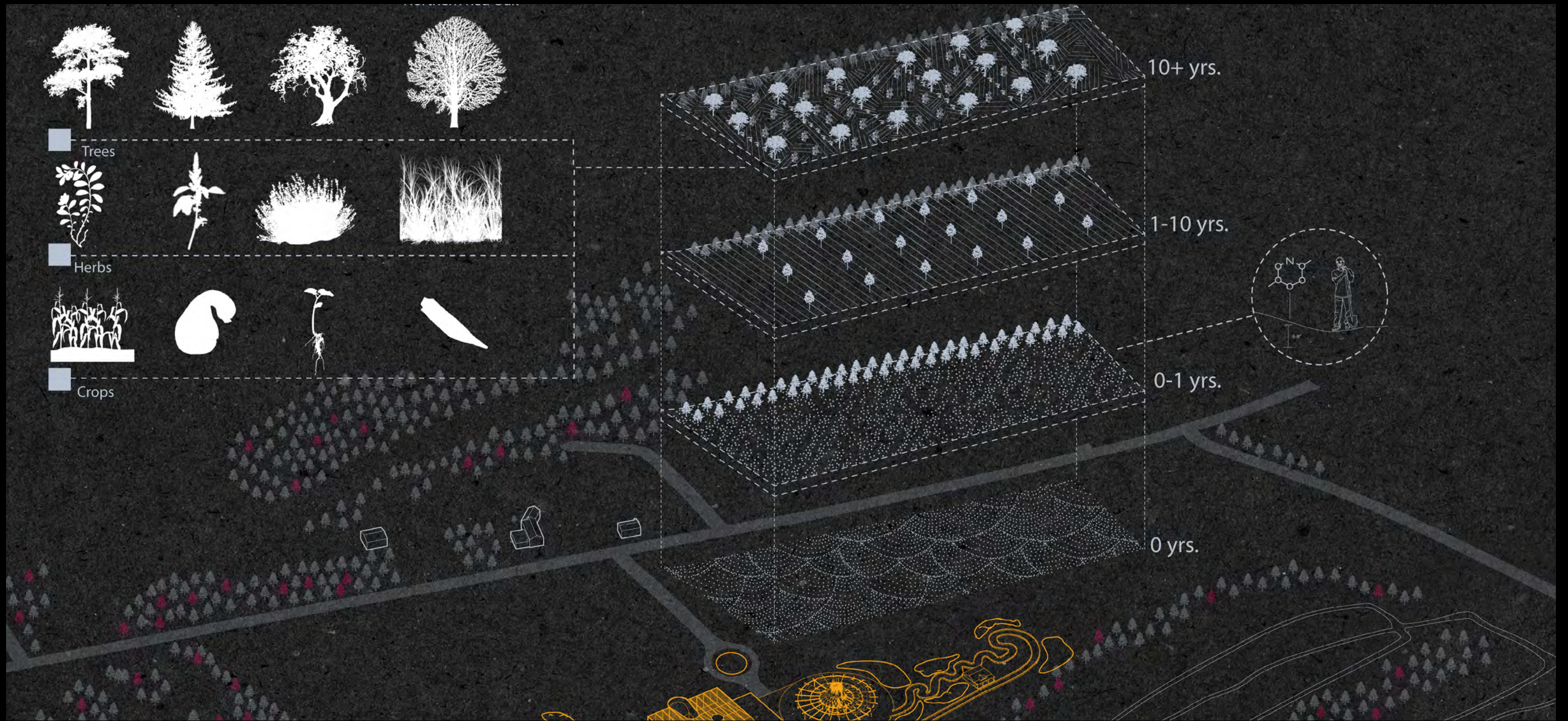


Can you grow okra and plantain in Northern New York? YES! A view of the greenhouse. Drawing by Kylie Walker & Stephanie McMorran.



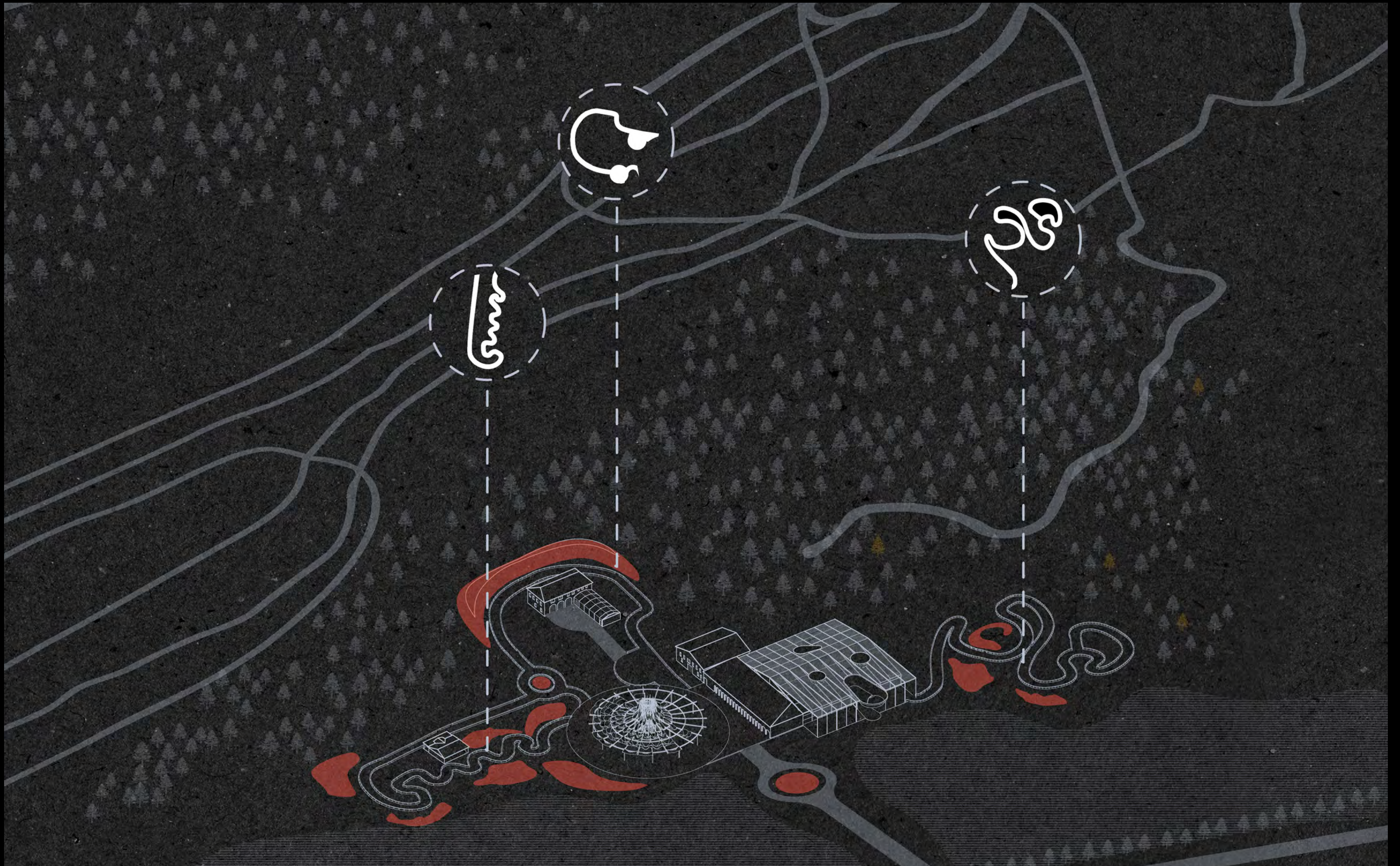
A view of the main rink. Drawing by Stephanie McMorran & Kylie Walker.





**SITE DEVELOPMENT & PERMACULTURE PLANNING**

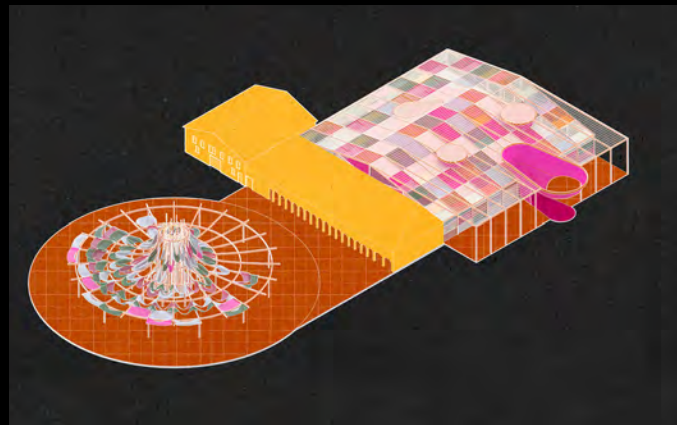




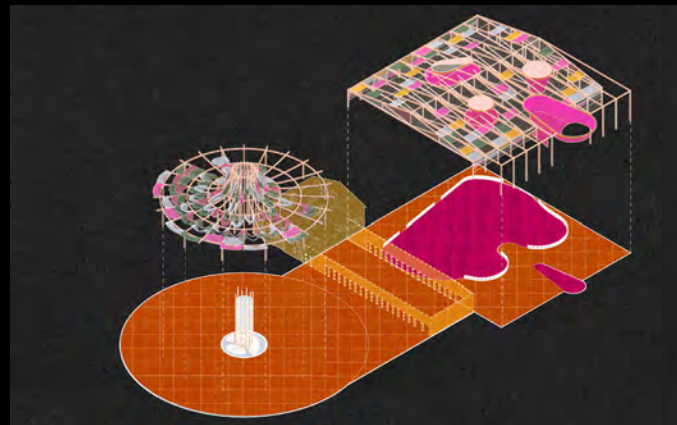
Close-up of the pathways.



THE RINK AT NIGHT & OTHER PERSPECTIVES by KYLIE WALKER.



Axonometric of the rinks.



Exploded Axonometric.



Inside the rink.



Until the break of dawn.



Site overview, 1453 Salt Point Turnpike.

PART 3

1 0 4 - 1 / 2

S T R E E T

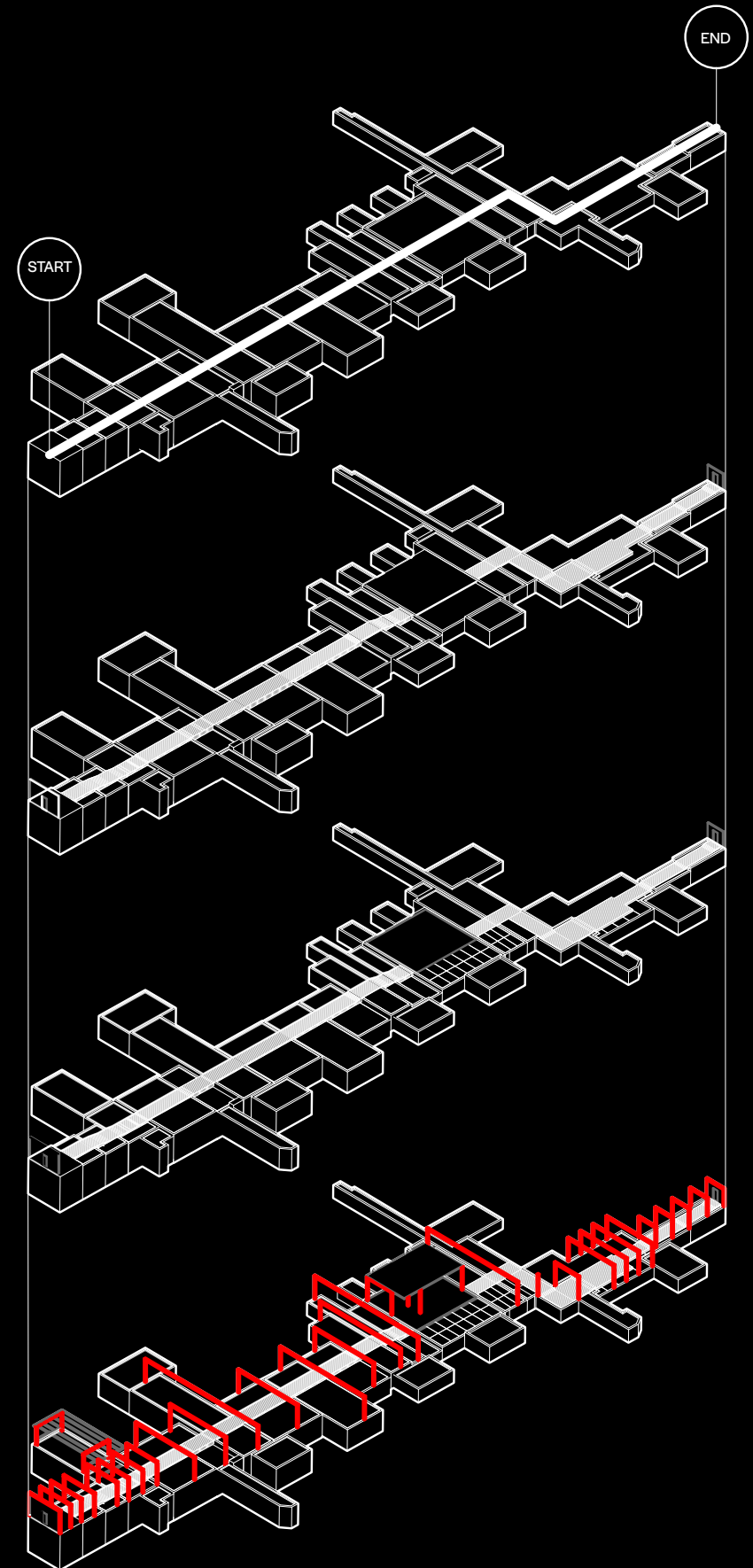
*A secret corridor and  
A midnight garden...*

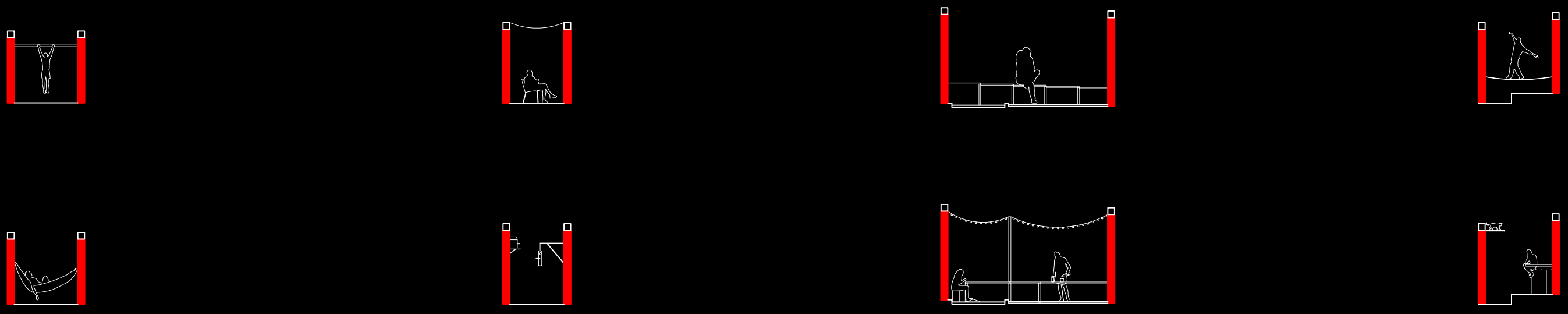
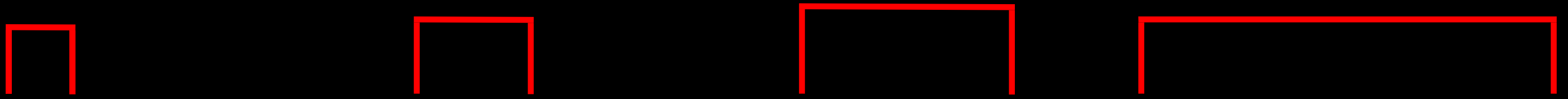
*Our protagonist gets lost in  
an urban void...*

## A PASSAGEWAY TO RIVERSIDE [PARK]

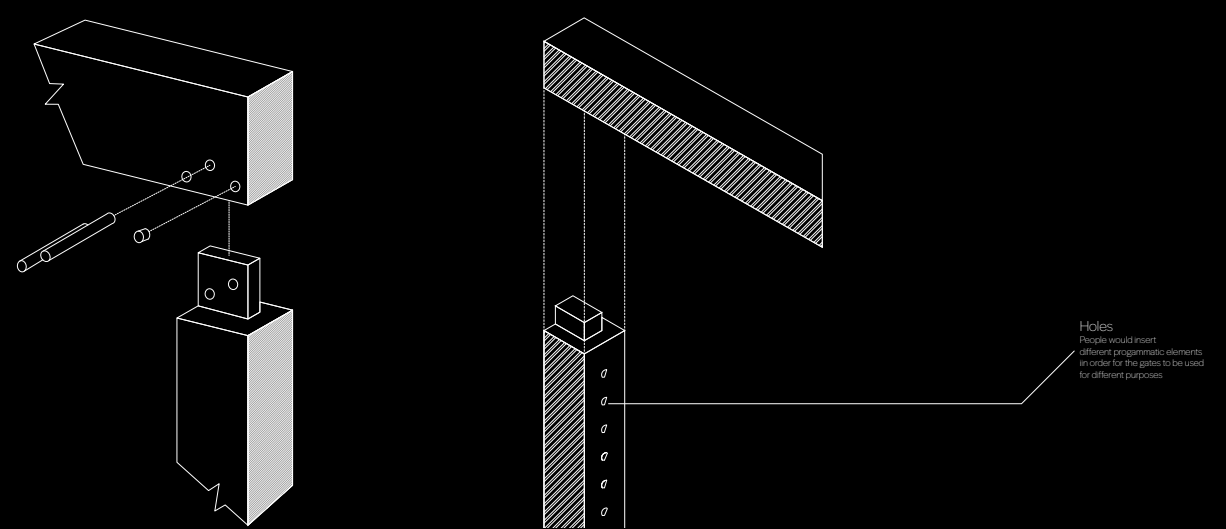
The project site was located on the Upper West Side bounded by 104th and 105th streets to the north and south and West End Avenue and Riverside Drive.

Initially conceived as a walkway through the block connecting Riverside Park to the more residential West End Avenue, during the COVID-19 pandemic was revised to have a dual function as an intimate park space. The project also experimented with the idea of user-driven program.

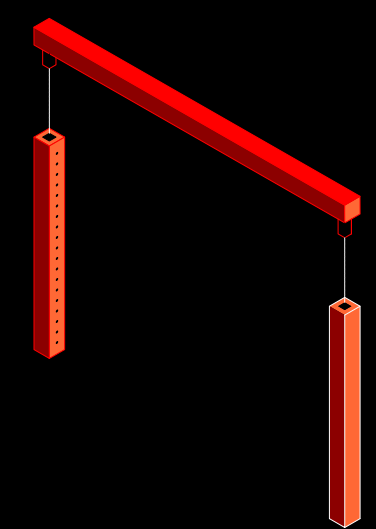




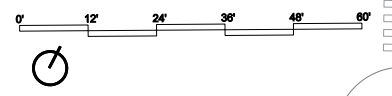
Co-creating architecture with the public.



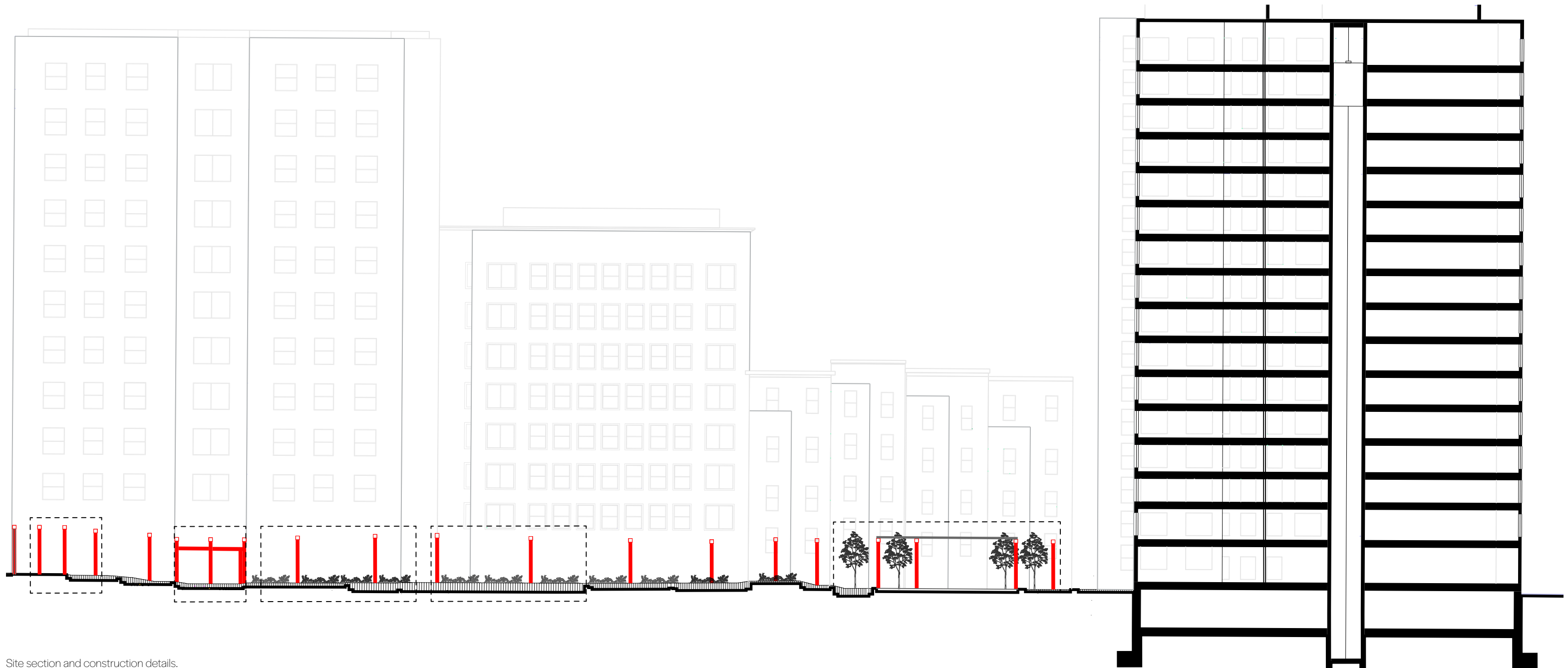
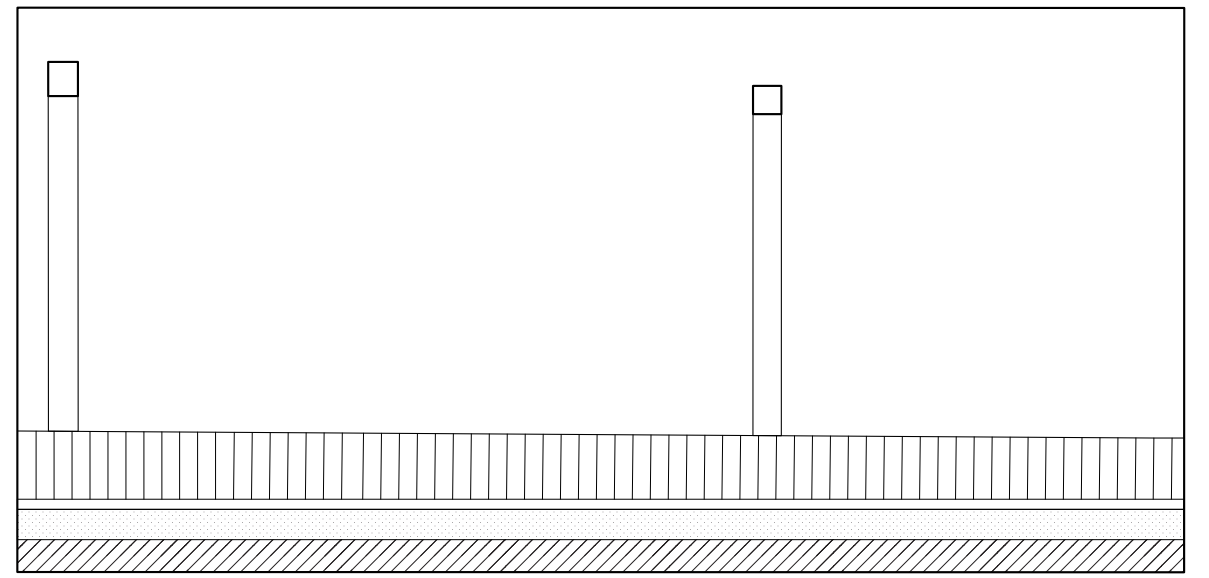
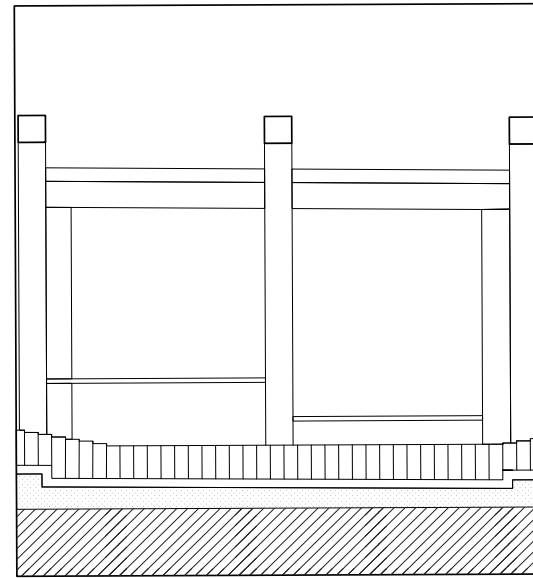
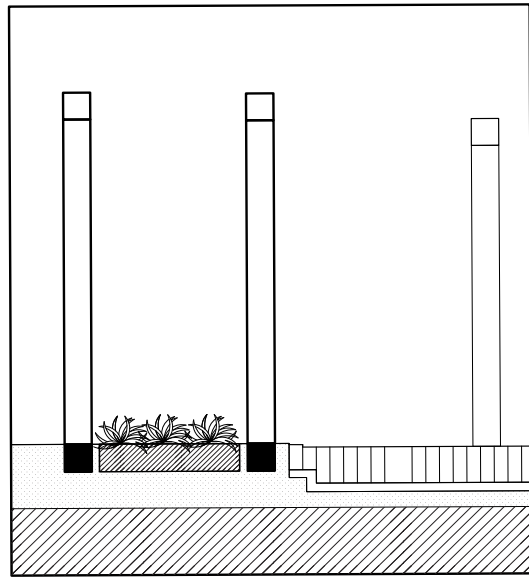
Holes  
People would insert  
different programmatic elements  
in order for the gates to be used  
for different purposes



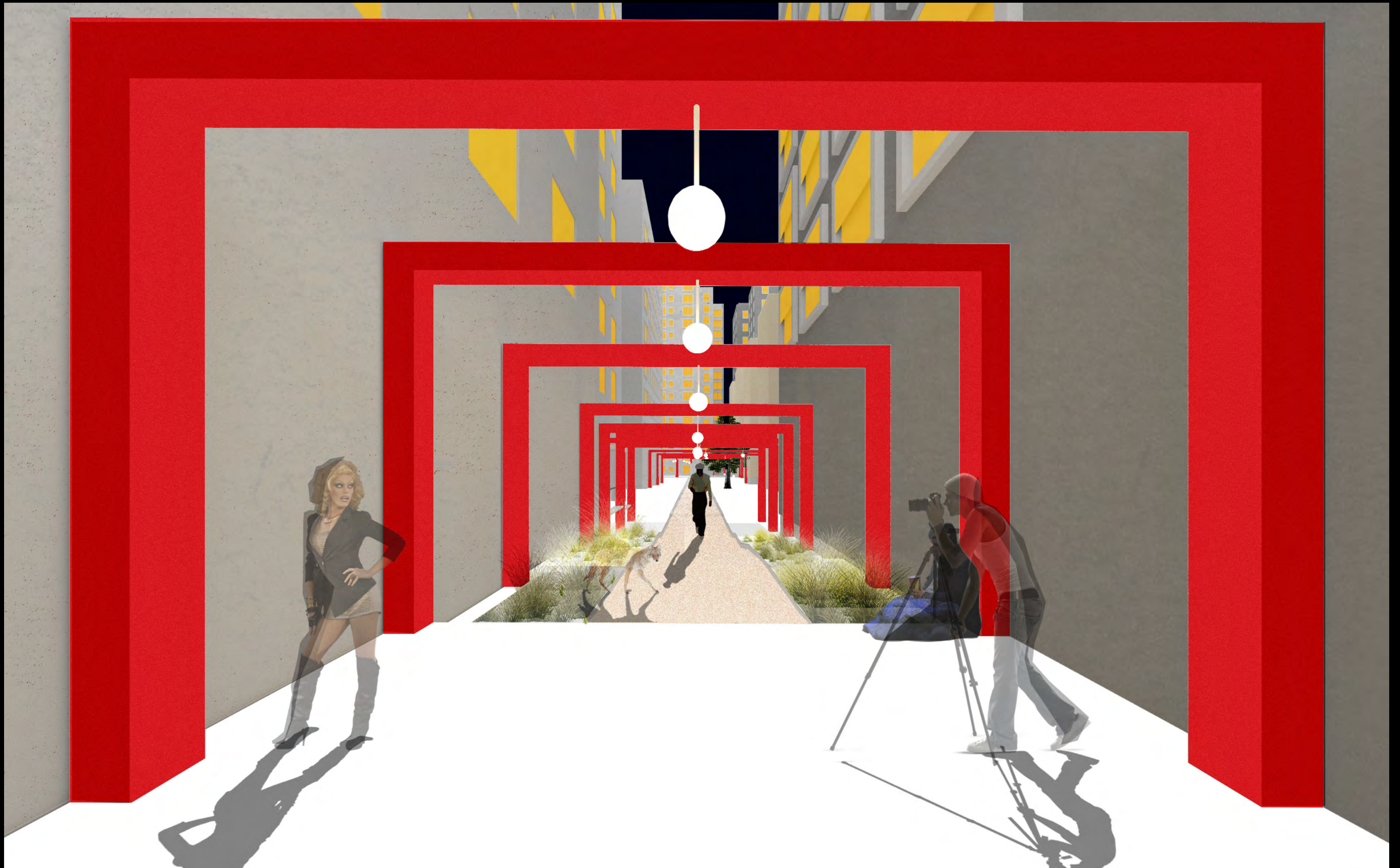
Colored axonometric close-up of the gate & its construction.







Site section and construction details.



C H A P T E R

THREE

T H R O U G H

T H E

H E A R T

O F

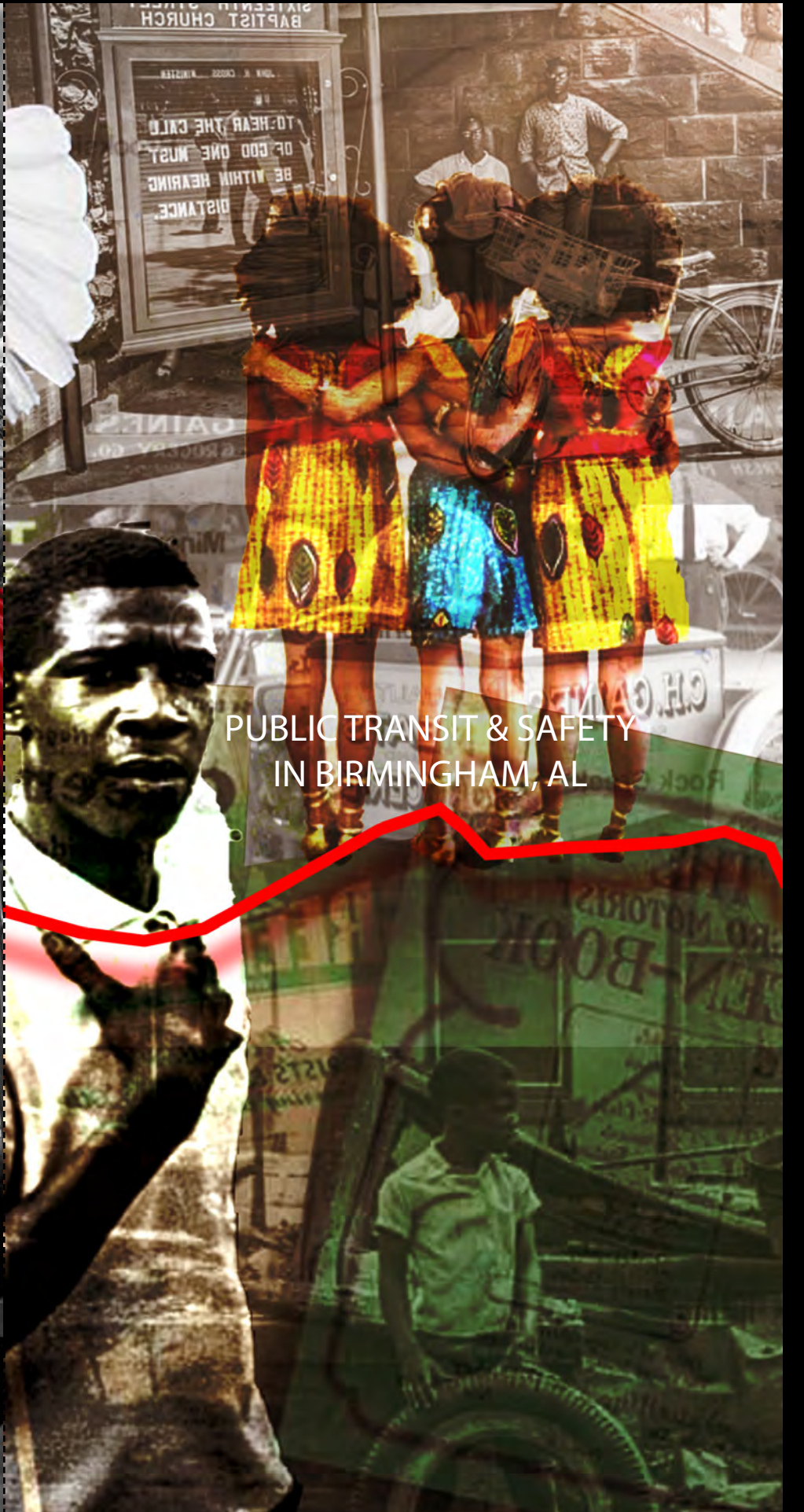
I T



THE IMPACT OF I-65 and I-85  
IN MONTGOMERY, AL



SUBWAY BALLET



PUBLIC TRANSIT & SAFETY  
IN BIRMINGHAM, AL

Professor Justin Garrett Moore  
Partners: Trenton Scott  
and Kayla Heard  
(TUSKEEGEE UNIVERSITY)  
FALL 2021

**P A R T 1**

**S U B W A Y  
B A L L E T**

*The Invisible Man  
decides to build a secret  
subway line through the  
big apple...*

## THE INVISIBLE MAN HAS A PLAN...

[or, what happens when the urban narrative is black?]

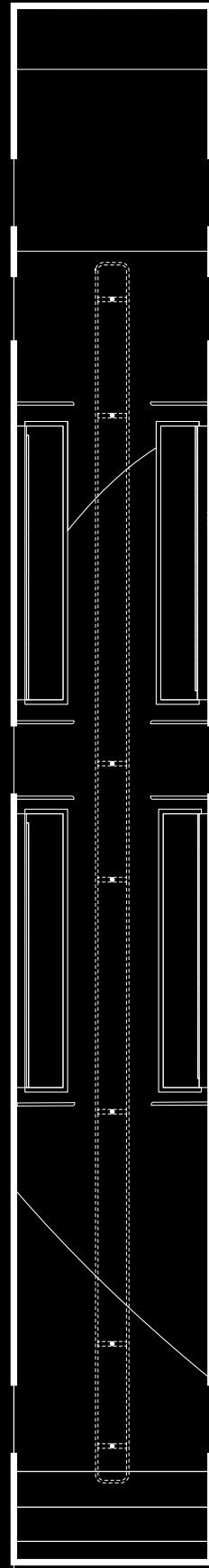
*From an interview between SM and R.J. Ellison, a local tycoon, better known locally in Harlem as the Invisible Man.*

SM Can you tell our readers a bit more about yourself?

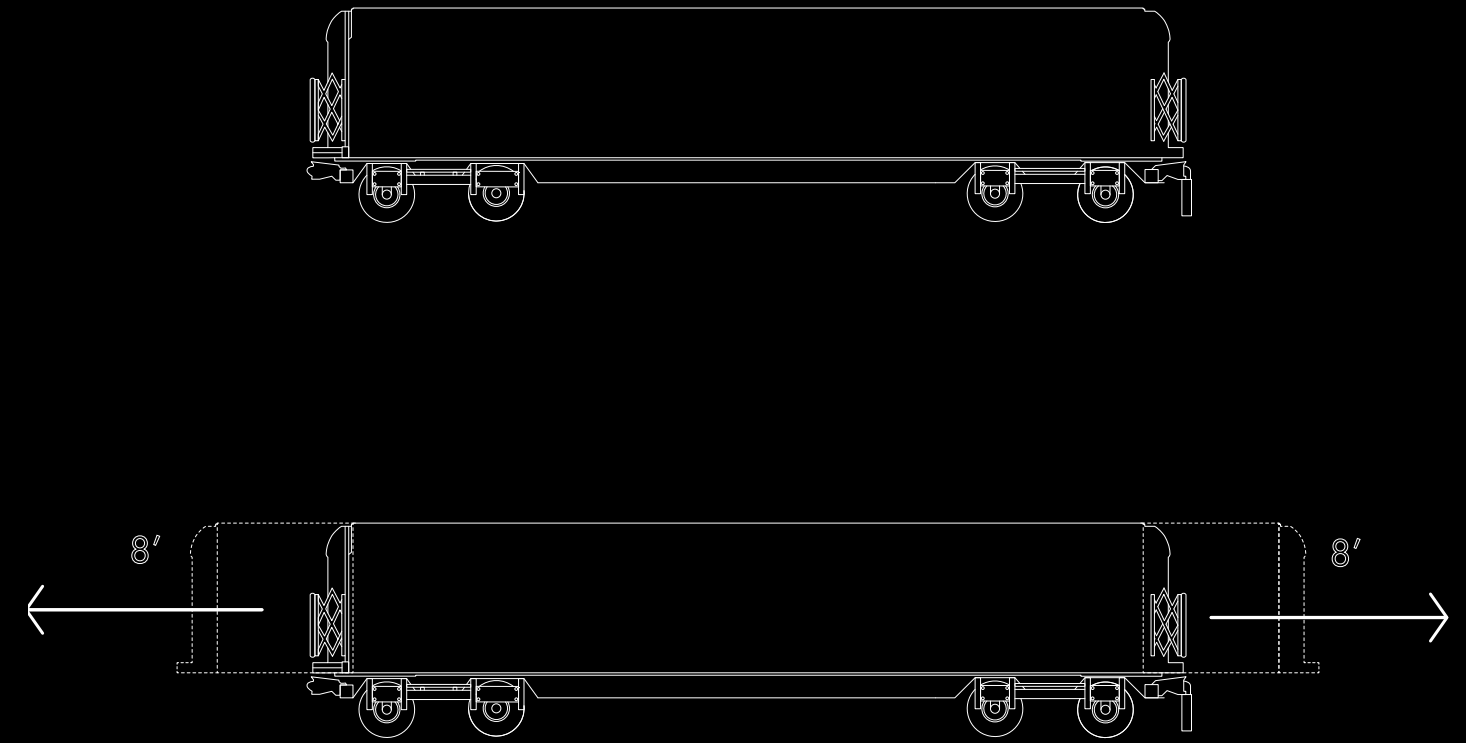
RJE Well, I am the proprietor of a subway line specifically designed to be a safe space for black performers to make money. The people on the Upper East side love it, especially because the last thing they want to do is go above E 96th to go listen to jazz in the evening. They're also willing to pay top dollar for such a unique and edgy experience. Currently, I have people working for me who do everything from graffiti artists to some of those old-time doo wop singers, but the main act is the subway dancers. I made my fortune in real estate and was able to use my money to construct a line directly under all of my buildings. Here is a map of the route. It turns out that if you throw enough money at the Sliwa administration you can truly do anything.



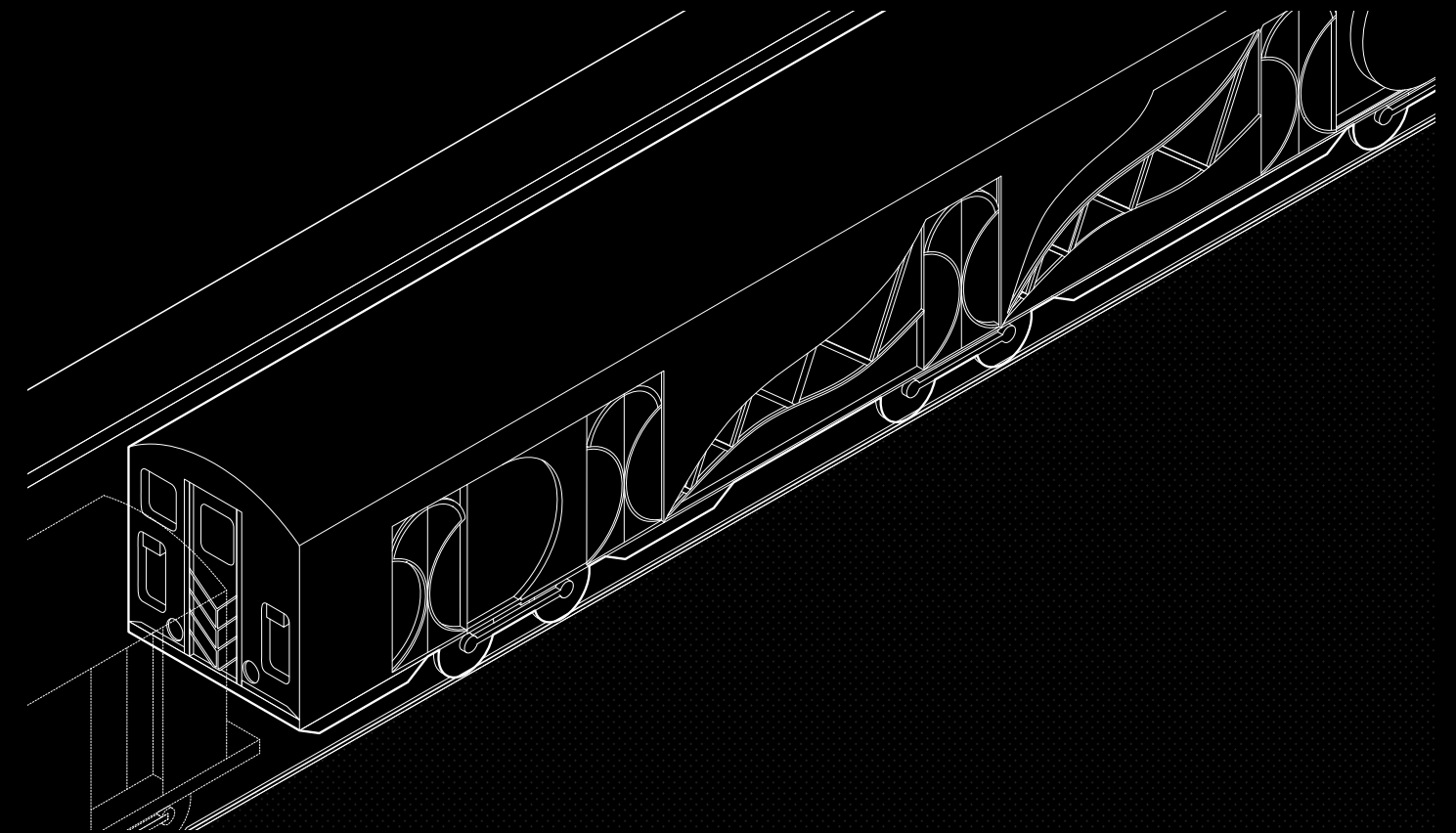
Subway Map. Courtesy of the Invisible Man Transit Authority. The line connects Brooklyn, Manhattan and the Bronx.



Proposed Car plan. Courtesy of the IMTA.

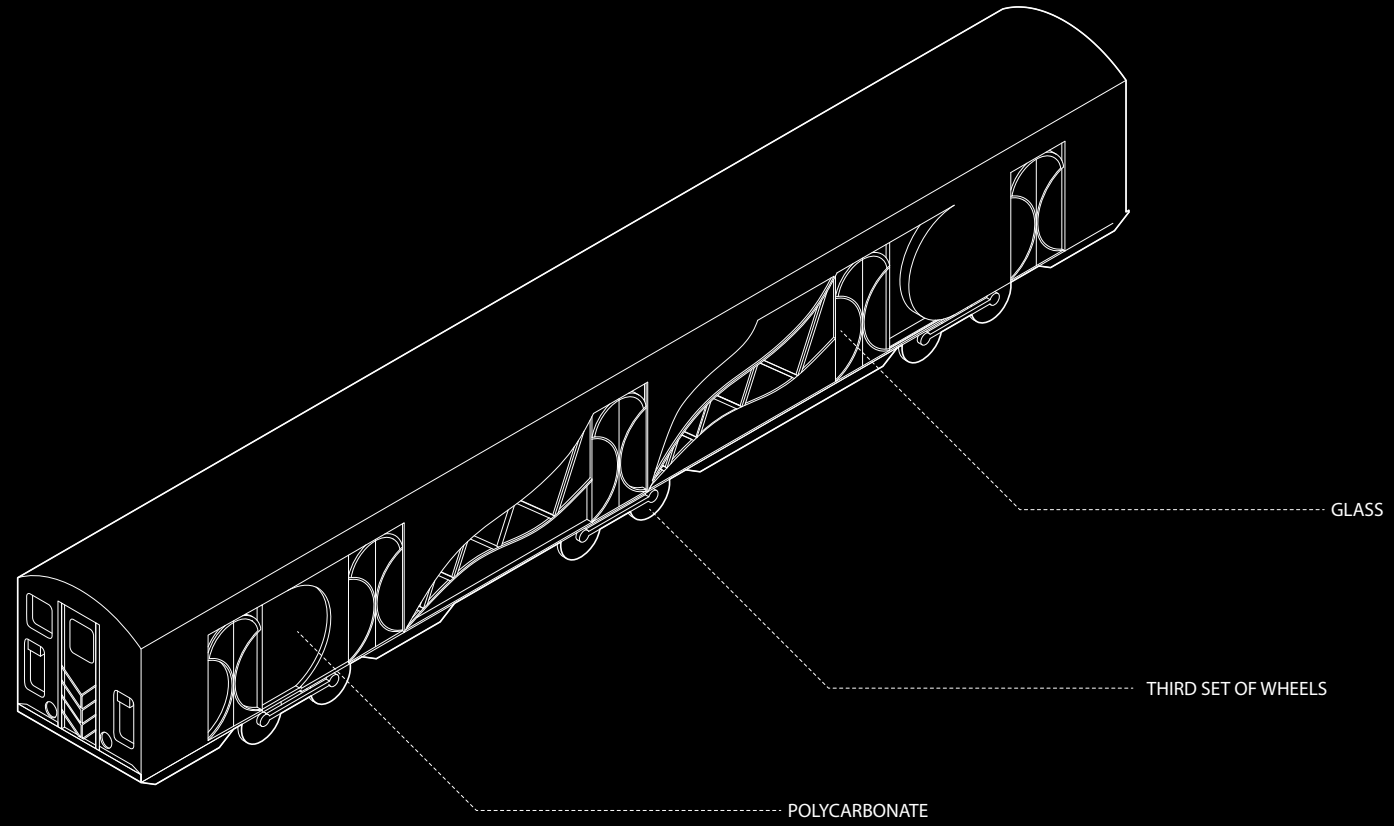


Schematic Design Parti. Courtesy of the IMTA.

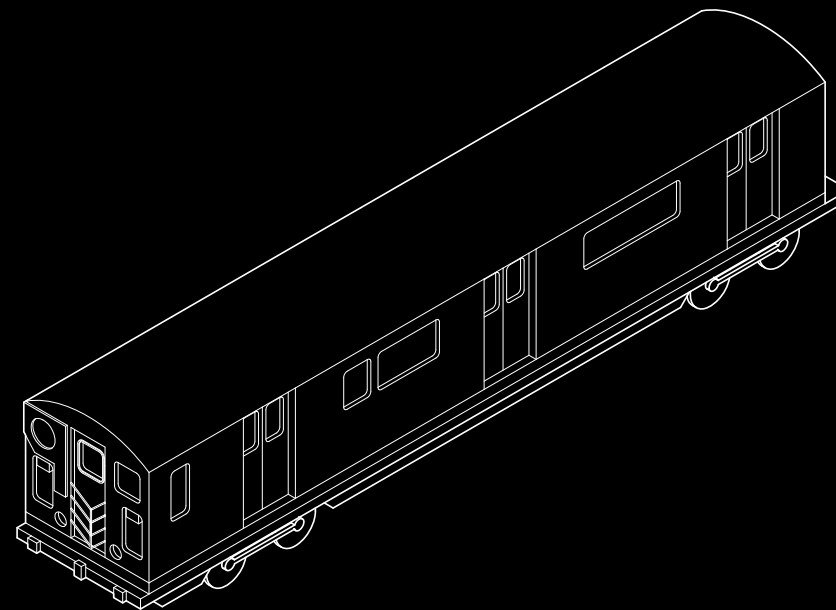


Tunnel Axonometric. Courtesy of the IMTA.

OLD CAR



NEW CAR



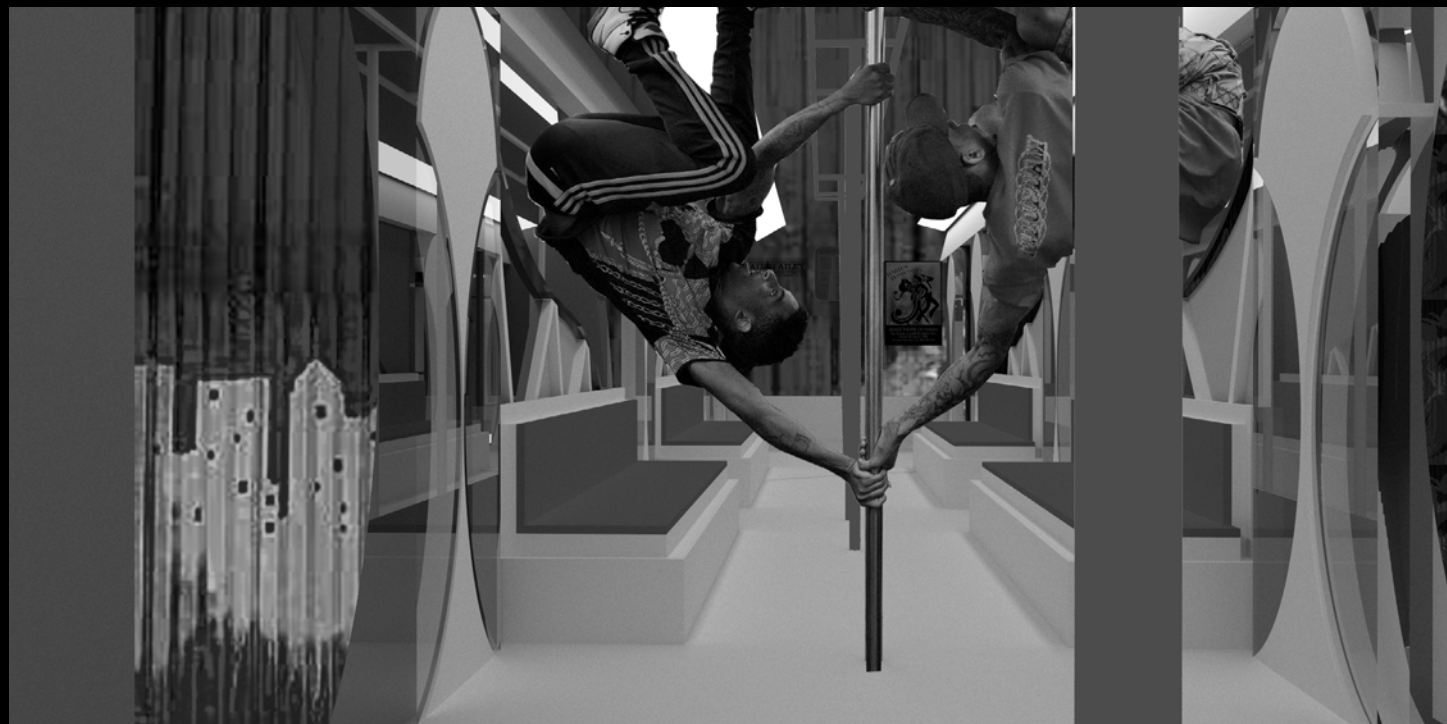




Rethinking spaces of capitalism. Show banner. Courtesy of IMTA.



Passenger reactions (old car). Courtesy of IMTA.



Testing out the performance area with more space for the dancers. Courtesy of IMTA.



A proposed second line with direct transit to the specialized high schools in NYC. Courtesy of IMTA.

C H A P T E R

FOUR

B O O G I E  
D O W N

**PART 1**

**BREAKDOWN**

*Socialize, get down, let your  
soul lead the way...*

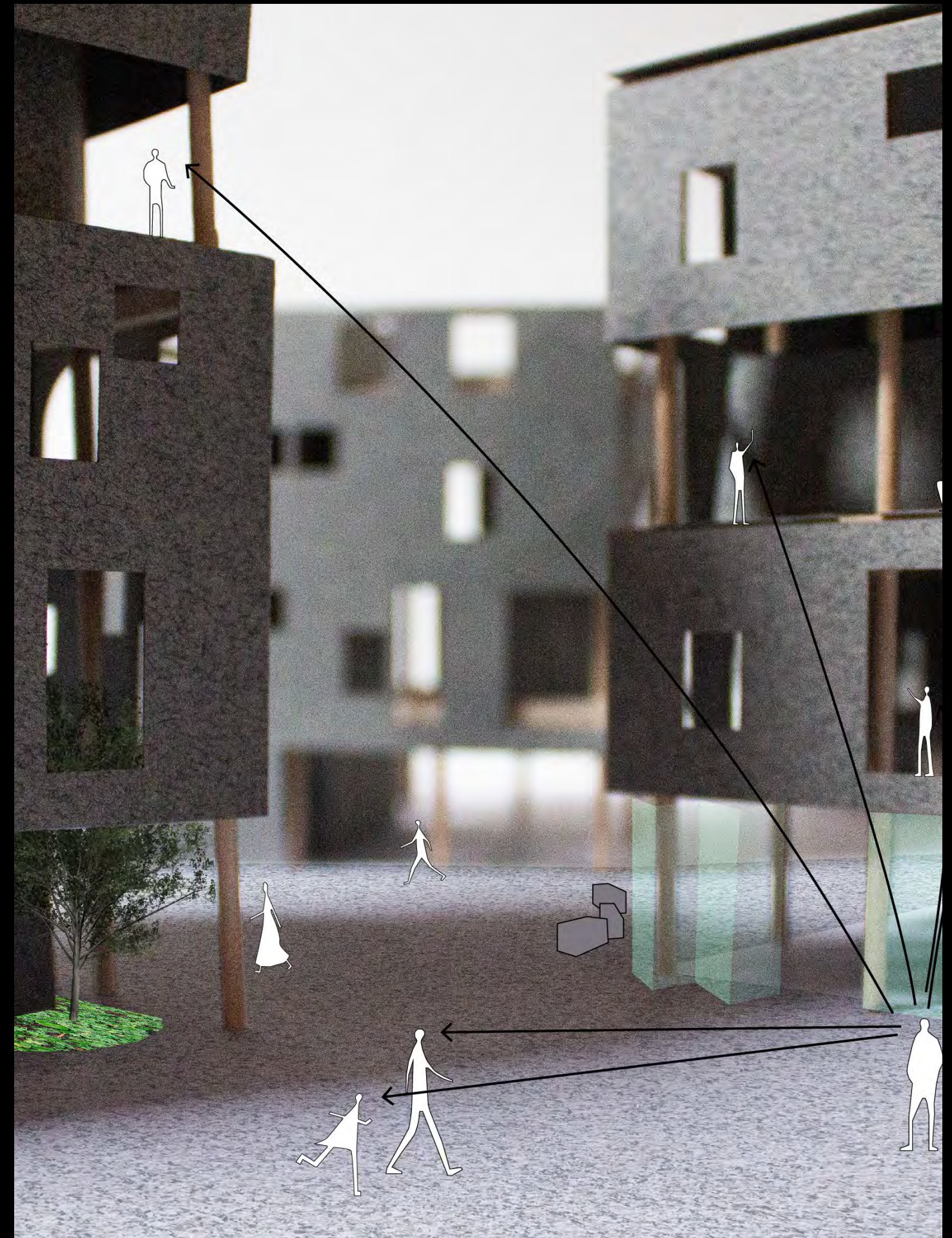
*-Afrika Bambaataa*

## ANOTHER LOOK AT TOWERS IN THE PARK

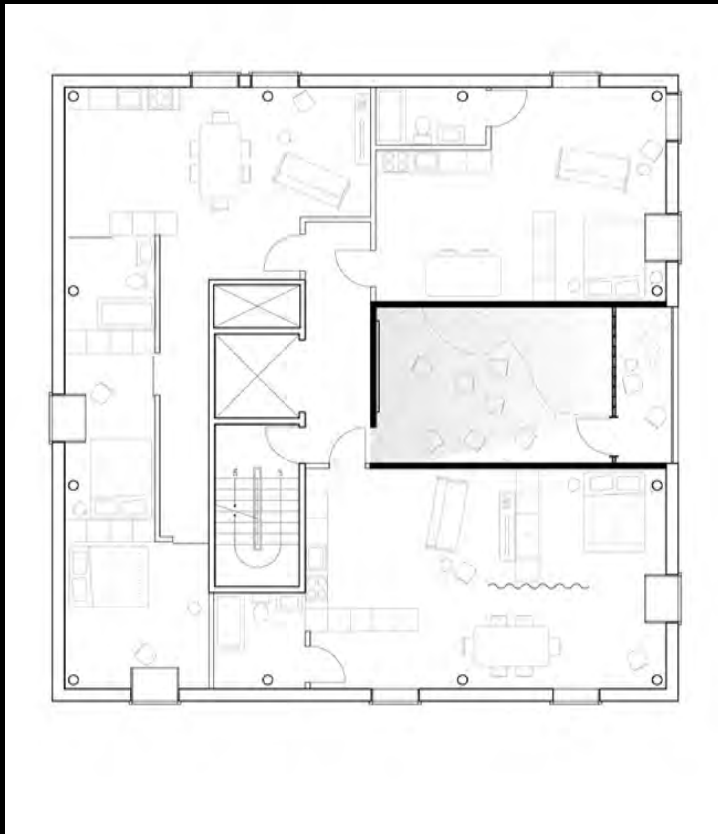
The project took Jane Jacobs' idea of opening up the New York city block and allowing people to move through it. The project was an intergenerational housing project, but the main idea was integrating the public housing into the urban fabric of Melrose / Mott Haven.

Public housing is all too often siphoned off from the rest of the grid. This project revisited the idea of towers in the park, using the Moriya house as inspiration, and translated that onto a larger scale.

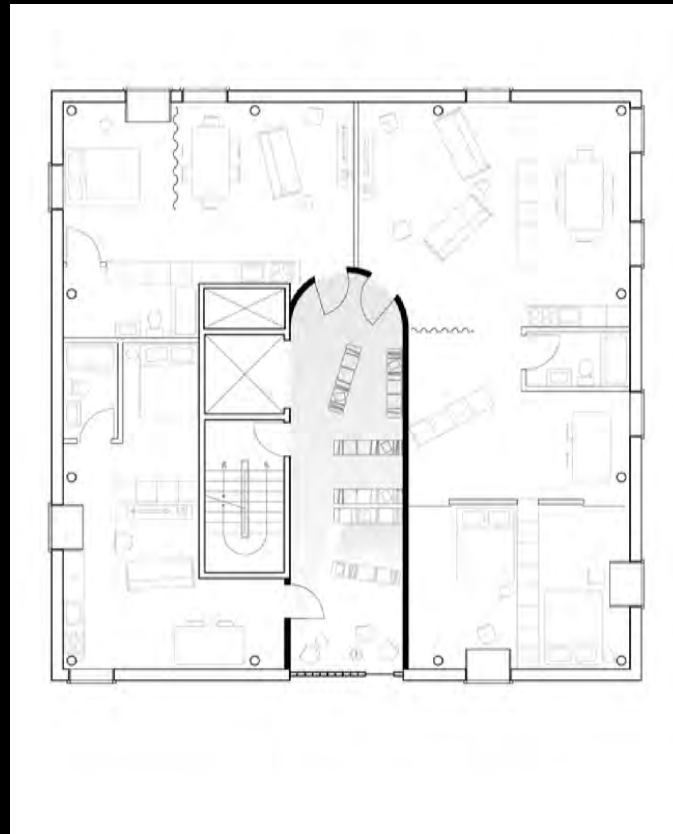
The project refrained from designing Corbusier-like project towers and was mindful of the scale, in order to maintain sight lines from the street.



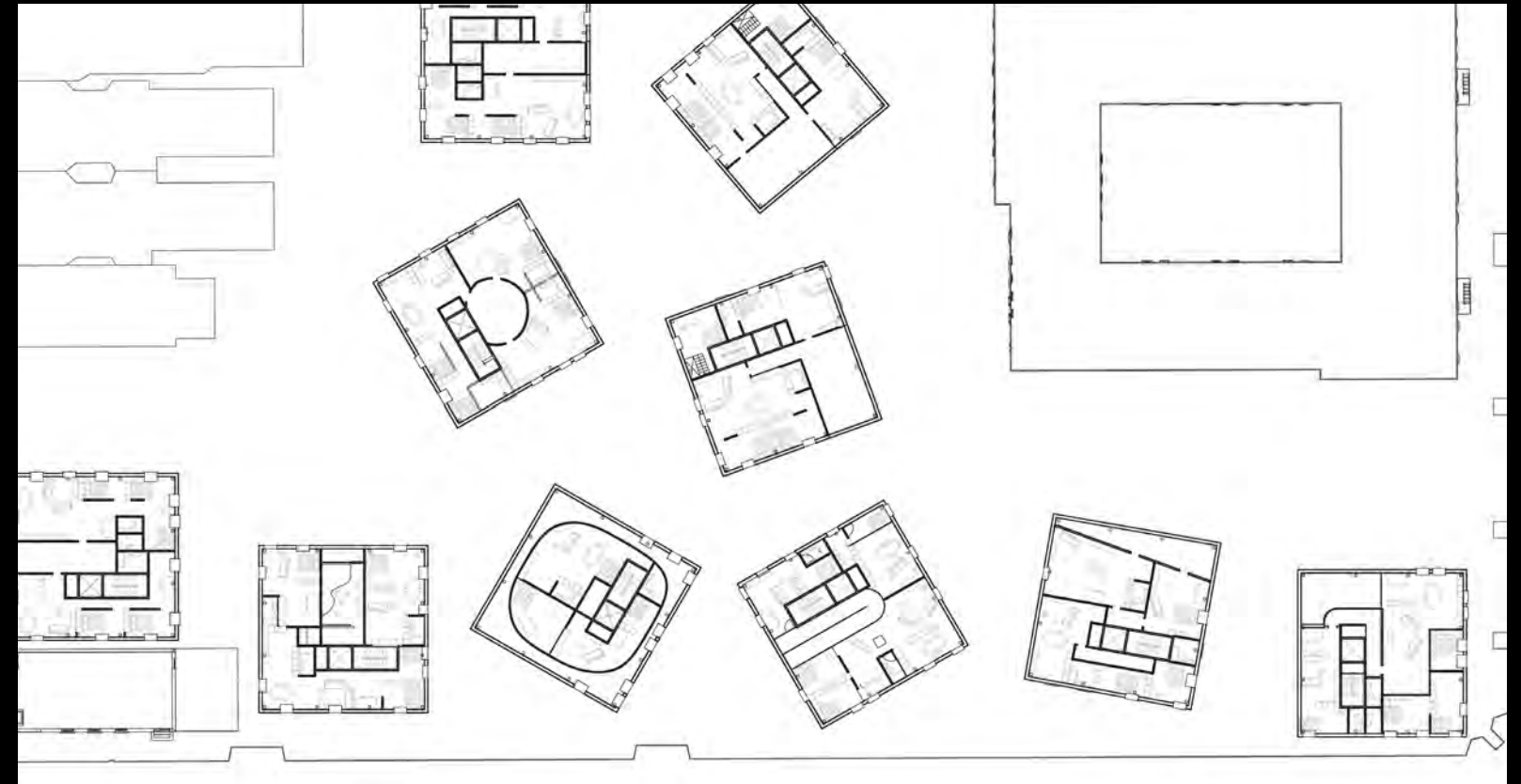
Sightlines based on Jan Gehl's *Cities for People*. Drawing by Ryan Hansen.



Typical floor plan for a single building. Drawing by Ryan Hansen.



Typical floor plan for a single building. Drawing by Ryan Hansen.



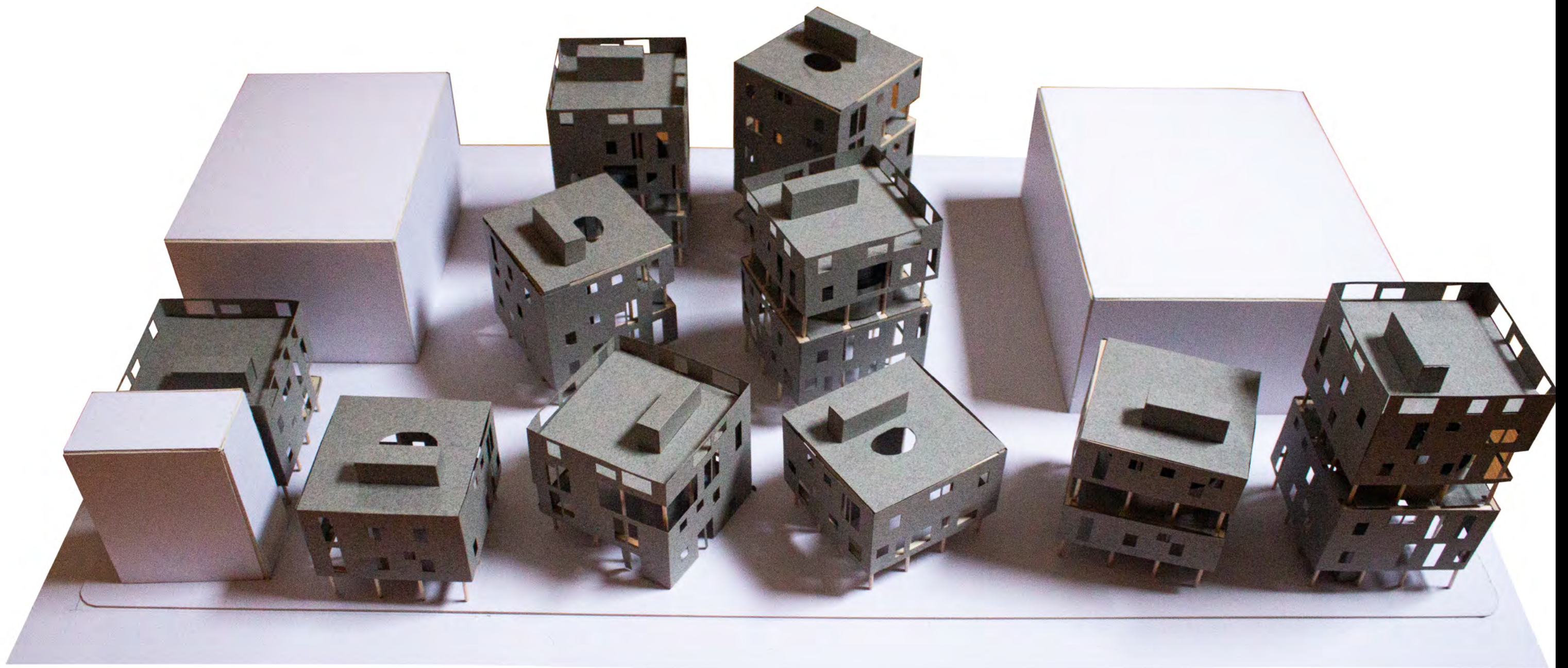
Typical floor plan. Spatial dialogue between buildings across the site.



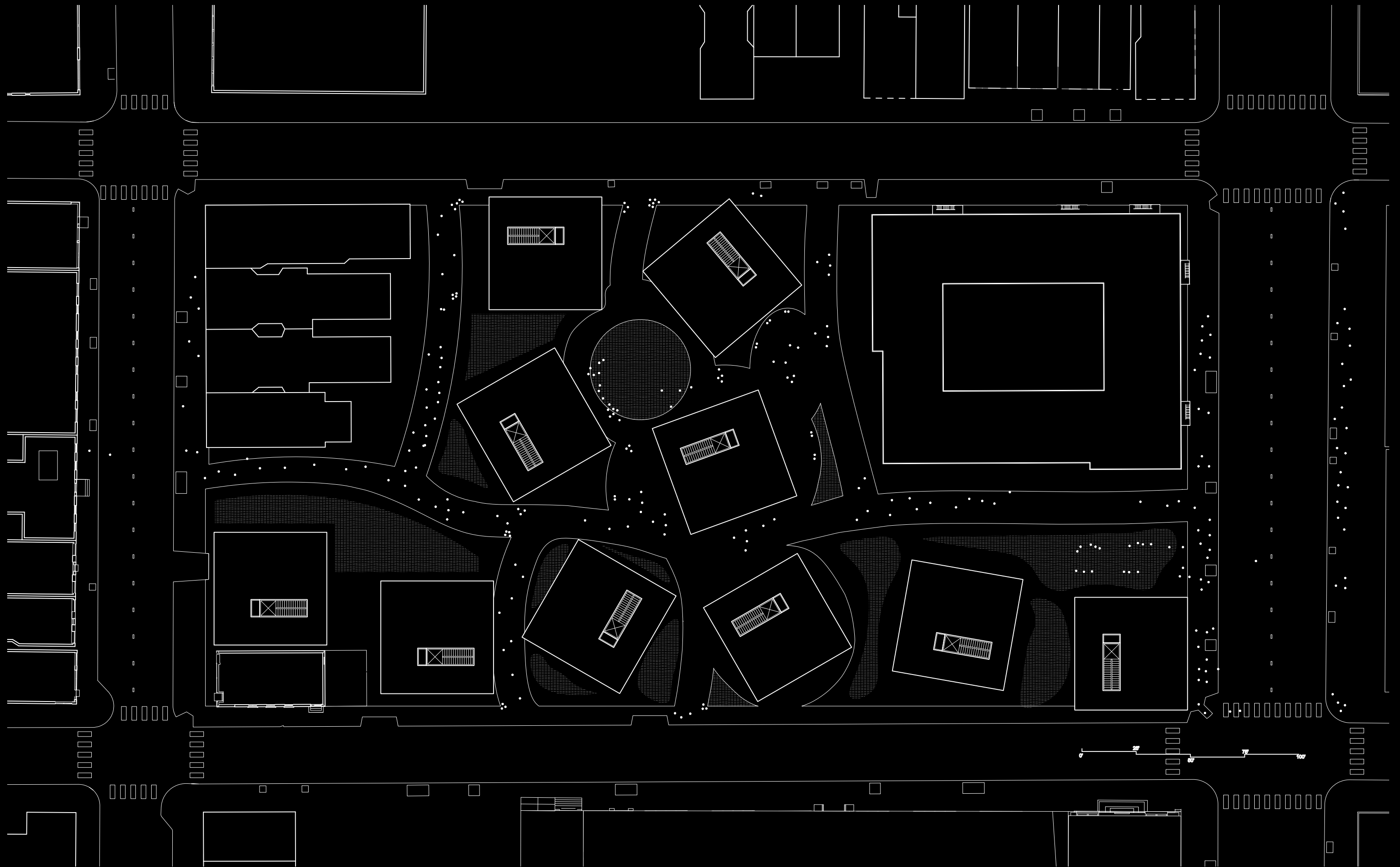
Axonometric view. Drawing by Ryan Hansen.



Site Section. Drawing by Johane Clermont.







Site Plan.



Rendering.

**PART 2**  
**A C C I D E N T S**

*What happens on the Cross  
Bronx changes the world...*

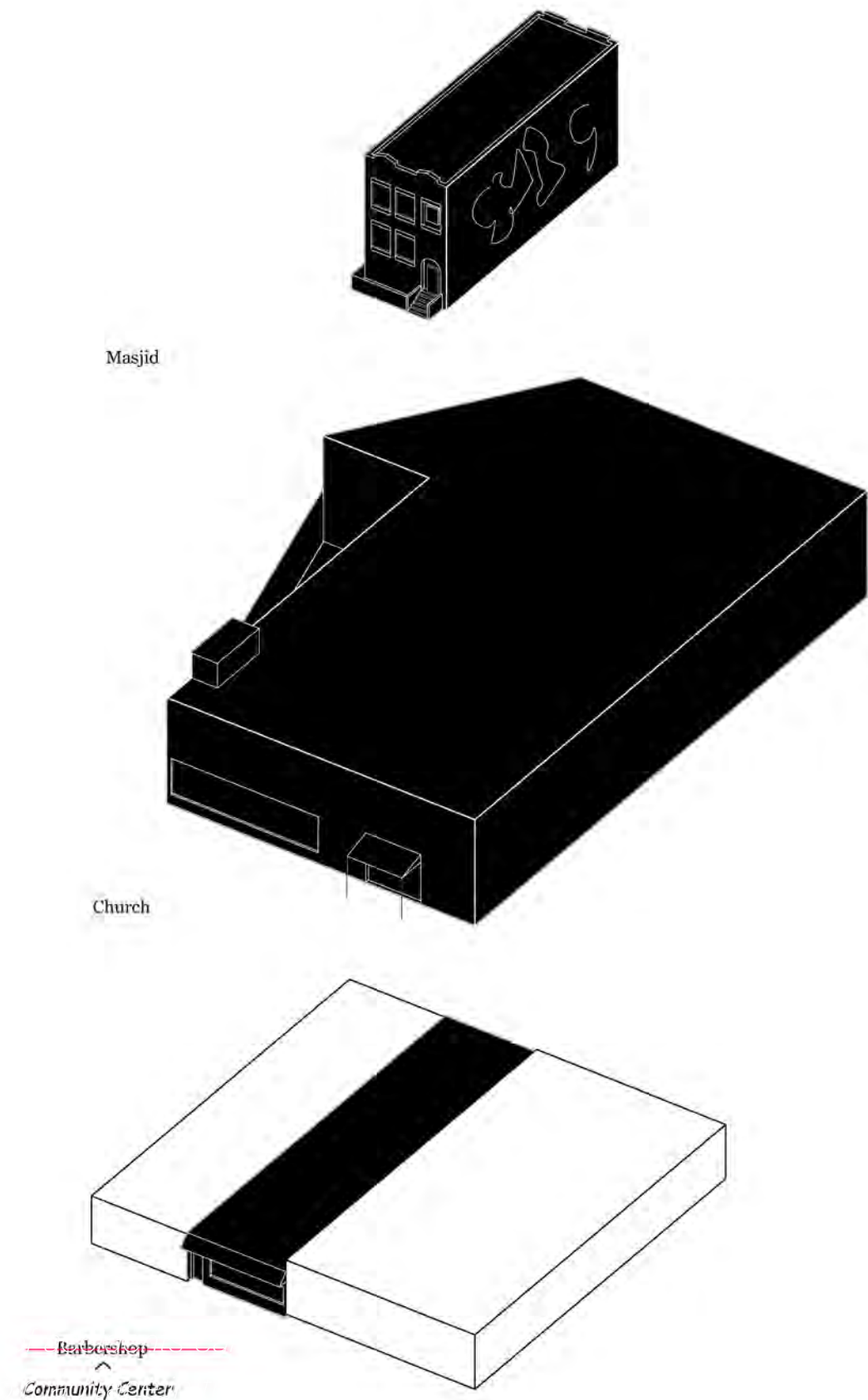
*-Fort Lee, NJ Proverb*

## HOW MUCH CAN ARCHITECTURE SOLVE THE PROBLEMS IT'S CREATED?

This studio examined the ways in which Architecture and Urban Design has been complicit in the structural racism. The aim was to propose a structural solution to spanning the highway where it runs below grade. The studio was supplemented by the research and guidance of Dr. Peter A. Muennig, a key player in securing funding through the Biden Infrastructure Act to cap the highway, and some of his students at the Mailman School of Public Health.

Beyond structure, however, my project interrogated the role of the community in a design process meant to ultimately heal the toxic legacy of a toxic figure. The question was how to pay homage to the cultural legacy of a polluted highway while removing its more negative effects.

The things that happen in the Bronx change the world. Could making the Bronx a better place also have implications for other cities in America as well?



## THE CROSS BRONX EFFECT

What are the consequences of anger?  
An accident occurs on the Cross Bronx Expressway  
and all of New Jersey comes to a standstill.

The Cross Bronx has not only led to poor  
physical health outcomes, but also poor  
mental health outcomes. Not only for the  
community but also for everyone who  
has to sit in the resulting traffic.

As with traffic, what happens  
in the Bronx changes the world.  
If we want to improve  
mental health in the US...  
why not start with the Bronx?



Time-lapse drawing. The effects of an accident on the Cross Bronx across the immediate region.

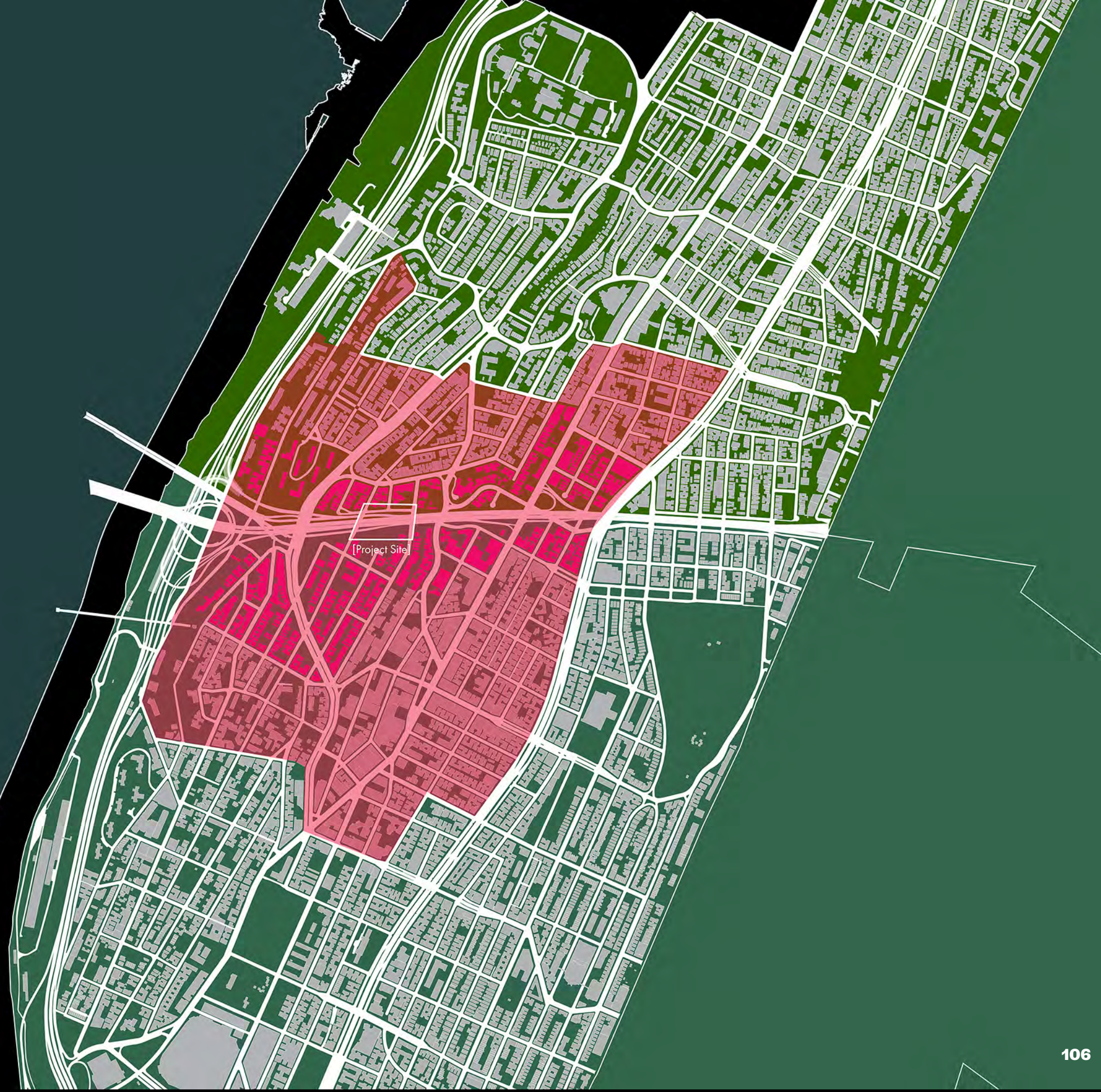
## ACCIDENTS - WHERE DO THEY HAPPEN?!

In the first quarter of 2020, there were 2600 accidents that occurred along the Cross Bronx. Here, I have outlined the areas where the majority tend to occur.

This perhaps suggests that the actual design of the highway, in these particular areas is to blame.



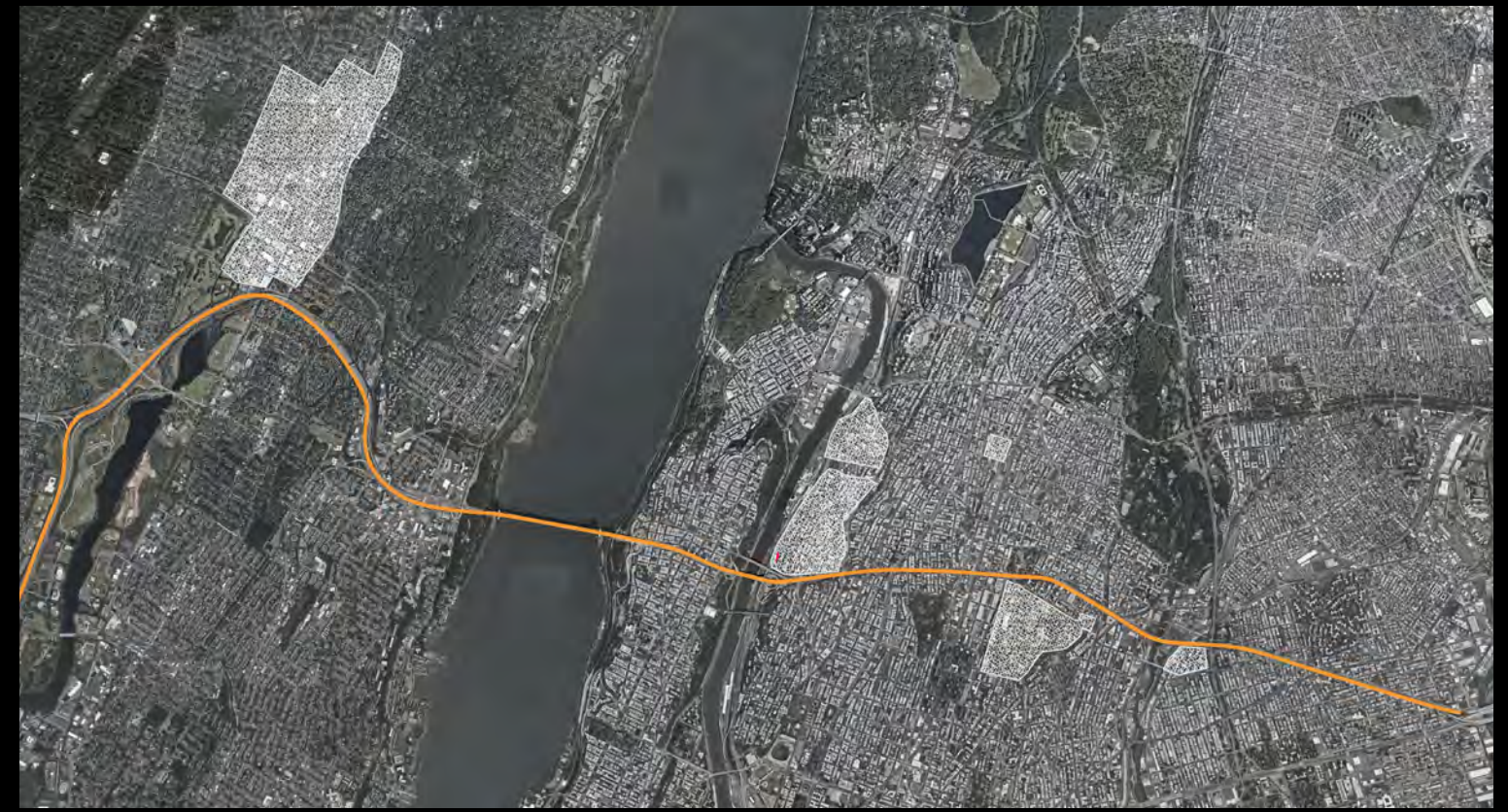
RATES OF SUBSTANCE-RELATED HOSPITALIZATIONS PER 100,000



## THE CROSS BRONX EFFECT, PT. II

What are the consequences of destroying a community? The repeat accidents add to the burden already placed on an already vulnerable community. Extensive research has been conducted into the psychological effects of breaking apart the physical connections between neighborhoods.

One can see the effect in this map, documenting the occurrence of drug-related hospitalizations. The areas of the Bronx with the highest rate of drug-related hospitalizations are in the area my project site is located. The Bronx is so much more than this map, however it gives indication to the mental health impacts of the roadway system implemented in the 1950s and fully completed in 1973...



**CAN POETRY INFORM ARCHITECTURE?**  
**Hip-Hop as expression of “Root Shock” over time**

Look past the garbage, over the trains  
 Under the ruins, through the remains  
 Around the crime and pollution  
 And tell me, where do I fit in?  
 South Bronx, New York that's where I dwell  
 To a lot of people it's a living hell  
 Full of frustration and poverty

-Grandmaster Caz, South Bronx Subway Rap, 1983

You'll grow in the ghetto, livin' second rate  
 And your eyes will sing a song of deep hate  
 The place, that you play and where you stay  
 Looks like one great big alley way

-Grandmaster Flash, The Message, 1983

Well it's on and on and on, on and on,  
 The beat don't stop until the break of dawn

-Sugarhill Gang, Rapper's Delight, 1979

The overseer had the right to get ill  
 And if you fought back, the overseer had the right to kill  
 The officer has the right to arrest  
 And if you fight back they put a hole in your chest  
 (Woop!) They both ride horses  
 After 400 years, I've got no choices

The police them have a likkle gun  
 So when I'm on the streets, I walk around with a bigger one

-KRS-One, Sound of Da Police, 1993

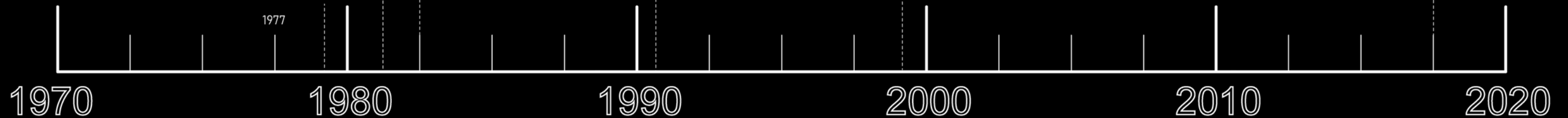
My sh\*t is raw straight from the Panama shores  
 If the feds can't catch me then they make up a law  
 Can't take it no more, ni\*\*as is fake to the core

-Lord Tariq & Peter Gunz ft. Fat Joe & Big Pun, Cross Bronx, 1998

My ex told me I was never gon' be sh\*t  
 Lookie, lookie now, lookie now, n\*\*\*a I'm that b\*\*\*  
 I used to stare at magazines on the train  
 Lookin' at these models like, "I gotta be this one"

-Cardi B, Bronx Season, 2017

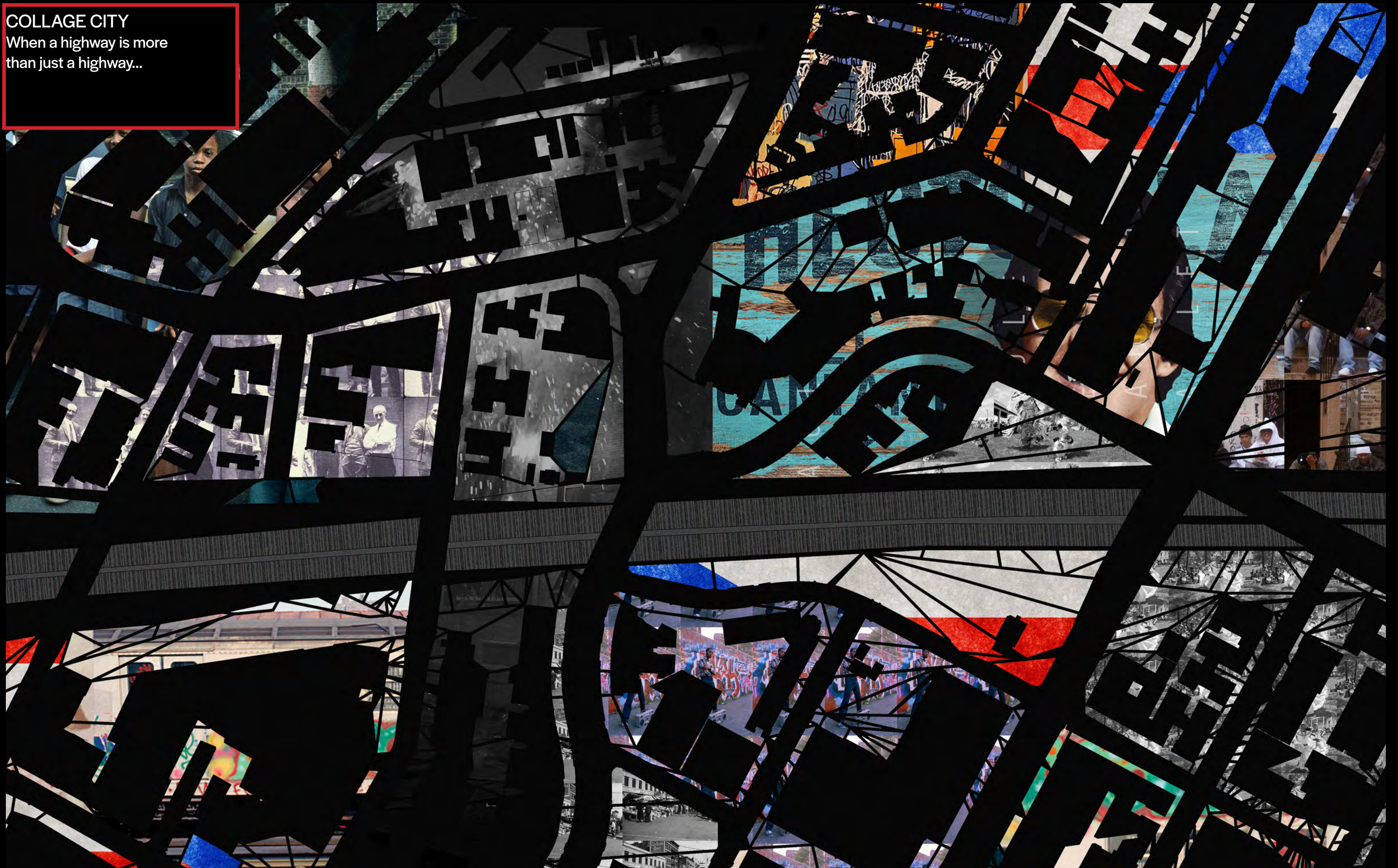
The orange line is I-95. The first hip-hop record, “Rapper’s Delight” was recorded in Englewood Cliffs, across the GW.



The Cross Bronx was fully completed in 1973, the year DJ Kool Herc accidentally scratched a record & hip-hop was born.



**COLLAGE CITY**  
When a highway is more  
than just a highway...



When a highway is both toxic legacy and a part of that legacy. Part of this project was about how to memorialize a difficult legacy.

## PROCESS WORK

The Bronx is more than just its cultural production, but the cultural phenomena that have come out of the Bronx are integral not only to the story of New York City, and the tri-state area, but also central to the cultural history of the United States. The process work interrogated how culture can help inform design. Taking graffiti as inspiration, did a series of ink tests on Bristol Paper.



spray paint + ink + water + Bristol Paper

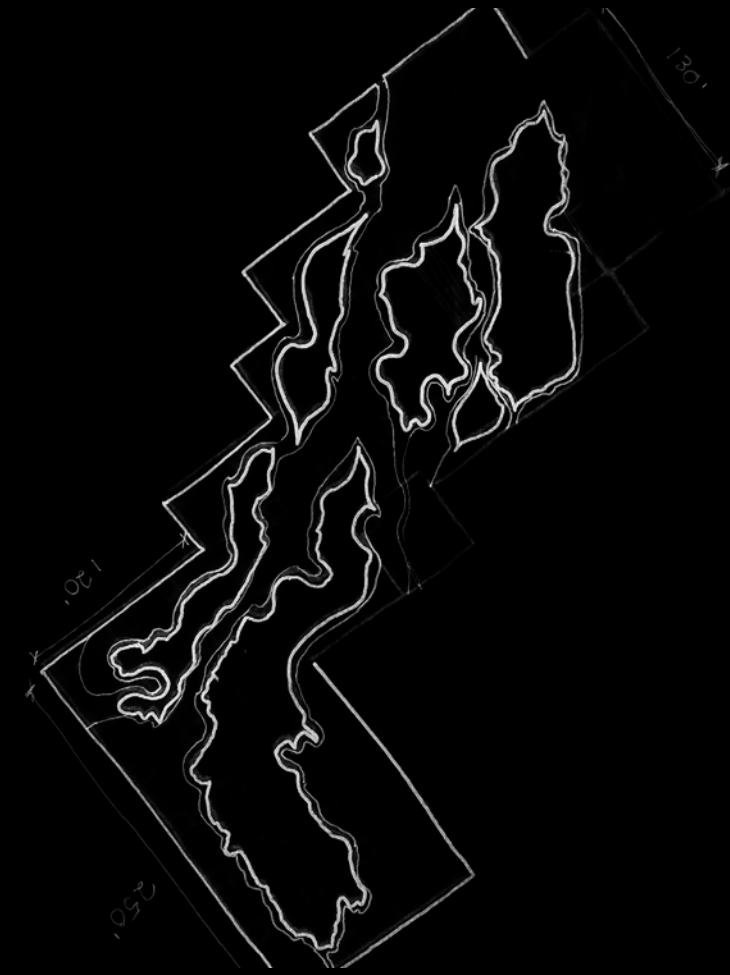
## PROCESS WORK

Then took those tests and the basic floor plan of the project area and, using trace paper, drew over the floor plan. Then re-inserted the floor plan into Rhino so that I could digitally trace the landscape patterns onto the 3D model.

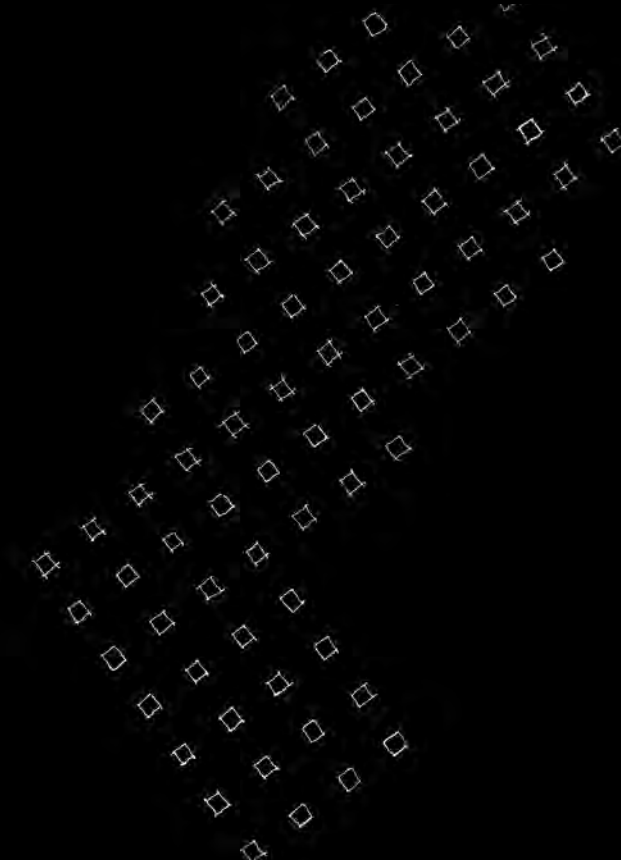
In other words, not letting technology dictate the design.



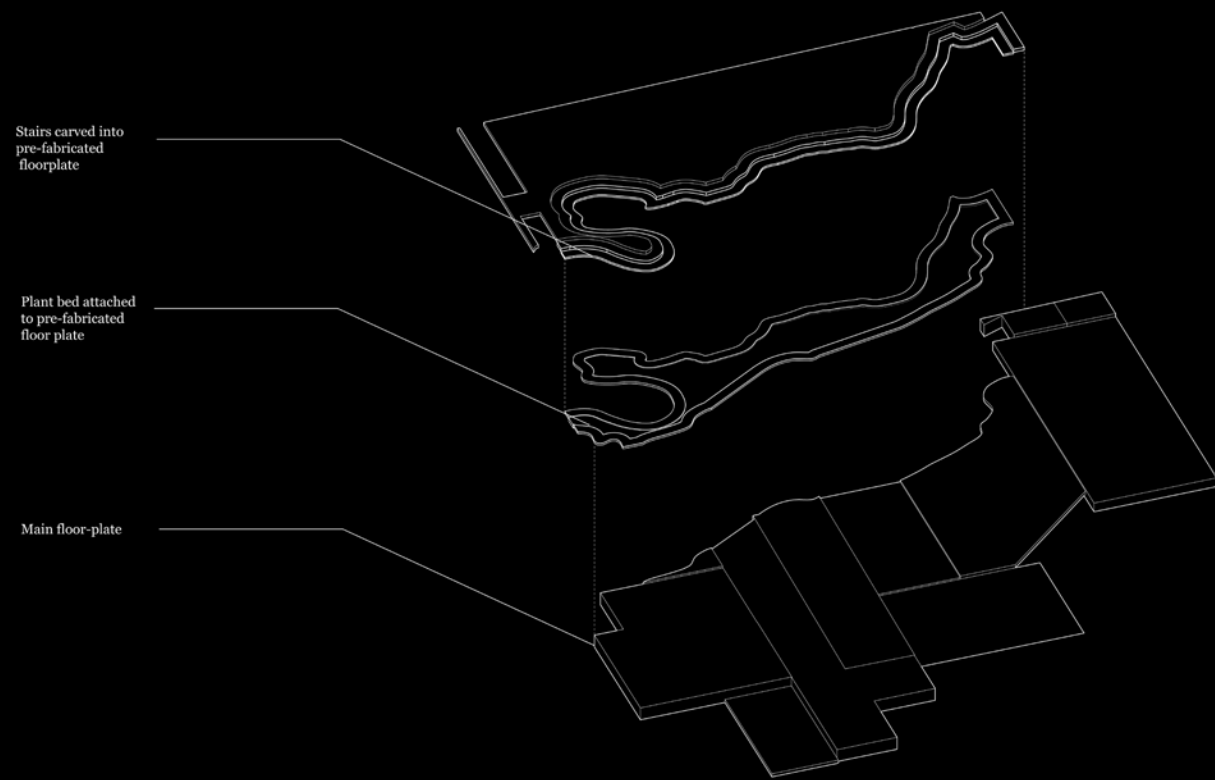
Hand sketch on trace paper. Sketching out the location of gardens along the Cap.



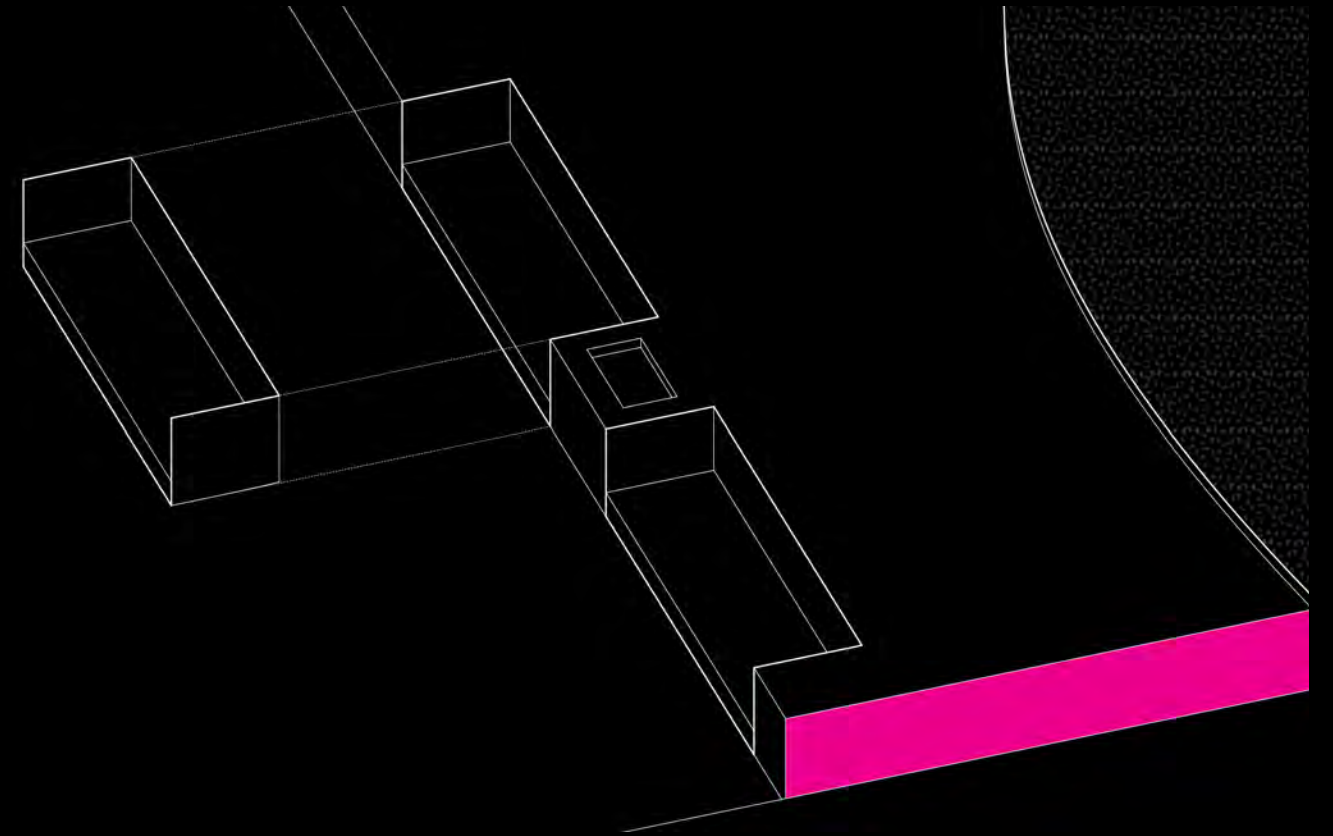
Hand sketch on trace paper. Sketching out the steps.



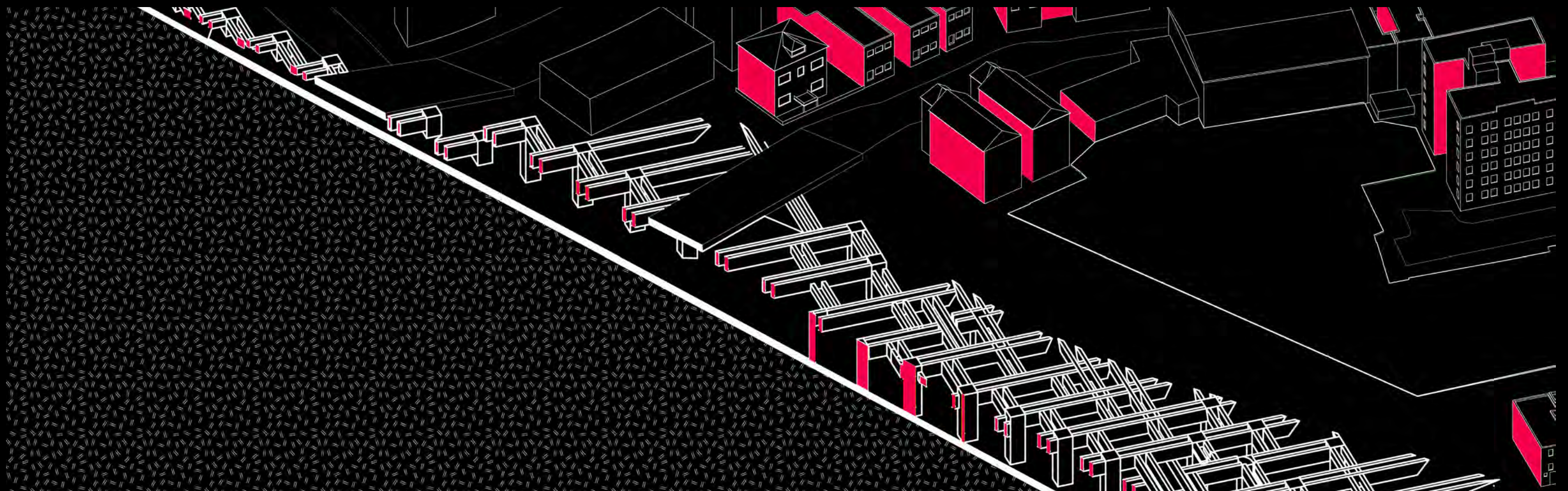
Hand sketch on trace paper. Sketching out the 40' x 40' mass timber grid.



Axonometric diagram of the engineered wood floorplates.



Integrating the community into the structure. An idea to create public furniture that could be community designed and built.



Axonometric section of mass timber structure.





Break of dawn

