

Architecture as a mediator

Narratives for
grounding

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Columbia
GSAPP

This year I have experienced different scenarios that have expanded my understanding of architecture, operating as **transcalar**, and at the same time as a recurring self-interrogation of my position within the **settings** in which I exist.

Beyond a book or a collection of architectural drawings, this is part of an exploration of architecture as a **mediator** that operates within the entanglements of individual stories of **humans** and **more-than-humans** towards a shared existence.

Therefore, each chapter enacts different architecture's engagements, where it is part of **networks** of caring, support spaces of **dialogue** and negotiation, rearticulate ways **bodies** relate and compose our individual **narratives**.

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1

Normalizing Networks of Interdependencies

AAD Entagled Studio

Instructed by **Ignacio Galan**
Infrastructures for the Countercollapse
In Collaboration with **Shikang Ding** and **Abriannah Aiken**



Networks of care are embedded within the spatial boundaries of our society. But, not everyone has equitable access to this network - some do not have a nuclear family to rely on, some do not have access to medical care due their immigration status, and some are oppressed by spatial accessibility limitations.

We challenge **binaries** between ability/disability, those assisted and those that assist and instead highlight networks of interdependencies, as well as provide spatial resources that promote racial justice. Through upending hierarchical structures of healthcare, the expansion of **spaces of commoning**, and the mobilization of care, we visualize a future with equitable access to networks of normalized assistance for all people.

In this way, our approach followed characters and their stories that are part of the daily life routines of the site, such as immigrant residents, the **disability community**, and women who help make up East Harlem, and the individuals overlap with these identities as an entry point to account for the formal and informal welfare that permeates to set the current **networks of care.**



Building on these stories, structural struggles, and the existing networks of assistance exemplify a site within which to imagine a counter collapse of the welfare state.



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We have taken East Harlem as a platform to rehearse this approach, and started our research following individuals involved in the current neighborhood's networks of care.



Our first intervention responds to the hierarchies and exclusions of the current system of healthcare.

An infrastructure of vehicles called **Mobile Care Units** will mobilize programs already carried out by organizations focused on providing assistance to people who are not included in the current healthcare system (such as immigrants).

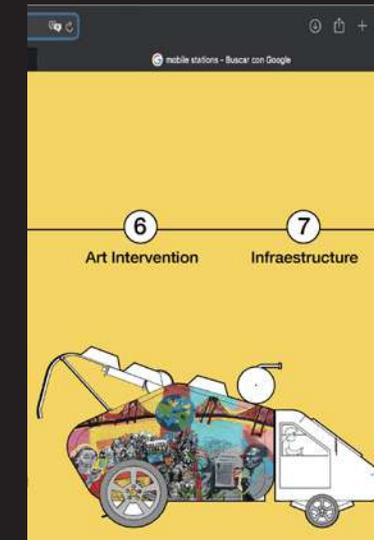
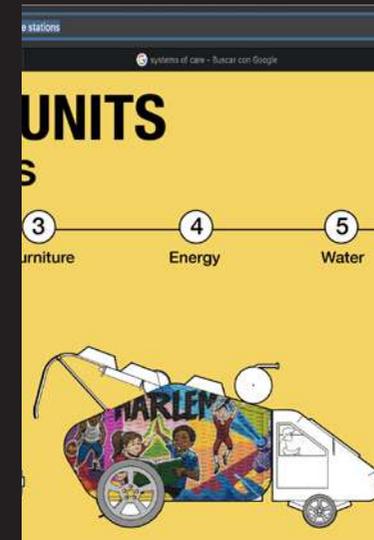
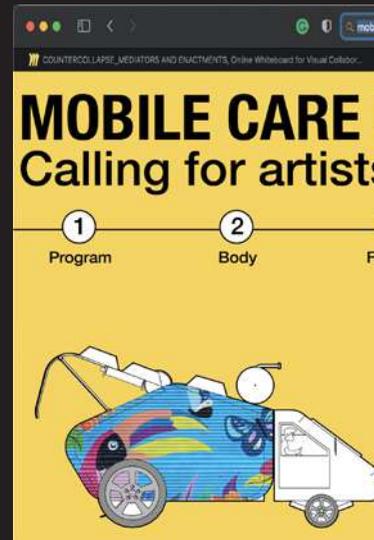
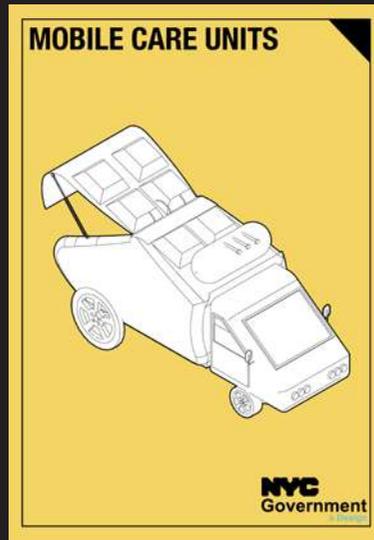
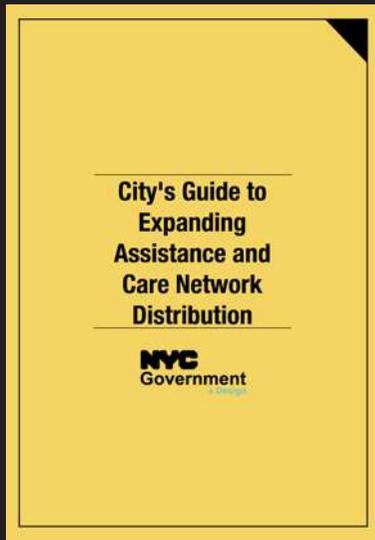
We envision new scenarios where local initiatives can hold checkups and pedagogic activities in a new regime of **caring and assistance**



We imagine these Care Units constantly distributed throughout the community. They could contribute to a radical change in the cultural perception, even transforming the ways in which children imagine assistance vehicles.



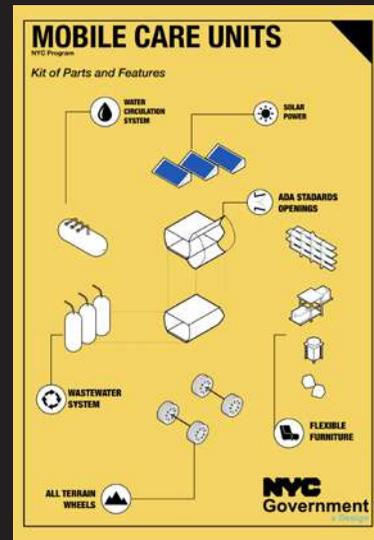
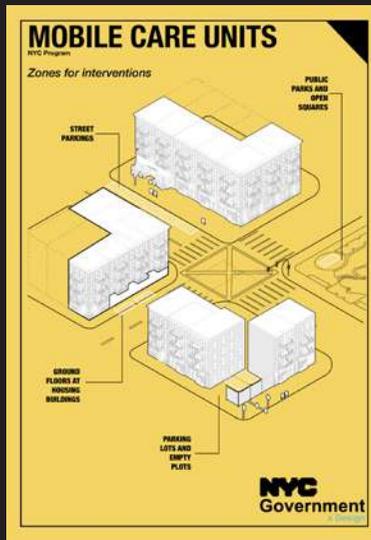
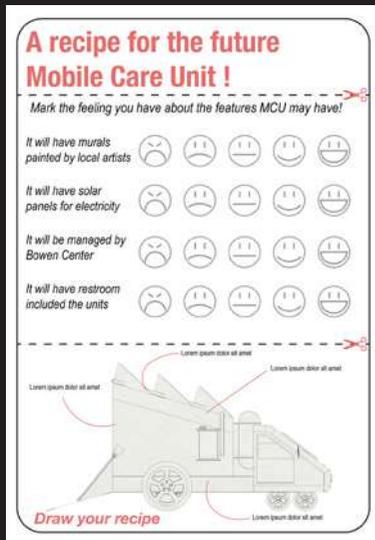
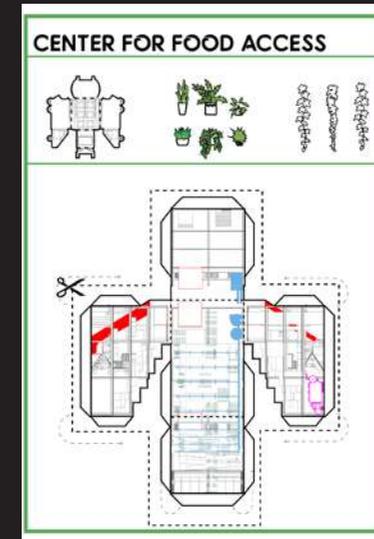
Care units can be used as a learning tool which can travel transnationally to learn from forms of care in East Harlem Residents' home countries



Care Units constantly are distributed throughout the community with a diversity of **mediators**. They contribute to a radical change in the cultural perception, transforming the ways in which children imagine assistance vehicles.

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The programming of the units is open to organizations focused on providing access to care.



An indoor space in the apartment ground floor, where group sessions and individual counseling can be supported by the organization.

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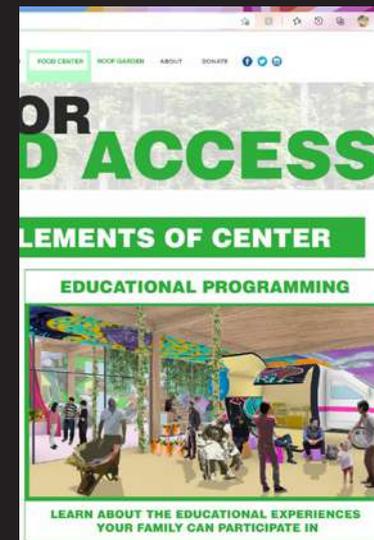
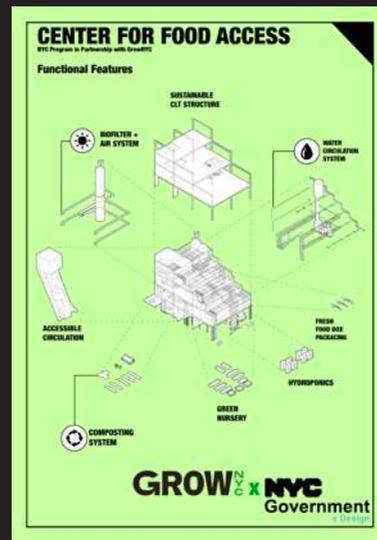
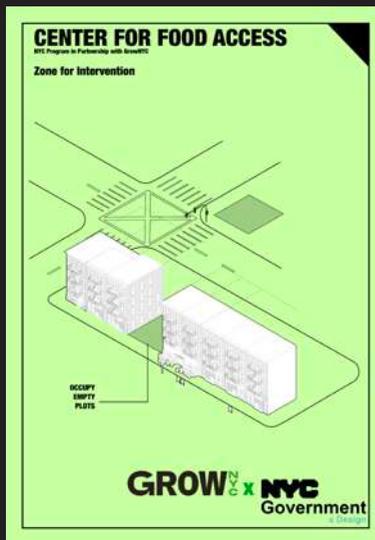


From an abolitionist perspective, one could imagine these vehicles completely substituting the role of police cars.

Health has been a method of exclusion, with accessibility to healthy food options unavailable to most. The Center for Food Access is part of an expansion to **food accessibility** a social justice that compliments current systems within East Harlem. We aim to spatially connect and expand current functions to food access through a distributed effort of garden and multi-functional Center.

architecture as a mediator The transformation of rooftops is connected to a more radical re-thinking of housing, challenging **isolationism** and lack of access to communal space. Housing renovations integrate communal ground floors and activated rooftop gardens to promote inclusive housing for all people to give and receive assistance. *architecture as a mediator*

Through Centers for Food Access and Communal Housing typologies, we challenge forms of exclusions, isolated spatial **bodies**, and centralized health services. We imagine this normalization of assistance in East Harlem working in solidarity with the projects of existing organizations to create radical spatial solutions



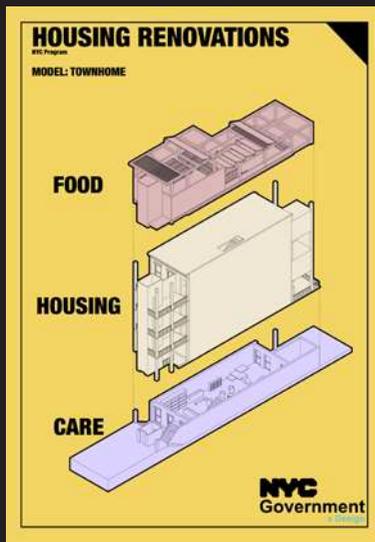
GrowNYC and other organizations have the opportunity to manage the building's nursery, composting and educational facilities. The Center also acts as a socializer that changes the community's perception on nutrition and can shift how even children imagine the cityscape.



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Monday, July 19, 2021
Today's Paper

City Funds Renovations For All Property Owners To Ensure ADA Accessibility

Housing has the opportunity to be converted into more activated and inclusive spaces.

The townhouse renovations integrate communal spaces of care on the ground floor and activated rooftop gardens can promote new ways to relate to food, but the integral infrastructural change promotes an inclusive and accessible living space for all people.

U.S. INTERNATIONAL CANADA ESPAÑOL 中文

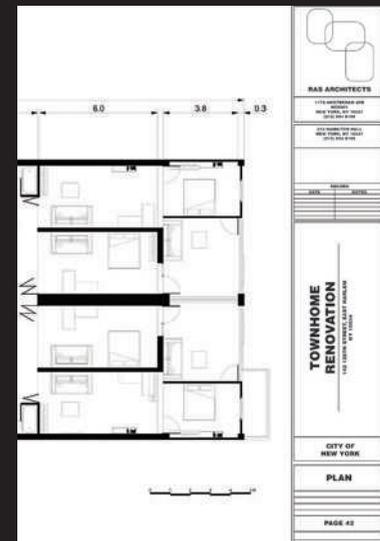
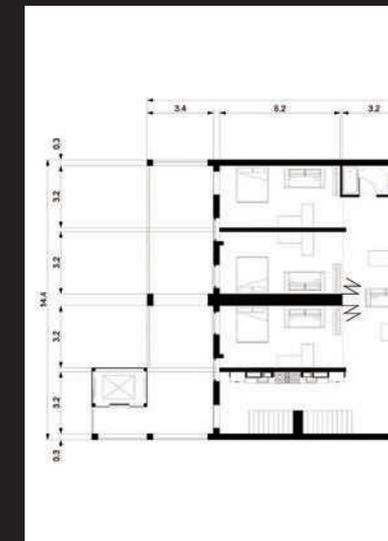
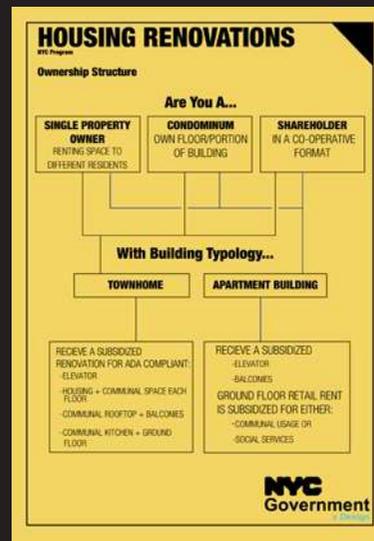
The New York Times

Science Health Sports Arts Books Style Food

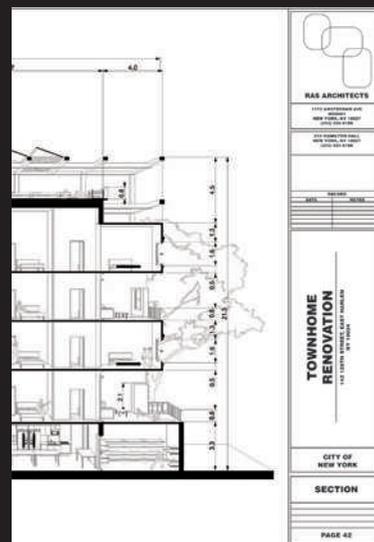
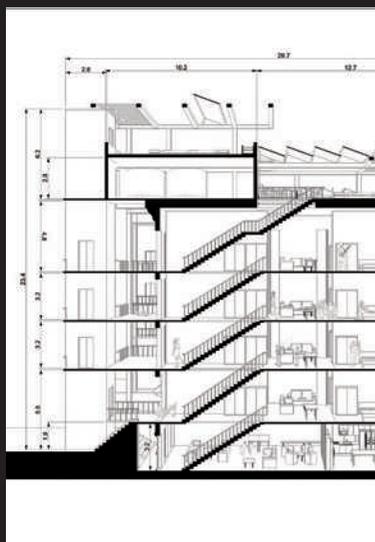
This renovation... through the installation of elevators and the provision of funds for ALL units to be ADA accessible.

Hope Community will mediate between residents, government and architects. Newspaper, flyers, brochures allow the community to hear about the project. The proposal claims the importance of challenging current ownership paradigms.

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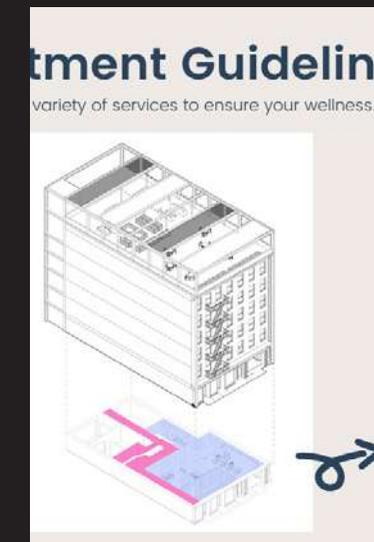
Apartment Guideline

We have a variety of services to ensure your wellness.

Communal Space

Cooperative Workspace + Shop

-You as a community can utilize the space to sell items you create



PARTICIPATORY WORKSHOP FOR TOWNHOUSE RENOVATION

NAME: _____

COMMUNAL SPACES	WHAT FUNCTIONS ARE MISSING FROM THE LIST?
A. CONNECTING/TALKING	G. _____
B. READING/LIBRARY	H. _____
C. CHILD PLAYING	I. _____
D. COOKING/COMMUNAL KITCHEN	J. _____
E. SITTING	K. _____

DRAW THINGS YOU THINK SHOULD BE ADDED - MAKE NOTES ON THE SPACE

MATERIALITY SURVEY	WHAT ARE YOUR REACTIONS TO THESE MATERIALS? WHAT IS MISSING?
	<input type="radio"/> Love <input type="radio"/> Like <input type="radio"/> Dislike <input type="radio"/> Hate
	<input type="radio"/> Love <input type="radio"/> Like <input type="radio"/> Dislike <input type="radio"/> Hate
	<input type="radio"/> Love <input type="radio"/> Like <input type="radio"/> Dislike <input type="radio"/> Hate

174 E 104th St
Come with Your Ideas
Or Submit the Application on Our Website

Renovate Your Home For FREE

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no other ground floor configuration could be a space of communal creativity and entrepreneurship. Here, there is a workshop and co-operative shop. Carpenter Michael and doll maker Mercedes can sell what they create to the community.



People can interact in communal space on their floors, creating neighbor networks of care.

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Through the introduction of rooftop gardens, this culture can emanate from indoors all the way to individual households.

2

Disappearing Queer Spaces QSAPP

By Student Organization
Queer Students, of Architecture,
Planning, and Preservation



As part of this academic year, I was part of the QSAAP student organization that produced a book that explores individuals and spaces that have fostered queer activism and have been part of the lived experiences of **Queer People** in Harlem, in the context of the Harlem Renaissance.

Widely acknowledged for liberating opportunities to express identity in the Black community, the **Harlem Renaissance** was unequivocally important for

the queer community, as well. The movement included racial acceptance but also extended further to encapsulate a welcoming exploration of **gender and sexuality.**

We aim to spatially visualize and recount the role the built environment and built space has had in Harlem's queer history – whether these are bars, clubs, social or domestic spaces. Aiming to preserve the memory and spatiality of this heritage.

A NIGHT - CLUB - MAP OF THE Renaissance Queer Harlem

The Niggerati
Manner is always
alive with culture,
music, and Art



This theatre hosts renowned queer artists Ethel Waters and Bessie Smith

You might find Countee Cullen and other artists in the audience

Drag Balls ignite the Stage!!!

Claude McKay produces many books and entertains his friends here

Home to the most infamous Drag Balls that thousands flock to

Harlem

The Best BLUES SINGER in America
ETHEL WATERS

LAFAYETTE

LAFAYETTE

All Singing

Lady Bentley

Clam House

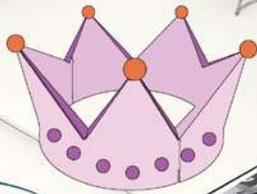
HOME TO HARLEM
CLAUDE MCKAY

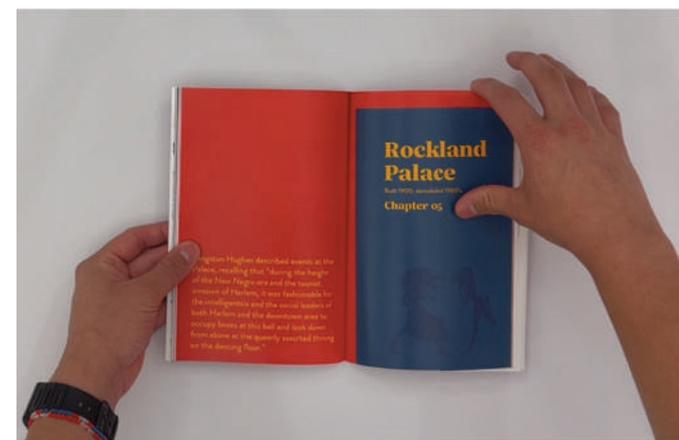
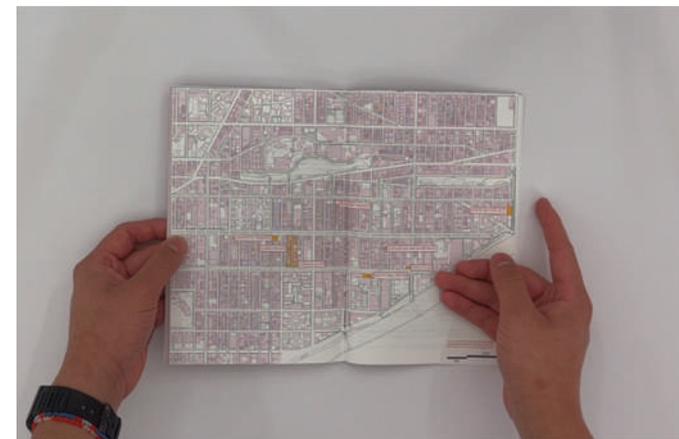
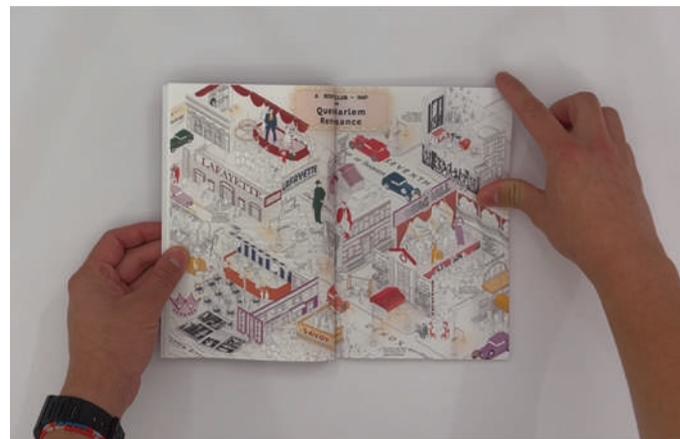
THE DRAG BALL

Hotel OIGA

HOTEL OIGA

Rocking Palace







3

Sandtown

Entanglements

Points Unknown

Instructed by **Juan Saldarriaga**
and **Michael Krisch**

Supported by **Lauren Tierney**

In Collaboration with **Leon Duval** and
Haotong Xia

In 2015, the Sandtown-Winchester' citizen **Freddy Gray** was arrested and later killed by the police creating a massive social outbreak, firstly on a city scale and later on a national scale, and placing a point of attention in the neighborhood of Sandtown. Today, as a structural and unsolved problem, the community of Sandtown is dealing with a frightening food desert, where poor quality and availability worsen the residents' current problems and especially damage their health, adding more troubles to a place full of them.

Today it's easily possible to see the decay of the neighborhood in the high percentage of **vacant** building density; a high percentage of working-age residents unemployed; high rate of community population incarcerated; a low average household income; but especially in the high percentage of area covered by **food desert**, which is complemented by an insufficient provision of healthy food among the existing markets and grocery stores.

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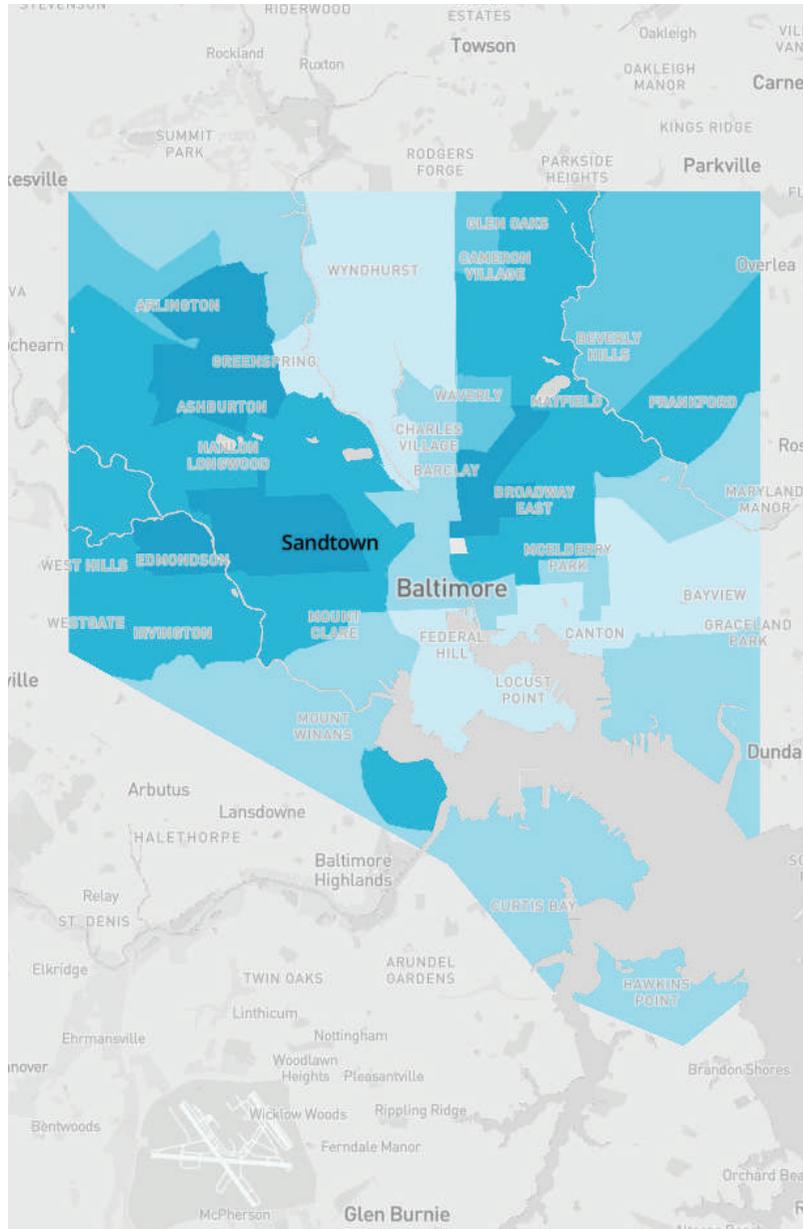


Grocery Stores

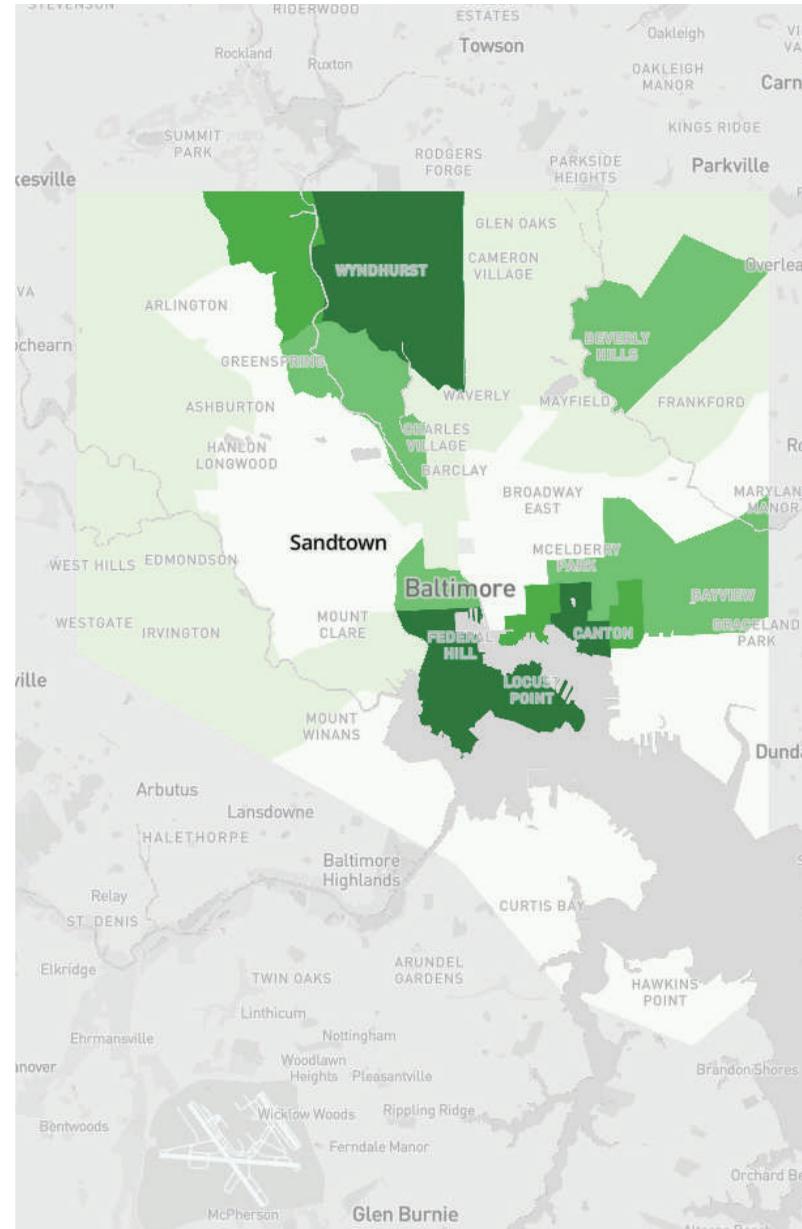


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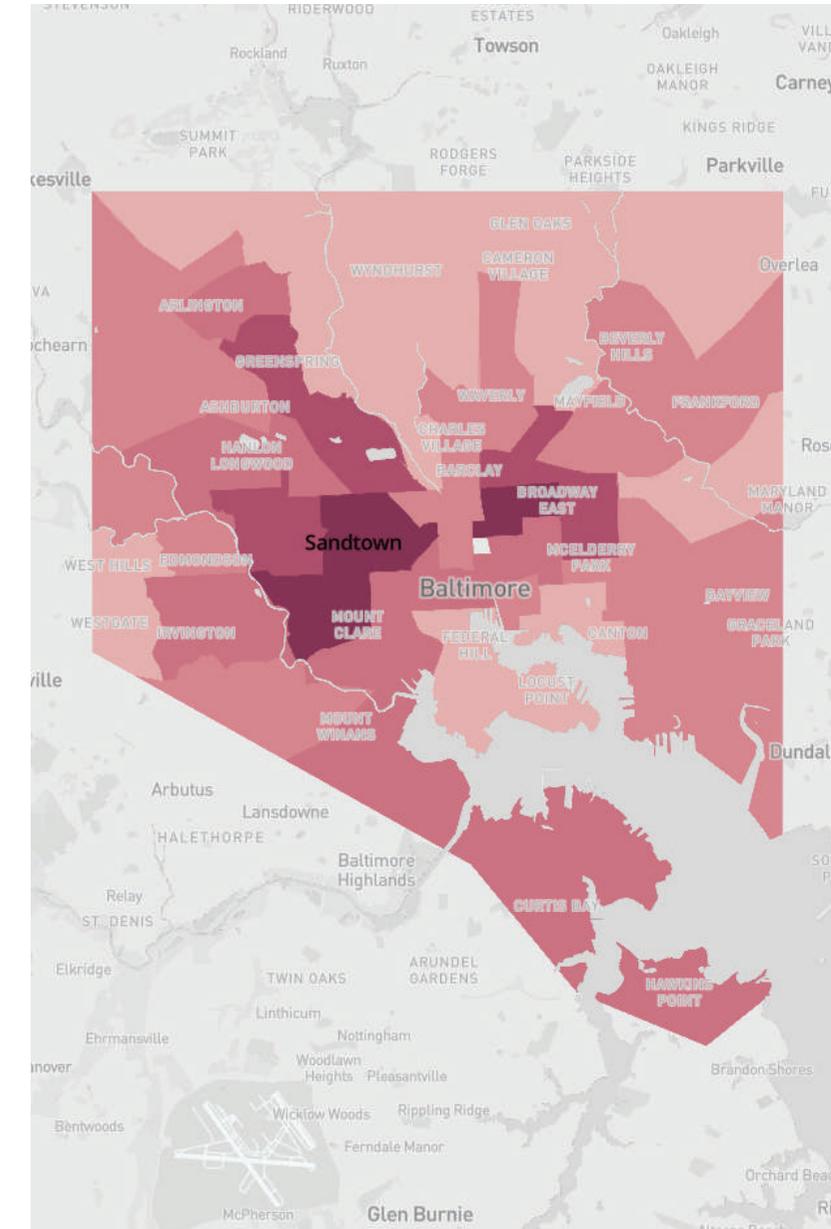
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An african-american neighborhood



Median Household Income



Lot Vacancy



4

Infrastructures of mediation in East Harlem

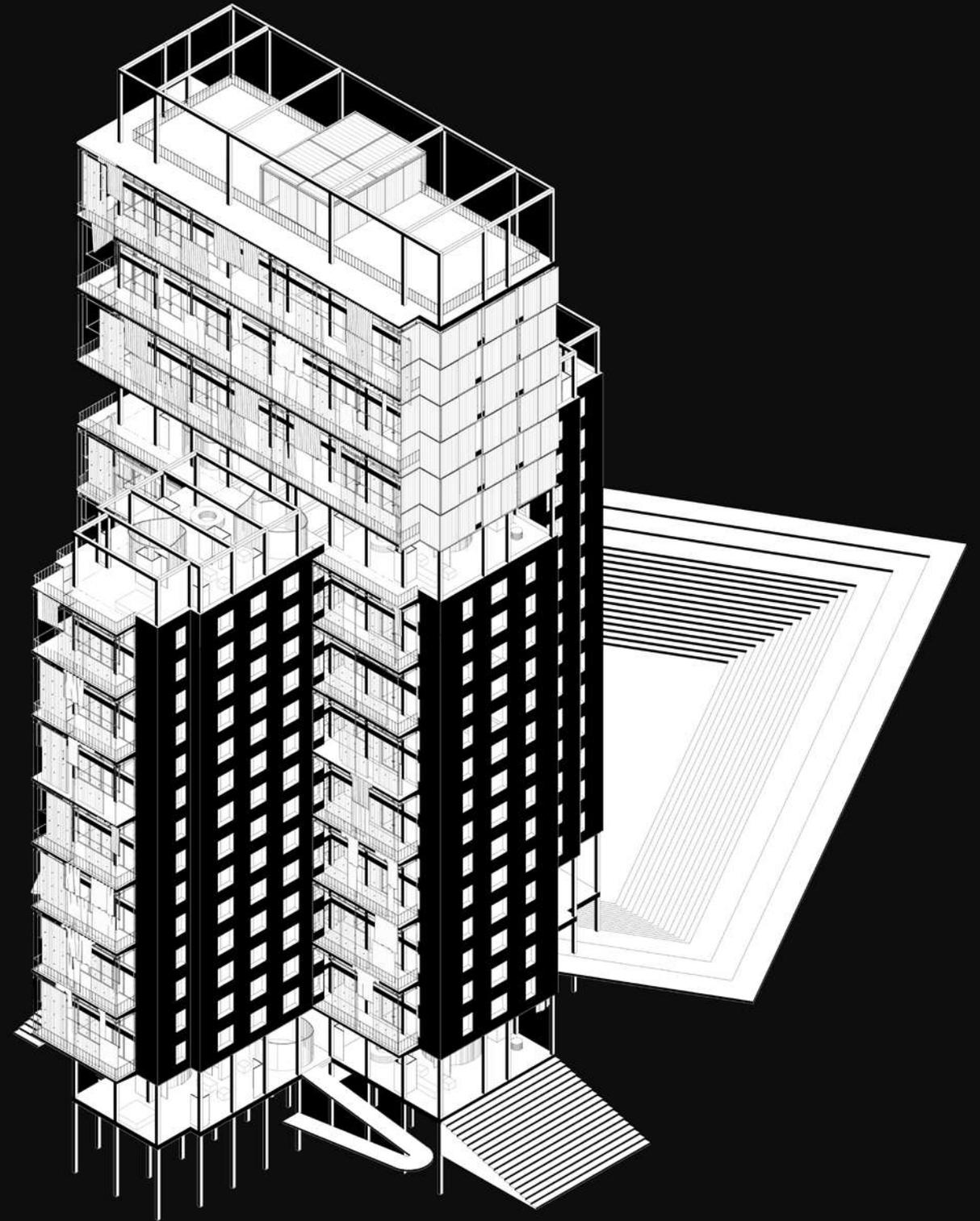
Advanced Studio V

Instructed by **Juan Herreros**

Typological Corrections

In Collaboration with **Leon Duval and**

Rocio Crosetto



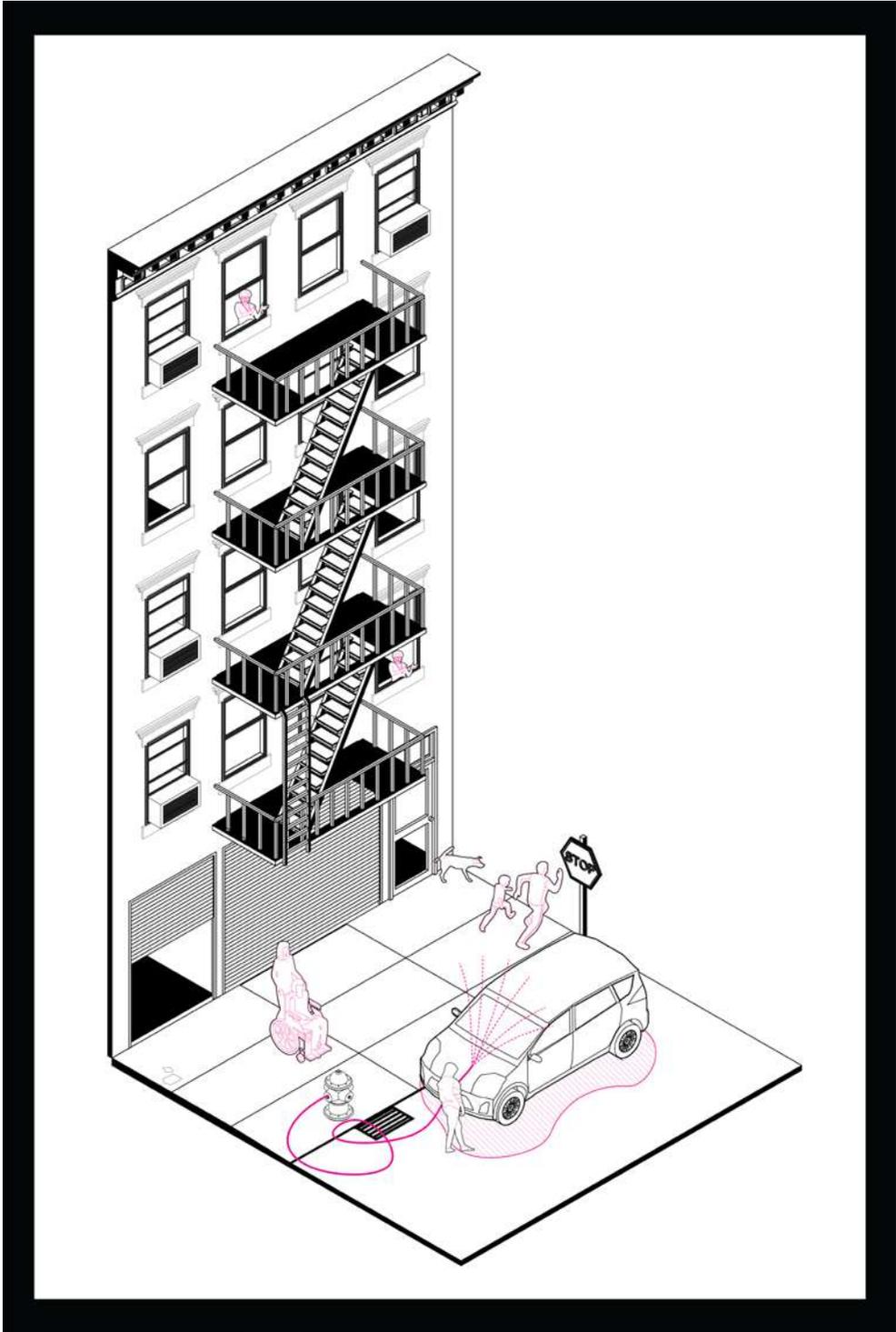
The Wagner Houses are located in a highly complex area with overlapping situations full of typologies, structures, and social and **environmental threats**. These situations and threats create for the East Harlem area a fragmented archipelago of disconnected moments like many NYCHA projects related to the maintenance and neglect of institutions.

By analyzing different situations and **assemblages** that happen in the daily routines throughout East Harlem, the architectural approach will work in solidarity with the human and more-than-human actors involved in the local.

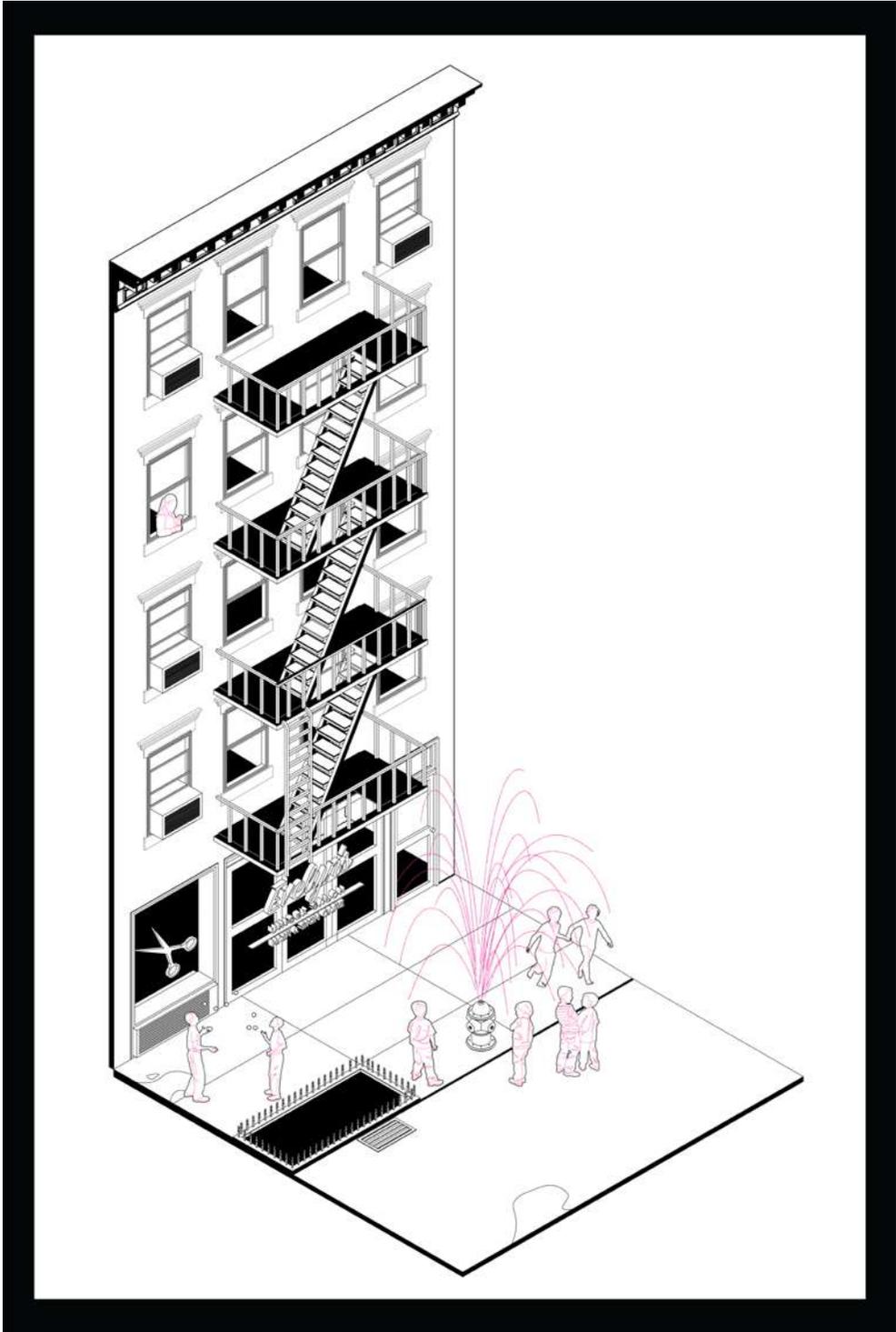
The project keeps the original structure and part of the facades to respond to the reuse of infrastructures. However, new typologies are designed to address not only the unique diversity of households but also the **idiosyncrasy** that a place like East Harlem has. In this way, the project will connect the existing local social structures with changes in the disposition and organization of the building.

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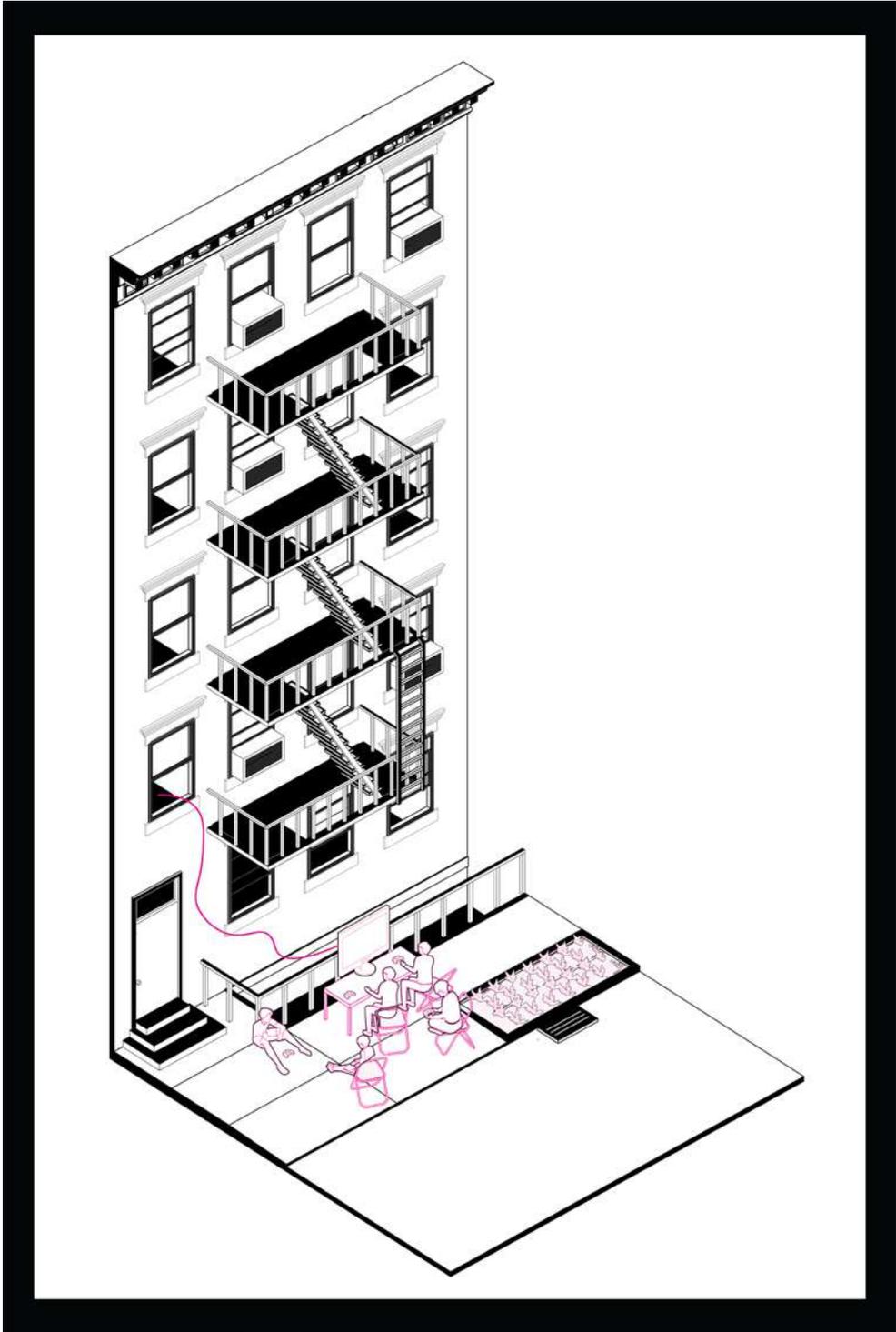
Carwashing in the streets



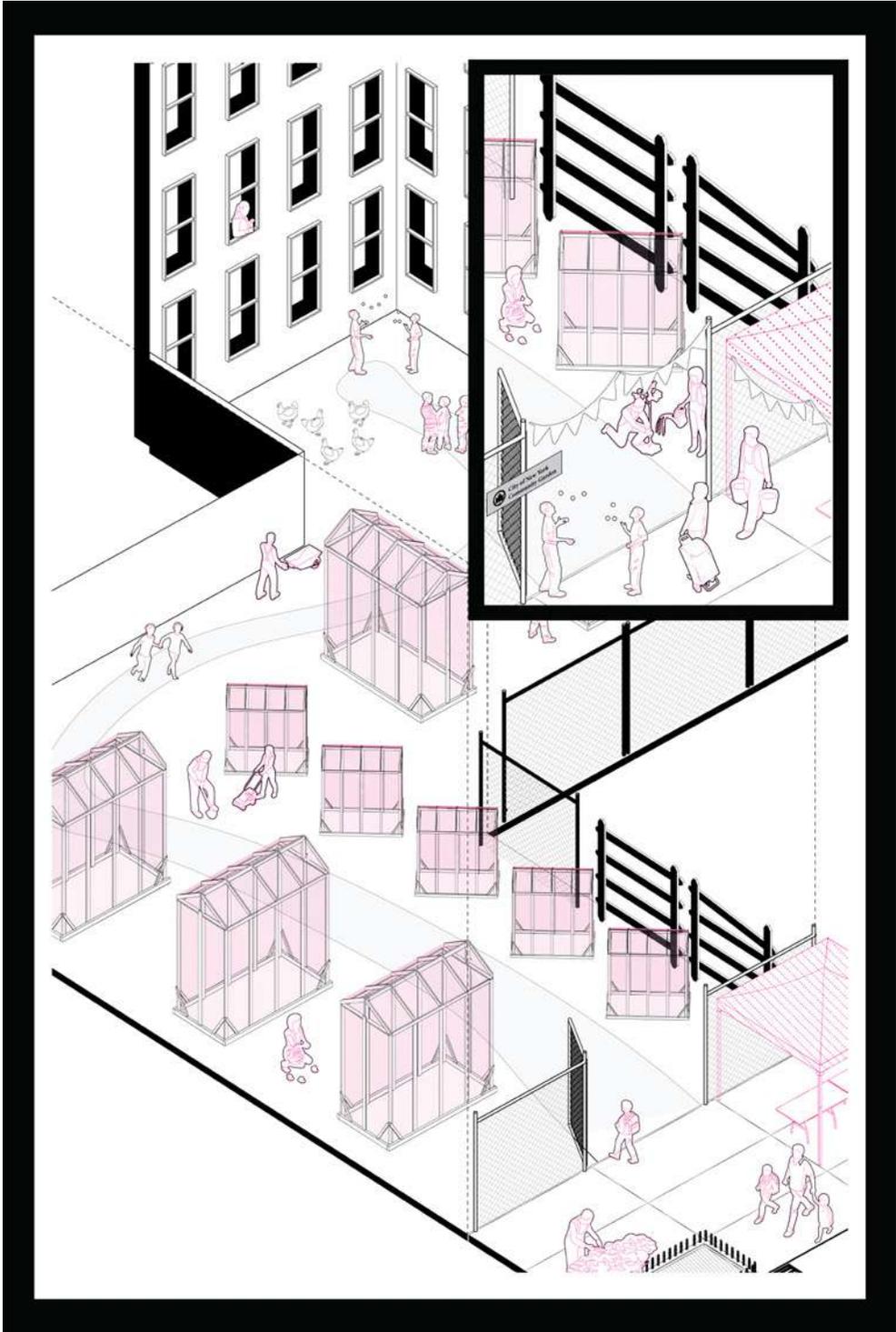
Spontaneous playground

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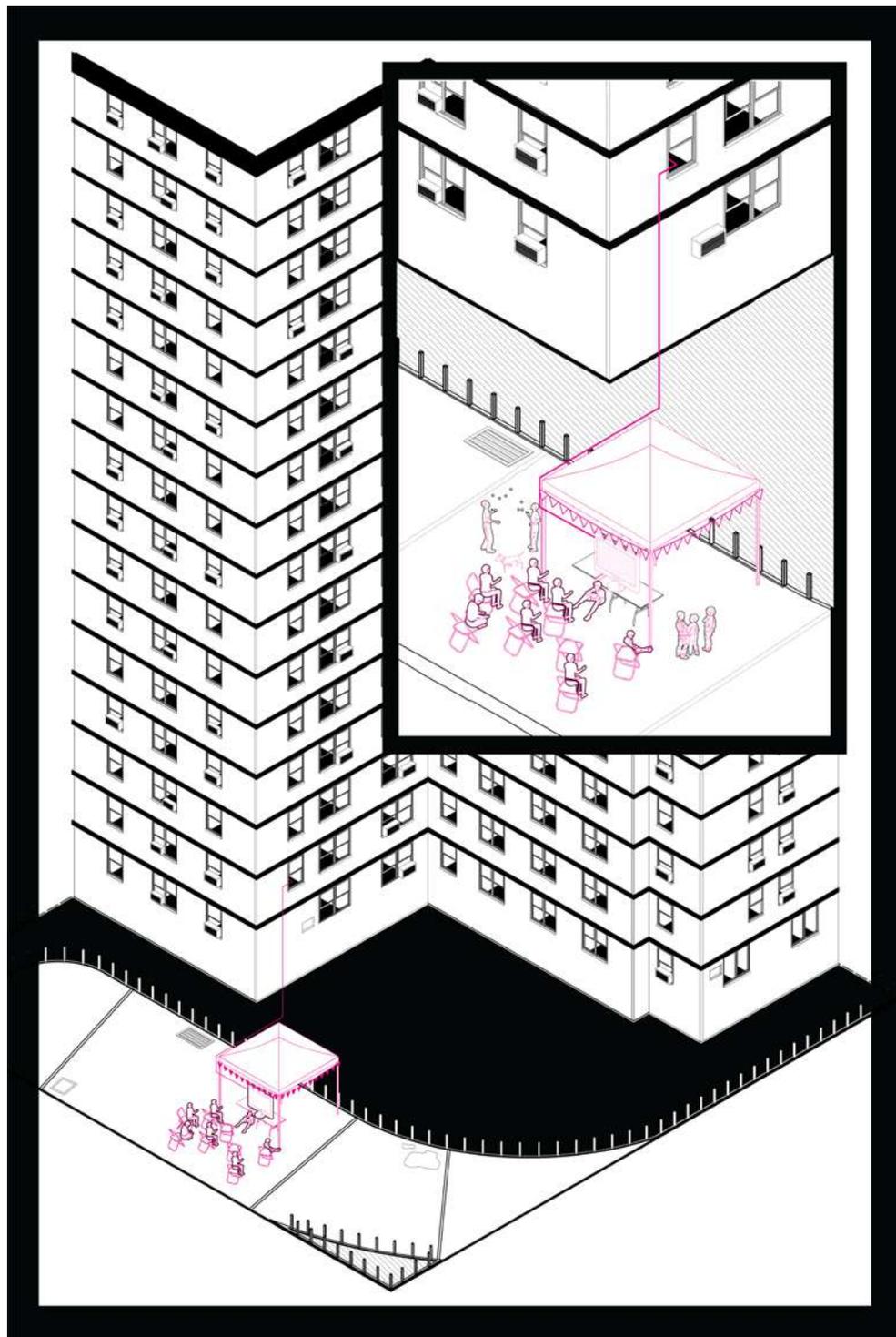
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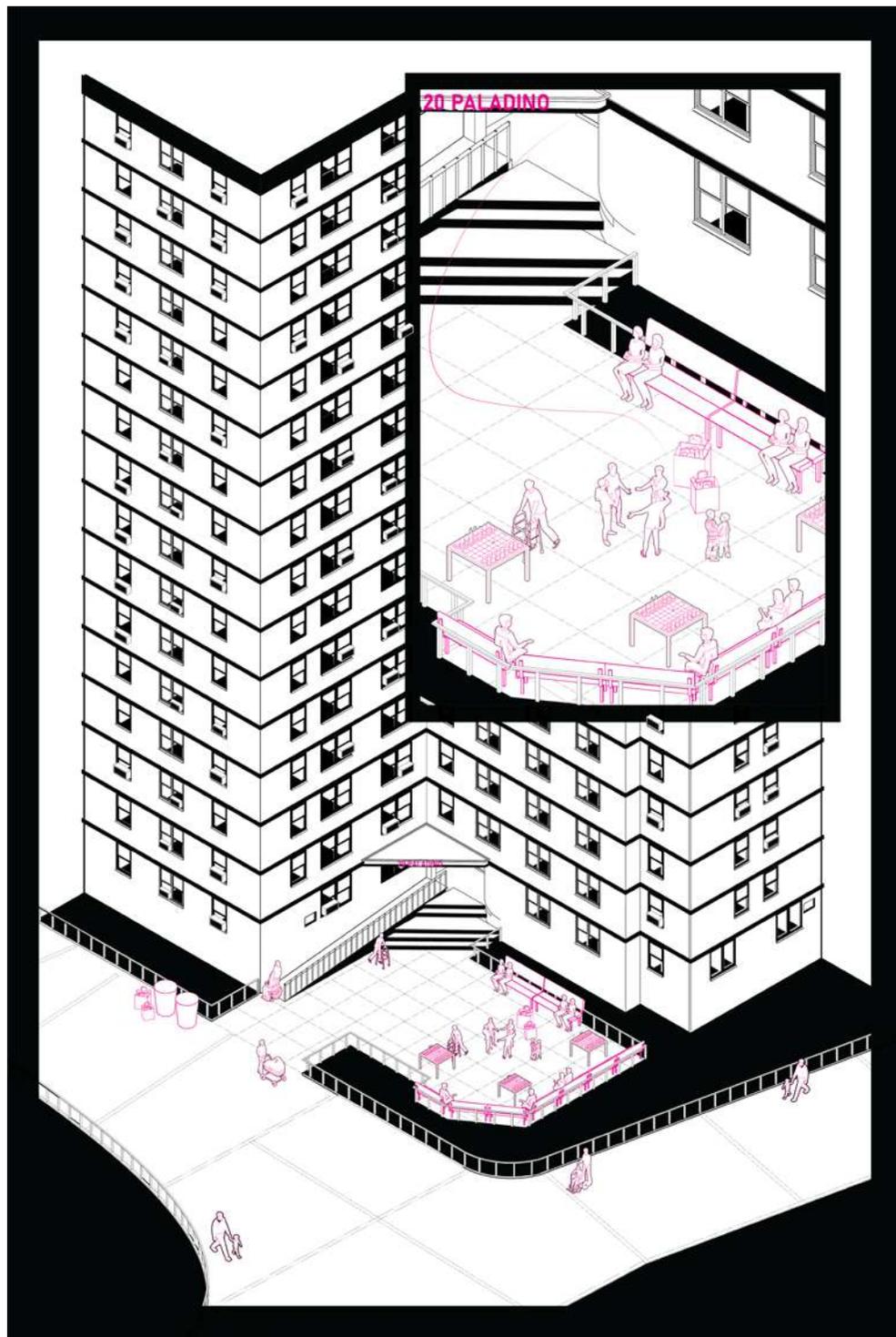
Outside TV gatherings



Community Gardens



Outside living-room to watch telenovelas



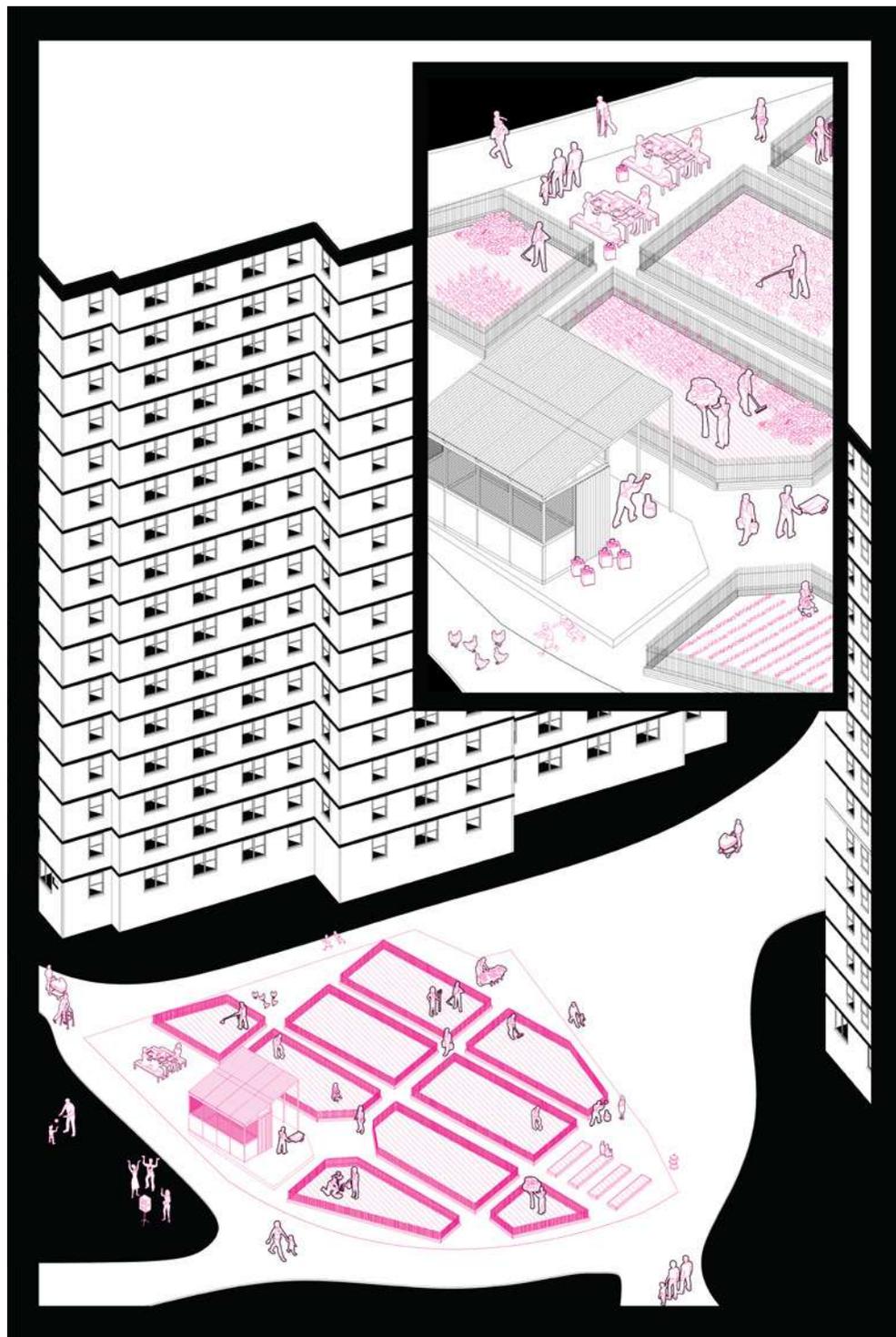
Chess competitions

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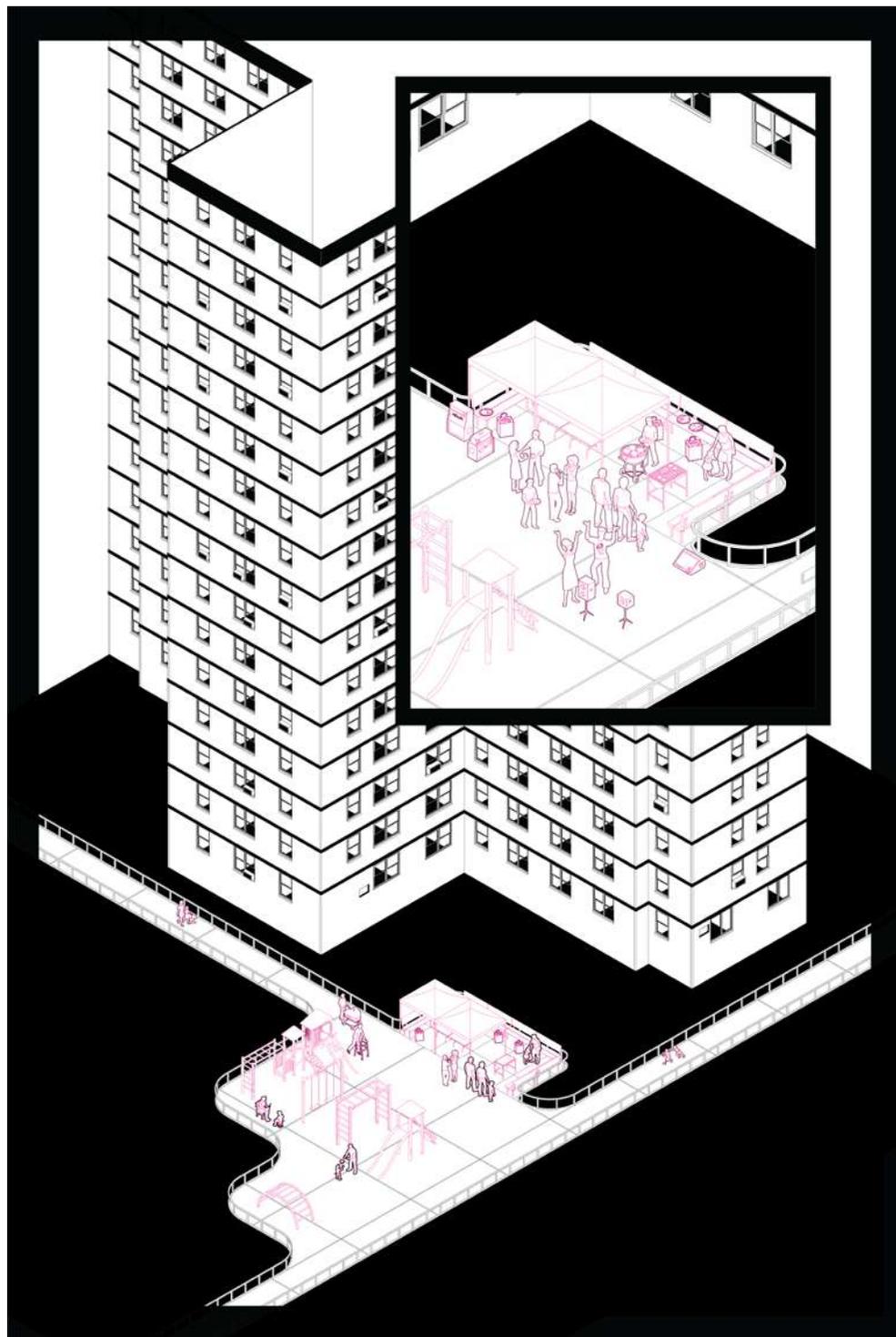
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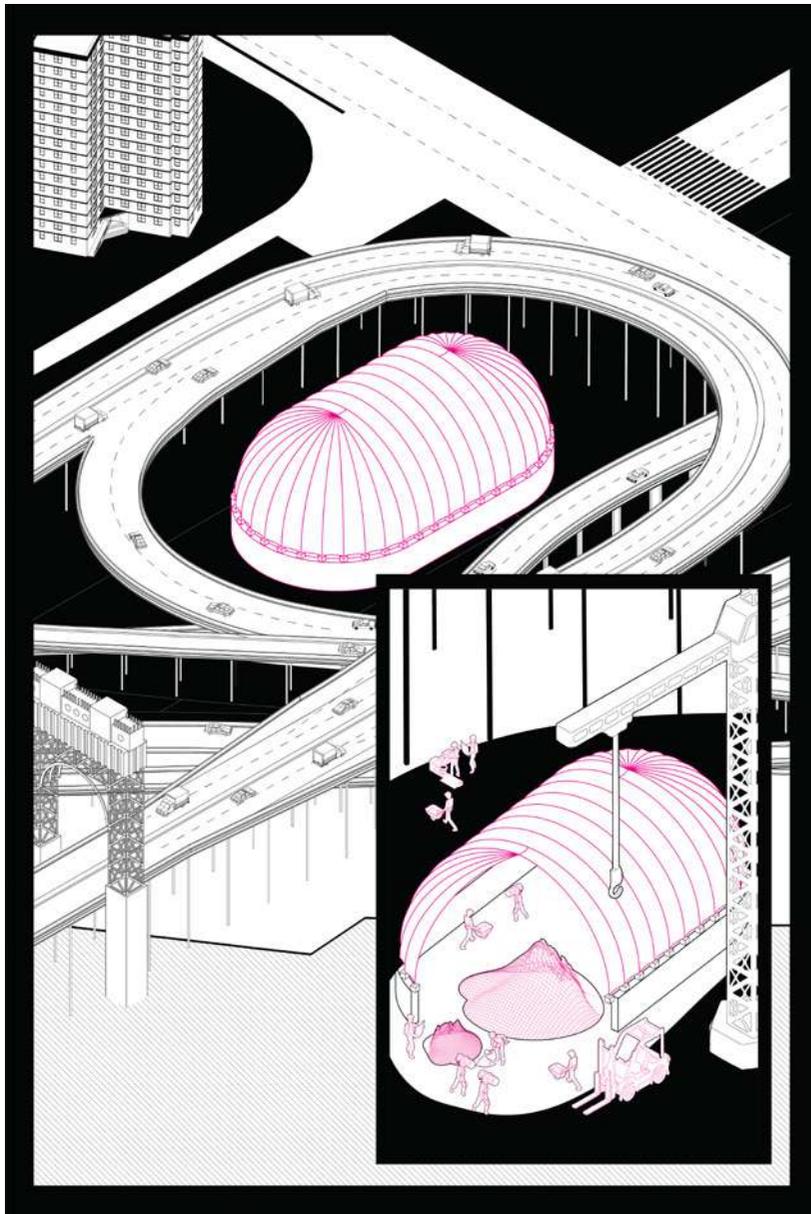


Collective Gardens

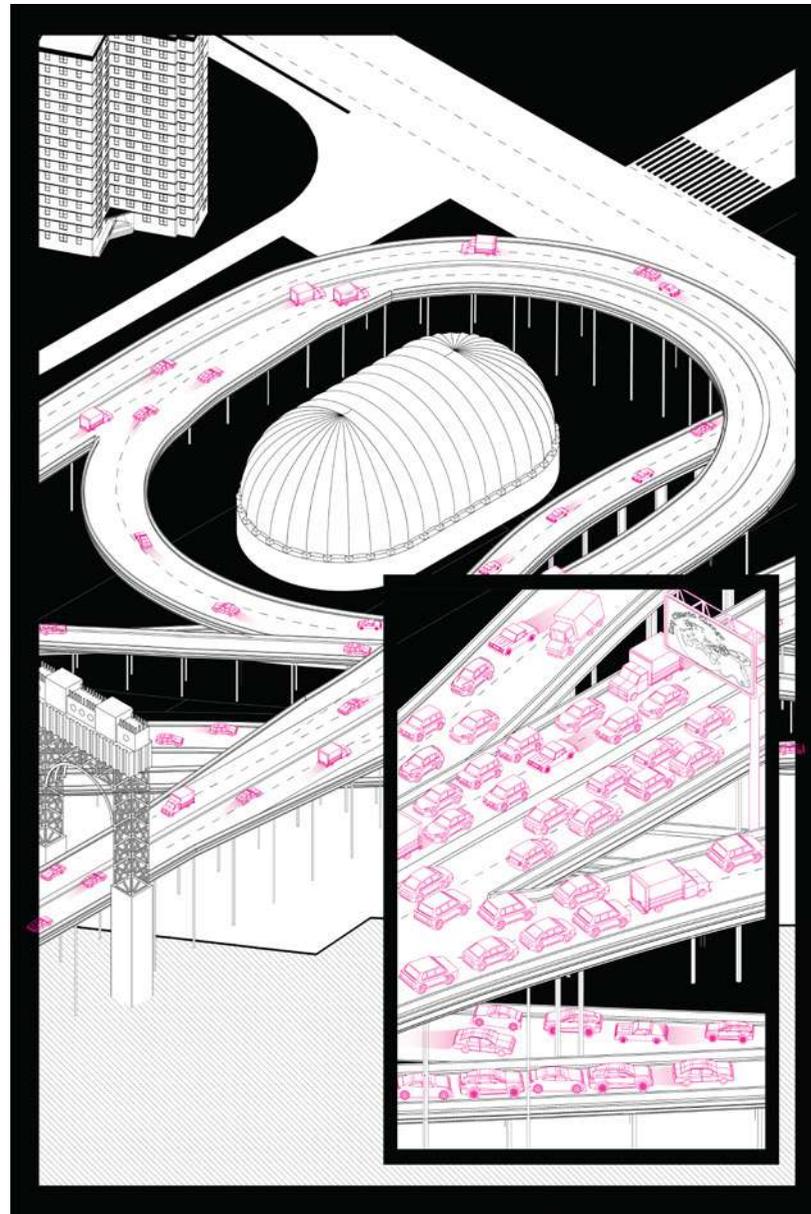


Asado and BBQ meetings

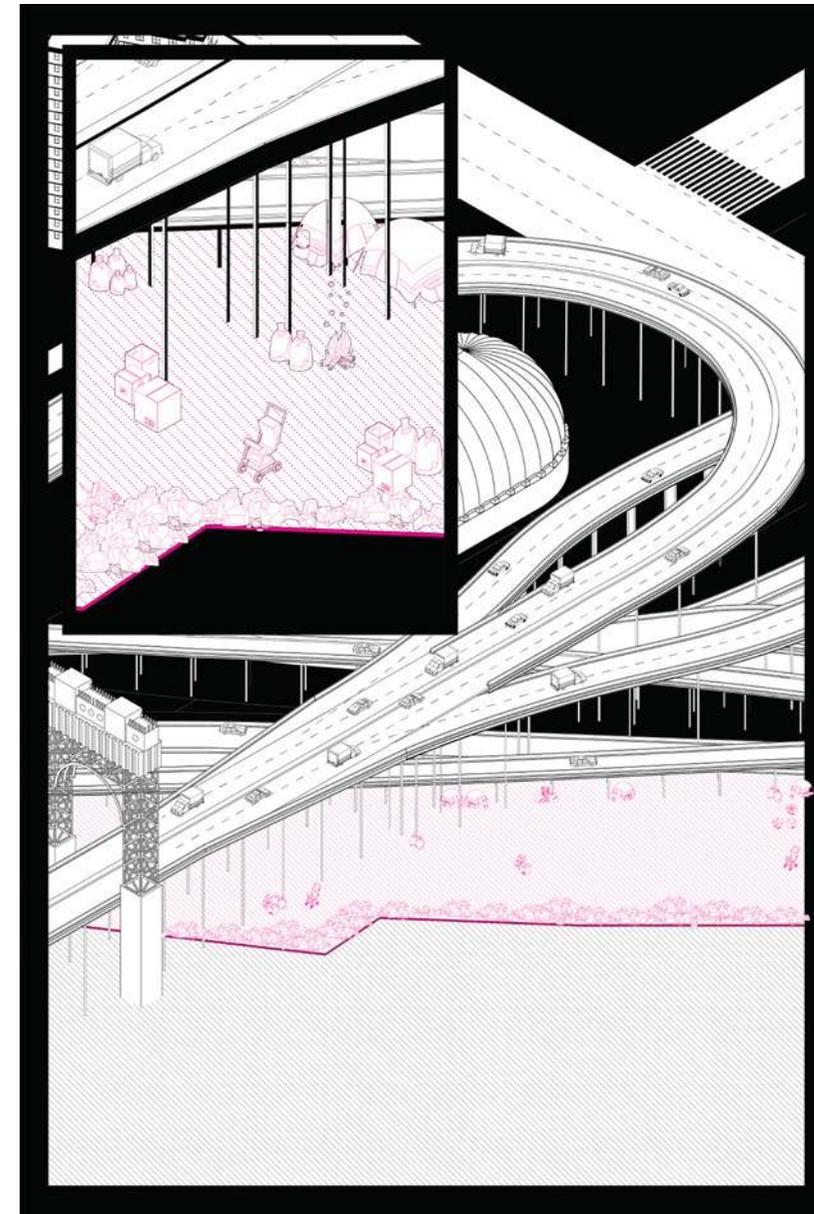
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Raw Materials Deposit



Vehicles and Traffic



Shelter for individuals experiencing homelessness

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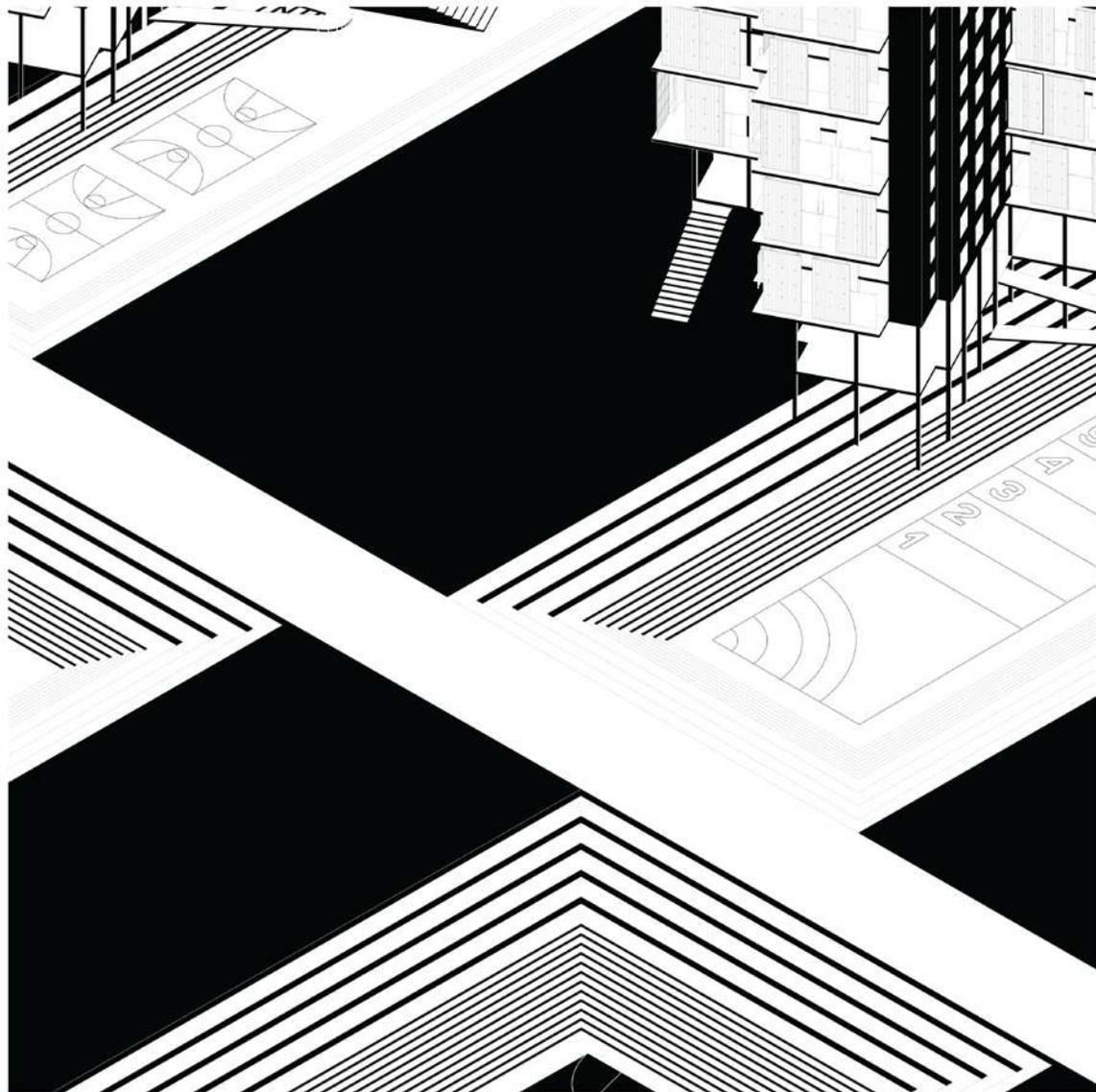
Spaces of negotiation and shared existence



What if the riverfront becomes a beach for encounters and social realm

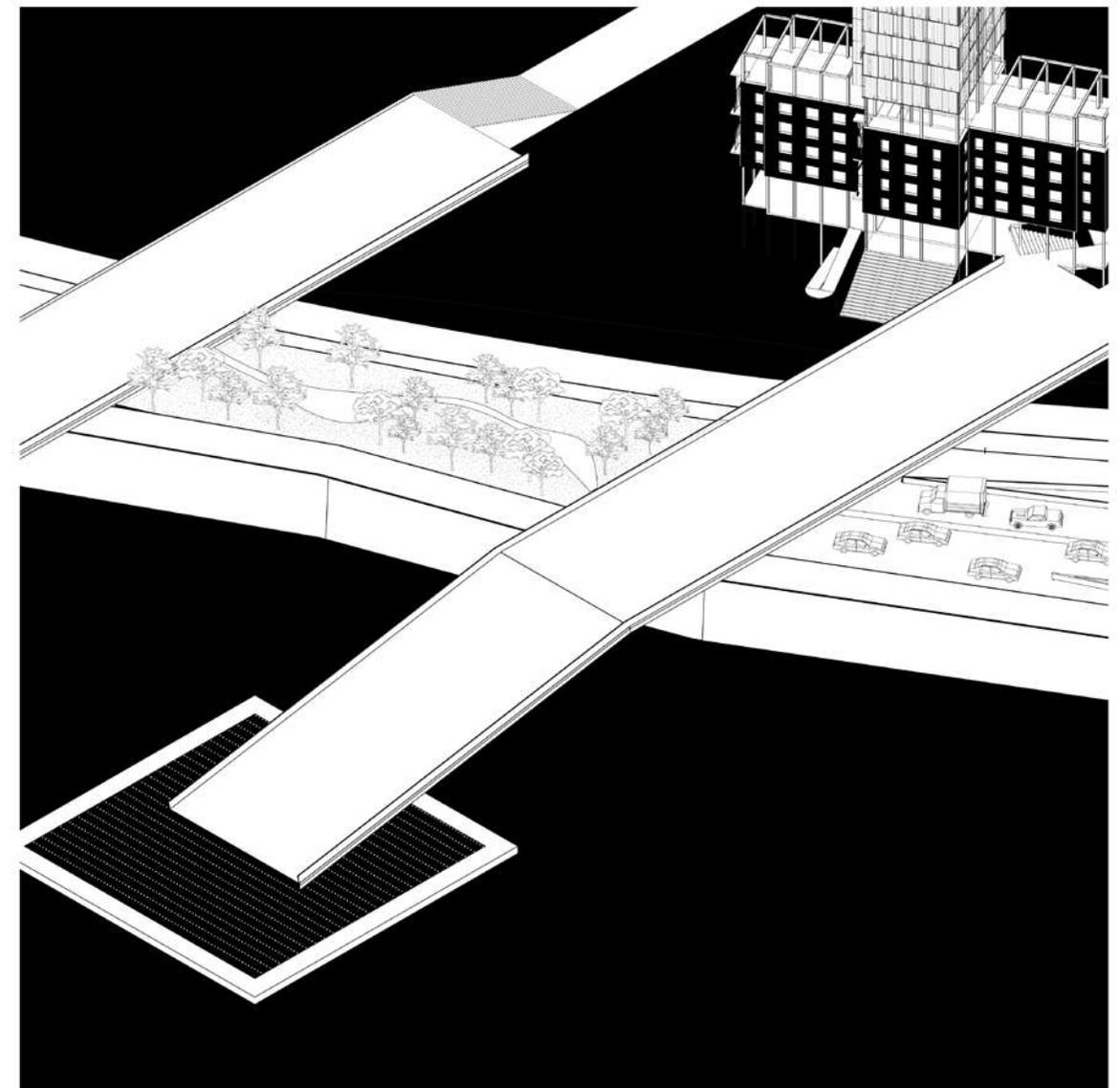


imaginaires of architecture devices that mediate relationships between ac



Devices for water collection

Instead a human centered approach, the architectures mediate



Infrastructures that connect the East River to the Wagner Houses

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East River Docks

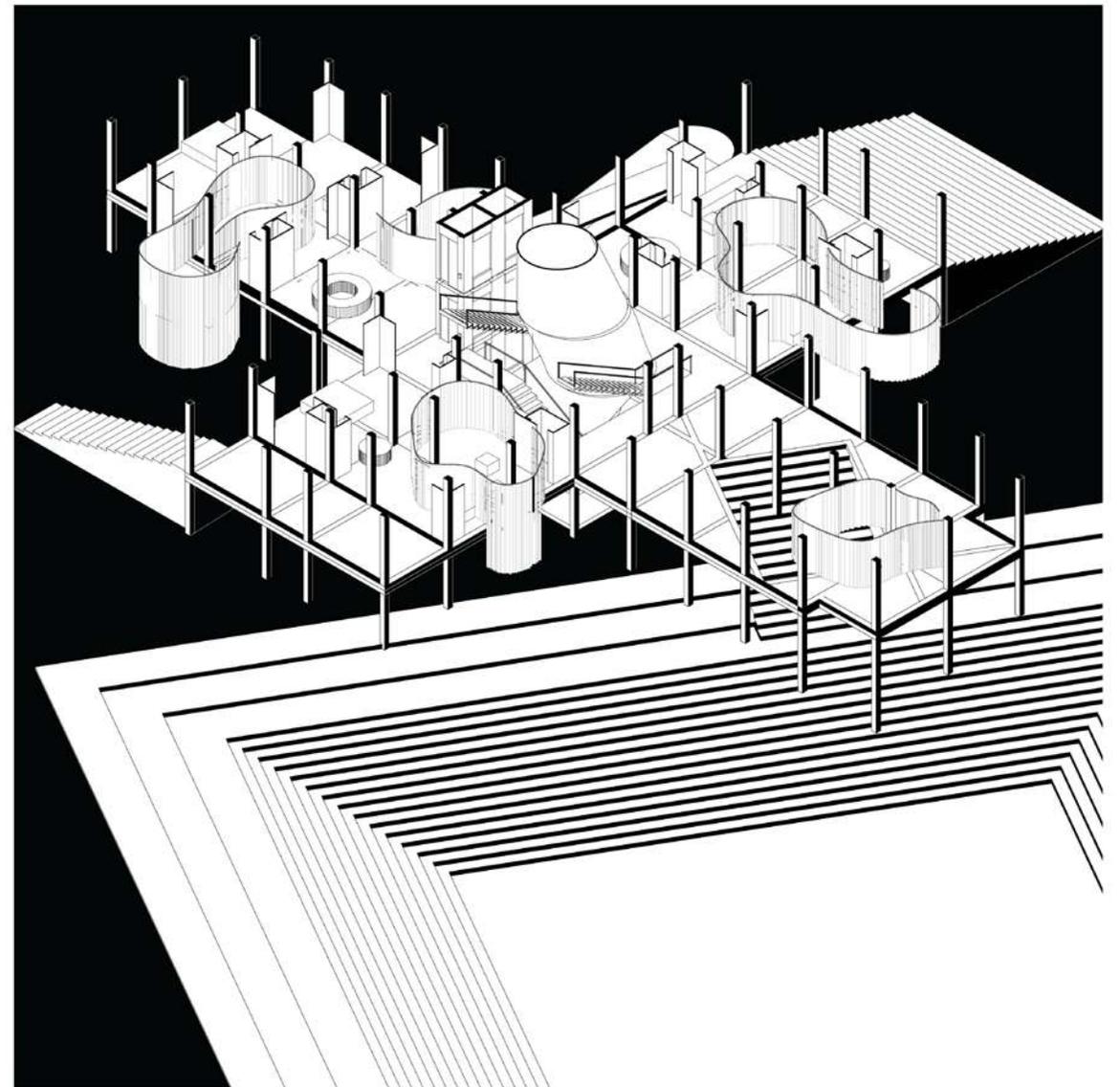


Public Infrastructure



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Communal Center Spaces



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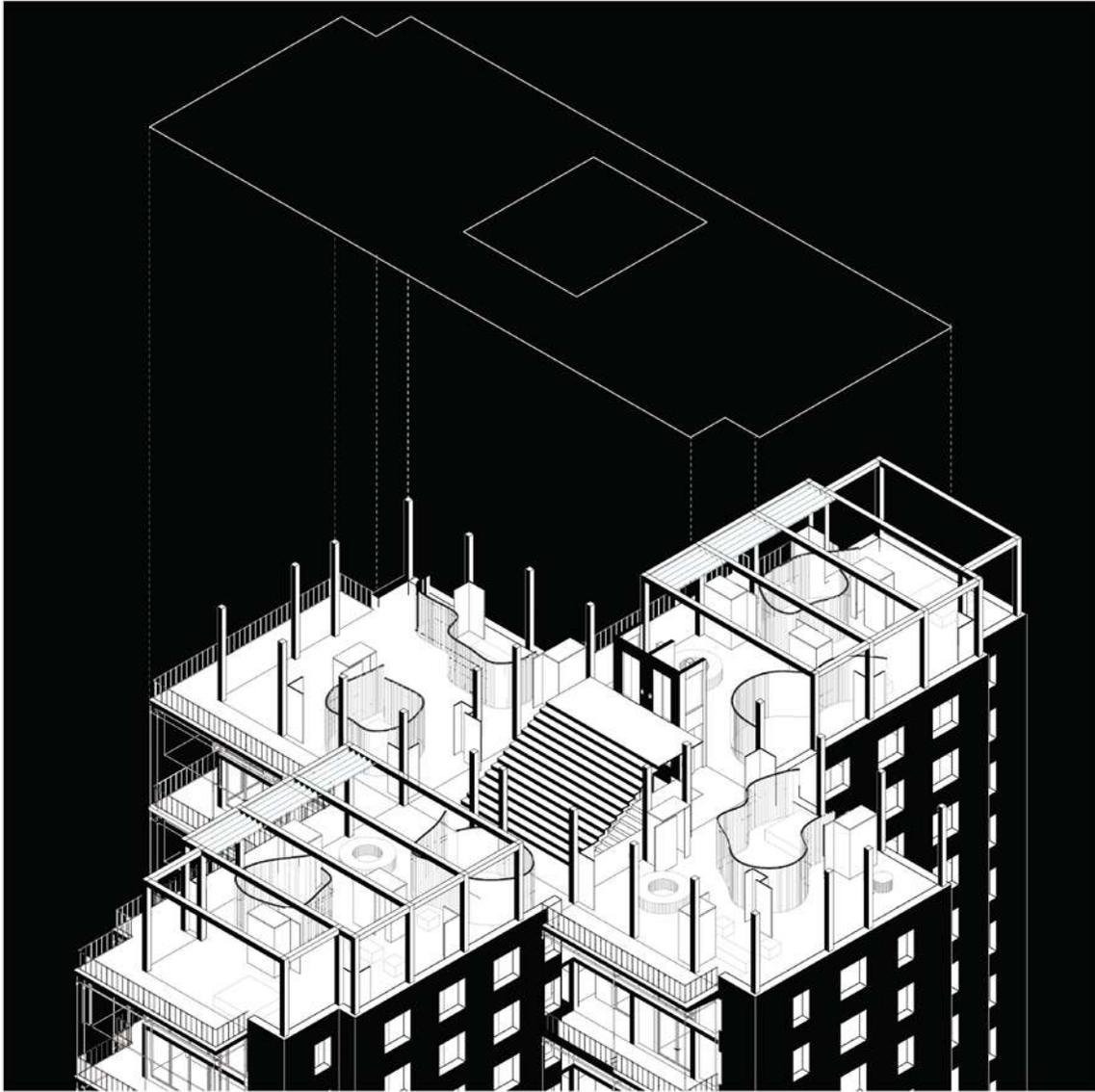
Ground floor as an area of exchange



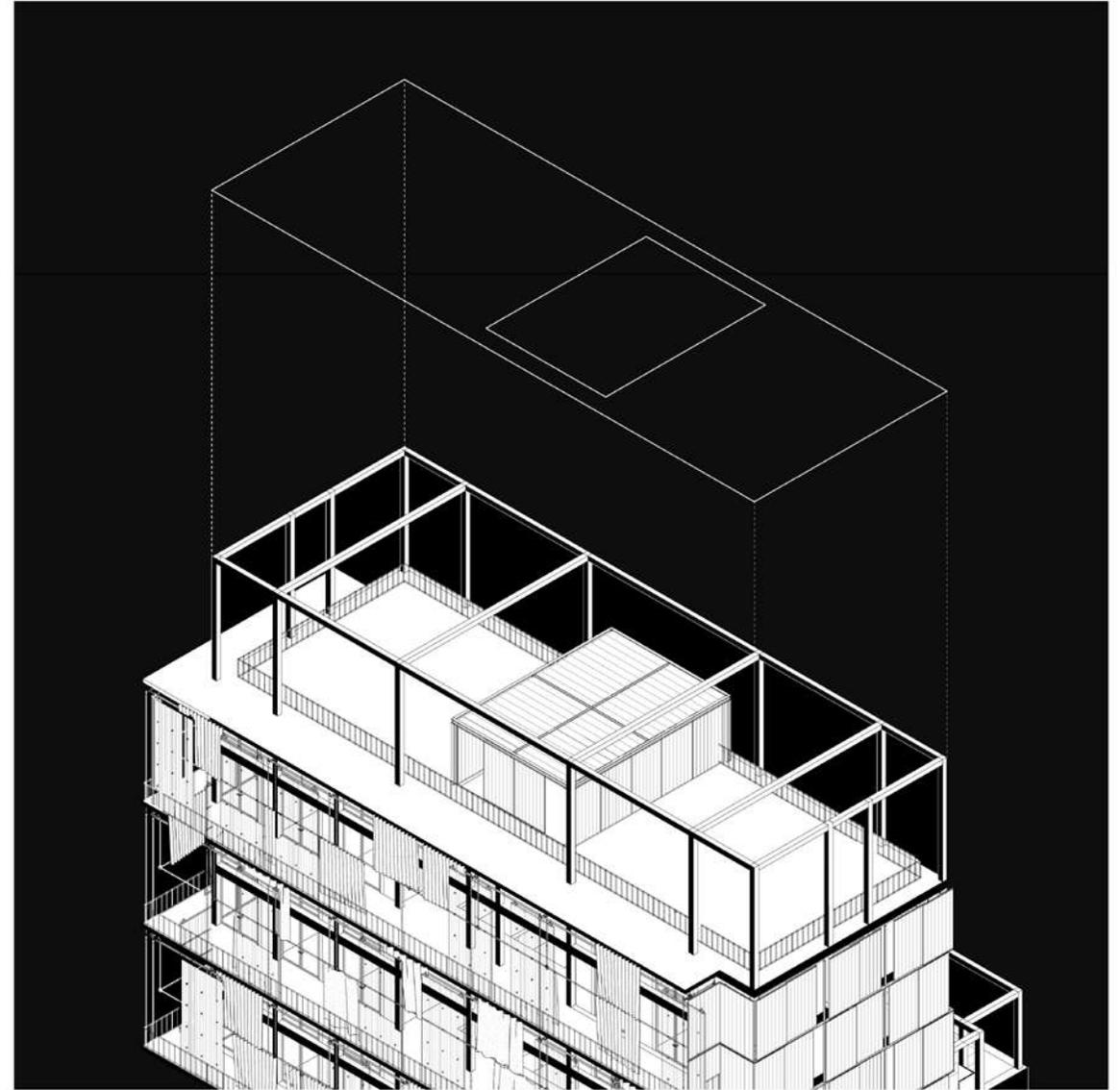
Instead corridors, there are performative areas



Spaces for the unexpected



Intermediate Floor



Terrace

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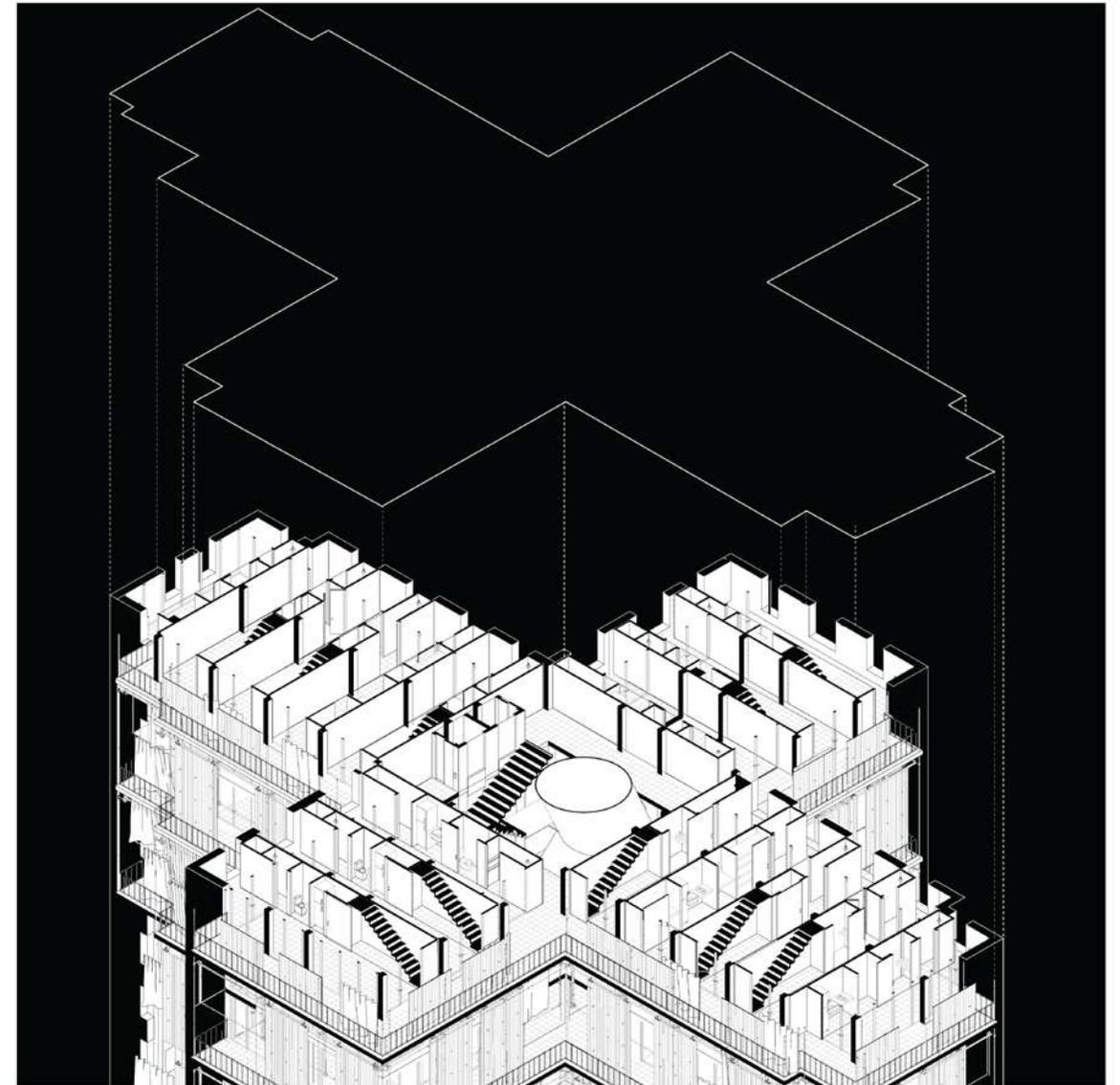
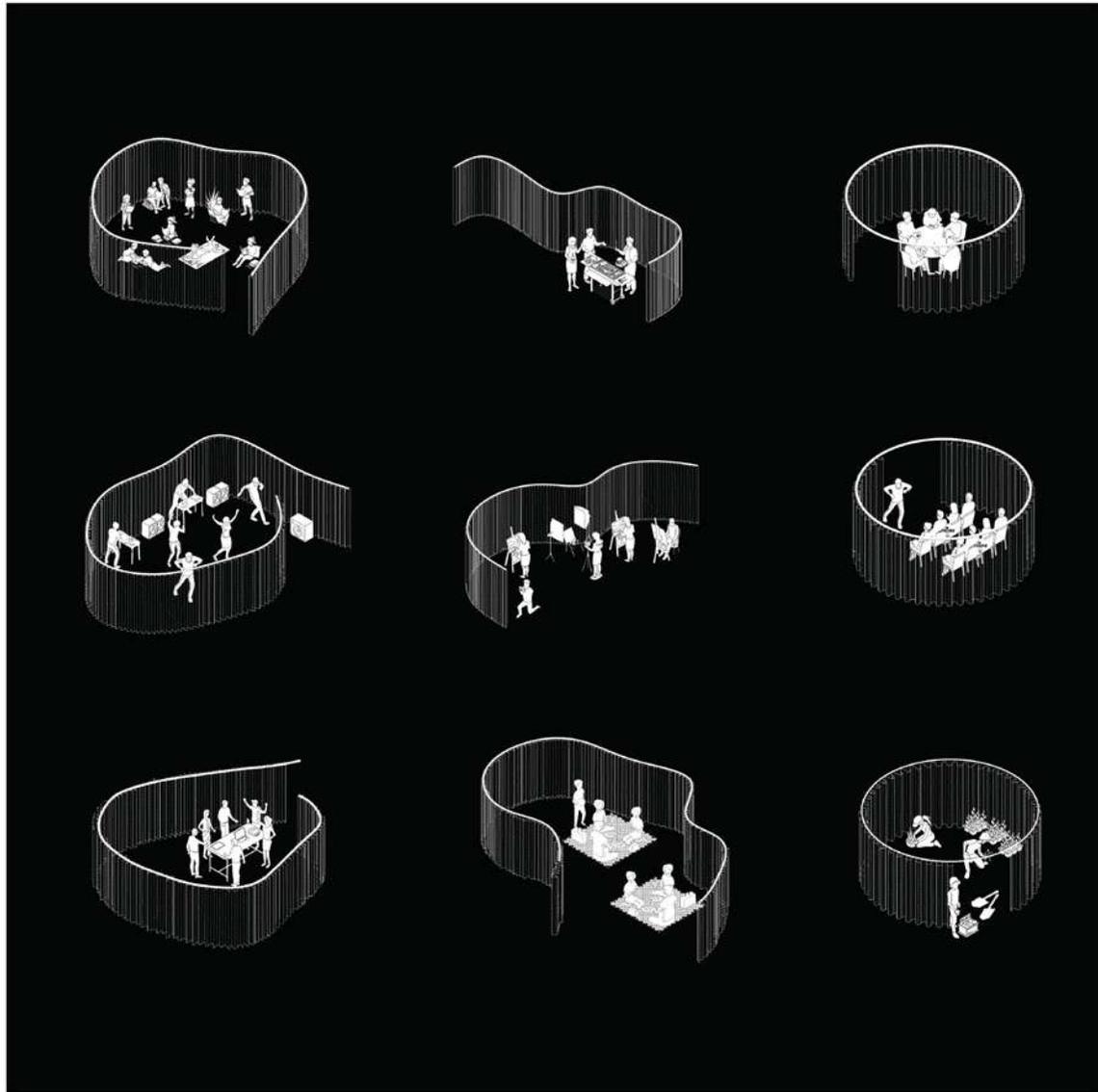
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New ways to get vitamin d



New Year's Eve



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Flexibility in the architectural elements

Typologies for housing to non-nuclear families

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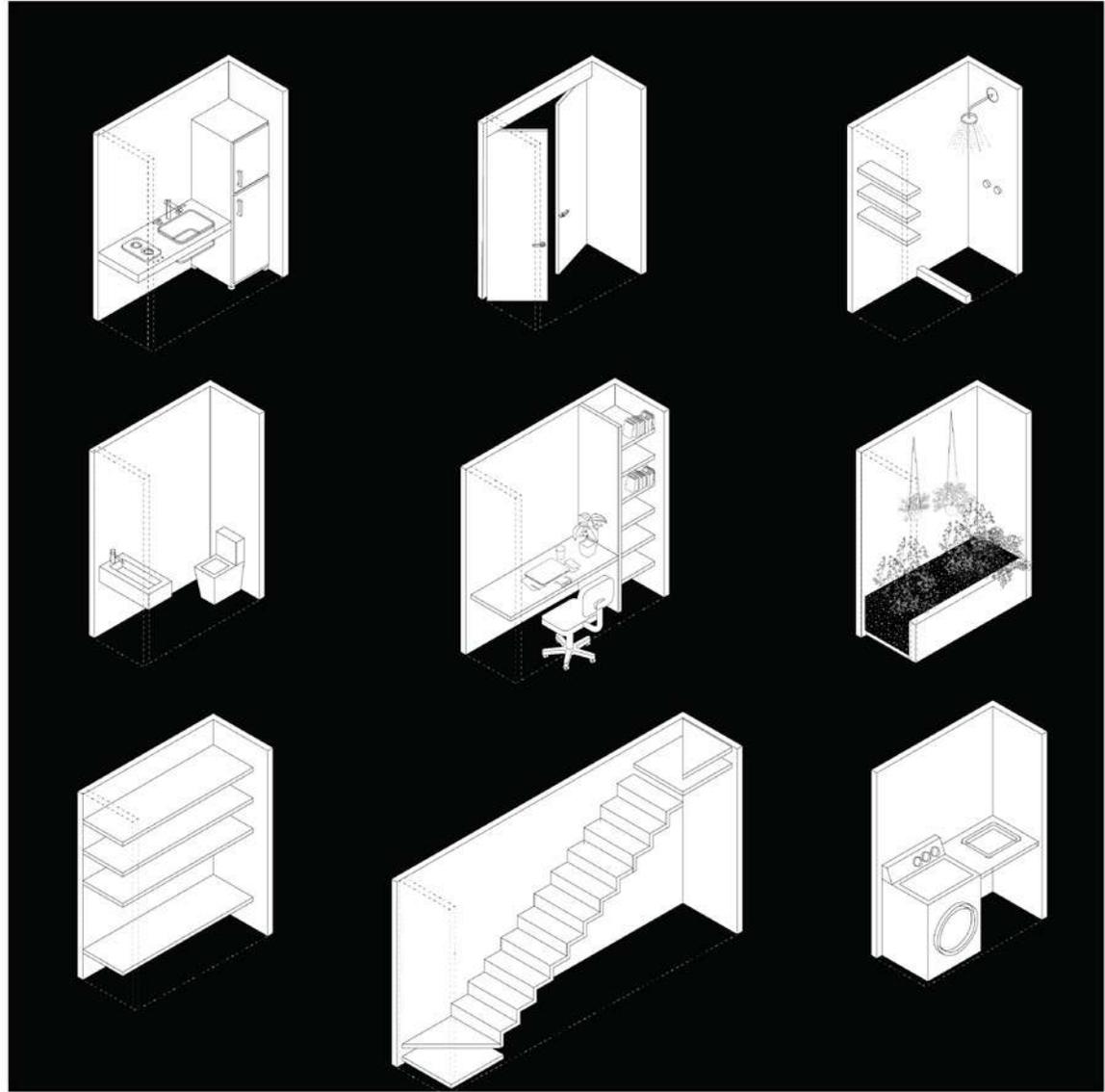
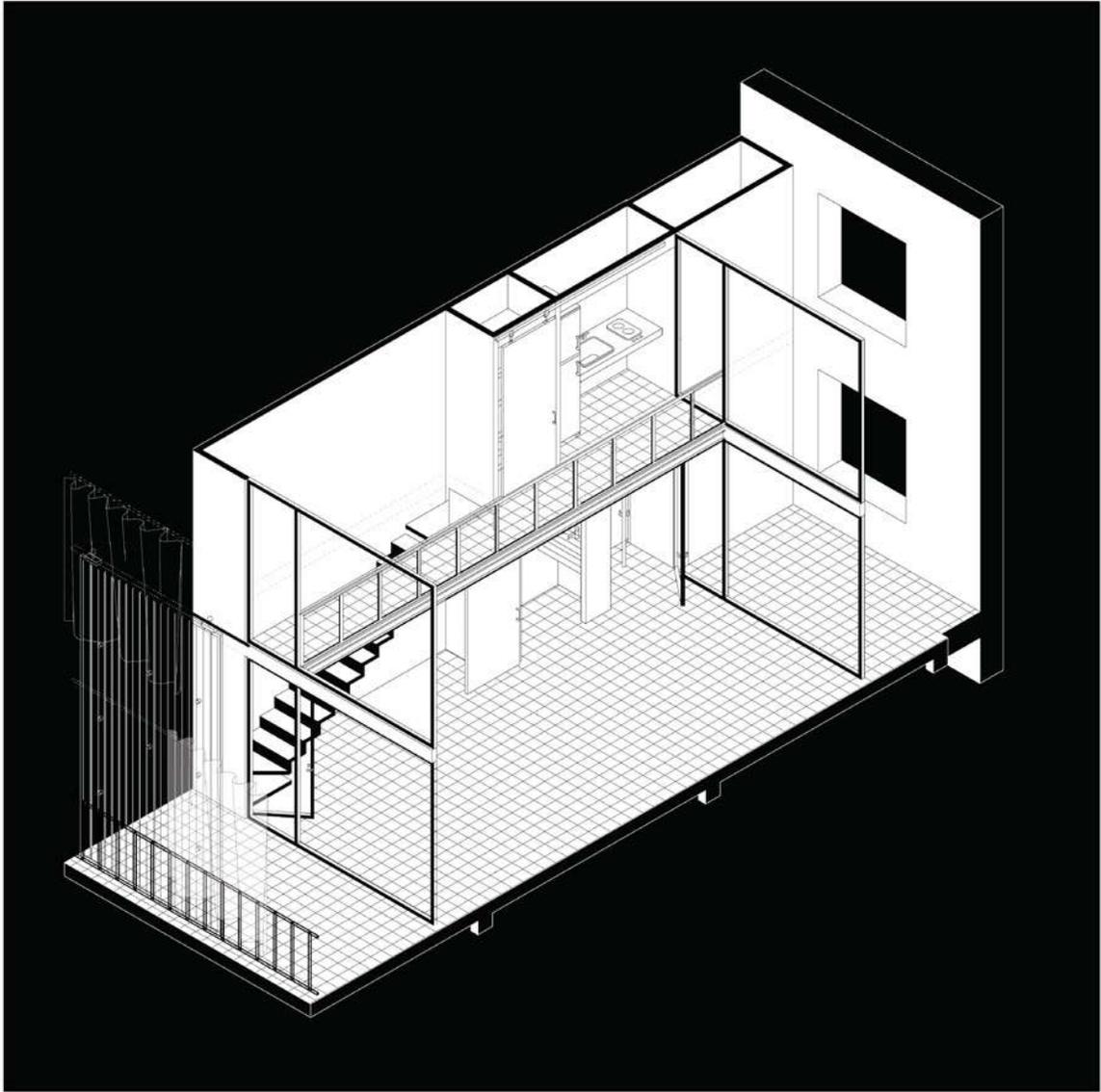
Curtains



Devices of constant interactions

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Typical module

Different configurations of programs



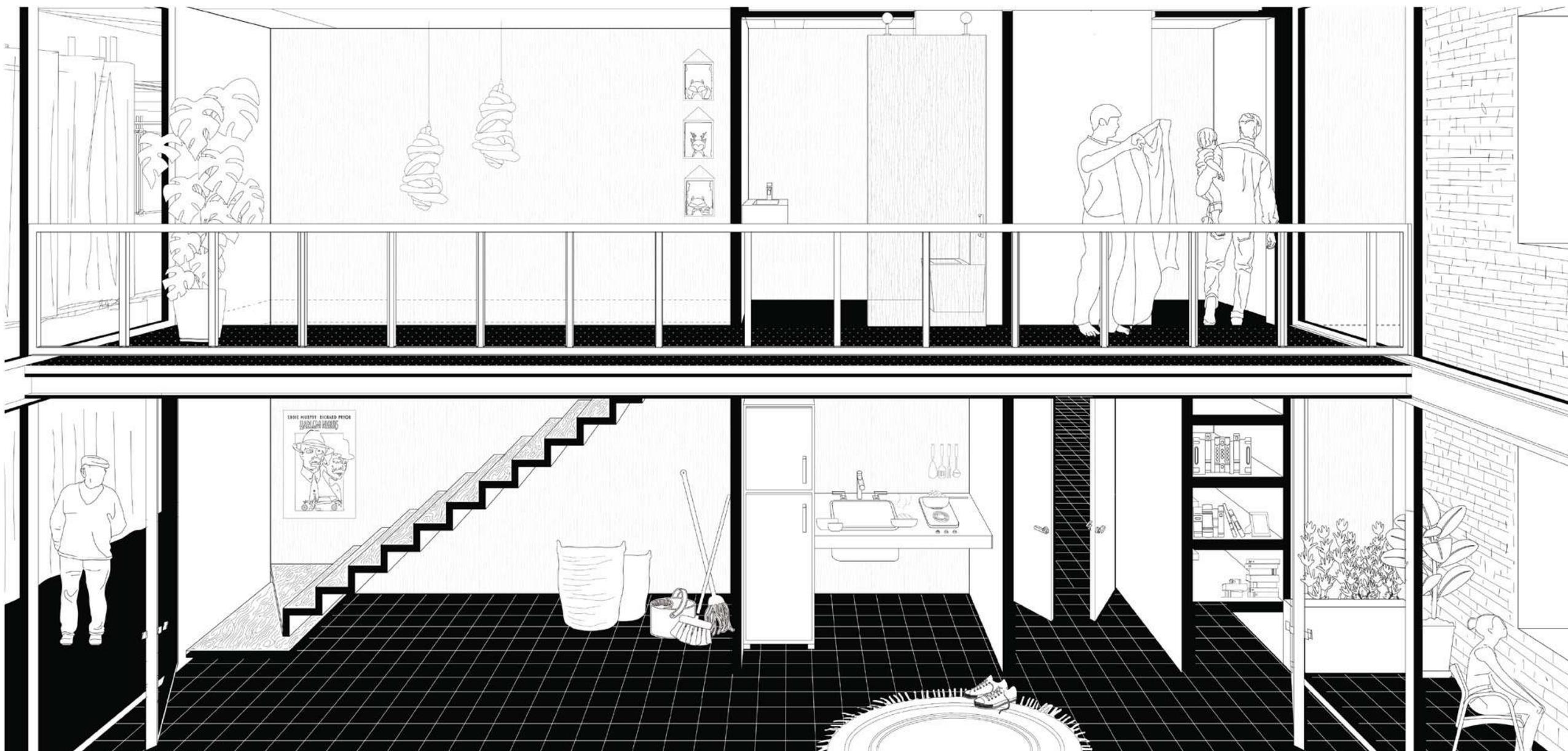
Non-hierarchical spaces



Domestic spaces

The domesticity is understood as a living process

Section of a housing module



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5

More-than-human Integrations Rethinking BIM

Instructed by **Mark Green**
Revit + Grasshopper + Rhino
In Collaboration with
Daniela Beraun



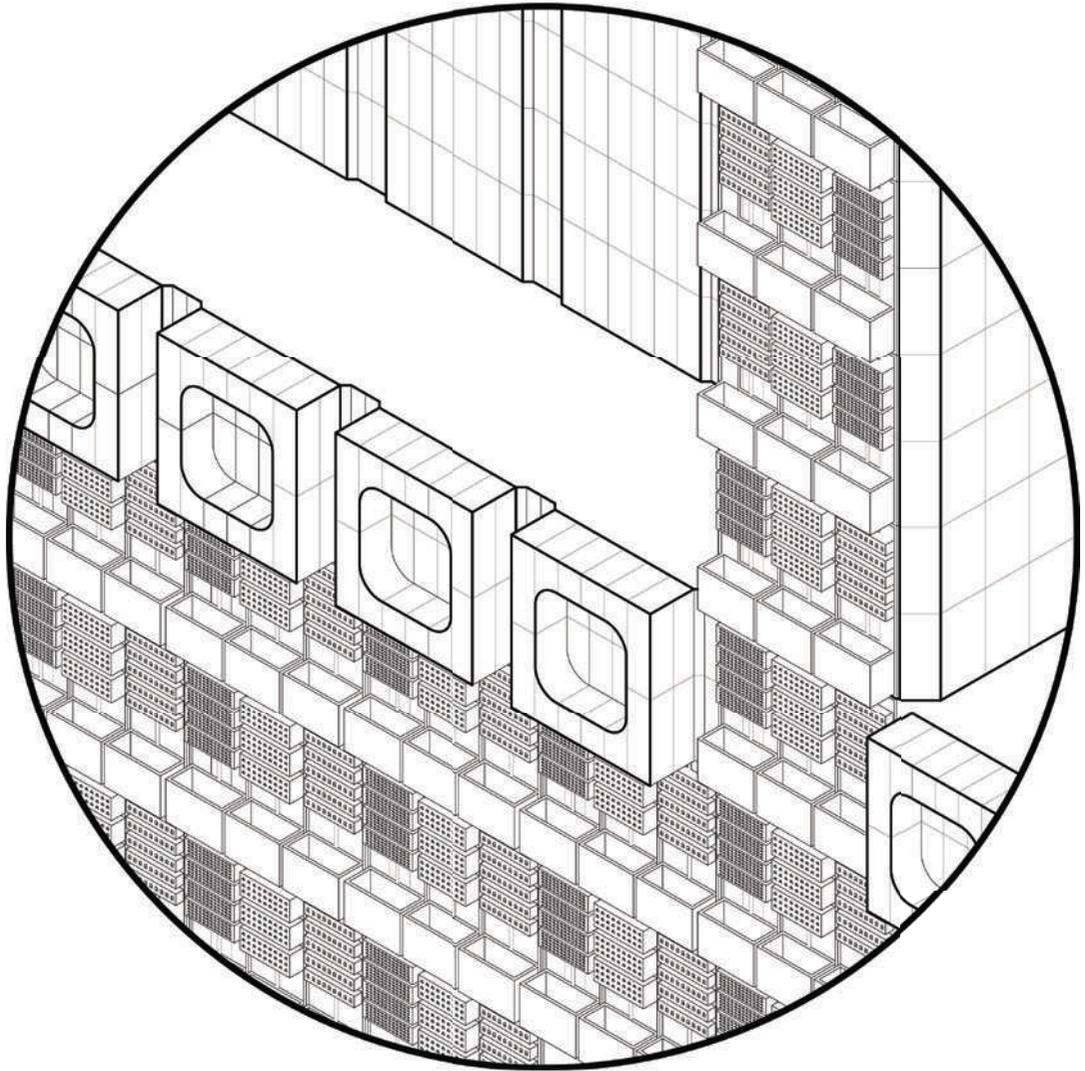
A facade intervention that came from looking at how the AT&T building did not relate to humans (is windowless, with oversized ventilation ducts as the only recognizable facade element). Our intent with this project was to take the next step and convert the building into an inhabitable building for **more-than-human** species.

We created a three dimensional facade that was able to host solitary bees and **migrating birds**

Each panel is a 3D grid that has a series of components: a bird or bee home and a planter.

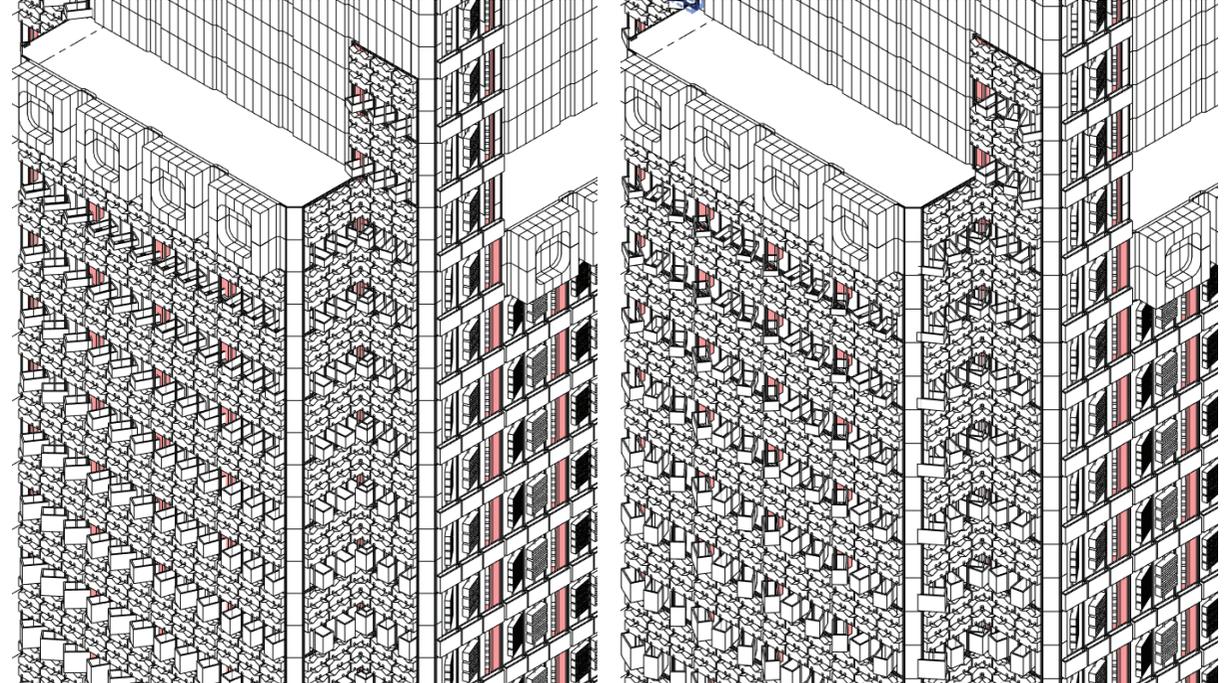
Each component will be affected by a particular data set. The bird homes will rotate so as to avoid direct wind directly, the planter dimension will be defined to maximize solar radiation, the **bee homes** will be associated with the planters (so that if the planter is bigger, the home matches its position).

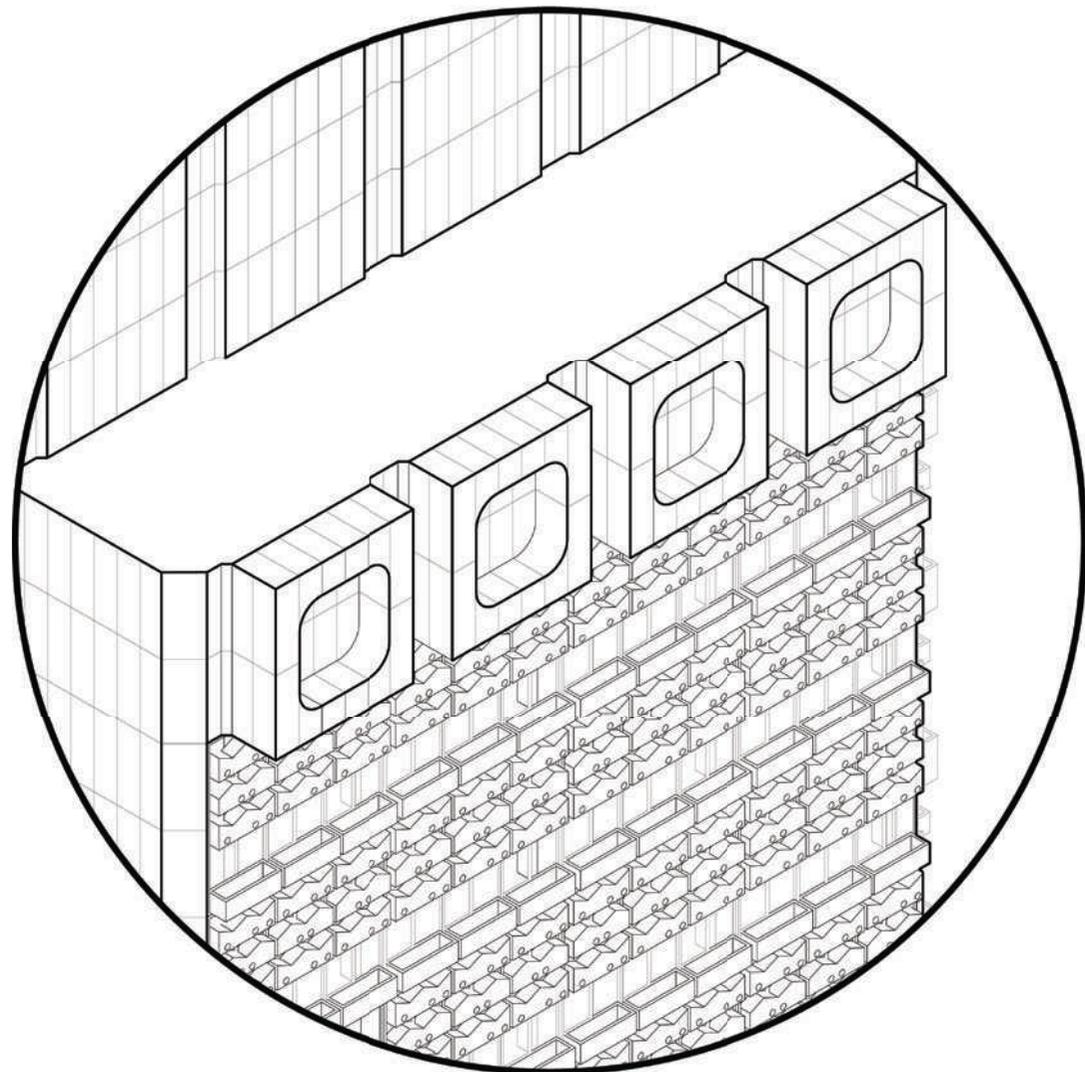
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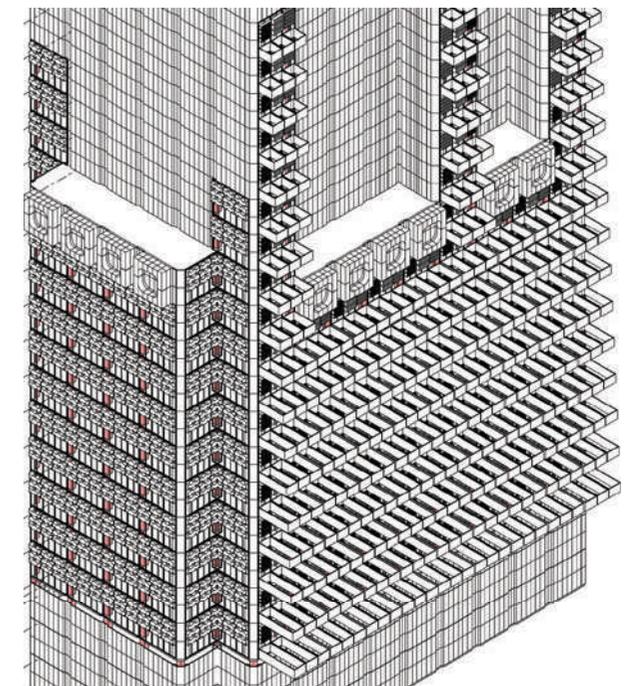
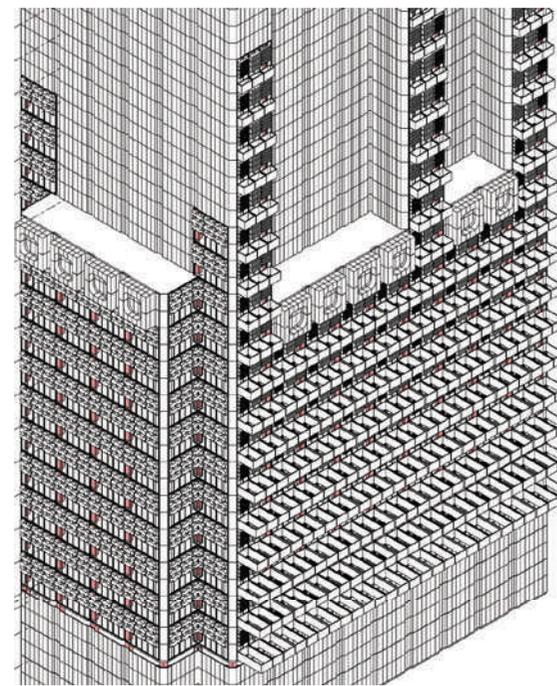
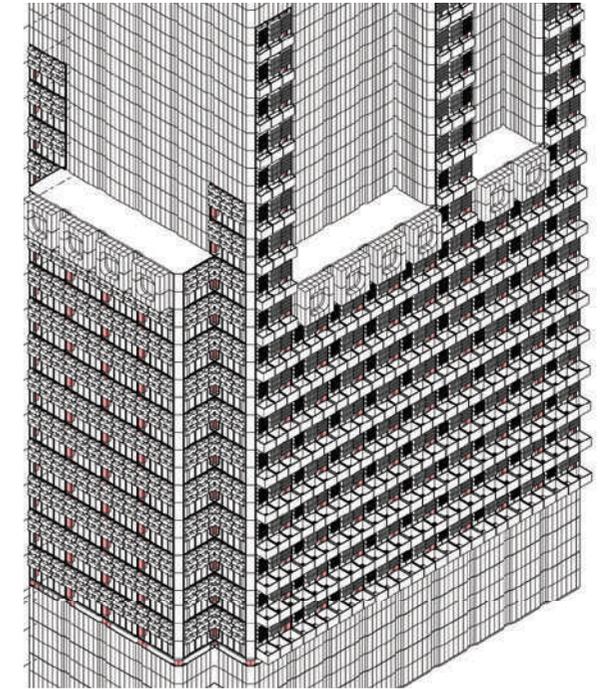
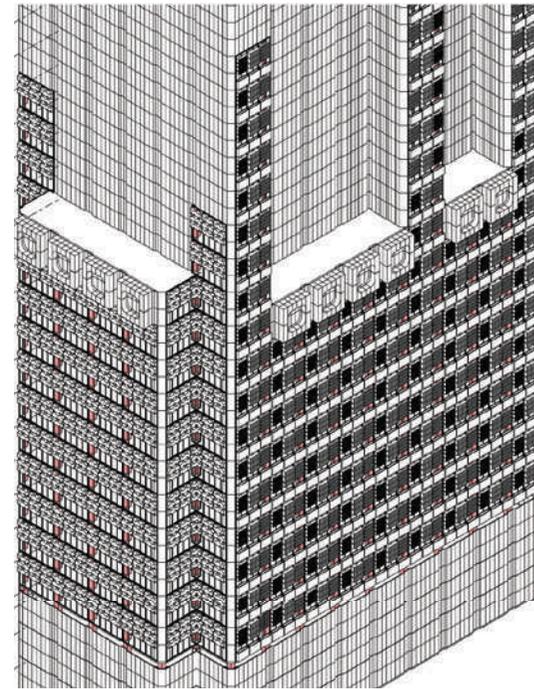
Bee homes that support the proliferation of flower to be pollinated

architecture as a mediator





Birds shelters that change planters size depending on radiation



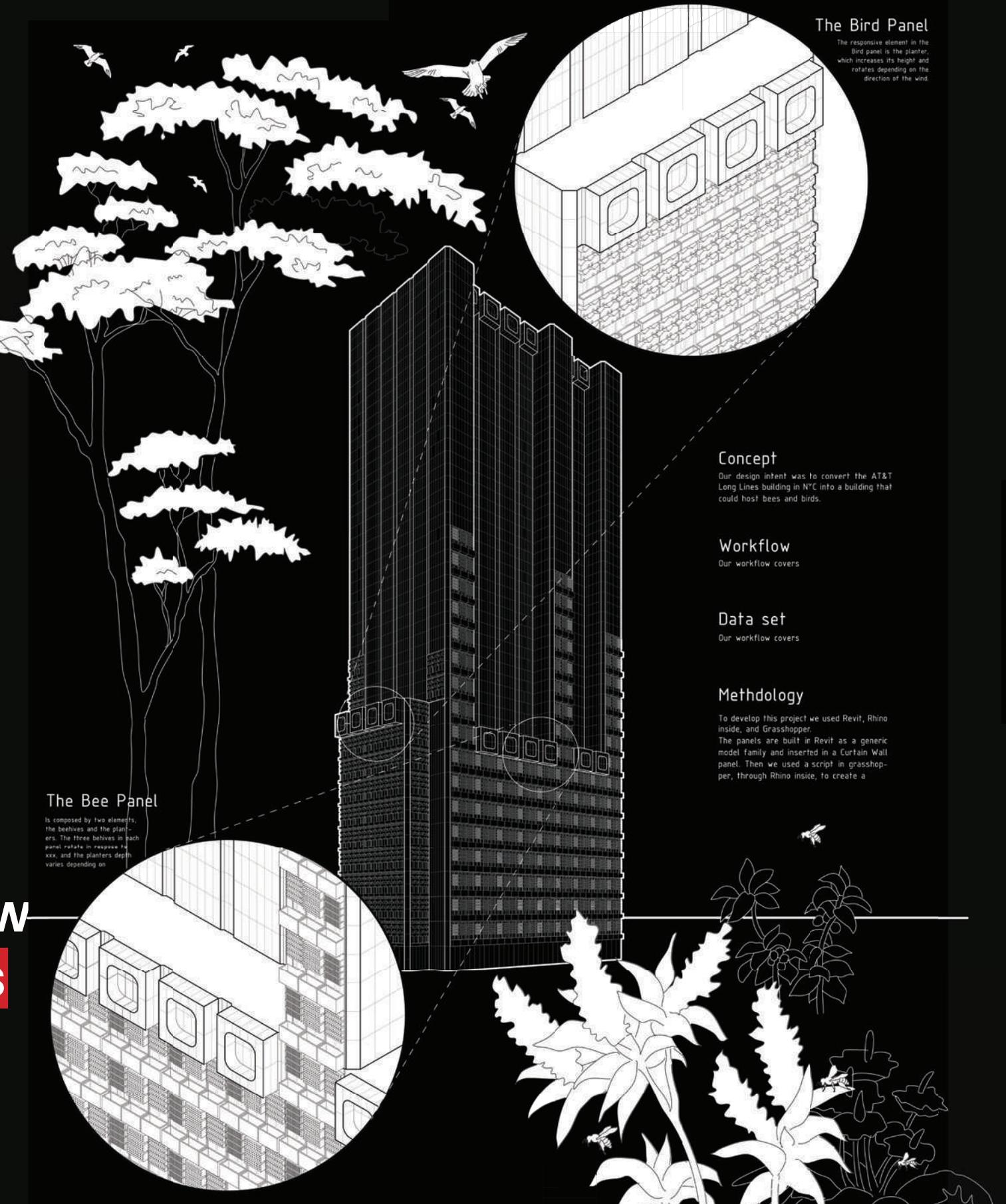
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We want to reverse engineer the process of designing a facade. Instead of collecting **climate** data so that the facade could react to it, we will collect data of the ideal environment for these non-human species, and modify the facade to achieve that ecosystem conditions.

Replacing the facade with something that would function as an artifact to allow the **environmental conditions** in a post occupation context

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The Bird Panel

The responsive element in the Bird panel is the planter, which increases its height and rotates depending on the direction of the wind.

The Bee Panel

is composed by two elements, the beehives and the planters. The three beehives in each panel rotate in response to xxx, and the planters depth varies depending on

Concept

Our design intent was to convert the AT&T Long Lines building in NYC into a building that could host bees and birds.

Workflow

Our workflow covers

Data set

Our workflow covers

Methodology

To develop this project we used Revit, Rhino inside, and Grasshopper. The panels are built in Revit as a generic model family and inserted in a Curtain Wall panel. Then we used a script in grasshopper, through Rhino inside, to create a

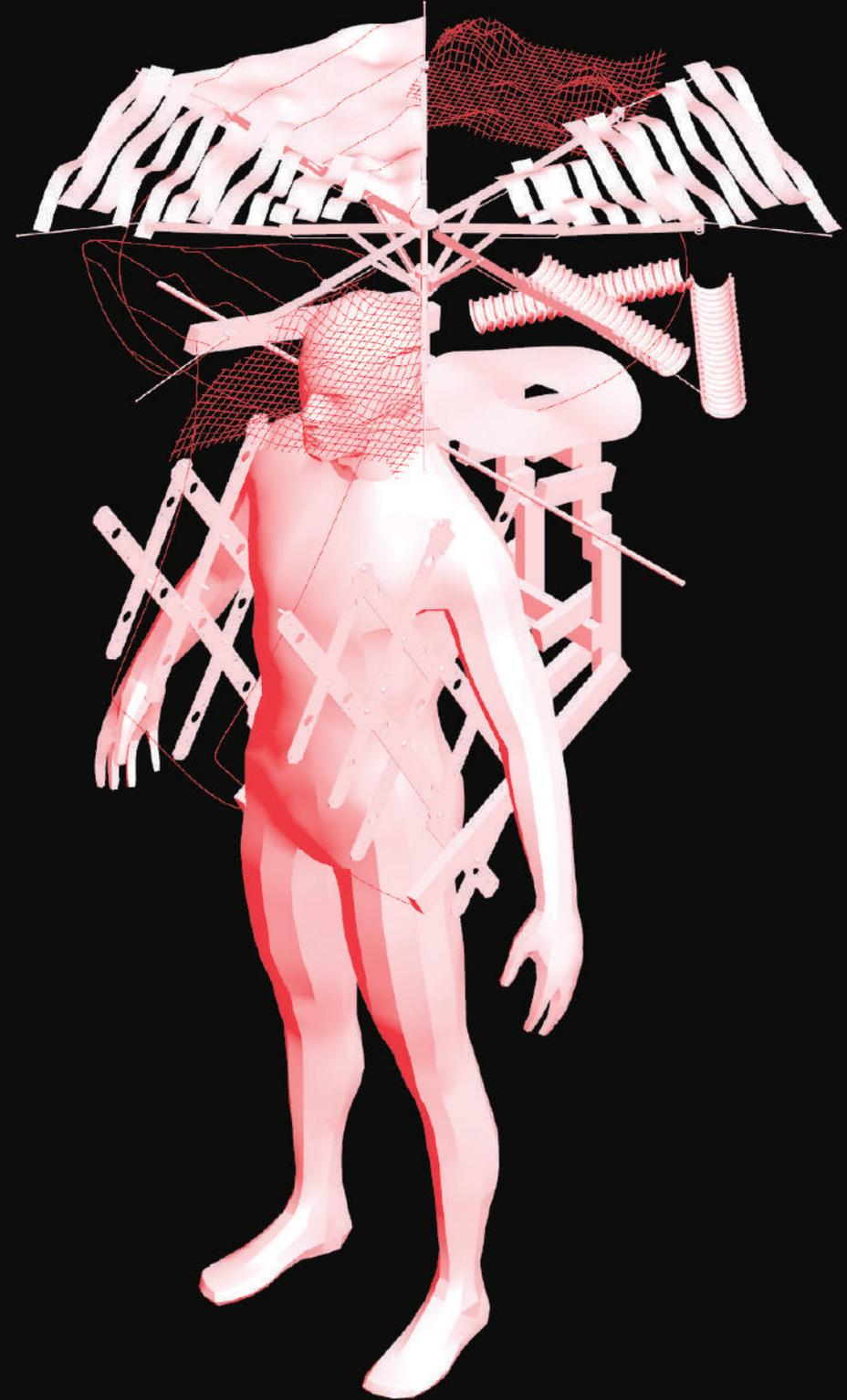
6

Mechanisms and Bodies

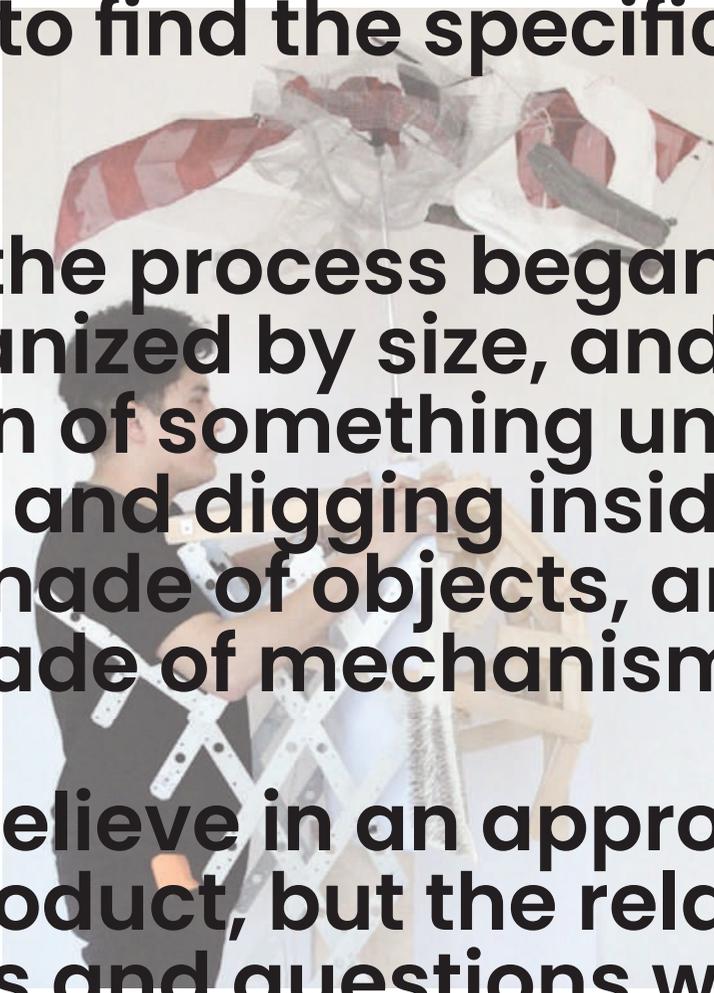
Advanced Studio VI

Instructed by **Ada Tolla and
Giuseppe Lignano**

Makergraph

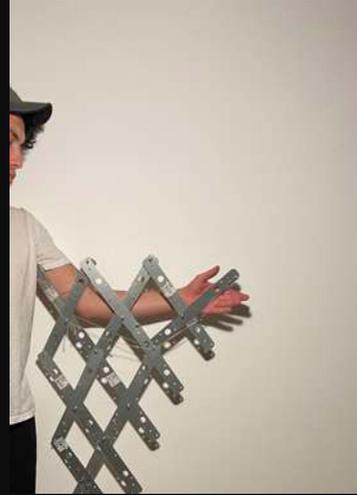
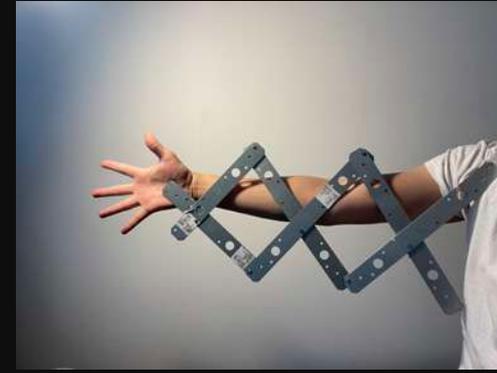
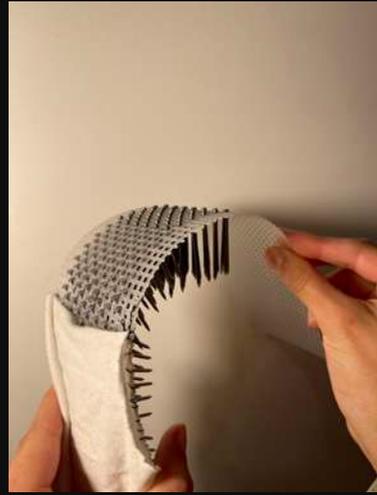


It was a sunny day in June 2003: during my school break, I was with my dad in a scrap deposit looking for plates, engines, and steel pipes. It was a particular landscape where hundreds of small pieces made large mountains possible. It was fascinating to see how they were stacked one by one, piece by piece. My curiosity made me go to find the specific pieces that were crucial later for my father.



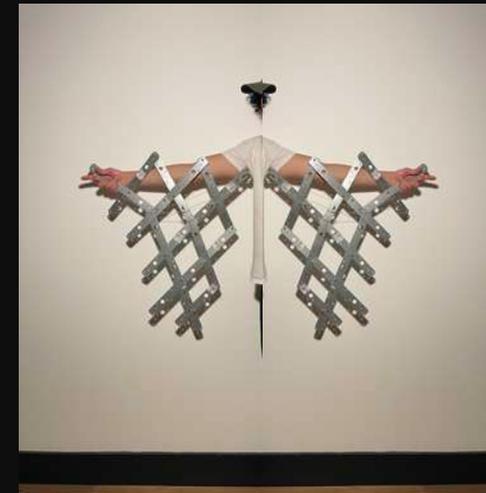
Back in his workshop, the process began: materials placed on his workstation, tools organized by size, and the multiplicity of joints involved in the creation of something unexpected. After hours of manipulation by hand and digging inside his head, he created an artifact, an object made of objects, an **assamblage** made of thoughts a machine made of mechanisms, a body made of parts.

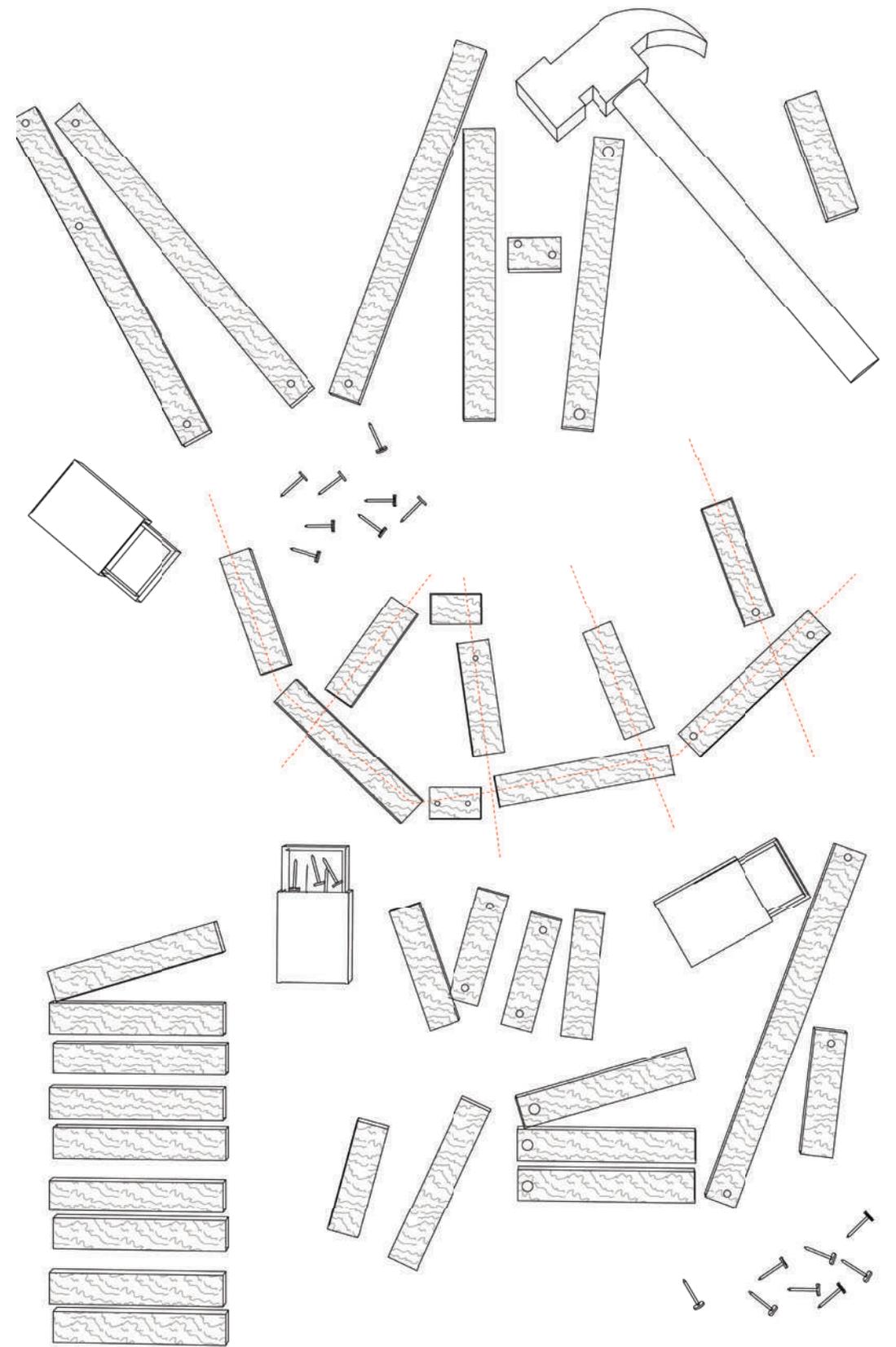
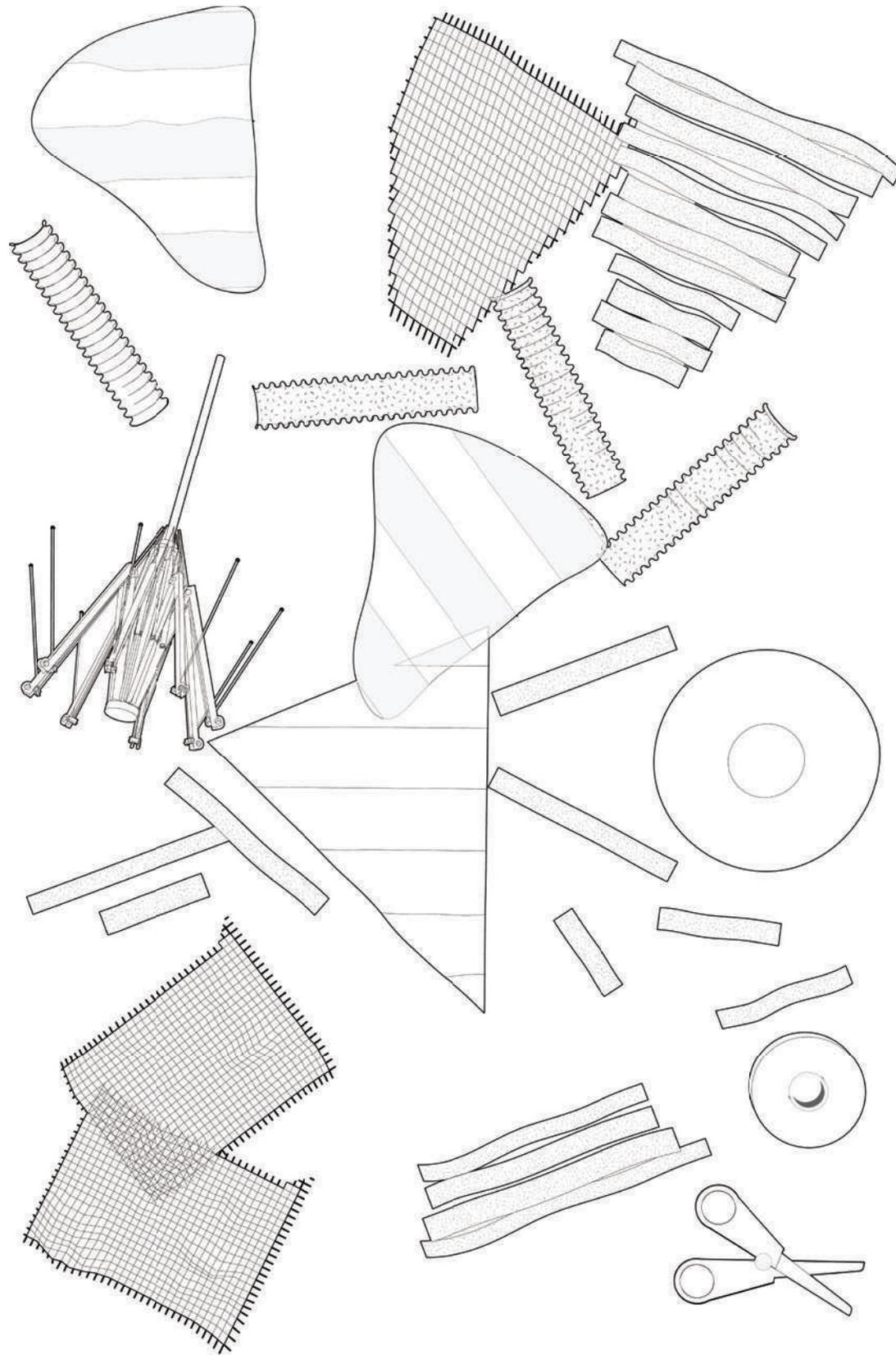
Since then, I strongly believe in an approach of doing things not focused on the final product, but the relationships that enact all the thoughts, beliefs and questions we have. In this way, instead of making things, I mediate between all the mechanisms involved in the construction of our surroundings, our meanings, and our **bodies**

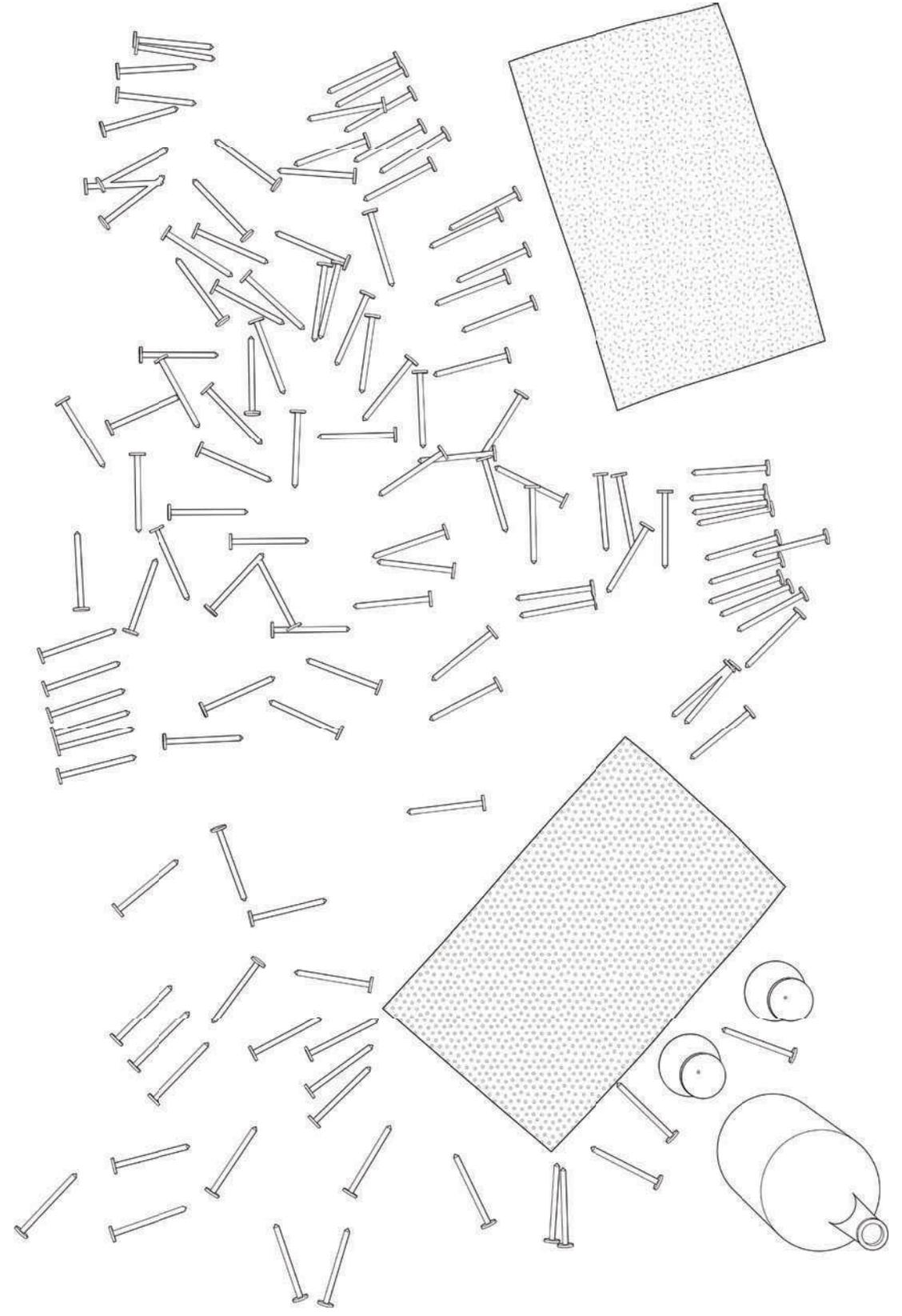
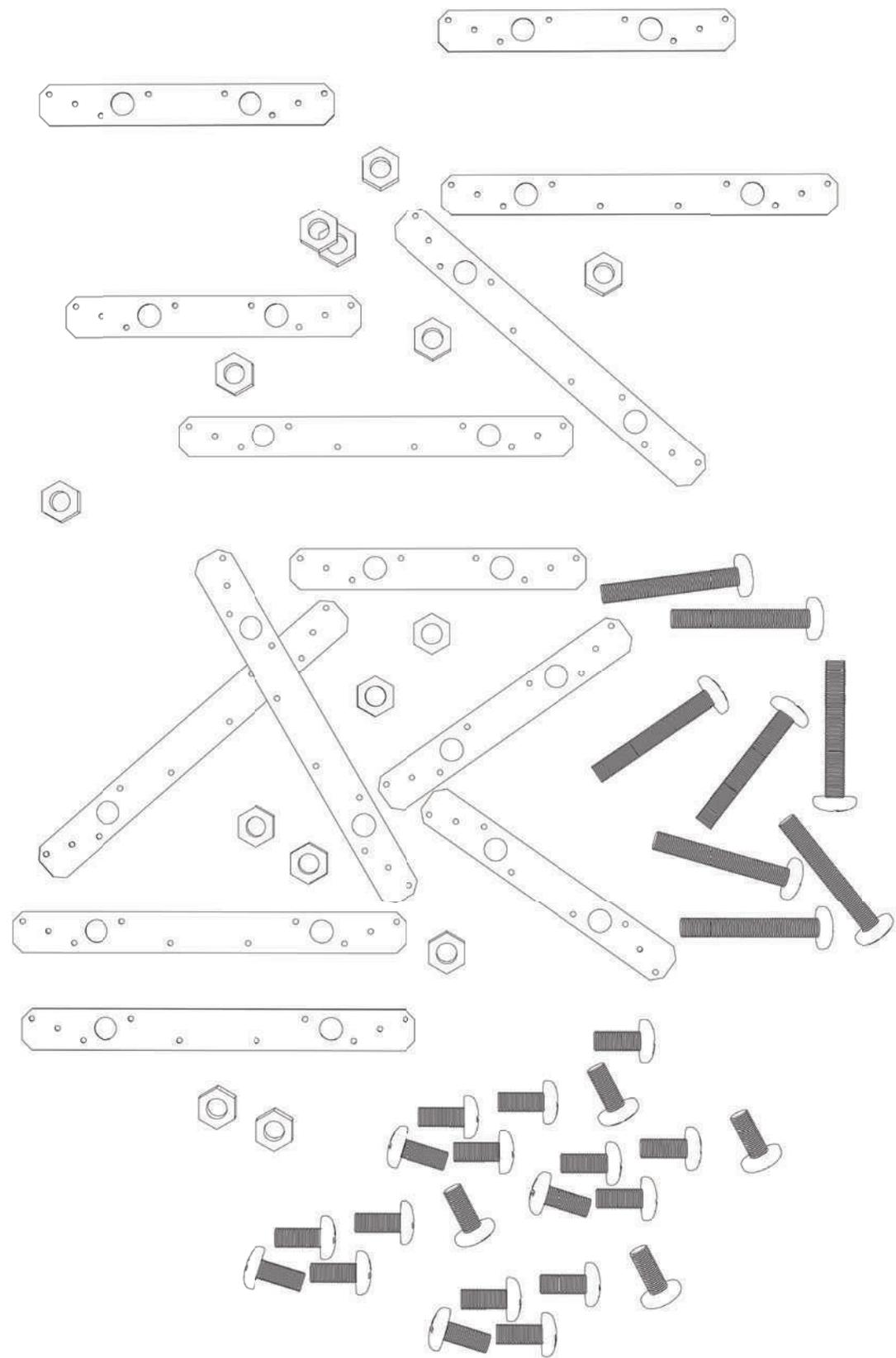


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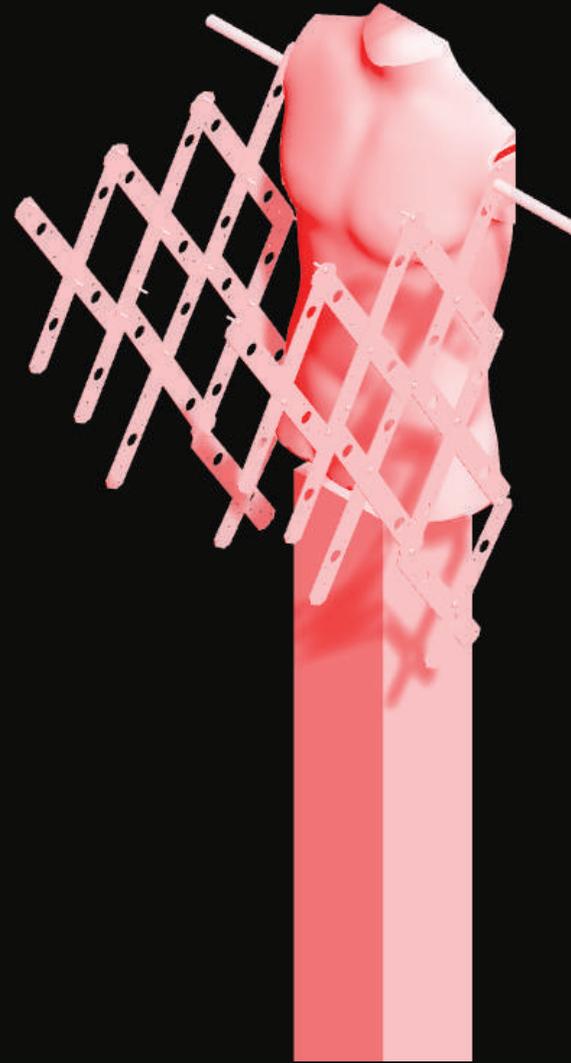
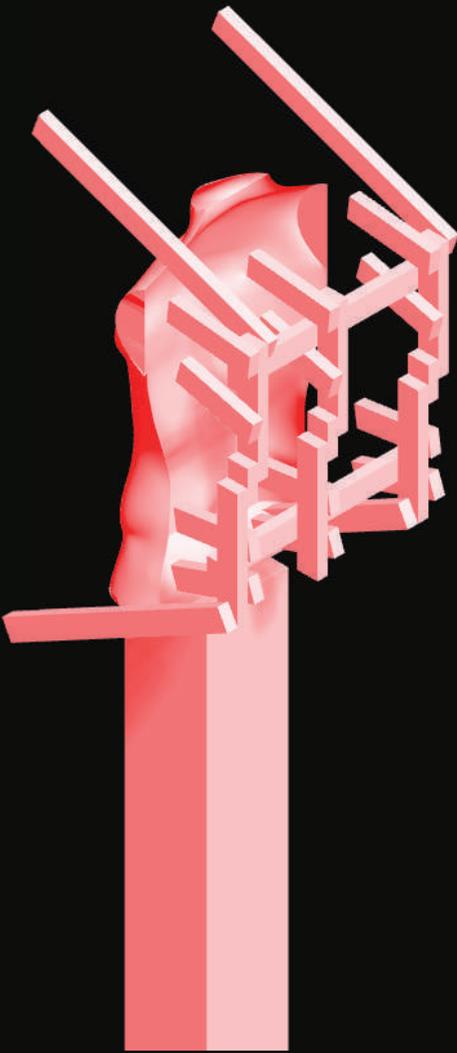
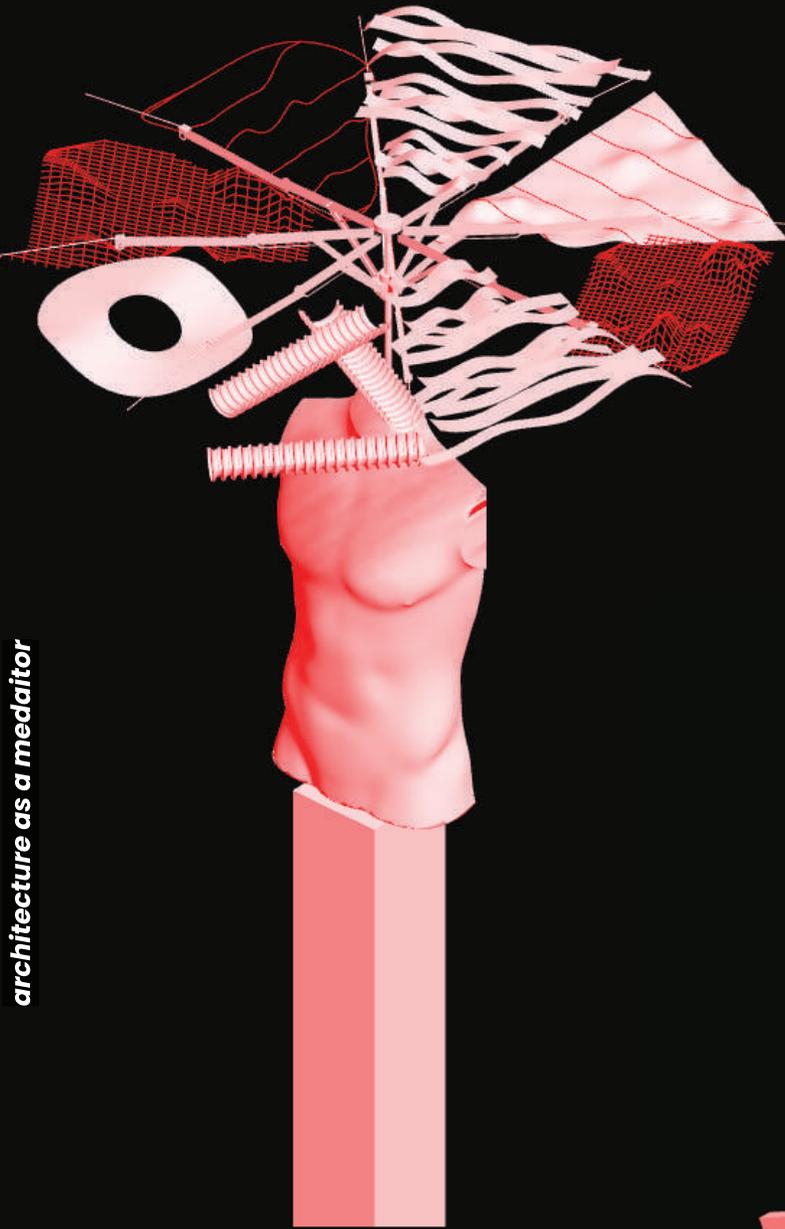






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This is an exercise of self-knowledge, a situated practice of understanding how I operate within the entanglements I am part of.

I interrogated my body as a way to deconstruct myself and understand my trans-relationship with the environment.

It has been an opportunity to situate myself in a setting of intimacy but in a critical-looking scenario.

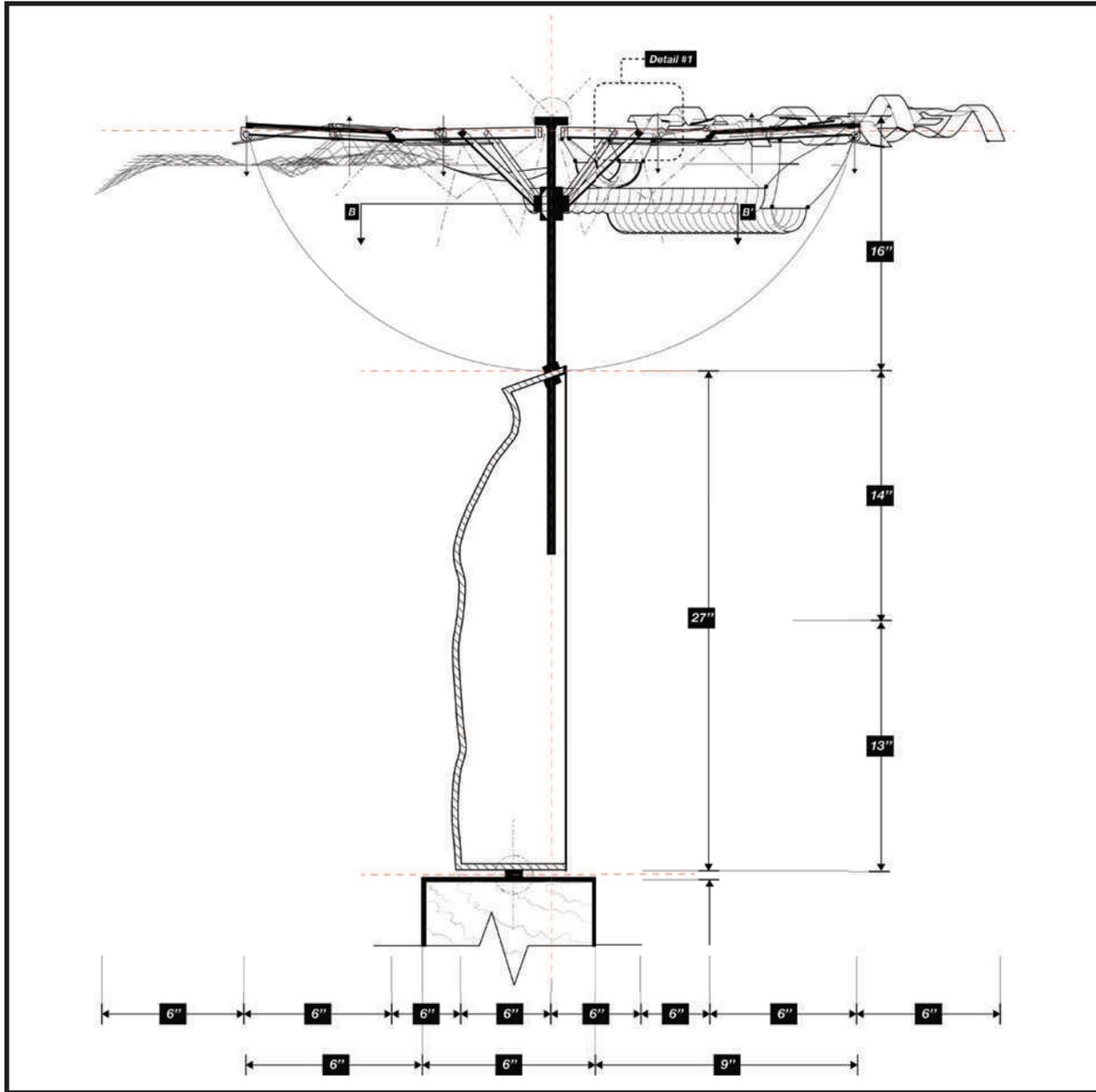
This is a project scale-complex



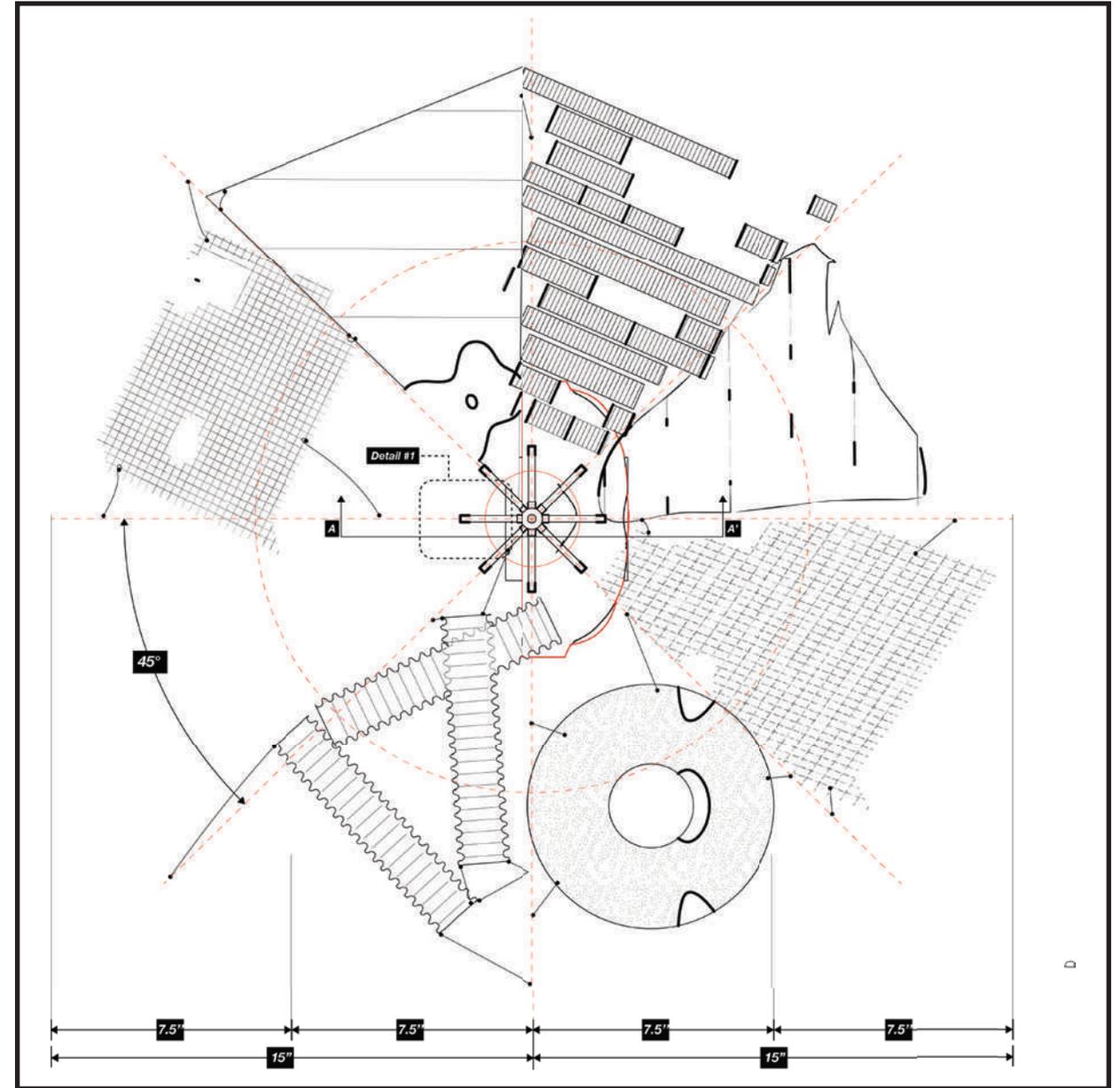


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Umbrella Section



Umbrella Top View

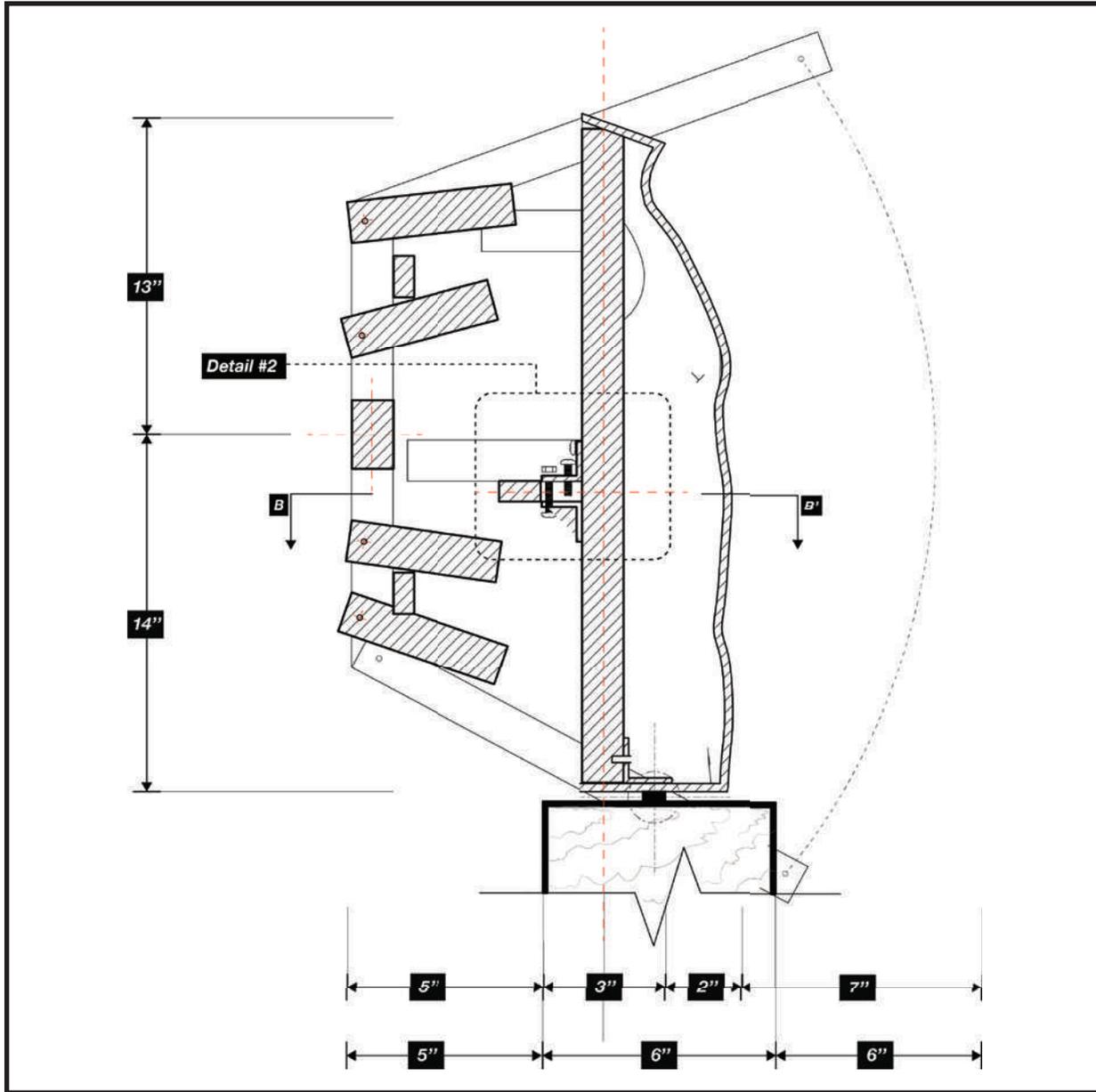
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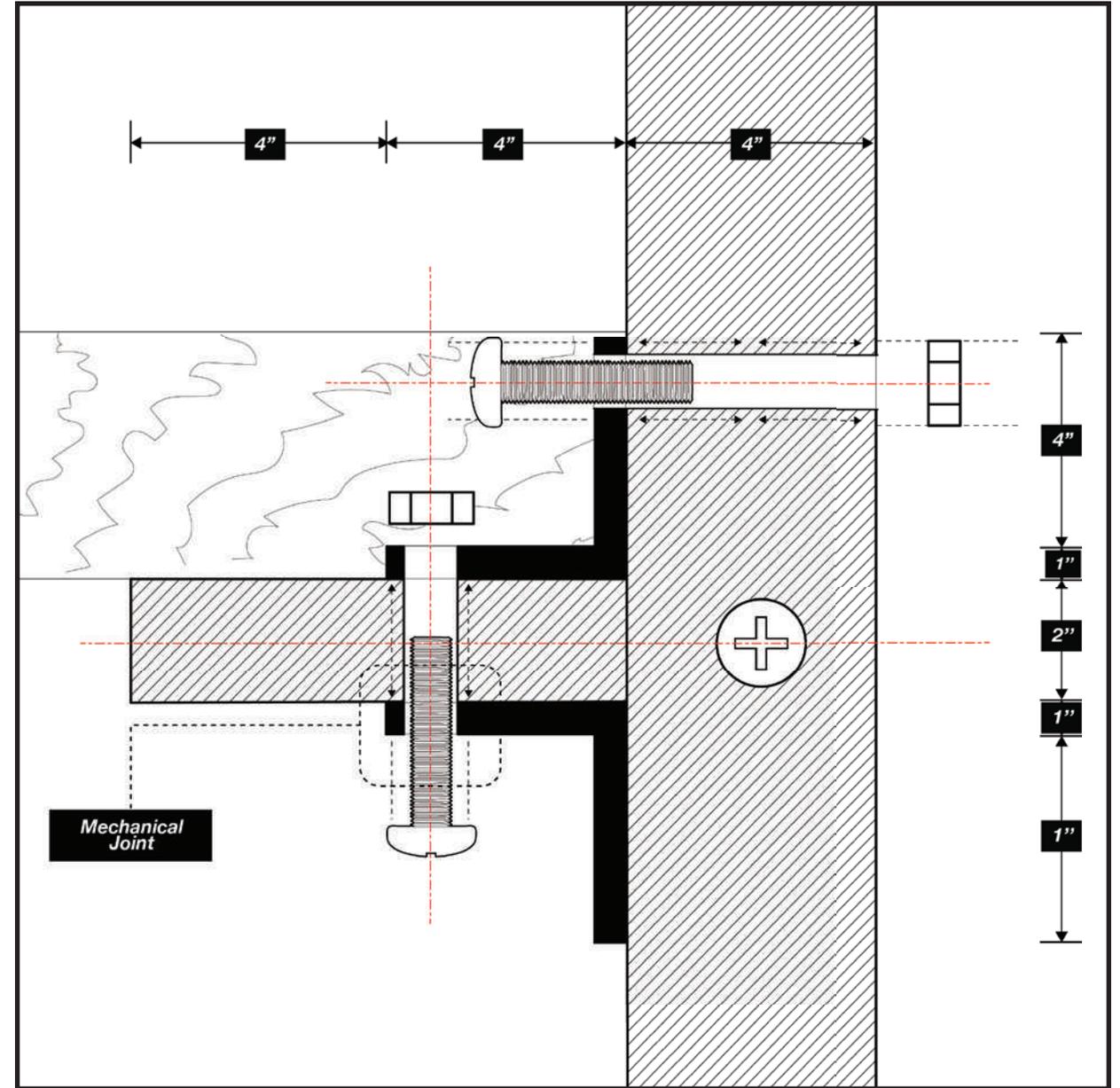


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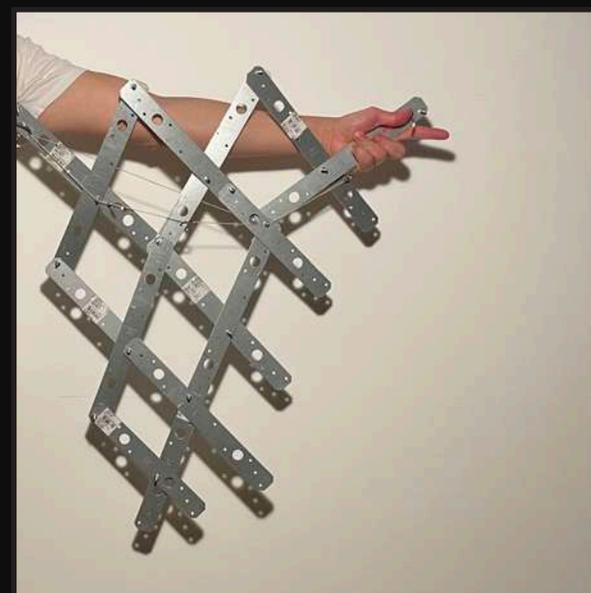
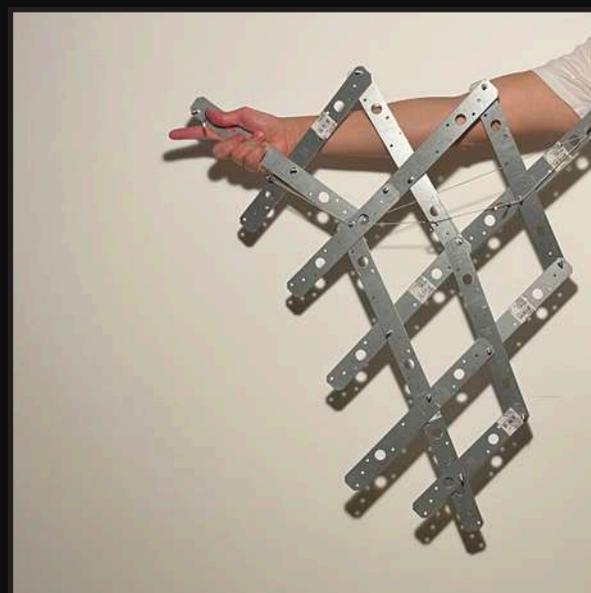
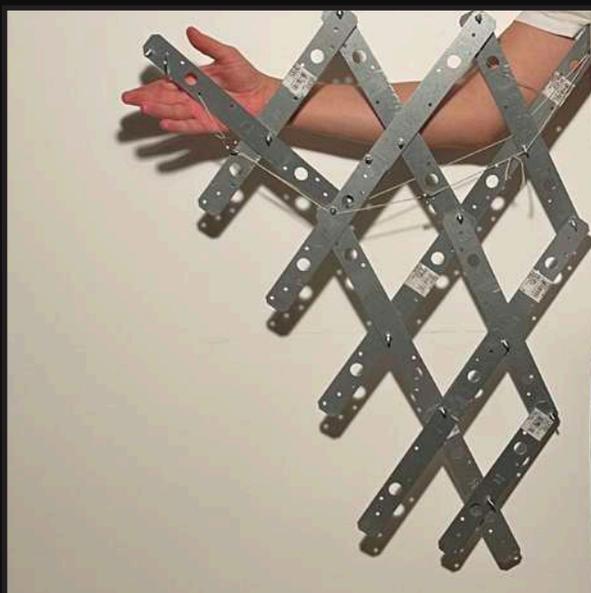
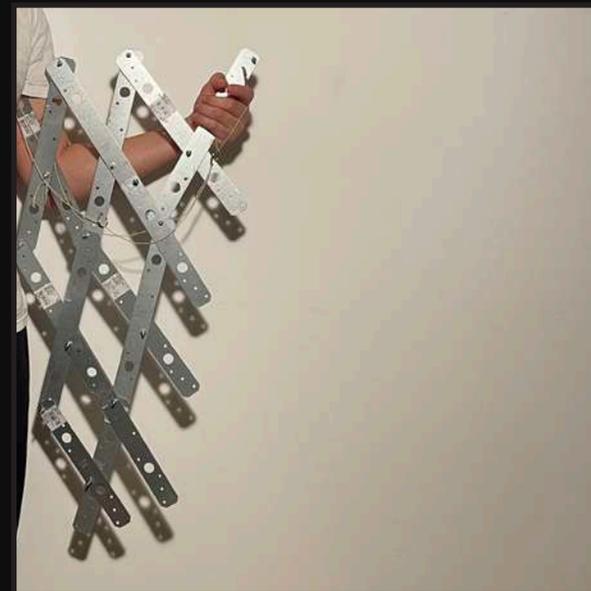
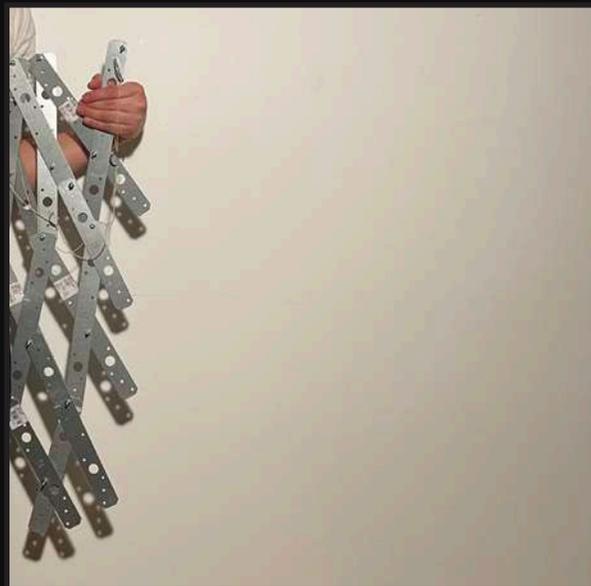
Back pack Section



Section of Joints

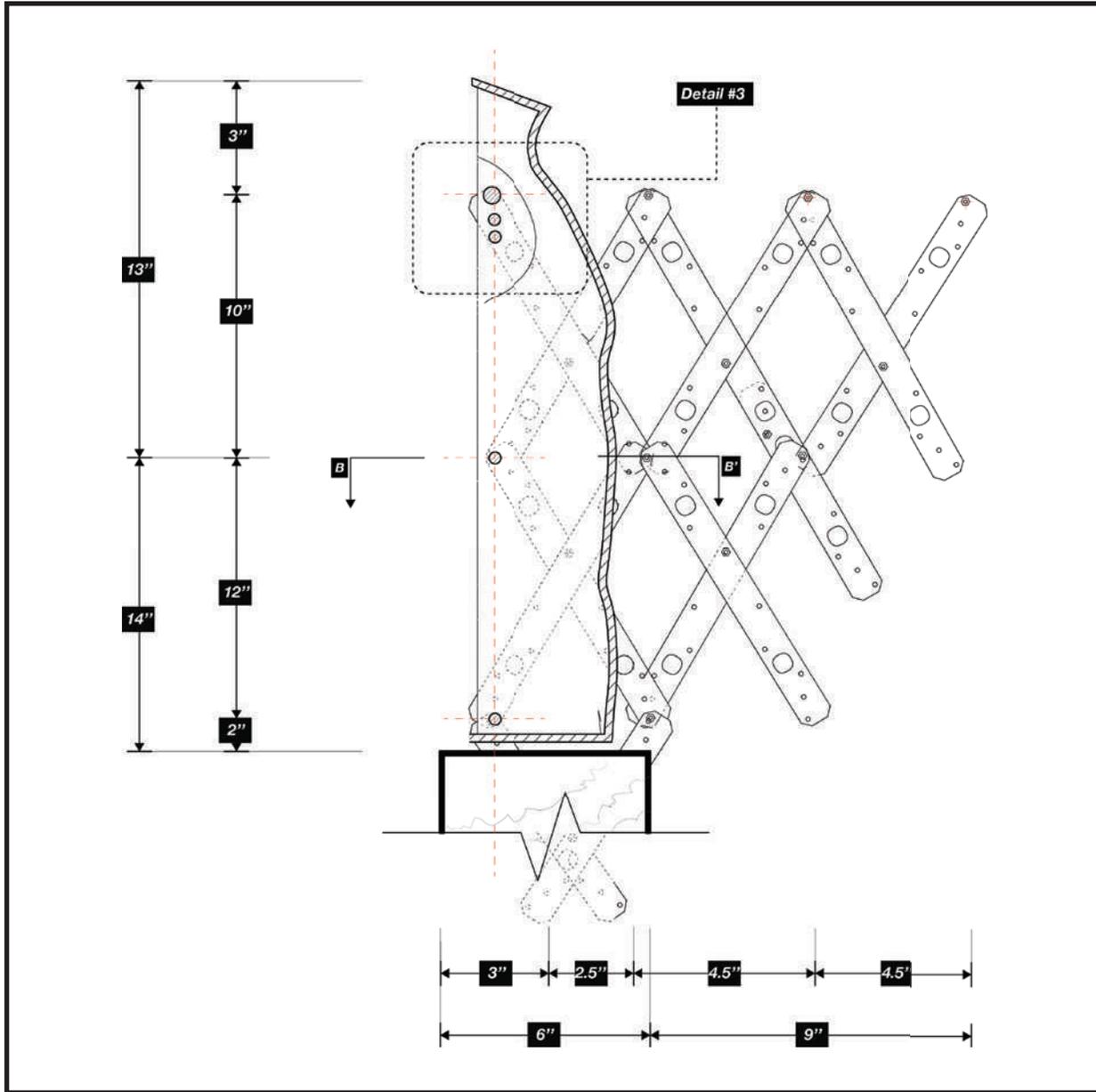
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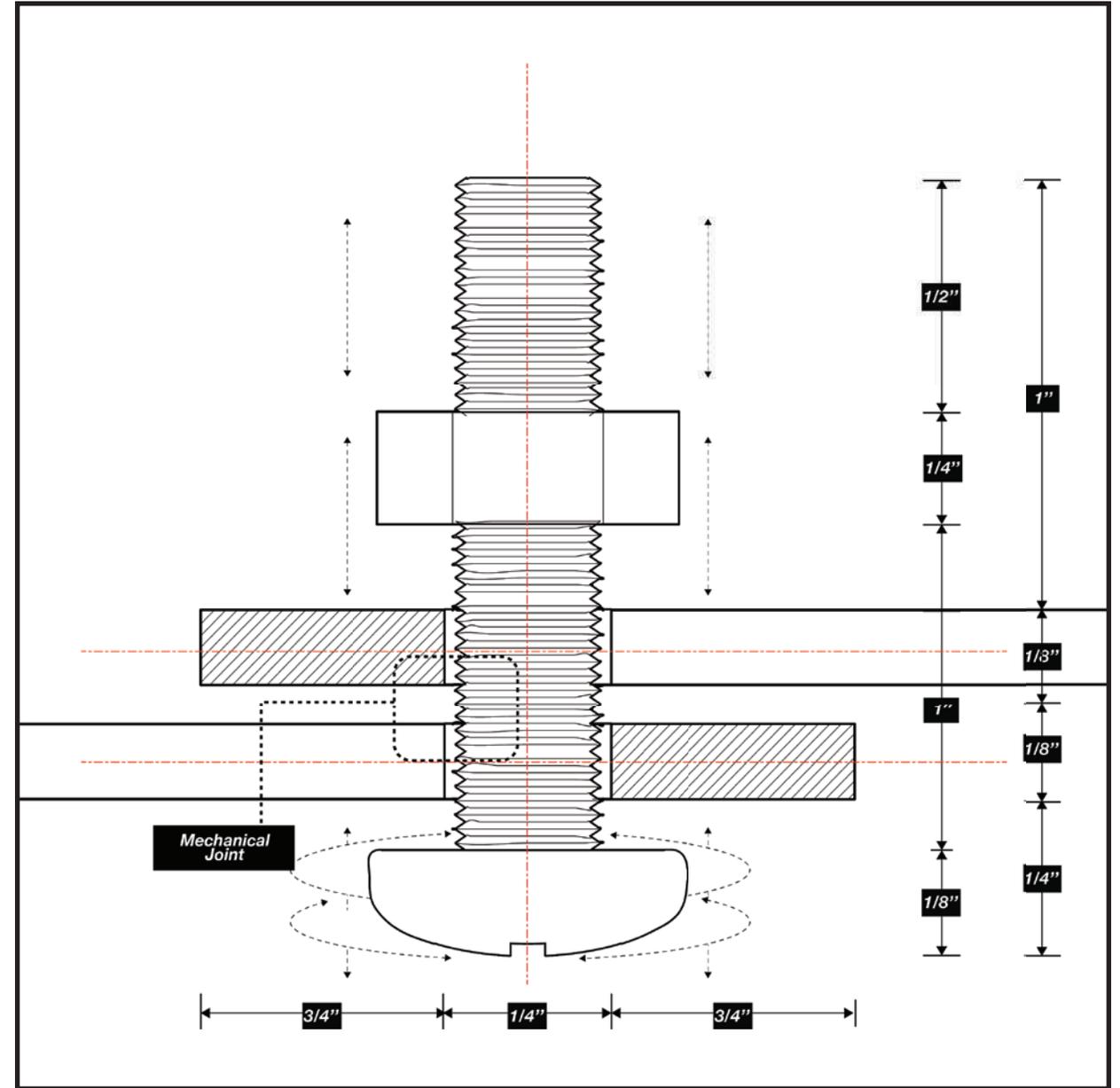


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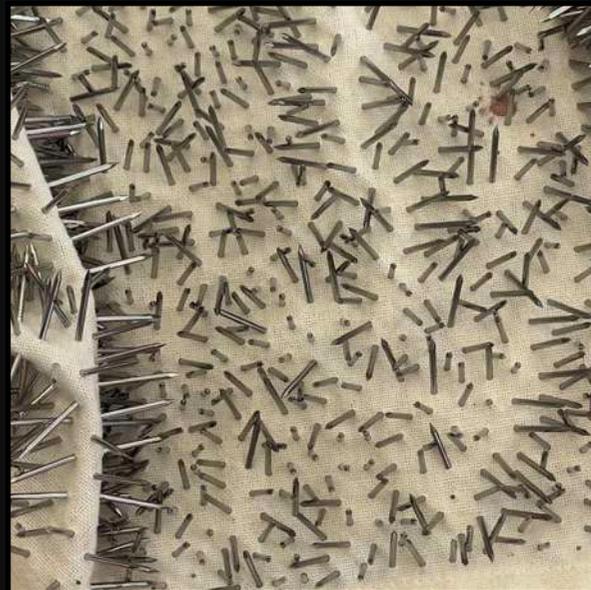
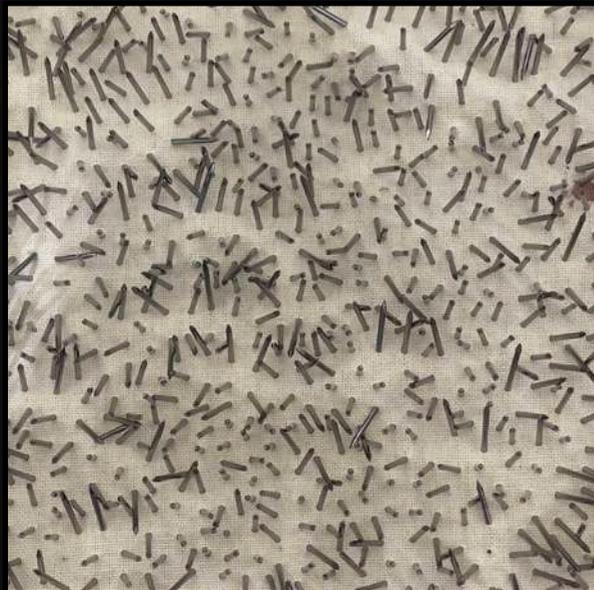
Section of Wings



Section of screws and nuts

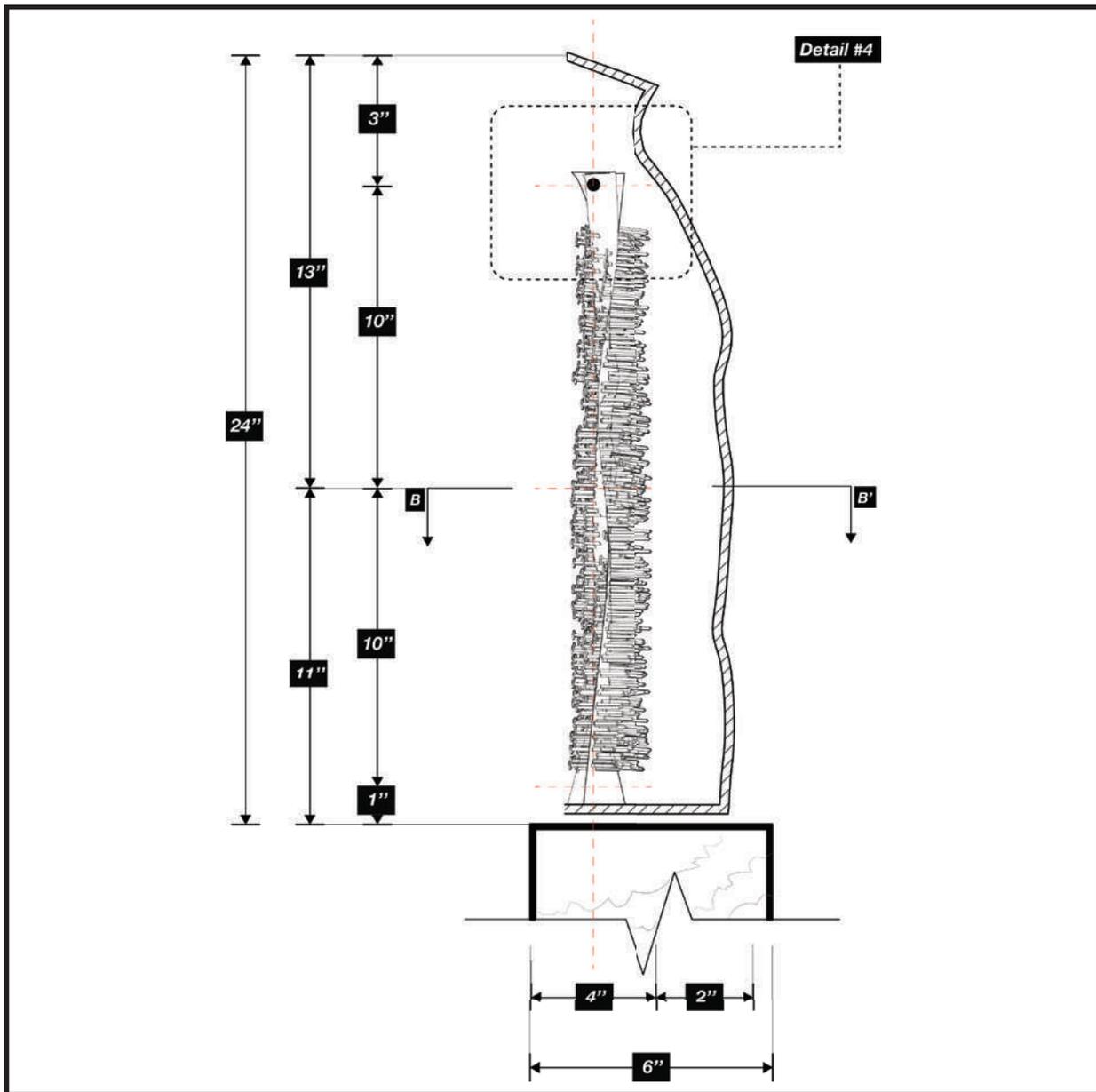
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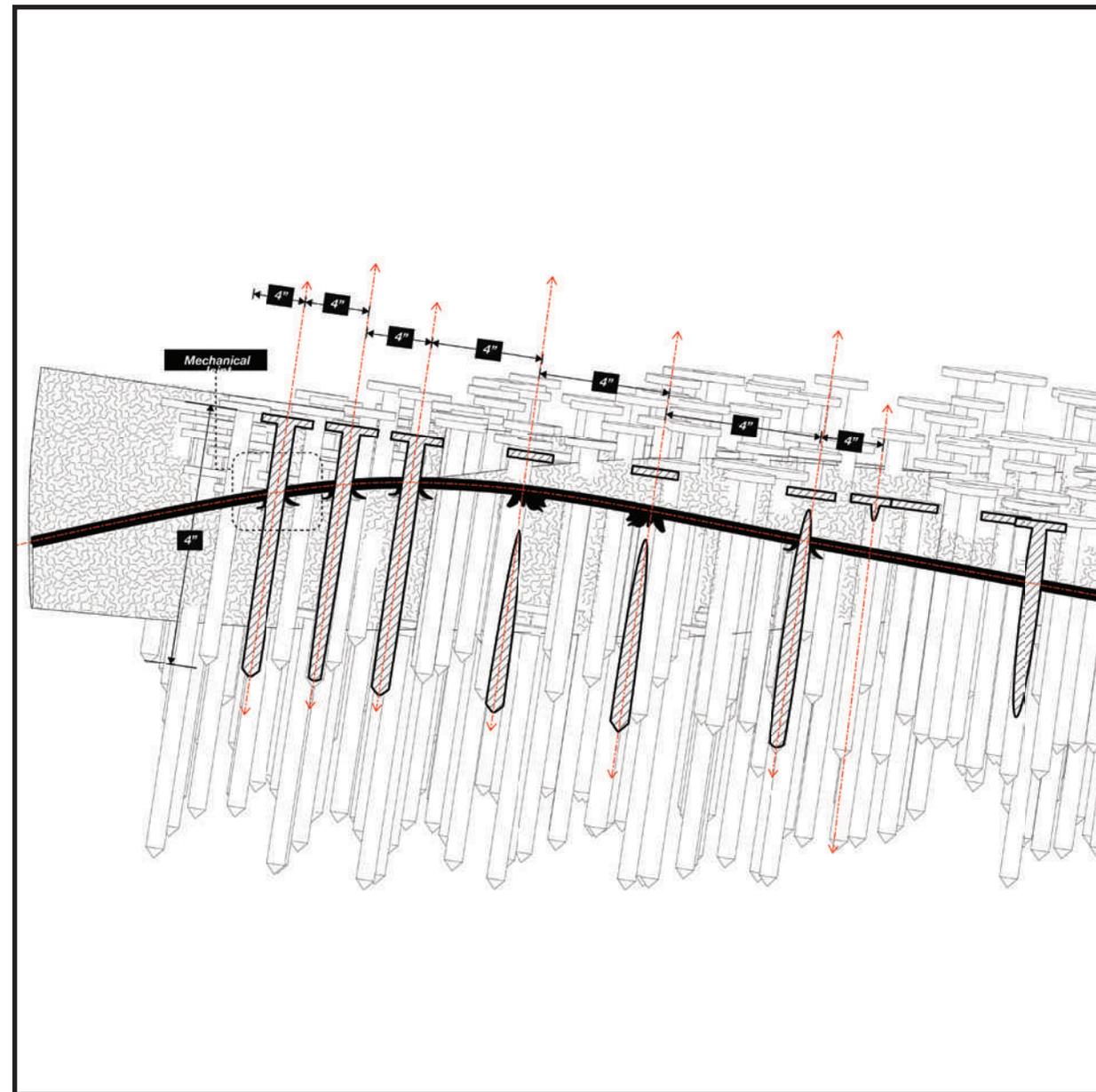


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Section of Fabric end Torso



Detail of Nails and Joints that create a Fabric

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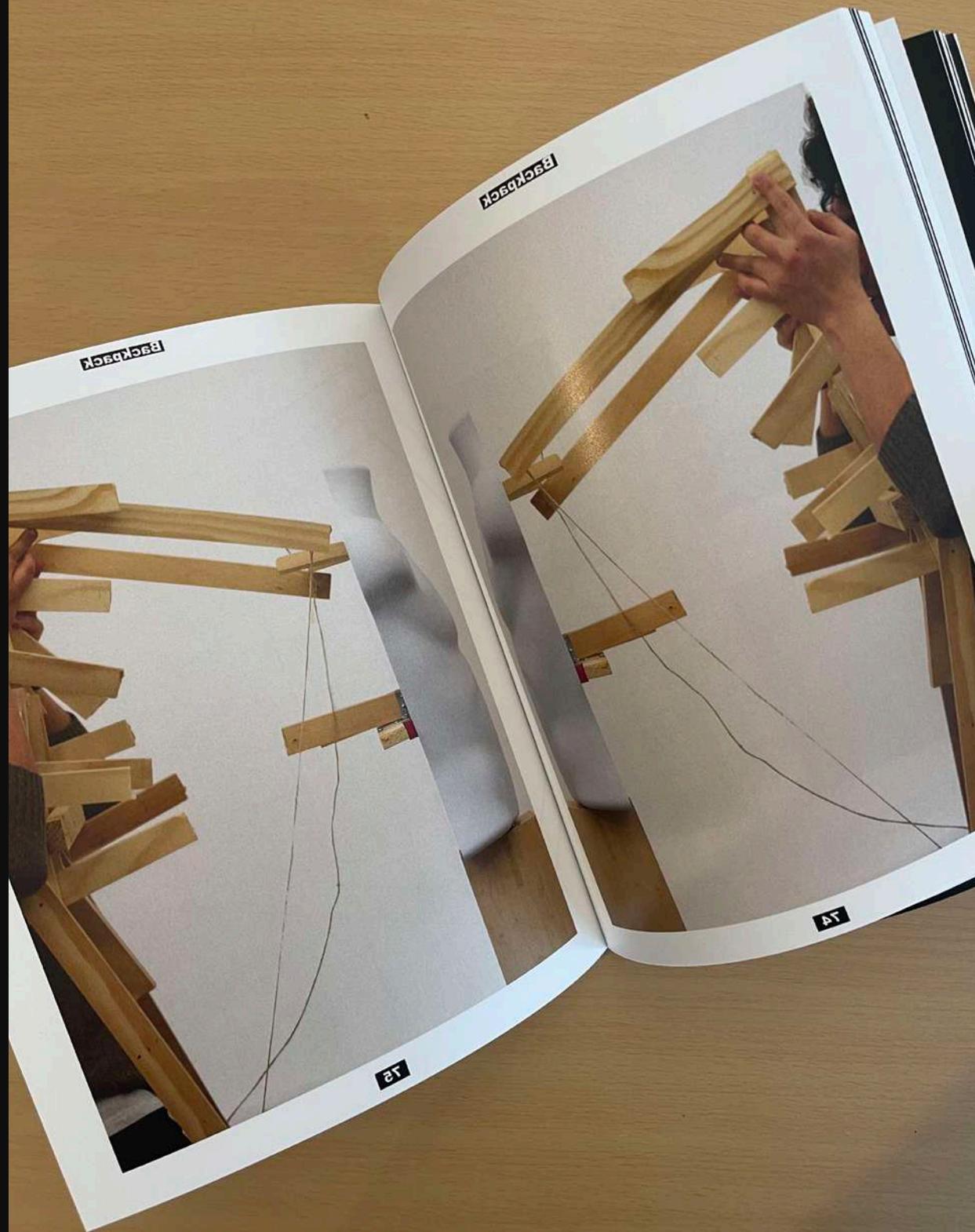
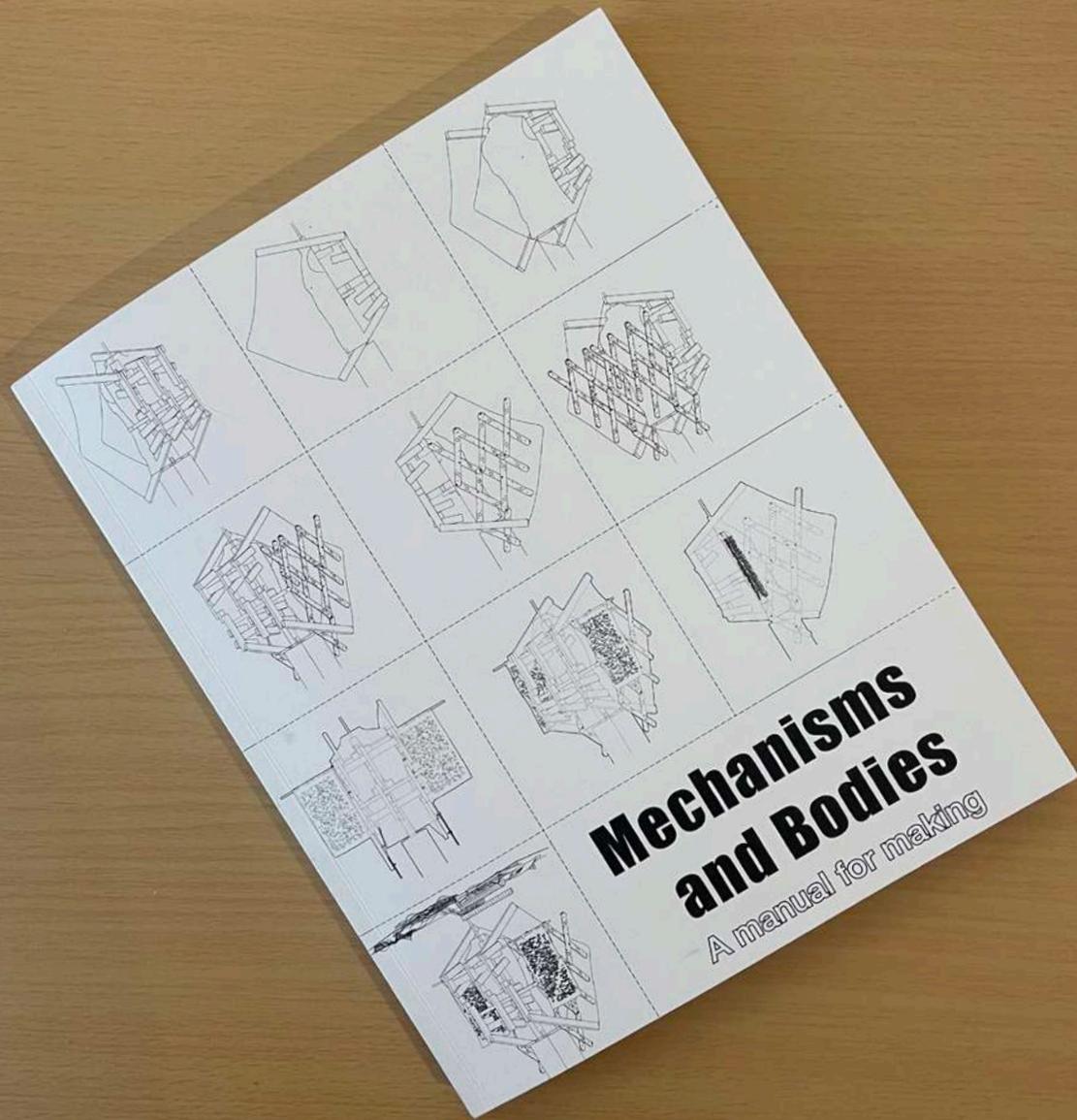
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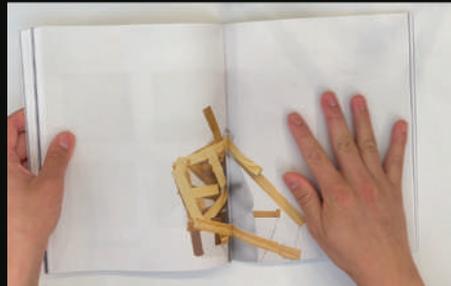
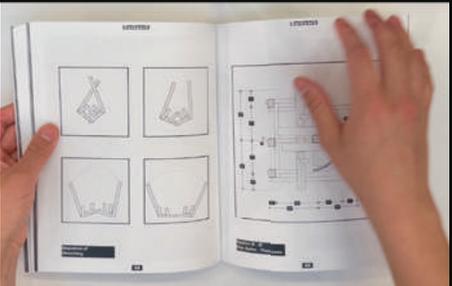
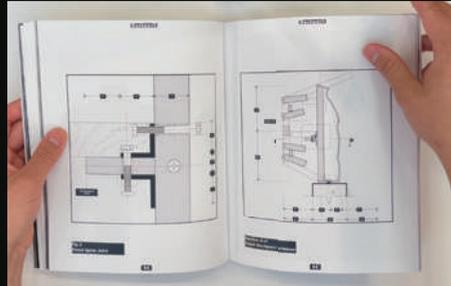
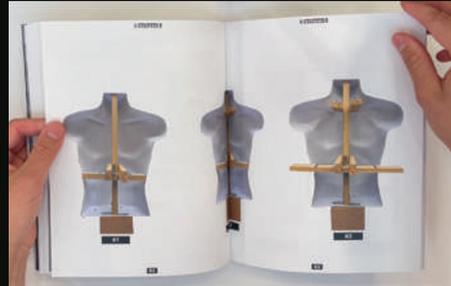
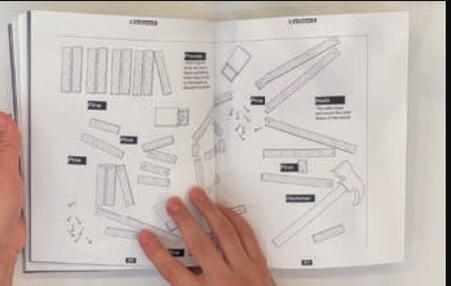
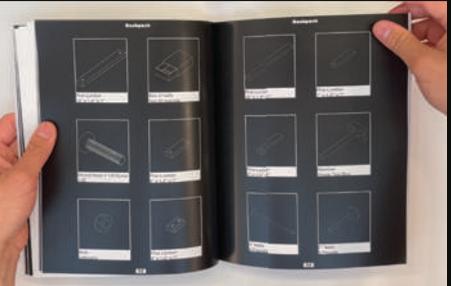
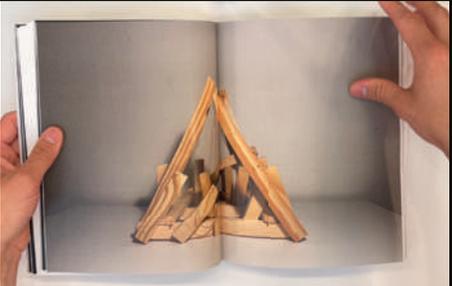
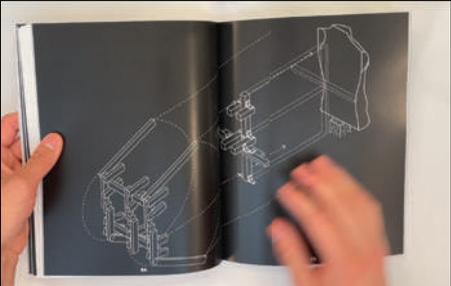
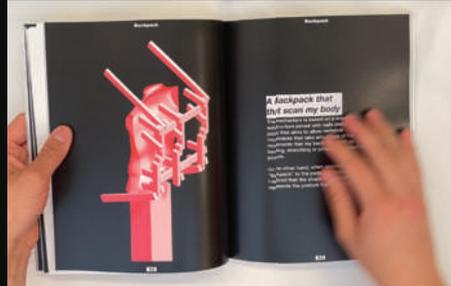
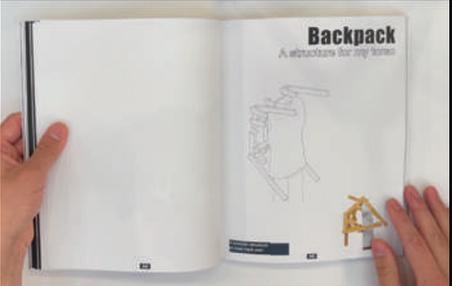
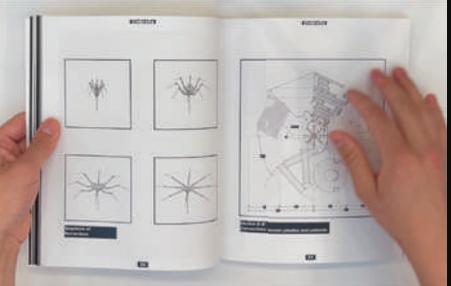
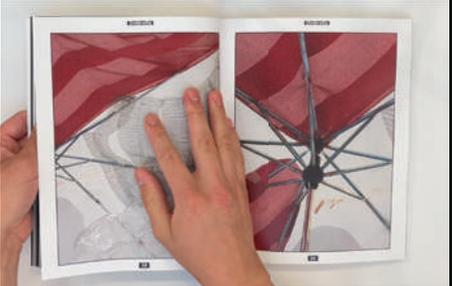
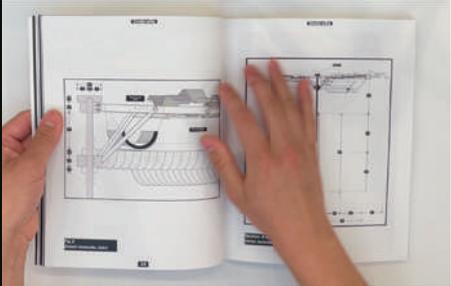
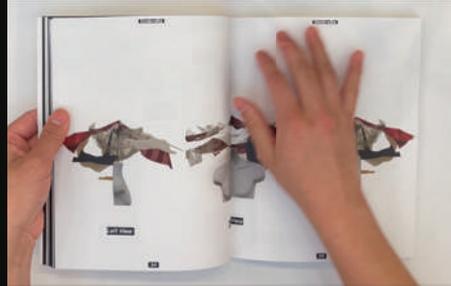
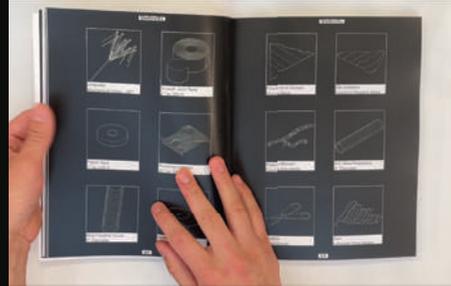
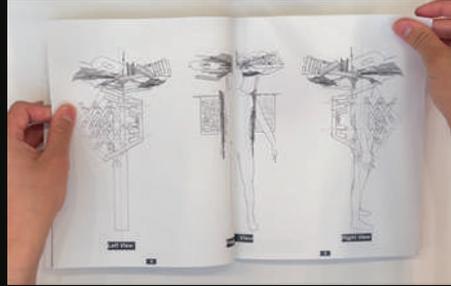
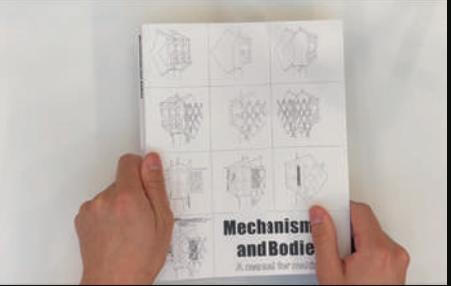
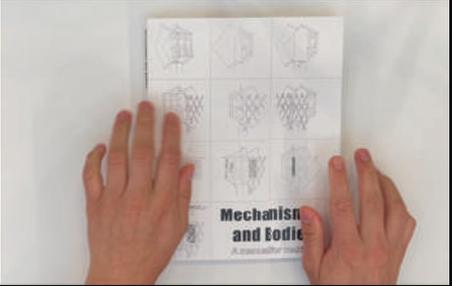


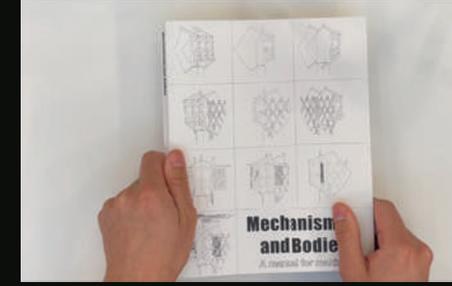
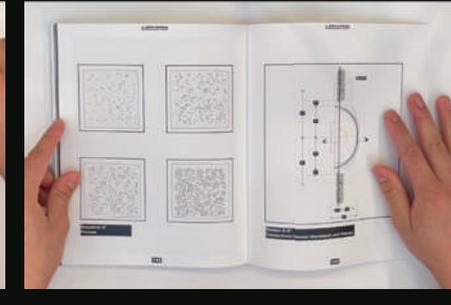
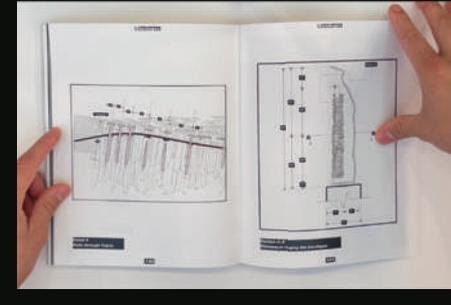
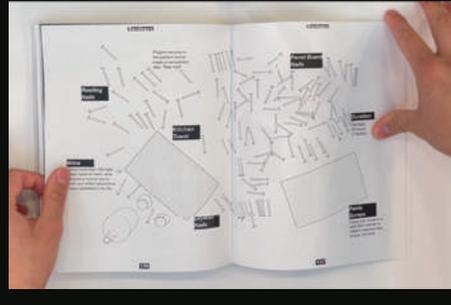
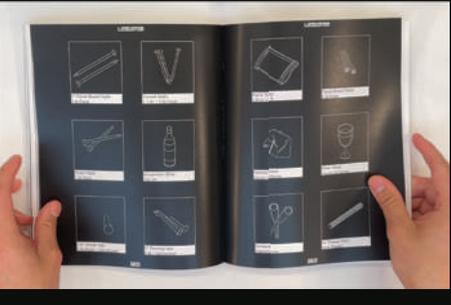
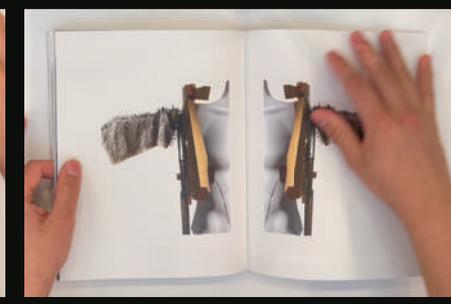
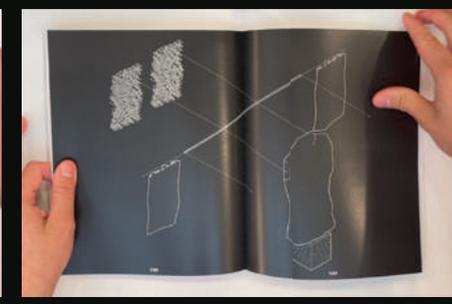
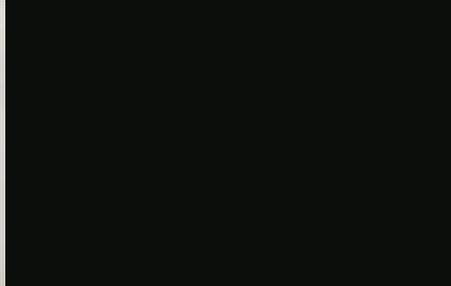
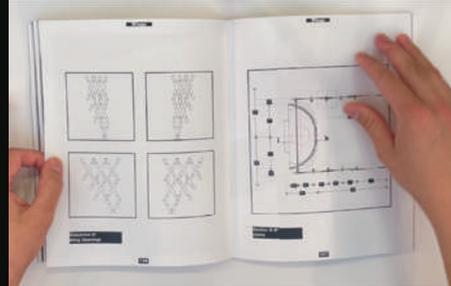
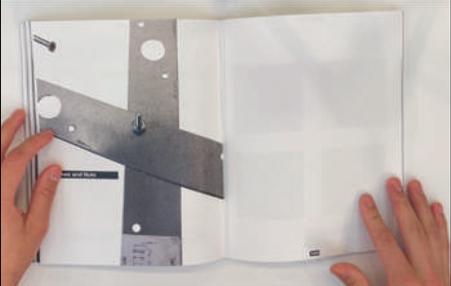
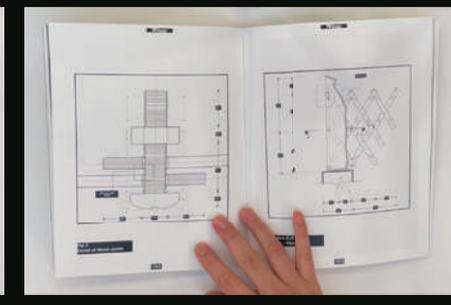
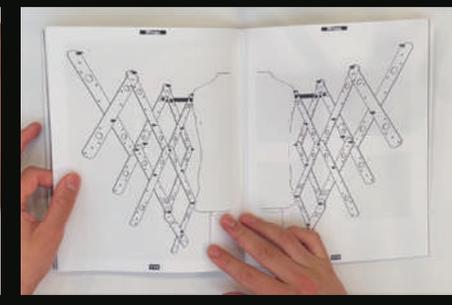
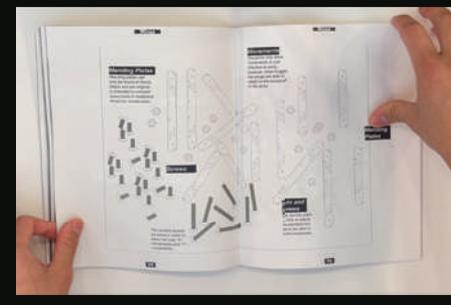
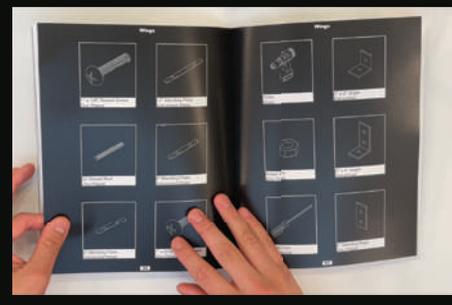
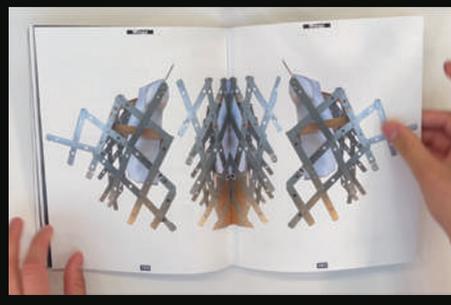
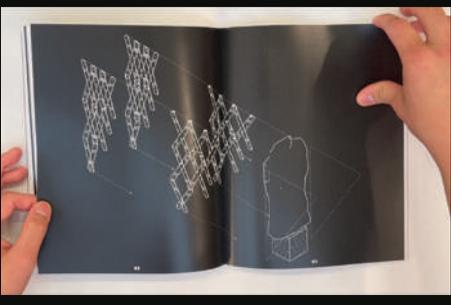
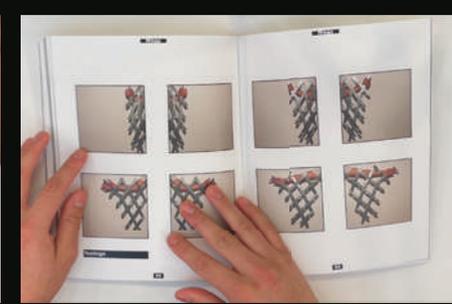
A backpack that aggravates the physical pain of the body

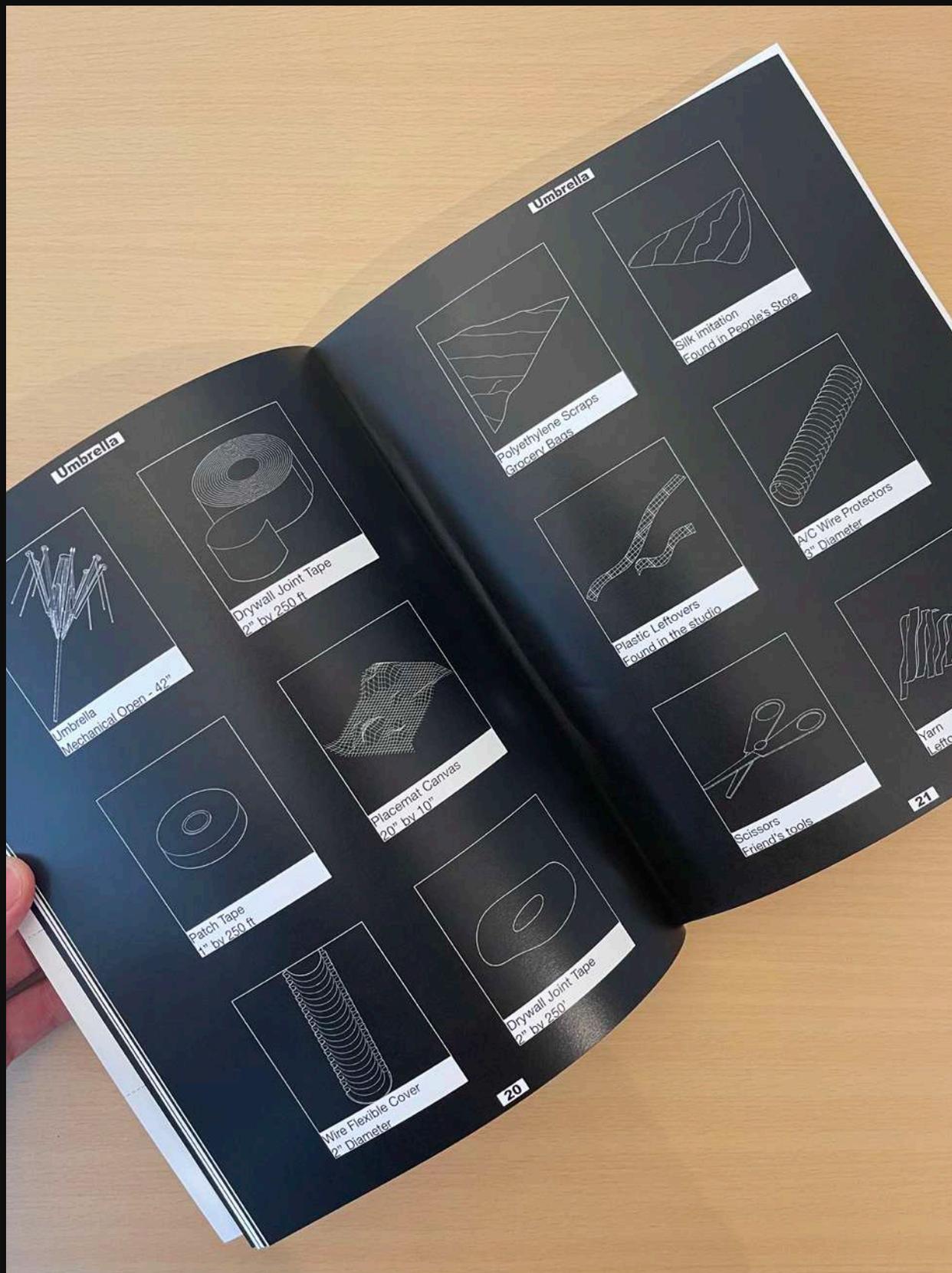
An umbrella that hides the intimacy of our thoughts











An Umbrella that protects and exposes

The umbrella will take advantage of the ribs of an existing one that is being forgotten for experimentation with plastic raw materials, from tapes to bottles that would also be transformed by exposing them to an oven.

In this way, the head will become a messy structure but the head will at the same time move from one place to another, from scene to scene, from retraction to expansion.

7

A Conversation to Understand my Roots

Independent Study

Directed by **Andrés Jaque**

In Collaboration with **my mother**

Adriana Ganan



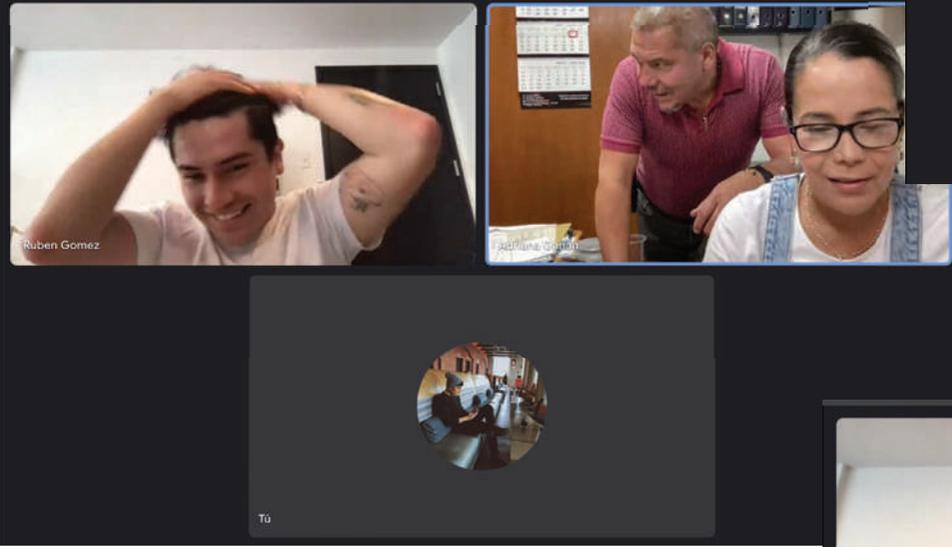
During the last semester in GSAPP, I have researched and worked in the structuring of **ethnographic** activities to exchange individual narratives in specific situations that account for the multi-scalar factors that determined the situation of the Embera Chami today in Colombia.

This proposal is based on a personal process that I have had with my **mother**, an indigenous woman from the Emberá Chamí

Reservation of San Lorenzo who lived through the process of **deculturalization** and strong denial of her past, where through unstructured conversations, we have been able to generate a space of horizontal and mutual construction to understand how our **identity** intertwines with the other agents of our context and enact our realities.

By zoom calls and storytelling activities, we have developed methodologies of sharing

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Possession of Sory Mildonia Morales as Governor of San Lorenzo indigenous reservation, 2022

Series of canes, For the Embera Chami people, the cane is wisdom and is the spiritual legacy from which one comes, Indigenous Guardians of San Lorenzo, 2019.



After collecting stories of everyday life in different forms, such as drawings, oral narratives, photographs, or recipes, in collaboration with my mother, we expanded the **ethnographic** content of each of us as a way to deeply account for the built environment, the settings and the agents where we mobilize and construct our **collective** memory.

I do not intend to embody the voice of those people who have had to deal with

systematic displacement and oblivion, nor to be a conclusive manifesto of how the Emberá Chamí population had to go through a process of cultural disintegration, but rather, this study aims to promote spaces and provide tools to foster day-by-day conversations about the **entanglements** and structures have impacted the individuality and identity of the Indigenous Reservation and their meanings.



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Rubén Gómez Gañán
Columbia
GSAPP
2022