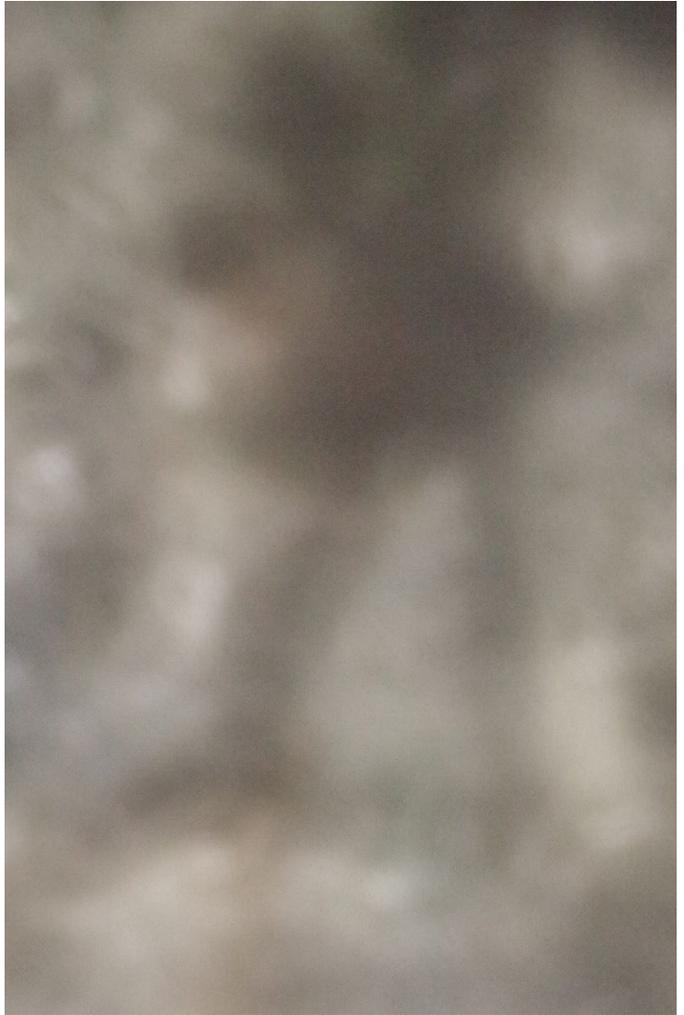
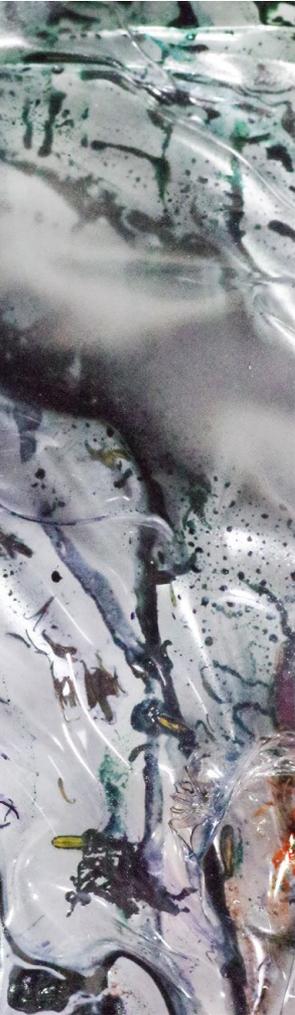


VIEWS INTO THE ETHER



PORTFOLIO GSAPP M.ARCH 2023

LAURA BLASZCZAK

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The following is a compilation of work by Laura Blaszcak in completion of the Master of Architecture degree at the Graduate School of Architecture Planning and Preservation, Columbia University.

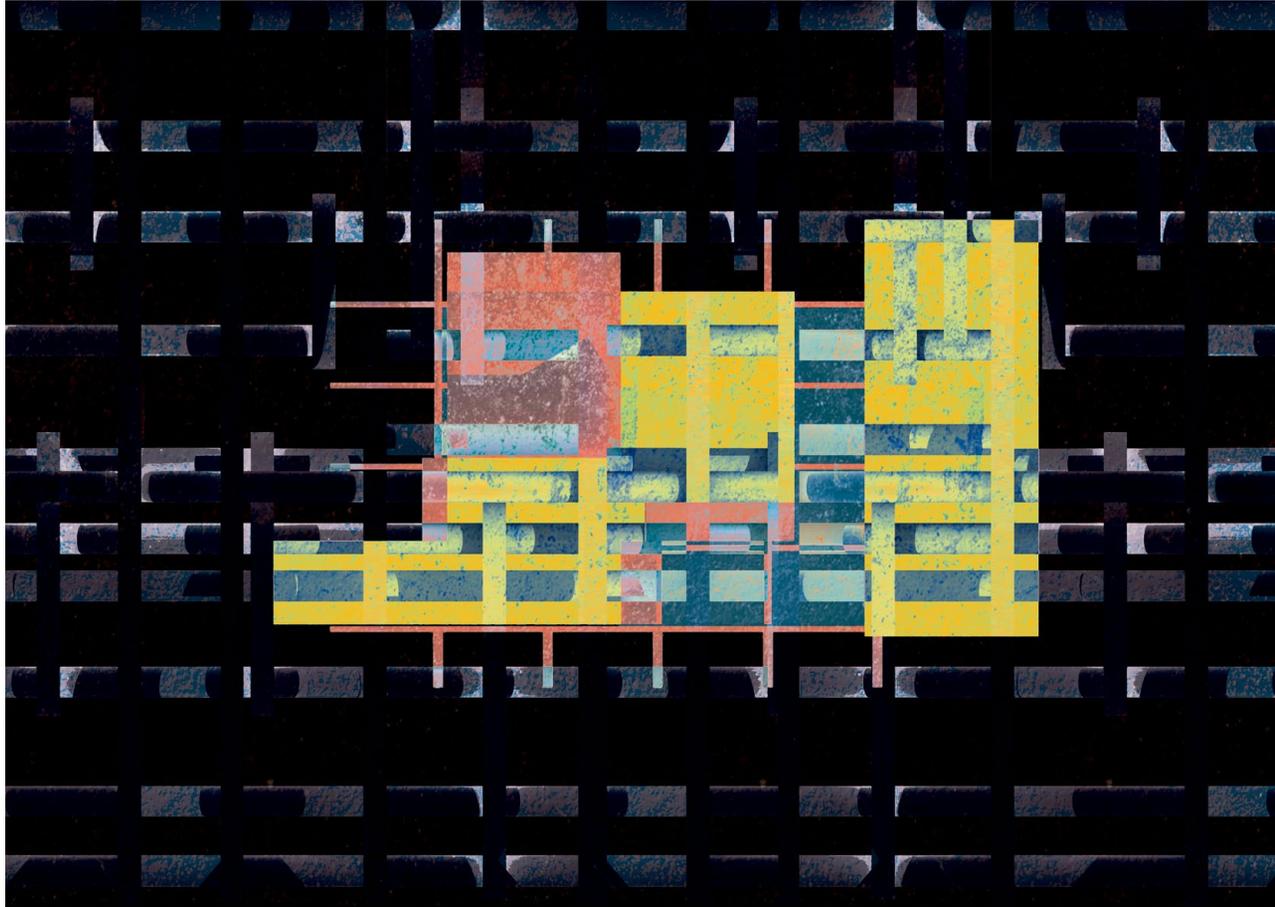
New York, New York. 2023.

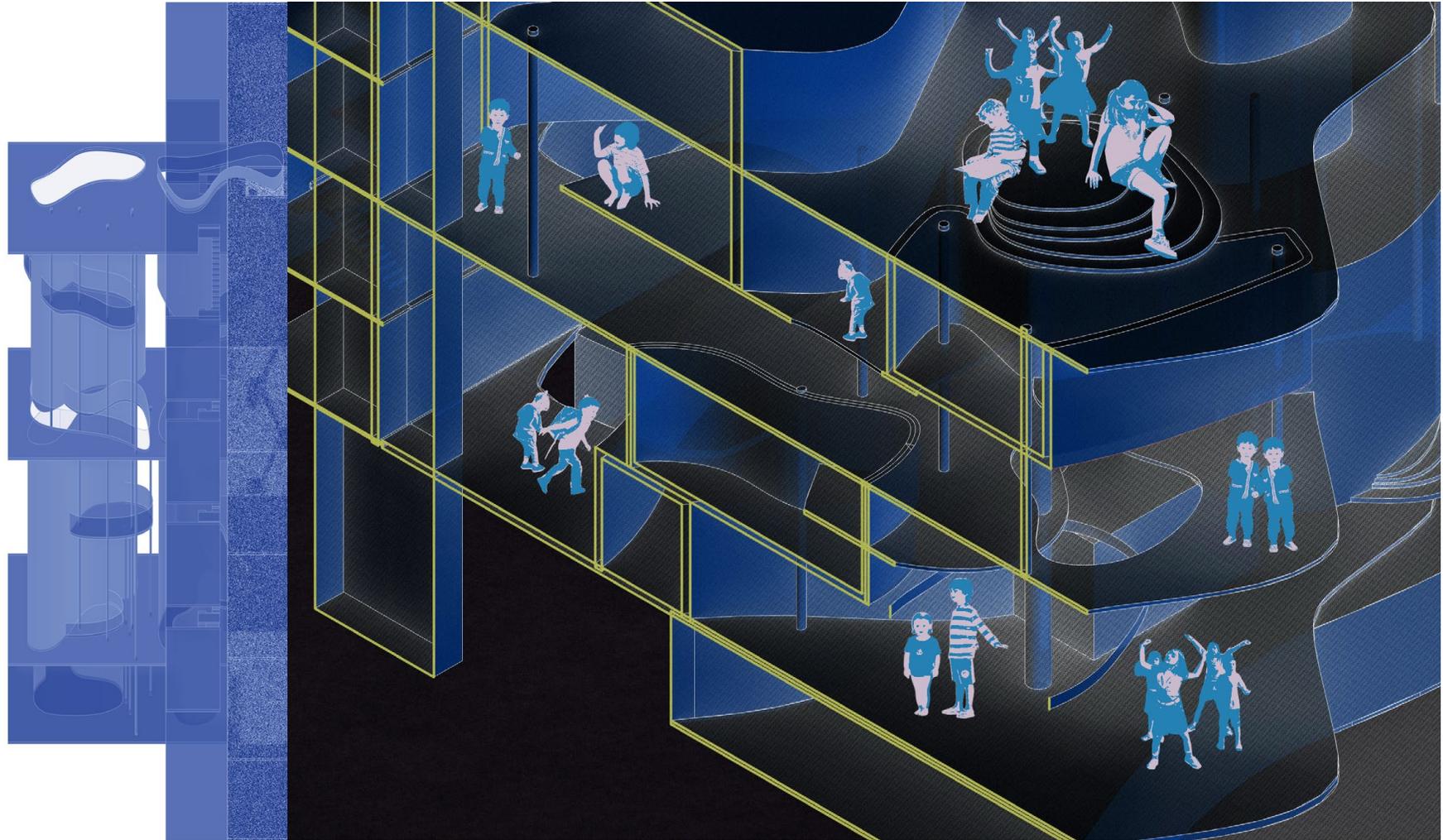
*selected project cloud.

THE AUTONOMOUS SCHOOL

CORE II, SPRING 2021

At my final review for Core II, one of the critics after a moment of pause said that she was reminded of the circular design of the large lecture hall at the architecture school at Porto. Because of its shape, everyone can see everyone else in the circle when no one knows each other yet. She shared an anecdote about the school, saying that after a semester of sharing space in that room, it is said that there is at least one pair of students that fall in love. This is how I want to imagine the future spaces I want to create.





The new addition to the H-block of the existing PS64 replaces the existing symmetry with an asymmetrical stacking of rounded spaces that overlap and peer into one another. Peer-to-peer learning replaces the old way of classroom learning with wider communal spaces where students interact in group settings and tactile furniture environments. The ground floor is open to the public, where an open gallery space, meeting hall, and playground lobby welcome students during the day and adult populations at school off-peak hours for a multi-flex space. In the spaces above, more regular classroom settings are updated in one of the old wings that is preserved and flow out into the amorphous learning spaces, programmed with a library floor, gym, and study spaces.

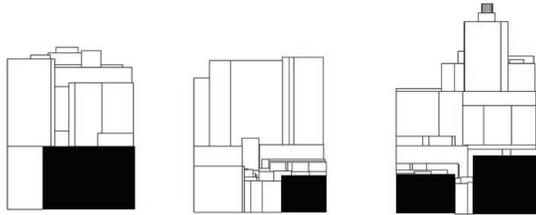
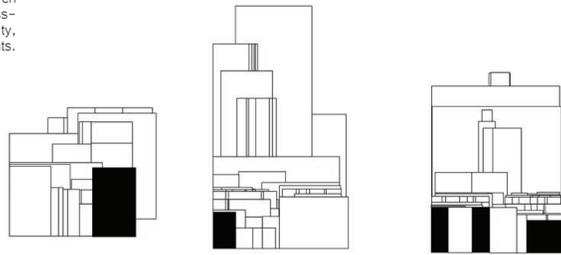
*collaged view of concept model and student experience of stacked classrooms.

Core II, Spring 2021

Site Research and Massing Studies

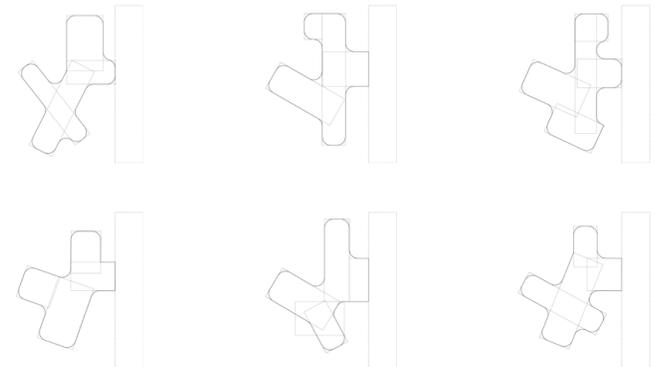
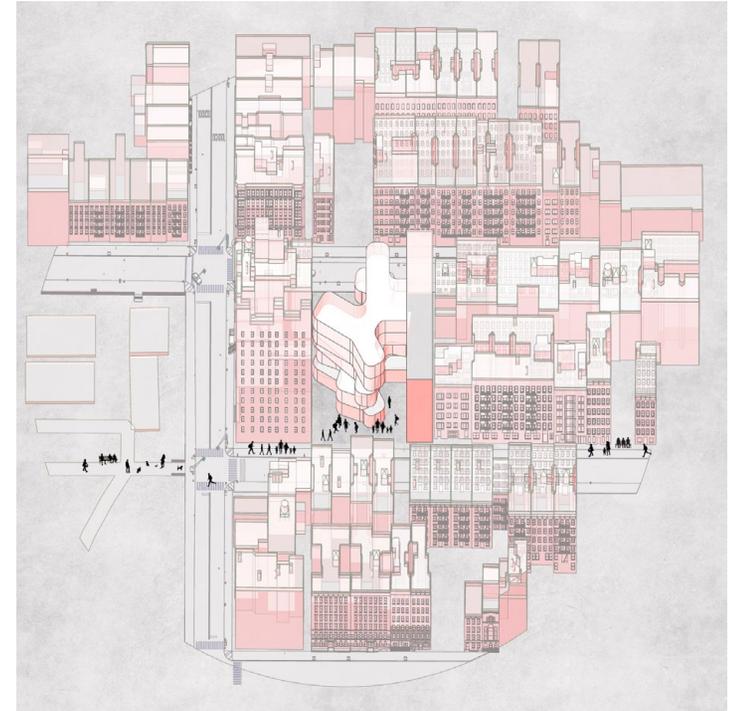
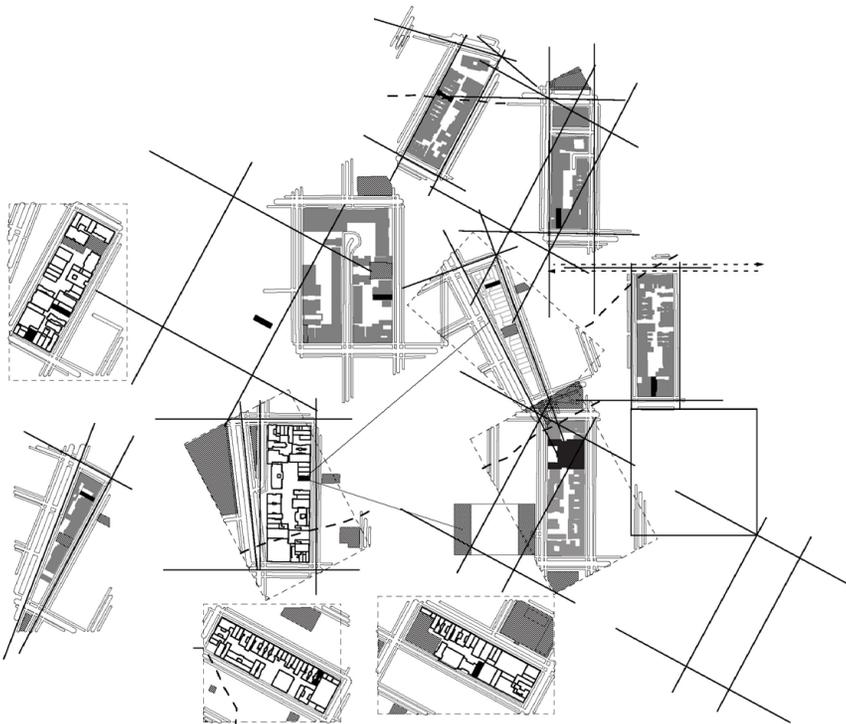
Initially in the site analysis I was interested in the 1970s CHARAS group organizing interventions in the city that were revitalizing the Lower East Side like installing DIY wind turbines and solar panels in contrast to the main city grid and taking over the PS64 building. The following mapping experiments collage together different squatter locations adjacent to long standing cultural centers, pirate radios, and outdoor spaces that really anchor the site.

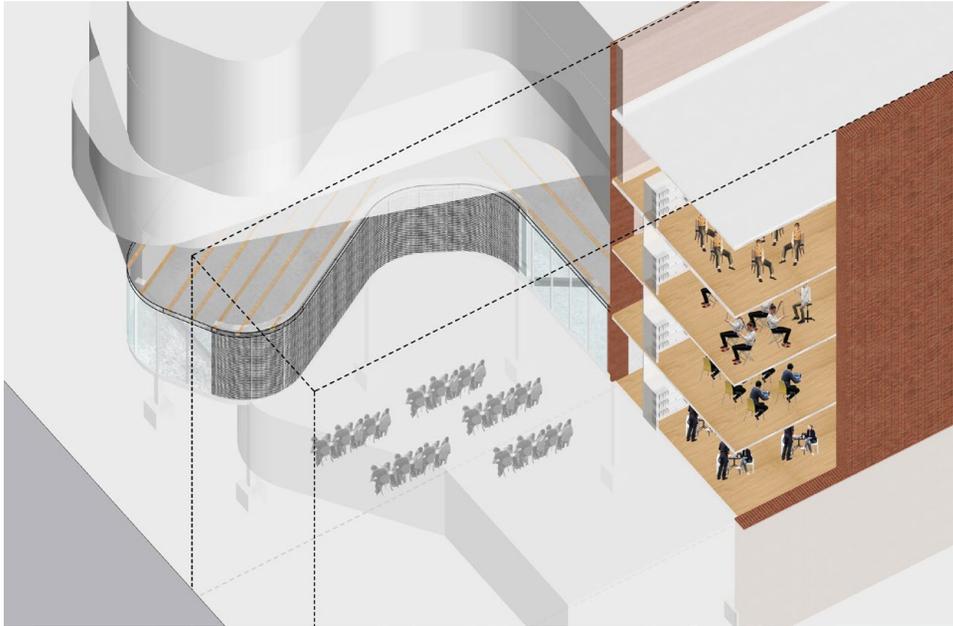
>collaged view of site research exploring context building massing, green space accessibility, and historic squatter settlements.



>new massing strategy on site connected to the old wing of the existing H-block, activating a throughway between E9th St and E10th St.

>massing iterations of overlapping program and spatial sequences connected to the rigid H-block.

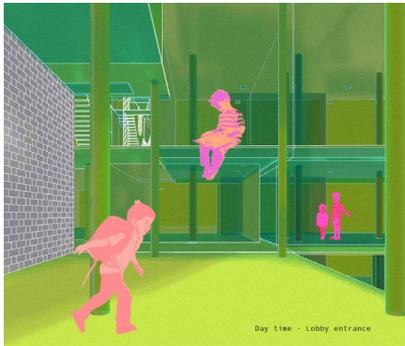




*the ground floor is connected to the cafeteria underground that is more continuous with the old structure and the open play lobby.



*view from E10th St entrance. metal mesh screens allow for privacy in the floors above and the old building is seen in the distance.



Day time - Lobby entrance



NIGHT TIME - SCHOOL PERFORMANCE



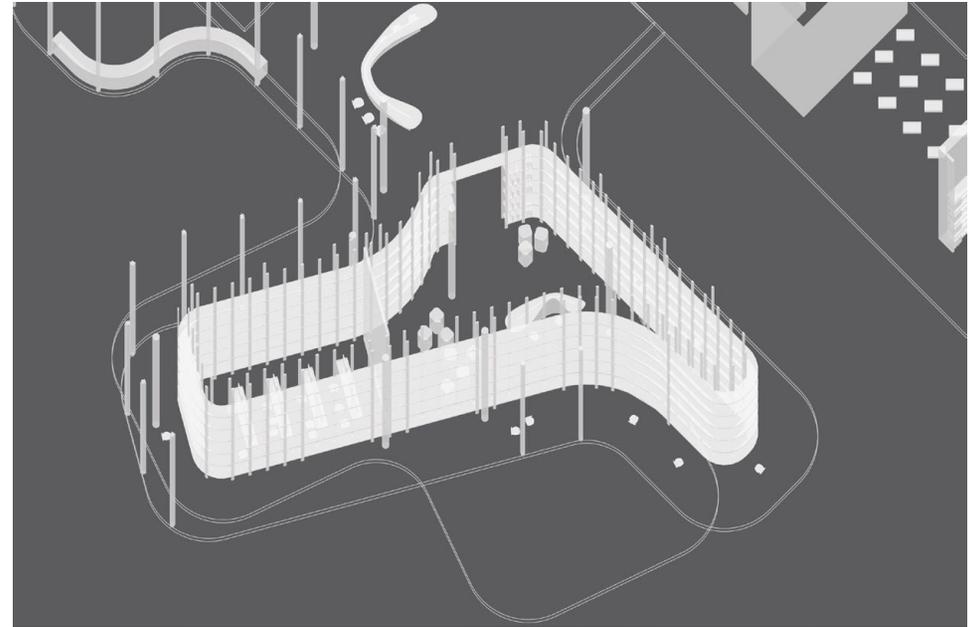
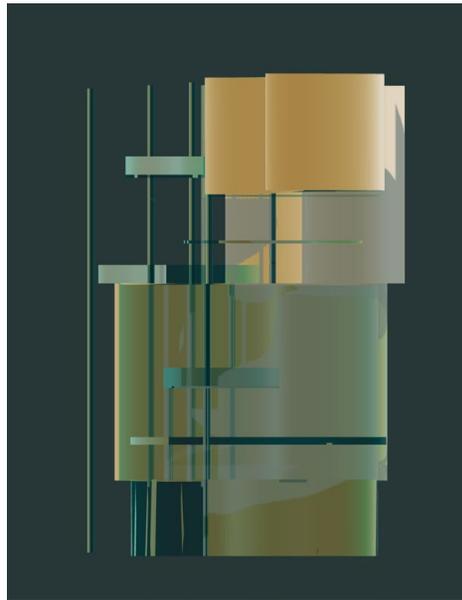
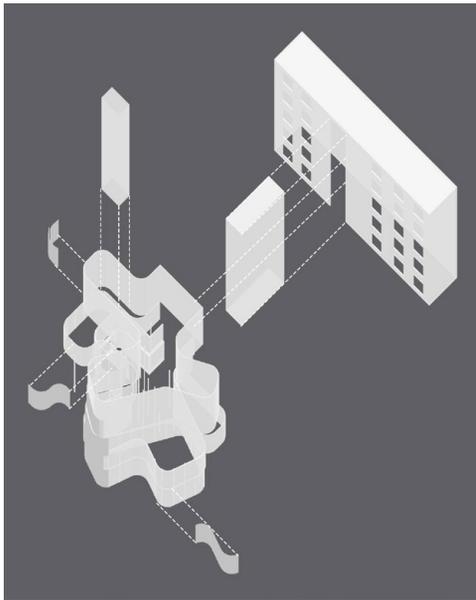
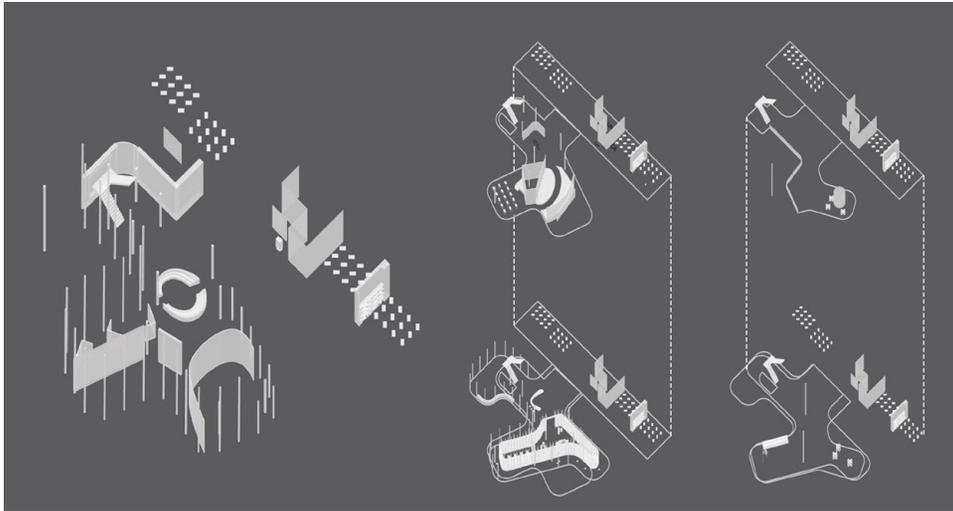
*collection of interior views and programmatic diagram in section



< physical model collage of ground floor spaces. a large open gathering space is open to the public on school off hours, as well as a communal makerspace that is shared by the students and the Lower East Side community.

A New Space for Learning and Teaching

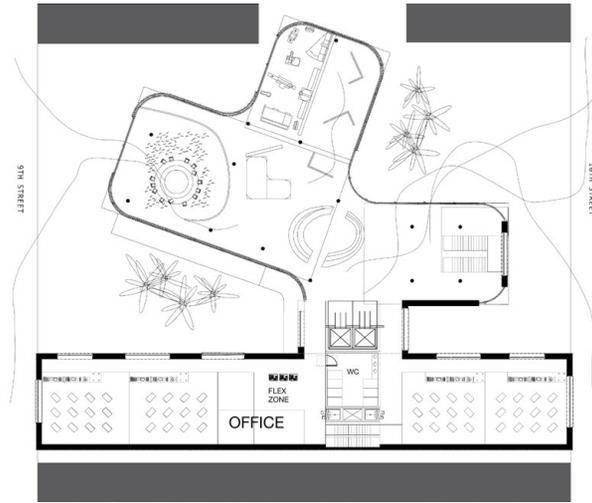
The main architectural move of the project is to preserve the existing east brick wing to house the main classrooms and services for the school, meanwhile the new freeform structure collapses the divide of the original H plan and distributes public programming and amenities for the students to use outside of their classroom time. Throughout the project, I am thinking about the different relationships with new and old, teacher and student, student and city, and student and student.



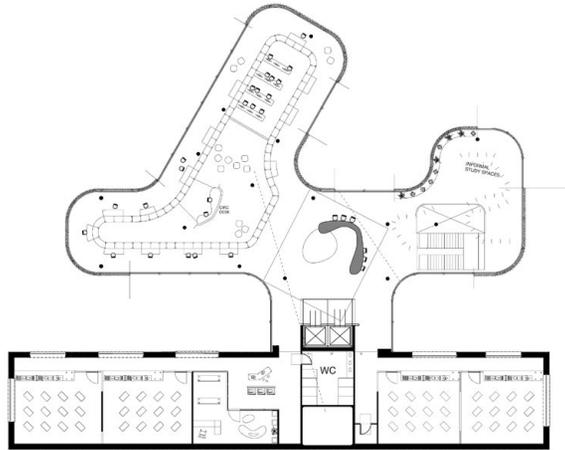
*view of the library. south facing stacks allow for light to filter through the space and divides the space into smaller meeting space.

Program Diagrams

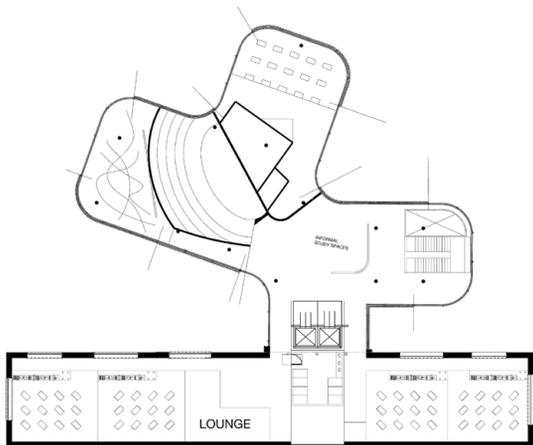
Programmatically on each of the floors there is a flex zone for teachers which is an open area adjacent to an office or admin space that has essential needs like printers and landline phones that is easily accessible from their classrooms. The auditorium is a casual platform space intended for organized school performances nested in the center of the second floor with studios and classrooms opened at its perimeter. The library is another communal space that takes the shape of the building and is a porous design of bookshelves and desks attached on the outside for study spaces and circulation.



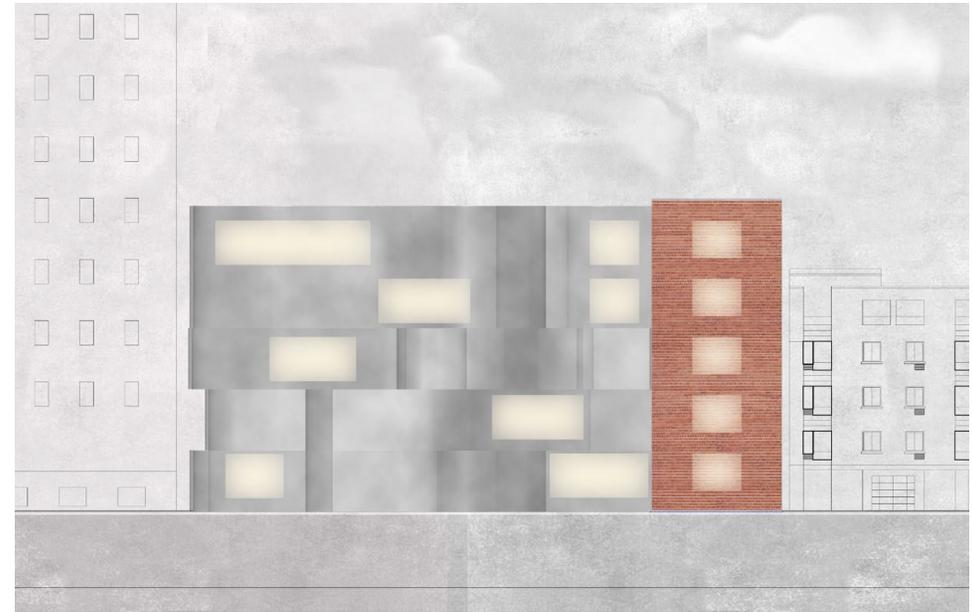
ground floor plan



library floor plan



auditorium floor plan



*the autonomous school material selection, looking North from E9th St.

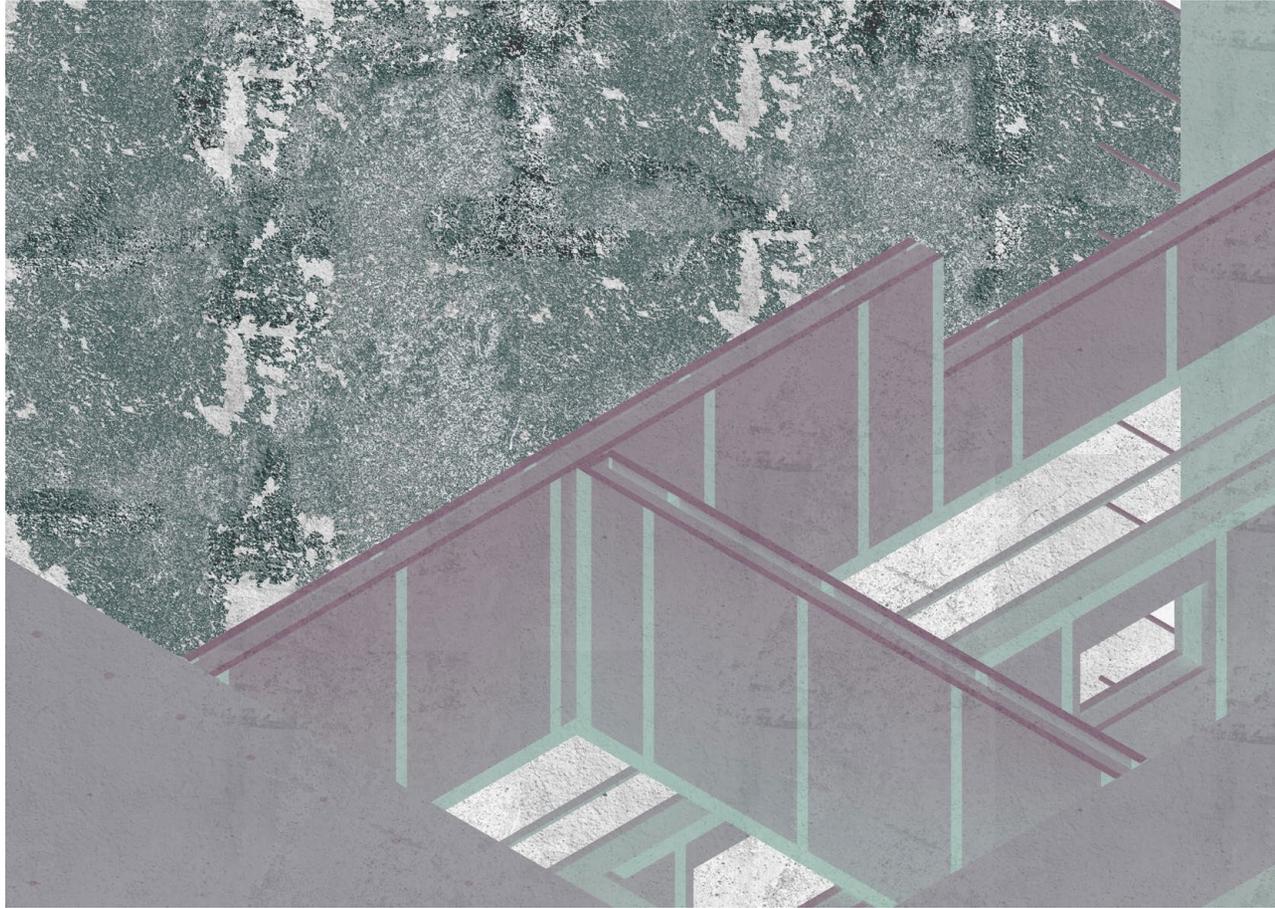
A Diaphanous Addition to the Block

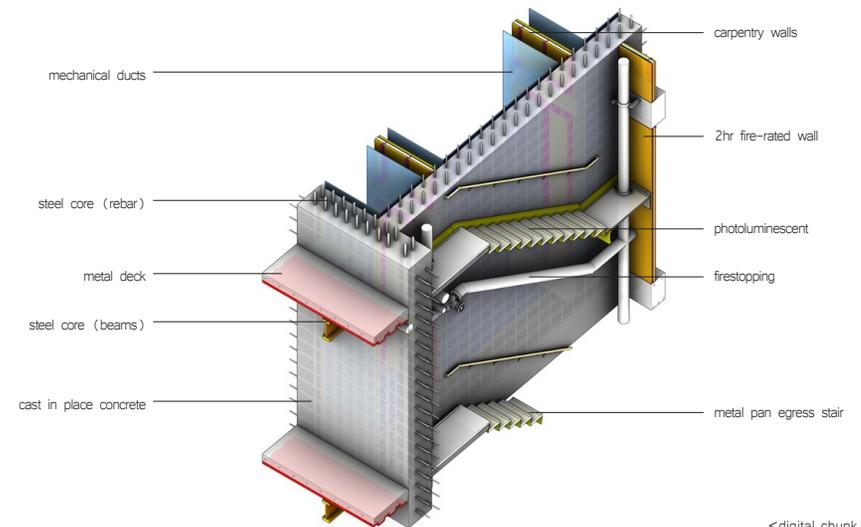
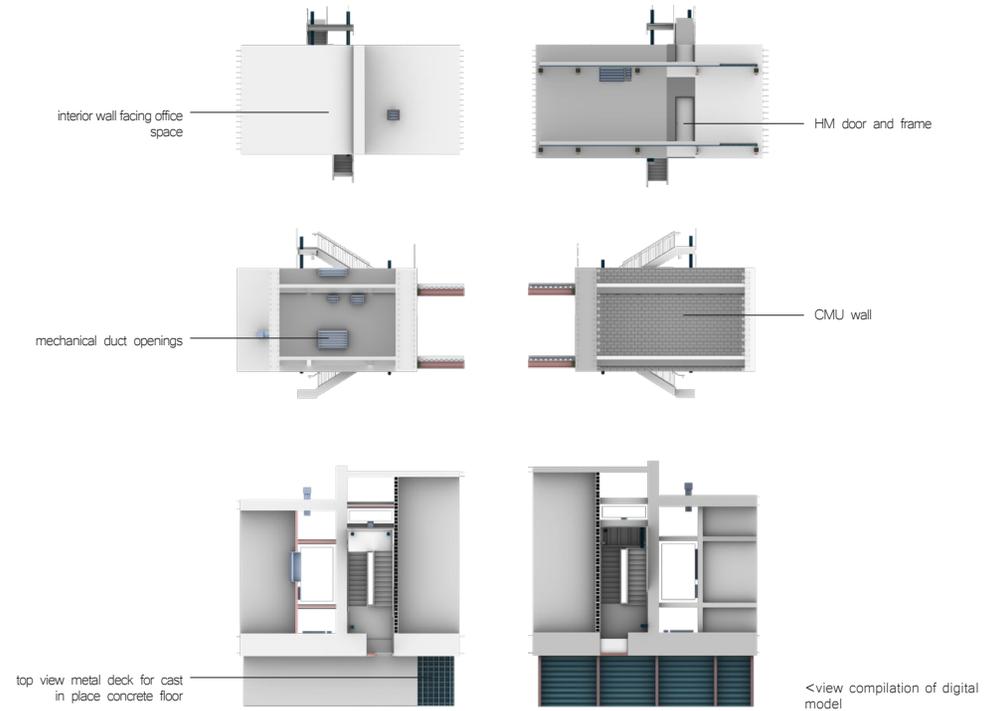
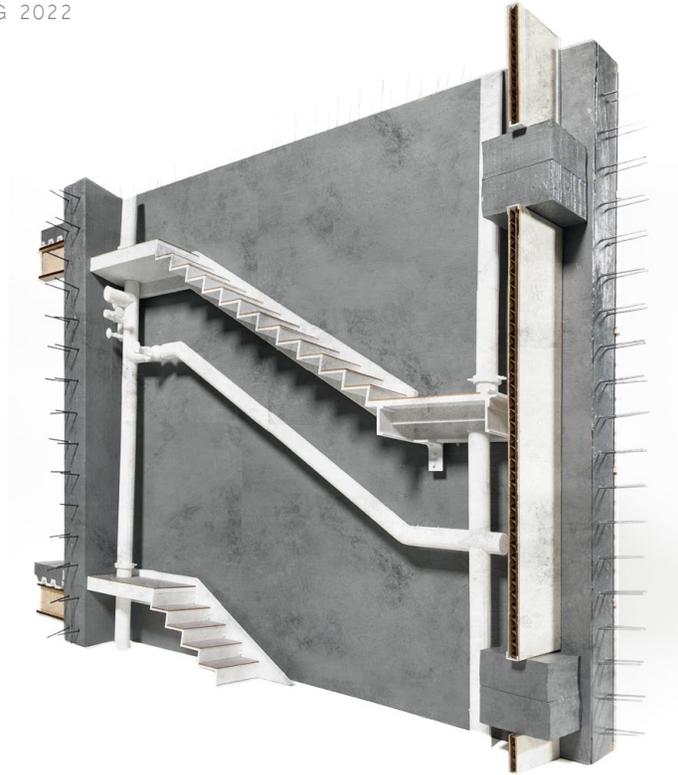
Materially the new building is made of a lighter construction in contrast to the old wing, while the project is also introducing some of these lighter materials back into the brick building as well for balance. The classrooms are accessed by a corridor and are separated by a glass wall so that the light from the main windows can filter inside. The space is separated by light weight see through bookcases made of a similar metal mesh material at the facade. The final view of the building does not hide that it is a completely new addition to the site and the two spaces work together from the outside as one as seen with the window lights.

EGRESS CORE STUDY

ARCHITECTURAL TECHNOLOGY V, SPRING 2022

A study into the technical and material composition of a stair core in an imagined highrise building.

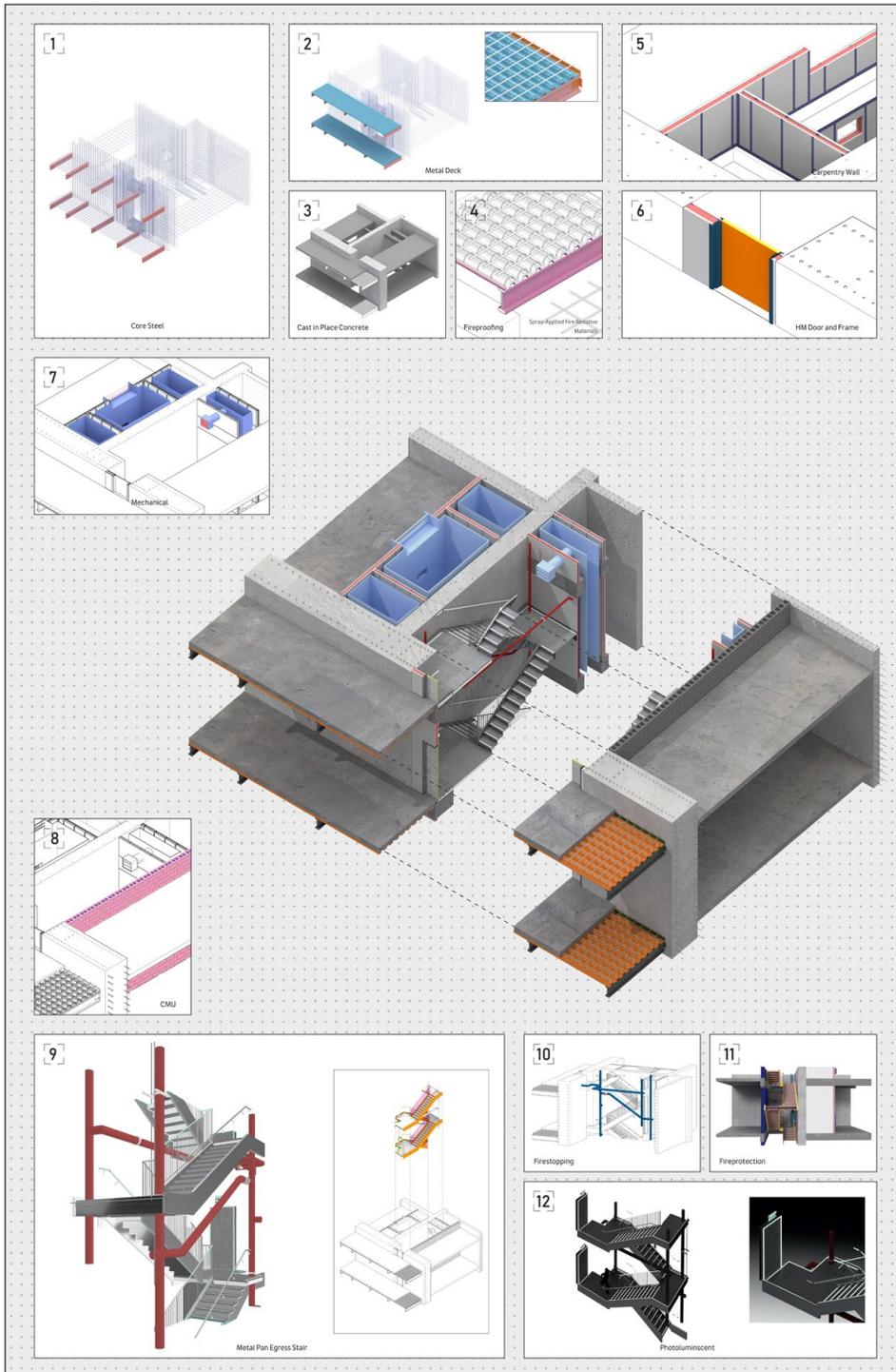




In this semester long project, I worked with a team to develop a digital chunk model of a core and egress stair assembly of a standard office building. Examining shop drawings and attending related lecture classes, the model investigates construction sequencing, fireproofing, carpentry wall assembly, and structural elements of the core. Critical to our study was the placement of fire smoke dampeners and mechanical air pressurization ducts which greatly reduce the hazard of fire spreading in a building in the case of an emergency. The fire smoke dampener is critical because it adjusts the airflow in an egress stair core so that the pressure differential between the door of the core and the building makes it easier to open doors and keep fire out.

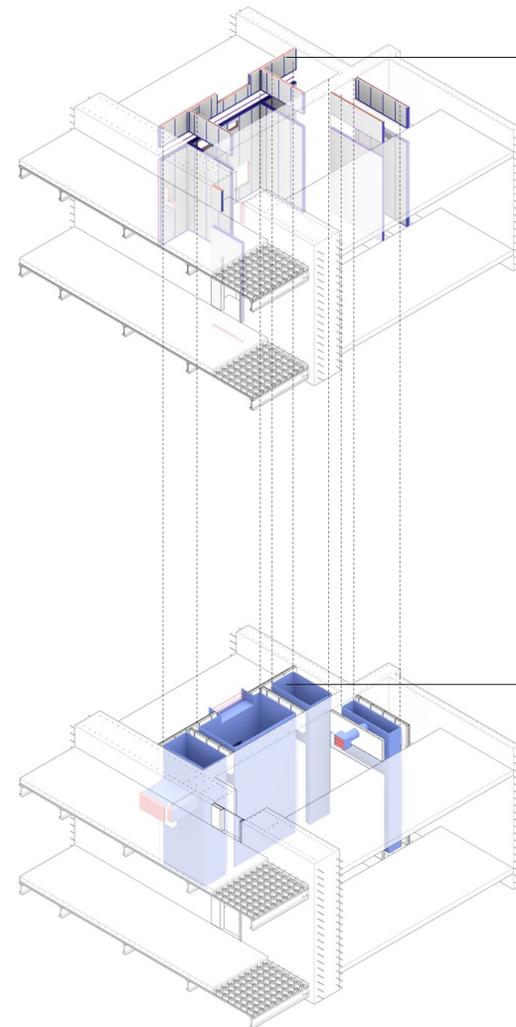
*final model images.

<digital chunk model in prep of the physical model



<final drawing layout, designed collectively. Formatted to be 24x36 portrait.

Construction Sequencing Diagram
The construction sequencing follows a specific order of actors and materials transferring across the site to build the core egress stair, starting with a core steel rebar framework, metal deck, and cast in place concrete following with the necessary retrofits to make the structure inhabitable and to code.



carpentry walls shown in x-ray view through the chunk model. 2-hour fire rating applied.

mechanical ducts are installed alongside the egress core in the shaft wall. The air ducts are equipped with FSD openings for fire protection.

~zoom in moments of digital chunk model.

AMONG THE TREES

ADVANCED IV, SPRING 2022

83 miles up the Hudson River from 125th Metro-North, the New York upstate trees are most likely turning green at this time of year. They hold stories of sanctuary that have been passed down from generations of soil, voices, and objects. *AMONG THE TREES* is an ode to those that have left their mark in stories of resistance.



Studio Information
Advanced IV Studio
Critic: Nina Cooke John
Collaborator: Kaixi Tu
Year: SPRING 2022

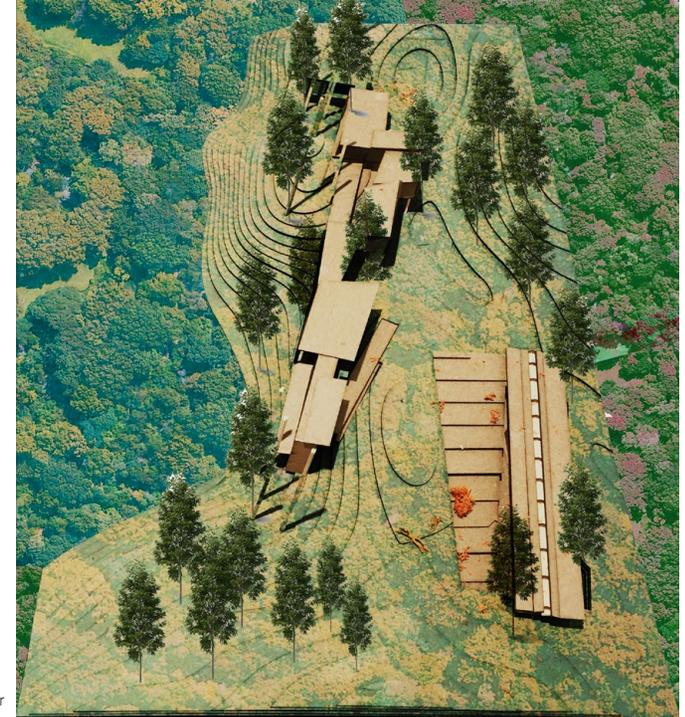
AMONG THE TREES



*experiential section, Fall



Located in Hyde Park, Dutchess County in Upstate New York, AMONG TREES proposes a small scale summer camp facility and memorial space for the local Hackett Hill Park, run by Hyde Park Recreation Department. Historically, this site was founded as a free black community during the 1800s. The Underground Railroad was a major factor in securing this space as a refuge for people escaping slavery in the Hudson Valley region, as well as the local geography of wooded land in aiding people to safety. To honor the findings of this place, the design of the day camp and memorial is conceptually guided by the experience of weaving through the trees. As a sanctuary space, the day camp provides a learning environment for kids anchored by a memorial to freedom.

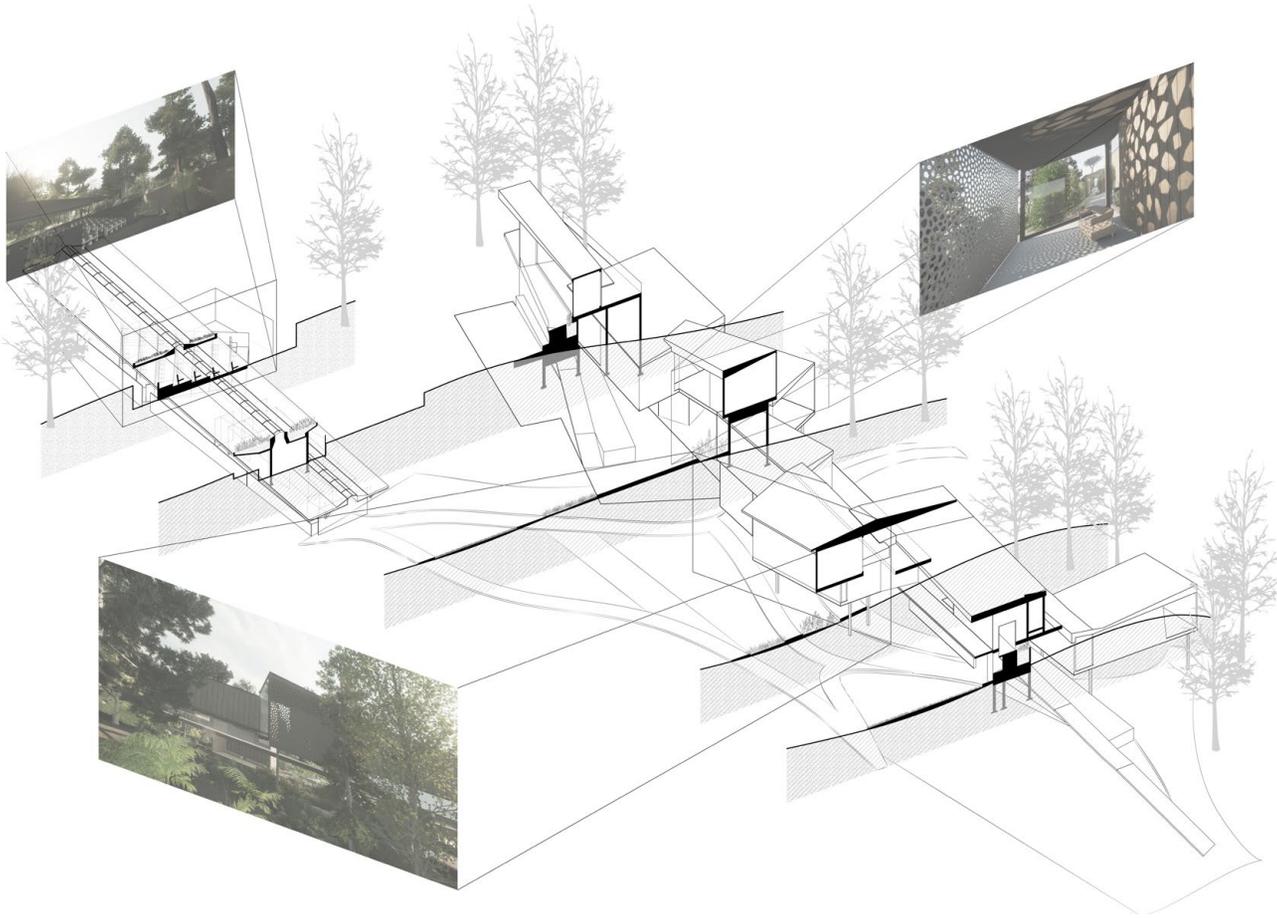


>collaged physical model of summer camp.

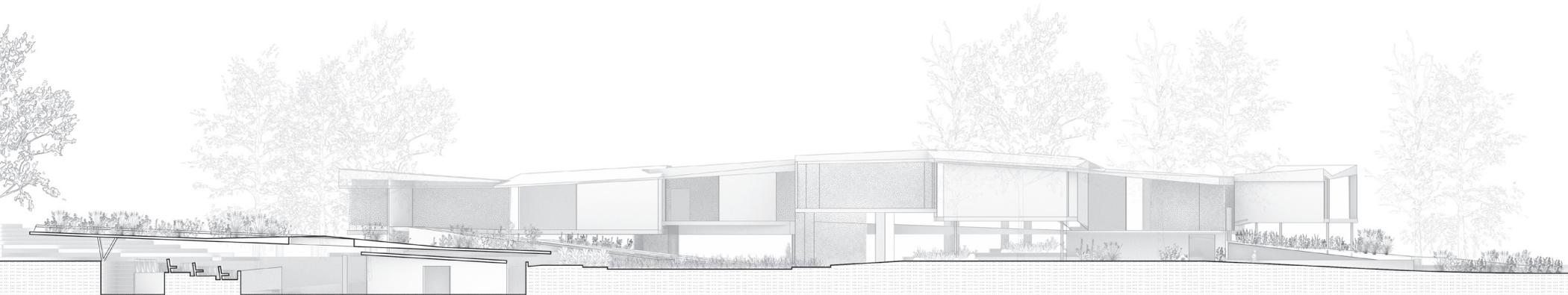
Advanced IV Studio, Spring 2022

As Above, So Below

The summer camp has two levels, the first level with only a few simple volumes, which serves as a support, but more than that, it provides a kind of gray space in such a site. People are constantly moving between the solid and transparency of the building and even semi transparency and nature. The second level is a meandering design with window openings that allow people to be completely hidden in the trees or open to nature at times. We used landscaping to connect the two buildings, with the topography gradually lowering to create a landscape plaza with two contours that are different from the surrounding environment. Two organic paved paths go through the freedonia lane and the buildings. A slope takes people into the underground space. Firstly, there is a linear floating planting box, the middle is glass, below is an exhibition space and a shifted auditorium.



^view from existing camp ground to a minimal path leading to new site
 <site isometric with section study of above and below ground spaces

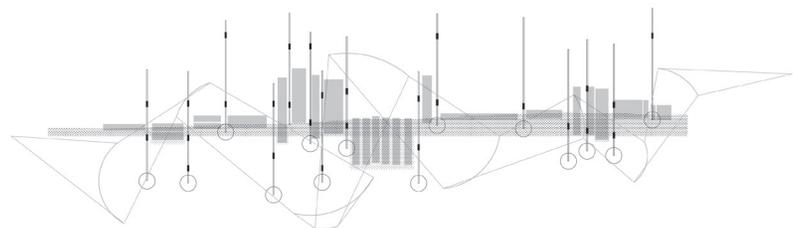
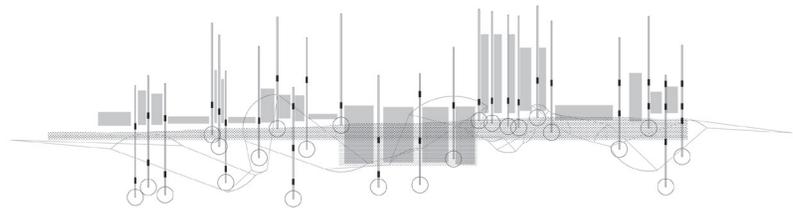
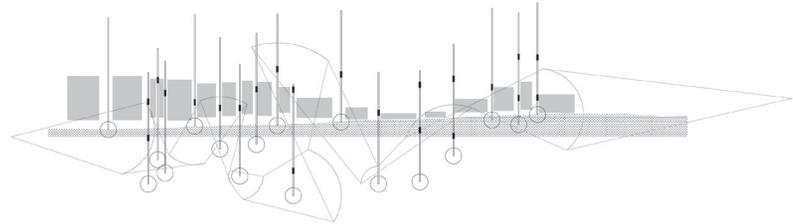
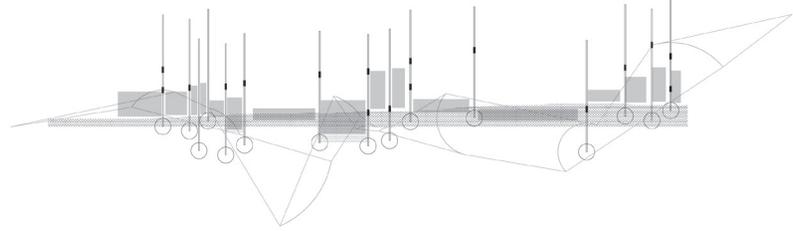


^long section of underground auditorium and exhibition space with summer cap in background

>conceptual collage of floating through the landscape and meandering through the trees, not knowing where the space that's being created ends or starts, a kind of hide and seek in the landscape



>a back and forth between the visible and invisible, and the sacred light and shadow effects created by the buildings and trees



<analysis drawing of different densities of trees and speculative pathways through the trees as well as the fragmentation of views

Calibrating the Walking Experience
In thinking about the sanctuary space, the structure is grounded in the current activities of the site with a sensitivity to the past. Historically, Fredonia Lane was used as a transition space where people would find community and either stay or move to other places. The project thus is a conditioned walkway that is meant to guide the visitors' experience through the landscape and anchor the summer day camp activities of the site.

RESTITUTION UNDERGROUND

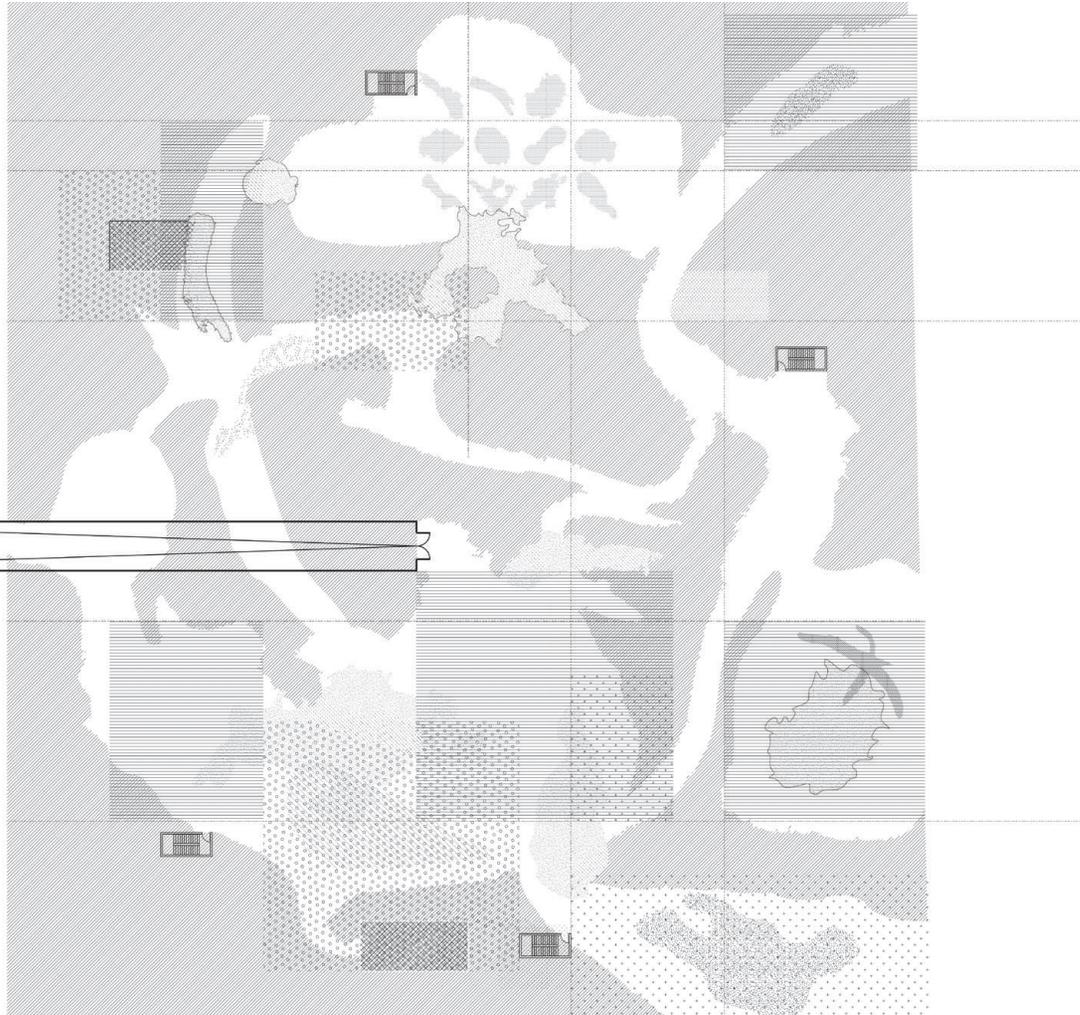
ADVANCED VI, SPRING 2023

Humboldt Forum has been an active player in the art black market for antiquity trafficking since the Enlightenment period in the 18th century. The architecture, a reconstruction of the Berlin Schloss at the peak of Prussian power, further legitimized the imperialism that made the museum as an institution possible.



RESTITUTION UNDERGROUND

Studio Information
Advanced VI Studio
Critic: Emanuel Admassu
Collaborator: Karen Wang
Year: SPRING 2023



*diptych view showing meadow
above the underground art space
<underground cave floor plan

Museum is black market.

The efforts towards restitution had been under spotlight since the presidential report composed by the economist Felwine Sarr and the art historian Benedicte Savoy.

The new identity of the western museum has been a benevolent, always in progress, global institution, actively pursuing restitution. Reframing the discussion as contemporary, withholding the agency and ownership of objects through lending, delaying the process through the tools of legitimization. Less than 2% has been returned so far.

The Humboldt Forum, an institution part of the larger Museum Island network, has profited from its settlement on this rich soil, and actively offers its visitors claims to a past that justifies its universalizing mission.

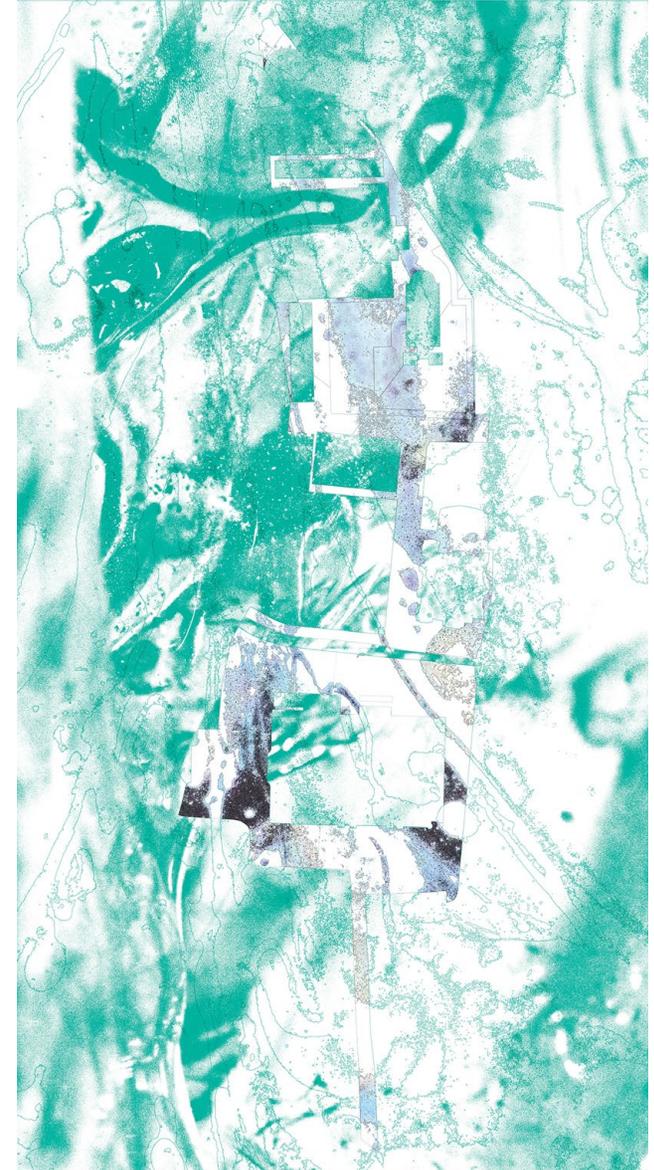
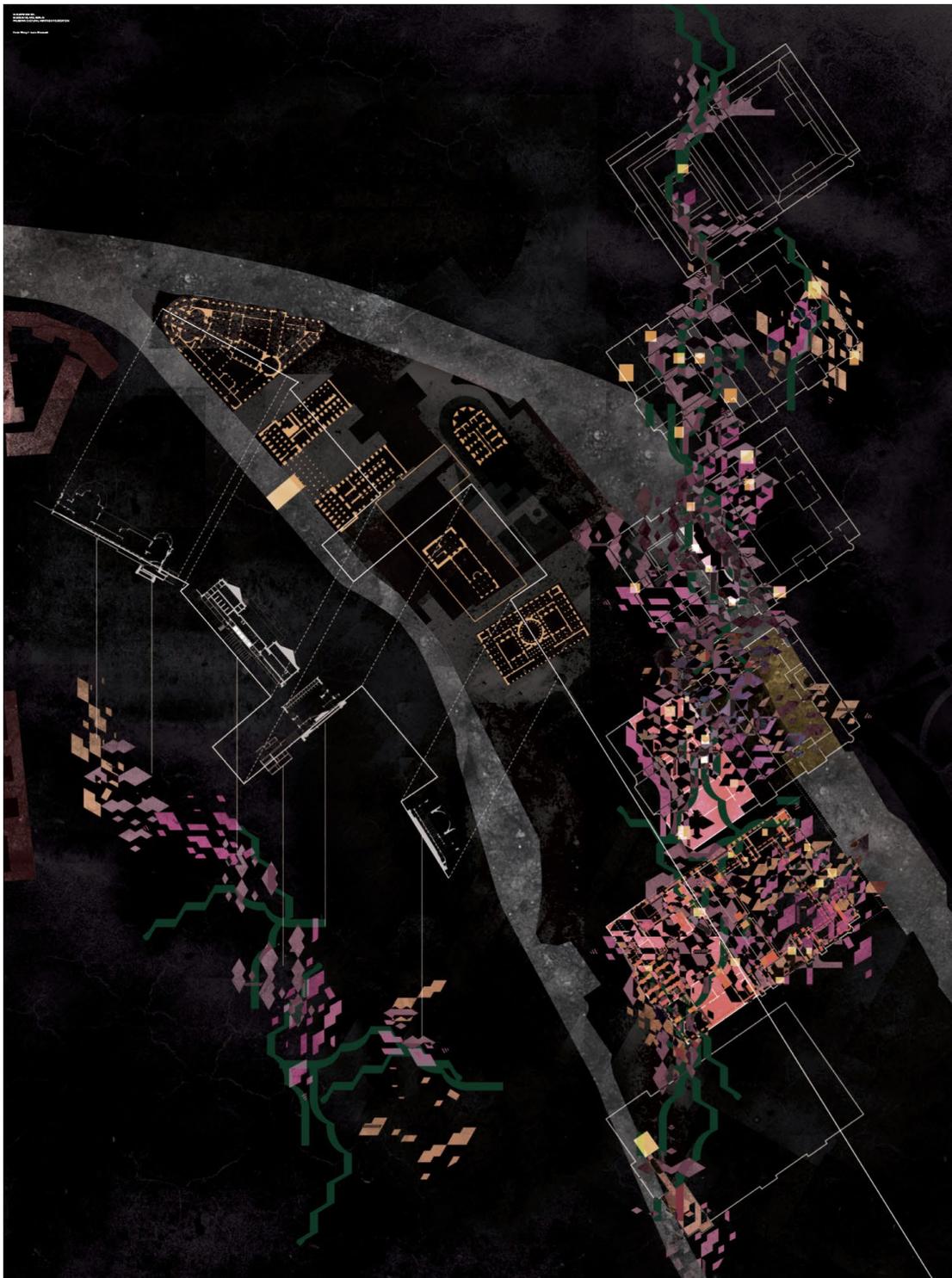
When asked about why it's named after Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt, the 18th century explorers, the museum frames the brothers as the "perfect role models" for "the whole world connected, interchanging and being seen as one big human culture."

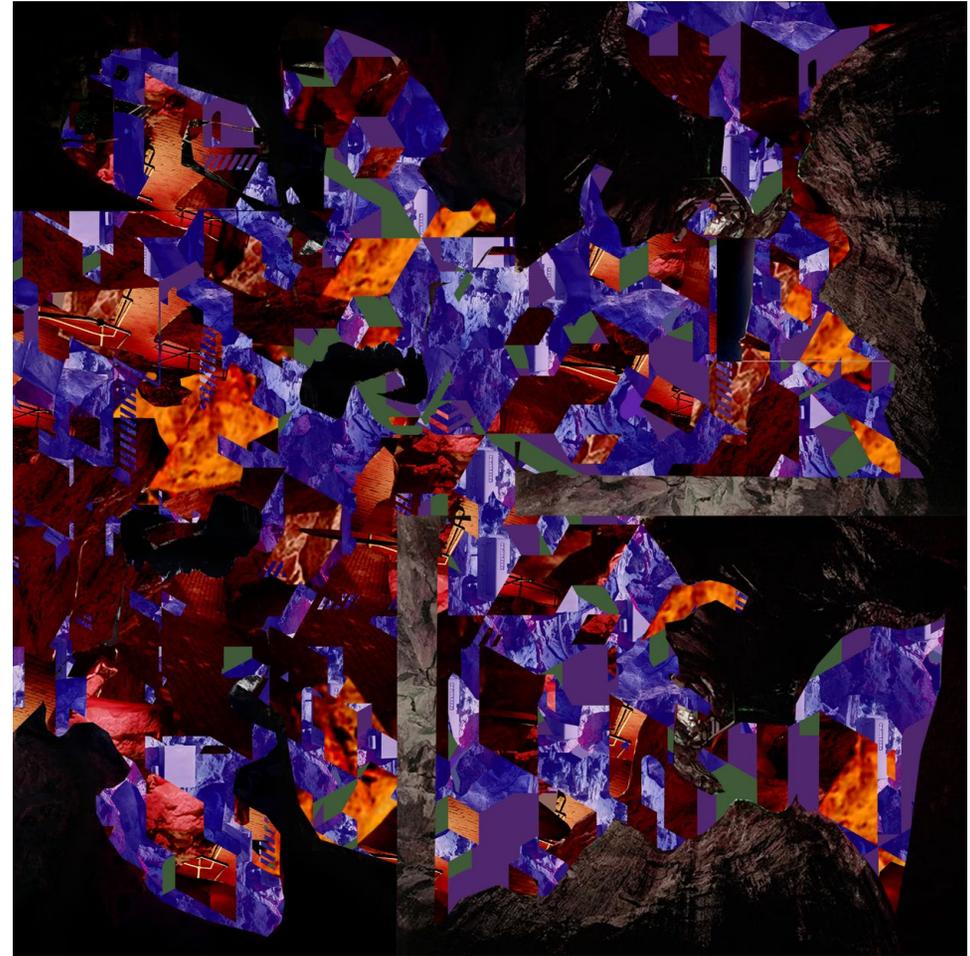
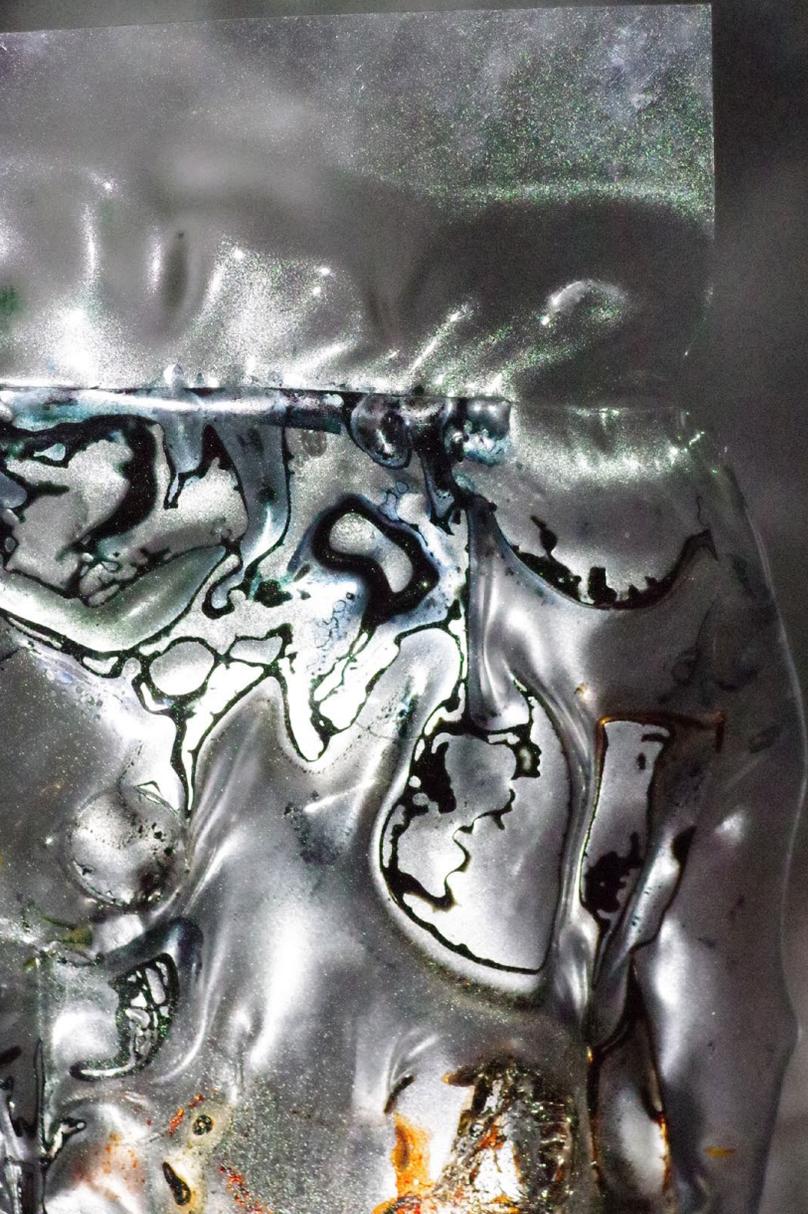
Advanced VI, Spring 2023

<basement section of museum island
and heat map of objects and space in
Humboldt Forum

>in 1443, the "Berlin Displeasure"
event was an uprising during which
the inhabitants of Berlin flooded
the construction site of the palace
by opening the locks on the Spree
in an act of resistance against the
House of Hohenzollern.

"The palace was not in Berlin; Berlin was the palace."
In 2008, excavations were carried out in the historic
city center of Berlin by the State Office for Historic
Landmark Conservation whose team "cut sections through
time [to] show a given development as an arrangement of
successive stages."





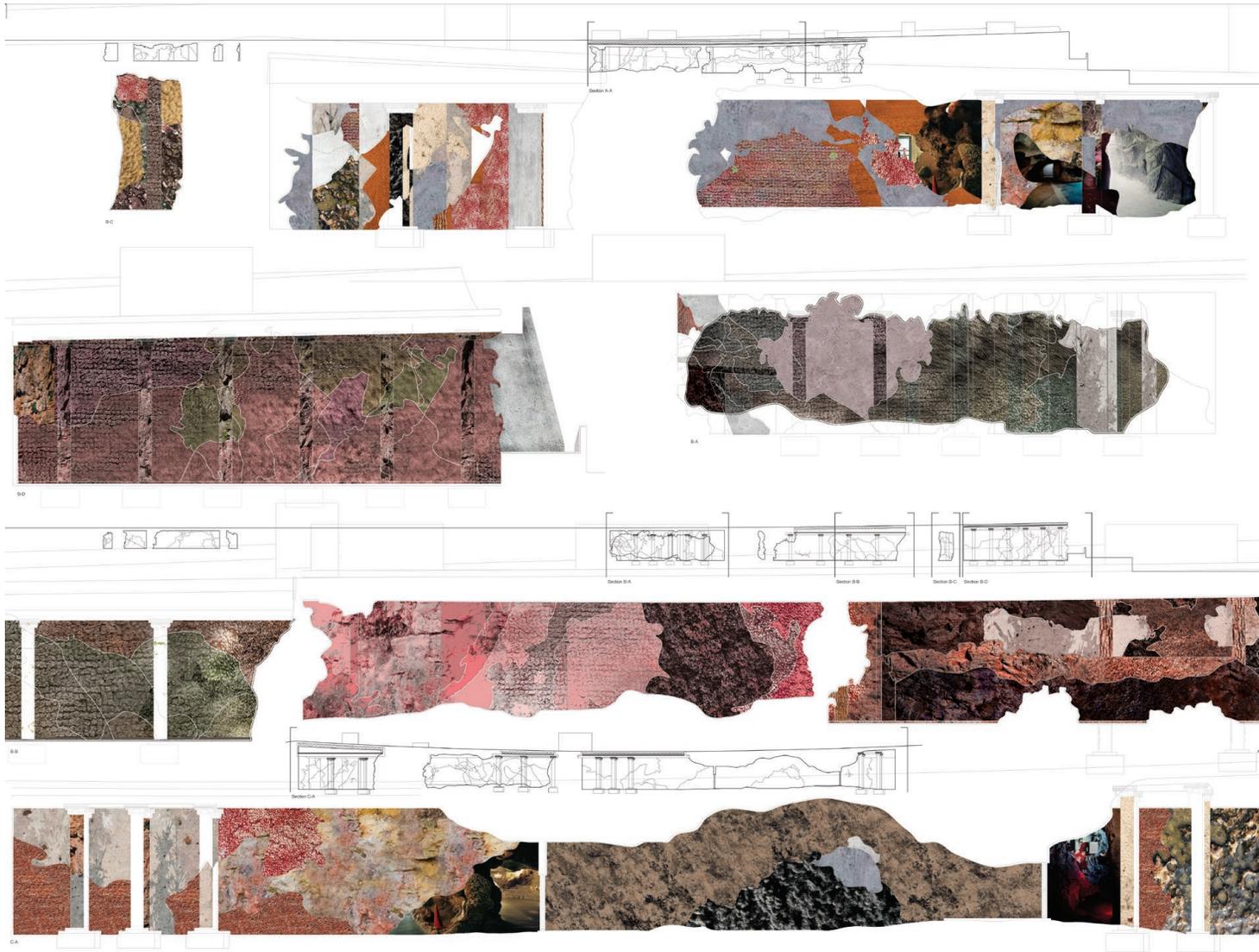
*cave analysis and heat map
interpretation of selected arts practice.

Spaces of Seduction

The excavated foundation of the Prussian Palace became critical in recreating the historic facade and crafts its argument of cultural heritage around selective history. The current Prussian Cultural Heritage foundation is excavating the ground to recreate the imperial palace, but in the context of restitution, excavation aims to create space that centralizes the perspectives of all those who have been and are still being silenced by colonialism. Under the open field, the cave space acts as a space for restitution focusing on developing relationships between archives and people. Agency and access is negotiated here to continue the cultural heritage disrupted by the expeditions and looting. In an attempt to collapse the linear construction of time used by the Humboldt for legitimization purposes and unite a divided Germany, the project can exist in the future, past or present.

<zoom in view of fluid concept model.

>sections of new arts space underground.



*main ramp leading into the underground arts space
 <section views of cave

Time passes differently in the cave.

In a time of contested visions, the empty Schlossplatz symbolized a utopia for the activist group Barazani and the potential(s) for people in Berlin. The time before the Humboldt when it was a vast open field seems to suggest the most democratic way of using the site. The grass has never been neutral. If both the Palace of the Republic and the Humboldt Forum are both overt manifestations of state building, then the grass field, even as an utopian state, is burying and camouflaging, the violence built within the institutions under the nation-state and the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation.

'Before' indicates both what precedes and what awaits, animating our times with fierce urgency.'

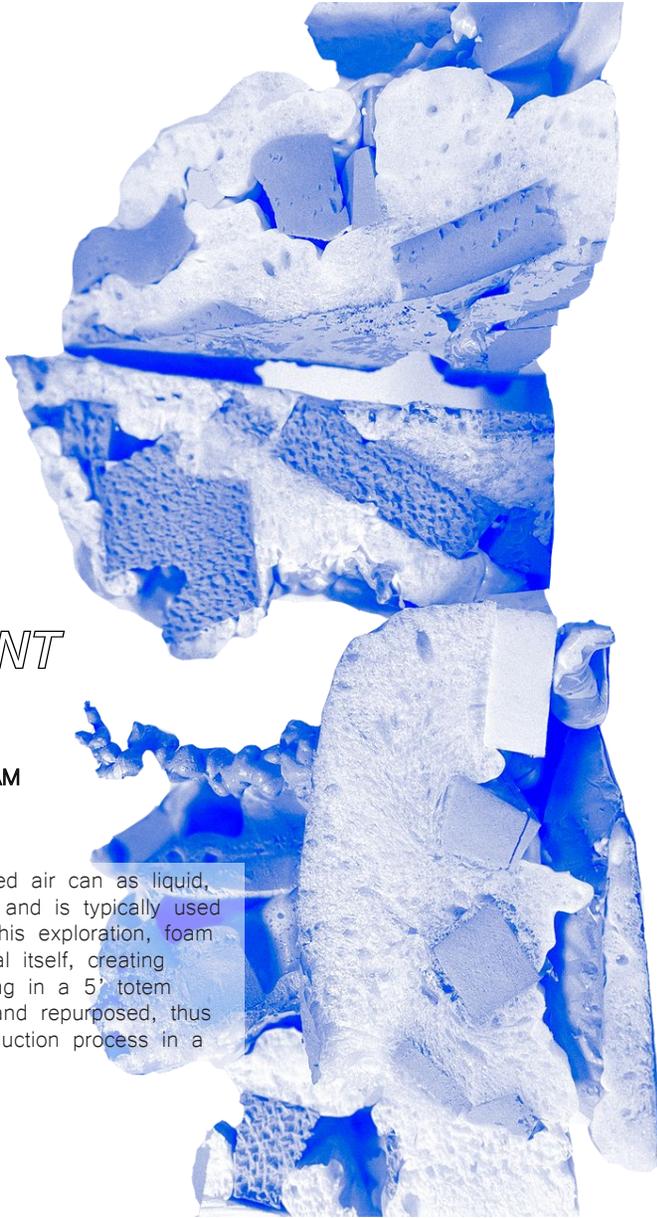
Studio Information

1:1 Fabrication of Detail

Critic: Zachary E. Mulitauapele

Collaborator: Anne Freeman

Year: FALL 2022



MAGNIFICENT

AN EXPLORATION IN FOAM

Foam exists in a compressed air can as liquid, then expands and hardens, and is typically used for insulation purposes. In this exploration, foam reconstitutes building material itself, creating composite foam tiles towering in a 5' totem that was then chainsawed and repurposed, thus re-starting the material production process in a continuous loop.

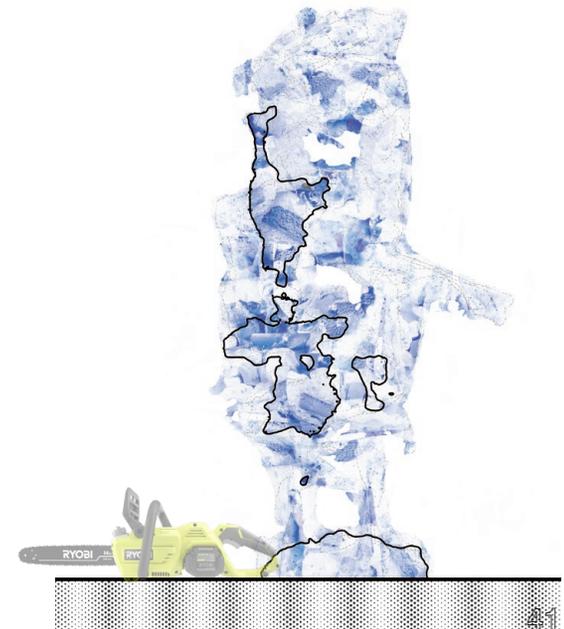


*zoom in views of final model, before and after deconstruction.



*chunk portion of severed foam showing terazzo like tile using expanding foam and salvaged foam pieces.

>3D photogrammetry scan of Magnificent and section cut of final model



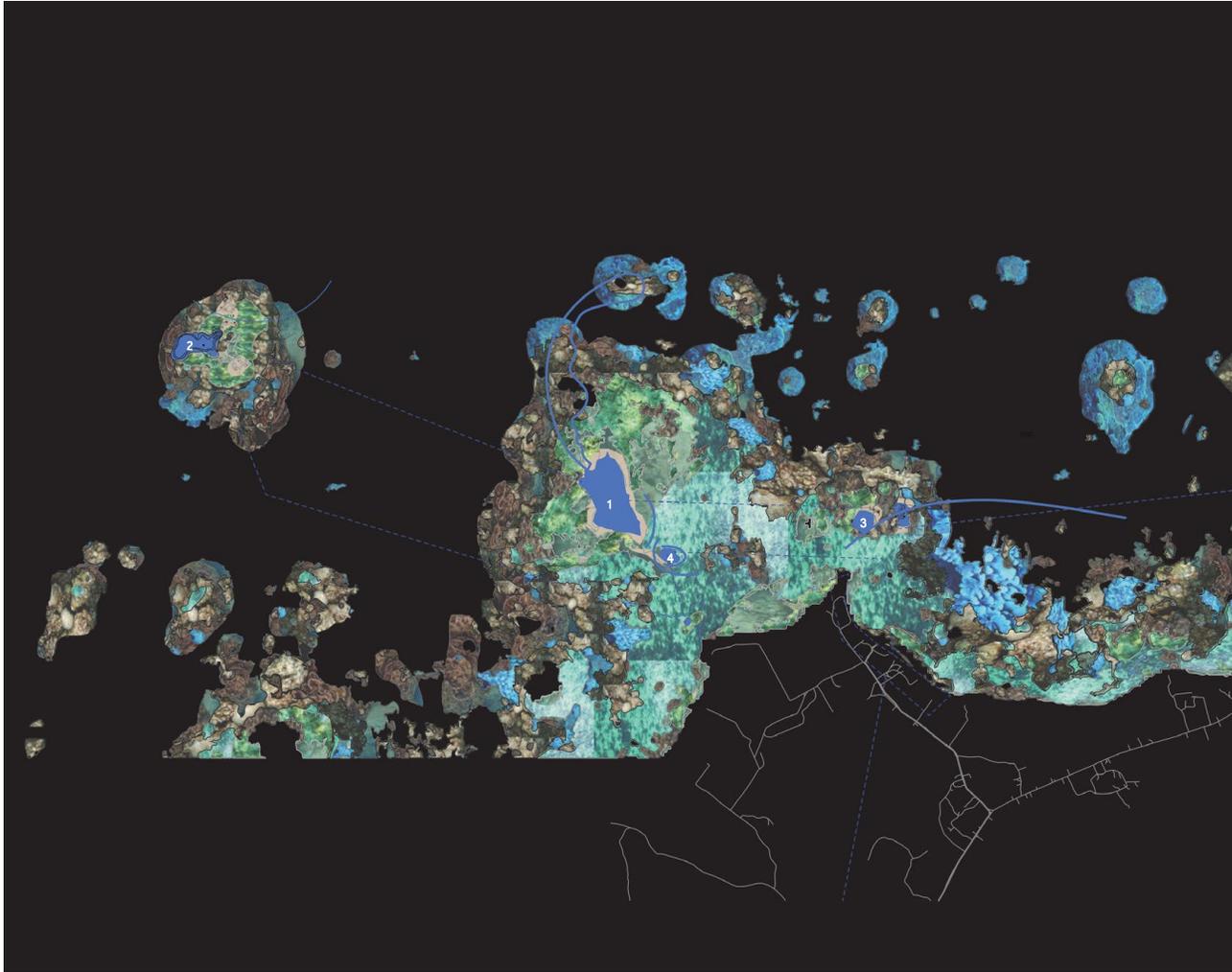
*SITES OF EXHAUSTION:
A STUDY INTO NON-HUMAN
LANDSCAPES AT BELITUNG ISLAND*

ADVANCED V, FALL 2022

Exploitation of land resources and vulnerable populations manifests in the global loss of coral reef life which have offered sanctuary spaces for marine ecology and their human counterparts alike. The contradictory mission statements of these companies to pursue a 'greener' future often puts people at risk and further invisibilizes the symbiotic relationships between local communities and their non-human co-habitants.

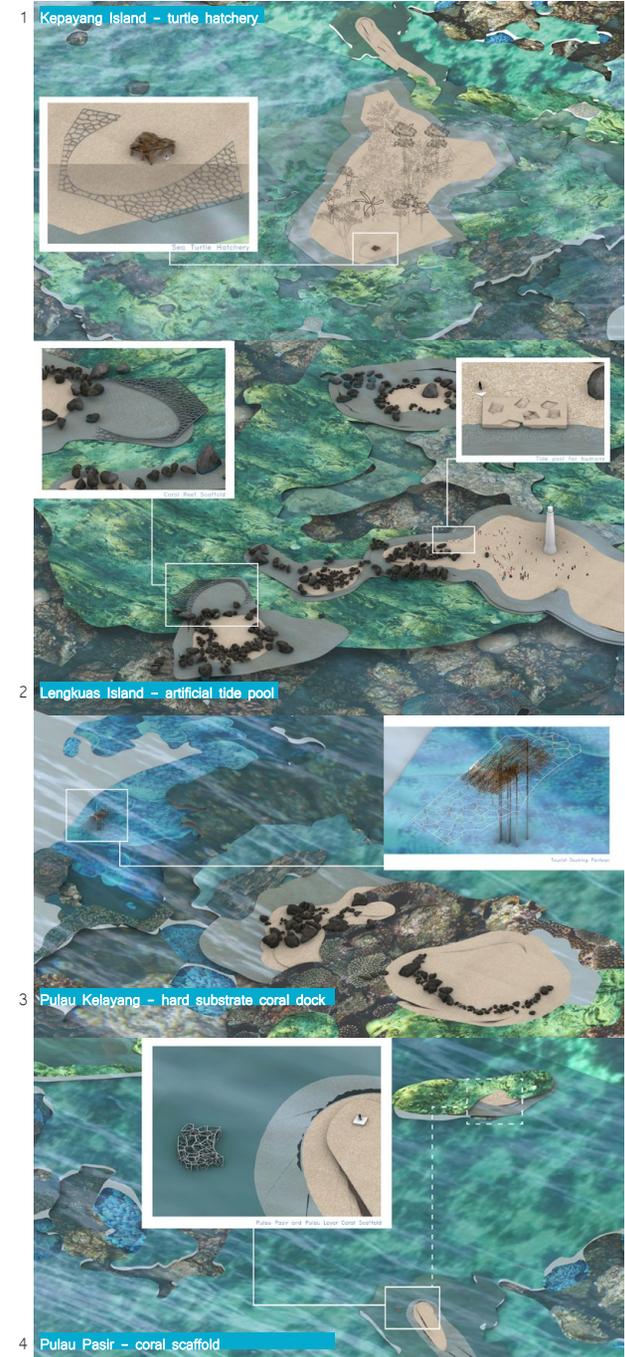


*experimental model of recycled aluminum cast into the proposed coral scaffolding, completed for Other Natures visual studies course with Michael Wang (Spring 2023)



*island hopping off of the Tanjung Kelayang beach.

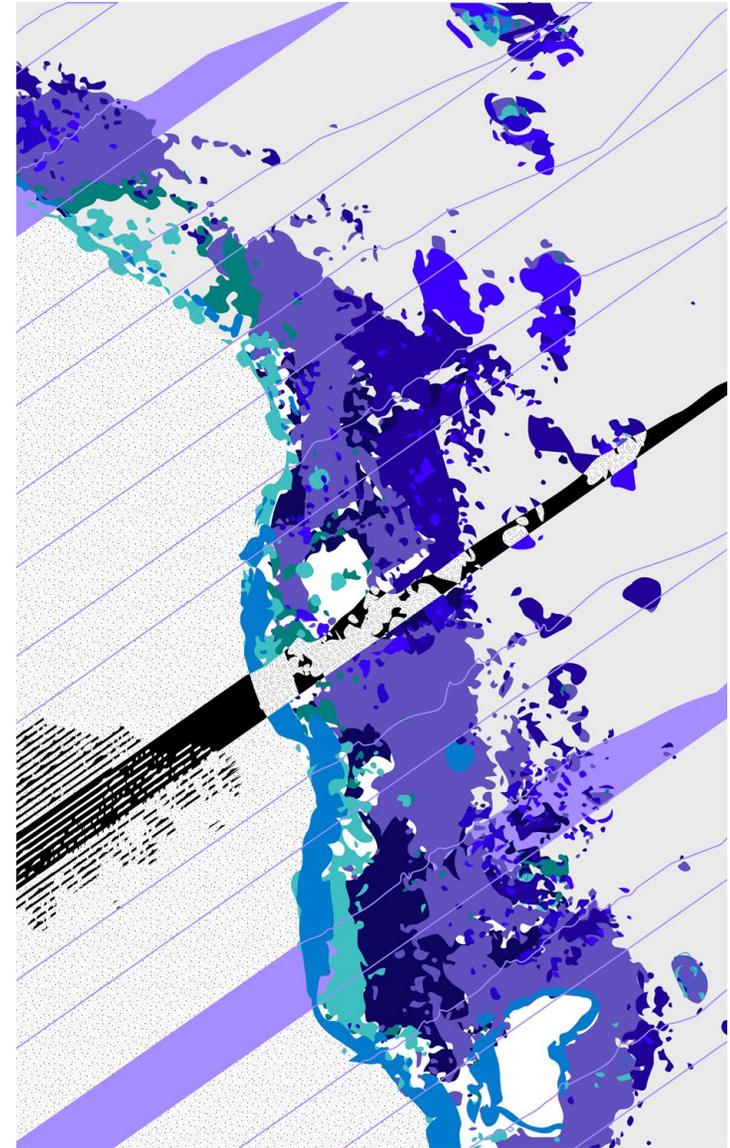
The project focuses on the Bangka and Belitung Provinces in Indonesia. Tin mining has historically been the main engine for economic activity from colonial times to the present, and with it has caused severe ecological damage and humanitarian violations. Exporting 90% of its tin from these islands in Indonesia, there has been little to none remediation efforts scarring the landscape and the people that live here. From this economic monopoly, there is also little diversification of income and the second largest economy is in the tourism sector. The intervention intercepts a tourist route through the island of Belitung at the coral reef island hopping location. Through different strategies of remediation, the project resists the ongoing exploitation of people and resources and denies the tourist gaze on the island.



>compilation of the four main interventions, rerouting the primary tourist path around non-human centered activity.



>coastal coral zones with
intersecting terrestrial mining
areas map



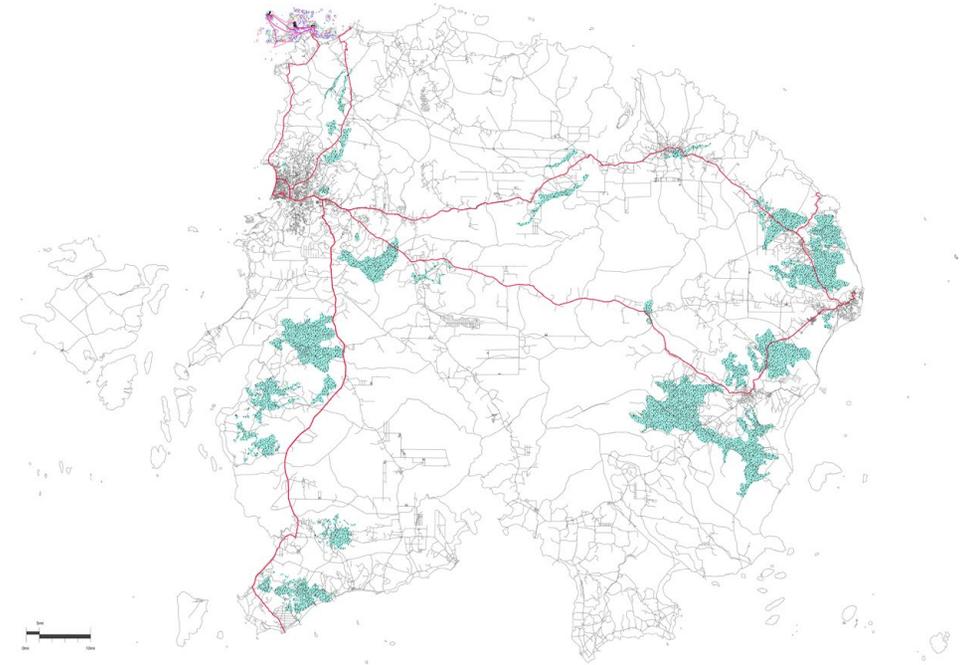
Remediation Sanctuaries at Belitung

Throughout the trip, the tourist is intersecting with these illegal mining sites, which are usually militarized and have little administrative oversight. Once the tin ore has been extracted, the mining companies move to other parts of the island to begin the process again.

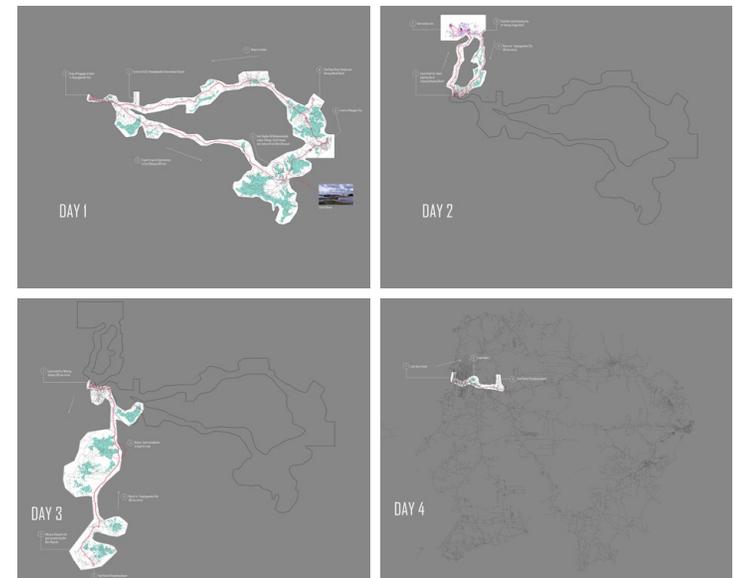
*experimental model of recycled aluminum cast into the proposed coral scaffolding.



*geological study of areas in Indonesia around Belitung Island.



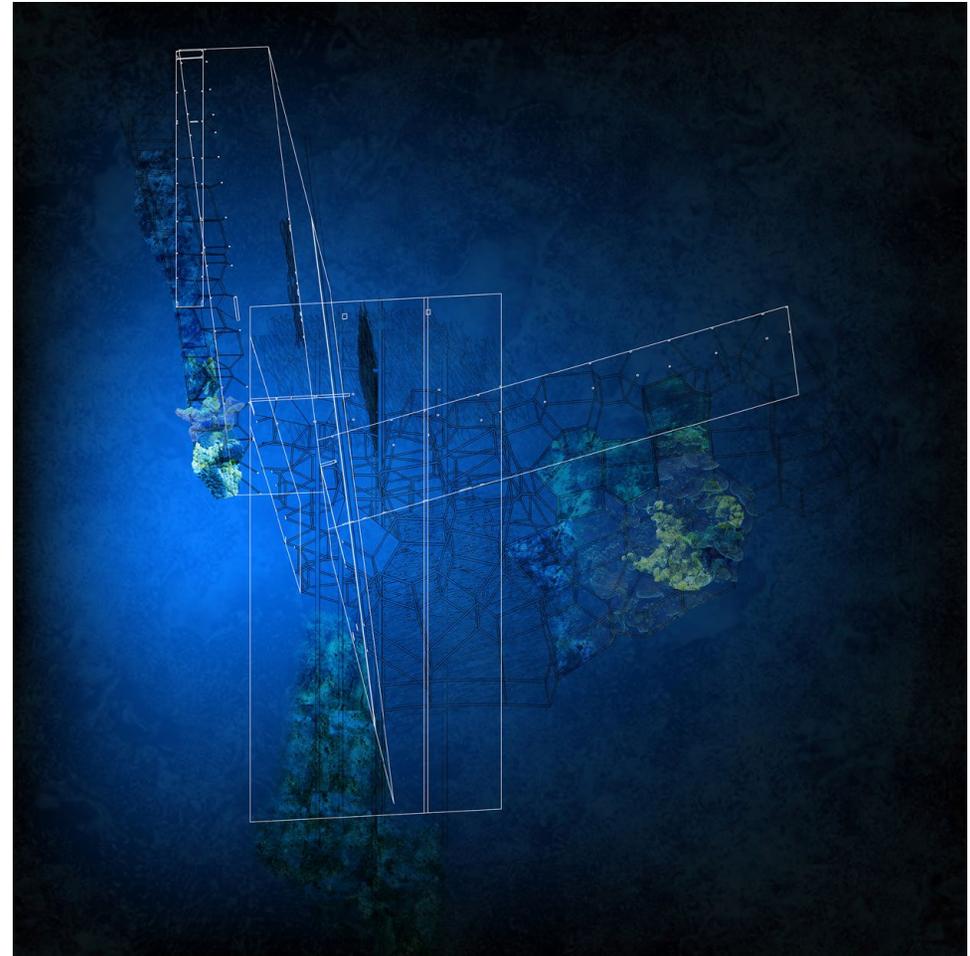
*tourist map with intersecting mining sites.



*four day tourist itinerary highlighting potential sites for landscape remediation.



*Pulau Pasir - passive coral scaffold intervention. Coral POV.



*Pulau Kelayang - hard substrate coral dock intervention. Sea turtle POV.

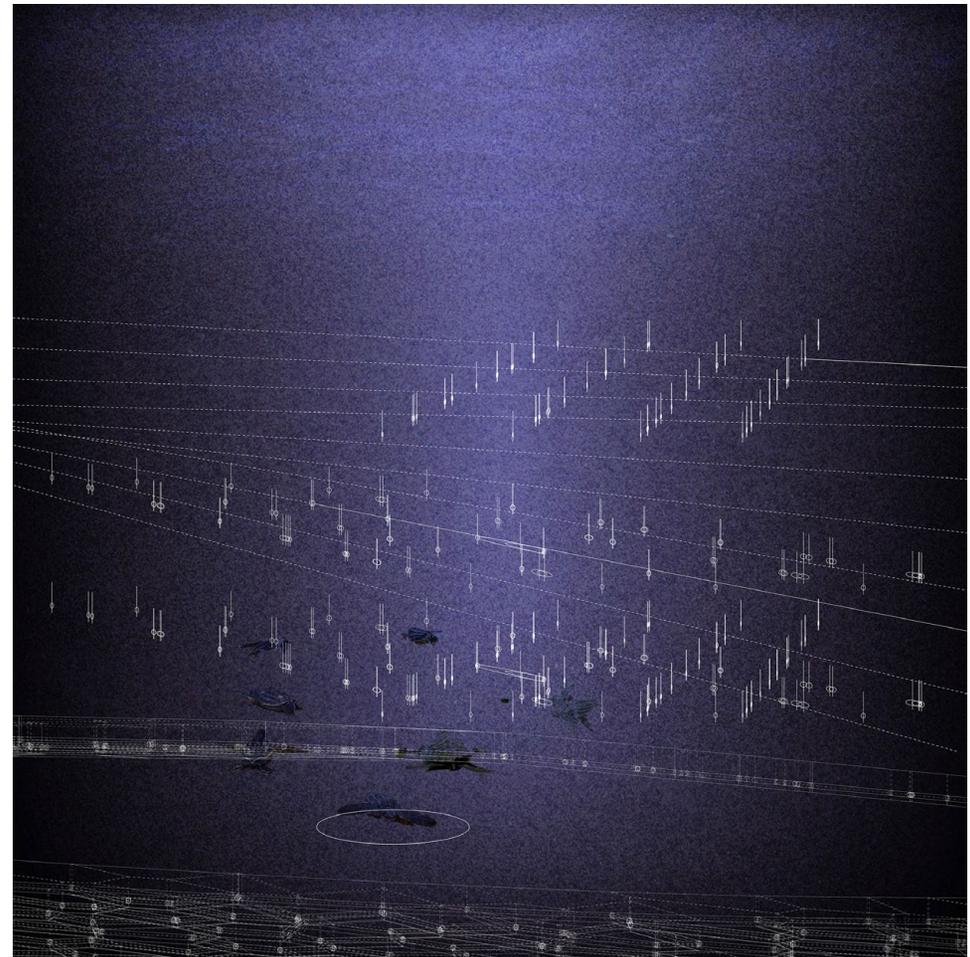
Open Pit Mining and Ocean Acidification

Carbon emissions globally are also stressing the oceans since a lot of excess carbon is being absorbed into the water and raising water temperatures and sea-level. There is a lot we do not know about the deep sea ocean. A recent scientific study estimates that humans have only explored less than one fifth of the ocean.

Meanwhile, terrestrial deposits of precious metals and ores are declining, like the tin mining sites in Indonesia, and there is global pressure from the mining industry to make this transition to deep sea mining, the next great extraction age.



*Lengkuas Island - artificial tide pool intervention. Fish POV.



*Kepayang Island - sea turtle hatchery intervention. Hatchling POV.

Non-Human Perspectives

Recently, the island has been declared a UN Global GeoPark which is bound to attract more ecotourism and acknowledges the unique granite landforms, rare tektites (tektites are small, pebble-like glassy objects of Earth material that have been melted by meteorite impact, splashed up into our atmosphere, and fallen to Earth again under gravity. They often acquire aerodynamic shapes when they partially melt on their return journey), endemic species, and long history of migrations of people and trading routes.

PROTEST INFRASTRUCTURES

CORE I, FALL 2020

In a third public private realm, the new infrastructure for movement utilizes the existing circulation of buildings that then opens up to shared lobby spaces and gradations of open space along the elevation fo the existing urban fabric, seeking to dematerialize unseen barriers.





*section view of facade prototype

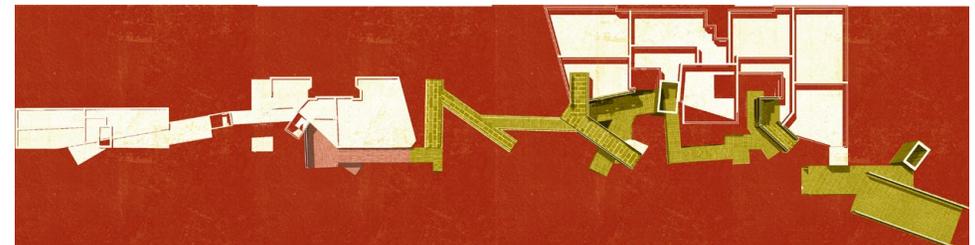


*external facade system weaving in and out



*concept plan for moving facades

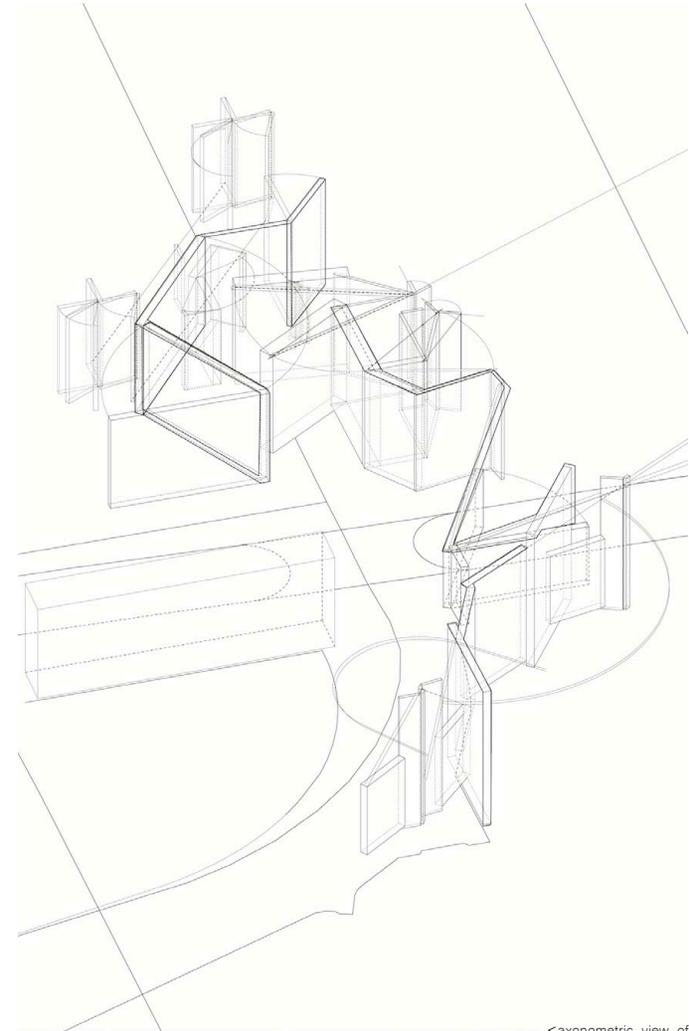
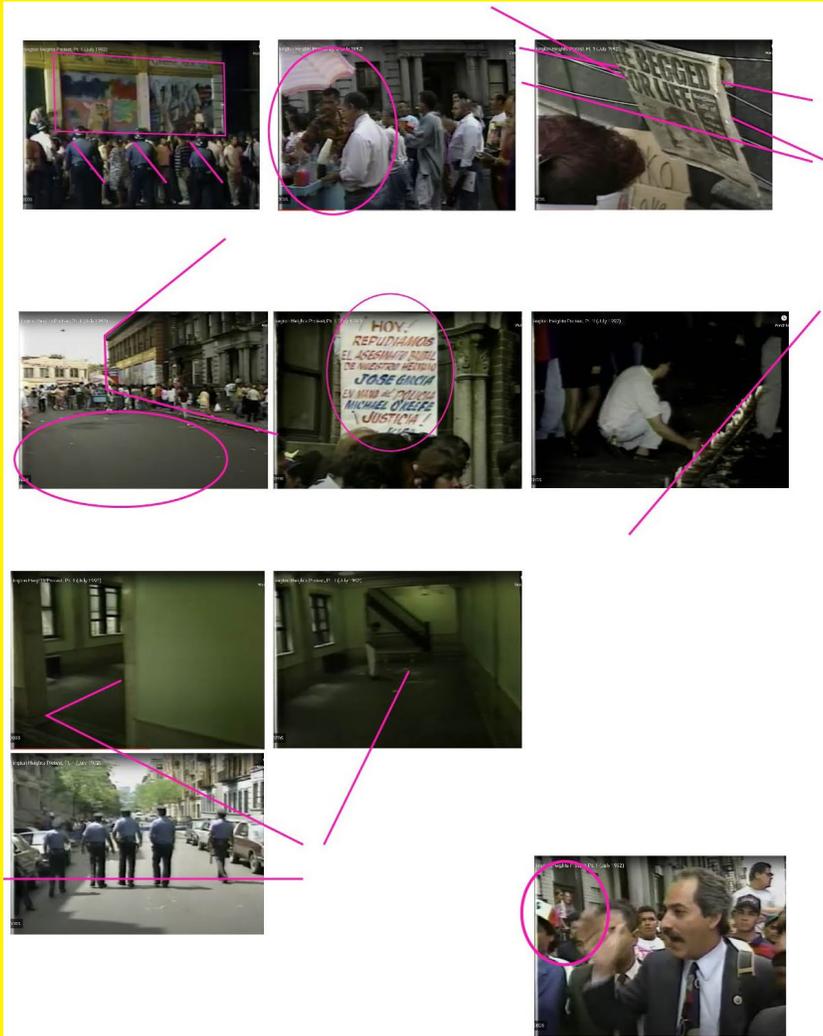
In this project, I am interested in understanding the city in times of protest and its implications on architecture within the context of Washington Heights. In my initial studies, the Washington Heights riots in 1992 and its histories surrounding the murder of Kiko Garcia and the Crack Epidemic reveals a community uprising that is representative of the city acting as an index of these events. What became clear in the visual analysis of the riots was that the imposition of the street grid in the city enables certain violences as police brutality to happen, mass movements manifest community, solidarity, and empathy, and that elements of the city are instrumentalized by the public for different purposes at different time.



*zoom in plan of prototype attached to existing building

Facade, Street Interface

To address this, the facade functions as a potential locus where the city starts to shift or come apart to reveal a different spatial imaginary that emerges during times of resistance.

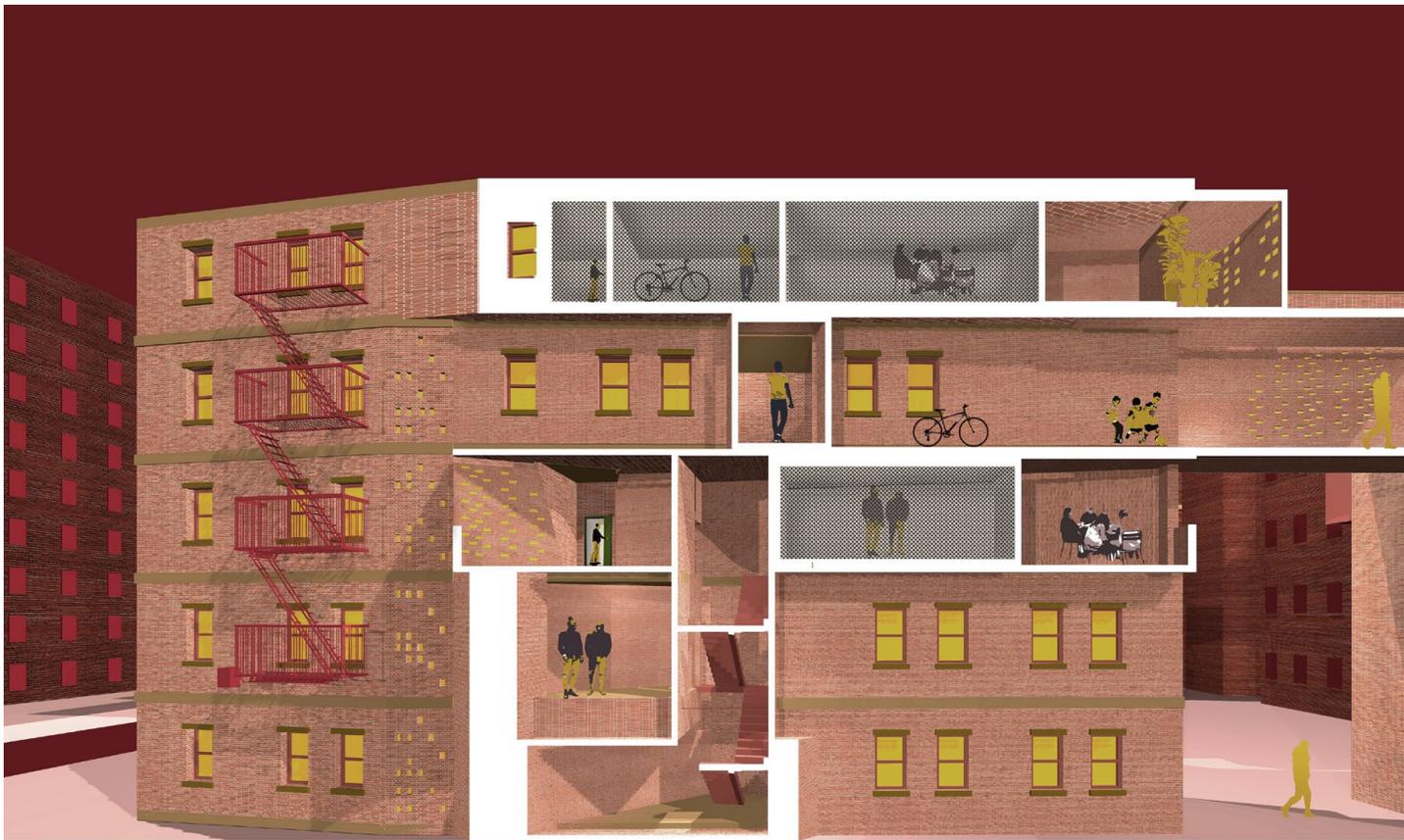


<axonometric view of Washington Heights, facade system as expanded field of depth

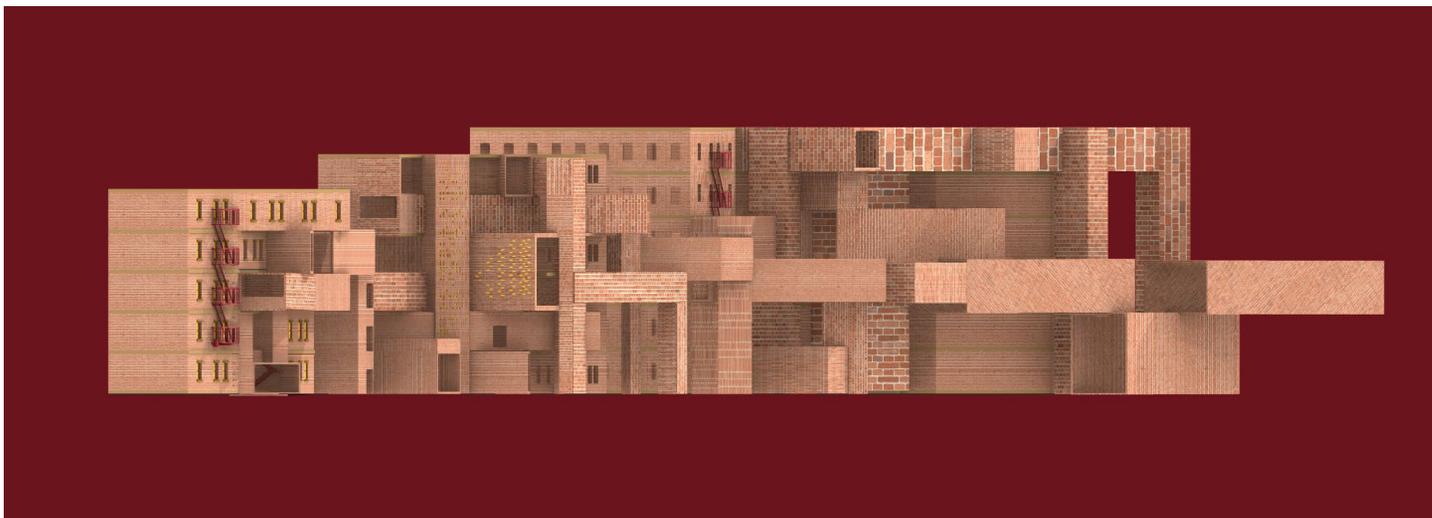
Core I, Fall 2020

Public, Private

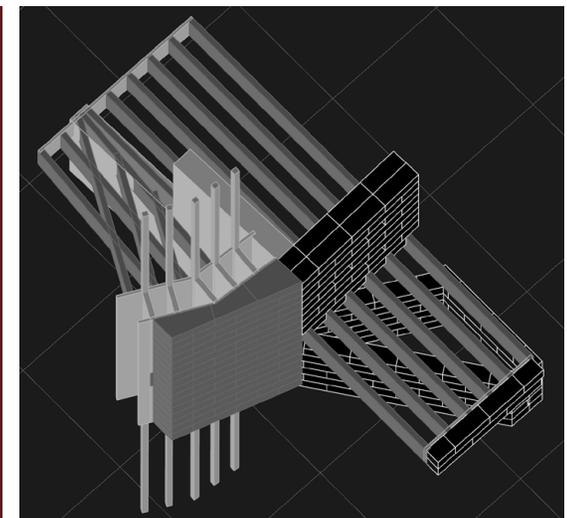
As a form of resistance, the facade then restructures a new relationship of living that is inspired by protest in spaces that are not considered public to operate in the same way. Thus, the proposed housing typology aims to create agency for the surrounding context where a network of public spaces permeates the private realm and adjacent underutilized areas to reflect the same solidarity as seen in protest.



<section view of facade system, creating a third space between public and private

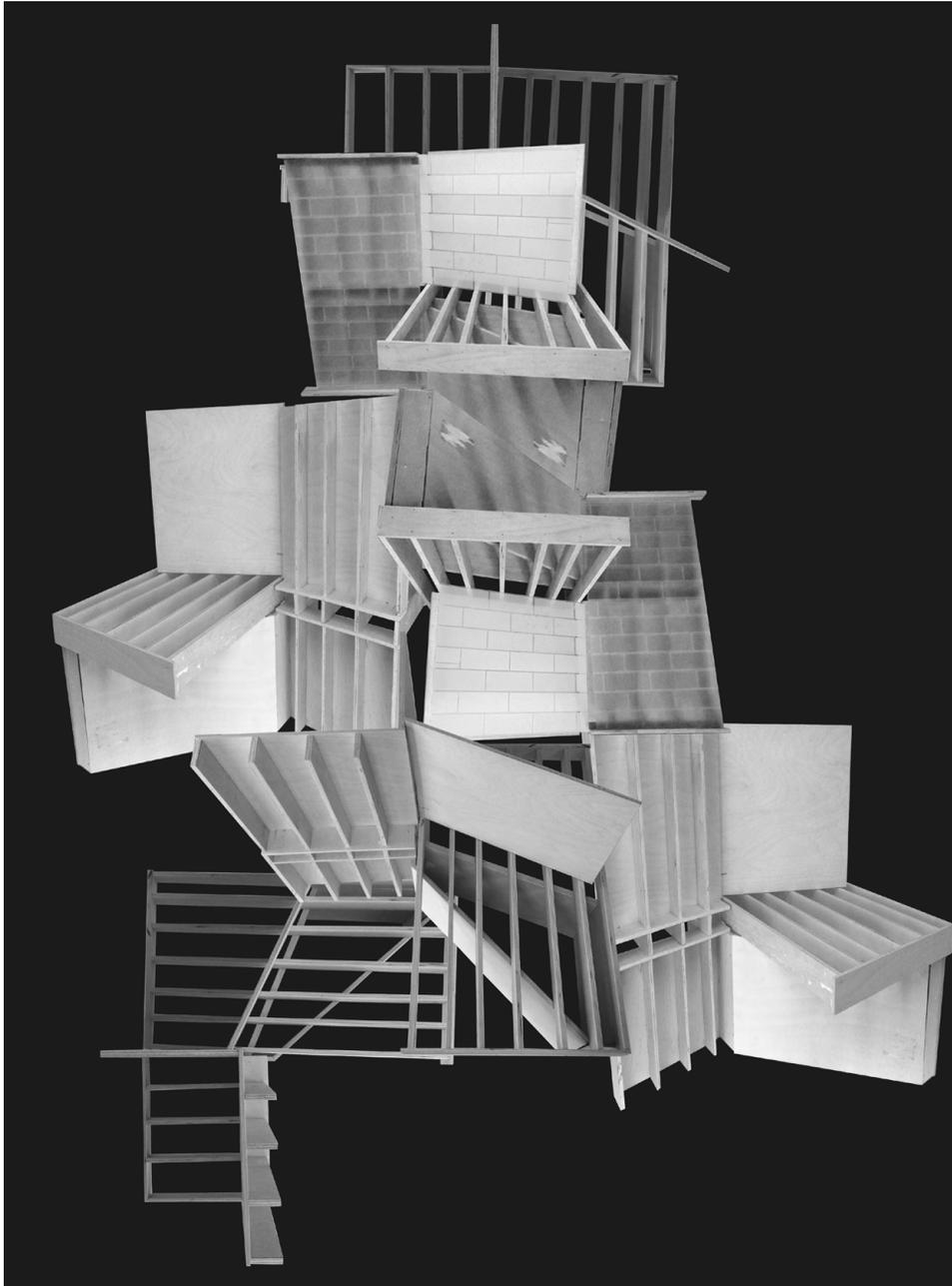


*elevation view of city block with added facade prototype in Washington Heights



*1:1 construction model of existing building connection to proposed facade system

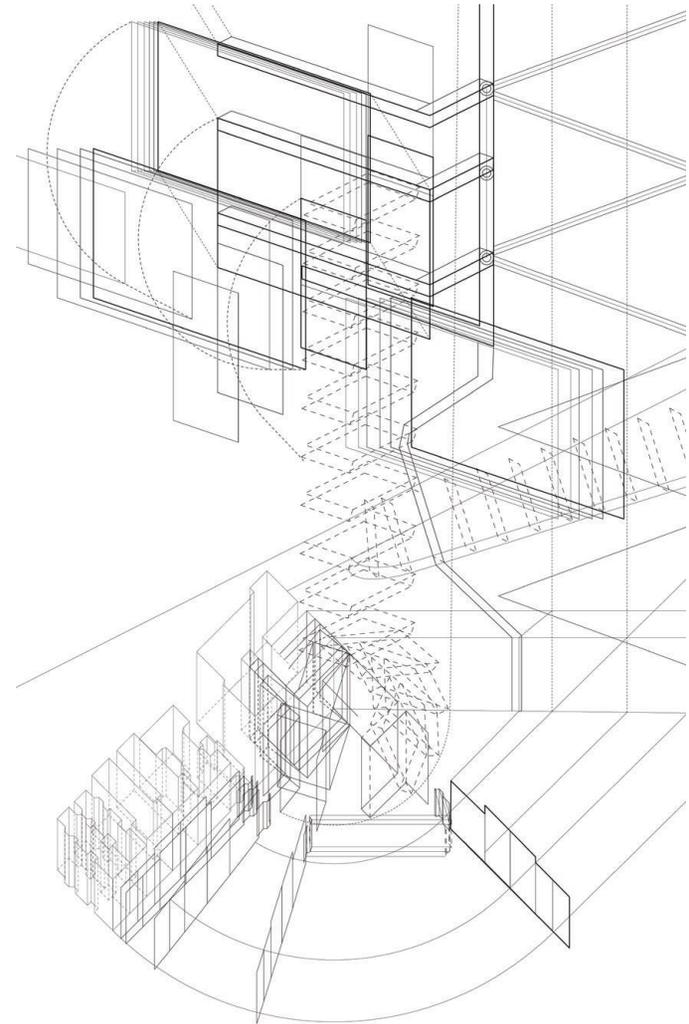
Core I, Fall 2020



*collaged view of physical 1:1 model

Protest as Site

In terms of construction, the primary material is brick although it negotiates with the typical timber wood construction of the floor joist and wall stud system in the low rise buildings in Washington Heights and its malleability to adapt to different existing conditions.



<section view of Washington Heights, facade system as expanded field of depth

heterotopia:
STEINWAY x HARLEM

POWERTOOLS, SPRING 2022

“From the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there. Starting from this gaze that is, as it were, directed toward me, from the ground of this virtual space that is on the other side of the glass, I come back toward myself; I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am.”

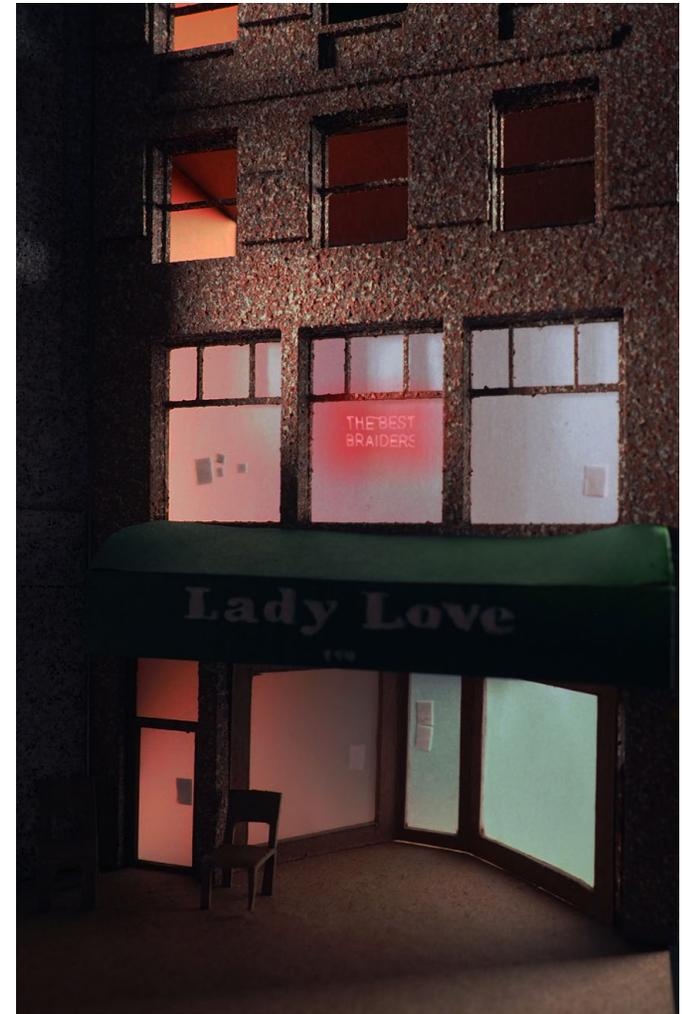
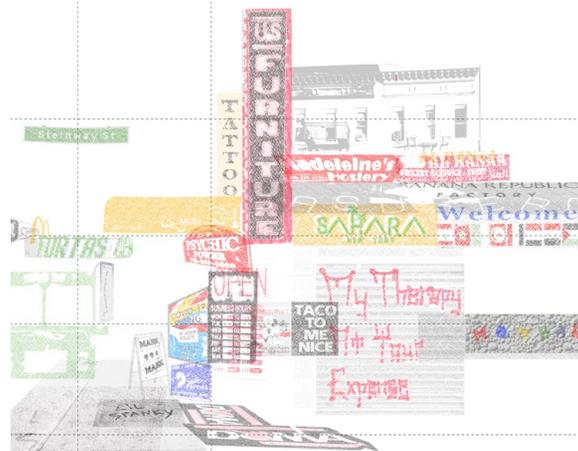
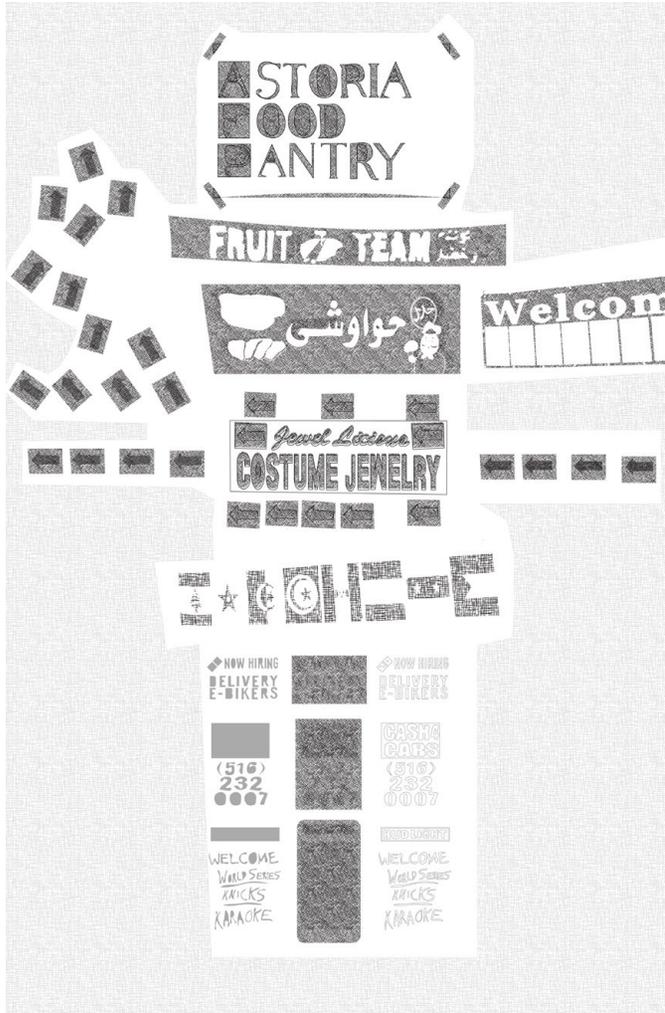
- Michel Foucault

What?



heterotopia: STEINWAY x HARLEM

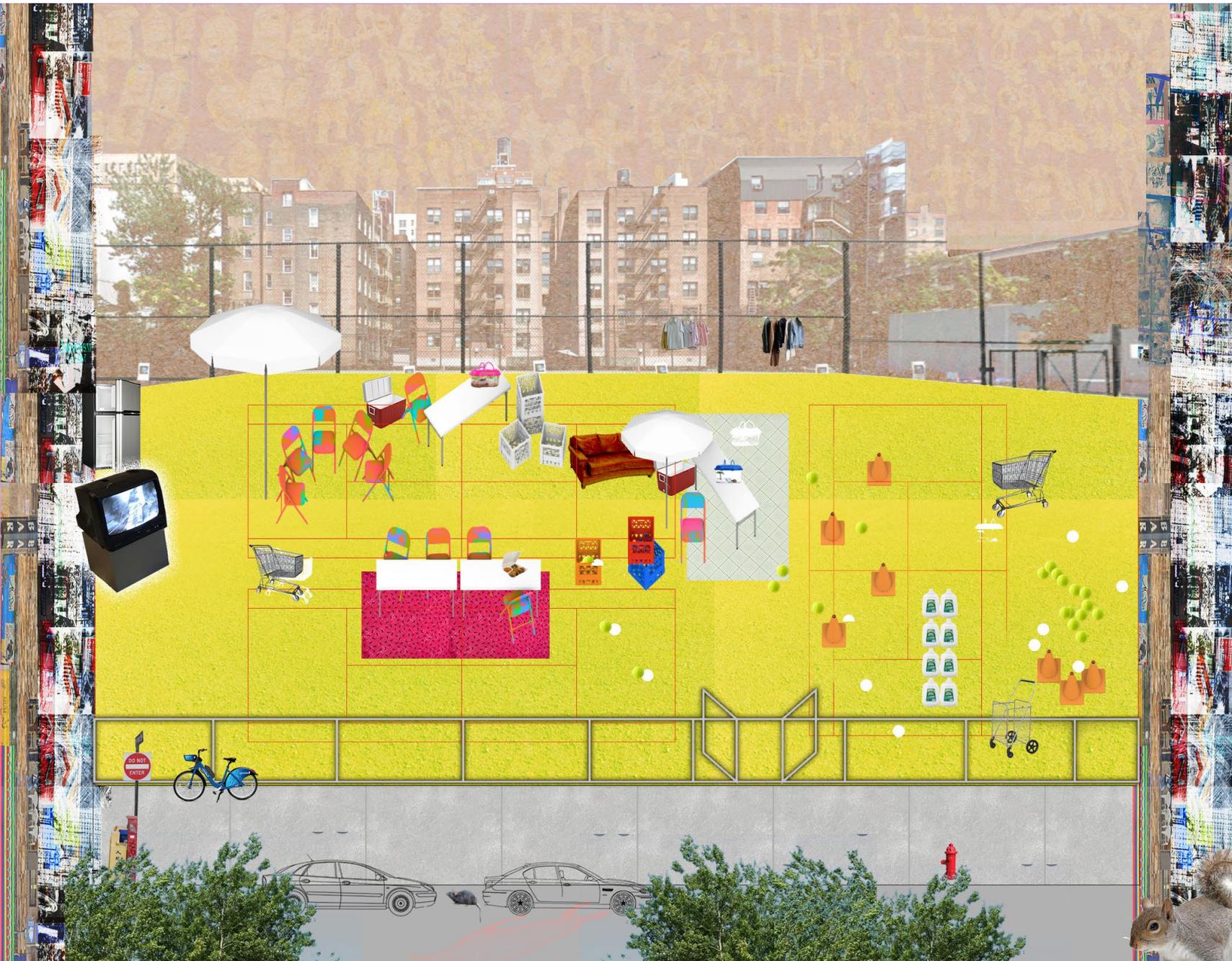
Studio Information
Powertools
Critic: Jelisa Blumberg, Lexi Tsien
Collaborator: Charlie Liu, Jacqueline Pothier
Year: SPRING 2022



According to Michel Foucault, there are six principles that describe a heterotopia, which start with either deviant or crisis modes, and can have a mixture of these properties so that there are multiple heterotopias and multiple transformations of how we experience space. There is no one definition of heterotopia but they share qualities that emerge from a specific site context, or "other" spaces that oppose or challenge the more rigid or unchanging spaces that we encounter.

In this visual elective course, we studied different spaces of heterotopia in New York, specifically Steinway Street in Queens and 125th Street in Harlem, drawing and modeling the different ways that space is appropriated and marked within the public sphere.

*exterior view of the immaterial public space created by lighting, neon signage, and levels of opacity around Lady Love
<Lady Love collaged view of domesticated public space
<<signage analysis of local stores at Steinway St.



The Projective City, A Speculation
This scene imagines a heterotopia taking place in a public tennis court on West 84th Street and Columbus Ave. Temporarily, the site is used as a field of play in addition to its intended use, as a collection of objects and interactions that are other than usually vacant state.

NEW GROUNDS FOR LEISURE

CORE III, FALL 2021

"Yet this reconsideration of myself, this thematization, was not my idea. I wanted quite simply to be a man among men. I would have liked to enter our world young and sleek, a world we could build together."

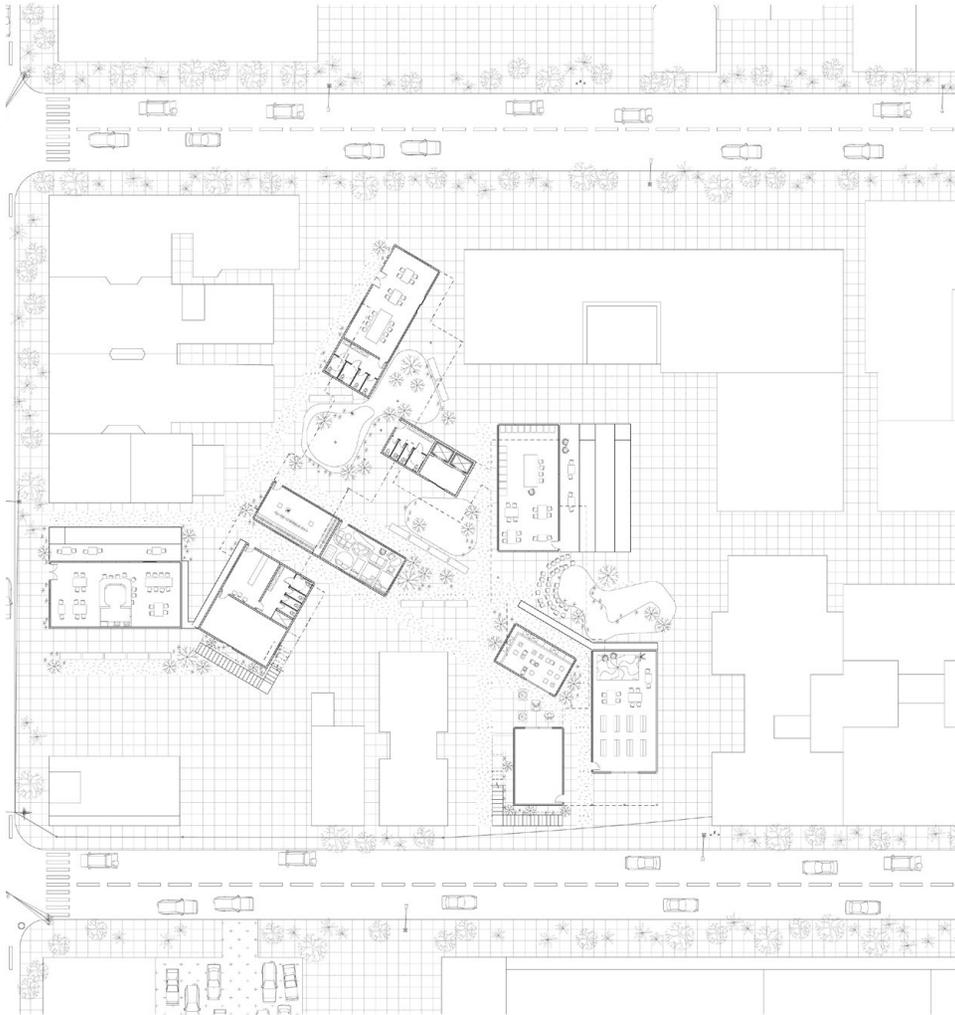
- Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

A quote I am grateful for encountering that was projected in Avery 114 in a lecture titled "Architecture in Triple Person" that I went to before the Kinne trip to Berlin.



NEW GROUNDS FOR LEISURE

Studio Information
Core III Studio
Critic: Alicia Ajayi
Collaborator: Cecile Kim
Year: FALL 2021

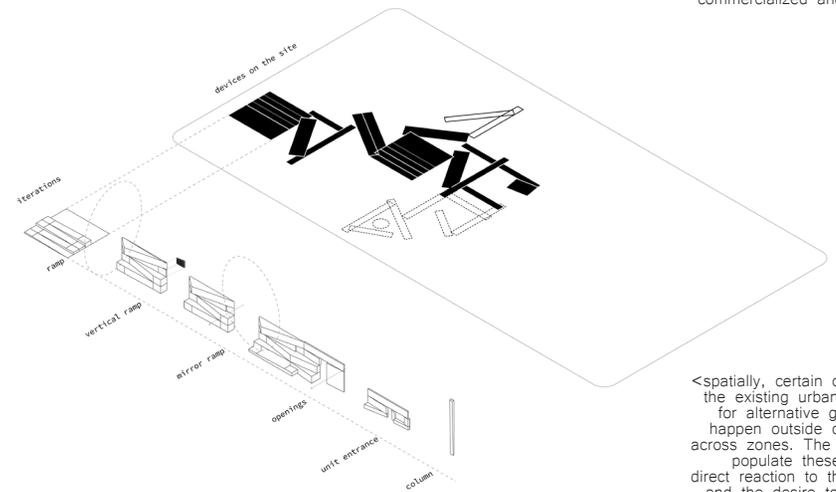


ground floor plan of New Grounds that opens the interior of the block to the street

Centering leisure as an activity that can be more accessible to housing proposes a public programming that intersects more directly with residential life in the city. New Grounds for Leisure takes cue from existing urban forms and devices on the site in Melrose, the Bronx that facilitate group gatherings and leisure activities that aren't afforded in a formal way by current city planning in the neighborhood. The Bronx community has reappropriated urban forms for leisurely gatherings and activities that bring a sense of togetherness on the street and public spaces that are typically or not intentionally designed to be occupied for leisure. Housing is typically zoned as its own category with little connection to lively activities like commercial streets or public places unless it intersects with commercial zones.



zoning analysis where NYCHA intersects with commercialized and residential zones



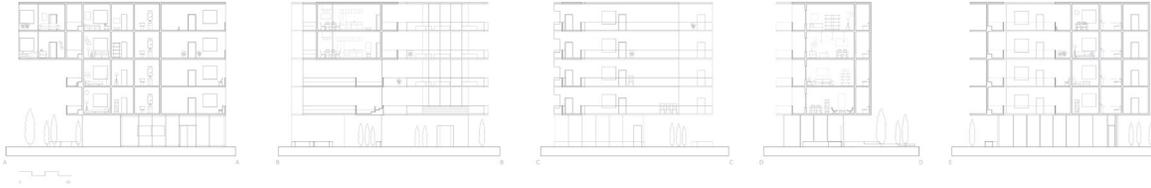
<spatially, certain conditions in the existing urban form allow for alternative gatherings to happen outside of the home across zones. The way people populate these sites is in direct reaction to the structure, and the desire to experience leisure that isn't surveilled or commodified

Siting Leisure

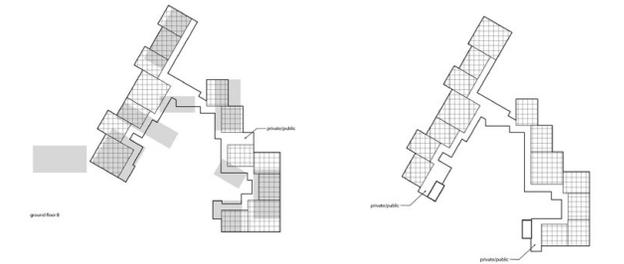
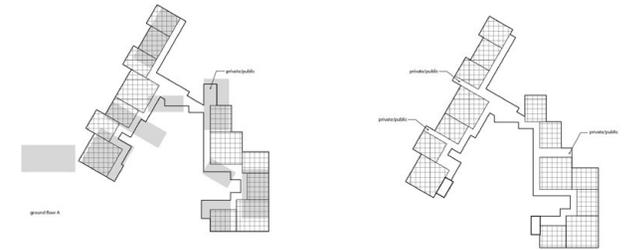
The project proposal is a direct reaction to these conditions and proposes an extended site of leisure that bleeds into the city block with public programming that is accessible to the immediate context and residents of the housing above. The current rigid structure of work and school force time for leisure in a prescribed way. Time for leisure is often allocated after work or school.

The proposal aims to weave leisure in to the quotidian parts of the day in multigenerational housing with an emphasis on leisure spaces that allow for acts of rest for populations in affordable housing development including seniors, families, and kids for rest outside of the home, work or school. This scheme allows for a break in the typical routine activities in residents zoned in mostly residential areas.

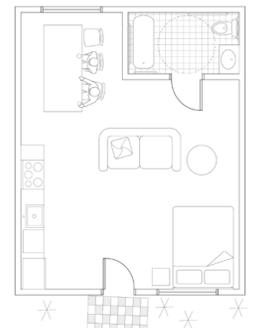
[...] section views, the porosity of the ground floor volumes are oriented by a series of paths that cut across the site, and at certain moments they face each other for continuity in program.



*imagined circulation path for four different types of users. As the ground floor is fully public, the lines in purple and orange show non-residents accessing the site, green and blue showing the different residents and unit types. The users enter from different access points and cross paths throughout the day, creating different interactions of people that typically wouldn't be encountered.

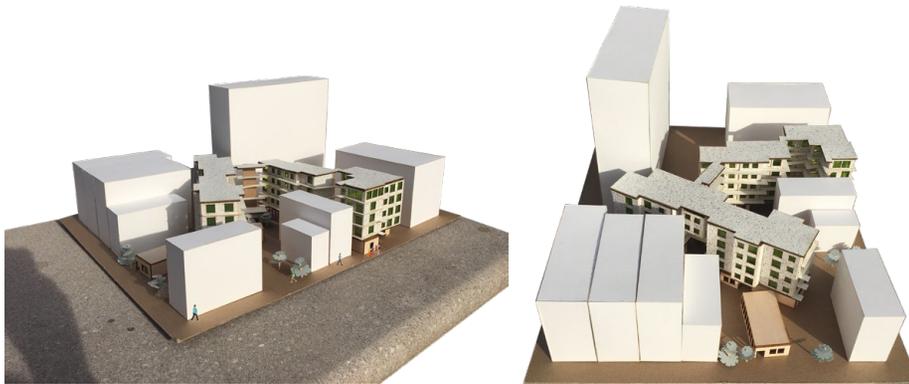
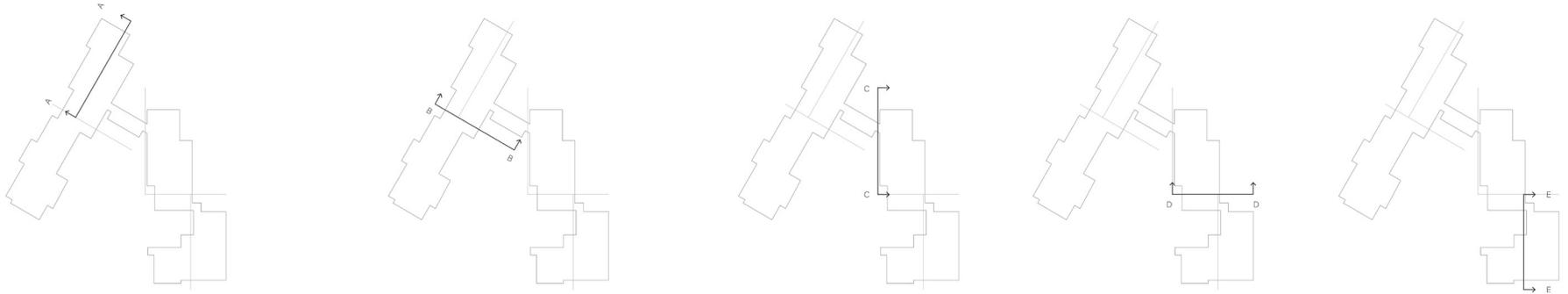
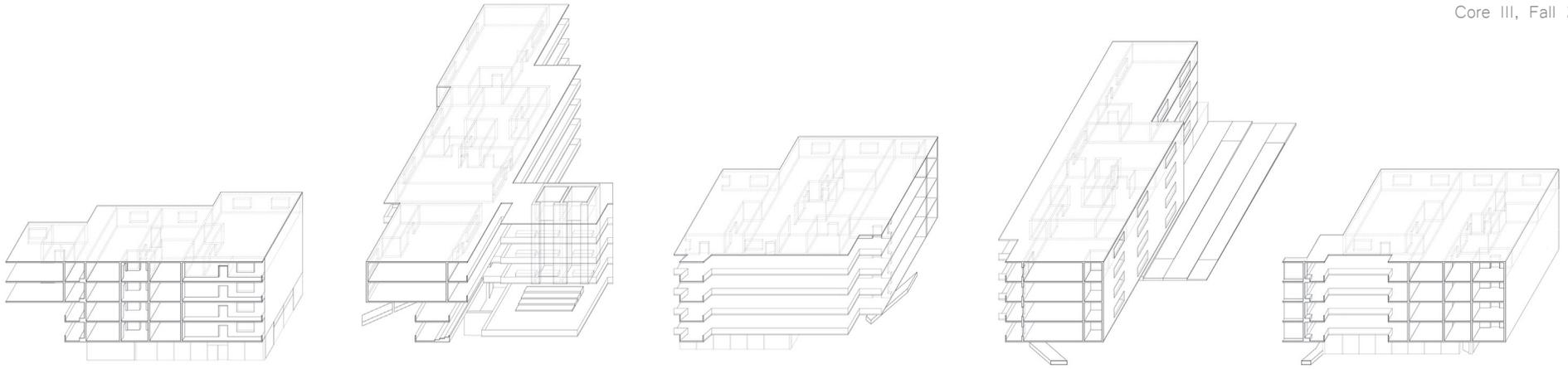


*massing schemes with leisure spaces in the liminal circulation space



*typical studio and 2 bedroom unit floor plan

[.] a series of section cuts through the site fragments the building into a sequence of experiences and the varied conditions a person encounters while walking on a path.



*final model views. the building's minimal profile infiltrates the block and can only be seen at an oblique perspective by casual pedestrians.

Leisure in Section

The leisure activities extend vertically in the space through a series of cuts in the floor plates to allow for a gradient of activities that are most public to most private. Each resident accesses their unit by a central core in the middle of the site, and a shared open air corridor becomes the main circulation space where a meandering walkway connects each unit, and functions as an extension of the unit. In this space people can gather and loiter.

