



SUBALTERN STORIES

Niriksha Vasudeva Shetty

Subaltern stories is a series of revelations constructed within realities that take place in 'the flesh of the world'.

In my year at GSAPP, I found myself constantly gravitating to the stories of the ostracised. Researching the the binary opposition between subject and object, self and other, Occident and Orient, center and marginal and the majority and minority. Perhaps, to understand my own place in the world as I unravelled the multiplicities of my own being.

My work at GSAPP has allowed me to explore an Architecture with existential meaning and liberating force. An architecture experienced metaphysically, transcending the concrete physical world. Space with an immediate impact, internalized in those who encounter it, striving to be understood. An architecture that approaches to decenter settler perspectives, one with objectives that may be incommensurable with imperialism. And this is approached on three scales- historical, environmental and object.

Colonial is a fundamental part of contemporary life, manifesting in bias, prejudice, gentrification, capitalism, etc, and deeply entangled in the complexities of the daily. Hence, my projects are always preceded by an urgent need to decolonize, and crafted with an idea that can be intellectualized by the people experiencing it.

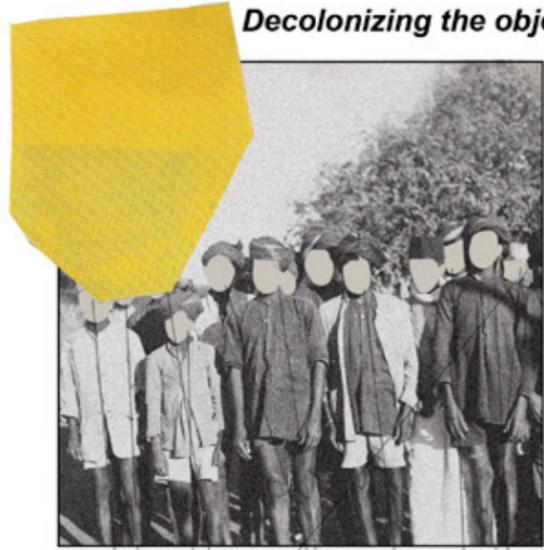
The architecture I have learn of is trans-disciplinary, experimental, deeply societal, unstable and highly performative. This facilitates a body of work with dual motives, embedded agendas and multiplicities, that play out as a performance, one that is deeply emotional and personal.

The phenomenological way of understanding "Subaltern stories" can be condensed into a rejection of the Western Collective imagination, an interest in the mundane as a reflection of nature and the society, a preference for studying embodied experiences, opposed to the ritual

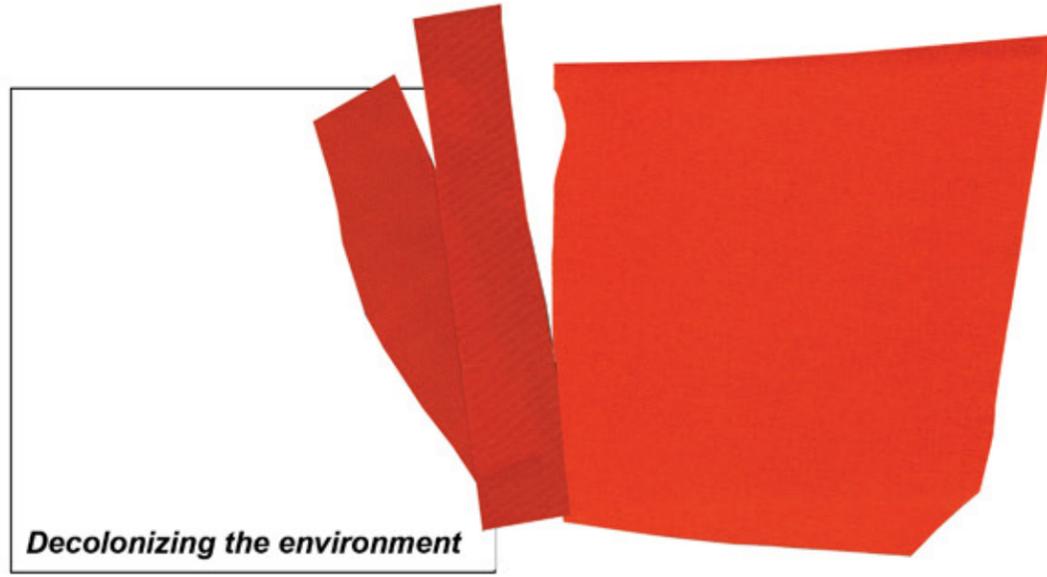


[Inspired by the Society of the spectacle, the illustration proposes an under construction society, based on the topics that are addressed within my work]

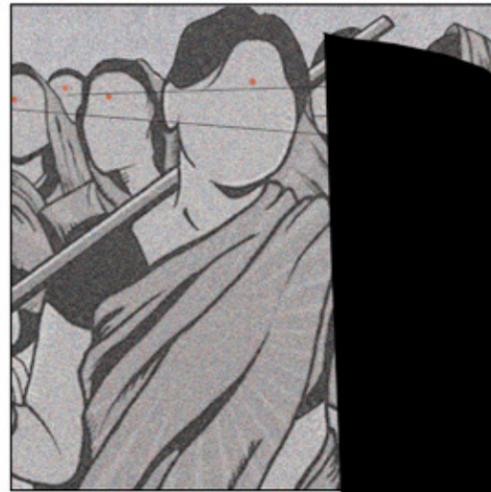
Decolonizing the object



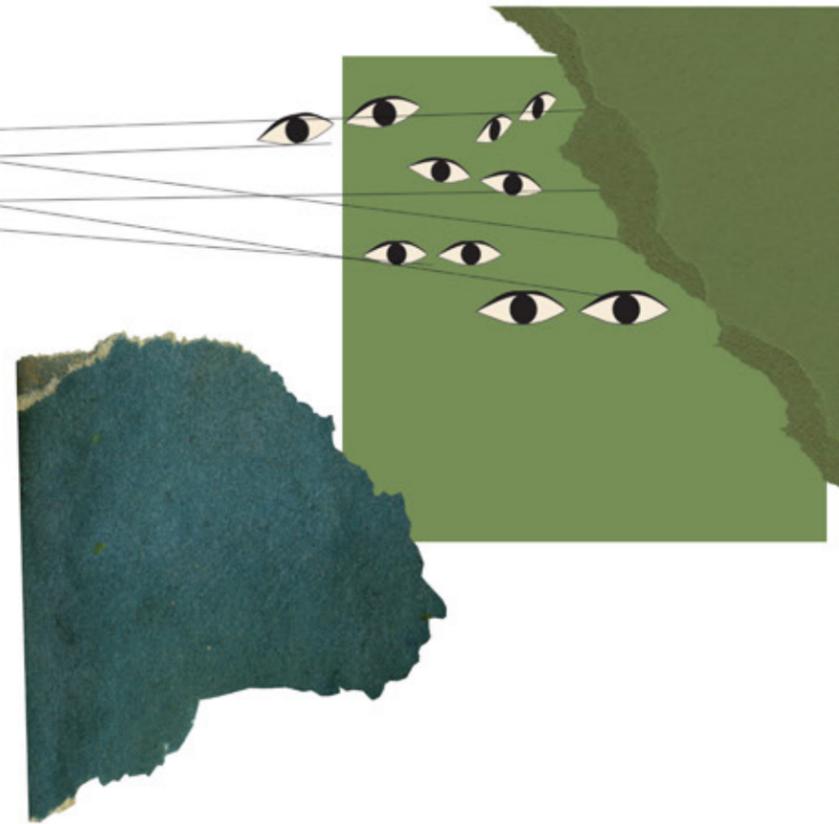
Decolonizing the environment



Decolonizing the environment



Decolonizing History



IDEOLOGICAL STATE APPARATUS

a shitty subaltern story

The story of an ideological state apparatus that yields the power of totalising and individualising by constructing concepts of normality and deviance. a story of a system of control and manipulation of desire, that stems from the benality of a toilet.



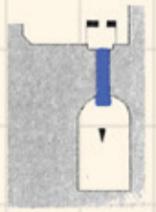
PROGRESS



COLONIAL



DIGNITY



An apparatus of disciplinary and civilising power. Toilets are technologies of power.



SURVEILLANCE

ABJECT



BOURGEOIS

ENVIRONMENTALISM



PURITY



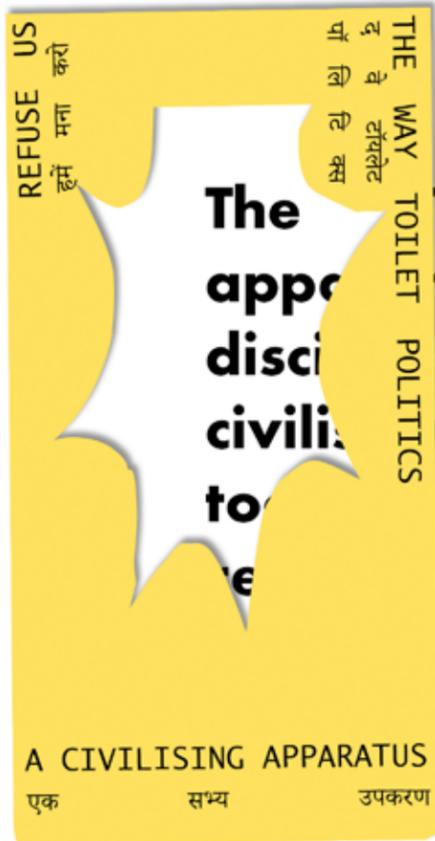
CLASS ANTAGONISM



PATRIARCHY

WESTERNISATION





The toilet is an apparatus of disciplinary and civilising power. It is a tool for social regulation, an apparatus: in the way toilet access correlates with class, gender, and race privilege; the way toilet denial pushes the body, especially multiply marginalized bodies — out.

The answer is not to build more toilets, but to rethink commons and the state beyond the welfare state.

This project sought to accept the toilet as a way to grapple with the material experience of marginalized bodies: to name and interrogate the links between bodily elimination and those bodies targeted for elimination. Exploring the deeply entrenched realities and history of the toilet as an apparatus of disciplinary and civilising power in India. I designate it as a tool for social regulation, as an institution: considering the way in which toilet access correlates with class, gender, and race privilege; the way toilet denial pushes the body, especially multiply marginalized bodies—out of public space.

The issue with sanitation in India is the lack of understanding of the micropolitics through which infrastructures are differently made, unmade and experienced. A pertinent knowledge, because it is in this making and unmaking that much of urban life is increasingly lived and politicized. Particularly focusing on Mumbai and legislation of the Cleanliness and Sanitation Byelaws which introduced punitive measures against cooking, bathing, spitting, urinating and defecating in public spaces. While the byelaws—which regulate a variety of other activities like littering, waste segregation, etc—are aimed at disciplining all urban residents and elevating their civic consciousness, many of the punitive measures are based on “bourgeois environmentalism”. This casts upper-class concerns around aesthetics, leisure and health, which usually clash with the rights of the poor, under broader, seemingly class-neutral discourses of the environmental quality of life. This ideology hails or interpellates concrete individual as concrete subjects, while ostracising the larger chunk.

Subjects

Technology of power

Hence, I explore the politics of open defecation by focusing on everyday intersections of the body and infrastructure in the metabolic city, which produces profoundly unequal opportunities for fulfilling bodily needs. Specifically, I examine how open defecation emerges in Mumbai’s informal settlements through everyday embodied experiences, practices and perceptions forged in relation to the materialities of informality and infrastructure. I do so by tracing the micropolitics of provision, access, territoriality and control of sanitation infrastructures; everyday routines and rhythms, both of people and infrastructures; and experiences of disgust and perceptions of dignity.





[Contemporary sanitation map of India]

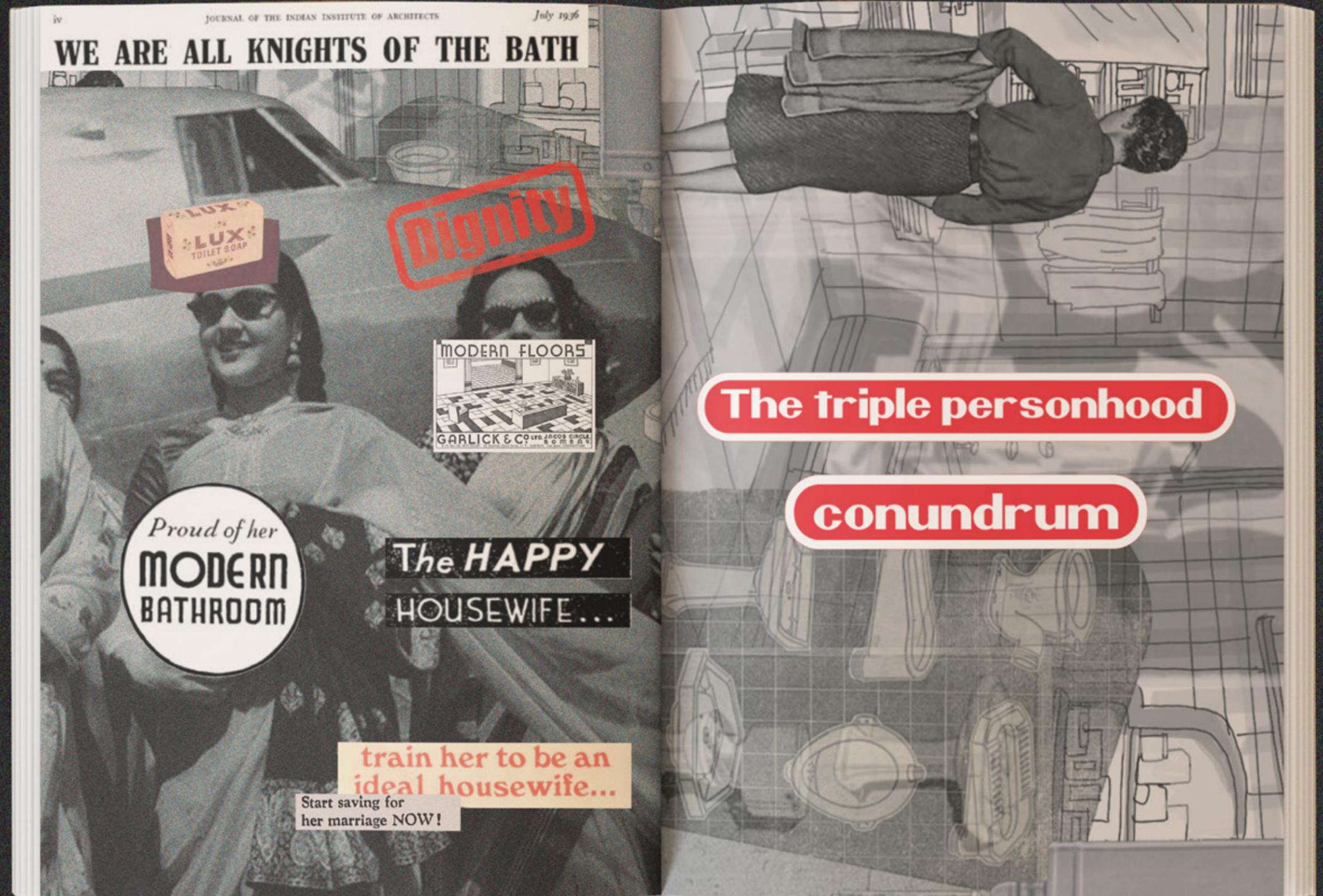
Orientalist binaries separating clean and sanitary Europeans from unclean colonial others usually led to colonial interventions in sanitation that were imposed from above through demolition, policing, coercion and punishment. Spacious residential quarters with modern infrastructure networks were developed for Europeans and their Indian elite and upper-middle-class collaborators. However, “native” inner cities and poorer areas remained devoid of sanitary improvements.

These othering discourses in India have a powerful echo in the contemporary practices, - which closes off alternate possibilities of understanding people’s sanitation practices as well as sustaining and creating new fragmentations and polarizations in the urban landscape

I explore the multiplicity of relationships between the body and infrastructure, that through this mapping of the contemporary sanitation history of India. Focusing on Mumbai in particular, I studied the initiatives and programs—issues of access, routine, perception and experience—in short, the lived worlds of urban infrastructure. Drawing a road map from the imperial regime to the present day context- a pattern of perpetuation comes to the fore. A perpetuation of laws, systems, styles of governance and control of subjects- painting the subaltern landscape of India today.

Indian democracy and its foundations of civility are closely associated with caste and imageries of 'purity' and 'pollution'. While the conception of toilets is based on modernist desires and civic consciousness, the cultural order plays a pertinent role.

Caste stratification and social hierarchies are deeply embedded in the sanitation story and continue to engender the crisis. To understand the true depths of the disparity, I collaborated with Evita Das- A Urban researcher, writer, and a Dalit woman, leading to the manifestation of my book "The story of Abjects".



iv JOURNAL OF THE INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS July 1936
WE ARE ALL KNIGHTS OF THE BATH

LUX
TOILET SOAP

Dignity

MODERN FLOORS
GARLICK & CO LTD

Proud of her
MODERN BATHROOM

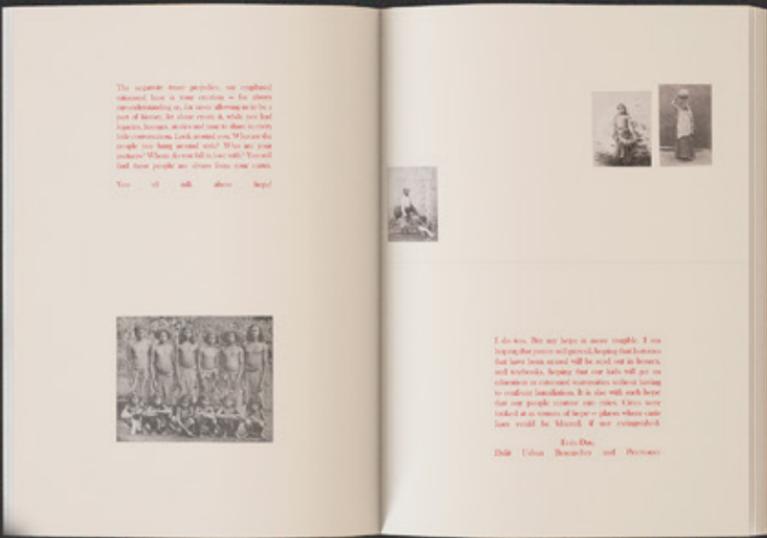
The HAPPY HOUSEWIFE...

train her to be an ideal housewife...

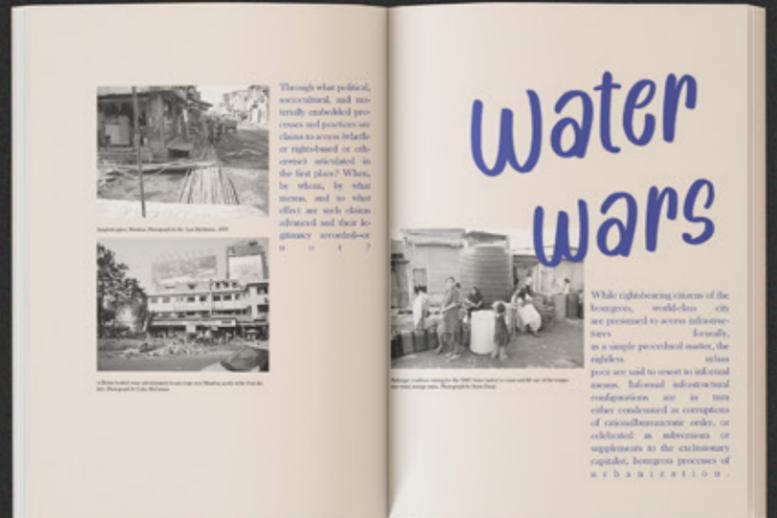
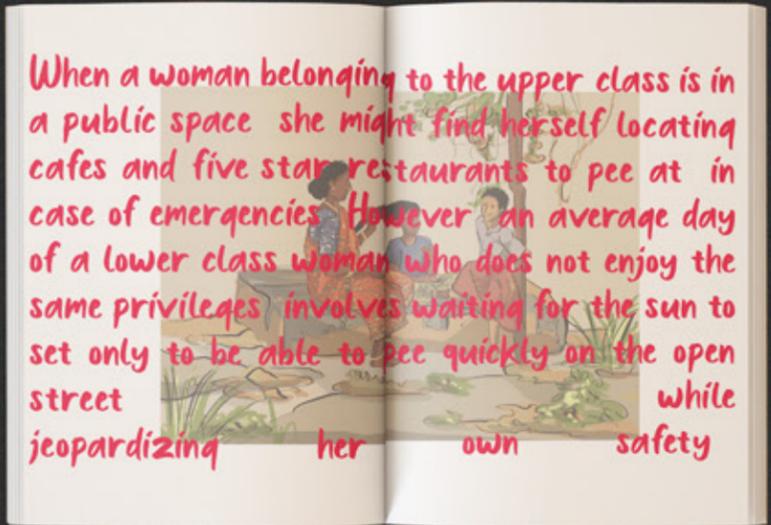
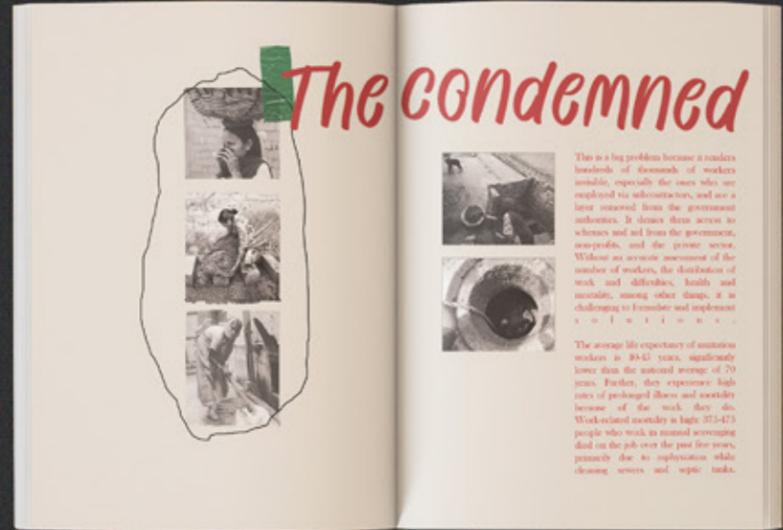
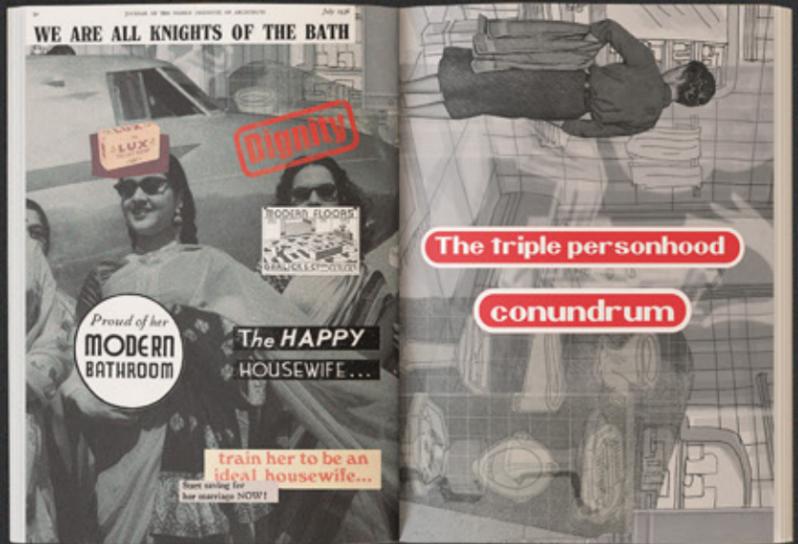
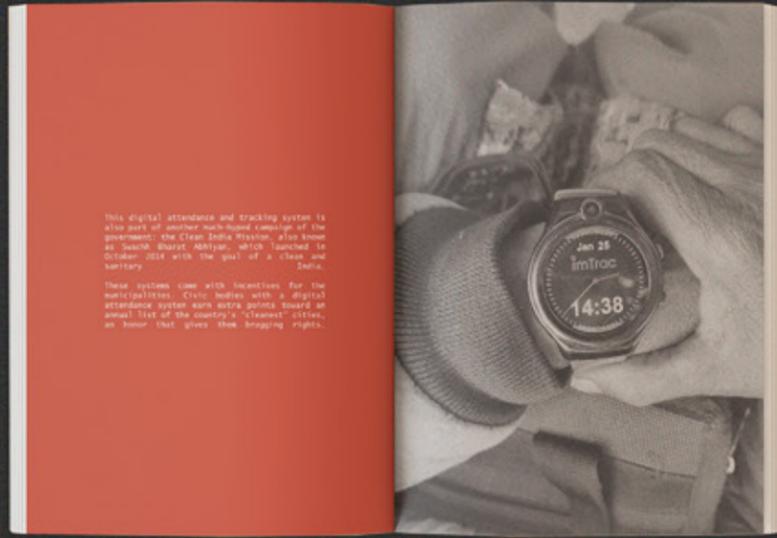
Start saving for her marriage NOW!

The triple personhood

conundrum



[Indian democracy and its foundations of civility are closely associated with caste and imageries of 'purity' and 'pollution'. While the conception of toilets is based on modernist desires and civic consciousness, the cultural order plays a pertinent role.]

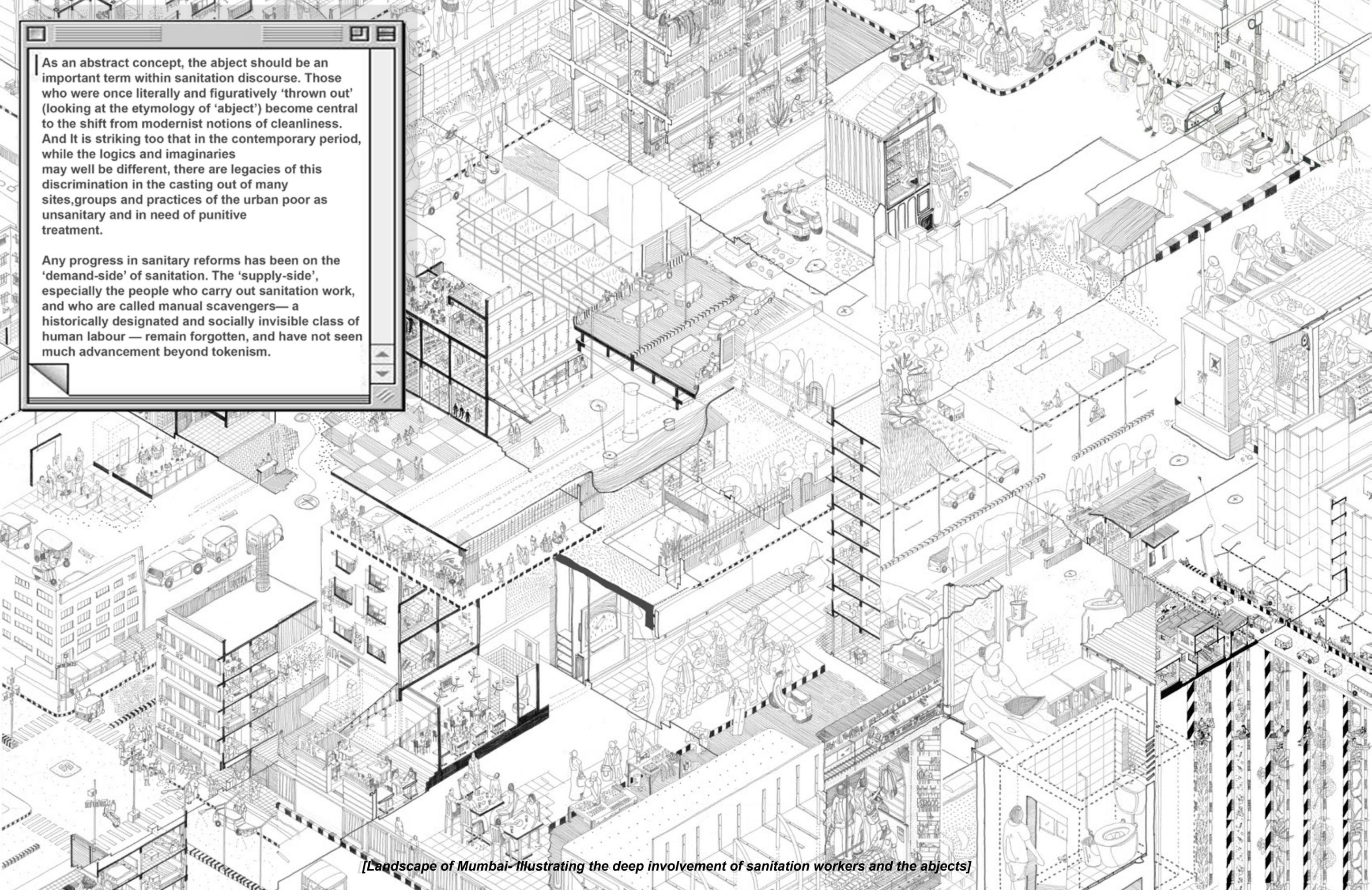


[Caste stratification and social hierarchies are deeply embedded in the sanitation story and continue to engender the crisis. To understand the true depths of the disparity, I collaborated with Evita Das- A Urban researcher, writer, and a Dalit woman, leading to the manifestation of my book "The story of Abjects".]

As an abstract concept, the abject should be an important term within sanitation discourse. Those who were once literally and figuratively 'thrown out' (looking at the etymology of 'abject') become central to the shift from modernist notions of cleanliness. And it is striking too that in the contemporary period, while the logics and imaginaries may well be different, there are legacies of this discrimination in the casting out of many sites, groups and practices of the urban poor as unsanitary and in need of punitive treatment.

Any progress in sanitary reforms has been on the 'demand-side' of sanitation. The 'supply-side', especially the people who carry out sanitation work, and who are called manual scavengers— a historically designated and socially invisible class of human labour — remain forgotten, and have not seen much advancement beyond tokenism.

[Landscape of Mumbai- Illustrating the deep involvement of sanitation workers and the abjects]



A "WESTERN COMMODE" PERSPECTIVE.



The right to pee.

MUMBAI, INDIA

2023

A "WESTERN COMMODE" PERSPECTIVE.



The right to privacy.

MUMBAI, INDIA

2023

A "WESTERN COMMODE" PERSPECTIVE.



The right to water.

MUMBAI, INDIA

2023

Many of the punitive measures are based on "bourgeois environmentalism". This casts upper-class concerns around aesthetics, leisure and health, which usually clash with the rights of the poor, under broader, seemingly class-neutral discourses of the environmental quality of life. This ideology hails or interpellates concrete individual as concrete subjects, while ostreising the larger chunk.

A "INDIAN TOILET" PERSPECTIVE.



The right to pee.

MUMBAI, INDIA

2023

A "INDIAN TOILET" PERSPECTIVE.



The right to privacy.

MUMBAI, INDIA

2023

A "INDIAN TOILET" PERSPECTIVE.

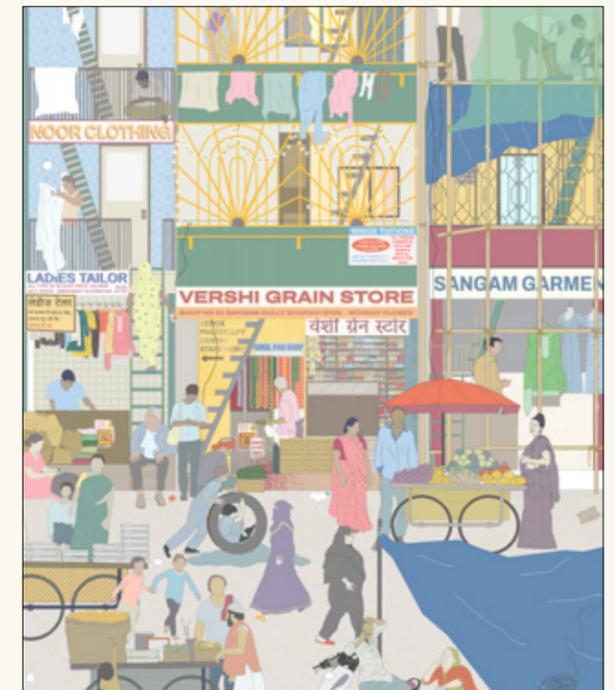


The right to water.

MUMBAI, INDIA

2023

A "INDIAN" PERSPECTIVE.



The right to life.

MUMBAI, INDIA

2023



1,531,123

1,822,17

5,993

3,536

[Illustration depicts the disparity between toilets for men and women in Mumbai- Perpetuating the patriarchal society]

निर्मल भारत अभियान
**बहूबेटियाँ दूर न जाये।
घर में ही शौचालय बनवाये।**

"Daughters and Daughters-in-law shouldn't go outside, build a toilet inside your house"

श्रीमान स्वतंत्रों के खिलाड़ी,
जाओ शौचालय छोड़ो झाड़ी।

"Dear Miss Fearless Adventurer, Use a toilet, leave the bush"

बेटी बही ब्याहने
जिस घर में शौचालय पायेगे

"Give your daughter to only homes with toilet"

THE STORY OF SUBJECTS

WILL YOU MARRY ME?

THE RIGHT TO SHIT
 - बनवाने - कराने - बनाने - बनाने
 - एक - जगह - अधिकार

CLASS
 ANTAGONISM
 PROTAGONIST

**माँ घर में घुंघट तेरा साथी,
फिर क्यों शौच खुले में जाती?**

निर्मल भारत अभियान
 जिला परिषद, अराण

"Mother, when you cover your head inside the house, how come you go in the open to defecate?"

[Sanitation campaigns that reinforce patriarchy]



This idea that toilets are important for the dignity of women and should be built to make sure that women don't face sexual harassment has also gained currency rapidly. While sanitation is required for the well being of women in India, especially to protect against sexual violence it is not the sole reason. Since it was found that more women face sexual violence on the daily than around toilets- these messages only further reinforce the patriarchal system.

The struggles for women's empowerment and improving sanitation are both harmed by using patriarchal messages to encourage construction of toilets.

[Link to my book.]



SCAN ME

Cities have become sites of new kinds of toilet modernism projects, and these fragmentations and polarizations have increasingly evolved into a formal/informal divide. Sanitation divides have become more entrenched in cities like Mumbai as the impetus for widespread sanitary reform dissipated with urban middle classes increasingly able to protect themselves from disease by monopolizing state-provided urban services and access to modern amenities.

Therefore, the solution to the sanitation problem is not to build more toilets, but to acknowledge these subaltern narratives and reconsider the role of the commons and the state in these measures.

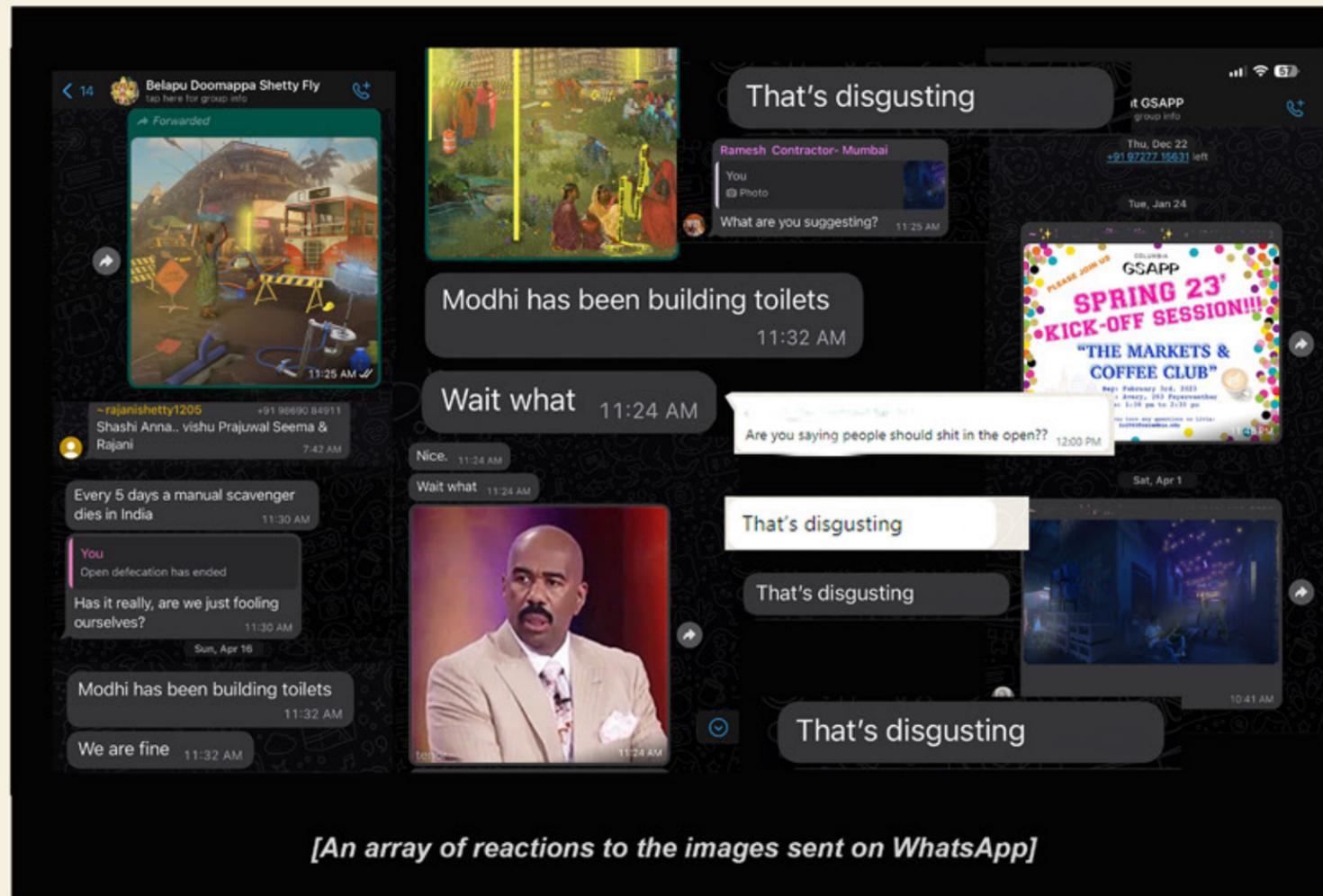
[I propose a Foucaultian heterotopia, a heterotopia that paints new landscape of open defecation. A landscape of dissent and agency for the people that have been largely left out. A Heterotopia that attacks specific notions of monolithic universals and encourages fractured, fluid and multiple perspectives.]



[Mumbai landscape imagined as a site for unapologetic open defecation- sites for dissent.]

The heterotopia of open defecation was created solely to provoke and pique public interest in order to draw attention to sanitation issues in India and the prevalence of Manual scavenging.

As an instrument of disseminating the word, WhatsApp is employed. Since WhatsApp in India is used for spreading extreme right-wing propaganda, the sharing of these images on the platform serves as “anti-propaganda” propaganda.





[A landscape of open defecation, against the background of the bourgeois.]

Theocracy

Casteism

Religious Violence

Toilet

As an institution

Social Inequality

Surveillance

Segregation

Gender Violence

Safety

Queer Violence

Toilets are institutions of power that manifest body politics. They are not neutral, utilitarian architectures, but rather highly contested spaces that influence the ways in which bodies and communities assemble and disperse. Hence, should be understood as such.



Power of the Toilet

REGROUNDING ARCHITECTURE

Abject Theory

The underpinnings of architecture are deeply rooted in the depths of racism and casteism and the construct of control dictated by them. Akin to Jefferson's Virginia, the travesties of India are illustrated by the ongoing struggles that still paint the social, political, and economic landscape. In 2016, at the origin of the fog-wrapped Himalayas in the northern state of Uttarakhand, a young construction worker was killed for having walked into a flour mill. He was Dalit, a relatively recent distinction claimed by communities that were once considered untouchable in the hierarchical caste system. Killed by a Brahmin, a caste elite, who accused him of having sullied all the flour by his mere presence. Further south, in the city of dreams-Mumbai, three men dropped dead at the crack of dawn. Men that made a living by "manual scavenging", emptying dry toilets and sewers by hand without protection. An occupation considered to be one of the most pernicious and one solely subjected to the "lower caste". It served as the starkest example of the pertinent blight of caste in the modern world and the continual subjugation by the system that still governs who most Indians marry, what we eat, and who unclogs our sewers.

Systems of human disparities remain a rudimentary impetus for the subject and social formation in the contemporary world. Race/caste, mobilized by the European colonizers in the Americas, Asia, and Africa, succeeds their time, setting a premise for how the modern

world is discovered, conquered, and known. The arrival of European power is seen in Indian society's obsession with lineal purity and demarcated living, an echo of their own understanding of racial purity. The tools of systemic oppression were memorialized in the edifices that remained in their wake, which were built on the backs and by the hands of the Dalits. However, repercussions of biases from the past extend into political, economic, and spatial conditions of power in the present and India continues to sit on a perpetuated history of exclusion and dispossession.

Like Jeffersons' trysts in slavery and its agency in the architecture of the Virginia Capitol, the Rashtrapathi Bhavan (Residence of the President of India and the Parliament) exudes the epitome of colonial sovereignty. Realized into existence by Dalit workers, the establishment sought to embargo their entry and confine them to the exterior and the trenches of parlous toil. The opulence of the architecture seeks to veil the salacious reality.

Today 'caste' is replaced by proxies such as 'communities' or 'family background'. However, it continues to create strong social sanctions around daily life, precluding the permeation of diversity. Geographic concentrations of castes are further solidified by informal strictures that dictate whom to rent or sell to. Caste is no static pyramid, it is a dynamic social organization, having now morphed and melded itself into the modern Indian urbanism. It has proved itself a resolute, nimble institution, having survived the waves of modern radicalism.

Today a Dalit woman occupies the Rashtrapathi Bhavan as the President, but it would be benighted to think of casteism or racism as belonging to the past, a retrograde realm. It is a palpable component of contemporary society that is intimately tangled with the human and the body. Sweat, semen, saliva, excreta, and blood are all instruments of ritual pollution, while the effluents of the 'inferior' remain more ignominious than those of the rest.

REPARATION ARCHITECTURE IS BEYOND EVOCATION.



Colonial and imperial practices still paint the landscapes of the city and recognizing the oppressive history means recognizing the oppressive present.

REPARATION ARCHITECTURE IS REBUILDING COGNIZANCE.



To shift the focus is to rebuild the minds and evoke critical practices.

REPARATION IS COMMUNITARIAN IRRELIGION.



The "new" Oval office.
Reimagining a democracy that is truly secular.

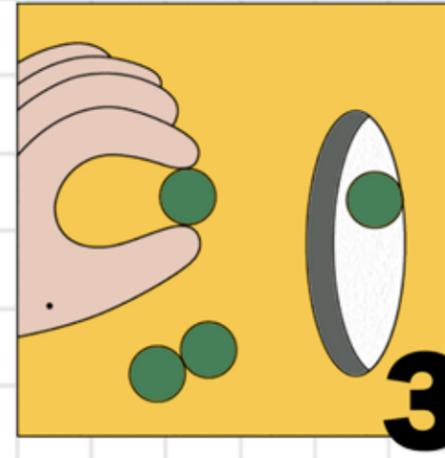
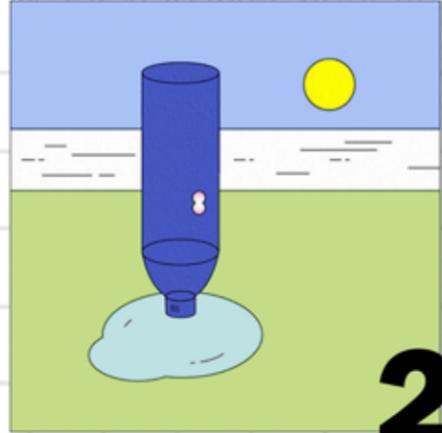
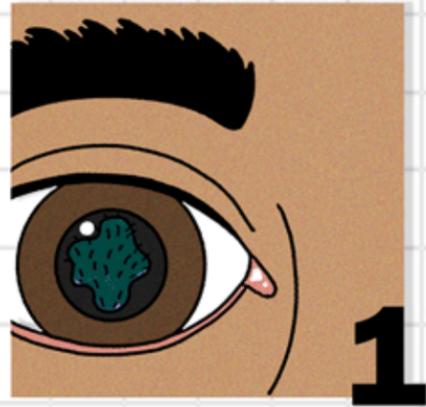
REPARATION ARCHITECTURE IS ELUDING MODERNITY.



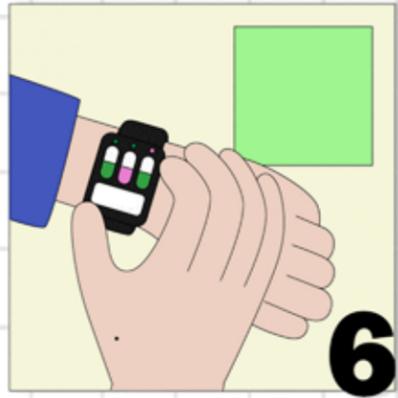
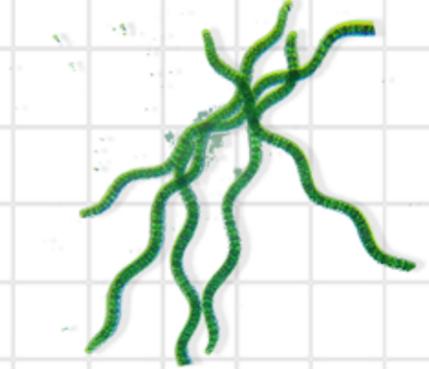
An acknowledgment of the Anthropocene

THE ALGAE BAR

"ENCROACHING" TO DECOLONIZE



The Algae bar is far from an encroachment project, instead refocusing and **shifting the colonial narrative.**



The effects of the redistribution of flora and fauna by European empires are still visible in global biodiversity today. Attempts to solve today's biodiversity crisis necessitates **grappling with colonial legacies head on.** This project attempts to reintroduce Spirulina to its former stature, before its attempted erasure.



The advent of **colonialism has erased bio-cultural diversity of Indigenous peoples in favor of Western knowledge.** Spirulina that was once used as a form of sustenance was deemed 'alien'. This project is a nuanced approach to understanding a species that was largely exiled.





[Base container]



[Base container]



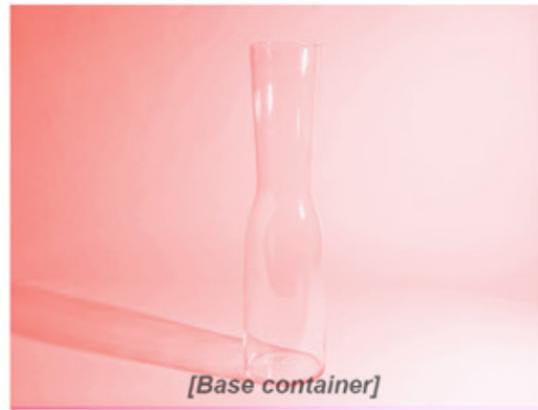
[Base container]



[Base container]



[Base container]



[Base container]



[Base container]



[Base container]



[Base container]



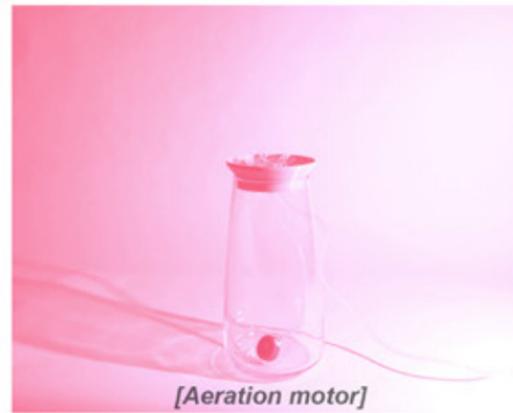
[Base container]



[Growing spirulina]



[Growing spirulina]



[Aeration motor]



[Water Base]



[Spirulina sample added]



[Day 02- growth]



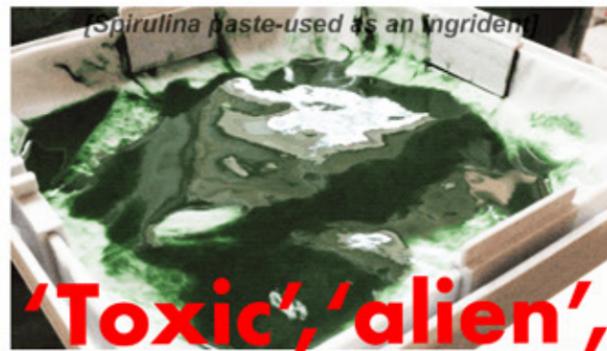
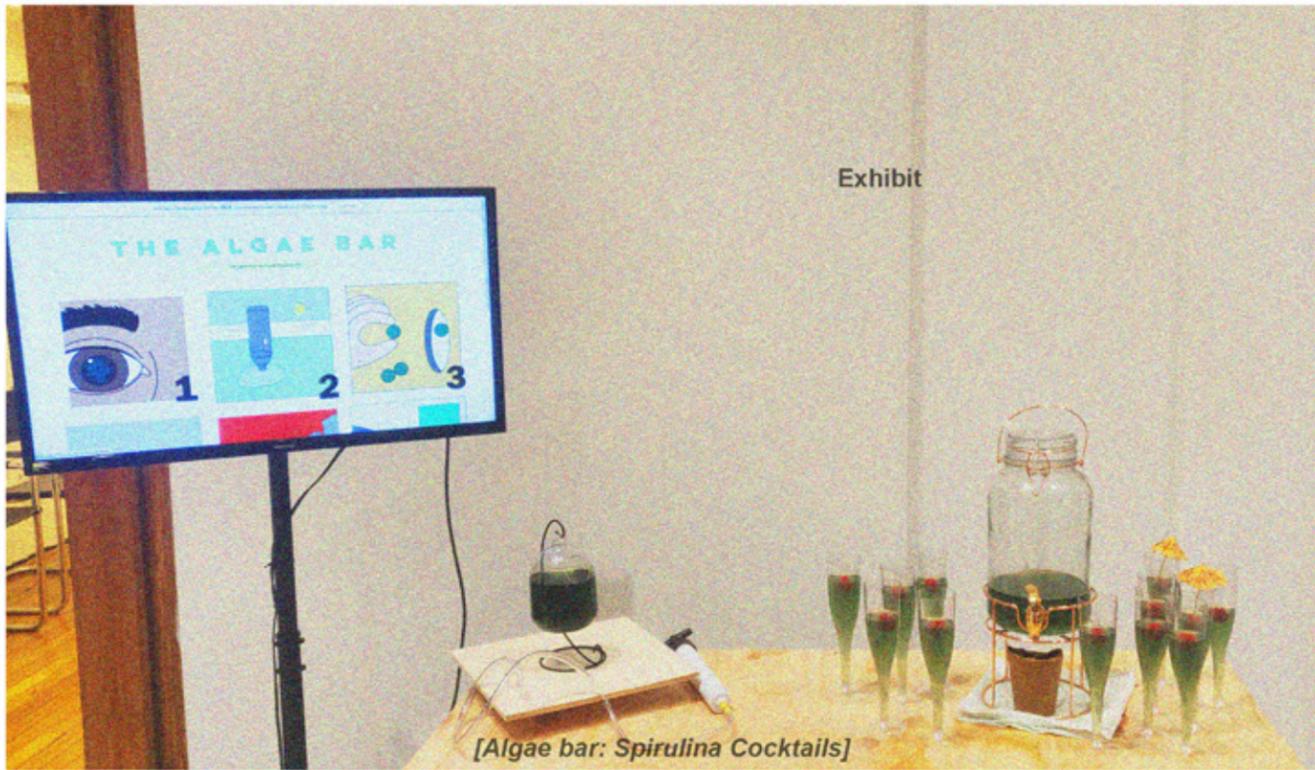
[Day 03- growth]



[Day 05- growth]

[The potential of Spirulina is unknown and untapped. The answer to deep-seated entanglements of the anthropocentric era could potentially lie with the slimy organisms deemed 'invasive'. It was pertinent to me to reestablish the potential of Spirulina that was lost during the imperial regime. Dismantling the systemic ritual of erasure means, a tangible manifestation of its prowess. The Algae bar lead me to an interesting trajectory that paves way for a transcalar architecture that focuses on more than just the human.]

[Above illustrates a system of nurturing and care that I established to grow my small sample of Spirulina.]



**'Toxic', 'alien',
'invasive', 'non-native' are
often more rooted in
xenophobia than in science
and perpetuate colonial
thinking.**



A FREEFALL INTO HEGEMONY

A Critique of
Bauhaus
Modernism

The probe of the perplexities of modern architecture begins with the deconstruction of Bauhaus. It begins with the imploration of the ethics and aesthetics of the movement that has since influenced the new world. How did an explorative utopian ideology morph into a totalitarian concrete jungle etching away signs of cultural diversity? What and where is the line between modernity and hegemony? And how does one plod it without plummeting into complete saturation? Or is the acceptance of modernity a mandatory expulsion of the history that grounds you?

Ines Weizman's exploration of the influences of Bauhaus Modernism, in *Dust and Data*, is a rich understanding of its reach beyond borders. Even in vagueness and instability, the movement propagated its influence, becoming a byword for modernity in design. It emerged as a counter-response to the chaos of war-torn Germany. The utopian ideals signified a break from the traditional salon art and independence from the political and social upheaval caused by the first world war. The Bauhaus school created a highly progressive practice to address the problems of industrialization in a haphazardly changing social climate. The style consisted of functional objects and works for modern life and everyday people that were characterized by simplicity in design and form. A unified architecture was explored in novel ways, under the overarching logic of utility and rationality.

While in the face of disorder, unity and functionality rendered a semblance of control amongst the people, Bauhaus modernism has since provoked the erasure of cultural and social identities. While it represents a compromise between conflicting tendencies; a hopeful utopian spirit against a more pragmatic character; it fails to represent a compromise between the old and the new. Instead drawing its strength from standardization and the spread of overseas technology over local craftsmanship. In its perusal of the shiny new technology, it has shunned the existence of a history that glorifies the existence of being.

A motor for gentrification and cultural colonization; the utopian program of the Bauhaus, has since perpetuated destruction. And the inquiry of the spread, also demands an understanding of the subjugation it begets. As omitted by Weizman, the radicalism of the Bauhaus movement is in no way linear and straightforward, it's tarnished in the complexities of the context it embeds itself in.

The Nazis perceived the Bauhaus to be yet another tool for global spanning by the Jewish that they sought to eliminate. When they expelled the Bauhaus, they couldn't have imagined that it would have found a home in the outstretched terraces of the first modern Jewish city.

Bauhaus, in the 1930s, became the beacon of modernist architecture in Tel-Aviv, with all the institutions and government edifices voluntarily evolving into a minimalist modern style. This shift is reflected in Ines Weizman's excerpt, detailing the presence of Bauhaus from the Sykes-Picot line to the Golan to the Levant and the white city. This flourish of style in complete contrast to the native Israeli architecture is an arbitrary example of the influence of colonisations in and around Israel. What place does a German style of architecture have in a hugely Jewish city, if not for continued subjugation at the hands of the communists?

This instance illustrates a style morphing and moving inexorably through place and time. In the Golan, the presence of Bauhaus was felt in the custom houses and the minimalist interior of government buildings. A rampant insistence was felt amongst the citizens to claim the architecture to be Bauhaus, even in instances to the contrary. This need to culturally assimilate is a pertinent feature of colonization. The subjects feel the overwhelming need to cope with the forced authority by mirroring and conforming to the conditions they are subjected to.

The spread of Bauhaus along the Golan feels like a continual power struggle by the Jewish, to in ways hide their cultural history in order to escape the confines of it. The incessant need to relate to the oppressor is a direct result of years of struggle. So then how can we talk about the Bauhaus in the Golan, without addressing the impacts of its colonial tendencies?

While the Bauhaus movement began as a democratic way of addressing design in a time of conflict, its spread in Israel was anything but. The whitewashing of the city of Tel-Aviv and hiding the embers of the history within its white walls is an undeviating move to conceal the constructs of a nation that rose from the vestiges of the past.

In essence, the history of the Bauhaus is a history of a movement passing inexorably through different stages of political and social cataclysm. While it propagated a progressive phenomenon of modern thinking, its execution led to vanquishing of historic styles that might have otherwise flourished in its absence. While the school sought to proposition artistic solutions to political dilemmas, the choice answer was to build with the latest technology that in no way reflected the contextual or cultural history and sought to fortify the power of institutions, further deepening societal problems in its wake.

In India too, Bauhaus modernism made its mark with concrete powerhouses that didn't conform to the climatic or cultural contexts of the city, instead standing erect in all its structural glory. While it eschewed the extravagant and impractical adorations of traditional Indian Architecture, it also diluted its prowess. The implorations of the Bauhaus movement were left stunted, partly due to profound political changes and partly due to the constitutional ground of the practice.

Ines Weizman shies away from confronting the traditionalist, conservative establishment of Bauhaus born out of 'Old European' values. While she tries to set her endeavors on courageous trajectories, her lack of critical analysis lands her research in the strictly neutral territory.

The central suggestion of the book is to think of the Bauhaus as a laboratory of inventions and ideas that galvanize history, but it fails to explore the implication of the patina of time it leaves behind on the culture.

Is Bauhaus modernism a radical movement or a disguised form of cultural colonialism itself? With its ethos of standardization and uniformity, and the spread of overseas technology over local craftsmanship, isn't the practice a way of confirming the people, like in Tel Aviv, where the history is forgotten behind the whitewash and unified design?

WHOSE AIR IS IT ANYWAY?

A SYSTEM FOR DISSENT

Whose air is it anyway- a system for dissent, is a speculative design interrogation rooted in the idea of territorialism in the public domain? It begs to question idea of the "public" and the environment and how it can truly belong to everyone. Can accessibility to air and the environment be truly created in a circumstance where all the odds are stacked against you?

JUSTICE

EAST NY

THE TALE

EAST NY

AIR

CARBON

PUBLIC LAND IN PUBLIC HANDS

Decolonizing the air.

When it comes to exposures to environmental hazards, people of color and low-income groups tend to get the short end of the stick. They are more likely than other groups to live close to highways or power plants; to live in housing with lead, pest, or other problems; and to be exposed to hazardous chemicals in personal care products. Whose air is it anyway, a system for dissent, is a speculative design interrogation rooted in the idea of territorialism in the public domain? It begs to question idea of the "public" and the environment and how it can truly belong to everyone. Can accessibility to air and the environment be truly created in a circumstance where all the odds are stacked against you?

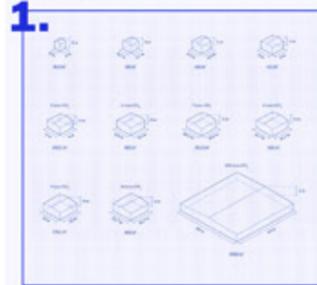
On the brink of gentrification, East NY is an industrial business zone primarily comprised of factories and transit corporations. East New York is a largely colored neighborhood is a hugely ostracized community, pushed to the sidelines- forgotten. With their poverty rate at 30% as opposed to the 20% of other parts of NY and a 10% unemployment rate in contrast to the 9% of the rest. But their plight is not only limited to the economic conditions they find themselves in, they are also victims of environmental racism. Based in this premise "Whose air is it anyway" materialises- investigating the reinvention of urban infrastructure in the anthropocene. This project is a response to the gentrification in East New York.

It aims to decentralize the existing infrastructural system that mainly serves the purpose of capitalism. A decentralization imagined , using the pollution mainly (carbon) that haunts East NY- one that originates from the street.

Hence, I propose a new type of "infra-sculpture" that can be localized, visualized, and popularized in the built environment. The idea intends to change how the public perceives infrastructural system, thus raising public awareness of current consumption practice and [bio]diversity. Three concepts are proposed to drive such a change: By localizing infrastructure, it creates an infra-sculpture that is self-sufficient at the community level, which will reduce demands from central supply. By visualizing infrastructure, it informs transparency, which exposes its operation to better understand the process and mechanism, hence educating the public on how the city operates. Finally, by popularizing infrastructure, it fabricates an integrated urban infrastructural landmark that celebrates the new social paradigm: diversity creates resilience.

CARBON IMAGINARIES

Could carbon be the answer to combat gentrification?



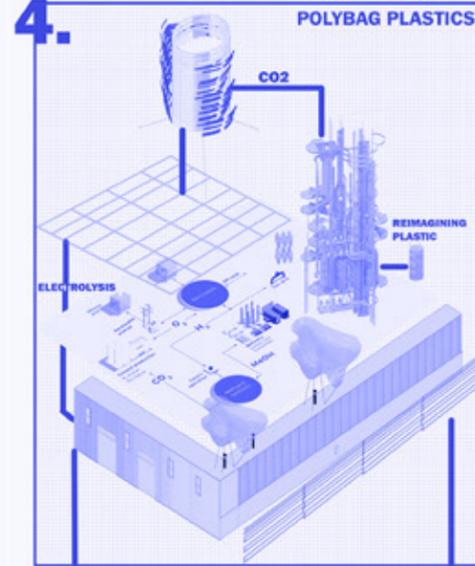
THE GREENHOUSE EFFECT



IS CEMENT THE ANSWER?



THE UBIQUITOUS ANSWER



ALGAE- OUR SAVIOR

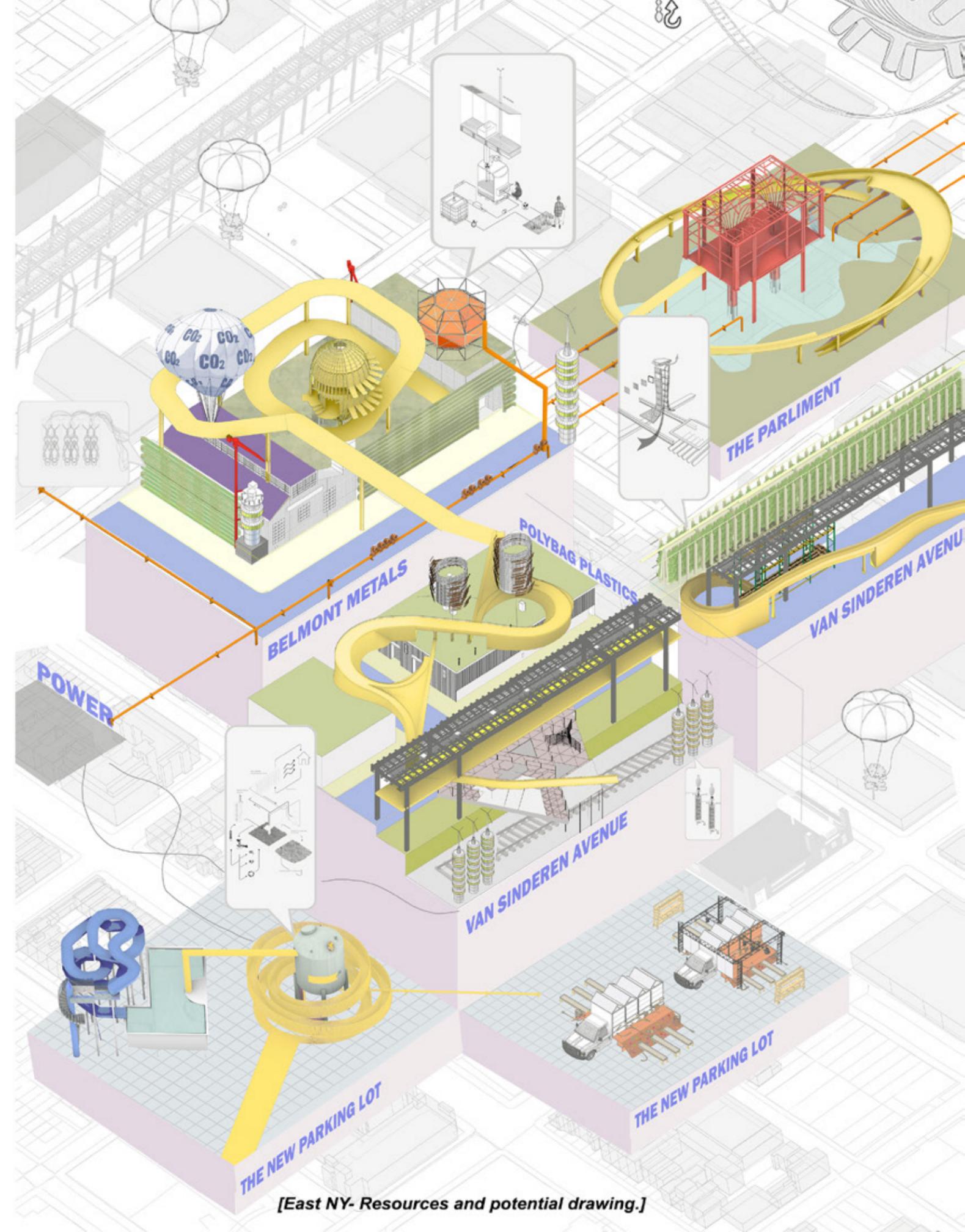
THE CARBON CAPITAL

Carbon captured can be used to decentralise the community and create a circular economy. Knowledge of carbon can be used by the ostracised community to create new materials.



East NY has the added disadvantage of being flanked by major transit lines— an elevated subway line, atlantic avenue which is a hugely used for transport of materials and the freight train line that runs parallel to van sinderen avenue. This in addition to the topography has resulted in an inequitable exposure to pollution. The research included an extensive study of the Van Sinderen Corridor in the East NY neighborhood to understand and analyse the resources available.

[The mapped factories and industries were then studied to understand the tools and technology already present to combat the air pollution. This study was devised as a plan for resistance as it would need minute alterations that could possibly work against the standards.]



[East NY- Resources and potential drawing.]

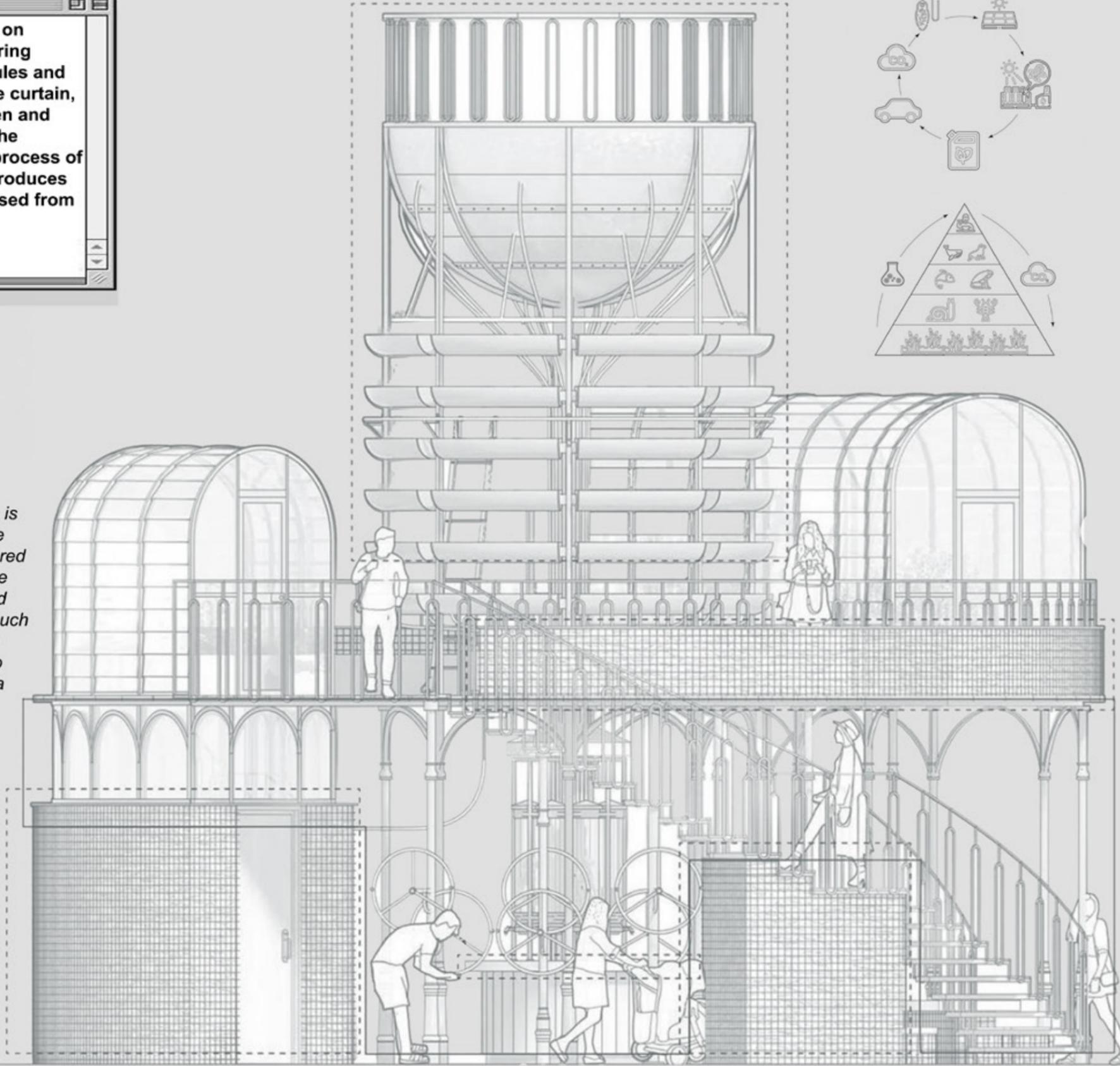
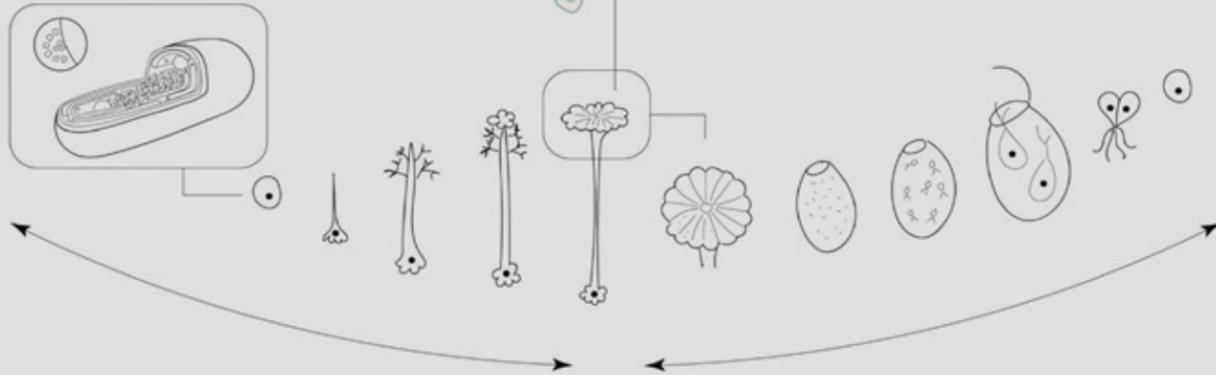
This research project is investigating the reinvention of urban infrastructure in the Post-Covid era. It aims to decentralise the existing infrastructural system that mainly serves the purpose of mass consumption. Using the commonly found Algae in East NY, I study a decarbonisation process that is to form an embodied knowledge to capture carbon.

The micro-algae feeds on daylight and air, capturing carbon dioxide molecules and storing them within the curtain, while producing oxygen and releasing it back into the surrounding air. This process of photosynthesis also produces oxygen, which is released from the top of the unit.

[Photosynthetic community- captured carbon to reproduce.]

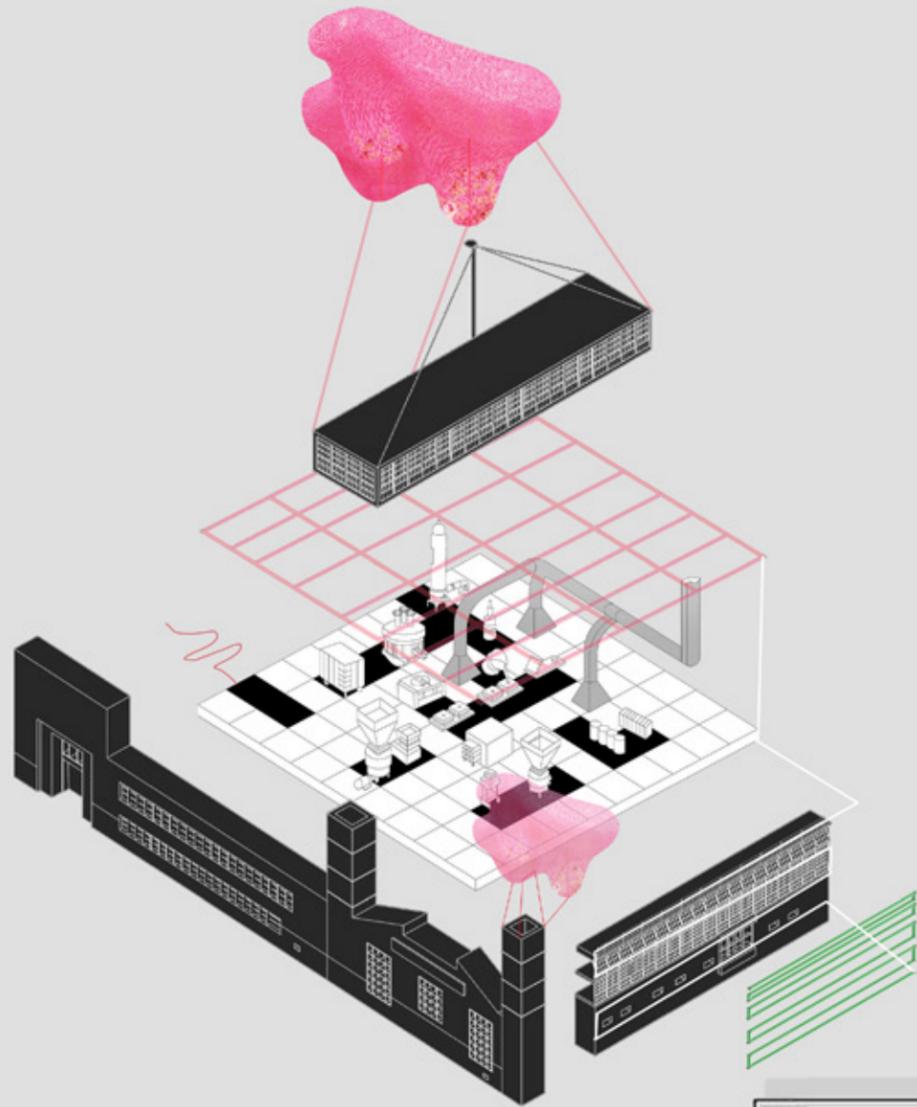


[Another beneficial byproduct of the process is biomass, which the algae grows from the sequestered carbon, and which can be burnt for energy or turned into bioplastic material, such as that used to make the curtain. The algae is also bioluminescent, casting a faint glow at night.]



[Algae growth and reaction process- a lifecycle map to understand the complexities.]

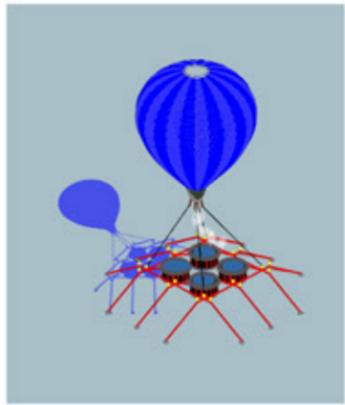
[A photobioreactor – an incubator for algae, which carries out the naturally carbon-sequestering process of photosynthesis. Conceptual sketch]



[The ethos of these initiatives is translated into my own design. Deconstructing the resources.]

[Seen in East NY today is a culture of dissent and defiance. The people that have lived in east New York for decades have mobilized into community groups. groups such as the ENY community land trust and the Universe City. Groups that are largely demanding basic rights and equity. They are targeting public lands to be given back into the hands of the public and demanding that they be put to use in order to serve the community.]

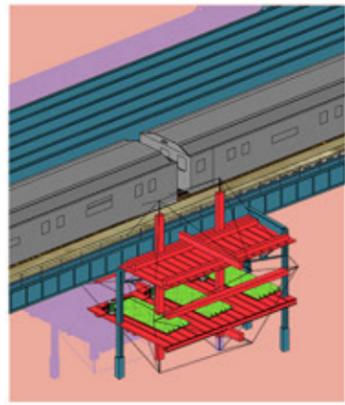




WATER CAPTURE



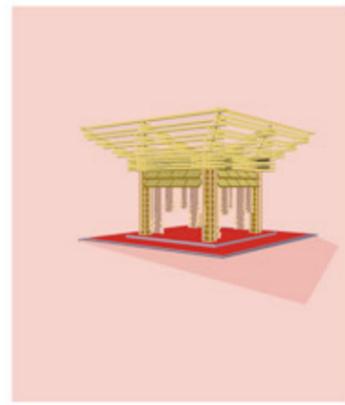
WATER CAPTURE



CARBON CAPTURE



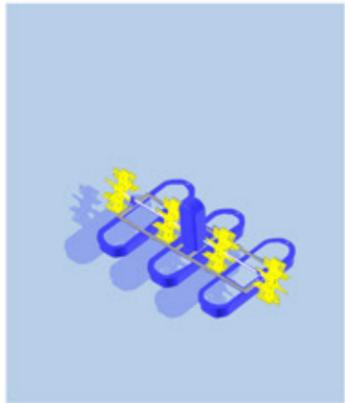
CARBON CAPTURE



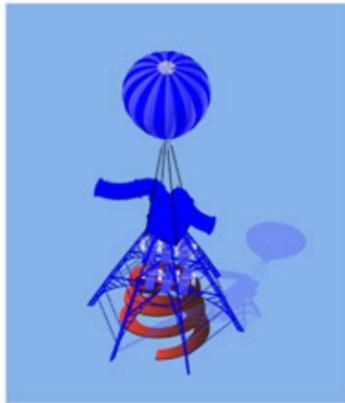
CARBON CAPTURE



CARBON CAPTURE



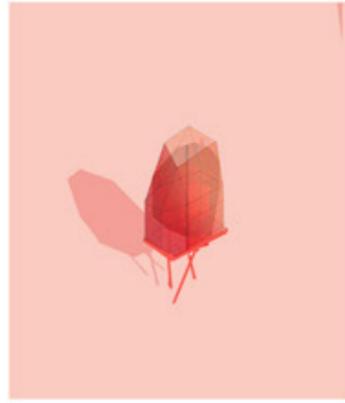
WATER CAPTURE



WATER CAPTURE



CARBON CAPTURE



CARBON CAPTURE



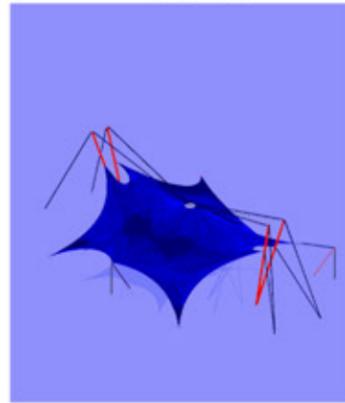
CARBON CAPTURE



CARBON CAPTURE



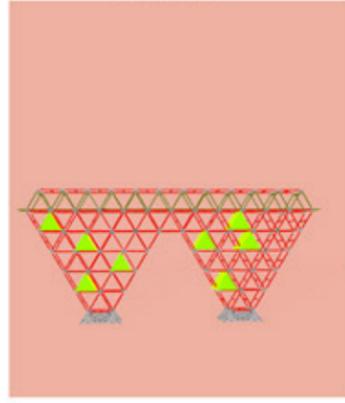
WATER CAPTURE



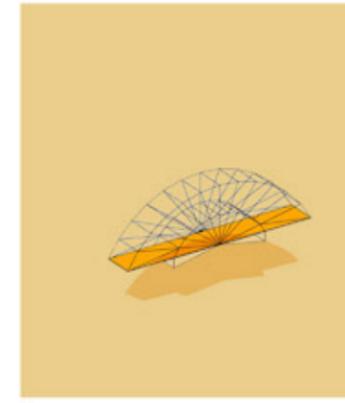
WATER CAPTURE



CARBON CAPTURE



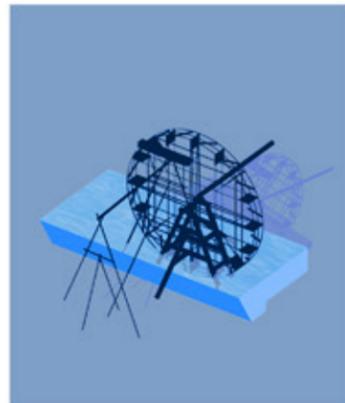
CARBON CAPTURE



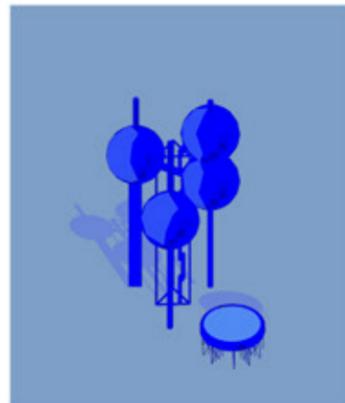
ACCESSIBILITY



ACCESSIBILITY



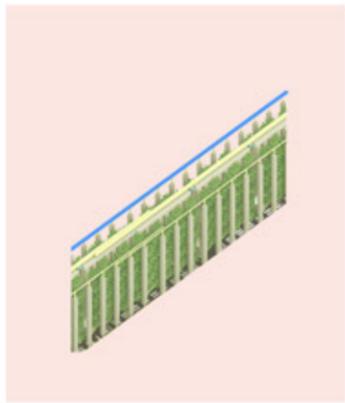
WATER CAPTURE



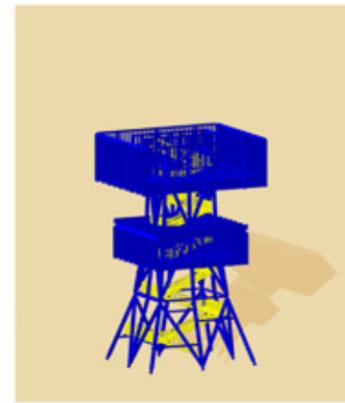
WATER CAPTURE



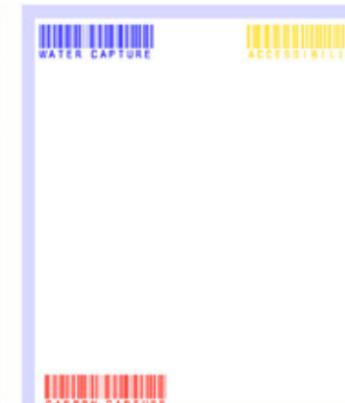
CARBON CAPTURE



CARBON CAPTURE



ACCESSIBILITY



WATER CAPTURE

ACCESSIBILITY

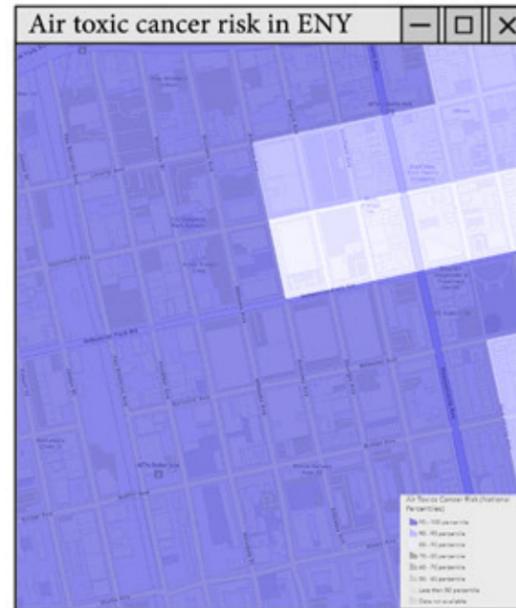
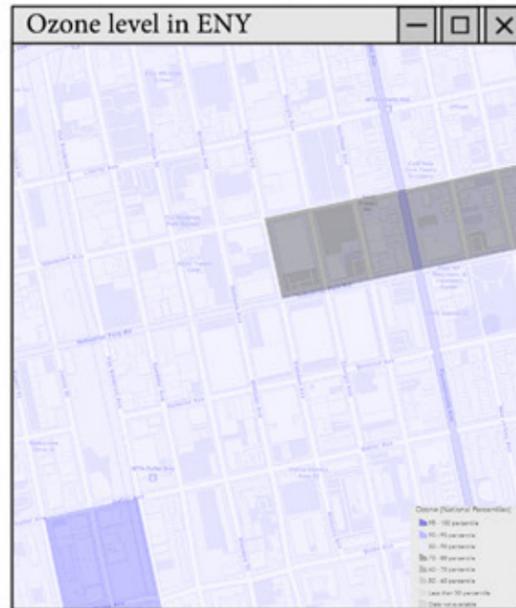
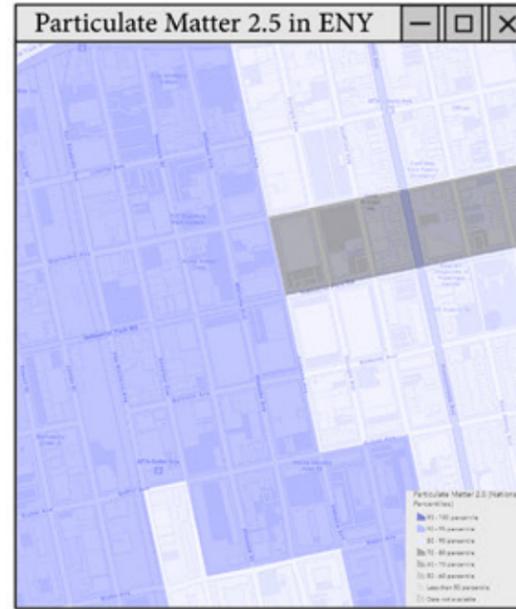
CARBON CAPTURE

The projects is taced in three layers- accessibility, Carbon capture and water. However these distinctions are blurred when merged with the existing ecology of East NY- to create a symbiotic, photosynthetic and circular community structure.

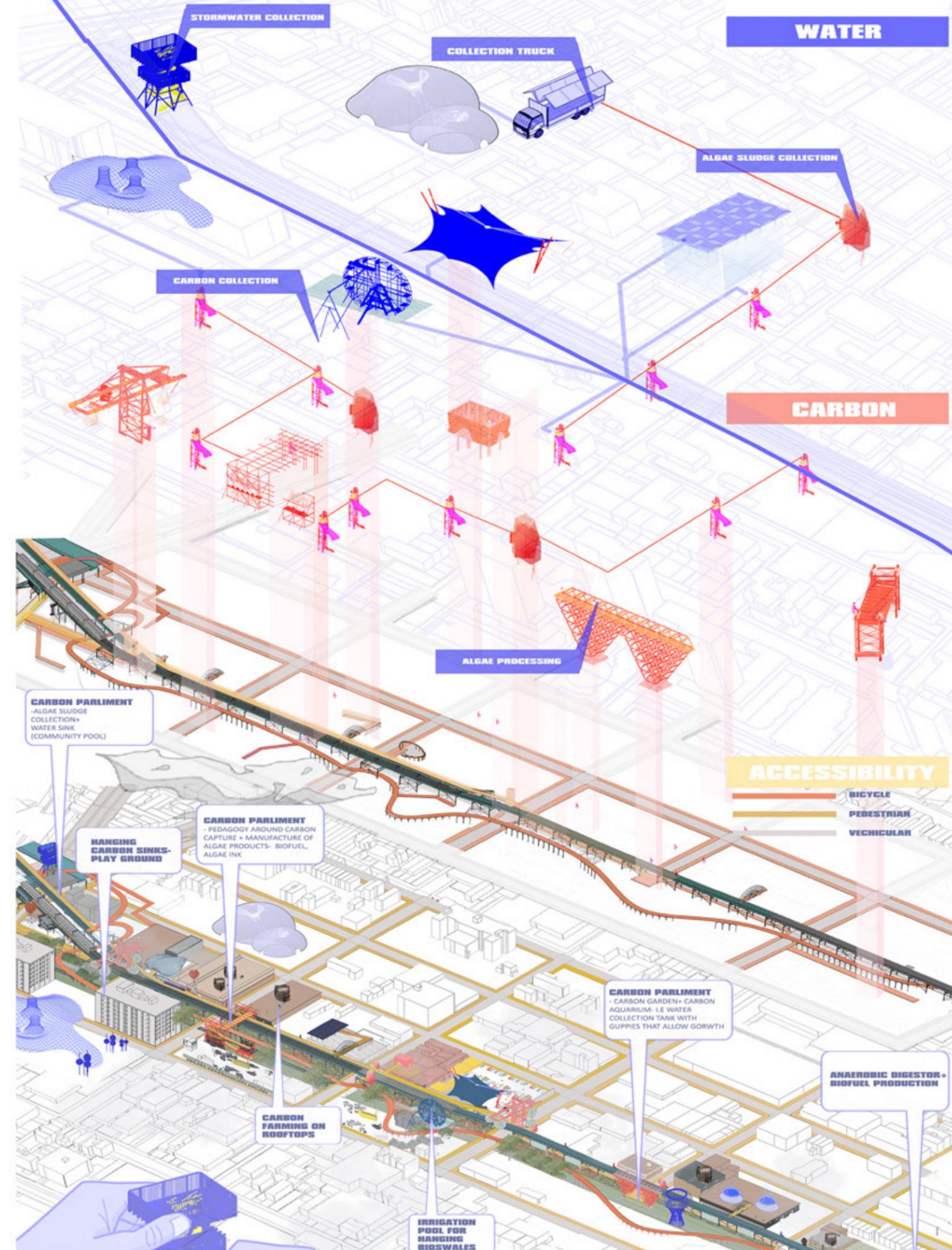
The project is about creating a new infrastructure gathering resources from pollutants in the city atmosphere, which could be another valuable commodity in the age of depleting resources,"It sought to create concepts and ideas of intervention for a carbon centered community that could then be used by the people to turn their downfall on its head and create autonomy through modularity.

Hence, all the devices designed are done with the use of raw-materials and technological knowledge existing in East NY.

[Risk mapping in East New York - mapping the pollution around Van Sinderen Avenue allowed me to decide strategically the locations of my infrasculptures.]

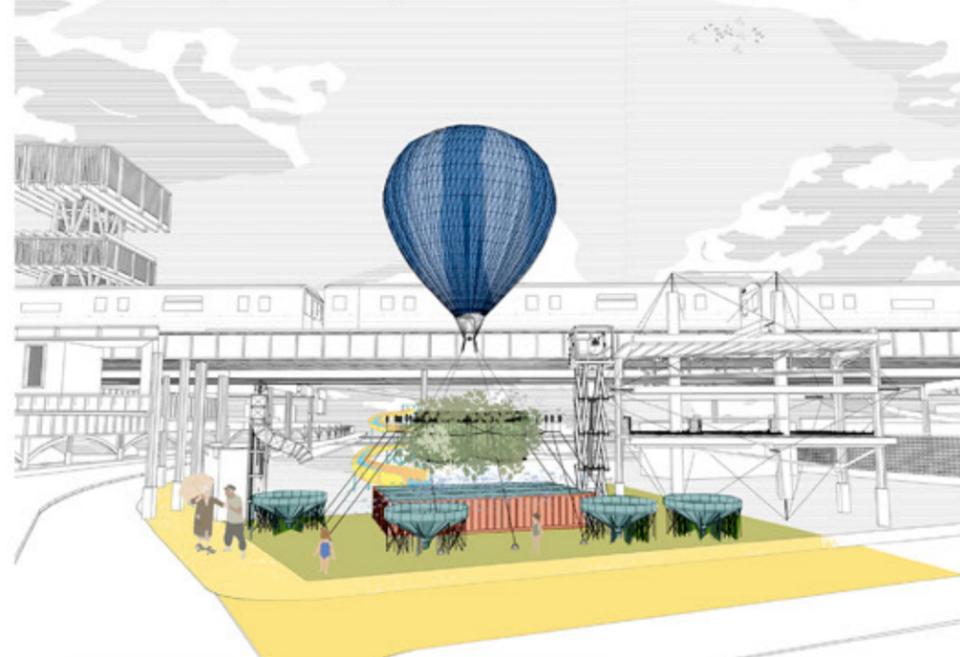


[Isometric map on the right shows the layers of infrasculptures and the system it creates. The water capture devices facilitate the capture and storage of water which then allows the carbon capture through algae to be done. It provides a medium for the growth of algae.]





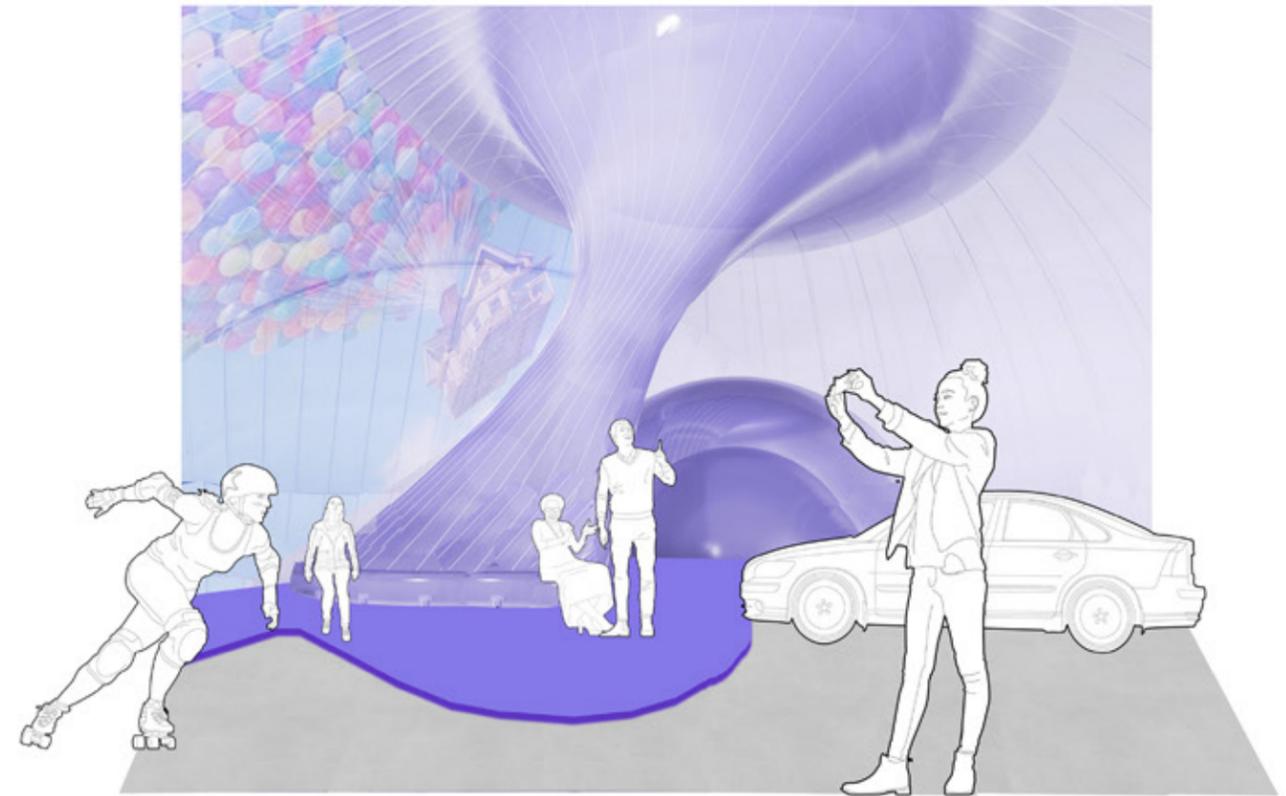
Algae Carbon capture device- provides shade for a running track.



Water capture and filtration device also used as public pool.

The conceptualisation and development of an autonomous framework for the (re)production of a productive commons network as a form of emancipation within and against state control. The construction of an identity for a community represented by its struggles for self-determination, towards a new grammar for the urban fabric. An architecture read as characters, developing over time and rooted in the rituals and struggles of East NY.

And ultimately, the Water and Carbon Capture devices provide a new public domain- for people of East NY to use, enjoy and claim ownership over- since they are the



Water capture shed- an inflatable device that doubles as a community theatre.



Water capture shed- deployable on any parking lot to collect water.



[The reimagined carbon- capture landscape of East NY. As a subset also creates the new public that truly belongs to everyone and truly accessible.]



[The reimagined rooftop with carbon capture device.]

WHO OWNS THE SKY?

A critique of drone technology and our realities.

The examination of drones begins with the consideration of their acephalia. What are the implications of its autonomy? What spaces will they inhabit? And where do we draw the line in the air? In 2015 Superflux, as part of their installation for V&A, proposed Drone Aviary, as an attempt to unravel this thread and unblur the space occupied by UAVs. A speculative piece, displayed at the show - All of this Belongs to you, it features five civilian drones partaking in a plethora of functions, from advertisement to surveillance.

The video released as part of the installation places the drone at the center as the protagonist, giving a glimpse of the mundaneness of the tasks performed by it. Its role in recording data, its capacity to form patterns and infer decisions, and ultimately its fragility and ineptness. While the innovation demonstrated, presents the video as a love letter of sorts, the strange foreboding hum injects ambivalence into the qualities of the drone that might be otherwise passed off as utilitarian or as prosthetics of a hidden hand.

The ambivalence is forged by notions of territory, control, authorship, intentionality, and agency of objects. It relates to the ways in which the drone is a vessel of knowledge and reason, as illustrated by Superflux's media drone. But if we are to unearth these layers of drone technology, we must first recognize the drone to be a political assemblage, rather than a detached device.

It is evident from the mapping of drone trajectories by Superflux, that they facilitate the production of territories, engaging self-governance as both a canon and a frontier. This territorialization occurs over both space and time. Because they remain unmanned, it allows for the transgression of borders and infiltration in a way that human bodies cannot. Hence, the drone produces knowledge of an interior, exterior, and of territories, defining the lines of society and creating an envelope of control. This layer of structure not only governs everyday life by subtle extortion of personal data but also by the propagation of unchanged motivations of a capitalistic society, as elucidated by Superflux's flying billboard.

The future of propaganda is airborne under the ever-seeing eyes of drones. Individually tailored advertisements are our reality, that not only feeds the bellies of conglomerations but that of politicians too. Location-based targeting breaches our personal territory on the daily, forcing us to examine the accessibility to geofencing in a landscape where it has become absolutely necessary. It has rendered anonymity a luxury, with the rich having deeper geofences while the rest make do with narrow or no boundaries to protect them. But how do we buy something that is intangible, with a constantly changing and diminishing function? And how do we enforce regulations on an autonomous object that is constantly breaking bounds and not settling or caring?

Superflux postulates that cities will need to develop resilient and well-thought-out strategies, and digital infrastructures to negate the intrusive nature of UAVs, urging us to look beyond the performative aspects of drones that act as a decoy. The drone is an independent machine, a vessel for misinformation and propaganda, that we have overlooked while we have been staring at something in the sky.

WHO IS A MUSEUM?



There can be no more ethnographic museums in the anthropocene!



Colonialism and Imperialism are core histories that saturate every aspect of museums. They are sites of societal authority, where the colonial memory is circulated and simulated. "Who is a museum?" is a commentary on **control, colonization and conceited conquests in the age of the Anthropocene.**



The universal discourse of the anthropocene presents a global choice that establishes environmental collapse as the problem of the future. However instead of focusing on colonialism, environmental discourses focus on technological innovations of a green society. But as I see it, the

Anthropocene functions as a geophysical justification of structures of colonialism in the services of a greener future and must be considered and more specifically in its attempt to place environmental collapse and change as the defining problem



of all of humanity, the Anthropocene legitimizes the continual colonial assertions of jurisdiction through conservation.

Replace
"Anthropocene"
with
"Colonization",
does it make a
difference?

Museums are a veiled public display of Western supremacy, a place where culture is static and exists independently of people. It is not only a nuanced space of conceited power but also a political language. Museological practices are underpinned by Western epistemologies, systems of classification, and ideological assumptions that, when applied to the Lenape Peoples, have functioned in exploitative, objectifying, and demeaning ways. By using a historically unquestioned authority to take Native objects and remains and to define who and what Native Americans are, museums have, in many ways, trapped The Lenape behind their glassed-in cases, rendering vital, contemporary Native voices silent, dynamic Native cultures invisible, and abstract concepts of legal and cultural sovereignty difficult to exercise in meaningful ways.

'Who is a Museum?' was response to the prompt of designing the new anthropocene museum as a way to re-inscribe New York City. It throws the authority of museums into question, attempting to subtract their power-Decolonization and repatriation of Indigenous land and life; beyond the metaphor.

Wielding the National Museums of American Indian, NY, as a site of repatriation, I attempt to create a framework for the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. The aim is not to represent-to represent would mean to dominate-but to use Architecture to generate agency for the Lenape peoples- whose dead were never ceded or relinquished, but stolen.

The research "Land of the forgotten" explored the Inwood caves, reinstating it as a site for Lenape history and culture; and subsequently of erasure and diaspora created by the Colonial project. It outlines the story of burial grounds in Inwood that have been carelessly built over and desecrated. I wanted to weave a story of the forgotten, both the Lenape and the slaves whose stories were lost to time and forgotten. But upon further prodding, I found this dark history was never forgotten- it was intentionally and very deliberately hidden away. Hidden under the landscape of Inwood, hidden behind the veil of religion, of propagating the "lord's ways", while simultaneously desecrating his creations and hidden behind the promises of establishments.

[The obscurity of history is a perverse ritual of erasure, propagation of cultural genocide upon on the Lenape Peoples.]

LAND OF THE FORGOTTEN

The Inwood caves sit on the historic site of the Lenape. Buried under the ground are century-old stories of betrayal, disrespect, and hate crimes.

Spots mark the Lenape ritual grounds that have been now built on and destroyed. The forgotten burial grounds of the Lenape and the African American slaves brought in by the Dutch through the Dyckman Farmhouse.

There are a number of Christian burial grounds but the remains of the Lenape stays unmarked.

BIAS EVEN IN DEATH

WHO DECIDES THE IMPORTANCE OF ONCE LIFE? GOD, MAN OR THE PREACHER MAN?

THE UNTOLD STORY OF SLAVES

The history of Inwood also buries the story of the slaves. They were treated with the same level of disrespect in death as they were in their lives.

Their burials remained unmarked, with later children unearthing the remains and playing with it.

IN THE NAME OF GOD!

THE END OF A BODY BUT NEVER THE SOUL.

HOW DO YOU REBUILD REMAINS?

LOST BUT NEVER FORGOTTEN- THE REPLANTING SOUL INTO INWOOD

DIRECTING SOULS

WOODLAWN PARK

CONFLICT

MISTREATMENT

DISRESPECT

DEATH



[The colonial performance in Inwood, New York. The stage]



[The NMAI, NY, was built as a part of the City Beautiful Movement, in 1890, in order to create order, dignity and harmony-A bourgeois movement started by the Upper-Middle class people. The collection of Indigenous artifacts and remains was owned by Gustav Heyes, comprising of about 50,000 ingenious remains, but only one-third has been repatriated.]

[The Colonial Museums of New York-Map]



[The national museum of American Indian- Torn apart]



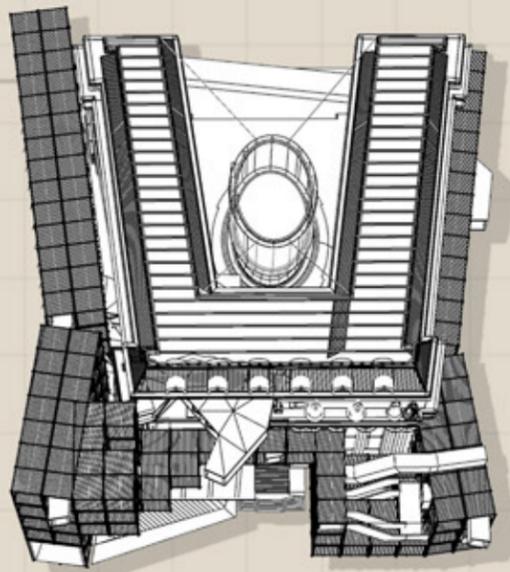
[There should be no more museums since they just serve to perpetuate the oppression that European colonizers brought with them. The project is an effort to recapture the colonial museum buildings in New York City. It takes on the National Museum of the American Indian, transforming it from a place of majesty and grandeur into a sanctuary where the remains of Lenape people could be repatriated back to their kin.]

[It envisions a feedback loop system that expedites the process of repatriation and repair. The building takes the form of a democratic tool, using minimal interventions and temporary architecture so as to create a design that doesn't aggress, instead allowing the users of the space to decide the evolution of the building. Allowing the building to metamorphosise with the people and context around it.]

[Hence, the edifice is reimagined as the new "public". Rewriting the story and the history as a way of homage to the people that were once displaced.]

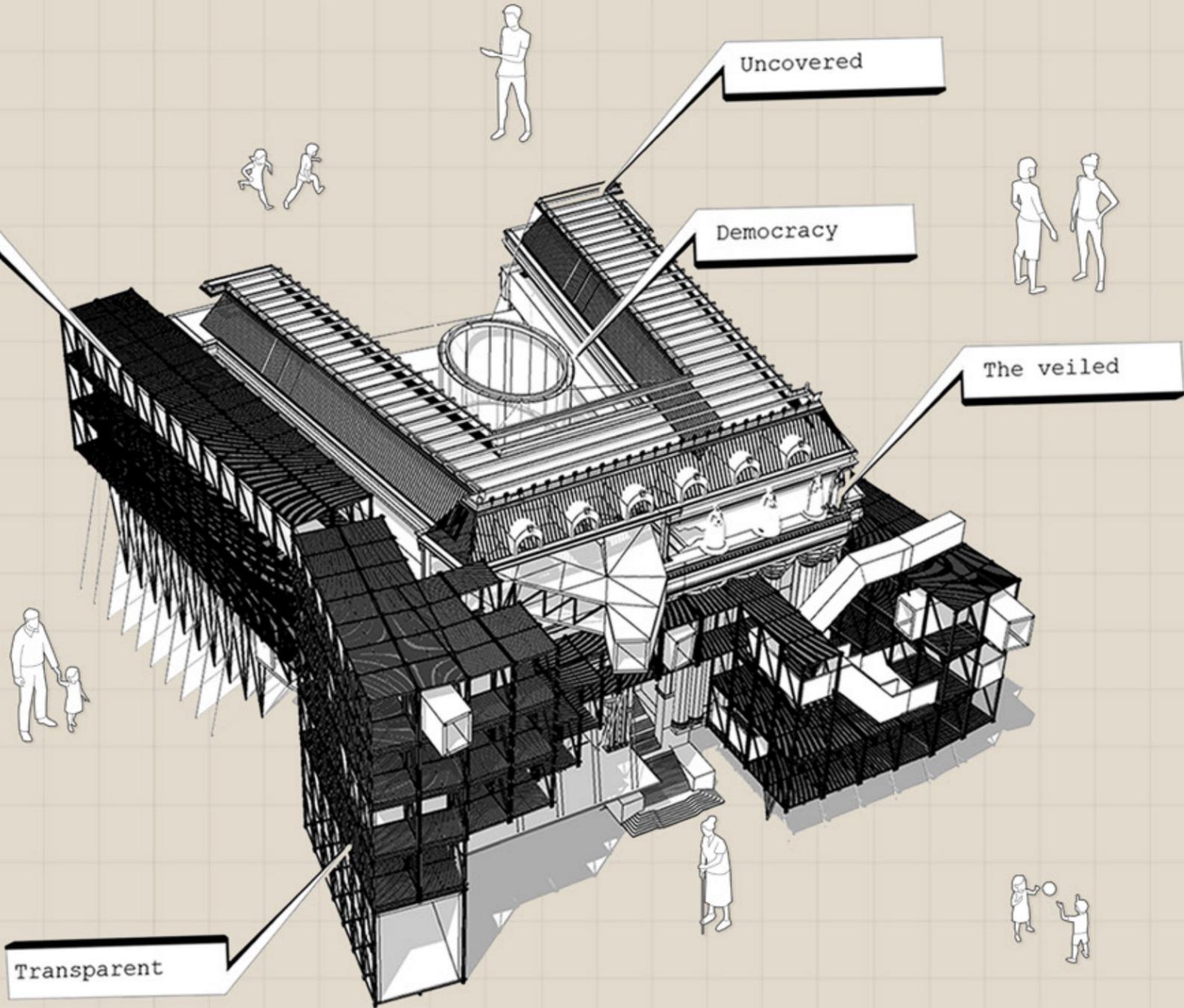
[The National Museum of American Indian- Reimagined]

It was designed as a political instrument. Strategically preserving a portion of the Colonial structure in order to demonstrate the peculiarity of its historical significance. In addition, temporality guarantees that the architecture itself does not play a homogeneous role - manifesting a democratic design.



[The new NMAI]

Transitional

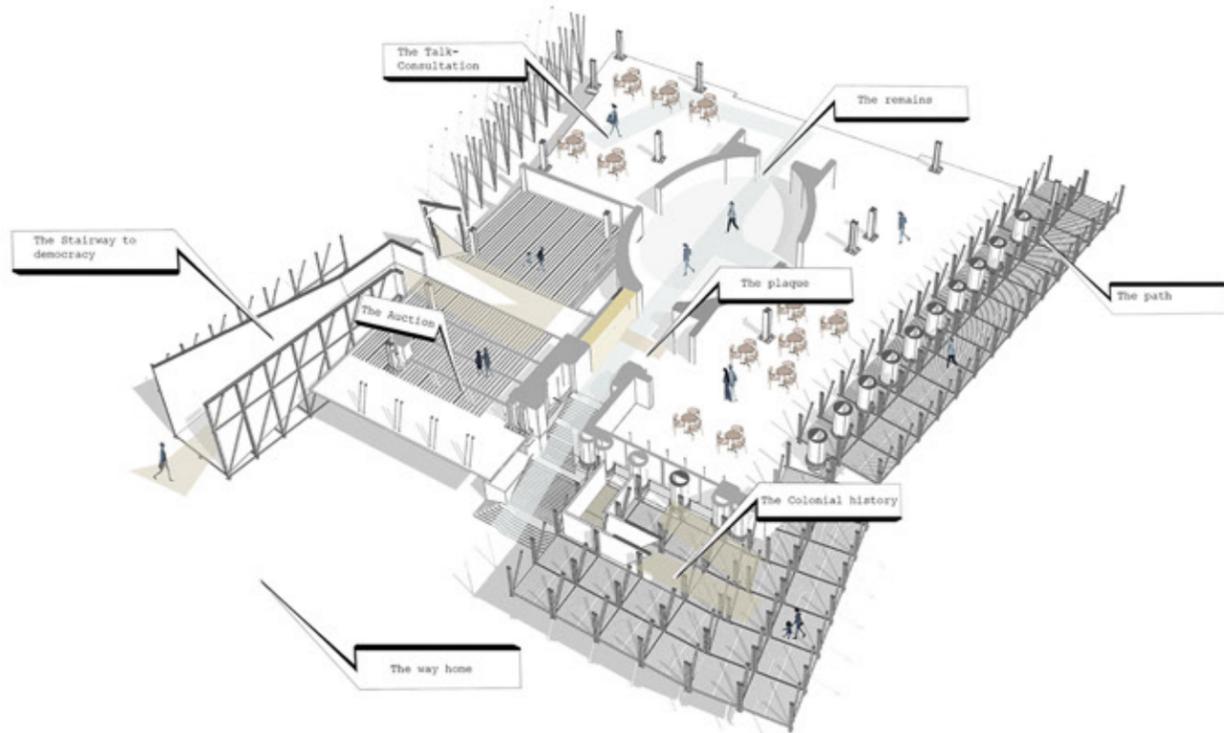


Uncovered

Democracy

The veiled

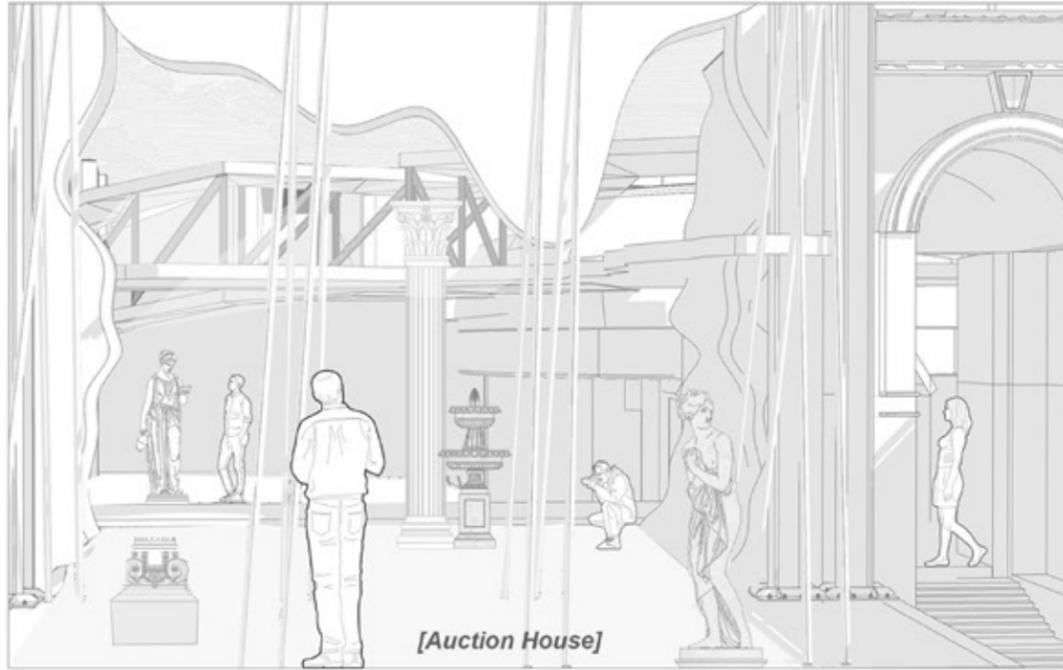
Transparent



[The National Museum of the American Indian is reconceived as a reparation system. As described in the section, the rotunda is envisioned as the repository of human remains that once resided in the museum's basement. As a gesture and to establish a "true" public space, the building was raised off the ground, and everyone is entitled to relish the space. The structure is further stripped of its classical and colonial architectural features. This is then displayed for auction at the front of the museum as an avenue for generating the economy of circularity, that would subsequently endorse the reparation process.]



[Sectional view of the repatriation process]



[A Democratic Rotunda stands suspended above the existing one. Made of "walls" of curtain, it acts as the new space for decision making- one that is physically open, accessible, and "wild".]

[Research of vegetation emphasizes how plants too have been micro markers of colonialism, hence creating a database of Indigenous Lenape vegetation and proposing to grow it within the museum, is a means to erase the bio-cultural appropriation.]

- Trees-**
 Acer rubrum- Red maple
 Acer saccharum- Sugar maple
 Carpinus caroliniana- hornbeam
 Cornus florida- Flowering dogwood
 Corylus americana- Hazelnut
 Fagus grandiflora- American beech
 Ostrya virginiana- Hop hornbeam
 Quercus rubra- Red oak
 Tilia americana- Basswood
- Shrubs**
 Amelanchier canadensis- Canadian serviceberry
 Aronia arbutifolia- Red chokeberry
 Aronia melanocarpa- Black chokeberry
 Clethra alnifolia- Sweet pepperbush
 Cornus alternifolia- Pagoda dogwood
 Cornus racemosa- Gray dogwood
 Hamamelis virginiana- Witchhazel
 Ilex glabra- Inkberry
 Lindera benzoin- Spicebush
- Herbs**
 Actea pachypoda- Doll's eyes
 Allium tricoccum- Wild leek
 Aquilegia canadensis- Wild columbine
 Aralia nudicaulis- Wild sarsaparilla
 Asarum canadense- Wild ginger
 Eupatorium purpureum- Sweet-scented joe-pye-weed
 Eupatorium rugosum- White snakeroot
 Eurybia divaricata- White wood aster
 Geranium maculatum- Wild geranium

[A list of vegetation native to the Lenape.]

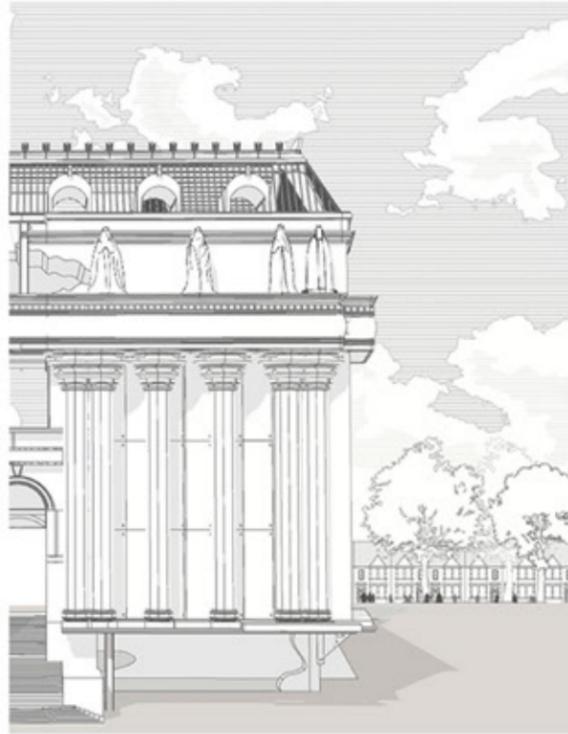


The reclamation of the architecture allows for a secondary economy to grow. One that uses the ruins of the edifice and by extension the colonial state to generate funds for the expedition of the repatriation process.

Thus, creating capital-agency for the ostrecised.



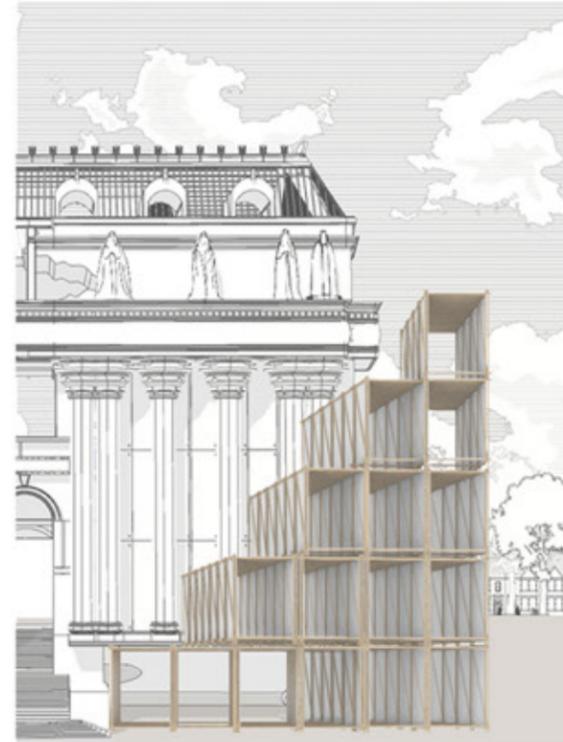
[The museum is articulated beyond architecture and the built space. The aim is to dismantle the epistemic violence and unravel rituals of erasure.]



[The museum broken down and left abandoned as form of dissent and resistance.]



[The museum imagined as a public experience to expose the diaspora.]



[The museum imagined as a open to everyone housing project.]



[The museum imagined as a public theatre and community centre.]



[The museum imagined as a sanctuary to undo the effects of the anthropocene epoch.]



[The museum destroyed and the land given back to the Lenape.]

Democratic Design as a response to the imperial control. The National Museum of American Indian, evolves and morphs according to the needs of the Lenape peoples that once occupied the area of Bowling greens, NYC. This proposal is imagined as a solution to the doings of the man in the anthropocene epoc.

[Who is a museum? It is the people, the culture that are objectified and commodified for the pleasure of the viewer. It does nothing for the people that are displayed within the fortified walls of its edifice.

Who is a museum? They are the people that were lost to time.]

A HARAMBE-ESQUE TALE

Review of
"Cyborg
Manifesto"

Why did Harambe become a meme? At the height of Harambe madness, in the summer of 2016, Internet users would continually post images of him, as a sign of solidarity and eventually that of perpetuated agendas. His images with a sign that read "Bush did Harambe" were used by Trump supporters at the Republican National convention. Images of him on crosses appeared in Google searches of "Jesus Christ." His death overshadowed that of thousands of migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea to Europe. Was this the work of Internet absurdists or a true stirring of empathy amongst masses? How did a western lowland gorilla, shot dead by a worker at the Cincinnati Zoo become a martyr for a generation far too apathetic to have martyrs?

Perhaps, because his story was a tragedy of irony and apathy in itself. Upheld as a great, Harambe was discarded as dangerous by the same institution that had presented him as robust. This episode demonstrates the frailty of human ethical regard for animal life. Further it highlights one cogent principle: when nonhumans, animals or even "lesser humans" inevitably lose political representation, it often becomes the task of aesthetic representation to give them a voice. The question that remains is how do we amplify that voice without diluting it? How can we speak for them without silencing them further? And moreover can this even be done?

She is not alone in her championing of an inductive approach to cognition. Donna Haraway in her *Cyborg Manifesto*, argues against capitalism and the Western culture of segregation that defines people (mostly women) based on race, class, or gender. Instead proposing an ideology that erases essentialism and dualism, with the goal of constructing a new and fluid existence for all living beings. The cyborg thereby erases boundaries previously constructed by the male capitalist. It is essentially a projection of Harambe—a tale of plight—onto humankind. And in line with Desprets' proddings, suggests that identity, categories, and relationships are unable to be totally defined in theory.

When we do not confine ourselves to metaphysical questions about the agency, subjectivity, and language of humans or animals, but rather ask what each situation asks of us, we are, involving ourselves in a play of reciprocal curiosity, ethical responsibility, and provisional interpretations that are always subject to correction and change. And this could be the line between the extinction or perpetuation of a whole species, even humans.



SUBALTERN STORIES

Niriksha Vasudeva Shetty