

PORTFOLIO



UN  FIXED

Javier
Flores

Throughout the course of my post-graduate studies and my personal career I've been engaging in the practice of building not as a noun but as a process. Even though by nature, buildings are considered static entities, they can also evoke heavy forces.

As the world has transformed, the lens of the practice has also shifted, nowadays buildings should not longer be permanent but "un-fixed", as we are currently heading into the era of uncertainty. Through this portfolio different projects evoke the concept of change, movement and mutation as it can reveal different possible scenarios driven by a common factor, reshaping our human nature.

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RESOURCEFUL NETWORKS

STUDIO
SUMMER
2023

JAVIER
FLORES

GYEOM
CHUNG

SANTIAGO
MARTINEZ

MENTOR:

KARLA
ROTHSTEIN

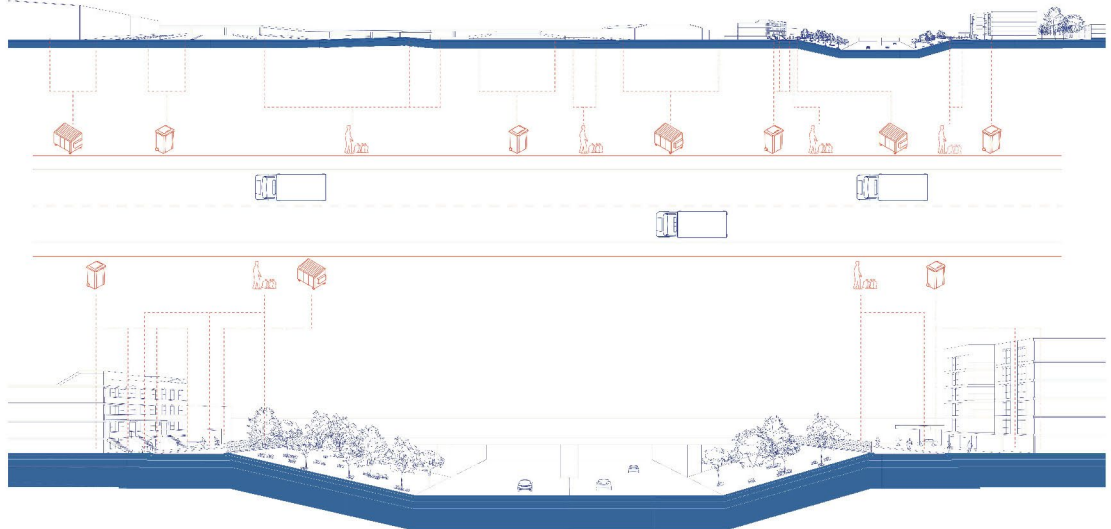
(DeathLAB,
Studio
Rothstein,
LATENT
NYC)

New York City produces approximately 14 million tons of waste annually, spreading to landfills in other states. We seek to change the perception of waste, looking into the concept not as a noun but as a verb, the action when a resource is being squandered, as a way of proposing strategies to see this element not as an urban and environmental problem, but as an asset. The project looks into each category of waste to design a system of in-situ local infrastructures that can turn its current spreading cycle into a full circle.

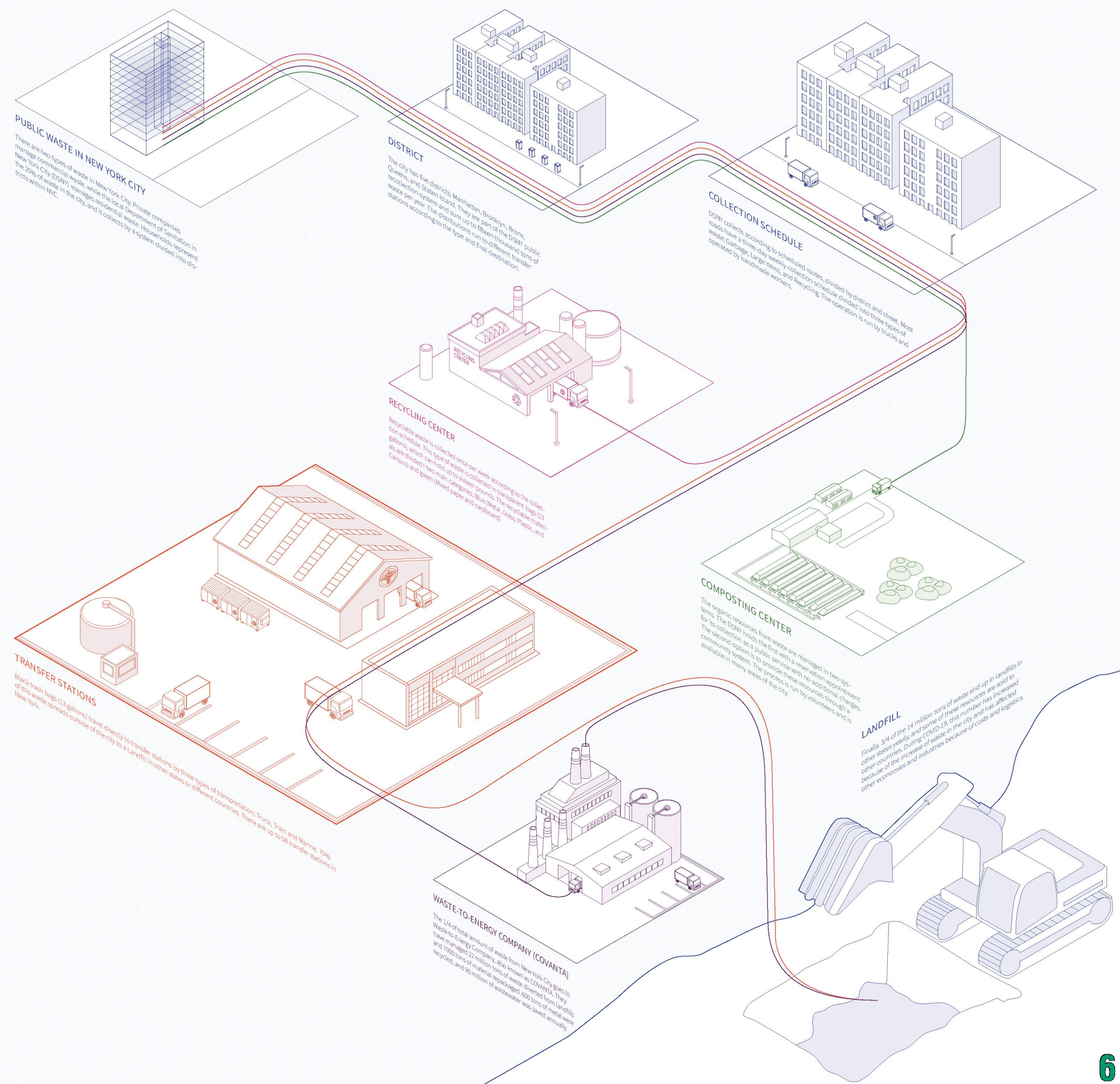
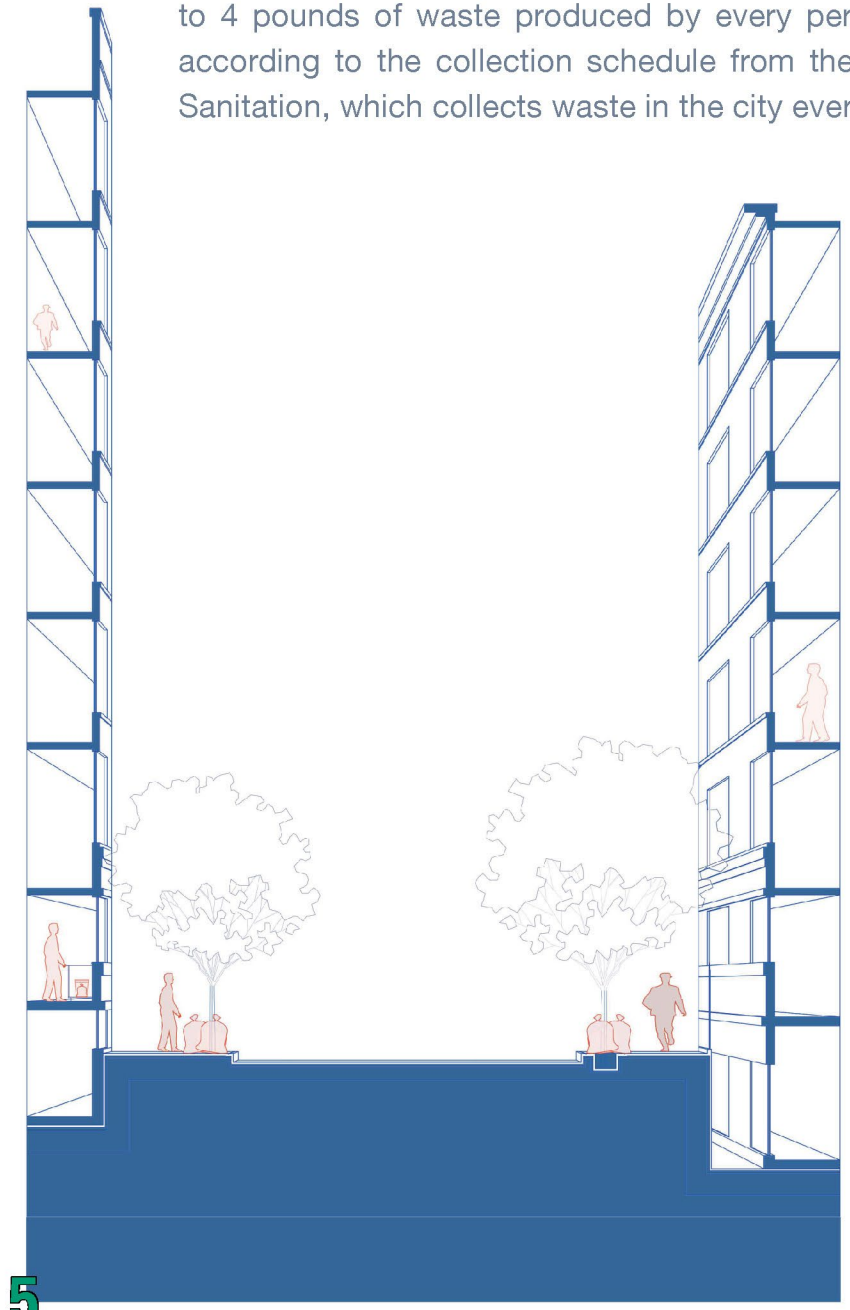
The South Bronx's area of Mott Haven was selected as the site of this transcalar project, where instead of only designing a more efficient machine, this prototype desires to redefine the current system and New Yorker's perception of waste, seeking to empower the community through an evolutionary program that promotes creative upcycling as a tool for economic autonomy. This redefinition involves new, multi-scalar interactions between waste and people

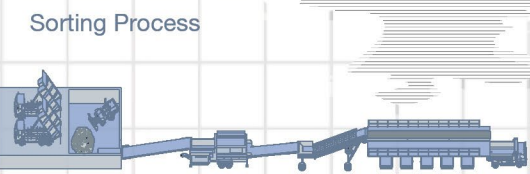
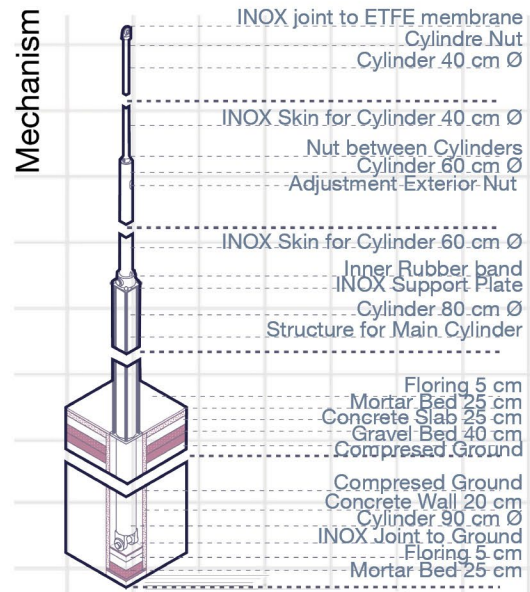
by incentivising resource management as part of the urban landscape. Giving these materials a permanent but evolving space in the city, creating new opportunities for community engagements where the waste cycle occupies a greater role in NYC urban life.





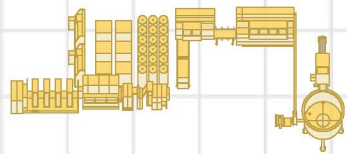
Currently, 23% of the sidewalks in most of the streets in New York city are occupied by trash bags. This is equivalent to 4 pounds of waste produced by every person every day, according to the collection schedule from the Department of Sanitation, which collects waste in the city every two days.



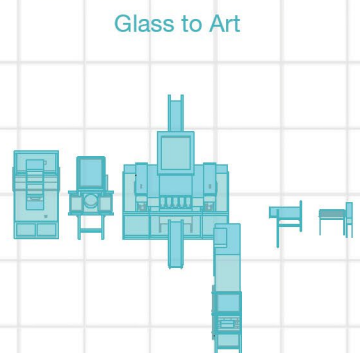


Sorting Process

240 000 Tons
 1 Group of machines to cover
 25% of the total production in
 Bronx

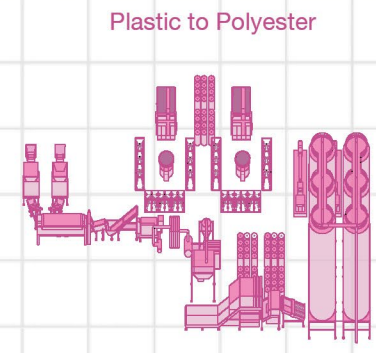


Paper to Books
 5 475 Tons
 4 Groups of machines to cover
 25% of the total production in
 Bronx



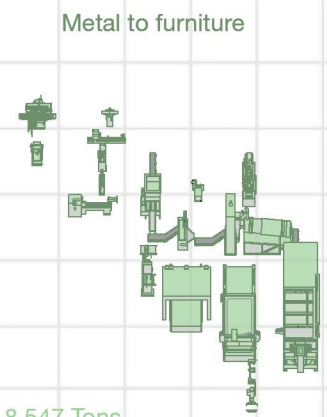
Glass to Art

6 570 Tons
 2 Groups of machines to cover
 25% of the total production in
 Bronx



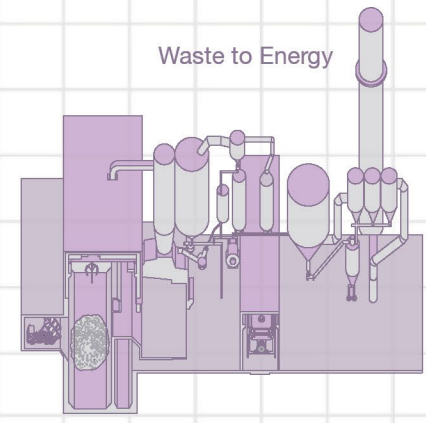
Plastic to Polyester

10 000 Tons
 3 Group of machines to cover
 100% of the total production in
 Bronx



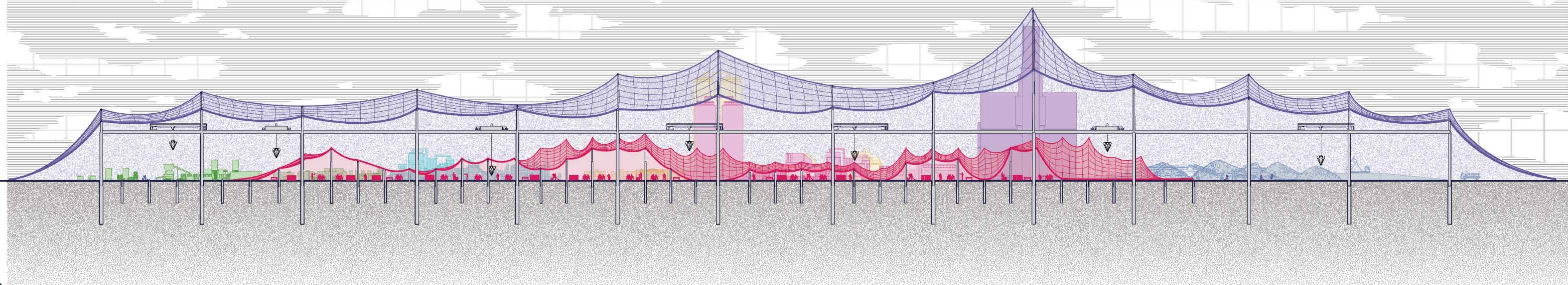
Metal to furniture

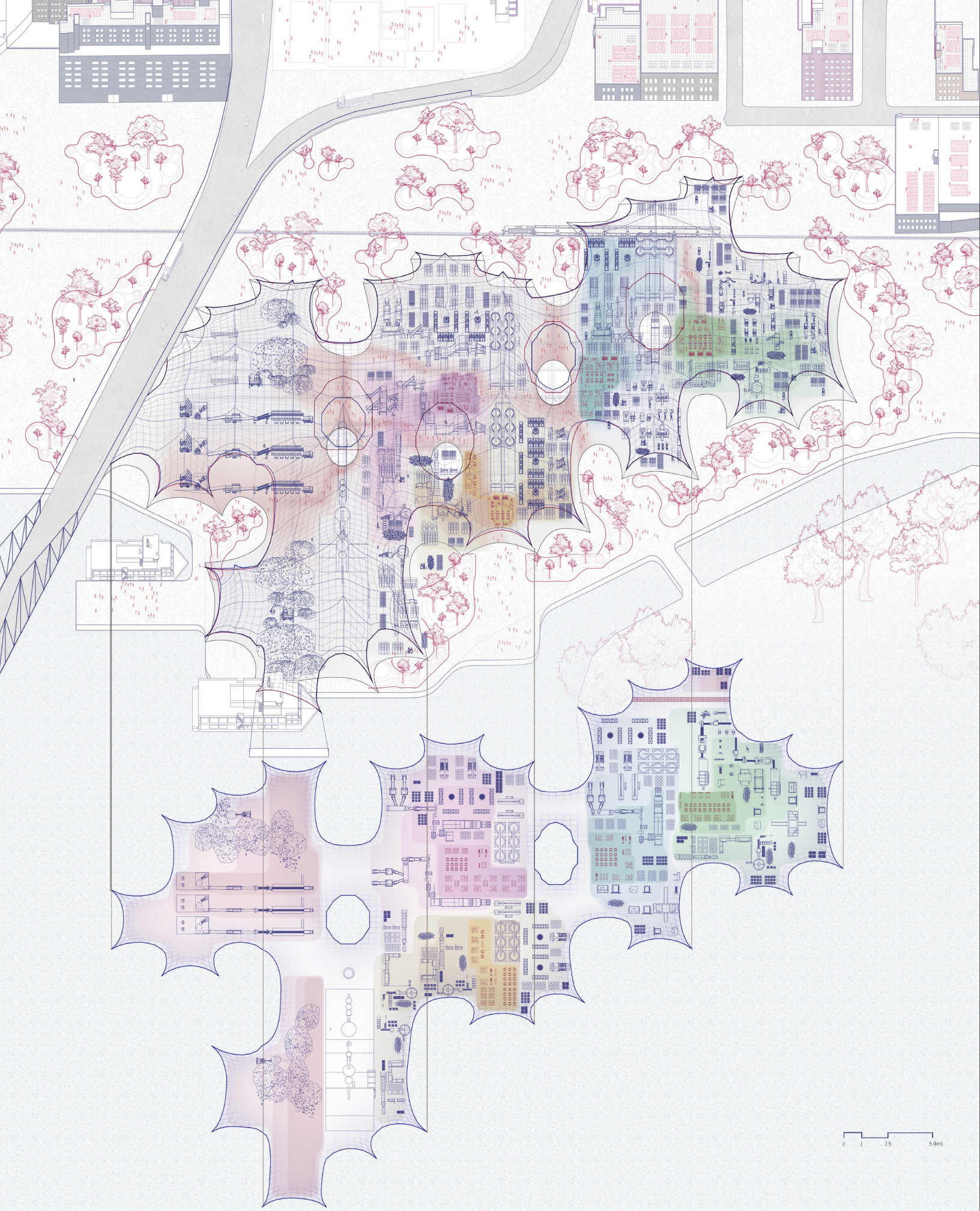
8 547 Tons
 2 Group of machines to cover
 100% of the total production in
 Bronx



Waste to Energy

130 000 Tons
 1 Group of machines to cover
 25% of the total production in
 Bronx





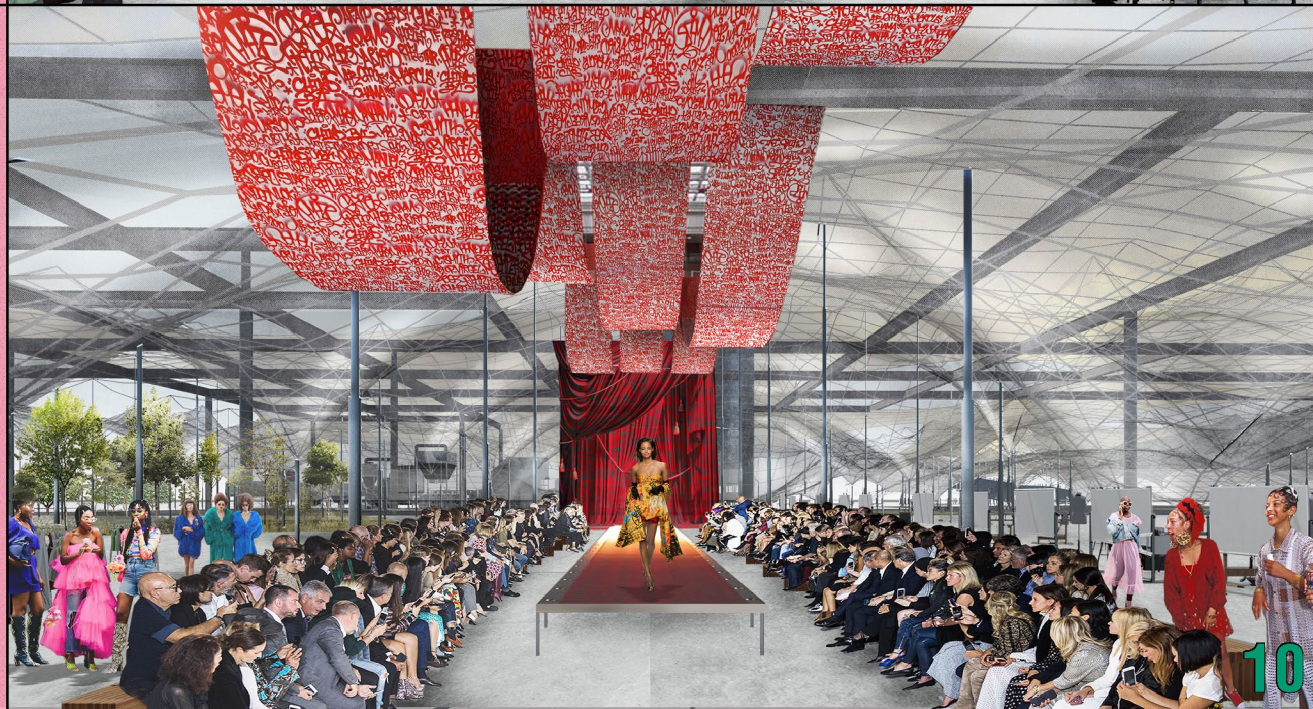
FIRST PHASE
LEARNING
(CLASSROOMS AND LABORATORIES)



SECOND PHASE
CREATING
(ATELIERS AND STUDIOS)



THIRD PHASE
EXHIBING AND PROFITING
(GALLERIES, AND FASHION SHOWS)





iHeart
RADIO

X-PRESS ABILITY

RE-PAINTING CANDEM BY FUNGI

Hilliards creek has a rich history when it comes to its paint industry, the same history that has permanently polluted the landscape of Camden. The lead component that was implemented in the former painting industry has damaged the soils of New Jersey.

Mushrooms have great bio-absorption capabilities, several species such as the oyster mushroom have the ability to absorb soil pollutants such as lead.

It is possible to think of a new food production alternative that will bring a brighter future to Camden, one that not only brings revenue but also cleans the soil.

The Hilliards creek landscape will be divided in stages and will also introduce new urban infrastructure such as new state of the art laboratories and responsible food production industries.

Painting the US

FROM YOUR FRIENDLY SHERWIN-WILLIAMS PAINT DEALER
82 West Street PITTSFIELD, MASS. Phone: 5667

In the mid-1880's, paint factories began springing up in population and industrial centers across the nation. Mechanization was making the manufacturing process accessible to a larger and less specialized group of entrepreneurs. Industry consensus standards limiting the use of lead pigments date back to the 1950s, when manufacturers led a voluntary effort to remove lead from house paints. Common house paints have contained little, if any, lead since then.

Welcome to Camden, NJ

FROM YOUR FRIENDLY SHERWIN-WILLIAMS PAINT DEALER
82 West Street PITTSFIELD, MASS. Phone: 5667

Dating back to the 19th century, the Superfund property was originally owned by Lucas Paint Works. Sherwin-Williams bought Lucas in the 1930s and expanded operations at the site. The facility was then closed in 1977 and sold to a developer in 1981.

The affected areas requiring cleanup include a 20-acre area where the former paint manufacturing plant operated, Hilliards Creek headquarters and other adjoining areas, which include approximately six residential properties. Hilliards Creek also flows through the site and into Kirkwood Lake. The plant's soil and groundwater are contaminated with lead, arsenic and volatile organic compounds, while the sediment in and near the creek contains lead and arsenic.

New circular economies

FROM YOUR FRIENDLY SHERWIN-WILLIAMS PAINT DEALER
82 West Street PITTSFIELD, MASS. Phone: 5667

Labels in diagram: Cap, Spore Print, Gills, Stalk, Mycelium, Soil/bed components, Metals, Metal complexes, Metal uptake by hyphae, Biochar Biofuel, Mushroom Cultivation, Mushroom Substrates, Ligno-cellulosic biomass, Agriculture Horticulture, Animal feed, Food and Medicine.

Superfund Mushroom Industries

FROM YOUR FRIENDLY SHERWIN-WILLIAMS PAINT DEALER
82 West Street PITTSFIELD, MASS. Phone: 5667

MAN, MACHINE AND THE INDUSTRIAL LANDSCAPE
FALL 2022

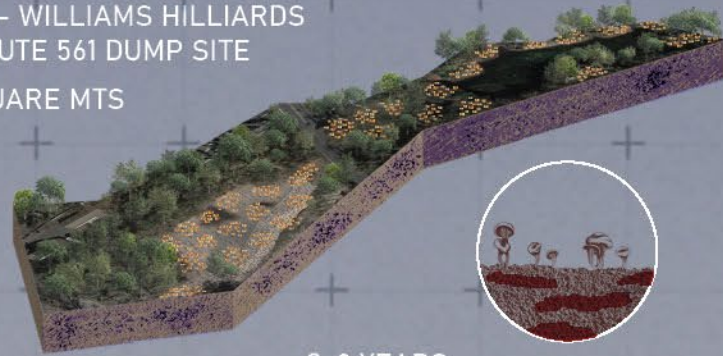
JAVIER FLORES

MENTOR:

SEAN A. GALLAGHER

(Director of Sustainable Design
at Diller Scofidio + Renfro)

INITIAL SITE:
 SHERWIN - WILLIAMS HILLIARDS
 CREEK ROUTE 561 DUMP SITE
 88,100 SQUARE MTS



0-3 YEARS

BIOCHAR PRODUCTION
 AVERAGE PRICE: \$9 PER M2

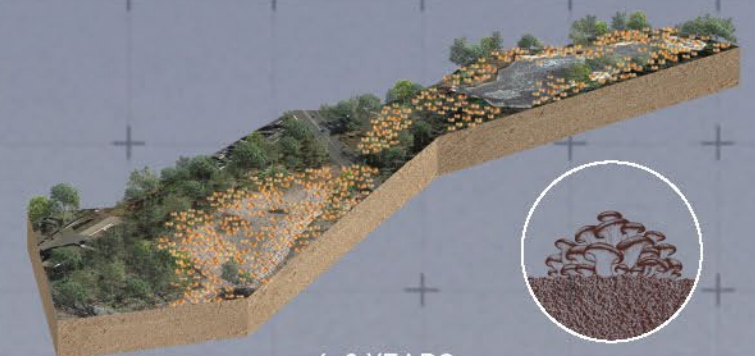
PRODUCTION VALUE IN 3 YEARS:
 \$2,378,700



3-6 YEARS

ANIMAL FOOD PRODUCTION
 AVERAGE PRICE: \$11 PER M2

PRODUCTION VALUE IN 3 YEARS:
 \$2,907,300



6-9 YEARS

FOOD PRODUCTION
 AVERAGE PRICE: \$15 PER M2

PRODUCTION VALUE IN 3 YEARS:
 \$3,964,500



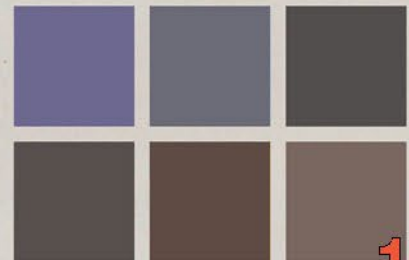
FROM YOUR FRIENDLY SHERWIN-WILLIAMS PAINT DEALER

Evolving landscapes

82 West Street

Phone: 5667

PITTSFIELD, MASS.





FROM YOUR FRIENDLY SHERWIN-WILLIAMS PAINT DEALER

Re-painting Camden by fungi

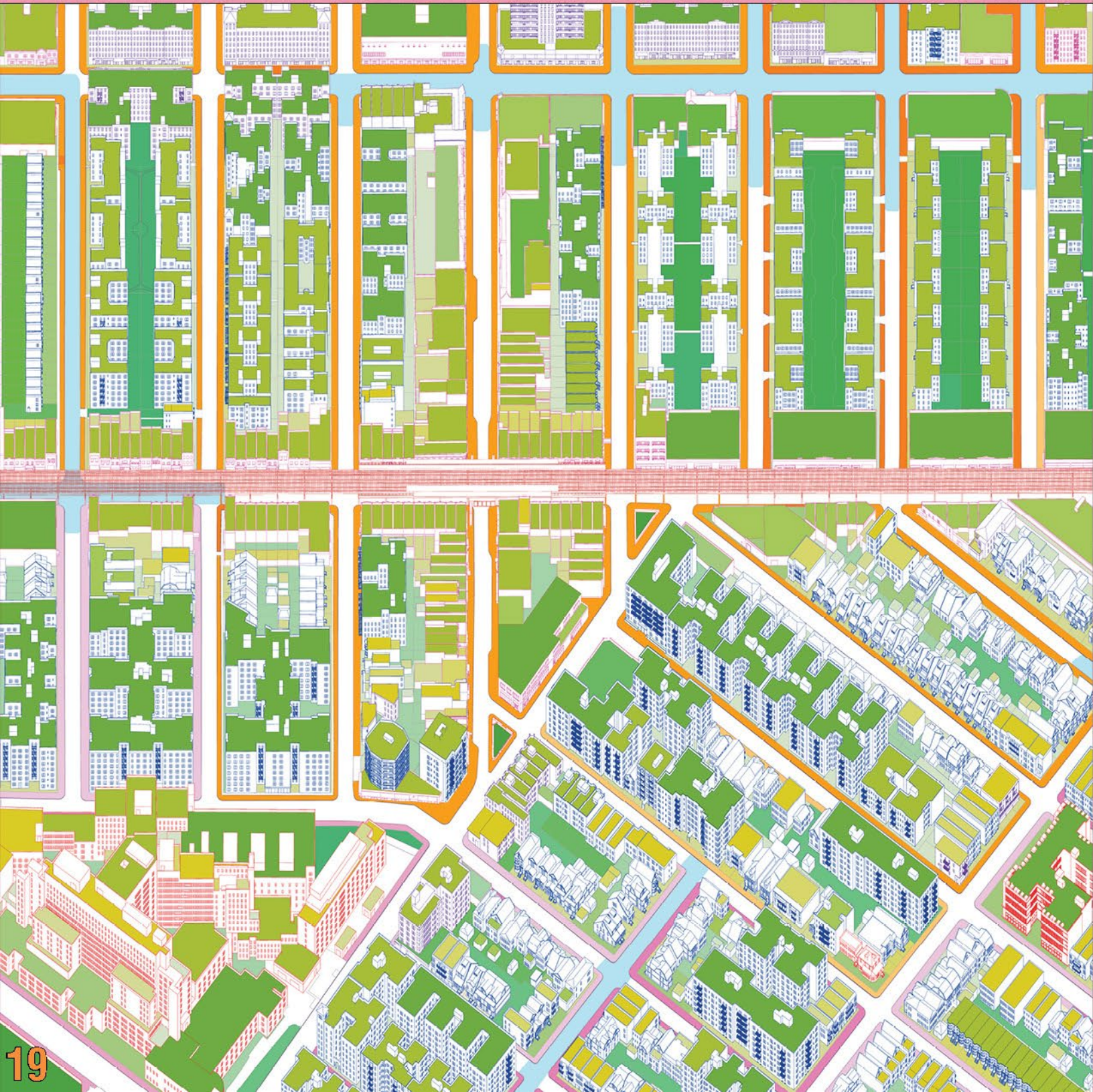
82 West Street

Phone: 5667

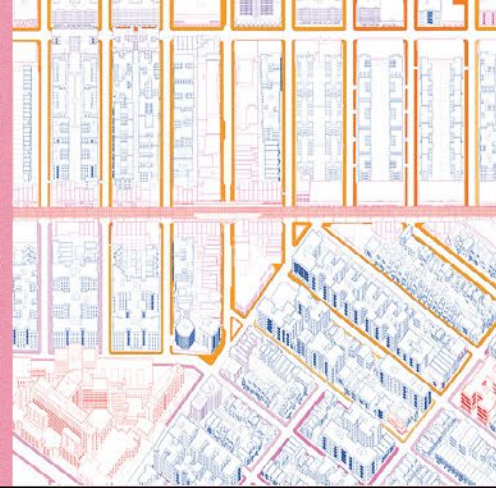
PITTSFIELD, MASS.



EAT JACKSON HEIGHTS



LAND USE / DENSITY / INCOME



SOLAR INCIDENCE



SPATIAL QUALITY / POTENTIAL



**STUDIO V
FALL 2022**

**JAVIER
FLORES**

MENTOR:

**JING
LIU**

(SO-IL)

Jackson Heights has become a clear example of an Anthropocene landscape, where the city has wiped out all existing green spaces and now is relying on external landscapes to survive. This project emerges as a response to “how it is possible to bring back a new conscious ecosystem where everything is already built?”

As there’s no space left, the project looks into the “liminal”, the forgotten areas, as a starting point for the creation of new structures capable of sustaining a new trans-species agricultural practice. These structures evoke a sense of communal agency where their configuration relies on small components that, as they come together, are capable of resisting heavy loads, acting as exoskeletons.

The structure is based on interlocked mass timber components that are able to reconfigure, reinforce and expand over time. The system is interlinked by tensile cables, providing structural independence, therefore not relying on or interfering with the existing urban landscape.

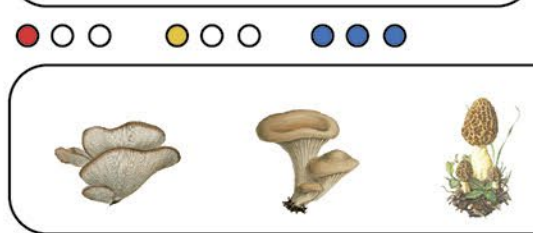
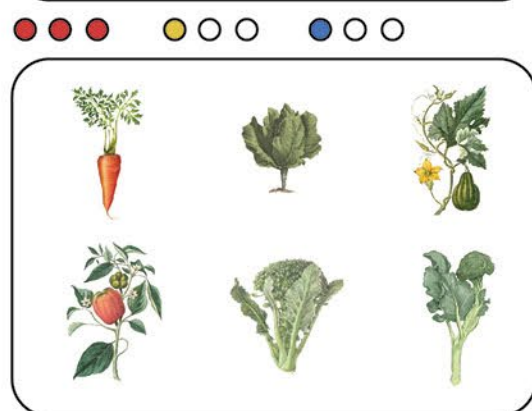
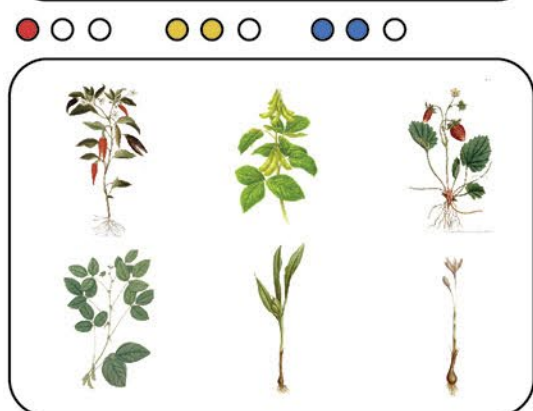
Furthermore, the project applies concepts of pixel farming and flexible fabrics which allow new species (fungi, pollinators, insects, and animals) to become part of this new ecosystem where humans act as part of it instead of above it. Transforming urban systems into small-scale, self-sustaining ecological communities.



GARDEN / STORE QUALITY DIFFERENCE

PRODUCTION PER SQUARE FOOT

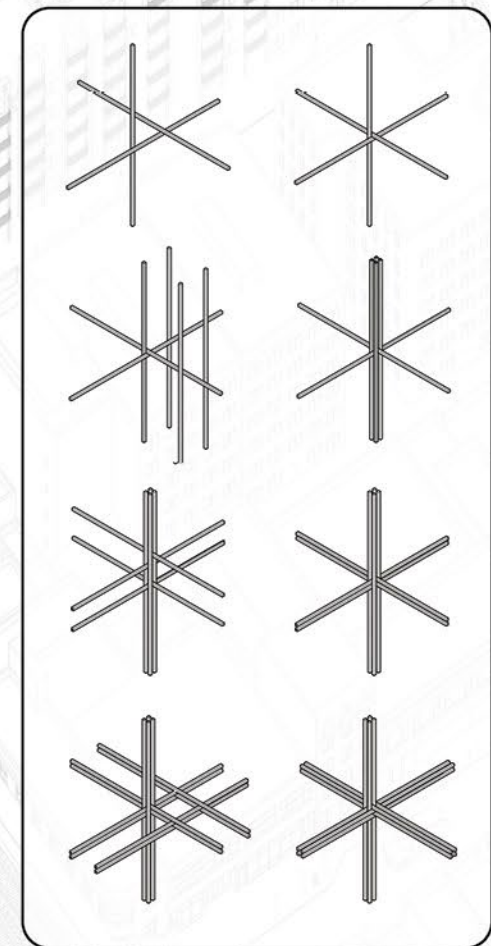
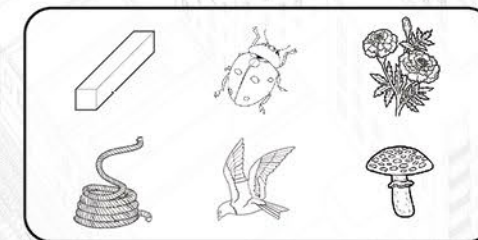
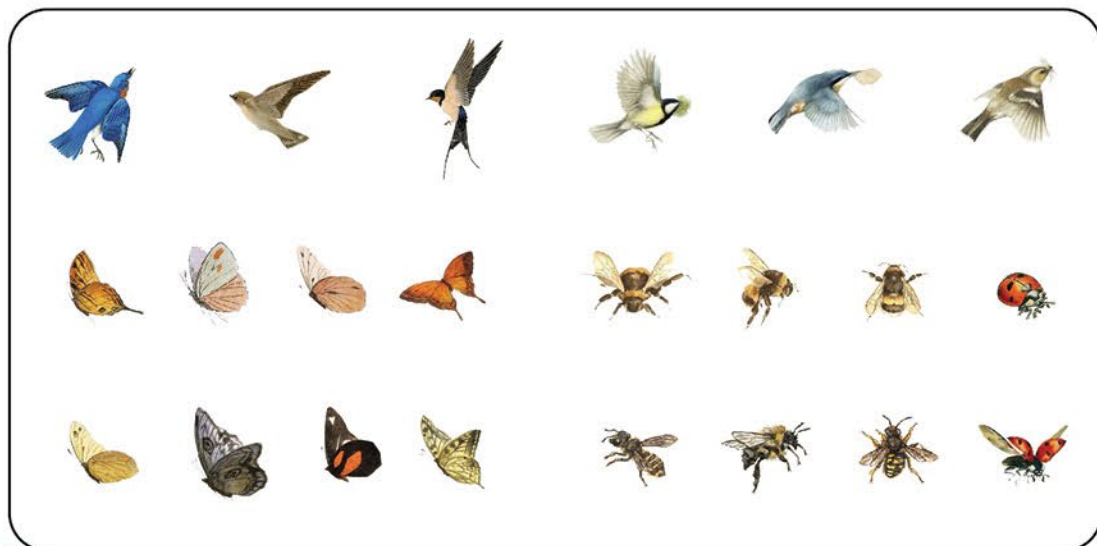
RELATIVE MONETARY VALUE



FUNGI

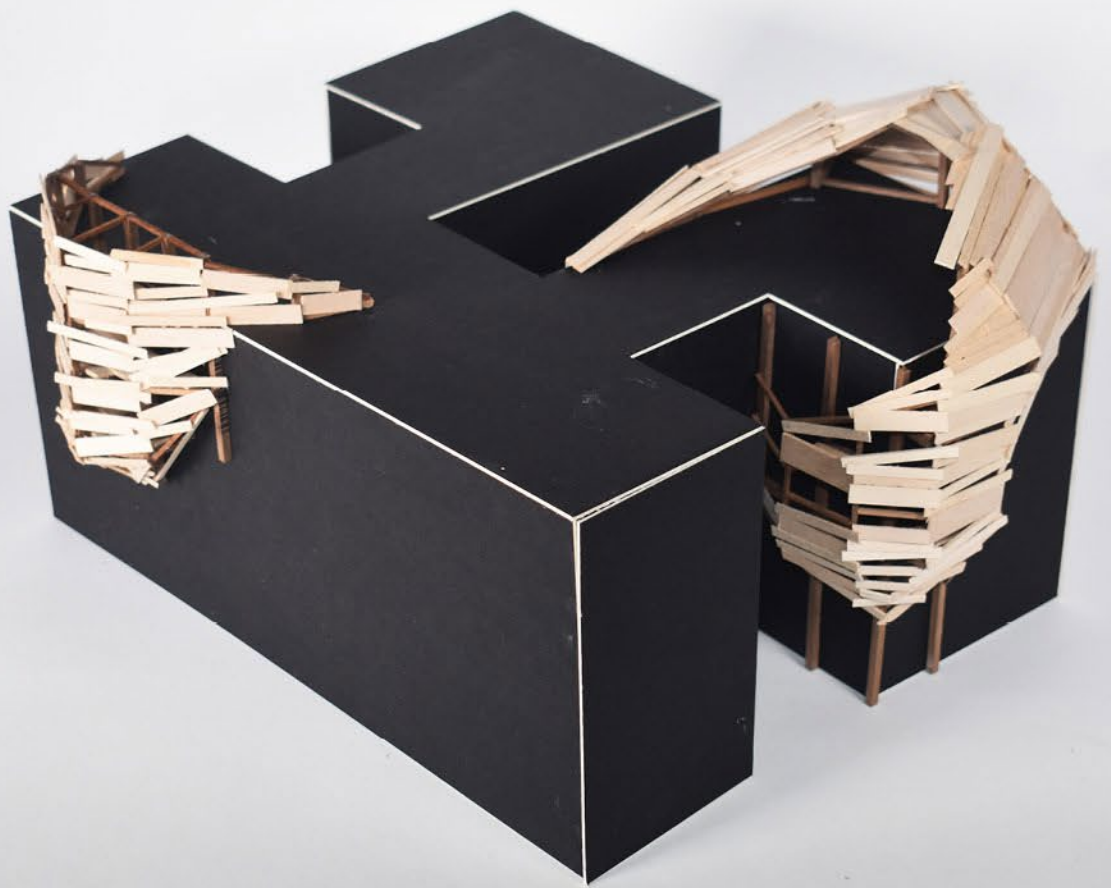


PERENNIALS





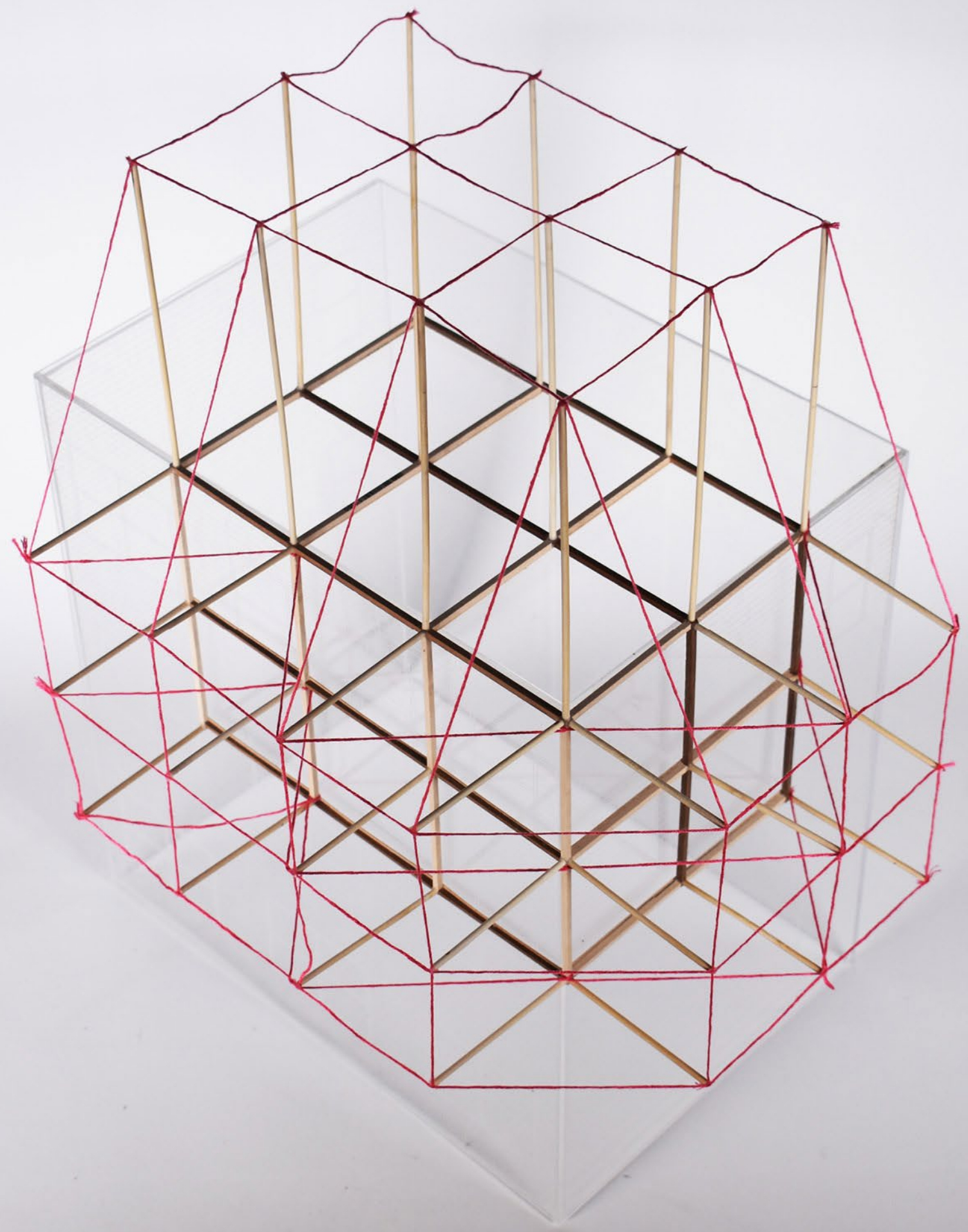
MODEL EXPERIMENTATION 1



MODEL EXPERIMENTATION 2

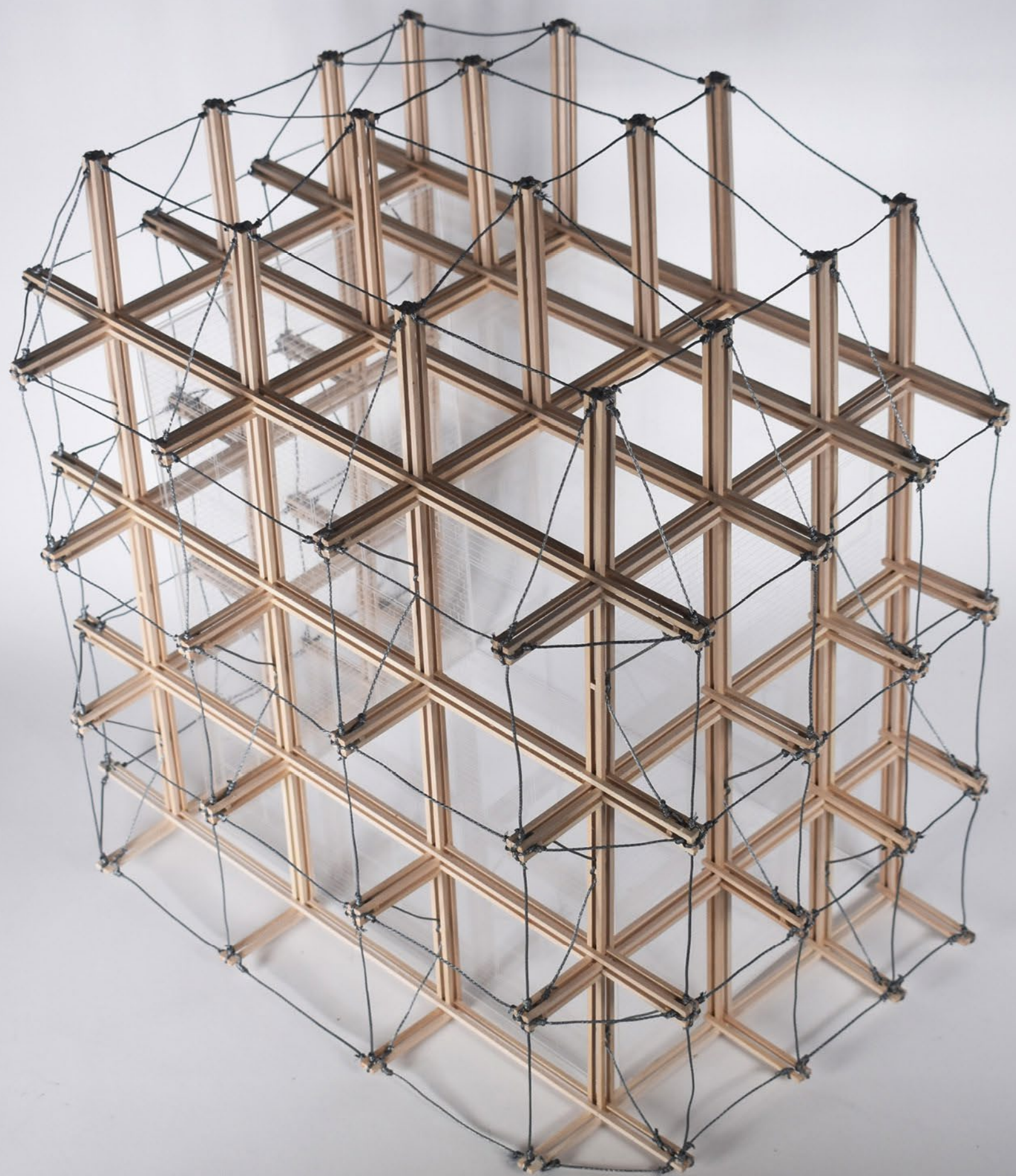
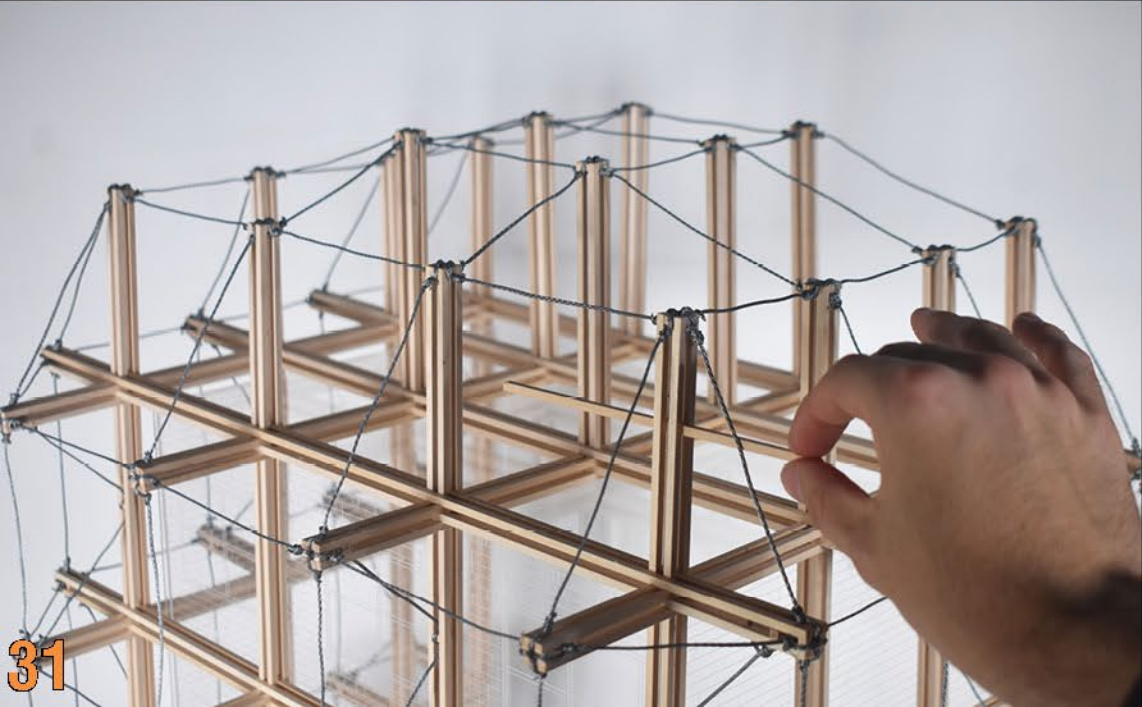
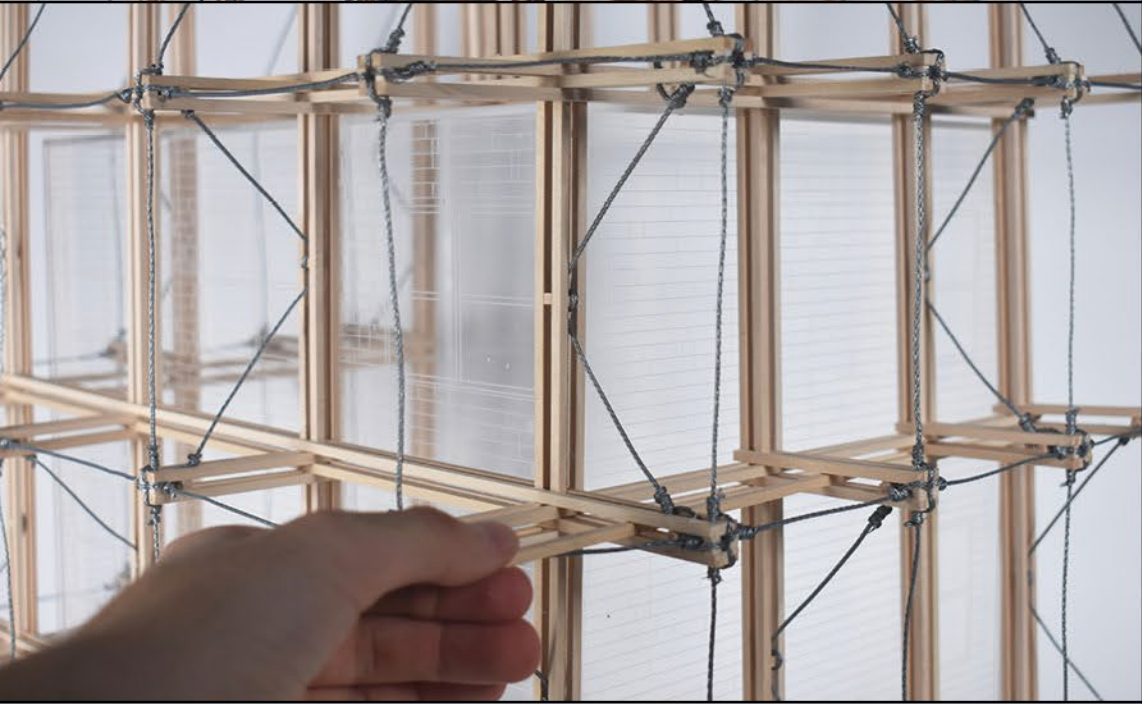
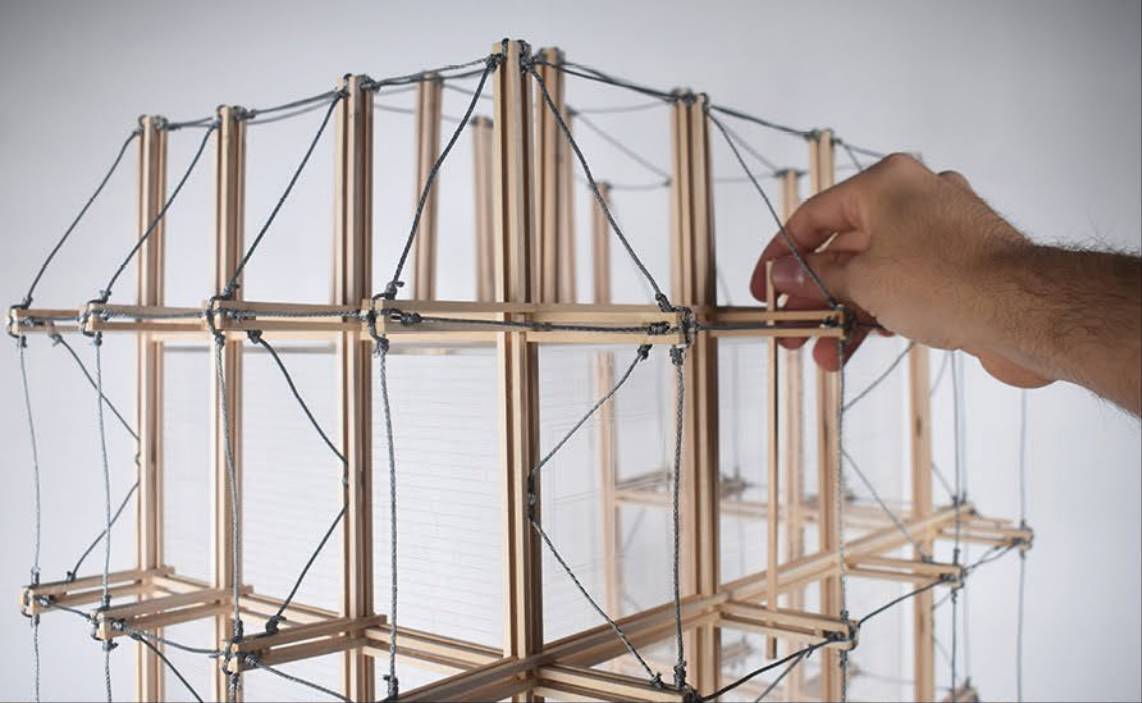


MODEL EXPERIMENTATION 3









IMMEASURABLE SITES
SPRING 2023

JAVIER FLORES

GYEOM CHUNG

MENTOR:
EMANUEL ADMASSU (AD-WO)

The primary objective of the course is to explore sites and methodologies that transcend conventional measures and boundaries.

Through the examination of visual and conceptual arts, we investigated the strategies of opacity, occlusion, and abstraction.

By delving into interdisciplinary areas such as black studies, decoloniality, contemporary art, and cultural geography, we can initiate critical reflection and action against knowledge systems based on measurement, categorization, and bordering. Throughout the course, a drawing was created each week, stimulating further discourse on these subjects.

For the culmination of the course, we were given the task of exploring two practices that encompassed the discussions and obstacles we encountered during our weekly class sessions.

The chosen subjects for analysis were the artist Pierre Huyghe and the architectural firm Bruther.

Our aim was to dive deeper into their practices, not only examining their projects, but also unraveling their belief systems, visions, goals, and methodologies.

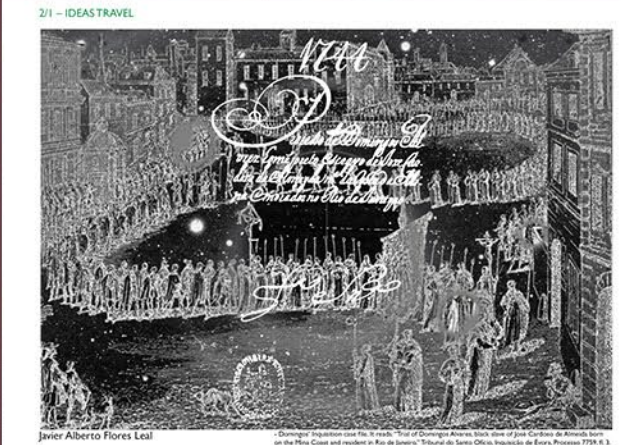
Once the analysis was completed, we developed a concept for a hybrid practice. One significant aspect we aimed to further explore in this new approach is their shared commitment to challenging the concept of "control." Pierre achieves this through the incorporation of interspecies actors in his artworks, while Bruther achieves it by designing structures that embrace flexibility and evolution.

The practice we have conceived challenges the prevailing concept of hermeticism in constructed spaces, initiating a transformative process that converts buildings and public areas into dynamic organisms capable of defying control.



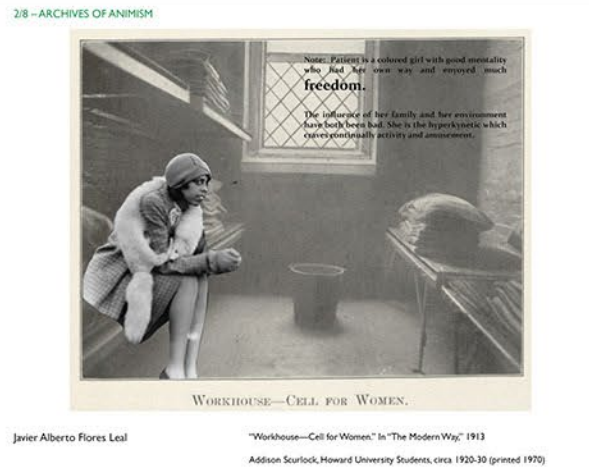
1/25 - NOMADIC IMAGES
Javier Alberto Flores Leal
John Baptist DE LA SALLE, Giovanni Gagliardi 1900

FOCAULT, MICHEL
"DOCILE BODIES"
IN DISCIPLINE AND PUNISH



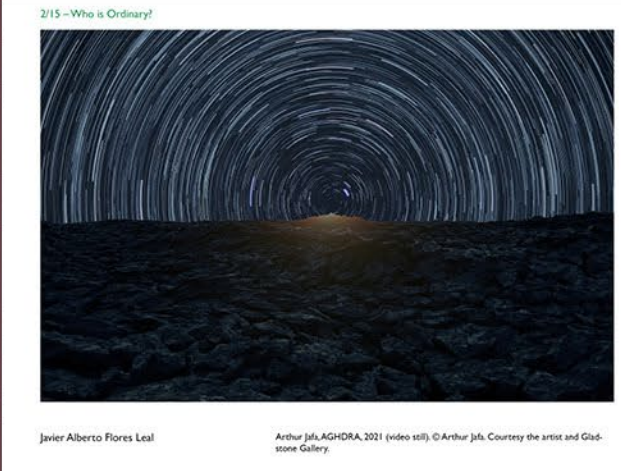
2/1 - IDEAS TRAVEL
Javier Alberto Flores Leal

SHEZAD DAWOOD
"BLACK
SUN: ALCHEMY, DISPORA AND
HETEROTOPIA"



2/8 - ARCHIVES OF ANIMISM
Javier Alberto Flores Leal
"Workhouse—Cell for Women." In "The Modern Way," 1913
Addison Scurlock, Howard University Students, circa 1920-30 (printed 1970)

HARTMAN, SAIDIYA
"THE ANARCHY OF COLORED
GIRLS"



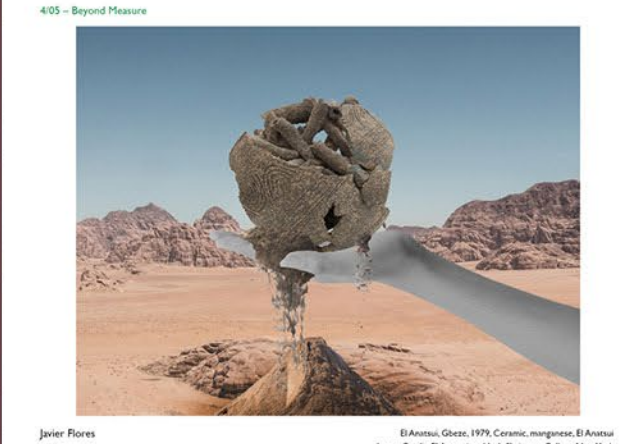
2/15 - Who is Ordinary?
Javier Alberto Flores Leal
Arthur Jafa, AGHDRA, 2021 (video still) © Arthur Jafa. Courtesy the artist and Gladstone Gallery.

SEXTON, JARED
"TROUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS"
ARTHUR JAJA MAGNUMB



3/22 - (Il)legible Form
Javier Alberto Flores Leal
Karen Knorr, The Pencil of Nature, 1994.

STANLEY
WOLUKAU-WANAMBA
"(W)HOLE"



4/05 - Beyond Measure
Javier Flores
El Anatsui, Obese, 1999, Ceramic, manganese, El Anatsui
Image Credit: El Anatsui and Jack Shorman Gallery, New York

OGUIBW, OLU
"EL ANATSUI: BEYOND DEATH
AND NOTHINGNESS"

SHATTERING THE BRIDGE

IF BUILDINGS COULD TALK
SPRING 2023

JAVIER FLORES

VICTORIA SHAY

FLORIANNE JACQUES

KRITI SHIVAGUNDE

VALENTINA JARAMILLO

MENTOR:

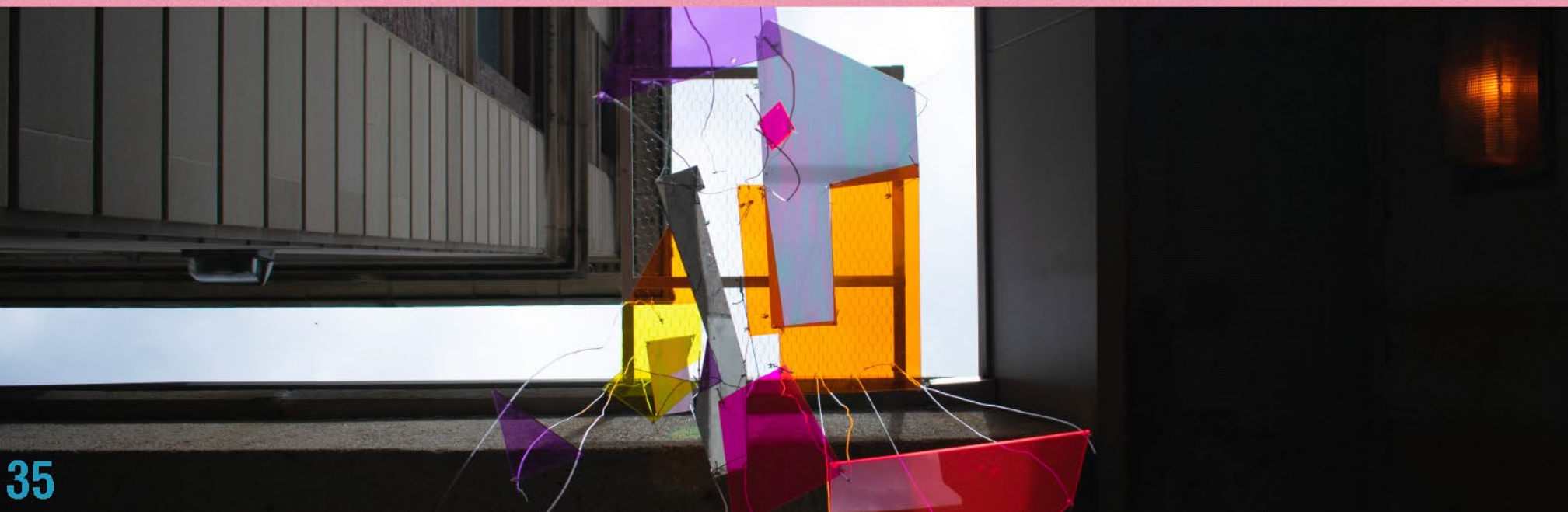
SHARON AYALON
(Cornell Tech)

Columbia University's imposition on Harlem threatens its culturally diverse heritage by encroaching neighborhood boundaries that diminish community belonging, ownership, local economies and its historical contributions to art, architecture, music, and cuisine. Its growing institutional wealth and population is further fueling this gentrification of homes, businesses and several acres of historical buildings to which the general Columbia Community is unaware of and blind to.

While bridges typically connect spaces and people, Revson Plaza, an elevated overpass above Amsterdam Avenue that connects Columbia's main campus buildings, disconnects the surrounding neighborhood communities from access to public spaces. This site exemplifies the existing physical boundaries that segregate Harlem from the rest of Manhattan's predominantly white neighborhoods - while dousing the street below with darkness.

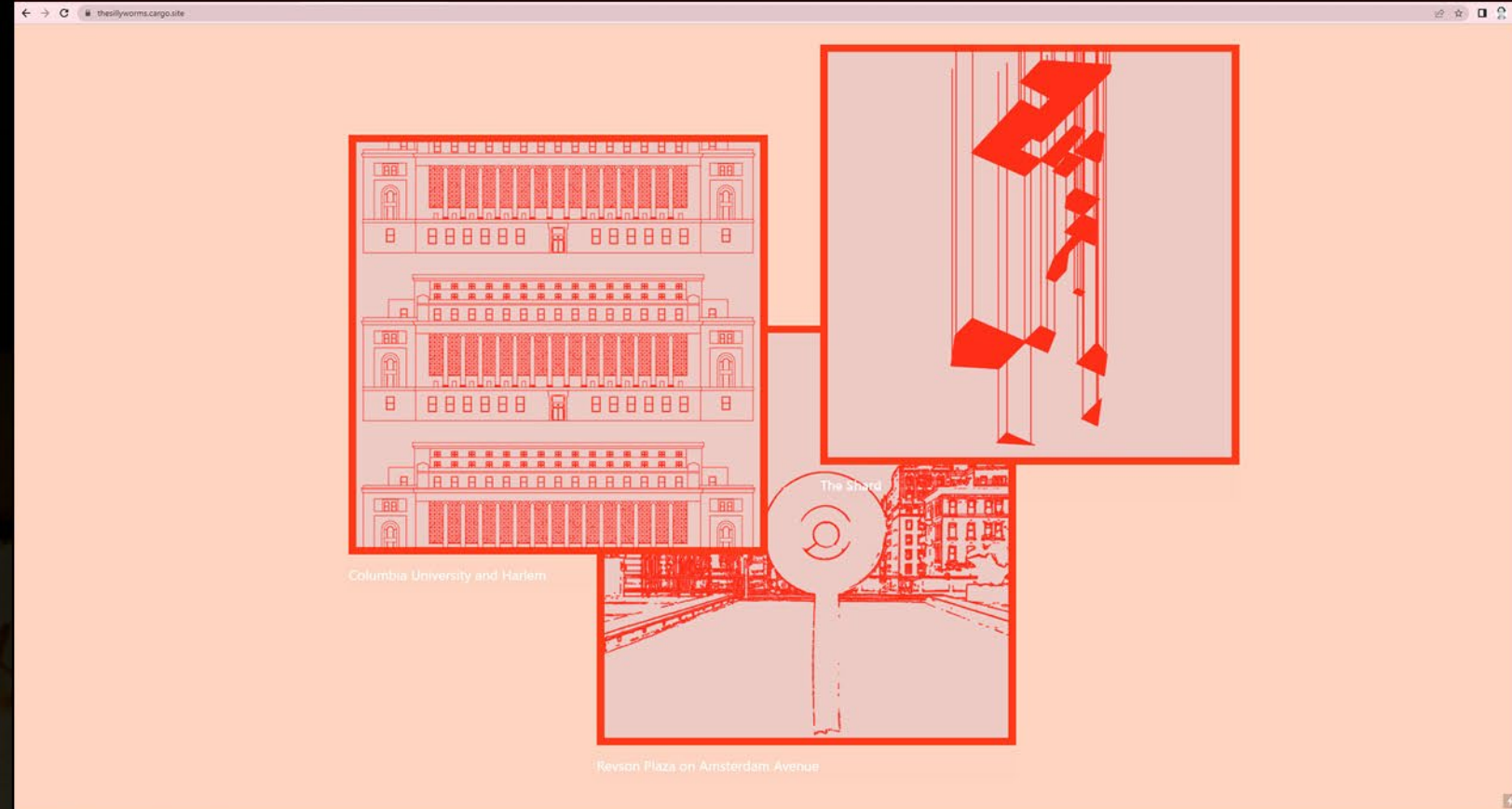
The project attempts to highlight this physical separation that Revson Plaza forms which symbolizes the larger inequity faced by

the residents of Harlem. The installation is a hybrid apparatus that plays with color and light to engage Columbians, commuters and workers who use the spaces above and below. The cantilevered reflective glass assembly suspends in the transitional space between the sidewalk and bridge. Derived from hard data on Harlem's periodical gentrification, the work abstracts the neighborhood zones into layered shards of glass, with the stable neighborhood layers towards the top that gradually descend to the gentrified neighborhood layers at the base. The viewers experience the piece differently depending on where they are situated on the site; from the ground, one can sense the overpowering presence of Columbia's institutional imposition, and from the top, you can see the longstanding repercussions of gentrification caused by the University's continual expansion. "Shattering the bridge" intends to bring to light this reality of Columbia's role in gentrifying Upper Manhattan.





Furthermore, the project also comes with a website, which users are able to have access by visiting the sculpture, this website has become the main source of internal information that will wrap all the invisible narratives that have been part of the gentrification of upper Manhattan.



The Shard

Ongoing Exclusion

Columbia University's prime location in Morningside Heights is an ever-encroaching growth into Harlem's historical occupancy. Through data sourced from urbandisplacement.org, The Shard is a hanging installation visualizing the gentrification and displacement data with translucent, mirrored and polychromatic acrylics at Revson Plaza. Derived from hard data on Harlem's periodical gentrification, the work abstracts the neighborhood zones into layered shards of glass, with the stable neighborhood layers towards the top that gradiently descend to the gentrified neighborhood layers at the base. The viewers experience the piece differently depending on where they are situated on the site; from the ground, one can sense the overpowering presence of Columbia's institutional imposition, and from the top, you can see the longstanding repercussions of gentrification caused by the University's continual expansion. The Shard intends to bring to light this reality of Columbia's role in gentrifying Upper Manhattan.

SHATTERING
THE
BRIDGE





Usually bridges are meant to connect but in this case is the whole opposite, that's why the project becomes an attempt to destroy an imposing bridge by breaking the physical boundaries through an art piece that is born from the history of the urban unfairness and institutional impositions.

HAUNTED LANDSCAPES AND THE NEW AUTOCH- THONOUS

STUDIO VI
SPRING 2023

JAVIER FLORES
KRITI SHIVAGUNDE

MENTORS:
MIREIA LUZARRAGA
ALEJANDRO MUIÑO
(TAKK Architecture)
ANDREA MOLINA

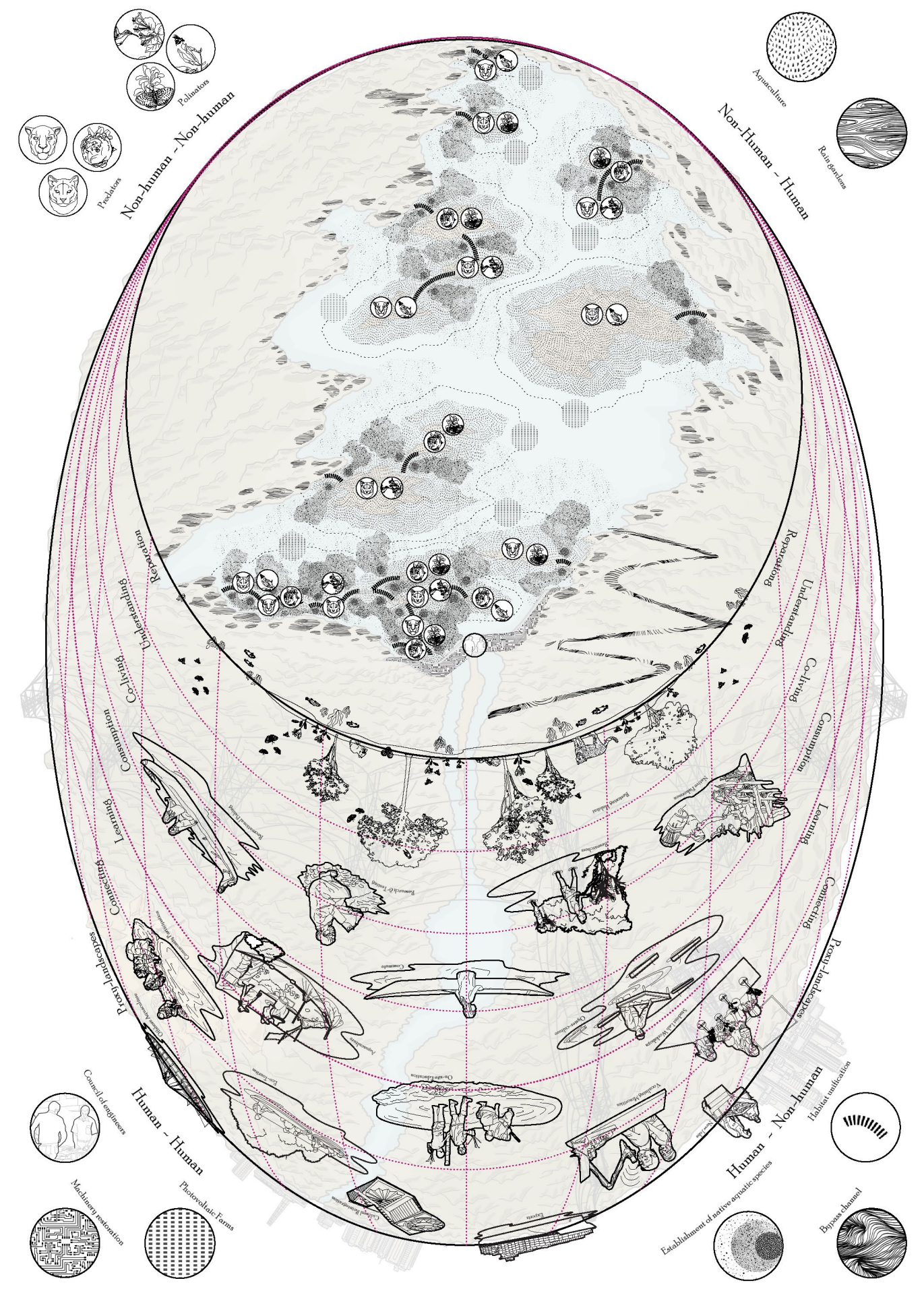
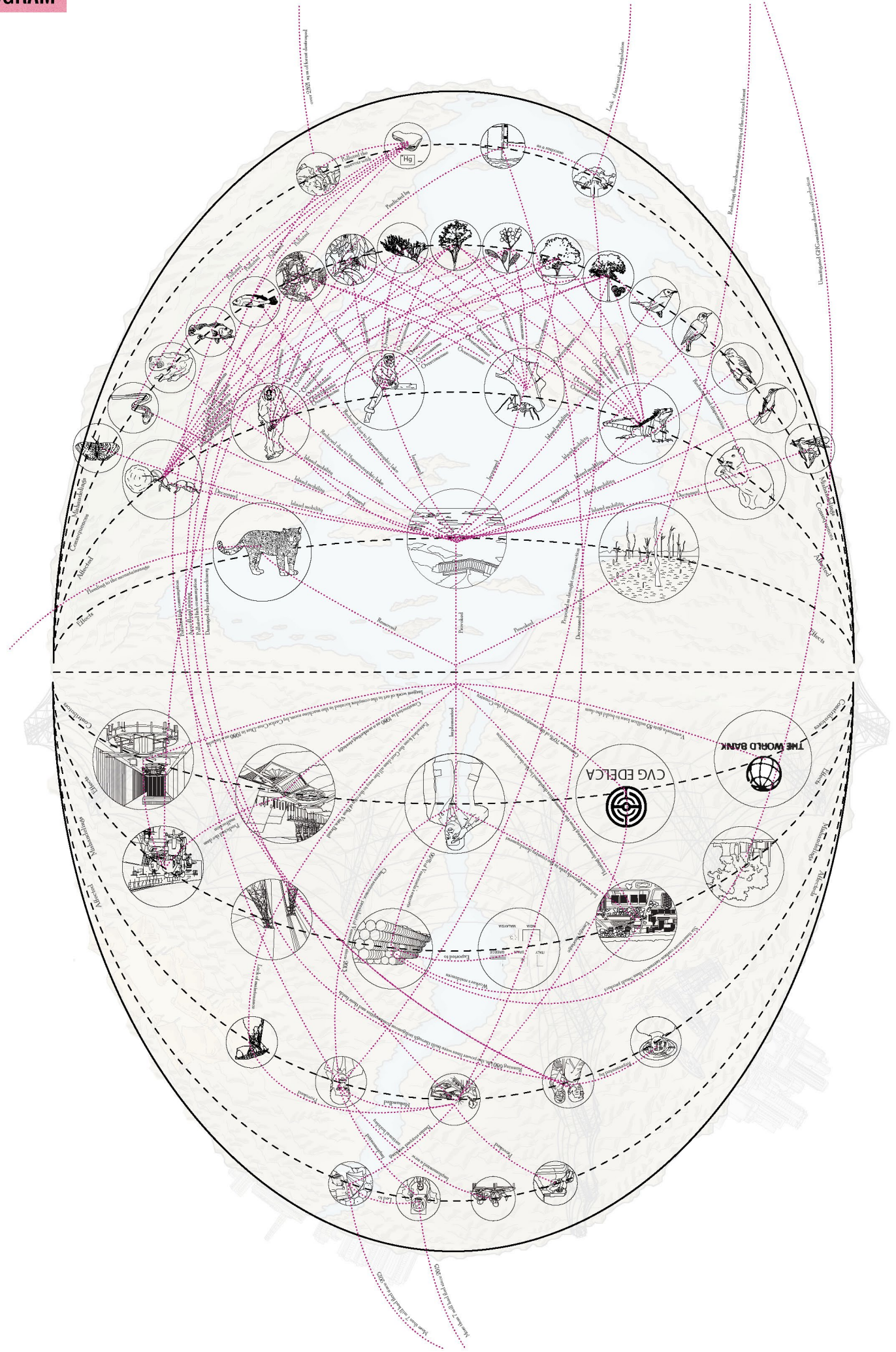
Defragmenting the islands of Guri Lake through temporal systems of habitat reparation

The heart of Venezuela's electricity system is built on the Caroní River just before it pours into the mythical Orinoco, a reflective pool with a 4,000 square kilometer surface area that feeds the Simón Bolívar hydroelectric plant (Guri Dam) which in turn provides 70% of Venezuela's electricity. Over a decade ago, the Venezuelan government issued the electrical emergency decree. Ever since, Guri has been at the center of controversy over the causes behind frequent power outages.

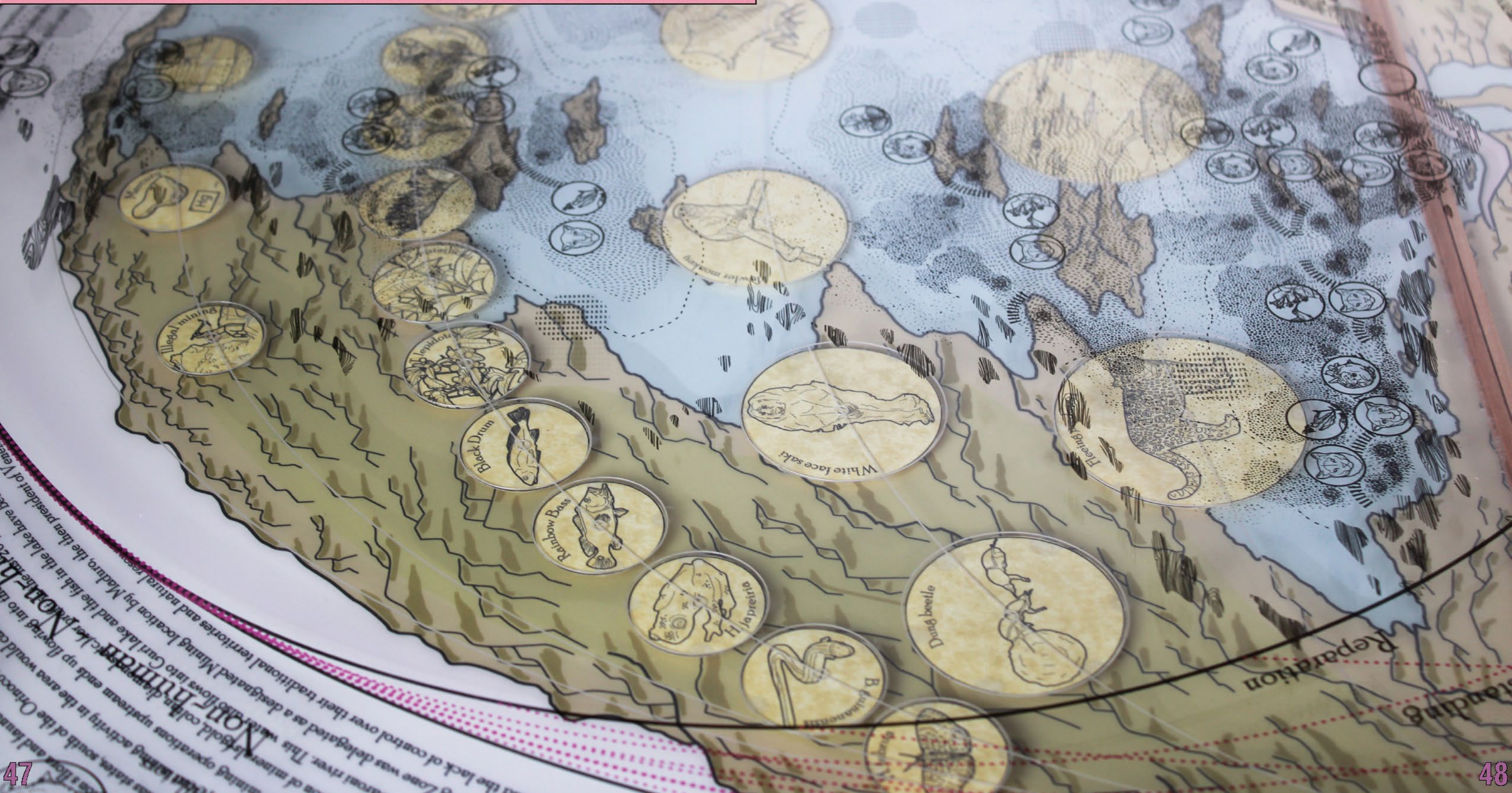
The Guri Dam finds itself symbolically and geographically located at the conjunction of urbanization and the tropical ecology of Venezuela. The cosmogram identifies the various socio, economic, political and ecological actors that impact and are impacted by the reservoirs and highlights their interconnected identities to flesh out a map of butterfly effects.

The many actors involved in this cosmogram of Impacts and Impacted offer multiple opportunities of intervention that could help the Guri Lake and its tangible and intangible environment.



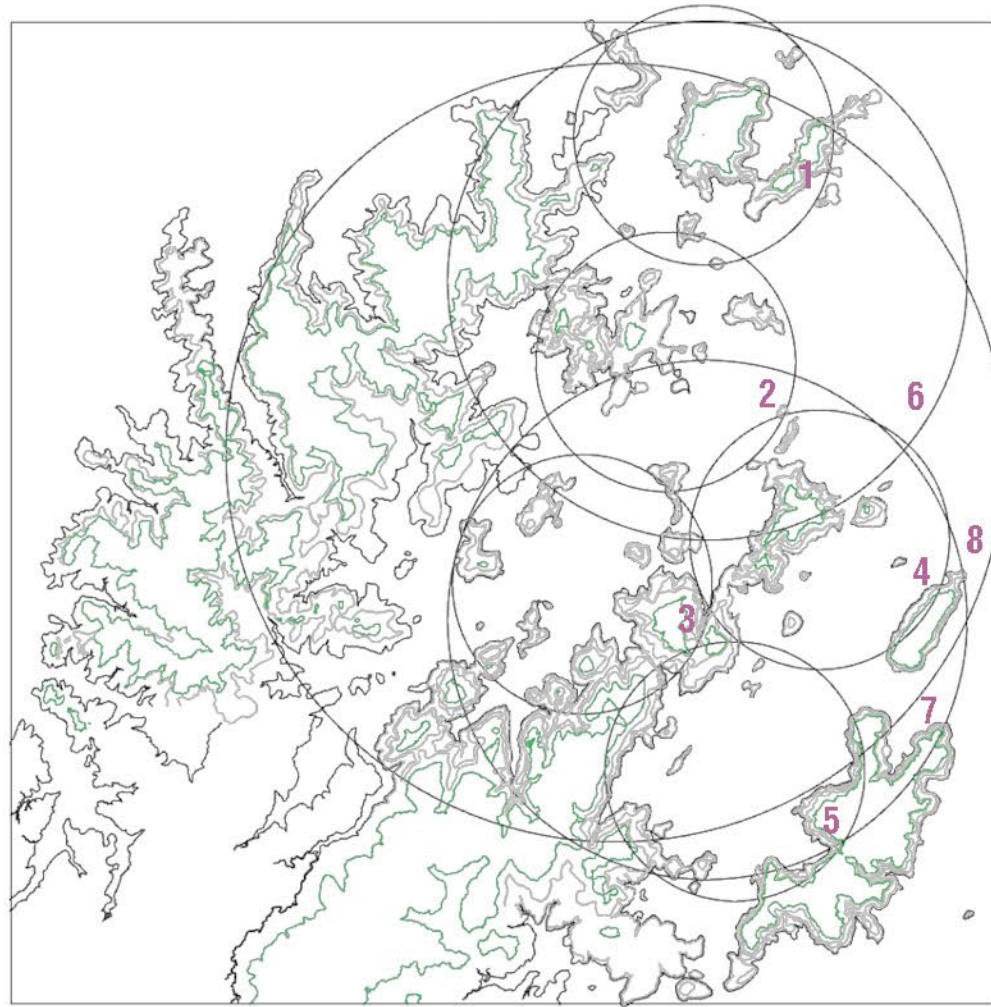


The aquatic landscape of Guri, which is the Guri lake, is a newly formed landscape that did not exist before the construction of Guri Dam. The shift of this ecology has in turn created a habitat for species that now belong in this lake ecosystem - researchers call such species as Neonatives or the New Autochthonous. Restoring the habitat of Guri Lake is as much bringing back the vegetation of the hills that existed before as it is the controlled insertion of a new yet important biodiversity of the aforementioned neonatives. Extensive research on fragmented landscapes shows that connecting these separate habitats is one of the most crucial necessities for the survival of the species inhabiting them.

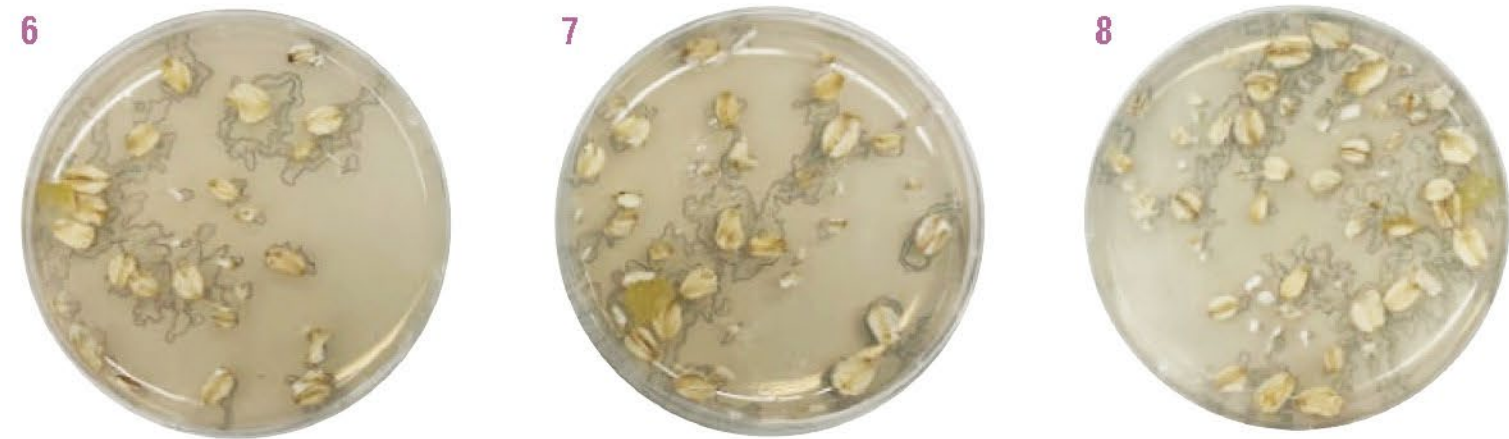


After mapping out our islands, we identified a broader site to place our intervention, and began to narrow it down further. (Danto Manchado, a pseudo mainland, and the surrounding islands)

Slime molds are a species of intelligent fungi/mold that have assisted in optimal way finding operations in urban planning - especially the Tokyo metro system - due to their methods of connecting points efficiently. Using slime mold to identify effective connections between our islands we were able to further zone into our site, tracing the lines of mold to form the lines of our design.



1 km Radius



2 km Radius

3 km Radius

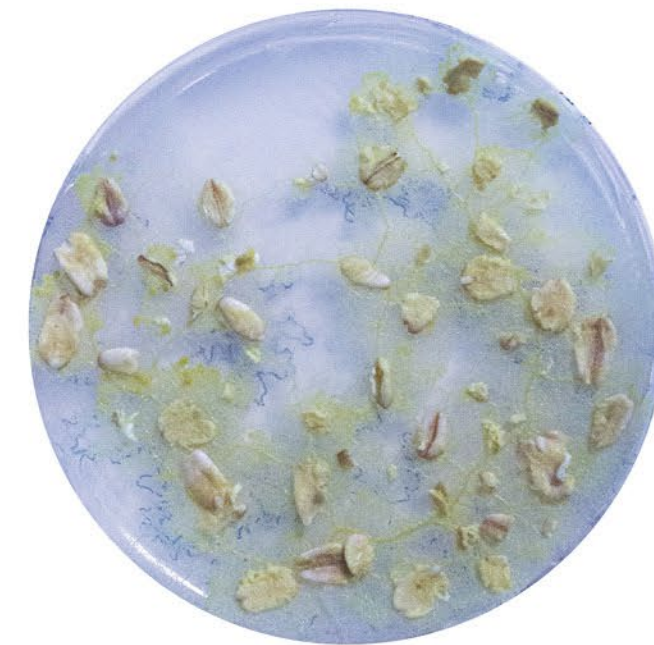
SLIME MOLD LAST PHASE



Petri No. 2
1km Radius



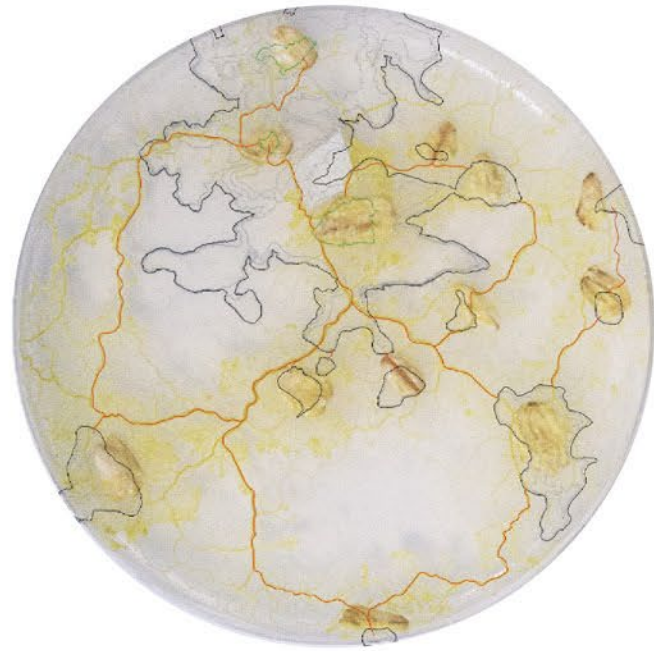
Petri No. 7
2km Radius



Petri No. 8
3km Radius



Photographic Documentation



Tracing



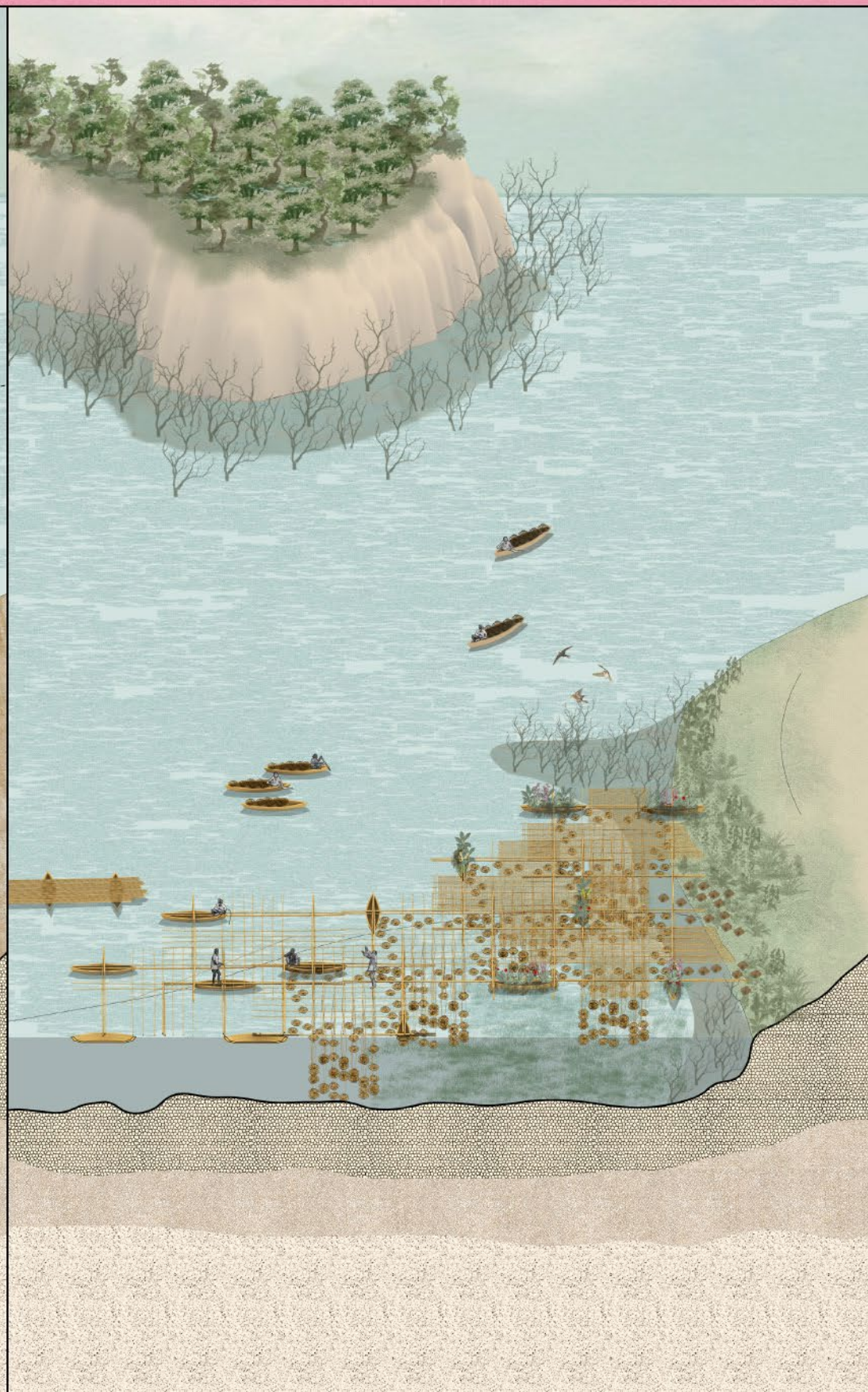
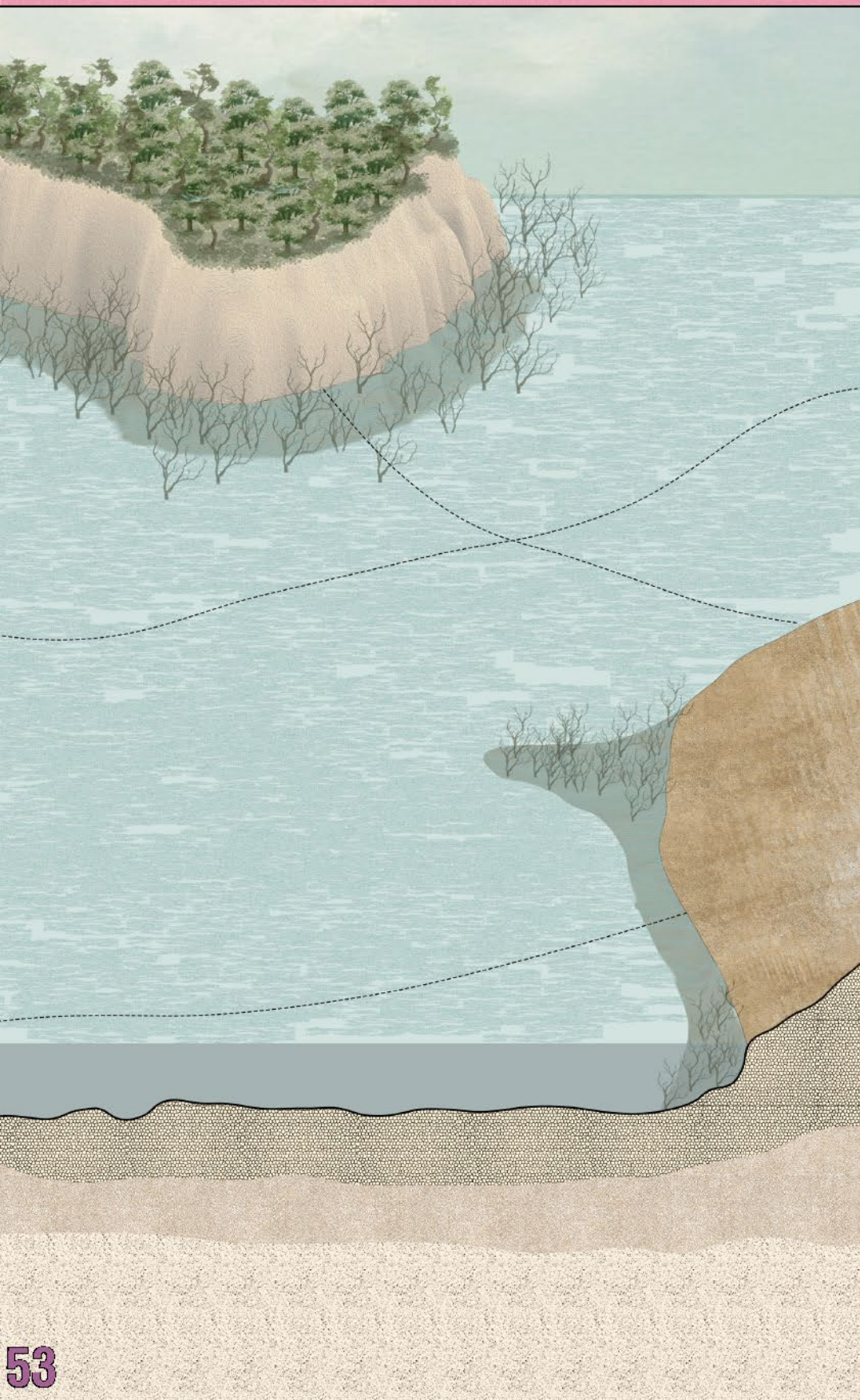
Abstraction and Superposition



RAFT INTERLOCKING EXPLORATION

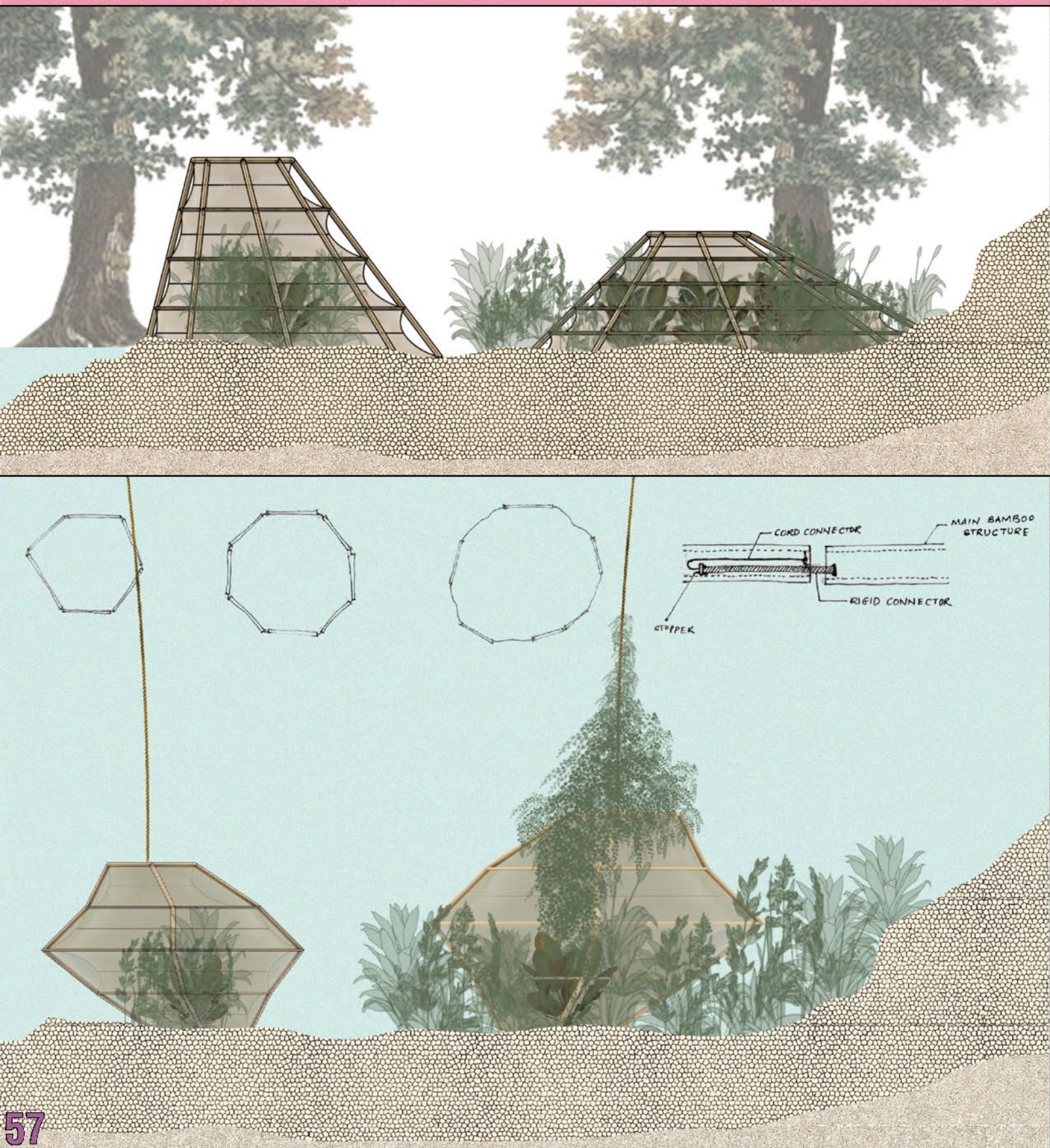


The species to be introduced and reintroduced are enclosed in a system of protection that unravels over time, decaying into organic matter as the species within grow and reproduce. These “pods” are connected to a deployment raft floating on the surface of the water. The raft is an interlocking grid of bamboo sourced within the forests of Guri, and worked upon by the Pemon and Warao communities, floating atop dug-out canoes. The pods and their connector ropes are deployed into the water from the raft, and overtime, the water currents intertwine the pods to form porous entanglements underwater. The pods are designed as a collapsible bamboo apparatus held together with layers of Moriche fabric screens; the dissolution of the fabric over time in the water expands the pods, until only the bamboo structure remains and the plants grow beyond the constraints of the pod. The structures left behind as well as the entangled rope connectors act as collectors of sediment that gradually solidify into a freshwater reef, offering habitat for the aquatic species. The pods deployed on ground operate through decay, collapsing the structure, flattening it over time, allowing the plants to grow out of it. The autochthonous species introduced on site are classified as Floating, Intermediate, or Underwater species, further classified based on their methods of reproduction (Through rocks, vegetative, seed dispersal through water, seed dispersal, seed dispersal by other species).





The deployed raft is then connected to a new raft, and as newer rafts connect to the older deployed grids, the islands are bridged, with the surface acting as wildlife walkways between the fragmented ecosystem. The Guri Lake ecosystem is an unintentionally created experimental landscape, and to protect the species inhabiting these islands and the aquatic inbetweens is also an experimental endeavor that is constantly studied and supervised by researchers, aided by the government in reparation efforts.



Rotor - Manifesta 12 - Pizzo Sella

The value of a public space lies in its relationship with its citizens, through this process, a collective memory is embedded in the building's materiality. Palermo offers a good example on how memory can also diminish a space. Pizzo Sella, the highest peak in the area, offers breathtaking views of the cliffs, sea and the city. However, it is recognized not from its scenery but from its controversial history. A surreal landscape composed of abandoned structures evokes a time when real estate corruption plagued the city in the 1980s through collaborations between the Italian mafia and the municipal administration. These ruins had permanently damaged the landscape of the hill, currently referred to by the Palermitans as "the hill of shame". In 2018 Palermo became the venue for the nomadic art biennial "Manifesta", bringing together various artists and architects to intervene in several areas of the city. One of those participants, the Belgian firm Rotor, selected Pizzo Sella for the site of their project. In an interview with the magazine Domus Rotor (2018) stated: "Our aim is to transform Pizzo Sella into a gigantic machine to change the perspective of Palermo. We want to restore people's relationship with the landscape of the hill,". Through their proposal they seek to reinvent the historic memory of the landscape by changing the programmatic use of these abandoned spaces as a way to demonstrate that a built landscape doesn't need to change its materiality for it to change its meaning.

Their project "Da quassù e tutta un'altra cosa," or "From up here it's a whole other story," consisted of an environmental intervention that presents Pizzo Sella through a pathway of storytelling; a hiking trail created through rediscovering existing paths that originally led to the top of the hill, and the reuse of one of the abandoned structures into an observatory, offering striking views of Palermo to the people; The intervention is still being used even after the conclusion of the Biennial, becoming a place that starts to enhance the emancipation and accountability of its citizens. The project can be seen on various youtube videos and on sites like Tripadvisor, Wikiloc and Alltrails, revealing how locals are continuing to engage with this landscape, but also raising the question if the project only worked for the younger generations of Palermitans, revealing a new layer on how the collective memory of a place might be more bendable as its starts to get passed through generations.

Through its projects, the firm Rotor has demonstrated the importance of reusing materials as a strategy to engage with the lived realities embedded into already built projects, reinvesting this acquired knowledge into something positive for the community. "From up here it's a whole other story" reveals a new perspective for the sustainable practice of material reuse, where there's no need of changing its materiality to change its memory, "the ingredients for the project might already be there" Rotor (2018); likewise, even if the collective memory of a place might seem permanent, within time this can be reinvented, however, the only way to rewrite a historical relationship is by enhancing a new one.

Casavecchia, B. (2018, June 20). Manifesta 12 - Criticism - art-agenda. Retrieved from <https://www.art-agenda.com/criticism/241650/manifesta-12>
Manifesta 12. (2018, September 10). Pizzo Sella. Retrieved from <https://m12.manifesta.org/monte-gallo/index.html>
Peluso, S. (2018, June 19). Rotor in Palermo: "From up here, it's a whole other story". Retrieved from <https://www.domusweb.it/en/speciali/manifesta/2018/rotor-in-palermo-from-up-here-its-a-whole-other-story.html>



Rotor, Da quassù è tutta un'altra cosa [From up here, everything looks different], 2018. Environmental intervention, mixed media. Courtesy the artist and Manifesta 12, Palermo. Copyright Manifesta. Photo by Cave Studio

Should machines be able to take the role of a therapist?

Since the dawn of the post war era, technological advancements not only shaped the human lifestyle but also shaped their modes of learning and behaving. The rise of new technologies and media pushed humankind to look into different ways to enhance its cognitive abilities, shifting technology from being a simple tool into an apparatus made to enhance the human condition. These advancements ignited new realms into the possibilities of human machine relationships, shading light into new topics of inquiry.

The 1960's was a promising time for the field of artificial intelligence, due to its short time as a newcomer concept, it was an era full of great expectations and predictions of the possible future roles for these new self-learning machines. During that time period new voices emerged that debated the ethical topics of AI as well as defining the ethical limits for the tasks of these machines, whether or not they were capable of achieving them. One of those voices was Joseph Weizenbaum, who is now considered as one of the fathers of artificial intelligence.

In his book "Computer power and human reason, from judgment to calculation", published in 1976, Weizenbaum shares his thoughts towards AI technology and lays his arguments on why, even though it might be possible in the future, humanity should never allow machines to take certain roles since they will always lack human characteristics such as wisdom or compassion.

Weizenbaum became famous in behalf of his creation ELIZA, a computer program with the ability to converse with humans (fig. 1). The machine worked through a typewriter, where the user would be able to type his/her portion of the conversation, connected to a computer, which was able to analyze the message and consequently respond through the computer's typewriter. ELIZA was developed in two tiers, the first one consisting of a language analyser and the second on a designed script.



Fig 1: Joseph Weizenbaum demonstrating his creation ELIZA
Retrieved from: <https://maeda.prm/2019/02/11/joseph-weizenbaum-humanist-technologist/>

The purpose of ELIZA was about maintaining conversation with humans through a script, which can be compared to the one given to an actor who is instructed to improvise around a certain theme, each of them allowed ELIZA to partake in a specific role. For his first experiment Weizenbaum gave ELIZA a script of a Rogerian psychotherapist. He considered that role relatively easy to imitate due to the technique of drawing a patient out by reflecting their patient's statements back to them.

ELIZA as a psychotherapist became famous due to its ability to demonstrate the information processing capabilities of a computer which at the same time ignited new conversations in the psychotherapy field.

In 1966 Kenneth Colby, James Watt and John Gilbert from Stanford University published in The journal of nervous and mental disease the article "A computer method of Psychotherapy: Preliminary communication", in which they stated how ELIZA could be able to shape the future of an automatic form of psychotherapy. They stated:

"If the method proves beneficial, then it would provide a therapeutic tool which can be made widely available to mental hospitals and psychiatric centers suffering a shortage of therapists"

(Colby et al., 1966)

Colby et al. mention that Weizenbaum's program,

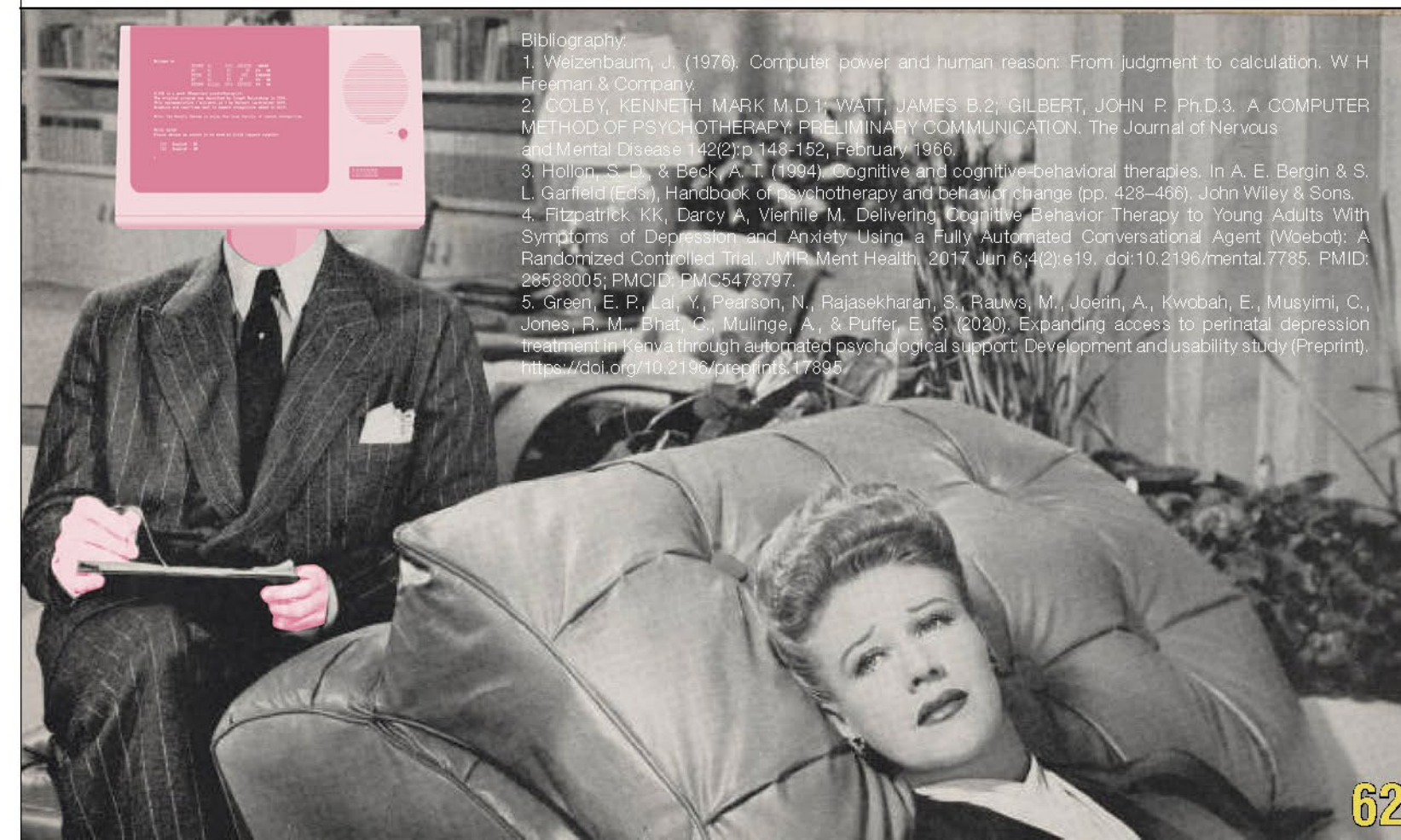
while it's dominantly motivated to reveal the technical questions between computer and computer languages, opens the field to further develop a program which might be able to successfully provide the communicative experience of a psychotherapist, where the human therapist will still be involved in the design and operation of the program, exemplifying how it will not be replaced but that their efforts would no longer be limited to the conventional one to one patient ratio.

Furthermore Colby et. revealed the similarities of the human and machine therapist stating that:

"a human therapist can be seen as an information processor and decision maker with a set of decision rules which are closely linked to short-range and long-range goals"

(Colby et al 1966)

Weizenbaum became concerned of his creation as he observed how quickly and very deeply



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people became emotionally involved with ELIZA, mentioning the example of his secretary, who had watched him work first hand on the computer program and therefore must have already figured out the machine nature of it. However, the first occasion she had a conversation with the program she became intimate with it and ended up asking Weizenbaum if she can have a few minutes alone with the machine. On another account, he suggested rigging the system and further examining the conversations on the program, which ended up with backlash, being clear evidence that people were conversing with ELIZA in a very intimate way.

The statements of psychotherapists like Colby et al and the intimacy and anthropomorphisation of ELIZA led Weizenbaum to further question the limits of AI when it came to their relationship with humans. One of the main concepts which defines the difference between man and machine is “natural language”, this language can only be understood by contextual frameworks, while programs like ELIZA are able to simulate the understanding of this language they are only able to utilize machine language, which is a language purely based on symbols.

One great example of natural language is if I instruct you to imagine a picture of an adult and a child in a seesaw, a human can infer that the adult figure will be down and the child will be sitting high on the other side. This type of knowledge comes from us from outside a picture or a symbol, hence it involves private knowledge that only lies in the real world.

In the 60's they were several attempts to imitate this human behavior through information processing systems like Newell and Simon's General Problem Solver (GPS) and Winograd hand-eye robot (SHRDLU), in both examples they solve problems using information processing and symbol manipulation without actually being able to fully comprehend the possible meaning that can lie

behind on each one of the symbols. The first program that seemed able to illuminate a different path for man-machine communication was ELIZA, nevertheless, the program acted similarly to the previous ones by analyzing sentences and fragments, locating key words and then responding through the assemblage of sentences. This program, as Weizenbaum states, was still using information processes and symbol manipulation, however, it created the illusion of having understood the thoughts of the users conversing with it. Weizenbaum compares this illusion with fortune tellers, where they appear to have a deep insight of the person's fortune while it's rather more a game of hypotheses that the users end up giving the meaning themselves.

Weizenbaum clearly defines the line between man and machine, mentioning that there is an intelligence that can only be manifested through specific and social contexts, these are types of human intelligences that not even the most sophisticated robot might be able to achieve, referring this as a great example on why a machine should never take the role of a therapist.

Weizenbaum mentions how the introduction of the self-learning machine might be able to shape negatively the future of humankind by stating that: **“The computer is a powerful new metaphor for helping us understand many aspects of the world, but that it slaves the mind that has no other metaphors and few other resources to call on”** (Weizenbaum, J. , 1976)

The statement of Weizenbaum reveals a reality where there is no possibility of creating a “wise machine”, therefore, we should never ask for them to make wise decisions.

Even Though Weizenbaum had some strong arguments in the 60s against the AI therapist, this topic is still relevant in the 21st Century. The primary thing that changed from ELIZA to the

contemporary AI therapist is that they changed methodologies from a scripted machine to a reframing device, being achievable through the introduction of “Cognitive behavioral therapy” (CBT).

As Steven D. Hollon and Aaron T. Beck mentioned in their article “Cognitive and Cognitive-Behavioral Therapies”, these approaches seek to reduce distress and enhance coping by shifting negative beliefs and teaching new information-processing skills.

One of the greatest attributes of CBT is its enduring effect that is able to last beyond the treatment , compared to traditional psychiatric medications which are only able to suppress the symptoms as long as they are still taken.

The main disorder that relies on CBT as a treatment is depression, pointing out that people who are depressed are due to their hold on inaccurate negative beliefs about themselves, their worlds and their futures. In other words they tend to suffer distortions in their information processing skills.

Patients in CBT are taught to evaluate their beliefs and become aware of their information processing tendencies, they are taught to treat their beliefs as hypotheses and validate them once they have gathered a right amount of evidence. This type of approach not only helps the patient treat their current depression by themselves but also can help prevent possible future relapses. In doing so, these therapies serve more than just medicines, they're mechanisms of change.

Further studies reveal how AI machines can be the new vessel to enhance Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. In 2017 a study was delivered among university students to further observe the effectiveness of AI chatbots as vessels for the distribution of cognitive behavioral therapy. The study was delivered by Kathleen Fitzpack and

PhD Molly Vierhile from Stanford University and PhD Alison Darcy from Woebot labs Inc.

The purpose of the study was to determine the feasibility, effectiveness and acceptability of an AI chatbot as an agent to deliver self help programs to college students with symptoms of anxiety and depression. The methodology consisted of trial of 70 individuals from ages 18 to 28 which were recruited online from an university community social media platform, the participants were separated into two groups the first one received two weeks of self help content derived from CBT through a AI chatbot companion (Woebot), while the second group were directed to a ebook from the National Institute of Mental Health “Depression in college students” (fig.2) . All participants were evaluated through the 9-item patient Health questionnaire (PHQ-9), the 7-item Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7) and the Positive and Negative Affect Scale at baseline (T2).

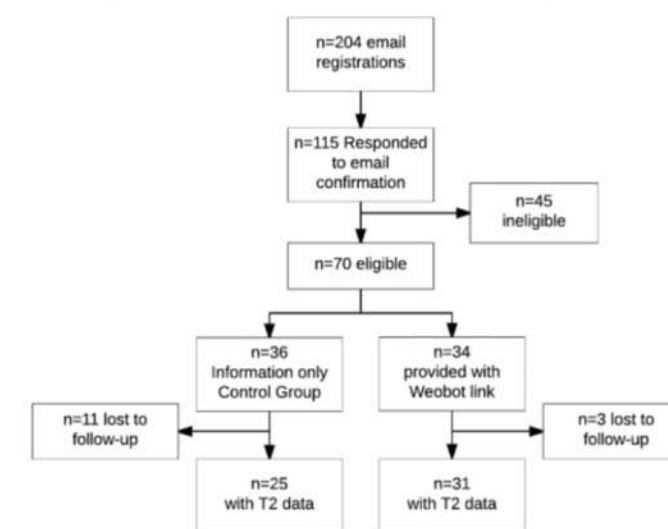


Fig. 2 participant recruitment flow Retrieved from: Fitzpatrick KK, Darcy A, Vierhile M. Delivering Cognitive Behavior Therapy to Young Adults With Symptoms of Depression and Anxiety Using a Fully Automated Conversational Agent (Woebot): A Randomized Controlled Trial. JMIR Ment Health. 2017

The AI therapist utilized for this study was Woebot, an automated conversational agent able to deliver Cognitive Behavioral Therapy through mood tracking and daily interactions. Each session begins with an initial inquiry of the patient's context and mood. In the first session the bot introduces the patient to the concept of CBT and ensures the

monitoring of a professional psychologist in case of an emergency.

Woebot contains several functions which enhances the CBT process, including empathetic responses, constant tailoring depending on the patient mood, a goal setting methodology as well as a sense of accountability through regular check ins, motivation and weekly charts which facilitate the reflection process of the patient through the constant observation of self-progress.

The results of the study showed a great contrast in improvement between group 1 and 2 (fig. 3), revealing that the group which used the AI chatbot (Woebot) drastically reduced their PHQ-9 score compared to the second control group which stayed the same.

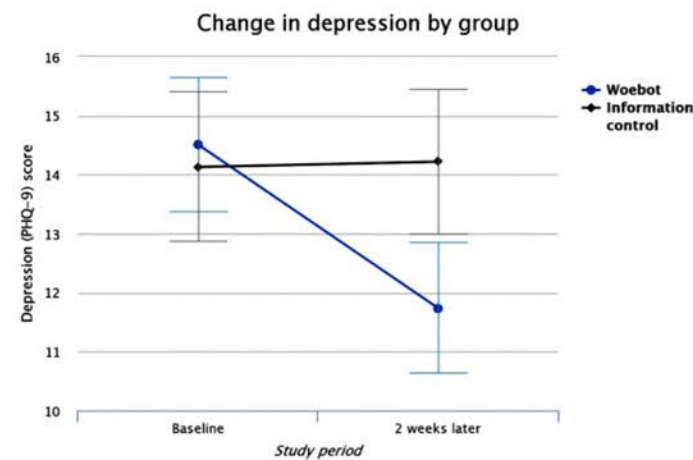


Fig.3 Change in mean depression (PHQ-9) score by group over the study period Retrieved from: Fitzpatrick KK, Darcy A, Vierhile M. Delivering Cognitive Behavior Therapy to Young Adults With Symptoms of Depression and Anxiety Using a Fully Automated Conversational Agent (Woebot): A Randomized Controlled Trial. JMIR Ment Health. 2017

In terms of acceptability the participants of the first control group reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction and reported an improvement in their emotional awareness.

Other qualitative findings was that a great number of the group one participants reported feeling that the bot was empathetic, referring it as “he” “a friend” or “a fun little dude”, revealing a possible new layer on the human-machine attachment and consequently anthropomorphization, even though the image and name of the chatbot was chosen to

represent a non human version of the therapist.

Additionally there have been recent studies which can be related to the writings of Colby et al. where AI can become a new method of therapy for cases of shortage of trained personnel. This study was developed in 2020 by Eric P Green et al. and was held in two public hospitals in Kiambu County, Kenya. The study focuses on the current issue of perinatal depression and how it gets untreated in low-income and middle-income countries due to the lack of trained professionals.

The research method consisted of a single-case experimental design and qualitative interview to inquire data about the feasibility, acceptability and response to the AI tool. Given the lack of psychotherapy treatments in Kenya, the Healthy Moms project creates a therapeutic alternative so that anyone with a basic mobile phone can be able to access high quality psychological support. The AI (Tess / Zuri) engages with the patient via SMS with on demand 24/7 access and connections to live counselors if needed.

For this evaluation a program was implemented, Healthy Moms, which relies on an AI chatbot (Tess or Zuri in Kenya) as therapy method for perinatal depression. 52 out of the 86 invited patients were recruited through an eligibility process from which only 41 completed the enrolment process.

The study was held through 15 sessions, 3 prenatal and 12 postnatal, on which they constantly tracked the mood of the participants as well as evaluated them through the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) (fig 4).

The quantitative results of the research showed an overall increase of 7.0% on the participants mood over their starting baseline. As for the qualitative findings, the results can be grouped into 3 themes, self-love, new skill acquisition and improvement in their social relationships.

The patients mentioned that after their treatment they learned to love and accept themselves more, they changed their negative thoughts by replacing them with positive ones and they became aware of their physical transformation in a positive way.

The treatment not only aided on their cognitive process of the users but also helped them acquire new parental skills, they were able to relate better with their infants as well as experience less distress raising them.

Lastly, the patients experienced an improvement in their social relationships, reporting that the program aided them in socializing with their loved ones during those stressful times as well as pushing them to rely more and expand their social support system.

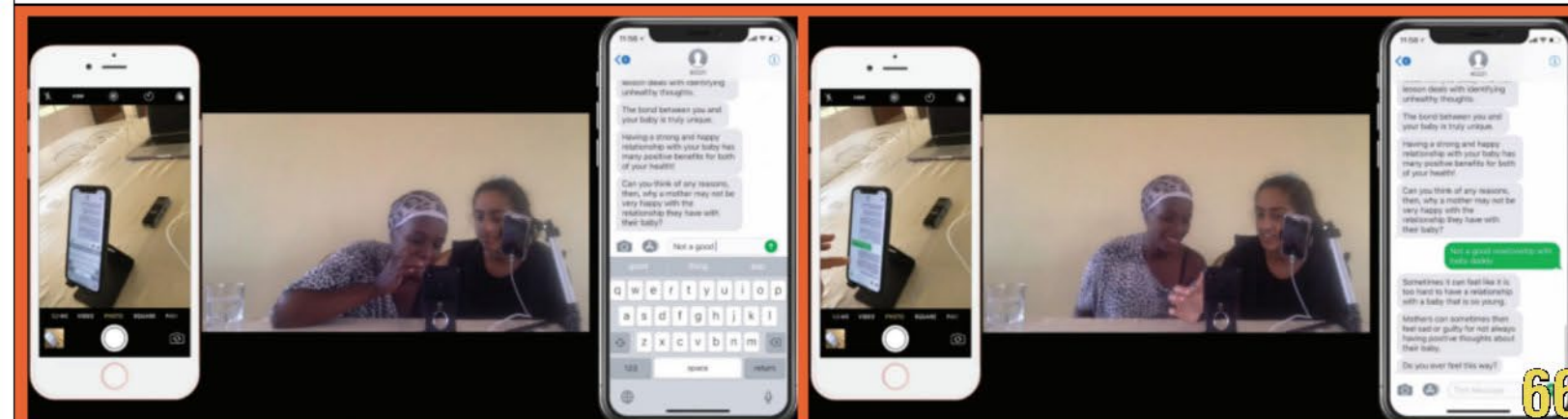
Both studies reveal the effectiveness of the AI machines as a vessel to deliver CBT to wider range of people in any place in the world, the difference between ELIZA and the latest iteration of AI chatbot therapist (Woebot and Tess) is that this last ones don't intent to pass as humans, as well as they are not designed to make human decisions. They are reframing devices that are able to decode and transmit our language back to us, these machines work by human input, they shift the data gathered and shape it in a way that the users are able to comprehend their own thoughts and behaviors, they act as a self pedagogical companion more than an actual human therapist.

Nevertheless, this new technologies have ignited new discussions around the possible new relationships between humans and machines, for example in the 2017 is revealed that several patients reported an incrementing bond between them and the conversational agent, as well as in the case of the 2020 study in Kenya, were the patients sense a attachment with the machine because they felt that they were connecting to someone that cared for them.

Similarly, there's the concept of therapeutic anonymity and its connection to the user's compliance. In both studies several patients recalled that they felt more willing to disclose and being vulnerable to an artificial intelligence than if it was a human therapist, in the two cases the patients perceived anonymity and privacy when chatting to a machine. Taking this into account, new issues might emerge regarding the control of the data managed through these chatbot apps, begging the question, to what extent can we assure that the data managed in these machines will not end up in someone else's hands?

Regarding the initial question, through these recent studies, there's a chance that humanity will lie more into AI therapy, shading the light into an accessible pedagogical machine that is able to teach us, through our own thoughts and behaviors, how to live a better life.

Fig 4. User testing demo Retrieved from: <https://uxplanet.org/healthymoms-a4c573fbfb7f>



A fight against modernity through storytelling, progress does not always mean contentment. This piece of work provides a glance into the perspective of Junichiro Tanizaki, an outsider of the modern era, one that feels that he doesn't belong to this new upbringing movement as a consequence of modernity's importation and imposition by foreign cultures. In Praise of Shadows is a book born as a new movement's imposition. As it takes over the author's country, he knows that eventually he will have to give in, but not without a fight.

This theory can be perceived as a counter reaction to modernity though the voice of the oppressed few that have to succumb to it. It is a demonstration of the compelling art of storytelling as a tool for expressing discontent and refusal. The author is aware of where he stands and this text can be perceived as the last cry before modernity destroys his life as he knows it.

In this piece of writing, the theory of "In praise of shadows" will be questioned as a method to uncover how it operates as well as how it succeeds. Beforehand it is crucial to understand the book's context evident from within the writing. Who wrote it? Where? When? And most importantly, who was meant to read it? It is possible for the reader to get the whole context of the piece without even looking at the author's background, nationality, profession or even date of publishing. As the book is read, clues begin to fall ahead as the writer recounts his stories, by the end of the text one would have been able to know and understand the complete



context without the need to dig further into other additional texts.

Even Though it's a small piece, the text is remarkably condense with information, however, this is not thrown directly at the reader but it's subtly spread throughout the book as crucial points that provide structure and realism to the stories.

It feels effortless as a reader to uncover the theory in this book. The text starts by mentioning the pains a modern architect would have to take if he/she sets out to build a house in "pure Japanese style"; with this first glance into the first paragraph it is inferred that the text will operate through contrasting modernity and traditionality, all through the lens of antique Japanese architecture.

Secondly, in the following part of the introductory paragraph, he later mentions how striving will be for someone to make electric wires, gas pipes, and waterlines harmonize with the "austerity of Japanese rooms". By reading these initial statements, it is possible to insinuate one of the main key points that the author will use as a practicing tool throughout the complete written piece, "austerity" which, as the reading progresses, can be inferred as the elegance in the "lack of".

Although it might be inferred, is not until page 4 that the author mentions himself as Japanese, this occurs when he uses the concept of the Japanese toilet as a contrasting point on its details and aesthetics compared to western architecture, during these descriptions he uses "our" whenever he was talking about the Japanese toilet, it not then when it can be assured within the text the author's nationality.

At first glance it seems that the author's profession is that of an architect or something close to that field, due to the fact that he constantly mentions aesthetics through traditional Japanese architecture. It is not until page 8 that the reader gets to know the true profession of the author. As he keeps revealing his desire for Japanese architecture to go back to what it once was, he later mentions that these are the merely empty dreams of a "novelist", revealing his true nature and at the same time setting up a basepoint for the reader to decide how much will they be willing to believe him. This is later further established in page 17 when he starts comparing the gothic

cathedrals with traditional Japanese temples, he mentions he possesses "no specialized knowledge of architecture". These instances can truly reveal an interesting characteristic of the author, honesty, which further gives agency to the reader, showing that he might have a valid point of view and that due to his lack of experience in the profession it would be the public's decision to buy his opinion or not. He is able to use a self-skepticism technique to approach architecture not like an all-knowing figure but a commoner, sharing his knowledge of architecture through experiences more than cold facts. His intent is not to teach the audience of Japanese aesthetics but the shared experiences that these are able to evoke.

As a reader it is hard to gauge "when" the book was written without previously looking at the publication date. The one thing in the text that is really scarce are specific dates. It is not up to the time when the reader reaches halfway through the text that he encounters a specific year, this is mentioned as the author recounts his mother and female relatives' traditional attire during his younger years, mentioning that was around 1890, which gives a glimpse into a more specific time period. It also seems like the author is of old age, considering his stance against modernity and how he praises the "old" and "traditional" qualities of Japanese aesthetics. Nevertheless, during three quarters into the book the age of the author begins to be questioned as he starts mentioning the misfortunes old Japanese people have to stand when it comes to living in the city, being that the reason why old people are going back to the countryside. The way the author begins describing old people as a distant subject creates a speculation that he is of young age. It is not until the last page of the book when he mentions that Japan has chosen to follow the west leaving "us old ones" behind, at that moment is when it's possible to acknowledge his current stage of life.

In the text the author believes that he shares a

IN PRAISE OF SHADOWS

BY JUNICHIRO TANIZAKI

THE HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURAL THEORY
FALL 2022

JAVIER FLORES

MENTOR:
MARK WIGLEY

similarity with the audience as well as indicates with established certainty that the audience is already familiar with certain Japanese elements. Tanizaki describes objects, materials, temples or even customs, by always referring to them by using the word “we” or “ours”. These can be demonstrated to a greater extent on page 19, as he mentions the scroll showing ceremony in the barely lightened Japanese temples, starting the paragraph with “We all had the experience”, by this the author shares with assurance how all of his audience has lived similar experiences by connecting this concepts with traditional events that not only are ancient but still relevant when the book was published. This phenomena further questions the possible legibility of the text from the eyes of a non-japanese. Will a non-japanese reader be able to completely comprehend the text as well as be fully captivated by it?

There is compelling nature in the text of Tanisaki, he is able through detailed storytelling to engage even the outsider reader. As a mexican reader I was able to fully comprehend and grasp all of the author’s descriptions even If I wasn’t familiar with them in the beginning. There are certain passages that might make the foreigner audience feel excluded, since they are not the intended audience. Nevertheless, due to the legibility of the text, everyone is able to understand and feel captivated by it.

Tanizaki’s desire is for the reader to understand his frustration before it’s too late and Japan completely changes for good. He does this by focusing on his audience in a considerably specific way . The author wants to reach from within, he wants to engage with people that might share similar circumstances, hence the fact he uses “us old ones” at the last page. His intentions are not completely about convincing the reader but about transmitting empathy through his stories.

As the book progresses we are introduced to

diverse conflicts the author himself faces against western modernity, in each of them there is an initial struggle in which the author seeks for different methods to not succumb to it. Through these passages It’s highly noticeable not only the writer’s stance in regards of western modernity but also his attitude towards it.

The first conflict is mentioned as he recounts the process of building his own house, in which the author refuses to let go the aesthetics of japanese paper walls, however, due to problems of illumination and security he decided to implement glass, with the intention of keeping the paper walls he opted for a double frame compound system in which the inside of the wall will be made out of paper while the exterior face is made out of glass. This ended up being heavily costly and the effect was far from pleasing, the outside remained no more than a glass door while on the inside the softness quality of the paper was destroyed by the glass composition behind it. At the end of his story he mentions he felt sorry for not just settling with only using glass from the beginning.

Similar to this story, Tanizaki shares other experiences when his refusal for modernity has brought him further despair. As he was suffering from a severe nervous disorder, he was recommended to attend a dentist who just came back from America with the latest equipment. Regardless of the possibility of having the most adequate procedure, he opted instead to go to an old fashioned Japanese dentist. That decision backlashed, causing him more pain. Instead of admitting his poor decision making, he calls out Japanese society for deciding to borrow the advanced medical procedures from the west, instead of creating their own ones that will be able to harmonize with Japanese architecture.

The last visible conflict comes three quarters into the book when he mentions the autumn moon viewing event, the day before the full moon he read

on the paper that the event will be accompanied by loud speakers that will enhance the moon viewing experience, which made him cancel his plans immediately. Nonetheless that modern equipment might affect the experience of this kind of traditional event, his reaction made him miss the entire experience as a whole.

With all of these reactions, it is possible to infer the hostility of the author against these situations. Similarly, it reveals a facet of his personality; he presents himself as an individual that resides in constant denial and refusal, someone who is constantly trying to fight modernity, always fighting a losing battle, hence the fact that in all of his tales he ends up defeated, either by losing money, health or cultural experiences.

In spite of all his defeats on the constant conflicts he refers throughout the book, Tanisaki never seems regretful of his choices, on the contrary, there is a sense of proudness he evokes as he recounts these stories. Even though the author seems constantly fighting against the current, this constant fight shares a symbol of hope as he tries to convince the audience that there might still be a chance where they can preserve some of their aesthetics before everything gets transformed by the western movement.

This being said, the book becomes more complex as more defeats unravel, as the writing progresses the author not only seems more honest but at the same time more vulnerable. It can be inferred through the text that he knows where he is standing as well as he acknowledges where his fate and the fate of japan are heading. The whole fight seems like a recounting of David versus Goliath, but in this case everyone knows that Goliath is eventually gonna win. However this foreseen defeat is able to transmit a sense of awareness to the audience, making them question their stance against modernization, where not everything that is new is meant to bring good to the Japanese

country.

Tanizaki creates a compelling workpiece not through data or crude information but with a romanticized and heavily descriptive storytelling. Through descriptive passages the author heightens the qualities of various oriental elements, serving as tools to emphasize the contrasting qualities between the oriental and western way of living. In each of them, the concept of value lies in different qualities, serving as one of the reasons why the modern western movement by being imposed into oriental lifestyles might end up destroying several valuable qualities of the Japanese aesthetics.

All of the oriental devices mentioned in this book are heavily accompanied by descriptions that commonly rely on one of the five senses. In most of the cases he uses “sight” as a way to describe the uncommonly valuable qualities of the oriental objects. The visual quality that the writer repeatedly mentions in the book is the “visible passing of time”. One set of words mentioned on page 10 are able to fully capture this concept “elegance of age”. Seen first as he mentioned the antique quality of oriental paper as well as later recalling precious metals and their quality to lose their shine overtime as silver, tin or lacquerware, the Japanese are able to admire these qualities not as westerners who just want everything to shine and glitter. Tanisaki uses this narrative technique to persuade the audience on their uniqueness as a japanese culture, communicating the contrasting perceptions on objectual value, how the westerns always want things to look new, while the Japanese seek value in the imperfect marks that objects acquired over time.

Tanisaki shares that there is also an added value in the lack of clarity, when our sense of sight gets diminished objects are able to acquire an abstract inferred value. One good example comes in page 19 when he mentions the treasures hanging in the deep recessed alcoves of the temples of Kyoto or

Nara. Those alcoves remain dark even in the bright daylight, provoking a blurred perception on the objects that are hanging over them. This blurriness provokes a sense of an inferred magnificence into the objects, the lack of clarity is able to make the mind complete the painting, making it be perceived more beautiful than it might actually be.

Similarly, Tanisaki mentions how the darkness is also able to evoke a magical sense of mystery, sharing experiences on how the lack of light is able to provoke a silence which at the same time is able to share complex stories. He attributes this to his ancestors, who by cutting out light in empty spaces, were able to create a world of shadows that had superior mystery and depth than any wall painting or ornament will ever be able to acquire. Through this passage the author is able to introduce a magical quality of darkness which could never be able to be achieved through western brightness.

The writer also relies on the sense of physical touch when it comes to these descriptions, a quality that certain western devices lack. This occurs as he compares ceramics, a western device, to lacquerware, an oriental device, none of them are inadequate for tableware, however, ceramics are heavy and cold to the touch, and due to their efficient heat conductor capacities, they are not best containers for hot foods, compare to lacquerware which is light and soft to the touch, the author mentions the feeling of holding a lacquer soup bowl with his hands, were the user is not only able to feel the weight of the liquid but also its mild warmth, comparing it to the sensation of holding a plump newborn baby. These detailed descriptions are able to persuade the reader into revealing unseen layers of material quality, through this evocative storytelling Tanisaki is able to make the reader almost feel the lacquer in their hands as an attempt to convince them not to transition into western materials.

In the text Tanisaki is able to convey sensorial experiences to spatial qualities. As the writer relies on the sense of taste, recalling the experience of being served Yokan in an old lacquer dish. Due to the darkness lacquer can acquire, the yokan becomes hardly distinguishable once it's inside it. Consequently he mentions that when one takes this cool smooth surface, there's an experience where the darkness of the room starts melting in your tongue, making the most indistinguishable yokan take on a mysteriously intriguing flavor. By doing this sensorial-spatial connections Tanisaki is able to add a new layer of value on traditional Japanese aesthetics, displaying experiences that are only able to be achieved through the combination of material and space, once one of them is gone the experience will become irreplicable.

All of his descriptions rely on the details, the imperceptible qualities that are able to enhance the most mundane experiences. Details that might be forgotten when everything ends up becoming bright and glittery. These detailed descriptions become compelling artifacts that are able to potentialize the connection between the reader and these mundane activities. As it was previously mentioned, the writer is already assured that the readers are familiar with these devices, therefore the detailed descriptions are not only meant to compel the reader but to invite them to look closely into what they already had and how through modernity they're collectively losing it.

Tanisaki conveys Japanese aesthetics as a reshaping tool on the current perception of modernity, every time there was a lack of light in Japanese culture it was for a reason, and instead on fighting it they learned to embrace it, the author desires to share his frustrations by showing how all of these cultural aspects will be gone once the western movement takes over Japan. How they used to have elongated rooftops so water didn't damage the paper walls, they tended to have large rooms and wide corridors as well as everything

was only barely lightened by candlelight or old gas lights, all of these combined created these dark environments. Instead of westerners who always seeked to eradicate the shadow, the Japanese learned how to live within it and, therefore, embrace it by creating a lore in which this darkness relies.

During the text Tanasaki brings up several Japanese traditions, to convey the idea on how the upbringing of western modernity will end up ruining them. Two of them being the No theater and the Kabuki theater, sharing the compelling beauty each of them reflect by their use of darkness. In the No theater the merest fraction of the actor flesh is visible, even the face is hidden through a mask leaving a strong and enchanting impression on the audience. Tanasaki mentions how modern floodlamps have vanished that ethereal sense of beauty. This effect is similar in the Kabuki costumes, when they become glared by the western light, these ethereal otherworldly costumes become real and made up. In this two instances Tanasaki mentions how Japanese culture lies in the abstract qualities of the imaginary, for centuries they used darkness as a tool the differ the eye from the qualities of the real mundane world, in this cases modernity became a unraveling tool that delivers realness to what was once seen as mystical.

The author reveals how embedded darkness has been in Japanese culture that it has become a feature in Japanese Folklore. He mentions how Japanese ghosts, unlike American ghosts, don't have feet. The Japanese stories are centered in the uncanny qualities darkness can enhance, as they show in the folktales, ghosts became a construct of an incomplete sight. Through these tales Tanasaki reveals how much Japanese stories have always relied in the dark, revealing its prevailing role in their cultural context.

Darkness is not only embedded in Japanese

culture through its folklore but is also part of its gender constructs, such as their depiction on women's beauty. Tanasaki mentions how their ancestors made women an object inseparable from darkness, they tended to hide them in the shadows as much as they could, concealing their bodies in long sleeves and skirts, only leaving one part of them to stand out, their face. In a startling manner, which today might be seen as controversial, he compares their curveless body to the western woman, redeeming the Japanese female body as more ugly. This statement he refers to as the reason why society pushes the woman to the shadows by saying "Our thoughts do not travel to what we cannot see". He mentions that by putting a bright light into them we will drive away whatever beauty may reside there. These statements might feel shocking for the contemporary reader, however, they reflect the social constructs of that era.

Despite the atemporality of most of his passages, there are some other passages in this book that might seem controversial in the contemporary era. In page 31 Tanizaki makes a reference between skin color and lighting, mentioning that in Japanese culture white skin has always been considered more elegant, as well as later stating that this whiteness quality also differs between races. In the same passage Tanisaki mentions how the whiteness of the Japanese might be seen as a stain in a white paper compared to the whiteness of westerners. Even Though his point relies more into how darkness enhances Japanese beauty while brightness enhances the westerners, this stance might seem outdated knowing the fact that this type of racial stereotypes are still a concern in the modern world. This passage reveals how the book is a product of its time, an era where these racial assumptions were not as controversial as today.

In spite of two controversial passages, there's still a sense of atemporality in the writings of Tanisaki,

even though it has been almost 90 years since its first publication in Japan. The detailed storytelling is able to bring a compelling narrative into the perspectives of an almost ending premodern Japan which, regardless of the distant time and place of this publication, the writings remain relevant in the contemporary era. However, the compelling factor might have shifted, nowadays this book doesn't work as a campaign in favor of a traditional Japan, but as a piece that evokes a reflection on the uncontrollable factor of modernity as well as the things that are being left behind as we progress as a society.

The relevance of the book reveals that it doesn't matter when or from where this piece is read, there's always an impeding factor when it comes to modernity. As modernity brings new things, there will always be a loss, a feeling that can be applicable to any context.

If there's one paragraph that can fully describe the whole theory of the book, it will be the one found on page 31, where the writer states that the Japanese used to seek their satisfaction in whatever surroundings they happen to find themselves in, they were able to find content with things as they were; for them darkness causes no discontent, they have resigned to it as it was inevitable. If light is scarce then they will immerse themselves into the darkness and discover its own particular beauty. The whole book surrounds itself within this concept, "beauty in the darkness", which can also be interpreted as "beauty in contentment", this writing piece serves as a great example on the social context regarding "absence" in traditional Japanese aesthetics.

Austerity became a quality when it came to Japanese aesthetics, being the austerity of light, glimmer or shine. In darkness there lies a value, a value of mystery, an ethereal quality that becomes a perfect setting for imagination. Through this piece of writing Tanizaki reveals, on the contrary

of western culture, not everything has to be bright to be valuable.

There is a glance when Tanizaki mentions one similarity between contemporary American and Japanese cultures, their wasteful nature towards electricity. He mentions how the novelist Musoan said that not even the most bright city in Europe, being Paris, will compare to the brightness of Tokyo and Osaka. He states the reason being "Japan is only too anxious to imitate America in every way they can". Through this statement it becomes even more forceable the impending doom on the imposition of Western Modernity, if Japanese culture will always rely on imitating the westerner then there is no a slight chance for the traditional aesthetics to prevail.



Still from: Tanizaki Junichiro on Japanese aesthetics [Video]. (n.d.). NHK WORLD. <https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/ondemand/video/5001346/?autoplay>

There is an uncanny sense when reading this piece in a contemporary printed book made of western paper. As a reader I felt alienated going into the passages that referred to the qualities of traditional Japanese paper while I was holding a westernized version of the book. The text feels more ancient, as if one is reading from an old manuscript. It is able to resemble an uncanny time where modernity was just around the corner and one was able to decide how much they wanted to succumb to it. As a reader who was born in a time when there wasn't that choice, when modernity had already taken over everything.

This evoked a somber feeling on reading a story where even before finishing it I already knew the end.

As it has been demonstrated in this paper, this theory doesn't look to impose or either control its audience, it simply wants to make the reader consider that they might be an underappreciated beauty in the absence of light. The writer knows he is losing his battle against western modernity, however, he hasn't lost all hope. In the last paragraph he mentions that maybe there is still something to be saved, that perhaps we can leave at least one mansion with its lights turned off so we can still let darkness tell its story.

Bibliography: Tanizaki, J. (1933). In praise of shadows.

FEATURING:


**RESOURCEFUL
NETWORKS**

**RE-PAINTING
CANDEM BY FUNGI**

**EAT JACKSON
HEIGHTS**

UN [Ctrl] LABLE

**SHATTERING THE
BRIDGE**

A close-up photograph of a person's hand, palm facing down, holding a tiny, pink, stylized human figure between the thumb and index finger. The background is a solid, vibrant blue. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the skin and the small figure.

**HAUNTED
LANDSCAPES
AND THE NEW
AUTOCHTHONOUS
FROM UP HERE
IT'S A WHOLE
OTHER STORY
AI THERAPIST
IN PRAISE OF
SHADOWS**