



POLEMICS

AARON SMOLAR

TOPOGRAPHIES OF HOMECOMING

MELROSE, THE BRONX, NYC
 FALL 2021, ESTEBAN DE BACKER
 COLLABORATION WITH PHOENIX YANG

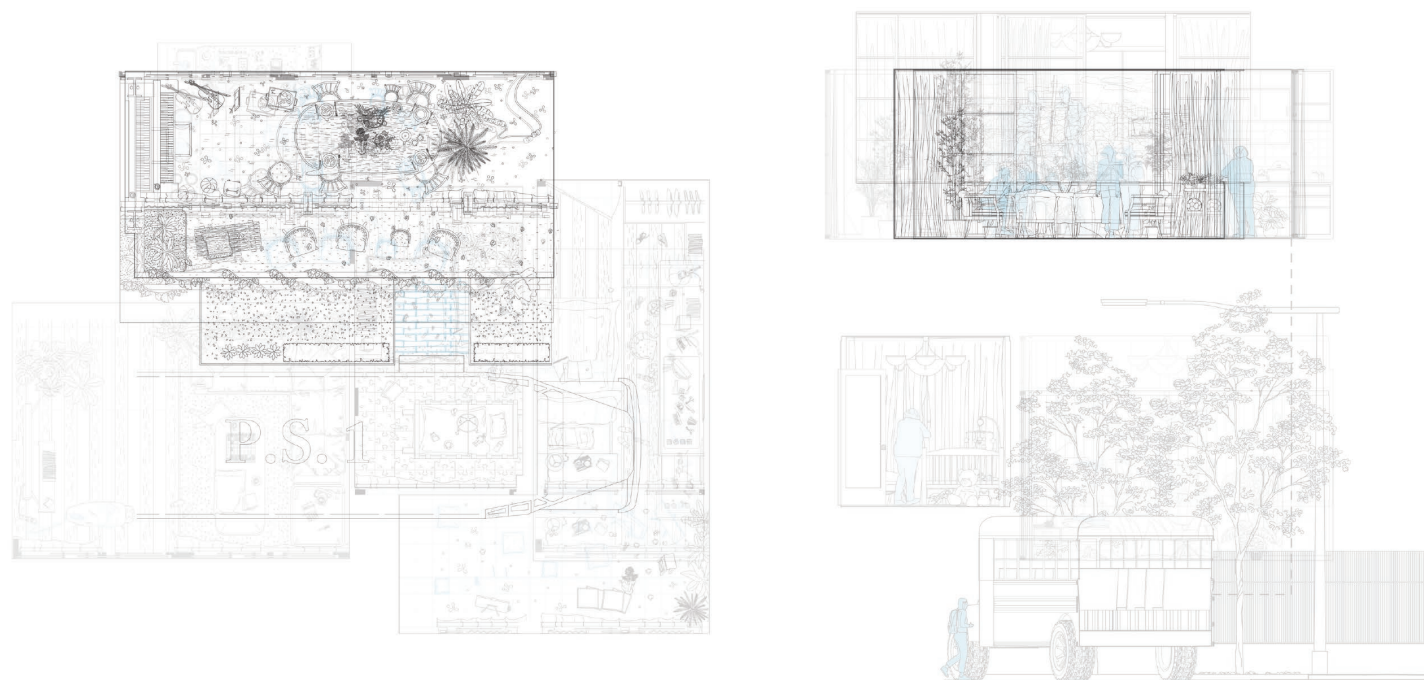
In a lecture regarding Lacaton Vassal's Tour Bois-le-Prêtre housing project, Anne Lacaton states, "[h]ousing is everywhere. Housing is here. Housing is in the school. Housing is in the city. **'Inhabiting'** is situations to be well in any place of the city," and that perhaps the architect's most challenging objective today is "to make the city comfortable and full of pleasures."

Yet, if the essence of "inhabitation," thusly conceived, is 'comfort,' a phenomenon which, though seductive, goes largely unnoticed in one's day-to-day affairs, one must acknowledge the countless modes of "dwelling" that materialize in everyday life. When one disembarks from a plane in a city with which they identify, they may characterize their situation as having "arrived home." Similarly, one may feel their body melt into a particular song as they listen - a profound resonance with, or belonging to, that piece. One may also dwell on a thought. At the same time, one may contemplate that the world's coherence, a system within which we typically operate unquestioningly, has been dictated by others or by society at large, engendering a kind of alienation from, or "homelessness" within, society. Indeed, Martin Heidegger, in his 1927 text *Being and Time*, describes existence itself as the condition of "dwelling" in this already constituted world.

Taking this neglected kind of dwelling as our point of departure, we mined the everyday concept of "home" as manifested at Tour Bois-le-Prêtre for traces of its presence. We became acutely interested in the project's "performance," a concept that spiritually recalls the structure's modernist heritage, as a framework within which the often-overlooked rituals which comprise everyday domestic life – intertwined networks of sequences, objects, relations, and feelings – are permitted to unfold for its inhabitants.

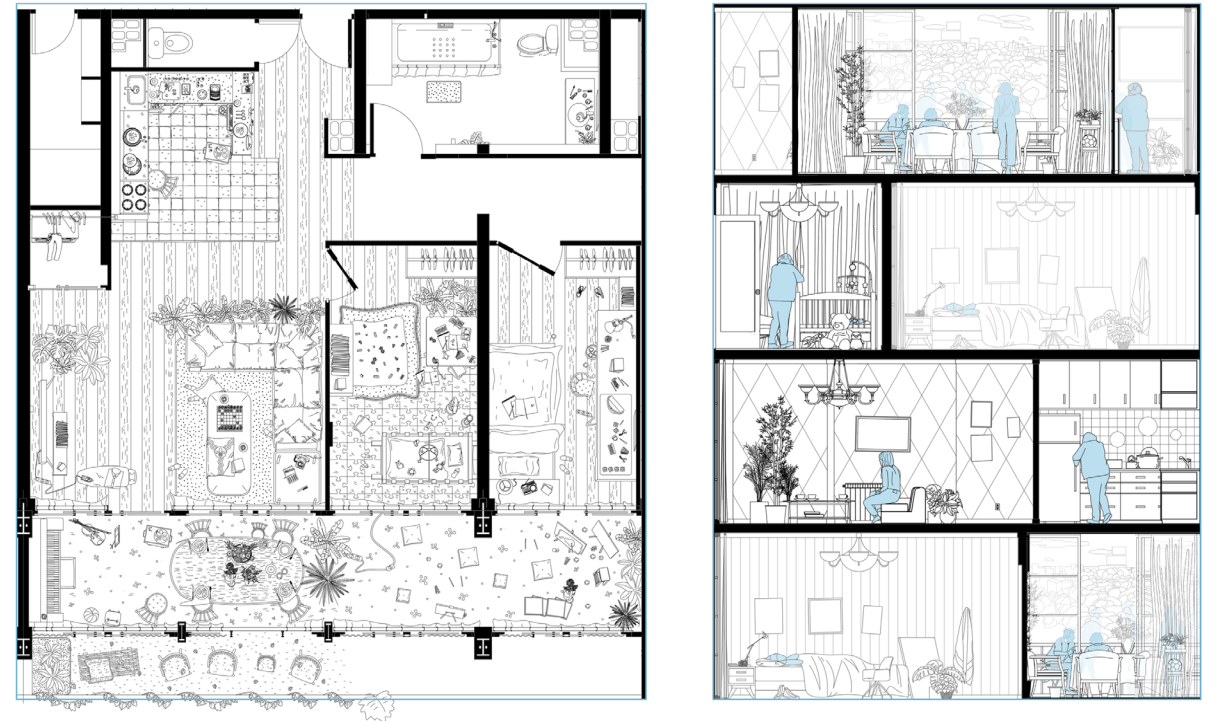
Tour Bois le Prêtre

8 : 0 0 A M 8 : 2 5 A M 8 : 5 0 A M 9 : 1 5 A M



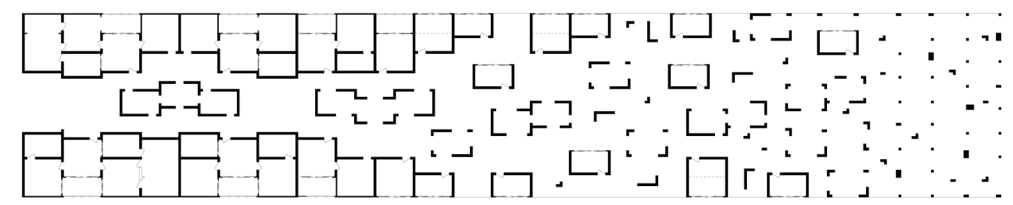
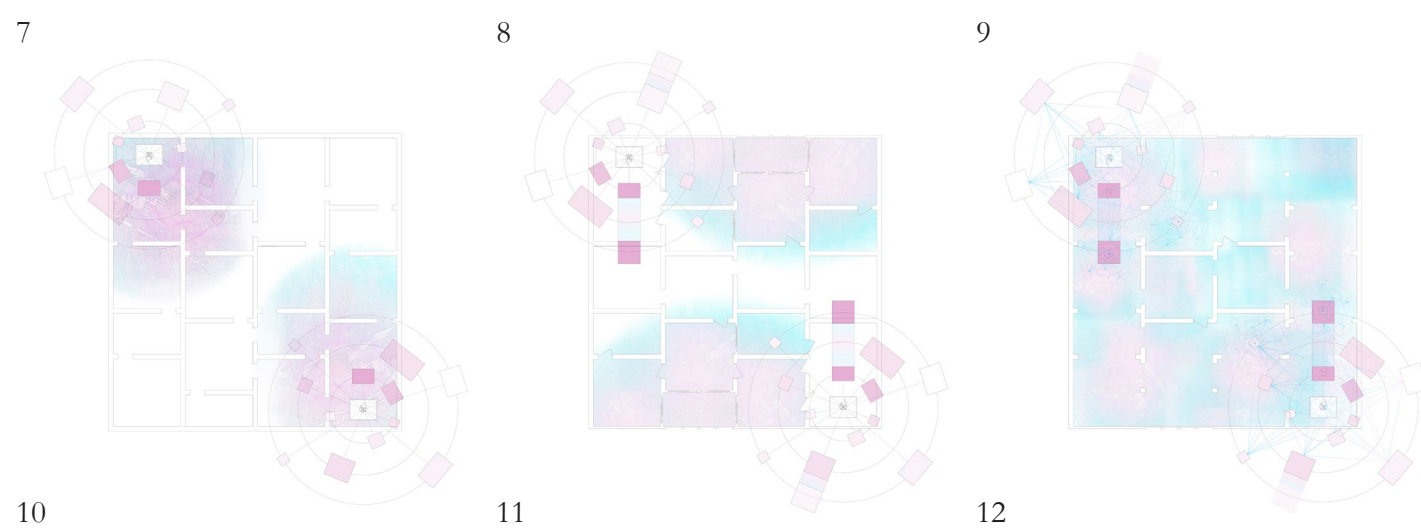
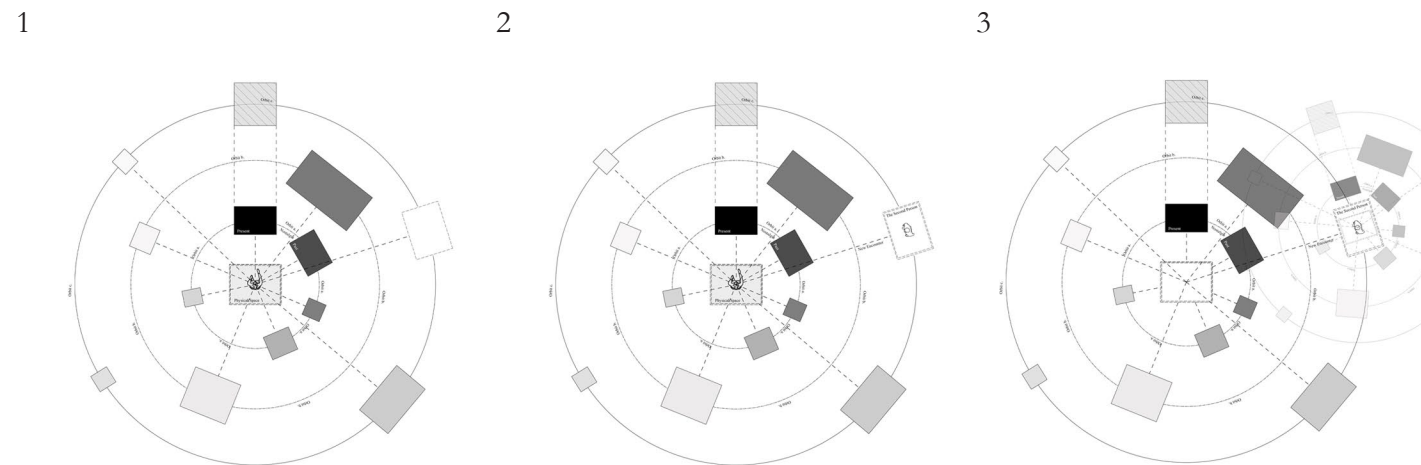
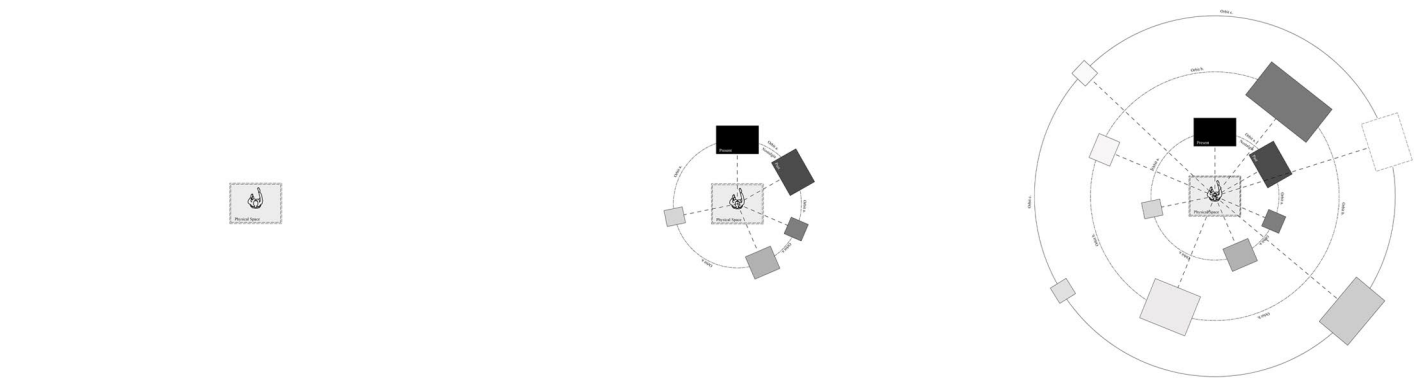
Tour Bois le Prêtre

9 : 2 0 A M



At the same time, we understand the production of routine in terms of the sociocultural and historical substrates which coalesce Melrose's distinctive atmosphere. For locals, such a fabric may be largely internalized, surfacing from time to time in specific moments or memories, yet ever-present nevertheless. To others, this character may be immediately apparent (as it was for us) in the neighborhood's built fabric, its people, its sights, sounds, and smells.





It follows that culture and history are inseparable from human cognition, the ground from which there can be any “dwelling” in the world that one inherits as it has already been and continues to be determined. In the context of both these norms and one’s preoccupations, Heidegger theorizes that humans exist at any given moment toward the future, in an infinite multiplicity of behavioral possibilities projected on different temporal scales or horizons. Because one’s closest possibilities respond to that with which one is immediately concerned, physical space itself is reconstituted in one’s experience as cognitive space primarily shaped by these involvements. Atmosphere and mood are thus intimately intertwined with the possibility of spatial experience.

We posit that the everyday notion of “dwelling,” which includes the architectural concept of ‘home,’ has its ground in this more original, existential space. Consequently, a dwelling unit’s architectural performativity must be sought in terms of its deference to this latter, fuller notion, which encompasses everyday lived space. In contrast to the modernist performative dwelling, the so-called “machine for living in” that pursued a cold and homogeneous approach to housing, we suggest that respecting the human spectrum of atmospheric and emotional needs will increase feelings of comfort and familiarity that could ward off anxiety and homelessness. The proposal thus features nodes of rigidly articulated programs that gradually dissolve into partition-less fields, affording a territorial kind of architecture conducive to a fluid and lively urban environment.

Diagram of existential space *(left top)*

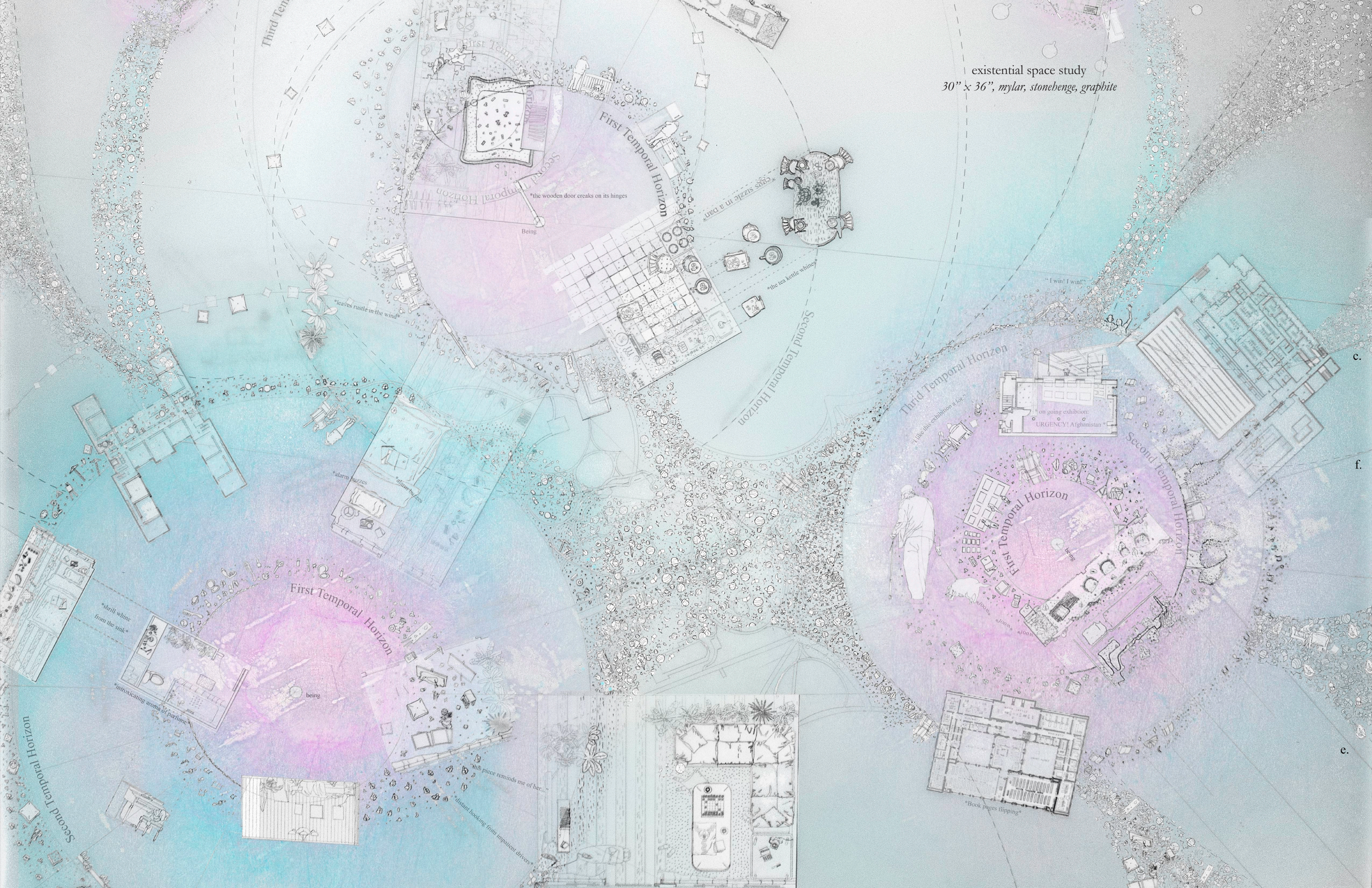
1. An individual is located at a point in space
2. At every moment, one implicitly understands possible ways to exist with respect to their cognitive involvements
3. These possibilities include others that are more temporally and cognitively distant
4. They perceive their physical space in terms of these cognitive involvements
5. Only in terms of these involvements can they encounter others
6. Others reciprocally encounter one in the context of their own possibilities

Existential space as a structural framework *(left bottom)*

7. Dwelling units as isolated spaces within a uniform framework
8. Introduction of limited auxiliary spaces and interconnection facilitate limited possibilities and atmospheric variety
- 9-10. Gradient of privacy, program, and atmosphere fluidly carries into intermediate spaces as units dissolve
11. Increased porosity in units increases possibilities for spatial appropriation, opening onto a more fluid interstitial realm
12. Internal structure almost entirely dissolves into a fluid condition, maximizing spatial flexibility and programmatic interpenetration

Unit aggregation and representation of atmospheric variety *(top)*

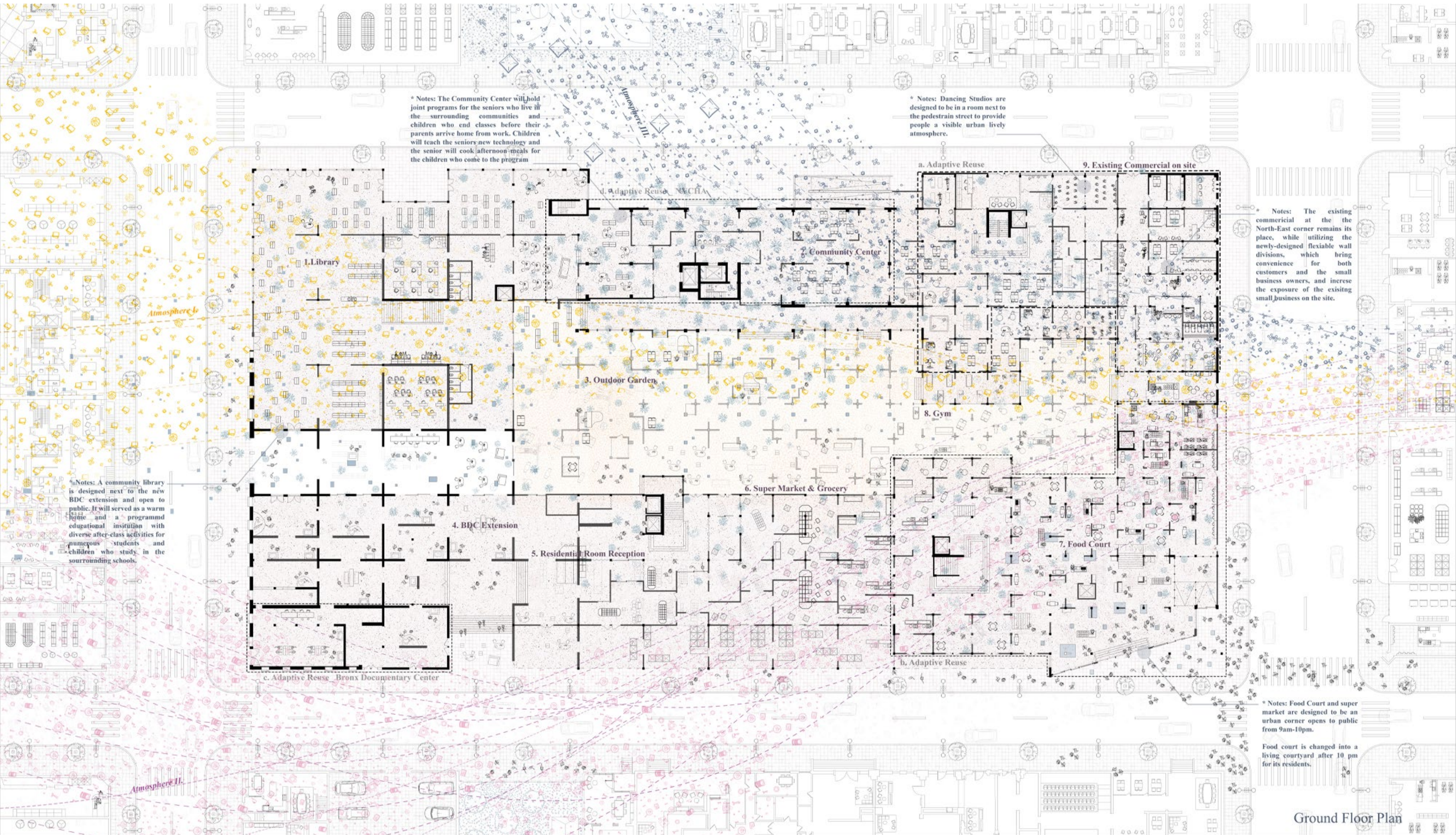
existential space study
30" x 36", mylar, stonebenge, graphite



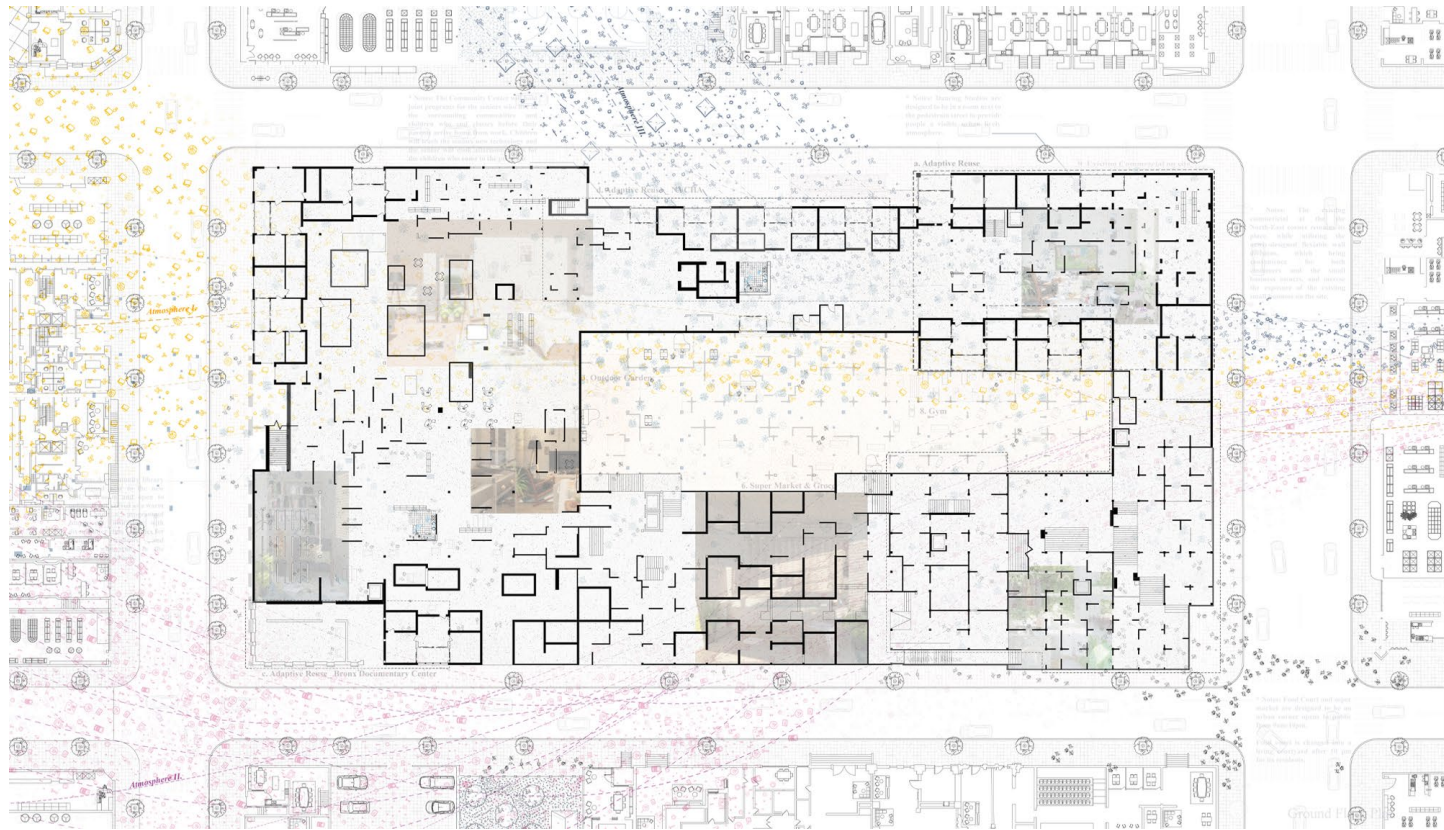
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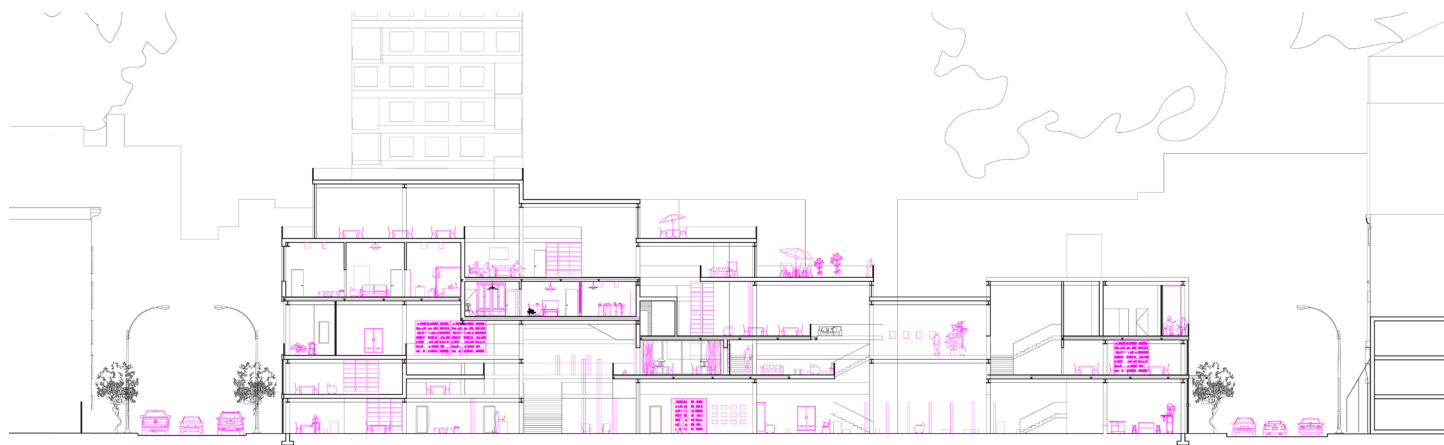
e.



Ground Floor Plan



These nodes respond to localized qualities around this block. For example, we assert that the corner of 151st St. and Melrose Avenue becomes the primary locus of a market to “receive” the public, in concert with the latter street’s operation as a major commercial strip, its size, and the intersection’s importance for transportation. With the area’s large educational presence, we envision this market to have a pedagogical role while providing the neighborhood with a pleasant olfactory stimulus. Furthermore, we hybridize the existing Bronx Documentary Center with a new library that permits integrated exhibition, reading, and residential experiences. We envision the gradient of residential units as an extension of this public dwelling, interspersed within more public programs such that all floors possess degrees of activity. Units maintain a consistent module to allow future reconfiguration as necessary while maintaining degrees of privacy.



Understanding this network of atmospheric nodes three-dimensionally, we augment this range of conditions with subtle programmatic interpenetration and varied ceiling heights. We also incorporate layers of passively-operated enclosure to facilitate internal climatic variation, with the capacity to more specifically temper light, temperature, and ventilation in more intimate spaces. Finally, the gradient of transparency and color conceived through the curtain wall and brick construction can internally contribute to these cognitive landscapes while, outside, maintaining a dialogue with Melrose’s historical and urban context.



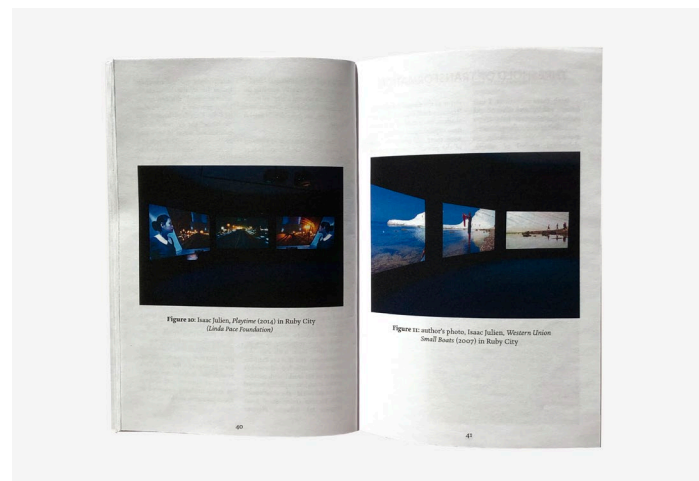
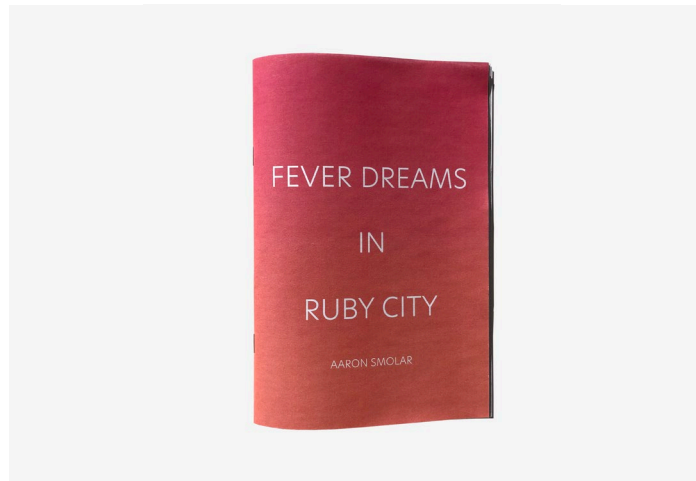


FEVER DREAMS IN RUBY CITY

COLLECTING ARCHITECTURE TERRITORIES
SPRING 2022, MARK WASIUTA

Over the last four decades, private contemporary art museums and foundations have proliferated across the globe as “high-net-worth individuals” increasingly turn to collecting contemporary art, whether as genuine passion or to accumulate various forms of capital (among those defined by Pierre Bourdieu in his famous essay “The Forms of Capital” are included social, cultural, social, symbolic capital), often even pricing museums out of these markets (which are rendered, in turn, increasingly beholden to private interest). In this increasingly privatized and homogeneous industry, the architectural intervention often stands in for more nebulous and geographically dispersed operating conditions and models, “territories” that are actively produced in the networks constituted by the institution’s collecting, funding, and display practices.

This analysis takes as its subject the Linda Pace Foundation in San Antonio, Texas, an organization established in 2003 by former salsa magnate and San Antonio native Linda Pace to both steward her private collection and disburse her funds to ArtPace, a separate artist-in-residence program she established one decade prior. After Pace’s death in 2007, her well-documented commitment to Jungian psychotherapy leaves these institutions (conceived as her “dreams”) in the curious predicament of continuously interpreting her dreams in their everyday operations, a phenomenon perhaps most clearly documented in relation to Ruby City, the Foundation’s new home designed by “starchitect” David Adjaye. Understanding the Linda Pace Foundation as a dream, I interrogate what it means for such an arts institution (and adjacent parties) to engage in this act of “interpretation” in its everyday operations.



FIRST CONDITION

“Recently, I had an absolutely incredible dream: Courtney and I were going to Galveston to see the re-building after the hurricane. So we were on the beach, and there was a serpentine boardwalk, and we were walking along that. To the left was the ocean and to the right were some gray buildings that were part of the reconstruction. At the end of the boardwalk was a ruby city, like the emerald city, but it was rubies.”
- Linda Pace

Immediately inside Ruby City’s narrow main entrance lobby, my chest tightens, overwhelmed by the density of information radiating from the massive red collaged panel that appears to hover out in front of a maroon structural wall like a phantom or specter (Figure 1). An attendant to the right welcomes me, providing basic knowledge for my visit, but it is impossible to really give her my attention in this otherwise dim and claustrophobic corridor. This piece asserts itself into the viewer’s space, a challenge to perceive in its totality, let alone photograph. Instead, *Red Project* (2001) coerces the viewer to surrender any possible ‘objectivity’ or ‘rationality’ and commune with its contents. Only from the side does this illusion collapse, revealing a continuous frame of neon ribbon lights.

Bearing in mind that *Red Project* was created by San Antonio

native and former picante sauce magnate Linda Pace, it is striking, though fantastic and wishful as this claim may sound, how this piece obtains the visual consistency of a chunky salsa when perceived at relatively low resolution: at once a smooth, cohesive vision comprising an assemblage of discrete red elements – including a Buddha, boxing gloves, a Rolling Stones logo, and a pair of ruby slippers – that registers with new details at any distance in an almost recursive fashion (Figure 2). Linger on the ruby slippers for a moment, *The Wizard of Oz* implies in its closing scenes that Dorothy’s journey through Oz was nothing more than a fever dream. Similarly phantasmagoric, Pace explains that in this deluge of symbols and associations, the chunks that constitute her emotional life appeared in front of her “like a photograph emerging in developer in the darkroom.”⁶ *Red Project* is one product of

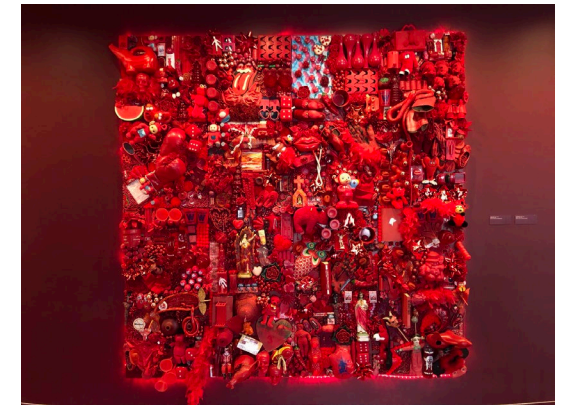
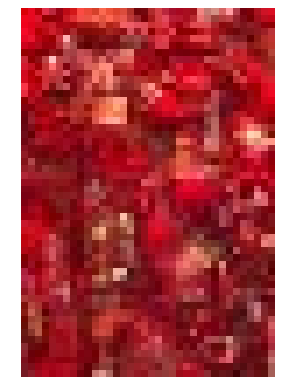


Figure 1: Linda Pace, *Red Project* in situ, 2001 (Ruby City Collection)

Figure 2: *Red Project* “obtains the visual consistency of a chunky salsa when perceived at relatively low resolution”



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Figure 6: author’s photo of ArtPace

Figure 7: ArtPace’s wall of all former residents and curators, author’s photo

(each artist representing a different geographic scale: Texas-based, national, and international), each cohort selected by one invited guest curator, later holding a six-week public exhibition. Pace conceived ArtPace as part of a larger proliferation through the 1990s of residency initiatives established in urban settings, distinguished from contemporaneous programs in traditional idyllic rural locations like Yaddo or MacDowell.⁶

Pace also credits this dream with stimulating her desire to collect art, later establishing a separate nonprofit in 2003 – the Linda Pace Foundation – to both steward this private collection and disburse her funds to ArtPace. Kelly O’Connor, Ruby City’s Head of Collections and Communications and Linda Pace’s former studio assistant, explains in an email that Pace’s “great wish” before succumbing to breast cancer in 2007 was “to have her collection made public for the people of San Antonio.”⁷ Sigmund Freud, Jung’s friend and mentor until their break in 1913, famously held that “the dream is the fulfillment of a wish,” a model that Jung sought to broaden, contributing to their souring relationship.⁸

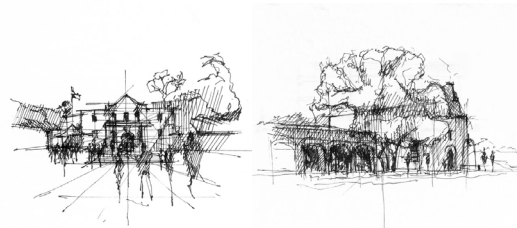
In this case, Pace’s wish was granted by emerging architect David Adjaye, now “starchitect”

(whom she met through Isaac Julien, filmmaker, 1999 ArtPace resident, and Foundation trustee), whom she commissioned to realize a permanent home for her collection on the Foundation’s CAMPStreet campus, Ruby City. Curiously, Pace stipulated that this project derive from one of her “dream drawings” – an image reminiscent of crimson, fuchsia, and rose phalluses, seen in her dream on a serpentine boardwalk in Galveston after a hurricane (not unlike the famous scene from *The Wizard of Oz* in which the protagonists approach the Emerald City on the yellow-brick road) (Figures 9-11). Although Pace was in dialogue with Adjaye for the project’s early stages when she died, this institution did not open to the public until 2019, in a faceted geometric form that is almost unrecognizable in relation to Pace’s generative drawing.



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Figure 7: author's sketches, juxtaposing San Antonio's Spanish Missions with Ruby City
 1. Ruby City
 2. Misión San Antonio de Valero (The Alamo)
 3. Misión San Francisco de la Espada

4. Ruby City
 5. Misión Nuestra Señora de la Purísima Concepción de Acuña
 6. Misión San Juan Capistrano

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JEWELS IN THE CONCRETE

"...the phrase 'jewels in the concrete' took on a meaning similar to that of my earlier multicolored snake dream, as a symbol of personal and artistic expression."
 - Linda Pace

In the Linda Pace Foundation's dynamic negotiation between primordial benevolence and icy distance, one can find parallels to the related concepts of "integration" and "transformation" that underpin such teleological processes as alchemy and individuation, which respectively pursue the philosopher's stone and psychic wholeness. Moreover, where the alchemists posited that the philosopher's stone, as the prospective source of an "Elixir of Life," allows one to attain immortality, Jung's individuation process accounts for an analogous transformation, holding that the immortal soul is a theological proxy for an aspect of the Self, which is constituted in part by an inherited, timeless, and universal "collective unconscious."² Institutions also aspire to permanence, and thus fundamentally depend on transmission for their perpetuation. However, the absence of conventional modes of rapid brand diffusion to a broad public like the gift shop or bookstore (although I later found out that, despite lacking

any indication whatsoever, select few items can be purchased at the visitor's desk, placed almost out of sight with respect to the entering visitor) in Ruby City suggests that transmission is not a priority, or at least assumes a different form, here. Toward what legacies does the Foundation's internal dialogue advance?

Indeed, Ruby City is inseparable from the notion of everlasting life given the project's relation to Linda Pace's declining health. Nevertheless, this orientation toward healing is even more potent in ChrisPark, a one-acre public park that Pace established in 2005 across Camp Street from what is now Ruby City, in honor of her son who passed away 1997 from a heroin overdose (Figure 1). In *Dreaming Red*, Pace recounts how one Jungian analyst told her that "dreams are our psyche's natural way of healing and can enrich our lives if we reflect on their deeper meanings or bring them alive in art or other forms of expression."³ Through this lens, Pace's dreams,

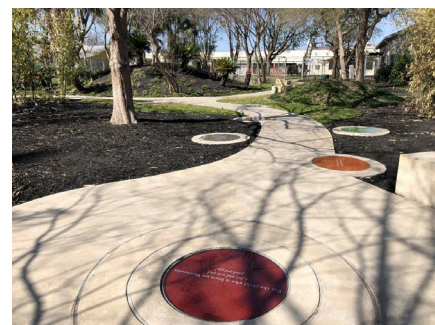


Figure 1: author's photo, ChrisPark



Figure 2: author's photo, jewels in the concrete at ChrisPark

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Figure 4: author's photo from public discussion at ArtPace with the current residency cohort (Ariel René Jackson, Glendalys Medina, and Claudia Martínez Garay) and guest curator Marcella Guerrero



Figure 5: author's photo in Ariel René Jackson's ArtPace installation

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THRESHOLD OF TRANSFORMATION

With these reflections, I exit Julien's gallery and descend the stairs that complete Ruby City's "ambulatory loop," this geometry, evocative of the *ouroboros*, an alchemical symbol of rebirth, recurrence, or wholeness and the unity of all things - of macrocosm and microcosm, of light and dark, of *prima materia* and philosopher's stone, of conscious and unconscious. (Figures 1-2) Exiting the lobby, passing both Pace's memorial plaque and *Red Project* a second time, I return to the problematic of an institution founded on dreams, finding the *ouroboros* an appropriate model for an institution that leverages the fuzziness inherent to the hermeneutical lens in pursuit of a multifaceted legacy of personal and cultural transformation.

In his key late-career text *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, Jung writes that individuation is never complete, that "the more numerous and the more significant the unconscious contents which are assimilated to the ego, the closer the approximation of the ego to the self, even though this approximation must be a never-ending process." Rather, there is always a part of the psyche that we cannot access by

virtue of the mutually dependent, "transcendent" relation of ego and shadow, one's field of consciousness expanding recursively. Likewise, there will always be logics of the private contemporary art institution that elude the viewer; after all, the proliferation of such establishments is still only in its early stages, this phenomenon particularly exploding since 1980, and not so far removed from a time when museums were perceived as a culmination of western 'rational thought.' In any case, I leave it for a future analyst to broaden this fever dream's horizon.

and significant and meaningful to the public," words that tautologically elaborate on each other: "distinct" in the structure's significance, "significant" because it has "meaning" for the public.⁹ Although Moore does not elaborate on the constitution of this "public" or the nature of this "meaning," it is abundantly clear from my Ruby City experience that he is not talking about the general public, a supposition reinforced by the fact that none of my taxi drivers had heard of the Center, let alone of anyone desiring to visit. Ruby City instead aspires, as suggested by the prominent references to its inclusion in TIME's "The World's Greatest Places of 2019," to a status independent of the visitor, by virtue of starchitect, star-curator, and star-artist engendered cultural capital.

More broadly, Randy Guthmiller explains that (in addition to her magic power of artistic empathy) "Linda always had this incredible foresight to see the potential in spaces," discernment that is particularly evident in Ruby City's integration (as part of the Foundation's CAMPStreet campus in Southtown) with the ongoing San Pedro Creek Culture Park master plan (Figures 6-7).¹⁰ This project envisions developing an existing drainage ditch, which passes just west of Ruby City, into

a nearly three-quarters-of-a-mile linear park that, on its anticipated completion in 2025, will connect the Southtown and Lone Star (a few blocks south of Southtown) neighborhoods to Downtown's western edge (two blocks west of ArtPace). Geographically and conceptually parallel to the city's famous River Walk, this park will include a landscape of public art installations and water features while restoring this artery to a natural creek habitat.

Guthmiller describes Ruby City's terraced interface with the Creek as "the completion of the [CAMPStreet] campus," an element that Adjaye conceives as integral to Ruby City's public orientation (Figure 8). Already registering akin to a lightning rod for real estate developers, the San Pedro Creek Culture Park undoubtedly foregrounds Southtown as a focal point for San Antonio's development in the coming decades. With the plan's three Downtown segments either completed or in construction, development is equally accelerating around ArtPace; gesturing toward orange barrels outside, Riley Robinson informs me during our meeting that ArtPace organization will be "the smallest building in this little area in about four years," with high-rise development around the structure slated to begin in the

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Figure 1: my sketch, from the end of the circulation loop, of its beginning

Figure 2: the *ouroboros*, represented as a serpent-like creature swallowing its tail (Wikimedia Commons)



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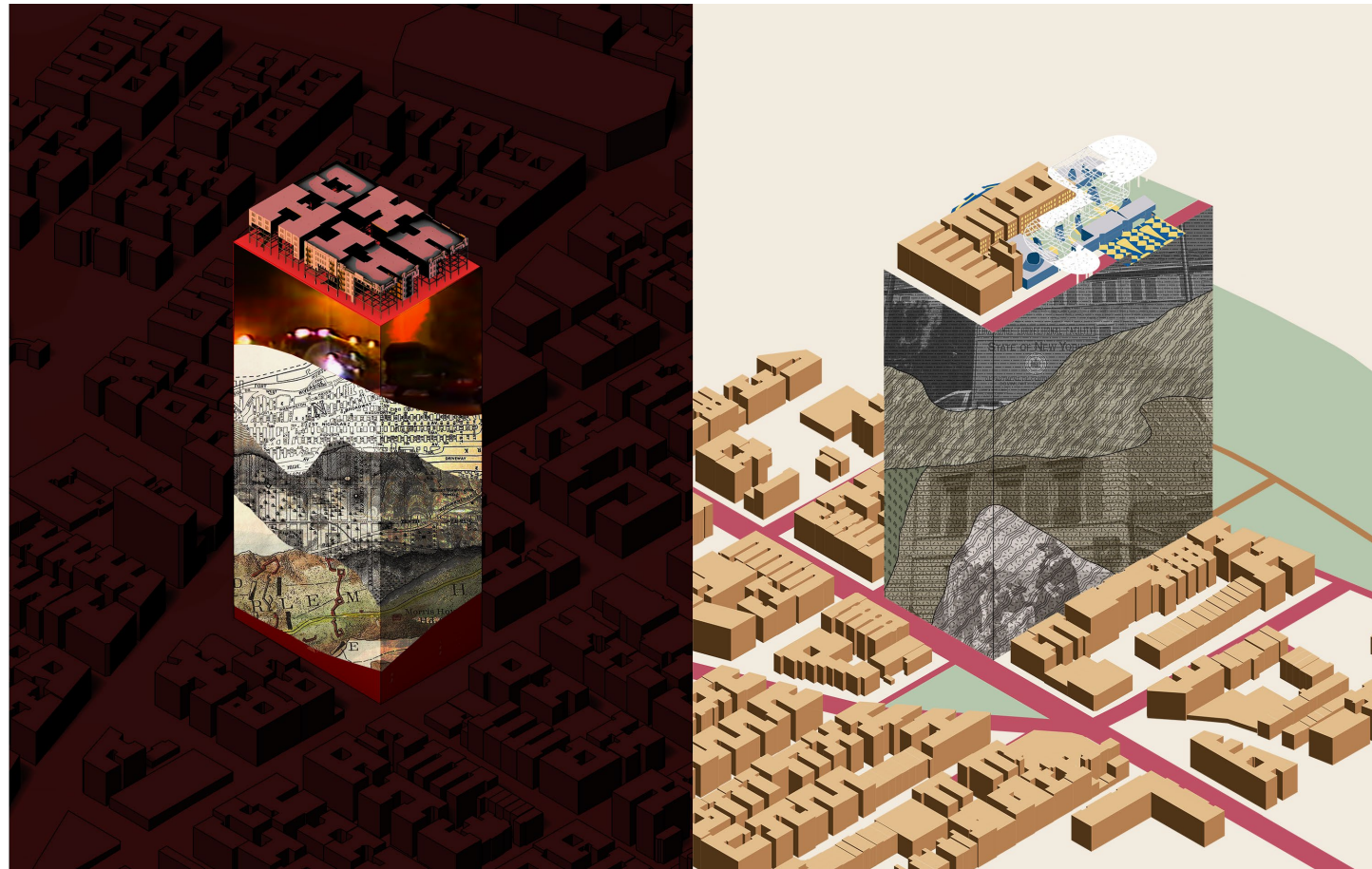
ARCHAEOLOGIES OF REPAIR

WASHINGTON HEIGHTS, MANHATTAN, NYC
FALL 2020, JEROME HAFERD

Manhattan's eminence as a global financial and cultural center is sustained by a dialectical relationship. Where the island's southern pole evolved into an international beacon of white capitalist hegemony, much of this growth was only facilitated by the presence of its historically neglected northern extremities. Manhattan's northern pole thus metaphorically parallels the physical concept of "dark matter," both of which largely elude representation yet remain integral to their respective ecosystems. As a similarly invisible but omnipresent phenomenon, dark matter also has an affinity with power, the dynamics of which I studied this semester in the island's Washington Heights neighborhood.

Perhaps the most explicit typological manifestation of these architecturally encoded imbalances is the prison. Washington Heights contains the only such structure in northern Manhattan, the Edgecombe Residential Treatment Facility, a consequence of the southern tip's magnetic pull. Through mining this institution's historical traces, this intervention seeks to repair this imposed spatial and structural violence. Through undoing this structure and penal convention, I propose carving out a new public urban space which challenges the traditional figure-ground dichotomy that defines the Manhattan grid to provide a respite from the city.

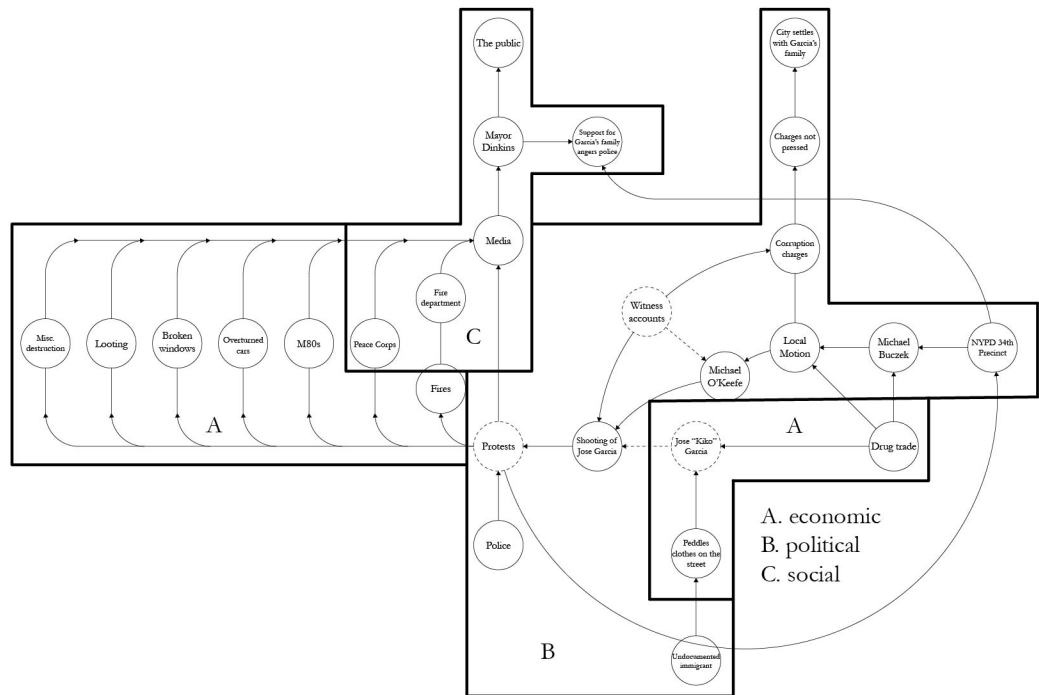
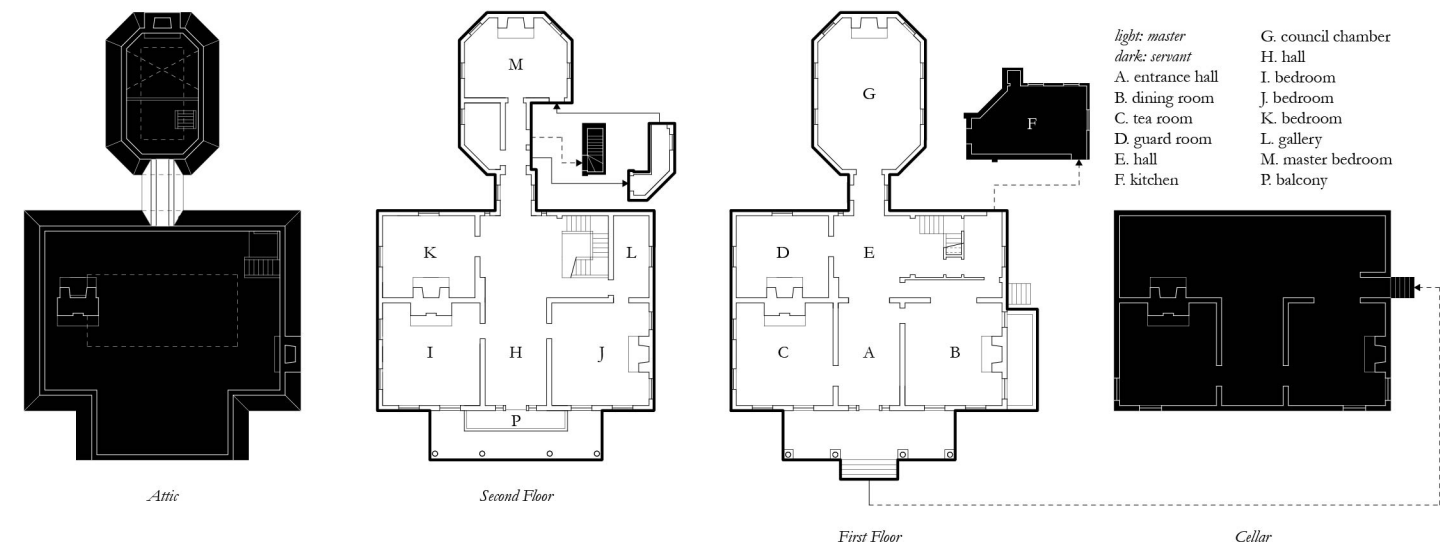
collaborative excavation with Isaac Khouzam (*bottom*)
urban scale proposal isometric (*right*)





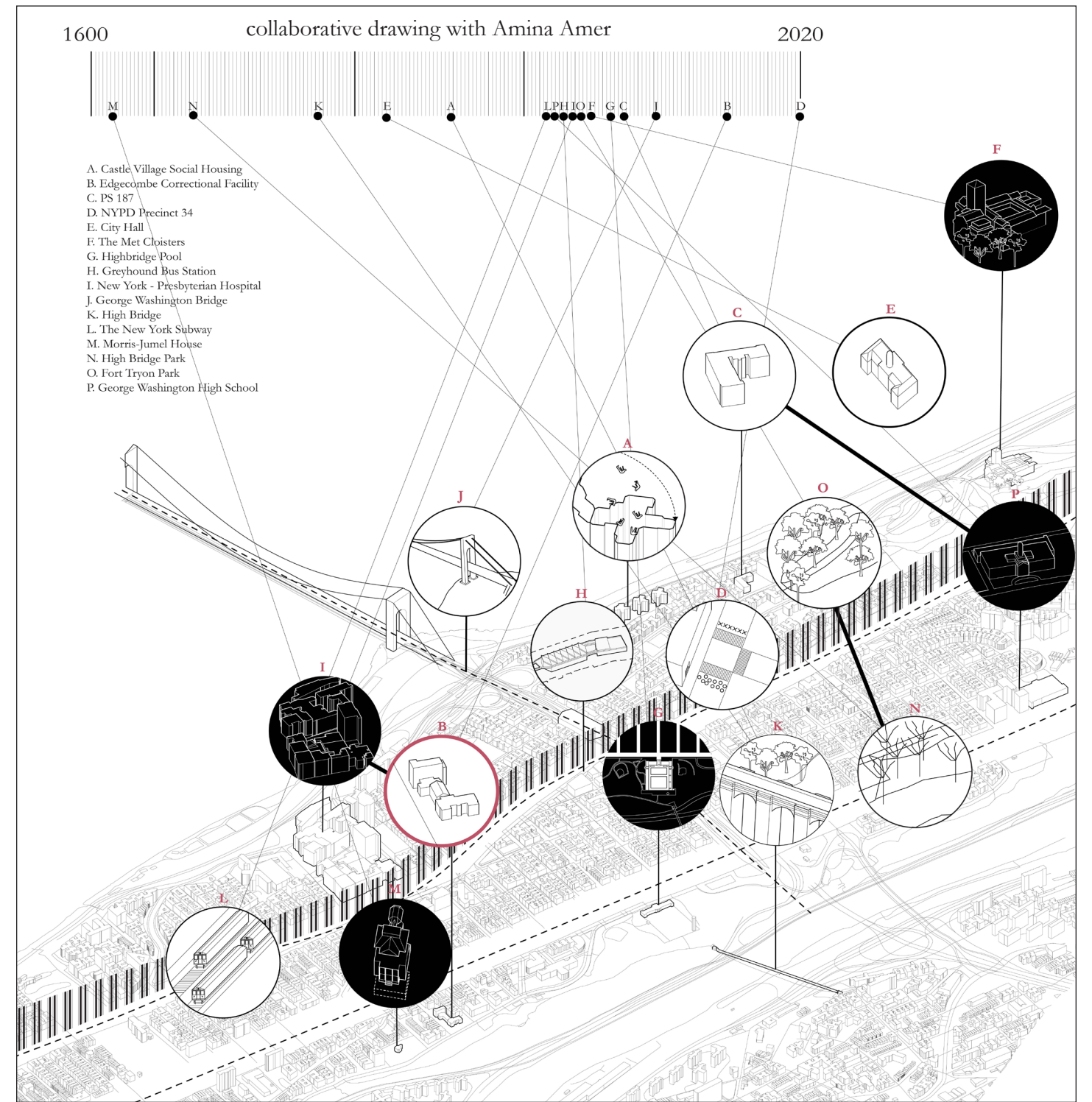
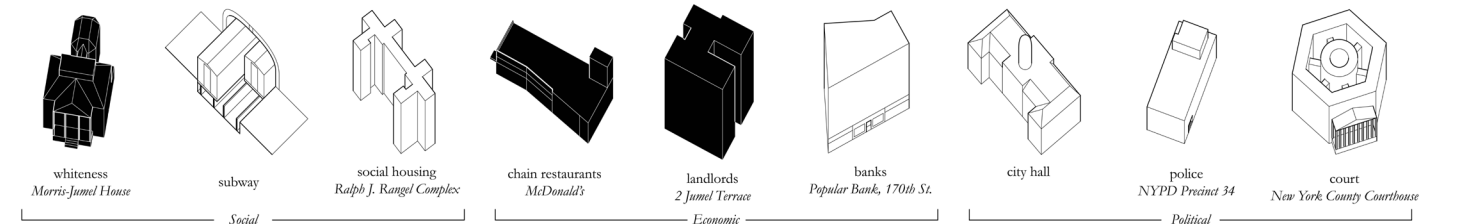
Territories of Power in the Morris-Jumel House

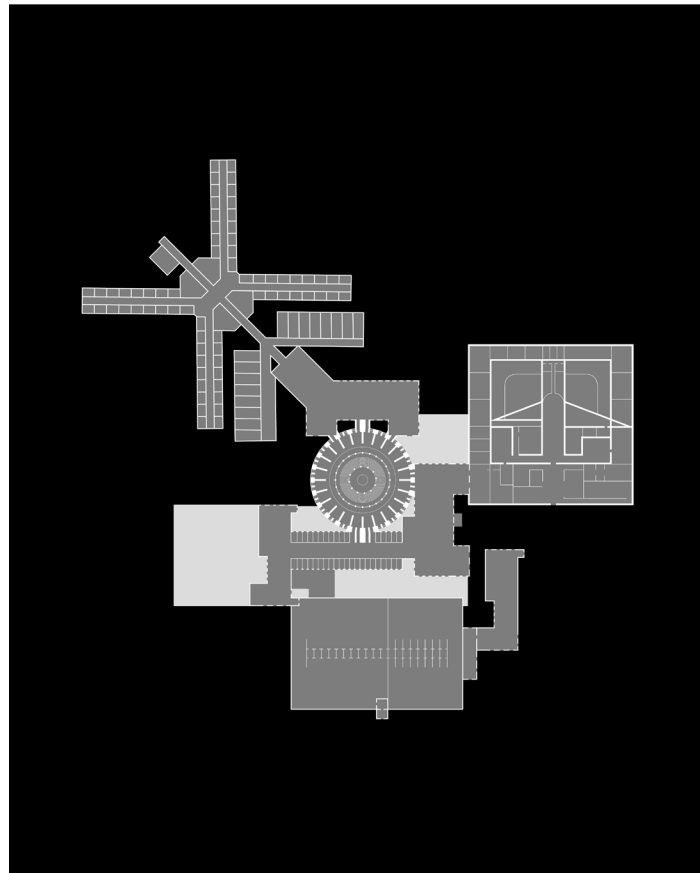
The Morris-Jumel House, commonly recognized as the first house in Manhattan, is an architectural embodiment of the European colonial project. In these drawings, I explore how this structure embodies the relationship of master and servant in planimetric and sectional territories.



Typologies of Power

Many of these invisible yet determining factors are expressed spatially in a variety of both state-owned and private architectural typologies, many of which exist outside Washington Heights yet bear heavily on its way of life.

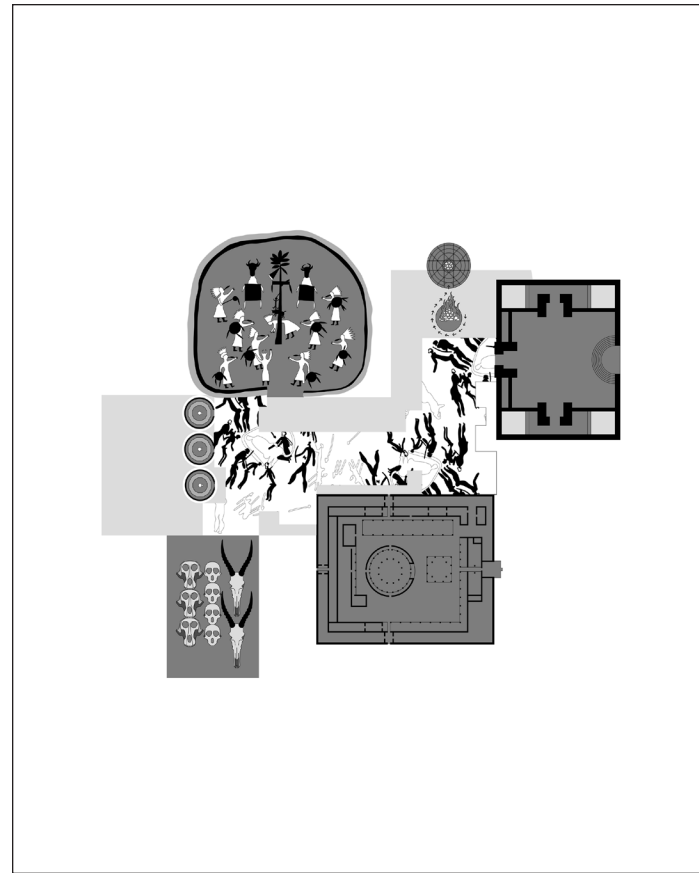




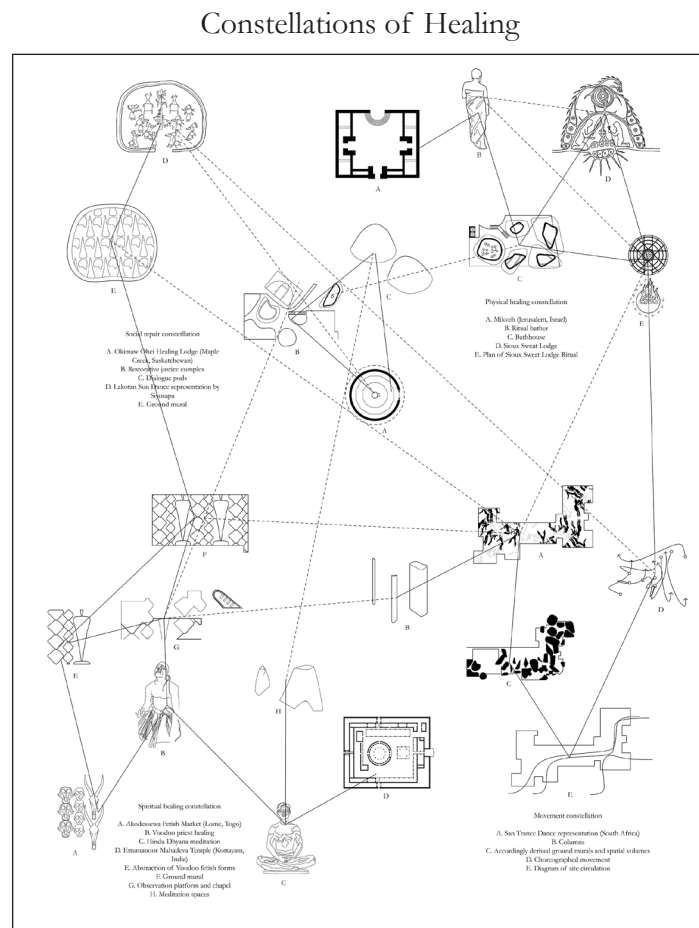
Typologies of Discipline

The Edgecombe Residential Treatment Facility was initially constructed as a small community hospital before it was forced to close in 1964 due to pressure from the nascent New York-Presbyterian Hospital. Upon its later appropriation by the city and conversion into a minimum-security prison, this structure, through architecture's complicity, was implicitly brought into dialogue with the carceral typology's roots as an instrument that excluded and perpetuated the subjugation of the "non-white" other to consolidate white western hegemony.

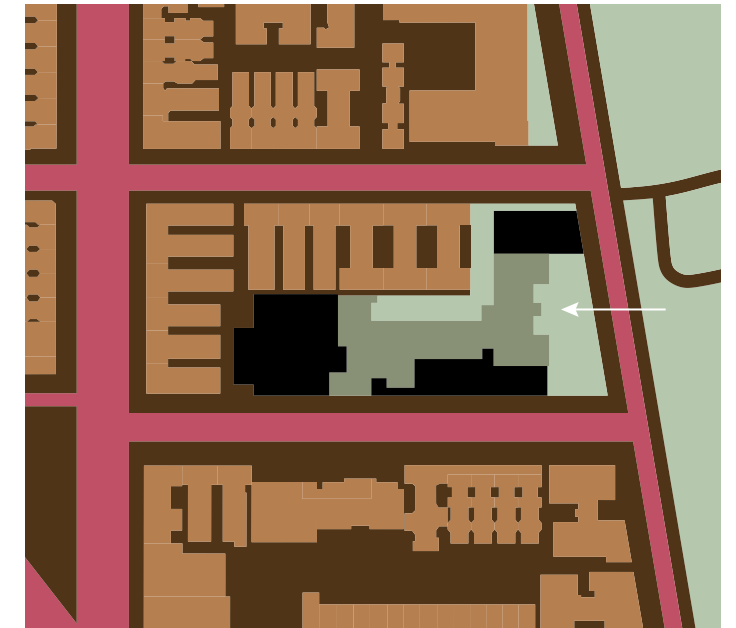
Where the disciplinary process, as documented by Michel Foucault, was ultimately removed from the public sphere as part of the Enlightenment humanist project, this proposal instead considers healing as both a public activity and a more constructive approach to justice. Inspired by Saidiya Hartman's notion of "critical fabulation," constructing imaginaries that address gaps in the historical archive, new imaginaries, this proposal draws upon community-oriented, non-western, and indigenous healing architectures and practices.



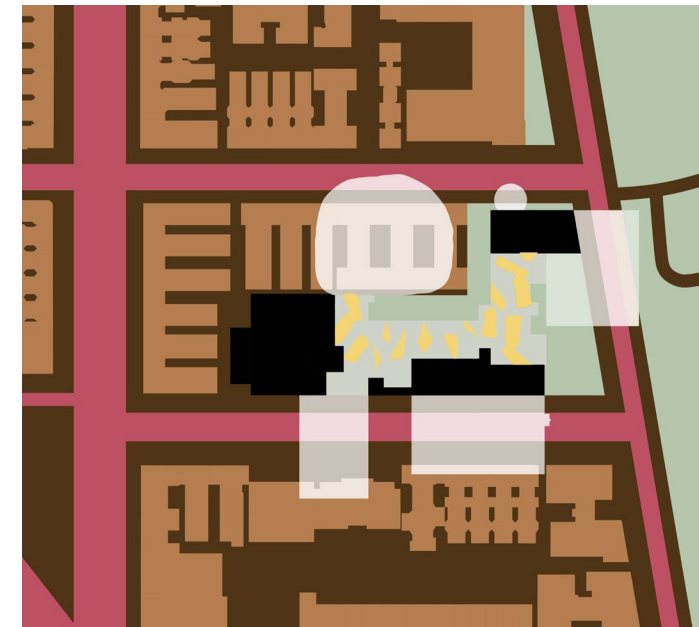
Typologies of Healing



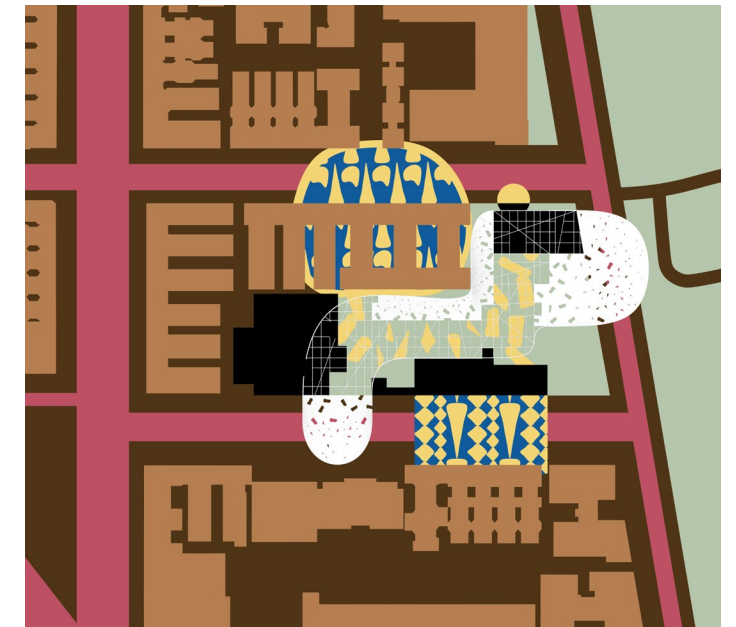
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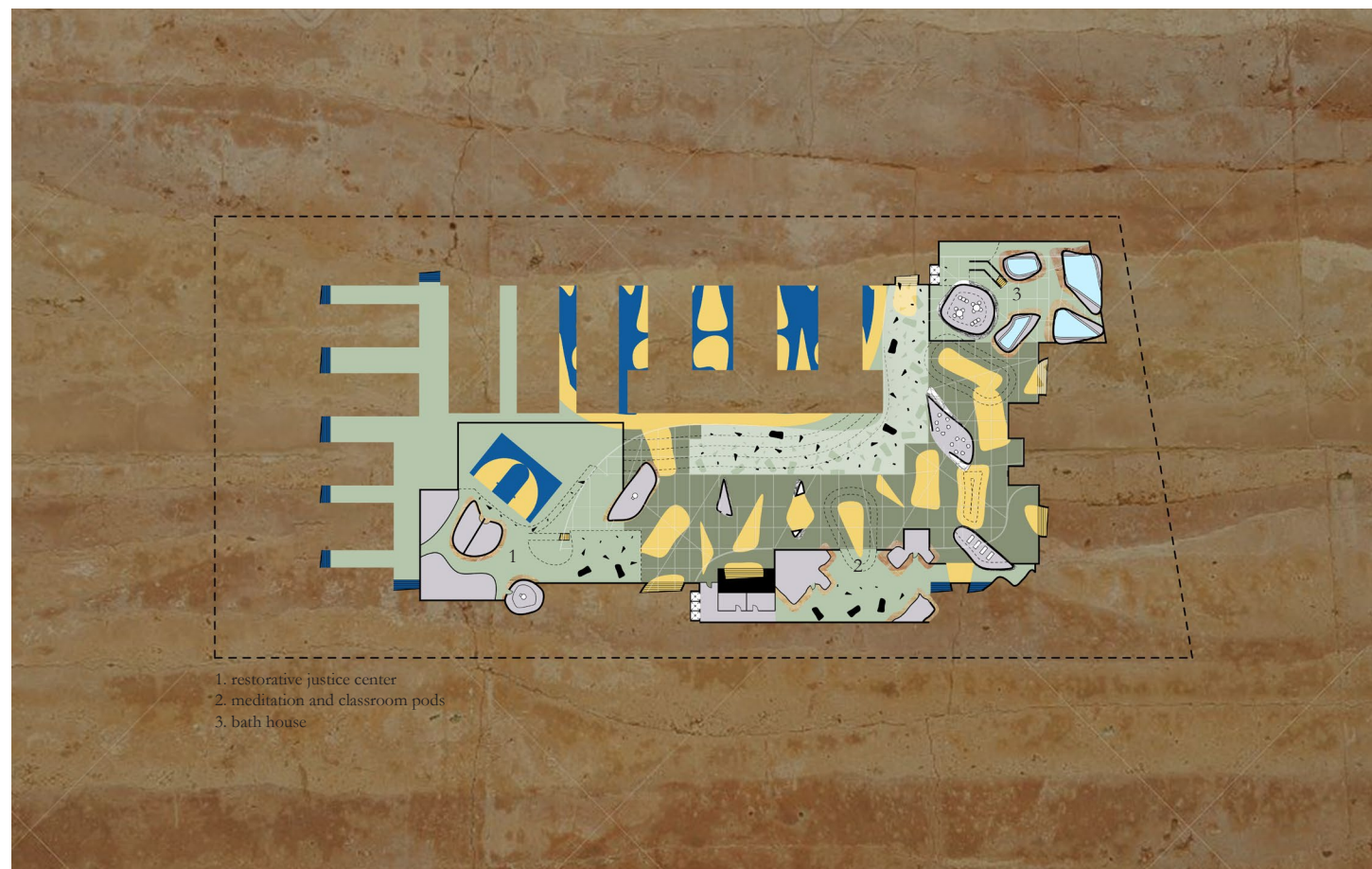
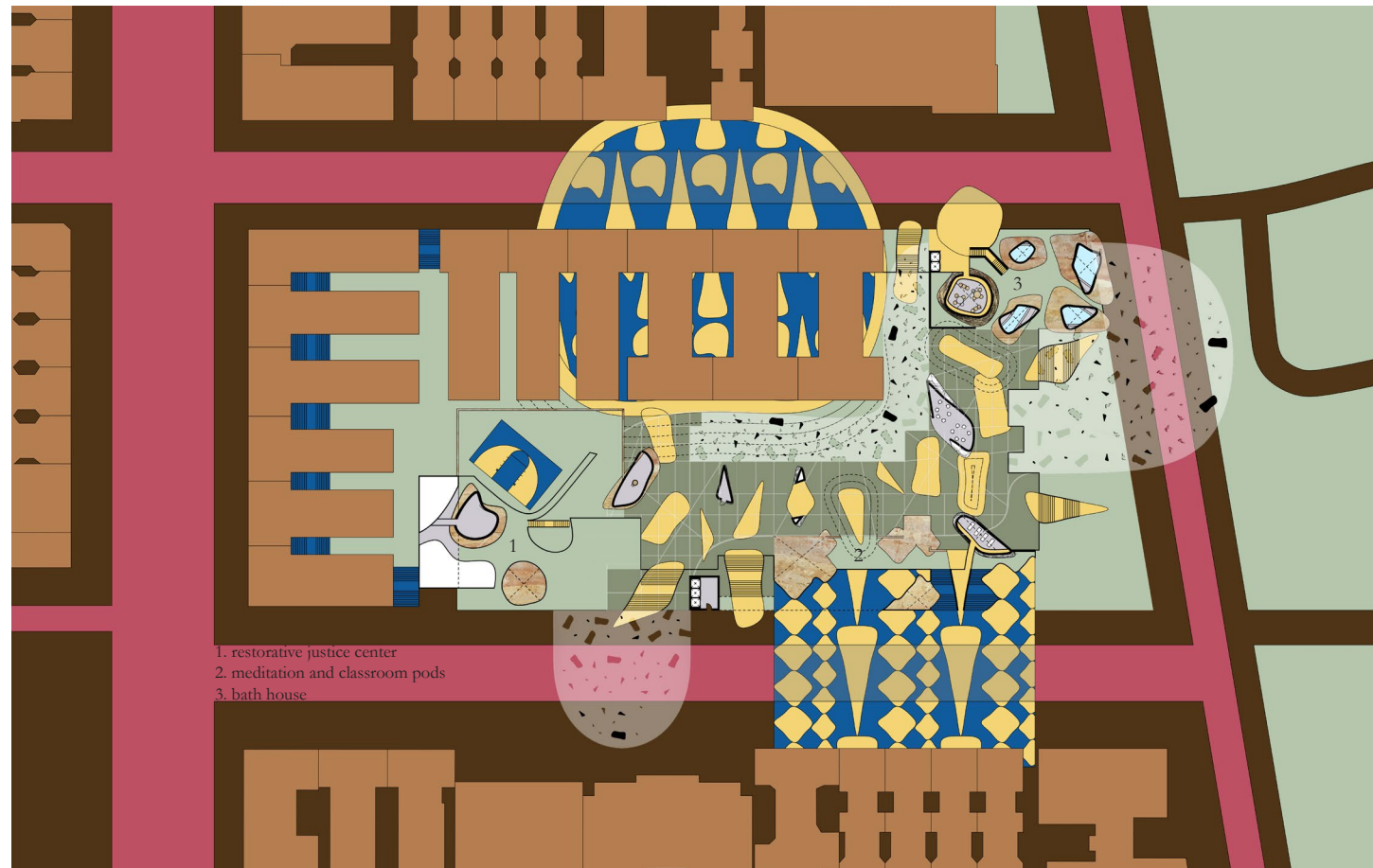
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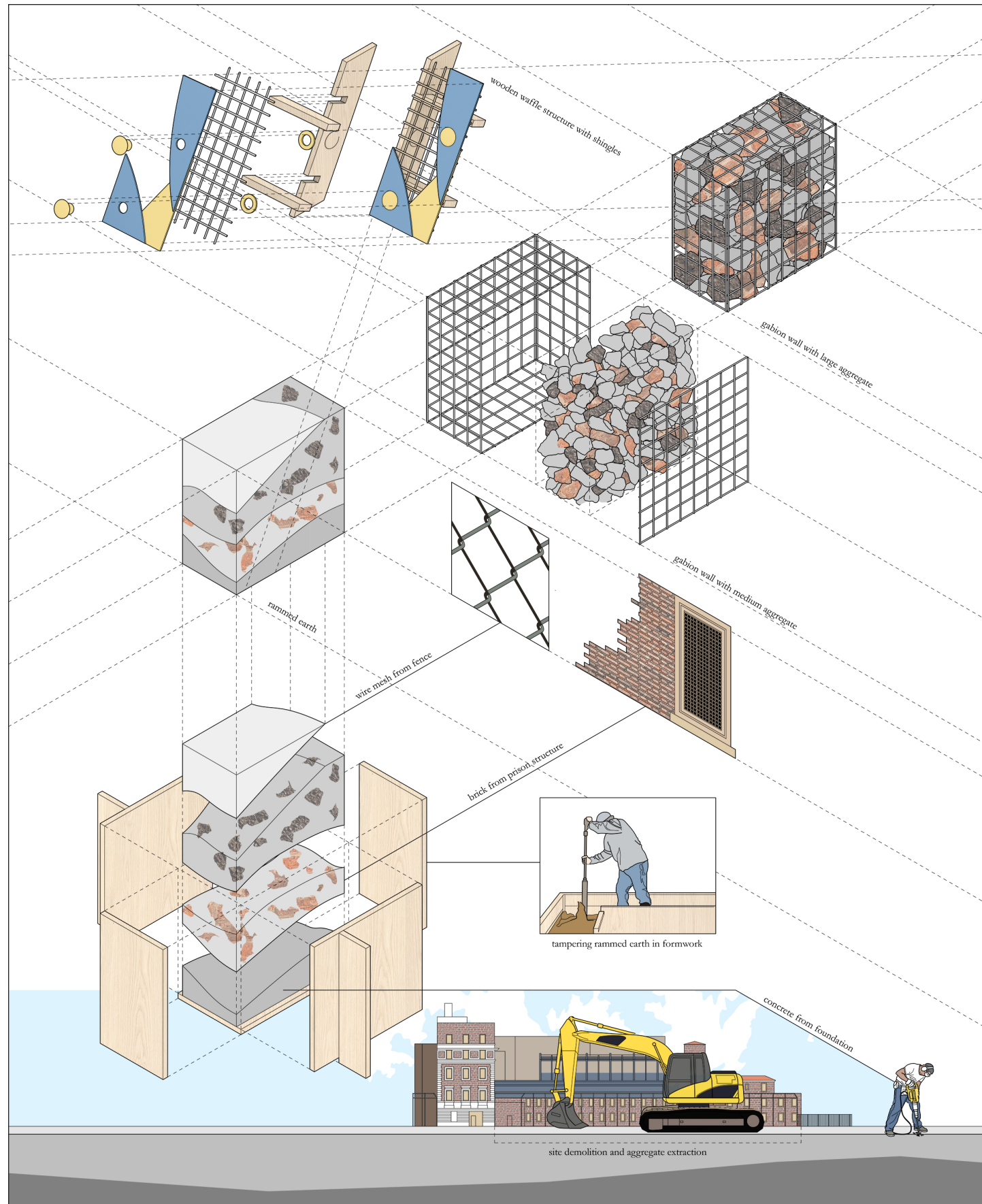


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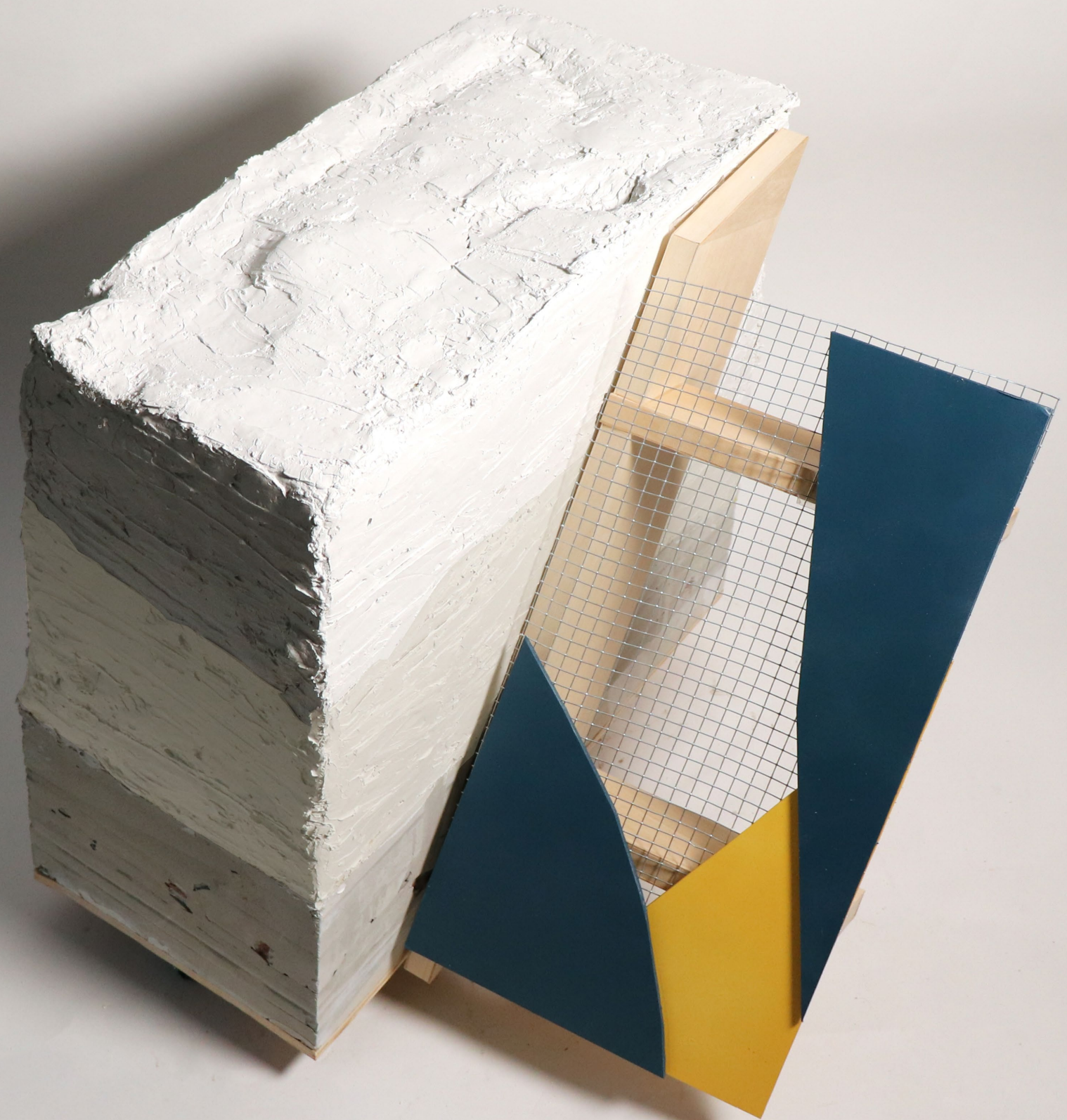
Site strategy

1. Present condition, showing prison and fenced enclosure
2. Inverting the site's present massing, transmuting the prison's fortress-like disposition into a semi-covered public park which reintegrates Highbridge Park (right) into the neighborhood's fabric while exploiting the site's natural sectional change
3. The canopy and ground murals are derived from indigenous and non-western representations of healing practices and behave as tendrils that erode the city grid.
4. Screen walls reinterpret the prison fence, loosely defining programmatic zones, populated with volumes that synthesize healing precedents into new hybrid typologies. These interventions support healing physically, spiritually, and socially through spaces for bathing, meditation, education, and restorative justice. As symbolic ruins or artifacts of the Edgecombe Facility, these two formal logics (the wall and the volume) suggest that the existing carceral model cannot be reformed. As the project erodes penal and architectural convention, the canopy dematerializes around the excavated void into a pergola.





The intervention employs rammed earth and gabion wall tectonics that incorporate aggregates from the site. The pergola carries into the volumes through a waffle structure and shingle system that reinterprets papier-mache. These materials naturally weather and decay, becoming artifacts of a new historiographic stratum.



2' x 2' x 2' detail model
rockite, bricks, gravel, expanding foam, spackle, plywood, basswood, foamcore, steel fencing

TESSUTO STUDIO

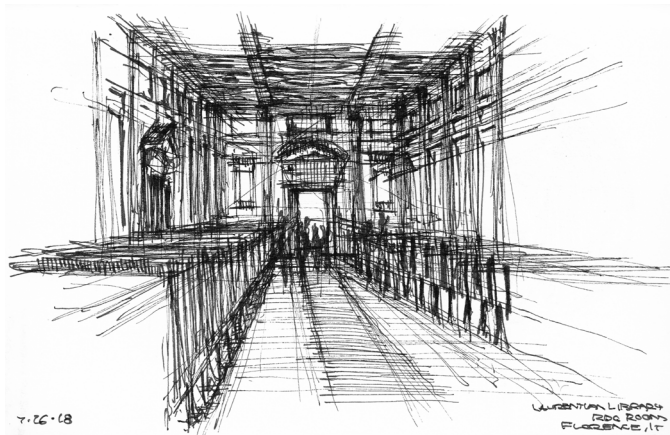
FLORENCE, ITALY
SUMMER 2018, IGOR MARJANOVIC AND ALEX WALLER

tessuto *mm* : textile

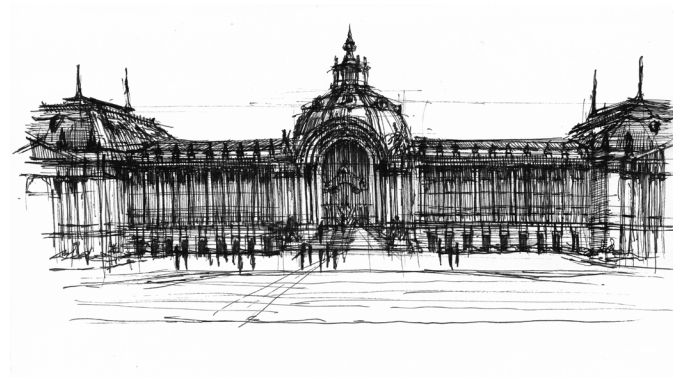
As a European Mediterranean port country, Italy was severely impacted by the 2015 refugee crisis. In an initial investigation reacting to these events, I explored the use of constellations as a navigation technique at sea.

This study inspired a collaborative proposal for a textile studio in the Florentine bastione. Though located outside of the Florence city walls, the bastione is an extension of the city's urban fabric. Tessuto Studio is a mixed typology textile studio, bazaar, education center, and textile gallery that operates as a public space for both refugees and locals.

Inspired by the ideas of textiles and urban fabric, we see the refugees as metaphorically being woven into the city's fabric. The subtle intervention preserves the existing historically significant context, representing the seamless integration of these refugees into the city. The use of glass partitions and fluidly woven circulation enhance this contextual unification, blurring the boundary between indoors and outdoors. Through facilitated interaction with migrants, this structure would be a center for the dissemination of typically "othered" cultures.



Laurentian Library Reading Room, Florence



Petit Palais, Paris

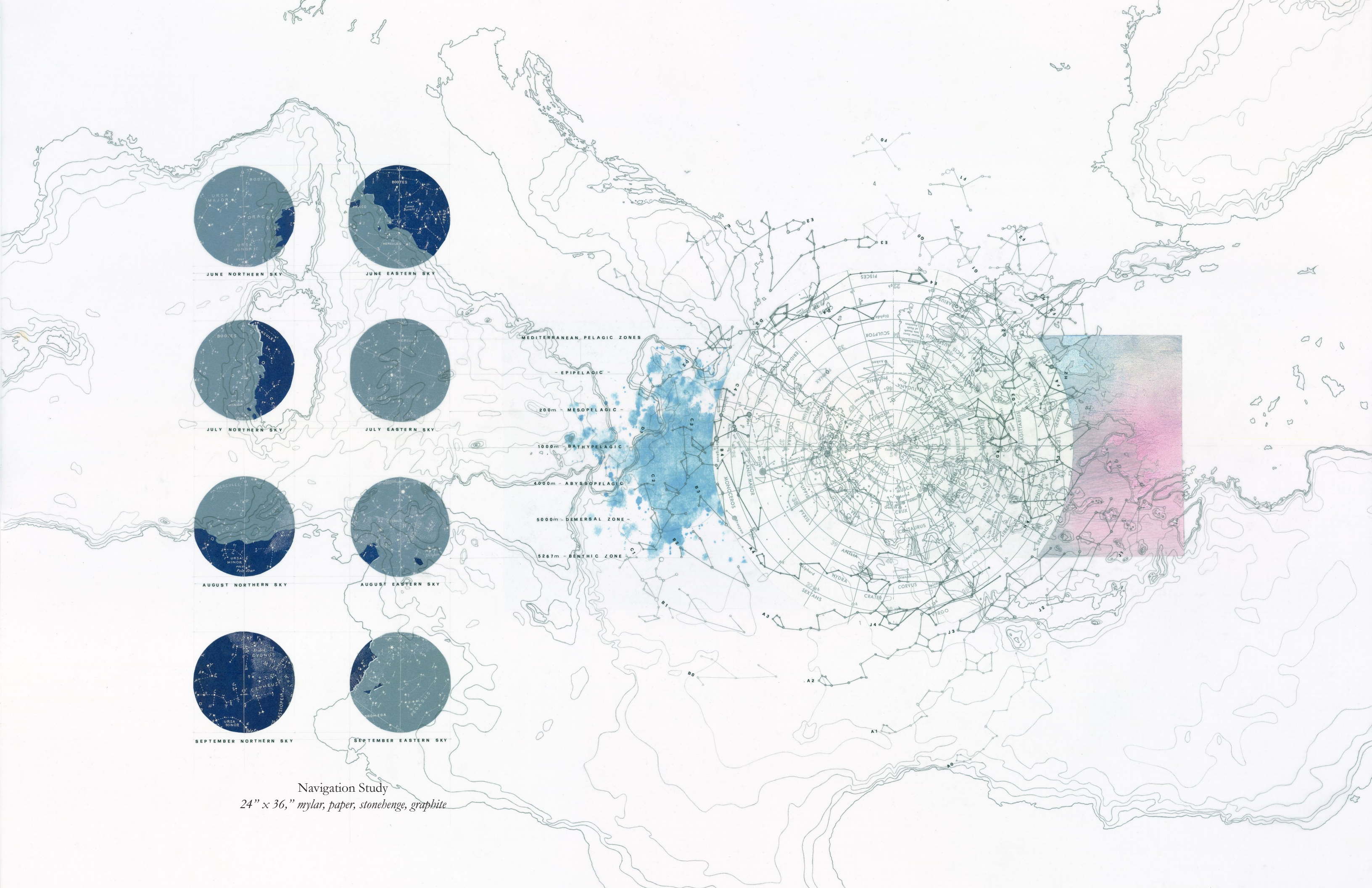


Casa Mila, Barcelona



Louis Vuitton Foundation, Paris

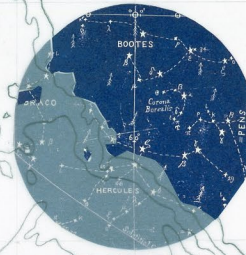




MEDITERRANEAN PELAGIC ZONES
- EPIPELAGIC -
200m - MESOPELAGIC -
1000m - BATHYPELAGIC -
4000m - ABYSSOPELAGIC -
5000m - DEMERSAL ZONE -
5267m - BENTHIC ZONE -



JUNE NORTHERN SKY



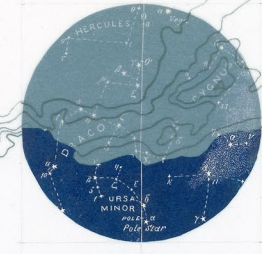
JUNE EASTERN SKY



JULY NORTHERN SKY



JULY EASTERN SKY



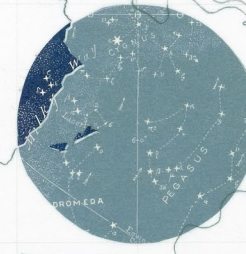
AUGUST NORTHERN SKY



AUGUST EASTERN SKY

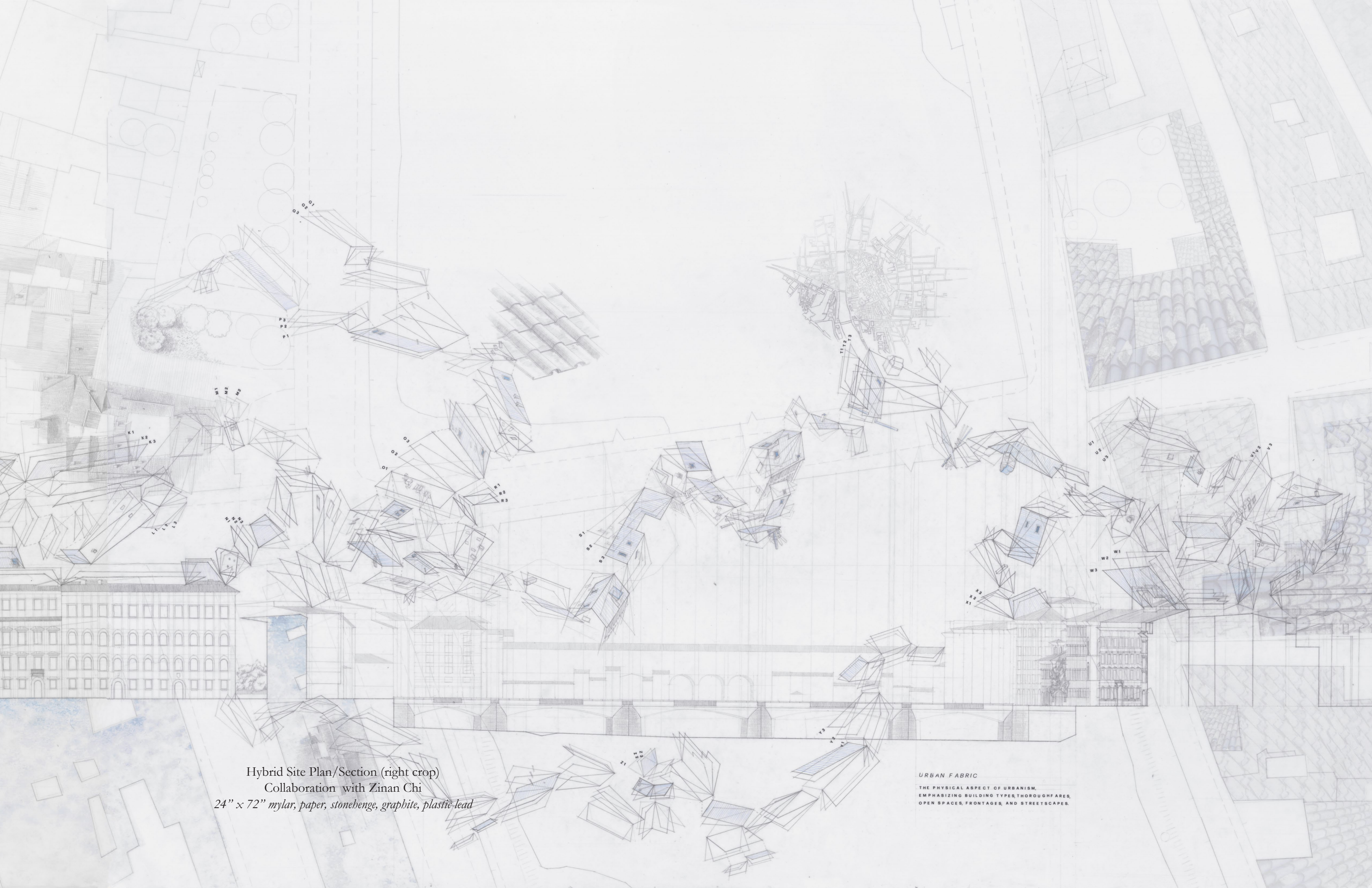


SEPTEMBER NORTHERN SKY



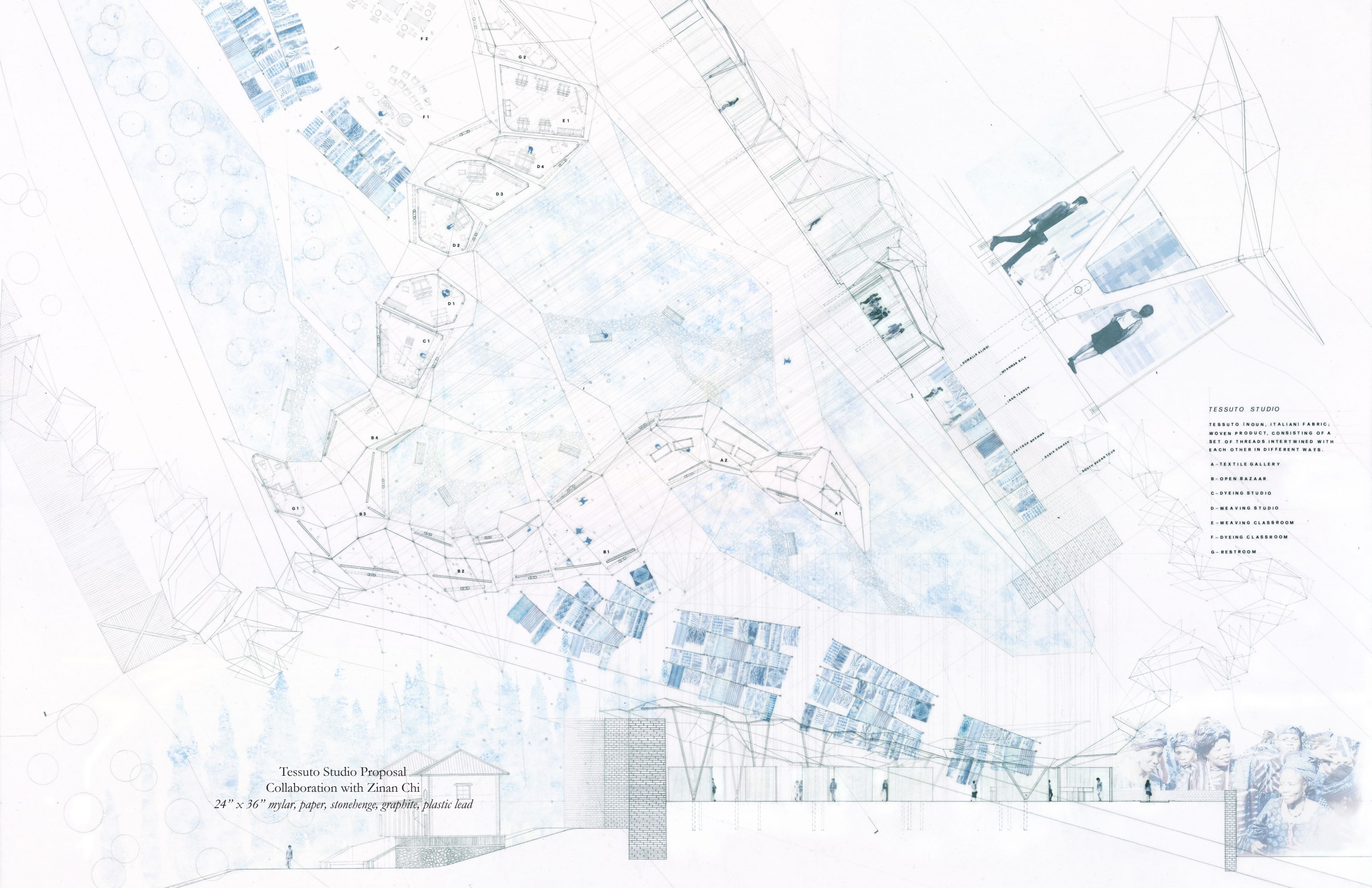
SEPTEMBER EASTERN SKY

Navigation Study
24" x 36," mylar, paper, stonehenge, graphite



Hybrid Site Plan/Section (right crop)
Collaboration with Zinan Chi
24" x 72" mylar, paper, stonebenge, graphite, plastic lead

URBAN FABRIC
THE PHYSICAL ASPECT OF URBANISM,
EMPHASIZING BUILDING TYPES, THOROUGHFARES,
OPEN SPACES, FRONTAGES, AND STREETSCAPES.



TESSUTO STUDIO

TESSUTO (INOON, ITALIAN) FABRIC; WOVEN PRODUCT, CONSISTING OF A SET OF THREADS INTERTWINED WITH EACH OTHER IN DIFFERENT WAYS.

- A - TEXTILE GALLERY
- B - OPEN BAZAAR
- C - DYEING STUDIO
- D - WEAVING STUDIO
- E - WEAVING CLASSROOM
- F - DYEING CLASSROOM
- G - RESTROOM

Tessuto Studio Proposal
Collaboration with Zinan Chi
24" x 36" mylar, paper, stonebenge, graphite, plastic lead



I would see beside me, on my left hand, an angel in bodily form... He was not tall, but short, and very beautiful, his face so aflame that he appeared to be one of the highest types of angel who seem to be all afire. ... In his hands I saw a long golden spear and at the end of the iron tip I seemed to see a point of fire. With this he seemed to pierce my heart several times so that it penetrated to my entrails... he left me completely afire with a great love for God. The pain was so sharp that it made me utter several moans; and so excessive was the sweetness caused me by this intense pain that one can never wish to lose it, nor will one's soul be content with anything less than God.

This famous passage from St. Teresa of Ávila's 1565 autobiography *The Life of Teresa of Jesus* recounts one of the saint's divine visions, the Transverberation, an embodied association between pain and the beauty of spiritual enlightenment similarly encompassed in words that became associated with her personage, "I desire to suffer, Lord, because Thou didst suffer." Architect and sculptor Gian Lorenzo Bernini enriched this narrative in his canonical opus the *Ecstasy of St. Teresa* (1647-1652) in the Cornaro Chapel of Rome's magnificently ornate Santa Maria della Vittoria (**Figure 1**). Bernini's piece depicts the moment just before the burning angel plunges the spear into Teresa's body, evidenced by the juxtaposition between the angels' tensely coiled arm and tender expression. The saint's reclined and passively limp figure appears to sink into her cloud-like drapery, eyes closed as her open mouth groans from an agony of such searing intensity and rapturous pleasure as to transcend language – filled with the love of God. Although often associated with a strand of landscape painting that included the likes of J. M. W. Turner, Caspar David Friedrich, and Thomas Cole, Bernini's attempt to visually distill the potency of Teresa's words provides a compelling case to apprehend the Transverberation in terms of the "sublime." This Enlightenment aesthetic philosophy of nature sought the divine's presence in phenomena beyond human understanding, usually evoking a sense of awe or terror.

In perceiving the body as an environment, its skin the exosphere of a precariously balanced internal ecosystem that depends on its own unique climatological or atmospheric conditions for proper operation, the



Fig. 1: *Ecstasy of St. Teresa*

Transverberation constitutes an accurate analog to the divinity of sublime landscapes. At the same time, this glorification of physical and spiritual suffering runs counter to the modern utopic desire for a world beyond pain, an achievement humanity has perhaps come closest to realizing through the advent of general anaesthesia. In Bernini's earlier Baroque cultural context, general anaesthesia would have comprised a form of pollution, a chemically induced haze that blankets and degrades a patient's internal landscape, inhibiting individuals from fully opening themselves to experience with an engendered loss of perception and consciousness. It is not surprising, then, that some denounced this innovation as satanic. In the following paragraphs, I will explore how a multivalent understanding of general anaesthesia, a trans-scalar and cross-disciplinary phenomenon that mediates between a series of dialectics, provides the seeds for an ethics of care. Through employing the spelling "anaesthesia," I intend to foreground this bodily state's derivation from the "aesthetic" (anaesthetic comes from the Greek *anaisthēsis*, a combination of *an-* meaning "without," and *aisthēsis* meaning "sensation"), illustrating its environmental implications.

Modern general anaesthesia operates through integrating sedation (a spectrum of reduced awareness or depression of consciousness), analgesia (reduced

sensitivity to pain), muscle paralysis, and amnesia, allowing humans to transcend their biologically encoded pain thresholds. This state is usually begotten today by a compound of intravenously injected chemicals that operates in each of these four spheres, a common combination being an IV of propofol (sedative, analgesic, and amnesiac) concurrently with one of succinyl choline (muscle paralytic). These agents broadly function by placing the patient in an induced coma and short-circuiting the neurotransmissions responsible for the brain's capacity to apprehend sensation, thus preventing this organ from interpreting pain inflicted during a procedure. In this sense, I understand general anaesthesia as an "adaptation technology," a construct that allows people to better reconcile themselves to aspects of existence or reality. Still, the mechanics of anaesthesia remain something of a mystery as researchers do not yet entirely understand how or why it works. In an article for *Scientific American*, Mayo Clinic College of Medicine and Science associate professor of anaesthesiology Bill Perkins states that "we don't yet know the molecular mechanism(s) of action for general anaesthetics," in spite of this procedure's long history.

The first medical application of general anaesthesia in human beings is generally recognized to have been dentist William Morton's demonstration of the use of ether vapor in what is now known as the "Ether Dome" of Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston on October 16, 1846. In this display, which has since been immortalized in Robert Cutler Hinckley's painting *The First Operation Under Ether* (1882-1893; on display in Harvard Medical School's Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine), surgeon John Collins Warren successfully removed a tumor from housepainter Gilbert Abbott's neck, the patient placed in a state of general anaesthesia under Morton's guidance (**Figure 2**). However, this "modern" technology owes a debt to the vast body of knowledge acquired over millennia of prior experimentation across a broad geographic range. This understanding recalls Astrida Neimanis's concept of "posthuman gestationality" elucidated in her book *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology*, in which the author apprehends embodiment as "watery," "...never really autonomous [as] we require other bodies of other waters...to bathe us into being." Critically, Neimanis interprets "body" through a posthuman lens that encompasses all natural and planetary entities and systems. After all, in Classical Greek mythology, the spatial association between



Fig. 2: *First Operation Under Ether*

Hypnos, the god of sleep and the River Lethe speaks to a reckoning with the values of primitive anaesthetics. Hypnos lived in Hades, in a cavern containing poppies (from which opium was derived) and other sleep-inducing plants, which was circumnavigated by the River Lethe, from which, "[b]efore souls passed to Elysium, they drank...to forget earthly sorrow." Where most early anaesthetics simply engendered sleep, it was only later when total and reliable sedation was united with proximal amnesia.

In subsequent decades, general anaesthesia quickly expanded into a standardized medical practice and splintered into a diverse assortment of compounds such as chloroform, propofol, morphine, and nitrous oxide ("laughing gas"). Intravenous anaesthesia was first used in 1934. Suddenly, these agents could be precisely administered to bring about a particular degree of general anaesthesia as codified in Dr. Arthur Guedel's 1937 four-tier classification system. Anaesthesia now ranges in intensity and comprehensiveness from topical (which blocks nerve endings in the skin), to local, regional, twilight, and ultimately, general. This evolutionary trajectory parallels Peter Sloterdijk's characterization of modern chemical weapons like Zyklon B as a "design problem" in his text *Terror from the Air*. Sloterdijk states that, "...the active manipulation of breathing air...had all the features of an act of design, one according to which 'within the rules of art' human beings produce and design more or less precisely delimitable microclimata of death for other human beings." The calibrated attributes of various

chemical weapons manifest an effort to clairvoyantly determine an enemy's responding behavior. General anaesthesia similarly allows an operating team to carefully curate a patient's consciousness and behavior during a procedure, even possessing the capacity to increase or decrease the dose, as necessary, to change their state. As such a crafted experience, general anaesthesia also mirrors "air design" in consumer capitalism, which "aim[ed] at directly modifying the mood of airspace users...enticing a space's passers-by with pleasant, smell induced impressions of a situation, contributing to heightened product acceptance and willingness to buy," extending "the principle of interior architecture...to an otherwise imperceptible milieu of everyday life." It follows that general anaesthesia could be perceived to extend this "principle" into the body, an architecture of consciousness, allowing the surgeon to reveal diagnosed yet latent ecological defects under precisely generated climatological conditions.

Sloterdijk refers to such an act as one of "explication," "the revealing-inclusion of the background givens underlying manifest operations," a concept which, in this context, is underpinned by an understanding of the patient as "object" or "container." In one of my own encounters with local anaesthesia, I was overcome by a profound awareness of the intricate vessel networks within my body as the physician released the numbing agent into my hand, that these systems suddenly carried a foreign substance that alienated my consciousness from my body, entirely out of my control. I felt the chemicals course through each finger, efficiently laying siege to my awareness, parasitically interrupting transmissions between the world and a determined set of nerves, a sensation that I perceived as "staticky" as these communications collapsed into the ether. In neutralizing the patient's brain activity, disrupting one's internal ecosystem, the subject is reduced to pure object, human life at its most "bare." General anaesthesia is, therefore, the crowning achievement atop the substrate of modernist epistemology that revolves around ideals of bodily and emotional transcendence through technical progress. This aspiration accordingly also stands in effective antithesis to an "ethics of care," a moral framework that foregrounds the value in the individual's responsibility toward the wellbeing of its relations, including natural and planetary entities or systems. This thoroughlygoingly individualistic conception of self also runs counter to both Neimanis's posthuman gestationality and Macarena Gómez-Barris

in *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives*, both which foreground the need for an anthropologically decentered feminist phenomenology. Instead, general anaesthesia takes these values to an extreme – the most isolated and detached possible form of existence – that is paradoxically critical to intensive care, ceasing to be at all (whether "in-the-world" or "in-the-air").

This latent spirit is apparent in the technicalization of comfort, this quality not interpreted in the medical context to subjectively relate a body to its environment, but as an absolute binary which does not necessarily require any visual or communicative input from the patient. The human body, conceived as a chemically disciplined container, is in turn reduced to a purely submissive biopolitical abstraction that is mined for objective metrics, a type of extraction, which can be evaluated apart from the subject-object. This resulting surveillance is largely twofold: monitoring both the anaesthetic's delivery to the patient and their physiological state to ensure that their vitals exceed a particular threshold. These judgements are primarily facilitated today by the anaesthesia workstation (**Figure 3**), which integrates several technological instruments critical to proper administration, including a gas delivery and scavenging system (to distribute anaesthetic gas and remove excess from the operating room), vaporizers (to convert chemical anaesthesia into gas), electronic flow meters (to observe the anaesthesia's rate of flow), a ventilator (for assisted breathing), and several monitors which require constant attention to ensure stable vitals. The standard monitors required by the American Society of Anesthesiologists include a pulse oximeter (oxygenation), an electrocardiograph machine and a non-invasive blood pressure device (circulation), and a temperature monitor. Each instrument supplies or operates based on quantitative information harvested from the unconscious patient's body to maintain a comfortable state.

In this way, anaesthesia gives rise to protective internal conditions – an environment – that insulate the patient from the potentially intolerable pain that typically accompanies an operation. Through this lens, anaesthesiology finds an affinity with the "late-modern architectural environment" elaborated in David Gissen's book *Manhattan Atmospheres: Architecture, the Interior Environment, and Urban Crisis*, variations on the hermetically sealed and climate-controlled interior



Fig. 3: Anaesthesia workstation

"comfort zone" that severed inhabitants from New York City's toxic industrial atmosphere in the 1960s and 1970s. New technologies that facilitated this transformation like the air-conditioning unit and mirrored curtain wall allowed comfort to be abstracted into quantities like temperature and humidity. As the locus of a sedated patient's latent or suspended existence, the anaesthesia workstation employs these metrics to perform a comparable act of environmental alchemy, transmuting a hostile, conceivably uninhabitable realm of an all-consuming "being-in-pain" into an impregnable fortress of "not-being."

General anaesthesia thus extends the Enlightenment belief in a correlation between societal progress and comfort, expressed in the writings of thinkers like Cesare Beccaria and Jeremy Bentham. The western doctrine of pain management as a human right emerged from this milieu, an idea expressed in the Eighth Amendment to the United States Constitution's clause prohibiting cruel and unusual punishment. This moral tide gave impetus to new, less barbarous modes of execution, including the electric chair, the

gas chamber, and the firing squad. Arguably the most significant step in this evolution was the first lethal injection execution in 1982, an institution which employs general anaesthesia to temper the most literally dehumanizing possible experience – the mechanical rendering of "being-unto-death." Although operating instead under the premise of a natural death, comfort care, which comprises palliative and hospice care, abides by the same principle of implementing general anaesthesia to soften the body's movement toward death. This spirit can be summarized in the principle that medical care will not be denied to a patient if there is reasonable cause to believe that it is necessary. The Hippocratic Oath, to which physicians commit upon completing medical school, expresses this notion in a moral imperative that physicians provide care and "do no harm," now legally codified under medical malpractice. The institution of "charity care" arose out of these concerns to provide the funds to cover necessary procedures; however, industry cynicism exists around the abuse of these channels.

Postoperative side-effects, on the other hand, coalesce an entirely different type of anaesthetic territory – one defined neither by the hospital domain nor by total consciousness nor by the operation's duration. Instead, this space is defined by discomfort, by the duration of these side-effects, and by the patient's location or motion. Such procedural residues could include nausea, fever, pain (especially without prescribed narcotics), delirium, and even the partial or complete loss of aspects of our faculty of sensibility like olfactory or gustatory perception. Many people even report experiencing disturbances in their sleep cycles or dreams over subsequent days and weeks from the stress, discomfort, and disruption. These lingering operative traces establish a unique spatiotemporal perceptual logic that adheres to the patient, reconfiguring their understanding of the world until their faculties fully recover, and as bodily functions return to their pre-operative states.

Such effects are one of the only ways in which a patient apprehends the temporal disjunction induced by general anaesthesia upon waking, in addition to the obvious shifts in their spatial environment (which is perhaps akin to a sort of teleportation). It is thought that, with complete amnesia of the procedure, the subject instead perceives the loss and return of being or consciousness in immediate sequence. At the same time, this sudden

shift generates anxiety, particularly within a patient whose cognitive faculties are not behaving properly. Here, psychoanalyst D. W. Winnicott's "transitional object" provides something of an antidote, framed as an object consciously or unconsciously adopted by an infant to help them cope with the shift from the illusion of omnipotent control over reality to complete reconciliation of the self with an autonomous external reality that does not conform to the infant's desires. In broader terms, the transitional object provides a coping mechanism which helps an individual adaptation to and endure (usually) traumatic experiences, a form of anaesthesia. Although, to an outside observer, no transitional object exists that can accompany the patient out of reality, according to this earlier logic, the transitional object technically provides continuity from the patient's point of view. When memory resumes, the resulting disjunction can only be reconstructed with information from those who were present during this absence. However, since the operating team is quite busy and a patient's caregiver often changes or rotates during their stay, these ruptures in the continuity of experience are usually left unfilled or unresolved, creating trauma and anxiety. In the case of hospice care, the home itself behaves as a transitional object, a point of continuity which eases the patient's progression through the final stages of their life.

Much of the tension around general anaesthesia also results from the patient's complete surrender to the surgical team, which is inevitably accompanied by an element of chance and danger not incomparable to that in mass-sports discussed by Lewis Mumford in *Technics and Civilization*. After all, there is little more terrifying than the prospect of returning to awareness in the middle of an operation, entirely paralyzed yet feeling and apprehending every sensation. Mumford defines these activities as "forms of organized play in which the spectator is more important than the player..." This sensibility permeates the pre-World War I operating theater typology, especially as illustrated in Hinckley's *First Operation Under Ether*, which captures this historical moment with Biblical wonderment, not incomparable to the tenderness with which the angel dominates and prepares to penetrate St. Teresa. This hybrid theater and operating room (its form varying widely across its broad geographic and temporal range) historically provided a space in which both students and the public gathered in the upper balconies to watch a surgical procedure, the notion of operation as spectacle inherent to the name.

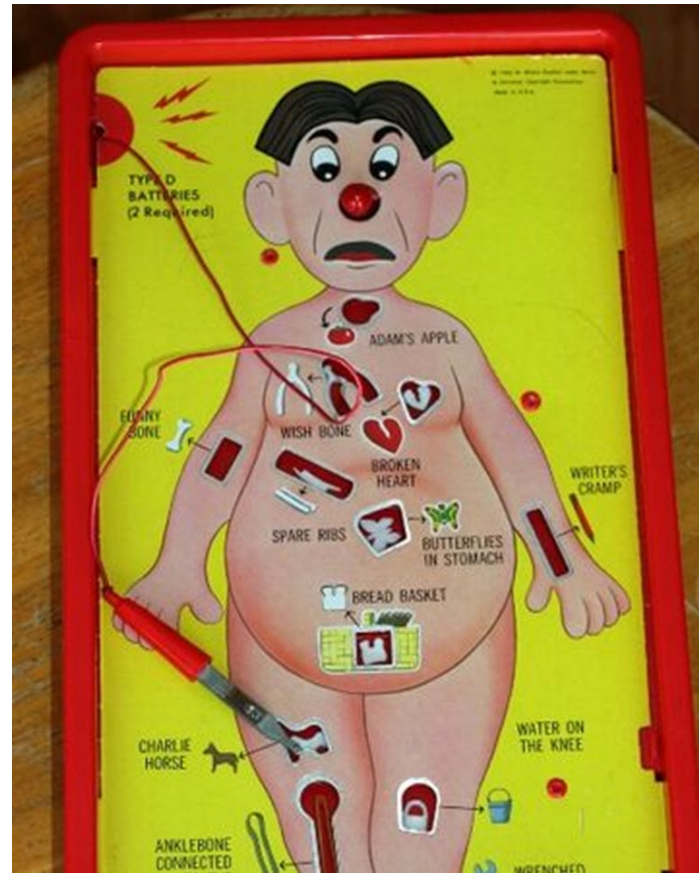


Fig. 4: Operation

This spatial configuration recalls how Bernini staged his rendition of the Transverberation, with the Cornaro family (the chapel's patrons) observing the scene, with the anticipatory transfixion of a professional baseball crowd, from theater boxes on the adjacent chapel walls. Bernini engineered this unmistakably Baroque strategy to incorporate the viewer into the scene, appealing to phenomenology to inspire sublime awe and devotion in the audience. Furthermore, Bernini conceals a window above the two central figures which casts a glittering "divine" light below, anticipating the sorts of cinematographic special effects in the theater of modern warfare described by Paul Virilio in his book *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception* more than three centuries later. In the operating auditorium, there is a comparable implied voyeurism, the patient providing the script according to which the surgical team performed and responded – a puzzle to solve – a test of the surgical team's talent. Perhaps it is not surprising, then, when Mumford mentions that "ether was first used in parlor games in America before it was used in surgery," conceiving modern surgical practice as an evolution in the history of play, one that paradoxically returned full-circle with the game Operation, published in 1965 (Figure 4).

With the new possibilities afforded by general anaesthesia's emergence like slower operating times and more reliable chemicals and methods, the surgical process was increasingly privatized and withdrawn, gradually departing from the public sphere altogether, consequently rendering the surgical theater obsolete. This change was symptomatic of larger trends in healthcare architecture intended to fulfill the increasingly demanding and stringent environmental requirements for new medical apparatuses related to power and cleanliness. One prime example of this motion 1903 Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast. As discussed in Reyner Banham's text *The Architecture of the Well-Tempered Environment*, this structure was one of the first hospitals to incorporate air conditioning with active humidity control for sanitation and comfort, the architecture subservient to the conditions necessary for its optimal performance. The Intensive Care Unit (ICU) proved another significant innovation, as this space integrated patients from disparate parts of the hospital who necessitated serious treatments like life support, intubation, long-term anaesthesia, or even palliative care, allowing for their constant surveillance (Figure 5).

At the same time, other transformations were more environmental in nature, such as the suspended ceiling, which conceals medical equipment that would, by clearly associating the hospital with a total submission to technology, an insensitivity to human life, likely make most patients uncomfortable. Hospitals today also tend to enlist art, music, and architecture to humanize the rational and often violent mechanical processes conducted within. These features thus seek to combat anxiety induced by the hospital from the perspective of atmosphere or aesthetic climatology to put patients and visitors at ease. These pieces and performances are generally valued less so for their artistic merit and more for the pure fact of their presence and accompanying ambience. Therefore, where Sloterdijk discusses environmental explication in terms of terroristic modalities and constant anxiety, these projects explicate atmosphere's capacity to alleviate anxiety and, more broadly, its therapeutic potential – perhaps the ideal starting point for an ethics of care.

This natural anxiety around an operation can also be allayed proportionally corresponding to the anaesthesiologist and operating team's ability to



Fig. 5: Intensive Care Unit (ICU)

establish a relationship of trust with the patient beforehand. In spite of this fact, medical professionals are effectively trained in school to suppress any emotional attachment to their patients, entering a long-term state of emotional anaesthesia for fear that such conflicts could jeopardize their capacity to properly enact the necessary and unwaveringly objective technical care procedures. Not restricted to medical school, this culture pervades professional practice in every sector, requiring notoriously long hours and intense consultations, which theoretically should not faze the properly trained physician. Accordingly, the American Medical Association prohibits physicians from treating members of their own family (with a few limited exceptions), which are perhaps the most lucid manifestation of Neimanis's watery ontology. This paradigm accordingly raises ethical questions like how such individuals can truly "do no harm" if medical personnel are systematically stripped of their power to empathize with others, many of whom present themselves to the hospital at their most vulnerable. This dictum requires a more expansive – more human – interpretation, attuned to both the patient and attending physician's needs, physical, mental, and environmental. This pedagogy of desensitization also bears alarming resemblance to Lewis Mumford's interpretation of military life: "[t]he denial of the body, the deprivation of the senses, the suppression of spontaneous impulses, the forced marches, the broken sleep, the exhaustion of the marrow, the neglect of cleanliness..." Mumford notably only attributes primal instincts like lust and the shockingly violent and act of rape with the power to penetrate or breach this façade, to insert a brief flash of reality through moments of physical connection within this otherwise disengaged vacuum.

Paul Virilio expands, stating, regarding the emergence of trench warfare that “...the vast new battlefield seemed to be composed of nothing...although they killed enemy soldiers, at least they did not see whom they were killing, since [guns and aerial reconnaissance crafts] had now taken responsibility for seeing in their stead...,” deeming the front an “abstract” site of “blind, non-directional desire[.]” He elaborates, “...the soldier had the feeling of being not so much destroyed as derealized or dematerialized, any sensory point of reference suddenly vanishing in a surfeit of optical targets.” Detached from their own faculty of sensibility, soldiers are removed from their bodies and consciousness, effectively reduced to an anaesthetized state, existing only as a representation in enemy weapon sights, observing the battle as passive spectacle. In this new field of war, violence no longer connects a victim directly with its perpetrators but becomes an amorphous entity disconnected from and coalescing between both. Even death loses its finality, the soldier having “died” long before, marking nothing more than the end of the show.

This psychological and emotional distance was perpetuated by the emergence of the pin-up, a technology that was entirely lobotomized from the reality of the source model. These virtual surrogates for physical intimacy or care replaced the “carefully retouched photograph that serving soldiers used to receive from a female correspondent, a distant, intangible...fiancée of death who appeared only in letters containing...such personal relics as a lock of hair, a glove, a trace of perfume or some dried flowers.” This “sublimation” of the romantic implications embedded within this relic of a real relationship, one invested with emotion and memories, into a technology of distanced, mechanical, sexual objectification suggests social anaesthetization – the soldier no longer requiring contact with the outside world. Where Virilio’s description of the letters explicitly refers to a variety of non-visual sensory stimuli – namely, those engaged with tactility and olfaction, the pin-up’s exclusively visual performativity highlights that this social isolation in the abstract was accompanied by a retreat from the senses. Both Mumford and Virilio’s soldiers thus become “homeless,” adrift alone in an ocean of barren earth, shrapnel, and cinematographic special effects, floating dissociated from identity or purpose, from time or place. Rendered into a state of passive helplessness, this soldier has an affinity with the anaesthetized

patient, forming a sharp contrast with the visceral imaginary of the soldier as perpetrator of violence and aggression.

This understanding of modern warfare illustrates one manifestation of a historical phenomenon that Mumford names “modern technics,” which describes the long evolution, from the Middle Ages, of the technologies, processes, and ideals that define modernity. In its objective to neutralize subjectivity and difference, I interpret the modern technical spirit as a cultural anaesthetic, a societal framework implemented to consolidate a dominant social order. Modern technics accordingly finds an affinity with Martin Heidegger’s existential paradigm of “enframing,” a reductive or flattened worldview enabled by technical progress which perpetuates extractive capitalism and circular technological innovation. This parasitic “noise” interrupts transmissions between external reality and man’s faculty of sensibility, inhibiting an individual’s ability to open themselves to conscious experience. This philosophy channels human desire, into the “will-to-order” under modern technics, the rational reorganization of time and space, which parallels the anaesthetized patient’s own unique conception of time and space engendered by the removal and return of “being.” Exhibiting this self-awareness, Astrida Neimanis further explains that we largely dwell, physically and intellectually, in the most “proximally” local or “comfortable” temporal and spatial scales, unable to access those more optimized to the processes that incorporate other species or planetary systems. Unless we consciously attune ourselves to these latent modes of being, this experiential and cultural anaesthetization will continue to annihilate the conditions requisite for self-transcendence by concealing the gestational traces internalized within our co-continuous watery bodies. The resulting socio-atmospheric archipelago to which Sloterdijk alludes naturally alienates people from collective cultural memory, paving the way for its exploitation or appropriation, which only furthers this disconnect, as seen in Macarena Gómez-Barris’s discussion of the submergence of indigenous Andean phenomenology beneath waves of spiritual tourism. When this relation is taken to an extreme, as in the concentration camp or the ghetto, Winnicott states that victims “have so far given up hope that they no longer suffer...they must have lost the characteristic that makes them human, so that they no longer see the world creatively.”

These people become so far removed from subjective experience that they effectively cease to *be* as they do under general anaesthesia and on the battlefield. On this point, Virilio speaks of “psychic anaesthesia,” a notion which describes how victims of serious traumas, past a certain saturation point, mentally barricade themselves from responding to additional suffering, “the simple idea that man can only take a certain amount of terror.”

In the realm of my personal experience, no case better illustrates this point than the Tree of Life synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh on October 27, 2018, in which 11 congregants were murdered in the environmental milieu of religious communion. It remains today that many of us are still profoundly processing this surreal experience and, frankly, may never fully reckon with the fact of its occurrence, the prospect of such immense tragedy so close to home, in a space of such love and reverence beyond anyone’s imagination. The structure itself, while various parties dispute its future, remains standing, surrounded by barricades covered with art pieces from students across the country, an attempt to affect the therapeutic quality of the hospital environment in a public space (**Figure 6**). These events cut to the core of what a phenomenological apprehension of terror implies – the radical and enduring modification of how people relate to this structure or behave – through explicating a latent (albeit rare) potentiality of occupying such structures (namely, terrorism), one that was present long before security guards were first hired for major religious holidays. The ensuing social and mass media storm, on the other hand, perpetuated the opposite response – a sort of anaesthetization of subjective experience through oversaturated yet short-lived coverage, subsumed into political ends, with much less attention or care devoted to the shooting’s visceral implications for quotidian local existence, especially for the victims’ families, who bear the heaviest burden. Modern society’s desensitization to violence and terror, which stands in opposition to watery gestationality and an ethics of care, is conditioned in large part through these channels between the subconscious and the world, the transmissions from which always operate at an emotional distance, filtered through the pixels on a screen.

(...)

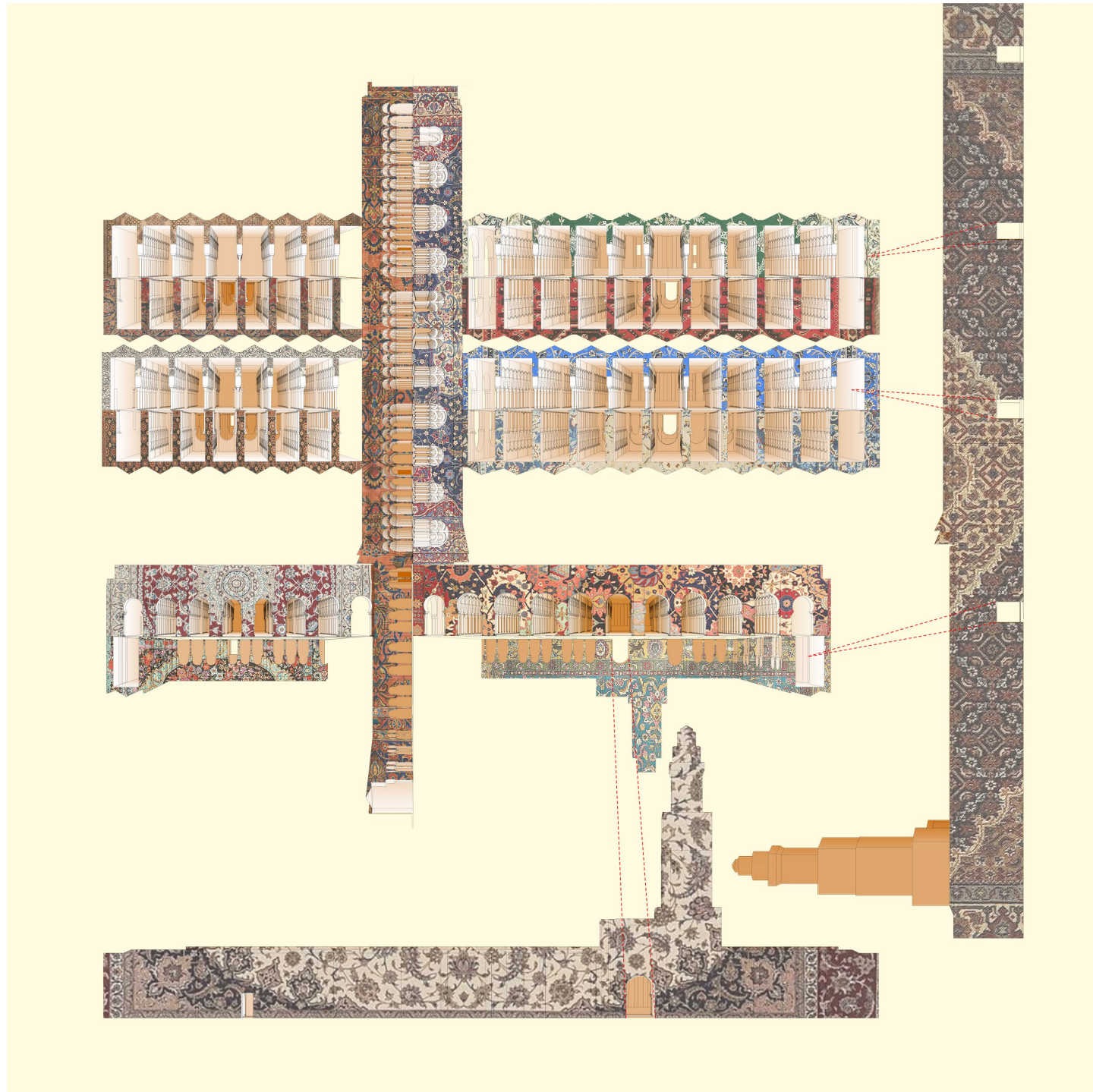


Fig. 6: Tree of Life Synagogue

THROUGH COGNITIVE FIELDS

ARCHITECTURAL DRAWING + REPRESENTATION 1
FALL 2020, ZACHARY WHITE

The Great Mosque in Cordoba, Spain has an intricate religious and cultural history, having changed hands multiple times and seen several expansions with the city's pivotal role in the expansion of both Islam and Christianity. This drawing accordingly investigates the notion of "threshold" as interfacing between the Great Mosque's historical layers, a microcosm of the city's own ad-hoc character, and how these traces dissolve into one cohesive and disorienting experience inside through adopting the language of carpets in Islamic manuscript illumination.



This game architecturalizes the phenomenon of losing one's bearings in this almost kaleidoscopic world through conceiving the structure as an infinite field of different historical moments, one which belies its austere and weathered exterior.

gameplay screenshots (*above, right*)



RADICAL LIVING

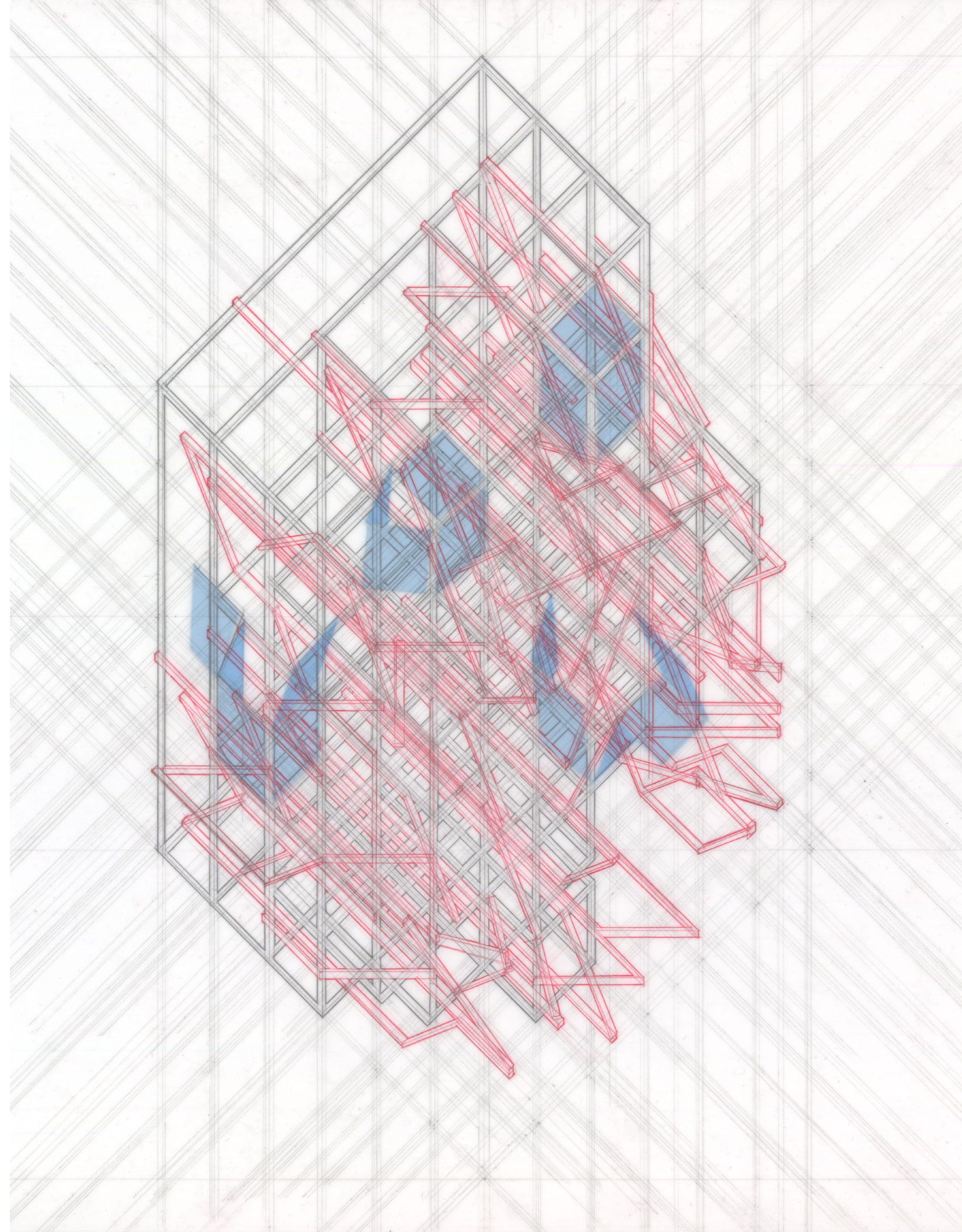
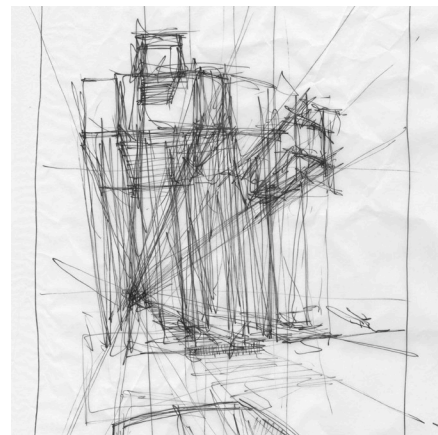
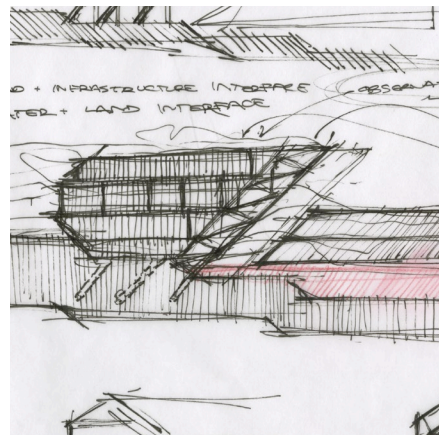
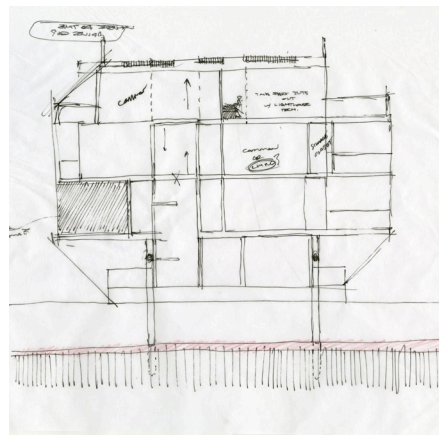
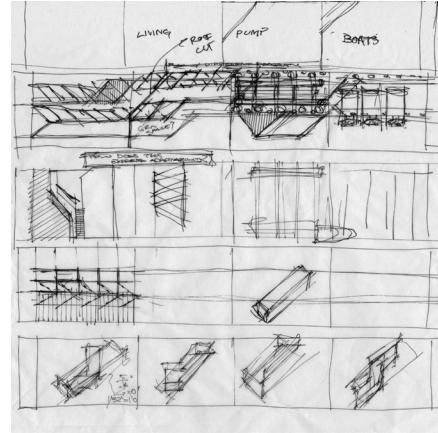
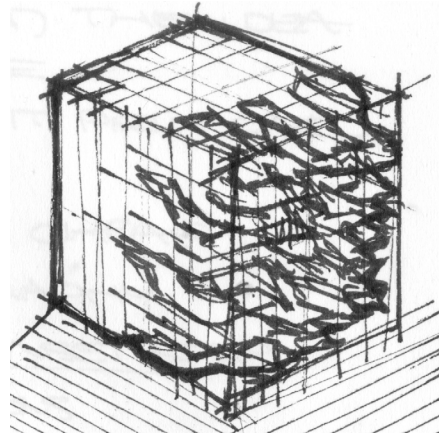
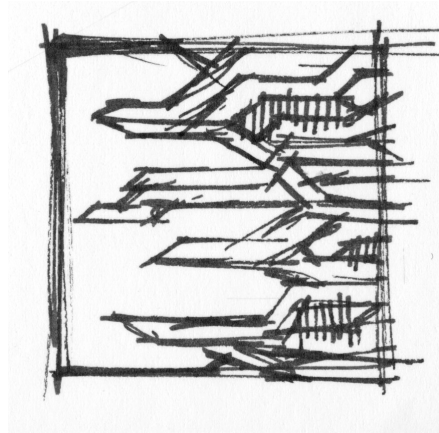
OLD RIVER CONTROL STRUCTURE, LOUISIANA
SPRING 2019, DEREK HOEFERLIN

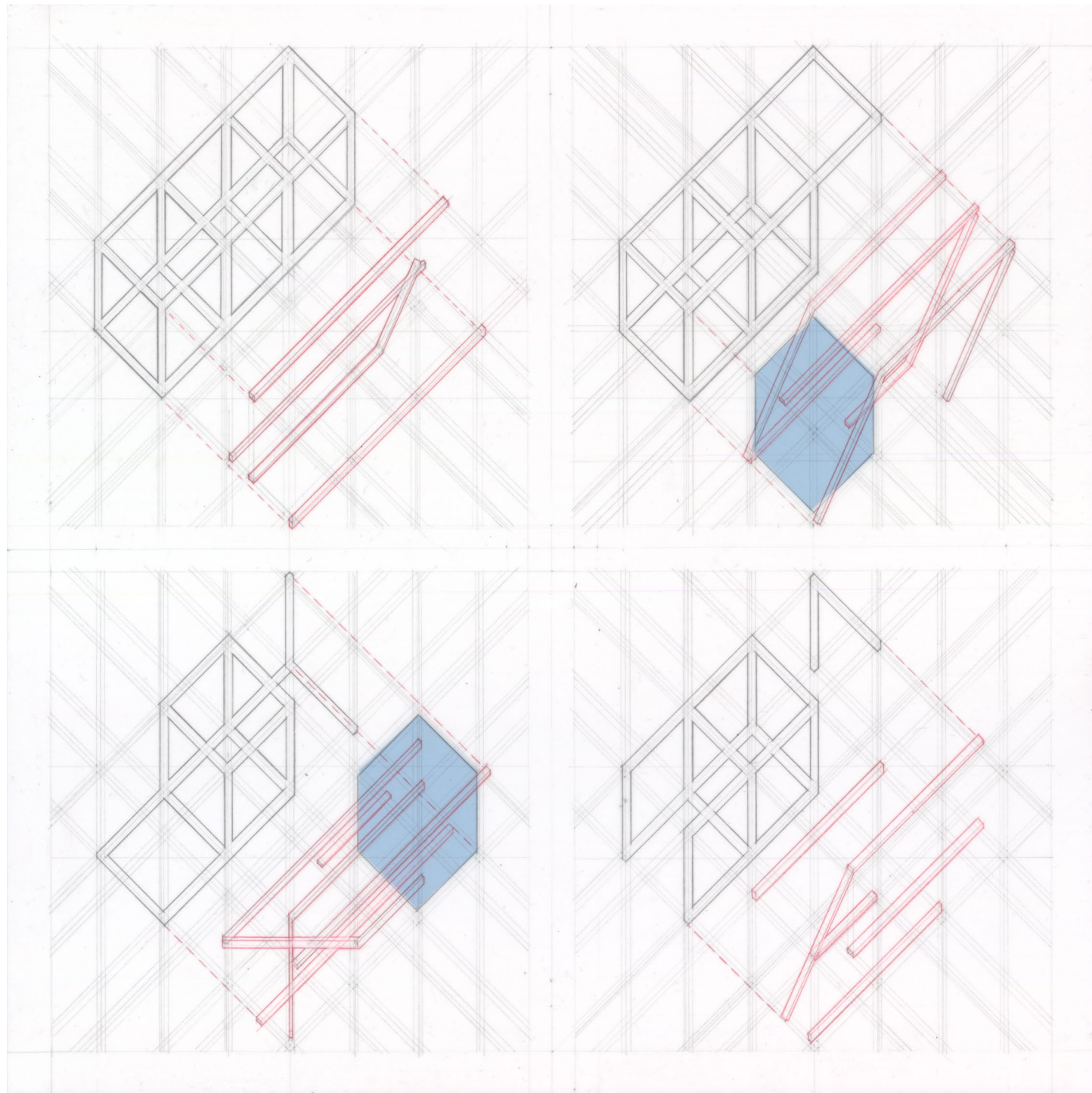
“This is an extremely complicated river system altered by works of man. A fifty-year prediction is not reliable. It’s a mixture of hydrologic events and human events. The Corps of Engineers - they’re scared as hell. They don’t know what’s going to happen. **This is planned chaos.** The more planning they do, the more chaotic it is. Nobody knows exactly where it’s going to end.”

- John McPhee, p. 55, “Atchafalaya,” *The Control of Nature*

Old River Control Structure is a complex of spillways near Vidalia, Louisiana that regulates the flow between the Mississippi and Atchafalaya rivers to a precise, Congressionally mandated 70% to 30% ratio. This system resists the Mississippi’s natural desire to divert entirely down the Atchafalaya, a situation which would have catastrophic consequences on both local and national scales. Author John McPhee eloquently catalogues the history of this conflict in his seminal essay, “Atchafalaya.” However, few people are cognizant of this remote area or its significance.

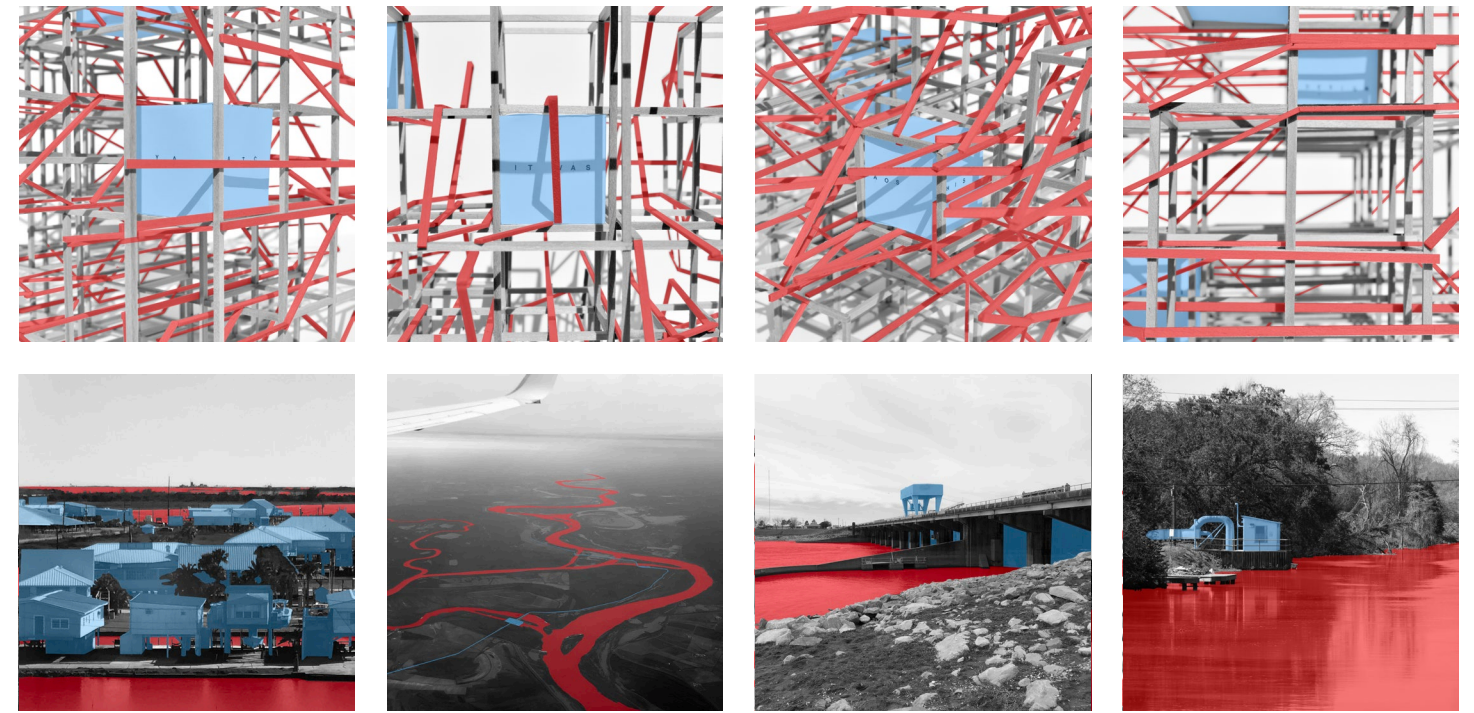
This speculative design reinterprets the idea of the “batture,” unprotected yet inhabited land in New Orleans between the river and the levee. Batture inhabitants have found ways not just to live, but to thrive in this unpredictable threshold condition. Inspired by this idea, the proposal seeks to establish a flexible way for locals to inhabit this highly volatile site.





“disorder” study (above, previous)
 12” x 12”, mylar, construction paper, stonehenge, graphice, plastic lead

These drawings study the motif of “disorder” in McPhee’s essay. I established a system of red and blue colors to represent the different systems that comprise the model: red for the deteriorating stick system and blue for the paper cubes covered with textual fragments.



1 2 3 4

I interpreted the Old River context through this lens at different scales: red represents natural water systems and blue, human infrastructure. This series translates the established color system to the Louisiana Delta context such that red represents the erratic natural water system to which human infrastructure (blue) must respond.

top row: model photos with digital overlay
 1. Cocodrie (a small Louisiana fishing village on the Gulf)
 2. Old River Control Complex
 3. Old River Control Low Sill Structure
 4. Pump station near Cocodrie

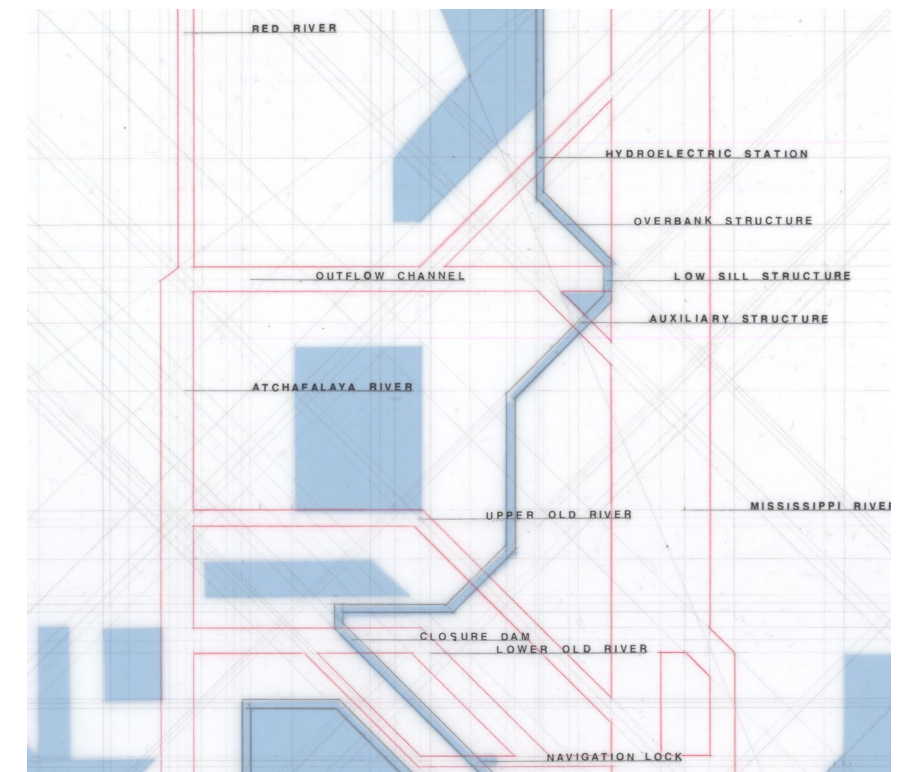
The following maps illuminate how human settlement conforms to the water systems at each scale to navigate shifting conditions. This adaptive lifestyle is exemplified in the New Orleans batture, as inhabitants here have adapted to a similarly unpredictable threshold condition.

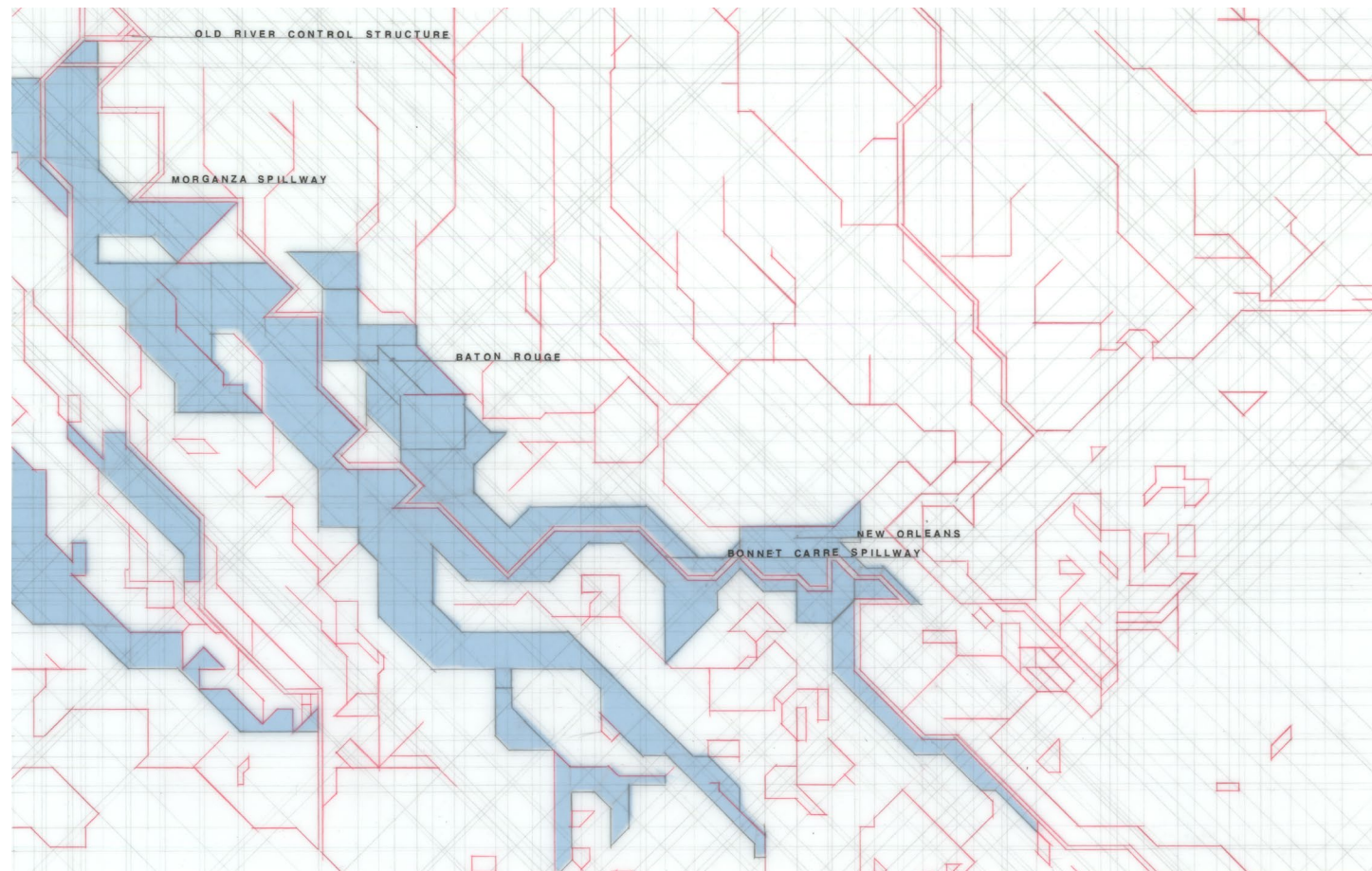
Old River Control scale (right)

Louisiana Delta scale (next page, top)

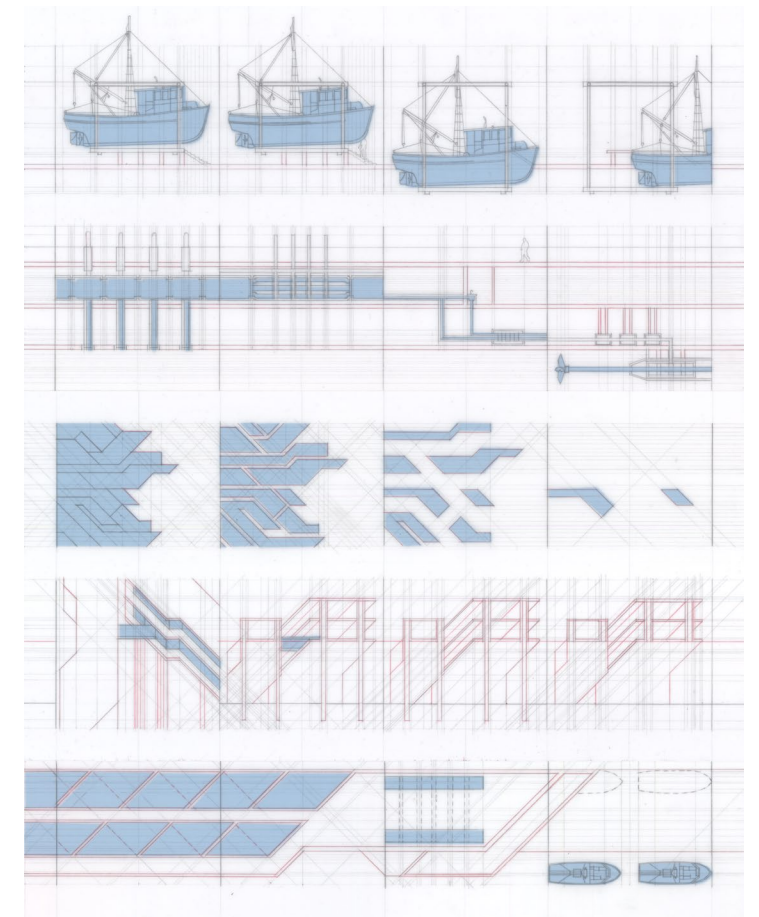
Lower Mississippi River Basin scale (next page, bottom)

all 12” x 12”, mylar, construction paper, stonehenge, graphite, plastic lead



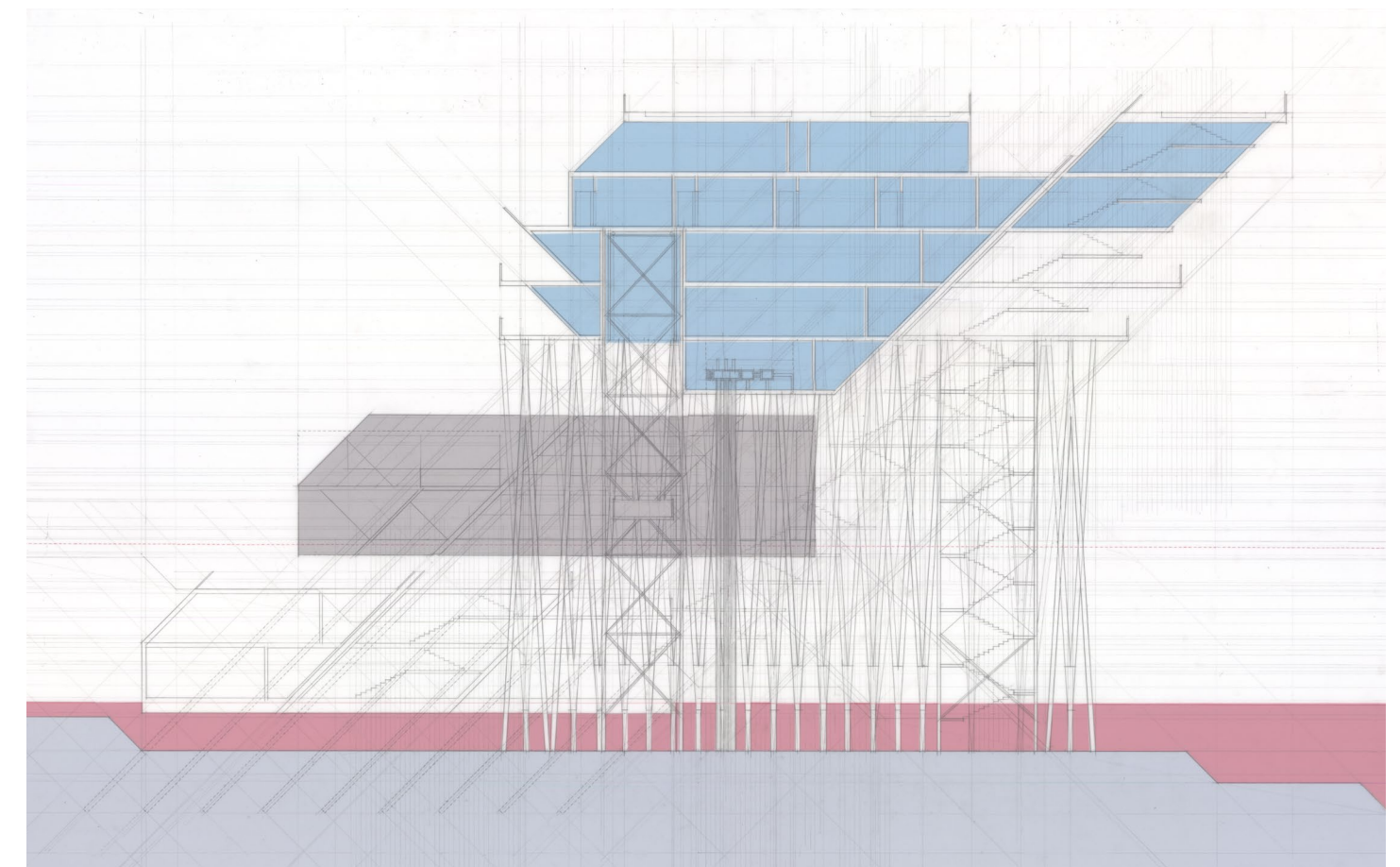
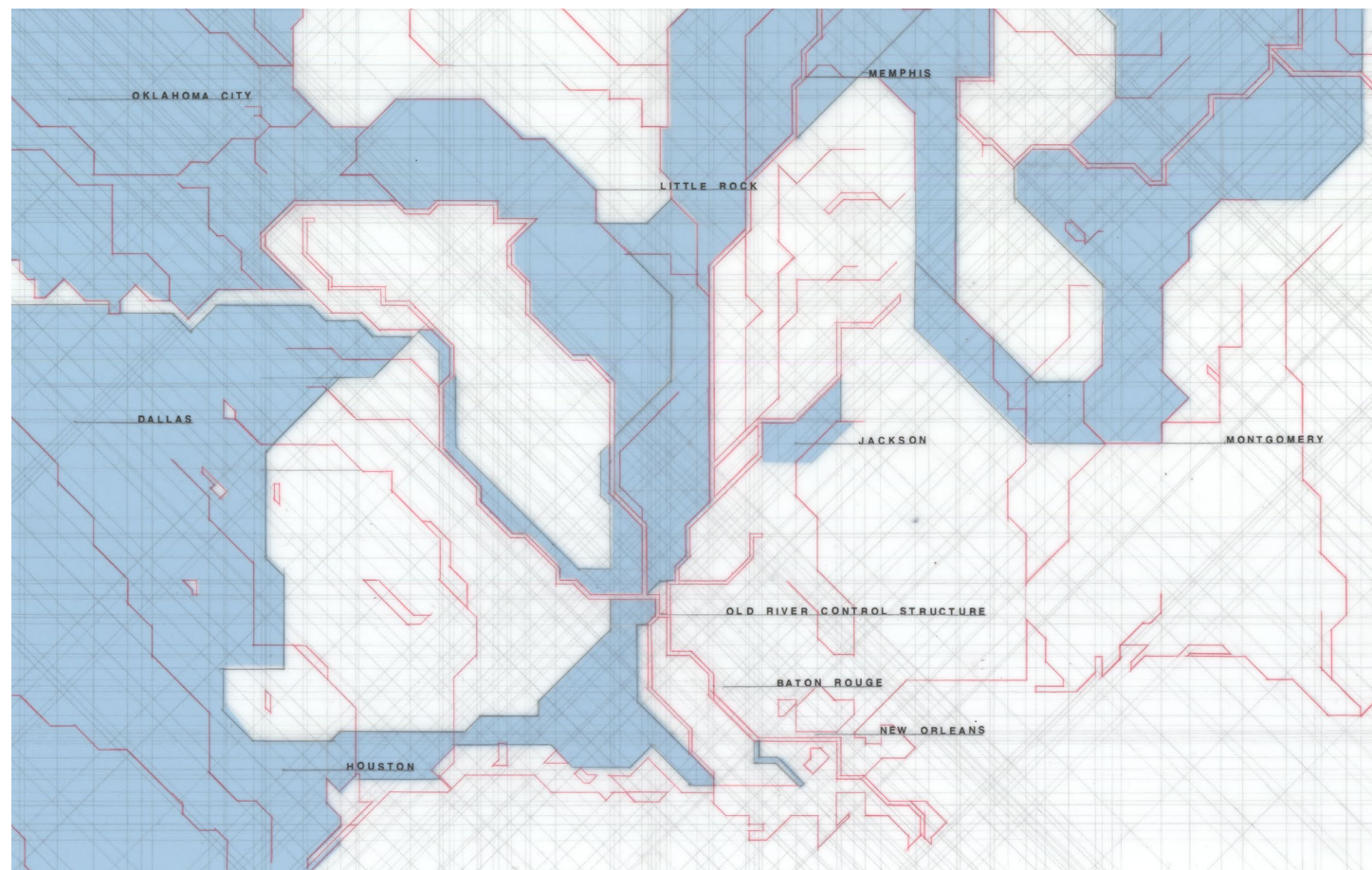


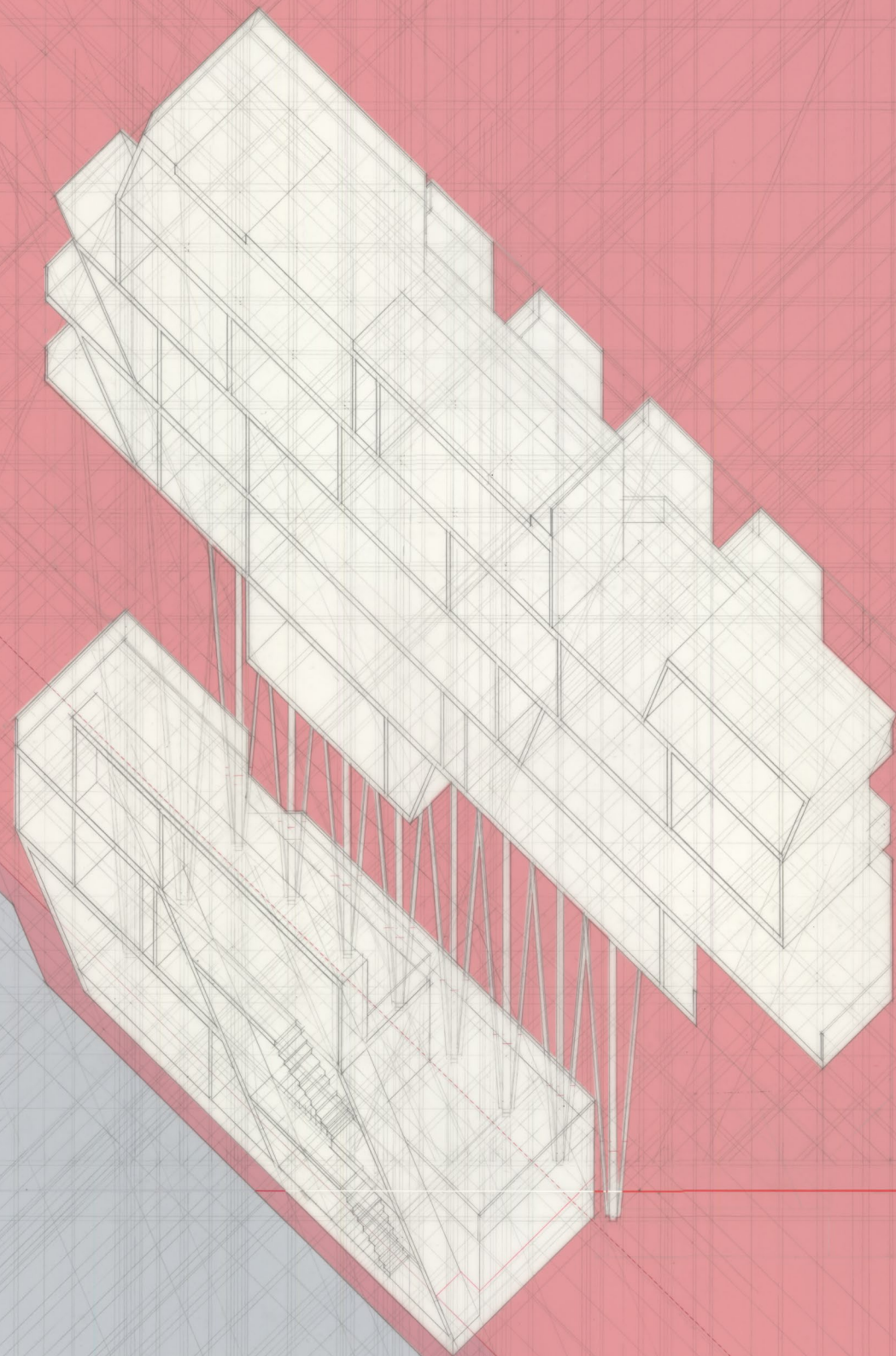
This proposal envisions that people inhabit mobile floating structures which enable evacuation to different areas as conditions shift. Larger stilted structures act as the land-water interface for these floating units and serve as rest “nodes” for the travelers. Program includes living space, storage, spa, gym, flexible multipurpose and common spaces, rooftop green space, and skiff storage for crisis conditions. The docking bay below accommodates both current and crisis water levels. This system can be deployed along any water body as both structures harvest hydrogen molecules from the water to power their operations.



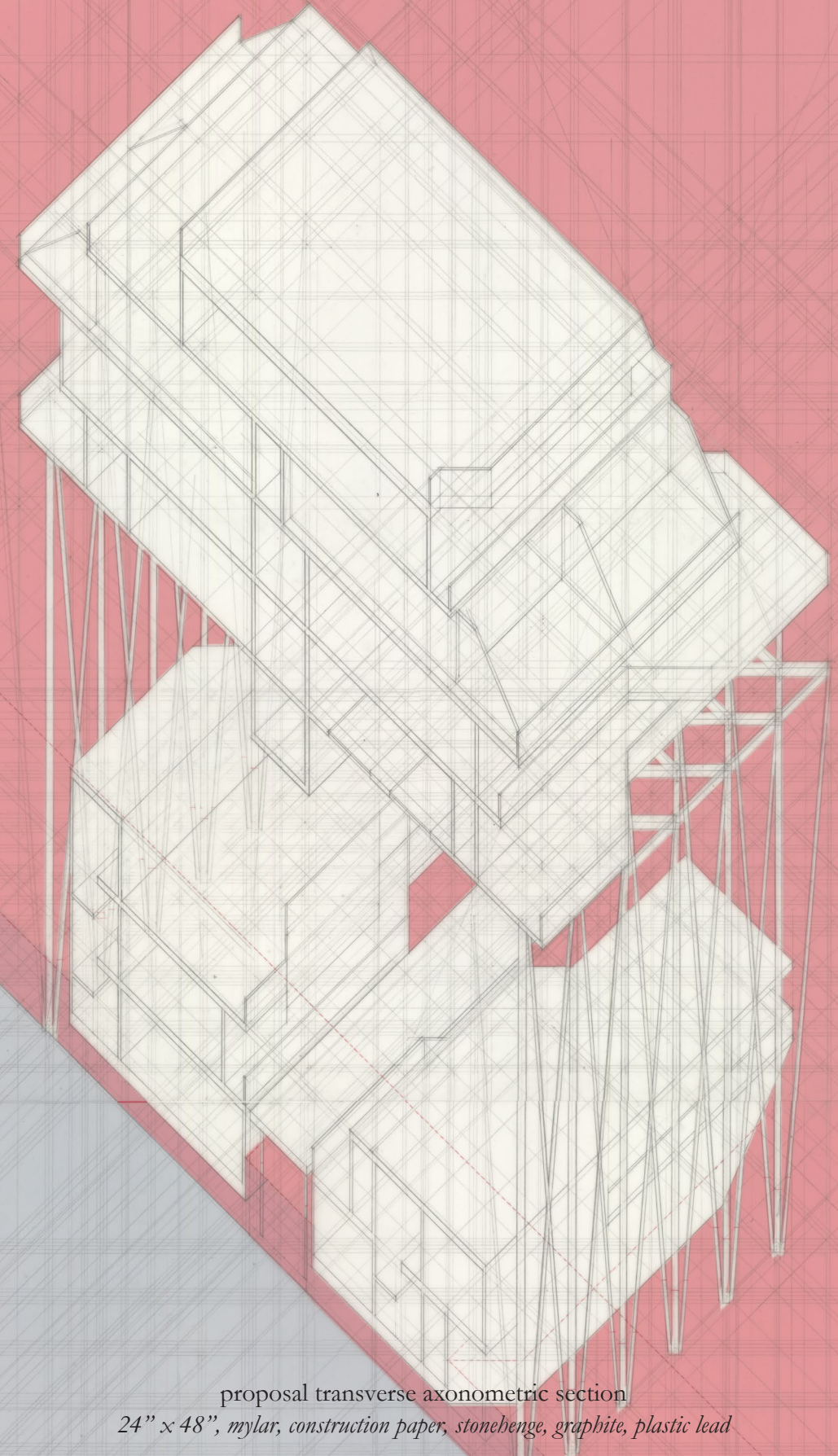
programmatic speculation frames (right)
 12" x 48", mylar, construction paper, stonebenge,
 graphite, plastic lead

proposal longitudinal section (below)
 24" x 36", mylar, construction paper, stonebenge,
 graphite, plastic lead

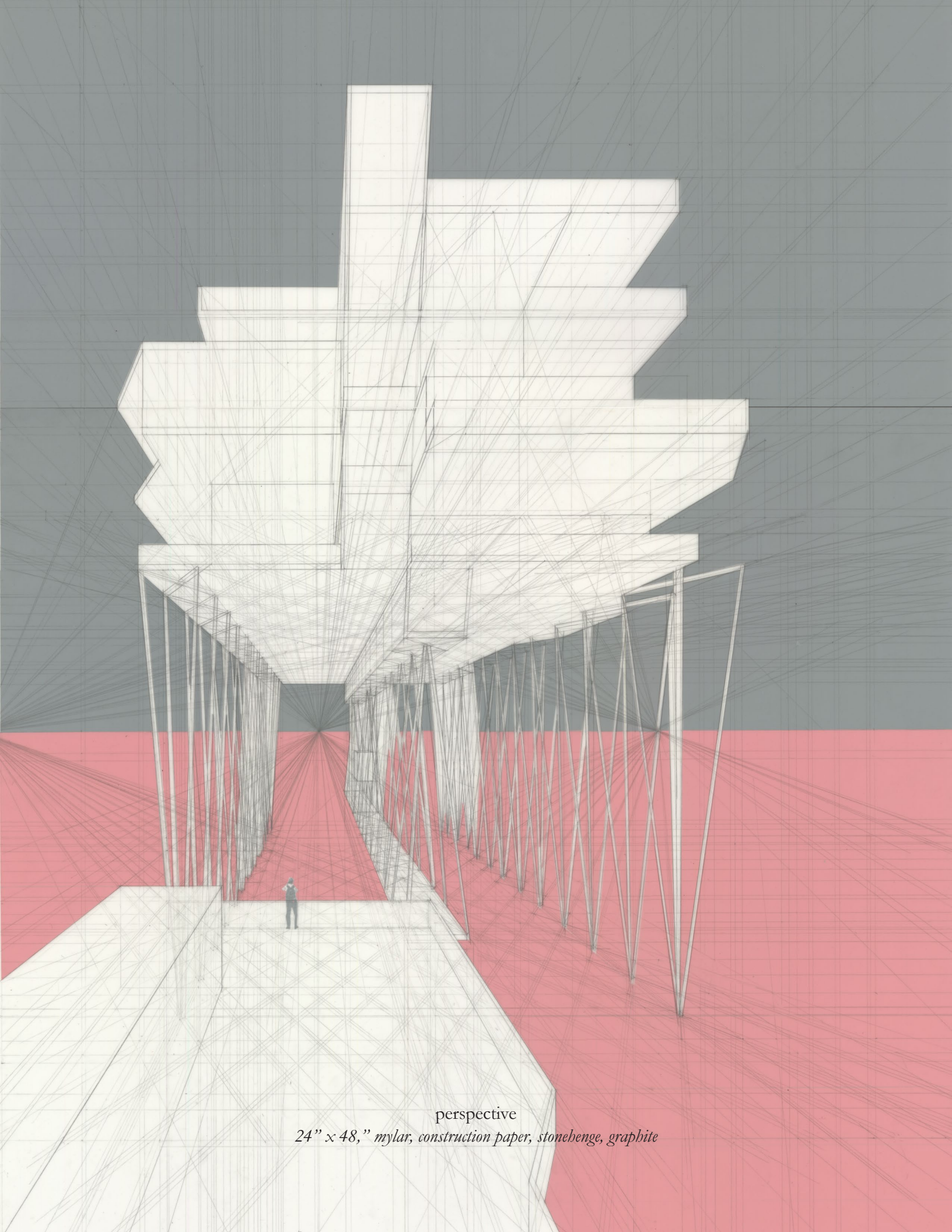




proposal longitudinal axonometric section
24" x 48", mylar, construction paper, stonehenge, graphite, plastic lead



proposal transverse axonometric section
24" x 48", mylar, construction paper, stonehenge, graphite, plastic lead



perspective
24" x 48," mylar, construction paper, stonebenge, graphite



proposal horizontal and vertical section model

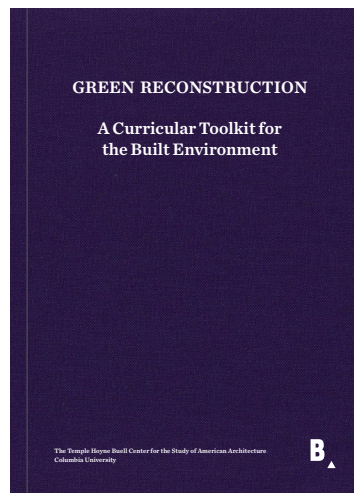
GREEN RECONSTRUCTION: A CURRICULAR TOOLKIT FOR THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

TEMPLE HOYNE BUELL CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF AMERICAN ARCHITECTURE
SUMMER - FALL 2021, GRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANT

The Buell Center’s multi-year Green Reconstruction project broadly probes the built environment’s capacity to promote climate action, mutual care, and social justice, particularly as values cultivated from within the professional landscape. Various components over the last two years culminate in this book, which looks specifically at how “the central role of professional, academically sanctioned expertise in constructing and maintaining a status quo.”

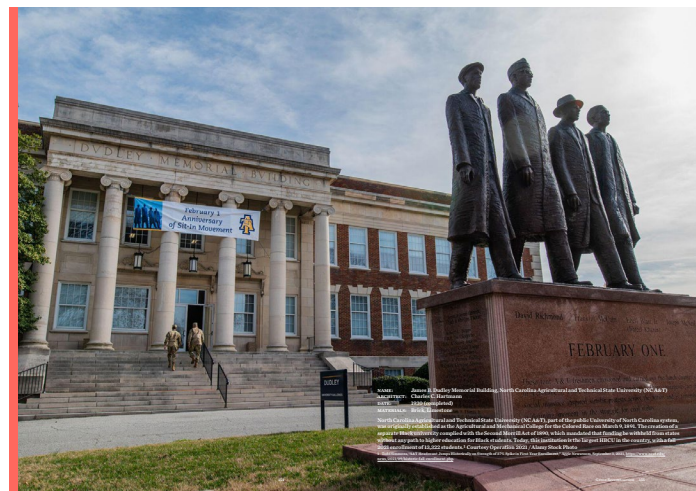
This book accordingly centers on speculative curricular interventions that could bring existing curricula more in line with the principles of Green Reconstruction: “[t]o assist in teaching these questions and developing their provisional answers we have fashioned, with the help of many, this toolkit regarding new curricular infrastructures for professional education in the design and planning of the built environment.” Another integral element is the “Object Lesson,” which studies three cities’ fabrics (Buckeye, Arizona, Greensboro North Carolina, and Erie, Pennsylvania) as socially, politically, and culturally contested sites.

As a graduate research assistant, my involvement largely centered on developing this pedagogical framework, research into (and sourcing images for) cities of concern, compiling data on all United States programs of the built environment, and various editing roles.



spreads about the James B. Dudley Memorial Building at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in Greensboro, North Carolina, written by me (*below*)

spread from the “Essentials” section of the “Curricular Tools” specifically looking at how core curricula (conducted and written by me) and textbooks are presently taught across programs in disciplines of the built environment. Later pages postulate, based on these findings, how such structures could be modified in accordance with Green Reconstruction principles. (*right, top*)



ESSENTIALS

HOW WE LEARN IT

CORE

A “core” curriculum is a set of courses that typically teach what program leaders deem essential knowledge and competencies. The core curriculum is often contrasted with elective courses, among which students are able to choose to supplement this core sequence. For this assessment, the subject distribution for courses in core curricula belonging to the sample set of architecture and urban planning programs was analyzed. (Bachelor’s curricula were not included.) Each architecture core curriculum was then examined according to its studio, option studio, history and theory, community service, visual representation, systems (building and environmental), and thesis requirements. The core curricula for those urban planning master’s programs in the subset were partitioned into studio, option studio, visual representation, professional practice, community service, methods, history and theory, politics and economics, and thesis requirements. However, urban planning programs often maintain less rigid distinctions than do architecture programs; “methods,” for example, is frequently understood to capture those courses that teach specific tools, practices, and skills related to different aspects of planning and policymaking.

ARCHITECTURE: Each of the twenty-one master of architecture programs analyzed maintains a core curriculum requiring at least one studio course, one history and/or theory course, one professional practice course, and one systems course. Studios are the most heavily required courses, followed by systems, then history and/or theory, with visual representation largely de-emphasized. Of these programs, Iowa State has the only M. Arch curriculum with a service-learning requirement. Additionally, Hampton University offers the only five-year master of architecture program in the subset, necessitating a more intensive core curriculum than post-undergraduate M. Arch programs.

URBAN PLANNING: Sixteen of the seventeen planning master’s programs surveyed maintain a core curriculum that requires at least one “methods” course, with core distributions otherwise varying widely. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s Master of Urban Studies and Planning is the only program that does not have a core curriculum, stating only that it requires students to complete a thesis. Of the other programs, East Carolina University’s Master of Geography with a planning concentration and Rutgers University-New Brunswick’s Master of City and Regional Studies are the only courses of study that do not require at least one studio. Comparable to architecture, none of the planning programs surveyed have a service or service-learning requirement. Planning programs generally also have shorter core sequences than do architecture programs, with most core courses completed in the first year. This flexibility allows students in many programs to pursue concentrations or specializations. The fact that no discrete “professional practice” courses are required suggests that such skills are learned across the various core classes and on the job.

Similarly, the relative standalone character of planning history and theory courses indicates that this knowledge is typically acquired through the “applied” lens.

See Credits on page 48 for notes on their use to measure courses’ relative importance.

TEXTBOOKS

A textbook presents codified knowledge on a given topic comprehensively, accessibly, and authoritatively. Textbooks in areas like professional practice often internalize societal norms and therefore offer important opportunities for transforming those norms. The centrality of textbooks to built environment curricula varies among courses and across disciplines. Although textbooks in these areas typically combine images and text, illustrations vary in importance. This assessment surveyed the architecture and urban studies textbooks published by Routledge over the past three years. A leading publisher of professional development books and textbooks based in the United Kingdom, Routledge was selected among other textbook publishers due to its expansive, annual, accessible list. The classification of certain publications as “textbooks,” and therefore as eligible for this survey, was also taken from Routledge. These publications, categorized by book title, date of publication, number of pages, and number of illustrations, were divided between “architecture” and “urban studies” (the latter acting as an imperfect but available proxy for urban planning). Thematic analyses of titles were then conducted using keywords.

ARCHITECTURE: Routledge published 287 textbooks in architecture between August 2018 and August 2021, compared to 183 textbooks in urban studies. Of the total number of textbooks published in architecture and urban studies by Routledge during this time, around 60% were in architecture. Architecture textbooks averaged ninety-nine illustrations per book, compared with just forty-eight illustrations per book for urban studies. The words “sustainable” and “sustainability” appear sixteen times in architecture textbook titles and nine times in urban studies textbook titles, roughly mirroring the distribution of total titles published, respectively. Other keywords echo this ratio less evenly. The word “material” appears ten times in architecture textbook titles listed, compared to just once in urban studies titles. “Construction” appears twenty times in architecture textbook titles, compared to just once in urban studies.

URBAN PLANNING: The survey of Routledge textbook publications over the last three years revealed 183 titles published in urban studies, compared to 287 published in architecture. Urban studies textbooks averaged 294 pages in length, roughly the same as the average of 289 pages for architecture textbooks. “Climate” appeared three times in urban studies titles versus just twice in architecture titles—despite the higher total number of titles published in architecture. “Resiliency” appeared seven times in urban studies titles compared to three times in architecture titles. The keywords “global south” or “developing nations” appear four times in urban studies titles and three times in architecture textbooks. The keywords “smart city” or “smart village”

Unbroken Windows: A digital archive tracing the spatial cultures of Broken Windows policing

As part of the Buell Center’s larger Green Reconstruction project, we participated in the Queens Museum’s “Year of Uncertainty” (YoU) initiative, “a framework for strengthening connection among the Museum, [its] communities, and constituents, focused on creating new possibilities for culture, kinship, and mutual support,” particularly in an increasingly precarious post-COVID-19 world.

Attending to such themes as “care,” “justice,” and “repair,” the Buell Center contributes a digital archive of many annotated primary sources related to Broken Windows theory in the 1990s. I participated in the project’s conception; later, I located, annotated, and wrote curatorial statements for many of these archival sources in the collection, including that on the bottom right.

