



AMBIGUOUS SPACE,

and the intersections of gender and queer theory in architecture.

Seantel Rae Trombly
Masters Thesis 2018

Ambiguous Space

by Seantel Rae Trombly

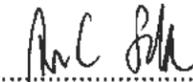
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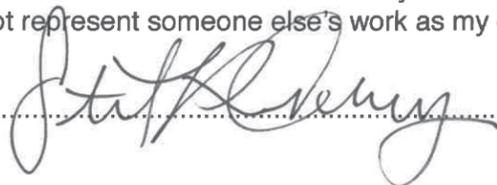
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ABSTRACT

Public space is the domain in which societal standards, hierarchies, and values are asserted and contested.

Architecture is both a political and artistic symbol that damns it to be perceived differently by every person, regardless of the original intent behind the design. Depending upon our own relation to social standards, part of how we determine our comfort in a space is through measuring our ability to maintain control of our safety and authority within it. Often the intent behind public space is to neutralize our differences in order to foster a peaceful experience. However, this approach commonly results in a further silencing of already oppressed identities. The following research is not intended to define a way in which architecture can force a change in societal tendencies, but to instead study the way the built environment can celebrate our individual experiences of space through our unique approaches to finding comfort within it. Looking at queer theory and gender theory as ways of rethinking architectural potential, this thesis aims to identify unique methods in which minority groups manipulate space to find a form of comfort in it. From these studies, we can develop a new architecture with a design that fosters choice, empowerment, and identity that will alter our vision of the future built environment.

Ambiguous space is a type of design that works to adapt instead of define. It is with the intent to *allow* the user to occupy a space, rather than *expect* one to follow a narrative previously written for them to experience. This mentality can often deter one from leaving a situation that may be dangerous or uncomfortable. This pushes people to find their own resonance through the way they identify with the built conditions around them, fostering an authentic versus a performed experience with the public environment.

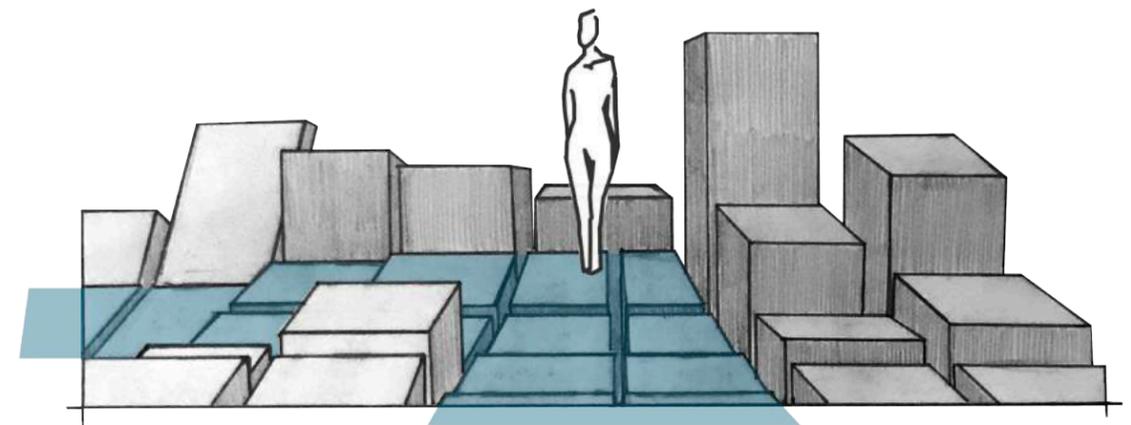


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After surviving the span of a five year combined Bachelors and Masters Degree of Architecture program I have learned one thing- *relativity*.

As independent as I'd like to see myself to be, there was not once in my life where I ever was truly alone. It is by the unconditional support of my friends, colleagues, family, and mentors who have helped me through the woes of being a starving college student, all the way to the highs of walking across a stage to receive my Masters degree.

I'd like to thank in particular the support of Ingrid Strong, Anne-Catrin Shultz, and John Ellis. Alongside an incredible faculty at Wentworth, my long-term relationship with these professors has motivated me to push the boundaries of my perception of architecture to the Nth degree. The endless support of the Wentworth Faculty continuously guided me to achieve so much more than any of my expectations.

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INTRODUCTION



*The Future is Fluid Tee by Wildfang Co. Teagan and Sarah Collection, 2017.
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COMING OUT

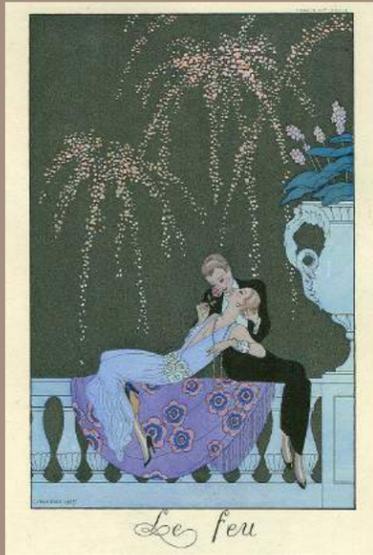


Figure 1 - *Le Feu* - Illustration by George Barbier, 1920's

How does architecture effect us? I believe the only true way to understand something is not by it's description alone, but paired with a description of it's environment as well. So in order to understand the person, you must understand the places it exists within. Commonly, the experience of architecture is often predicted to be through that of a specific character. Privilege, in this regard, is referring to those who are following a particular normative narrative. The assumed binary gender, race, economic status, sexuality, physical ability, etc. of a person predicted to be using the future space is a primary influence on the creation of the design. Architecture, described by Friedensreich Hundertwasser an Australian architect and artist, is one of five skins humans have. The first being the epidermis (physical skin), then the clothing one wears followed by the architecture of our home. The fourth being our identity, in the way that we associate ourselves with others often through what makes us different, and finally the earth, our connection with the greater harmony of ourselves in association to the laws of nature.¹

When we experience a form of dysphoria (a state of feeling very uneasy, or dissatisfied) it is a recognition of our subconscious rejection to the ways in which we are all taught to appropriately perform within society. Our use of "proper" language around these topics tend to cause difficulty due to the lack of knowledge around any identity considered to be "other." As the recognition of dysphoria within ourselves and space grows throughout the greater community and not

Cis-gendered - *When one's gender identity matches the sex that they were assigned at birth.*

Non-Binary / Gender-Fluid - *A person whose gender identity does not fit the strict man/woman dichotomy. Some non-binary people feel that their gender identity is between man and woman, is simultaneously fully man and fully woman, changes from man to woman and back, is a separate entity without connection to man or woman, is similar to either man or woman but is not quite either, is entirely neutral, or does not exist at all. Pronouns typically: Them/Them/Theirs*

Gender Non-Conforming - *Anyone who does not fit neatly into a gender role, typically described as a dissociation from the social construct that is gender.*

Trans-gendered - *people have a gender identity or expression different from the one they were assigned at birth or are expected to exhibit in adulthood.*

LGBTQ+ - *an acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning, and others. It refers to a population of people united by having gender identities or sexual orientations that differ from the heterosexual and cis-gender majority.*

Queer (as an identity) - *A orientation that is intentionally left vague. Many people identify as queer because they feel that no other term applies to them in regards to sexuality, sex, or gender.*

Androgynous - *Having/representing both masculine and feminine qualities.*

definitions by the Social Justice and Advocacy group at University at Central Florida

¹ Friedensreich Hundertwasser, *Hundertwasser-Haus*, Vienna: Orac Verlag, 1988.

just contained within the identities of those in marginalized communities, the language to discuss these growing phenomenas rapidly grows and changes as well. In order to provide an understanding of language that is to be further discussed throughout this essay, below includes a list of terms to familiarize oneself prior to entering this reading. Sula Malina, a non-binary identified graduate from Bryn Mawr in gender and sexuality studies describes the non-binary experience in their thesis as one of anachronism, of simultaneity, and of time warps.² Meaning that the way these people experience their lives and identity is not one with a typical beginning, middle and ending expectation, but more one that is in constant flux and adaptation.

Being a queer and androgynous-presenting person myself, my experience with these 'layers of identity' described by Hundertwasser forms a unique lens in my perception of architecture in a heteronormative culture and university. Although there are significant strides being made within the cultures in schools, cities and the country to recognize the queer community, it is still a recognition of it as an accepted "other" meaning that which is still not the ideal "normal" (i.e. white, cis-gendered, heterosexual, male-bodied, upper-class, able-bodied). In the 1940's a study was conducted by psychologist Erik H. Erikson that continues to spark controversy today, where each of 150 boys and 150 girls, age ten to twelve, were asked to construct a movie scene from assembled toys and building blocks in Erikson's California office. The instructions, however, were inherently inviting the children to play the part of an anticipated roll. So, naturally when the results showed the girls creating static spaces representing that of a home or interior space, and the boys constructing high-rise, elaborate towers or exterior scenes, Erikson concluded that anatomy is destiny. What he failed to recognize is the ways, by the ages of 10 and 12, society has already had an immense impact on a child's understanding of what was expected of them, based upon the makeup of their anatomy. The children were simply reproducing the same spaces traditionally occupied by the role models assigned to them.³ Malina questions how one may represent a blending of gender experiences onto a body that is conventionally confined to a linear narrative where gendered and physical development are looked as synonymous. How can one physicalize the experience of living "outside of" gendered bounds? How does one theorize an androgynous embodiment?

Architecture, as both a symbol of art and politics, is representative of an expression and future intent.⁴ If then, in the past, our knowledge of the expected user is one within the strict confines of dated societal norms, how then does/can and will architecture reflect the identities of those refusing to detach from our

² Sula Malina, "A 'Place Between Places': Constructing Non-Binary Narratives of Surgical Affirmation," (Bryn Mawr, PA: Bryn Mawr College, Gender & Sexuality Studies, 2017) 3.

³ Judith Fryer, "Women and Space," *Felicitous Space: The Imaginative Structures of Edith Wharton and Willa Cather*, (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1986) 7.

⁴ Fryer, "Women and Space," 3.

authentic Hundertwasser-described “five skins.” If our built environment is intended to reflect the needs of our human experience, it is inevitable that architecture is destined to reflect that of a queer, racially and economically diverse society.

Throughout my studies in architecture I have always focused upon the ways in which space can foster one’s feeling of being comfortable in association with their ability to maintain control of a space. This relates to our sub-conscious understanding of when and how often in our personal history we have maintained the ability of free self-expression and ability to speak without the threat of danger. This lens of focus, being one I often experience myself, is one that exposes the ways society may use architecture as a means of signaling to users when it is appropriate to be authentic, to claim authority or to submit. This phenomenon is a reflection of the implied social hierarchy defined by the “norm.”

These past “linear” narratives for people were developed and carried throughout history with gender being something that was associated with the anatomical sex one was assigned at birth. The fate of an expected gender-expression limits an individual’s ability to develop their own unique relationship to their body and their association and comfort with the space around themselves. As the science of the physical body and our understanding of various gender identities developed, society started to hit a boundary of what is “normal” vs. what is considered “other.”⁵ With the civil rights movements, we find a pattern of people re-claiming their identity by the expression of what makes them different, implying that these are the qualities of themselves that were silenced or rejected in the first place. For example, with the developing research on intersex bodies, we learn about the unique ways in which people respond to androgen and estrogen hormones. This calls into question the once clear expectation projected onto the life of a new-born child. Now it is far more complicated for us to say that nature can draw the line between male and female, when it is us that continuously tries to draw a line on nature.⁶

When we define qualities considered to be masculine vs. feminine, our mistake lies in the separation between the two rather than seeing how they exist within all attributes of life, including space. All persons cannot be held accountable for a single performance of gender depending upon their anatomical similarities or differences. How these unique attributes are represented in the spaces we have been conditioned to perform in constrains a person’s comfort to freely explore their own identity.

⁵ Alice Dreger, “Is Anatomy Destiny?” filmed December 2010 at TEDxNorthwesternU, Evanston, IL, TIME, https://www.ted.com/talks/alice_dreger_is_anatomy_destiny
⁶ Dreger, “Is Anatomy Destiny?”

My question now is to study the ways in which altering typical architecture may push the predetermined ownership of space by users’ associations with hierarchies. Can space have the ability to create an equal authority and vulnerability amongst strangers regardless of their relationship with societal boundaries and expectations?



Femme. to Masc. -

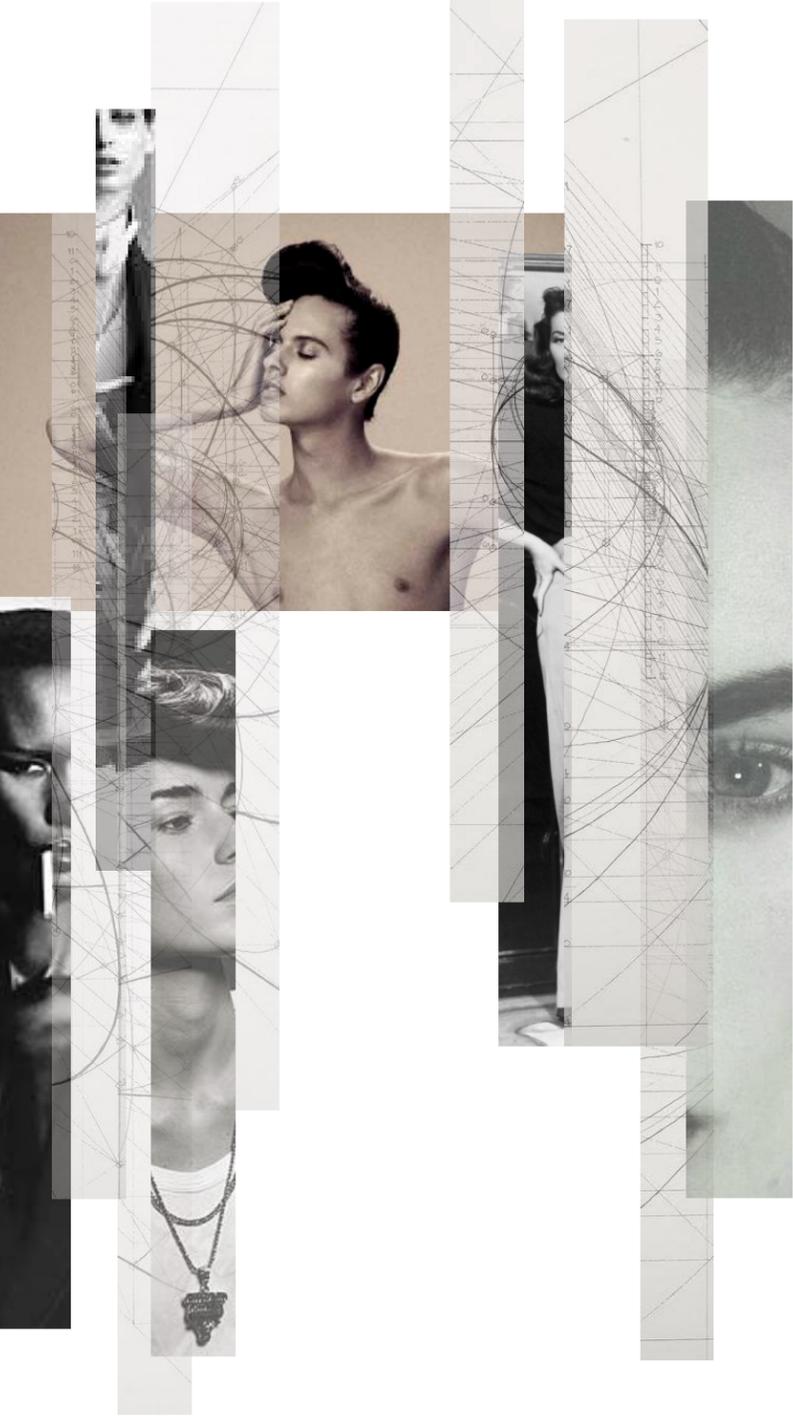
A photo series to express the difference of masculine and feminine qualities through the use of fashion, demeanor, and photography. The photos represent the androgynous body and its ability to express both qualities, while simultaneously manipulating their representation dependent upon need to find comfort.

Figure 2 - (left) Model, Seantel Trombly representing a feminine look. They describe their use of skin shown, posture, makeup, jewelry, and body movement to be key factors of their identity that warp when they alter their look.

Figure 3 - (right) Model, Seantel Trombly representing a masculine look.

IS ANATOMY DESTINY?

Chapter 2



How did the spaces get control?

Tyranny refers to the exercise of power which is cruelly or harshly administered; it usually involves some form of oppression by those wielding authority over the less powerful.¹ The tyranny of gender described by Petra L. Doan, a transgender Professor at Florida State University, is that which arises when people dare to challenge the hegemonic expectations for appropriately gendered behavior in western society. These gendered expectations are an artifact of the Patriarchal rule over gender and have profound and painful consequences for many individuals, particularly that of the gender variant. The tyranny of gender intrudes on every aspect of spaces in which we live and constrains the behaviors that we display within them. Historically, the intent behind space was to foster the need of the individual occupying it. Architectural design became the job of those who were trusted to create structures best fit to foster these needs. The woman's job often perceived to be that of the child bearer and the man's as the bread winner, both of which associating interior/exterior space with feminine/masculine space. However, as our language and understanding of gender and anatomical makeup grow much more vast our expectations of the bodies filling these roles and spaces becomes a lot more varied as well.

As these gendered characters developed, the qualities of interior and exterior spaces did as well. Public space became the domain in which societal standards, hierarchies, and values were asserted and contested, while the quality of life behind the closed door to a home became much more hidden within the layers of the home. In our present American culture, the public sphere is where we witness the representation of these expectations put onto our society in addition to the protesting against them. Although both space and action are necessary components of the "American Dream,"² the exterior world became arguably more dependent on architecture due to its public ownership and therefore representation of commercial expectations of "the human experience." Architecture is the human scale representation of the greater world. It is how we find meaning through our understanding of our existence in relation to the built and natural environment around us. The built environment is both a political symbol and an art, allowing it (by nature) the freedom to be interpreted by any user differently while maintaining a thread of relations through a series of spaces that reflect one another. Thus, we understand new space by determining how it is we most likely utilized similar spaces in the past. Our prior experiences give us the knowledge that helps us to interpret the quality of the space we are in and assess if it is okay to be there. Within an instant, we determine how it most effectively serves a purpose, and if it may also inspire other unintended uses.³

¹ Petra L. Doan, "The Tyranny of Gendered Spaces – Reflections from Beyond the Gender Dichotomy," *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, 17:5, 635-654, DOI: 10.1080/0966369X.2010.503121

² J. Matthew Cottrill, "Queering Architecture: Possibilities of Space(s)," *Getting Real: Designing Ethos Now*, (Washington, DC: Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, 2006), 359.

³ Thomas D. Albright, "Neuroscience for Architecture," *Ming in Architecture: Neuroscience, Embodiment, and the Future of Design*, eds. Sarah Robinson and Juhani Pallasmaa (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015) chapter 10.



The brain does not merely sense the world; it actively confronts it with its own representational models and it continually tests and retests its hypotheses.⁴

When there is a disconnect between intent and occupation (i.e. the interior and exterior of a space), architecture can become uncomfortable for its users and the surrounding culture due to their lack of ability to understand the "point" of it. This can also trigger a feeling of potential threat for an occupant.

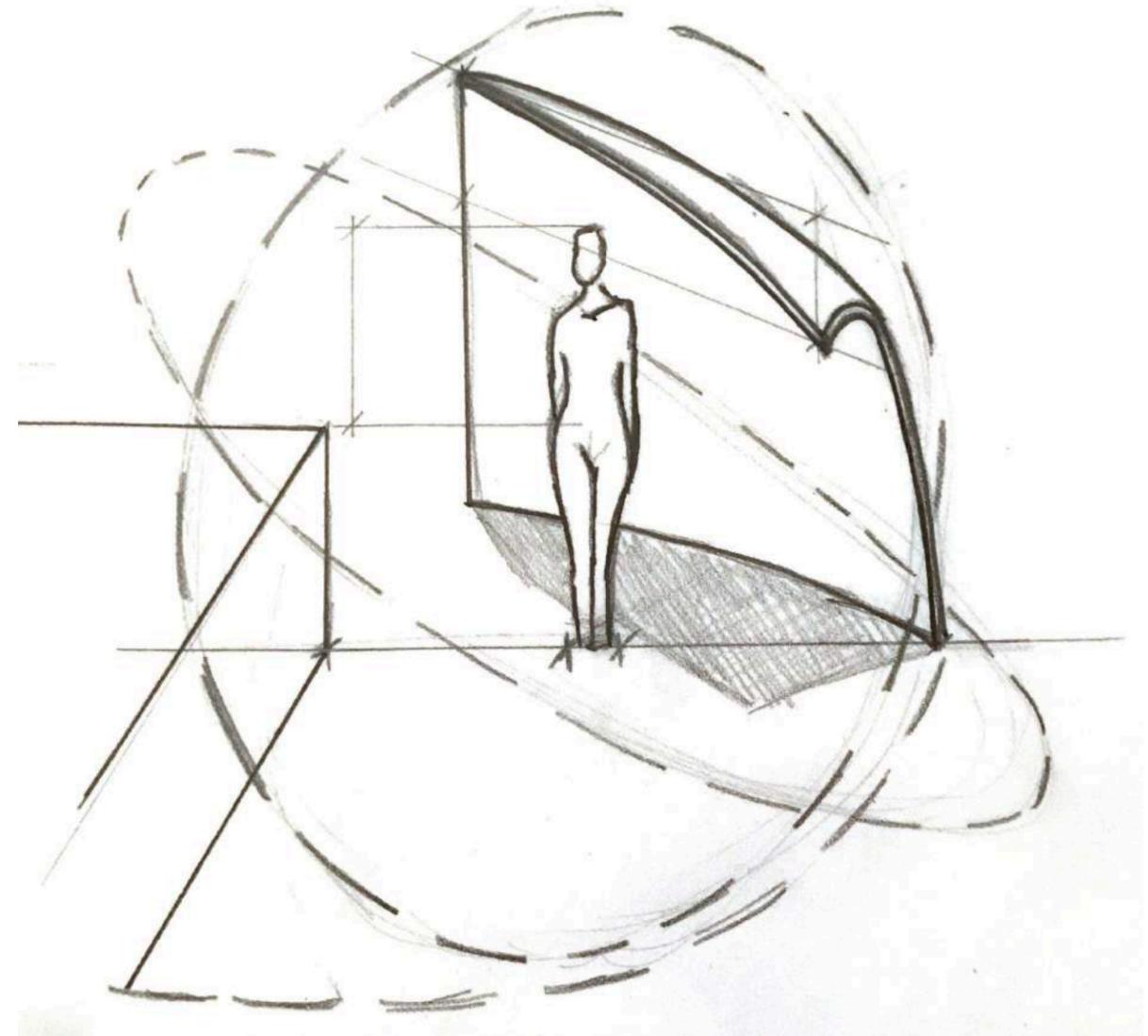
A similar discomfort can be compared to the unachievable "American Dream." It is portrayed in lifestyle advertisements and magazines as one that is perceivably easy to acquire, yet, for the average person, it is quite impossible in reality. Our culture depicts a desired lifestyle through clothing, looks, cars, and other material items, but often disregards the way we associate success with the type of space one typically occupies. The hustle and bustle of city culture fosters this idea of "joining" rather than "creating" a life. Generations of people find themselves packing their lives into U-Hauls in order to "become someone" in the city. Rem Koolhaas describes this phenomena of desire in his book *Delirious New York*, where the skyscraper became what broke the boundary of occupation, allowing more commonly one to dwell above the once inhabitable level of the 5th floor regardless of their income.⁵ Now with the average person having the ability to live inside the implied ideology of the multistory towers of the city, they feel an instant sensation of accomplishment by simply living amongst the symbolic towers of societal success. These towers represent the *possibility* of character, giving users the ability to walk in and out of the front doors playing the part of any caricature they desire with the truth of their lives remaining aloof to those occupying the street.

⁴ Harry Francis Mallgrave, "Anatomy: Architecture of the Brain," *The Architect's Brain: Neuroscience, Creativity, and Architecture*, (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009) 134.

⁵ Rem Koolhaas, "The Double Life of Utopia: The Skyscraper," *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*, (New York, NY: The Monacelli Press, Inc. 1994), 85.

This false caricature has been stereotyped to cover those who are lost and/or powerless, those who go to the city to find meaning and possibility amongst the crowds. Marginalized groups share a relation of dysphoria in rural space, often guiding them towards cities as a way of creating communities amongst others who share similar lifestyles. Walter Gropius wrote that “architecture implies the mastery of space,”⁶ yet mastery requires not only rule, but also government; it demands equally the shaping and molding of what is governed and in these instances that defines both space *and* the people occupying it.⁷ In other words, architecture can and does foster the same rule that societal hierarchies govern over people through social interactions. We reflect those same relations and segregations in the way we act through the development of our built environment, by who is allowed into what space, and what is built for whom and why.

This *American Dream* is commonly associated with the quality and amount of space/land one owns. There is a sense of pride that comes with this ownership. However, with an economy and lifestyle pushing for a generation of temporary living, the apartment lifestyle and era of the tiny house/mobile home movement is challenging that once thought necessary structure of the home. *Place attachment* is commonly defined as an affective bond that connects people to places, often implying an “anchoring” of emotions to the object of attachment. This creates a feeling of belonging, a willingness to stay close, and a wish to return when away.⁸



⁶ Walter Gropius, *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1963), 25.

⁷ Julius Gavroche, “Struggles for Space: Queering Straight Space: Thinking towards a queer architecture,” *Autonomies*, October 3, 2016, <http://autonomies.org/pt/2016/10/struggles-for-space-queering-straight-space-thinking-towards-a-queer-architecture-4/>.

⁸ Maria Lewicka, “In Search of Roots: Memory as Enabler of Place Attachment,” *Place Attachment: Advances in Theory, Methods and Applications*, eds. Lynee C. Manzo and Patrick Devine-Wright, (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2013).

SEGREGATING SPACES

Harry Mallgrave argues that “we are biologically fitted to view the world with certain visuals of environmental propensities,”¹ meaning our primal instincts cause us to view the spaces we are in as ones of survey or refuge, both being forms of *visual dominance*.

Visual Dominance is the controlling of space through the manipulation of sight, leaving the user to determine their place in relation to authority and safety based off of who they can visually govern. Focusing on the structure of the home, I will be going over three projects where the process of design was influenced by the intent behind male vs. female spaces. In addition, this reflects the way authority over a space *can* be designed and how that may be seen parallel to the way gendered spaces are designed.

Today, one could argue that there is a denouncing of personal influence, deeming any negative outcome to be a result of a requirement by a client. There is a history of architects pitching designs in ways that remain ignorant to the forces that may compromise its primary intent. However, claiming autonomy does not withhold architecture’s ability to affect a greater community. Koolhaas references Henry Erkins’ concept of the architectural lobotomy in *Delirious New York*. Erkins discusses the negative outcomes of architecture when the interior and exterior of a building are not living in harmony, an “autonomous” architecture where the design is attempting to satisfy two incompatible demands.² Without an interior speaking with the context of the exterior, a divide is formed between those who occupy the sidewalk and those who occupy within. In the context of the home, this is seen as questioning the authenticity of the lifestyle portrayed by the exterior facades in comparison to the quality of life of those within. The potential of commercial interest, which makes up the bulk of architectural commissions, to “take over” the creation of any built space, due to their amount of control of a community, is only feeding the void between architecture and the human that already exists.³ If architecture is built without purpose, it is deeming the space to be occupied only by those who can afford to do so, further widening the gap between social hierarchies of those occupying the public sphere.

*It is impossible for architecture to exist without context. What we control, and must be accountable for, is our intentions.*⁴

¹ Harry Francis Mallgrave, “Cognition in the Flesh: The Human in Design,” *Thresholds 42, Human*, (Cambridge: SA+P Press, 2014) 78.

² Rem Koolhaas, “The Double Life of Utopia: The Skyscraper,” *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*, (New York, NY: The Monacelli Press, Inc. 1994), 104-105.

³ Robert Cowherd, “Notes on Post-criticality: Towards an Architecture of Reflexive Modernisation.” *Agency in Architecture: Rethinking Criticality in Theory and Practice*, Edited by Isabelle Doucet and Kenny Cupers (CR Delft: Footprint: Delft School of Design Journal) 2009.

⁴ Alberto Perez-Gomez, “Built Upon Love,” *Architecture Norway*, 2014.



Figure 4 - In *Secrets Beyond the Door*, an image from Fritz Lang’s “paranoid woman’s film,” you can see the image of the fearful woman. The door symbolizes the privacy one often finds in the home, but her overall expression leads the viewer to call into question the motives of the husband. This represents the silent battle of a power dynamic that exists within the domicile. The assumption that the woman has control over the interior sphere often disregards the male’s secure dominance through his ownership of the home. How can/does the architecture influence this power dynamic? ¹

¹ Patricia White, “Female Spectator, Lesbian Specter: The Haunting,” *Sexuality and Space*, ed. Beatriz Colomina. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992) 141.

THE DINING TABLE

Traditionally, the dining room of a home is held to a primary importance in relation to other spaces. It is the location of gathering for all family members, and a common location for ritual. It reflects the social hierarchy of family members in relation to who is allowed to sit where.⁴ Gender roles and the binary expectation of each, often separates the “man” from the “woman,” putting each at either end of the table. Using Alvaro Aalto’s Villa Mairea as an example, designed for Harry and Maire Gullichsen, you can see in Figure 6 that the head of the house is at the head of the table. This represents ownership and control over the public realm of the house. *He* has visual dominance over the space, seeing not only the family, but also the front door and the entire public sphere (anything related to exterior affiliation). *She* sits in direct line with her husband. Her back is to the door and her only visuals are through the window to his right, her view framed to only see natural/traditional elements of the yard.

“The organization of the dining room in connection with the seating arrangement at the table is a clever constellation that subtly underlines the gender roles in the home and society.”⁵

4 Dorte Kuhlmann, “Introduction,” *Gender Studies in Architecture: Space, Power and Difference*, (Oxon: Routledge, 2013) 1-13.

5 Kuhlmann, “Introduction,” 9.

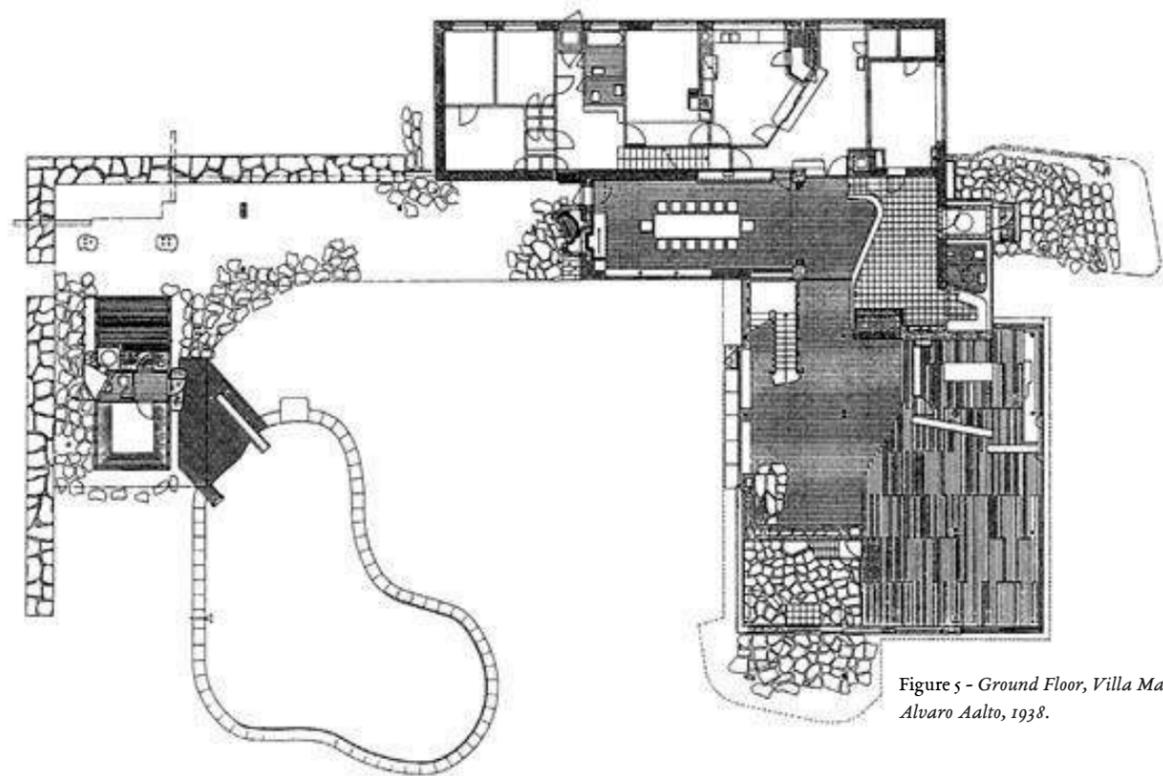


Figure 5 - Ground Floor, Villa Mairea
Alvaro Aalto, 1938.

When designing for the human, there is a harmony that must exist within the interior and the exterior, similarly as the relation of masculine to feminine. An “honest” facade speaks about the activities it conceals (the everyday life of the owner),⁷ and the interior of a building is unique to the more private qualities. In this regard, women become the mere signifier of the man’s hard-earned wealth.⁸ The female is the embodiment of the “back-stage” quality to any success. *She* is often symbolizing, as Koolhaas likes to put it: “the necessary, but unwanted shadow.”⁹ Represented by the home, the rooms present themselves as partly private versus partly public, again the feminine versus masculine identity. This leaves the woman to be, more often than not, a *prisoner* to the home.

Figure 6 shows the divide indicating a separation of entry space and private space. In the direct line of sight from the male’s seat positioned at the head of the table, it has direct view over the first entry to the home. He is the symbol of owner and first thought. The woman’s seat becomes part of the home, part of what is at threat of loss if the house is to be overtaken. From her seat she has view over the yard, the nature, and the sauna, all of which are natural elements, keeping the design as one aligning with her expectation of character. Her drawing room, kitchen, and bedroom are all located so the paths from one to the other require her to fall under the male gaze regardless of how she moves.¹⁰

7 Rem Koolhaas, “The Double Life of Utopia: The Skyscraper,” *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*, (New York, NY: The Monacelli Press, Inc. 1994), 100.

8 Vanessa Chase, “Edith Wharton, The Decoration of Houses, and Gender,” *Architecture and Feminism*, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996) 135.

9 Rem Koolhaas, “The Double Life of Utopia: The Skyscraper,” 130.

10 Kuhlmann, “Introduction,” 13.

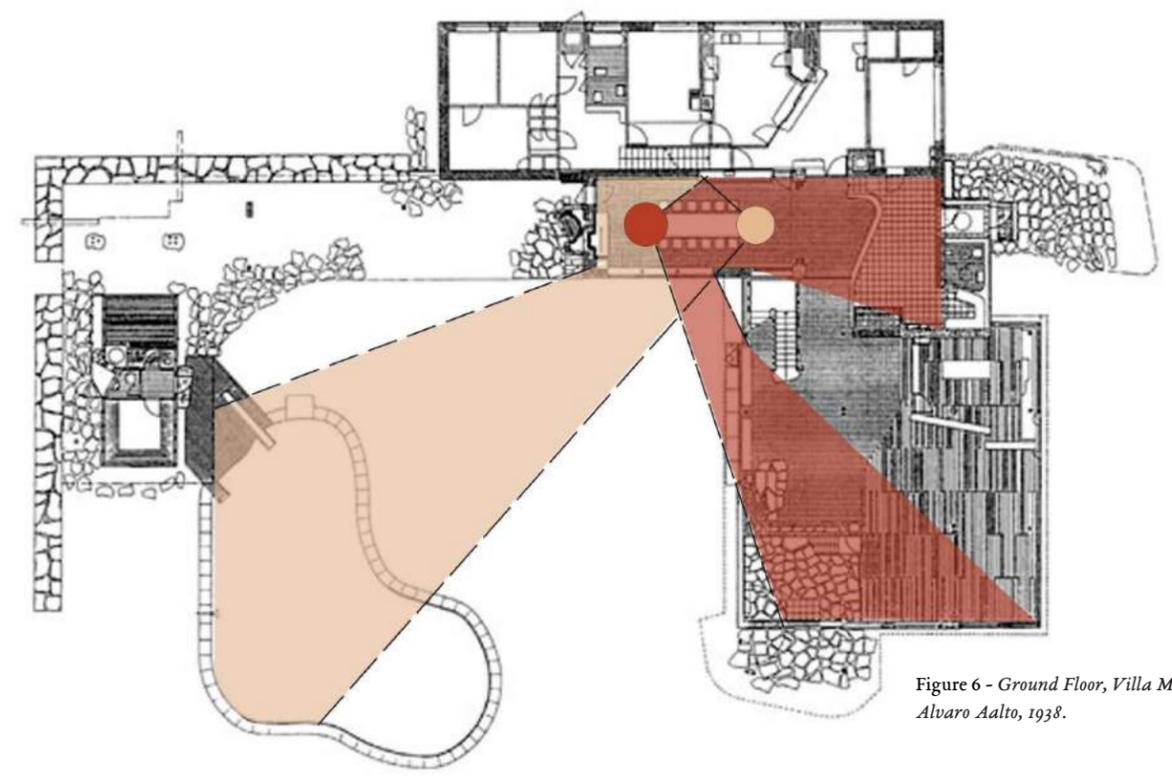


Figure 6 - Ground Floor, Villa Mairea
Alvaro Aalto, 1938.

Harry Gullichsen's office, on the other hand, sat above the entrance to the home in order to provide him with a visual of anyone coming or going from the home. However, Maire Gullichsen's studio was placed in direct view of the courtyard and trees to provide her with "domestic enjoyment" rather than "industrial use."¹¹ Her studio was designed with the intent of having feminine qualities of nature through the curves in the walls quoted to be symbolic of a birch tree. With the studio being in an isolated position within the house, the prescribed intent was for her to feel as though she was living amongst the trees.

"The artist' is given their own sphere, with the tower motif claiming for her to be viewed as powerful due to height and separation. In contrast, it could be interpreted as Marie being kept in a cage, ruler of the inside but withheld from the outside.

When analyzing buildings like the Villa Mairea, constructed in 1940, one must take into consideration the social expectations of that time. It was considered to be reasonable in the 40's to organize space around (what was thought to be) one gender's ability, often putting the man as top priority. In contrast, it is up to the user to enable these expectations of design. Architecture cannot force people to act in certain ways, but there is proof that the historical examination of the construction is a reflection of social meanings at the time.

CLAIMING AUTHORITY

Symbolism in architecture holds an underlying representation of power, implying a social governing within space embodied in the way users are inspired to interact within it. Those who aim to demand power in society also mean to demand the ability to govern a space. It is easy to submit to space when society has structured the mind to not feel empowered to overcome discrimination.

The power of place to nurture social memory... remains largely untapped for most working people's neighborhoods in most American cities, and for most ethnic history and for most women's history.¹²

The tower, in this case, is a notable symbol that represents power and domination over those existing on the ground plane. It embodies the unknown potential of who and what occupies it while also creating a distinct separation between those who exist within and those without. Its (often argued) phallic design even reflects the male body, implying that they are the ones most fit to occupy. It also is only afforded to those of who have the money to occupy, statistically being: white, cis,

¹¹ Kuhlmann, "Introduction," 11.

¹² Dorte Kuhlmann, "The Tradition of Psychoanalysis," *Gender Studies in Architecture: Space, Power and Difference*, (Oxon: Routledge, 2013) 76.

straight, able-bodied men. Koolhaas describes the skyscraper as "announcing the segregation of mankind into two tribes," one able to reach unique levels of perfection through their ability to navigate the building, and the second simply the remainder of the traditional human race.¹³ This principle of design dominance is even put into practice on the smaller scale, often seen in the creation of furniture. The ways in which form can choreograph how people navigate space reflects how each person perceives where they fall in ability to own it. The results rely on the identity of those occupying due to the ways in which we compare identities and their relationships with control. Architecture provides the platform in which social constructs have the ability to influence people on who and how to govern one another. This is seen in another example in Figure 7, representing the design variations for the negotiating tables during the Vietnam War.¹⁴ The parties would argue for weeks prior to meetings about the shape of the tables before actually agreeing to meet. Environmental psychology studies indicate that people determine the importance of a person depending on their location in a space in relation to others. Sitting at the narrow side of an oblong table gives a greater chance of being elected chairman of the group, or at least of influencing the group to a greater degree.¹⁵ The table designs in the diagram below represent how varying implications alter directional focus for occupants.

Now a new question arises: *How can one manipulate a design to create a greater equality amongst varying identities in relation to finding authority in space?*

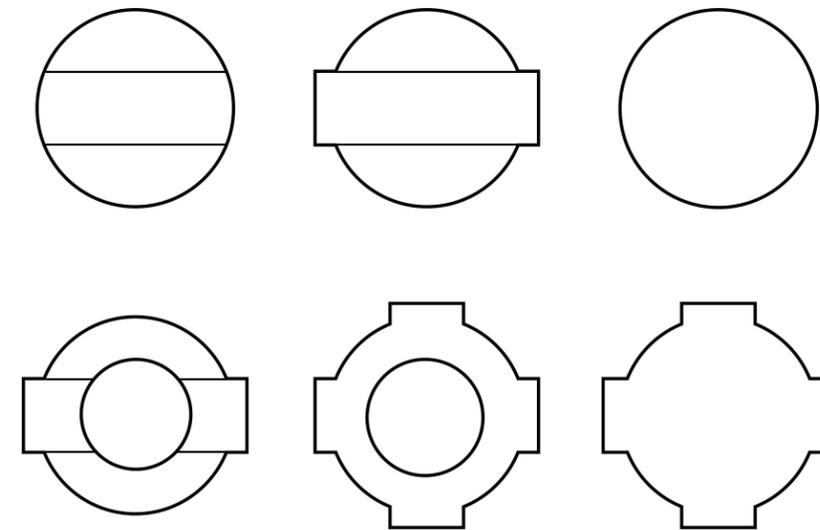


Figure 7 - Table design examples inspired by the alternative designs for a table in the Vietnam War negotiations as discussed in the New York Times. Image created by: Seantel Trombly 2017. Original drawing by Clemens Rauber

¹³ Rem Koolhaas, "The Lives of a Block: Teh Waldort-Astoria Hotel and the Empire State Building," *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*, (New York, NY: The Monacelli Press, Inc. 1994), 158.

¹⁴ Kuhlmann, "The Tradition of Psychoanalysis," 77.

¹⁵ Kuhlmann, "The Tradition of Psychoanalysis," 77.

WHAT IS MINE IS MINE

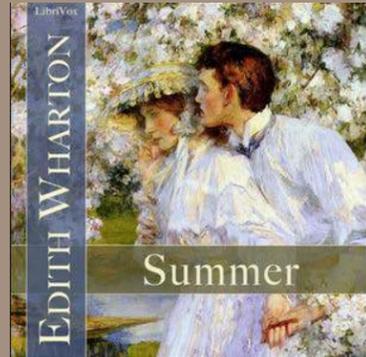


Figure 8 - Cover of Edith Wharton's 'Summer'

I believe I know the only cure [for nervous disorders] is to make one's center of life inside one's self, not selfishly or excludingly, but with a kind of unassailable serenity—to decorate one's inner house so richly that one is content there, glad to welcome anyone who wants to come and stay, but happy all the same in the hours when one is inevitably alone.¹

Edith Wharton is known primarily for her fictional portraits of New York's society in the late-nineteenth/early-twentieth centuries; emphasizing primarily her piercing observations of the women's roll (Figure 8). She also has had a large contribution to architectural thought and practice with a focus around gendered spaces. She wrote several books about architecture, decoration, and drawing, with the *Decoration of Houses* being her most notable. She designed her own home in Lenox, Massachusetts, which fostered a new interpretation of the way spaces in the home could reflect the binary roles, and then reorganizing priorities to neutralize spaces. In Wharton's home, she was the dominating figure in all regards—socially, economically, and intellectually.² This power difference between her and her husband, Edward Wharton, changed the operation of space and circulation from the start, putting the woman in true control.

Wharton's position in the architectural world held great influence during the turn of the century. With architecture and feminism holding great symbolic weight, her movement towards revolutionizing the woman's role began to blur many, once clear, social limitations. Within her home, she was able to reclaim many spaces without question, her goal being to exploit and neutralize the masculine and feminine properties of a space by redistributing their power in different realms not yet explored. She implemented masculine qualities into her “female” spaces and reworked the “male” with feminine qualities as well. To some, her intent seemed to be one of prioritizing of female spaces, but to Wharton, she was instead neutralizing, “feminizing,” or “de-emphasizing” the masculine/public spaces. She recognized that, if one were to just increase the importance of feminine spaces, that would therefore just reiterate the gender inequalities that they expressed and enforced in the first place.³

Spaces in the home were categorized around use, forming a list of functions and who was to do them. This clarified to her what were considered to be “male” or “female” roles and spaces. Wharton's unconventional role of the female breadwinner already put into question the expectations of who occupied space. She redefined other spaces to become ones of joint ruling that both users (Edith or Edward) could occupy comfortably. By first recognizing and defining feminine vs. masculine qualities, she was then able to articulate how to alter spaces.

¹ Edith Wharton, as quoted in R.W.B. Lewis, *Edith Wharton: A Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), 14.

² Vanessa Chase, “Edith Wharton, The Decoration of Houses, and Gender in Turn-of-the-Century America,” *Architecture and Feminism*, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996) 130.

³ Chase, “Edith Wharton, The Decoration of Houses, and Gender in Turn-of-the-Century America,” 151.

She noted the importance of privacy in a home and correlated it with the door, identifying it as one of the most feminine features of a house.

“The primary purpose of a[n entrance] door is to admit, it's secondary purpose is to exclude.”⁴

In opposition to the traditional open, passage-like rooms of previous generations, she focused her designs around single use rooms with many doors and thresholds. Wharton notes her biggest issue with the American House is the disappearance of the door, making the ability to control comfort and privacy difficult. In the development with modernism, the open floor plan design became more popular, given it provides the opportunity for constant surveillance with very little privacy.⁵ The door symbolically represents not only privacy but also an allowance of someone into a space. It is a symbol of safety in the way that whomever has control over the door has control over a space where an encounter is made. The owner, regardless of sex or gender identity, is then the one who yields power over the structure and therefore over the the people engaged.

Wharton proposes a way of designing a home similar to that of a maze, putting control in the hands of whomever knows the floor plan. Instinctively we think of closed, stiff, and controlled spaces to be ones that contrast femininity, but in this regard, the feminine is represented through methods of layering spaces to protect and foster private/intimate moments within the home.

The *designer onto project* is as much a part of any art as it is in architecture, and this home was the reflection of Wharton and her needs into a space. Feminine spaces have the ability to resonate with the feminine qualities of any person, regardless of their bodily makeup. Spaces where nurturing lessons and moments happen, where there is warmth, intimacy, flirtation, self-reflection, art, etc., are all spaces in which the humans have the ability to be their most authentic selves. Space begins to reflect an individual's freedom, and in the design of this home, Wharton's layout of spaces provides multiple thresholds, entries, and exits to not only create a need to be allowed into different areas of the home, but to also present the option to keep things private. The design also requires a meaning behind movement, a *purpose*. Intention behind action is the cause for creating a space, so no action or space can or should be casually explained.⁶ John-Paul Sartre, a French writer and philosopher, is known for his perspective on cause and motive (reason and emotion), stating:

Intention is to be understood as seeing a lack, and action implies the condition, the recognition of a desideratum (objective lack)... This action necessitates the conception of a new building that is lacking, but is possible and desirable.⁷

⁴ Chase, “Edith Wharton, The Decoration of Houses, and Gender in Turn-of-the-Century America,” 146.

⁵ Chase, “Edith Wharton, The Decoration of Houses, and Gender in Turn-of-the-Century America,” 145.

⁶ Philippe d'Anjou, “Beyond Duty and Virtue in Design Ethics,” *Design Issues, Vol. 26*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010).

⁷ d'Anjou, *Beyond Duty and Virtue in Design Ethics*.

What Sartre calls *objective lack* is what the act of creating the building is meant to fulfill. As an example, a group that is in need of a place to worship, is the *lack*. The act of a designer providing a space for worshiping is the *action*. This is saying that the architecture is backed by a will/intent to fulfill a need. However, the *lack* behind the creation of feminine spaces is not backed by the *woman*, but by the *expectation* of the woman. Female-bodied people are not the only ones who thrive in feminine spaces. In a “Wharton inspired” home, you can see the feminine qualities of privacy and allowance being applied to many spaces that originally were intended to be for “man,” but are now neutralized, allowing them to be for anyone. The “neutralizing” of space brings a higher level of intimacy to the public sphere. The success of Wharton’s design is in the fostering of the user’s ability to be their authentic selves in a public space. The intent is to allow guests the comfort of authenticity vs. feeling forced to continue to play the part of whatever caricature they would normally play in the exterior world (the business-man/entrepreneur/housewife). You can see Wharton’s intentions come to life in Figure 9 - Figure 12 through the comparison of sketches by two architects, Ogden Codman and Francis Hoppin. Both were commissioned by Wharton to design a home based upon her requests and with her very active involvement in the process.⁸

As new generations start to take over spaces through the growing visibility of POC (people of color) and LGBTQ+ communities, feminist movements, etc., architecture will have the responsibility of creating appropriate places and contexts for this new social life. Architecture is an art, but it is also ethical.”⁹ Jane Collier writes about the varying effects of architecture due to the multiplicity of interpretation by users over time. It is, in many ways, part of the dilemma of social changes, being the ultimate symbol of the past. With the original intent of a home reflecting one interpretation of a dated social expectation, the design must adapt alongside people in order to empower the users occupying it.

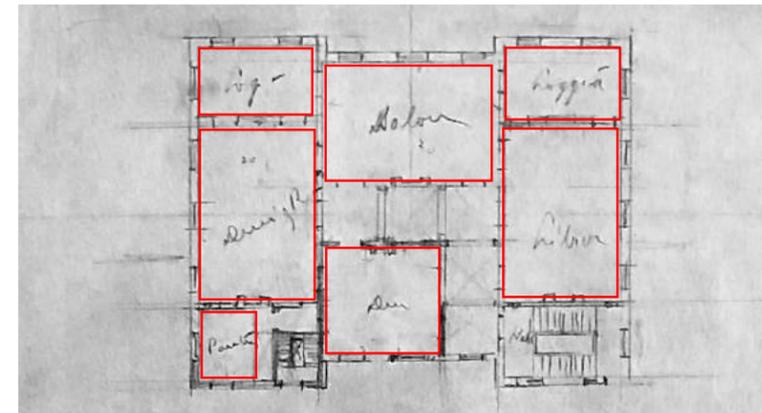


Figure 9 - First Floor Plan proposal for The Mount. Designed by Ogden Codman. Edited by: Seantel Trombly, 2017.

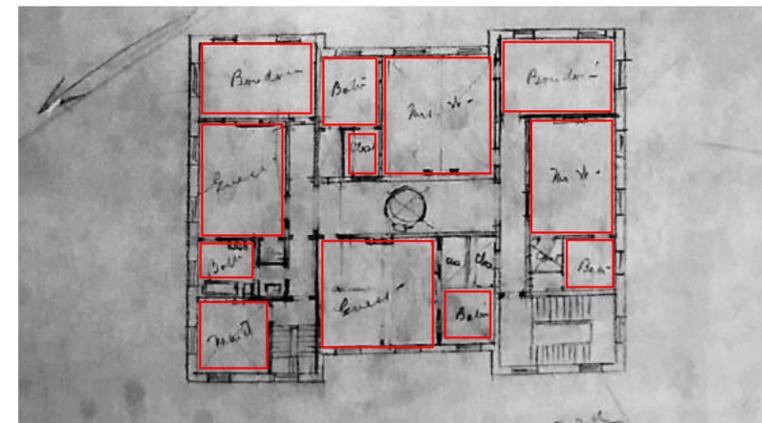


Figure 10 - Second Floor Plan proposal for The Mount. Designed by Ogden Codman. Edited by: Seantel Trombly, 2017.

Figure 11 - First Floor Plan proposal for The Mount. Designed by Francis Hoppin. Edited by: Seantel Trombly, 2017.

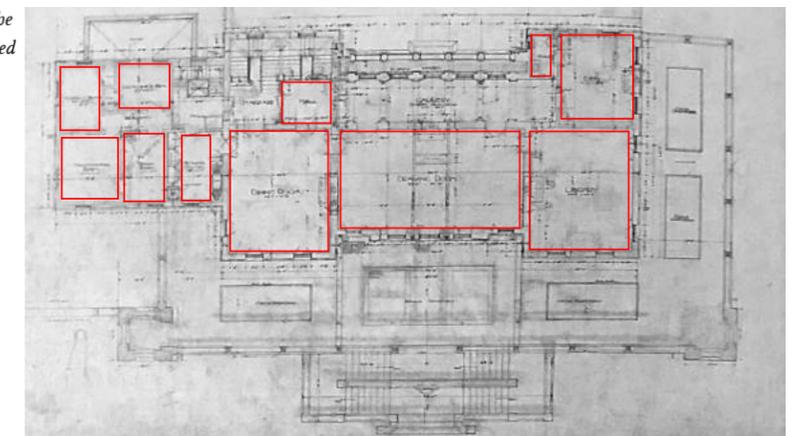
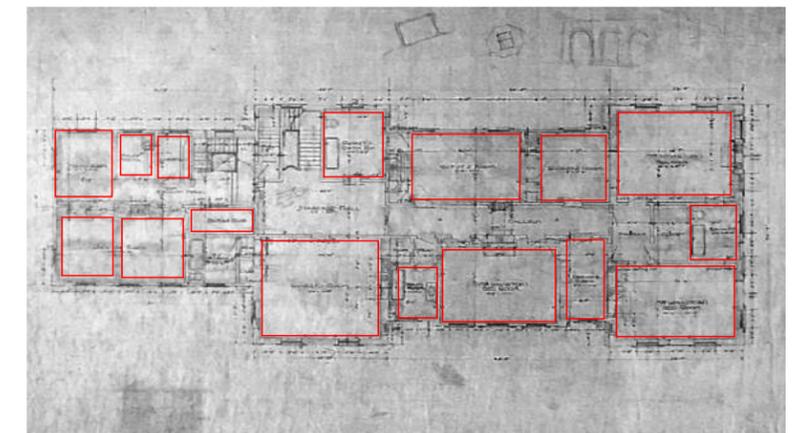


Figure 12 - Second Floor Plan proposal for The Mount. Designed by Francis Hoppin. Edited by: Seantel Trombly, 2017.



⁸ Vanessa Chase, “Edith Wharton, The Decoration of Houses, and Gender in Turn-of-the-Century America,” *Architecture and Feminism*, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996) 148.

⁹ Jane Collier, “The Art of Moral Imagination: Ethics in the Practice of Architecture Author(s): Jane Collier,” *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol 66. (New York: Springer Publishing, 2006).

Can architecture put you on a pedestal?

Architects have a unique ability to choreograph the movement of users within a space by solely influencing them through the surrounding structures. This movement is influenced both by the architect's intent and the unique interpretation of the user. This interpretation varies for each individual based upon their background experience throughout life. The ways in which each person has learned to "take up space" is different depending upon varying social backgrounds. Again, this is where social hierarchies influence our resonance within space. The scale of a controlling object (in this case, the user) is calibrated in reference to the field it commands.¹ Therefore, the subconscious measurement of the control one has over others is related to how much area the user believes they can occupy freely.

The studies in Figure 13 - Figure 15 of the Villa Moller designed in 1930's by Adolf Loos, represent ways in which the gaze of the user fosters their ability to control the home. The design gives one an understanding of what is and is not the private sphere based upon thresholds and level changes within the space. In the first floor plan of the Villa Moller in Figure 13, there is a clear progression from public to private spaces when first walking through the home, with the entry level being entirely for public interaction, and progressing upwards to become more private. As a guest, it requires a much more intentional movement throughout the home to come across any intimate space of the families. You can see this progression of space through the varying levels in the section cut in Figure 14 and 15. The red sphere, the private sphere, is typically occupied by the owners and has visual dominance over the intermediate and public spheres on the lower levels.

Figure 13 - First Floor Plan of the Villa Moller by Adolf Loos, 1930.

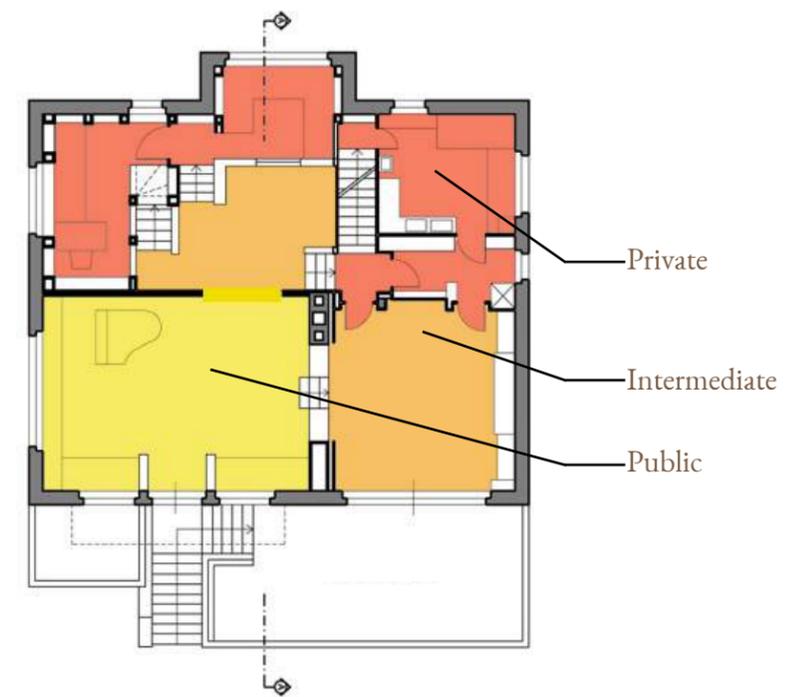


Figure 14 - Reduced section cut of the Villa Moller by Adolf Loos, 1930.

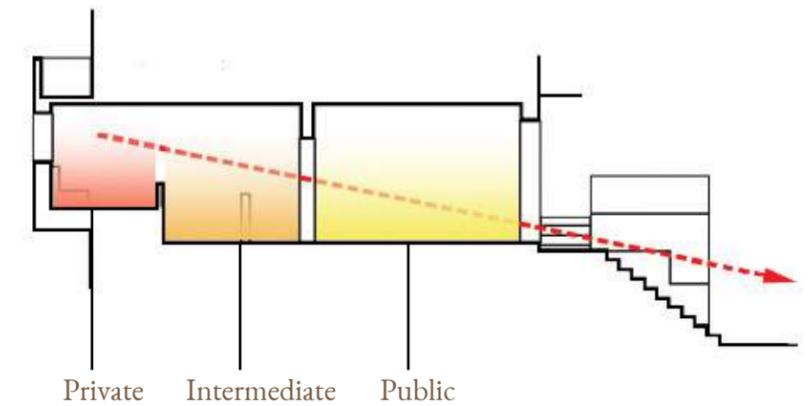
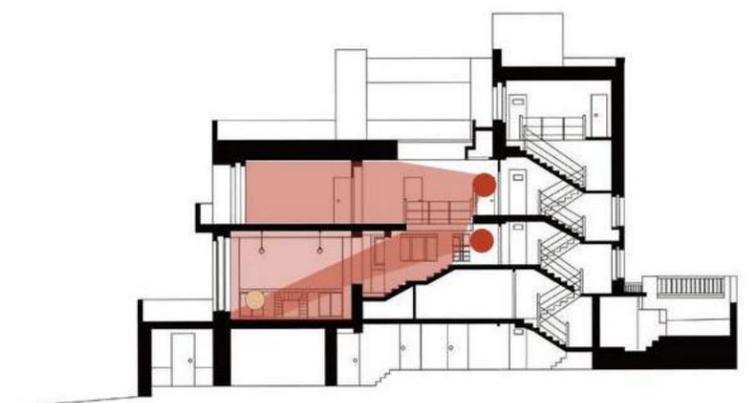


Figure 15 - Main section cut of the Villa Moller by Adolf Loos, 1930.



¹ George Wagner, "The Lair of the Bachelor," *Architecture and Feminism*, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996) 194-195.

Where do we draw the line?

George Wagner's analysis of the "ideal bachelor pad" created from the concepts developed by *Playboy* around the 1960's, identifies masculine space as being a reflection of the desires of the "ideal man." In *The Lair of the Bachelor* he describes architecture as:

a way of manipulating geometries that frame a visual field and the subject's view, or it overtly demonstrates of the latent forces of control- the governmental, economic, and bureaucratic. It is no secret that architecture is a medium of domination.¹

In many ways, buildings become the symbol of a lifestyle (or world) that can be "mastered." In the city, the urban utopia is often one that many people strive for, especially the young entrepreneur. After the Second World War, the quality of the individual home became what represented the accomplishment of the "every man" desire. This meant that, as one improved upon their domicile, they inevitably improved within life. The bachelor pad created a space with an overt program for sexual power. It laid out a clear ability through its open floor plan for the "predator" to maintain visual dominance over their "prey." *Playboy Magazine* became a popular representation of how to succeed (or at least how to look successful) in society, and its representation of this lifestyle through architecture allowed for the mental picture to be painted more clearly for the lonely bachelor.

The projects become a means of longing for the unattainable. After the war, there was a loss of hope among men after losing their jobs to women, combined with many other devastations. Wagner argues that the redesigning of the home and appliances provided a way to lure the women back into the home, allowing men to regain control over the workplace. This new cultural shift reflected again the need for control that one experiences through the subconscious measurement of the field they command. In *Delirious New York*, Koolhaas describes the skyscraper as an incubator for (male) adults. As one progresses through the building, each floor molds the man into further becoming the symbol of the elite persona he desires.

"It permits it's members that are too impatient to await the outcome of evolution to reach new strata of maturity by transforming themselves into new beings."²

The urban utopia and the lifestyle of the bachelor pad are seen as spaces where the few who have reached "unique levels of perfection" dwell. The *Playboy* magazine goes as far as to insult those who do not find resonance within these spaces.

¹ George Wagner, "The Lair of the Bachelor," *Architecture and Feminism*, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996) 194-195.

² Rem Koolhaas, "Definitive Instability: The Downtown Athletic Club," *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*, (New York, NY: The Monacelli Press, Inc. 1994), 158.

It disregards them as being a "loser" or "even worse, queer."³ Edith Wharton describes masculine space to be one of fixed control, claiming that it is dependent upon the owners ability to "see all and rule all." The bachelor's apartment is a site of fantasy and seduction with *him* being the predator and *her* being the prey. You can see in Figure 16 that, unlike Wharton's design of the home, the plan shows no sign of separate space. The circulation becomes fluid and the line of who controls what becomes blurred. The bachelor is fantasized as being a free agent, therefore his space is to reflect that of free movement. However, the open floor plan also gives the owner complete control over any guest through the ability to *watch*. This prevents any opportunity for a visiting user to change their mind and leave, or to question the level of authority. Electronics even foster the constant stimulation of a guest, keeping everything within arms reach, the owner in control, and distraction limited. With little movement necessary, the environment turns into a dream world, one detached from reality.

In the case of the Farnsworth House, Edith Farnsworth was interviewed by *House Beautiful* after losing her lawsuit against Mies Van der Rohe for cost increases. When asked if she felt comfortable in the house she replied:

The conception of a house as a glass cage suspended in air is ridiculous... do i feel implacable calm? The truth is that in this house with its four walls of glass, I feel like a prowling animal, always on the alert. I am always restless. Even in the evening, I feel like a sentinel on guard day and night. I can rarely stretch out and relax.⁴

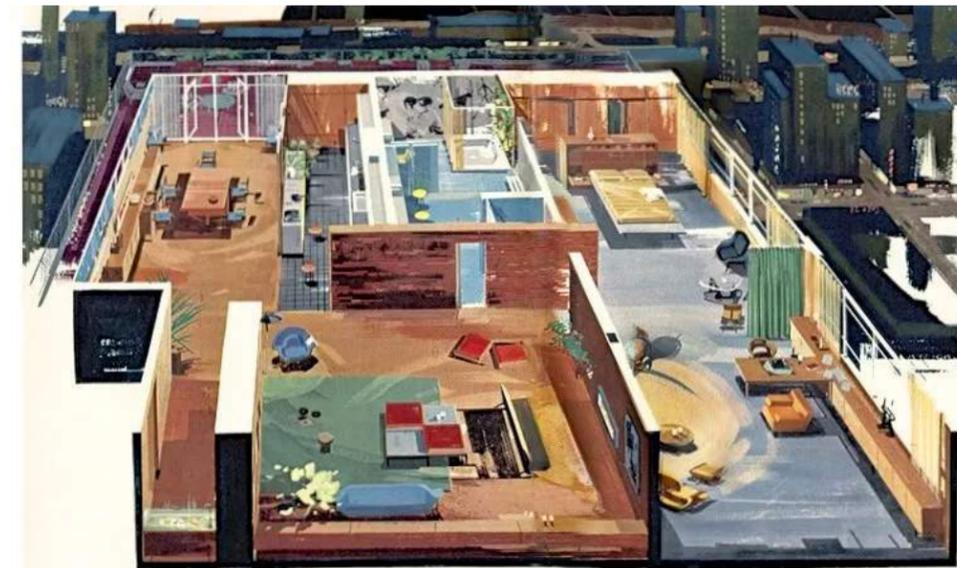


Figure 16 - The Playboy Penthouse Apartment Layout

³ Wagner, "The Lair of the Bachelor," 196.

⁴ Joseph A. Barry, "Good and Bad Modern Houses," *House Beautiful* (May 1953) 266.

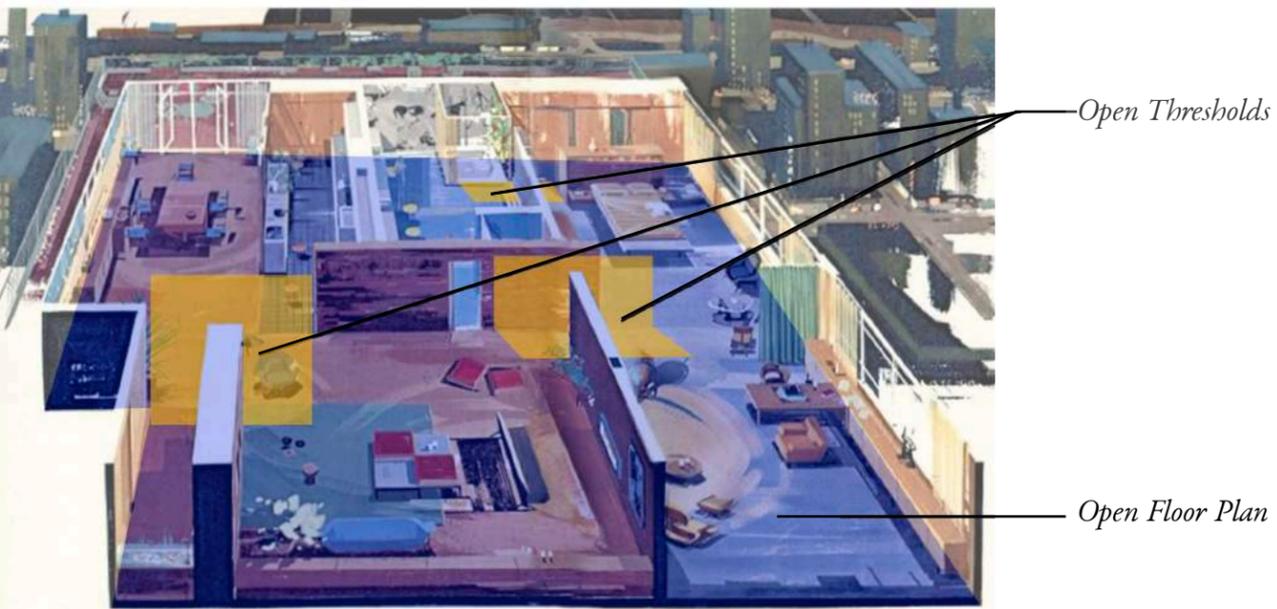
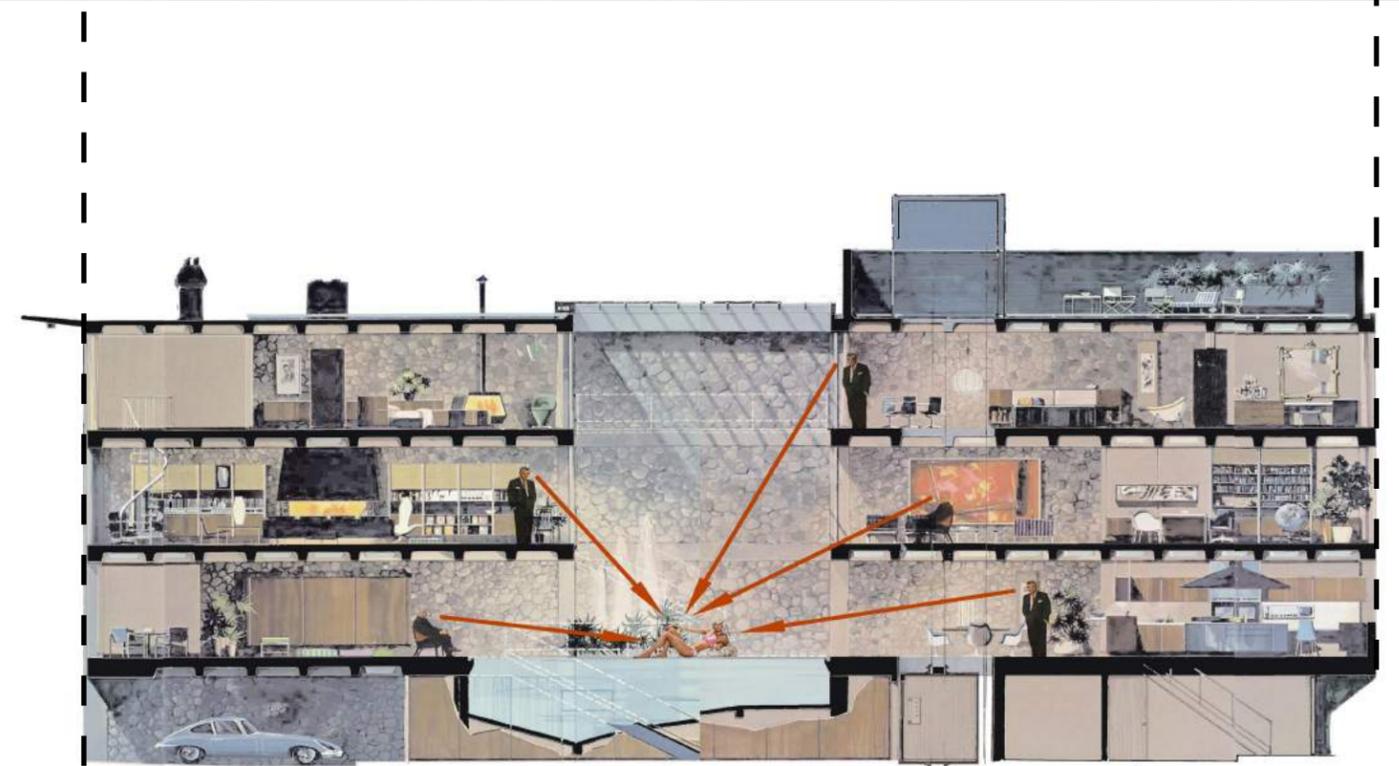
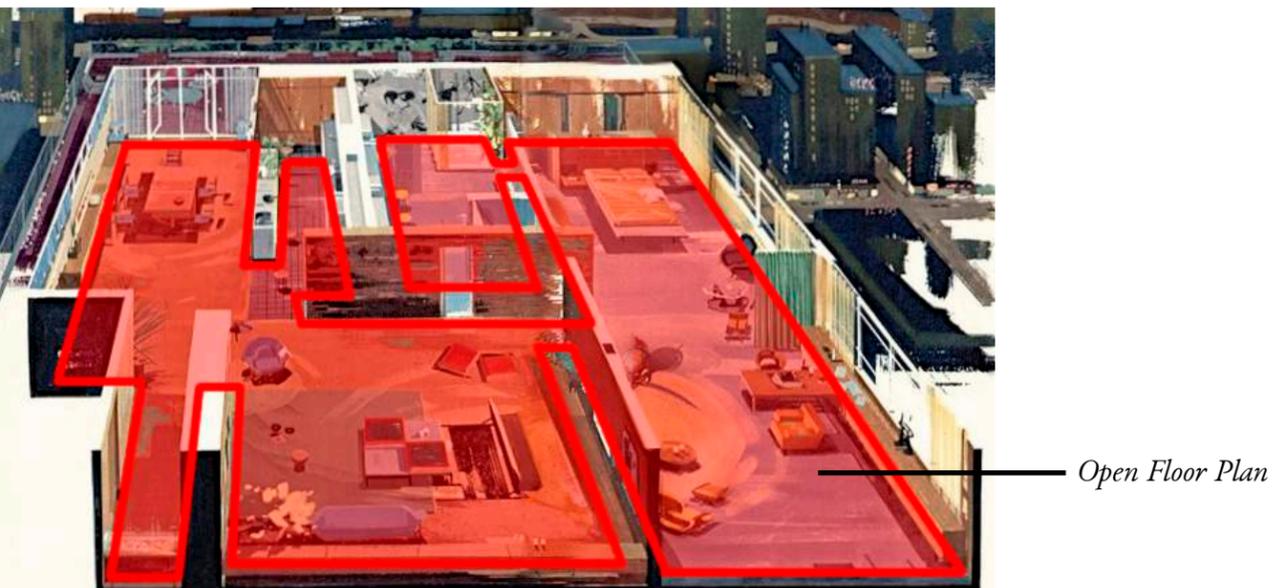


Figure 17 - (top) Diagramming over the given floor plan for the Playboy Penthouse Apartment design with the blue representing the connected open floor plan, and the yellow representing the use of large thresholds vs more concrete doorways.

Figure 18 - (right) Section of the Playboy Bachelor Pad, reflecting the focus of the pool as the stage of the home, this allows visual dominance of the guest, which Playboy suggests as the dream woman. The open floor plan is suggested and seen in this view as well, allowing each space to flow into the next, leaving little to no spaces for privacy.



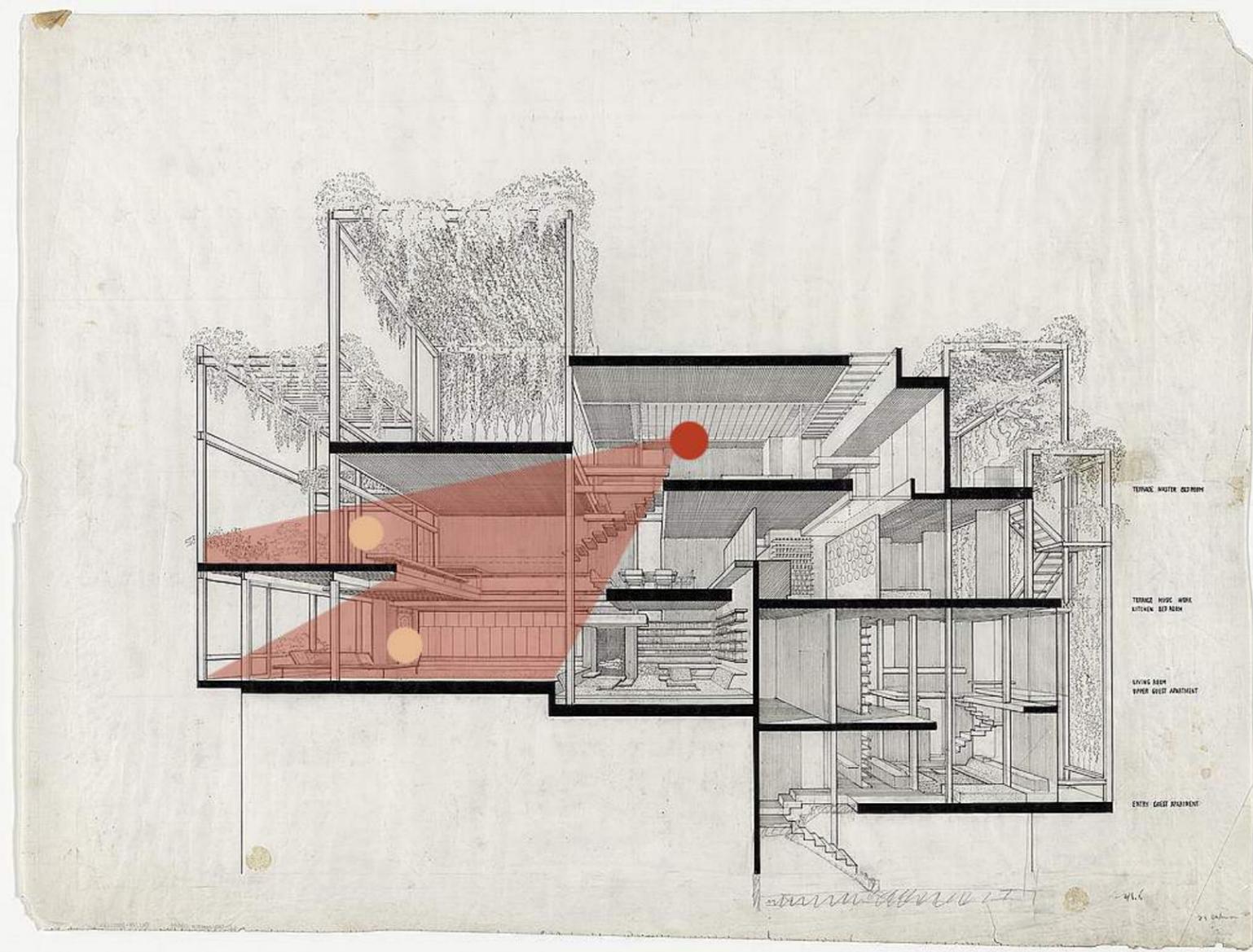


Figure 19 - Section perspective of Paul Rudolph's Manhattan home, edited by Seantel Trombly to show how visual dominance is created through the use of gaze by owner (red dot) over subjects (tan dots).

LEVELING UP

Paul Rudolph's Manhattan home, completed in 1973, was known to be a gravity-defying design. His intent was to have the "natural light pour through from top-to-bottom," giving each space a feeling of lightness. Even to the detail of mirrored stairs, everything had a way of reflecting light to allude to levels of structures levitating within the space.¹ The entire design of the apartment maintains aspects similar to those seen in *Playboy's* bachelor pad with the open floor plan. However, this design extends the viewing plane through multiple levels. Continuously, we see the use of gaze to foster an ability to control the space, providing the owner with opportunity to rule others without even being at eye level.

One can see in Figure 19 that, from the top floor (Rudolph's bedroom), one is able to look out onto the living room two levels below. In Figure 20, the red space represents that which is in most control and on top. This space has visual control over all the outlined spaces below, emphasizing the clear dichotomy between the two. Paul Rudolph's manipulation of this once stiff apartment gave life to the desired bachelor's lifestyle. He created his own utopia, reclaiming and dominating every sphere which elevated his presence within the home. This sets the fire underneath a new and upcoming revolution of minority identities learning ways to reclaim ownership within a space or environment.

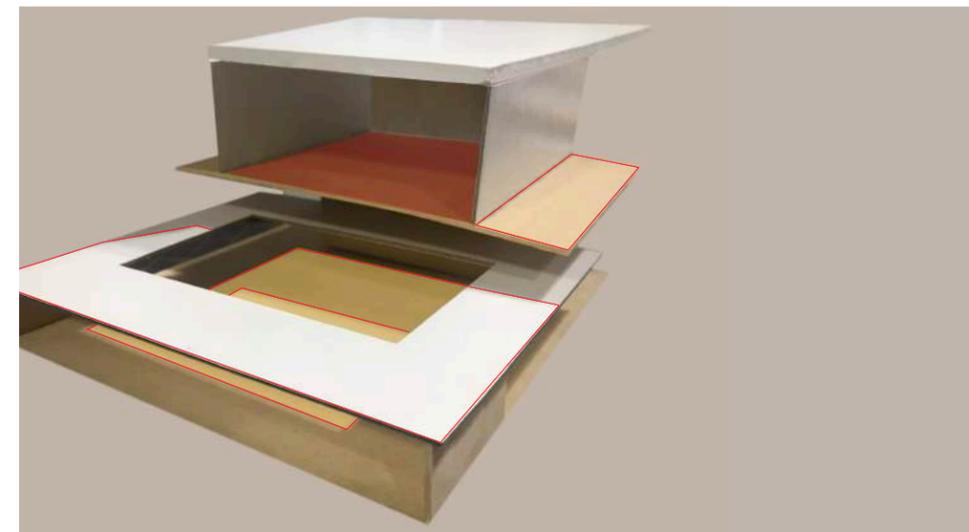


Figure 20 - Abstract model of level variation and visual dominance in the context of Paul Rudolph's Manhattan apartment. Created by: Seantel Trombly, 2017.

¹ Matt A.V. Chaban, "In Era of Iconoclasts, Imagination Took Wing on Beekman Place," *The New York Times*, (New York: 2014).

WHO MADE THE ROLES?

The Kitchenless Home is a concept for the 21st century pitched by Anna Puigjaner, as a way of disrupting our original expectations of how we view the design of residential living. In the movement of downsizing, one must start to rethink the necessity of space; not to say eating is unnecessary, but to instead understand the reason for separated space for cooking.

Kitchens were instilled with certain ideological values during the twentieth century linked to the role of women, politics, and the construct of the ideal family. The part that interests me the most involves a large change in mentality. It's about looking at a house not for its square footage but for its uses. In short, this idea of eliminating the kitchen was quite good because it simplified everything while being very provocative. Homes that do not have a room designated as the kitchen have a kitchenette. Here's the catch, my kitchen is only 1.20 meters (4 ft.) long.¹

Historically, kitchens were often communal, but as society evolved, the models of a home and occupancy became politicized. The desire of a successful home became concretely defined, and the need for a separate space for cooking was born. Mainly backed by the need for hygiene, a separate space for the handling of food was necessary, but the intent to keep servants/domestic work separate from the public spheres of the home was another big concern for this generation.² The dining room and den are often associated with the public, therefore the kitchen must be separate and preferably unseen. *The Kitchenless Home* disrupts this hierarchy of actions by combining many functions into one room. A design approach was created to push both user and domicile to the edge of normality and empowering the user to work with the architecture to foster unique needs.

What we consider comfortable today is different from what was comfortable at other points in time. It was neither better nor worse, just different.

The architect Alejandro Aravena influenced a new approach to building culture in 2003 that not only allows the user's influence in occupation, but also requires it. A Chilean low-income housing project by Alejandro Aravena was the solution for a need to build 100 homes with a minimal budget after an earthquake in 2010 with a magnitude of 8.8 that hit Constitución, the second biggest that the world had seen in half a century.³ With a seemingly impossible task of having to rebuild an entirely destroyed town, his firm, Elemental, continued to work with their idea of building half a house, forcing the other half to be completed by the new owner of the home. The firm worked on a project similar to this in 2002, building 100 units of low-income housing in the city of Iquique, Chile. Their budget was \$7,500 per unit, and the community was adamant about not wanting large high-rise style public-housing. The half a house idea allowed the simple areas of the home to be designed by the individual members of the community, resulting in each home on the block

¹ Cati Bestard, "The 'Kitchenless' House: A Concept for the 21st Century," *Arch Daily*, August, 17, 2016, <https://www.archdaily.com/793370/the-kitchenless-house-a-concept-for-the-21st-century>.

² Bestard, "The 'Kitchenless' House: A Concept for the 21st Century."

³ Sam Greenspan, "Half a House," *99% Invisible: Episode 231*. <https://99percentinvisible.org/episode/half-a-house/>

to look completely different. Aravena won a Pritzker Prize in 2016 for giving life and opportunity to many areas and to the people in Chile. This design model is a clear example as to how space can provide a neighborhood with a platform to promote involvement and identity. In *Housing as a verb*, John F.C. Turner states that housing should be more than just a form handed over to the people, it should be an ongoing project with residents as co-creators.

As housing action depends on the actors' will... the people themselves must be free to make the decisions which most concern them.⁴



Figure 21 - Examples of completed homes in Iquique, Chile by Elemental

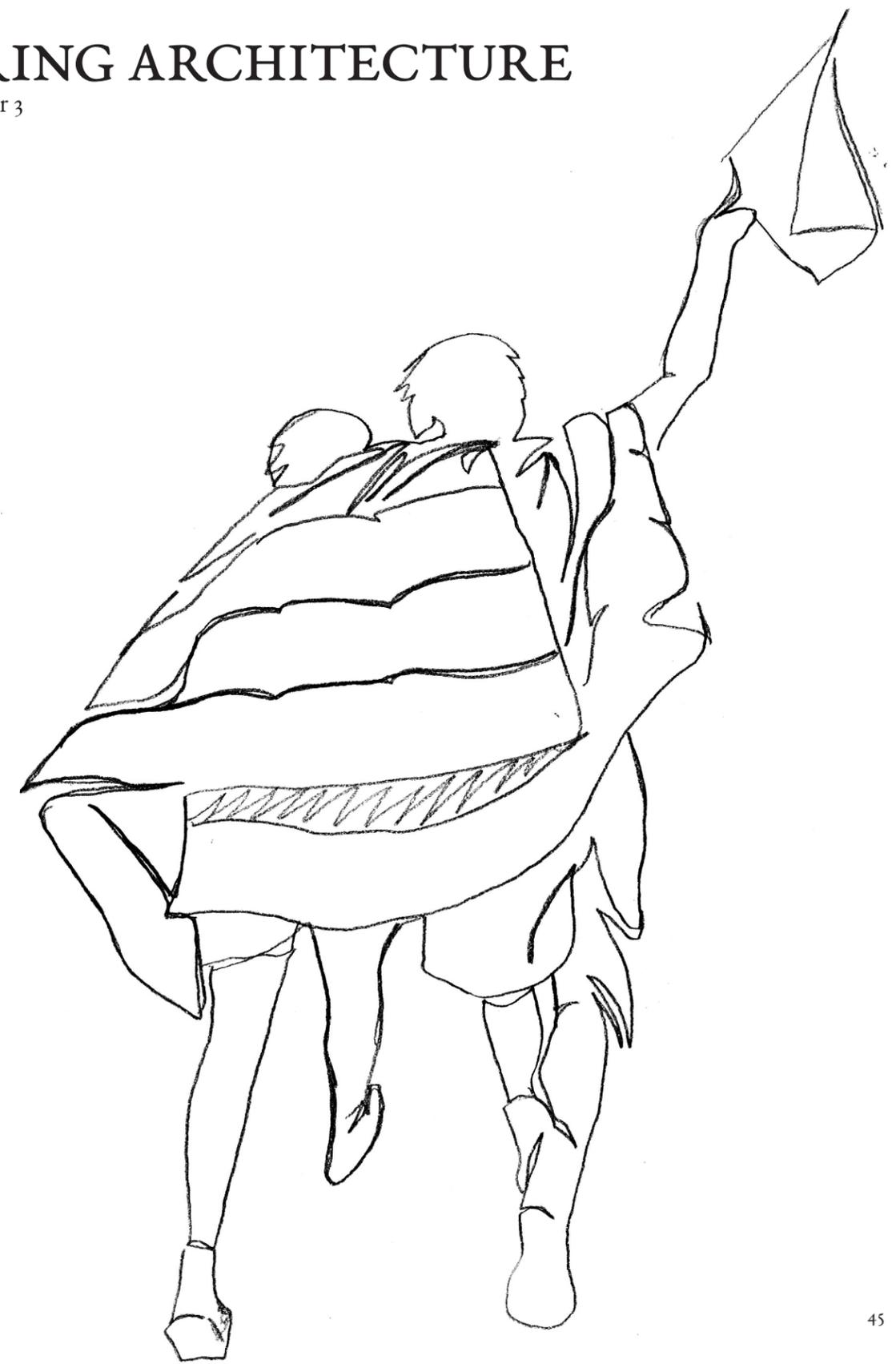


Figure 22 - Quinta Monroy project in Iquique, Chile by Elemental

⁴ John F.C. Turner, "Freedom to Build, dweller control of the housing process," *Housing as a Verb*, (New York: John Turner Archive) 174.

QUEERING ARCHITECTURE

Chapter 3



QUEERING ARCHITECTURE

On the basis of Hundertwasser's *Five Skins* concept, one can see the projection of human identity onto the environment that surrounds us. The home is a representation of the individual who owns it, or arguably what is expected or desired of the individual who owns it, whereas the public environment is one reflecting our societal expectations of our culture as a whole. We see particular people using particular products in particular ways all around us, and our system targets certain audiences around the prediction and of who will be where and doing what. This process fosters a segregation amongst people in any society, and is most commonly noticed in the ways that different communities form in cities. In the case of any minority group, there are different ways we recognize rejection from products and spaces based upon the lifestyle advertised to go with it. This means that the greater audience you want to reach, the broader the spectrum of identity you must advertise using it. Without the embracing of this spectrum, the noted rejection of anyone not relating to the advertisement is carried on a subconscious level throughout their future analysis of space and product to determine if it is fit for them. The 'lower' one falls on the social hierarchical scale, the more one experiences this phenomenon regularly. Again, a lot of modern architecture is constructed from the influence of famous architects like Le Corbusier who had very blunt intent with his designs, often not fostering diversity, inclusion, or empowerment. Although designers like him were important to architecture as a whole, it is also necessary to recognize that when we implement their methods of design into our current projects, we may also be blindly continuing to carry their ways of fostering social segregation. Recognizing their intent allows us to be more mindful as we alter the future of architecture with a more open mindset.

When you've been in the majority for a long time (privileged), equality can feel like oppression.¹

Queer space is defined by Christopher Reed as being *imminent*: rooted in the Latin *imminere*: to loom over or threaten, it is ready to take place.² Those who do not fit the identity advertised with architecture are making a constant effort to find comfort within that space. This may be easier within the home, given the owner's ability to alter it. However, the public sphere is much harder to alter when it reflects a governed and segregated use. For the LGBTQ+ community, queer spaces come (typically) in two forms, sexualized and political.³

¹ Faith, "Fred Phelps and conservative Christians: Not so different," *Are Women Human?*, 2010. <http://arewomenhuman.me/2010/12/24/fred-phelps-and-conservative-christians-not-so-different/>

² Christopher Reed, "Imminent Domain: Queer Space in the Built Environment," *Art Journal*, Vol. 55, No. 4, *We're Here: Gay and Lesbian Presence in Art and Art History*, (New York: College Art Association, 1996) 64.

³ Matthew Cottrill, "Queering Architecture: Possibilities of Space(s)," *Getting Real: Designing Ethos Now*, (Washington, DC: Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, 2006), 361.

"Sexualized space" rebels against the heteronormative symbols of domestic lifestyle, whereas "political space" embraces it as a form of proof that one can *play the norm*. Many queer people live among their heterosexual neighbors, adapting to a lifestyle not designed for them, and adhering by their way of life as a means of "normalizing" the abstract/queer/different lifestyle they live. In any other regard, the queer lifestyle is eroticized, emphasizing the main aspects of the identity that defines them as 'different.' This phenomenon is also seen in the ways people manipulate their bodies and fashion to "look gay," symbolizing one's pride in breaking binary expectations on gender and sex. On the other hand, one can also "look straight" to avoid the confrontation and questions that can come along with standing out. The exploitation of 'feminine men' and 'masculine women' is appropriated by their own culture to make known their invisible identity in public. Many queer people find difficulty in having to pick daily between the roles of abiding or resisting, reflecting also their potential of safety throughout the day.

"By its very nature, queer space is something that is not built, only implied, and usually invisible. Queer space does not confidently establish a clear, ordered space for itself...It is altogether more ambivalent, open, self-critical or ironic, and ephemeral. Queer space often doesn't look like an order you can recognize, and when it does, it seems like an ironic or rhetorical twist on such an order."⁴



Figure 23 - West Street, New York, 1977. Gay men occupying the edges of downtown area. (National Archive of Lesbian and Gay History, in Aaron Betsky. *Queer Space*. and Joel Sanders. *Stud: Architectures of Masculinity. Introduction, The Evolution of Gay Bard and Clubs in Montreal.*)

⁴ Cottrill, "Queering Architecture: Possibilities of Space(s)," 362.

It is essential to study the way the LGBTQ+ communities occupy space for their unique interconnection of intimacy in the public realm. Studies of queer space provide us with methods of how this community has manipulated space to provide a platform for the individual to feel free enough to explore their body, mind, and others.⁵

The oxymoron of queer space being hidden is part of its beauty, and to make queer space concrete would go against the very nature of its purpose. How, then, does one design queer space? One clear quality of cultural methods vs. the rest of society is that it is embracing and representing the most intimate parts of the human experience- sex. What is normally kept within the confining walls of the home is embraced in these public spaces of queer communities. Christopher Reed sees this work running parallel to post-modernism, as they both blur the boundaries between dominant categories vs. individual narratives.⁶ Although this provocative rebellion against social standards is seen in the LGBTQ+ community, it is also a movement that many political revolutions are a part of.

The image of contemporary queer domesticity holds similar qualities to the architecture of feminist utopias described by Phyllis Birkby as “*inclusive sheltering gestures and gentle containments that provide a sense of inward psychological and physical security.*”⁷ She documented sketched homes designed by women intended to be their ‘retirement and revival circles,’ as well as their ‘zones for private strokes and escapes.’ She concludes that sexuality and identity politics are one in the same, and the way individuals represent themselves through art is the same way they manipulate space to represent themselves and foster their unique psychological security. Minority space has a similar hold on the built environment by representing their identity through its relation to the past. Marginalized persons are in a constant fight against structured rule, and, with architecture being a political and social symbol, it is inherently involved in this battle.

The matrices of government are both the consequence of architectural practices and the domain within which architecture and its creations act. It is both *in* and *out*.⁸ Although, like any art, architecture is varying in its interpretation by individuals, it is also its relation to societal power that renders it political. To ignore architecture’s ability to foster a systematic government and its anticipated dominance with users in space is to inevitably repeat the political gestures of the past. In order for architecture to empower a changing society, it must anticipate the use of its projected practice.

⁵ Cottrill, “Queering Architecture: Possibilities of Space(s),” 364.

⁶ Cottrill, “Queering Architecture: Possibilities of Space(s),” 363.

⁷ Reed, “Imminent Domain: Queer Space in the Built Environment,” 69.

⁸ Julius Gavroche, “Struggles for Space: Queering Straight Space: Thinking towards a queer architecture,” *Autonomies*, October 3, 2016, <http://autonomies.org/pt/2016/10/struggles-for-space-queering-straight-space-thinking-towards-a-queer-architecture-4/>.

As we project forward the methods of building a future with ambiguous architecture, we think of design to be something that works with society, not against it. An ambiguous space is one that is fluid, not limiting the potential of current or future use. It is free of boundaries or expectation, it is incomplete and destined to be ever-changing. To make ambiguous space present within the territory of cities, suburbs, and rural areas, it needs to pull the culture of marginalized people out of the shadows and into the desired utopia. Queer culture lives in the confines of the every day lifestyle, proclaiming a space against the matrices fighting against its people.⁹ These spaces vary in transparency, which alludes to their function as private, public, or intermediate/everyday experience. The queer community, being one whose very existence is to blur these lines of visibility, provides us with methods of how it is done. When architecture fosters the user’s ability to occupy it visibly, it becomes the new symbol of empowerment for marginalized communities, and with a progressive society trying to promote the visibility and voices of marginalized persons, the architecture must reflect their existence in its projection of future utopias to further empower and represent that equality.

⁹ Matthew Cottrill, “Queering Architecture: Possibilities of Space(s),” *Getting Real: Designing Ethos Now*, (Washington, DC: Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, 2006), 364..



Figure 24 - 2015 movie poster for a film on a queer teenager struggling to find his identity and escape the confines of his turbulent childhood. The poster does not just reflect different characters, but also different lifestyles and directions of the main characters fluid identity.

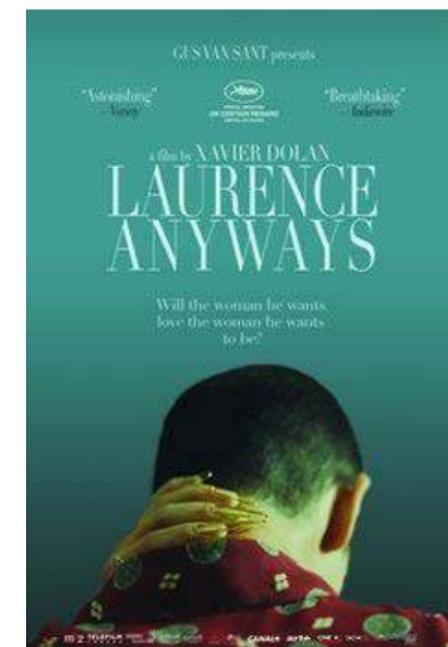


Figure 25 - 2012 movie poster for *Laurence Anyways* tells the story of a transgender woman coming to terms with her identity while being in a heterosexual relationship. The symbolism of the paper clips on the fingernails is reflective of a hidden/temporary identity.

QUEER TEMPORALITY

*“Queer space is characterized by a kind of social practice that is accepting the existence of categories, power and valuation, but also attempting to conceptualize them not in a fixed, but rather in a continually changing manner. The point is not being different (static and dualistic), but the aim of becoming different (process).”*¹

Queer identity is the representative of changing quality, therefore queer space inhabits the same quality of inter-changeability; the possibility to move, make several interpretations of, slide over, or reposition limits. The hope of the space is to foster queer performative acts, and not static preconditions. It is in these spaces that architecture has the ability to open up to the many possible interpretations of oneself and others, letting go slightly of the grip societal expectations have on us. These spaces are key to both fostering a shift in how architecture can be understood, and contributing to a transformation in future building, presenting, in a broader sense, enactments of architecture.² Queer space theory is far from being limited to gay and lesbian oriented architecture, but instead suggests that lessons learned from critically queer occupation of space by LGBTQ+ people could be useful in rethinking how our environments are designed, used, and analyzed.³

“Coming out” (often referring to *the closet* metaphor) is a representation of a conceal and reveal. Henry Urbach uses “ante-closet” as a metaphor, describing the space before the closet as the space of changing. For him:

*the ante-closet is an effect of re-appropriations and re-significations without end. It resists the violence of fixed identities by allowing spaces to fold, unfold, and fold again.... the ante-closet dismantles their tired architecture to sustain the possibility of other arrangements.*⁴

Regardless of the public/private/intermediate scenes of the queer community, the occupation of queer space is one of temporality. Bars ‘turning gay’ for one night a week, the inside realm being one that is camouflaged from the exterior, people having a queer internal identity that differs from the external performance associated with appearance, etc. are all examples of this temporal/ambiguous space.

¹ “A Kind of Queer Geography/Räume Durchqueeren: The Doreen Massey Reading Weekends,” *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 13, no. 2 (2006): 177.

² Bonnevier, Behind Straight Curtains : Towards a Queer Feminist Theory of Architecture, 22.

³ Olivier Vallerand, “Mapping Queer and Architectural Theories,” *Homonormative Architecture & Queer Space: The Evolution of Gay Bars and Clubs in Montréal*, (Montreal: McGill University, 2010) 12.

⁴ Vallerand, “Mapping Queer and Architectural Theories,” 17.

Queer bars take on many of the feminine qualities emphasized by Edith Wharton as being the intimate, and therefore vulnerable, spaces of the home and bringing them into the public sphere. The LGBTQ+ community is on a constant search for spaces where the predictions of that intimacy that follows a couple home will not be the cause of violent threat in public. Bars and nightlife often become the staple marks of queer culture because they are the moments where one is safe to make their most intimate desires public, in hopes that they are reciprocated.

Looking at the qualities of queer bars and meeting places, it becomes obvious these elements of privacy and intimacy forming are reflecting the safety often found within the home. Often times, queer spaces are pulled away from the ground plane and exist mainly in upper stories or basements. There is also a common method of manipulating the front facade by using dirty windows or tall plants to mask the view of the interior space. To straight culture, the difference between queer bars and straight bars doesn't seem like much, but in the first formation of these spaces a main quality that is necessary is the "runaway space."

The provision of mirrors and "runaway space" facilitated the display of bodies, bringing the rituals of public cruising inside a defined space, while "defense mechanisms" such as steps, corridors, nooks, dark interiors or partitions protected patrons' privacy from straight "intrusions."

After continuous riots against the LGBTQ+ communities, queer spaces had to adapt internally to allow for escape routes and places to hide in the case of an attack. Rooms became darker and smaller, borders became ambiguous, and the use of curtains, fabric, and lighting to alter our perceptions of walls and borders foster this unique quality of space.² You can see in the arrangement of space in Figure 29 that there are many implied and physical borders to imply not only privacy, but intimacy as the space proceeds to get more dark. Navigating the space requires different forms of allowance, from a physical ID check to mere blending of culture and body language in relation to comfort. The layered spaces progress from the well-lit public, through the lounging/dining intermediate, and end in the hidden privacy of the dance floor. It is the arrangement of furniture and barriers around the intimate spaces, which are also the spaces closest to the back exit of the building, that prevents direct attack or vision, keeping the happenings of the dance floor private and separate from that of the public sphere.

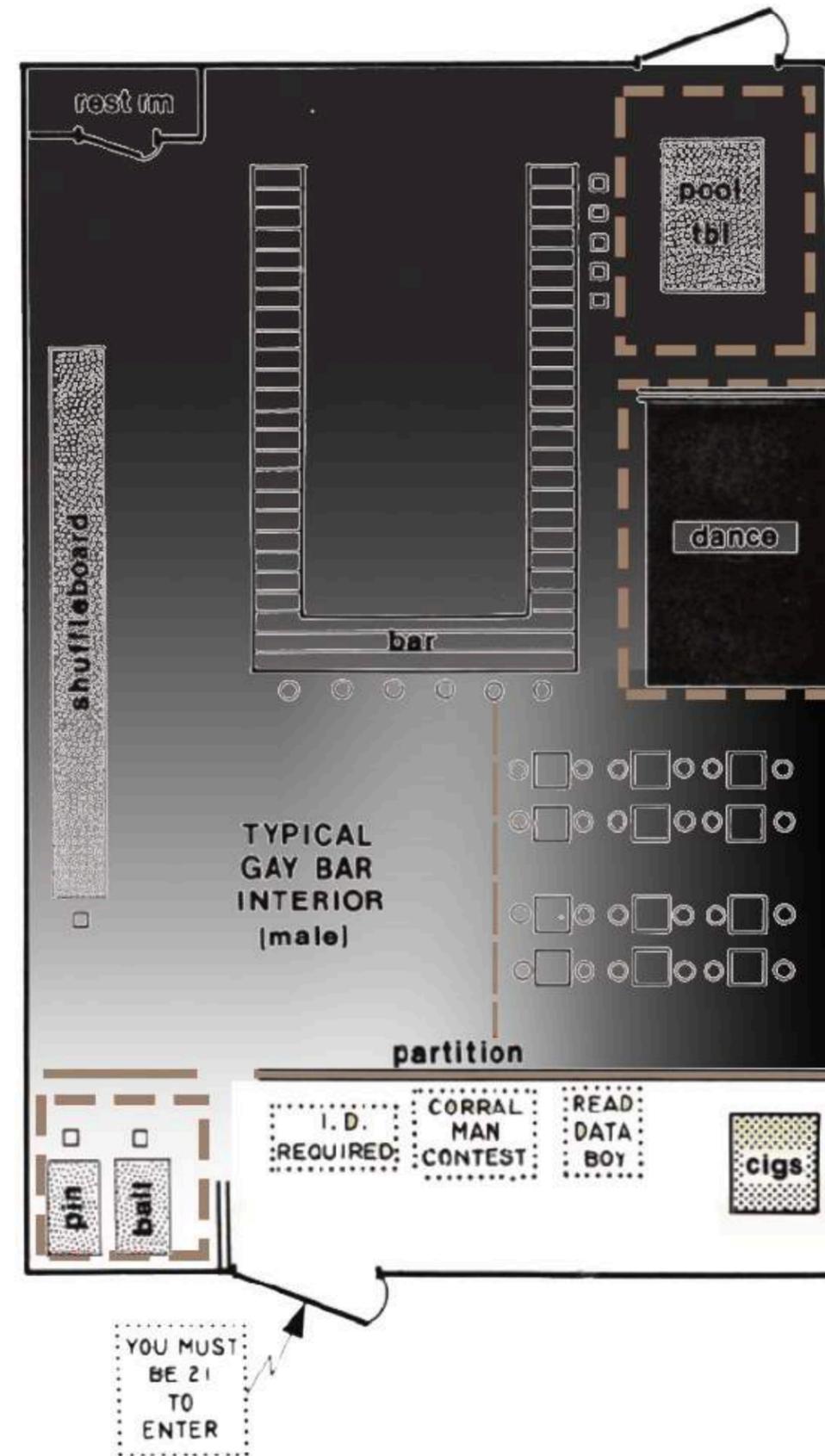


Figure 26 - A plan from a typical early gay bar. Plan drawn by Barbara Weightmen from "Gay Bars as Private Places," Accessed from Olivier Vallerand's *Evolution of Gay Bars and Clubs in Montreal*. Adapted with color by Seantel Trombly

¹ Weightman, "Gay Bars as Private Places," 14-15.

² Olivier Vallerand, "Mapping Queer and Architectural Theories," *Homonormative Architecture & Queer Space: The Evolution of Gay Bars and Clubs in Montréal*, (Montreal: McGill University, 2010) 23-24.

Although queer space is representative of a progressive inclusive culture, the segregation and dominance around gender and race is still prevalent in ways unique to straight culture. “Queer” mixed spaces are often transformations of what were originally cisgendered, gay, male-oriented spaces, thus inherently “masculine” in their design. “Lesbian” bars (which are much less frequent) are often spaces catering to entertain, hear, and nourish.³ With this reality in mind, one can feel the focus of the space based upon the quality of it. Many queer spaces are still primarily serving the needs of cisgendered gay men due to the fact that they generally hold the most economic power. Queer spaces, as described by Olivier Vallerand, can easily become ones of exploitation, harassment, and even homophobia.⁴

In gay villages, the acceptance of spaces and allowance for privacy and intimacy is something that many humans, regardless of sexuality, find comfort in. This, in effect, causes the “colonization” of queer spaces by straight users to be quite frequent. Many are drawn to the “safe” qualities of space. However, the integration of straight communities into the queer community is inherently making them unsafe. This appropriation of space is detrimental to the original intent behind it, often circling back to queer temporal space being the most successful for its use.

Normand Chamberland designed the Complexe Bourbon’s flagship restaurant Le Club Sandwich (Figure 32) with the intent to create a complex without walls that would blur the separation of interior and exterior spaces. His desire was to redesign a queer-dominated space to attract both heterosexuals and homosexuals. By breaking down the defining walls through the use of color and balconies, he started to merge the gay space out of the shadows and into the public.⁵ Michael Bronski describes the expulsion of the private sexual fantasy into the public view as a powerful political statement, juxtaposing the hidden world of gay bars and saunas with the public world of restaurants and terraces, turning the Bourbon into a political tool.⁶

By constantly responding to the desires of his clientele and putting their fantasies into the public view, Chamberland shaped a queer political statement.⁷

³ Podmore, “Gone ‘Underground’? Lesbian Visibility and the Consolidation of Queer Space in Montréal,” 609.

⁴ Vallerand, “Mapping Queer and Architectural Theories,” 31.

⁵ Vallerand, “Mapping Queer and Architectural Theories,” 39.

⁶ Michael Bronski, “A Dream Is a Wish Your Heart Makes: Notes on the Materialization of Sexual Fantasy,” in *Leatherfolk: Radical Sex, People, Politics, and Practice*, ed. Mark Thompson (Boston: Alyson, 1991), 64. cited in Binnie, “The Erotic Possibilities of the City,” 109.

⁷ Vallerand, “Mapping Queer and Architectural Theories,” 41.

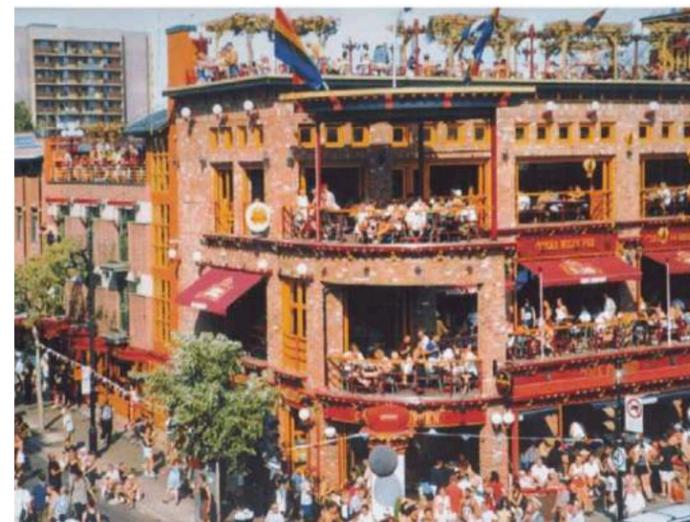
Figure 27 - Bushes screening a late 1970s gay bar. Photograph taken by Barbara Weightman from “Gay Bars as Private Places.”



Figure 28 - Shot of the interior of Henrietta Hudson, a Lesbian bar in New York, also representing the method of manipulation of interior space through the use of mirrors, photos and many items hanging from the ceiling.



Figure 29 - Celebrating Gay Pride at The Complexe Bourbon’s flagship restaurant Le Club Sandwich, designed by Normand Chamberland.



A CAVE FOR MOLES

Harwell Hamilton Harris designed the Havens House in 1941 as a “brilliant example of queer space,” described by Annamarie Adams. Queer theory encompasses whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, and the dominant. There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers, making it an identity without an essence. Based on this mentality, queer theory suggests that architecture that is itself odd or different might also qualify as queer space.⁸ The Havens House is designed in a way that reflects many of the qualities of space already discussed. In the main section of the house seen in figure 33, you can see the “closeted” aspects of the interior spaces in relation to their original expectation from the exterior view. This provides the owner with the feeling of being in an individual utopia behind the front door of the home. The design is intended to build tension as one moves towards the entrance from the exterior and then releasing it suddenly upon entry.

Barbara Winslow describes the lower level of the home as the “secret heart of the home.”⁹ Your identity in relation to ownership of the home is what allows you to feel comfortable moving into the lower depths or “shadows” of the home. However, in this instance, the shadowed/hidden space is one of beauty. With great views outward towards the water, the most private sphere of the home is one of refuge.

The Havens House offers several metaphors to describe queer space. Harris called the house “A cave for moles,” comparing the structure to the solitary, nearly invisible burrows where moles live.¹⁰ This relates directly to the common metaphor of “the closet,” representing the secrets of homosexuality. The closet/cave metaphor representing the secret/shadow quality is embodied through the way architecture fosters comfort in isolation. It is the space rid of danger.

The more our environment promotes people to “claim” space, the more we begin to identify with it. The architect Friedensreich Hundertwasser believes architecture is in the midst of a turning point revolting against its recent history of something that no longer relates to people. His belief in the three skins of identity gives architecture the platform to bridge the gap of detachment that humans often experience with space. His *Hundertwasser House* in Vienna was an apartment built to give its occupants the opportunity to lean out of their window and decorate the outer walls as they see fit. This encouragement of unique participation with design gave not only the dweller a stronger connection to their space but also any human a visual understanding of their relationship to the building through scale.¹¹ This project received a lot of criticism from other architects, but with 53 apartments, 4 offices, 16 private terraces, 3 communal terraces, and a shocking 250 trees and bushes growing through the apartments and out of the windows, the house has become one of Vienna’s most visited buildings and a huge part of Austria’s cultural heritage.

⁸ Annmarie Adams, “Sex and the Single Building: The Weston Havens House,” *Buildings & Landscapes: Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Forum*, Volume 17, Number 1 (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2010) 82.

⁹ Adams, “Sex and the Single Building: The Weston Havens House,” 87.

¹⁰ Harwell Hamilton Harris, “Harwell Hamil-ton Harris: A Collection of His Writings and Buildings” (Raleigh: Student Publication of the School of Design, University of North Carolina, 1965), 48-49.

¹¹ Friedensreich Hundertwasser, *Hundertwasser-Haus*, Vienna: Orac Verlag, 1988.

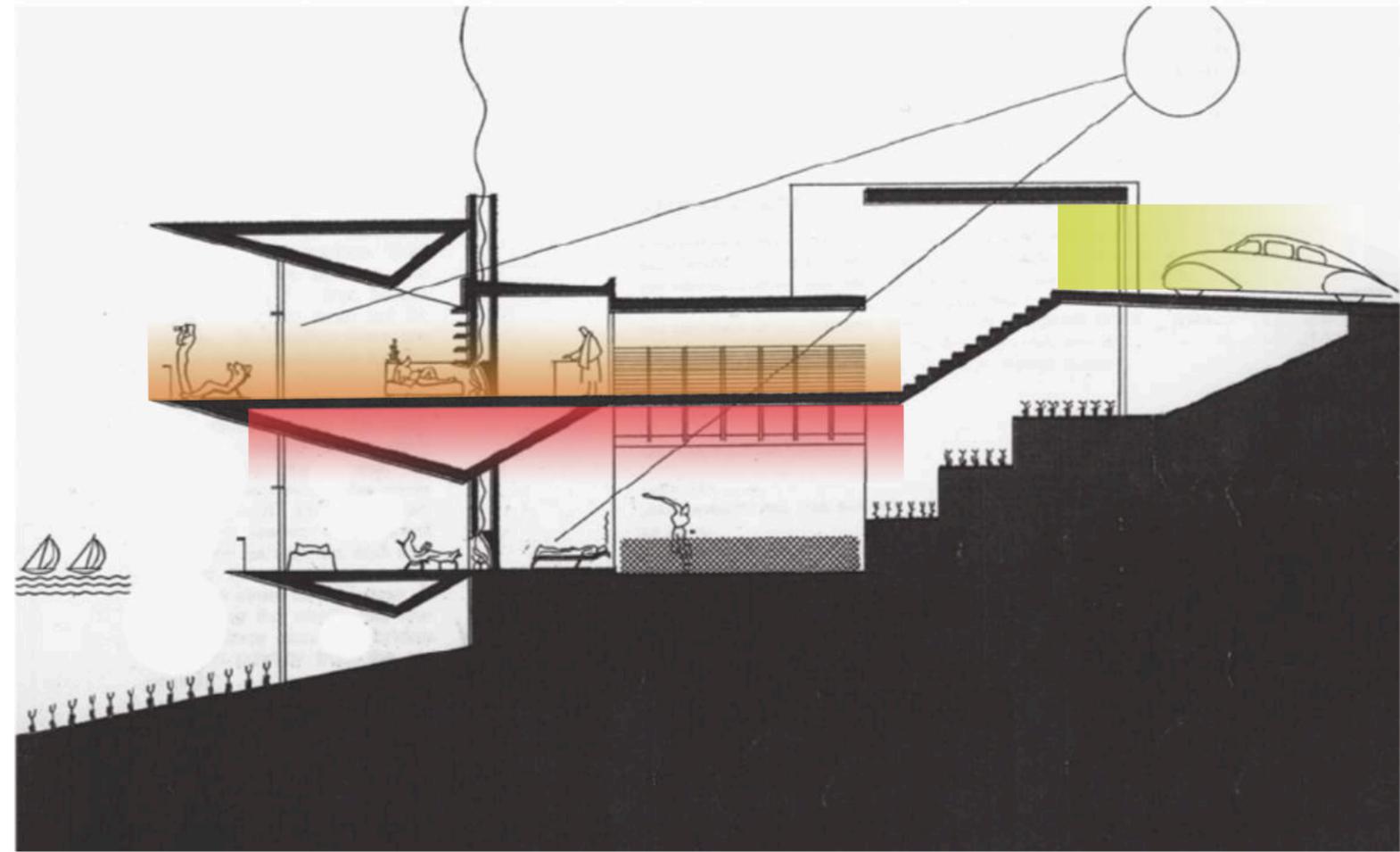


Figure 30 - Section of the Weston Havens house featured on the cover of *California Arts & Architecture* in March 1940. Image edited by Seantel Trombly to show the different spheres of the home, from public (yellow), to intermediate (orange) to private (red).

Figure 31 - *Hundertwasser House* in Vienna, designed by Friedensreich Hundertwasser in 1988.

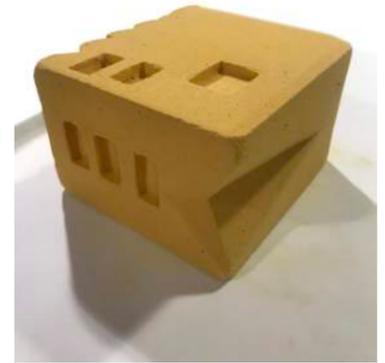
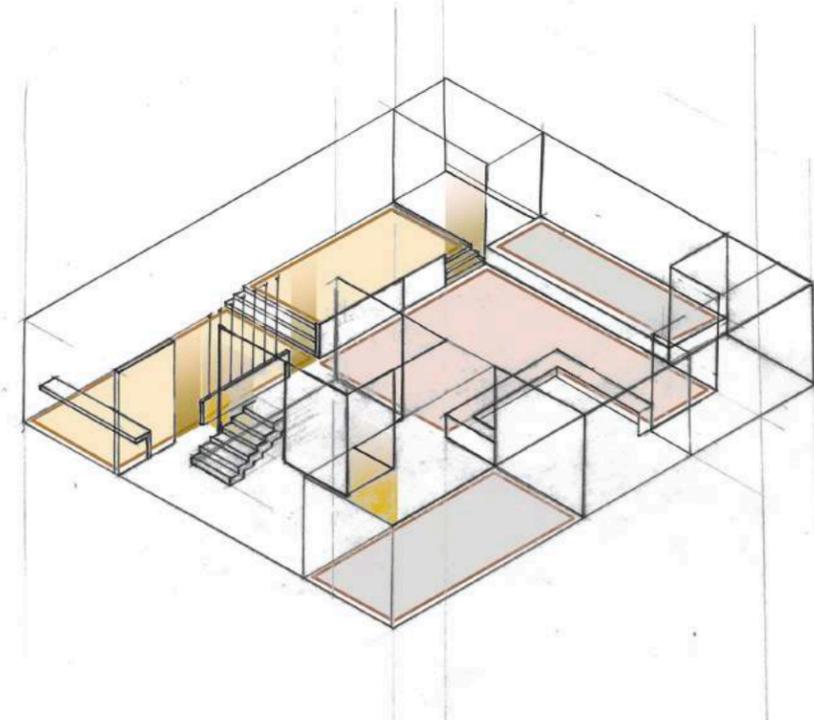
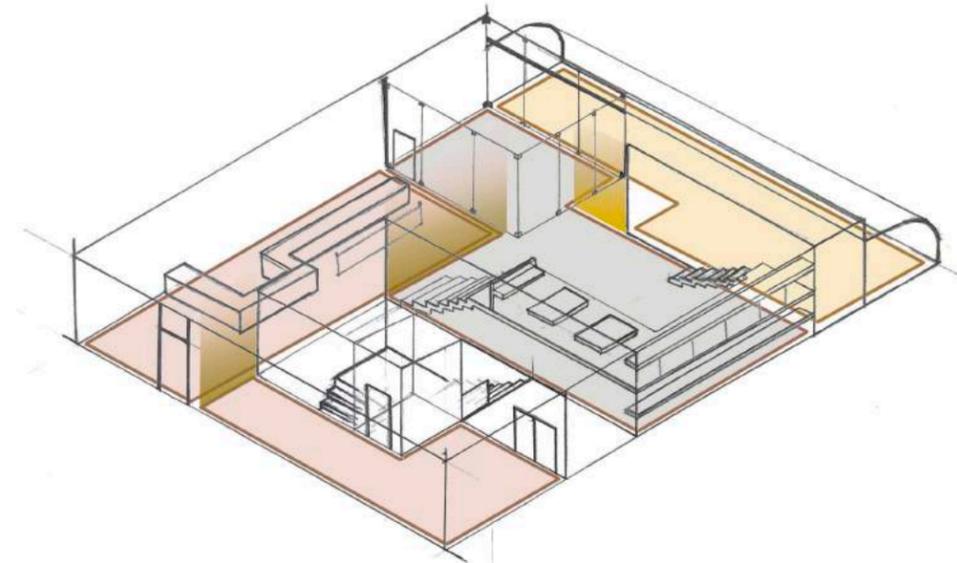


THE COFFEE SHOP

In the world of performed normativity and the strive for queer community to exist as themselves, but in the typical realm of society, small strides towards public spaces that foster unique vulnerability is necessary. In a proposal for a coffee shop *Hygge & Lykke* meaning comfort and happiness in Swedish, the architectural progression through the space supports the individual moments in particular to the kinds of interactions each space would foster.

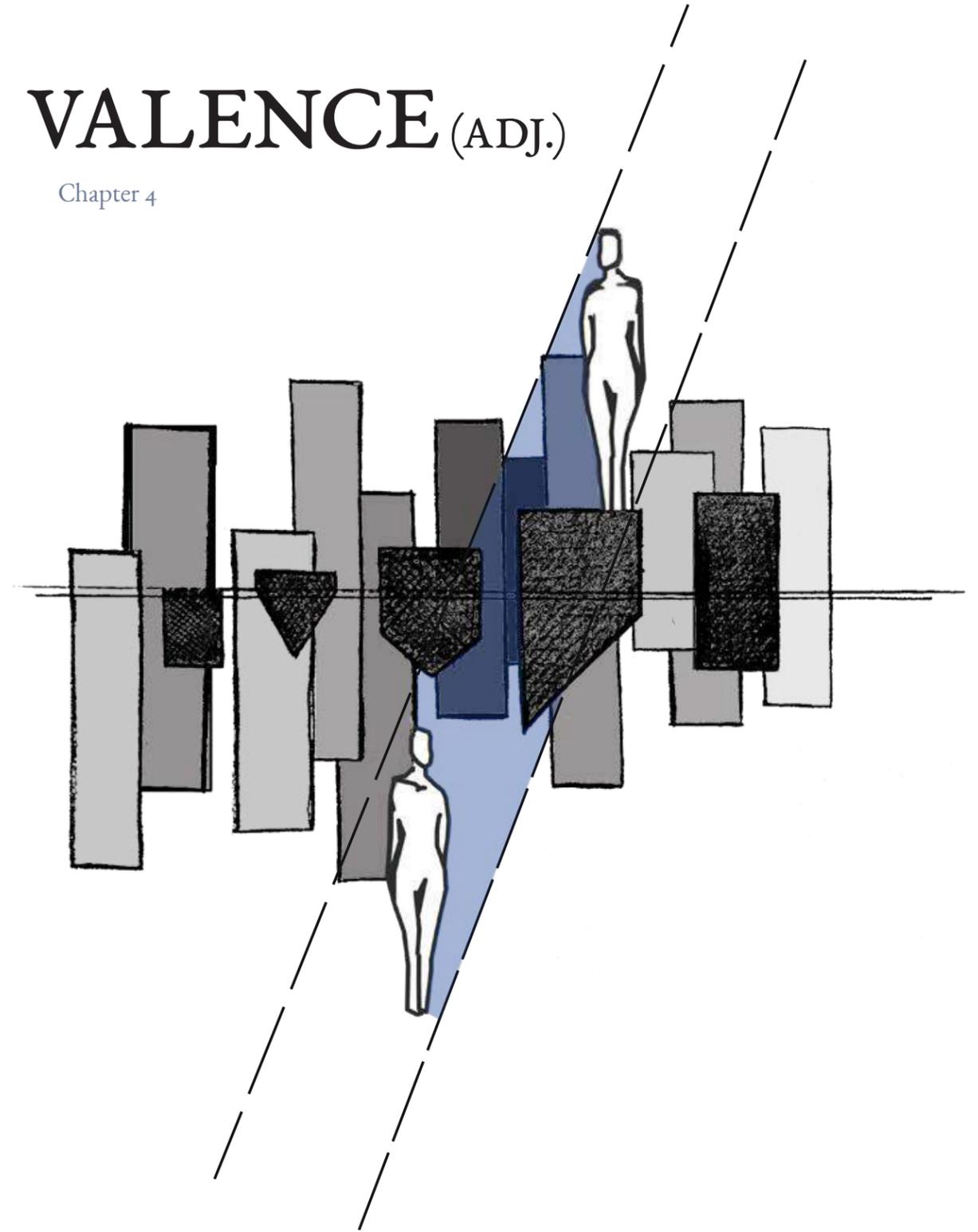
The front wall of this “queer friendly” public venue would match the exterior walls of the surrounding buildings allowing it to blend with its surroundings, but the immediate look behind this glass facade would be nothing unusual to what the passerby on the street would see. The individual “vulnerable” moments for minority persons, in this case queers, would be focused in the back of the coffee shop, hidden from the wandering eyes of lookers on the street. This way anyone coming in contact with “witnessing” relationships, conversations, or any form of organic existence would be more likely to act in a way deemed appropriate by the establishment, if it is a queer-friendly establishment than most guests will refrain from speaking out against the queer users.

The makeup of the shop is also focused around separating purposes. The middle section is one of congregation and integrated energy with the intent to promote work, meetings, focus groups etc. It is the final area, closest to an exterior garden that would be more intended to foster dates, intimate conversations, alone time, etc. In accordance to the studies of Edith Wharton and layered spaces, the progression through the environment leading to the final space gives one a recognition of it being the most intimate, similarly to the way the bedroom of a home is in the furthest point of ones progression through a house. The common middle space is designed with hard lines and platforms to allow for a visually open space, keeping the minds within it sharp, paying attention, and ideally focused on whatever tasks they came to do. A carved study model seen below was developed to mock the feeling of progressing through the shop by the way the form of the block changes as you run your finger across it. The rough, structured spots represent the formal interactive moments in the shop leading to the smooth intimate spaces in the back.



VALENCE (ADJ.)

Chapter 4



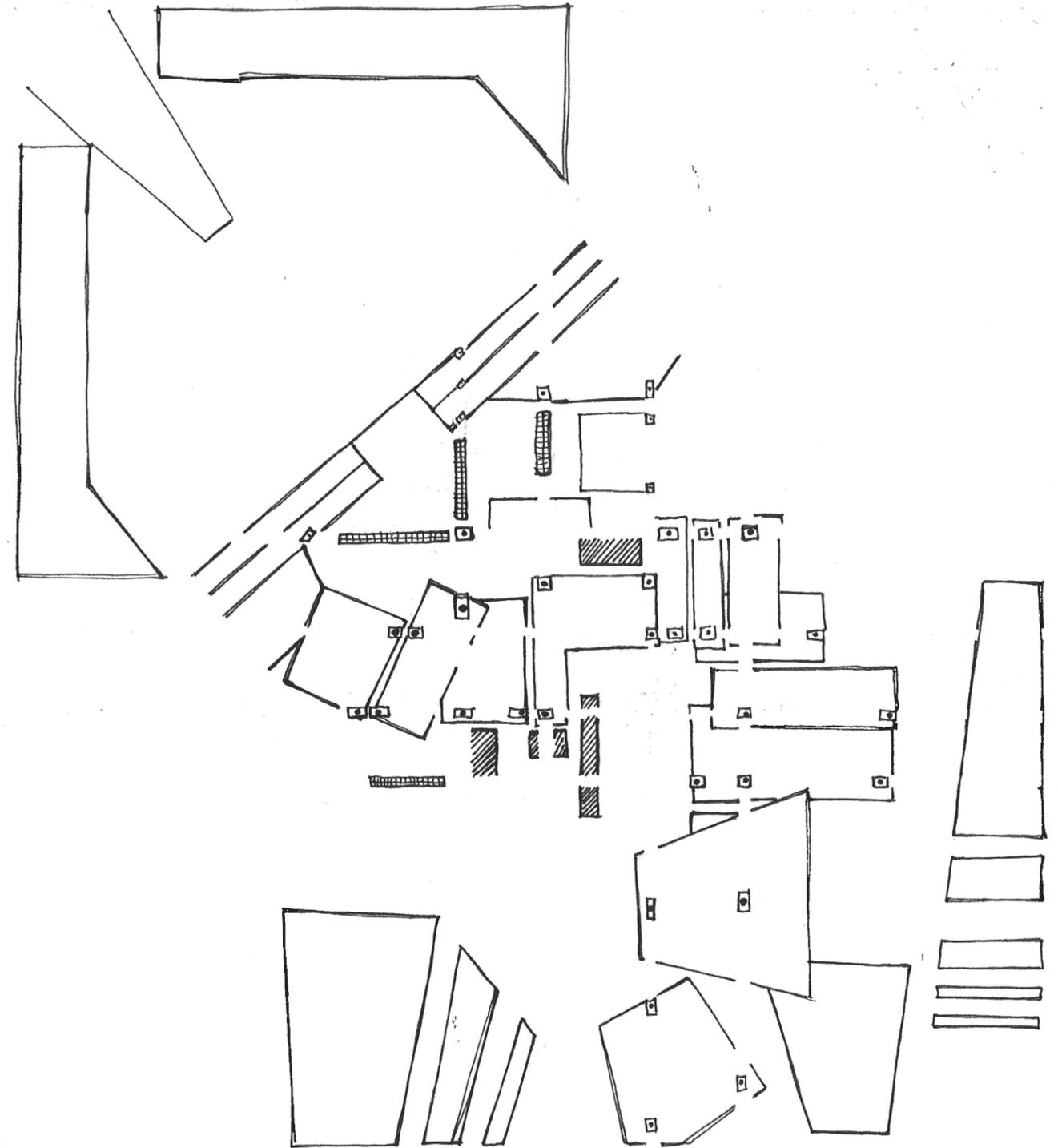
VALENCE DESIGN PROPOSAL

Valence is a term commonly used in science terminology in relation to “valence electrons.” In this case, we are using more of a broad definition to refer to something having the capacity to unite, react, or interact in some way, particularly with another thing. The goal of the Valence Pavilion is an architectural attempt to bring form to a void, detaching the users from the a-typical space we have a comfort of navigating. This space is one that brings together two strangers from different levels and areas of a public sphere of the museum, and for the sake of this proposal, the Rijks Museum located in Amsterdam is being used. The site in this project, however, is one that is meant to be fluid, with the “museum” quality being the “first phase of agreement” that a user will experience. The rest will be discussed further along. This manipulation of a layer of public space relates to the way our individual identities can resonate with our surroundings.

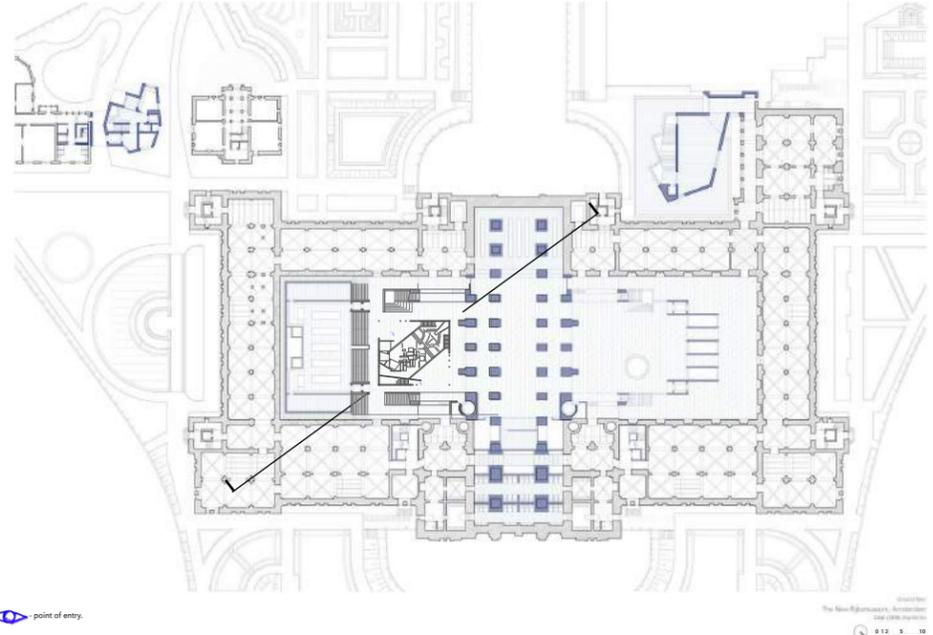
How can architecture, being both a political and artistic symbol disrupt this common understanding of space and how to interact within it? Can an installation call into question our understanding of the subconscious dialogue we exchange between our bodies and the architecture around us?

When entering a museum, one submits to the concept of suspending their disbelief in relation to the art they are soon to experience. We acknowledge the potential of not understanding something as much as we do the potential of gaining a new perspective. When entering behind the curtains of a video presentation or the threshold of a physical installation, we add another layer of this suspension of comfort, thus giving into the idea of being vulnerable in a new unexpected experience. Different forms of installations and art are used to challenge our perceptions and understanding of the typical, offering a new perspective you may take with you as you exit the museum.

VALENCE aims to guide two strangers through an environment that relies on each user’s unique instinct to lead them through the exhibit by agreeing to trust the unknown. With this mutual vulnerability, each person is forced to develop their own means of egress, putting them in power of their space to inevitably lead them to a point of witnessing another vulnerable and willing stranger. The goal is to empower those occupying to make an organic movement through space where one user aims to be put face-to-face with the other by choice rather than by force. This creates a moment of raw human connection stripped from the predetermined assumptions of character through stereotypes or standards.



FLOOR PLAN RIJKS MUSEUM PLAN



THE NARRATIVE

I'm nothing like you... I'm something like you.... I'm nothing but you....

There is a balance of understanding oneself in relation to the “greater meaning of things.” It is easy to get caught up in wondering what the “point” of everything is and why we are here. We find a lot of the answers that settle this anxiety through finding out how it is we are actually *different*. We compare ourselves to other to prove that we exist and in the depth of that meaning we find exactly how it is we are all the same.

“All things come into being through opposition and all are in flux like a river”

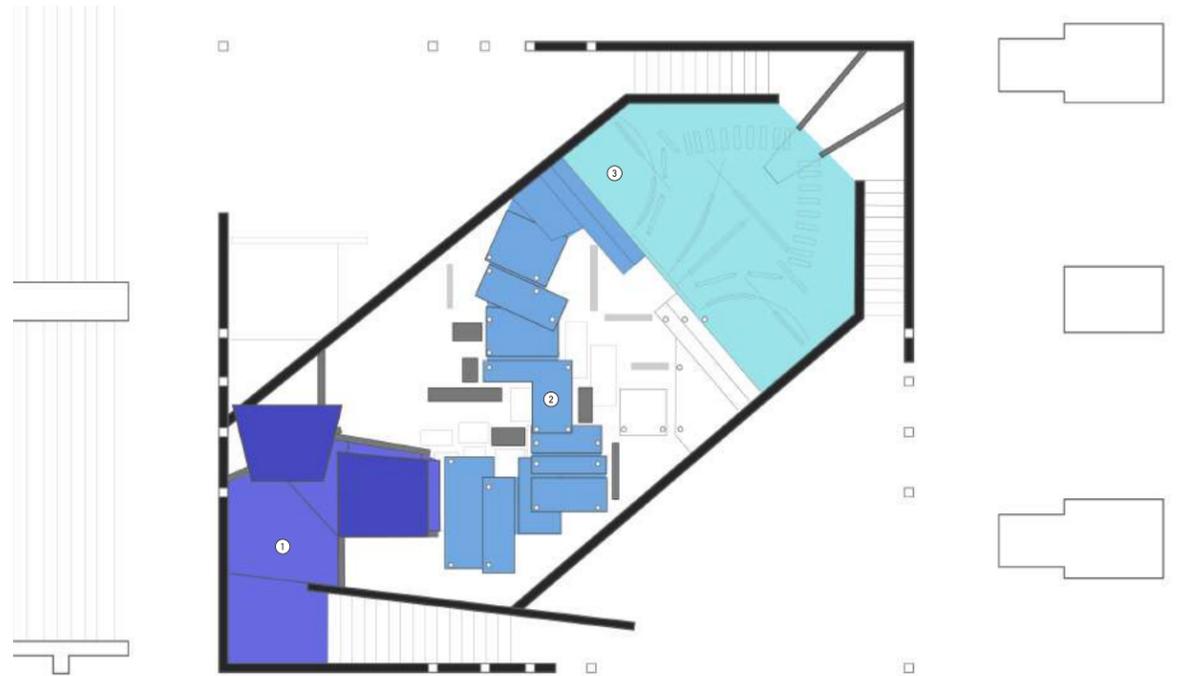
This installation is focused around three phases aimed to mock the narrative of difference and similarity. The first phase being a separate experience where one is physically engaged with a changing atypical space. The second bringing glimpses and suggestions of another navigating a mutual, yet still separate space, and finally the third phase being one where each user may choose to peel the layers back separating the two in order to reveal the other stranger as human, one equally as vulnerable and capable of existing as you.

¹ Joshua J. Mark “Life is Flux,” *Heraclitus of Ephesus*. July 2010. https://www.ancient.eu/Heraclitus_of_Ephesos/

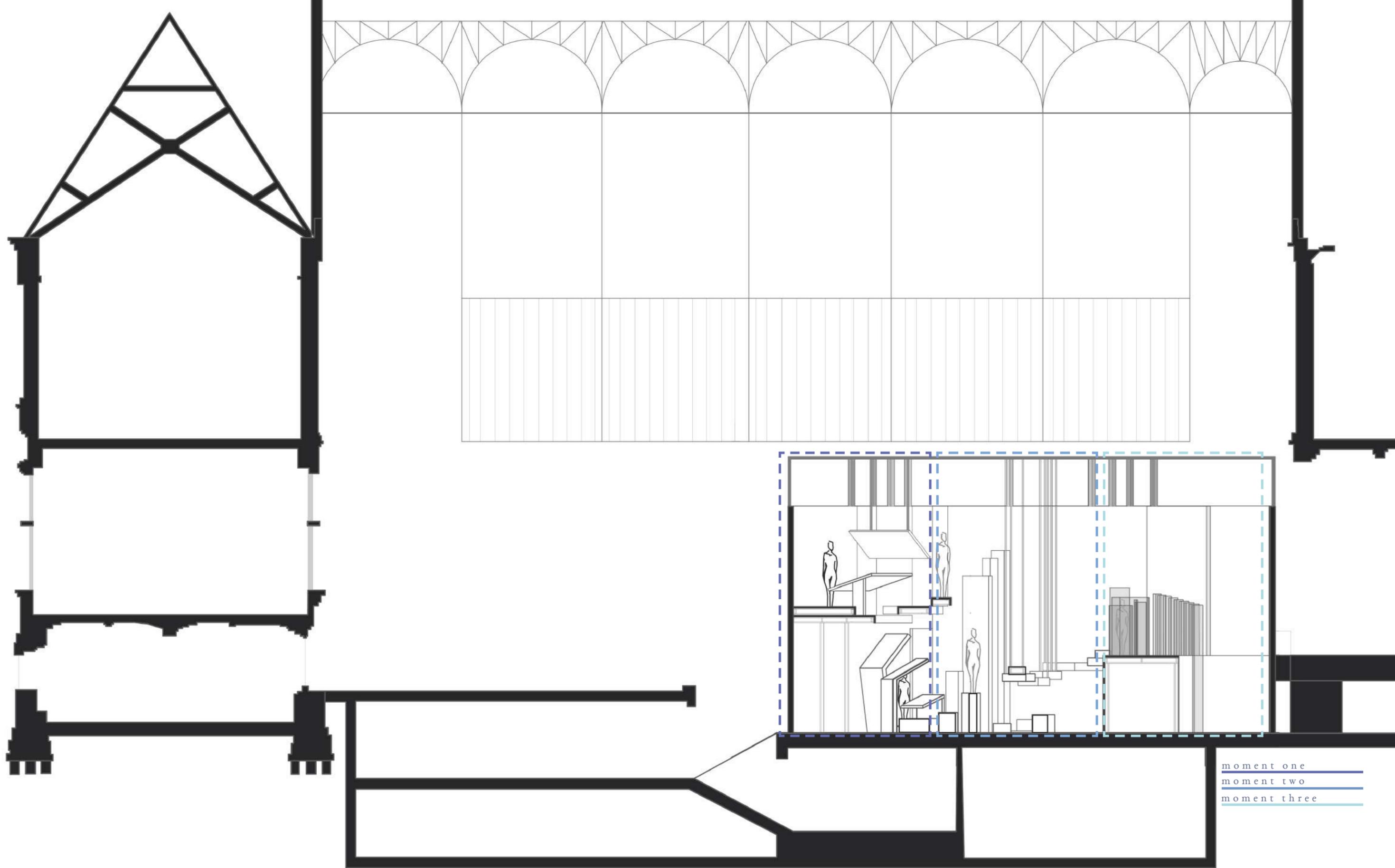
ENLARGED PAVILION PLAN



Level / Experience 1



Level / Experience 2



moment one
moment two
moment three

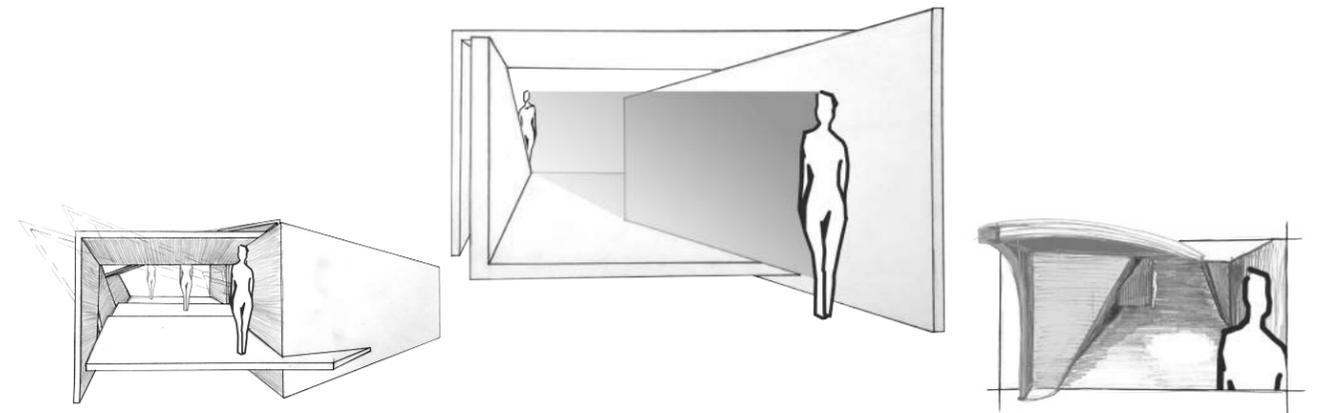
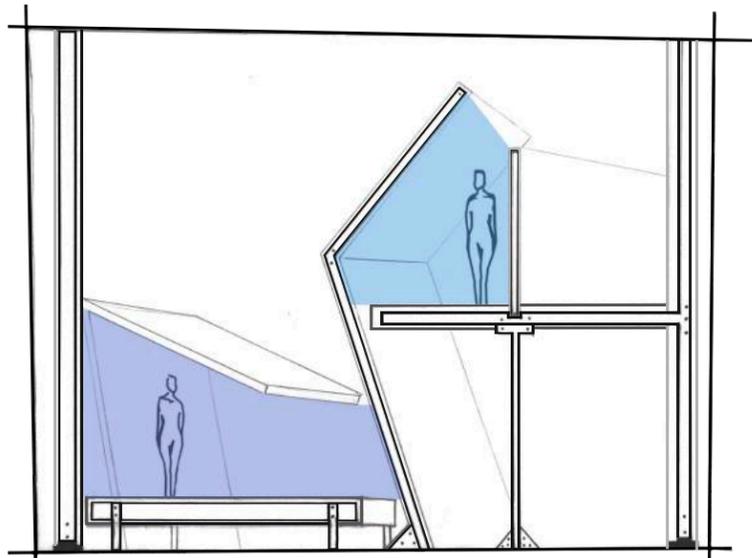
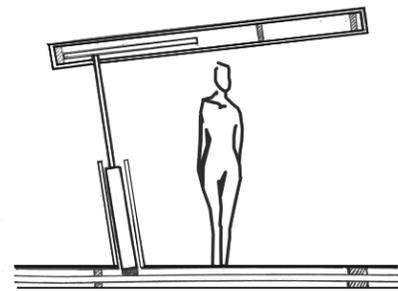
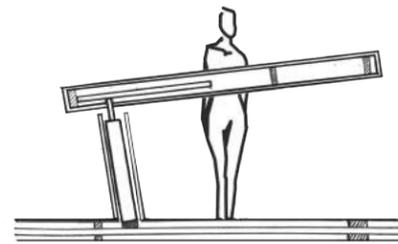
MOMENT ONE



I'M NOTHING LIKE YOU.

The first phase of movement aims to push the user through a series of unfamiliar spaces. Due to how the mind finds comfort as it resonates in space, the design of a space unfamiliar to most pushes both users closer to feeling discomfort in space. Creating this mutual discomfort for both simultaneously balances both users' capability to feel as though they can "overcome" or "rule" the space. The more familiar we are to our environment, the more effectively we feel we can rule it.

Regardless of if it is conscious or subconscious, our minds are constantly responding to the social cues around us signaling where on a "hierarchy of authority" we fall in the given space. We compare ourselves to one another on this figurative ladder in any given space in relation to how we feel in similar places prior. For minority people, we fall lower on that ladder more frequently than not. Introducing a space with an architecture foreign to most people makes the average person's (regardless of their identity on the social scale) ability to understand it less likely, resulting in a more equal comparison between persons in a space.



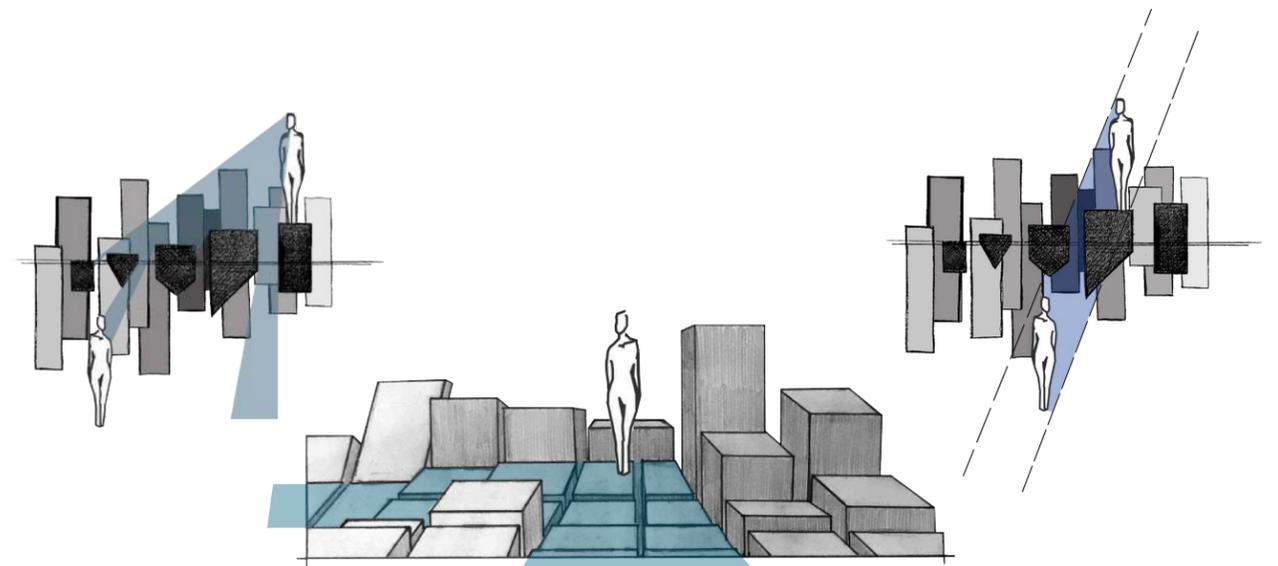
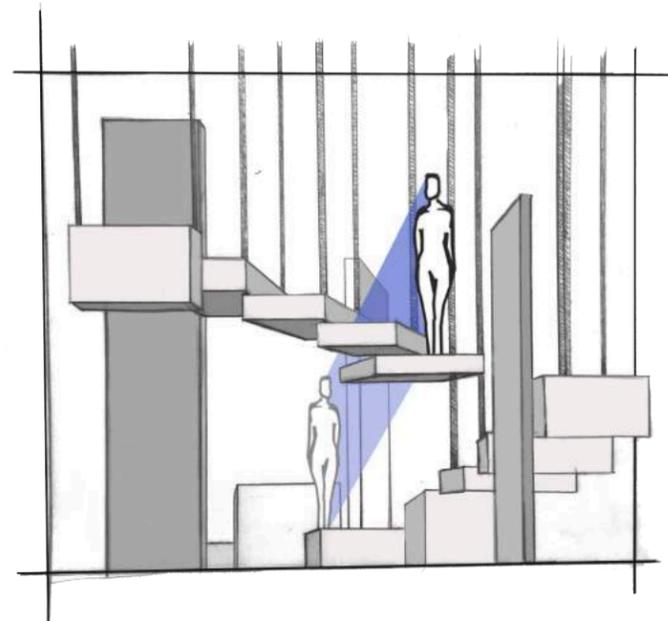
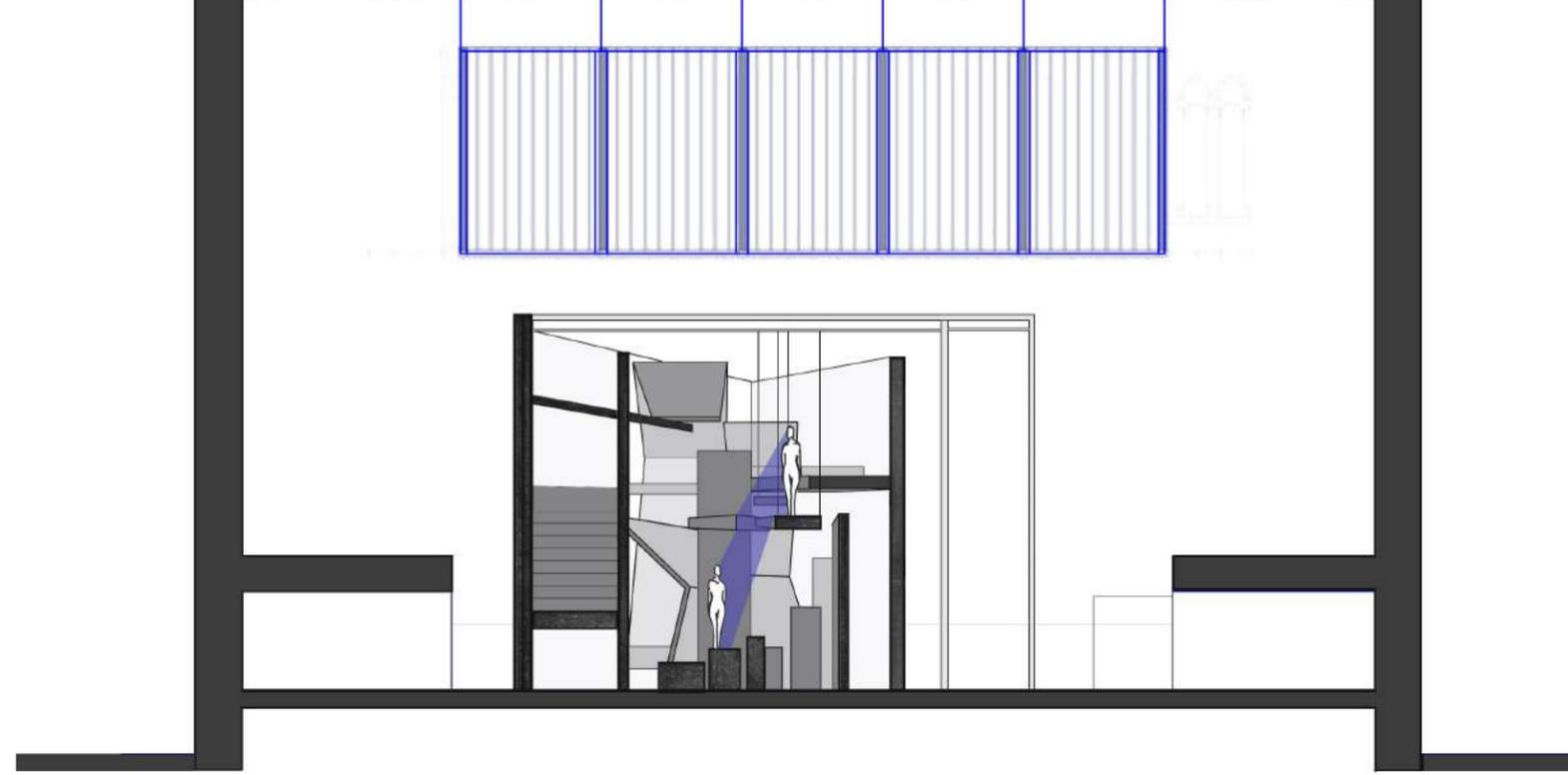
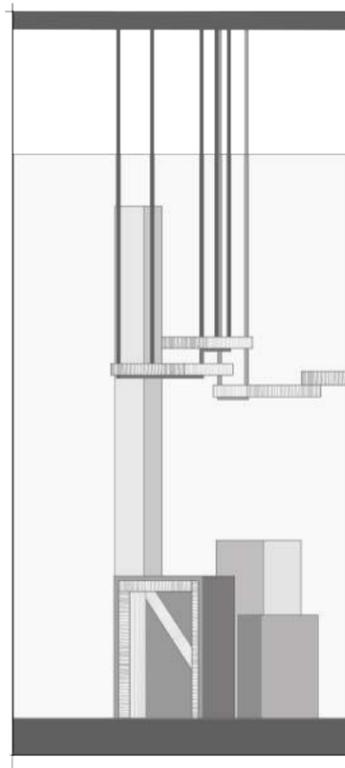
MOMENT TWO



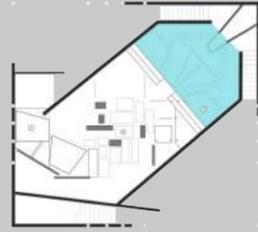
I'M SOMETHING LIKE YOU.

The second phase of the pavilion guides the user through a series of scattered and layered panels. These layers allow for moments of movement to pass by one another, giving each user a sense of another human figure in the room. This builds a relationship between the two by forcing each individual to focus on senses other than direct visuals to understand space. It influences one to focus on listening for the other's movements and feeling the way the architecture is affected by their interactions. Eliminating direct gaze requires one to become more attuned, present, and willing to learn from the space and how the architecture affects our social interactions.

This phase mirrors how easily the average person disregards the built environment's effect on our everyday lives. The topic of designing for emotion or happiness is discussed often around the architecture community, but rarely among the common user/non-architect.

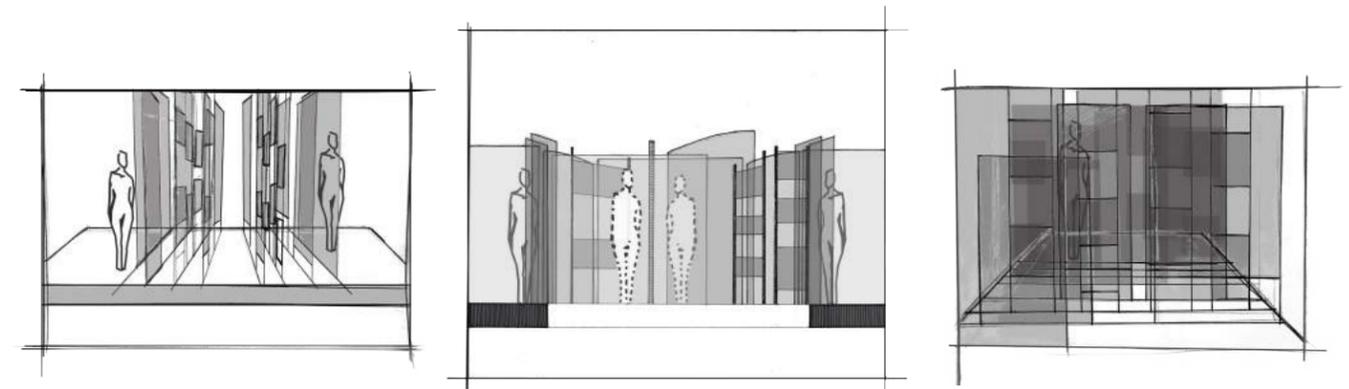
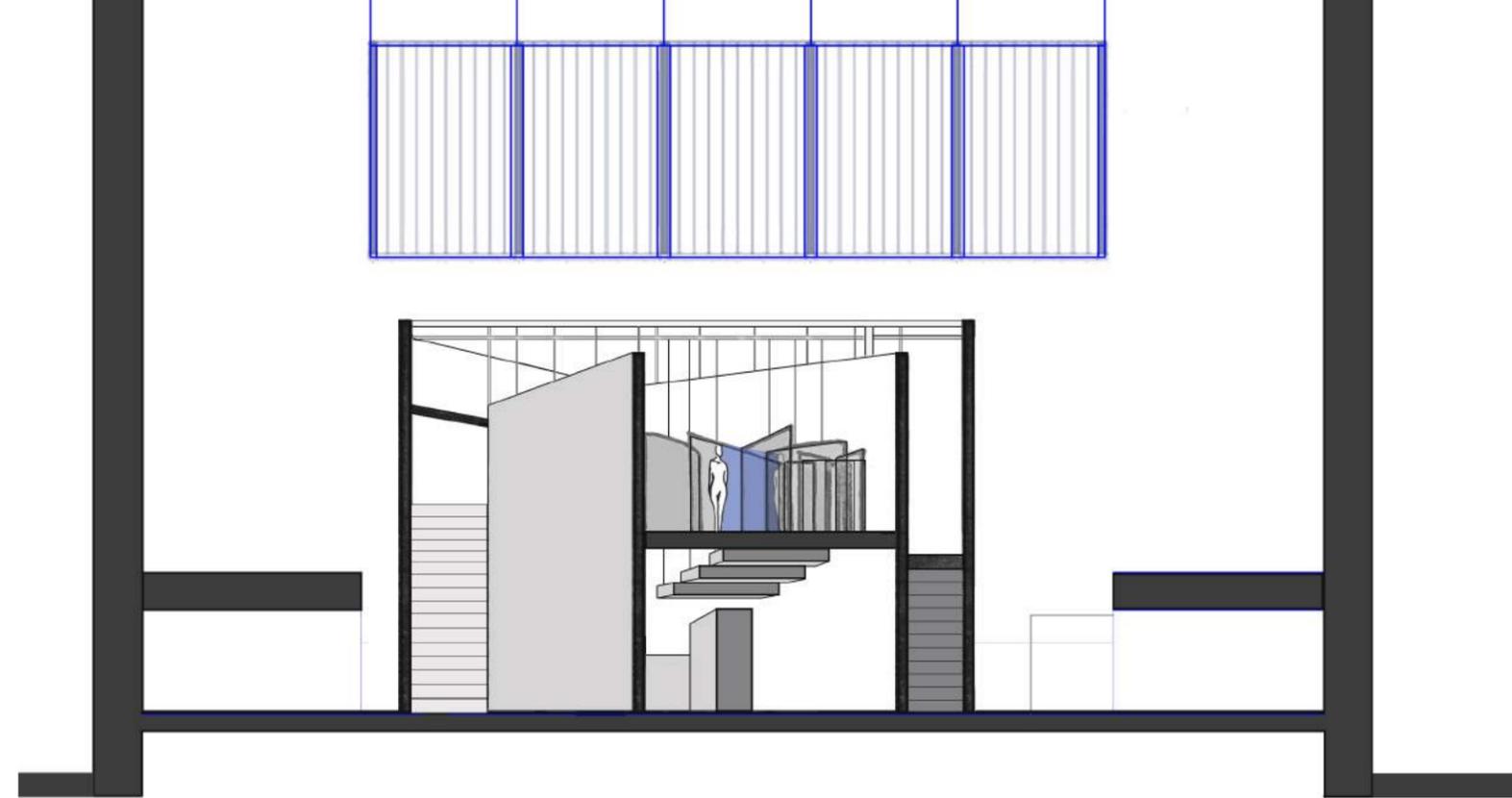
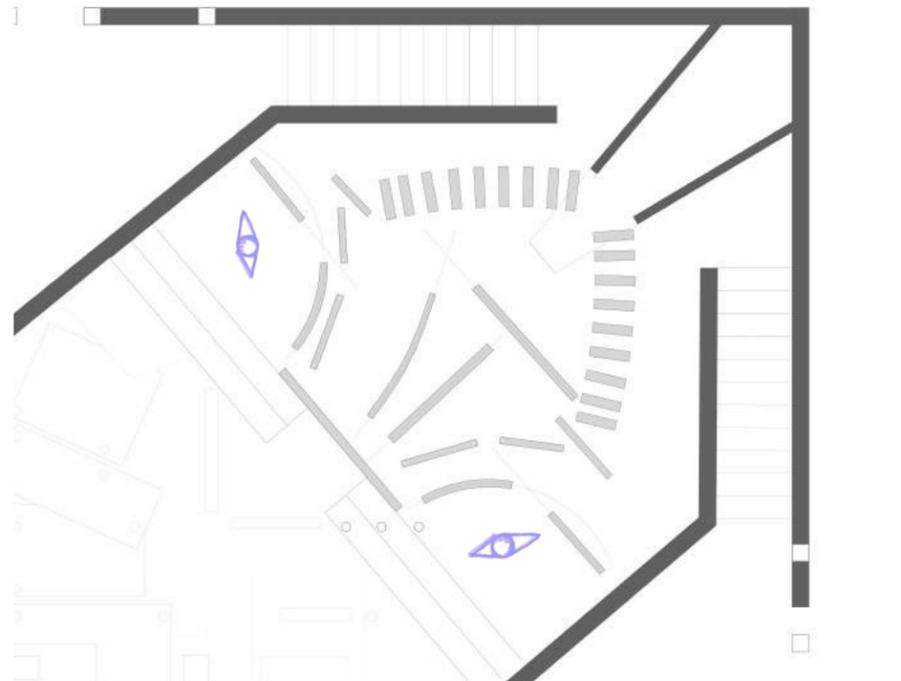


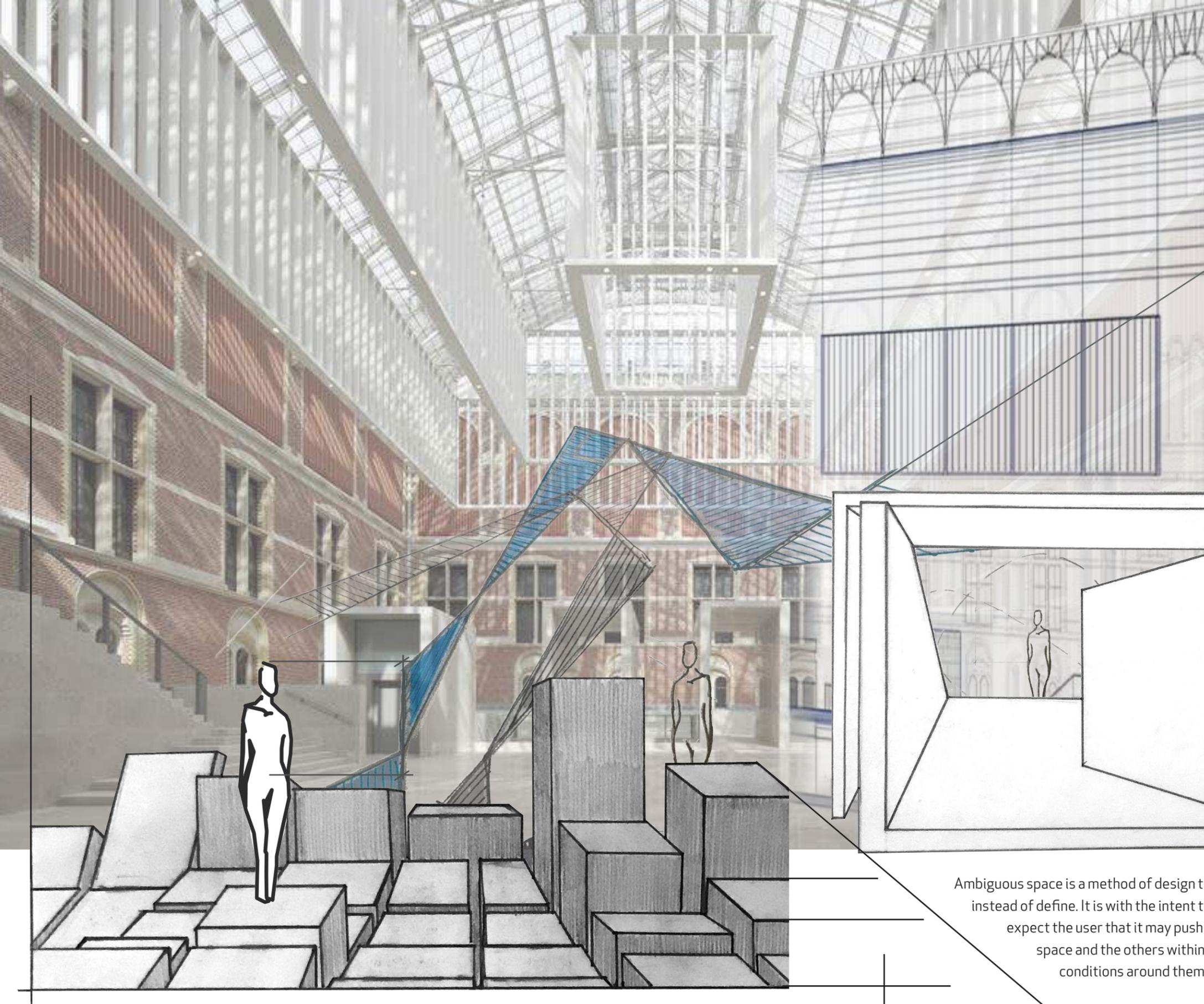
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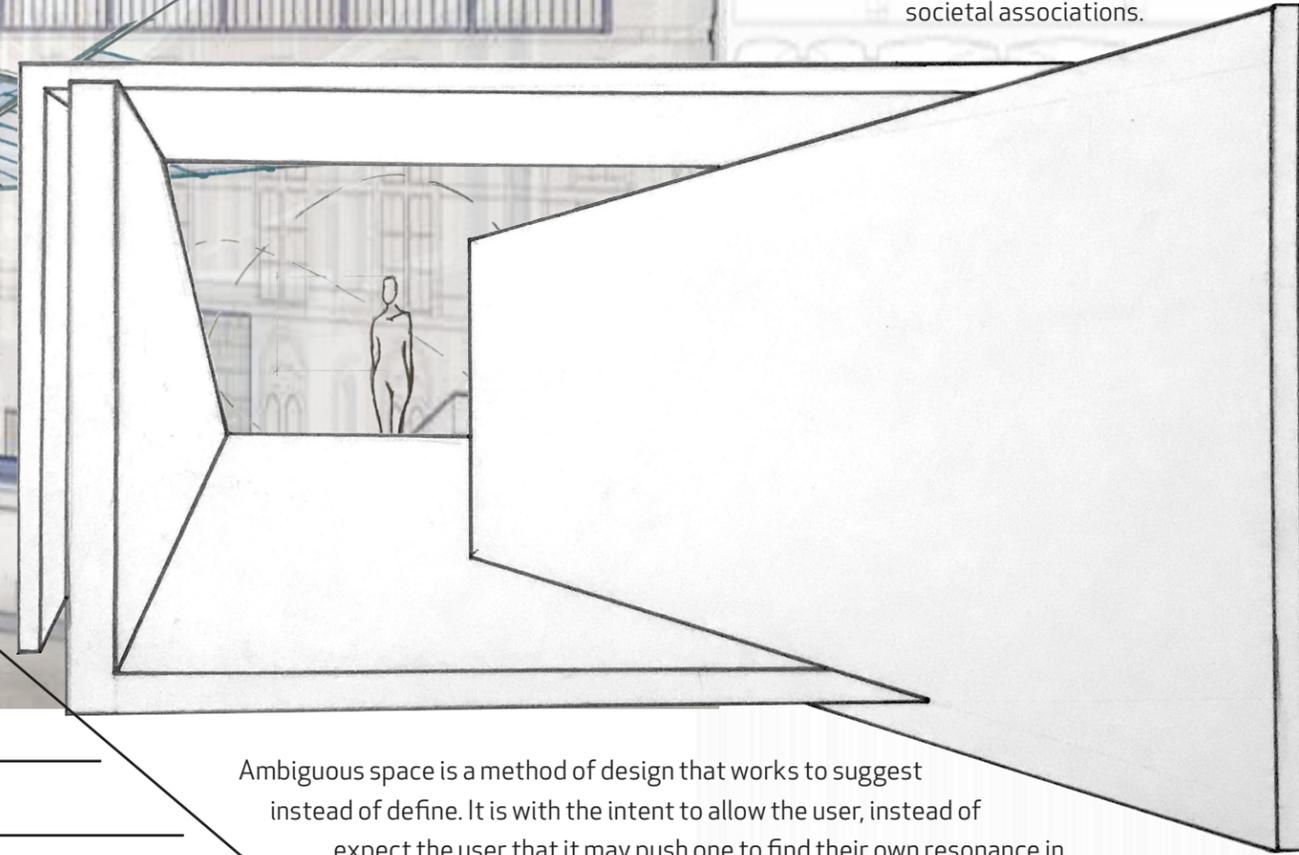
I'M NOTHING BUT YOU.

The third phase of this pavilion places each user in an optional point of witnessing the another. The two have the option to decide for themselves if they want to work together to remove the layers between one another, or to leave the installation all together. This option to leave offers them a path of escaping without falling under the gaze of the other user, giving each person control over their decision. The movable panels allow one the freedom to interact with the architecture that is keeping both users hidden. If the choice to “witness” is made, the users begin to move aside and through the panels dividing the space between them. This movement requires a mutual allowance, forcing the two to work together due to some of the panels being rendered immobile without the involvement of both participants. This whole experience symbolizes the idea of stripping away social expectations and stereotypes that are made with immediate visuals. It emphasizes the connection made with someone through experiencing something together by choice of vulnerability, then leading to witness, and finally to both users passing by the other and exiting through the path of the others entrance. The final metaphor of “taking a walk in the other’s shoes.”





Public space is the domain in which societal standards, hierarchies and values are asserted and contested. In our present American culture the public sphere is where we witness the representation of these expectations in addition to the protesting against them. Architecture as both a political and artistic symbol, that damns it to be perceived differently by every person regardless of the original intent behind the design. Depending upon our own individual relationships with our surroundings, how can an installation detach two strangers from their typical understanding of how to inhabit space. **VALENCE** aims to guide two strangers through an environment that relies on each users unique instinct to lead them through as well as teach the other to trust based upon the agreement of mutual vulnerability. The goal is to create a moment of raw human interaction without predetermined assumption of stereotypes from societal associations.



Ambiguous space is a method of design that works to suggest instead of define. It is with the intent to allow the user, instead of expect the user that it may push one to find their own resonance in space and the others within it through the way they work with the built conditions around them.

NOW WHAT?

Since I was young I have always been intrigued by the “why” and the “unknown” in situations. I would run to converse with strangers in grocery stores, write screen plays on the backs of place mats at restaurants, and sketch buildings that mocked the identity of the life predicted to dwell within it. However, my first attempt at a “car-home” for a race car driver was far from code-compliant, but it definitely got me heading in the right direction. Since then, I dedicated my studies to understanding how the individual resonates with space. Every question formed in the process of this thesis has opened the door to an infinite amount of new questions on how we alter space in the most simple of ways. It is clear to me now that our environment reflects who we are as a community based off of our actions and needs at any given point in time, and I aim to be involved with the evolution of design that comes with that change. The philosopher Alan Watts wrote,

We cannot chop off a person's head or remove his heart without killing him. But we can kill him just as effectively by separating him from his proper environment.¹

We depend upon our space to reflect and respond to the needs of those who occupy it, and when it doesn't we can clearly feel the disconnect. The research presented in this thesis aims to guide an ever-evolving conversation around the stories of architecture from a particular lens. If we look back and analyze how the architecture of particular timeframes correlates to the mentality on civil rights, we can see how the built environment may reflect patterns through structures, scale, community development, etc.

Our desire for the culture of city life, to the desire of owning property, our perspective on success has evolved along with our search for ourselves. We have been designing and installing ways to find comfort within our discomfort since we first began to put up shelters and the way that reflects our priorities as a community is far too clear to label as coincidence. Our primal instinct to search for comfort and control comes in many forms, and our architecture can either foster or fight these desires.

What the design of VALENCE aimed to do was break down that first barrier between identities that is put up with the stereotypes we associate with others based off their appearance. If users learn to navigate the space with a stranger without being able to see them, they then rely on building a more intimate understanding of character through utilizing their other senses; i.e. hearing the pattern of footsteps, the changes in breathing, reactions to new visuals, the energy in the space, etc. If we put both users in a unique space (one foreign to their typical placement) there is a submission to being the *guest* within it, the one not in

¹ Alan Watts, “How to Be Genuinely Fake,” *The Book on the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are*. (Vintage Book, New York: 1989) 53.

control. This equal level of vulnerability (in other words a “submission”) in the space is not to say one is now “below” another, but instead to avoid the feeling of seeing yourself or another as “above.” This installation tests how architecture can foster vulnerability as well as a different means of connection amongst users through how they progress and interact with a space. To study the physical results of this installation in a one-to-one scale would help identify the reactions to the space more accurately. How people feel before and after, the willingness to engage with it, how many utilized the optional exits, etc. What we gain from studying the effects of atypical space is how and who responds to it in a negative and positive manner. This physical “pushing of boundaries” helps normalize the atypical and promote learning from new identities in new environments, ones where someone else may thrive more than yourself. Yet, this shift in authority does not have to threaten ones sense of safety because, although you may not rule an entire space, you always remain in control of yourself. This balance will teach the users of these environments to navigate, respect, observe, and appreciate the spaces and users that may be new to them while minimizing the feeling of threat because you know you have your spaces and control as well.

This research hopes to continue the push on a lot of architectural conversations to consider the forms and environments that makes us feel, or not feel, empowered. The scale of our space, the forms it reflects, the way we fit into these forms all help us define the ways and methods in which we occupy space. So I will part with another quote from Watts:

*“Our knowledge of the world is, in one sense, self-knowledge. -We know the world in terms of the body, and therefore in accordance with it’s structure.”*²

² Watts, “The World is Your Body,” 100.



“To Define is to fix, and real life isn’t fixed.”

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