



PORTFOLIO

SHARON NAHM

I have always been interested in how things come together.

Whether that is by unpacking the materials and processes through which an image or object takes form, or by examining the contexts in which people gather to produce a community.

The body of work in my portfolio reflects an ongoing exploration of community as understood and constructed through the medium of design.

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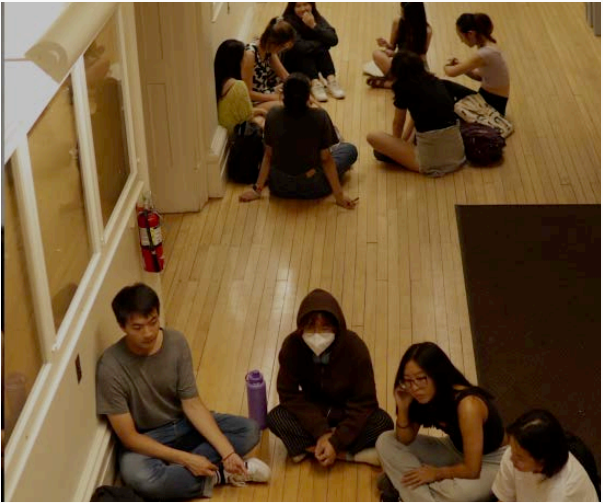
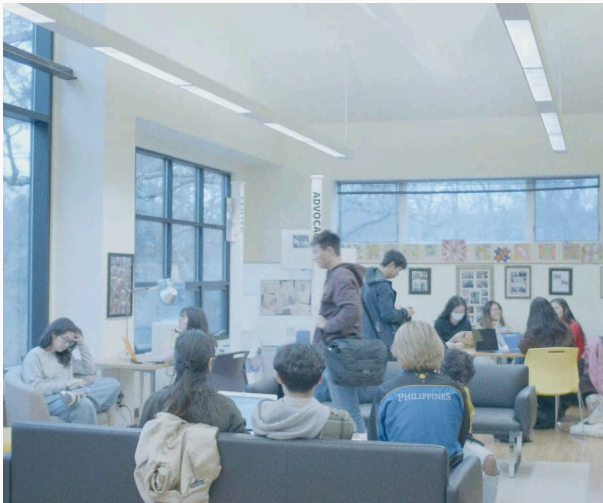
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Part I: Through Collage
Project 1

PORTRAIT

During my time at Vassar, I contributed to *Portrait Magazine*, a magazine spotlighting Asian-identifying artists and writers, for eight issues (2020-2024). From 2022-2023, I served as creative director where I led teams of 20+ designers in publishing two issues with around 90 pages of content each.

Portrait served as my DIY design education throughout college. Throughout the process of making each issue, I learned the hard skills of design—visual storytelling, layout, vectorizing, etc.—as well as the soft skills of design—collaboration, translation, iteration, and critique.

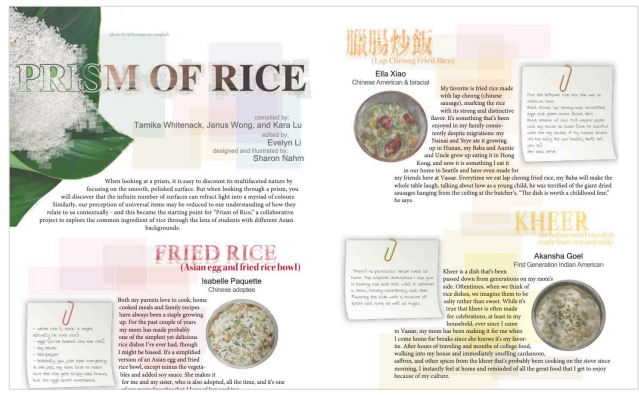


Every week, we found a space to gather on campus to share ideas, provide feedback to each other, and work towards the final product of the semesterly issue.

At the beginning of each semester we chose a *theme*. The themes guided both the written content and the design choices for the issue.

Designers and writers were paired together to collaborate on pieces. Throughout the eight

issues that I contributed to Portrait, I designed content for over fifty spreads spreads. Each spread was the product of several rounds of feedback and iteration amongst my peer community.



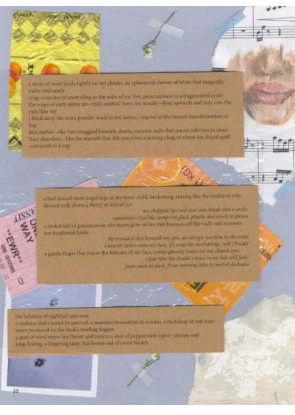
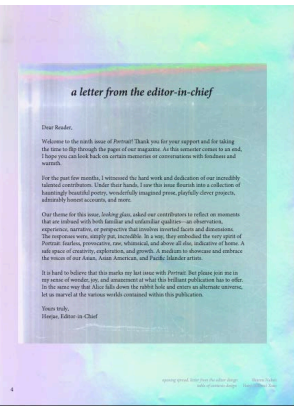
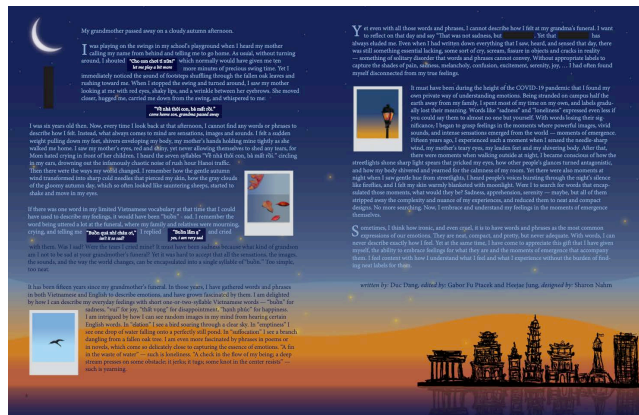
I served as creative director for two issues: *looking glass* and *renaissance*.

The theme of *looking glass* prompted contributors to reflect on moments that are imbued with both familiar and unfamiliar qualities. *Renaissance* prompted contributors to think back on and celebrate not just who we are today, but also who we were in the past and who we will be in the future.

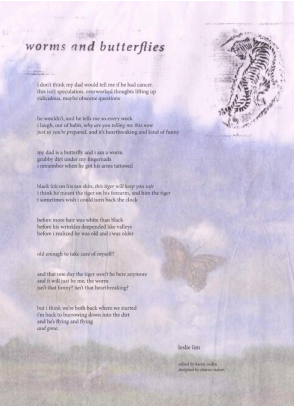
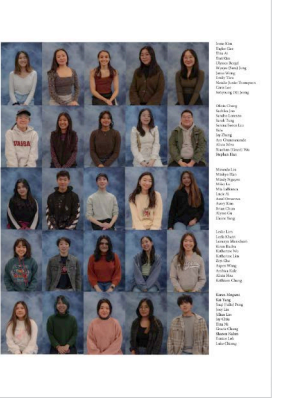
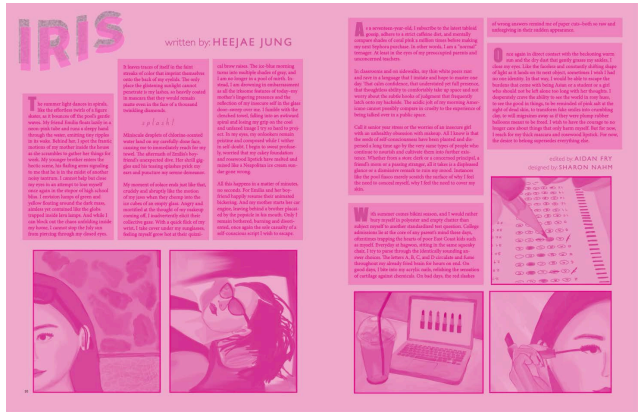
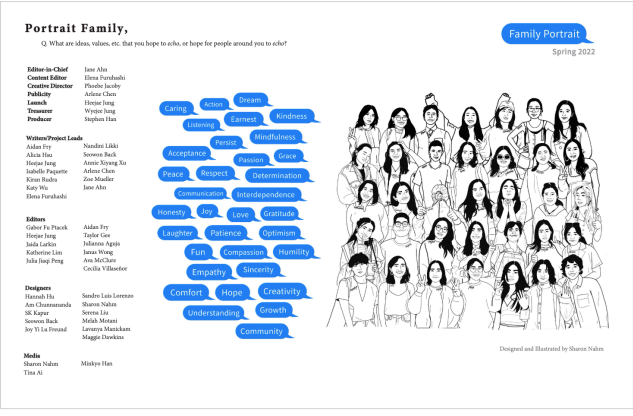
I led photoshoots and design workshops during the production of these two issues, and designed the covers, opening, and closing spreads of the magazines.

Once everyone's pieces were completed, I digitally compiled all the finished work together to produce the final cohesive magazines, which we published both online and in an edition of physical copies.

ISSUE 4: prism



ISSUE 6 & 7: playground & emergence



ISSUE 8: echo

ISSUE 10: renaissance

*The next page features a collage that I designed for Issue 10 using files from Portrait's digital archive.

Part I: Through Collage
Project 2

RE: MEMORY

Re:memory is a sculptural collage that I fabricated in response to an assignment in my sculpture studio that prompted us to make a sculpture in which *connections and/or attachments* were a central component.

An excerpt from the assignment reads:
“This sculpture is an occasion to practice various modes of connecting materials as well as to develop your interpretation of how we make and do our connections. Connections are physical and material while also being social, emotional, and political.”

When thinking of ways to respond to the assignment, I thought about an everyday practice of connection that I have maintained over time: collecting and gathering objects that remind me of experiences and encounters that I have had.

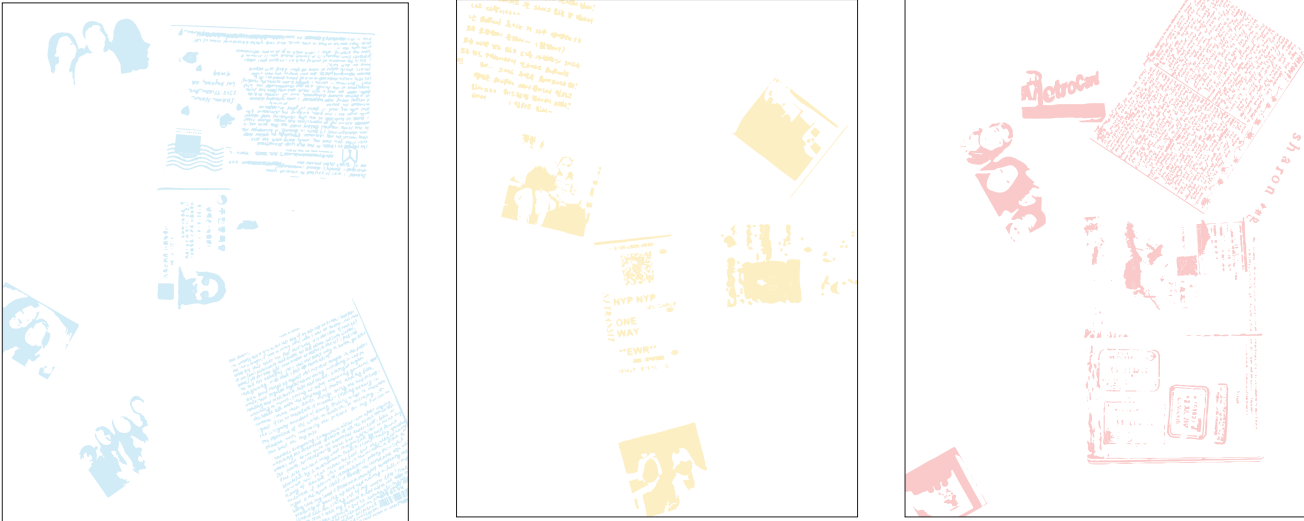
I began ideating by scanning a myriad of paper documents from my collection. With the scanned images, I created a series of digital collages, playing with organization, color, and form. I thought about how I might proceed with designing a sculptural object that could evoke the sentiments of the prompt for a neutral viewer while simultaneously reflecting my personal *connections and attachments*.



top-left: documents
bottom-left: letters
right: photographs

I took the digitally scanned png files from my collages and converted the images into abstracted vector shapes.

With the vector files, I organized the three compositions below.

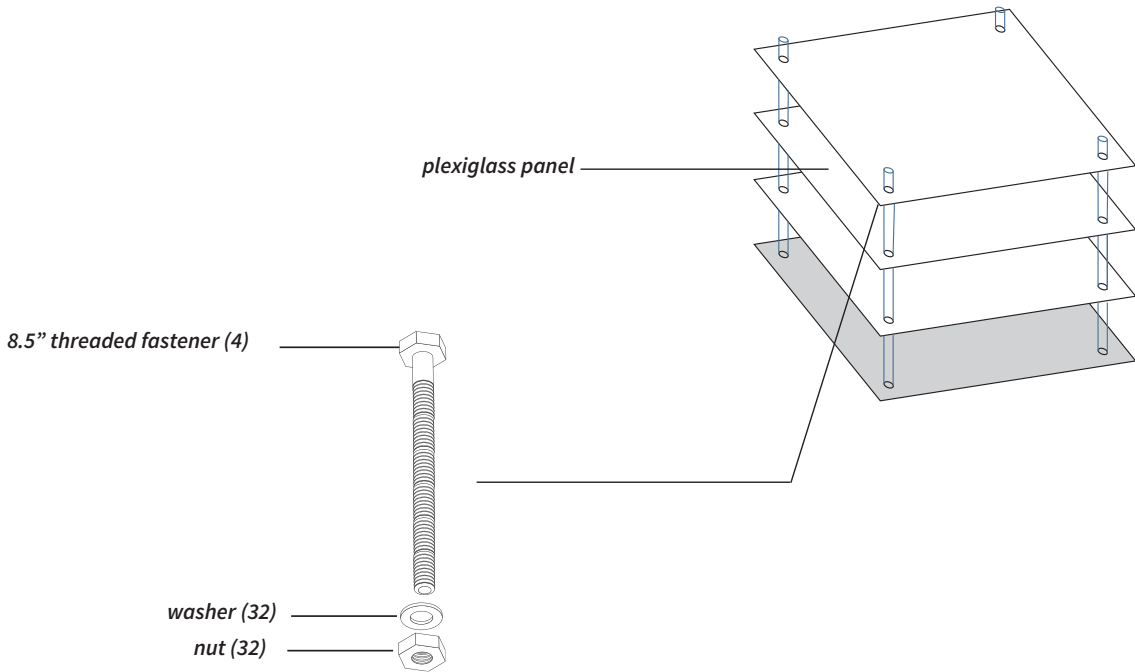
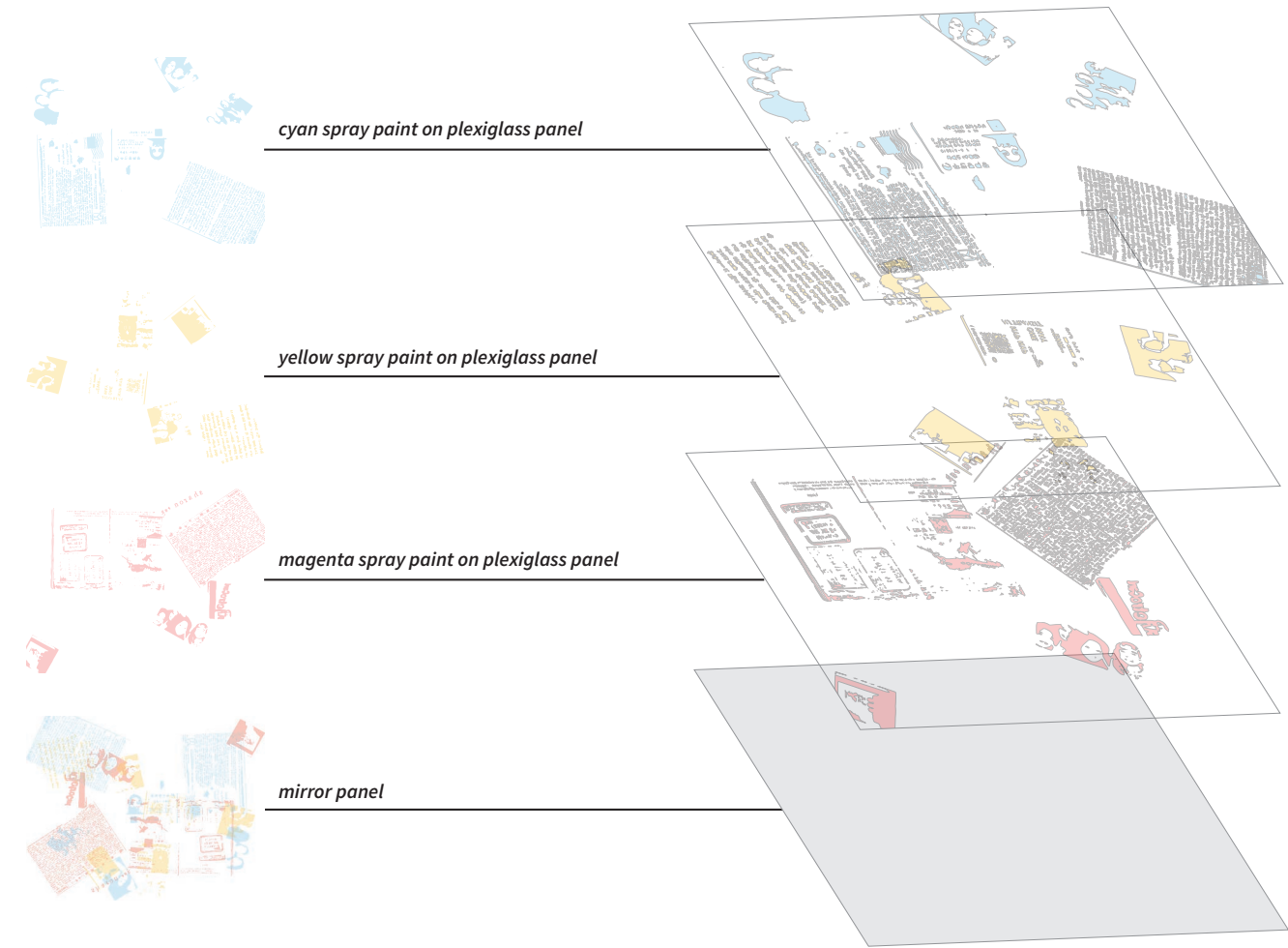


I wanted to use these images to create a cohesive composition.

of eachother to “print” a shifting and reflective collage-image.

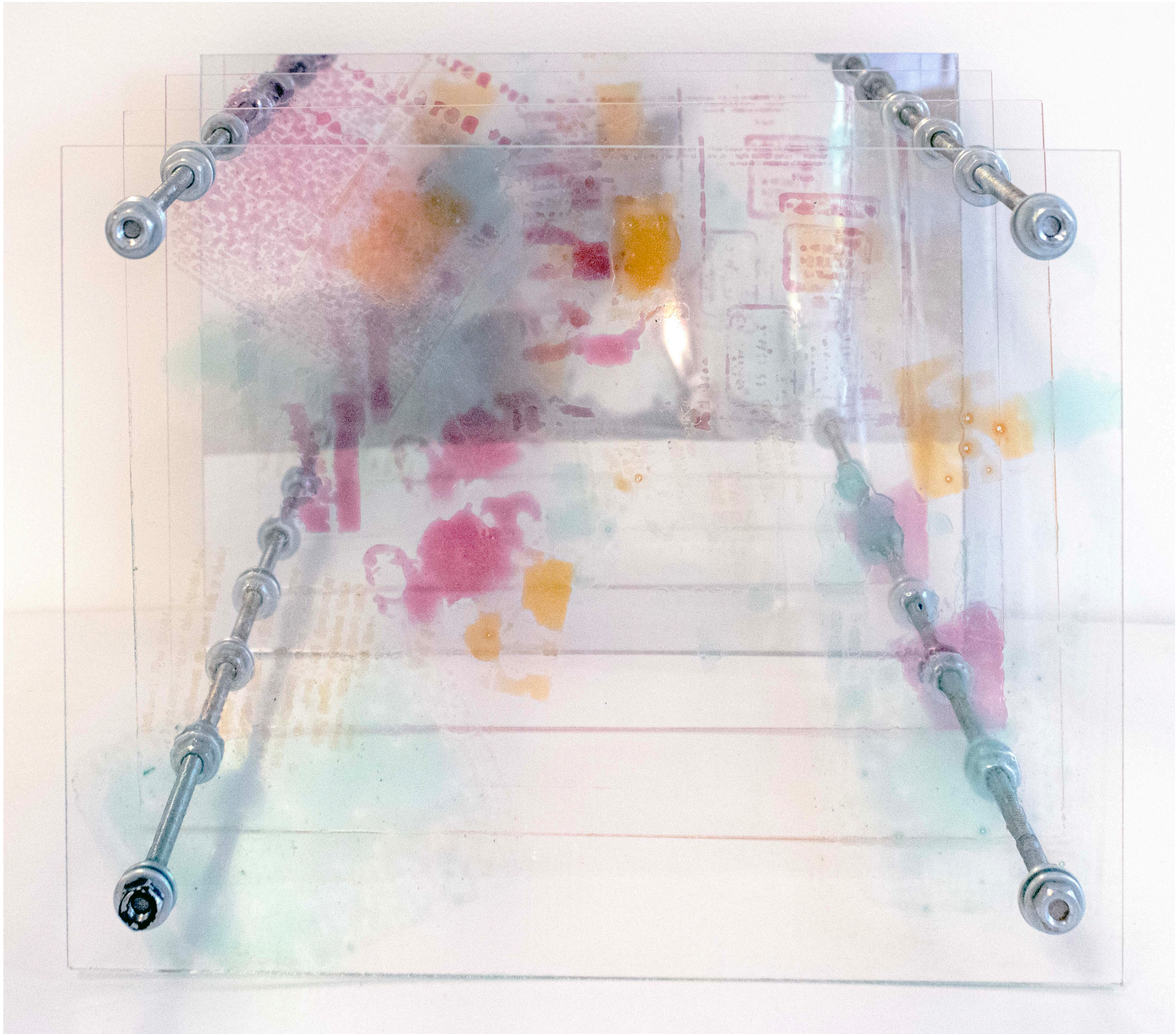
Inspired by the CMYK printing process, I decided to create a sculptural object that layered the cyan, magenta, and yellow compositions on top

I laser-cut stencils for the individual layers, and spray painted each image onto a plexiglass panel.



I assembled the plexiglass panels into a layered three-dimensional structure.

The final art piece was a three-dimensional collage that could be experienced differently according to the viewer's perspective and context. The experience of viewing yourself through the obscuring imagery was intended to evoke the sensation of remembering.



Part II: Through Objects
Project 3

CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence was a temporary installation I created for a sculpture studio assignment that asked us to design a site-specific intervention exploring ephemeral and fleeting modes of making.

Inspired by the theme of ephemerality, I designed a temporary analog communication network for the campus.

I was interested in how communication shifts alongside the interfaces through which it occurs. Physical mail—carried and delivered by the post office—retains a tangible sense of place, time, and presence. In contrast, digital communication often abstracts these qualities, compressing distance while simultaneously producing a sense of dislocation.

By reintroducing slow, material forms of exchange, *Correspondence* invited participants to pause and reflect on how communication is shaped by physical context and shared experience. I designed the installation as a space for collective engagement, encouraging participants to consider how presence, place, and materiality influence the ways we connect and commune with one another.



POSTCARDS



I digitally designed a postcard using various campus locations as reference points, then

produced an edition of the postcards using risograph printing.

MAILBOXES



Drawing from the design of the USPS mailbox, I crafted three miniature mailboxes by cutting and

drilling plywood, then finishing them with paint and laser engraving.

The mailboxes read:

this object is placed here, in this shared space of Vassar College, to ask you to immerse yourself in the practice of LETTER-WRITING. these days, everything is so instantaneous, smooth, efficient... what is lost when mediated communication becomes so seamless?

letter-writing is a form of communication that is slow, uncertain, imperfect. its magic arises from its humanity.

at the conclusion of this installation, this object will be removed from this space, but the letters you write and leave in this object will pass through hands and systems to find their recipients at some point in the future...

CORRESPONDENCE SYSTEM



I placed the three mailboxes, alongside postcards and pens, on three different locations on campus. Over the course of seven days, around 80 people wrote and deposited postcards in the mailboxes. At the conclusion of the installation, I postage-stamped and mailed out (using the actual USPS) the postcards that people had left in my correspondence system.



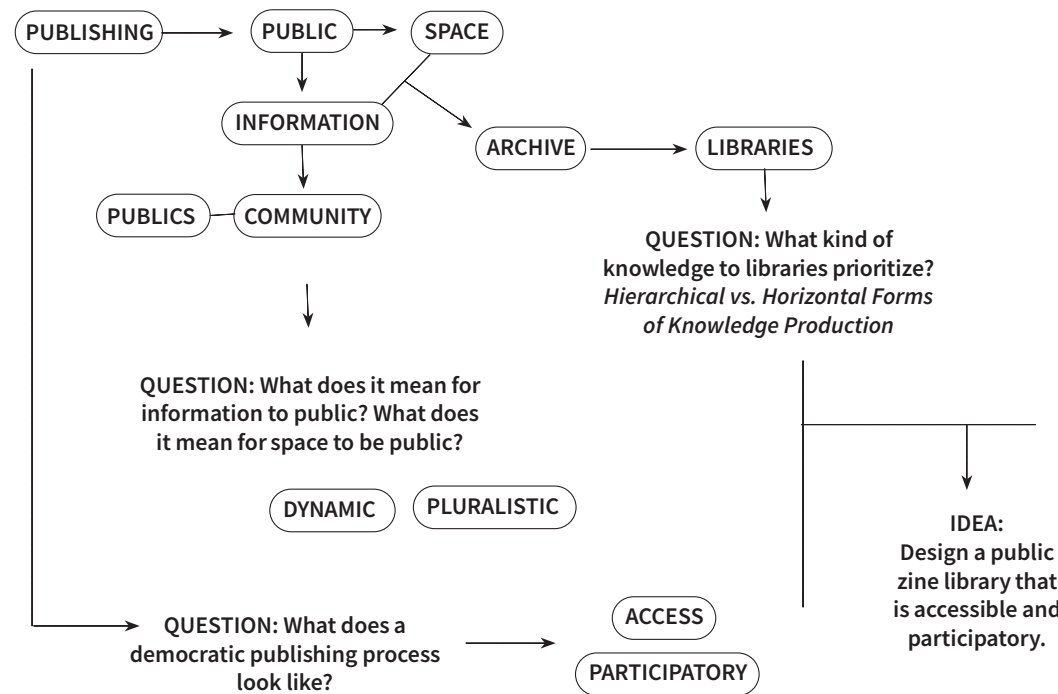
Part II: Through Objects
Project 4

INSTANT PUBLIC LIBRARY

The *Instant Public Library* is a public installation project that I developed for my sculpture studio. Inspired by Archigram’s concept of *Instant City*, a transportable kit of parts designed to bring the material and cultural resources of a large metropolis to small town, my project explores how access to *information* and *community* can be flexibly constructed.

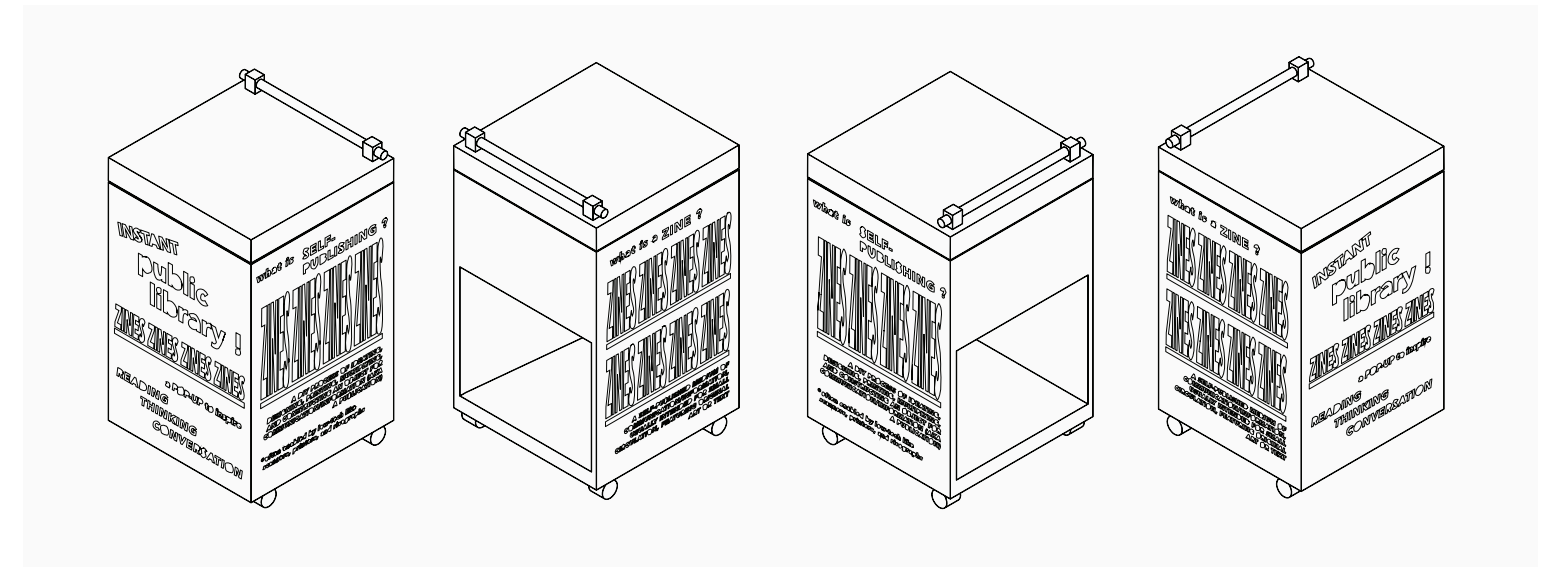
Given the changing nature of information and the ways it is received, stored, and spatially organized, I sought to translate Archigram’s vision into a contemporary framework. The *Instant Public Library* reimagines the public library not as a permanent building, but as a mobile, adaptable installation that activates public space and makes information and community immediately accessible.



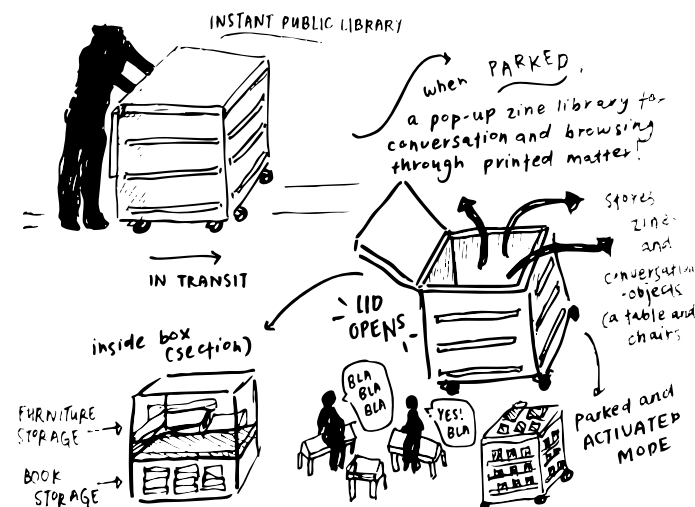


The *Instant Public Library* was designed in parallel with my Urban Studies senior project, which examined self-publishing and the emerging public spheres surrounding this growing practice. My research explored how grassroots publishing generates collective cultural spaces, positioning self-publishing as a democratic, participatory mode of production shaped by community-based art practices and informal networks of distribution.

The *Instant Public Library* spatialized my research in the form of a mobile installation. Constructed from plywood and mounted on casters, the structure challenges the conventional public library typology by proposing a flexible, temporary infrastructure adaptable to diverse public contexts. Functioning as a portable zine library, the *Instant Public Library* prioritizes accessibility and interaction, creating space for shared authorship and community-driven exchange beyond traditional institutions.



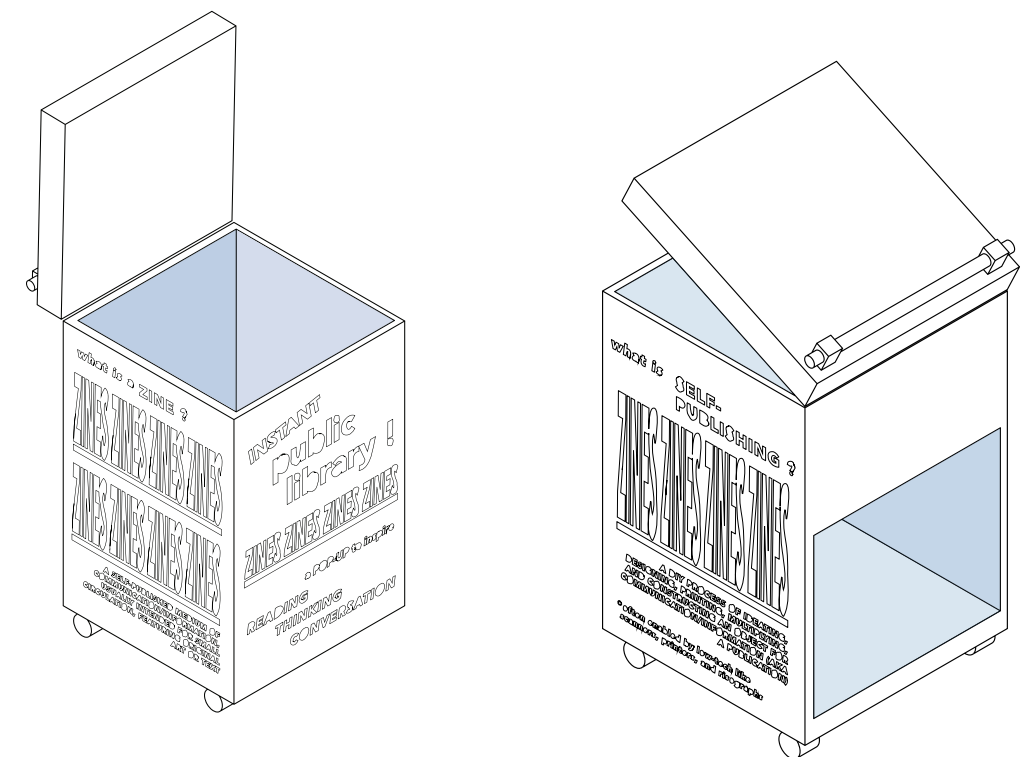
text



preliminary sketch



process



The library's infrastructure contains compartments and shelves for holding interchangeable information.



YEAR: Spring 2024
COURSE: Sculpture II: Space and Place
INSTRUCTOR: Gordon Hall
LOCATION: Vassar College

Part III: Through Architecture
Project 5

PUBLIC PLAZAS

In my sculpture seminar, we were asked to propose an imaginary monument in a specific real site of our choosing anywhere in the world.

My public monument, *Public Plazas*, features a landscaped series of engraved benches located on Beneficial Plaza in Koreatown, Los Angeles.



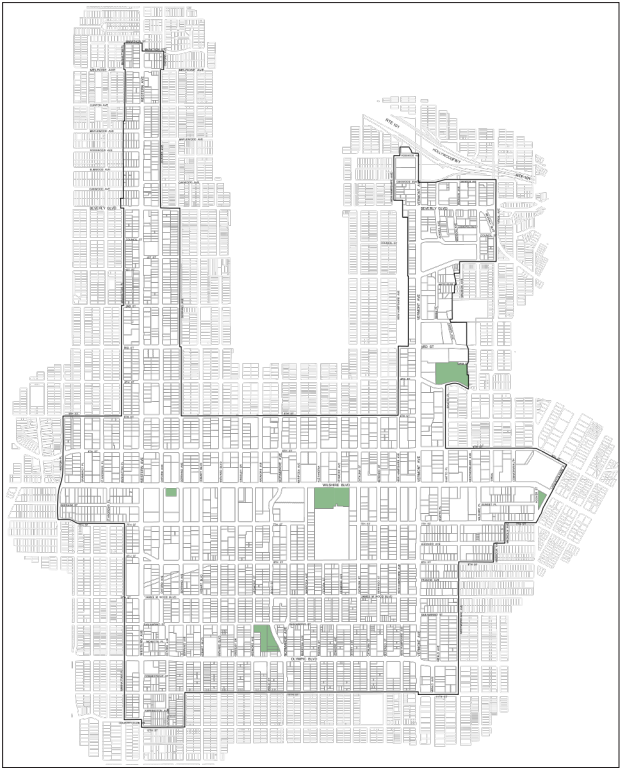
SITE

I wanted to choose a site of personal and political significance that I possessed lived knowledge of. Being Korean-American and having grown up in the city of Los Angeles, I chose the neighborhood of Koreatown as the site of my intervention.

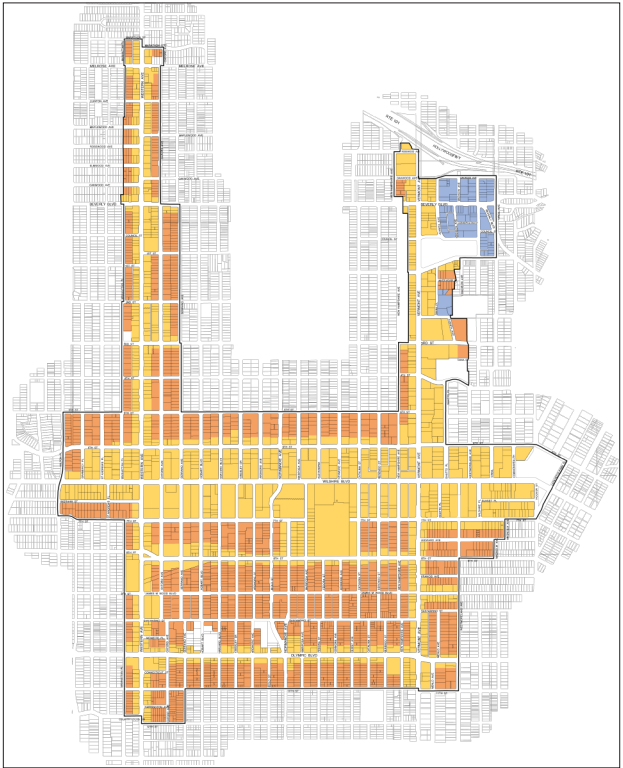
Koreatown is a neighborhood in central Los Angeles, encompassing around 115,000 inhabitants within its 2.9 square miles area—which makes it the densest neighborhood in Los Angeles County.

Demographically, Koreatown has been a historically underserved area with a racial makeup mostly composed of individuals of Hispanic and Asian origin and a median income hovering at around 43,000 a year.

At the built environment level, the historic underinvestment in the neighborhood of Koreatown has manifested in a severe lack of public amenities and green space.



Koreatown, Zoned as Open Space



Koreatown, Zoned as Residential, Commercial, and Industrial

From my own observations, when I thought about the building typology that characterizes the neighborhood, I immediately thought of the numerous strip malls, referred to as “plazas” that dominate the dense commercial areas. The units of these plazas are always occupied by small immigrant owned-businesses that, to me, define the character of Koreatown.

Interestingly, when I was doing research into the area, I came across another “plaza” typology. The only privately-owned (and zoning-protected historic) open space in the neighborhood is Liberty Park located on Beneficial Plaza, a corporate plaza that sits outside a large office building containing various multinational company offices.

“PLAZA” TYPOLOGY

I was inspired to have my monument play with the juxtaposition of these two plazas typologies that characterize Koreatown.



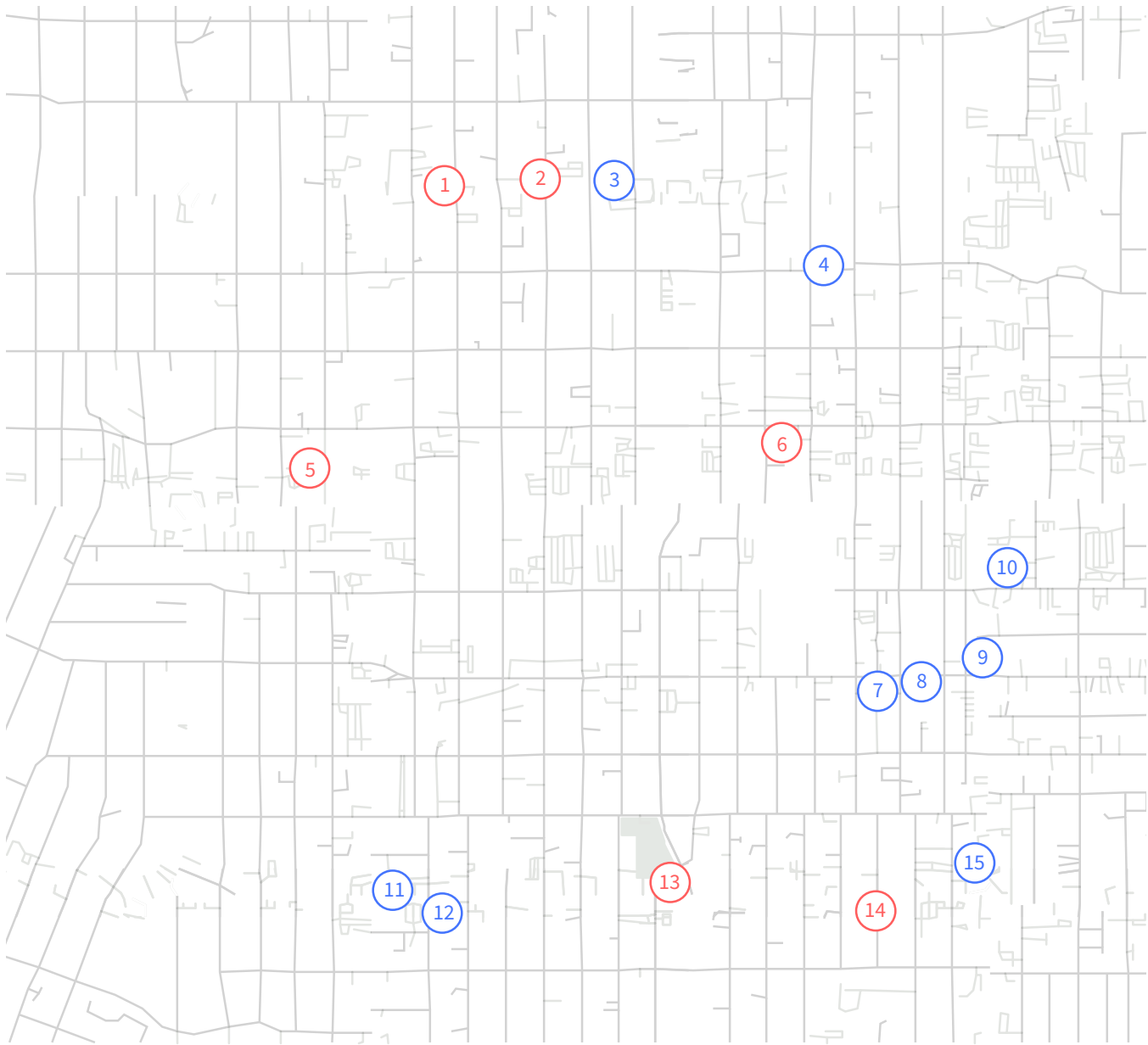
Plazas, Koreatown



Beneficial Plaza, Koreatown

I used Google Street view to inventory and screen capture every single one of the fifteen strip mall plazas in Koreatown. I then used ArcGIS Pro to map out these plazas within the area of Koreatown. Next, I translated thse data

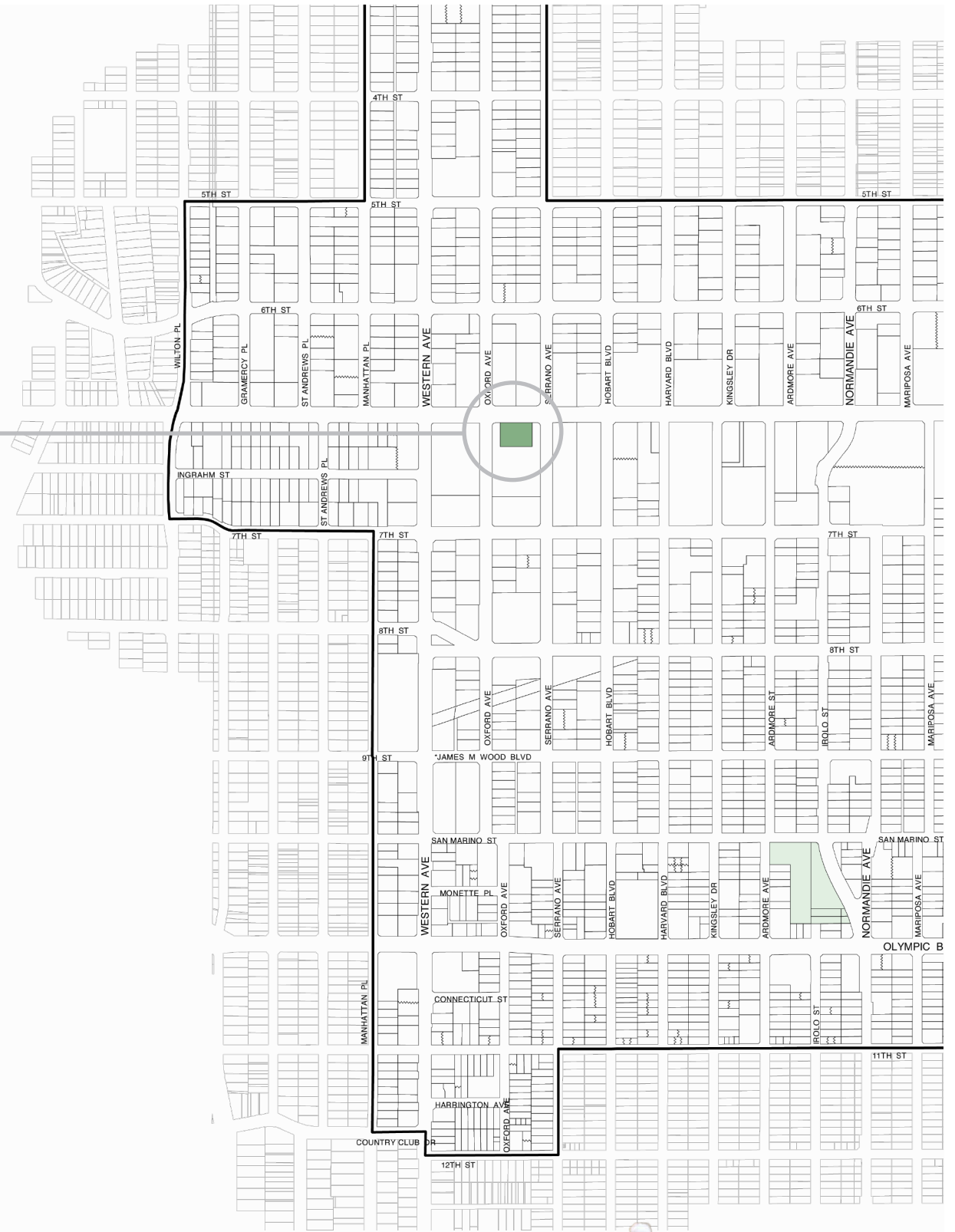
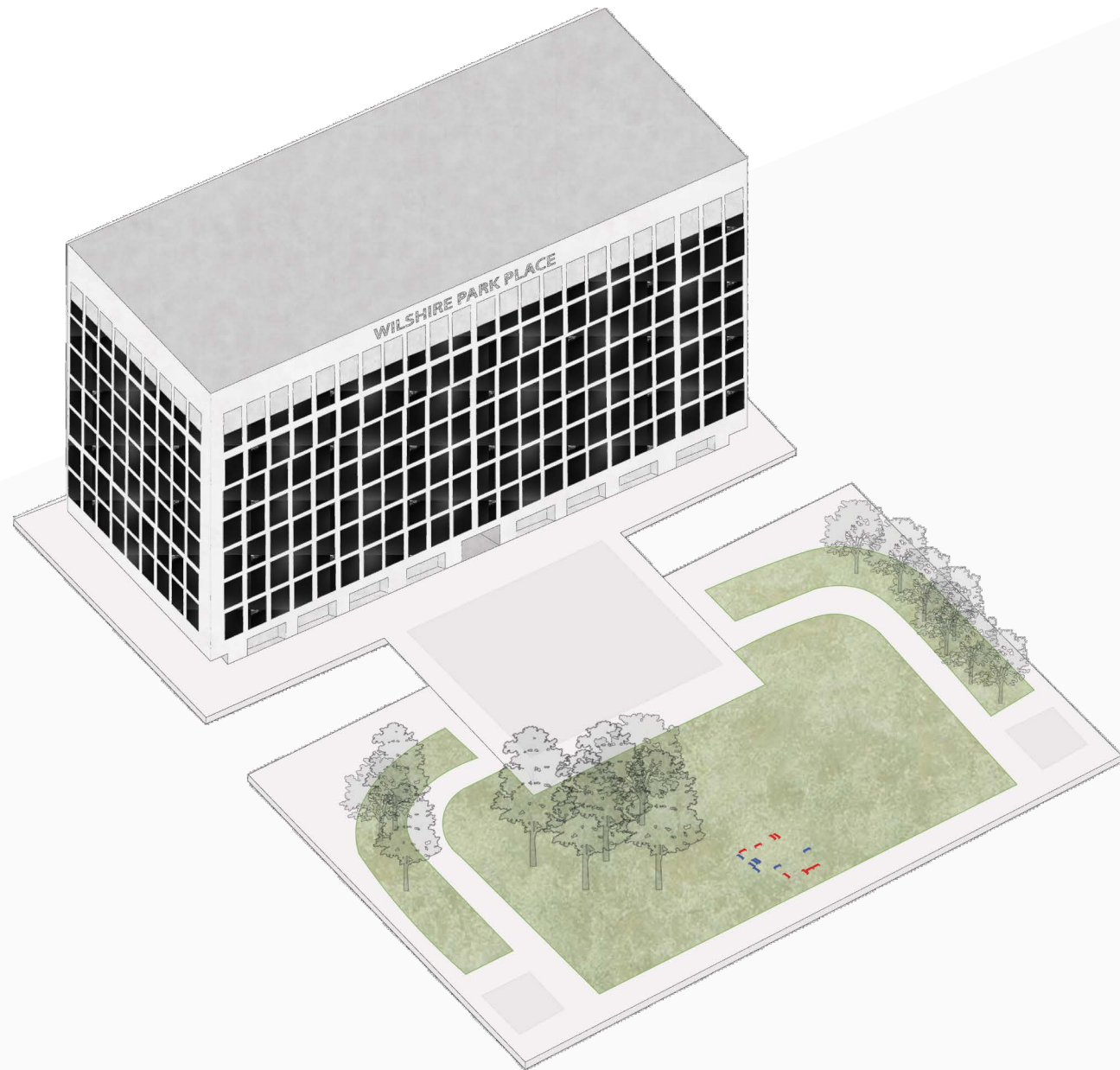
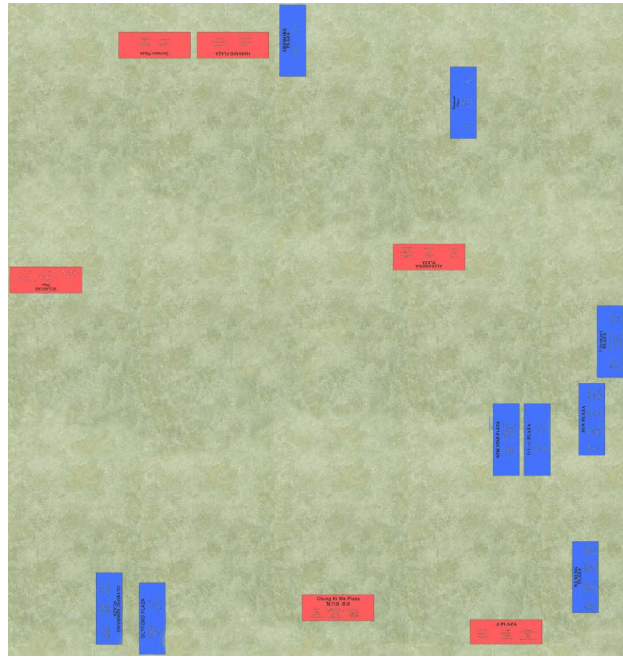
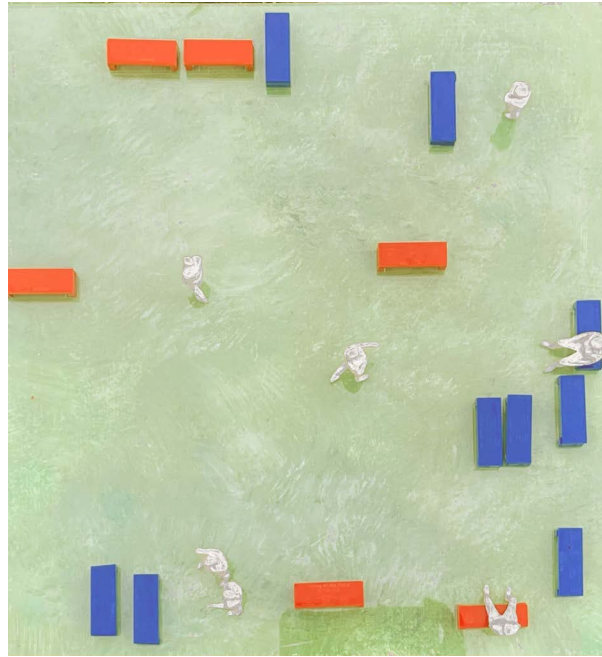
points into a formal architectural language. I used Illustrator to turn the plaza signage into public bench designs and I used the mapping data to dicate the landscaping of benches within the grass park.



map indicating plaza locations in Koreatown, Los Angeles

1	Serrano Plaza			8	8th Street Plaza		
2	Harvard Plaza			9	Sun Plaza		
3	Ardmore Plaza			10	7th & Vermont Plaza		
4	Vermont Plaza			11	Olympic Serrano Plaza		
5	Wilshire Plaza			12	Olyford Plaza		
6	Alexandria Plaza			13	Chung Ki Wa Plaza		
7	New Star Plaza			14	J-Plaza		
				15	Na Sung Plaza		

Public Plazas reclaims the corporate plaza as a public landscape through a series of landscaped benches, transforming privately oriented green space into a shared civic environment that recognizes the small businesses at the heart of Koreatown's cultural life.



YEAR: Summer 2023
COURSE: Introduction to Architecture
INSTRUCTOR: Lucy Navarro
LOCATION: Columbia Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation

Part III: Through Architecture
Project 6

ZERO-ENERGY SYSTEM

“Zero-Energy System” is a speculative design project that I completed during a summer architecture intensive at Columbia University’s Graduate School of Planning, Preservation, and Architecture.

This studio intensive prompted us to imagine machinic systems that could be used to mitigate the impacts of pollutants in the face of climate change.



In the first stage of this project, I designed a machine in the form of an everyday object.

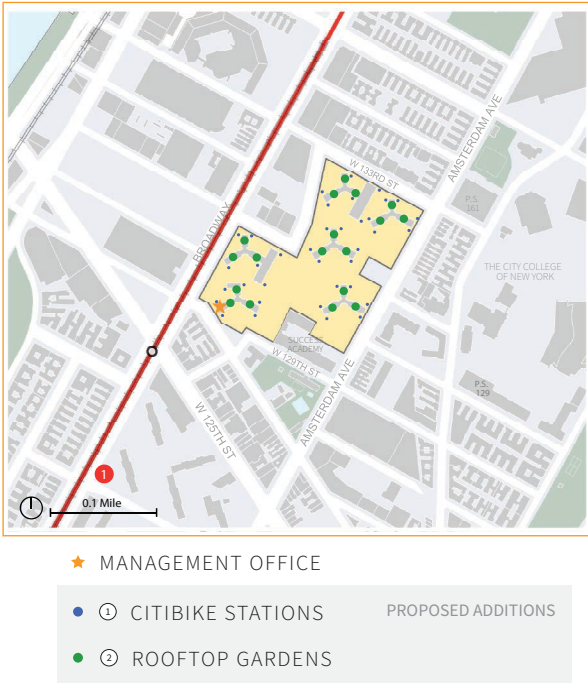
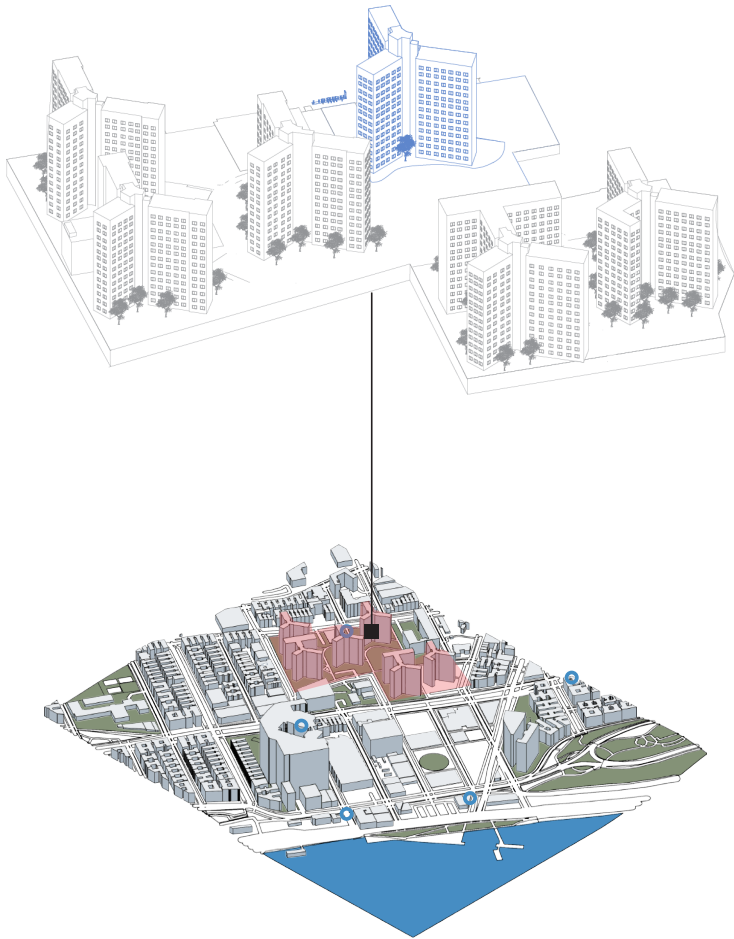
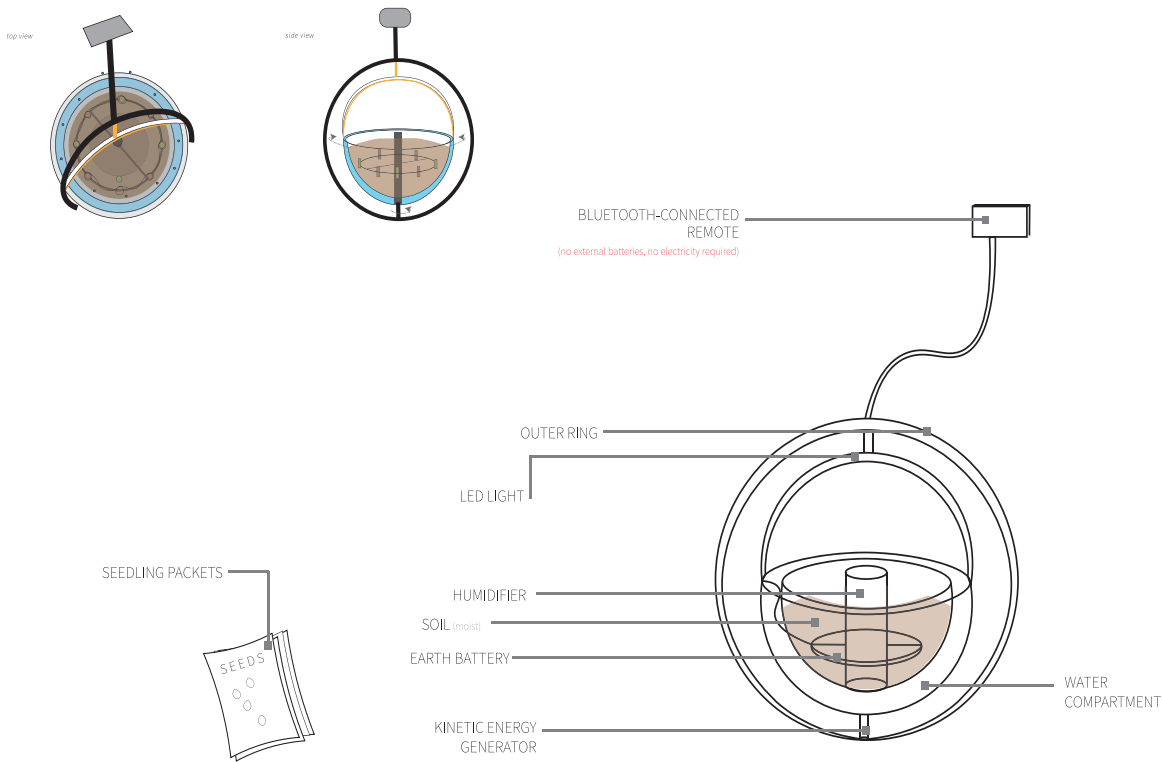
The “00photoplanner” serves as a self-sufficient light fixture and a planter.

It alleviates the impacts of carbon-dioxide in two ways: firstly, by powering itself on self-produced energy, and secondly, by facilitating the growth of photosynthesizing plants.

After conceptualizing a small-scale filtering device for the home, our next step was to translate the logic of our micro-scale device into a macro-level system for a given site.

The site where we were tasked to design our scaled up systems was West Harlem in Manhattan, New York (adjacent to Columbia University’s campus).

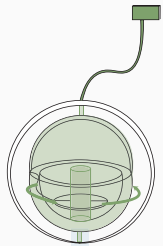
While researching the area, I came across NYCHA’s Manhattanville Houses. This development consists of a series of six identical tower-in-the-park buildings, each housing around 200 units, all governed under one central housing authority. Because of these factors, I thought that the Manhattanville Houses could serve as a suitable site for a self-contained energy system design.



ZERO ENERGY

The humidifier diffuses **water** using the kinetic energy generator. Energy is produced by users manually rotating the smaller planter sphere within the larger sphere.

- 1) Fill the planter with water (in the section indicated)
- 2) Program the planter in the 00photoplanner app with the appropriate watering settings.
- 3) Rotate the planter sphere whenever/ as indicated by the photoplanner app to charge the watering humidifier within the 00photoplanner.

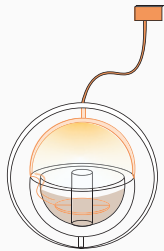


00photoplanner
ZERO ENERGY
ZERO SUNLIGHT
ABOUT THE MACHINE

ZERO SUNLIGHT

Light is produced using the LED light installed within the planter sphere. The LED light is powered by an earth battery, built utilizing the soil's natural ionic properties and a series of arranged metals.

- 1) Fill the planter with moist soil (and your plant).
- 2) Program the planter in the 00photoplanner app with the appropriate light settings.
- 3) The LED light will use the earth battery to turn on/off according to your programmed settings.
- 4) Replace the soil in the 00photoplanner whenever indicated by the app.



What is a
KINETIC ENERGY GENERATOR ?

The KINETIC ENERGY GENERATOR, located at the intersection of the spherical planter and its surrounding circle, uses manual rotational energy to spin the rotor shaft of a generator. The generator, in turn, converts this kinetic energy of the rotor to electrical energy, charging the 00photoplanner and its internal humidifier.

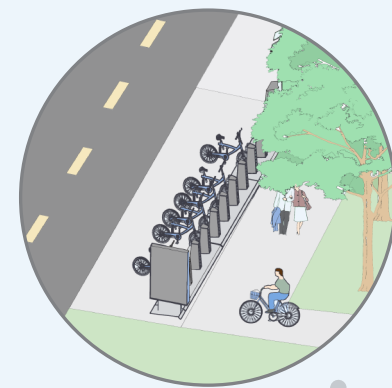


What is an
EARTH BATTERY ?

The EARTH BATTERY, located within the spherical planter, is an arrangement of zinc and copper metals placed in series. The moist soil of the plant will act as a conductor that facilitates an electrochemical reaction. This electrochemical reaction then produces an electrical current that powers the LED light within the top of the spherical planter.



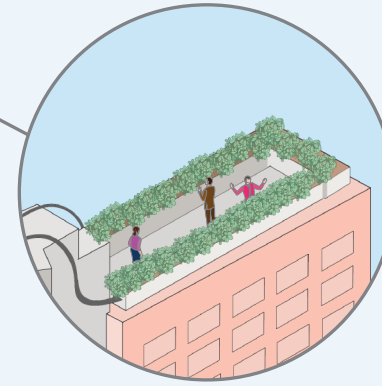
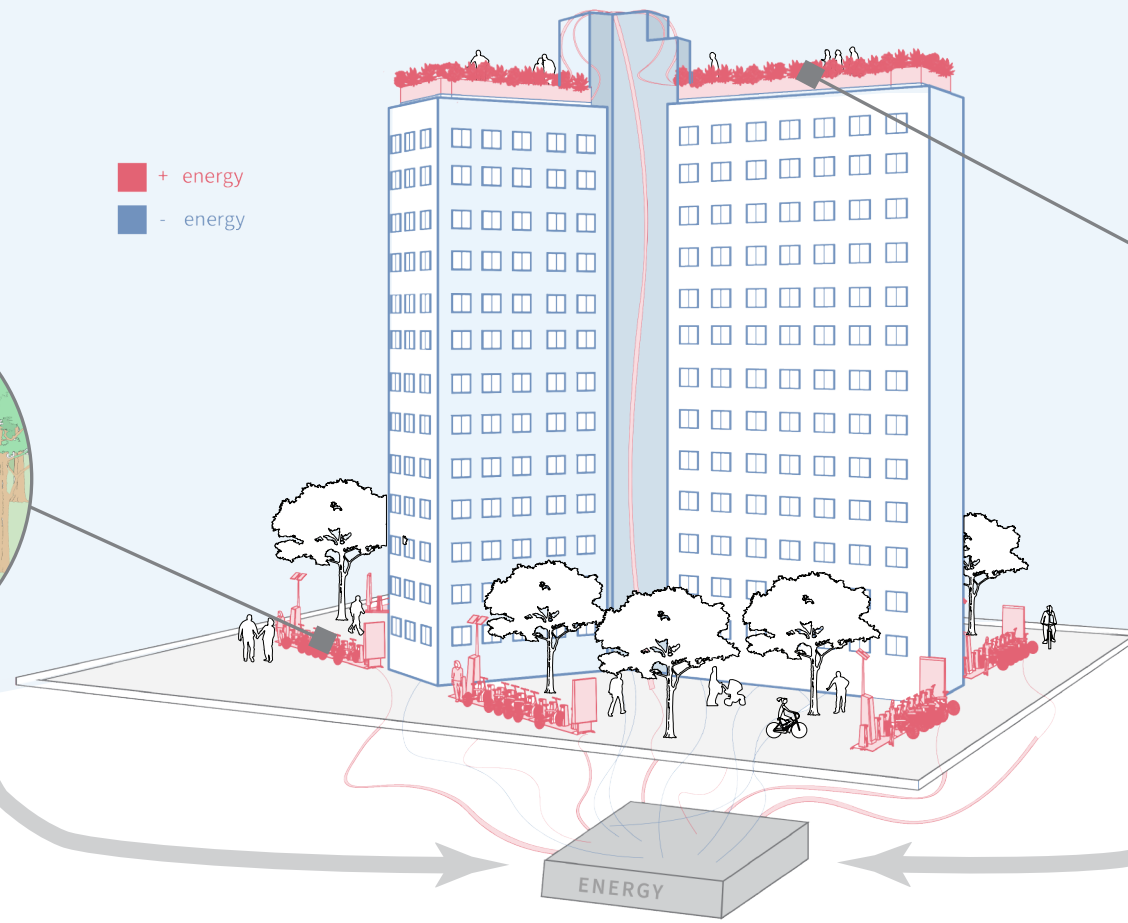
In my final presentation, I proposed a series of renovations that would transform the Manhattanville Houses into a closed energy system. In this system, all energy used by residents can be produced on-site through mechanical energy, created through Citibike usage, and through earth energy, created through the maintenance of rooftop community gardens.



① CITIBIKE STATIONS

Six modified Citibike stations will be added to the perimeter of every apartment complex (in total 36 Citibike stations). Residents can use these bikes for their everyday commutes for no charge (charges subsidized by PACT). These Citibikes are modified to capture and contain kinetic energy so that when residents park their bikes back at the apartment charging stations, the stored kinetic energy feeds into the contained generator for the apartment.

■ + energy
■ - energy



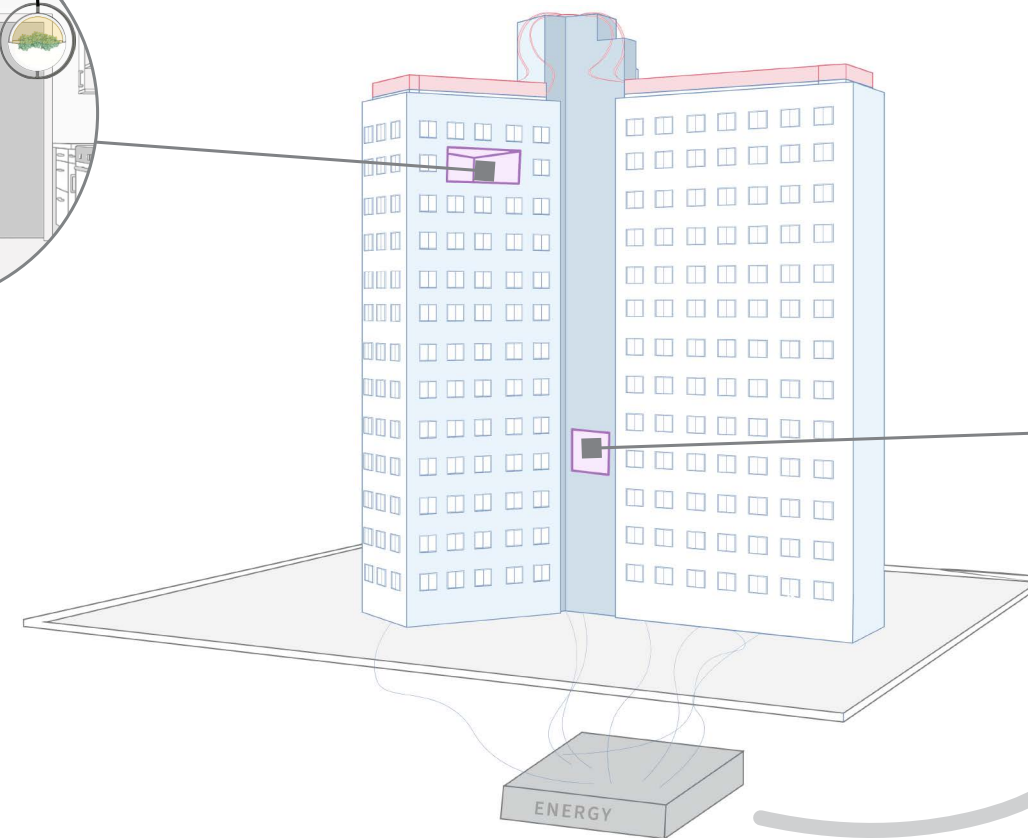
② ROOFTOP GARDENS

The roofs of all the apartment buildings (18 roofs total) will be landscaped with community food gardens. Residents can enjoy growing fruits and vegetables in this newly landscaped space. Additionally, earth battery infrastructure will be installed into the soil of every garden so that the soil of these gardens can also serve as energy-producing batteries that feed the generator contained underground the apartment complexes.



③ 00PHOTOPLANTERS

The lighting fixtures in all 1,272 apartment units will be replaced with highly efficient 00photoplanter fixtures. This new lighting system is not internally connected to the apartment's electricity system, rather it requires external charging in the apartment's 00photoplanter charging chambers (4). This modularity allows for residents to freely customize the lighting placement in their homes.

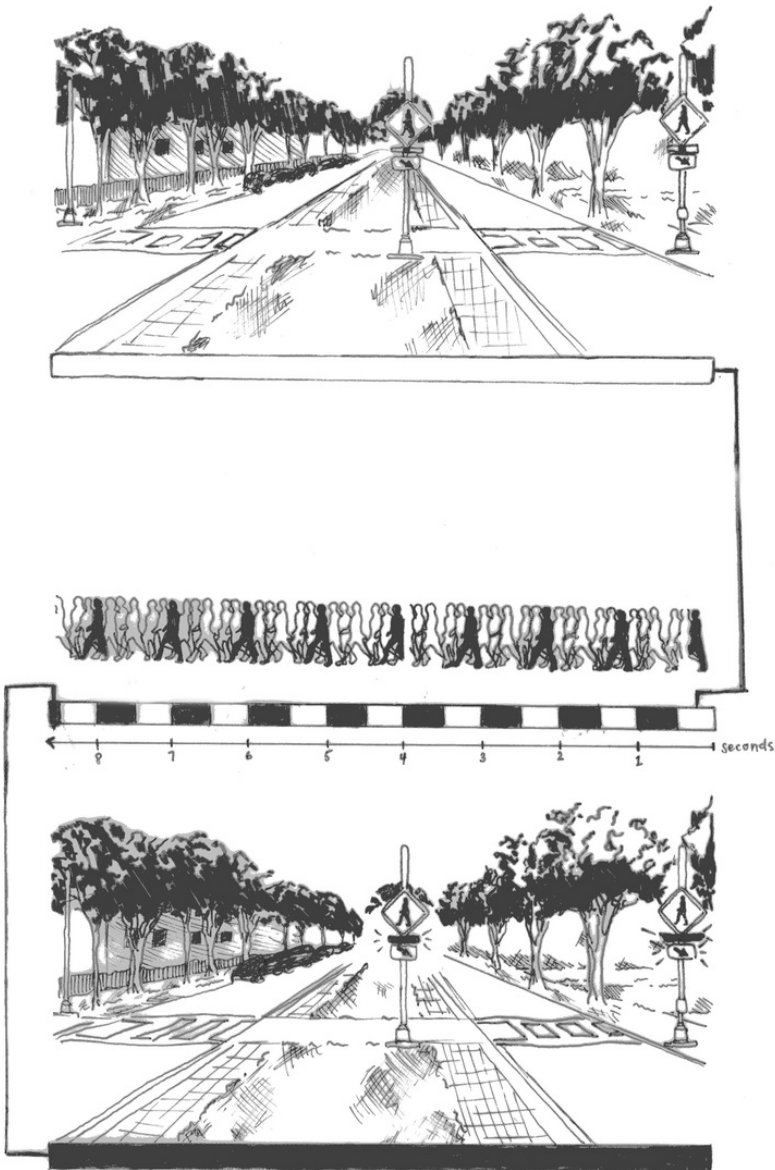
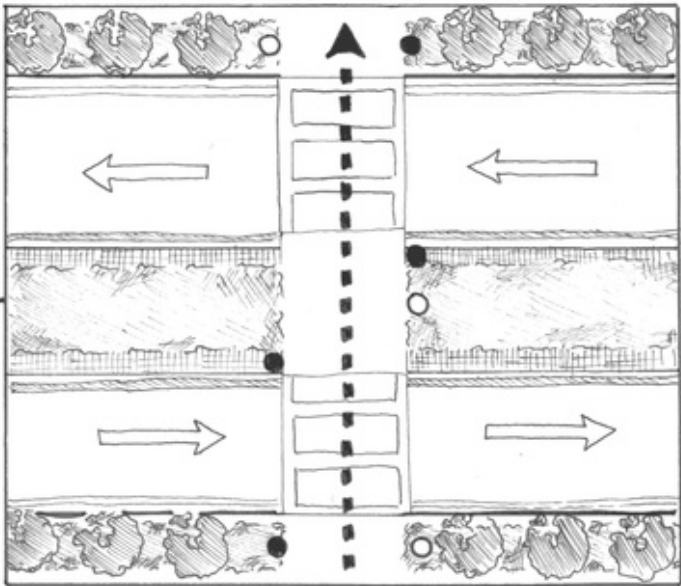
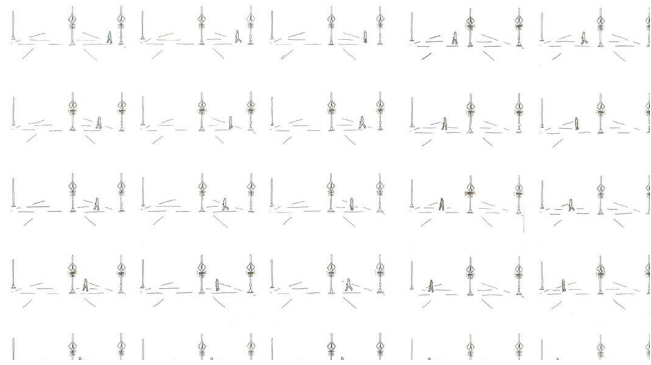
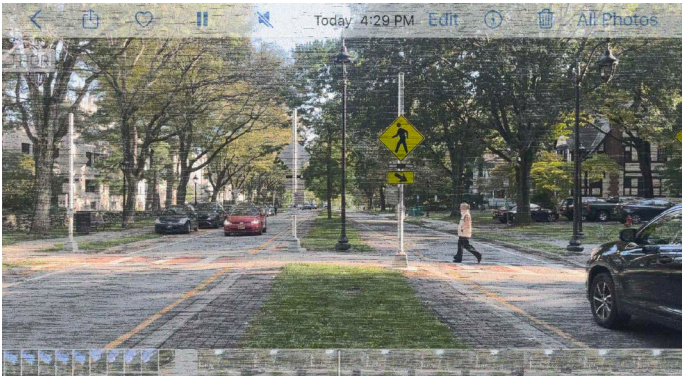


④ 00PHOTOPLANTER CHARGING CHAMBERS

Located in the central tower of each apartment complex will be 00photoplanter community charging chambers on each floor for residents to charge their 00photoplanters. When a 00photoplanter runs out of battery, residents can go to the charging chambers and exchange their 00photoplanter for a fully charged 00photoplanter. The charging chambers are extremely energy-efficient, require little maintenance, and run 24/7.

How can a 3D dynamic movement be represented using a stationary, 2D medium?

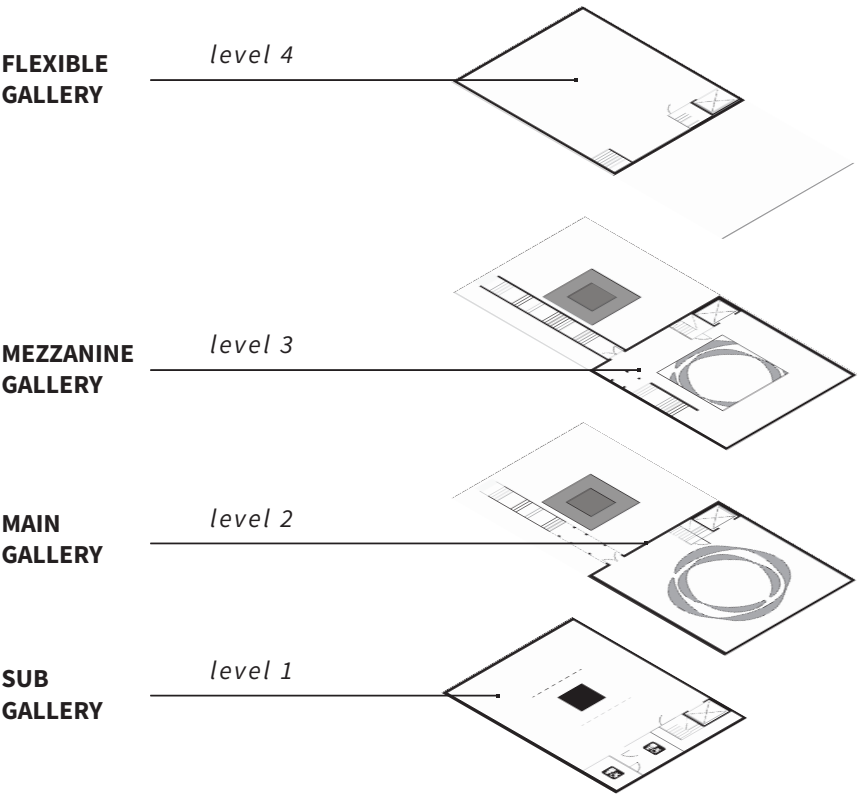
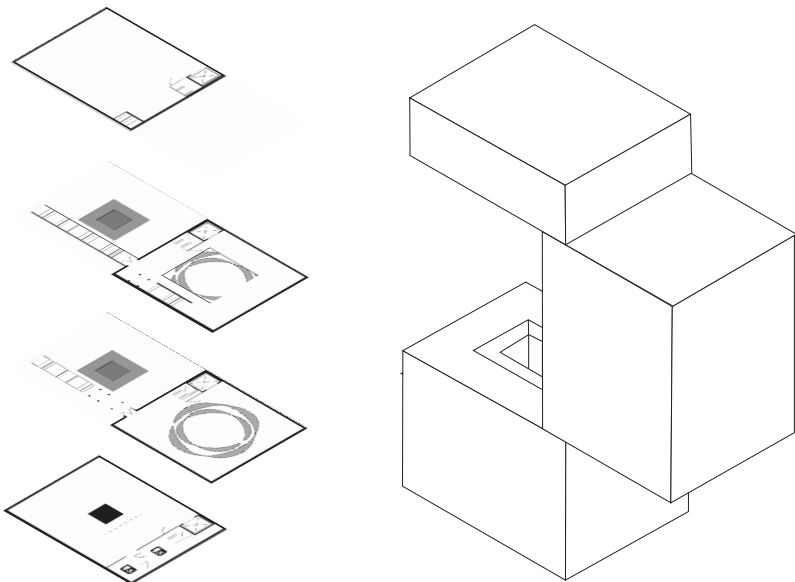
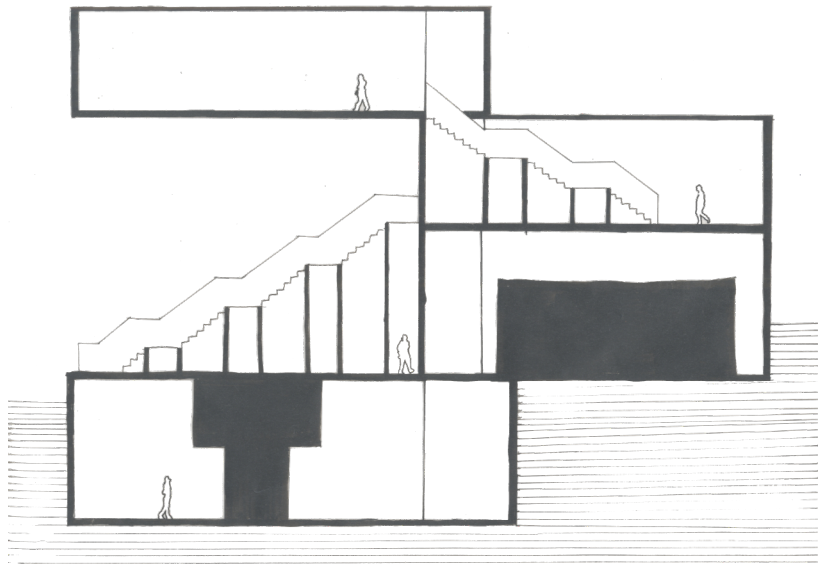
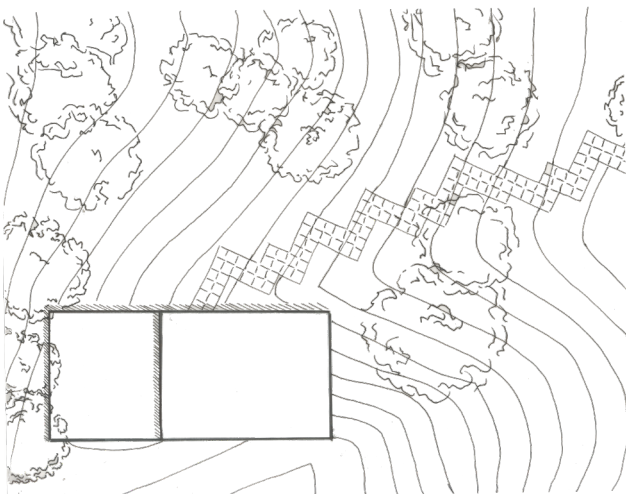
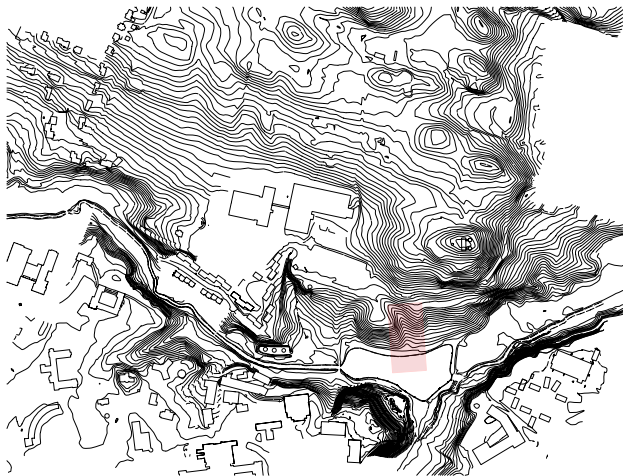
This was the question that I sought out to solve with this exercise, taking the everyday movement of my walk to class as my case study.

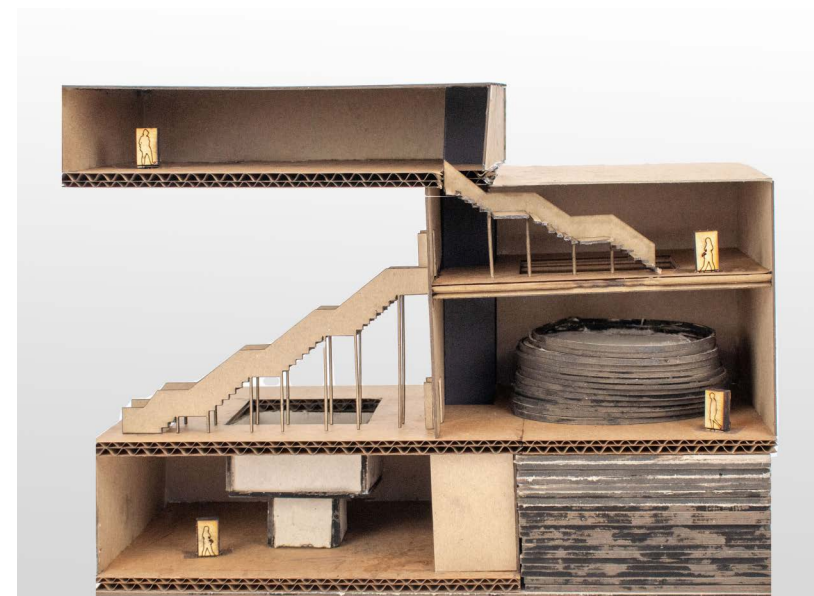
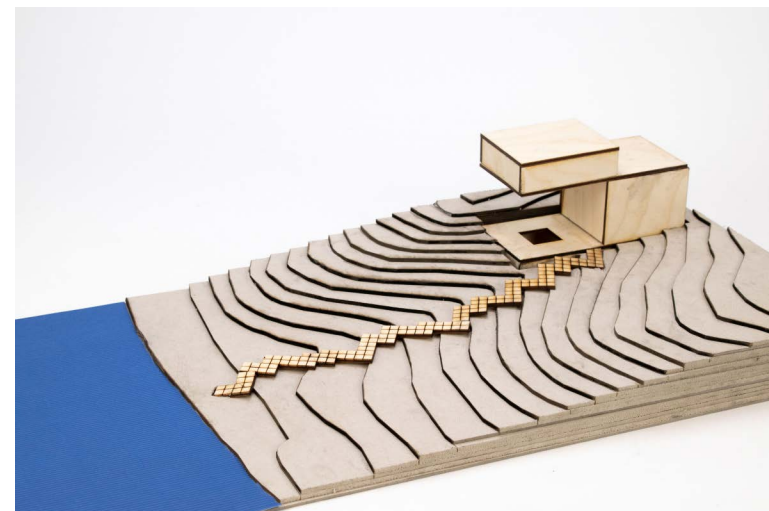
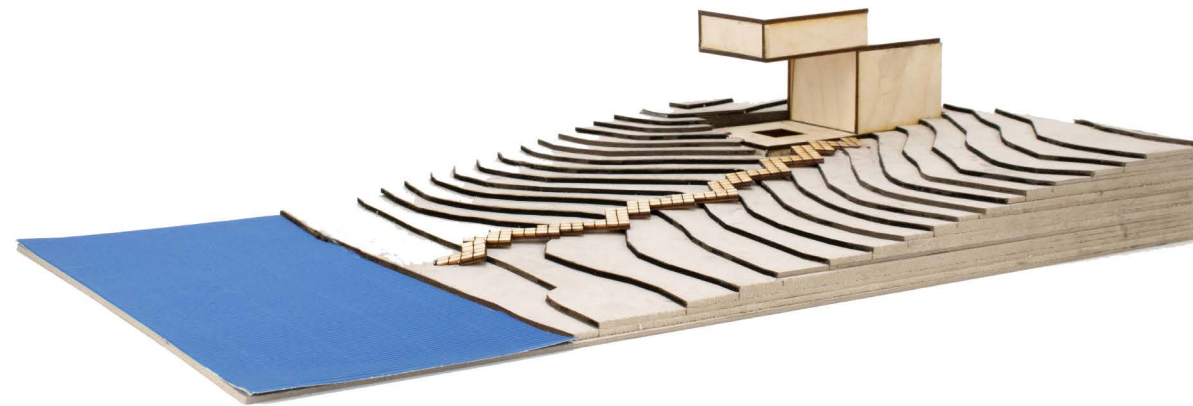


YEAR: Fall 2023
COURSE: Architectural Design I
INSTRUCTOR: Tobias Armbrorst
LOCATION: Vassar College

Epilogue: Explorations
Study 2 | site and form

For my final project for Architectural Design I, I was tasked with the design and articulation of a museum space sited on the Vassar College Campus. Within the design, I was instructed to 1) consider the existing topography of our assigned site and 2) incorporate two pieces from Dia: Beacon's permanent collection within the final design.





For my design workshop seminar, my classmates and I collaboratively designed and published an eleven-book series of interactive booklets exploring the potential of gardens as strategic assets within public housing communities. I led the team’s research direction and design development, with a particular focus on the sections of the booklet highlighted on the following page.

NYCHA developments are often situated in areas characterized by food deserts and high food vulnerability. In recent years, grassroots models of small-scale urban food production have emerged in the form of community gardens cultivating edible perennials—such as Red Hook Farms in Brooklyn, New York, located directly adjacent to NYCHA’s Red Hook Houses.

This project investigated the potential of NYCHA open spaces as sites for food production and examined how these spaces might be leveraged as material resources to address urban food insecurity in areas of greatest vulnerability.

