

architectural design

PORTFOLIO

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MYTHOLOGIES OF SYSTEMS

Exploring and Disrupting Systems of Exclusion

This project is rooted in the critical exploration of systems design as both a mechanism of power and a site of erasure. Through gamification, modeling, and narrative storytelling, the studio interrogated how rules, boundaries, and hierarchies are constructed to include some and exclude others. Each system: economic, social, political, or spatial carries a mythology: a logic that seems neutral until disrupted.

Over the semester, I constructed a speculative prison-military-media complex, tracing how architectural space, incarcerated labor, and media manipulation interact to sustain cycles of exploitation. By mapping, glitching, and reimagining this system, I exposed the subtle complicities that uphold it, privatized prison labor, restricted narratives, and hidden thresholds of control.

Using glitches, modular disruptions, and character-based storytelling, I reoriented this world through the lens of those excluded from it. The final intervention, a towering media house embodies both visibility and concealment, anchoring the system while revealing its inner fractures. Through iterative modeling, visual mapping, and narrative sequencing, the project critiques systemic erasure while imagining new thresholds of agency and disruption. Reframing Incarceration through Architecture & Media. This project investigates the architecture of power within a prison-industrial complex, tracing how incarceration is sustained and obscured through systems of labor, media, and corporate control. It unfolds across multiple scales, from the intimate space of a work gear room to the monumental presence of a media skyscraper, revealing the hidden thresholds where influence and resistance collide.



I. RULES: Present the System

3 - 5

Part A: Miniature Systems Mapping

Part B: Microcosm Analysis – The Alabama Prison System

II. GLITCH: Reframe the System

6 - 10

Part A: 10 5x5 Modular Glitches

Part B: 5x5x5 Threshold Artefacts

III. INTERVENTION: Reorient the System

11 - 14

Part A: Cartography

Part B: Threshold Devices (S, M, L)

IV. REPRESENTATION: Represent the System

15 - 22

Part A: Postcards and Storyboards

Part B: Final Threshold

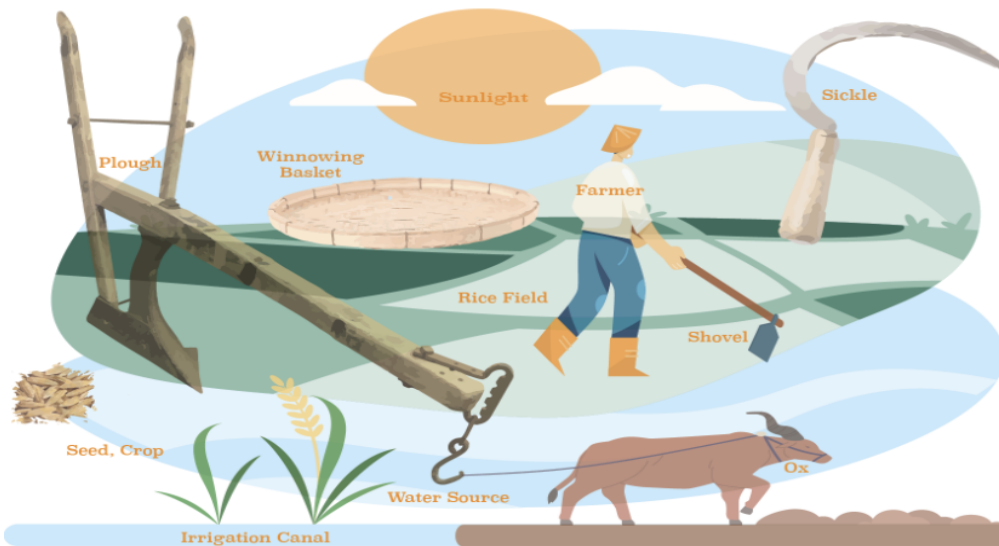
Part I RULES

The project begins with a mini systems map of rice harvesting, a daily system of labor with embedded hierarchies and flows. This leads into a macro analysis of the Alabama prison system, mapping how incarcerated labor, prison officials, private corporations, advocacy groups, and parole-denied prisoners operate within a tightly regulated ecosystem. Through megadrawings and diagrams, I visualized how resources like commissary, transportation, and manufacturing circulate among players under explicit and implicit rules of control and exclusion.

I- RULES

part a: mini systems map

Rule Set: Rice Plantation System



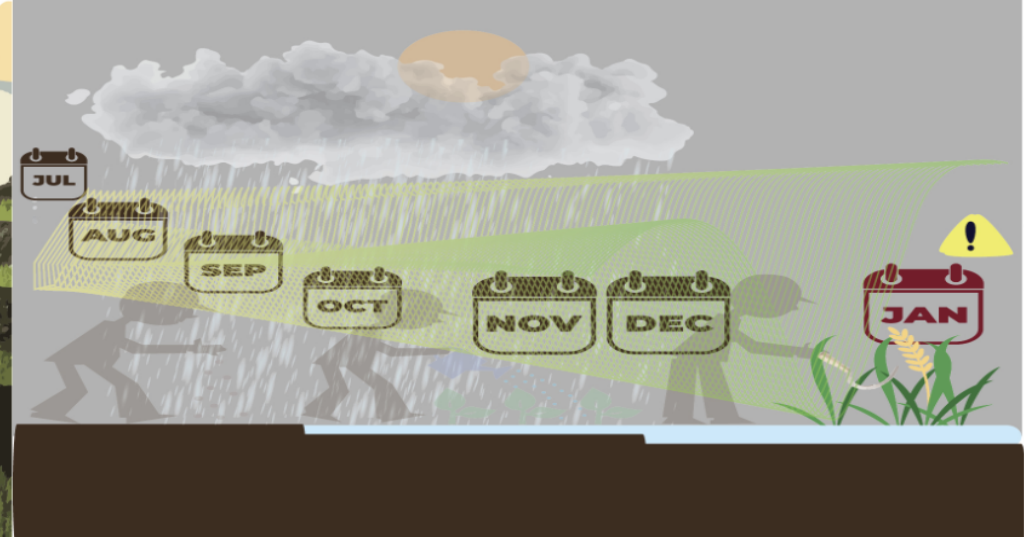
Ideal System Map



Neutral System Map: Good Weather Condition/ Manual



Variable System Map



I- RULES

part b: microcosm- an analysis of complex systems

IMPOSED SYSTEMS:

The Alabama Prison Industrial Complex

"Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing 'patterns of change' rather than static 'snapshots.'"
- Peter Senge

A system is a group of parts working together to achieve a unified goal. There are systems everywhere in life that often go unnoticed until they are questioned—questions that arise when analyzing and understanding the origin and process behind certain outcomes. For example, when an individual plans to bring a specific dish to a potluck with friends, they have an origin point of realization of the dish they intend to bring. The individual then begins the process of gathering the necessary ingredients and tools and following the recipe for the desired dish. However, what if the individual does not use their own ingredients to make the dish, but rather their roommate, then serves their friends first and gives their roommate the leftovers, while also expecting the roommate to clean up afterwards? The roommate becomes an unwilling participant in an **imposed system**—one in which they had no say in how their resources were used, were left dissatisfied, and were burdened with responsibilities they did not choose.

Before:

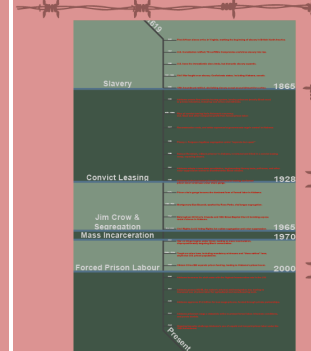
Ingredients

After:

Tools

But what happens when the system is not just about food, but about the life and liberty of individuals? What happens if those at the bottom of the system never have a voice?

In Alabama, similar to the previously mentioned roommate, there is a large population of incarcerated individuals playing a crucial role in an imposed system called the **Alabama Prison Industrial Complex (APIC)**. Rooted in a historical continuum from slavery and convict leasing to modern mass incarceration and forced labor, the APIC operates through deeply embedded social, economic, and spatial structures that sustain its power. Analyzing these frameworks reveals how Alabama's prison system does not function as a means of justice, but as a mechanism of control and profit.

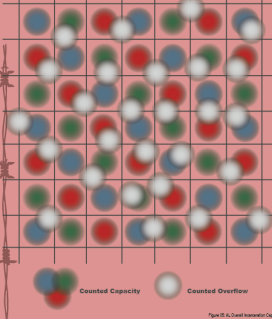
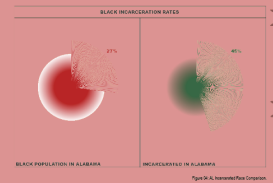


The APIC is not a new system—it is simply the latest version of an old cycle. After the Civil War, Alabama did not abolish enslavement; it re-branded it. Slavery became convict leasing, where Black men were disproportionately arrested for "crimes" like vagrancy or even homelessness, then forced to work under brutal conditions. The system adapted, but the goal remained the same—cheap, controlled labor. The 13th Amendment, though it abolished slavery, left a critical loophole—allowing involuntary servitude as punishment for crime. In response, Black Codes and Jim Crow laws emerged, criminalizing minor infractions like vagrancy and loitering, effectively re-enslaving newly freed Black individuals under the guise of law and order.

By the end of the 19th century, Alabama's economy had become dependent on convict leasing, a system in which incarcerated individuals—overwhelmingly Black men—were leased to private, profit-driven industries, generating income for the state while subjecting prisoners to brutal and inhumane conditions. Though Alabama formally abolished convict leasing in 1920, forced labor persisted through chain gangs and later through the expansion of modern prison industries. Today, Alabama prisoners contract prison labor to private corporations like the Alabama Correctional Industries and agricultural companies, often paying workers as little as \$0.25 per hour—if they are paid at all. For every 100,000 people in Alabama, 358 are behind bars. That's nearly 50% higher than the national average. If Alabama were a country, it would have one of the highest incarceration rates in the world—higher than Russia or China. These figures are not just statistics; they represent lives trapped in a cycle that profits from their incarceration. (Figure 13)

If prisons were truly about justice and rehabilitation, wouldn't we expect a state with so many incarcerated individuals to have lower crime rates? So why does Alabama continue to struggle with crime and recidivism?

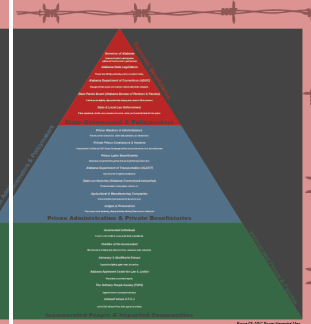
African Americans in Alabama, despite representing only 27% of the state's population, make up over 45% of its prison population, a clear reflection of the racial disparities that have defined the system since its inception. Over time, Alabama's prison system has expanded, not out of necessity, but in response to political and economic incentives that prioritize incarceration over rehabilitation. The rise of "tough on crime" policies in the 1980s and 1990s—driven by the War on Drugs—accelerated mass incarceration, disproportionately targeting Black and low-income communities. Between 1980 and 2020, Alabama's prison population increased by more than 400%, as a direct result of punitive laws and a growing reliance on contracts with private prisons that turned incarceration into a profitable business. (Figure 14-15)



Beyond its growing reach, the very infrastructure of Alabama's prison system is crumbling. Many of the state's correctional facilities, some more than 50 years old, are in a state of severe disrepair. However, rather than investing in decarceration, rehabilitation, or addressing the root causes of incarceration, Alabama has proposed a \$1.2 billion expansion of its prison system (Equal Justice Initiative, 2022). Meanwhile, overcrowding depletes already scarce resources, leading to extreme heat, poor sanitation, and unsafe living conditions—further proof that Alabama's prison system is not designed for justice, but for control and profit, regardless of the human cost. (Figures 16-17)

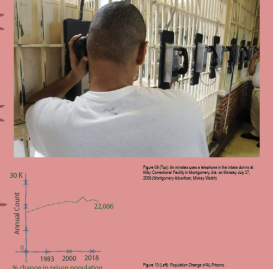


At the top of the APIC, politicians and private corporations make decisions that drive the system running. At the bottom, incarcerated individuals and their families are powerless—trapped in a structure designed to profit from their suffering. With the Governor, the Alabama Department of Corrections (ADOC), and the state legislature at the top, they can dictate prison policies and allocate funds, shaping the system to align with political and financial interests rather than rehabilitation or justice. Second, prison directors, parole boards, and private contractors enforce these policies, overseeing daily operations and ensuring the system runs efficiently—not for the welfare of the incarcerated, but for the continuation of incarceration itself. And finally, incarcerated individuals, their families, and advocacy groups are excluded from decision-making, bearing the consequences of a system they have no control over. Corporate interests further entrench the APIC's power. Private prison companies like CoreCivic and GEO Group profit from prison labor and facility management, actively lobbying for stricter sentencing laws to keep incarceration rates high. In 2020 alone, CoreCivic and GEO spent over \$1.6 million lobbying for prison expansion and labor contracts (OpenSecrets, 2023). The result is a system that does not seek rehabilitation but to sustain itself—prioritizing profit over human lives. Alabama's prisons do not merely serve as correctional facilities—they function as a state-sanctioned labor force, feeding industries like manufacturing, agriculture, and textiles. Incarcerated individuals produce goods ranging from furniture to kerosene stoves and agricultural products, yet are paid as little as \$0.13 per hour—wages that underscore their exploitation more than their rehabilitation. To keep incarceration rates high, ensuring a steady supply of workers who have

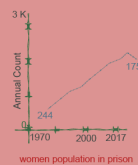


The state's economic dependence on this cheap labor creates a perverse incentive: no bargaining power and no option but to participate.

The weight of this system falls most heavily on low-income and African American communities, who are disproportionately targeted by harsh sentencing and receive few parole possibilities. The parole approval rate in Alabama fell from 54% in 2017 to 19% in 2022, extending the length of incarceration and further entrenching systemic oppression (Marguerite Advait, 2022). Meanwhile, the financial burden extends beyond prison walls—hundreds of incarcerated individuals face economic costs, paying for phone calls, commissary, and legal fees, forced to navigate a system designed to extract resources from those least able to afford it.



The APIC operates through the control of people, goods, and information—each serving as a mechanism to sustain incarceration while restricting autonomy and access to resources. The who and how of prison population is dictated by administrators, parole, recidivism, and transfers, all of which shape the revolving door of the system. With a recidivism rate of 71% in Alabama, the cycle of incarceration persists, driven by the state's failure to offer meaningful rehabilitation opportunities. Instead of equipping individuals with the tools to reintegrate into society, the system resources many will return, reinforcing its own permanence. Prisons rely on a steady supply of food, medical resources, and corporate products, but shortages and inflation create extreme conditions within ADOC facilities. Reports of malnutrition and hazardous medical care expose a system where even basic needs are insufficient—proof that Alabama's prisons are designed to punish rather than rehabilitate. Communication behind bars is not a right, but a commodity—one that comes at an enormous cost. Alabama's prisons charge up to \$0.30 per email and \$1.00 per phone call, effectively limiting incarcerated individuals' ability to connect with their families, access legal help, or advocate for themselves. By restricting communication, the system isolates those within, ensuring they are voiceless and struggle—remain unheard.



women population in prison

Alabama's prisons are not just places of confinement—they are deliberately embedded in the state's economic and geographic landscape, reinforcing a dependence on incarceration that extends beyond prison walls. Strategically placed in rural and economically depressed areas, these facilities serve as lifelines for communities with few other industries, making the expansion of prisons a financial decision, more than a moral one. Physically, Alabama's prisons are designed for confinement and control. High-security fences, watchtowers, and restricted movement zones dictate daily life, ensuring those inside remain invisible and unheard. The Donaldson Correctional Facility, for example, has one of the highest solitary confinement rates in the country, with some individuals isolated for more than a decade—a punishment that extends far beyond the limits of justice. Despite federal intervention, Alabama continues to expand its prison system. In 2020, the U.S. Department of Justice sued the state for unconstitutional conditions in its prisons, citing extreme overcrowding, unsanitary facilities, and rampant violence (DOJ Report, 2020). However, rather than address these crises through decarceration or systemic reform, Alabama's response remains the same—build more prisons, perpetuate the cycle, and sustain a system that thrives on incarceration, regardless of the human cost.

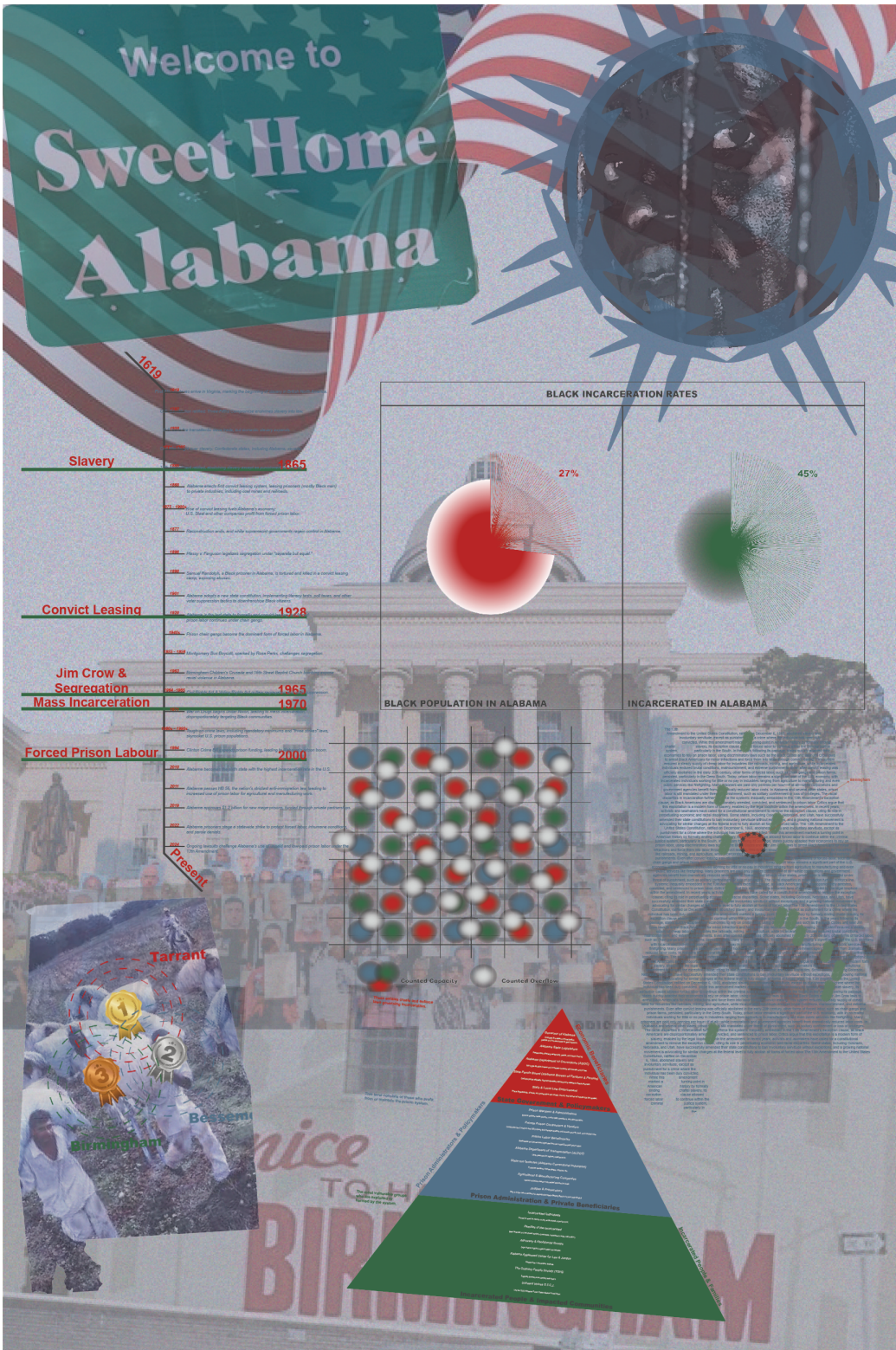


The APIC does not just confine individuals—it subjects them to inhumane living conditions that threaten their health, safety, and dignity. From the water they drink to the air they breathe, incarcerated individuals face an environment designed to break them down rather than rehabilitate them. Access to clean water and adequate nutrition is a fundamental human right, but Alabama's prisons routinely violate this standard. Reports reveal incarcerated individuals are given expired food and are forced to drink contaminated water, exposing them to illness and malnutrition. Rather than nourish those under their custody, the system dehumanizes them further, reducing survival to a continuous struggle. Alabama's prisons are environmental pressure cookers, lacking proper climate control even as indoor temperatures soar over 100°F in the summer. Extreme heat, compounded by overcrowding, turns cells into lethal spaces, where relief is nonexistent and suffering is inevitable. As climate change intensifies, the state's refusal to implement temperature regulations turns incarceration not just into a sentence, but into a test of endurance. The consequences of Alabama's prison system extend beyond prison walls, seeping into the land and surrounding communities. Toxic waste from prison industries is improperly disposed of, contaminating soil and water in rural areas already burdened by the economic crisis. Just as incarcerated individuals are stripped of their agency within prisons, nearby communities bear the environmental costs of a system that prioritizes profit over people.



The APIC embodies a system of imposed exploitation, backed by economic incentives, racial disparities, and entrenched political lobbying. Decarcerating this framework requires structural intervention: eliminating unpaid prison labor and establishing fair wages, expanding eligibility for parole and rehabilitative initiatives, redirecting investments toward community-based alternatives to incarceration, and severing ties with private prison contracts to redirect funds toward education and social services. However, look within and ask yourself, are we willing to make these changes? Or will we continue to accept a system that values profit over people? Organizations like Alabama Appleseed and the Equal Justice Initiative lead the fight for systemic change, advocating for legal reforms and independent oversight of prisons. Confronting the APIC requires more than superficial policy adjustments—it requires dismantling the economic dependencies that sustain mass incarceration and prioritizing human dignity over profit.

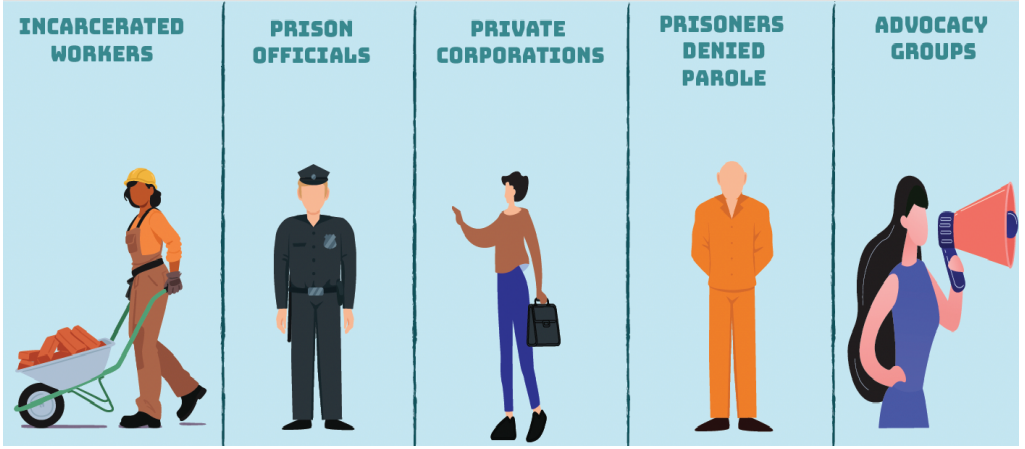
ALABAMA APPLESEED
CENTER FOR LAW & JUSTICE



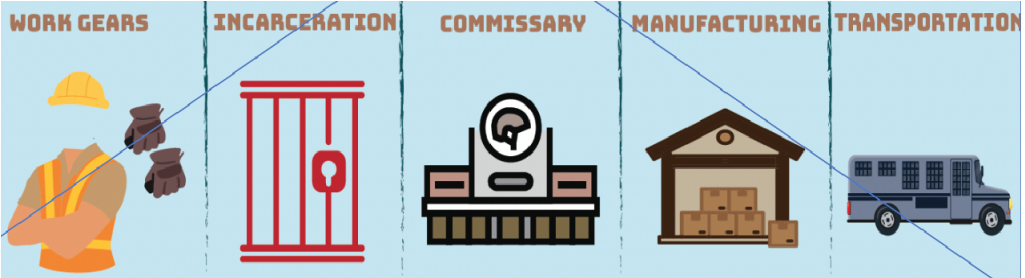
Players and Resources

Identified from the Alabama prison system microcosm, the players represent key agents who sustain and are affected by carceral operations: incarcerated workers, prison officials, private corporations, prisoners denied parole, and advocacy groups. Each player interacts with specific resources that structure the system's flows of control, labor, and mobility ranging from work gear and incarceration infrastructure to commissary networks, manufacturing facilities, and transportation systems. This mapping highlights how labor is extracted, narratives are controlled, and rights are negotiated within a closed-loop of economic and institutional dependency. This revelation of the underlying power structures and dependencies within a closed institutional loop clarified how control is distributed and sustained through labor, surveillance, profit, and restricted mobility. It informed every phase of the project, from the glitch matrices to the design of threshold artefacts and narrative storyboards, allowing each spatial and representational move to be rooted in real systemic dynamics. By making these relationships explicit, the project was able to critically explore the role of architecture and architectural elements in enabling the systems of exclusion.

Players



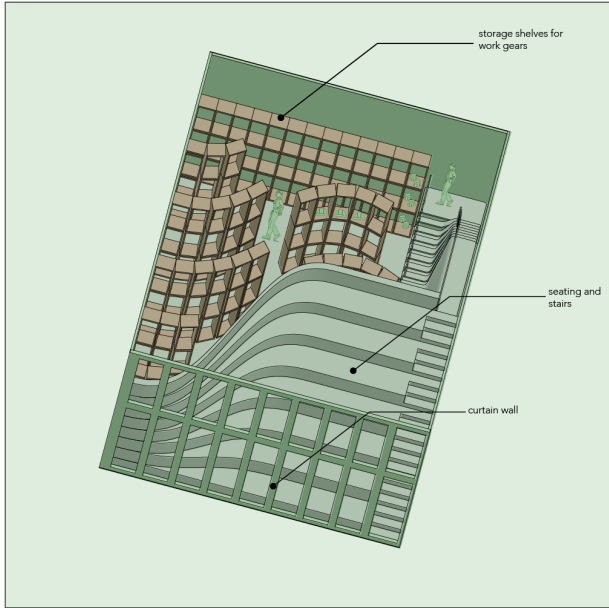
Resources



Part II GLITCH

Using a 5x5 matrix, I disrupted the spatial logics of incarceration across five scales. Players and resources from the prison system were reassembled into axonometric configurations, applying organizational strategies (grid, radial, linear, central, and clustered) and spatial glitches (mirror, rotate, overlap, shear, and scale). At the room scale, work gear storage became a threshold condition. At the building scale, a prison's internal structure was examined, and at the block scale, the system's entanglement with private corporations and commissary networks emerged.

II- GLITCH
part a: 5x5 : modular scaleable glitches

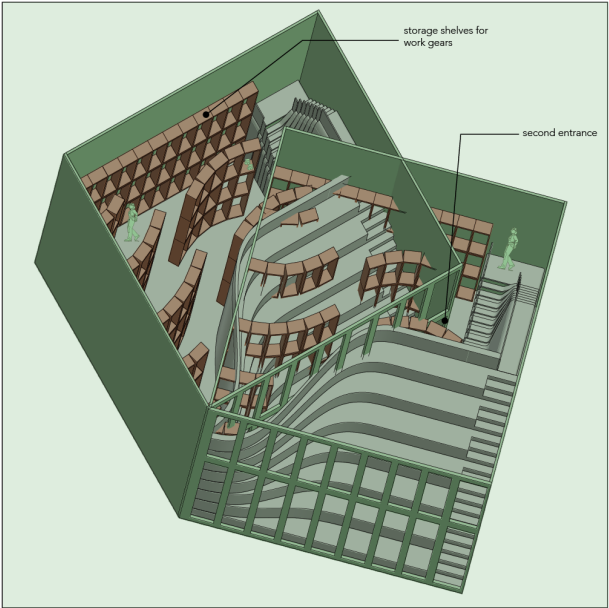


SCALE
ROOM | building | block | neighborhood | city
1" = 6'-0"

PLAYER(S)
INCARCERATED WORKERS | prison officials | prisoners denied parole | private corporations | advocacy groups

RESOURCE(S)
WORK GEARS | incarceration | commissary | manufacturing | transportation

ORGANIZATION
GRID | radial | linear | central | clustered

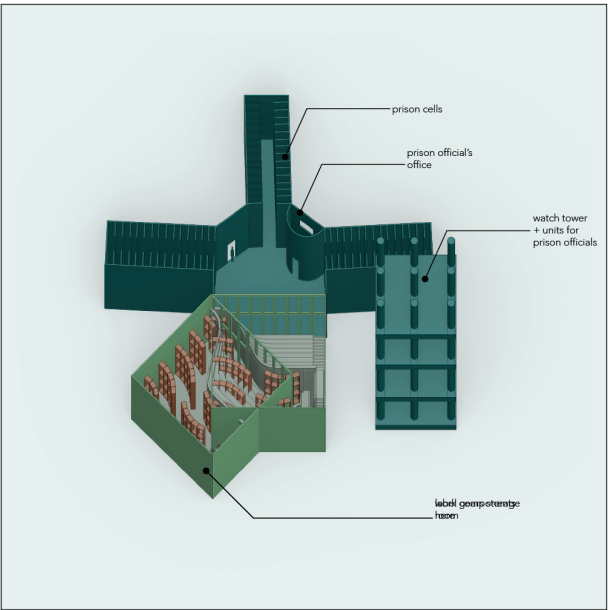


SCALE
ROOM | building | block | neighborhood | city
1" = 6'-0"

PLAYER(S)
INCARCERATED WORKERS | prison officials | prisoners denied parole | private corporations | advocacy groups

RESOURCE(S)
WORK GEARS | incarceration | commissary | manufacturing | transportation

ORGANIZATION + GLITCH
GRID | radial | linear | central | clustered
ROTATE | mirror | scale | shear | overlap

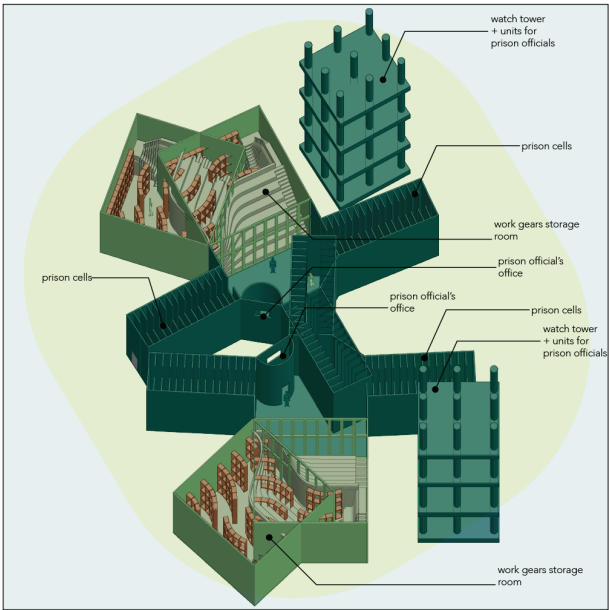


SCALE
room | BUILDING | block | neighborhood | city
1" = 16'-0"

PLAYER(S)
INCARCERATED WORKERS | PRISON OFFICIALS | prisoners denied parole | private corporations | advocacy groups

RESOURCE(S)
work gears | INCARCERATION | commissary | manufacturing | transportation

ORGANIZATION
grid | RADIAL | linear | central | clustered

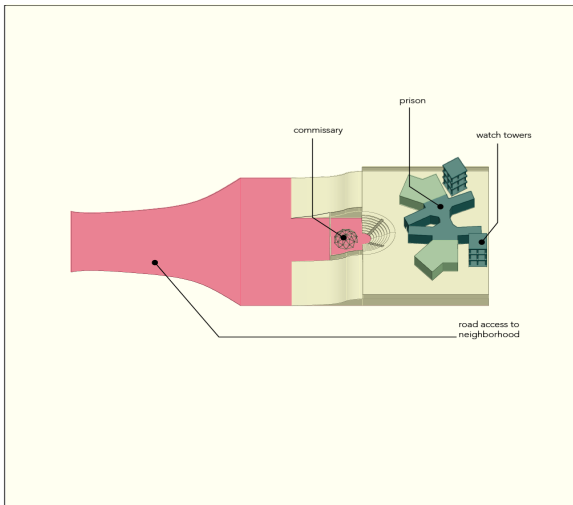


SCALE
room | BUILDING | block | neighborhood | city
1" = 16'-0"

PLAYER(S)
INCARCERATED WORKERS | PRISON OFFICIALS | prisoners denied parole | private corporations | advocacy groups

RESOURCE(S)
work gears | INCARCERATION | commissary | manufacturing | transportation

ORGANIZATION + GLITCH
grid | RADIAL | linear | central | clustered
rotate | MIRROR | scale | shear | overlap



SCALE

room | building | BLOCK | neighborhood | city
1" = 64'-0"

PLAYER(S)

incarcerated workers | prison officials | PRISONERS DENIED PAROLE | private corporations | advocacy groups



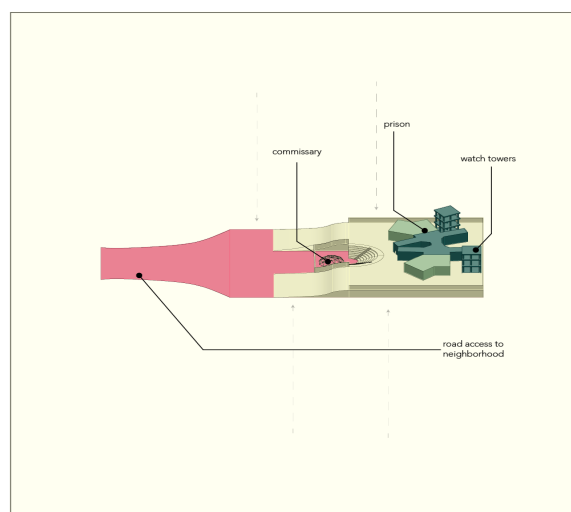
RESOURCE(S)

work gears | incarceration | COMMISSARY | manufacturing | transportation



ORGANIZATION

grid | radial | LINEAR | central | clustered



SCALE

room | building | BLOCK | neighborhood | city
1" = 64'-0"

PLAYER(S)

incarcerated workers | prison officials | PRISONERS DENIED PAROLE | private corporations | advocacy groups



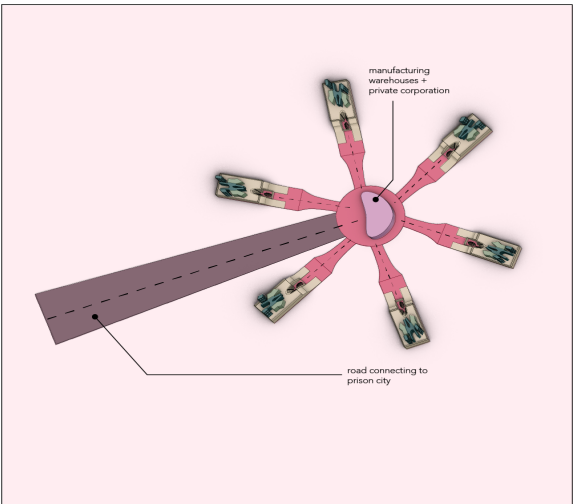
RESOURCE(S)

work gears | incarceration | COMMISSARY | manufacturing | transportation



ORGANIZATION + GLITCH

grid | radial | LINEAR | central | clustered
rotate | mirror | SCALE | shear | overlap

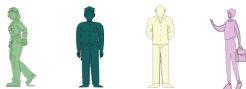


SCALE

room | building | block | NEIGHBORHOOD | city
1" = 200'-0"

PLAYER(S)

incarcerated workers | prison officials | prisoners denied parole | PRIVATE CORPORATIONS | advocacy groups



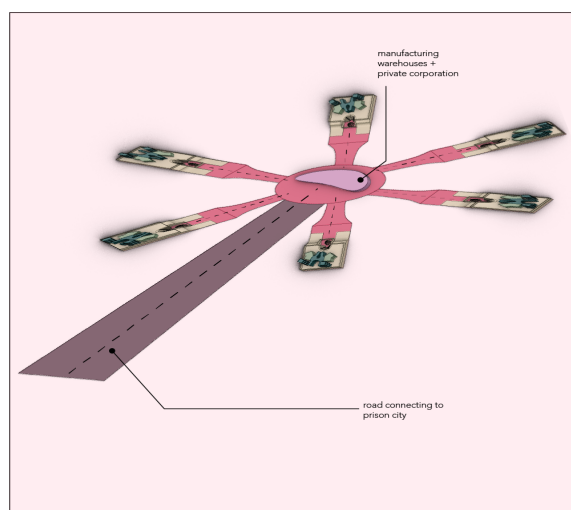
RESOURCE(S)

work gears | incarceration | commissary | MANUFACTURING | transportation



ORGANIZATION

grid | radial | linear | CENTRAL | clustered



SCALE

room | building | block | NEIGHBORHOOD | city
1" = 200'-0"

PLAYER(S)

incarcerated workers | prison officials | prisoners denied parole | PRIVATE CORPORATIONS | advocacy groups



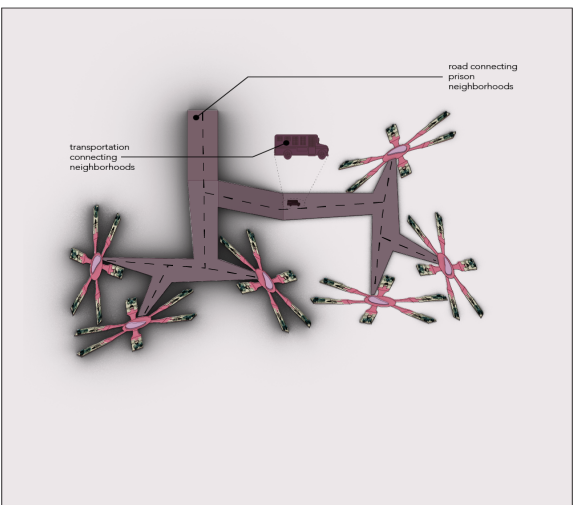
RESOURCE(S)

work gears | incarceration | commissary | MANUFACTURING | transportation



ORGANIZATION + GLITCH

grid | radial | linear | CENTRAL | clustered
rotate | mirror | scale | SHEAR | overlap



SCALE

room | building | block | neighborhood | CITY
1" = 800'-0"

PLAYER(S)

incarcerated workers | prison officials | prisoners denied parole | private corporations | ADVOCACY GROUPS



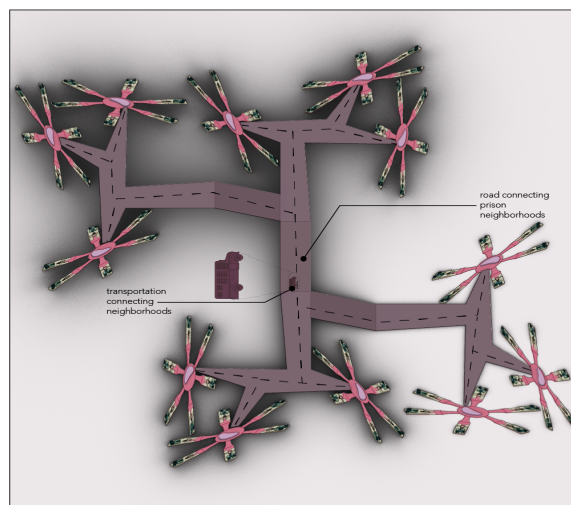
RESOURCE(S)

work gears | incarceration | commissary | manufacturing | TRANSPORTATION



ORGANIZATION

grid | radial | linear | central | CLUSTERED



SCALE

room | building | block | neighborhood | CITY
1" = 800'-0"

PLAYER(S)

incarcerated workers | prison officials | prisoners denied parole | private corporations | ADVOCACY GROUPS



RESOURCE(S)

work gears | incarceration | commissary | manufacturing | TRANSPORTATION



ORGANIZATION + GLITCH

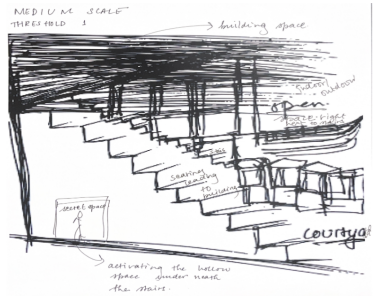
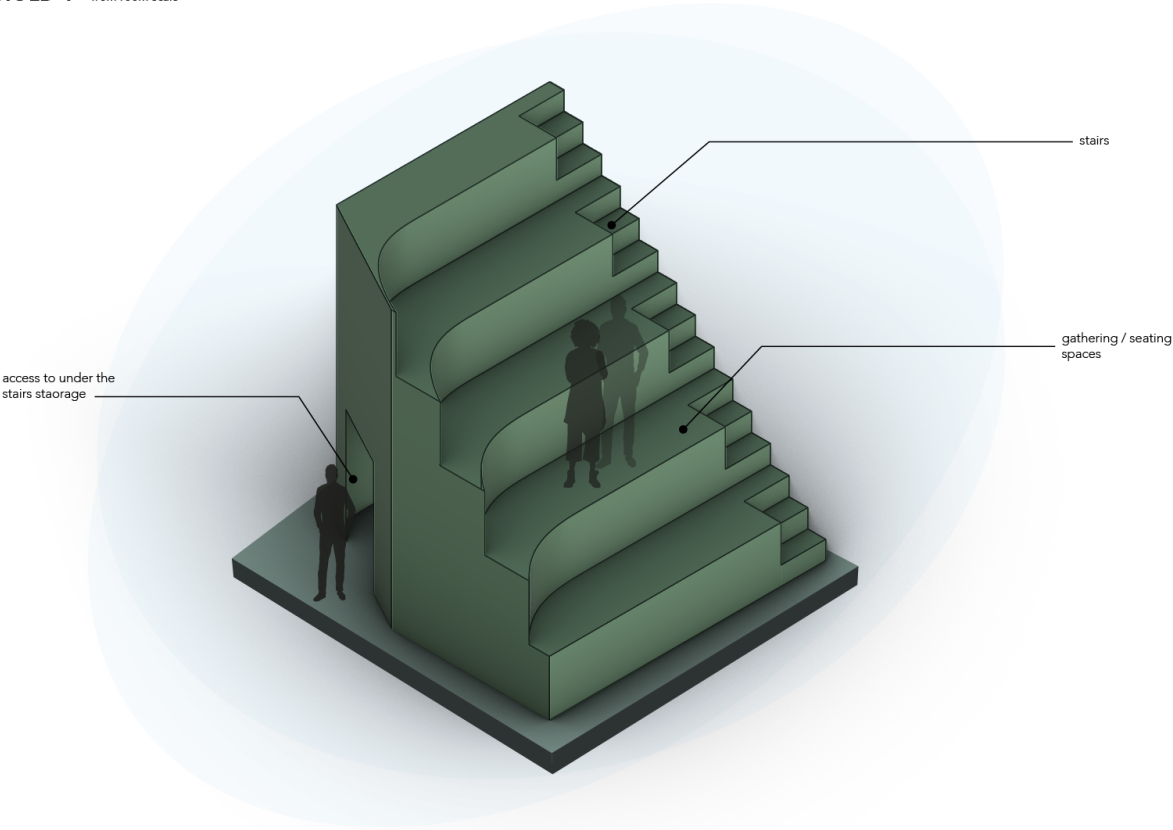
grid | radial | linear | central | CLUSTERED
rotate | mirror | scale | shear | OVERLAP



Part IIb: 5x5x5 Threshold Artefacts

Three thresholds were extracted from different scales, each representing a zone of friction. The room-scale threshold (medium) explored the backstage infrastructure of a media house, where information is filtered. The building-scale threshold (small) depicted private corporate cubicles, illustrating compliance and bureaucracy, and digital oversight. The block-scale threshold (large) addressed the prison itself as an architectural mechanism of entrapment, labor, and surveillance. I explored the “thinking through making” with the thresholds and crafted a narrative for each of the three thresholds that tell a different story.

THRESHOLD 1 - from room scale



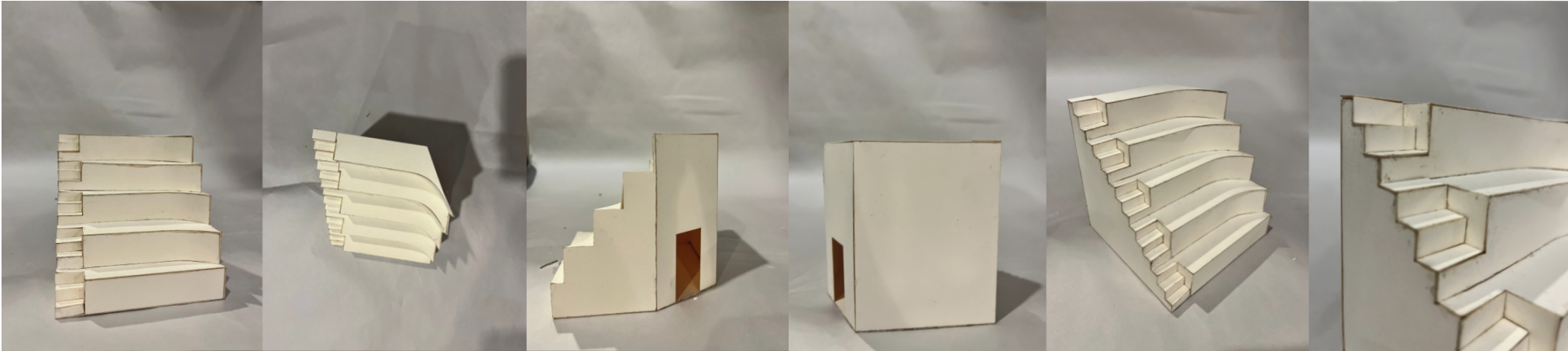
NARRATIVE TITLE: The Interplay of Visibility and Concealment
Spaces for players who seek quiet in shared spaces and interactions in between monotone lives.

SCALE: Medium

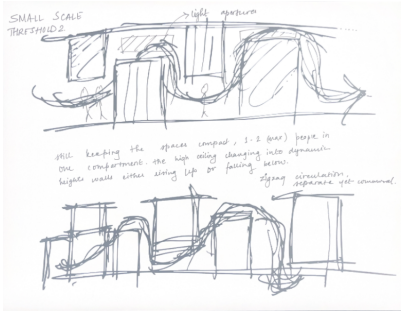
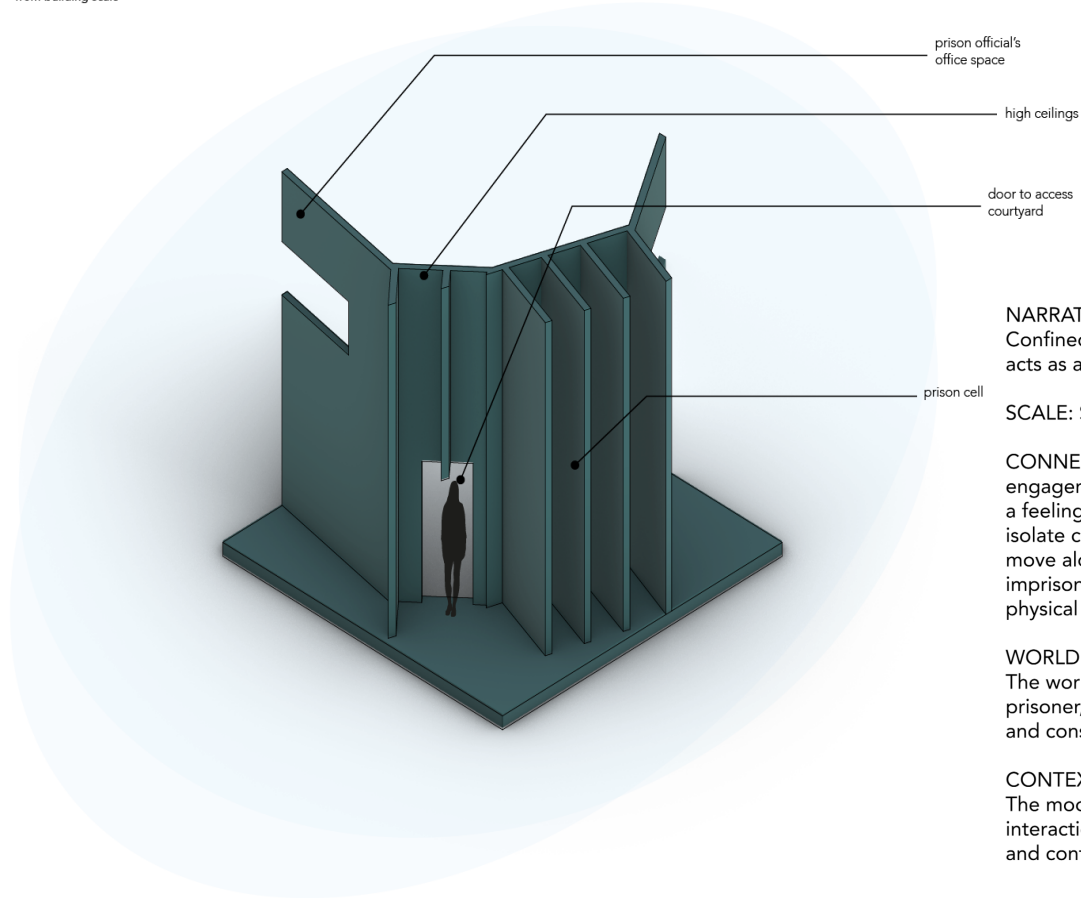
CONNECTIONS: The vertical steps are also horizontal seats, which successfully creates a dual function. The hidden door below the steps represents hierarchy as well. Some players occupy the top while others maneuver below. The physical connections are asymmetrical as the person below is in a lower, concealed vertical position, while those above are in a higher, open vertical position. Horizontally, the person under the stair may be moving in a different direction, unseen, and detached from the communal stair function, creating a split in the spatial and social dynamics.

WORLD BUILDING: The storage space underneath the steps becomes a mystery, a backstage world. Regardless of the function, the form holds secrets. The user here operates in the shadow of the more public stair.

CONTEXT: The stair is not just a transition between levels, but between access and privacy, labor and leisure, and activating spaces which otherwise would have been unused.



THRESHOLD 2 - from building scale



NARRATIVE TITLE: The Divide
Confined Space experienced very differently by each players: Prisoners and Prison Officials. It acts as a pivotal zone that determines power, movement, and control within a larger system.

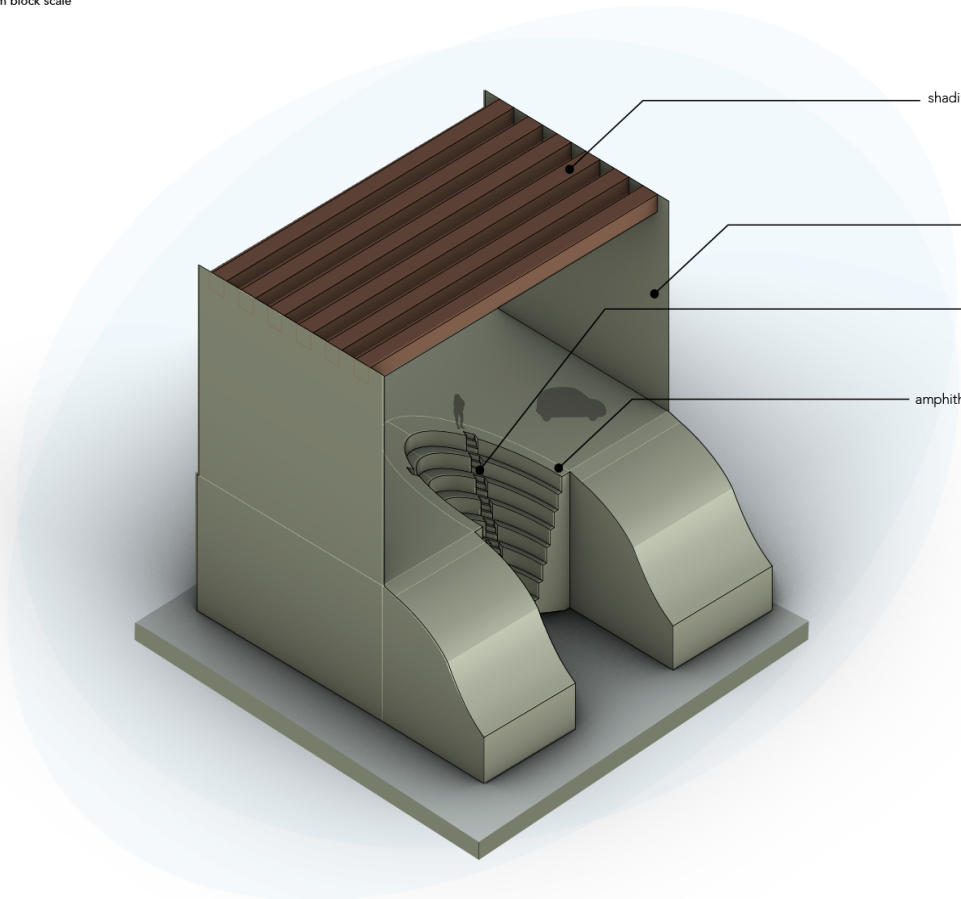
SCALE: Small

CONNECTIONS: The high ceilings and elevated vantage point allows surveillance without engagement and exaggerates the prisoner's sense of confinement. The high ceilings exaggerate a feeling of powerlessness; the eye is drawn up to freedom it cannot reach. Thick partition walls isolate cells side-by-side, preventing inmate connection. Meanwhile, the prison official and visitor move along perpendicular axes, across and through the threshold, yet never intersecting with the imprisoned. The door connecting to the courtyard and the courtyard becomes the only shared physical zone.

WORLD BUILDING:
The world within this threshold is constructed around containment and observation. For the prisoner, it is a suspended state of stillness and invisibility. For the official, it is a space of control and constant encounter with silence and surveillance embedded in the architecture itself.

CONTEXT:
The mood is silent, heavy, and watchful. The environment is engineered to suppress noise and interaction by transforming this threshold into a space of enforcing discipline, limiting movement and controlling transition.



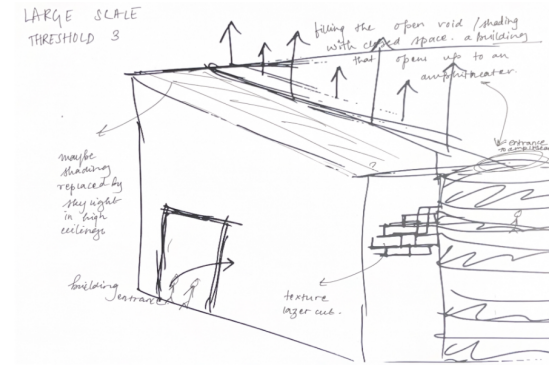


shading structure

perimeter walls

stairs

amphitheater



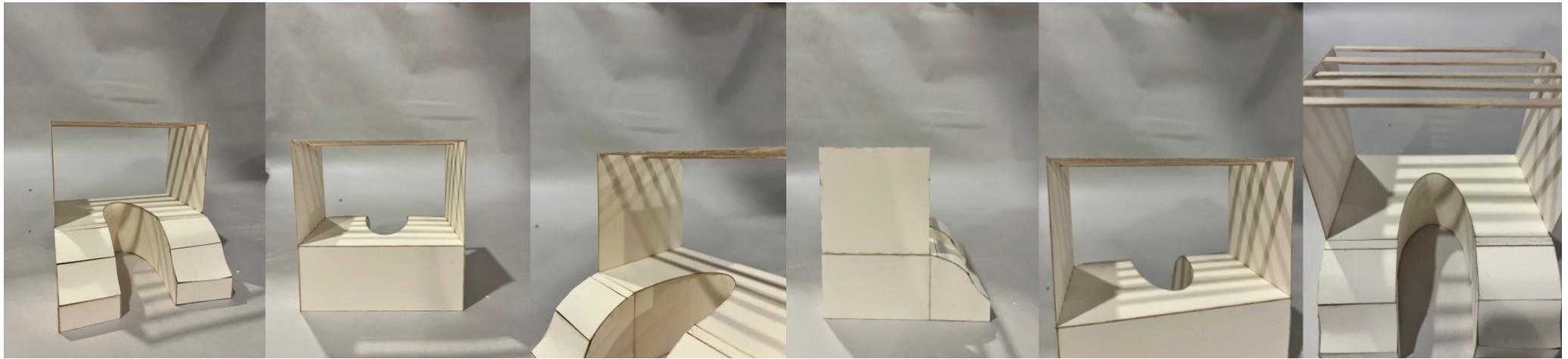
NARRATIVE TITLE : Collective Ground
A civic threshold in its truest sense: it allows access, offers pause, and celebrates presence. It supports collective activity, movement, and gathering.

SCALE: Large

CONNECTIONS: The amphitheater steps descend below street level, creating a sunken gathering zone. This produces a natural stage and audience relationship, where vertical hierarchy temporarily defines focus and directionality. The perimeter walls create a semi-enclosed edge condition that delineates the space without fully restricting access or visibility. Circulation routes allow lateral movement across the site, while the stairs and shading structure draw users inward creating a more horizontal connection. The central space establishes spatial attention around a focal user, yet allows for dynamic shifts.

WORLD BUILDING: This threshold is situated within a dense urban block and serves as a multifunctional public infrastructure. It accommodates performances, small gatherings, and everyday occupation. The spatial configuration promotes flexibility. It is structured enough to support organized events, but open enough for informal use. The shading system moderates climate and signals a place of pause, while the amphitheater form encourages interaction and layered engagement.

CONTEXT: The amphitheater is partially shaded, providing thermal comfort throughout the day. Users include those moving through the block. The space operates as both a passage and a destination, an integrated urban threshold that activates underutilized block-scale voids.



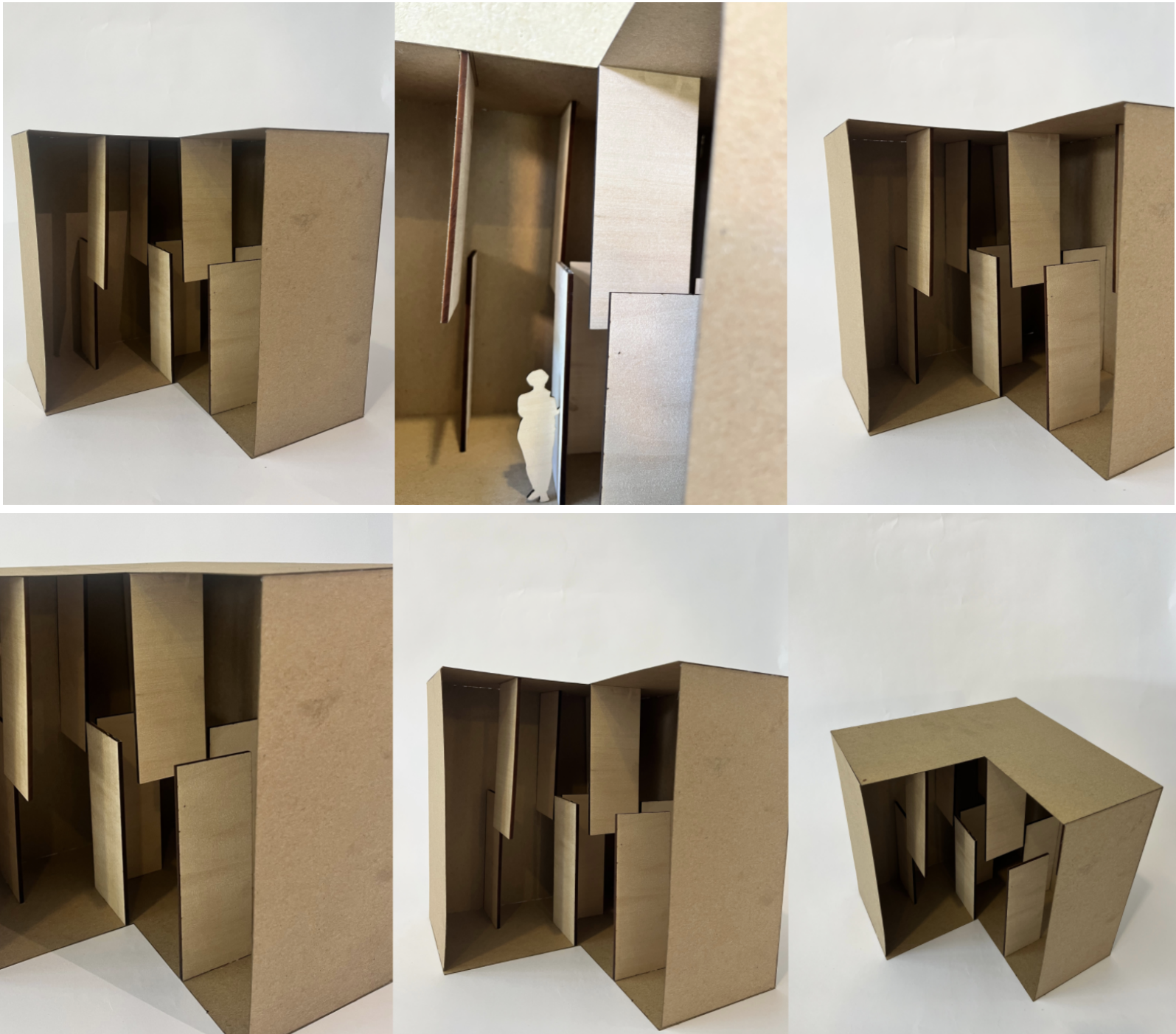
Part III: INTERVENTION

A large-scale 18 X 18 X 6 (in inches) cartographic model was developed to stitch these thresholds into a speculative prison city. The name of this microcosm is - Apex. This topography revealed how systems of control extend beyond walls into media narratives, transport routes, and urban fabric. Three expanded device models 9 X 9 X 9 (S, M, L) connected threshold conditions, articulating spatial hierarchies and constituent flows.



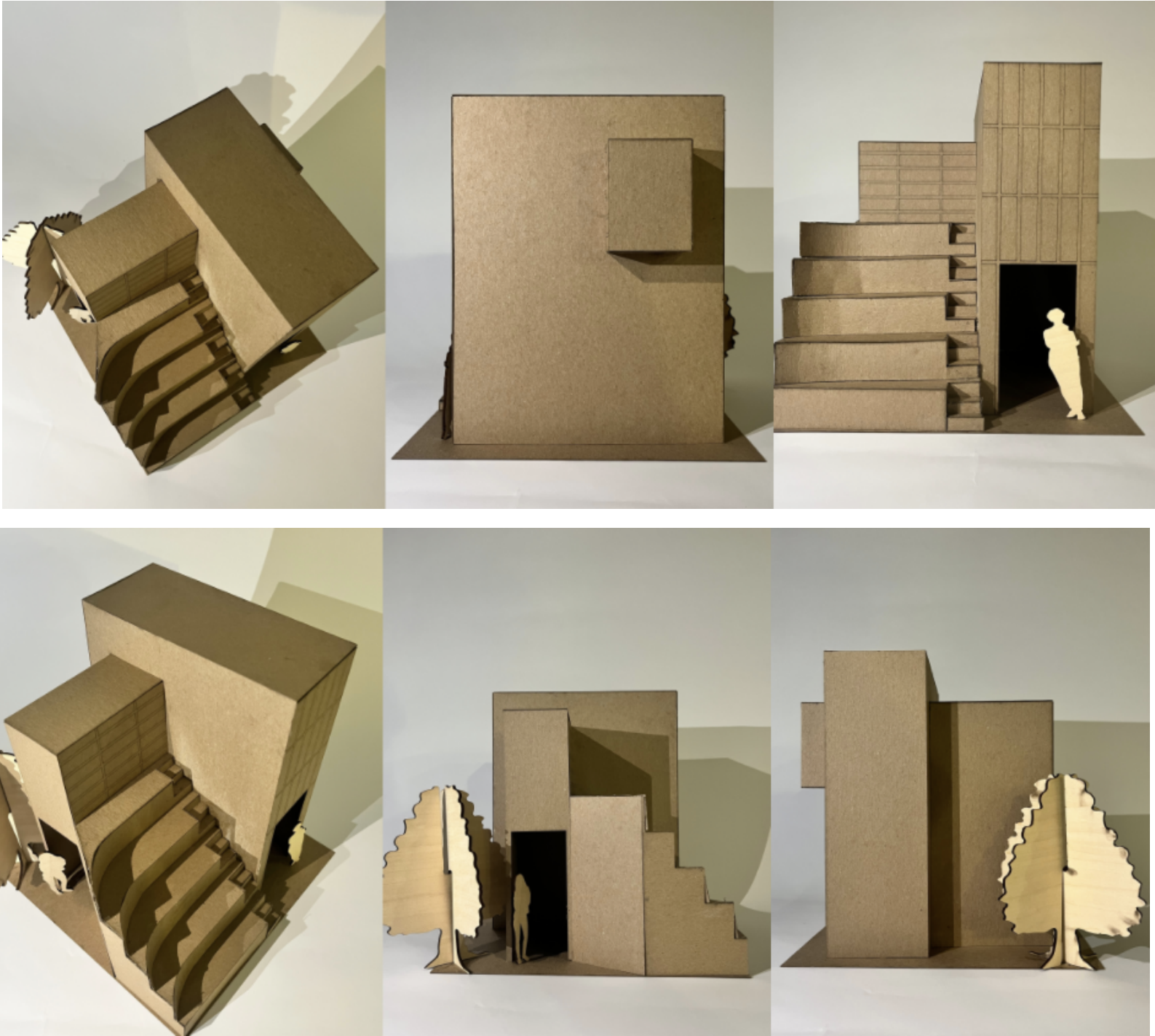
Small Scale: Corporate Cubicle

This threshold represents the private corporation's workspace—a compact, controlled environment where digital labor and compliance are enforced through spatial monotony and surveillance. The device explores how isolation, compartmentalization, and restricted vision contribute to systemic detachment from the effects of incarceration, yet remain essential to its operation.



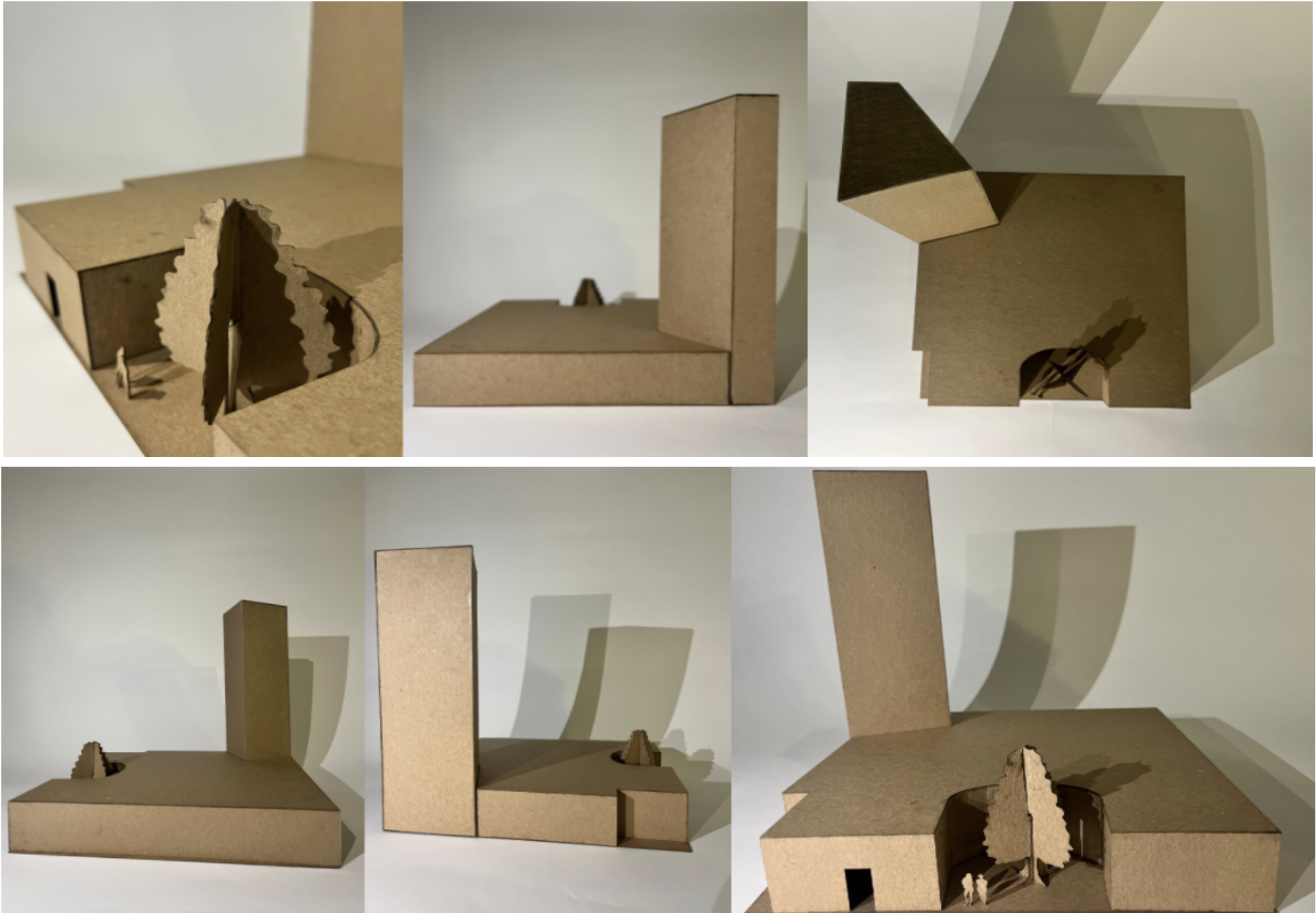
Medium Scale: Media Infrasrtucture

Positioned within the media house, this threshold mediates the flow of information filtering what is seen and circulated. Architecturally, it manipulates the stories, transparency and layering to reflect editorial bias, manipulation of truth, and selective exposure. It becomes a spatial metaphor for complicity masked as neutrality.



Large Scale: Prison Complex

At the urban scale, this threshold expands into the prison itself an infrastructural and spatial instrument of long-term containment and labor extraction. Designed as a dense, interlocking system, the device reveals how movement is controlled, how work is extracted, and how architecture reinforces psychological confinement.



Part IV: REPRESENTATION

Through a series of postcards and storyboards, the system was brought to life via three characters:

- An incarcerated worker, stuck in an endless cycle of labor and denial.
- A former media official, who escaped the system and now seeks to expose its inner workings.
- A current media executive, complicit in maintaining and profiting from the narrative of control.
- Each vignette captured daily moments, showing how architecture conditions freedom and silence.



Dear Viewers,
I watched a riot unfold today. Thirty inmates. Four guards injured. But what I wrote? "Cooperation Day at Sector 9 Brings Hope." Because that's what the people need hope, not horror. We are the architects of peace, the illusionists of progress. Without us, chaos reigns. With us, the truth bends gently like light through glass. Long live the lens.
— Mira Kell, Senior Broadcast




To whoever still believes in truth, I reported from inside for ten years. I told stories that weren't mine. I silenced those who screamed too loud. We made prisoners into villains. We made corporations into saviors. We made ourselves gods. They paid me to polish cages. I quit when I saw my face in one. Media isn't just a tool, it's the architect. You think power sits in government? It sits in the editing room. If you find this card, know this: Not everything on screen is a lie, but it is not the full truth.
— Ex-Anchor, Now Witness

To no one,
We line up for camera time. They call it "Progress Parade." We scrub floors with smiling faces. They call it "Vacational Triumph." We cry. They cut. We scream. They dub. In here, our only mirror is the screen. But it's a window too— and we see you watching.
I don't know if anyone will read this. Maybe this postcard is just a prop. Maybe, I am too.




Storyboard 1: A Week in the Life of a Media Executive


This storyboard follows a media executive who is deeply embedded in the system, benefitting from and upholding its architecture of control. Over the span of a week, we see their routine in the towering media skyscraper—overseeing content production, meeting with corporate partners, and manipulating narratives that maintain public ignorance. The sequences reveal a life of privilege, isolation, and subtle complicity, where power is exercised not through force, but through selective storytelling and omission.




Time: 8:00 AM, Day: Monday
Place: Prison Watch Tower
Media official in prison watch tower monday morning strategizing the story to broadcast this week before workers come in.




Time: 2:00 PM, Day: Tuesday
Place: Prison Watch Tower
Media official in prison watch tower tuesday evening closely observing the incarcerated workers behavior to fabricate a story later.



Time: 10:00 AM, Day: Wednesday
Place: Media House Meeting Room
Media official briefing the news / narrative strategy for this week's news broadcast to other media workers and their private corporation allies.



Time: 3:00 PM, Day: Thursday
Place: Media House Editing Room
Media personnel closely watching the live recordings from prison to find the short excerpts that they will use to compile and broadcast the news that best fits their narrative for the week to manipulate the public about prison labor system and prisoners.



Time: 7:00 PM, Day: Friday
Place: Media House Broadcast Room
Media personnel broadcasting the edited footages to the public on friday night as that is the only time the public gets access to the news. The edited clips are to push a certain narrative of glorifying private corporations and media.



Time: 9:00 PM, Day: Saturday
Place: Media Official watching Interviews
Media Official watching interviews of himself and private corporation allies portrayed as the savior of the city by keeping the problematic prisoners occupied and helping them "make their own living" by giving them jobs.

Storyboard 2: Six Months in the Life of an Escaped Media Official

Spanning six months, this storyboard traces the fragmented and unstable life of a former media worker who escaped the system. From initial disillusionment to quiet acts of resistance, we follow their journey through hidden networks, coded messages, and underground platforms as they attempt to expose the truth. The panels depict moments of fear, anonymity, and brief connection suggesting the emotional toll of defying a machine designed to silence dissent.



Time: 10:00 AM, December

Place: Media Personnel Office

One of the media workers found out about the unethical works of media personnel and private corporations and how they seamlessly hide their actual truth and deceive the city for their benefit.



Time: 02:00 PM, January

Place: Other side of the city

The worker could no longer work for the media house and escaped from his part of the city and is looking for a place in the other side of the city to go into hiding as he escaped the system and is a threat.



Time: 7:00 AM, February

Place: Ex-Media Personnel New Apartment

He finds a studio apartment to live in, and begins gathering as much information as he can from the internet about this system and it's dark history/ agenda.



Time: 6:00 PM, March

Place: Ex-Media Personnel New Apartment

He does not leave his apartment for days and starts figuring out a game plan to expose the system, writes his research down to make sense of all the information he found.



Time: 2:00 AM, April

Place: Ex-Media Personnel New Apartment

He starts writing postcards, articles, and a book that exposes this flawed system.



Time: 1:00 PM, May

Place: Ex-Media Personnel New Apartment

He finds a way to hack into the broadcast system and is all set to release his podcast that announces his book, and exposes the media and corporations. He uses green screen to show different proofs he gathered through his months of research and writing.

Storyboard 3: A Day in the Life of an Incarcerated Prison Worker

This storyboard captures a single, repetitive day in the life of an incarcerated worker. From the early morning wake-up to forced labor in the manufacturing wing and restricted recreation hours, each panel emphasizes the monotonous, tightly controlled rhythm of prison life. Moments of exhaustion, dehumanization, and fleeting glimpses of hope underscore the invisible labor that powers the system. The storyboard positions this character not just as a subject of confinement, but as a foundational force sustaining institutional profit.



Time: 8:00 AM

Place: Prison Cell

Prison Workers alarm goes off at 8:00 am every morning.



Time: 9:30 AM

Place: Prison Lobby

Prison Workers are escorted to the changing and work gear storage room before their shifts.



Time: 10:00 AM

Place: Work Gear Storage / Changing Room

Prison Workers grab their respective gears and get dressed for work.



Time: 10:30 AM - 6:30 PM

Place: Warehouse

Prison Workers work long hours at the amazon warehouses.



Time: 7:00 PM

Place: Cafeteria

Prison Worker gets the first meal of the day at 7:00 pm due to long work hours.



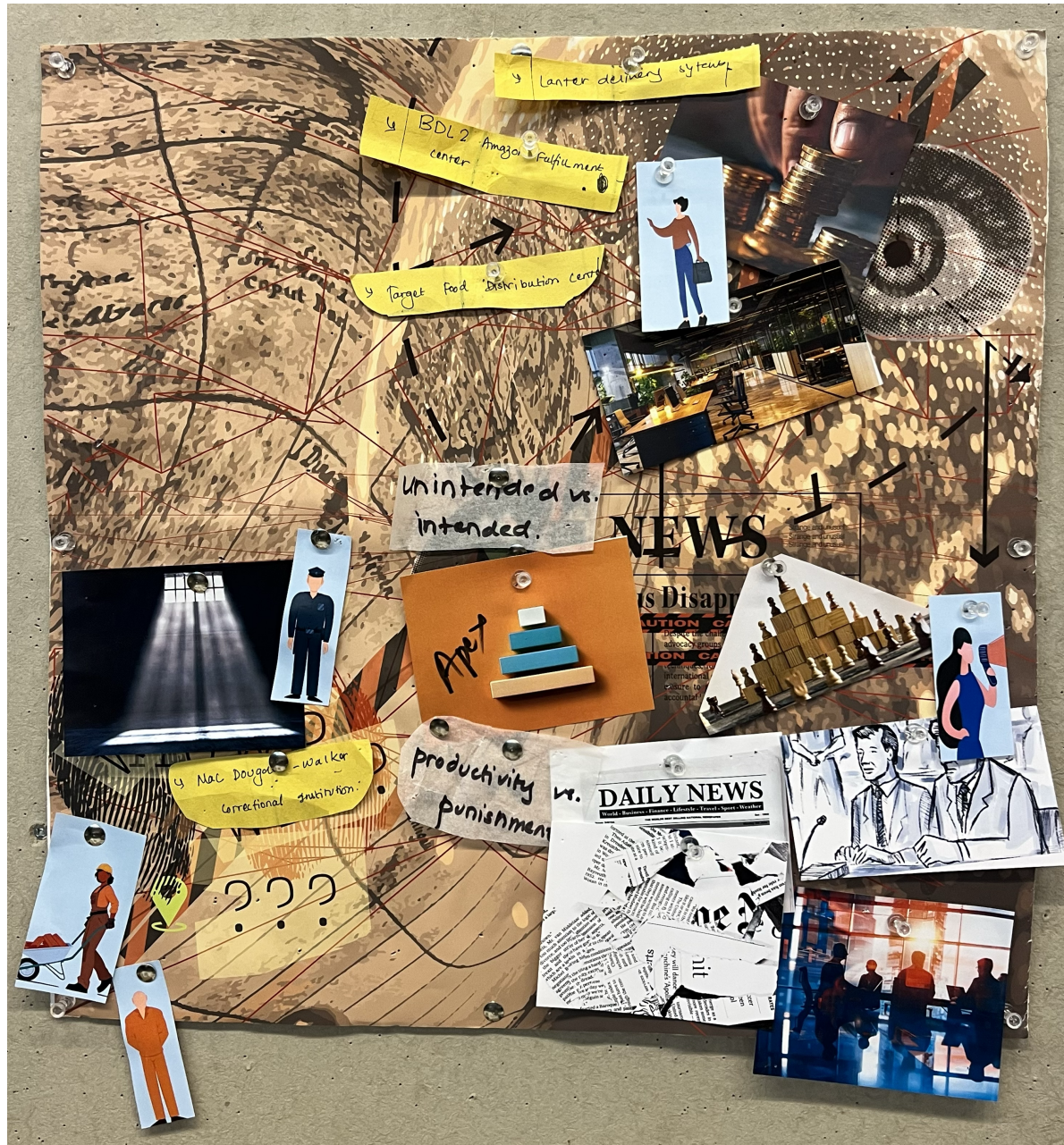
Time: 7:30 PM

Prison Shared Courtyard

Prison Worker using some solitude and thinking about if they can ever skip the system.

Narrative Device

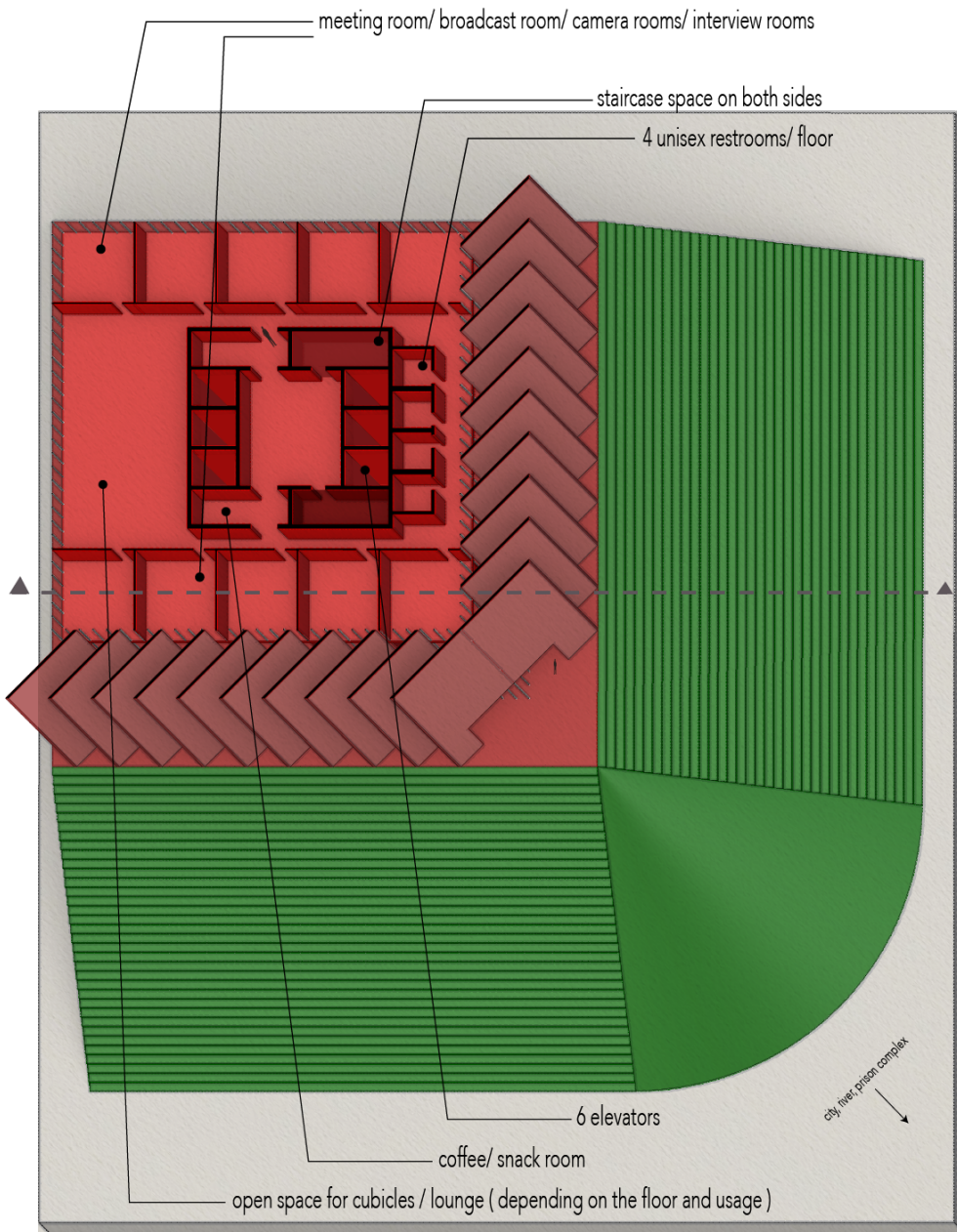
The narrative device in this project serves as a conceptual and spatial tool to thread together the fragmented experiences of individuals embedded within the prison-media-industrial system. Positioned in storytelling, it captures how space produces and conceals narratives of power, labor, and resistance. The device operates as both map and a fragment layering time, character, and architecture into a three-dimensional form. Its components reference the spatial environments of each protagonist: the control-driven media skyscraper, the anonymous in-between spaces of the escaped official, and the rigid corridors of the incarcerated worker. Through cutouts of characters/ players and resources and strategic placement of these it reveals how each character navigates visibility, confinement, and agency within the system.



Final Threshold: The Media House

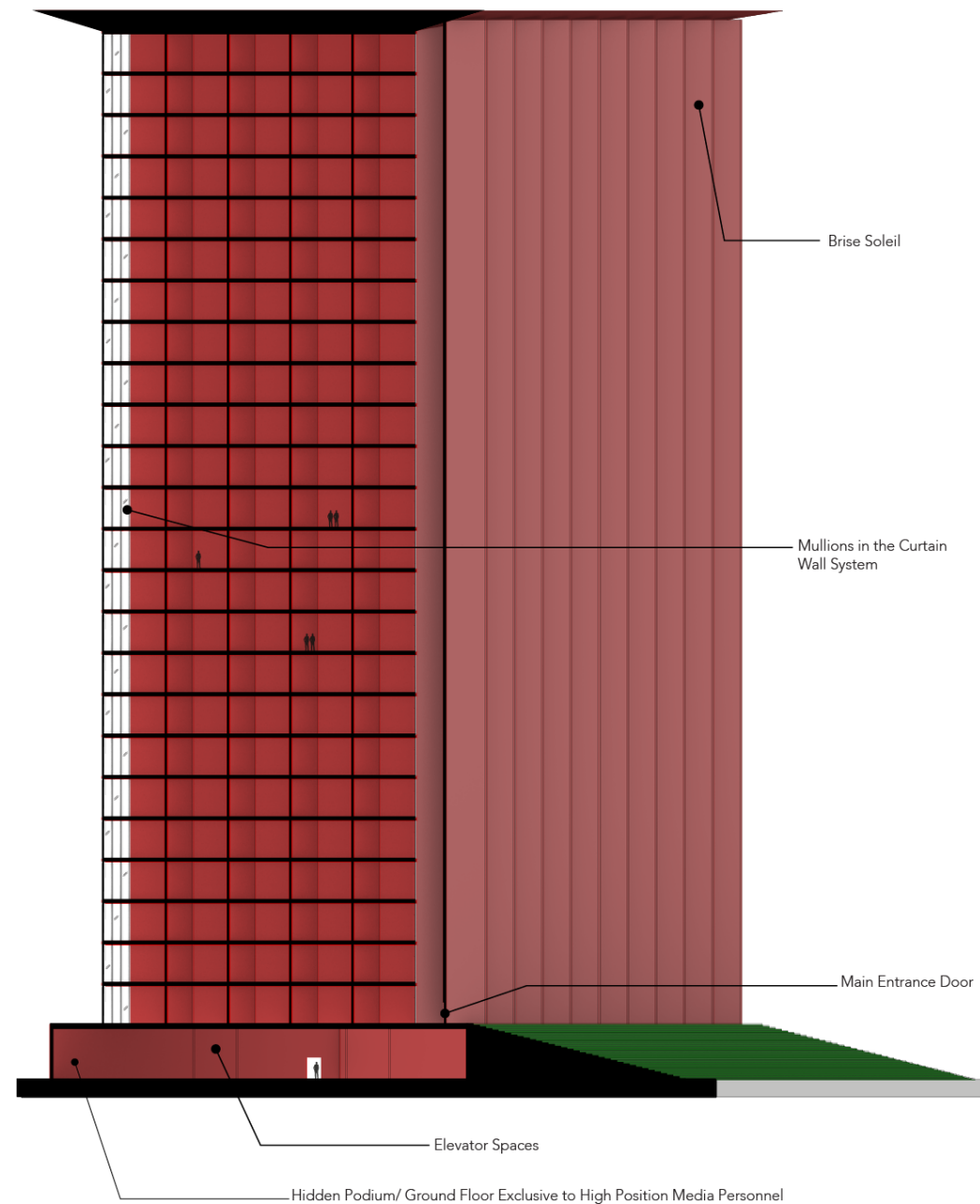
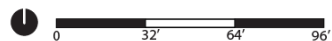
The project culminated in the design of a monumental media skyscraper, a threshold where control becomes architectural. This final model explores privacy, spectacle, and systemic opacity. As the central node in the prison-military-media nexus, it both reveals and conceals. Its spatial form embodies contradiction: an icon of truth-making built on selective access and institutional power.





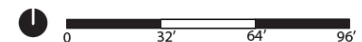
Media Tower Plan Oblique

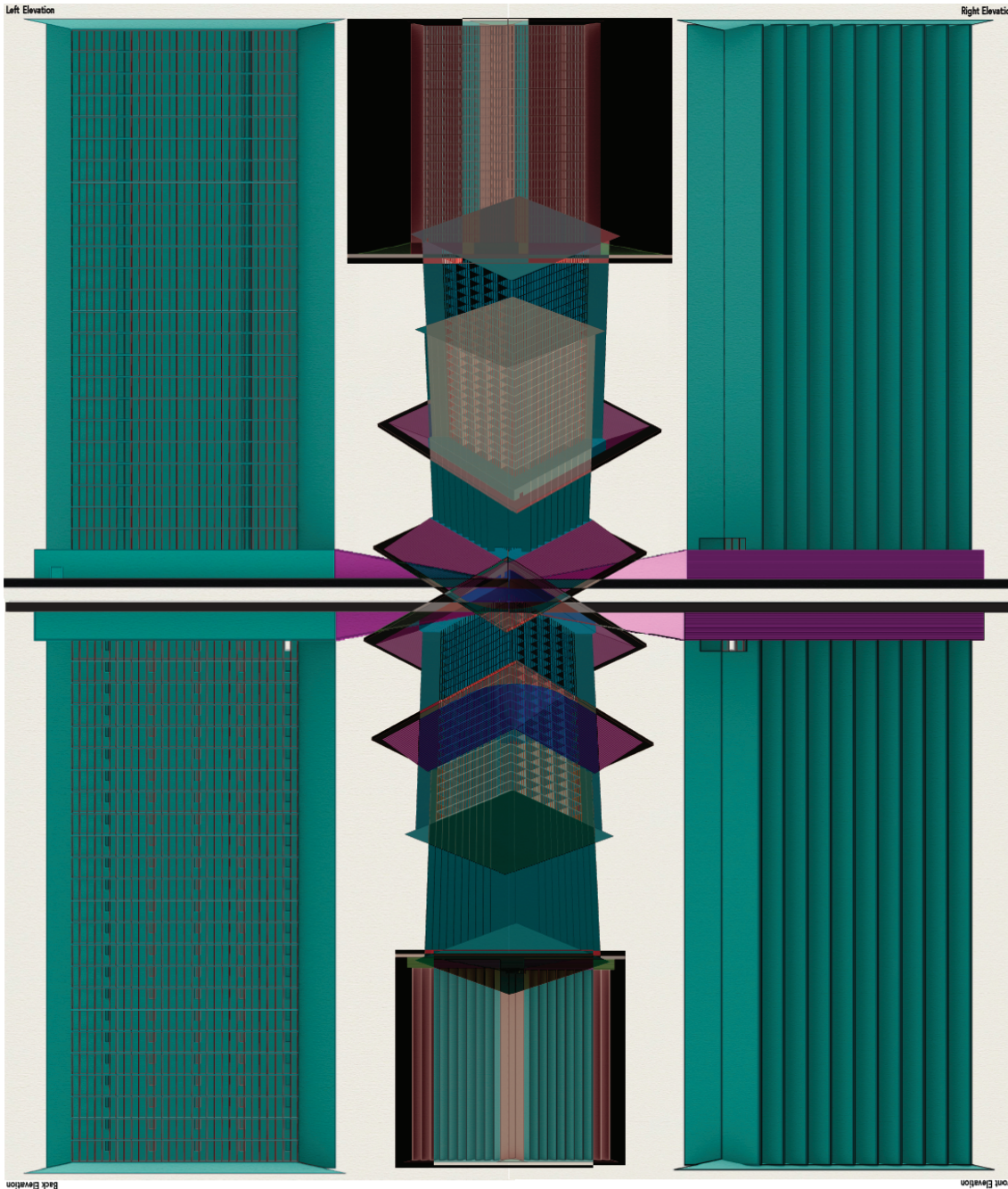
This plan oblique reveals the interior of a media skyscraper at the heart of a prison-corporate microcosm, where the media controls the narrative and workers operate under cold, hostile conditions. Broadcast rooms, interview pods, and tightly packed cubicles mimic the structure of confinement, blurring the line between inmate and employee. Despite amenities like coffee rooms and open-plan lounges, the environment remains sterile and oppressive—designed for control, not comfort. The building embodies a system where storytelling is a tool of power, and labor is closely monitored within a facade of corporate normalcy. White the curtain wall allows light in, the mullions layout replicates the prison cell doors.



Media Tower Section Oblique

This sectional view of the media tower reveals a tightly controlled vertical system where labor is compartmentalized and circulation is efficient but impersonal. Broadcast rooms, interview pods, and repetitive cubicle floors stack one atop the other, echoing the regimented structure of a prison. Vertical core like elevators function like arteries of control, moving workers within an environment designed more for output than well-being. Concealing the tower's city facing sides, a dense brise soleil system filters light while blocking views, asserting dominance from the inside out. For the select few, it offers privacy and power and for the rest, it enforces a visual disconnect from the world they shape but cannot access. Together, the spatial hierarchy and brise soleil form an architecture of surveillance, exclusion, and narrative control.





Media Tower Hybrid Drawing

This hybrid drawing presents four elevations of the media tower, each rendered with varying degrees of opacity, texture, and annotation to expose the layered power dynamics embedded in its façade. The elevations reveal not just the architectural skin, but the ideology it enforces shifting from sterile corporate minimalism to a more fortified, brise soleil cladding surface that blocks visibility and reinforces internal control. By juxtaposing different versions, one stripped down, one with contextual shadows, one fully detailed, and one diagrammatic, the drawing dissects how the building communicates authority to the outside while concealing its inner tensions. This multi-perspective elevation study becomes less about form and more about the façade as a tool of narrative control, where architecture serves as both mask and message.

Project Conclusion

This project began as a way to understand how systems operate not just in theory, but in real, everyday spaces. What started with mapping a rice harvesting cycle led me into the complexities of the Alabama prison system, where labor, punishment, media, and profit are deeply intertwined. Through this, I started to see how architecture isn't neutral, it's complicit. It holds people in, pushes them out, hides stories, and sometimes, tells them and shapes them.

Breaking the system apart through drawings, glitches, models, and characters helped me understand how deeply embedded these structures are, and how easy it is for them to go unnoticed. Each phase, whether it was the glitch matrices or the threshold artefacts, was a way to make that invisibility visible. The expanded thresholds, especially the prison complex, the corporate cubicle, and the media house, helped me test how architecture can uphold or question it.

The narratives became a turning point in this project. Designing from the perspective of someone stuck inside, someone who escaped, and someone who benefits from the system grounded everything. It reminded me that architecture isn't just about form or function, it's about people, and what they're allowed or not allowed to do in a space. The media skyscraper as a final threshold tried to capture that tension: it's powerful, towering, controlled, but also cracked open, asking what's being hidden and who gets to decide the story.

This project has changed how I see systems and space. It's made me more aware of the power dynamics that architecture often masks. More than anything, it's a reminder that design is never just design it is political, and it matters who and what we're designing for. I'm leaving this project with more questions than answers, but maybe that's the point: to stay curious.

Multigenerational Housing Project

This project explores how architecture can support layered relationships, shared responsibility, and long-term rootedness through the design of a multigenerational housing complex. Set in a dense urban neighborhood in Albuquerque, the design responds to the evolving needs of a Nepali family living across three generations blending tradition, adaptability, and communal care. The building is organized to support both independence and interdependence. The ground floor houses a commercial restaurant that connects the community to the public realm, while the upper floors hold private residential units, shared kitchens, prayer rooms, and communal gathering spaces. Each program is carefully zoned to balance privacy and collectivity, structured around light-filled cores and intuitive circulation paths. Key design elements such as integrated prayer spaces, adaptable living units, and shared domestic areas honor cultural traditions while accommodating future needs. The project considers how life unfolds across time: spaces are designed not only for who lives there now, but who will grow into them over the next 15 to 30 years. With a material palette of concrete, glass, aluminum, and steel, the architecture expresses both permanence and openness. It creates a durable yet sensitive environment where stories, rituals, and daily routines can coexist. This project asks how architecture can move beyond individualism, and instead serve as a framework for generational continuity, support, and cultural resilience.

MULTIGENERATIONAL HOUSING

PROGRAMMATIC REQUIREMENTS :

COMMERCIAL - RESTAURANT

FRONT DESK AND WAIT AREA : 180 50 FT
FIRST FLOOR DINING : 823 50 FT
SECOND FLOOR DINING : 603 50 FT
ADA BATHROOM (2) : 47 50 FT / EACH
STAFF WASHING ROOM : 53 50 FT
DRY STORAGE : 90 50 FT
FREEZER / COLD STORAGE : 62 50 FT
KITCHEN : 369 50 FT
FOOD PREPARATION AREA : 139 50 FT
DISH WASHING AREA : 82 50 FT

MATERIALS :

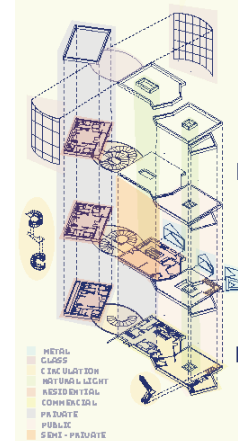
- CONCRETE
- ALUMINIUM CLADDING
- GLASS
- STEEL

RESIDENTIAL - COMMUNAL

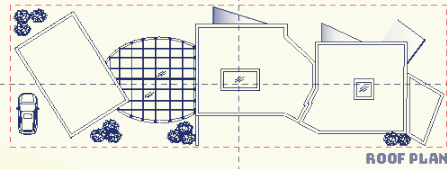
SHARED KITCHEN : 375 50 FT
SHARED KITCHEN PANTRY : 45 50 FT
WASHER DRYER : 47 50 FT
GUEST ROOM : 87 50 FT
ADA BATHROOM : 48 50 FT
COMMUNAL DINING : 97 50 FT
LIVING SPACE : 150 50 FT
STORAGE : 123 50 FT

RESIDENTIAL - PRIVATE UNIT (3)

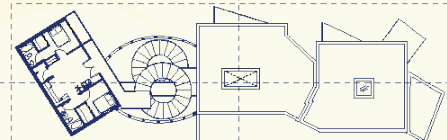
LIVING ROOM : 131 50 FT
BEDROOM 1 : 97 50 FT
CLOSET 1 : 18 50 FT
BATHROOM 1 : 39 50 FT
BEDROOM 2 : 92 50 FT
CLOSET 2 : 26 50 FT
BATHROOM 2 : 50 50 FT
KITCHEN : 56 50 FT
PANTRY : 10 50 FT
PRAYER ROOM : 21 50 FT



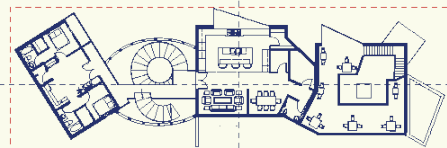
LEGEND
METAL
STAIRS
CIRCULATION
NATURAL LIGHT
RESIDENTIAL
COMMERCIAL
PUBLIC
SEMI-PUBLIC



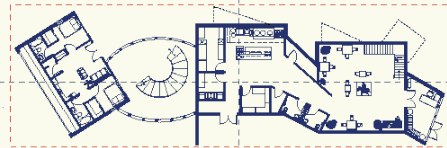
ROOF PLAN



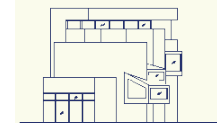
THIRD FLOOR PLAN



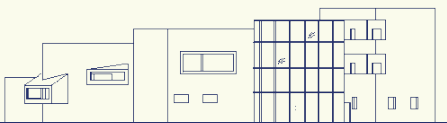
SECOND FLOOR PLAN



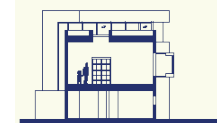
FIRST FLOOR PLAN



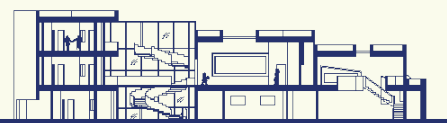
EAST ELEVATION



NORTH ELEVATION



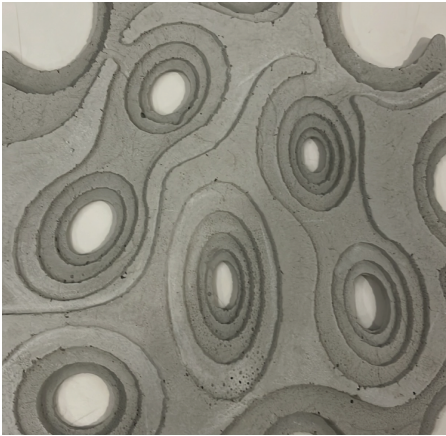
SECTION LOOKING EAST



SECTION LOOKING NORTH

Rocket Slab: Dual-Scale Concrete Casting

This project explores the versatility of form and materiality through the casting of a rocket slab a sculptural concrete object designed to operate at two radically different scales. The process began with designing and fabricating a formwork for casting a unique slab, using geometry and texture to push the limits of concrete as both structural and aesthetic material. At the tiny scale, the slab functions as a succulent holder a tabletop object where the detailing, surface texture, and material imperfections are closely read. This scale emphasizes tactility, hand-held interaction, and the way light and shadow interact with micro-topographies of the form. At the large scale, the same form is reimagined as a hot spring landscape, rendered as an immersive public space carved into the earth. The slab's channels and pockets now become seating zones, thermal pools, and water flows highlighting how a single form can suggest vastly different spatial experiences depending on scale and context. The project challenged us to think across dimensions and uses, revealing how scale transforms not only perception, but also function and meaning. It celebrates concrete's raw honesty while testing its potential to serve both human touch and landscape immersion.

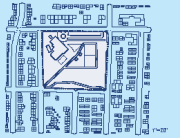


Pop-Up Cooling Station: Geodesic Dome

In response to Albuquerque's rising temperatures and increasing extreme heat events, this project proposes a temporary, scalable cooling station designed to support vulnerable communities during climate emergencies. Set in the La Mesa neighborhood, the design uses a geodesic dome structure for its strength, material efficiency, and ease of deployment. The dome is lightweight, inflatable, and designed for rapid installation in vacant lots or parking areas. The project integrates passive cooling strategies, such as high ventilation points, a single entrance oriented to reduce sun exposure, and a white, reflective exterior to minimize heat absorption. Inside, breathable insulating materials like closed-cell foam and recycled polyester with air channels ensure thermal comfort for 5 to 7 people. The goal was to create a low-tech, high-impact solution that prioritizes accessibility, resilience, and human dignity in the face of environmental stress. This intervention is not just about climate adaptation it's about building care infrastructure for communities most affected by systemic inequalities and the climate crisis.

POP - UP COOLING STATION: GEODISIC DOME

To address Albuquerque's rising temperatures and promote community resilience, this pop-up cooling station explores how these temporary, adaptable stations serve as vital hubs of relief during extreme heat events, providing hydration, shade, and a safe environment. This pop-up cooling station integrates passive cooling design strategies, values community impact, and the collaborative efforts that make these stations a sustainable and lifesaving solution for all people in Albuquerque.



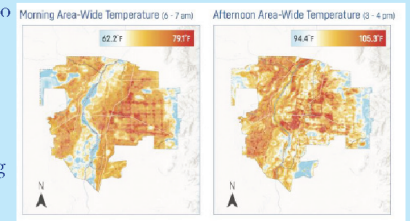
**MESA VERDE COMMUNITY CENTER, 7900 MARQUETTE AVE. NE,
ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87108**

This center is located in the heart of La Mesa Neighborhood. The facility is equipped with a fitness room, arts and crafts room, game room, computer lab, gymnasium, and classrooms.

Monday to Thursday: 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Friday: 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

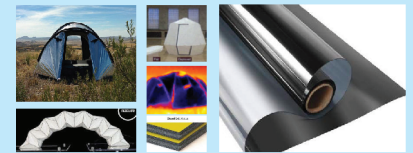
THE GROWING CHALLENGE OF EXTREME HEAT IN ALBUQUERQUE

- **Increasing Heatwaves:** More frequent and intense heat events due to climate change.
- **Health Risks:** Vulnerable populations face higher risks of heat exhaustion, dehydration, and heat stroke.
- **Energy Demand:** Rising temperatures contribute to higher energy consumption.
- **Urban Heat Island Effect:** Dense urban areas trap heat, intensifying temperatures in developed spaces.
- **Urgent Need for Solutions:** Addressing heat impacts is critical for



https://www.cabq.gov/sustainability/documents/heat-watch-albuquerque_report_111921.pdf

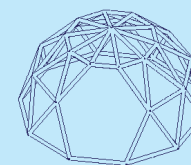
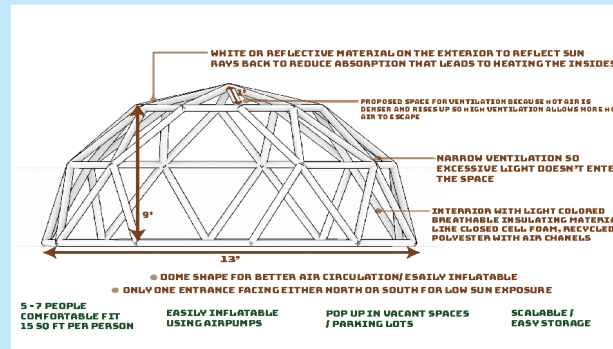
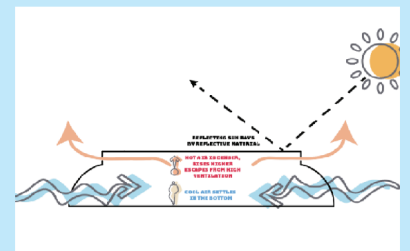
PRECEDENT STUDY / MATERIALS



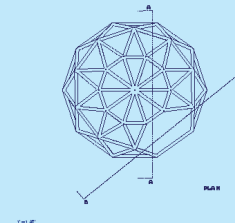
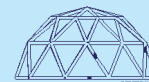
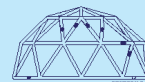
- Closed Cell Foam for Interior Insulation
 - Waterproof, lightweight, ultra-reflective fly fabric. The double-wall design reflects UV, visible and infrared, and there are mesh inner walls for bugs
 - From Heat Reflecting Pod Tent.
- <https://gearjunkie.com/camping/heat-pod-tent>



PASSIVE COOLING STRATEGIES



- STRENGTH OF TRIANGLES
- EFFICIENT LOAD DISTRIBUTION
- MATERIAL EFFICIENCY
- SPHERICAL SHAPE
- SELF-SUPPORTING STRUCTURE
- REDUNDANCY AND RESILIENCE



- Includes only one entrance, positioned either north or south, to minimize direct sun exposure.
- Scalable and easy to store, making it suitable for repeated use in various locations

This portfolio brings together the architectural projects and design explorations I completed over the final two years of my undergraduate journey. As an international student from Nepal, studying architecture in the U.S. has been both a challenge and a gift, a space where I've learned to merge the values I carry from home with the tools and perspectives I've gained here. My work is often grounded in systems thinking, storytelling, and care, whether I'm designing a multi-generational home, reimagining prison infrastructures, casting a concrete slab, or proposing public cooling stations in response to climate urgency. Personally I have found that my strength lies in concept formation and I thoroughly enjoy the design process from the research to creation. I have come to realize the power of design and I leveraged my adobe creative suite skills, design thinking, rhino, revit, and cad software skills to manifest my ideas into creation of the designs.

Each project in this portfolio is a reflection of how I've grown not just as a designer, but as a listener, a collaborator, and a thinker who cares deeply about how people live and what architecture can do to support, question, or transform the systems we live in.

Thank you for taking the time to engage with my work. Your attention means a great deal to me, and I hope these projects offer something back whether it's a moment of curiosity, reflection, or inspiration.

With gratitude,
Shubhangi Khanal
Undergraduate, Architecture.