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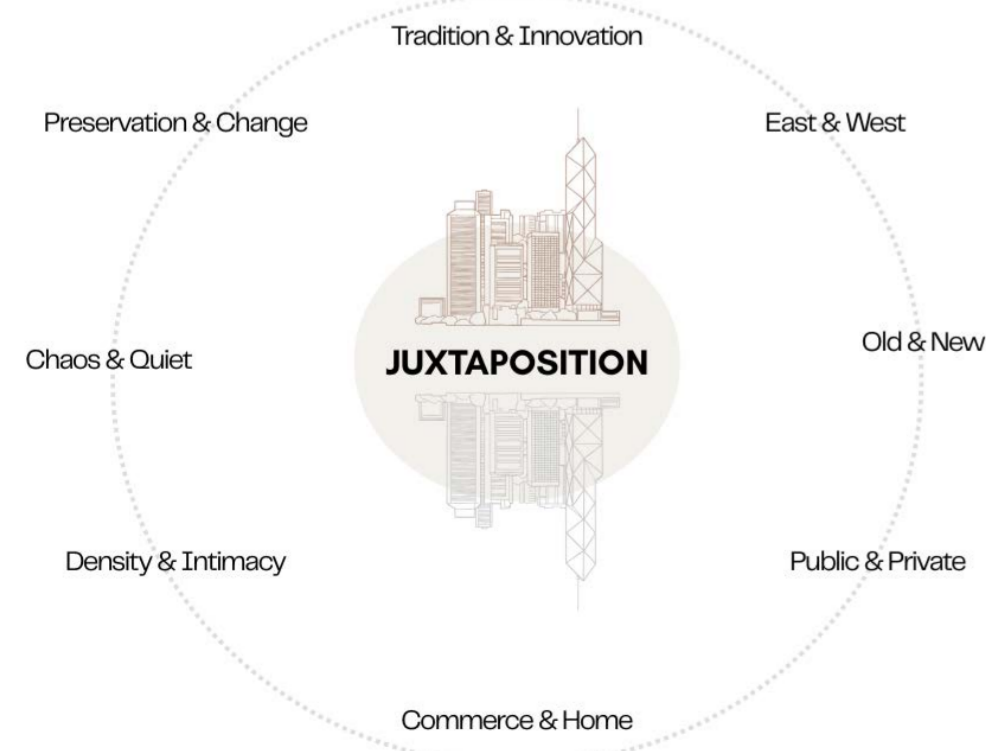
ORIGIN

ORIGIN explores the interior as both a lived environment and a constructed cultural image, translating the layered atmosphere of Cantonese urban life into an immersive spatial narrative. Cantonese identity is often reduced to generalisation and stereotyping, while its depth, history, and emotional texture remain overlooked. Informed by memories of Hong Kong and Macau streetscapes, ORIGIN investigates how interiors can embody identity through rhythm, compression, verticality, and sensory experience. These regions embody the art of juxtaposition, where contrasting identities coexist to create a rich cultural tapestry that challenges perception and blurs the boundaries between memory, imagination, and lived experience.



Lane7 Leicester
Grand Central Station, Great Central St,
Leicester LE1 4JT

Leicester's former Grand Central Station plays a historic role as a place of movement, connection, and exchange. Once linking Leicester to London and beyond, the station symbolised shared journeys and the coming together of diverse communities. Today, its central position within one of the UK's most multicultural cities provides an opportunity to continue this legacy through a contemporary cultural destination.



Visual of Central Community Square

what we see vs what we know

Westernisation & Generalisation

- Generic Chinatown aesthetics
- "Asian fusion" branding
- Mass-produced cultural imagery
- Broad "Chinese" representation

Media Portrayal & Familiar Symbols

- Hong Kong Skyscrapers
- Macau as "Gambling Capital of Asia"
- Neon signs and Red lanterns
- Martial arts and film references

Tourism

- Souvenir shops
- Instagram photo spots
- Guided cultural attractions
- Curated heritage districts
- Surface-level cultural experiences



What Lies Beneath?

- Family rituals
- Community networks
- Multigenerational households
- Migration stories
- Everyday routines

Reality

- Identity Crisis
- Struggle
- Vertical living
- Neighbourhood relationships

Living Cultural Identity

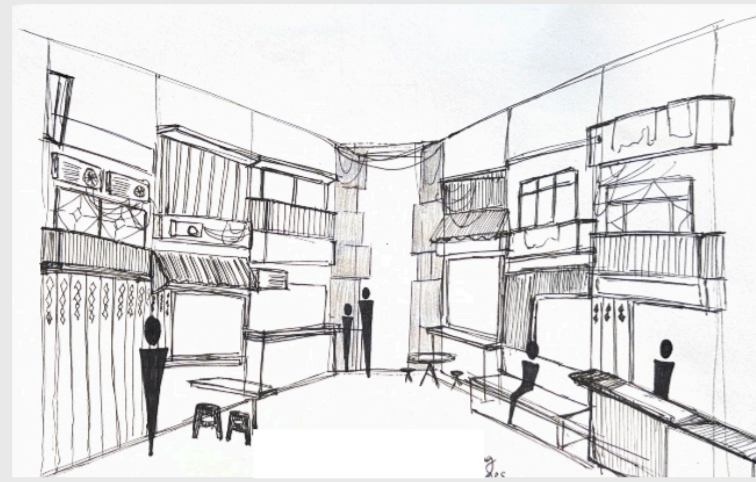
- Memory
- Belonging
- Resilience
- Adaptation
- Collective heritage

surface

depth

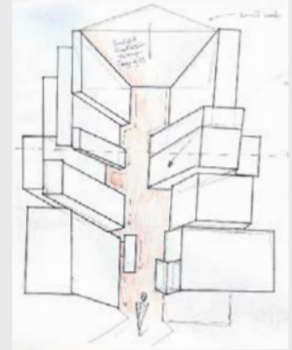
cultural observations

compression



Narrow routes create anticipation and discovery, leading into different open spaces.

Cramped, Ominous, Quiet



Overwhelming, Dense, Textural

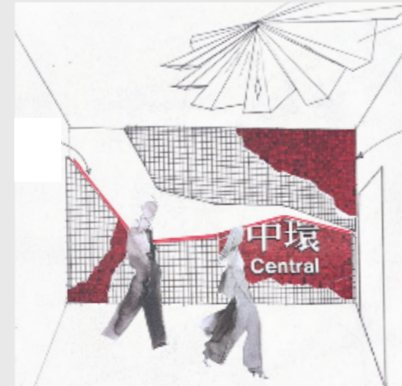
vertical density

Limited land availability has shaped a distinctive vertical urbanism, where vibrant commercial streetscapes occupy the ground plane while layers of residential life accumulate above, creating a rich and interconnected urban experience.

informal gathering



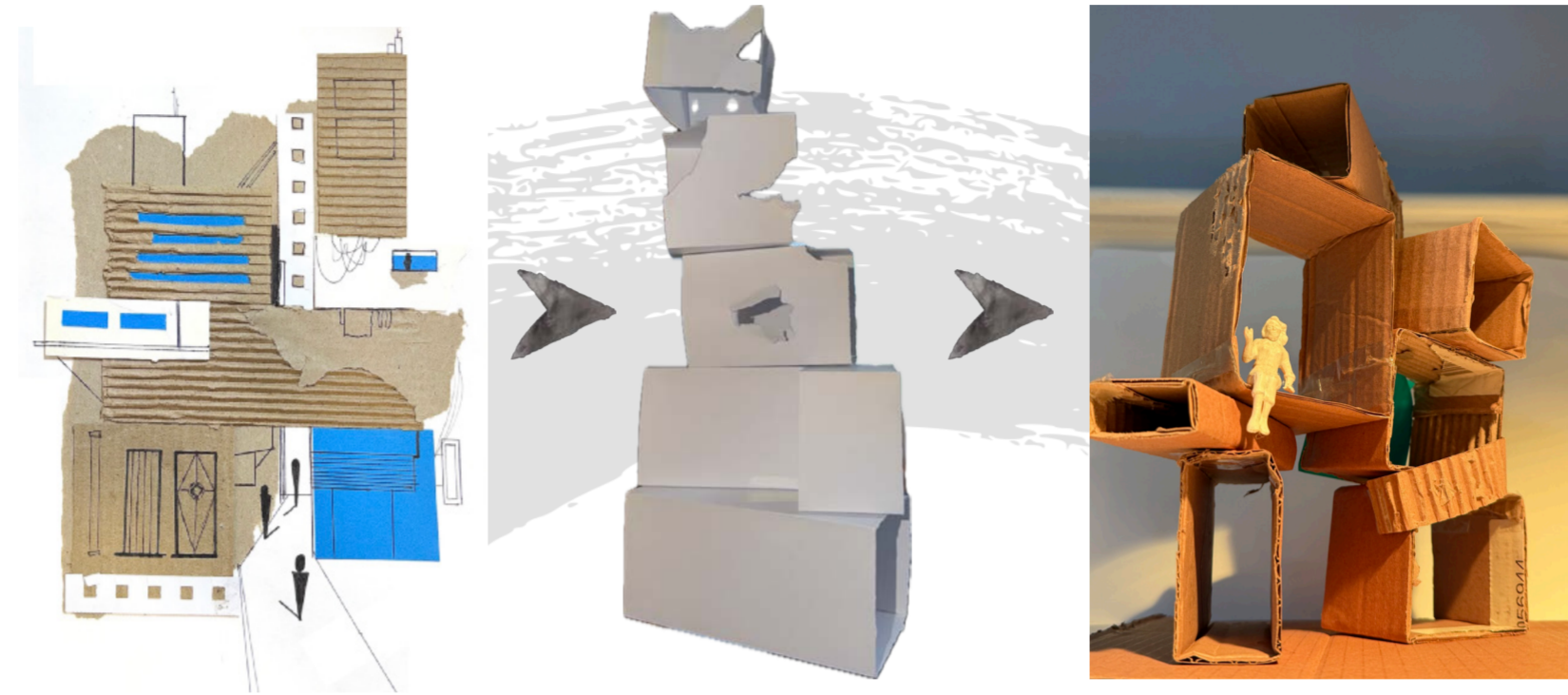
Social interaction emerges within everyday thresholds. People are indirectly united and contribute to the vibrance of the regions.



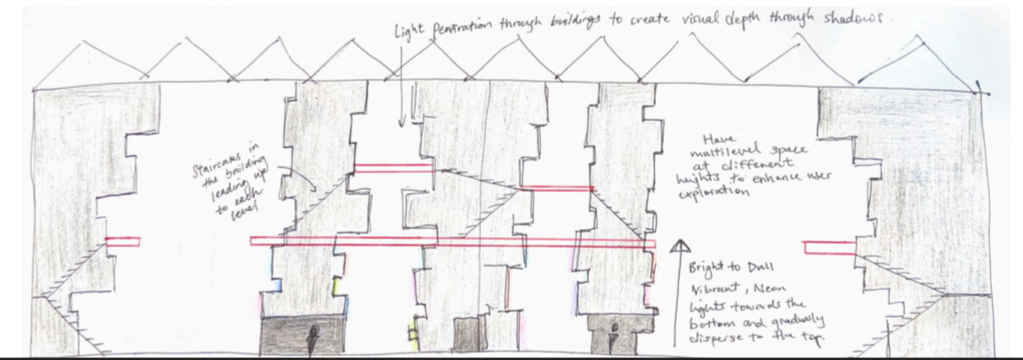
Casual, Socialising, Reflection

visual interpretation

Through collage and modelling experimentation, moments of Cantonese life were fragmented, layered, and reassembled to explore how memory and atmosphere could inform interior experience. This communicated the gradual upward transition from commercial vibrance to degrading residential facades.



Rather than reproducing Hong Kong and Macau, the project interprets them as living characters defined by their contrasting qualities. The resulting interior becomes an imagined expression of the cities' personalities, allowing visitors to experience their atmosphere through space rather than representation alone.



Concept Model

importance of texture and natural imperfection

Texture acts as a physical record of cultural layering, revealing the marks of time, use, and collective memory. By combining rough, weathered, and vibrant surfaces, the project translates the depth and complexity of Cantonese urban life into an immersive sensory experience.



Corrugated Metal



Chipping Tiles



Aged Concrete



Plastic Sheets



Geometric Patterns

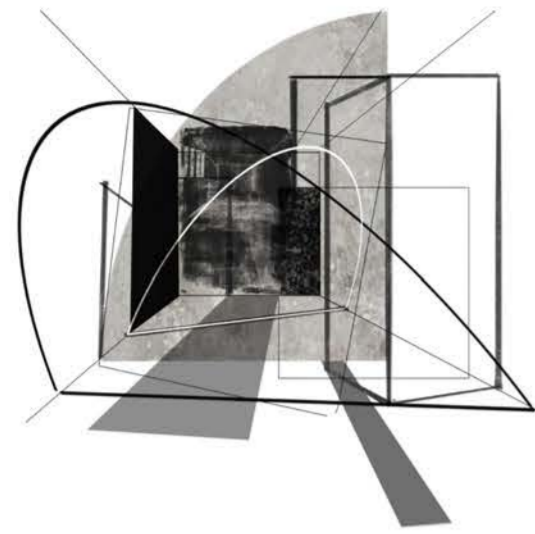
Materials are used as a narrative device, guiding visitors through changing atmospheres across the interior. Vibrant colours and illuminated elements animate the ground floor, reflecting the energy of Cantonese street life, while weathered concrete, metal finishes, and aged textures emerge within the upper levels. This transition from vibrancy to layers of time mirrors the project's concept of unlayering culture, revealing deeper stories, memories, and identities as visitors move through the space.

materiality



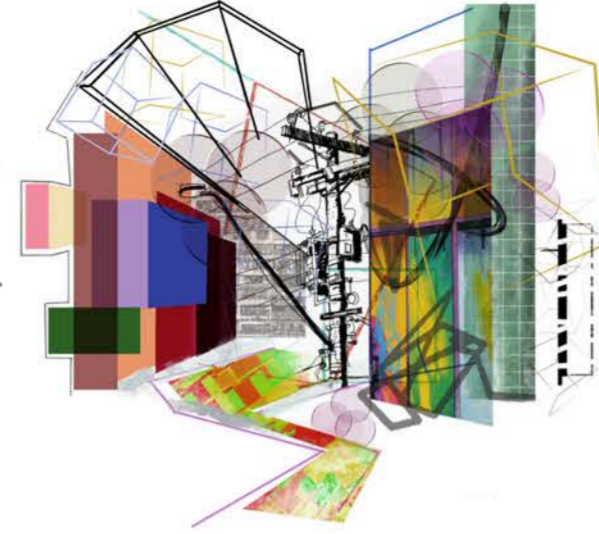
PSYCHOLOGICAL JOURNEY

1. DISORIENTATION



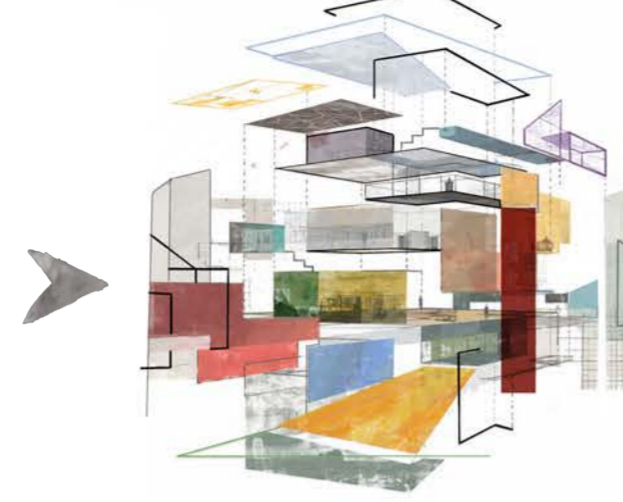
Entry, Curiosity, Intrigue, Compression

2. SENSORY OVERLOAD



Chaos, Noisy, Neon, Vibrance, Overwhelm

3. LAYER UNPACKING



Fragments, Materials, Surprises

4. IMMERSION



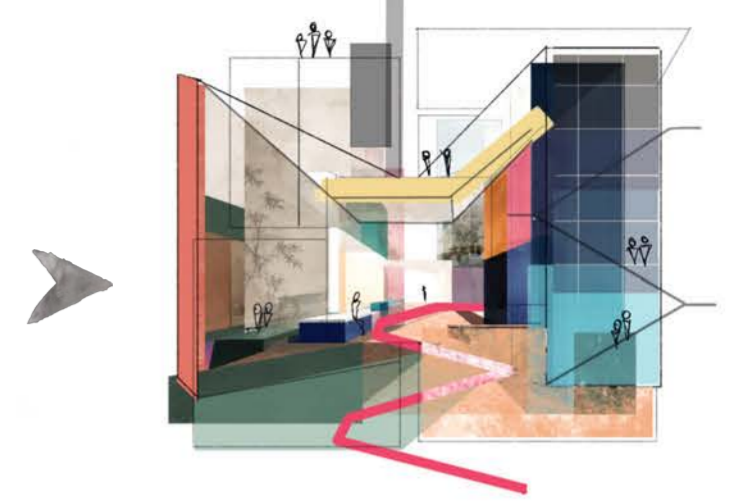
Slow, Warmth, Personal, Enclosed

5. REFLECTION



Nostalgia, Belonging, Understanding, Depth

6. CONNECTION



Unity, Appreciation, Inclusive, Continuity

10. IMMERSION - Cultural Storytelling Rooms

The culmination of the journey. Visitors enter immersive domestic environments inspired by Cantonese household life, uncovering personal stories, traditions, and family dynamics that reveal the human experiences behind the culture.

9. OVERLOOK - Mezzanine Walkways

Elevated routes introduce new perspectives across the interior, revealing the interconnected nature of the spaces below while reinforcing themes of verticality and layered occupation.

8. ASCENT - Stairways

Weathered staircases guide visitors upward through the building, symbolising the transition from public experiences towards deeper cultural understanding.

7. REFLECTION - Tea & Coffee House

A quieter environment that slows the pace of the journey, encouraging conversation, observation, and appreciation of cultural rituals.

6. SOCIAL EXCHANGE - Food & Drink Village

A lively gathering space inspired by Cantonese wet markets, where casual dining become a form of cultural connection.

5. DISCOVERY - Cultural Exhibition

An interactive zone that reveals the histories, identities, and narratives often overlooked within broader representations of Cantonese culture such as childhood life, photography, local stories, entertainment etc.

4. ENGAGEMENT - Pop-Up Stalls

Flexible spaces that line the circumference of the forecourt for workshops, demonstrations, and cultural exchange that celebrate everyday practices and community interaction.

3. EXPLORATION - Alleyways

Four alleyways branch from the square, introducing contrasting atmospheres, textures, sounds, and visual fragments that encourage curiosity and discovery.

2. GATHERING - Central Community Square

The social heart of the project. An open communal environment that welcomes visitors and establishes the bustling atmosphere before they begin exploring the layers beyond. Visually overwhelming with bright neon lights and vibrant textures.

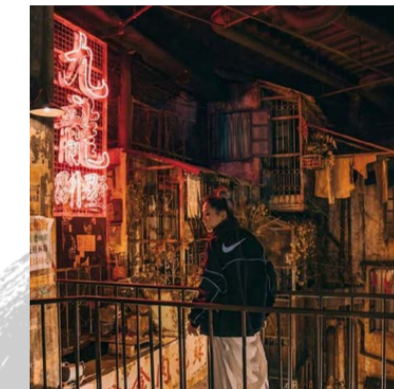
1. ARRIVAL - Entry Corridor

Visitors enter through a tunnel inspired by the corridors of Hong Kong MTR stations. The transition creates intrigue and anticipation, encouraging visitors to step beyond familiar perceptions. Surrounding lights and speakers playing nostalgic sounds create dream-like transition from outside.

SPATIAL NARRATIVE



Observation
Signage, Vertical Height, Colours

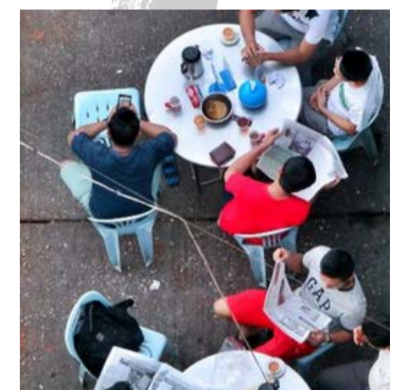


Exploration
Alleyways, Hidden Spaces



Participation
Workshops, Retail, Activities, Exhibits

How users engage with Cantonese Culture inside?



Incidental Engagement
Learning simply by being present, people watching



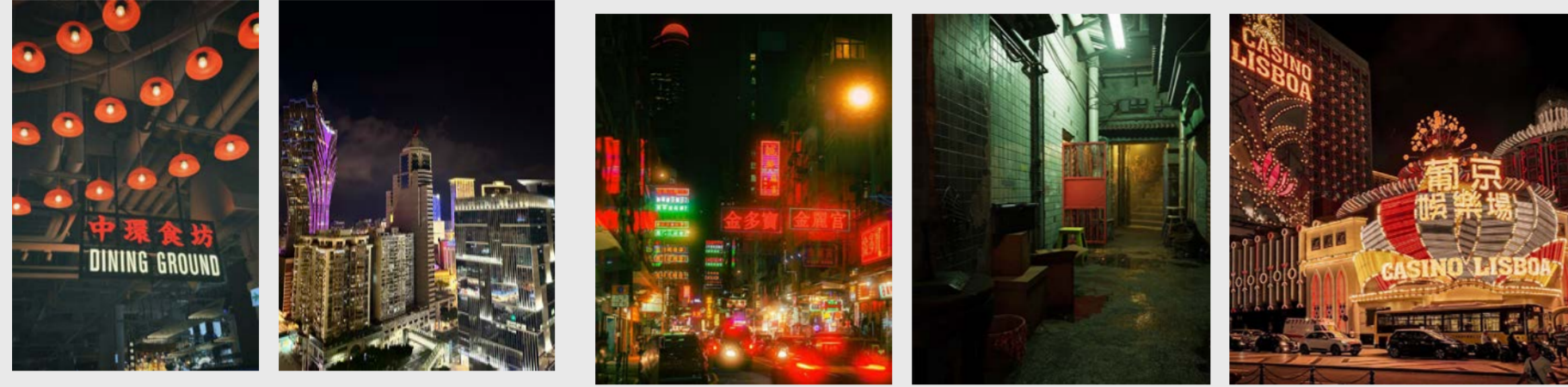
Food and Drink



Connection
Events, Celebrations

cultural image to lived experience

Light and Colour



Lighting shapes the emotional rhythm of the journey, transitioning from vibrant neon illumination to softer, more intimate environments, shifting the mood of users from excitement and wonder to reflective and calm. This contrast reflects the project's narrative of moving beyond surface-level perceptions to uncover the deeper stories and lived experiences embedded within Cantonese culture.

Everyday Artefacts



Familiar objects become carriers of cultural memory. Plastic stools, folding gates, air-conditioning units, signage and street kiosks are reinterpreted as spatial cues that anchor visitors within recognisable moments of Cantonese urban life.

Representation becomes part of the design process rather than simply a method of communication. The collage-based visual style reflects the project's exploration of cultural identity as something layered, evolving, and open to interpretation. By combining reality with imagined narratives, the renders challenge singular readings of Cantonese culture and instead communicate a richer understanding shaped by memory, experience, and human connection.



Cultural Exhibition Visual

The exhibition encourages visitors to become active participants rather than passive observers. Interactive exhibition panels invite visitors to explore questions of identity, belonging, and cultural memory through personal stories, audio recordings, photographs, and artefacts. By contributing their own reflections, visitors become part of the narrative, creating a shared experience that reconnects the Cantonese diaspora while introducing others to the culture through intimate and authentic moments.



Controlled Disorientation - Staircase Corridor

Narrow proportions, exposed services and shifting light levels recreate the spatial compression found within hidden Cantonese passageways. The staircases gradually shift users from the vibrant ground level to the dimmed, dark mezzanine level creating both an atmosphere and mood change.



Cultural Participation - Photobooth Pop-Up Stall

Inspired by the popularity of photo culture across Hong Kong and Macau, the photobooth transforms visitors from observers into participants. Through dress, props and image-making, cultural appreciation becomes a shared and memorable experience that enables users to unite through fun and memories.



Everyday Life - Kiosk Pop-Up Stall

Referencing the neighbourhood kiosks found throughout Hong Kong and Macau, the stall celebrates the ordinary rituals of browsing, gathering and conversation. Deliberately cramped and messy layouts reinforce the priorities of convenience and casual style of kiosks and the value of fast-paced and daily routine in the Cantonese regions. These familiar moments reveal the social fabric often overlooked within broader cultural representations.



Layered Perspectives - Mezzanine and Cultural Storytelling Rooms



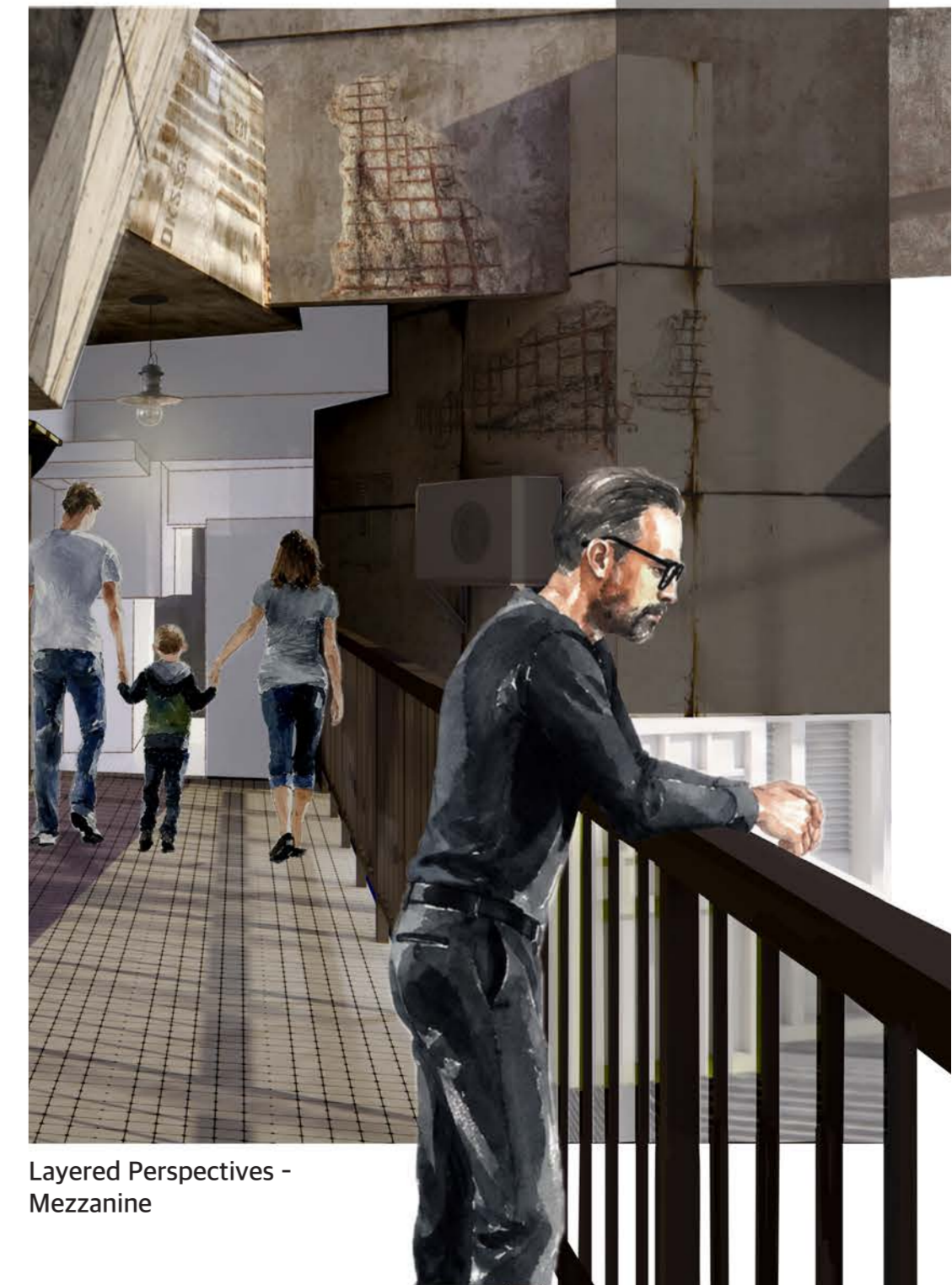
Vertical Experience - Sectional Perspective

The surrounding architectural forms rise around visitors, generating a sense of immersion and protection rather than confinement. Elevated walkways, overlooking balconies, and stacked spaces encourage visitors to occupy multiple perspectives, reinforcing the idea that culture is not a singular image but a collection of overlapping stories and experiences. Much like the streets of Hong Kong and Macau, where dense building forms create intimate urban rooms, the interior embraces occupants within a layered spatial landscape.



Journey Inward - Alleyway Visual

Beyond the images and symbols often associated with culture lies a deeper landscape of memory, belonging, and lived experience. Through moments of discovery and reflection, the interior invites visitors to look beyond the surface and engage with the stories that shape Cantonese identity. Culture is then experienced not as something to simply observe, but as something to connect with, understand, and remember.



Layered Perspectives - Mezzanine