

unco

Unco is an installation that exposes contemporary society's fear of uncertainty through the lens of the liminal and the uncanny.

Inspired by the liminal and uncanny qualities of Dundee's wynds, as well as Walter Benjamin's figure of the flâneur, the installation explores urban anxieties that have become increasingly prominent within a modern "achievement society."

The work encourages the viewer to adopt flâneurism, engaging in observational drifting within an urban environment that lacks commercial purpose, where efficiency would typically be prioritised. In this uncanny setting, the observer becomes the observed, and a sense of unease begins to emerge.



The figure of the flâneur, as articulated by Walter Benjamin in *The Arcades Project*, is traditionally associated with the spectacle of the modern city, a detached observer moving through crowds and commerce. However, within the narrow wynds, this condition begins to break down. The thinning of the crowd and the absence of commercial rhythm collapse the flâneur's protective "veil," shifting perception from distracted movement to heightened spatial awareness and stillness. In these residual urban spaces, time appears to slow and thicken. Through the lens of the 'dialectical image', the alley becomes more than a passage; it operates as a site of interruption where past and present converge and linear narratives of progress are suspended. What initially reads as absence instead becomes a charged pause, where architecture itself, rather than the crowd, mediates the reading of urban space.



Paris Street; rainy day, Gustave Caillebote



Peter Street



Horse wynd

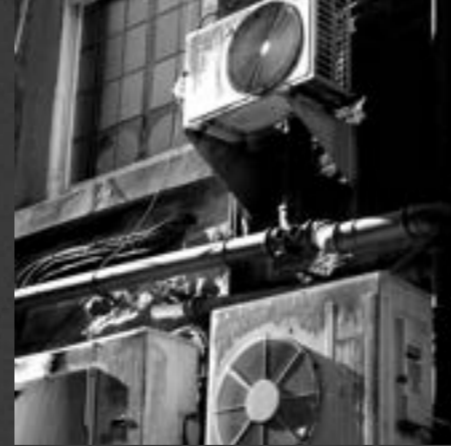


Coutties wynd



site visit.

Using the philosophy of the flâneur, several site visits were conducted across the three locations. Observations and information were gathered at a slower pace, allowing for a more in-depth collection of photographs and drawings.



Site map showing the wynds in Dundee

the fear of uncertainty.

In the modern age, where urban navigation is heavily reliant on mobile phones and digital guidance through the built environment, society has become increasingly unfamiliar with spaces such as alleyways and wynds that exist beyond the commercial activity of the main street. Throughout this investigation, three key themes emerged when interrogating the wynds: the fear of wandering, the fear of unproductive time, and the feeling of architectural surveillance.



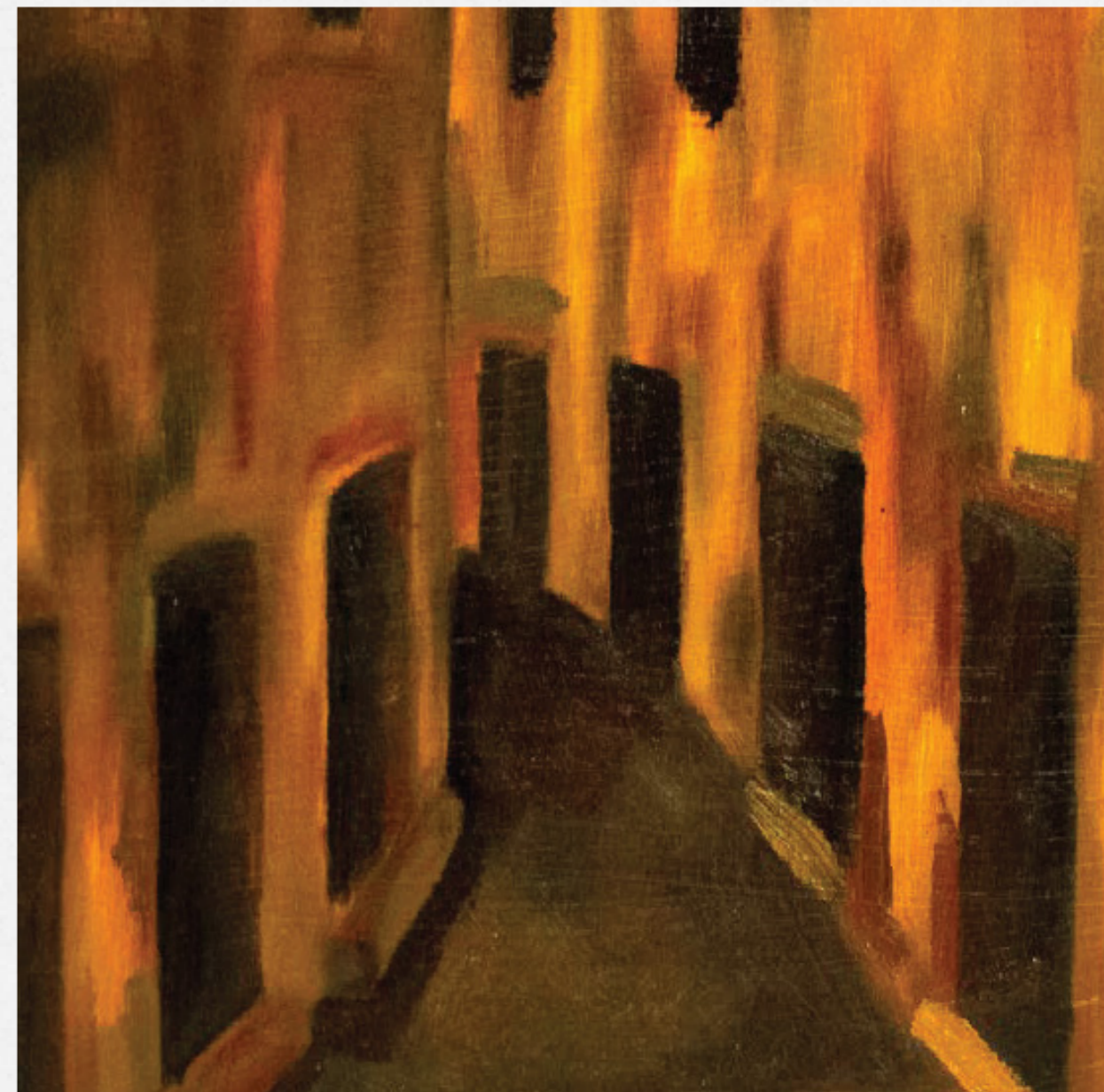
Nighthawks, Edward Hopper



The street, Karl Grune



Sketch of crowd movement through Peter street



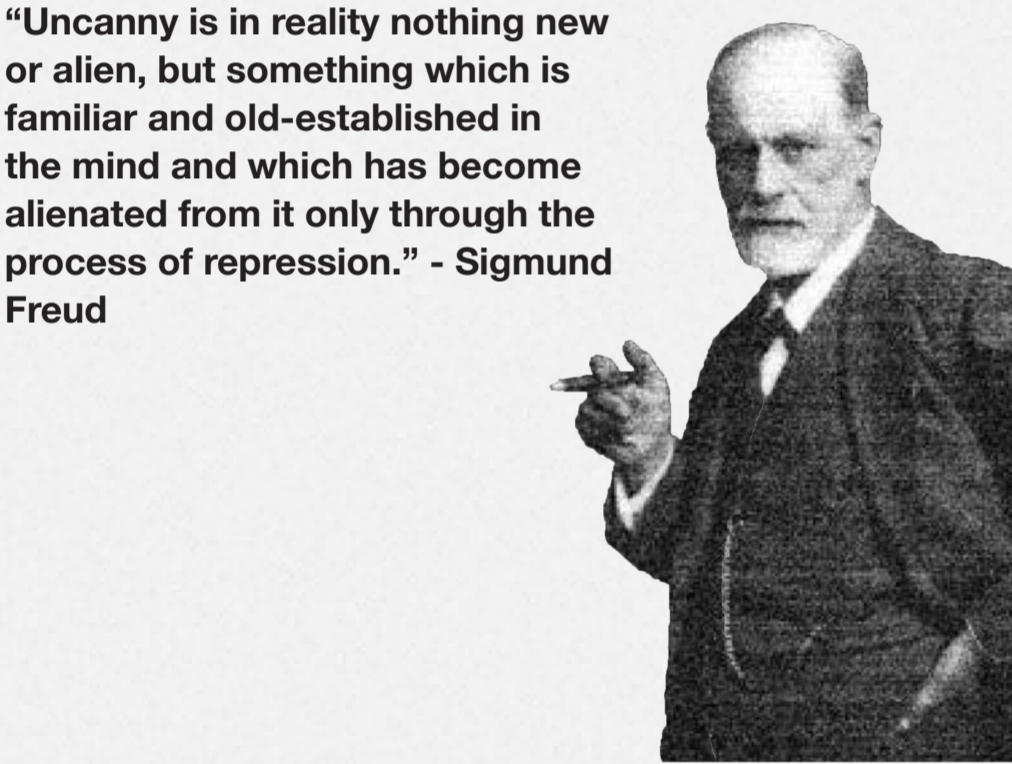
Oil painting of the wynd



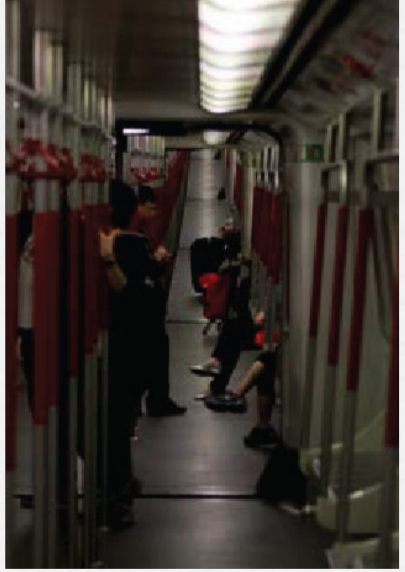
The Arcades of Paris

the architectural uncanny.

Within an architectural context, Freud's ideas resonate through thresholds, frames, and transitional spaces, windows, corridors, and passageways, where distinctions between inside and outside, public and private, begin to blur. These are moments where space becomes unstable, and where the act of inhabitation is unsettled. Freud's thinking allows the built environment to be read not only as a physical construct, but as a psychological condition shaped by memory, perception, and latent tension. In this way, architecture becomes a site where the liminal and the uncanny are not only experienced, but continuously produced.



"Uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression." - Sigmund Freud



Subway train



The Backrooms, Internet concept 2019

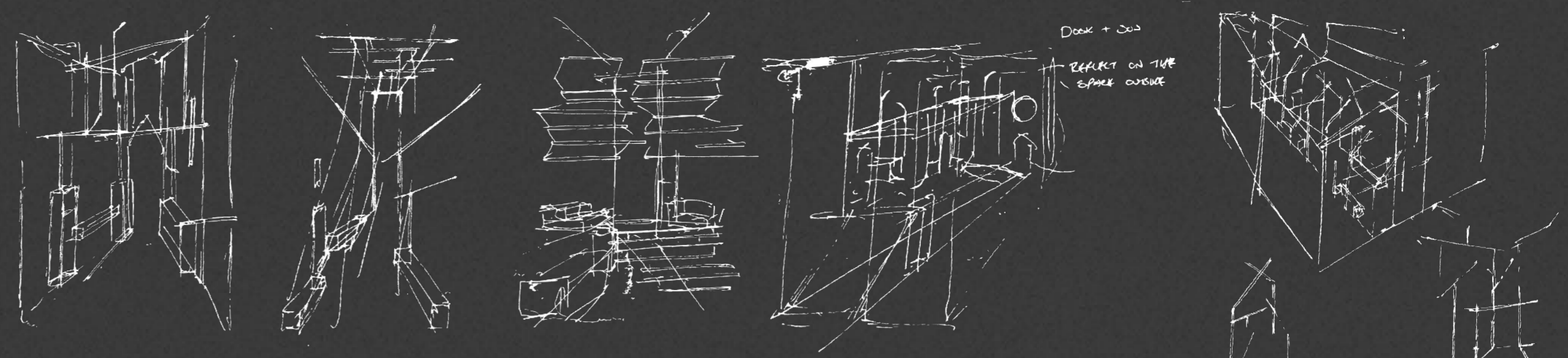


the passage.

Through the philosophy of the flâneur, the wynd was understood not merely as a street but as a passage: a room within the city and a space of theatrical transition.



Inserting the commerce into the site



The wolf mans dream.

The childhood dream of Sergei Pankejeff, later analysed by Sigmund Freud, centres on a moment of spatial rupture: the sudden opening of a window. On the night before his fourth birthday, Pankejeff dreamed of white wolves sitting in a tree outside, their fixed gaze directed into the room. Freud later interpreted the dream as evidence of an "infantile neurosis" connected to a formative "primal scene."

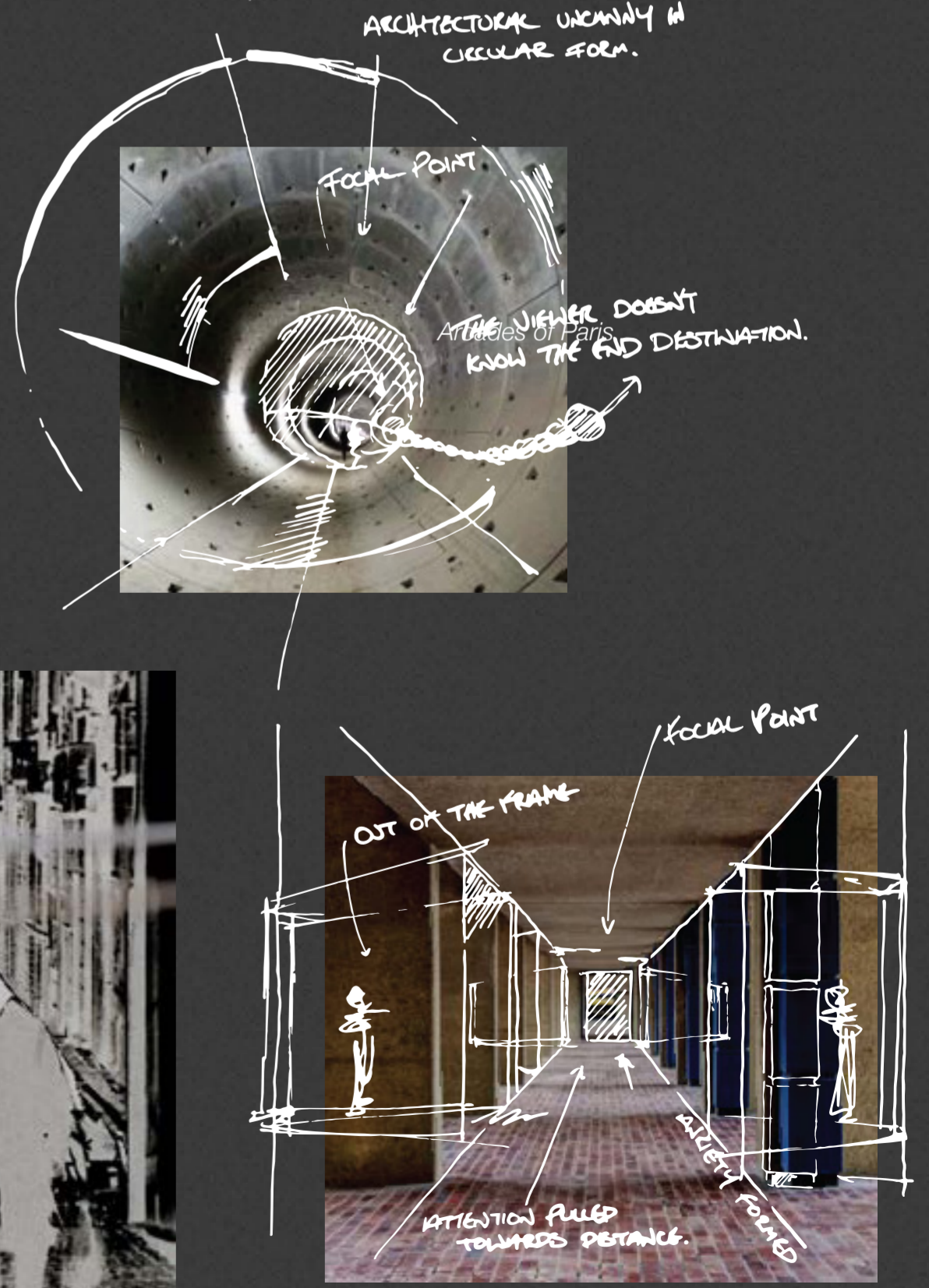
Ordinarily, the window frame separates inside from outside, safety from exposure. Here, however, that boundary collapses. Although the wolves remain outside, their gaze penetrates the interior, transforming looking into being seen. The window becomes a site of psychological tension, where visibility overrides enclosure and the domestic space is rendered vulnerable and exposed.



The wolf mans dream 1937

exploring the uncanny within the wynds.

Following an exploration of the concept of the frame within the architectural uncanny and its capacity to stage particular scenes, photographs from the site were digitally manipulated to identify framed and constructed compositions. A series of afternoons were spent documenting the site using both fast and slow shutter speeds, generating a range of visual outcomes. After undergoing digital editing in Photoshop, the images were printed and assembled into collages, enabling further investigation of the site's spatial and atmospheric qualities.



exploring the frame.

Drawing on Freud's notion of the frame, the exploration and experimentation of framing were essential to understanding the psychological effects of the architectural uncanny, particularly the tension created by the possibility of the observer becoming the observed.

the frame within cinematography.



Halloween, 1978



Ring, 1998

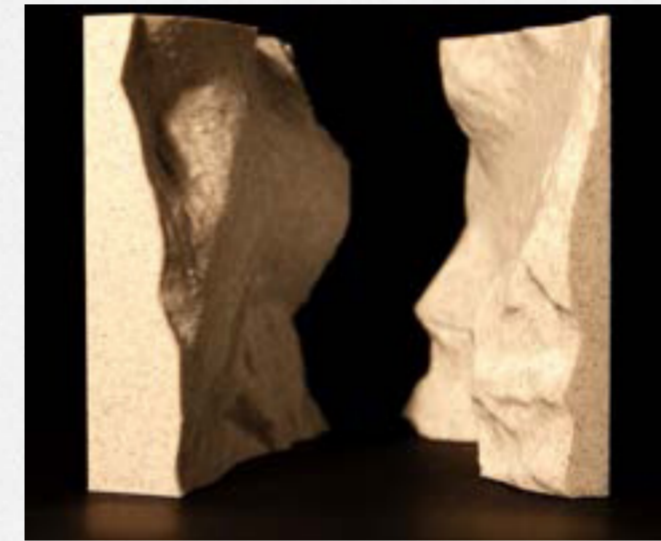
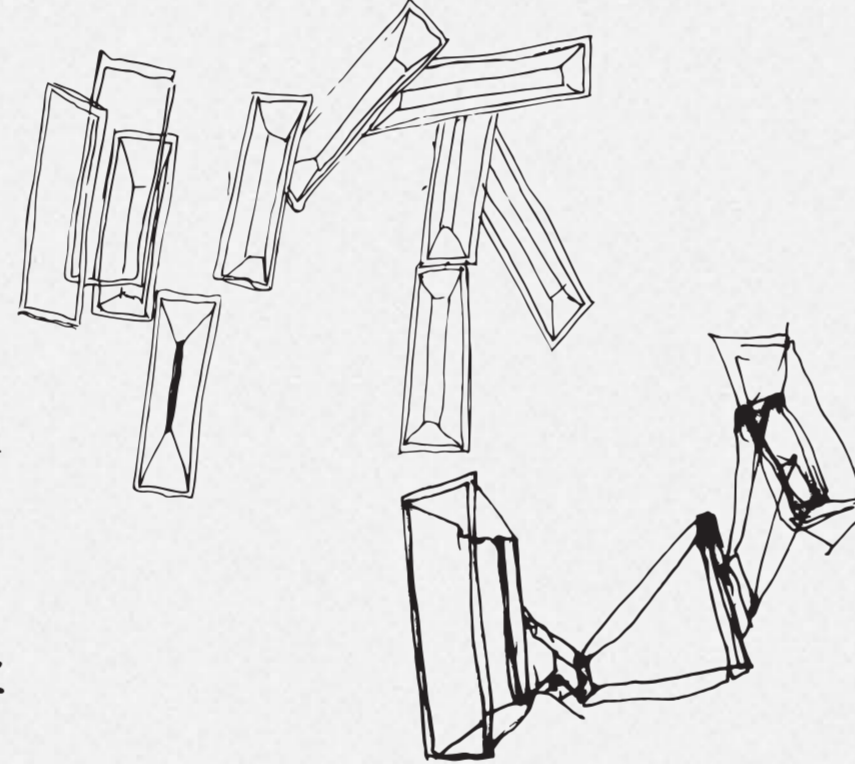
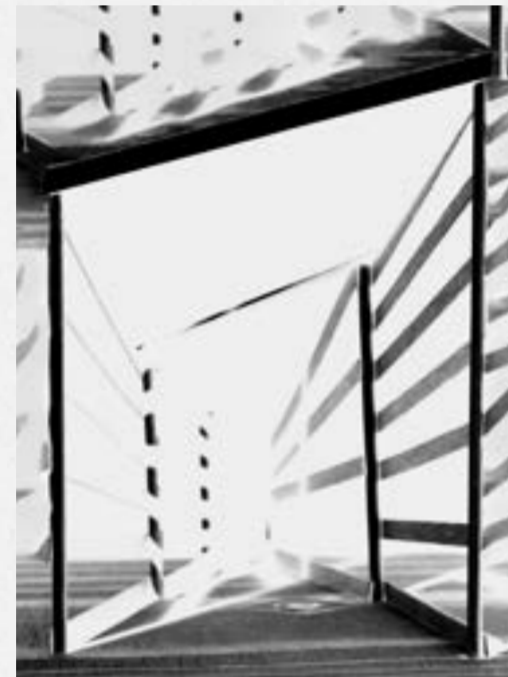
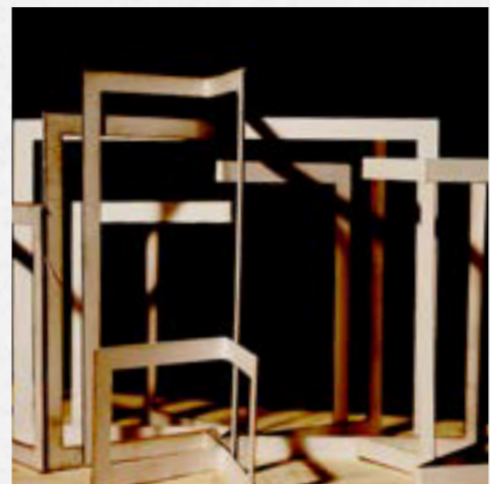
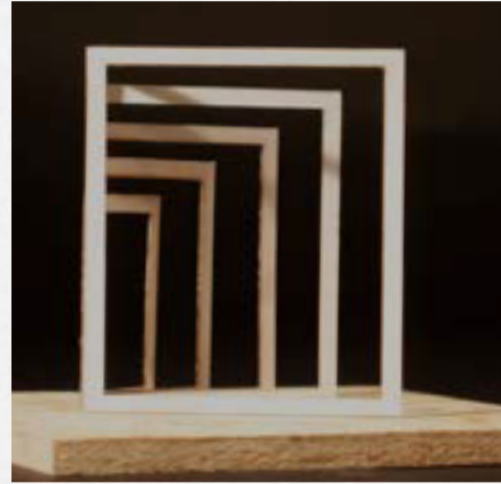


Halloween, 1978



The Shining, 1980

exploring the frame within sketch models.

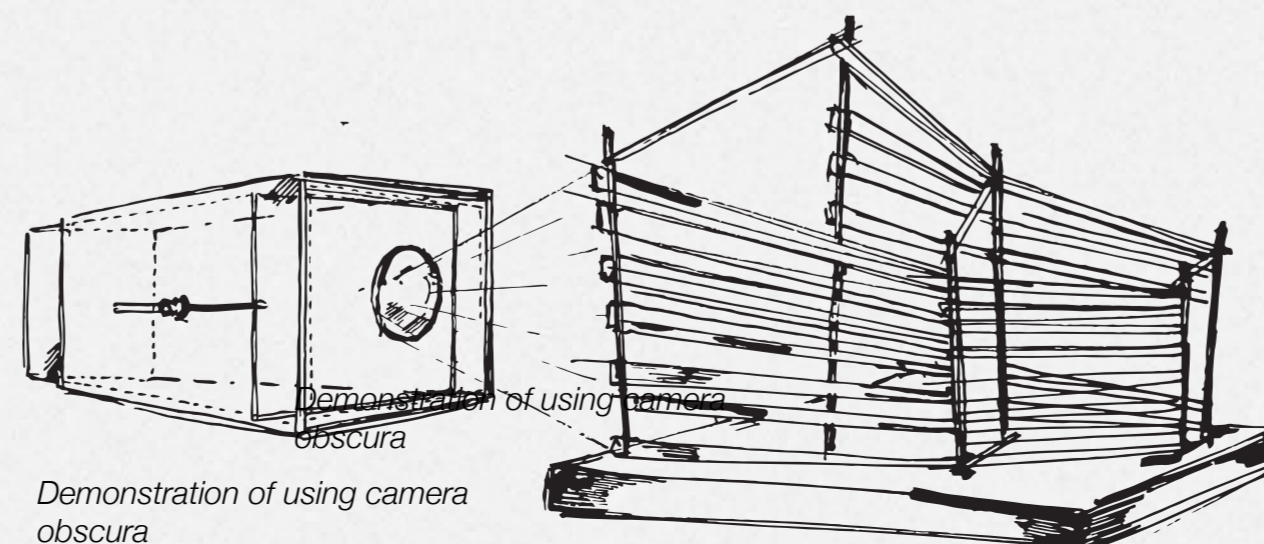
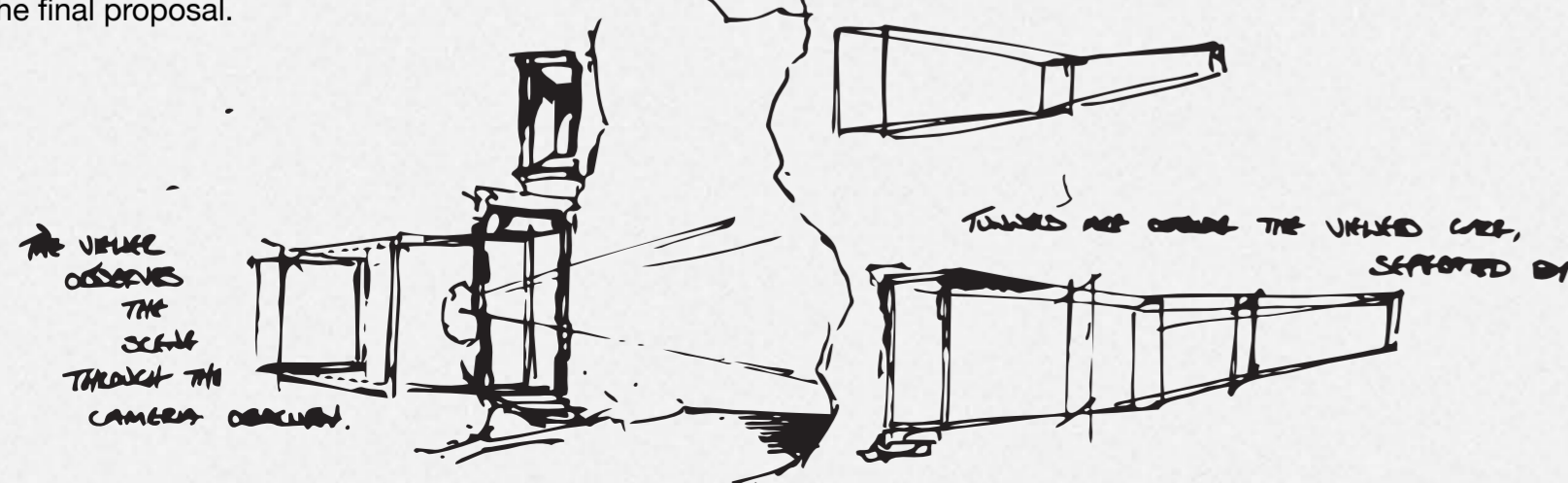
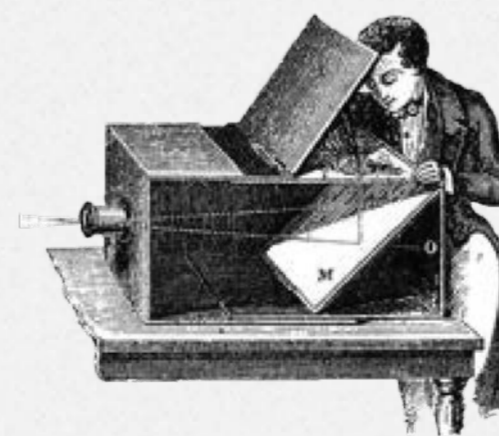
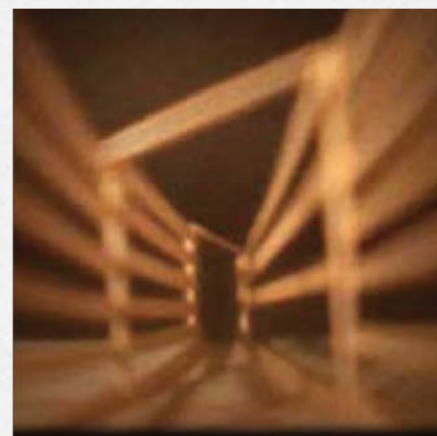


Initial exploration of the veil w

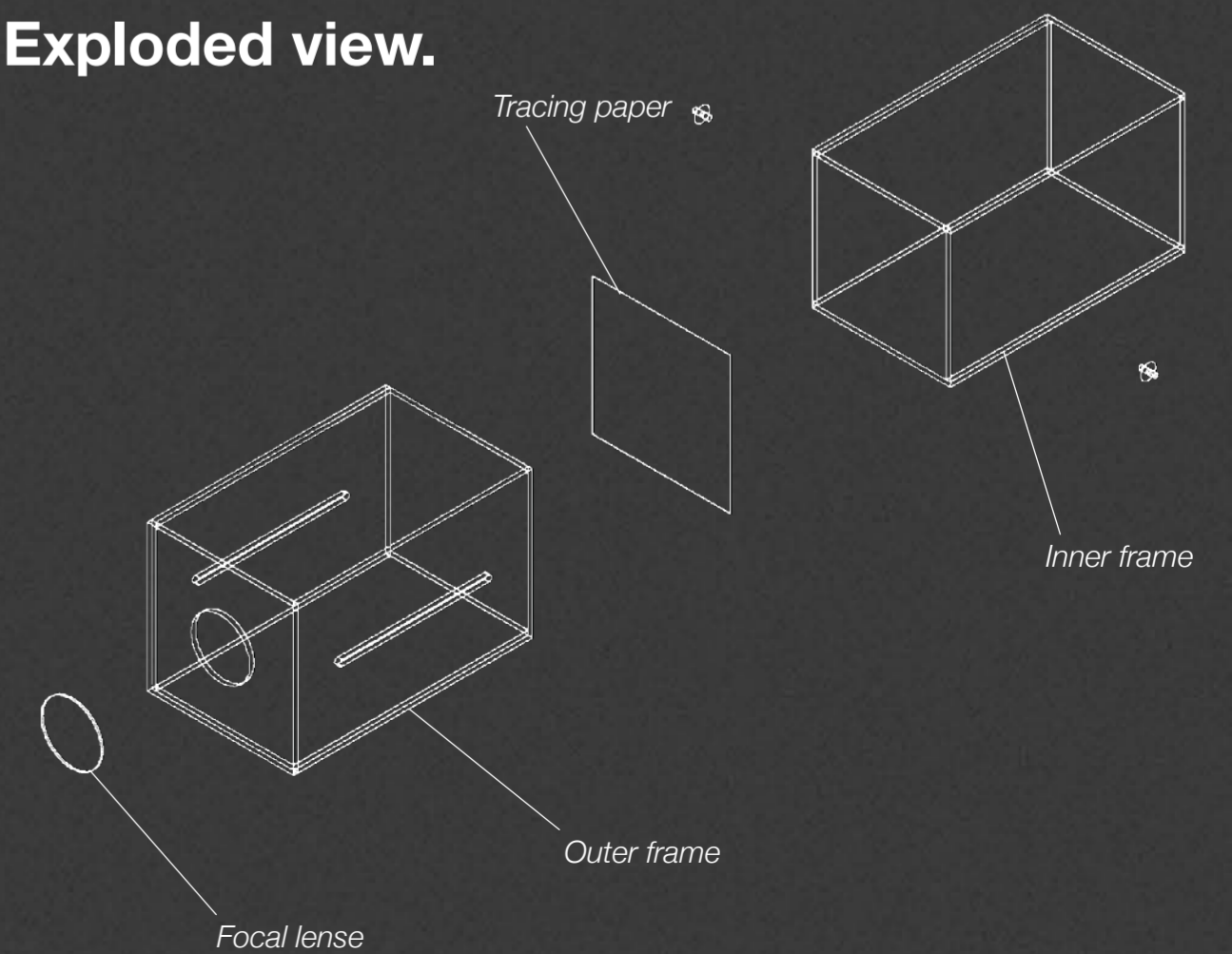
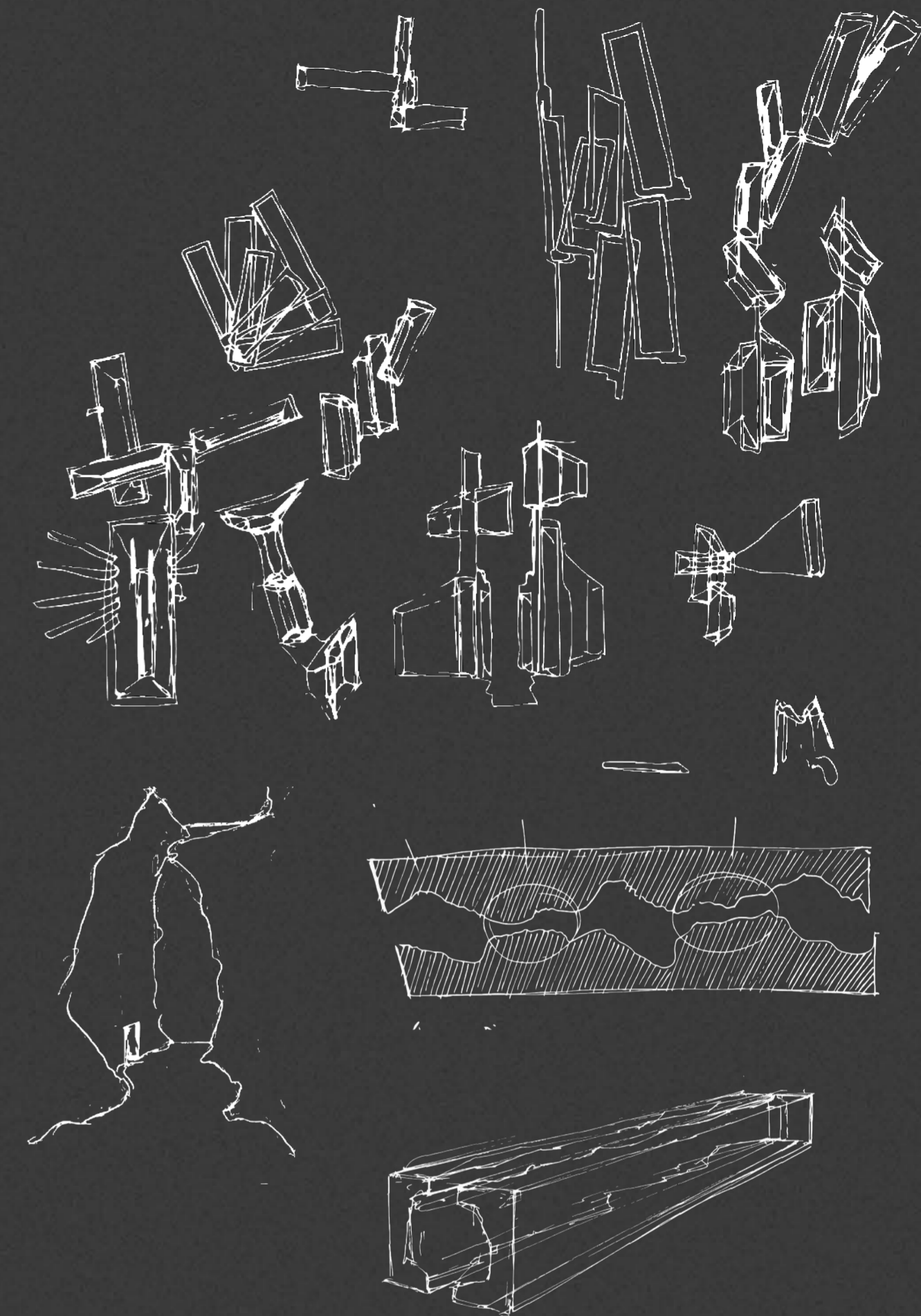
the camera obscura.

Given the sensory and psychological nature of the project, it became essential to identify a device capable of fully immersing the viewer within the installation. Initial investigations focused on the use of door spyholes as a means of creating the illusion of a scaled interior space. However, repeated testing revealed their limitations, as the experience relied heavily on the viewer occupying a precise position, ultimately reducing the effectiveness of the intended immersion.

Through further experimentation, attention shifted towards the camera obscura, an early photographic technique. This approach produced a more compelling outcome, capturing scenes at a subtly distorted scale while allowing viewers to move in and out of focus. In doing so, it introduced a dynamic and immersive quality that enhanced the sensory experience of the installation, ultimately becoming a defining element of the final proposal.



Exploded view.



development.

The development of UNCO involved a range of techniques and methods. Using 3D LIDAR scanning, the sites were visualised and explored at an entirely new level, allowing the wynds to be interrogated from perspectives beyond the ground plane. Through sketch models and material experimentation, the concept of the veil was developed. Drawing on these tools, alongside Freud's theories, a spatial response began to emerge that explores and refines themes relating to societal fears.



Motifs gathered from mark making exercise



Coutties wynd

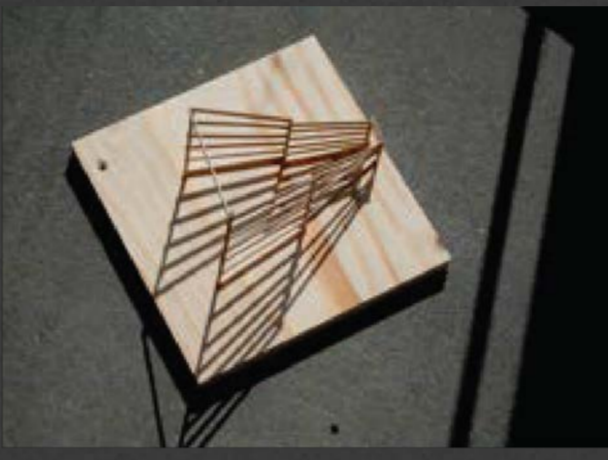
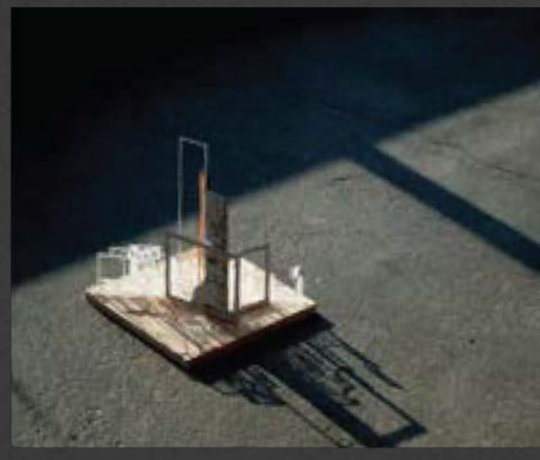
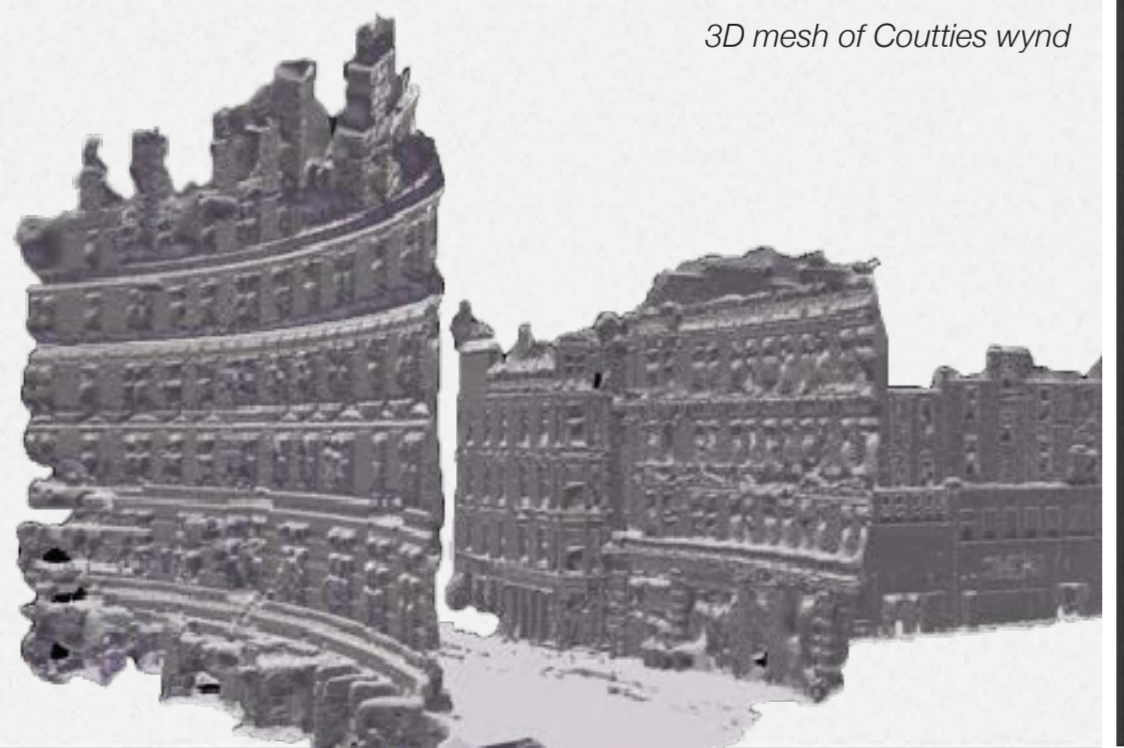


Peter Street

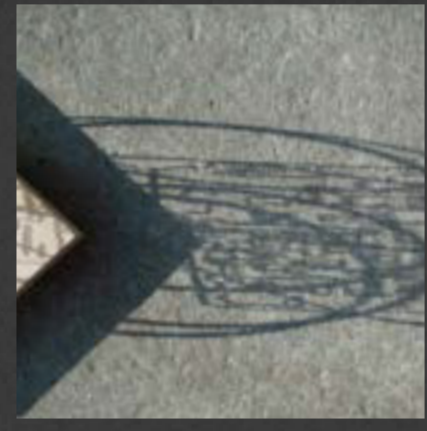


Horse wynd

3D mesh of Coutties wynd



Light test on paper



recreating the veil.

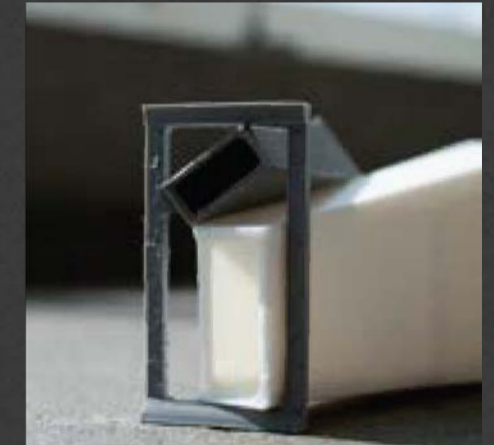
Inspired by the wrappings of Jeanne-Claude and Christo, and by the notion of the crowd as the flâneur's "veil," I created my own veil to reveal the societal fears embedded within the built environment. The veil transforms the wynd into a dwelling-like space through which the observer must drift, engaging in a process of observation and discovery.



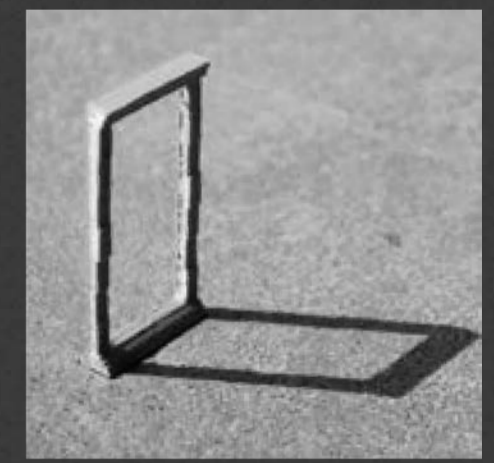
Le Arc de Triomphe, Wrapped, 2021



3D printed tunnel that explores the fear of wandering



3D printed tunnel that explores the observer being observed.



3D printed frame, that creates the stage.



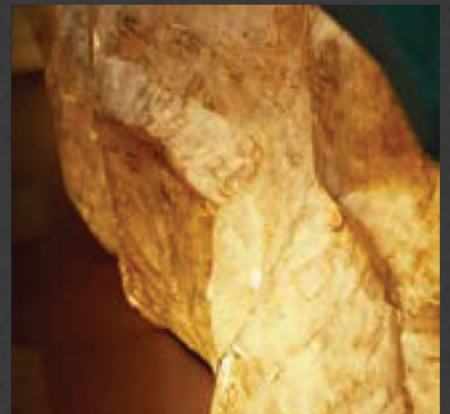
Laser engraving Japanese washi paper with motifs.



Applying Japanese tissue paper to washi paper.

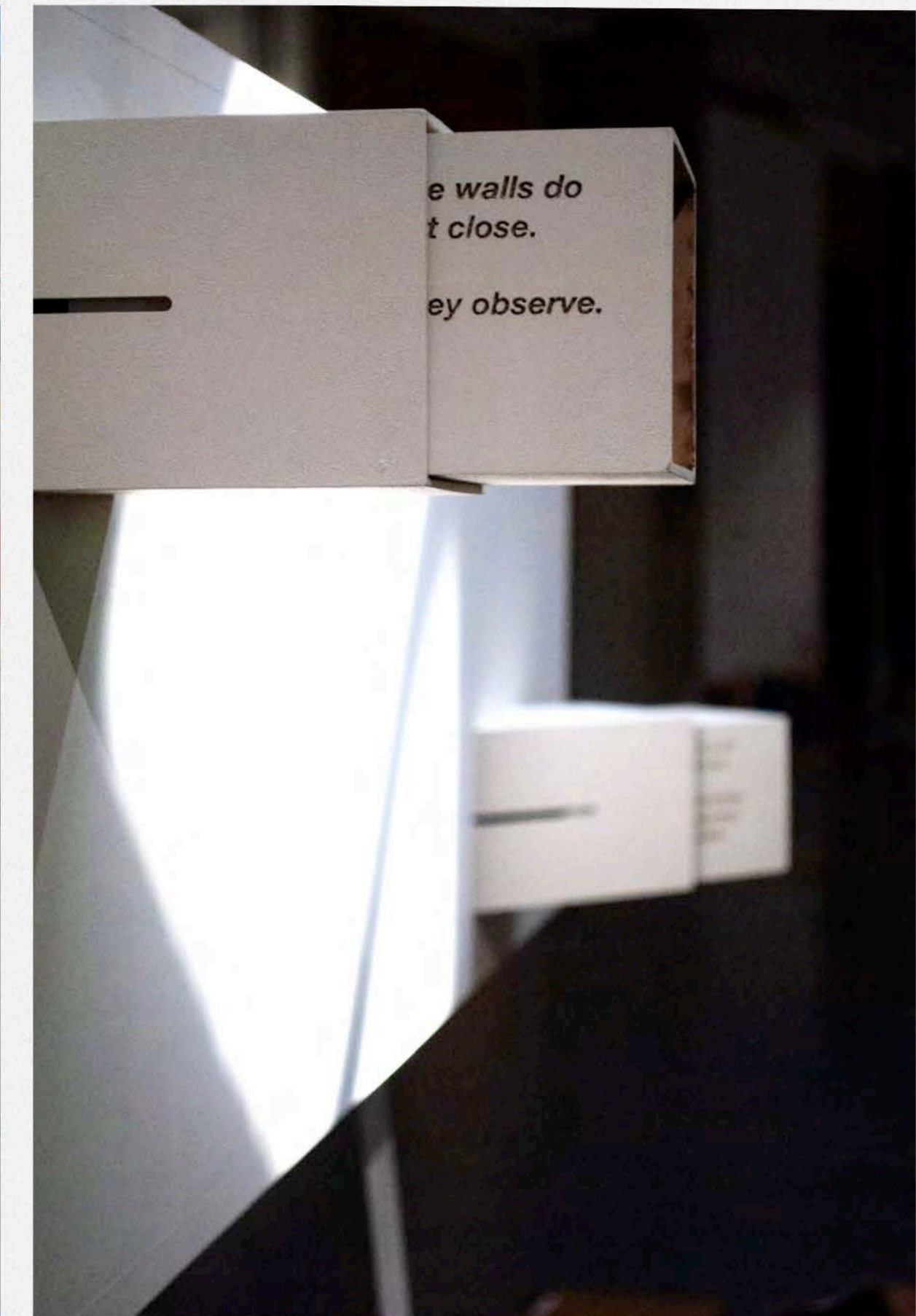
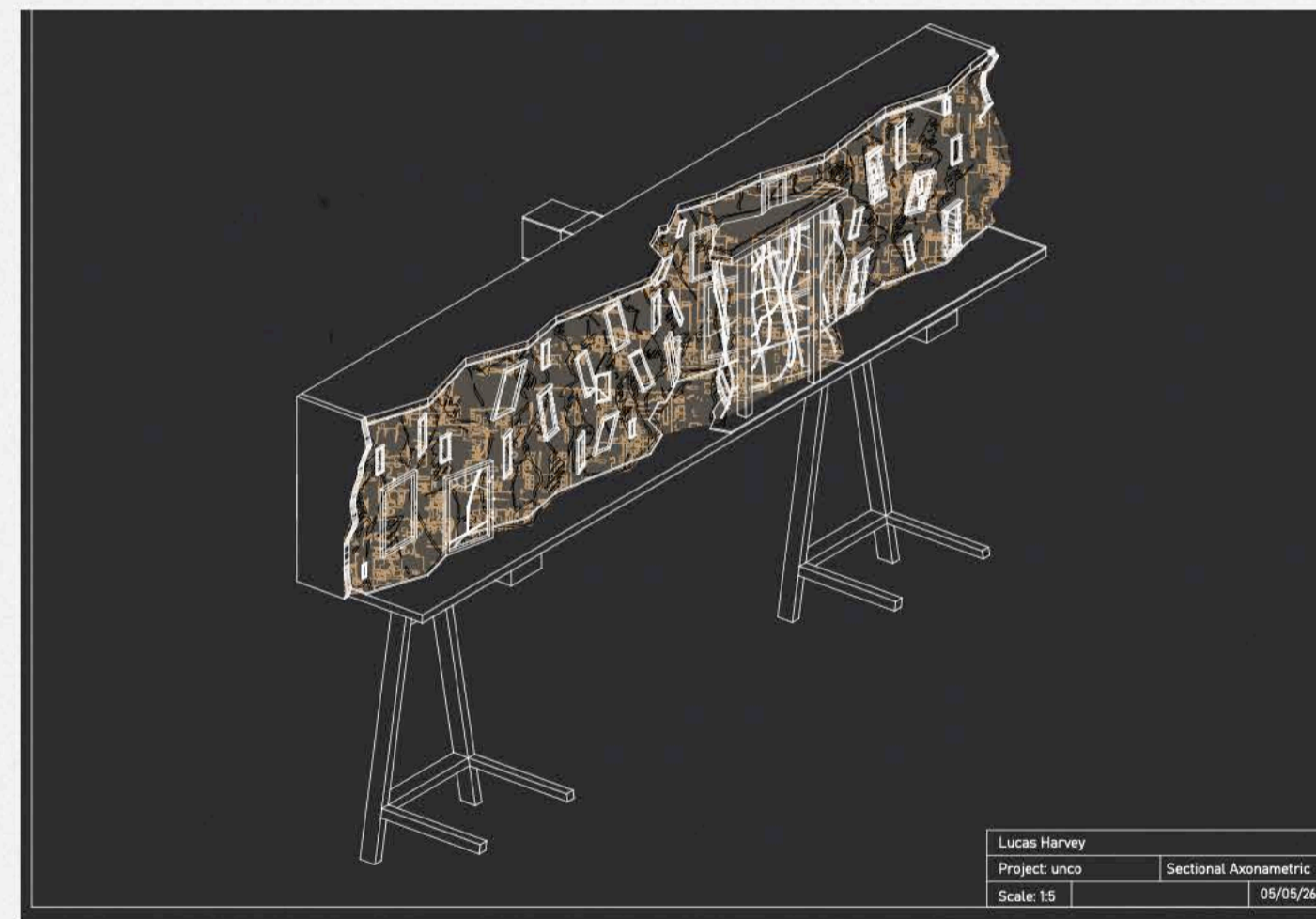
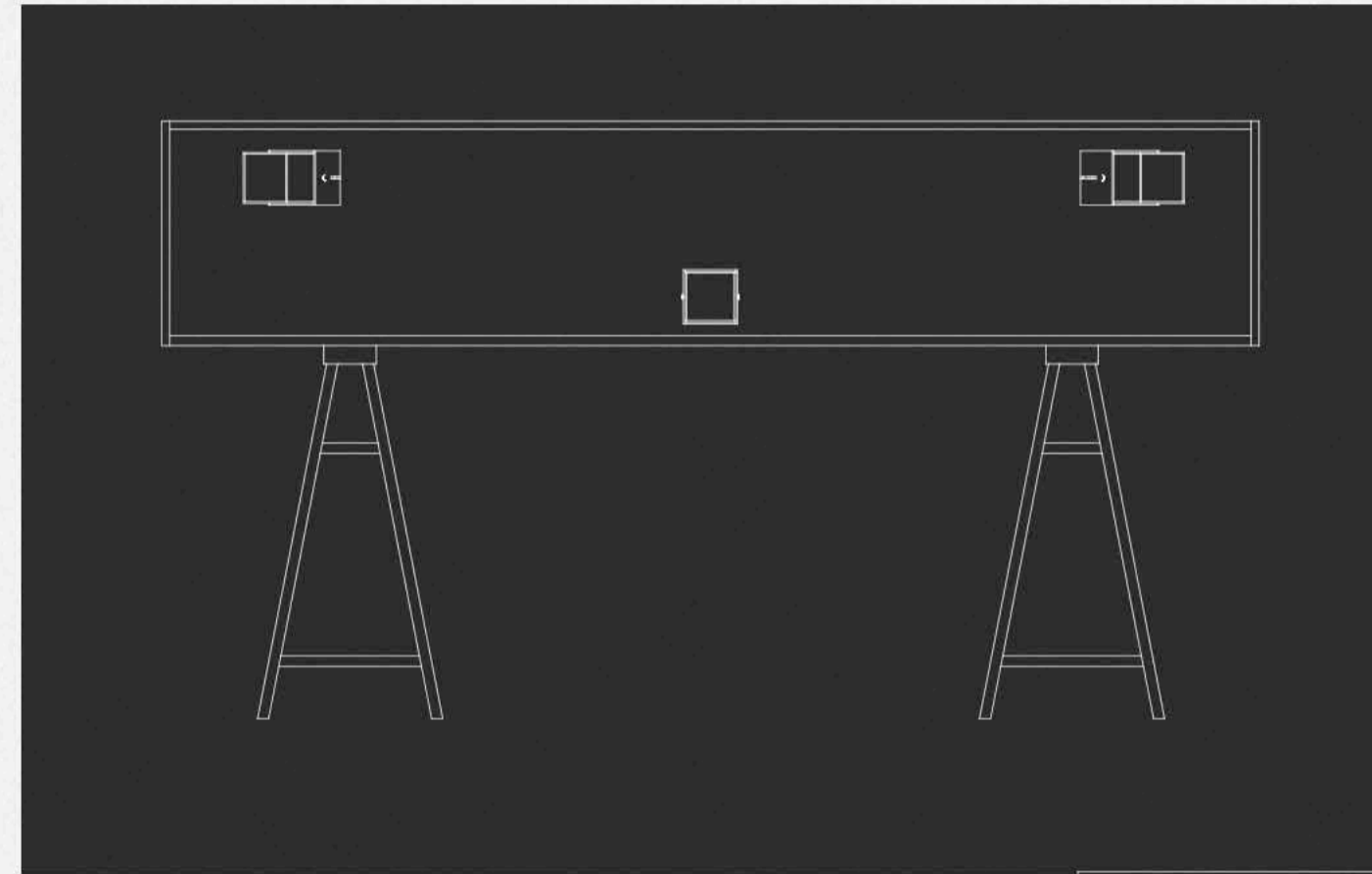
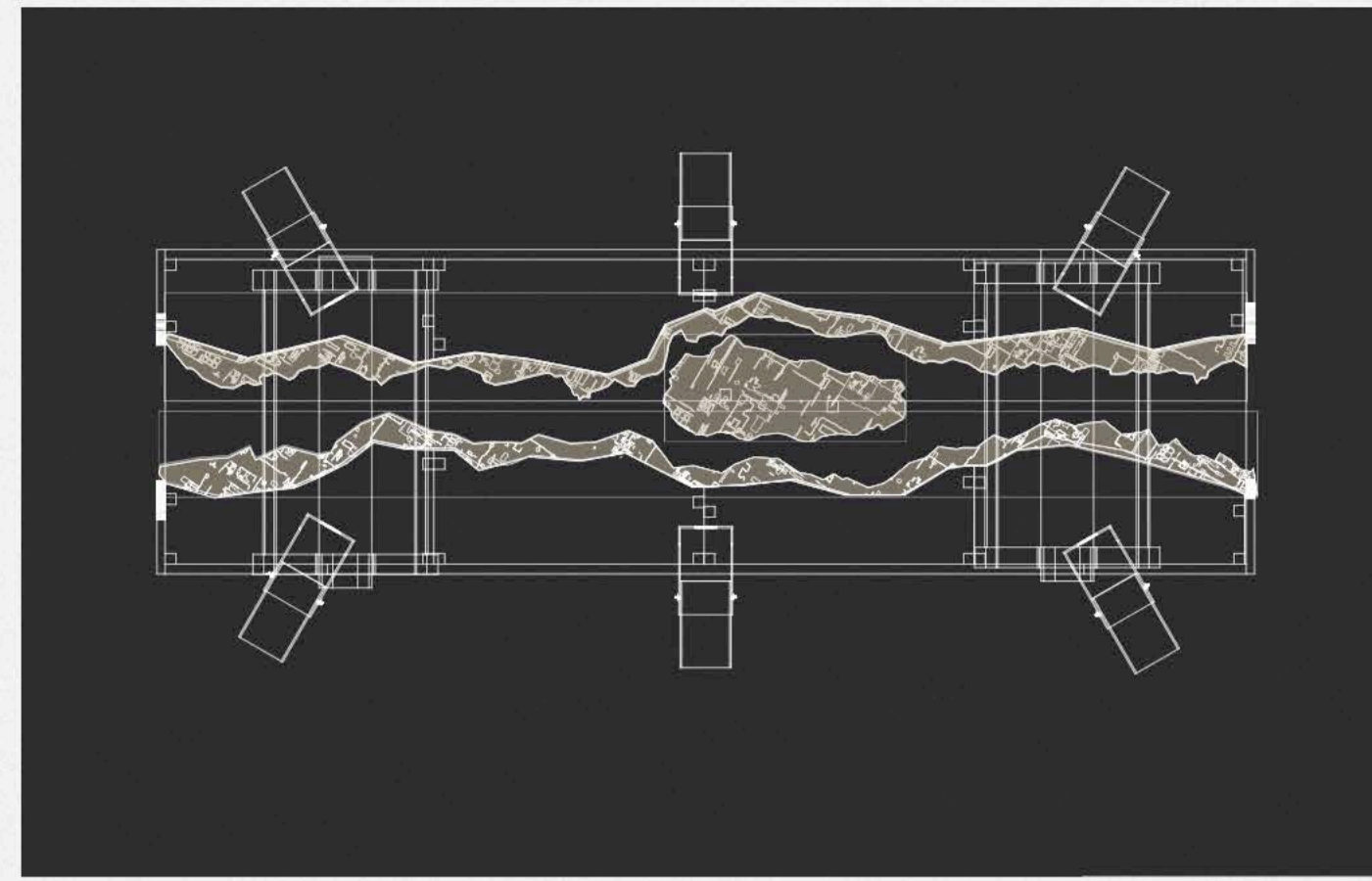


Draping paper over wooden frame to create the veil.

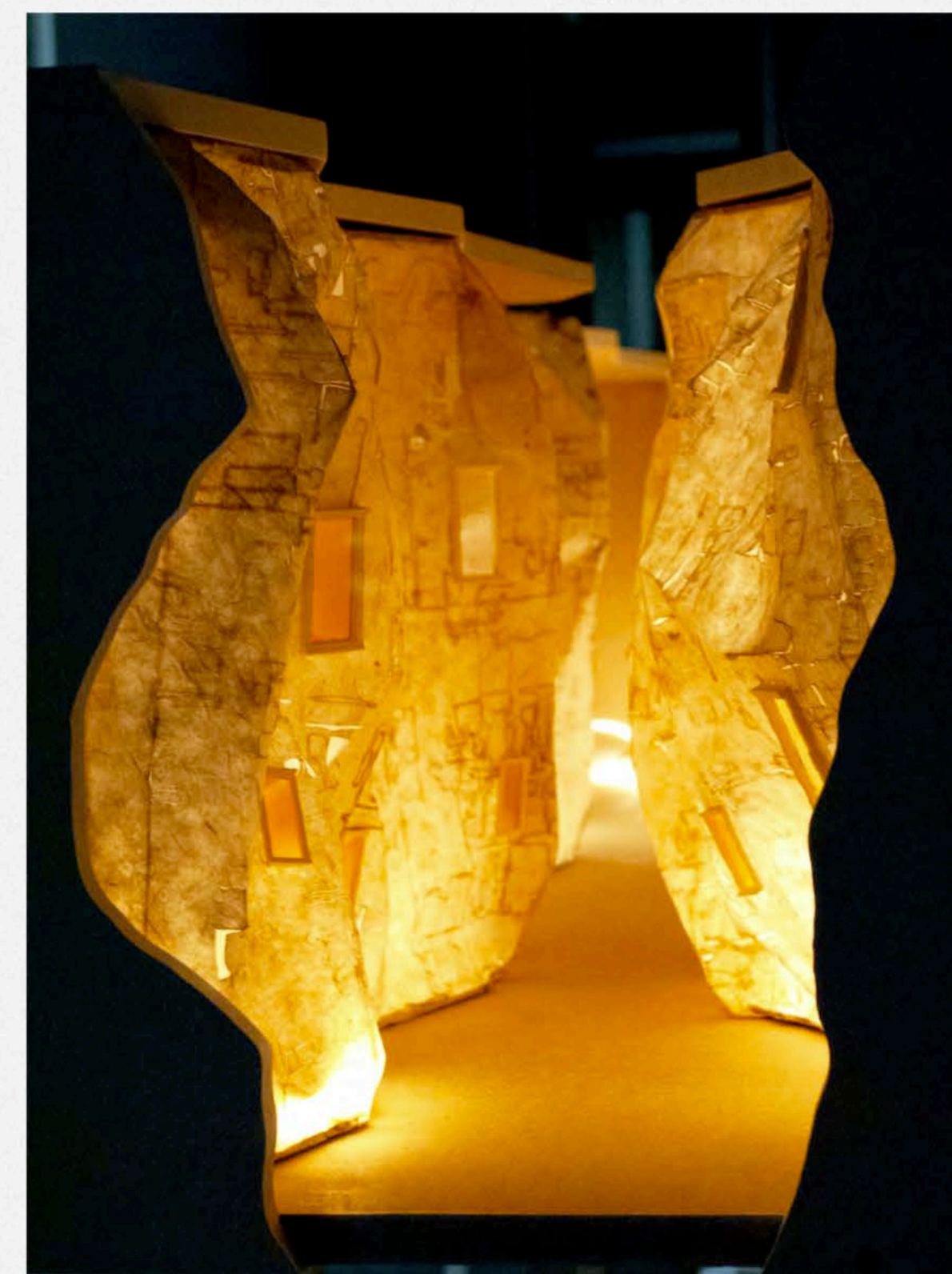


final outcome.

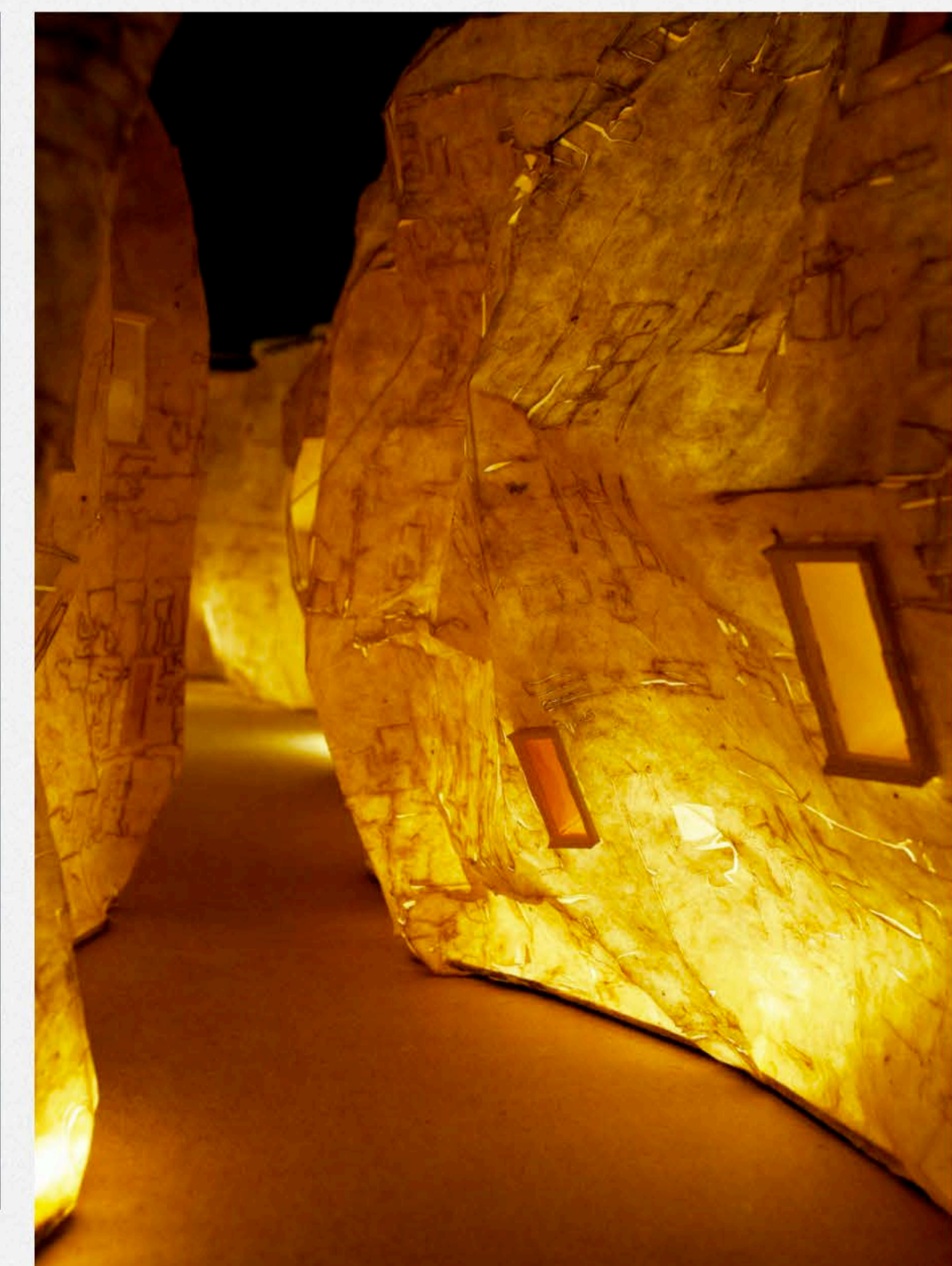
The final outcome is a response to the findings of this spatial investigation. The veil of the crowd, through which the flâneur would once drift, has now been cast over the sites themselves, exposing the elements that fuel contemporary society's fear of uncertainty. Through the fear of wandering, unproductive time, and architectural surveil-



Camera Obscuras



View down installation



Inside installation