



UTOPIA

Utopia is envisioned as a much-needed vibrant, transformative force in Edinburgh's **queer nightlife** scene, at its core it is a **nightclub**. But this isn't just about music and dancing; it's about creating a sanctuary where every individual feels seen.



SCAN FOR THE FULL VIRTUAL TOUR

Set across **four dynamic stories**, the venue lies in the heart of the city at the prominent intersection of George Street and Hanover Street. The building was previously used as a bank and is now occupied by all bar one. Beyond its striking visual appeal, the building is deeply conceptual. **Each floor utilizes its own distinct material and colour palette to physically embody one of the project's four core values:**



CHANGE

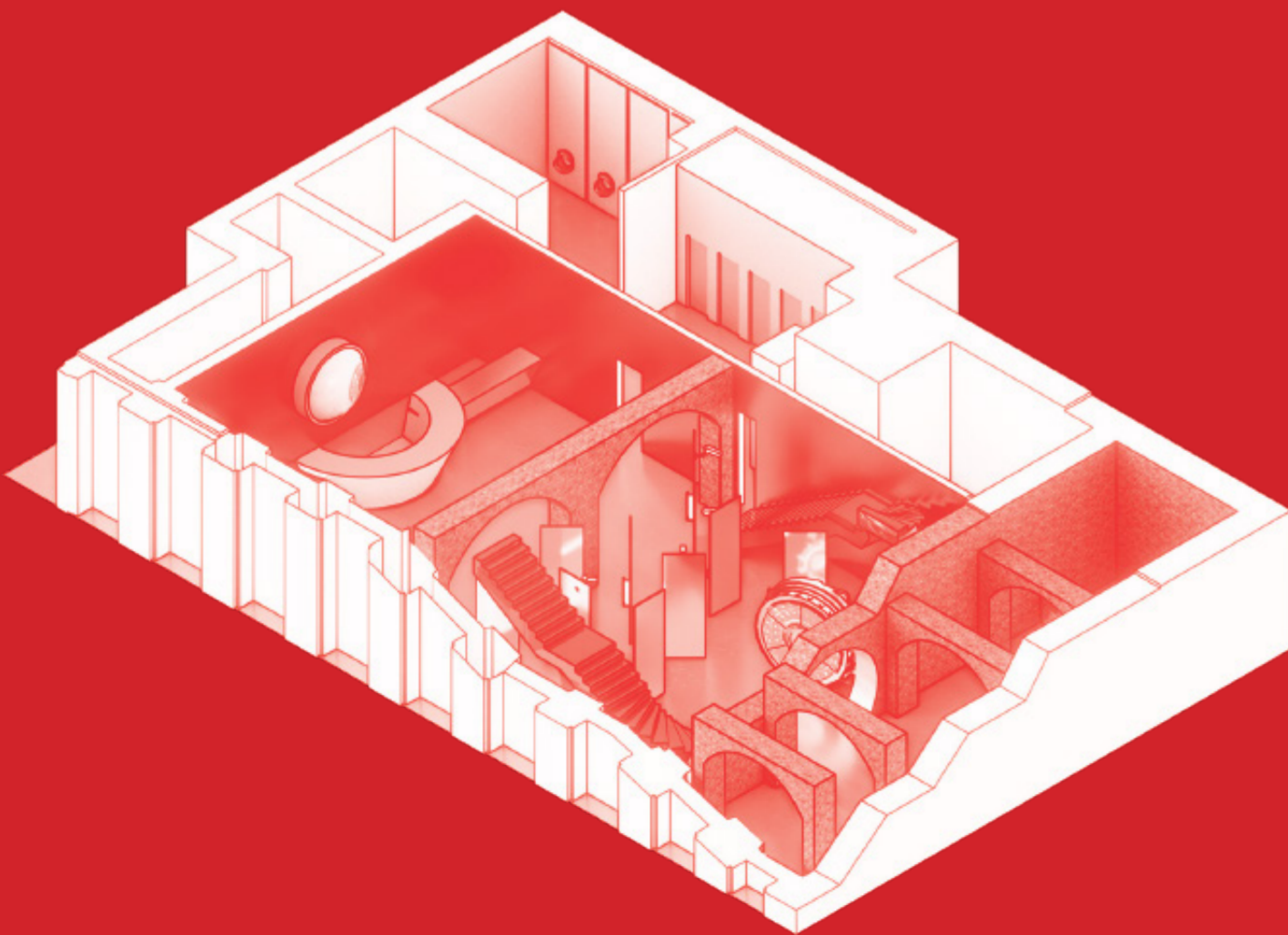
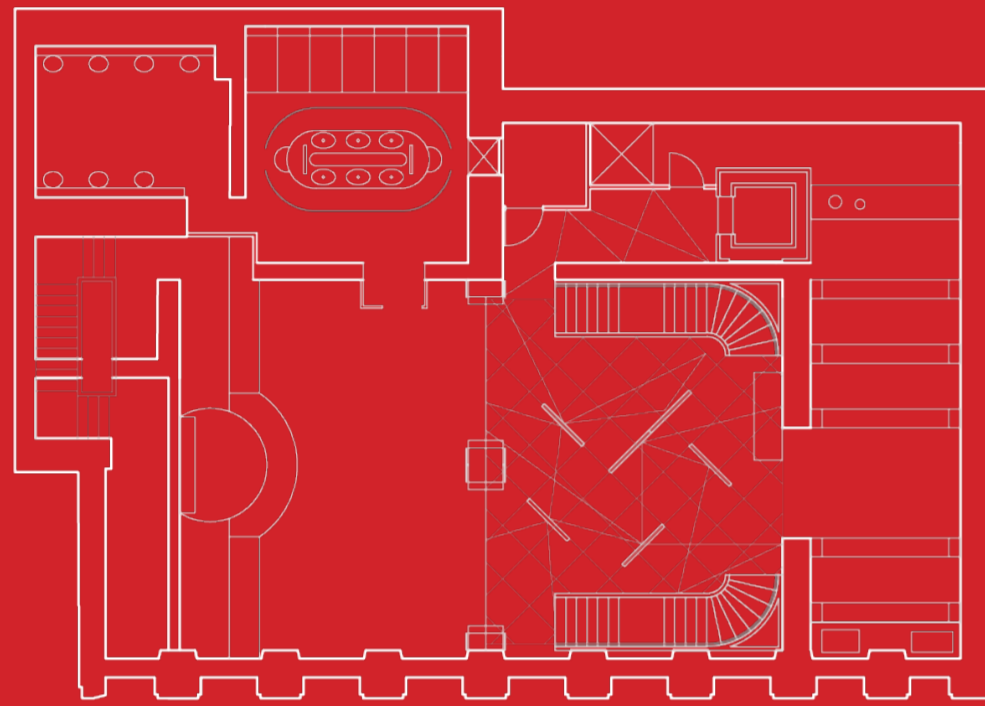
DIVERSITY

INCLUSIVITY

SAFETY

THE SPATIAL JOURNEY THROUGH THE BUILDING MIRRORS THE QUEER EXPERIENCE.

THE BASEMENT: SAFETY

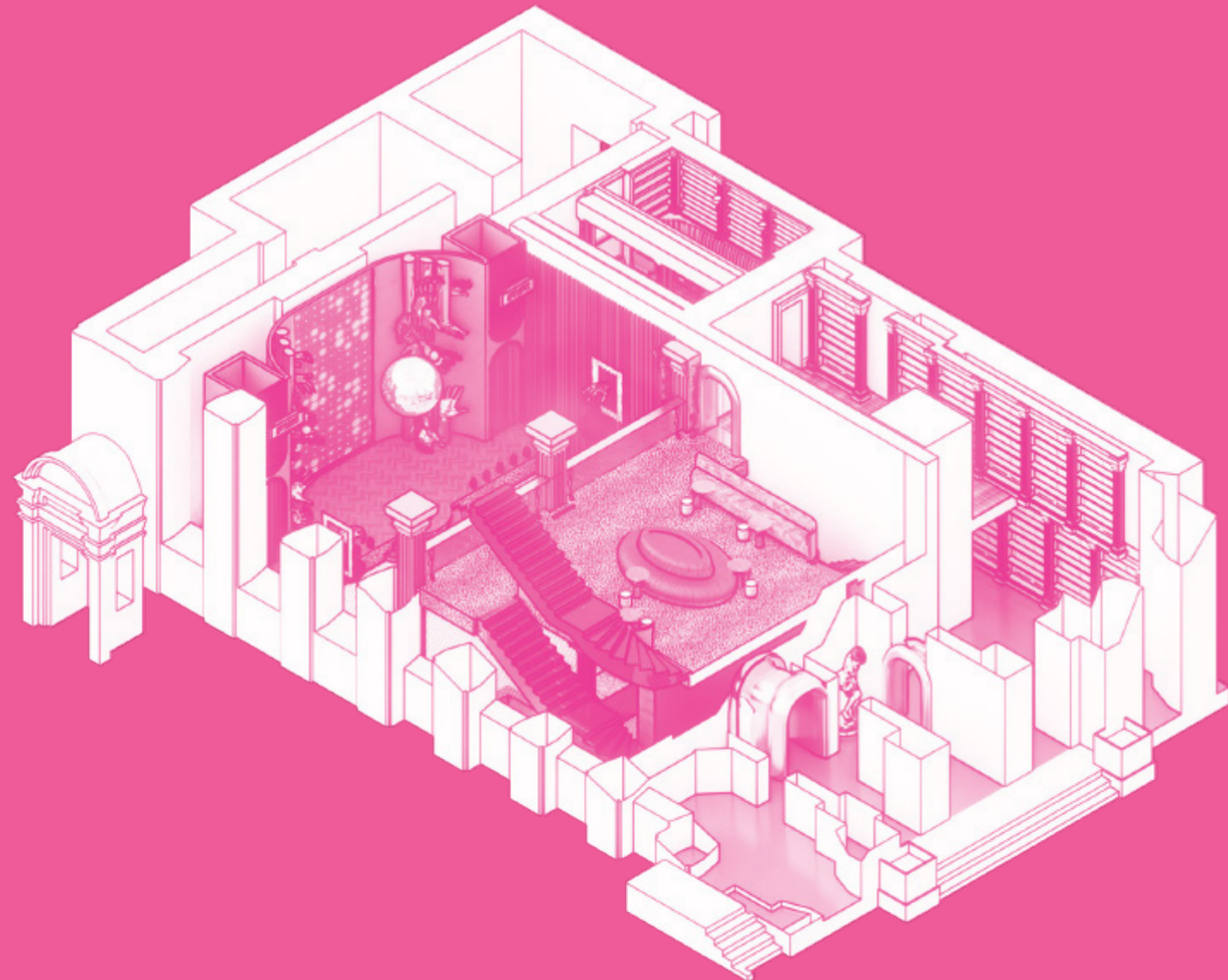
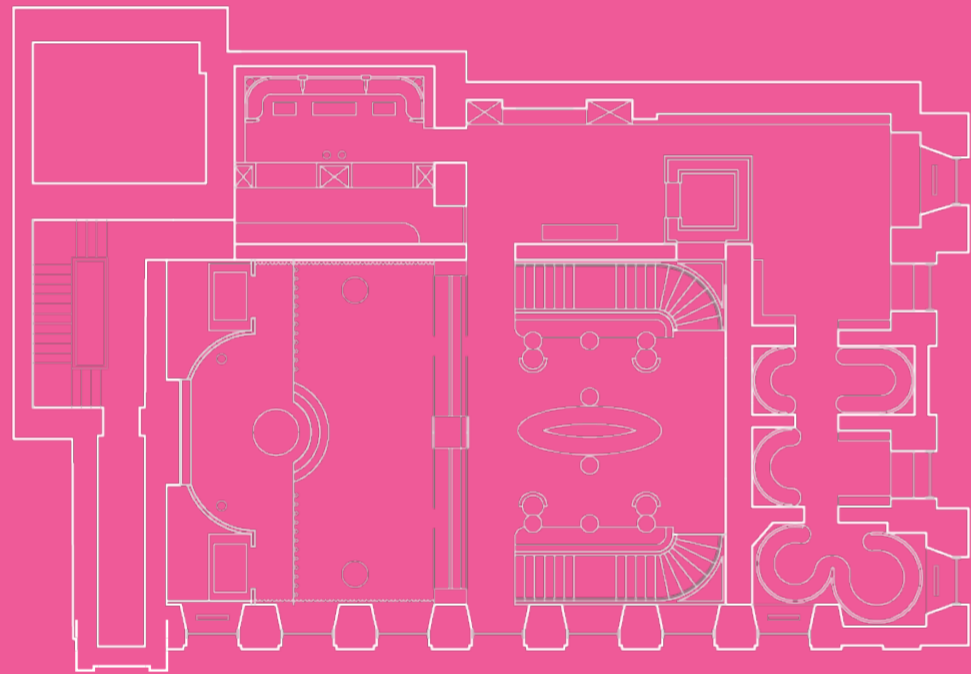
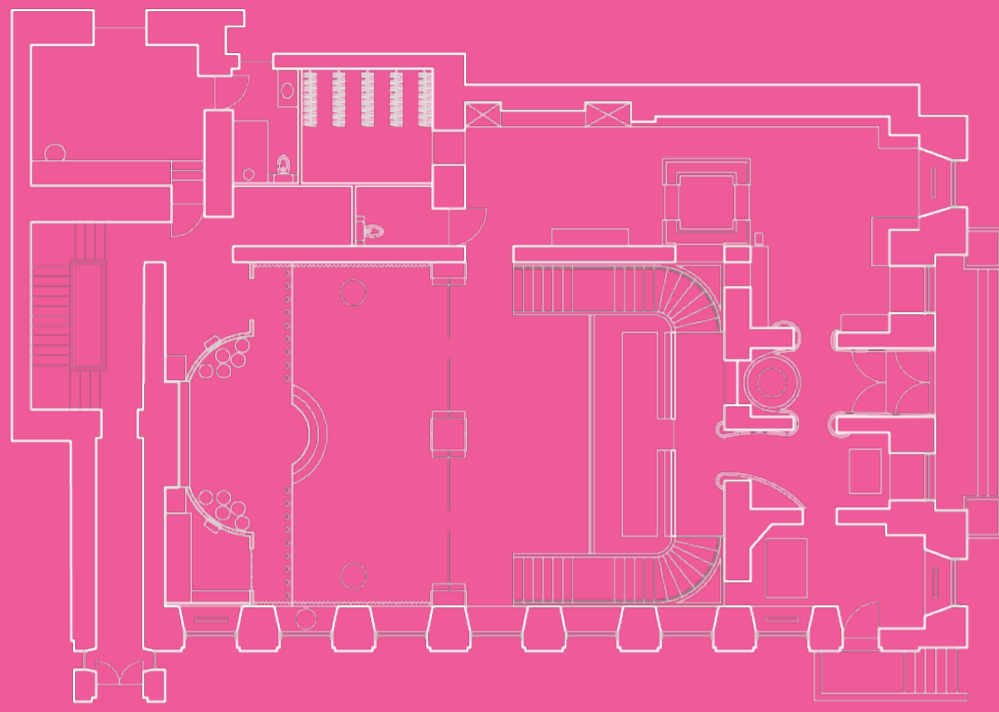


When you enter the building, you are not immediately taken into the large, open ballroom like you might assume. Much like discovering one's queer identity, the initial journey can be confusing, dark, and non-linear. That is why my design encourages users to take the stairs down to the basement, where they are faced with a maze of brushed aluminium panels.

These panels are not reflective enough to show a clear image of yourself, but just enough to bounce light and distort forms. Suspended from a 45-degree grid system of tracks, the panels can be moved and reconfigured every night. No experience in the basement is ever exactly the same.

Down here you will also find the vault this references back to the buildings original purpose. The vault will only play music on physical media like vinyl

THE BALLROOM: INCLUSIVITY

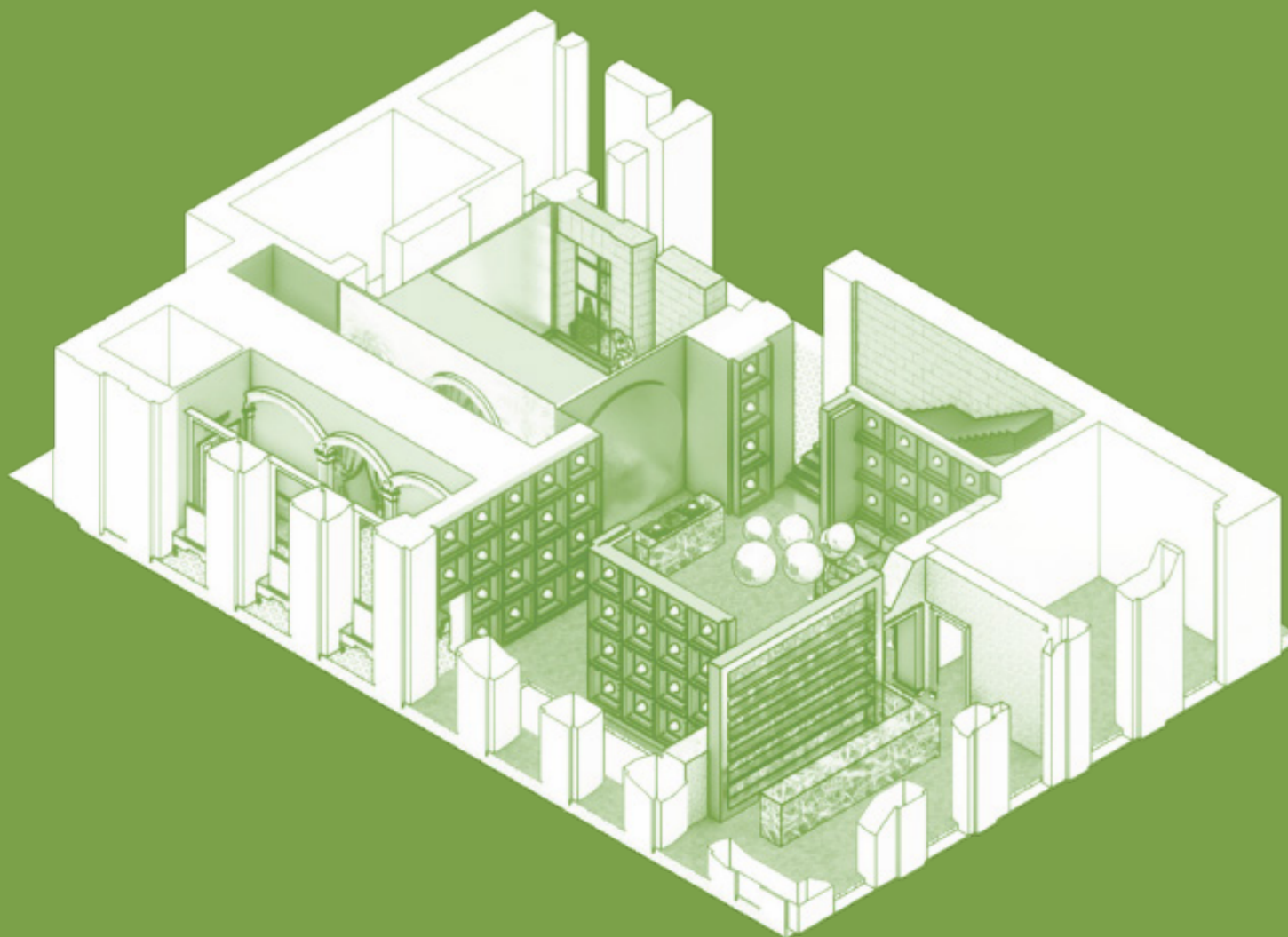
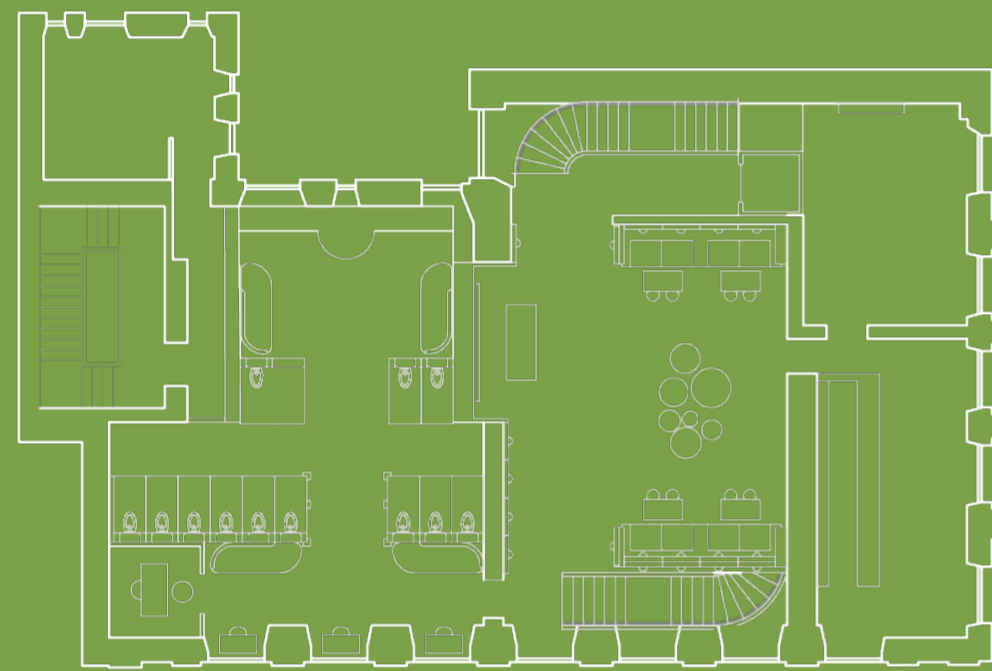


Once you have navigated the maze, you ascend a staircase. Emerging at the top, you are greeted with an absolute explosion of colour. This is the Ballroom, the beating heart of Utopia. This is a space **for cabaret, burlesque, drag, and dance.** The stage is adorned with sculptural brass hands representing applause and queer ballroom culture. Overhead, the ceiling is tented with velvet, mimicking a circus tent.

This fabric spills down the walls, wrapping the room to create a highly theatrical atmosphere while optimizing the room's acoustics.

Heading up the stairs from the ballroom, you arrive at the Mezzanine. This space acts as a viewpoint over the stage, but more importantly, as a place to sit and relax. During my research at the start of 4th year, a survey I conducted revealed that 93% of participants would rather go to a bar than a nightclub. It was vital to design for users who want nightlife without being confined to a dancefloor.

THE JUNGLE: DIVERSITY

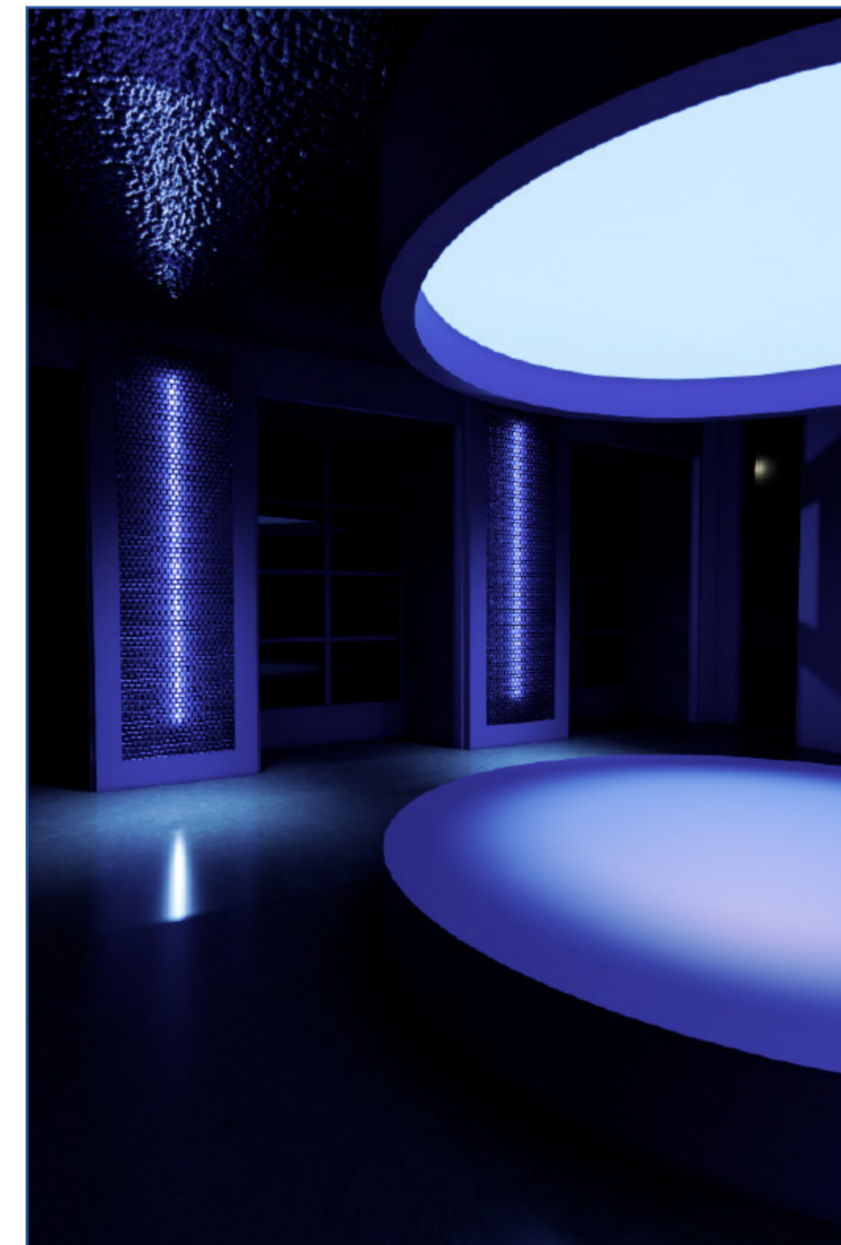
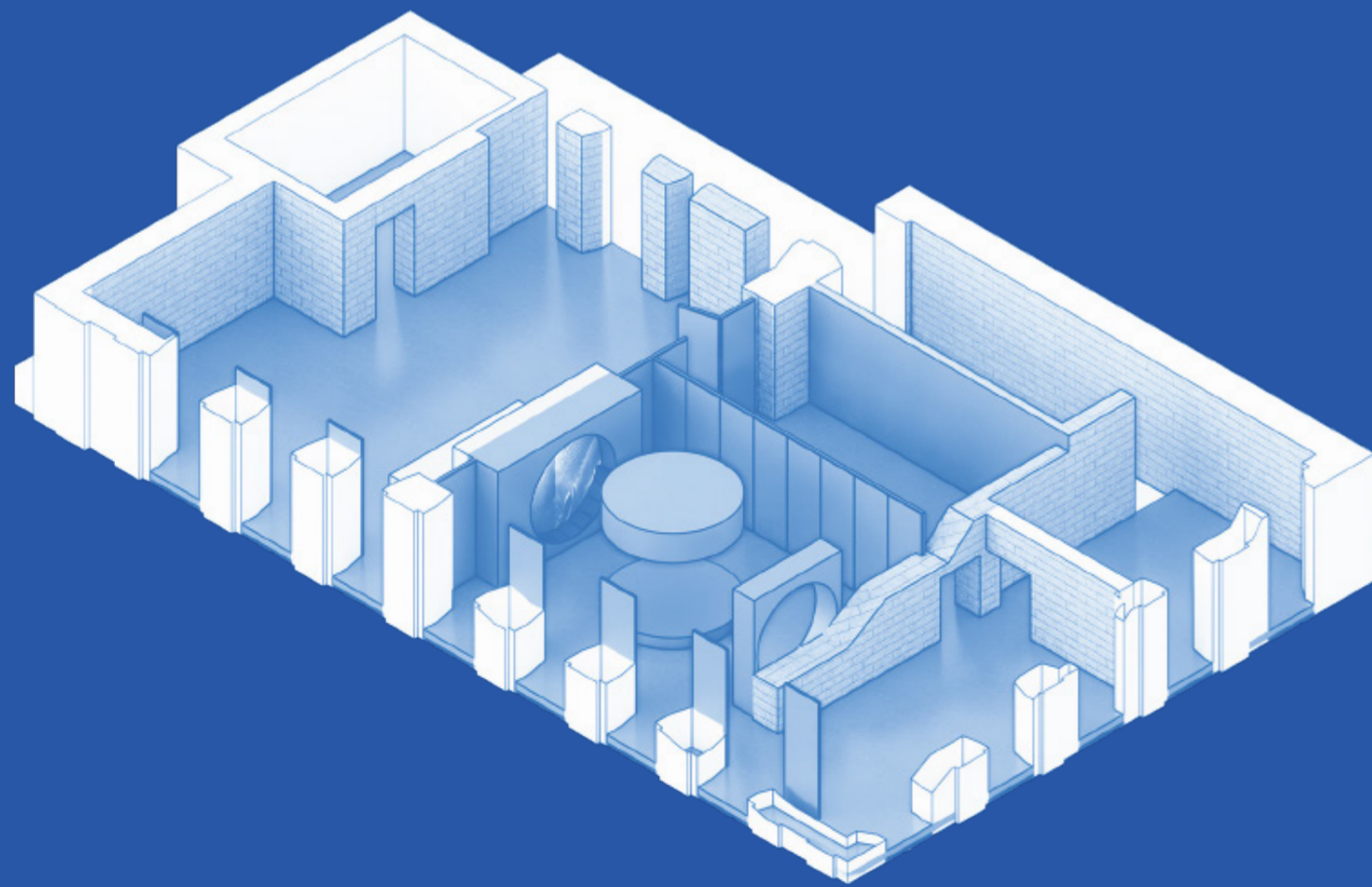
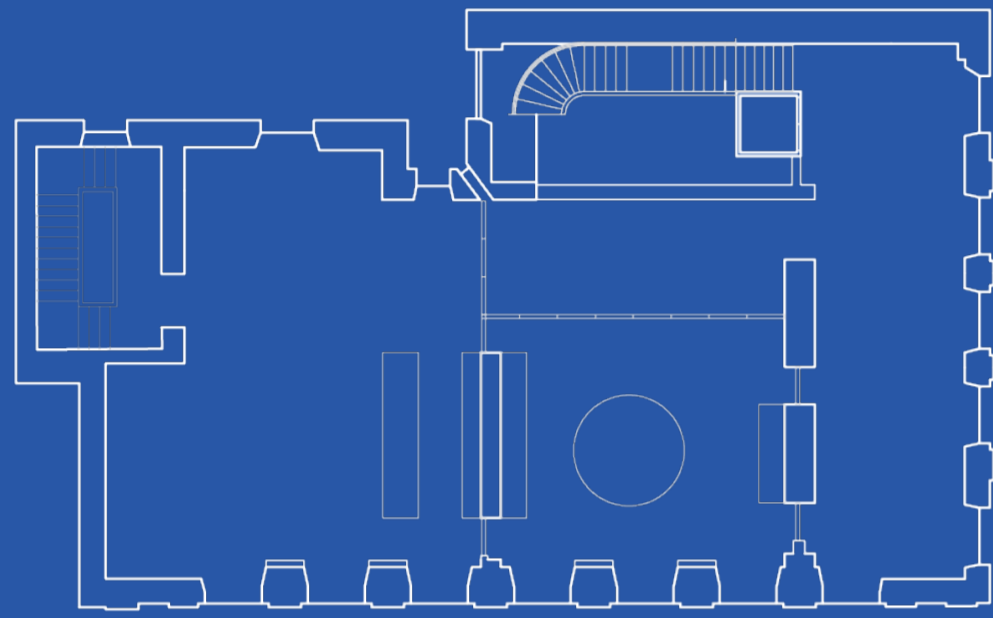


Making our way up to the next floor, the narrative shifts. You have navigated the confusing basement, been birthed into the colourful, overwhelming ballroom, and rested on the mezzanine. Now, you are ready to explore deeper. Just as coming out often leads to a deeper questioning and exploration of sexuality and gender, this floor invites discovery.

This is the Jungle Floor, representing Diversity and what is more diverse than wild plant life? This floor re-imagines the traditional nightclub bathroom. The walls have jungle murals showcasing diverse flora and fauna. Bathrooms also naturally become highly sociable spaces in night-life i've incorporated vanities and lounge seating. Also within this space is a tarot reader for those ready to delve into the spirituality of identity.

The main room of this has a gorgeous, original coffered ceiling. To play with the distortion of reality and the ongoing journey of self-discovery, I have brought the plasterwork detailing of the ceiling down onto the walls.

THE BLUE ROOMS: CHANGE



Finally, we reach the top floor of Utopia. You've been challenged, you've felt open and free, you've rested, and you've delved deep into your identity. Now, you land here.

This is an almost completely empty, highly versatile space. Using the same acoustic panel track system as the basement—though this time running parallel to the building's architecture rather than at a 45-degree angle—the space can be divided into three individual rooms or opened up into one expansive venue. It adapts entirely to the needs of the moment. It is not confined to a single purpose or label. It adapts and changes over time, proving that the journey is not linear and not always the same just like being queer.