

How is sentimentality found within the mapping of a familiar space? A study on whether the ephemeral or structure makes a house a home.

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Introduction

For most people a home is made up of memories and life events all represented in the form of a building. A building may never change its shape or style throughout its life; however, the occupant will find different uses for this space. What one person may find brings them joy in their home, may be the worst possible idea for another. I will be researching how a space can be defined by its inhabitants using a home that was in my family for 60 years as my case study. Within my argument I will be comparing various sites that have undergone severe change and relate this back to whether these have been made due to the differing culture, or potentially the generation of the occupant.

“What makes a person call a particular place ‘home’? Does this ascription, this attachment, follow simply from being born there? Is it the result of a language shared with neighbours, or of a sense of rootedness in a particular landscape – the hills and valleys of your homeland, say?” (Blackbourn and Retallack, 2007:3)

After reviewing the above text taken from *Localism, Landscape, and the Ambiguities of Place: German-Speaking Central Europe*, edited by David Blackbourn, and James Retallack, I decided to relate this extract with my experience of a home, being that it is not felt through the bricks and mortar that makes the space, but rather through the people and the ways in which a house is used. For instance, every home I have visited is used in many ways, my home for example is full of people and always lively, however many may find peace in a quiet and tranquil space. When considering the above extract, it becomes apparent that all the aforementioned details for what may make a house a home, explains the need for my grandmother to ensure her home always matched the one she had in Valencia, her home country, as explained below.

My case study begins with research into my grandmother’s house, ‘Lusanraf’ which was built in the 1950’s by two Spanish brothers, who had made their living in the construction trade working in London. The work they did together and the efforts they went to in order to keep each other close, was a direct relation to how much the Spanish culture valued their families. *“The family (familia) is the most important aspect of most Spaniard’s lives.”* (Evason, 2018). They later moved away from the metropolitan city to explore a quieter part of the country and relocated further southeast to Medway.

Methodology

I will be using primary data gathered from my memories and souvenirs from when I was a child/teenager, to produce a qualitative analysis of my grandmothers house. By using primary qualitative research, I am able to map the house through my writing and poetry, and explore sentimentality through my own experiences to be able to argue if a house is made from walls or by memories and sentiment. The use of secondary qualitative research will be used in order to identify the architecture of my grandmother's house and a Spanish house located in Valencia, to identify the similarities and differences in building materials and styles, despite them being built in different countries. I will also use secondary data to explore traditional foods from Spain and England that hold relevance to my grandmother's house due to it being in the UK. Food holds sentiment and memories through the taste and from whom it was cooked by, which allows me to explore my grandmother's house further into analysing what makes a house a home.

Grandmother

My grandmother Maria Luisa Manero Learmonth, emigrated from Valencia, Spain when she was 19 years old, she wanted to depart from her family and desired what the experience England would offer, mainly for the reason of the culture. Maria Luisa treasured Spain but had built an entirely new life here in England. Where she met my grandfather David John Allcott and created a family of her own. She resided in London but found the metropolitan city to become quite a bore to her and struggled to maintain her way of life in a city devout of her culture. It was after my grandfather's untimely death at 26, that she took my father on a trip across the United Kingdom and saw a notice advertising a house for sale in the area. She viewed it that day, and having been raised in the same town as the current owners and builders, they agreed to sell it to her for less than it was marketed for. I was always told that, though she had never laid eyes on her house before that day, it was made for her and that only when she was experiencing the worst part of her life, did she come across what she called 'her salvation'.

My grandmother's house was a home to her for 60 years and the way she used the space was rather unique and replicated her home life from Valencia. Now the current family that live there hold different views and use the space differently.

Lusanraf – A Study into my Grandmother’s House

Originally the plot of land was positioned on a steep and unattractive hill, where trees slumped over in place of where the house now sits. They chose to build the house away from the road and nestled into a dip in the hill, to preserve privacy and allow for a more even surface to begin construction. Over time this space was modified. What was once a veranda for evening sitting or preparing grilled dishes, soon became an extension to house a larger kitchen. As my grandmother began to fill the rooms of her house with her belongings and make use of her day-to-day activities, she prepared for a grand extension in the roof, to create a further 4 rooms. She used two as storage rooms, a vast array of boxes neatly positioned against all walls filled with the memories of a life she once had in Valencia.

When first entering such a space, it became clear that it was unlike any home I had visited whilst in the United Kingdom. There was always a smell of food, as there would usually be food cooking. I remember I was always excited to cross the border between the outside world and my grandmother’s house, as every time it felt as though I was being teleported to another planet.

She had bright coloured patterned carpet in certain areas, it was well worn and there was no hope for it ever being replaced, my grandmother believed that money should not be spent on such things that you are only to walk on, it only had the pleasure of grazing her feet and nothing more. She later told me it was placed there once to cover the original tiles, which made the home feel too cold and uninviting. The rest of her home was a vastly different story. Walls upon walls were adorned with decorative China plates and collectable items I thought would only be seen in a museum. Having lived a rich life in Spain and transporting everything over, all belongings even down to the ornate glass framed lampshade was an exotic item that my ‘little fingers’ were forbidden to touch. Amongst these collectables were walls filled with trinkets from her various travels and mementos carefully positioned to remind her of home. I can clearly see a rectangular corkboard that hung in her kitchen, many recipes and shopping lists pinned in full display. But within the wooden frame, lay photographs of our times spent together. I remember a trip to the local summer fare, a bright pink paper wristband that had once wrapped itself around my arm. She held my hand on every ride and it was the same hand she held as we stood patiently waiting for the bus back home. For years that thin slip of paper lightly hugged the corkboard, secured only by a bright brass pin. I wonder where it is now and why for many years, she left it hanging there.

“If I save the ribbon from a corsage, the souvenir is, in Eco’s terms, a homomaterial replica, a metonymic reference existing between object/part and object/whole in which the part is of the material of the original a thus a ‘partial double” (Stewart, 1993:136).

This extract taken from Susan Stewart's literature, 'On Longing' describes a human's natural reaction to keep a small piece of a memory with us in physical form. Personally, I am unable to forget that day, beginning with her waking me in bed with porridge, evaporated milk and demerara sugar sprinkled on top. We laid comfortably on the chesterfield sofa watching *The Land Before Time* whilst she sat beside me. Her rounded glasses rested on the bridge of her nose as she started another crocheting project. Seeing that ribbon every day reminded me of the memory. It may have no significance to the actual day, other than as a pass onto the nearest attraction, but it held a power of bringing me back to that moment. There is sentimentality within it, much like every object that she had in her possession. The four walls of her living room meant nothing without the objects we kept close and saw every day, they formed a part of our memories and in some ways brought me back to a feeling of comfort.

Never one to discard of anything, many boxes were housed in recreational rooms she dubbed her, storage sheds. They contained every memento from thousands of polaroid pictures all the way to the dress she wore for her christening, passed down from her grandmother generations ago. I always struggled to understand my grandmothers need to collect small pieces of every moment in her life, "*we cannot be proud of someone else's souvenir unless the narrative is extended to include our relationship with the object's owner*" (Stewart, 1993:137). However, after time it became clear that each item she owned had a deeper meaning to it. It reminds me of a memory, positioned symmetrically in a line across her hallway wall, where painted plates of various landscapes and towns from her home in Valencia. They stuck out from the thick, lined, white walls and hung on small plastic hooks that were nailed deep into the brick. One day, whilst cleaning, I lightly brushed the rim of one plate to remove any dust that may have collected atop it, and like a tear drop, it fell from its hook and shattered against the terracotta floor. My Abuela cried. And indeed, I believe she cursed at me in her mother tongue of Spanish. She leant her forehead against the wooden architrave and began praying. It was whilst collecting the large shards of China from the floor that I noticed that the back of the plate had been drawn on with words written in Spanish, which I could not read, were sprawled across the white. It was later, she explained, whilst sat at the thick oak dining table overlooking the vines that grew from her pomegranate plants, she meticulously glued the large shards together, and commented that her eldest brother Miguel, her 'Hermano', would send these plates from home, like postcards, and write a small message on the back to help her feel less home sick. Only she knew of the writing on these plates, it was personal yet hidden in plain sight. I then came to understand how hard it must be for my grandmother to struggle to feel at home, in a place she had already been living in for 50 years. It meant more also, as her brother had passed some 23 years previously. I remember the date of this happening, it was the 27th of March 2017. I remember this as it was also the day I had come home from London, after collecting a souvenir of my own from a show I went to. It was a signed autograph from a celebrity called Laurie Holden, as well as the train ticket stub, I still have tucked into the frame. I believe that though I may

not have inherited my grandmothers mother tongue, she did pass down her trait of being a collector to me.

Souvenirs

As mentioned above, throughout my grandmother's life she collected various souvenirs from all her travels. Her home became a museum of trinkets, collectables and fine China from every country she visited. On every trip she made, there would always be a new addition to the home upon her return. I began to mimic her actions, always returning home with a new item for her to display.

"If I purchase a plastic miniature of the Eiffel Tower as a souvenir of my trip to Paris, the object is not a homomaterial one; it is a representation of in another medium" (Stewart, 1993:137).

One such item I had gifted her, was a glass gondola I obtained in Venice, Italy. The glass was inscribed with Venicia. It was one of her most treasured gifts from me along with a glass butterfly wind chime that hung in her living room.

When taking me to the hidden space within the roof, an anthracite wrought iron spiral staircase reached down from the ceiling and tucked itself into the original floorboards. The staircase, as it appeared to me, was another portal from her picturesque home into chaos. The loft, as it seemed, she used as a sewing and prayer room, it was the space she felt most comfortable. Perhaps it was the chaos of scattered fabrics, books and old photographs, but it truly made her feel more comfortable in this country than any other space. There was one window that looked out upon the back garden, and if you didn't know any better, you could be stood in that room and feel as though you were anywhere in the world.

I remember as a child, punishment was very different in this house than any other, I was made to sit alone in the hallway facing the wall, no sounds or noise, no one to talk to. I would sit there facing the rough rendering of the brick walls, picking at the white mortar until I was finally allowed to go back to my usual routine of playing with my toy cars. When gazing upon the large house, it seems almost too out of place for the area in which it is located. Where every house built up and down the street would mimic the typical 1950's English style, their timber framed and brick built square boxes, a noticeable contrast to the Spanish style home. It sat low and wide against the hills, where every wall never quite sat perfectly in line with the others. Built out of brick and clay, the rendering on the outside of the house was made of adobe, a mud brick that allowed them to create a waved pattern. Now, this brick has been shaved back and repainted by its current inhabitants, its story removed and its walls flat and smooth to the touch. Only those who knew, like me, will remember the pain of grazing the back of your hand against it whilst running down the garden path with arms open wide to greet a loved one.

Traditional Food

In Spain, the most used traditional dish is Paella, *“Paella is perhaps the most famous Spanish dish of all, and certainly one of the most abused. Authentic paella originates from the region around Valencia, and comes in two varieties: Paella Valenciana, with rabbit and chicken; and seafood paella.”* (Yeomans, 2018). This compares to the United Kingdom’s most popular, traditional dish, being fish and chips.

Furthermore, upon looking at online sources, there are websites dedicated to have calculated what the eating habits of Spanish and England are. For example, the standard meals throughout a day whilst in the UK are 3 main meals, however Spain, or Valencia specifically, boasts 5 main meals a day. *“There is no doubt that the Spanish love their food, to the extent that they eat up to 5 times a day, whipping the British 3 times a day out of the ballpark!”* (Muchosol, 2019)

My grandmother loved to cook paella, it kept her close to Valencia, even if she couldn’t be back there, it continued to make her reminisce of home. I remember that she refused to eat the paella made in England, as it wasn’t cooked correctly and lacked the flavour, she very much coveted. She always believed that it was incorrectly made because they used the wrong spices and wasn’t willing to learn how to make it ‘properly’. Often would she argue with people who offered her paella, it wasn’t her favourite dish in regard to taste, but to making it is what was important to her. It never mattered where she was in the world but when she made that paella it was somewhat special for her, the food took her back home. To prepare the dish, she would stand on the rear patio with a large cast iron ‘cauldron’ with three separate rings. Each ring had multiple different ingredients for her dish. Despite being outside and left to cook for the whole day, the house would begin to smell with all of the flavour, and was sometimes overpowering. Nothing had compared to the dish and upon visiting Spain in my 20’s, I was able to experience something almost exactly the same as how she had cooked it. I do remember my mother taking lessons from my Abuela during a few of our visits and those lessons extended to my mother showing her how to make Yorkshire puddings from scratch, as well as various other English dishes like Sheppard’s Pie and Meat pudding.

“Sharing a meal with someone, eating and drinking together behind the same table — is one of the most important manifestations of sociality in all cultures. Eating together confirms the sense of belonging, being part of a community.” (Bardone, 2015).

When considering the diet my grandmother had, and the nature surrounding the long life that she lived, I researched further into her health and wellbeing during her later years.

“Growing evidence shows that a dietary pattern inspired by Mediterranean Diet (MD) principles is associated with numerous health benefits. A Mediterranean-type diet has been demonstrated to exert a preventive effect toward cardiovascular diseases, in both Mediterranean and non-Mediterranean populations” (Grosso and Martini, 2019:1).

Considering that my grandmother, who passed in 2018, had lived until the age of 89 and her mother before her had lived until 96, her diet and culture could have played an important role in her long life. My grandmother had suffered many ailments throughout her life that were deemed to be quite severe, having suffered a brain haemorrhage at 42, a stroke at 60 and also had a lifelong illness of bipolar disorder. Despite this she still lived almost until 90 and was active and in good health until she passed. The food she ate was always made fresh and featured many different spices and nutrients as well as continuing to lead an active lifestyle, playing tennis and frequently swimming. She had also always attributed her health to her afternoon siesta. Despite not living in Spain, she continued her tradition of an afternoon nap each day and making time to ensure she had adequate rest. In comparison, much of the food eaten by the British population has added preservatives, is pre-packaged or made with ingredients that do not have the same quality as can be found in other countries such as Spain.

When considering the food in which many Spaniards would eat it was always prepared by hand with each ingredient sourced or farmed fresh. My grandmother never believed in processed foods or anything that existed in a tin or a jar whereas the population of the United Kingdom found a new way of life with pre-packaged or processed foods as the economy grew less farms would make way for fresh produce, and it was easier. I was told a story of my grandmother’s youth and how as a child her home never housed a kitchen, but only a room for preparation. Come dinnertime her family would walk to the end of the road and queue up where there would be many people holding various dishes waiting for it to be cooked in a large communal oven. When it was cooked it would be taken home for the family to feast upon.

“There is no doubt that the Spanish love their food, to the extent that they eat up to 5 times a day, whipping the British 3 times a day out of the ballpark! But food culture in Spain is about so much more than eating. No, it’s about enjoying the company of your friends, good food, good wine or beer and most importantly good conversation: “sobremesa”. The closest translation into English would be something along the lines of table-talk and in Spain it can last for hours after a meal.” (Muchosol, 2019).

The most used room in the house was the kitchen, large pots and plates would be scattered across the worktop, forever being moved as a new plate of food would be placed in front of us, I never knew dinner could be more than 3 courses. And they always were. Despite the differing nature in which the kitchen had been

constructed, my Abuela loved to cook and found it always reminded her of her time spent back home. We would spend many hours sat at the dining table, her recanting stories of her life as a child and her experiences of being in the United Kingdom. She did regularly visit home, multiple times throughout a year. She owned her original family home in Valencia still, after all of the time she had remained in the UK. Unfortunately, though we had planned to visit in the summer of 2018 after I had reached 18, she passed a month before our trip, and I was unable to go to her hometown with her and experience her life. Her niece now lives in her old home in Valencia, and I plan to honour her memory by visiting one day to experience first-hand, the culture she taught me.

A Poem for Grandmother, by James Bealing

Like smoke, nostrils flared against a rush of vanilla, perhaps citrus.
Powerful, almost too powerful. A head rush develops.
Glimpse the walls, their white stained mortar spread against the brick, like waves,
unmoving yet lifelike, trying to fight towards the floor, the shore.
To follow, the carpet was a crimson sun, spiralling through the fibres like footsteps
through the sand.

Wood beams extend from the walls to meet the other side, touching against the
plaster like a delicate kiss, running across the ceiling, cracked, pressure.
Spitting, the fireplace with its clay brick foundation welcomes you into the living
room, running soft hands against a coarse wall,
the curve leading you from the doorway to the foot of a swirling staircase.
Iron pressed against iron, feeling every step groan against the gentle weight.
Buzzing, clicking. The door atop the stairs is left ajar, emitting a skelf of light
through the narrow opening. From here, it seems, you can view the life of the
home.

Delicate, ornate frames grip the walls and hang high, stories told within their
images.

Glass butterflies swing before the window,
A rainbow array of colour vibrates through the room as the sun shines through.
The glow travels to a display case, its treasures collected from
expeditions to various corners of the globe.
Nestled deep into a corner, a small wooden furniture set.
Hand crafted by my father's grandfather.
Sat cross legged on the floor, Abuela would play, dolls arranged neatly in their
chairs,
What lives did they lead in her eyes?
Now they sit, as an item, no, a memory.

The fireplace dances against the room, still cracking, still spitting.
Cold metal wrapped within my hand, I'm at the top step.
The door is opened, stained wood swinging on its hinge.
Wood held up by metal held up by wood, fixed in the frame.
Stood strong atop a battered beam.
There she sat, hands tingling with emotion and care,
Fabric running between each finger, long and thin.
It touched the floor and extended to the four corners of the roof.
Below the slope, below the window, below the pillars.
"Oh, darling," thrown off her tongue like a stone through a greenhouse.
Sharp, loud and full of life.
There was no warning.

Whisked away from the confines of her sanctuary, she led me down the stairs.
More groaning, more light, more cold metal.
The kitchen, we fell into.

The rest of the house, where the walls were never straight, were never soft.
Where the house felt ethereal. Where I was an explorer, finding new artifacts in
every room.

It was, however, unlike that here. It was completely square, completely flat.

A cacophony rises from the oven. Grease, spice, flavour.

We sit there, scraping forks against plates, clinking glasses against the table.

For, the journey was over now. I am home, she is home.

Architecture of Spanish Styled Houses

Upon further research, considering the materials that were used for construction for an average Spanish style house, especially one built in the 1950's, I discovered that the elements used differ than that of a home built in the United Kingdom at the same time. With many advantages and disadvantages for construction of homes built in the two separate countries, a benefit of a Spanish style home is that it is displayed as being much more versatile with many pros for functionality and practicality, *"Spanish-style homes can range from minimal to more ornate"* (s.n., 2020), dependant on the users' needs for the space. Recanting history from my Abuela's life in Valencia, her home there was surrounded by her family. Something Spaniards consider to be the most important aspect of a person's life. I decided to delve deeper into finding out how they were able to use their surroundings to form the materials that made up the buildings. I discovered that the materials used differ from the available products we were able to source in the United Kingdom at the time.

"Spanish homes were built out of adobe, known as mudbrick. With wooden exposed beam roof supports that often extend to create an outside veranda. Floorboards, tiles, or cement for flooring, thick stucco-clad exterior, red-tiled roofs, inner courtyard, and arches. With tiles or painted lime walls" (s.n., 2021).

Upon further reflection it became evident that these materials used in colonial style architecture are greatly different to then UK houses especially when looking at the houses built within the timeframe of 1940s to 1950s, this was known as the post war architecture movement, commonly referred to as modernist architecture *"This movement was all about embracing the new and looking to the future. Modernist architects rejected ornamentation, embraced minimalism, and introduced structural innovation into housing design. Above all, modernist architecture was about function and how spaces could be used practically"* (s.n., 2021), both countries appreciated practicality when it come to the interior and exterior designs of their houses, but Spanish homes wanted to use more natural materials when designing. The designs may also have offered a wider range of ideas due to the space and abundance of supplies that they had at their disposal.

"The architecture utilizes local and natural elements in its construction, from the clay used in the roof tiles to the stucco used for the walls. These natural elements create an atmosphere of comfort and connectedness to the home's environment." (Beer, 2022). When using this as a comparison between the home I grew up in and the home I visited quite regularly, I grew no attachment to my home. It appeared to be every bit similar to each house that lined my street, where as my grandmother's home, built and decorated with vastly different materials, always felt more comfortable and 'homely' once you were inside.

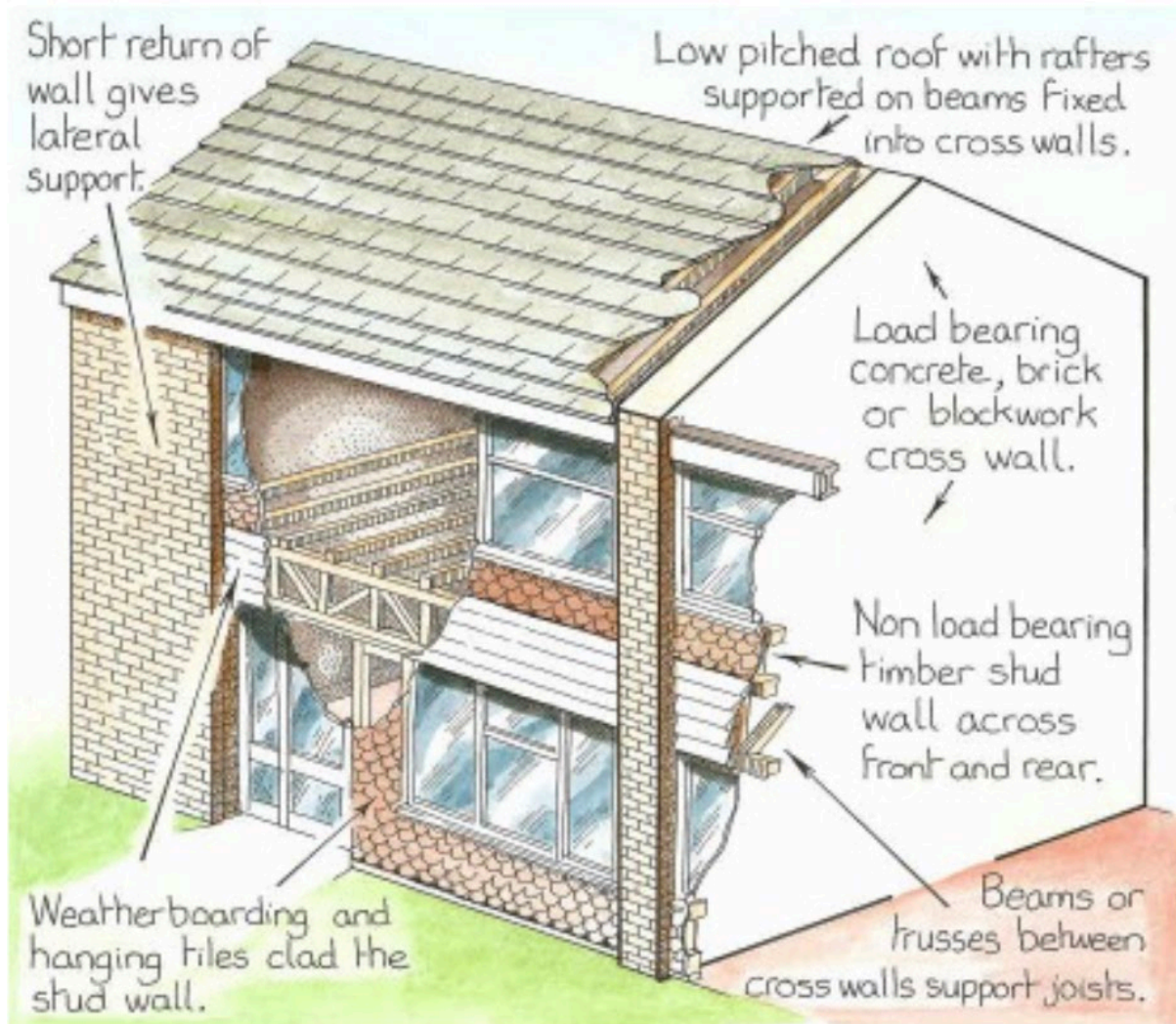


Fig. 1 1950s and 60s Cross Wall Construction. Image by Trevor Yorke

The above illustration shows cross wall construction of a 1950s-1960s house in England, as you can see the use of materials within this house are different to the houses of Spain's. For instance, the houses of Spain use materials such as "*adobe, known as mudbrick*" (refer to quotation above 1.0) but England used materials such as concrete and timber, compared to the use of clay in Spain.

The style of the houses in Spain shows a direct relationship to the climate and considerable factors for the country. Many homes, much like the Spanish Style house my grandmother lived in, feature open plan living, not as commonplace in the 1950's as it is today. This is due to the needs of the residents and the functionality that came with a large family. Family and togetherness are always considered important within Spanish Architecture and therefore the layout was arranged to feature an open plan with only the bedrooms and more intimate spaces being secluded and providing an area of privacy.

Her home, as with many homes in Spain, featured a veranda at the front and rear with several archways and a curved roof above. When making your way onto the front veranda, the roof above was shown to be roughly textured with a curve running from the wall to the beams. This curve, as it seems, was to allow for the change of wind. At the end of the veranda was a concealed courtyard nestled between the house and the private driveway. In a hotter climate, this would have been an ideal design to allow for cooling at the courtyard by having the veranda act as a funnel for wind to flow through.

“Dating back thousands of years, when they were found in India, China, Egypt and Iran, courtyards form a focal point where families can gather, sheltering from the heat. The hard-floor surfaces are cool as the hot air rises. Water channels, fountains or shallow reflecting pools are common, and act not just to soften the heat but to provide a cool microclimate – they dissipate the heat and act as the lungs of the household.” (Erdem, S. (2022).

Other designs such as the floor tiling were also installed in mind with a climate for a home built in Valencia. These cooling methods were commonplace in the home of the original builders, but their lack of knowledge for our country caused them to overlook that these designs, though they may have worked well back home, were counter intuitive when considering the climate of the United Kingdom. Over time, my grandmother opted to keep these implemented in the fabric of her home as, though not as useful as they would have been in Valencia, they provided her a comfort memory of the home she once had.

When comparing this to the homes built in England following the second world war, they were built for necessity and function as opposed to style and usability. Most houses were terraced and the ones that differed, were still designed to be wooden framed boxes with a roof above. Affordability and the ease of finding materials was what went into the design phase of the houses built in that time. The cheapest materials, timber and brick, were used. These materials were commonplace around the United Kingdom and continue to be up until now.

Edifici Moroder de Valencia

Upon further research I discovered a building constructed in 1960 called the Edifici Moroder de Valencia. I have selected the building in Valencia, Spain designed and built by Miguel Fisac Serma, the Moroder Building also known as 'Edifici Moroder de Valencia' and is used as a residential apartment.

Tetuán Square is located on the edge of the overcrowded historic centre of Valencia, one of the few spaces in the urban fabric that can be freed up. Fisac, in his decision-making process for the project, took the decision to propose a project in which he would not use all the building space permitted by the urban plan of the time, creating a square before the entrance to the building.

The second decision he considered was the existing harmony in the square. At that time, the ensemble had an eclectic architecture that combined harmoniously and whose highest point was on the other side of the square, the bell tower of the Capitanía General. In counterpoint to this and in order to create balance, part of the programme is set out in a 10-storey building that resembles the bell tower."

I decided to research this building as it was designed and built in the same time period, the 1950s/1960s that my grandmother's home was built. To follow suit with the needs of the residents and as was common throughout the homes in Valencia, he opted to build 'a square before the entrance to the building.' His motives, as it has been made aware, was to minimise the space used in an already crowded city. Also to allow the use of communal gathering between the residents as Spaniards believe in unity and togetherness within their communities.

Conclusion

After further deliberation, I can confirm that mapping of a site is not restricted to the structure or fabricated use of a building but is instead more open to the interpretation from the user. In my grandmother's house, each room that she used was entirely unique and different to many other homes, including, but not limited to the current owners of her home who have modified and changed the space to suit their needs. I believe that memory and emotional attachment are what fuels our need to for expression in architecture and how we use our space. Due to the influence of my grandmother, I began to collect my own mementos and use these to decorate the space that I have, much like she did for her whole life. The items may be different, but they offer individual meanings and intention behind them that only I can relate to, much like is described in Susan Stewart's book, *On Longing* (1993).

Within my research, I discovered that sentimentality is found within the mapping of space due to memories and objects that have been collected, souvenirs if you will. They hold a value much greater than the building, taking my grandmothers smashed plate as an example. It is my belief that despite a home being made up of a structural substance such as bricks and mortar, it is indeed the ephemeral such as memory, sentimentality, emotion and feeling that influence a given reaction to a space and how is it used or mapped. A house becomes a home when you discover that the space gives you a feeling of full and utter comfort, whether this is because of the people you share it with, the possessions, or the memories. A house isn't just built with walls, it is built with the love, care, culture, memories and traditions of the user and the inhabitants of the space. My grandmother's house is an example of how we can shape houses to become our homes through personal experiences, memories and possession to create a warming and calming space like no other. We create our own sanctuaries through our own experiences which makes us individual.

List of Illustrations

fig.1 1950s and 60s Cross Wall Construction. Image by Trevor Yorke
<https://www.propertyinvestmentsuk.co.uk/1950s-and-1960s-housing/>

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How is sentimentality found within the mapping of a familiar space?

A study on whether the ephemeral or structure makes a house a home.

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Introduction

Within this visual portfolio, I am continuing my research into my thesis “How is sentimentality found within the mapping of a familiar space? A study on whether the ephemeral or structure makes a house a home.” I will do this through the use of visual illustrations and mapping shown on a building that is familiar to me.

The building in question is my Grandmothers house which I spent many years of my life growing up in. As explained within my thesis, this building was held in my family for 60 years and underwent many changes throughout it’s life.

My aim is to explore whether the building itself became a significant part of my development due to physical and structural elements of the space such as construction and materials. Or, if it was in fact memory, usage and sentimentality looking back into the past from now. I will do this through the creation of technical drawings and mapping illustrations created entirely from memory. I also intend to conduct further research using my siblings own memories and thoughts to analyse my hypothesis.

Site Drawings and Context

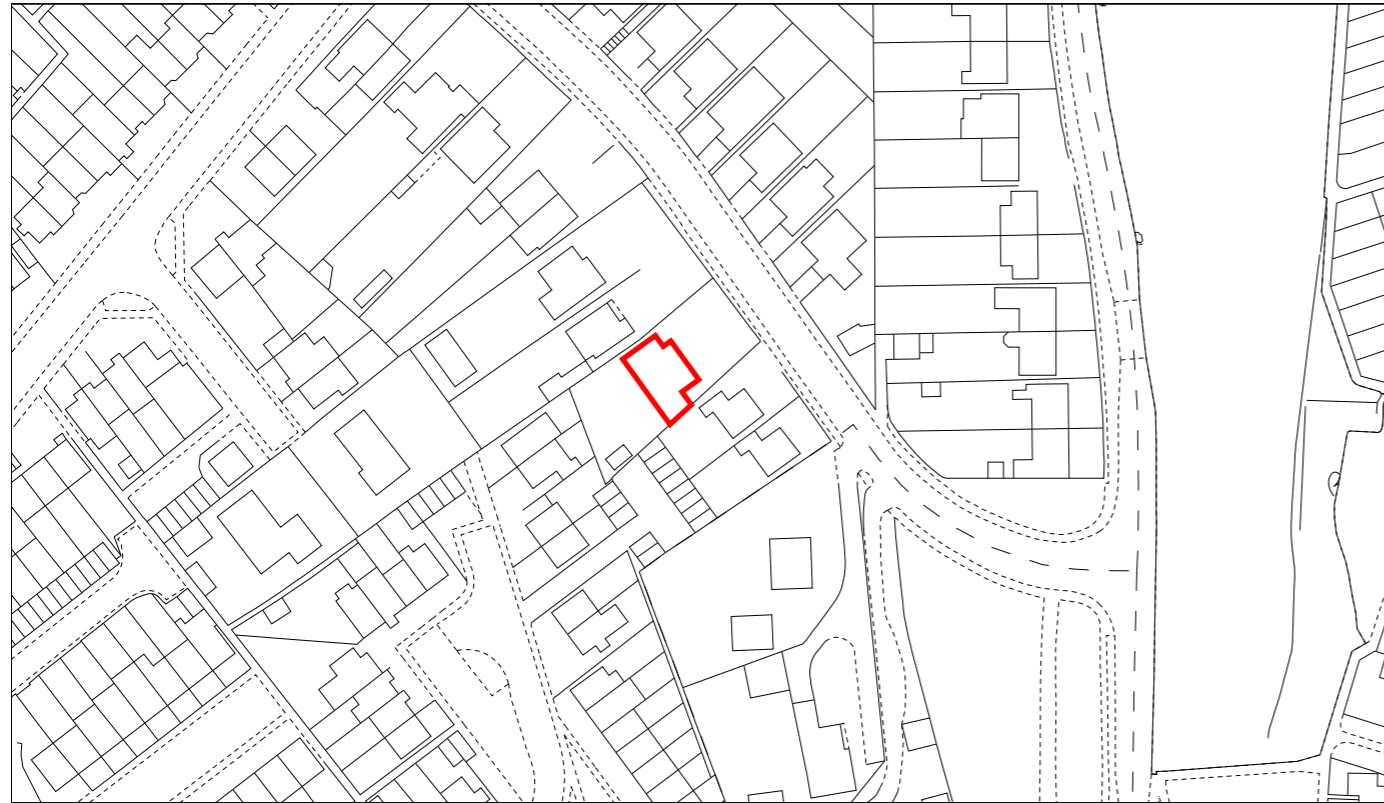


Fig. 1 Lusanraf Site Location Map (2023)

My case study is on my Grandmother, Maria-Luisa Manero Learmonth's Spanish style home built in Walderslade, Chatham, Kent. The illustration in Figure 1 shows the site in contrast to the surrounding areas and land of Prince Charles Avenue, Walderslade. As depicted in my thesis, this property was built in the 1950's and constructed with the materiality and usage of a home built in Valencia, Spain. In comparison to the other properties, Lusanraf is seen to be slightly larger in scale than any others for the area.

The plans shown in Figures 2 & 3, show the space directly from my memory of my experience within her home.

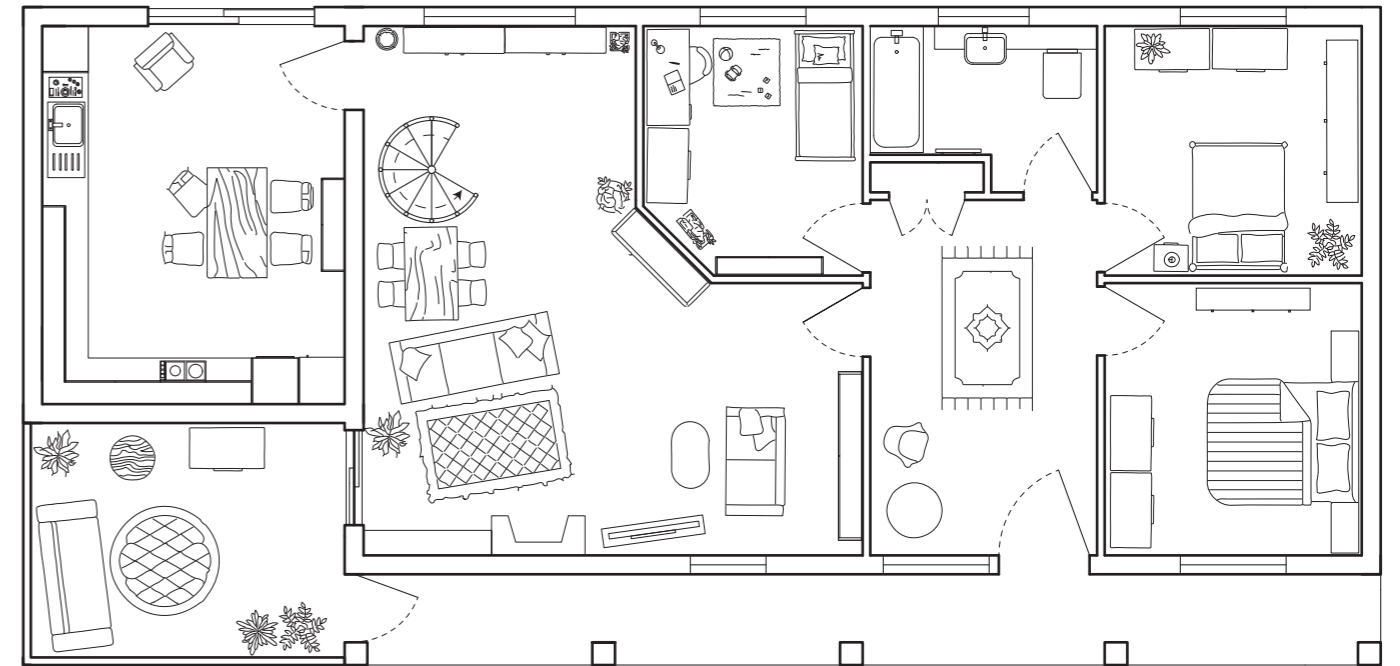


Fig. 2 Lusanraf Ground Floor Plan (2023)

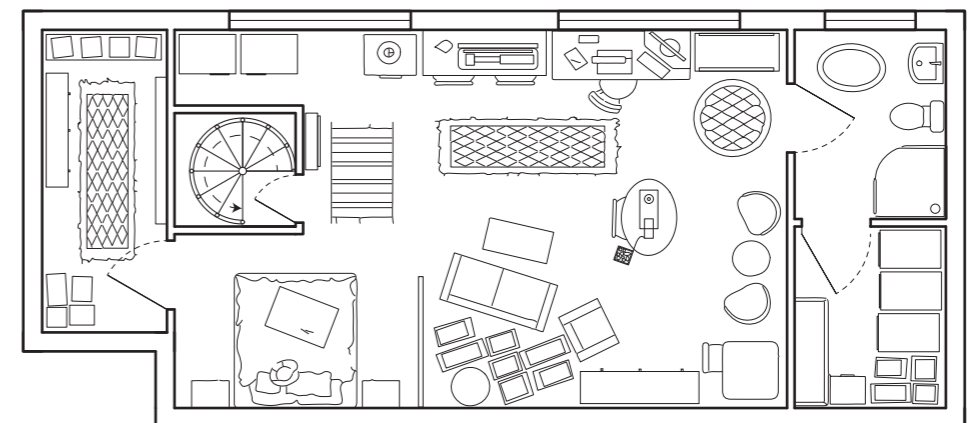


Fig. 3 Lusanraf First Floor Plan (2023)

Elevation Mapping



Fig. 5 Mapping Kitchen Elevation of Lusanraf No. 1 (2023)



Fig. 7 Mapping Kitchen Elevation of Lusanraf No. 3 (2023)

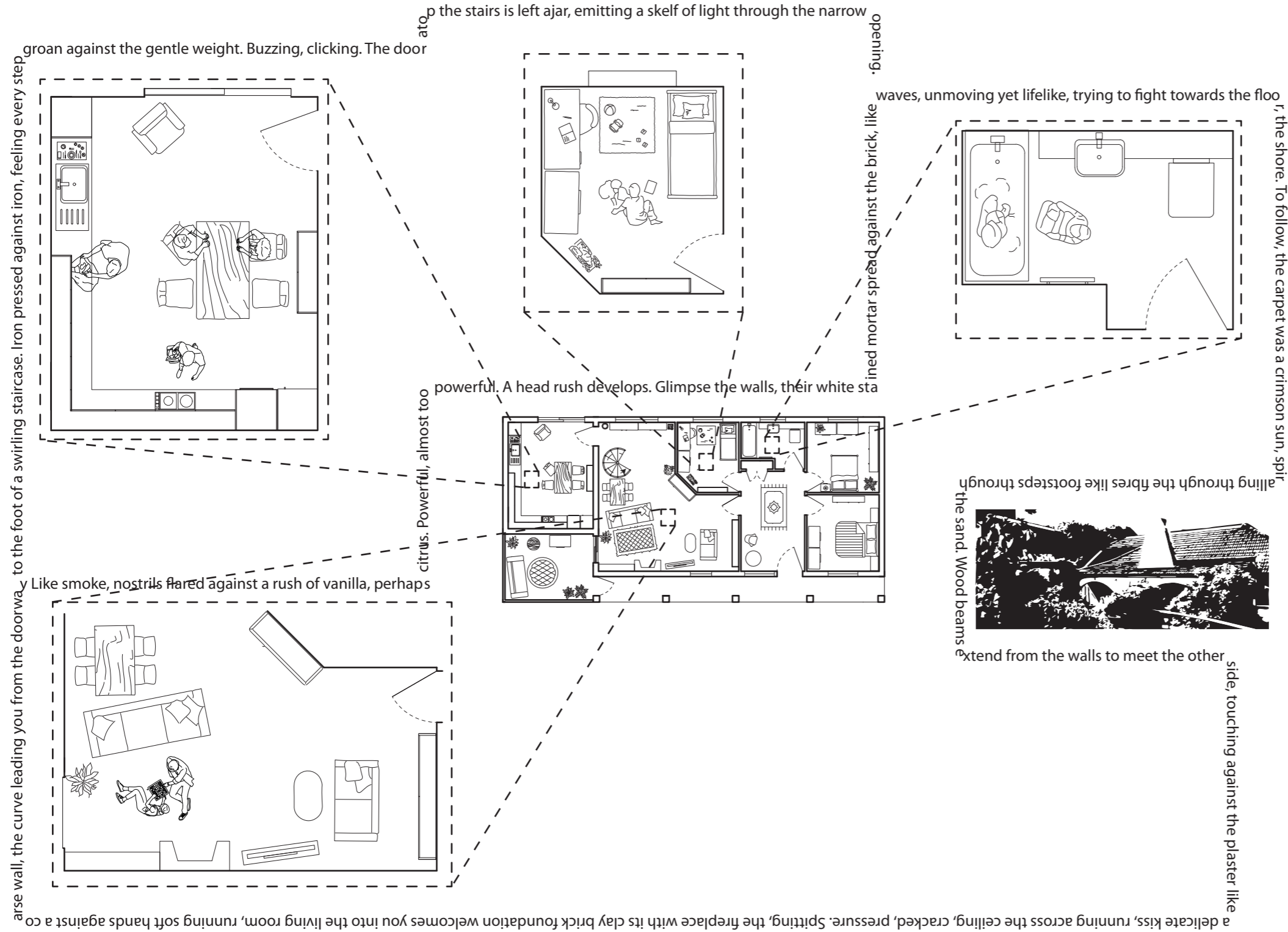
Within my elevation mapping, I looked into the usage of my Grandmothers Kitchen. This room was where we spent the most time, either her preparing large meals for us, with our help, or sat at the dining room table discussing many topics or playing board games.



Fig. 6 Mapping Kitchen Elevation of Lusanraf No. 2 (2023)

I created these elevations from memory and taken from the perspectives previously depicted in Figure 3.

Expanded View & Concrete Poetry



When looking further into her home, I created a visual representation of the activities I would spend my time doing with her. I expanded this view to illustrate these within the space. One such example is that of bathtime, one of my most relaxing moments of being in her home. The bath would be filled with bubbles and soap, then she would gently wash my hair whilst humming to the subtle sound of the radio playing in the living room. Afterwards I would be left to play with toys. Once I was out, I was dried and given a lather of baby powder to keep my skin soft. It made me feel safe and cared for. The most comfortable feeling I had whilst under her supervision.

Another example is our joined hobby of playing board games, most commonly chess. We would lay opposite each other on the floor of the living room, or sit at the dining table after dinner, and play a £1 coin for each game of chess we would play. I remember one day, when I was 14 years old, we were competing in chess and in the background, the scent of her perfume mixed with the smell of lasagna cooking and the sound of Enrique Iglesias on the Radio, I won my first £1 coin after beating her for the first time. My Grandmother, normally a highly competitive person, was so proud of me that she took me upstairs to the giant loft room and have me bracklet that once belonged to my grandfather. She told me she was going to give it to me someday, but wanted to treat me for being patient and not upset every time before that I had lost. It is a life lesson I choose to remember to this day, that sometimes it is better to continue, rather than give up after so many wins.

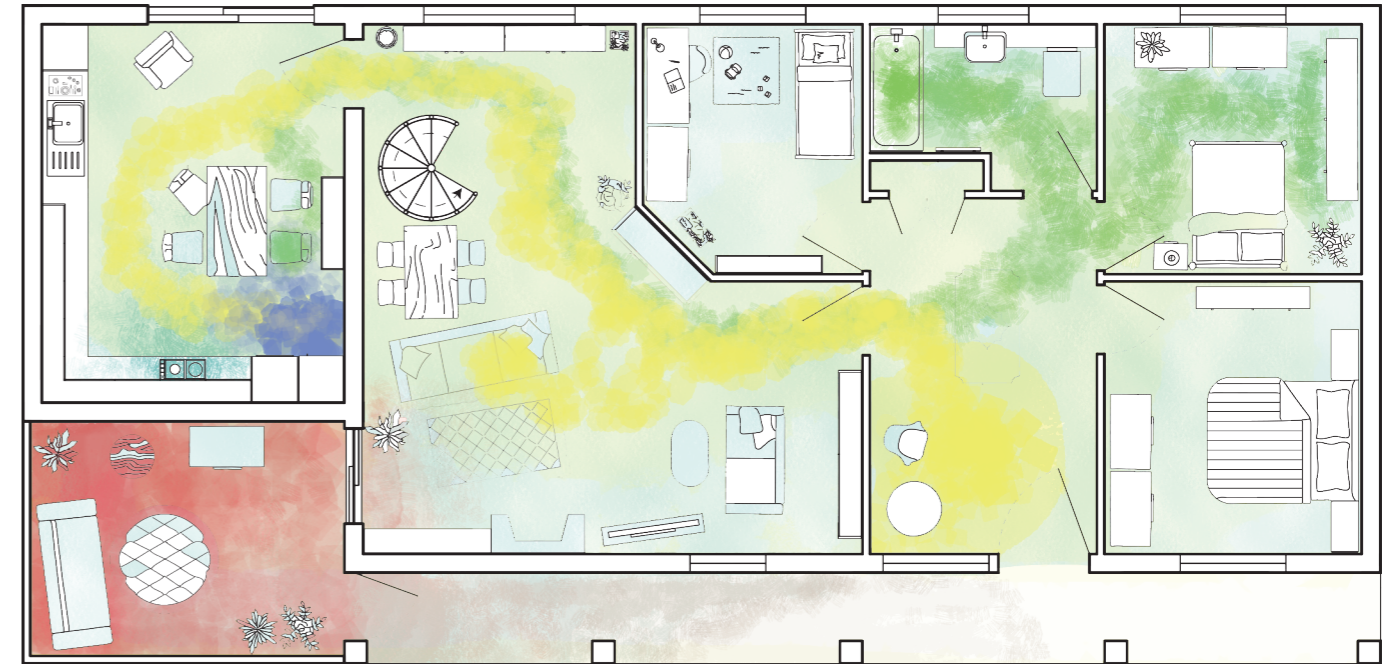
Within Figure 8 I have also mapped my older brothers room and how we would sit on the floor playing with our toys, me with my exotic car collection and him with his grasshopper replicor from 'A Bug's Life'.

There is once final illustration which depicts another memory. My brother sat opposite me making fun of my Grandmother's accent, which she never minded, whilst our mother helped prepare food with her. Shortly after this, my brother and I joined in, as was expected. My job was to peel potatoes and vegetables with my Grandmother, whilst Luke would help Mum with stirring the food on the hob.

Fig. 8 Focused Activity Mapping of Lusanraf (2023)

The Memory of Smell

To begin mapping the space as I once remembered, I decided to explore the different scents of her home. There were 4 main scents that even now, I am unable to forget. These are; Perfume, Plants/Flowers, Bath Soaps and finally the Refrigerator.



Yellow: Scent of Perfume

Vanilla and Citrus Perfume. It is my most favourite smell that even after 5 years, I have never been able to find. My Grandmother would bring home gallon jugs filled with this perfume from a neighbour in Valencia, home made. It was strong and powerful, but yet she would respray herself everytime she walked past a unit that she had placed the spray on. It was comforting and sweet to smell. After she passed, I took home a small stuffed animal she had bought me as a baby. It had sat on a shelf in my room for 15 years. Even now, if I pull the fabric close to my nose, I can smell a slight whiff of her perfume. It helped the grieving.



Blue: Scent of Refrigerator

The worst smell I have ever experience in this house, (except a room full of family members after a rather large meal). Never one to through anything away, my Grandmother would take leftover food and package it up for days before eating it. At times there were over 6 different meals inside this fridge. Tasteful to eat, but not great to smell all at once. When the door was opened the room would fill with the smell of many different meals, fruits, opened tin cans and 'strange' drinks she had prepared. It was not pleasant. In fact, it was a smell even her perfume could not mask.



Red: Scent of Plants/Flowers

Amongst my memories, I was always fond of summer afternoons spent in the courtyard. My grandmother tender to many flowers not normally present in this country. She would bring cuttings home from her family house in Valencia and grow them from hanging baskets as high as she could to get closer to the sun. It was a calming smell that I can only recognise with brisk walks through country gardens.



Green: Scent of Bath Soaps/Wash

After a long day of playing in the garden, or being taken to the local swimming pool. My Grandmother would bathe me to make sure I was clean before dinner. The bath would be filled with bubbles and soap, then she would gently wash my hair whilst humming to the subtle sound of the radio playing in the living room. Afterwards I would be left to play with toys. Once I was out, I was dried and given a lather of baby powder to keep my skin soft. I remember sitting at the dining table waiting for food to be cooked and I'd still smell of the fresh, comforting bath.

Fig. 9 Mapping of Scent & Key of Lusanraf (2023)

The Memory of Sound

When looking at figure 8, you can see the effects of sound waves that travelled throughout my grandmothers house on a regular basis.

Each colour represents a different memory, sometimes these sounds would radiate through the space at once or sometimes seperately.

The loudest was always the Radio. There would be songs sung in different languages that we had heard so many times, we would know the words but not their meaning. It could be heard from every room in the house. The mapping diagram shows the radius of this sound and how far it permeates through the site.

Another frequent sound would be my grandmother sat in her chair in the hall, shouting loudly down the phone in Spanish to her close relatives, that lived far away back in Valencia. When I was much younger, her Spanish voice used to scare me because of how loud it was and because I didn't understand the words. So my brother and I would play, either in his room, the garden, or we would create a scavenger hunt throughout her house. But he would calm me down and help me get over my fear.

My Grandmother, as I later realised, was not talking in anger, but rather excitement. This was because every time she would receive a call from her home country, she was so happy that she would not be able to hold in her excitement. She would sit there for hours sometimes, so much so, that her armchair that sat in front of the patio doors to the courtyard, had found a permanent home directly in front of the telephone.

One continuous sound that was always heard, is highlighted in blue. This is the sound of her gas hob, that always had a pot on top of it spitting away at whatever food was gently simmering inside it. Morning, noon and night. Something was always cooking.

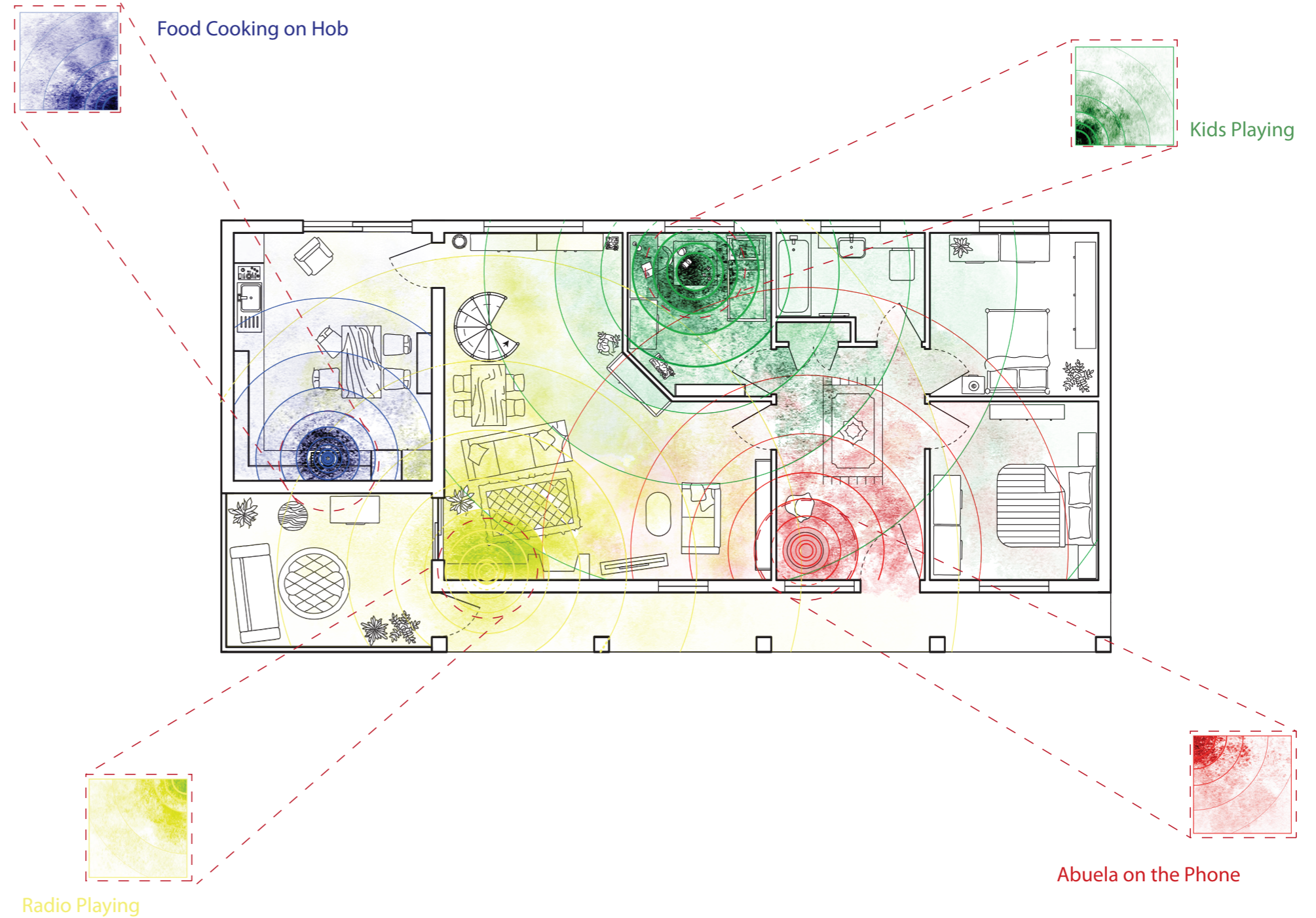


Fig. 10 Mapping of Sound & Key of Lusanraf (2023)

Comparing Memory: James & Luke

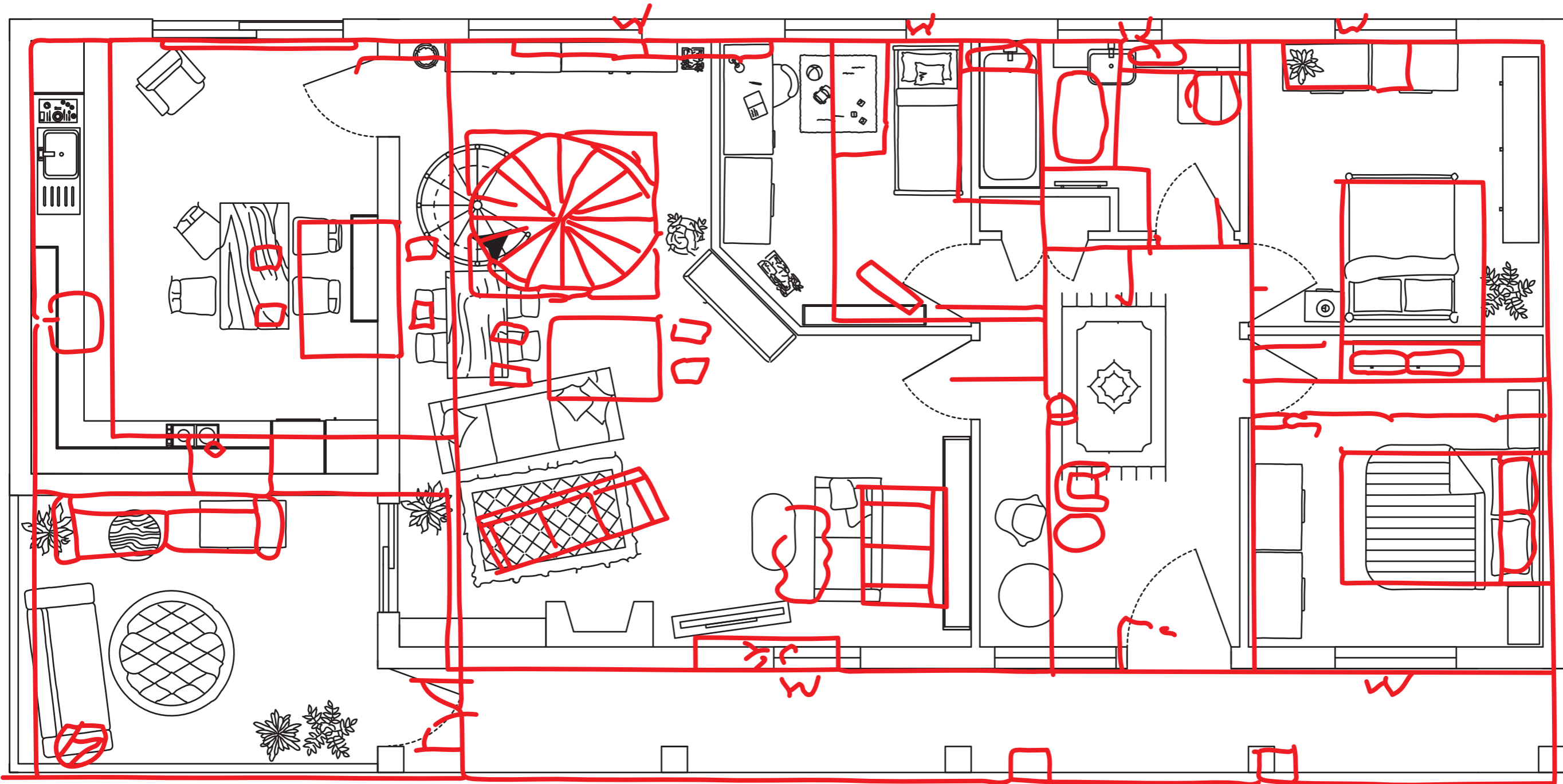
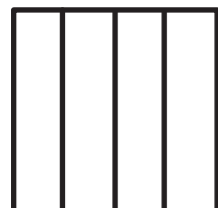
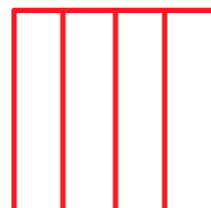


Fig. 11 Comparison of Plan & Key of Lusanraf (2023)



The black lines represent my plan as shown in Figure 02. My drawing, as my brother's was designed by myself directly from memory. I asked my brother to create his own iterations so that I could compare any differences or similarities. We sat there and discussed her home and commented on many of the things previously discussed within this booklet, such as smells, sounds and also memories.



The red lines represent my brother, Luke Bealing's, drawing. As seen in Figure 11, there are a few differences. He described remembering the stairs as being much bigger and taking up a rather large area of space, he was once afraid to climb them because of how loud they would sound being metal and wood. Another contrast is how narrow her entryway was. He remembered it to be small and narrow as opposed to my drawing which shows it as grand and inviting.

Activity Silhouettes

To finalise my booklet, I delved into my photo archives to find any images that may relate to the spaces described within my visual guide.

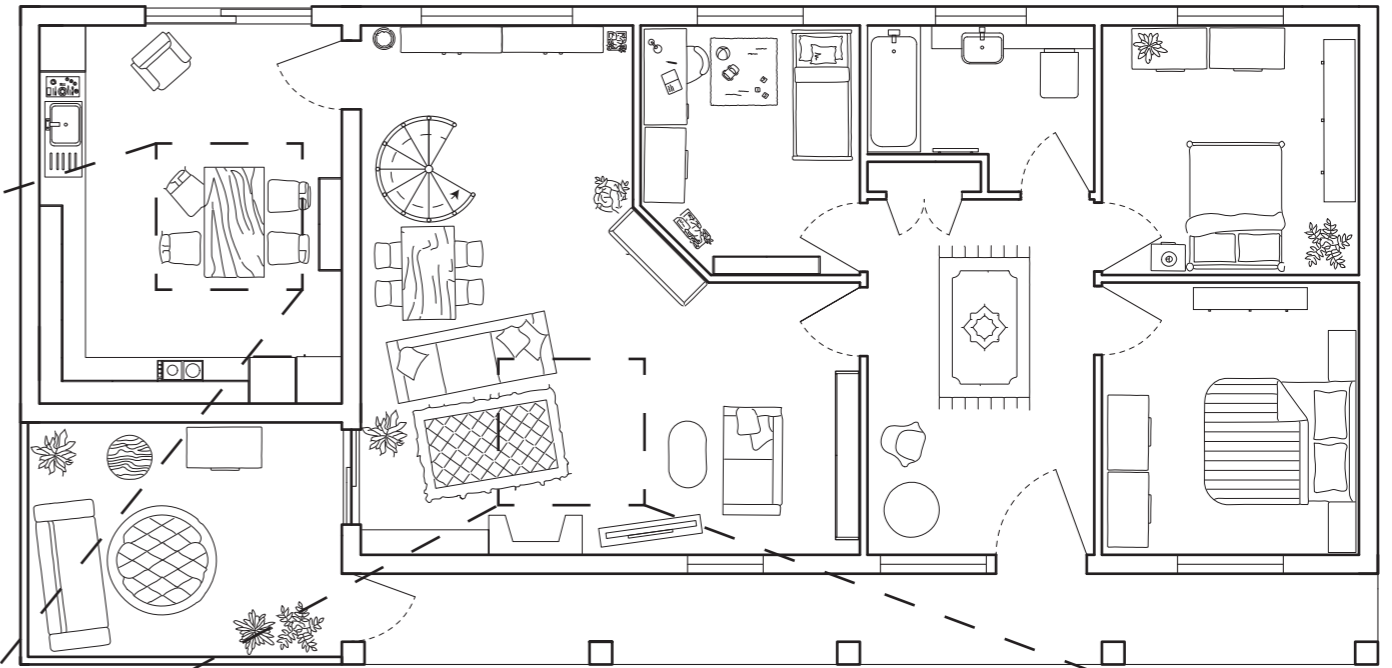


Fig. 12 Mapping of Activity Silhouettes of Lusanraf (2023)

Conclusion

After spending many years of my life under the comfort and care of my Grandmother, I chose this project because it is very meaningful to me. When looking back upon her home and the home I once shared with her, I was able to remember more things in detail as I progressed through my research.

I discovered that many concepts of the site that I did not consider were present in my mind through memory.

I would not remember the materials or style of the walls, were it not for my punishment being to sit there facing the wall to atone for my misbehaviour, and the only thing to do was to pick at the rough mortar on the wall until it slowly chipped away.

When I look at old photographs or when creating the illustrations, there were moments that moved me and invoked emotion within me. This wasn't because of the position of the walls, the width of the doors or even the size of the rooms. It was due to the fact that every item I began to design in this space, I looked deep into my memory to find and as I did, I discovered moments that I had once lived that filled me with a bittersweet feeling of sentimentality.

This house, though built out of brick, clay and mortar, was a comfort for my Grandmother in a time she most missed her home. But to me, it was a comfort because of my memories with her. If she was not originally from Valencia and was not constantly feeling separated from her roots, I believe this house would not have been as important to her as it was. It gave her the security she needed and the way she used it, the way she decorated it, resembled her home life and reminded her of her family.

I conclude with my statement that an building can be modified into a house, a dwelling for a person or persons. However, not every building can be made a home. I experience this as there is no other building I have visited that had invoked such comfort and euphoria as I witnessed at my Grandmother's house. An identical building across from the street would cause me to feel the same as I do about this house.

Sentimentality plays a vital role in how people perceive their homes. Those who experience trauma and have unpleasant memories of their home will not think of it favourably as those who have found a space that brings them peace.

List of Illustrations

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Fig. 1 Bealing, J. (2023) Lusanraf Site Location Map [Drawing] In possession of the author: Canterbury.

Fig. 2 Bealing, J. (2023) Lusanraf Ground Floor Plan [Drawing] In possession of the author: Canterbury.

Fig. 3 Bealing, J. (2023) Lusanraf First Floor Plan [Drawing] In possession of the author: Canterbury.

Fig. 4 Bealing, J. (2023) Perspective Map of Lusanraf [Drawing] In possession of the author: Canterbury.

Fig. 5 Bealing, J. (2023) Mapping Kitchen Elevation of Lusanraf No. 1 [Drawing] In possession of the author: Canterbury.

Fig. 6 Bealing, J. (2023) Mapping Kitchen Elevation of Lusanraf No. 2 [Drawing] In possession of the author: Canterbury.

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Fig. 12 Bealing, J. (2023) Mapping of Activity Silhouettes of Lusanraf [Drawing] In possession of the author: Canterbury.