

The Time is Now

a design theory report

by sav kes

analysis04

introduction	06
avian aspirations	09
pigeon perspective 1.0	10
pigeon perspective 2.0	12
Precedents	14

concept17

a new brief	18
permission for scope	19

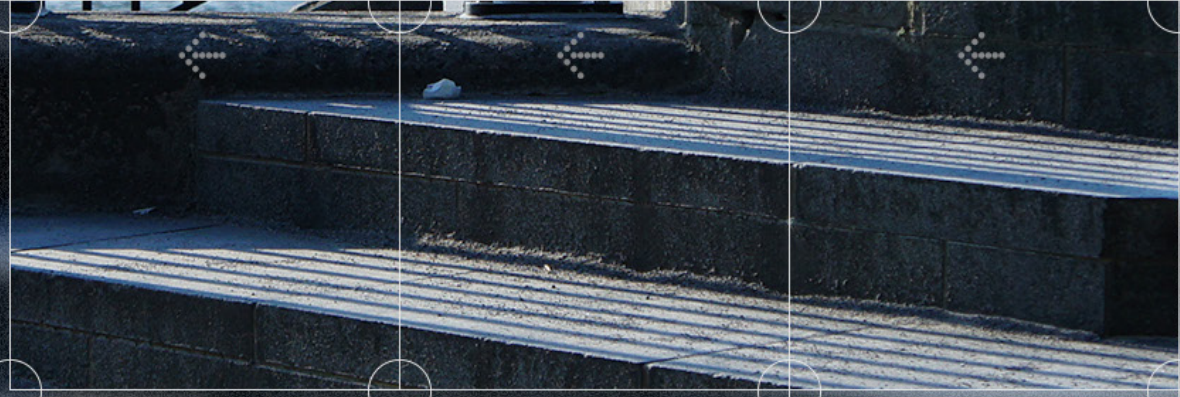
design22

hoodwinked	24
time	26
design: language	27
installation	28
exodus	30
architectural explanations	32
Seating	54

reflection57

bibliography59

an alibi



*Time is unavoidable in a train station.
the feeling of having something you need to
catch, a future, a pre-determined event, is
exciting and terrifying. Our lives are ruled by
clock-time, an invisible force and semi-serious
measurement of life that does it's best to
dictate peoples' lives, and in most cases - wins.*

A 5 o'clock finish means nothing to a pigeon

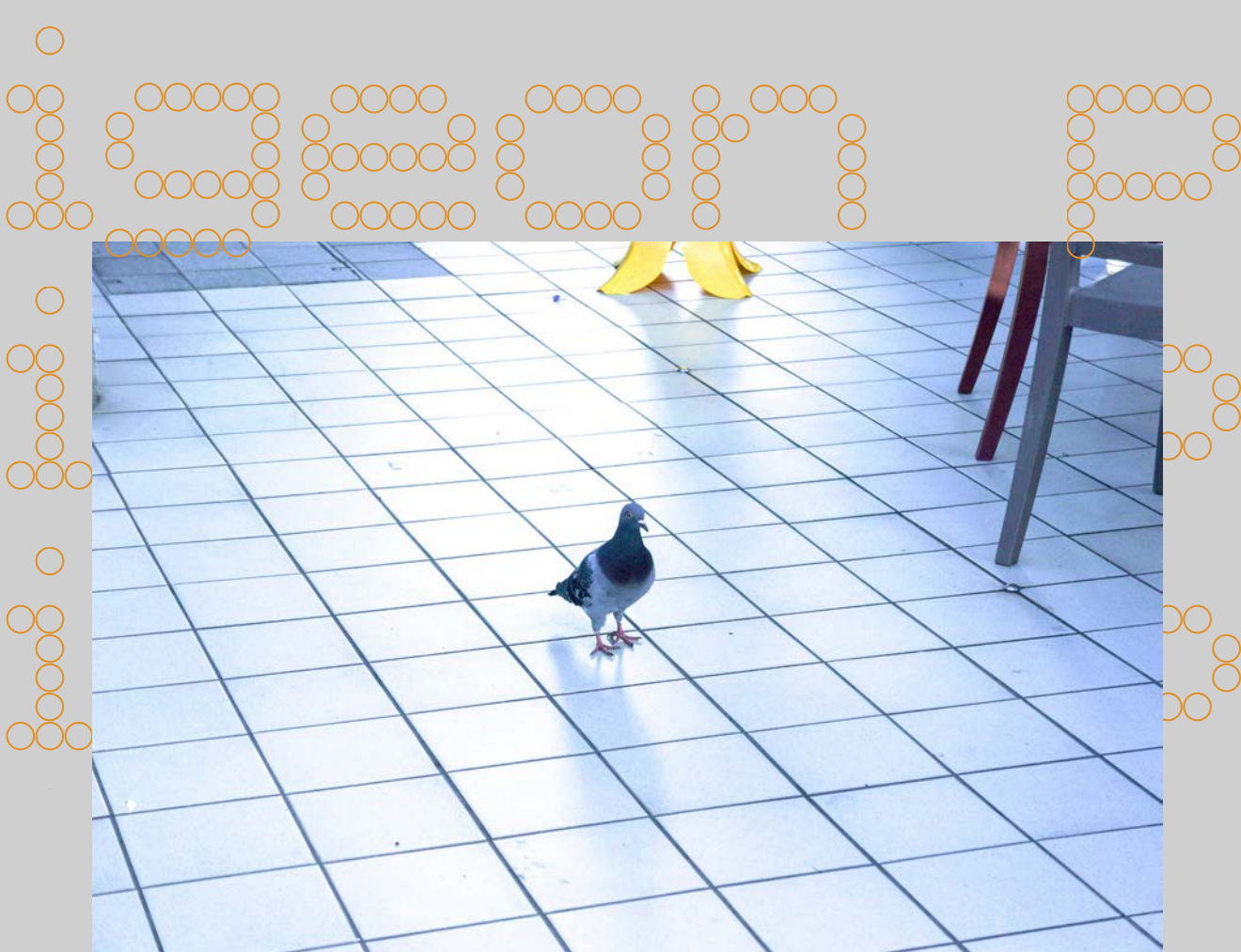
Everyone has their own internal clocks, rhythms and paces - and these don't always align with the departure board. My initial section aimed to expose this invisible force, this mutual feeling, by observing the transient heart of Sheffield Station (formerly Sheffield Midland Station), in an attempt to capture the action and the movement.

I used long exposures, and collaged time-lapses through photography and sound.



The observation of a platform evokes a strong sense of sonder. By using my camera lens, new perspectives presented themselves as opportunities for exploration.





Even with new avenues now opening up, I am still struggling to find a biting point for my project. I am thinking about scope - in terms of both the direction these images I'm collecting are taking me, and my personal design and career goals. I took my camera back, armed with new questions: What is jumping out at me? What am I interested in? What aspect is here that can I use to explore all the things I want to explore?

Then, I took a picture of a pigeon.

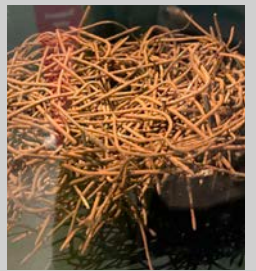
Analysis of Self

Our society has a tendency to neglect, overlook and even abandon nature. Despite this, pigeons remain unbothered. Content to coexist with us on station platforms, pigeons seem to possess a unique relationship with train stations. Even without the ability to contemplate why they inhabit such spaces (or maybe due to their inability) they adapt seamlessly to their environment.

Avian Aspirations

Pigeons see in slow motion, and also pass the Mirror Test, proving they have a wholly different experience of life, and some semblance of self-awareness. Despite their impressive and unique cognitive abilities (including 3D mapping and homing), I could not interview a pigeon in the traditional sense, so I decided to do the next best thing and take on the perspective of a Sheffield Station resident pigeon.

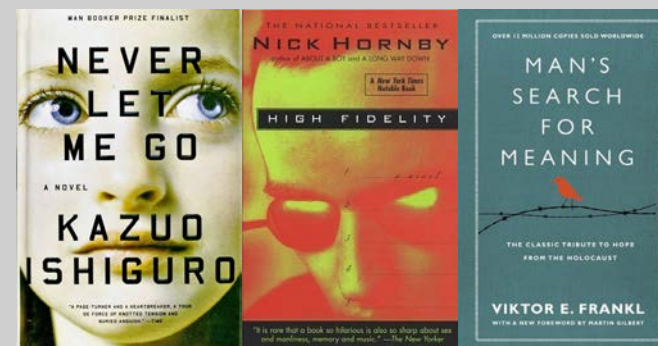
This experiment will entail spending a day in the train station, observing from a 'slow motion' perspective that deliberately restricts my pattern recognition and habitual behaviours. These restrictions include altering my perception of time, avoiding interactions with technology and man-made machines, and eating only crumbs I find on the floor.



A great example of this adaptability in action is the nest of nails in millennium gallery.

I have played characters before in my projects with success, one example would be the Heartbreak Hostel project, where I took an unconventional and conceptual route into my research that had me explore 'heartbreak' from multiple perspectives.

This was achieved through books both fiction and non-fiction. This research allowed me to enter a state where the patterns of heartbreak formed a 'theme' for that period of my life. By stepping out of my personal perspective, I could pick out and find more inspiration as I temporarily experienced life through the eyes of others undergoing intense heartbreak.



Left to Right: Conceptual Research for 'How's this for Heartbreak?'

*Never Let Me Go (Kazuo Ishiguro),
High Fidelity (Nick Hornby),
Man's Search for Meaning (Viktor E Frankl)*



The pigeon perspective experiment entailed me observing people's movements and behaviours when moving through the station.

Attempting to do so in a non-judging and objective way was hard, but a camera lens and time helped me to step out of my default frame of mind.



This is a compartmentalisation style of approach; defining boundaries before starting creates a natural entry point to a project. This first-person, explorative, and first-hand nature of starting a project requires meditation and dissolution of preconceived notions. That way a more accurate, true and pure concept can be developed naturally.

The role of the pigeon is that of a character; a temporary guise I can use to place my full self into the project; this way I can feel on an emotional level what often gets missed by my conscious attention in its default-mode.



Stills from the Pigeon Perspective video, linked

I have not yet concluded on a concept for my train station project because first I must practice the role of someone who is doing a project about a train station.

It was important to compartmentalise this experience because, during moments of critical analysis and creativity—such as model making or writing—I needed to step back into my default self.



This split can be noticed in the spaces I inhabit. I wrote an ethnographic piece on different spaces, that you can read here: [2021 Spaces essay](#).

The conclusion I came to through this investigation was just how different the outcome of my work is depending on my working environment, and now with my new insight into Attention and ADHD, the importance of avoiding an 'everything' space to improve concentration has been more intentional.

Currently, my Attention is divided between music, art, and what I consider 'work.' My workspace reflects this split: one table for music [1], one for paint [3], and one resembling a desk for design theory reports and CAD work—the latter demanding the most time and focus. [2]

Pigeon Perspective 2.0

Like pigeons, we live in a city but we are nature. It's easy to neglect and forget that we are born to be wild, because the natural tendency to build and be around other people dictates the structures we see around us. But, more often than not, these structures are built to reduce nature to nothing, built only in the image of the mind.

After completing the meditations at the train station, I started to question my personal ethics, my reasonings, and my approach to the entire concept. This has put my Summer placement in China into questioning, and I am now more critical about the motive for, and approach to, design projects.

Are my current ethics and approach to design conducive to a 'good' outcome, or an ethical one? And which one will instill good habits for my future practice?



0.5 -Concept for analysis

To reinforce my concept, an additional stage to my process was created:

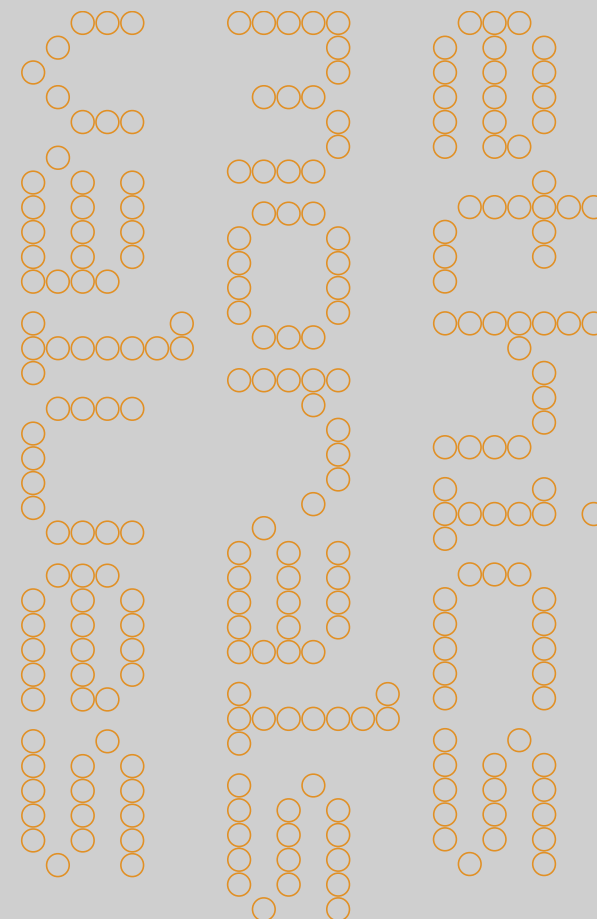
Concept for Analysis

This stage serves as an intermediary step between analysis and concept, focusing on perspective and the scope of my research. Its purpose is to ensure that my research and experiments remain aligned and relevant as I prepare for the development of my final concept.

At this stage, I had not yet determined what my exact concept would be, but I had some ingredients in the form of precedents.



Buildings around Sheffield.



The role of the pigeon was to become an 'actor' - to play a role for the project in order to be as objective and authentic as possible.

Precedent: Bollingen Tower

Bollingen Tower was made by Carl Jung, a psychiatrist and psychotherapist who conceptualised theories about identity, his writings on 'Shadow' being most well-known.

Bollingen Tower is a handcrafted stone structure, resembling a castle, it lies on the upper lake basin of Lake Zurich, Switzerland.

Jung made his retreat, by hand, from 1922 - completing it in 1935. A second story was added in 1955.

In his writings, the 'Tower' is often a metaphor for Self, and it can arise as either a positive, or negative symbol. Jung wrote *"I had to achieve a kind of representation in stone of my innermost thoughts and of the knowledge I had acquired."* (Carl Jung: Memories, Dreams, Reflections 1961) Bollingen Tower was a physical representation of his individuation, a structure that started modestly and grew as he did - the second story in 1955 was constructed after the death of his wife, and each addition represented new insights and stages in his life, such as this confrontation with mortality, and his understanding of the different layers of consciousness.

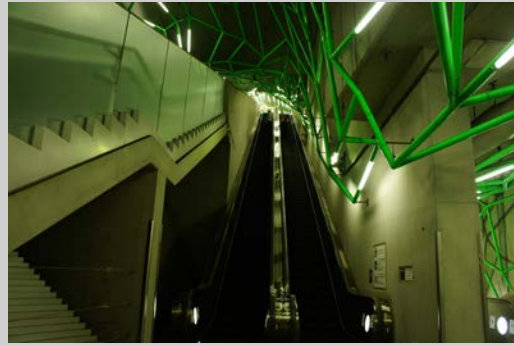
For this project so far there have been misalignments and challenges with my process. Jung believed that embracing and integrating the Shadow was crucial for personal growth and authenticity, which is a sometimes painful process of acknowledging parts of ourselves that we repress or ignore, and then finding a way to accept and integrate these aspects.

The idea of creating architecture as a physical manifestation of internal growth is something I find deeply inspiring, aligning with movements like metabolic architecture that similarly embrace growth, adaptability, and personal meaning within architectural concepts.



Image by X

Migration is an important part of life, so having a direct link is a monumental thing to uphold. Finding yourself again requires nature.



Precedent: Iidobashi Station

This Summer, I had the experience of exploring Tokyo and its underground network of stations. Occasionally, a stop or station is designed by an architecture firm, and offers a unique experience for commuters and visitors. One station that stuck with me was Iidobashi, designed by Makoto Sei Watanabe Architects.

The station was designed in 2000 and questions the distinction between designed and non-designed, as well as human and technology relations in terms of Architectural concept and construction.

Iidobashi Station establishes a line between what is intentionally designed and what is left to randomness or computational processes. This was a hopeful arc of the metabolist movement in Japanese Architecture that experimented heavily with algorithmic computer design.

'Induction Cities' is the framework of this thinking, and Iidobashi is a practical application. Both alter the role of the designer, positioning them as a curator of rules and values rather than a creator of forms. This opens up a new paradigm complexity of natural systems inspire architectural solutions free from unnecessary human influence.

This can be seen in my precursor - Babel, where I created an algorithm geared to create, delegate and dictate the outcome. The end result was a collaboration between human input and algorithm.

The output of the program is likened to natural phenomena, such as the growth of plant roots or butterfly wings. These structures appear designed but are actually the result of natural laws rather than the intentional work of a human hand.

In my final design, this naturalistic approach can be physically seen in the lighting rig that mirrors the movement and elevation of rivers as they flow out of Sheffield, but is an ever-present theme throughout the core of my concept.

<https://www.makoto-architect.com/iidobashi.html>

China



Precedent: Chongqing Railway Station



A typical user journey down long, descending escalators, spiralling underground, wrapping around invisible columns for behemoth structures before finally reaching the train line.

The mountainous terrain forces deep excavation, creating a daily downwards pilgrimage for the commuter.

"What's reality? I don't know. When my bird was looking at my computer monitor I thought, 'That bird has no idea what he's looking at.' And yet what does the bird do? Does he panic? No, he can't really panic, he just does the best he can. Is he able to live in a world where he's so ignorant? Well, he doesn't really have a choice. The bird is okay even though he doesn't understand the world."

You're that bird looking at the monitor, and you're thinking to yourself, 'I can figure this out.' Maybe you have some bird ideas. Maybe that's the best you can do."

— Terry A. Davis, creator of TempleOS

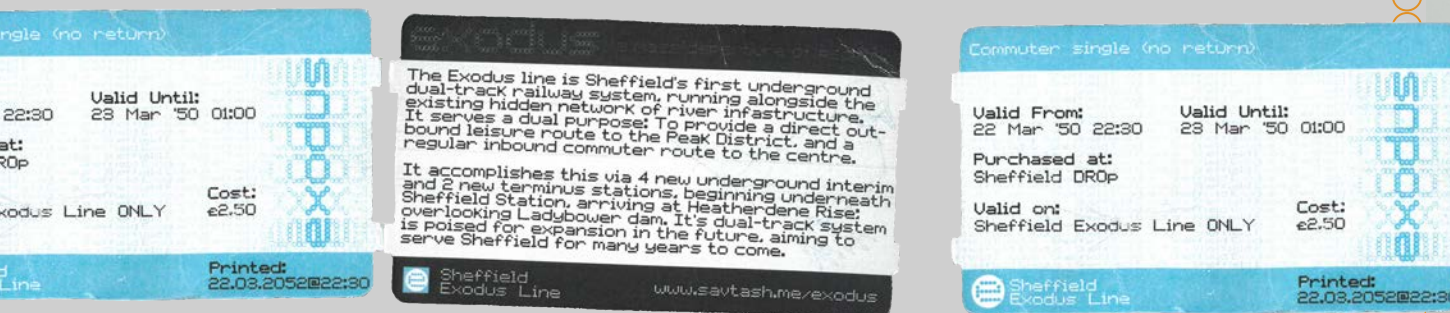


Final Concept Brief



The exodus line is Sheffield's first underground dual-track railway system, running alongside the existing hidden network of river infrastructure. It serves a dual purpose: to provide a direct out-bound leisure route to the Peak District, and a regular inbound commuter route to the centre.

It accomplishes this via 4 new underground interim and 2 new terminus stations, starting underneath Sheffield Station, ending at Heatherdene park - overlooking Ladybower Dam. It's dual-track system is poised for expansion in the future, aiming to serve Sheffield for many years to come.



Permission for Scope



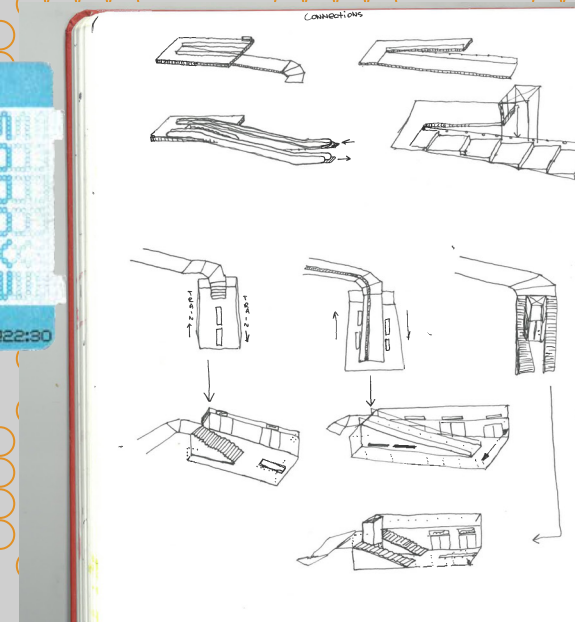
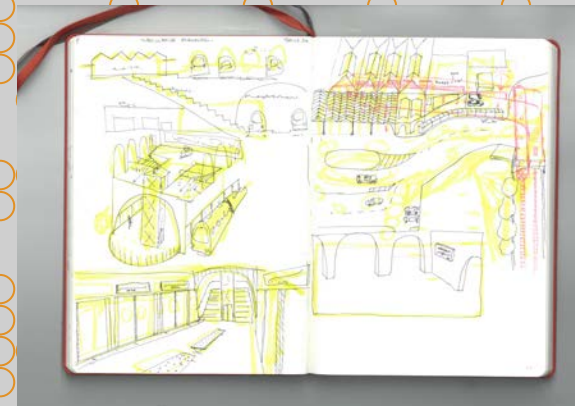
Justification.

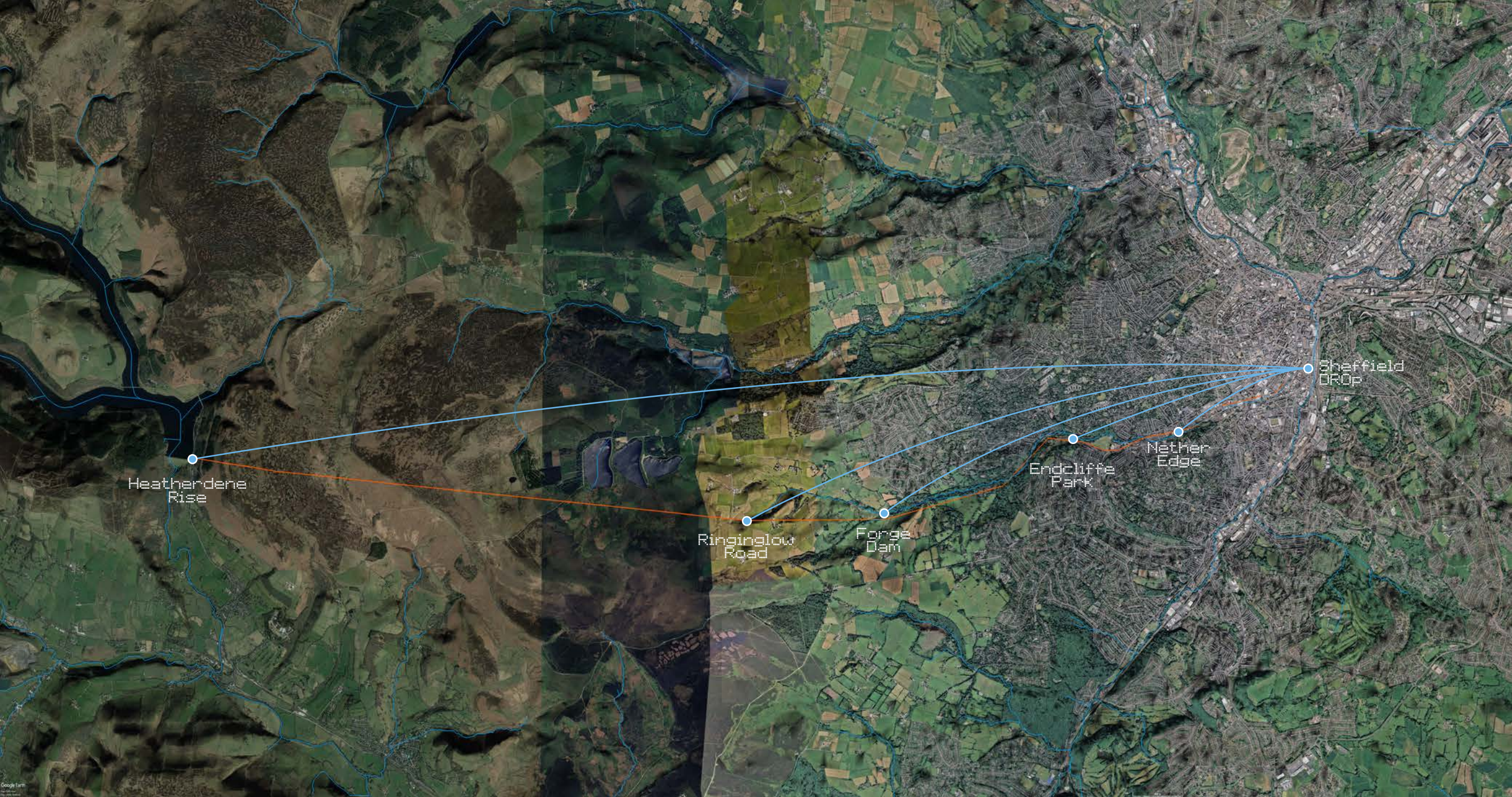
Design intent is about setting the stage, and choosing whether to define your own parameters or to work within those given to you. After finishing my reflections during the 'concept for analysis' stage, the approach has evolved into a mixture of both. I've created an outcome directly tied to the given site, yet by overlaying my own story and vision, the result reaches a little further than the initial brief.

I compare interior architecture to other disciplines as the difference between starting with a blank canvas and having something tangible to shape. Like comparing the process of sculpting clay vs painting on a pure white page.

With sculpting, you start with a form—something tangible to mold, refine, and guide. A blank canvas, however, feels daunting - especially when working with new paint, uncertain of their behavior or blend. While there is beauty in this naivety, my inexperience often leads to outcomes that feel unconsidered or unjustified.

I believe that there is potential in the rawness of such work, like a child's drawing, to be evocative. Artists like Cy Twombly and Otto Zitko have, and still inspire me in my personal work, and while I have considered this route—translating such energy into installations or interiors— This current project is a more refined and distilled undertaking. Looking at the initial renders, it can lack some of the naive expression and soul, replacing it with considered design aspects that, to me, have become cold through their countless design revisions. This is in stark contrast to the initial drawings which leave room for imagination and user-engagement. I believe both paths hold potential as a career direction, and I will aim to strike more of a balance in the future.



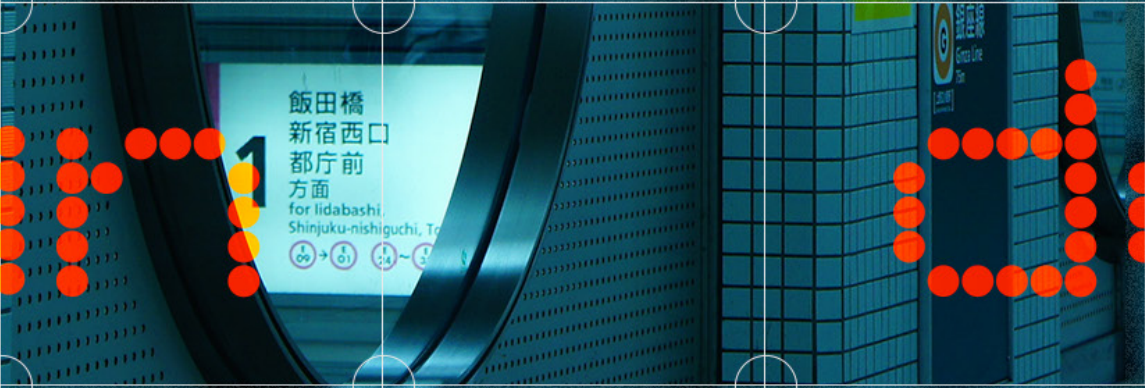


Stop

The wider context of my concept is to help people reconnect with nature by providing infrastructure.

This was inspired by the migration pattern of birds, which emerged after observing commuters at Sheffield Station.

Given more time, I would further detail the route, and it's stations.



Hoodwinked

Hoodwinked: designing from the start

I was forced to make a model, before I had a chance to fully compartmentalise myself.

This meant I had to put on hold all of my ideas, and 'freeze frame' my current thinking, a month after the brief. Some of my classmates had concepts, in varying forms of finality, whereas I was worried that I had to have a more concrete idea about what I wanted to portray with my model before actually making anything.

This relates to my physical model for my previous project 'Holgate: The Goal' where I made a model pre-design stage, and post-concept stage. This model represented a thought, an idea, and a masterplan, that acted purely as a catalyst for conversation between me; someone who played the role not as an architect at that stage, but as a developer or similar role - and the client.

It worked great, because it got us both thinking abstractly, and didn't put too many ideas into the mix that would dictate or create rash design decisions. Also, as it was an extreme concept, it helped to have a, comparatively, extreme model.



Mistakes.

As me and my team were still on the site analysis stage, our model ended up being a representation of our findings, from an architectural perspective. Structural stone, steel, and technology combined in 3 ways that aimed to portray an abstracted 'image' of Sheffield Station.

I feel as though this was achieved. If I were to further push this model, I would spend more time on my personal 'concept for analysis' as to not contrive my contribution with too many ideas from my personal project.

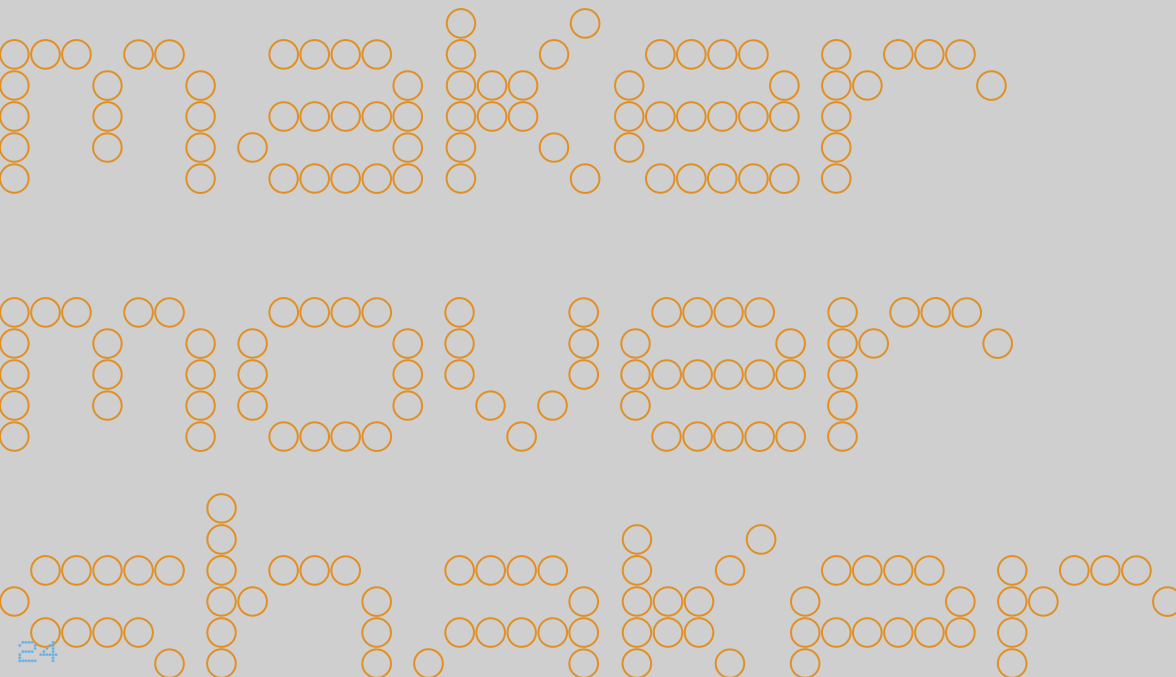
This was seen in the amount of time wasted attempting to make an overcomplicated departure board sign. It turned out to be a standalone box that sat separately, disconnected from the model and it's ideals.

I should have noticed this when the copper sheet that represented the steel element came back from the workshop with a matte finish, leaving no opportunity for the initial idea of reflections. It was at this critical point where I should have decided to morph my contribution to a more harmonising concept, but I didn't. I was already in the process of making the enclosure, and as I was by myself, my mind had shifted gears and I was in a hyperfocus state of working that prevented me from zooming out and looking at the big picture - the narrative of the final model.

I am grateful for my teammate Nell for realising this particular juncture and guiding me to make the handrail that would act as the 'backup' contribution.

This was crucial, as without this handrail, we would only have had 2 elements in our final design, leaving it lacking. Their role in this workshop environment was a force that I had not experienced up until this point in my design career - someone to guide and nurture direction in an effective way, that prevented focused energy going in the wrong direction.

Moving forward I am looking forward to more collaborative group work as it shows, in very practical and pragmatic ways, the effect of my role on final outcomes and where it needs - in this case - constant reflection to improve the results. This could be done by generating new processes for physical designing by identifying problems evident in my workflow and cross-referencing them with my digital creative process, where I am more practiced in orienting myself during tasks.





The time aspect, as outlined in the introduction, was the initial gut feeling that I followed through with, and after multiple explorations of the site, it was clear that analog clocks were not nearly as prevalent as the synchronised, clear and concise departure boards, which to a seasoned commuter serve as an efficient carrier for pure information.

Designed to be clear to read from distance and in all lighting and weather conditions, low maintenance, simple and effective, they were introduced in the 90s to replace split-flap boards.

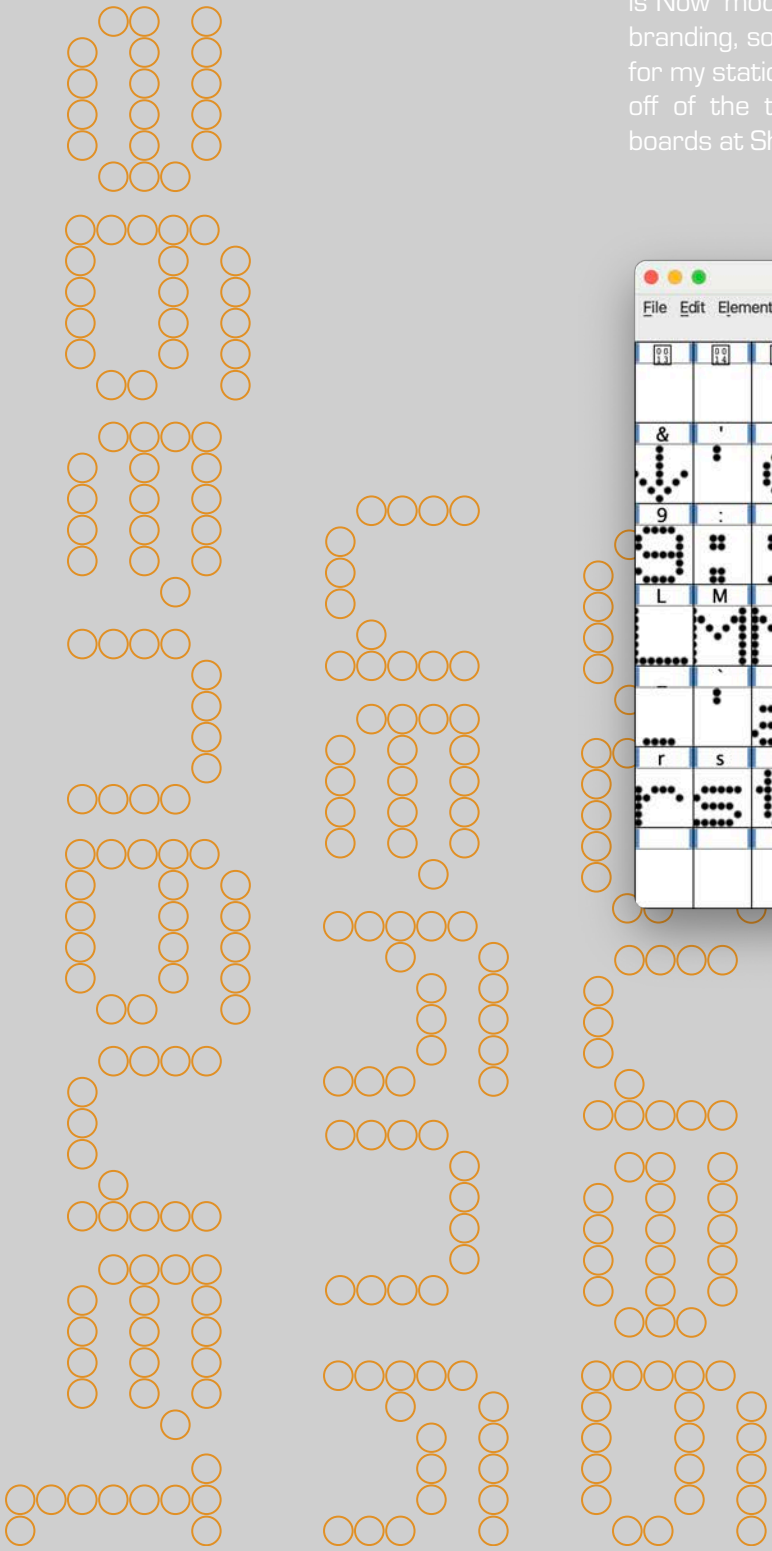
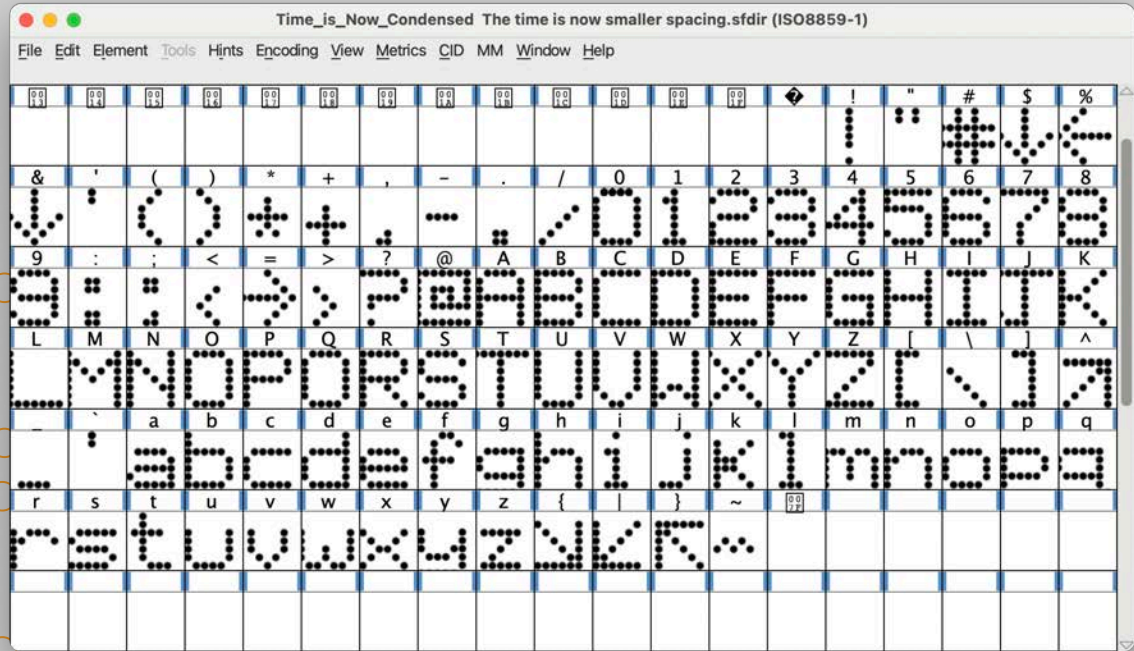
These boards will be replaced, if not soon then eventually, by the same type of LCD panels used in televisions - Shanghai, Seoul, America and even London already have these signs, and the dot-matrix layout of UK departure boards when viewed in this wider perspective are a characterful, iconic friend that marks the era of both urban transport, and design we currently live in.



Reflections from steel inspired our initial model

Design Language

I was inspired by this technology, its graphic design, its invisible, yet-omnipresent and dependent nature. After my initial 'The Time is Now' model, this exploration flowed into my branding, so when making signs and graphics for my station, I developed my own font based off of the typeface used on the departure boards at Sheffield Station.



Installation

My installation is an upscaled dot-matrix display based on the traditional LED departure board.

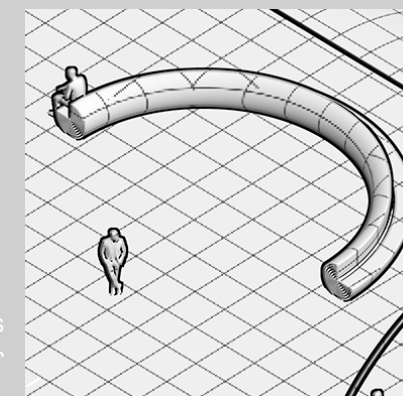
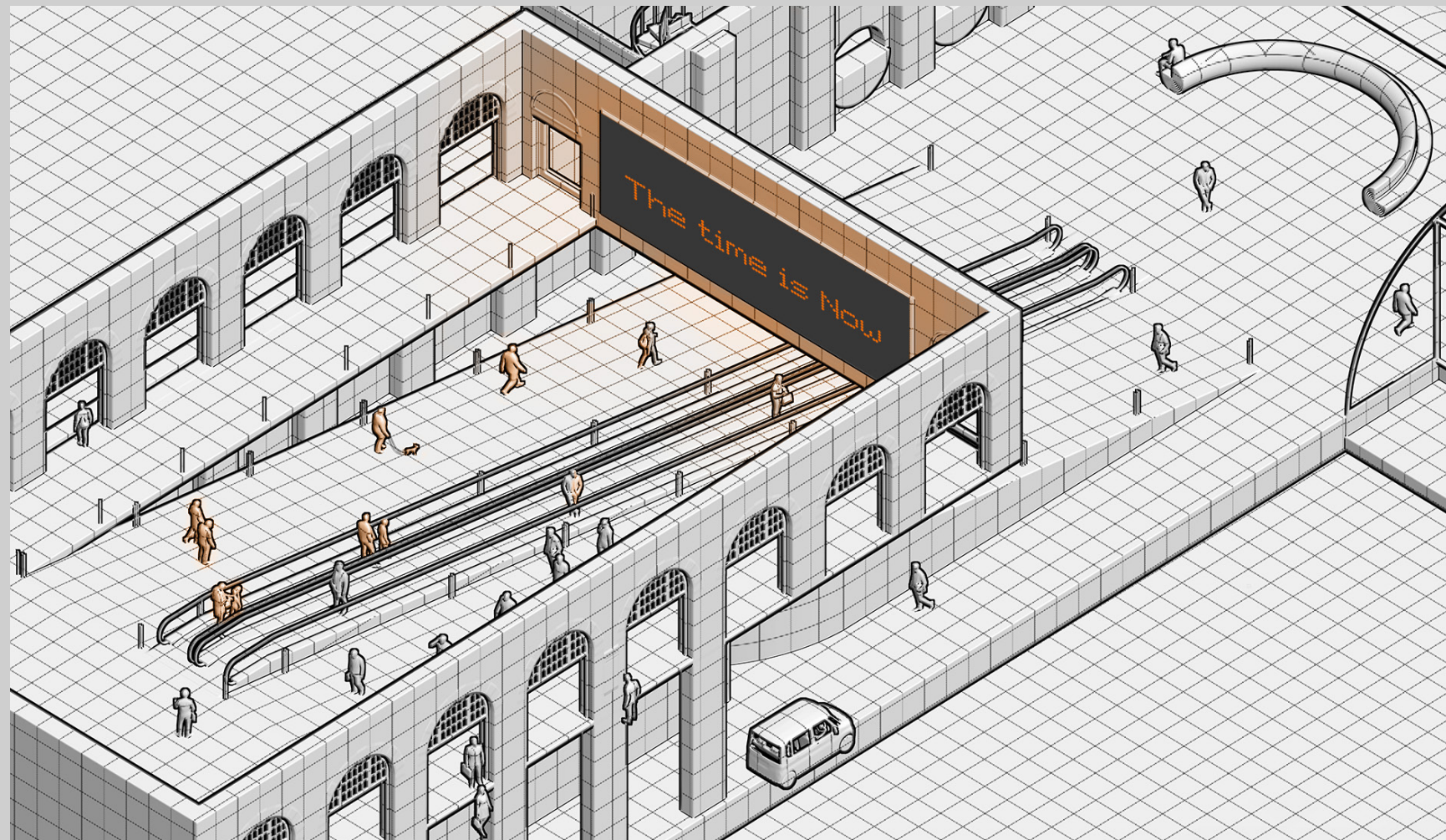
The concept, while fluid, is to have poetry and user-submitted phrases such as Tweets scroll across the screen, creating an interactive and controlled user experience, in conjunction with the central travelers.

Scroll speed and prompt length should be measured against the average time taken to travel down the ramp to create a proper experience. This way, the art harmonises with the architecture to create a deeper relationship of space and identity.

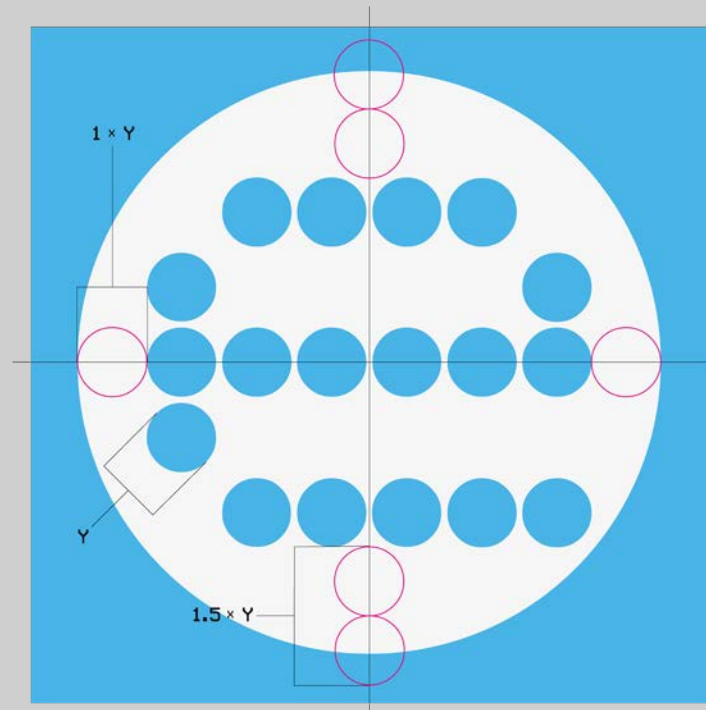
I used the dot-matrix font to add personality and relatability. To further push this concept, I played with the idea of 'pigeon perspective' which would entail cameras pointed at people on the ramp, relaying the image on the screen with a time delay, giving a slow-motion effect.



Reflections from steel inspired our initial model

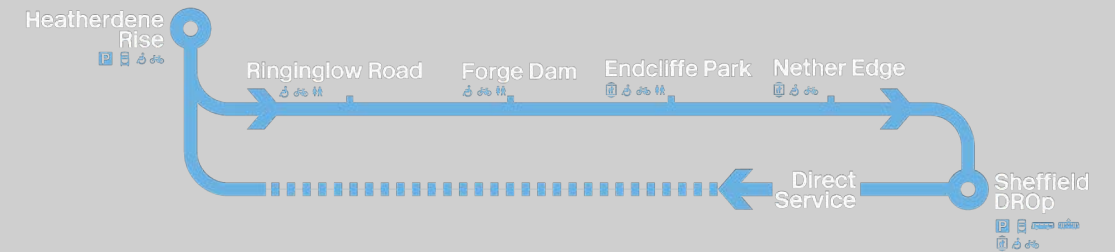


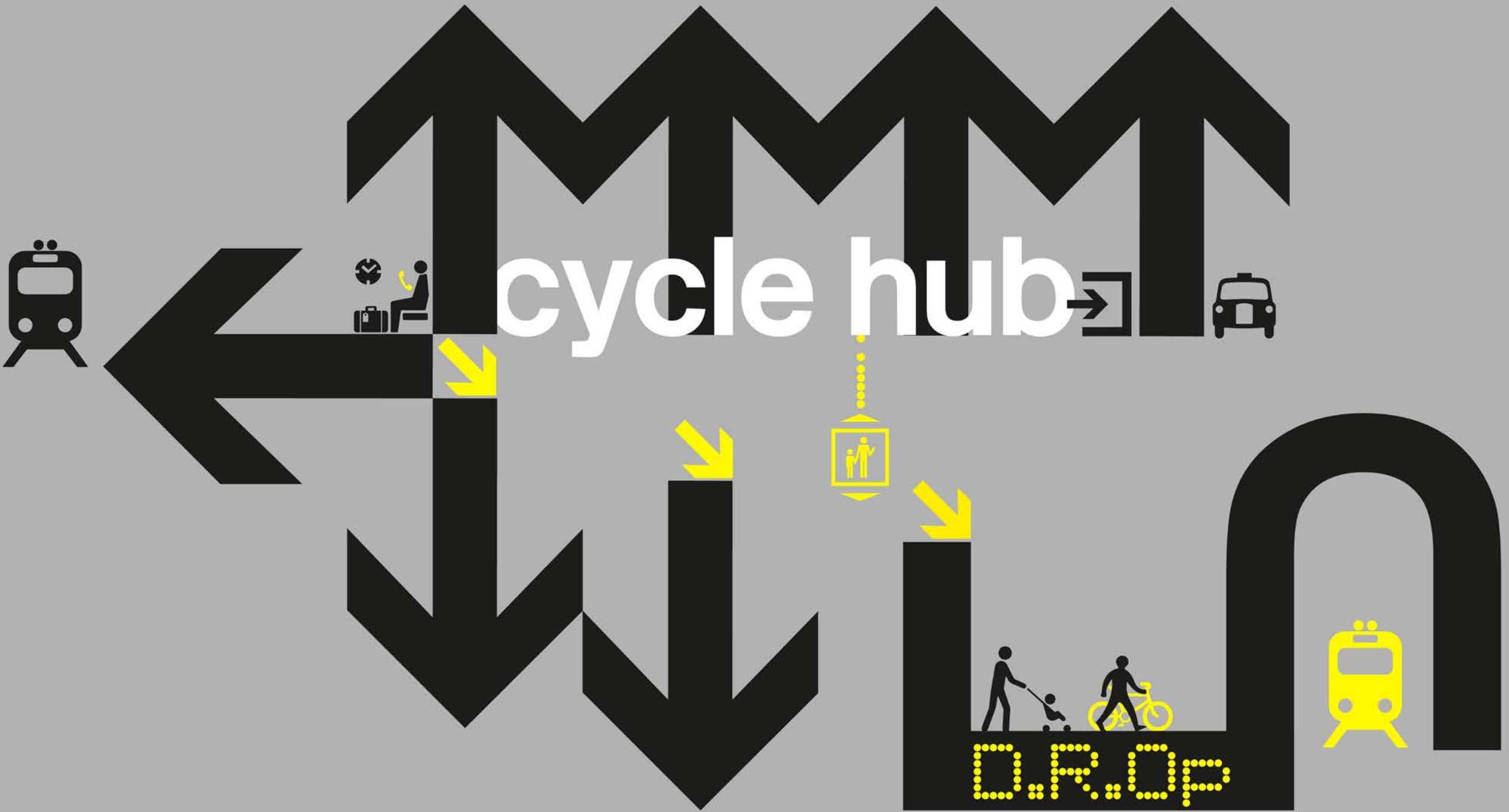
Seating at the bottom of the ramp also allows a central space for performances, busking, or sculptural installations.

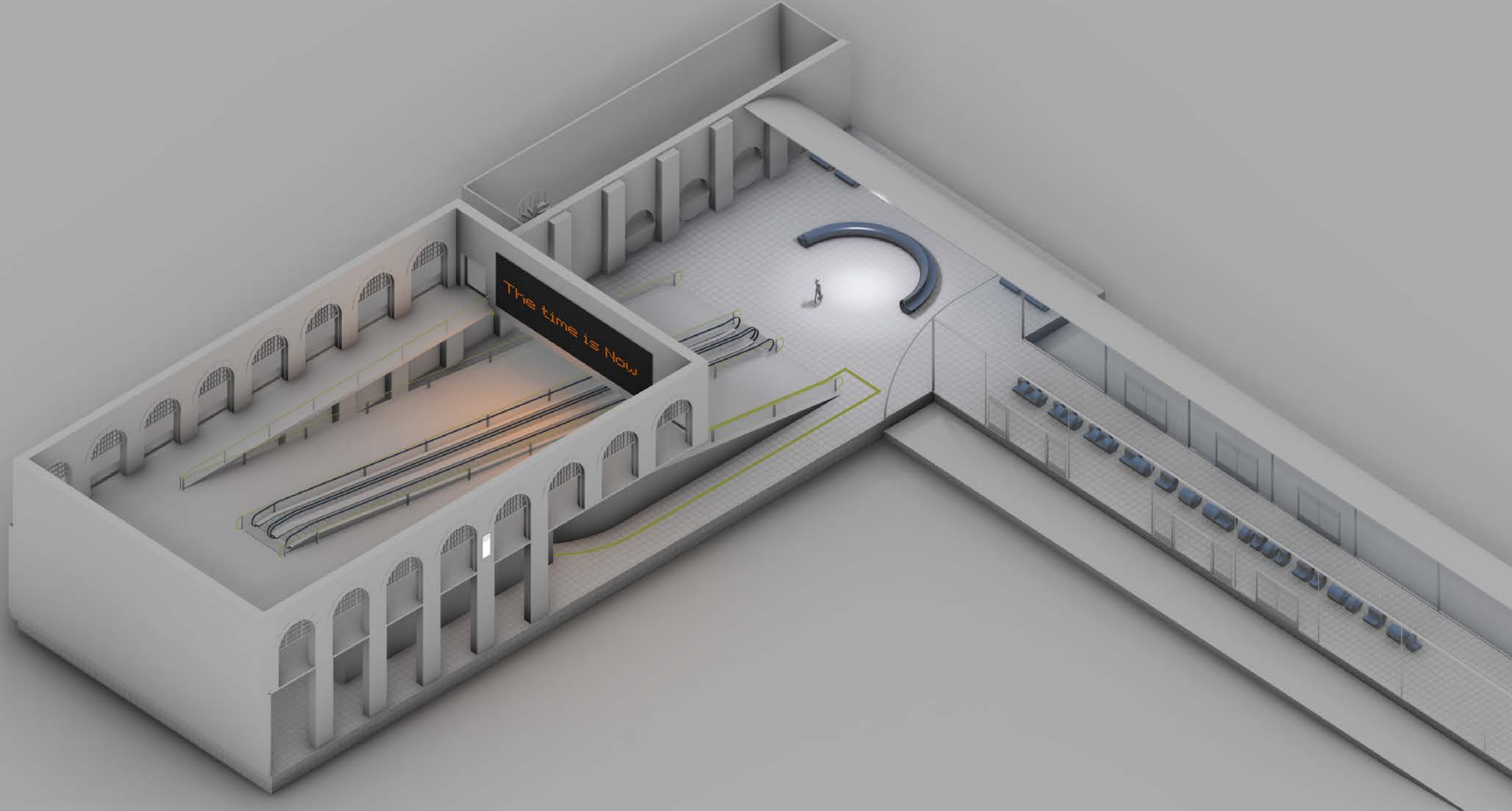


In order to create signage to be placed in and around the station, I first needed a 'container' for my conceptual line. This emerged as a brand which would enrich my project's identity: Exodus. This world-building helps create context, and gave me an understanding of practices in adjacent disciplines, for example TfL's graphic design and strict guidelines that ensure clarity.

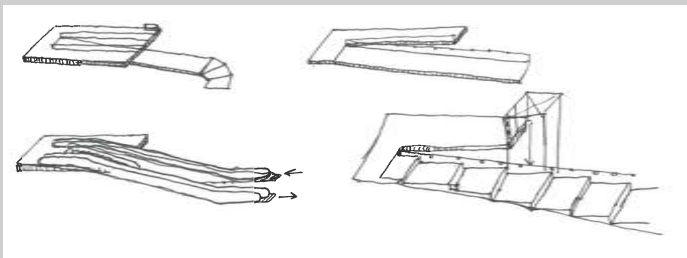
→ Exodus Line



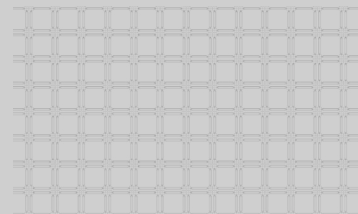




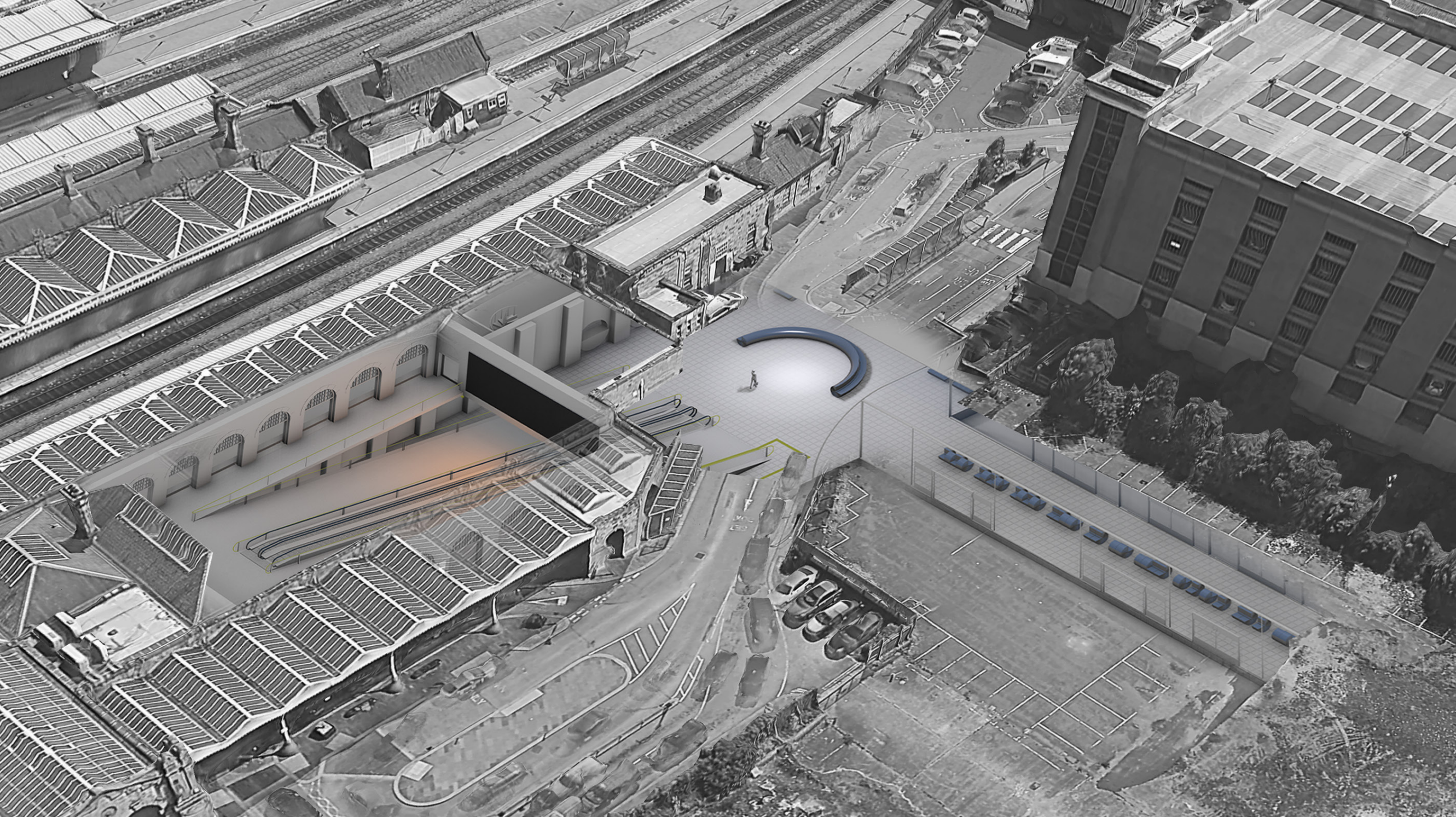
Shafted Drop



My proposal sits underneath the Cycle Hub, and features a long travelator down to the platform.



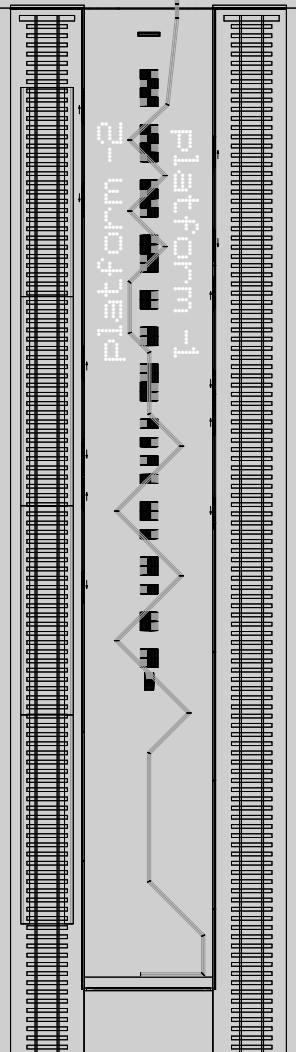
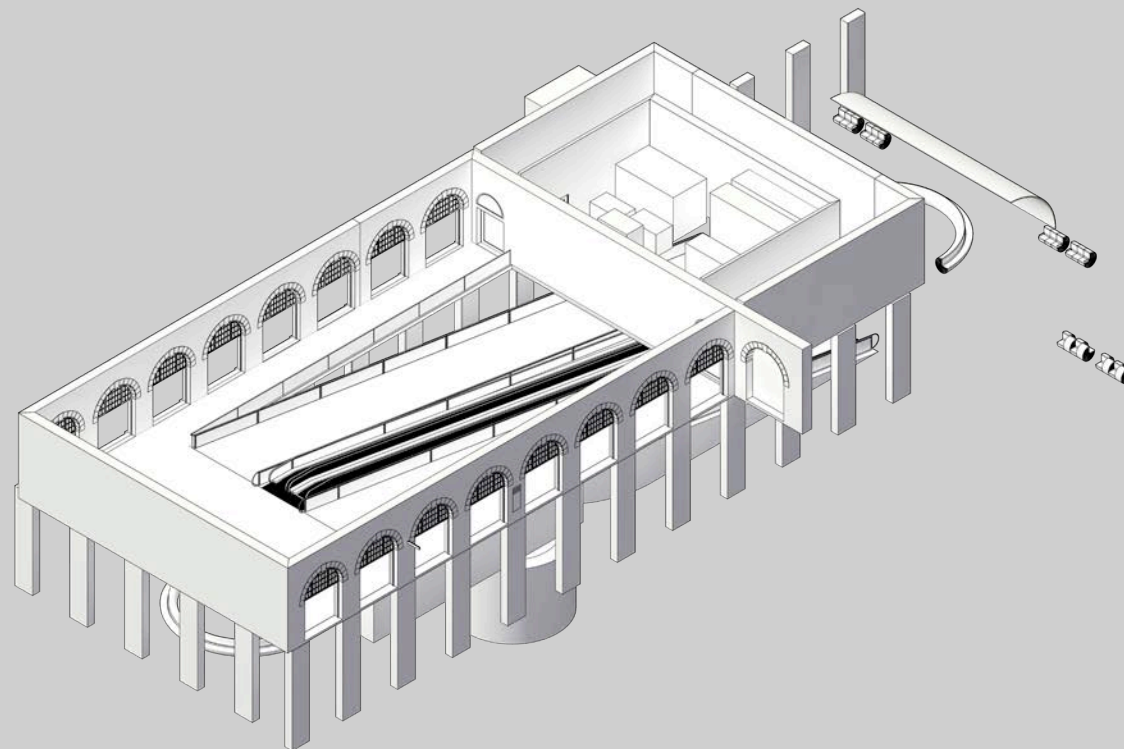
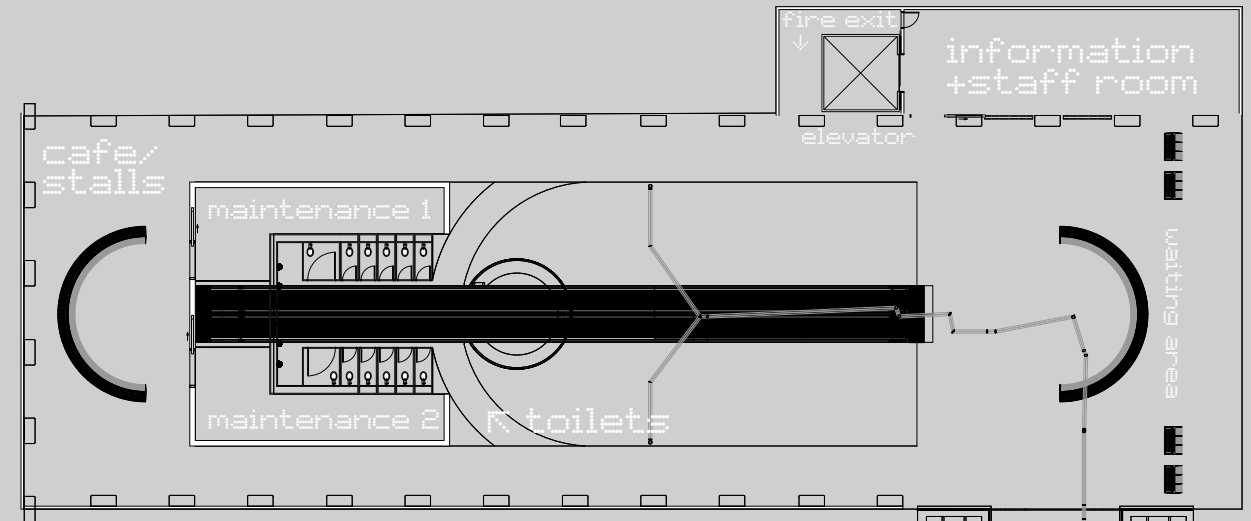
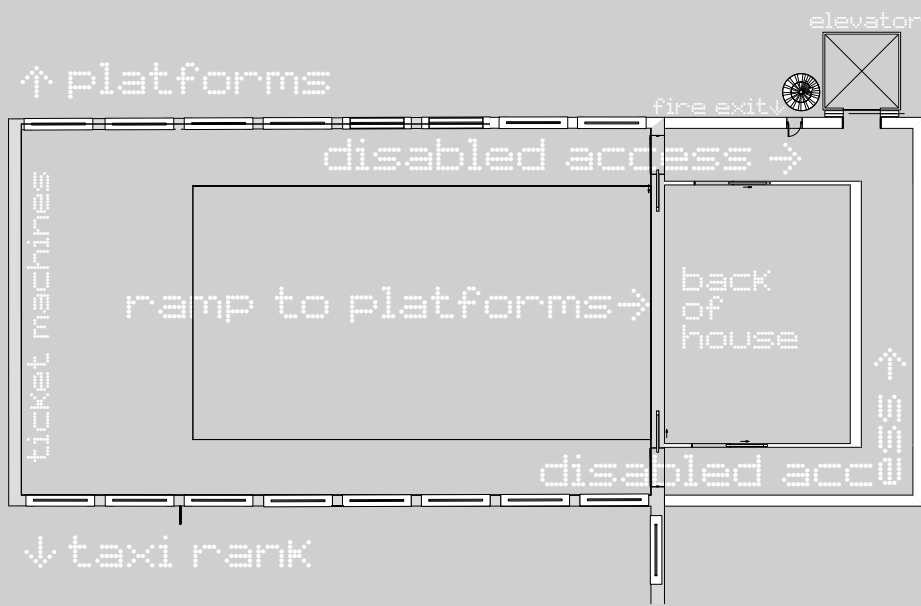
Not seen in this render is the lighting grid solution, inspired by metabolic architecture this is a fabric that grows, morphs and spreads depending on it's environment. It can be seen throughout all stations and stops, acting as a cohesive structure that lighting, HVAC and safety equipment can be attached to and stored within.



Sheffield DROp

The platforms distance and orientation from the surface is totally dictated by the Porter Brook river. This is because my conceptual track runs in the valleys alongside the underground rivers of Sheffield.

Sheffield DROp is an acronym for Direct Rail Operation which is inspired by the direct service it provides, as well as drop handlebars on a bicycle, used when moving quickly to avoid headwinds.



Shafted Drop

The station takes into consideration fire safety, staff areas and storage, as well as disabled access from both the platform side and taxi side. This symmetry ensures ease of access for the large flow of people during rush hours.

Materiality

Collected and curated materials from the Megatron, and the underground river system to inform choices in my underground station.

Material collection inspired by the nest building technique used by pigeons

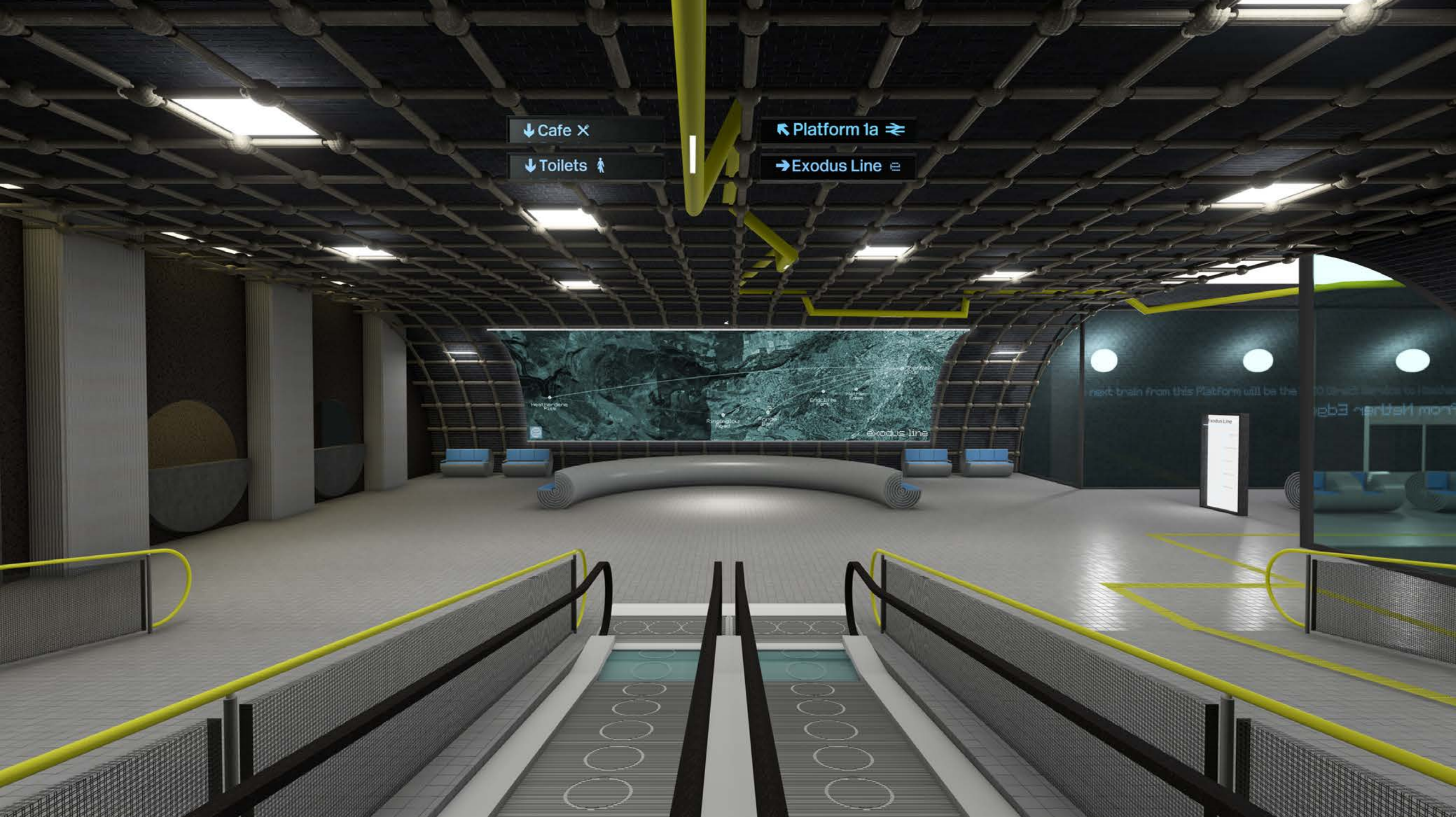


Upper Floor

Situated between the taxi rank and platforms, the upper floor provides a new through-access between the station and street. Shutters and even ticket gates could be added to the arched entryways to control the flow of commuters.

Details

Ceramic tile walls and floor
Stainless steel/chrome accents
Arched elements
Yellow powder coated handrails
Perforated steel and glass railing panels



Lower Floor

This area consists of toilets, an information desk, seating areas and dual-track platform.

Instead of departure boards, the glass partitions guarding the track project the next departure or arrival on it's surface.

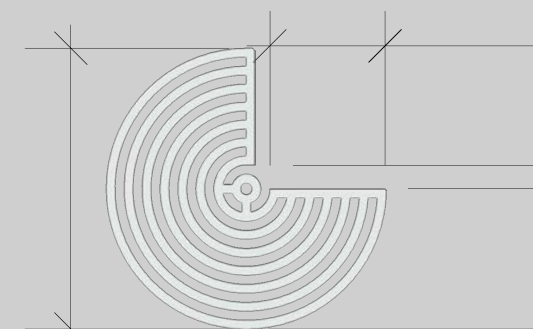
Materials

Ceramic tile walls and floor
Black brick arches
Poured & combed concrete supports
Steel structural frame
Double glazed laminated glass
Stainless steel seating
Embroidered fabric seat covers
Arched elements in brick
Yellow powder coated handrails + lighting rig
Perforated steel railing panels



Circles

Circular design language inspired by the dot matrix found in departure boards.



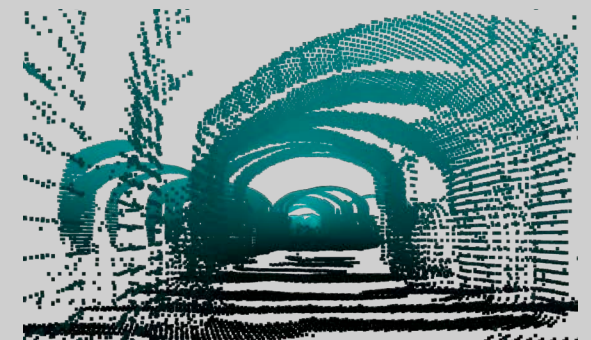


Platforms

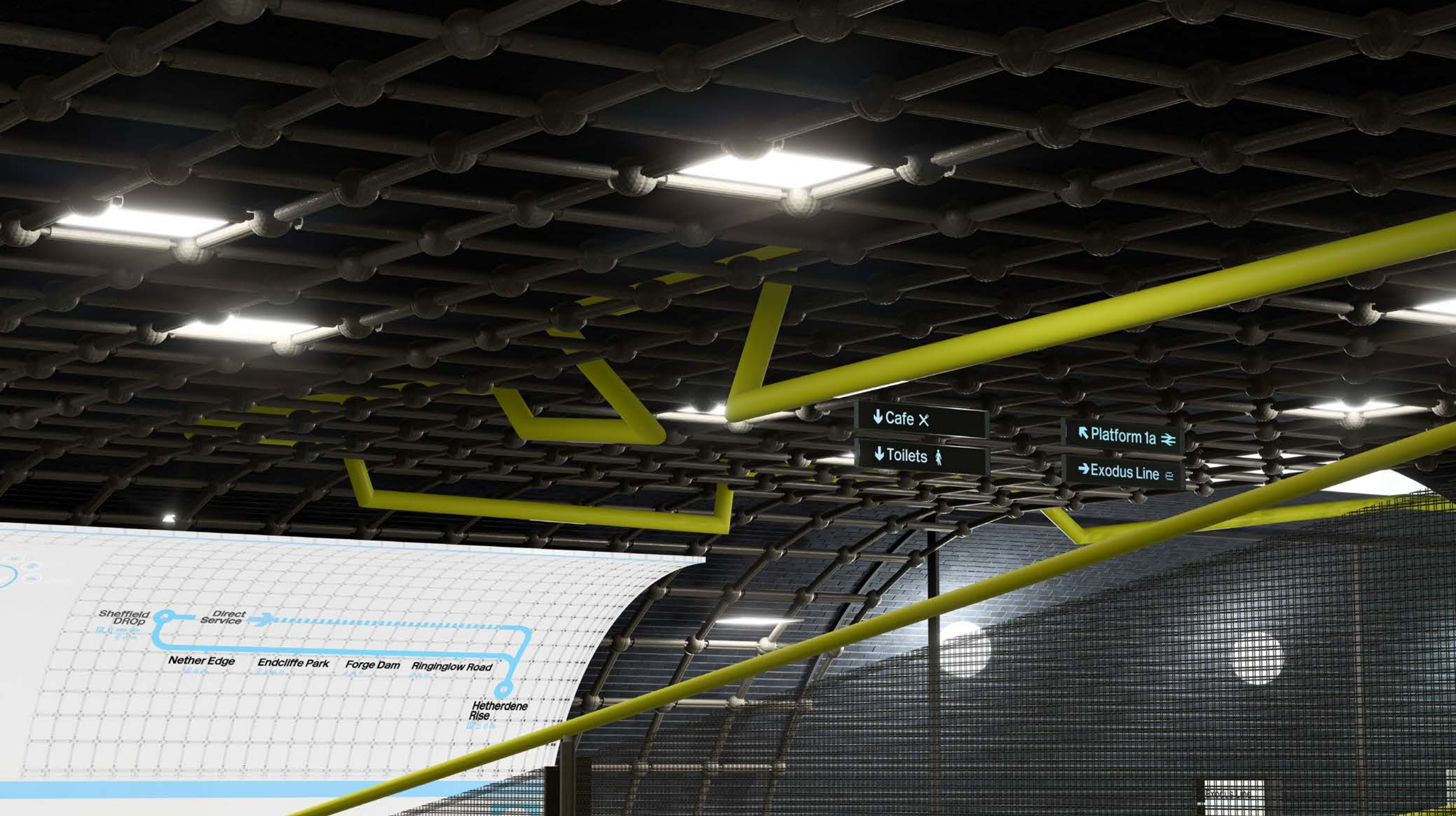
Tunnel inspired by the Victorian constructed 'Megatron' underground river overflow system.

A dual-track setup is better suited for future expansion across the city, as well as increasing the frequency of departures from the stations.

Black bricks are fired at 1000°C to achieve their appearance, and fire resistance.



A scan of the tunnel system underneath Sheffield. 49

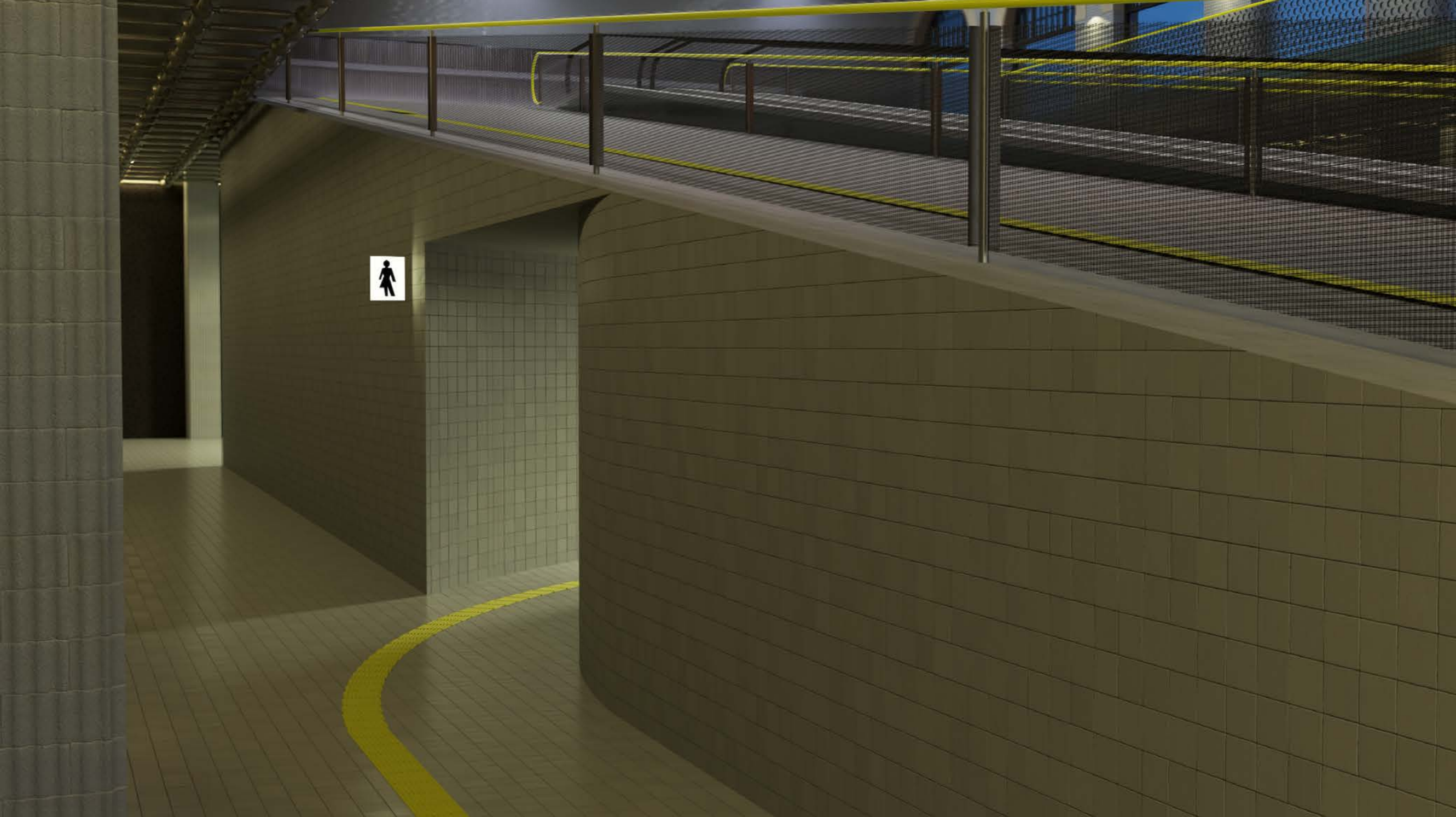


Water

The influence of metabolic design can be seen most clearly in the cell-like structure of the lighting grid. Inspired by arches of the Megatron tunnels, the grid evolves and seems to “dissolve” as it transitions toward the natural environment in the final render. I see this form as a metaphor for growth, migration, and the organic spread of structure and industry—ideas that connect directly to my research on bird migration and interconnected systems.



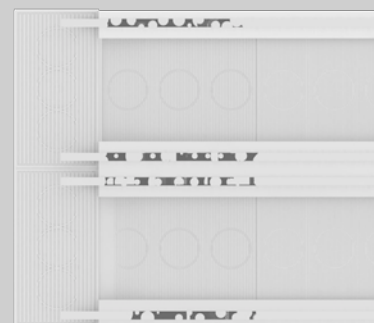
An elevation map ranging from Sheffield Drop to Heatherdene, the terminus stations.

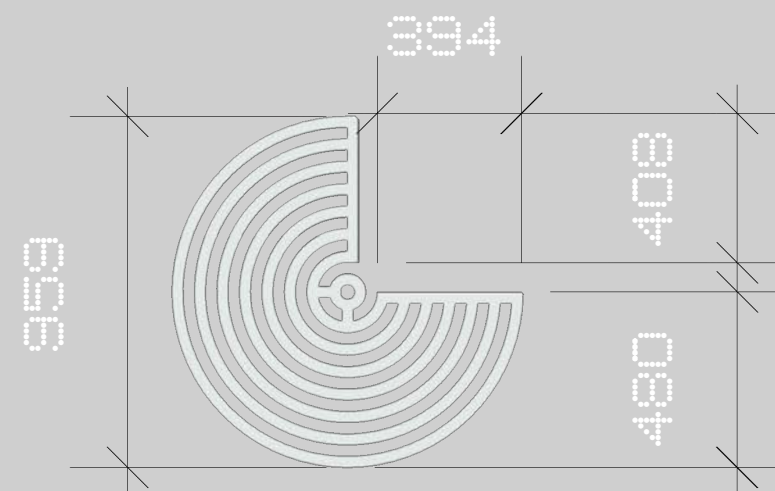
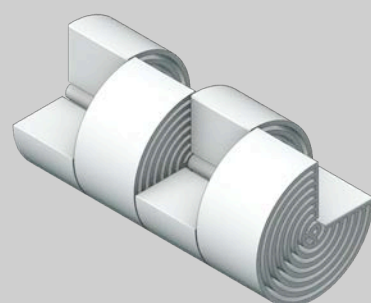
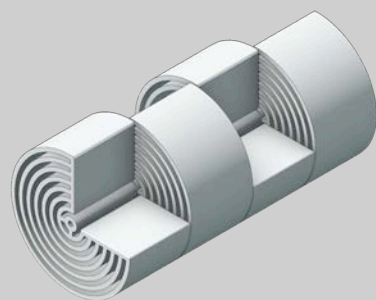
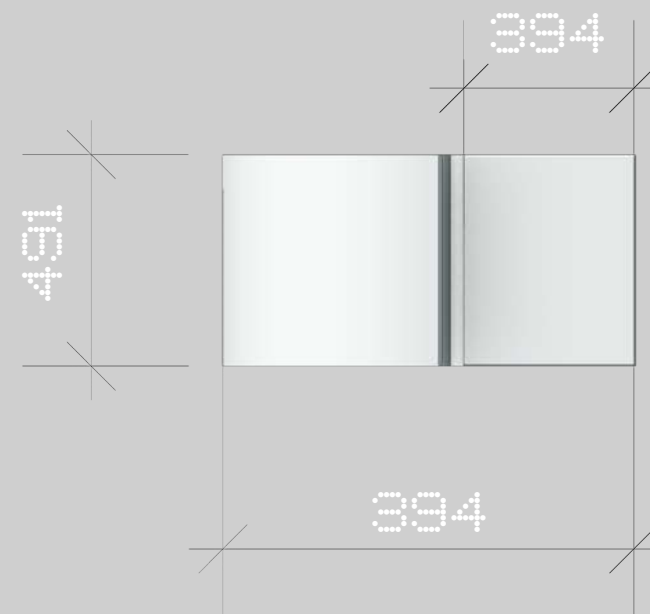
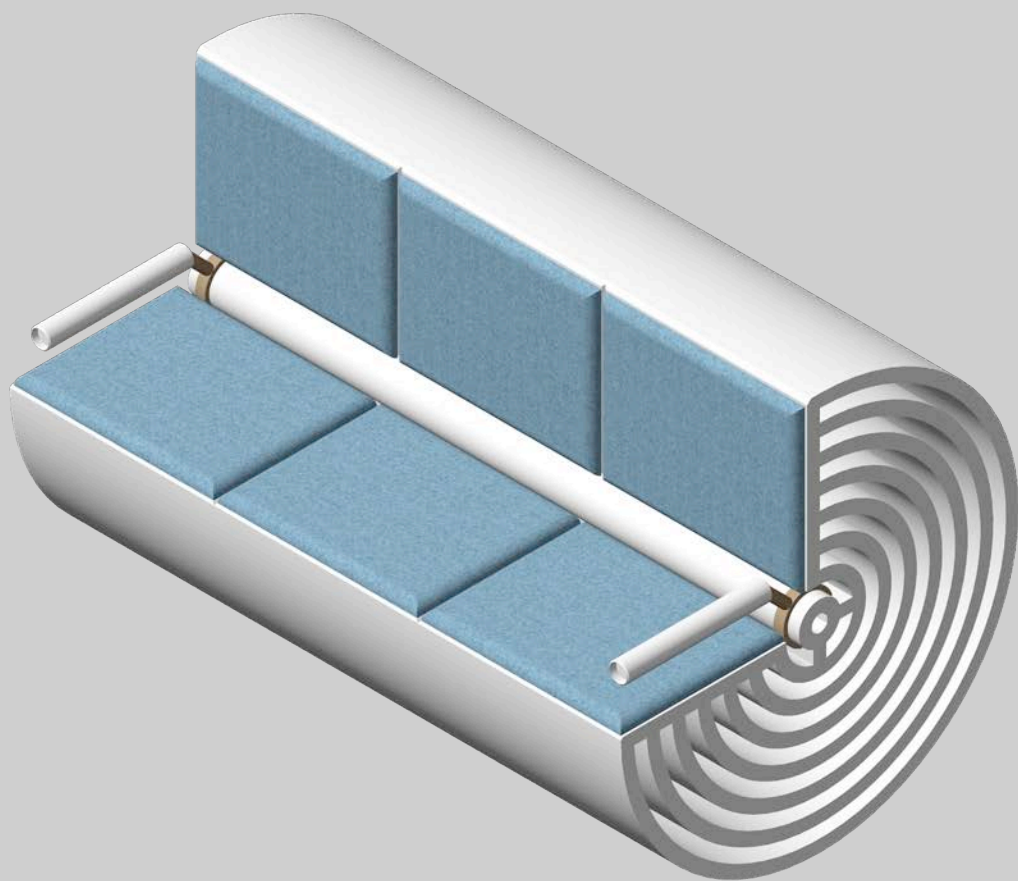


Utilities

Circular design language can be seen in the entrance to the toilets, the back of which houses two maintenance rooms, for access to the travelator and plumbing.

More circular design language can be seen in the motifs on the escalator steps.





Seating

Constructed in stainless steel, seating can be connected together in different orientations to create benches, or single seating arrangements. Armrests can be added to improve comfort, as well as cushioning.

Early each day, you fly this way,
Calling, calling my cranes,
As I look at you from my eyes,
sorrow and heavy teardrops rains,
and the thought of her, the beloved, the fair,
stirs up afresh my pains.
As an orphan I, in a strange land lie,
hid as a pilgrim lost.
Dark hues in my clothes,
and in my heart great woes,
I wear for morning dressed.
Unlike you I have no wings,
to go with you to my dearest.

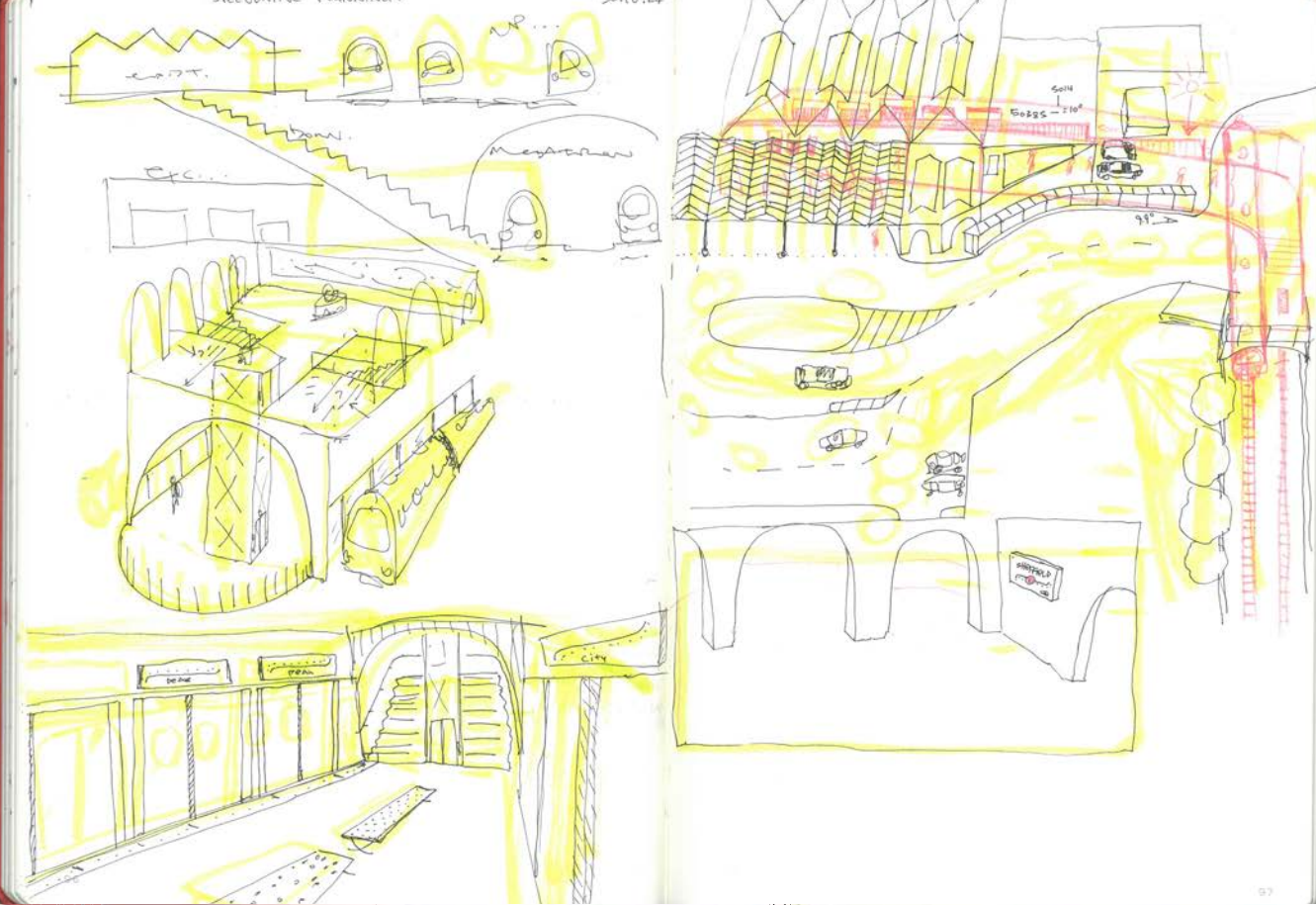
cranes

no

remembered

*Early each day, you fly this way,
Calling, calling my cranes,
As I look at you from my eyes,
sorrow and heavy teardrops rains,
and the thought of her, the beloved, the fair,
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As an orphan I, in a strange land lie,
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Dark hues in my clothes,
and in my heart great woes,
I wear for morning dressed.
Unlike you I have no wings,
to go with you to my dearest.*

*Cranes migrating over Hungary
'Trad'
Balassi Bálint*



connections

6-11-24

