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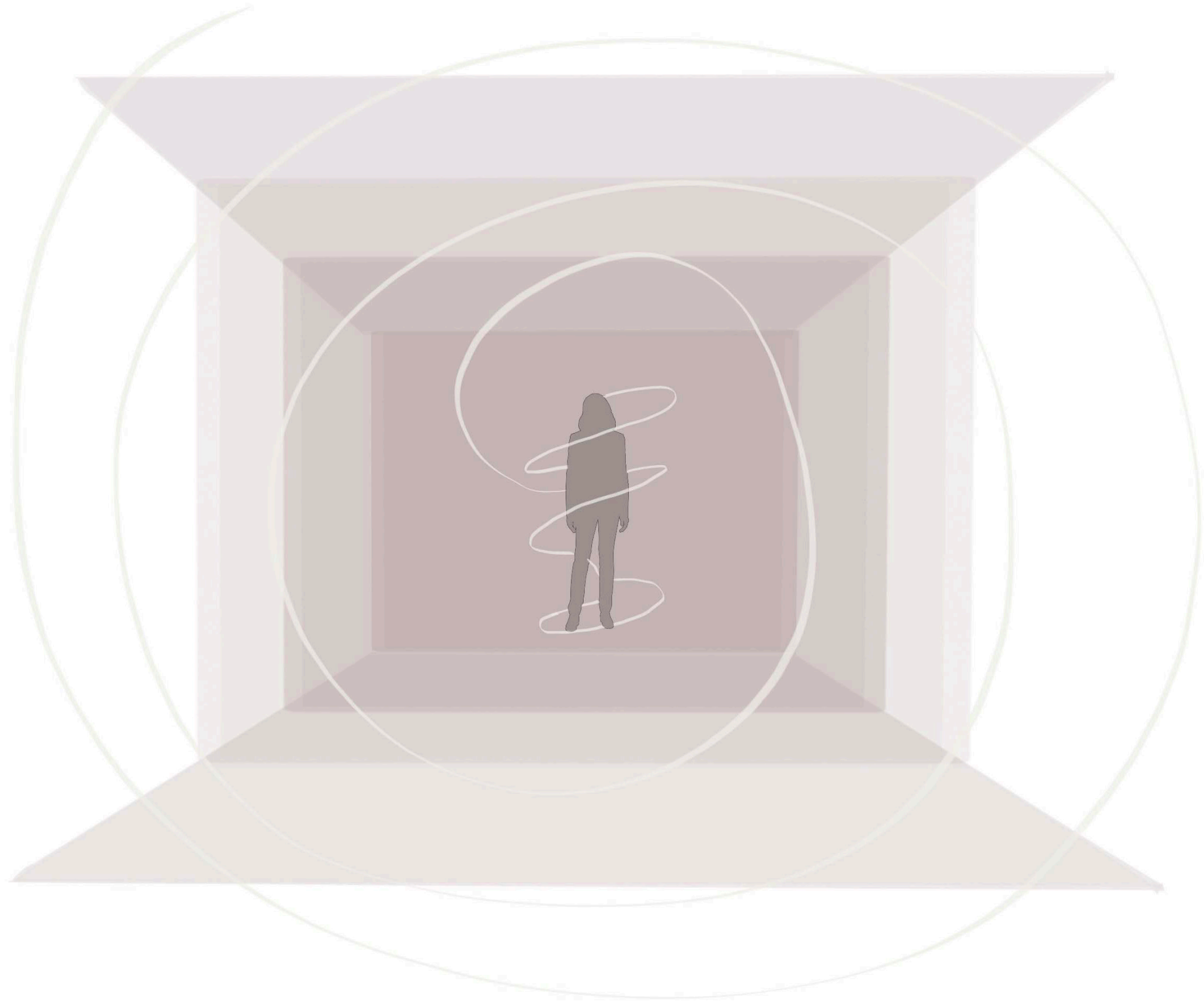
Introduction

We have always and continue to place too much importance on our vision. “Seeing is believing”, as the old saying goes. Yet, we do not realize how dependent our vision is on the other senses. This includes the sense of smell, hearing, taste, as well as, our haptic and kinetic senses. Our mind processes information gathered from all our senses to help us perceive our surroundings. When it comes to architecture and interior design, we strive to create an embodied experience for the visitors and users of a space. In his book *Experiencing Architecture*, Rasmussen (1964, p.10) argues that architecture is not only meant to be discerned visually but it is to be lived in. So, architecture needs to go beyond being just functional and beautiful. Commercial buildings and skyscrapers, as magnificent and glittering as they look, often fail to evoke emotion and connection, both of which, are primal human instincts. This heavy emphasis on visual perception can lead to a degree of superficiality in the experience of these spaces. If architects and interior designers break free from designing mainly for the eye and focus on enhancing our overall sensory experience, a truly immersive experience can be created. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most people are unable to travel or explore new places. Therefore, in this dissertation, through self-illustrated diagrams, drawings and visuals; we will represent the imagined narrative of sensory spatial journeys experienced by our bodies in the case studies and examples used throughout. Photographs may sometimes seem cold and impersonal, so creating my own illustrations is an attempt to convey the intangible, tactile or textural qualities of space for the reader to experience via this dissertation.

The first chapter, Colloquy Of Senses: Memory, Body and Experience, will focus on the understanding of the impact of haptic, auditory and kinetic senses as well as our memories and their contribution to the way in which we perceive spaces. We will review *Eyes Of The Skin* by Juhani Pallasmaa, *Sensuous Geographies* by Paul Rodaway and *Thinking Architecture* by Peter Zumthor. We will strive to argue and interpret the impact of memories of the body, senses and our imagination upon our perception of the surrounding environments. We will also understand how placing significance on elevating our sensory experience through senses other than vision when it comes to interior design, can also help us be more inclusive of people with visual impairment. We will illustrate and enrich our understanding and interpretation of Casa Mac - a home designed for a blind client. Through this, we will also identify some principles of designing sensory interiors that do not emphasize on visual perception. The relevance of sensory design for the current pandemic and also the post-pandemic world will be introduced in this chapter and discussed briefly in the latter parts of the dissertation.

Chapter two, Immersive Spatial Environment, will explore how enveloping sensory atmospheres are created. By studying the famous Falling Water House by Frank Lloyd Wright we will identify how atmospheric abstraction can be translated into a tangible sensory encounter with space. Naturally, different people will perceive the same space differently. The house, which is now open to the public, but was once a residence - a family holiday home is perceived in varied ways. The way we relate to the spaces around us and the way we orient and experience spatially all depend quite heavily on our senses. We will also consider Under restaurant by Snøhetta to understand the extent of applying common interior design principles like the use of light/shadow, materiality, structure and context to enhance our sensory perception of spaces. We will attempt to narrate the sensory experiences of the body in Under restaurant. In *Eyes Of The Skin*, Pallasmaa (2012, loc 859) stresses the co-dependence of people and space, and how they are never separate but intertwined. Thus, as spatial designers, it is our responsibility to develop a sensitivity towards human behaviour and psychology to aid people in creating a tangible and positive connection with the space.

Chapter three, Intimate Experiences In Public Settings, will explore the connection we have with our surroundings from a different perspective. Our ideas of inside/outside, private/public are always clearly defined and change the way in which we behave in certain environments. There is an unusual and contradictory experience to be had in retail stores that sell body and face care products. Through the help of two different case studies, the Forest Essentials store in Jodhpur, India and Aesop Store in London, United Kingdom, we will analyse how interior designers have been able to provide a backdrop to facilitate intimate, immersive experiences in commercial/public spaces. These stores also embrace two different cultural identities in their design but share their aim of putting visitors at ease, enough to create a sense of escapism in their stores. The sensory narrative created in these retail stores through the means of materiality and navigation will be unraveled.



Chapter 1

Colloquy Of Senses : Memory, Body and Experience

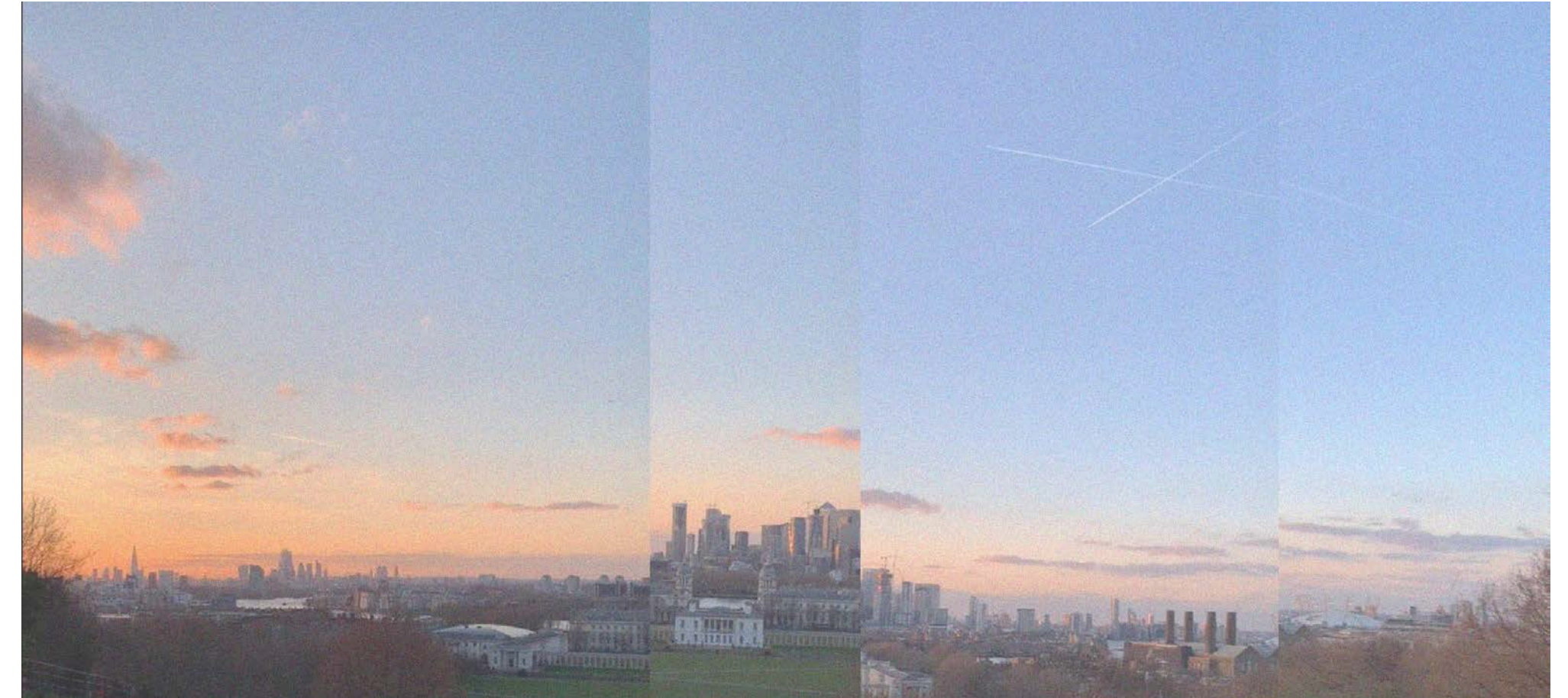
Architecture is created for the human body and mind to experience, not just to see but to absorb. Our senses help us turn spatial experiences into memory embedded in our body. In, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty (2002, p.268) argued that perception unites our individual sensory experiences into a whole further comparing it to the way in which a single object is grasped by both our eyes fixating on it. This implies that the memories of our body, memories of our individual senses, memories of past experiences all feed into creating a constant conversation of inhabitants with their surroundings. This dialogue in turn helps us to experience space in its entirety, made up of various fragments of spatial moments that weave and intertwine to give us a grasp of the immediate environment.

the re-evaluation of how we percieve architecture

According to Pallasmaa (2012, loc 1272) the body is at the center of experience and we witness and survey the world with our whole physical presence. This implies that architecture is already a sensory landscape. Spatial Designers create sensory narratives inside this landscape. Each body and mind may perceive differently but we share common human instincts- to feel, to connect, to use our senses. Instead of approaching the subject of experiential design with the rigidity of trying to fix a particular experience, more designs need to be richer in the dialogue they create with different inhabitants and users.

Our day to day lives will get further enhanced in spaces that evoke our imagination, improve our sensory perception, as well as, help us forge meaningful connections with the space and fellow inhabitants. For Pallasmaa (2012, loc 946) the body is not merely a physical entity, it is enhanced by time, memory and dream. This suggests that at the core of sensory and experiential interior design are our memories, previous impressions and our senses. All of these collectively influence our interpretation of the sensory landscape around us.

Zumthor (2015, p.18) is of the belief that buildings should intrigue our minds, engage our senses and comply with memory to be accepted. This again suggests that architecture is much more than just a visual experience. Let us consider a beautiful skyscraper made of steel and glass. It reflects the sunlight during the day and lights up from within at night time. From a distance, it impresses, it looks visually beautiful but it does not always evoke strong emotions within us. We may admire its appearance when it joins the skyline or from the window of an airplane. We may even be daunted by it. But we observe the superficiality of laying emphasis on the visual perception. We experience through our vision the frigid elegance of the building. But that is not where our sensory journey stops. Some may get excited by the unusual form of the building. Others may see it as part of the skyline of the city where they have made fond memories. Some may notice what it adds to the surrounding context. For example, the skyline of Mumbai, India - my home city at night, never fails to invoke the pulsating, chaotic energy of the city as represented in illustration two. The skyline of London, United Kingdom, is in my personal experience always related with the memory of seeing a part of it from Greenwich Park at sunset for the first time. Hence, our perception is never purely visual. Interior designers need to exploit and utilise this further when they enhance the sensory experience.



Top, 2: Pulsating mumbai skyline at night. Illustration by author. 2020.

Bottom, 3: View from Greenwich park at sunset. The London skyline is always personally associated with this memory. Photograph taken and edited by author. 2019.

exploring new avenues

Curating a well-rounded sensory spatial journey, driven by narrative becomes even more relevant in the current pandemic. Most people are now wary of visiting spaces in the public realm like restaurants and retail stores, which are enclosed and easily crowded. In order to limit the spread of the virus we need a well-ventilated space that can accommodate people as they follow the six-feet-apart social distancing rule. Further restrictions imposed by the government limit time spent in public interiors during nationwide lockdowns as most restaurants and shops remain closed, with the exception of grocery and medical stores that sell necessary amenities. These further discourage the casual pre-pandemic decisions of visiting public spaces or dining outdoors. As a result, we are now spending most of our time couped up inside our homes. Now more than ever, designers have to rise to the challenge of creating interiors that fit within the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

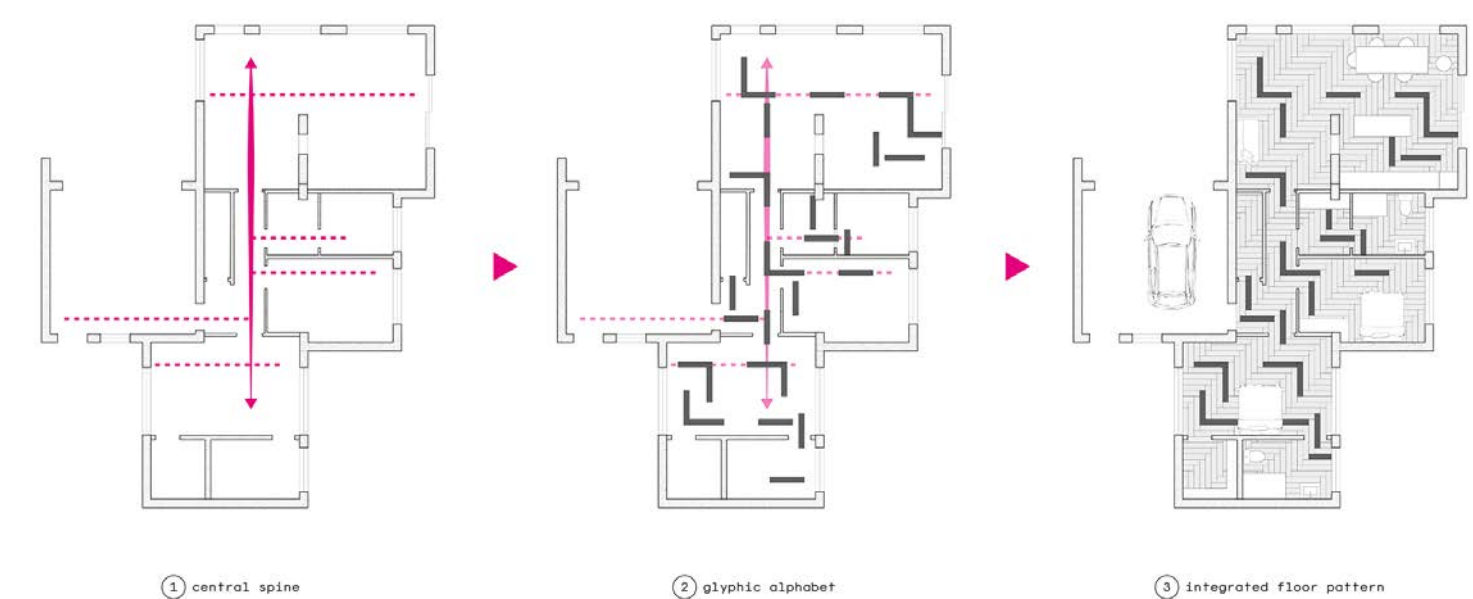
The impact of the pandemic can be felt both in our private as well as public spaces. Being limited to our homes, we have started to notice the chinks in the design of our apartment buildings and houses. Some of them may look impressive to the eye but may not appeal to the other senses. It can be detrimental to our mental health being inside houses that look like boxes and offer no sensory spatial journeys. During and post-pandemic, this process or product of design needs to change for greater connections between people and the spaces that they inhabit.

Placing a great importance on visual perception of interior architecture is also not inclusive of people with vision impairment. The visually impaired generally have their other senses like smell, hearing, haptic and kinetic senses heightened and therefore, they rely on these to experience and navigate a space. Designing for all senses will then make a positive impact on our society as a whole. In order to better articulate this part of the argument, the focus will be on exploring how to design a space for a visually impaired person as that will give us cues on how to move away from designing for simply a visual experience.

and making new avenues

In, *Sensuous Geographies*, Paul Rodaway (2002, p.53) describes how blind people navigate through a space using memory and a “tactile mental map”. All of us create mental maps of spaces in our minds. Even in the darkness of the night, one can make one's way, in a familiar place to get a glass of water without switching the light bulbs on. The paths we trace in our daily lives are also affected by our kinetic sense not just our ocular perception. Since we prioritize the sense of vision, people with visual impairment are the ones most affected by our ignorance. I believe that multisensory interiors, as well as insight into how memory and cognitive data work together, can help us create intuitive spaces for people with visual impairment. Let us consider an example of how the knowledge and proper use of haptic and kinetic senses can help a blind person navigate space. Casa Mac, located in Vicenza, Italy is a home for a blind client designed by So & So Studio. The studio has cleverly identified the paths that should be traced by the client in her daily life and how they can be integrated in the floor-plan of the house to make it safe to navigate. Thus, kinetic sense of the client comes into play. As we can see from the diagram below that So & So Studio created, the journey through the house is through a central path that runs vertically along the house and connects the spaces for safe navigation.

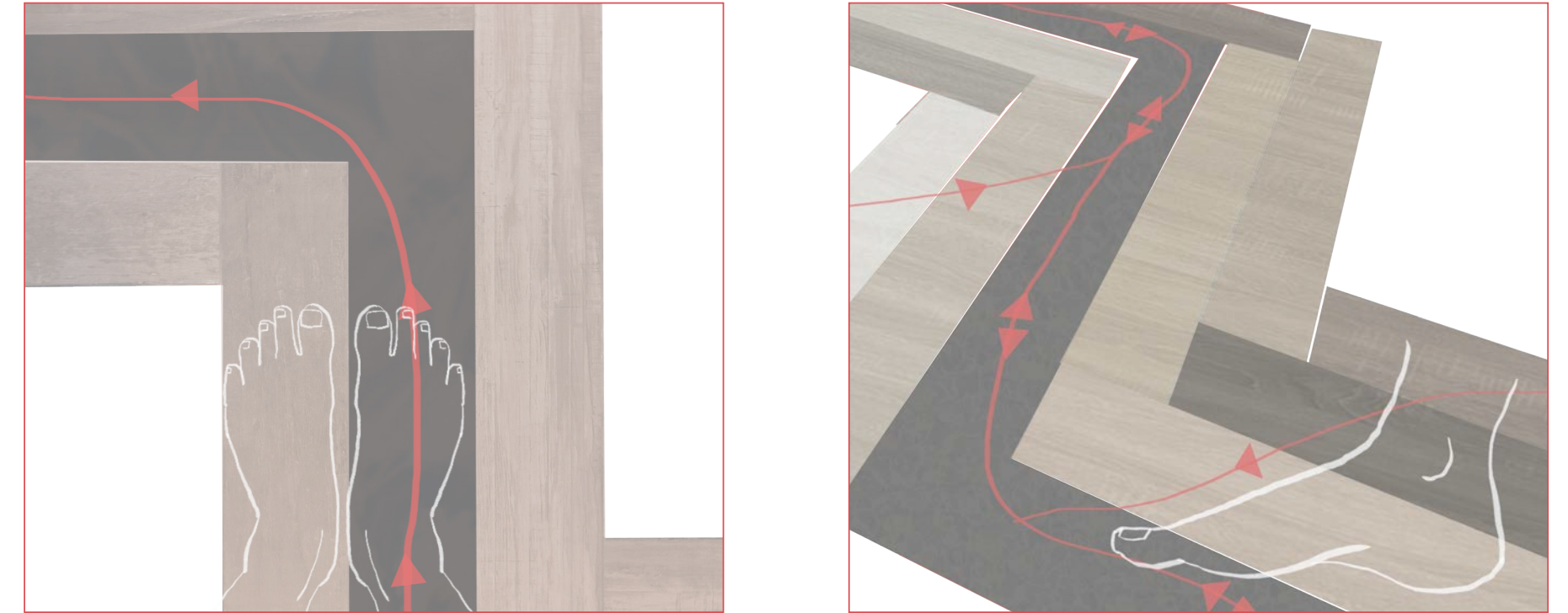
The ‘central spine’ leads the user from one room to the other and connects secondary spaces, entrances and exits. The direction cues that the client is familiar with, have been identified and intertwined with the central spine and the completed floorplan contains the cues embedded in the floor.



4: Diagram by So & So studio. González, M.F. (2018).



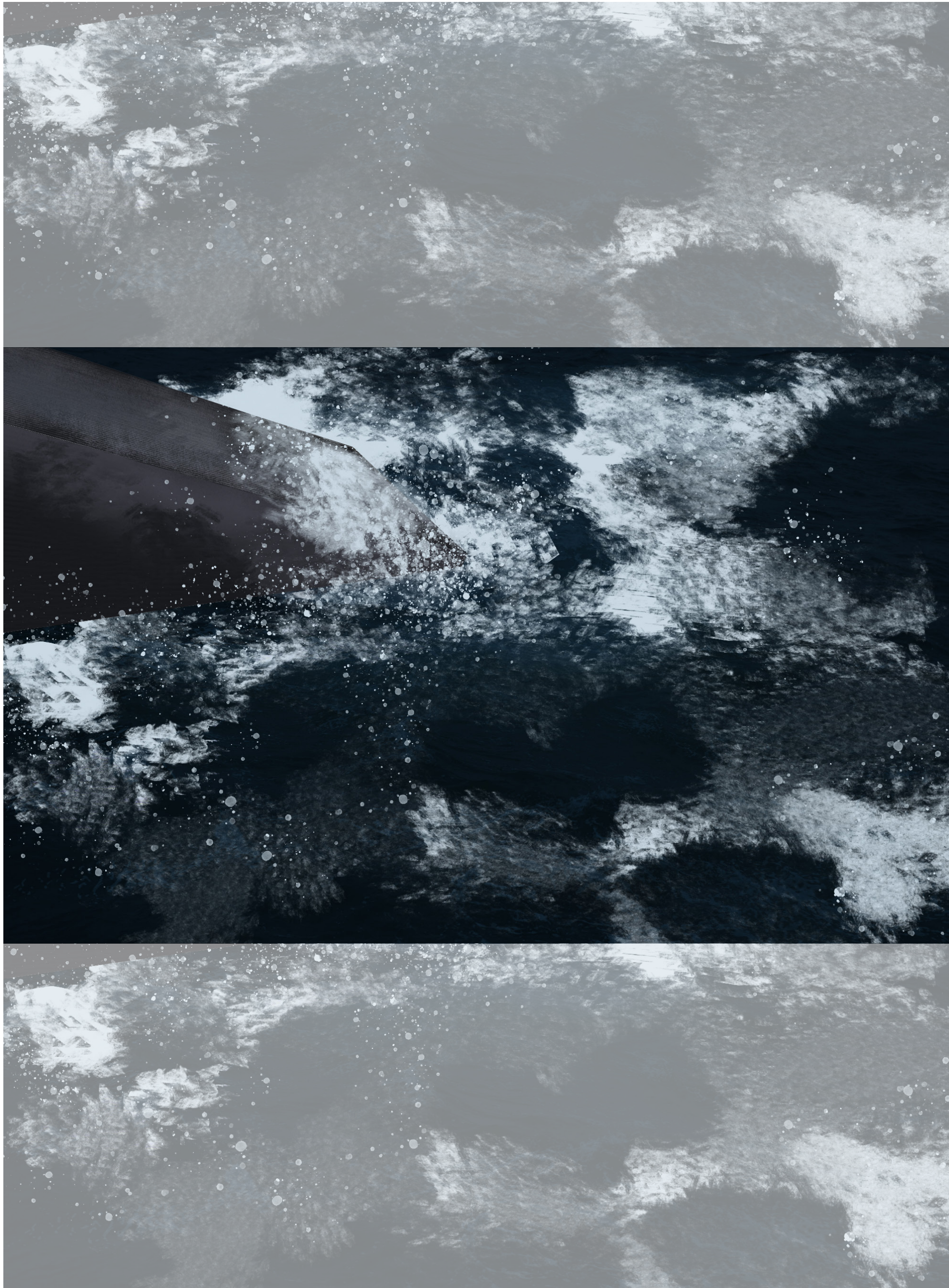
5: The patterns and cues on the floorplan of Casa Mac have been placed cleverly in rooms and junctions, to avoid accidents like bumping into furniture or the walls. The textural changes in the floor felt by the sense of touch alerts the client of obstacles. Illustration by author. 2021.



6: Textural change via material .
The cues are in a different material to the wooden floor. This is experienced via the haptic and kinetic senses as the client moves through space and ensures safe navigation. Illustration by author. 2021.

As the analysis on illustration six show, we can identify the use of simple directional cues, set by the designers so that the client may rely on her own mental map. Haptic sense also plays a vital role as these directional cues have been embedded in the very floors of the house marked by a change in material. The house has a wooden floor but the markers identified in illustration five use smooth marble. Hence, change in the texture of material on the floor helps the client to remember where the walls and furniture are located. So, one can imagine as the client walks through her home, she recognises the material and recalls the direction that it represents. Therefore, we see the senses other than vision being implemented in an ingenious way in the design of this home.

This makes one think further about the challenges when it comes to designing spaces for people with impairment. Interior designers do not pay enough attention to designing for this group who are forced to use the same public spaces as the general community, which are deeply inadequate in terms of their needs. There is an urgent need for designers to be more inclusive and cognizant of these shortcomings when it comes to accommodating people with disabilities or impairments.



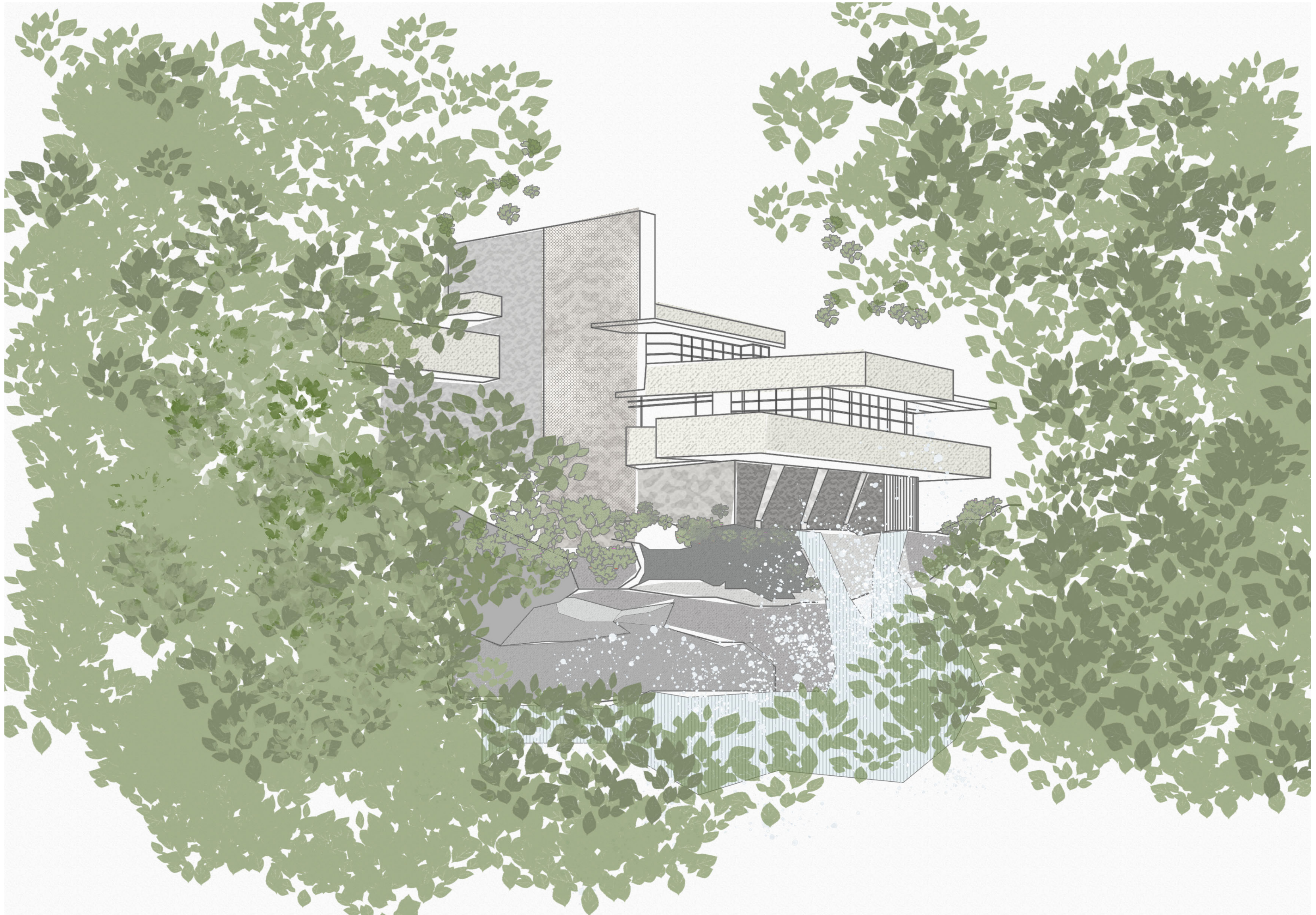
7: Effect of crashing waves on the partially sunken Under Restaurant are dampened. Architecture responding to the context it has been built in. Illustration by author. 2021.

Chapter 2

Immersive Spatial Environment

A designer exercises a degree of control because we are responsible for designing the places that will be occupied by people. We are given a brief by the client and have to answer to it, while solving problems on site, anticipating the needs of the client, providing functional elements and applying our own principles when it comes to designing. Norberg- Schulz (1996, p.425) claims that the character of a place is assumed by the personality of the person occupying it. If we believe this to be true, it seems that the tipping point for our control over the space shifting is when we deliver the finished product to the inhabitant. A new journey starts here. Users and visitors are constantly taking in their surroundings; finding links with their prior knowledge and current opinions; observing the space simultaneously on various threads of thought; all of which in turn create a complex and unique reflection upon the space itself. Let us investigate through case studies, the elements of space that can be manipulated to translate an abstract sensory narrative into a tactile design. The first case study is Falling Water House by Frank Lloyd Wright and the second is Under Restaurant by Snøhetta. They respond well to the context they have been placed in and engross a visitor's senses. Only through sensory perception visitors can fully comprehend the ambient surroundings, which is a commendable feat.

Falling water house



8: Falling Water house by Frank Lloyd Wright
Nestled perfectly within the natural elements it looks as if it is a product of the natural landscape itself. Immediately evokes the sense of tranquility so often associated with nature. One can almost hear the sound of the gushing waterfall and gentle rustle of leaves in the breeze...

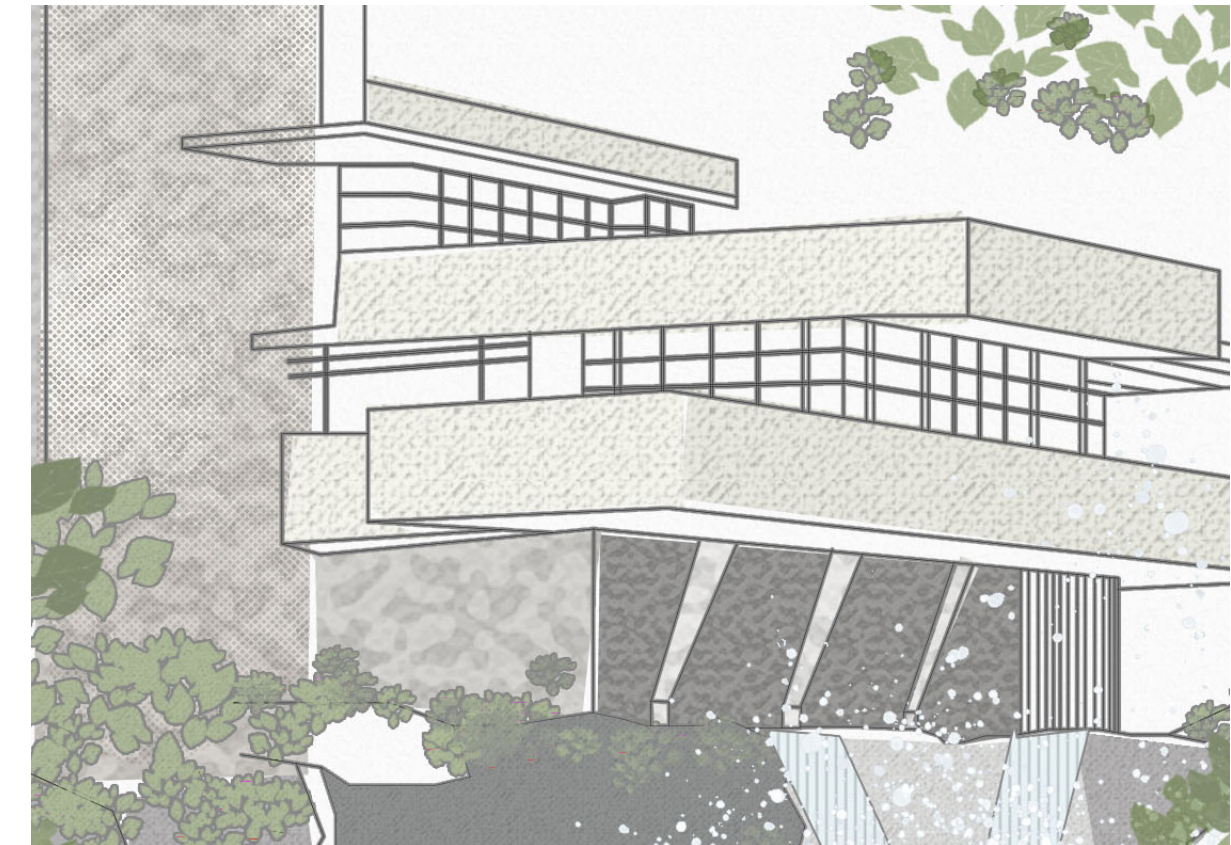
Illustration by author. 2020.

a surreal yet tangible experience

One of the most iconic pieces of architecture, Falling Water House, located in Pennsylvania, U.S.A, was built for the Kaufmann family as their holiday home (Sandoval, 2017, p.85). It is one of the most iconic buildings of the 20th century. It seems to me, a piece of architecture cleverly integrated within the lush nature surrounding it. My illustration of it also represents my interpretation. This view of the house has been immortalized in countless photographs and even in the famous sketch drawn by Wright himself. The clean lines of the building provide a contrast against the rugged landscape, yet the towering section of coarse stone speaks to the roughness of the wilderness. It's immediate expression seems to be a perpetuation of the gushing waterfall under it. Yet as we peel back the layers, it becomes an enveloping body of sound, form, energy and mass that communicates with the visitor or user.

Rasmussen (1964, p.76) describes the house as an organic arrangement, of horizontal components projected right over the waterfall and whose inhabitants live above the gushing water. This description, I believe, aptly captures the experiential essence of the house. The vivid imagery of the house is only a part of its charm. It is the immediate beckoning of the utilization of our auditory, haptic and kinetic senses along with the vision that make Falling Water a truly captivating place.

Yet, in photographs of the house, an indefatigable attempt is made at capturing the beauty from a single point of view – the house sitting in the middle of green foliage, perfectly poised above the water fall. However, if one is to understand the depth of this sensory encounter with the house, one needs to first understand the process of the architect who designed it. Weisberg (2011, p.311) claims that the house was conceived by Wright responding to the restraints of designing in that location, as well as, through the constraints of logic and correlation, along with past observations and memory. In my opinion, this is a very plausible deduction because it cannot be denied that the main inspiration for the house came from nature. Wright drew up the rough plans of the house quickly, months after seeing the site for the first time (Sandoval, 2017, p.87). This hints at the possible impact of the site on Wright's mind and how an abstraction of the spirit of the place from his memory was translated into the structure of the house. Illustrations ten and eleven represent the two elements he must have been most influenced by during his first visit to the site. Wright's first impression of the site seems to be the dominant waterfall. He did not design around the waterfall but on top of it, which, makes a difference to the overall experience of the place. The feeling of being in the middle of the forest and that attachment with the surrounding environment, has been translated into a substantial moment in time. Illustration nine shows his genius in creating cantilevered floors jutting out over the waterfall mimicking the falling water torrents right below. It is a difficult feat to appropriately translate an abstract emotion into a tangible experience. So, Wright's attempt at encapsulating what he felt, into a palpable entity which is Falling Water house, is truly applaudable. Thus, architects and designers may sometimes translate their own emotional interpretation of the atmospheric context into design. This then encapsulates the users or visitors who form sensory experiences relating to the context of the building. Through self- illustrating this celebrated house, it has become possible for me to represent another layer of sensory experience, in this dissertation. This implies that even when one is not present, the imagined sensory perceptions of textures, sounds or touch can be conveyed by mediating it through drawings.



9: Cantilevered elements juxtaposed over the waterfall. Illustration by author



10: The waterfall intertwined with the experience of space. Illustration by author.



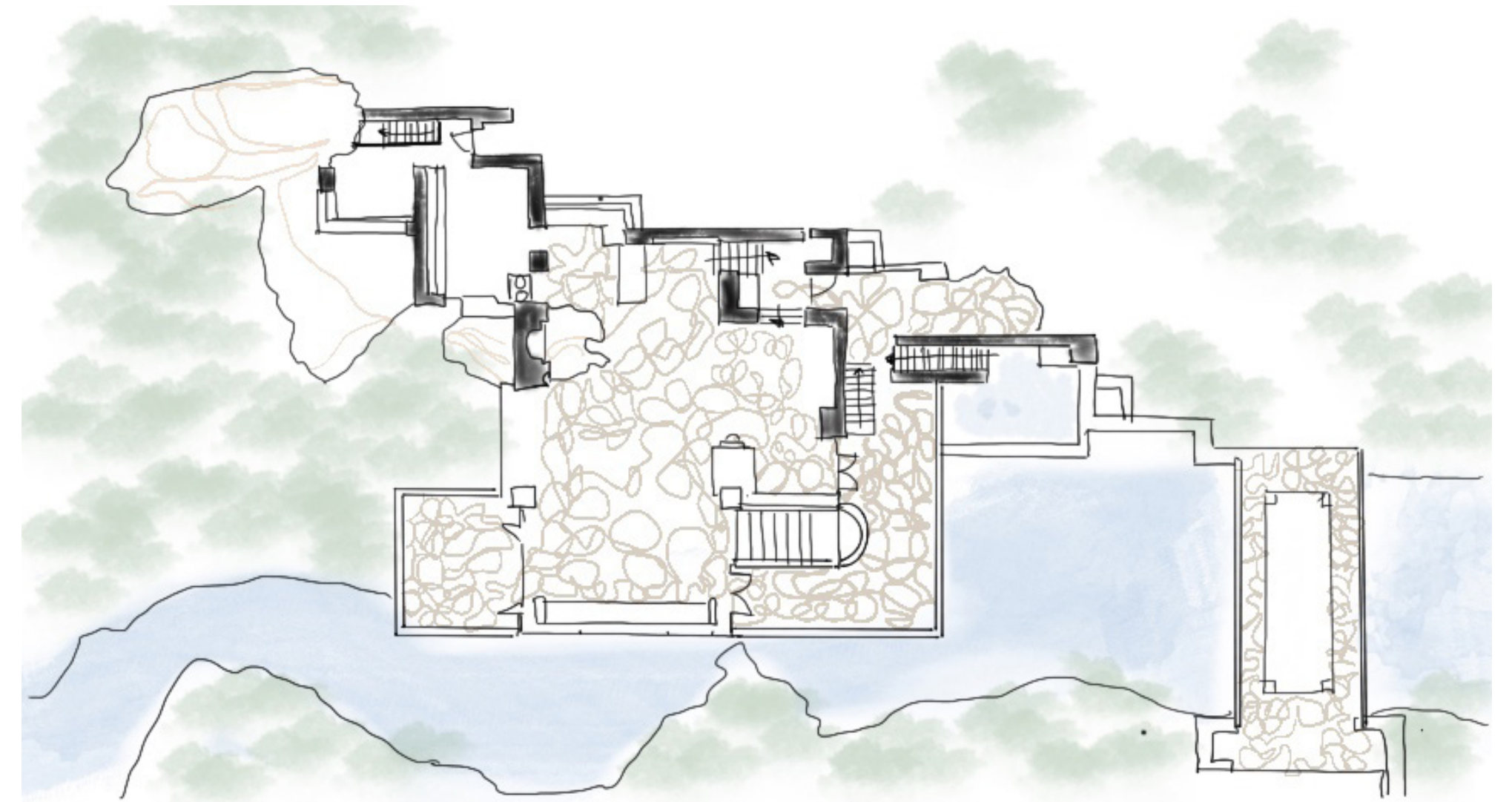
11:Overbearing green foliage. Illustration by author

place in nature and question of control

Wright's adoration for Japanese architecture has also influenced the conception of Falling Water house (Perez, 2010). It is quite apparent because of Wright's insistence of not just providing views of the waterfall from the house but to carefully place the house in the existing experience of the natural landscape so as to immerse us into it's narrative. Studying the first floor plan, in illustration twelve, we can clearly see the house looking like a continuance of the rugged landscape rather than a hinderance. It is evident that Wright respected and perpetuated the language of nature. Tadao Ando, the famous Japanese architect describes the difference in response to nature between the East and the West, (Ando, 1996, p.460) that for our unanimity with nature, we must not aspire to control or go against it but to learn its proper integration into our lives. This is exactly what has been achieved in Falling Water house.

Although it is certain that nature is a significant part of one's perception of the house, I do not think it should be limited to as such. The house was originally built for a family, who were connected to the site through their own memories. In their view it must have been a 'home', a place for family. But since it was donated, it is now acknowledged differently by the visitors who have preconceptions and prejudices about how the place should be experienced. Since the house is so well-known all around the world people expect a certain experience before visiting, based off of seen and spoken accounts of those who have already visited. A heavy emphasis is based on the visual perception of the house's location over the waterfall by visitors. Wright's intension was clearly to thrust the inhabitants right inside the sensory landscape of the house and its surroundings. Therefore, the experience created was not solely for the previous inhabitants, the Kauffman family, but for any guest or visitor that may experience the house in their own unique way in the future.

Visitors may generally be influenced by the same set of photographs seen online before visiting the house which may induce preconcieved notions about the visual perception of the house. It is my surmise that if undeterred by this prejudice that has been perpetuated, we could experience it in the way Wright would have wanted. This surmise brings with it the question of control and how much of it can be exercised by the architect or interior designer. Is it not our duty to have our creation be understood in various ways by different people just like a piece of art? Afterall, architecture is an art form. It will unlock new facets to the space and allow it to evolve and grow even after we as designers are finished with it only if we don't try to create a particular experience to be shared in the same exact way we want. The control has to be shared with the users of the space because at the end of the day, the spaces we as interior architects create are to enrich the inhabitants' lives.



12: First Floor plan of Falling Water House .

Continuation of the rugged landscape in the interior of the house as the rocks around the site are used in the first floor. By bringing the context of surrounding indoors, a unique layer of tactility has been expressed. This intertwines the experience of Falling Water House with the trees, the water and the very rocks upon which it stands.

Illustration by author. 2021.

Under restaurant



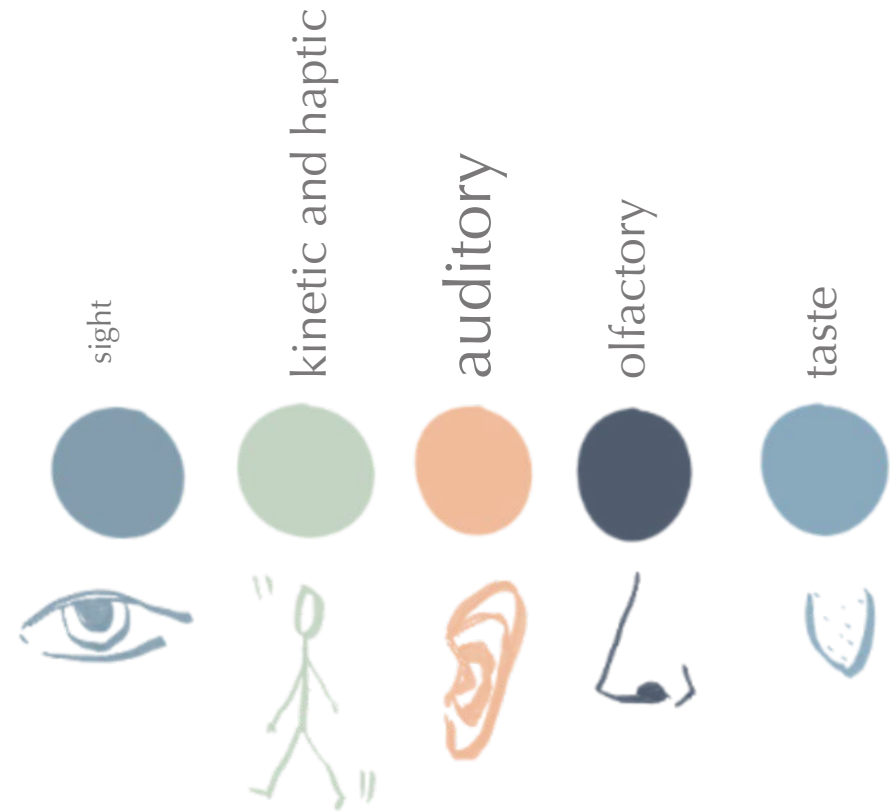
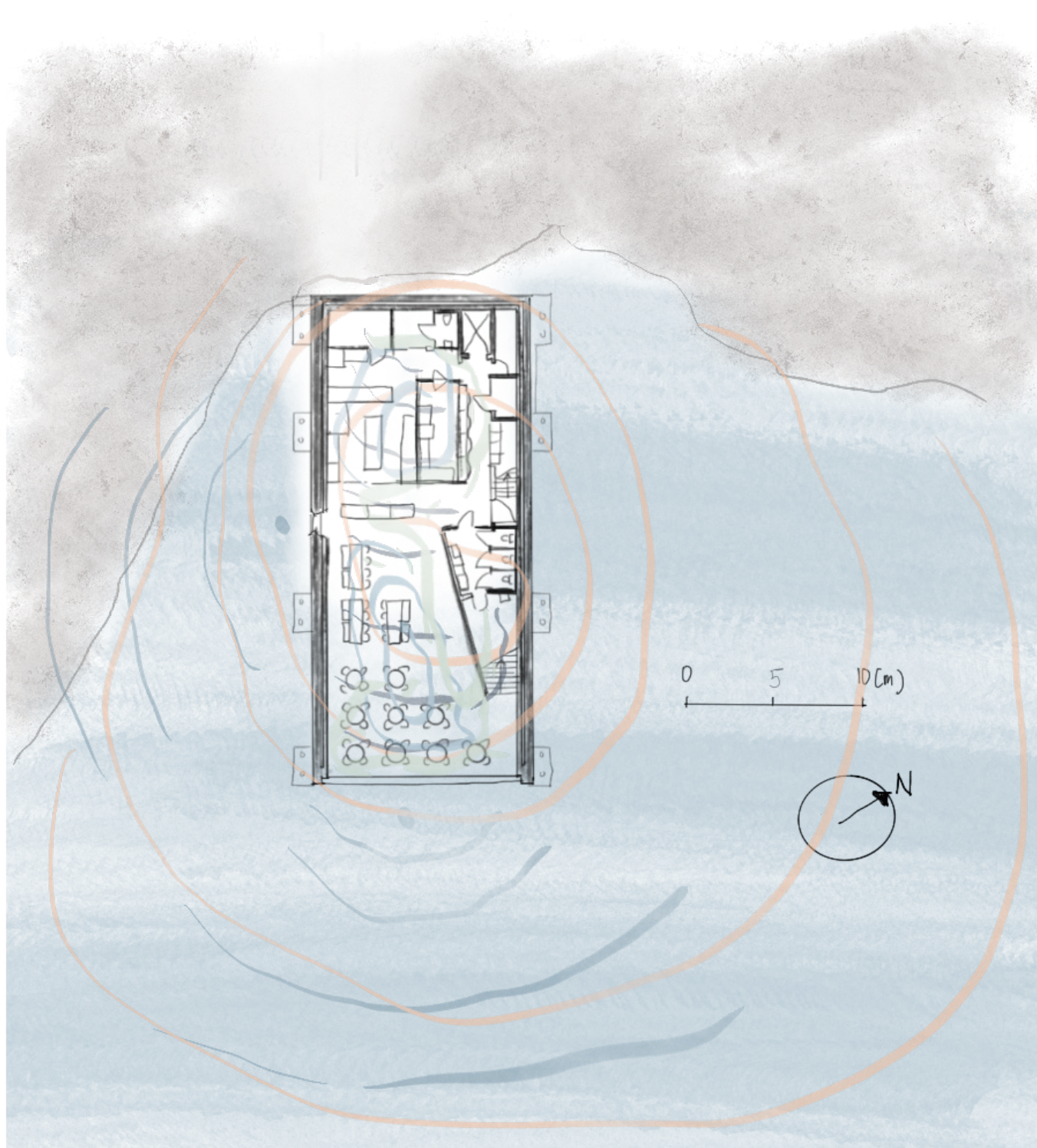
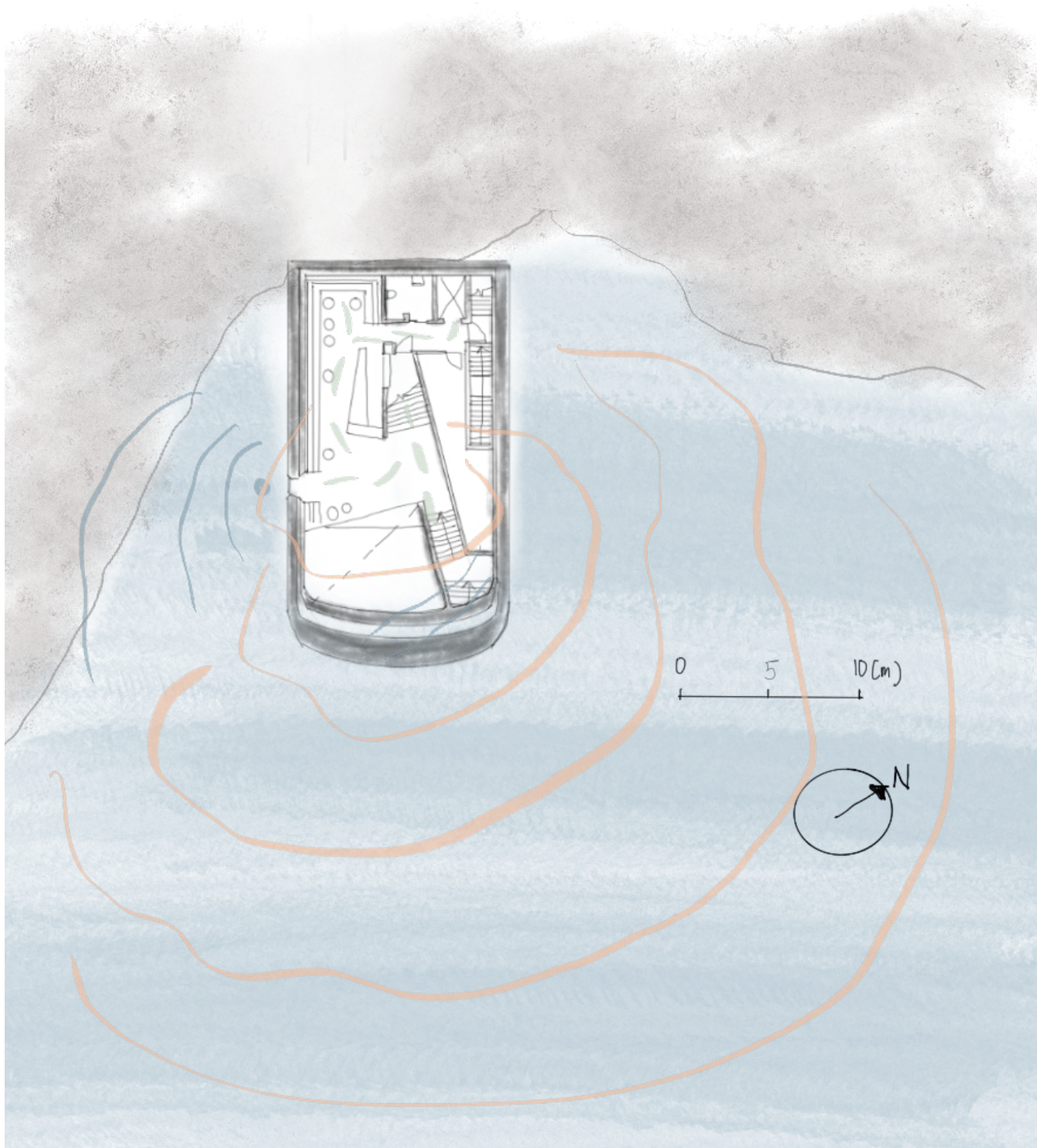
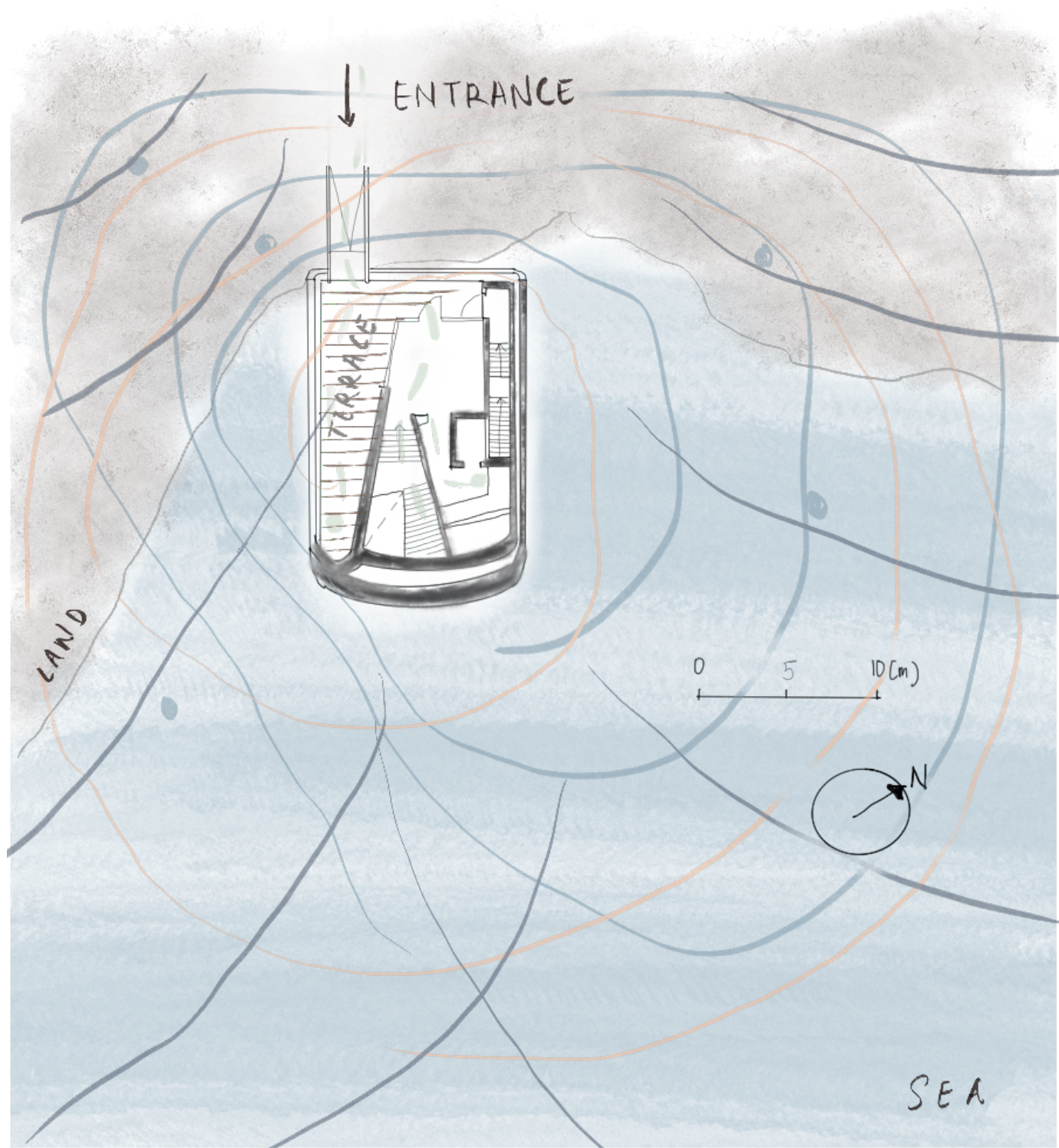
13: Under restaurant in Oslo, Norway by Snøhetta
The position of the restaurant make it seem like it has been washed ashore by the violent waves of the North Sea. One can feel the spray of salty water and hear the raging waves.

Illustration by author. 2021.

‘Under’ is a restaurant in Norway which is partially submerged inside the turbulent North Sea which also serves as a research place for marine biologists due to its unmatched proximity to under-sea life (Lloyd-Smith, 2019). In some respects, it is similar to Falling Water as they are both architectural pieces thrust inside the immediate surrounding natural landscape. They also create a sensory landscape for people to experience.

between land and sea

As we observed, in the ground floor plan of Falling Water House, the context of the surroundings had been brought inside as a continuation of the sensory experience of the waterfall and forest. But, studying the plans of Snøhetta's Under restaurant in illustration fourteen, one can see that an active effort has been made to bring the experience of being submerged in the sea as one moves from the entrance on ground level, mezzanine which is the threshold between land and sea and finally the lowest floor which is completely underwater. The main challenge here was to keep the violence of the ocean at bay.



14: From left to right - entrance level, mezzanine level and restaurant level of Under. Each level adds another layer of sensory experience as the visitor, whose path is traced in light green moves from land to the bridge connecting the entrance of the restaurant to the mezzanine level bar and final the fully submerged dining area. The senses have been mapped as one would experience them in the natural progression from land to underwater.

Illustration by author. 2021.

atmospheric immersions



15: Under on a calm day. The stillness can be felt and it looks as though it has been delicately perched upon the rocks rather than washed ashore by the violent sea waves as illustrated earlier. Illustration by author. 2021.

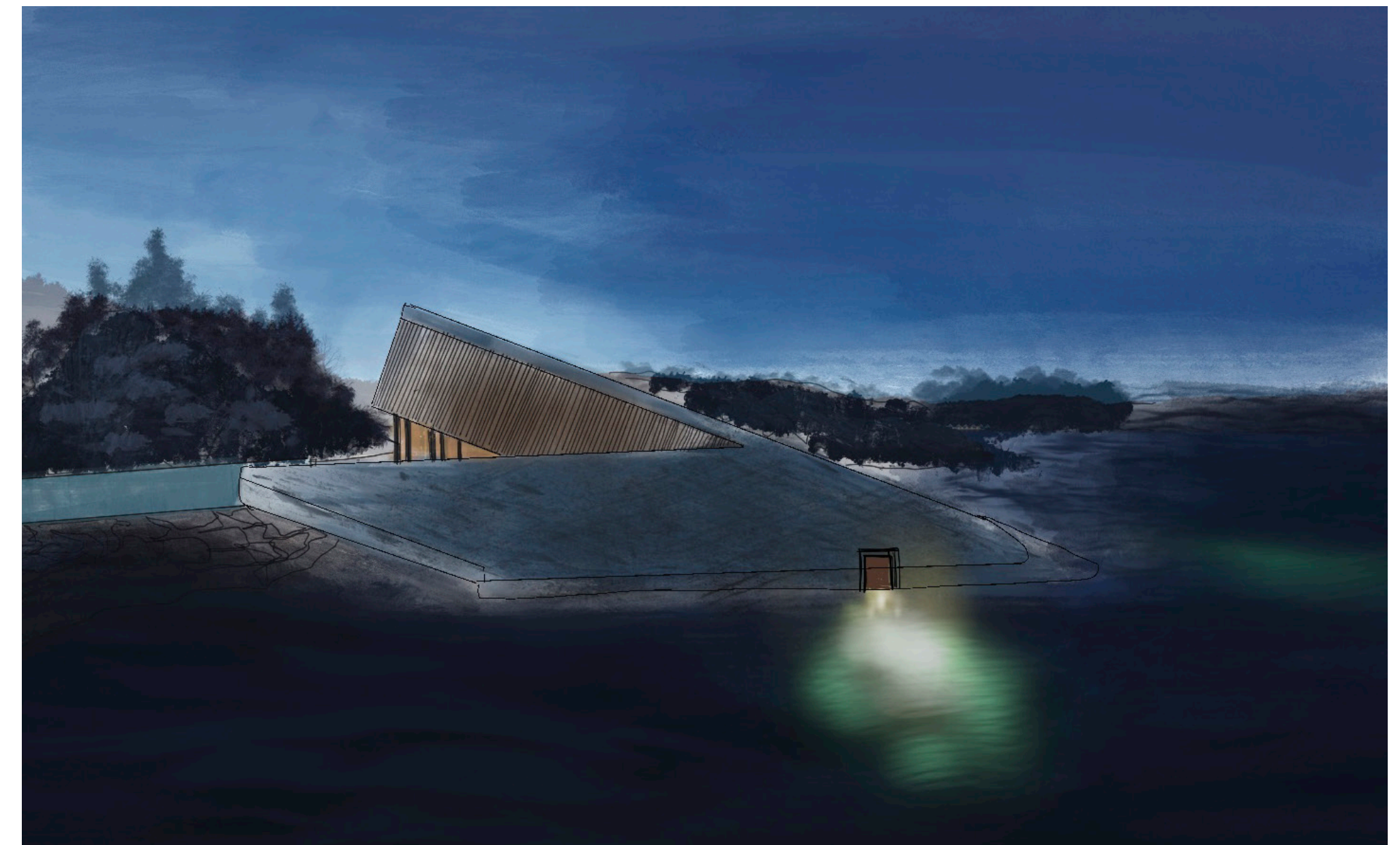
The allure of Snøhetta's 'Under' starts from a distance as one gazes at the imposing block of concrete denoting all illusions of being casually placed in the middle of the violent North Sea. Harriet Lloyd-Smith (2019), in an article 'Snøhetta unveils Europe's first underwater restaurant in Norway' for Wallpaper Magazine describes the structure as looking very much as an accidental occurrence, half-sunk into the sea. But the structure itself dispels any shocks from the crashing waves, standing sturdy and unrelenting on the threshold between land and sea.

Illustration sixteen depicts my impression of the atmosphere on a stormy day with the haze and seawater threatening to swallow 'Under'. It also amplifies the existing air of mystery about the restaurant. Illustration fifteen is an interpretation of 'Under' on a calm day, the structure seems to settle comfortably in the rosy glow of the sunlight delicately touching its concrete façade, bringing out the texture and intensifying the feeling of stillness.

Illustration seventeen shows the still sea at night and the restaurant feels like it emerges from the water itself. We can notice the window that is partially under water. This is what makes the water seem glowing from within.

Through these examples, it becomes apparent that atmosphere and context in which the built environment is placed, plays a key role in the perception of the whole form and the assertion in the power of a site.

and changing perceptions



top, 16: Under restaurant in stormy sea interpretation. Illustration by author. 2021.
bottom, 17: Under in the still ocean at night perception. At nighttime the structure seems to glow due to the lights underwater. It feels surreal and ethereal. Illustration by author. 2021.

light and shadow



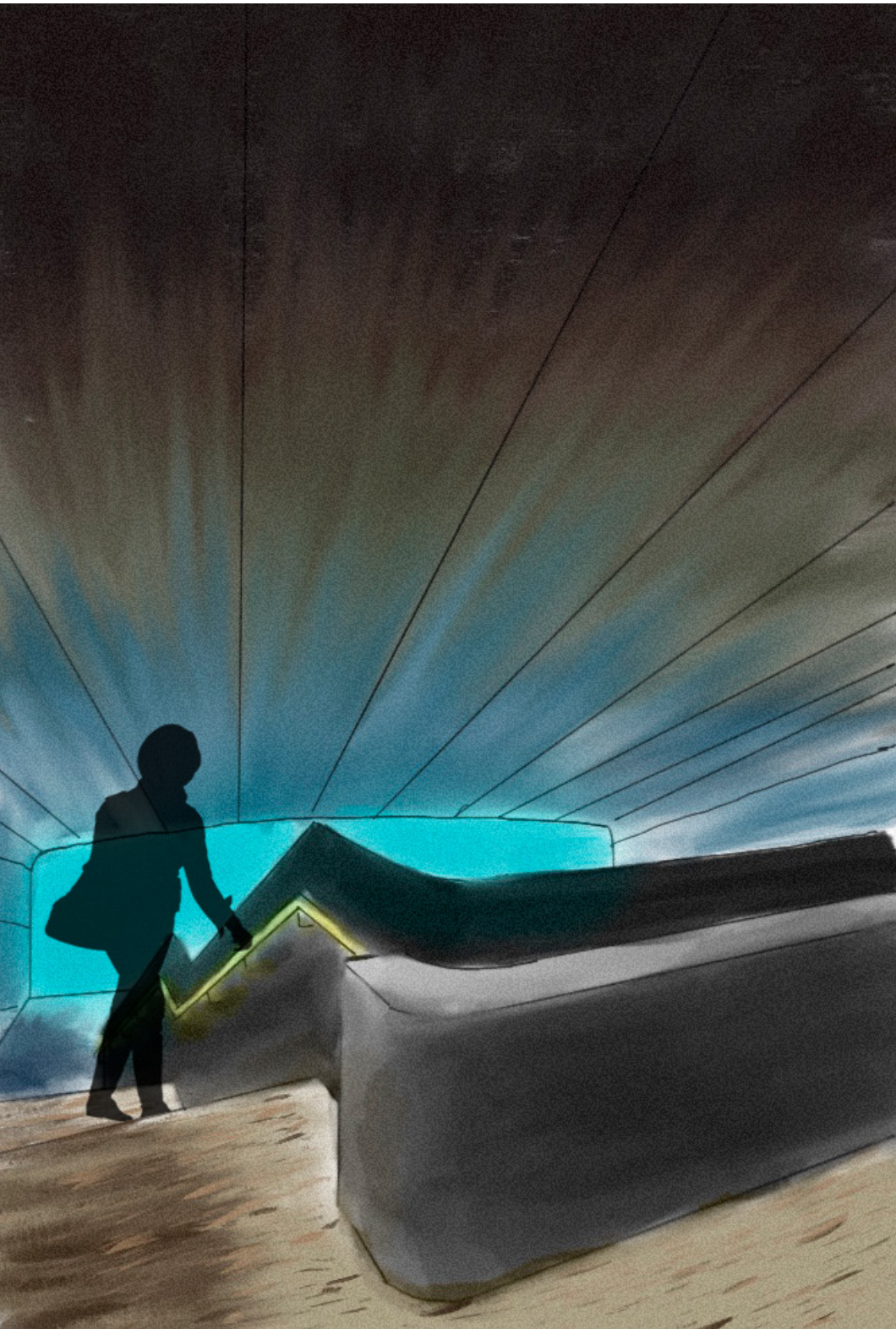
18: contrast of light and shadow inside Under restaurant and relation to senses.
Illustration by author. 2021.

Tanizaki (2019, p. 35) in, *In Praise Of Shadows*, talks about the inherent beauty of Japanese interiors that stems from finding allure in the mystery of shadows, natural materials, neutral colours and delicate dance of natural light. In *Falling Water*, a lot of natural light comes in through the glass windows with unearths the warmth of the surroundings it has been placed into.

In 'Under' a different sensory narrative is brought forth. As we approach the entrance and beyond, the soft and bright oak cladding appears welcoming. We start gauging the surrounding space with our kinetic sense as we descend down the staircase with the bright light of day gradually settling into a darker, intriguing atmosphere. Our haptic sense comes into play as we stretch out a hand holding onto the smooth, cold metal of the hand rail, uncertain of what to expect next.

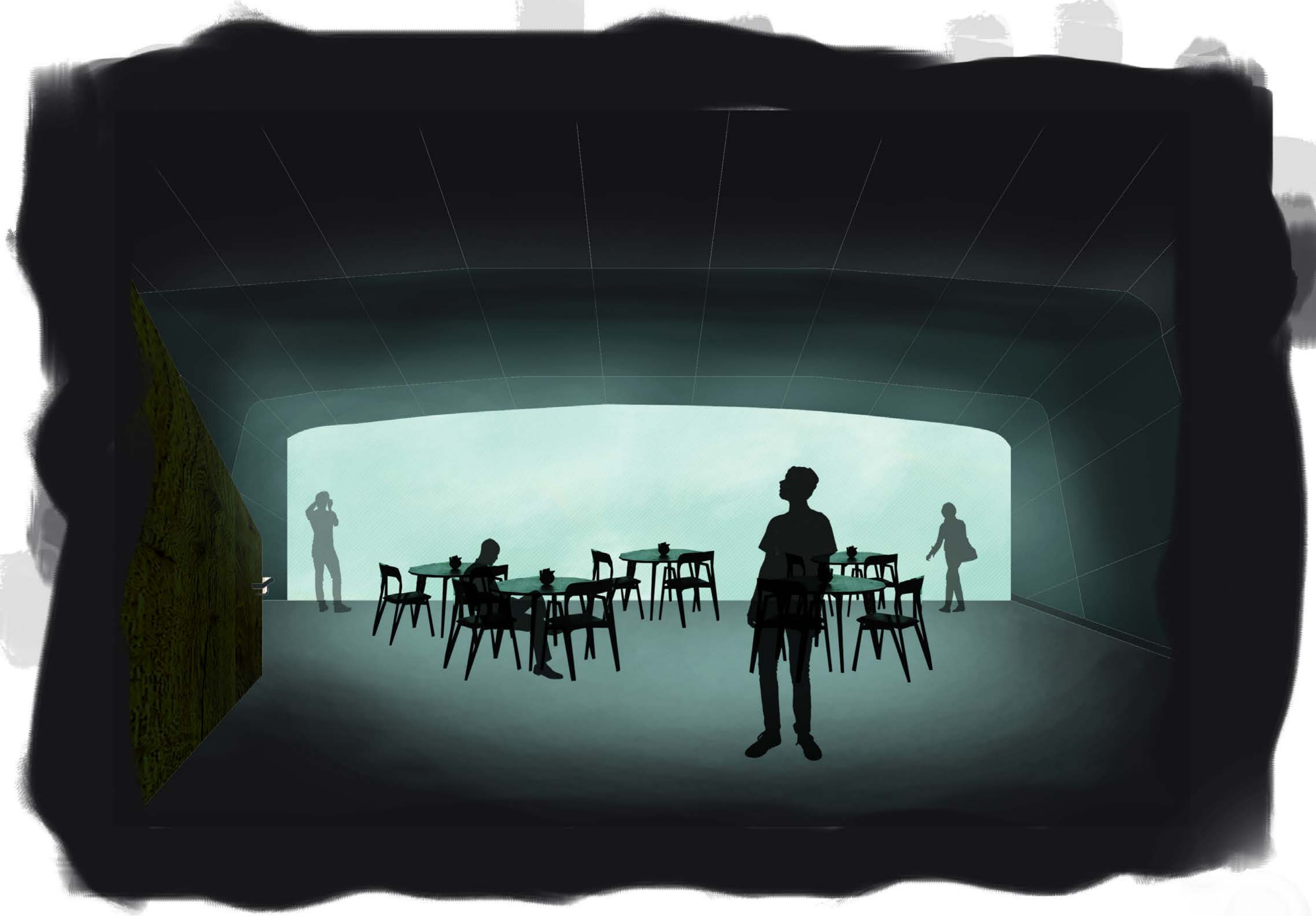
Gernot Böhme (2017, p.149) in *Atmospheric architectures: the aesthetics of felt spaces*, talks about the association of feeling secure within brightly lit spaces. Therefore, in 'Under' as we come down the stairs to the main dining area we may feel thrilled or apprehensive, depending on past memories and associations relating to light. As we approach the bottom step our sense of vision joins the others working together as we are met with the theatrical display of underwater life in the Nordic sea. The stage set by the architects, the destination of the visitors as they are shown to their seats is dramatic and immerses one into the eerie blue light filtering through the surface of the water. The threshold between these contrastingly lit areas is the dark staircase with brass railing as presented in illustration nineteen. This takes the person from the softer upper level bar to the inky dining area under it. Another portal into the sea is represented in illustration eighteen, as the window is half under and half above the sea water level.

The juxtaposition of light and shadow can manipulate the mood of the space, making it appear dramatic, intense and theatrical; or on the other end of the spectrum delicate, airy and soft. It also has an effect on how the materials look, where the eye wanders and spatial cognition. Controlling light and shadow, knowing when and how to hold back light, becomes an integral part of creating experiential interiors.



19: The vivid blue ocean seen as one moves from dark to light enhances the intensity of experience
Illustration by author. 2021.

Hear. Taste. Touch. Move. See.



20: Interpretation of sensory perception inside 'Under' restaurant.
Proximity to underwater life, texture of fabric and oak has been represented. Acoustic quality of space and dramatic glow from the sea capture the auditory and visual senses. In this sparsely lit space, one can imagine the eerie stillness interlaced with the noise of cutlery clinking and faint chatter in the background as the diners immerse their tastebuds in the delicacies served.
Illustration by author. 2021.



21: material tactility of Under restaurant, washed with blue light filtering through the ocean.
Illustration by author. 2021.

materiality and passage of time

Coleman (2020, loc 519) says that for some architects “..material has a nearly mystical value, as though worth was inbuilt.” This introspection into the quality and usage of material is indispensable when it comes to creating sensory spaces. When thinking about material in architecture, there are considerations like sustainability, longevity, possible reuse and recycling, etc. All of these have the ability to drive design decisions and maneuver the relationship of people and spaces.

Material preferences can be very personal, forged by our previous encounter with them. Zumthor (2015, p.10) is of the opinion that when he is successful in drawing out a particular significance of a material in the context of only one building and it can only be understood in this context, an understanding is developed. I believe this to be partially true, because materials change with time. Adaptability and time are factors that that can help define the character of a space for the present as well as the future. Our sensory perception of materials is not only visual but connected with our haptic sense. Our hand knows the texture of the material even as our eyes see it and this is why we can fully comprehend what it is that we are seeing. A good example of adaptable architecture is Snøhetta’s ‘Under’ restaurant in Norway.

According to Lizzie Crook (2019) writing for Dezeen magazine article titled ‘Snøhetta completes Europe’s first underwater restaurant in Norway’, the concrete on the façade of the restaurant has been left rough on purpose so as to allow the sea life to make a home on it. Therefore, the materials and textures used, like the hard concrete on the outside, the smooth oak that leads the journey of a visitor from the outside to the inside creates a contrasting dialogue. The concrete can weather storms outside and the great force of the waves but the sensory journey of the user is also interlaced with wood and oak which particularly evokes a sense of familiarity, warmth and comfort because some may relate it to walking on the wooden floors or through wooden doors of their homes. In illustration 21, an attempt has been made to represent the texture of the materials in dining area and how they would be perceived when everything is tinged with blue which amplifies the feeling of being underwater. This proves how the manipulation of these interior elements and an understanding of the context, can help interior designers and architects to elevate sensory experience, while maintaining the appropriate amount of control on how these spaces are perceived.



22: A cocoon of serenity.
Intimate experiences created inside retail stores that retail body and facial care products, even though the store itself is a public setting. Entering the store, testing products and taking them home become one sensory journey.
Illustration by author. 2021.

Chapter 3

Intimate Experiences In Public Settings

In the previous chapter, through Falling Water house which used to be a private residence but is now open to public, we explored a blurring of boundary between inside and outside. We seem to have clear separation when it comes to ideas about private/ public and inside/outside. This chapter will explore these boundaries on a more direct level, by looking into the design of places we are more likely to visit in our day-to-day life. We will review the Forest Essentials Store in Jodhpur, India and Aesop Store Piccadilly Arcade in London, United Kingdom. We will understand how they each use different materials responding to local cultural context in differing ways, to create an environment of calm and intimacy in their stores. Through self-illustrated drawings and sketches we will explore the sensory narrative and passage of a user from the outside to the inside of the stores. The design of these retail spaces that offer facial and body care products and services has to consider making the visitors comfortable enough so that they are able to undergo a private moment in a public space. They then carry this moment at home and in their memory through the purchase of the products sold.

In many commercial places like shops and restaurants, the boundaries of inside/outside are blurred by interior designers. This enables a moment of connection between contradictory elements of space. However, it is rarer to see such flexibility in notions about what is private and public.

enthraling the senses

Through two case studies in different countries, we will analyse the differing approaches that have been taken in the interior design of these retail spaces, that resonate with their respective contexts and cultural identities. The first is Forest Essentials store in Jodhpur, India and the other, Aesop store in Piccadilly Arcade, London. The elements these case studies share, are their similar philosophies and the successful translation of their brand identities in the space through the sensory spatial experience. Illustration 23 shows Forest Essentials is an Indian luxury retail brand selling facial, body and hair care products. Their philosophy revolves around indulging in the multi-sensory rituals carried out in the ancient Indian art of Ayurveda.



23: Forest Essentials Store, Jodhpur, India.
Designed by Architecture Discipline
Illustration by author. 2021.

Illustration 24 shows Aesop, an Australian facial and body care brand which seems to have a similar ethos about immersing people in the art of cherishing oneself through the stimulation of the senses. Another factor, that is common between the two is their determination to avoid getting marred by corporate predictability that can often be noticed in the interior design of similar chain stores. Each store seems to have an identity and character defined by the context and local culture of the place they are situated in. Yet, the one common thread woven in all the designs is that of creating a well-rounded, visceral and indelible sensory experience for the user that continues even as they exit the store.



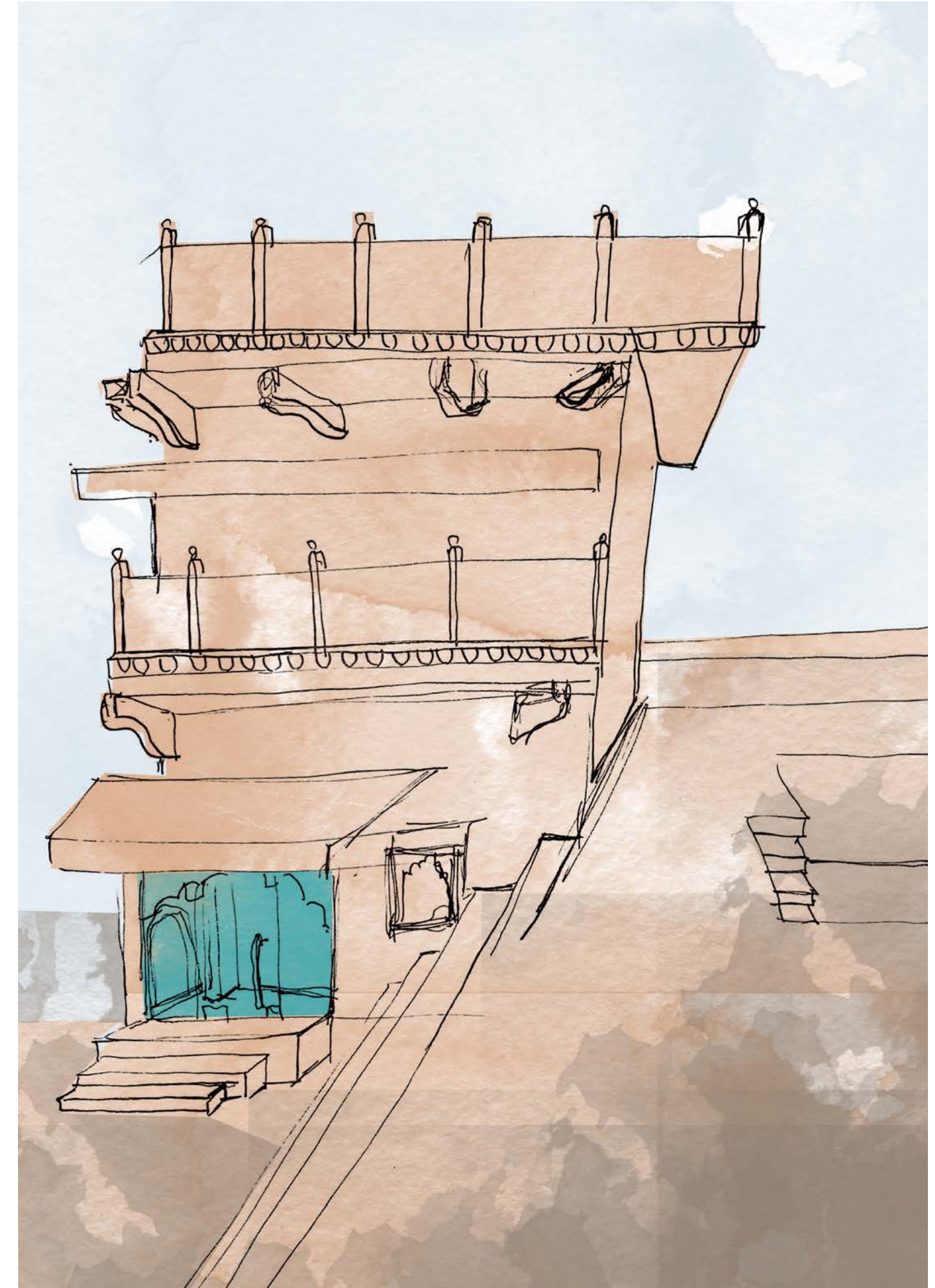
24: Aesop Store in Piccadilly Arcade, London, England.
Designed by Studio Luca Guadagnino
Illustration by author. 2021.

sensory journeys

Pallasmaa (2012, loc 1253) writes that initiation, direction and organization of behaviour and movement is done by architecture. This implies that design decisions affect the way people navigate through a space as well as their level of comfort in the space. This becomes more significant in commercial spaces. The way one orients oneself in a space one has never visited, to feel a sense of ease inside and to be enthralled enough by the space to remember it; these, in my opinion, are all important factors when it comes to the design of spaces in the hospitality and leisure sector. These can be achieved through a focus on enhancing the sensory perception of space, as well as, studying behaviour patterns of people. Cultural influences and identity are to be considered as well.

Simona Bordone (2020) in an article for Domus Magazine called 'An old building in Jodhpur becomes the new Forest Essentials store', writes about the use of various materials in the design and how they relate to the local craft and culture, with corten steel offering a similar colour to the traditional red sandstone used around the area and also changing with time and weather. It is interesting to note here the cultural cues taken from the area within which the store is situated. In this case, it hints toward the material and craftsmanship applied on site to enhance the spatial experience. Inside, the store is painted in a vivid shade of blue covering most surfaces and the gleam of brass visible in small moments as the eye wanders about the room. The first sensory journey can start right at the store-front. Let us take the example of Forest Essentials. As illustration 25 suggests, the focal point of bright teal against the red sandstone makes use of our sight to grab attention. But this is not where the journey ends for some, as we get closer to the door, our sense of smell causes intrigue about the fragrance coming from inside. Our hand touches the smooth brass handle and inside we are immersed into a sensory landscape.

Forest Essentials Jodhpur



25: Forest Essentials Jodhpur facade
Red sandstone, cor-ten steel and the pop of teal creating a focal point.
Illustration by author. 2021.

From the outside...

It is difficult to just pass by the store even on a crowded street. Sometimes you get faint whiffs of formulations and concoctions as they are being tested by customers inside. The colour also becomes a focal point faintly registered via peripheral vision. When one walks in, a sense of tranquility and calm washes over them.

Sensory Landscape



26: Forest Essentials Jodhpur sensory landscape- outside.
Teal blue focal point, fragrance coming from within the store and the touch of smooth brass door handle.
Illustration by author. 2021.



27: Forest Essentials Jodhpur sensory landscape- inside.
The continuation of brass in shelves, plush velvet, teal washed walls and mosaic floor
Illustration by author. 2021.

to the inside...

The plush velvet seat looks inviting but the urgent instinct is to reach out to one of the shelves, hands wrapping around the product, poised to feel the texture and inhale the soothing scent. All at once, one is wrapped around in a moment in time that in memory, will be associated to the sense of touch, smell and hearing. Thus, a private moment of quiet solitude has been created in the bustling store for each individual participating in the sensory spatial experience.

map of the senses

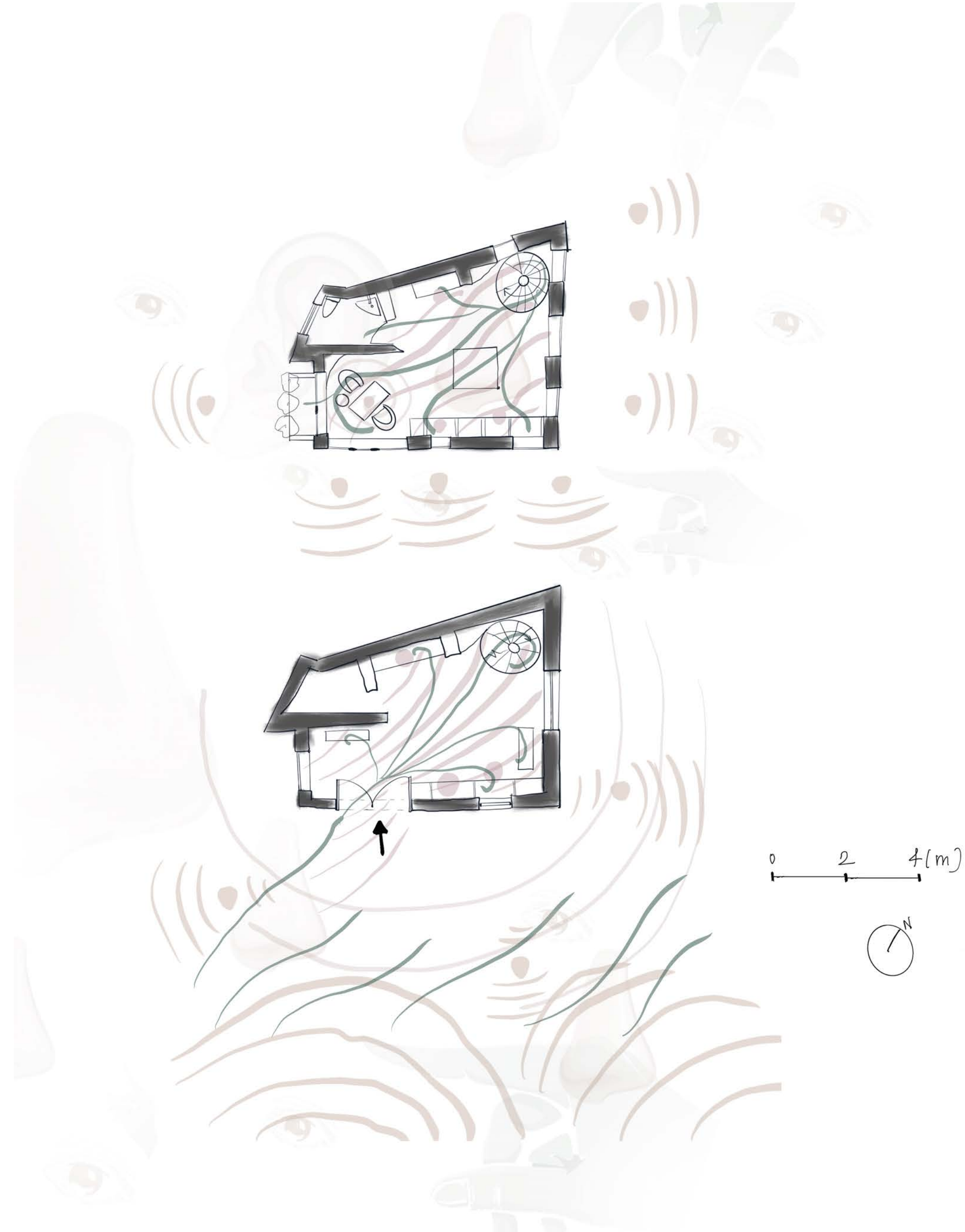
Again, let us deviate from what the eye can see.

Illustration 28 shows the sensory map juxtaposed over the estimated floor plans of Forest Essentials. This helps us understand how our senses work simultaneously as we navigate and experience a space.

Here, all senses work together to create an experience of the store. The dominant sense is not sight but rather smell. For, it is through the sense of smell we navigate the space while testing one product and the next. It is through the haptic sense that we test various products. This becomes part of the memory that will in future be called upon in recollection of the store's interior. Hence, when an interior designer thinks about spatial strategy, navigation and experience, they must imagine the sensory journey of the user in that space to create sensory spaces. Let us continue the discovery of the journey. Consider that the purchase of the product has been made, the memory of the space is encapsulated in it which will then be rediscovered at home, each time the product is used. Thus, a sensory journey originating from the interior of the store starts.

Let us describe it from the visitor's point of view. After walking in through the glass doors, the vivid teal blue and the scent overwhelms. One is naturally drawn to the delicate glass shelves displaying an array of products. Reaching out to one of the products to test it on our hand, to feel the texture is the natural instinct. Regardless of the people around us, this moment is intimate and experienced solely by us - the visitor. This particular perception is unique to an individual and will differ from one person to the next. Thus, a kaliedoscope of fragmented tangible moments are created in a public space due to the overlapping of varied perceptions. We can imagine taking the circular staircase that winds upto the floor above, where maybe the scent of rose, sandalwood and jasmine overwhelms. The seating area looks inviting so we pause, staying completely still listening to the birds outside and the faint murmur of shoppers nearby. Every aspect of the space invites serenity.

28: On the right- Forest Essentials Jodhpur
Tactile sensory mapping over estimated floor plan.
Illustration by author. 2021.



sensory journeys

Let us now consider the Aesop Store in Piccadilly, miles and miles away from Forest Essentials. The fabric of the surrounding city has changed. The atmosphere has changed from sunny to cloudy with a chance of rainfall. The elegance of Piccadilly arcade is where the journey starts as presented in illustration 29. The curved façade of number 2 holds a palette of blushed nudes and rows upon rows of the signature Aesop bottles. Natasha Levy (2019) in the article 'Aesop opts for a more luxurious feel with marble fittings at Piccadilly Arcade store', describes the magic of using different material textures like marble and silk on ground level to reclaimed timber and linen on first floor and soft beige plaster throughout. Even as one reads these textures from a distance but mediated through illustration 30, one can almost feel the smooth marble, the decadent silk to sit upon or reaching out to shelves and shelves of bottles that lure one to use the sense of smell and touch.

material

matters

Pallasmaa (2012, loc 902) describes the sense of touch as being the subliminal to vision and how entities faraway or close by, intertwine in one experience. This seems to be the reason why we can feel and imagine the textural qualities of materials even as we read about them or gaze upon them. The haptic experience translates itself into knowledge and imagination. The apparent role played by the materials a designer uses in space, is one of creating a sensory landscape. The material choices are affected by a myriad of factors. According to Bordone (2020), the bright teal in the Forest Essentials store is a nod to Art Deco as well as the traditional finishes applied in Jodhpur. Let us consider the different ways material is used to capture the senses in Forest Essentials Jodhpur and Aesop in Piccadilly Arcade. The bright blue used in Forest Essentials, is at stark contrast against the soft beige plaster of the Aesop store. According to Levy (2019) a lot of the materials used to furnish the Aesop Piccadilly store have been sourced from Italy when the Aesop store in Rome was designed. This seems like an attempt at re-creating the charm, grace and grandeur of the Roman store in London but to suit more to the immediate context here. A retail experience such as this, is one of indulgence and so is rightly reflected in the interior finishes. Thus, a sensory landscape created by the designers, affects the sensory journeys of the users of space and makes them deviate from ocular perception.

Aesop Piccadilly Arcade



29: Aesop Store facade
Piccadilly Arcade , London
Illustration by author. 2021.



30: Aesop Store Piccadilly Arcade interior sensory experience.
 The ritual of washing hands. We interpret and imagine this as though seen through the steam coming from hot water. The relaxing scent inside the store, the feel of the smooth textures of plaster, velvet and marble appeal to the haptic sense.
 Illustration by author. 2021.

Sensory Narratives in Interior Spaces

conclusion

Much like an artist or a music composer, an interior designer or an architect's creations will ultimately be interpreted differently. Architecture and interiors are embodied sensory experiences. These experiences are not solely recognised through our sense of sight. Our auditory, haptic, kinetic, oral, olfactory and visual senses intertwine with the knowledge obtained from our former encounters and come together to supplement our complex spatial experiences. A dialogue is thus created between the senses of the users and the tactile landscape that is architecture. Designers are responsible to create spaces which enrich the overall sensory dialogue between users and space. Through this, they can also manipulate the users to move away from ocular perception of interiors. As we saw in the first chapter, the applied knowledge of this can enrich how we design for our society as a whole because it will lead to designing for the human body and its experience. It will also become more inclusive for people with vision impairments who rely on all senses except vision to navigate and experience space. In chapter one, we explored Casa Mac- the home for a blind client by So&So Studio. We identified two important factors needed to design for people with vision impairment. Firstly, material textures can respond largely to the haptic and kinetic senses. Secondly, this information through movement and touch can help us make sensory mental maps in memory. Both of these work together to enhance the sensory narrative within the interior space leading to intuitive navigation and experiential spaces. If these principles are applied when one is designing for the general public, as we have seen in the latter examples, they will help intensify the sensory landscape and experience of users and visitors.

The evolution of design during and post-pandemic should be to create sensory narratives in interior spaces of both private and public realm. Private residential design will benefit from the application of the principles that we have identified in this dissertation, as inhabitants spend a copious amount of time inside their homes because of the pandemic. The design of spaces in the public realm like retail stores and restaurants should also focus on the a full sensory experience as they can then offer surreal interior experiences. These interiors can create intrigue for the visitors of space and facilitate mental well-being by diminishing COVID-19 related anxiety when it comes to visiting stores and eateries.

We then established how elements of design like atmosphere, structure, material tactility, light, shadow and context can be manipulated to amplify the sensory quality of spaces and user experience. Through case studies, the first being Falling Water House, one of the most revered examples of architecture, we explored how Wright designed an immersive experience for the inhabitants intertwined cohesively with the waterfall and the natural landscape. The cantilevered and juxtaposed structure highlighted in illustrations of the house, made us employ our imagination to experience the narrative through the extensive use of the sense of touch, smell and hearing. These factors were accentuated by Wright to abide by the contextual language of the surroundings, and therefore resulted in the expressive imagery which we conveyed through the drawings. We explored how material, yet again plays an important role in the experience of space through the haptic and kinetic sense as Wright brought elements of the context in the interior of the house. Along with Falling Water House, we understood how Under restaurant by Snøhetta developed an immersive experience. Snøhetta utilised the contextual language of the surrounding landscape as well. We saw how the difference in the surrounding atmosphere also changes the perception of space. Through the illustrations, we understood how Under restaurant appeared serene when the sea was calm but mysterious at night time and daunting during stormy weather. Similar to Casa Mac and Falling Water House, the material textures used on different levels of Under restaurant evoke the kinetic and haptic sense. This then created a substantial sensory landscape to ease the sensory journey of a diner entering on land and dining underwater. We also identified the importance of the role of light and shadow in manipulating the sensory experience of a space through Snøhetta's Under restaurant. The theatrical quality of the dramatic glass screen underwater provided unmatched views and bathed the restaurant in a teal glow.

Seminal examples such as Under and Falling Water House push the boundaries of what architecture can provide. They are and will always remain exceptional architectural feats because they have both attempted to materialise a sensory experience. Sensory architecture speaks directly to our senses and can therefore, remain in our memory. Even with the ever-changing circumstances, now brought by the onset of the pandemic and global warming, architecture that holds a colloquy with our senses like the examples we have reviewed, will impact our lives in a positive way.

Since Falling Water House and Under are exceptional, one-of-a-kind places, we have also explored the interiors of retail stores that are more extensively used in our daily life. Through the examples of Forest Essentials in India and Aesop Store in the U.K, we identified that the principles of sensory mapping through material textures, light and context can be applied to the interior of retail stores as well to create sensory narratives for users to experience. We saw how the soothing qualities of the sensory landscapes created in the interior of these stores, encapsulated the senses and enforced serenity amongst visitors.

We have experienced the sensory qualities of the examples and case studies through the illustrations in this dissertation which proves the potential of experiential design reaching people, who may not be able to visit the places physically. Communicating the sensory perception of spaces through digital or manual drawing and painting techniques added life and lead to a better understanding of the case studies and examples in this dissertation. Since the aim throughout was to deviate from ocular perception, through the illustrations we have recalled the textures we usually associate with the materials discussed and portrayed. This indicates the potential of using illustrations after photographs and drawings to help advance our sensory perception and improve design ingenuity and appreciation. As we have identified, material choice in interiors plays a significant role when it comes to creating sensory design and can provide different cues depending on the way in which they have been used. These cues as identified in the previous chapters are – directional, experiential and psychological. Additional examples that can be studied to discover the myriad approaches to experiential design include The Lucky Cat restaurant located in Mayfair by Afroditi Krassa, where material tangibility and light have been expertly manoeuvred for the design to appear intensely dramatic. Moreover, the Pinocchio Bakery in Japan by I IN Studio is an example of how these principles can be applied to a project on a smaller scale. Warm hues, textures and the smell of freshly baked bread all work cohesively to elicit a comforting sensation in the visitors. Furthermore, on a smaller scale, experiential and sensory design can assist in the creation of riveting pop-up stores and installations; like the Self Portrait store by Storey Studio which opened in New York in 2019; or the Glossier London store which temporarily opened in Covent Garden the same year. A study of psychology along with the findings of this dissertation can provide clues on the evolution of design in the future and the post-pandemic world. It can also help us design spaces that progress mental well-being and help inhabitants and users cope with COVID-19 related anxieties. The existing potential of interior design and architecture can be expanded through further explorations of the topics identified in this dissertation. Yet, the first step remains to help users deviate from visual perception of space by creating tangible sensory narratives and landscapes in the spaces that we design.

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