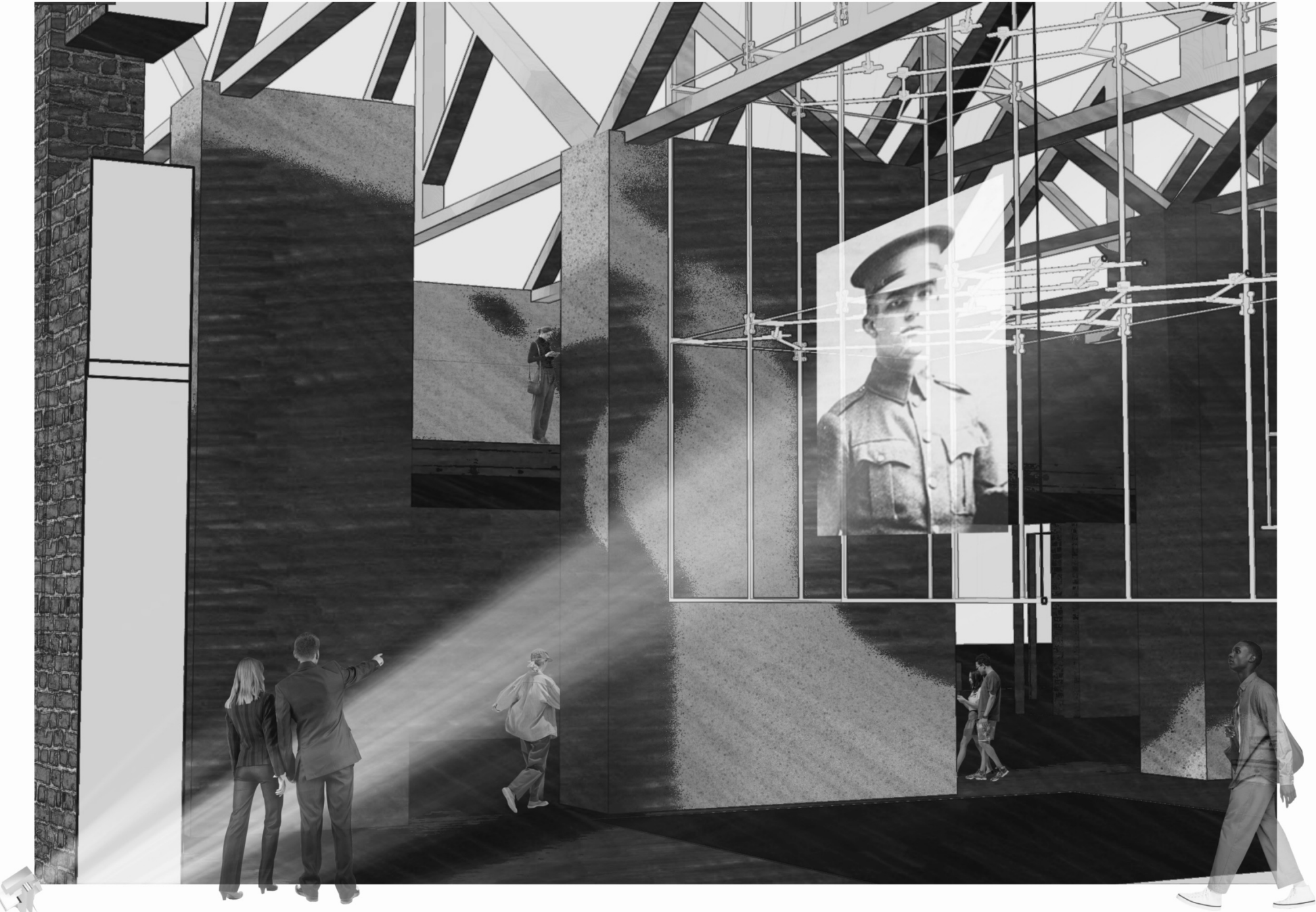# INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC RECORDS
Human Endeavors and collective stories in Oxford
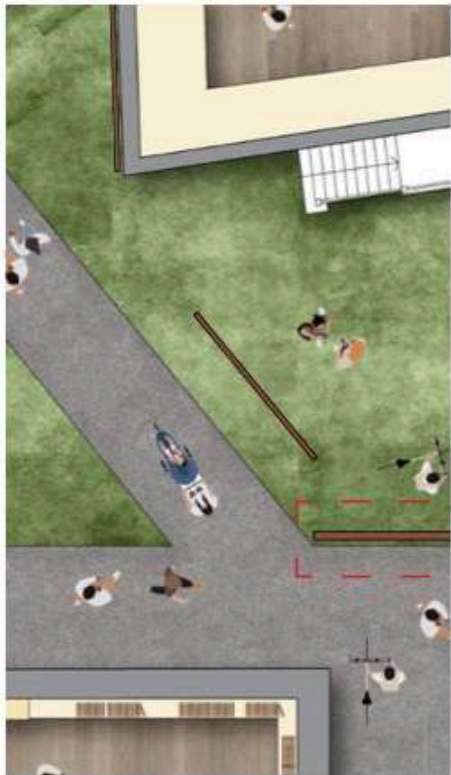
Julianna Levy

Oxford's streets hum with history, yet many of its most iconic spaces remain behind closed doors—owned, preserved, and **out of reach**. This project begins with a question: *How can we share what is privately held, without losing what makes it valuable?* Using the University-owned Malthouse as a case study, the design reimagines a space once defined by exclusion as a threshold between privilege and public life. Through floating rooms, immersive archives, and adaptable programs, the Malthouse becomes a civic stage—where industry meets inquiry, and past meets public. The project is a **call for spatial justice**: a quiet rebellion against the invisible lines that divide us. By inviting community into the heart of institutional space, it offers a model for cities everywhere—to preserve ownership, but unlock access. In doing so, it doesn't just redesign a building, but reshapes a relationship: between **Town and Gown, history and future, right and right of way.**
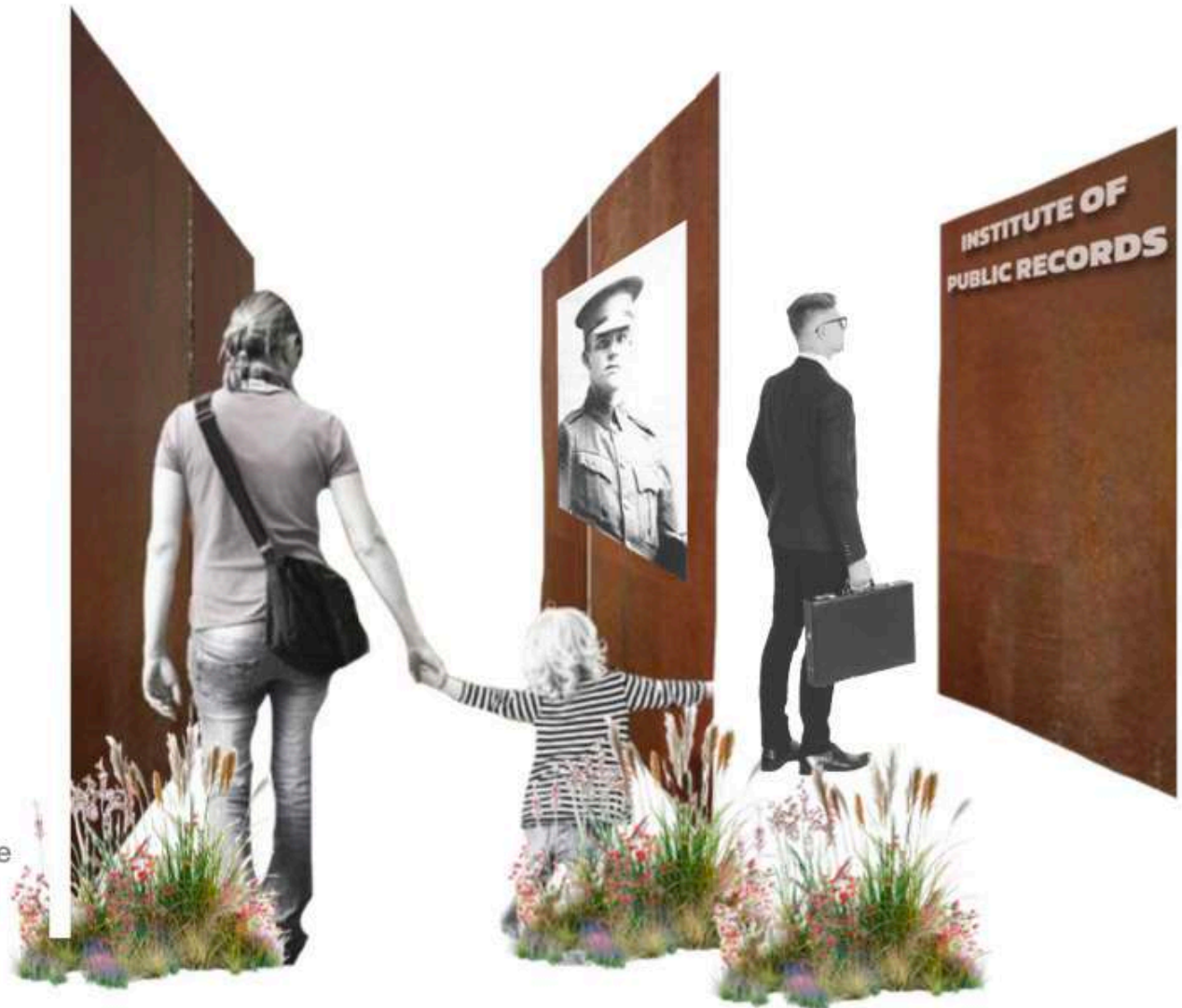
THE INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC RECORDS

"Visualising the spatial tension between public experience and institutional control in Oxford."

Preservation
Fast Tourism Slow Tourism
Industrial Heritage
Historical Identity
Collective Memory
Common Ground
Public spaces
Academic spaces
Shared Narrative
The Morrel Family
Restoration
Human Impact
Social Infrastructure
Primary tool for Oxford
Access
Civic Dialogue

Elinor Ostrom "Commons Theory"
Addresses how shared resources can be managed collectively for mutual benefit. It argues that private ownership can coexist with public access if managed effectively through shared governance.

Castle Mill Stream

Work and Innovation Zones

Public and Social Zone

Public Zone

Tidmarsh Lane

"Hidden Figures of Oxford"
Discover the untold stories of those who shaped Oxford's history. These lesser-known figures made lasting contributions that continue to resonate in the city today.

INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC RECORDS

STITCHING THE CITY TOGETHER

The design takes a non-symmetrical approach, shaped by Oxford's layered infrastructure and guided by the concept of stitching the city together—reflecting the organic and uneven nature of the city's urban fabric.

Waterways of Oxford:
River Thames (Isis) → Main river flowing through Oxford.
Oxford Canal → Man-made canal joining Thames at Isis Lock.
Castle Mill Stream → Historic side channel of the Thames, runs beside the site.

1 Oxford Castle and Prison
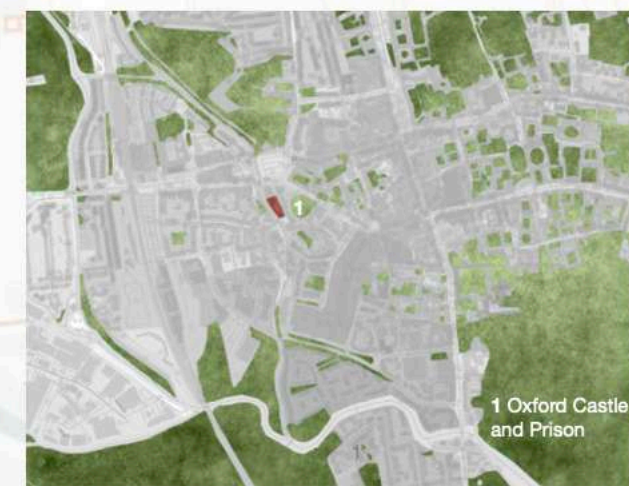
Green infrastructure of Oxford:
Mapping Oxford's green infrastructure: a blend of public parks, private gardens, and natural landscapes that define the city's character and offer environmental and social value.

Oxford main circulation network:
This map shows Oxford's main circulation routes-highlighting the city's primary roads. key access points, and dominant transport corridors.

Stitching the City Together explores the layered systems that shape Oxford's urban fabric—from its historic waterways and infrastructure to the main routes of circulation that define movement through the city. Through a series of carefully curated maps, the project reveals the hidden patterns that connect past and present. A corten steel board stands as a focal point, where visitors encounter the often-overlooked figures whose contributions have quietly shaped the city. Together, these elements invite a deeper understanding of Oxford as a place continuously woven by both visible structures and unseen narratives.

Corten Steel Elevation

The Malthouse Oxford

70% of land in the city centre is owned by the University of Oxford making it one of the largest landowners in Oxford.

Elders
Local Heritage Experts: Older residents with historical knowledge who want to share their stories and experiences with younger generations.
Reflective Visitors: Elders interested in learning about Oxford's evolution in a quieter, more contemplative way.
Socially Active Seniors: Elders who enjoy socializing, attending public events, and participating in community gatherings within a historic setting.

Tourists
Cultural Tourists: Visitors who are interested in experiencing Oxford's history and unique cultural offerings.
Slow Tourists: Looking for immersive experiences and connections to the local community.
Fast Tourists: Individuals who seek quick access to Oxford's history.

Local Residents and Community Groups
Community History Enthusiasts: Locals passionate about Oxford's heritage who enjoy learning and engaging with their city's history.
Public Workshop Participants: Residents interested in hands-on activities like tool banks, storytelling, or heritage preservation workshops.
Local Civic Groups: Community organizations and activists who use the center for events and discussions on local history and social issues.

Conservation professionals, Academics, and Innovators
Architects and Urban Planners: Professionals focused on the intersection of historical preservation and modern design.
Historians and Urbanism Specialists: Experts interested in architecture, urban studies, and historical preservation (explore Oxford's urban transformation and its cultural implications).
University Academics and Independent
Researchers: Those engaging with Oxford's heritage, industrial history, and social evolution to advance academic or personal research.

Young Adults
University Students: Young adults from local universities who seek interactive exhibits, collaborative spaces, and modern technology for academic enrichment.
Early-Career Professionals: Young adults in creative fields, such as architecture or design, looking for professional growth and networking opportunities.
Community-Minded Individuals: Young adults who are passionate about engaging with Oxford's cultural heritage and social issues through events, workshops, and volunteering.

NAVIGATING CONFLICT
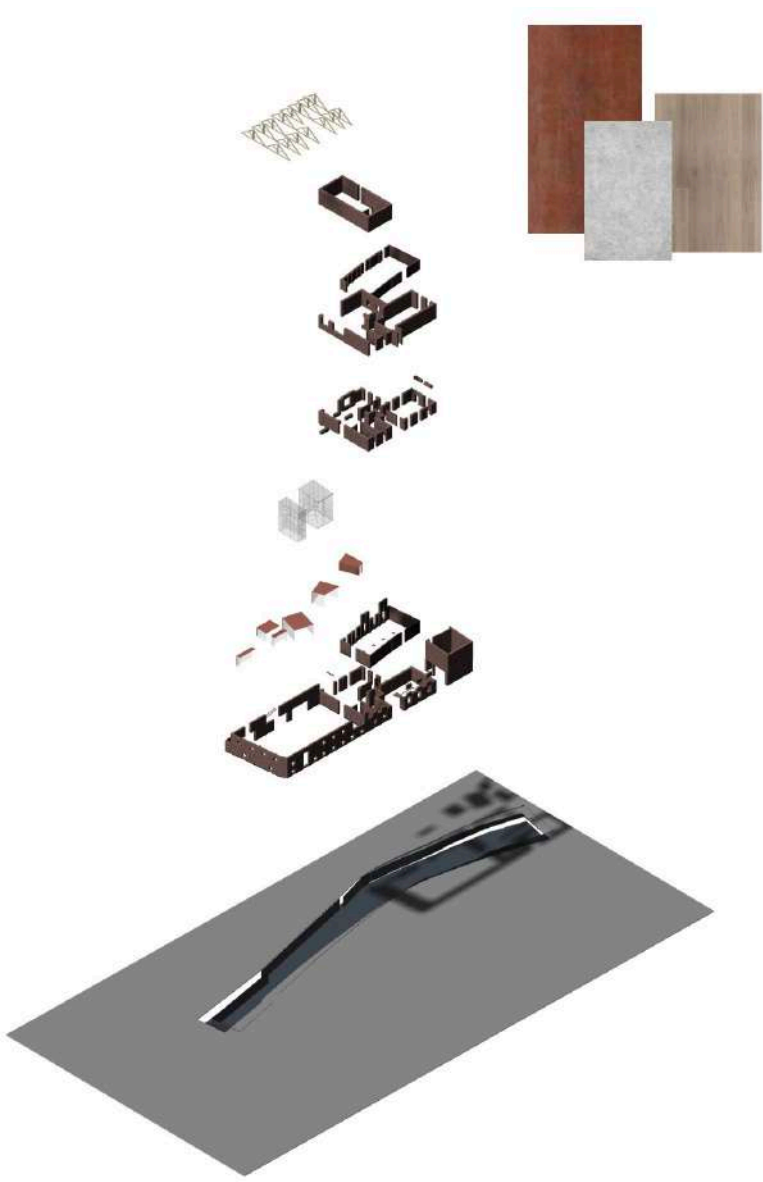
Conflict Resolution
Design as Mediation: Adaptive reuse can resolve conflicts by preserving historical elements while meeting modern needs. The Malthouse balances private ownership with public access through adaptive reuse.
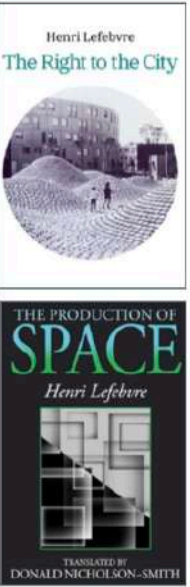
Design Application
The theoretical framework guides the Malthouse's design, focusing on inclusivity, adaptive reuse, and public engagement. The project will blend Oxford's heritage with modern public needs, making the Malthouse a dynamic, accessible space for all.
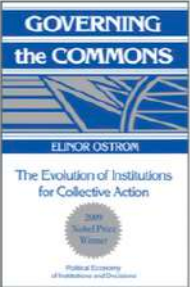
Theories of Ownership
Private vs. Public Ownership: Debates on ownership balance between private control and public access, as seen in Oxford where the University owns much of the city's historical sites.
The Commons: Elinor Ostrom's theory advocates for shared management of public resources, guiding the Malthouse's transformation into a public-facing space.

Accessibility and Public Space
Inclusive Design: Spaces should be accessible to all. Elizabeth Guffey and Richard Sennett's work emphasizes creating inclusive spaces that serve diverse users.
Right to the City: Henri Lefebvre's theory argues that everyone should have access to and influence over urban spaces, supporting the Malthouse as a public space for all.

Cultural and Social Theories
Social Space: Lefebvre's "The Production of Space" suggests that architecture influences social interaction. The Malthouse will be a social space fostering community engagement.
Cultural Capital: Pierre Bourdieu's theory suggests democratizing access to cultural resources. The Malthouse aims to make Oxford's heritage accessible to the public through immersive experiences.

GOVERNING the COMMONS
ELINOR OSTROM
The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action

Henri Lefebvre
The Right to the City

THE PRODUCTION OF SPACE
Henri Lefebvre
TRANSLATED BY
DONALD NICHOLSON-SMITH

"We shape our tools and thereafter our tools shape us."
Marshall McLuhan – The Medium is the Message (1964)

1st Floor Plan 1:100

1st Floor Plan
1 **Private: Work and Innovation Zones**
PHD research and Professional development
PHD collaboration
Lounge

2 **Public: Social Zone**
Cafe
Lounge

3 **Semi-Public: Restricted Zones**
Back of room kitchen
Auditorium

Ground Floor Plan
1 **Private: Work and Innovation Zones**
Architects Zone
Researchers
Collaboration
Independent Study
Printing Station
Meeting room
Security room

2 **Public: Social Zone**
Cafe
Lounge
Public book shop
Archive

3 **Semi-Public: Restricted Zones**
Back of room kitchen

Ground Floor Plan 1:100

CONTROLLING THE NARRATIVE

3 | **Reflection and Dialogue**

2 | **Urban Futures**

1 | **Research and Social Spaces**

G | **Public Access and Collaboration**

3- Space to Reflect and Speak
Above it all, a calm retreat—lectures unfold, thoughts settle, and reflection finds its place.

2- Shaping Tomorrow's Cities
A hub for those imagining future landscapes—urban planners and researchers shaping the city through study and strategy.

1- Quiet Minds, Shared Conversations
A floor for focused research and soft dialogue—PhD minds at work, knowledge shared in lounges, and voices echo in the auditorium.

G- Where Public Meets Practice
A lively threshold where visitors and professionals cross paths, ideas exchanged over coffee, books discovered, and research begins in open, collaborative spaces.
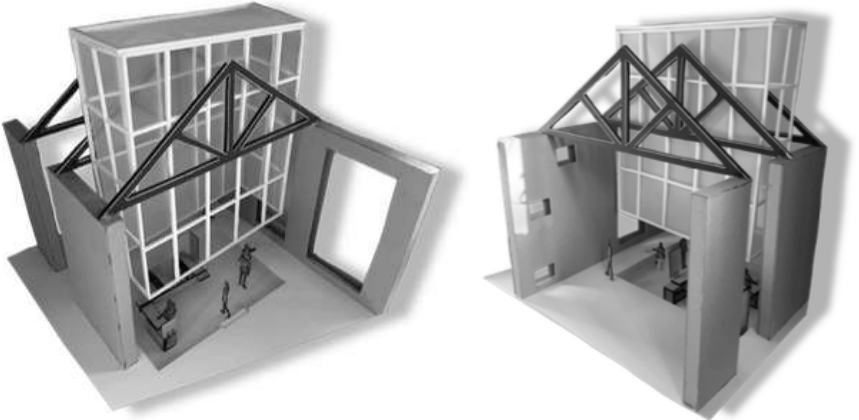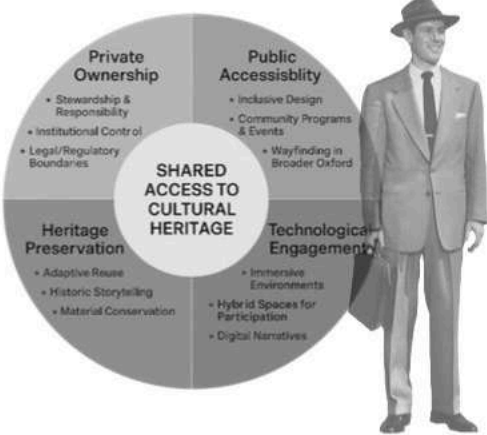
Digital Archives & Mural Interaction
Digital projections of Oxford's history interact with users through touch or motion, while murals anchor the content, creating an immersive, evolving environment.

User Experience Impact
The skylight projections stimulate engagement, while the conversation pit promotes collaboration and inclusivity, supporting both work and social interaction.

Openness & Privacy Balance
The skylight fosters openness, while the conversation pit ensures privacy with acoustic treatments and thoughtful spatial design.
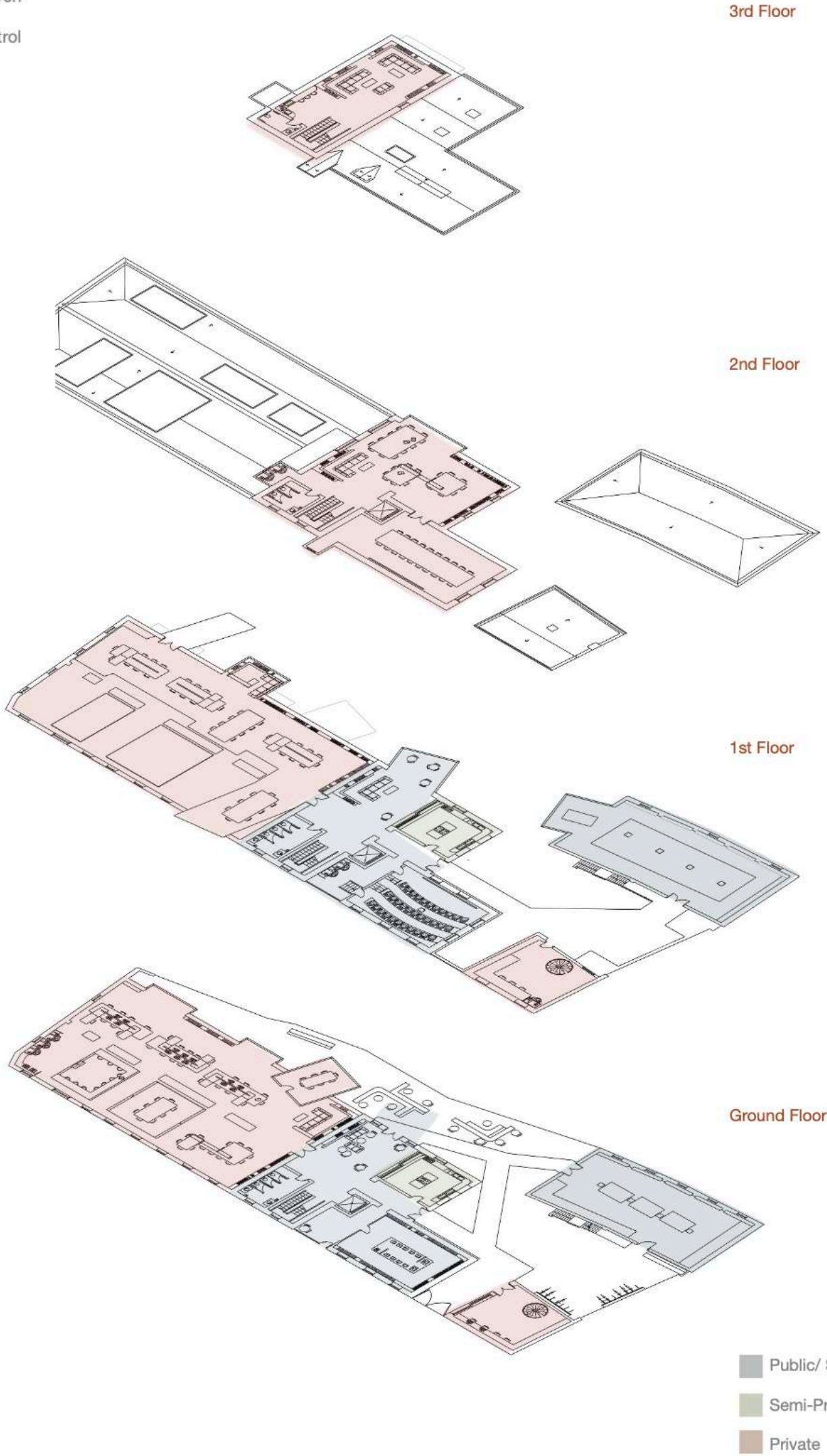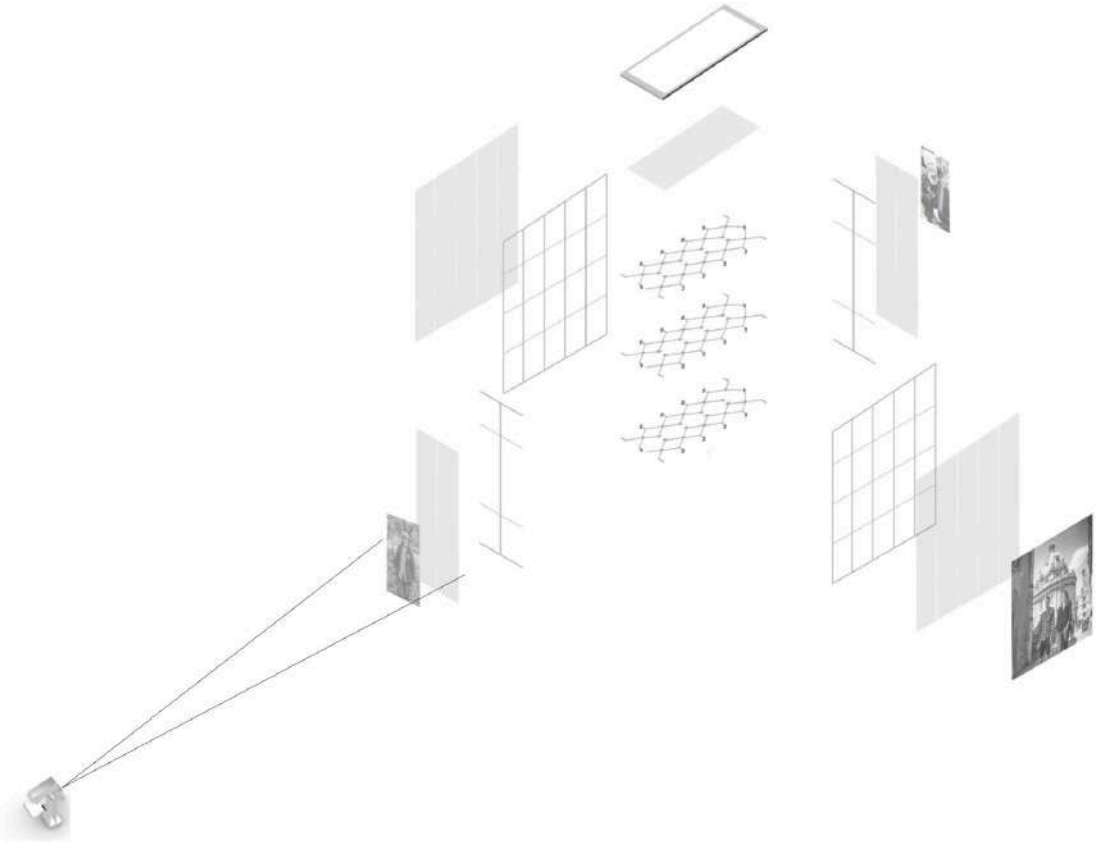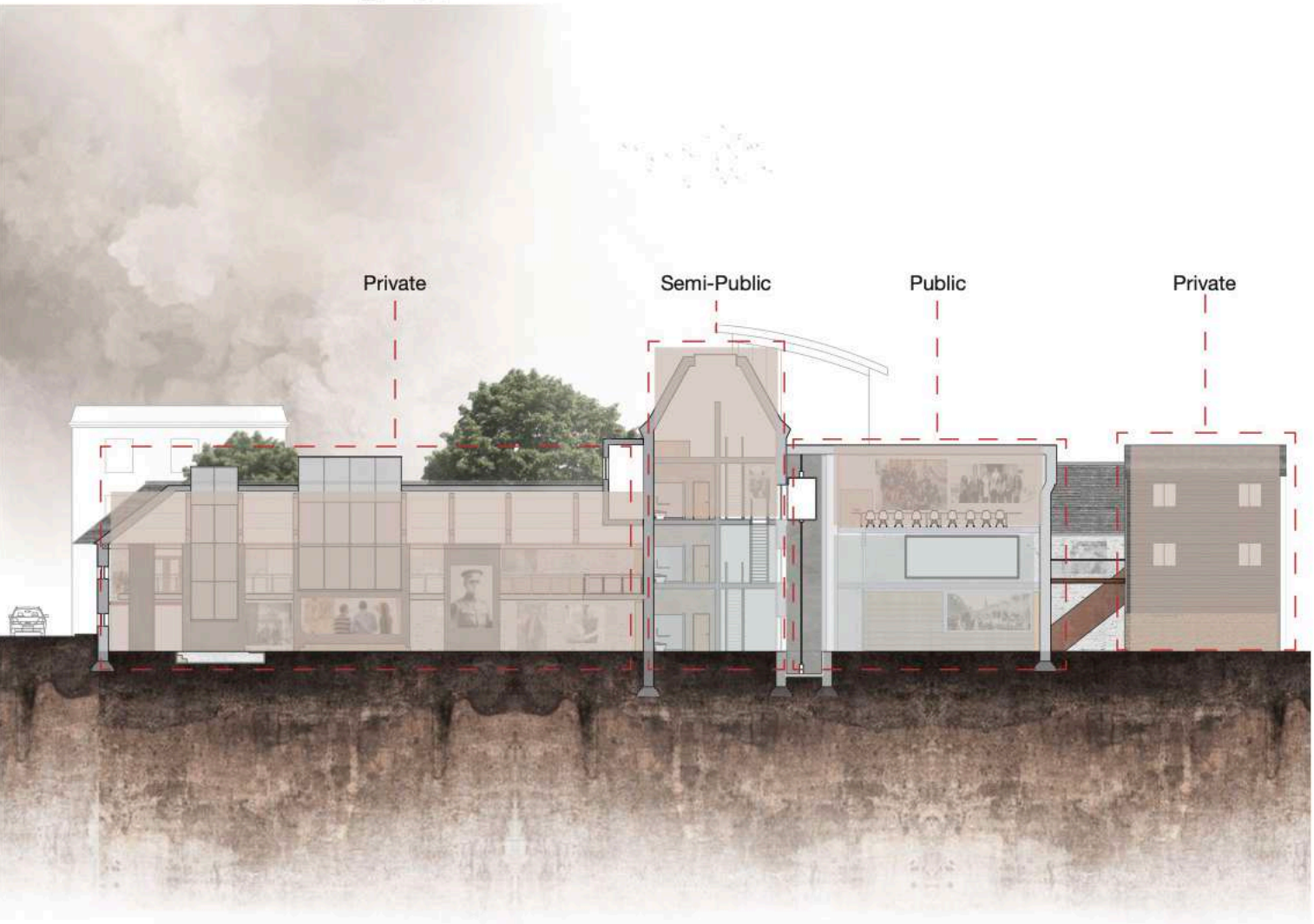
Accessibility & Inclusivity
The space is fully accessible, ensuring everyone can engage with digital projections and murals.

Sensory & Psychological Impact
Visuals, sound, and tactile elements stimulate creativity and reflection, offering a dynamic, evolving experience.

Through interactive projections, the skylight creates a constantly evolving environment, blending digital and physical spaces while bringing history to life with dynamic digital content.

With each change in projection, the space evolves, allowing us to shift the narrative from historical archives to modern innovation, fostering both reflection and forward-thinking dialogue.

- The **semi-transparent double-glazed** skylights allow natural light to filter in, which can affect projection clarity.
- **High-lumen projectors** (3000 lumens+) will be used to ensure bright, vibrant projections even in ambient light.
- Projections will be **scheduled for dusk or after dark** to minimize interference from natural light.
- Projection mapping software (e.g., MadMapper, Resolume) will adjust brightness and contrast for optimal visibility in mixed lighting.
- The **projectors will be carefully positioned** to ensure even light distribution and clear projections.
- Shading or dimming systems will be incorporated to control natural light and maintain projection clarity.
- **Semi transparent layer on the glass exterior** of the skylight will be used on the glass to enhance projection quality without blocking light.

3rd Floor

2nd Floor

1st Floor

Ground Floor

Private   Semi-Public   Public   Private

Public/ Semi Public

Semi-Private

Private

Collaborative and private study rooms
Creating a balance between focused, independent work and dynamic group interaction, fostering both concentration and teamwork.
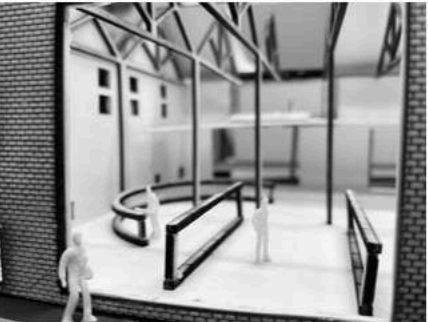
Oxford's collective stories and individual contributions
A sense of community, pride, and inspiration, highlighting the interconnectedness of individual contributions and Oxford's shared heritage.
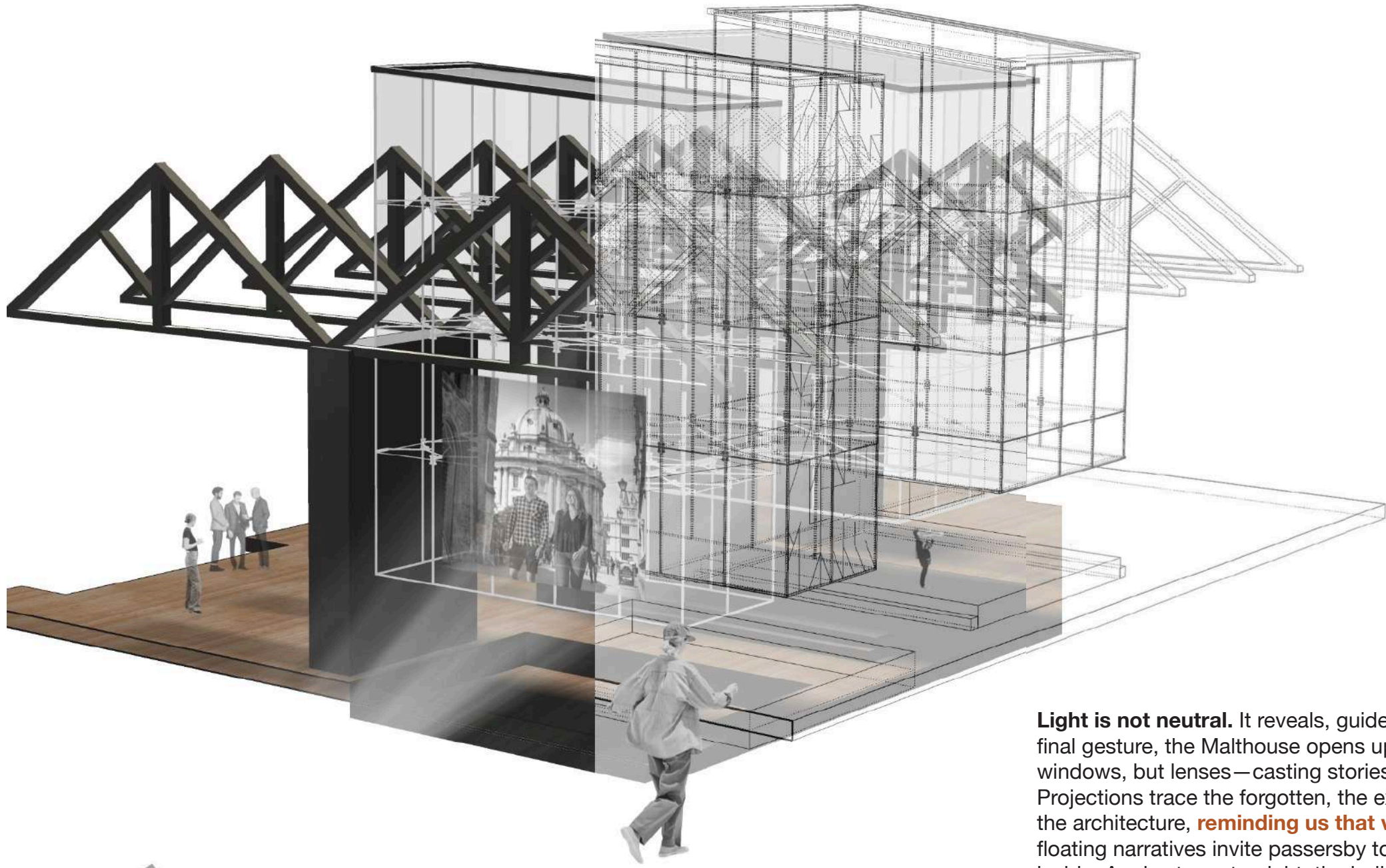
Enhanced spatial interaction
The ramp serves as a unifying feature, seamlessly connecting multiple floors or areas, fostering easy movement and exploration between spaces such as research centers, public exhibitions, and collaborative hubs.

**"Architecture is storytelling.
It's about layers of meaning
and memory."**
-David Adjaye, 2015

LIGHT AS ACCESS

Light is not neutral. It reveals, guides, privileges, and conceals. In this final gesture, the Malthouse opens upward. Skylights become not just windows, but lenses—casting stories once hidden into the public eye. Projections trace the forgotten, the excluded, and the overlooked across the architecture, **reminding us that visibility is a form of justice**. These floating narratives invite passersby to look up—and, in doing so, to see inside. As day turns to night, the building itself becomes an exhibit: *history not encased, but activated, shared, and reimagined.*