

THE GRID & TABLE

a house of play

by mara onofrei

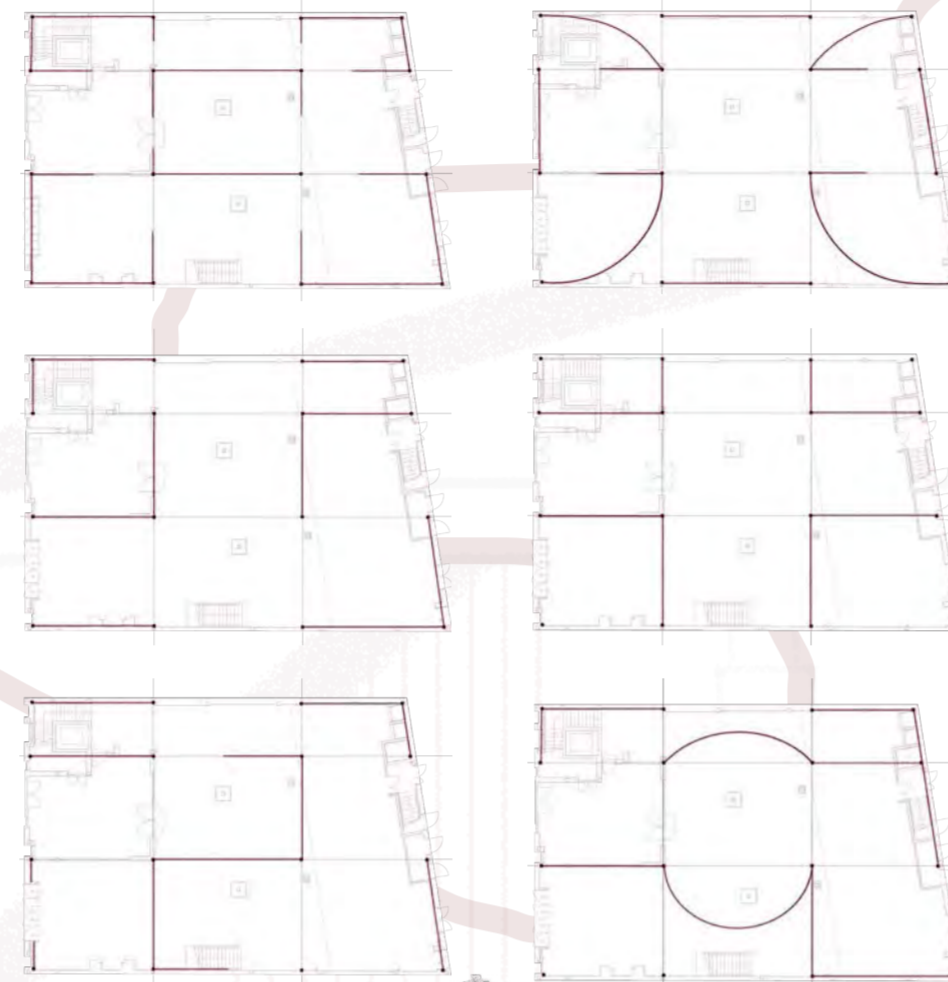
This project investigates the correlation between the **decline of British pub culture** and the growing **generational divide** within contemporary society. A former JD Wetherspoon pub is transformed into a community-owned pub and creative hub, where the spatial strategy is informed by **board games** and the **logic of play** as a means of bringing generations together. Users are encouraged to interact through hidden details and discoveries embedded within the space, rewarding curiosity and creating moments of connection between strangers. The upper floor is converted into subsidised studio spaces for young creatives from underprivileged backgrounds, with their work exhibited and sold within the pub below.

The project focuses on the **lived experience** of the interior, using movement, visibility, and spatial sequencing to encourage interaction between users. Play is employed as a spatial device to shape atmosphere, encourage exploration, and organise encounters across generations. In doing so, the proposal demonstrates how interior architecture can strengthen community, support creativity, and enrich everyday experiences.

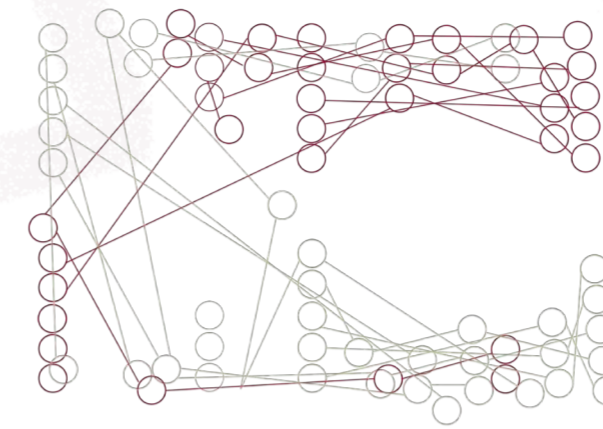
narrative panorama



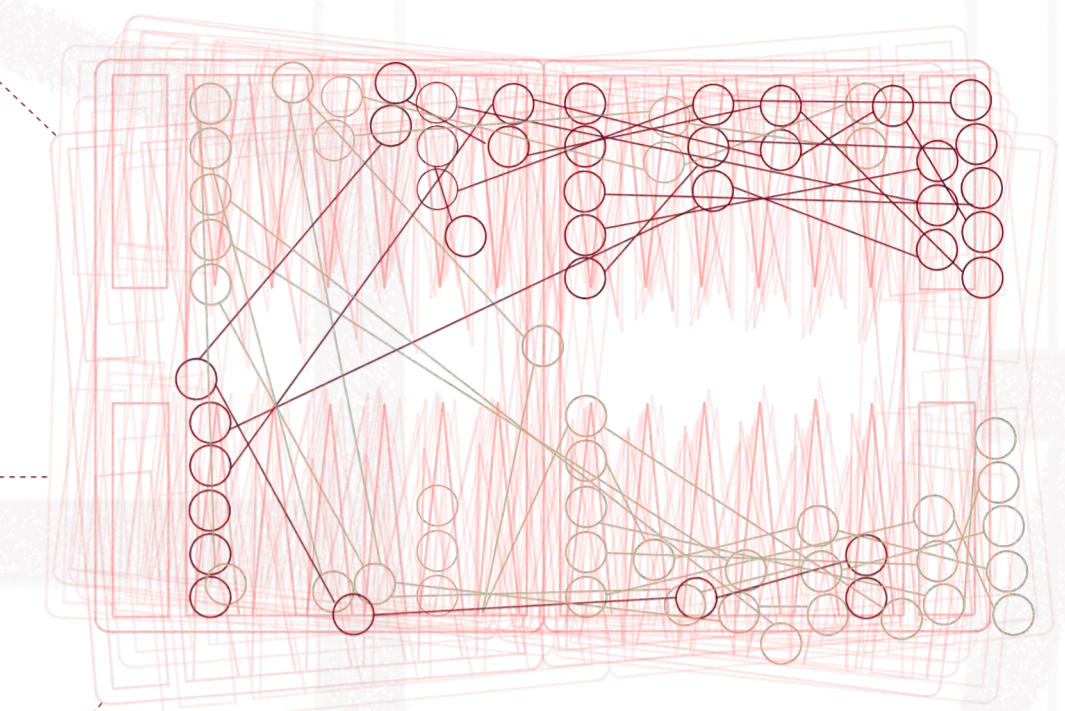
exploring the nine-square grid



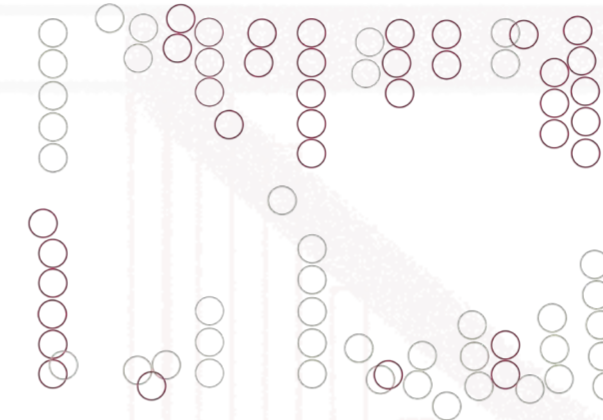
checker movements



backgammon in motion



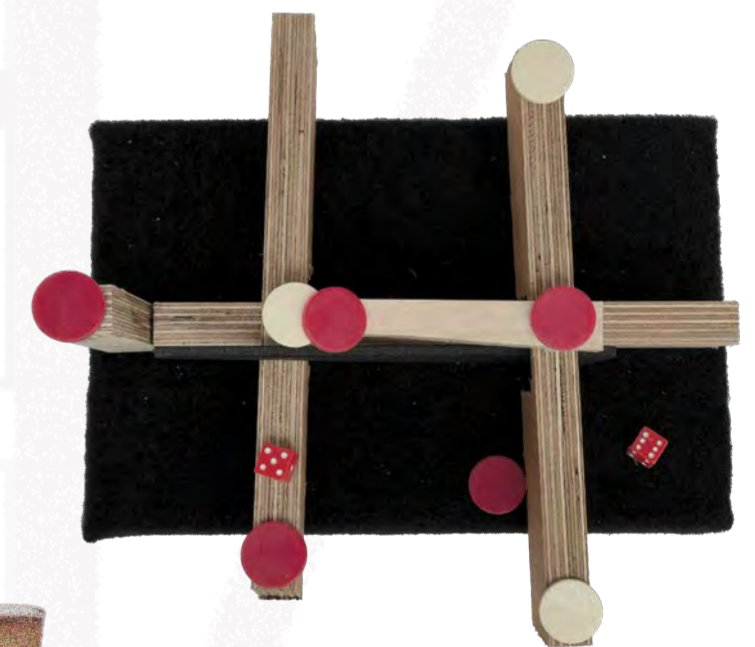
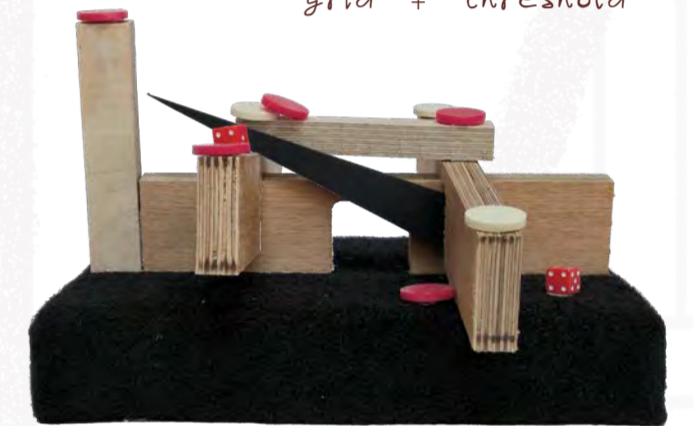
possible placements



possible trajectories



conceptual model creating grid + threshold



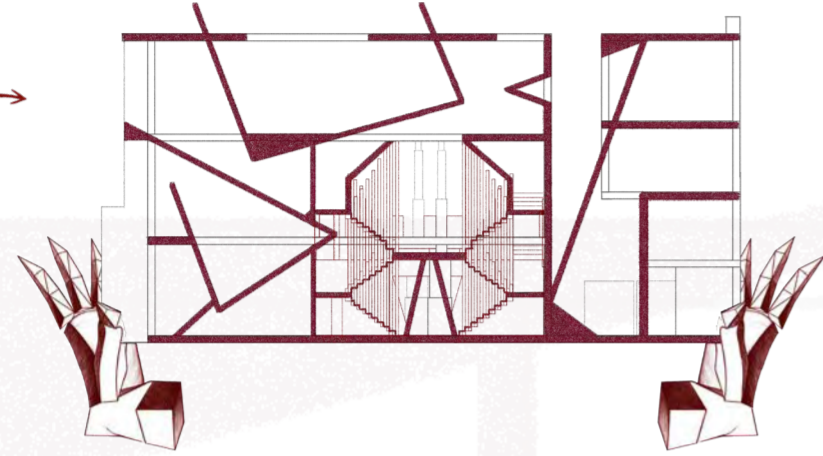
◆The chosen site for this project is **Baxter's Court**, a former Wetherspoon pub located within a 10-minute walk from Hackney Central Overground Station at 282 Mare Street. Following its sale and reopening under new ownership, many local residents expressed concerns over the loss of an affordable community space and the increase in food and drink prices. This response highlighted the important **social role** that accessible pubs play within local communities, inspiring the proposal to reimagine the building as a **community-owned pub** that prioritises affordability, inclusion, and shared cultural activity.

DEVELOPING A STRUCTURAL LANGUAGE

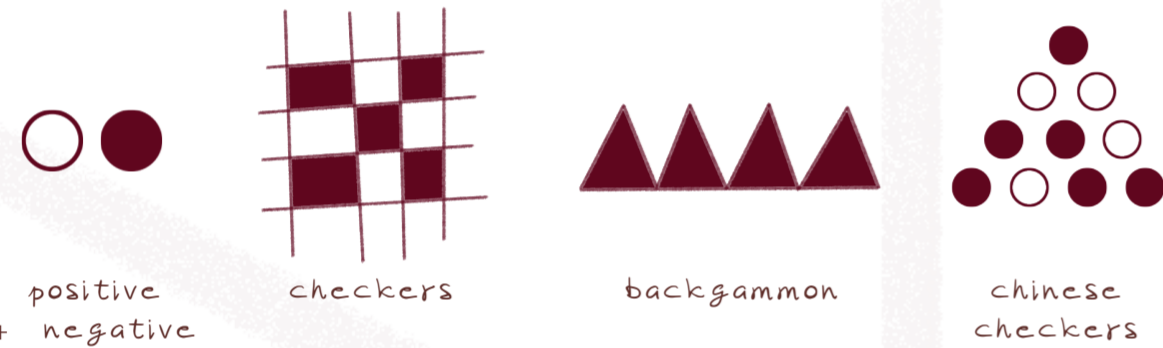
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These diagrams explore the logic of board games in a more allegorical manner, leading to architectural solutions. By abstracting the grid and the common positive and negative logic found in games, a multifaceted architectural language has been developed. This logic can be manifested in three forms: **exhibition shelves**, **stairs**, and **structural pillars**.

This is a sectional parti diagram that depicts the building as a display room, where structures and voids highlight specific moments as if they are items exhibited in a showroom.



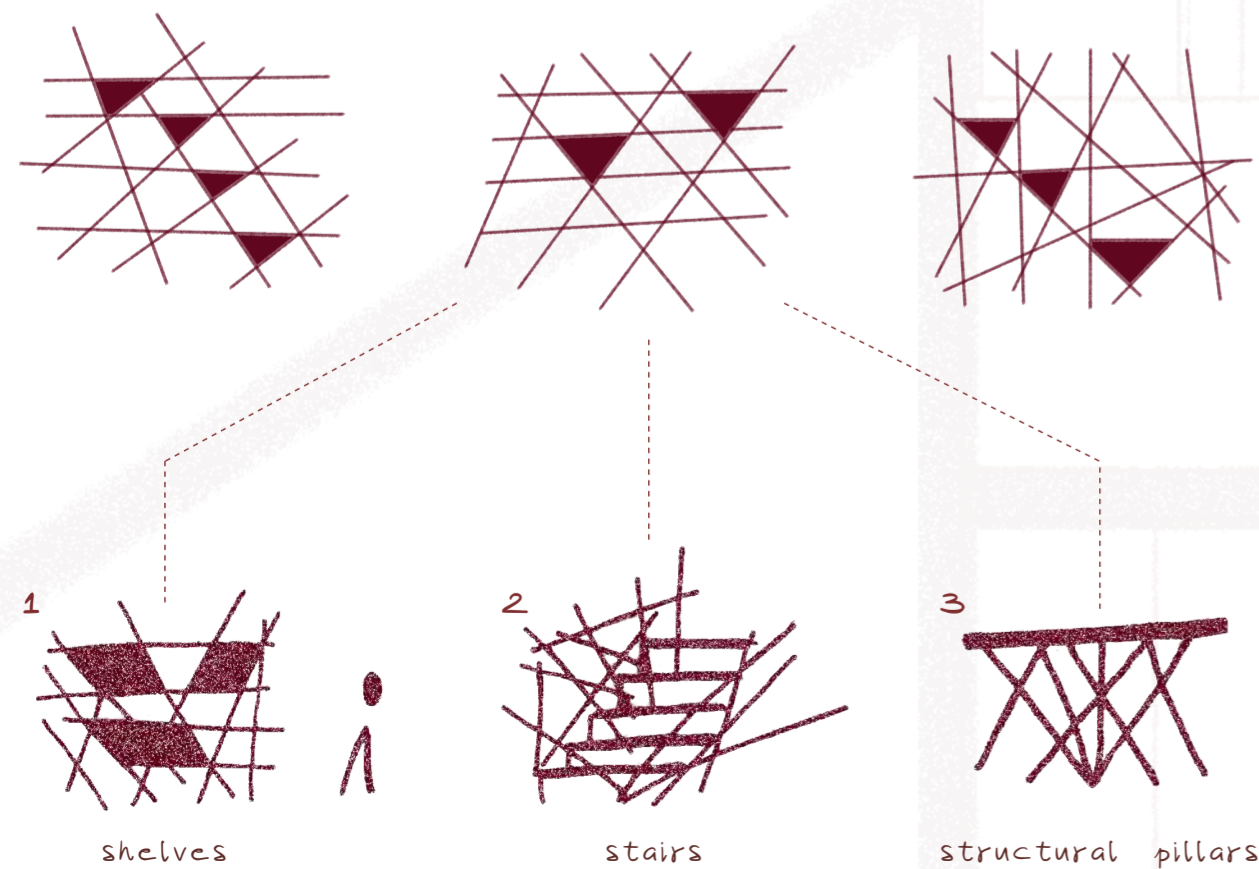
board game logic



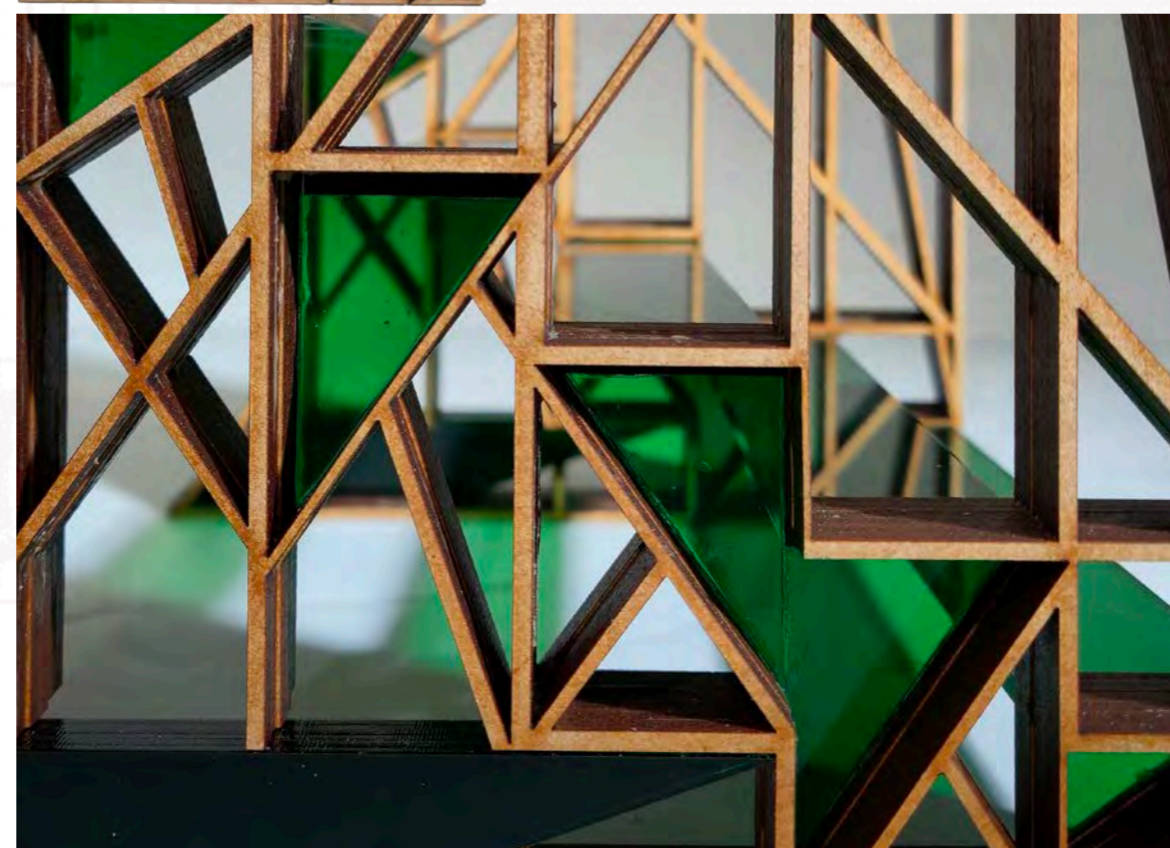
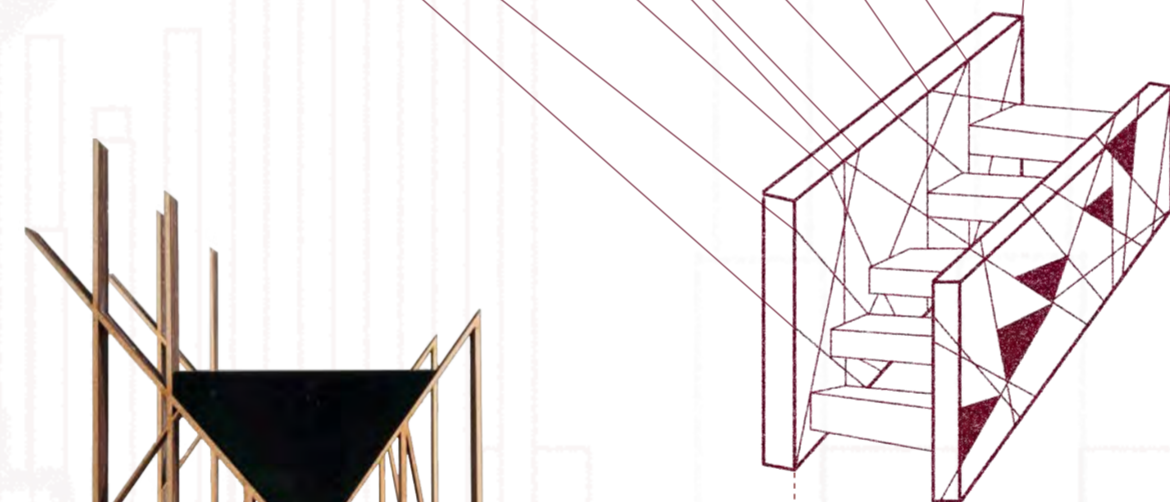
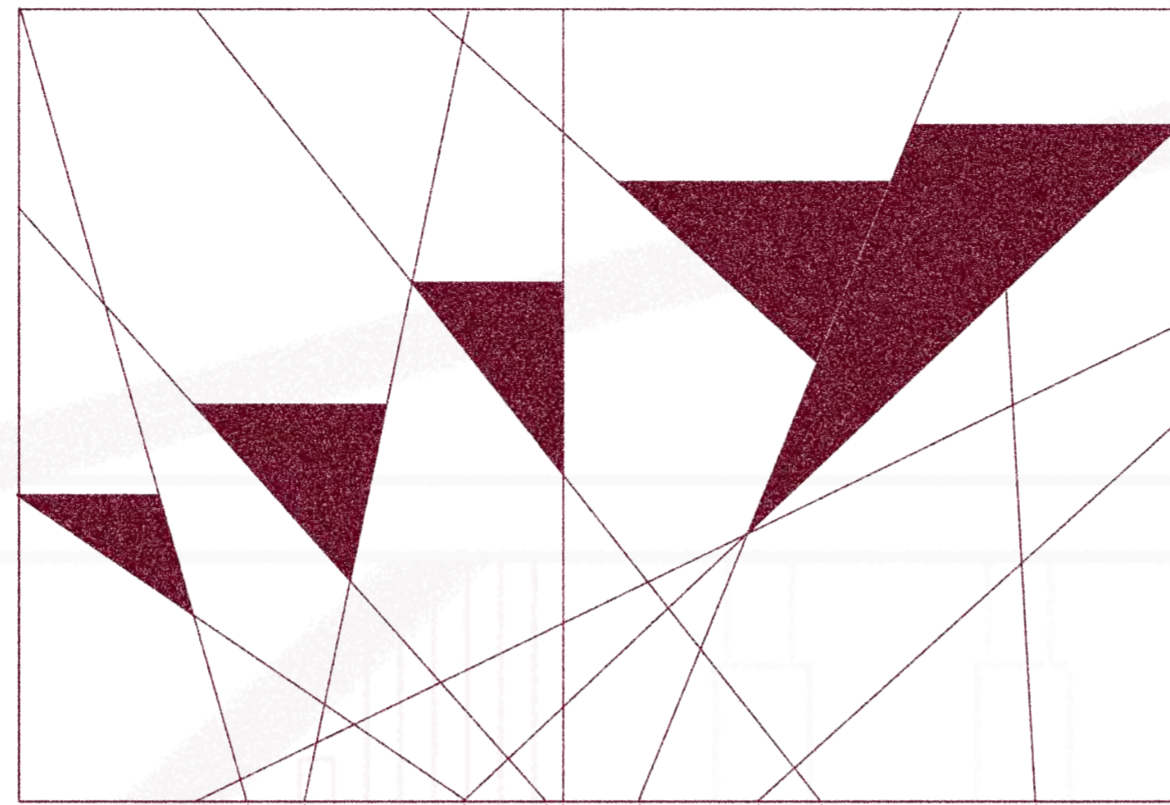
abstracting the nine-square grid



incorporating positives and negatives

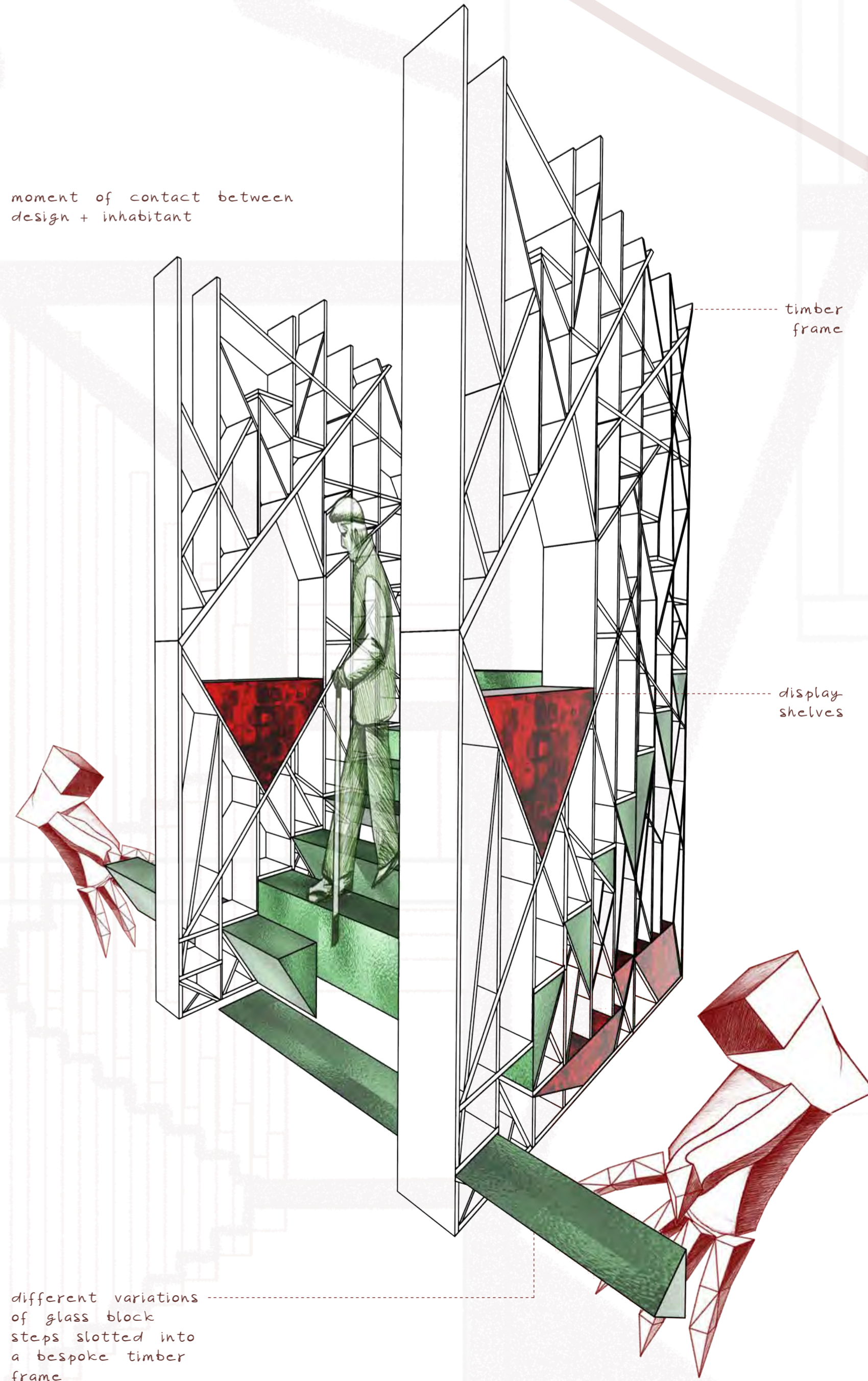


staircase development



1:10 fragment model

moment of contact between design + inhabitant

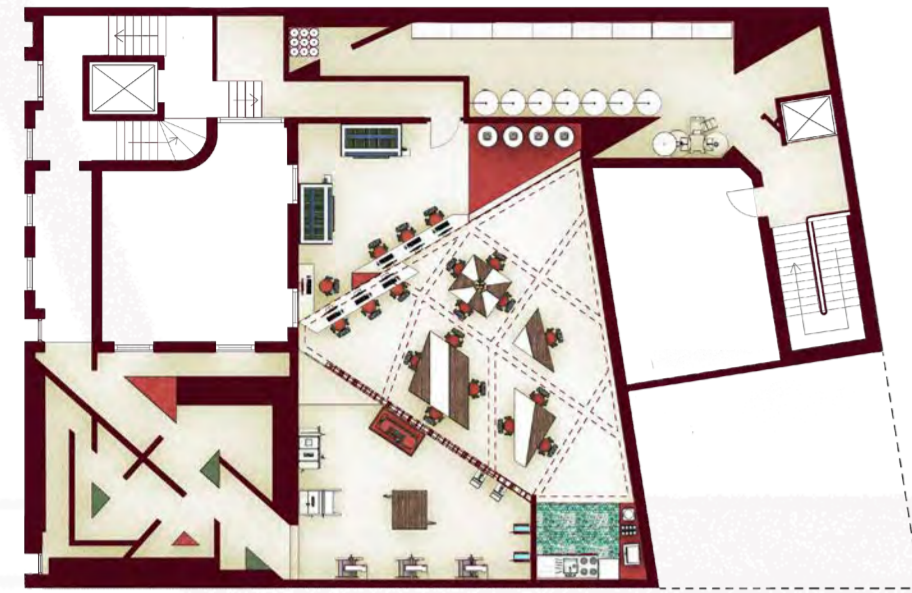


different variations of glass block steps slotted into a bespoke timber frame

SPATIAL ORGANISATION & MATERIALITY

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second floor: the workshop



The second floor accommodates affordable artist studios, a beer cellar, and a material library. There is a wood/metal lab, laser cutting lab, 3d printing facilities, and a kitchenette.

upper first floor: the balconies



The upper first floor provides additional seating, balcony spaces, an outdoor garden, and the kitchen. It offers quieter areas for visitors while maintaining visual connections to the activity below.

ground floor: the public house



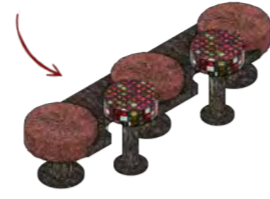
The ground floor contains the main pub, exhibition spaces, and courtyard. It serves as the primary social space within the building, bringing together eating, drinking, artwork, and everyday interaction.

NTS

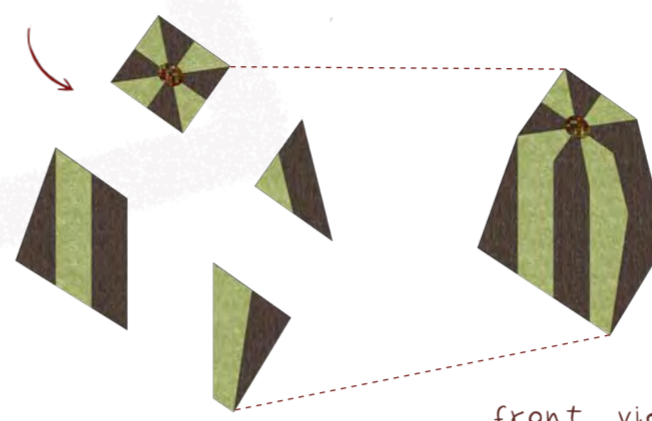
key

- 1 Existing concrete
- 2 Vegan leather
- 3 Red and green mosaic tiles
- 4 Red reflective reinforced glass
- 5 Green reflective reinforced glass
- 6 Patterned carpet
- 7 Patterned carpet
- 8 Dark timber
- 9 Wood wool
- 10 Patterned wood veneer

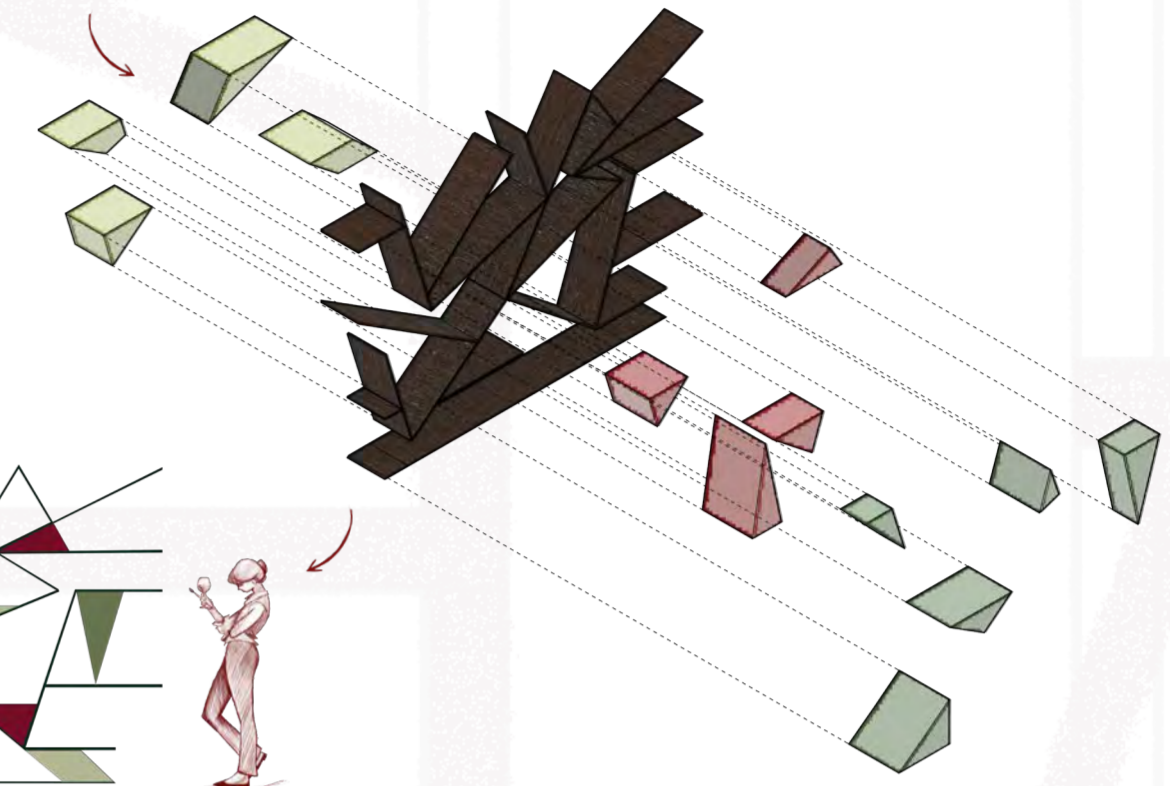
stage seating



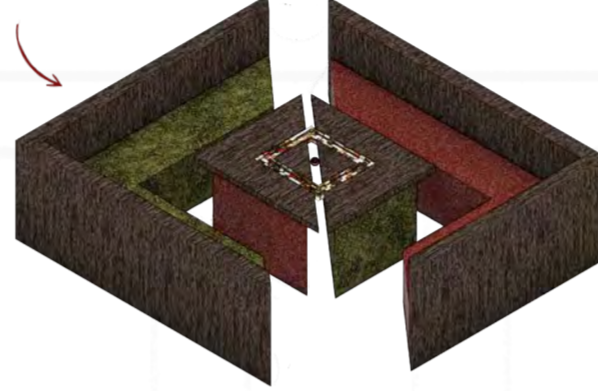
studio tables



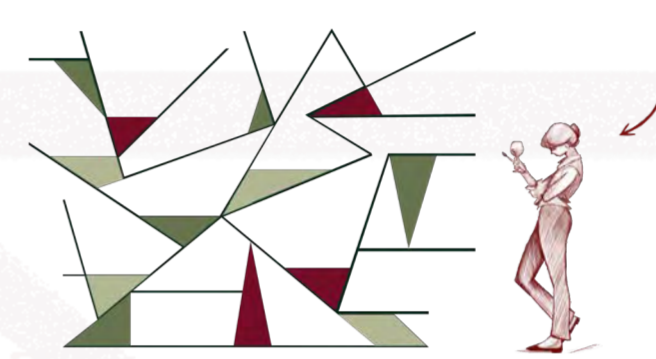
shelving units



pub booths



front view



STORYBOARD OF DETAILS

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Five character stories have been created to represent and assess the feasibility and enjoyment of the proposed programme, through interviews and analysis of stakeholders. **The Architect** is the unseen author, embedding rules of movement and interaction into the organisation of the space itself. **The Regular** occupies the pub through habit and routine, while **The Maker** enters with intent, bringing new ideas and creativity into an existing social setting. **The Observer** engages passively through watching, listening, and lingering around thresholds and elevated positions where she can experience the activity of others without direct participation. Meanwhile, **The Player** is the only character conscious of the architect's embedded rules, navigating the space deliberately and drawing others into engagement and interaction.

the observer



the regular



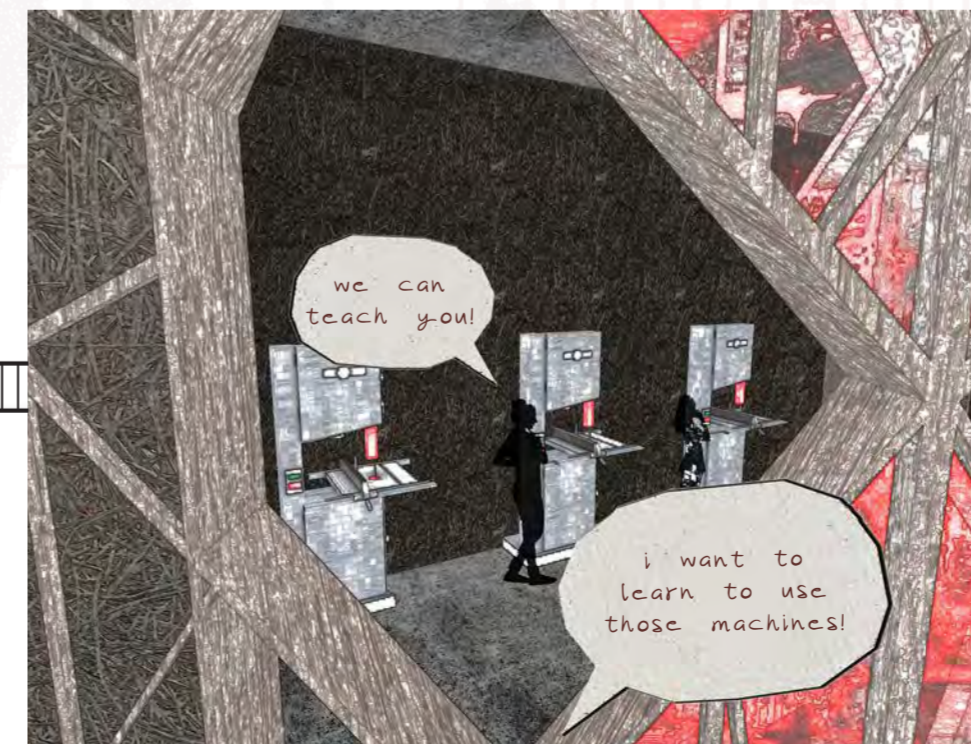
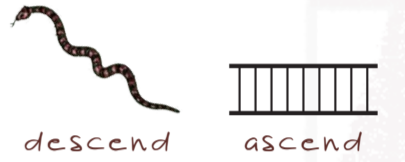
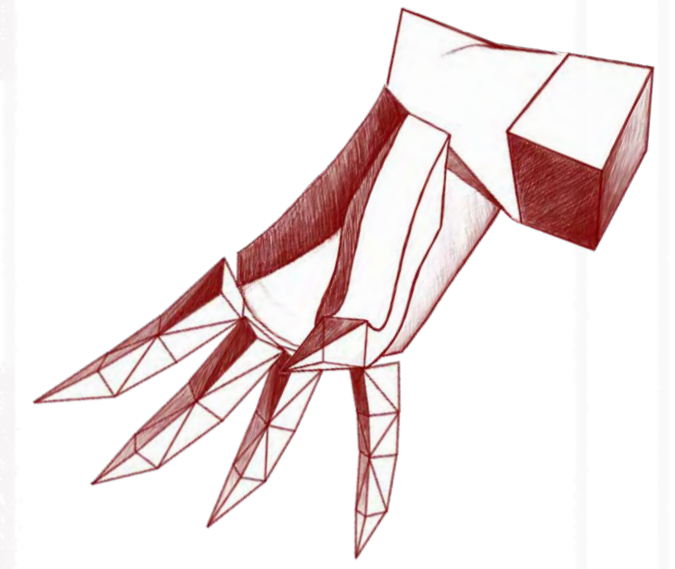
the maker



the player



the architect

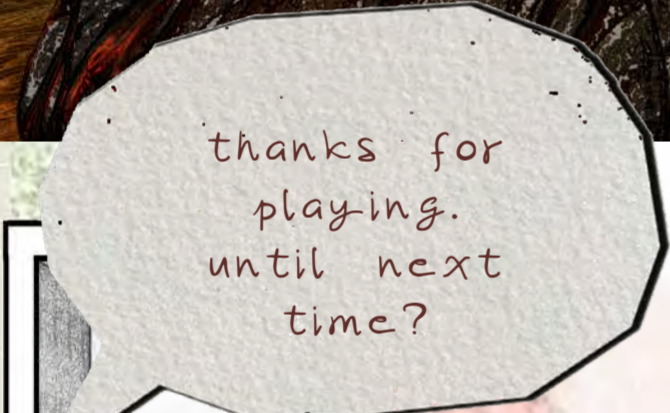
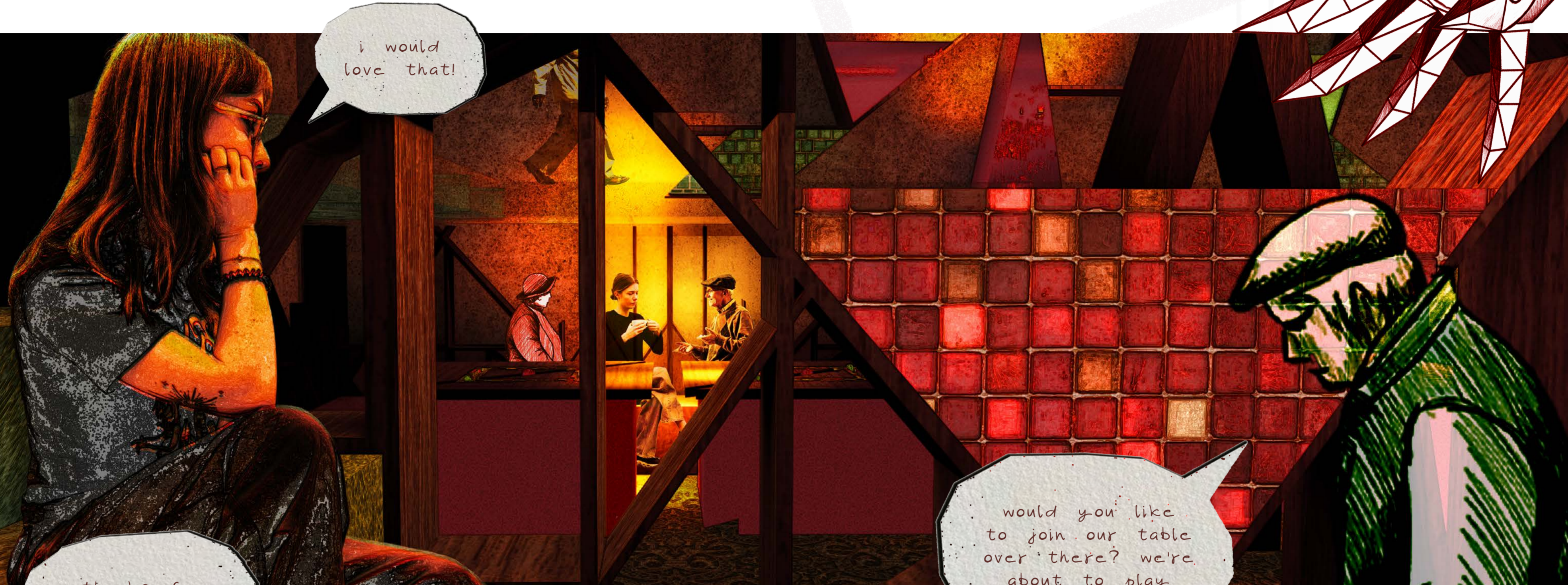


THE SPATIAL EXPERIENCE

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Framed through the staircase, an intergenerational moment of connection marks the beginning of many more to come.

As play unfolds, the world of the characters and the world of the viewer become one and the same.



section AA
NTS