## Practices of Reuse// Lost Community/ Skills/ Histories/ St. Mary's Church, Somers Town

## **Interior Architecture Education & Social Impact**

In Year 3, Interior Architecture students engage in projects that emphasize reuse, sustainable communities, and innovative approaches to spatial inhabitation. Through practice-led initiatives, they develop structural and programmatic strategies that support new civic typologies, promoting social cohesion.

Through direct engagement with clients, active community stakeholders, and professional designers, students gain invaluable experience that enhances their personal and professional development.

Graduates of the BA Interior Architecture programme emerge as contemporary place-makers, industry influencers, and spatial problem-solvers equipped to shape the future of the built environment. This transition from student to professional is supported by tutors through collaborative projects centred on reuse and transformation.

## **Collaboration in Interior Architecture Practice**

In the autumn of 2024, final-year BA Interior Architecture students, partnered with Father Paschal Worton and the community of St. Mary's Church, Somers Town, London - a 'live' external stakeholder - to imagine the possible futures of this church - an important community asset, which continues to resist the threat of demolition in the face of rising maintenance costs.

## The Collaborative Process

After an official project launch at St. Mary's Church led by Father Paschal and the programme leader, students were challenged to become transformers of space, developing new architectural hybrids that complemented existing uses while respecting the historic structure and its role as a place of worship. As Father Paschal expressed in his briefing, "I'll be very interested in how the students create something that blends a place of prayer and worship with reaching out to the community."

Working collectively to document, translate, and survey the church and its surroundings, the students captured three key social factors:

Ephemeral – Inspirational moments and observed situations Physical – Material connections and tactile experiences Political – Local voices and civic engagement

## **Design & Fabrication**

To enable the church's future functionality, students proposed a suspended structure above the congregation, accessed via a new ground-floor entrance. To support their individual project proposals, they were required to embrace Al ideation and fabricate a physical material sample in collaboration with university workshop technicians. These samples became integral to each scheme, ensuring alignment with the university's Sustainable Design Goals.

The architectural interventions emerging from this research-led process were further mapped across the following themes to provide a framework for their dissertations.

Health – Empathy for lost community services Museum – Storytelling to recover lost histories Learning – Making to preserve lost skills

## **Exhibition & Community Engagement**

Students and tutors collaboratively designed and installed a live exhibition, Ed Lawrensor featuring an 'altar' of student work showcasing their proposals. To capture community responses, both an online Google Forms account and a physical comments table were provided, encouraging visitors to share written and illustrated feedback.

## The Future of St. Mary's Church

This collaboration aimed to empower students by facilitating an exhibition that sparked dialogue about ensuring St. Mary's Church's survival. As an essential part of Somers Town, the church stands as a beacon of wellbeing, refuge, and community support-values that inform the architectural proposals showcased in this project.



## St Mary's Church Parish of Old St Pancras





St. Mary's Churc







St. Marv's Churc xhibition build video



Clien

Father Pascha

## /// Consultation Exhibition feedback\*

"What a marvellous exhibition!

The students work have brought deep thought and imaginative creativity to their various versions of 're-use' and transformed St. Mary's. I spent an hour of happy-looking and inspired and uplifting thinking about what St. Mary's could be.

It is extremely impressive to see the range of skills, crafts, cultures, histories (social and ndividual), aesthetics, politics, etc inform the thinking and visualisation of all the students. Also, in each of their ways, they respect the role of worship and spirituality in society.

The students have opened their hearts as well as their architectural skills in creating their visions and models.

Thank you for opening up new possibilities of what St. Mary's can be and do.

Thank you for giving us hope as we strive to save St Mary's."

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"Like the sustainable features of many of the concepts. We need to recycle buildings, materials, ideas!"

"Students have captured well the various priorities of the community – homelessness, food security, climate change."

"A fantastic group display of artwork. And for futuristic design and modification of the church

"Thank you to all the students who have taken time to put their thoughts to paper and provide the Church with some useful ideas going forward."

\*Google forms

Local residents talk

"The Exhibition certainly opened our minds and hearts to fresh visions for St. Mary's Church."

## Al Ideation/ Prompt your thinking! Digital/ Physical Collaboration/ Al> Collage> Dio

Diorama> Make

# Sample Prototype/ Fabricate & Manufacture

**Collaborative Sample Store** 



## extracts panel onsultation exhibition/ Ű **Reuse/** of **Practices**

**Community Cohesion** Community 04/ Crafting g of Echoes 03/ 1/ Echoes of Memory 02/ Trapped Memories Ô



Echoes of Memory: Multi-Sensory Journeys Through Soundscape Embark on an immersive journey through Somers Town, where the rich tapestry of soundscapes and voices come together to tell its unique story. Explore the area's hidden narratives as you engage with its auditory landscapes, from the echoes of everyday life to the voices that shape its identity. This experience invites you to listen, connect, and uncover the vibrant history and culture of the community, offering a deeper, multi-sensory connection to the space. Through shared soundscapes and stories, Somers Town transforms into a living archive, celebrating the unices are dreamed and the fields. mories that define it.

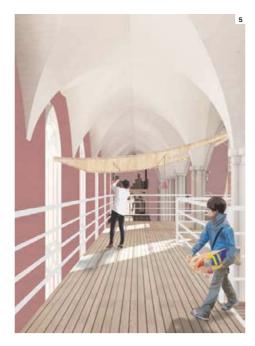
MATARIA



emphasizes sustainability and responsibility. Recyclable steel, FSC-certified wooden decking, eco-friendly terracotta, and lightweight plywood were chosen to respect the church's heritage while 00 mental impact



2: MAGDALEN CENTRE TERRACE 2: MAGDALEN CENTRE TERRACE 3: CREATING A SOUNDSCAPE MAP 4: WALL-EMBEDDED SOUND LISTENING 5: DIRECT SOUNDSCAPE LISTENING WITH SOUND FUNNELS 6: CREATING MAP SPACE 7: UNDER THE FLOATING SPACE





REFLECTIVE CEILING

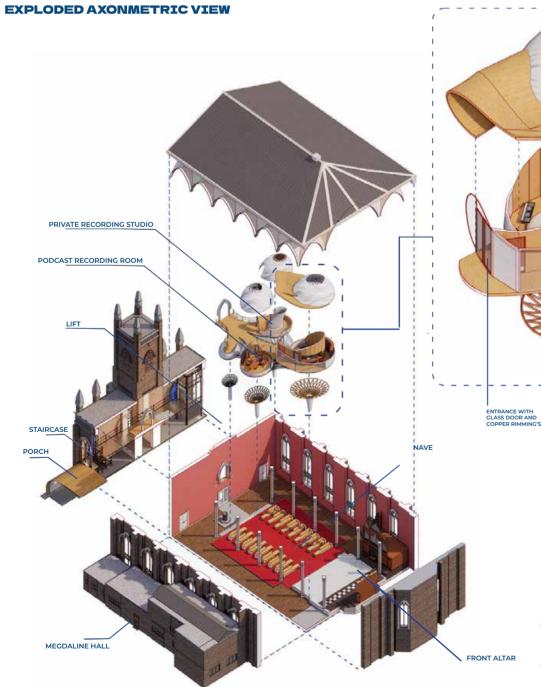
ticality while maintaining serene atmospher

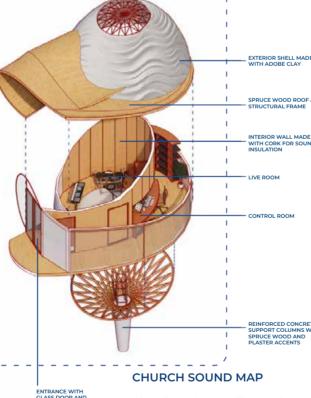
CELLING PLAN STRUCTUR MILLOR

between H-beams, with gaps allowing the louvers to be visible and enhancing the sense of height. The alternating materials create a

MATERIAL SELECTION

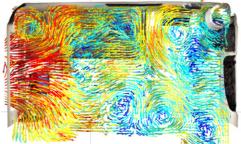
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This map illustrates how sound diffuses throughout the church, highlighting the patterns and pathways it takes as it interacts with the building's architectural features. By studying this map, I was able to gain a better understanding of how sound flows through the space, including how it reflects off the walls, travels along the vaulted ceilings, and dissipates in the open areas.

The information gathered from this map serves as a foundational guide for designing the floorplan. By aligning the layout with the natural movement of sound, I can ensure that the space remains acoustically balanced and suitable for its intended purposes. This means positioning key features, such as the mezzanine, seating, and recording pods, in locations that either enhance or work harmoniously with the church's existing acoustics





instead of taking away from it thus i chose muted colors and materials from the existing area. the other shell is made from adobe clay using the abundant London Clay in the area as clay is a great sound insulator and is lightweight, it is also easily moldable allowing me to create the sound wave patterns present on the shell The frame of the Sound Speres is created using Spruce Wood which is sturdy and also abun-dant in the area. Insulation will be put inside as well for better sound dampening and warmth.

Finally, the interior wall will be made of a thick layer of cork which is also a great sound insula-tor, perfect for sound recording studios such as the example shown on the right. this will be accented with copper riming's which will rust over time giving the structure more character, similar to the church church

## SAMPLE

EXTERIOR WALL



INTERIOR WALL

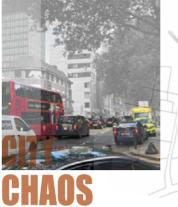
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## Introduction

Trapped Memory" is the title of my project, inspired by my survey of the Somers Town area. During my site visit, I noticed many items accumulated on the balconies of the local community, which made me realize that people lack adequate storage for their belongings, risking the loss of treasured possessions.

My design aims to create a space where people can bring their personal items, whether for temporary storage or donation. Additionally, it will serve as a collection hub where residents can have their parcels delivered to a secure place when they are not at home.



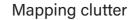






Euston and King's Cross are both bustling hubs, serving as key transport links that connect not only different parts of London

but also the rest of the UK and international



Located right in front of a busy road the church seems invisible as the scaffolding is covering most of its structure. Unless you walk in pavement across the street the you won't even be able to notice its presence.

The church seems like its a divider between the front industrial business and the back formed by residential building.





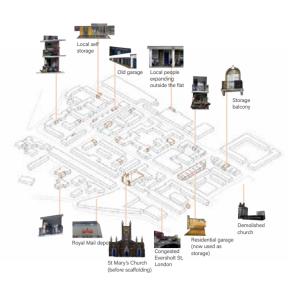












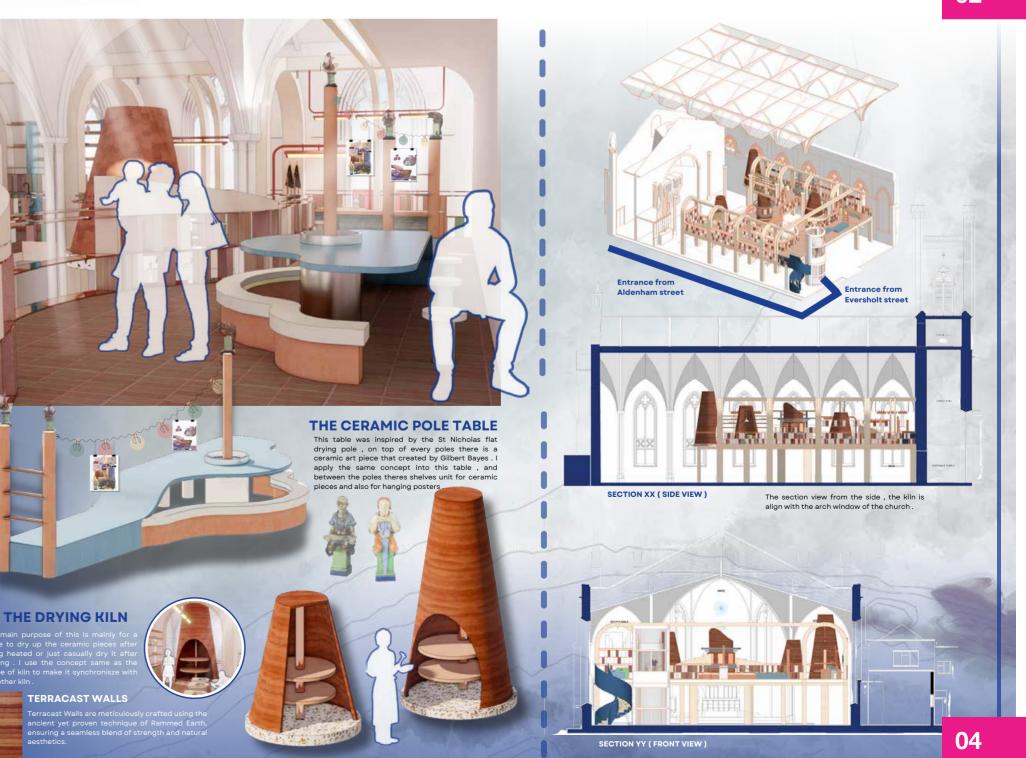
The outside of the church seems left to deteriorate making the place looking unmaintained and filthy.

Space is wide creating an echo on each step, the space give a sense of calmness imposing the idea of being quiet. In the air a typical church smell cense is constantly present.

Once inside the church the outside feels forgotten as the interior is completely different formed by well urated details and colours. e naves are tall and allow lots of light to come through.



02



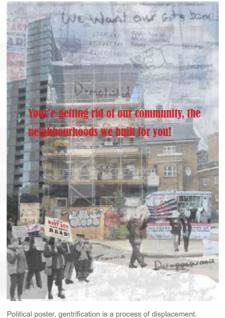
## **Unhoused Minds**

Gentrification has forced people, buildings, communities and neighbourhoods out of their sancturary. This has caused society, to become more displaced and because of this, buildings, individuals, communities and the environment are losing their identity and becoming more isolated. Gentrification erases memories, histories, and generations. Out with the old, in with the new is how we now see and define gentrification. This has served as my inspiration for my design as when I visited Somers Town, I observed how gentrified it was becoming due to all the scaffolding, grafti and stores closing down. I questioned how the long term residents felt and if I could help them come to terms with this victimising process. My research strand is health through empathy and lost community sprisical and mental health was and how I could help these displaced residents feel heard and understood.

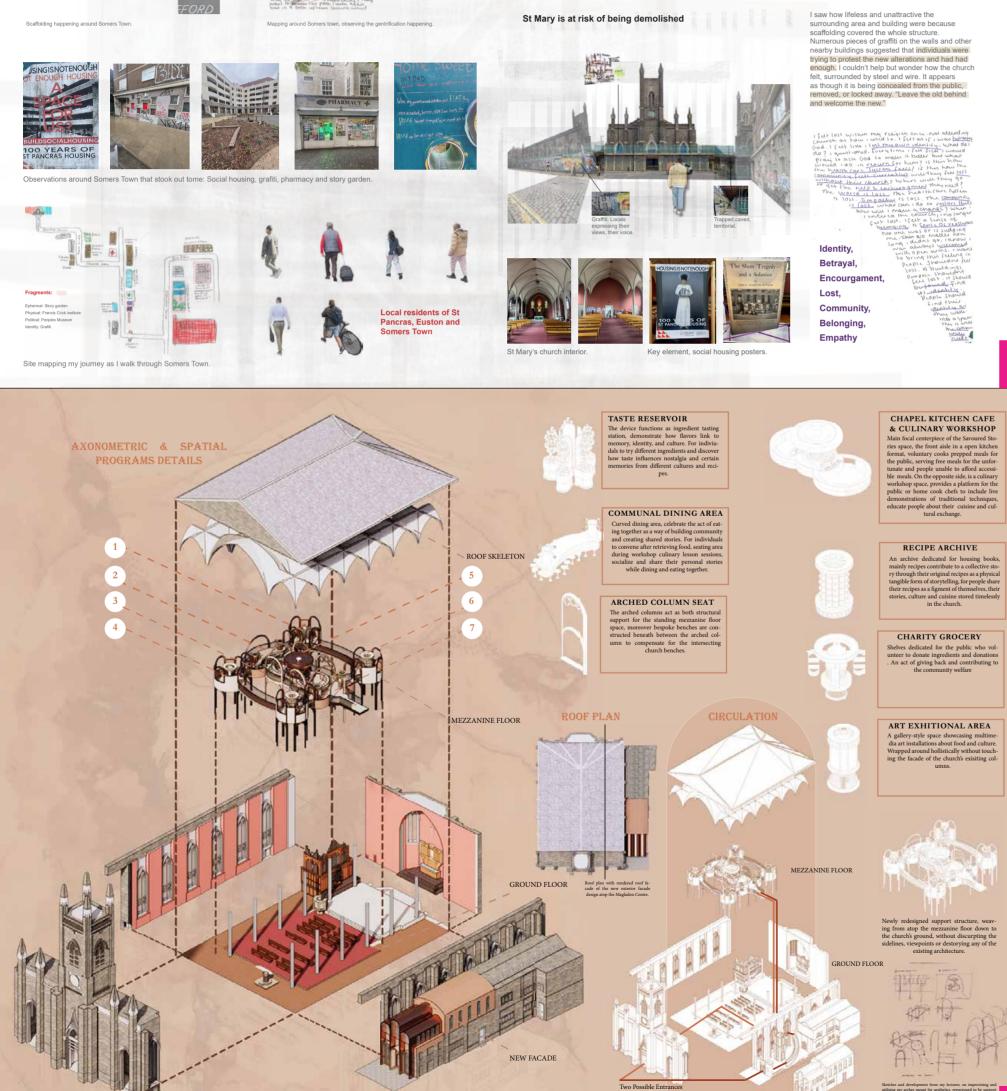






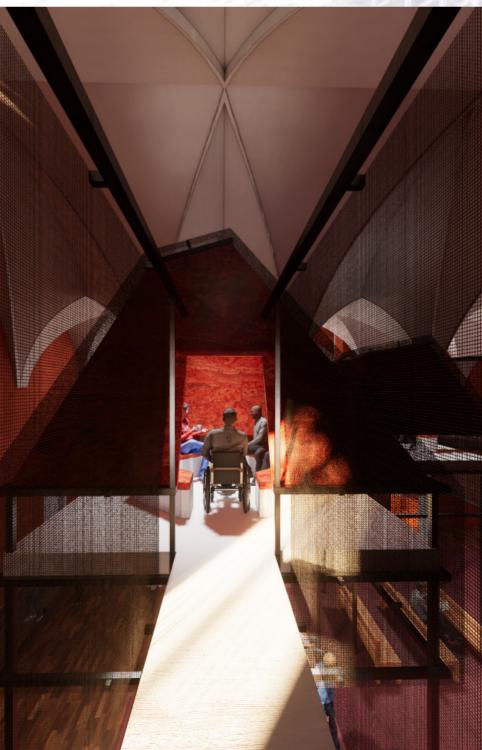


05



To The Mezz











Private pods offer a one-to-one session where a therapist and client can speak away from others.

Both visuals display the blend of artificial and natural light in the church, with artificial light starting from the slanted top and illuminating downwards onto the floor. The colour of lighting was important, as colour can play a massive role in how others may feel in the space. The colour white is neutral and doesn't clash with the interior of the pods. It creates a positive atmosphere.

## **Response from Father Paschal**



Please find my personal reflection of the recent Exhibition in St, Mary`s - Jan-Feb 2025

## What stood out:

Dear All,

I was impressed and moved by the level of care and detail that went into every section of the Exhibition. This stemmed from the research gleaned from real contact with the Somers Town community and resulted in a huge variety of 'options'. Every design reflected a desire to value and celebrate our local identity, histories, stories and values, lest they be lost forever. Every design had a clear aim and narrative, and I rejoiced that St Mary's could be seen, going forward, as a 'safe space for hearts and minds'. Being a facility for the locality, it was good to see the variety of uses - so a 'Permanent archive' where historical roots can be valued and built upon; 'the Escapism Space' & 'Phantom Shell' might enable people to enter into a nonjudgmental place especially for those weary of 'Urban Stress'. Important to Christianity and many other Faiths is the importance of "hospitality" - so it was a delight to see from the 'Table of Tales Space' a facility which enables people to share stories over a home-cooked meal. The creative design to acknowledge much-needed sustainability through clothes and the release of artistic flair with pottery were all areas which are 'current' yet also imaginative.

## What I found inspirational:

As a Parish Priest, I spend a lot of time dealing with pastoral encounters - whether brief or on a regular basis, so it was heartening to see the beautiful different designs of different kinds of spaces for counselling, confession and individual or small group work. In such a large building, it is encouraging to find smaller spaces which provide calmness and intimacy. The "Unheard Minds" design speaks to the crying hunger for people's stories and concerns to be heard. The engraved wooden structure, with local comments and reflections, was intriguing and unusual, and deserved sustained examination. The unusual different entrances into the church, combined with the sheer light in the 'upper rooms', gave much 'food for thought' on how not to waste space.

## What I found surprising:

I hadn't realised the importance and the difference of 'sound' within one building - so the 'Soundscape' was a fresh learning experience for me - plus, opening up a source of income through hiring out a recording studio - or a room for people's enjoyment of sound and music. The different style of walls, incorporated in many of the designs, was something I hadn't really thought of as important, but now I do! The partitions and walls not only 'protect' the activities within, but some are, in themselves, sustainable. The use of ceramic tiles of different styles, colours and designs, each made an impact - especially, the soothing green tiles for mental health provision. The cork, wood and Soy wax, plus the clever and beautiful use of stained glass, all added to the development of each vision. The 'Threads of Time' workshop and library. the 'Echoes of Memory' and 'Trapped Memories' were all surprising uses of the building. I was particularly impressed that providing space for storage in "Trapped Memories" arose from observing the shortage of housing space in homes in the area, as I know so many families have little space within their flats.

The Exhibition certainly opened our minds and hearts to fresh visions for St Mary's Church - though, of course, any structural change in a historic building is fraught with regulations and heritage and ecclesiastical permissions! But all the hard work involved in this Exhibition has lifted our spirits as a congregation, as we sit surrounded by corrugated fences and graffiti! Beauty heals the human soul - and so, you have all, in different ways, have brought unexpected beauty to all your designs.

Thank you for 'seeing with your hearts', as well as your eyes!!



## **Collaboration Team:**

Client: Father Paschal Worton, St. Mary's congregation and local residents.

**Pratices of Reuse Project Themes:** Trapped Memories Fading Crafts **Future Threads Unlocked Voices** Style Meets Comfort Soul on Sound Healing Through Design/ An Exploration of Therapeutic Spaces in Healthcare Self Care Healing Spaces Treads of Transformation Phantom Shell A Living Palimpsest The Unhoused Minds Threads of Time Public Voice Crafting Community Cohesion Wall of Unwritten Endings Mending The Cracks An Artistic Voice Resilient Embrace: A Cage or Renewal Echoes of Memory Savoured Stories Lost Voices Voices of St Mary's Church Echoes of a Community Urban Stress The Living Archive Silent Walls

## **University Technicians:**

Craft as Connection

Technical Tutor (3D) Senior Technician (Digital Manufacturing) Senior Technician (Small Metals and Jewellery) Senior Technician (Ceramics) Senior Technician (Making Specialist)



St. Marv's Church **Exhibition build video** 

Senior Research Lecturer CAD Support Lecturer

Interior architecture tutor team:

## **University Friends:**

Programme Leader

UAL - Edward Lawrenson, Filmmaker/ Lecturer, UCL Anthropology, who kindly recorded the exhibition build as part of a possible research project on St. Mary's Church and Somers Town.

## Thanks to:

A Space for us/ People's Museum/ Diana Foster - Learning Designer, artist, and community activist, who kindly introduced Father Paschal to us, and without that serendipitous moment, this collaboration project would never of happened.

And lastly, to Father Paschal for his insight and help!



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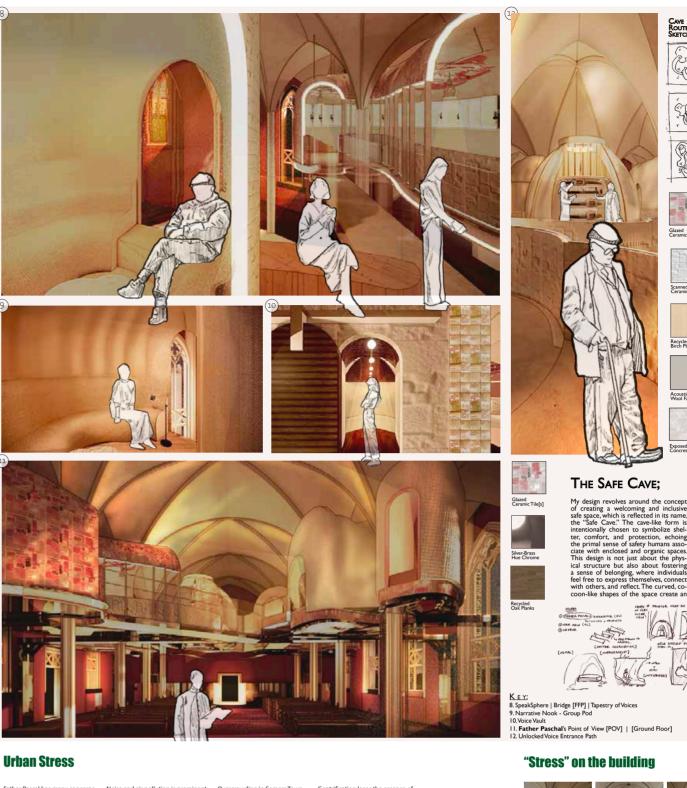
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Noise and air pollution is prominent Overcrowding in Somers Town 
 Father Pascal has many concerns
 Noise and air pollution is prominent
 Overcrowing in Somers Town

 about his community due to the two najor transport
 is a clear indication of a cause
 is a clear indication of a cause

 thing they're mainly facing, which is the poverty. This could be due to living in an urban city, when the transmitter to living in an urban city, when transport
 stations means that there's constant
 community as its characterized by high density housing, specifically which are significant sources of urban

ularly noticed as I walked through Somers Town. This poster em

as is a concern. Like graffiti, someones mind may become messy and all over the plac

uilt up of traffic which in turn makes it more noisy. There's not much escape as these p

in population and due to urbanisation, green spaces being rep

noise has on the lack of peace. The issue of overcrowding can result in a high

onstant road works, construction of new buildings and repairs leading

Adurtments

the local area as small bu are replaced by chain bu stress, poor mental healt

utural safe space

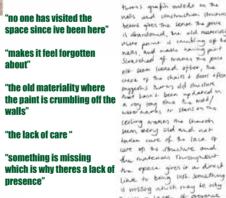
## 'no one has visited the space since ive been here'

"makes it feel forgotten about "the old materiality where

the paint is crumbling off the walls'

## "the lack of care "

"something is missing





decay and deterioration as well a scaffolding and structure The walls are peeling, the concre



## **Ai Project Manifesto**

This is due to the feeling of being and you entered an interior space that takes you out from reality due to is unusual nature, it could remove you from the stress you're a space that is unreal, a space that is a distraction, a space that separated you from what you're used to on a day to day basis. dealing with in your worldly life.



I: | FABRICATION SAMPLE[S]

Cave Route Sketch[es]

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SO.

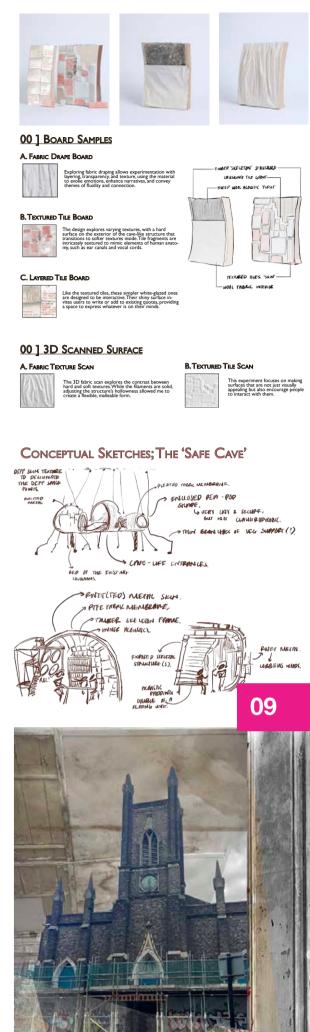
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Glazed Ceramic Tile[s]

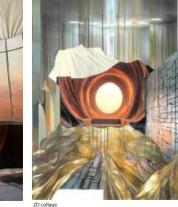
Scanned Ceramic Tile

Recycled Birch Planks

Acoustic Wool Fabrie







in the collage, it looks like ther re piercing through the ceiling and comin down as a support sturtcure which could suggest some sort of support that could be holding something up through hanging, rather than a support structure from hold something up as it sits on the top of it.

10

In materiality or mediums used to create i helped to communicate the idea of a soft, calm, relaxed and safe environment I am aiming to created in terms of the idea of relieving urban stress within the commun



by laking the concept of loss and a and the !

The layer concealing the trusses can be seen as the cathartic calmness of the church in comparison to the usses which are a structural element holding the load of the chruch. structural elements are is chipping, the wood is splitting atations of strass and prossure as the whole building relies of o keep it up