

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 AI 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, 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.



Site Location

Client

Father Paschal

IAY3 Cohort

/// 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 individual), 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."

"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 interior."

"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."

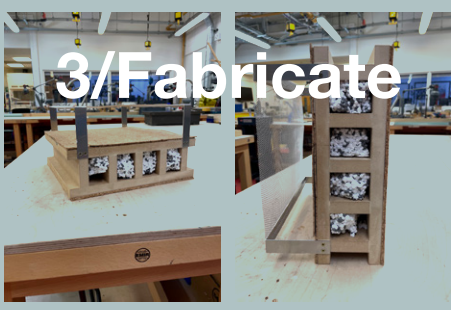
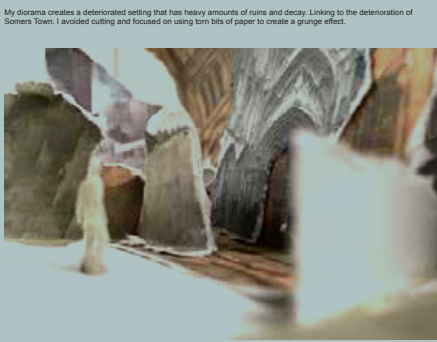
Father Paschal Worton, Parish Priest, St. Mary's Church, Somers Town.



IAY3 Collaborative Studio start-up session



My collage embodies the idea of a fading memory, illustrating the concept of deterioration of an area, leading to deterioration of an individual's physical and mental state.
Prompts: Rugged, rare, deteriorated, disruption, fade, Murred, loss, bleak, not, watercolour, and dark.



For the first sample, I changed the bracket system as I could make the brackets steel used in the current structure. I used aluminium and cut out two 50mm strips, which then created a 90° bend to form a U-shaped bracket. Lastly, I carefully measured the brackets and made several brackets to ensure the 'ghost' was.



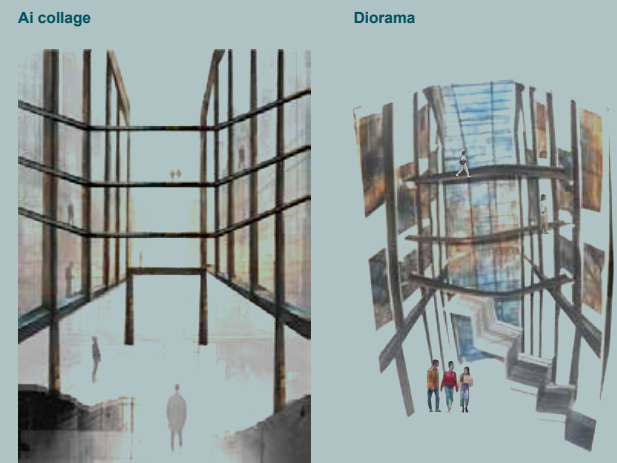
The images below show how the 'ghost' steel arch when an object is behind, creating a story and hidden view of my hand.



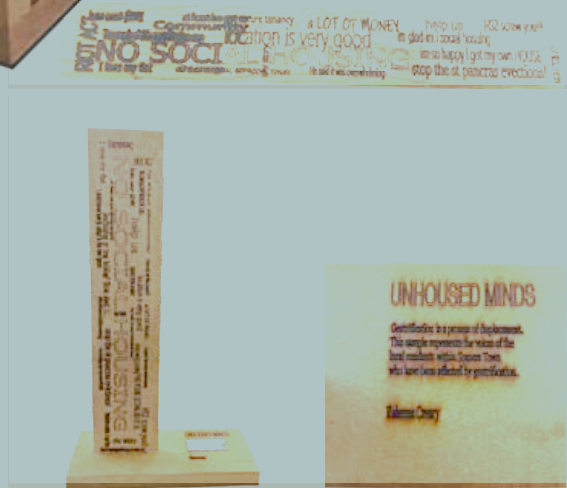
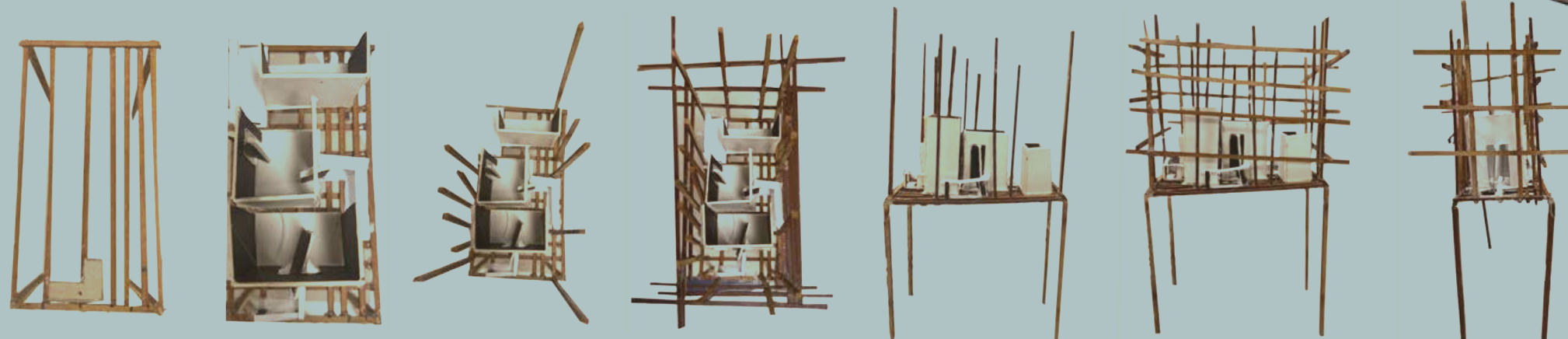
2425 - Semester 1
PRACTICES OF REUSE //
Prototyper/ Manufacture
SAMPLE STORE
BA INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE



I selected these images because they depict displacement, loss, identity and gentrification. There is the usage of glass, which represents transparency, which is something I want to produce in my design, as well as fragments that symbolise the relocation of people and cities as a result of gentrification. There are other layers that demonstrate how individuals feel about social housing and how it impacts their psychological and physical health. Huge vertical wooden structure to reflect the scaffolding outside. I want to turn it into a positive memory instead of a traumatic one for the community.



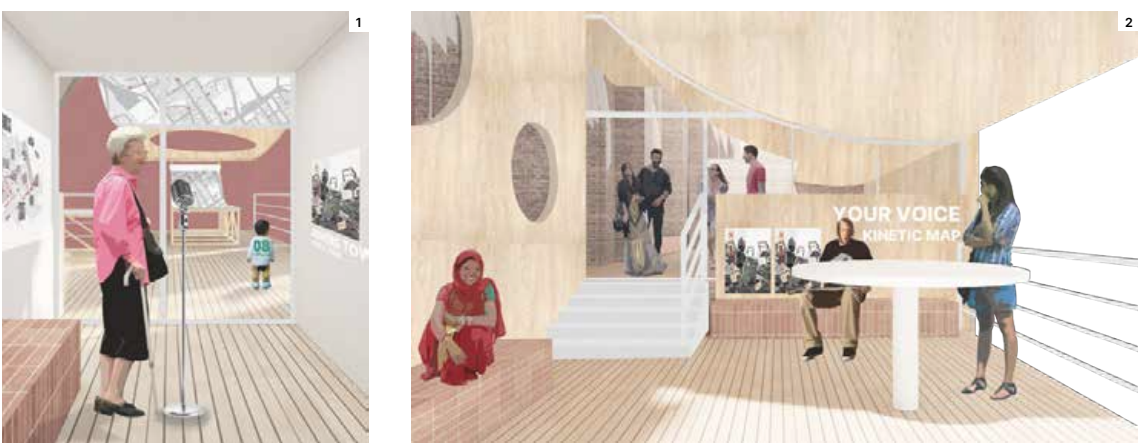
Collage based on the AI images produced. Focusing on the structural element and how I will create a "new community" within the church. Bringing in the scaffolding element but using timber instead to make it appear softer for the residents, letting them know this is a safe place where they can talk. Thinking of the atmosphere and how people will use it.



Fabricate/ Manufacture team



VISUAL



Echoes of Memory:
Multi-Sensory Journeys Through Soundscapes
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 voices and memories that define it.

MATERIAL



Aligned with SDG 11 and 12, the material selection 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 minimizing environmental impact.



1: RECORDING SPACE
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



TRAPPED MEMORIES

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.



CITY CHAOS



The area is rich with stories, cultural and valuable objects to vibrant community spaces where people gather to share their experiences and tales.



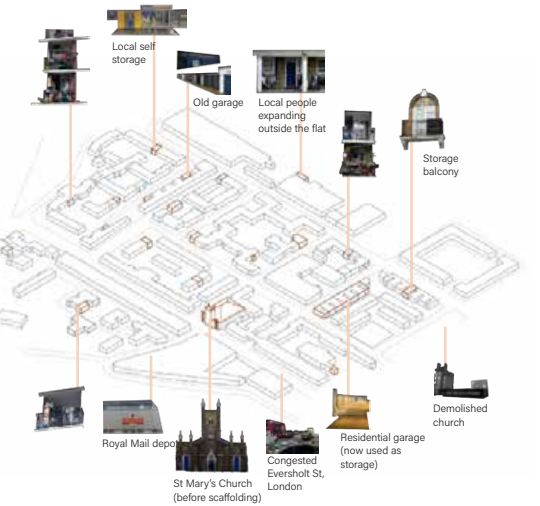
Euston and King's Cross are both bustling hubs, serving as key transport links that connect not only different parts of London but also the rest of the UK and international destinations. As a result, millions of people pass through daily, whether commuting for work or traveling for leisure.

The streets are often congested, especially during rush hours, with heavy traffic and crowds of people frantically navigating the bustling thoroughfares, competing for space.

Mapping clutter

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.

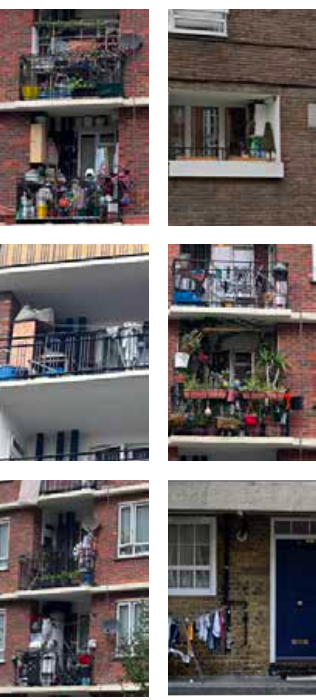


The outside of the church seems left to deteriorate making the place looking unmaintained and filthy.

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 of incense is constantly present.

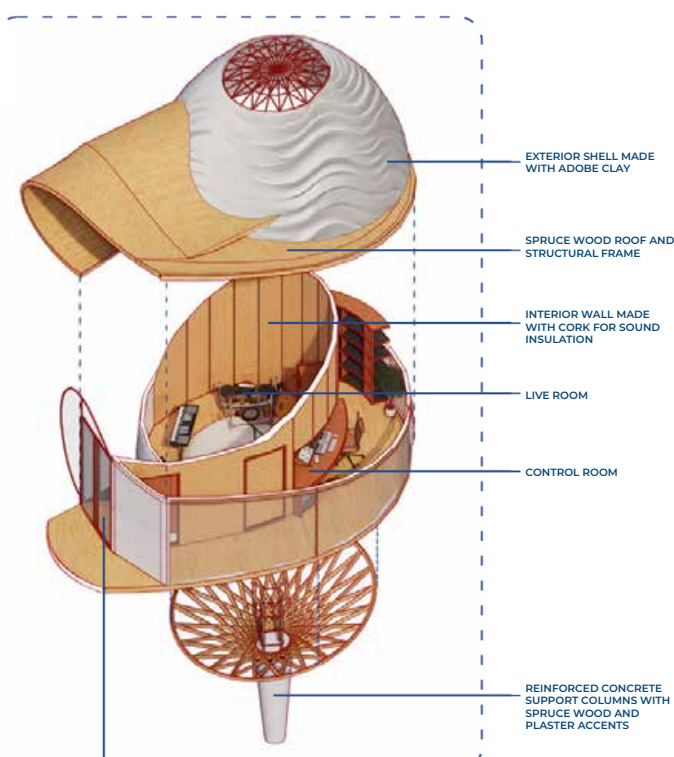
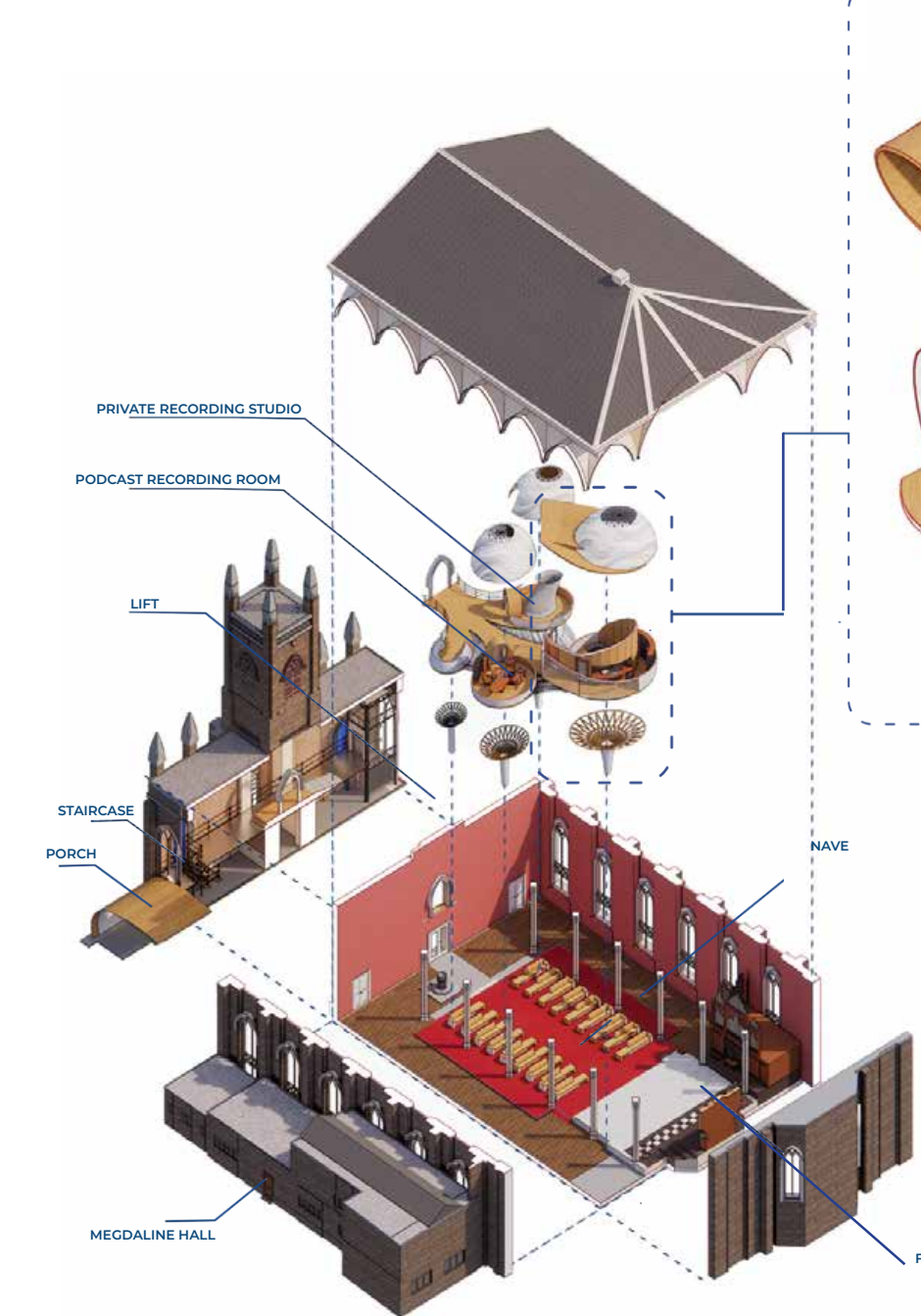
Once inside the church the outside feels forgotten as the interior is completely different formed by well curated details and colours. The naves are tall and allow lots of light to come through.

QUIETNESS NEGLECTED BRIGHT SMELL



01

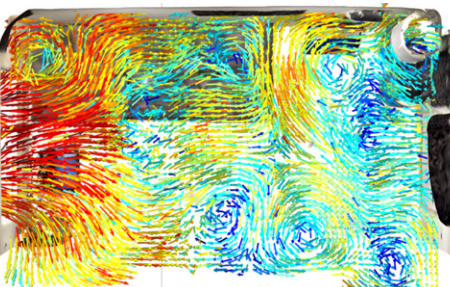
EXPLODED AXONOMETRIC VIEW



CHURCH SOUND MAP

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.



MATERIAL SELECTION



I wanted the materials to complement the existing structure of the church instead of taking away from it thus I chose muted colors and materials from the existing area.

The frame of the Sound Spheres is created using Spruce Wood which is sturdy and also abundant 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 insulator, perfect for sound recording studios such as the example shown on the right. This will be accented with copper rimming which will rust over time giving the structure more character, similar to the church.

SAMPLE



03



THE CERAMIC POLE TABLE

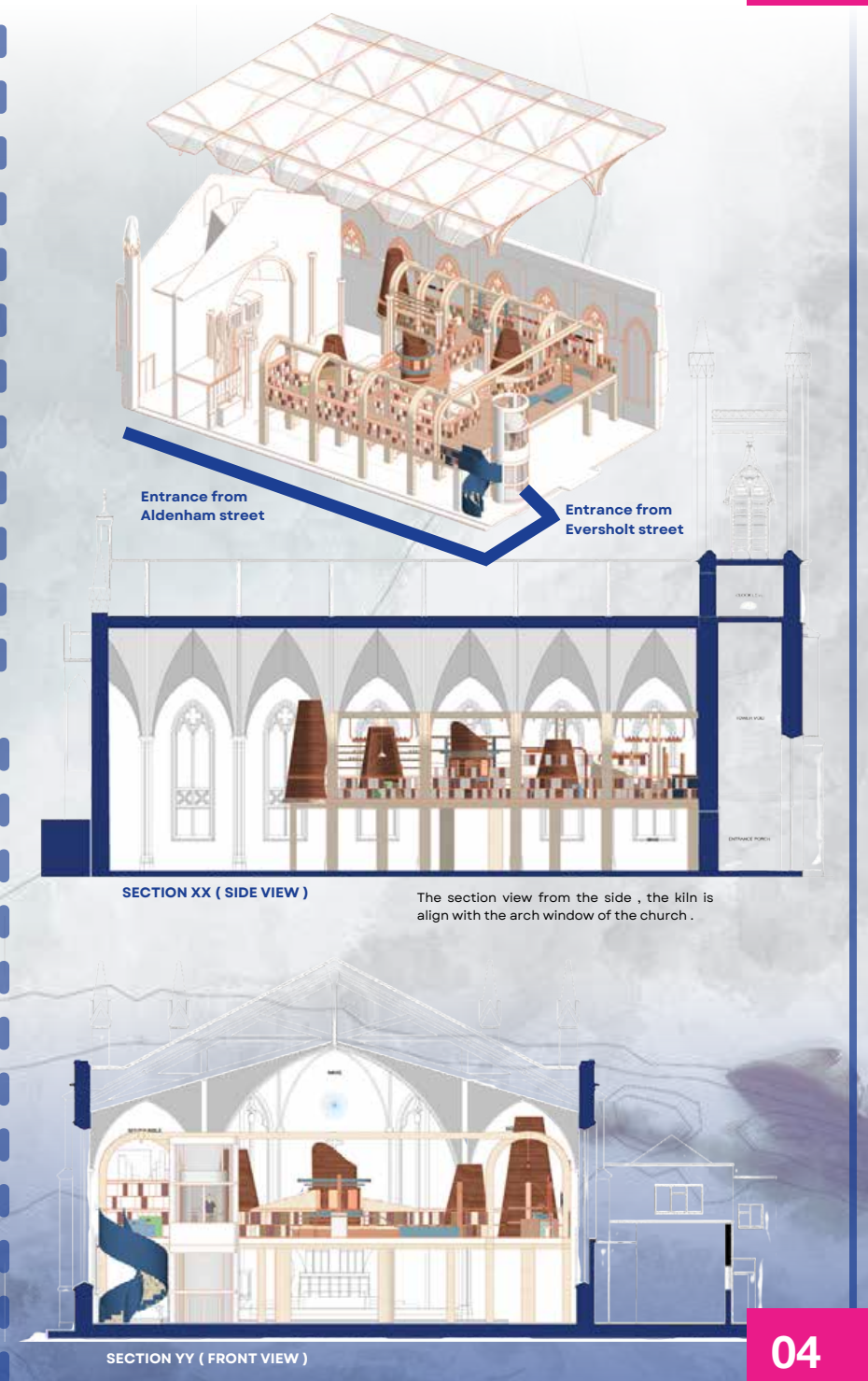
This table was inspired by the St. Nicholas flat drying pole, on top of every poles there is a ceramic art piece that created by Gilbert Bayes. I apply the same concept into this table, and between the poles there's shelves unit for ceramic pieces and also for hanging posters.

THE DRYING KILN

The main purpose of this is mainly for a place to dry up the ceramic pieces after being heated or just casually dry it after making. I use the concept same as the shape of kiln to make it synchronize with the other kiln.

TERRACAST WALLS

Terracast Walls are meticulously crafted using the ancient yet proven technique of Rammed Earth, ensuring a seamless blend of strength and natural aesthetics.



02

04

Unhoused Minds

Gentrification has forced people, buildings, communities and neighbourhoods out of their sanctuary. This has caused society, to become more displaced and because of this, 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, graffiti 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 service. Therefore, I questioned how the residents physical and mental health was and how I could help these displaced residents feel heard and understood.



Scaffolding happening around Somers Town.



Mapping around Somers town, observing the gentrification happening.



Observations around Somers Town that stood out to me: Social housing, graffiti, pharmacy and story garden.



Site mapping my journey as I walk through Somers Town.



Sample of the unhoused minds. Words of the local community



Political poster, gentrification is a process of displacement.

St Mary is at risk of being demolished



St Mary's church interior.

Key element, social housing posters.

I saw how lifeless and unattractive the surrounding area and building were because scaffolding covered the whole structure. Numerous pieces of graffiti on the walls and other nearby buildings suggested that individuals were trying to protest the new alterations and had had enough. I couldn't help but wonder how the church felt, surrounded by steel and wire. It appears as though it is being concealed from the public; removed, or locked away. "Leave the old behind and welcome the new."

Identity, Betrayal, Encouragement, Lost, Community, Belonging, Empathy

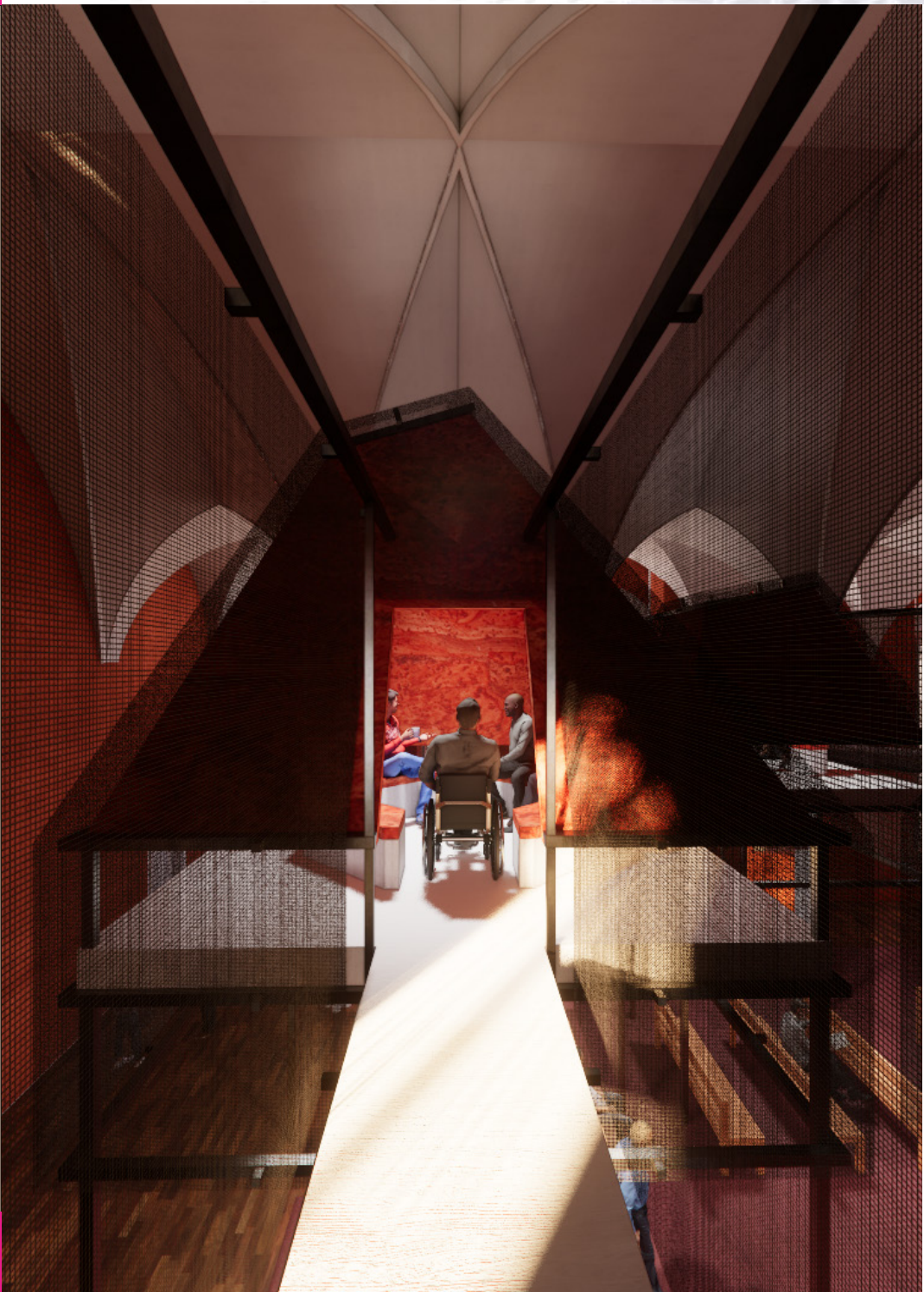
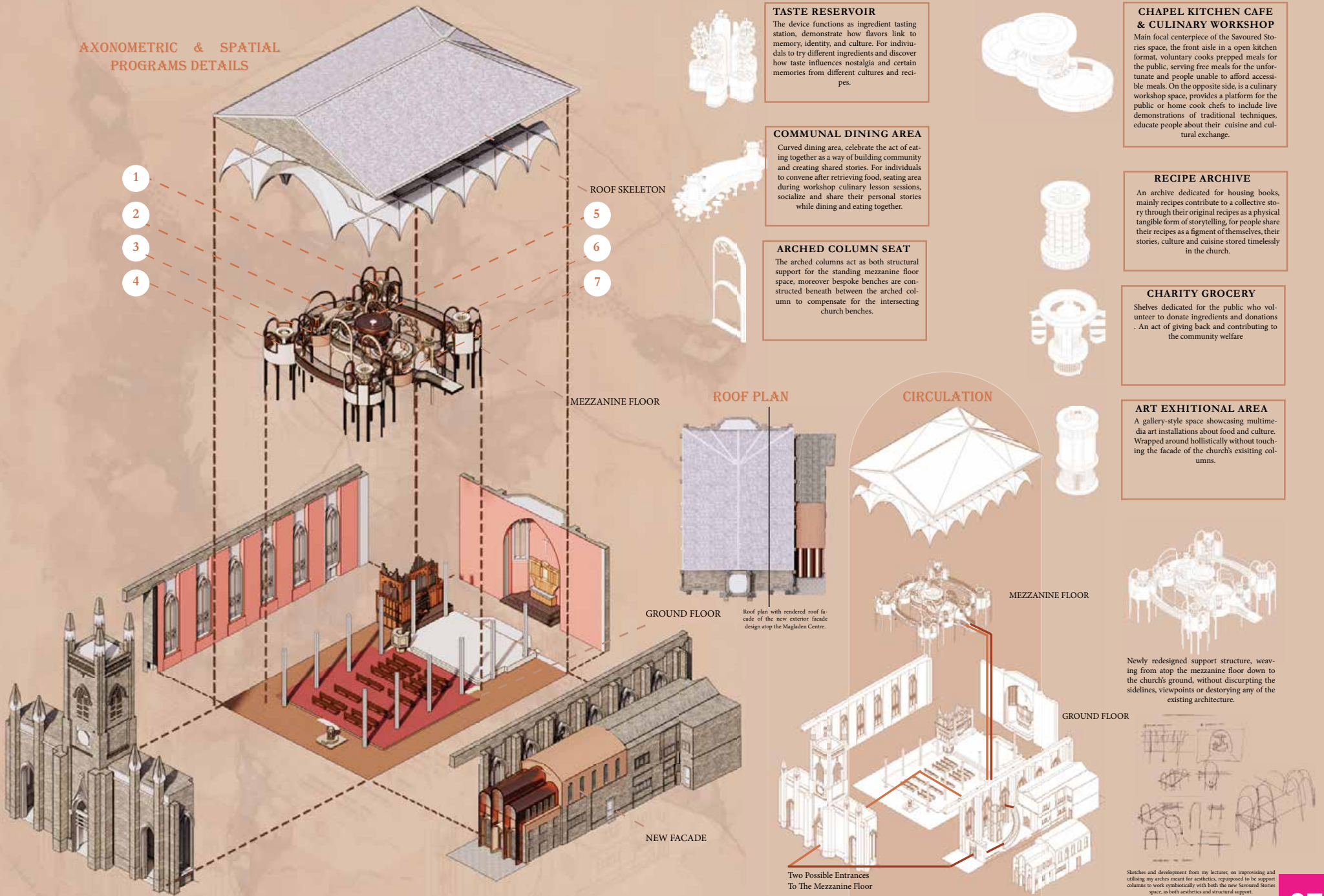
Interior visuals



Entrance and approach



AXONOMETRIC & SPATIAL PROGRAMS DETAILS



Group therapy pod being acts as a communal space for people to share and offer help to one another.



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.

