



Architecture Beyond Vision:  
A Multi-Sensory Exploration, Connecting Spaces to Memory

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Fig 1: Digital illustration by Seungho Cho [Cho,SH (2024), People who focus on sight]

People tend to respond first to visual stimuli in their daily lives. This project began by questioning why people focus so much vision and become less aware of other senses, like sound and smell. In particular, I explored why vision is prioritized in the spaces, while other senses are often overlooked. This study experimented with how to experience space in a new way by using sound, scent, and touch. It analyzed how these senses could change our emotional and historical connection to a space, especially in relation to local history. The research explored the potential of strengthening these connections through the use of multiple senses.

The results show that buildings are not just about physical structures but about deepening people's connection to the space through sensory experiences.

This paper examines how psychogeography, through a multi-sensory lens, deepens our connection to historical architecture. By engaging all senses, it reveals the hidden psychological layers of spaces, enriching their bond with the community. Through sensory experiences, we can connect more deeply to the history and culture of a place, transforming spaces into living narratives.



INTRODUCTION

"I enter a building, see a room, and—within seconds—a feeling has enveloped me. A strong sense of this place, its atmosphere, its aura" (Zumthor, 2006).<sup>1</sup> This statement encapsulates my approach to multisensory architecture, where design extends beyond visual aesthetics to engage touch, sound, smell, and light. How do spaces influence our emotions and behaviors through these sensory dimensions? Can architecture truly connect with us if it overlooks these aspects? These questions anchor my academic investigation, inviting a rethinking of how spaces can resonate with their users on emotional and sensory levels.

Architecture is often seen as a visual art, dominated by form, symmetry, and proportion. However, focusing solely on sight risks creating spaces that feel detached from the full human experience. The built environment has the potential to engage us on deeper, more personal levels by incorporating all our senses. As "The skin reads the texture, weight, and temperature of matter," emphasizing that touch, sound, and smell are as integral to our connection with space as what we see.<sup>2</sup> This sensory engagement transforms architecture into more than just a physical structure—it becomes a medium for storytelling, memory, and emotion.

This journal explores how multisensory architecture can bridge this gap, creating spaces that resonate with individuals in profound and personal ways. By drawing on psychogeographic methods, the research delves into how sensory layers—sounds, textures, and atmospheres—shape human interactions with their environments. Psychogeography highlights that spaces are not static; they are living ecosystems shaped by memory, culture, and the dynamic interplay between people and their surroundings.

Key case studies serve as critical touchpoints for this exploration. IK LAB in Tulum, Mexico, exemplifies how organic forms and tactile materials invite intuitive navigation and emotional connection.<sup>3</sup> The Sancaklar Mosque in Turkey demonstrates how simplicity and material authenticity can create spiritual and introspective experiences.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, Junya Ishigami's KAIT Workshop in Japan reimagines spatial norms with radical openness, encouraging freedom and collaboration through delicate and fluid design.<sup>5</sup>

Together, these examples illustrate how architecture can transcend its physicality, fostering lasting connections through sensory engagement. This investigation challenges the visual dominance of modern design, proposing instead that truly meaningful spaces are those that connect with all the senses. By exploring this multisensory approach, the journal seeks to understand how architecture can evoke deeper relationships with the spaces we inhabit, bridging the past, present, and future through design.

1 Zumthor, P. (2006) Atmospheres : architectural environments, surrounding objects. Basel: Birkhäuser.  
2 Pallasmaa, J. (2024) The eyes of the skin : architecture and the senses. Fourth edition. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.  
3 IK LAB. (n.d.). IK LAB Tulum. Available at: <https://iklab.org> [Accessed 28 November. 2024].  
4 Sancaklar Mosque. (2013). Project by Emre Arolat Architecture. Available at: <https://emrearolat.com> [Accessed 28 November. 2024].  
5 Ishigami, J. (2009). KAIT Workshop. Kanagawa Institute of Technology. Available at: <https://www.junyaishigami.com> [Accessed 28 November. 2024].







In Somers Town, local history comes alive through the rich details scattered across its streets, each element whispering stories of the past. Old buildings stand as quiet witnesses to time, their weathered stone walls etched with cracks and marks, carrying the rough textures of an enduring legacy. Touching their cool, uneven surfaces feels like tracing the fingerprints of history itself. Alongside these aged structures, planters line the streets—some vibrant, others neglected—adding to the sensory tapestry. Their earthy scent mingles with the faint fragrance of city soil, damp greenery, and the occasional whiff of rusted metal, creating an olfactory map of the area.

The streets reveal themselves as an intricate mosaic, with patches of old brickwork peeking through modern layers and faded iron railings standing like sentinels from another era. These tactile and olfactory layers—damp stone, rusty iron, and overgrown planters—convey more than just physicality; they hold the stories of a neighborhood shaped by change and resilience. Walking through Somers Town becomes an intimate exploration, where the senses uncover the hidden layers of its history, offering an almost tangible connection to its past.

# Local History





THE TRANSFORMING LANDSCAPE OF SOMERS TOWN

I walked through Somers Town, keenly observing how the area's physical and social landscape is being reshaped by large-scale developments. The most striking transformation was the loss of a public park that had been a vital communal space. This park, one of the last green spaces in the neighborhood, has been overshadowed and fragmented by the construction of a 28-story luxury apartment building. Promoted as "invisible," this tower instead asserts an overwhelming presence, disrupting the openness of the park. One side of the park was fenced off with metal barriers and stern warnings: "WARNING, these premises are protected, Anchor 24/7 security."

This change felt jarring. Parks are intended to be public sanctuaries, places for relaxation and interaction. Yet, what I saw was exclusion—a fenced-off construction site replacing a lively communal hub. Diana Foster, founder of the People's Museum, articulates the broader implications of such changes: "Somers Town is being dismantled, building by building, park by park, with precious green space in our park sold off for a 28-story luxury tower." (Foster, 2020). These developments prioritize private profit over the shared values of community and environmental sustainability.<sup>1</sup>

What struck me most was the irony. While local councils and developers often highlight commitments to environmental and social well-being, their actions contradict these claims. As Foster observed, the loss of public parks not only removes physical spaces but also erodes the intangible sense of belonging and connection

that these spaces foster.<sup>2</sup> This aligns with David Littlefield and Saskia Lewis's sentiment: "Where there should have been bustle and noise and life, there was quiet." (Littlefield and Lewis, 2007).<sup>3</sup> The park, once a symbol of communal vitality, now stands as a muted testament to the impact of gentrification.

<sup>1</sup> Foster, D. (2020) 'PR sees Somers Town written off as "a forlorn" part of London', Camden New Journal. Available at: <https://www.camdennewjournal.co.uk/article/pr-sees-somers-town-written-off-as-a-forlorn-part-of-london> (Accessed: 24 October 2024).  
<sup>2</sup> Foster, D. (2020) 'It could be a Rachel Whiteread but it's not...', Camden New Journal. Available at: <https://www.camdennewjournal.co.uk/article/it-could-be-a-rachel-whiteread-but-its-not> (Accessed: 24 October 2024).  
<sup>3</sup> Littlefield, D. and Lewis, S. (2007) Architectural Voices: Listening to Old Buildings. Chichester: Wiley-Academy.  
<sup>4</sup> Waterson, M. (2019) Rescue and Reuse: Communities, Heritage and Architecture. London: RIBA Publishing.  
<sup>5</sup> A Space For Us Club (n.d.) 'Demolition imminent 42 Phoenix Road'. Available at: <https://aspaceforus.club/projects/demolition-imminent-42-phoenix-rd/> (Accessed: 24 October 2024).



HISTORICAL BUILDINGS AND THE FIGHT FOR PRESERVATION

I continued my walk through Somers Town, drawn to its aging buildings, each etched with stories of resilience and transformation. One that particularly caught my attention was Margaret's Day Nursery. This locally listed building, established in 1934, has been a cornerstone of the community, serving as a refuge for fatherless children, a support center for Bangladeshi women, and later, a tutoring service. Its history reflects the evolution of Somers Town itself, a place of diversity and adaptation. However, this building now faces demolition, slated to be replaced by student flats. As I stood before its weathered façade, I couldn't help but feel the weight of loss—not just of a structure, but of a cultural and social landmark. Locals have long fought for its preservation, advocating for "imaginative yet careful integration of old and new." (Waterson, 2019).<sup>4</sup> Yet, the council has dismissed these concerns, prioritizing developments that offer little benefit to the existing community.

Diana Foster's words in the Camden New Journal resonated deeply as I looked at the nursery: "Much change is inevitable, but it does rather rankle when we hear that consultants are paid thousands to create a 'sense of place.'"

(Foster, 2020).<sup>2</sup> Her critique captures the profound irony of such redevelopment—while developers attempt to construct an artificial sense of identity, they erase the genuine histories embedded in places like this nursery. The demolition represents not just a physical loss but also a symbolic severing of the community's ties to its past. The struggle over Margaret's Day Nursery epitomizes the tension between gentrification and preservation. While change is inevitable,

it need not come at the expense of community heritage and identity.<sup>5</sup> What locals desire is a balanced approach, one that respects history while accommodating progress. Without this, places like Somers Town risk losing the very character that defines them.

<sup>1</sup> Foster, D. (2020) 'PR sees Somers Town written off as "a forlorn" part of London', Camden New Journal. Available at: <https://www.camdennewjournal.co.uk/article/pr-sees-somers-town-written-off-as-a-forlorn-part-of-london> (Accessed: 24 October 2024).  
<sup>2</sup> Foster, D. (2020) 'It could be a Rachel Whiteread but it's not...', Camden New Journal. Available at: <https://www.camdennewjournal.co.uk/article/it-could-be-a-rachel-whiteread-but-its-not> (Accessed: 24 October 2024).  
<sup>3</sup> Littlefield, D. and Lewis, S. (2007) Architectural Voices: Listening to Old Buildings. Chichester: Wiley-Academy.  
<sup>4</sup> Waterson, M. (2019) Rescue and Reuse: Communities, Heritage and Architecture. London: RIBA Publishing.  
<sup>5</sup> A Space For Us Club (n.d.) 'Demolition imminent 42 Phoenix Road'. Available at: <https://aspaceforus.club/projects/demolition-imminent-42-phoenix-rd/> (Accessed: 24 October 2024).



A Sensory Journey Through Somers Town

As I walked through Chalton Street in Somers Town, I was struck by the distinct sensory experiences that seemed to echo the area's history. Chalton Street, home to a small market and various community spaces, is a place where time feels layered. The roughness of the cobblestones beneath my feet provided a tactile reminder of the street's age, their unevenness revealing years of use. Nearby, the faint metallic scent of rust emanated from the old railings surrounding the St. Mary's Flats—a relic of Somers Town's social housing history. These textures and smells gave the area a raw, unpolished character, one that spoke of resilience rather than perfection.<sup>1</sup>

At the corner where Chalton Street meets Phoenix Road, I paused by the People's Museum, a community-run initiative housed in a modest, weathered building. The wooden door of the museum, worn smooth by countless hands, felt like a portal to the neighborhood's collective memory. A local volunteer greeted me, explaining how the museum preserves the stories of Somers Town's working-class roots. As I leaned against the brick wall, its rough surface carried the chill of the morning air—a tactile connection to the building's enduring presence amidst the neighborhood's changes.

Further along Phoenix Road, I noticed overgrown planters outside the Margaret's Day Nursery building, a site marked for redevelopment. The neglected greenery had its own earthy scent, mingling with the faint, damp aroma of the building's brickwork. The nursery's faded signage told of its once-vibrant role in the community, and the chipped paint hinted at years of wear. The surrounding silence, broken only by distant construction sounds, was unsettling—a quietness that seemed to mourn the building's impending demolition.<sup>2</sup>

These sensory details told a story that no guidebook or historical text could capture. As Diana Foster of the People's Museum said in an article, "Somers Town is not just a place; it's a feeling, an experience shaped by its people, its textures, and its smells."

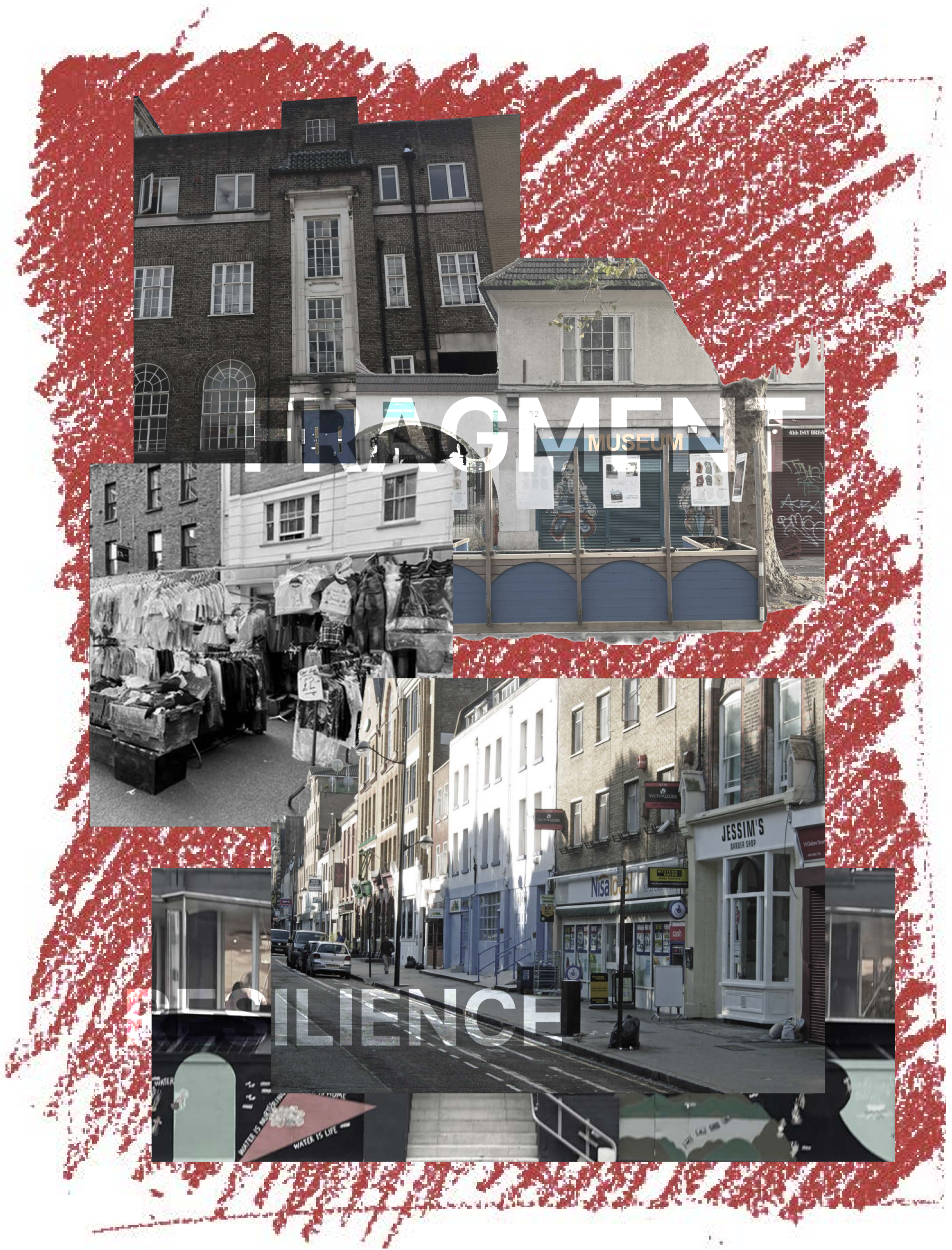
(Camden New Journal, 2020).<sup>1</sup> Her words resonated as I noticed the subtle contrast between the neighborhood's old, worn surfaces and the sleek, sterile facades of new developments like the Brill Place Tower.

The interplay of textures, sounds, and smells made me acutely aware of the fragility of Somers Town's identity. The weight of history in its crumbling walls and the persistence of life in its neglected greenery felt at odds with the looming modernity encroaching on the neighborhood. These sensory experiences are not merely aesthetic; they are the essence of what makes Somers Town distinct. Without them, the area risks becoming another anonymous urban landscape, its stories lost to smooth glass and steel.<sup>2</sup>

I questioned whether redevelopment can truly honor the essence of a place like Somers Town. Projects like the Brill Place Tower may bring economic benefits but risk eroding the neighborhood's social and cultural fabric. As Pallasmaa (2024) states, "Architecture's task is to create embodied and lived meanings, not to offer mere visual delight."<sup>5</sup> This loss of sensory richness, often replaced by modern architecture's focus on efficiency and aesthetics, disconnects people from their emotional ties to a place.

True preservation goes beyond protecting physical structures; it requires retaining the sensory layers that root people in their environment. The challenge is to balance modern development with the sensory and historical identity of neighborhoods like Somers Town, ensuring their stories endure.

1 Somers Town History Club (n.d.) Chalton Street Market and Community Spaces. Available at: <https://somerstownhistory.org.uk/> (Accessed: 9 October 2024).  
2 A Space for Us Club (n.d.) Margaret's Day Nursery: History and Threats. Available at: <https://aspaceforus.club/our-projects/emergences-disappearances/> (Accessed: 9 October 2024).  
3 Camden New Journal (2020) 'Somers Town written off as "a forlorn part of London"', Camden New Journal, 24 November. Available at: <https://www.camdennewjournal.co.uk/article/pr-sees-somers-town-written-off-as-a-forlorn-part-of-london> (Accessed: 9 October 2024).  
4 Evening Standard (2019) 'The changing face of Somers Town', Evening Standard, 18 January. Available at: <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/the-changing-face-of-somers-town-a4042836.html> (Accessed: 9 October 2024).  
5 Pallasmaa, J. (2024) The eyes of the skin : architecture and the senses. Fourth edition. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.





SOUNDSCAPE IN SOMERS TOWN



This psychogeographic encounter at the Crypt Gallery highlighted how atmospheric qualities profoundly shape perception. The interplay of light and shadow, with faint beams piercing through darkness, animated the space and guided movement, fostering a slower, more deliberate engagement. What stood out most was the soundscape—or its absence. The muffled echoes of footsteps and occasional murmurs amplified the profound silence, which became a sensory presence, emphasizing the stillness and weight of the environment. This heightened awareness of subtle details, such as the rustling air or creaking boards, created an immersive, almost otherworldly experience, showcasing the gallery's ability to evoke memory and reflection through multi-sensory design.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast, Minsuk Cho's Serpentine Pavilion offered a more open yet equally introspective exploration of sensory design. The curved pathways and interconnected voids encouraged a slowed pace and heightened awareness. Natural light filtering through the oculus created shifting contrasts of light and shadow, mirroring the introspection of the Crypt Gallery while offering a sense of freedom and openness. The cool, textured materials grounded the space, while the voids fostered moments of reflection and connection.<sup>2</sup>

Inspired by the madang, a traditional Korean courtyard, Cho's design blended sensory elements seamlessly. A sound installation heightened auditory engagement, a library of unread books sparked curiosity, and an auditorium invited collective dialogue, creating a dynamic multi-sensory environment.

Both spaces, though distinct in form, revealed how sensory design transcends materiality to shape emotional and physical connections. By engaging light, sound, and touch, they encouraged reflection and deepened relationships between users and their environments, illustrating the transformative potential of multi-sensory architecture.

<sup>1</sup> St Pancras Church London. Available at: <https://stpancraschurch.org/> (Accessed: 1 October 2024).  
<sup>2</sup> Starr Charles | 5 June 2024 | Leave a comment (2024) Minsuk Cho unveils star-shaped serpentine pavilion that 'provides many choices', Dezeen. Available at: <https://www.dezeen.com/2024/06/05/minsuk-cho-serpentine-pavilion-2024/> (Accessed: 17 October 2024).



As I explored Euston Road and Somers Town, I recorded the contrasting soundscapes of each area: Euston's bustling urban noise against Somers Town's quieter streets, filled with natural sounds, distant train rumbles, and city horns. These auditory layers offered more than just sounds—they created a sensory map of each place, reflecting layers of history and atmosphere.

In the Crypt Gallery, sound and texture took on a deeper meaning. The rough walls, echoing footsteps, and soft rustling of leaves connected me to the past, amplifying the gallery's quiet yet powerful ambiance. These recordings invite others to experience spaces through sound, beyond what the eye can see. By engaging with these auditory elements, we can feel the unique atmospheres of places and connect more deeply with their history. Through this project, I hope to guide others into these sensory landscapes, where soundscapes act as bridges to the past.



SENSUOUS GEOGRAPHIES

Illustrates how traditional architecture has been dominated by visual design but argues for a more multisensory approach that incorporates sound, touch, smell, and even taste. It has been suggested that how integrating multiple senses into architectural design can improve well-being and cognitive function. The review advocates replacing synaesthetic design with crossmodal correspondence, emphasizing how sensory elements interact and affect our perception of space. It calls for future designs that promote emotional and social development through multisensory environments.

The growing role of scent in architectural and urban design, citing examples like the Barclays Center, where a unique fragrance was used to create a signature scent. It highlights the historical use of scent in spaces, such as a Berlin cinema in 1913, and recent projects like Dawn Goldsworthy's bespoke scent for a Miami apartment. Scent can influence behaviors, like citrus scents encouraging cleaning. There's also evidence that scents like lavender reduce stress, leading to discussions about "medicinal urbanism" and olfactory mapping in cities.<sup>1</sup>

Multisensory design, allowing people to control factors like lighting and temperature, significantly boosts productivity, with architects like Juhani Pallasmaa emphasizing the equal importance of how spaces look, feel, sound, and smell. Sensory urbanism discusses designing cities to engage multiple senses, not just sight. How incorporating elements like sound, scent, touch, and even temperature can improve public spaces, making them more accessible, enjoyable, and meaningful for residents. Sensory urbanism aims to create environments that foster a deeper connection to place, enhance well-being, and evoke emotions by integrating sensory experiences into urban planning.<sup>2</sup>

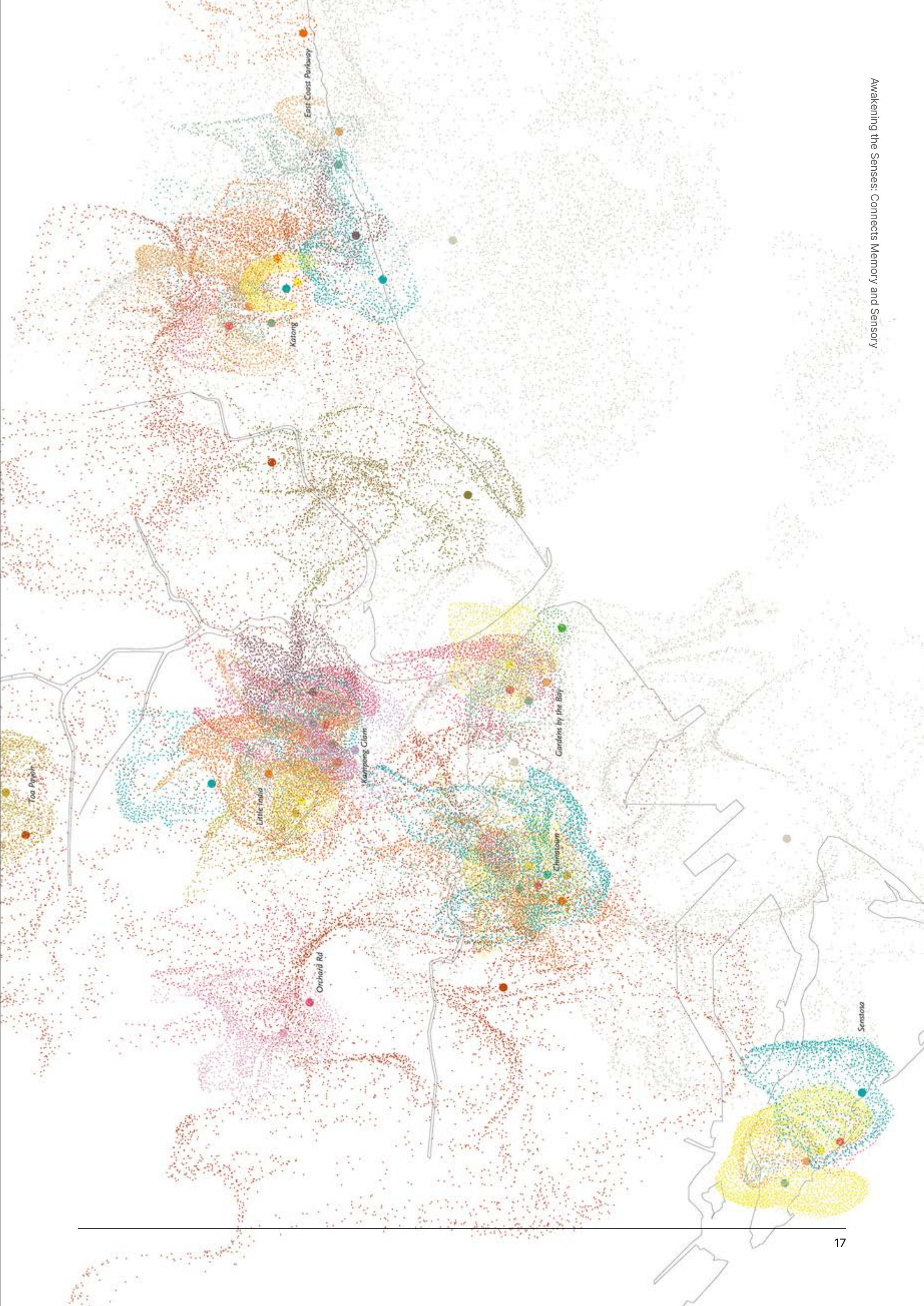
<sup>1</sup> Spence, C. (2020) 'Senses of Place: Architectural Design for the multisensory mind', *Cognitive Research: Principles and Implications*, 5(1). doi:10.1186/s41235-020-00243-4. pp.12-26 Available at: <https://cognitiveresearchjournal.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s41235-020-00243-4> (Accessed: 16 October 2024).

<sup>2</sup> Sharma, P. (2024) *The Ultimate Guide to Understanding Sensory Urbanism*, Parametric Architecture. Available at: <https://parametric-architecture.com/the-ultimate-guide-to-understanding-sensory-urbanism/> (Accessed: 16 October 2024).

To create a smellscape for Somers Town, I would begin by identifying the scents that define its character and historical identity. Along Chalton Street, the metallic scent of old railings and the earthy aroma of overgrown planters are particularly notable. These olfactory elements reflect the embedded history of the neighborhood, and I would aim to preserve and enhance them in locations such as the People's Museum or Margaret's Day Nursery.

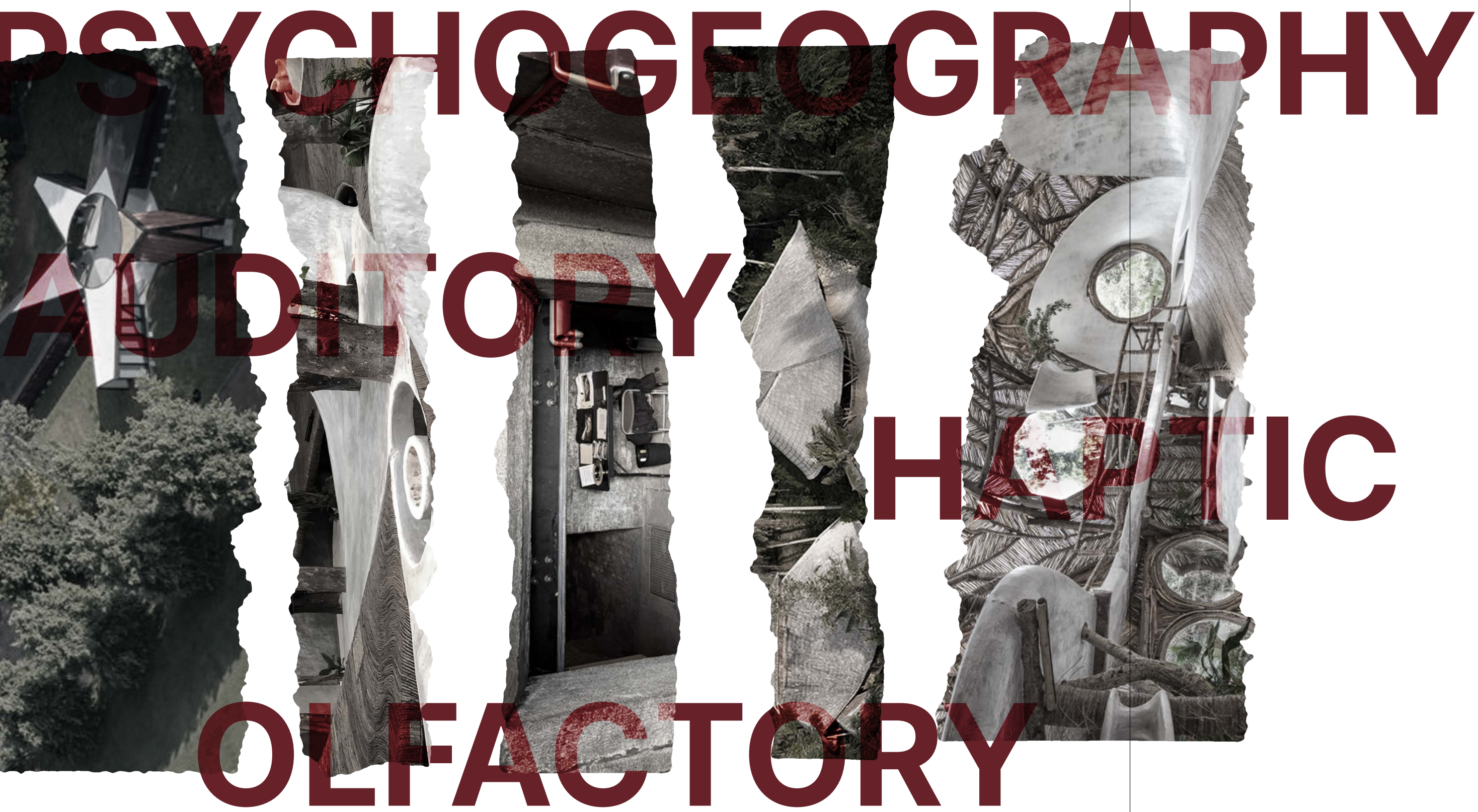
In addition, I would introduce new olfactory elements that represent the diversity and cultural richness of the community. The addition of planters with herbs such as lavender or rosemary could enhance green spaces with calming scents. Similarly, the diffusion of aromas like freshly baked bread or spices in communal areas could establish sensory connections to the neighborhood's cultural life, enriching the sensory experience of the area.

Community involvement would be essential in this process. By consulting residents about scents that evoke personal memories or cultural significance, a smellscape could be created that authentically reflects the identity of Somers Town. This approach would transform the neighborhood into a place that connects people not only visually but also through deep sensory and historical engagement.





# PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY AUDITORY HAPTIC OLFACTORY



I will investigate this topic by exploring three core concepts: multi-sensory connections, psychogeography, and deliberate methodology. These frameworks will guide an emotional and experimental journey through the spatial experience, emphasizing how engaging the full sensory spectrum creates deeper resonance within a space. By involving different senses in the perception of space, I aim to demonstrate an alternative approach to architecture, examining its impact through a multi-sensory lens.

“The most essential architectural experience is rooted in the tactile sense; the body remembers how a space feels”<sup>1</sup> “The sonic environment is as much a part of our surroundings as the visual landscape”<sup>2</sup> Through my research and experiences, I aim to explore how engaging multiple senses can transform architecture into a dynamic, immersive medium that deeply resonates with users. By weaving concepts from psychogeography, I will analyze how deliberate sensory engagement can create profound, layered connections between individuals and their environment. Ultimately, this study seeks to reveal how multi-sensory architecture reshapes our understanding of space, making it a catalyst for emotional, cultural, and experiential depth.

<sup>1</sup> Pallasmaa, J. (2024) The eyes of the skin : architecture and the senses. Fourth edition. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

<sup>2</sup> Schafer, R.M. (1993) The Soundscape : Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World. Rochester: Inner Traditions International, Limited.



IK LAB IN TULUM, MEXICO

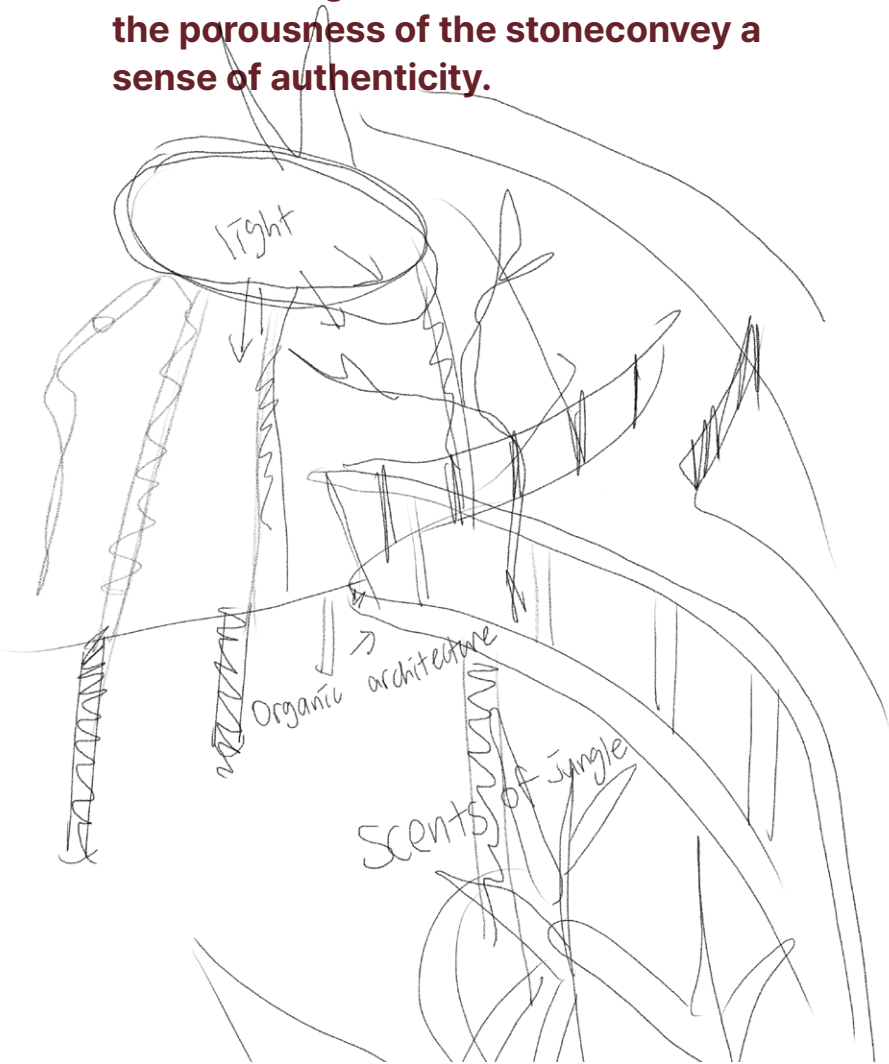
The IK Lab gallery in Tulum, Mexico, exemplifies how architecture can create an immersive sensory experience by harmonizing with its natural surroundings. I chose this case study because it shifts focus from conventional visual aesthetics to a multisensory approach, engaging touch, sound, and atmosphere. Its seamless integration with the surrounding jungle highlights the potential of design to evoke memory and emotion, demonstrating the importance of materials, spatial forms, and sensory interplay in shaping meaningful architectural experiences.<sup>1</sup> The gallery's fluid, organic spatial design captivated me. Curving walls and asymmetrical layouts evoke a sense of movement, guiding visitors intuitively through the space. Openings allow shifting light and shadow to create what Zumthor (2006) calls "atmospheres," leaving a lasting emotional impact.<sup>2</sup> The absence of sharp divisions between interior and exterior spaces, with apertures inviting natural light and ambient sounds, deepens the connection to the environment, offering an evolving, dynamic experience. This made me reflect on how modern architecture often overlooks the transformative role of natural light and sound.

Materiality is another striking aspect of IK Lab. Locally sourced materials like polished wood and textured stone enhance tactile engagement, aligning with Rodaway's (1994) idea that touch strengthens our connection to space. Walking barefoot on polished floors contrasts with the roughness of the walls, encouraging physical interaction and grounding the experience. The imperfections in these materials, such as the grain of the wood and porousness of the stone, enhance authenticity, making the gallery feel like an extension of the jungle. This aligns with Pallasmaa's (2024) critique of modern architecture's detachment from sensory richness through synthetic finishes.<sup>3</sup>

1 Gibson, E. (2018) 'Guggenheim successor opens tropical-influenced IK lab art gallery in Tulum', Dezeen, 2 May. Available at: <https://www.dezeen.com/2018/05/02/ik-lab-santiago-rumney-guggenheim-jorge-eduardo-neira-sterkel-art-gallery-azulik-tulum-mexico/> (Accessed: 16 October 2024).  
2 Pallasmaa, J. (2024) The eyes of the skin : architecture and the senses. Fourth edition. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.  
3 Rodaway, P. (1994) Sensuous geographies body, sense, and place. London: Routledge.



The imperfections in the materials such as the grain of the wood and the porousness of the stone convey a sense of authenticity.



What I found particularly fascinating about IK Lab was its use of sound. The gallery amplifies the ambient noise of the jungle—rustling leaves, birdsong, and the occasional rush of wind—creating an auditory connection to the natural environment. Schafer (1993) describes soundscapes as a vital layer of spatial experience, and IK Lab demonstrates this beautifully.<sup>1</sup> I imagined how the sounds would layer and shift as visitors moved through the space, adding a living, dynamic quality that complements the tactile and visual elements. This emphasis on auditory engagement has made me reconsider how sound could be used in adaptive reuse projects. For example, incorporating subtle soundscapes into a church might evoke memories of its community or the surrounding city, connecting visitors to the space in new ways. The gallery's integration with nature goes beyond mere aesthetics. It incorporates living elements—trees, vines, and foliage—

into its structure, creating a dialogue between architecture and the environment. For me, this blurring of boundaries between built and natural spaces reinforces the idea that architecture can foster a symbiotic relationship with its surroundings. This approach reminded me of biophilic design principles, which emphasize the importance of connecting people with nature to enhance well-being (Zaredar, 2015).<sup>2</sup>

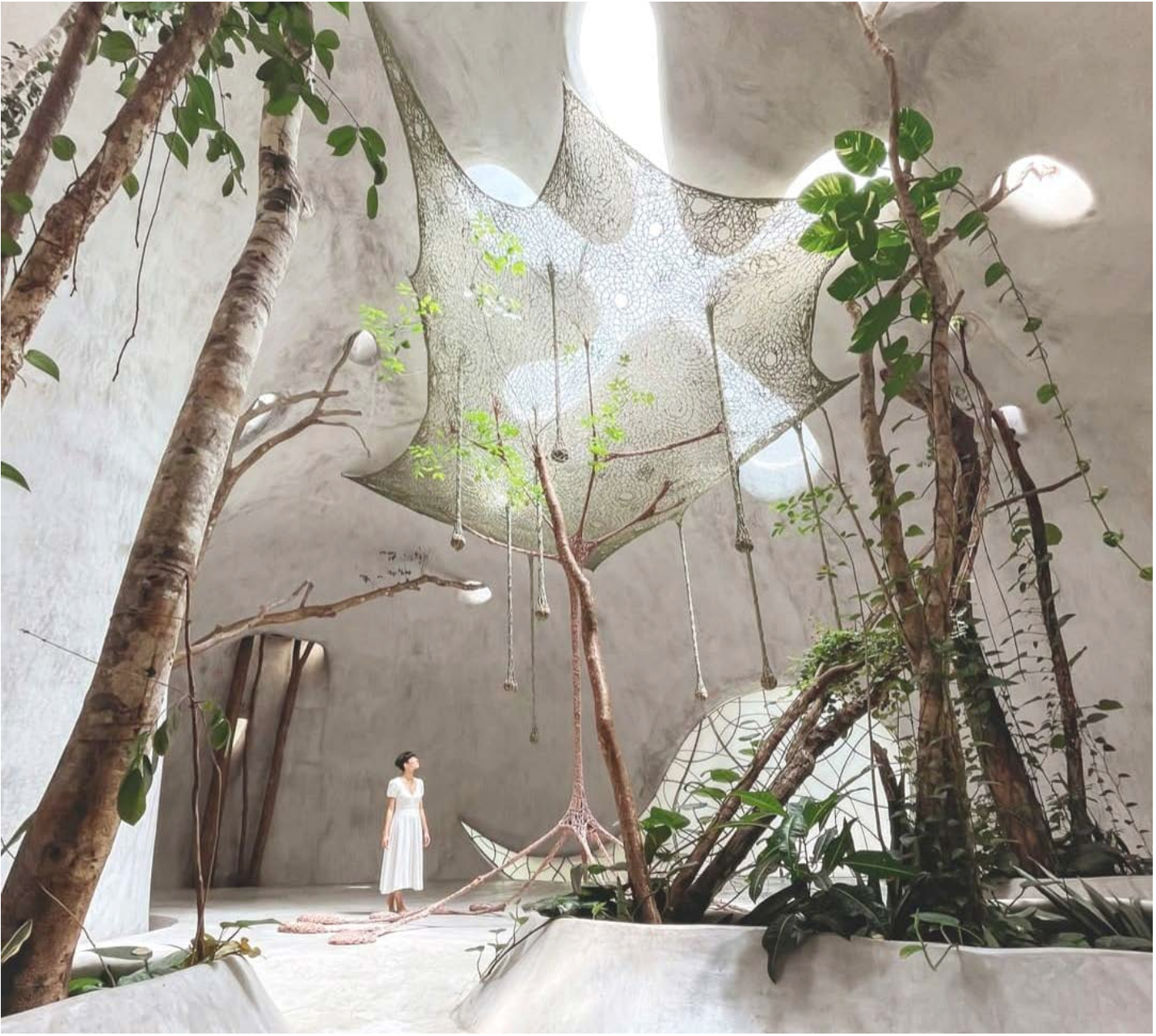
1 Schafer, R.M. (1993) The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World. Rochester: Inner Traditions International, Limited.  
2 Zaredar, A. (2015) 'Considering the Five Senses in Architecture', Current world environment, 10(Special-Issue1), pp. 138–143. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.12944/CWE.10.Special-Issue1.19> (Accessed: 22 October 2024).

How do the curved structures and natural materials at IK Lab make visitors feel?

The curved walls and natural materials like wood help the building blend in with the jungle surroundings. This design makes visitors feel as if they are part of nature, providing an experience that feels like being in the forest, where the building itself seems like an extension of the natural environment.

How does IK Lab blur the boundaries between the building and nature?

By using large windows and open spaces that let in natural light and bring the sounds and scents of the jungle inside, IK Lab creates a sense of connection, making the boundaries between the building and nature feel less distinct.





CASE STUDY

While IK Lab’s achievements are inspiring, they also raised critical questions for me. The gallery’s reliance on a lush, natural setting made me wonder whether its sensory richness could be replicated in an urban context or within the constraints of a historical building. Could the same tactile and auditory qualities be achieved in a church surrounded by the sounds of city life? While Schafer’s (1993) soundscape theory suggests that urban sounds could be curated to create meaningful auditory layers, I remain skeptical about whether these elements could achieve the same depth of connection as IK Lab’s jungle environment.<sup>1</sup>

Another point of reflection for me was whether the gallery’s immersive qualities might overshadow its purpose as an art space. I started to question whether visitors might focus more on the sensory environment than the artworks themselves. This tension between form and function reinforced the importance of balance in architectural design—a lesson I hope to carry into my own projects. Finally, I thought about inclusivity. While the tactile and auditory elements of IK Lab enrich the experience for many, they might overwhelm individuals with sensory sensitivities. This realization has made me more aware of the need for inclusive design approaches that balance sensory engagement with accessibility.

Studying IK Lab has taught me that architecture is most powerful when it engages the full range of human senses. Its use of tactile materials, dynamic light, and ambient soundscapes creates an experience that is not only memorable but also emotionally resonant. However, it also reminded me of the importance of context, balance, and inclusivity in design. As I explore adaptive reuse projects, I aim to apply these lessons by considering how sensory elements can be tailored to honor a space’s history and community while creating an inclusive and accessible environment.



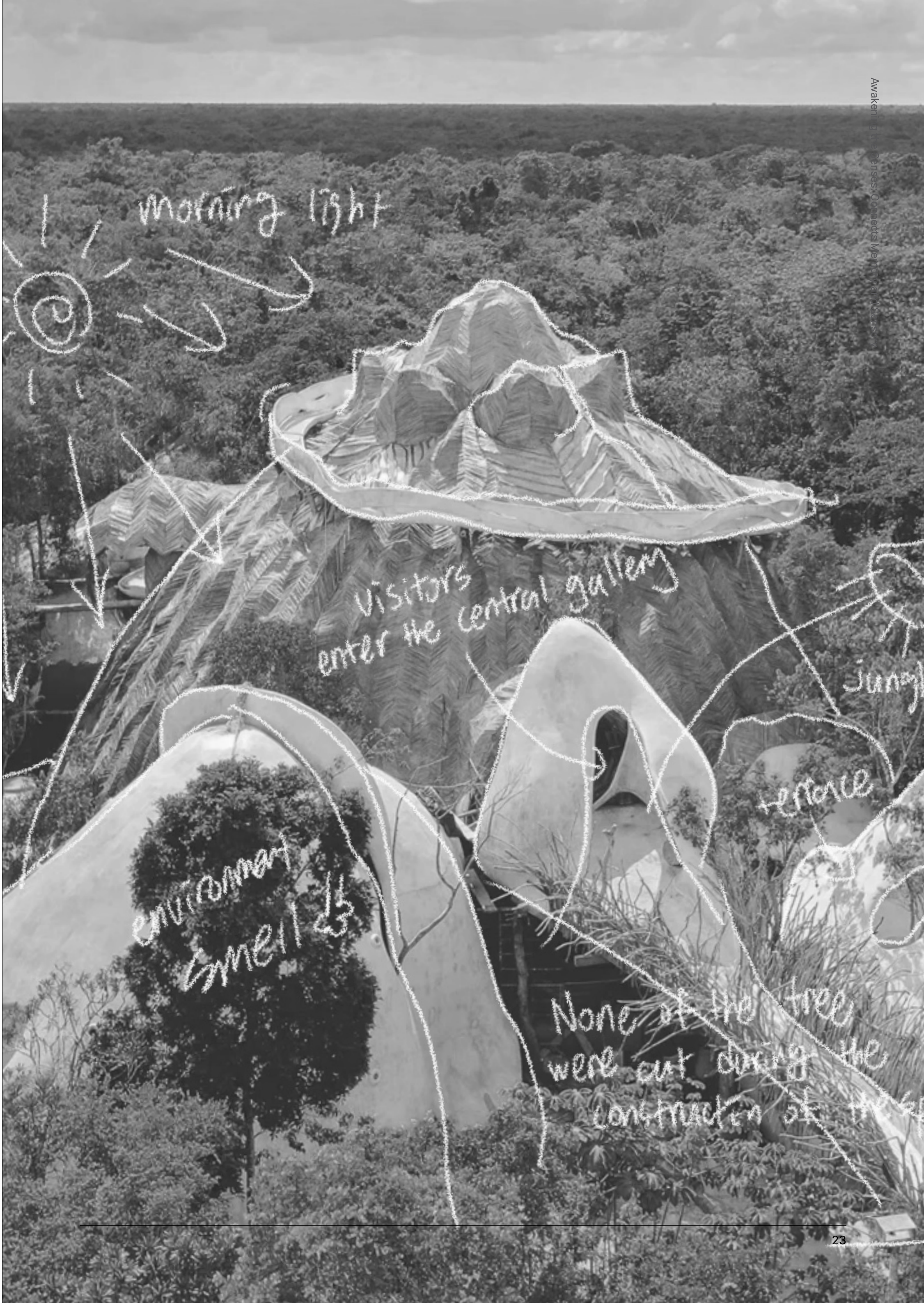
The design of IK Lab offers a compelling exploration of multi-sensory engagement, yet it raises critical questions about how effectively architecture can truly prioritize all senses equally. Schafer’s assertion that sound “actively shapes our understanding and memory of a space” (Schafer, 1993, p. 37) resonates within IK Lab’s natural soundscape.<sup>1</sup> The ambient jungle sounds create an auditory immersion that enhances the sense of place. However, one might question whether this reliance on natural soundscapes, while evocative, limits the potential for exploring more complex or urban auditory experiences. Is the space fully leveraging sound as a narrative device, or does it remain too dependent on its natural context?

The tactile experience is another highlight, embodying Hadjiphilippou’s idea of architecture as an “extension of nature” that engages through sensory diversity (Hadjiphilippou, 2021, pp. 27-28).<sup>2</sup> IK Lab’s undulating surfaces, which encourage visitors to feel their way through the space, exemplify this principle. The polished wood and raw stone provide a layered tactile narrative, yet this raises questions about accessibility. While the uneven textures invite interaction, they may inadvertently exclude those who cannot physically navigate such challenging surfaces. Does the space unintentionally create barriers in its pursuit of tactile richness?

Smith’s observation that soundscapes “engage the imagination and memory”

(Smith, cited in Schafer, 1993) further underscores IK Lab’s sensory ambitions.<sup>3</sup> Yet, this also highlights a gap: the space’s focus on organic and timeless elements risks neglecting the cultural or historical layers that could deepen its narrative impact. While the design succeeds in creating an immersive experience, one could critique whether it fully leverages its potential to provoke critical reflection or dialogue about the relationship between human and environment.

1 Schafer, R. M. (1993). The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World. Rochester: Inner Traditions International, Limited.  
2 Hadjiphilippou, A. (2021). Tactile Architecture: Engaging Senses Through Design. London: Architectural Press.  
3 Smith, B. R. (1999). The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-Factor. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.



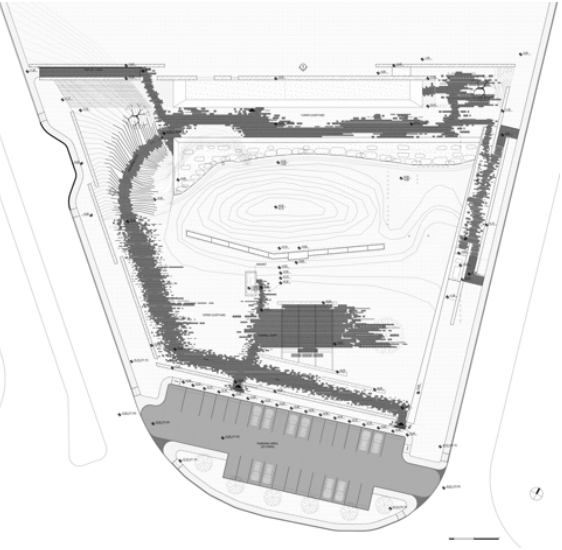
Awaken: IK Lab, a sensory-rich environment



THE SANCAKLAR MOSQUE, TURKEY

The Sancaklar Mosque in Istanbul, Turkey, designed by Emre Arolat Architects, redefines the role of religious architecture in the modern era by focusing on simplicity, sensory immersion, and integration with the natural landscape. Situated on the outskirts of Istanbul, the mosque breaks away from traditional Ottoman mosque designs, offering a serene and introspective experience that connects worshippers to both their faith and the surrounding environment.<sup>1</sup>

The mosque is seamlessly embedded into the natural slope of the land, making it appear almost hidden when viewed from afar. This decision to partially bury the mosque reflects the architects’ intent to prioritize humility and introspection, aligning with the spiritual goals of the space. Unlike towering domes and minarets that dominate the skyline, the Sancaklar Mosque allows the landscape to take precedence, creating a unique harmony between architecture and nature. This design approach reminded me of psychogeographic explorations, where the journey to a space is as significant as the destination itself. Merlin Coverley (2012) discusses the “hidden stories” revealed through wandering, and the descending pathway into the mosque mirrors this sentiment.<sup>2</sup> The gradual transition from the external environment into the prayer hall is both a physical and spiritual journey, reinforcing the idea that architecture can evoke emotional and reflective responses. The floor plan highlights the pathway leading from the entrance to the prayer hall, emphasizing the interplay between open spaces and enclosed areas. The elevation diagram illustrates how the mosque integrates with the sloping terrain, with the prayer hall appearing as a natural extension of the hill.

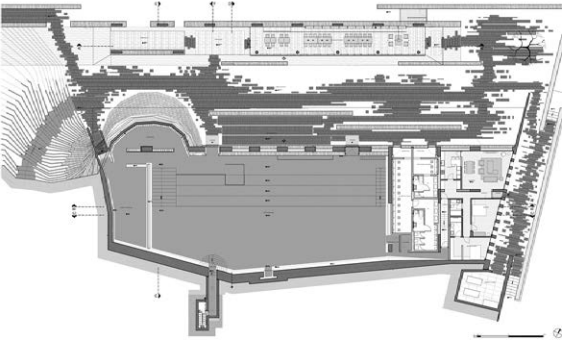


One of the most striking features of the mosque is its materiality. The walls are made of textured concrete and locally sourced stone, which give the interior a raw, natural aesthetic. The tactile nature of these materials invites touch, making visitors physically engage with the space. The uneven textures of the stone walls remind me of Paul Rodaway's (1994) emphasis on "tactile geographies," where touch becomes a medium for connecting with a place.<sup>3</sup>

Inside the prayer hall, the lighting design plays a pivotal role in shaping the atmosphere. Narrow slits in the walls allow natural light to filter through, creating shifting patterns of light and shadow throughout the day. This dynamic interplay recalls Peter Zumthor's (2006) concept of "atmospheres," where light, materiality, and form work together to evoke emotion.<sup>4</sup> The dimly lit interior contrasts with the bright exterior, creating a sense of serenity and introspection.

The use of raw materials like stone and concrete made me think about how contemporary architecture often neglects the emotional impact of texture. In modern buildings dominated by smooth, synthetic finishes, the roughness of the mosque's walls feels grounding and authentic, connecting visitors to the earth.

1 ArchDaily. (2014). Sancaklar Mosque / Emre Arolat Architects. Retrieved from ArchDaily.  
2 Coverley, M. (2012) Psychogeography. Revised ebook edition. Harpenden, England: Pocket Essentials.  
3 Rodaway, P. (1994). Sensuous Geographies: Body, Sense, and Place. London: Routledge.  
4 Zumthor, P. (2006) Atmospheres: Architectural Environments, Surrounding Objects. Basel: Birkhäuser.



The Sancaklar Mosque also engages the auditory senses. The prayer hall's acoustics are designed to enhance the spiritual experience, amplifying the human voice while minimizing external noise. The echoes within the hall create a sense of depth, connecting worshippers to the spiritual significance of the space. This reminded me of R.M. Schafer's (1993) concept of soundscapes, where sound becomes a defining characteristic of place.<sup>1</sup> In this case, the mosque's acoustics transform the space into a resonant chamber for worship and reflection.

As I considered the role of sound in this space, I reflected on how contemporary urban environments often neglect the auditory dimension. The quiet hum of the prayer hall contrasts sharply with the noise of Istanbul's busy streets, offering a sensory retreat that amplifies the sacred atmosphere.

The spatial layout of the mosque is intentionally minimalistic. The floor plan reveals an open prayer hall with no fixed seating, allowing for flexible use of the space. The transition from the exterior to the interior is carefully choreographed, with the descending pathway serving as a threshold between the secular and the sacred.

The absence of ornate decorations commonly found in traditional mosques shifts the focus to the spatial qualities of the building. This decision aligns with the architects’ philosophy of stripping away unnecessary elements to create a purer, more meditative environment.

As Merlin Coverley (2006) suggests, spaces that encourage exploration and introspection often rely on subtle design gestures rather than overt statements.<sup>2</sup> Walking through the mosque's open layout must feel liberating, as the lack of barriers allows for a continuous flow of movement and thought. This simplicity made me question how often modern religious spaces rely on visual grandeur rather than creating environments that foster genuine connection.

1 Schafer, R.M. (1993) The Soundscape : Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the  
2 Coverley, M. (2012) Psychogeography. Revised ebook edition. Harpenden, England: Pocket Essentials.





## CASE STUDY

The Sancaklar Mosque redefines traditional Islamic architecture by challenging conventional forms such as domes and minarets, typically associated with Ottoman mosques. Instead, its design emphasizes simplicity and humility, stripping away ornamentation to focus on the essence of a mosque: a place for prayer and reflection. As Zeynep Çelik Alexander suggests, "Architecture speaks as much through absence as it does through presence, allowing meaning to emerge in subtle ways" (Çelik Alexander, 2015).<sup>1</sup> The absence of traditional elements fosters introspection and connection with faith, unencumbered by historical expectations.

Located in the suburban outskirts of Istanbul, the mosque addresses the need for a sacred space accessible and rooted in its environment. Its subterranean design integrates with the natural landscape, symbolizing humility. Worshippers descend into the mosque, stripping away worldly concerns and immersing themselves in a spiritual journey, resonating with Merlin Coverley's idea that spaces should evoke emotional connections to their environment (Coverley, 2012).<sup>2</sup>

The lack of minarets or elaborate domes amplifies its purpose as a spiritual retreat. Istanbul's cultural duality shapes the design, blending tradition with modernity. The tactile stone walls and interplay of natural light foster a universal environment, transcending cultural and religious divides while serving as both a sacred and communal space.

The Sancaklar Mosque redefines religious architecture by prioritizing simplicity, sensory engagement, and a connection to its natural surroundings. Departing from traditional Islamic design elements like domes and minarets, the mosque embraces raw materials such as stone and concrete, fostering a tactile and grounding experience. Natural light transforms the interior, creating a dynamic and reflective atmosphere that enhances introspection and spirituality.

This design encourages personal and intimate connections, aligning with Rodaway's view that sensory-focused spaces deepen emotional resonance. By avoiding excessive ornamentation, the mosque shifts focus toward individual and communal experiences. Its open plaza and auxiliary spaces further support cultural exchange and inclusivity, positioning the mosque as a community hub that addresses contemporary societal needs.

The Sancaklar Mosque exemplifies architecture's potential to shape human experience beyond aesthetics and utility. It inspires a critical reflection on the interplay of form, function, and senses, demonstrating how thoughtful design can evoke emotion, provoke thought, and foster meaningful connections. This case study highlights how architecture can transcend physical boundaries to resonate deeply with users.



**The Sancaklar Mosque demonstrates that design is not solely about aesthetics or utility but about creating spaces that evoke emotion, provoke thought, and foster connection**

<sup>1</sup> Çelik Alexander, Z. (2015). On the Limits of Representation in Islamic Architecture.

<sup>2</sup> Coverley, M. (2012) Psychogeography. Revised ebook edition. Harpenden, England: Pocket Essentials.



JUNYA ISHIGAMI'S KAIT

Architecture goes beyond physical form; it shapes human experiences, stirs emotions, and engages senses in ways that resonate deeply with its users. Junya Ishigami's KAIT in Kanagawa, Japan, exemplifies this potential through its unique spatial openness and minimalist aesthetic. This essay critically examines the building's design through the lens of sensory architecture and psychogeology, drawing insights from Pallasmaa's *The Eyes of the Skin* (2024) and related works to offer a fresh perspective.<sup>1</sup> The analysis critiques the workshop's strengths and limitations, highlighting its missed opportunities and proposing ways to deepen its sensory and functional impact.

**A Space for Discovery or Disorientation?**  
The defining feature of KAIT is its radical openness, created by hundreds of slender steel columns irregularly arranged throughout the space. This design dissolves traditional spatial boundaries, fostering a sense of freedom and exploration. The extensive glass walls amplify this openness, allowing natural light to flood the interior while visually connecting the building to its surroundings.

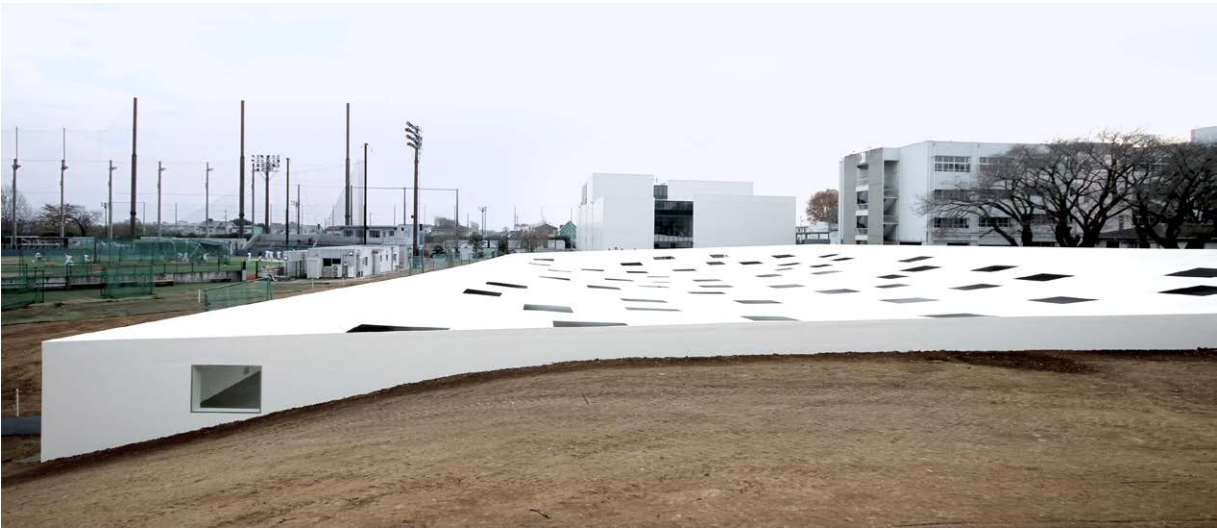
Pallasmaa (2024) emphasizes the importance of multisensory engagement in architecture, arguing that spaces should appeal to more than just the visual sense. In this regard, the workshop succeeds: its dynamic interplay of light and shadow creates a visually stimulating environment that evolves throughout the day. This temporal quality imbues the space with a sense of life and responsiveness, aligning with the principles of psychogeology, where spatial design influences emotional and cognitive experiences. While this openness invites discovery, it also risks causing sensory overload or disorientation. The lack of defined zones makes it challenging to establish clear functional areas, which may hinder users seeking focused environments for specific tasks. From my perspective, this raises questions about the balance between freedom and usability. Could introducing subtle spatial divisions such as variations in ceiling height or material texture enhance functionality without compromising openness?

The material palette of KAIT is deliberately minimal, featuring steel, glass, and concrete.

This simplicity reflects Ishigami's vision of creating a light, unobtrusive structure that harmonizes with its environment. The steel columns, in particular, contribute to the ethereal quality of the space, making it feel weightless and unencumbered. However, Pallasmaa (2024) argues that tactile engagement is essential for creating meaningful architectural experiences. The smoothness of the workshop's materials offers little variation, potentially leaving users feeling disconnected from the physicality of the space. This critique aligns with Zumthor's (2006) emphasis on the importance of material authenticity and the emotional resonance of textures.<sup>2</sup> This lack of tactile diversity is a missed opportunity. Incorporating materials like wood or stone could provide warmth and contrast, grounding the ethereal openness with a sense of physical connection. Such an approach would align with the sensory richness found in Ando's *Church of the Light*, where rough concrete and natural light create a profound tactile and visual interplay.



1 Pallasmaa, J. (2024) *The eyes of the skin : architecture and the senses*. Fourth edition. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.  
2 Zumthor, P. (2006) *Atmospheres: Architectural Environments, Surrounding Objects*. Basel: Birkhäuser.



The glass walls at KAIT allow natural light to penetrate, creating a dynamic interplay of light and shadow that evolves with the rhythms of nature. As Holl, Pallasmaa, and Pérez-Gómez (2006) suggest, light shapes our perception of space and time.<sup>2</sup> However, the reliance on glass raises sustainability concerns, as it can lead to heat gain or loss and higher energy consumption. The brightness may also not suit all tasks, particularly those requiring softer lighting. Solutions like energy-efficient glazing, shading devices, or diffused lighting—similar to *The Crypt Gallery* in London—could enhance functionality while preserving the sensory experience.<sup>2</sup>

The irregular placement of steel columns fosters spatial fluidity and encourages intuitive exploration, aligning with principles of psychogeology. This design supports creativity and collaboration, transforming the workshop into a space for experimentation. However, the lack of defined pathways or zones can create

sensory ambiguity, particularly during busy periods. This contrasts with Tadao Ando's *Church of the Light*, where the balance of open and enclosed spaces supports interaction and reflection.<sup>3</sup>

To balance fluidity with functionality, subtle interventions such as changes in flooring texture or strategically placed furniture could guide movement and introduce order without compromising Ishigami's vision. These adjustments would enhance usability while maintaining the workshop's creative essence.



1 Holl, S., Pallasmaa, J., & Pérez-Gómez, A. (2006). *Questions of Perception: Phenomenology of Architecture*. San Francisco: William Stout Publishers.  
2 Crypt Gallery, London. (n.d.). Exhibition Documentation.  
3 Ando, T. (1989). *Church of the Light*. Osaka: Tadao Ando Architect & Associates.



## CASE STUDY

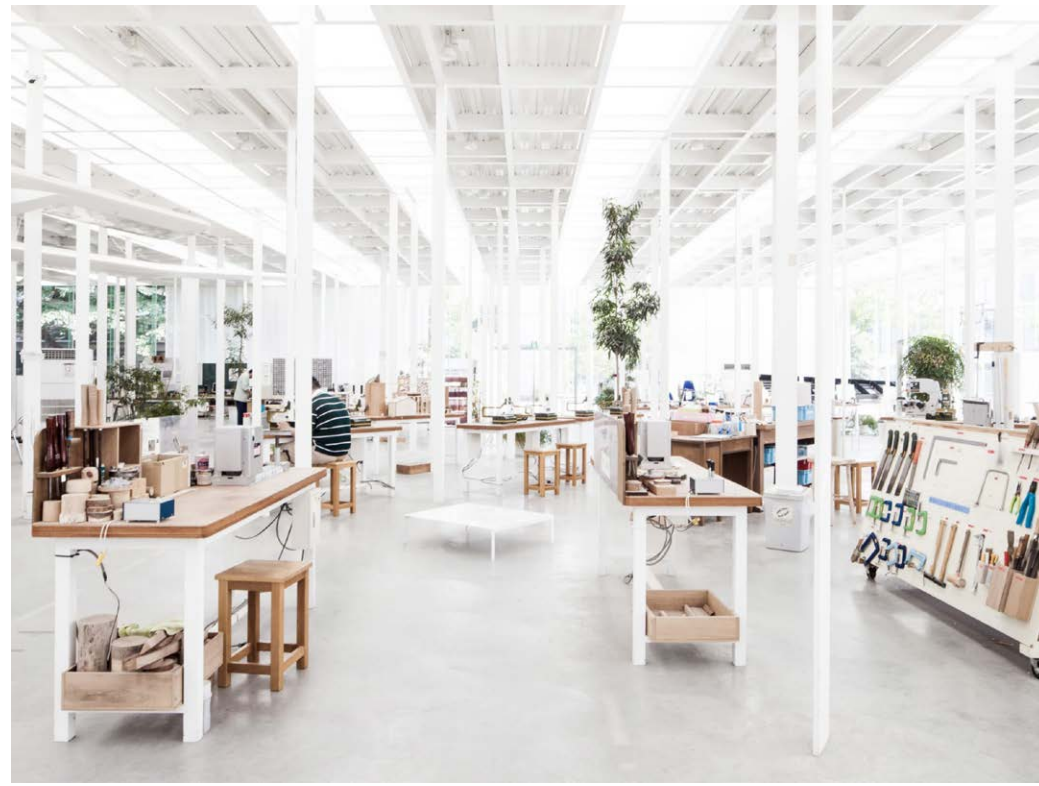
While KAIT excels in visual engagement, its multisensory potential remains underexplored. The hard surfaces and open plan amplify noise, creating an acoustically challenging environment. Moreover, the absence of olfactory and tactile elements limits the building's ability to evoke deeper emotional responses.

Drawing on my analysis of The Green Village in Bali, where natural scents and materials enrich the sensory experience, I see an opportunity for KAIT to integrate similar elements. For instance, incorporating plants or natural materials could introduce calming scents and textures, creating a more immersive environment. Additionally, subtle soundscapes inspired by the surrounding environment could enhance the auditory experience, transforming the workshop into a truly multisensory space.

The lack of multisensory integration reflects a broader challenge in modern minimalist architecture: the tendency to prioritize aesthetics over holistic user experience. I believe that architecture should engage all senses, not just sight. By embracing this principle, KAIT could evolve from a visually striking space into one that resonates on a deeper, more personal level.

The reliance on industrial materials such as steel and glass raises questions about the building's environmental impact. Compared to sustainable projects like The Remakery in London, which uses reclaimed materials, KAIT appears less aligned with contemporary ecological priorities. Incorporating biophilic elements or renewable materials could reduce its carbon footprint while enhancing its sensory qualities.

I see sustainability as a critical consideration. While Ishigami's design is visually compelling, its long-term environmental implications cannot be ignored. Combining aesthetic ambition with ecological responsibility would not only strengthen the building's impact but also set a precedent for future architectural practices.



**Innovative architecture  
must balance visual impact  
with sensory depth,  
emotional connection, and  
sustainable functionality**



My research examines how multi-sensory architecture, informed by psychogeography, can deepen our connection to urban spaces by amplifying community voices, preserving local histories, and fostering a greater sense of presence. By engaging the full spectrum of human senses—particularly through soundscapes—this approach reveals how architecture can move beyond its physical form to evoke memory, emotion, and identity. Rather than prioritizing visual aesthetics alone, this perspective highlights the sensory layers of our environments—its sounds, textures, and atmospheres—uncovering untold narratives that reflect the dynamic interplay between people and place.

Psychogeographic methods remind us that urban spaces are not static but living ecosystems shaped by sensory experiences and human interactions. By exploring how individuals navigate and emotionally connect with their surroundings, we see the potential for architecture to actively engage its users—inviting reflection, participation, and shared memory-making. Through sound, touch, and atmosphere, spaces can become catalysts for storytelling, forging connections between the past, present, and future.

Building on these insights, my proposal envisions spaces that use soundscapes and tactile design to document and amplify local stories, transforming architecture into a medium of care and connection. As discussed in *Feminist Designer* (Place, 2020), care is not merely an act of empathy but a political and relational practice that requires us to address inequities and foster inclusivity.<sup>1</sup> Designing with care means prioritizing diverse voices, embracing sustainable approaches, and acknowledging the interdependence between people, histories, and the environment.

Ultimately, multi-sensory architecture becomes a profound act of care—one that challenges us to see design not as a static outcome but as an ongoing process of creating spaces that resonate deeply with their users. It calls on designers to rethink their practices, not just as creators of physical forms but as facilitators of connection, healing, and equity, continuously questioning how we can design for a more inclusive and caring future.

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<sup>1</sup> Place, A. (ed.) (2020) *Feminist Designer: On the Personal and the Political in Design*. First edition.

# MULTI-SENSORY ARCHITECTURE CONNECTS PEOPLE TO HISTORIES, EMOTIONS, AND COMMUNITIES THROUGH SENSORY ENGAGEMENT



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CHAPTER 1: The Power of Touch, Sound, and Smell in Architectural Experience

The sensory dimensions of architecture, as emphasized by Juhani Pallasmaa and Peter Zumthor, offer profound insights into how spaces connect with people on emotional and experiential levels. In *The Eyes of the Skin*, Pallasmaa critiques architecture's over-reliance on visual aesthetics, advocating for a multisensory approach that includes touch, sound, and smell. He argues that textures such as the roughness of stone or the warmth of wood shape how we emotionally connect with spaces. Touch, in his view, allows individuals to experience the physical presence of a building, forging deeper bonds between people and architecture.<sup>1</sup>

Sound is equally integral to our spatial experiences. The acoustics of a space like footsteps echoing in a hall or the murmur of distant voices evoke moods and memories. These auditory elements have the power to calm, discomfort, or inspire, depending on their quality and context. Pallasmaa also highlights the evocative nature of smell, a sense intimately tied to memory and emotion. Scents such as incense or aged wood imbue spaces with identity, triggering associations with spirituality or history. These sensory layers, often overlooked, allow architecture to resonate on a deeply personal level.

Peter Zumthor, echoes similar ideas, emphasizing how materiality, sound, and light shape a space's emotional and atmospheric qualities. He describes how the tactile properties of materials, such as the smoothness of polished wood or the coarseness of stone, create lasting impressions not just through their appearance but through how they feel. Zumthor also delves into the role of sound and silence, exploring how natural sounds or quiet pauses in a space can elicit reflection and emotional depth. His focus on light and shadow, as tools to guide attention and set mood, reveals how thoughtful design transforms architecture into a layered, sensory-rich experience.<sup>2</sup>

1 Pallasmaa, J. (2024) *The eyes of the skin : architecture and the senses*. Fourth edition. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.  
2 Zumthor, P. (2006) *Atmospheres : architectural environments, surrounding objects*. Basel: Birkhäuser.



Fig 1: Vision and the tactile sense are fused in actual lived experience. Herbert Bayer, *Lonely Metropolitan*, 1932 (detail), Buhl Collection.

# Emotional and Experiential Connection



Fig 2,3: Bruder Klaus Chapel, under construction, Mechernich. model of lead floor and water

These theoretical perspectives profoundly shaped my understanding of sensory architecture. Pallasmaa and Zumthor's emphasis on multisensory engagement underscores how architecture can transcend visual impressions, fostering connections through touch, sound, and smell. Their ideas have inspired me to think critically about how spaces can evoke emotions, memories, and reflections.

From these insights, I have come to appreciate the power of architecture to act as an immersive, sensory narrative. Engaging multiple senses allows spaces to become more than physical structures; they become environments where history, emotion, and human interaction converge. Reading these works has deepened my desire to create spaces that connect people to their surroundings through sensory experiences, enabling more profound and lasting engagement. These ideas have also shaped my approach to exploring how architecture can tell stories, evoke memories, and foster emotional connections that go beyond the surface.



CHAPTER 2: Sensuous geographies

Paul Rodaway's work emphasizes how our senses interact with places to shape our experiences and memories of them. While sight is often the primary way people perceive spaces, other senses such as hearing, smell, touch, and even taste play equally important roles in how we connect with our surroundings. This multi-sensory approach to understanding places encourages a deeper, more personal connection to the world around us. It could be argued that hearing as a way to create what he calls "auditory geographies," where sounds define the character and identity of a place. For instance, the constant hum of traffic in a city or the calming rustle of leaves in a forest gives a sense of place that goes beyond what we see. These sounds contribute to the atmosphere, helping us to form emotional connections to locations through auditory experiences. Hearing is thus a fundamental element of place-making, showing that environments are not merely visual landscapes but complex, multi-sensory settings that envelop us. Paul Rodaway emphasizes the role of multiple senses—especially smell and touch—in shaping our connection to places. Smell,

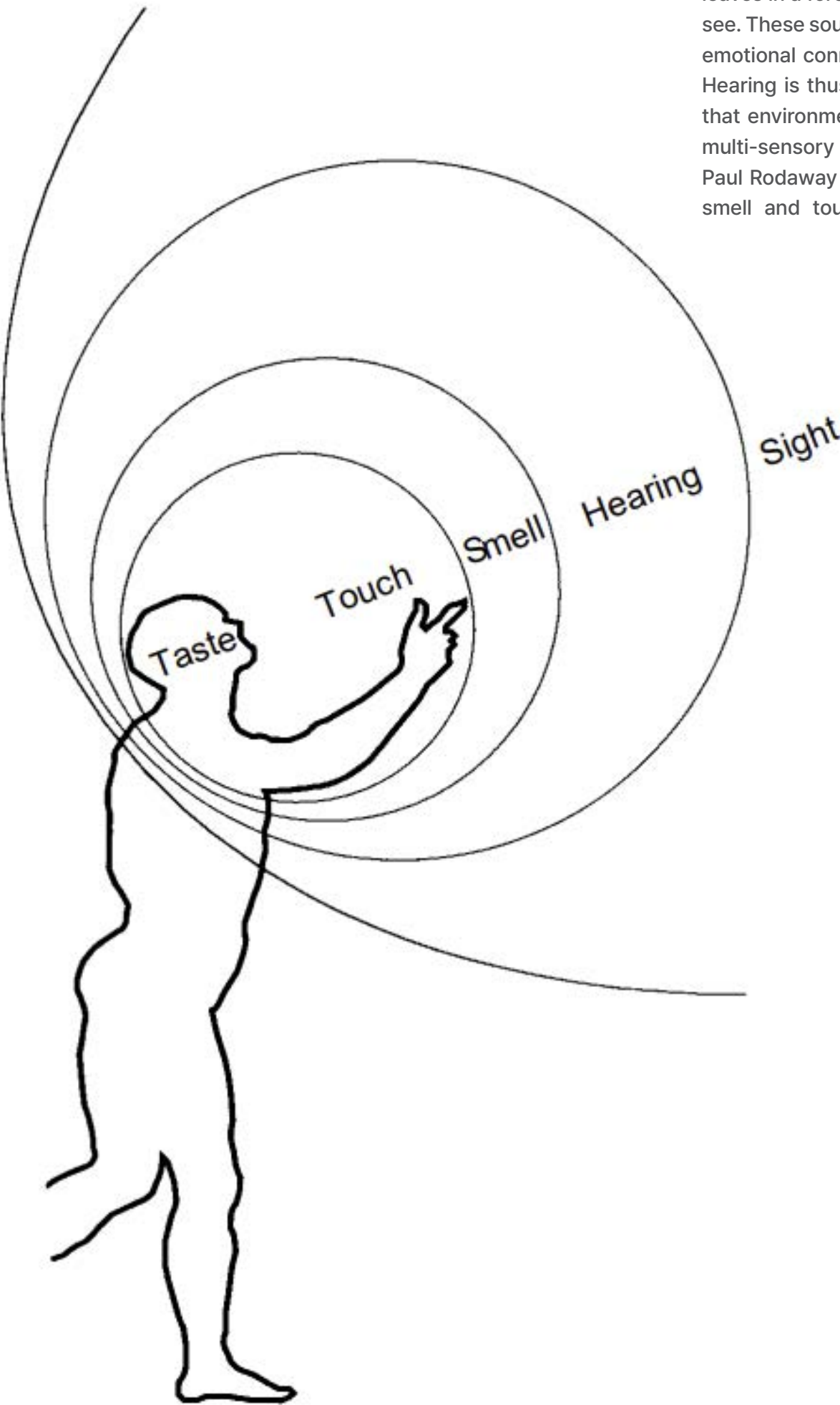


Fig 4: The range of the senses Source: Skurnik and George (1967:14). Copyright 1964, 1967 by Larry S.Skurnik and Frank George. Reprinted by permission of the authors

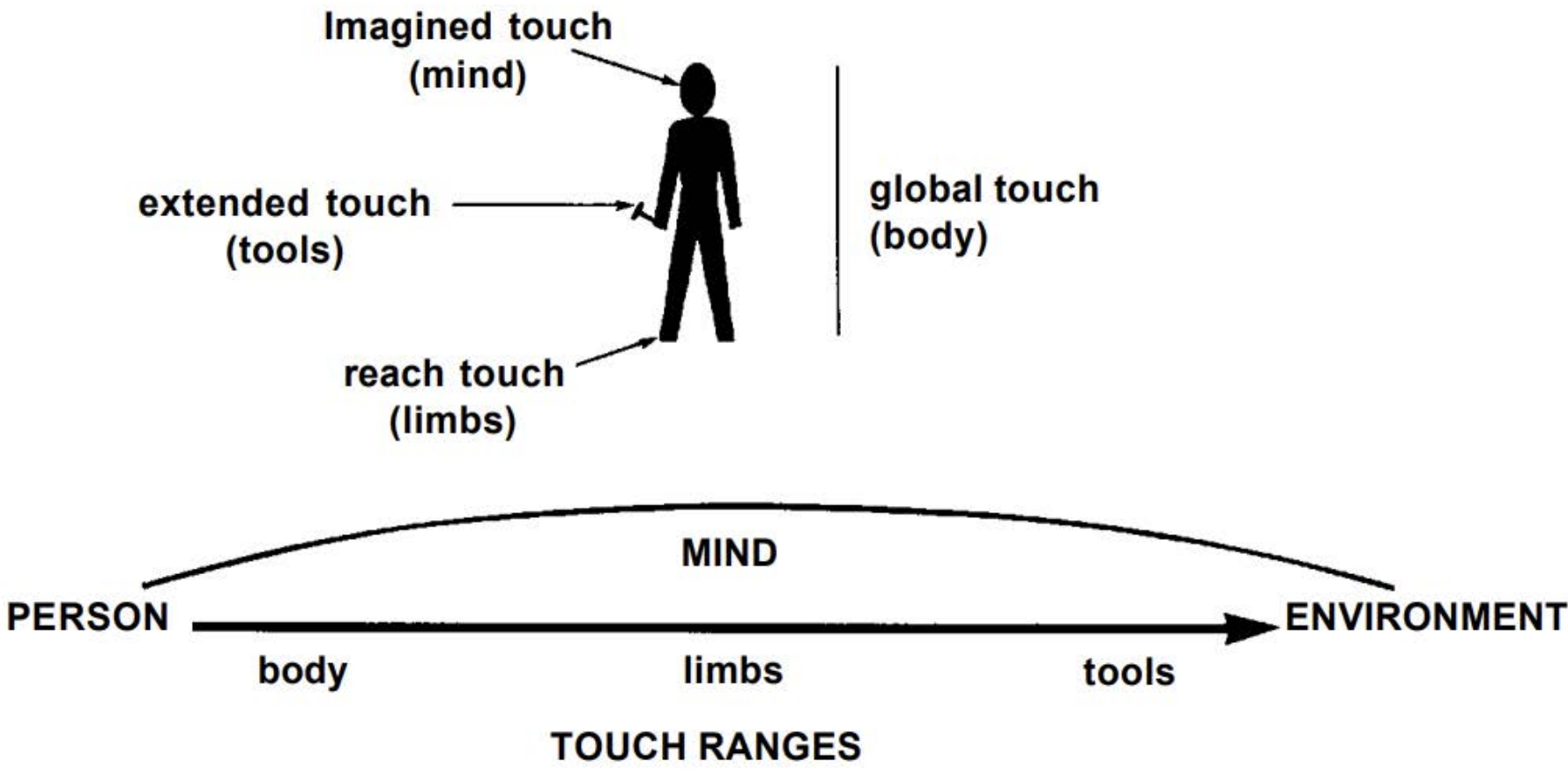


Fig 5: Dimensions of touch

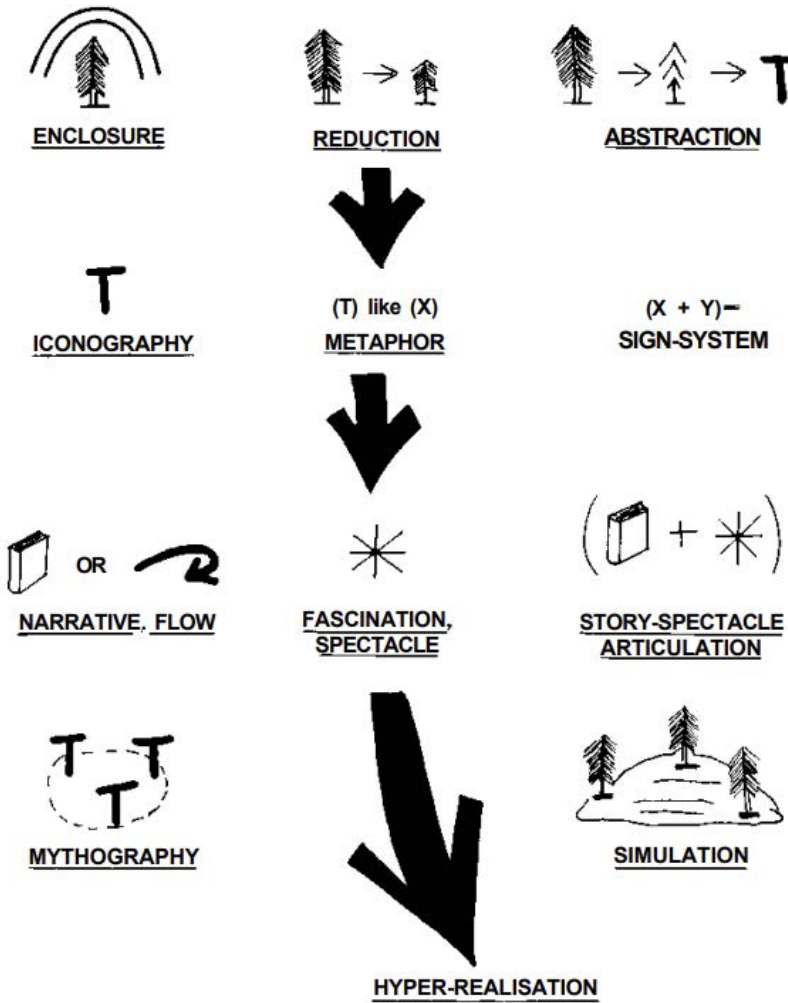


Fig 6: Reconstruction of sensuous geographies: a hypothesis

strongly linked to memory and emotion, can create lasting bonds with locations. For instance, scents like fresh-baked bread or sea air trigger powerful memories and emotions, making places more memorable. Touch is another key sense; feeling textures like rough bark or warm sand strengthens our connection to surroundings. Types of touch, such as "global touch," the body's response to a space, and "reach-touch," direct contact with surfaces, helping us understand textures, temperature, and movement (Rodaway, 1994, pp. 48-50, 112-118).<sup>1</sup>

Inspired by Rodaway's insights, I understand that architecture can transcend visual aesthetics by actively engaging multiple senses. A space designed to incorporate touch and smell, in addition to sight, invites deeper interaction—allowing individuals to feel the textures of materials, notice subtle temperature changes, and sense distinct aromas that enrich their experience. Rodaway's perspective emphasizes how sensory details profoundly shape our perception of places, making them not just visually striking but emotionally impactful and memorable.

Spaces are multi-dimensional experiences, crafted through the interplay of all senses. By embedding sensory elements into design such as tactile surfaces, evocative scents, and auditory cues architects can create environments that invite exploration, encourage storytelling, and foster personal connections. This multi-sensory approach transforms even ordinary spaces into engaging, meaningful, and enduring experiences.

<sup>1</sup> Rodaway, P. (1994) Sensuous geographies body, sense, and place. London: Routledge.



CHAPTER 3: Connecting to History Through the Multi-Sensory

"Contemporary architecture's reliance on vision often neglects the richness of other senses, leading to spaces that lack emotional depth and connection. Zaredar critiques this imbalance, stating, "The most problems of contemporary architecture are rooted in the dominance of the sense of eyesight and an unbalanced system of senses." A multi-sensory approach addresses this by engaging sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste to create immersive environments. The "Five Senses Museum" demonstrates this through olfactory elements like the scent of clay guiding visitors, while Peter Zumthor's reflections, such as "the sound of the gravel under my feet," emphasize how sensory details shape lasting impressions and emotional connections to space."<sup>1</sup>

Hadjiphilippou expands on this by framing architecture as an "extension of nature" that must embody sensory diversity to fully immerse its occupants. He highlights touch as a central element, with tactile features like rough surfaces or soft edges adding emotional depth. Even shadows, he argues, can enhance tactile awareness, offering subtle yet impactful ways for architecture to engage its users on a sensory level .These elements reinforce the idea that multi-sensory design allows spaces to resonate with people in ways that are both visceral and intellectually meaningful.<sup>2</sup>

"soundscapes" define the character of a place. For instance, the rustling leaves of a medieval village contrast with the hum of modern city traffic, creating a distinct sense of time and atmosphere. By incorporating these auditory layers, architecture becomes a medium that bridges historical moments and evokes a deeper emotional response. Schafer's work underscores that sound is not merely background noise but a fundamental element of place-making that actively shapes our understanding and memory of a space.<sup>3</sup>

Historians emphasize the emotional and mnemonic power of sound in connecting people to their environments. Smith highlights how echoes in old churches or the bustling sounds of historical London streets vividly evoke past eras, engaging the imagination and memory.<sup>4</sup> Sound is integral to human experience, capable of bridging past and present in ways that visual stimuli alone cannot achieve.<sup>5</sup> These perspectives reinforce the importance of integrating sound into architectural design to create immersive and emotionally resonant environments.

1 Zaredar, A. (2015) 'Considering the Five Senses in Architecture', Current world environment, 10(Special-Issue1), pp. 138–143. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.12944/CWE.10.Special-Issue1.19> (Accessed: 22 October 2024).

2 Hadjiphilippou, P. (2013) The contribution of the five human senses towards the perception of space. Department of Architecture, University of Nicosia. Available at: [https://www.academia.edu/2460561/The\\_contribution\\_of\\_the\\_five\\_human\\_senses\\_towards\\_the\\_perception\\_of\\_space](https://www.academia.edu/2460561/The_contribution_of_the_five_human_senses_towards_the_perception_of_space) (Accessed: 22 October 2024).

3 Schafer, R.M. (1993) The Soundscape : Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World. Rochester: Inner Traditions International, Limited.

4 Smith, B.R. (1999) The acoustic world of early modern England : attending to the O-factor. Chicago, Ill. ; University of Chicago Press.

5 Sterne, J. and Rodman, G.B. (2005) 'The audible past: cultural origins of sound reproduction', Cultural studies, pp. 396–398.



Fig 7: Image in The contribution of the five human senses towards the perception of space. Department of Architecture

HISTORY THROUGH THE MULTI-SENSORY



Fig 8: First Soundscapes- In those days men's ears heard sounds whose angelic purity cannot be conjured up again by any amount of science or magic. P.136

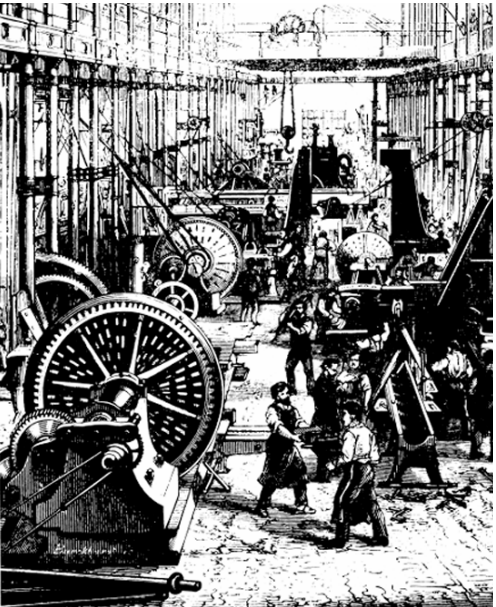


Fig 9: The Post-Industrial Soundscape. The\_Soundscape\_Our\_Sonic\_Environment\_and\_the\_Tuning of the world. P.80

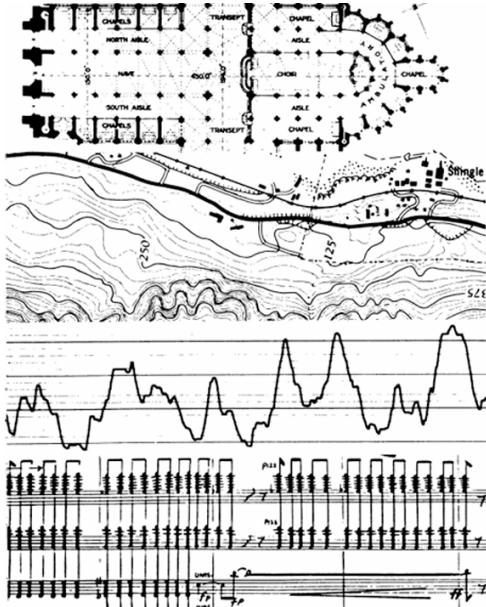


Fig 10: Analysis Soundscape. The\_Soundscape\_Our\_Sonic\_Environment\_and\_the\_Tuning of the world. P.136

A multi-sensory approach fosters connections that are both visceral and intellectual, enabling architecture to resonate with users on a deeper level. Through sound, touch, and smell, spaces can transcend their physical boundaries to become repositories of memory, identity, and meaning.

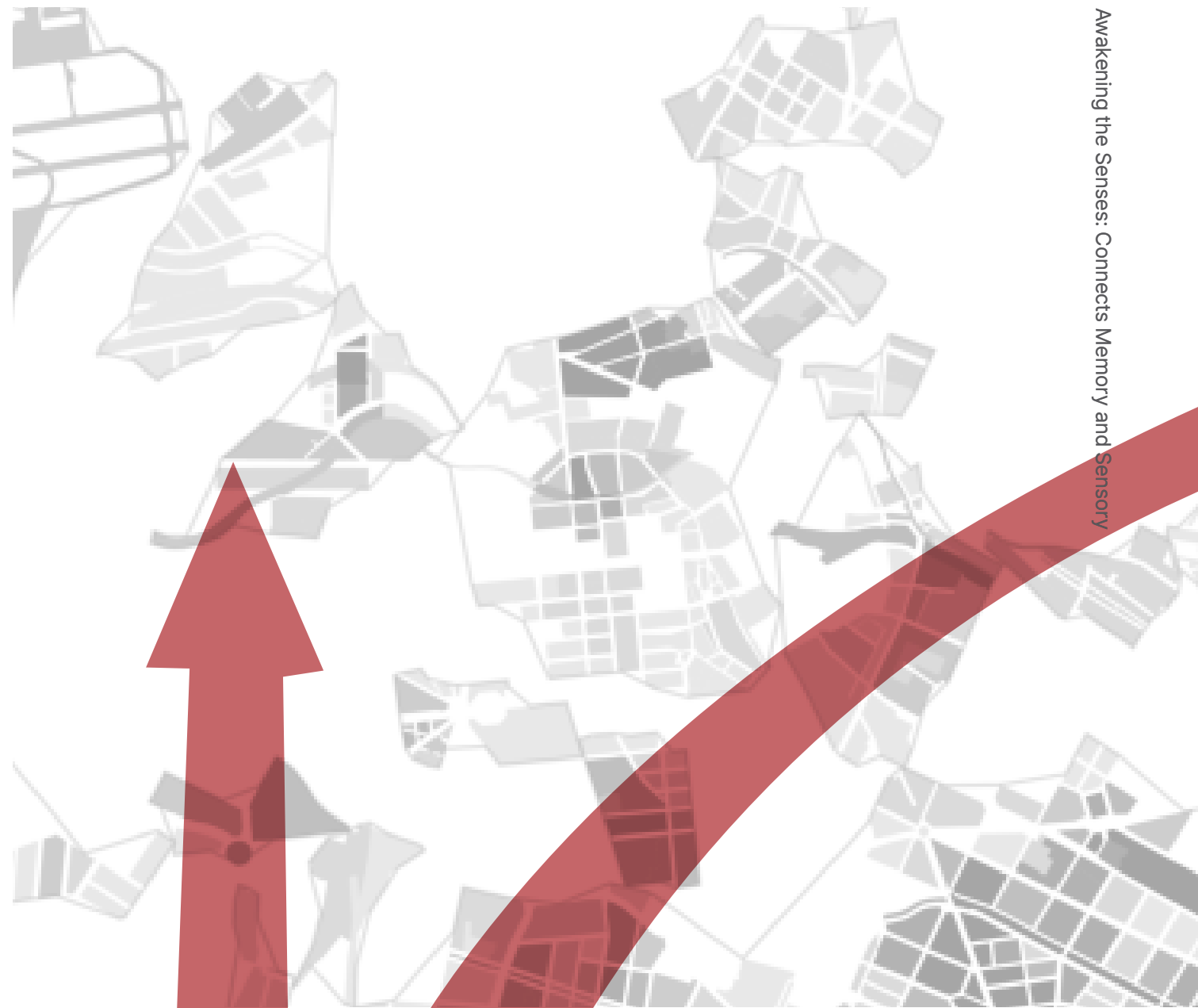
My exploration of multi-sensory architecture highlights its potential to create environments that connect people to the layered histories and emotional narratives of a place. This approach underscores that architecture is not merely a visual or functional endeavor but a medium for storytelling and connection. By engaging all the senses, architecture can build bridges between the past, present, and future, offering profound and enduring experiences that resonate beyond the immediate. This academic inquiry has deepened my understanding of how multi-sensory design transforms spaces into more than just structures, shaping them into living, breathing narratives of human experience.



CHAPTER 4: A PSYCHOGEOGRAPHIC EXPLORATION

Walking through Somers Town is a journey into the layered narratives of an urban environment. Each corner reveals subtle details that evoke both personal reflection and collective memory: the quiet murmur of voices filtering through windows, the uneven textures of weathered brick facades, and the fleeting scent of damp earth carried by the breeze. These elements contribute to what Merlin Coverley calls the “hidden story” of the city, where the physical and sensory qualities of a place “reveal a deeper truth, concealed beneath the surface” (Psychogeography, 2006, p. 12).

The streets of Somers Town invite a heightened sensory awareness, transforming ordinary spaces into deeply reflective experiences. Psychogeography, as Coverley describes, involves the “act of walking as a method of engagement,” uncovering layers of meaning that often go unnoticed by casual observers. As I walked, the fading murals, overgrown planters, and distant hum of trains seemed to embody a dialogue between neglect and care, revealing the passage of time and the fragility of urban life. These auditory elements, like the rustle of leaves or the creak of gates, were not just background noises but active participants in shaping my emotional connection to the space. “Experiencing space through all senses, not simply as a visual phenomenon” (Psychogeography, 2006, p. 31). I found myself drawn to the interplay of light and shadow in narrow alleyways, which seemed to guide my perception, contrasting



PSYCHOGEOGRAPHIC EXPLORATION

sharply with the bright, bustling main streets. This contrast deepened my understanding of Coverley's notion that psychogeographic exploration uncovers “the emotional landscape embedded in the material one.” For me, these sensory highlighted the complexities of urban life, drawing attention to the forgotten and overlooked, while challenging me to engage with the layers of memory, history, and meaning hidden in the everyday.

The psychogeographic exploration of Somers Town underscores the power of sensory engagement in revealing the deeper narratives embedded within urban spaces. Coverley's insights inspire a renewed understanding of place, where walking and sensory awareness uncover hidden layers of meaning. This perspective offers not just a method of inquiry but a way to reimagine how we connect with the spaces around us, fostering a richer, more profound engagement with their histories and emotions.

<sup>1</sup> Coverley, M. (2012) Psychogeography. Revised ebook edition. Harpenden, [England: Pocket Essentials.



Fig 11: Psychogeographic (AI Inspiration)