

Vita

Nova

Translation: 'New Life' in Latin

The Journey Beyond Grief

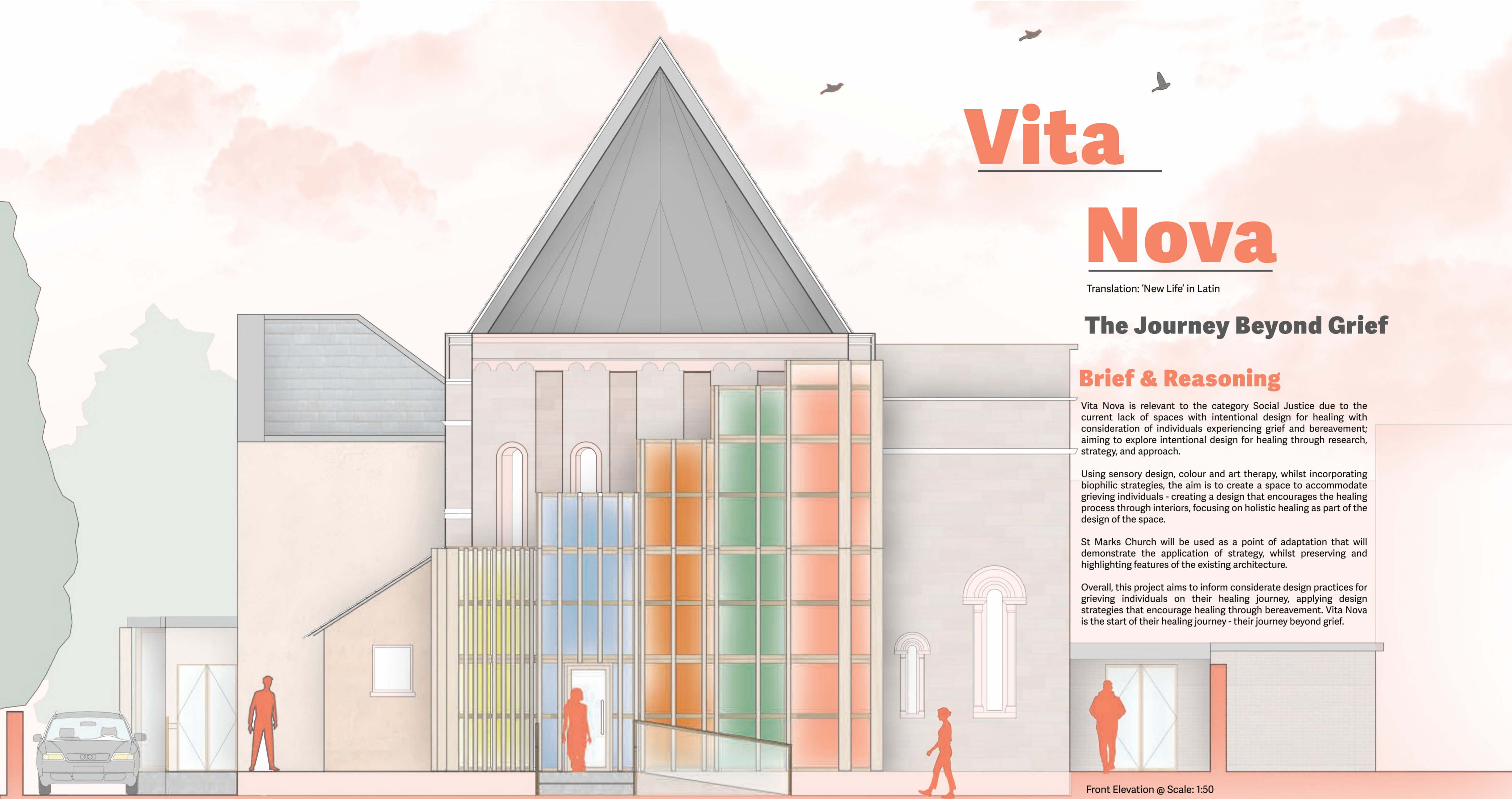
Brief & Reasoning

Vita Nova is relevant to the category Social Justice due to the current lack of spaces with intentional design for healing with consideration of individuals experiencing grief and bereavement; aiming to explore intentional design for healing through research, strategy, and approach.

Using sensory design, colour and art therapy, whilst incorporating biophilic strategies, the aim is to create a space to accommodate grieving individuals - creating a design that encourages the healing process through interiors, focusing on holistic healing as part of the design of the space.

St Marks Church will be used as a point of adaptation that will demonstrate the application of strategy, whilst preserving and highlighting features of the existing architecture.

Overall, this project aims to inform considerate design practices for grieving individuals on their healing journey, applying design strategies that encourage healing through bereavement. Vita Nova is the start of their healing journey - their journey beyond grief.



Front Elevation @ Scale: 1:50

The Five Stages of Grief



The process of grief was explored by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, who established the five stages of grief as a framework for the bereavement process. Within Vita Nova, this is explored through activity within the five zones starting from pot selection through to final decoration and kiln - this framework was used for the main basis of the project.

Why Pottery?
Pottery was used to unite the areas through the process of selecting, breaking, fixing, and painting, through to completion. The deciding factor for the involvement of pottery through the processes links to the healing benefits of art therapy, and also relates to the fragility of the user through their grieving process.

Colour Breakdown:
Each colour used within the individual pod areas through upholstery, was also reflected and used within the front facade, linking back to traditional church stained glass windows.

Each colour was used to offset the emotions within each stage, until stage five where coral is the representative colour of acceptance.

Denial - beige
Anger - blue
Guilt - orange
Depression - green
Acceptance - coral



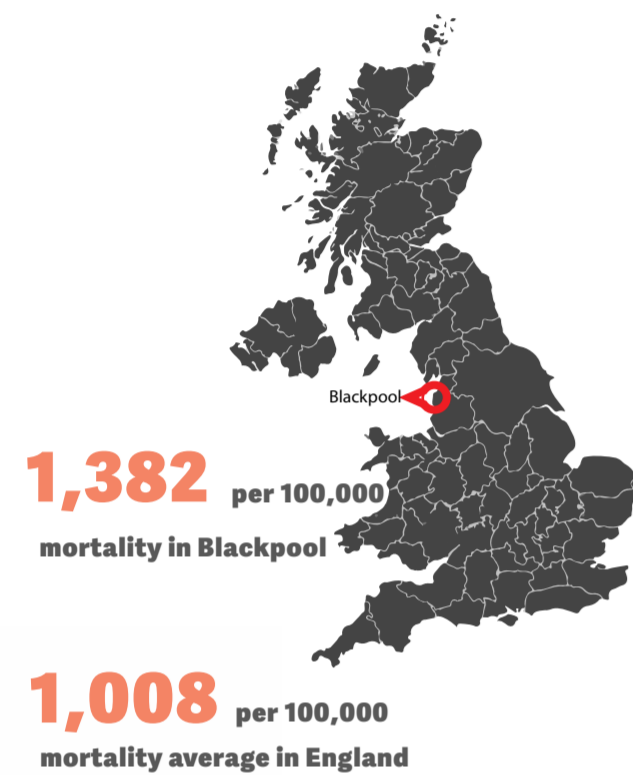
LOCATION & USER

Location

My initial research identified the location with the highest mortality rate in England, I found that Blackpool had the highest rate of 1,382 per 100,000, in comparison to the average mortality rate in England being 1,008 per 100,000 as shown in the diagram below.

This is important to understand the high number of grieving individuals to accommodate within Vita Nova, where it will be more successful to meet the demand.

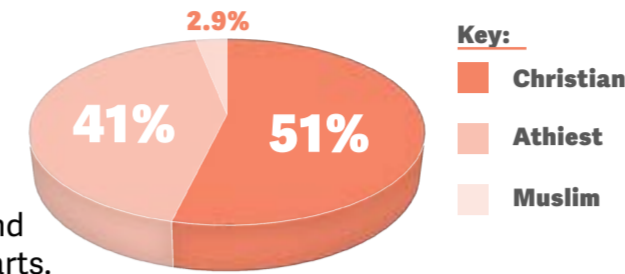
Mortality rate



Intended User

Due to the religious nature of the building, I then researched the religious beliefs of the Blackpool population. This informed the intended user of the space, which influenced the direction of the design to be of a secular nature.

This project is aimed towards athiests as a secular support space for individuals, as it was found that people without a religion have higher levels of death anxiety than their religious counterparts.



Types of Grief



This project was also required to be considerate to the 3 main types of grief – anticipatory, sudden, and traumatic grief. Having an understanding of the types of grief provides sympathetic understanding to design for the multiple forms of grief, considering individual experiences that may impact how they grieve and interact with the process, providing a design that is considerate to their needs.

Client

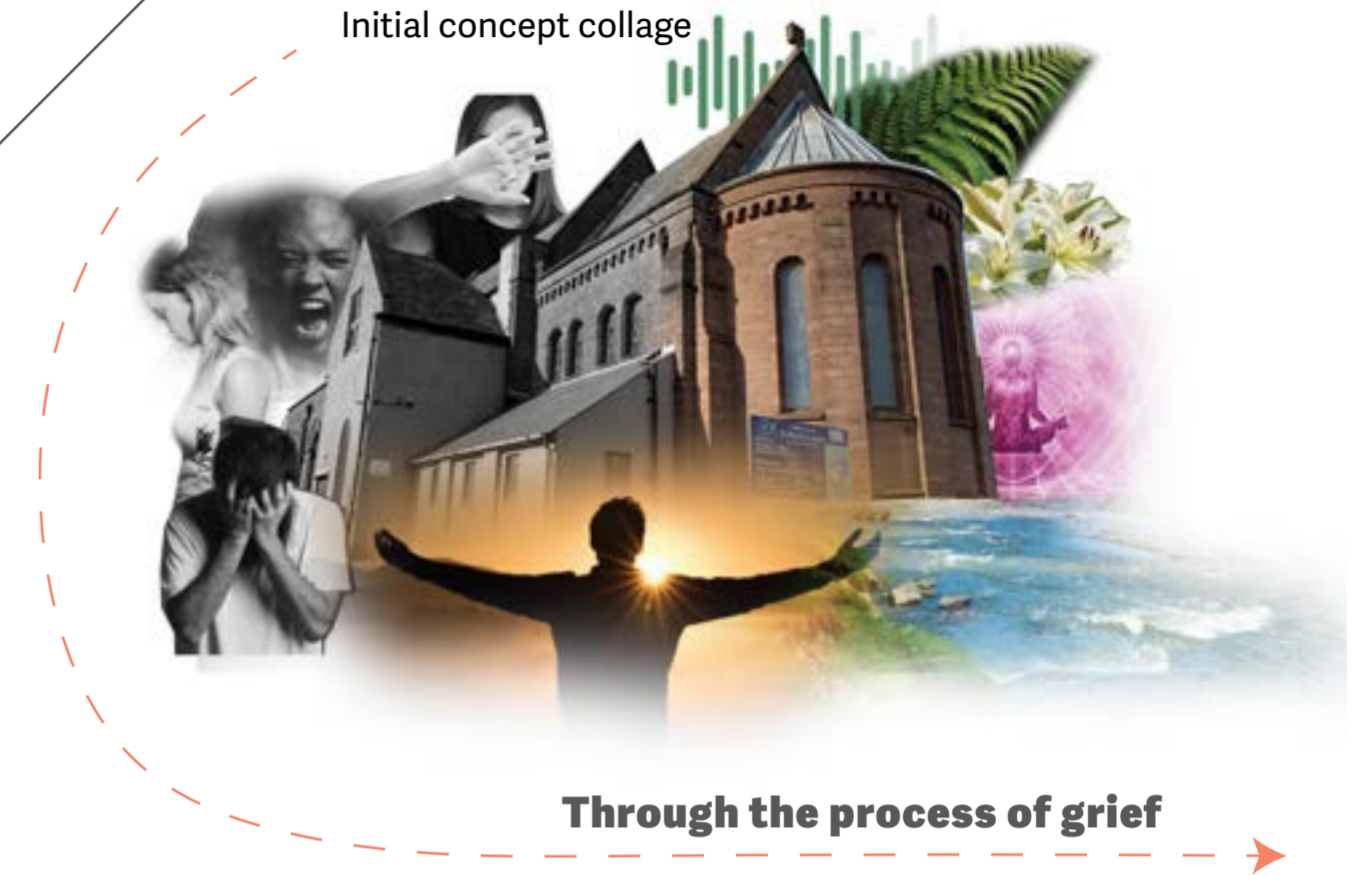
The chosen client for this building is the NHS as they currently do not offer any support with bereavement. Currently they only offer mental health support with anxiety and depression caused from bereavement after suffering for 6 months (NHS, 2023).



CONCEPT & STRATEGY

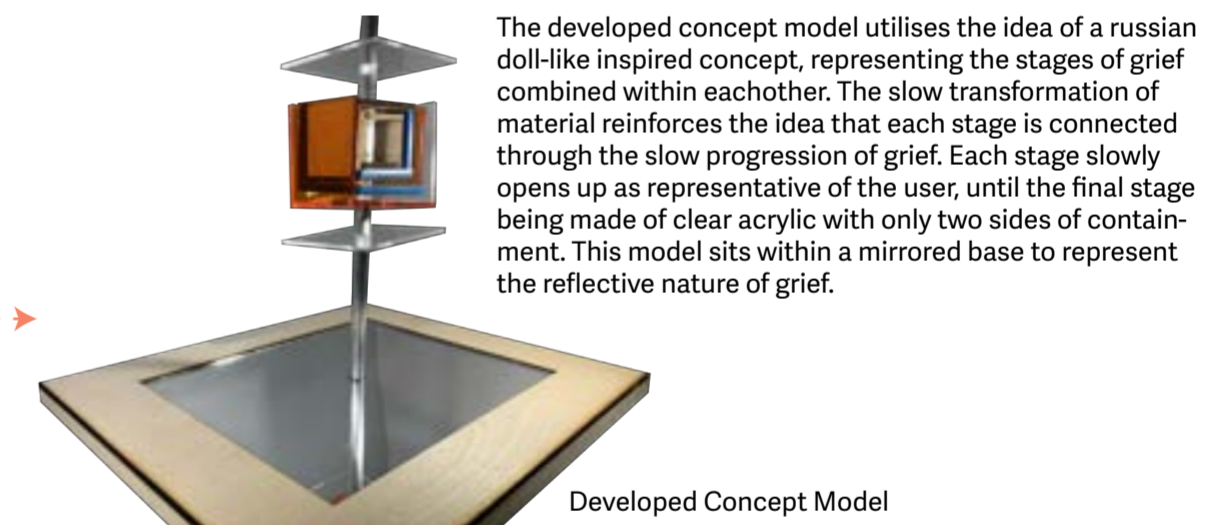
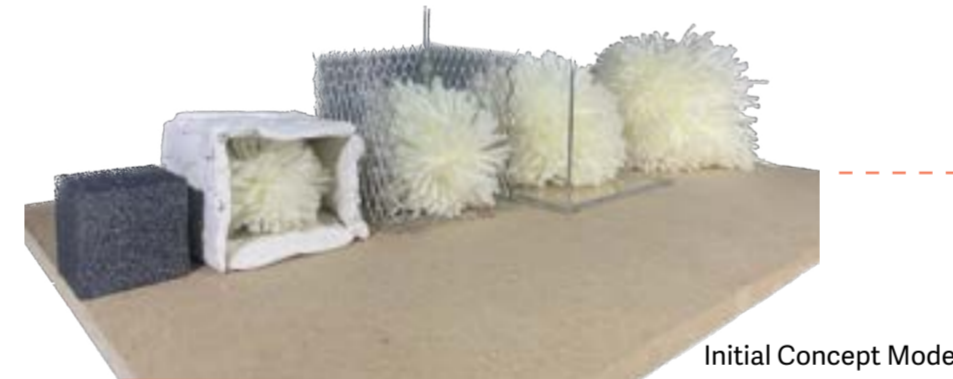
Concept

The initial concept for Vita Nova was heavily based on the five stages of grief, wanting to encourage healing through a transformative journey - for individuals to go from a dark place of grief where life is dull and painful, into acceptance of their grief, being able to see life in full colour.



Concept Model Development

The initial concept model was based on the progression through the five stages of grief. Each stage expanded in size to represent the growth and opening up of the user through the stages. This was, however, reconsidered as I made note that grief is not linear, and each stage is not separate as I had previously displayed it.



The developed concept model utilises the idea of a russian doll-like inspired concept, representing the stages of grief combined within each other. The slow transformation of material reinforces the idea that each stage is connected through the slow progression of grief. Each stage slowly opens up as representative of the user, until the final stage being made of clear acrylic with only two sides of containment. This model sits within a mirrored base to represent the reflective nature of grief.

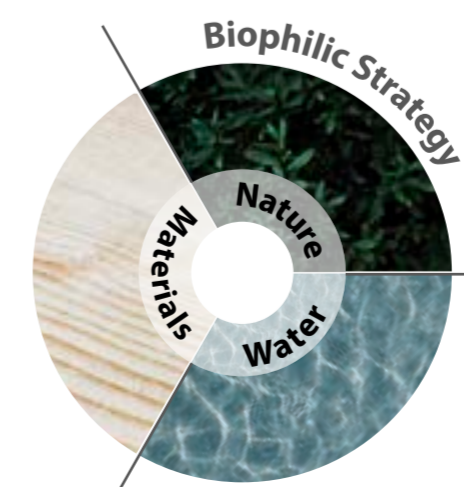
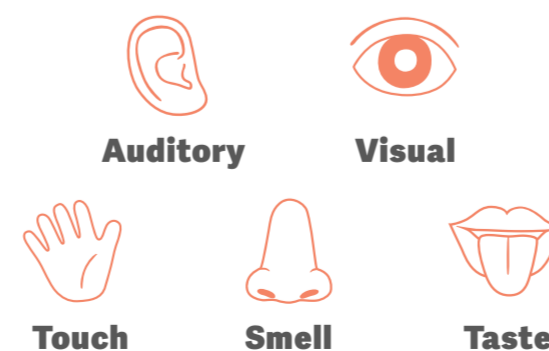
Site location within Blackpool

Site Map @ Scale: 1:1000

Design Strategy

Sensory design has been shown to encourage the process of healing, which is incorporated through stimulation of the senses using materiality and activity. The sensory aspects of water and use of timber link to biophilic strategy, re-inforcing the healing aspects of the design.

Sensory Design

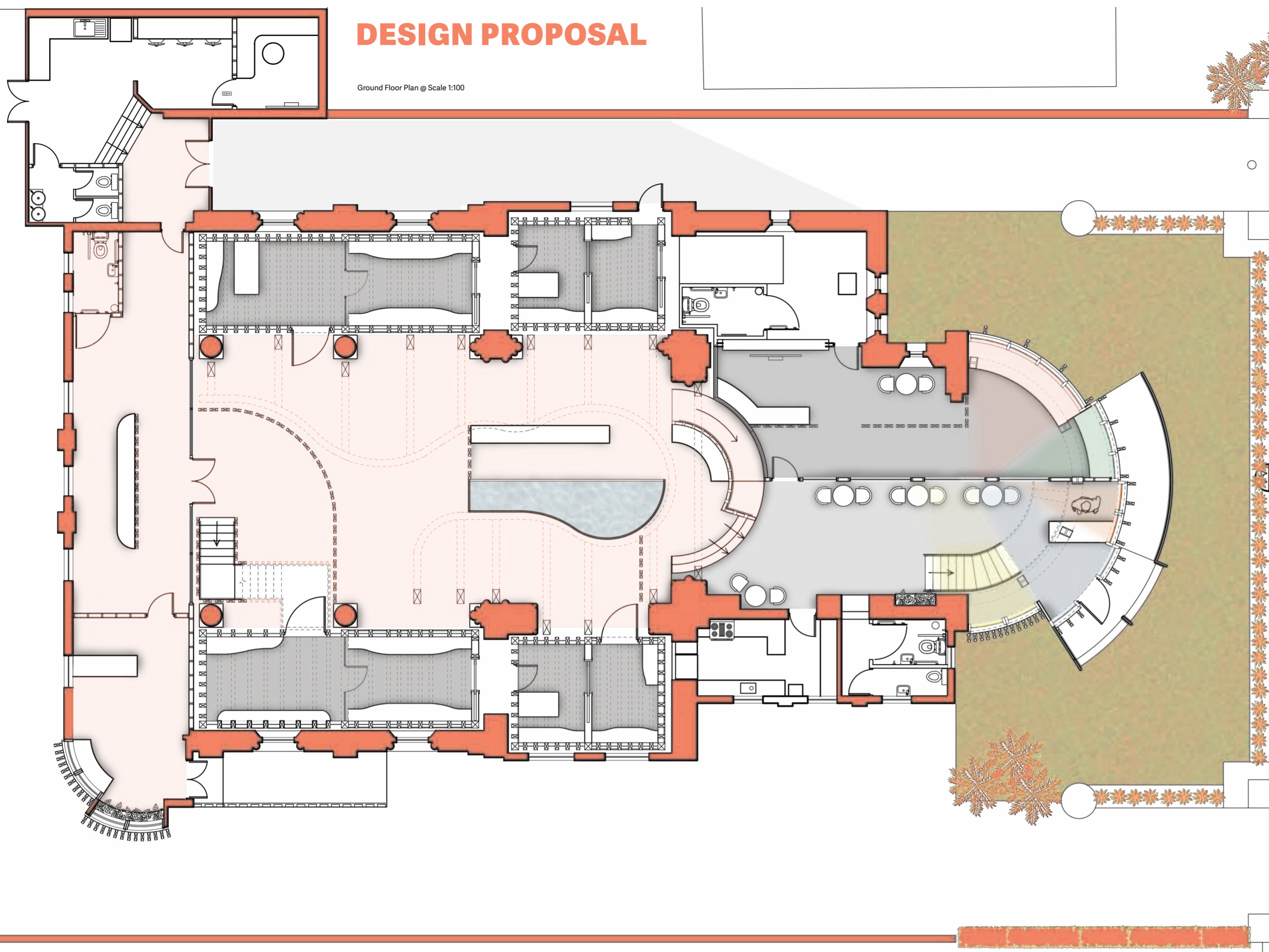


Form Exploration



DESIGN PROPOSAL

Ground Floor Plan @ Scale 1:100



After Blackpool was identified as the chosen location, the next step was to select the building. St Marks Church was built in 1927 and is a 5 min walk from Layton Cemetery – the oldest cemetery in Blackpool.

Understanding the existing building and layout of the church was important to inform the design itself. The design of the intervention took inspiration from the traditional layout of the church, the aisles were used for the grieving areas within the stages of grief until the final stage, which opens up in relation to the metaphor of the user opening up by the final stage.

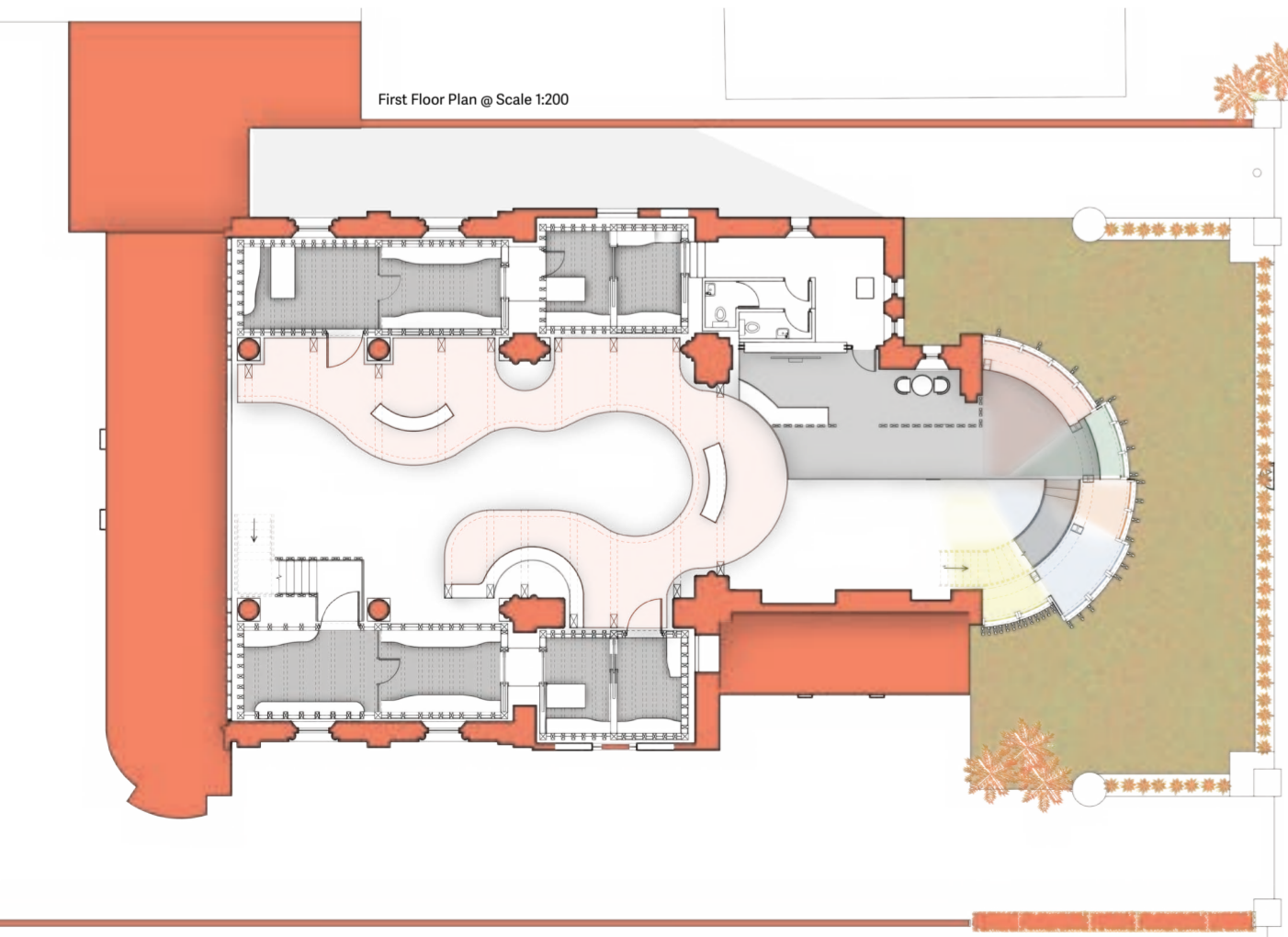
To encourage healing through the design and link back to the identified strategies, I wanted to incorporate biophilic and sensory design principles - this was done through materiality and form, using birchwood glulam, water elements and a simple palette for cohesion and preventing overwhelm. The role of colour was also an important aspect of the design, linking to each stage of grief to offset the emotions of the user; this was reflected in the colour tinted glass facade that progressed in size to represent the internal growth of the user.



Materiality

- Colour tinted glass - front facade, linking back to the stages of grief
- Existing red sandstone - main building structure, remaining connection to building history
- Birchwood - grieving pod structures, internal spatial dividers, front facade, with biophilic connection and atmosphere
- Brass - structural support for glulam structures, and lighting features, for warm atmosphere
- Concrete - first floor mezzanine, representative for the strength of the user
- Terazzo - returning cafe flooring, representing the combining of colours for the stages of grief
- Toughened Transparent Glass - mezzanine balcony, representative of the open nature of Vita Nova
- Frosted Glass - between glulam supports for consultation pods, providing privacy and acoustic separation
- Little Greene Paint - entrance and lobby areas, to prevent overwhelm and overstimulation for users when first arriving

First Floor Plan @ Scale 1:200



The design is reflected on the ground and first floor due to the nature of grief itself being reflective - the design is a metaphor for the process of grief. The first floor mezzanine stands independent of the church to avoid the structural columns and celebrate the existing architectural forms. This mezzanine is also complimentary to the activities and function within the ground floor; the curve of the mezzanine takes form from the water feature below, this central water feature took inspiration from the curvature of the existing building facade.

RETURNING CAFE



OVERVIEW OF SPACE



Applied Strategy





- Sensory**
Kintsugi is a hands-on approach with sensory stimulation through touch activity.
- Sensory**
Art therapy provides opportunity for sensory stimulation through touch activity, connecting with the pottery.
- Sensory & Biophilic**
Through auditory and visual stimulation, running water is an applied sensory and biophilic element within the space for overwhelm.
- Biophilic**
The use of birchwood consistently throughout the design connects to biophilia with the proximity to nature.
- Biophilic**
Nature reinforces the healing properties within the space, being introduced in the initial and cafe space of the design.

GRIEVING POD

The grieving pods take form inspiration from the archways of the church aisles. Seating and desks are extruded through organic forms incorporated in the design of each pod. These pods are made from birchwood glulam as structural forms, connected with 12mm brass rods and secured into the floor with concealed t-blade post support fixtures as shown under the detail component.

Consultation pods will have frosted glass inserts between each glulam structure for further privacy and acoustic separation. Seating will be cushioned with cotton upholstery of various colours that associate with each stage - going from neutral beige, to not initially overwhelm the user, navy to offset their anger, orange to contrast their guilt, green to offset their depression, and coral as the colour of acceptance.

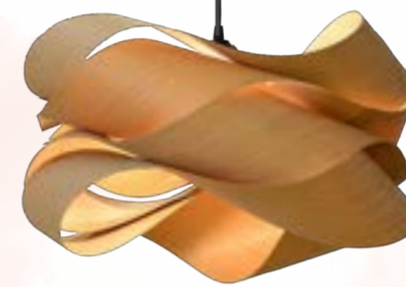
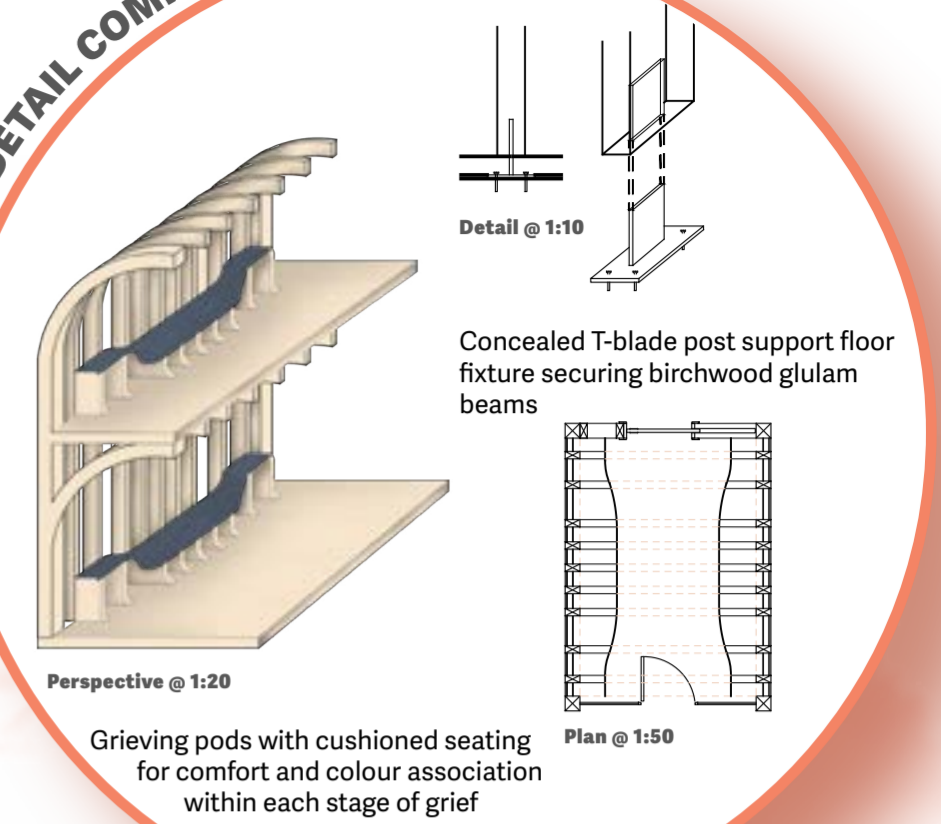
Material Consideration

-  Frosted glass to provide privacy and acoustic separation within consultation pods
-  12mm brass rods connect the glulam arches for structural support
-  Birchwood glulam used for the main structures, creating a comforting, warm atmosphere whilst linking to biophilic strategy
-  Upholstery linking to individual colour association within each stage, whilst considering physical comfort for the users



Tone of lighting dictates atmosphere within an internal space, this is important to understand when considering lighting fixtures and their properties to include within the consultation grieving pods. Warm lighting will be used to create a comforting, warm atmosphere.

DETAIL COMPONENT



Lighting

Lighting is an important aspect for atmosphere within the design of the grieving pods, these pendant lights from Nyra London reflect the curved and organic nature of the glulam arch structures.

Detail Model Exploration

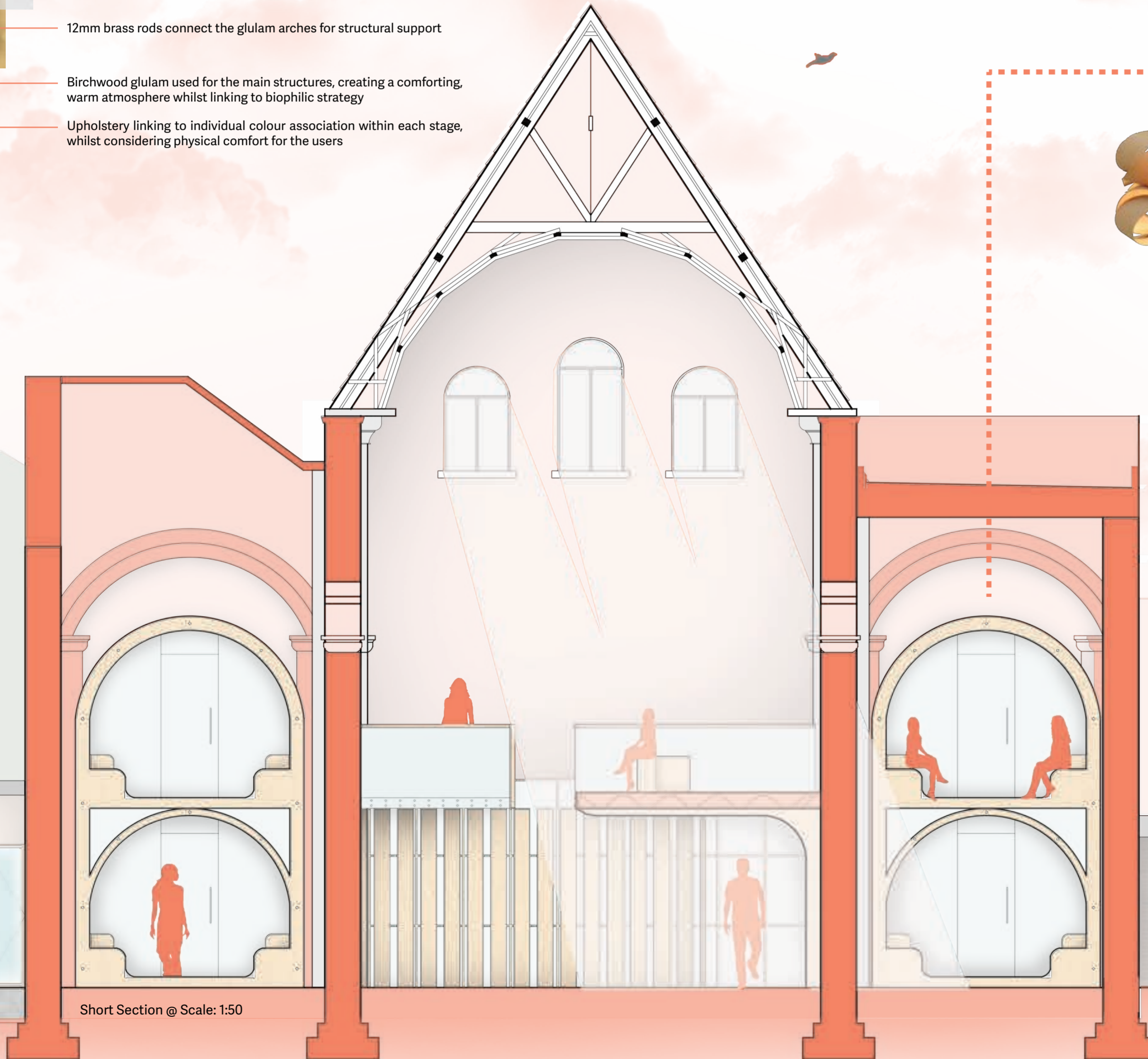
The pod structure was inspired through precedent studies and practical exploration with multiple model prototypes. The main goal for this space was to create a comforting and accommodating atmosphere due to the sensitive nature of grief.

Ultimately, I explored integrated furniture within a dual space archstructure, inspired by that of the church. To further soften the atmosphere, I considered organic lighting fixtures and seating upholstery.

Initial Detail model



Detail Model @ Scale 1:20



Short Section @ Scale: 1:50

THE JOURNEY

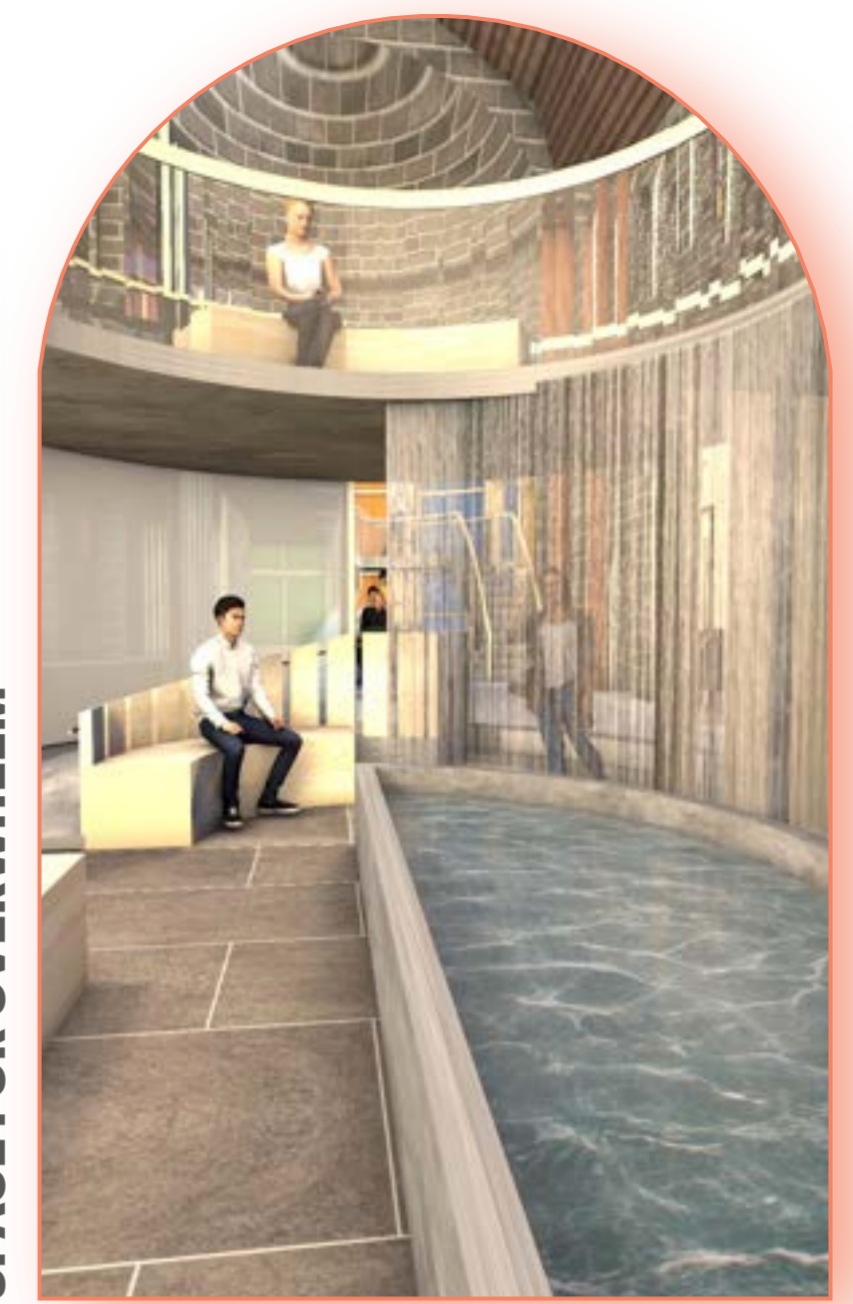
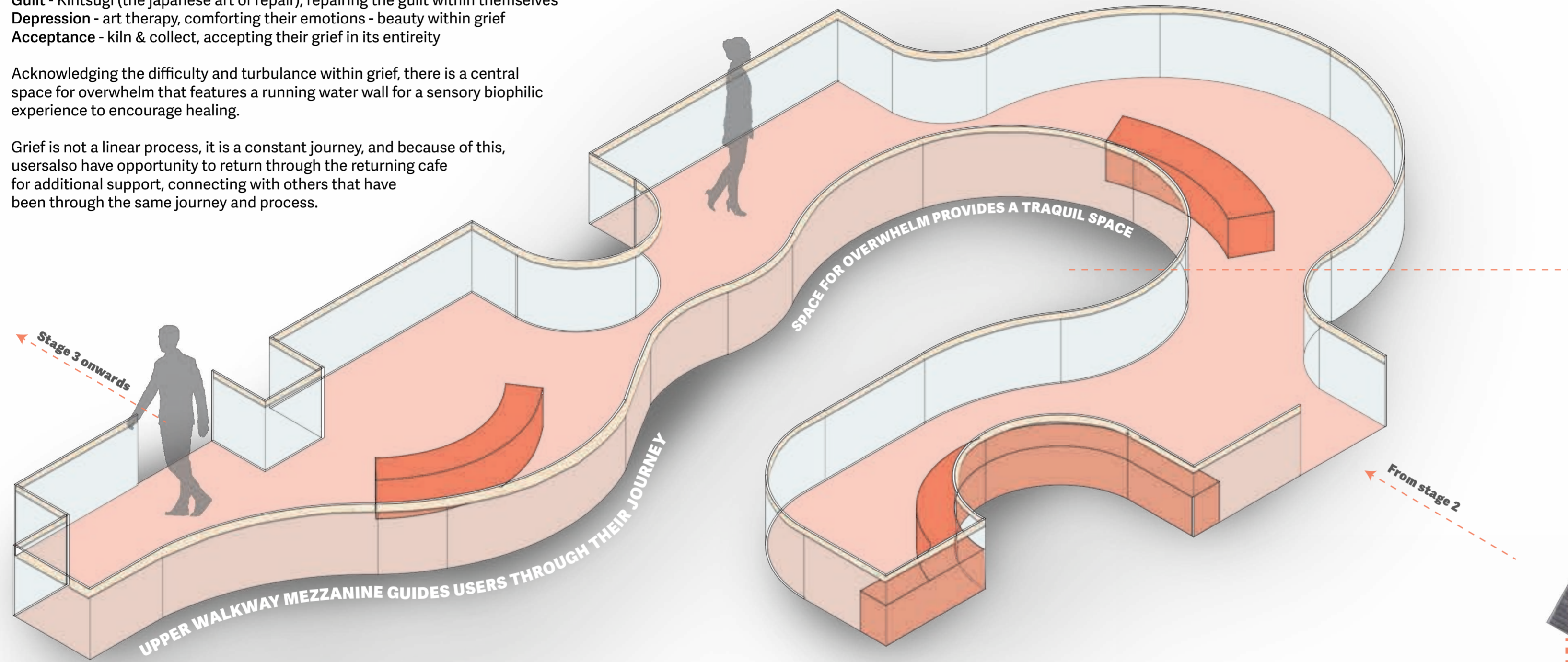
The journey of the user is guided through the framework of the five stages of grief. This provides a guided experience through their healing journey.

The user initiates their journey through appointment, upon arrival they will be guided to the initial stage of grief with the pot selection area - the pottery being a representation of their grief. Throughout their journey, the pottery is transformed through each stage of grief.

- Denial - pottery selection, acknowledging their grief
- Anger - pottery breaking, expression of emotion
- Guilt - Kintsugi (the Japanese art of repair), repairing the guilt within themselves
- Depression - art therapy, comforting their emotions - beauty within grief
- Acceptance - kiln & collect, accepting their grief in its entirety

Acknowledging the difficulty and turbulence within grief, there is a central space for overwhelm that features a running water wall for a sensory biophilic experience to encourage healing.

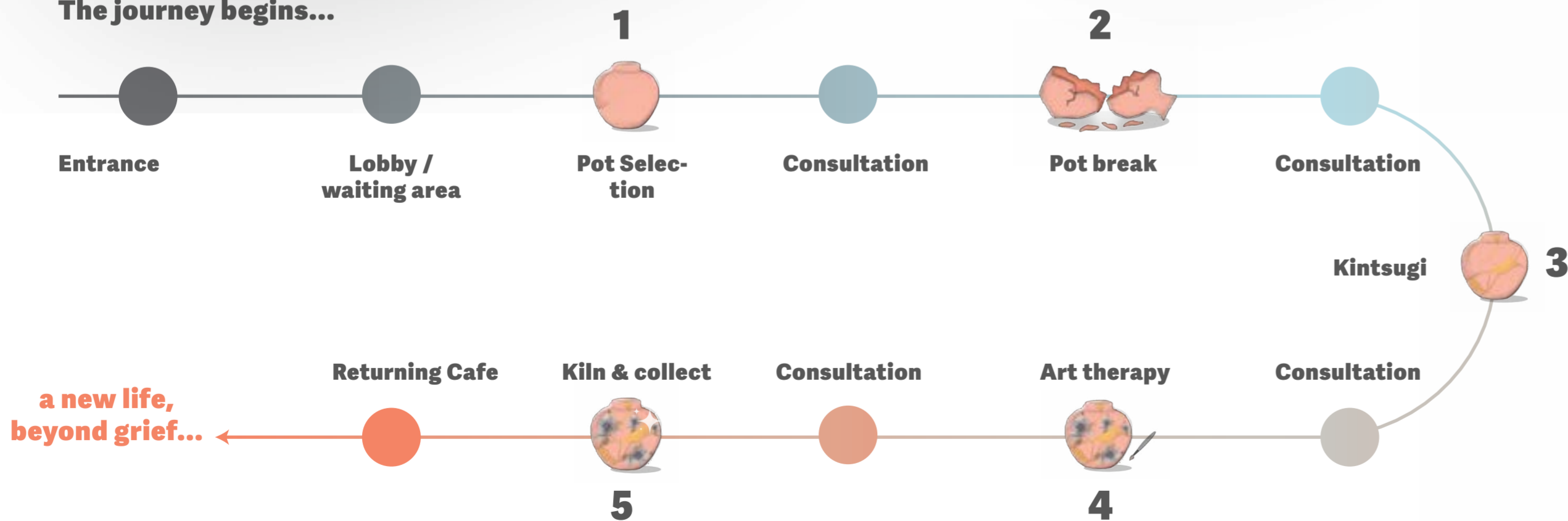
Grief is not a linear process, it is a constant journey, and because of this, users also have opportunity to return through the returning cafe for additional support, connecting with others that have been through the same journey and process.



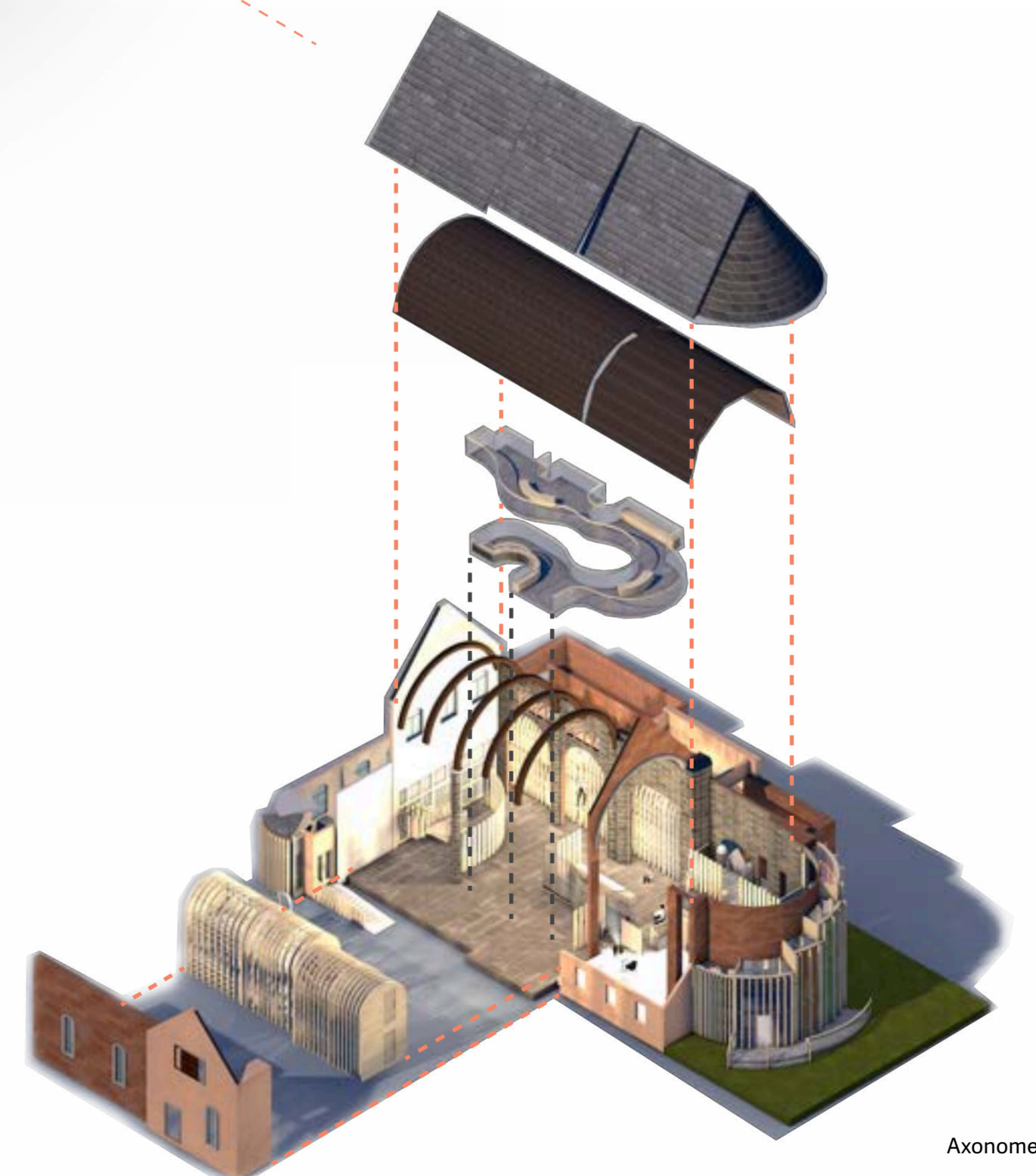
SPACE FOR OVERWHELM

The space for overwhelm incorporates sensory and biophilic strategies to offer a calming environment to encourage healing and tranquility for each user.

The journey begins...



Each stage of grief has an associated activity, as shown above. This is then paired with consultation for a dual approach of creative expression and talking therapy, which has been shown to be an effective combined therapy for healing individuals. Being guided through the journey provides structure and comfortable exploration of the users' feelings.



Axonometric of space