

OBSCURA

by rachael mackay

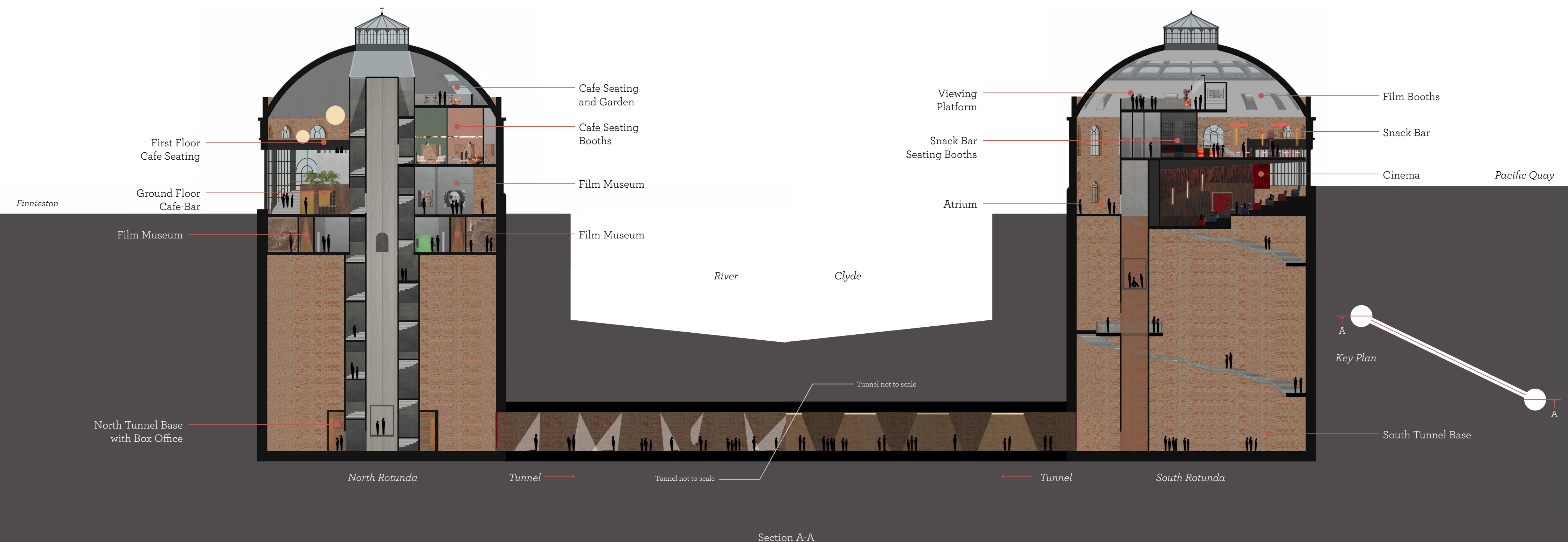
Welcome to Obscura, the new social film space and hidden cinema with a unique location in the centre of Glasgow.

Obscura allows visitors to interact with film via an experiential journey through an immersive film museum, hidden tunnel film experience, cinema auditorium and private film booths. Obscura is comprised of three sections - The North Rotunda, The South Rotunda and the Harbour Tunnel which connects the two Rotundas under the River Clyde. The user journey throughout the three buildings is designed to reflect the classic story structure - beginning in the known world, where a discovery sets the character off on an adventure into a new, unknown world. Representing the journey between the known and unknown worlds, the tunnel is both a linking space between the two Rotundas and an immersive experience itself. Using a variety of techniques, the following horror film demonstrates a tunnel experience that would link to the subject matter of the film being shown within the cinema

Use this link
or scan the QR
code to watch



The final film showcases
the tunnel experience if
a horror film were being
shown in the cinema.



The Tunnel, known as the Glasgow Harbour Tunnel, was originally one of three tunnels which linked the two Rotundas.

Built between 1890-95, the three tunnels transported pedestrians, vehicles and horses across the River Clyde. The Rotundas were built to cover the lift shafts and stairs, transporting passengers approximately 24 metres down to the tunnel.

Eventually, the tunnels became disused and the two vehicle tunnels were closed in 1943. In 1986, the opening of a nearby bridge offered pedestrians easier access across the Clyde. The following year, the two vehicle tunnels were filled in, and a water mains pipe was installed in the pedestrian tunnel. I chose to remove and relocate the water mains pipe in order to create a more immersive experience for audiences visiting the tunnel.

SITE HISTORY

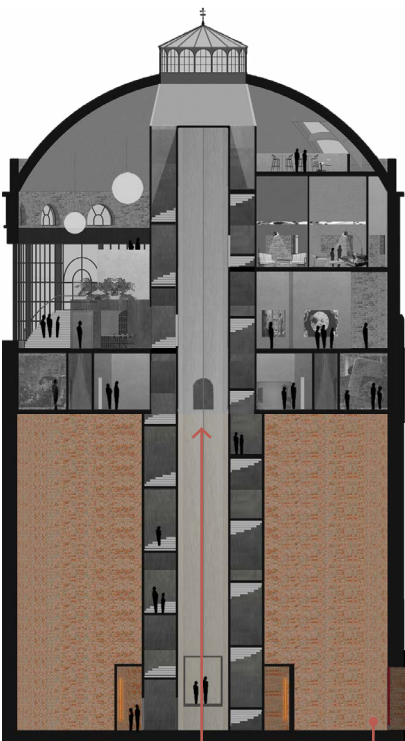


THE JOURNEY

The tunnel connects the two Rotundas, providing an interesting and unique journey for visitors.

Using sound and lighting, it is a dynamic, immersive experience, building anticipation for the film. The experience is tailored to the film currently being shown in the South Rotunda's cinema, and therefore provides a different journey for every visit.

The user journey through the North Rotunda, Tunnel and South Rotunda is designed to reflect the classic story structure - beginning in the known world, where a discovery sets the character off on an adventure into a new, unknown world. The Tunnel represents *the journey* into the new world.



North Rotunda



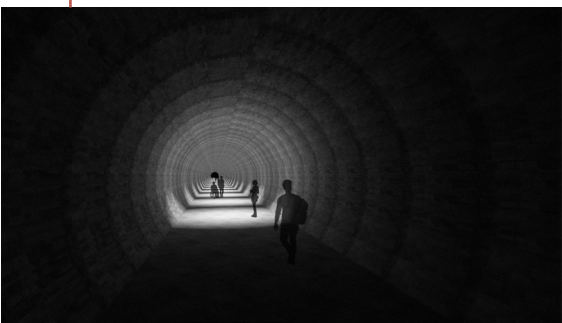
South Rotunda

Tunnel



Photobooth

This seemingly-ordinary photobooth can also be found in the basement of the film museum. Upon entering the photobooth, visitors find a secret doorway which leads them down a further 22m underground to the tunnel. The discovery of the tunnel entrance sparks the beginning of the next part of the user journey - the transition into the new world.



Horror Experience - View Upon Entering the Tunnel

The box office is located at the mouth of the tunnel, where visitors can purchase tickets for the cinema, hire out film booths and find out more about the current tunnel experience.

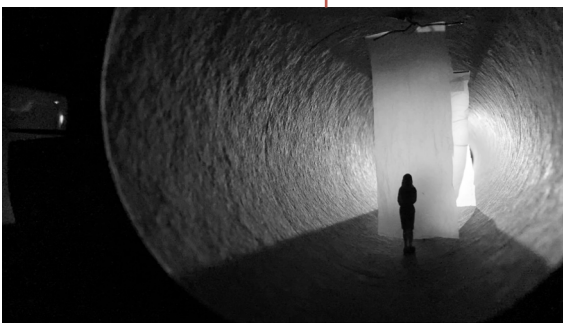
The tunnel experience is ever-changing, dependant on the film currently being shown in the South Rotunda. **The following journey is an example of the experience if a horror film was being shown in the cinema.**



Horror Experience - ACT ONE - Searchlights

The first of the three sections begins the tunnel experience by introducing the story. Visitors make their way into the tunnel, where they hear a car's engine start as spotlights begin moving around the space like car headlights. As the sounds build and headlights shine, a radio sounds informing the audience that a suspected killer is on the loose. As spotlights motion-track the audience, the radio begins to cut out, and eventually the spotlights angle to cast long shadows down the tunnel.

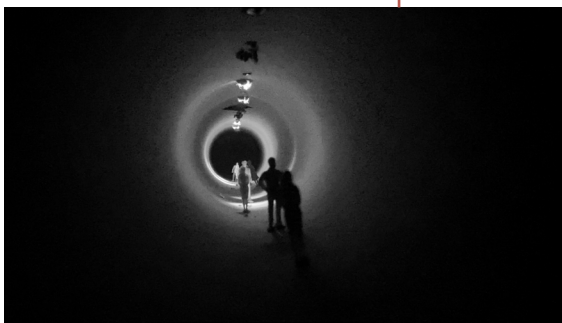
“There is a killer on the loose!”



Horror Experience - ACT TWO - Obscured

The second section draws the audience further into the story, building up towards the experience's climax in the third act. Upon entering this section, visitors are met with plastic sheets, which hang from the ceiling, obscuring their view along the tunnel. Fans and spotlights in the ceiling softly move the sheets, casting shadows through the tunnel. Rain and wind sounds play as visitors make their way through the space, and softly flashing lighting creates a tense atmosphere.

“The killer is among us!”



Horror Experience - ACT THREE - The Killer

The last section brings the story to a climax and concludes the tunnel experience. Low lighting occasionally flickers and the sound of chains clinking can be heard as visitors enter the space. Visitors can see the end of the tunnel, until suddenly the lights go out and they are plunged into darkness. The chains softly clink until there is a loud screeching noise - a monster! Lights then turn on one-by-one from the end of the tunnel towards the visitors, as they hear monster footsteps approaching and passing them by.

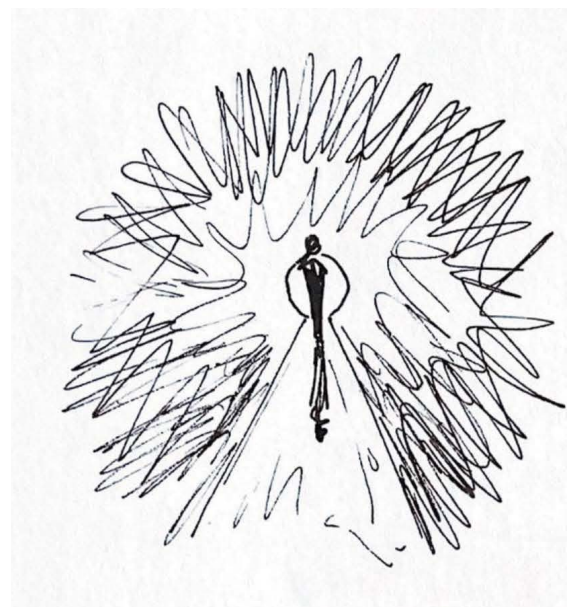
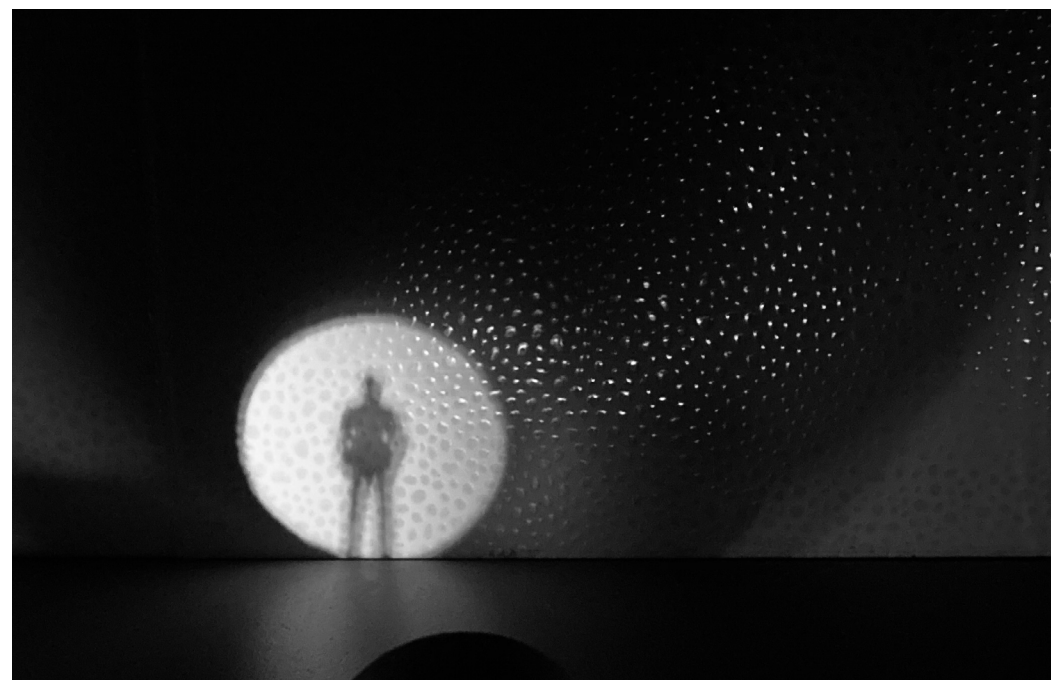
“It turns out the killer isn't human at all, and it is in the room with us now!”



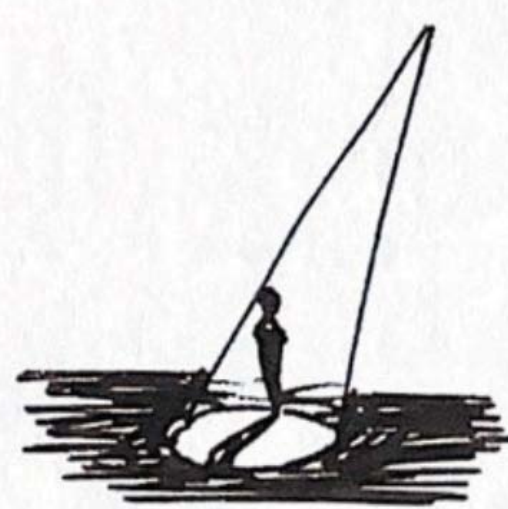
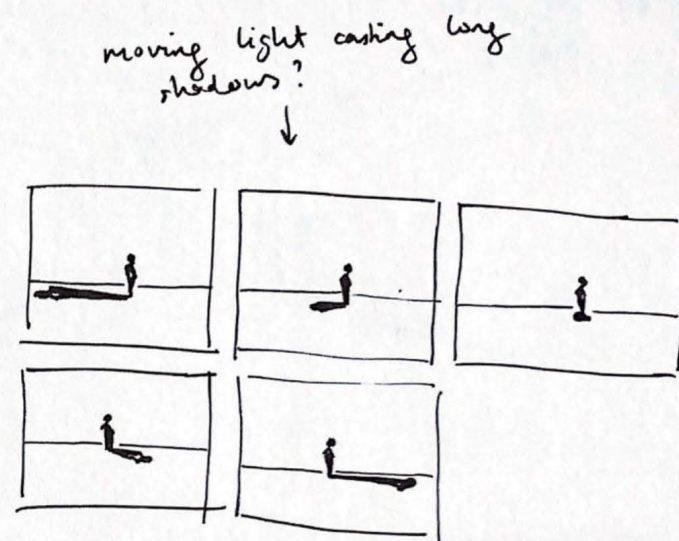
Projection on Tunnel Base Wall

Once the tunnel experience is over, visitors enter the base of the South Rotunda. The North tunnel base is closed off and secretive, building anticipation for the tunnel. In contrast, the South tunnel base is open and bright, with stairs rising up around the edges of the building, emphasising the vastness of the space.

The space allows visitors to decompress after the tunnel experience and builds up further anticipation for entering the South Rotunda.



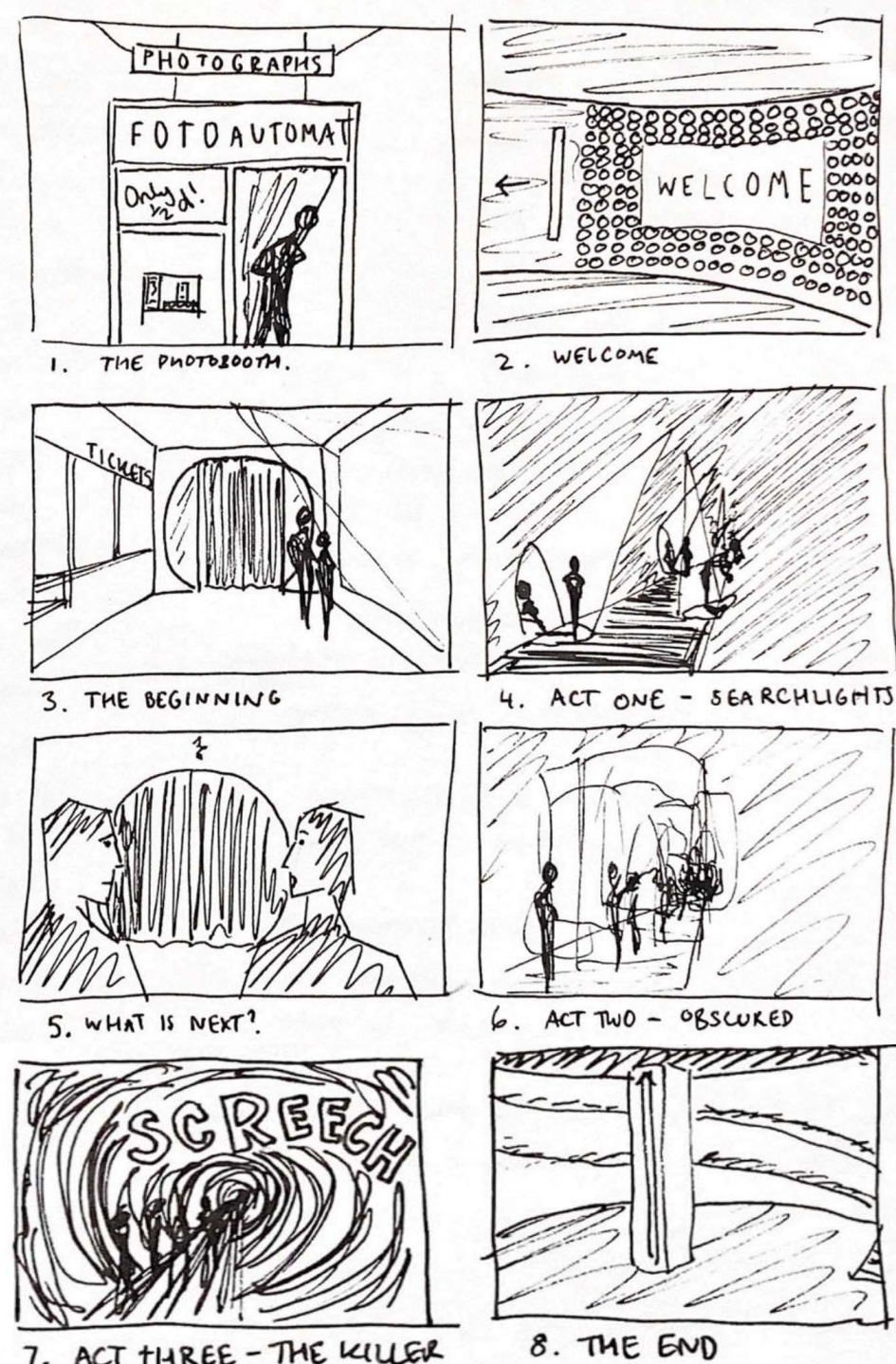
shiny floor
for water-like
reflections.



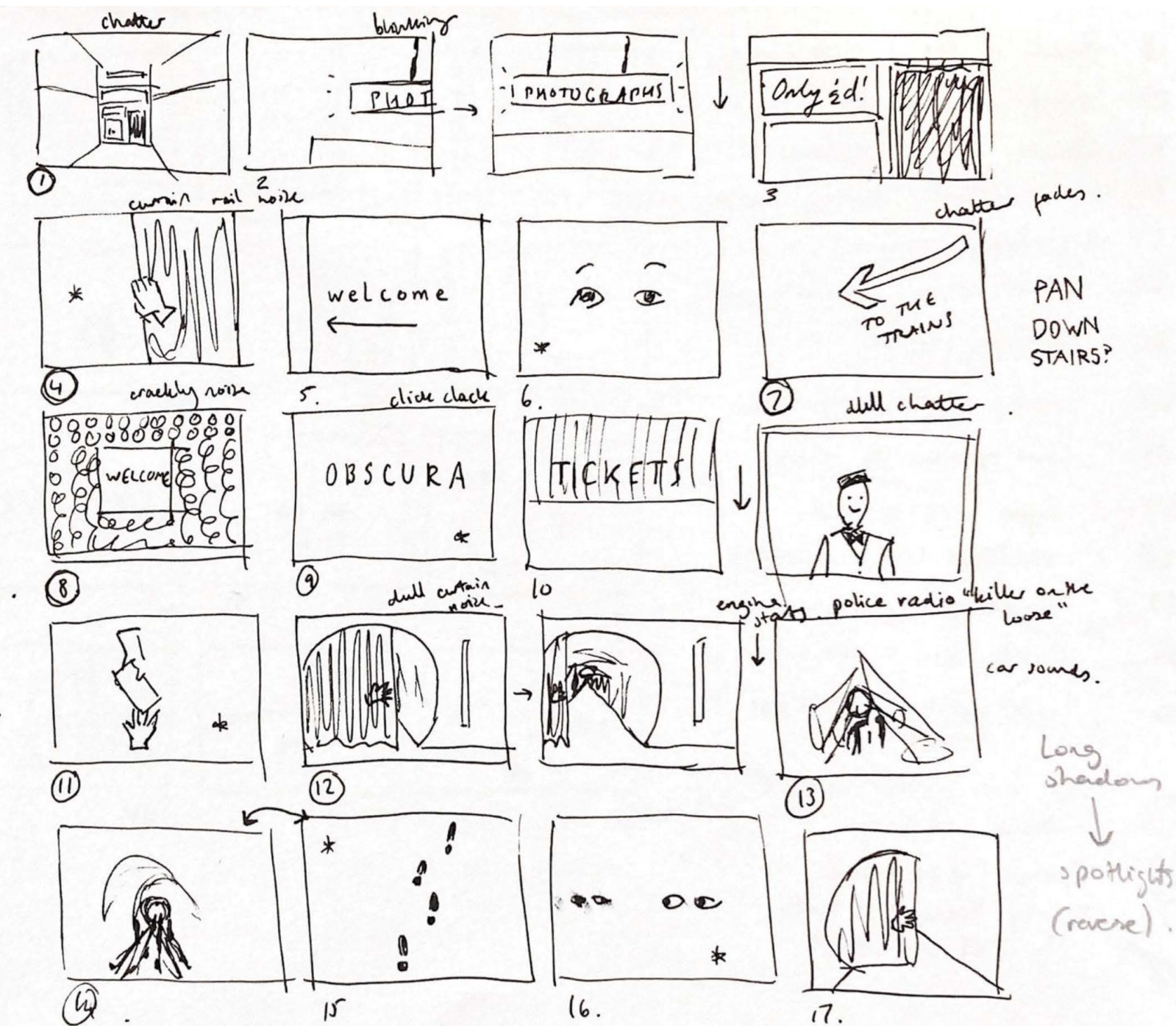
I was interested in viewing the tunnel not only as a journey from one Rotunda to the other, but also independently as the setting for a story. I aimed to keep the tunnel free from obstruction, so that visitors could fully understand the scale of the space they were visiting. This led me to the idea of the tunnel as an immersive experience, where lighting and sound would fill the tunnel, rather than physical objects. To create a continually interesting journey which would encourage visitors to return, the tunnel experience is ever-changing, directly linking to the genre of the film being shown in the cinema.

I have long had an interest in film, and wanted to create a short film which would convey the tunnel experience. After researching colour, lighting and sound in film, I chose to focus the film on a horror theme. Experimenting with contrast, lighting and a scale figure, I created photographs and sketches showcasing my initial ideas for the tunnel experience. These informed the three 'acts' of the proposed tunnel experience, which I storyboarded for the tunnel experience.

Storyboarding also helped to test ideas for the lighting, camera angles and shorts for the final film.



Storyboarding the Tunnel Experience



- 1 Photobooth flickering.
- 2 Detail of light flickering
- 3 Pan down to curtain
- 4 Hand pulls curtain across.
- 5 welcome sign. ←
6. Eyes surprised
7. stairs lead down.
8. to tunnel base. WELCOME

1. Zoom in → changes to obscura.
10. Tickets pass down to ticket guy.
11. Handing over ticket.
12. Curtain to tunnel opens
13. ↑ fades into video of searchlights.
14. Lights start sending out long shadow.
15. Footsteps walking.
16. Eyes glancing
17. Next curtain opens.

Storyboarding for part of the Final Film

PROCESS

THE FINAL FILM

The final film uses a mixture of live action videos, scale models, animated renders and hand-drawn animations to convey the tunnel experience. This involved using *Vectorworks*, *Sketchup* and *V-Ray* softwares for modelling and rendering, *Adobe Illustrator* and *Procreate* for animation and *CapCut* for editing.

I chose to shoot the film mainly in black-and-white, to emphasise the dramatic lighting and reflect the films which inspired the sequence.

Interspersing sound clips of traffic, thunderstorms and subway trains with sounds from *Psycho*, *Alien* and *Stranger Things*, and self-recorded audio, the sound provides a greater emotional experience when watching the film.

The horror experience begins with *Part One: Searchlights*. Inspired by *Zodiac*, this part uses high contrast lighting, long shadows and moving spotlights to create a dramatic atmosphere. Audio of passing cars and a police radio call alert the audience that a suspected killer is on the loose. As the audio begins to break up, searchlights follow visitors along the tunnel to the next part.



Part One Title Page



Long Shadows Along the Tunnel

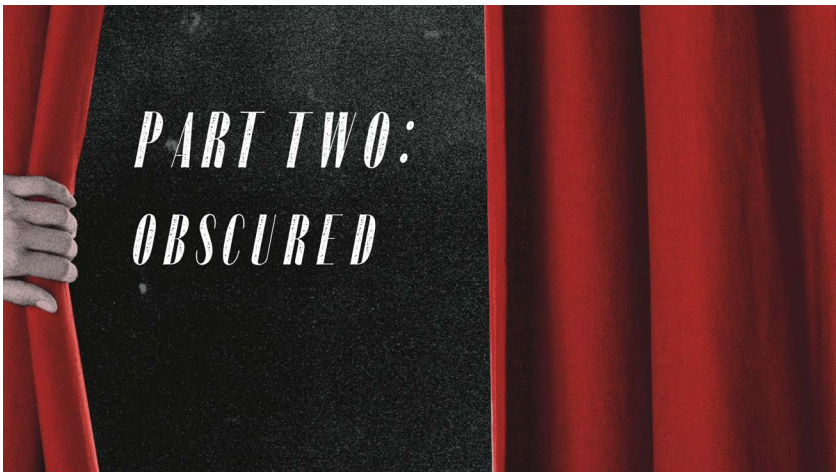


Searchlights Fill the Tunnel



Eyes Glance at Each Other

The horror experience continues with *Part Two: Obscured*. Inspired by *Psycho*, this sequence involves visitors navigating through layers of plastic sheets which are hung from the ceiling. A rainstorm can be heard, inspired by the shower scene in the film, and the shadows of the gently blowing sheets play with the fear of the unknown. The memorable soundtrack to *Psycho* is quietly heard in the background as the audience wonders whether “the killer” is among them.



Part Two Title Page



Light Filters Through Plastic Sheets

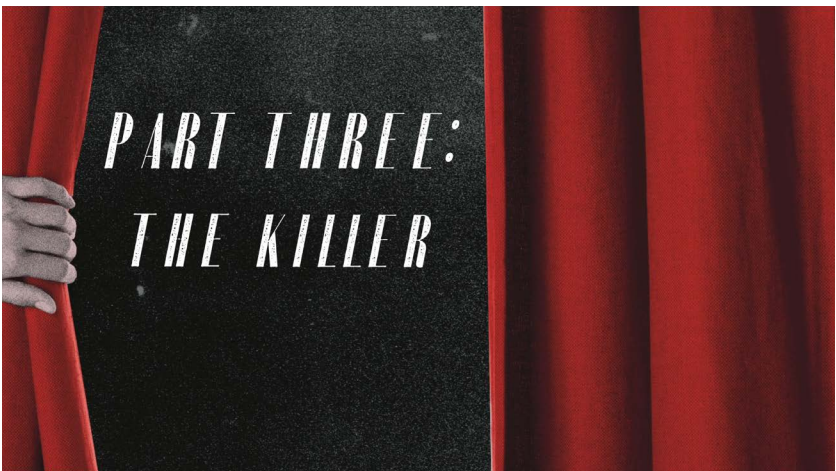


Hand Appears Behind the Sheet



Sheets Move Around in the Breeze

The final section of the experience is titled *Part Three: The Killer*. Inspired by *Alien* and *Stranger Things*, this part begins with dim lighting and the sound of chains quietly clinking. Audio builds up, before suddenly stopping as the audience is plunged into darkness. A monster screeches in the dark, before lights start to flicker and monster footsteps can be heard approaching the audience. The audio gently returns and the lights brighten to conclude the three-part experience. The audience can now travel through to the South Rotunda’s base and relax after the experience.



Part Three Title Page



Lights Flicker Softly



Shadows at the End of the Tunnel



Eyes Appear in the Darkness

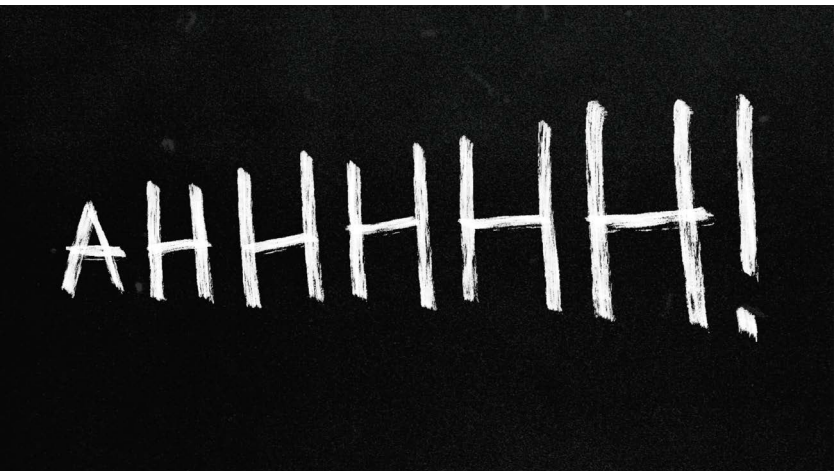
On the following page the tunnel experience is shown in context with the rest of my project in a storyboard of a journey through the space.



A Monster Screeches in the Dark



Lights Turn on as Monster Footsteps Approach

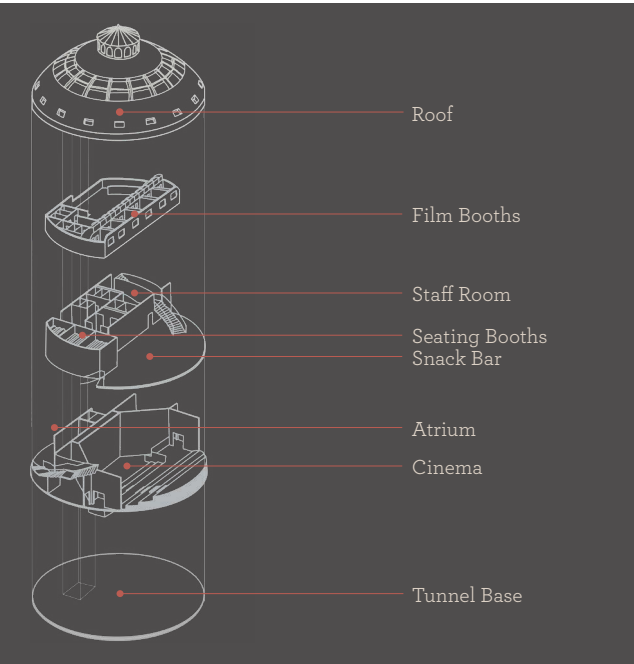


The Audience are Frightened



The Experience Has Come to an End

THE TUNNEL EXPERIENCE IN CONTEXT



The North Rotunda



1. The Entrance



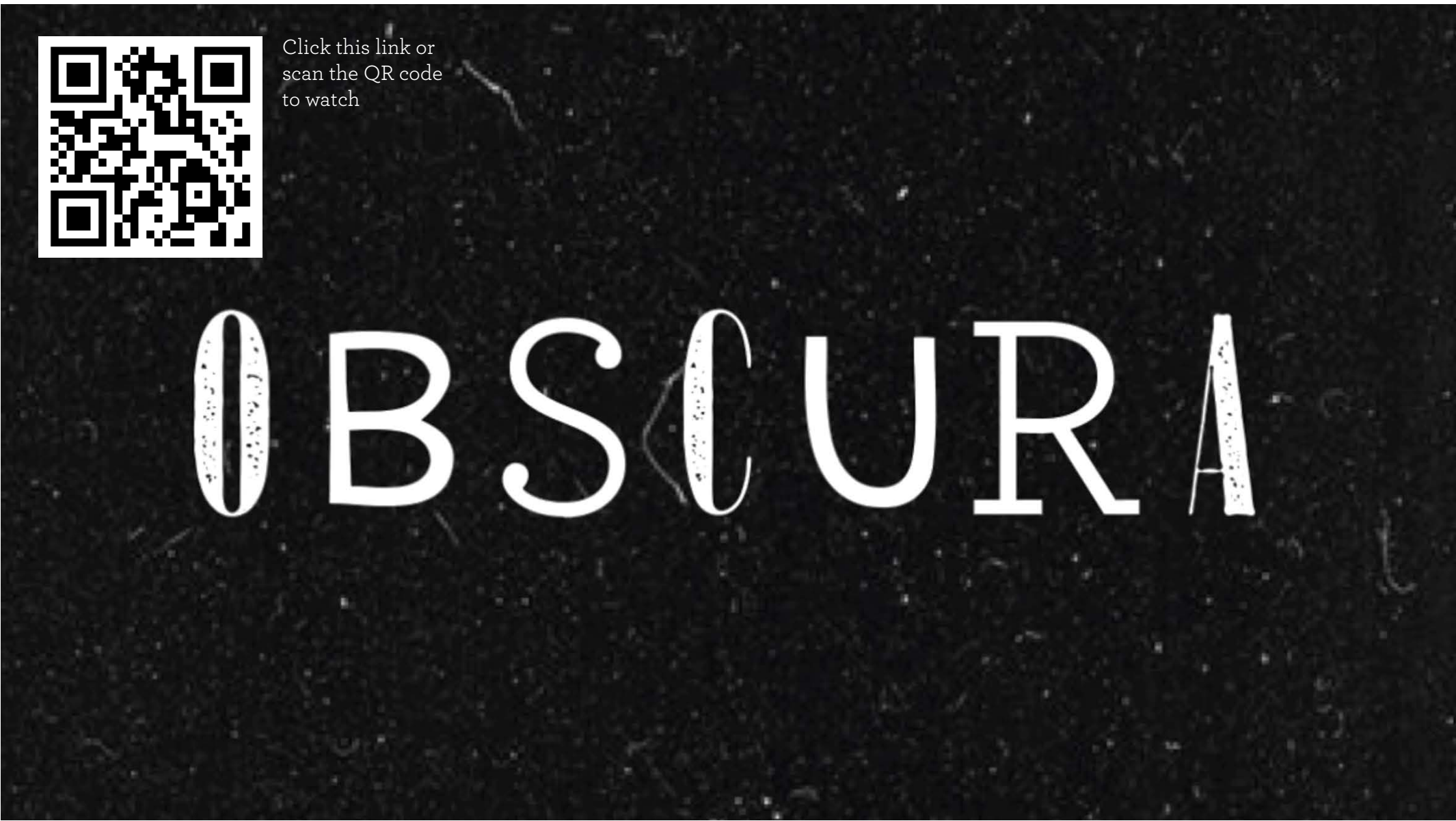
2. The Cafe-Bar on the Ground Floor



3. Cafe Seating on the First Floor



4. The Photobooth/Hidden Tunnel Entrance



5. The Tunnel Experience - The Film



6. The Cinema Auditorium on the Ground Floor



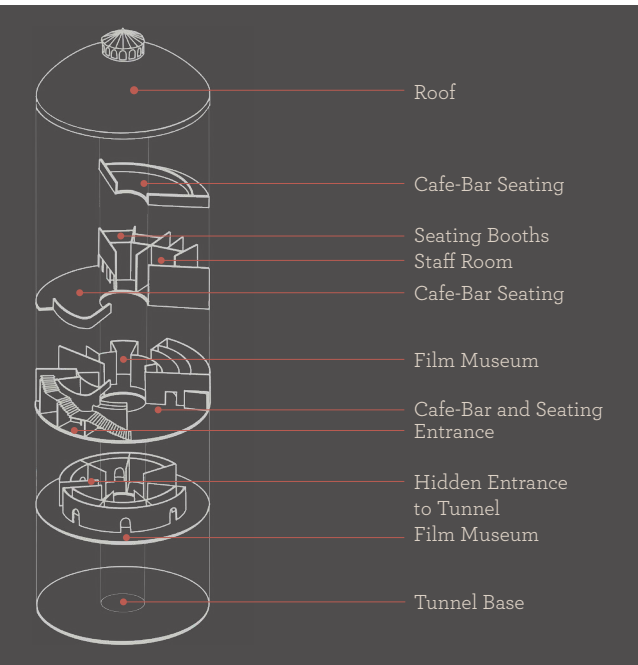
7. The Snack Bar on the First Floor



8. Snack Bar Seating and Popcorn Stand



9. Film Booths on the Second Floor



The South Rotunda