



The Search Engine: A Living Organism

In the absence of the smartphone, who will we become?

Concept

The Search Engine is a permanent digital detox facility that harvests a primary focus on responding to the dark side of the digital age, creating human-anatomy focused experiences and amenities that manifest an evolving digital detox for the benefit of human beings. Smartphones are restricted within the facility, with phone restriction desks running throughout the sites three main entrance points. The home of the detox is situated within the Botanic Gardens Railway in Glasgow's West end, stretching for just under 1km.

Unlike traditional digital detox retreats (24-48 hours), the facility falls under the category of a public space, becoming an easily accessible staple within Glasgow for humans from all over the surrounding area to experience. The goal is to generate more facilities throughout the whole of the UK, with this Glasgow base being the experimental start of a mass operation to tackle digital dependency and detachment from our human bodies.

Users can undergo three main detox types:

- A Full Detox is for users who require deep soul searching. They will begin their digital detox at Kelvinbridge, and embark on a 1km journey..
- For this setting, the user exploration of the site is guided. Staff members will provide amenity stop off points to fit the needs of the user throughout the 1km stretch.
- The Everyday Detox is for the user groups who simply want to escape the parameters of the digital world within a more relaxed public space setting. At this entrance point, there is a cross over of Full Detox users and Everyday Detox users. The exploration of this particular section of The Search Engine becomes autonomous.
- The Profound Detox is set within the final 200m of the site, harvesting a synchronistic exploration of the Search Engines final tunnel and finally, the outdoor detox amenities the experience has to offer.

The facility has been broken down into four main anatomical parts. Similar to a Google search engine, the search for detox is vast and forever evolving. The facility is designed to evolve in parallel with technological and societal developments, offering users eye opening experiences that resonate with the complexities of our current digital landscape.

The sites three main entrance points:

Full Detox:	Guided	55°52'28.3"N 4°16'52.1"W
Everyday Detox:	Autonomous	55.87918°N 4.29129°W
Profound Detox:	Synchronistic	55°52'53.0"N 4°17'33.2"W

Opening hours: 7:00 - 22:00 daily

Average time spent within the facility (users): 5-6 hours

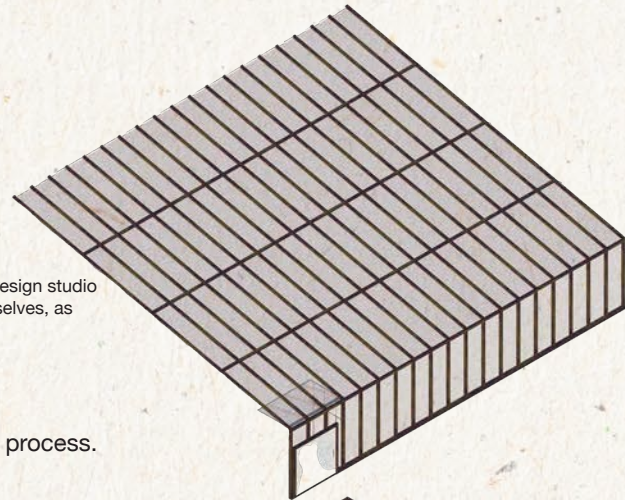
Rules: No phones or other personal digital devices

Sono Collective

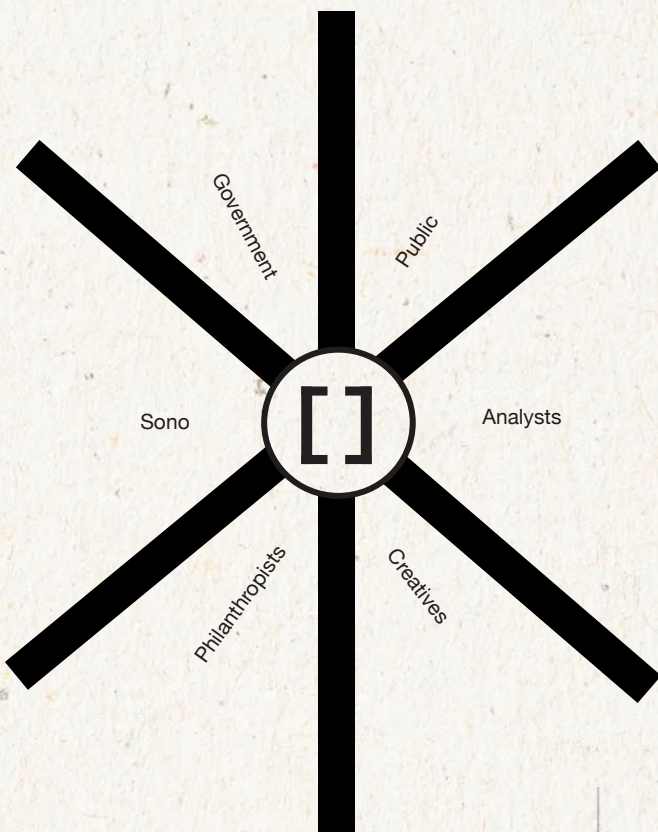
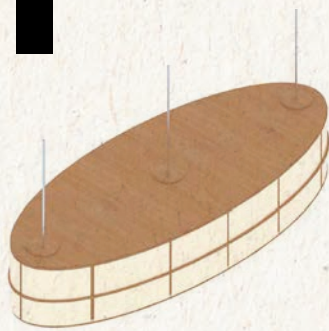
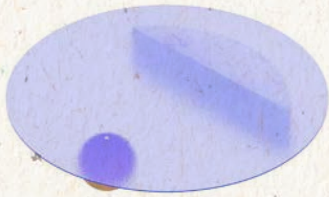
The facility is run by an inconspicuous movement named Sono Collective, whose design studio sits within the proposed site. They are active participants of the detox facility themselves, as even their studio has been designed to encourage less screen time.

Sono are still learning, and will continue to learn.

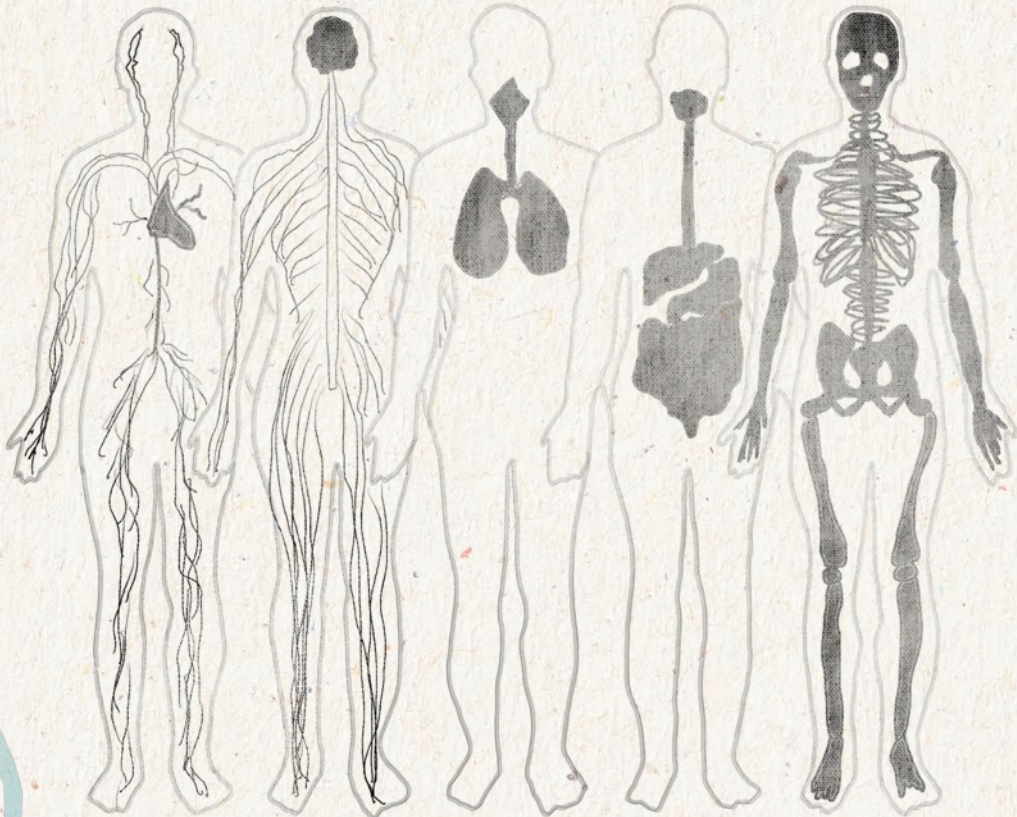
Their search for detox is an ongoing process.



Sono studio, staff experience



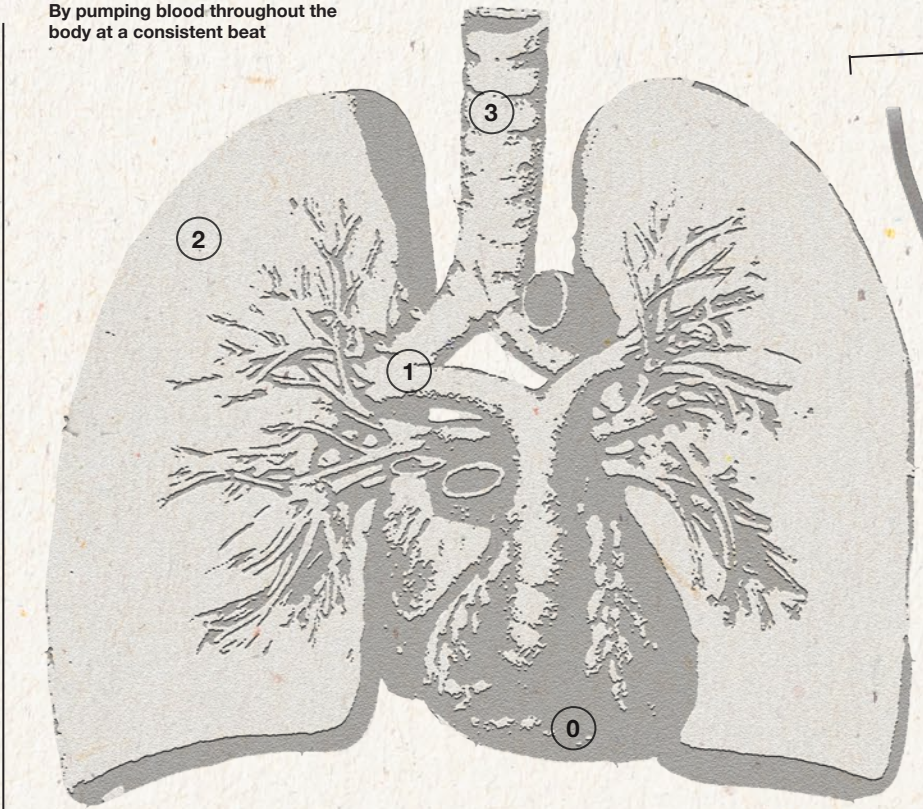
The detox experiences and amenities within The Search Engine target multiple anatomical systems in the human body. Special emphasis is placed on rehabilitating the nervous system, particularly the central nervous and limbic systems.



Circulatory Nervous Respiratory Digestive Skeletal

0 The Heart

-The Heart keeps the site alive by providing solidity. By pumping blood throughout the body at a consistent beat



1 The Pulmonary Artery

The role of the Pulmonary Artery is to carry de-oxygenated blood from the heart to the lungs. This means the detox is complex and manifests a darker response to digital age (A.I, digital dependency)

2 The Lungs

Once the blood almost reaches the lungs, a gas exchange must occur within alveoli capillaries to reject waste products such as CO2. This means the Detox actively works to rehabilitate through body-focused amenities.

3 The Trachea

The goal of this final section is to exhale users out of the experience with tools to go about their daily lives.

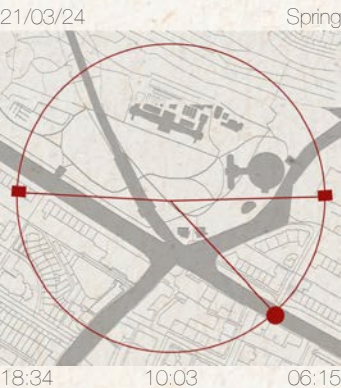
Facility structure

The proposed site has been organised according to components of the respiratory system. This structure provides an anatomical framework for the guided digital detox experience of the facility and its accompanying amenities.



Botanic Gardens Railway

The beauty of the railway can't be ignored. Many types of birds and plants are found within the gardens that exist above ground. The proposal extends to nurturing and harmonising with nature, with the detox experience ending within the north end of the gardens to complete the detox.







Phone Restriction System, *Yondr*

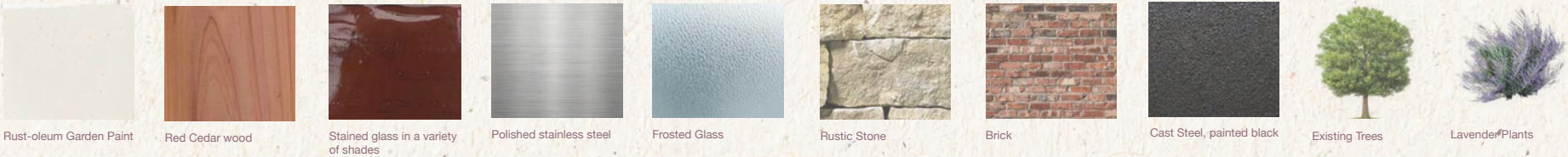
In order to ensure no phones within the space, a phone restriction system has been installed at specific locations throughout the site. The Search Engine will partner with Yondr, a patented magnet phone pouch system company. The logo will be added to the front of the pouch, with the addition of a cross body strap for hands-free user site exploration.

(Photograph of the system belongs to Yondr™, edited by author)

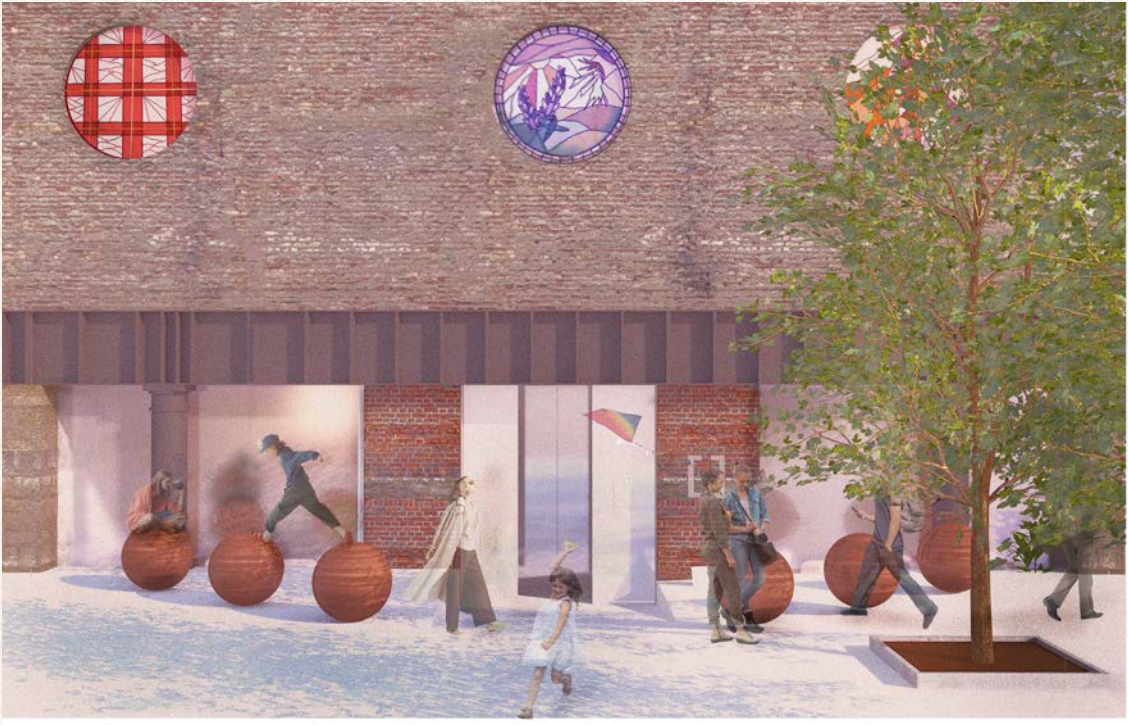


Section displaying staff (*Sono*) and user experience (*The Search Engine*) within *The Heart*

**[ ]** *The Heart: Digital Detox Activated*

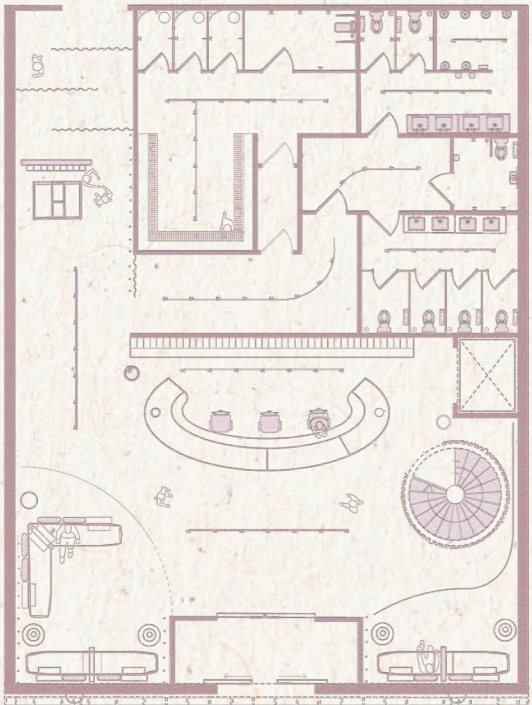


Bespoke Scottish heritage stained glass (*The Performer*, *Tartan*, *Lavender*)

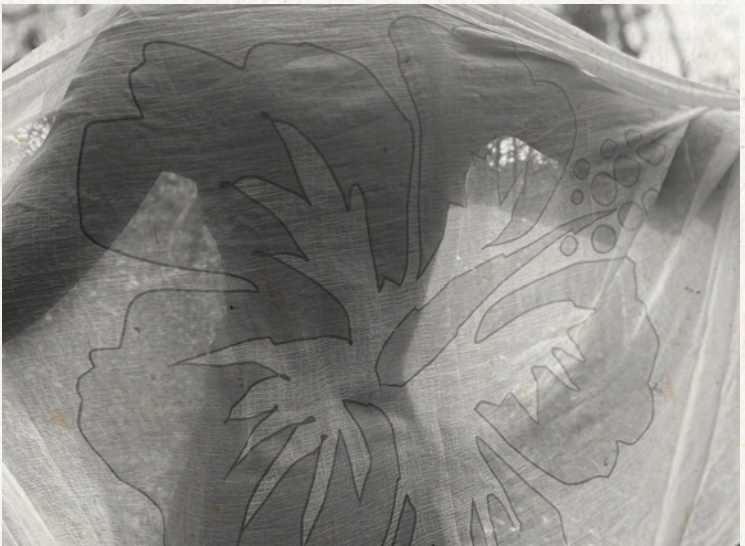


Facade of *The Heart*

After passing through the threshold, users of *The Search Engine* are met with an array of amenities to prepare them for the tunnel phase. They are greeted by staff who sit behind a warmly downlit reception desk. They are then guided to the lockers/changing rooms/toilets, and finally, to the phone restriction area. Users then walk through a curtained walkway where they meet the next phase of the digital detox, 'The Act of Waiting'. The lighting has been designed to only use 'the big light' when absolutely necessary (hallways, lockers, phone restriction desk etc.). The rest of the reception area is dimly lit with uplights or bespoke lamps.



Transitional space, curtained walkway



Consultation rooms for those in need of severe detox

The Search Engine does not have an age limitation, as smartphones have the ability to snatch precious moments away from even the tiniest of humans. Detox from digital devices should be accessible to every life.

Users

When researching the correlation between smartphone use and different demographics, Gen Z have the most severe screentime, averaging at 6 hours per day. Conversations with the older generation (70+) revealed that smartphone use is no where near as prevalent. My 92 year old grandmother spends 1 hour per week on her phone.

With this in mind, *The Search Engine* aims to cater to a wide range of user groups:

- Worried parents and their tech obsessed teens (Gen Z / Alpha)
- The elderly generation who feel disconnected from our current world
- Millennials who grew up without tech, and feel nostalgic towards that time
- Lost individuals who are striving towards less screentime.
- Young people who are in the process of being introduced to technology





## The Pulmonary Artery: Full Detox

**Detoxifying installations that respond to darker themes of the digital age such as the proliferation of A.i generators and their side effects, and smartphone related issues such as instant gratification.**

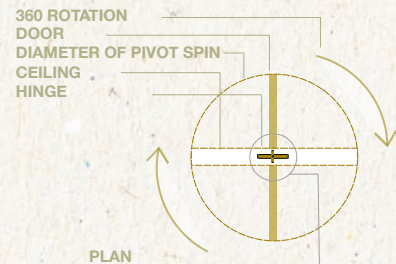
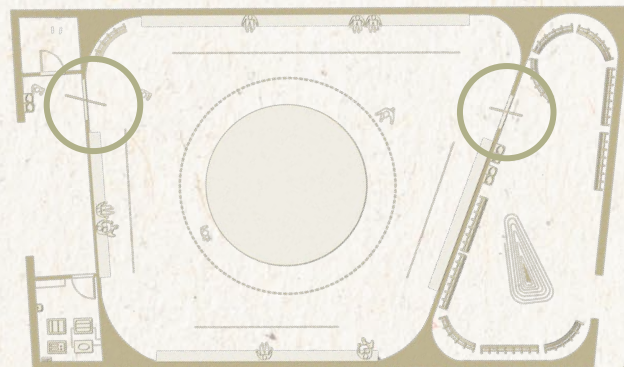
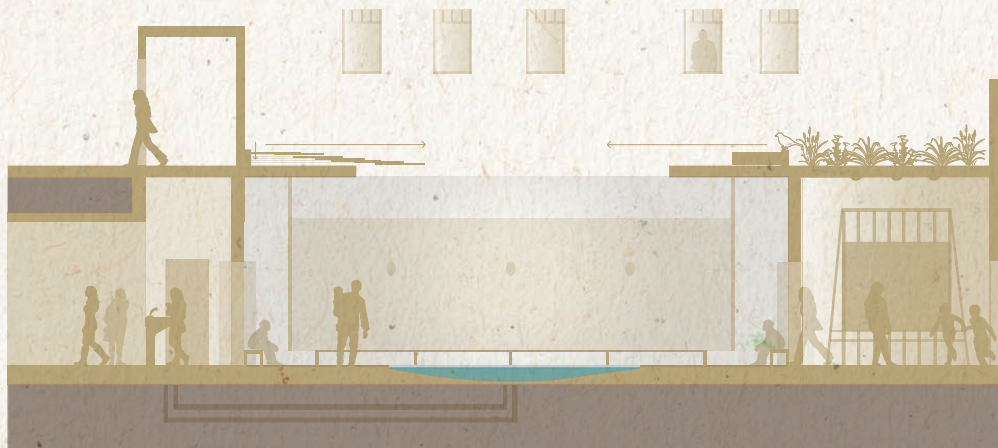
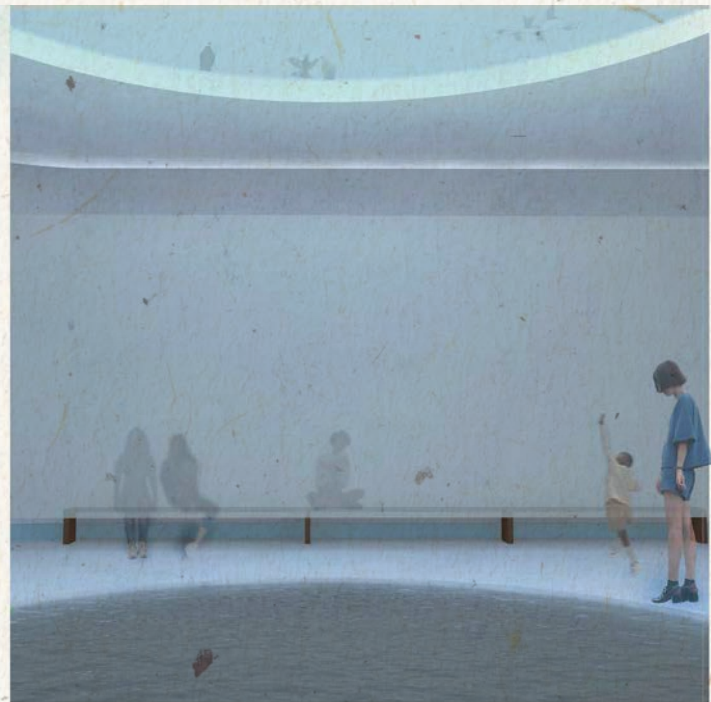


### The Act of Waiting

This section of the detox was created after Sono conducted research on queue culture, and how humans behave when we have nothing to do but...wait. This lead Sono on to discover more about **instant gratification, over stimulation, and irritation when we can't access something instantly** (digitally and in real life scenarios).

Through this, The Act of Waiting is born. This **introductory nervous system regulator** does not give the user what they have come to expect. Instead, they are given very little. The space is comprised of a pond, benches, stretched gauze screens and a skylight. **Simplicity is key.**

Just as birds gather around a pond when they feel safe enough to do so, it is expected that the humans in this space will do the same. **They may hide behind the gauze screens at first, but once they understand that there is no threat, conversations may occur and friendships may form.**

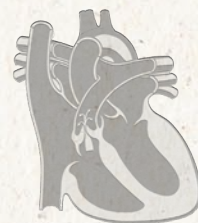


#### DETAIL B

360 self-closing magnet pivot door.  
To be installed throughout sections of the proposed site.  
Door: 2400 width x 2300 height  
Hinge system sits within the centre to facilitate the 360 spin.

#### Pivot Door Reference:

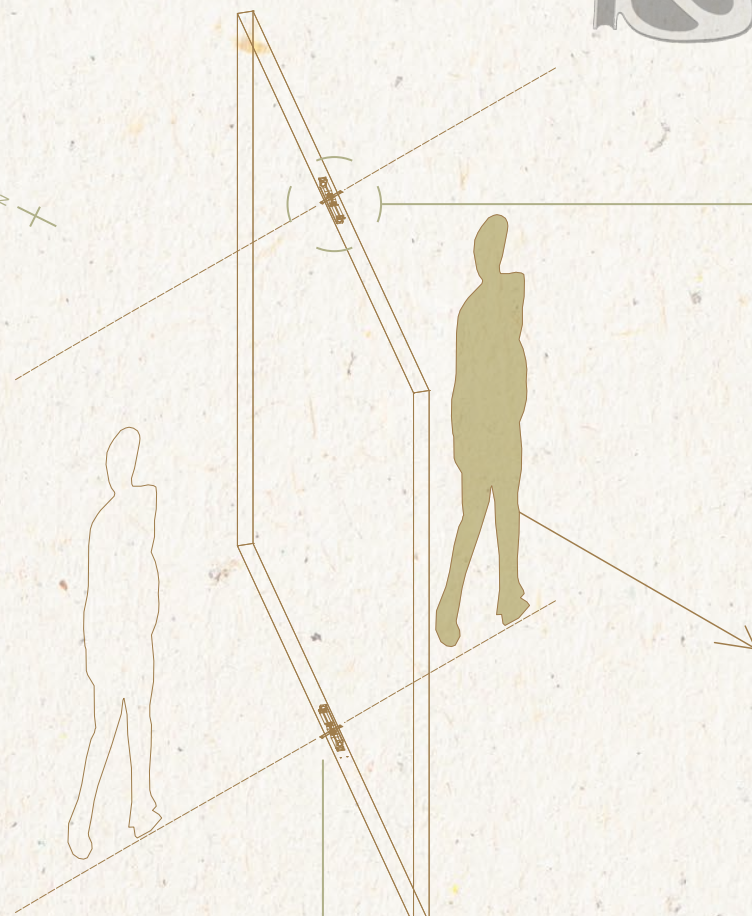
**The Pulmonary Valve within the heart of a human body.**



6MM X 50MM SCREWS X8

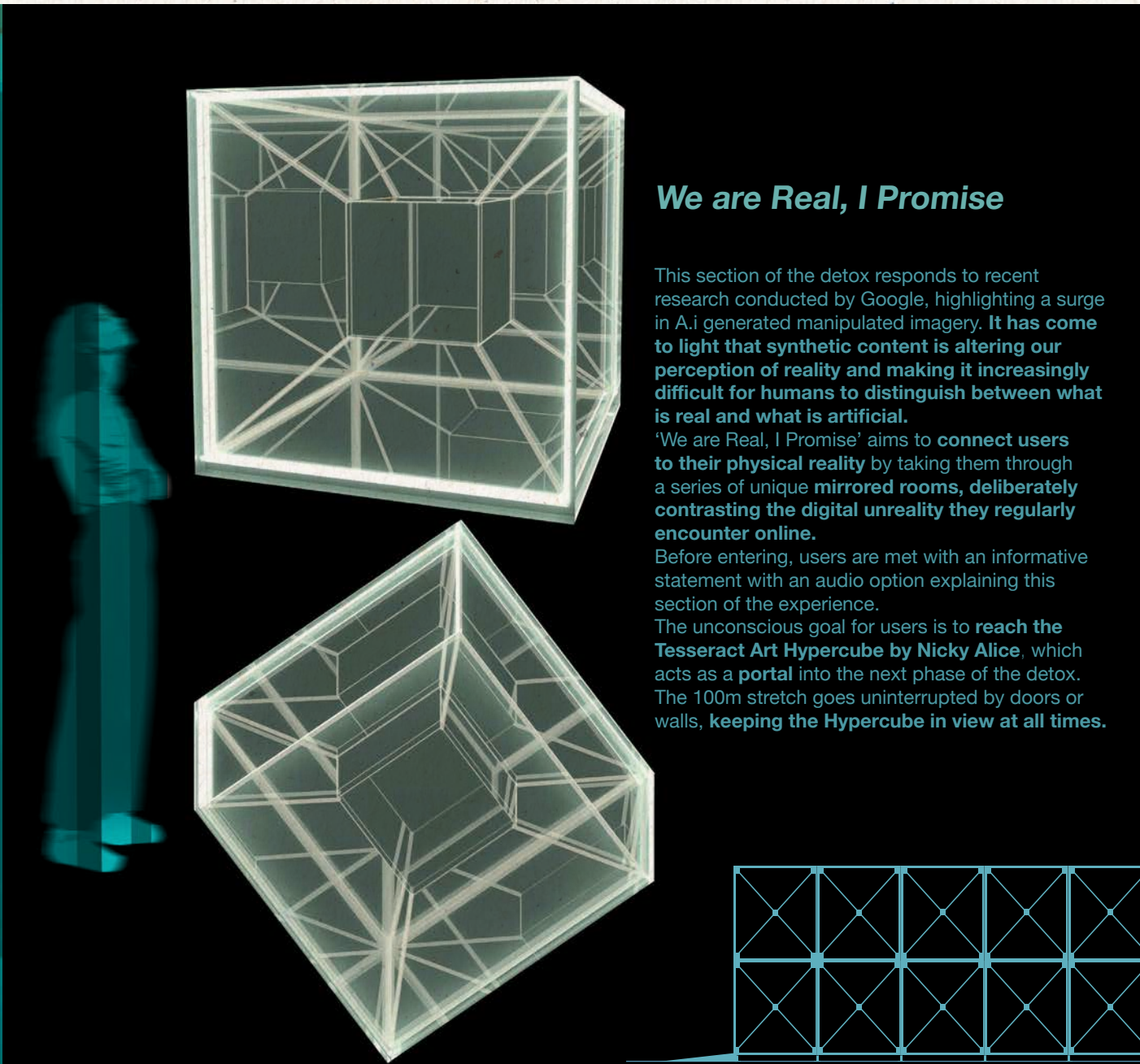
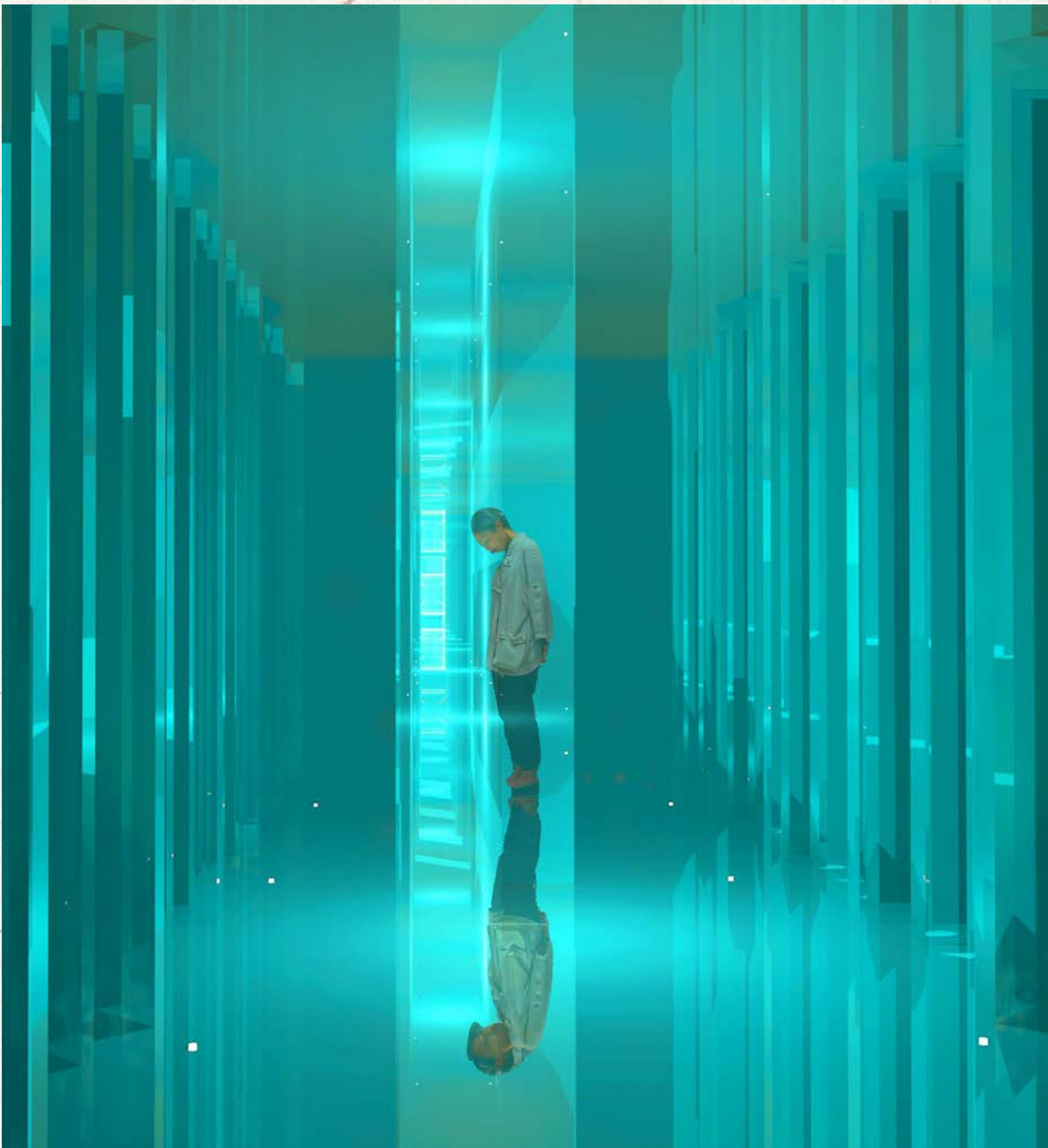
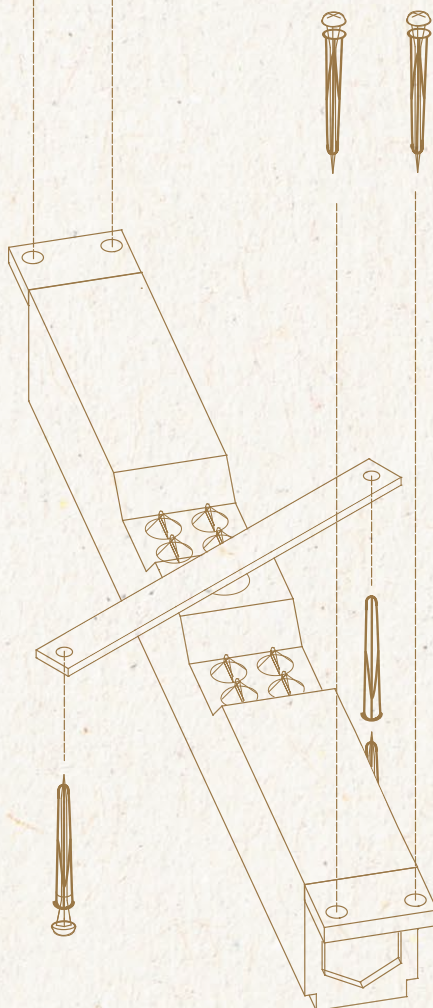
8MM X 40MM FISCHER® DUOPOWER WALL PLUGS X8

PRE SUNK WITH 8X50MM DRILL BIT, SCREWED TO DOOR AND CEILING



HINGE SYSTEM RECESSED INTO DOOR, THEN SCREWED INTO PLACE

THERE ARE NO CHANGES IN FLOOR AND CEILING HINGE INSTALLATION



### We are Real, I Promise

This section of the detox responds to recent research conducted by Google, highlighting a surge in A.i generated manipulated imagery. **It has come to light that synthetic content is altering our perception of reality and making it increasingly difficult for humans to distinguish between what is real and what is artificial.**

'We are Real, I Promise' aims to **connect users to their physical reality** by taking them through a series of unique mirrored rooms, deliberately contrasting the digital unreality they regularly encounter online.

Before entering, users are met with an informative statement with an audio option explaining this section of the experience. The unconscious goal for users is to **reach the Tesseract Art Hypercube by Nicky Alice**, which acts as a **portal** into the next phase of the detox. The 100m stretch goes uninterrupted by doors or walls, **keeping the Hypercube in view at all times.**

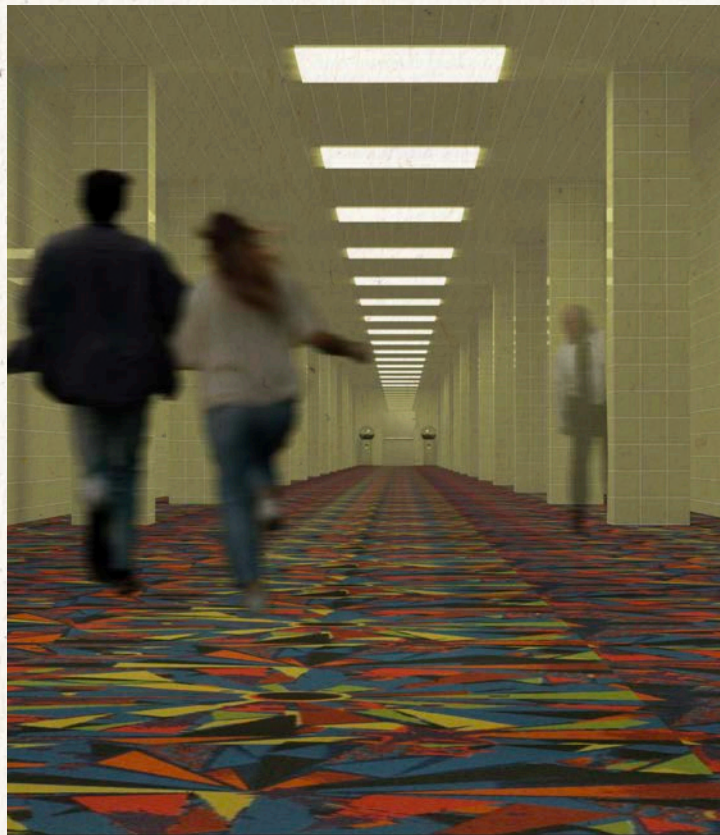
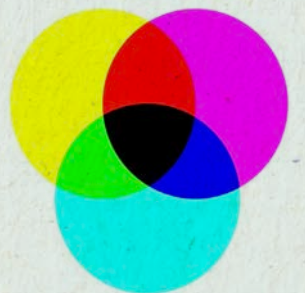


### Flutter

A symbolic, permanent 230m section of the tunnel that allows the human voice to metallically flutter echo, in protest of humans losing their richness to A.i generators.

These three installations have been designed in the CMYK colour formula.

They have essentially been 'printed out' from digital screen to real life.



### Liminal

According to specific research, there is a genre of design that brings people comfort and feelings of nostalgia. That being a genre titled Liminal. Recently, **Gen Z have been replicating this specific type of design through the use of A.i synthetic media generators** in order to create spaces that resemble 90's offices, kids play areas, swimming baths and so on. This type of space is commonly referred to as the Backrooms.

Liminal pushes the boundaries of the phrase 'digital detox', as the space has been created to resemble an **oddly familiar memory. One that we all know, yet can't quite place.**

**This is the half way point of the tunnel, so essentially, Liminal acts as limbo. Neither heaven or hell. Stress ball dispensers sit waiting at the end.**

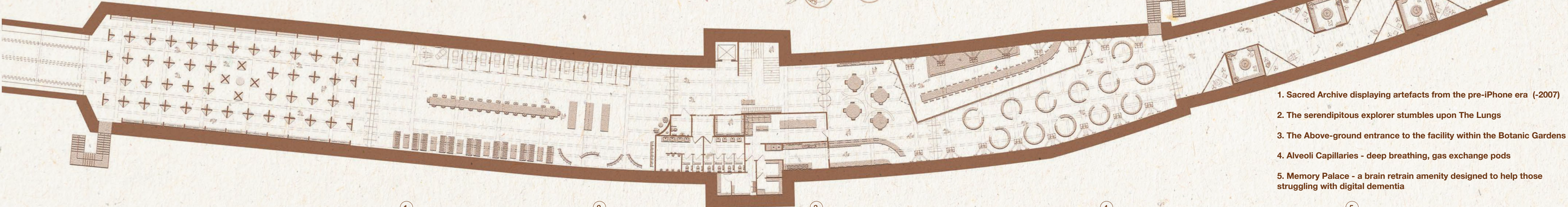
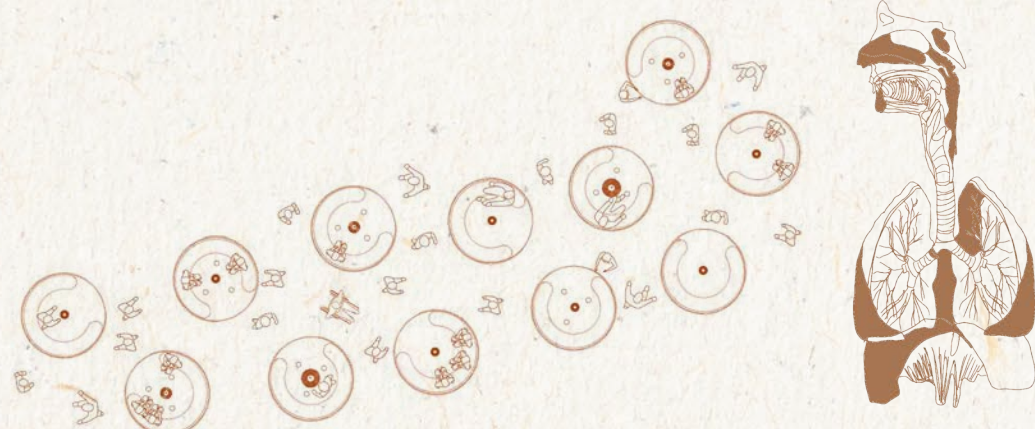




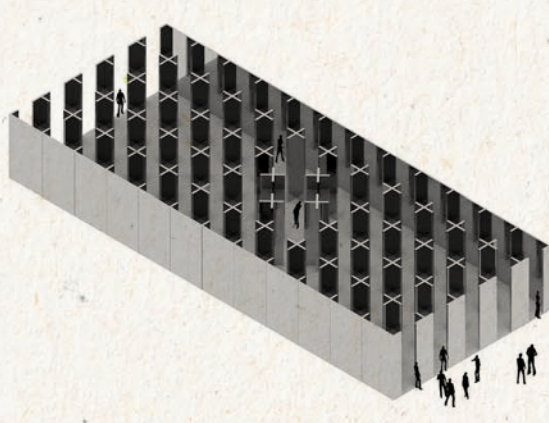
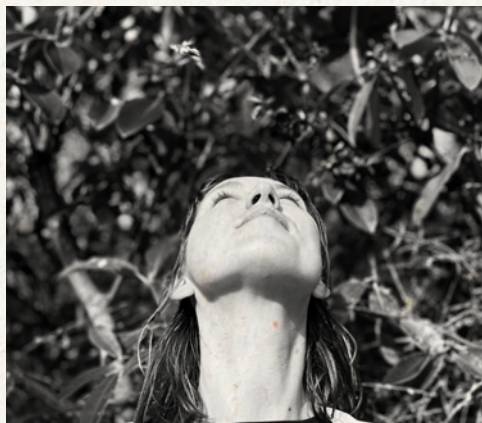


## The Lungs: Everyday Detox

Situated underground within the Botanic Gardens lies The Lungs, a part of the facility where users can autonomously and serendipitously explore amenities and workshops that act as catalysts for everyday detox. While The Pulmonary Artery offers a one-way guided system, The Lungs allows freedom to travel west through to The Trachea and vice versa. The amenities within The Lungs comprise a mixture of modular, temporary, and permanent experiences, all overseen by Sono staff who closely monitor how users respond to these experiences to gain a better understanding of digital detox amenities that work effectively and those that need improvement. The design of The Lungs not only contains anatomically designed public amenities, but also harvests anatomy through the design of the floorplan. Blood circulation, valves, capillaries and blood clots have all been consistent inspiration throughout the design of this space. (Please see the following floorplans for a zoom-in on each amenity.)



1. Sacred Archive displaying artefacts from the pre-iPhone era (-2007)
2. The serendipitous explorer stumbles upon The Lungs
3. The Above-ground entrance to the facility within the Botanic Gardens
4. Alveoli Capillaries - deep breathing, gas exchange pods
5. Memory Palace - a brain retrain amenity designed to help those struggling with digital dementia



①



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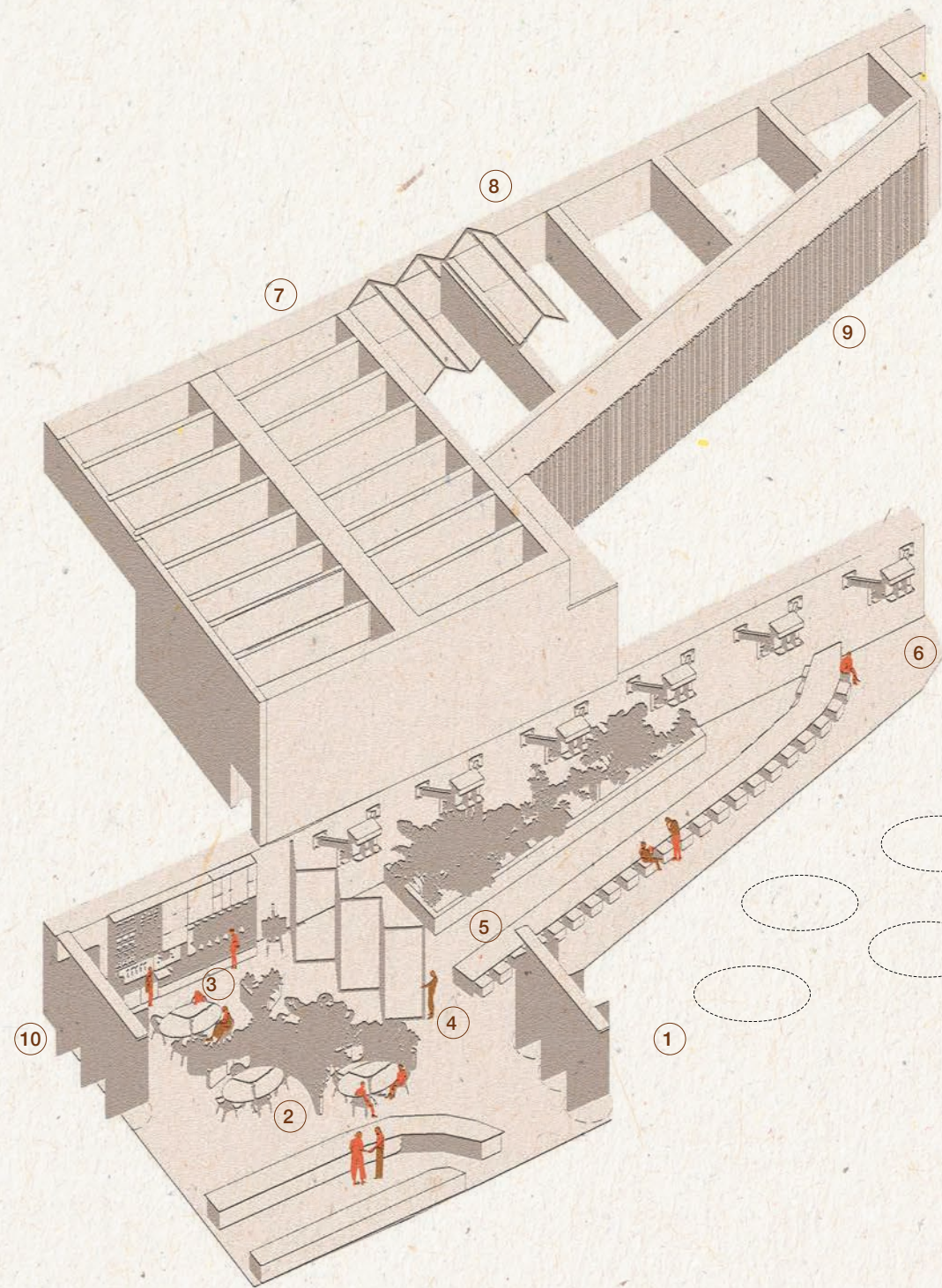
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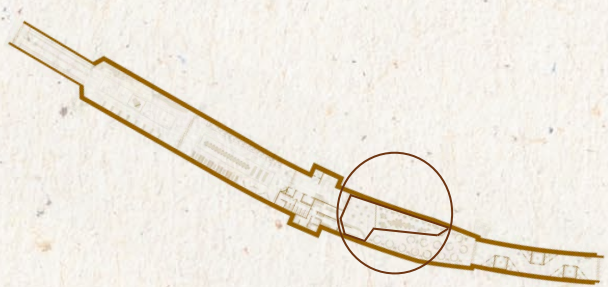


## [] Gut

Gut is a section of the Search Engine focused on **repairing the digestive system**, promoting a detox from within. Located within The Lungs, **Gut offers a variety of nourishing foods and non-alcoholic beverages**. Guests can order at the bar before being guided to the communal seating area, where conversations with strangers are encouraged. **Situated in the same area as the bar is a second concept café named Breakfast Gut**, where visitors can choose from various cereals and milks to start their day properly.

The two cafés work together to provide distinct experiences: one for food and drink-related detoxification, and another for evoking nostalgic feelings.

Discovered by Leopold Auerbach, the body has two brains, one being the gut. Research suggests the human stomach plays a role in cognition. With this understanding, repairing the gut has the potential to clear the mind, further enhancing the detox process.



1. Pivot entrance to Gut from Alveoli Capillaries
2. Seating with planters as dividers
3. Breakfast Gut with milk taps
4. Glass bi-fold door to separate the void
5. Communal seating (44 person) within a void setting
6. 'Trust your gut' secret entrance to the Alveoli Capillaries
7. Roof plan
8. Void with retractable roof system
9. Curtains to stop natural light creeping in to Alveoli
10. Pivot entrance to staff amenities and public toilets

②



4x Kintsugi Collection Dining Tables by Pedro Franco. Brazil 2022



Breakfast Gut's furniture choices are deliberately **fragmented** to resemble the idea **forgotten memories**, such as having Cheries before catching the school bus.

20x Deconstructed Monobloc chairs by Pierre Catignola  
Photo credit: Pierre Catignola

⑤

The **COMMUNAL SEATING** design is stripped back to basics, ensuring cognitive focus remains centred on the food.

The use of **Bio-Active concrete** on the walls of the void area mean that overtime, **nature will claim this space**, as biocrete is the perfect breeding ground for plants due to its open cell structure that facilitates growth while providing protection of waterproof membranes and insulation. **When the green wall begins to grow, the plants will absorb CO2, purifying the air and making the dining experience more beneficial to the user.**



Structural concrete layer below



Bio-Active Concrete from Holcim layered on top



At 6:45am on a summers day, the Gut staff prepare the communal area for the morning rush. One opens the bi-fold doors, another spot checks the cleanliness of the table and surrounding area, and lastly, the plants are watered and cared for.





### Being Alive

In today's digital world, where everything is available at the press of a button, **traditional hands-on skills are rapidly disappearing**. Being Alive stands against this, offering **workshops and amenities where people can reconnect with crafts** that smartphones and modernity have pushed aside. **The aim is to provide a space where traditional skills aren't just preserved, they're celebrated and shared.**

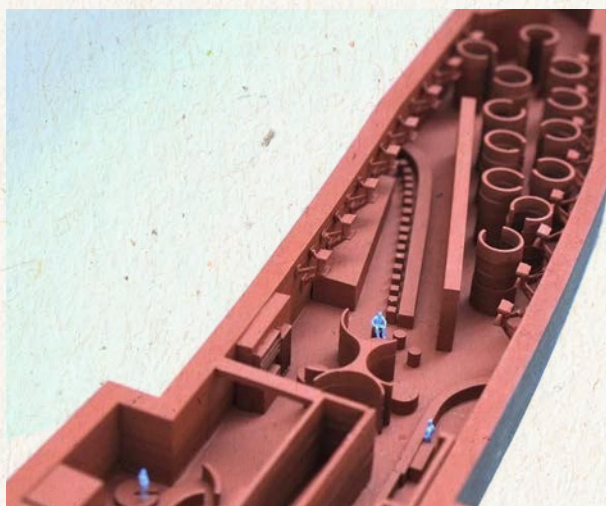
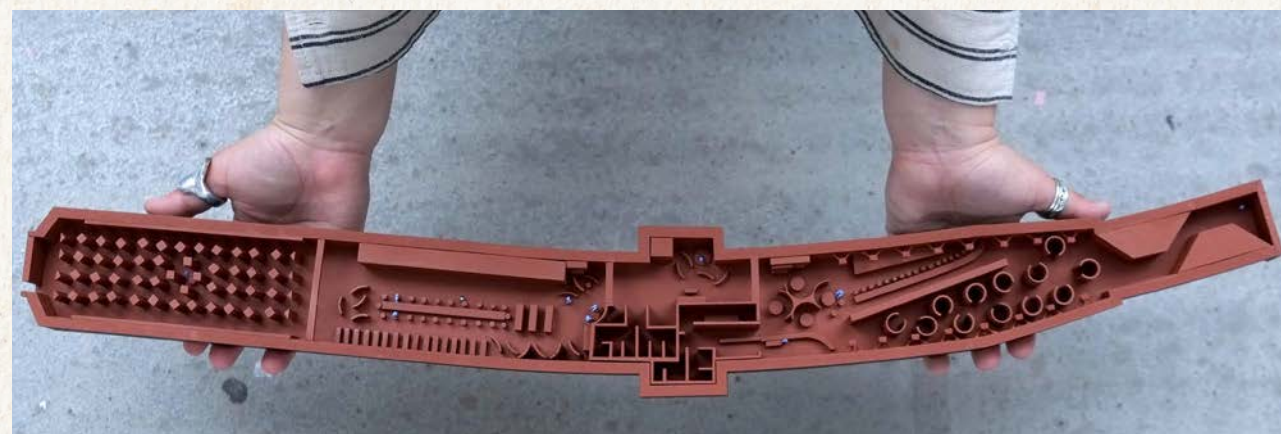


### The Trachea: Profound Detox



### A Gravitational Pull

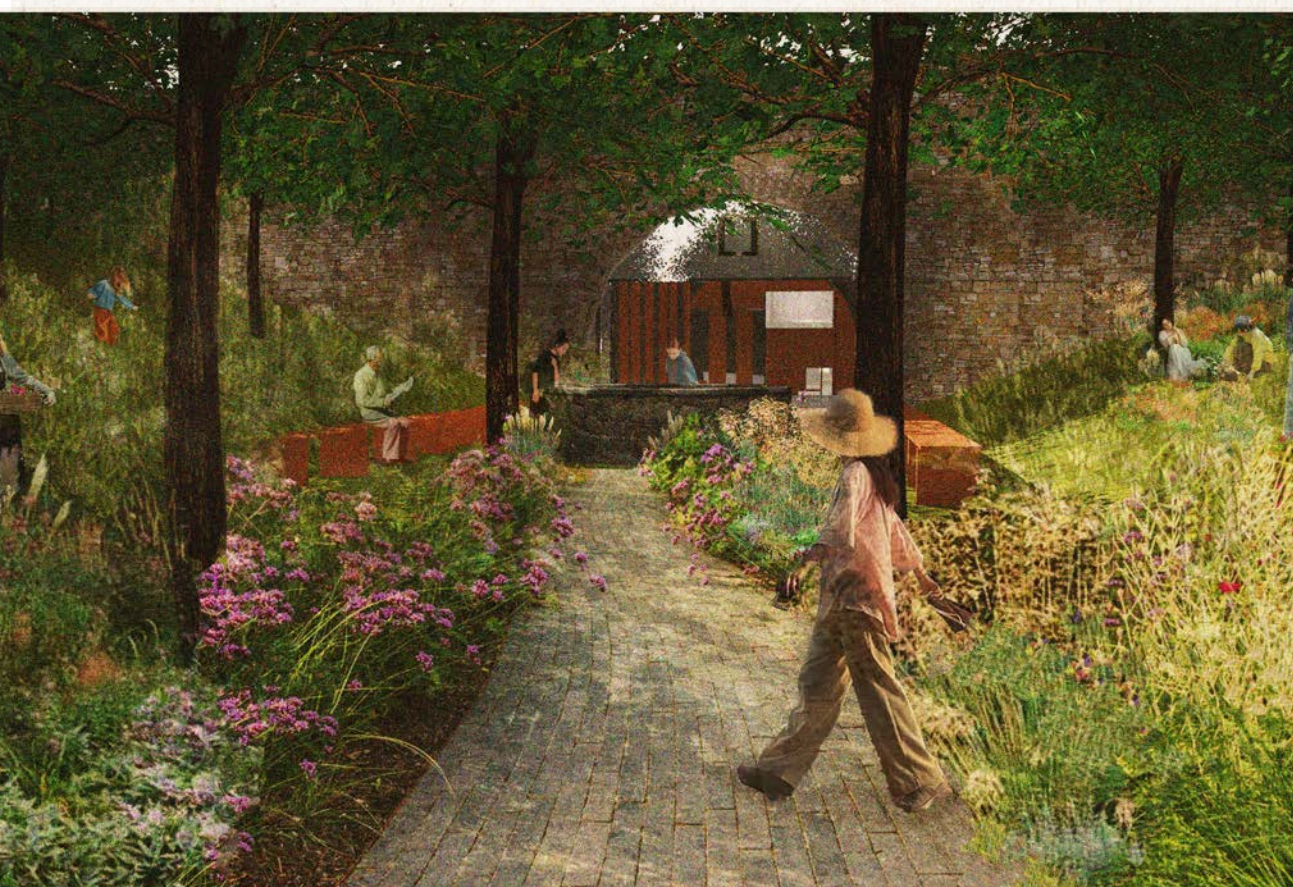
The 22-metre tunnel library takes users through a gravitational pull of warm light and books, creating the sensation of traveling through a literary event horizon. This knowledge hub is a permanent part of The Trachea, acting as a cosmic threshold to the outside world while providing stillness for active users. Timber, glass spherical lights and a mirrored floor are the main material choices, with the tunnel's bowed shape and the play of light across its textured ridges commanding attention as the main design element.



### 1:200 Model of The Lungs

Laser cut and made to resemble vintage hand-held wooden maze games such as Labyrinth, the model received praise at degree show for its interactive elements.

The user is encouraged to place a small metal ball within the model and explore every corner autonomously. Analogue communication methods were fundamental in counteracting the digitality of my 3D renders. This model gave me a break from it all.



### The Detox Garden

Following Carl Jung's theory of Synchronicity, the Detox Garden runs far deeper than a pursuit for happiness. It's a butterfly landing on your open palm. It's seeing an angel number and knowing that this is exactly where you are meant to be at this very given moment. The Profound Detox is a final embrace.

### A Note to the Reader: Technological Paradox

Once I settled on a digital detox facility, I thought I would be able to put down my phone and laptop with ease, as I wanted to honour the ethos of the typology. However,

**This posed a massive challenge.**

I used 3D softwares to communicate visuals / plans and InDesign for layout. **My eyes were glued to the screen.**

**Hope was not lost when I found comfort in human things:**

- My physical human body, and being around other human bodies
- Having real life conversations. Laughing, deep talks, project brainstorming and general chitchat.
- Nostalgia
- Photography
- An anatomical and practical approach to my design process
- Using the world around me as inspiration to communicate the basis of the project.

**The uncomfortable feeling of technology is here to stay, so how do we live with it?**



**I used photography as a form of human communication and design inspiration**

