

OBSCURA

by rachael mackay

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

With inclusive, social spaces comes community. By introducing creative spaces centring on connection and experience, we can build and inspire a broader community of creative people. Much like films, immersive spaces transport audiences into new worlds, open up new perspectives and encourage new conversations. 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.



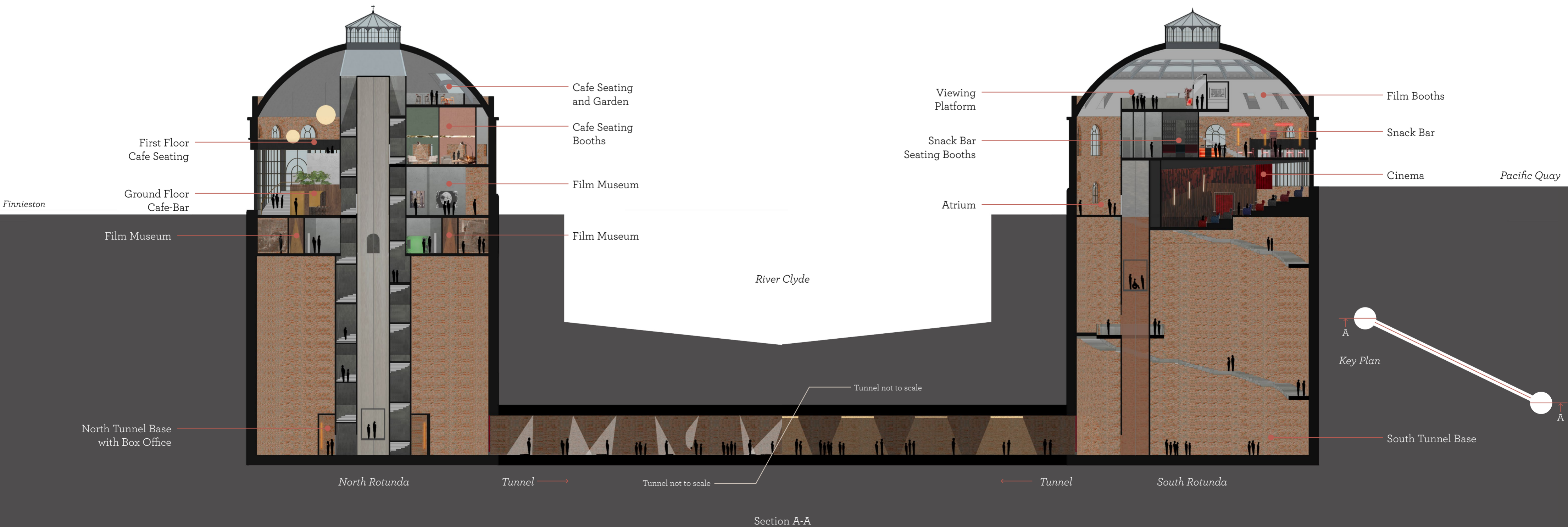
THE NORTH ROTUNDA

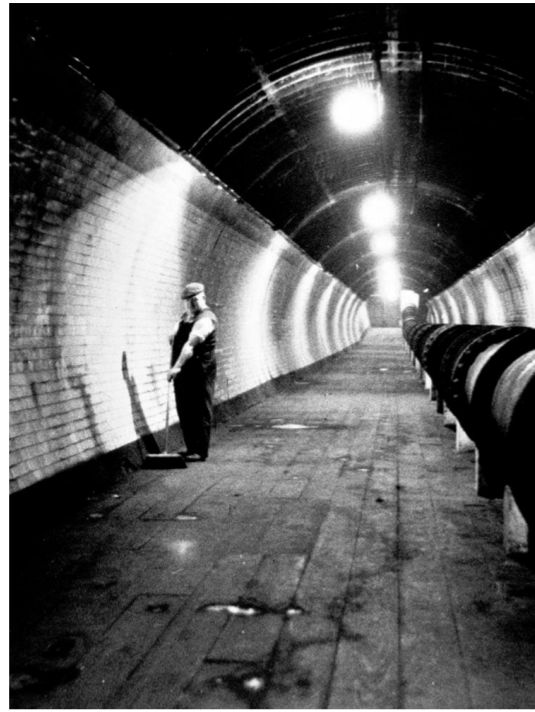


THE TUNNEL



THE SOUTH ROTUNDA





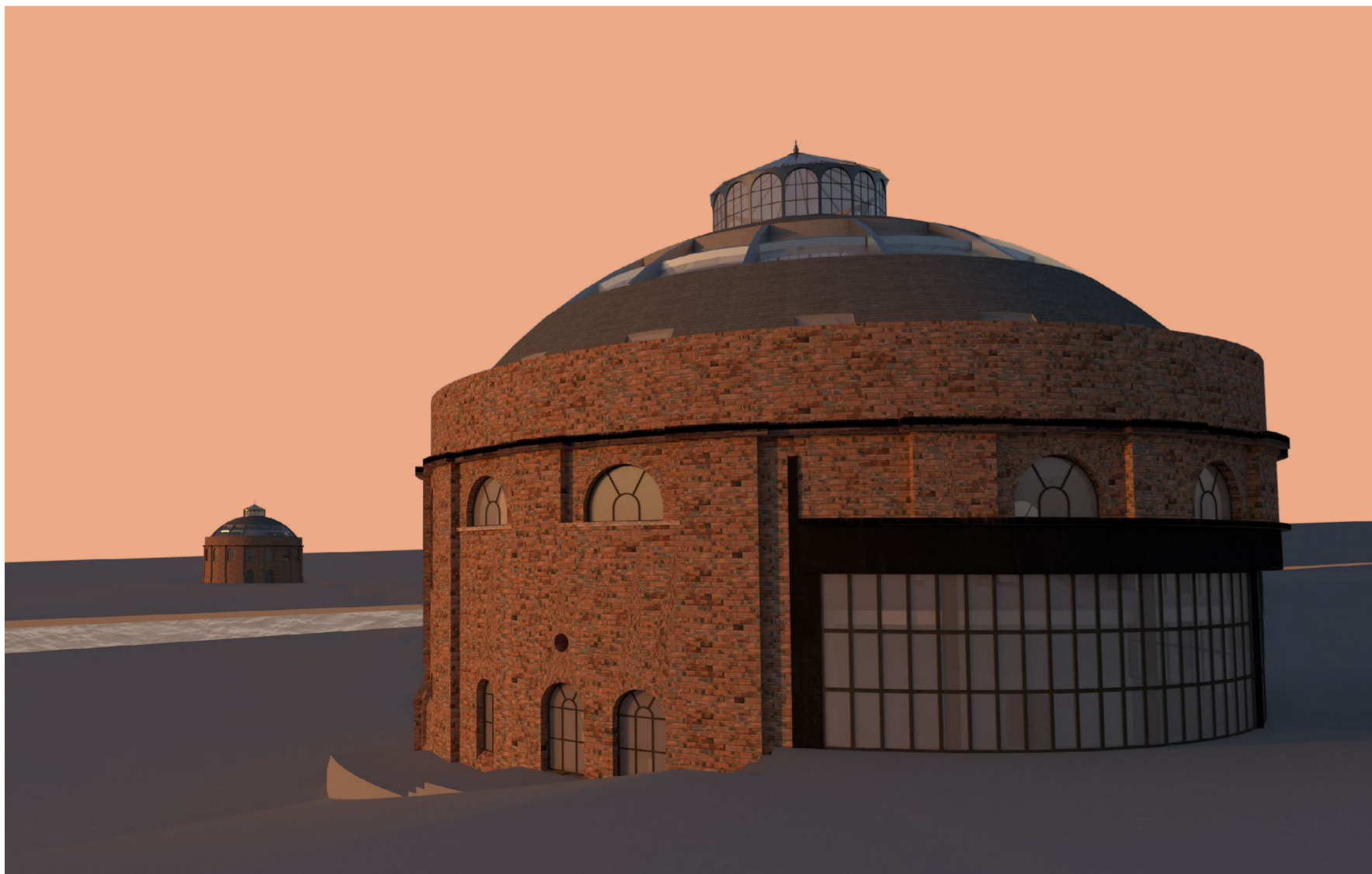
Photographs of the Site

The Rotundas were originally built in 1890-95 as entrances to the tunnel, transporting goods and people under the River Clyde. Though the Rotundas currently house a restaurant and offices, this proposal entirely repurposes the two round buildings and tunnel in a way which both celebrates the site and its history, and also creates a new space for community, conversation and creativity.

The journey of both the audience and characters in a film is comparable to the user journey through the three spaces, and can also be likened to a train journey, from one world to another. The influence of the train journey and subway stations informed the final design.

Putting the user journey at the centre of the design allows visitors to feel immersed in the story, and able to discover their own path through the buildings. The spaces are inclusive and accessible, and their design, alongside the films and filmmakers included in the cinema and film museum, aims to create a fuller representation of our world and its diverse population.

User profiles on the right outline examples of six people who may visit the space. These profiles helped to define potential user journeys and accessibility needs within the design. They also demonstrate the diversity of the audience and the need for inclusivity throughout the space.



THE ARTIST

NAME: Kat
AGE: 23
PRONOUNS: She/They

GOALS: Kat is looking for somewhere to meet other people in the LGBTQIA+ community. They also hope to explore the world of animated film, and discover new films with friends.

THE TALKER

NAME: Kamari
AGE: 29
PRONOUNS: They/Them

GOALS: Kamari is looking for a cinema space to hire for their birthday, preferably somewhere independent and spacious enough for family and friends. They also hope to see more diverse films, with representation of different gender identities and people of colour.

THE WRITER

NAME: Seo-Joon
AGE: 25
PRONOUNS: He/Him

GOALS: Seo-Joon is looking for a place where he can watch and borrow lesser-known films, and somewhere to go with friends to discuss film. He wants to go to a cinema which is accessible and comfortable for wheelchair users.

THE ACTOR

NAME: Orla
AGE: 24
PRONOUNS: She/Her

GOALS: Orla is looking for an immersive film experience. As she doesn't have streaming services, she wants to find somewhere with a big screen and sound equipment to watch films, and somewhere she can borrow films on DVD. She is also looking for an inexpensive cinema which screens films with subtitles and audio description.

THE EXPLORER

NAME: Simone
AGE: 26
PRONOUNS: She/Her

GOALS: Simone is looking for somewhere to meet and socialise with new people. She also wants to explore the world of film, and find out more about different careers in the industry.

THE THINKER

NAME: Leo
AGE: 20
PRONOUNS: He/Him

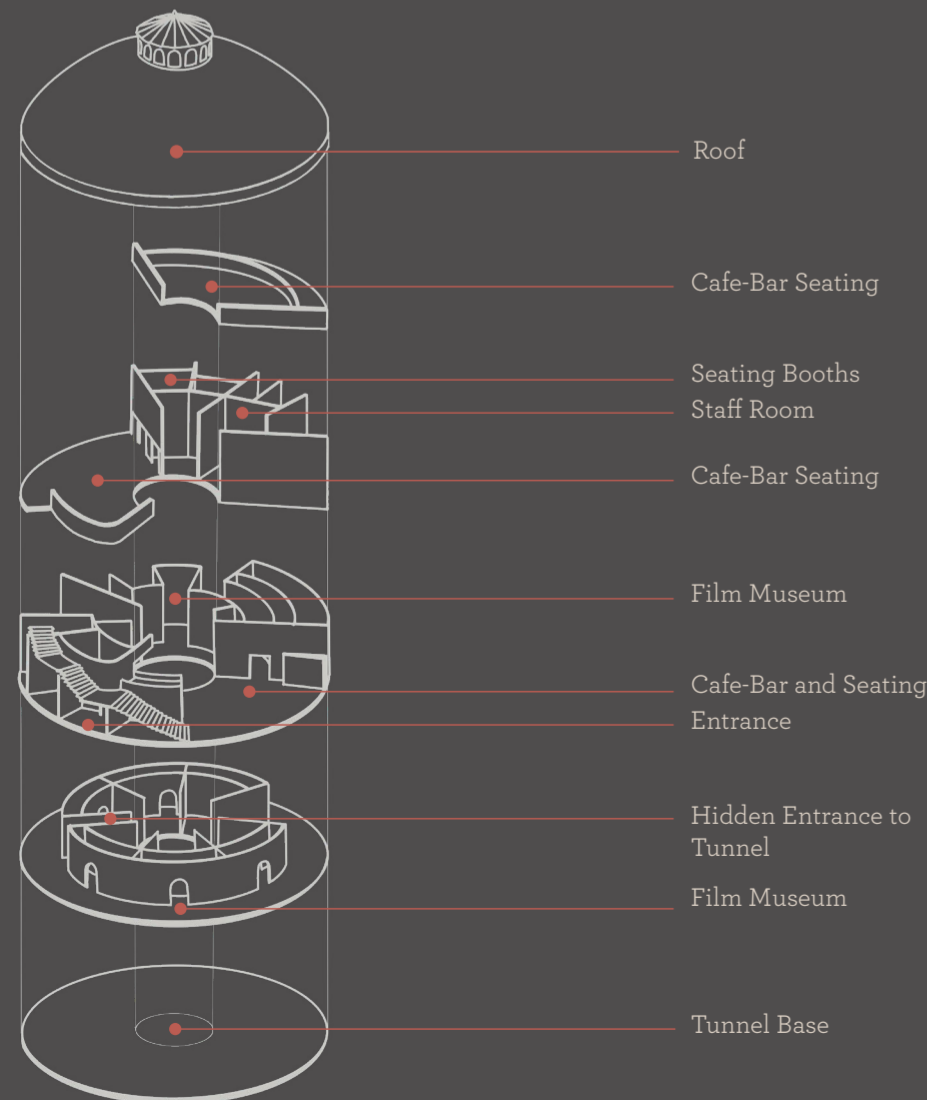
GOALS: Leo wants to go somewhere that he can be fully immersed in a film, and forget about the stress of day-to-day life. He is also looking for somewhere different to go with friends, rather than going out for drinks.



The Entrance



The Cafe-Bar, looking towards Entrance Passageway



The North Rotunda is primarily a social space, facilitating connection and encouraging engagement with film and film-making.

The space takes inspiration from the concept of home and belonging as represented in film. Designed in a mid-century modern style, the building provides a comfortable, inclusive and welcoming space for all, encouraging people to come together, learn more about film, and connect over shared interests. The North Rotunda is a welcoming social space, with a cafe-bar, film museum and hidden tunnel entrance, split across five levels.

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 North Rotunda is the manifestation of the *known world*, the setting for the beginning of the adventure.

Retaining the existing building shell allows the cafe-bar to be a bright, open space. The bar takes inspiration from forms found in the building's exterior, and the range of table and bar seating allows for a mixture of private and open spaces, both encouraging conversation and connection.

The first floor provides a more relaxed and flexible seating arrangement, with loose furniture allowing the space to be reconfigured for film nights and events. Cosy seating booths cater to larger groups, whereas armchairs and sofas give space for smaller groups and pairs.

The second floor features a cafe garden, with bar and table seating and views across the river towards the South Rotunda.

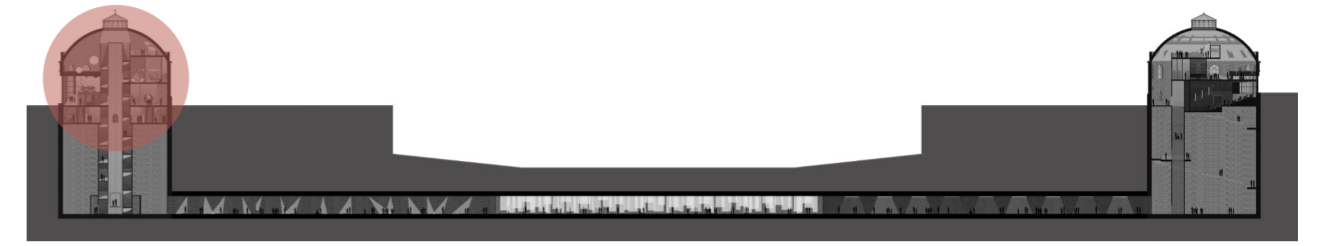


Seating Booths on the First Floor

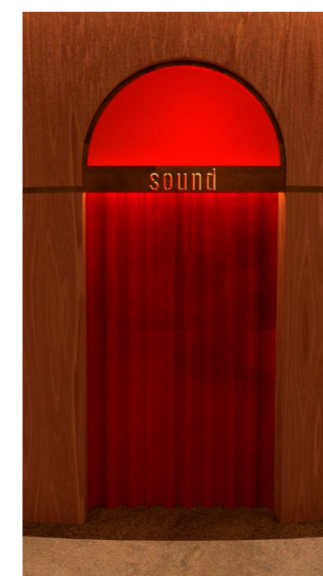


The Cafe-Bar and Entrance to the Film Museum

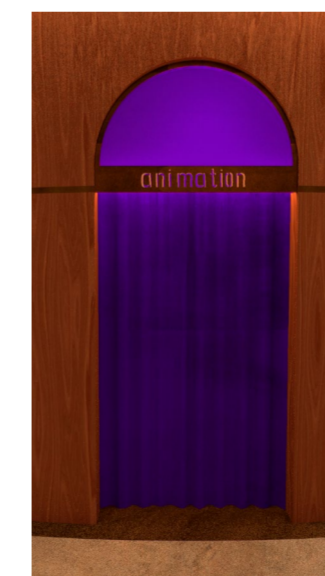
THE NORTH ROTUNDA



The Film Museum spans across the ground floor and basement of the North Rotunda. The ground floor provides an introduction and short history of film, and the basement allows visitors to explore and interact with film. Each of the six rooms focuses on a key element of film, giving visitors the opportunity to learn and engage with exhibits to create their own films.



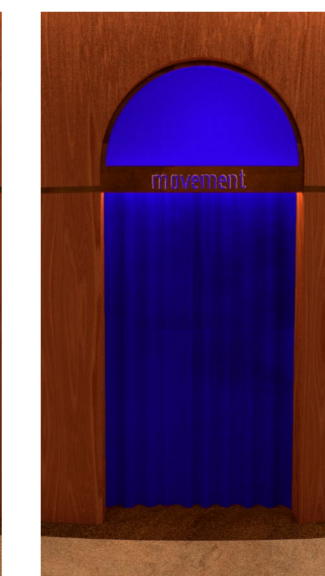
Sound



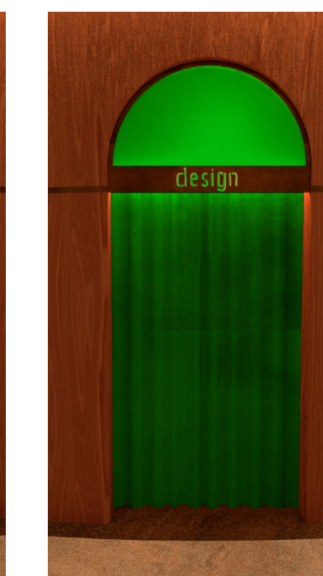
Animation



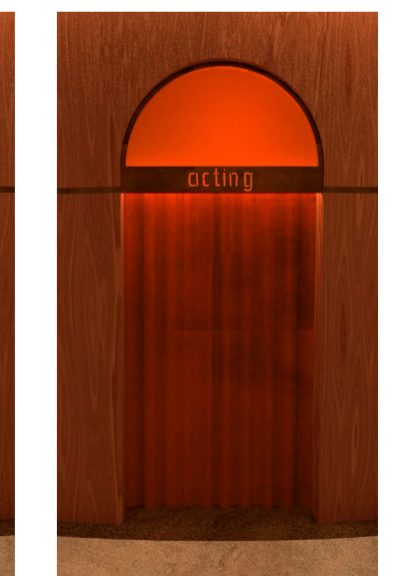
VR



Movement

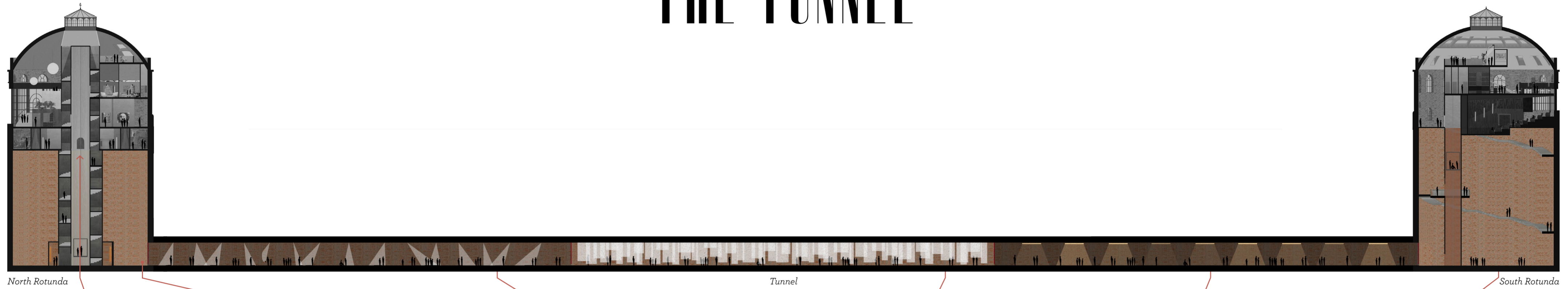


Design



Acting

THE 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.

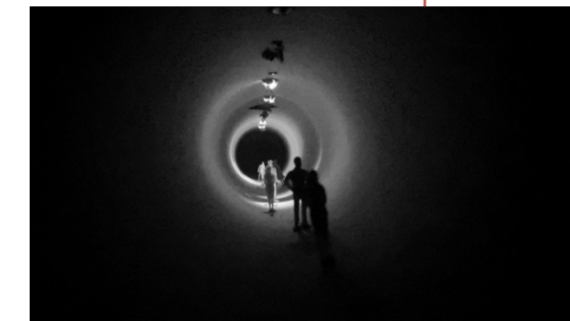
"There is a killer on the loose!"



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.

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

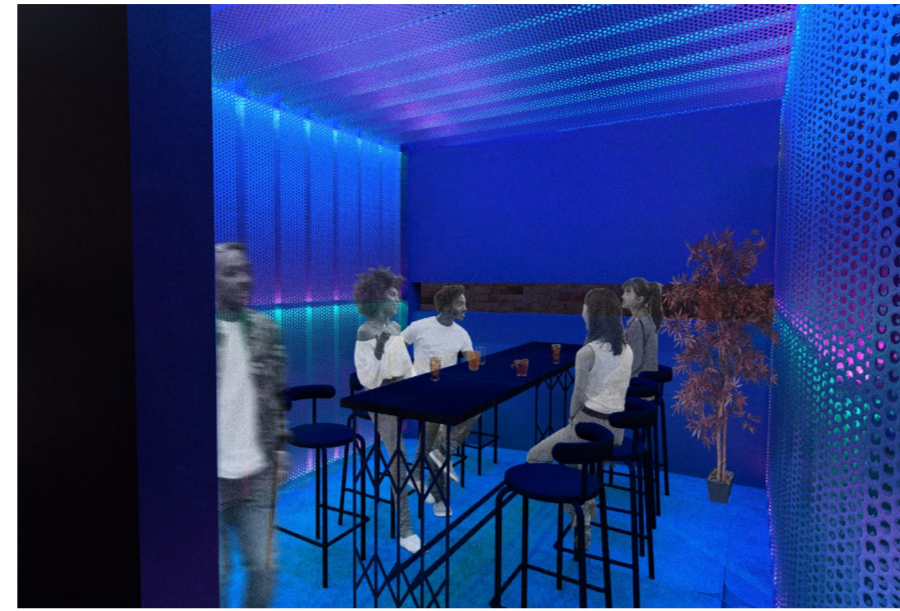
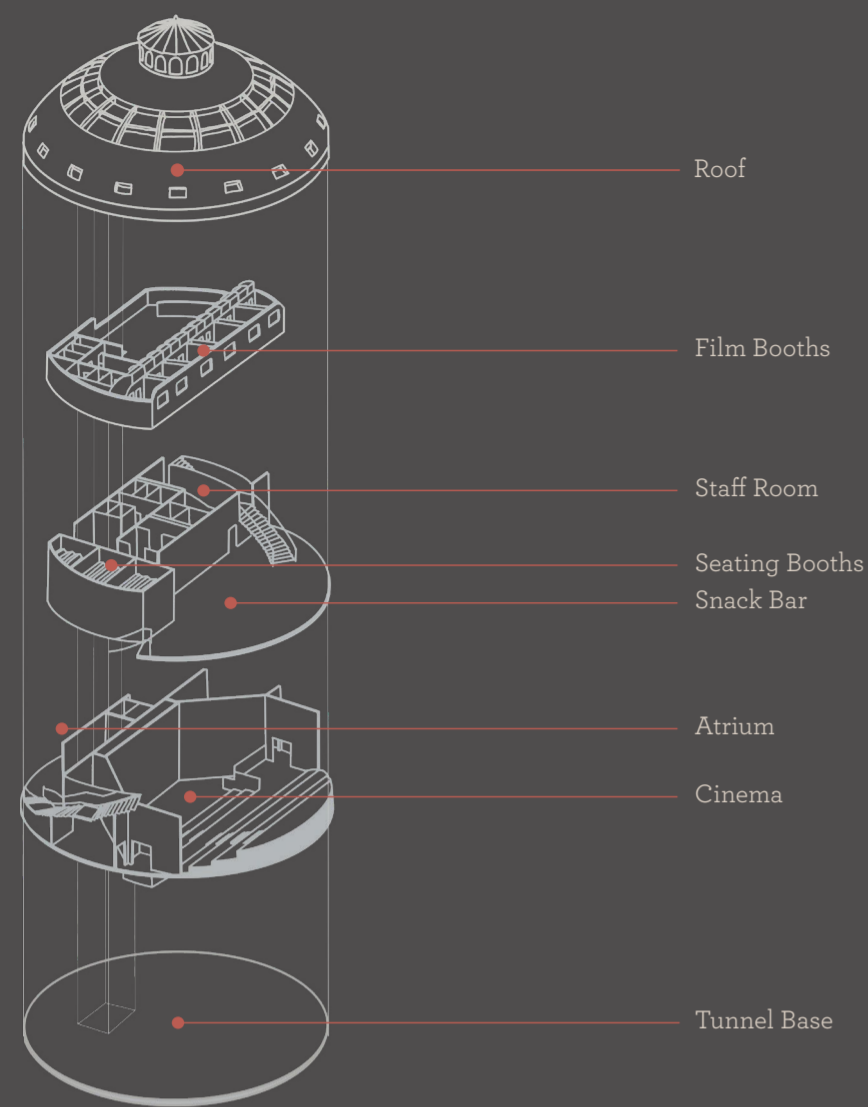
Using sound and lighting, it is a dynamic, immersive experience, building anticipation for the film. The experience is tailored to the film currently being shown in the South Rotunda's cinema, and therefore provides a different journey for every visit.

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.

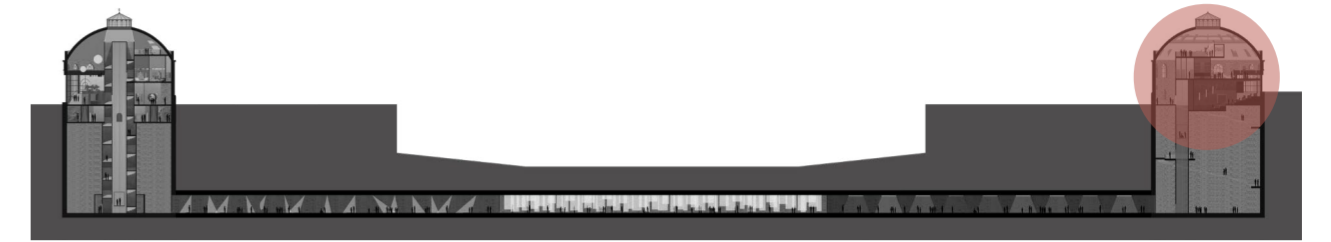


Use this link or scan the QR code to watch

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



THE SOUTH ROTUNDA



The South Rotunda is a space focused on the discovery and enjoyment of film, providing both public and private film-viewing experiences.

This space takes inspiration from past visions of the futuristic city, the outdated take on what the future city might look like. Dramatic lighting is used to create immersive spaces for exploration and conversation, whilst the classic cinema experience remains, with popcorn, pick 'n' mix, and a comfortable cinema auditorium.

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 South Rotunda is the manifestation of the new world, a space for exploration and full of discovery.

The Cinema on the ground floor provides space for 100 people, with individually-upholstered seats creating a sense of individuality whilst being part of a larger audience.

The Snack Bar on the first floor is inspired by fast-paced and otherworldly films including *Blade Runner* and *Spiderman: Into the Spiderverse*. Using dramatic neon lighting, the space immerses visitors in a new world. A choice of table seating, bar seating and seating booths provide a range of accessible options for visitors.

The Film Booths on the second floor provide private viewing space for up to four people each. Two of the six booths are wheelchair accessible, and all allow visitors to stream a film from the database, or showcase their own films from their device.

This project arose out of my frustration at the lack of social space for young adults in Glasgow which did not have a primary focus on alcohol. Overall, this project has allowed me to rethink how entertainment-focused developments can integrate both social and educational space to grow a more conscious and creative community. Being part of a bigger collective of people - whether as part of an audience for a film, associating with characters on screen or simply connecting with friends over shared interests - can provide us with a better understanding of the world, ourselves and others.

