Unplugged

Encouraging gamers to 'unplug' and recharge
by Lily Wolstenholme

What is Unplugged?

This project presents Unplugged, a preseason esports bootcamp that enforces a physical and environmental shift between plugged-in (performance) and unplugged (recovery) states. It is designed for professional Esports athletes, specifically league of legends players, at the peak of their career in which they would attend the bootcamp for three weeks to improve team building, work life balance and the mental and physical health of the athletes.

This experience is targeted at improving work-life balance in esports, encouraging players to disconnect from screens and invest in in-person relationships, mental and physical health, and social interaction. The bootcamp includes circuit-inspired pathways, private capacitor-shaped meeting pods, scrim review rooms, cognitive training zones, and warm-up spaces, fostering a high-performance yet sustainable training environment that prioritizes longevity in a player's career.

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What is Esports?

Esports or electronic sports are competitive video games in which teams or professional players compete for prizes. Players compete in virtual arenas during tournaments held by video games such as League of Legends, Call of Duty, Overwatch, and Counterstrike. With prize pools in certain competitions reaching tens of millions of dollars, eSports has become competitive with traditional sports in terms of professionalism and viewer attraction (British Esports Association 2017).
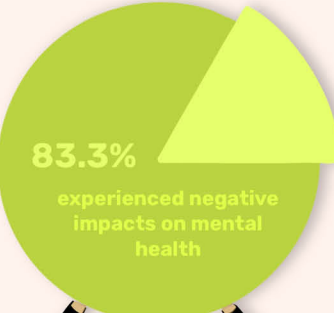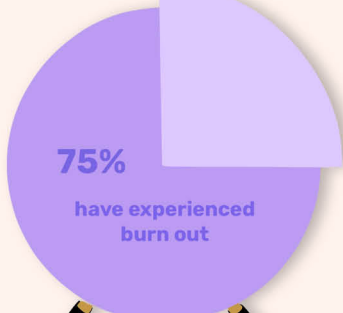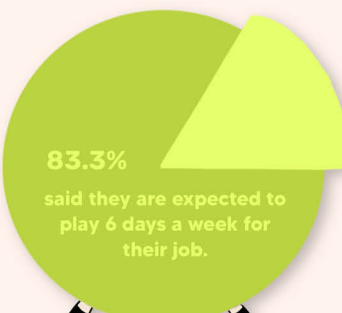
2.6BN
Players worldwide

433M
Global esports audience
(FNATIC, 2024)

The Issue...

In the competitive gaming world, the physical and emotional toll on players is often overlooked. Long hours dedicated to mastering gaming skills can take a serious toll on players' health. Whether it's the strain of prolonged sitting with poor posture, the elevated stress after a tough loss, or irregular, restless sleep, the negative effects are undeniable (Corner, cited in Finch et al., 2019:134). I conducted my own research by surveying 12 professional esports athletes and these were some of the key findings:

66.6% said they spent 9 or more hours a day gaming.

83.3% said they are expected to play 6 days a week for their job.

75% have experienced burn out

83.3% experienced negative impacts on mental health

Unplugged's take on 'Interior Futures'

Unplugged envisions the future of interior design in esports by rethinking how performance, well-being, and sustainability intersect. Blending kinetic architecture with passive environmental strategies, it creates a dynamic space that adapts to users' physical and mental states. The project challenges industry norms by prioritising inclusivity, recovery, and long-term athlete health. Through innovative spatial transitions and modular design, Unplugged offers a forward-thinking model for sustainable, human-centred interiors that respond to the evolving needs of digital culture and competitive gaming.

The Site

Located a short walk from Bermondsey Street is The Pickle Factory where this project will be housed ('The Pickle Factory Bermondsey SE1 - by London Square | About' 2024). Bermondsey, situated in southeast London, is a vibrant and diverse area known for its rich history, thriving food and arts scene and its desirable proximity to central London (London Square 2024).

History

The Pickle Factory was built in the 19th century when it was first used as one of the many tanneries in Bermondsey and later, it contained premises owned by Crosse and Blackwell where they made their famous Branston Pickle (Orbit Architects 2023).
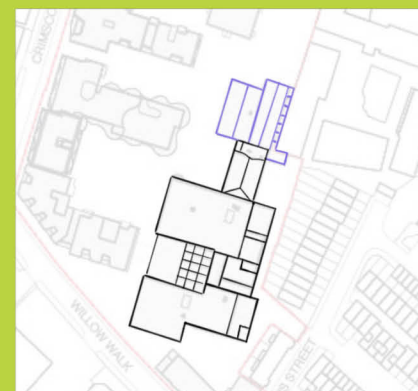
Site Analysis
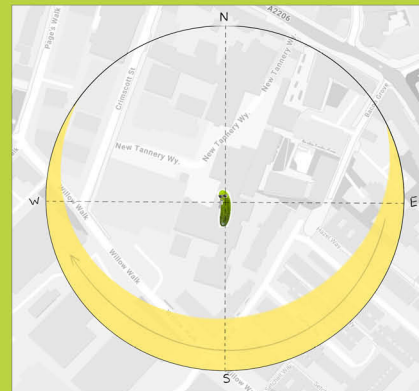
Sun Path

The Pickle Factory is North facing therefore it lacks natural light. To combat this, skylights could be added.
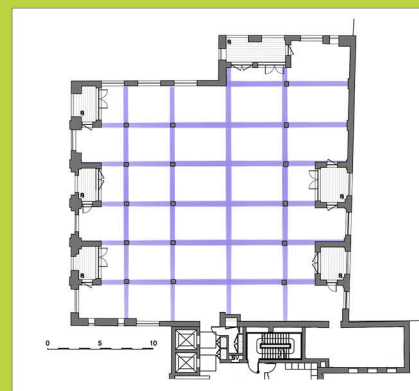
Structural Grid

The building presents a structural grid laid out by columns and joists. This determins spacial planning.

Area Im using

I choose this area of the building due to its managable size in comparison to its newer extension.

The Unplugged Brand

Colour code	
16, 0, 80, 16	
45, 54, 0, 11	
16, 33, 0, 3	

I have established my own brand "Unplugged," which will be comprised of a series of boot camps for professional eSports athletes as part of a "healthy habits initiative."

The brand colours purple and green sit opposite each other on the colour wheel, making them complementary colours. Because they don't share a common base colour, they create high contrast and vibrancy when used together, which can visually express tension and balance. This goes hand-in-hand with the plugged vs unplugged concept.

Unplugged merch design

The design for this jersey was created in Owayo's free online 3D design software. The background of the jersey is inspired by a circuit board and features the key brand colours of purple and green.

The custom Unplugged logo was included on the front and back of the jersey alongside space for each players individual gamer tag to be displayed in the iconic Unplugged green.

| Motherboard	Violet 2	Bright Green	Violet 4

The Concept

The Unplugged concept originates from the familiar language users often use when stepping away from technology – phrases like "going off grid" or "unplugging" to describe the need for a digital detox. For professional gamers, whose daily lives revolve around high-pressure, screen-intensive environments, the need to unplug becomes even more critical. This project acknowledges that intensity and designs a spatial narrative around it – where plugging in represents high-performance, immersive training, and unplugging offers space to disconnect, recover, and reset.
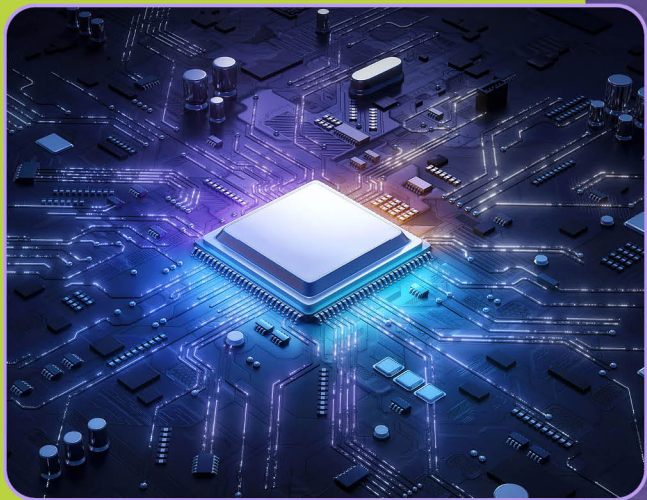
The strategy

How?

This conceptual framework is visualised through the metaphor of a circuit board, where the Scrim Room acts as the CPU – the system's brain. When the CPU lifts via mechanical winding gear, the board powers down. The environment visibly shifts, signalling a transition from performance to rest. This moment is not just functional, but symbolic – a structured, visualised act of digital detox and human reconnection.
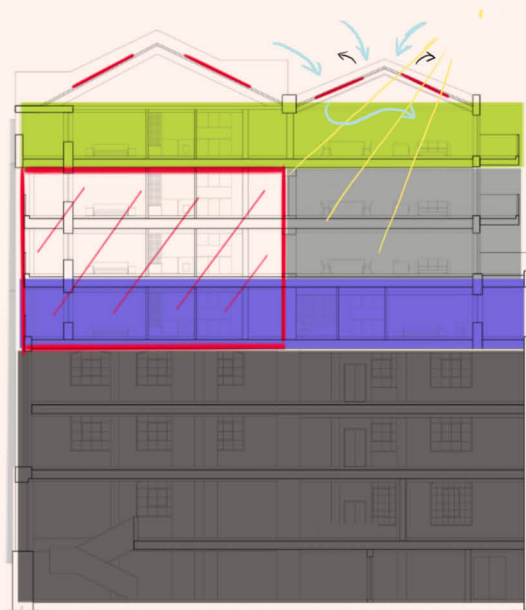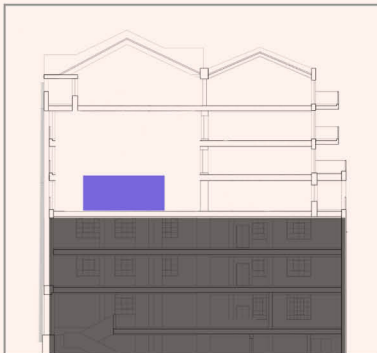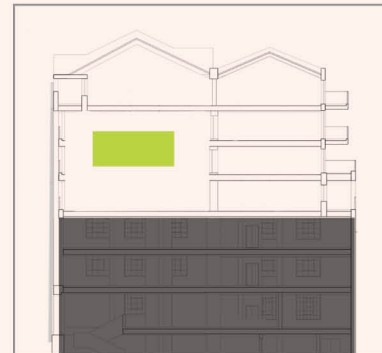
The Circuit Grid
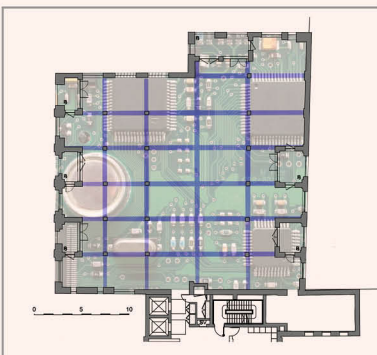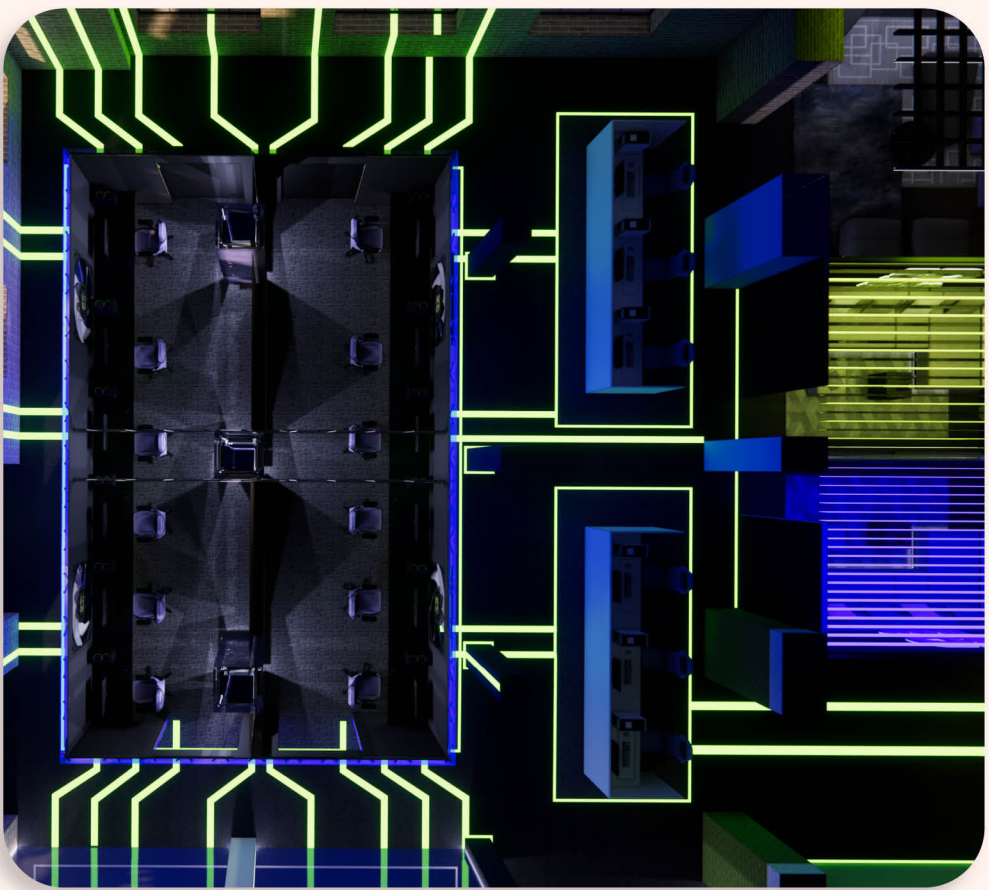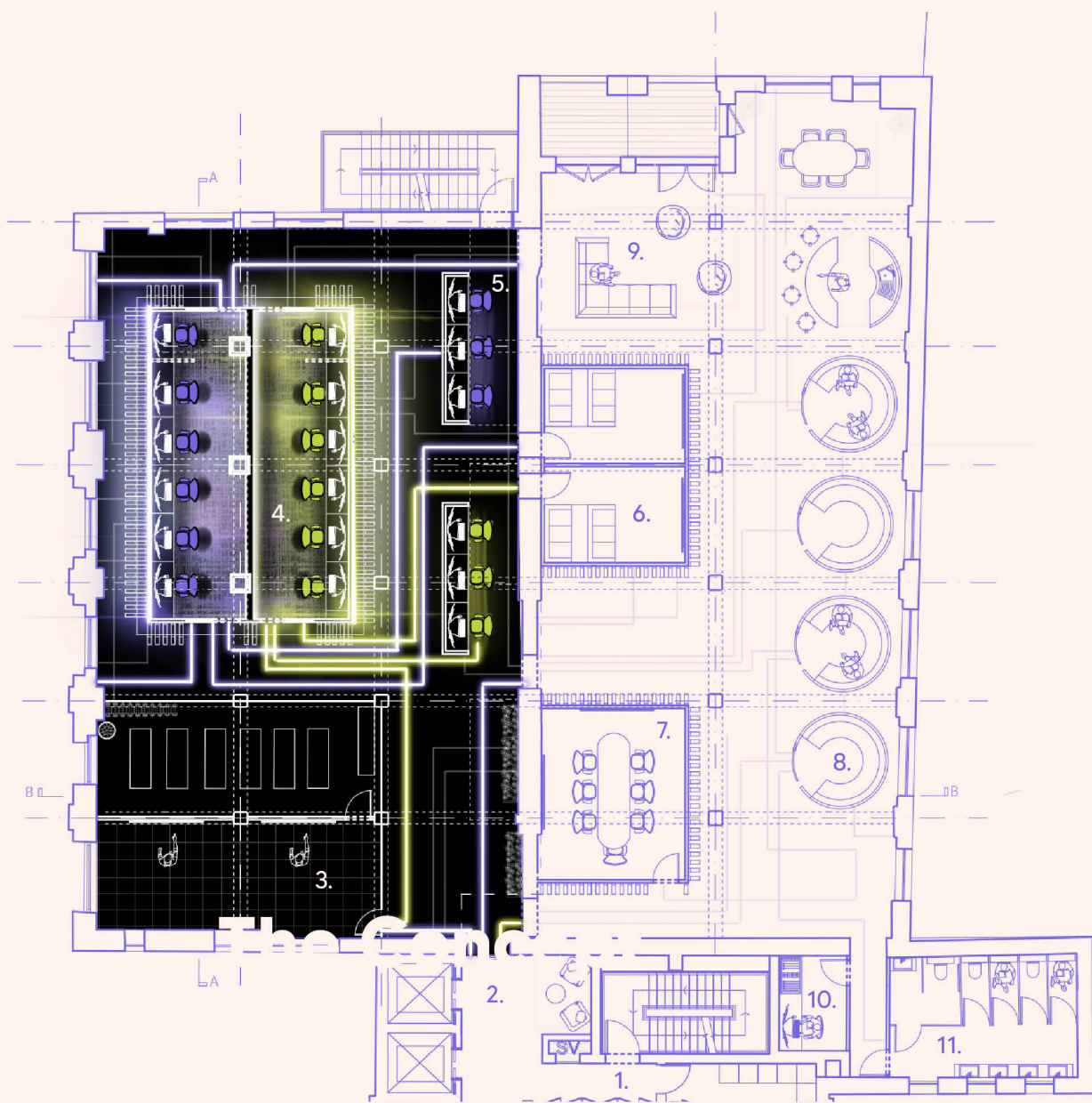
Light Vs Dark
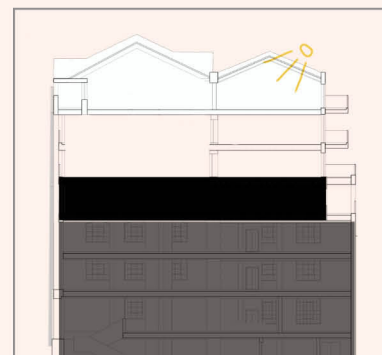
The CPU (Plugged)

The CPU (Unplugged)

- Plugged
- Unplugged
- Player Accommodation
- Selective Demolition

How is Unplugged helping this issue?

Enforcing balance...

83.3% said they are expected to play 6 days a week for their job.

66.6% said they spent 9 or more hours a day gaming.

The concept of Unplugging and the strategy of the circuit board and CPU, will improve the life of professional gamers by enforcing a new work schedule. When the CPU unplugs and lifts to the ceiling, it takes the pc's and the power with it. Consequently, the players can no longer physically access the computers and if they could, they would have no power.

What this does, is encourages players to pay attention to their mental and phsyicsl health by making use of other areas within the bootcamp, e.g. the gym, the sauna, or social spaces.

Third Floor Plan - The Performance Floor

Plan Key

1. Firestair
2. Lift lobby
3. Performance hub
4. 'CPU' gaming arena
5. Staff computers
6. 'Data Node' scrim review room
7. Private meeting room
8. 'Capacitors' private quiet rooms.
9. Break out zone
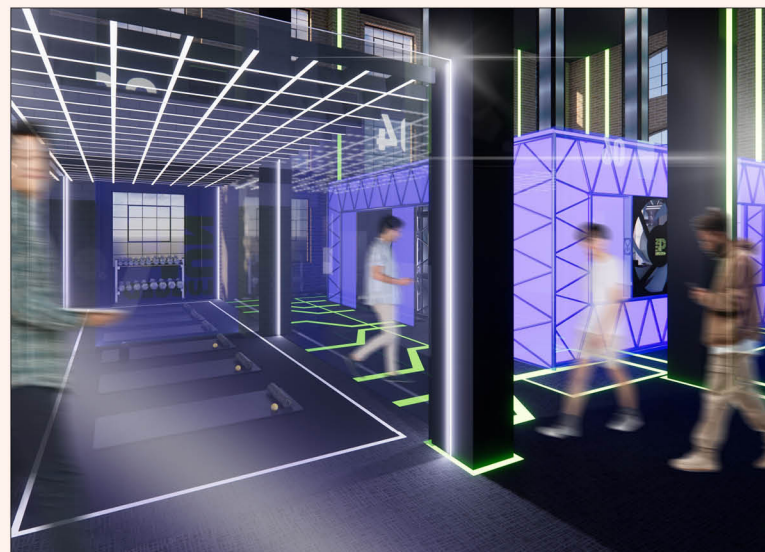10. Control room
11. Player & staff WC

Rendered visuals of the performance floor

Inside visual of the gaming arena aka 'The CPU'.

A visual of the 'performance hub' taken from model.

Overview of the performance floor.

Team 1's scrim review room, where they review games.

Team 2's scrim review room, where they review games.

A visual from inside the gaming arena aka 'CPU'.

Sixth Floor Plan - The Wellness Floor

Birds eye view of the sixth floor plan, taken from the 3D model.

Plan Key

1. Firestair
2. Lift lobby
3. Wash room
4. Kitchen
5. Communal lounge
6. Analogue gaming

7. The Gym
8. The Yoga/tai chi room
9. Communal changing
10. Sensory deprivation tank
11. Ice baths
12. Sauna

Sustainability at Unplugged

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Environmental Sustainability

The Unplugged project addresses environmental sustainability through thoughtful material choices and operational strategies. At its core is the mechanically lifting CPU, which initiates the transition from performance to recovery. As it lifts and "unplugs" from the circuit board-inspired floor, lighting and AV systems shut down automatically, reducing energy use. Natural light enters through automated shutters, enabling a passive environmental response during downtime.

This approach aligns with UN Sustainable Development Goals 7 and 12 by improving energy efficiency and minimising resource consumption through modular design and lifecycle planning. Unplugged sets a new standard for low-impact, high-performance esports environments.

Social Sustainability

The project fosters social sustainability by creating a balanced, health-focused environment for esports athletes. Addressing the industry's intense demands, it promotes work-life balance through spaces that encourage social interaction, mental well-being, and physical recovery. The unplugged floor supports real-life connection and relaxation, helping to prevent isolation and burnout, with communal dining, wellness zones, and social hubs.
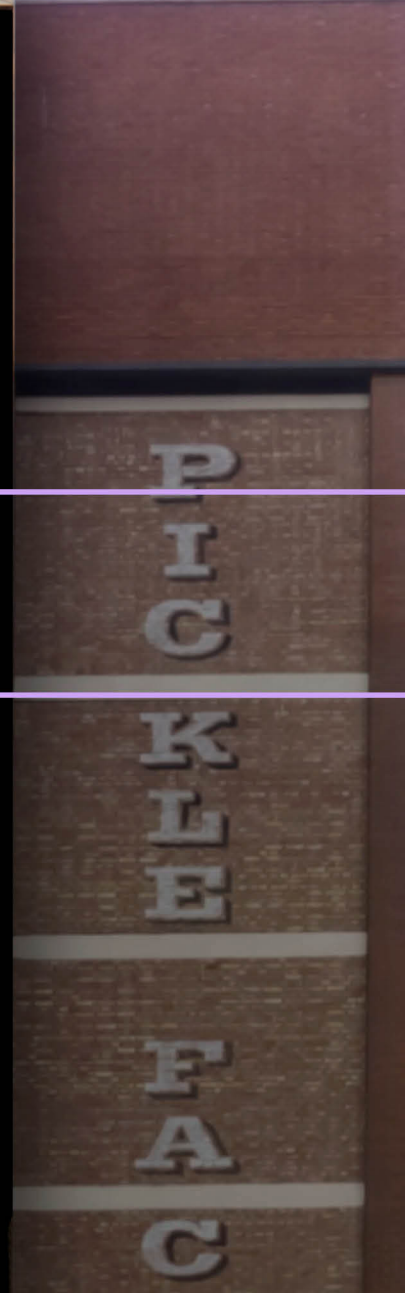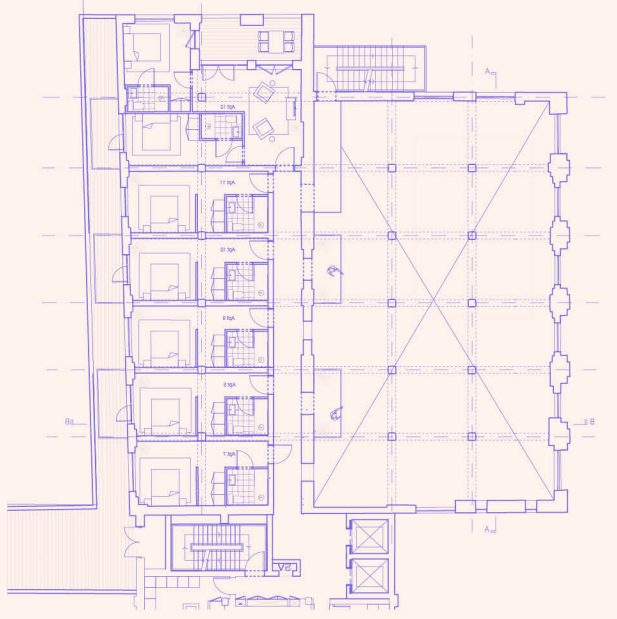
Designed with inclusivity in mind–especially for female gamers–it prioritizes recovery and mental resilience, challenging conventional esports training models. Through thoughtful spatial planning and sustainable materials, the project supports long-term athlete well-being.
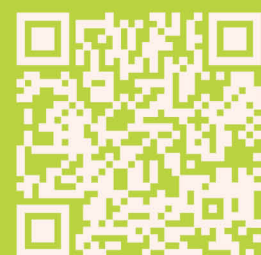
Player Accommodation

Fifth Floor
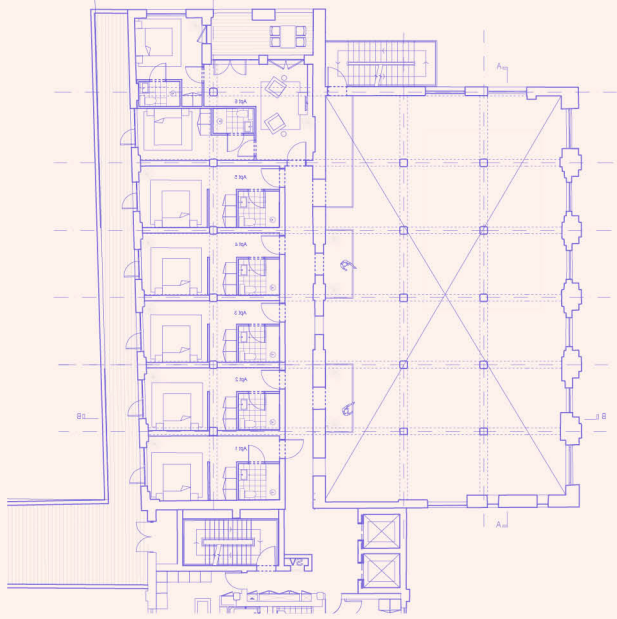
Fourth Floor

Technical Section

Purple Polycarbonate

Polycarbonate providing a lightweight, impactresistant surface. Diffuses light softly while maintaining privacy–ideal for creating dynamic partitions and a futuristic aesthetic.
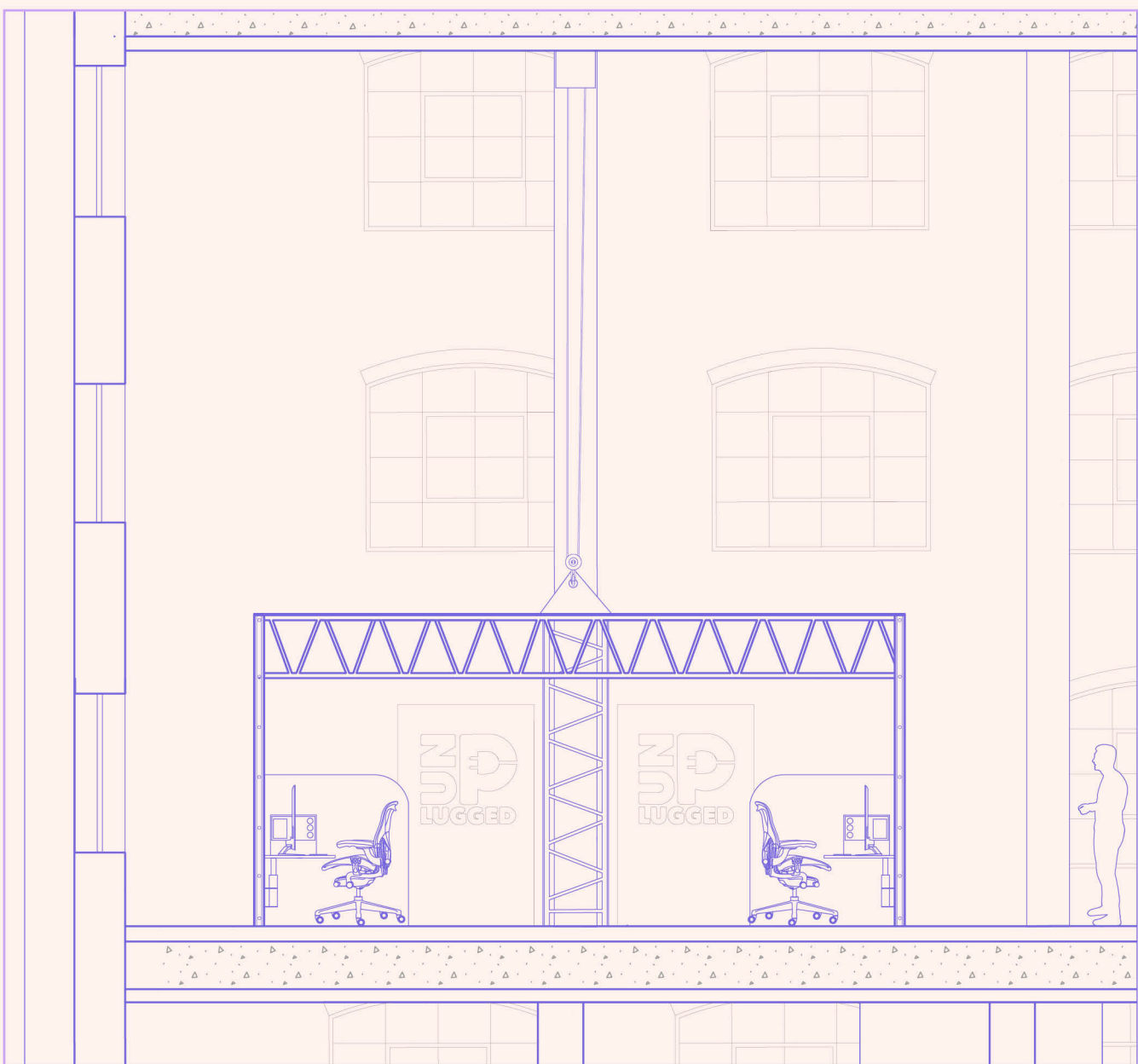
Plywood

Sustainably sourced plywood offering a warm, natural aesthetic with strong structural integrity. Lightweight, versatile, and easy to work with– ideal for modular construction and interior spatial definition.

Gypsum Board and Clayworks Plaster

Natural clay plaster in a soft, dark black tone (BLA-01), offering a smooth, velvety finish. Adds depth and warmth to interior surfaces while regulating humidity and improving indoor air quality.
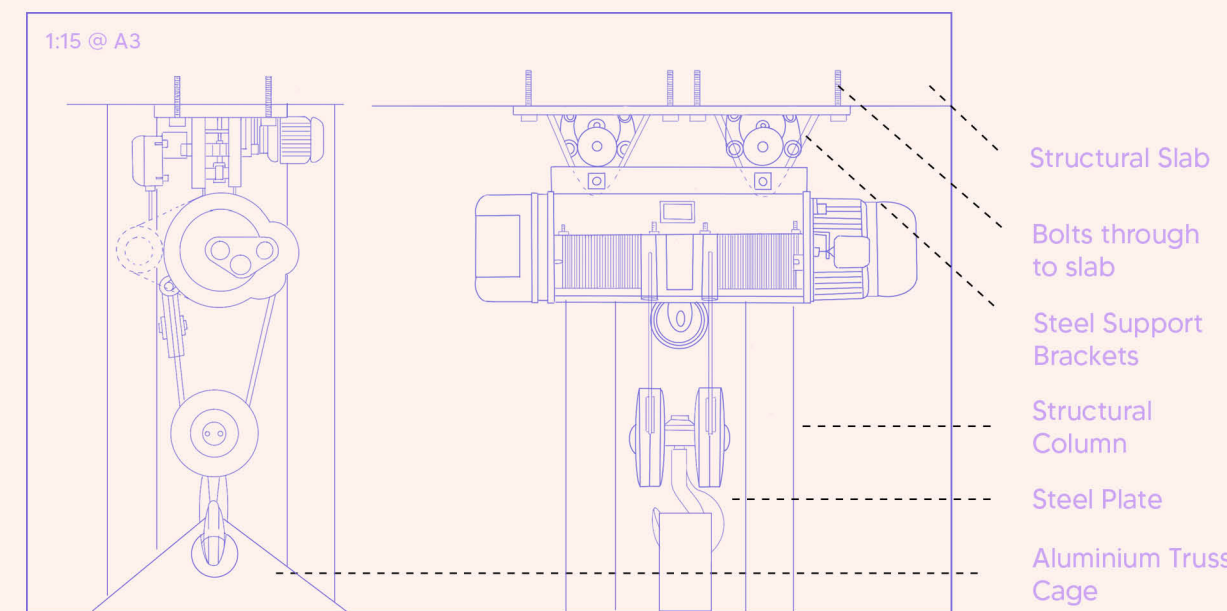
Aluminium Truss Frame

Lightweight aluminium truss frame providing structural strength with minimal material use. Easy to assemble, disassemble, and recycle– ideal for modular, adaptive design with a high strength-to-weight ratio.

The Mechanics

How have we made this liftable?

1:15 @ A3

- Structural Slab
- Bolts through to slab
- Steel Support Brackets
- Structural Column
- Steel Plate
- Aluminium Truss Cage

Rollers for stabilisation when lifting

Stabilisation rollers were included within the truss frame to stop the structure from swaying and hitting the structural column when being lifted. A steel plate was added to the structural column to prevent the rollers from wearing down the column.

Mute Single Double Speed CD1 MD1 Electric Wire Rope Hoist

This is what lifts the CPU. There are 3 hoists as a fail safe incase one fails theres a reserve.
Lifting Capacity: 0.5t to 32t
Lifting Speed: 3.5/0.35m/min to 8/0.8m/min

1:20 @ A3