

Craft I aim to preserve in design: Wooden latticework refers to the intricate structure or design of a product made by crisscrossing or interweaving wooden strips

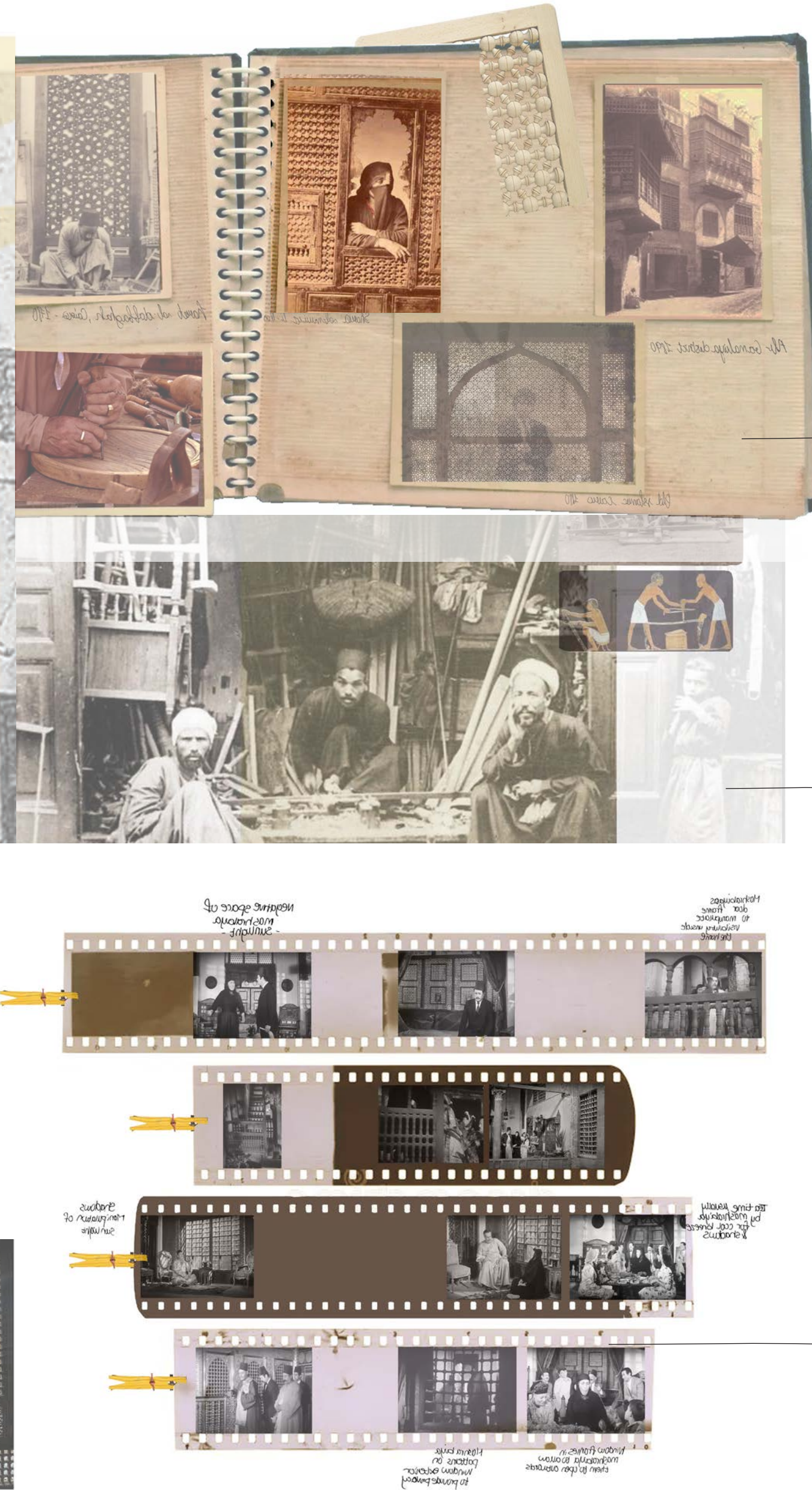
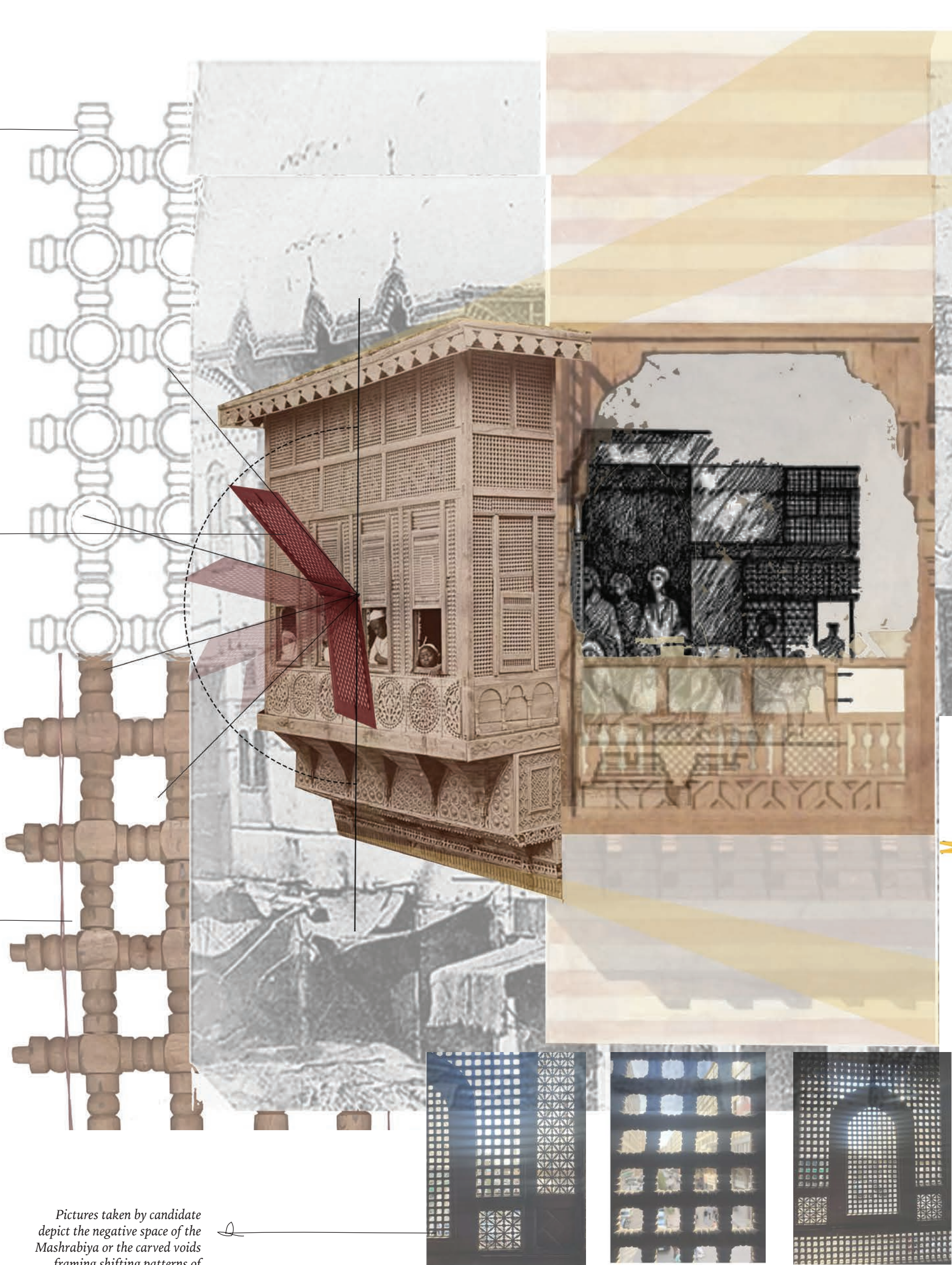
Research will focus on a type of wooden latticework used in traditional Islamic and Middle Eastern architecture called the mashrabiya.

The functionality of the Mashrabiya in protecting women:

- 1 | People Watching: The mashrabiya enables subtle observation: Women to observe and not be seen
- 2 | Protection of Women: It offered a cultural means of gender segregation and safety.
- 3 | Privacy: The lattice structure provides visibility from within while maintaining seclusion for women.

1:50 Detail Model (made by candidate) of Mashrabiya Joinery depicts the craft of wooden latticework using a lot-in slot-out joinery technique. Model depicts the positive space offering physical protection, privacy, and cultural symbolism

Pictures taken by candidate depict the negative space of the Mashrabiya or the carved voids framing shifting patterns of light, air, and views without revealing the person behind



Introduction to Project Aim:

This project reclaims the Mashrabiya as a feminist architectural tool rooted in social justice, transforming it from a historic screen into a system that empowers women to control their spatial experience. Aim will be developed and refined alongside design development.

Women in control:

The primary users of the space are women, offering them control over visibility — allowing them to observe the workshop while remaining seen or unseen.

This photo is symbolic: though the woman is visible, her full coverage questions the nature of being truly seen, echoing the core purpose of the Mashrabiya.

Craftmen's Perspective:

1 | Historically, craftsmanship has been preserved and passed down through male lineages, with workshops functioning like familial units centered around male pride, patience, and social bonds.

2 | This deeply rooted male-only environment unintentionally excluded women from participating or observing the making process.

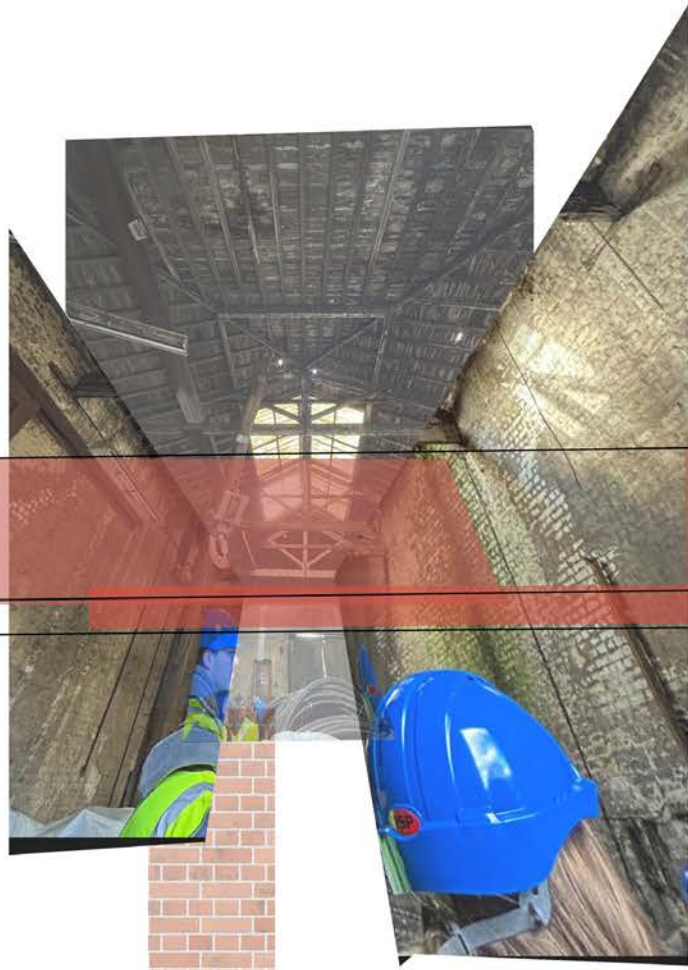
3 | In response, my design introduces spatial separation through the Mashrabiya mezzanine, allowing women the control to observe the workshop below with full control over their visibility—seen or unseen—reclaiming space within a traditionally male craft.

Women's use in Egyptian Cinema:

Analysis of Mashrabiya use in Egyptian cinema reveals its role as a visual device often placed in women's rooms: serving as a filtered link to the outside world. It also commonly appears in entrance doors, distorting visibility to conceal who is entering and when, reinforcing themes of privacy and protection.

To See or Not To See - Design Process & Expirementation
Farida Eltayeb

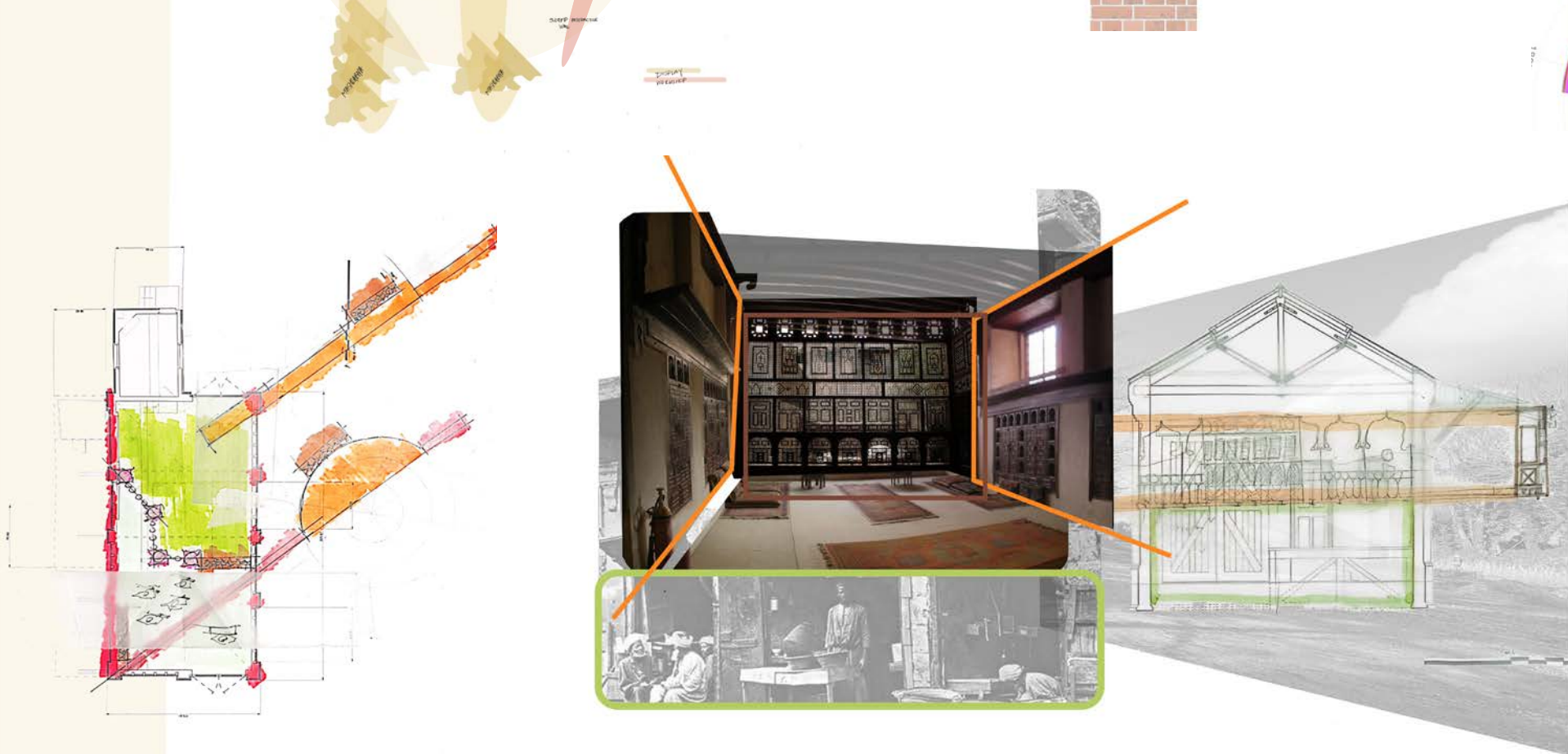
Precedent Study: The Hijazi tower houses were vertically organized homes that used Mashrabiya screens to separate public and private spaces—closed panels ensured privacy for women, while men had access to open balconies. Just like the traditional homes, my design reclaims control over visibility and continues a cultural logic of separation, privacy, and control.



Project Manifesto & Aim:

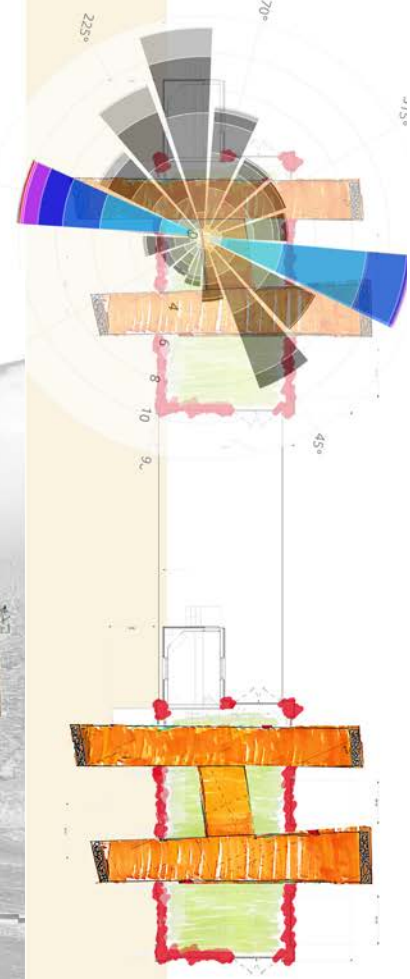
This project reclaims the Mashrabiya as a feminist spatial device, restoring its role in granting women privacy, autonomy, and control over visibility. A raised mezzanine enclosed by modular Mashrabiya panels allows women to observe the male-dominated workshop below without being seen, with open and screened sections offering agency over when to appear or remain hidden. Rooted in traditional joinery and designed for disassembly, the system embeds resistance, care, and cultural authorship within the rigid colonial brickwork: reactivating the Mashrabiya as a living architecture of protection and choice.

This is important because it reclaims architectural power, shifting control from the built environment to the individual. By allowing women to decide when to be seen, the design repositions the Mashrabiya from a passive relic to an active tool of empowerment — redefining visibility as a choice, not a spatial condition.



Initial Design Proposal:

Through physical model testing and drawings, I explored a slicing structural strategy. However, this approach limited the Mashrabiya's ability to overlook meaningful activity, weakening the core theme of observation and concealment. Without a clear spatial divide, the design lacked the intended separation between public and private realms.

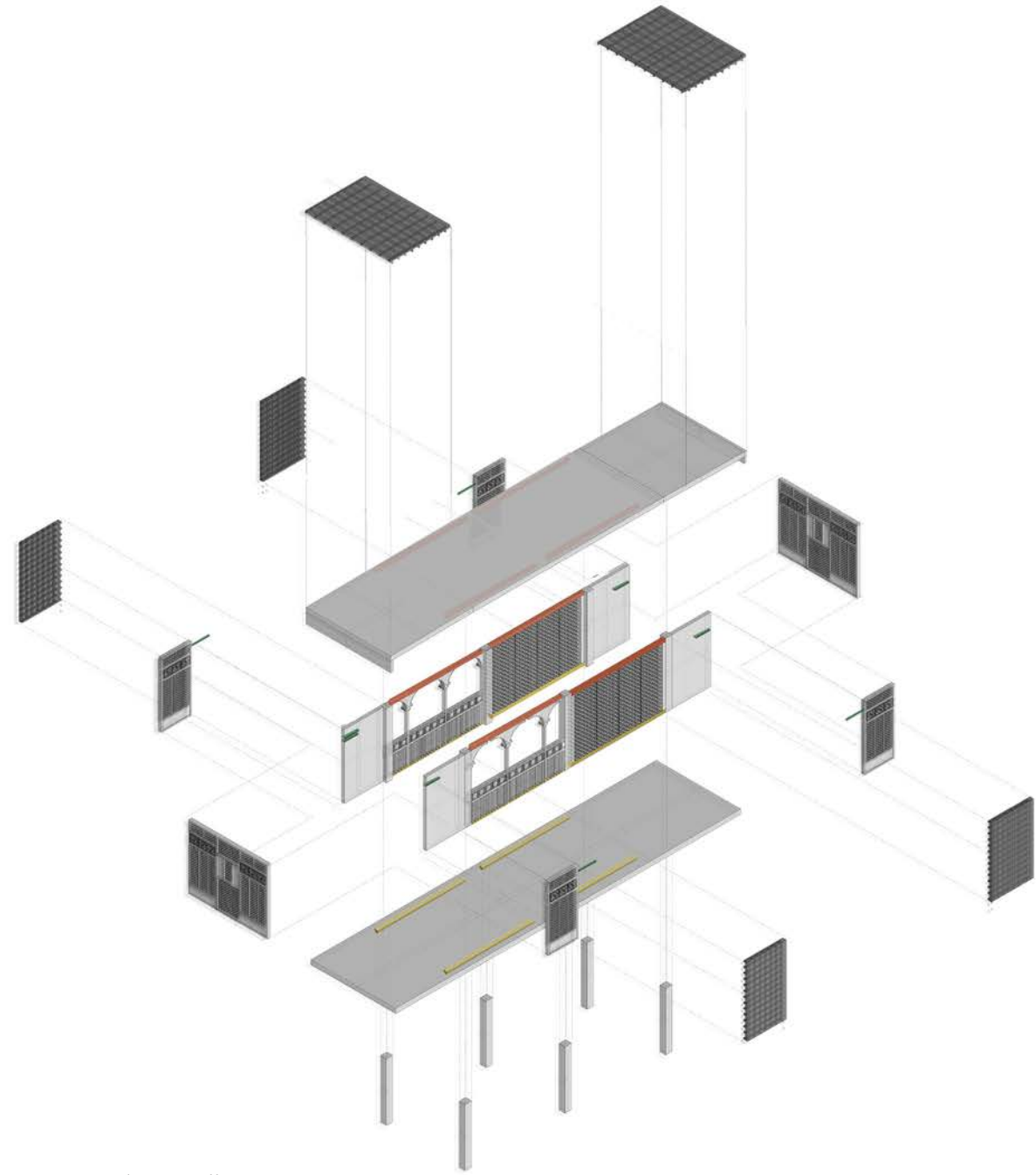


Final Design Proposal works with mezzanines:

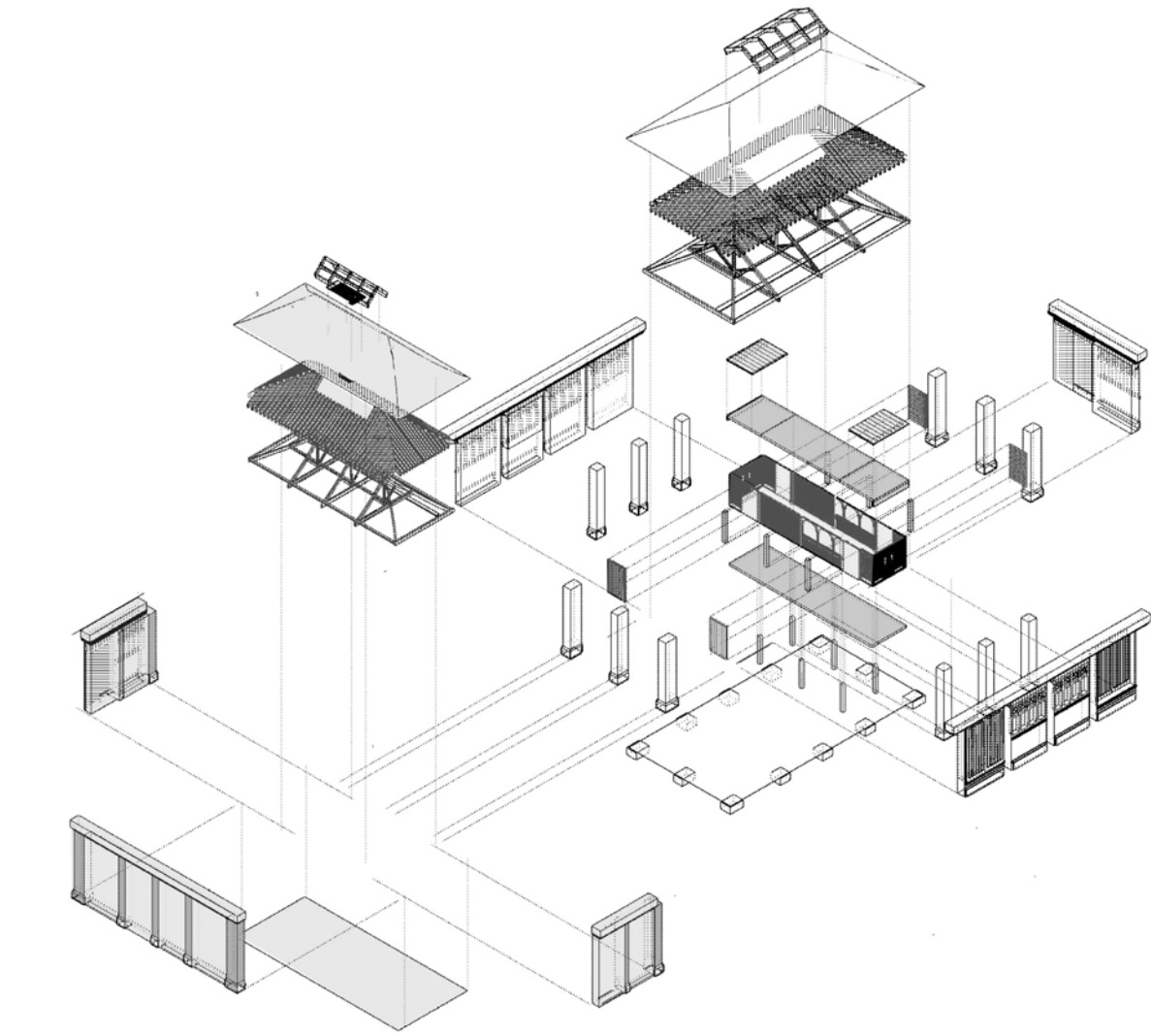
Collage illustrates how the Mashrabiya was traditionally elevated above ground level to allow women to discreetly observe the street below without being seen. This spatial arrangement reinforces the manifesto's aim: reviving the Mashrabiya's original function of empowering women with control over visibility. The site's vertical height supports this strategy, aligning with both cultural intent and construction logic.

To See or Not To See - Layers & Technologies

Farida Eltayeb

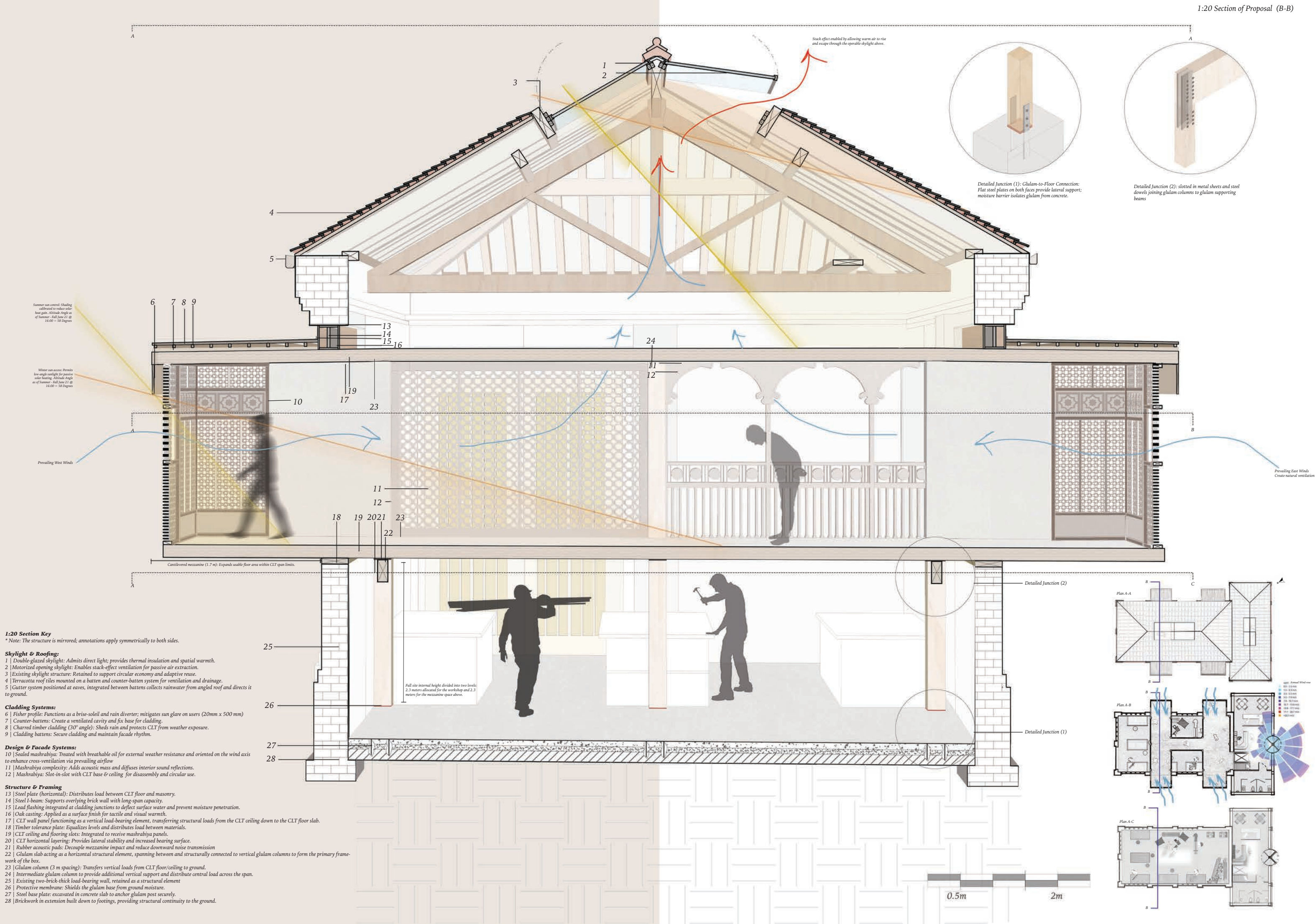


Axonometric diagram illustrating zones of visibility and concealment within the mezzanine.



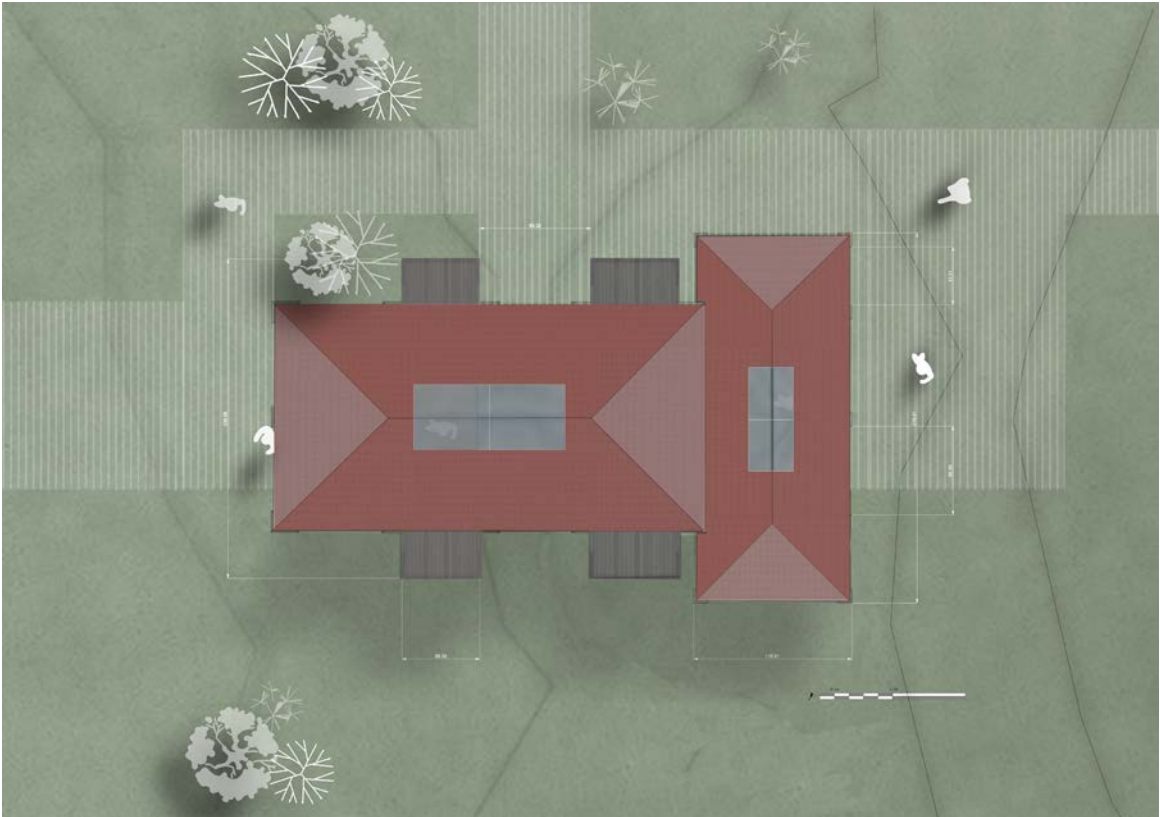
Axonometric diagram illustrating design proposal within site.

Technological study of design proposal.



To See or Not To See - Atmospheric Narratives
Farida Eltayeb

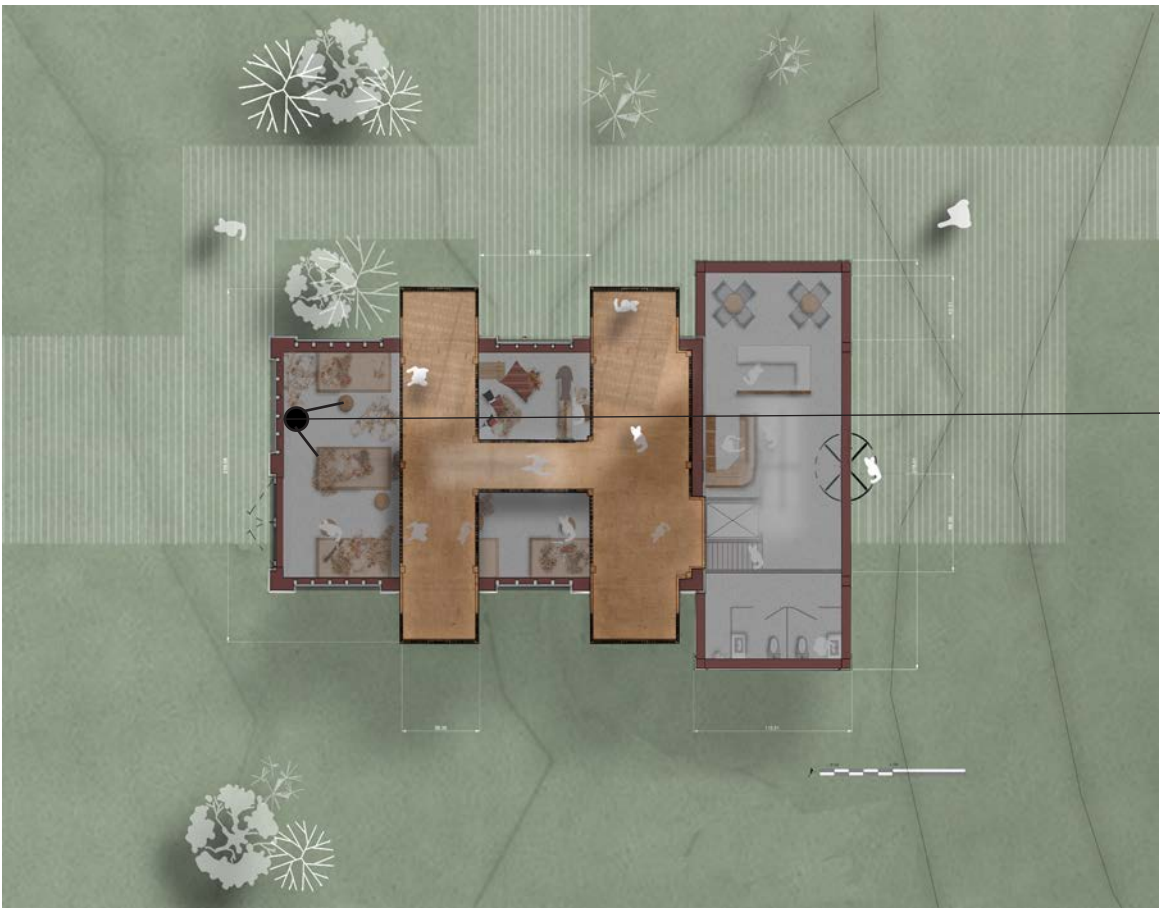
This atmospheric shot captures the spatial relationship between the male-dominated workshop below and the mezzanines above, designed for women. Within these elevated walkways, the Mashrabiya panels give women control — allowing them to choose whether to observe while remaining unseen or to be visible within the space.



Roof plan



Ground Floor Plan:
Male concentrated work-
shop to be observed
through mashrabiya
designs



Mezzanine floor Plan:
Designed for women to
allow them control of
visibility and privacy while
observing the workshop.

Render Shot Viewpoint