Albany Theatre
Coventry, West Midlands

The building is currently housing a multi-purpose Arts Centre. In line with the Albany Theatre Trust's values and aims, the **purpose of learning and creative expression must be preserved** within the space, due to its long battle to keep the theatre open for the public.

The main house was originally built and used as a lecture theatre. Called the Great Hall, it sat at the heart of **Coventry Technical College**, which opened in 1935. During the WW2 the space provided shelter for the community and **became a place of creative expression and entertainment.**

Fast forward to 2022, the public nostalgia of its golden days keeps the Theatre's door open, over the existing use of the space, which today provides very little space for the public use within it's Art Deco interiors.

Approach:

A space that connects people to the use vie the space like during its golden days. In contrast to how today the community is connected to the space vie memories of its use.

Absurdity

Aims to explore a variety of possibilities in which we might **disconnect from the world as we know it and reconnect with the reality.** Absurdism is an attempt to **understand our life the way it truly is.** Without propaganda, ideology, politics and imposed tastes.

Breaking Preconceptions

"Metaphor, rather than being solely a linguistic or rhetorical trope, constitutes a human process by which we understand and structure one domain of experience in terms of another of a different kind."

The studies in Tectonic culture: The poetics of construction in 19th and 20th Century Architecture by Kenneth Frampton.

Escapism might be weakened in quiet spaces that allow people to disconnect. Arguably, those are harder to find in a city, than places to socialise.

Hypothesis: *Using Absurdity in design of Interior public spaces can challange our perception of spaces by breaking preconceptions through the use of mixed metaphors.*

Method

Metaphors
Breaking preconceptions

An expression of a memory associated with a past experience or distant location, found in an unexpected place may challenge perception of that space and its use.

Experience

Exploration - Fun - Seclusion - Rest

Experience of an environemnt enforces spacial presence and may lead to reflection.

Objects

Engage - Disconnect - Reconnect

Interacting with objects defines understanding of a place and forms connection to the use of the space vie encounter.

Scan here for a flythrough

About the Project:

Aiming to challenge our perception of interior public spaces this research based project aims to challenge our perception of interior public spaces, how we use them and what they can do for us in today's fast paced world.

Intending to spark curiosity among younger audiences, whose digitalized world perspective affected how they identify reality, the space focuses on providing unexpected experience using metaphors and objects, over simply dictating a function, making it more accessible and attractive. Encouraging communal engagement through exploration and use, the space is designed to allow its users to experience rest, fun and reflection.

Unfamiliar Theatre

"In this expanding dystopia, escapism and absurdism can be an important tool for harnessing new ways of thinking about, and changing spaces around us."

15 years ago, the internet was an escape from the real world. Today, the real world is an escape from the internet.

Testing how we interact with everyday objects

The task:

1. Think about these objects, create narrative around it.

2. What could you do with it, what would you do with it, what have you done with it?

Observations

1.- Answers were getting more creative depending on the object and the longer the person was doing the task for.

2. All the objects' original use has developed into other uses. For example, no one said they would write in a book, which is it's original use, could this be because it became more convinient to type on our electrical devices than write on paper?

Testing how we interact with unfamilliar objects

The task:

1. What do you think this is?

2. What can you do with it?

Observations

1. The responses varied depending on the surroundings and what was available around.

2. A person showed more interest in the object when others were present and actively engaging with it.

3. Focusing on this object provided a temporary distraction for the person playing with it.

4. People were curious about the object, but once they ran out of ideas for what to do with it they left it.

Object 1

Designer
- read it
- display/decoration
- use it to print onto for art
- depends if im looking at a book or a picture of a book

Software Engeneer
- It has potential to read it
- It has potential to prop up other stuff with is
- ignore it
- alphabetise it (sort them)
- smack a fly or a spider with it
- steps to reach something

Gardener
- Read it
- Use it as decoration
- Weights to press flowers
- To lift things up
- Destroy and make confetti

Object 2

Designer
- stare at it, tell myself im gonna ride it and never get on it
- watch videos on youtube how to hook it up to an electrical thing to power something up like a washing mashice or blender
- hung on a wall
- give it away

Software Engeneer
- ride it
- lend it and get it stolen.
- Could mount it on a wall,

Gardener
- Ride it or ignore it.
- Could use to stretch,
- Art piece eg to sketch,
- take it apart
- store it

Object 3

Designer
- drink out of it,
- water plants
- throw it at someone, or throw its contents,

Software Engeneer
- drink cold or hot drink out of it
- clean it.

Gardener
- rolling pin to flaten something
- stencil
- to drink from
- to carry liquid in it (eg, soup, alcohol or water)

Object 4

Designer
- walk past it bc never use one unless it was redesigned

Software Engeneer
- pose in it for a photo
- go inside it if it was raining and use mobile phone to call,
- take a picture of it,
- ignore it

Gardener
- shelter from rain (would probably be scared to go in, feels exposed/trap)
- ignore it
- take a photo in it
- call from it

Object 5

Designer
- stab someone
- eat food with
- make jewellery from it,
- loose it
- stab myself by accident, drop

Software Engeneer
- shove it in a plug socket
- use it to eat, might use it as a makeshift scredriver,
- clean it,
- use it to stir.
- defend yourself with it

Gardener
- use it as an eating utencil, - mix things with is,
- use as a stencil,
- brush hair,
- reach for fix or get into things that were stuck,

Object 6

Designer
- walk around it
- sit on it maybe bevcause im out of breath,
- walk past it

Software Engeneer
- ignore it,
- sit on it,
- walk on it pretending to be jack sparrow,
- put things down on it use as table or a ledge
- prop my foot on it to tie a shoe
- mount stuff on it, put a door bell on it, bird house, prill into it and hang stuff from it,

Gardener
- sit on it,
- walk on it,
- jump over it,
- use it as a table,
- hide beind it,
- count the bricks,
- grafiti

Person 1

- Can I break it at the end? I want to see what happens?
- It's like a weird spining top, it also looks kinda like a spaceship but kind of not.
- I can stick my fingers in it, i can look through it, could be a light shed
- imagine if its masisve, run around, try look out all the holes.

Person 2

- cuold be one of those things you put in a garden to create a home for worms and bugs.
- if i was given this i wanna make it my own.
- a pen holder that's what i would use it for, and a phone holder, ctually i dont wanna give it back to you to be honest.

Person 3

-could be a wheel, if you add a wooden stick
- it could be a toy
- in bangladesh called a rice cake, phitha and you eat it during satly rice cake you eat with meat and its shaped like this.
- could be a kettle

Person 4

- a weirdly shaped cube
- looks like an ufo
- it looks like its moulded, it could be a vase
- could be a hotel room, it could be so mch stuff just depends how you imagine it
- could be a weapon

Person 1 & 3

- Person 1 picked up the object and began to play with it on the floor and then throwing it to me. Person 3 joined in.

Person 8

- what is it?
- what is it meant to be?
- spinner, reminds me of a turbine top toys
- puts it down a carries on doing their original task after 1 minute

Person 11

- what is it?
- do you go inside it? or is it like a technical model, but it looks like a spaceship
- please explain it to me
- im a bit curious about it bc i dont know what ot is, im inttrigued

Person 2 & 3

Person 2 and 3 start to discuss the object while they play with it.

- having somebody elses name on it bothered me
- I needed it to have a purpose, that's why I put my pens in it.

Person 21

- hampster cage,
- it looks like a castle
- could be a mechanism engeneering a space ship
- horses have like stables where you keep stuff for them

Person 19

- it reminds me of the pokemon ball
- it could be a bucket if ithad a botom/base
- looks liek a wheel, and wheels it,
- touches the texture, it's smooth but it also has rings, it reminds me of the tree rings

Person 13

- a lamp shed
- it could be a toy
- put plants in it, hang it
- a slicer for food
- i wanna put my fingers in it, if it has more holes I would put al my fingers in it.
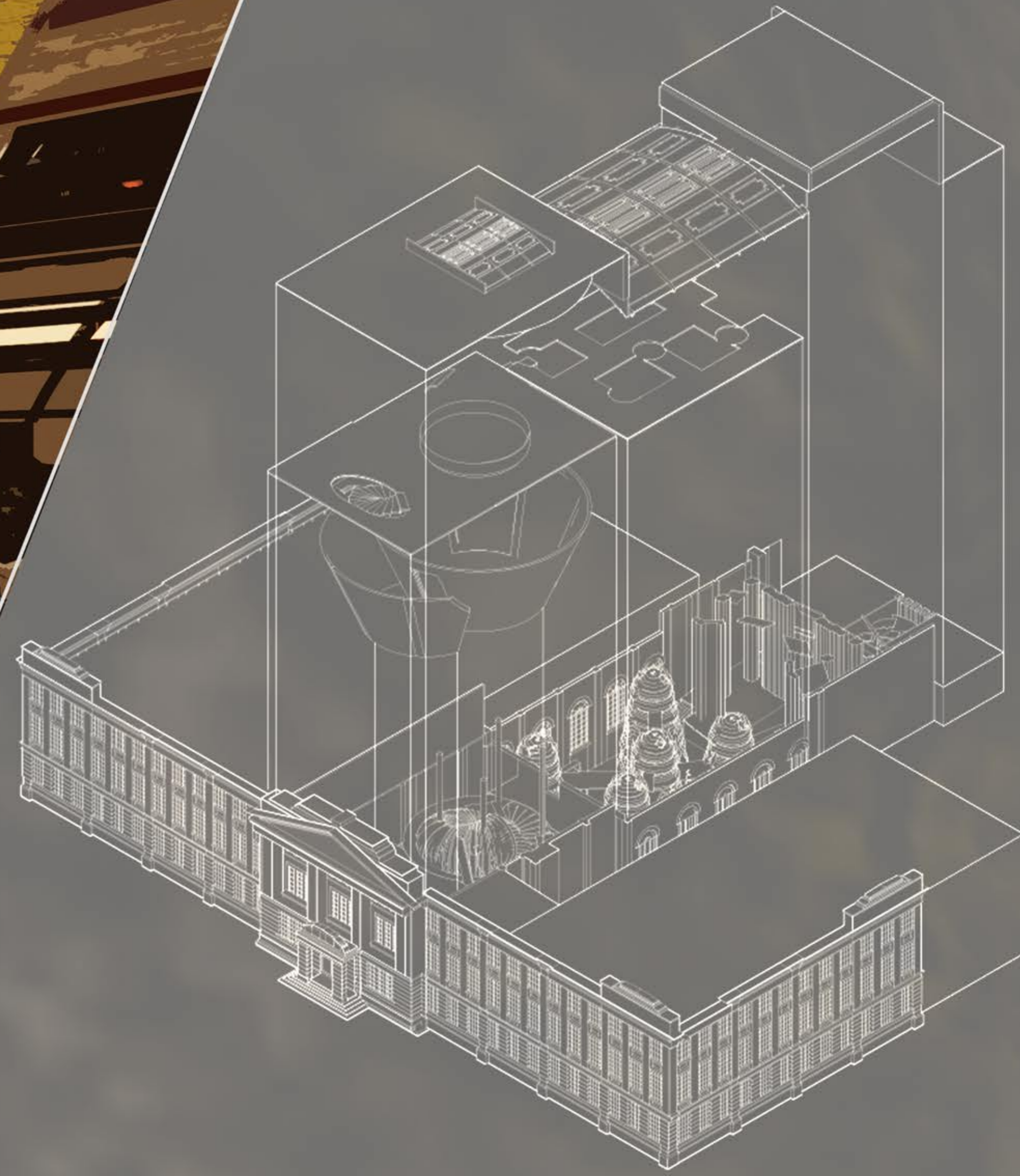- a fiddling mashine
- modersnist hat

Person 24
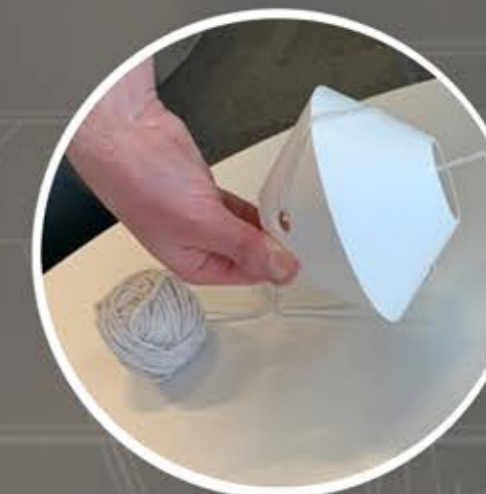
- on it's own it is a bit useless isn't it?
- It looks like a part of something else, is there any more components to it?
- I could combine it with some string and hang it

About the space

- It offers an opportunity to **explore** various **unexpected spaces** and multiple routes. There is no straight, single path for the visitor to follow.

- The **visual language** of the space **changes throughout the day**. Space for open public use all day and evening.

- There is no defined use for the space. **Objects** placed throughout the space **trigger unexpected use of the space.**

Where this leads...

- Interior public spaces could in the future provide an **escape from the internet** and constantly expanding digital realm of information.

- Eventually the **preconceptions associated with public spaces could decline** as our use could become more flexible, individual and undefined.

- It could redefine what we do in public spaces and provide a **neutral ground between work and home environments**, creating a **new typology of spaces**.

- This could mean that in the same way that everyone learns in different ways, the **uses and interactions within absurd spaces** could develop and expand.

What do you see when you think of a theatre?

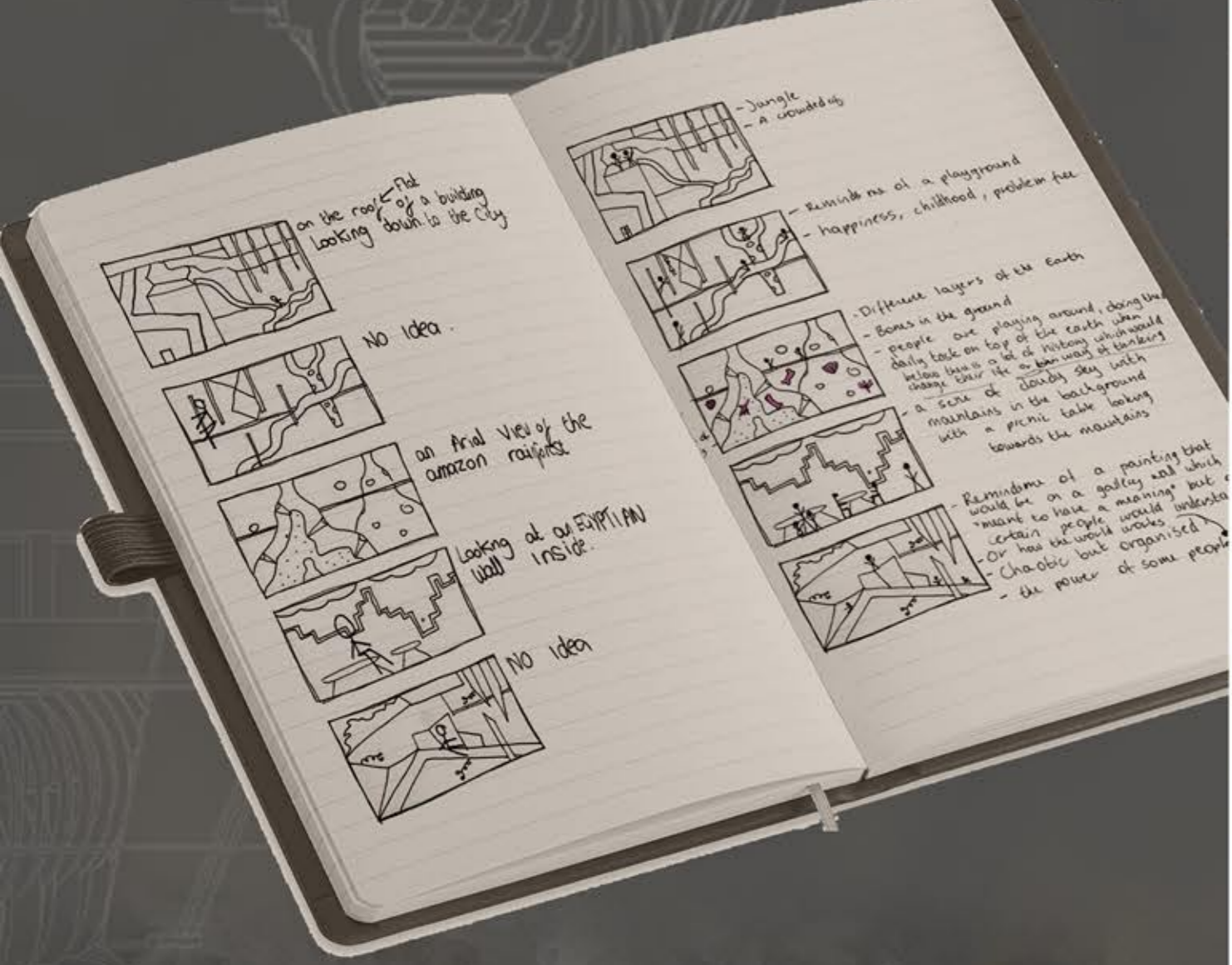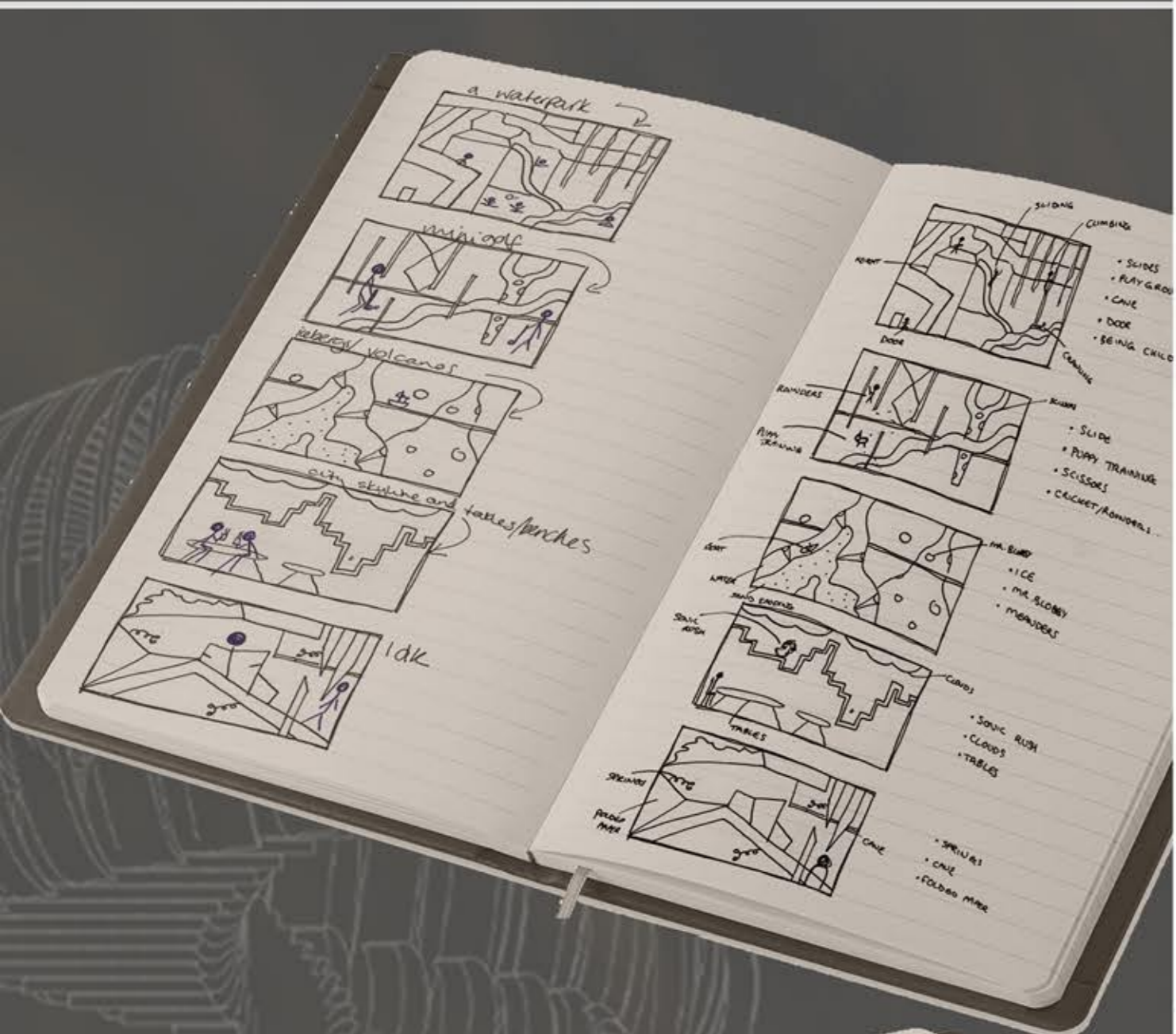"The reality has come to seem more and more what we are shown by the camera"
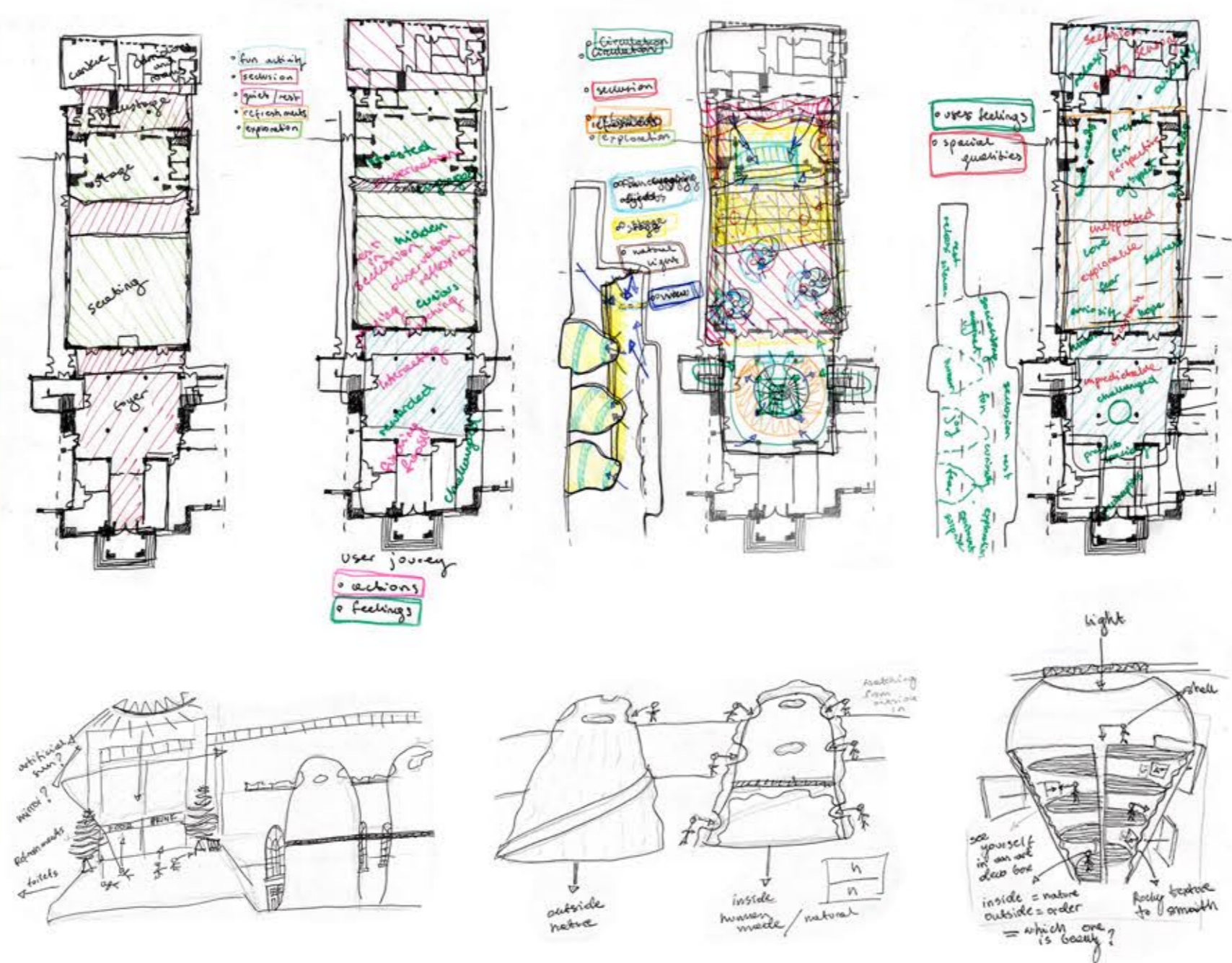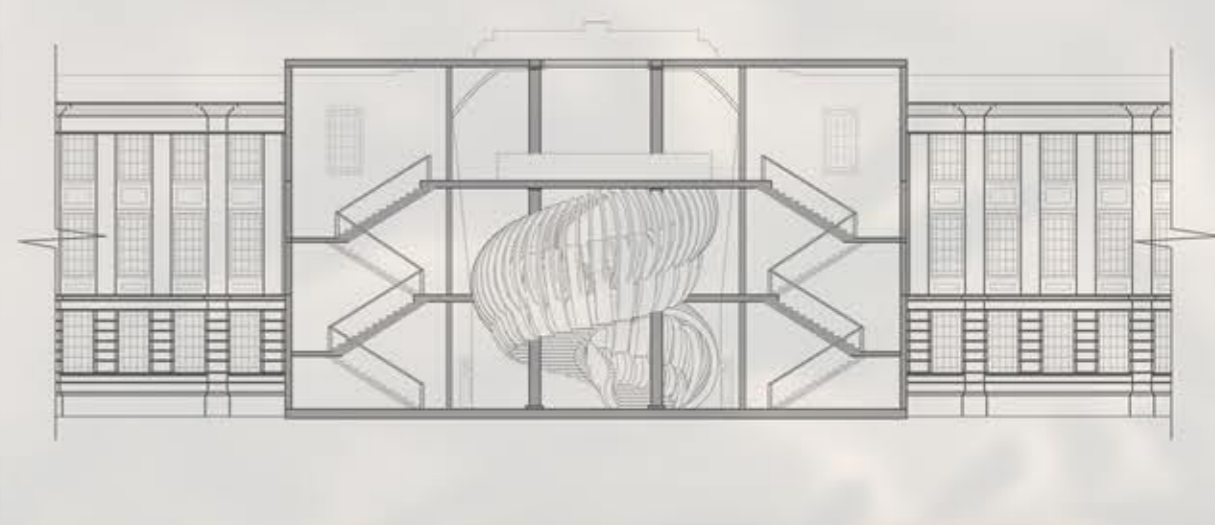
Testing how we find absurd environments

The task:

1. What does this image remind you of? What do you see?

2. Draw people in those spaces. What could they be doing?

Observations

1. People use memory to recognise familiarities.

2. Majority of projections related to natural and outdoor environments, which is associated with physical sports and fun activities.

3. Some answers showed that those who In city centre tend to wish for outdoor environments away from busy streets.

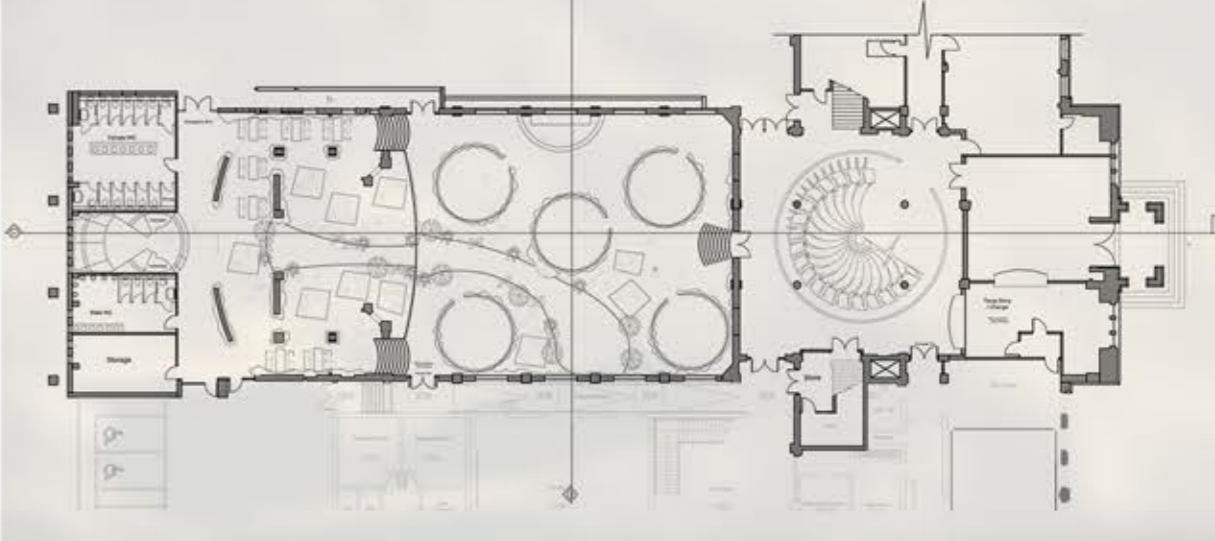4. If the image was too abstract, it was met with confusion.
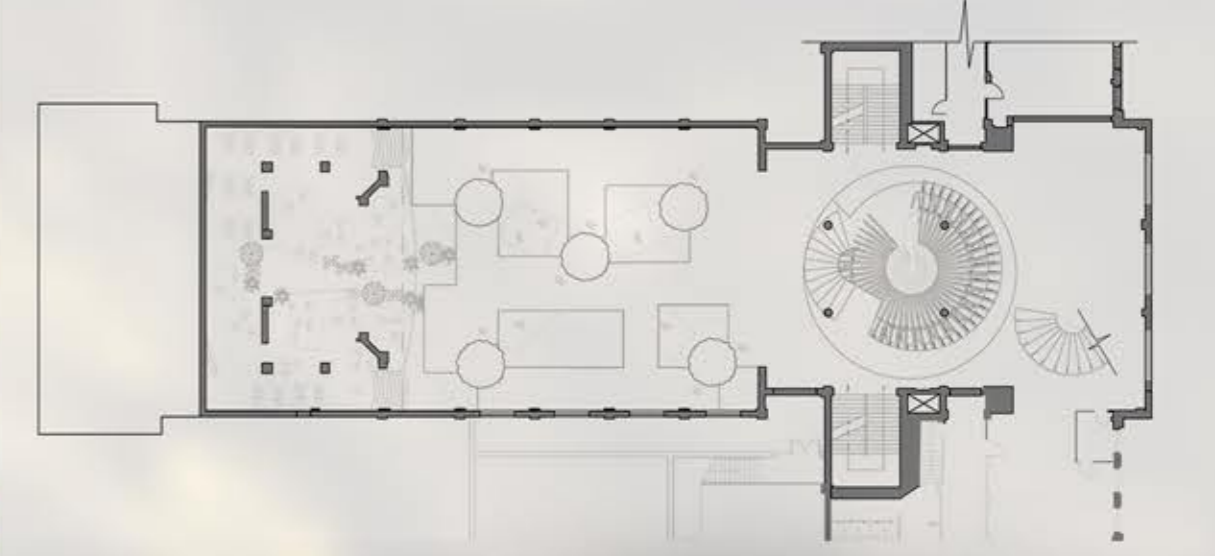

Diagramming data