



**unveiling the potential of architectural  
ugliness to cultivate social diversity**

Chalmers School of Architecture  
Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering  
Architecture and Planning Beyond Sustainability  
Design Activism Beyond Borders  
Master Thesis 2024  
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**Per Formam**  
- Unveiling the Potential of  
Architectural Ugliness to cultivate  
Social Diversity

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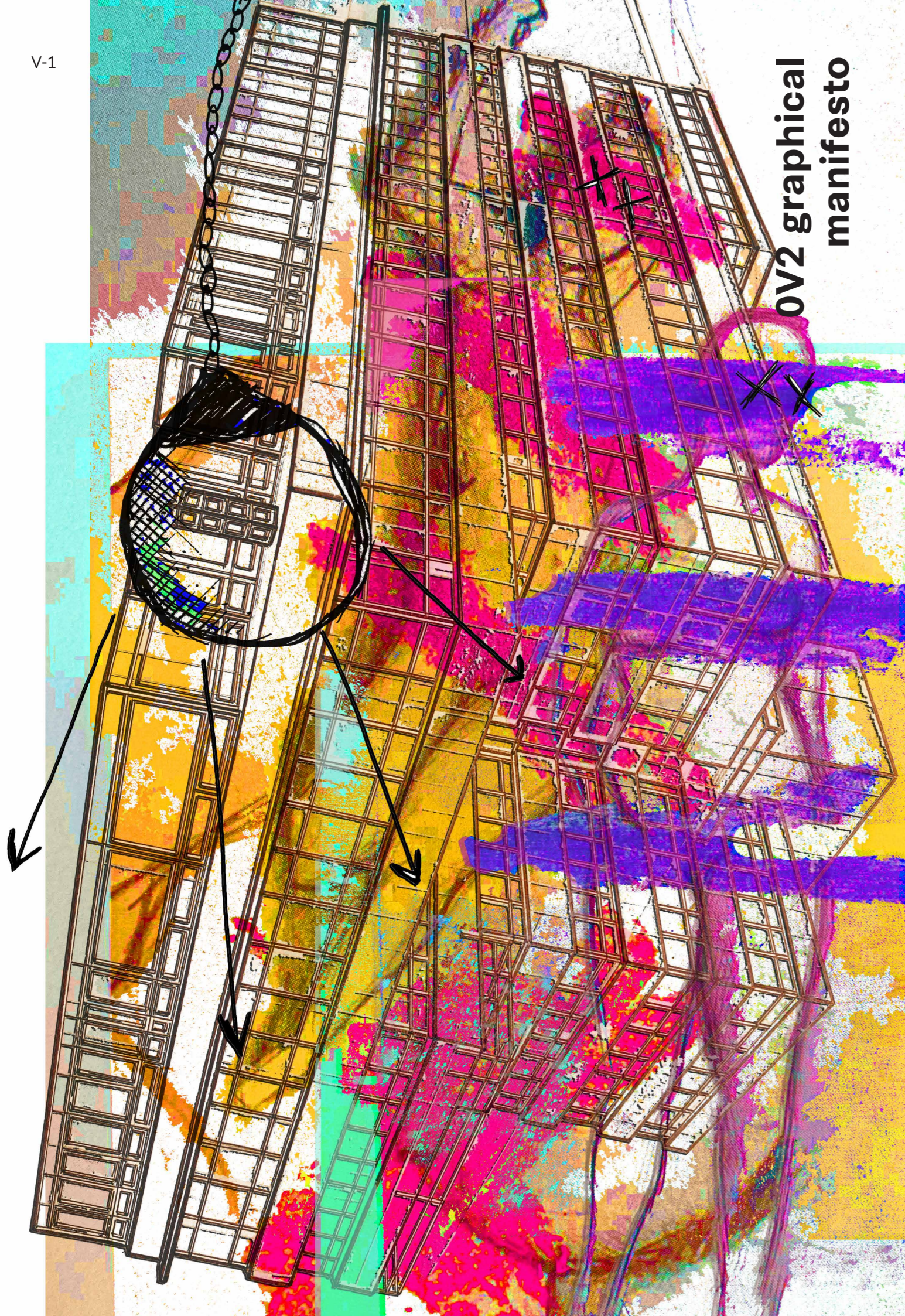
Society, Justice, Space  
Design Activism Beyond Borders  
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## 0V2 graphical manifesto

## 0V1 abstract

In recent decades, the standardization and homogenization of metropolitan areas have become topics of discourse due to their significant impacts on city identity and contributions to gentrification.

Situated in Berlin, Germany, a city once-prized for its heterogeneity and vibrancy, the city's identity is now imperiled by the emergence of parallel societies, spatially and ideologically isolated from one another. Concurrently, the demolition of buildings that have played pivotal roles in shaping the city's identity adds another layer of complexity to this urban narrative.

Building upon the notion that the built environment serves as a reflection of society, and vice versa, this thesis constitutes a process-oriented, metaphysical exploration of neglected non-normative urban components, which are considered as „ugly“.

This exploration unfolds as a critical examination of contemporary aesthetic norms and their impact on the urban fabric. Furthermore, the affects of these norms on society are analysed through investigations into the psychogeography of the context. In doing so, it endeavors to deconstruct the prevailing norms and beliefs that contribute to the marginalization of societal minorities.

The thesis goes beyond mere academic inquiry. By examining the intersection of architectural aesthetics and society, the research endeavors to be a catalyst for change and a call to action.

Spatial experimentations, leveraging the inherent spatial potentials of what may be deemed „anti-normative“ or ugly aesthetics, result in a performance design intervention, which seeks to challenge and transform entrenched, implicit belief patterns.

By embracing and celebrating architectural diversity in form of ugliness, the intention is to introduce a paradigm shift that not only redefines aesthetic appreciation but also cultivates a more inclusive and heterogeneous societal framework, which embraces the unique narratives of all its inhabitants.

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Fig. 1. author

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ugliness

Timothy Hyde (2023) defined ugliness in architecture not as the absence of beauty. In fact both of them possess their own respective potentials. Furthermore ugliness is described not as an inherent quality of an object, but rather an assessment which arises from the relation between an object (the architecture or an architectural element) and a subject (the observer or critic). Thus ugliness is context-dependent and a relational evaluation. (p.26)

homogeneity

This thesis considers homogeneity as equivalent to monotony, implying a uniform or consistent quality that lacks diversity, not only in aesthetics and style but also in the broader context of society. It is the opposite of heterogeneity.

heterogeneity

In this thesis, heterogeneity is defined as a synonym for diversity and variation, encompassing both design and society.

Furthermore, the term is positioned as the opposite of homogeneity.

psychogeography

The *Situationist International* (1953) introduced the practice of psychogeography, which describes the study of the particular impacts of the geographical environment, whether intentionally arranged or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals (Knabb, 2006). (p.18)

derive

Guy Debord, member of *Situationist International*, introduced the practice *derivé*, which describes a mode of experimental behaviour. During this practice, individuals forsake their usual motivations for movement and action, their own relations, leisure and work for a designated period. Instead, they allow themsel-

ves to be guided by the attractions of the terrain, space and the encounters they chance upon (Knabb, 2006). (p.19)

performatism

Performatism in architecture is a term introduced by Raoul Eshelman (2020), as a definition of the architectural epoch after Postmodernism, which utilizes formal means of artistically mediated belief to create positive experiences. (p.40)

performance

A performance according to Alex Schweder (2016) is an ongoing process of interaction and engagement. The dynamic relationship between performers and the surrounding environment, highlights how these elements continuously influence and shape each other. Performances transcend traditional boundaries, encompassing not only theatrical productions but also everyday actions and interactions that unfold within architectural spaces. (p.40)

## 00Z note

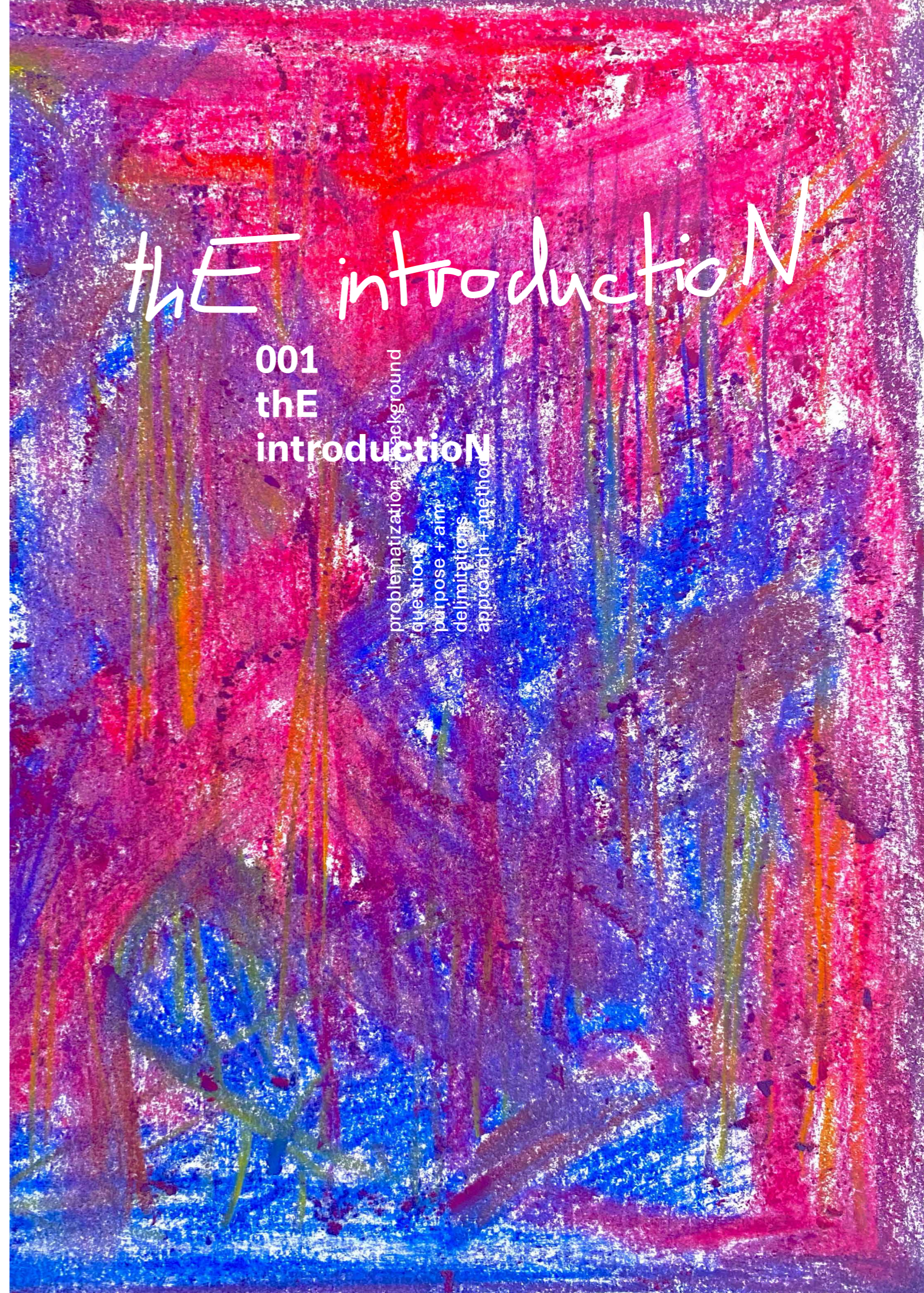
Criticising and reevaluating current values and decisions that shape the everyday life, this thesis also became a time of introspection regarding my own thoughts and actions. The process of drawing helped me processing and expressing my impressions and feelings after site visits. These images are featured on each chapter's front page in this booklet.

Each chapter follows a structured format, comprising a prologue that outlines the content and direction of the upcoming pages, and an epilogue that encapsulates key findings, serving as a bridge to the next theme.

In addition to the academic body of text, the inclusion of personal and informal reflections, presented in pink text, adds a more subjective layer to the narrative.

The utilization of small characters for headings and varying widths of text columns serves a deliberate purpose: to provoke irritation and disrupt the norm, not just in terms of the thesis's content but also through overall appearance and stylistic choices. This holistic approach to design aims to challenge conventional expectations and encourage a deeper engagement with the material by confronting readers with unexpected visual elements.

It is crucial to note that this thesis does not claim to offer the ultimate solution to current design practices. Instead, it represents an attempt to reevaluate behaviors, not only within the architectural profession but also in the day-to-day life of each of us.



*"We cannot solve our  
problems with the same  
thinking we used when  
we created them."*

*Albert Einstein*

## Intro

### *Establishing Thesis Foundations:*

Laying the groundwork for the thesis, setting its core components in place.

This phase focuses on establishing the fundamental elements that will guide the thesis.

### *Problematizing Broader Sustainability Issues:*

Identifying and addressing broader issues within social and ecological sustainability.

Delving into the complexities of sustainability to inform the thesis's direction and objectives.

### *Developing Research Questions and Objectives:*

Crafting research questions and defining overarching aims to guide the thesis's inquiry.

Formulating clear objectives to direct the focus and scope of the research.

### *Structuring Approach and Process:*

Outlining the approach and structuring the process to navigate the complexities of the project.

Integrating various threads of the project into a cohesive framework for analysis and exploration.



# 00111

## problematization + background

a general case

In recent decades, cities globally have undergone a noticeable shift towards increasingly homogeneous urban structures. Building in standardized, prefabricated forms stems from the imperative of urban expansion (Lemoine-Rodríguez, Inostroza & Zepp, 2020). This trend towards a generic cities is facilitated by convergence, posing a substantial threat to the distinct identity and diluting the unique characteristics that define a city and shape their social dynamics, whilst threatening the societal fabric of these cities itself (Koolhaas in Rosario, n.d.).



Fig. 2. skyline Frankfurt (bit.ly/4b2kfpd)



Fig. 3. skyline London (bit.ly/4csr1m)



Fig. 4. skyline New York (bit.ly/44t1QiB)

a case for berlin

This project is situated in Berlin, Germany, a city once-prized for its heterogeneity and vibrancy. The development in recent years is showing a simultaneous trend towards a more homogeneous cityscape, which is viewed as a design problem, and a more homogeneous society, which is viewed as a social problem (Koch, 2012). The following root cause analysis points to several interconnected factors contributing to these trends.

*Erasure of Identity-Forming Buildings:* The development of a homogeneous cityscape is attributed to the erasure of identity-forming buildings and the lack of alternative or unconventional spaces. The trend towards standardized, prefabricated forms in construction contributes to the replacement of older buildings with generic ones, leading to a homogeneous buildingscape, which tends to dominate the urban tissue. However the city is considered as one of the last major cities where generic (standardized) and non-generic (unstandardized) urban fabric still co-exist as fragments (Koolhaas in Rosario, n.d.).

*Environmental Impact and Gentrification:* The replacement of old buildings, that are unwanted, contributes to environmental issues such as waste production, unnecessary material use and

CO2 emissions. Additionally, increased rents after constructing new structures contribute to gentrification, leading to the displacement of marginalized groups.

*Aesthetic and Social Norms:* Although this trend is additionally influenced by economic motivations and a capitalistic mindset driving more profit, aesthetic judgment of old buildings as „unwanted“ or „ugly“ are very prominent in media. This judgment is influenced by preconstructed opinions of aesthetic and social values and norms. This reflects a normative perspective shaped by collective preconstructed social and aesthetic norms (Hyde, 2023).

*Gentrification and Social Isolation:* Gentrification not only impacts the physical landscape but also leads to the displacement of marginalized groups, creating parallel societies that are distinct, separated, and isolated from each other in both mind and location. Since that trend, which could be seen as a modern form of Social Darwinism, has been observed, actual efforts to change these circumstances are lacking (Koch, 2012).

The thesis aims to investigate one of the fundamental causes of both the design and social problem by examining preconstructed opinions of aesthetic norms.



Fig. 5. Berlin RAW (bit.ly/3Wfcd7Y)



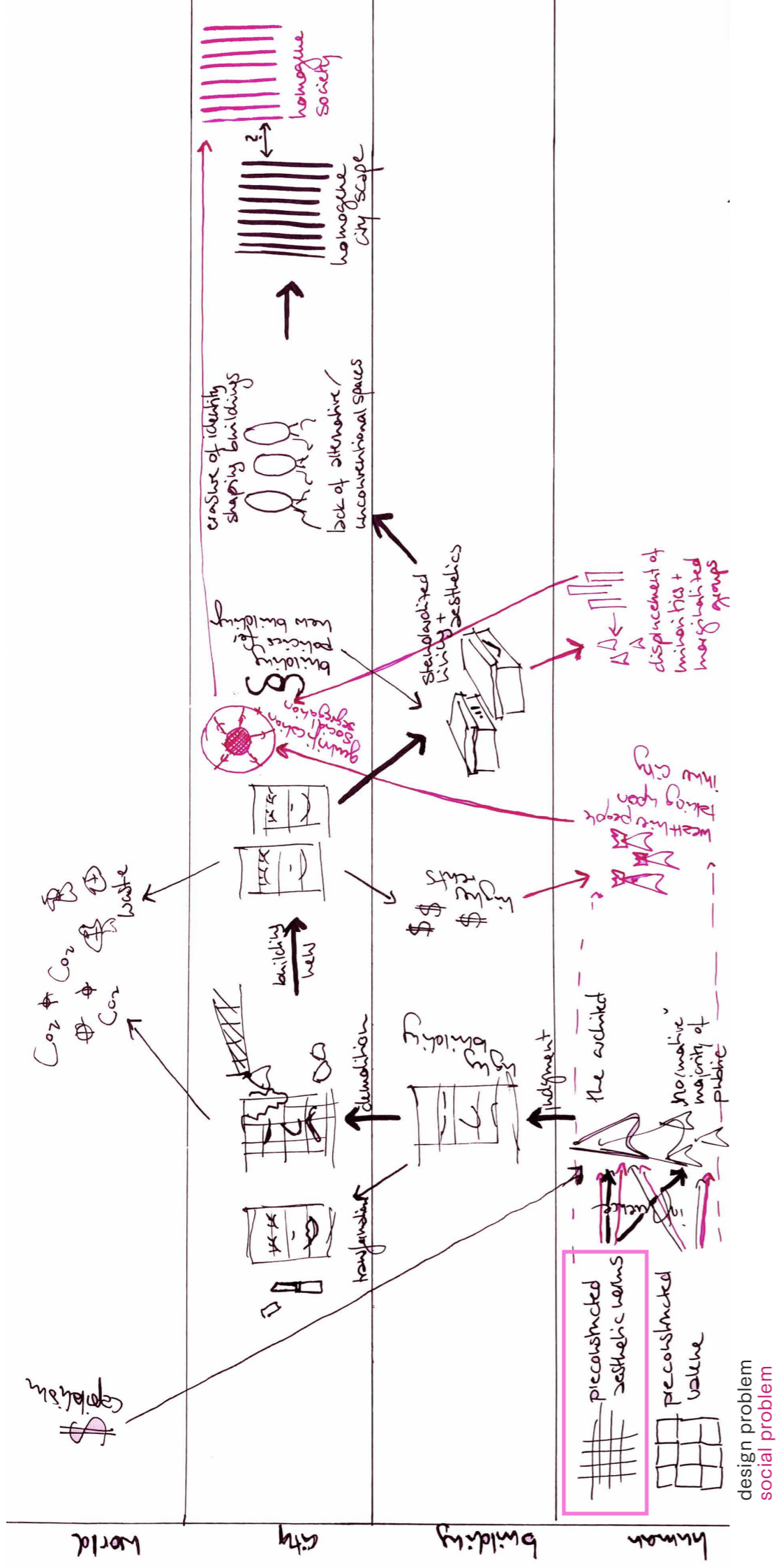
Fig. 6. Berlin Potsdamer Platz (bit.ly/3wjTb5D)

way forward

The thesis builds upon the profound concept that the built environment is a mirror of society and vice versa and that both entities are constantly transforming and shaping each other in a symbiotic relationship. Architecture serves as a reflection of societal values, virtues, vices, and beliefs (Fidanci, 2023).

Taking a point of departure in challenging that relation, one might inquire about the role assumed by architecture deemed ugly or divergent from accepted norms. By provoking this correlation, one could contemplate architecture, more specifically non-conventional architecture within the built environment as equivalent to societal minority groups deviating from the norm. Thus, if ugly architecture faces potential demolition owing to strong criticism from the normative sector of the public, what would be the societal parallel to this demolition?





design problem  
social problem

Fig. 7. root cause analysis

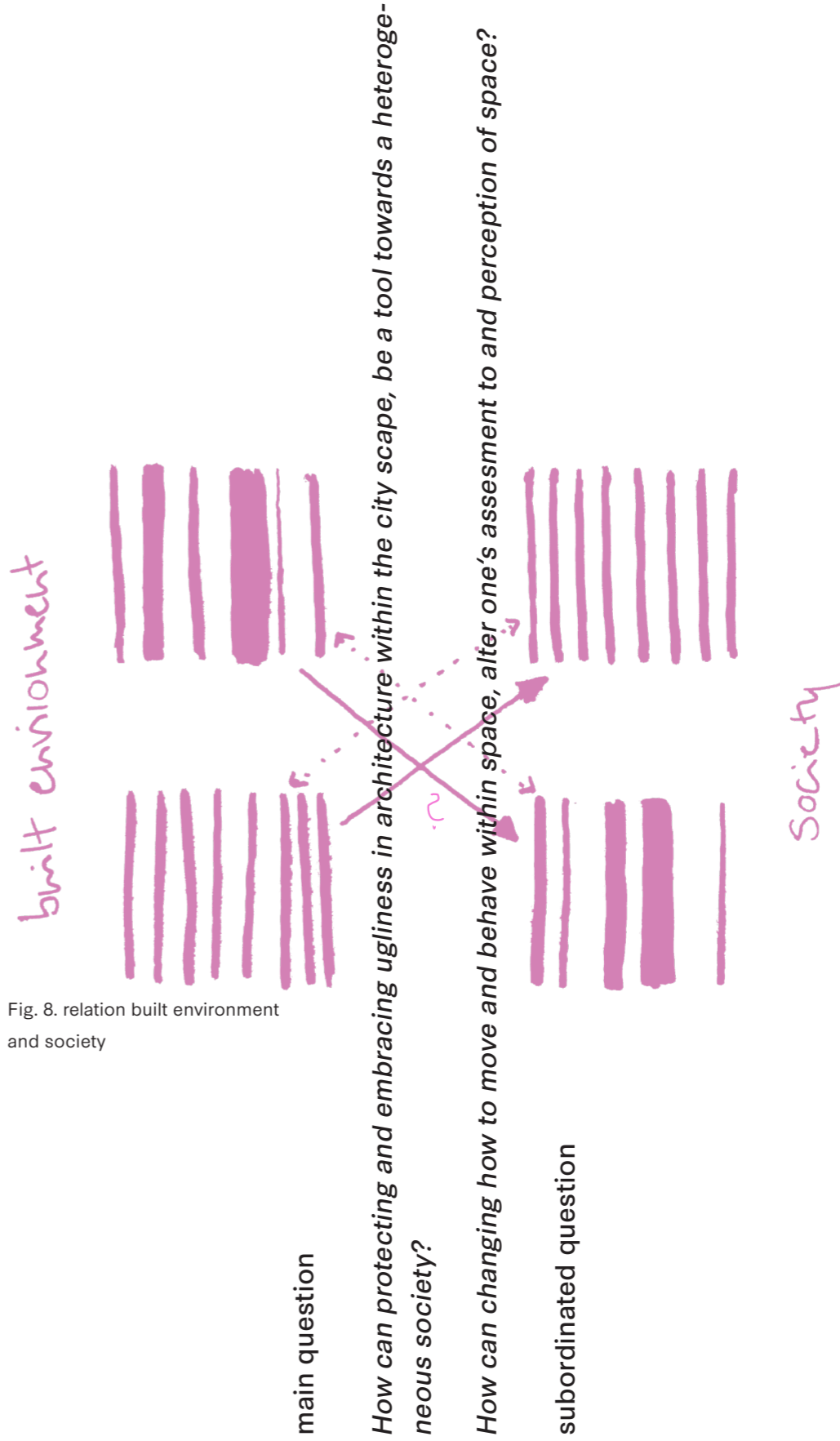


Fig. 8. relation built environment and society

# 001I3

## purpose + aim

The theme of this thesis endeavors to cultivate a critical perspective on prevailing norms and standards governing the relation between existing building stock and social groups that deviate from conventional norms.

*The starting point for this project stemmed from my personal interest in questioning intrinsic patterns of behavior and action, particularly those we commonly accept as the norm. For the architectural profession, this specifically means the urge to create structures that are deemed beautiful. So, I sought to create a project that explores the opposite of the conventional—embracing the concept of the ugly. By challenging established aesthetic (and social) norms, I aimed to question the status quo and demonstrate alternative ways of thinking and approaching design. This project delves into the potentials of what is traditionally considered ugly, investigating how these non-normative elements can contribute to a more inclusive and diverse urban and social environment. Through this exploration, I hope to highlight the value of architectural diversity and provoke a reevaluation of what constitutes beauty and utility in our built environments.*

Central to this is the pursuit of tools that not only protect but also foster heterogeneity and diversity in both urban fabric and society. By doing so, the thesis aspires to contribute to the cultivation of a more inclusive and accepting togetherness.

In addition, the thesis integrates sustainability discourse by developing tools aimed at fostering heterogeneity and diversity in both urban fabric and society. This initiative, ultimately contributing to resilience in both social and spatial dimensions, concurrently addresses the critical issues of unnecessary waste production, material use and CO2 emissions associated with the demolition of intact building stock. Ultimately, the thesis aspires to make a substantial stride towards a more sustainable and humanistic society.

# 001I4

## delimitations

is about	is not about
questioning the current status quo	proposing a solution
proactiveness	problem-solving
awareness	quantitative research
qualitative research	data-based/matrix
physical + phenomenological	
site-specific	
urban (Berlin)	
human-scale design	large scale design
performative	static
diversity	
social sustainability + resilience	policies
	ecology
	economy
stigmatization	issues of criminality
aesthetics + aesthetic judgement	power relations in architecture

# 00115

## approach + method

### structure

The thesis inherently comprises three-practical components in addition to the theoretical aspects.

*The voyage*, commences with an investigation of a specific context and site. The aim is to explore the potential suppression of architectural aesthetics deemed ‚ugly.‘ This exploration will extend to examining the conceivable impacts of such perceived ugliness, tracing their origins, and delving into the intricate relationship between social and aesthetic norms. This analysis will serve as the foundational framework for the subsequent design process.

*The laboratory*, as the design phase, is envisioned to distill these findings into a format accessible and relatable to a broader audience—the very public responsible for the judgments that initiated this exploration. The primary objective is to position design as a proactive instrument, fostering awareness regarding prevailing misconceptions and problematic issues surrounding the status quo. Through this, the design process seeks to initiate conversations and debates about preconceived values and their profound effects on life.

### literature studies

Beyond the practical elements, literature studies played a crucial role in establishing the theoretical foundation for subsequent applied work. Notably, specific philosophical texts addressing the origins of ugliness (Hyde, 2023), aesthetic judgment (Kant, 1790), and performatism (Eselman, 2008 + Schweder, 2016) served as essential resources for reference and reliance.

### psychogeographical mapping

The *Situationist International* (1953) introduced the practice of psycho-geography, which describes the study of the particular impacts of the geographical environment, whether intentionally arranged or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals. Wandering through urban space is the key essence of this study (Knabb, 2006).

In addition to formal analysis, this mode of inquiry offers a unique perspective into how an urban setting can shape the psychological experiences and perceptions of individuals, introducing an additional layer of understanding, that reveals the hidden, subjective dimensions of space. The results of a psychogeographical mapping heavily rely on the chosen methods of exploration, providing flexibility for practitioners to select their approaches freely.

This thesis employed three primary methods to create a psychogeographical map of the selected context: *Dérivé*, Interviews and Mental Mapping.

### dérivé

To avoid a solely formal analysis of the spatial context, a mode of experimental behaviour or a *dérivé*, a term introduced by Guy Debord, member of *Situationist International*, was practiced. During a *dérivé*, individuals forsake their usual motivations for movement and action and their own relations for a designated period. Instead, they allow themselves to be guided by the attractions of the terrain, space and the encounters they chance upon (Knabb, 2006).

Inspired by this approach, various daily site visits were conducted. These explorations involved individual walking as well as observing the walking patterns and behaviors of others within the same context. Throughout this process, sketching, note-taking, and photography served as mediums, functioning not only as a means of comprehension but also as the groundwork for the subsequent creation of a mental map.

### interviews

During the *dérivé*, the significance extended beyond personal observations to encompass spontaneous interactions and communication with others, which offered valuable insights into the impacts of the built environment. In the-

se encounters, various individuals—whether actively engaged in the context or passers-by—were approached to comprehend their unique perspectives on the subject.

### mental mapping

A mental map was generated for the analyzed context to complement the formal physical map of the geographical environment. This visualization encapsulates the insights gained from the *dérivé* and interviews, and when combined with the geographical map, forms the comprehensive psychogeographical map. (p.30)

### experimentation

The design aspect of the thesis entailed a process-oriented approach to spatial experimentation. Reflecting on the project’s progress made thus far, personal and professional intuition, the project’s objectives, and theoretical insights guided the decision to implement the testing across different stages of design experimentation. This encompassed a range of internal processes, such as conceptualizing, sketching, and drawing, alongside external processes, including ongoing collaboration with a diverse focus group through workshops. This iterative approach was designed to support the experimental laboratory effectively, ensuring continuous refinement and progress.

	THE INTRODUCTION	THE INVESTIGATION I	THE VOYAGE	THE INVESTIGATION II	THE LABORATORY
input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social Problem (General Problem)</li> <li>- Design Problem (General Problem)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ugliness in Architecture (Theory)</li> <li>- Aesthetic Judgement (Theory)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Design Problem (Specific Problem)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Performatism + Performance Design (Theory)</li> </ul>	
output	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Correlation in root cause of problems (preconstructed aesthetic values)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- modes of architectural ugliness</li> <li>- Social dimensions of ugliness + judgement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- relational characteristics of ugliness + their affects (on society)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Performance Design to change values / belief patterns through shared collective experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Design Proposal for Performance (shared collective experience) to change behaviours (through change of values + belief patterns)</li> <li>→ non-normalness potential</li> </ul>
action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- application of concept 'architecture as mirror of society'</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Selection of specific design problem (+ social problem)</li> <li>→ site</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Psychogeographical Mapping (spatial + phenomenological analysis of site)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Generalization of findings (output) from 'Voyage'</li> <li>→ Design Principles</li> <li>- experimentation with + application of Design Principles for design of Performance</li> </ul>

Fig. 9. process

## outro

### *Exploring Preconstructed Aesthetic Norms:*

An experimental, process-oriented project delves into preconstructed opinions of aesthetic norms, identifying them as a root cause of design and social issues.

Recognizing architecture as a reflection of societal values, virtues, and beliefs, the project seeks to understand the correlation between implicit societal norms and architectural aesthetics.

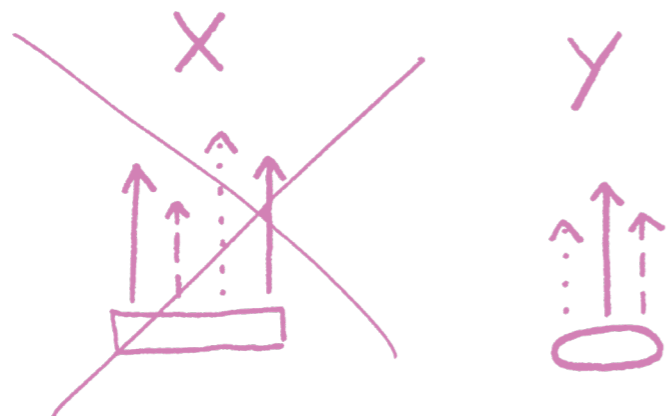
### *Parallel Investigation:*

The project examines parallels between anti-normative architecture and societal minority groups that deviate from accepted norms.

By challenging prevailing norms and advocating for inclusivity, the project aims to foster diversity and acceptance within both architectural design and society.

### *Unraveling the Root Cause:*

To pave the way for a transformative shift in outcomes, it is imperative to delve deep into the underlying root cause of prevailing aesthetic norms. This necessitates a comprehensive examination of the concept of ugliness, dissecting its intricacies to gain a thorough understanding of its scope and influence. This critical analysis will be undertaken in the upcoming phase, known as the investigation.



# the investigation I

002

the

investigation I

about ugliness  
about aesthetic judgement  
social dimension

„Beauty is, in some way, boring. Even if its concept changes through the ages... a beautiful object must always follow certain rules. A beautiful nose shouldn't be longer than that or shorter than that, on the contrary, an ugly nose can be as long as the one of Pinocchio, or as big as the trunk of an elephant, or like the beak of an eagle, and so ugliness is unpredictable, and offers an infinite range of possibility. Beauty is finite, ugliness is infinite (...).”

**Umberto Eco**

## Intro!

### *Text Selection and Integration:*

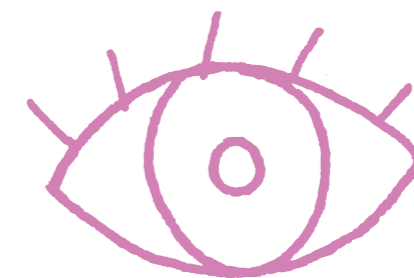
Drawing upon philosophical works by Timothy Hyde, Immanuel Kant, and David Hume to construct a theoretical framework.

### *Understanding Architectural Ugliness:*

Utilizing these texts to gain insights into the essence of architectural ugliness, unraveling its implicit values and effects.

### *Identification of Project Site:*

Extracting key aspects of ugliness from philosophical discourse to pinpoint a suitable site for the operational phase of the thesis.



## 002I1 about ugliness

the nature of ugliness

Derived from the evolution of architectural ugliness and judgement since the 18th century, this thesis is grounded in the notion that ugliness in architecture is not the absence of beauty, instead both possess their own respective potentials within social contexts. Furthermore ugliness is not an inherent quality of an object, rather it derives from the relation between an object (such as a building or spatial context) and a subject (an individual or a collective). Consequently ugliness assumes a relational character, devoid of absoluteness and existing as a relational circumstance (Hyde, 2023).

Furthermore, the historical progression reveals that the assessment of ugliness operates in a precipitating role, initiating debates and consequently engaging with social, political, environmental, and/or juridical dimensions. It functions not as a conclusive judgment but as a precipitating force. The inseparable nature of aesthetics from social intentions reinforces the assertion that changes in aest-

hetics evolve parallel to transformations within society. In this context, ugliness is positioned as an instrument of and for social transformation, possessing the capacity to enter into and influence the routines of society (Hyde, 2023).

Ugliness operates through three distinct modes (Hyde, 2023 & Eco in Acker + Mical, 2023):

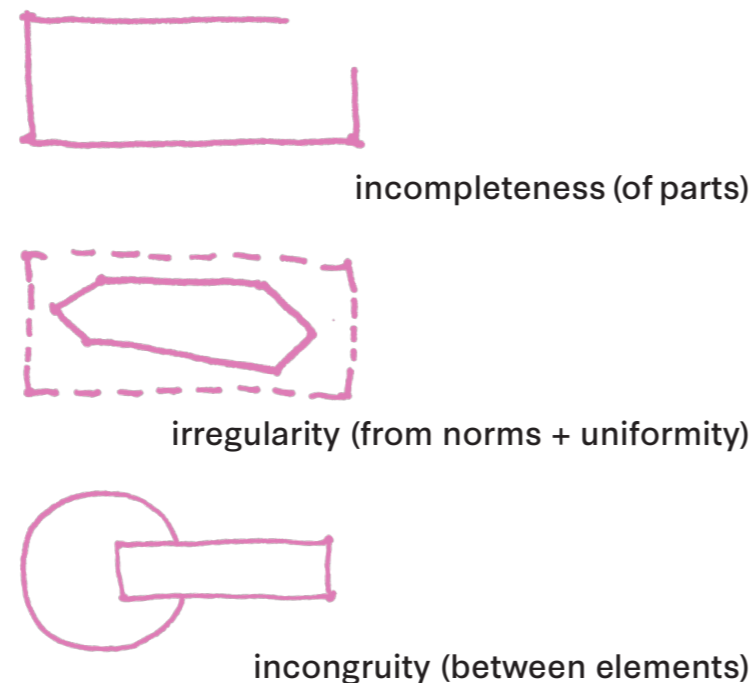


Fig. 10. operational modes of ugliness in architecture

ugliness + irritation

Moreover, this thesis expands upon the differentiation between affects and sentiments. While the term „disgust“ is frequently employed in discussions surrounding ugly architecture, it inherently qualifies as a sentiment, given its potential to induce physical reactions such as vomiting or an immediate desire to distance oneself from the object evoking the feeling. In contrast, ugliness, in this context, operates in a more nuanced manner, giving rise to an affect of irritation (Hyde, 2023.)

## 002I2 about aesthetic judgement

the nature of aesthetic judgement

Philosopher Immanuel Kant (1790, in Zangwill, 2023) posits that aesthetic judgment, specifically the judgment of ugliness in this context, falls under the category of a judgment of taste. Such a judgement, according to Kant, necessitates two crucial conditions: subjectivity and normativity.

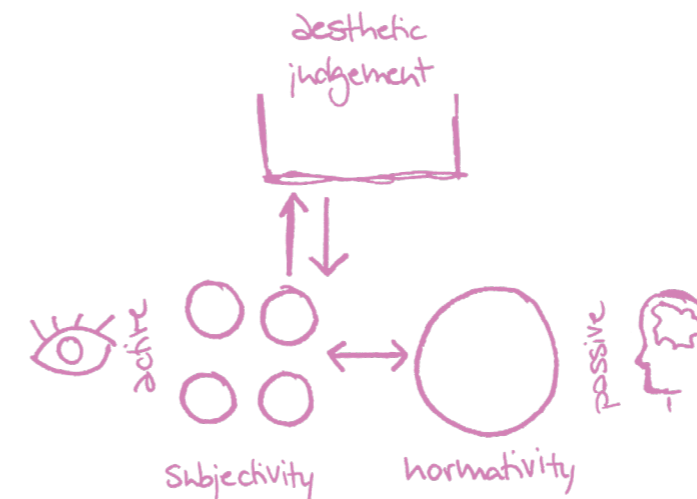


Fig. 11. nature of aesthetic judgement

subjectivity

A judgement of taste is fundamentally subjective, originating from an individual's internal sense of pleasure or displeasure. It is a subjective response that entails a feeling of pleasure, and this pleasure is characterized as „disinterested.“ In this context, „disinterested“ implies that the feeling of pleasure is not motivated by desire of the subject, nor does it generate desire by itself (Kant, 1790 in Zangwill, 2023). This emphasizes that, although a judgment of taste is fundamentally subjective, the feeling produced before the judgement process itself involves no subjec-

tivity, thus pointing towards the second condition of aesthetic judgment.

normativity

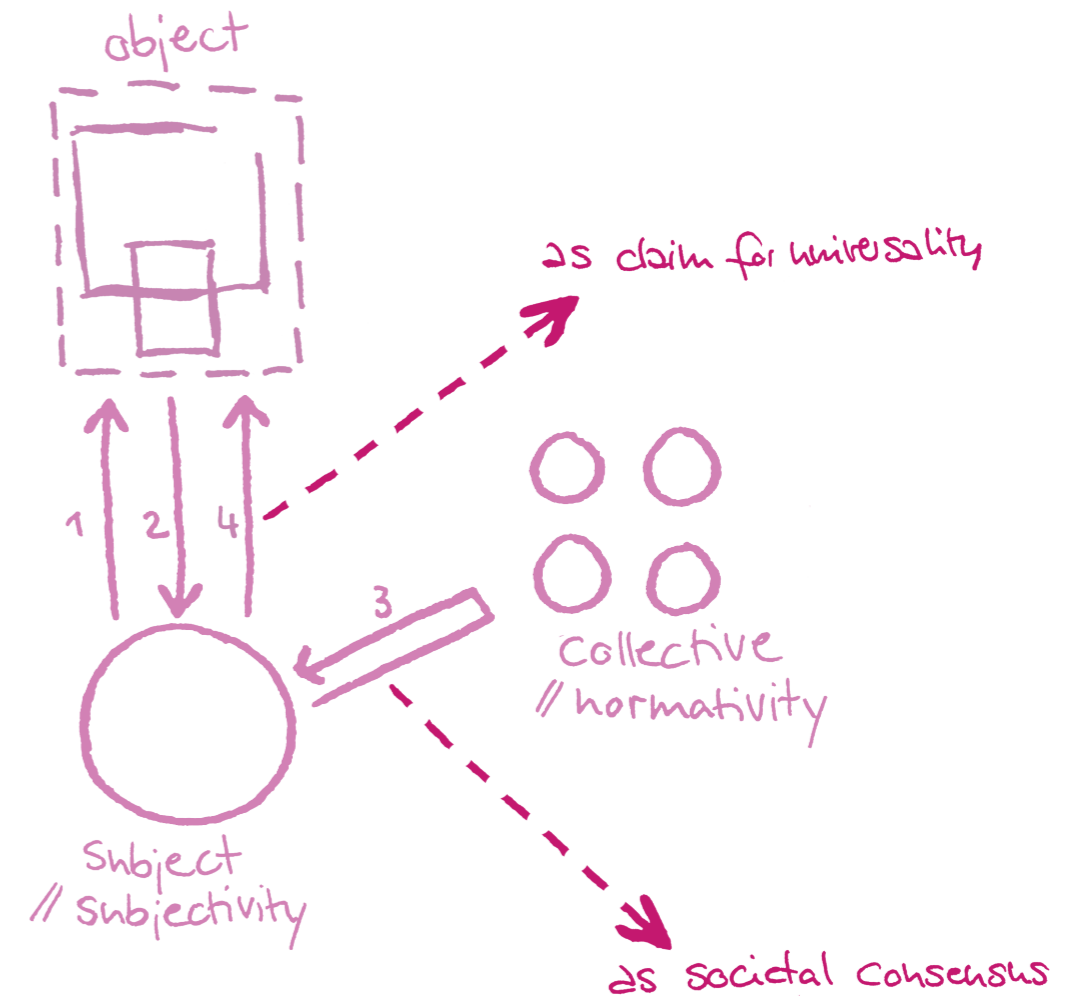
The second condition for a judgement of taste is normativity, which, at first glance, appears to be in contrast with the first condition of subjectivity. Kant's concept of normativity (1790, in Zangwill, 2023) is rooted in the general cognitive faculties shared by humans, which one subject assumes another subject to share. In this sense, normativity implies that a judgment of taste asserts a claim towards universal validity. This implies that a subject does not solely render judgment for itself but, treating the judgment as if it were an inherent quality of the object itself. Moreover, a judgment of taste necessitates the agreement of others, underscoring a specific normativity within the evaluative process. A judgment of taste also encompasses its claim to validity for everyone, as one subject considers the perspective of another, aiming to avoid any potential incorrect judgments by the other subject. This pursuit of correctness, in turn, underscores the normative nature of the judgment (Zangwill, 2023).

## 00213 social dimensions

According to Kant (1790, in Zangwill, 2023), the feelings evoked by an ugly object, in this context, possess a universal and normative nature. Given that a judgment of taste asserts a claim for universality, this aligns with Hyde's (2023) assertion that ugliness does not elicit individual feelings within an individual subject but rather induces affects that are detached from individual emotions. This depersonalization of aesthetic judgment can, in turn, be comprehended as a collective judgment, opening the discourse to encompass social dimensions.

David Hume (in Hyde, 2023) further emphasizes that this collective judgment can be considered as a societal consensus or a social manifestation of taste. This perspective arises from the understanding that ugliness is not an inherent quality of an object but an idea generated in a subject by the object, as a responsive relational affect. Thus these affects carry a social dimension even operate as social instruments, encapsulated by the concept of a standard of taste or the judgment of taste.

Consequently, ugliness, while initially emerging as an aesthetic judgment, holds social and collective dimensions. Hence, it can serve as a catalyst in shaping the constitution of society (Hyde, 2023).



- 1- impression of object
- 2- affect of irritation
- 3- reassurance through assumption of shared cognitive faculties
- 4- aesthetic judgement

Fig. 12. social dimensions of ugliness + aesthetic judgement



## outro

### *Ugliness and Social Qualities*

The theoretical research underscores that ugliness transcends mere aesthetic quality; rather, it reveals a profound social framework underlying the principles of ugliness and aesthetic judgment. This expands the scope of the research question to explore social dynamics beyond the borders of aesthetic norms.

### *Operational Modes of Ugliness Testing (Voyage Phase):*

Hypotheses regarding operational modes of ugliness will be tested on a specific building during the Voyage phase.

### *Ugliness as Catalyst for Social Transformation Testing (Laboratory Phase):*

Hypotheses concerning ugliness as a catalyst for social transformation will be tested in the Laboratory phase.

### *Diverse Representation in Laboratory and Design Project:*

The Laboratory and design project aim to address ugliness as a judgment of taste, which claims universality and arises from the implicit relation between subjective individuals and normative collectives.

It is crucial that the Laboratory and design project addresses a diverse target group to represent the normative public, from which the judgement arises, effectively.



# the voyage

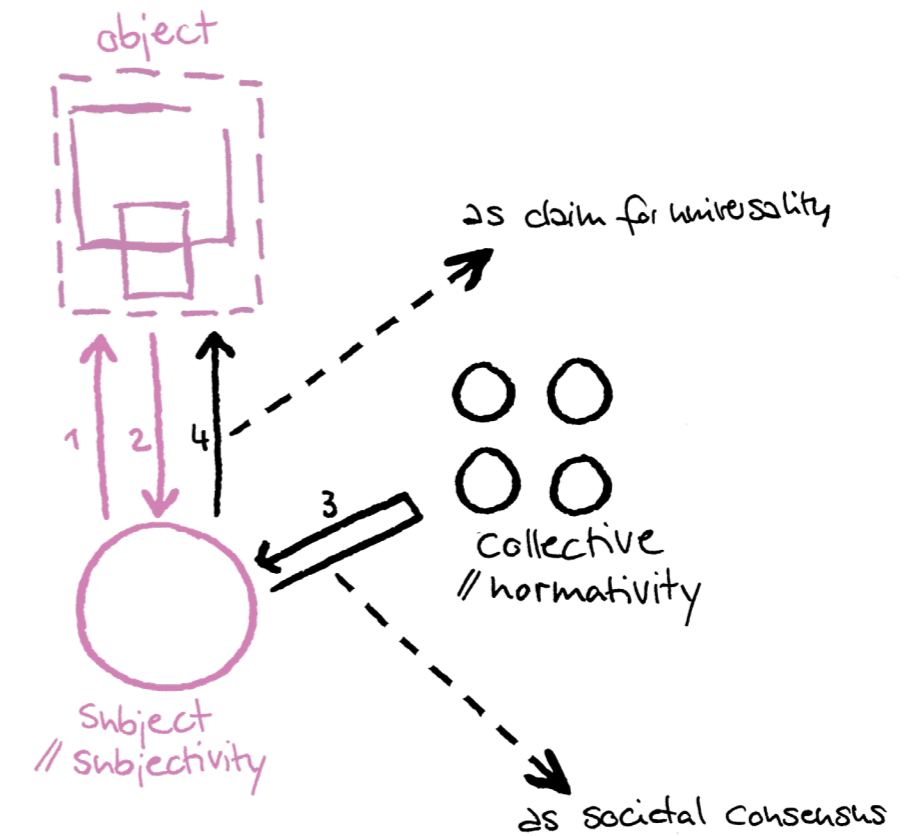
003  
the  
voyage

area  
building  
crossing  
analysis + principles

„Architecture is the very mirror of life. You only have to cast your eyes on buildings (...); they are the reflection of society.“

[L.M. Pei]<sup>3</sup>

## Intro



- 1- impression of object
- 2- affect of irritation
- 3- reassurance through assumption of shared cognitive faculties
- 4- aesthetic judgement

Fig. 13. operational area of The Voyage

### *Analysis of Ugliness in Practice:*

Delving into specific operational modes of ugliness within a specific area and the selected site building.

### *Impact of Ugliness:*

Investigating the specific affects of ugliness on the subject, exploring its psychological and emotional consequences.

### *Derivation of Design Principles:*

Extracting general design principles, that allow for access to a wider target group, from the examination of ugliness, laying the groundwork for the subsequent design phase, known as the Laboratory.

# 003I1 the area

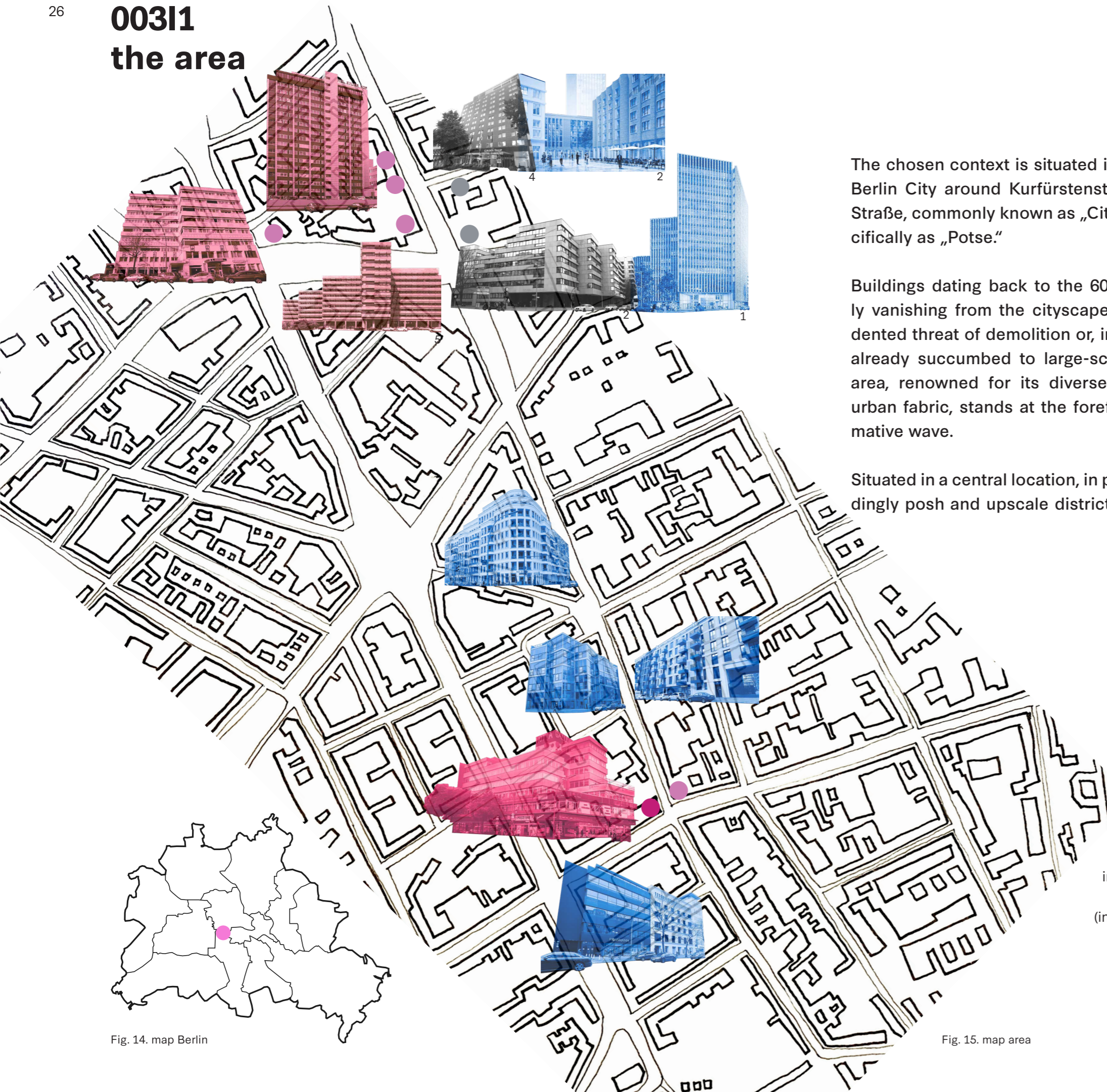


Fig. 14. map Berlin

The chosen context is situated in the western part of Berlin City around Kurfürstenstraße and Potsdamer Straße, commonly known as „City West“ or more specifically as „Potse.“

Buildings dating back to the 60s and 70s are rapidly vanishing from the cityscape, facing an unprecedented threat of demolition or, in many cases, having already succumbed to large-scale demolitions. The area, renowned for its diverse and heterogeneous urban fabric, stands at the forefront of this transformative wave.

Situated in a central location, in proximity to an exceedingly posh and upscale district, the region faces an

imminent risk of gentrification, evidenced by a staggering 25% increase in rents over the past four years. These structures, some of which have played a pivotal role in shaping the identity of the area since the aftermath of World War II, now find themselves under the looming shadow of change (ufo ufo, 2023). Since 1790, prostitution has been a significant aspect of the area, playing a pivotal role in shaping its identity. Notably, it has contributed to the development of the queer community in Berlin, making the area renowned internationally for its vibrant and diverse character (Tate, Pastorello, Green + Roux (2022).

As the architectural remnants of a dynamic and evolving history are systematically dismantled, the very essence of the neighbourhood undergoes a profound and irreversible transformation.

- demolished ●
- in threat of demolition ●
- selected site (in threat of demolition) ●
- new built ■
- 1- [bit.ly/3xXJjPk](https://bit.ly/3xXJjPk)
- 2- [bit.ly/4a3p28o](https://bit.ly/4a3p28o)
- 3- [bit.ly/4bmLg6A](https://bit.ly/4bmLg6A)
- 4- [bit.ly/4bcPvB4](https://bit.ly/4bcPvB4)
- 5- [bit.ly/4bIEsWJ](https://bit.ly/4bIEsWJ)

Fig. 15. map area

## 00312 the building



Fig. 16. design proposal 1964  
(bit.ly/4aYU42D)



Fig. 17. building in 1975  
(bit.ly/3QvlgfV)



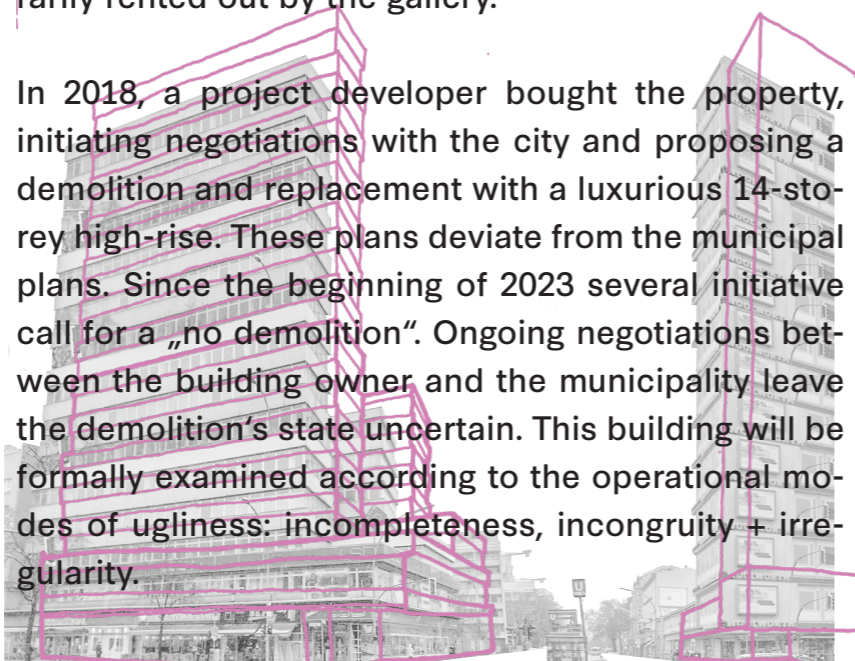
Fig. 18. building in 2024

In 1964, the building emerged as a symbol of modernity and progress amidst bombed ruins and gaps, reflecting the evolving landscape of Potsdamer Straße. In its early days, the building served as the venue for a photography and radio laboratory known as „Foto Wegert,“ operating until the company declared bankruptcy in 2005. In the following years, there was a change in use, resulting in commercial and office spaces being created. An application for conversion to a brothel in 2007 sparked widespread debate and a lengthy legal dispute. Ultimately, no permission was granted. In 2009, a retail space for the LSD Erotikmarkt with video booths was established on the ground floor. Today, surrounded by parking lots and residential complexes, the building narrates the area’s transformation.

This building, hosting a 700 sqm sex shop named LSD (Love, Sex and Dreams), alongside a bakery and an art gallery known as „Not a Gallery,“ embodies the street’s evolution. Its various art spaces, including photography, dance, and music studios, are temporarily rented out by the gallery.

In 2018, a project developer bought the property, initiating negotiations with the city and proposing a demolition and replacement with a luxurious 14-story high-rise. These plans deviate from the municipal plans. Since the beginning of 2023 several initiatives call for a „no demolition“. Ongoing negotiations between the building owner and the municipality leave the demolition’s state uncertain. This building will be formally examined according to the operational modes of ugliness: incompleteness, incongruity + irregularity.

Fig. 19. collage planned buildings



The study employed psychogeographical mapping techniques, including derivé with photography, note-taking, sketching, interviews and mental mapping. The exploration delved into the phenomenological investigation of the affects of ugliness within the specific context. Additionally, headlines from local newspapers detailing the building and the development of the crossing were interwoven into the study.

The study revealed a clash of different social groups in the area, particularly between sex workers and businesspeople, adding a complex layer to the social dynamics of the urban space.

*At first, I aimed to conduct formal interviews with those directly*

*involved and impacted by the*

*developments surrounding the*

*building. However, this plan proved*

*more challenging than anticipated.*

*The owner of the sex shop*

*adamantly refused to participate,*

*citing the need to protect the*

*women working there. This underscores*

*the role of the sex shop not*

*just as a retail space but also as*

*a sanctuary for sex workers. Similarly,*

*the owner of the gallery declined*

*to engage with me, insisting*

*I leave the premises on multiple*

*occasions. Despite my efforts,*

*attempts to connect with various*

*initiatives involved in the „no-*

*demolition call to action“ were also*

*unsuccessful. These encounters*

*reveal the sensitivity surrounding*

*the issue and the tendency for it*

*to be swept under the rug.*

In addition, the use of reflective surfaces and the manipulation of curtains on the groundfloor played a pivotal role in exploring the dichotomy between concealment and revelation within the space. Reflective surfaces confront viewers with their own reflections, blurring the boundaries between observer and observed.

## 00313 the crossing

Interviews conducted with individuals on the streets revealed a noticeable sense of controversy surrounding the building, its outward appearance, and its intended purpose. Comments ranged from disdain to outright condemnation, with many expressing unease about the building’s presence and the activities it accommodates.

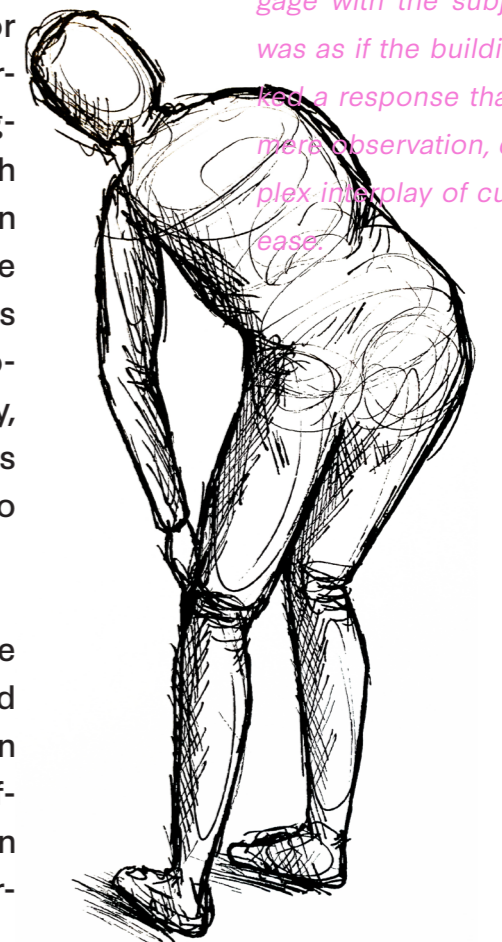
*As I approached individuals to inquire about their thoughts on the building, I noticed subtle yet telling gestures.*

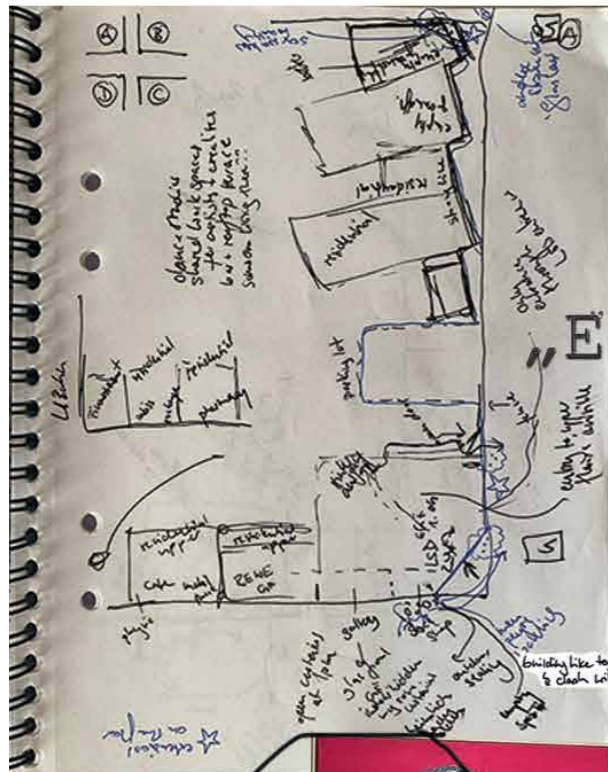
*Some would instinctively bend their knees, tilt their heads, squint their eyes, and furrow their brows, as if studying an alien creature or a rare zoo animal.*

*This behavior conveyed a sense of intrigue mixed with caution—a visceral reaction to something unfamiliar. Yet, beneath the surface, I sensed not just a physical distance, but a relational one—a subtle*

*emotional separation that seemed to suggest a hesitancy to fully engage with the subject at hand. It*

*was as if the building itself provoked a response that went beyond mere observation, evoking a complex interplay of curiosity and unease.*





"The demolition will make Berlin a little less colorful."

"We mean to create a modern, fresh and beautiful business"  
 "Eyesore"

NEW TENDENCY



"diversity is only possible through change + progress"

"nothing special"

"There is beauty and magic in it and... graphs -> spirit as a way to appropriate space"

"the building is controversial, LSD as well but they disagree so Berlin is..."

building as landmark in area

building like ten blocks piled up by a child - naive appearance? & each with her own sex-shop?

NOT AGAIN

I don't like all these corners + edges

The building is light + rolling the color is fading off for some reason and I don't like the color in general

dopamine



the space has to be in scale in some way building needs to be in scale to appropriate space

empty ground floor - why? reflects the facade - reflection of empty life in streets?



interior gallery

"old buildings need to go in order to growth change"

the contrast in color shape are very contrasting but contrast is what Berlin is

unfurnished on the inside + outside

there is no work to be done that is not missing

corners most dynamic hotel & clash with sex-hotels looking at corners?



people looking through in between corners

if there had been a hotel building it should have the same effect as the existing one...



metro station as border between opposing sides of street

the outside is just ugly

(fictional) border through material change on ground -> hot 4-sided crossing but T-Shape

old house is a very fine house

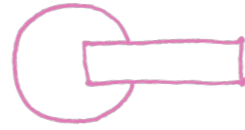


Fig. 20. psychogeographical mapping

# 00314

## analysis + principles

The relational analysis of ugliness, according to the three operational modes of ugliness, involves combining an architectural analysis conducted by oneself with findings from on-site interviews and observations to explore perceptions of aesthetic ugliness within the specific context.



incongruity

Incongruity may also be described as impropriety or ineffectiveness (Hyde, 2023).

*- stains on surface*

Stains act as visible indicators of aging and the passage of time, leaving traces on the outer skin of the structure, while also giving subtle hints towards the materiality of the facade. By disrupting the intended flawless finish of the exterior, these stains challenge the notion of perfection and can be perceived as intrusions that detract from the overall aesthetic. In this way, they exist as tangible reminders of the building's history and environment, yet simultaneously evoke a sense of discord within the visual appearance.

*keywords: traces, disruption, imperfection*



Fig. 21. stains on facade



Fig. 22. stains on facade

*- no imposed geometric order*

The absence of an imposed geometric order is characterized by various volumes of different shapes and sizes sharing identical facades throughout. The lack of structural connection between these different volumes further emphasizes this observation.

*keywords: assemblage, connections*



Fig. 23. volumetrics



Fig. 24. obstructed entrance sex-shop



Fig. 25. hidden entrance upper floors



Fig. 26. context structure (1964)  
(bit.ly/4aYU42D)

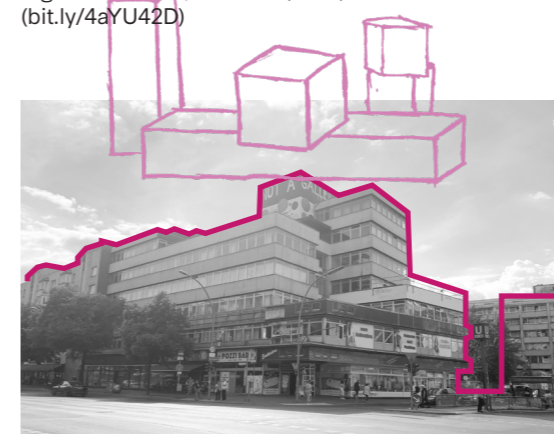


Fig. 27. context structure (2024)

*- no structure of movement*

The lack of a structured movement or hierarchy within the building presents significant challenges. Although the ground floor is accessible, the entrance to the sex shop, despite being at a prominent corner, is somewhat concealed and obstructed by posters, tapestries and a massive column. Similarly, the gallery entrance is hindered by curtains during closing times. Despite the building housing public use dance studios, accessing the upper floors is highly unclear. It is now understood that entry is through the backside, but this entrance is further obstructed by a high fence. These barriers significantly impede navigation and detract from the building's functionality.

*keywords: hierarchy, accessibility, barriers*

*- no spatially fixed relation to site*

The lack of order and connections between the different volumes of same style, results in the perception of an infantile assemblage of volumetrics. Observing the transformation over time reveals an evolution of the building: initially presenting a monolithic, sculptural appearance surrounded by urban gaps, the context and use have since changed. What was once perceived as cohesive now appears disjointed, with the infantile assemblage of volumes standing in stark contrast to the surrounding context of sex-working.

*keywords: monolithic enduring structures*



incompleteness

- *no spatially fixed relation to site*

The building lacks a spatially fixed relation to its site, with significant changes occurring over time. Initially, the ground floor was highly accessible, featuring cut-ins that opened onto the street and sidewalk. However, transformations over time have led to the closure of most ground floor access points, leaving only one cut-out remaining at the corner of the building. This alteration has effectively severed the building's once strong connections to the street, contributing to a sense of detachment from its immediate environment. It highlights that the incompleteness observed in the building is not inherent to its contemporary form, but rather reflects a deviation from the intended initial design and appearance.

*keywords: sightlines, accessibility, edges*

Furthermore, the once inviting display windows, which once beckoned passersby to peek inside, have now been concealed by a clutter of posters and tapestries. This transformation has not only obscured any view of the building's interior but has also erected an imposing and harsh boundary between the structure of the building and its surroundings. The transparency that once characterized the building's facade has been replaced by a sense of seclusion and detachment, leaving pedestrians disconnected from the life within.

*keywords: boundaries, edges*



Fig. 28. ground floor (1975)  
(bit.ly/3QvlgfV)

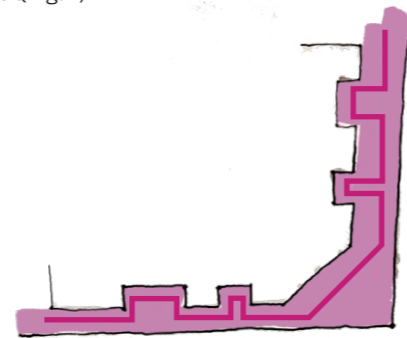


Fig. 29. accessibility groundfloor schematic (1975)



Fig. 30. ground floor (2024)

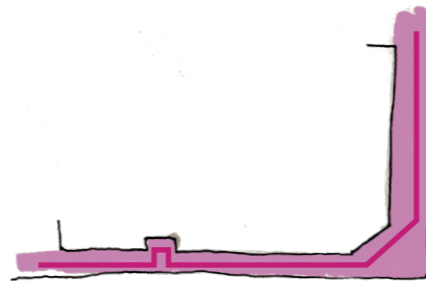
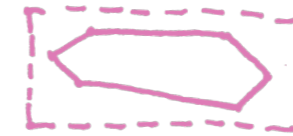


Fig. 31. accessibility groundfloor schematic (2024)



Fig. 32. concealed display windows



irregularity

- *inconsistency of the facade*

The presence of curtains, which can be opened and closed, adds an element of variability and irregularity to the building's facade. Particularly on the ground floor, the level where people are expected to have the most interaction in their daily lives, the building remains in a perpetual state of instability. It unpredictably reveals or conceals its interior and identity, adding to a sense of irritation and disarray experienced by passersby and visitors.

*keywords: temporality, flexible + moveable structures*



Fig. 33. variable facade

- *barriers of the facade*

The presence of reflective surfaces within the building's design proves to be a disruptive addition, as they merely mirror the surrounding environment and everyday activities instead of offering any meaningful insight into the building itself. Rather than offering transparency or revealing the architectural interior, these reflective surfaces create a disorienting effect that obstructs the pedestrian experience. Whereas glass typically serves to create a gentle transition and inconcrete boundary between a building's interior and the street, in this case, it acts as a harsh barrier, effectively preventing any insights into the ground floor. Instead passersby find themselves distracted by their own reflections in the mirroring glass, further contributing to the sense of irritation and detachment.

*keywords: soft + harsh barriers, sightlines*

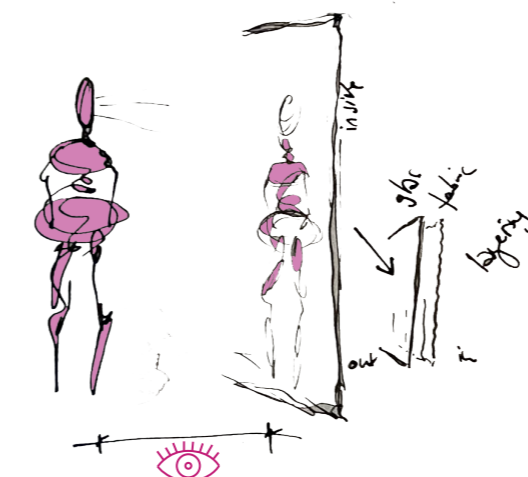


Fig. 34. scheme reflective layering

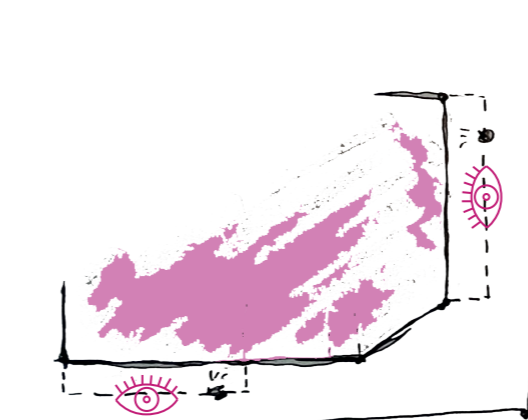


Fig. 35. intimate space of contemplation

affects

The traces of ugliness evident in the building underscore an experiential sense of separation and detachment between the structure and daily life, manifested in both its surroundings and the people on the street. Obstructions on the ground floor in form of poster and pastries, reflective glasses and curtains further exacerbate this separation, leaving little opportunity for engagement with the building itself. Rather than engaging with the building and the life inside, people passing by scarcely take notice of it. Instead, they find themselves captivated by their own reflections in the mirroring windows, further detaching from any interaction with the actual structure. This separation and lack of engagement fosters, besides the buildings overall controversy, a sense of irritation.

The sight of sex workers standing and waiting as part of their job, while businesspeople and other members of everyday life passing by, whether on foot, in cars, or on e-scooters, highlights a stark dichotomy of the place and reinforces societal stigma. This scene embodies a contrast between a stagnation of sex workers and the forward movement of what is deemed „normative“ society, symbolizing the marginalized status of those engaged in sex work.

It underscores the enduring inequalities that penetrate society, where certain social groups are subject to judgment and discrimination, while others are afforded societal acceptance and privilege.

principles

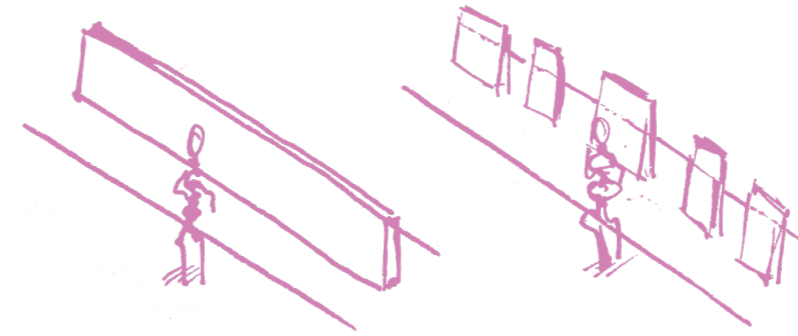


Fig. 36. soft vs harsh boundaries  
**soft vs. harsh boundaries**  
 (opaque, transparent, reflective)

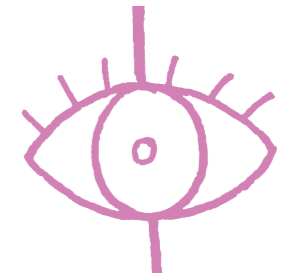


Fig. 37. sightlines  
**sightlines**

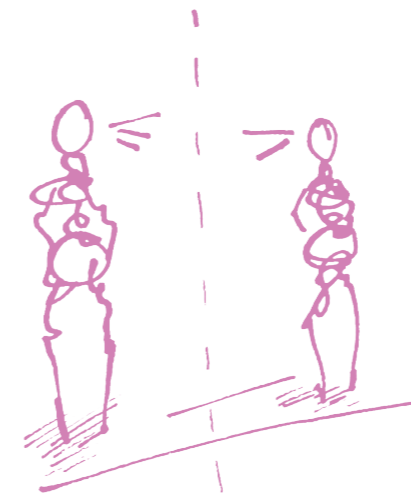


Fig. 38. observer + observed  
**being the observer**  
**while being observed**

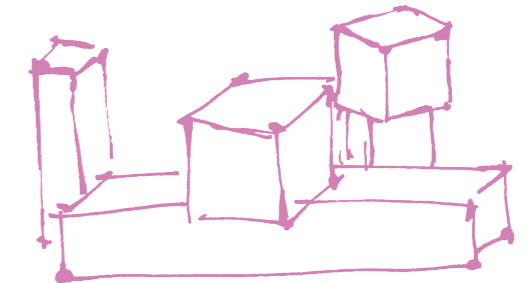


Fig. 39. incongruity through infantilility  
**incongruity through infantilility**

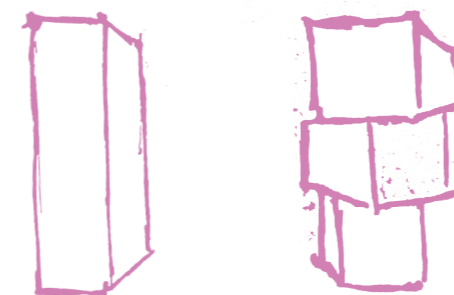


Fig. 40. monolithic vs temporal structures  
**monolithic vs temporal structures**

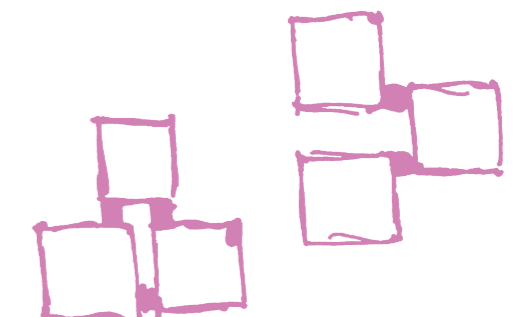


Fig. 41. assemblage  
**assemblage**



## outro

### *Validation of Operational Modes of Architectural Ugliness:*

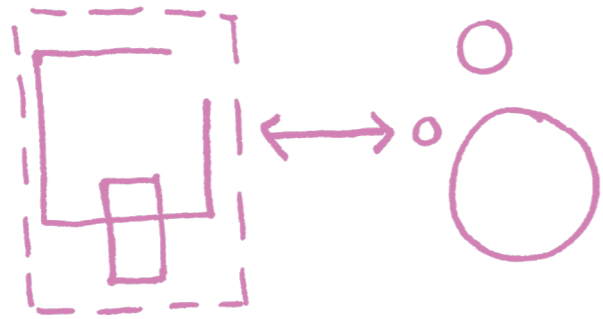
The site analysis has confirmed the operational modes of architectural ugliness identified in Investigation I. Nevertheless, it has been demonstrated that these modes are relational, emerging from the interaction between the subject and the object, rather than being inherently absolute.

### *Amplification of Social Stigma:*

The selected specific contexts underscore that disgrace towards anti-normative buildings intensifies social stigma, thereby emphasizing the profound relationship between the built environment and society. This disgrace arises as a direct result of a lack of engagement between subject and object.

### *Path forward:*

The generalized principles will be experimented with in the laboratory aligning with the thesis's objectives.



# the investigation II

004

the

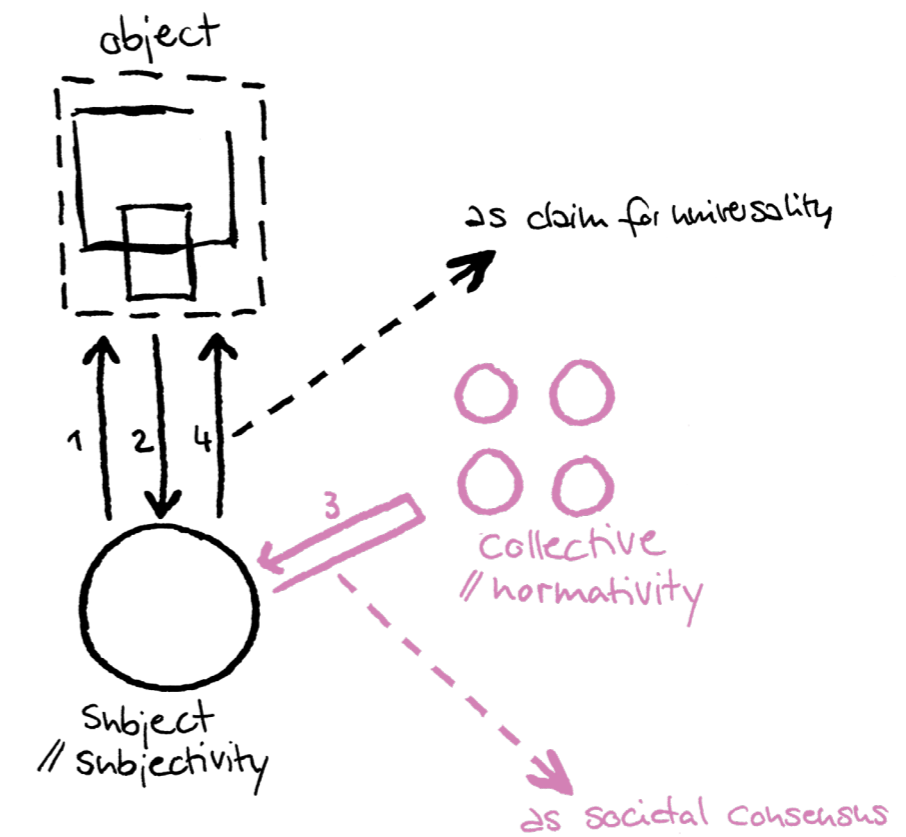
investigation II

about performatism

To design is much more than simply to assemble, to order or even to edit: it is to add value and meaning, to illuminate, to simplify, to clarify, to modify, to dignify, to dramatize, to persuade and perhaps even to amuse. To design is to transform prose into poetry."

Paul Rand

## Intro



- 1- impression of object
- 2- affect of irritation
- 3- reassurance through assumption of shared cognitive faculties
- 4- aesthetic judgement

Fig. 42. operational area of The Investigation II

The investigation explores how performatism can potentially reshape the approach to the assumption of shared cognitive faculties, functioning as a passive exchange between individuals and the collective, thereby influencing societal consensus.

# 004I1

## about performatism

performatism

The investigation introduces the concept of Performatism to delve into the dynamics of collective beliefs shaping a collective mood. Performatism in architecture is a term introduced by Raoul Eshelman (2020), as a definition of the architectural epoch after Postmodernism, which utilizes formal means of artistically mediated belief to create positive experiences.

Performatism requires, besides other aspects, the reduction of individual subjectivity. A so-called Performance, described as a metaphysical experience, has the potential to turn a horrific intangible truth into a tangible narrative. The Performance was successful when belief patterns were altered and projected back into reality (Eshelman, 2001).

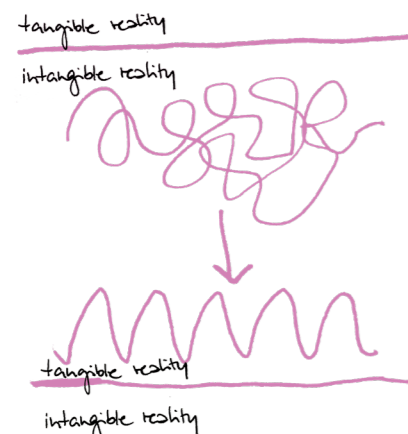


Fig. 43. process of performatism

interdisciplinarity

Performance architecture represents a dynamic fusion of performance, architecture, and art, embodying an interdisciplinary approach to spatial design and cultural expression. Emerging as a distinct field in the late 20th century, performance architecture transcends conventional definitions of space, inviting audiences to engage with environments that are immersive, interactive, and transformative. It represents a dynamic intersection where the realms of performance, architecture, and art converge, creating a multidimensional space for expression, interaction, and exploration. Performance architecture possesses the ability to render implicit behaviors explicit by accentuating their effects through performances. The architecture itself transforms into a script for these performances (Schweder, 2016 + 2024).

social dimensions

Moreover, performance architecture serves as a platform for social and cultural inquiry, challenging prevailing norms and assumptions about space, identity, and belonging. By interrogating the dynamics of power, agency, and representation within architectural contexts, performance architects provoke critical reflection and dialogue, amplifying marginalized voices and perspectives. Through site-specific interventions and community-engaged practices, performance architecture becomes not only a mode of creative expression but also a tool for social justice and collective empowerment.

In the realm of performance, the stage becomes a crucible for intercultural encounters, particu-

larly in settings where communication proves inadequate. Here, performances thrive on the dynamic interplay of diverse cultural perspectives, actively probing and leveraging the nuances of misunderstanding. It is within the tension of these encounters, where disparate cultures pull apart or collide, that fertile ground for the emergence of new knowledge and fresh outlooks is found. Far from being barriers to understanding, these moments of discord become catalysts for innovation and transformation, shaping the fabric of our shared human experience (Schechner, 2001).

Schechner (2001) describes two assertions of performative architecture:

### 1. embodied action

Embodied action in performance architecture involves active physical engagement within designed spaces. Participants move, interact, and experience the environment sensorially, blurring boundaries between performer and spectator. This immersive experience encourages

participation, shapes narrative, and prompts reflection on social and political issues. In addition to participants taking on the role of performers, the architecture itself can also actively participate in the performance, blurring the boundaries between space and body. Both the participants and the architectural elements may act as performers simultaneously, further enriching the immersive experience.



Fig. 44. embodied action through blurred boundaries

### 2. no finality

In performance, behavior drives perpetual change, constantly evolving through adaptation and iteration. Each iteration builds upon the last, refining and reshaping the performance to better reflect the evolving context and goals. This dynamic process ensures that performance remains responsive and relevant in an ever-changing environment.



Fig. 45. continuous iterative process

## outro

### *Disruption of Normative Context:*

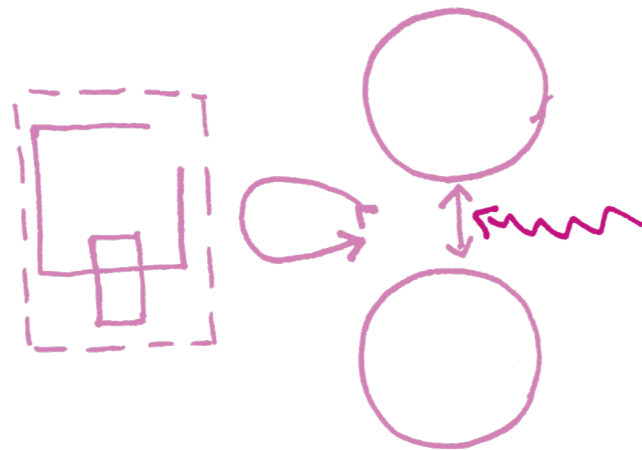
The few remaining buildings perceived as ugly, along with any social minority deviating from the norm, disrupt their surroundings, standing out conspicuously amidst normative environments. Consequently, translating and visualizing societal judgment and the displacement of minorities through ugly architecture becomes a meta-physical and performative act, highlighting the consequences of societal disdain towards them.

### *Path forward:*

Performatism possesses capacity to change collective beliefs and amplifies marginalized voices and perspectives, thus proves as a suitable medium for the thesis's objectives

The necessity to minimize subjectivity in performance architecture underscores the significance of addressing a broad audience rather than a specific target group.

The investigation in the laboratory will explore how performance architecture can highlight the implicit relation between subject and collective and thereby change the social consensus within the specific context of the thesis.



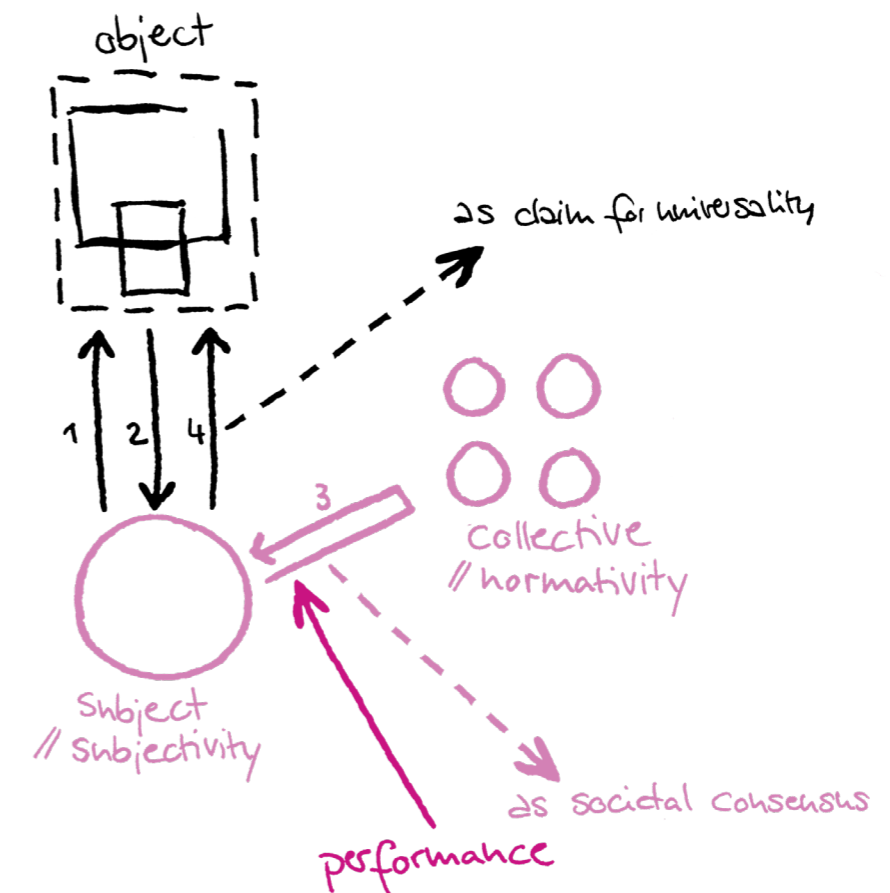
# the laboratory

005  
the  
laboratory

thinking  
people, positions + pens  
sketching  
characters + chairs  
drawing + constructing  
balance + billboards  
reflecting

„To find beauty in  
ugliness is the  
province of the poet.“  
Thomas Hardy<sup>5</sup>

## Intro



- 1- impression of object
- 2- affect of irritation
- 3- reassurance through assumption of shared cognitive faculties
- 4- aesthetic judgement

Fig. 46. social dimensions of ugliness + aesthetic judgement

Experimenting with performance design structures to visualize the implicit relation between individual subject and collective.

Experimenting with performance design structures (by means of site specific principles of ugliness) to facilitate the alteration of the assumption of shared cognitive faculties, thus altering the societal consensus towards positive beliefs

# 00511 thinking

Engaging in a thinking process, in which the previous work was revised, clear aims for the design were formulated as the first step, providing a clear direction for the project's goals.

The design process was structured to involve a blend of internal and external processes for continuous experimentation and iteration.

The qualitative, external process includes engaging a focus groups to gather diverse feedback for the results of the internal processes.

The focus group comprises four individuals selected for their diverse backgrounds, a strategic decision aligning with the target audience -the general public. This diversity is especially relevant within the context of performatism, where mitigating subjectivity is pivotal. By incorporating participants from varied backgrounds, the aim is to cultivate a collective understanding that transcends individual biases. The age range of the participants, spanning from 33 to 51, and their professions range from police officer to pedagogist ensures a broad spectrum of perspectives. Through this methodological decision for diversity, the aim is to identify common experiences and values that will enrich the depth of the design process.

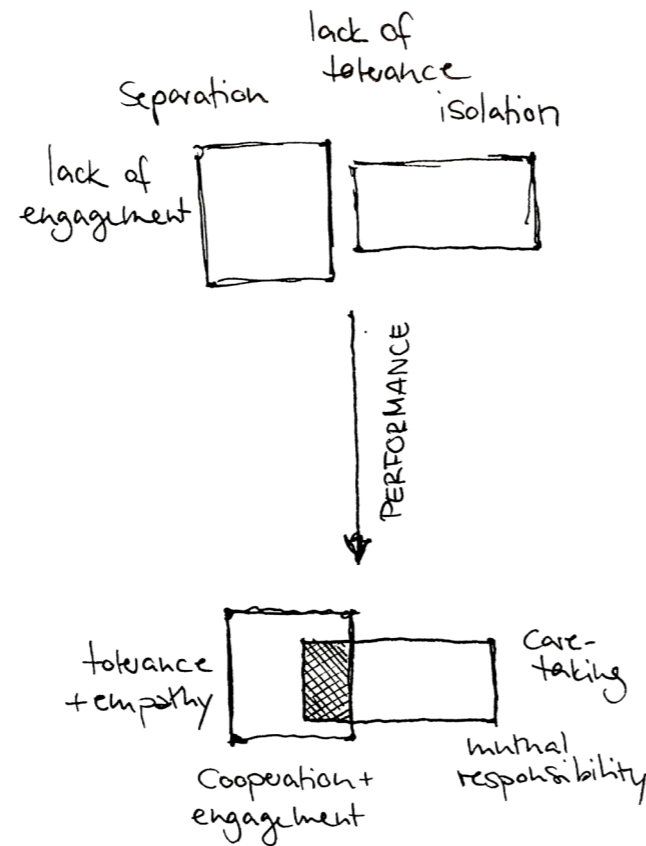


Fig. 47. aims

people, positions + pens

A mental workshop with the focus group, engaged in discussions and reflections on the project's aims by dissecting words and associations. This process provides insights into objective feelings, particularly soft values, that should be elicited through the performance design.

sketching

The design principles derived from The Voyage are combined with iterated aims and soft values to conceptualize a performative design. This interactive performance aims to facilitate engagement between two individuals.

characters + chairs

During the interactive workshop with the focus group, various spatial configurations between two people are experimented with and assessed based on the soft values established during the first workshop.

drawing + constructing

The iteration of the design idea involves refining and enhancing its elements through adjustment. Formulating a design proposal entails synthesizing the insights gained from the iterative workshops into a comprehensive plan. Constructing a prototype with simple materials allows for practical exploration and validation of the proposed design concepts.

balance + billboards

This interactive workshop with the focus group facilitates collaborative exploration and feedback gathering. Following this, the design proposal is put to the test through the creation and evaluation of a prototype.

reflecting

Reflecting on the design proposal involves considering its strengths and areas for improvement, as well as reflections on the experimentation process. Subsequently, an outlook is developed on how to proceed further with the results, envisioning potential next steps in an imaginary scenario and demonstrate further applications of the Laboratory for other potential projects.

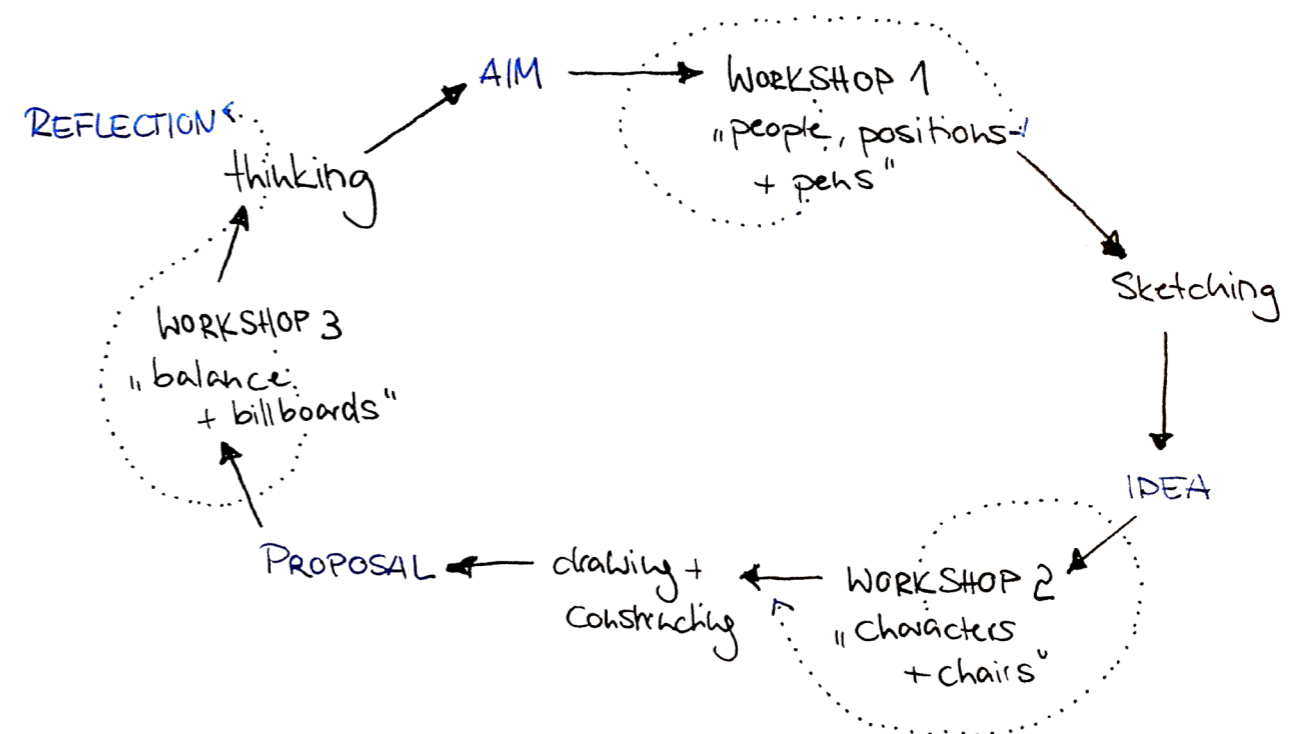


Fig. 48. process laboratory

# 00512

## people, positions + pens

### setting and atmosphere:

Designed as a gentle introduction, the workshop aimed to foster comfort and openness. The chosen date, time, and setting created a relaxed, informal atmosphere conducive to open discussion.

### workshop structure:

The presenter introduced a structured format, encouraging participants to freely share their thoughts and ideas. Initially, participants noted their associations with specific categories, but this evolved into open discussions.

### participant engagement:

Despite initial hesitations, participants actively engaged, recognizing the value of reflecting on seemingly mundane topics.

### exploration of project aims:

The workshop provided an opportunity to deeply explore the project's aims and responsibilities, laying a strong foundation for subsequent phases.

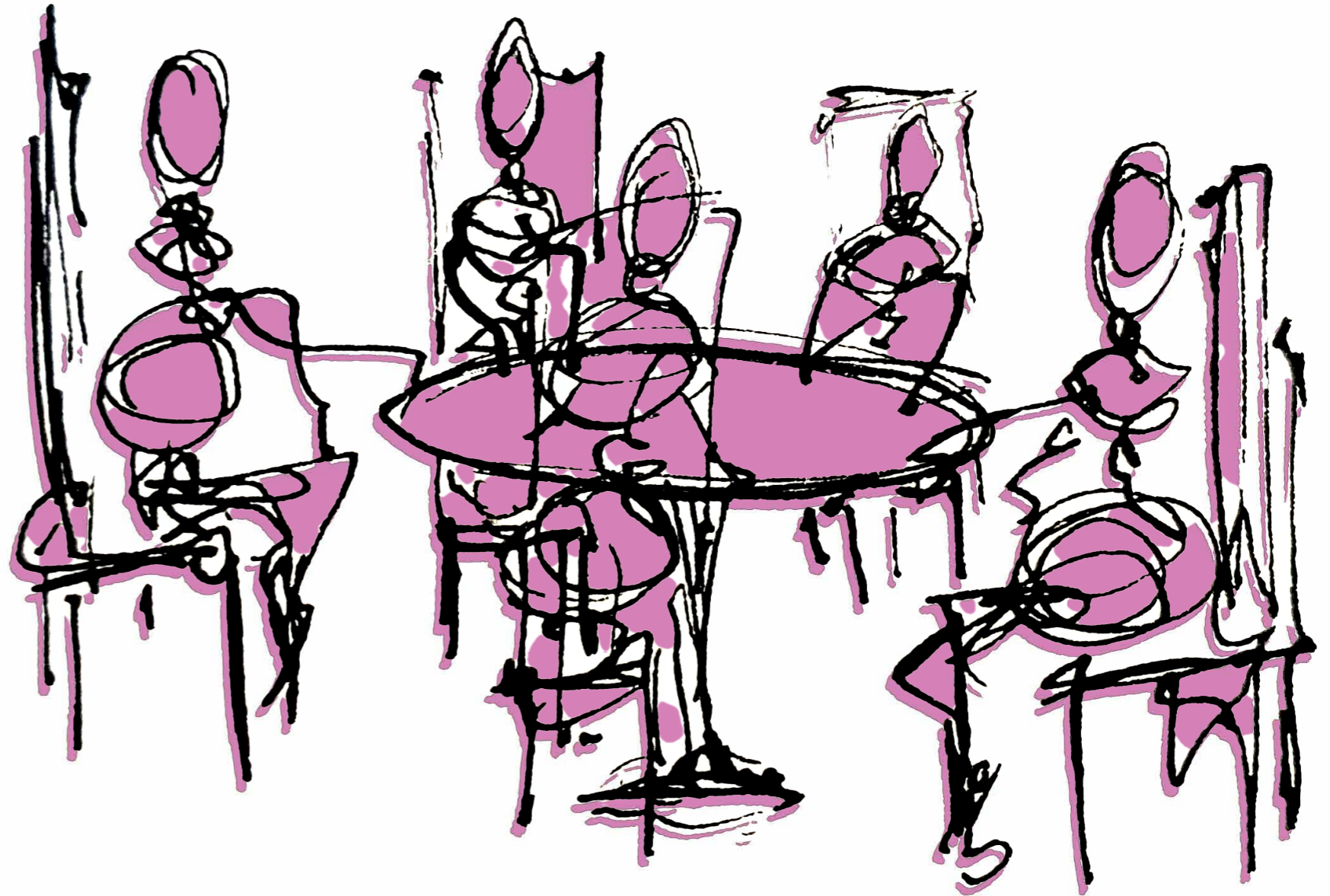


Fig. 49. mental workshop

### tolerance + empathy

- sensitivity
- acceptance
- good motives
- open-mindedness
- action = reaction
- awareness for co-existence
- jumping over one's own shadow
- respect
- no stigmatization
- courage
- facial expressions + gestures can foster a sense of honesty

### engagement + cooperation

- communication
- listening to one another
- acceptance of other opinions, even if they deviate from one's own
- support
- reliability
- space without shame
- trust
- consistency
- taking + giving
- meet at eye-level

### mutual responsibility

- action = reaction
- active decision
- it is not a sprint, but a marathon (time-aspect)
- physical + emotional well-being
- empathy
- concessions
- no excuses
- honesty + tolerance
- mutual support
- sincere interest

### care-taking

- support rather than take-over
- awareness + understanding
- for better for worse
- trust + reliability
- responsibility
- sincere will + support
- communication more than mere words
- not limiting other's being
- constant thinking process, even in cases of spatial separation
- acknowledge others needs, even if they deviate from one's own

# 00512 sketching

assemblage // sightlines // layering // incongruity

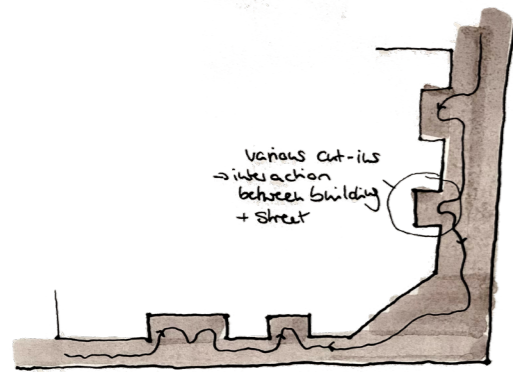


Fig. 50. schematic ground-floor 1965

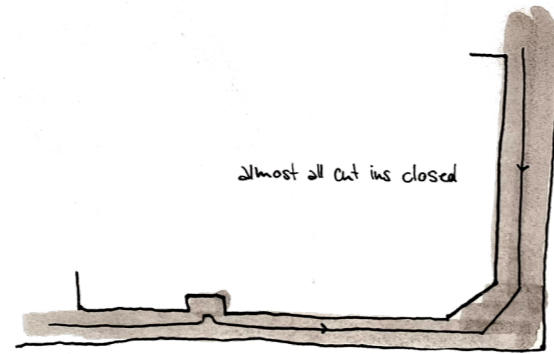


Fig. 51. schematic ground-floor 2024

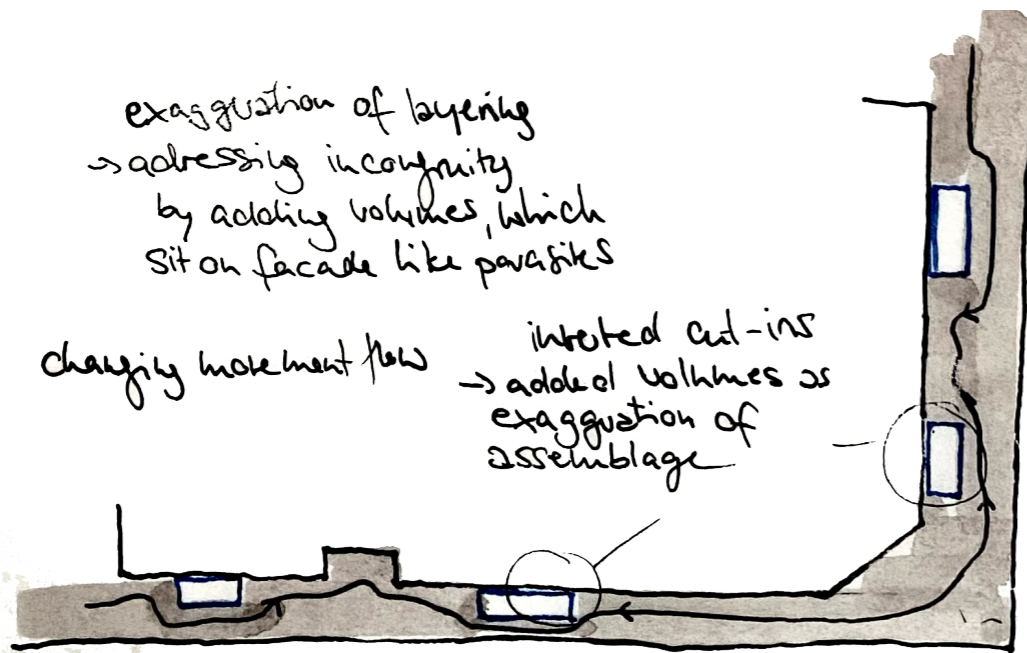
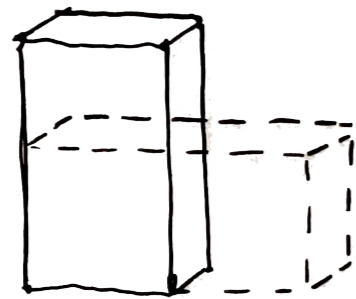
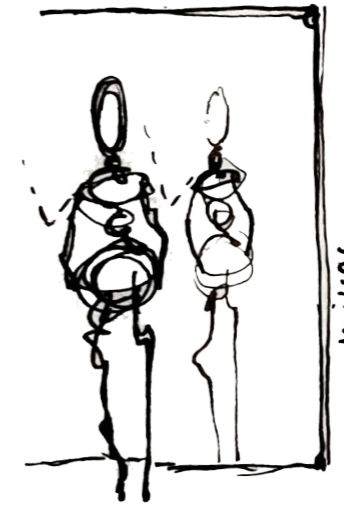


Fig. 52. schematic ground-floor design idea



-> cuboid in analogy to form-language of existing volumetrics

Fig. 53. existing prevailing volumetrics



-> if I move, the image in the mirror moves  
**INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE**

Fig. 54. actual reflection

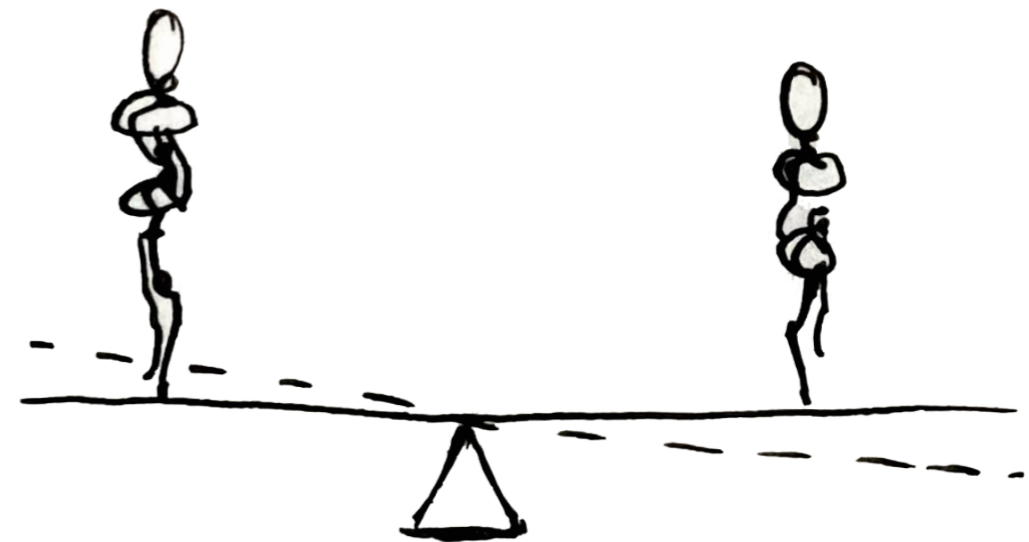


Fig. 55. metaphorical reflection

-> if you move, I move in order to keep us in balance

**ACTION = REACTION**

-> shared experience

**PERFORMANCE**



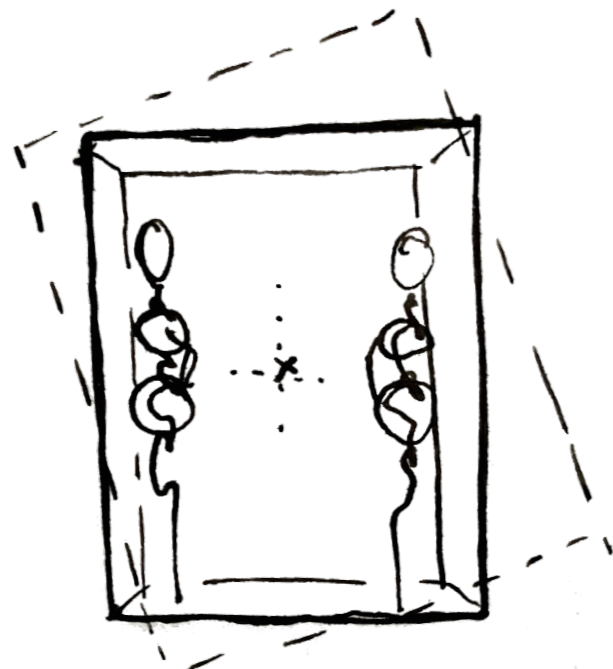


Fig. 56. standing balance

creating a space for interaction between two people in a comfortable position

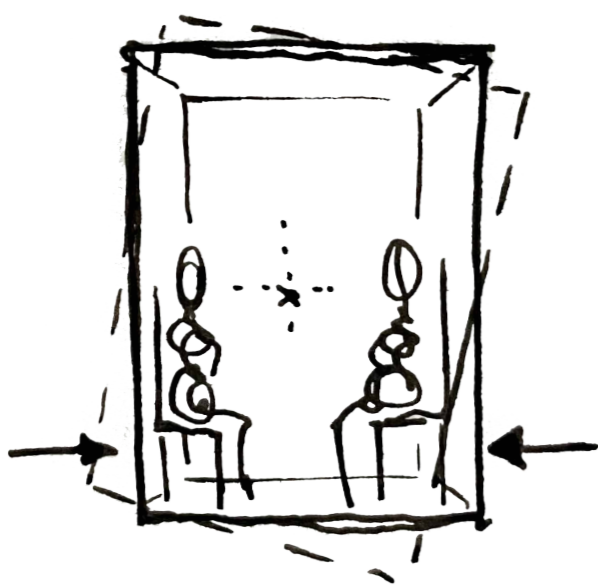
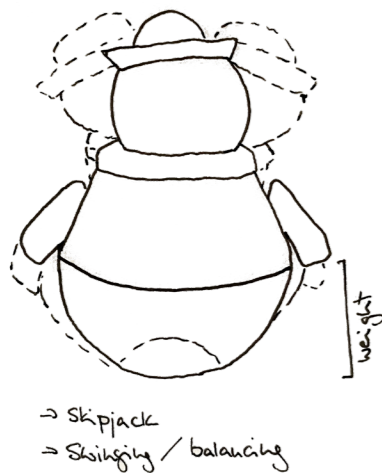


Fig. 57. sitting balance

infantility



→ skipjack  
→ swinging / balancing

Fig. 58. skipjack

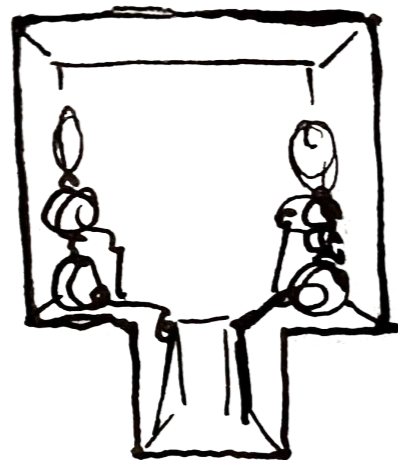


Fig. 59. basic construction

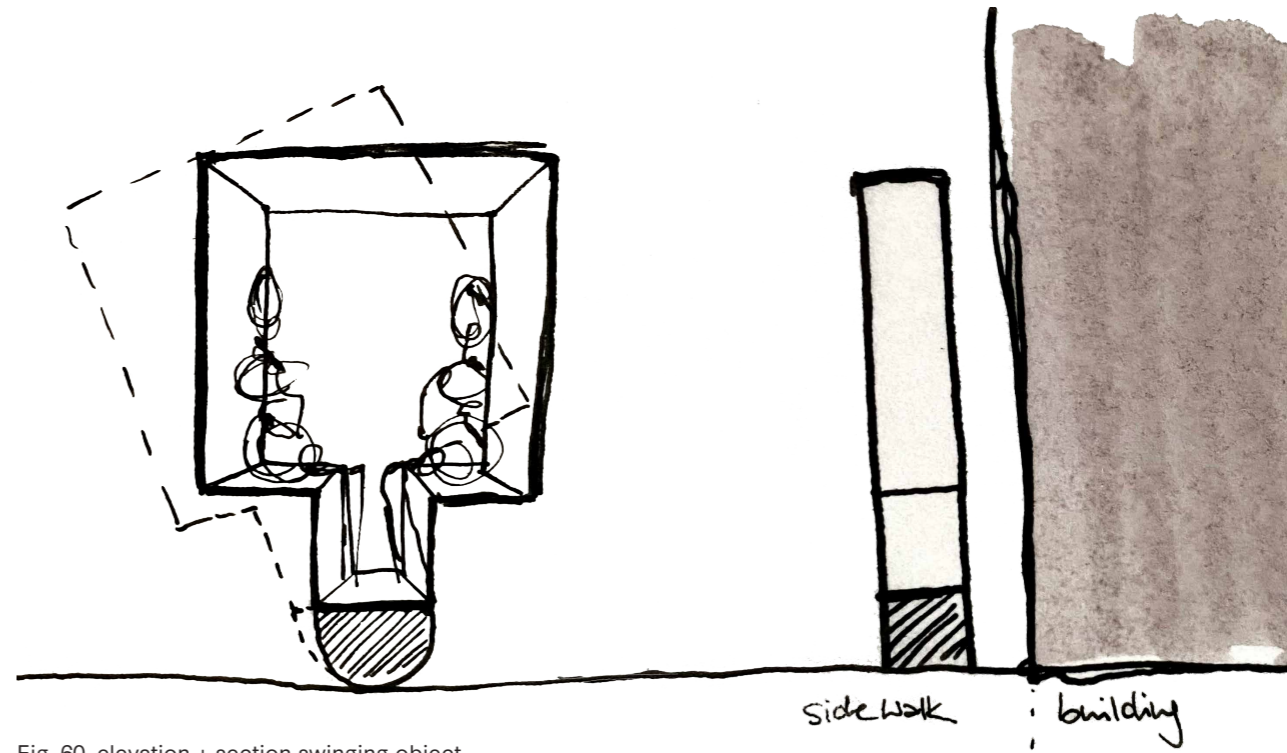


Fig. 60. elevation + section swinging object

stains

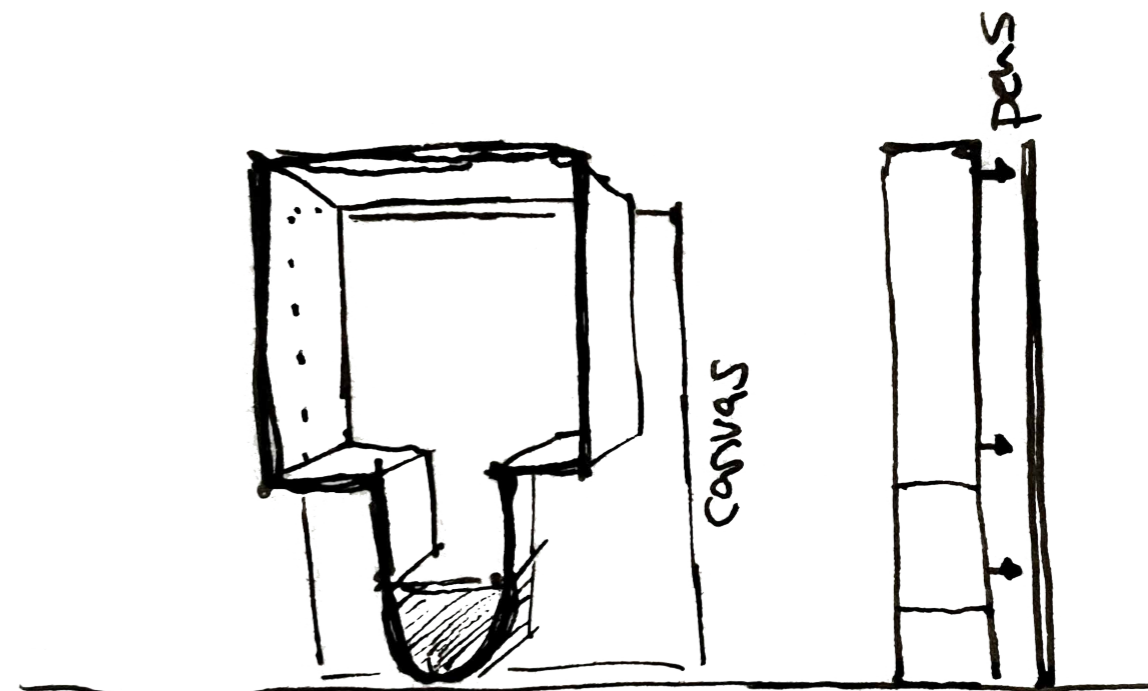


Fig. 61. elevation + section swinging object with canvas

→ act of balancing paints  
abstract drawing on canvas  
through swinging  
→ visualizing that every interaction  
leaves traces → AWARENESS

exhibition in collaboration  
with art gallery??

# 005I3

## characters + chairs

During the workshop, participants actively explored a range of seating positions for the proposed design object, evaluating how each configuration influenced their sense and manifestation of togetherness. This experimental process allowed for a comprehensive understanding of how spatial arrangements can shape interpersonal dynamics and foster meaningful connections.

In addition to the practical exploration of seating configurations, participants were immersed in an imaginative scenario that guided their interactions. Beginning as strangers, they navigated through various stages of acquaintance, gradually reaching a level of familiarity akin to friends. This narrative framework provided a context for participants to engage authentically with each other, allowing for a deeper exploration of the nuances of social interaction.

Throughout the session, reflections were actively solicited from participants experiencing the scenario firsthand, as well as from observers situated outside the interaction. These reflections provided valuable insights into the subjective experiences of individuals engaged in the exercise, as well as objective observations of the dynamics unfolding within the space. By capturing both internal and external perspectives, the workshop fostered a rich dialogue surrounding the interplay between spatial design and social interaction.

### Setting:

*Encountered tension with the owners of the sex shop and gallery; had to relocate the workshop.*

*Arranged a neutral, placeless setting to allow readers to imagine the site context.*

*Aimed to create a collaborative and casual atmosphere.*

### Testing Configurations:

*Chose six predefined seating configurations for evaluation.*

### Objectives:

*Defining a seating configuration in reminiscence with the goals defined in the first workshop, that will be applied to the final design proposal.*

### Participant Engagement:

*Participants divided into pairs and tested each setup. Initial hesitation gave way to lively discussions on perceptions of togetherness. Observers also contributed valuable insights.*

### Documentation:

*Photographs taken by the presenter, with participants' faces and bodies anonymized as agreed. Anonymity helped participants feel more comfortable and expressive, enhancing the overall experience.*



profound sense of distance

folded arms further enhance distance



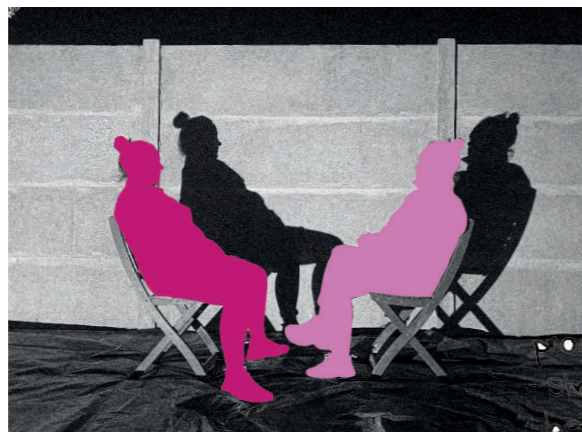
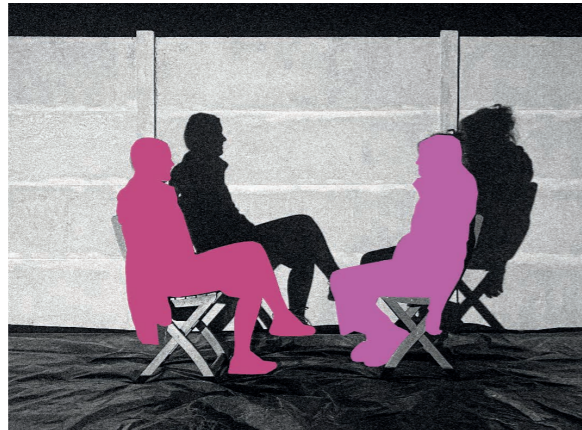
visible proximity isn't fostering any feeling of physical closeness / connection



Fig. 62-64. series maximum distance



(structural) element to engage arms would foster feeling of connection (pretention of folded arms + enabling comfort)

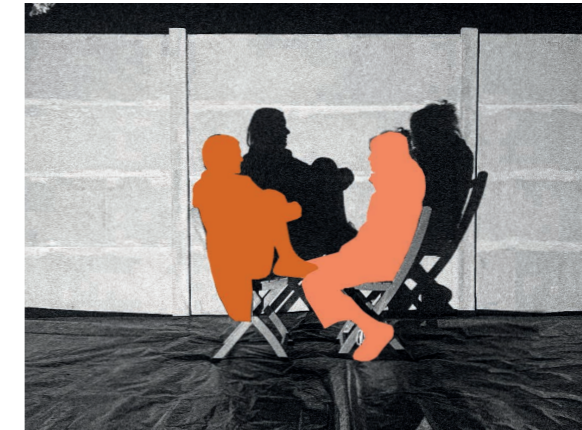


process:  
- Angus → physically being as far apart as possible  
- friends → gradually leaning towards each other

very comfortable proximity (both visibly + physically)



Fig. 65-67. series medium distance



physical contraction (retracted legs + folded arms) as protection mechanism

proximity perceived as uncomfortably close



difficult to leave situation (necessity of moving even closer to other person before departing)

naturally leg positions were chosen, that allow to leave situation



Fig. 68-70. series minimal distance



great variety in body positions



Spatial setting that allowed to get to know each other very naturally



Fig. 71-73. series next to



more comfortable than being forced to directly look at each other



more space to maneuver -> natural process of connecting



Fig. 74-76. series tete a tete



visible disconnection highly contributed to feeling of distance



process:  
- strangers → intuitively leaning forward to create physical distance  
- when feeling more comfortable, participants turned around to create visible connection

very different movements between participants

no obvious communication



visible disconnection engaged other senses to grasp other person (listening + feeling)

Fig. 77-79. series back to back

take-aways

The experiment underscores the significance of visible connection and proximity in nurturing an ultimate sense of togetherness, emphasizing the importance of architectural elements that facilitate such connections.

Furthermore this observation validates findings from psychogeographical mapping, where the presence of reflective glasses on the ground floor acted as a barrier, hindering interaction between passersby and the building, thereby illustrating the impact of visual barriers on social engagement. Participants echoed this sentiment, expressing a greater sense of comfort and connection when visual contact was prioritized over physical proximity.

Moreover, the observation that participants tended to mimic each other's movements when making eye contact further highlights the powerful role of visual cues in interpersonal communication. This phenomenon suggests a subconscious synchronization that occurs when individuals are visually engaged with each other, contributing to a shared sense of understanding and accordance.

Conversely, in moments when eye contact was not established, participants relied on alternative sensory modalities, such as touch and hea-

ring, to perceive and interpret each other's presence. Despite the absence of direct visual contact, verbal communication naturally flowed, underscoring the multifaceted nature of human interaction.

To provide a comprehensive experience of these interpersonal dynamics, the decision was made to incorporate three distinct seating configurations. This approach allows for a nuanced experience of how different spatial arrangements influence social behavior and connection, enriching our understanding of the complex interplay between architecture and human interaction.

can navigate the nuances of personal space at their own pace, fostering a progressive increase in comfort and engagement.  
The third configuration is back-to-back. In this arrangement, visual eye contact is not essential for generating a sense of togetherness; instead, other senses such as touch and hearing play a crucial role. This setup underscores the multifaceted nature of human relationships, where connection can be established through diverse sensory experiences. It challenges participants to rely on their non-visual senses, enhancing their awareness of each other's presence and fostering a unique form of intimacy and communication.  
Each of these three seating configurations offers unique potential in supporting the project's objectives. They allow participants to explore togetherness and relationships in distinct ways, whether through the immediacy of eye contact, the gradual building of closeness, or the reliance on other senses. These varied setups provide rich experiences, encouraging participants to discover and understand the different dimensions of human interaction and connection.

00514  
drawing + constructing

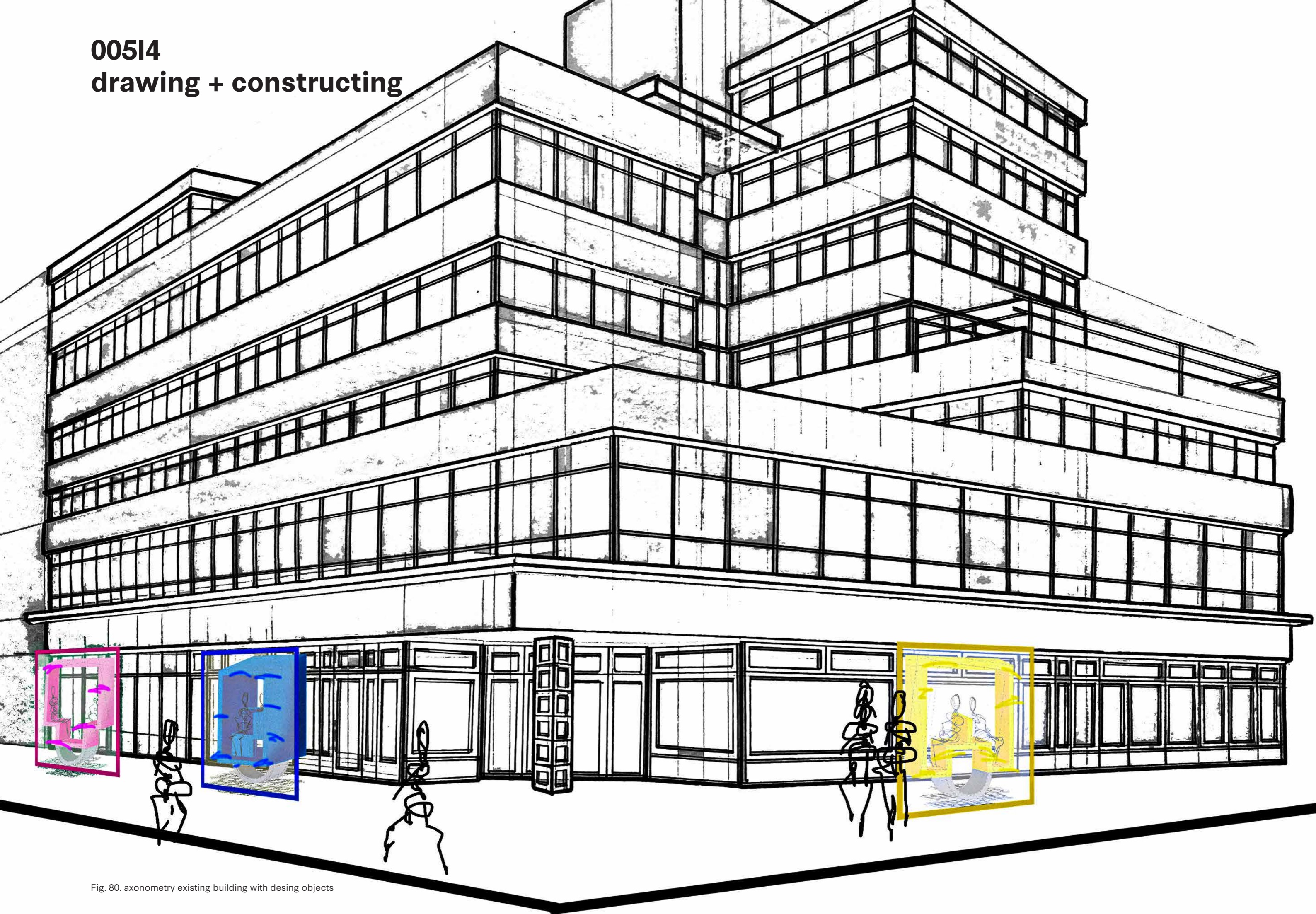


Fig. 80. axonometry existing building with desing objects

□ □

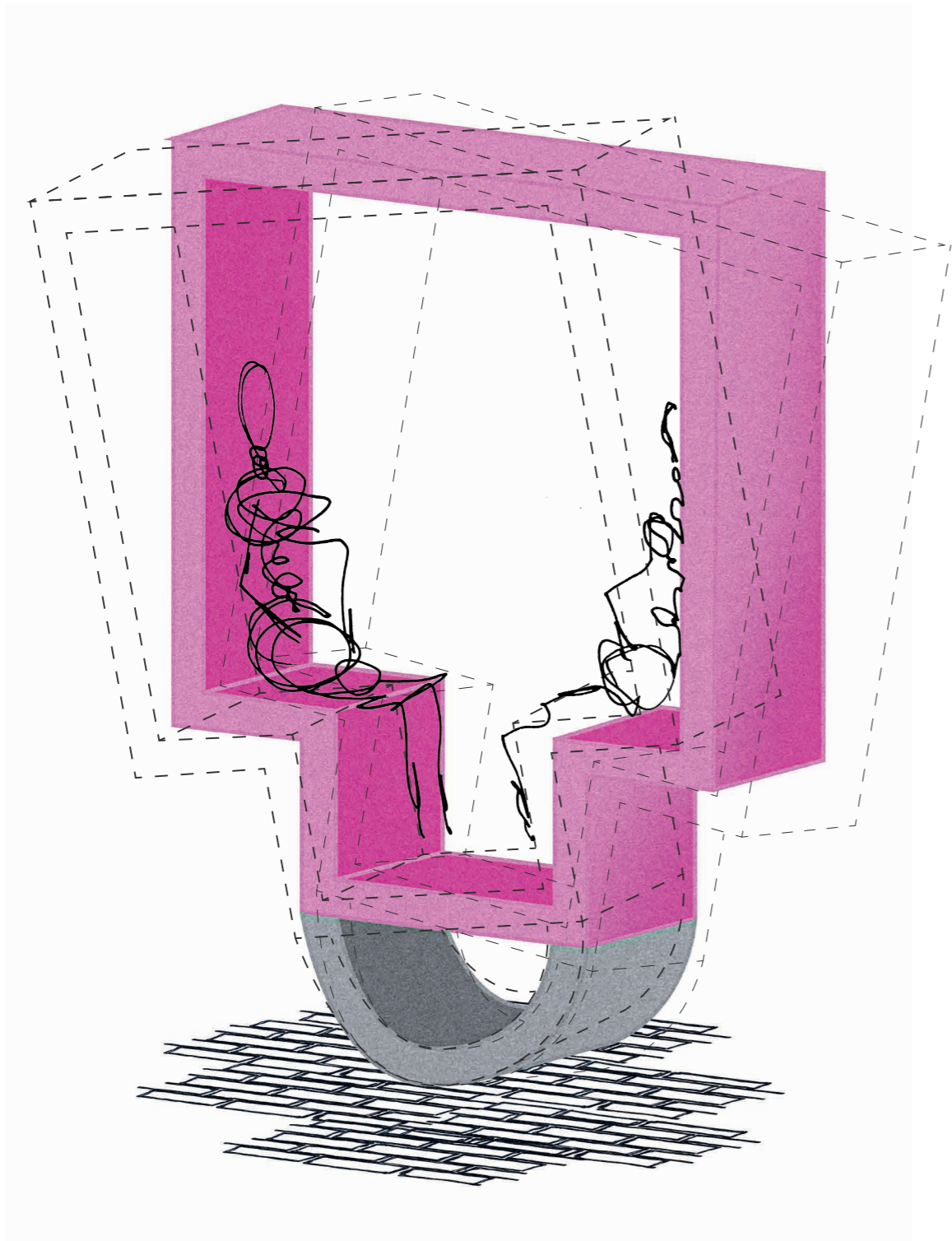


Fig. 80. annotated axonometry design object I

□ □

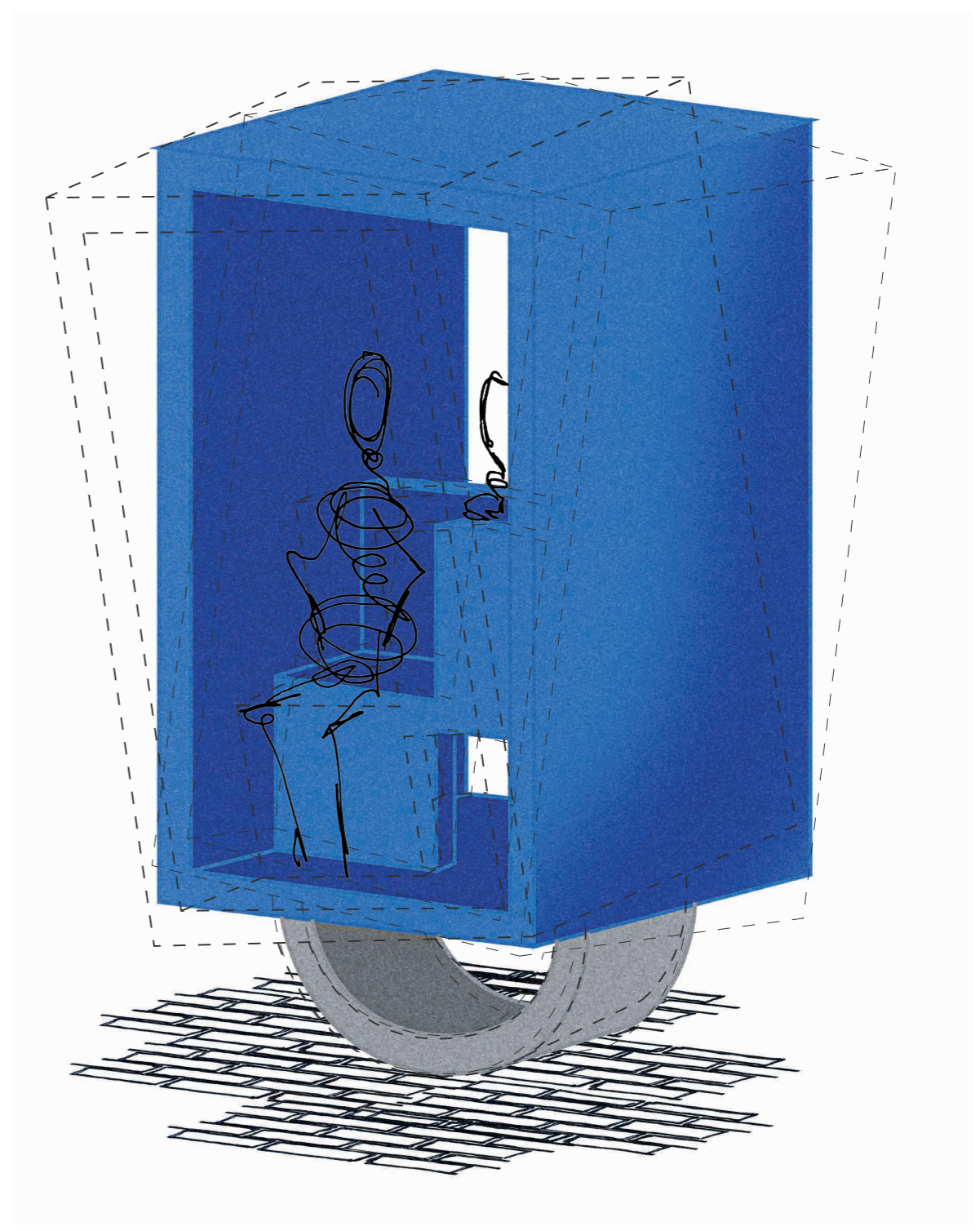


Fig. 81. annotated axonometry design object II

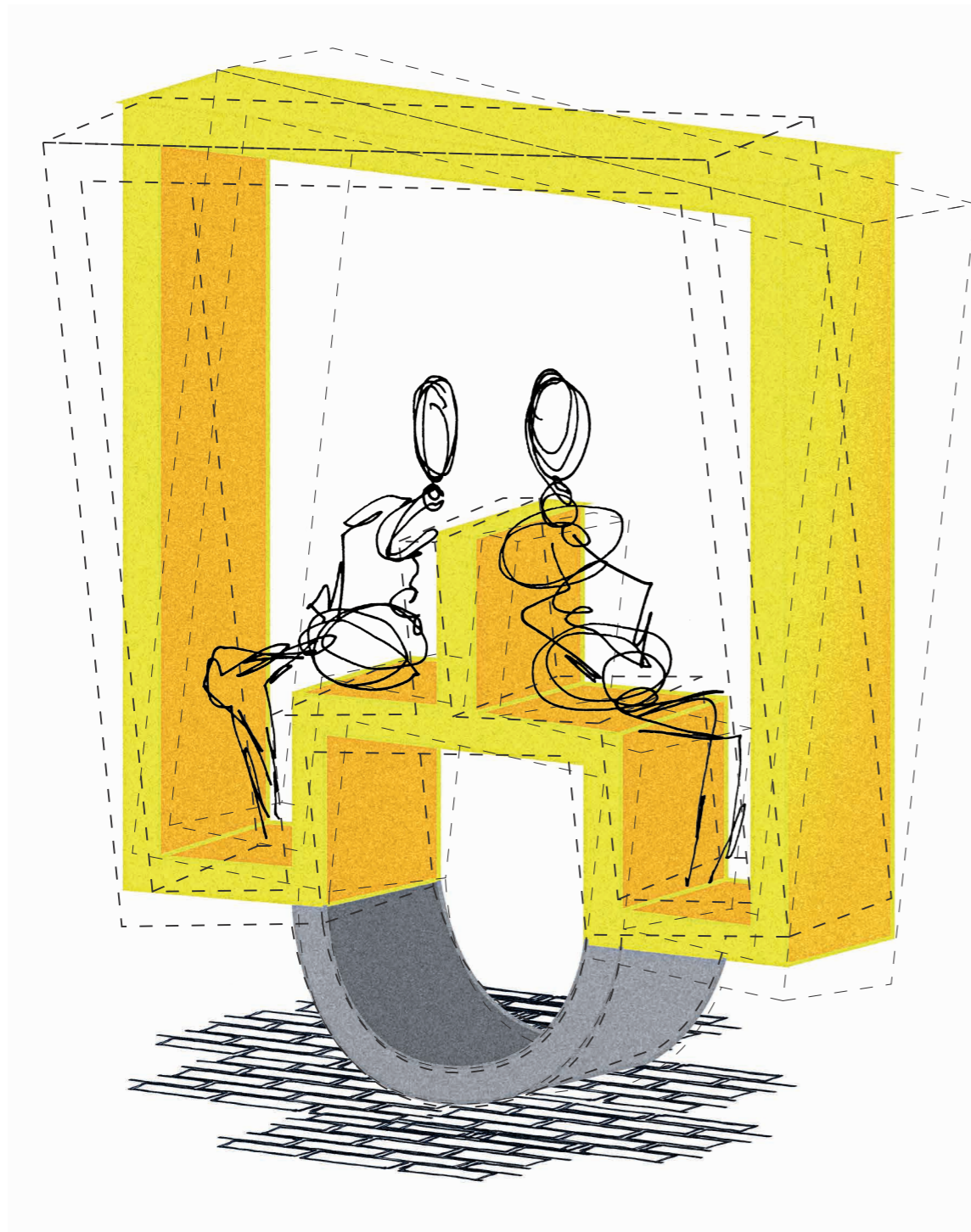
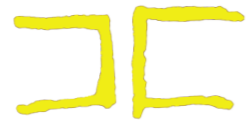


Fig. 82. annotated axonometry design object III

## balance + billboards

In this culminating workshop, participants actively interacted with a constructed prototype that embodied the essence of the three design objects. Through their engagement with three distinct scenarios, they not only sought balance within the object but also forged connections with one another. Concluding this phase of the laboratory a collaborative group discussion was convened.

This forum facilitated a reflective discourse concerning the relevance and resonance of the design objects. This dynamic interaction prompted deep reflection on the participants collective experience, resonating with the overarching goals established during the initial workshop.

### Objectives:

*Aimed to test the entire design object, including different seating configurations and interactive elements, in reminiscence of the goals defined in the first workshop.*

### Prototype Construction and Adaptations:

*Constructed a simple prototype using an OSB board, two chairs, a balancing element and chalk. Wall serves as a canvas.*

*Initial set up was altered during experimentation with active participation of the participants.*

### Conclusion:

*Concluded with a group discussion on the objects' relevance to initial workshop goals.*



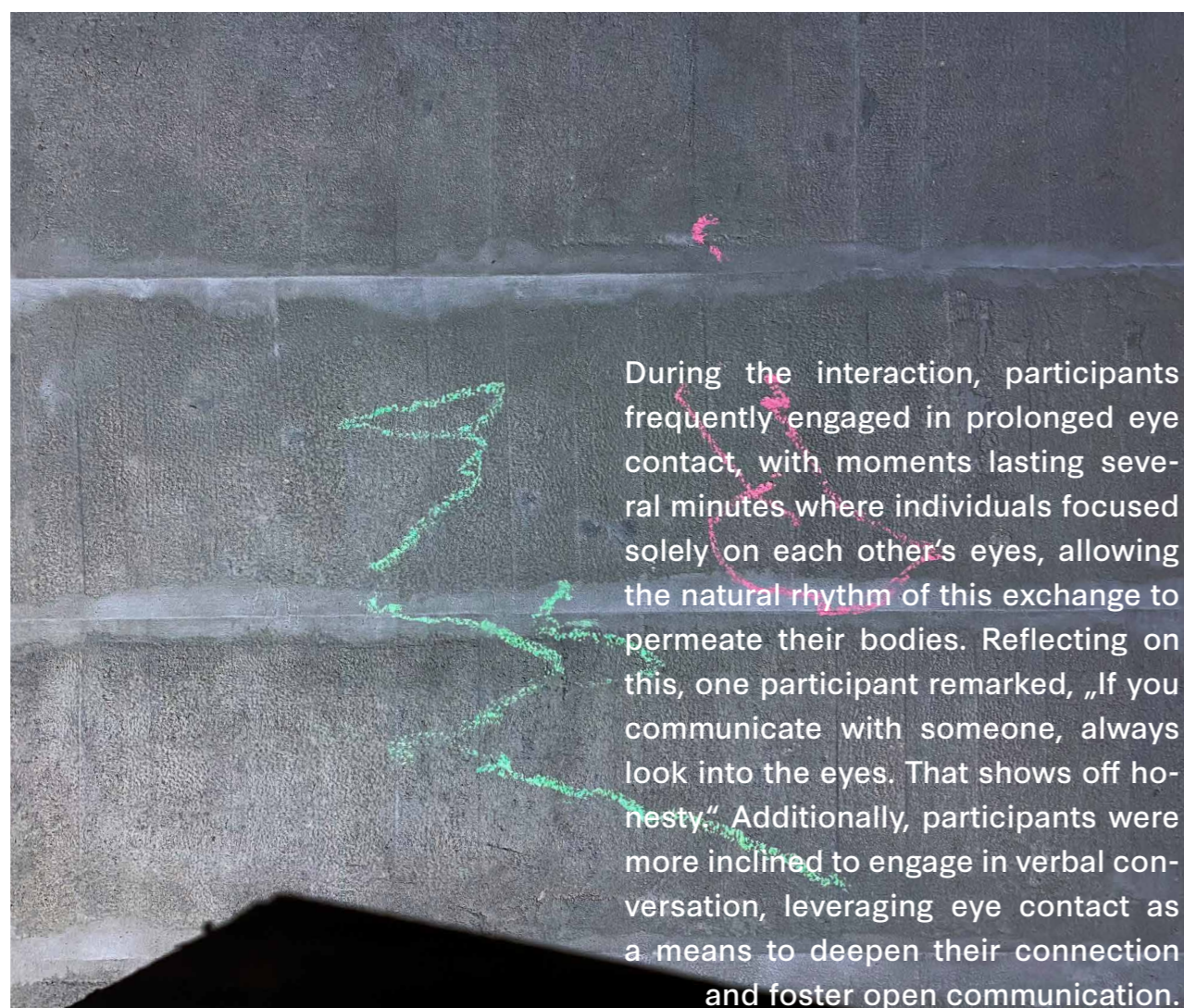
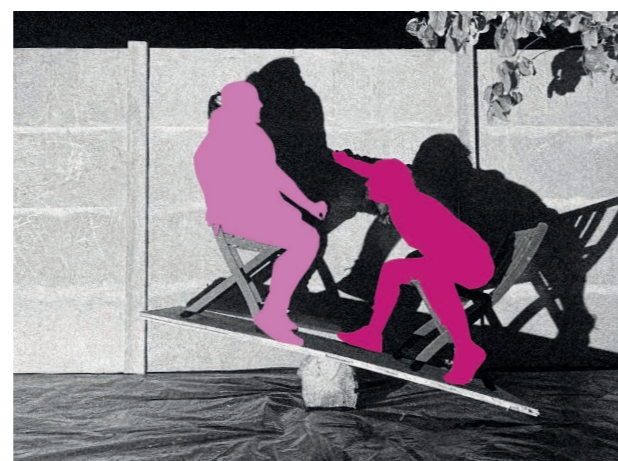
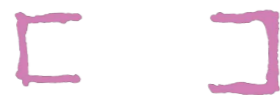


Fig. 83-85. series design object I

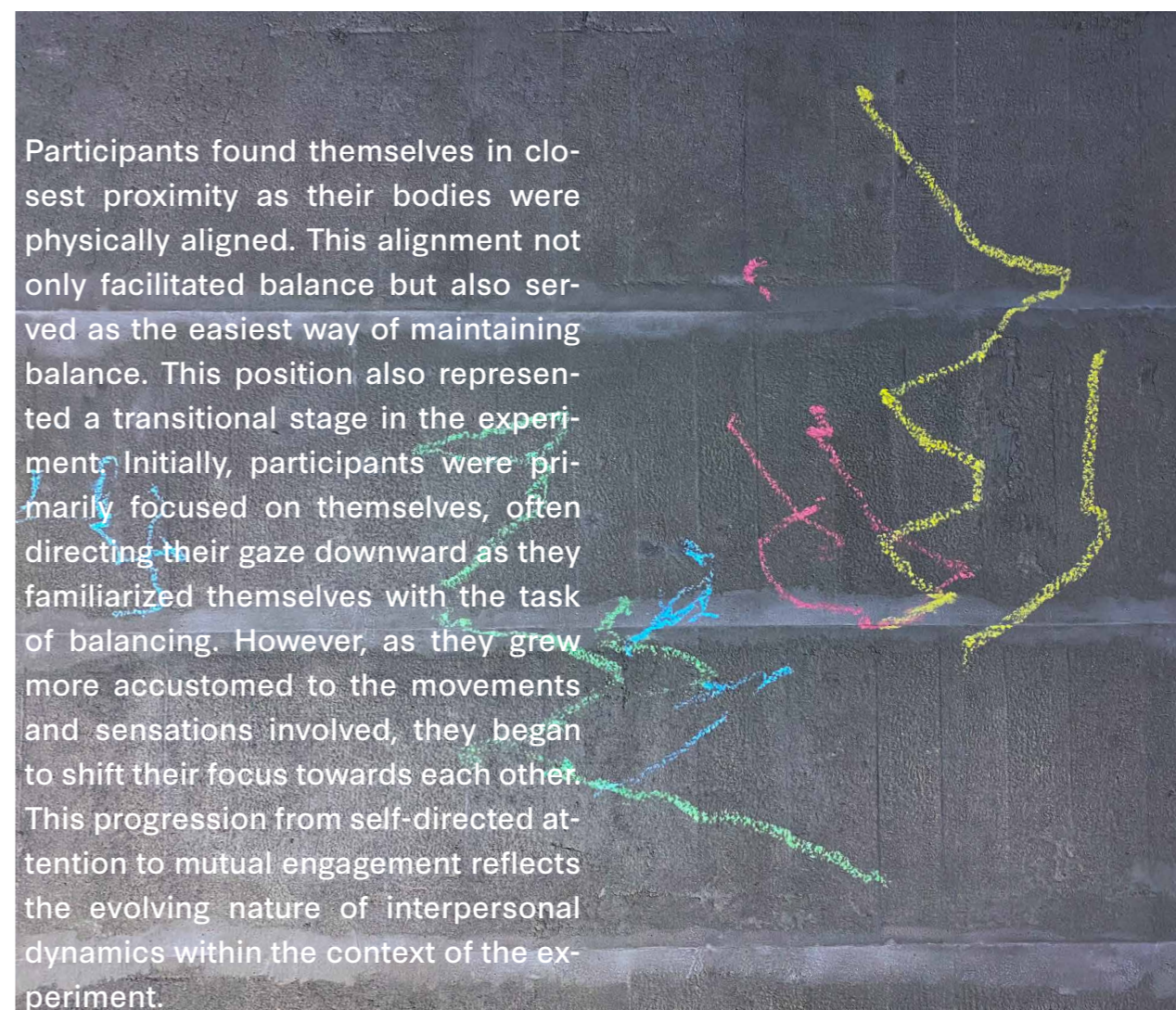
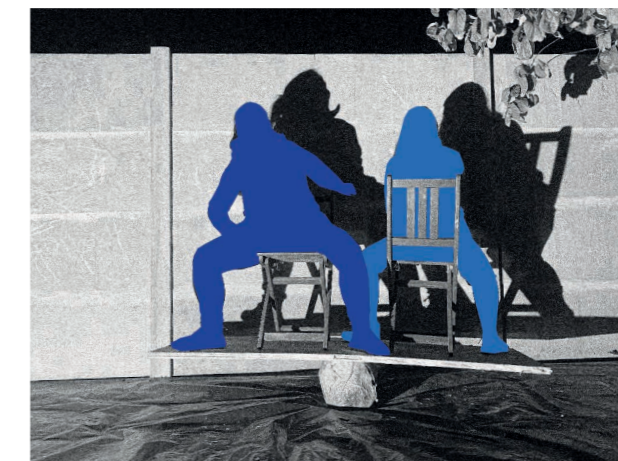


Fig. 86-88. series design object II

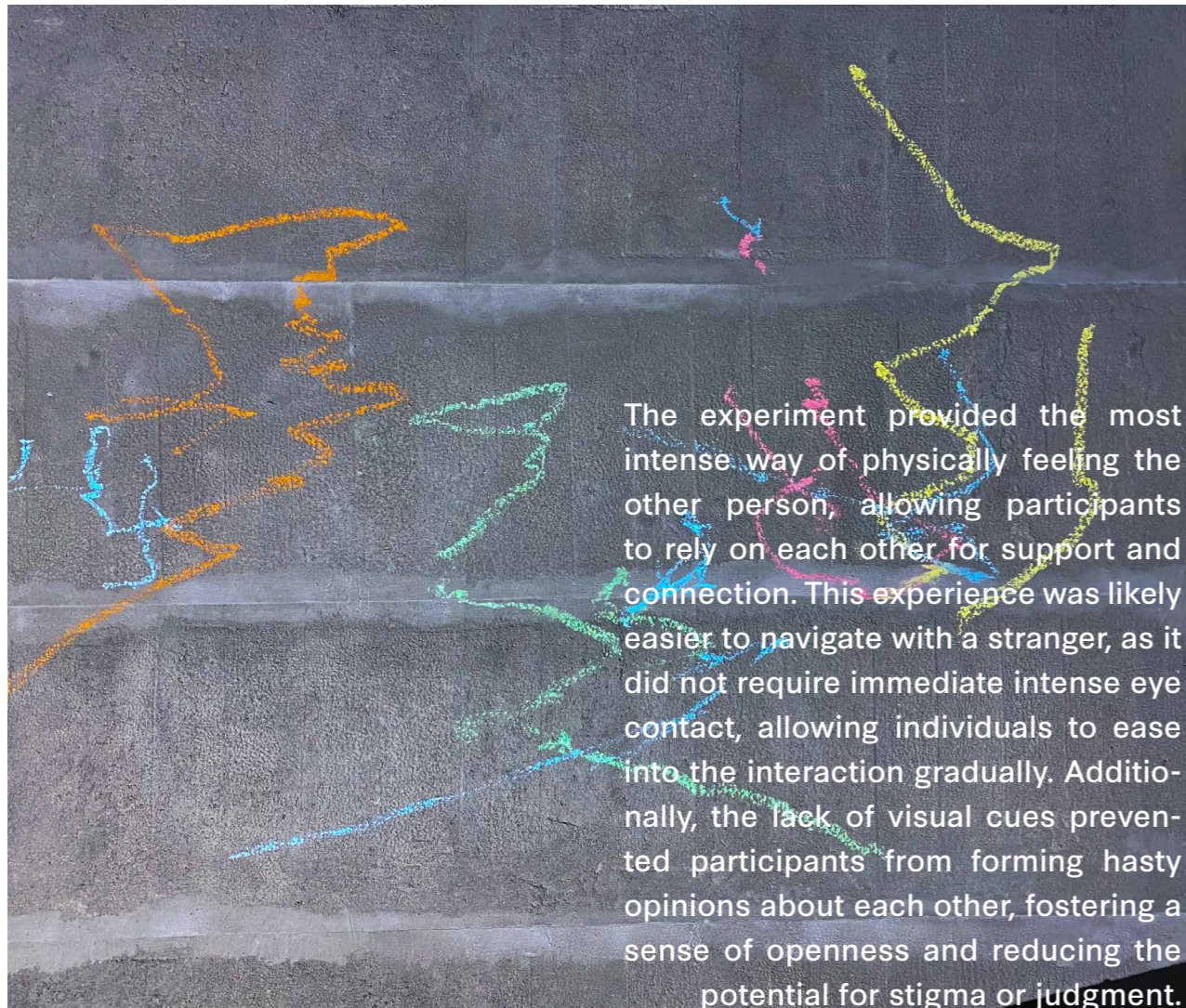
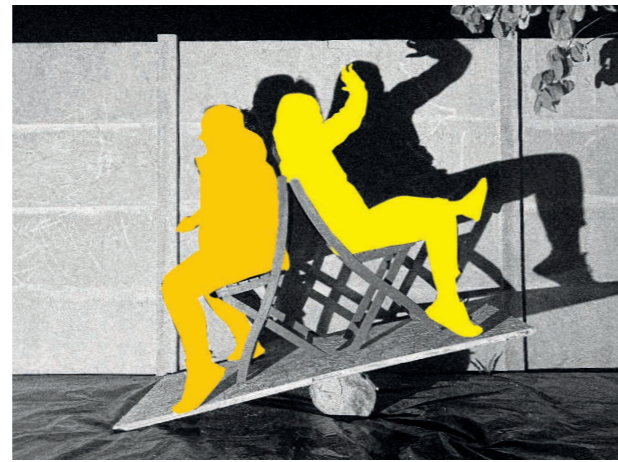
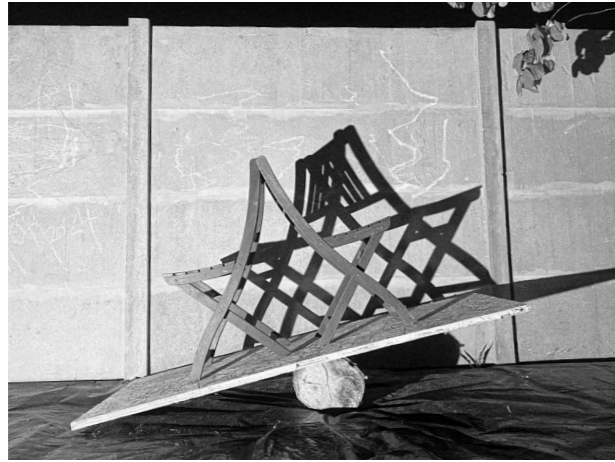


Fig. 89-91. series design object III

take aways

The exercise provided a novel yet effective avenue for acquainting oneself with another individual, offering a unique opportunity for meaningful interaction. Initially, participants found the design object and its purpose somewhat irritating in first encounter. However, after actively engaging with both the object and each other, their perceptions underwent a significant shift. They came to appreciate the object as a valuable tool for fostering engagement and connection among themselves. Furthermore, the experience prompted rich discussions surrounding topics of togetherness, as well as individual and mutual reflection.

*Topics discussed alongside: Reflections on the experience revealed an unanimous preference against the involvement of a professional assistant to the performance. Participants expressed concerns that such an observer would detract from the authenticity of the interaction, leading them to feel self-conscious and inhibited.*

Participants envision the canvas as a continuum, transporting it from one object to the next to reflect the evolving stages of togetherness. Each canvas serves as an artistic visualization of their journey in getting to know each other, with one canvas dedicated to each interaction rather than one per object.

The following discussion brought forward the vision of three distinct seating arrangements, where participants explore varying levels of intimacy, progressing from initial acquaintance to deeper connection. The first object positions individuals back to back, providing a comfortable starting point for interaction, particularly with strangers, as participants begin to acquaint themselves with each other through physical sensation.

The second object, a next to each other situation, brings individuals closer together, enabling the opportunity for eye contact and deeper connection. Finally, the third object positions individuals facing each other, fostering intense eye contact and a sense of trust between participants.

All the participants described the experiment as a shared experience and exploration of togetherness, highlighting the sense of empathy, sensitivity and acceptance fostered among them through the experience.

# 00516

## reflecting

project

The questions the thesis seeks to answer are:

How can protecting and embracing ugliness in architecture within the city scape, be a tool towards a heterogeneous society?

and

How can changing how to move and behave within space, alter one's assessment to and perception of space?

The thesis has adopted a process-oriented methodology, allowing its evolution to be guided by emerging insights, thus shaping its trajectory and ultimate conclusions. Through this approach, it has become evident that the initial research question has been addressed significantly. The explora-

tion has revealed that performance architecture, incorporating elements of architectural ugliness, serves as a potent catalyst for fostering vital societal values such as tolerance, empathy, and mutual responsibility—essential ingredients for nurturing a diverse and inclusive society.

Furthermore, while the focus has shifted slightly from the initial inquiry, the second question has also been effectively tackled. This shift towards an outcome centered on fostering togetherness, rather than purely on spatial dynamics, reframes the investigation. It prompts us to reconsider not just how behavior shapes our perception of space, but also how the built environment itself can influence behaviors. This expanded perspective underscores the transformative potential of ugliness and performance architecture, not only in redefining spatial experiences but also in fostering more cohesive and diverse communities.

process

The journey of this project transcended mere academic exploration, delving deep into personal growth and introspection. It pushed me to confront my own biases, step outside my comfort zone, and engage with unfamiliar territories, both intellectually and emotionally. This internal evolution was pivotal in the selection of my thesis topic, as I aimed for the research process to be a vehicle for holistic development, enriching both my personal and professional realms.

However, I encountered several obstacles along the way, particularly in engaging with stakeholders who were unwilling to communicate, firstly hindering my efforts to grasp the complexities of the subject matter. Despite these challenges, the diverse methods of inquiry employed enabled a multifaceted exploration of the site, offering valuable insights from a different perspective.

This project has served as a profound awakening,

prompting a critical reevaluation of entrenched and implicit behaviors and beliefs that shape our daily lives. While the proposed design solution may not offer a definitive resolution to the site's complex challenges, it serves as a powerful catalyst for reexamining behaviours and norms and raising awareness about the hardships associated with separation, intolerance, and neglect of the non-normative. Together, these elements have crafted an immersive experience that challenges conventional notions of togetherness and fosters a deeper understanding of inclusivity and acceptance.

continuation

Originally, the plan was to culminate the thesis project with an on-site exhibition, showcasing the process findings and effectively communicating the results. Additionally, it aimed to present a prototype for on-site experimentation, offering a deeper exploration of the second research question in alignment with the site's context. However, as the project progressed, it became evident that time constraints posed a challenge in curating a comprehensive on-site exhibition. Looking ahead in a hypothetical scenario, the next step would involve collaborating with the art gallery to curate the exhibition, potentially showcasing the drawn canvases as part of the display. This exhibition could offer a unique perspective on the traces of social interaction, highlighting the impact and significance of human connections portrayed through artistic expression.

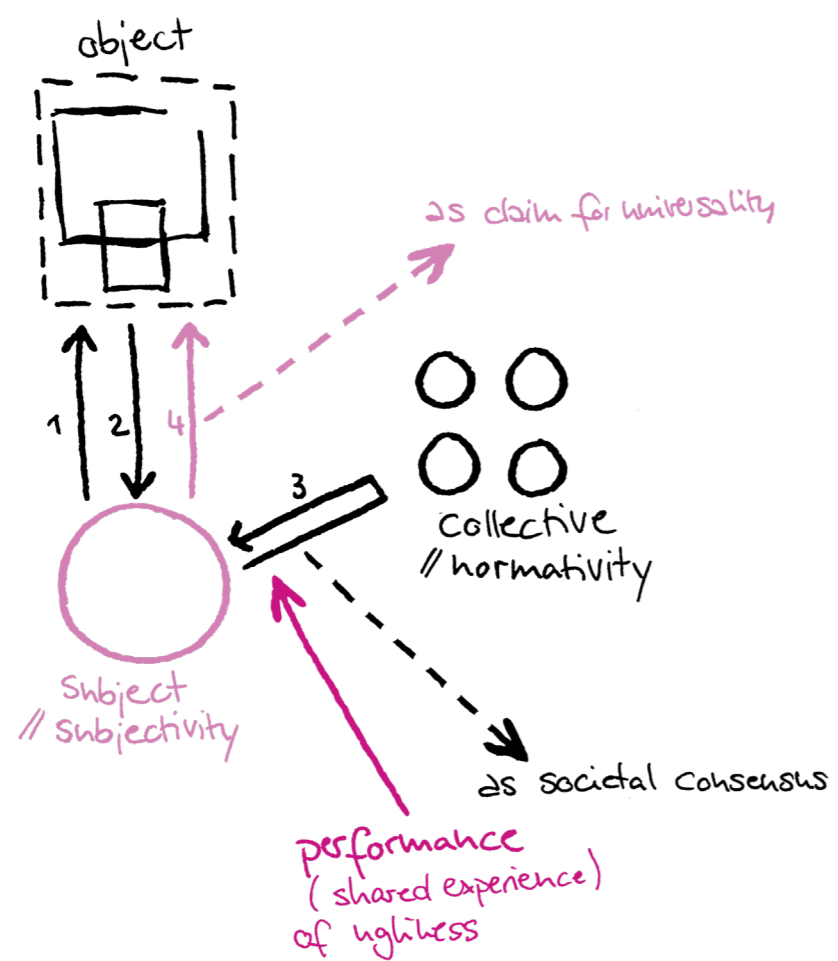
the site + wider scope

By fostering a shift in perceptions surrounding ugliness or anti-normativity, from being viewed negatively to being seen as avenues for inclusivity and understanding, behavioral patterns have the potential to undergo significant transformation. Embracing a different approach to so-called „ugly“ or anti-normative architecture not only secures the preservation of this identity-defining structure but also upholds the importance of the safe environ-

ment it offers for sex workers to conduct their work. This shift in perspective not only protects the physical building but also promotes a more compassionate and accepting societal mindset towards diverse forms of expression and identity.

This project served as an exploration of the unknown potentials inherent in anti-normative structures, aiming to inspire other initiatives and approaches to adopt strategies of inquiry and transformation. By encouraging similar efforts to protect both architectural landmarks and marginalized communities, it contributes to the preservation of a city's identity and diversity in both its urban and social fabric.

# outro



- 1- impression of object
- 2- affect of irritation
- 3- reassurance through assumption of shared cognitive faculties
- 4- empathy + tolerance

Fig. 92. redefined process of aesthetic judgement

00A -references  
 00B -appendix



endnotes

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images

All images and graphic materials have been produced by the author, if not indicated otherwise.

## 00B appendix

# 00B-1 frame//workshop 1 people, positions + pens

April 6th 2024, 7-10pm

The focus group for this workshop was a mix of my friends. I envisioned the first session as a gentle warm-up, both among the participants and with the topic itself. We chose a date, time, and setting that made everyone feel comfortable, creating a relaxed, get-together atmosphere instead of a formal, rule-bound meeting. We all sat around a round table to foster an open exchange and ensure everyone felt equally valued.

I started by laying out the workshop structure, which everyone seemed interested in, even though I hadn't explained anything in advance, and no one had specific expectations. I emphasized that this was a shame-free space where no thought or idea is stupid. Everyone could ask questions at any time, and every idea was meaningful.

The intended structure was simple: I'd state the title of a category (e.g., tolerance and empathy), and everyone would note down their associations with these words for three minutes. Then, each person would share their notes and thoughts with the group. However, after the first category, we noticed many similar ideas. So, I shifted to an open discussion after note-taking, which turned out to be a great decision, fostering even more input and valuable exchange among participants. I wasn't just a discussion leader; I actively engaged in the conversations too.

Interestingly, some participants were initially hesitant to start taking notes, thinking the words were self-explanatory. They'd say things like, „Ugh, I really don't know what to write here. I have no idea.“ But after a few more seconds of reflection, everyone began to write something down. By the end of the workshop, participants appreciated how something that initially seemed banal could actually help reflect on everyday behavioral belief patterns.

Instead of just having boldly phrased aims for the design project, this workshop helped us delve deeply into the actual meaning and responsibilities associated with these aims. This approach set a solid foundation for the more detailed and complex explorations that would follow in the next phases of the project.

## 00B-2 frame//workshop 2 characters + chairs

April 13th 2024, 8-11pm

Initially, I wanted the space-related workshops to be on site. However, during the site visits, I encountered some tension with the owners of the sex shop and the gallery. I was even sent away from the property multiple times, so I had to rethink where to hold the workshop. I ended up arranging a neutral, placeless setting so readers of the final work could imagine it in relation to the actual site.

I set up the workshop in the backyard of the place I was living at during the project. Again the idea was to create a collaborative casual environment, rather than something stiff and formal. I laid out a big black tarp in front of a concrete wall and positioned two chairs in front of it. Since the sketching phase led me to propose a swinging object where two people could sit together, this workshop was about trying out different seating configurations and discussing and evaluating them based on the goals we developed during the first workshop. Ultimately six predefined seating configurations were chosen to test during the workshop in order to define one, that will be applied to the design proposal.

Participants divided into pairs and took turns experiencing each setup. Initially, they were a bit hesitant, but after engaging with the different setups, they really got into lively discussions about the different perceptions of togetherness within each configuration.

I had planned to take notes on the participants' experiences, but the observers also took initiative and expressed their opinions on what they observed, which provided valuable input.

We wrapped up the experimentation with a final group discussion. We collectively decided that instead of choosing just one seating configuration, three stood out with their own unique potentials and were interesting choices to further explore in the project.

The experimentation was documented by photographs taken by myself. I discussed that beforehand with all the participants. They raised concerns, that they don't want their face to be displayed in the work so we agreed on anonymizing the bodies and faces in the pictures. During the final discussion, all participants agreed, that they felt much more free in moving and expressing, as they knew they won't be recognizable in the pictures, which helped the overall experience.

## 00B-3 frame//workshop 3 balance + billboards

April 27th 2024, 8-11pm

The setup for this last workshop was the same as the second one. After finalizing the design proposal in the drawing stage, this workshop aimed to test the entire object—a combination of different seating configurations for two people and the act of swinging or balancing to draw an abstract picture.

We discussed beforehand how the results would be presented in the final work, and everyone agreed to follow the same approach we used in the second workshop.

I put together a simple prototype using a board, something rounded to balance on, and two chairs. The board was an OSB board, 30mm thick, 1.80m long, and 70cm wide, sized to hold two people comfortably. These dimensions were chosen to work with the different seating setups that were put to test. The chairs weren't attached to the board, allowing to switch configurations easily during the workshop. Initially I tried using a bouncy ball as the round element for the board to balance on, but it was too unstable, making the board swing in all directions. So, I switched to a birch tree trunk with a 30cm diameter, which provided better stability due to its imperfect roundness. I had planned to attach chalk to the chairs as an equivalent for the pens in the design proposal, but this setup was unstable and the chalk broke. So, we improvised and had the participants hold the chalk in their hands. The concrete wall served as a canvas for that drawing.

First, the participants practiced on an experimentation wall to get familiar with the task. Then we moved on to the final wall, to capture the process. Once again the object was met with irritation by the participants, however after engaging with it, served to be a valuable tool for reflecting on togetherness. I took notes on their experiences and also on the observers' feedback.

We wrapped up this final workshop with a group discussion about the objects and how they related to the goals we set in the first workshop. Looking ahead, these objects might be build in full scale and tested on site with passersby, possibly collaborating with the art gallery.

