Frames & lenses

AZA Conference – August 2025

Felicity Atekpe
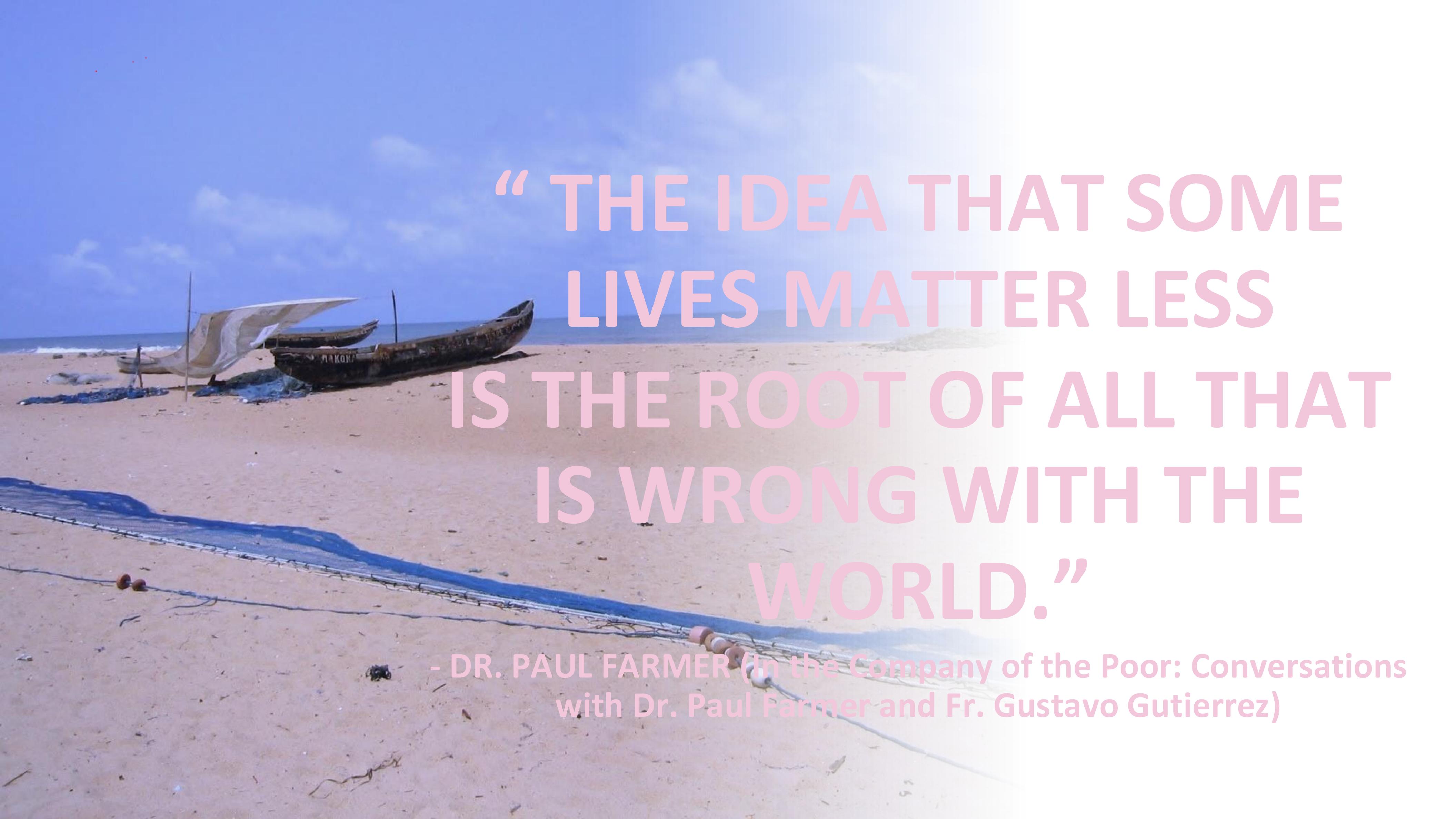
" THE IDEA THAT SOME
LIVES MATTER LESS
IS THE ROOT OF ALL THAT
IS WRONG WITH THE
WORLD."

- DR. PAUL FARMER (In the Company of the Poor: Conversations
with Dr. Paul Farmer and Fr. Gustavo Gutierrez)

United kingdom
London
Kent
Cambridge

France
Paris

Ghana
Tsito, Volta Region

Ethiopia
Addis Ababa
Shashamane
Diko Dalle

United states
Boca Grande, Florida

Denmark
Aarhus

Ireland
Dublin

Finland
Tampere
Helsinki

south Africa
Johannesburg
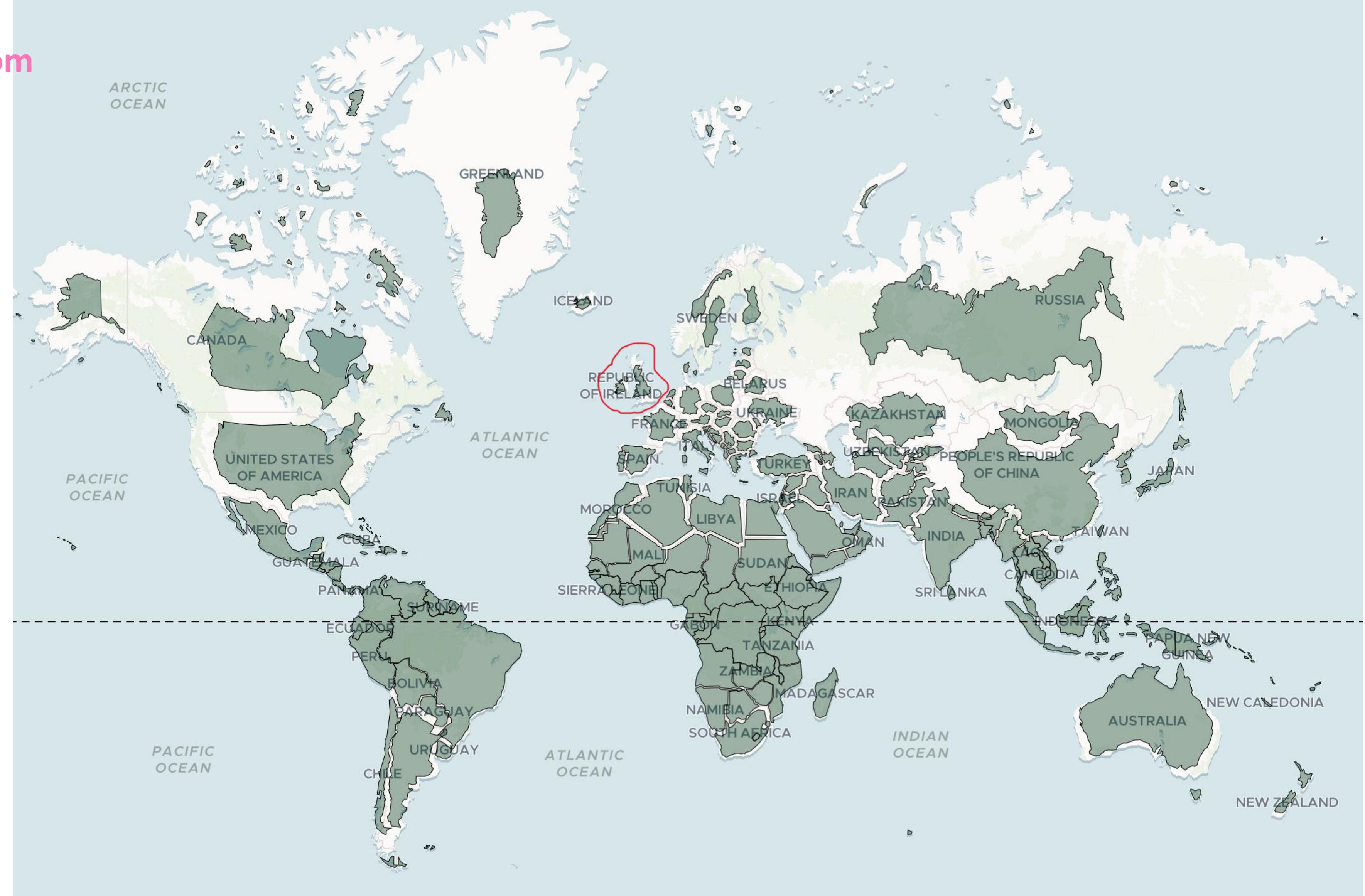
Who I am/

Ewe
Dzelukope / Keta
Volta Region
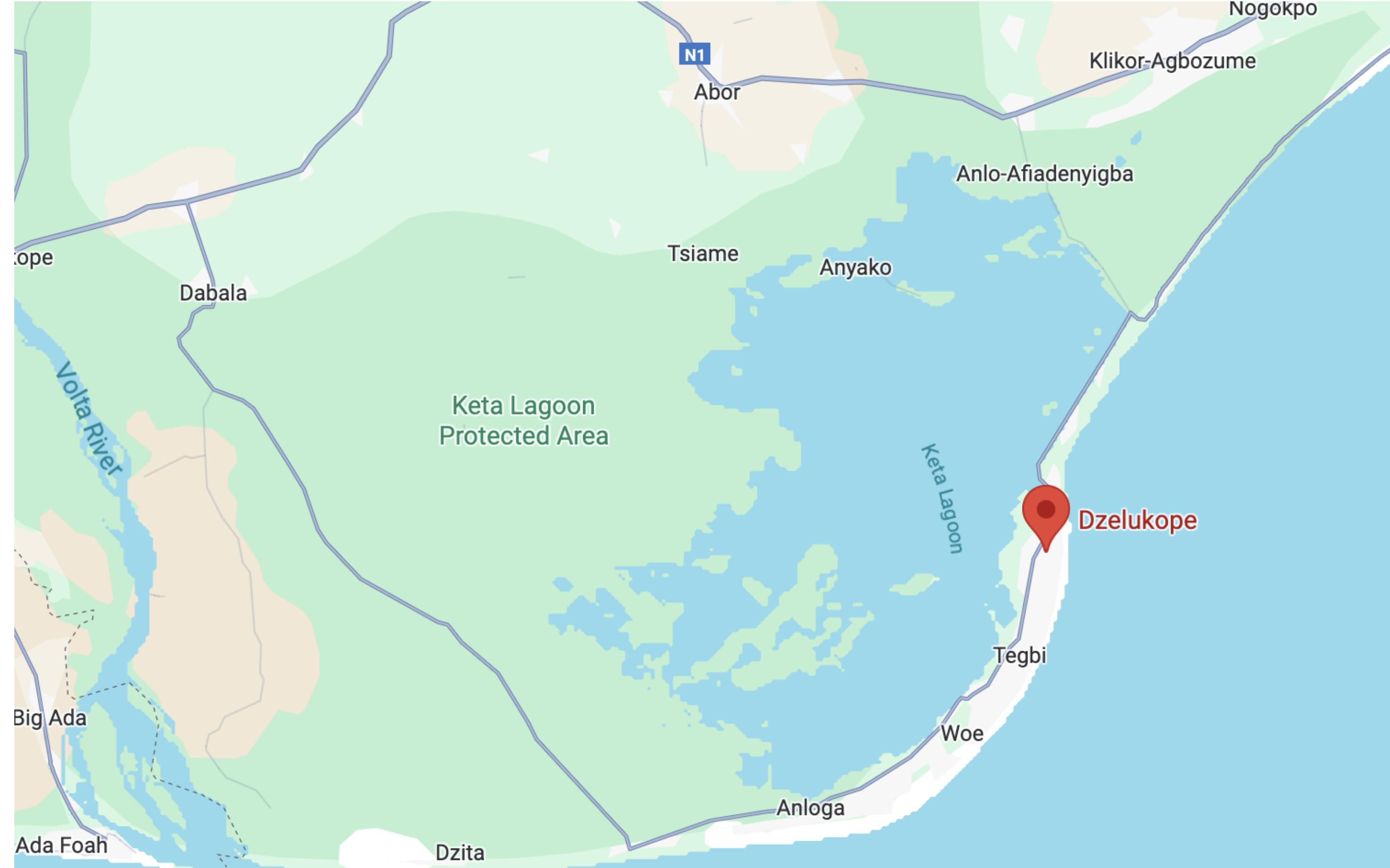
PRACTICE FIELDNOTES

## Anthropological, collaborative practice

whitetable

Bright Future School/

"We cannot tire or give up. We owe it to the present and future generations of all species to rise up and walk."

Prof. Wangari Maathai

New School for The Green Belt Movement with Sister Tibebwa Selassie Heckett

Wendo Genet, Ethiopia 2002
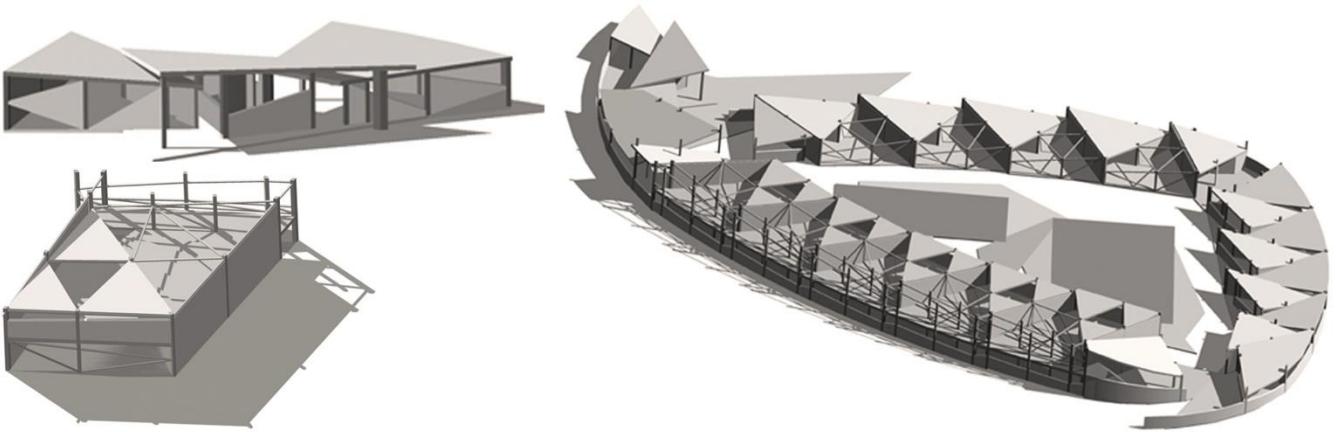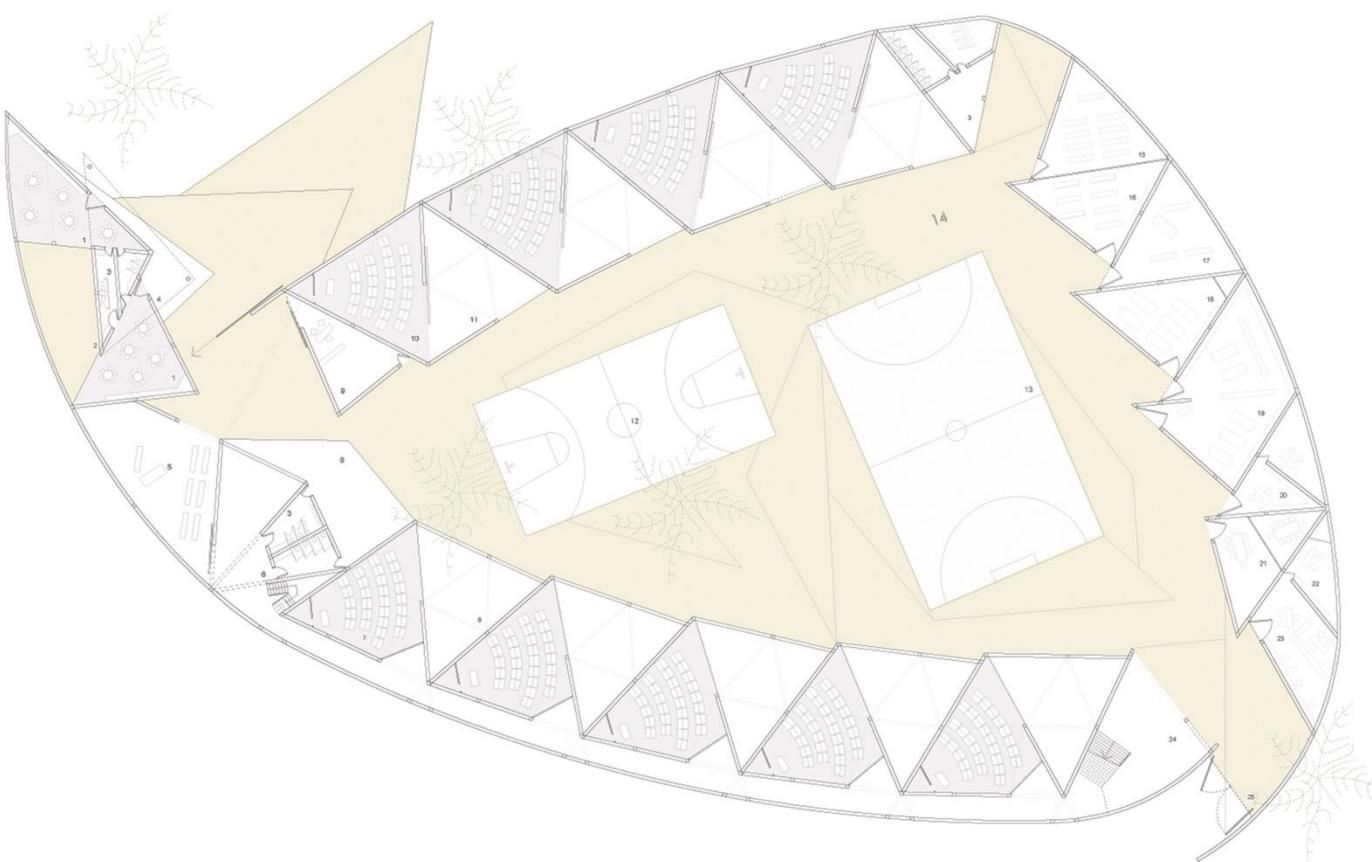
Mother's House/

"A good house is like a small city; a city is like a large house"
Aldo Van Eyck

The exploded mud hut and extended family house for orphans

Tsito, Volta Region, Ghana, 2004

KEY
1 - Boys House
2 - Girls House
3 - Babies/Toddlers House
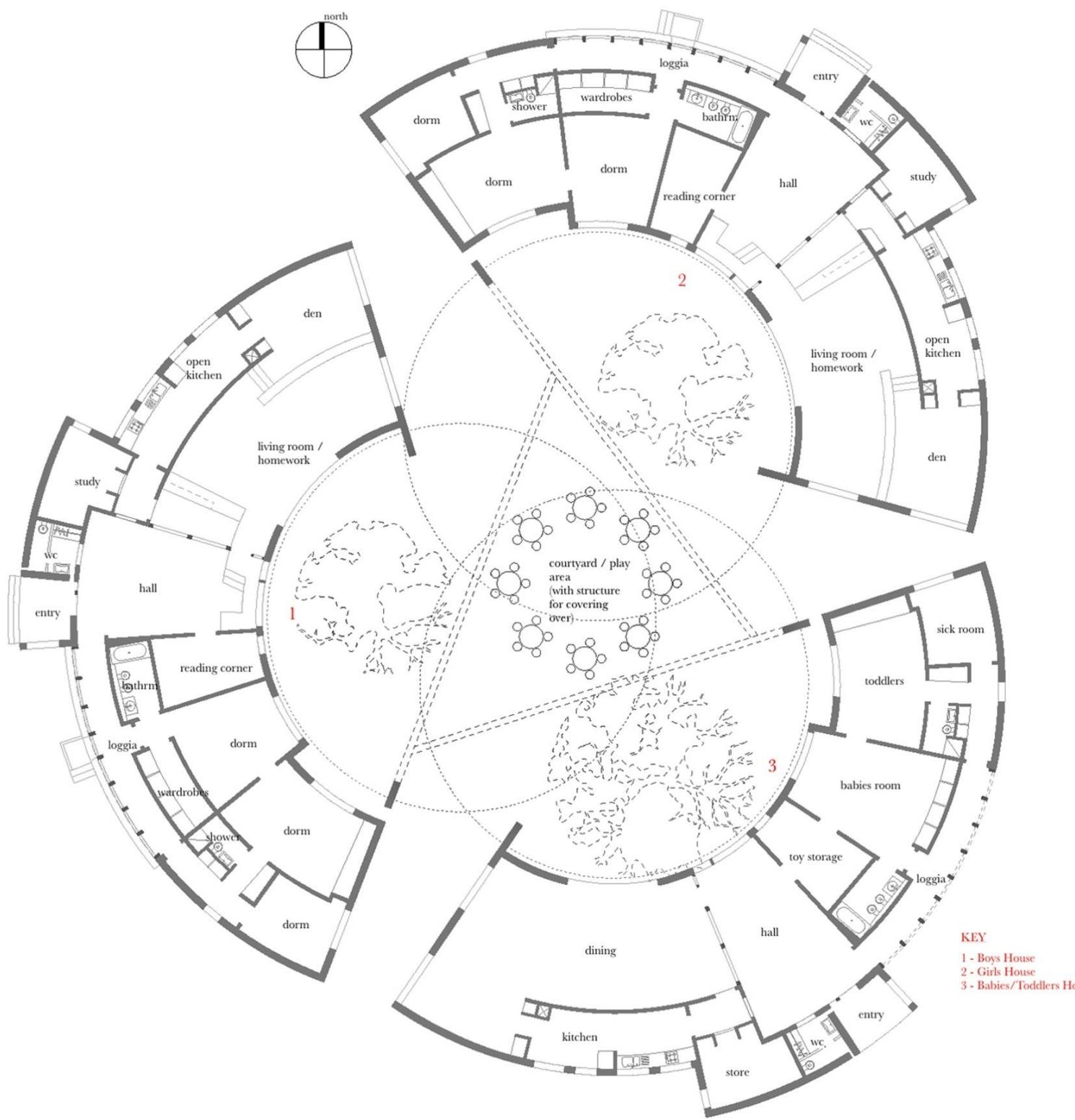
White Table (2002 – 2022)
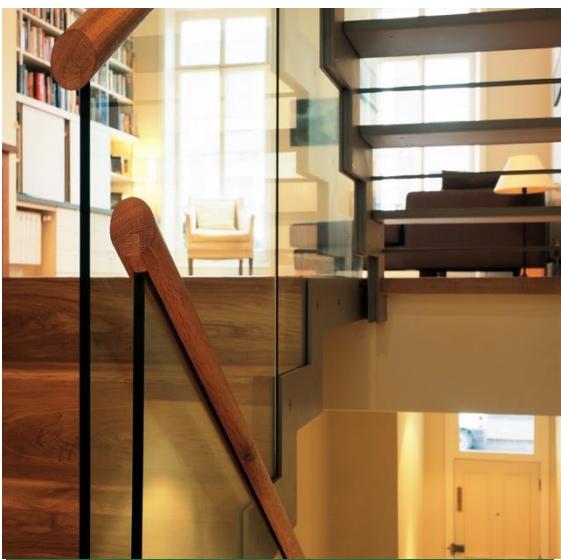
Moreton Street
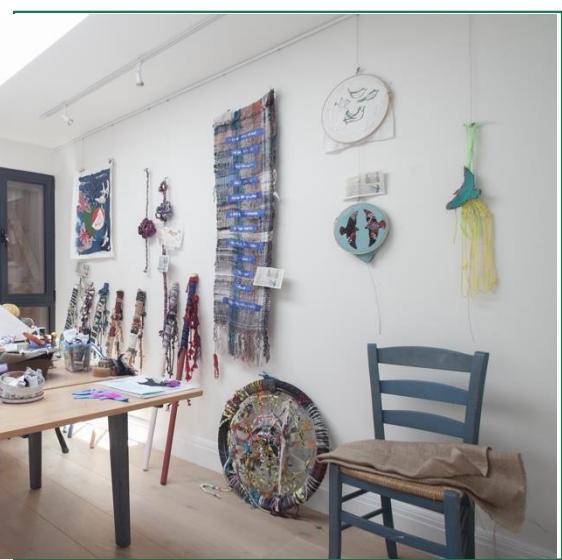
Florida In Tankerton

Budget Council Flat

Dickens was 'Ere!

Harbour Life
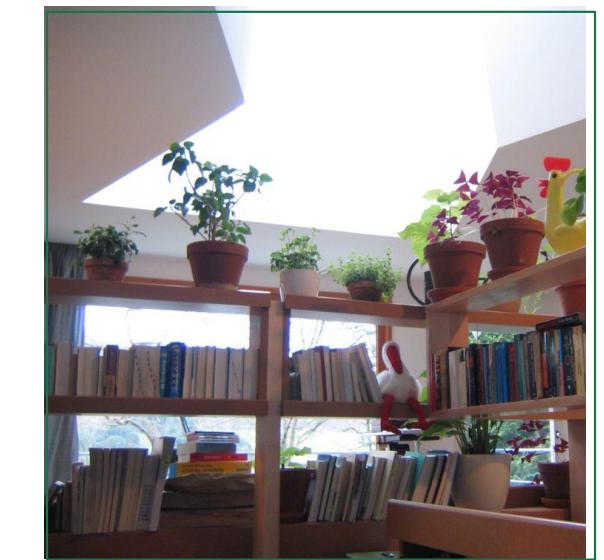
Lightcatcher
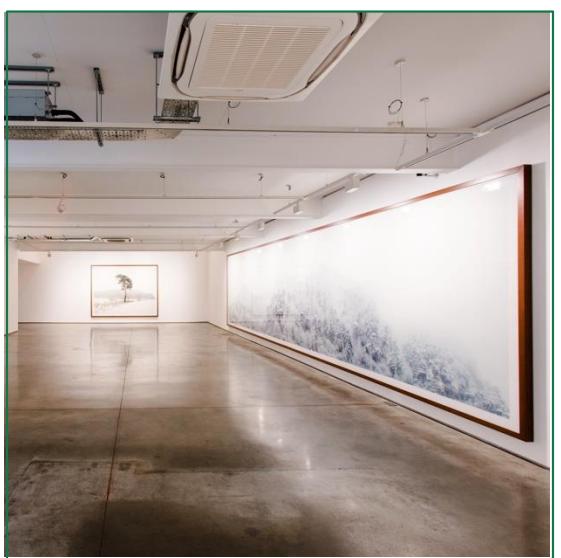
Image 7
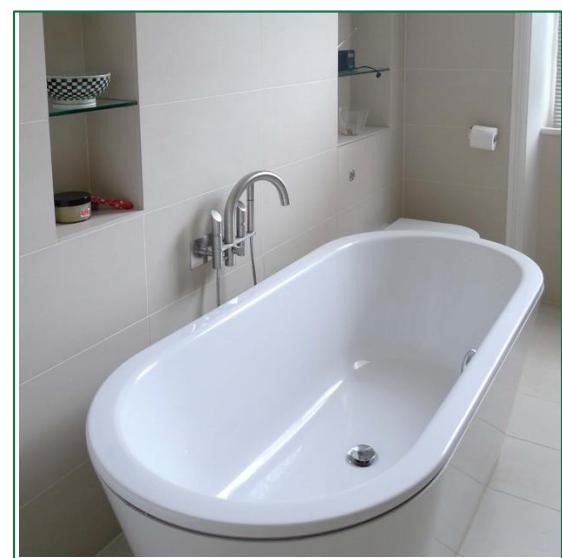
Nordic Light

Three Cups Yard
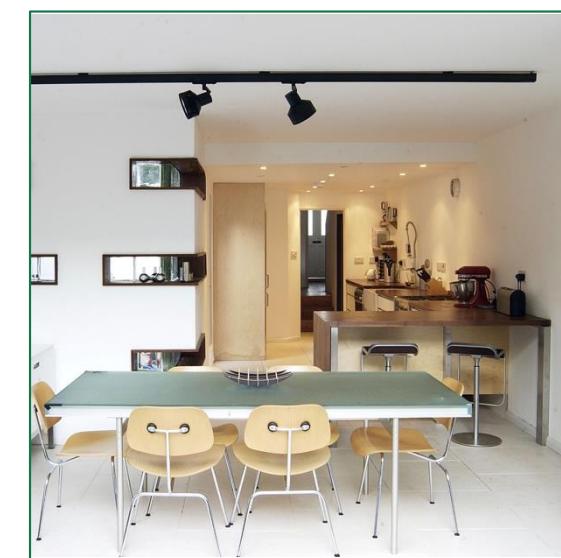
House for an Engineer

Whitehall Court
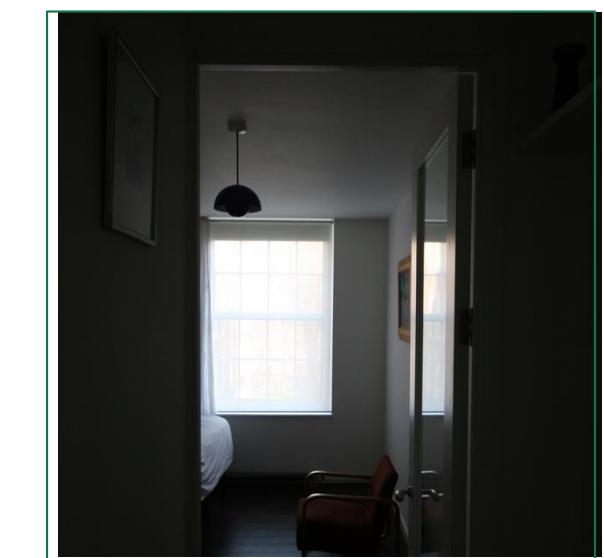
Budget Council Flat 2

Everyday Landscapes

Dam-if-ino
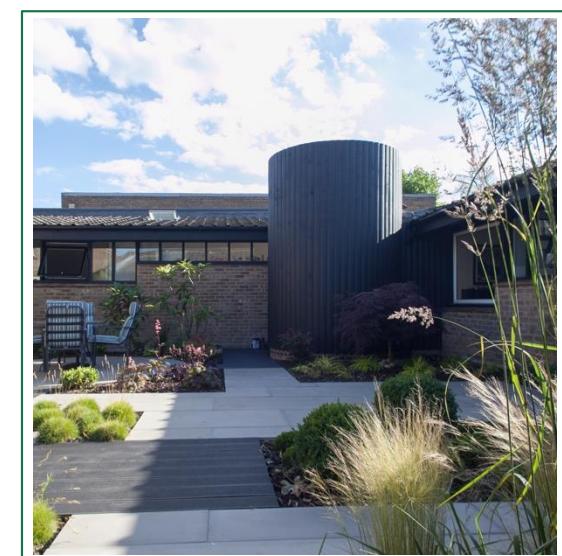
Star Catcher
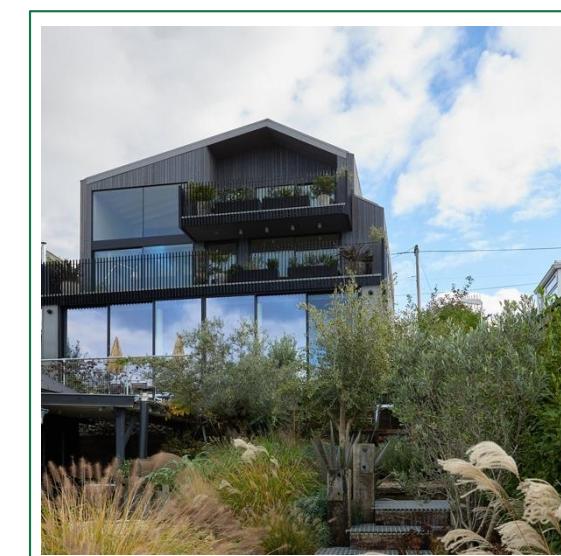
Whitstable Boys

Beach Life / Barn Life

Morning Light

Mood Makers

Dam-if-ino

2013

Architects: Felicity Atekpe, Jasmina Dragisic, Sara Shafiei, Karl Unglaub
Main Contractor: SunTech Builders
Photography: Mitzi de Margary

This project for sailing enthusiasts on an island. It has been about getting the materials to site and building to withstand hurricanes rather than the current local practice of assuming that everything built will fall down after 3 bad hurricanes. The clients were interested in whiteness, opacity, transience and diffusion. (In close collaboration with Pete Sangar, SunTech Builders,

Location: Boca Grande, Florida, USA

First floor terrace
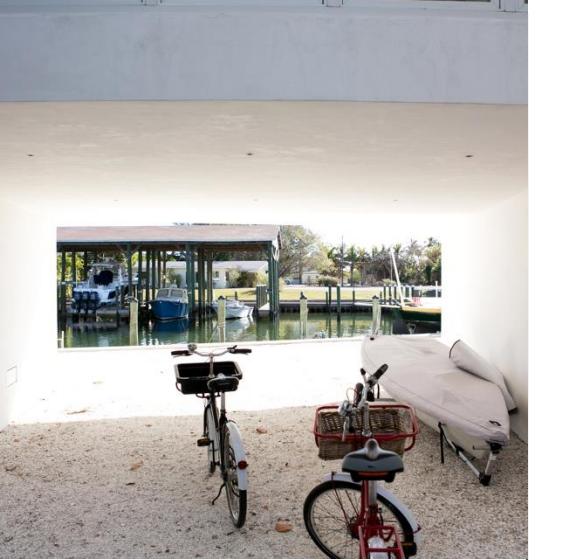
Ground Store
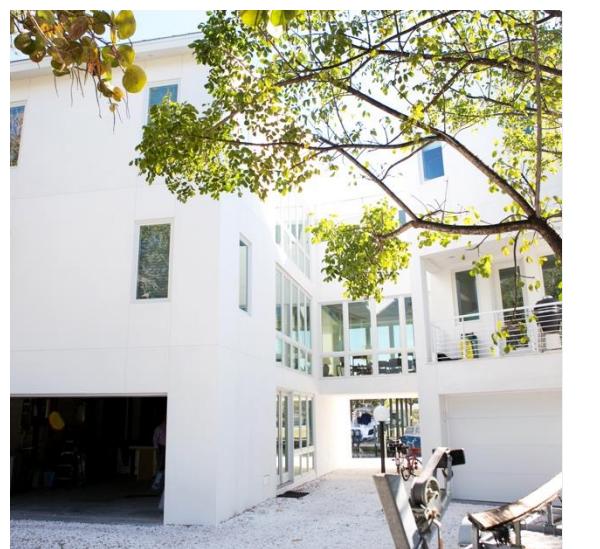
Entry

Architect's View

Mood Catchers

Lightcatcher -

2006
Architects: Karl Unglaub, Felicity Atekpe
Main Contractor: Tecta
Photography: Karl Unglaub

Re-organisation of a mediocre 1960s house by key insertions:
Rooflight, alcove window transforming the upper space.

Location: Bad Karlshafen, Hessen. Germany
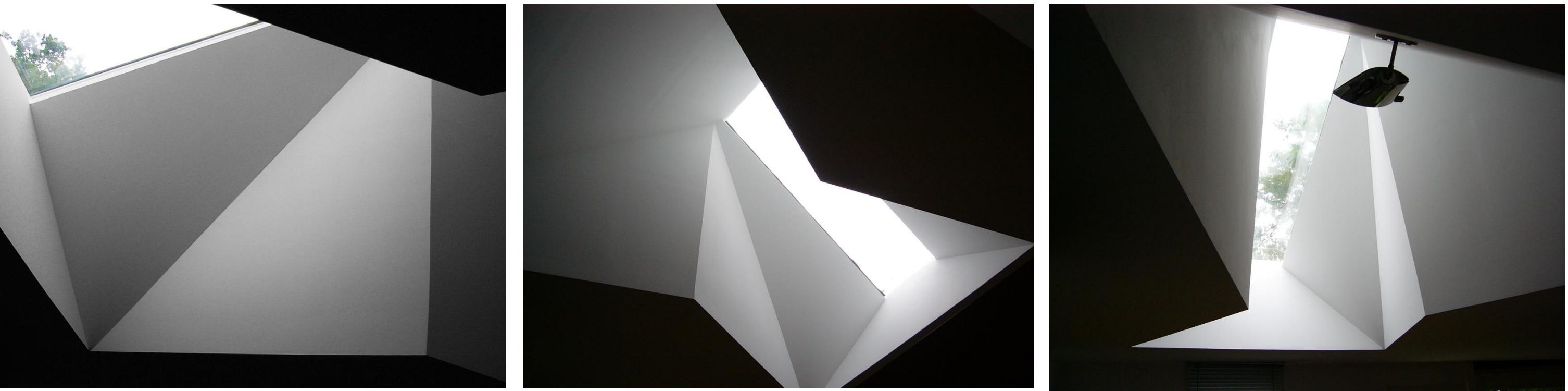
Times Kitchen

Sunday Times Commission

- The **Interior** is the lived experience of architectural spaces through the study of architectural spatial types, surfaces and objects.

- **Design** is a focus on images rather than metaphors. We understand space through immediacy rather than hidden meanings.

- **Environment** capture both total worlds and the intimacy of personal experience.

- We should all recognise ourselves in the spaces we design and in the people who design them in **architecture** at all scales.

PRACTICING RESEARCH
(Un)equal lives, (un)equal outcomes: visioning the future

Research Focus /

"Our task is to make trouble, to stir up potent response to devastating events, as well as to settle troubled waters and rebuild quiet places"

"Staying with the Trouble" insists on working, playing and thinking in multispecies cosmopolitics in the face of the killing of entire ways of being on earth that characterise the age cunningly called 'now' and the place called 'here'"

Donna Haraway, Staying with the Trouble (2016)
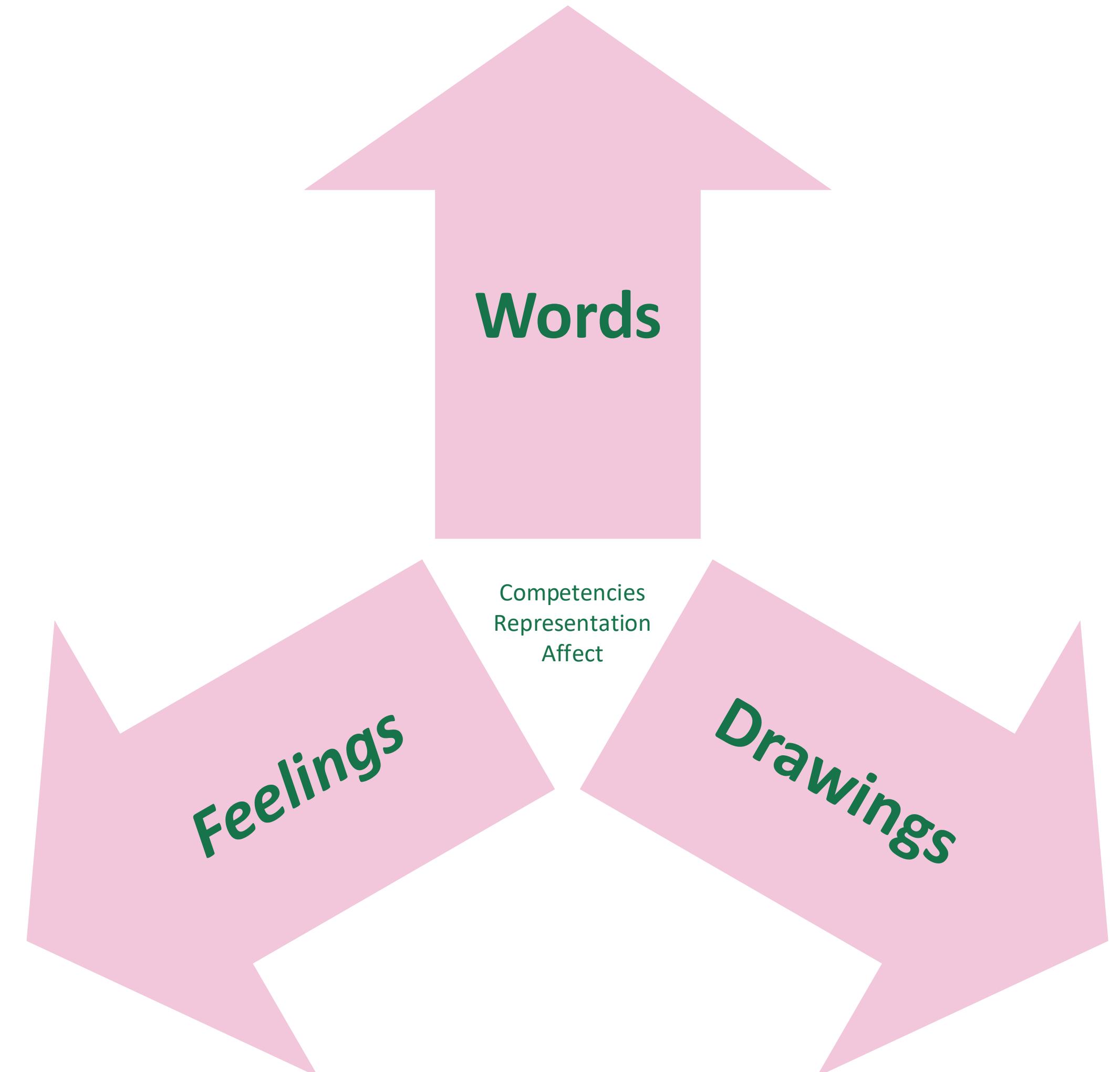
Words

Competencies
Representation
Affect

Feelings

Drawings

Creaturely Pedagogy/

Sustainability, under whose umbrella ecology and climate emergencies lie, is a threshold concept (game changer!). That is the context in which it must be understood to really affect radical, essential shifts in how we teach the architectural curriculum. To address its implications, we need to move from **a mentality of abundance to scarcity** in every aspect of our thinking. (Cousins, 2016)

RADICAL SHIFT

- An urgent and complete shift to a carbon neutral society is needed to mitigate (and adapt to) climate change.

- Carbon emissions, must reach ZERO by 2050, or before.

- A society cannot be carbon neutral unless also the built environment is:
    - **a radical transition from a fossil-fueled to a fossil-free built environment.**

Words

Unsustainable enviroment

Sustainable enviroment

A4C
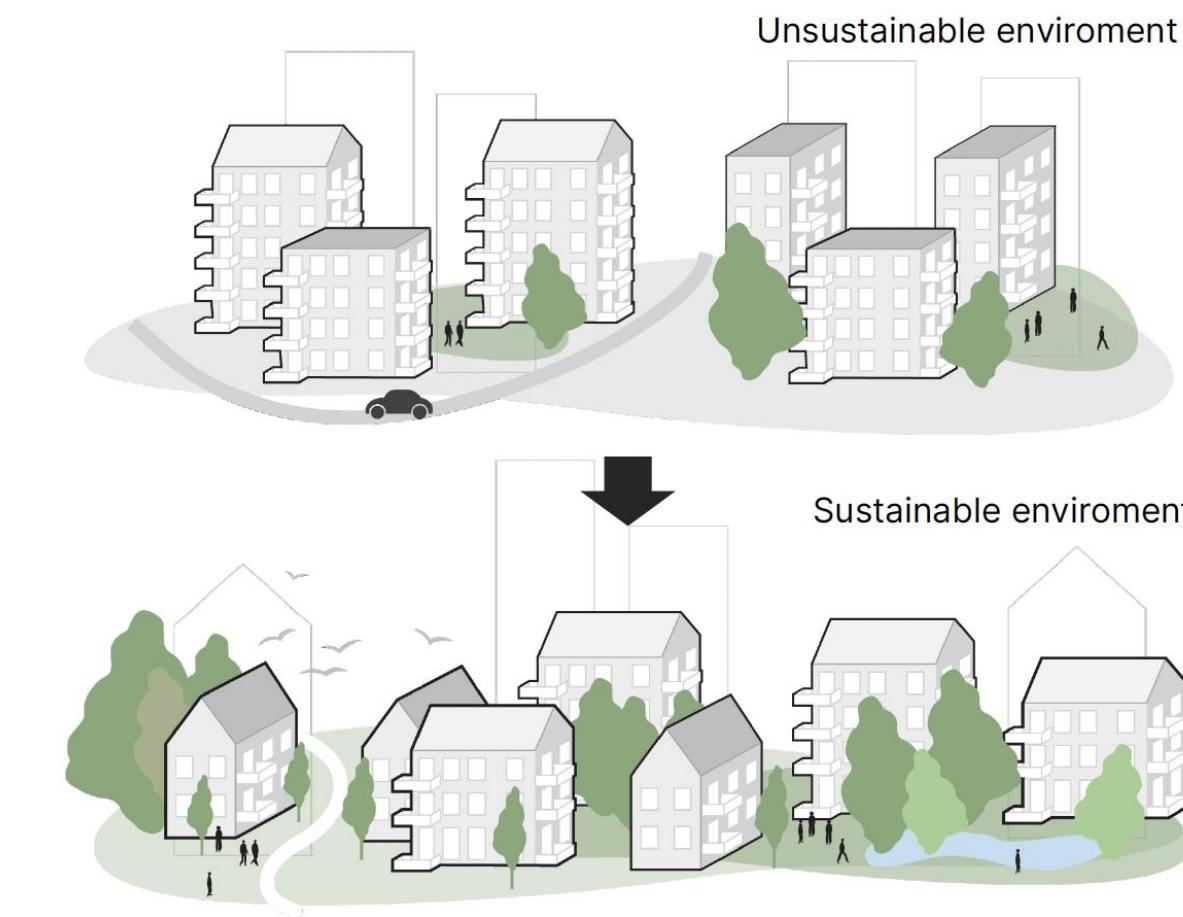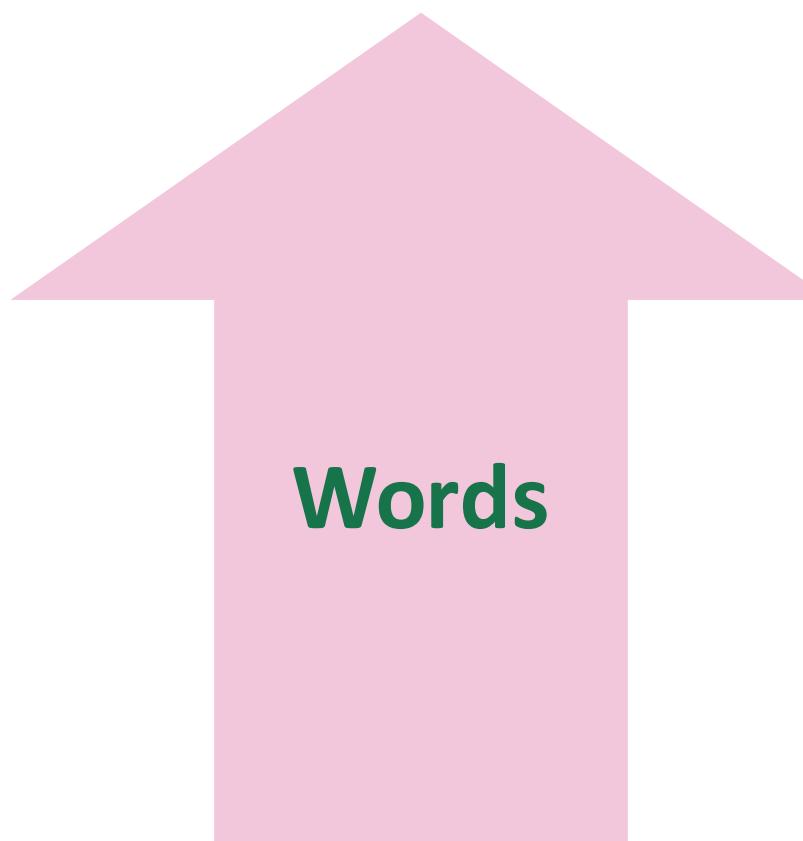
ARB PPE Commission/ Tomorrow's Architects

Architect regulation
ARB should remove constraints to flexibility and innovation to lead sustainable change across the profession

Learning providers
Learning providers should take a co-ordinating role in facilitating trainees' acquisition of all the Competency Outcomes

Architectural employers
Significant improvements in workplace culture should be secured to strengthen how competence is gained

+ Professor Sir Chris Husbands/ Polly Mackenzie/ Peter Barker

Unfolding Cartographies of Practice
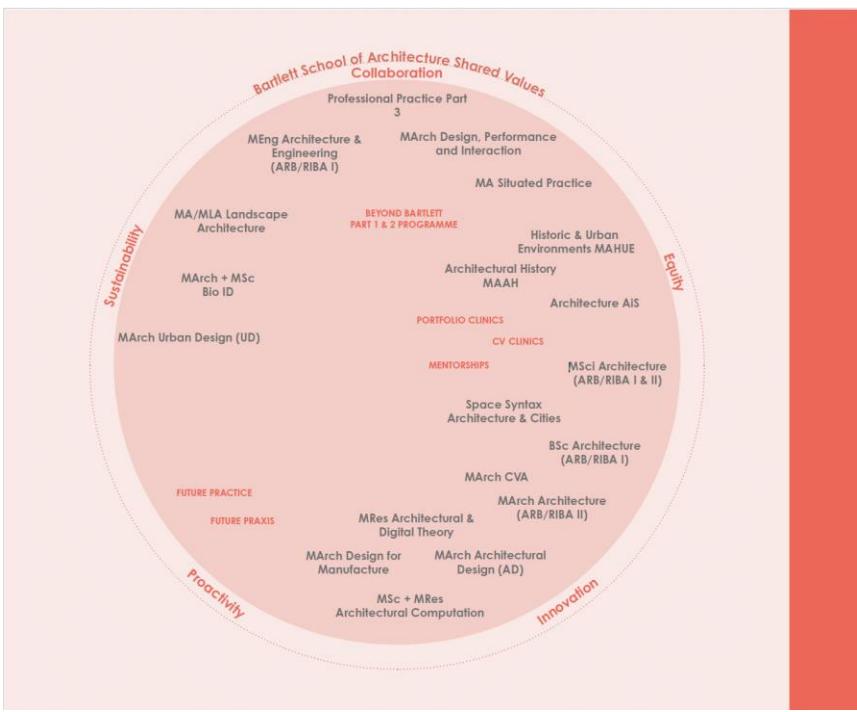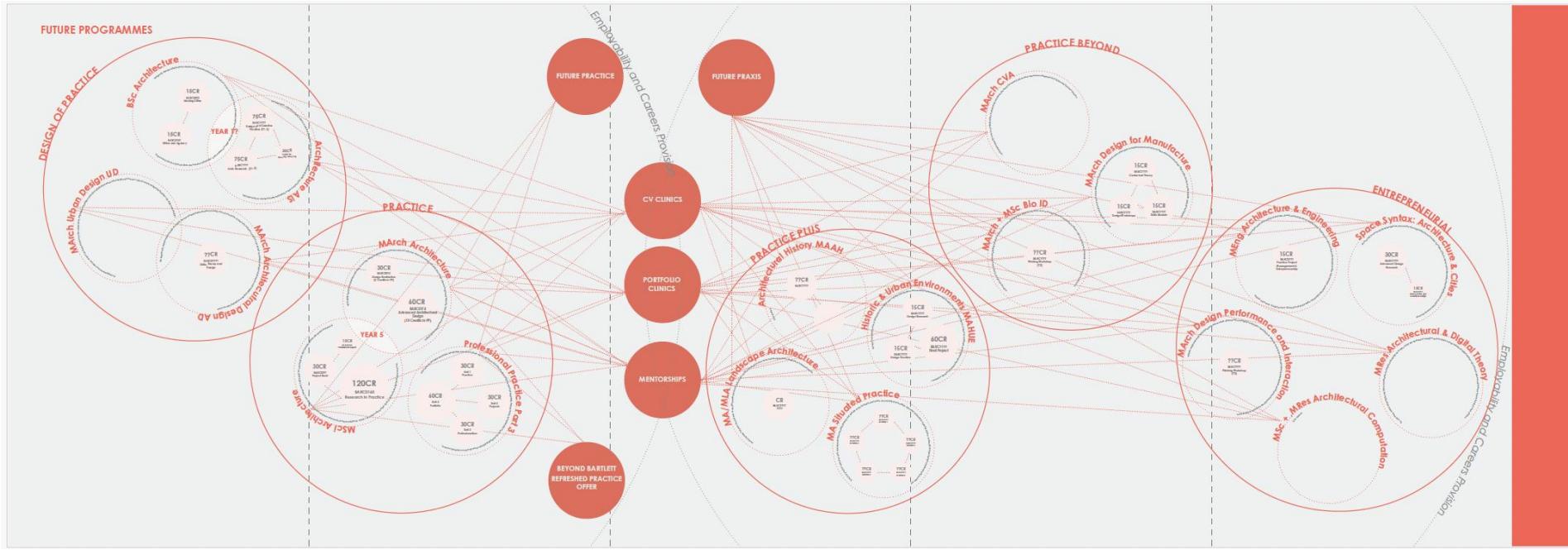
Felicity Atekpe/
Yip Siu

Glossary/

"The conventional wisdom of the Tower of Babel story is that the collapse was a misfortune. That it was the distraction, or the weight of many languages that precipitated the tower's failed architecture. That one monolithic language would have expedited the building, and heaven would have been reached. Whose heaven, she wonders? And what kind? Perhaps the achievement of Paradise was premature, a little hasty if no one could take the time to understand other languages, other views, other narratives period. Had they, the heaven they imagined might have been found at their feet. Complicated, demanding, yes, but a view of heaven as life; not heaven as post-life."

[Toni Morrison, Nobel Prize Lecture, 1993]

The built environment is more than just a collection of spaces; it shapes our lives, influencing how we live, interact, and engage with marginalised or "othered" communities. This glossary invites readers to explore the intersections of decolonial thought and the built environment, offering a fresh lens to challenge colonial legacies in our spaces and practices. Whether you're a student, practitioner, or curious reader, Glossary of Decolonial Language is an essential resource for fostering critical engagement and promoting inclusivity in shared spaces.

The
Glossary

of

DECOLONIAL

Vol. 1

Felicity Atekpe
Sara Shafiei

Language

Glossary

Comfort

Pronunciation
/ˈkʌmfət/ KUM-fuht

Etymology
A borrowing from Old French *confort*, which itself derives from Latin *confortare*, meaning "to strengthen greatly." Initially, the term referred to strengthening or encouragement but has evolved over centuries to encompass physical ease and emotional solace.

Definition
1.a. (c. 1225–1769) *Strengthening; encouragement, incitement; aid, succour, support, countenance.* Often used in the phrase "in aid and comfort." Now mostly obsolete, except in certain archaic legal uses.

1.b. (1455–1577) † *Concrete. A person or thing that strengthens or supports; a source of strength.* Obsolete.

2. (1377–1631) † *Physical refreshment or sustenance; a refreshing or invigorating influence.* Obsolete in this sense today.

Source of above
Oxford English Dictionary

Alternative Definition
These are not translations of the word "comfort" but related terms or concepts in various languages that emphasise specific cultural, functional, and environmental aspects of comfort within the built environment in their respective regions.

African (Swahili - Faraja)
In Swahili and various African languages, *Faraja* means "comfort" or "relief." It refers to creating spaces that provide respite from external stressors, fostering a sense of security, connection to nature, and community well-being.

Reference
— Denyer, S. (1978). *African Traditional Architecture.* Africana Publishing Company.
— Rapoport, A. (1969). *House Form and Culture.* Prentice-Hall.

Persian (آسایش - Asāyesh)
In Persian, *Asāyesh* translates to "comfort" or "ease." It highlights the importance of environments that promote physical comfort and mental peace, often through natural materials, thoughtful spatial designs, and elements that connect people to their cultural and natural heritage.

Reference
— Ardalan, N., & Bakhtiar, L. (1973). *The Sense of Unity: The Sufi Tradition in Persian Architecture.* University of Chicago Press.
— Grigor, T. H. (2009). *Building Iran: Modernism, Architecture, and National Heritage under the Pahlavi Monarchs.* Prestel Publishing.

Japanese (快適 - Kaiteki)
In Japanese, *Kaiteki* translates to "comfortable" or "pleasant." Within the built environment, it embodies a sense of physical and psychological well-being, achieved through thoughtful design, natural materials, and harmonious spatial arrangements.

Reference
— Brown, A. (2012). *Just Enough: Lessons in Living Green from Traditional Japan.* Tuttle Publishing.
— Reynolds, J. (2001). *Japanese Architecture and Design.* Tuttle Publishing.

03 Comfort

Indian (सुख - Sukh)
In Sanskrit and many Indian languages, *Sukh* denotes "pleasure" or "comfort." In architecture, it reflects the idea of creating spaces that promote well-being, tranquillity, and harmony through natural materials, cultural symbolism, and spatial layouts.

Reference
— Acharya, P. K. (1997). *An Encyclopaedia of Hindu Architecture.* Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers.
— Rao, M. S. (1995). *Vastu Architecture: Design Theory and Application for Everyday Life.* Lotus Press.

Chinese (舒适 - Shūshì)
In Chinese, *Shūshi* means "comfortable" or "cozy." It refers to a state of physical ease hnd contentment, often achieved through careful ventilation, natural lighting, and harmonious spatial organisation in architecture.

Reference
— Keswick, M. (2003). *The Chinese Garden: History, Art and Architecture.* Harvard University Press.
— Steinhardt, N. S. (1990). *Chinese Traditional Architecture.* China Books & Periodicals.

Arabic
In Arabic, *Rahat* signifies "ease" or "comfort." This concept encompasses both physical and spiritual well-being in architectural design, often achieved through shaded courtyards, water features, and orientation that maximises natural ventilation and sunlight.

Reference
— Rice, G. (2004). *Doing Business in the Middle East: A Cultural and Practical Guide.* Routledge.
— Ali, A. J. (2005). *Islamic Perspectives on Management and Organization.* Edward Elgar Publishing.

Who We Are/

Sara is an Associate Professor (Teaching) at the Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment and serves as the Vice Dean of Equality, Diversity, ad Inclusion. Her academic work advocates for new initiatives in architectural education, focusing on curriculum reform and pedagogical innovation. She developed and launched the MSci Architecture Programme, which integrates UCL's Grand Challenges and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, connecting creative thinking, design, and research to real-world issues. She designed and launched Bartlett Alternative, an online collective platform supporting the internationalisation and diversification of curriculum.

Felicity Atekpe/
Sara Shafiei

Where we are/

The layout and typography (the writing of the word decolonial in particular) on the cover is not straightforward.

It requires the active engagement of the audience to (be able to) read the title. The word "decolonial" wraps around front/back cover and the layout aims to reflect the non-linearity of its content.

The historiography, origins and multiple facets of meanings in this glossary are complex and far from linear (but rather a set of overlapping and contested perspectives).

The typography encourages non-linear exploration of content and access to information but also ultimately aims to transform through multi-layered, sideways thinking, education, and discovery.

A UCL Grand Challenges fund supported the development of content for one of eight volumes. Volumes are not alphabetical but rather a journey of the authors' discovery.

Glossary

01 Memoryscape

Memoryscape

Pronunciation

MEM-uh-ree-skayp

Etymology

Memoryscape is a recent blend of memory (from Latin *memoria*, meaning "remembrance") and -scape (from Old English -*sceap*, meaning "shape" or "view"). Together, Memoryscape combines these roots to mean a "landscape of memories" or a conceptual space that contains or evokes memories. Its recent usage is evident as it doesn't appear in older dictionaries and has mainly emerged in modern fields to describe spaces shaped by personal or collective memory.

Alternative Definition

Whilst evocative and could be interpreted in many ways, we did not find this term in any of the traditional and everyday sources, only finding it in alternative definitions.

Definition

Memoryscapes encompass not just physical landscapes and built structures, but also the collective memories, histories, and narratives associated with them. It can be seen through critical perspectives that aims to challenge dominant narratives and give voice to marginalized experiences within these memoryscapes.

   This concept is often discussed in academic fields such as cultural studies, history, anthropology, and geography, particularly within the context of postcolonial studies or critical heritage studies. It can be found in scholarly articles, books, or discussions focusing on topics related to memory, identity, place, and power dynamics.

References

— Sturken, M., & Cartwright, L. (2009). *Practices of Memory: Theories and Methods. In Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture.* Oxford University Press.
This chapter discusses memoryscapes in the context of visual culture and examines how collective memories are embedded within physical spaces.
— Edensor, T. (2001). *Memoryscape: Landscape, Heritage and Memory. In Cultural Memories: The Geographical Point of View,* edited by Susan M. Pearce. Routledge.
This chapter delves into the intersection of landscape, heritage, and memory, framing memoryscapes as dynamic spaces where collective memories are inscribed and contested.
— Nora, P. (1989). *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire. Representations.* In this article, Nora explores the concept of lieux de mémoire (sites of memory), which can be considered as memoryscapes, and discusses their role in shaping collective memory.
— Smith, L. (2006). *The Uses of Heritage.* Routledge. Smith discusses memoryscapes within the broader context of heritage studies, emphasising the importance of recognising diverse narratives and experiences within heritage sites.
— Harvey, D. (1990). *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change.* Wiley-Blackwell. While not explicitly using the term "memoryscape", Harvey's work explores how contemporary landscapes are shaped by historical processes and collective memories, aligning with the concept.

Where we go from here /

accessible	discriminated	inclusive	privilege
activism	discrimination	inclusive leadership	privileges
activists	discriminatory	inclusiveness	promote diversity
advocacy	disparity	inclusivity	promoting diversity
advocate	diverse	increase diversity	pronoun
advocates	diverse backgrounds	increase the diversity	pronouns
affirming care	diverse communities	indigenous community	prostitute
all-inclusive	diverse community	inequalities	race
allyship	diverse group	inequality	race and ethnicity
anti-racism	diverse groups	inequitable	racial
antiracist	diversified	inequities	racial diversity
assigned at birth	diversify	inequity	racial identity
assigned female at birth	diversifying	injustice	racial inequality
assigned male at birth	diversity	institutional	racial justice
at risk	enhance the diversity	intersectional	racially
barrier	enhancing diversity	intersectionality	racism
barriers	environmental quality	key groups	segregation
belong	equal opportunity	key people	sense of belonging
bias	equality	key populations	sex
biased	equitable	Latinx	sexual preferences
biased toward	equitableness	LGBT	sexuality
biases	equity	LGBTQ	social justice
biases towards	ethnicity	marginalize	sociocultural
biologically female	excluded	marginalized	socioeconomic
biologically male	exclusion	men who have sex with	status
BIPOC	expression	men	stereotype
Black	female	mental health	stereotypes
breastfeed + people	females	minorities	systemic

These Words Are Disappearing in the New Trump Administration

By Karen Yourish, Annie Daniel, Saurabh Datar, Isaac White and Lazaro Gamio — March 7, 2025

As President Trump seeks to purge the federal government of "woke" initiatives, agencies have flagged hundreds of words to limit or avoid, according to a compilation of government documents.

|			
breastfeed + person	feminism	minority	systemically
chestfeed + people	fostering inclusivity	most risk	they/them
chestfeed + person	GBV	MSM	trans
clean energy	gender	multicultural	transgender
climate crisis	gender based	Mx	transsexual
climate science	gender based violence	Native American	trauma
commercial sex worker	gender diversity	non-binary	traumatic
community diversity	gender identity	nonbinary	tribal
community equity	gender ideology	oppression	unconscious bias
confirmation bias	gender-affirming care	oppressive	underappreciated
cultural competence	genders	orientation	underprivileged
cultural differences	Gulf of Mexico	people + uterus	underrepresentation
cultural heritage	hate speech	people-centered care	underrepresented
cultural sensitivity	health disparity	person-centered	underserved
culturally appropriate	health equity	person-centered care	undervalued
culturally responsive	hispanic minority	polarization	victim
DEI	historically	political	victims
DEIA	identity	pollution	vulnerable populations
DEIAB	immigrants	pregnant people	women
DEIJ	implicit bias	pregnant person	women and
disabilities	implicit biases	pregnant persons	underrepresented
disability	inclusion	prejudice	

Notes: Some terms listed with a plus sign represent combinations of words that, when used together, acknowledge transgender people, which is not in keeping with the current federal government's position that there are only two, immutable sexes. Any term collected above was included on at least one agency's list, which does not necessarily imply that other agencies are also discouraged from using it.

Radical Analogue/

"What is the relationship between quiet and the quotidian? Each term references something assumed to go unspoken or unsaid, unremarked, unrecognized, or overlooked. They name practices that are pervasive and ever-present yet occluded by their seeming absence or erasure in repetition, routine, or internalization. Yet the quotidian is not equivalent to passive everyday acts, and quiet is not an absence of articulation or utterance. Quiet is a modality that surrounds or infuses sound with impact and affect, which creates the possibility for it to register as meaningful. At the same time, the quotidian must be understood as a practice rather than an act/ion. It is a practice honed by the dispossessed in the struggle to create possibility within the constraints of everyday life."

[Tina M. Campt, Listening to Images, Duke University Press, 2017]
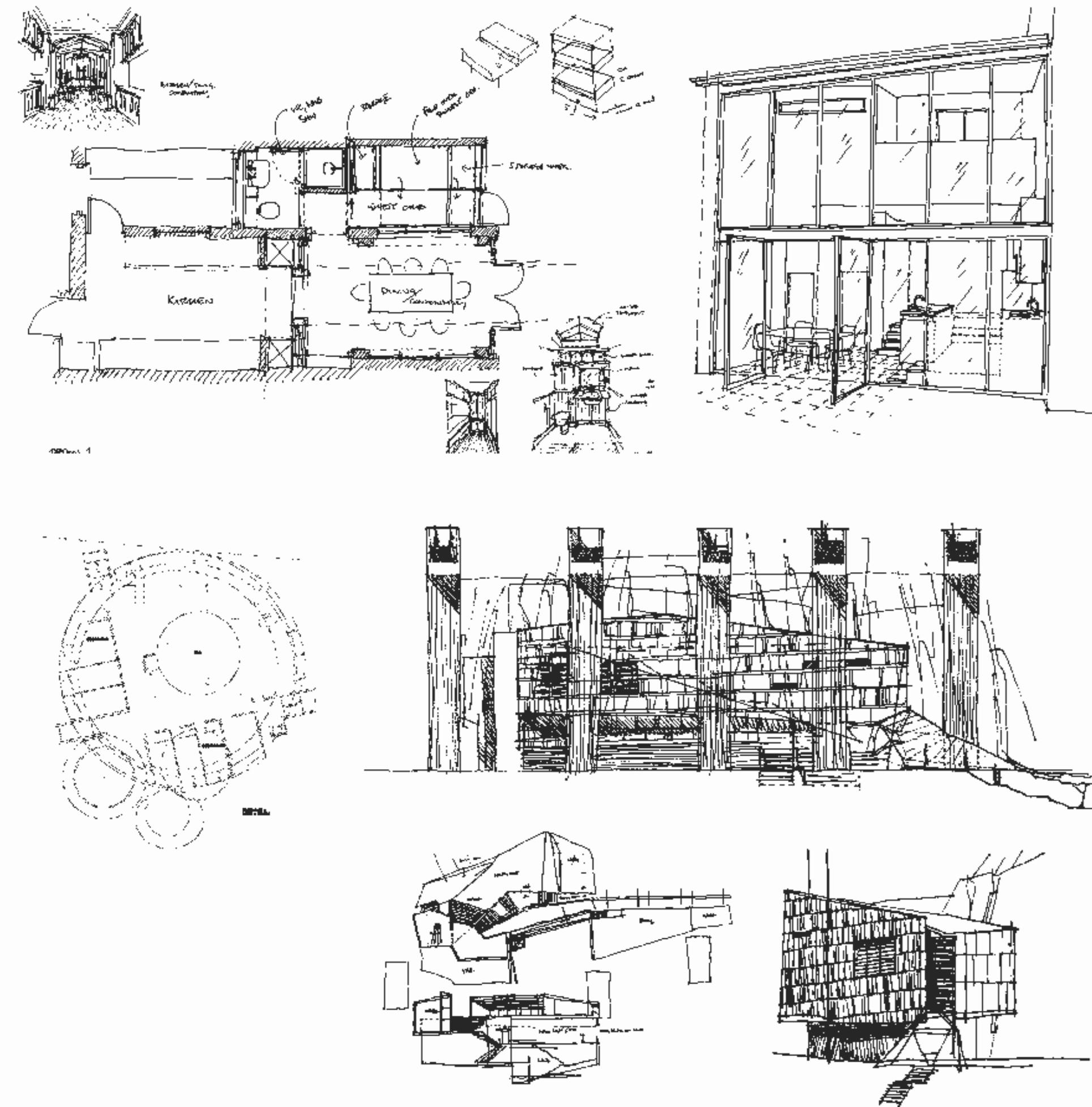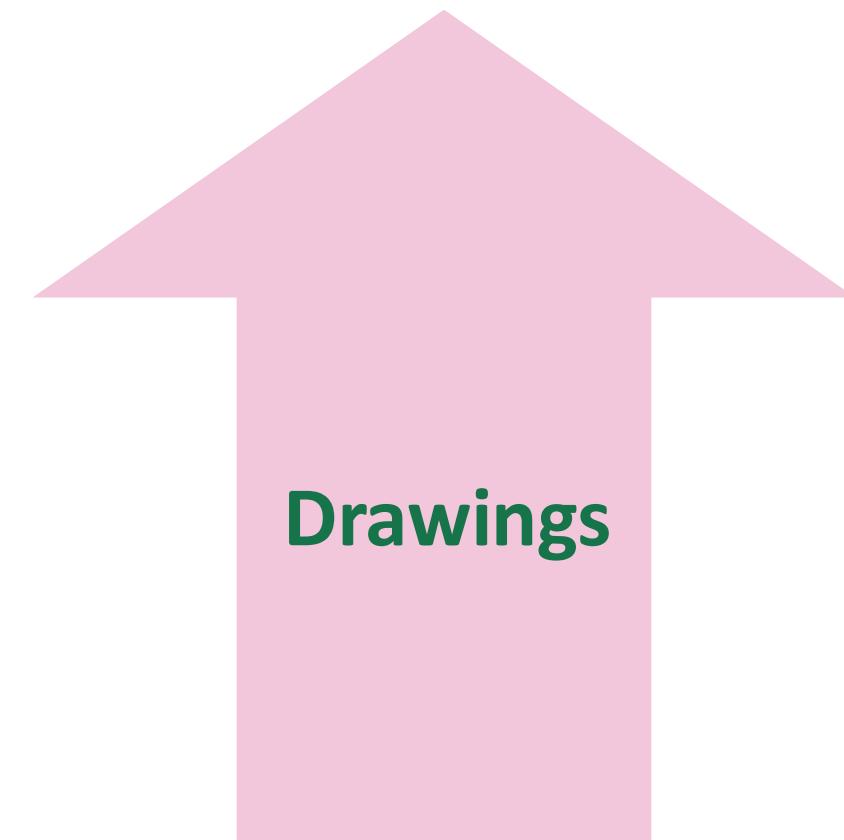
Drawings

Radical Analogue/
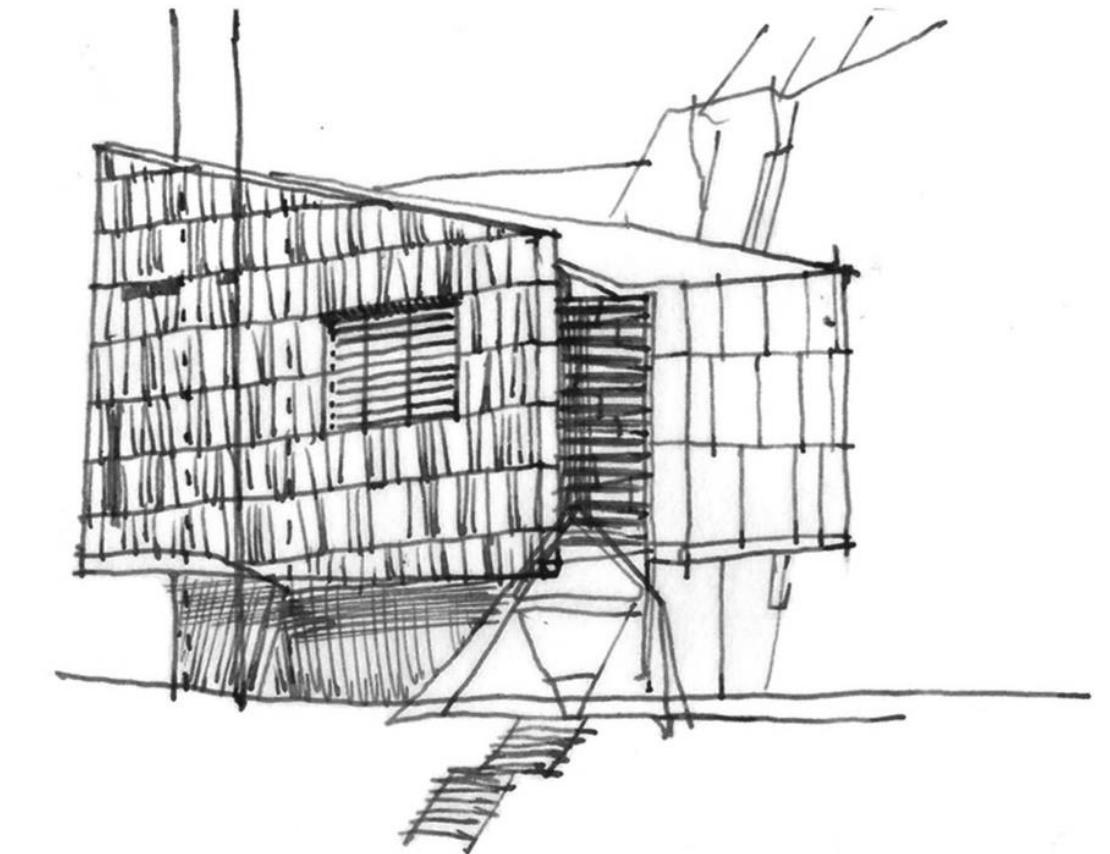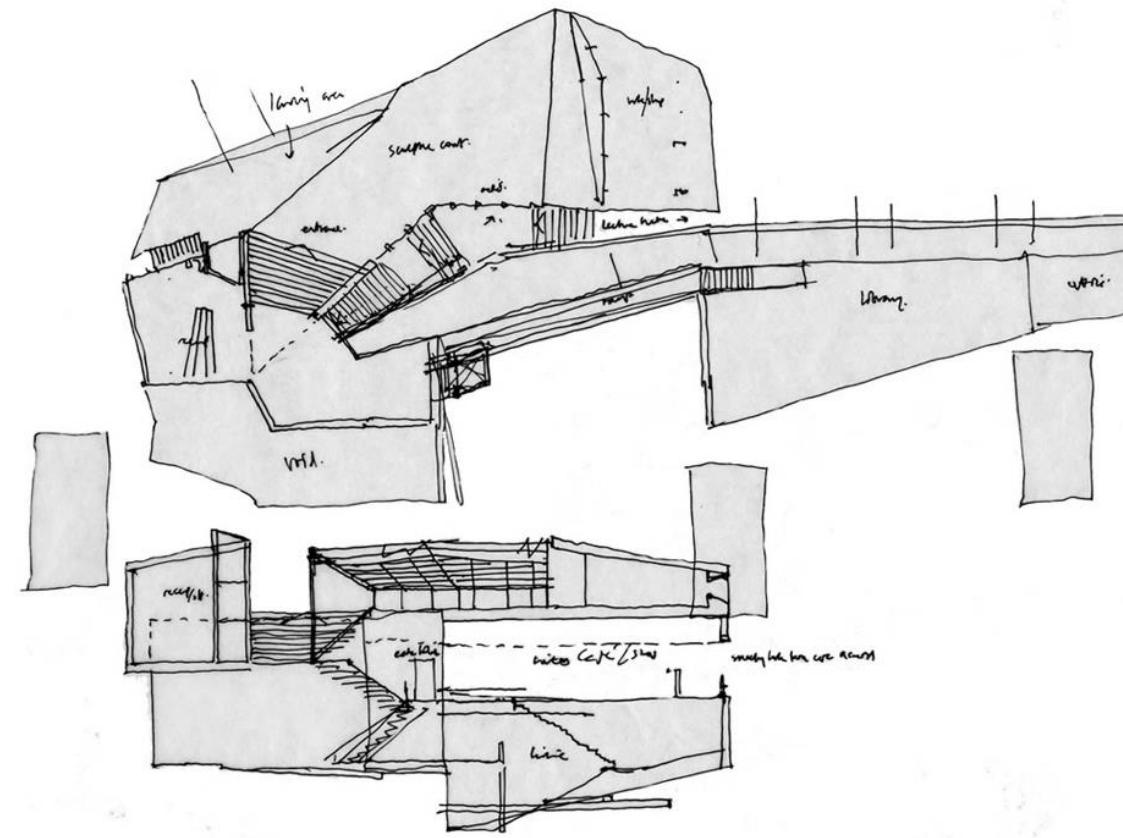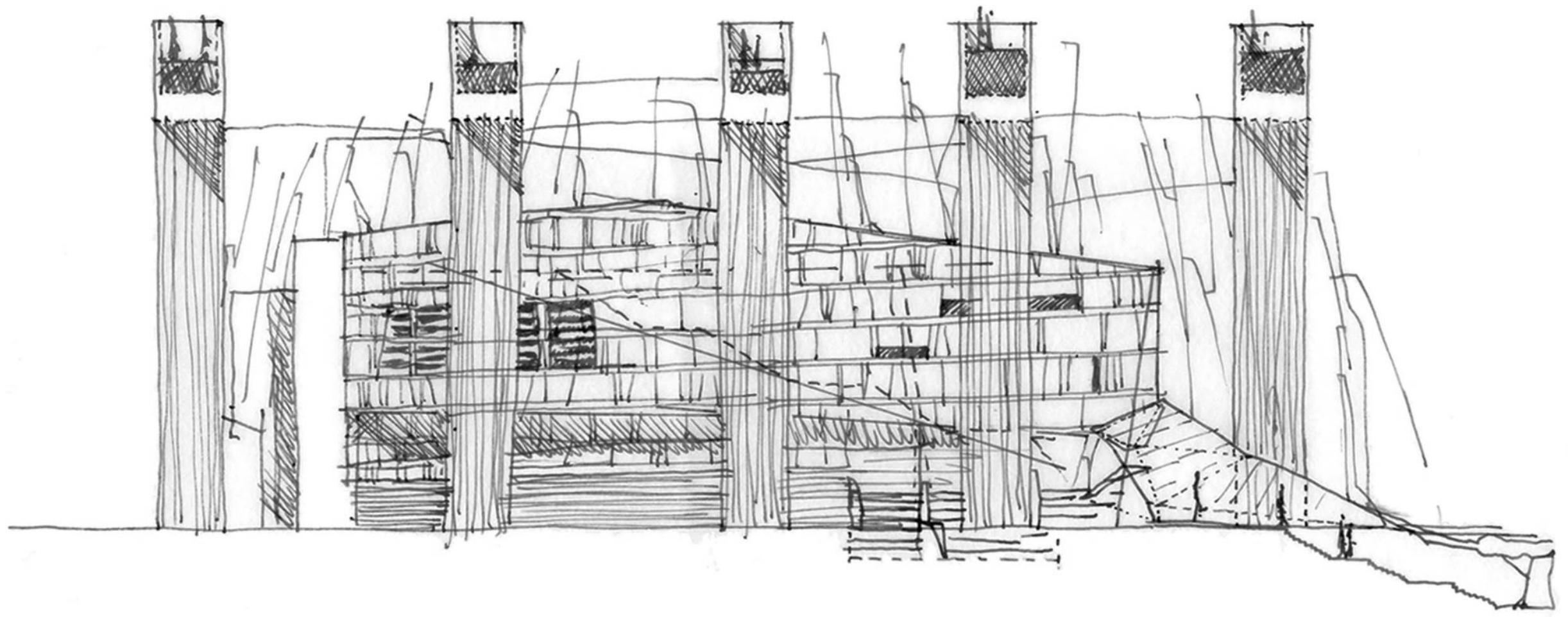
Quantitative/

Port of my design practice explores how tactile, embodied processes – such as needlework, hand-poke tattoos and analogue architectural drawings – serve as tools for storytelling and cultural expression. I am particularly interested in the connection between hand drawing and homemade creations as a way of exploring analogue understandings of the body. These three mediums share a focus on mark-making: they transform deliberate gestures into meaningful forms on fabric, skin or paper. Each medium also embodies a meditative quality, fostering intimacy between maker, material and space.

I am drawn to these practices because they represent different scales of drawing: needlework operates at the scale of texture and touch; tattoos engage with the human body as a canvas, exploring themes of connection and intimacy; and architectural drawings expand into the scale of space and structure. Together, they offer reciprocal ways of understanding history, memory and space through craft and design.
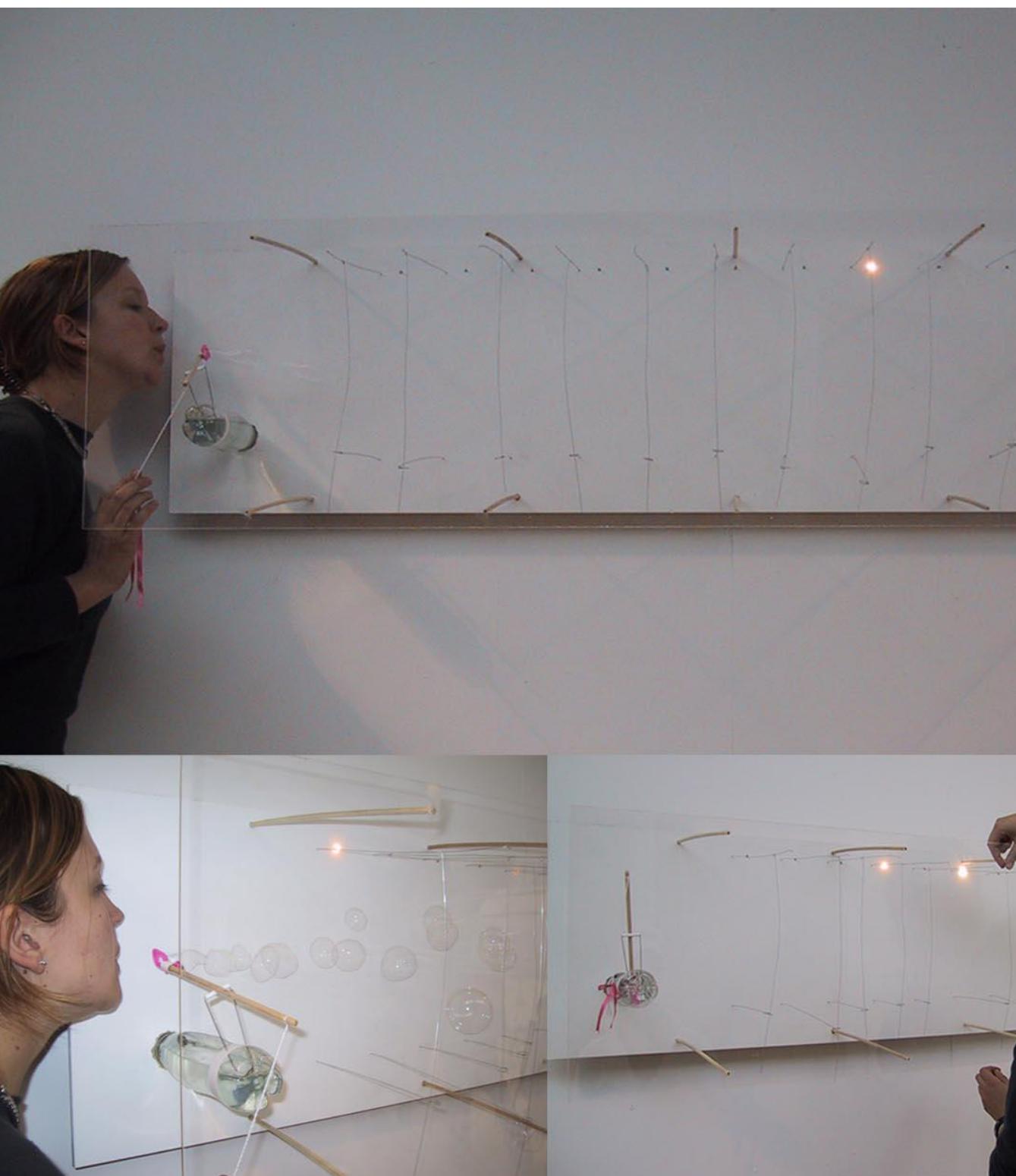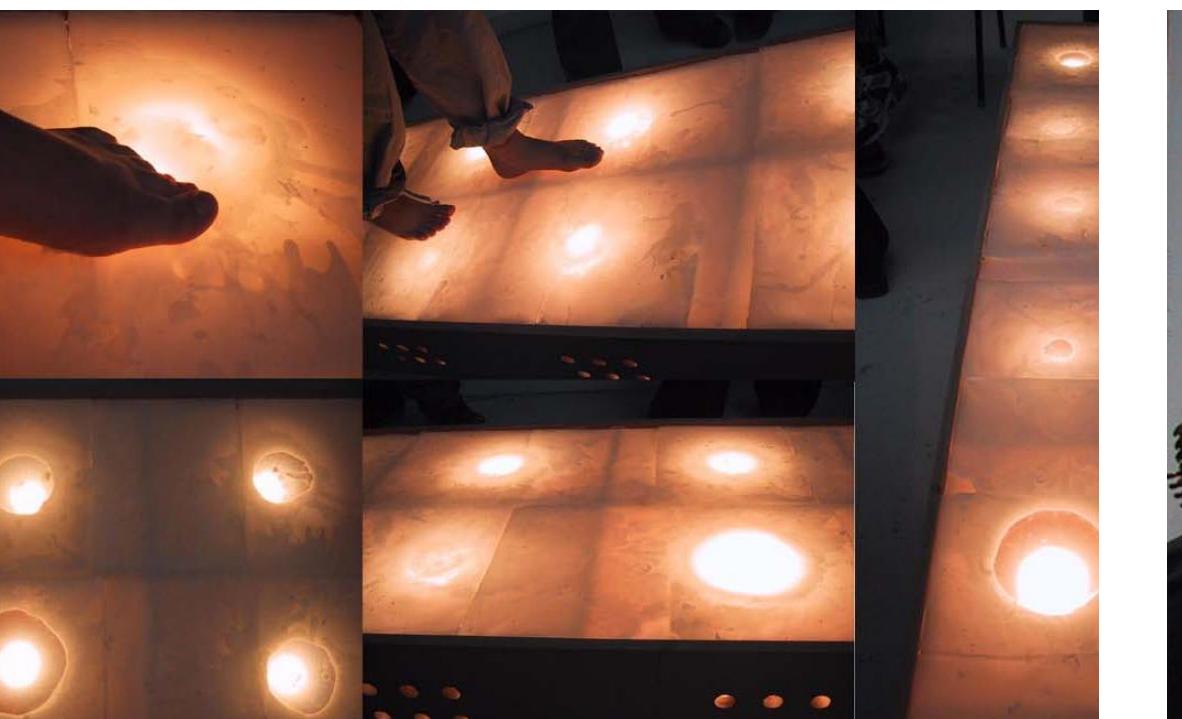
Qualitative/

**Film as an urban research tool /
Cinematic aided design /
Films of everyday life as a revelator of
spatial conditions**

**Literature and Memory**

Art / Photography

A palimpsest methodology
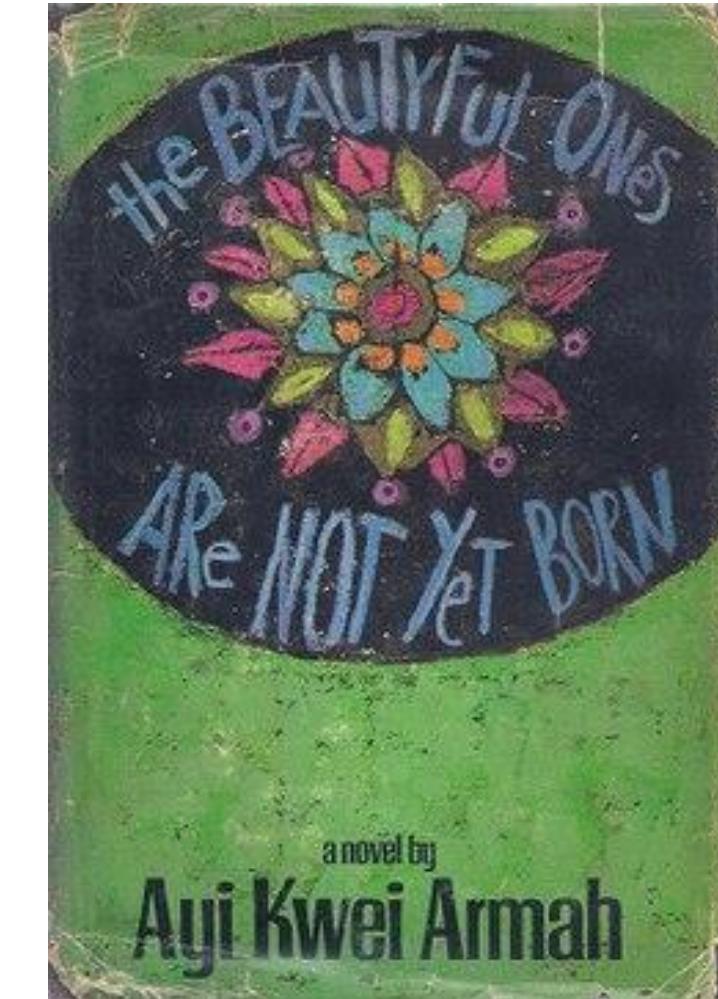
Film: Abouna (2002)
Director: Mahamet-Saleh Haroun
Cinematography: Abraham Haile Biru

Film: Three Colours Trilogy - Blue (1993)
Director and screenwriter: Krzysztof Kieślowski
Cinematography: Sławomir Idziak
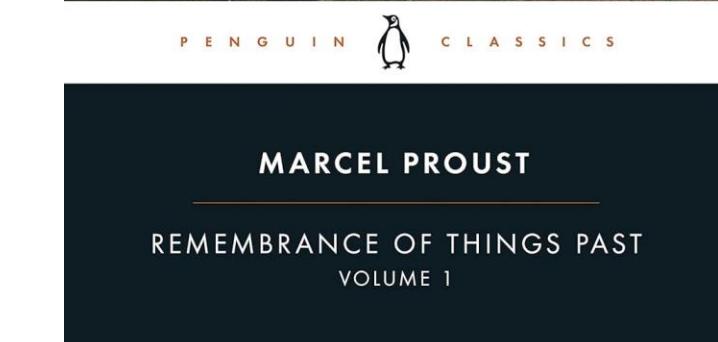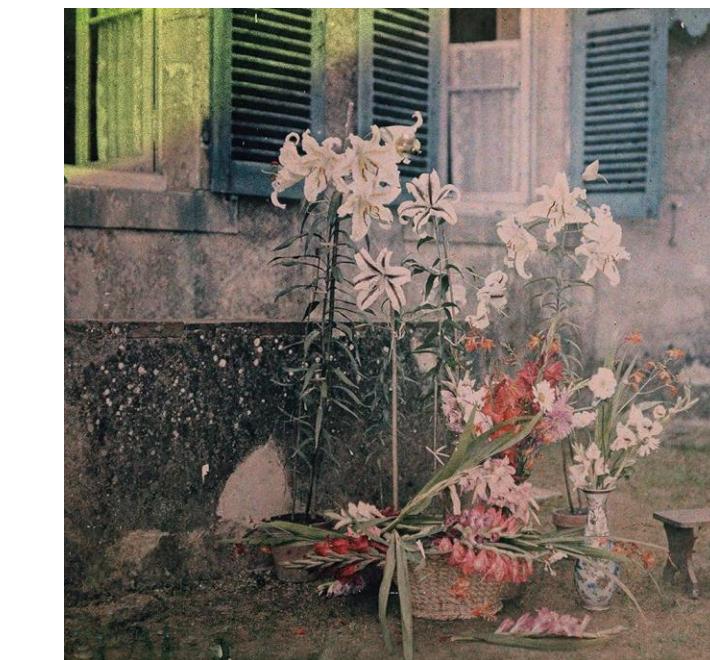
Mickalene Thomas, *Le Dejeuner sur l'herbe: Les trois femmes noires* (detail), 2010. Rhinestones, acrylic, and enamel on wood panel, 304.8 x 731.5 cm.

Edouard Manet, *9Le Dejeuner sur l'herbe) Lunch on the Grass*, 1863. Oil on canvas, 208 x 264.5 cm.

The Feeling of Spaces/

"Space is substance. Cézanne painted and modelled space. Giacometti sculpted by "taking the fat off space". Mallarmé conceived poems with absences as well as words. Ralph Richardson asserted that acting lay in pauses... Isaac Stern described music as "that little bit between each note – silences which give the form"... The Japanese have a word (ma) for this interval which gives shape to the whole. In the West we have neither word nor term. A serious omission."

Alan Fletcher, The Art of Looking Sideways, Phaidon (2001)

Feelings

The Feeling of Spaces

Blanket Den; Unknown

Our first experience of "home" begins in the womb, creating an intimate connection with our mothers that is unparalleled. This primordial space represents our initial understanding of safety, comfort, and belonging – a blueprint for how we will subsequently perceive and interact with environments throughout our lives.

As children, we instinctively recreate this sense of security by building dens – makeshift sanctuaries that mirror our fundamental need for personal territory. These constructed spaces are more than simple play; they are profound explorations of spatial identity, where imagination transforms ordinary materials into protective landscapes. Each den becomes a microcosm of emotional geography, reflecting our innate desire to define and control our immediate environment.

The concept of "home" transcends physical boundaries, embodying complex emotional and psychological dimensions. It is a dynamic concept that evolves with our experiences, shaped by cultural, personal, and architectural influences. Architects and designers increasingly recognise that spaces are not merely functional structures but emotional ecosystems that profoundly impact human behaviour and well-being.

Our relationship with space is deeply reciprocal. We shape spaces, and in term, these spaces shape us – influencing our moods, interactions and sense of self. From the intimate corners of a room to broader urban landscapes, every environment tells a story of human adaptation, resilience and creativity.

Understanding this intricate dialogue between humans and their spatial contexts offers insight into how we create meaning, find comfort, and construct identity through the environments we inhabit. It reveals that our most fundamental human experiences are fundamentally spatial experiences.

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DOMESTIC MOODS

Mood catchers and makers

Felicity Atekpe

Mood catchers

This chapter is a sort of manifesto or an auto-ethnographic[1] reflection on the everyday life of an architect working with clients to create domestic moods in their homes.

I am passionate about designing homes that enhance the quality of everyday life. In order to design for people, we need to meet them as they are and honor our collective ordinariness with respect for our surroundings. My clients are predominantly other architects, artists, writers, and key workers: teachers, lecturers, nurses, doctors, paramedics, planners, train and bus drivers, fire-fighters, my window cleaner, police officers, and all the builders I have worked with. In other words, everyday people doing everyday jobs, with everyday needs.

Architecture, as I practice it, is very collaborative, and most of the work would look very different without the input of my clients. Recently, when asked, White Table's clients thought that the practice had a specialty in making moods in their homes, hence the title of this chapter. We think deeply about their environments, necessities, and aspirations, by collaboratively exploring spatial, pictorial, and filmic moods. This way of designing makes everyday life extraordinary and resonates even more with clients since the pandemic in 2020 when our homes and the people we live with have become the center of our universes without escape. The need for the designer-psychologist is evident.

Defining the frame

White table: n 1 represents a place for discussion and involvement. 2 a symbolic meeting place of people on equal terms for discussion. 3 'tabula rasa' – a clean state.[2]

End

The Future is Unmade