

LOST ON CYPRESS

Tyler Smith // LA 8555



investigate.

TRACING GHOSTS	07
LUST/LOST	11
RELATIONALITY	15

charette.

LOST ROOMS	19
(DE)CONSTRUCT	21
LANDMARK(ING)	27

pleasure.

MAKING LOVE	33
THE BATHS	41
THE RUNWAY	47

epilogue.

ON THE DESIGN OF PLEASURE	55
---------------------------	----

appendix.

QUEER ECOLOGIES	59
GAY GARDENS	61
ANNOTATED LITERATURE REVIEW	63
MANIFESTO	67

“In the early 80s I was told by an older gay man, Bill Tate, who had worked Cypress in the 40s that at that time an older lady lived in their home on the corner across 6th Street from the Gallus, told him of men working Cypress in the 20s. If so, it’s the earliest gay space in Atlanta that I know of. 90 years ago.”

GIL ROBISON (2019)
GAYATLANTAFLASHBACK.COM



INVESTIGATE



TRACING GHOSTS

Approaching Queer Space in Atlanta

“What is queer space?”

I’ve asked this question to so many of my friends, both from my home of Atlanta and those that live hundreds of miles away. There are some commonalities in their answers: a sense of safety, of community. When I ask for examples of queer spaces, almost unanimously, it comes down to the bars we haunt. Otherwise, it is our apartments or houses. Arguments can be made that there is no such thing as a physical queer space, that queer space is something that is strictly relational. Queer historian George Chauncy for one argues that “there is no queer space; there are only spaces used by queers or put to queer use.”

But what does this mean for the spaces that we have abandoned as a community? Many have decried the death of the gay bar and the gaybourhood due to the advent of queer hook up apps such as Grindr or Scruff. There is a fear of loss that accompanies this-- the histories wrapped in these spaces hold importance for the memory of queer communities, something that already feels at odds due to the catastrophe of the AIDS epidemic. Jose Estaban Munoz discusses this at length in his seminal book *Cruising Utopia*, arguing that the recollection of memories of such spaces of spontaneous sex and community self organizing represent a sort of “queer world making:”

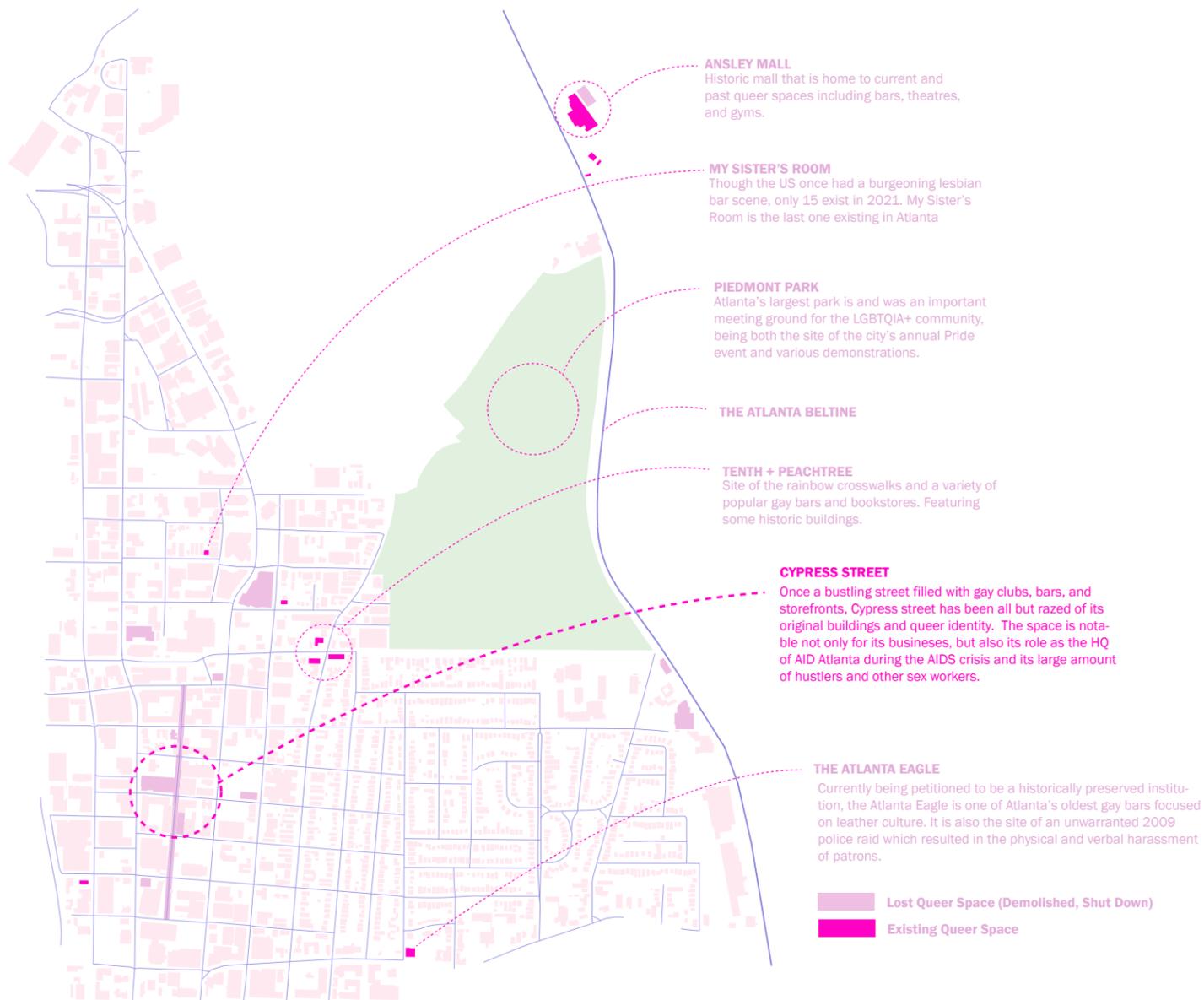
“...I see world making here as functioning and coming into play through the performance of queer utopian memory, that is, a utopia that

understands its time as reaching beyond some nostalgic past that perhaps never was or some future whose arrival is continuously belated -- a utopia in the present.

He goes on to describe the ghosts in spaces that have been lost since the AIDS epidemic: emotional ghosts and memories that resonate to this day and shape our experiences in the present as much as they do our future. If these spaces hold so much weight, then, it seems impossible to totally remove the physical from the equation. And when these spaces are razed and stripped of their physicality, how are we tracing these ghosts?

Queer space in Atlanta has typically been organized in Midtown, one of Atlanta’s most rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods. As such, most of the historic LGBTQIA+ spaces here have been bulldozed or made invisible. Queer space has always been fluid due to its relationality and I do not want to wax poetic about nostalgia and preservation. However, in a city that still is actively dealing with impacts of the AIDS epidemic, the need to maintain intergenerational and intersectional memory and history feels even more pressing for the queer community. We need to be cognizent of the ghosts that have shaped us and this begins in understanding where memory resides.

Today, most of the gay bars and queer spaces have moved closer to Piedmont Park and the Atlanta Beltline. Some have indeed been around since the mid 80’s, however, many of them reflect the new commercial development surrounding the



Midtown neighborhood. One of the most prominent historic centers of queer activity in Atlanta has been all but lost to this rapid development; Cypress Street has been rendered forgettable. Today, the street backs up to luxury apartments and parking garages. It is quiet and tends to serve primarily a collegiate crowd from the nearby Georgia Tech campus. And yet, for the bulk of the 20th century, it was the center of Atlanta's cruising scene. While much of this history began as serving primarily white, cis-gendered gay men, the street's character shifted towards the 1970's as being a reflection of a more intersectional queer community. Cypress also is notable as

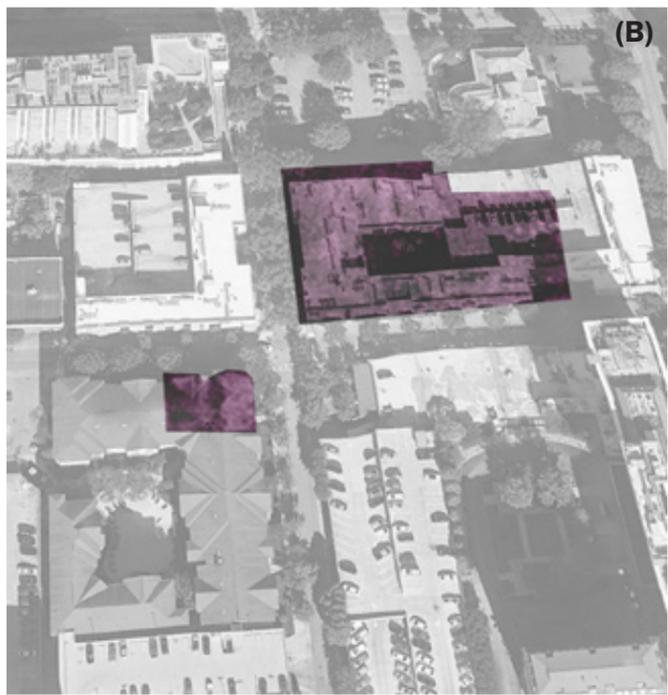
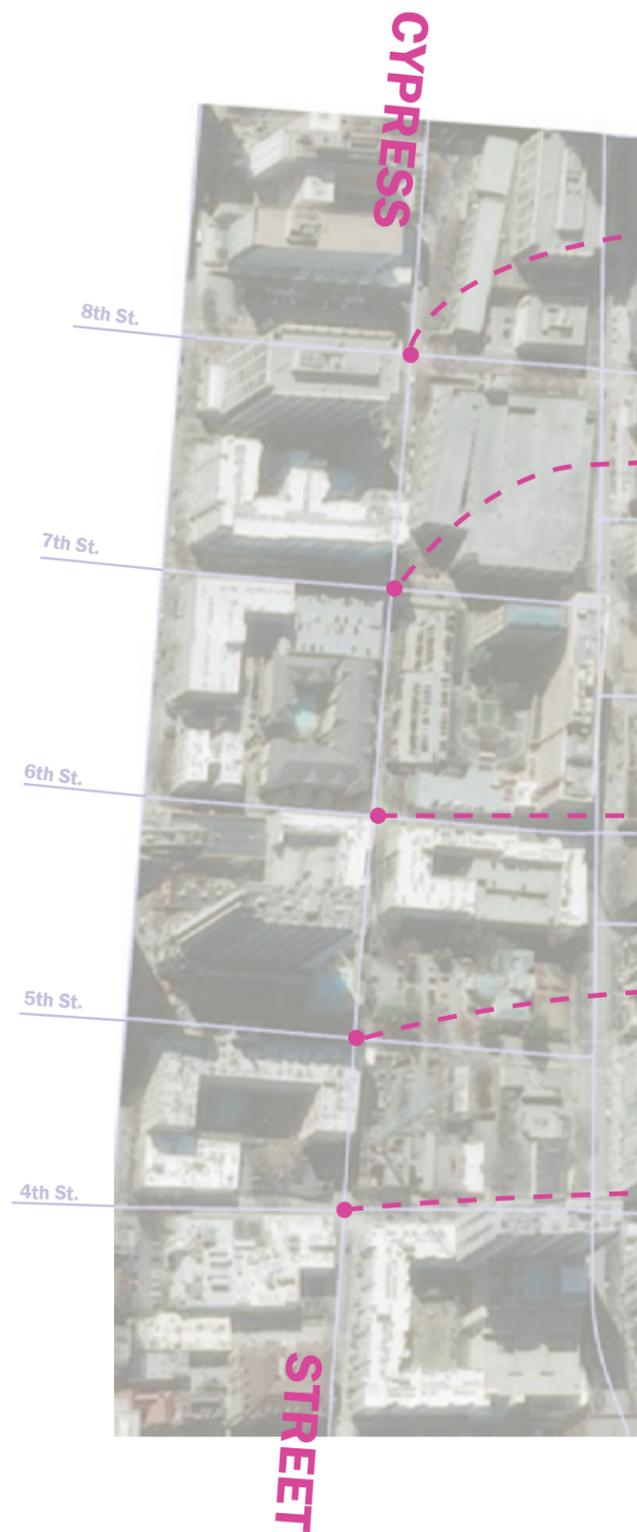
the headquarters of AID Atlanta during the worst years of the AIDS crisis. While most of locations were razed by the late 90's and early 00's, memories of this space still resonate for the older members of the city's LGBTQ community.

As the divide between the intergenerational gaps of Atlanta's community grows and more of these memories are lost, are there opportunities to begin to preserve meaningful histories along Cypress? How can we begin to commemorate important queer spaces in a way that does not just account for strict recollection, but also allows for a dynamic relationship with our collective pasts.



(OPPOSITE) Mapping of lost and existing queer spaces in Atlanta (as of 2021)

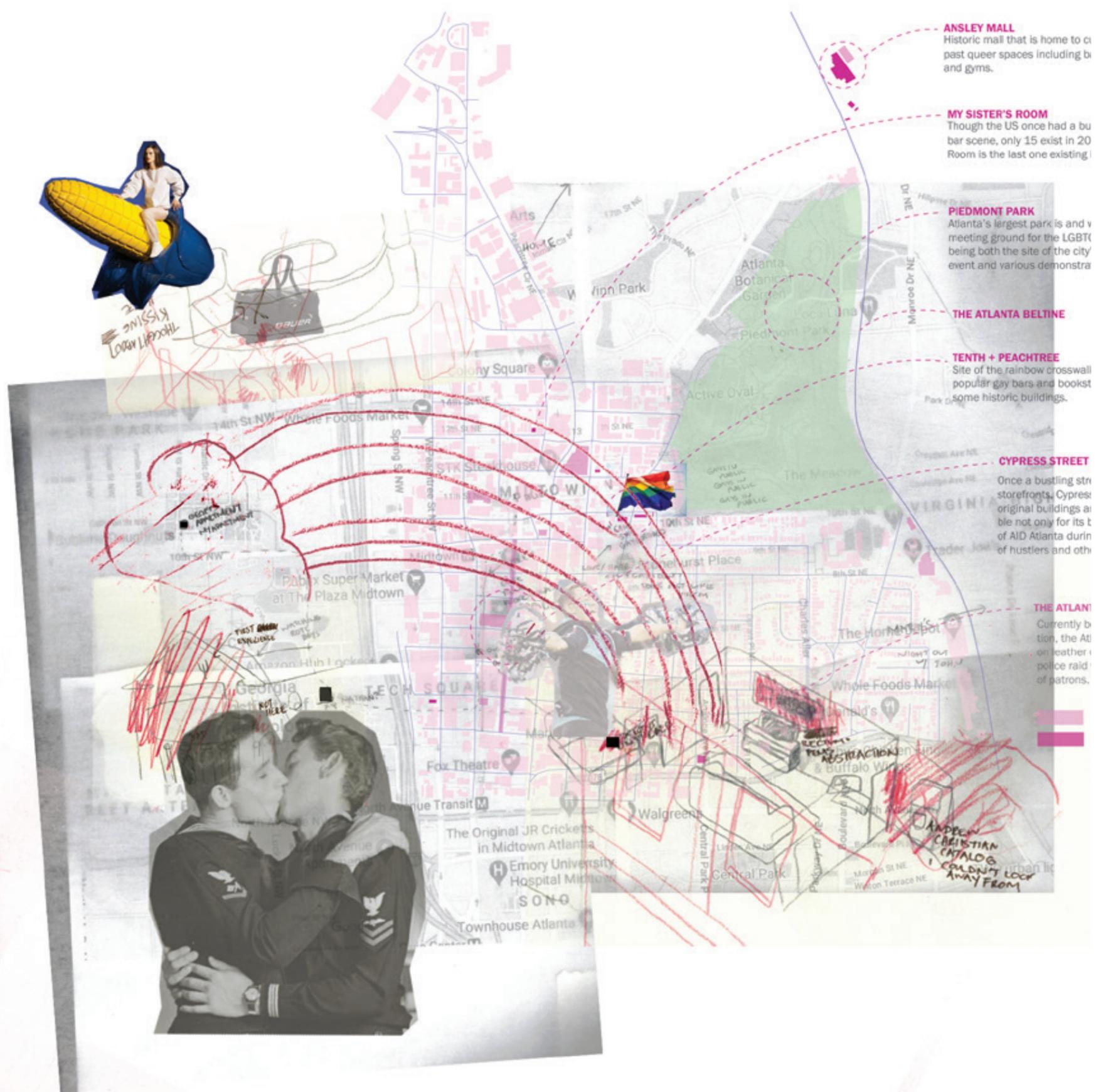
(ABOVE) Map from the article "Cruising Atlanta," which showed up in the monthly gay magazine David, December 1970. Nearly all of these locations have since been lost.



GHOSTS OF CYPRESS STREET

With most of the original buildings and spaces demolished, does exact location help trace the ghosts of this street? Can any of these sites act as an anchor for meaningful transformations of urban space?

- (A) THEN:** The site of Down Under, demolished after it was set on fire in a hate-driven arson. **NOW:** a broadcast station.
- (B) THEN:** Gallus and Backstreet, two infamous fixtures of the cruising scene. **NOW:** Luxury Apartments.
- (C) THEN:** The Prince George Inn, a performance venue that served primarily gay men but also was the site of regular performances of notable Atlanta jazz singers. **NOW:** Retail and Luxury Apartments.



ANSLEY MALL
Historic mall that is home to a past queer spaces including bars and gyms.

MY SISTER'S ROOM
Though the US once had a busy bar scene, only 15 exist in 2020. Room is the last one existing!

PIEDMONT PARK
Atlanta's largest park is and a meeting ground for the LGBTQ+ being both the site of the city event and various demonstrations.

THE ATLANTA BELTLINE

TENTH + PEACHTREE
Site of the rainbow crosswalk, popular gay bars and bookstores, some historic buildings.

CYPRESS STREET
Once a bustling street with storefronts, Cypress is notable for its history of AIDS Atlanta during the 1980s and 1990s.

THE ATLANTA
Currently a hot spot, the Atlanta is known for its leather and police raid of patrons.

RELATIONALITY

I know Cypress Street very well. While I was still closeted while I lived in Atlanta, many of the queer spaces I haunted (or at least, the spaces where I felt safe to come into my own sexuality) necessitated that I cross or walk along Cypress. Queer space is relational and we all do not have the same relationship or definitions of what this means.

This relationality is important. What paints my vision of queer space in Atlanta might be dramatically different from someone else's. In remembering or commemorating historic queer space, I feel it would be wrong to paint a singular experience of space and history.

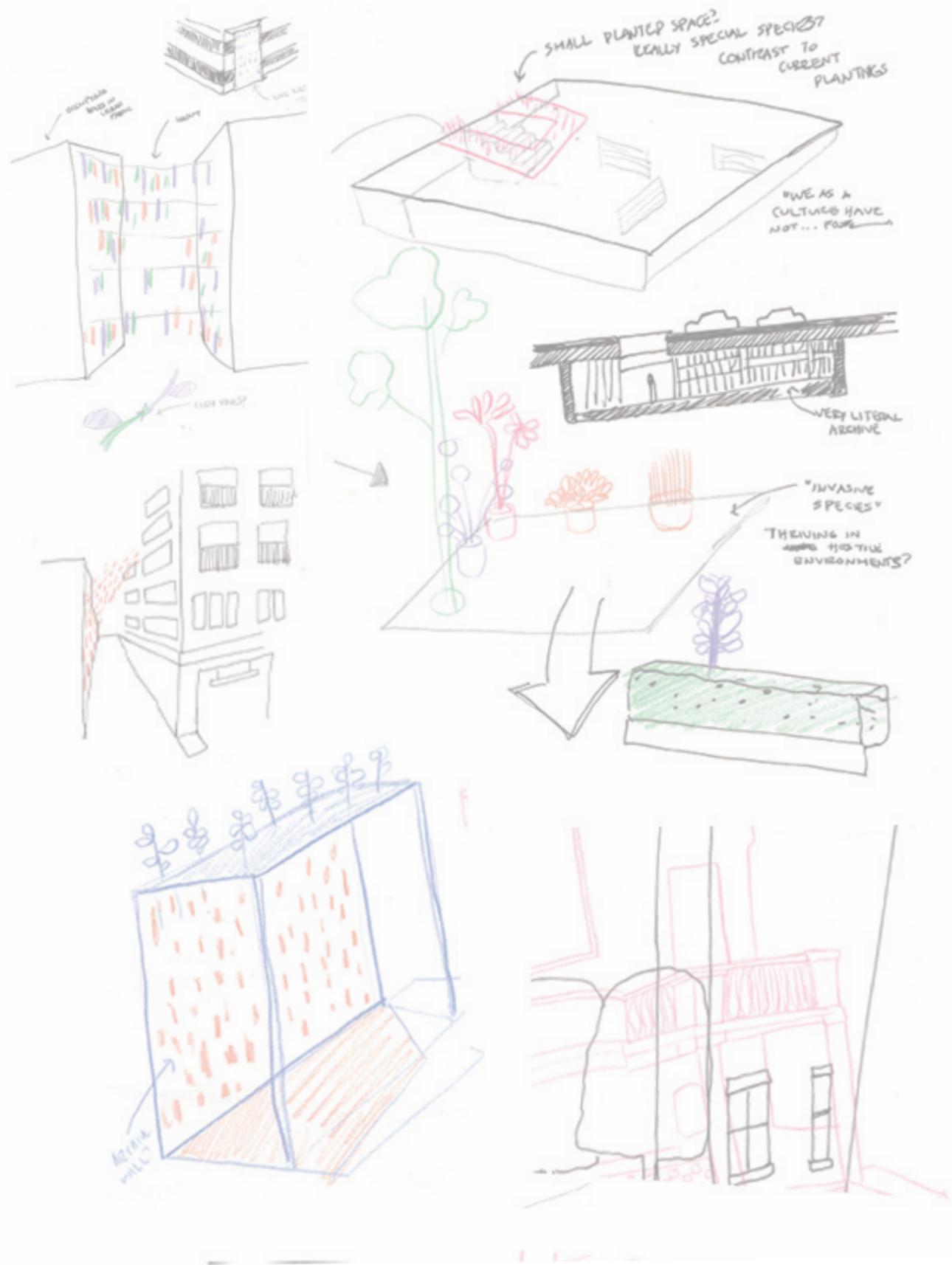
***And just you look after
it, this stupid little street.
It's the middle of the
world. Cos on a street like
this, every single night,
anyone can meet anyone.
And every single night,
someone meets someone.***

*RUSSELL DAVIES (2000)
QUEER AS FOLK, BBC*

||



CHARETTE



Early Iterations of On Site Archives



LOST ROOM(S)

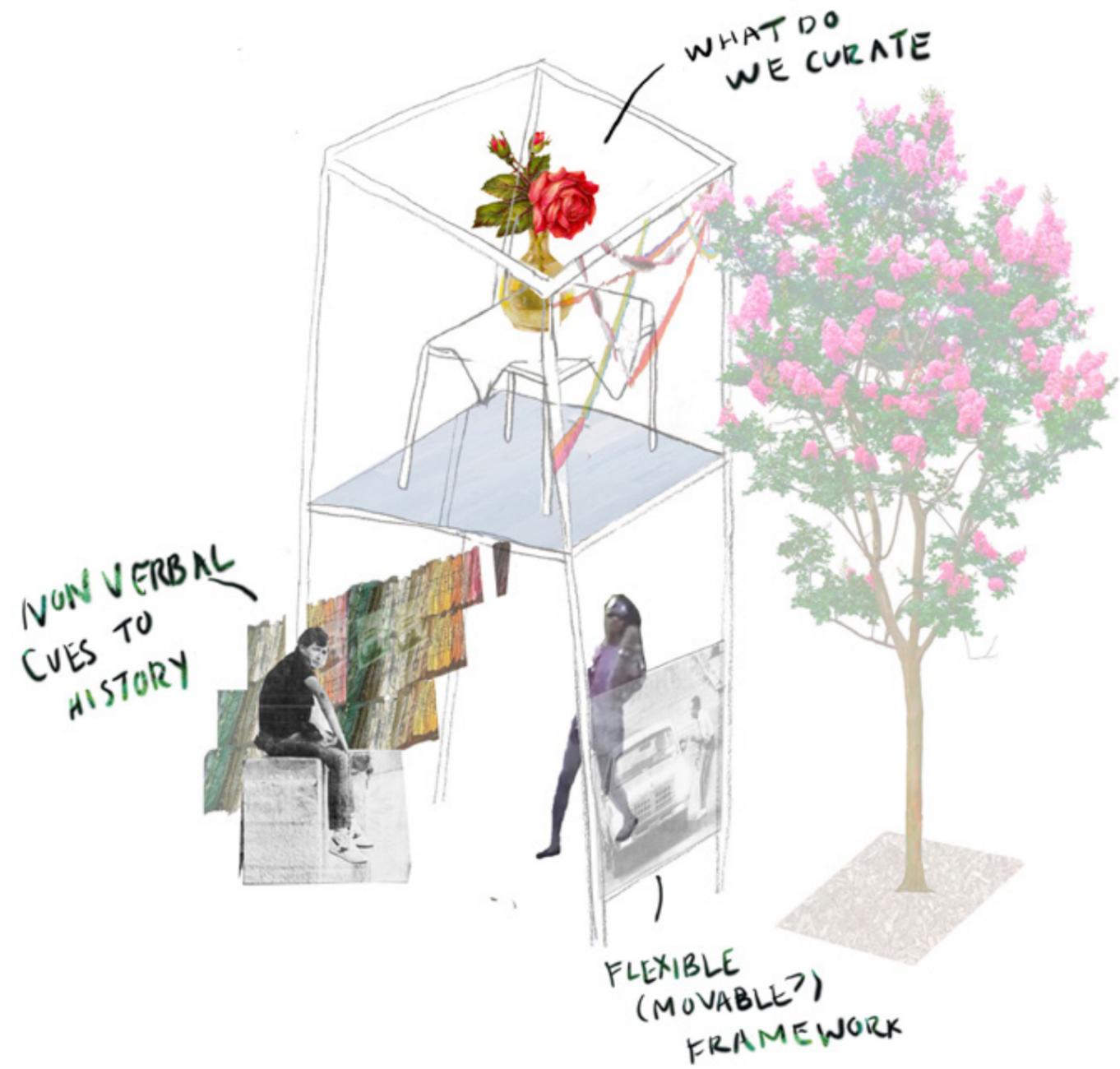
As it stands, Cypress street is lined with apartments and parking garages. It is bookended by corporate buildings and there is little space for life on the street. Once pockets of queer memory are sanitized and bulldozed for a culture of sameness and forgetfulness. How do we evoke the prior spirit of this street? What of what we have lost should be recovered, should be archived?

These are the questions I hope to explore through this series of iterations. Taking inspiration from the destruction of these sites in which internal, often secret architectures are laid exposed, a framework emerges for spaces that occupy the street and allow for a variety of storytelling interventions. Using both oral and photographic histories, these frameworks attempt to trace the ghost's of the past.



(DE)CONSTRUCT

Atlanta is a city that holds very little dear when it comes to architectural preservation. The midtown region near Cypress Street has particularly faced some of the most rapid redevelopment efforts in the past decade. This has led to the deconstruction of many buildings and the rapid construction of high rises. By taking the language of this deconstructive process, I propose the reconstruction of space through the temporal frameworks present in scaffolding and construction sites. What emerges is a framework that is accessible, movable, and endemic to Atlanta's urban processes.



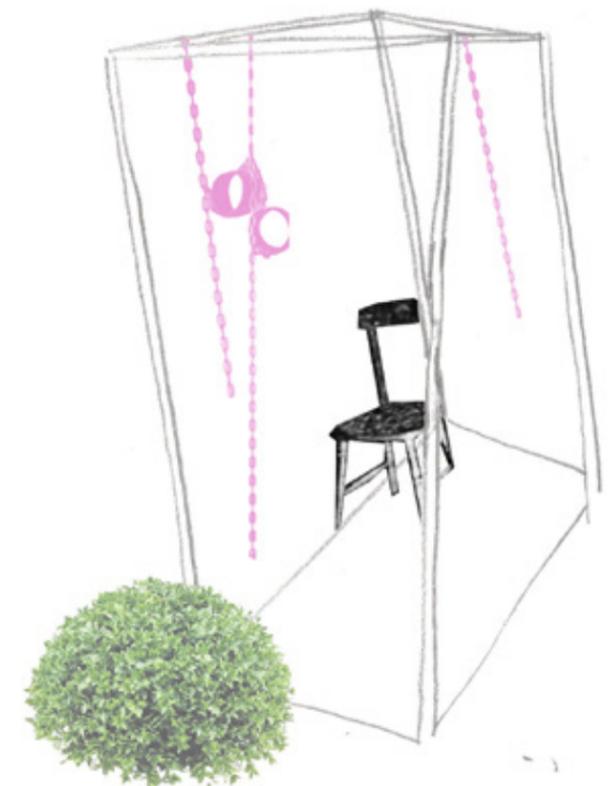
(GALLUS)



A. CRUISING TOWERS



B. LOST ROOM (DOWN UNDER I)



C. LOST ROOM (DOWN UNDER II)



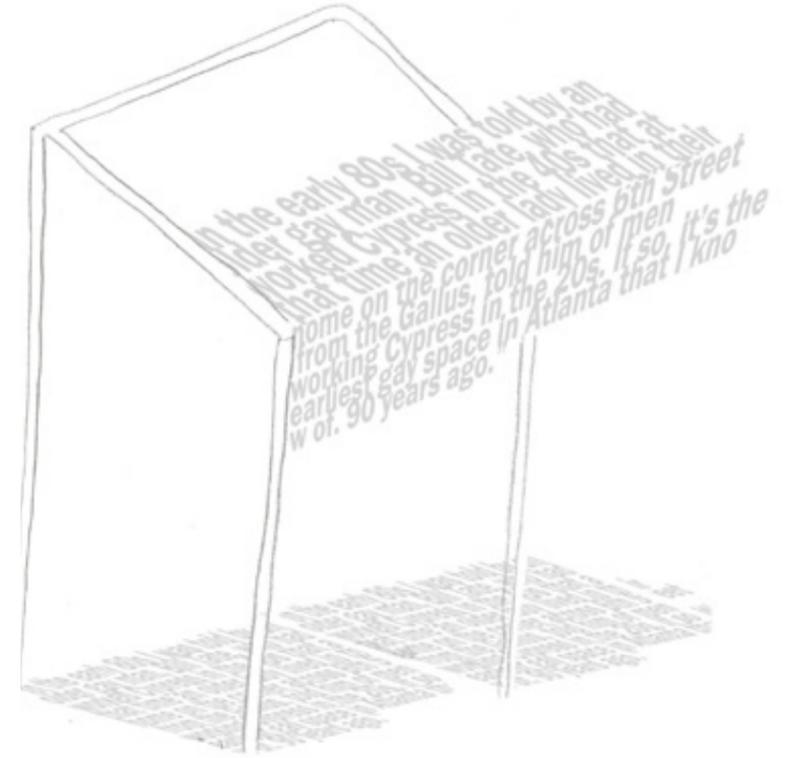
D. PLEASURE ARCHIVE



E. LOST ROOM (BACKSTREET, 3RD FLR)



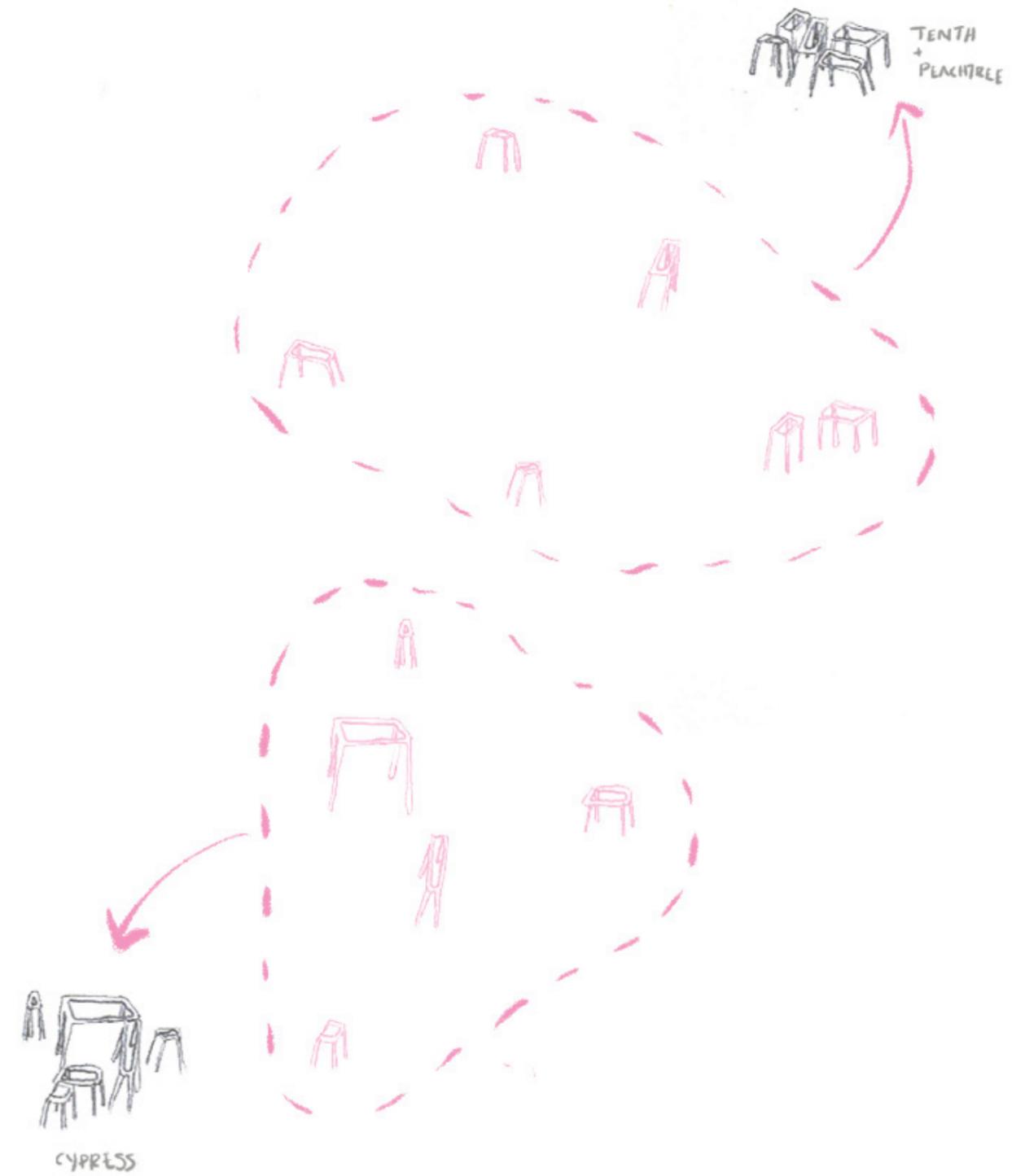
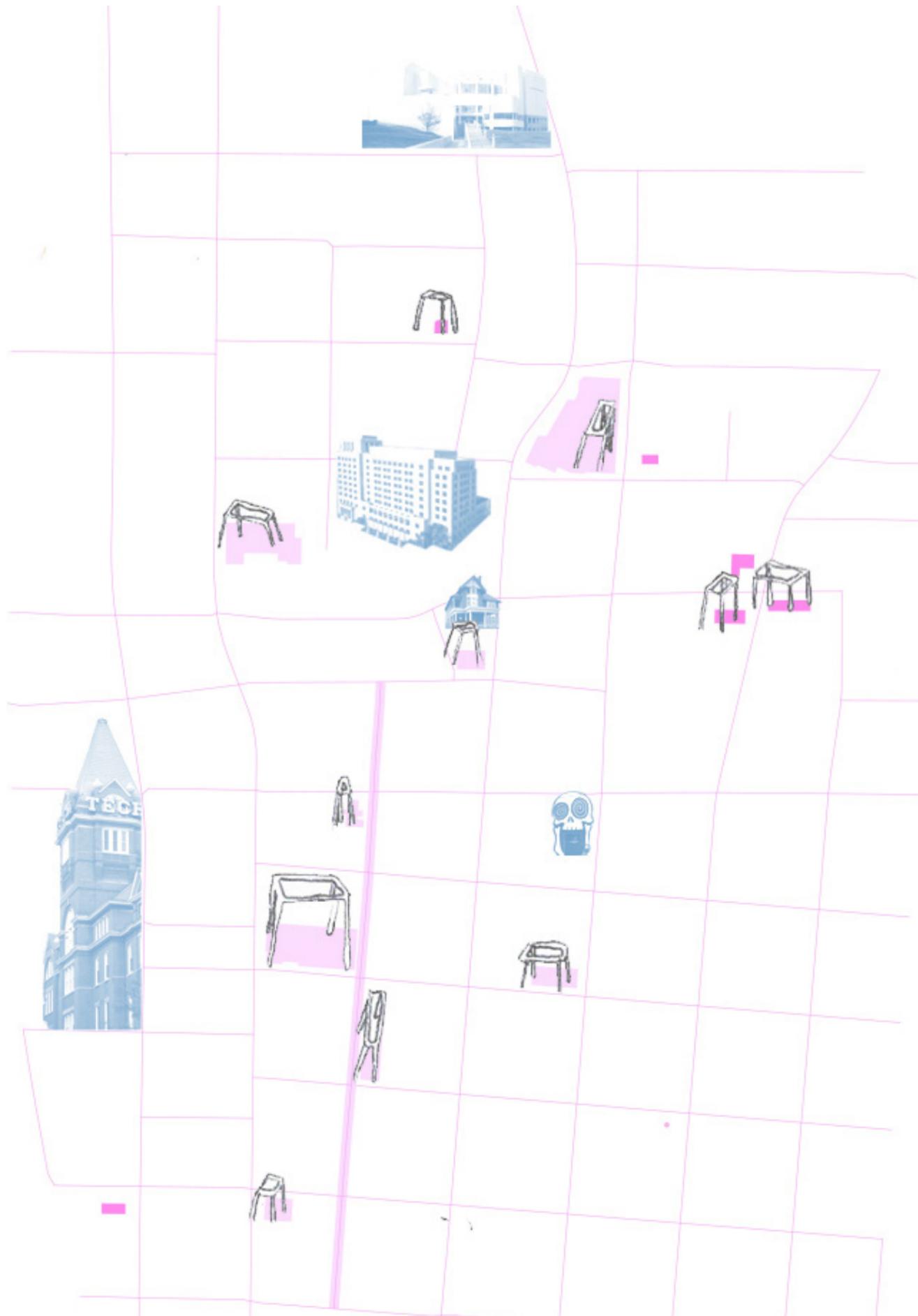
F. LOST ROOM (GALLUS, EXT.)



H. STORY CANOPY



G. LOST ROOM (FOSTER'S)



LANDMARK(ING)

In choosing sites for these frameworks, it became essential to start and analyze the relationship between the location of these structures and their referenced histories. Is the locating of these structures strengthened or hindered by being tied to the historical sites? Furthermore, how does the language of scaffolding relate to temporality and modularity? Can these structures connect and disconnect freely?

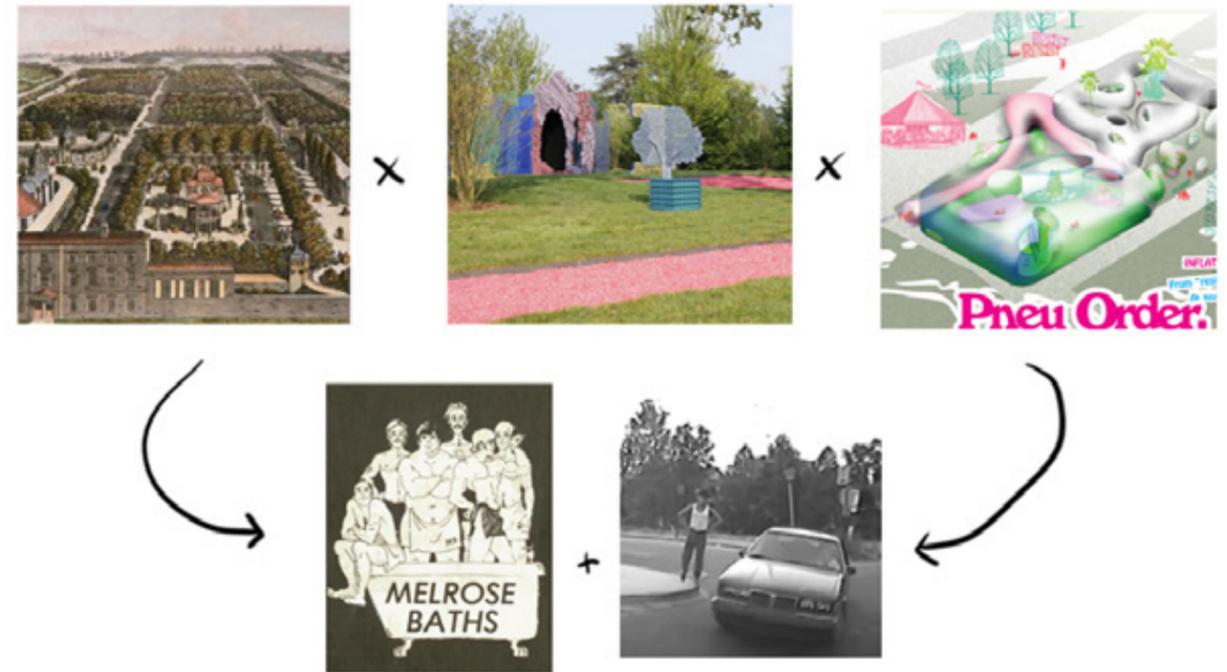


Queer world making [hinges on] the possibility to map a world where one is allowed to cast pictures of utopia and to include such pictures in any map of the social.”.

*– José Esteban Muñoz,
Cruising Utopia: The Then and
There of Queer Futurity,*



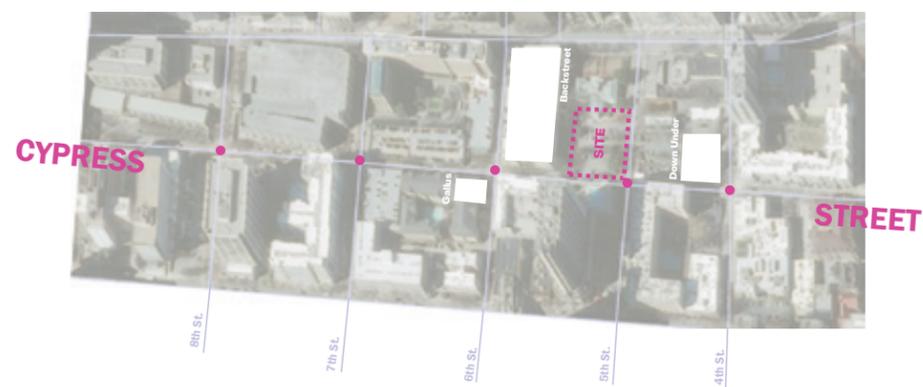
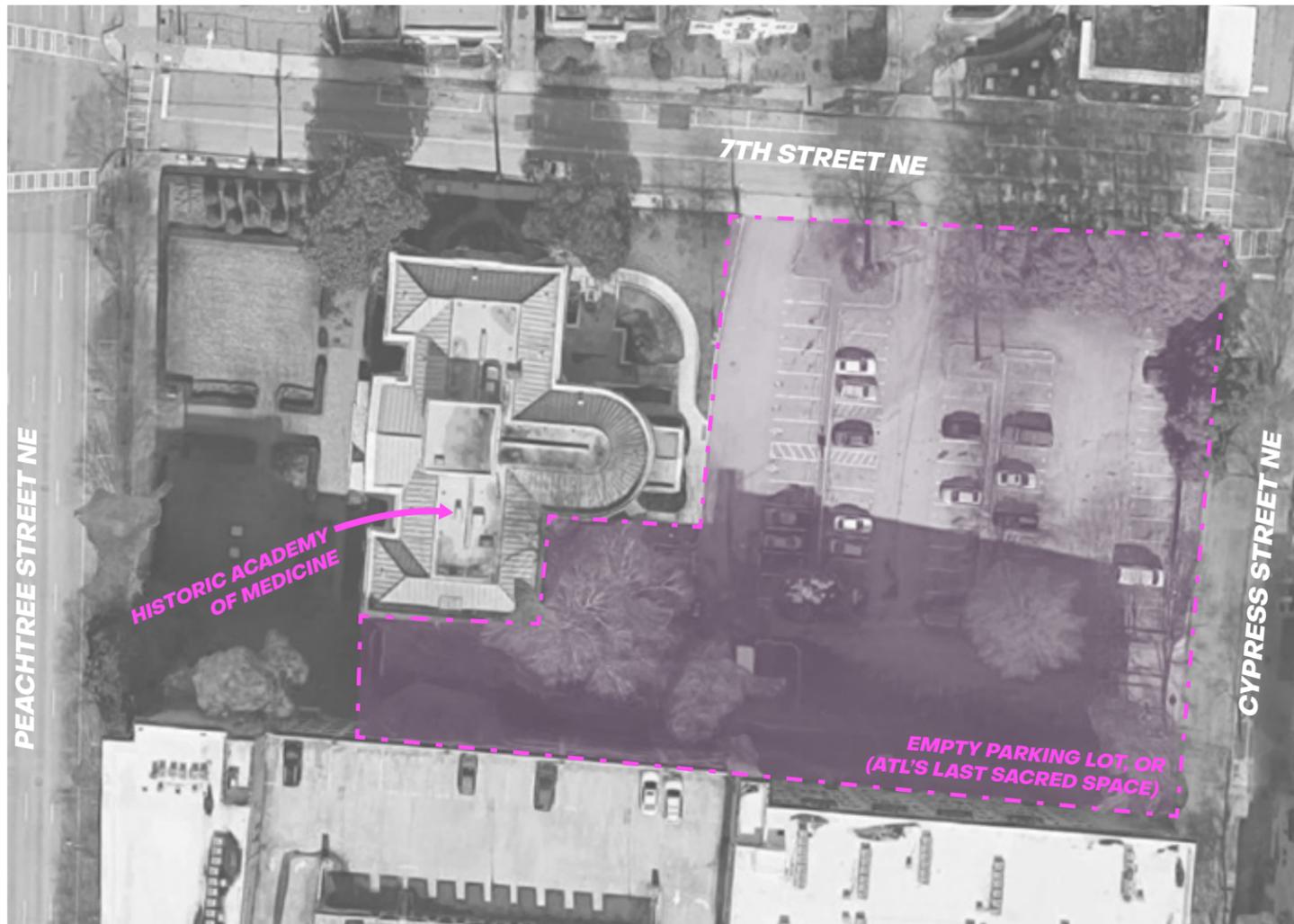
PLEASURE



MAKING LOVE (OUT OF NOTHING AT ALL)

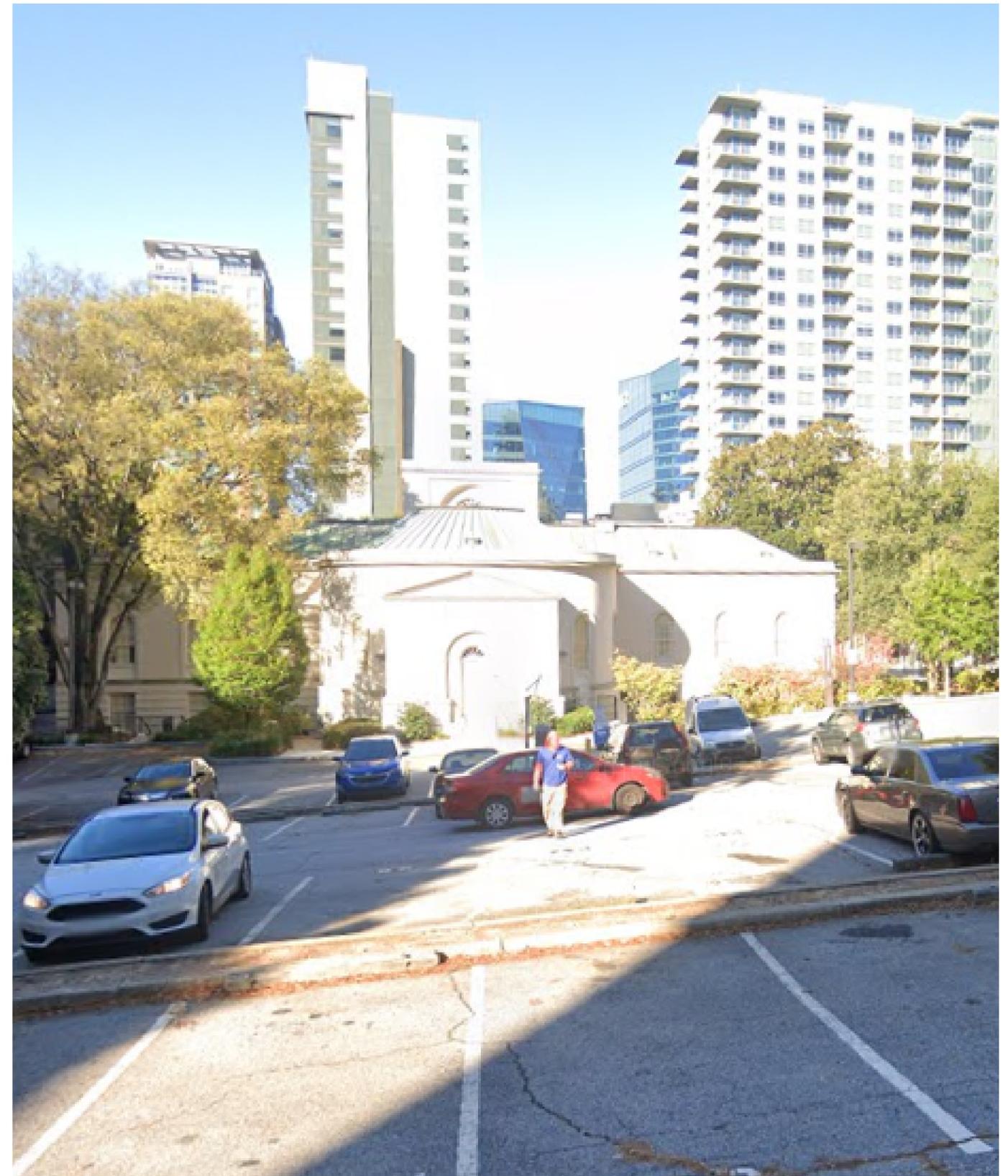
There were 3 major landscape typologies I used to inform my design from this point on: Pleasure gardens. These were recorded queer sex spaces in 18th century England and France and provide a historic framework and tradition to have a conversation with. Likewise, subversive approaches to landscape architecture- especially those that indulge in gay cultural patterns of campiness, made up another design language. Finally, I felt it important to try and stay abreast of current queer discourse in architecture, landscape architecture, and interior design and to continue building off of the work of other queer designers. I then took these typologies and filtered them through more quotidian queer pleasure spaces, namely, bathhouses and cruising grounds. Finally, I decided that this project needed to exist in a utopic future.

Early on, I was really struggling with how to do justice to the stories of this street, especially with balancing the constraints of heteronormative urban design standards. Keeping this project in a utopic realm allows for more freedom to imagine more evocative, dynamic futures and to not get caught in compromising for the realities of the moment, but rather to offer critique on these realities. It exists in a utopic context where policing does not exist and sex work is decriminalized and destigmatized. Likewise, I imagine that this site exists in a non-capitalist society that is both decolonized and no longer embraces heteronormative traditions.

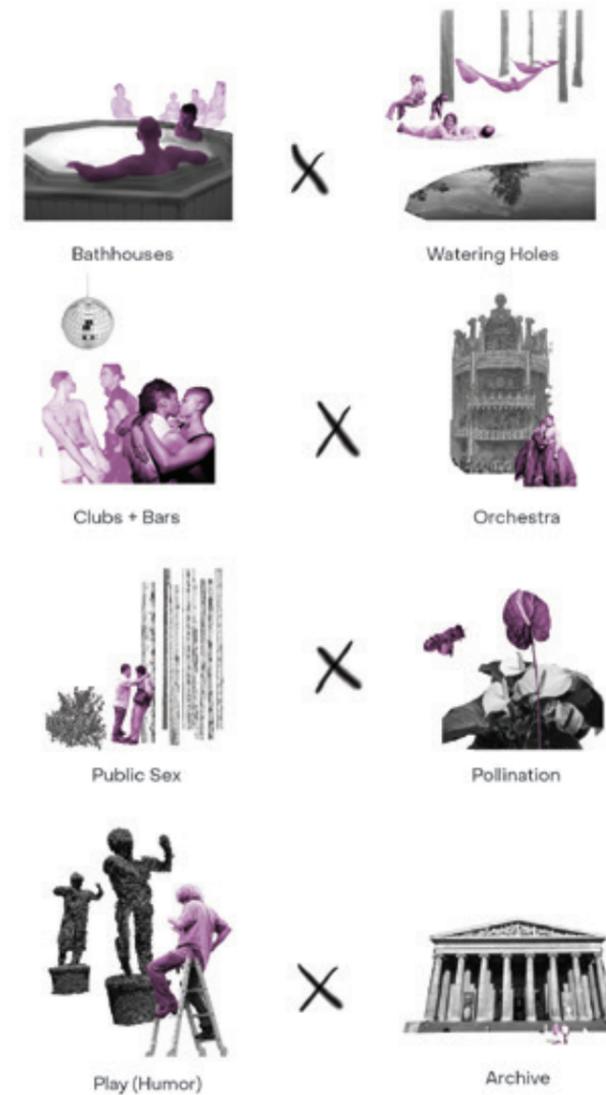
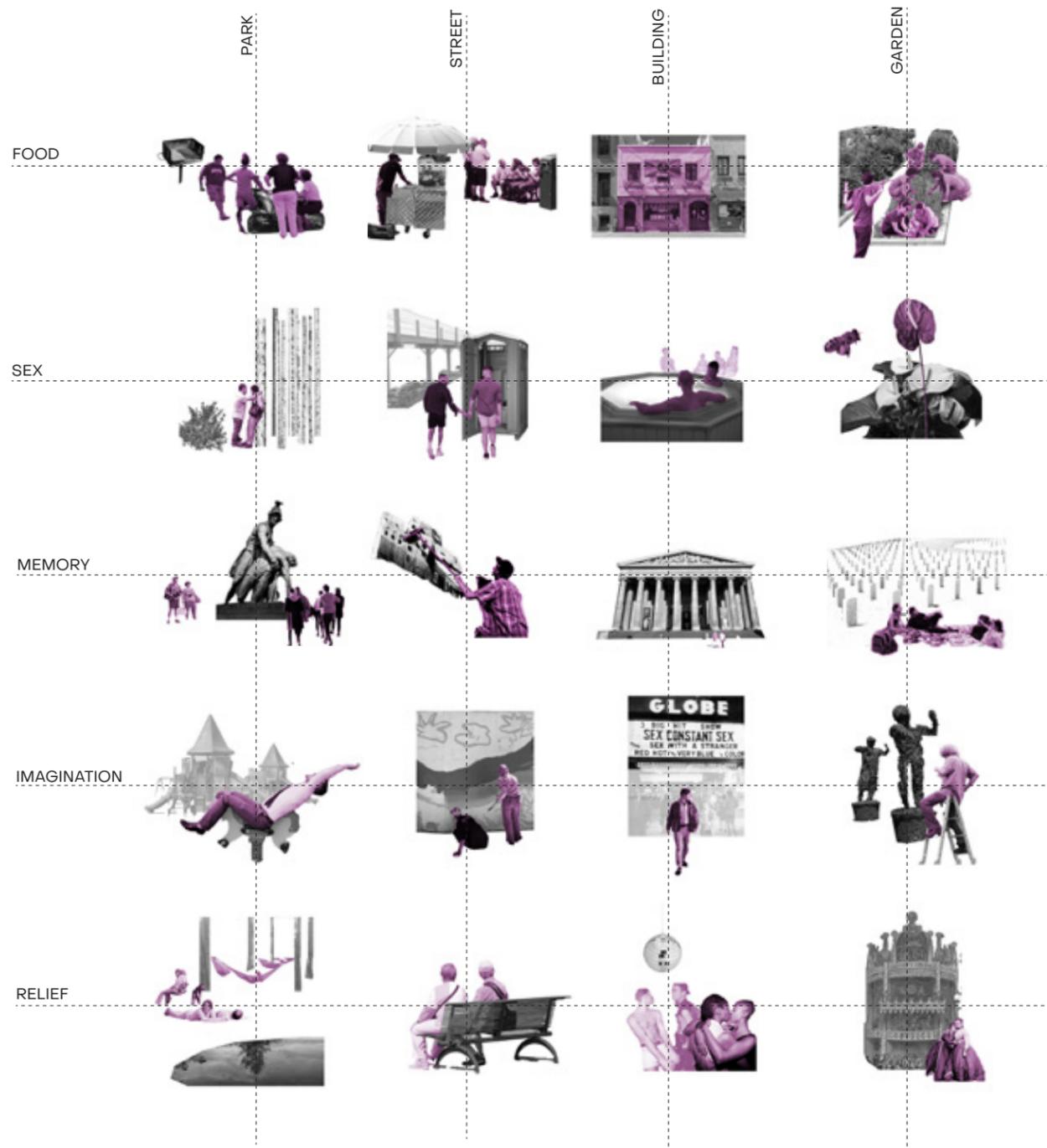


SITING PLEASURE

To site the project, I decided to locate the pleasure garden in the last large occupiable space on cypress street - the parking lot of the historic academy of medicine. This works in two ways- it is located between two prominent queer sites but also is positioned next to a building that is programmed as an event space, giving additional programmatic context that plays into notions of pleasure. Additionally, the siting here acts as a critique against medical histories which have acted against queer pleasure.

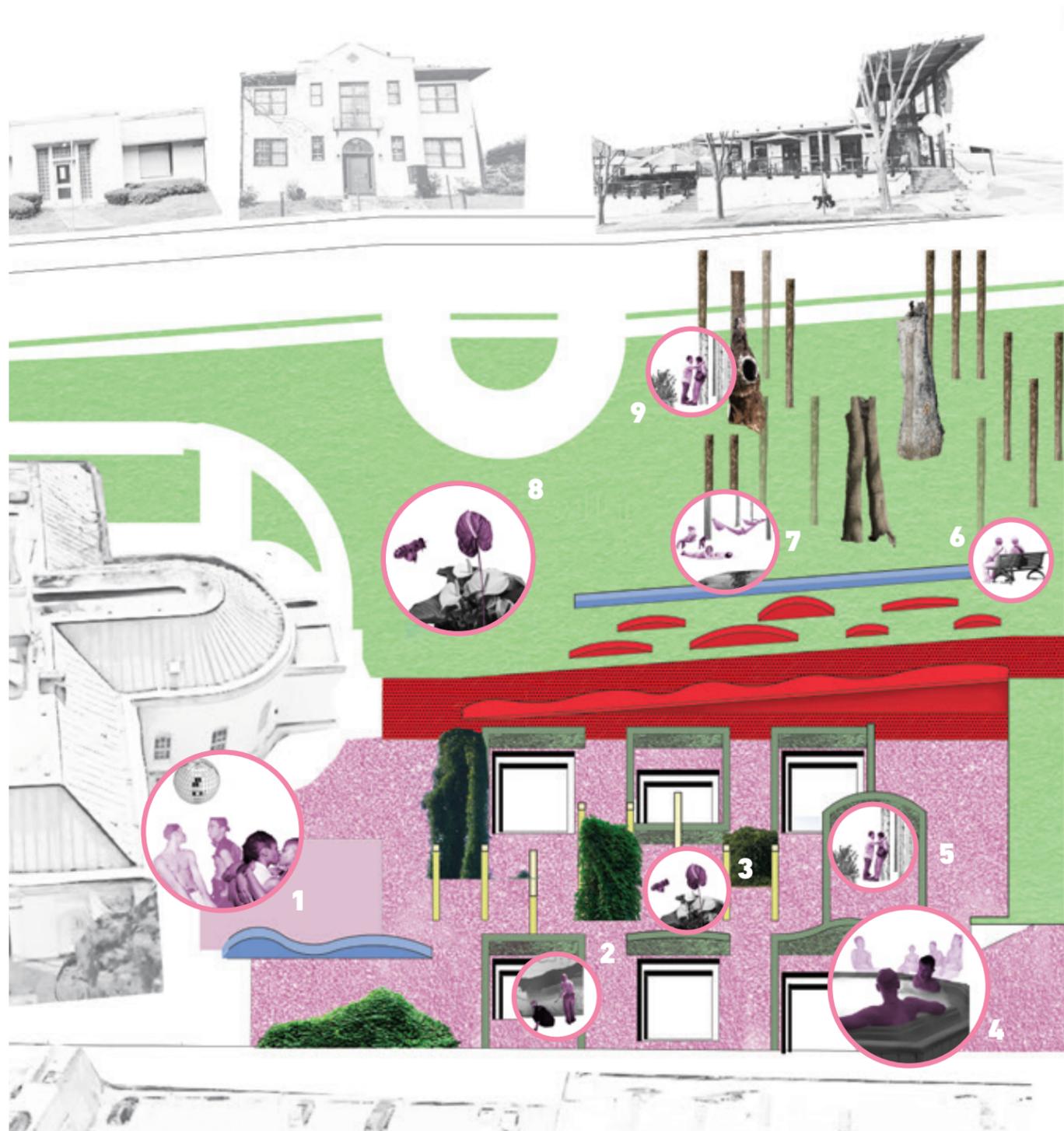


View of the parking lot today (Google Maps)



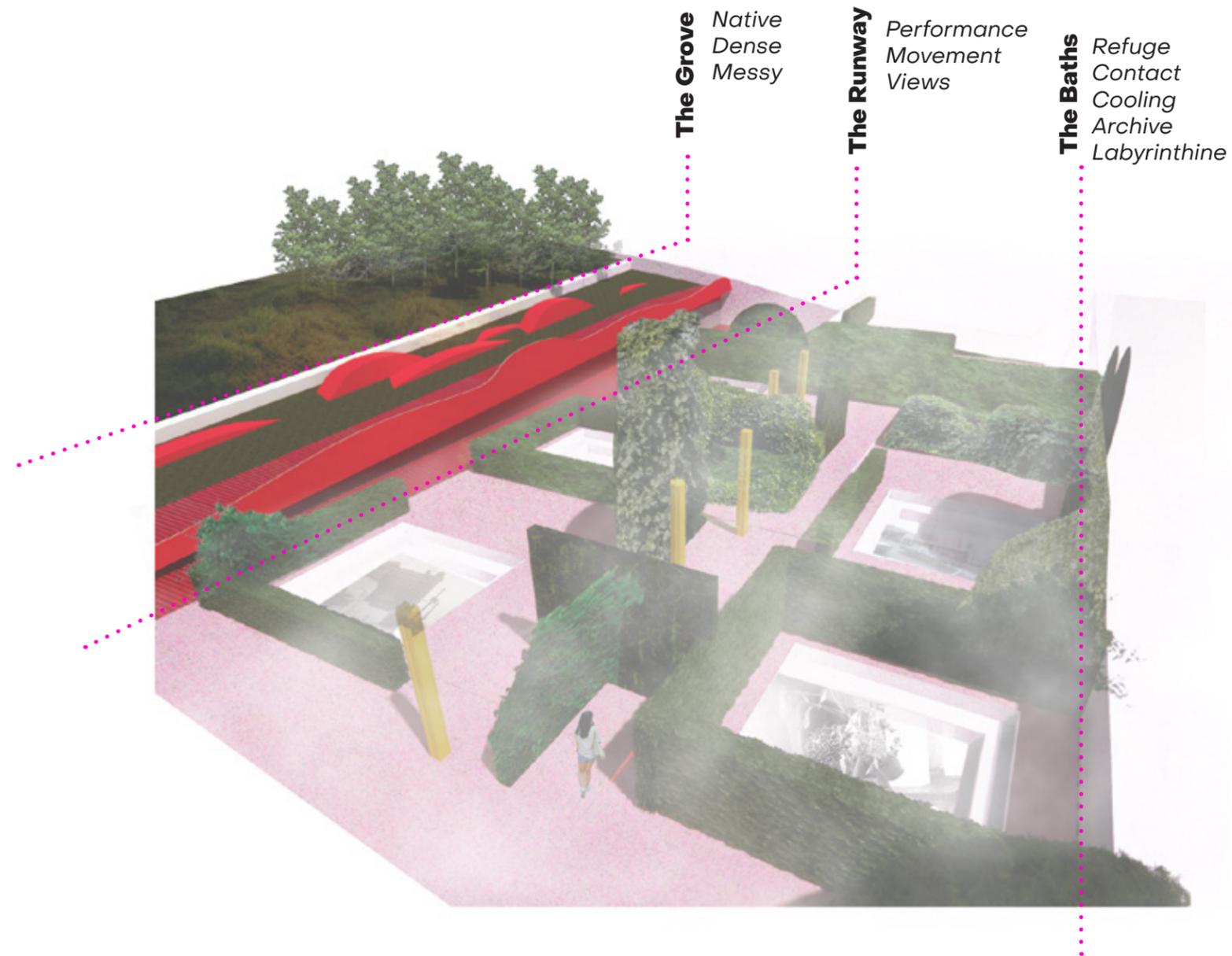
ANALYZING PLEASURE

Before beginning design on the garden itself, I wanted to do one last exercise in understanding typologies of pleasure in public space. Thinking about the street, the park, the built, and the garden, I began to trace how pleasure can manifest in the public realm.. This matrix allowed for me to pull together a diversity of contexts, histories, and types of pleasure which then allowed me to start to mix and match instances of queer pleasure with typologies that might exist within a traditional pleasure garden. From a programming point of view, this began to inform how programs can be layered and blended with one another. It allows for the public to begin to have agency in determining how programs begin to operate and interrelate.



- (1) Dance Floor**
- (2) Vine to Five**
- (3) Tile after Time**
- (4) Cold Sauna**
- (5) Oubliette Me Not**

- (6) The Runway**
- (7) Park Lot**
- (8) Pollinator Paradise**
- (9) The Woods**



PLANNING PLEASURE

I then mapped these pleasure typologies on the site in order to think more critically about the character of spaces present, the types of pleasure that would layer and intermingle, and the logistics of spatial organization. This led to the creation of three distinct regions, each with a character that is at once unique but also helps to inform neighboring zones.

WELCOME TO THE BATHS

Sunken seating emulates the intimate nature of bathhouses and provide space for contact. Meanwhile spray misters and shade provided by oversized vine topiaries give visitors relief from the hot Atlanta summer. The air is thick with floral aromas and if you look closer, these topiaries also act as hidden entries to clandestine lovers' hideaways. It's your sauna, and you are welcome to carve out your experience how you would like.



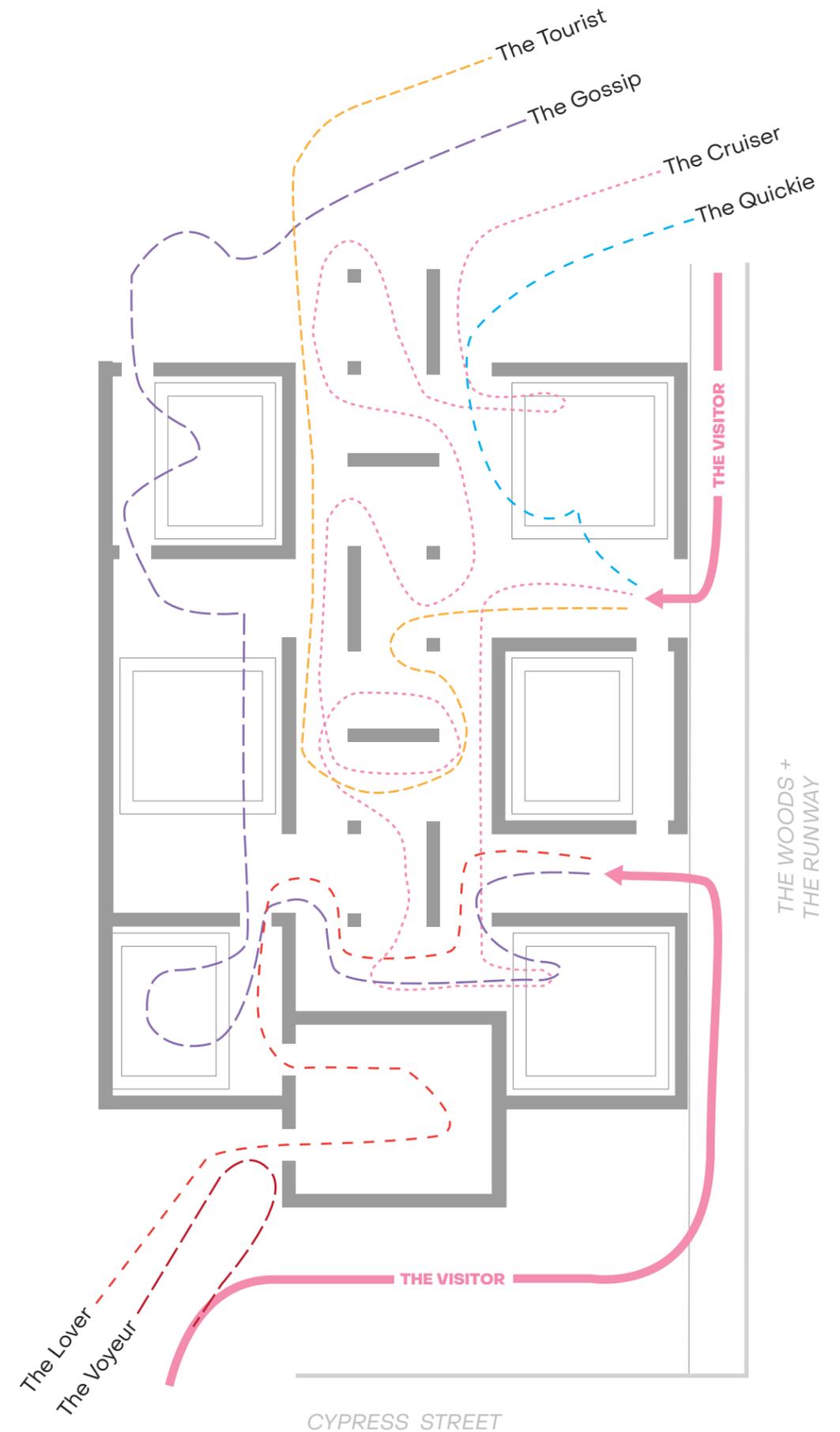


Plan of the Roman Baths (ABOVE), an early gay bathhouse in Toronto. This is typological of the sometimes labyrinthine, winding nature of these spaces meant for members to carve out their own experiences.

(DIS)ORGANIZING PLEASURE

This choose your own adventure approach to public space owes a lot to the designs of gay bathhouses past. These spaces often promoted wandering and cruising through a series of themed rooms, nooks, and crannies. In a similar spirit, I wanted to design a space that was labyrinthine and encouraged an agency of motion through the site.

This means that there is no hierarchy to the site, rather, pockets that beg to be explored (or ignored) at the visitors leisure.





Crossvine
Bigonia Capreolata



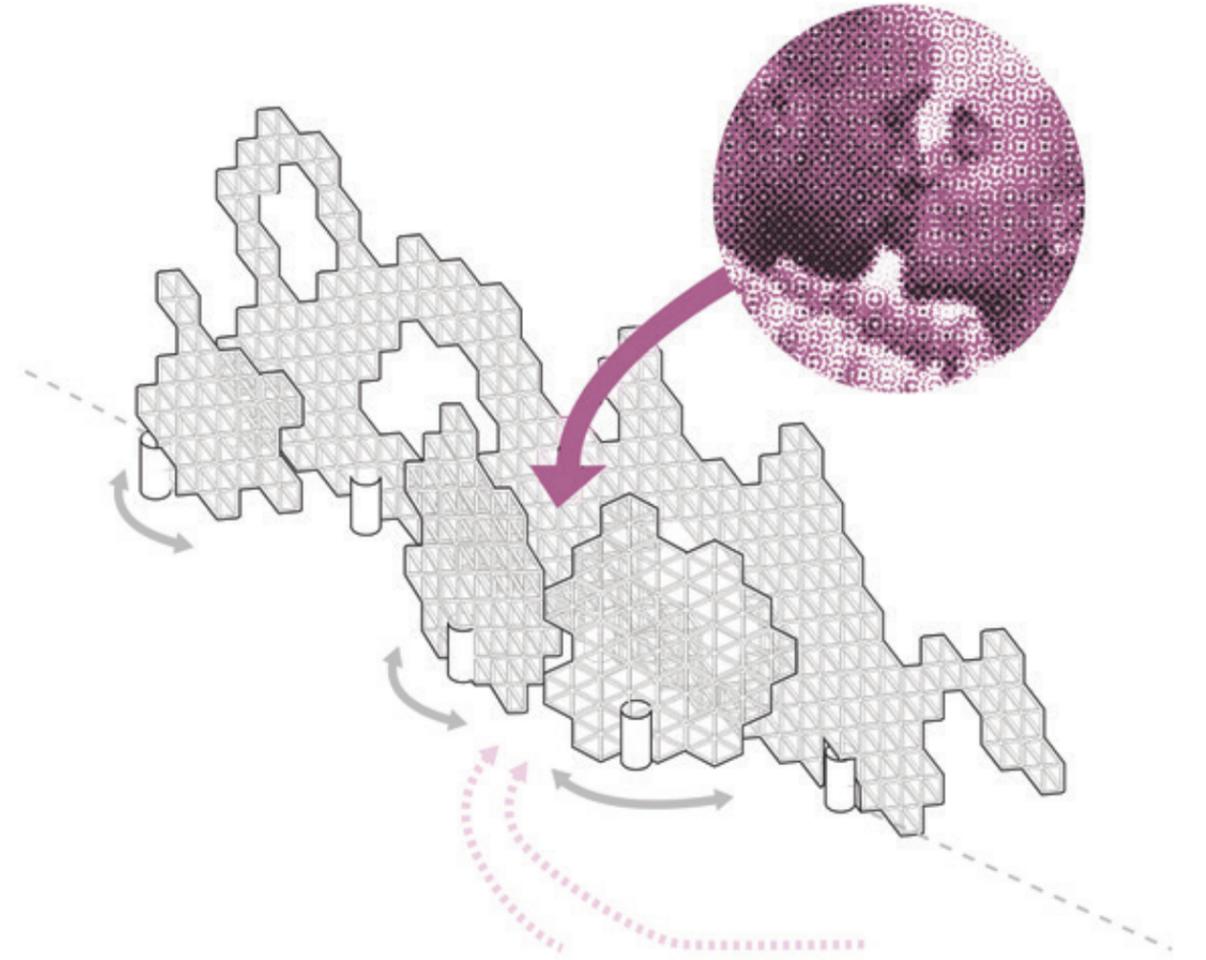
Climbing Hydrangea
Decumaria barbara



Carolina Yellow Jessamine
Gelsemium sempervirens



When selecting plants, I thought about how sex is often controlled in the garden. We cut down the weeds and don't allow them to pollinate, but on the other hand, we encourage the growth of flowers we find aesthetically pleasing. I wanted to play with this idea of control by taking both native vines - which would provide opportunities for native pollinators to come to the site- and interspersing them among public enemy #1 among southern planters: kudzu. Why do this? Well for one, I wanted to give this plant, that has become as integral to the identity of the south as pecan pie, a chance to be recognized as something that it also living, that also has its own beauty. I see this as a queer approach to planting.



Topiary Garden



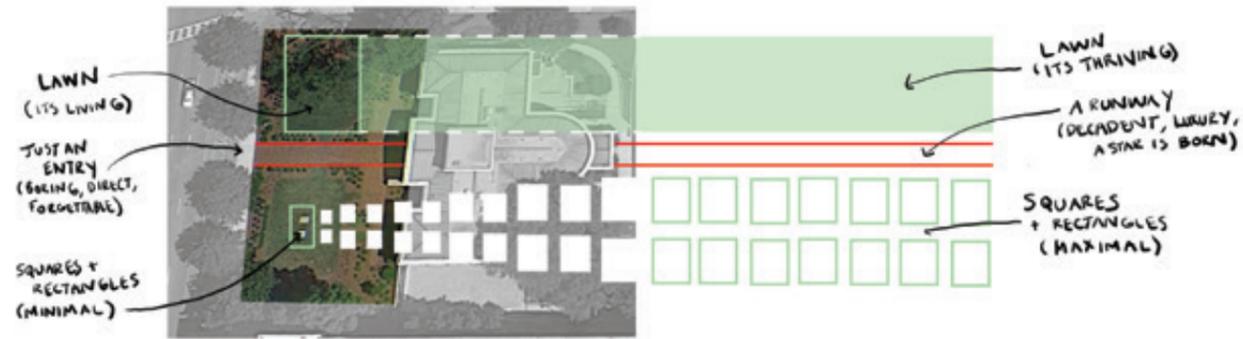
Kudzu

WALK, WALK FASHION BABY

As we move from the baths to the runway, I want to take a chance to return to the notion of subversion and camp. Likewise, I take the love of the lawn and take this and introduce a super lawn, complete with native grasses, sedges, and weeds that provides for a more dynamic field for activity, from humans to the birds and the bees.

Here, circulation meets performance and spectacle. Take a chance and be a star among a killer supporting cast.

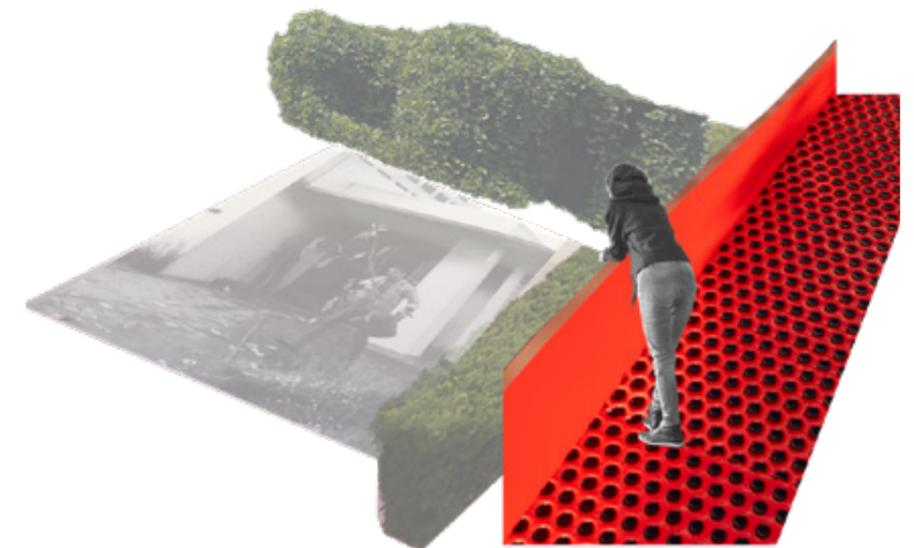
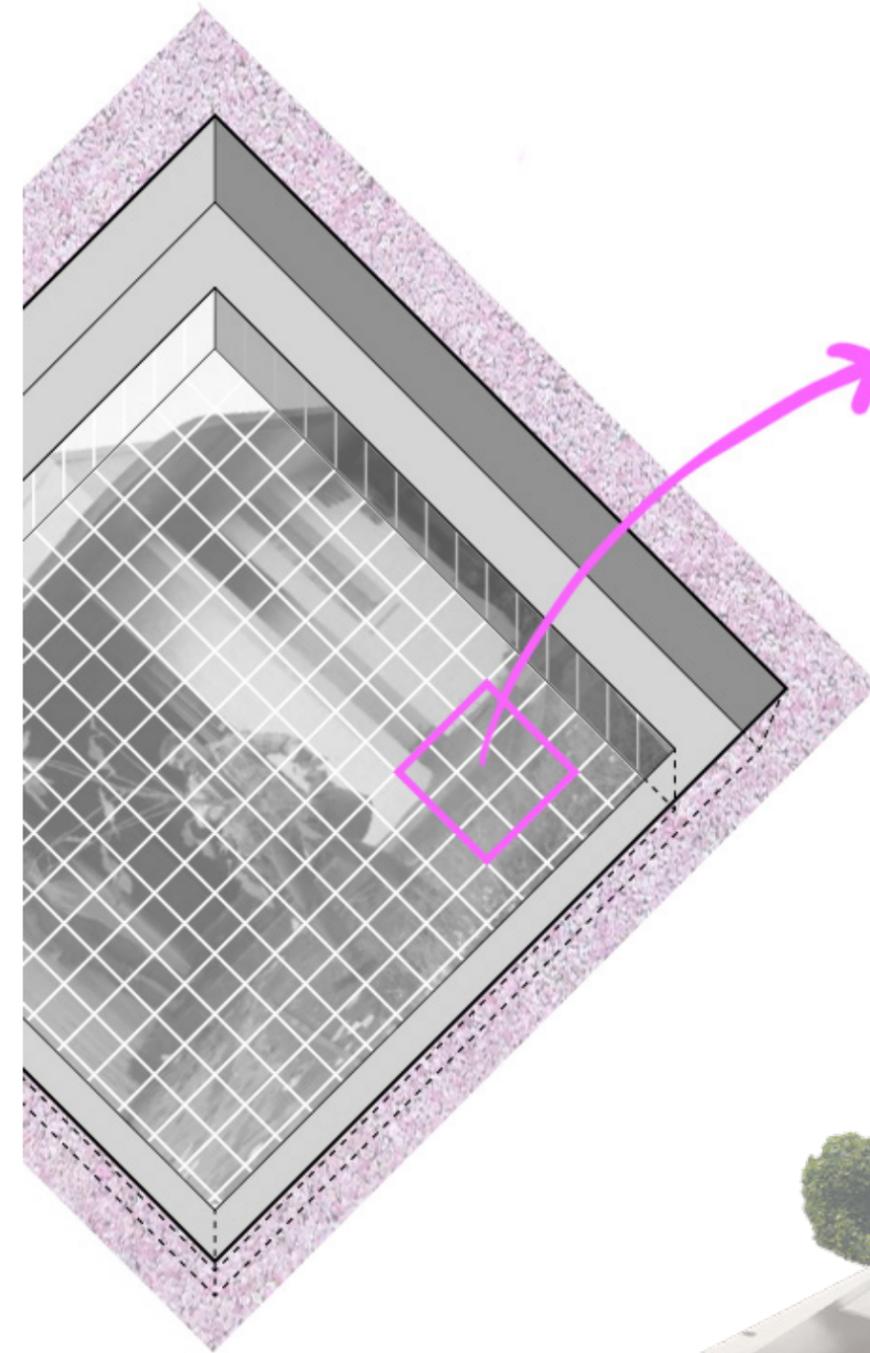


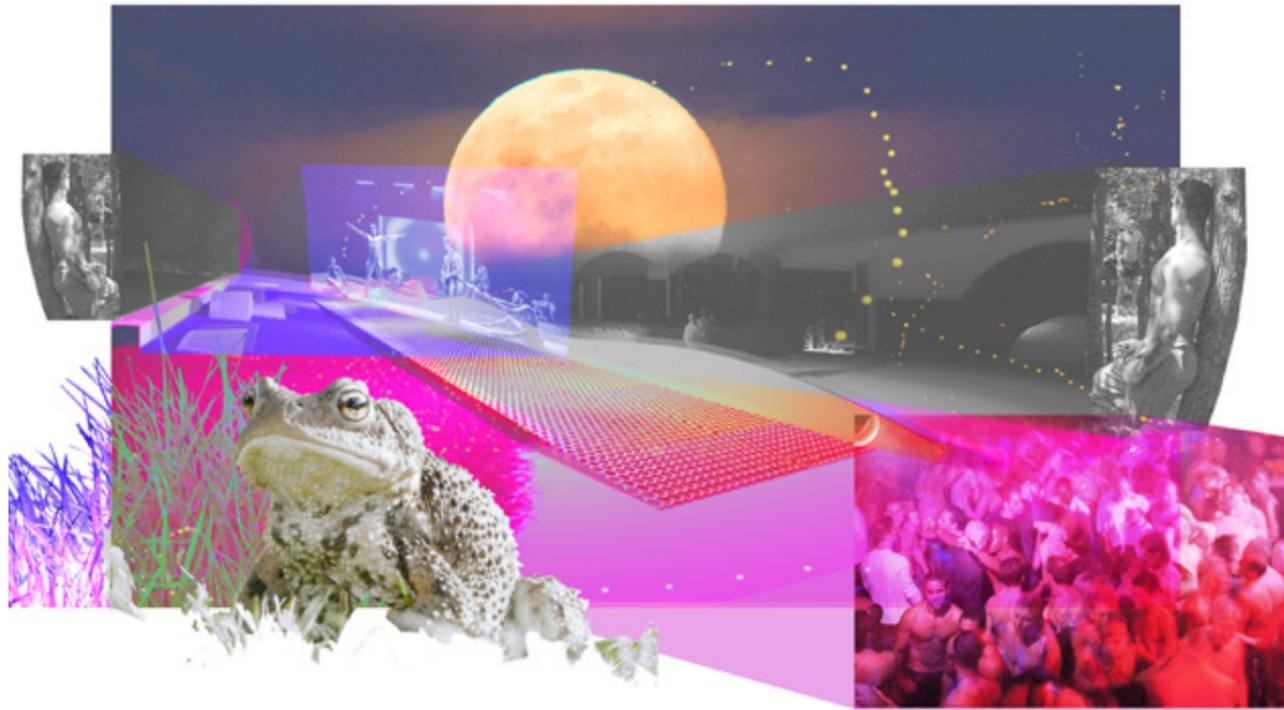


THE LANGUAGE OF PLEASURE

I focused on exaggerating elements of the Academy of medicine's very neo-classical approach to the landscape. Taking the axial entry way, blowing it out of proportion, and making it an opulent, luxurious runway that completely shifts intended view lines away from the building and towards the garden, which becomes a sort of set piece.

I used materiality as a means of connecting the site to its history. This is done in subtle ways like in using reclaimed symbology to inform palettes. It's also done in a very direct way which proposes that these sunken bath seats become tiled images to be viewed from the runway. Each tile making up these larger images would then be composed of smaller images recalling the history of LGBTQ+ histories of Atlanta.





Night Life

it would be difficult to talk about this site without acknowledging how the nature of these spaces shift temporally. Night provides a new kind of soundscape as crickets chirp in time to the distant bass of an outdoor dance party. The spaces meant to be refuge from the heat during the day meanwhile become a different kind of refuge at night, providing spaces for sex work and intimate encounters. Meanwhile, the runway which has acted as an overlook til this point, becomes the center of attention as it can be repurposed for a stage and performance.

***Exercise gives you
endorphins. Endorphins
make you happy. Happy
people just don't shoot their
husbands, they just don't.***

*RUSSELL DAVIES (2000)
QUEER AS FOLK, BBC*

IV



EPILOGUE



ON THE DESIGN OF PLEASURE

I want to end on this image, also taken from the Down Under bombing. I spent a lot of time looking at this - it's a really striking image on its own, but it represents a lot to me. It talks about the resiliency of queer landscapes in the face of violence and oppression, but more than that, it talks about care as a radical act. In my opinion, there have always been obstacles to the performance of pleasure in the public realm, especially when it comes to marginalized bodies. All too often, when we design landscapes our notions of joy and pleasure are limited to what is acceptable by the ongoing culture of the time. To ignore the pleasure and joy that exists outside of this purview only tells half of the story and limits the ability for public space to act democratically.

It is my hope that through designing more intentionally for a wide array of pleasure that we can make more equitable and dynamic public spaces.

Thank you

-Tyler Smith

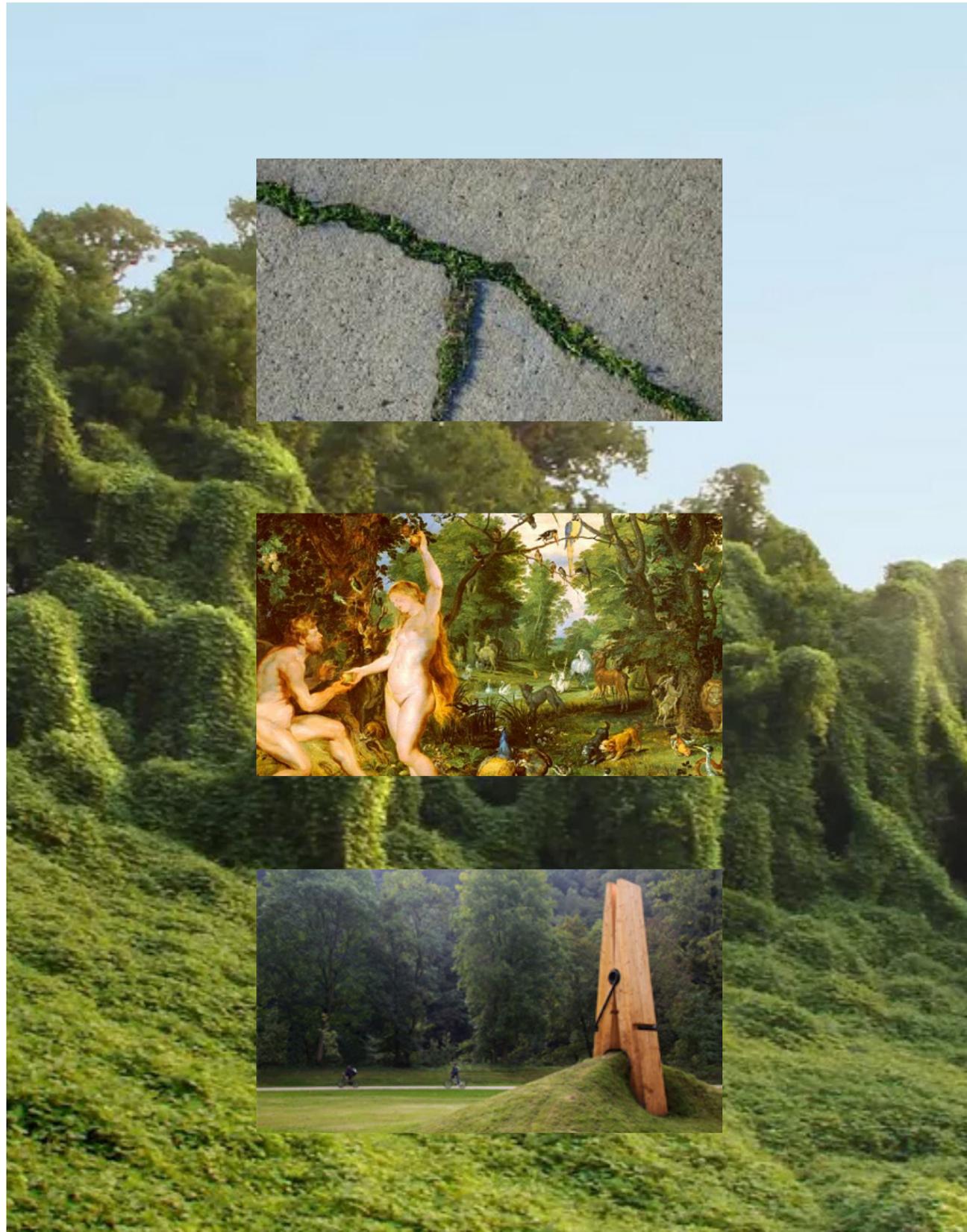
***there is a polyphony of stories,
and they do not harmonize.***

*– Donna J. Haraway,
The Haraway Reader*

V



APPENDIX



Queer Ecologies

An Introduction To Queer Issues In Design

Queer space theory has been emergent in the study of the built environment since the 1990's, yet has received little to no traction within larger trends of the profession. This could be due to a range of reasons: the focus on international multi-million dollar projects, a lack of diversity in the field to advocate for these theories, and a general cultural squeamishness with regards to sexuality and queerness. Nonetheless, the challenges we face in rapidly growing cities that need to support a diversity of peoples and increased environmental pressures seem to be an ideal testing ground for queer design theories.

Queer theory first and foremost advocates for a deconstruction of normative cultural binaries which define the systems and spaces that surround us. At the core of this is the division between Nature and Human. Ideal nature is seen as a "pure," or at the very least, in need of being maintained as such. Meanwhile, Wilderness is often associated with sin and danger. Humans are often positioned as diametrically opposed to Nature and this influences much of ecological and landscape thinking for the better part of the past several centuries. For instance, weeds are often seen as being in need of grooming or destruction, through they are as complex as any other part of the ecosystem. Simply put, our projection of these cultural binaries physically manifest themselves in our designs. Queer theory advocates for a need to

embrace the complexity and uncertainty embedded in the world. It advocates for failure and messiness, dirtiness and fuzziness. A queer space is one that supports maximalism and a plurality of narratives.

Queer space is, as such, not an exclusively LGBTQIA+ space, though these communities are often involved in supporting these theories through self-organizing. Rather, queer space (and queer ecologies) act as non-heteronormative spaces that seek to deconstruct traditional values and associations of space. The definitions of queer space are diverse due to their embedded plurality; some space takes a distinctive activist lens while others choose to focus on campiness and the socially performative nature of space. While this makes it difficult to assign a strict framework to queering design, this fluidity is exactly what makes queer theory ideal for approaching complex issues embedded in urbanity.

Gay Gardens

Or, how we've learned to fear the plants and the wilderness

In taking a queer perspective towards ecology and landscape, we must understand how our relationship with plants and space is defined by a heteronormative fear of queerness. Plants are fluid- throughout ecological history, scientists have had to constantly revise and reconceptualize how to classify plants. Flowers fail to fit neatly into anthropocentric norms of femininity and masculinity, both physically and symbolically. Furthermore, new research supporting plant intelligence and communication have shaken the human centric cosmic order which has been the traditional cultural norm.

Plants force us to rethink our own relationship to the world around us. As such, the narrative around plants that are uncontrollable have often been the basis of horror stories. It doesn't take much digging to find examples of sci-fi tropes that depict intelligent plants that pose a threat to humanity's self-imposed hierarchy over "Nature." Both the Little Shop of Horrors (1960) and the Day of the Triffids feature plants that rapidly multiply and consume "civil" society. It is no coincidence that these plants are often also hyper-sexualized. This emphasis on sexuality highlights the irony of traditional garden practices: gardeners love when plants reproduce, as they give us both food and beauty in the form of flowers. However, we only like certain plants to reproduce- woe to the errant weed that begins to overtake a garden bed!

This also manifests itself in how we see planting practices and, in particular, the concept of wilderness. As touched on previously, Wilderness often has implications of danger and sin. Wilderness, furthermore, has traditionally been a space of queer desire. The Vauxhall Gardens in Lambeth London existed as a pleasure garden for queer desire between the 17th and 19th centuries. Its design levied the lush and uncontrolled types of growth associated with wilderness as a means of creating hidden spaces of refuge. There was a lack of surveillance in these spaces, and as such, a lack of the type of control pervading traditional social performance. Similarly, "cruising" culture which has defined a significant portion of gay experiences in the 20th century has used similar landscape as a means of refuge for sexual encounters unable to safely exist under societal surveillance. These spaces point to the deconstruction of the binary of public and private.

There are many lessons we can glean from the plants and growth our society fears and rejects. They have shaped how we both engage and imagine landscapes through maintenance and control. Engaging queer theory once again gives us the space to reimagine our relationship with the spaces that define how we interact with the world around us. Such a shift in narrative is important for us to truly learn how to reengage spaces that allow for the negotiation between plants, humans, and the systems that impact them.



Annotated Literature Review

Writings and research on queerness,
design, and ecology

Crowdy, Joe. “Queer Undergrowth: Weeds and Sexuality in the Architecture of the Garden.” *Architecture and Culture* 5, no. 3 (2017): 423–33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20507828.2017.1365541>.

This article addresses fundamental issues regarding queerness in gardening. In particular, it highlights the dynamics of the garden as a sensual site and one which humans struggle to control. In doing such, Crowdy illuminates parallels between the ways in which we approach our cultural fixations towards sexuality with that of “Nature.” He takes both a historical and cultural survey of sources in which the element of wilderness or uncontrolled plant growth acts as a foil to socio-cultural norms regarding a variety of cultural binaries. While the article does not directly address design, it aligns with much landscape writing which sees the act of maintenance as fundamental towards our approach to space in design professions. The author argues that gardens are spaces of negotiation and competition between humans and plants, representing a fundamental cultural divide which we have made with larger ecologies. However, he also argues that these spaces can blur the lines between private and public, plant and human.

Vallerand, Olivier. “Learning from... (or “the need for queer pedagogies of space”).” *Interiors* 9, no. 2 (2018), 140–156, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20419112.2019.1565175>

A rather rich text, Vallerand’s article approaches queer theory across a wide ranging context of spatial design including interior design, architectural design, and landscape design. He argues that fundamental aspects of queer space theory should be greatly adopted in both the practice and education of designers across disciplines. This includes a willingness to accept (and embrace) failure or disruption, becoming activist-educators, supporting a diversity of designers, and multiplying points of views. At its core, the article argues that space has traditionally been designed by and for a specific demographic (white, cis, christian, heteronormative men) and, as such, supports the oppressive systems which have traditionally elevated these voices and narratives. While Vallerand suggests that queering design is a way of bringing in a wider range of voices into these spaces, he does not prescribe how to do it. Rather, it becomes an issue of advocating for a variety of approaches from activist driven design to embracing maximalist “camp” approaches to design. An important highlight from this article is that of its discussion on novel approaches to programming (using the work of Bernard Tschumi as a jumping point). Tschumi’s work at La Villette has been inspirational to me, so it was nice to see how this folds into queer space theory. In particular, the focus on transprogramming and crossprogramming will likely become central to the execution of my final project.

Vallerand, Olivier. “Home Is the Place We All Share.” *Journal of Architectural Education* 67, no. 1 (2013): 64–75. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10464883.2013.767125>.

In focusing this article on the idea of queer collectivity and utopia, Vallerand takes a cross section of important feminist and queer writers and applies them to how they influence and direct queer space theory. In doing so, the implicit binaries present in contemporary spaces is highlighted. In particular, focusing on how space is both gendered and often divided in between private and public is examined. Another important aspect which Vallerand examines is the social performativity of space. Queerness is seen as both a principle and an act of pushing whatever is at odds with normative or the dominant. In examining how this contrast and disharmony exists in space, the article both leads to a questioning of how space develops identity and how identity can subvert or alter traditional notions of this.

Sandilands, Catriona. “Fear of a Queer Plant?” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 23, no. 3 (2017): 419–29. <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-3818477>.

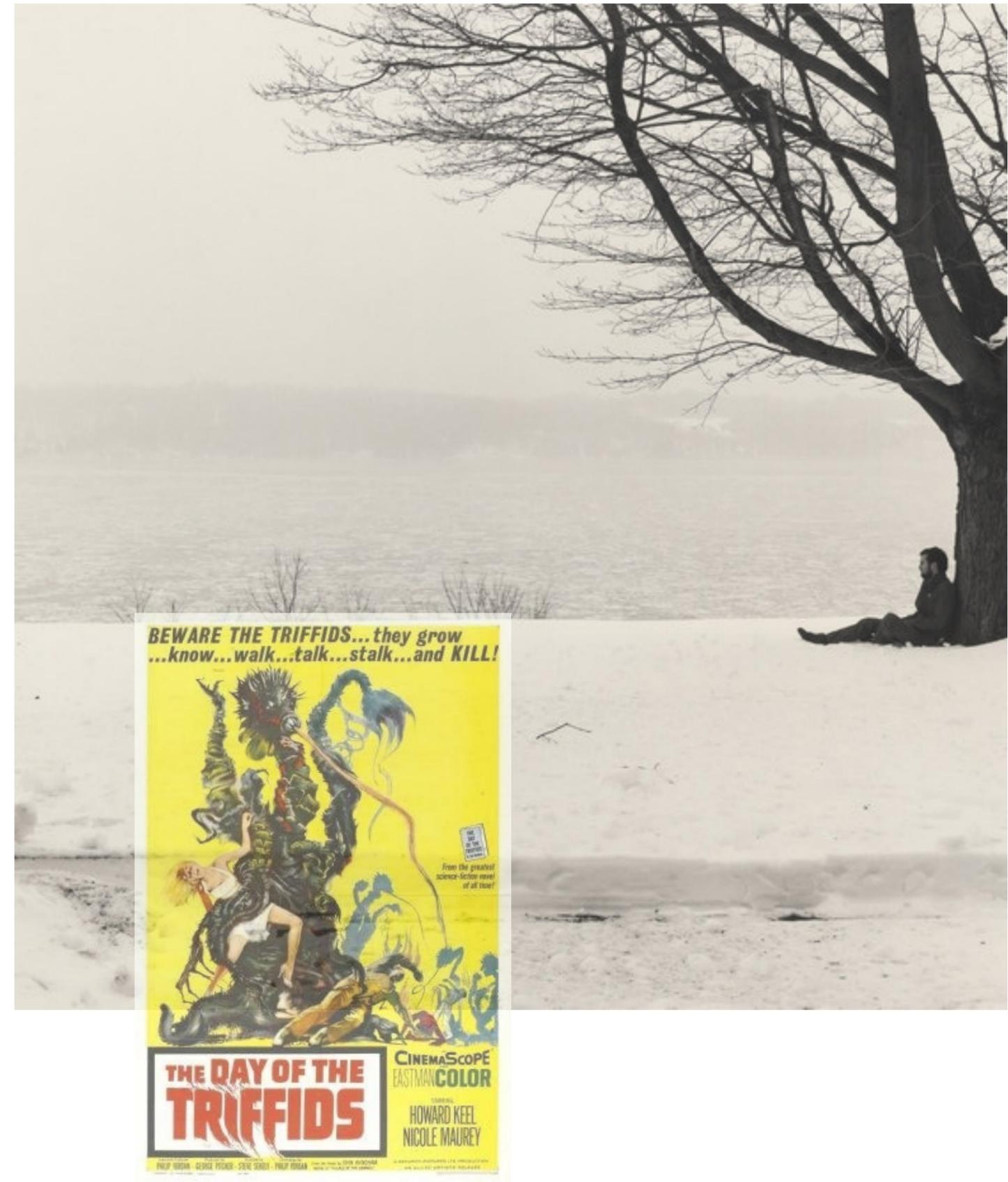
This literature review is an examination of queerness and ecology outside of the context of design. It levies both avant garde and camp sci-fi films to underscore how the implicit queerness of plants acts at odds with standard cultural norms which place humans at the top of the cosmic order. While a large amount of the text is far too specific for the scope of this capstone, there are important cultural narratives that can be distilled from this text. In particular, the rejection of fluidity and unclassifiability within our current culture seems to be at the core of the discussion here. The author makes a point to address that themes of queerness cannot be exclusive to humans and that an embrace of queer principles is aligned with a greater interconnectedness with the world we exist in.

Morton, Timothy. "Guest Column: Queer Ecology." Publications of the Modern Language Association of America 125, no. 2 (2010): 273–82. <https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2010.125.2.273>.

This brief article acts as a great primer on the intersection between queer theory and ecology. In particular, concepts pertaining to the "Human" and "Nature" divide are highlighted, as well as the implicit binary between the way we approach interior and exterior spaces. The article both traces the origins of queer ecological thinking while also looking forward towards how we can apply these principles and theories in future work and research. Another aspect that is touched on is the role of sexuality in defining queer ecologies, a topic which seems to be at once foregrounded and set aside in discussing queer space (as queer space is at once simply non-heteronormative and also pertaining to queer populations who typically identify under the LGBTQIA+ umbrella). Finally, Morton echoes much of what Vallerand discusses in his writing, arguing that existing in a queer ecology means celebrating weakness over mastery and fragmentation over wholism. It is a call for the messy and the complex.

Johnson, Alex. "How to Queer Ecology: One Goose at a Time." Orion Magazine. Massachusetts Cultural Council, 2011. orionmagazine.org.

One of the first articles that I approached in understanding the intersection of queer issues within the lens of landscape architecture, this is an oft referenced essay which acts as a manifesto for approaching nature and larger ecological concepts and theories through the lens of queerness. Johnson dismantles the notion that "nature" is a pure thing (a prominent cultural narrative which has been used to support the idea of something being "natural" or not with regards to social behavior). More importantly, though, is this articles relation to the personal histories and lives of members of the LGBTQ community. While it is just one examples of how the personal narratives and theory intersect, it is important in acknowledging how these personal experiences (and often hardships) shape these theories and act as activist ideologies for radically changing the space we inhabit.





uncertainty, absurdity, artificiality

A MANIFESTO

Landscape Architecture should accept and embrace its own artificiality.

In other words, we need to take ourselves less seriously. Rather than seeing ourselves as Designers on a divine mission to fix the world, we need to see ourselves first and foremost as humans who are indulging an innate curiosity of creation. We strive to carve out our presence in a universe that is hard to unilaterally attach meaning to. The act of human creation is at its core a practice in absurdity and yet we are driven to do it, even if we do not intend to. As discourse into the arts begins to expand the definition of what of these creations constitutes itself as Art (with a capital "A"), I propose that landscape architecture should be treated as an Art; it is constructed, edited, theorized, taken for granted, admonished, admired, adapted, thrown out, and occasionally preserved. It is also the sum of our collective subjectivity, where the mere act of littering fundamentally can change how we read a landscape. Much in the same way in which we are driven to create, we are driven to seek our own reflection in the landscape. We look at landscape through a distinctly human lens because we don't know how else to see it. And we can't shed this either, no matter how hard we try. We can try to grok the ways in the which a bird can identify what thread will best insulate its nest, but we will always better understand how to locate the best spot to set up a picnic. The practice of landscape architecture is deeply anthropocentric even if its ideals might aspire to be symbiotic (and there is nothing wrong with this!)

Rather, this is the onus of design in the landscape. To design is to consider the human element at all times, even if it means rejecting human pleasure or comfort. To design is to continue to try and understand how we can impose order where there is none, even if it means purposefully seeking disorder. To design is to resign oneself to living paradoxically. We work in the grey areas where the ultimate judgment of our worth as creators boils down to the values that we attach to it.

This makes the act of design itself radical.

To design is to invoke change in one's landscape. Some would question the limits to this radicality, as if there is a border to what no longer constitutes itself as practical design. But if the act of designing itself is radical in nature, how can we separate it from its own essence? In short, we can't. Design can be both radical in the way it upends the status quo, but also in the way it staunchly preserves it. It is the latter which has led us to some of the most extreme anthropocentric typologies. Mierle Laderman Ukeles describes this succinctly in her reading of Fresh Kills, New York (an infamous landfill-island) as "a true social sculpture composed of 150 million tons from literally billions of individual decisions and acts of rejection." Much in the same way we must embrace the artificiality of our work, we must also embrace the radicality of our work. Landscape

(cont.)

architecture should constantly be reworking itself and reshaping itself through close analysis of what types of radicality it supports. Design cannot and should never exist in a space of unintentionality for to do that is to resign oneself to the chaotic nature of the universe where human creation has no purpose. (and even then, is resigning oneself to purposelessness not also radical?) To be radical, though, is to accept responsibility for one's own radicality. The sense of ownership which designers and artisans have over this is broad, and yet there are some realms in which we must take collective ownerships of our designs.

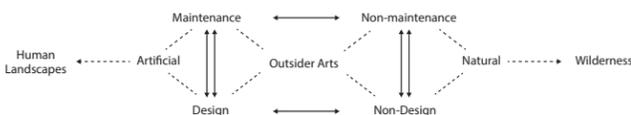
Human made landscapes should be our priority.

These places are a physical manifestation of our own radical impulses. Urban and increasingly suburban contexts reflect the human imprint on the world to such an extent of thoroughness and complexity that our responsibility as designers should not be limited to, but rather concentrated on these systems. As we are makers and creators and experts of our own human impulses, the typologies which emerge in these contexts are where our collective knowledge as a profession

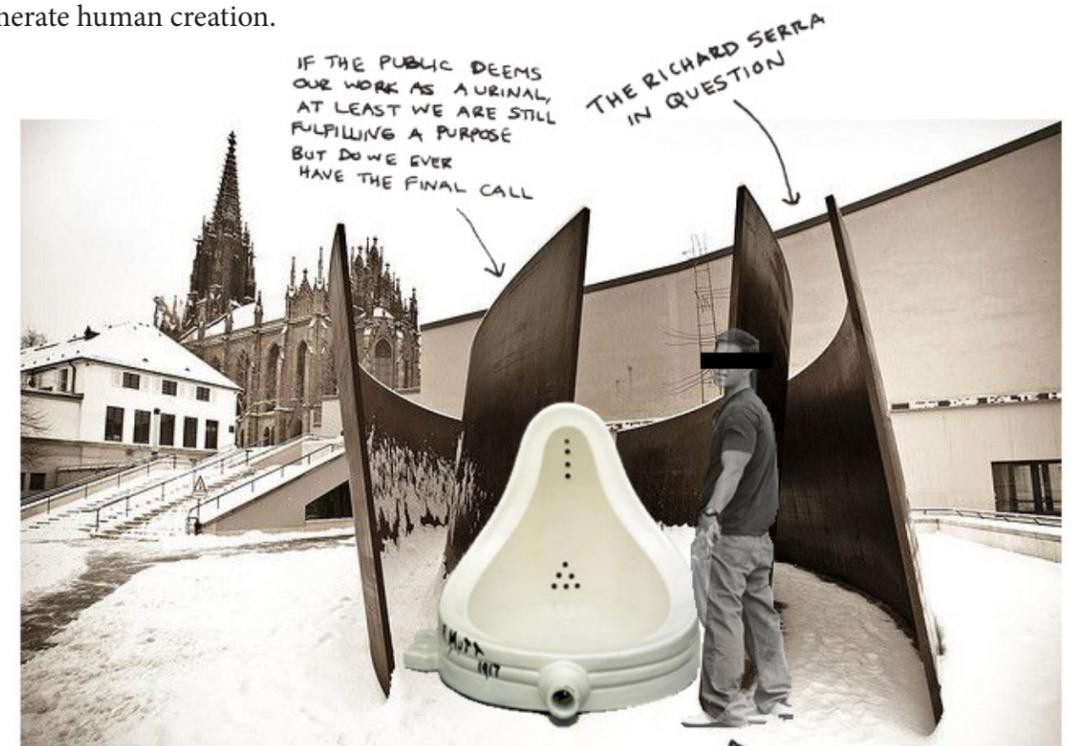
is most needed. It is imperative that we do not separate ourselves from these systems but rather see ourselves as a reflection of them. Even if we do not come from peri-urban environments, cities encapsulate core human ideals of sociality and production. We should embrace the urban as a center of creation where all forms of creation, both societally and personally deemed good and bad, should hold similar importance. This means that our understanding of what the umbrella of design and art should be must include the role of the "outsider" in creation. ("Outsider" usually meaning outside of the Institutional which is to say that the "outsider" is more often than not the majority) It is often the role of the outsider that has the most power in how our landscapes are shaped—what is the image of a city without walls of graffiti or windows adorned with personal decoration?

We must learn from outsider design.

In many ways, outsider art and design are the purest acts of human creation that there is—they simply come from the intrinsic need to create. And yet, in no way should this type of work be diminished as "spontaneous" or "naïve." On the contrary, this work is the culmination of both the active and instinctual understanding of our contexts. It feeds on the political, the spiritual, the religious, and the social. There is no categorization or institutionalization that it will tolerate. Landscape architecture should



understand these forms of creation as cues for what ideals and systems we should strive for. We should also accept and understand that we cannot and should not try to divine what will come from the outside. (If people are using the Richard Serra as a public urinal then so be it!) We should learn to be more instinctual and less prescriptive. Empathy and humanity must be the drivers. We must embrace the messiness and uncertainty that comes with the contexts that generate human creation.



HUMANS NEED TO MARK THEIR TERRITORY!