Integrating Islamic Cultural Identity Preservation in the Urban Fabric of the United States

A Thesis

Submitted to the

Faculty of Miami University

In partial fulfillment of

The requirements for the degree of

Master of Architecture

Department of Architecture and Interior Design

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2015

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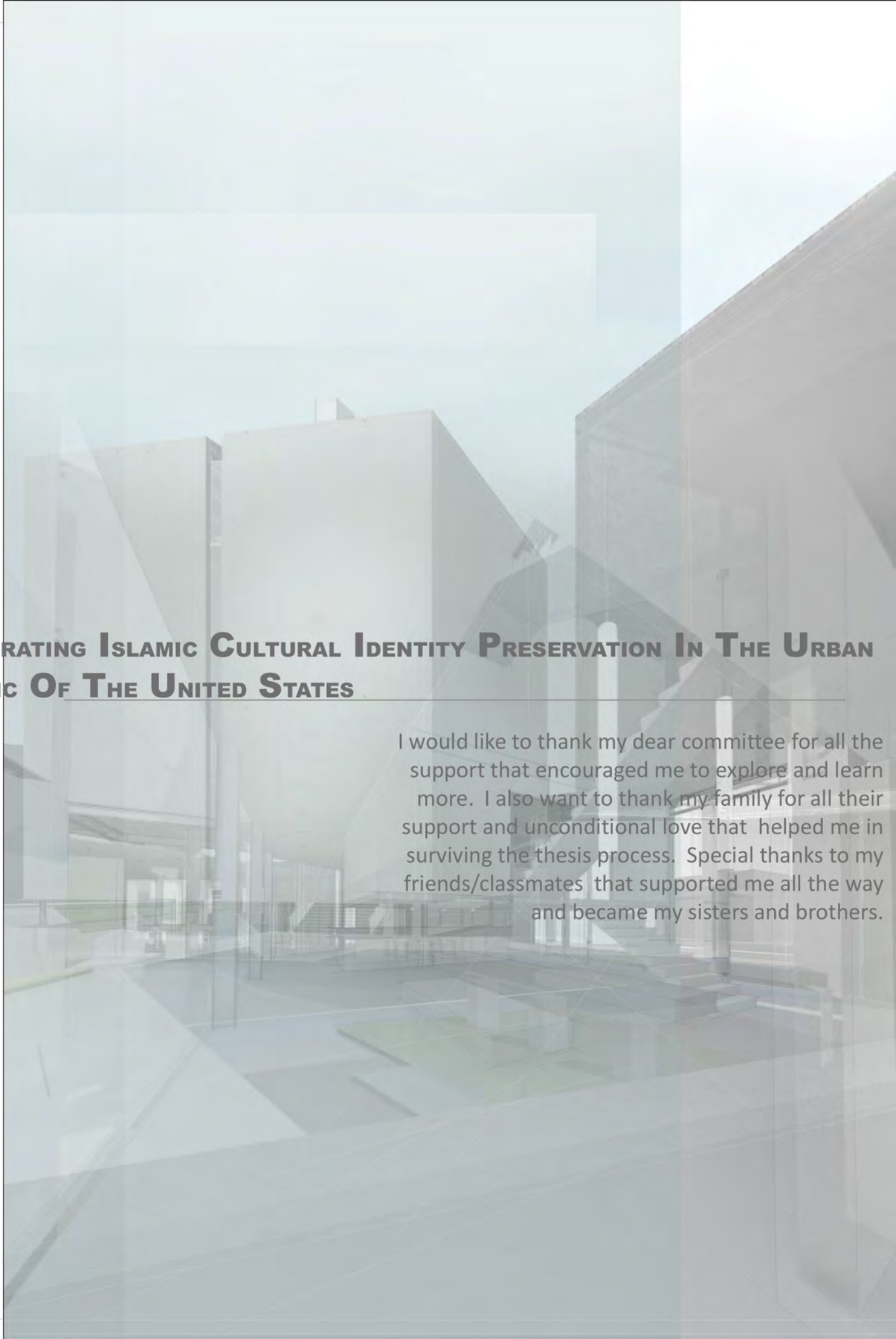

Integrating Islamic Cultural Identity Preservation In The Urban Fabric Of The United States

I would like to thank my dear committee for all the support that encouraged me to explore and learn more. I also want to thank my family for all their support and unconditional love that helped me in surviving the thesis process. Special thanks to my friends/classmates that supported me all the way and became my sisters and brothers.

Integrating Islamic Cultural Identity Preservation in the Urban Fabric of the United States

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ABSTRACT:

The post-displacement phase of Islamic migrants in the urban fabric of the United States as a democratic country creates a bicultural identity. Muslims have been concerned about their identity preservation in the United States and integrating in the surrounding host community. This paper concentrates on what type of solution I can contribute, as an architect, to help in integrating Muslim population specially migrants at the post-displacement phase in the urban fabric of the United States. How can an architect help Muslim religious commonality connect in the larger United States Context? How do religious cultural buildings preserve and integrate an Islamic cultural Identity in the general cultural context of the United States? In addition, how do public spaces located in urban fabrics serve the integration process of Islamic culture with the surrounding cultural norms in order to be identified and well accepted by the community? In order to understand displaced minorities needs and concerns interviews are conducted. A brief explanation and analysis of the main Islamic lifestyle and ancient cities planning is also an important methodology in order to understand the effectiveness of Islamic cultural buildings at the United States in the identity preservation process. Inspired by my own personal experience I will explore and compare three case studies: Saudi Arabia − a strict Islamic country, Sudan − a moderate Islamic country, and Columbus, Ohio − a western urban society in the United States that is a non-Islamic democratic country. An empirical study will compare these three case studies through the lens of democracy, diversity and religion to explore how the Islamic Culture has been reformed and how religious minorities are preserving their own identities. My proposed methodology in order to find a solution, as an architect, is to create a loose public space where all different cultures connect and engage.

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- **INTRODUCTION:**

A year ago, on January 14, 2013, my life ended. In the departure lounge at Khartoum International Airport, I left my extended family, friends and hometown that I shared my last 6 years with in search for a better life and future. Leaving was not an easy choice to make. However, it was the only way to fulfill my ambitions. In the airport, I was terrified, scared of the unknown and did not want to leave what I loved to get what I wanted. Besides, like everything in life, this day had to end. I said goodbye, knowing that I will not be back any time soon and that what I left back home will not be the same when I come back. It is sad because government policies that was the reason for the of jobs and satisfactory salaries forced thousands of talented citizens to migrate to other countries in pursuit of a better life. I became the newest member of the Sudanese diasporas who wanted to stay and build our country for future generations. Sadly, we face a struggle of preserving our and future Sudanese generations' own cultural identity around the world.

I arrived in the United States a few years after my main family members settled there. Since the time of arrival, I kept thinking about when I could return to Sudan, knowing that it is not going to be anytime soon. There were a number of challenges in the new country, the United States. I could not find a job. I did not have friends. I even kept all my watches set to Sudan's time zone; I was having problems adjusting to my new life. After a long but unsuccessful search for a job in my profession, I had to settle for a job at a restaurant. It was nothing close to what I envisioned, but I was still happy about it. My friends back in Sudan kept wondering about why I left my job as an architect and went to cook food in the US. However, I kept reminding myself that I am here to make a better future for myself, and that I left my hometown for a good reason. Eventually, I received the best news of acceptance into an American architectural mater's program. This news was the impetus for me to embrace my current situation and do my best to integrate into the American society instead of being isolated and disengaged.

My personal experience made me one of the 214 million migrants around the world (International Organization for Migration estimate, 2008). It inspired me to find a way to improve the lives of emigrant minorities in the US through my profession as an architect. Migrants and displaced people, as minorities in their new communities, struggle to preserve their cultural identities in a diverse cultural majority. They strive to achieve the identity preservation process on one hand and integrating into their new communities and sharing their cultural values, on the other. A common approach of preserving cultural identity of emigrant minorities is to live together in closed and relatively isolated communities that insulate them from the influence of the surrounding cultural majority. This approach prevents integration which slows the acceptance process of a cultural minority. To be realistic, I am proposing to use my background as an architect to find a solution for my personal concerns of cultural identity preservation as an emigrant with an Islamic background in the secular society of the United States by being accepted in my new cultural society.

- **Identity preservation in the post-displacement phase of Muslim migrants:**

This paper concentrates on what type of solution I can contribute, as an architect, to help in integrating Muslim population specially migrants at the post-displacement phase in the urban fabric of the United States. How can an architect help Muslim religious commonality connect in the larger United States Context? How do religious cultural buildings preserve and integrate an Islamic cultural Identity in the general cultural context of the United States? In addition, how do public spaces located in urban fabrics serve the integration process of Islamic culture with the surrounding cultural norms in order to be identified and well accepted by the community?

- **Methodology:**

A displacement process exposes a displaced person to new cultures that can have an adverse influence on his or her life. Therefore, understanding displaced individuals' concerns and needs is important in the process of linking them through cultural religious centers when religion is one of the core values of the displaced persons life. To understand the Islamic cultural identity preservation in the United States among immigrants from countries governed by Islamic law and with an Islamic population majority, a psychological analysis of the displaced individuals is briefly. To better understand identity preservation for Muslim immigrants of diverse ages, interview and questionnaires will be conducted specifically in Islamic Cultural Centers. An analysis of the main abstracted Islamic lifestyle is explained in order to understand Muslims basic needs that will be reformed in the cultural context of the United States.

It is also important to understand Islamic cities planning in the early ages of its spread where Muslims and non-Muslims engaged. This will help in applying the modern planning principles (starting with Public, Semi-public and private spaces) on an urban context, where Muslims and non-Muslims would engage and integrate while preserving an Islamic identity through commercial, recreational, educational and worship functions. This study is important to understand how an Islamic life style as obtained in these cities can be applied on a small scale. The main outcome of this study would be a connection between loose public spaces where they meet their own needs and desires.[1]

This thesis topic was inspired by my personal experience growing up in the oil rich Gulf country of Saudi Arabia, living in Sudan, and migrating to the US. By living in these three countries, I witnessed a wide range of differences through my personal practice of Islam. Islamic culture is influenced by the local religious and cultural norms of each certain country differently. I will explore and compare three case studies: Saudi Arabia − a strict Islamic country, Sudan − a moderate Islamic country, and Columbus, Ohio − a western urban society in the United States that is a non-Islamic democratic country. An empirical study will compare these three case studies through the lens of democracy, diversity and religion to explore how the Islamic Culture has been reformed and how religious minorities are preserving their own identities. The effect of local or regional cultural norms and practices in different countries will also be examined. In order to find commonalities or the best integrative methods between Islamic culture and the general cultural context in the United States, two case studies in the US comparing Islamic religious centers in suburban and urban area are discussed. For a better understanding of two environmental contexts that differ in density and demographics are discussed. These considerations allow us for the opportunity to question how the pure entity of Islam could be adapted or should be reformed to participate fully in the cultural context of the United States as a democratic country.

- **Islamic culture reformation according to the surrounding culture influence**
  - **Main Islamic Concept**

It is important to understand the religious and social aspects of an Islamic cultural lifestyle in order to understand its engagement with Islamic cities' urban structure analysis. "As far as architecture is concerned, it is haven where man's spirit, soul and body find and shelter …"[2] Architecture and urban planning express current religious values and beliefs. Islam has given a comprehensive and integrated cultural system. This system is

[2] Franck, Karen A., and Quentin Stevens. *Loose space: possibility and diversity in urban life*. London: Routledge, 2007. Print. (Page 23)

formed on a daily lifestyle of individuals and society.

The Islamic religion's social nature is created by the "five pillars of faith". The first pillar is the basic affirmation of faith that only Allah is worth of Worship. The second pillar is prayer in congregation five times a day and at noontime on Friday. A whole local community comes together for Friday prayer which creates a social and political event. As a result the life of the community, the course of commercial activities, mosques spaces and orientation in the city is structured. The third pillar which is alms giving (i.e. Zakat in Arabic) is considered a religious tax with social benefits where 4% of person's yearly income is used for charity. The fourth pillar which is fasting in the month of Ramadan from dawn to sunset is a yearly social event that is connected to a set of related religious and social festivities when everyone breaks their fast at the same time, people get together as an important and big social gathering ending with "Eid Alfitr" which is one of the major Islamic holidays. Every Moslem, including the unborn, has to pay charity to the poor at the end of the fasting month. Finally, the last pillar of Islam is the pilgrimage of hajj where all believers unite at Mecca to perform hajj. The ceremonies take several days to end with "Eid Aladha" the second major Islamic holiday. [4]

- **Overview of Islamic Urban Planning:**

Islam started to spread beyond the Arabian Peninsula between the 8th and 9th century AD. Through the years, masses of Arabs and non-Arabs embraced Islam. Muslims and non-Muslims have been integrating in Islamic cities due to common interests including merchandise trading in markets and public areas. This is when cultural, religious and political aspects started to influence the Islamic cultural lifestyle. Consequently, it was difficult to sustain the combination of spirituality and political authority in one institution like the early Islamic age. This is when Islamic urban planning started to reform.[5]It is important to understand old Islamic cities planning in order to understand Islamic lifestyle and how to apply it in a small scale to enable people with Islamic culture engage and integrate in the surrounding community; while preserving their own identity.

Since the beginning of Islam, mosques have been the focal point of the Islamic communities. Although Islam's start was in a Bedouin tribal society, it is considered an urban religion because of its distinct civic character that was created through social community matters. [6] This makes Islam culture and lifestyle fit in any urban context. Islamic cities have concentrated on social consensus and human interaction as a reaction to the absence of dominant civic institutions. The urban planning process includes three main components: the main mosque, market (Souk) and residential units.
The three components are connected to form a scale starting with public, semi-public to private spaces. This provided hierarchical sections to increase and decrees the degree of privacy when needed. Islamic cities planning were highly offered by public streets networks that were reduced to the minimum in order to insure selective assembly in private spaces while connecting them to the main public space.[7]Islamic cities commonly have an

[4] Bianca, Stefano. *Urban form in the Arab world: past and present*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2000. Print. (page 28)

[5] Bianca, Stefano. *Urban form in the Arab world: past and present*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2000. Print. (page 27)

[6] Bianca, Stefano. *Urban form in the Arab world: past and present*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2000. Print. (page 25)

[7] Bianca, Stefano. *Urban form in the Arab world: past and present*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2000. Print. (page 39)

informal layout corresponding to a freedom in architectural expression.[8]

Figure 1 Old Islamic city urban planning concept

- **Loose public spaces influencing Islamic identity preservation and cultural integration:**

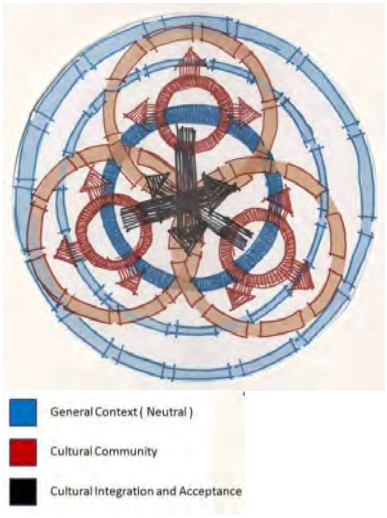

Figure 2 Cultural Identity Preservation and Integration through Loose Public Urban Space

Each religion has its own focal point according to neighborhood or city planning. Muslims in general come from very diverse backgrounds with respect to ethnic, geographic, language, etc. but still worship together and interact smoothly in trade and many social functions, where they also include non-Muslims. This is due to the fact that Islam is not only practiced in a mosque or on a certain day in the week. It is a lifestyle that details each Muslim lifestyle and especially emphasizes the sacredness of good relationship with neighbors of all humankind. It is thus feasible to develop loose public spaces that preserve Islamic cultural identity and integrate with the surrounding cultural norm in an urban context. This space will also help non-Muslims to come in closer contact with Muslims to know, understand and appreciate their cultural identity; and identify the many common values that the two groups share. Creating a loose public space depends on the overall structure of an urban structure. Loose space emerges in an urban context when social and physical looseness encouraging conditions appear that assure a better integration between different cultures.

- Paper architectural vision:

Markets are an important part of Islamic cities planning to sustain its urban life. They are located in a prominent position of the city center in order to interact with Friday Mosque and social welfare buildings. As a result, a connection between religious, commercial and social activities occurs to sustain the Islamic lifestyle concept[9], where they are closely placed to create a courtyard. They continued on being sacred places also, but sacred in Islamic cities does not stand for concentrated or isolated. Sacred is founded through the whole urban fabric of a city where multitude fountains and public spaces provide life to the city around mosques, souks and other socially

[8] Bianca, Stefano. *Urban form in the Arab world: past and present*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2000. Print. (page 32)

[9] Bianca, Stefano. *Urban form in the Arab world: past and present*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2000. Print. (page 125)

embraced aspects in the cellular structure of Islamic cities. This insures the continuous remembrance of the divine and proper compromising between timeless and mundane in the built environment of Islamic cities. [10] The Islamic lifestyle helped in reforming each urban context that includes Muslims. Its social based lifestyle created the spaces that Islam is practiced at, while maintaining cultural diversity between Muslims and Non-Muslims at the same time. Figure 5 resembles old Islamic city urban planning concept.

The main outcome of this thesis will be creating connections between public, semi-public, semi-private and private spaces that contain diverse communities and preserve the Islamic culture in an urban environment in order to create a connecting public loose space and at the same time facilitate Muslims and non-Muslims mingle and share common areas. Providing common public functions attracts both Muslims and non-Muslims. Therefore, my efforts will be directed towards designing a loose public space in a typical urban setup at Columbus, Ohio which will be a tool for preserving Muslims immigrants' identity integrating architecture, landscape and people with surrounding host community in a functional and enjoyable environment.

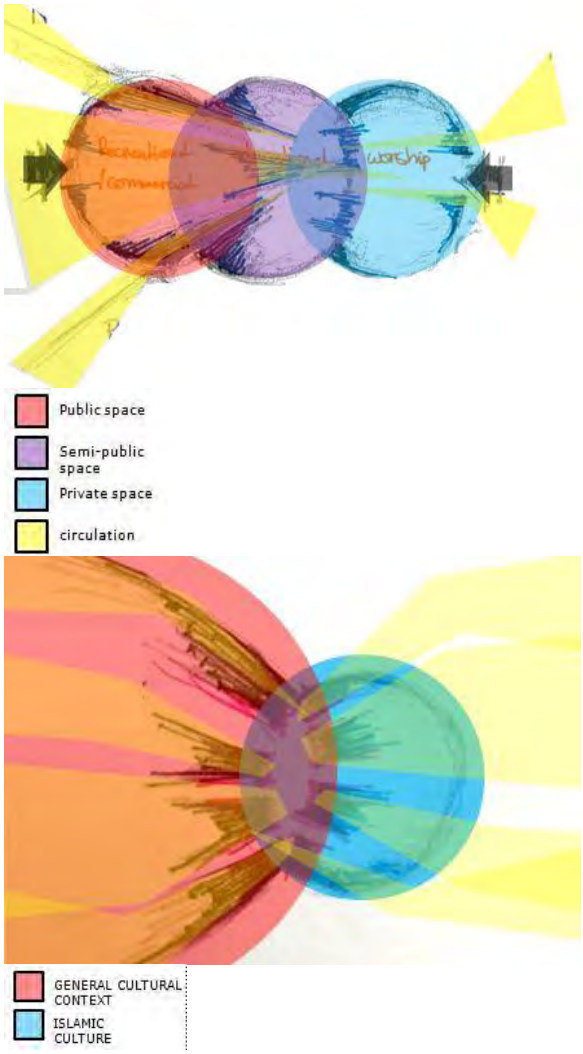

Figure 3 Integration Methods through Loose public spaces

- **Islamic cultural life style comparison in around the world**

It is important to point to the fact that, although all Muslims believe in the same five pillars of Islam, they differ in practicing them, based on the social and cultural backgrounds. Some are very strict, some are moderate and others are relatively liberal in the interpretation and practice. These differences can be observed by comparing Moslems in a strict Islamic country (Saudi Arabia), a moderate Islamic country (Sudan) and in Columbus, Ohio – a western urban society in the United States that is a non-Islamic democratic country. This is done through the

[10] Bianca, Stefano. *Urban form in the Arab world: past and present*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2000. Print. (page 36)

lenses of religion, democracy and diversity and by finding similarities and differences between the three countries according to the levels of migration, integration and citizenship.

- Strict Islamic Country, Saudi Arabia:

In this country due to the existence of mosques around it as a strict Islamic country, shops closing at prayer times and all the obligatory restrictions in the name of Islam most citizens and expatriates practice an Islamic orthodox lifestyle. People often associate the strict Islamic country traditions with the original Islamic lifestyle. As a result, Islam loses its original spirit of tolerance and inclusiveness to strict cultural traditions and values. Furthermore, part of the society try to escape from this strict cultural society and search for social freedom by travelling abroad or living in gated residential compounds that have private and less restricted life. This was the main reason as an expatriate to leave and look for a better education in my hometown, Sudan, specially that woman education is not fully supported in Saudi Arabia.

- Moderate Islamic Country, Sudan:

It is easy to adopt an Islamic lifestyle in the moderate Islamic country as part of the majority. In law religious freedom is provided for all, Muslims and non-Muslims. This makes the urban public space in the moderate country similar to democratic secular society's public spaces. As a result, a person making a religious decision in his or her life style by his or her own choice, contrary to the situation in the strict Islamic country.

After two year of being away from Sudan, I went back this summer as an essential step of my post-displacement phase. This is when I started viewing the social relationship between Islamic majority and Christian Minority. During my interview I interview a wide range of Christians starting with a chaplain. I found out that recently Christians are forbidden from building new churches, while they can keep the old churches built in the English Colonialism time and the three extra churches that were built after that for political reasons. As a result of the interviews, I realized that Christian minority in Sudan's method of identity preservation is through isolation in religious buildings. This is a result of Christian minority being suppressed socially and politically.

- Democratic Country, The United States:

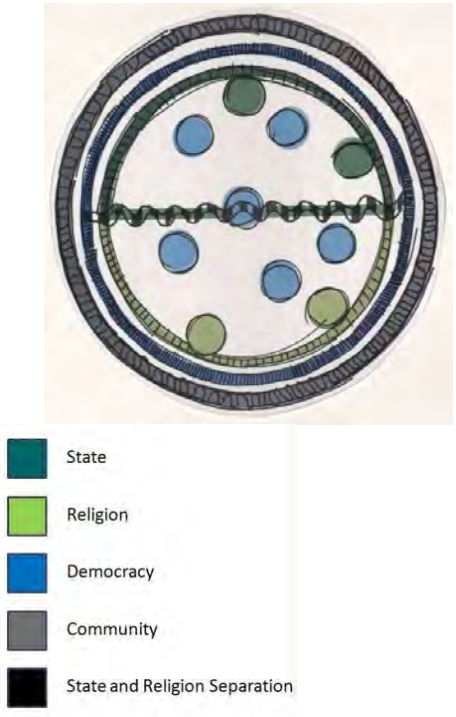

Figure 4 State and Church Separation in a Democratic Country

Living in the US, where there is a wide range of freedom, does not assure easy acceptance of Islamic values. This narrows the mental freedom of different individuals. Mental freedom of choice is the key for identity preservation where a person can practice his or her own beliefs without any judgment from state and people. In order to create a better cultural integration and acceptance of the Islamic Culture in the United States while preserving a cultural identity, Muslim individuals should be able to communicate with the surrounding culture in a space that provides their primary social, religious and commercial needs. In the US, as a democratic country, Religion is separated from state, to insure the freedom of a religious choice.

According to Parrillo in the Sociological Forums, the US has been more multicultural in the past. Although immigrants might try to resist assimilation, its effects in their new lifestyles were dominant. [11] The diverse American society is influenced by different ethnicities, but the best tool for identity preservation in such a society is decreasing the social distance between different ethnicities to eliminate their differences and promote multiculturalism through integration.

- **Immigrated Muslims in Ohio, USA:**

There are 150,000 Muslims living throughout Ohio. When Muslim populations started to increase, they began to settle down and establish organizations and religious buildings for worship and preserving their cultural identity. There are more than hundred Islamic centers, mosques, other Islamic organizations and four full-time Islamic schools that are located around Ohio.[12] In Columbus, The most ambitious project undertaken by the central Ohio Muslim community is Al-Noor Mosque that provides social and cultural needs of more than 25,000 Muslims in Central Ohio. [13]

I believe that enabling Muslims to feel accepted in their new home will encourage them to preserve Islamic cultural identity in the US as a democratic country in two phases. The first phase is by connecting all generations of Muslims socially in a place where they can share their interests and concerns. The disadvantage of this is that it has been provided traditionally through establishing mosques, Islamic centers, and Schools with no or minimum interaction between the host surrounding communities. The second phase is providing means of connecting other cultures to the Islamic culture by sharing common values and some unique and interesting parts of the Islamic culture. A small scale of the proposed loose public area can resemble in commercial, recreational, educational and religious functions that has the Islamic culture spirit. This loose public space is an investment and a tool in integrating the Islamic culture in the US. The proposed space will serve the previous objectives better in urban space settings than in sub-Urban settings because of the diversity in the urban communities. The mosque is the prime public building that serves institutional functions including Islamic philosophy of life, religion, politics and social functions. The mosque is fully integrated in social life and architectural fabric of a city to accommodate comprehensive civic functions. It is the monumental core of public spaces that are highlighted through religious buildings and markets (Souk) as a social commercial space that integrate with the urban fabric without expressing the power of religious or secular society. Monumental architecture through religious buildings can create a focal point that attracts its believers and other surrounding cultural norms. Such a structure can exceed the scale of every day buildings; this is why it has to be connected to the lifestyle of a culture instead of being a religious structure. A horizontal attachment should be created as a connection between religious buildings and the surrounding environment. Social gathering and bonding can be created through educational, cultural and religious events. Events can be created daily, weekly, monthly or yearly.[14] To

[11] Daniels, Roger. *Guarding the golden door: American immigration policy and immigrants since 1882*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2004. Print. (page 8)

[12] Butalia, Tarunjit S., and Dianne P. Small. *Religion in Ohio: profiles of faith communities*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2004. Print. (page 287)

[13] Butalia, Tarunjit S., and Dianne P. Small. *Religion in Ohio: profiles of faith communities*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2004. Print. (page 292)

[14] Hamburger, Philip. *Separation of church and state*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002. Print.

emphasize this point, the following section describes two Islamic centers; one in urban setting the other one is in a sub-urban setting.

- Islamic Cultural Centers in the United States:

Islamic cultural centers existence and effectiveness are influenced by its location in the United States. It is difficult to be accepted as an Islamic Cultural center if the cultural context refused to. As an example the Islamic cultural center in New York two blocks away from the World Trade center. This problem could be solved if the general cultural context is considered in the building architecture and planning by creating a loose public space that connects both cultures in a spontaneous way more than being force to interact. Two examples of accepted Islamic cultural centers are:

- **Case study 1: Noor Islamic Center at Columbus, OH (Suburban Center)**

Figure 5 Noor Islamic Center at Columbus, OH

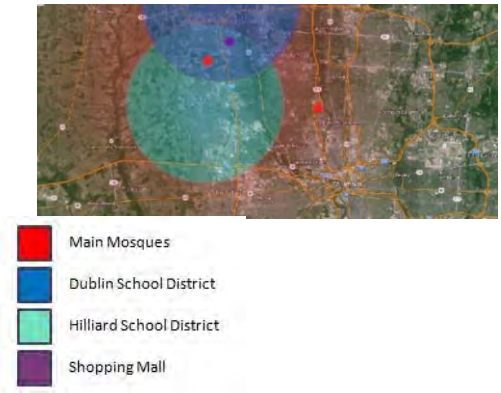

Figure 6 Noor Islamic Center Site Analysis

Noor Islamic Center is located in the suburb of Columbus, Ohio between Dublin and Hilliard school districts. This location has a future expansion possibility. After interviewing a member of the Islamic center committee I realized that the location is a development that is surrounded by empty lands and residential units that are almost fully occupied by Muslims.

Noor center is mainly a mosque that serves several functions. It is a place for daily prayers, weekly Islamic and Arabic learning schools and yearly Islamic events. It is also a main location for Islamic celebrations such as Eid, weddings and parties.

The center is attended by generally well educated Muslims that have good connections with the surrounding culture. Due to the center suburban location and its distance from away Public transportation, it is visited by high income Muslims who can afford to reach it with a car. Although the location was chosen as an advantage to serve future expansion purposes, it created a geographic disadvantage of being out of reach for non-Muslims and low-income Muslims because it is not connected to public transportation. This is explains the importance of establishing the proposed space in an urban setting in order to help in integrating Islamic culture with the urban fabric of the main surrounding community on a spontaneous daily bases and will lead to a better understanding and acceptance. Although this center's main

concept is to create the focal point of an Islamic neighborhood, it did not serve that main concept of connecting different occupants including Muslims and non-Muslims where they can exchange common interests. It created an isolated Islamic community that would have to stop growing when the surrounding empty lands are fully occupied.

- **Case study 2: Downtown Islamic Center at Chicago, IL (Urban Center)**

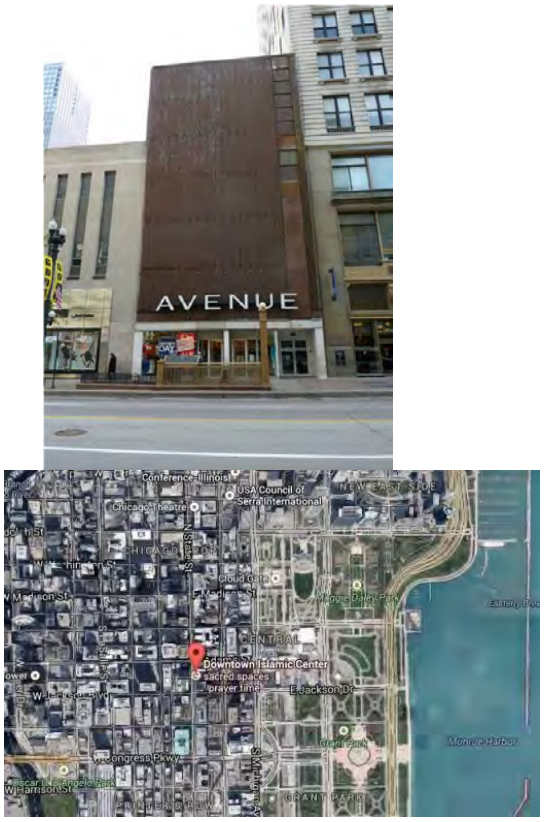

Figure 7 Downtown Mosque at Chicago, IL

Downtown Islamic Center at Chicago is located at S. State Street north of State and Jackson intersection in Chicago, IL. It is located on the second floor of a building in downtown. Although the exterior of the building did not reflect an Islamic identity, the interior of the building reflected the Islamic spirit. As for the surroundings, the Mosque is located at downtown Chicago close to Grant Park. Its location serves the largest number of Muslims on a daily, weekly, monthly and yearly base.

As for its function, the Downtown Islamic Center was established in 1976 to provide a space for Muslims in the loop area to attend Friday prayers. When the Islamic community has grown and established roots in the downtown area, the Center started to grow. The mosque and community center include educational classes, programs for the youth, and daily prayers. During Friday prayers over 500 patrons attend services. This center helped in efficiently serving Muslim community and the downtown community at large by targeting education and community service.[15] Muslims and non-Muslims attend the Center from all levels of the society. They participate in this Islamic Cultural building due to its location in an easy to reach urban fabric; the center also has a variety of functions that serve non-Muslims.

This Islamic Center has an advantage of connecting to the general cultural context and integrating for a better cultural identity preservation and acceptance. In spite of the fact that the building is not recognized from the exterior and the small area is a disadvantage, but the location provided a big bonus for the Islamic Center. I expect that selecting the advantages of each the two mosques, in an urban and a sub-urban area, and applying them on an urban space would create a great Islamic Center in the US. It would also provide both the identity preservation function and the integration with the American cultural context in Columbus, OH.

- **CONCLUSION:**

The sections presented above have shown that post-displacement phase of immigrants is very critical because they find themselves in multicultural state. At the same time dislocated

[15] "DIC - Chicago." *Overview*. N.p., n.d. Web. 18 May 2014. <http://www.dic-chicago.org/index.php/aboutus/overview>.

persons strive to preserve their identities while integrating with new communities. I have described the status of Muslim immigrants from my personal experience and proposed a methodology through loose open spaces in search for an proper solution. My proposed methodology, as an architect, is to create a loose public space that is influenced by the abstracted main concept of Islam lifestyle and planning. A space that has some of the interesting features of the Islamic culture that can engage people of different cultures and enable them to experience the Islamic culture of art, merchandise, food, architecture, clothes, accessories and other parts. This space that varies from public, semi-public to private will be an investment and a tool in integrating the Islamic culture in the US. The proposed space will serve the previous objectives better in urban space settings than in sub-Urban settings because of the diversity in the urban communities.

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Design Process

Site Analysis

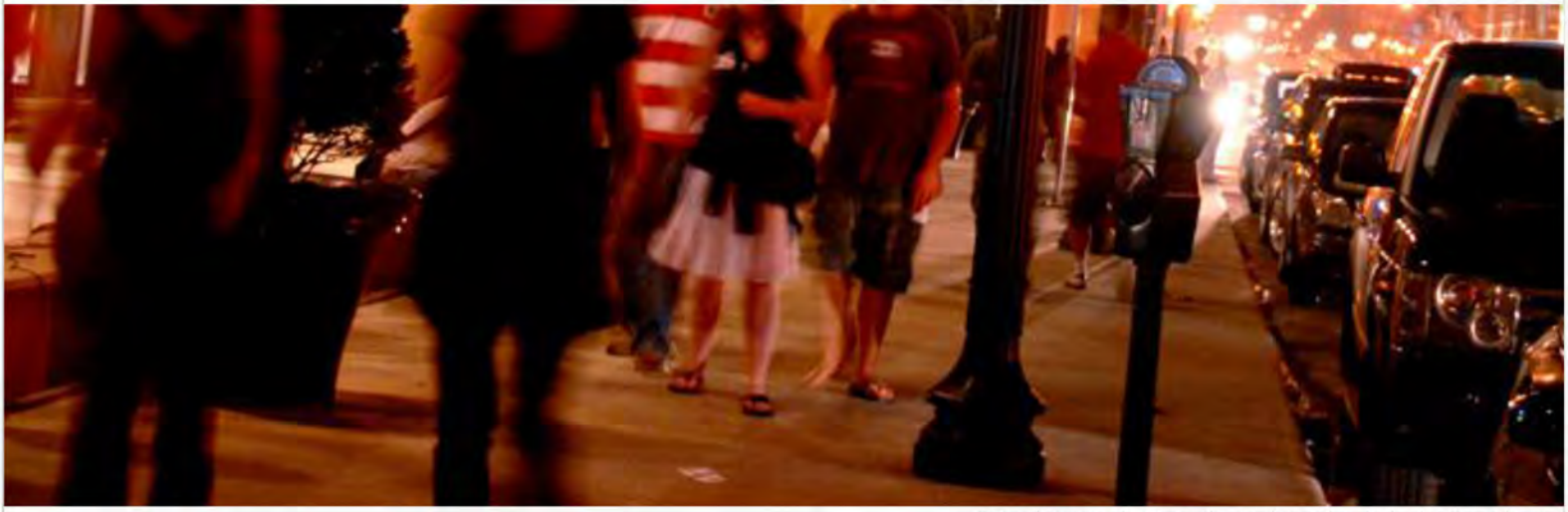
Site Location

The site is located in the Short North Art District at Columbus, Ohio as an attempt to find a artistic common interest between the Islamic Culture and its surrounding cultural context.

SITE- East Side

Short North Gallery Hop

The SHORT NORTH is an area where many artistic activities are located. It includes art galleries, museums, restaurants, antique shops and the Gallery Hop. The Gallery Hop is a monthly event where thousands of people visit the area to celebrate different types of art all along the North High street all day long. It includes indoor and outdoor activities. All of the above was the main reason for my site location decision. It supports my vision of an integrated Islamic Cultural Identity preservation through recognition, acceptance and respect of the Islamic art and culture. .



http://www.shortnorth.org/popular-links/gallery-hop

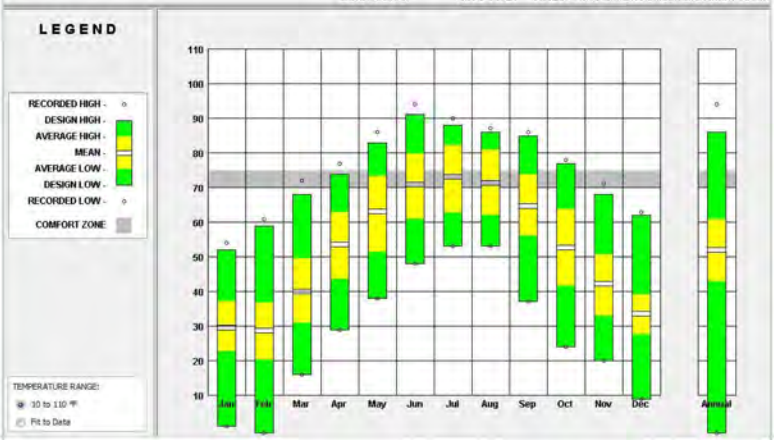
SITE- West Side

Climate Data

COLUMBUS, OH - The Short North

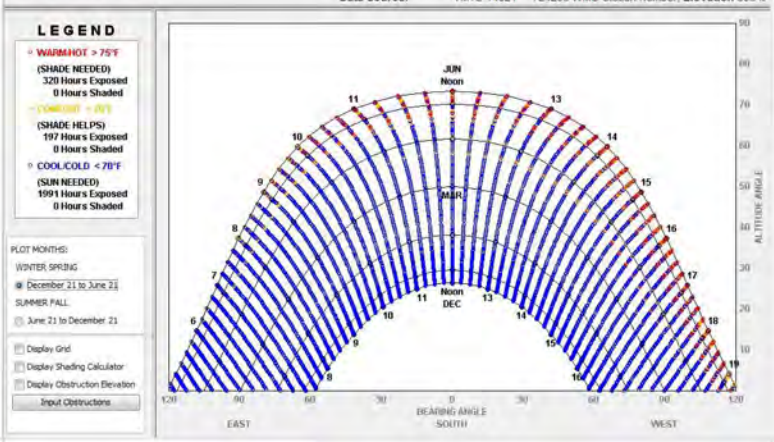
TEMPERATURE RANGE

LOCATION: COLUMBUS, OH, USA
Latitude/Longitude: 40.0° North, 82.88° West, **Time Zone from Greenwich** -5
Data Source: TMY2-14821 724280 WMO Station Number, **Elevation** 833 ft



SUN SHADING CHART

LOCATION: COLUMBUS, OH, USA
Latitude/Longitude: 40.0° North, 82.88° West, **Time Zone from Greenwich** -5
Data Source: TMY2-14821 724280 WMO Station Number, **Elevation** 833 ft



SKY COVER RANGE

LOCATION: COLUMBUS, OH, USA
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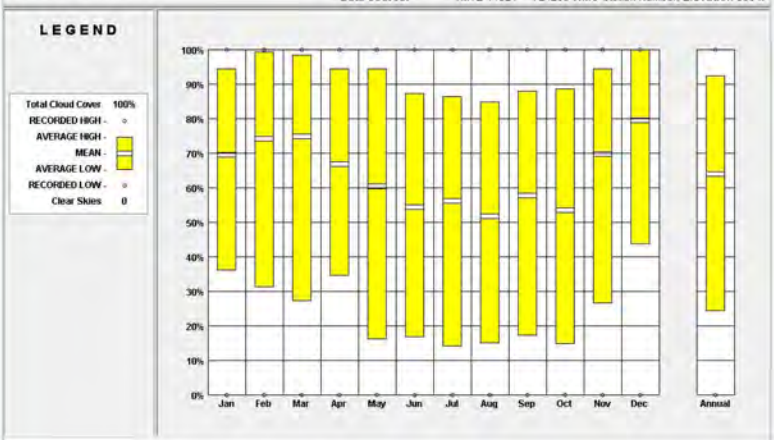
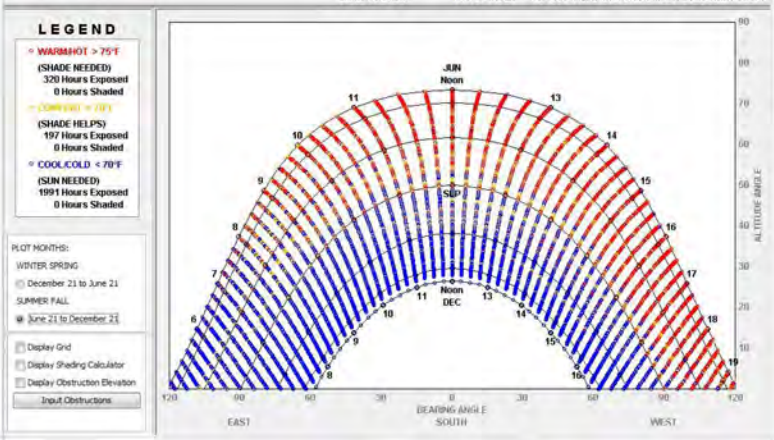
Data Source: TMY2-14821 724280 WMO Station Number, **Elevation** 833 ft



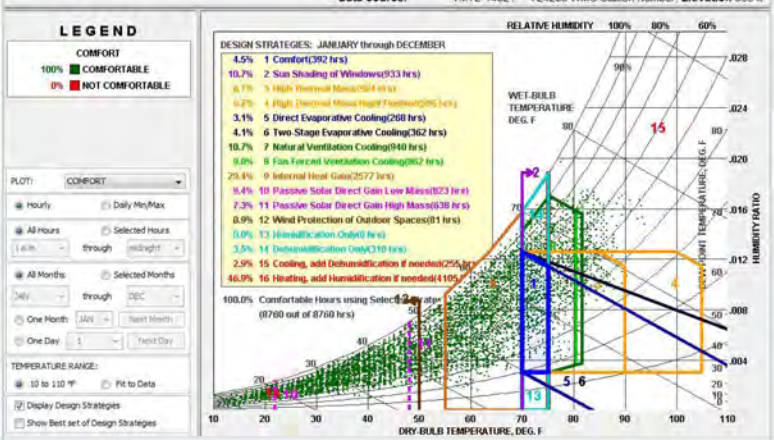
SUN SHADING CHART

LOCATION: COLUMBUS, OH, USA
Latitude/Longitude: 40.0° North, 82.88° West, **Time Zone from Greenwich** -5
Data Source: TMY2-14821 724280 WMO Station Number, **Elevation** 833 ft



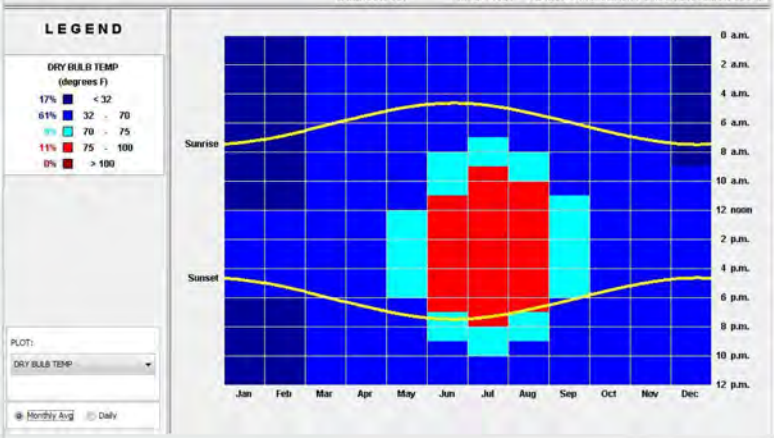
PSYCHROMETRIC CHART
California Energy Code

LOCATION: COLUMBUS, OH, USA
Latitude/Longitude: 40.0° North, 82.88° West, **Time Zone from Greenwich** -5
Data Source: TMY2-14821 724280 WMO Station Number, **Elevation** 833 ft



TIMETABLE PLOT

LOCATION: COLUMBUS, OH, USA
Latitude/Longitude: 40.0° North, 82.88° West, **Time Zone from Greenwich** -5
Data Source: TMY2-14821 724280 WMO Station Number, **Elevation** 833 ft



PROJECT PROGRAM

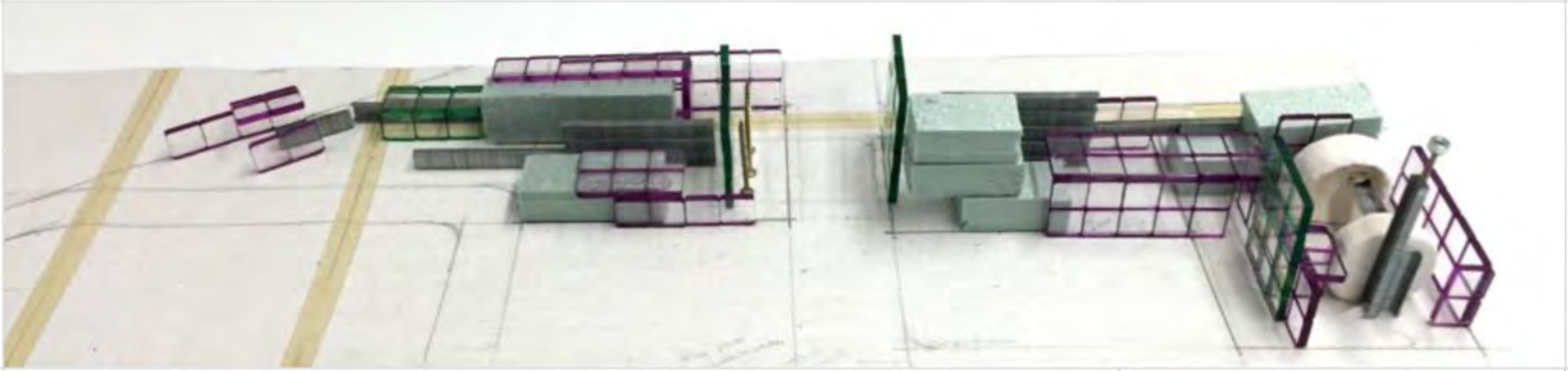
Project Program

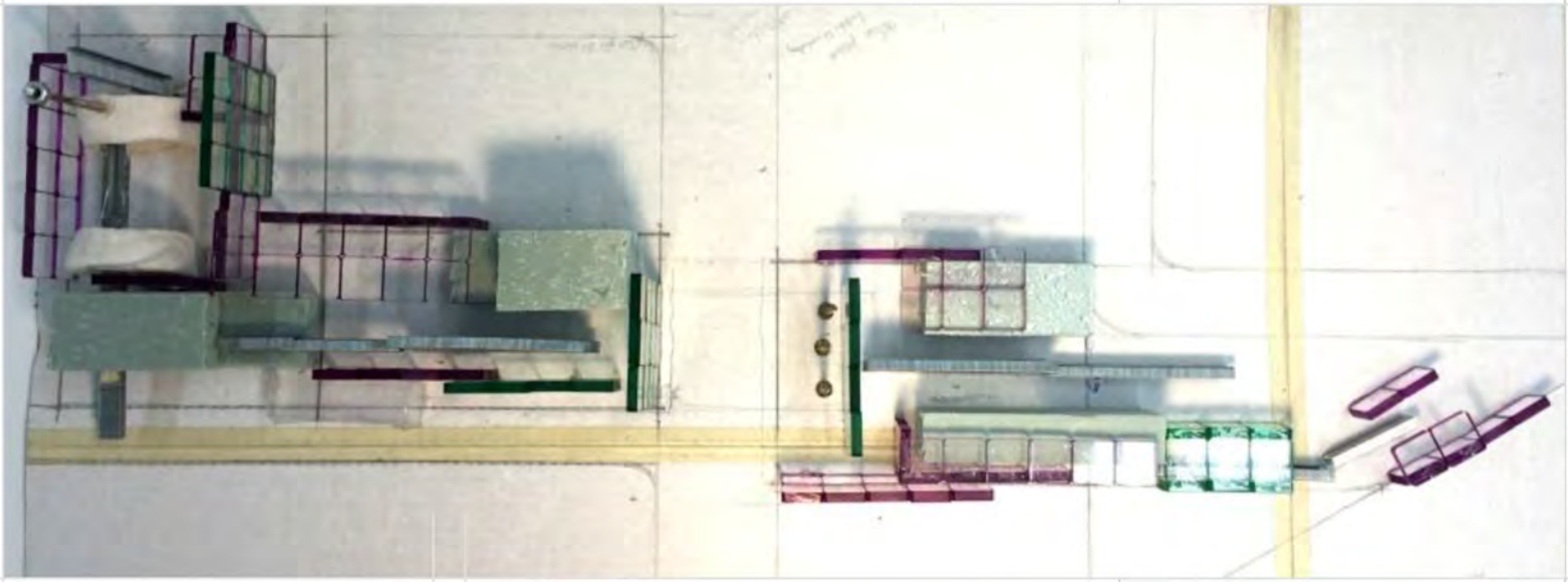
COLUMBUS, OH - The Short North

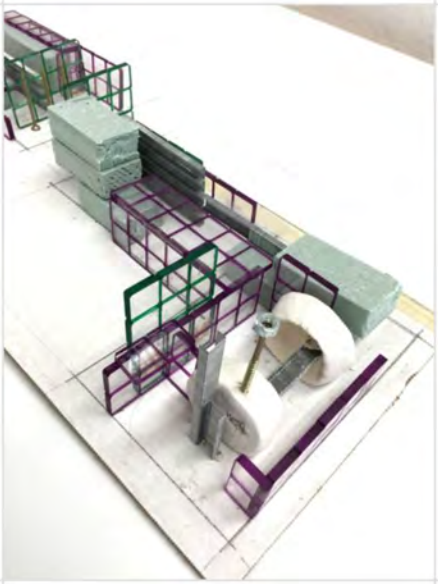
ENGAGE
CONNECTION
GATE
OUTDOOR
TRANSPERANCY
LIGHT
CLARITY

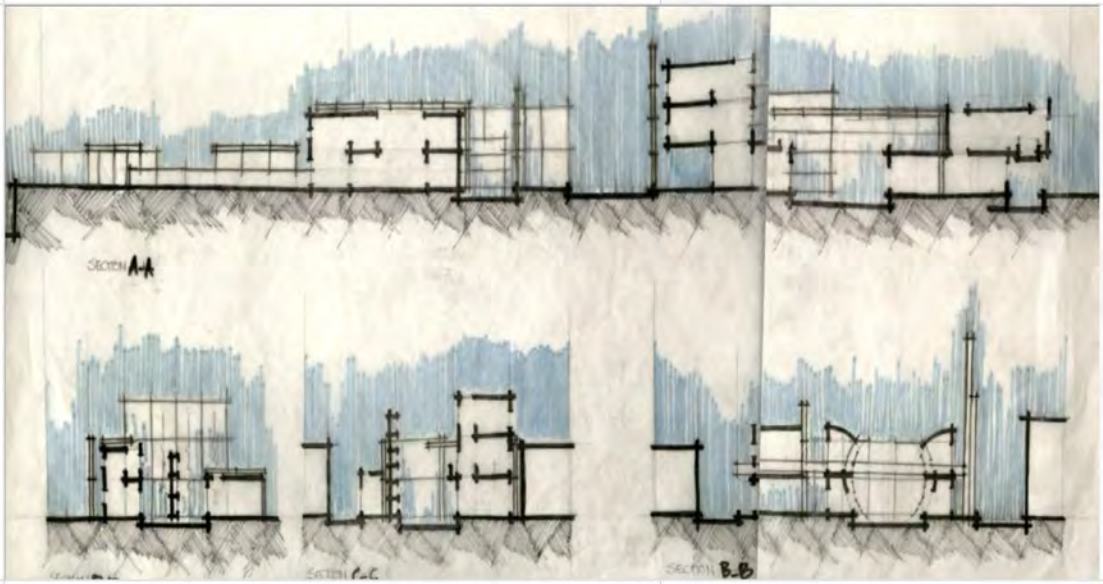
PRELIMINARY DESIGN PROPOSALS

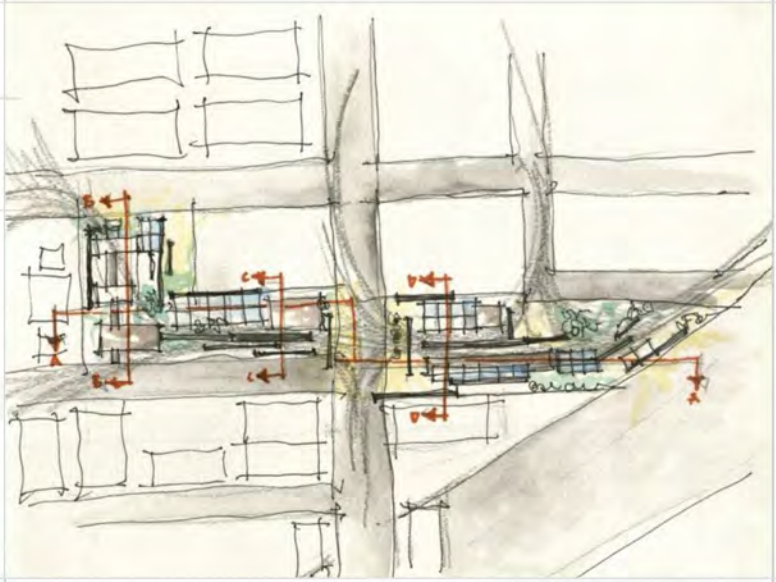
DESIGN PROPOSAL 1 – Transparency

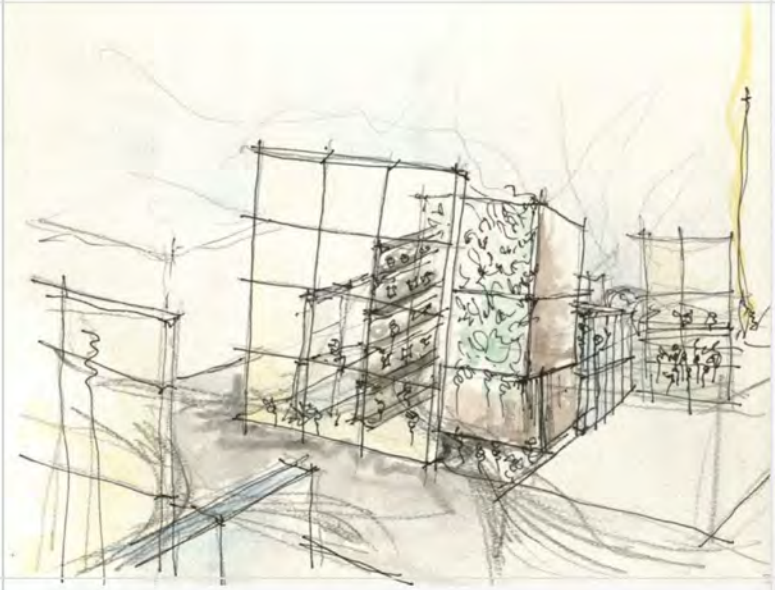


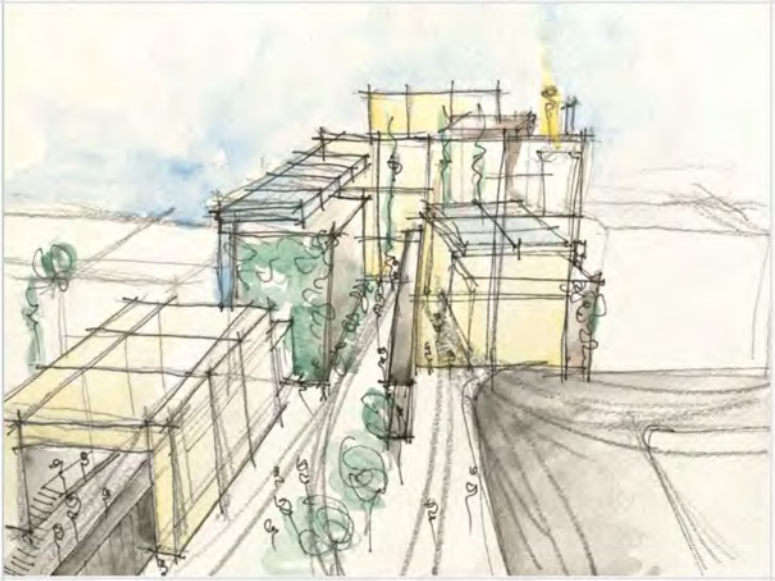


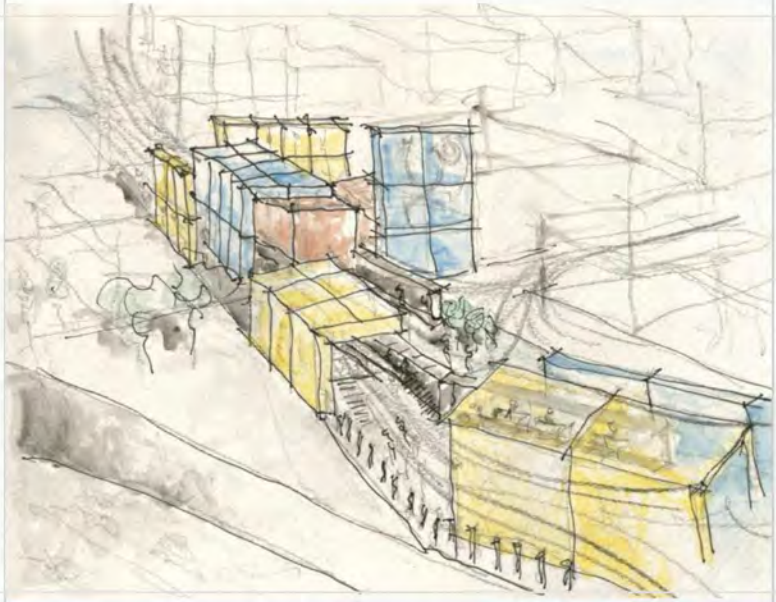


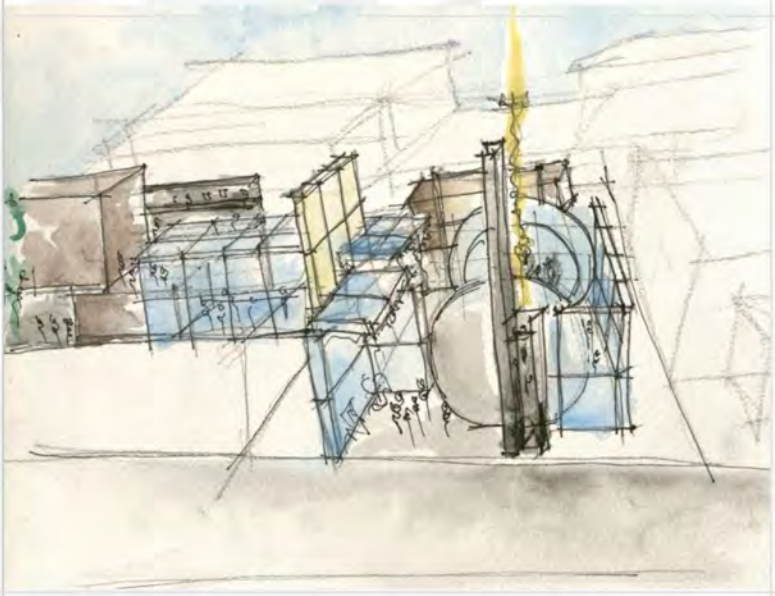






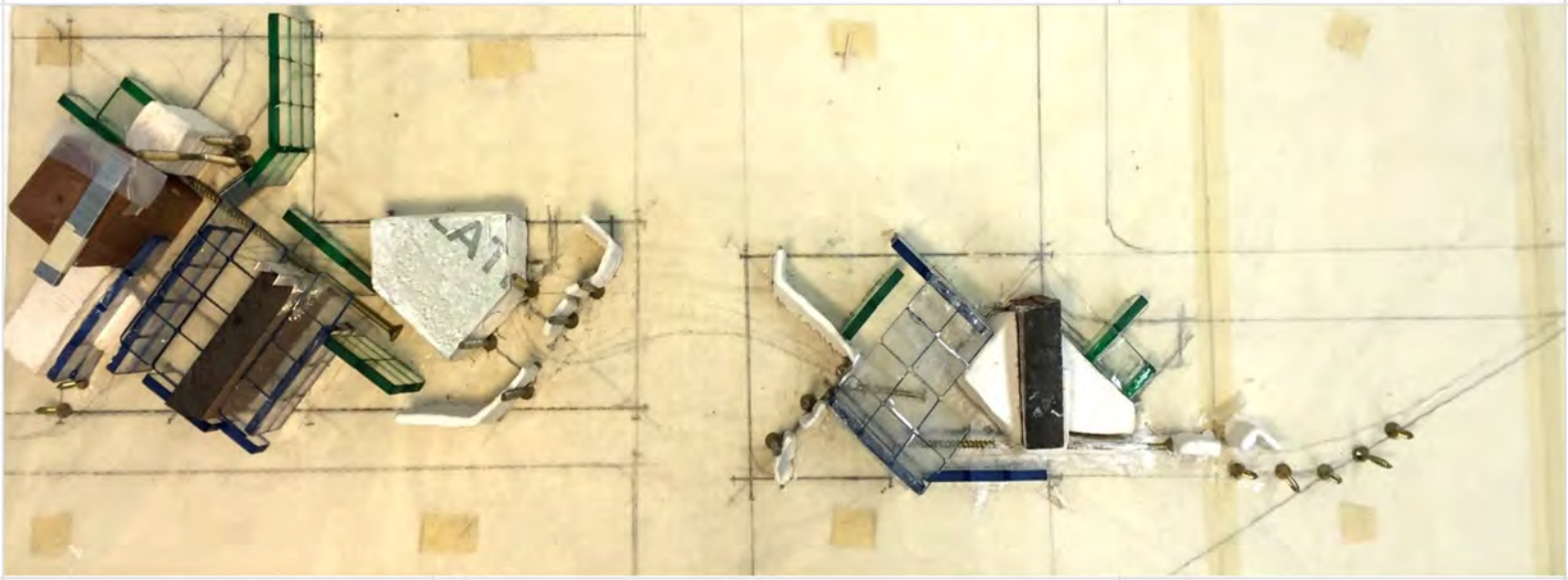


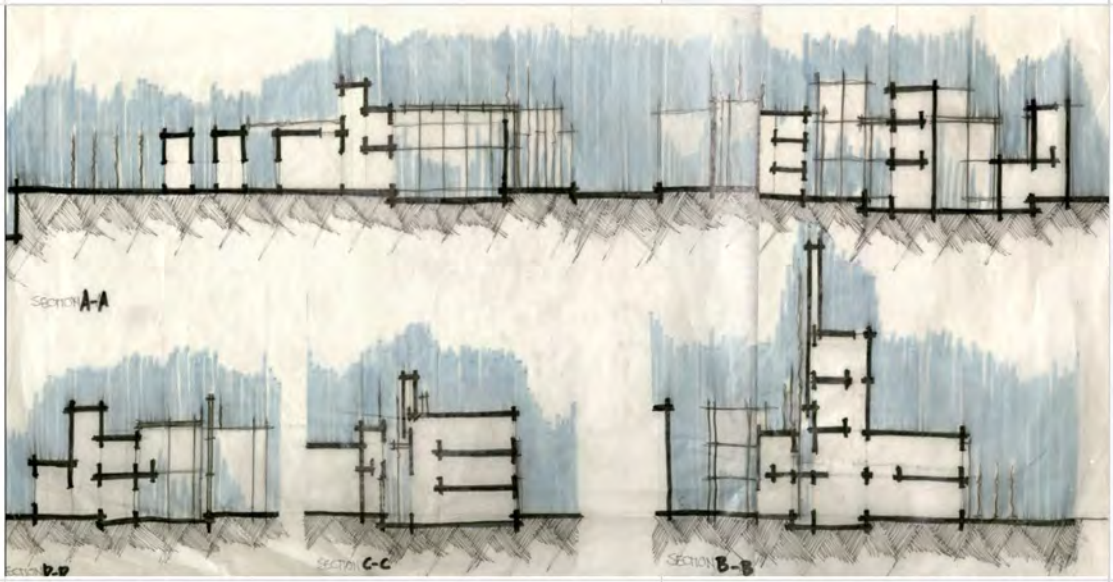


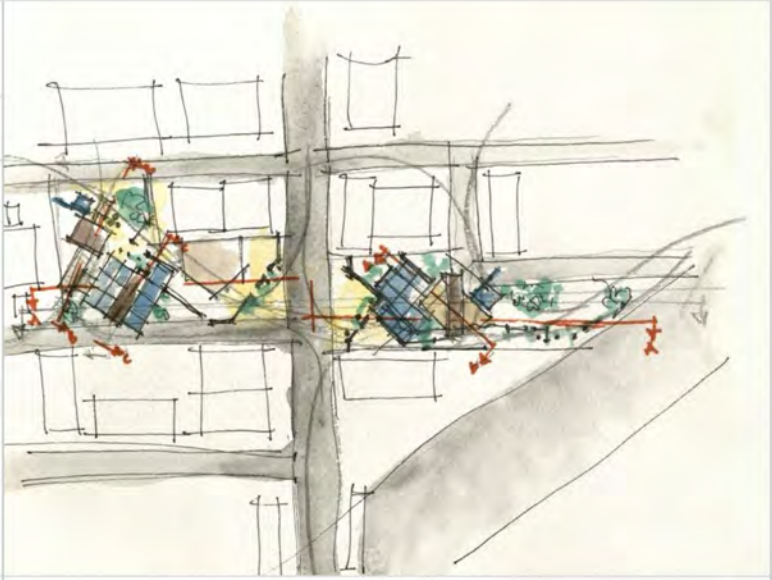


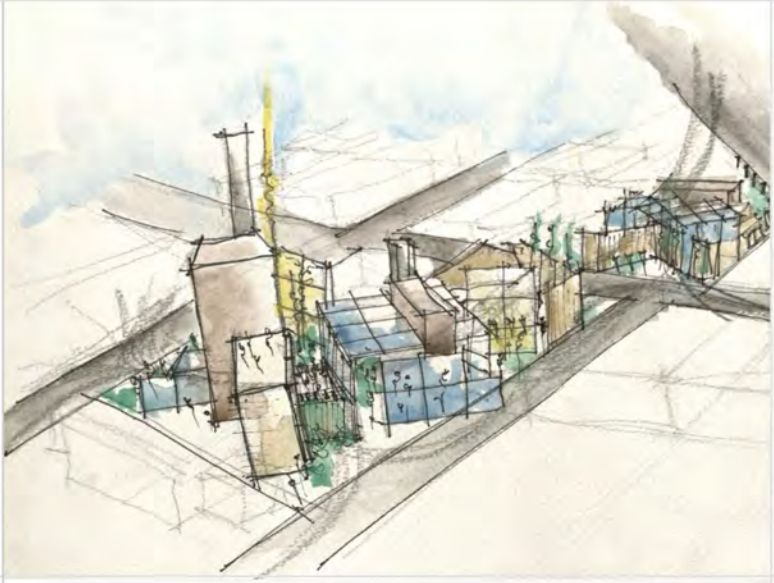
PRELIMINARY DESIGN PROPOSALS

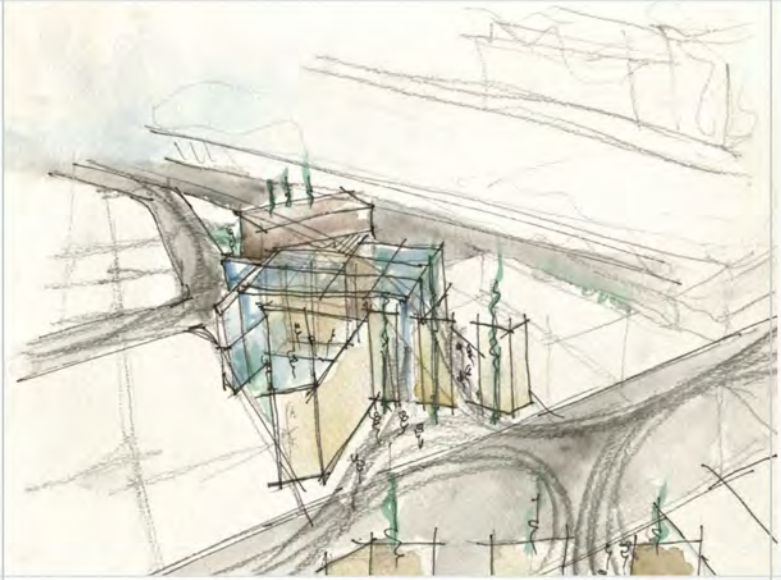
DESIGN PROPOSAL 2– Transparency influenced by the prayer direction

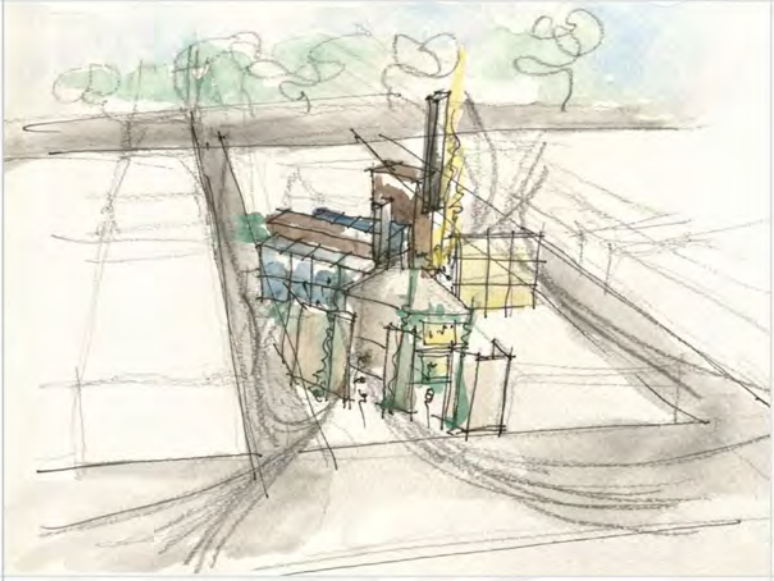


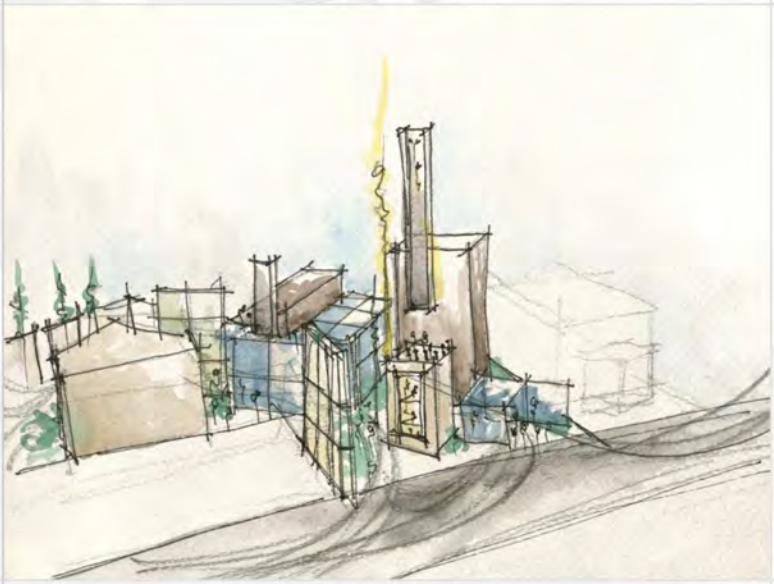






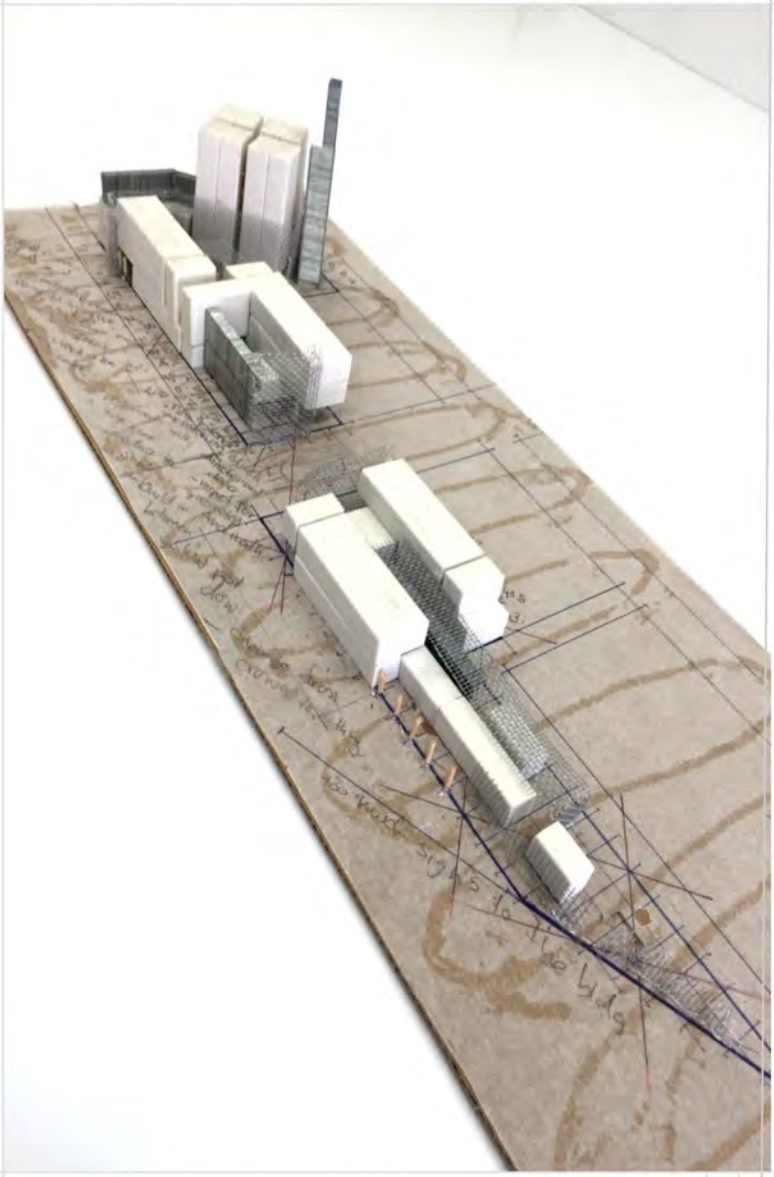


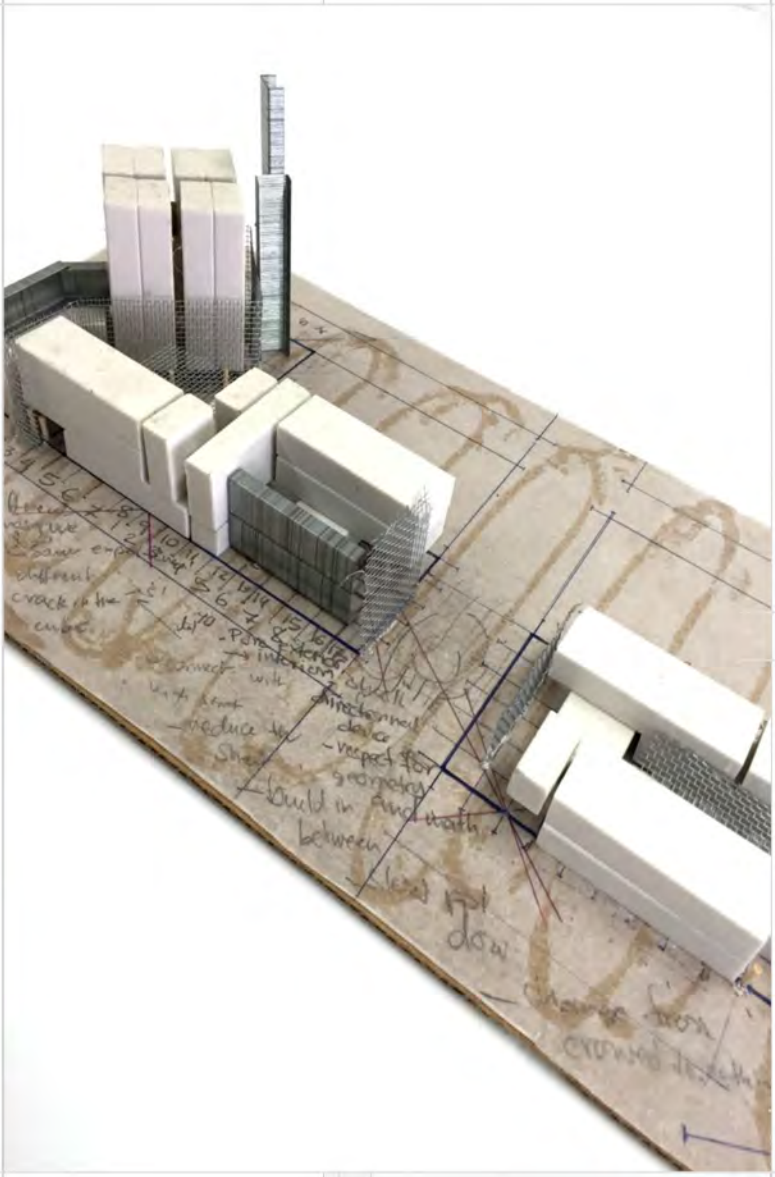


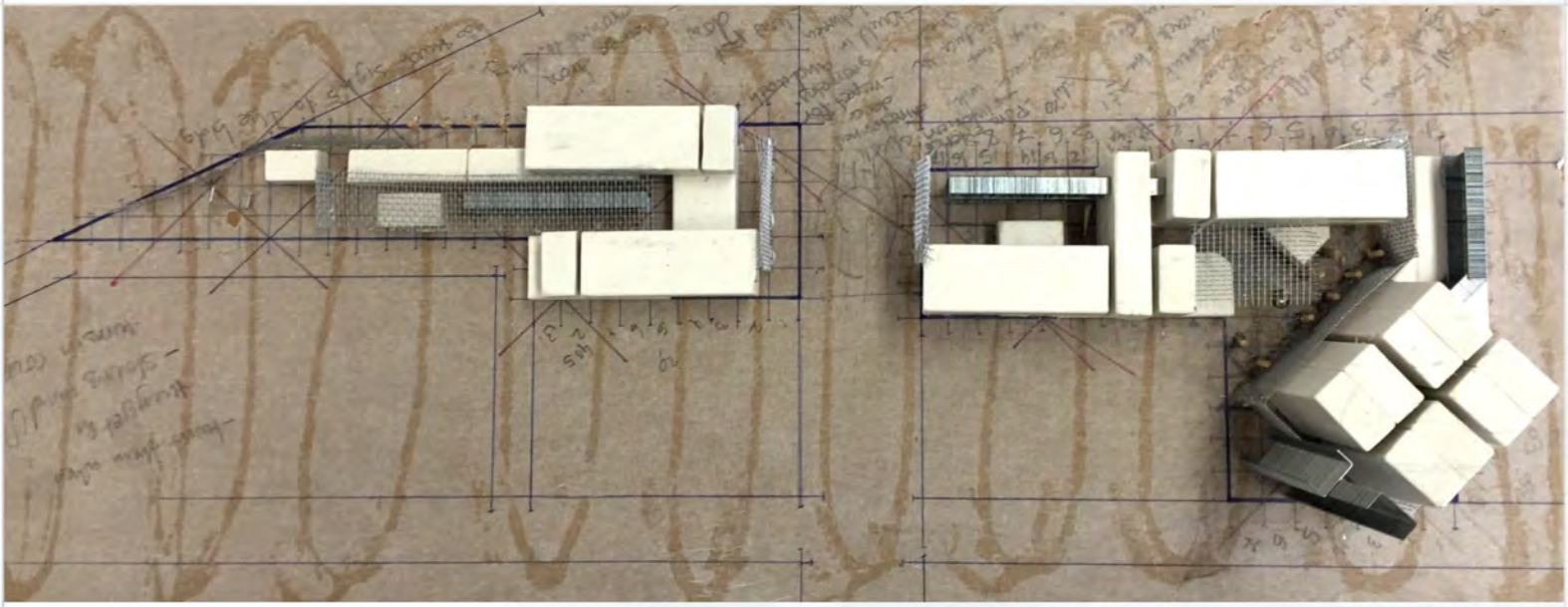


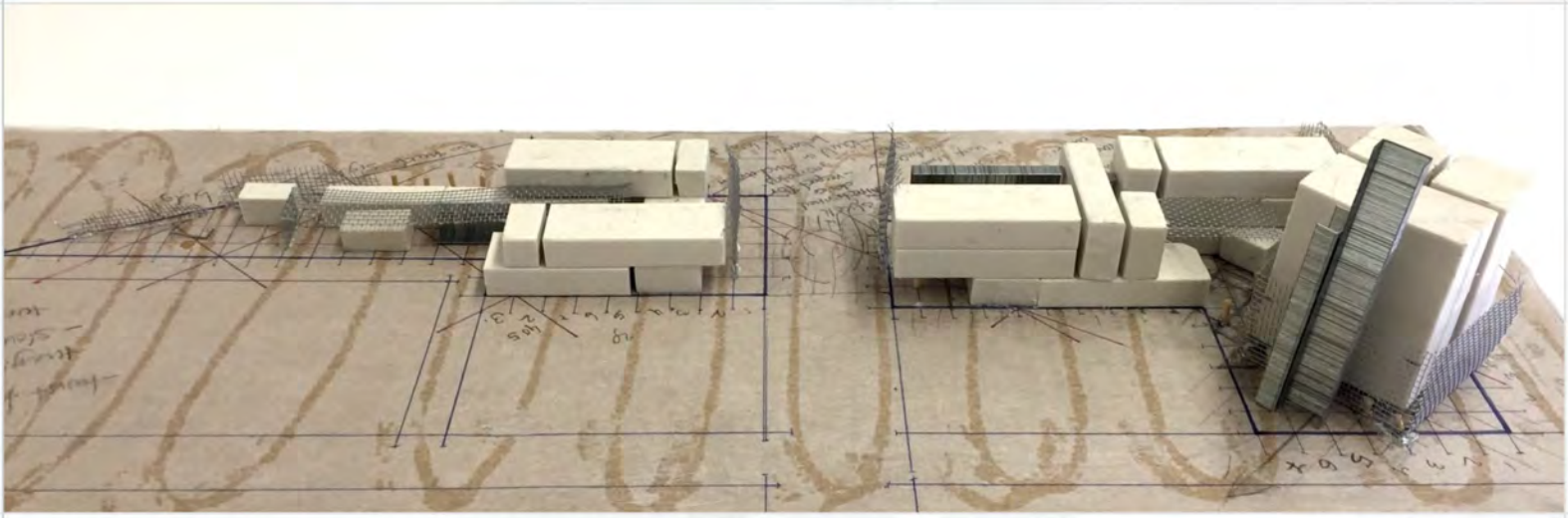
Developed Design proposal

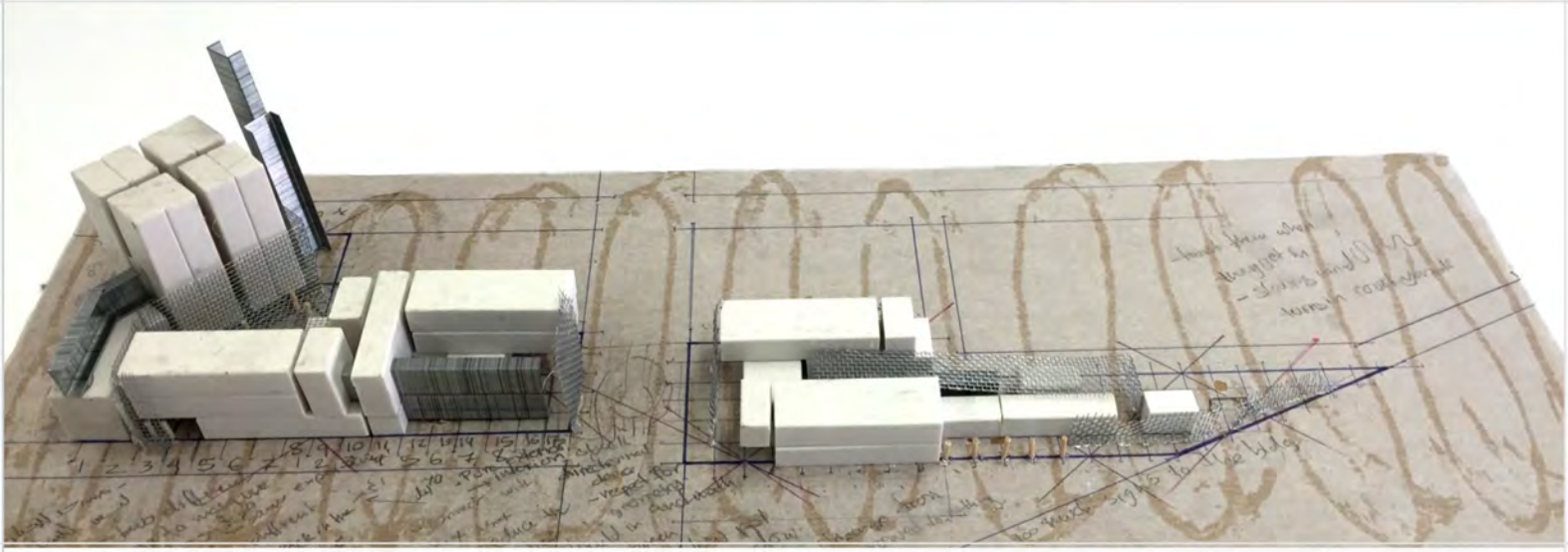
DESIGN PROPOSAL 3– Inspired by the Islamic city planning, (A combination between design 1 and 2)











DEVELOPED DESIGN PROPOSAL

DESIGN MANIFESTO Process – A Sensorial Experience

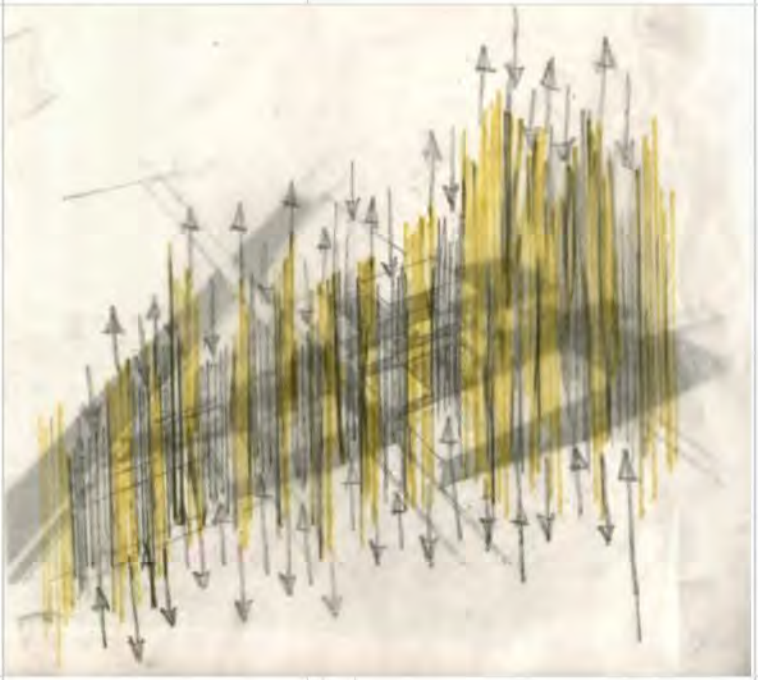
INSPERATION

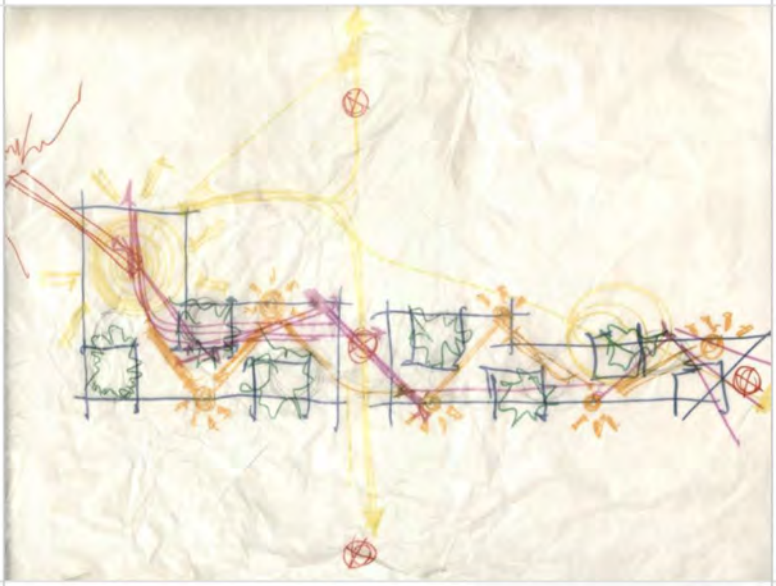
اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ مَثَلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكَاةٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ الْمِصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ يُوقَدُ مِن شَجَرَةٍ مُّبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونِةٍ لَّا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ نُّورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ ويضرب الله الأمثال للناس والله بكل شيء عليم

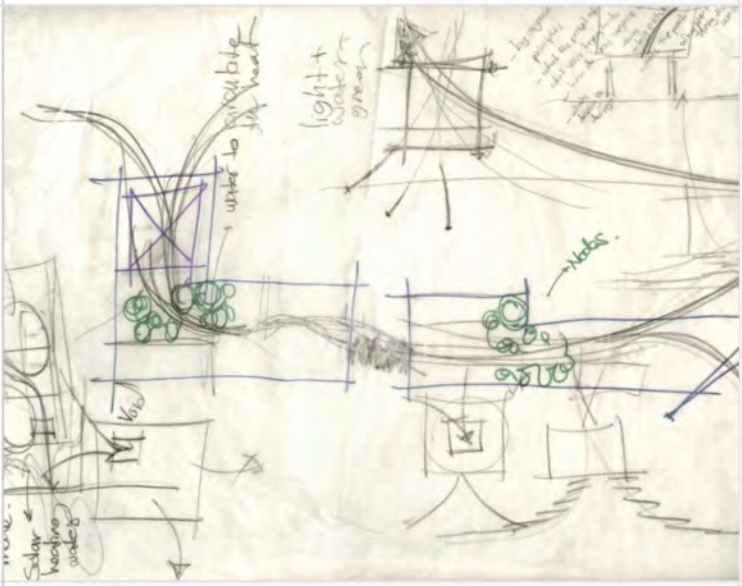
Quoting the Holly Quran "Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp, the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. Allah guides to His light whom He wills. And Allah presents examples for the people, and Allah is Knowing of all things."

The Design Manifesto was inspired by the importance of a sensorial experience in Islamic Architecture. The sensorial experience of an Islamic Architecture is stimulated through the use of light, shadow, water and vegetation.

The main method of creating this sensorial experience in this project was through the contrast between the light and shadow. This contrast was originally provided in the Astrolabe which was used in the early ages of the Islamic Culture in order to determine prayer times, important dates and occasions. The following drawings shows an attempt of creating a building that works as an astrolabe.



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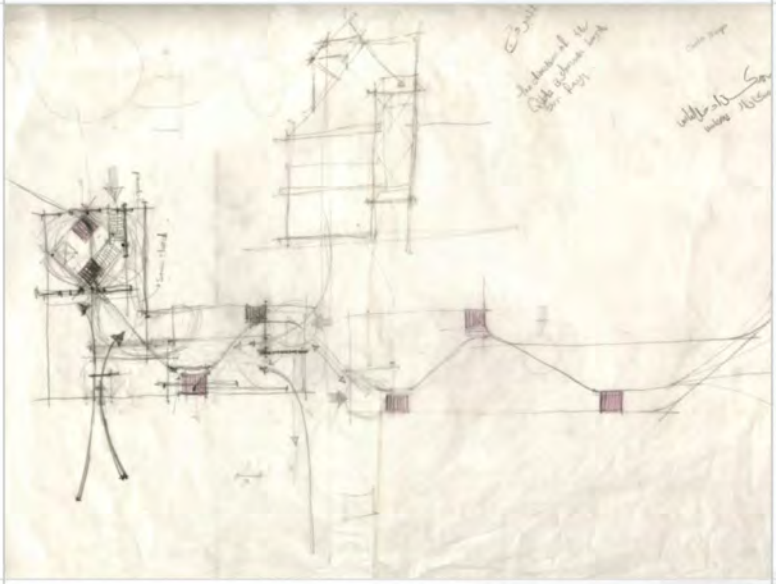
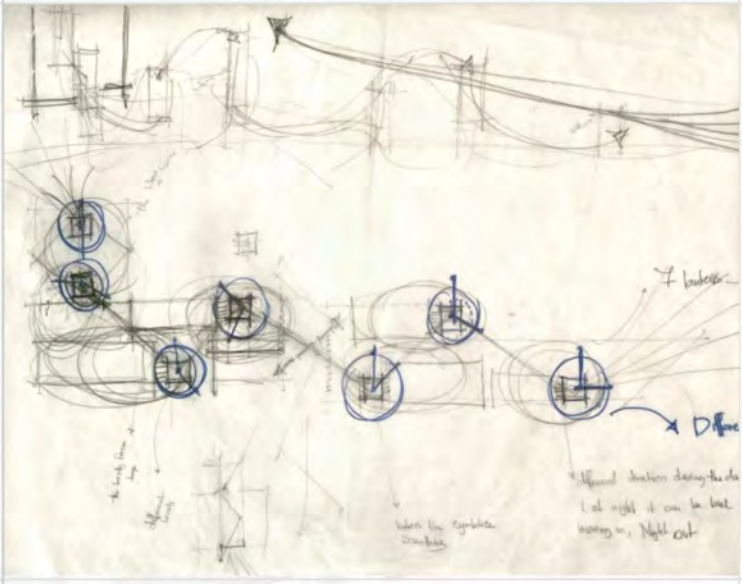
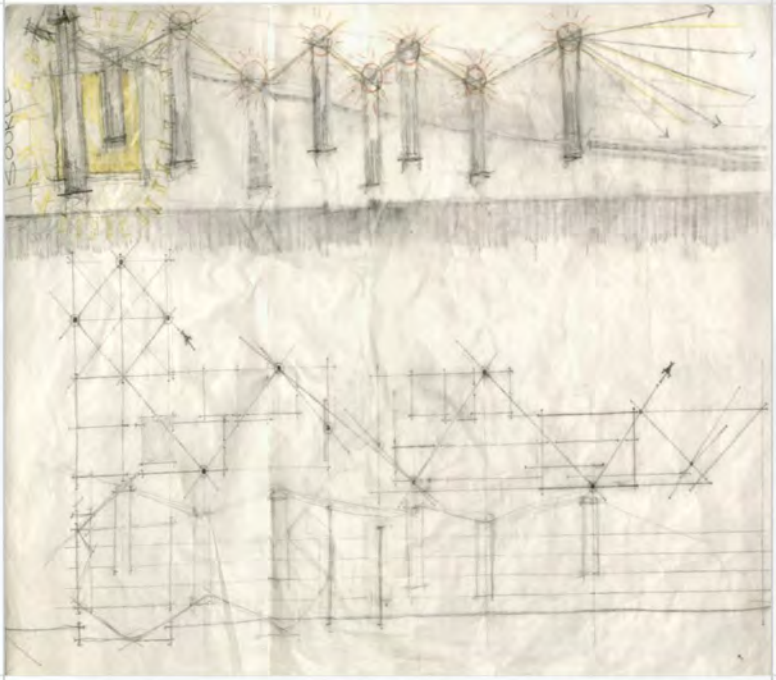
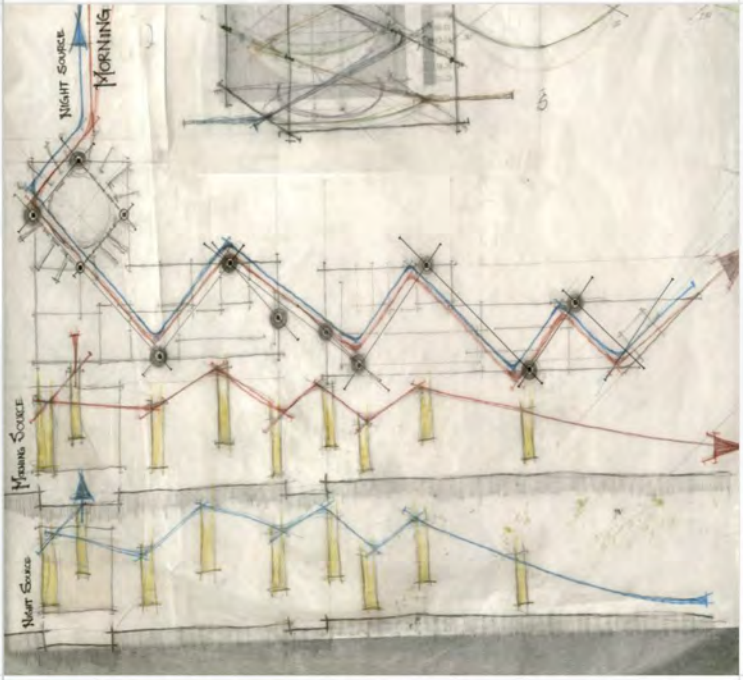




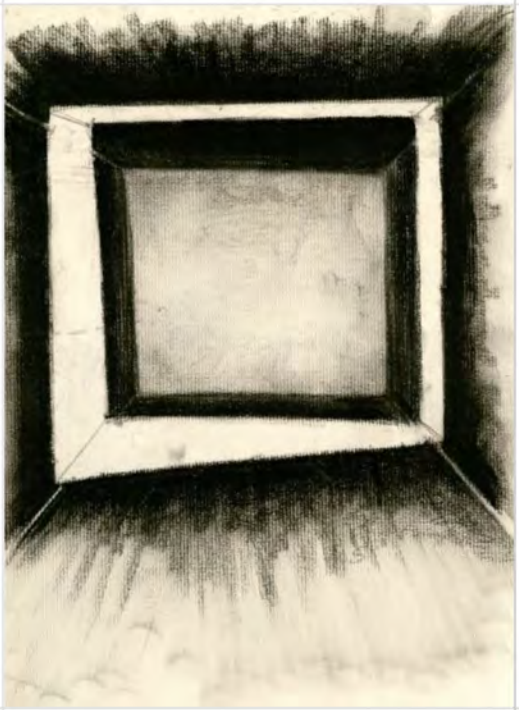


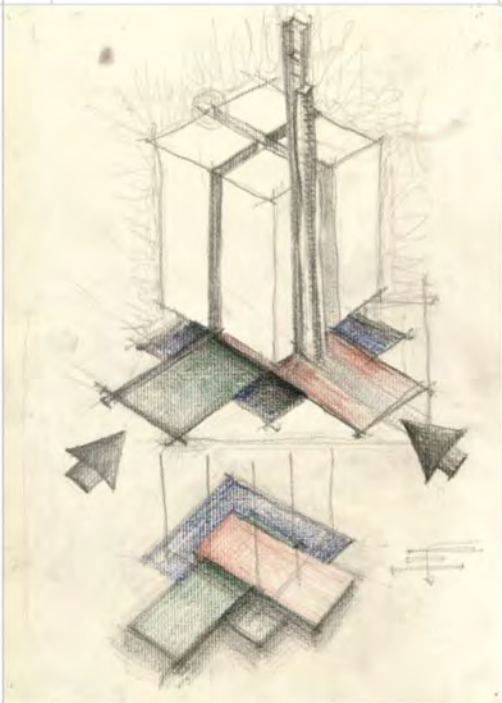

Night Source
Morning
Morning Source
Night Source

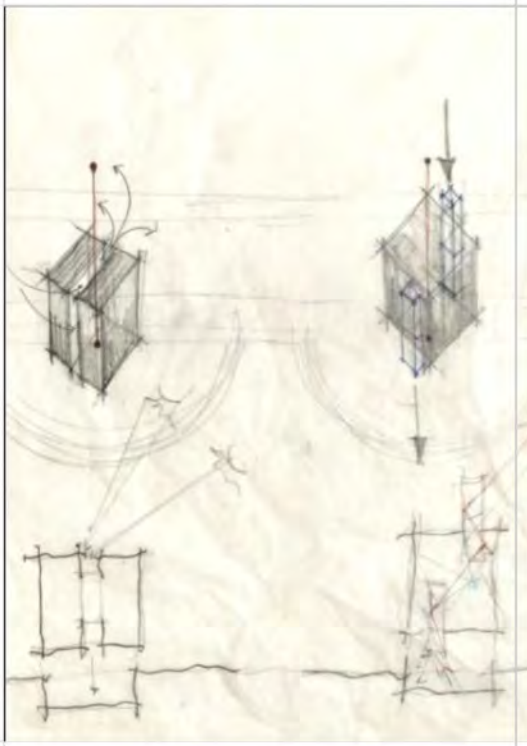
DEVELOPED DESIGN PROPOSAL

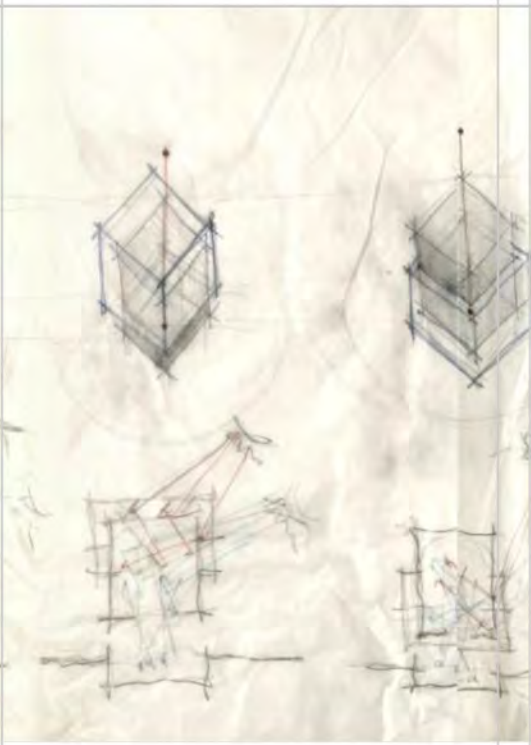
DESIGN MANIFESTO Process – A Sensorial Experience

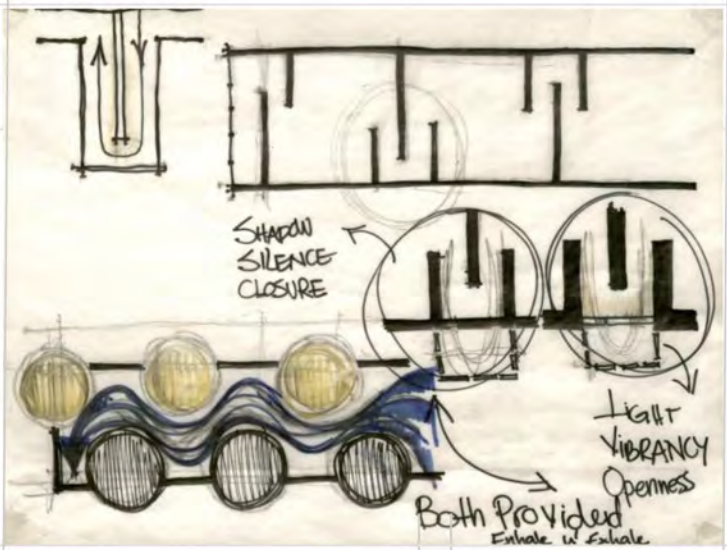
THE MOSQUE – THE CUBE

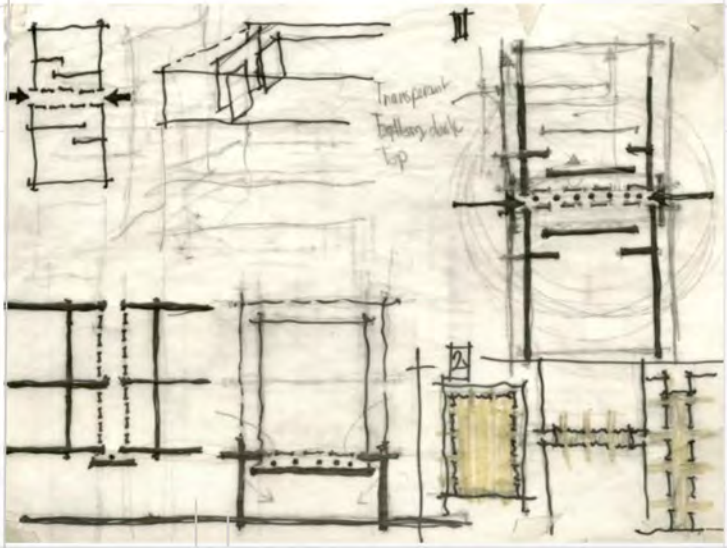


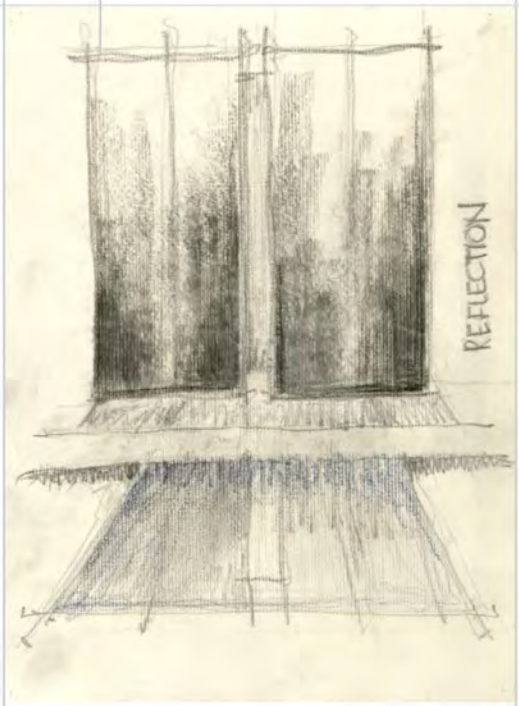







SHADOW
SILENCE
CLOSURE
LIGHT
VIBRANCY
Openness
Both Provided
Exhale w Exhale


Transparent
Bathroom door
Top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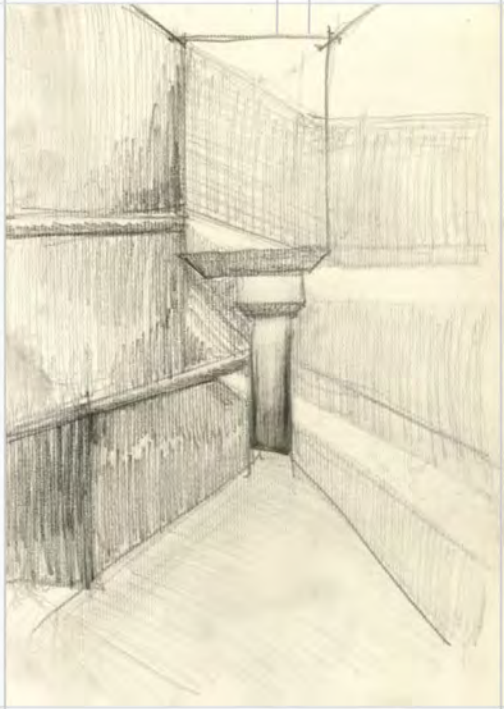
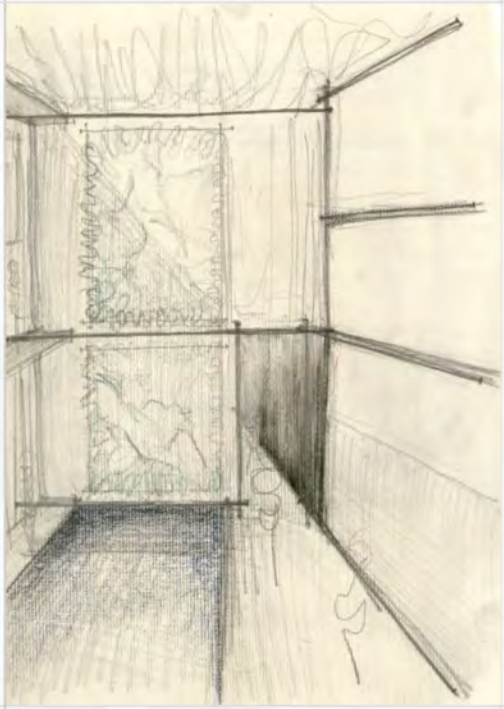
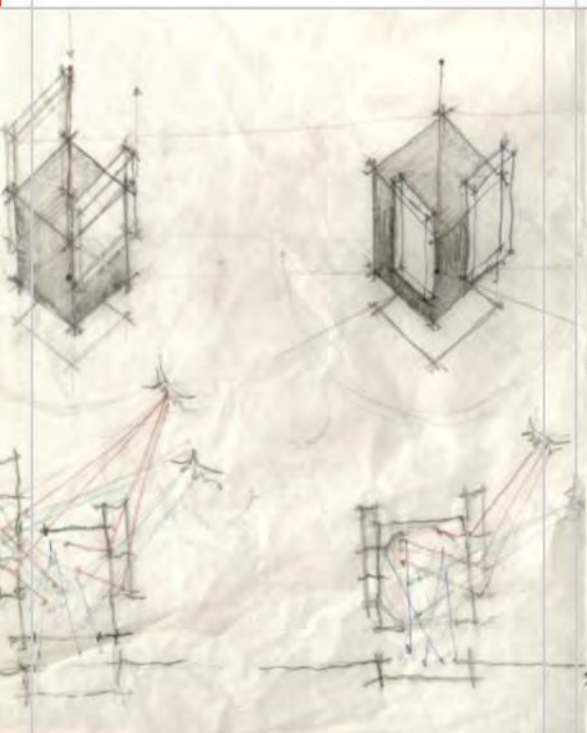
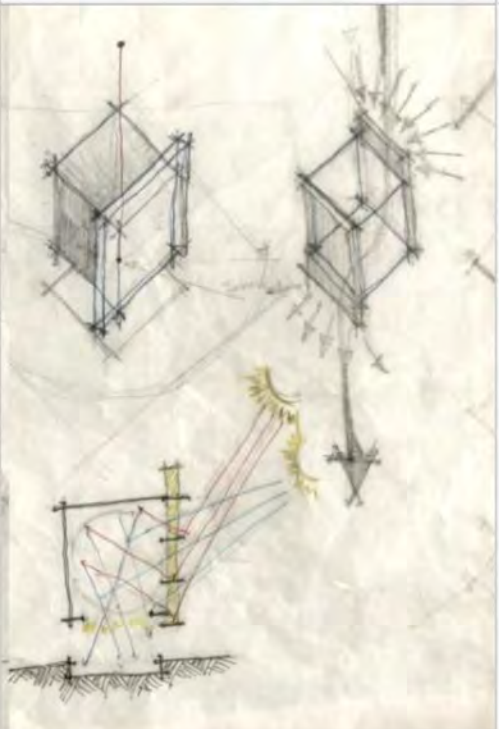
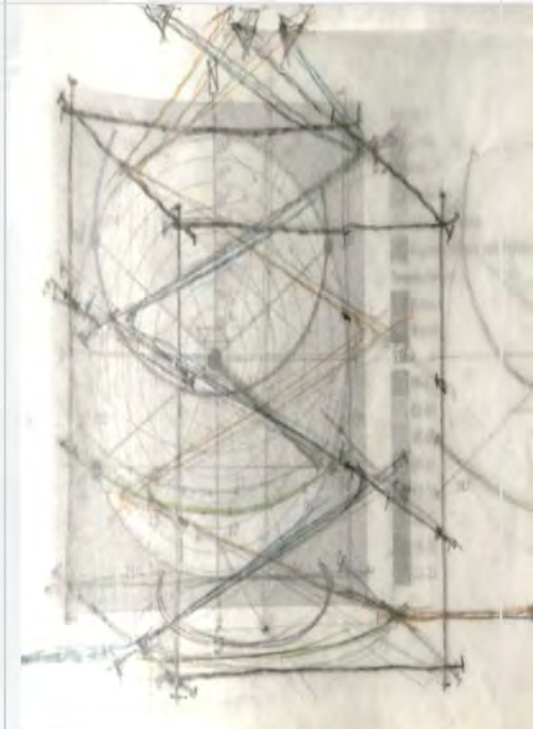










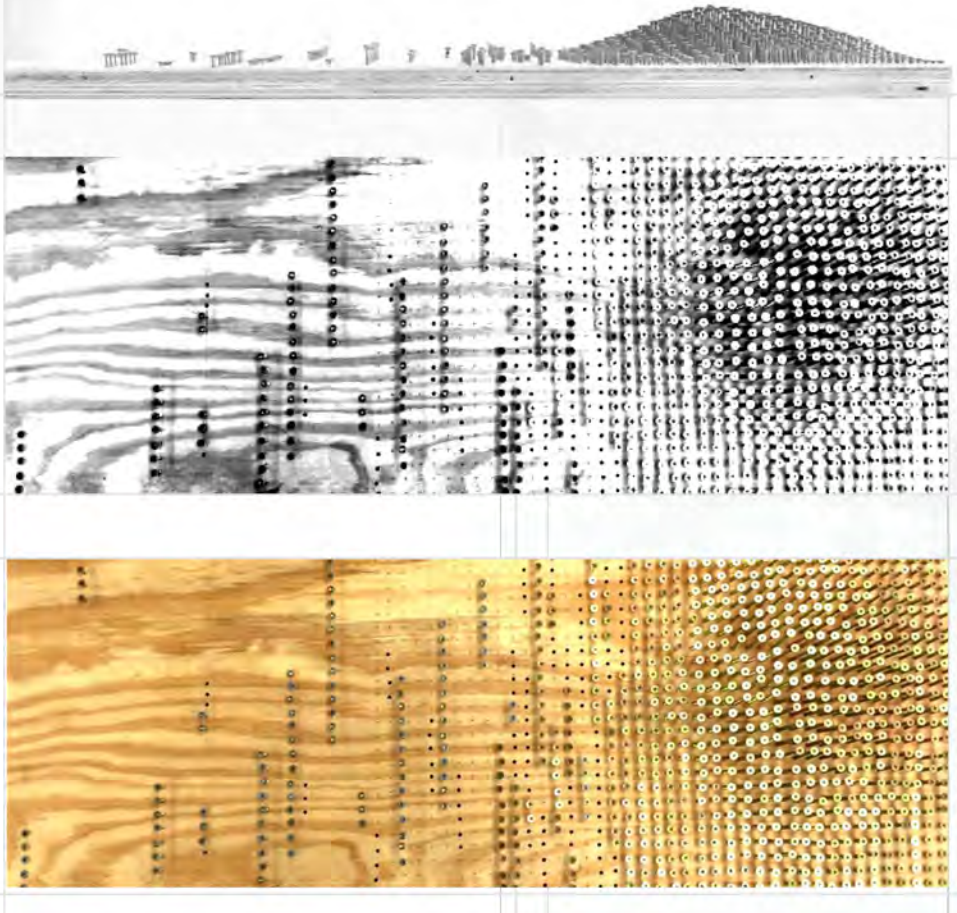
DEVELOPED DESIGN PROPOSAL

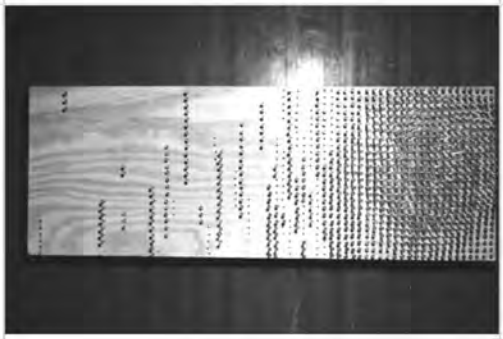
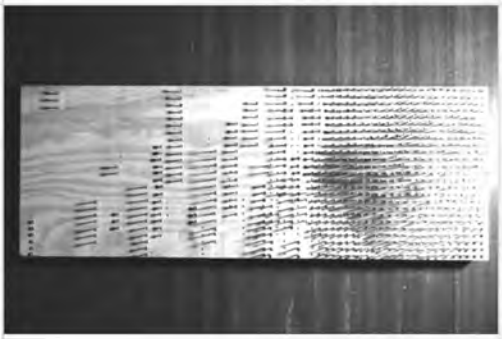
DESIGN MANIFESTO Process – A Sensorial Experience

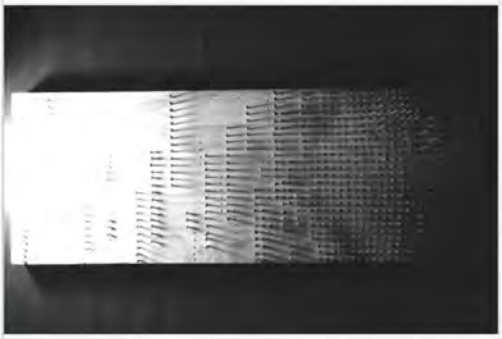
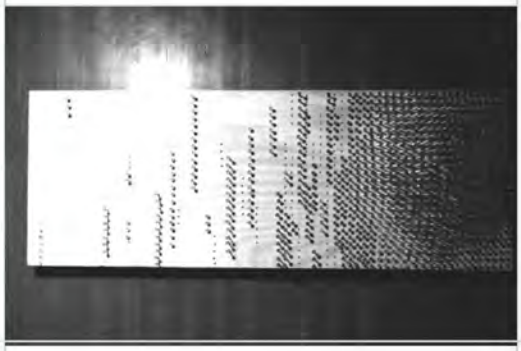
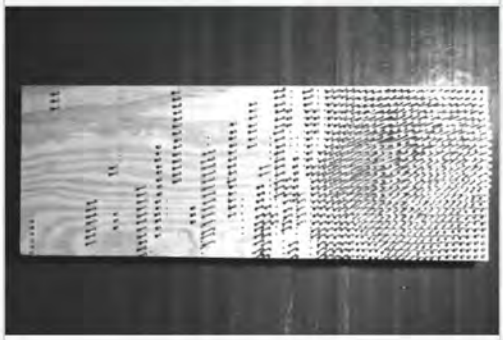
SENSORIAL EXPERIENCE

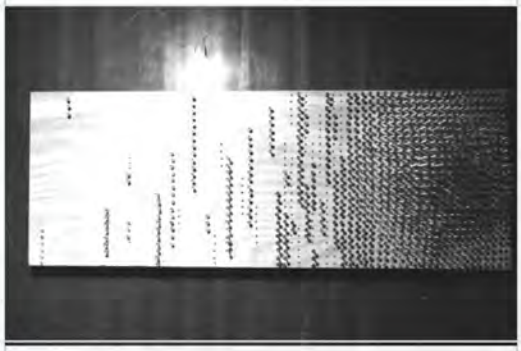
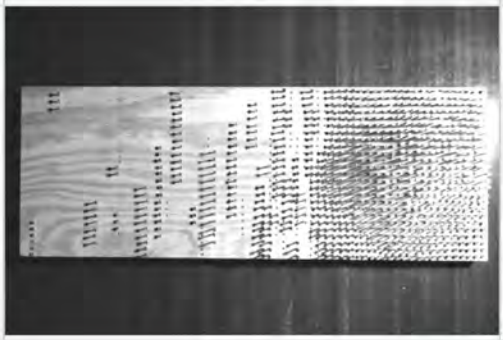
DEEP BREATHING OF **LIGHT** INHALES
SHADOW EXHALES

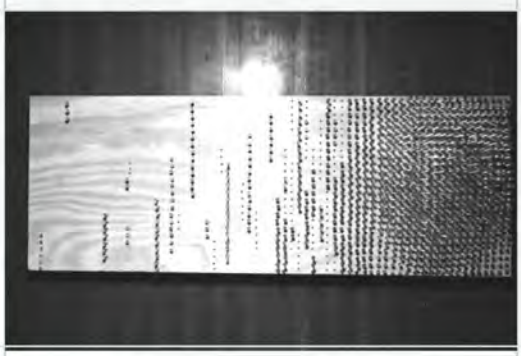
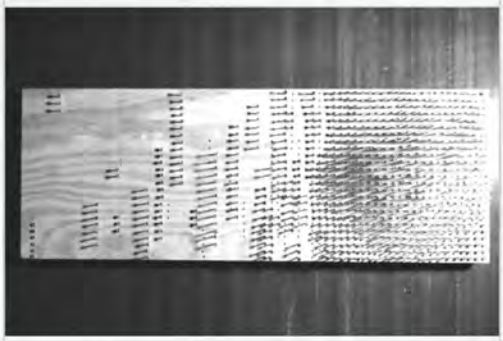
This piece is inspired by the essence of the Islamic Architecture that dematerializes the building masses to reveal a hidden spiritual reality. It absorbs and reflects the light to transform a flat static surface into a vibrant and luminous screen that seems to glow from within. It symbolizes the Islamic architecture concept of the universe perfection and the infinity of the Divine through patterns, materials and their own properties. It also provides an axis to the truth relying on its sensorial experience. This is a start to inspire, transform and unify the built environment through the lens of Islamic Architecture.



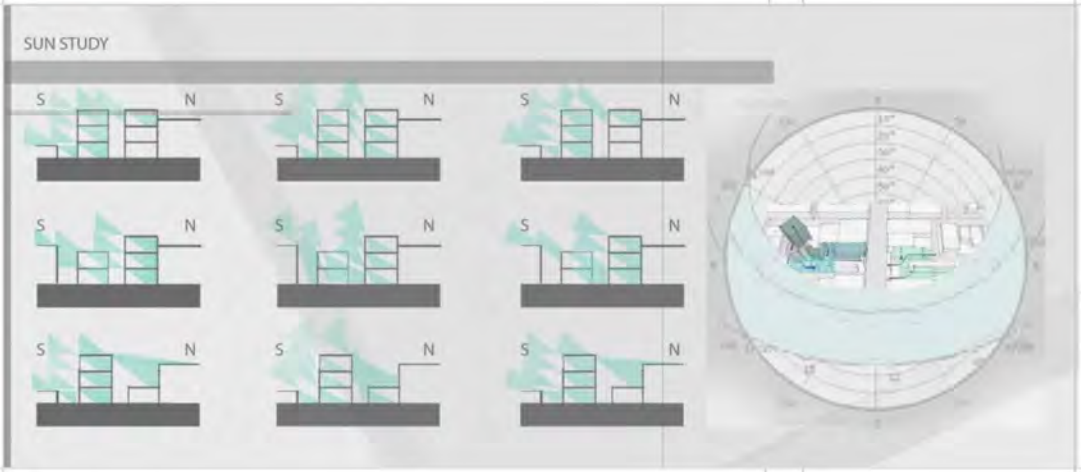
Final Design Proposal

FINAL DESIGN PROPOSAL

DESIGN MANIFESTO

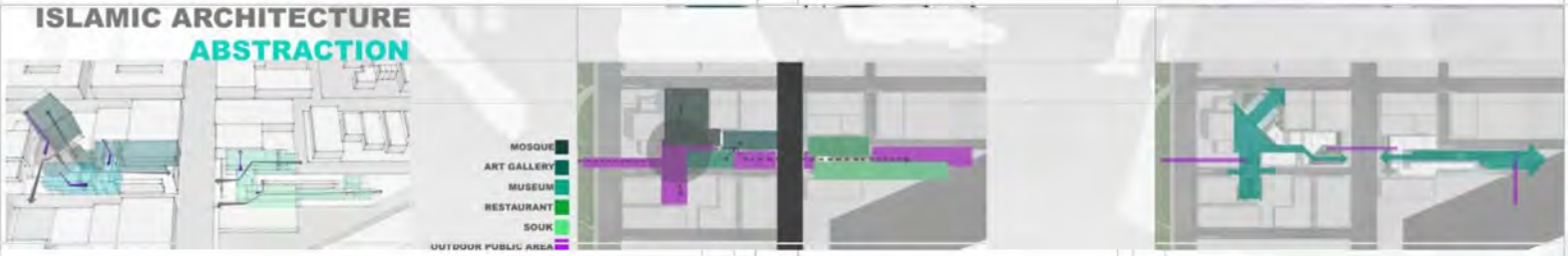
SENSORIAL EXPERIENCE

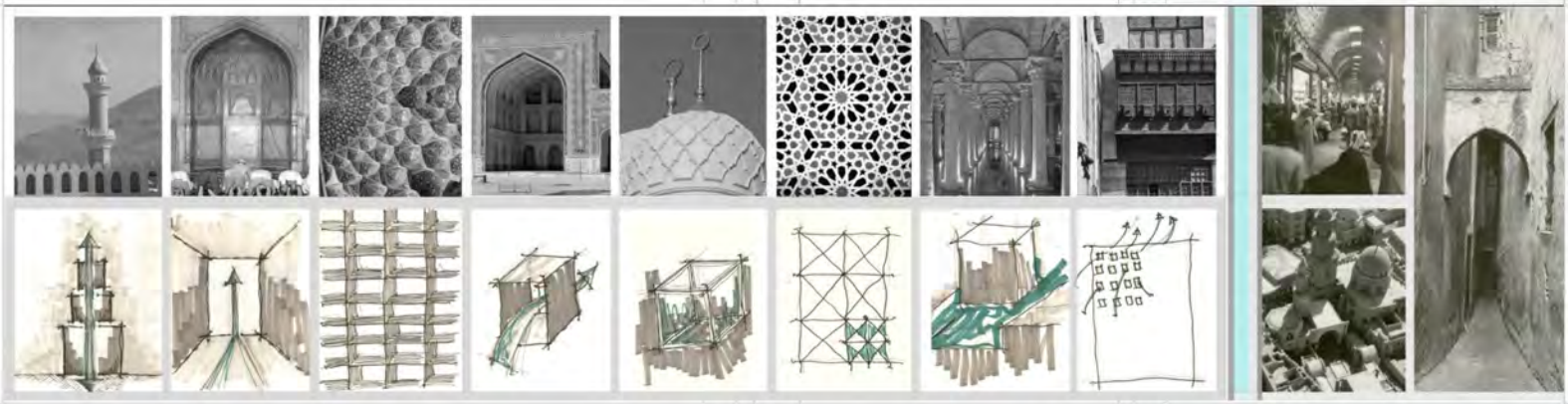
DEEP BREATHING OF LIGHT INHALES
SHADOW EXHALES

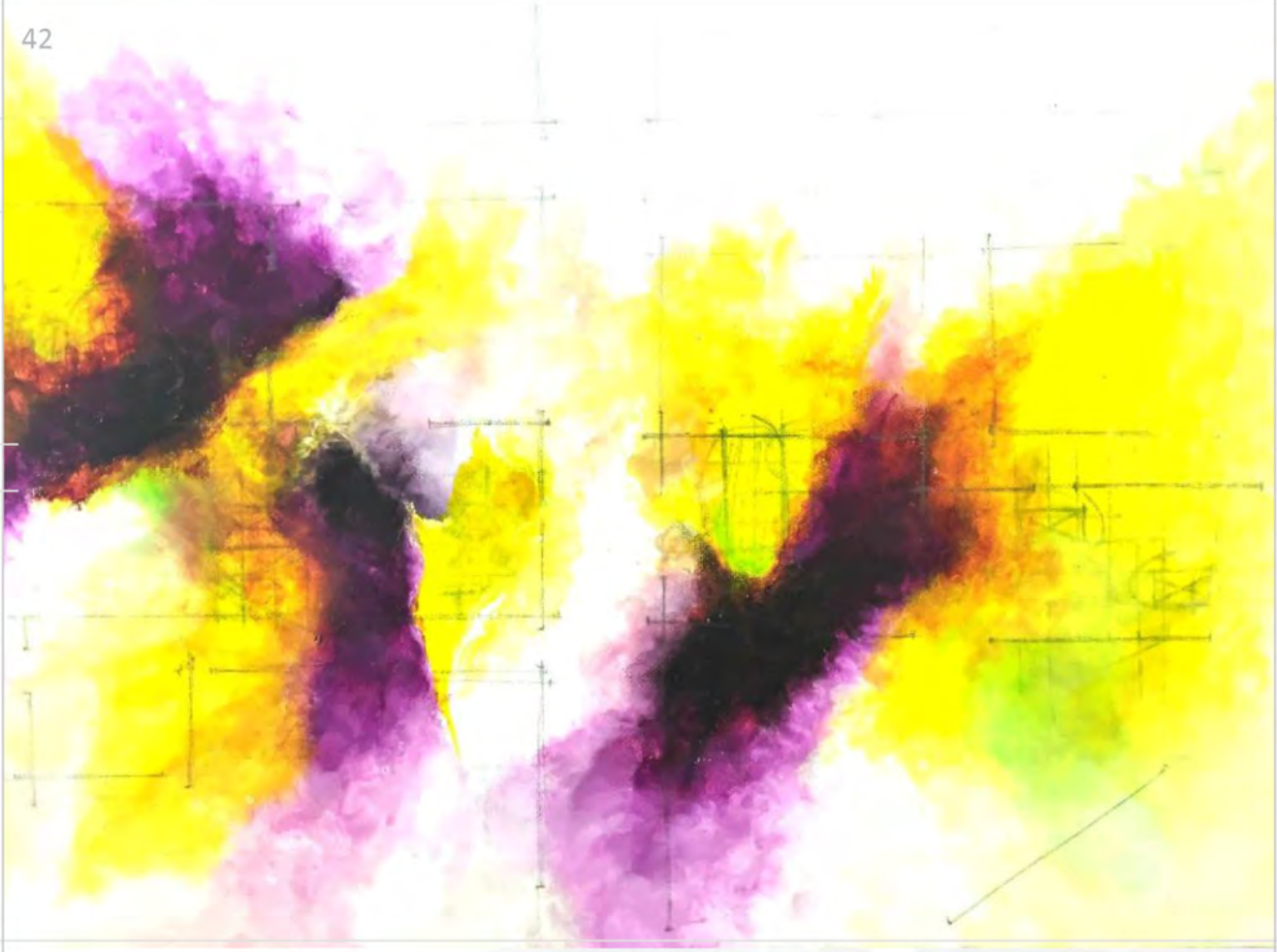


DEMATERIALIAZE
INSPIRE
TRANSFORM
UNIFY
ENGAGE

ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE
ABSTRACTION

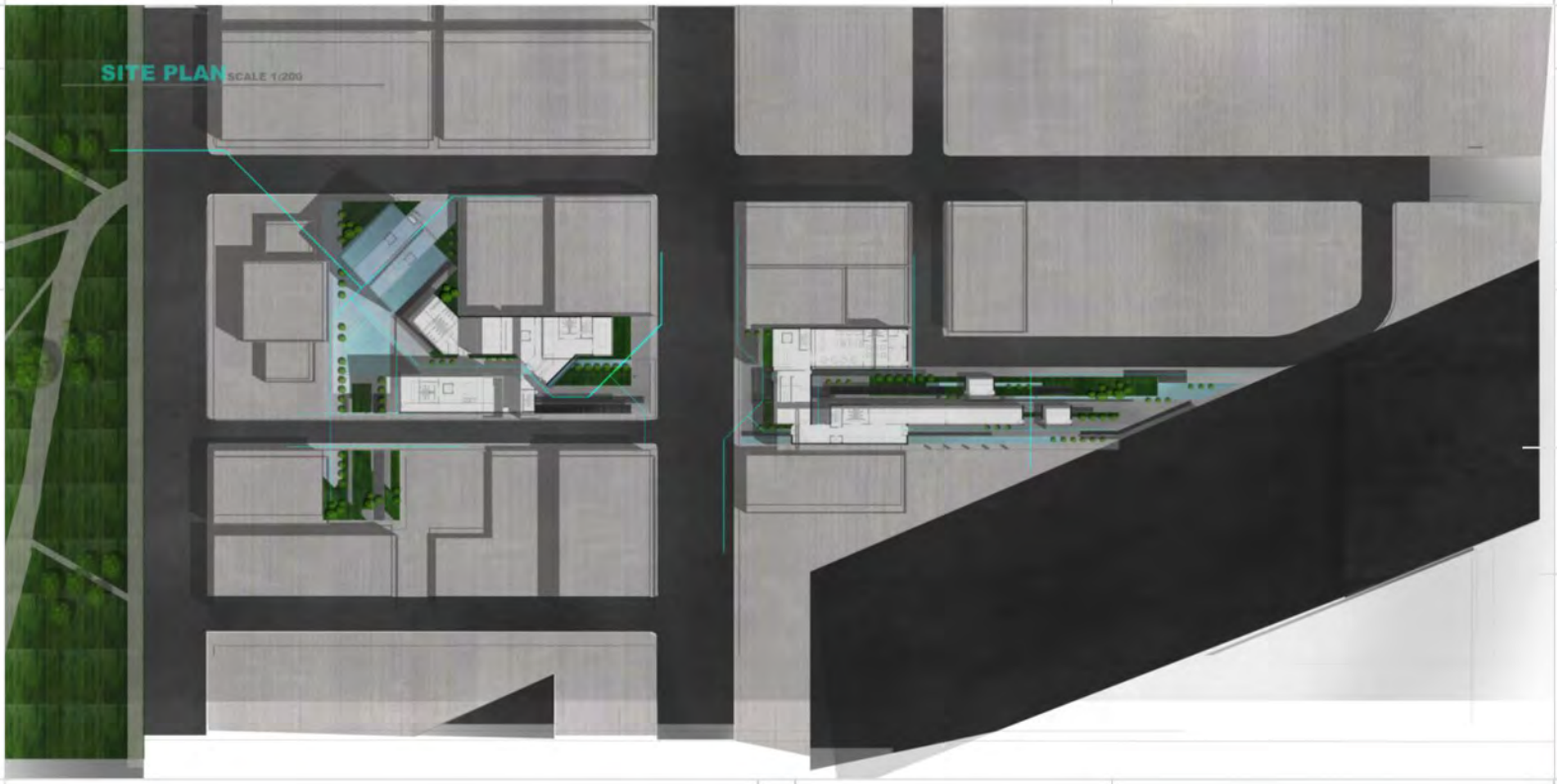






Final Design proposal

Site Plan



Plans

FIRST FLOOR PLAN SCALE 1:100

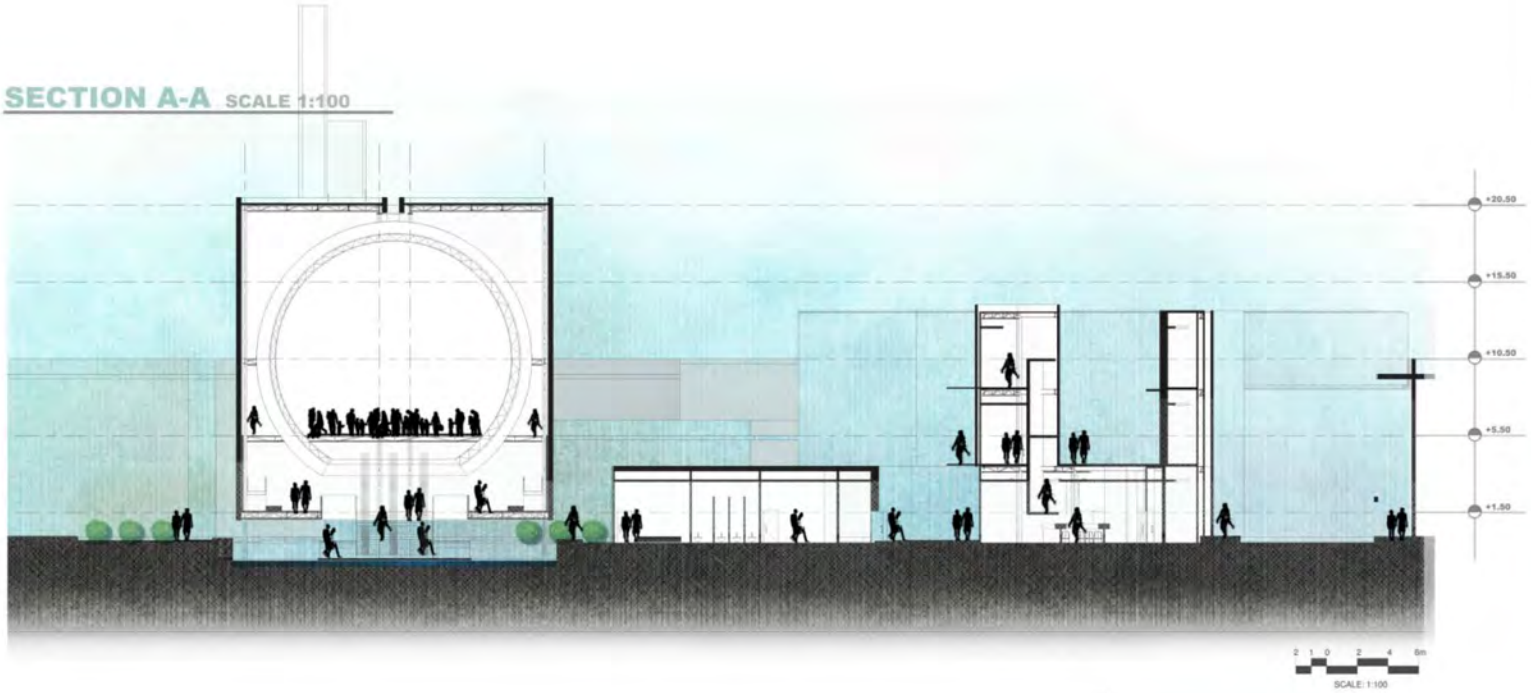
SECOND FLOOR PLAN SCALE 1:100

THIRD FLOOR PLAN SCALE 1:100

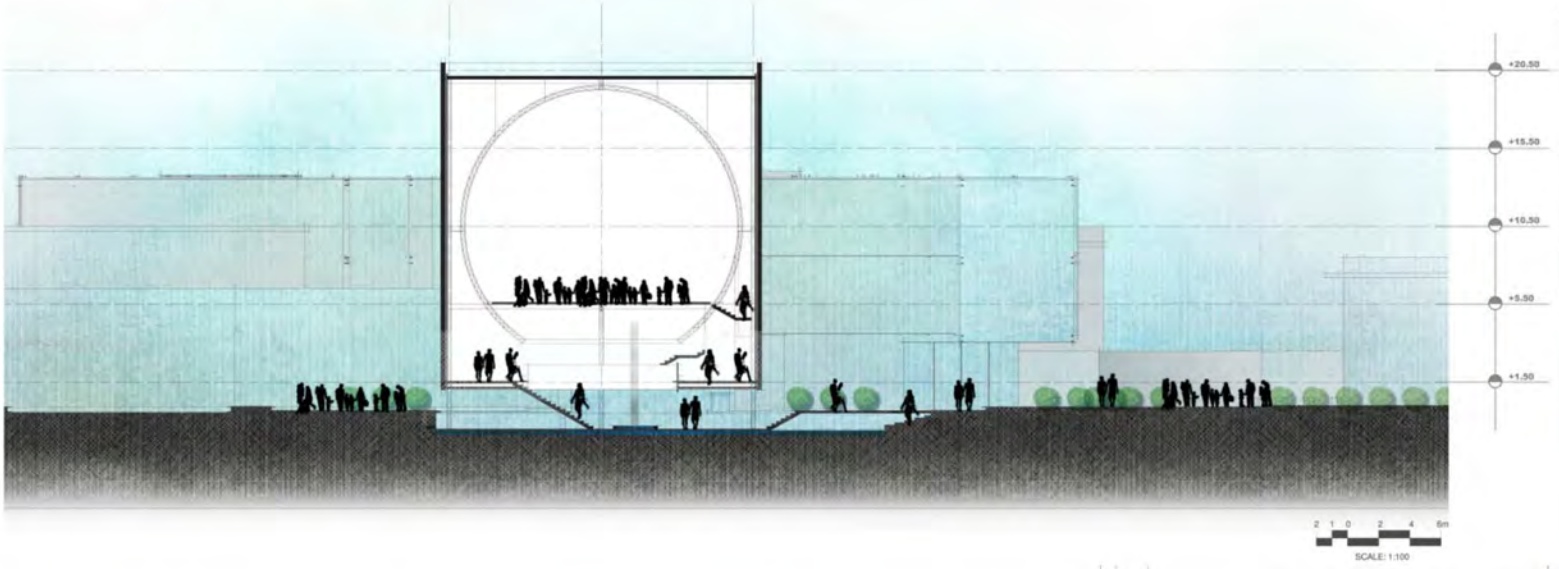
Final Design proposal

Sections

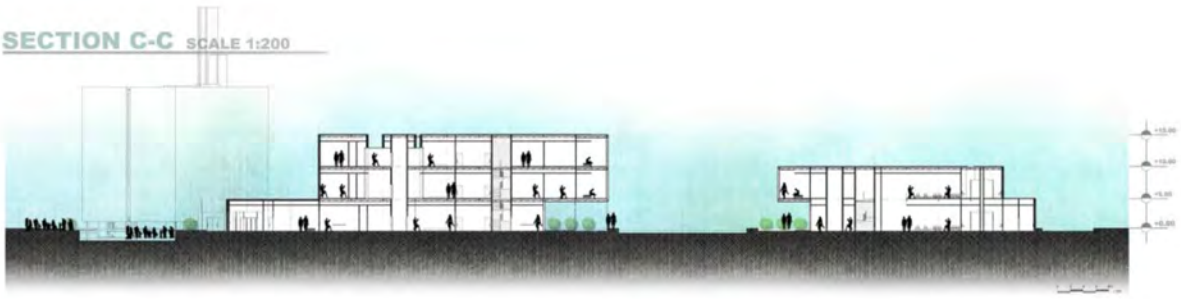
SECTION A-A SCALE 1:100



SECTION A-A SCALE 1:100



SECTION C-C SCALE 1:200



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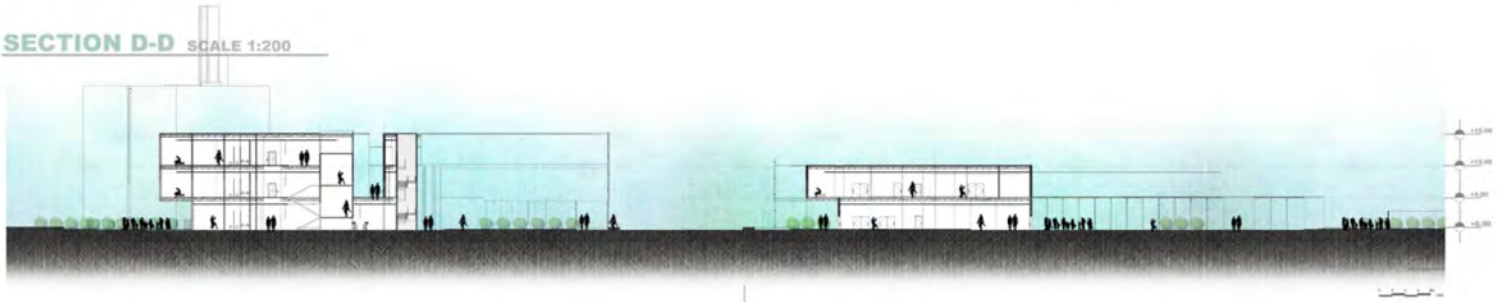
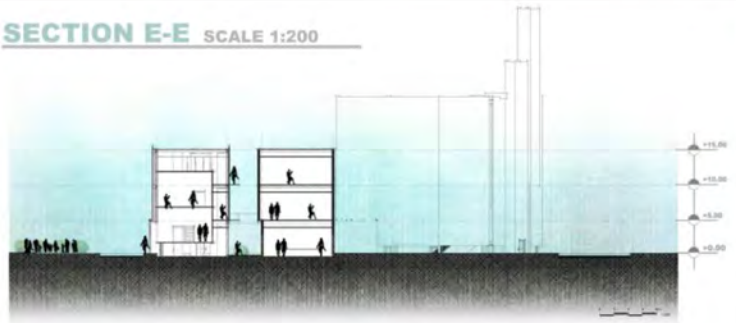
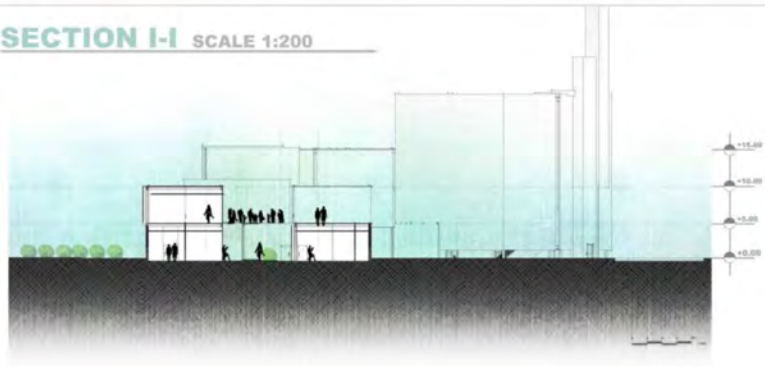


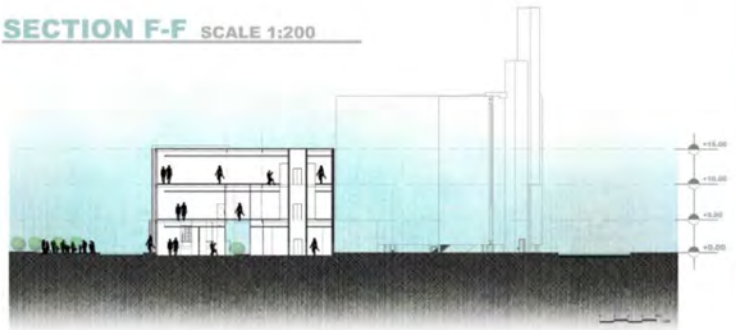
SECTION E-E SCALE 1:200



SECTION I-I SCALE 1:200



SECTION F-F SCALE 1:200



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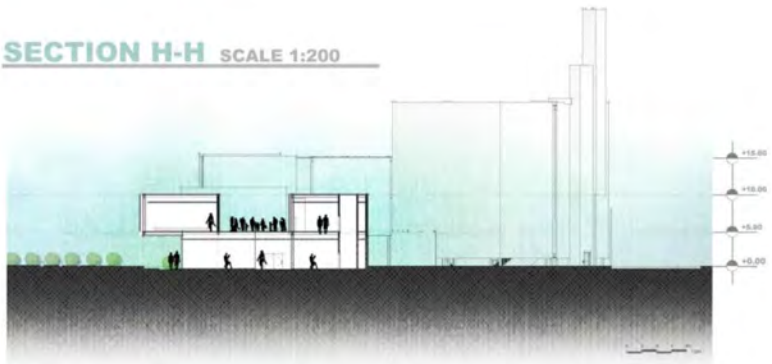
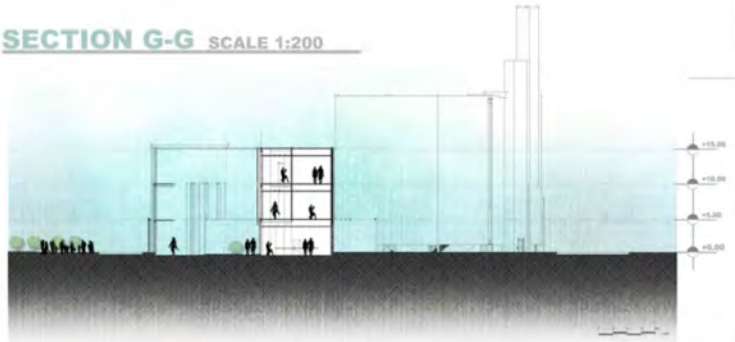


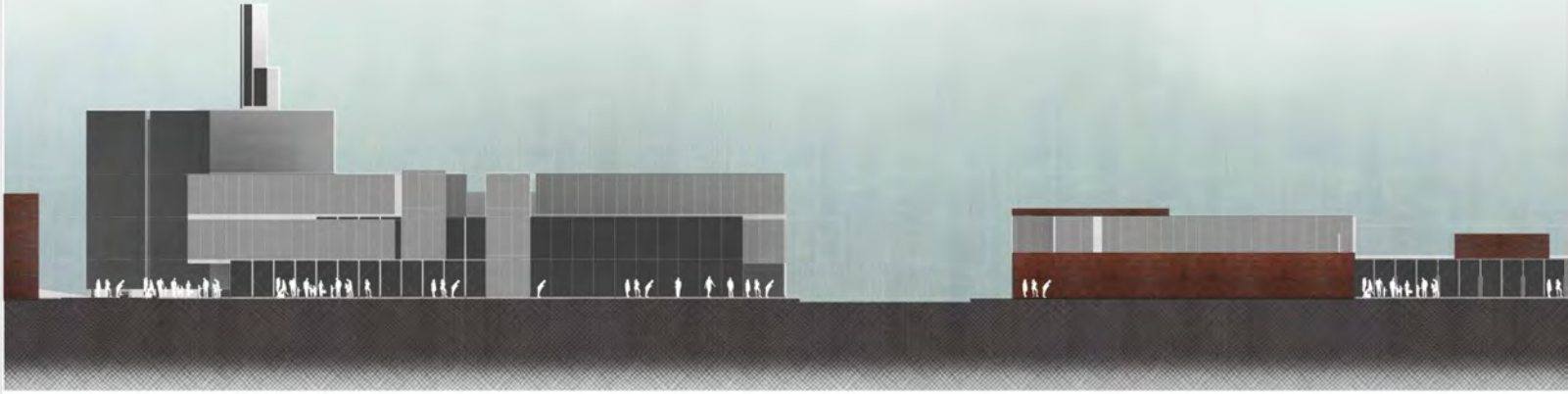
SECTION G-G SCALE 1:200



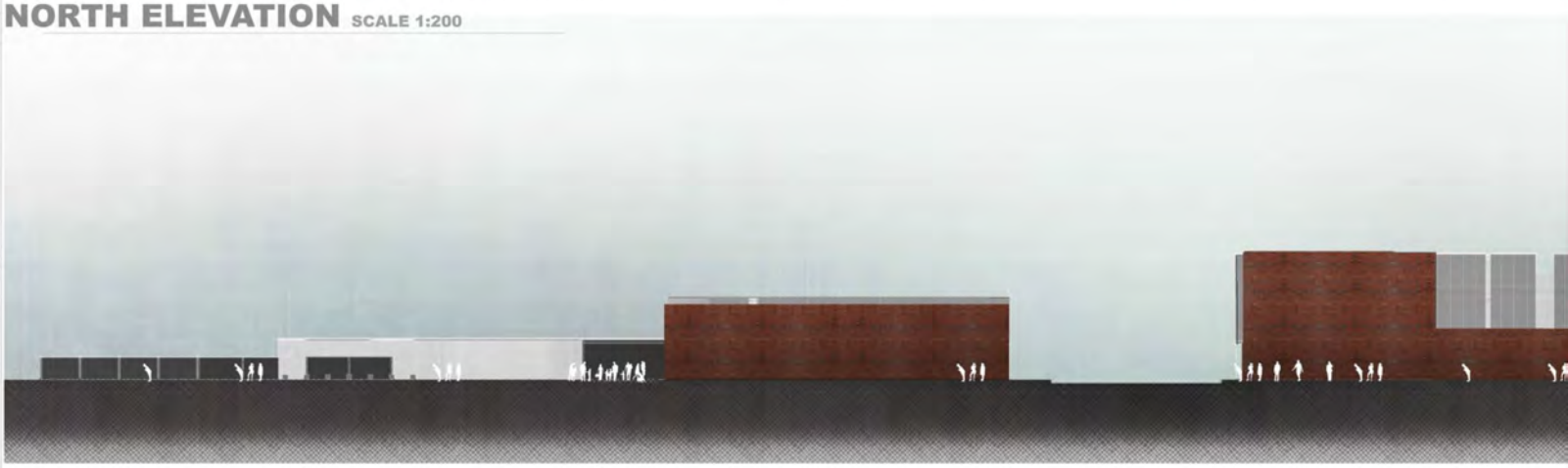
Final Design proposal

Elevations

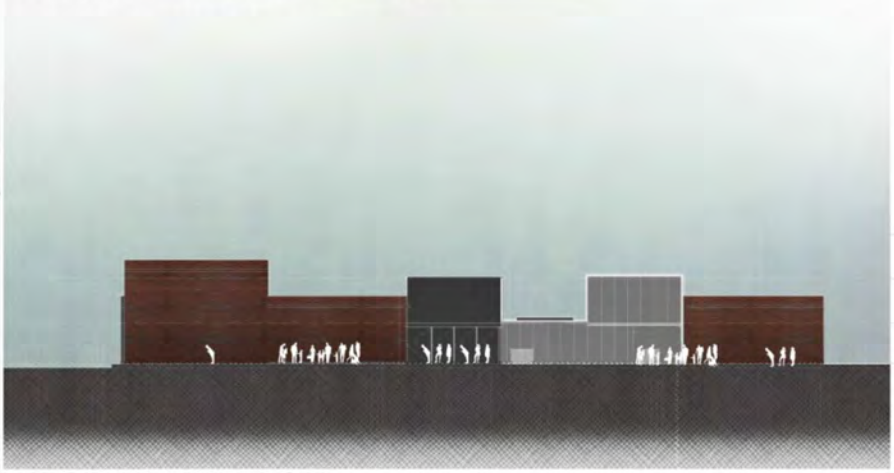
SOUTH ELEVATION SCALE 1:200



NORTH ELEVATION SCALE 1:200



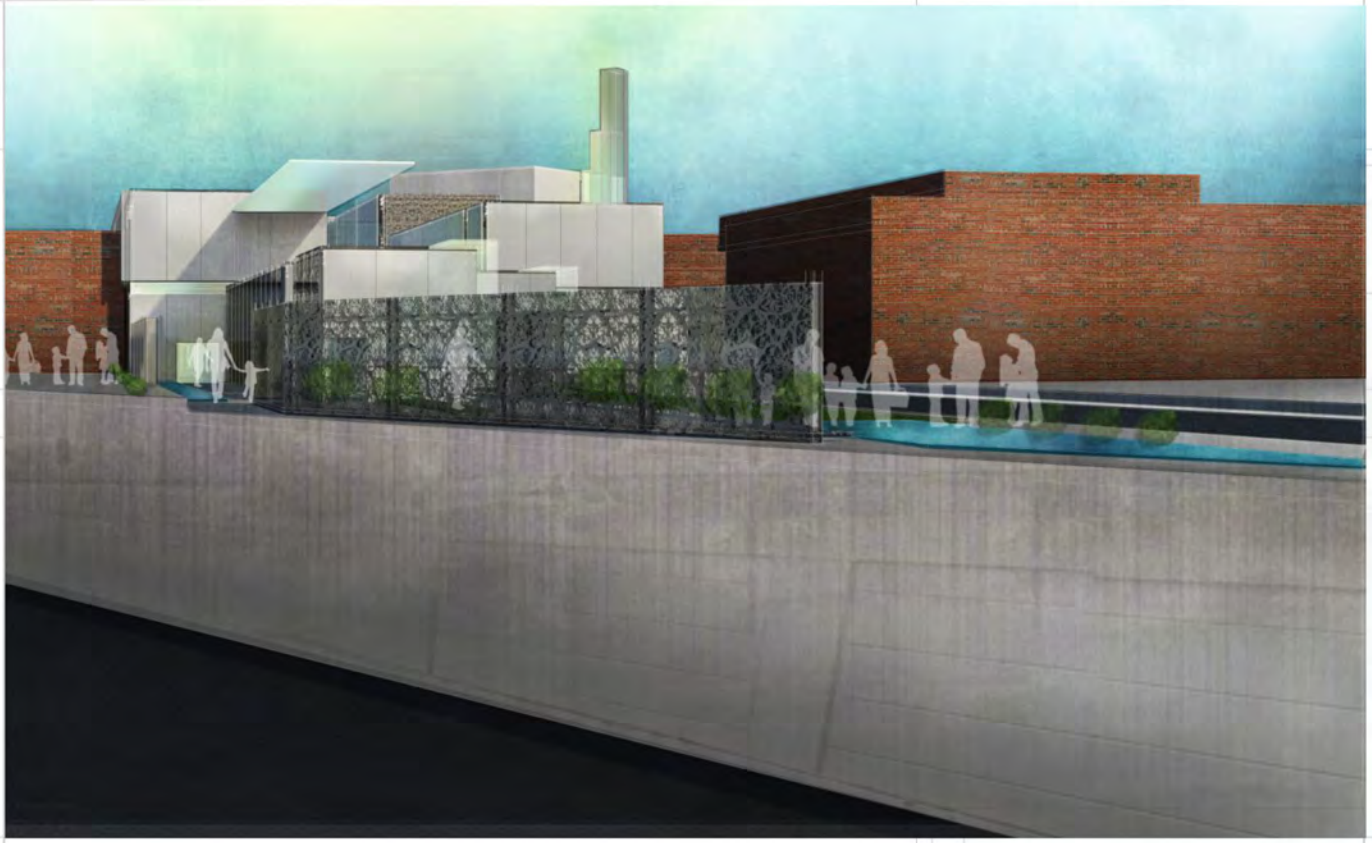
EAST ELEVATION SCALE 1:200

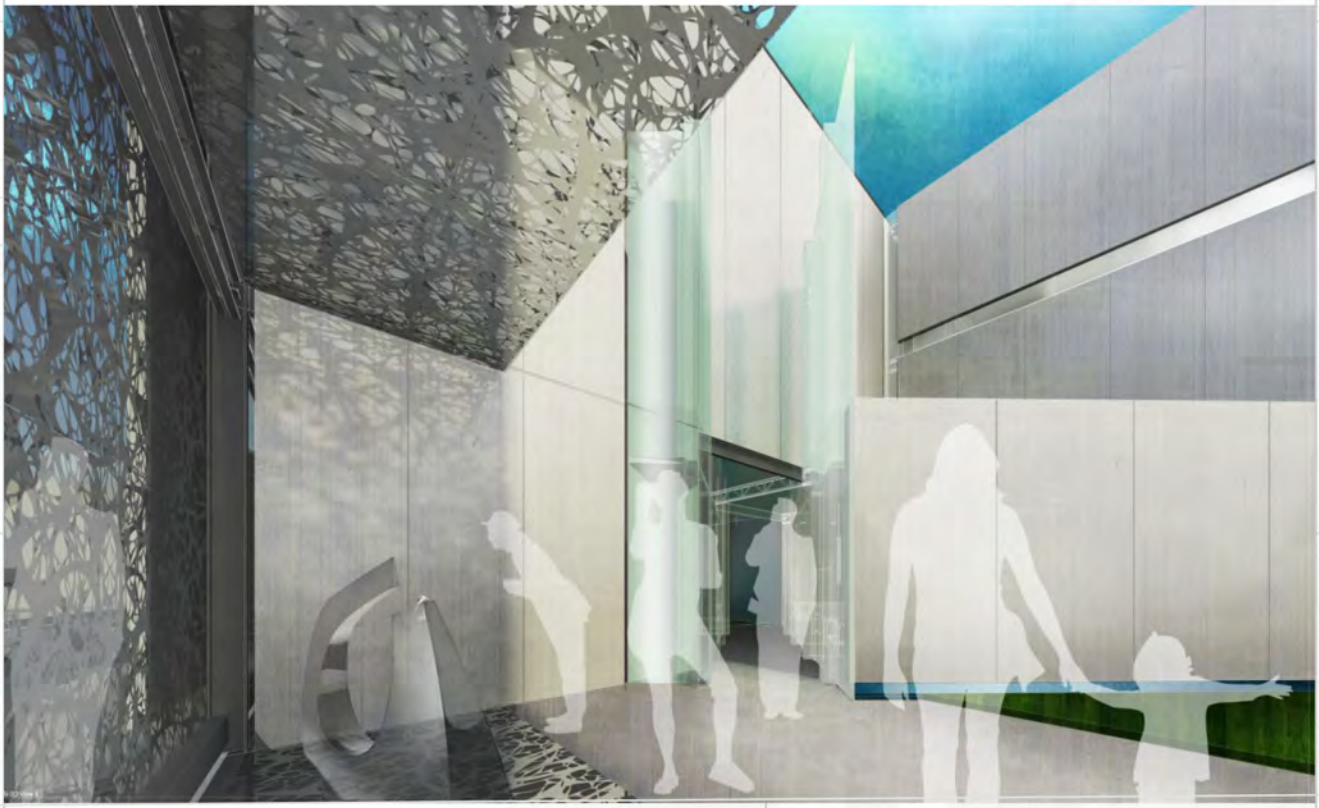


WEST ELEVATION SCALE 1:200

Final Design proposal

Exterior Views

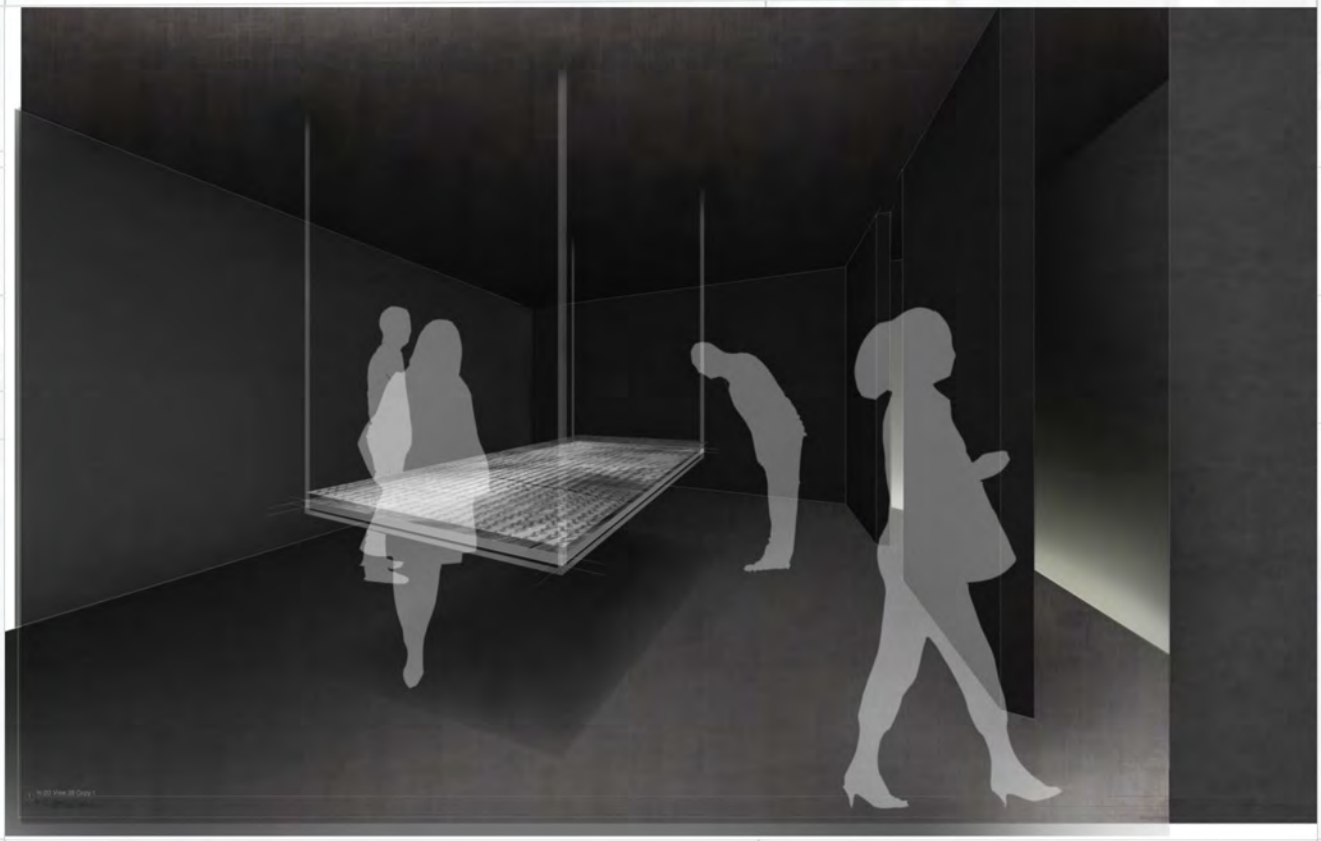




Final Design proposal

Interior Light Views

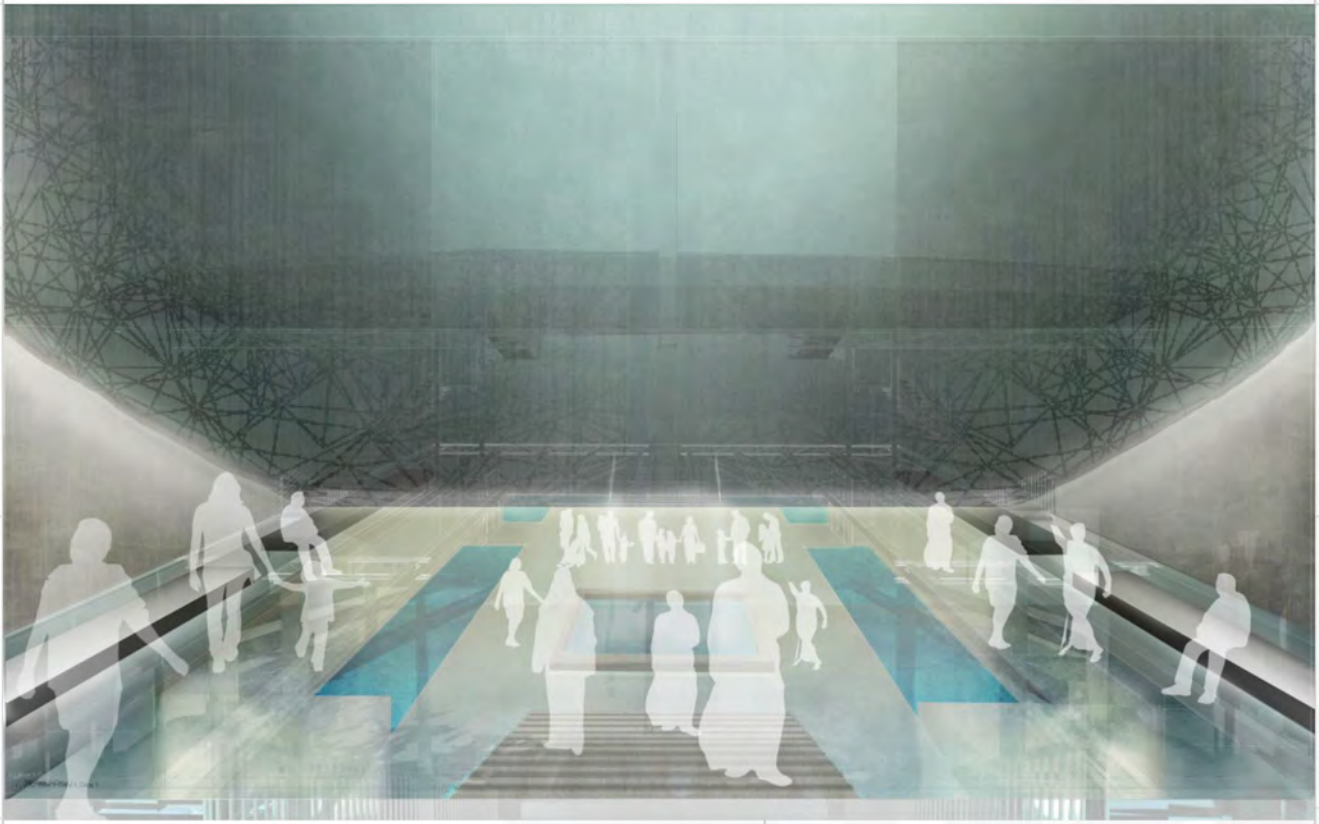
Interior Shadow Views

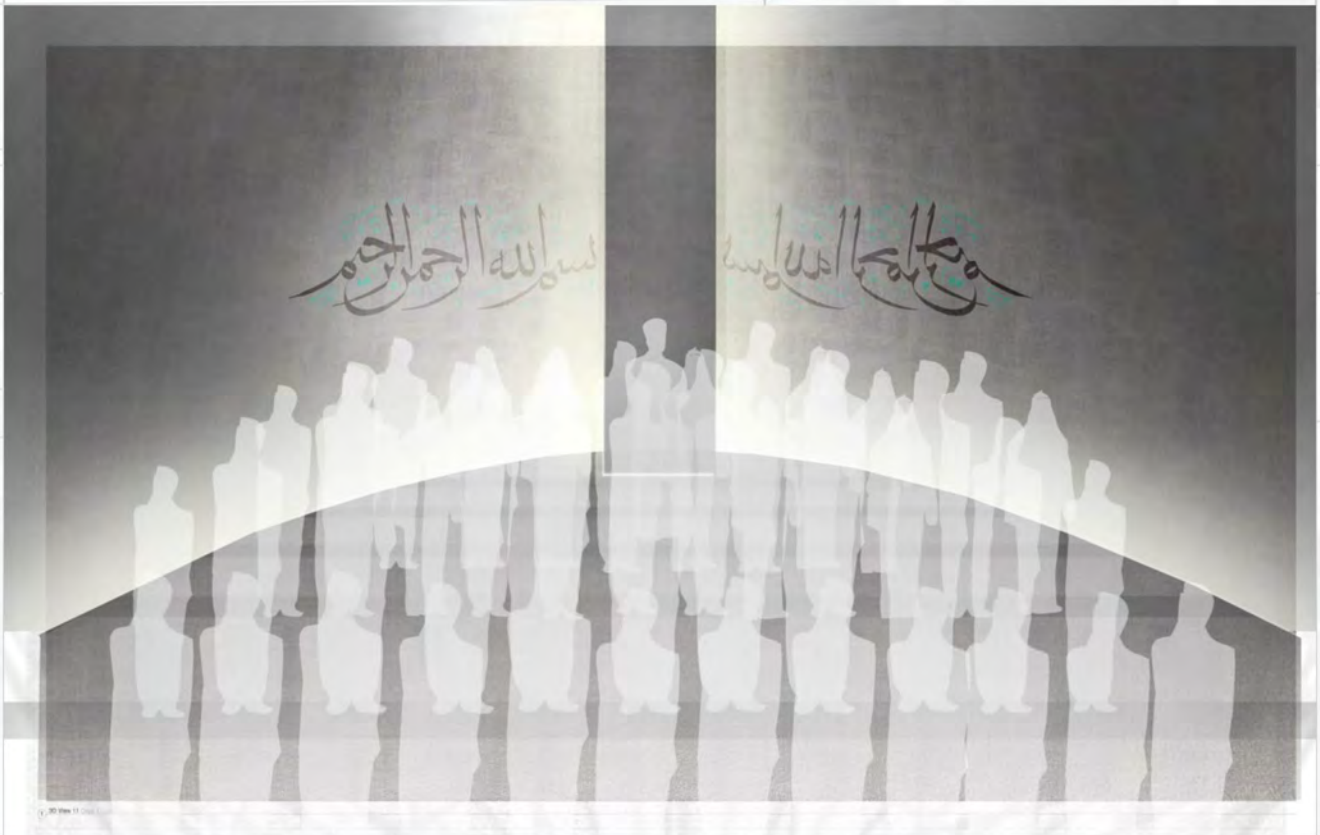


Final Design proposal

Views

Mosque Views





Thesis Addendum

Through my life I have been considered as a cultural minority by being born and raised outside my hometown Sudan. But, my awareness of an issue of an identity preservation as a minority in a majority increased when I moved to the United States two years ago. This is why as an architect I decided to try to find a solution that would help minorities and majorities to understand, accept and respect each other.

In this project design I tried to answer my main thesis questions: How can an architect help Muslim religious commonality connect in the larger United States Context? How do religious cultural buildings preserve and integrate an Islamic cultural Identity in the general cultural context of the United States? In addition, how do public spaces located in urban fabrics serve the integration process of Islamic culture with the surrounding cultural norms in order to be identified and well accepted by the community?

In order to answer these questions I tried to find a solution for identity preservation in a common interest between Muslims and non-Muslims. Due to my interest and fascination by art I realized that the beauty of art would engage everybody and help the Islamic cultural minority and its surrounding cultural majority understand, accept and respect each other. Islamic art and calligraphy reveals the beauty of its culture.

In the design process I tried to express different shapes of the Islamic culture, architecture and art. Because the Islamic experience is based on a sensorial experience that is derived from its spirituality I decided to abstract its main concepts to reach its essence that is easily understood, accepted and enjoyed by Muslims and non-Muslims. At the end of the exploration process my inspiration was derived by a verse from the holy Quran saying "Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp, the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. Allah guides to His light whom He wills. And Allah presents examples for the people, and Allah is Knowing of all things." This inspiration led to my main design manifesto "The Deep Breathing of light."

This project design is inspired by the Islamic architecture that dematerialize the building masses to reveal a hidden spiritual reality. It also seeks the embodiment of the invisible reality by staying in a narrow ridge between physical and metaphysical forms. It also absorbs and reflects light to transform a flat static surface into a vibrant and luminous screen that seems to glow from within. Islamic architecture also symbolizes the concept of universe perfection and the infinity of the divine through patterns, materials and their own properties. It also provides an axis to the truth relying on its sensorial experience.

It is the architecture of veil that celebrates the beauty of interior spaces. All the previous concepts were provided in an abstracted form as part of the project design in order to fit in its cultural context. The contrast that was created through the light and shadow in different interior and exterior spaces stimulates the senses of the building visitors. It also helps them in being aware of the surrounding spaces that are experienced differently. The design was an attempt of creating a vibrant building out of static masses.

The investigation process of the design manifesto in this project inspired me to keep on exploring the powerful deep breathing of light. In the future I will continue on learning more about how a sensorial experience could be created through the inhale of light and the exhale of shadow. This is just the first step of a passion of learning more about all of the above. But, it is also the start to inspire, transform and unify the built environment through the lens of Islamic Architecture.