





**DOMINICA KUSMIERCZYK** 

CHICAGO ALLEYWAYS, ARCHITECTURAL CURIOSITY, EXPERIENTIAL LANDSCAPE, VISIBILITY AND INTERACTION

Thank you Myefski Architects for a transformative year.

## Unseen

"not seen or noticed" "not foreseen or predicated"

#### "not seen or noticed"

not seen because hidden not seen because avoided not seen because unpleasant

unnoticed because uninterested unnoticed because irrelevant unnoticed because thoughts are elsewhere

#### "not foreseen or predicated"

unforeseen because it's unusual unforeseen because it's random unforeseen because it's new

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Unseen Urban Spaces

# unseen spaces

We've established a tendency to hide the elements of architecture that are typically the most crucial in helping things function. Covered by drywall and paint are essential pipes, studs, water infrastructure, etc. But if it's out of sight... it's out of mind.

### What would happen if we decided to expose these elements in our buildings instead?

Would we visit these spaces less because they're unpleasant to look at or, conversely, would we grow more appreciative of these critical architectural elements now that they are in our line of sight?



# The overarching goal of this study is to investigate urban spaces and to highlight important urban

Urban unseen spaces can be defined as spaces within a city that are excluded from people's everyday routines and practice, and therefore tend to be forgotten. Their lack of action and life tends to associate them with a threatening reputation and cyclically makes them even less appealing and populated.

There is an important distinction between unseen spaces and unused spaces that must be considered when reading this book. Unused spaces have no present function or use, whether they are institutionalized or socially developed and therefore are unnoticed. Unseen spaces, on the other hand, serve a relevant function to the urban setting, yet are regarded as empty because they are typically unoccupied and avoided by most people. These spaces include alleyways, tunnels, underpasses, railways, waterfronts, etc.

However, spaces that have a relevant and important function to the success of a city should not go unnoticed. Recognizing these spaces and highlighting their role in the city will help urban dwellers get a better understanding of their surroundings and what makes their urban lifestyle feasible. To better understand the environment, I explored some unseen spaces, specifically Chicago alleyways, and took note of both my own feelings and experiences, as well as observing others' actions and reactions. Often when explaining my prompt, I was warned to be careful when entering these spaces. This was an expected response. However, when personally experiencing the alleyways, I cannot definitively say that I ever felt unsafe. Instead, I would identify my experience as feeling unwelcome. I felt as though I did not belong there.

Here are some observations from my field work studies:

People who work in the neighboring buildings often occupied alleyways during their smoke break. I noticed that occasionally people used them as a shortcut (the frequency of this happening depended on the appearance and location of the alleyway). They of course were riddled with trash bins and service trucks, often with very unpleasant smells. Finally, in a few rare instances I noticed unique activities, i.e. someone filming an audition in the depths of an alley in order to avoid disturbance. All these activities within the alleyways are valid and should be celebrated.

# a multi-functional approach to underutilized spaces that are typically overlooked.

"This invisibility makes it seem like there's an established, singular way to design infrastructure, and that there's no need to rethink these technologies." <sup>1</sup>

By pretending as if these spaces don't exist, we often disregard the idea of improving them, or better yet, we don't notice them enough to recognize their need for improvement. Even without any physical barriers stopping us, we tend to accept social standards of avoiding certain locations that seem to have back-of-house function.

Architectural design can be used as a tool to break this social barrier that has been established around unseen urban spaces, and instead foster an appreciation for their complexity. Inviting people into a newly renovated, social space is the simple task. The challenge lies in getting people to appreciate the trash bins and service function that make these spaces so important. The dilemma however, is whether it is appropriate to introduce novelty to a space that has typically been a space of isolation. Understandably, appealing landscapes tend to attract intrigued people. We flock towards things that look nice or make us curious. Therefore it is unlikely that spaces such as alleyways, tunnels, underpasses, etc. attract an enthusiastic crowd. For this reason, these spaces are often unpopulated and occasionally people use them to hideaway from the chaos of the urban scene, isolate themselves from potential social interaction and even test their courage of entering a dangerous space.

The aim of this project, however, is not to eliminate these opportunities and sentiments from people. The goal is to maintain the program of these unseen spaces as they are crucial to the functionality of a city, yet introduce an intriguing design that will entice people to enter these spaces and be among these realities. It is inevitable that the atmosphere of a space will change once a new design is introduced. The space can no longer produce the exact effect it once did. However, it is possible to approach the task with a multifaceted and modular mindset to showcase the various opportunities that unseen spaces offer.

Statement

### What happens to....

The sentiment of being somewhere you're not supposed to be...

The feeling of isolation when tucking away from a busy street...

The people that take a quiet smoke break...

The deliberate avoidance of social interaction...

The secret shortcut you think no one knows about...

The adrenaline from being in a liminal space...

The dangerous reputation...

The trash bins...

The service trucks...

"In the middle of the third largest city in the states, tucked away amidst nine odd million other people, surrounded on all sides by the products of human labor, you are alone. What an isolation! You run the risk here of slipping into oblivion."<sup>2</sup>

Fig. 2 . Joseph Taylor Alleyway Art, Oil Painting

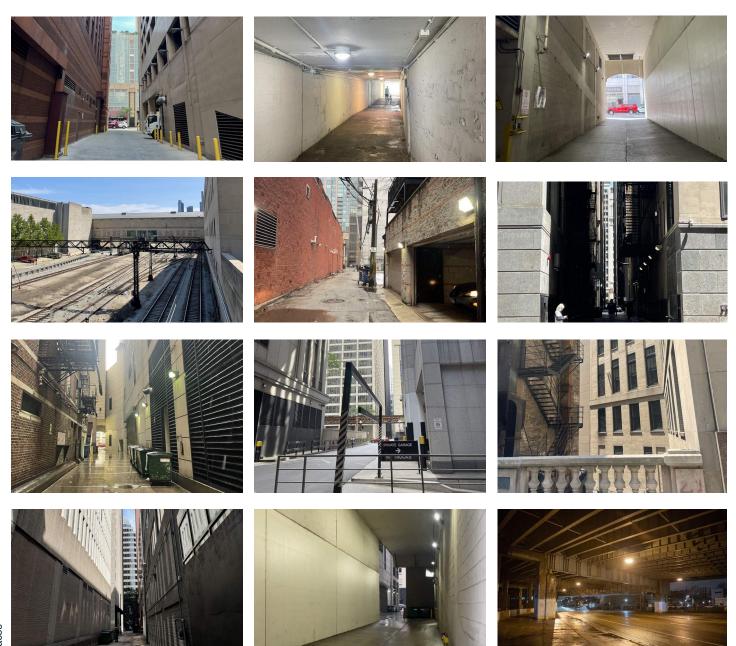
Spaces

Statement

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HUMBER

### **Unseen Urban Spaces:**



Alleyways, tunnels, underpasses; personal photography

### **Urban Intervention in Previously Unseen Spaces:**



The Bentway, Toronto 3



The Underline Caulfield to Dandenong, Melbourne <sup>3</sup>



Interwoven Installation, New York Clty 4



Carlo Ratti Associati Urban Intervention; Prishtina, Kosovo 7



Fly the Flyover, Hong Kong <sup>3</sup>



Crossroads Project, Milwaukee 3



Empty Pavilion, Detroit 5



City Thread; Chattanooga ,Tennessee 8



Craiglinn Underpass, Scotland 3



Burnside Skatepark; Portland, Oregon 3

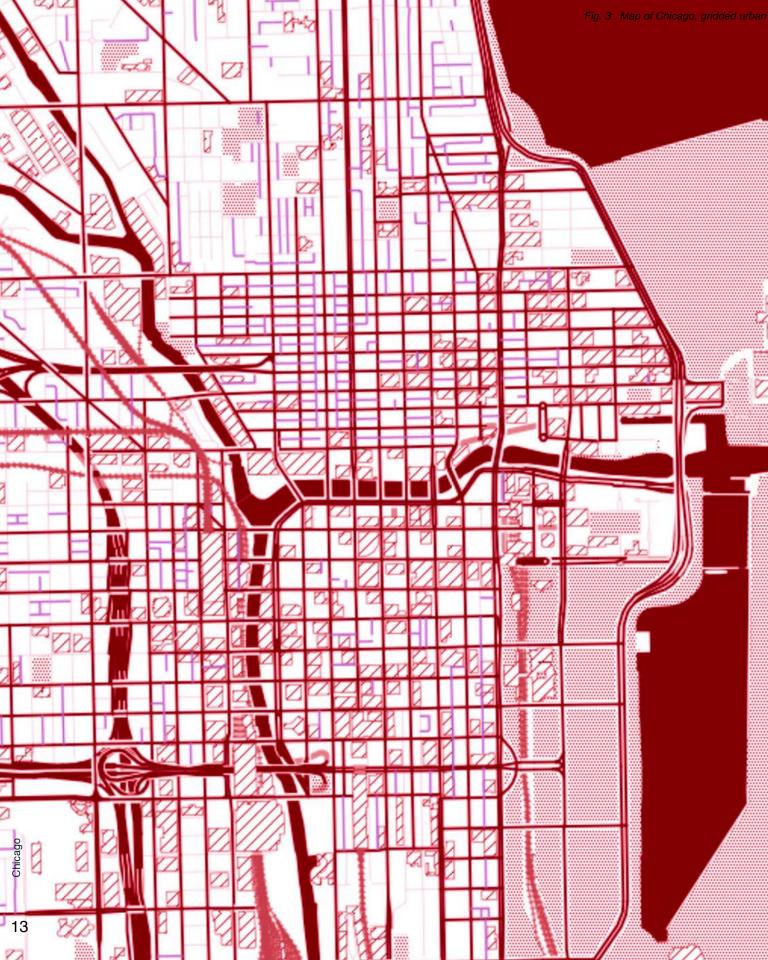


Superkilen Park, Copenhagen 6



Temporary Seesaw installation, New York City<sup>9</sup>

Chicago



### THE CHICAGO ALLEYWAY

"Chicago exhibits the closest approximation of a single perfect grid." <sup>10</sup>

James Thompson, deemed father of the Chicago Grid, is the man responsible for the success of Chicago's urban planning and 0.9 rating on the Euclidean scale. The gridded urban layout enabled Chicago to be one of the fastest-growing city's in the country as new buildings and lots could be quickly drawn in with few irregular adjustments.<sup>11</sup> This gridded system also makes the implementation of a successful alleyway network more feasible and pedestrian navigability more comprehensive.

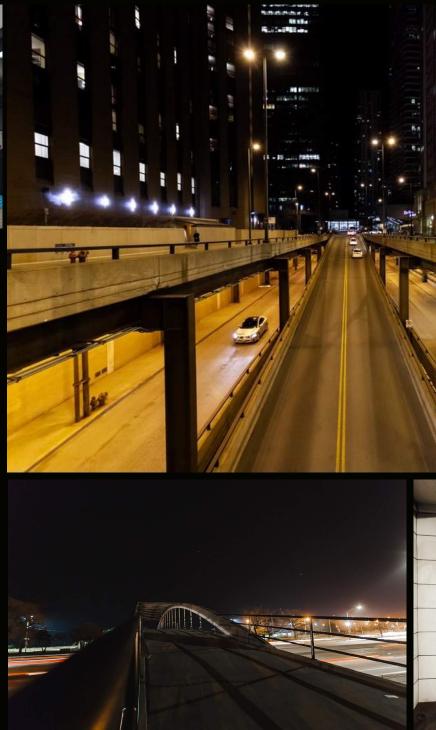
Chicago is know to have one of the most extensive alleyway systems in the country, with just shy of 2,000 miles worth. Beyond following New York City's orthogonal grid, Chicago's town plat included 18 foot wide alleyway in each of the city's 58 blocks.12 Although this caused a decrease in available real-estate, it proved to be revolutionary to the overall atmosphere of the city. Contrary to New York City, and other alley-less cities, Chicago avoids the problem of having sidewalks crowded with trash and streets populated with large service trucks. The city's cleanliness and disease-free reputation is largely accredited to these unseen spaces. The alleyways have been viewed as the "arteries" of the city, connecting everything to the main streets.13 This nickname emphasizes the importance of these narrow passages to the survival and beauty of the city. "While alleyways aren't particularly glamorous, Chicago functions as well as it does because of them."14 This sentiment inspired me to investigate the possibility of maintaining alleyway functionality, while building appreciation for them by making them more appealing, and thus more noticeable.

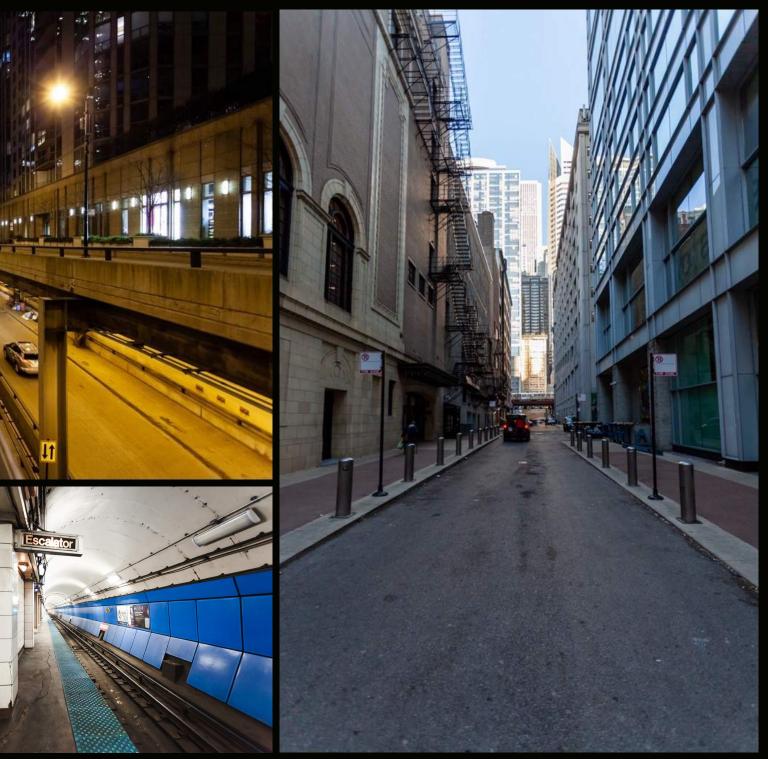
### CHICAGO'S UNSEEN SPACES

Photography by Chicago Resident Miles Macklin









### **SUCCESSFUL CHICAGO URBAN INTERVENTIONS**

Chicago has an abundance of urban interventions that populate sidewalks, plazas and parks for people to enjoy as they explore the city. Whether it's as minimal as placing a boulder on grass that looks sittable or a stretch of outdoor games for people to stumble upon and spontaneously enjoy, the city effectively introduces the potential for play and rest into people's daily routines.



Fig. 5. A few rocks in a plaza become a place for people to rest and gather

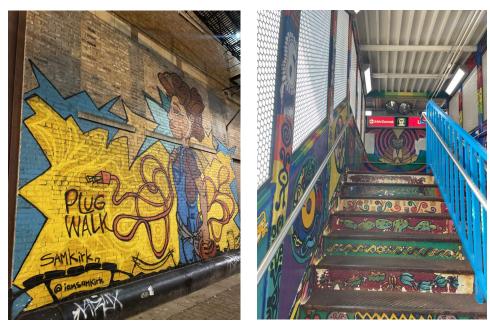


Fig. 5. The use of art and graffiti, although not physically interactive, is a way to catch the attention of pedestrians, pull people into a space and slow down their pace so they can observe the surroundings

Chicago



Fig. 6. Urban Intervention of Riverwalk elevates the riverfront and offers many activities, seating areas and retail spaces for shops and resturants



Fig. 7. Rainbow Rail Art Installation, 5,000 LED lights under Chicago's "L" rail way change the experience of this "unseen" space.

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Experiential Landscape

"The order of a city is composed of movement and change, the dynamic behavior of activity and human behavior but also, I might argue, the dynamic appearance of urban landscape" <sup>15</sup>

**Thwaites and Simkins** 

"Not to a simple-minded precision dance with everyone kicking up at the same time, twirling in unison and bowing off en masse, but to an intricate ballet in which the individual dancers and ensembles all have distinctive parts which miraculously reinforce each other and compose an orderly whole." <sup>16</sup>

**Jane Jacobs** 

### **EXPERIENTIAL LANDSCAPE & PLACE IDENTITY**

Alleyways serve a crucial role in the functionality of a city, therefore they cannot be categorized as unused or empty spaces, as empty spaces typically are deemed momentarily useless. It may be more accurate to identify them as "non-places" that are in need of placemaking and revitalization. By Jekaterina Lavrinec's analysis, "non-places" are defined as transitional spaces that are simply used for crossing and not for domesticating.<sup>17</sup> Non-places lack the ability to motivate action or interaction and therefore, are rarely filled with life. The act of place-making, that would turn public non-places into populated civic spaces, considers tools such a bodily experience, shared emotional experiences and temporal community participation and communication in order to engage passerby attention.18

Kevin Twaites and Ian Simkins study the way that people experience the outdoor spaces that they encounter in their everyday lives. Designing an experiential landscape is a process of intricately analyzing the human relationship with physical space and applying it to the spatial and psychological experience of a particular landscape. Their study addresses methods for designing spaces that could ultimately change or enhance the place identity or place attachment of the urban scene for urban dwellers.<sup>19</sup>

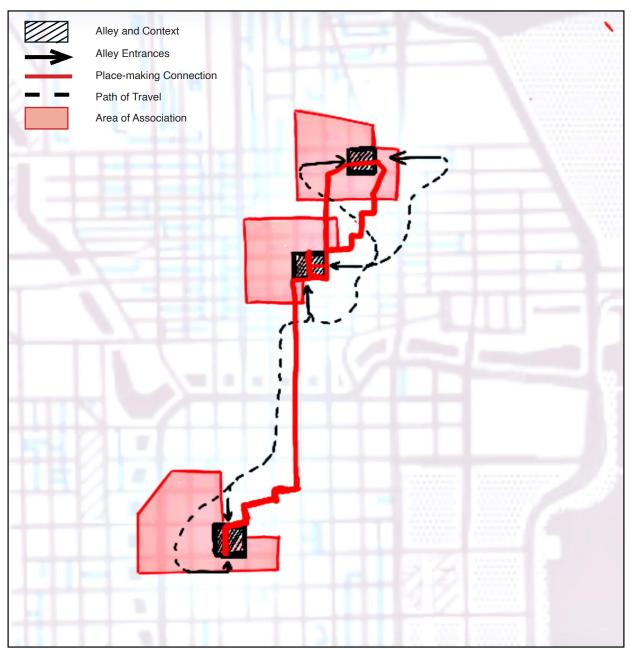
People become attached to places that are able to satisfy specific motivational needs and desires and that are distinguishable by their design, sound, smell and/or memorable sensations. Familiarity among architecture spaces is also an effective tool in building place identity. When people come across recognizable spaces, that evoke positive memories, they instantly become more comfortable and confident entering and occupying the space. Familiarity or comfort with a particular space is also developed through routine use. The repetition of the alleyway structure throughout the urban scene addresses this familiarity. Although each design is unique and independent, they work together to establish a rhythm through the city. As Thwaites and Simkins report, "occurrences of place attachment may be more intense where centers are made up of small centers of different levels of scale acting together to define the larger whole". <sup>20</sup>

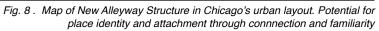
Although alleyways are always present around us, we do not often get attached to them because they do not play a significant role in our daily routines (unless of course your job revolves around alleyways). By revitalizing alleyways with a design that distinguishes it from the general background of everyday life, there is an opportunity for it to become a foreground in routine life and therefore make it's way into people's place identity.

To design an experiential landscape is to engage the interest and attention of passerby. A space that offers a diversity of activities, encouragement to explore and multiple choice of routes is one that becomes more memorable. When we have to pause for a moment to make a distinctive choice and think about what will come next, our minds are momentarily captivated by our surroundings and therefore have a higher chance of truly remembering the experience. Beyond the choice of where to go next, the choice of what to do in the space remains a potential question as well.

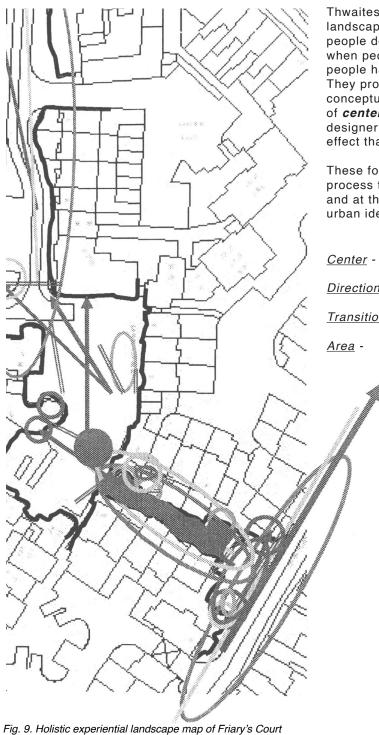
Are you interested in engaging in spontaneous social interaction? Are you in need of a hidden, private moment, withdrawn from urban chaos? Are you simply walking through to make it on time to work?

Introducing a balance of all options within a space helps to encourage pedestrians to acknowledge their surroundings and follow personal preference.





### **CENTER, DIRECTION, TRANSITION, AREA**



Thwaites and Simkins define the concept of an experiential landscape through a series of fundamental occurrences: when people develop a sense of orientation because of the space, when people attach a significance to the space, or when people have an overall sense of identity for that space.<sup>21</sup> They propose that these fundamental experiences can be conceptualized through the spatial (or social) manipulation of *center, direction, transition, and area.* The way that a designer interprets these four components is based on the effect that they want their design to have on its users.

These four components can be used during the design process to both understand the space as a standalone entity and at the same time be part of a collection that defines an urban identity.

<u>Center</u> -	Experience of location and proximity
<u>Direction</u> -	Awareness of continuity and future possibility
<u>Transition</u> -	Feel a sense of change occurring
<u>Area</u> -	Sense of environmental coordination that can give a sense of being somewhere as opposed to somewhere else. <sup>22</sup>

The center (or centers) acts as a potential destination point for pedestrians. It is a space where you feel a sense of hereness, restoration, and general understanding of your location, direction, and surroundings. Typically, centers are defined as the "enclosure" of a space. For now, we will simply interpret the term "enclosure" through an experiential lens and not necessarily defined as an "interior" space.

There is a sense of direction defined by the linearity of the design and an understanding of "there-ness". The path that stretches from one end to the other for those that simply want to walk through the alleyway and continue with their daily commute. A path that splits gives the opportunity for new direction and possibilities.

Transitions are ephemeral and felt momentarily as you move through space. When a path deviates from itself, dips behind a wall, opens up and becomes a social space the pedestrian becomes aware of a potential directional or experiential transition and can choose to accept or ignore it.

Finally, we must consider area. This becomes the most interpretative and abstract design feature because it is inherently created when the previous three components become integrated. The uniqueness of a space, or personal associations with a space, will automatically provide a sense of being "somewhere". Furthermore, the pattern and/or rhythm will help trigger the sentiment of being "somewhere familiar" as you move through the city and discover the next alleyway. Therefore, the effect produced by the first three design components will help create a distinguishable, yet recognizable, area that could potentially become a part of Chicago's urban identity.

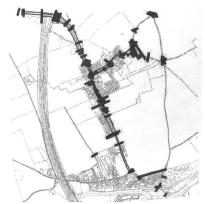


Fig. 10. Mapping Analysis of Transitions

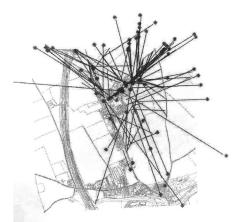


Fig. 11. Mapping Analysis of Direction, sensory and kinetic direction

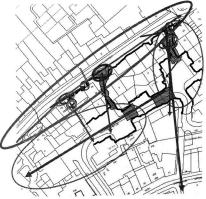


Fig. 12. Holistic Experiential Landscape map of The Piggeries

### **HUMAN INTERACTION THROUGH**



Flash Mob in Plaza



Big Street Chess



During the pandemic, humanity experienced

a loss in the spontaneity of human stranger

public spaces in urban settings promote the

interaction. As we attempt to rebuild that social comfort and enthusiasm, it is important that

kind of interaction and activity that will increase shared experiences. Creating an identity for a

non-place means relying on people's actions and

participation that will reinterpret the use of the public space and encourage alternative behaviors

within them. Lavrinec outlines two methods for accomplishing this: 1) disturbing typical routine and behavior, and revealing the potential that a space has for revitalization, and 2) attracting

passersby by reinterpreting and reorganizing

spatial structures.<sup>23</sup> Oftentimes we see this

There are so many opportunities that have

emerged around us in the urban context that promote spontaneous interactions with strangers.

or at least dealienation. Street performances,

of synchronizing strangers all help build this connectedness and thus, the identity of a place.

public art, urban games and other creative ways

actions and playful interventions.

happening through various forms of creative

Friends Ramen - Wall of Wishes



Street Performer Collects Audience



Crowd Gathers around Park Table Chess



Urban Water Fountain Park



Urban Collective Garden



Hubbard Street - Wall of Murals



Dog Owners meeting at Dog Parks

But what if, instead of publications and deliberate solutions for participation we can instead use the method of architectural forms to promote a sense of spontaneity and interaction.

By introducing novelty to an unexpected space, this already begins disturbing typical routine, encouraging new behaviors and manipulating spatial structure. Therefore, architecture can in itself becomes a form of creative public action and performance. Creating a space that invites all forms of walking, sitting and standing inherently supports a multitude of interaction. People can use the space for preplanned gatherings or experience spontaneous interaction through the alleyways flexibility.

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## **SPONTANEOUS URBAN INTERVENTIONS**



Street Festival / Market



"Podcast but Outside"



By using movable/modular/flexible systems, users can create a space that satisfies their

own personal needs. However, a flexible

system that is shared among all users may

availability and ask for permission to claim

certain elements. It also helps to recognize

before us. A group of people may leave their

the life that is happening around us or

spatial configuration for the next person

to find, making it clear that the space was previously occupied. This leaves room for

the next person to be curious and let their

is a weird way to organize the space...I'm

people doing? How big was this group? This

imagination run free. "What were these

inspired to make an cooler space ..... "

encourage some interaction to inquire about



Urban Playground



Christmas Tree Lighting Gathering





Interactive Piano Steps



Outdoor Yoga Class



Ice Cream Man on Bike

Although there was no physical interaction between these two groups of people, it can still classify as a human exchange between strangers and can spark the social enthusiasm that we are continuing to rebuild. This act of transforming a space into whatever you may want it to be is also a form of urban acupuncture that hopes to engage the community and encourage creative participation.

Putting such a structure in an alleyway that would subconsciously (but also consciously if using interactive, reconfigurable components) remind people of life and show signs of togetherness can instantly transform it from a non-place into a space of shared experience.

Design Approach

# PARASITIC ARCHITECTURE



Fig. 13. Dresden's Military History Museum / Studio Libeskind. The new extension to the historic building cuts through the symmetry of building as a way to showcase the juxtaposition of tradition and innovation.

Parasitic architecture is an effective design tool in turning peoples' heads towards spaces that typically go unnoticed. It is the relationship between an existing building and a new addition that can serve as an extension, adaptive reuse, superstructure, installation, or even distraction. Just as a parasite is a small-scale organism that attacks its host, a parasitic work of architecture is a free-living structure that clings to a host and helps to diversify it, prompt response/reaction or, conversely, chip away at it. <sup>24</sup>

One form of parasitic architecture can be distinguished as a modern structure filling the space around historic architecture. This method clearly communicates the attempt to preserve historic architecture as there is a very obvious juxtaposition between the two and therefore displays the intention of avoiding the intrusion/destruction of the existing building. Parasitic architecture with two modern structures can be distinguished by the "parasite" structure evidently being an addition that responds to the distinct form of the existing architecture. As with a historical host, the parasite very recognizably juxtaposes the existing building through style, color, material, etc. even though it follows the shape and external form of its host building. It can ultimately help to expand the host spatially but it rarely interferes with the host's program and function.

This is an effective method when dealing with unseen urban spaces as the goal is to preserve the primary function of the space, avoid destruction of surroundings buildings, populate a space that is often unused, and grab the attention of a pedestrian.

# Urban acupuncture can be interpreted as a form of <u>parasitic architecture</u> and has been used as a means of improving city life and urban environments.

Acupuncture is a Chinese medical practice of inserting sharp thin needles into the skin to relieve pain and tensions. Similarly urban acupuncture is defined as small-scale urban interventions that are intended to relieve stress in the urban environment and produce a holistically greater impact on the urban context.<sup>25</sup>

The practice focuses on a bottom-up approach with an emphasis on community involvement and revitalization. It is a way to reclaim public land and give citizens the opportunity to participate in the planning process of urban development, which can help boost community morale and give people the power to choose how they use their city space. <sup>26</sup>

This urban design approach can be considered parasitic architecture as these interventions become "parasites" to the existing context. They claim a host and intervene with their own program and purpose, while maintaining and respecting the existing layers and memory of the host. Often times these interventions stand out from their surrounding context as a way to showcase the community-led projects.



Fig. 14. The Betsy-Carlton Hotel, Shulman + Assiocates; Bridge design between historic building and new extension



Fig. 15. Carl Ratti Associait, Urban Interventions: A community space, "urban living room", designed in an unused space of a factory to highlight the intention of reactivating abandoned land.

**Behavior Analysis** 

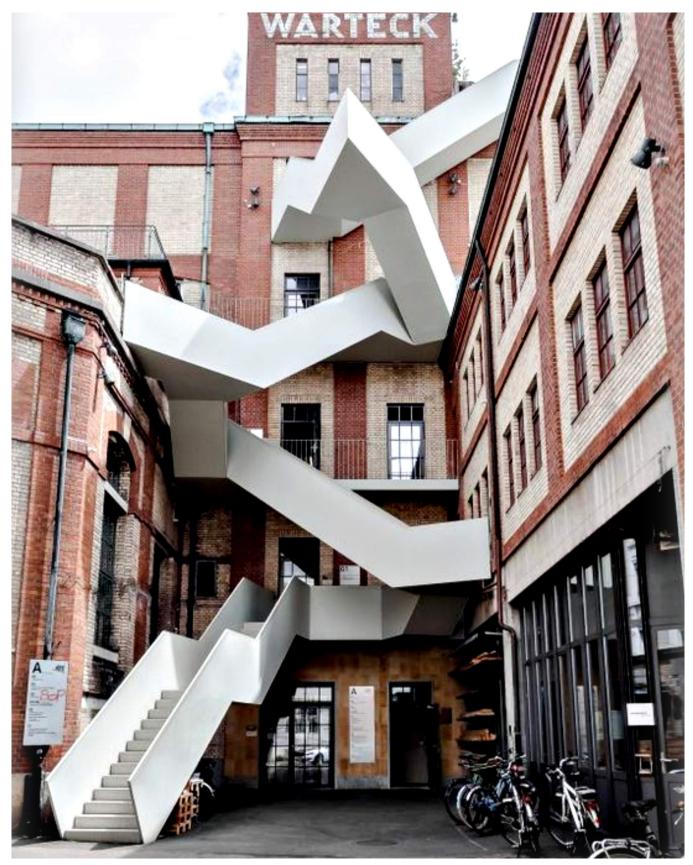


Fig. 16. Werkraum Warteck Stairs, Nichele and Eisele: Parasitic Design



Fig. 17. RedBall Project, Kurt Perschke: Inflated red ball squeezed into the cracks/gaps of urban spaces















































Design Approach



Sometimes choosing the correct color could be just what a work of architecture needs in order to grasp pedestrian attention. With the goal of turning people's heads towards a space that is typically unnoticed, it is important to choose a color that is not often found in urban settings. Chicago's urban landscape can be generally categorized as having gray or neutral tones (especially in the colorless winter months). Therefore a hint of unexpected, vibrant red will undeniably draw people closer. The color red is associated with a variety of emotional triggers, provoking the strongest and most contrasting emotions of all the colors, from love and passion, to power, danger and anger. Studies show that it stimulates excitement and causes energy levels to spike, ultimately resulting in an increase in stamina and leaves one feeling more motivated.27 Red also gives the perception that it appears to be closer than it actually is. It's long wavelength means that it is one of the most visible colors on the color spectrum, thus making it more noticeable and approachable. 28

Red

# **BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS**

When working on re-purposing a space that was previously ignored by a typical pedestrian, it is important to consider all the possible reactions that the new design can provoke. Empty alleyways do not offer many restrictions to what can occur within them, therefore filling their emptiness with prescribed activities and a specific program that limits a pedestrian's possibility may come as a shock. Therefore in this case it is important to be meticulous about every specific action that this space will witness: **walking, sitting, standing, interacting.** Analyzing and predicting these behaviors is a useful tool when considering the spatial organization of the project.

#### WALKING BEHAVIOR

Besides serving as back-of-house spaces, alleyways are often used as shortcuts to get to another street or as paths people take as part of their commutes. Therefore, it is important to consider how to create unobstructed circulation that would harbor spaces for rest and play. This also depends on what kind of effect each alleyway hopes to create on both the space and the users. Regardless of what the intended program of the particular alleyway is, the goal is for these spaces to be as inviting to anyone moving through the city as possible, whether on foot or bike, with a stroller or dog, etc. Therefore the space needs to be organized in a way that portrays flexible boundaries and access points, encouraging people to pop in and out without signs of intimidating commitment.

> A central and linear path of circulation is beneficial in maintaining the efficiency of moving from one place to the next, pushing the gathering spaces to the edges as a potential option. This way the user can tuck away to the side for a moment of rest while maintain view of the central walkway.

Linear circulation pushed to both edges of the alley centralizes the interaction space, calling more attention to it. This approach makes the alleyway more inviting to stay and rest as there is more focus on the act of gathering and activity.

A combination of both instances creates a dynamic path that then naturally forms pockets of space for people to rest. This is a successful approach if the goal is to promote a slower pace, as people are forced to walk a longer distance, with their destination out of sight, and more possibility to spontaneously interact with the surrounding activity. This approach also makes it easy to seamlessly create pods of various sizes and distinct activities by simple manipulations of the circulation path. Smooth transitions between public and private spaces is also important in helping people make spontaneous decisions for how they want to experience the space. A path that encourages people to walk slower is a way of helping people to take in their surroundings and process meaningful information around them.<sup>29</sup> This could inform a better decision about how one wants to utilize the space.



Central and Linear Circulation, Pushing Interaction to Both Edges



Linear Edge Circulation, One Large Central Interaction Space



Dynamic Circulation Creates Pods of Interaction of Various Sizes

#### SITTING BEHAVIOR

"PEOPLE TEND TO SIT MOST WHERE THERE ARE PLACES TO SIT" 30 ~ William H. Whyte









#### A space that offers a variety of seating options is more successful for inviting a wide range of people looking to satisfy different needs. Establishing primary and secondary seating can help introduce this diversity. <sup>31</sup>

A popular form of seating in urban settings is that which produces an edge effect. When seating is located at the edge of a space, the sitters backs are protected and their view of the space is unobstructed, elevating their comfort and security.<sup>32</sup>

Another effective form of seating is niche, intriguing spaces that offer privacy and security.<sup>33</sup> This can be done by populating tight spaces, corners, nooks, etc that people can intimately occupy.

Flexible and modular seating allows the user to have more jurisdiction over their space. Multi-purpose furniture, that can be a seat, table, or bench at different instances, gives the opportunity and inspiration for all users to stay.

### STANDING BEHAVIOR



Providing people with the opportunity to stand without obstructing the walking path is another successful method of inviting as many people in as possible. When considering spatial organization it is important to understand the distinction between standing and staying. Oftentimes an abundance of seating informs a more long-term stay and can hinder people who simply want to accomplish a quick, standing activity (i.e. phone call or a quick conversation). Creating pockets of space where people can quickly deviate from the main walking path without getting in other's way is a means of promoting temporary rest. It is also helpful to include a variety of sizes for the standing zones to encourage private and public standing gatherings.

Curiosity

Red

Fig. 19. Various forms of standing and walking

### NOSTALGIA

nostos : "return home", algos : "longing"

#### "A SENTIMENTAL LONGING OR WISTFUL AFFECTION FOR THE PAST, TYPICALLY FOR A PERIOD OR PLACE WITH HAPPY PERSONAL ASSOCIATIONS" - WESTER DICTIONARY

Long believed to be a psychiatric disorder, nostalgia is now used as a means of celebrating one's memories and battling anxiety and depression. In the past, this sentiment was considered a soldier's malady, a mental illness, that revealed signs of weakness in troops as they yearn for the past and for their return home. It was coined in a Swiss medical student's dissertation in 1688 and soon had doctors prescribing false medication to people with symptoms of this curable sickness.<sup>34</sup> When no prescriptions were showing signs of relieving nostalgic symptoms, it was eventually deemed to be an incurable disease. In the late 20th century however, an academic called Constantine Sedikides, began to approach nostalgia with an optimistic lens. He experienced these emotions when memories of his past became very prevalent in his day to day life after moving to a new location. However, he explained that these emotions helped him:

#### "MAKE SENSE OF HIS JOURNEY" & "FEEL OPTIMISTIC ABOUT HIS FUTURE" <sup>35</sup>

Since then, nostalgia is often associated with a positive reflection of past memories. Constantine Sedikides and Tim Wildschut conducted a variety of controlled experiments to test the benefits of nostalgia. The results of these experiments clearly indicate that any form of being mindfully nostalgic, whether it was to remember a nostalgic event, listen

> Elevates Mood Boosts Self-Esteem Increases sense of Social Connectedness Motivational Consequences

to a nostalgic song, think about childhood, etc. would elicit more positive emotions and reactions than that of the control group that was instructed to do the same activity, yet with ordinary memories. Their various studies, along with many other throughout the years, have revealed nostalgia's advantages.<sup>36</sup>

Increases Meaning in Life Increases Creativity and Productivity Facilitates Approach-Oriented Behavior Facilitates Productive Self-Reflection

Reminiscing about their own past can help an individual become excited and motivated about the future. It is a tool that people use to navigate through uncertainty and ultimately find the motivation needed to move forward and pursue their important life goals. This mental exercise typically results in restorative thoughts and augmented meaning in life.<sup>37</sup>

Since nostalgic emotions have a positive effect on people's psyche and mental health, it could be beneficial to create spaces where people can experience nostalgia as they go about their daily lives. A quick moment of reflection, comforting reminiscing or playful activity can set the day up for much greater success. Take for example, a businessman or a designer or an engineer who are on their way to work. Their attention is captured by a colorful structure and their eagerness to explore gets the best of them. They enter the space and are transported to their playful pasts where they are encouraged to discover new spaces and play with their surroundings. They walk through, and maybe even engage with, a space of colors and possibilities of fun, encountering other people who may be doing the same.



Fig. 21.





How 'Stranger Things' is fueling an obsession with the 1980s–and why this nostalgia is unique

As they exit the space, they continue their typical commute to work, but now are filled with a more creative and productive mentality as their mind and emotions just became stimulated. An addition like this to a workers daily commute can change people's energies as they begin their workday. Beyond helping people feel more creative and inspired, nostalgia also helps with feeling socially connected which generates more confidence, energy and open-mindedness among people. Fig. 22.



Fig. 23.



These benefits can have a productive effect on anyone's day, whether going to work to seal the next big deal, or simply taking a walk to get some fresh air. A boost of creativity, inspiration and meaningfulness will undeniably enhance a person's life. Nostalgia has even become a trend within media, fashion, art, forms of representation, film, etc. Architecture, too, can be become a tool used to instill these positive reactions among people.

20. TV Series "Stranger Things" has a strong emphasis on nostalgic aesthetics to appeal to particular viewers

21. Art that can universally remind people of their past, collective nostalgia

22. Playful architecture that has childlike features can bring nostalgic reactions

23. Fashion Trends along with other media has increasingly been using nostalgia as inspiration

Nostalgia

Curiosity

Red

### **CURIOSITY**

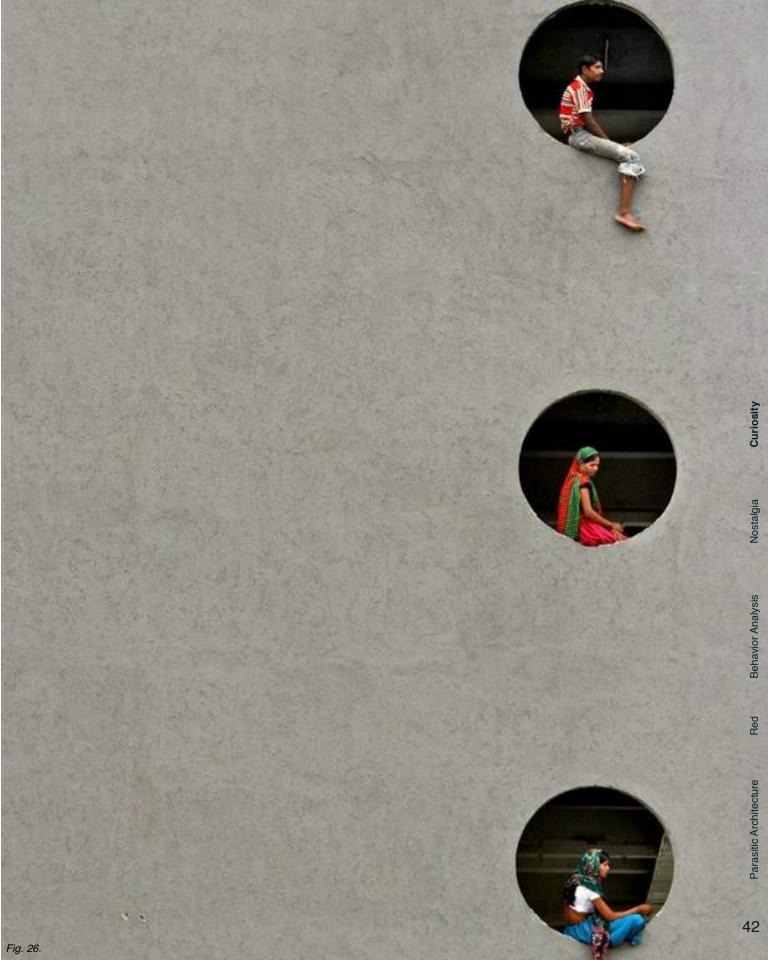
Nostalgic reactions are complex and multi-faceted, and therefore can be triggered by many various components, some collective and some personal. Given that every individual fosters their own unique memories throughout their life, it would be difficult to acknowledge nostalgia holistically in the realm of design. Therefore, in this study, I narrow down my nostalgic focus to just one quality: <u>Curiosity</u>

Curiosity is an emotion that motivates exploration. The fearlessness of exploration is often seen in children who are excited to learn more about their surroundings and who have the energy and desire to discover. Over time, as we grow older and the realities of our working lifestyles overwhelm us, we often forget about that side of ourselves. When a design catches a user's eye and pulls them in to explore and discover, there is the potential that this child-like curiosity will resurface. The eagerness to explore, to turn a corner, to follow a shadow could trigger a playfulness that could then generate nostalgic reactions.

Humans are inherently a curious species. Whether seen in our technological advancements, our continuous push for exploration of the unknown or virtually anything that has been catalyzing societal progression, it is clear that following our intrigue is a natural human tendency. However, addressing our curiosities does not always need to result in profound answers. Can de-institutionalized, unprogrammized architectural forms be a way to spark people's curiosity solely for the purpose of feeling adventurous and exploring a space?







### **ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN APPROACH**

In a space where we are typically used to seeing nothing but back-of-house elements or even nothing at all, anything novel can be enough to spark curiosity. Through the course of this project, a variety of architectural forms were explored to identify what elements best represent and evoke the emotion. Working with light and casting shadows of unseen forms from various angles is an interesting conjecture in already dark, unnoticed spaces. Gradually revealing openings as well as creating openings that reveal elements from beyond the space motivates people to explore what is behind a wall. Long walkways with an intriguing destination helps to pull people through a space. A path with deviations that provides multiple options into unseen spaces helps people consciously make decisions about where their curiosity takes them. All these subtle manipulations to an otherwise simple space serve to pull people into previously unpopulated spaces and, ultimately, bring out playful and exploratory tendencies.

"Curves and bends which introduce a sense of mystery and anticipation by hiding and then gradually revealing what is ahead engage the imagination and have been found to be preferred by people, particularly when they include points of interest along the way to aid navigation and attract attention." <sup>38</sup>

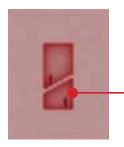


Fig. 27.

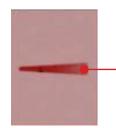
Fig. 28.



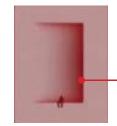
A shadow or glimpse of a staircase from beyond the doorway



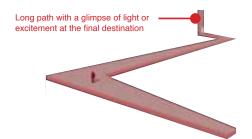
A void in a wall that exposes internal activity or program



A cut in a wall allows the user to have a glimpse of external activities



A wall peels back to reveal an opening into another space / path



Red

#### **ALLEYWAY ONE**

LOCATION: RUSH & WALTON CONTEXT: RETAIL



Alley One is a wide alleyway that functions heavily as a back-of-house space for its neighboring buildings. Large service trucks, dumpsters and overhead roll-up doors occupy this space. The primary function of this new structure is to highlight the important BOH functions for the pedestrians to appreciate while also offering seating for those in need of a break from walking and shopping.

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FoodRetail

Hotels

Parks
Alley

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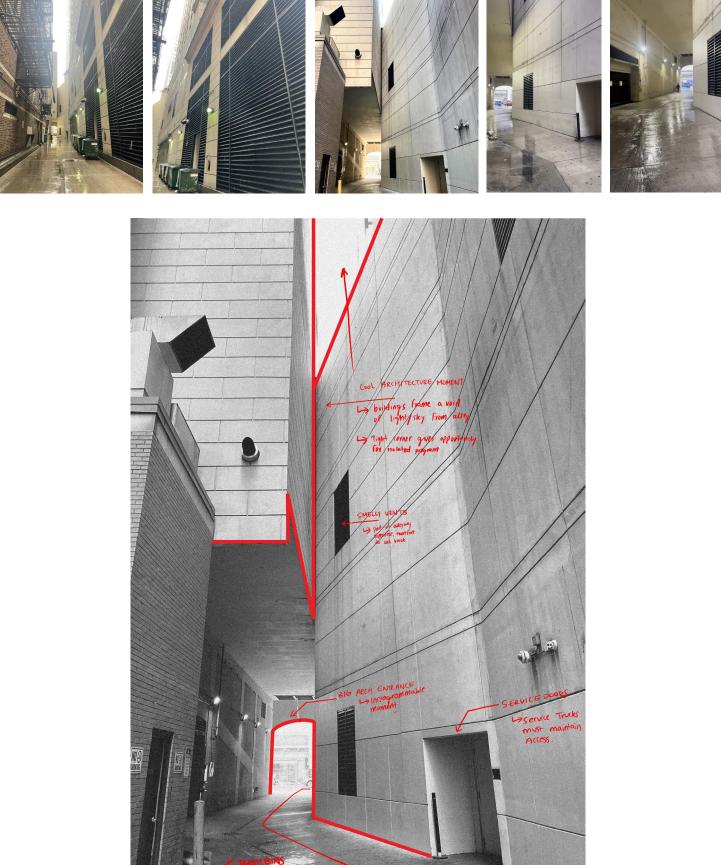
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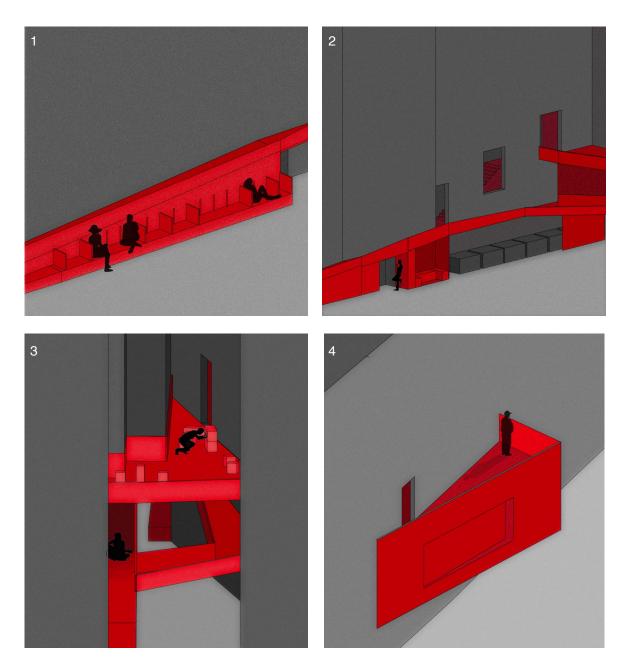
### A NETWORK OF RAMPS, CURIOUS MOMENTS AND DECISIONS



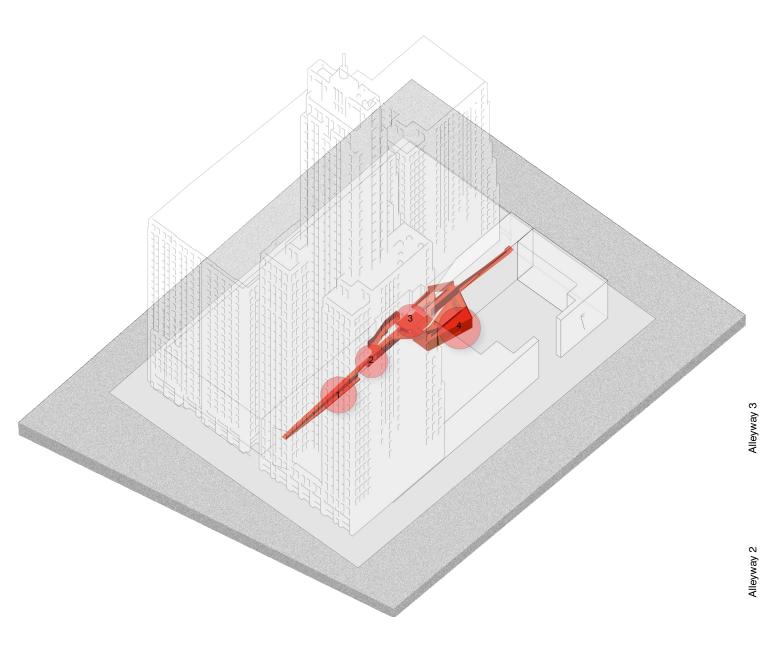




## **ACTIVITIES**



- 1. People slide the dividers to create their desirable seating space
- 2. Person is peacefully leaning against a wall taking their smoke break
- 3. Person is getting ready for a group gathering while someone plays guitar in a dark corner
- 4. Person found the door to get to the terrace and is now people watching from above



# **FLEXIBLE SYSTEM**

making room for service functions

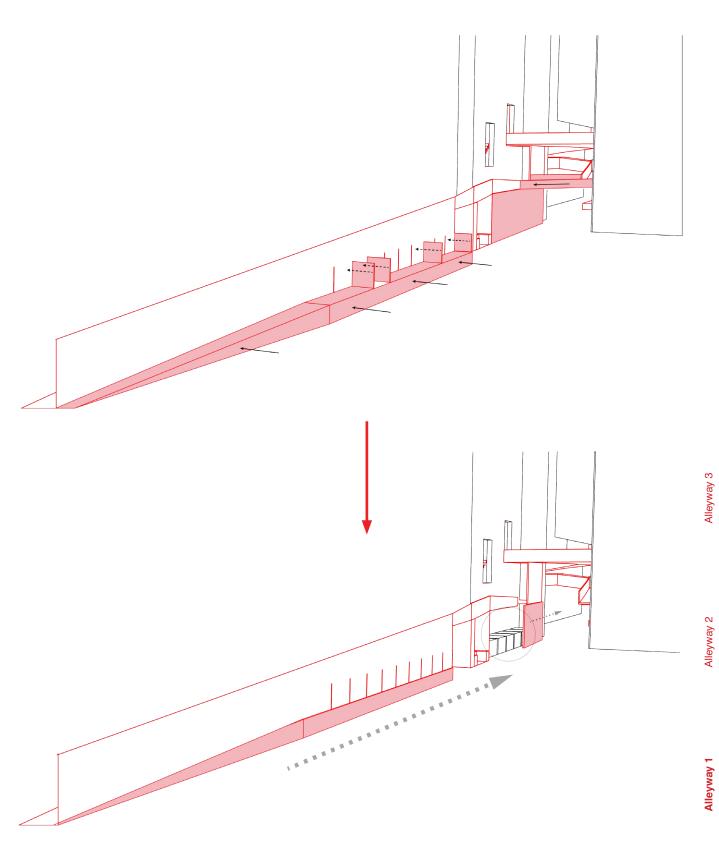
Alley One is primarily occupied by large service trucks, dumpsters and overhead roll-up doors. It is important for the success of the neighboring hotels that this space remains available for their back-of-house use. Therefore, a flexible system that allows for this space to transform whenever necessary to allow for these functions is crucial.

The dumpsters can be compiled into one area and hidden behind a sliding door, allowing them to be easily accessible whenever needed. The sliding door not only hides the trash from pedestrian view but also helps to contain the smell, making the alleyway more enjoyable.

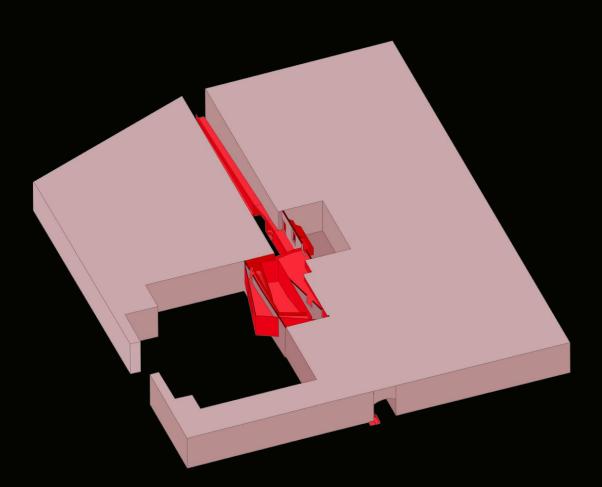
The seating and partitions can easily slide in and out whenever a larger vehicle needs more room to drive through the alleyway.

The structure is designed on one edge of the alleyway, leaving the side of the alleyway that is populated by the overhead doors unobstructed.

The path that crosses to the other side of the alleyway is retractable and can fold/slide out of the way to allow larger trucks to pass through the alley.

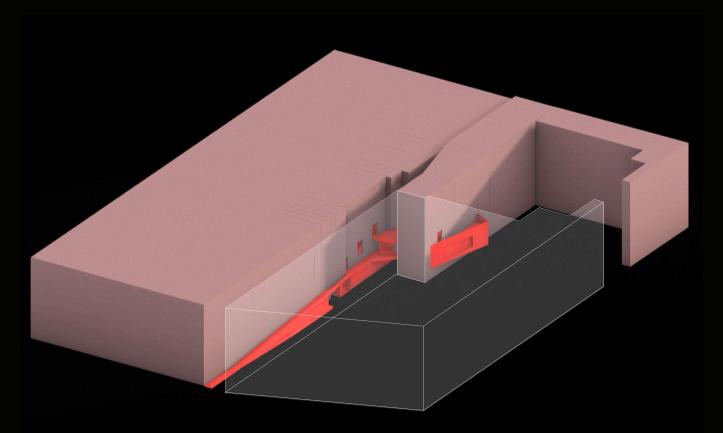


### PARASITIC ARCHITECTURE



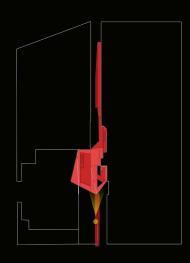
The Section Axonometric reveals the moments where the structure begins to invade its neighboring buildings. There are two moments when the path breaks through the walls and fills the interior of the building as a way to intertwine with its context. Although the path maintains its unique and holistic entity, it is also clearly adjusting to the context of the alleyway and buildings. This shows that the design is a response to its surroundings and is not simply being placed in a space where it appears to not belong.

### PARASITIC ARCHITECTURE



The neighboring buildings of this alley are primarily hotels and retails spaces. Investigating these buildings and speaking with the workers, I learned that a majority of the spaces that share the wall with the alleyway are storage and back of house rooms. Therefore slightly cutting into these spaces can be convincing and reasonable. This would allow an arm of the structure to reach through part of the building and reveal itself on the external side of the building. Peaking into the courtyard of the building as a unique entity, this independent red structure catches people's attention as they walk along the sidewalk. They question what the structure belongs to, where it's coming from, what's inside, etc. and are inspired to explore.

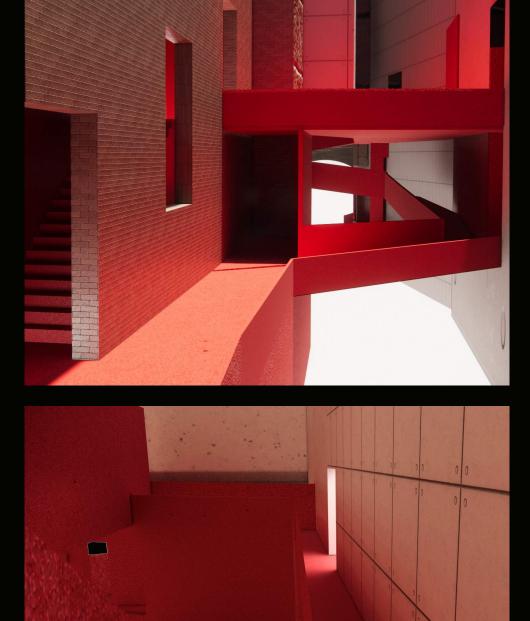
# **CURIOUS MOMENTS**

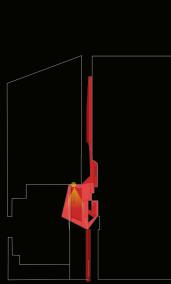


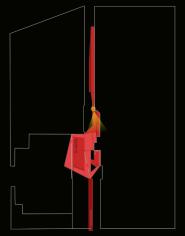






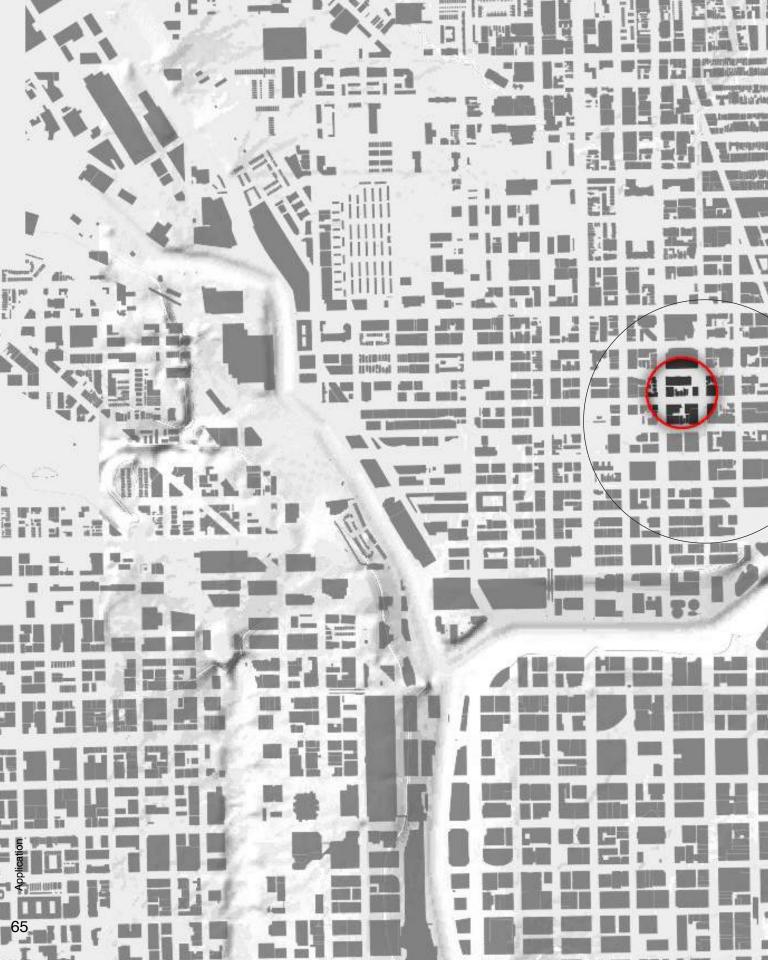






#### **ALLEYWAY TWO**

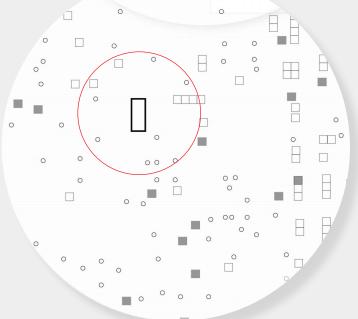
LOCATION: STATE & ERIE CONTEXT: MIXED USE



Alley Two is a very narrow alleyway, 15' wide, that is surrounded by multi-use buildings. It's direct neighboring buildings are a nail salon, a currently empty building, and an apartment complex in the back with balconies overlooking the alleyway. This alleyway holds few dumpsters and service doors, therefore this space is primarily used as an attraction that people spontaneously interact with and can use as a gathering spot or to enjoy fun and creative activities.



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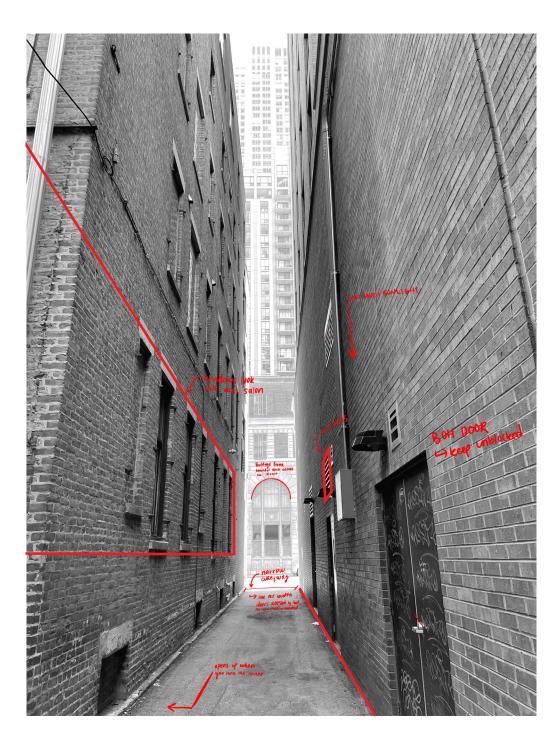
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Alleyway 2

Alleyway 1

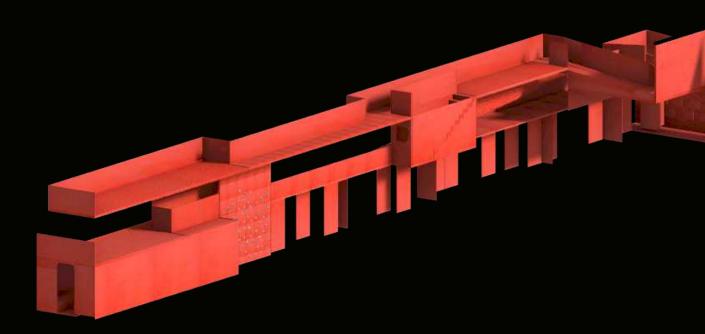


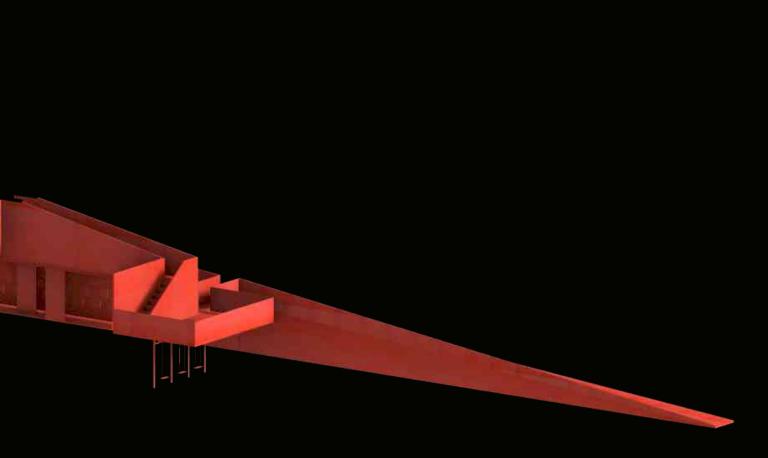


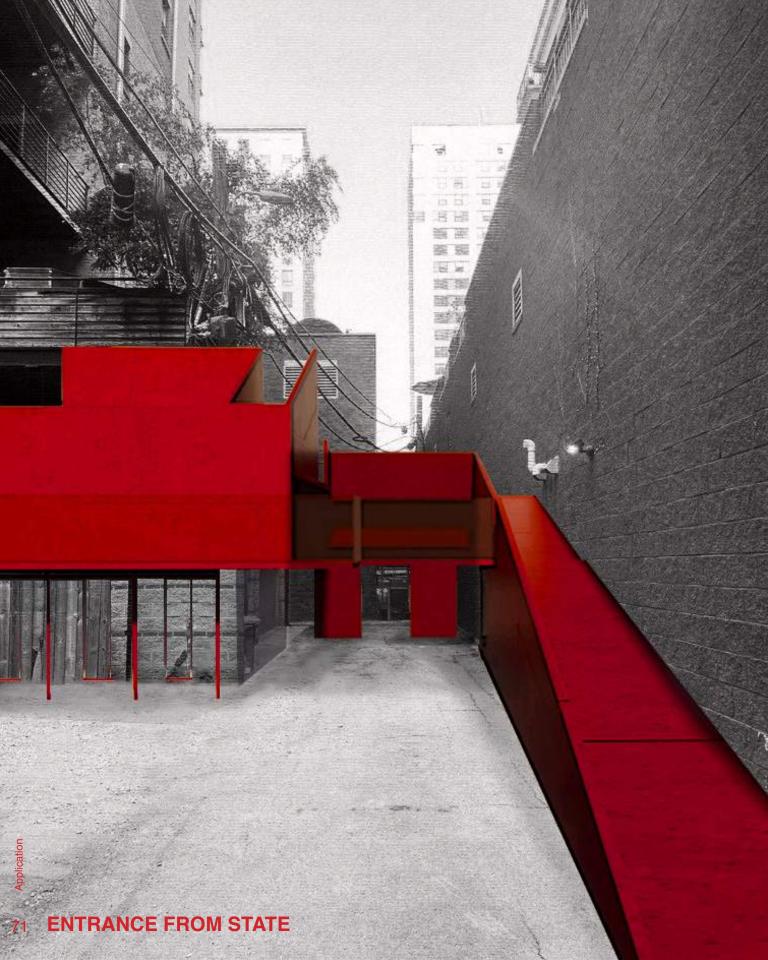


Alleyway 1

A NETWORK OF RAMPS, CURIOUS MOMENTS AND DECISIONS

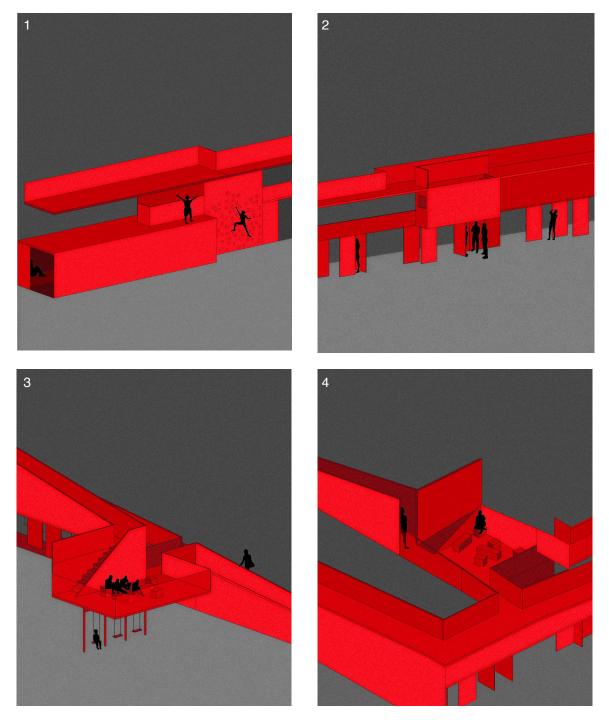




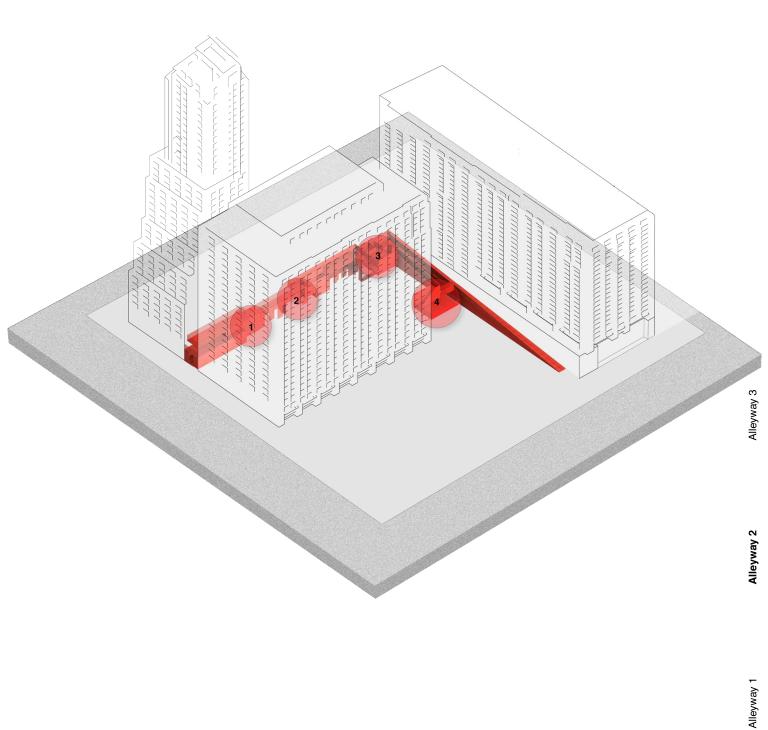




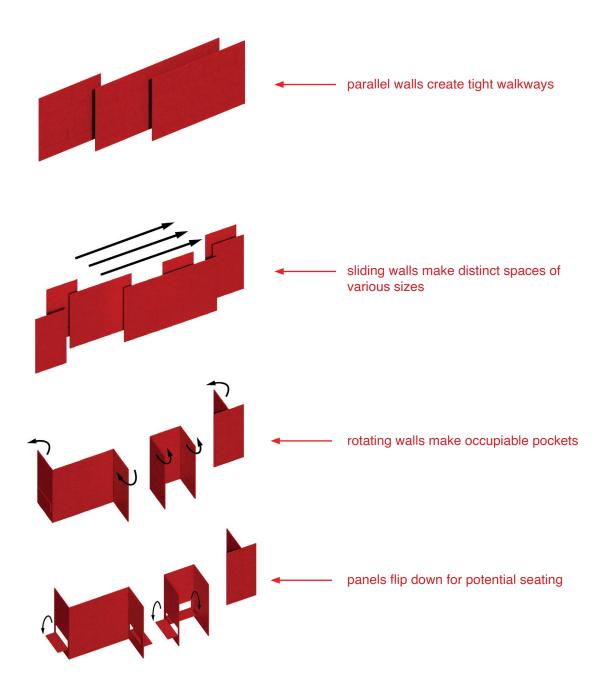
## **ACTIVITIES**



- 1. Two people climb the rock wall to get to the second level while a person quietly reads on the entryway bench.
- 2. People configure their own space using the sliding walls dependent on the size of the group and their desired use.
- 3. A group of friends arranged the cubes, their friend is walking on the ramp to join them, a child is swinging below.
- 4. A person is enjoying a moment alone on a cube, suddenly a person appears from around the corner.



### **MOVABLE WALLS** users have jurisdiction





This movable wall system allows the users to have jurisdiction over their own space. Located in the center of the alleyway, this design pushes circulation to the edges and highlights the central zone of interaction or place of rest.

With a three-rail system, the walls can slide along almost the entire extent of the alleyway. The walls can be aligned side-byside to create larger surfaces, if desirable. This rail system also allows these walls to be rotated, offering more creativity with spacial configuration. As a result, a large group of people can create a meeting spot and simultaneously, an individual can close themselves off in a private nook just a few feet away.

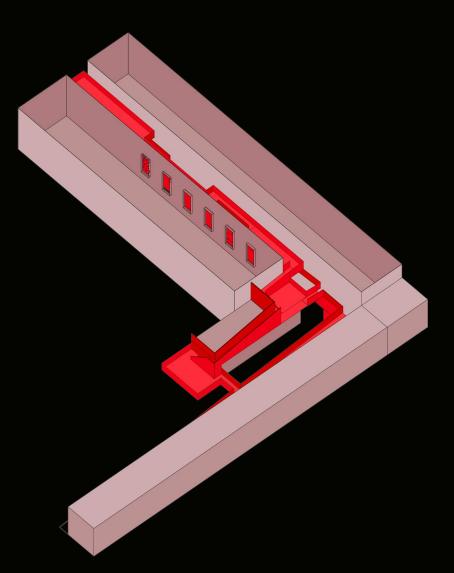
#### PARASITIC ARCHITECTURE



A pedestrian walks along Erie street, they stumble upon an empty lot between buildings that is used primarily for car parking and dumpsters. Against the wall at the back end of this lot is where the red ramp begins. Pedestrians who glance in this direction will get a glimpse of this exciting structure and feel curious to explore more. As they continue walking, they will discover the entrance of the alleyway with a view of the activities and will be enticed to experience the space.

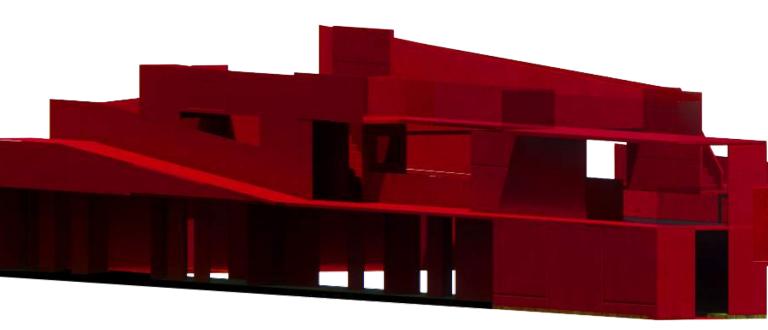
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#### PARASITIC ARCHITECTURE



The Section Axonometric reveals the moments where the structure begins to invade its neighboring buildings. Instead of physically occupying the interior of these buildings, the structure takes advantage of the windows of the salon that look into the alleyway. People inside the salon get a glimpse of the interesting structure and activities occurring on the other side of the wall and are intrigued to explore.

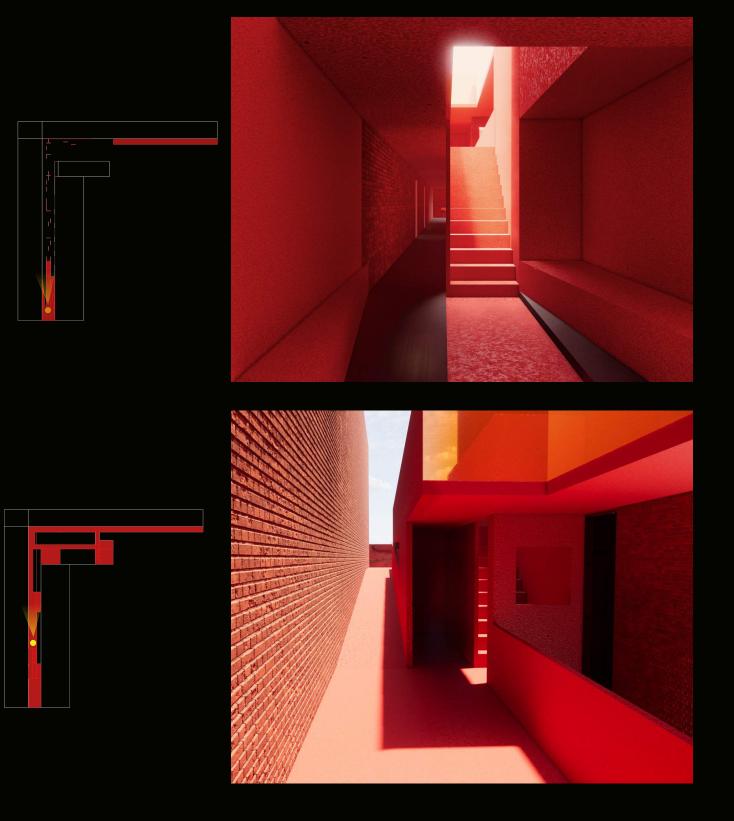
One path of the structure rests on top of the two-car garage to use as both structural support and to create an intertwining effect with its context.



REMOVING CONTEXT BUILDINGS. LOOKING AT THE STRUCTURE AS AN ISOMETRIC CLUSTER OF WALLS. LOOK CLOSELY TO DISCOVER THE GLIMPSES OF HIDING STAIRCASES, THE VOIDS IN THE WALLS THAT GIVE SIGHT TO THE PROGRAM BEYOND, THE DARK OPENINGS THAT MIGHT NOT BE INVITING BUT MAY MAKE YOU

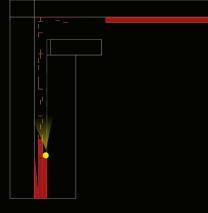
CURIOUS TO SEE WHERE IT LEADS. DOES IT LEAD TO A SPACE WHERE YOU CAN BE ALONE OR TO A BRIGHTER SPACE WITH CHILDREN PLAYING OR AN OPEN SPACE WHERE YOU CAN MAKE IT WHATEVER YOU MAY NEED IT TO BE?

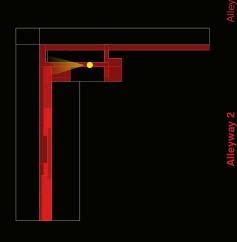
# **CURIOUS MOMENTS**











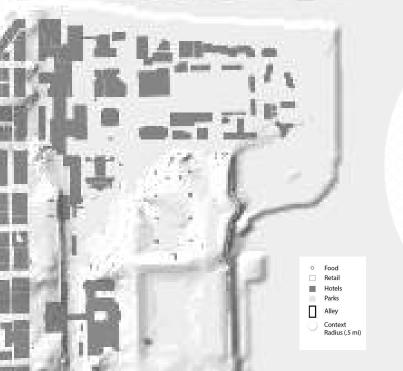
Alleyway

#### **ALLEYWAY THREE**

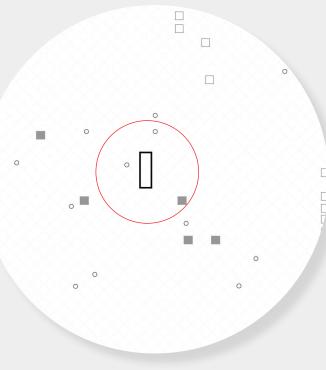
LOCATION: MADISON & ARCADE PL CONTEXT: BUSINESS & COMMERCIAL



Alley Three is a pedestrian alleyway primarily used as a shortcut and by people taking their breaks. It is a narrow alleyway with large exterior columns that create many nooks and opportunities to fill empty space. The design of the new structure focuses on emphasizing this alleyway as a spot for people to enjoy during their lunch break as it is located in the Loop and primarily surrounded by buildings of commercial and business use.

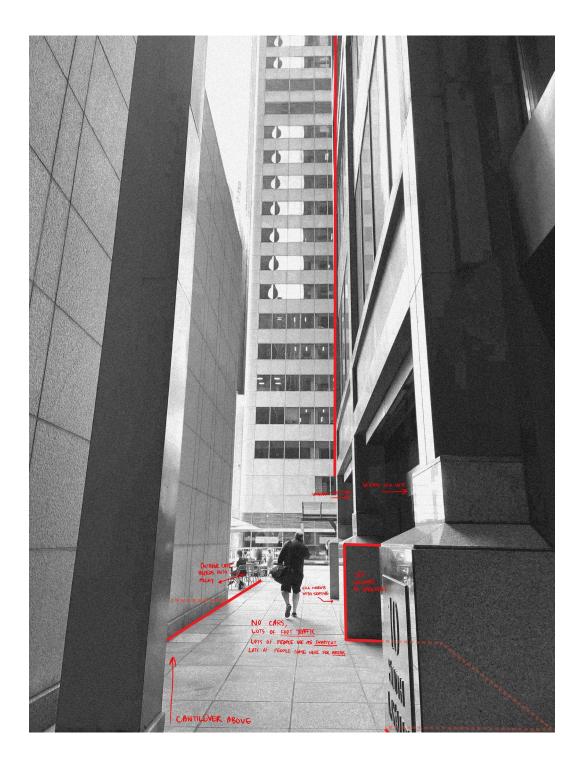


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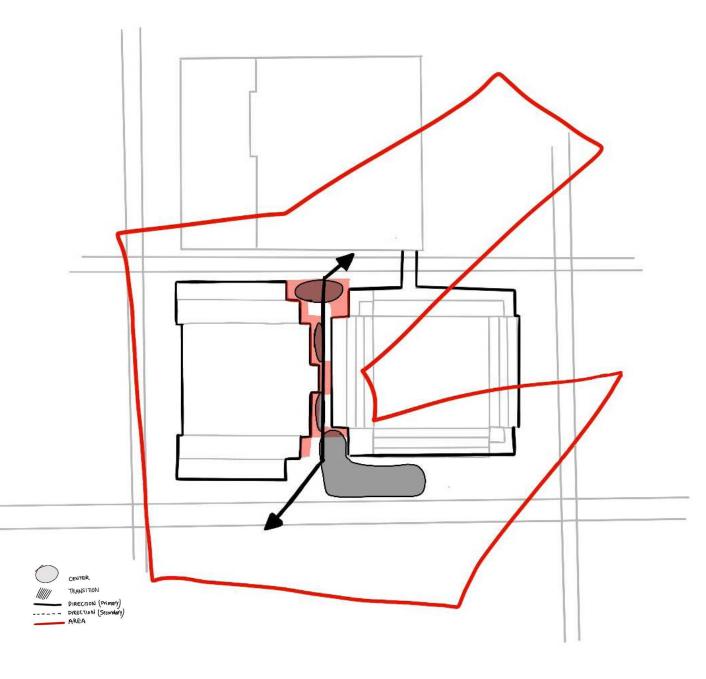


Alleyway 1

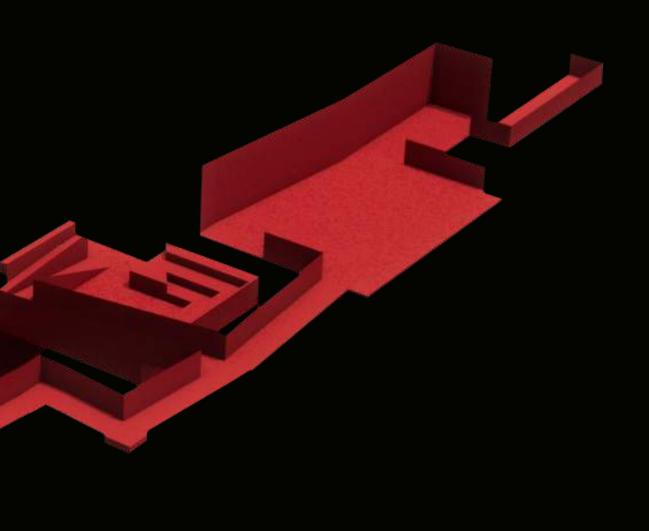








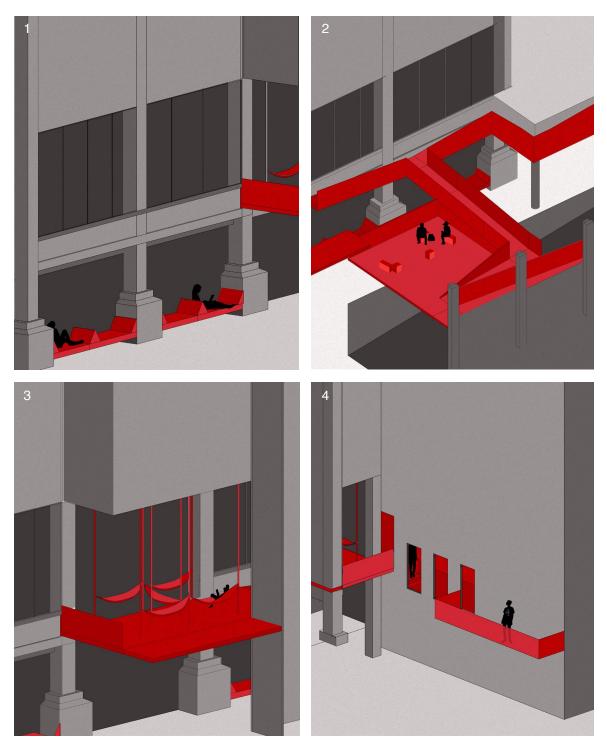
A NETWORK OF RAMPS, CURIOUS MOMENTS AND DECISIONS



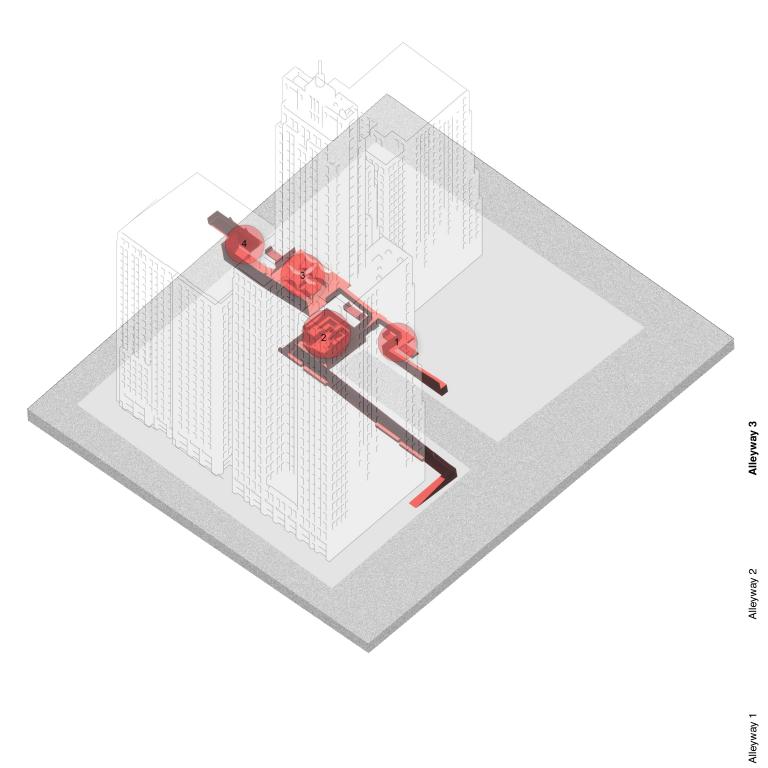




## **ACTIVITIES**

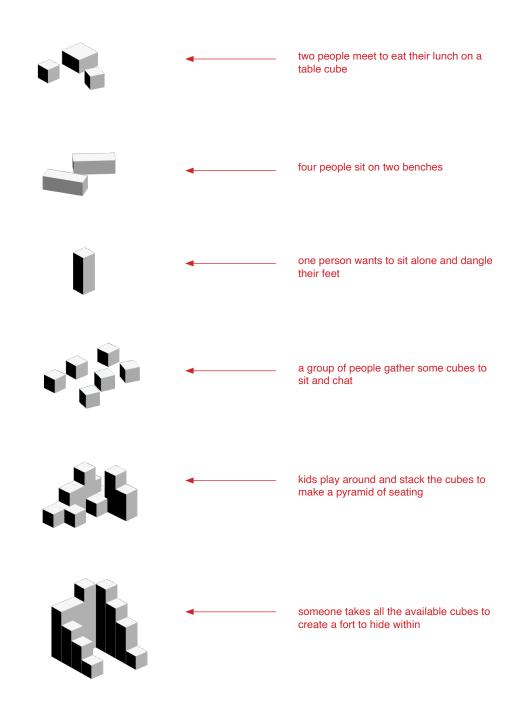


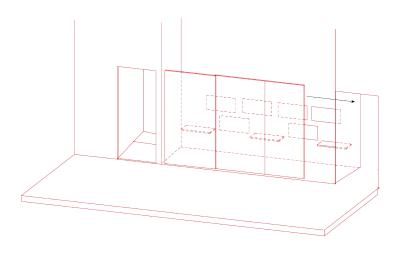
- 1. People hide in the nooks of the columns to enjoy a private, secure moment.
- 2. Two people meet for lunch and find two available cubes.
- 3. Person peacefully reads their book in a hammock during their lunch break.
- 4. Person looks up with jealousy at person in hammocks, while someone inside is discovering the interior space.



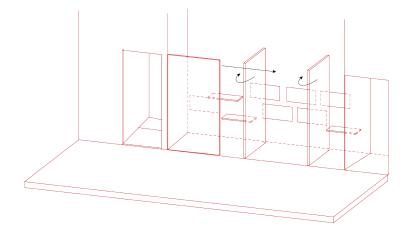


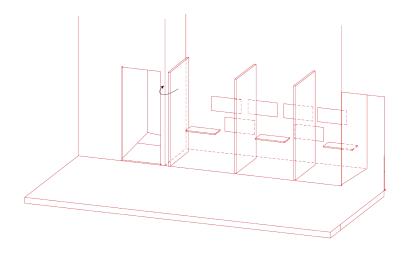
users have jurisdiction





This alleyway uses the movable wall system to provide opportunity for personalized seating. The flat walls can offer a completely covered group space while the rotated walls offer multiple individual cubicles for isolated seating. The panels against the walls can flip down to serve as both benches or tables.



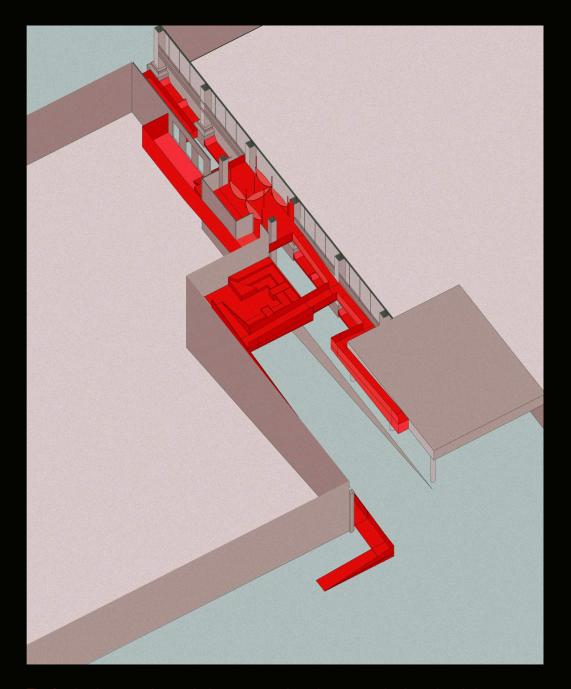


#### PARASITIC ARCHITECTURE



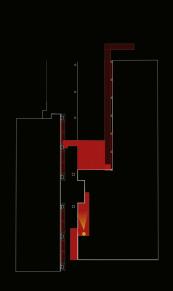
The neighboring building of this alleyway offers patio seating that floods the small plaza in front of the alleyway. This creates an opportunity where the structure can become an extension of this patio seating as it reaches into the space and becomes visible in the plaza and from Madison street. With limited tables and chairs available in the plaza, the customers can curiously wander into the alley and find additional options for seating.

#### PARASITIC ARCHITECTURE



The Section Axonometric reveals the moments where the structure begins to invade its neighboring buildings. One section of the structure crosses into the interior of the neighboring building providing a sheltered space for the users. The structure also benefits from the spaces created by the building's columns. The structure fills these in between spaces with seating and shows that the design is a response to its surroundings and is not simply being placed in a space where it appears to not belong.

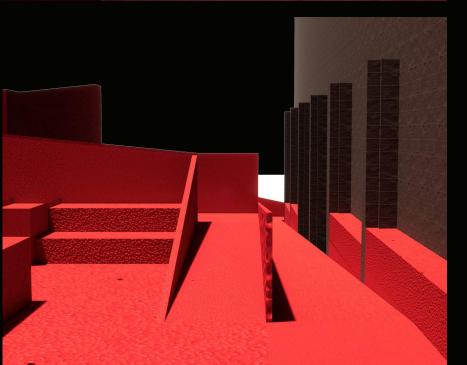
# **CURIOUS MOMENTS**















Nleyway 1

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#### **AFTERTHOUGHTS**

"No single element in a city is, in truth, the kingpin. The mixture is the kingpin, and its mutual support is the order."

**Jane Jacobs** 

"Life in buildings and between buildings seems in nearly all situations to rank as more essential and more relevant than the space and buildings themselves" 40

**Jan Gehl** 

To create an eye-catching design for a previously unnoticed space that passersby will enjoy and marvel at means considering its effect on the community and identifying approaches that minimize the imposition of potentially unwanted change.

Chicago, being an architectural hot spot, has a wide range of architectural styles to offer. However, as you move through a neighborhood, you can generally sense a commonality among your immediate surroundings and therefore can begin to identify an architectural theme for each neighborhood. (More on subjectivity of place perception and identity in Fie Sommer's Fellowship book *"The Cultural Aesthetics of Chicago"*)

A bright-red, distinguishable structure placed in an unprecedented location has the potential to change the local architectural identity and therefore can be dangerous to one's sense of place and comfort. I argue, however, that the physical image or intentional homogeneity of a neighborhood does not define a perception or experience of a space.

If I ask ten people, who all have the same commute to work and experience the same exact surroundings as one another to describe their personal experience I can expect every answer to be different. Every individual has an entirely unique perception of the place they are experiencing; what captures their attention the most; what memories their surroundings trigger; what they hope to achieve in that place at that moment. Even among those same ten people, the answer could change if I ask them the same question the following day.

As architectural designers, it is important to celebrate this uniqueness and to create designs that appreciate the extreme dynamics of urban experience. Of course, there are times where architects have a responsibility for creating spaces that generate a particular emotional or programmatic effect, however, in this case, the purpose of the design is to cater to the reality of flexibility. The alleyway designs allow for loose programs to meet momentary/ temporary desires. The movable walls and cubes encourage users to create a space that best suits them in any given moment. The goal is to foster and facilitate as many experiences as possible; children may discover a new playground, a businessman curiously finds a new route to work, and at the same time a receptionist from a nearby hotel can continue taking a peaceful break, but now within a more enjoyable space.

Although a strong physical presence can alter the image of a neighborhood, these alleyway designs offer enough leniency for an individual's chosen experience to define a unique perception of the space. I seek to celebrate that the diversity of architecture does not always have to be disruptive to an individual's place identity and instead recognize the significance of the power to create a personal architectural identity.



### **TEXT NOTES**

- 1 (The seen and the unseen, 2021)
- 2 (Martin, 2020)
- 3 (Jeffrey, 2022)
- 4 (Silva, 2023)
- 5 (Kreynolds, 2012)
- 6 (Superkilen, 2012)
- 7 (Florian, 2022)
- 8 (Caballero, 2019)
- 9 (Herman, 2020)
- 10 (Mcclelland, 2023)
- 11 (Mcclelland, 2023)
- 12 (Martin, 2020)
- 13 (Martin, 2020)
- 14 (Edwards, 2022)
- 15 (Twaites and Simkins, 2016. 109)
- 16 (Twaites and Simkins, 2016. 109)
- 17 (Lavrinec, 1970. 72)
- 18 (Lavrinec, 1970. 71)
- 19 (Thwaites and Simkins, 2016. 41)
- 20 (Thwaites and Simkins, 2016. 57)
- 21 (Thwaites and Simkins, 2016. 58)
- 22 (Thwaites and Simkins, 2016. 53-74)
- 23 (Lavrinec, 1970. 71)
- 24 (Baros and Katunsky, 2020. 20)
- 25 (Baros and Katunsky, 2020. 22)
- 26 (Baros and Katunsky, 2020. 22)
- 27 (Cherry, 2023)
- 28 (Cherry, 2023)
- 29 (Gehl and Koch, 71)
- 30 (Bodrul Amin, 12)
- 31 (Gehl and Koch, 2011. 161)
- 32 (Gehl and Koch, 2011. 157)
- 33 (Bodrul Amin. 26)
- 34 (Martin, 2020)
- 35 (Look Back in Joy: The Power of Nostalgia, 2014)
- 36 (Sedikides and Wildschut, 2018. 48)
- 37 (Sedikides and Wildschut, 2018. 52)
- 38 (Thwaites and Simkins, 2016. 42)
- 39 (Gehl and Koch, 2011. 29)

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### **IMAGE REFERENCES**

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