

**LIFE
IN- BETWEEN**

ZHENG RUI

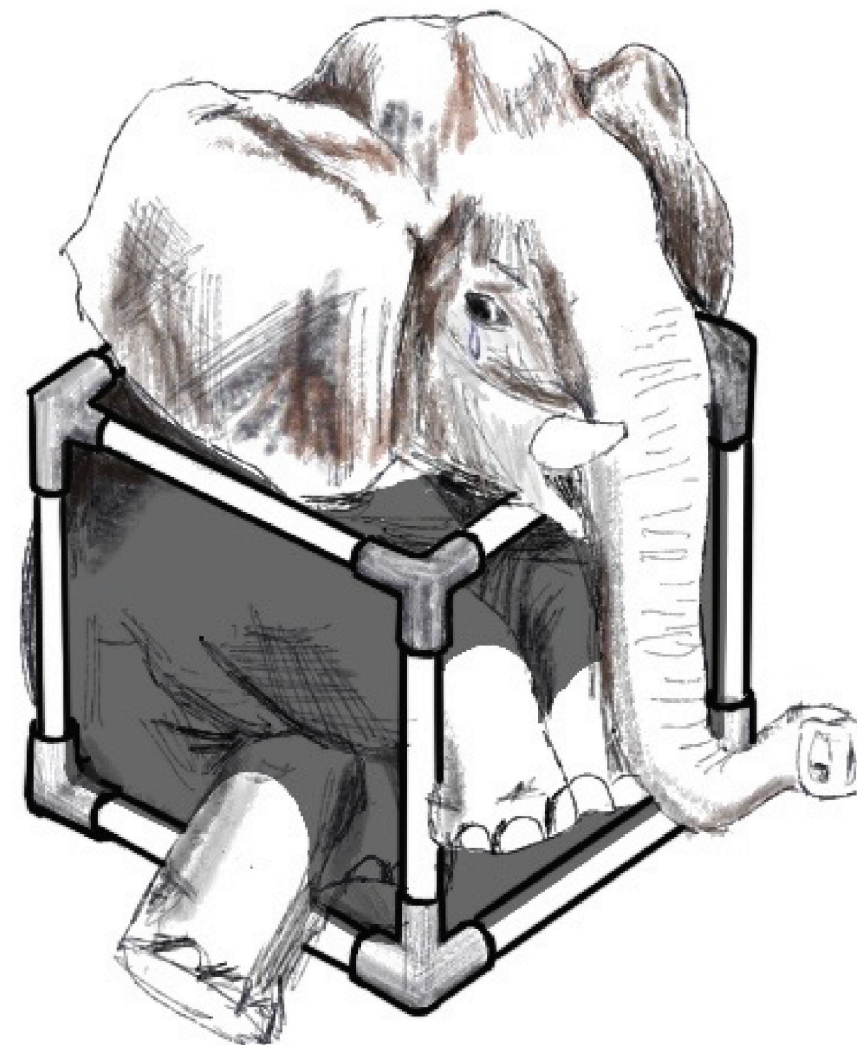
Zheng Rui

**Life
in- between**

2024 Fall

For Domestic Capital

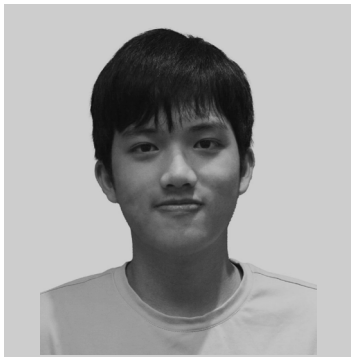
A/Prof Dr Lilian Chee
Lim Kun Yi James
Liyana Ivanova Doneva



Elephant

Put an elephant in the room, how would we choose to put the elephant into the room

The form of architecture influence how people engage with space. Since we can't fully fit into the room, do we choose to sacrifice the residents' life or continuing to maintain the designer's cold, unyielding insistence...



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Abstract

This project examines the states that exist between the virtual and the real, as well as between introversion and extroversion, focusing on spatial transitions experienced by text creators. Using Bras Basah Complex as a base, it discusses the definitions of work and living spaces. My design intervention emphasizes the façade created by the building’s windows and corridors, aiming to disrupt the living and working environments of text creators. By integrating residential units with the podium roof, the design connects public and private areas while activating surrounding living spaces through this in-between zone, thereby promoting interaction among residents. This dynamic also influences the creativity and productivity of text creators. The design strategy addresses the blurred boundaries of work and life in the post-pandemic era, challenges the binary oppositions present in Singapore’s spatial strategies, and proposes new ways of existing in the transitional space between work and life.

Keywords

Liminality, Intervention, In-between, Binary oppositions, Creativity.



Facade of Transformation of 530 Dwellings



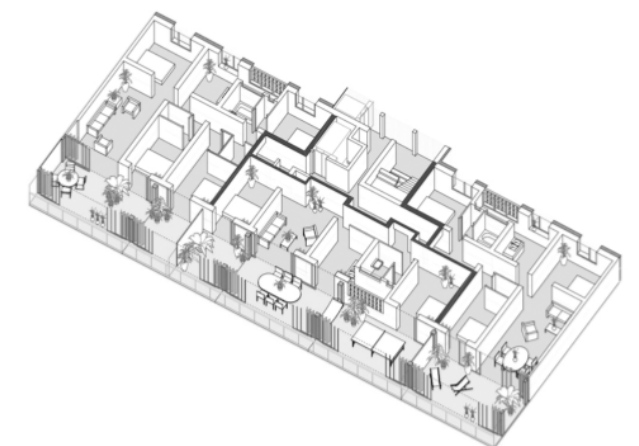
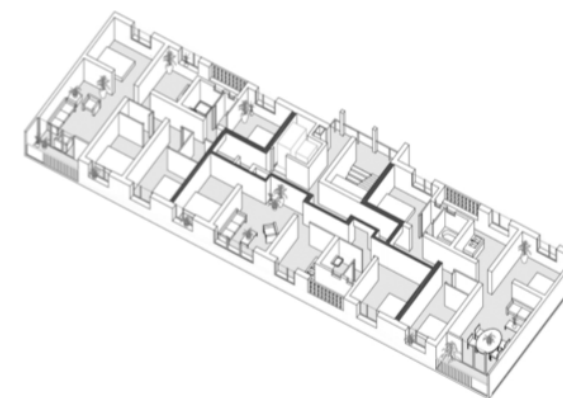
Old Facade of Transformation of 530 Dwellings



Renovated Facade of Transformation of 530 Dwellings



Facade of Taiwan's Street



CASE STUDY

Transformation of 530 Dwellings

Lacaton & Vessel

Facade Thinking / Renovation / Work Life

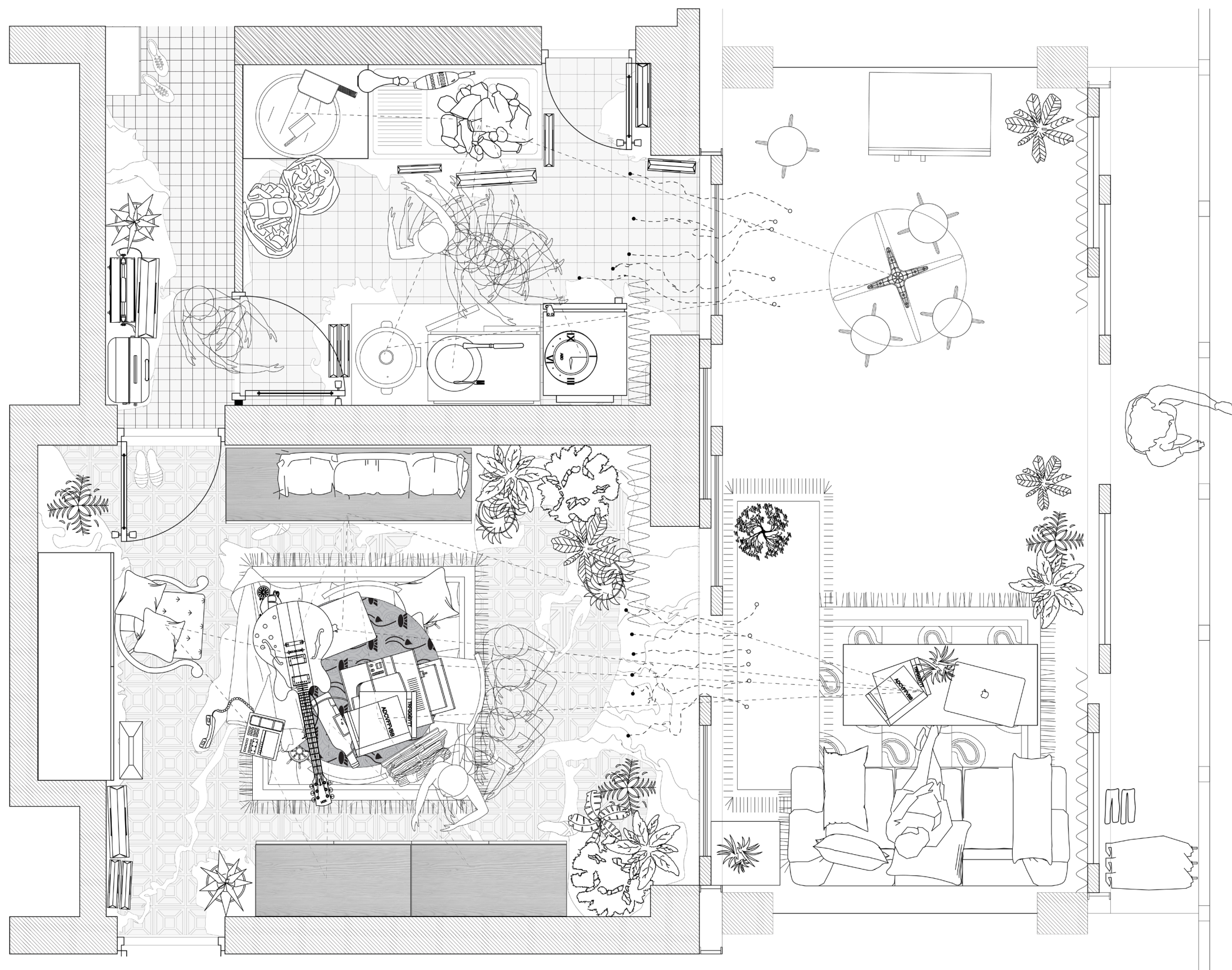
This project emphasizes the significance of preserving existing buildings rather than opting for demolition. While tearing down structures might seem like a quick fix, it is an irreversible action that erases valuable materials, memories, and history. Instead, the project advocates for the transformation and adaptive reuse of existing structures, which proves to be a more economical, ecological, and creative approach. In this instance, three modernist social housing buildings in Bordeaux were renovated, showcasing the potential of revitalizing old structures to serve contemporary needs while honoring their past.

Past

1. Each residential unit is divided into many small rooms.
2. The living quality of each room is very poor
3. Each room only has a small window to access the outdoors.

Present

1. The newly added space connects various small rooms
2. Reduce the number of walls and replace them with curtains to increase freedom.
3. Improve life quality and create outdoor connections



0 20 40 60 80 100 200cm

Plan of Transformation of 530 Dwelling, Redraw by Rui, Zheng

Overlay / In-between

In my initial research, I explored the fusion of old and new spatial elements by combining photographs from different time periods into a single image. This method provided a visual and analytical framework to examine the impact of newly introduced spaces on existing historical environments.

The original spaces were marked by a dense, chaotic layout, where living and working areas were tightly intertwined. This lack of separation created an overwhelming sense of congestion, with people conducting their daily activities in spaces that blurred the boundaries between professional and personal life.

The addition of new architectural elements disrupted this established order, reshaping the perception and functionality of the original areas. Through this transformation, I identified two key outcomes that emerged from this spatial evolution.

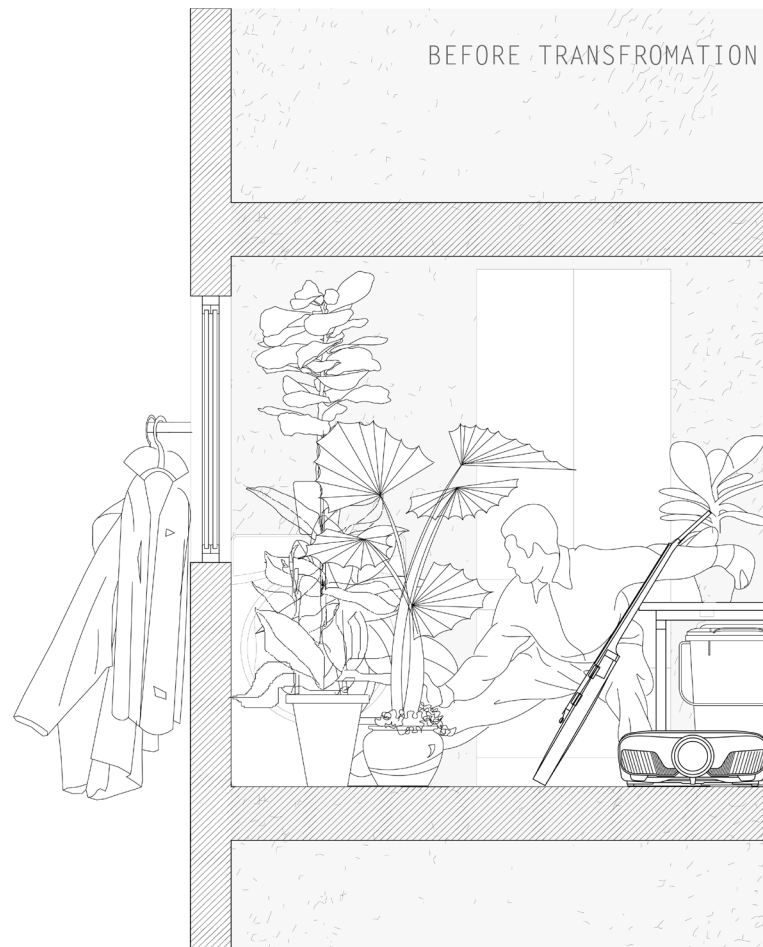
Before



After



- 1 Sliding Door with Single Glazing
- 2 Solar Protection
- 3 Sliding Door with Insulating Glazing
- 4 Thermal Insulation
Curtain Reflective material on Glass Side
Thermal Insulation Decorative Material on Inside



Old Section of Transformation of 530 Dwelling, Redraw by Rui, Zheng

Firstly, the newly introduced spaces brought much-needed flexibility to the original areas. This integration allowed for a reorganization that revitalized the existing spaces while establishing clear, functional boundaries. The reconfiguration separated work zones from living areas, transforming a previously chaotic environment into one that was more structured and harmonious. This newfound flexibility enhanced the efficiency and comfort of the overall space, accommodating evolving needs and fostering adaptability over time.



New Section of Transformation of 530 Dwelling, Redraw by Rui, Zheng

Secondly, the introduction of these new spaces transformed the relationship between indoor and outdoor environments. This interplay created transitional layers that users could actively navigate, ranging from fully enclosed interiors to semi-open areas that seamlessly connect with the outdoors. These gradations blurred the boundaries between interior and exterior, offering a dynamic and fluid spatial experience.

I coined this transitional zone the "Gap Space" or "Space In-Between." Acting as a buffer or bridge, it enables a nuanced interaction between the built environment and its natural surroundings. Within these in-between spaces, the most innovative and adaptable uses emerge, providing both flexibility and a fresh way of experiencing the connection between indoor and outdoor realms.

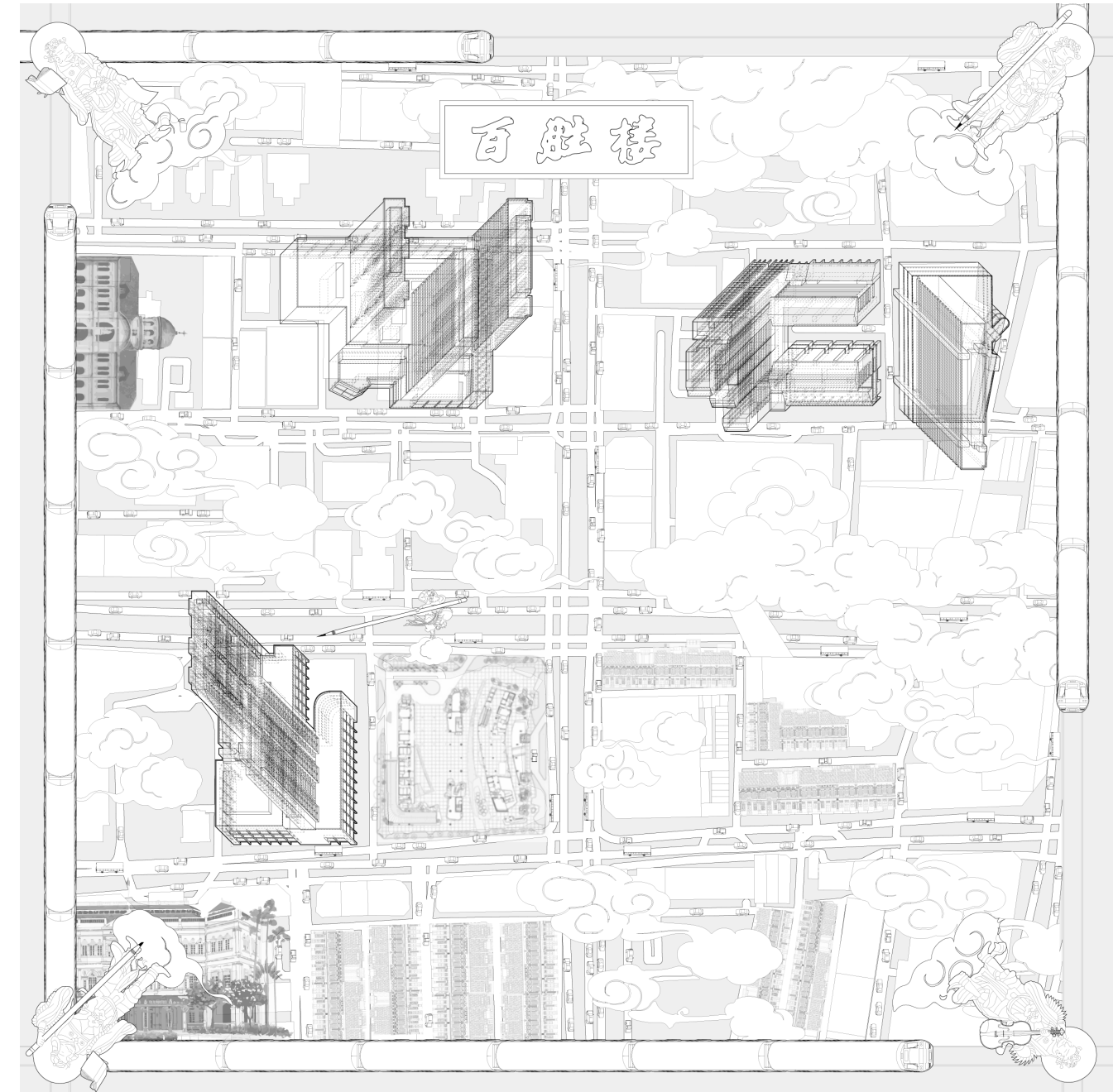


SITE ANALYSIS *Bras Basah Complex / Book / Work Life*

Bras Basah Complex

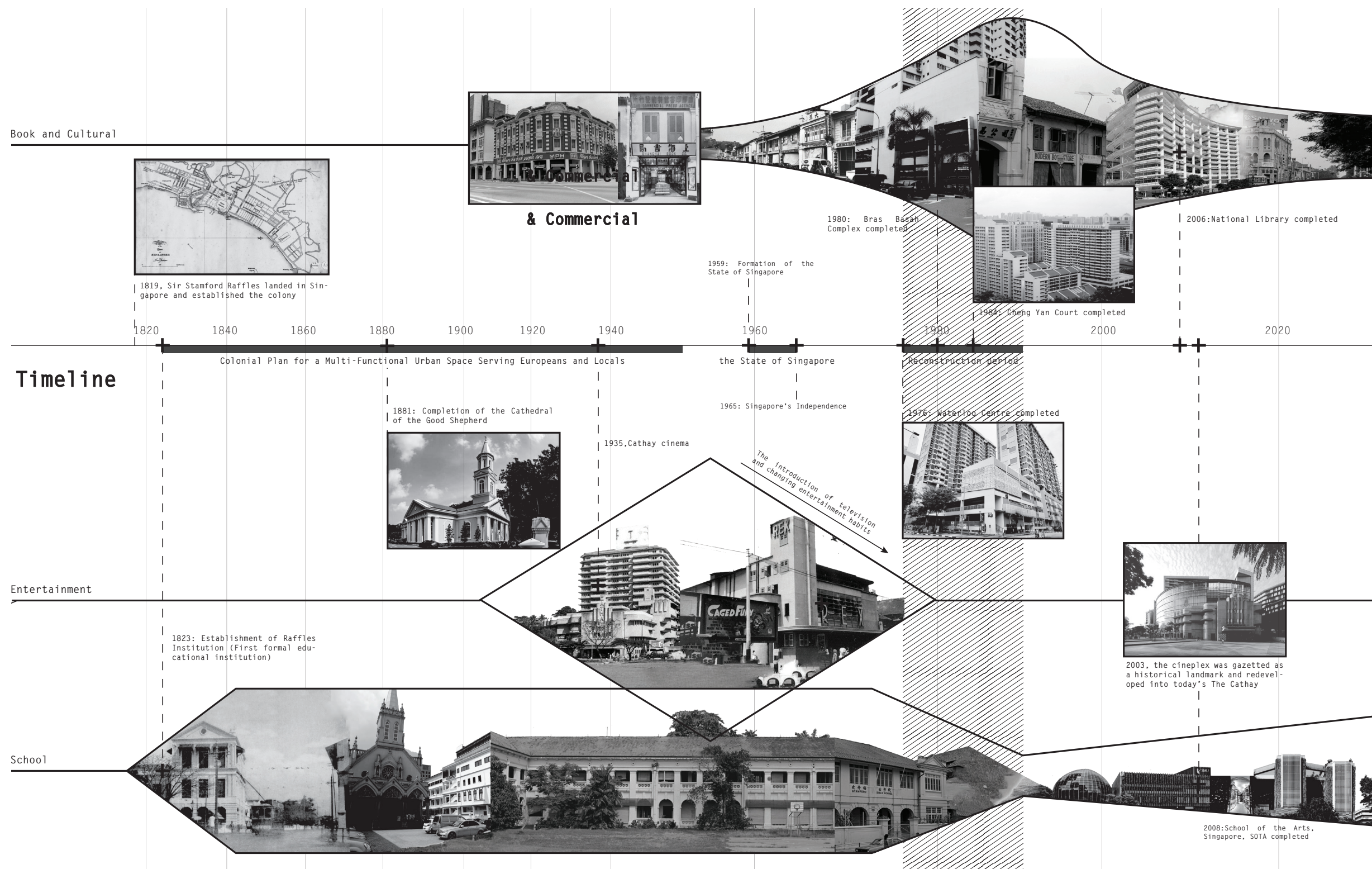
Singapore HDB Podium Block

Bras Basah Complex is a mixed-use building located on Bain Street in Bras Basah, Singapore, featuring both residential and commercial units. My project will focus specifically on the podium roof, corridors, and façade of the complex. It aims to explore the in-between spaces within this environment, reimagining the dynamics between work and life, private and public spheres, as well as the relationship between writers and their audience.



Bras Basah

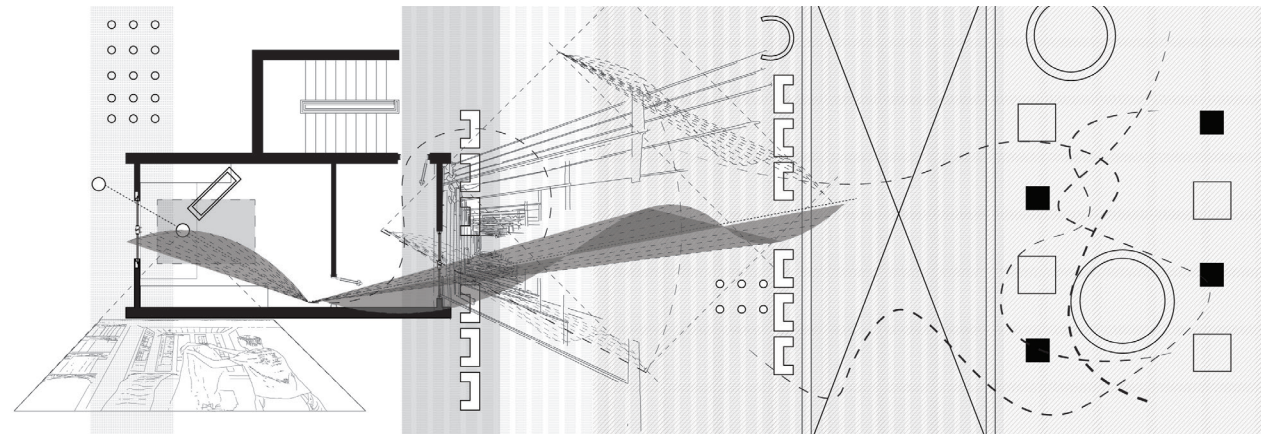
At BBC, many shop tenants lived above their stores, creating a balance between work and life. Today, however, outdated facilities and shifting shopping habits have led to bookstore closures and new challenges for tenants. These changes highlight the need to reimagine the integration of work and living spaces in the area.



PRESENT :
Residential and
Commercial

Bras Basah Complex possesses the highest commercial-residential floor area ratio (53.7%) amongst similar development typologies in the city. Allocating over 90% of the shop mix in the podium to book trade in the renewal programme, it has since shifted to accommodate a more diverse range of arts and cultural related shops. pore's annual Light to Night Festival.

As a HDB Development, Bras Basah Complex underwent upgrading programs such as the Home Improvement Programme (HIP) in 2012 which aimed to resolve maintenance issues of ageing flats, and the Lift Upgrading Programme (LUP) in 2019, to provide direct lift access for all apartments in 232 and 233 Bain Street. The commercial podium underwent HDB's Revitalisation of Shops (ROS) Scheme in two batches; one in 2009 and a major facelift, in 2013



Spatial Sequence of Publishing, Book Industry Research

WORK TYPE ANALYSIS

Book Industry

Book Industry / Flexibility / Engagement

Book industry encompass a wide range of roles, including authors (for online content and books), editors, magazine editors, bloggers, publishers and sellers. While there are many types of creators, I want to focus specifically on those in the physical book industry. A common characteristic among the job types I mentioned is the freedom to arrange their work and rest schedules. They often shift between different modes of working, as they need to dedicate considerable time to thinking, editing, and proofreading—personal tasks—while also engaging in social activities and public speaking that require interaction with others.

Early Stage

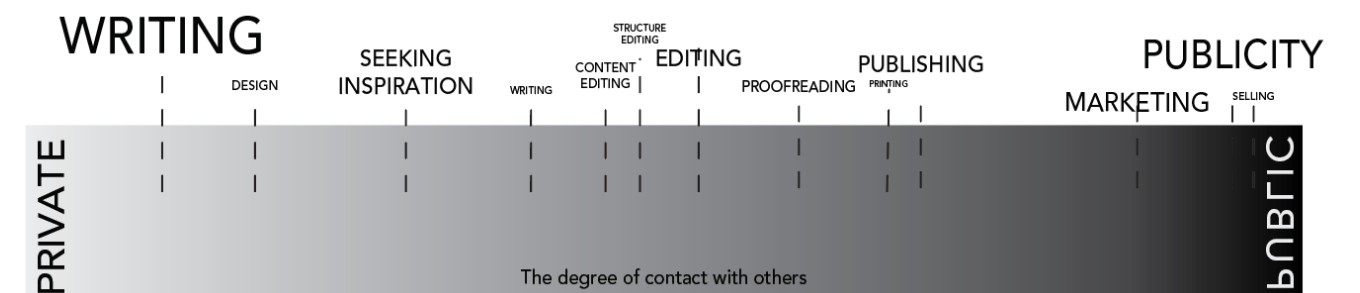
Writing Editing Structural Editing Content Editing

Middle Stage

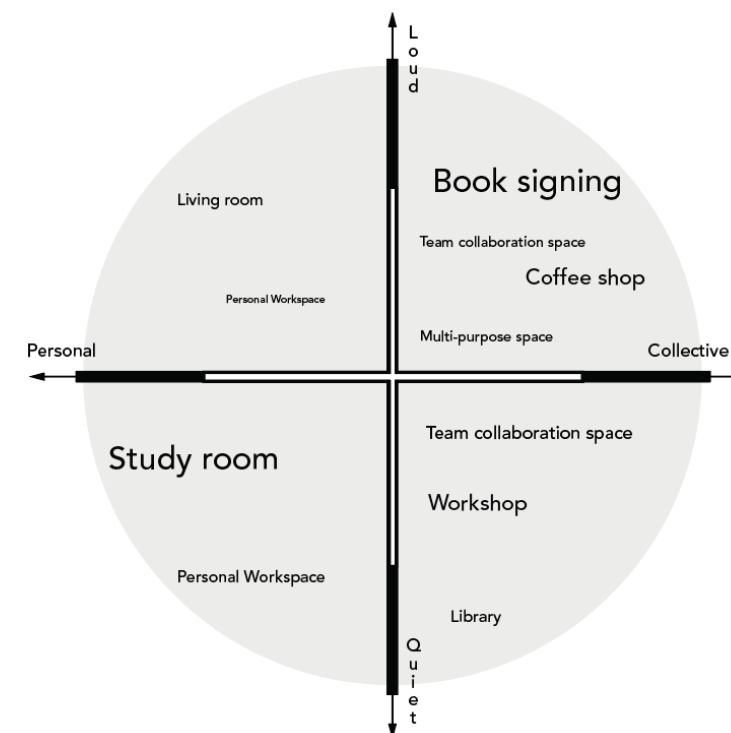
Technical Editing Typesetting Proofreading Publishing

Late Stage

Printing Sales Marketing Publicity



Stage of Publishing, Book Industry Research



Daily Space of A Writer, Book Industry Research

Domestic Work : Book Industry

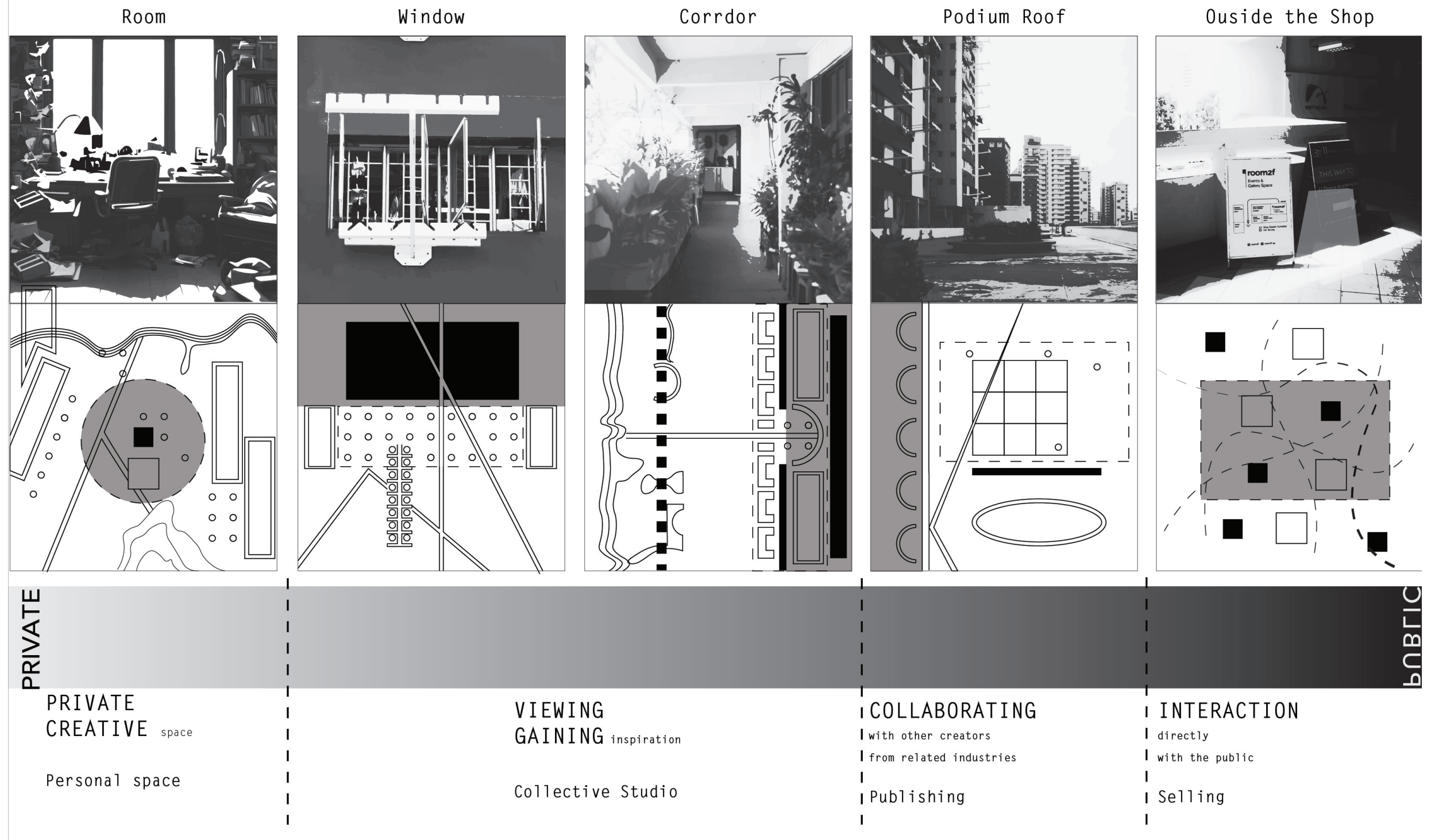
How the concept of the “In-between” intervenes in the lives of these writers. They constantly need to shift their states, engaging in personal creation at times and venturing out to give talks and draw inspiration at others, moving back and forth between two extremes. Through the lens of the “In-between,” the boundaries between work and life, private and public, as well as between writers and readers, can be redefined.

Stage of Publishing, Space research

The concept of the “In-between” reflects how writers navigate shifting states — balancing personal creation with public engagement, moving between solitude and interaction. This perspective redefines boundaries between work and life, private and public, and writers and readers.

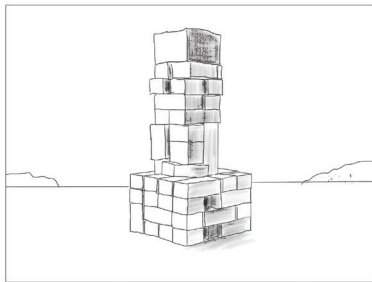
In Bras Basah, Gap spaces illustrate this dynamic, blending contrasts like indoor and outdoor, private and public, and virtual and real. These transitional spaces shape experiences, facilitating movement between environments and revealing opportunities for innovative design.

Through studying the lifecycle of books, I mapped activities along a public-to-private spectrum. Writers require four key spaces: private creation zones, areas for observation and inspiration, collaborative spaces, and venues for public interaction.

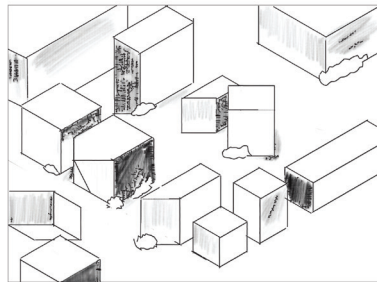


**"3C product, physical book"**

The ability of Generation Z to exchange information can be replaced by 3C products, so what do physical books represent for them?

**"Tower, Centralized."**

Knowledge has been amassed into a towering structure, and people have moved into this tower, deluding themselves with the illusion of a worry-free life within. Meanwhile, those living there aspire to create and gather, hoping to foster a new culture.

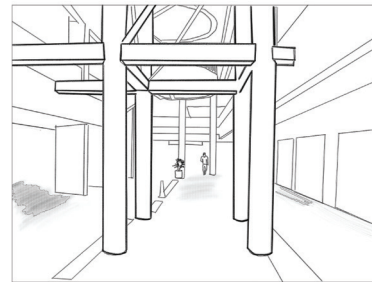
**"Bookstore, dispersed, Web."**

Originally, bookstores existed independently, but due to certain circumstances, various types of bookstores all gathered in this location.

Knowledge is dispersed, yet it converges into a web.

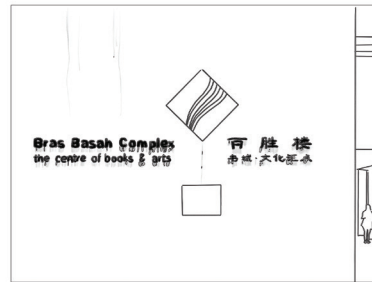
**"Book, meaning, space"**

The significance of books differs for each generation, as they provide varying levels of engagement for exchanging ideas. This meaning also influences the transformation of spaces.

**"Steel structure, incongruity"**

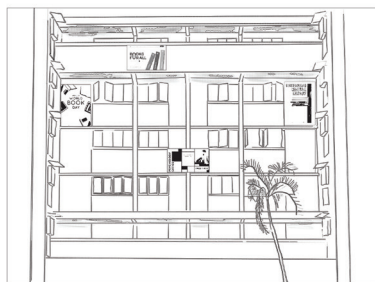
A massive steel structure suddenly appears in the middle of the corridor, but this sense of incongruity has become part of the everyday here.

Steel structure inserted in the middle

**"Bras Basah Complex, book, art"**

Writers, poets, and publishers all gather here, turning BBC into a towering center of knowledge.

Sign

**"Open house, work, life"**

Occasional open house events allow the public to participate in the book production process, bringing writers and readers closer together.

Open house events

**"Framework of Knowledge"**

The framework of the building is filled with knowledge-related elements, once again becoming a gathering place for knowledge as it moves forward into the future.

A gathering place for knowledge.

**"Private, public, blend"**

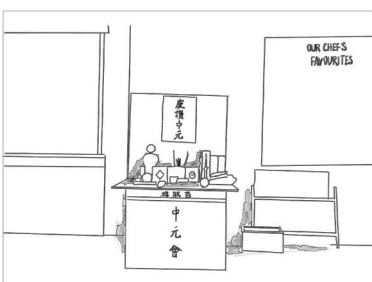
The corridor outside the residences has public bookshelves where people can come and borrow books of their choice.

Corridor bookshelves

**"Coexist, new experience"**

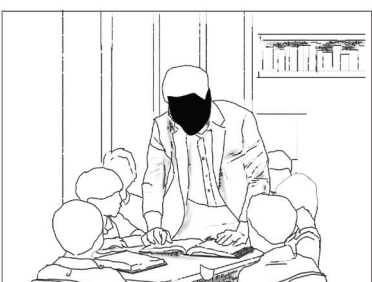
Book signings coexist with drying racks, creating a seemingly contradictory yet harmonious blend that offers a new experience.

Book signings on podium roof.

**"Belief, book city"**

The shared belief here is to restore the glory of BBC as a book city, to pray for it, and to work diligently towards that goal.

Altar placed in the corner

**"Kid, read class"**

Local children gather at BBC to listen to people here read them children's books.

Read class in BBC.

**"Writer, freelancer, chaotic space"**

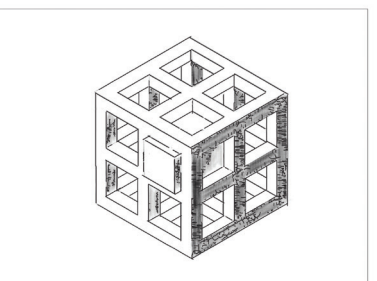
What is real and what is fake, I try to control the whole world with stories, but the reality is that I am only one part of this world.

Work, rest and play, all in the same space.

**"Work, Life, Window"**

Life and work are indistinguishable in space, and crowded spaces reduce the quality of life. After being separated from work, I am still in the same space, and what I have to face is still the trivial chores in life.

Finding the pace of life in a crowded space

**"Framework, What's the future."**

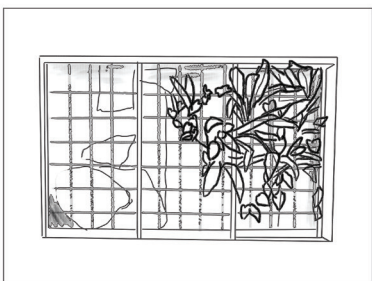
As times change and dreams fade, the tower is left as an empty shell, with only a few still upholding the future of books.

The framework of the building, the decline of the industry.

**"Joy of books, club"**

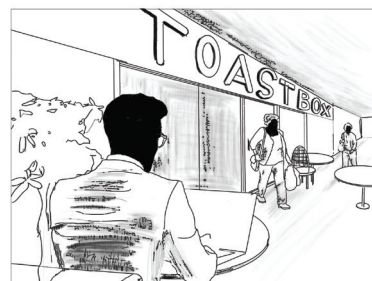
Invite friends around you to rediscover the joy of books, apart from electronic gadgets

Reading class, book club

**"Window, overlap"**

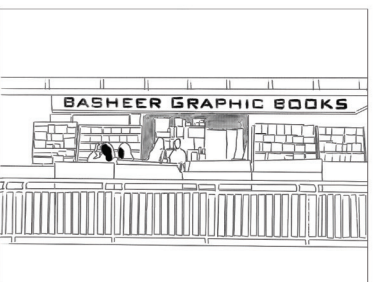
Shadows of work and life overlap on the window, hiding the chaotic reality behind the beautiful flowers and greenery.

The multiple layers of meaning overlapping on the window.

**"Inspiration, Reimagine, Everyday experience"**

Inspiration comes from the little details of life. Stories not only stem from imagination but also from a reimagining of everyday experiences.

Playground equipment on the podium roof.

**"Exchanging, connecting, networks"**

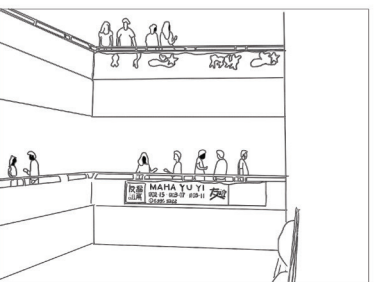
Besides selling books, the stores also serve as hubs for exchanging opinions and ideas, connecting people and networks.

Bookshop, Basheer

**"Signposts, exhibition"**

Vacant spaces are used to host talks and exhibitions, attracting more people to come here.

Signposts

**"Banner, decorations, promotion"**

Both the storefronts and the upcoming events can be seen through the banners and decorations hanging around as you walk through.

Banners and decorations hanging around

**"Paradox, repurpose"**

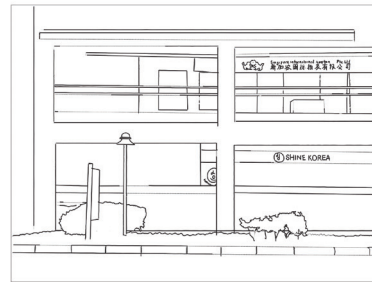
An idle storefront is about to be repurposed; the seemingly lifeless corridor is actually brimming with vitality.

Corridor and clutter

**"Production, promotion, factory"**

Tools provided for writers' creation and promotion, like a small-scale factory for words.

Podcast studio

**"City, building"**

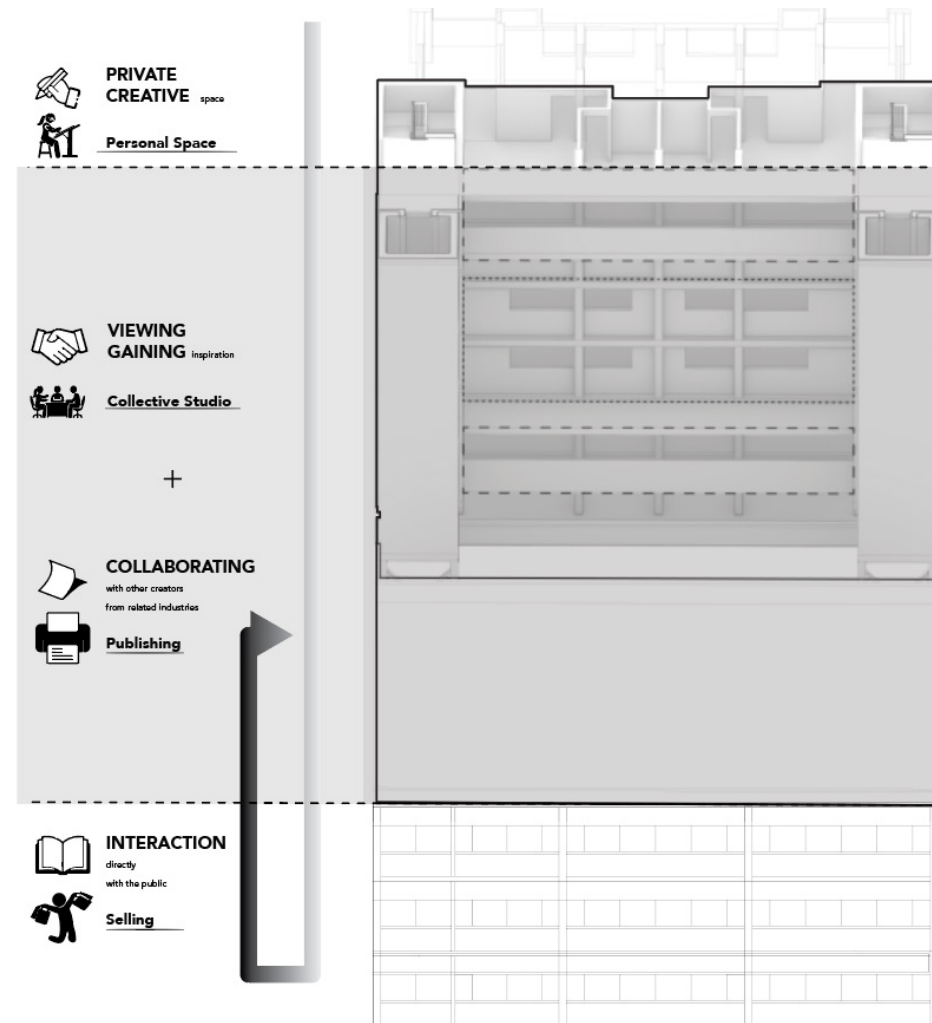
The noisy city was once referred to as a book city, with its heart located on a nondescript roadside.

Building beside the road

Storyboard of Bras Basah Complex

Since text creators have a wide variety of needs, I used this storyboard to tell a story connecting the Bras Basah Complex with content creators, showing the relationship between work and life through a series of scenes.

These come together to form my vision for the future of Bras Basah.



INTERVENTION

Book Industry / Flexibility / Engagement

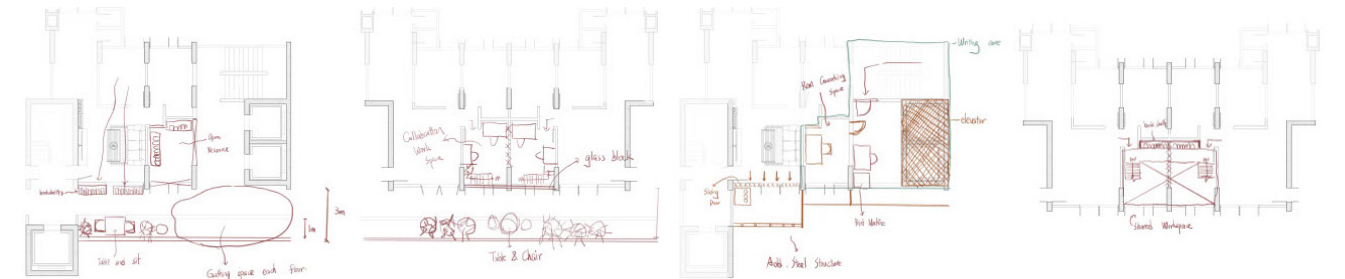
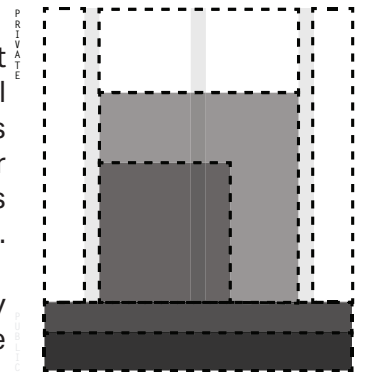
Facade Circulation

My design intervention focuses on two key elements: façade and circulation. This approach aligns with the spatial progression I've analyzed within the Bras Basah Complex (BBC), moving from private individual rooms to public commercial units, creating a journey from intimacy to openness. I aim to incorporate this sequence into the complex's spatial design.

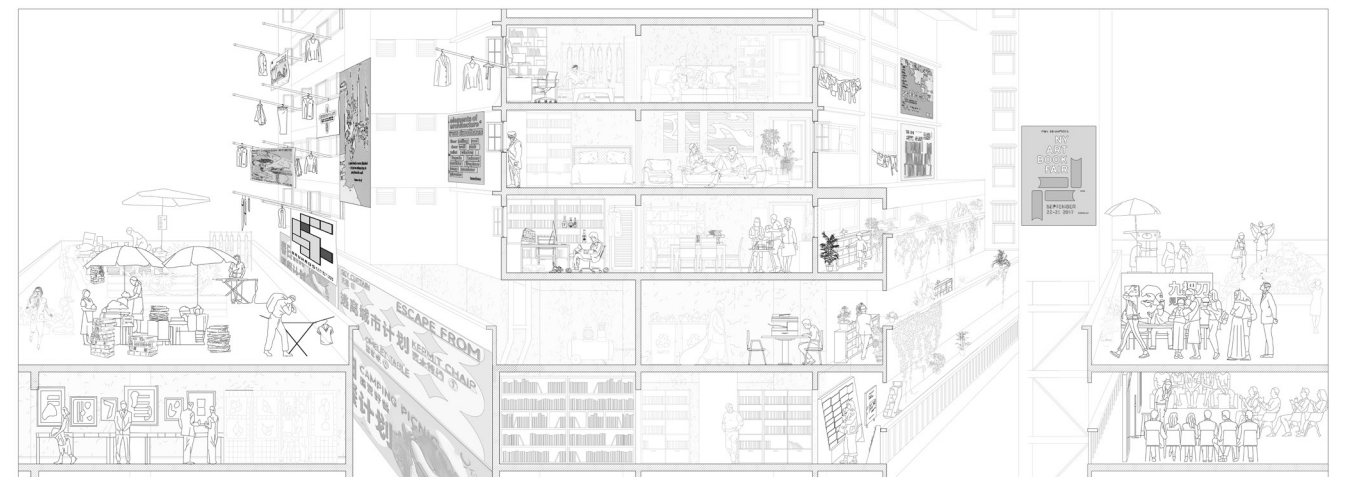
Design Strategy

To address circulation, I developed a spatial hierarchy that balances the interplay between commercial and residential spaces. Public and private zones are distinctly separated across different floors, with ground-level commercial areas reimagined for interaction and sales. The upper levels feature façade installations that create connections between residents and the public.

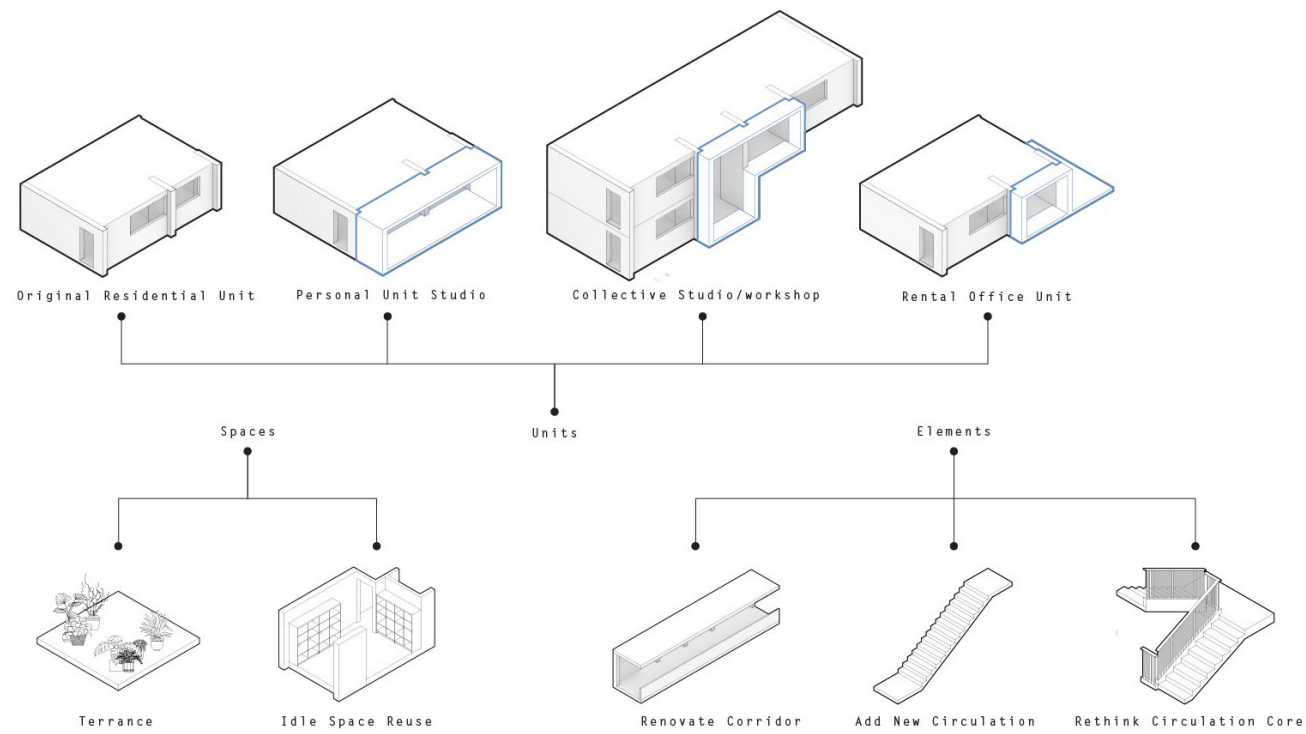
A central atrium anchors the design, integrating the spaces both vertically and horizontally. The building's façade reflects the essence of the publishing industry, visually tying the design to its thematic inspiration.



Sketch, Corridor and Window



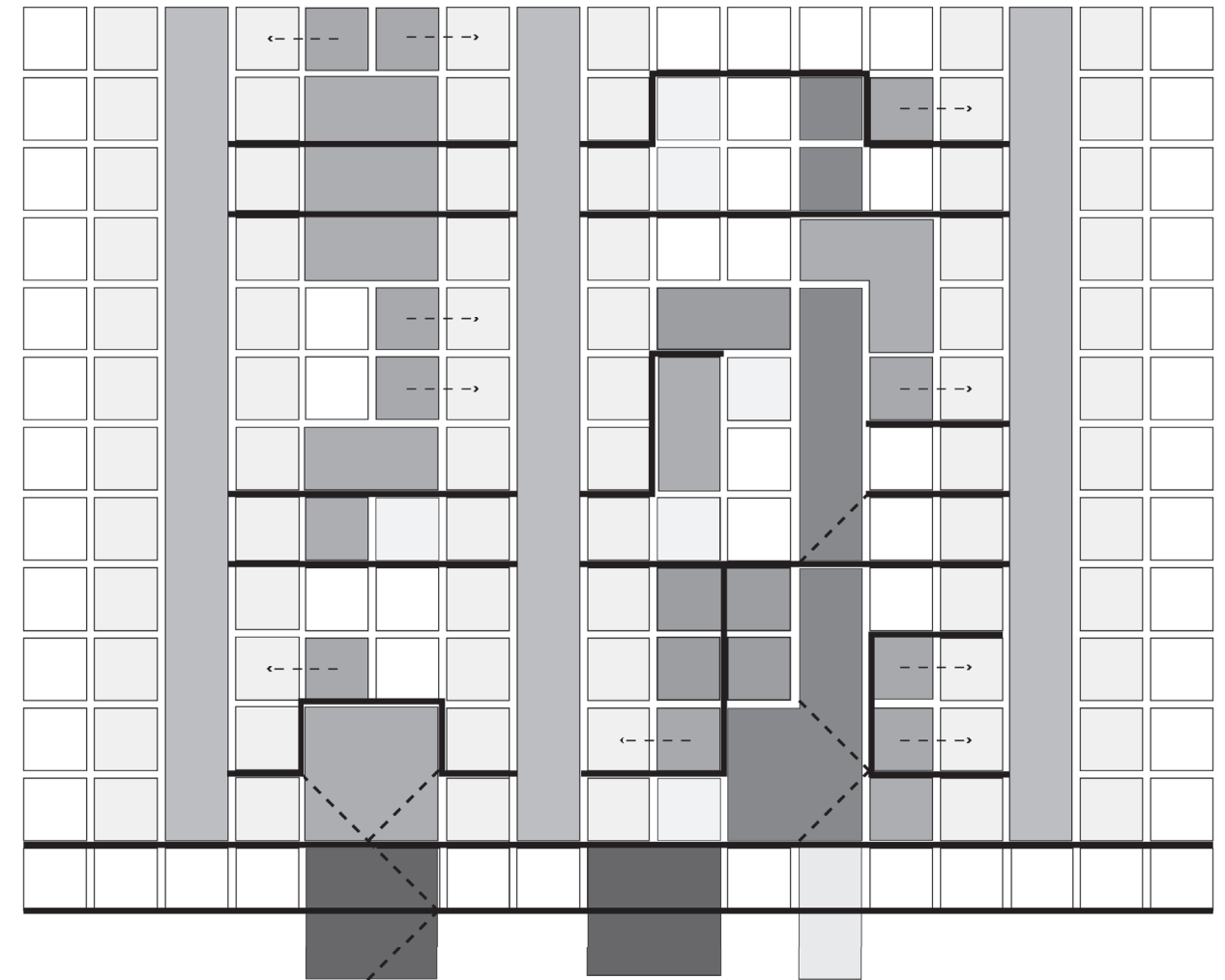
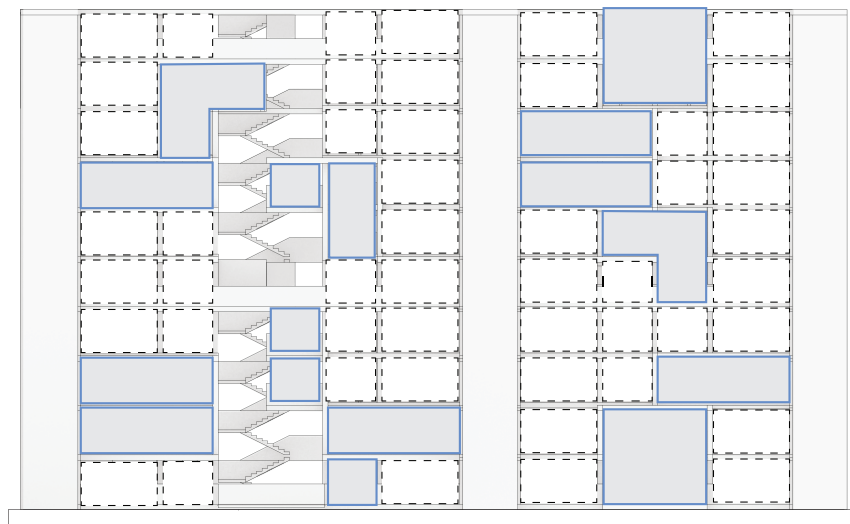
Intervention, Interim Drawing



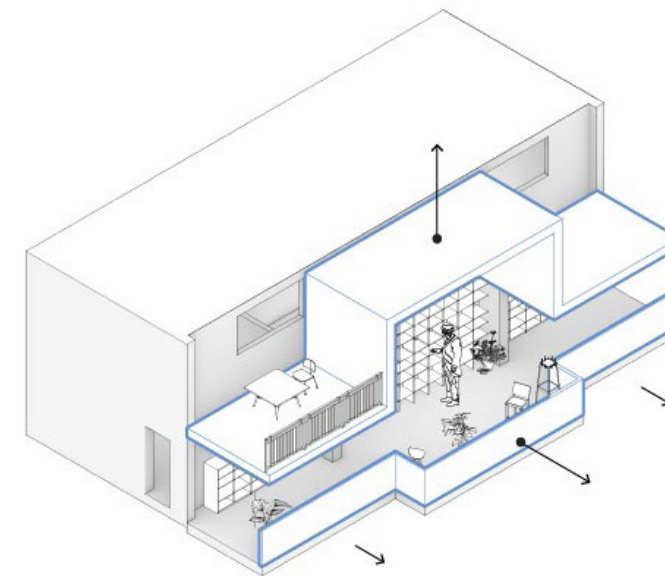
Tetris Facade

The façade design unfolds in two stages.

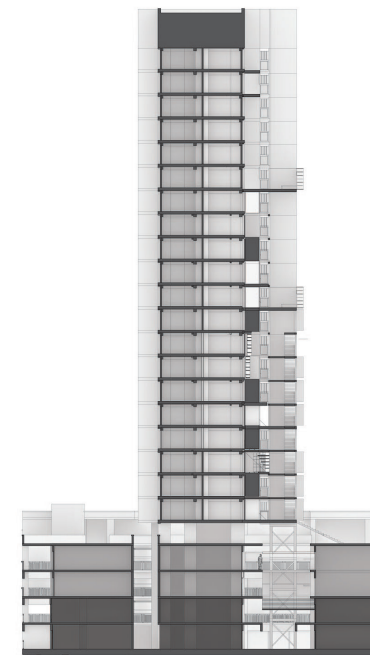
In the first, I conceptualize the façade as a Tetris-like arrangement, with each "block" resembling a uniquely sized book. To achieve this, I analyzed the original unit layout and developed a new organizational logic, combining four distinct unit types to create a façade rich in variety.



Facade Thinking, Previous Drawing

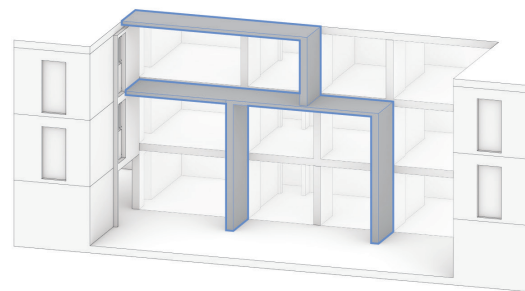


Corridor Intervention, Previous Drawing

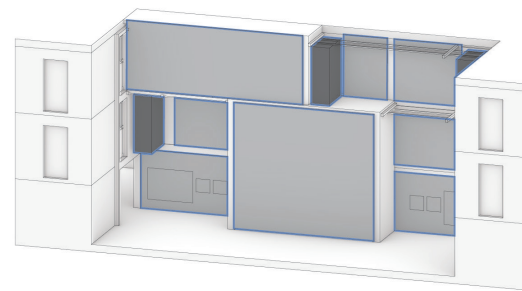


Section, Previous Drawing

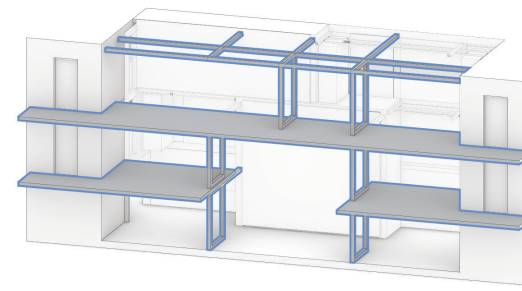
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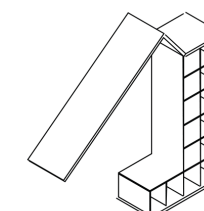
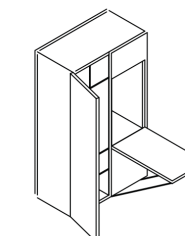
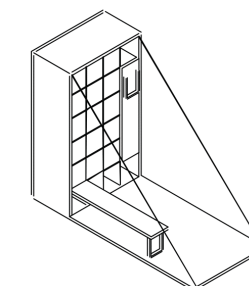
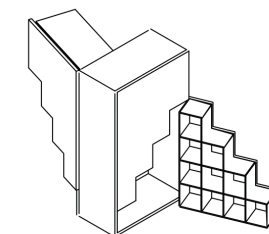
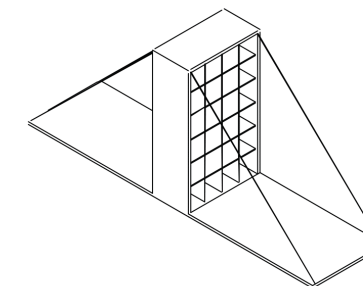
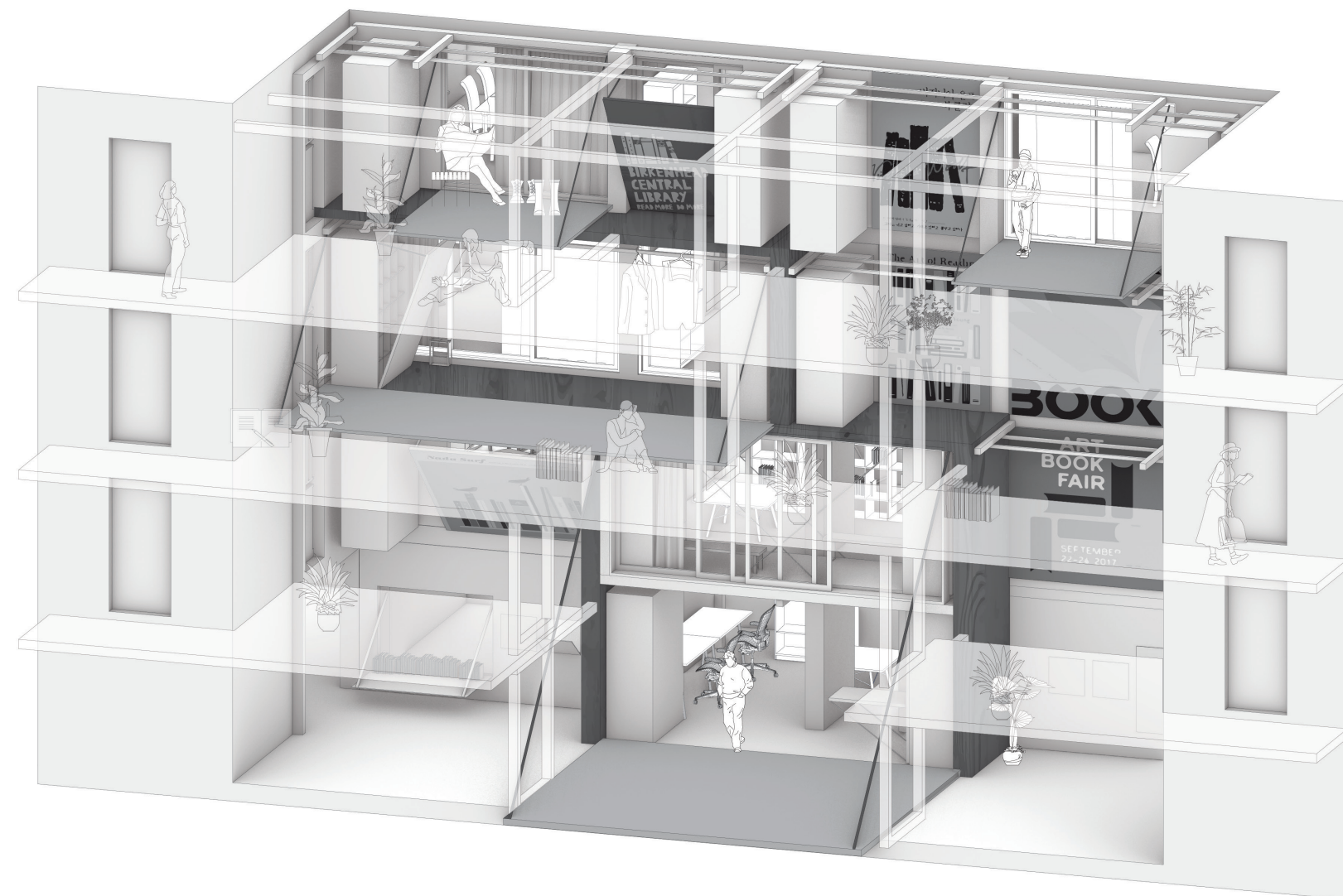
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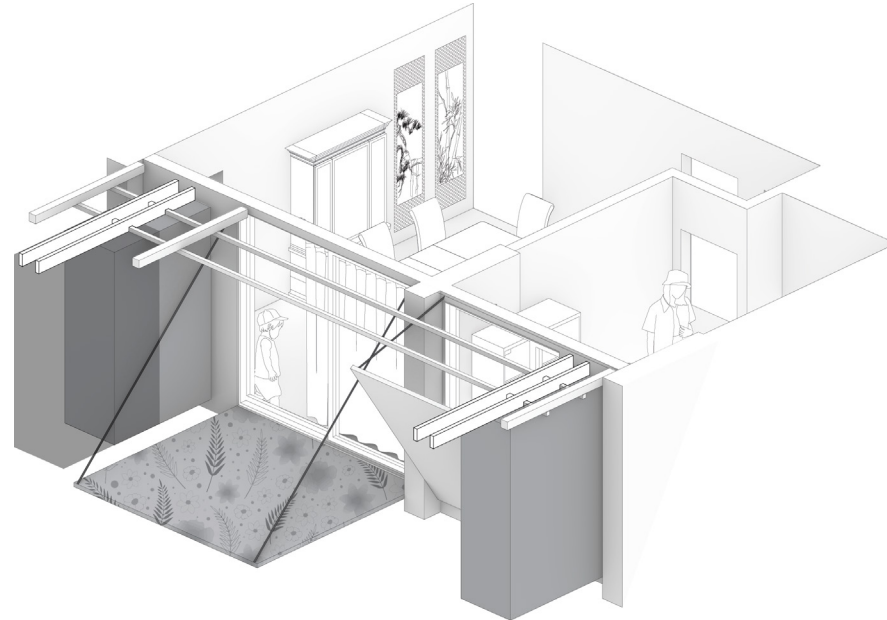
New Structure

In the second stage, I designed a new structure consisting of three parts: a scaffold-like framework with walkways, an adjustable façade, and a modular “bookshelf” unit in between. This setup enables interior units to serve as both residences and interactive spaces for writers to engage with the public. When closed, the façade signals privacy, indicating the writer is working. When opened, a panel lowers to connect with the walkway, inviting visitors inside like an open house. The hanging modular units can transform into tables, chairs, or bookshelves, adapting to the residents’ desired level of interaction.

Original Residential Unit

-Regular Residents

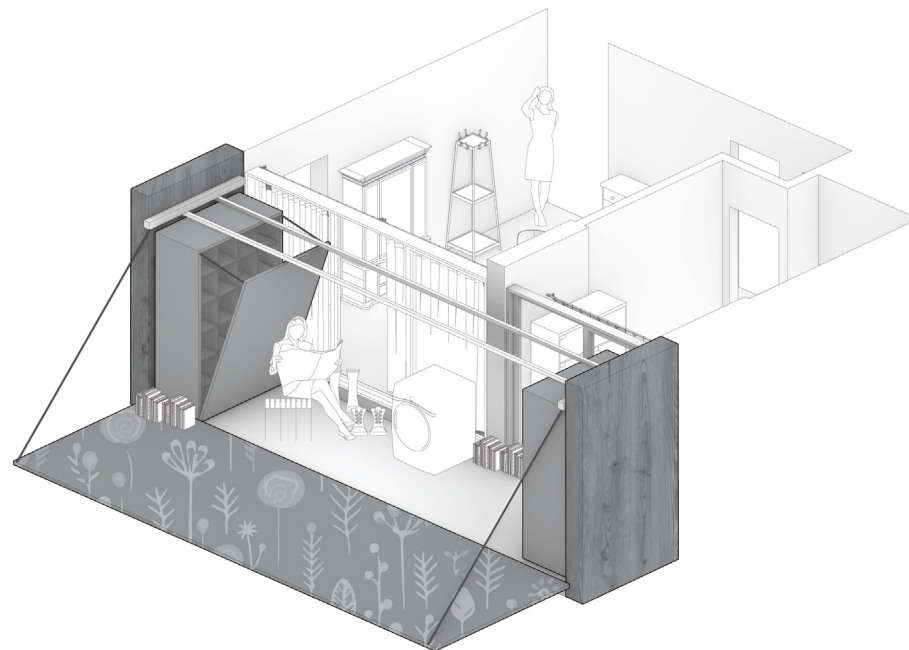
For regular residents, the opening and closing facade not only serves as an extendable balcony but also acts as a barrier against external disturbances. The units hung on the facade can move in the direction of the vertical plane. When the facade is closed, they can be used for the exterior corridor, and when the facade is open, they can retract to serve as seating for the balcony.



Personal Studio Unit

-Independent Writer -Emerging Writer

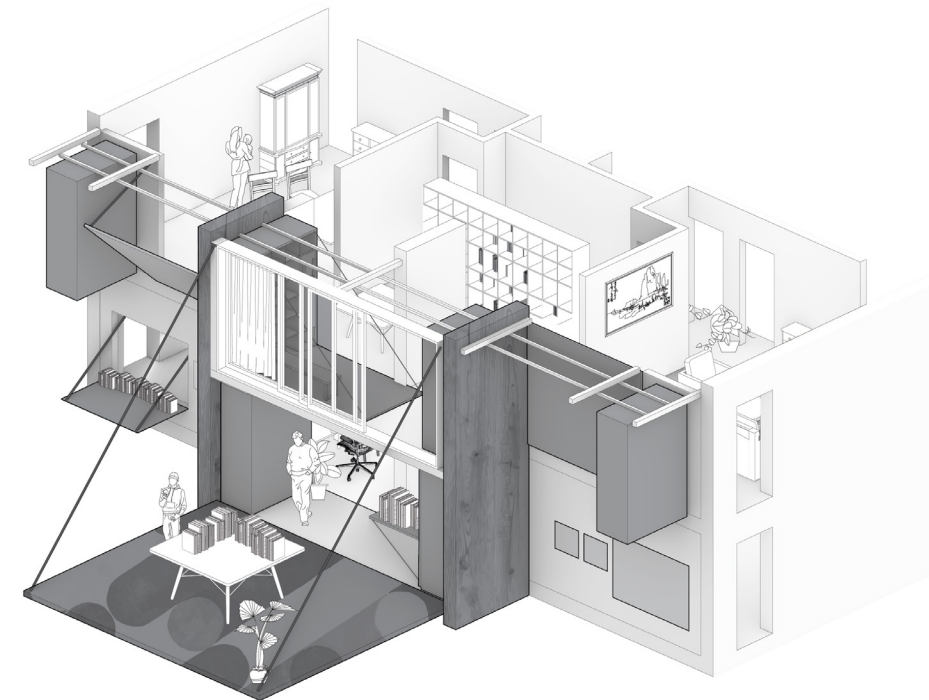
The home serves as an independent creative space, with a small balcony extending outward to draw inspiration from the outside during the creative process. At the same time, this space can also be used for everyday household tasks.



Collective Studio Unit

-Firm -Studio

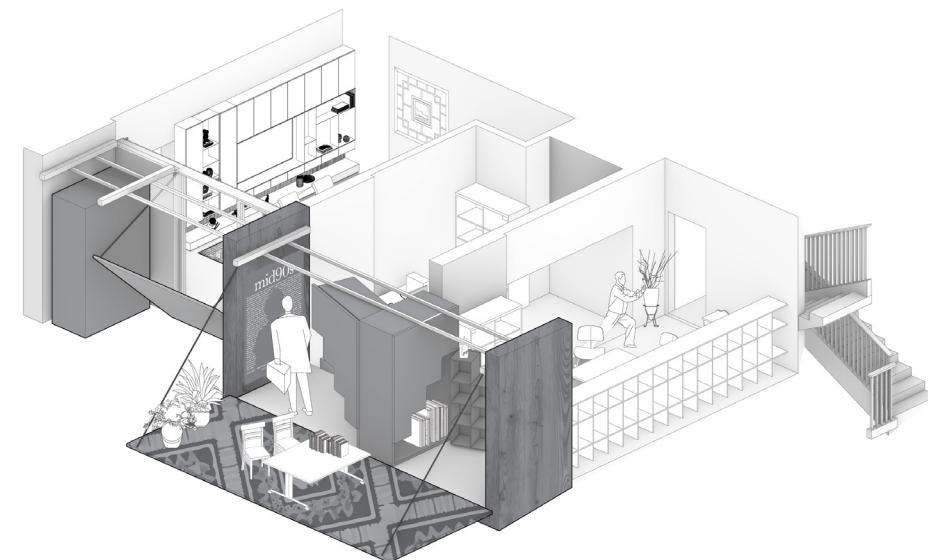
By opening up the inner units of multiple writers, a collective workspace is formed that serves only the internal units. This provides a larger space and integrates various resources.

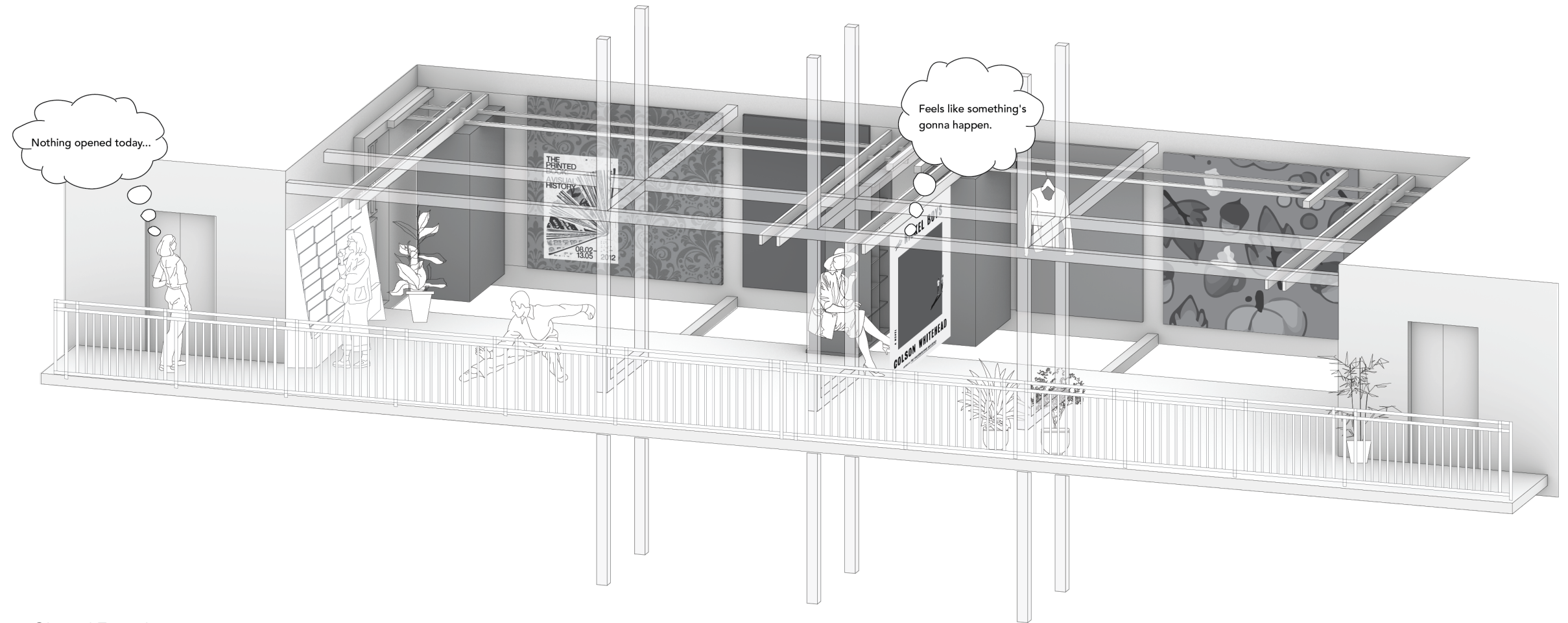


Side Unit

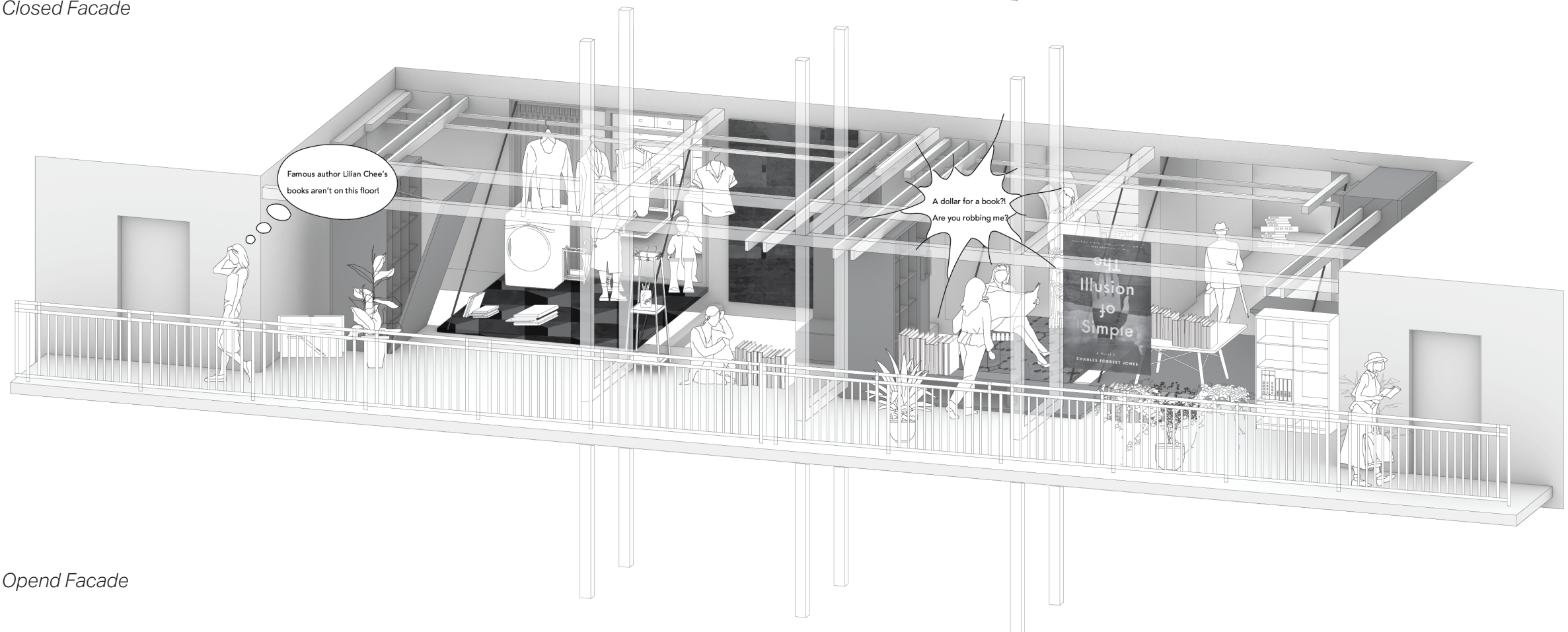
-Small office -Rental office

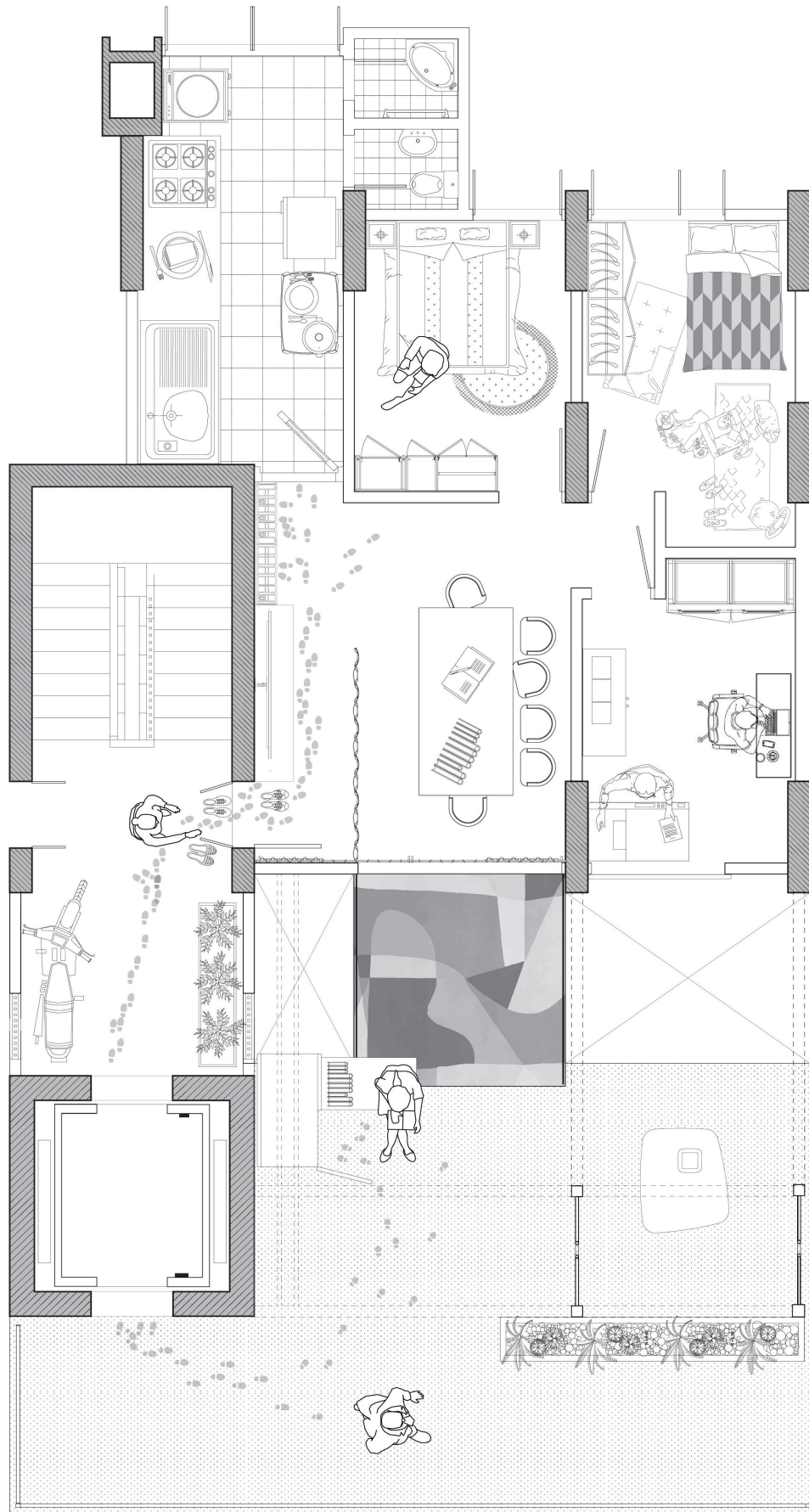
Repurposing the noisier spaces located along circulation paths, which are less suitable for residential use, into more affordable rental offices with public interaction. These offices, like before, use outward-extending platforms to connect indoor activities with the outside environment.



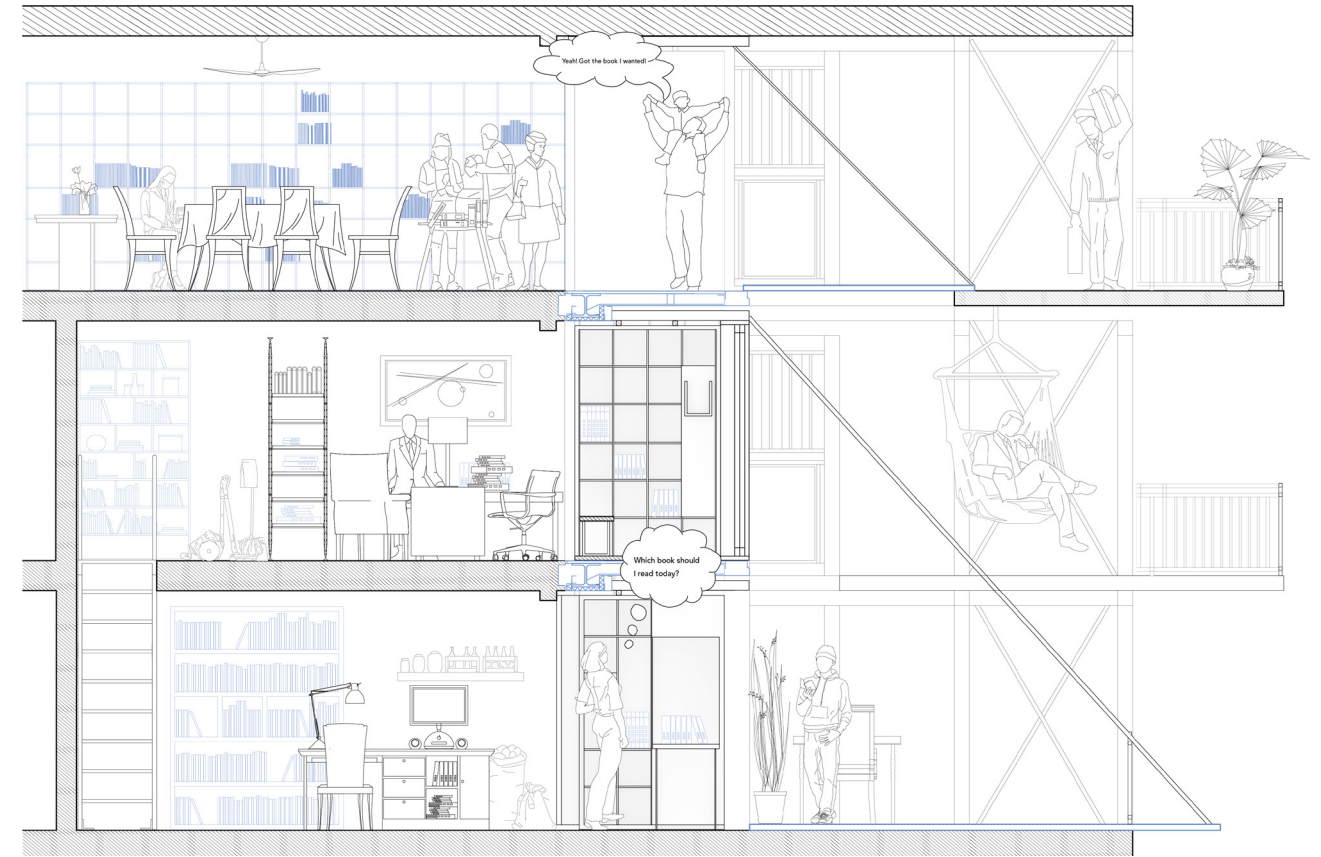
*Closed Facade**Open and Closed*

This design enables the interior units to serve as both private residences and interactive spaces for writers to engage with the public. When closed, it signals that the unit is private, suggesting the writer is focused on work. When opened, a panel lowers to connect with the walkway, inviting visitors inside like an open house. The hanging modular units can transform into tables, chairs, or bookshelves, adapting to the residents' preferred level of interaction.

*Open Facade*



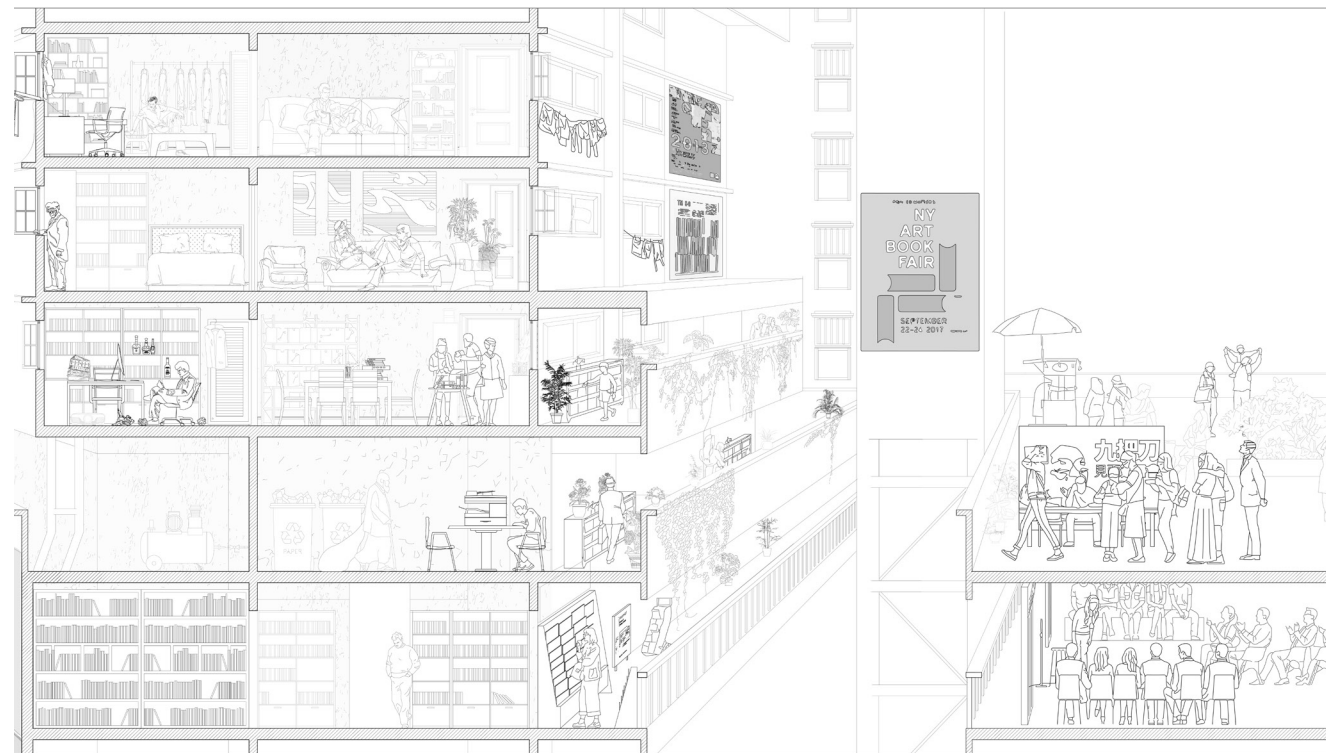
Public & Private, Unit Plan Drawing



Work and Life Extension, Section Drawing



Elvation & Podium Section



A Beacon of Literary Excellence

Rejuvenation / Integration / Literary Excellence

Rejuvenate the Bras Basah Complex as a hub of literary excellence, leveraging spatial transformations to forge stronger connections between the contemporary book industry and the public. By redesigning and reorganizing in-between spaces, it blurs the boundaries between living and working, fostering integration and adaptability. Additionally, the project reinterprets the Old City Podium Block's role and relevance in today's evolving urban and cultural context.

