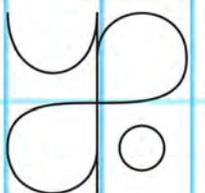


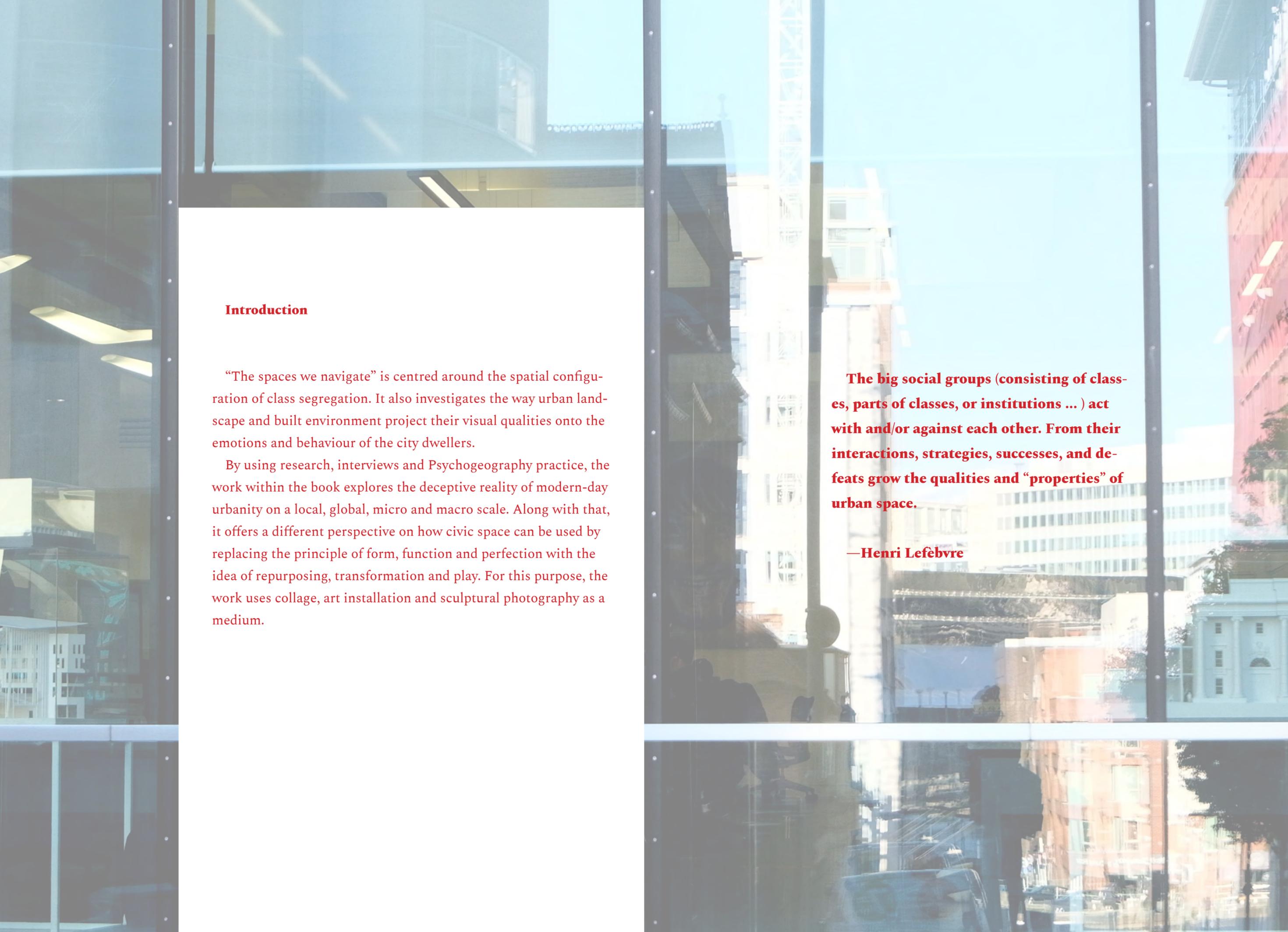


The spaces we navigate



A process book by Yoana Petrova





Introduction

“The spaces we navigate” is centred around the spatial configuration of class segregation. It also investigates the way urban landscape and built environment project their visual qualities onto the emotions and behaviour of the city dwellers.

By using research, interviews and Psychogeography practice, the work within the book explores the deceptive reality of modern-day urbanity on a local, global, micro and macro scale. Along with that, it offers a different perspective on how civic space can be used by replacing the principle of form, function and perfection with the idea of repurposing, transformation and play. For this purpose, the work uses collage, art installation and sculptural photography as a medium.

The big social groups (consisting of classes, parts of classes, or institutions ...) act with and/or against each other. From their interactions, strategies, successes, and defeats grow the qualities and “properties” of urban space.

—Henri Lefèbvre

Capitalist Realism

Mark Fisher

“It is easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of Capitalism”

-Frederic Jameson and Slavoj Žižek

According to Mark Fisher when the thesis of “postmodernism” was first advanced in the 1980s by Jameson, there were still political alternatives to capitalism. However, what is observed in the last two decades, is a deeper sense of exhaustion, cultural and political sterility that seems inevitable. For most people in Europe and North America, this lack of alternatives is no longer even an issue because it occupies the horizons of the thinkable and the visible. Now capitalism is not simply confined to functionalism, and advertising propaganda, instead, as Fisher describes it: “it looks more like a pervasive atmosphere” conditioning not only the production of culture but also the regulation of work, education, media and even the infrastructural components of place.

Fisher, M., Davies, S. & ProQuest (Firm) 2009, Capitalist realism: is there no alternative? Zero Books, Ropley, England.



Here I'll use the term "hyperreality" coined by the sociologist Jean Baudrillard to explain what Badiou describes as "A brutal state of affairs, profoundly inegalitarian, where all existence is evaluated in terms of money and presented to us as ideal" (1).

Consequently, we are so absorbed with the established capitalist system that we are no longer able to consciously distinguish the reality from what is presented to us as reality.

Underneath the “Reality”

As Badiou puts it “in claiming to have delivered us from the fatal abstractions inspired by the ideologies of the past” capitalist realism presents itself as a “small price to pay for being protected from the terror and totalitarianism of the past”.

However, this statement appears contradictory in his observations. According to him, in order to justify the unevenness and imperfection of the capitalist system, we are constantly being presented everything else as horrible, in other words, “It may be unjust, but at least it is not criminal like Stalinism”.



Extrastate - craft

Keller Easterling



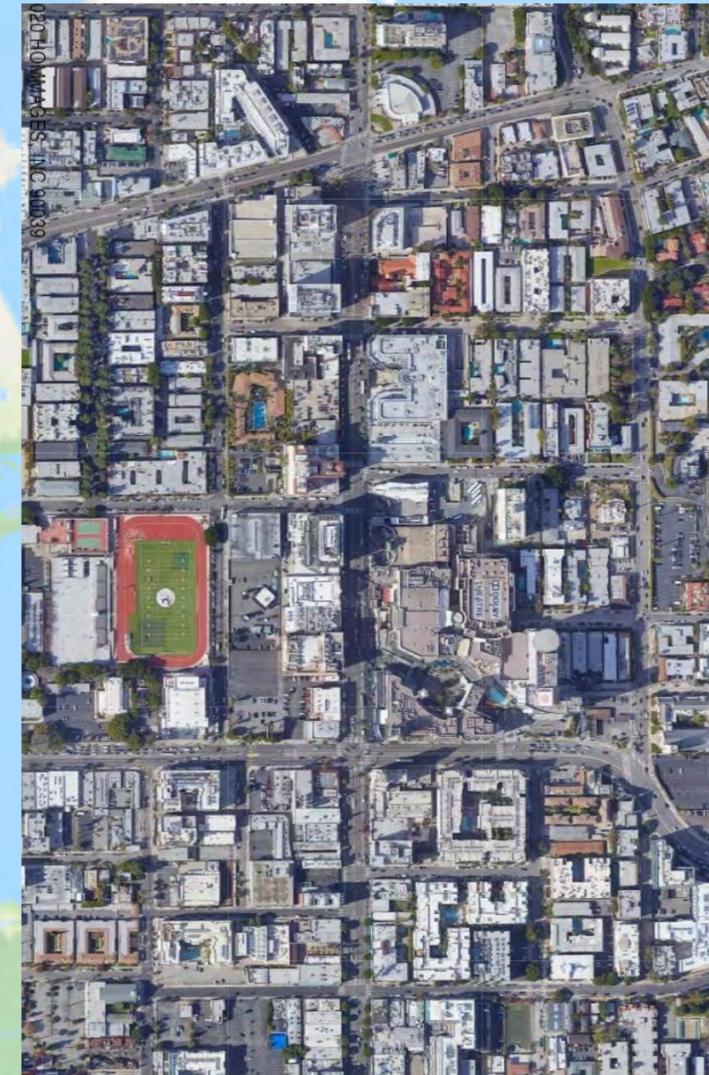
“Today urban space has become a mobile, monetized technology, and some of the most radical changes to the globalizing world are being written, not in the language of law and diplomacy, but rather in the spatial information of infrastructure, architecture and urbanism” (1).

As part of Keller Easterling’s work, some contemporary urban spaces appear as dynamic cross road zones of finance, management and communication. Consequently, their spatial and architectural configuration has become repeatable and highly infrastructural (1).

Despite the promotion of terms like openness, relaxation and freedom as part of the development of those glittering world cities, the reality is often the opposite. Behind that scene of smart, developed and intensified urbanity lies a setting for secrets, hyper-control and segregation (1). And since zone business interests disregard the larger social and environmental costs, the zone has been called “a potential health and environment time-bomb” by Jesper Nielsen (2007 Cited in Easterling, 2012).

“Spaces and objects are more than just volume and geometry: they have their own active potentials. Their stories are always visual and not really so obscure. They are about the space that is hard to see because it is surrounding us — the space that is everywhere and nowhere. Usually, the stories are also very silly — about the candy-colored formulas for making repeatable spaces or the Esperanto of management-ese.”

- Keller Easterling



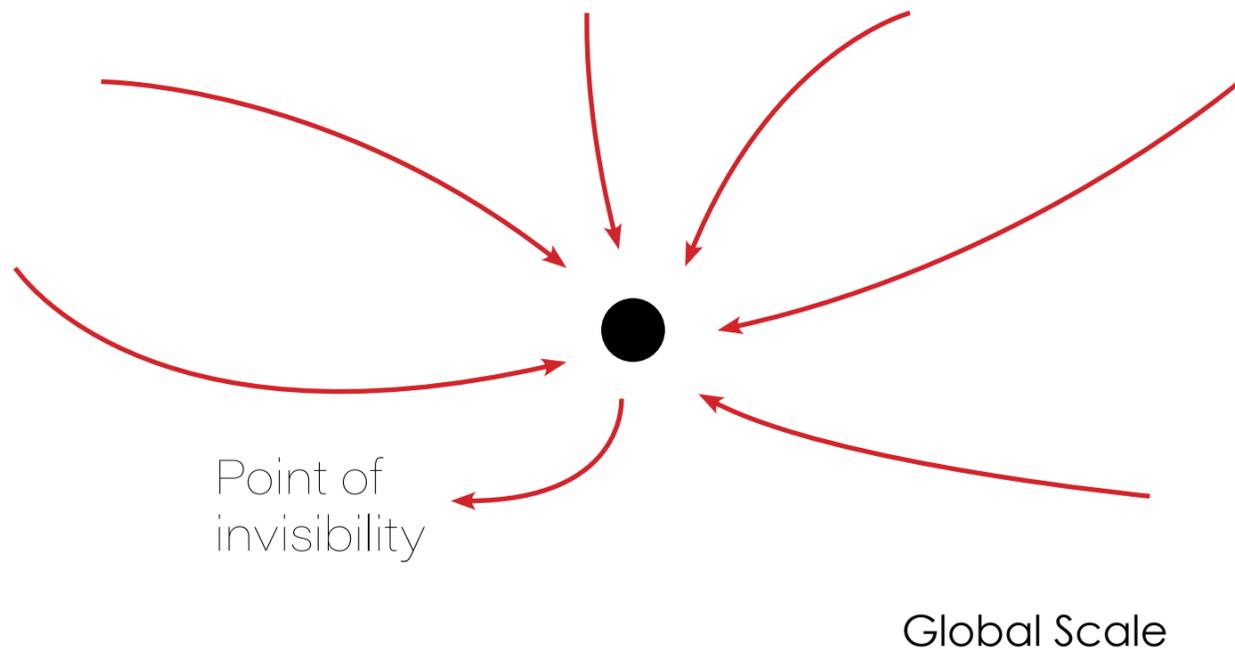
National Disintegrations

By Braden King

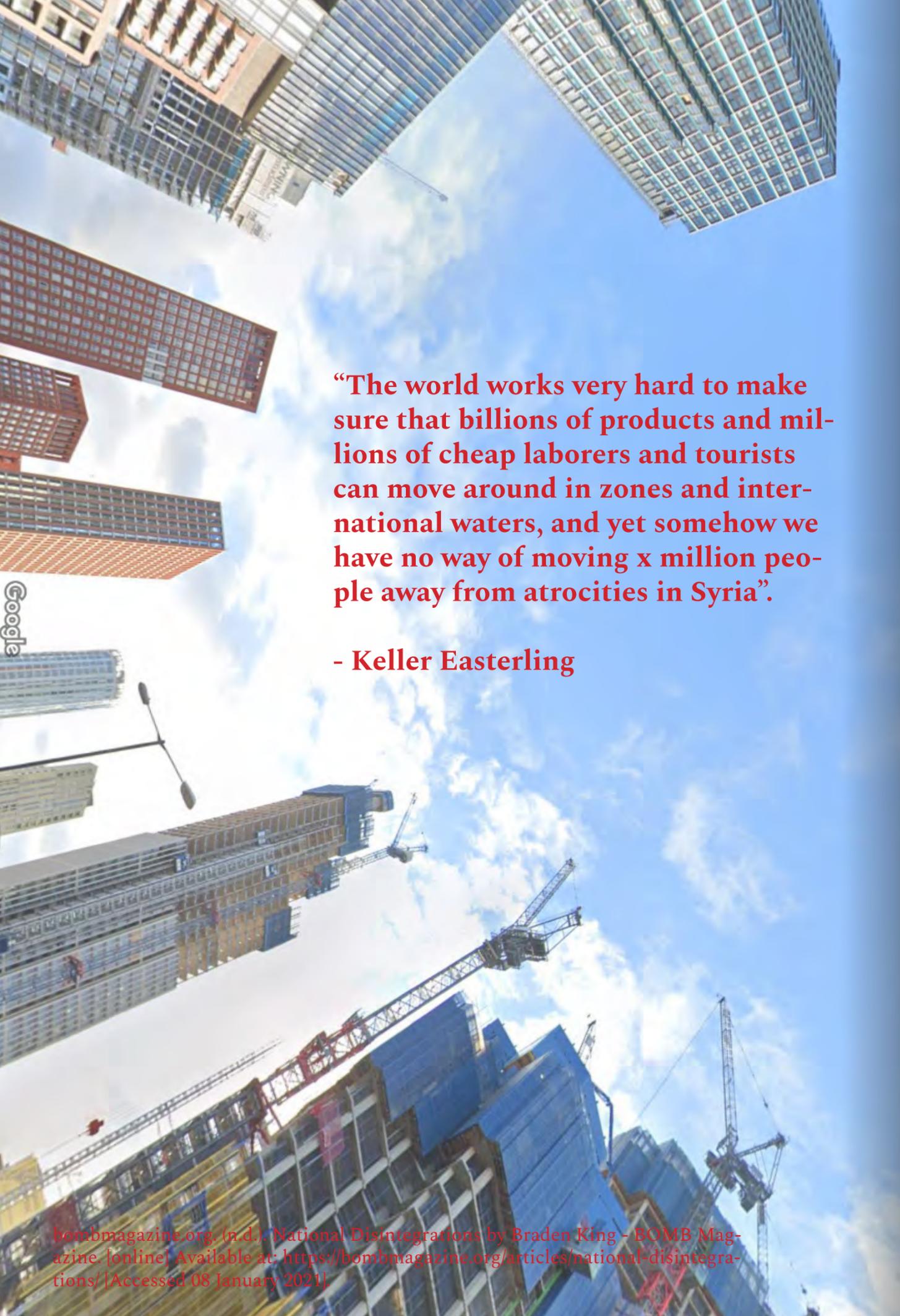
Geneva Freeport, a warehouse complex in Switzerland that is considered to house over 1 million works of art. A high-security tax haven for international dealers and collectors, which exact contents remain a mystery to the general public, while people crossing borders are more to more and greater scrutiny, NATIONAL DISINTEGRATIONS examines what it means to have untold amounts of wealth and property flowing freely through this space.

“These extra-legal structures, a lot of which are also offshore tax havens, have a massive influence on global economics, trade, geopolitical power and the movements of people”. (1)

bombmagazine.org. (n.d.). National Disintegrations by Braden King - BOMB Magazine. [online] Available at: <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/national-disintegrations/> [Accessed 08 January 2021].



King, B. (2017). Still from National Disintegrations. Available at: <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/national-disintegrations/> [Accessed 8 Jan. 2021].



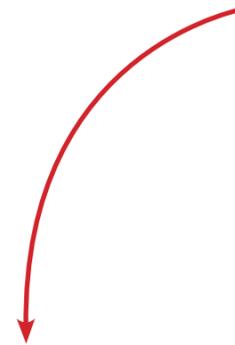
“The world works very hard to make sure that billions of products and millions of cheap laborers and tourists can move around in zones and international waters, and yet somehow we have no way of moving x million people away from atrocities in Syria”.

- Keller Easterling

bombmagazine.org. (n.d.). National Disintegrations by Braden King - BOMB Magazine. [online] Available at: <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/national-disintegrations/> [Accessed 08 January 2021].

“Every night on this planet, about six percent of humans sleep in tents. We can guess this figure based on the 1.6 billion who lack adequate housing and the 150 million who are homeless. We must also include the 65 million forcibly displaced people: refugees of war, climate change, economics or politics, and asylum seekers of every kind”.

- Jack Self



We process capital's image-dense data without any need to read.

Apparently nobody wants to know that contemporary history has created a new kind of human being – the kind that are put in concentration camps by their foes and in internment camps by their friends.

Self, J. (2021). Campos. E-flux. [online] 23 Jan. Available at: <https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/confinement/356030/campos/> [Accessed 7 Feb. 2021].

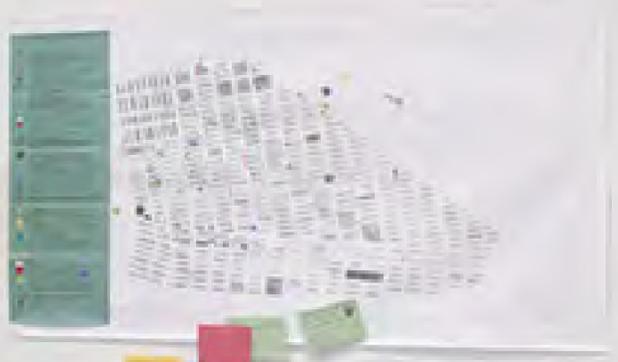
HOMELESSNESS EXISTS NOT BECAUSE THE HOUSING SYSTEM IS NOT WORKING
— PETER MARCUSE
BUT BECAUSE THIS IS THE WAY IT WORKS



Vertical text panel on the left side of the wall.



Vertical text panel on the right side of the wall.



EXHIBITION
CONTINUES
➔



View of Martha Rosler's exhibition "If you can't afford to live here, mo-o-ove!!" 2016, at Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York. Available at: <https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/features/martha-rosler-57287/> [Accessed 23 February 2021]

Penthouses and poor doors

The Vauxhall Nine Elms Battersea “opportunity area” has been considered to be the biggest regeneration project in Europe. It has also been described by Boris Johnson as “the greatest transformational story in the world’s greatest city”, the “final piece in the jigsaw” of central London. Replacing the Warehouses, logistics depots and the elm trees that previously stood there, it is now a big part of the London skyline with buildings made of concrete, covered with a collage of mirrored glass and coloured plastic panels.

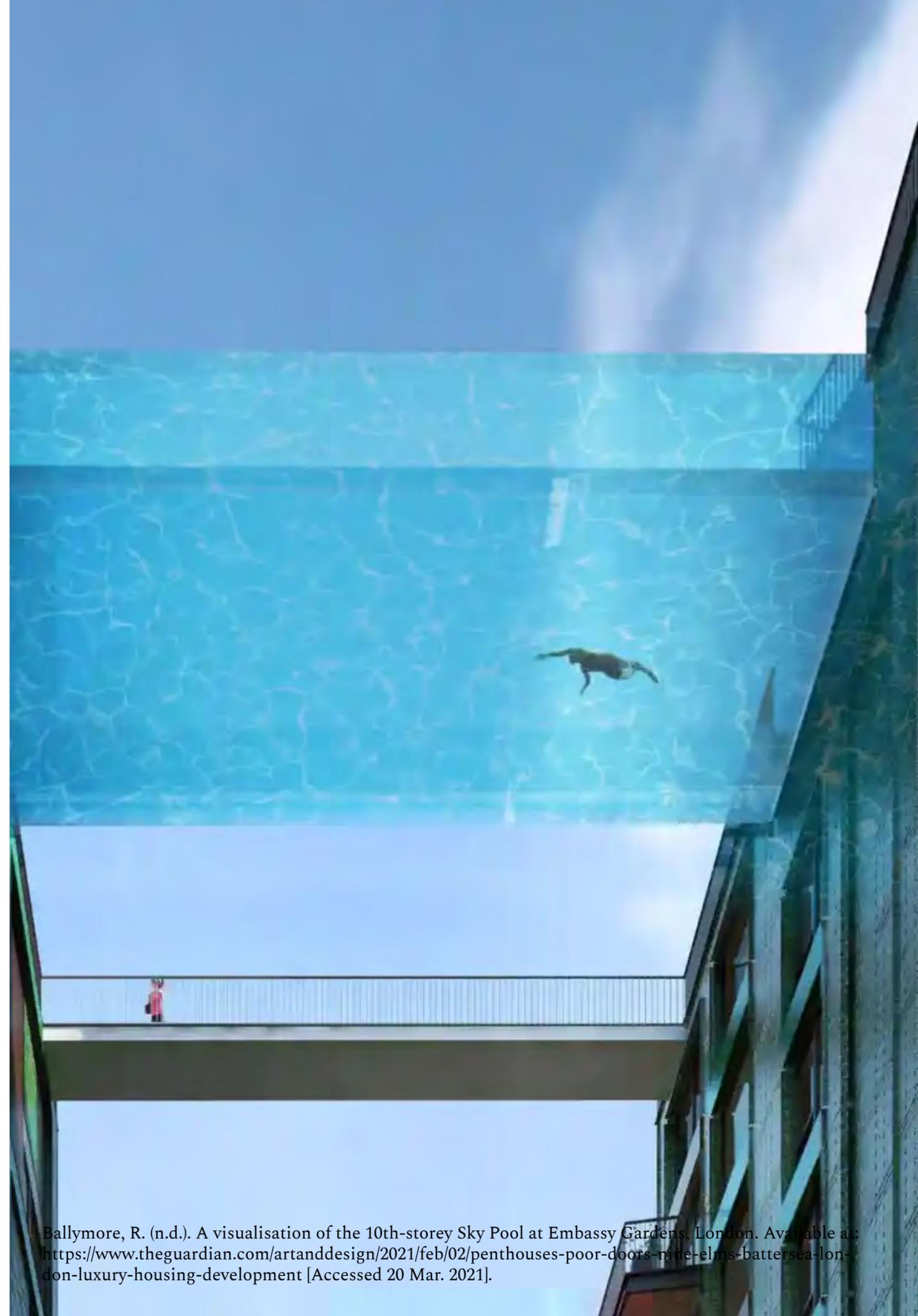
According to Oliver Wainwright, it is roughly the size of Monaco having all the makings of similarly exclusive investor’s playground where regular Londoners are edged out or

By Oliver Wainwright

missing in the picture of the city. He finds more upsetting the fact that many of the flats in those new developments are held by “secretive shell companies in off-shore tax havens” causing a stark division between international investors who are absent most of the time and the regular owner-occupiers and rent-payers confined to poor Doors. In this matter Aydin Dikerdem, a Labour councillor for the Queenstown ward, concludes that what is going on in Nine Elms and Battersea has nothing to do with maximising social good or creating mixed communities, instead, Oliver Wainwright adds, “it is the product of politicians in thrall to property developers, driven by a blind faith in the market”.

Local Scale

Wainwright, O. (2021). Penthouses and poor doors: how Europe’s “biggest regeneration project” fell flat. The Guardian. [online] 2 Feb. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2021/feb/02/penthouses-poor-doors-nine-elms-battersea-london-luxury-housing-development> [Accessed 20 Mar. 2021].



Ballymore, R. (n.d.). A visualisation of the 10th-storey Sky Pool at Embassy Gardens, London. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2021/feb/02/penthouses-poor-doors-nine-elms-battersea-london-luxury-housing-development> [Accessed 20 Mar. 2021].



Hammond, F. (2015). Capital Growth.
Available at: <http://www.felicityhammond.com/you-will-enter-an-oasis> [Accessed 25 Apr. 2021].

Felicity Hammond “Capital Growth”

“The fundamental theme around the work is about urban regeneration, the way that the city promises one thing but gives us another so it is using imagery taken from marketing for new developments, particularly the beginnings of the so-called luxury developments, but alongside, it also has these moments of decay in the city so what it is really looking at is that kind of incongruous moment where the digital image meets the kind of ruin of the physical sight.”

www.youtube.com. (n.d.). SITUATION #103: Felicity Hammond, Capital Growth, 2015. [online] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gBs_H1b6U4I&list=LL&index=7 [Accessed 25 April 2021].



Reference work, 2021



Reference work, 2021

Now repetitive buildings consisting of offices and small one or two-bedroom apartments are taking over major city centres while their inhabitants feel more and more atomized and isolated.

[www.youtube.com. \(n.d.\). Why Modern Architecture SUCKS. \[online\] Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GapUEKYLE1o&t=820s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GapUEKYLE1o&t=820s) [Accessed 16 May 2021].



“Shopping is another medium by which the market has solidified its grip on our spaces, buildings, cities, activities and lives. It is the material outcome of the degree to which the market economy has shaped our surroundings and ultimately ourselves.”

Leong, S.T. (2001). And then there was shopping. In: R. Koolhaas and C.J. Chung, eds., Harvard Design School guide to shopping. Köln;London: Taschen.



Reference work, 2020

people are strongly affected by building facades. If the facade is complex and interesting, it affects people in a positive way; negatively if it is simple and monotonous.

- Colin Ellard



“When the public began to react against the brutal concrete style of the 1960, architects simply replaced it with a new kind of junk glass walls hung on steel frames.”

“Birmingham City centre was once a concrete maze that only cars could find their way through, people did not stand a chance. Cars were placed above people and people were placed above one above the other on concrete shows.”



City Contrasts



Local scale



Reference work, 2021

Based on Barber and Hall's study (2008), the key weaknesses of Birmingham's renaissance turned out to be the partial economic revival, the exclusion of the local population from the regeneration planning (Smyth, 1994, cited in Barber and Hall, 2008: 7) and the consecutive rise of property and rent values followed by a displacement of local communities and residents. (Barber, 2007, cited in Barber and Hall, 2008: 8).

The transformative acts within the city centre were also criticized for being inconsistent with the fabric of some areas such as Digbeth and Jewellery quarter and the diverse anthropological needs of the population (Porter and Barber, 2006). This is subservient to issues of marginalization, commercialization and disregard of cultural values for the sake of economic growth.

Local Scale

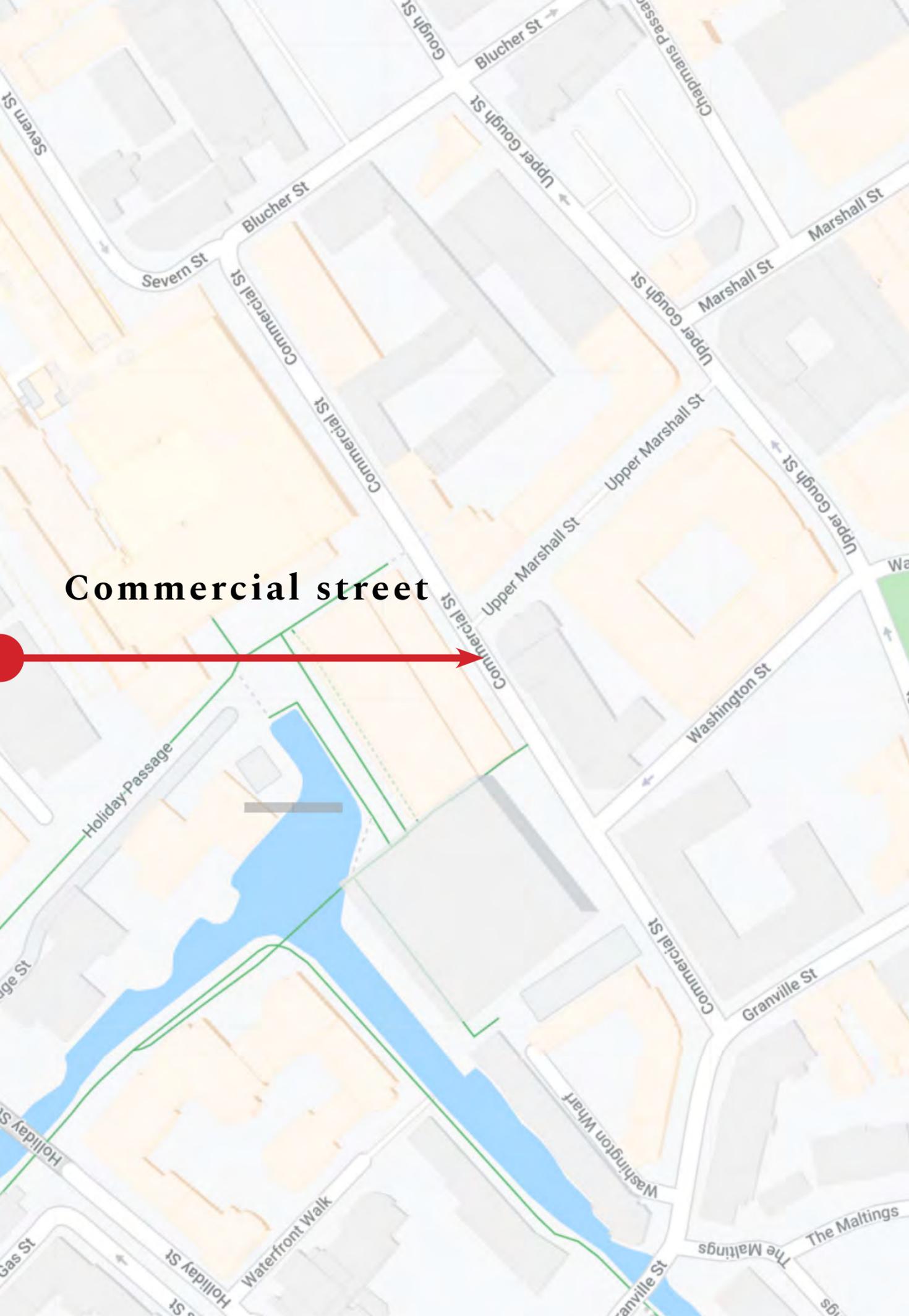
A psychogeography practice reveals the effect of specific location and its built environment on the emotions and behaviour of individuals.

Seeing how older constructions and specific places are left behind and how other areas are constantly being built on and developed has increased the feeling of class segregation between the working class and the technocratic elite. What is more concerning is the sense of community and diversity that is lacking in both places.

Abandoned buildings might be unrepresentable but so are the tower blocks whose uninviting steel/glass facades convey a feeling of coldness and alienation.



Reference work, 2021



Needless Alley

Commercial street

Gentrification and the role of culture in urban regeneration policies

By Yoana Petrova

My interest in the social and cultural aspects of cities and the capitalist formation of urban space has led me to conduct a research based on gentrification and the role of culture in urban regeneration policies with a main focus on Birmingham's cultural quarter - Digbeth.

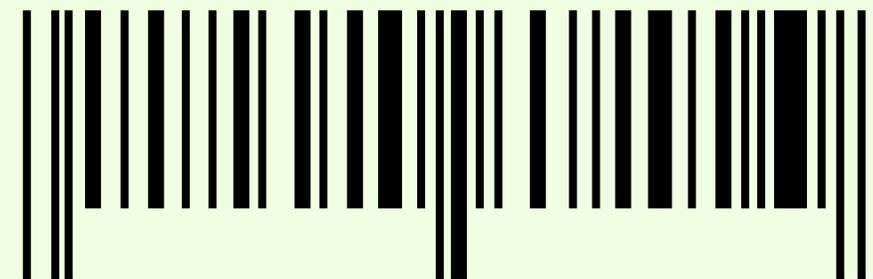
The research uses secondary data and interviews with Digbeth-based artists to understand whether a displacement of local organizations, communities and individuals as a result of the regeneration processes is evident in the area. Another intention is to investigate whether such processes could affect its distinctive character.

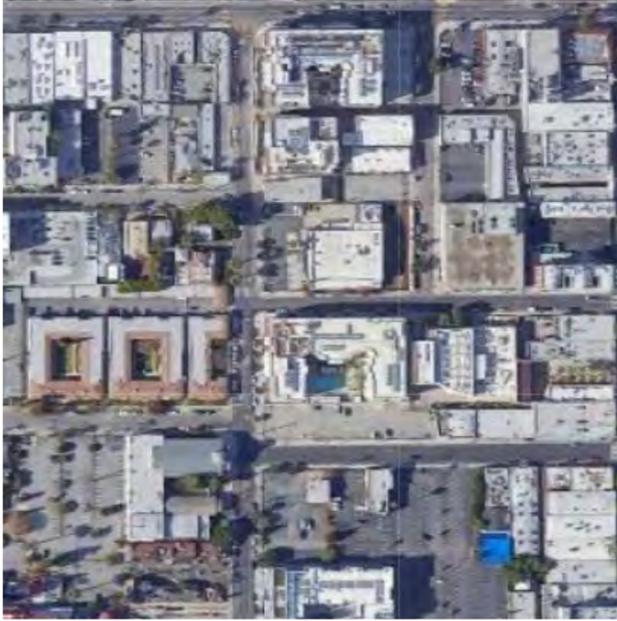
It was revealed that despite the initial seeds of bottom-up approach in the area and its conservation status, it has also been subject to gentrification pressures and commercialization because of its central location and the necessity of new residential acquisitions and commercial development (Porter and Barber 2007). As a result of that and the consecutive rise of property and rent values, some organisations, communities and individuals have moved, or are about to move to other areas in search of affordable spaces, which inevitably steals from the cultural legacy of Digbeth (participant 1). There is also uncertainty about the future of the area after the development plans and corporate investments expected with the arrival of HS2, which would also cause an increase in rent and property values (participant 1). Another participant (2) finds more concerning the general erosion of the cultural fabric of cities as productivity and value for money become the defining factors for their redevelopment.

“Often, these urban regeneration schemes are built around the premise of housing as a financial asset. There is often little thought for existing communities and how an area might be improved for them. State-led urban planning does not have the same utopian ambitions as past planning projects which – despite rarely succeeding - attempted to rethink what it meant to inhabit a city and how civic space could be used”

- Participant 2

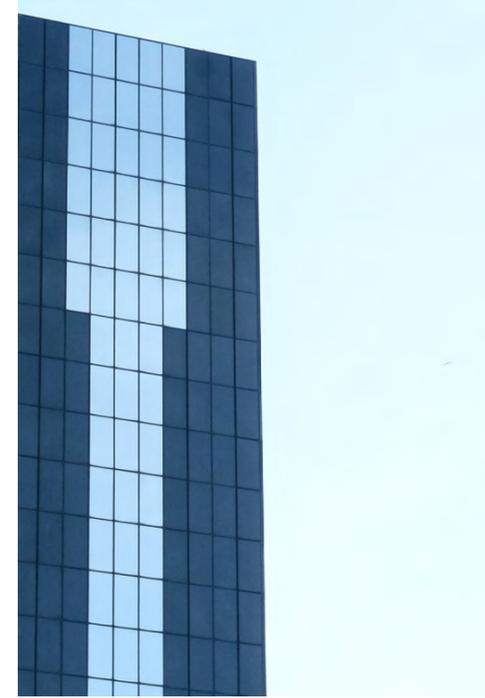
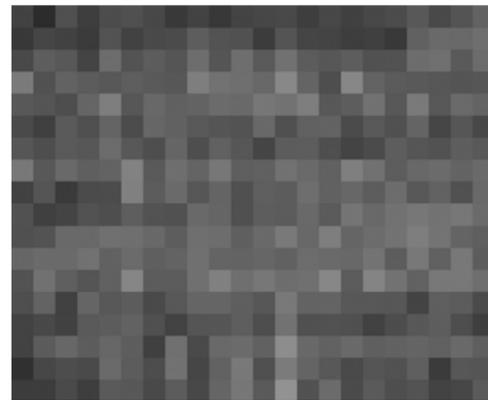
Local Scale





"Form ever follows function."

- Louis Sullivan



"Bit structures are the mechanism by which the virtual establishes its logic in the real. Supporting the control, monitoring, and distribution of brand identities, Bit structures set up their own economy."

- Bit structures by Hiromi Hosoya and Markus Shaefer.

Hosoya, H., Shaefer, M. (2001). Bit structures. In: R. Koolhaas and C.J. Chung, eds., Harvard Design School guide to shopping. Köln;London: Taschen.



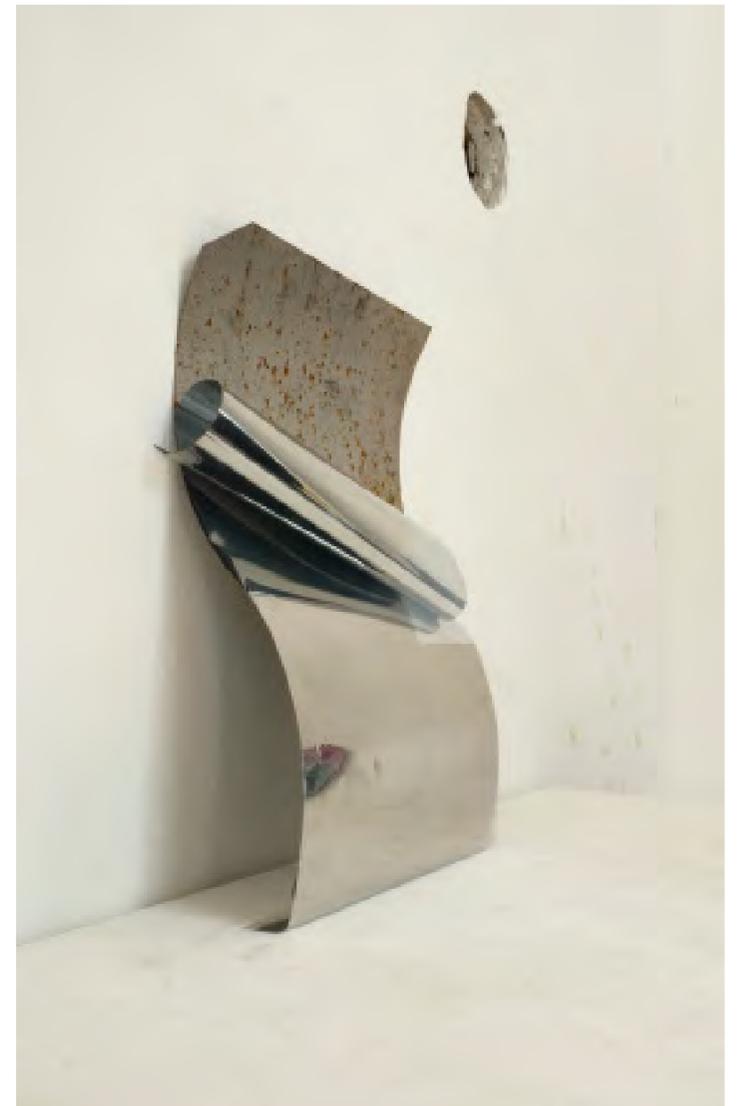
Layers of Reflection

The reflections of the glossy facades are confusing and distorted as a representation of the hyperreal layer of capitalist reality, hiding deeper social and economic issues underneath.



Lorenza Longhi "Visual Hell, New Location" at Fanta-MLN, Milan, 2019 Courtesy: the artist and Fanta-MLN, Milan. Photo: Roberto Marossi

Lorenza Longhi's practice is concerned with an attempt to understand the deceptive structures and economies that stand behind specific facades. For her exhibition "Visual Hell, New Location", the artist adopts typical modes and structures of institutional and corporate display, trying to push them to a point where they lose their neutral, polite functionality.



“Quilting melts into grid, retroreflection imitates reflection. They mirror something that isn’t there and lead the eye to confuse levels of reality, like a painterly trick.”



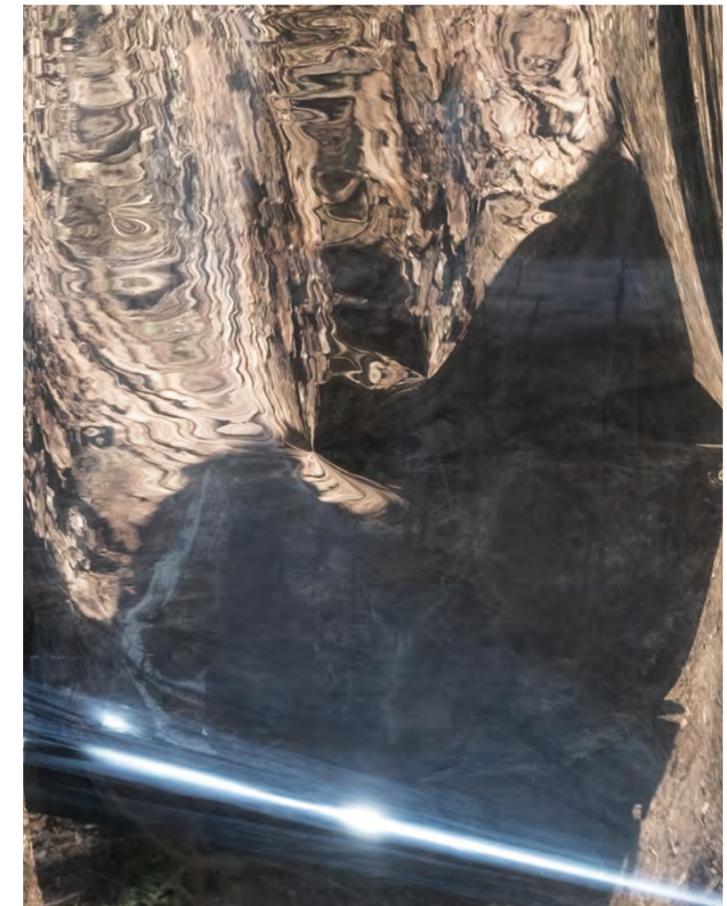
Anne Libby, Beaded Iris, 2020
Courtesy: the artist and Soft
Opening, London

Anne Libby, Green Diaphragm, 2020
Courtesy: the artist and Soft Opening, London



Untitled, 2021

Nature does not look for perfection. Its functionality is not based on straight angles. It does not reflect, it simply grows. What we are building today is a human world filled with repetitive spaces following the principle of form, function and perfection. Yet, it has only disconnected us from the natural happening and growth that is an essential part of life.



Untitled, 2021

The relationship between sculpture and photography

Part One: Looking into Peles Empire's work



MUTANT at SALTS
photos: Gunnar Meier

Peles Empire, FORMATION 2, 2013

porcelain and black grog ceramic
at Cell Project Space, photo: Mariell Amélie



The relationship between sculpture and photography

Part Two: Sculptural Landscape by A Corner With



Artists

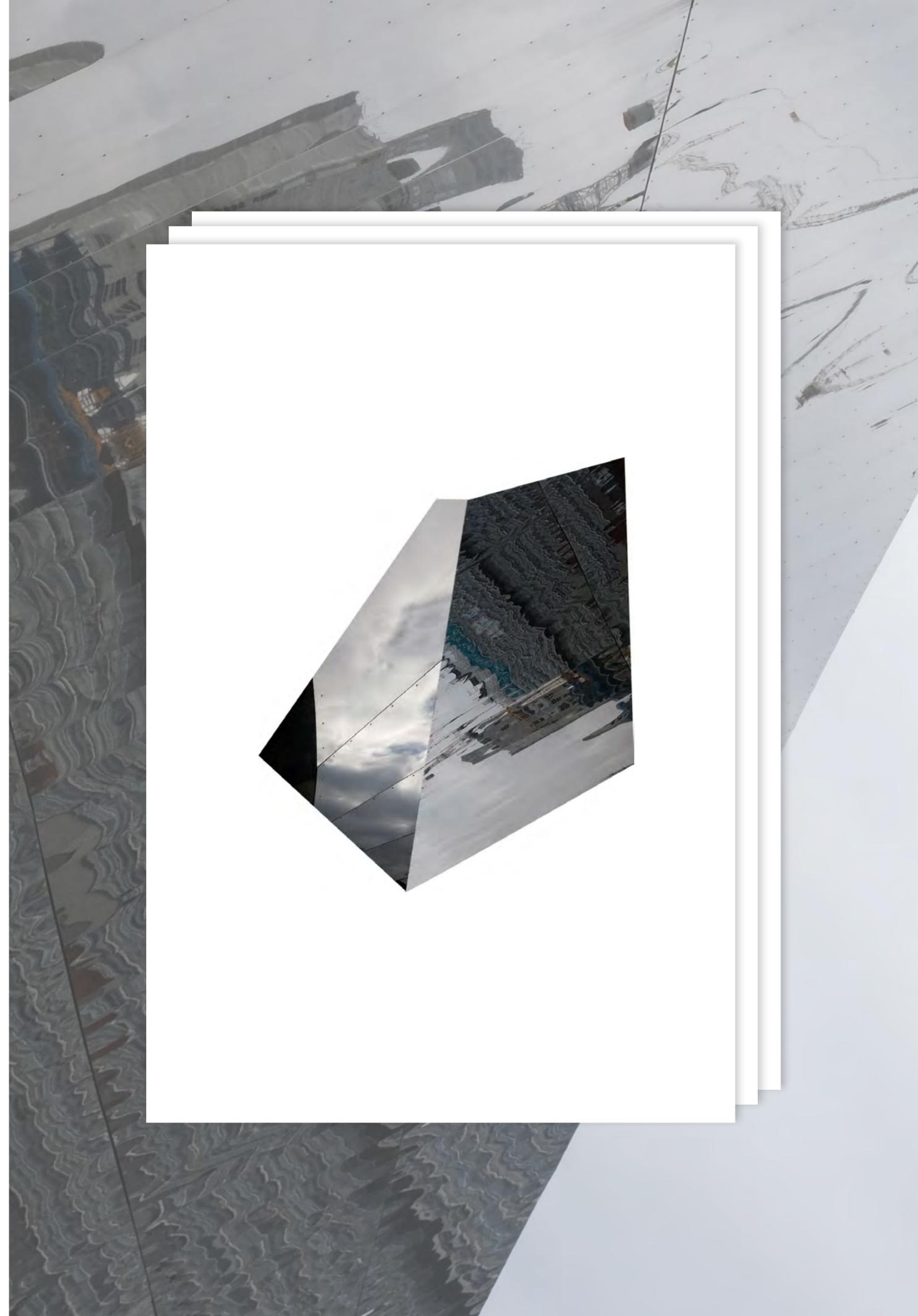
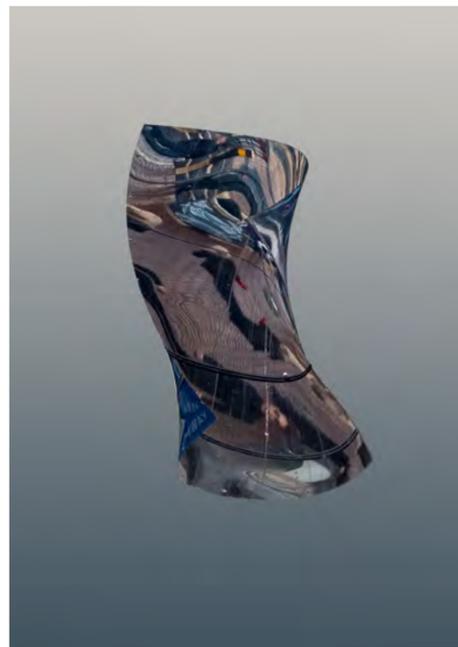
Miriam Nielsen
Inka And Niclas
Adam Jeppesen
Marianne Bjørn

Curated by Trine
Stephensen

30.03.2019 - 31.03.2019

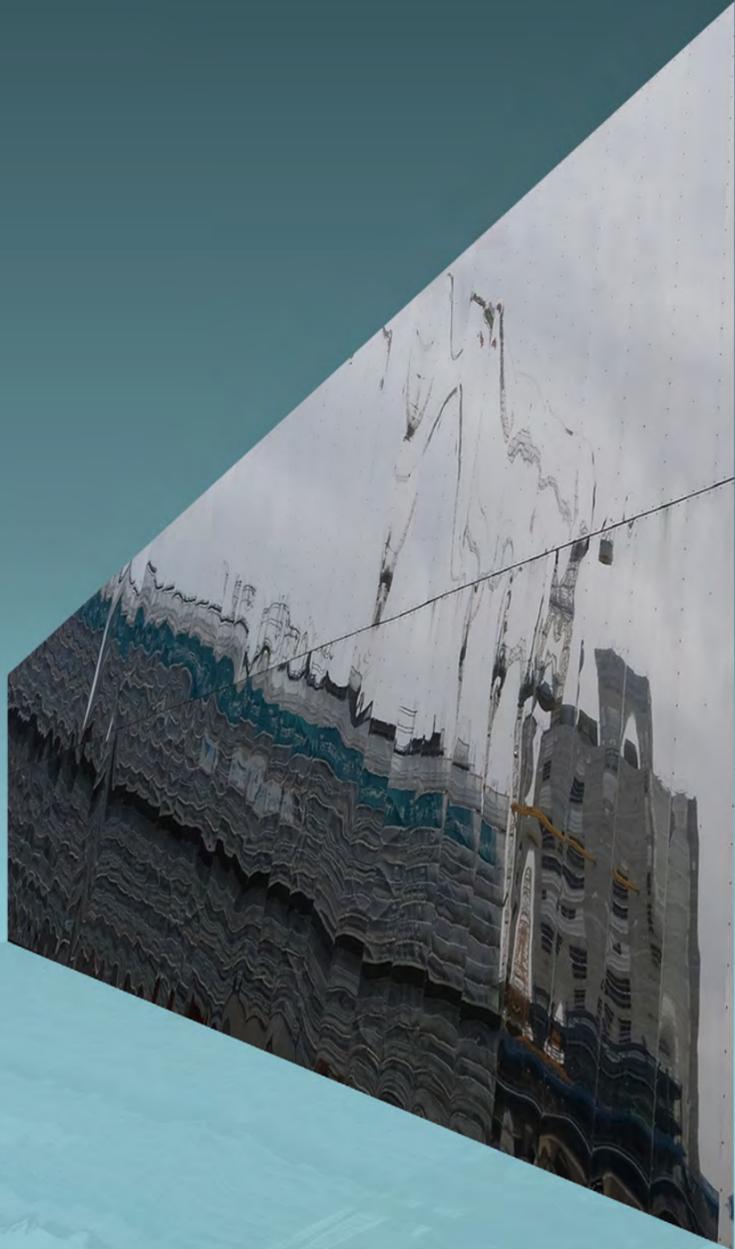


Work in progress



Micro/Macro scale

Visual Potentials, 2021



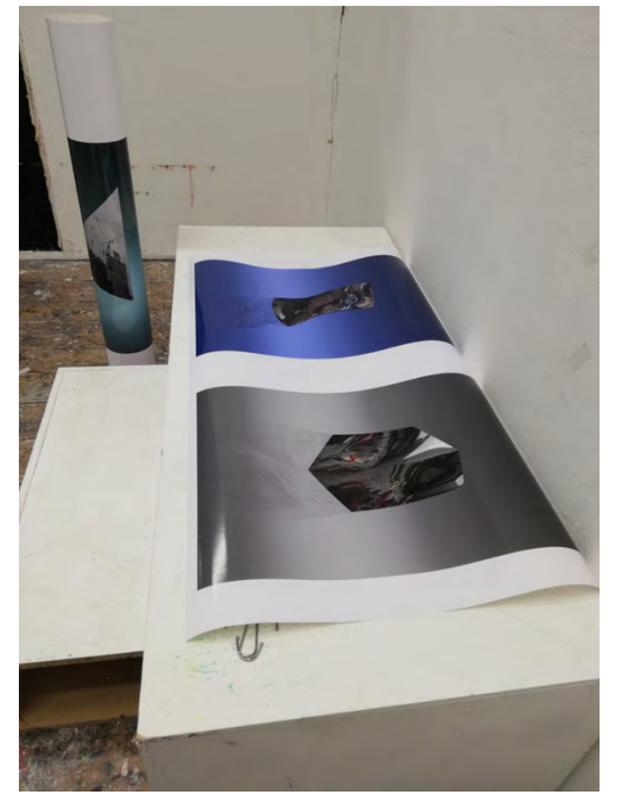
Layers of Reflection

An exhibition in response to
the theme.



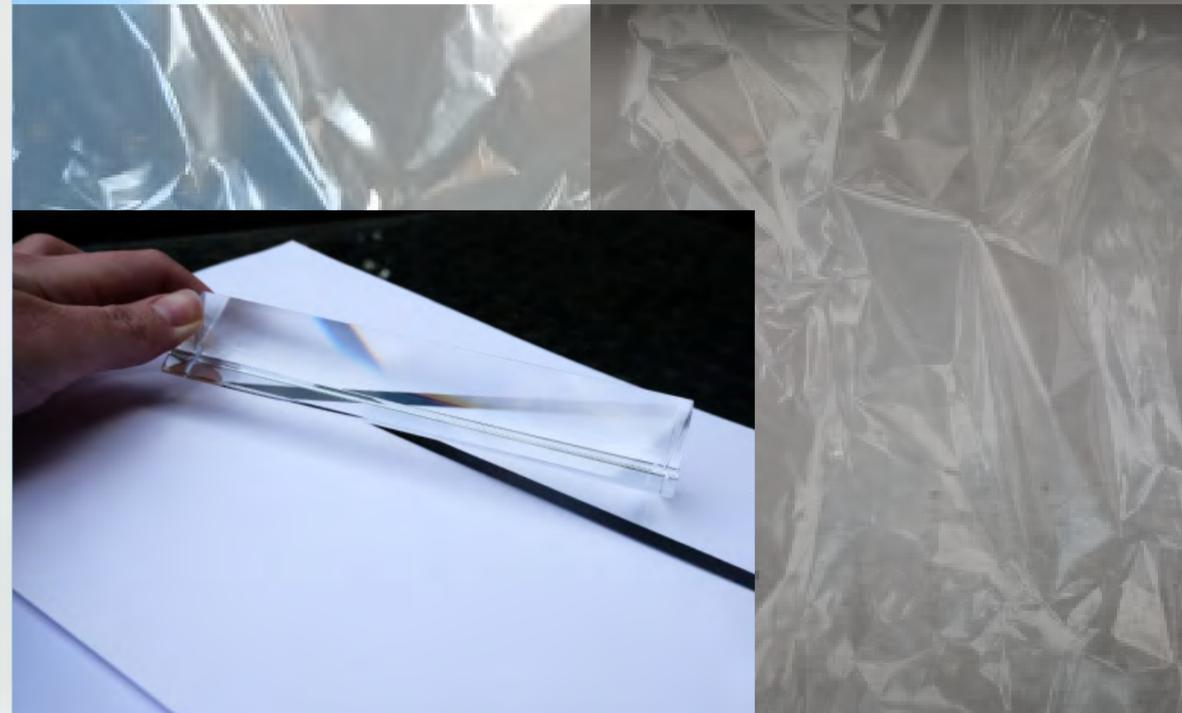
Yoana Petrova

When the digital work entered
the exhibition space as some A2
prints, new ideas related to form
and material emerged.



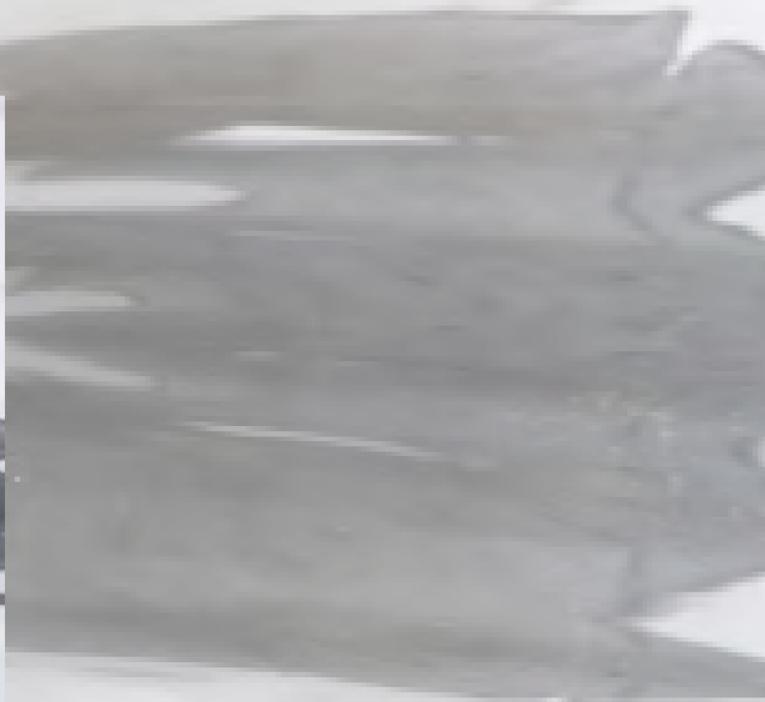
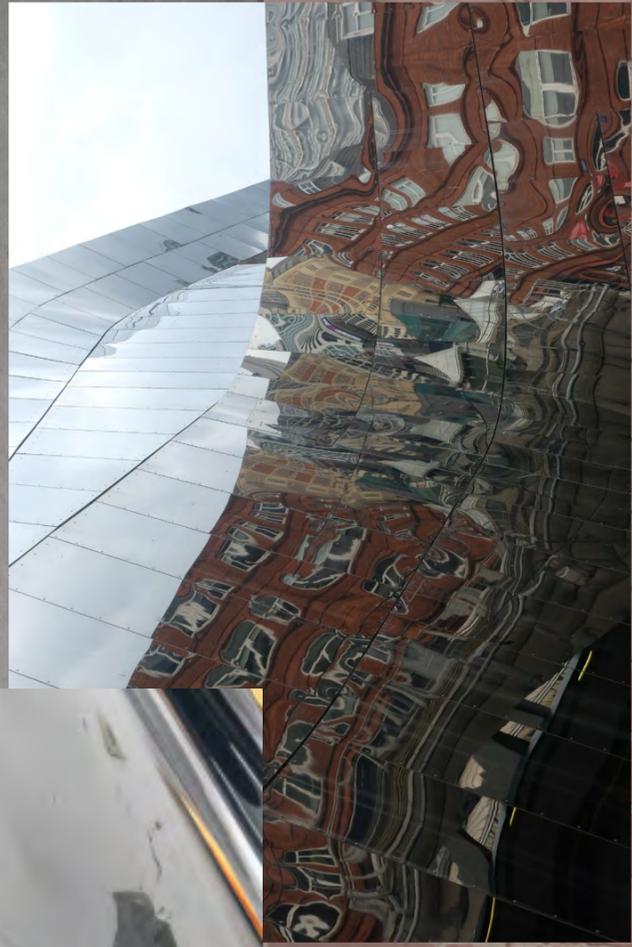
Visual Potentials, 2020

Work in progress



Micro scale

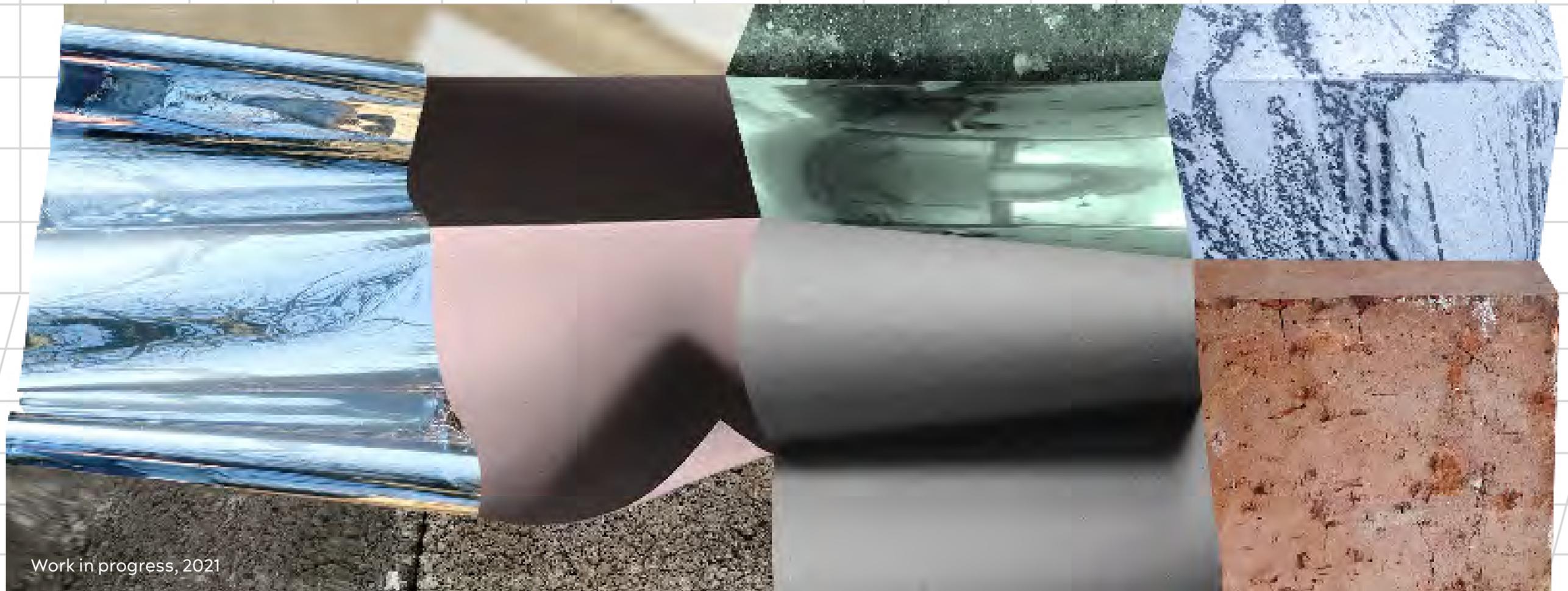
Work in progress



Micro scale

Alternative Architecture

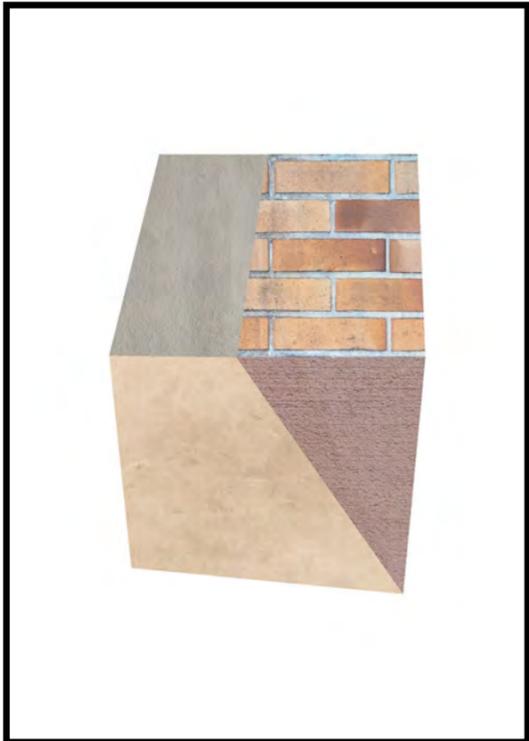
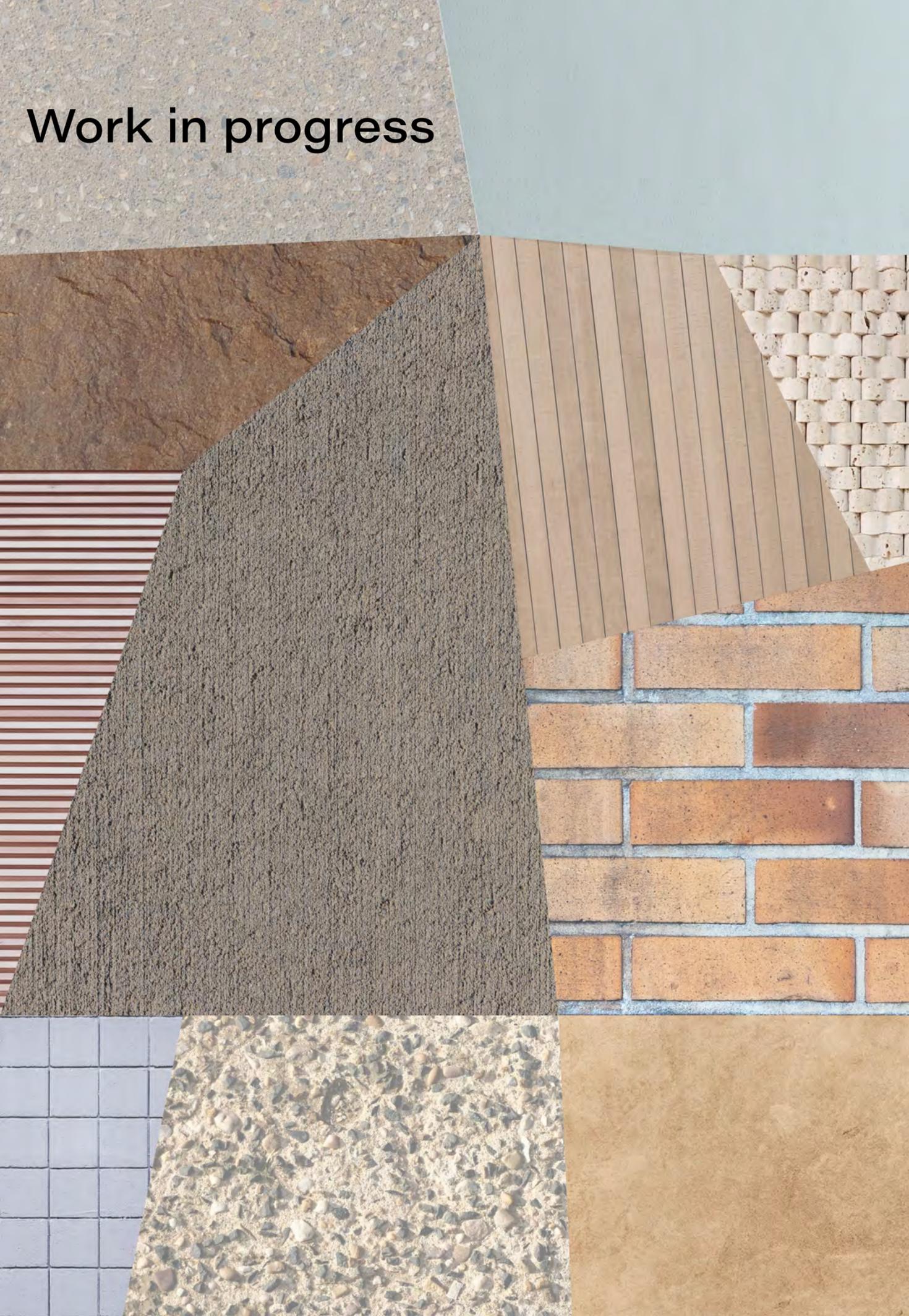
Transformation
Repurposing
Play

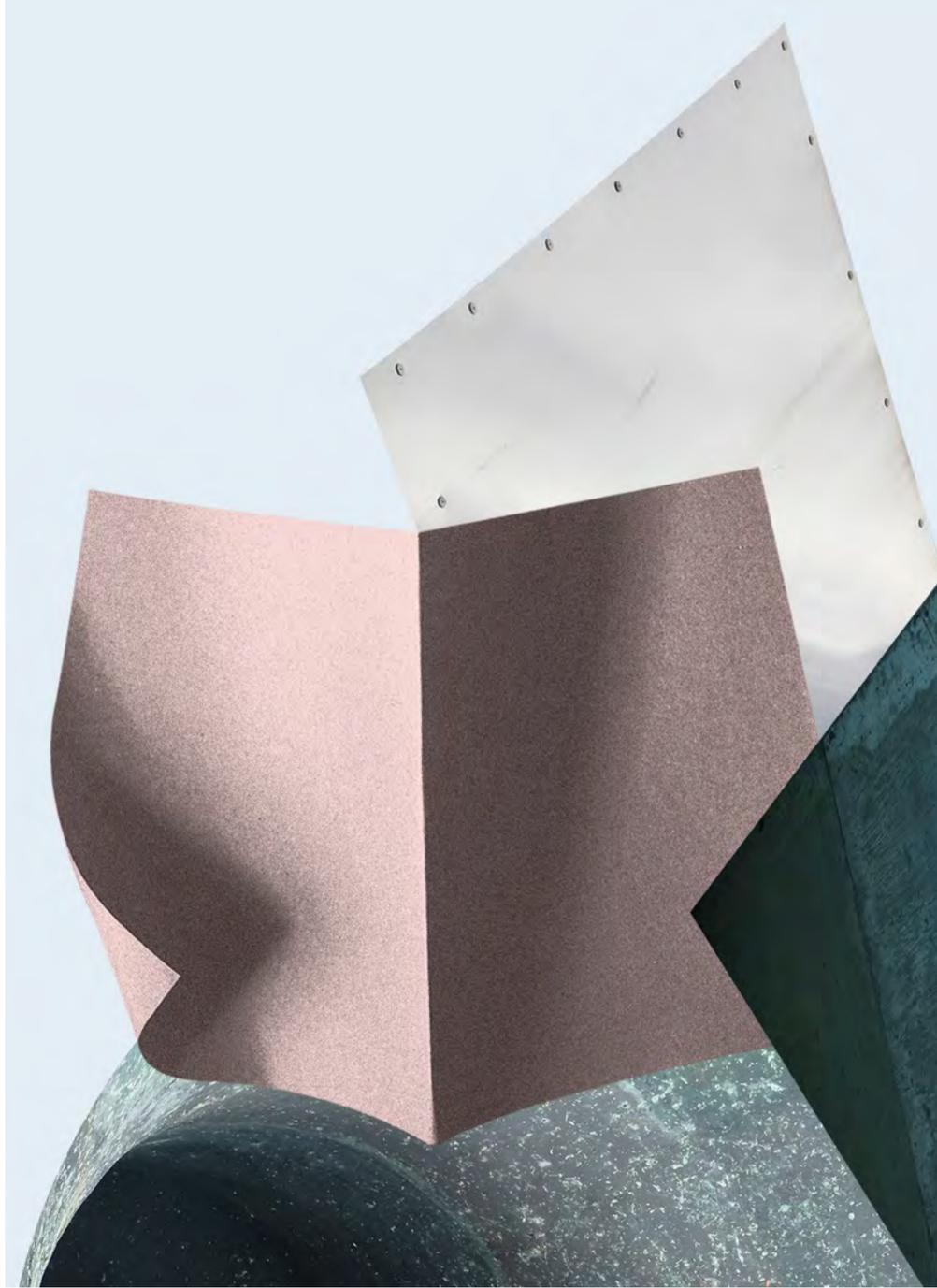


“The building aimed to create a sociable and collaborative work environment. It was simply arranged, as a two-storey, three-bay structure. The two outer-bays were used as individual studio spaces, opening onto a generous double height communal area. Through utilizing off the shelf materials and taking an extremely economic approach to construction, the project provided the generous scale, light quality and ceiling heights desirable for creative uses at a fraction of the cost of a conventional new building.”

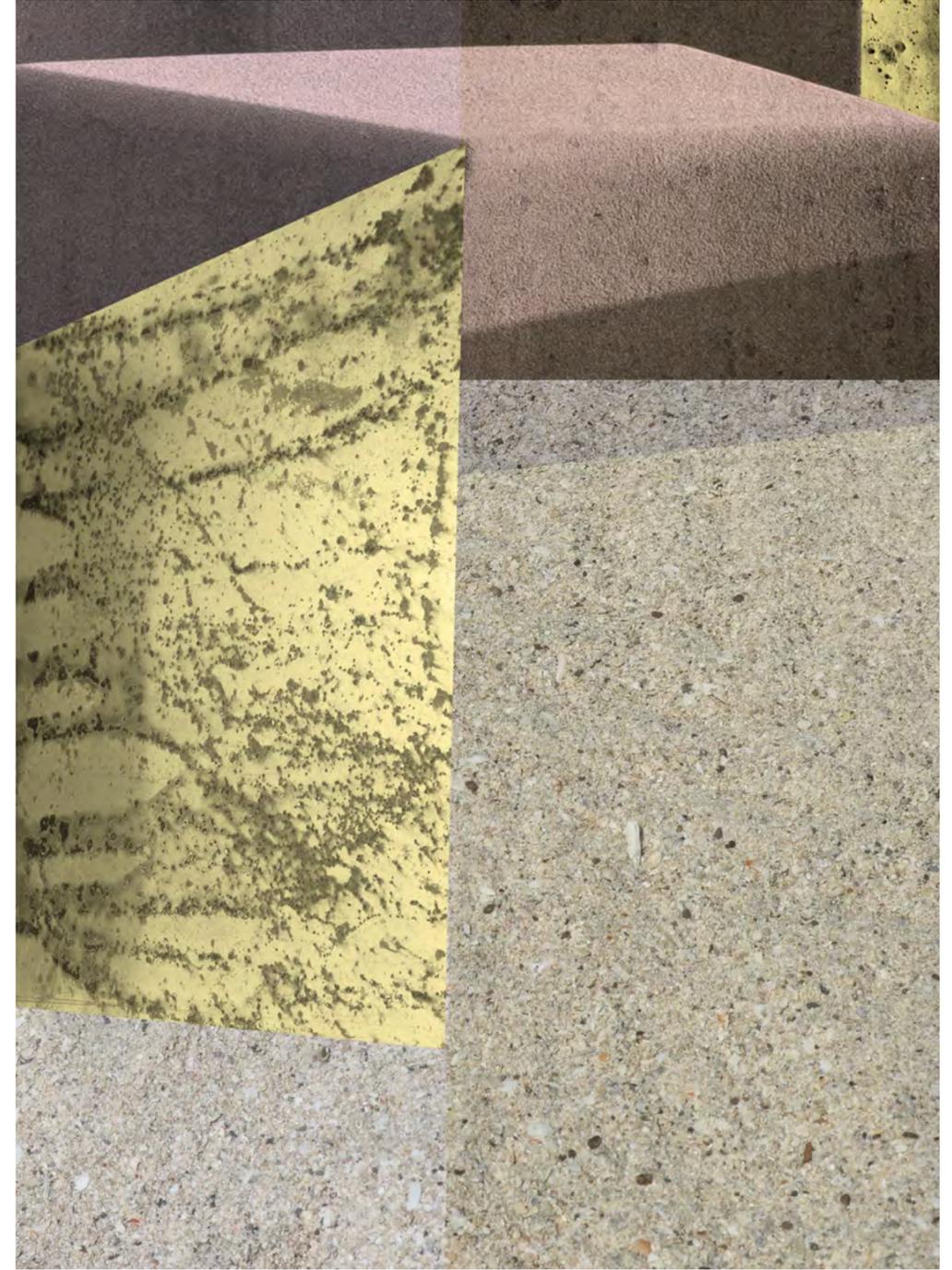


Work in progress





Untitled, 2021



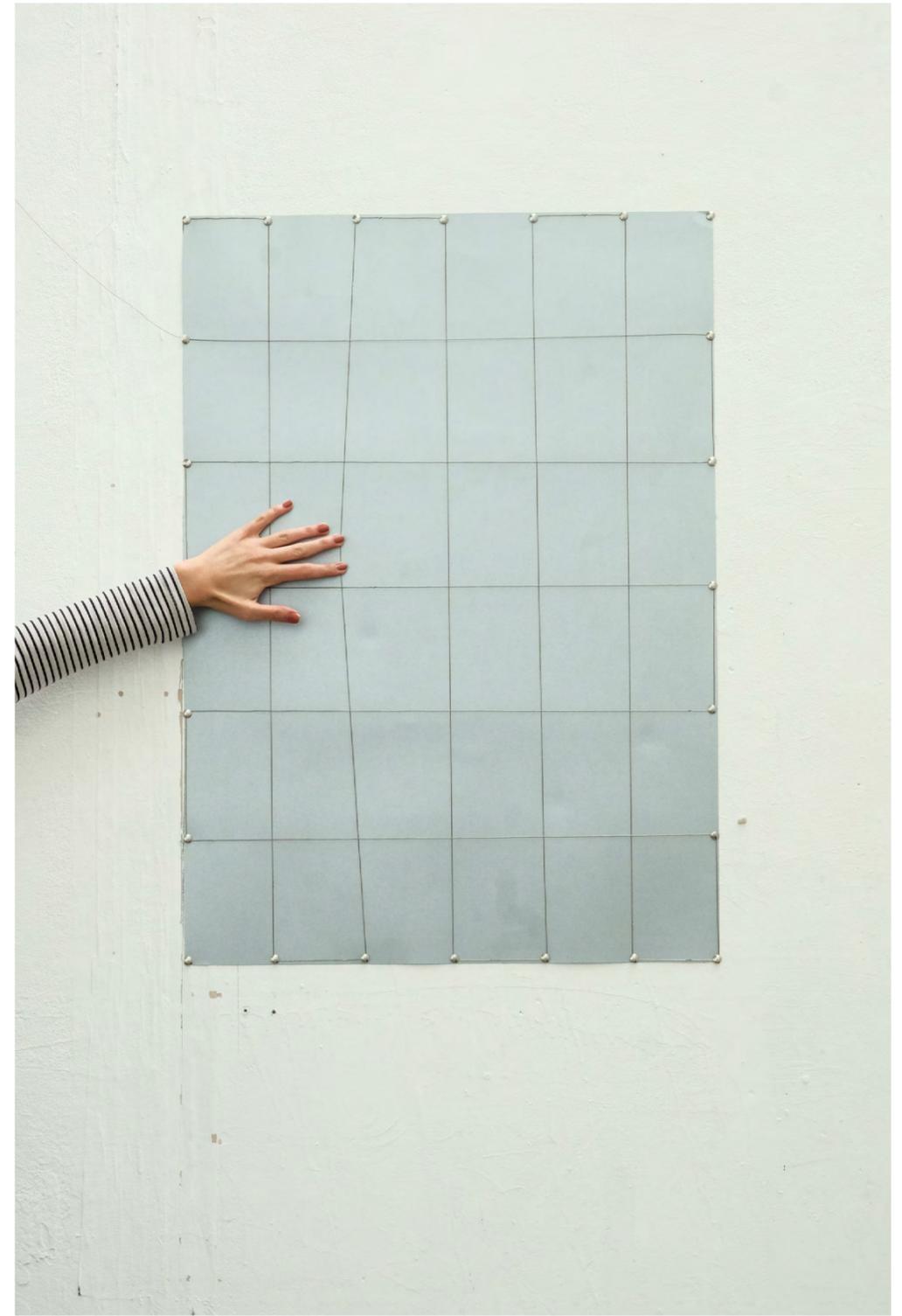
Untitled, 2021



Work in progress



A Different Layer, 2021



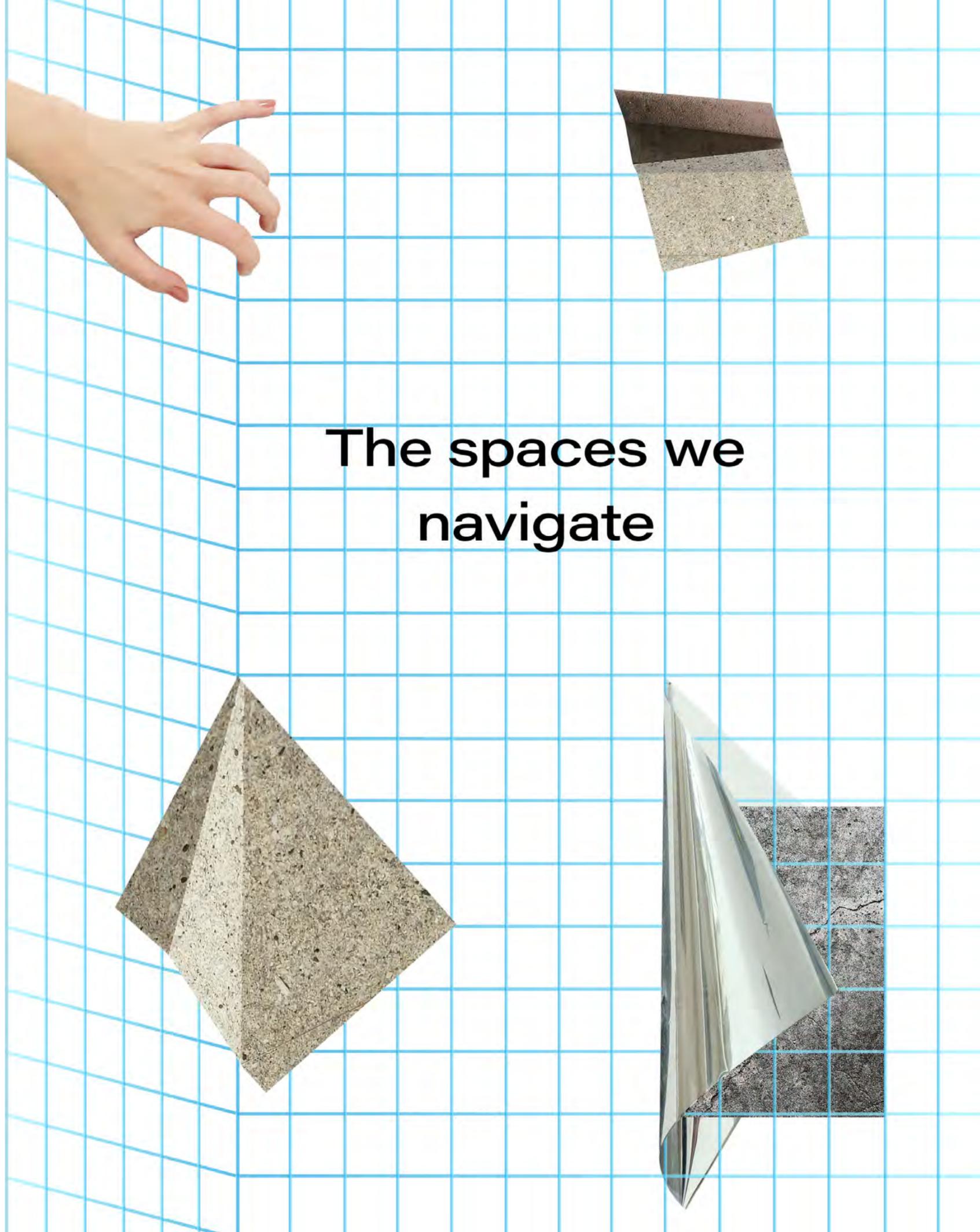
Get rid of the grid (1), 2021



Work in progress



Final Outcome



The spaces we
navigate

Layers of Reflection



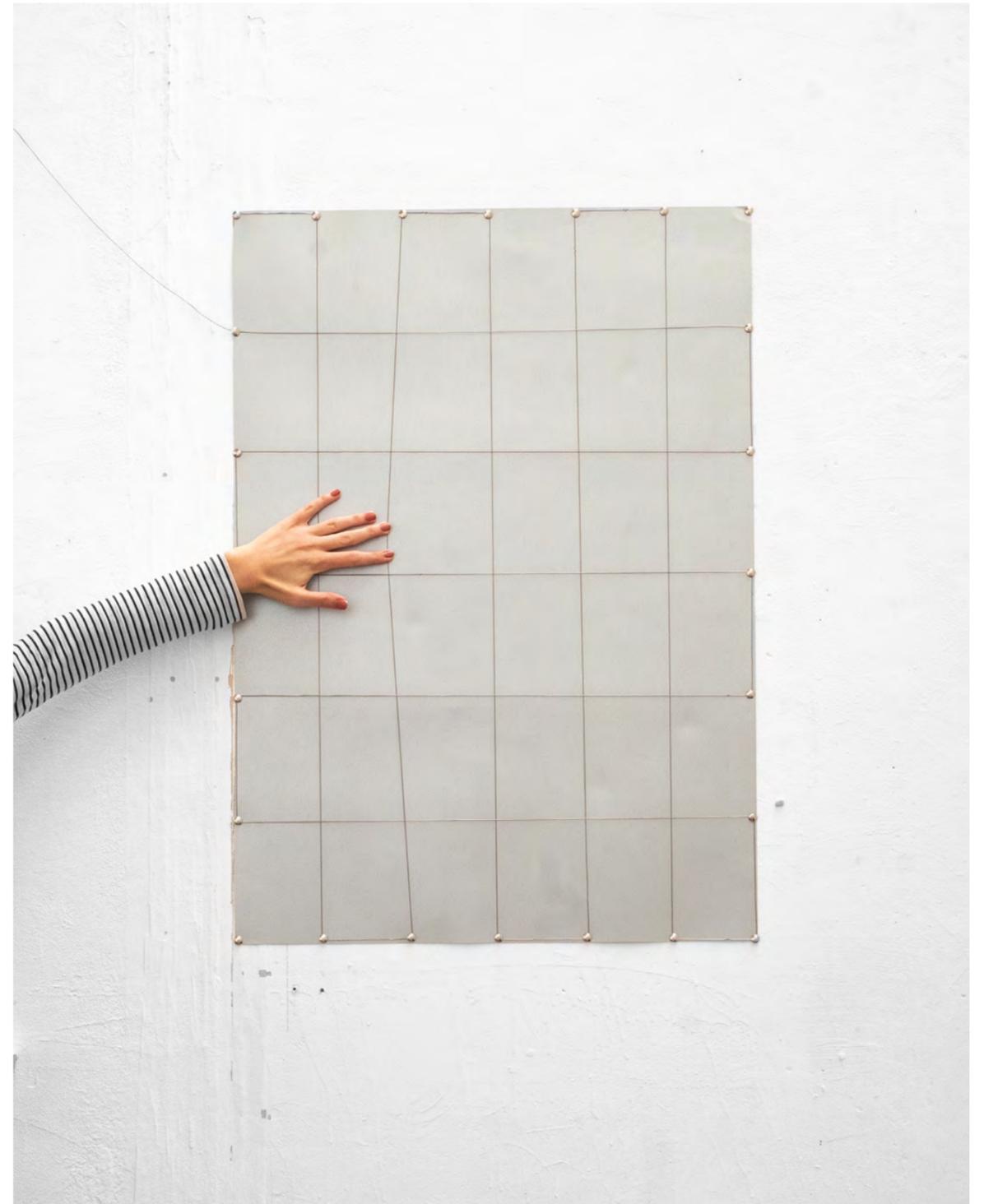
“Visual Potentials”
Print, 594 x 420 mm, 2020

“Reflections”
Print, 594 x 420 mm, 2021

“Underneath”
Print, 594 x 420 mm, 2021



“Same but glossy”
2 x Print, 297 x 420 mm,
covered with reflective
window film, 2021



“Get rid of the grid”
Installation, 841 x 594mm, 2021

Alternative Architecture



“Construction Pieces”
3 x Print, 297 x 210 mm, 307 x 2020 mm, 290 x 203 mm, 2021

“Alternative Architecture”
Installation, 827 x 580 mm, 2021

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