

bagging

by

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B.A. Science in Society Program, Social and Critical Theory Certificate
Wesleyan University, 2014

Submitted to the Department of Architecture in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

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bagging



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A thesis bagged by Stratton Coffman

Submitted to the Department of Architecture
on January 16, 2020 in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of Master of
Architecture

abstract bagging

The projective gesture of architecture, its forward reach as an offering, anticipates a recipient. Through a systematized catcall, it interpellates a subject as the beneficiary of its offering. As Mabel Wilson has reminded us, the professionalization of this effort has helped produce the humanist subject to “consolidate a European worldview,” and thereby define its margins.

Bagging provides a wrinkle in the lines of this orthographic regime, of architecture’s iterative inscription of this liberal subject. It is an attempt at a partial unravelling of architecture’s straightening devices that orient the body toward designed ends (and align it with systems of power) and that “make certain things, and not others, available,” as Sarah Ahmed puts it. It does so not to seek abolition of the line but to open design to new (deviant) subjects, like cows, crowds, and sodomites.

As a set of role-playing moves at body-ish scale, bagging gathers a multiplicity of contents within soft parameters, working with textile to deny the conventional fixity of position, dimensioning, scale. Bagging invites a deviation from the orthographic view, turning our attention to that “field of unreachable objects” constituted by following lines of inscription, turning sideways to nuzzle the warm side of the cow, to dwell within a mess of bodies, to seek pleasure beyond the straight.

Thesis Supervisor: Ana Miljački
Title: Professor of Architecture



What an emotional (and intellectual, I guess) rollercoaster these last 3.5+ years have been. I owe so much to those bags in my life that encouraged me to run with this weird project, to make it even weirder, to stay true to the bagging spirit, who fed the bag ideas, helping it grow and absorb, who calmed the creeping critical faculties, who focused and directed my efforts when I couldn't myself, who injected joy when the bag seemed a little deflated—I like to think that because of all this, this project isn't mine alone. You've been bagged!

thank you,
bags!

x

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bagging contents

- 1 Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 53.
- 2 Mabel O. Wilson, "Changing the Subject: Race and Public Space," *Artforum*, <https://www.artforum.com/print/201706/changing-the-subject-race-and-public-space-68687>.





“Just when polite liberal (not to mention correct leftist) discourse ceased speaking of us as dykes, faggots, colored girls, or natives, we began speaking of ourselves this way. Refusing the invitation to absorption, we insisted instead upon politicizing and working into cultural critique the very constructions that a liberal humanism increasingly exposed in its tacit operations of racial, sexual, and gender privilege was seeking to bring to a formal close.”¹



“What’s interesting to me is that this distancing of architecture from labor is part of a much larger early-modern epistemology, a whole new worldview that also produced its own ontology, which was, by definition, universal: the birth of the humanist subject. But of course that subject, the modern “Man,” is not universal—it’s exclusively European, and it was invented exactly at the same time that the era of European colonization was beginning.”²

- 3 Wislon, "Changing the Subject: Race and Public Space."
- 4 Brown, *States of Injury*, 40.
- 5 Brown, *States of Injury*, 6.
- 6 Brown, *States of Injury*, 110.
- 7 Brown, *States of Injury*, 127. According to Brown, even as subjects make claims through difference, such identity formations organized into identity politics are systematically coopted by liberal regimes through the depoliticization of "the pluralistic "I's"" through its incorporation into the abstract, "universalistic "we"." The identity of the "I" is constituted by political aims that remain, within this framework, entirely defined by the larger common good of the abstracted, universal "we," so that its "difference" is effectively erased or diminished. Thus, the politicized identity is incorporated into the liberal political regime at the same time as its political efficacy as a force outside of and resistant to state power is foreclosed. Through its aspiration for an abstract subject, liberal discourse naturalizes (depoliticizes) differences.
- 8 Max Weber, H.H. Gerth, ed. *From Max Weber* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

The projective gesture of architecture, its forward reach as an offering, anticipates a recipient. Through a systematized catcall, it interpellates a subject as the beneficiary of its offering. As Mabel Wilson has reminded us, the professionalization of this effort has helped produce the humanist subject to "consolidate a European worldview,"³ and thereby define its margins.

The production of this architectural subject requires splitting off the individual (the user) from its other limbs, an attenuation supported by the rhetoric of liberalism. In "the autonomous, rights-bearing fictional unity that liberalism promises to secure," we find a fantasy of the emancipation of the 'I' from all those attachments, dependencies, and other sustaining features that might trouble or otherwise implicate this 'I' in other forms—the stuff around and to the side.⁴ In the words of political theorist and queer badass Wendy Brown, "as freedom from encroachment by others and from collective institutions, [liberal freedom] entails an atomistic ontology, a metaphysics of separation, an ethos of defensiveness, and an abstract equality."⁵

This conception of liberal freedom presents its subject, the autonomous 'I' to which rights accrue, as a vacancy open to all, a spectral, unmarked nowhere. Yet this 'abstract equality' that liberal freedom boasts "guarantees only that all individuals will be treated as if they were sovereign and isolated individuals. Liberal equality guarantees that the state will regard us all as equally abstracted from the social powers constituting our existence, equally decontextualized from the unequal conditions of our lives."⁶ Its ahistoricizing



rhetoric of universality—that gives force to the promise of the I—necessarily “mystifies the conditions and power that delimit the possibility of achieving personhood, while its decontextualizing force deprives political consciousness of recognition of the histories, relations, and modalities of power that produce and situate us as human.”⁷

As a humanist discipline, a profession formed around technical reasoning, architecture offers a field of acts, techniques, methods, representations through which the subject is addressed, parceled. This individuation begins at home (or the workplace), with the model of the architect as a humanist subject producing abstract knowledge through drawings. Drawings are instruments of communication, conveying instructions through professionally standardized and codified languages (such as annotation symbols), anticipating an audience equipped to interpret them. These documents organize—and are the outcomes of—the regulatory apparatus that attended the professionalization of architecture. As Weber writes of the emergence of bureaucracy—and rationalized competencies—in the late nineteenth century, “the management of the office follows general rules, which are more or less stable, more or less exhaustive, and which can be learned. Knowledge of these rules represents a special technical expertise which the officials possess.”⁸ This organizational form attempts to delaminate expertise from the particular life histories of any given individual that may come to assume the position of the expert. As documents of specialized knowledge, architectural drawings are thus oriented

“the autonomous, rights-bearing fictional unity that liberalism promises to secure”

x

- 9 Sara Ahmed, "A Phenomenology of Whiteness," *Feminist Theory* 8, no. 2: 158.
- 10 Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 8.

toward certain professional others, even as they attest to the effort to erase "the histories, relations, and modalities of power that produce and situate us as human"—they are the material out of which involved parties perform their respective competencies and enter into legally bound agreements. In this epistemic arrangement, competency works industriously to expunge from its transmissions traces of the differences lived by socially enmeshed bodies, to defend its knowledge as unmediated by power. With enough training, anyone may grasp the content of architecture's address.

To the extent that architecture relies on professional commensurability—the depoliticization of knowledge—as its source of legitimacy, it remains bound to the rhetoric of liberalism, and to the 'atomistic ontology' of its subject. In regulating its instruments of communication, it hails those already well positioned to assume its guise. As Sara Ahmed shows, "the 'hey you' is not just addressed to anybody: some bodies more than others are recruited, those that can inherit the 'character' of the organization, by returning its image with a reflection that reflects back that image, what we could call a 'good likeness'. ... whiteness is what the institution is orientated 'around', so that even bodies that might not appear white still have to inhabit whiteness, if they are to get 'in'."⁹ Whiteness is one "straightening device" among many that the liberal discipline of architecture deploys to habituate its bodies.

The work shared here departs from a feeling of not-quite-fitting, a feeling captured in Alexander Weheliye's moving,



motivating question: “what different modalities of the human come to light if we do not take the liberal humanist figure of Man as the master-subject but focus on how humanity has been imagined and lived by those subjects excluded from this domain?” What if we re-enter moments when architecture attempted to respond to a “different modality of the human”?¹⁰ What if our architectural labor cared about entities beyond that “fictional unity that liberalism promises to secure”? I offer the beginning of a revisionist archive of queerness as it has haunted the production of architecture (and liberalism at large), three historical moments when certain architectural regimes sought to enclose and discipline failed subjects, entities that couldn’t speak, or seemed immeasurable or beyond betterment. In the attempt to produce its subjects, to stabilize them into predictable patterns of use, occupancy, flow, and behavior—to straighten—architecture produces means of defying its ‘hey you.’

‘hey you’

x



Scott Mclaughlin, "Mid-Plains
Equipment Titan West Cattle
Handling Equipment,"
YouTube Video, 4:48, January 16
2016. [https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=hpygeHoHjcY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpygeHoHjcY)



X



- 11 Temple Grandin, *Thinking In Pictures: My Life with Autism* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 25.





Through the machine, I reached out and held the animal. When I held his head in the yoke, I imagined placing my hands on his forehead and under his chin and gently easing him into position. Body boundaries seemed to disappear, and I had no awareness of pushing the levers. The rear pusher gate and head yoke became an extension of my hands.

People with autism sometimes have body boundary problems. They are unable to judge by feel where their body ends and the chair they are sitting on or the object they are holding begins, much like what happens when a person loses a limb but still experiences the feeling of the limb being there. In this case, the parts of the apparatus that held the animal felt as if they were an extension of my own body, similar to the phantom limb effect.¹²

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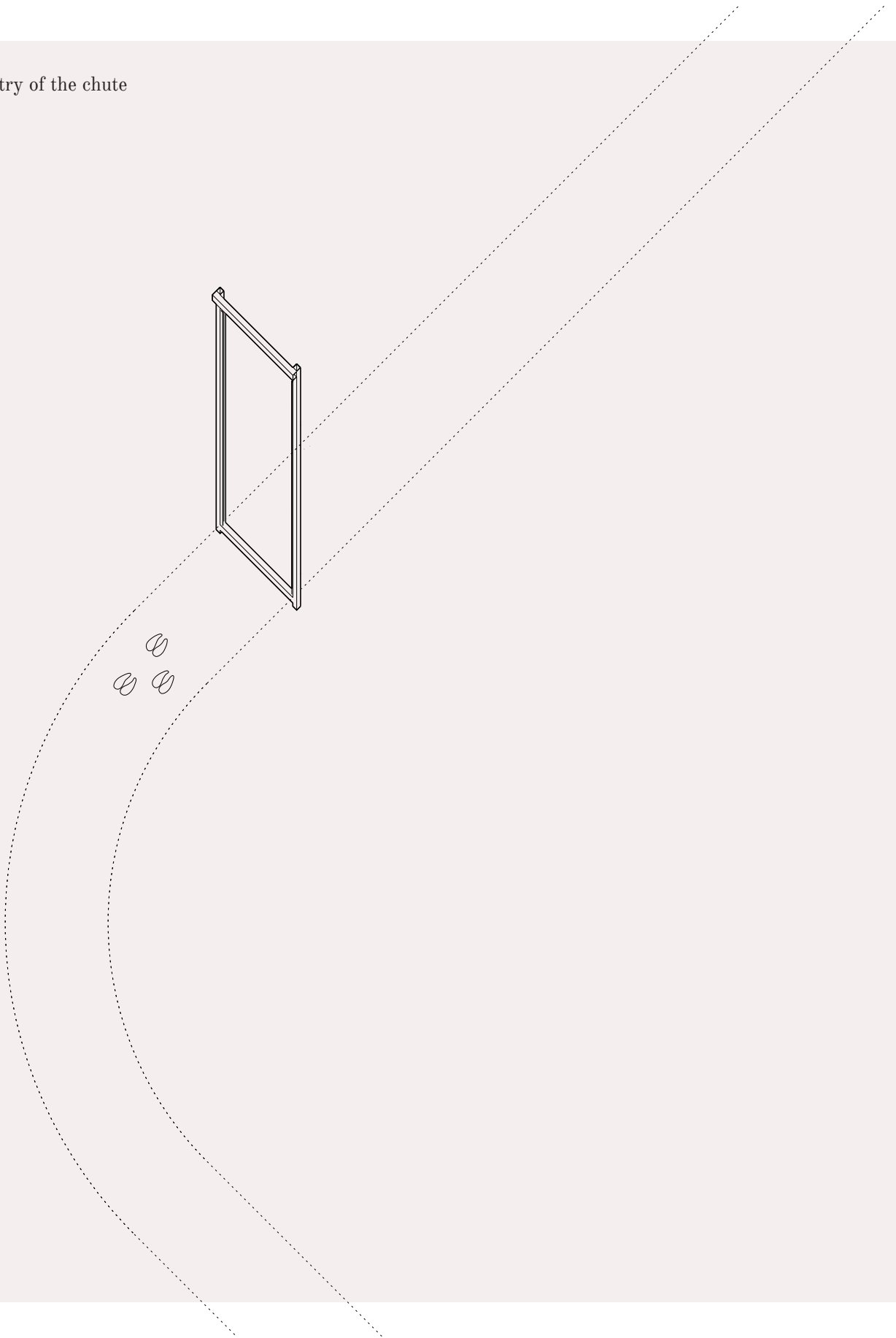
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CASE 001: COW

TECHNICAL EXPOSITION
The Squeeze Chute, 1992

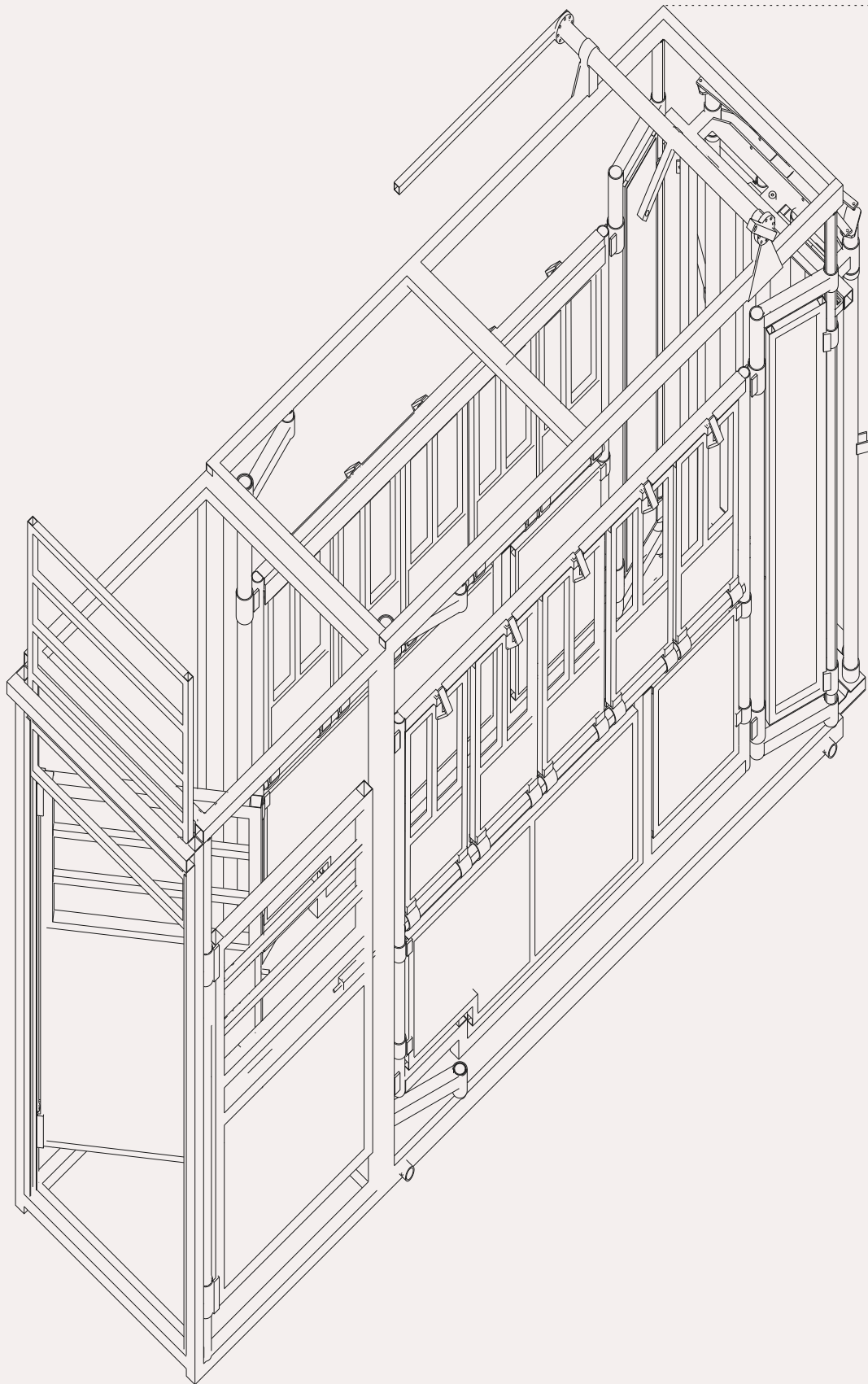


The entry of the chute



The full assembly of the chute





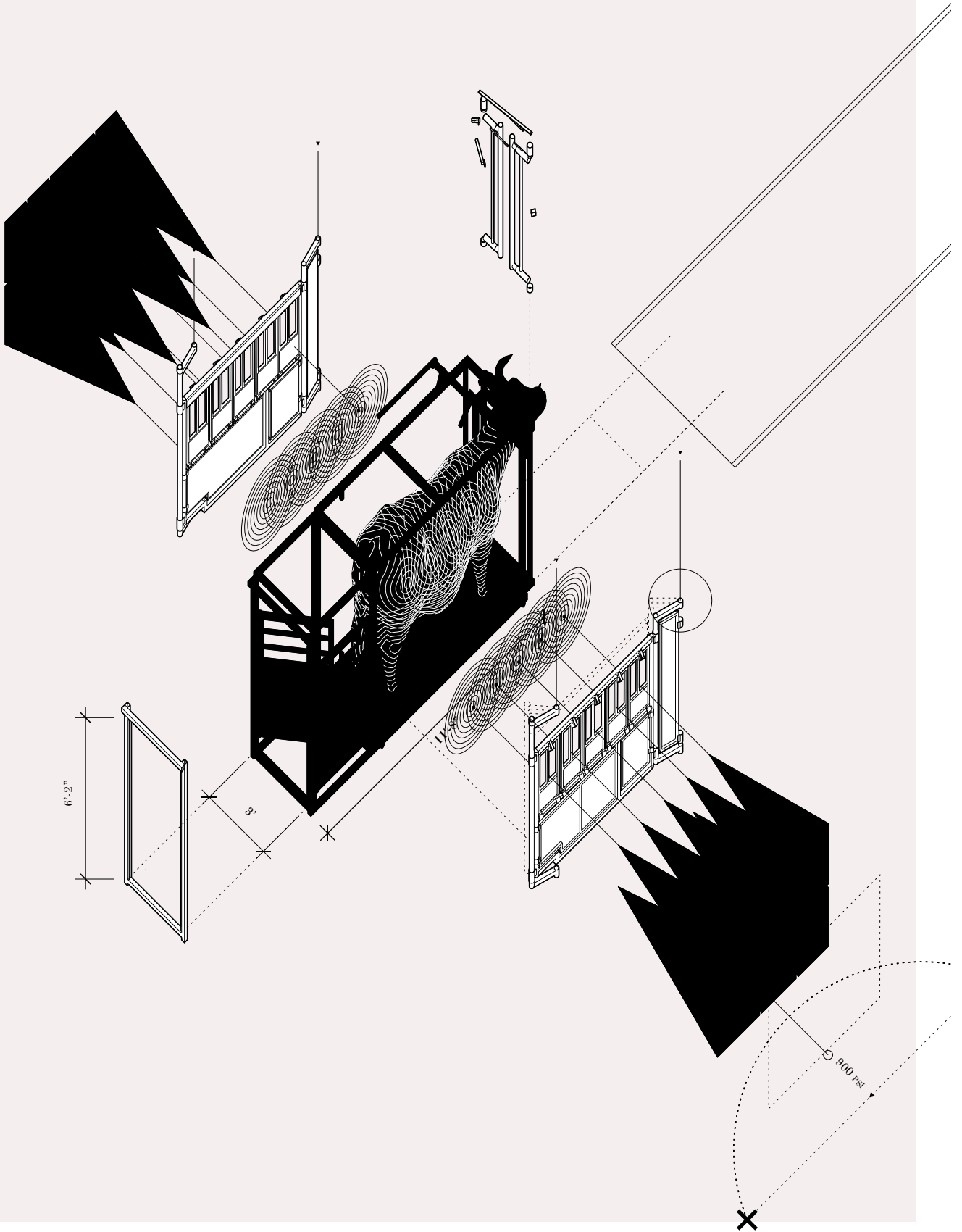
Resting position of the body in the chute



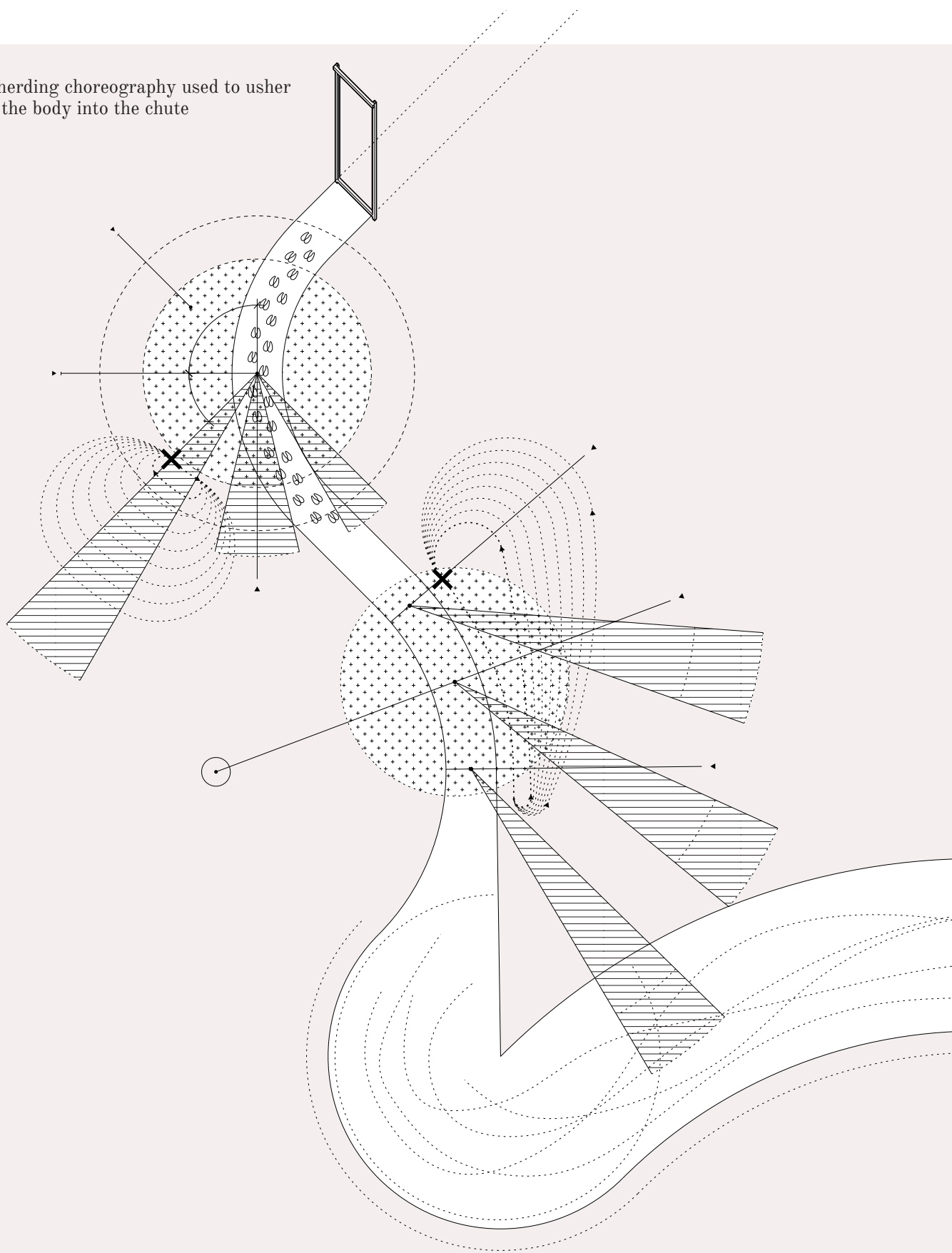


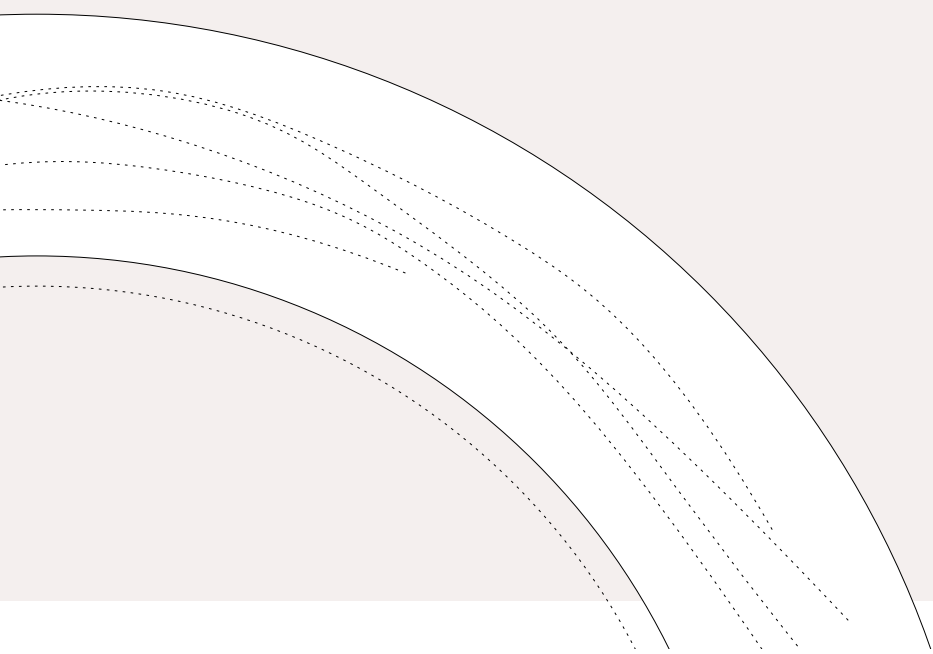
The vectors of applied pressure

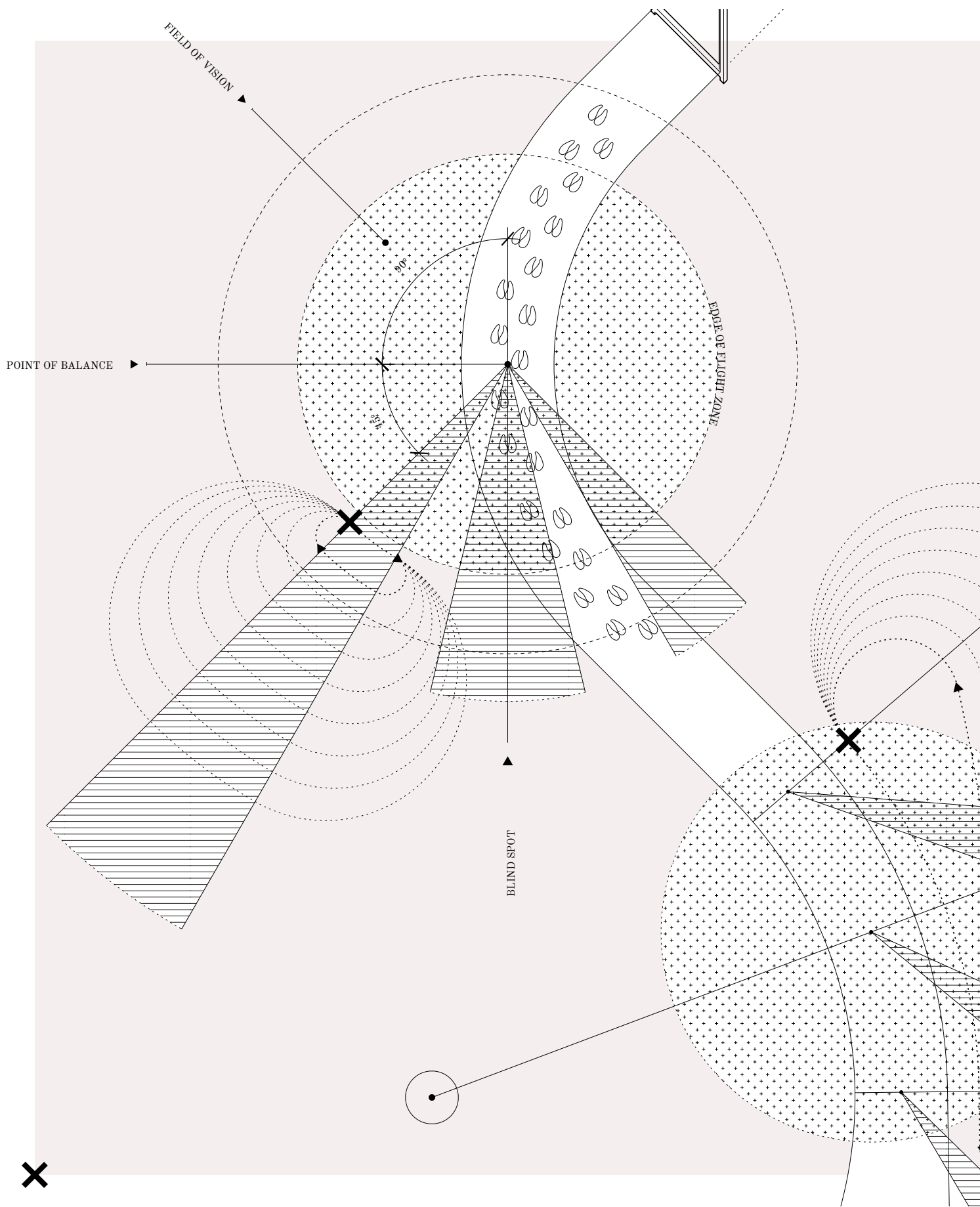


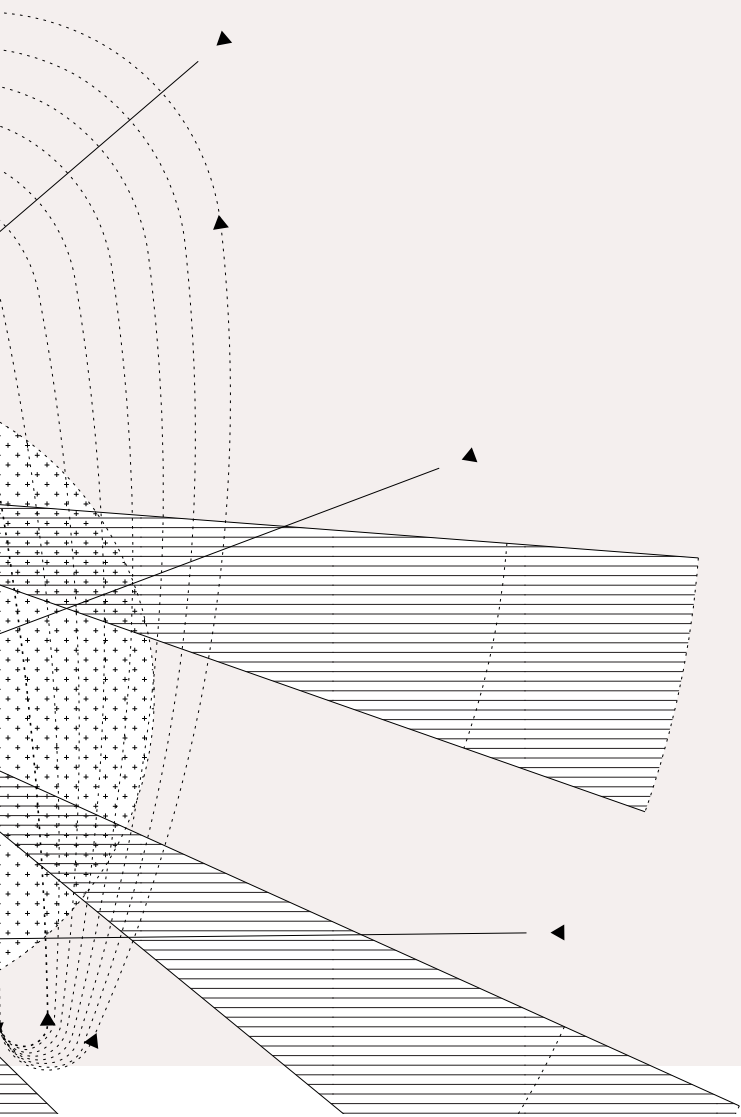


The herding choreography used to usher the body into the chute

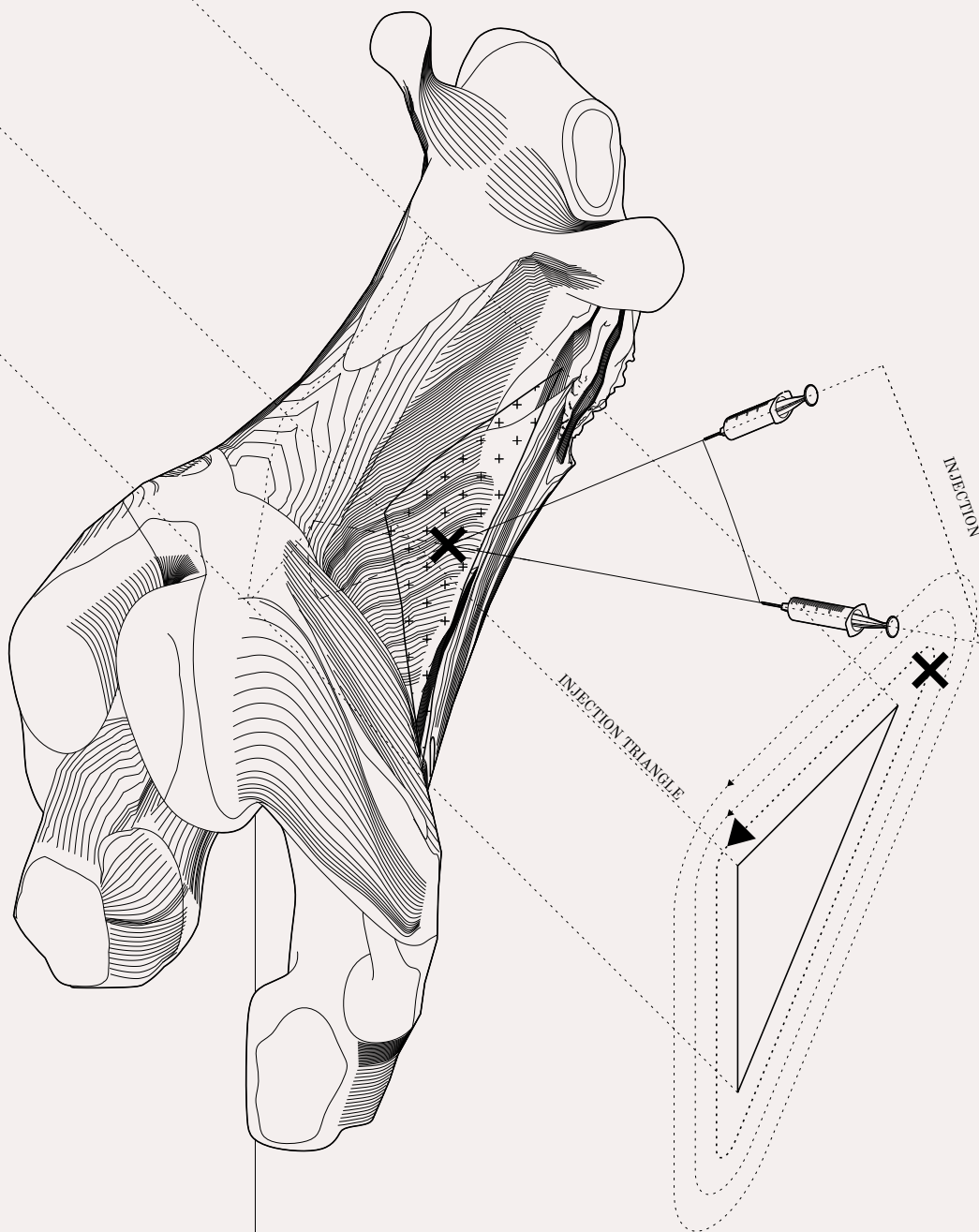






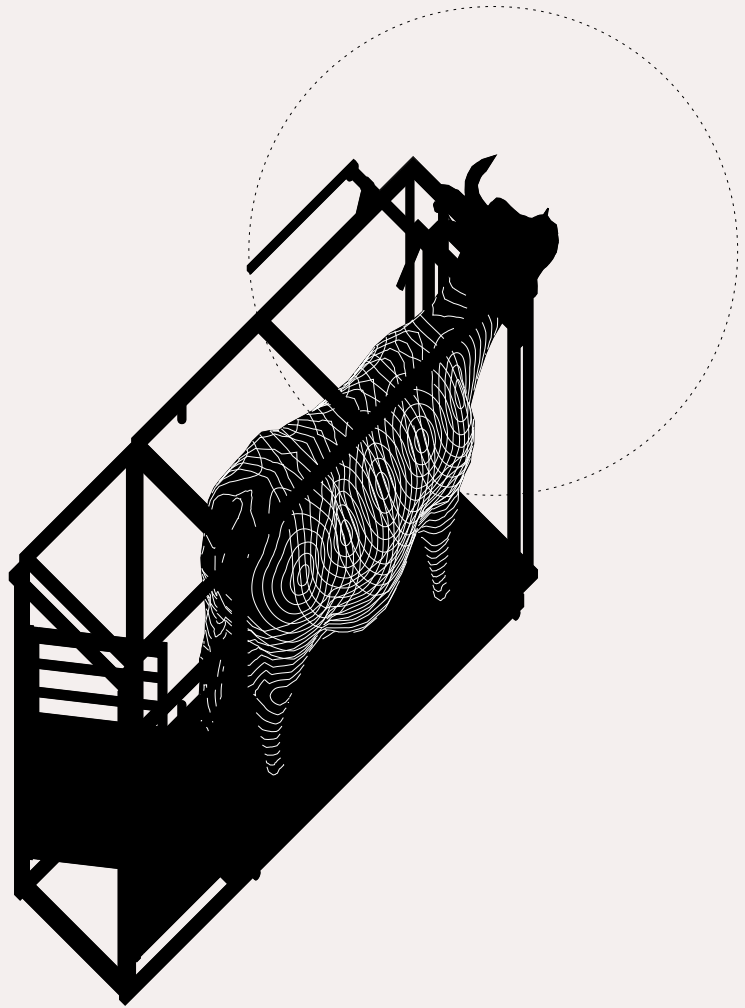


Anatomy of injection triangle



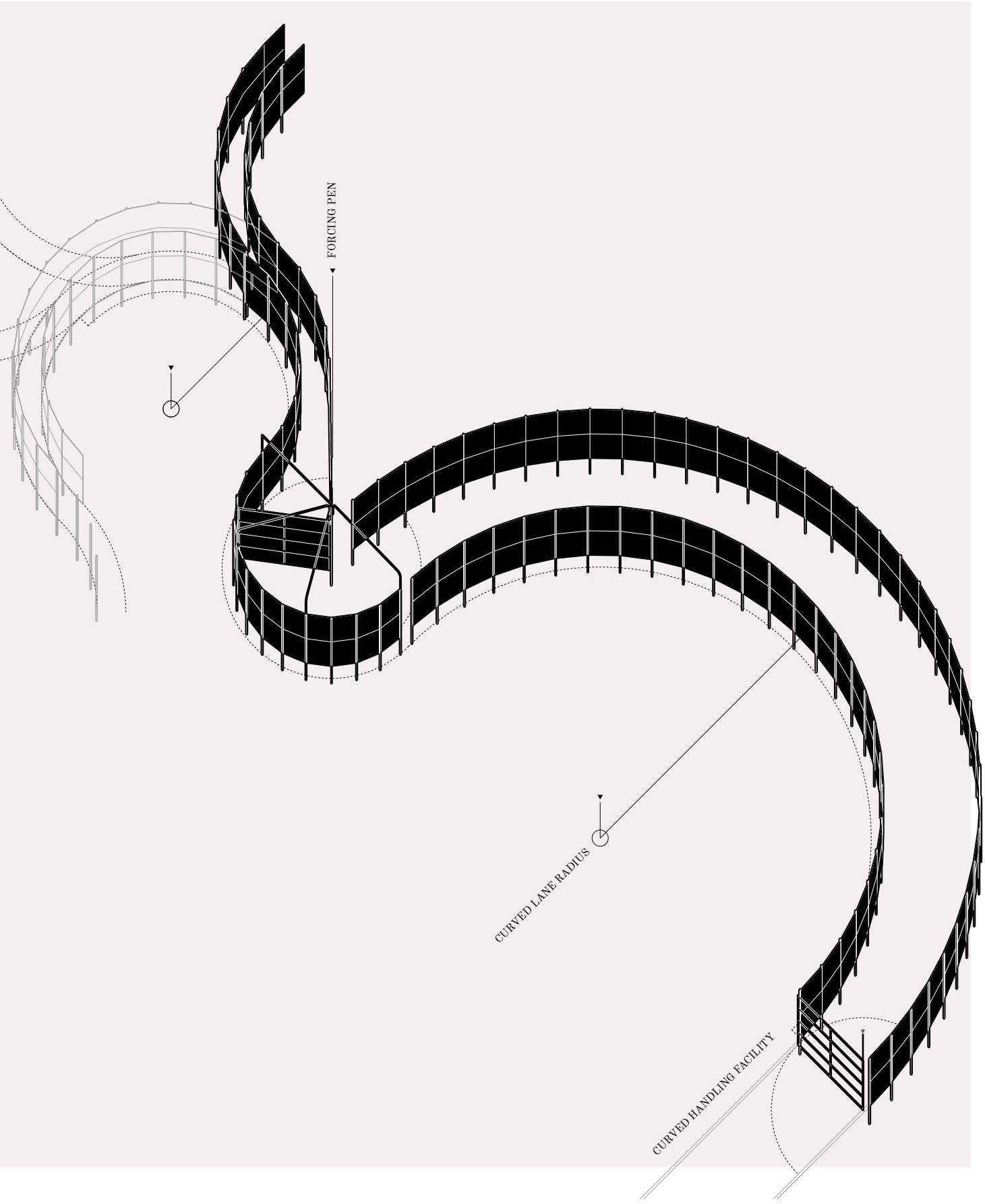
ANTERIOR MUSCULATURE



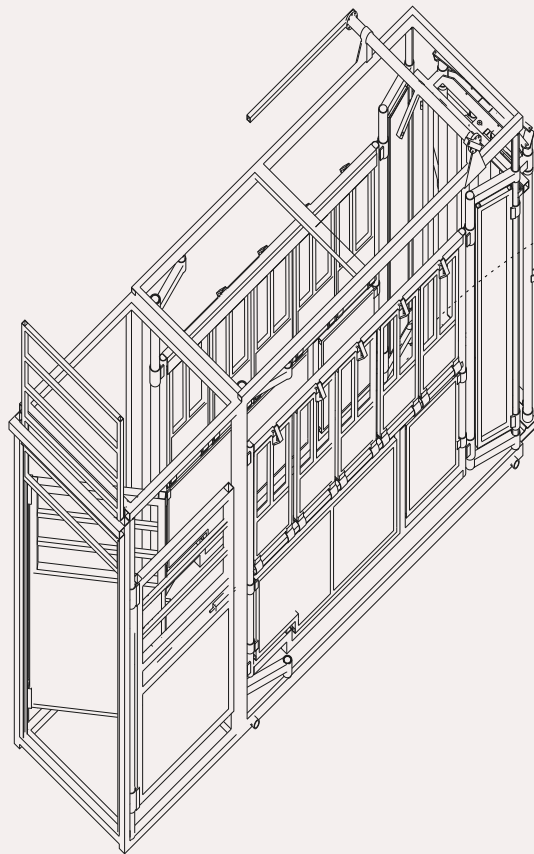


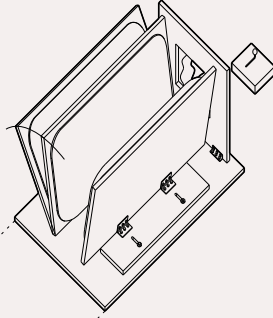
Extended herding facility



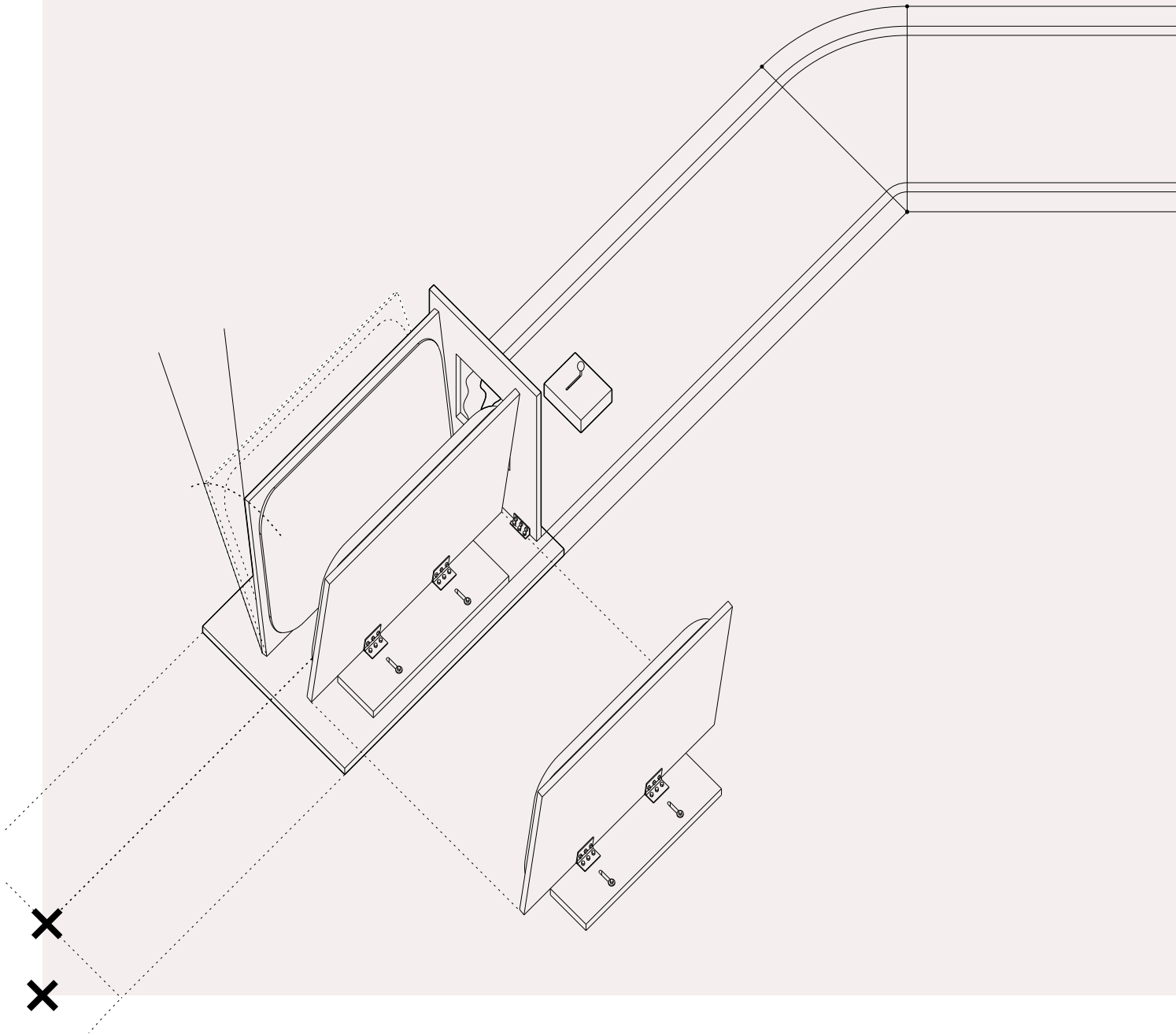


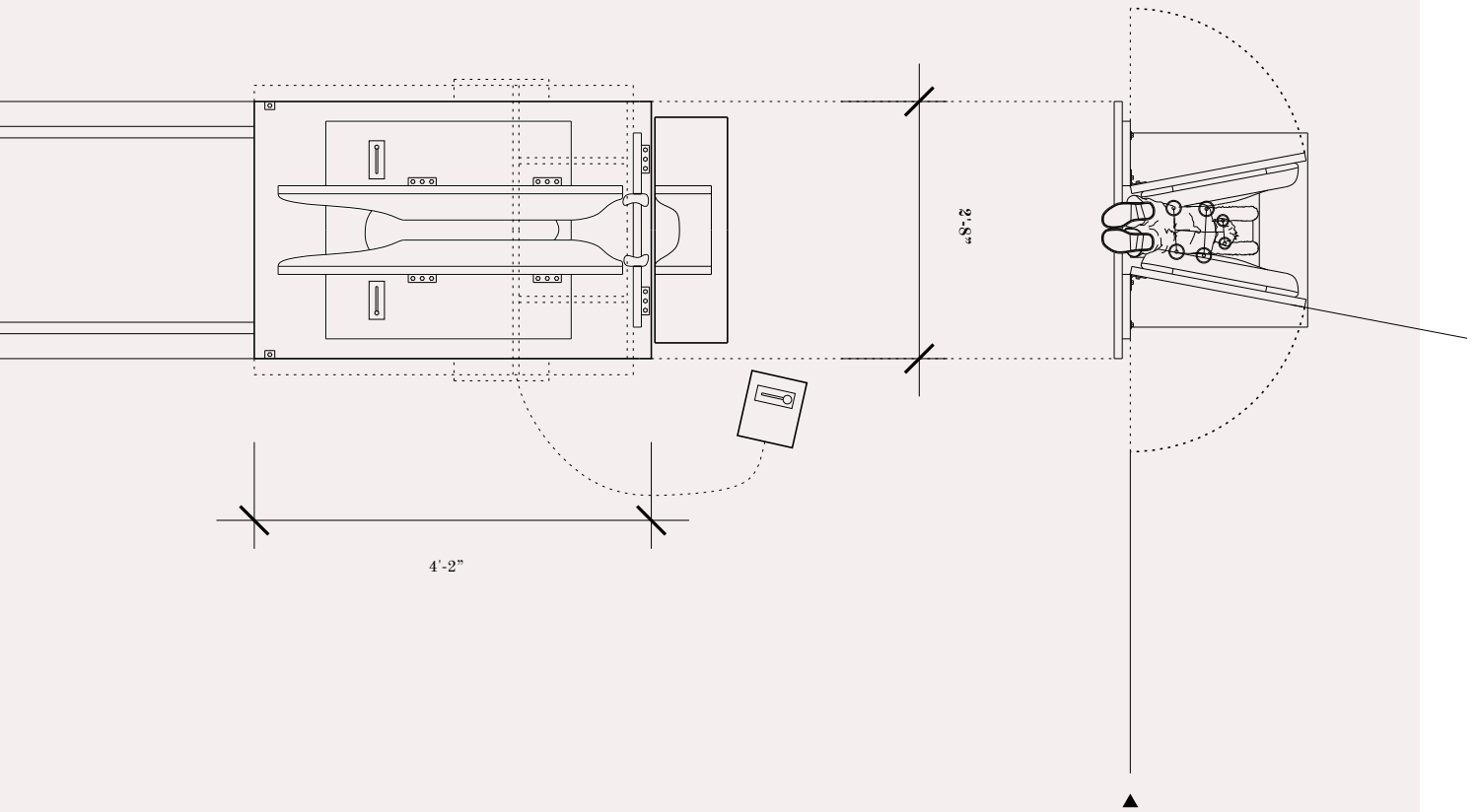
Scale comparison of cattle chute and human chute





Chute adapted for human use







CASE 001: COW

TECHNICAL EXPOSITION
The Squeeze Chute, 1992



▶ The squeeze chute directs a domesticated animal into a docile, compliant pose for delivery of medicine into its body or its body into slaughter. Through the application of deep, uniform lateral pressure, the sentient being enters a zone of sensory suspension, calming it—but not before bouts of intense bucking and squirming. In this

- 12 Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 14.
- 13 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 14.
- 14 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 15.
- 15 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 28.

sly between comfort and limpness, the commodified body awaits inspection and injection. As a touching condensation of the logics and violence of industrialized agriculture, the chute only cares about ensuring the efficient extraction of meat and dairy products from this body. Yet to function toward this end it generates sensation in excess of this efficiency, in pleasure and comfort, even as it remains indifferent to this surplus.

The chute marks a point of forking (both a division and residual connection) among its various appropriations for enclosing humans, in the non-consensual use as an authoritarian strategy for packing targeted, enslaved bodies for examination, transfer, containment, death and in the consensual use as a therapy for overstimulation and anxiety. The chute, as a model of cross-species inhabitation, unsettles norms of closeness between enclosure and subjects, the appropriate “humane” distance inscribed into architectural standards. Striking against expectations of the subject as mobile, entry into its compressive armature guarantees the restriction of motion, subduing its contents into a dependent mammalian orientation (horizontal, leaning forward, not standing).

The straight-shot setup of the chute orients its squeezed body toward the goal of extraction, facing forward along a vector of unidirectional, linear movement. As an armature modeled on the quadrupedal ambulation, it facilitates the efficient rehearsal of action along the line, a directional and directing line of the kind that Sara Ahmed says “divide things and create spaces that we imagine we



can be “in.””¹² Lines compose a kind of naturalized choreography: left, right; east, west; vertical, horizontal; forward, sideward; straight, deviant. In “giv[ing] matter form and...creat[ing] the impression of “surface, boundaries and fixity,”” lines bracket the available or at-hand ways of becoming oriented.¹³ In the case of the chute, the line of the herding circuit enables a technical production apparatus to move masses of bodies toward compliance. That is, “the body gets directed in some ways,” along some lines, “more than others,” to the side, toward other bodies.¹⁴ As embodied orientations, such “directions toward objects ... affect what we do, and how we inhabit space.”¹⁵

The chute lubricates production at a population scale by individuating herds into lone bodies. The line performs a movement of many but in sequence, head to tail, head to butt. It is dimensioned to accommodate not more than one body within the fluctuating widths of biological variability but still roomy enough for forward movement. A drift of the head sideways might be met with calls or prods to return to the line, a line the Temple Grandin crossed.

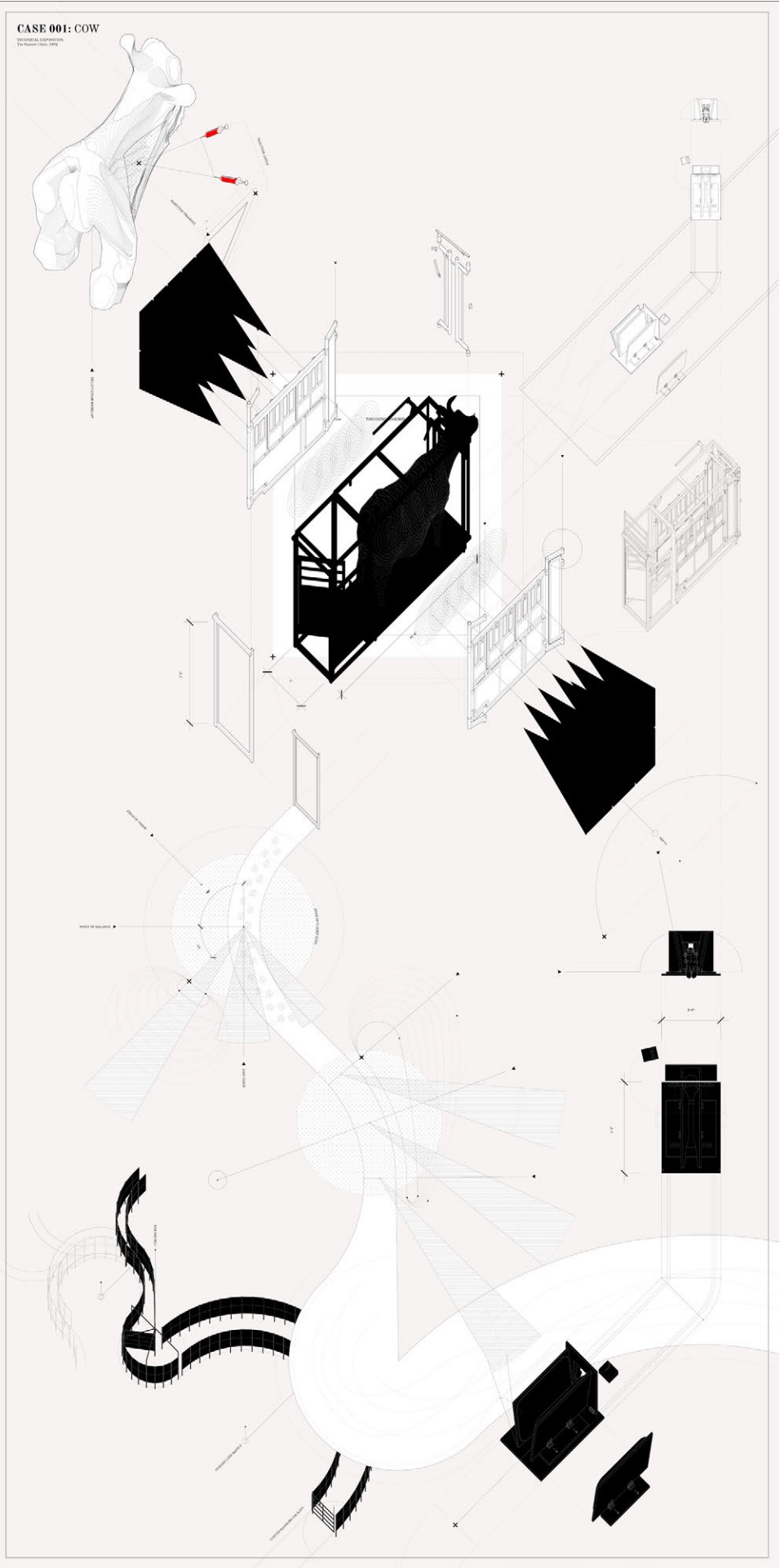
as a model of cross-species inhabitation, the chute unsettles norms of closeness

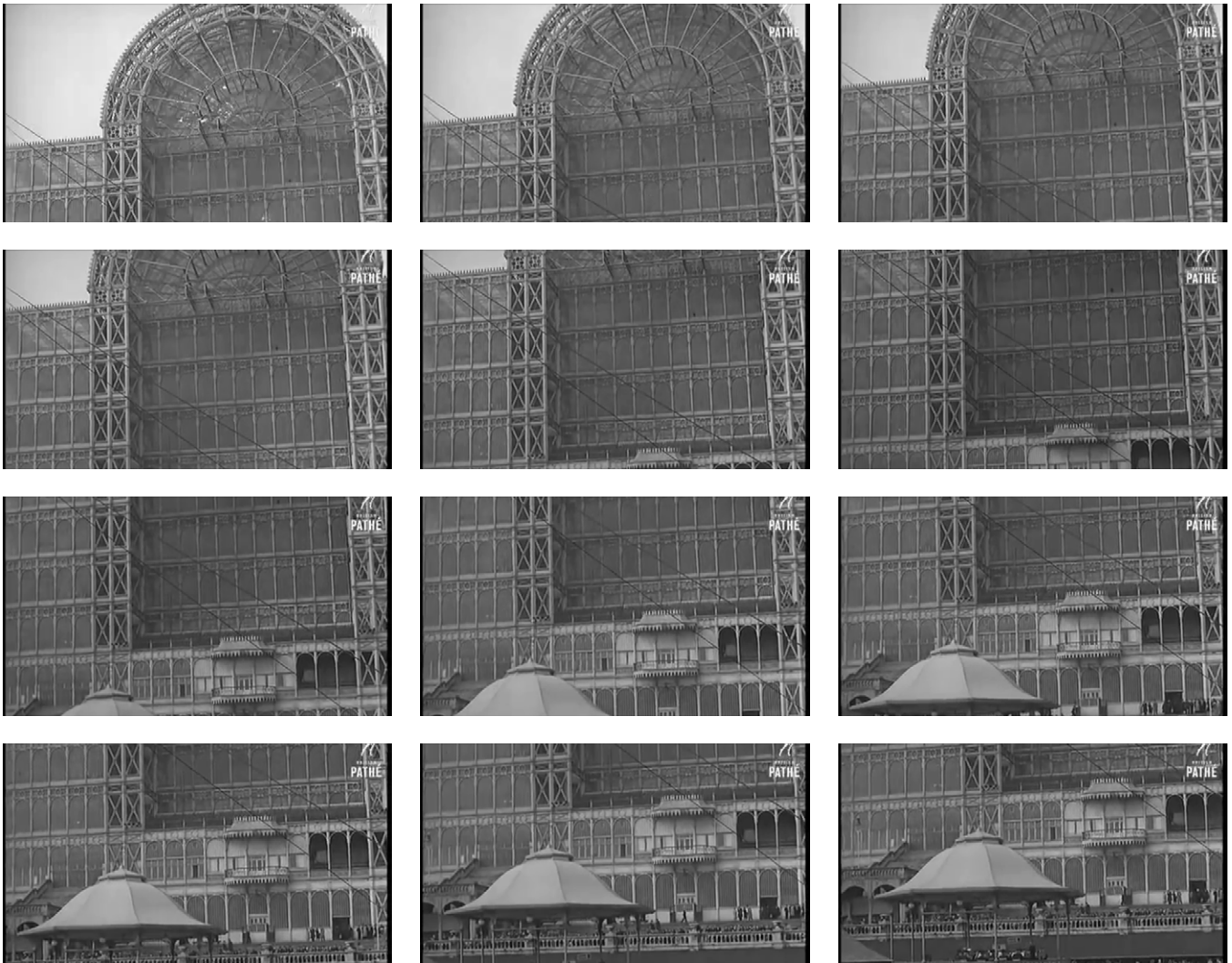
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Presentation drawing
CASE 001: COW



CASE 001: COW
© 2000-2001 Architecture
The National Cow 1997

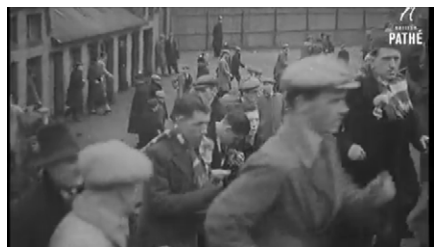




Above and right (top):
British Pathé, “Crystal Palace,”
1935. [https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=zZVGpCH0hHQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zZVGpCH0hHQ).

Right (bottom):
British Pathé, “Scottish Cup Final,”
1935. [https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=wJ3UVJAuno0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJ3UVJAuno0).





- 16 Alexis de Valon, "Le tour du monde a l'exposition de Londres," *Revue des deux mondes* 11 (1851): 197.





An enormous portal opens up before you. In this large entrance, which is there purely for the sake of form, a dozen little doors, upholstered in red fabric and just wide enough to give passage to one person at a time, have been installed so as to prevent any congestion. A sign on each of the doors (no change given) warns the public that the correct entrance fee should be held at the ready; you then slip into this narrow passageway where a metal bar grabs your waist and brings you to a halt; you toss your shilling onto the counter, the bar rotates on its axis and sets you free; without having uttered a single word, without anyone having addressed a single word in your direction, you find that you have penetrated, via one of the pettiest doors of all time, the most immense covered space mankind has ever seen or even dreamed of.¹⁶

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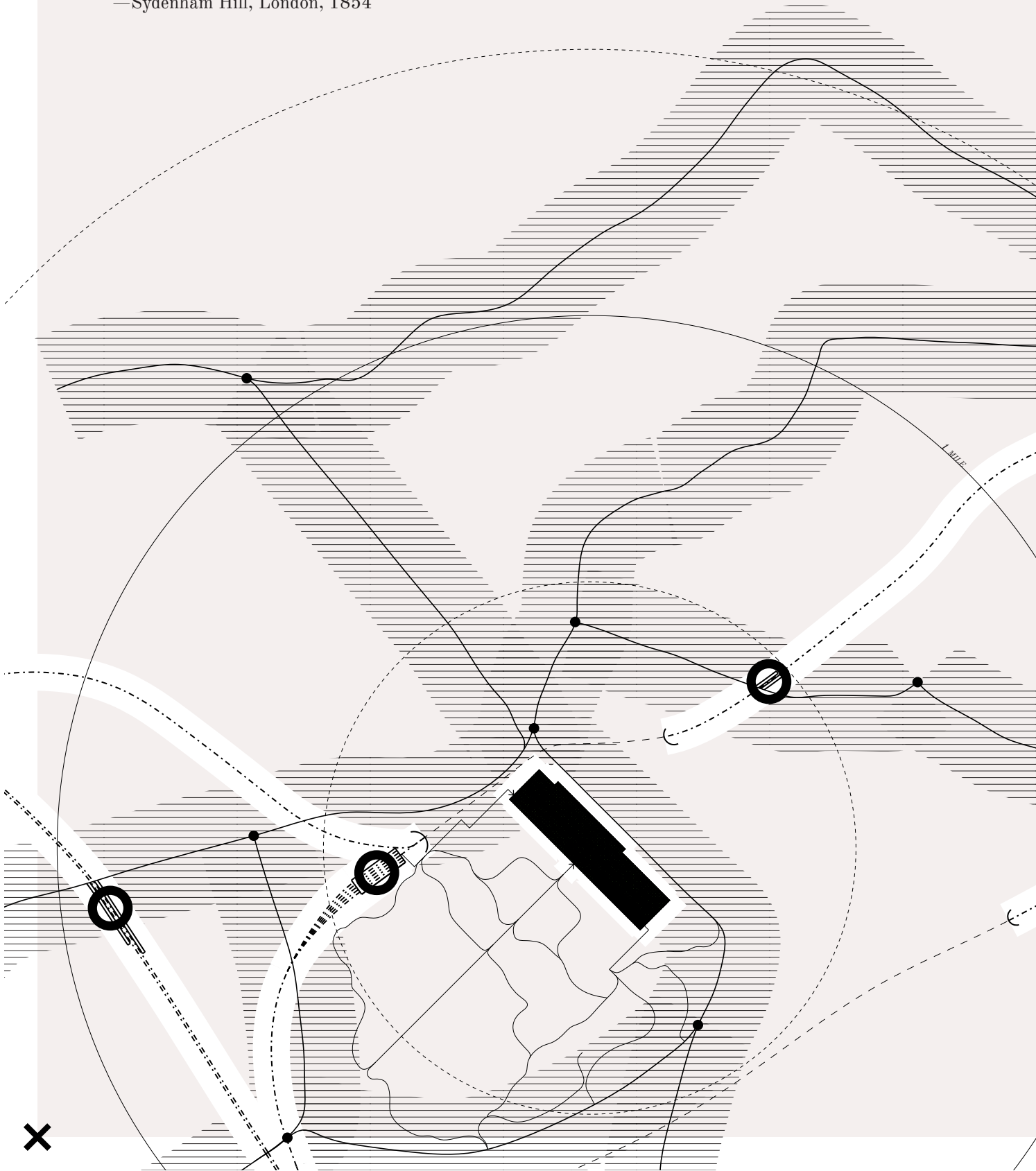
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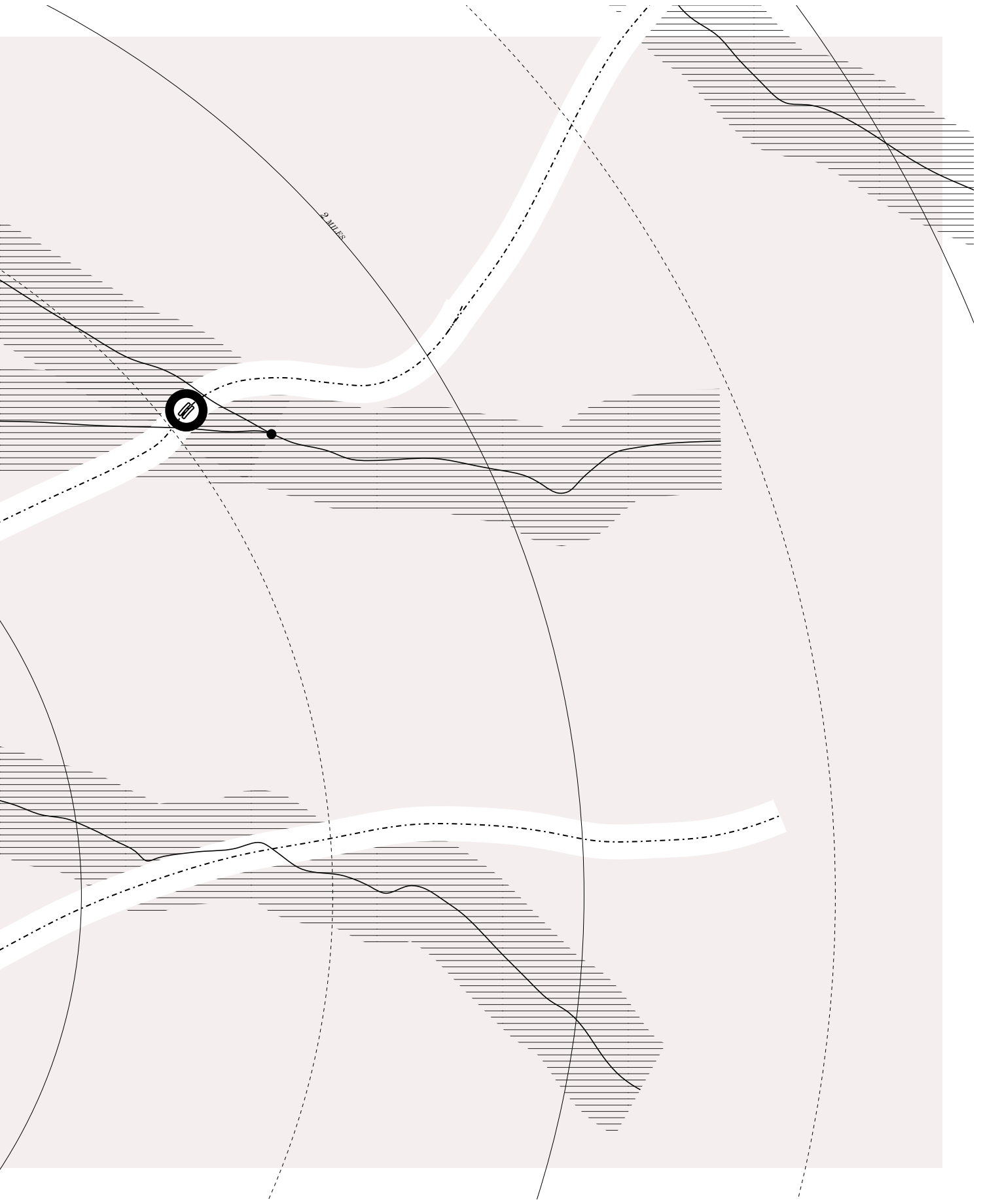
CASE 002: MASSES

TECHNICAL EXPOSITION
The Crystal Palace, 1851

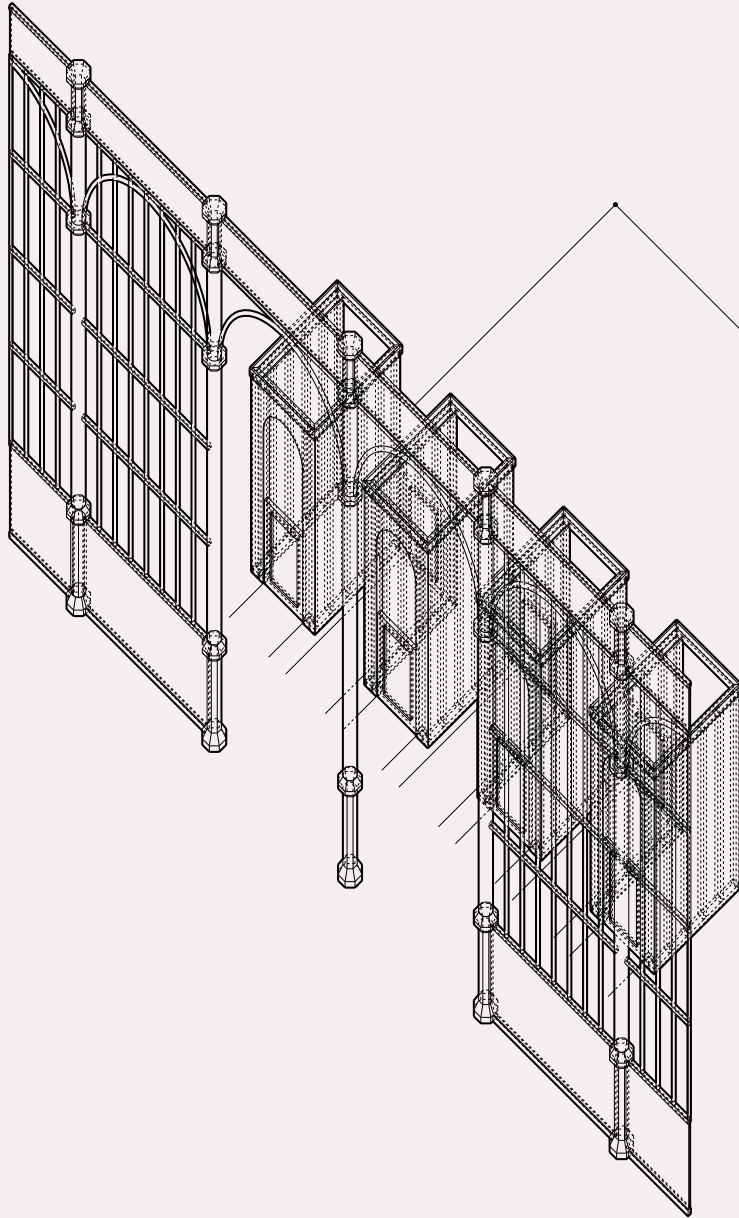


The Crystal Palace in its second location
— Sydenham Hill, London, 1854



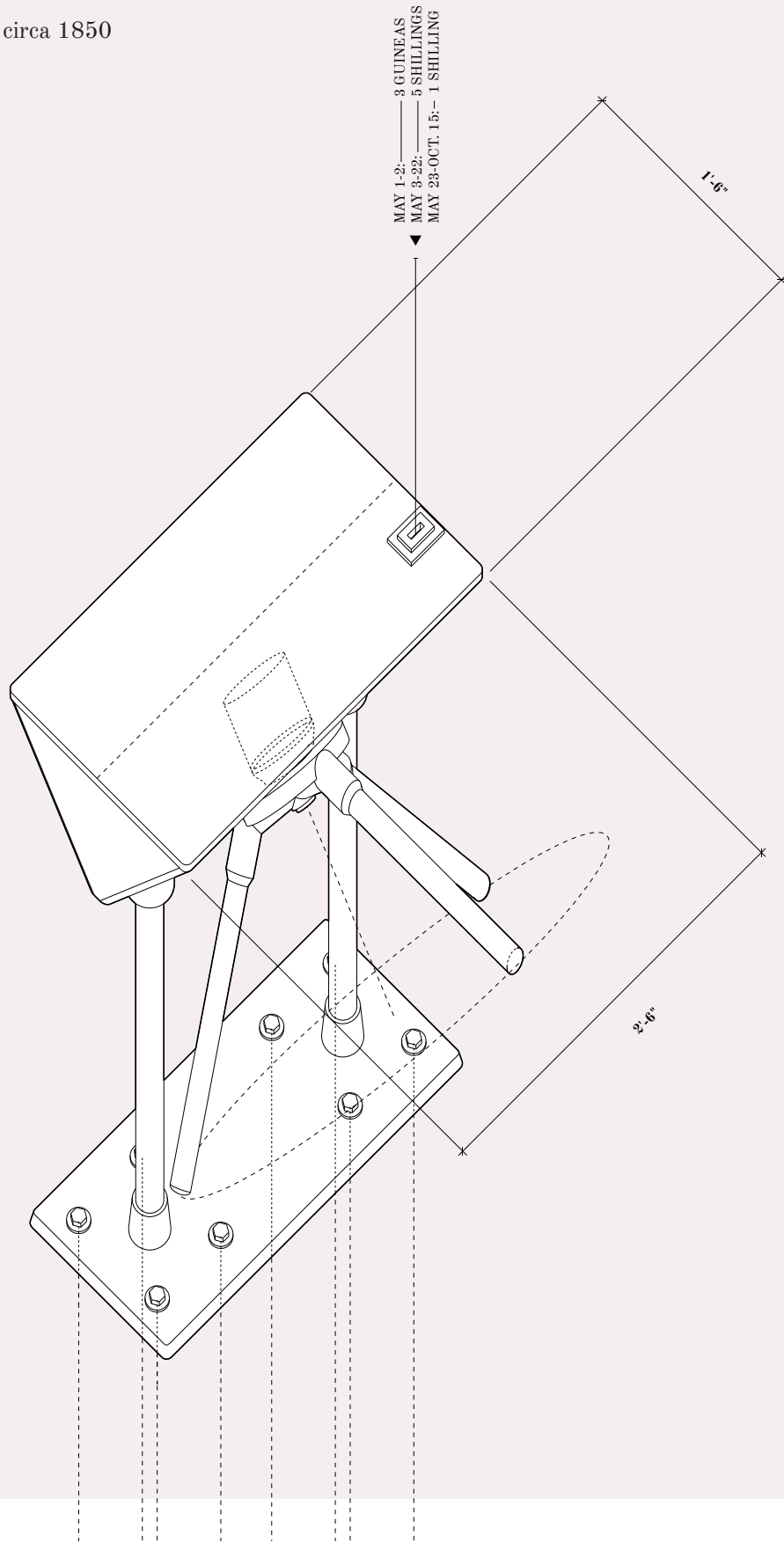


Entry sequence of the Crystal Palace

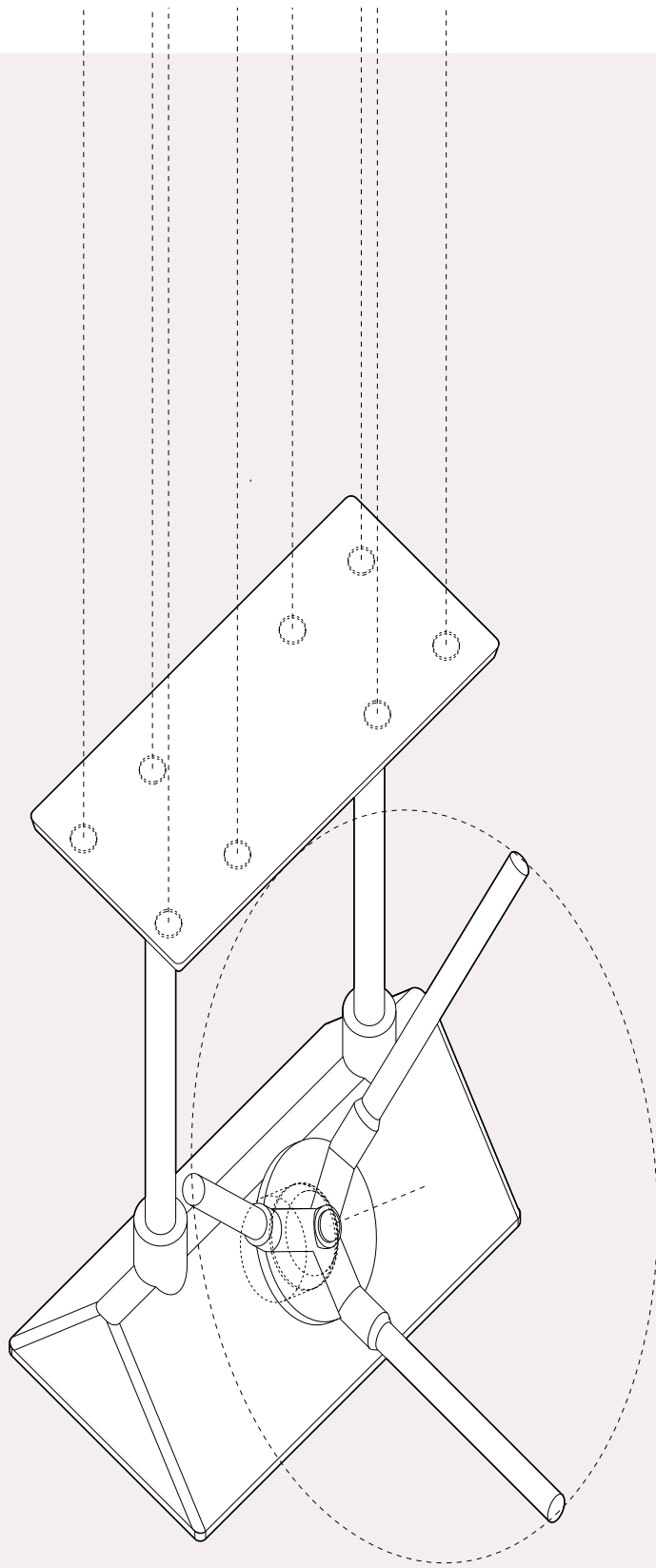




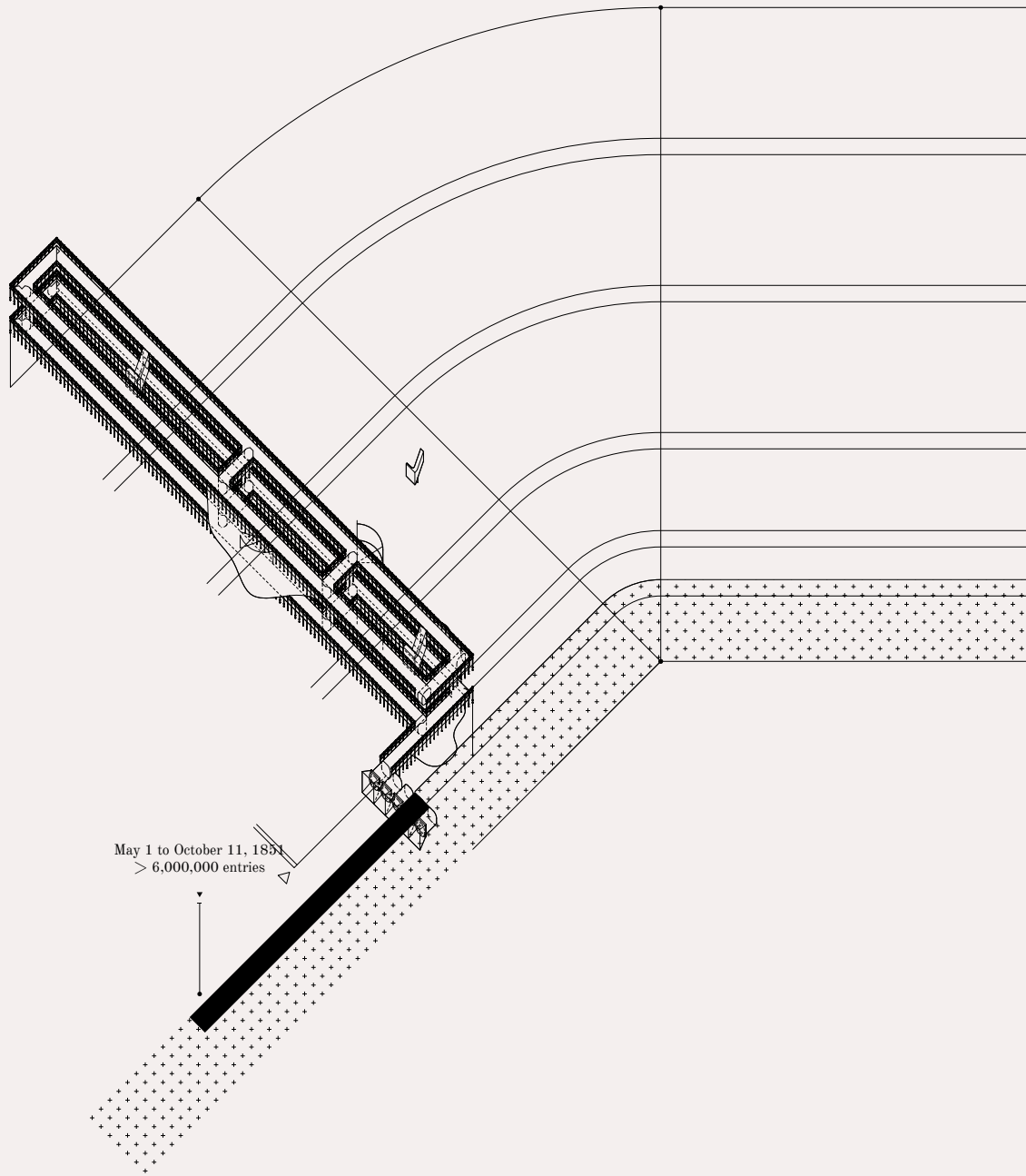
Turnstile, circa 1850



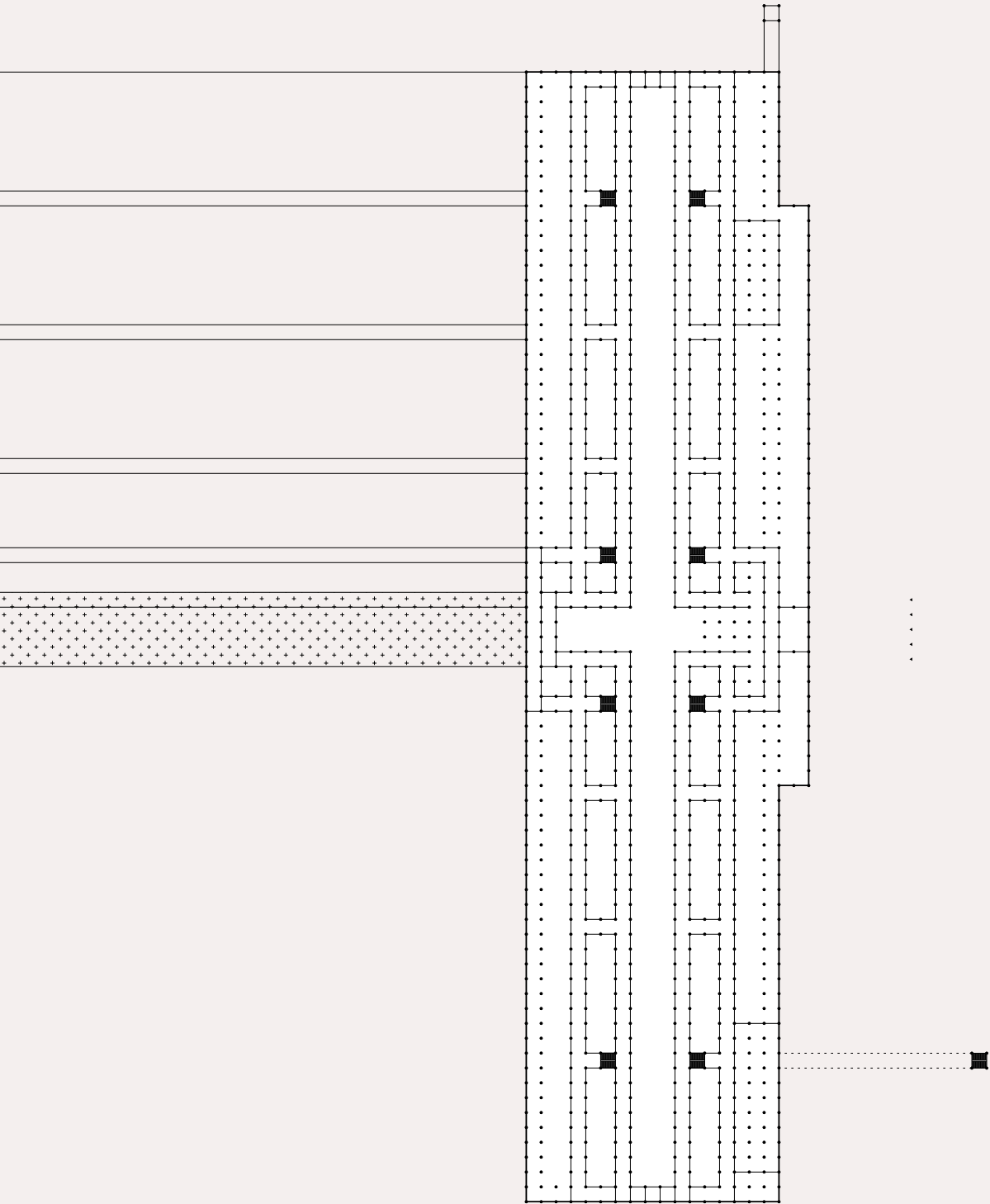
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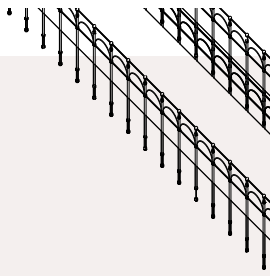
Footprint of the Crystal Palace

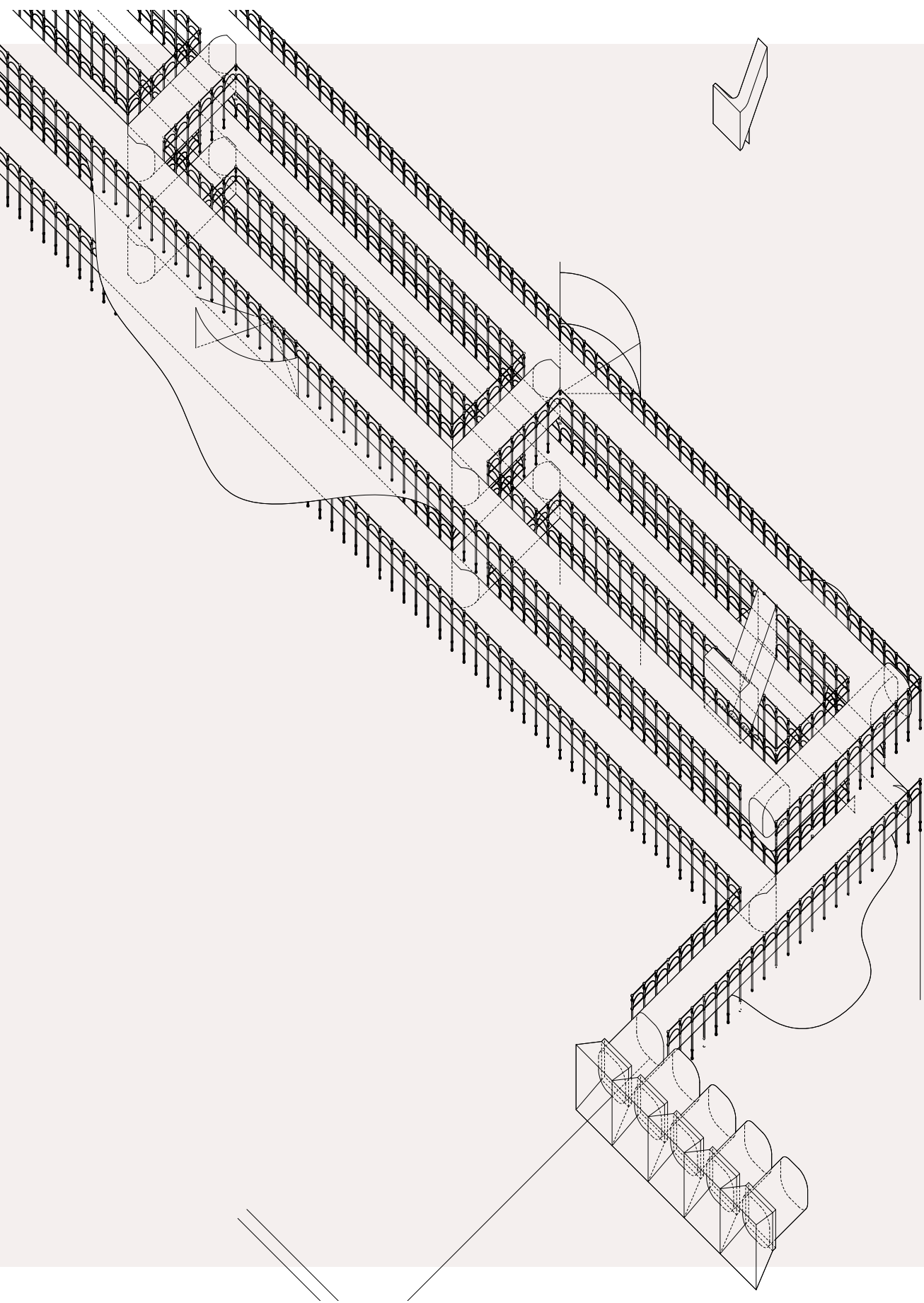


X 1,463 UNITS = 772,784 SQ. FT.



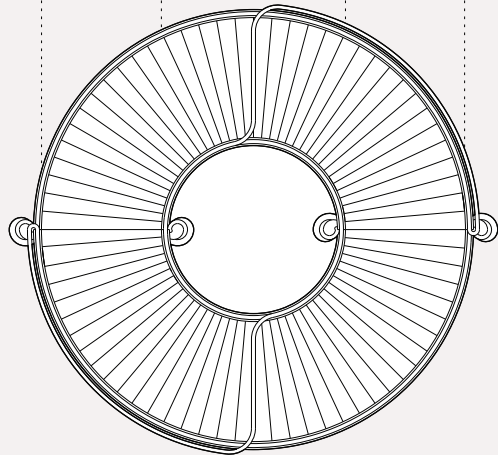
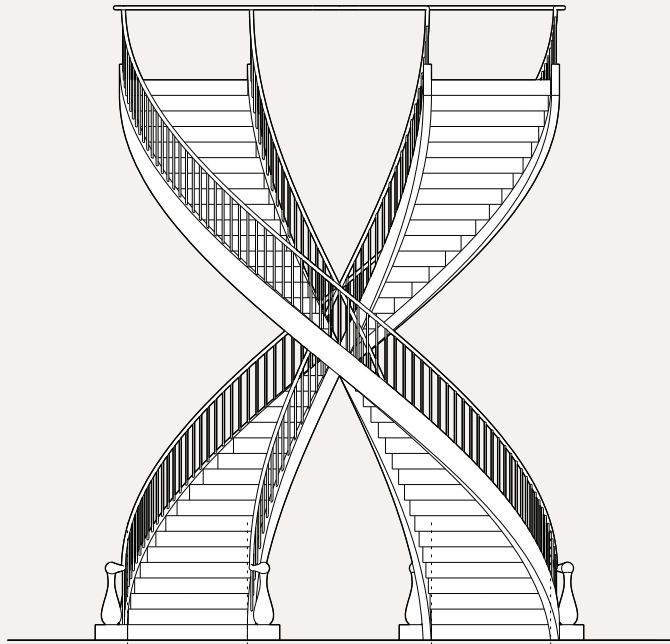
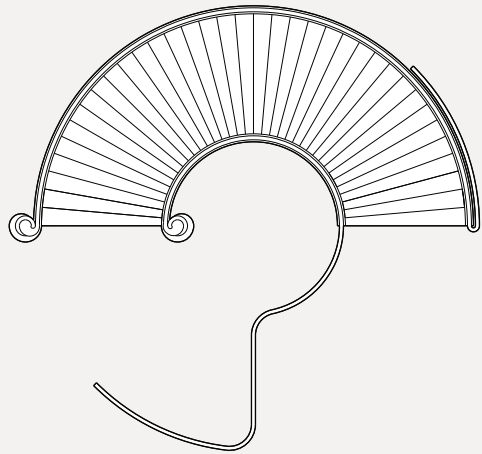
The interior circulatory system of
the Crystal Palace, formed by
colonnades





Bi-directional stair developed for interior
circulation of the Crystal Palace







CASE 005: MASSES

TECHNICAL EXPOSITION
The Crystal Palace, 1851



- If the chute disciplines its subject by dimensioning closeness to allow or prevent movement, the turnstile does so by choreographing movement across enclosure.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the masses emerged as an articulated urban entity, thought to be governed by its own peculiar impulses,

17 Brown, *States of Injury*, 56.

a source of destructive energies that, while constituting the populace of the liberal state, threatened its pursuit of orderly flows. The masses buried or suspended the norms of public decency and civility that underwrote the social contracts of liberalism. Individuals—those white men with property—claimed entry into liberal subjecthood—and its bundle of rights and protections—by surrendering freedoms threatening to the social order. As Brown notes, the erasure of such qualifications and exceptions defining the subject safeguard the stability of this tenuous contract —“the tension between particularistic “I’s” and a universal “we” in liberalism is sustainable as long as the constituent terms of the “I” remain unpoliticized.”¹⁷ Neither I nor we, the masses ruptures the terms, politicized yet non-identarian, differentiated yet un-dividuated.

As the squeeze chute attempts to translate the embodied experience of the cow into another lubricant for industrial production, “a regulated discursive practice,” as architectural historian Moritz Gleich has termed it, emerged to intervene in the mass—not to obliterate it, but to design for it, to fashion . This constellation of discourses included crowd psychology and modern urban planning, concurrent with the development of representational methods (to chart the movement of populations, migrant flows). While the regime of the chute ensures the translation of bio-material into consumable goods (with economic value), the regime of turnstile attempts a moral betterment of its material (crowds), a training in self-regulating action duplicated throughout societies of control.



The Crystal Palace marks the first systematic insertion of the turnstile, a device for containing wandering cattle, into an architecture to modulate the pace and volume of entry and exit—enumerating the fuzzy entity of crowds into occupancy loads and rates of flow. The turnstile’s sequence of pause-and-proceed—as a directing line for habituating behavior much like the chute—allowed for the collection of entry fees, effectively turning it into an engine for monetizing crowd flows. It also introduced a filtering mechanism, gendered, racialized, and class-based. While the turnstile attempted to re-inscribe individual entrants into the architecture—as digits, tallies, units of volume and live load—it also afforded a venue for the unfolding of mass spectacle, the tensioned and risky churning and subsuming within stranger densities.

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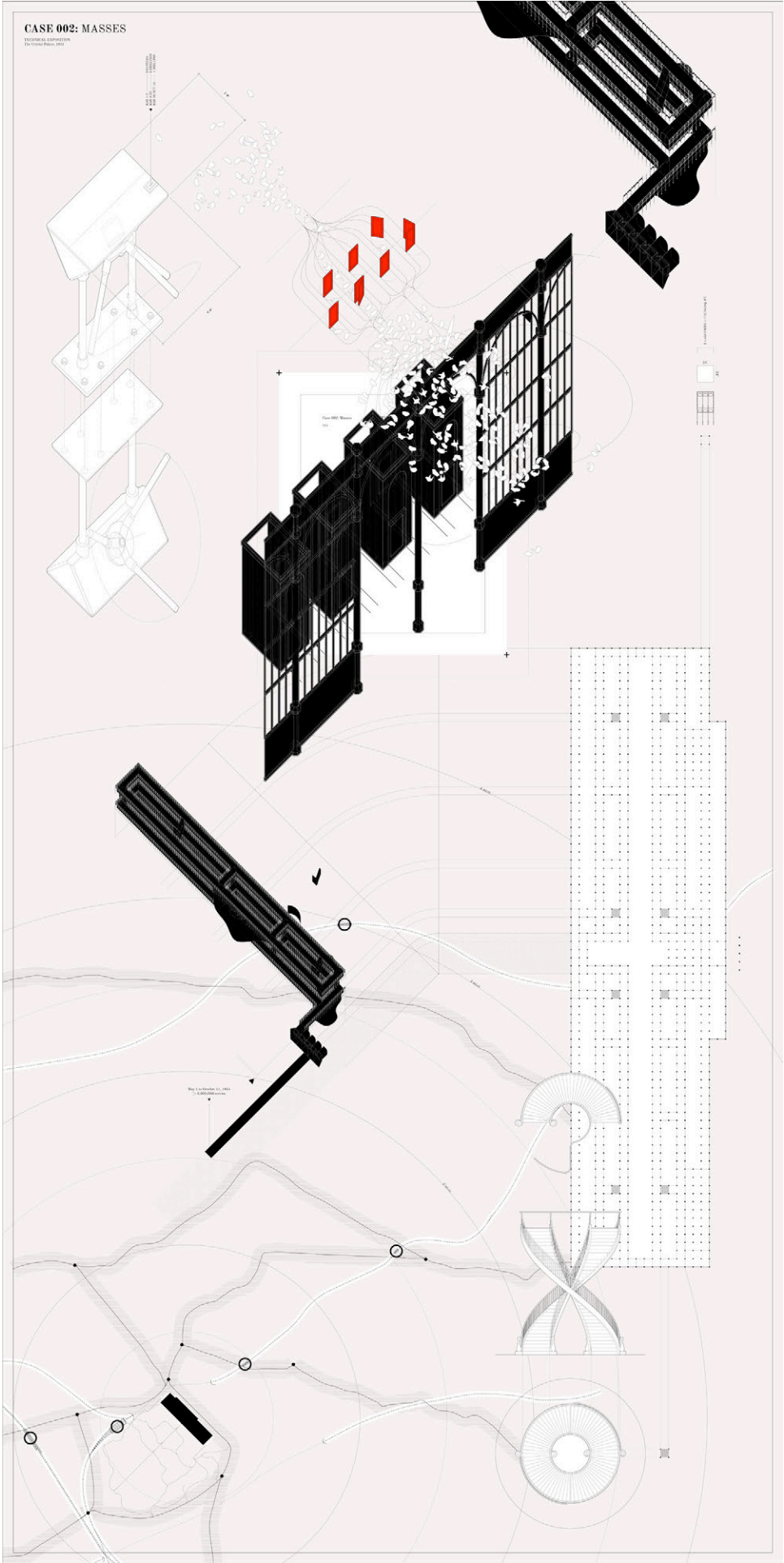
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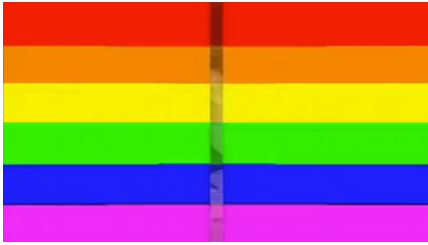
Presentation drawing
CASE 002: MASSES



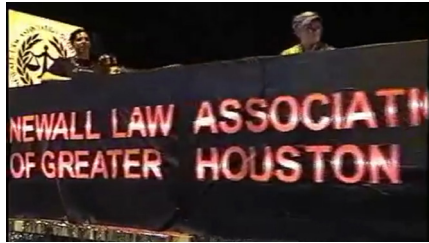
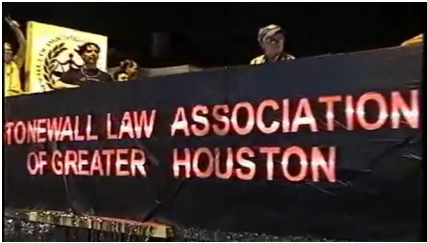
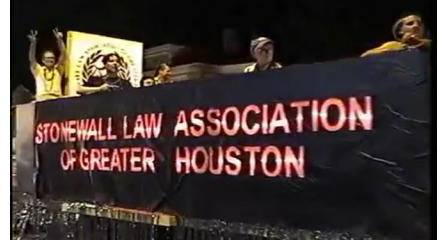
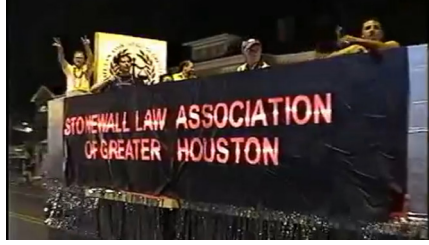
CASE 002: MASSES

© 2010 ARCHITECTS
The United States 1992





xeghys, "Gay Pride Parade '03 part-2," YouTube Video, 6:45, January 19 2007. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2GikyiLnPjY>.



- 18 Lior Jacob Strahilevitz, "Consent, Aesthetics, and the Boundaries of Sexual Privacy After Lawrence v. Texas," *DePaul Law Review* 54, no. 3 (Spring 2005): 671.





“Justice Antonin Scalia raised eyebrows in a September 20, 2004 speech, stating that he could “accept for the sake of argument ... that sexual orgies eliminate social tension and ought to be encouraged.”” After a journalist misunderstood Justice Scalia to be endorsing group sex, the speech generated headlines.

What Scalia said next drew less attention, which is a shame because Scalia was being serious and the issue he raised was interesting. Scalia began ridiculing a European Court of Human Rights decision which had held that because of privacy rights, the state could not punish five men who had engaged in a sex act within one of the participant’s homes. Justice Scalia wondered aloud how “privacy” could possibly cover five people, let alone some larger number, such as “the number of people required to fill the Coliseum.””¹⁸

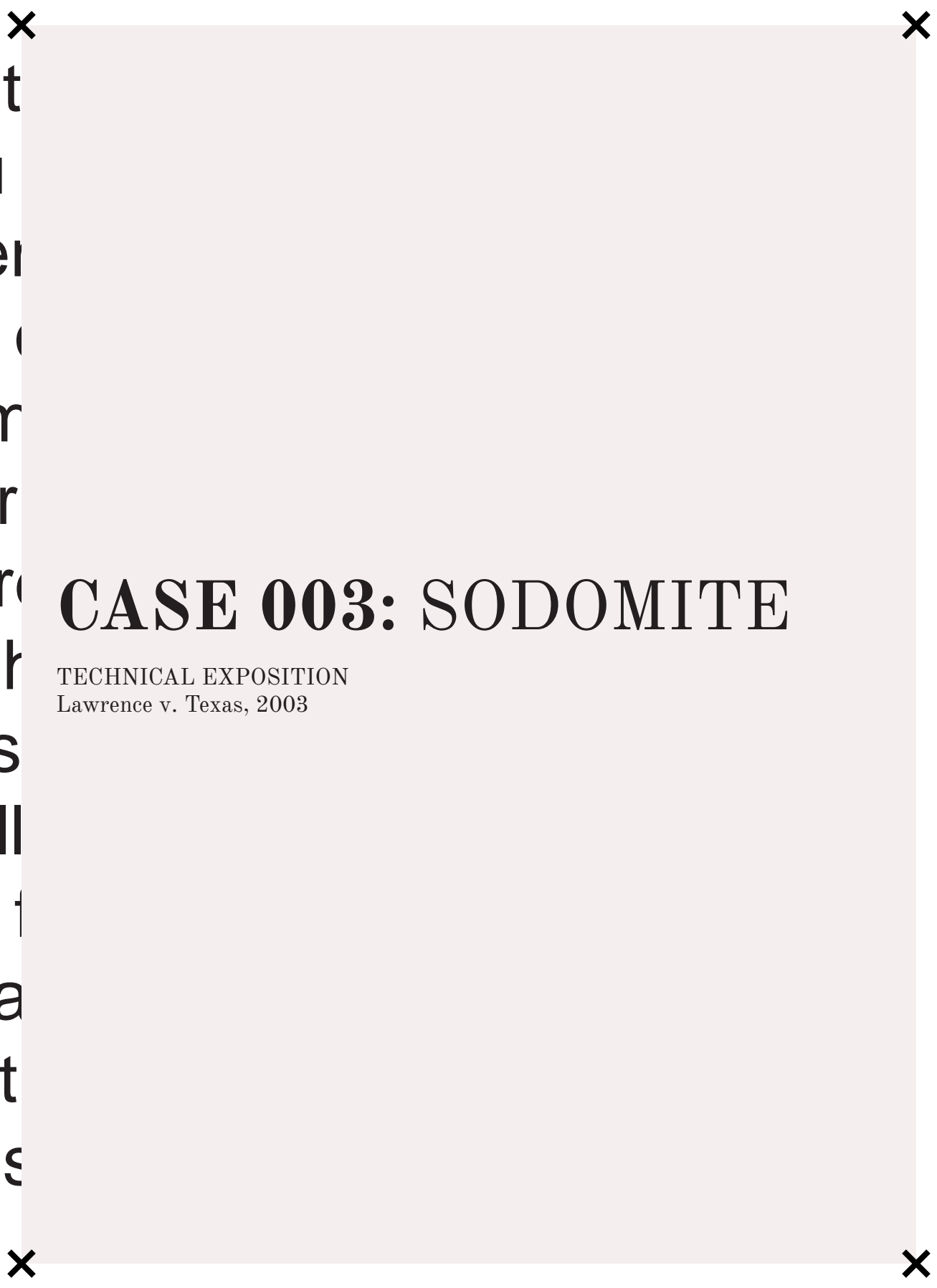
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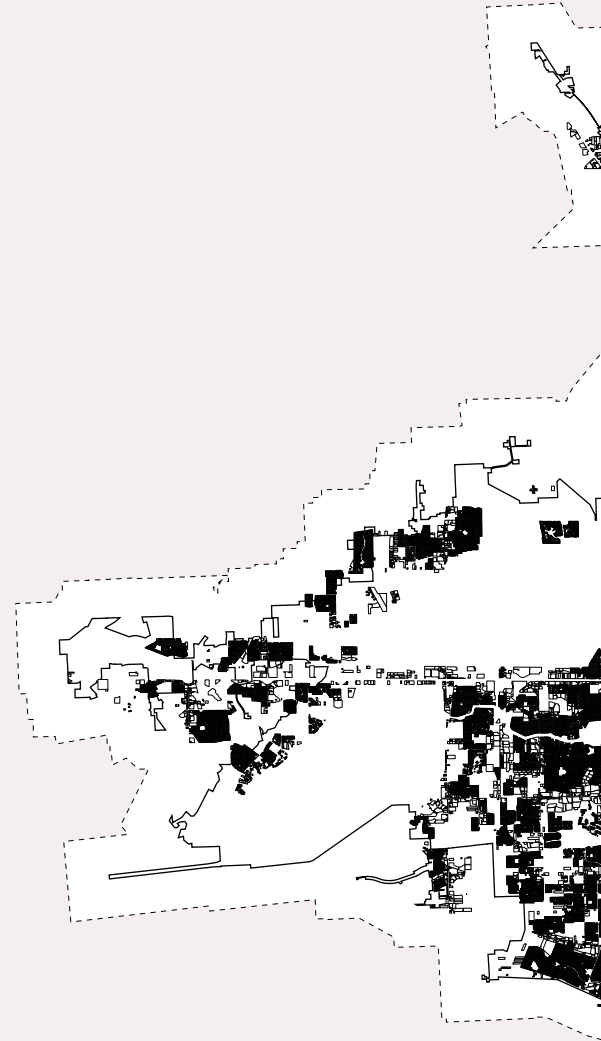
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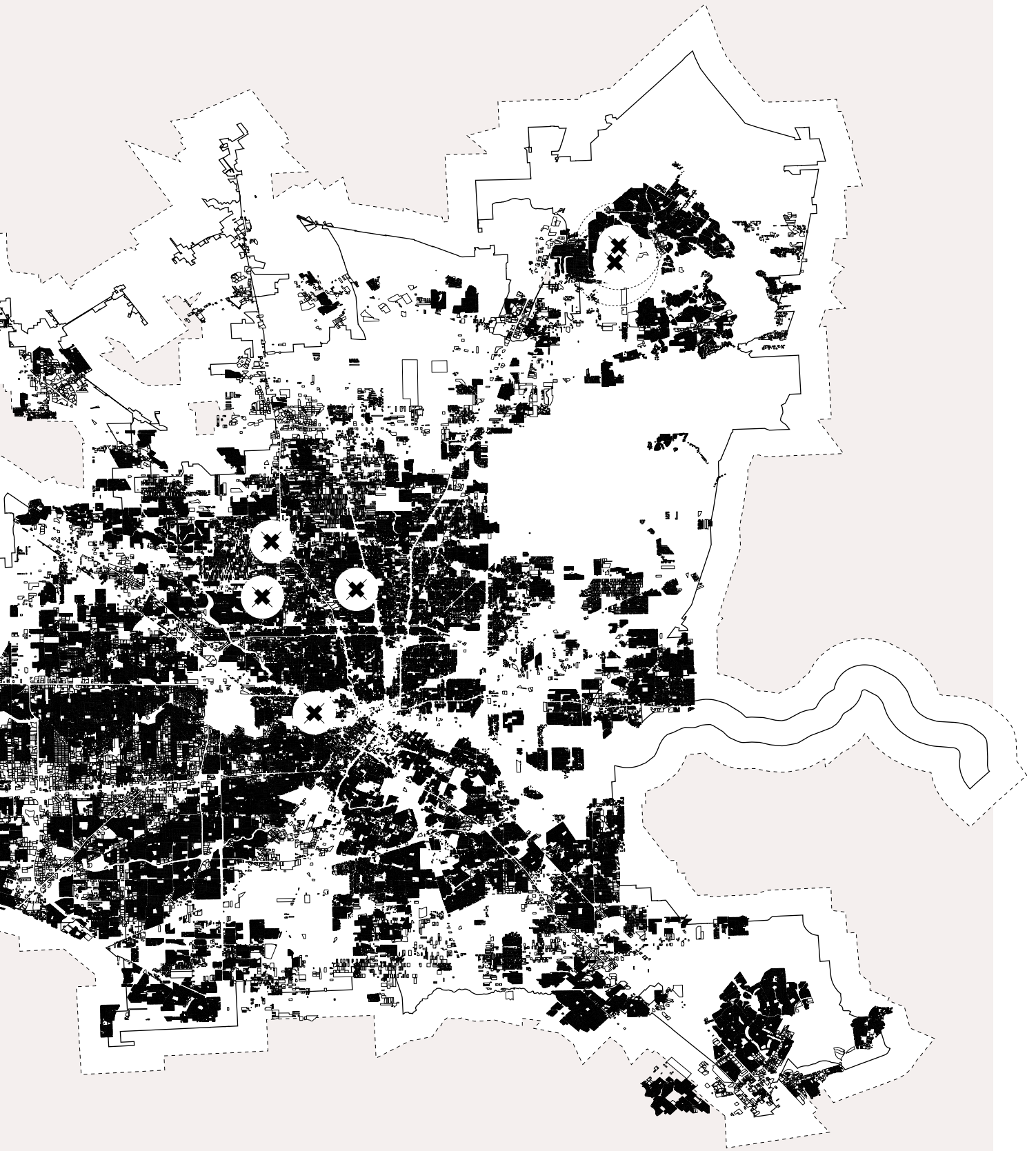
CASE 003: SODOMITE

TECHNICAL EXPOSITION
Lawrence v. Texas, 2003

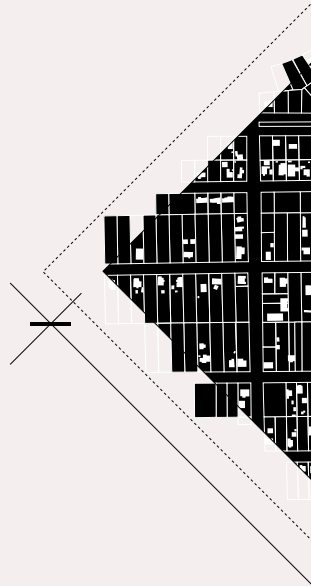


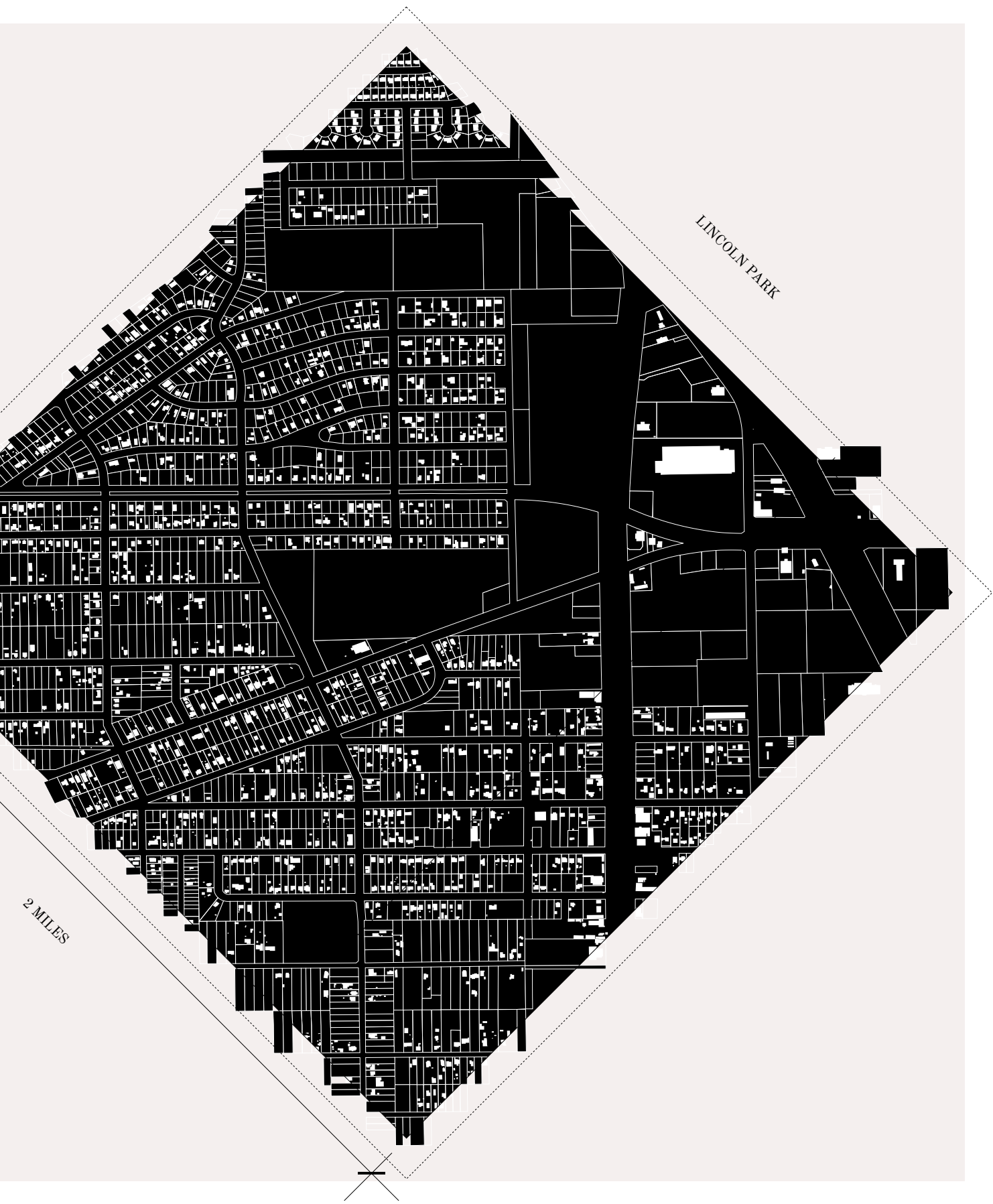
The zones of privacy of the greater
Houston area, by land use
designation



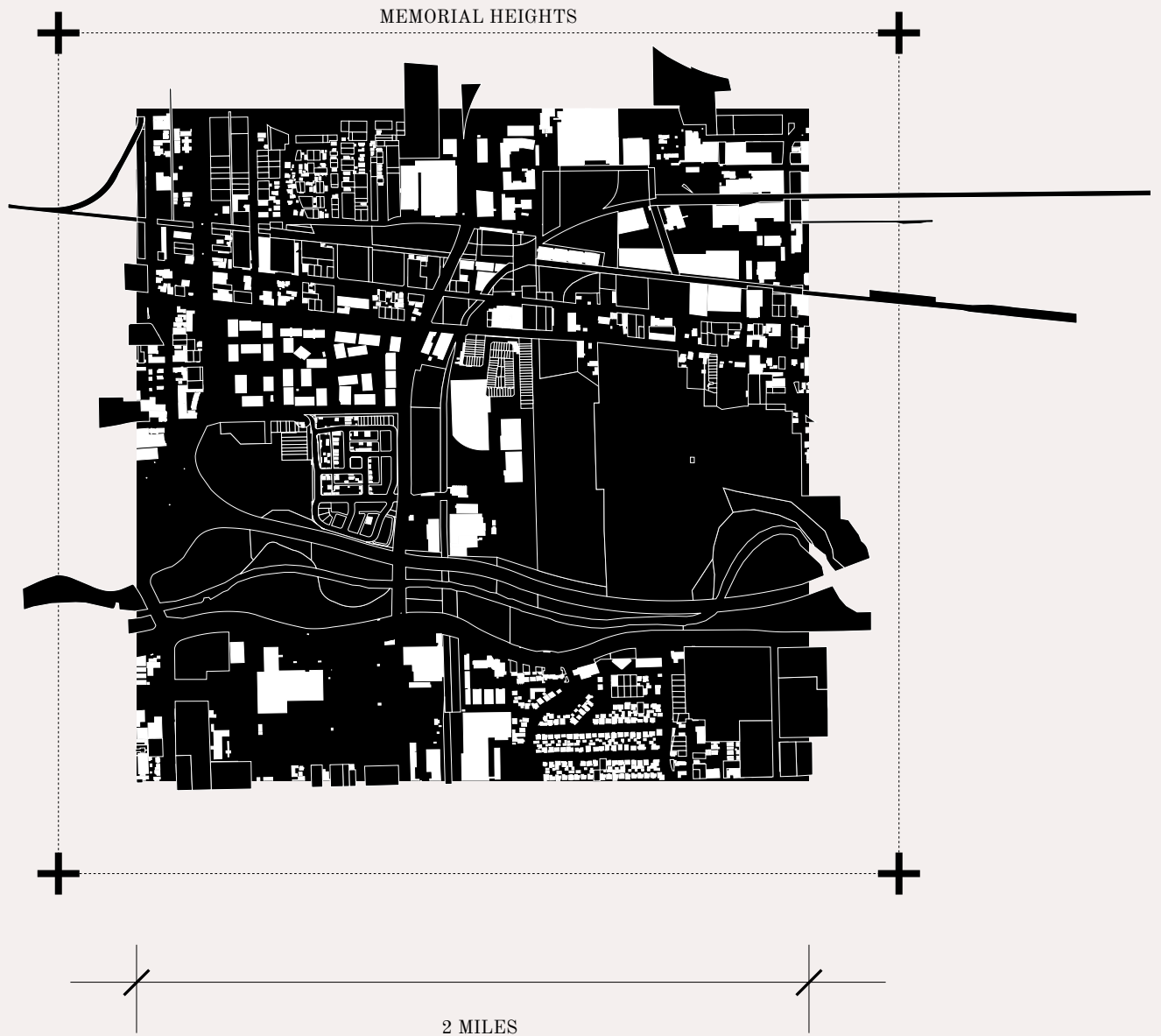


Urban topology of privacy: sample 001
—white depicts zones in which the
right to privacy is guaranteed





Urban topology of privacy: samples 002-003



BARRINGTON KINGWOOD



Urban topology of privacy: samples 004-005

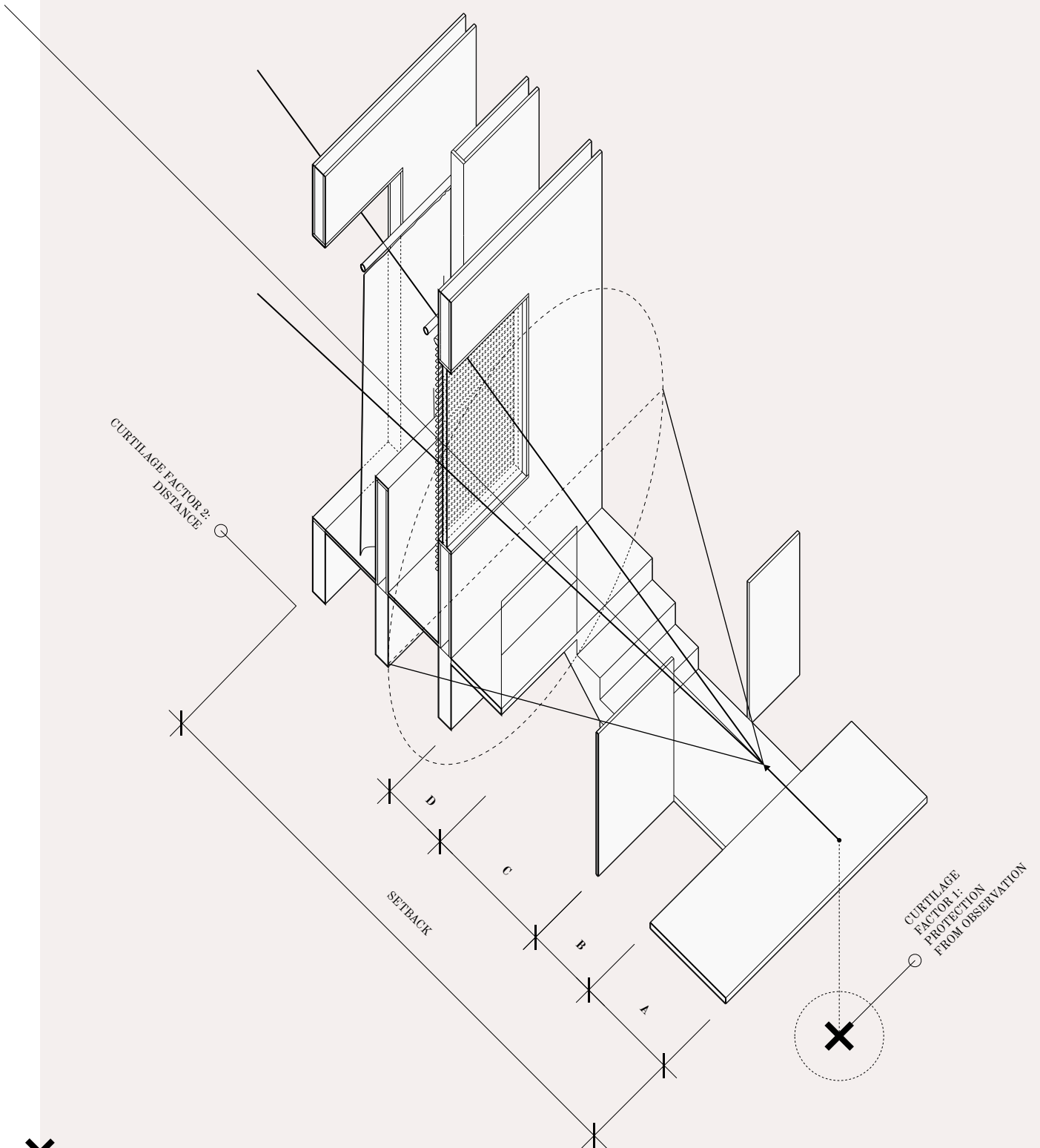
OXFORD PLACE

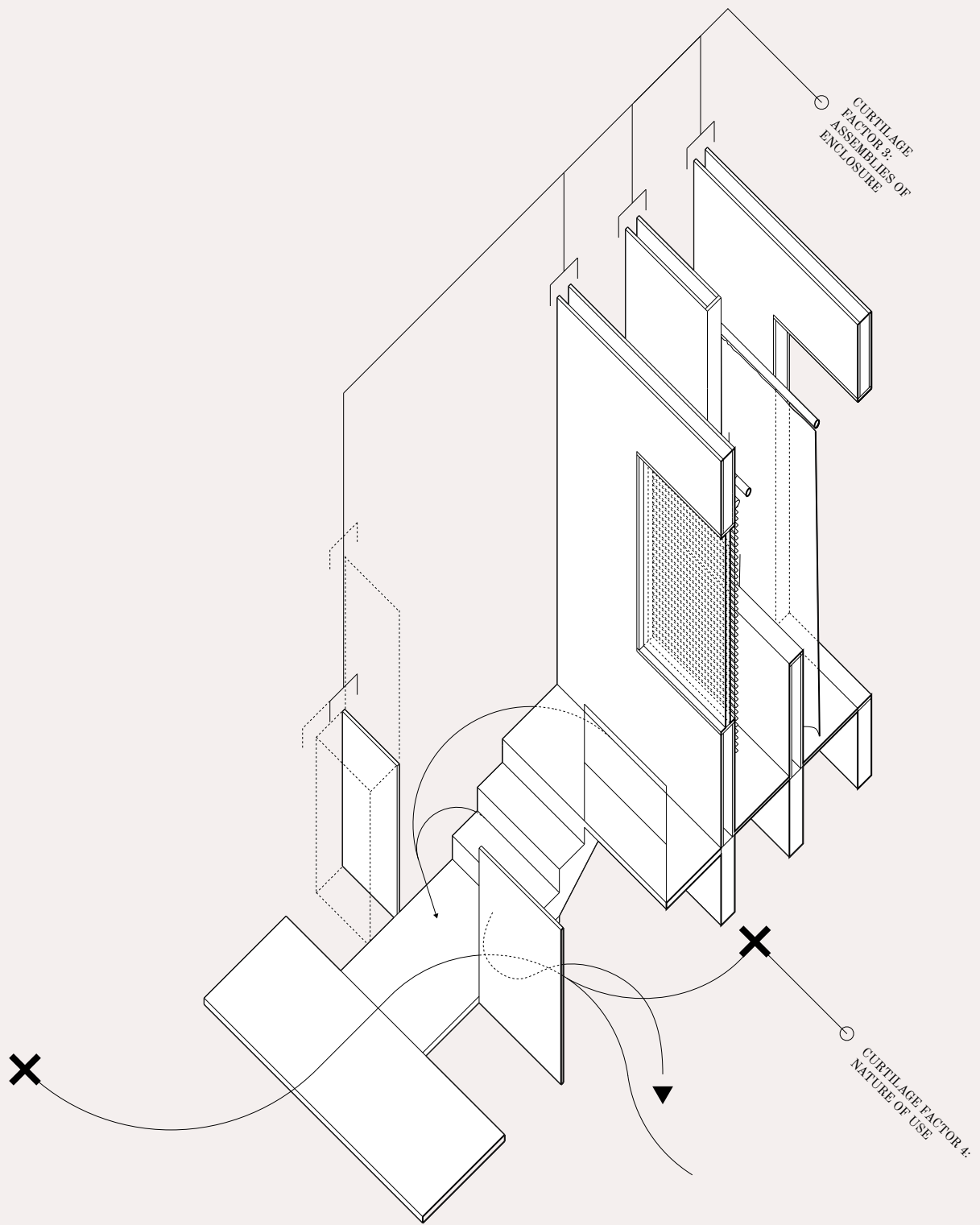


LINCOLN PARK

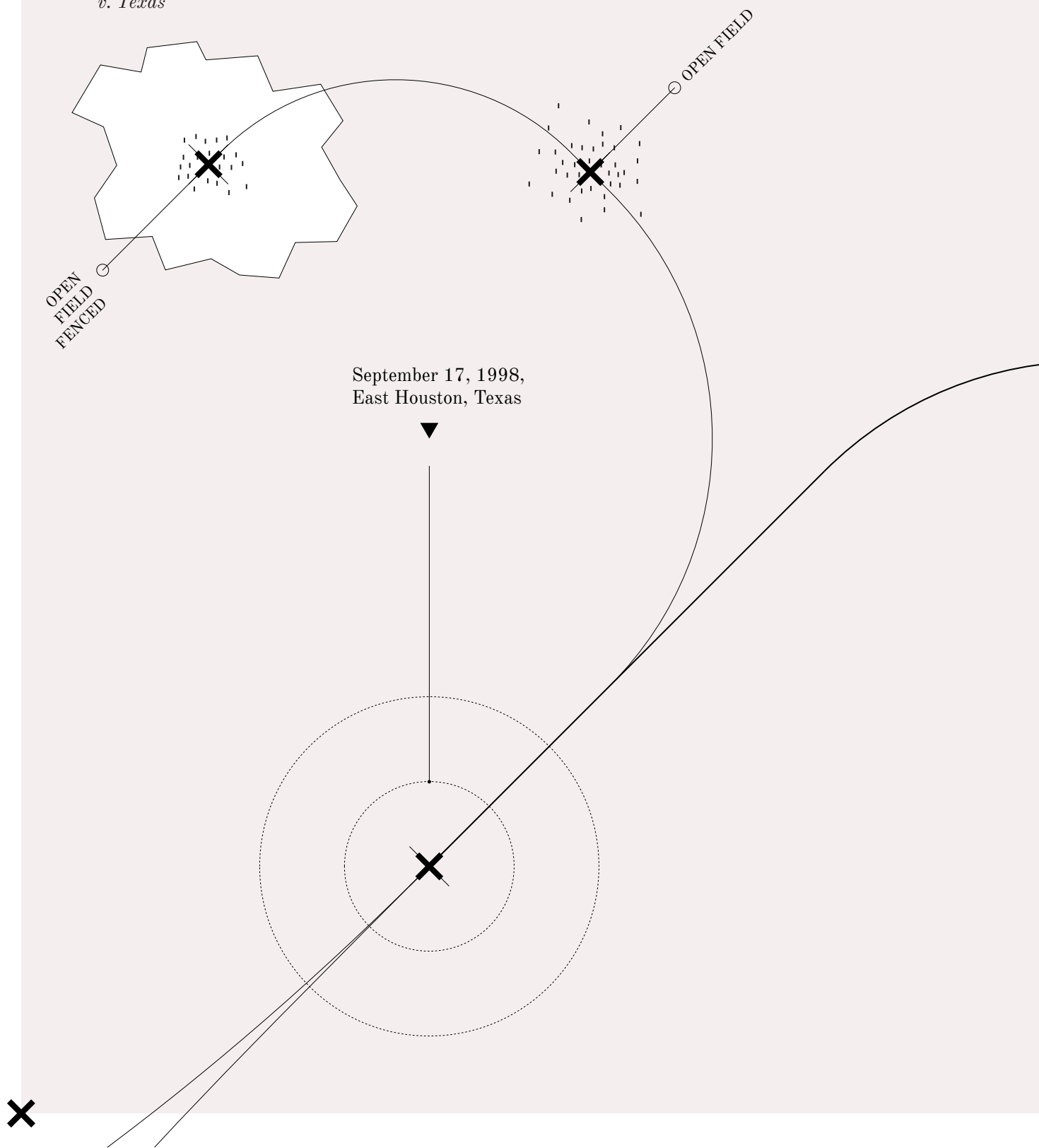


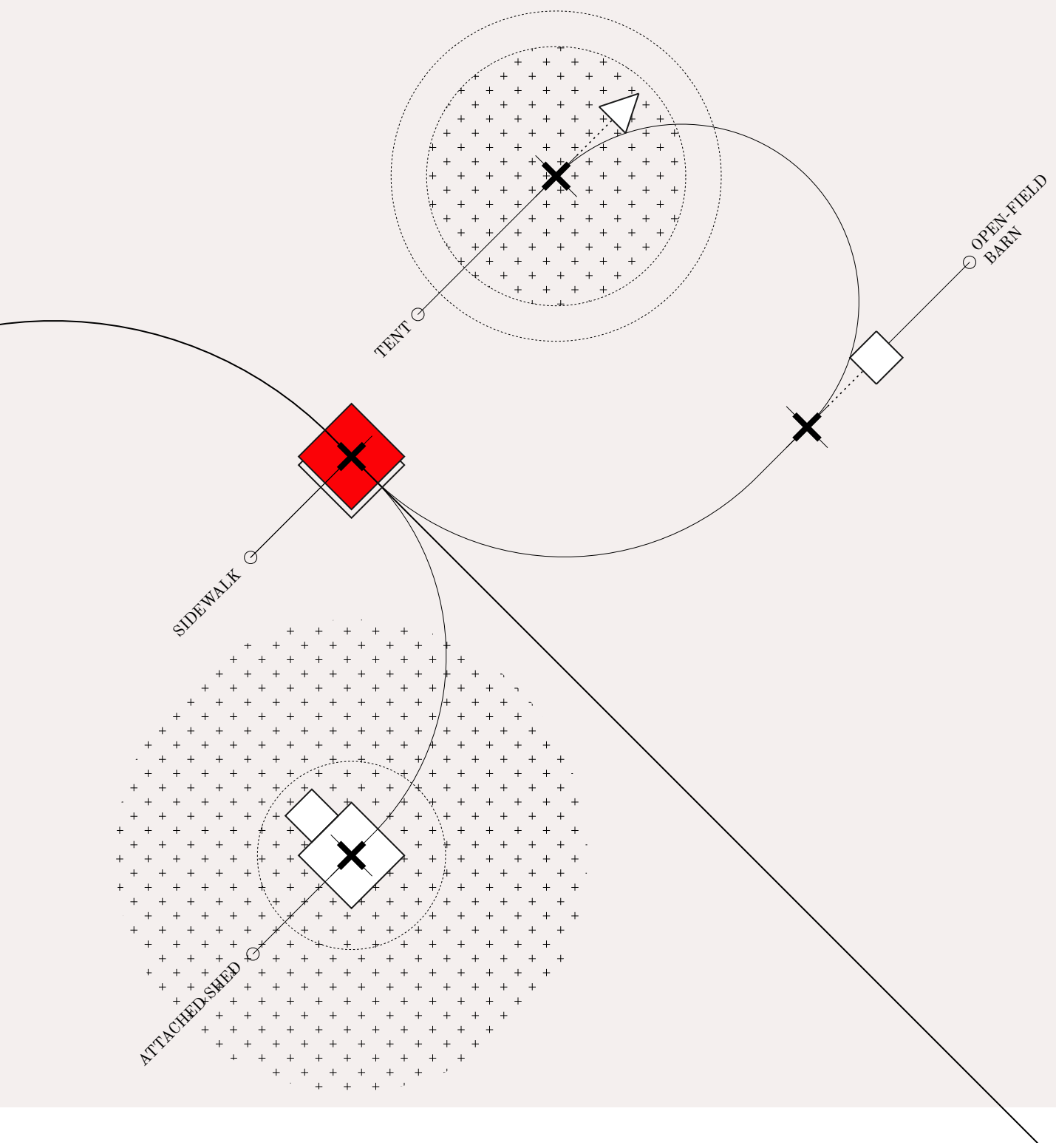
The four factors that determine the legal definition of curtilage, the grey area between 'public' and 'private'

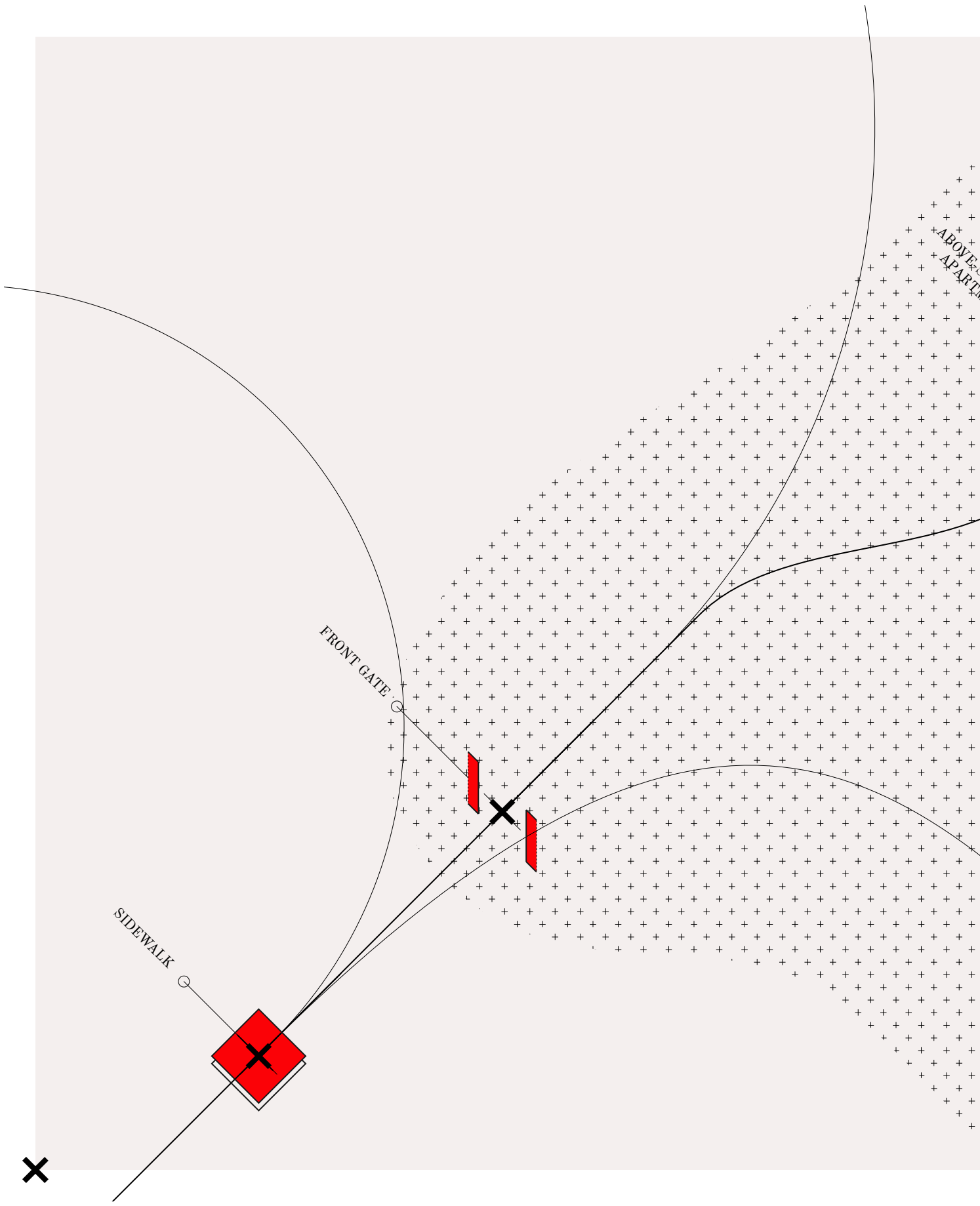


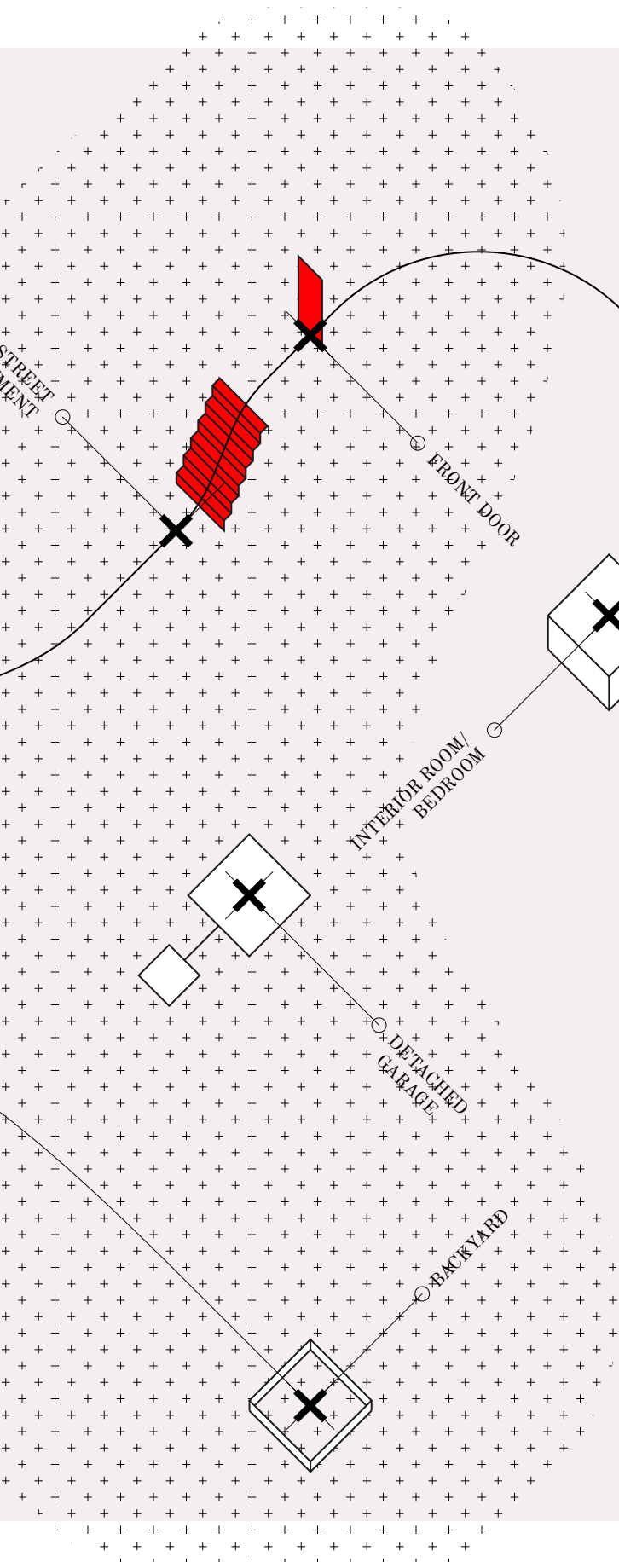


A reconstruction of the path of entry by police into the home of John Geddes Lawrence Jr., plaintiff of *Lawrence v. Texas*

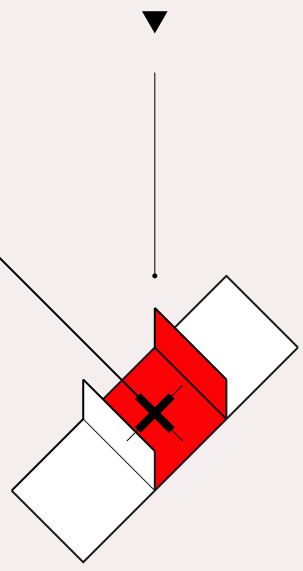


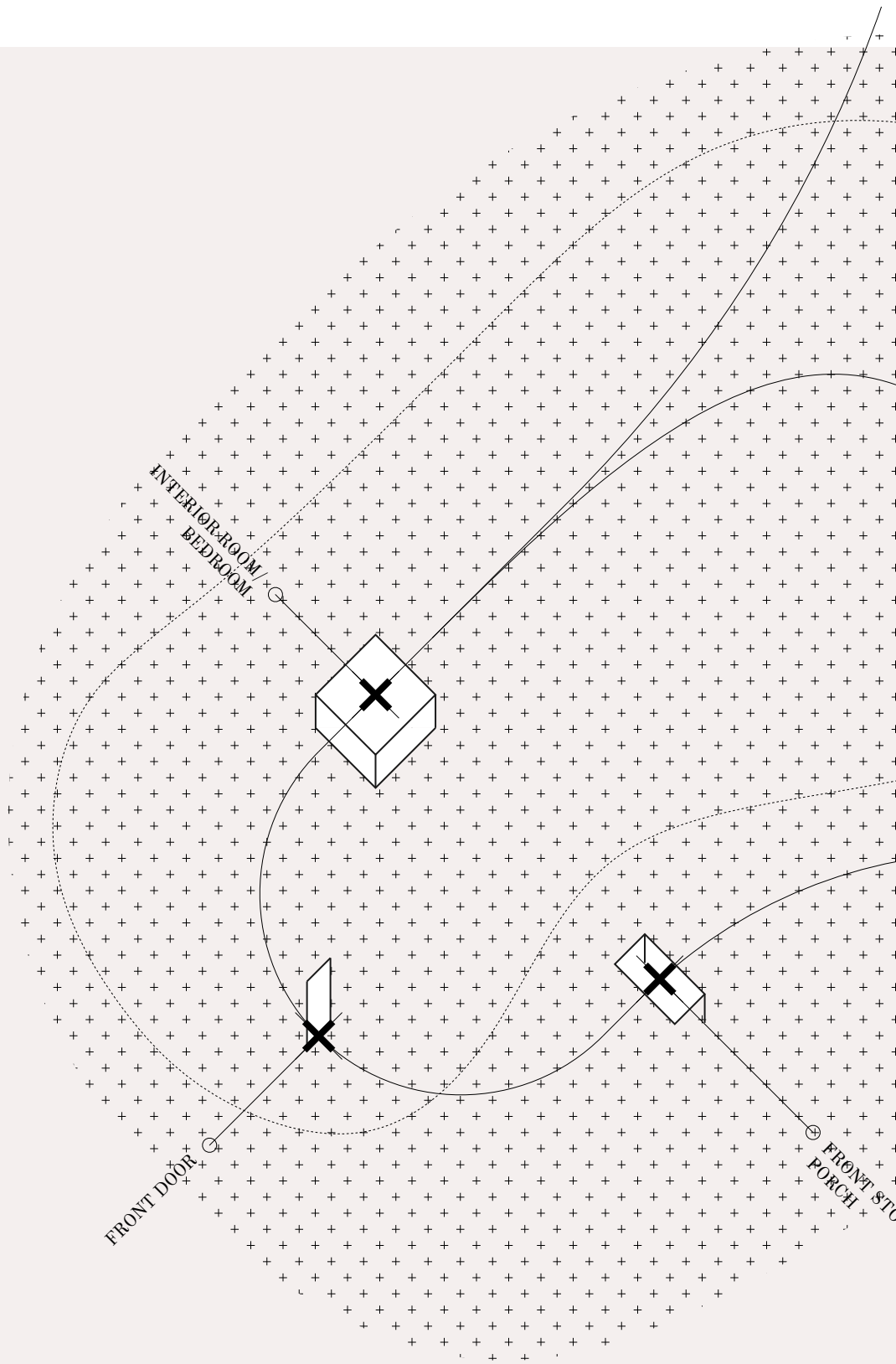


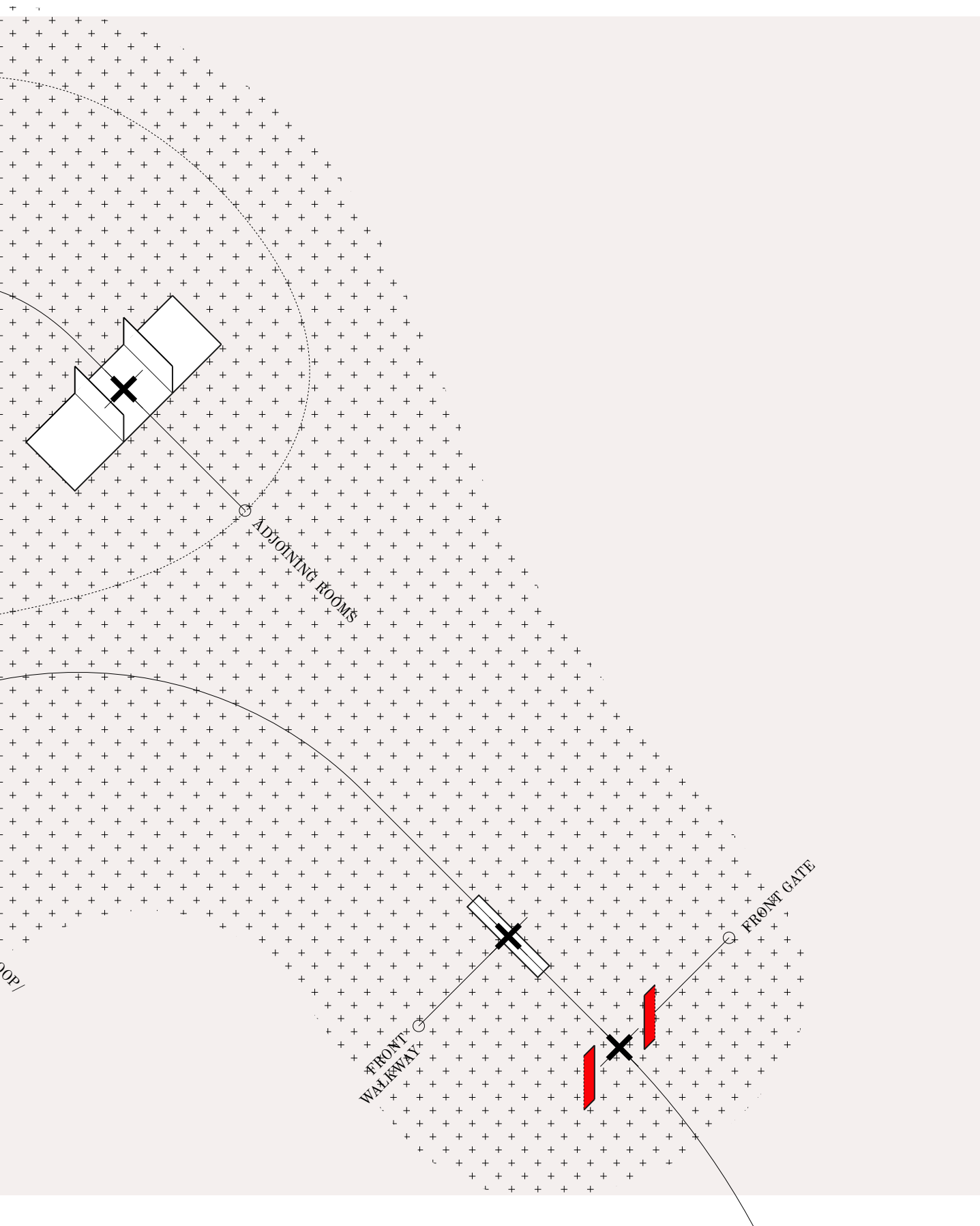




11:00PM CST:
John Geddes Lawrence Jr. (55)
and Tyron Garner (31)
arrested for sodomy









CASE 005: MASSES

TECHNICAL EXPOSITION
The Crystal Palace, 1851



- As the turnstile attempts to instantiate out of the masses a liberal citizenry of spectator-consumers, right-to-privacy laws enable the containment of other forms of deviance.

The 2003 Supreme Court decision in *Lawrence v. Texas* that invalidated legal prohibitions against sodomy is one entry in a history of what legal scholars have termed boundary

- 19 Strahilevitz, “Consent, Aesthetics, and the Boundaries of Sexual Privacy After *Lawrence v. Texas*,” 671.
- 20 Lisa Guenther, *Log* 42, 39.

maintenance around zones of privacy, in defense of the looming phantom of contagion—in this case, gay sex. The 2003 decision, based on a suit brought by two men who were arrested for having sex in one of their apartments, validated the legality of this transgression because of its occurrence within the private sphere, upholding the binding power of the home—and private property—in the heteronormative, liberal spatial imaginary while, by exclusion, marking the public as unprotected.

This rhetorical splitting intensifies an already uneven territorialization of at-home-ness, providing further means through which some residents and communities lay claim to territorial control by projecting a sense of home, hardening it architecturally, as through a front gate, and exacerbating histories of targeted dispossession and neglect. In this case, the decision slightly broadens the definition of privacy to welcome the entry of the compliant queer into liberal subjecthood, the queer who conforms to norms of decency and publicity, constantly monitoring one’s visibility, disclosing personal affairs only strategically and discretely.

Despite these re-entrenchments, discourse around this ruling, by the authors themselves, unravels openings for non-normative desire and reconfigurations in its inscription of privacy. Regarding a European Court of Human Rights decision, “which had held that because of privacy rights, the state could not punish five men who had engaged in a sex act within one of the participant’s homes,” “Justice Scalia wondered aloud how “privacy”



could possibly cover five people, let alone some larger number, such as ‘the number of people required to fill the Coliseum.’”¹⁹

The slipperiness of the legal bounds of the right to privacy implies architectural opportunities. As Lisa Guenther notes, “the more expansive the territory demarcated by the wall, the greater the risk of penetration by intruders.”²⁰

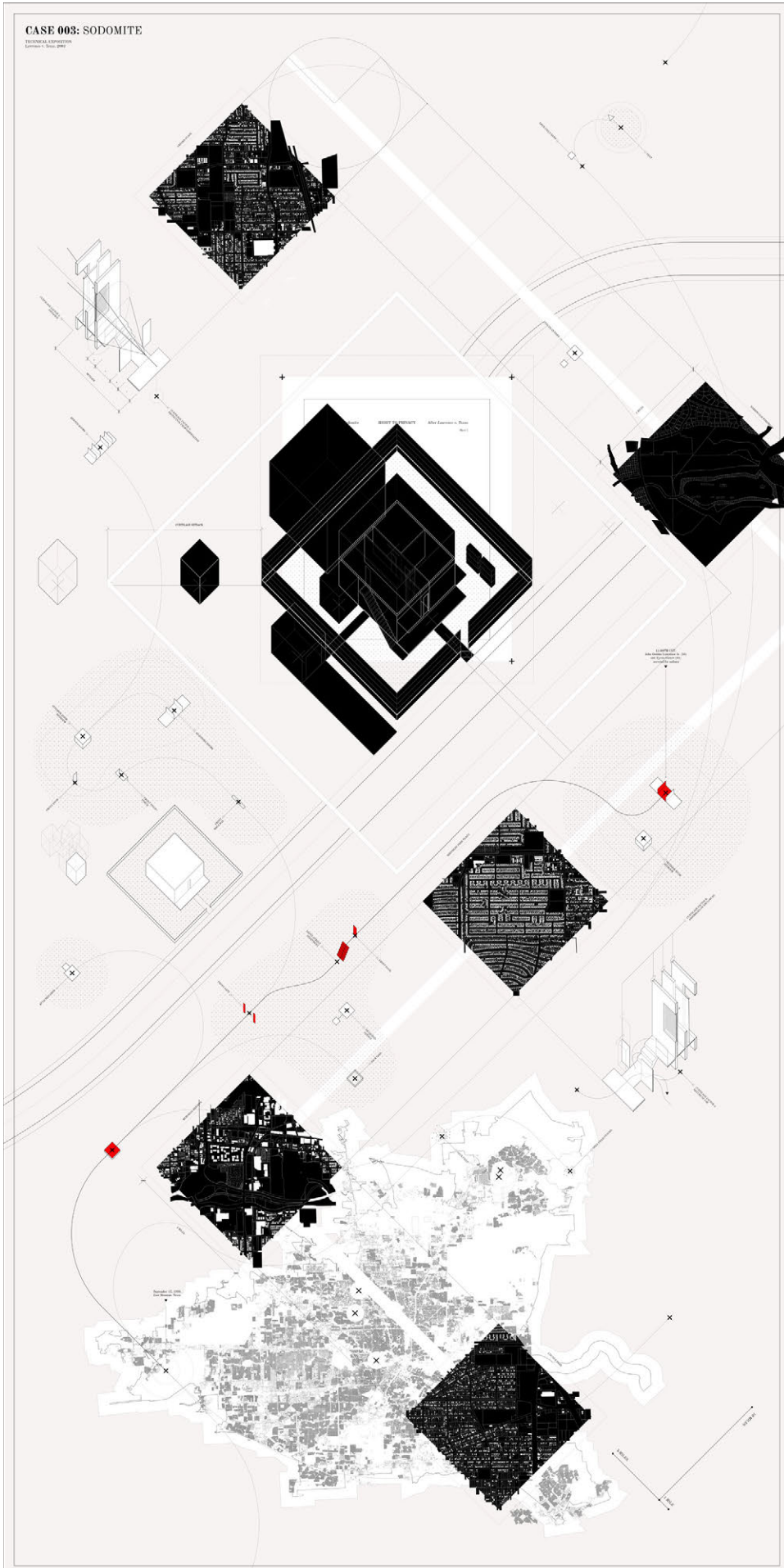
“the more
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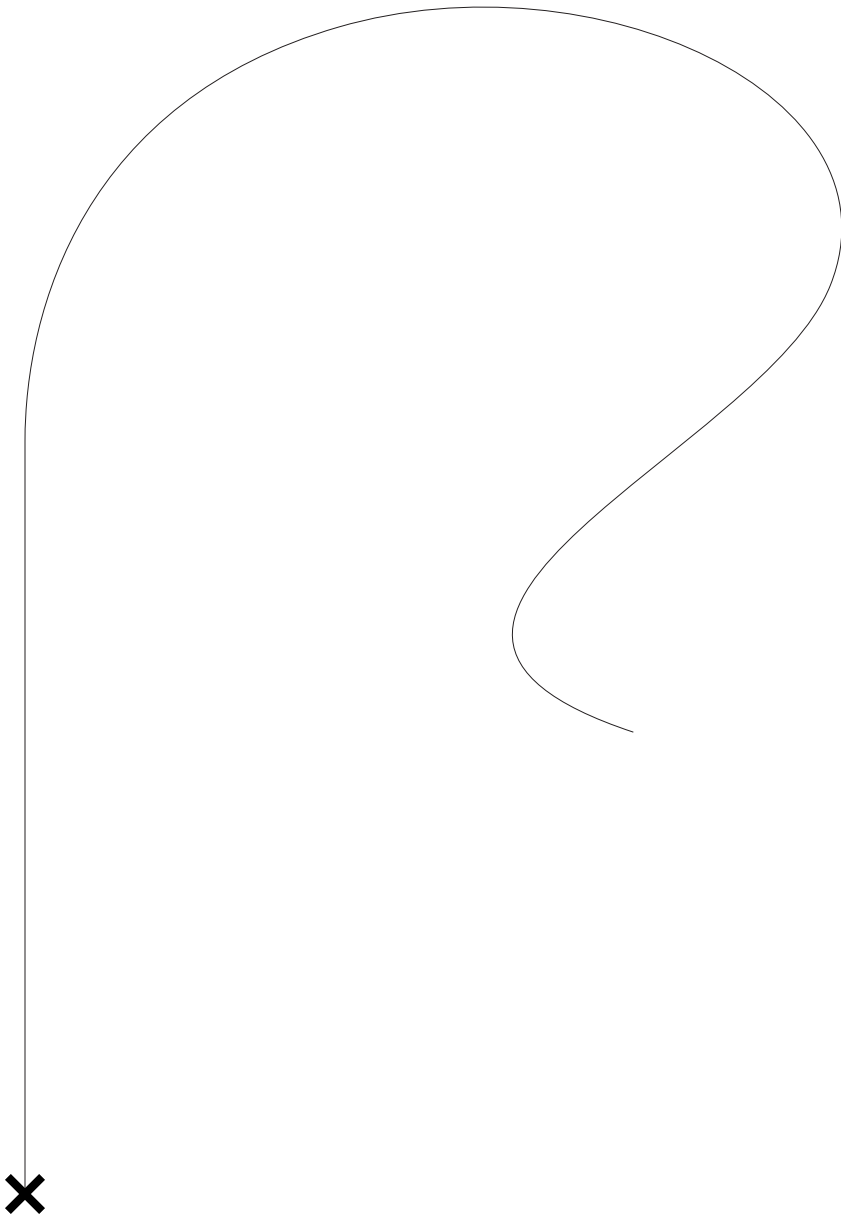
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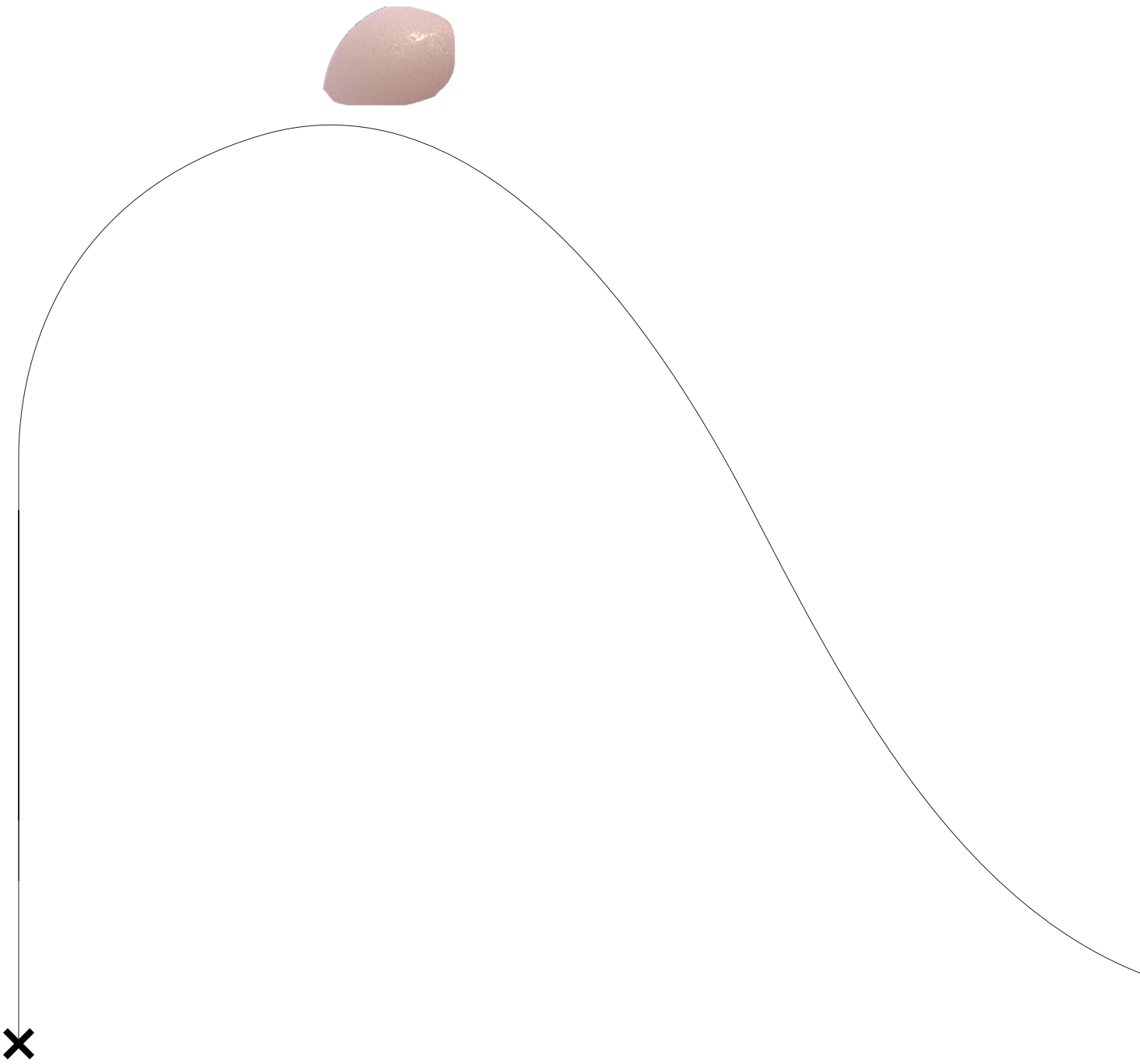
Presentation drawing
CASE 003: SODOMITE



CASE 003: SODOMITE
SODOMITE ARCHITECTURE
LONDON • 2011, 2012

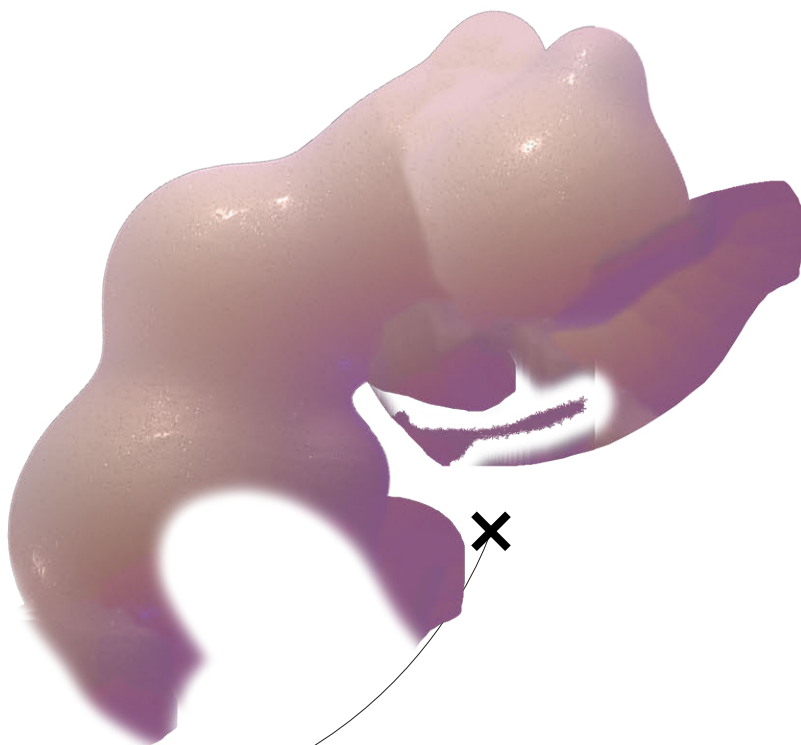






Who or what are the subjects that are accounted for? What bodies are made abject, targeted by techniques of control, and which are augmented? What clues do these test cases offer for imagining ways that architecture could differently inscribe its subjects, or provide openings for inscriptions of multiple identities, or otherwise grapple with designing for subjects unknown, without mandating humanist epistemologies?

bagging design



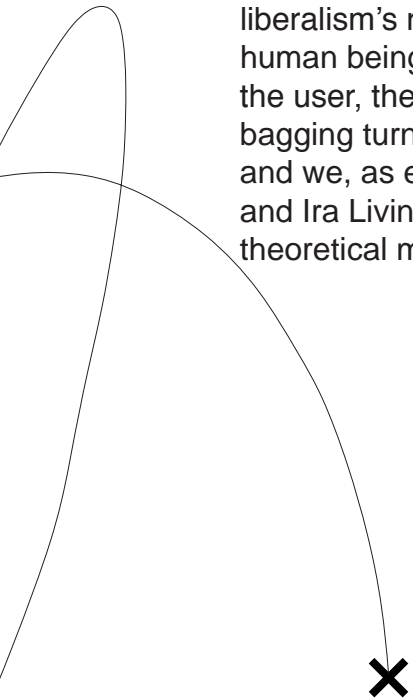
21 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 15.

22 Brown, *States of Injury*, 40.

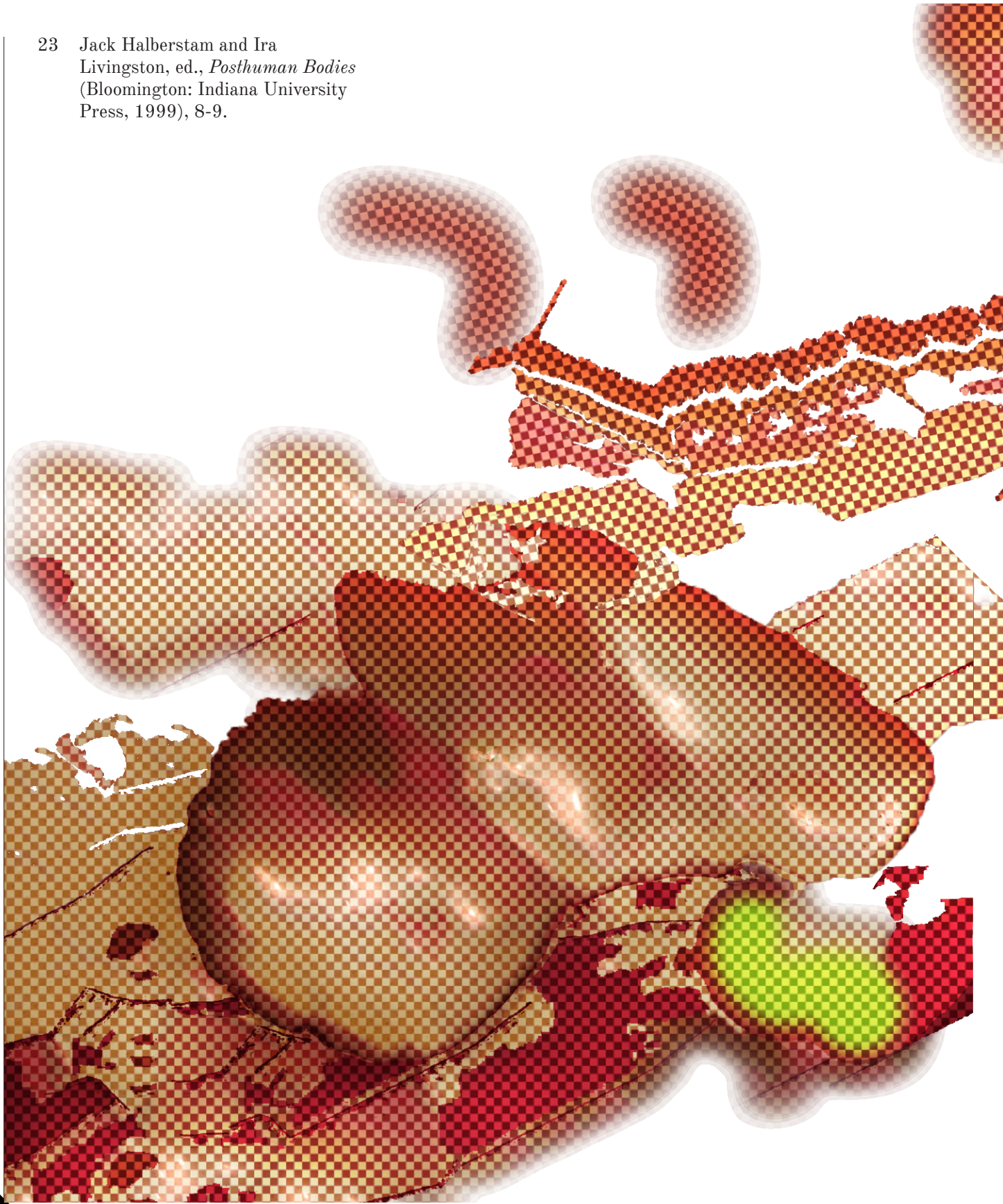
Bagging provides a wrinkle in the lines of these orthographic regimes, of architecture's iterative inscription of this liberal subject. It is an attempt at a partial unravelling of architecture's straightening devices that orient the body toward designed ends (and align it with systems of power) and that "make certain things, and not others, available."²¹



If such devices help instantiate “the willing, deliberate, and consenting “I” that liberalism’s rational-actor model of the human being proffers”²²—the professional, the user, the consumer, the citizen—bagging turns to some terrain between I and we, as explored by Jack Halberstam and Ira Livingston as a queerly “rigorous theoretical mandate”:

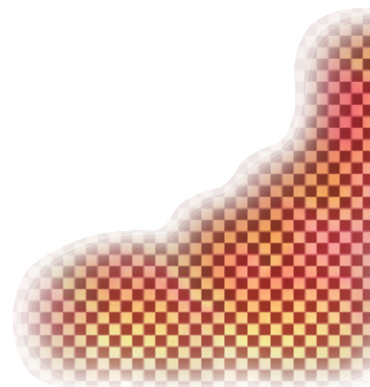


23 Jack Halberstam and Ira Livingston, ed., *Posthuman Bodies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 8-9.





[S]exuality is a dispersed relation between bodies and things: some bodies (such as male lesbians, female cockwearers, baby butches, generationalsists, sadofetishists, women with guns) and some things (dildoes, pistols, vegetables, ATM cards, computers, phones, phone books). Some turn-ons: women in suits looking like boys, women in suits wearing dildos looking like and being men, virtual body parts, interactive fantasy. . . . How many races, genders, sexualities are there? Some. How many are you? Some. “Some” is not an indefinite number awaiting a more accurate measurement, but a rigorous theoretical mandate whose specification, necessary as it is . . . is neither numerable nor, in the common sense, innumerable.”²³

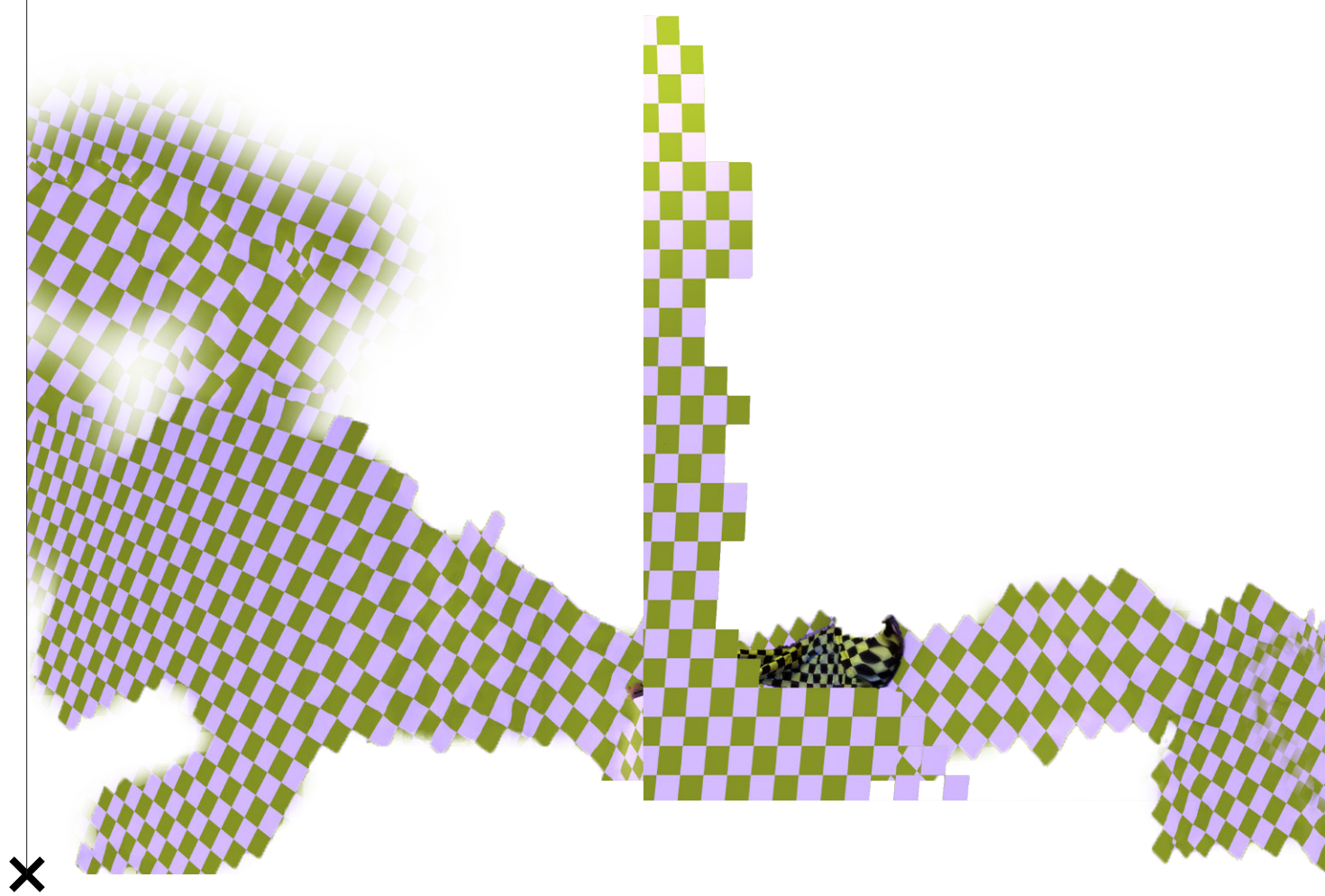






24 John May, "Under Present Conditions Our Dullness Will Intensify," *Project 3*.

Holding onto some-thing opens the door for indeterminacy not as a deficiency in need of further resolution by the enumerating hand of the architect, nor as the noise that surrounds and prevents access to the true or the real, nor as a kind of prototypical condition that precedes the intervention of design. It challenges the epistemological standards by which the discipline of architecture marshals competency, in which "every active impulse towards ambiguity, every instinct towards the inexpressible is displaced by a preemptive system of discursive evidentiary justification."^x

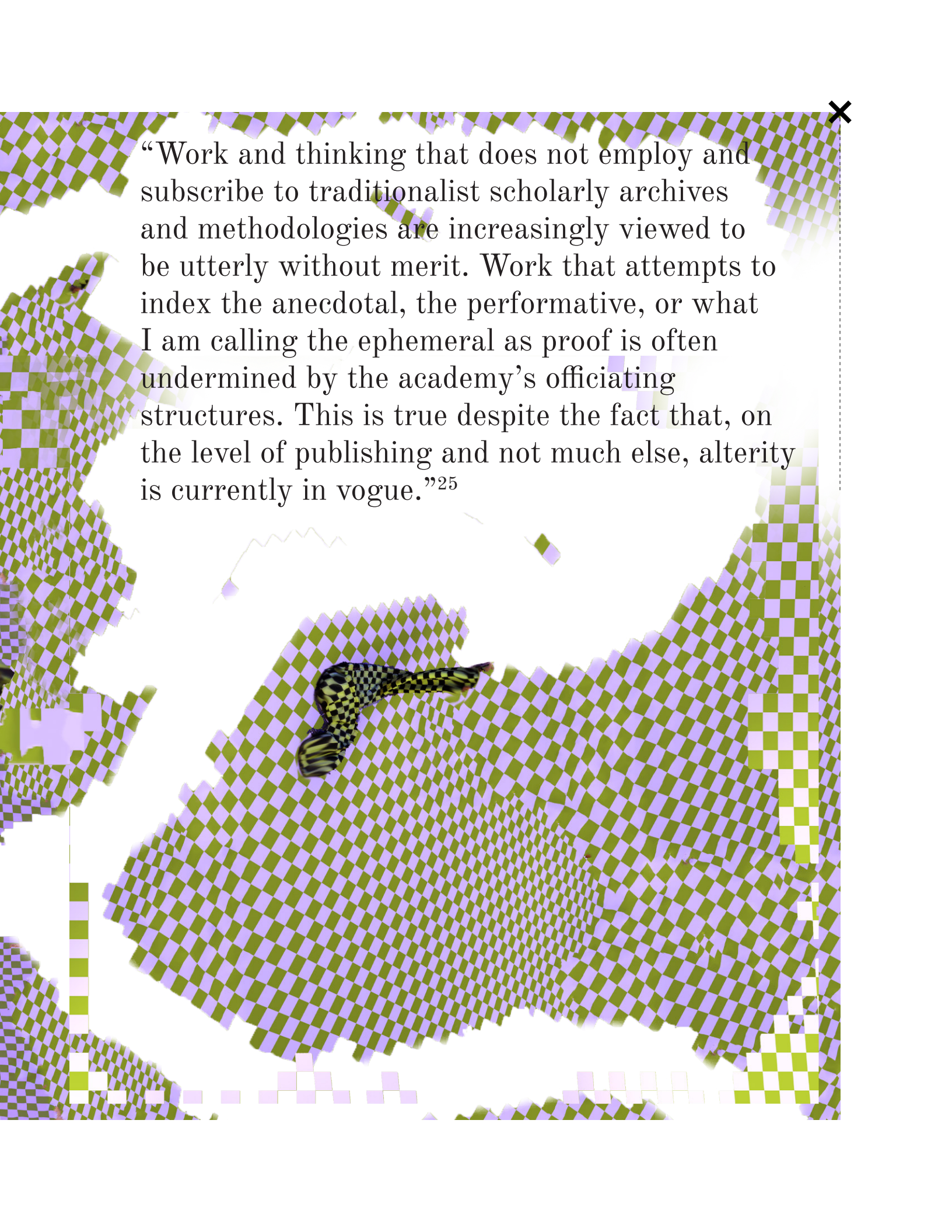


In place/parody of rigorous justification, bagging uses rigor-mortis methods, a term borrowed lovingly from the late queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz to spotlight the exclusions built into the term 'rigorous' as a legitimizing metric of scholarship. Rigor "is owned, made and deployed through institutional ideology" that dismisses the difficulties of scholarship on minoritarian histories and practices as proof of their triviality:



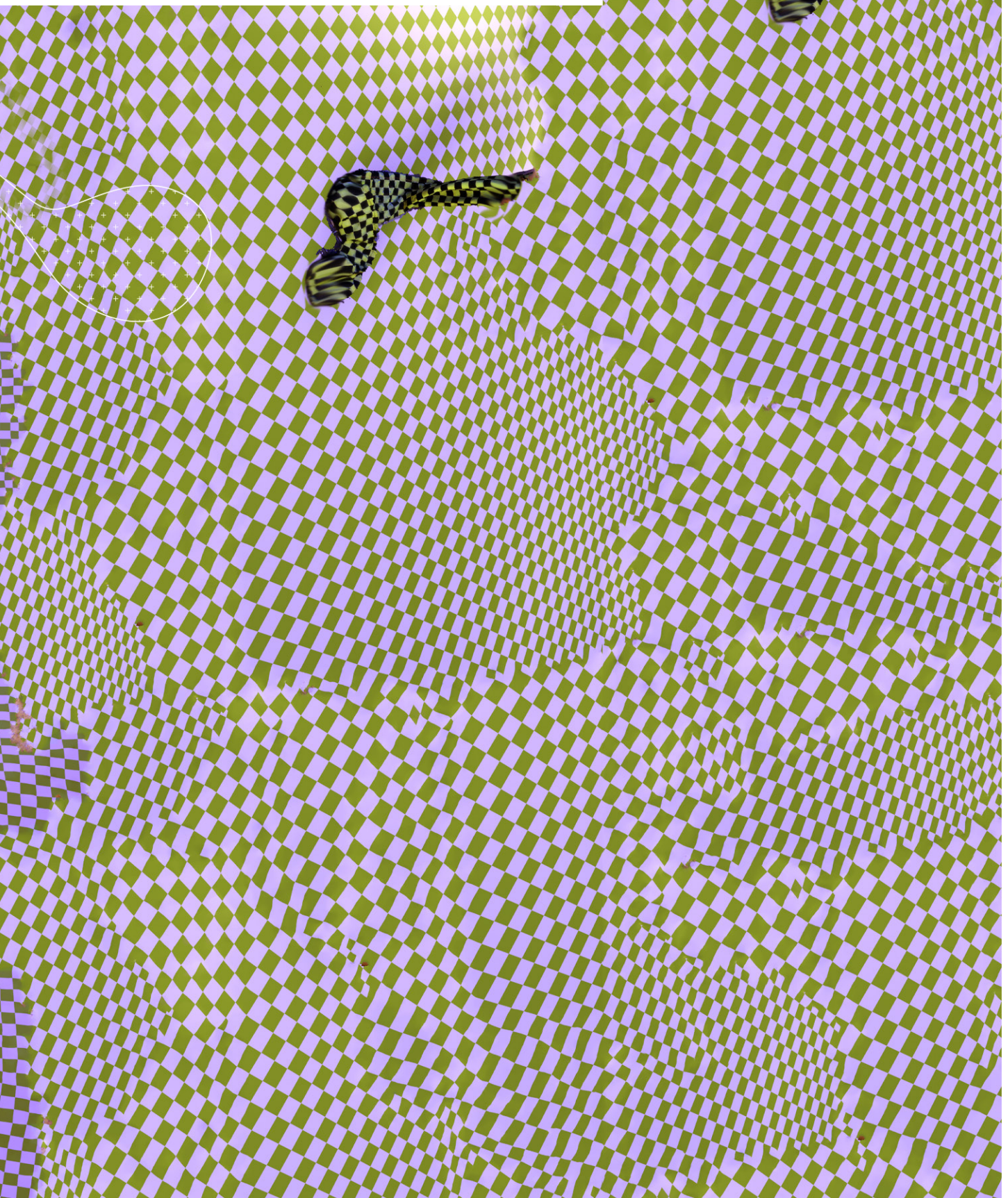
25 José Esteban Muñoz, "Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts," *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 8:2 (1996), 7.



A decorative border with a purple and green checkerboard pattern surrounds the text. A butterfly with black and yellow wings is positioned in the lower-left area of the border. A small black 'X' mark is located in the top right corner of the page.

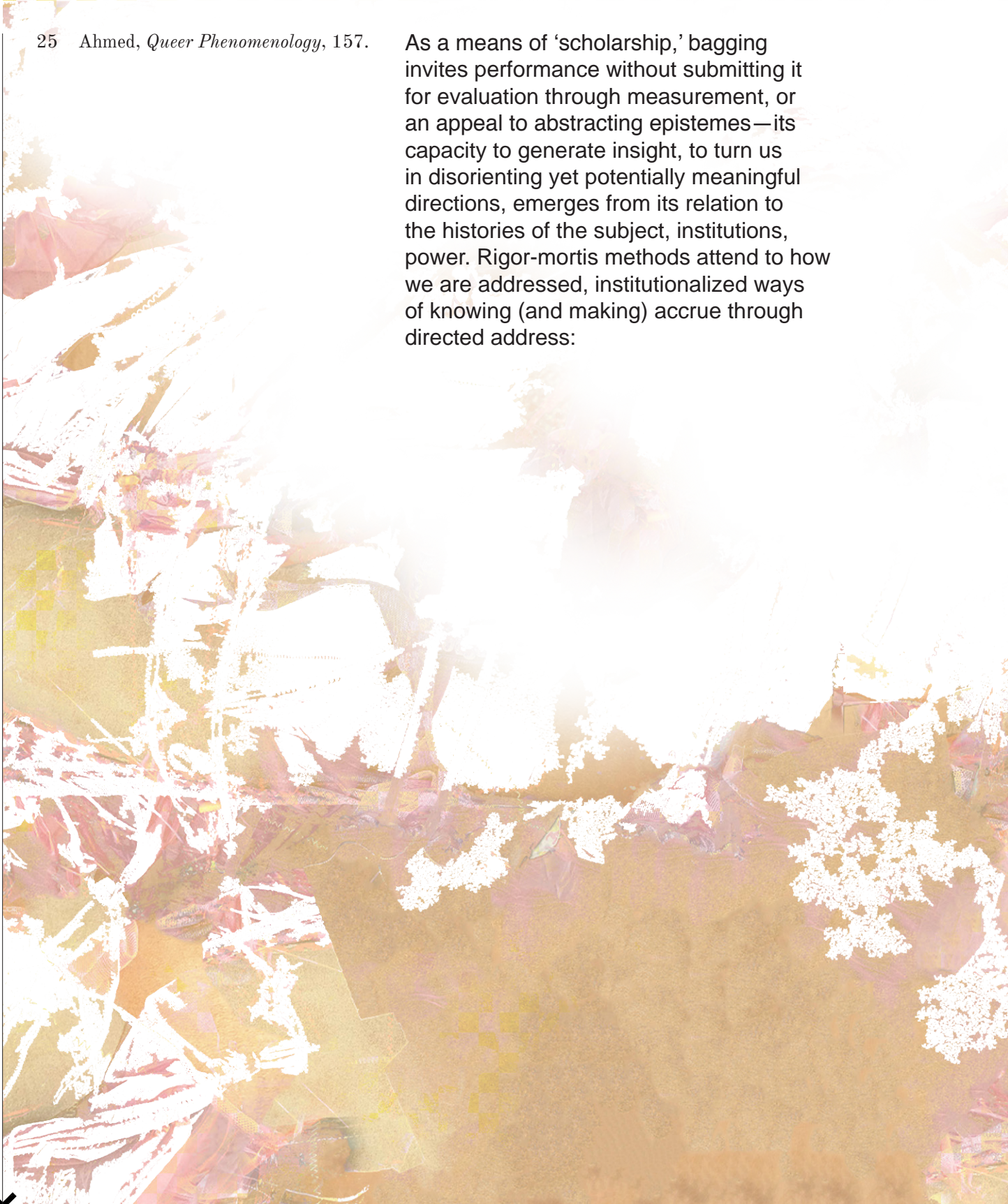
“Work and thinking that does not employ and subscribe to traditionalist scholarly archives and methodologies are increasingly viewed to be utterly without merit. Work that attempts to index the anecdotal, the performative, or what I am calling the ephemeral as proof is often undermined by the academy’s officiating structures. This is true despite the fact that, on the level of publishing and not much else, alterity is currently in vogue.”²⁵

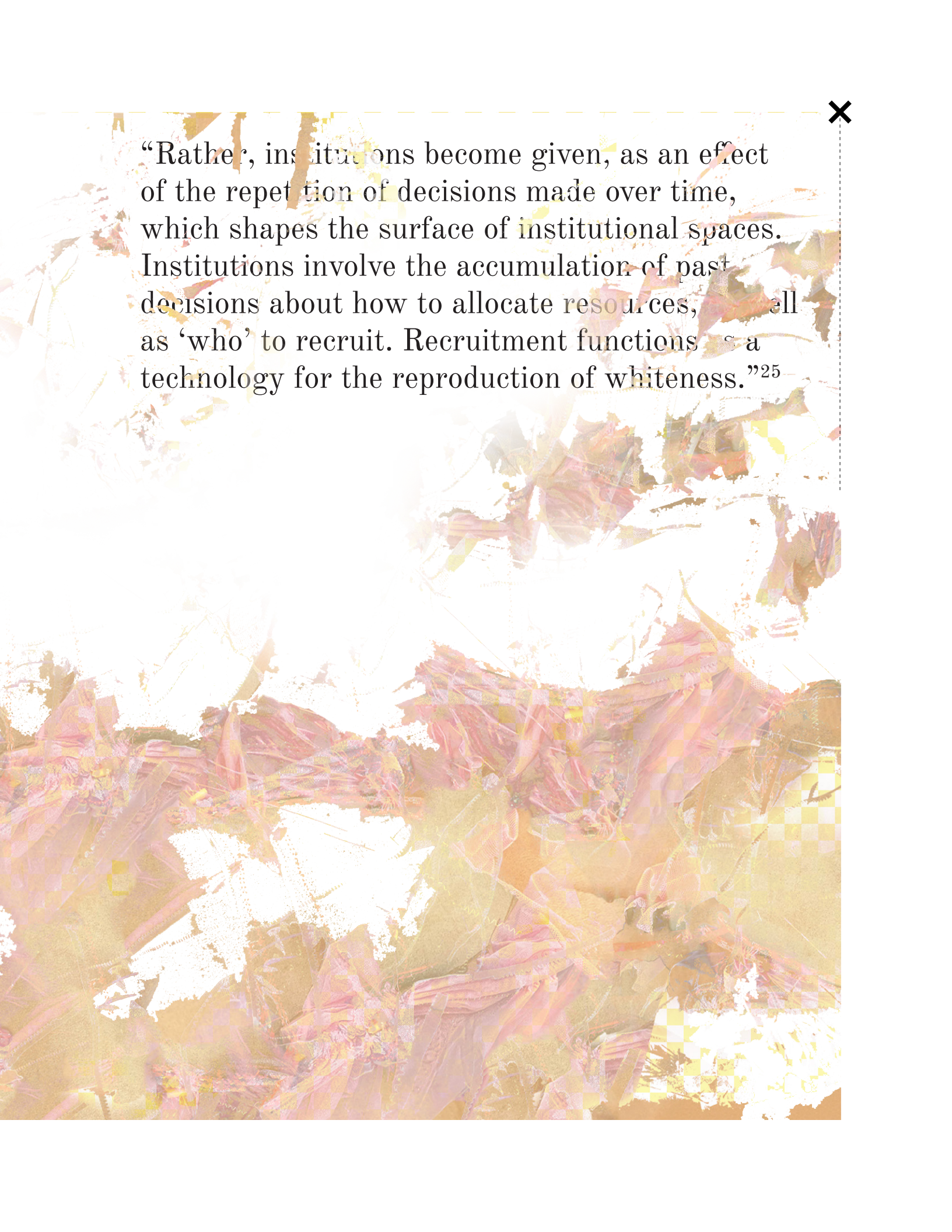




25 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 157.

As a means of 'scholarship,' bagging invites performance without submitting it for evaluation through measurement, or an appeal to abstracting epistemes—its capacity to generate insight, to turn us in disorienting yet potentially meaningful directions, emerges from its relation to the histories of the subject, institutions, power. Rigor-mortis methods attend to how we are addressed, institutionalized ways of knowing (and making) accrue through directed address:





“Rather, institutions become given, as an effect of the repetition of decisions made over time, which shapes the surface of institutional spaces. Institutions involve the accumulation of past decisions about how to allocate resources, as well as ‘who’ to recruit. Recruitment functions as a technology for the reproduction of whiteness.”²⁵







26 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 15.

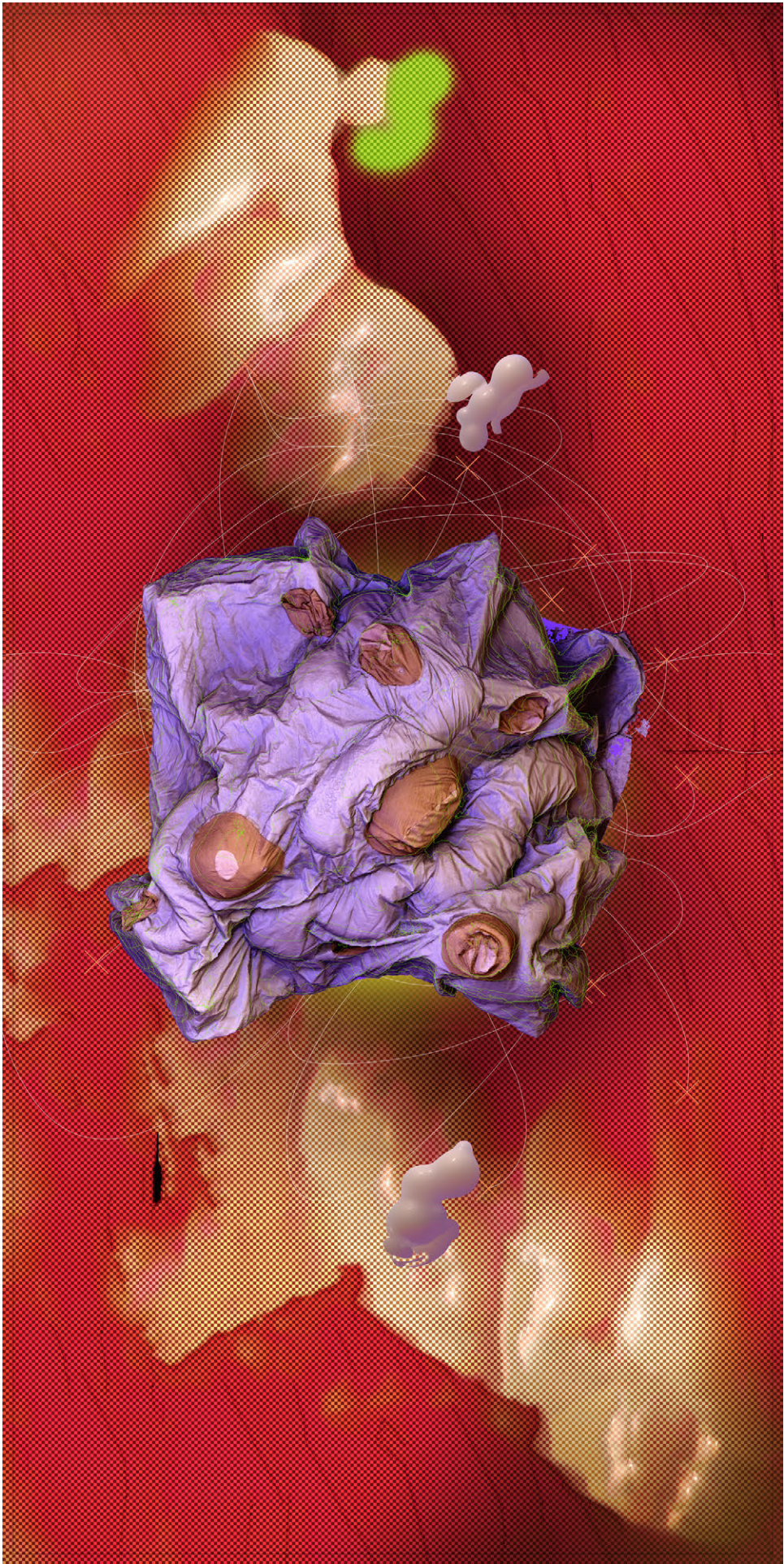
Some bagging wanders from the straight not to seek abolition of the line—the disciplinary line that orients us toward the reproduction of its norms—but to open design to new (deviant) subjects, like cows, crowds, sodomites, and others.

As a set of role-playing moves at body-ish scale, bagging gathers a multiplicity of contents within soft parameters, working with textile to deny the fixity of dimensioning. Only given volume and room by the bodies that wear them, these slouchy assemblies rely on use, but unattended by instruction, remain open for re-orienting toward emergent configurations. Bagging invites a deviation from the orthographic view, turning our attention to that “field of unreachable objects”²⁶ constituted by following lines of inscription, turning sideways to nuzzle the warm side of the cow, to dwell within a mess of bodies, to seek pleasure beyond the straight.



Presentation drawing
bagging cow





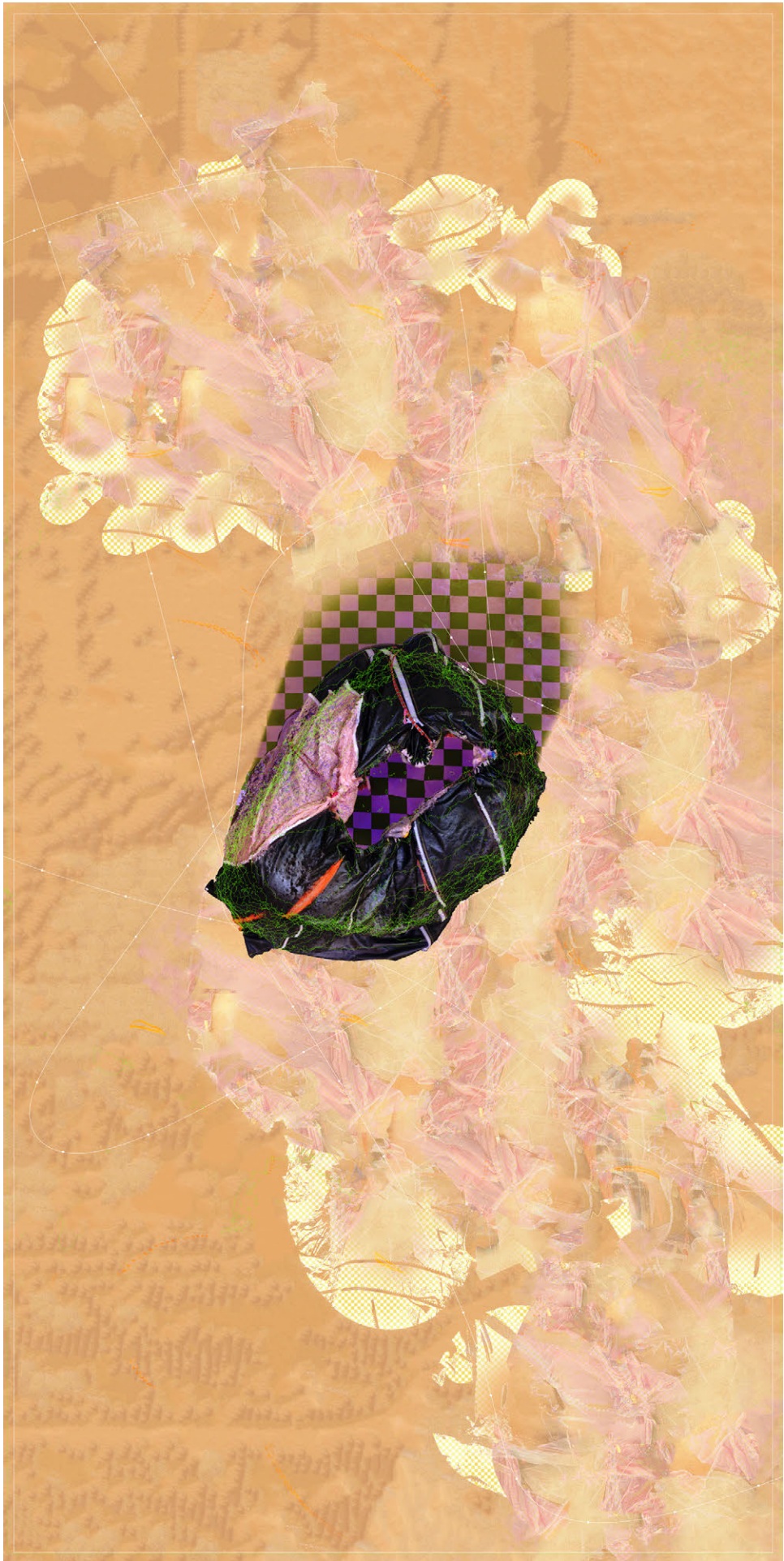
Presentation drawing
bagging masses





Presentation drawing
bagging sodomite





All photographs of thesis presentation by
April Gao, December 19, 2019.



bagging in action

“The mis-en-scene for me is...my profound discomfort with me standing up above you as we sit.”²⁷

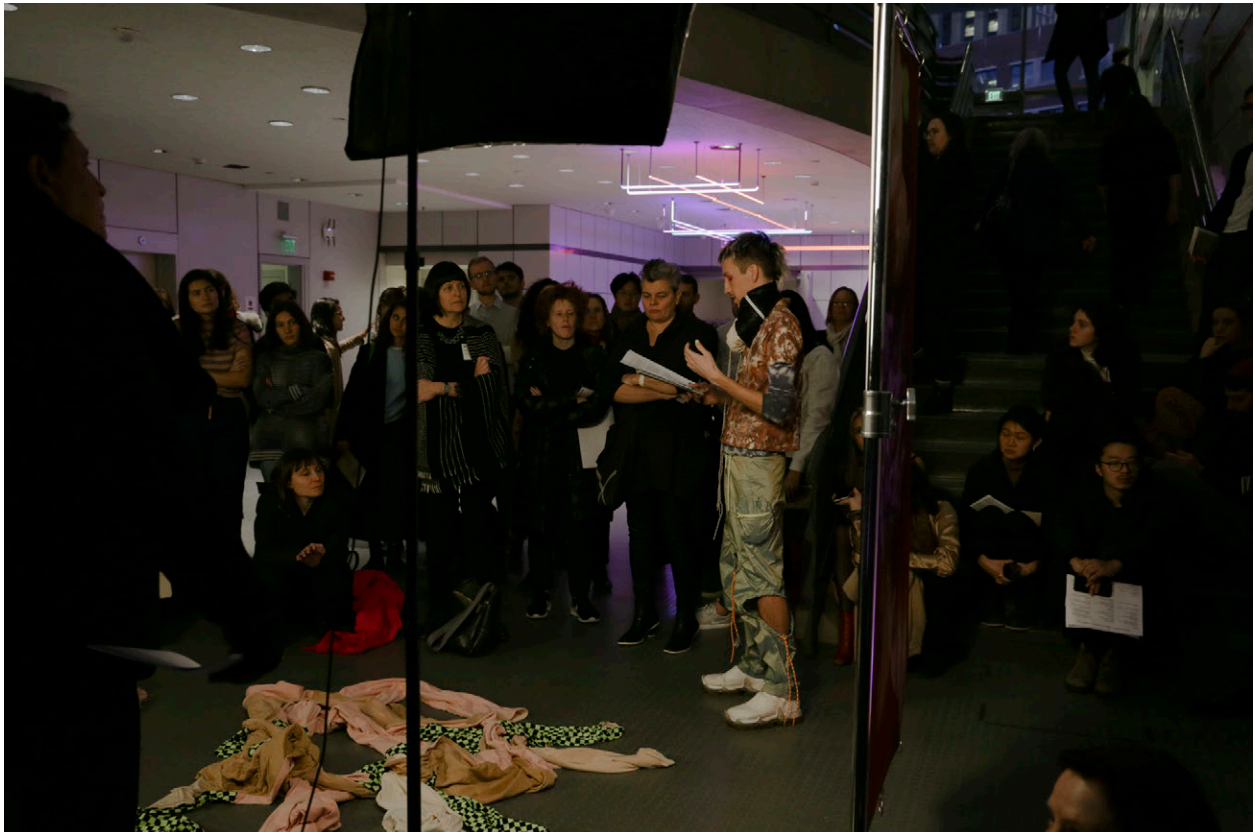












“I didn’t quite
get the line
that was
drawn through
these.”²⁸









“An initial material embodiment of a particular philosophy or approach to work ... a specific proposal for non-specificity... like a concept object, an ethos object.”²⁹









“These are fabulous, I love seeing them, I love touching them ... and I hate your drawings ... oh my god this is Superstudio ... I want you to go farther.”³⁰







- Ahmed, Sara. "A Phenomenology of Whiteness." *Feminist Theory* 8, no. 2: 158.
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- Wislon, Mabel O. "Changing the Subject: Race and Public Space," *Artforum*, <https://www.artforum.com/print/201706/changing-the-subject-race-and-public-space-68687>.



bibliogra- phy

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