

Pronounced Absurdity

The Wedding-Scape Outside a Conical Field

by

Yutan Sun

Bachelor of Architecture
Tsinghua University, 2018

Submitted to the Department of Architecture in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of Master of
Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

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Signature of Author: _____

Department of Architecture
Jan 14, 2022

Certified by: _____

Jeremy Jih
Visiting Lecturer of Architecture
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by: _____

Leslie K. Norford
Professor of Building Technology
Chair, Department Committee for Graduate Students

advisor

Jeremy Jih

Visiting Lecturer of Architecture

readers

Axel Kilian

Visiting Assistant Professor of Architecture

William O'Brien Jr

Associate Professor of Architecture

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ABSTRACT

Usually taking on an exotic appearance and occurring as a defocused and cropped backdrop in a picture frame, a wedding park is an architectural complex that provides spectacular and romanticized scene settings like a proscenium stage for wedding photographs. In order to satisfy the bourgeoisie lifestyle fantasy, architectural symbols out of the in situ context are extensively deployed to create a sense of elsewhere in a wedding park, leading to a misalignment of a wedding park's pictorial presence and physical reality.

A wedding park as a real estate typology is an architectural response to both the prosperous wedding economy and the visual consumption fever in China. Xiamen, a city branding itself as the international wedding capital, expects a new typology of wedding park that conforms its highly dense urban fabric and city image around weddings.

The double-image phenomenon in a wedding park is paralleled in a dummy cake, a cake whose sponge has been wholly or partially replaced with polystyrene blocks. The dramatic counterpose between its sumptuous profile and inedibility becomes a metaphor for the duality of wedding spaces.

This thesis understands a dummy cake as a political and cultural artifact that echoes the double-image of architecture and critiques the misalignment of imageability and physicality in Xiamen's wedding spaces. This thesis imagines a set of wedding infrastructures inserted in the highly dense urban fabric of Shapowei district, building up fantasies with the appropriation of architectural symbols. The concentration of diversely themed wedding scenes signifies an efficient, inhumane, and consumeristic image-making mechanism. By replicating alienated symbols and juxtaposing the fantasized construct and the realistic urban context, this thesis creates spectacles for visual consumption and simultaneously foregrounds the absurdity of both the construct per se and its uncanny collision with the existing urban ambient. In this way, the rationality of wedding infrastructures only exists in the conical field of a camera, and the dysfunctional, disordered and obscure physical reality behind a flawless wedding photo becomes a critique of visual consumerism.

Thesis Supervisor: Jeremy Jih
Title: Visiting Lecturer of Architecture



A pair of wedding cake toppers in front of cake sponges, 2009, Image © Abigail Tucker

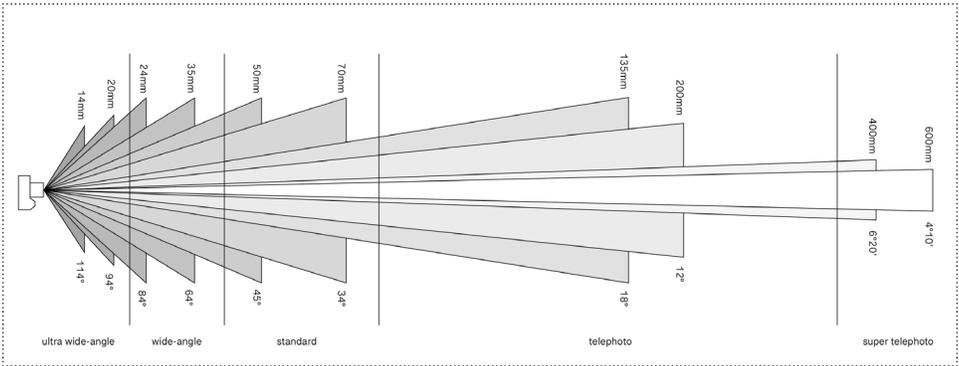
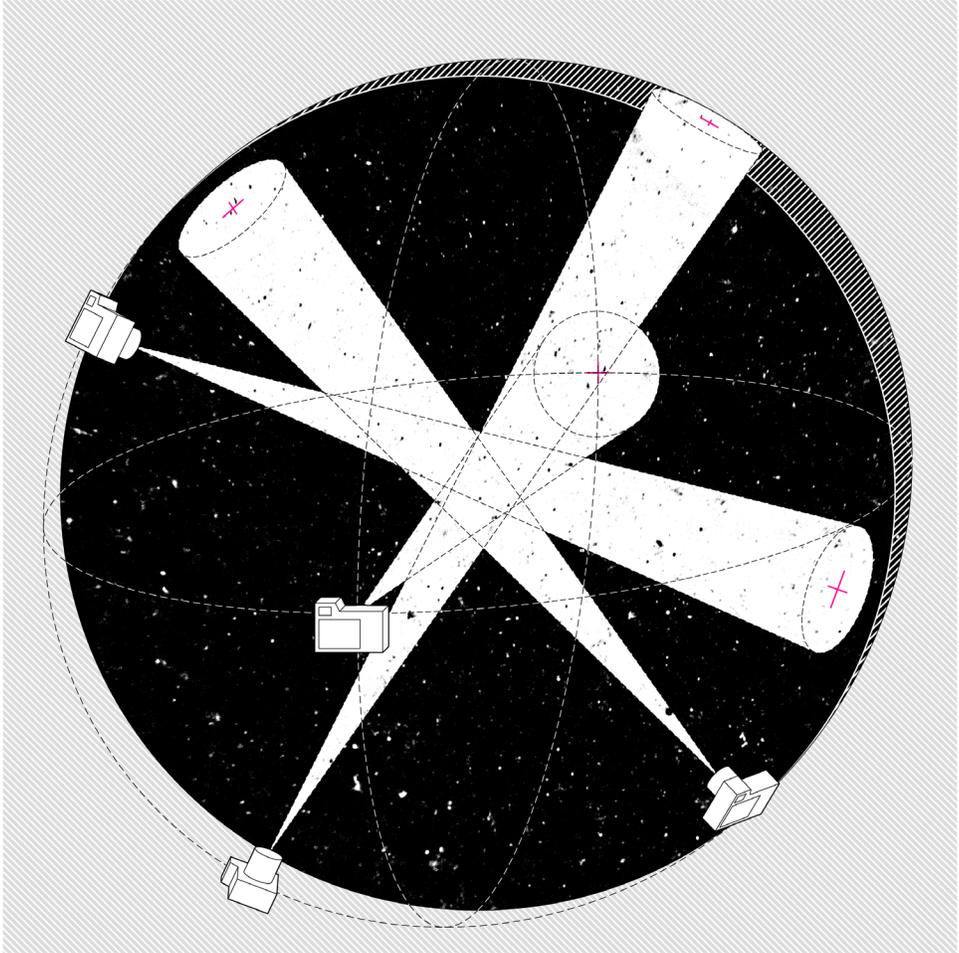
Pronounced Absurdity: The Wedding-scape outside a Conical Field



A M.Arch Thesis by Yutan Sun

Fall 2021

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Visual Cones

This thesis starts with a statement that visual consumption is alienating artifacts from their primary identities.

As Oscar Wilde has said, 'one should either be a work of art, or wear a work of art.' Our obsession with the visual attributes of objects comes from our need to construct identities. It is out of the need for self-branding.

A subject appropriates the cultural and hierarchical connotation of artifacts to compile its identities, and at the same time, objectify itself. The subject could be a person, a collective, a city, and a nation. The objects could be clothes, jewelry, food, cars, and houses; they could also sometimes be people.

In this process, visual attributes of objects become foremost because their carriers, images, are affordable, open to manipulation, and easier to spread online. As Pallasmaa stated in *The Eyes of the Skin*, by furnishing this already crowded world with a duplicate one of images, photography makes us feel that the world is more available than it really is.

With the layering of multiple images of different objects, people confirm their position in the virtual field of our society and accomplish the construction of their identities. Visual attributes of objects are projected to subjects in the consumption process. In the case of British royal wedding cakes, a white, tall, and delicate cake fulfills a statement of purity, virginity, prominence, and prosperity.

The emphasis on imageability leads to today's celebration of visual consumption and has profoundly impacted how we sense, perceive, and interact with the world. As Susan Sontag has stated, the prevalence of image culture has rendered us 'a mentality which looks at the world as a set of potential photographs.' Today, when people interact with artifacts or places, they no longer passively accept whatever has been brought to their scope but spontaneously engage in the curation of their experience.

This is the case in gastronomy. When a dish is served in a restaurant, people composite their table settings and take pictures before eating it. This is also the case in architecture. There are many online contents teaching how to make a perfectly Instagram-able picture. The contents vary from niche destinations for photography, the perfect angles to photo filter recommendations.



Met Gala 2018 Red Carpet,



Image @Jamie McCarthy



Hollywood t

*By simply replacing the 'H' with a 'B', which sta
film industry successfully inherits the images ass
lishes its identity.*



as Bollywood

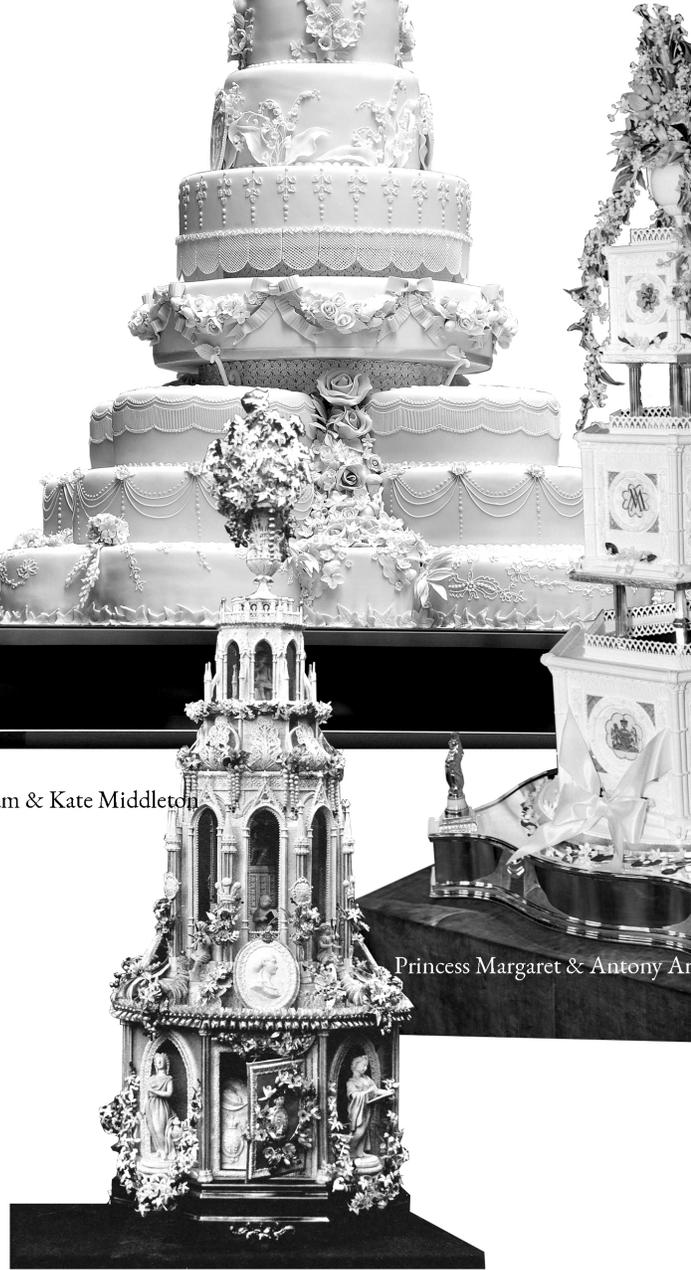
*nds for Bombay, the Indian Hindi-language
sociated with cinema of Hollywood and estab-*



Queen Elizabeth II & Philip Mountbatten



Prince William & Kate Middleton



Princess Margaret & Antony Armstrong-Jones

Prince of Wales King Edward VII & Queen Alexandar



Prince of Wales & Lady Diana Spencer



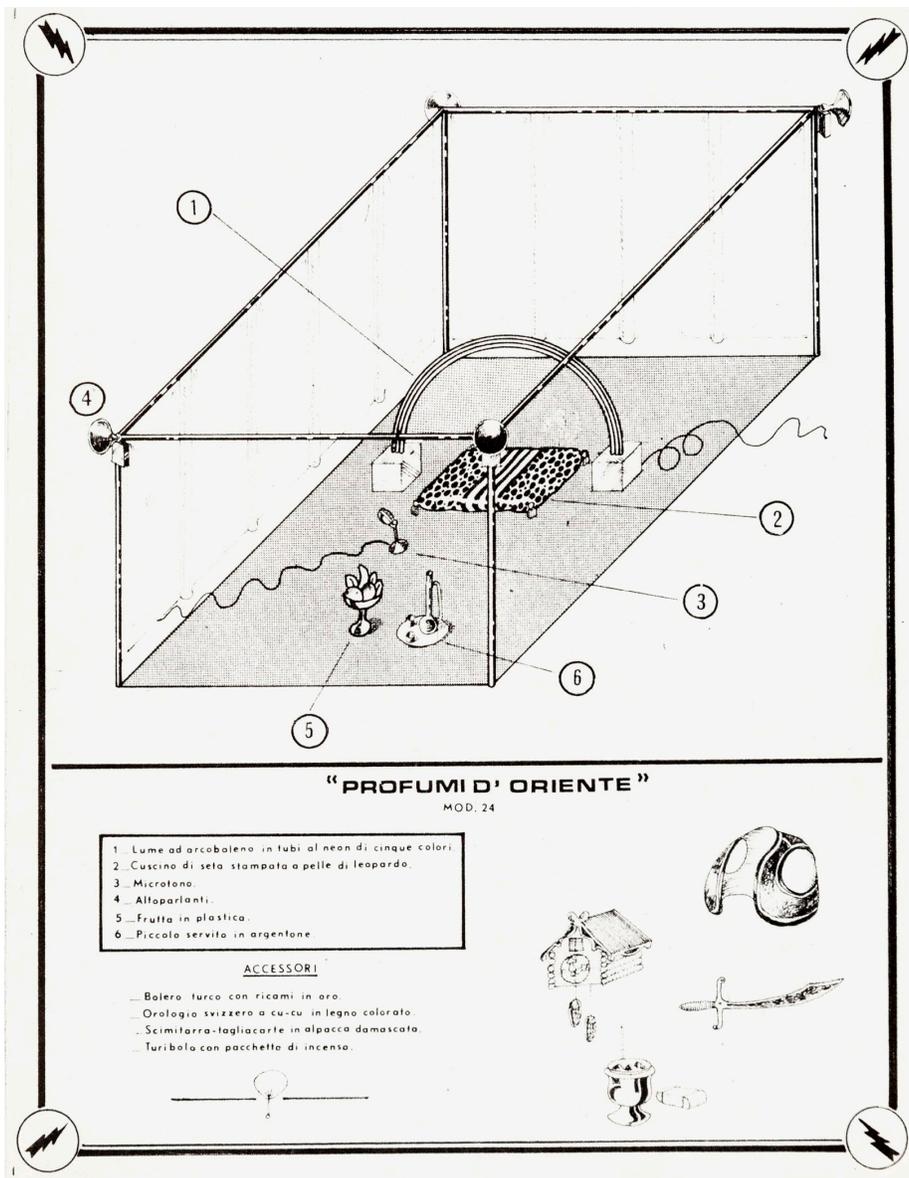
Princess Royal Victoria, Queen of Prussia & German Emperor Frederick III



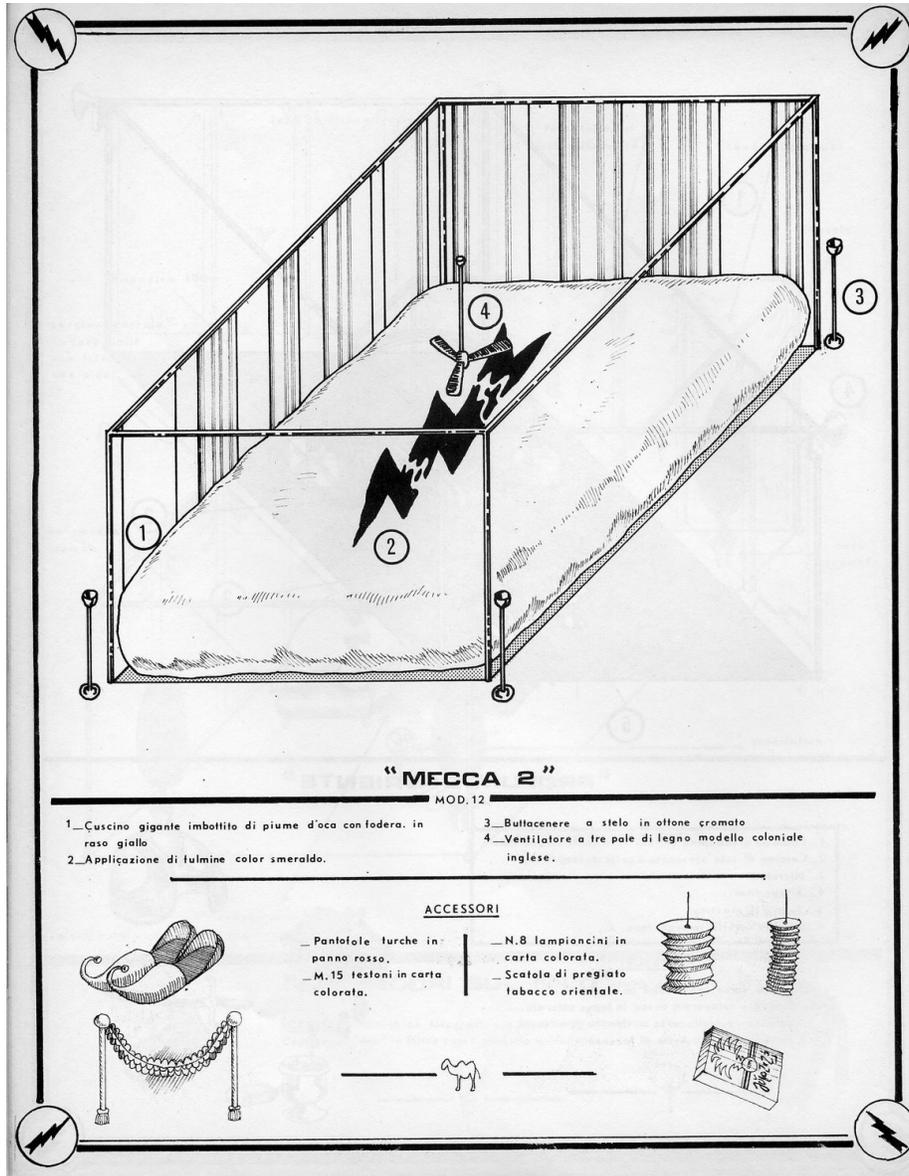
Prince Charles & Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall



Princess Louise and the Marquess of Lorne



Archizoom Associati (1966–1974), Gazebi, Profumi d'Oriente, 1968. Print on paper,
330 × 240 mm. DMC 2057.8.

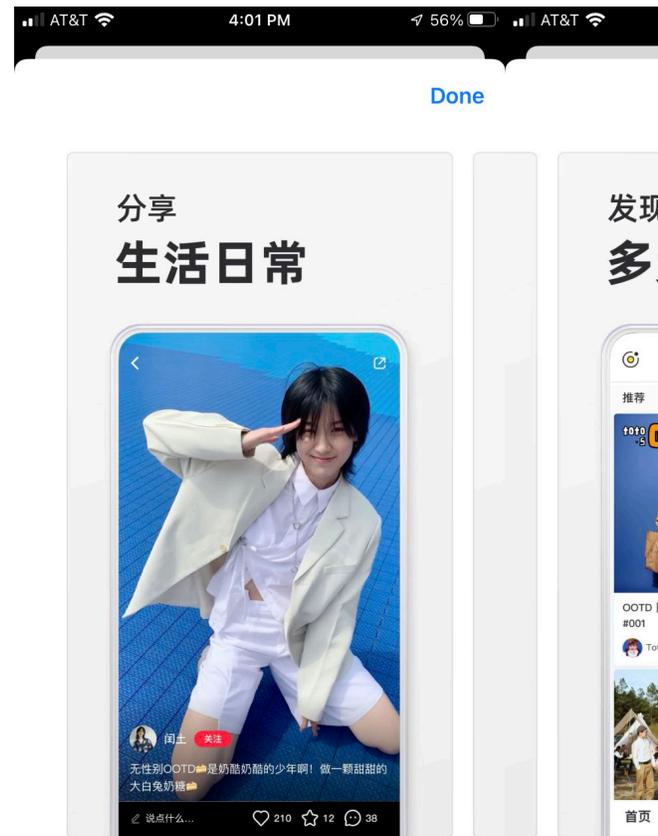


Archizoom Associati (1966–1974), "Mecca 2" from the Gazebo series. Print on paper, 285 x 215mm.



App Store screenshot of Little Red Book (Xiaohongshu), the largest platform to share consumer experience and all aspects of lifestyle in China.

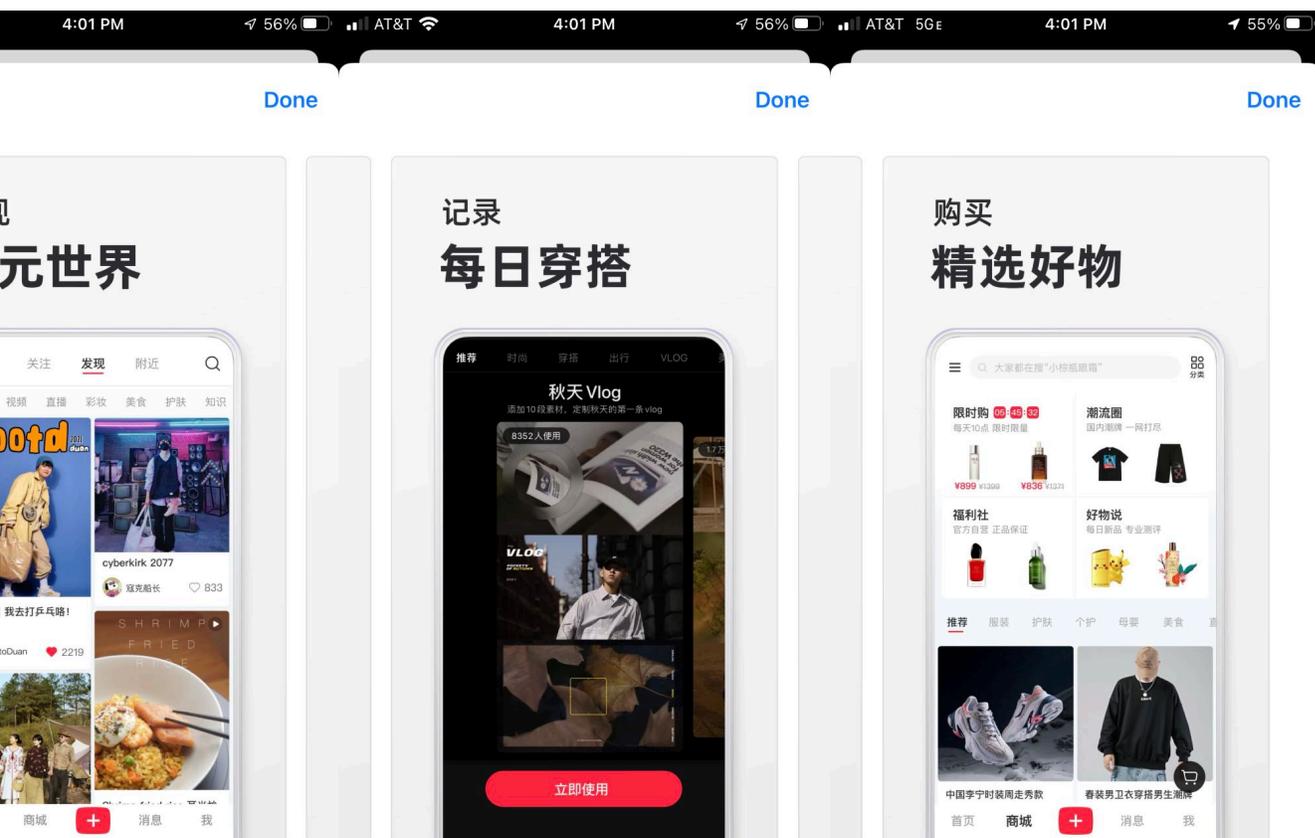
Social media is accelerating our transition to an image-making mindset. Little Red Book, sometimes called Red or Xiaohongshu, is the largest online platform to share consumer experiences and all aspects of lifestyles in China. When it came to the market in 2013, it was a community to share overseas shopping experiences, but soon the content was broadened to all aspects of consumption. Now Xiaohongshu positions itself as the 'lifestyle platform which integrates community, content and commerce', also known as '3 Cs' that holds its fundamental value. From a western perspective, Xiaohongshu equals 'Pinterest + Instagram + Amazon.' Xiaohongshu has been growing fast since its release. It was nominated to Fast Company 'The



'Share your everyday life'

World's 50 Most Innovative Companies 2019'. In the same year, its monthly active users have reached 220 million, and its market value has surpassed USD 3 billion.

Similar to Instagram, contents on Xiaohongshu are image-based. Xiaohongshu provides a significant number of embedded photo editing functions, including templates, filters, and animation effects. The mechanism of Xiaohongshu and the nature of image dissemination significantly encourages the overprocessing of images, leading to the divorce of physical reality and pictorial presence. Social media, exemplified by Xiaohongshu, becomes a crucial tool for self-branding. Those deliberately composited and laboriously proceeded images construct



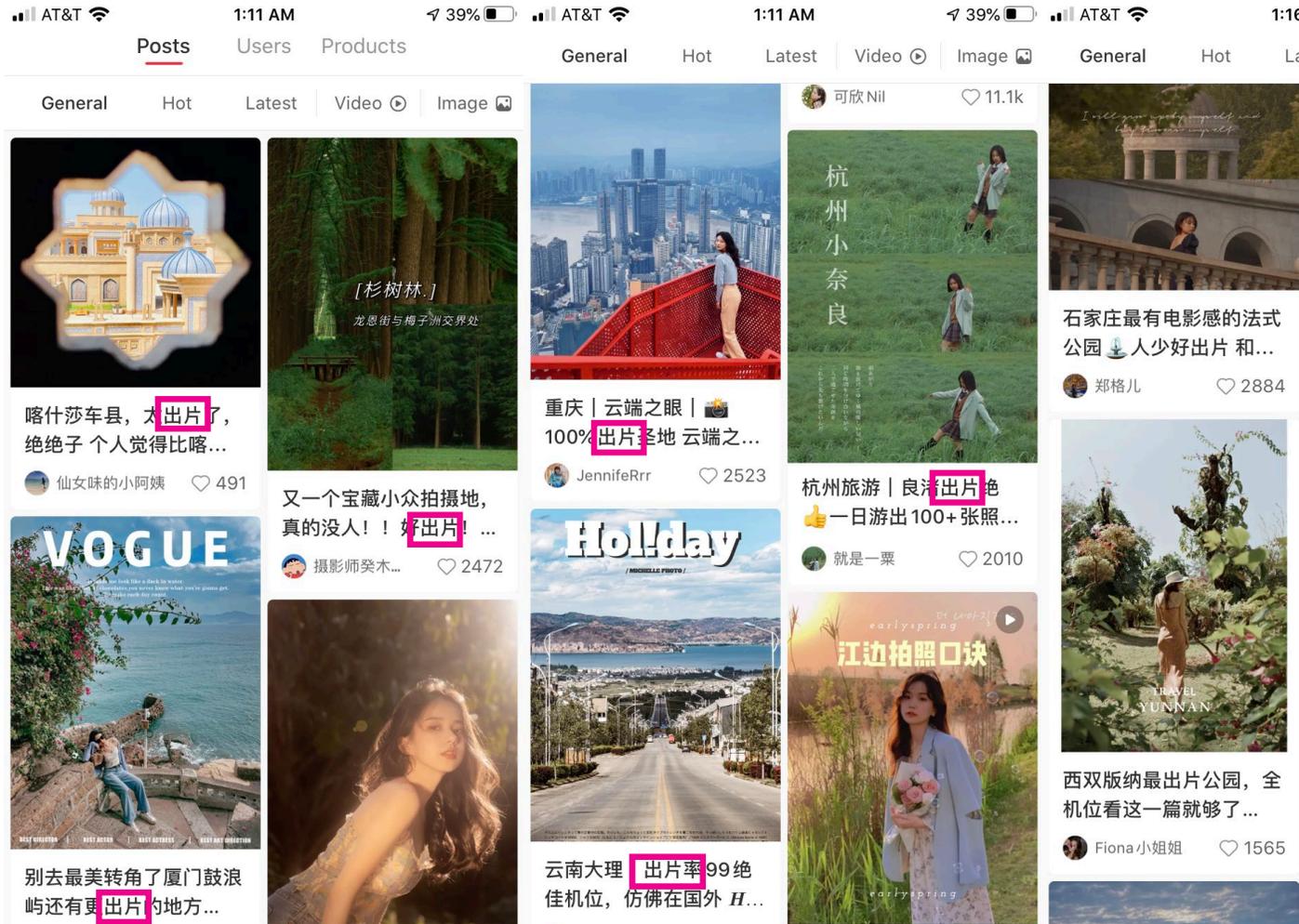
'Cover the diverse world'

'Record your OOTD'

'Purchase featured goods'

the user's identity, and the watermark further consolidates the image by declaring their ownership. 'Chupian(出片)' has become a vital evaluation parameter for artifacts and places. It literally translates as 'foster images,' describing a possibility of yielding aesthetic photos. Over 2 million posts are tagged with 'Chupian' on Little Red Book (Xiaohongshu). Chupian means more online exposure, more public attention, and ultimately, more profit, and reversely ask architecture to cater to the need of image production. Following our enthusiasm for image-making and the ever-growing need for self-branding, what Susan Sontag criticized half a century ago is turning into a physical reality. Our mental-

ty that looks at the world as a set of potential images triggers a mental presence of artifacts, which is usually fantasized and glorified. The physical presence, the product of space making, becomes the simulacra, or mimicry of its mental presence. The flattened presence, which is the product of image-making, further alienates the physical presence in its consumption progress, as its consumers use differentiated images as an expression of their identities, further divorcing it from its mental prototype.



Posts tagged with 'Chupian' on Little Red Book



青岛 | 八大关的山洞太出片啦! 附详细位置地图...

荔九- 5769



长沙这个地方拍日系照片太出片了!! 朋友圈说...

雅雅文 2713



石家庄最有电影感的法式公园 人少好出片...

郑格儿 3021



深圳拍照 | 这个小众拍照地 人少又出片! ...

摄影师毛小枫 40



名字叫 YUYU. 10.6k

太好出片了, 随手拍就像是在瑞士的即视感! 走...

吴噪音 7501



魔都探店 安福路的超美花店 出片一级棒 #ABS...



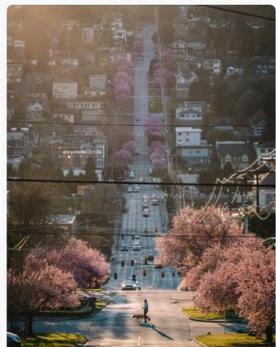
绍兴游 | 打卡许光汉同款

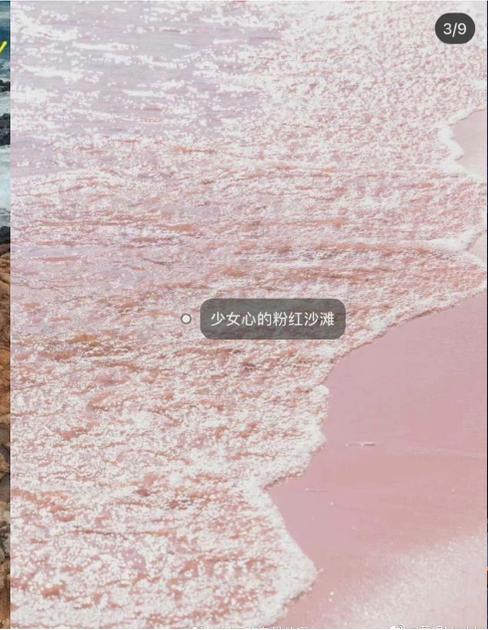
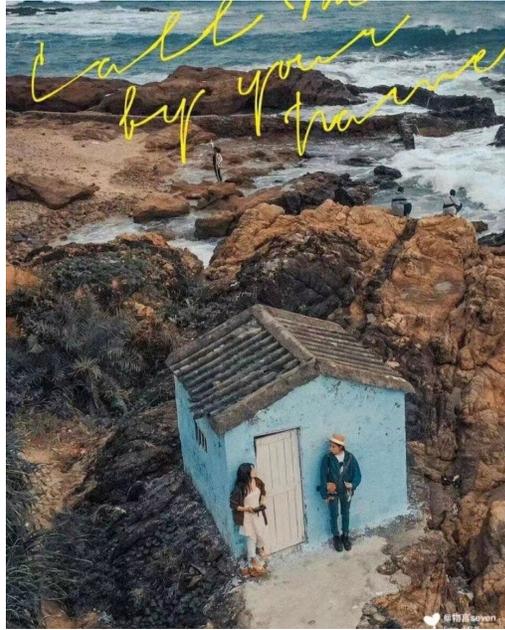


秋冬银杏叶太出片啦最

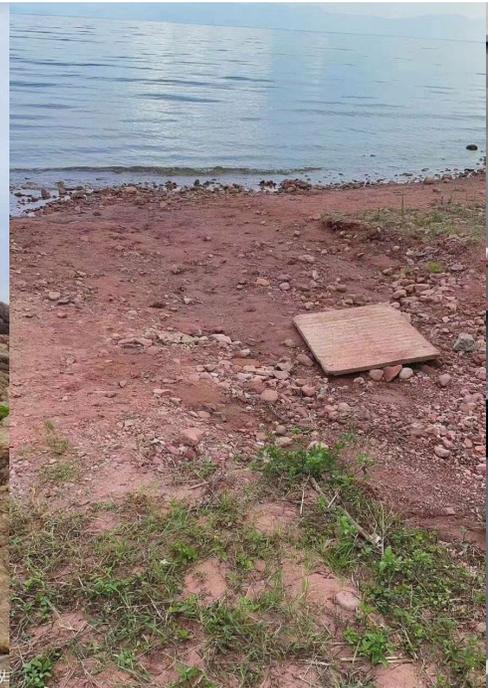


一种出片! 头像怎么拍 等一个好天气 对着干净...





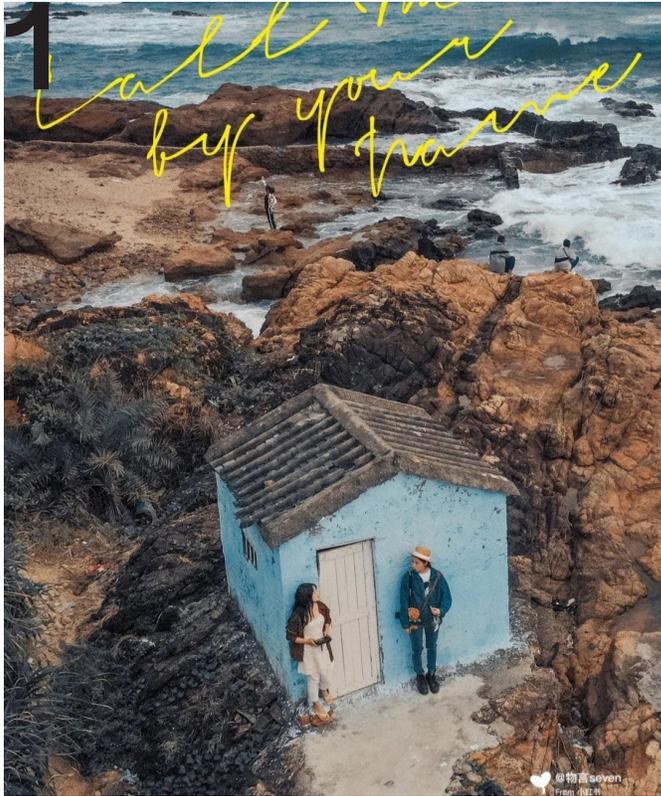
Pictorial Presence



Physical Reality



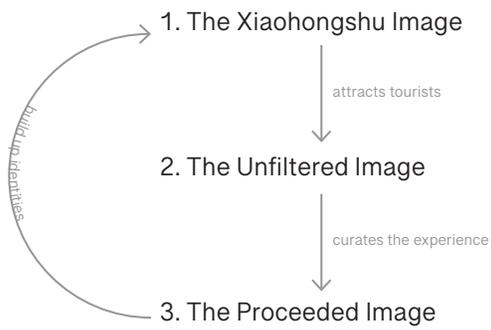
The tag 'I don't believe Xiaohongshu anymore(我再也不相信小红书了)' went viral on Chinese Internet last year. This is an increasing number of complaints on social media platforms about how people found themselves deceived after being attracted to a place by a Xiaohongshu post.



The Xiaohongshu Image



The Unfiltered Image



The mechanism of image production on Xiaohongshu

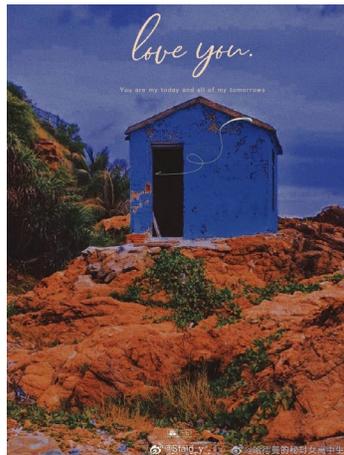
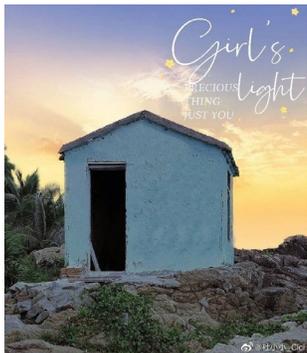
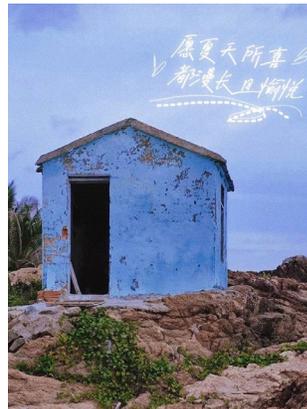
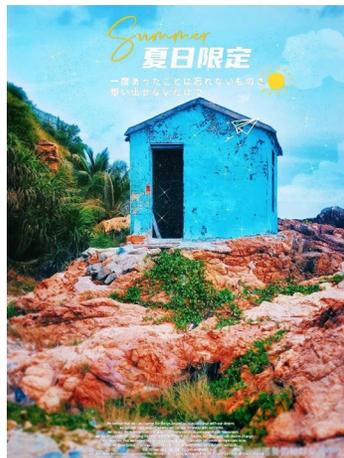
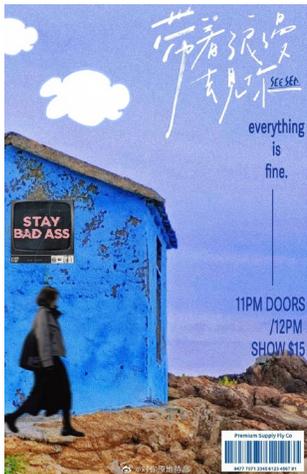
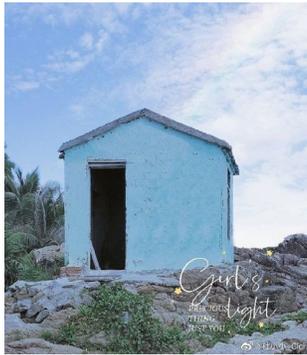
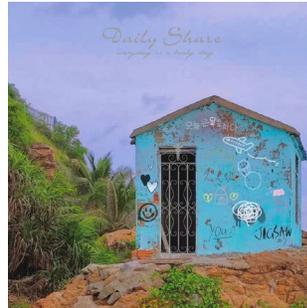
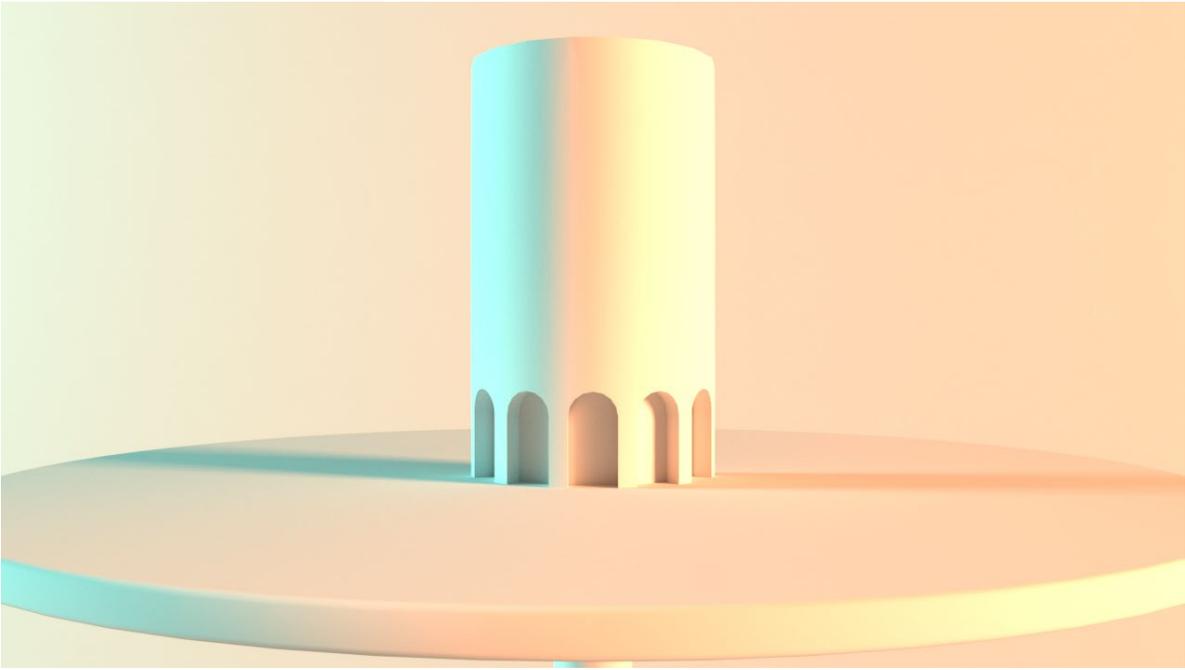
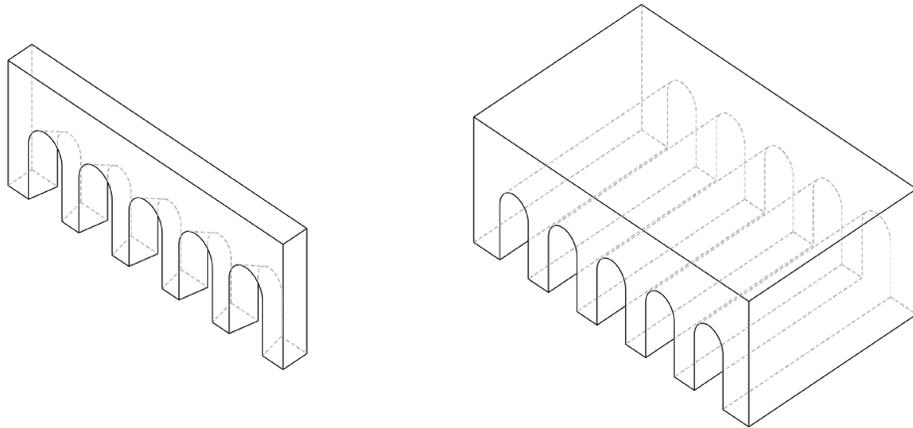


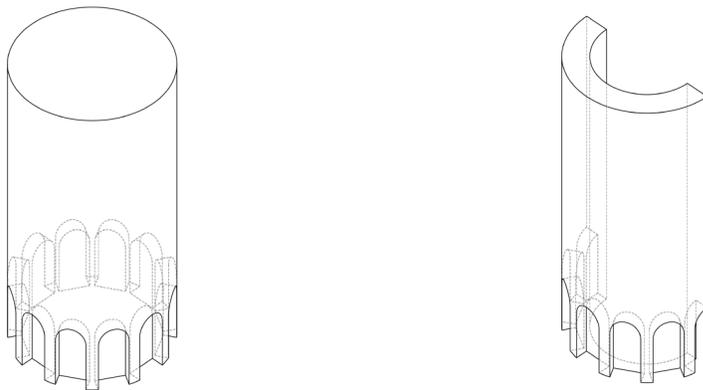
Image Production Mechanism

The Proceeded Image





Perspectival Distortion



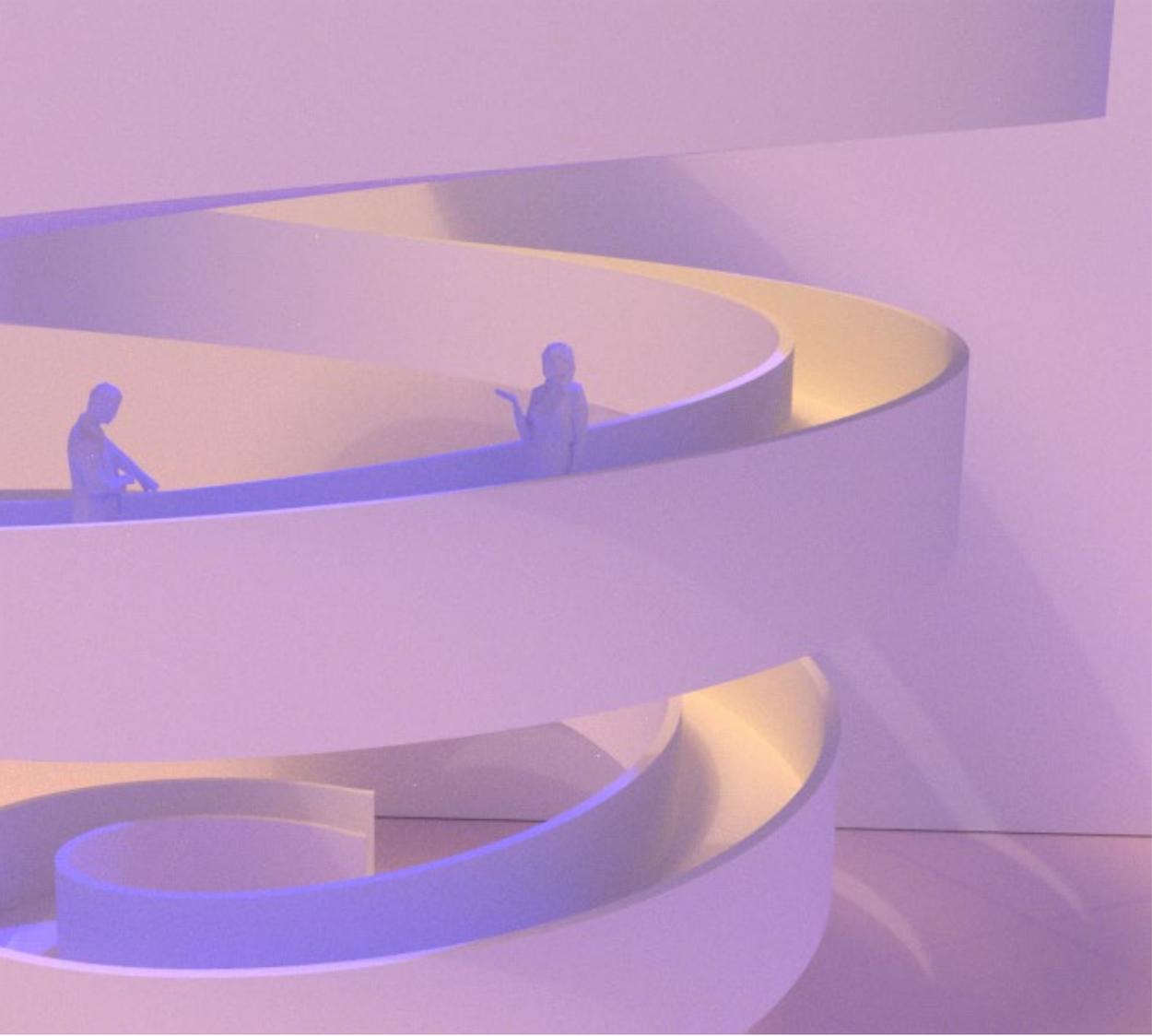
Gestaltism

Visual Deception Mechanism

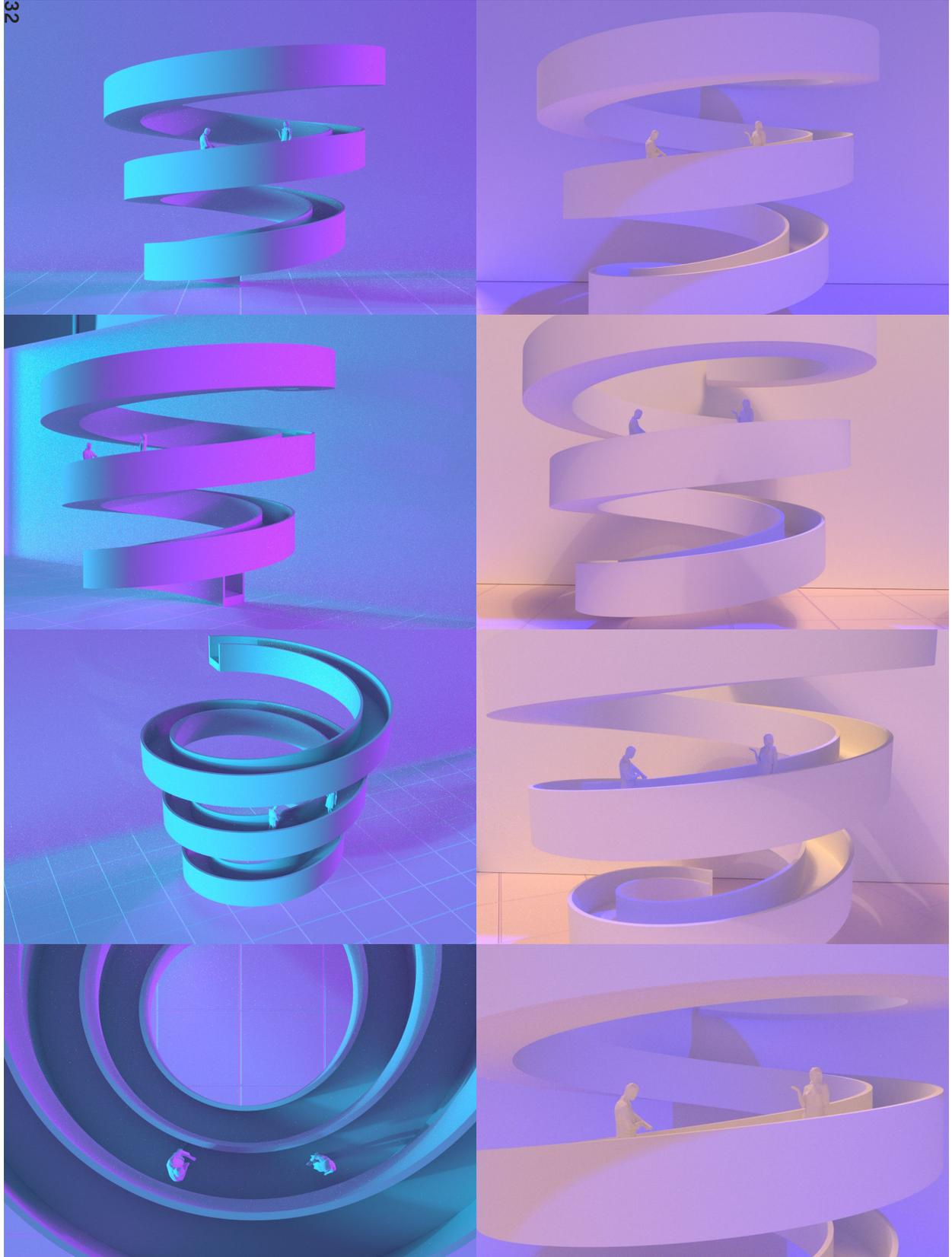
Reverse Engineer an Image

take a spiral ramp as an example

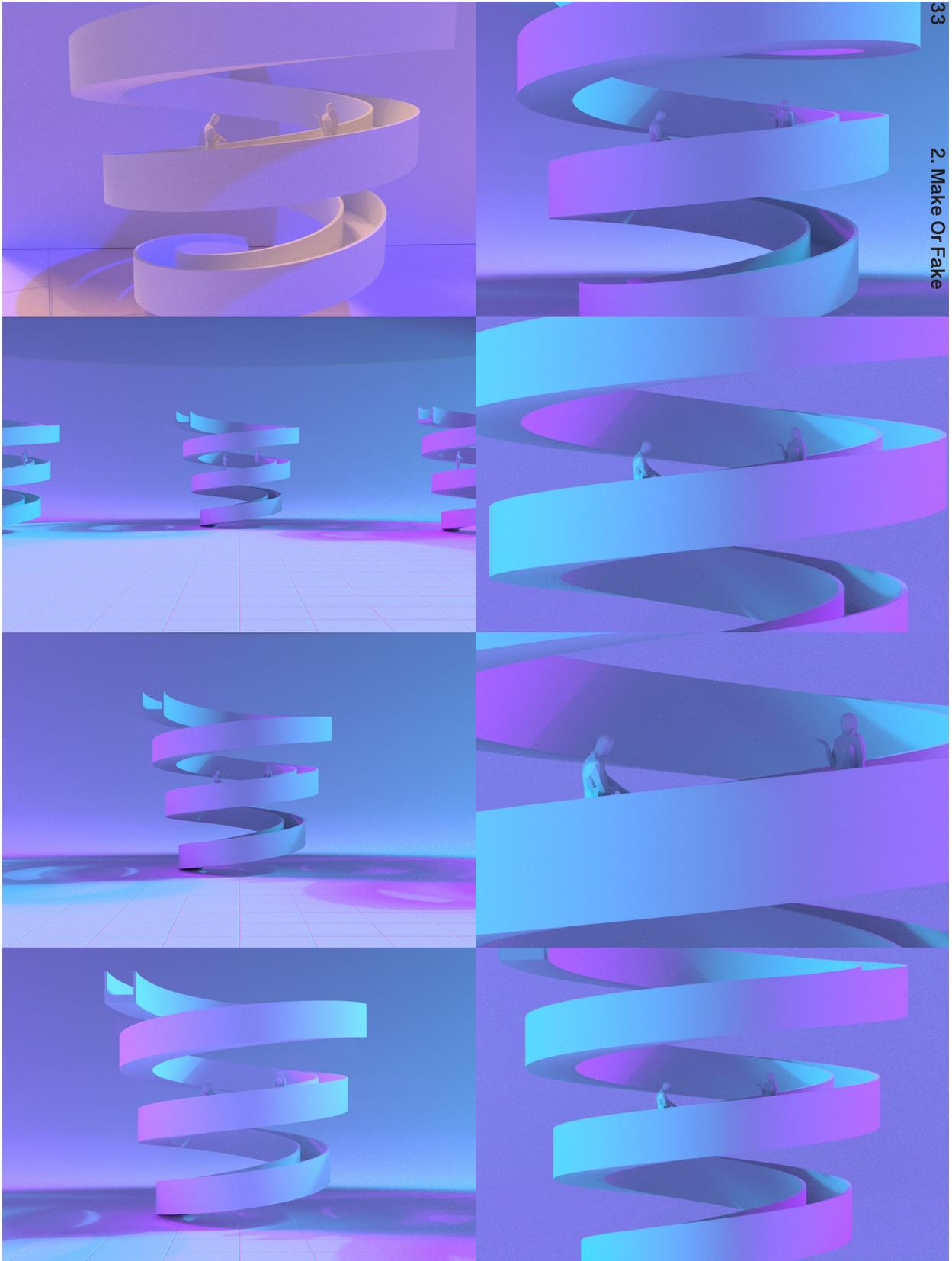




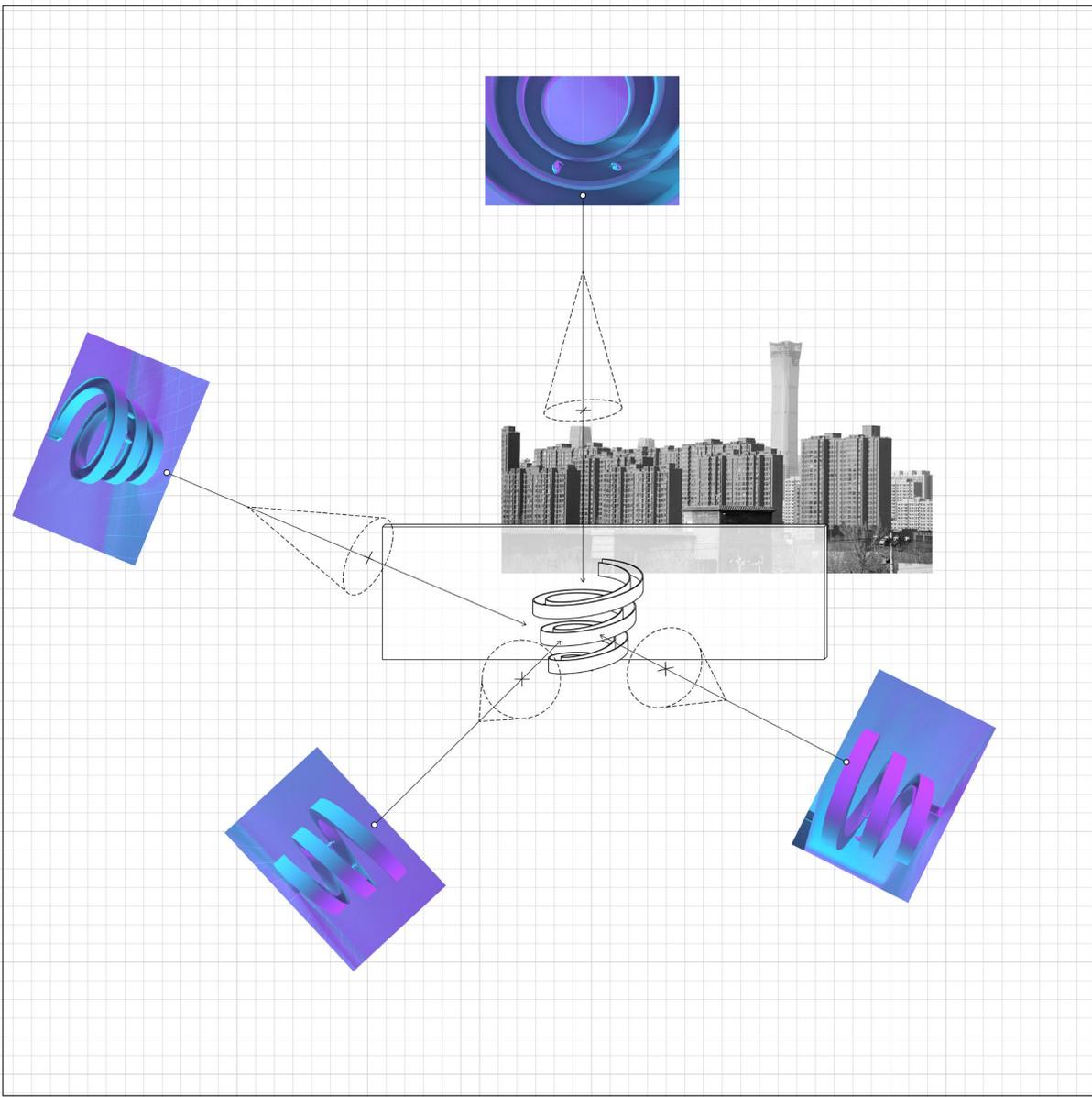
A desired image



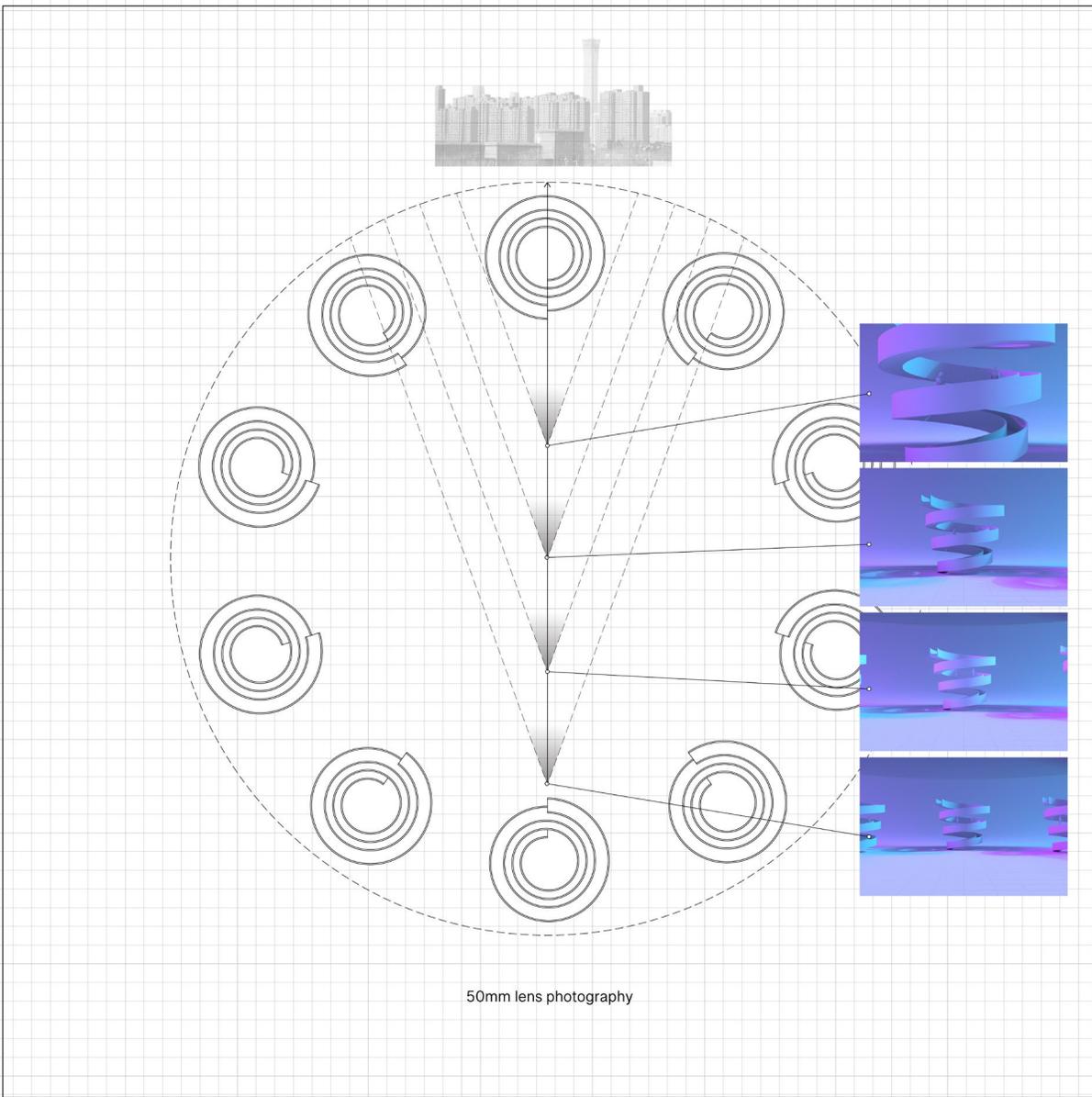
The Variation



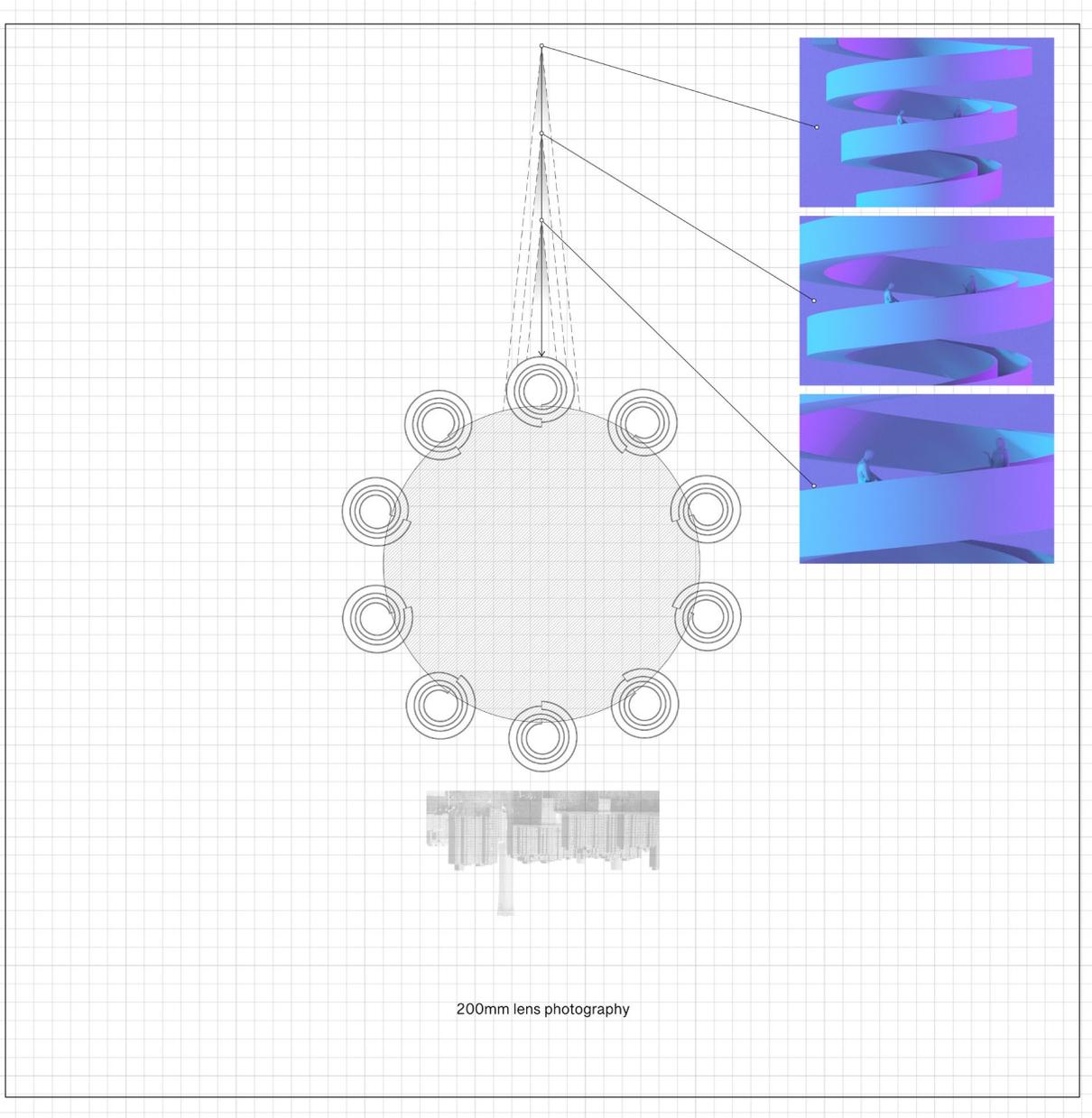
The Variation



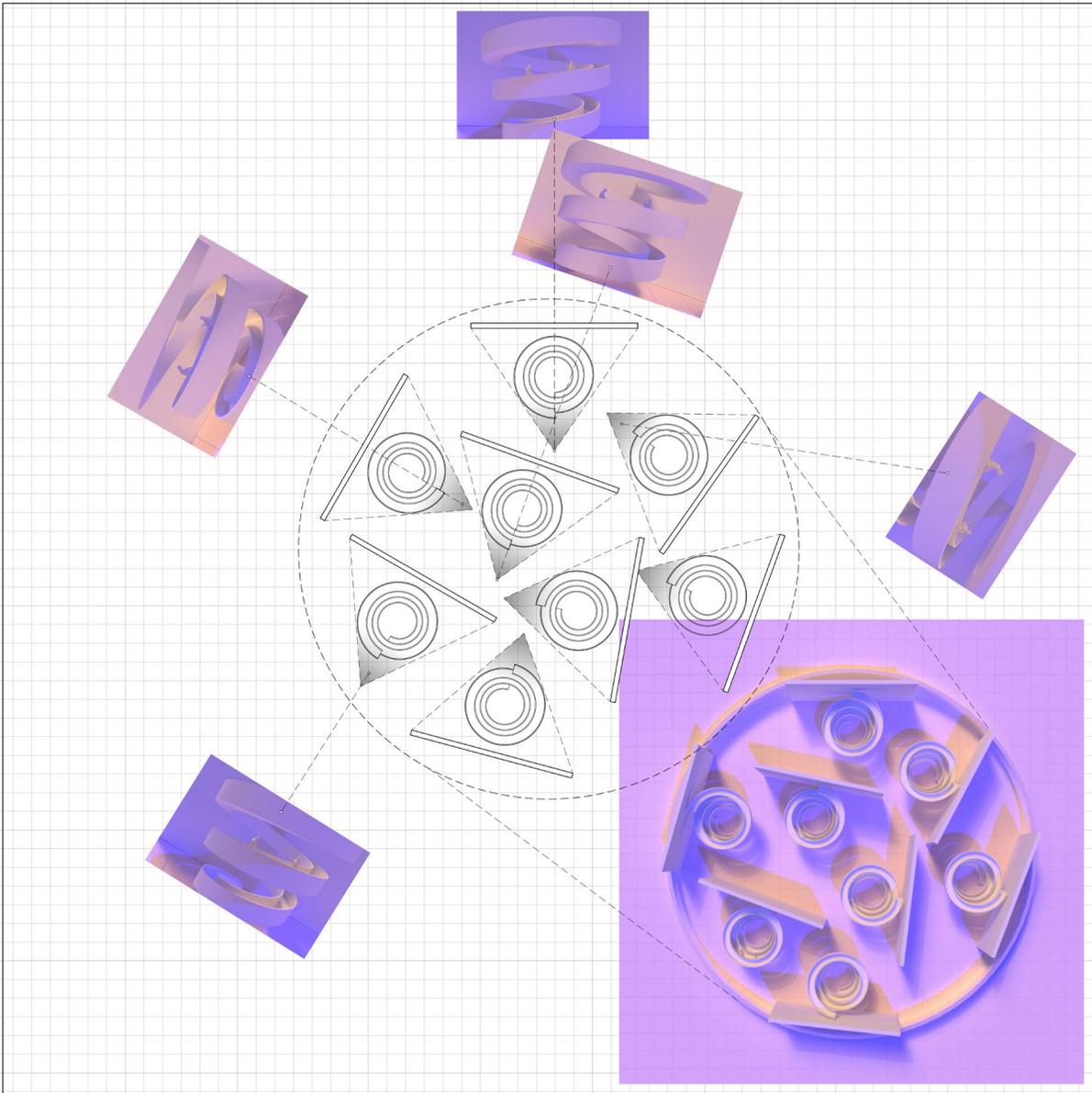
Interpretation 1 - Block



Interpretation 2 - Inward Polar Array



Interpretation 3 - Outward Polar Array



Interpretation 4 - Randomize

KINFOLK | 融创阿朵小镇
A TOWN A LIFE



月空時刻
共赴一场回归
爱情初心的婚礼

Lunar space time
Wedding at the beginning of love 2021.

我将于人海茫茫中，
访我唯一灵魂之伴侣，
得之，我幸；失之，我命。
—徐志摩

The wedding chapel in Kinfolk wedding town, Sunac Wechat Official Account

Wedding Parks

Usually taking on an exotic appearance and occurring as a defocused and cropped backdrop in a picture frame, a wedding park is an architectural complex that provides spectacular and romanticized scene settings like a proscenium stage for wedding photographs. A wedding park can have alternative forms such as wedding town, wedding plaza, or even wedding island, but what is inevitably true is its engagement with image-making. It creates a utopia parallel to everyday life and offers an affordable alternative to a real honeymoon trip.

A wedding park is a testament to our obsession with visual consumption in today's contemporality. It has segmented the continuous spatial experience into a set of discrete moments. In this scenario, only the seen matters. Within the conical field engendered by a camera, things are fully designed and well-orchestrated to deliver a sense of reality; outside the cone, it attempts to be as sloppy as possible to save spatial and financial budget.

Oftentimes, a wedding park cascades several spaces with different themes. It tries to provide a broad spectrum of cityscape and scene settings so that its customers can virtually travel to many places within one day. In other cases, it replicates a space many times to accommodate multiple couples simultaneously. A wedding park pursues a meticulous, efficient, and consumeristic image production mechanism. It turns photography into a highly programmed and rigidly streamlined experience, possible to be massively produced and collectively consumed.



Wedding Park Categories

1. Wedding park as a portion of a housing real estate project



Evergrande Haihua Island

- Three artificial islands integrating residences, apartments, hotels, exhibition centers, leisure and entertainment, and vacations
- Claim to be the biggest artificial land worldwide
- The total investment reaches 160 billion
- A total of 12,000 mu is reclaimed, and the island has a total area of 783 hectares.
- Divided into 36 sub-projects, each with an area of about 27 hectares.



Pan'an Lake Wedding Town masterplan

Theme Banquets



Theme Suites



Pan'an Lake Wedding Town

- Xuzhou is rich in coal resources. After the founding of New China, it was once one of the crucial coal bases. Residents' lives revolved around coal mining and processing. With the depletion of coal resources, the former pillar industries are declining, and industries such as chemical and metallurgical industries have overcapacity, air pollution, and land collapse; infrastructure is lagging behind, and there are a large number of industrial and mining areas in the city.

- Xuzhou urgently needs to restore the ecological environment and introduce new industries to provide new employ-

ment opportunities for laid-off workers. Excavated to be a lake, Xuzhou's largest coal mining subsidence area has transformed into Pan'an Lake National Wetland Park, with clear water and lush vegetation.

- Xuzhou is transforming from the secondary industry to the tertiary sector. Pan'an Lake is positioned as an eco-tourism base, and the wedding town is only part of its functions.



Mediterranean Hall



Provence Hall



Harvard Hall

Constructed Wedding-scapes



Mediterranean Suite



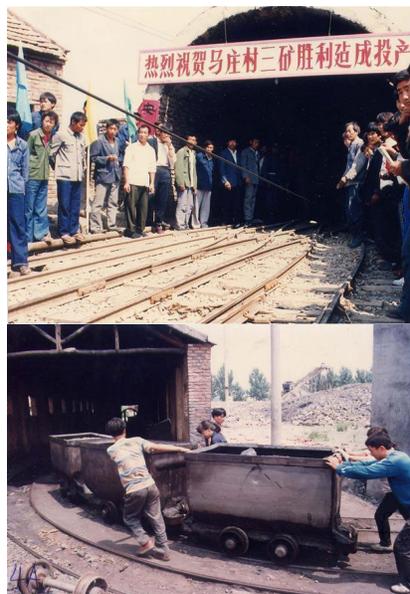
Tuscany Hall



Pastoral Hall

Wedding Park Categories

2. Wedding park as a catalyst for tourism development



The celebrating scene for the completion of the Third Coal Mine in Xuzhou, 1988, Xinhuanet, <http://www.news.cn>



Geography Museum

A duplicate of Agrasen ki baoli

Zhangzhou Volcano Island

The Volcano Island is situated in Zhangzhou, Fujian. It was initially developed as an ordinary tourist attraction and not intended to be associated with weddings. With a flush of newlyweds and photographers in recent years, it has switched its branding strategy and begun to promote existing constructs as wedding photography facilities.

The Geography Museum takes on an aesthetic that doesn't speak to the true geographic condition of the island and instead adopts a Ricardo Bofill tone; functions are removed from the Indian Well (Agrasen ki baoli), as it does not store any water; the colorful hill is almost a one-to-one duplicate of the Salvation Mountain in Los Angeles.



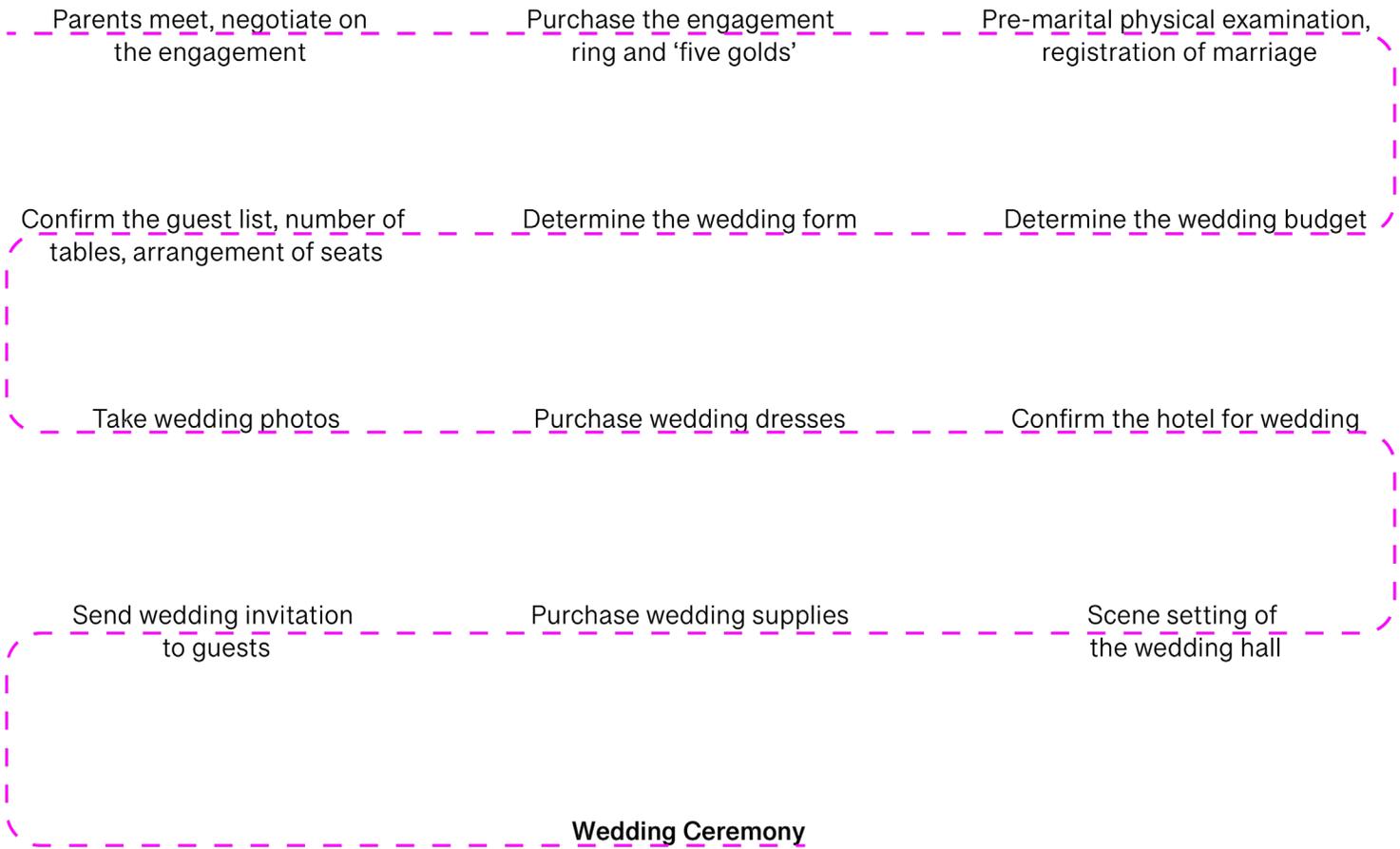
A duplicate of Salvation Mountain

Wedding Park Categories



A tourist map for wedding photography

3. Wedding park transformed from a tourist attraction



The Road Map of Wedding Agencies



Bride Elysee, the unicorn in wedding agency industry in China

Wedding Agencies

A more escalated version of a wedding park is a one-stop wedding service.

The idea of the one-stop wedding comes from the 'house wedding' concept in western countries. One-stop wedding agencies aim to provide comprehensive service in the entire wedding cycle, from the engagement to the final ceremony.

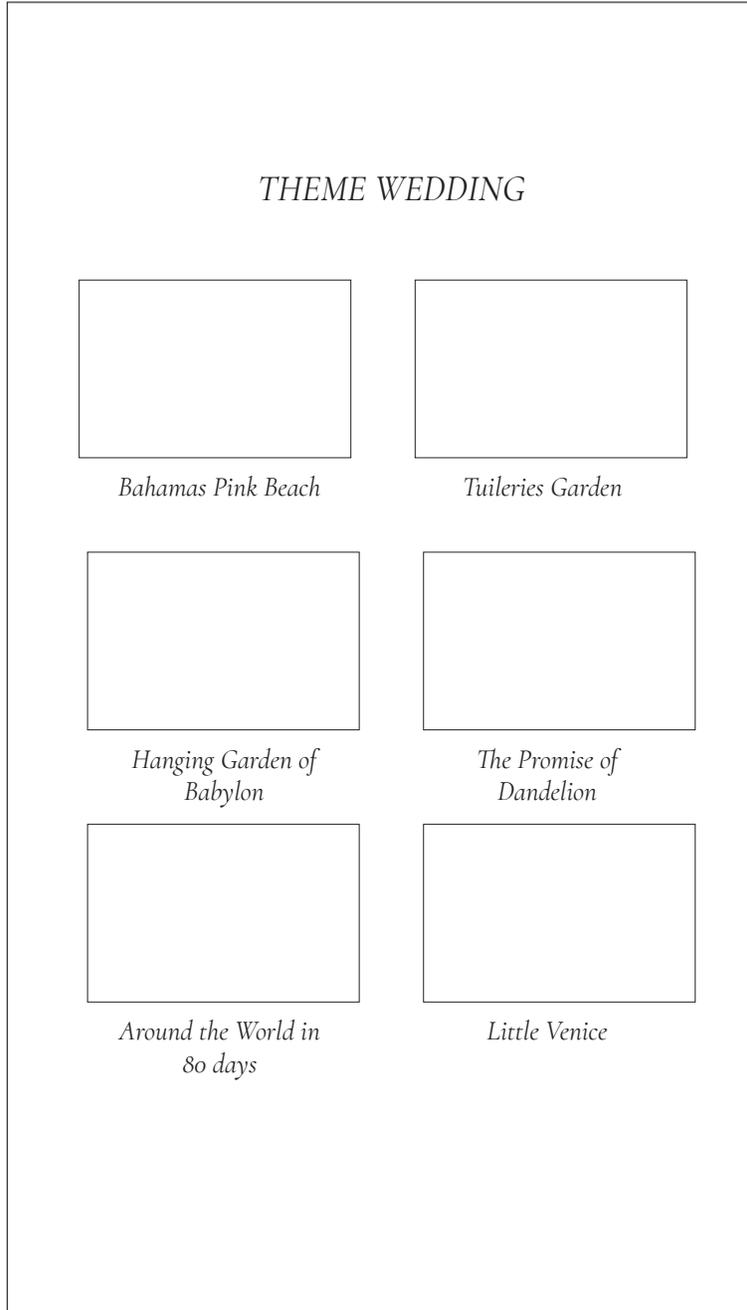
Bride Elysee is a leading one-stop wedding agency in China. In the first half of 2021, Bride Elysee had an operating income of 170 million yuan. It successfully landed on the New Third Board (China's stock market) in September 2015, becoming the one-stop wedding leader in the capital market in China. Its primary services cover wedding banquet services, venue services, wedding planning, wedding emcee, photography, wedding make-up, wedding dress rental, etc. So far, Bride Elysee has opened six 'wedding clubhouses'

with sixteen banquets in Shanghai and is proactively extending its footprint to other cities.

Both wedding agencies and independent photographers are spectacle hunters in cities. They excel at discovering imageable places in their ambient and reiterate all the photo-taking processes for different clients. What distinguishes the former from the latter is its capability of constructing new spectacles unseen elsewhere before. In the case of Bride Elysee, wedding banquets become the stage to exert their spatial fantasies. Banquets are usually themed with famous fairytales or myths, making the product more relatable to clients' fantasies. The ceiling is decorated with 600 000 natural crystals in a hall themed with 'Crystal Love'. Every effort is to enable the production of an impressive wedding photo and the perpetuation of a stunning moment.



A screenshot of Bride Elysee's Taobao shop



A screenshot of Bride Elysee's Taobao shop

50
**Bride
 Elysee
 Featured
 Products**

*images from Bride Elysee's
 Wechat Official Account*

Around The World In 80 Days

I ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT DAY

一起在埃菲尔铁塔刻下爱的誓言
 纽约、伦敦、泰国...带你打卡世界各地
 踏上一场跨越七大洲的奇妙之旅

THERE IS A LADY SWEET AND KIND, WAS NEVER A FACE SO PLEASD MY MIND,
 I DID BUT SEE HER PASSING BY, AND YET, I'LL LOVE HER TILL I DIE...



AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS

LOVE IS THE GREATEST REFRESHMENT IN LIFE.



THERE IS A LADY SWEET AND KIND, WAS NEVER A FACE SO PLEASD MY MIND,
 I DID BUT SEE HER PASSING BY, AND YET, I'LL LOVE HER TILL I DIE...

Hanging Garden Of

OF BABYLON
Hanging Garden

爱，是通往空中巴比伦的唯

Blooming in the midsummer forest fairy tale lo



一脚踏入少女的梦境
 在森林深处精灵飞舞小鹿低语

There is a wonderful place in memory
 There is magic, there is spirit, there is love, there is dream

★ There is a wonderful place in memory



I ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT DAY

欢迎步入小王子与玫瑰的童话世界
在浩瀚星辰奏响爱的心动乐章

THERE IS A LADY SWEET AND KIND, WAS NEVER A FACE SO PLEASED MY MIND;
I DID BUT SEE HER PASSING BY, AND YET, I'LL LOVE HER TILL I DIE.



▼ 图片为100%真实客片



BRIDE ELYSEE

TO THE WORLD YOU MAY BE ONE PERSON,
BUT TO ONE PERSON YOU MAY BE THE WORLD.

WE SHARE SO MUCH TOGETHER AND
YOU ALWAYS PULL ME
THROUGH THANK YOU FOR
STANDING BEHIND ME IN ALL THAT I DO.

拍摄达人：小红书ID-木鱼WW

I ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT DAY

Since the first time I saw you, I felt something inside,
I don't know if it's love at first sight, I do know I really like you a lot.



每个女生都有一个梦的仙境

EVERY GIRL HAS A FAIRYLAND OF DREAMS

遇见你,就像闯入了一片未曾踏足的梦境

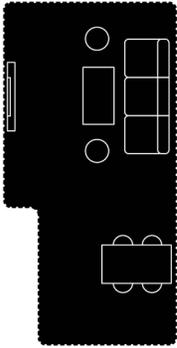
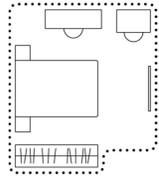


CRISTAL DU LOUVRE

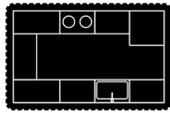
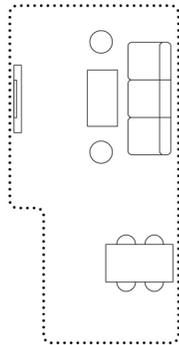
Since the first time I saw you, I felt something inside,
I don't know if it's love at first sight, I do know I really like you a lot.

There is a lady sweet and kind, Was never a face so pleased my
mind, did but see her passing by, And yet, I'll love her till I die. Thomas Ford

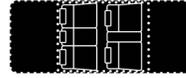
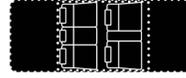
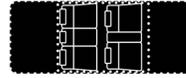
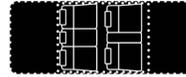
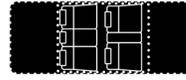
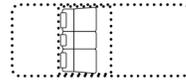
bedroom in
bride's house



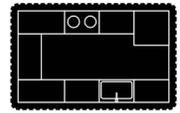
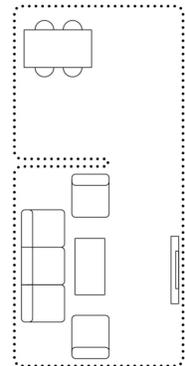
living room in
bride's house



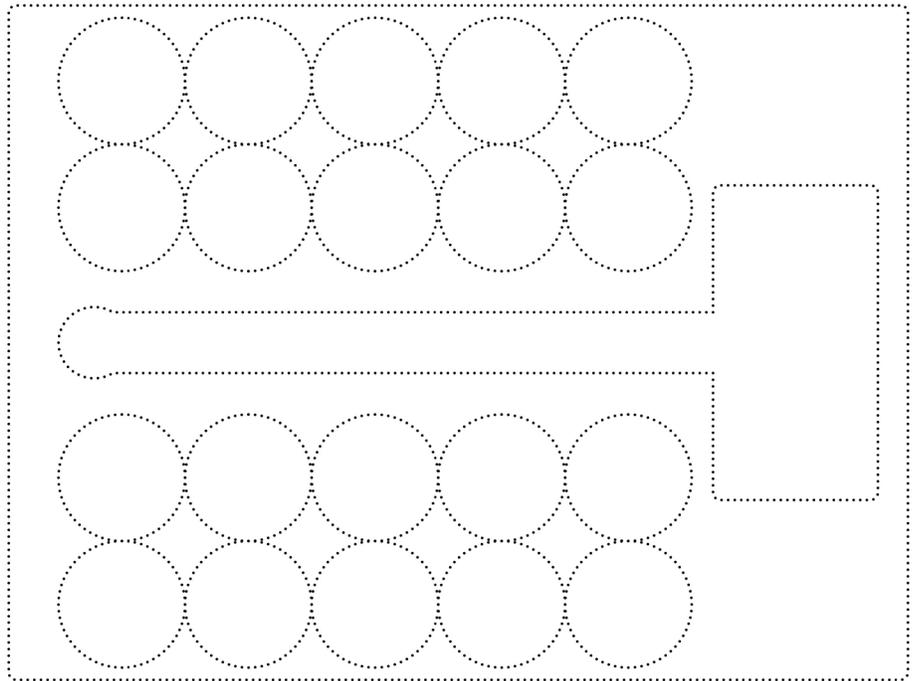
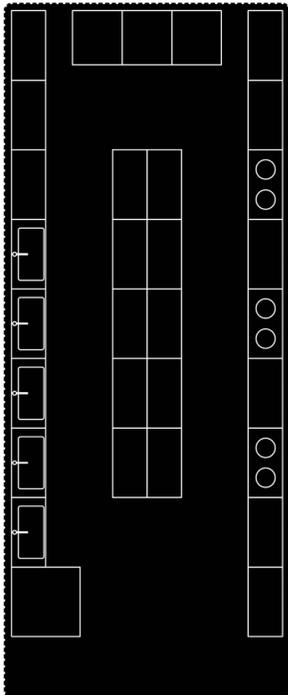
wedding car

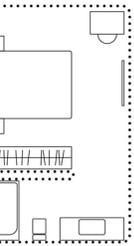


living room in
groom's house

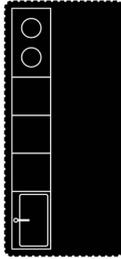
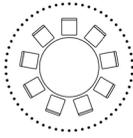


banquet hall

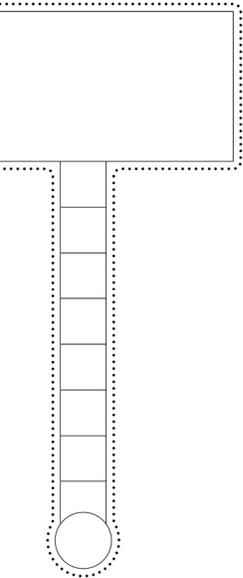


dinning room in
room's house

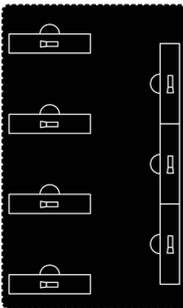
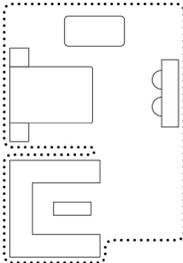
dinning table



stage



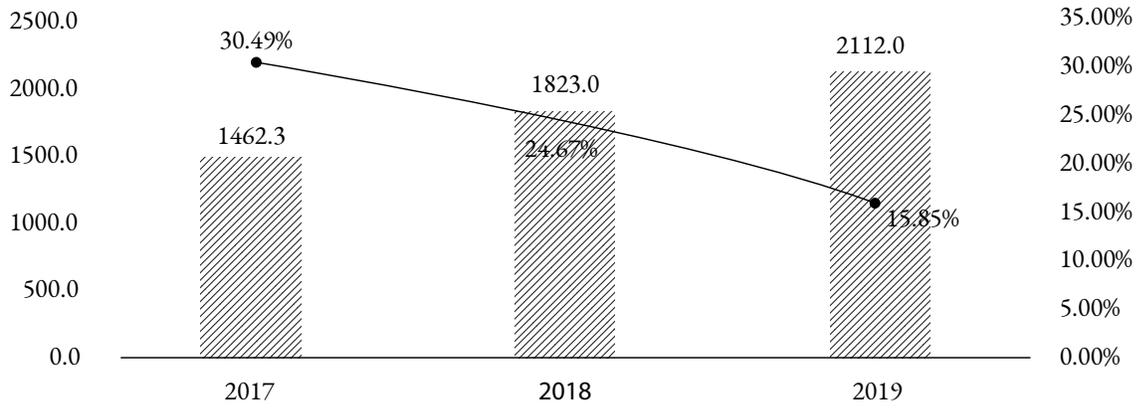
dressing room



The Figure-Ground Relationship In A Wedding

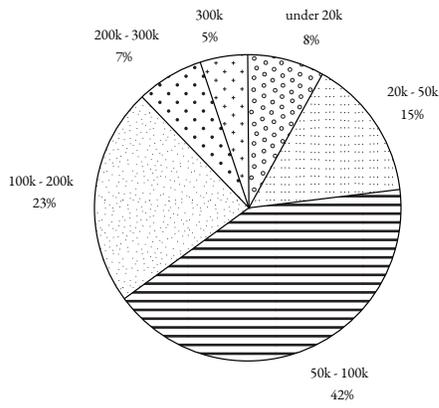
In our contemporary context, image-making has far more surpassed the execution of action but has sublimed to be a notion, a mindset, and a status that is ready to face a camera. Particularly, In an image-heavy activity such as a wedding, the disparity between pictorial presence and physical reality can be noted in space, events, and rituals.

The binary between protagonists of a wedding (newly-weds) and people in service and the seen and unseen in a camera lens is also reflected in wedding-related spaces. A scene setting cannot survive alone; it is always supported by some 'hidden space', which is usually for the wedding agency staff and photographers. A simple example of this could be the contrast between the wedding car present in the picture and the wedding fleet in reality.

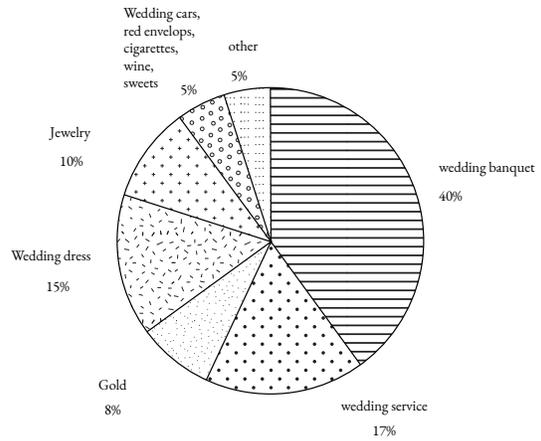


2017-2019 China's wedding industry market scale and growth

 market scale (billion)
 Year-on-Year growth (%)



Wedding Expense



Expense Distribution

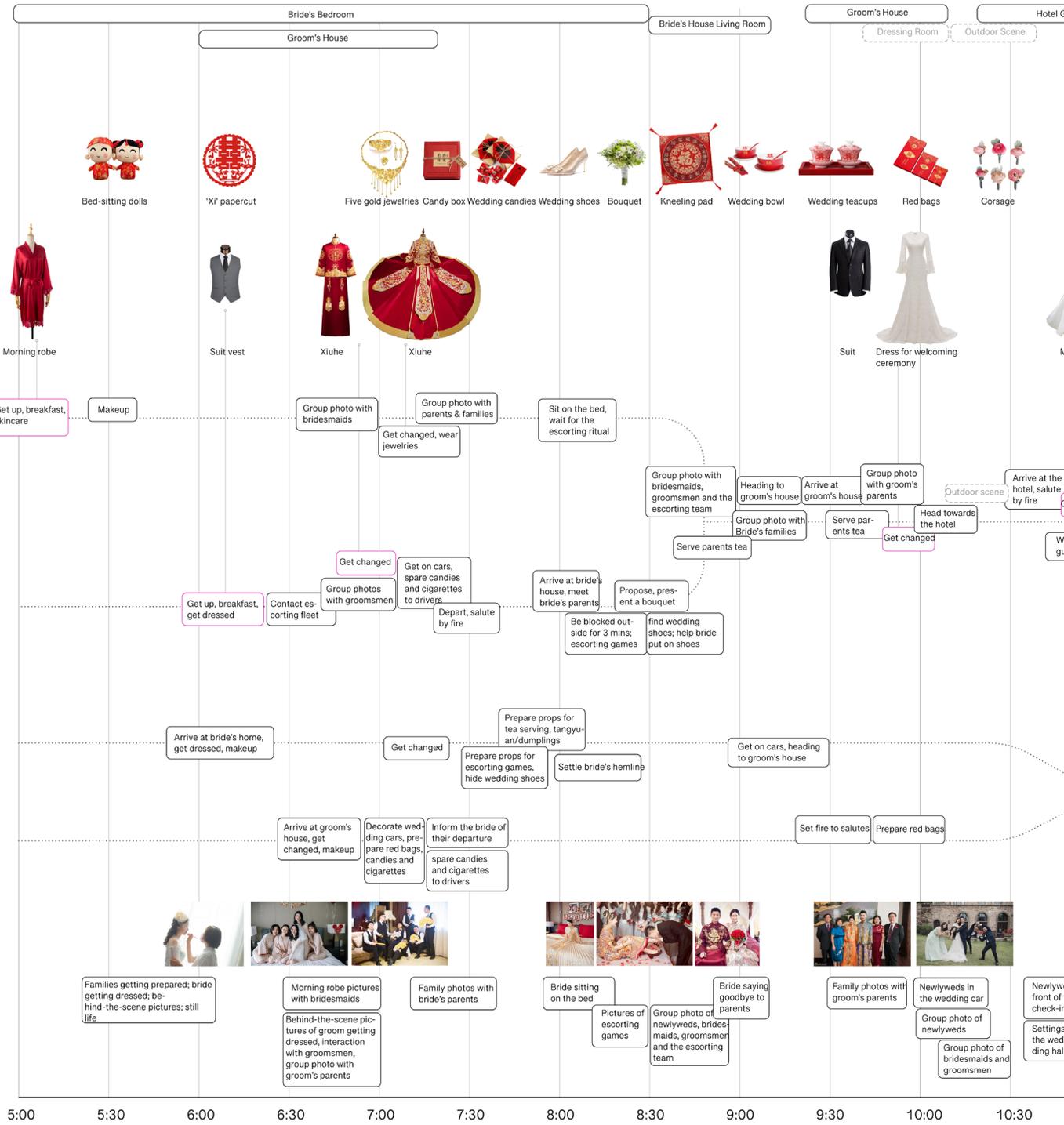
Chinese Wedding Economy

The wedding park is a downstream industry in the wedding economy in China, whose scale has reached 2 trillion in 2019 and is witnessing robust growth in post-pandemic time.

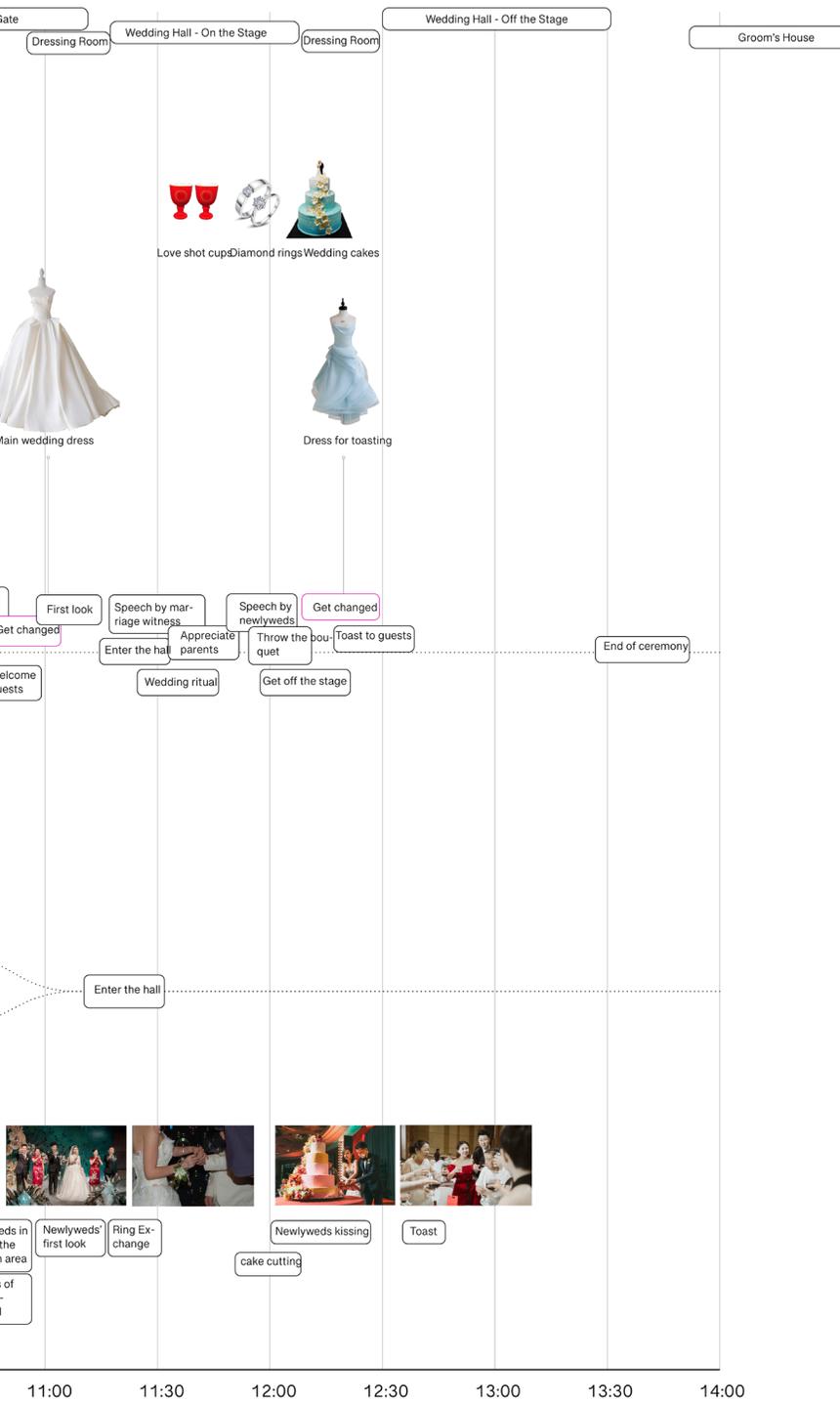
According to an annual report of the Chinese wedding industry, this sector is becoming increasingly inclusive with the emerging wedding trend. A typical Chinese wedding needs the service of a wedding host, wedding planning, wedding venue layout, wedding banquet, wedding dresses and jewelry, wedding flowers, wedding makeup, wedding photography, and wedding car rental.

Chinese couples are very generous in investing in their weddings. Nearly 35% of newlyweds spend more than 100 thousand RMB (USD 15,727) on their marriages, 3/2 of China's per capita annual income.

The reason for luxurious weddings is rooted in the Chinese's attitude towards marriage. On the one hand, marriage is believed to be a milestone in one's adulthood in Chinese culture and rendered enormous importance. A wedding is still a 'once-in-a-lifetime' event. On the other hand, marriage is not only the bond between two persons but the integration of two families. A wedding is the best occasion to showcase social status and family wealth.



Chinese Wedding Timeline



A Chinese wedding is a highly programmed and rigidly sequential ritual. It cascades a set of fixed customs: some of them are inherited from the ancient culture, for example, the bride pick-up ritual; some are imported from western wedding norms and later internalized as a new tradition, for example, the cake-cutting ceremony. The hybrid of culturally diverse customs constitutes the contemporality of Chinese weddings.

A Chinese wedding is grand and therefore laborious. It usually starts from 4 to 5 am with the bride getting dressed. Chinese people believe that the most essential rituals should happen at the hour. From the bride pick-up ceremony to the final toasting etiquette, every step is strictly orchestrated or even rehearsed before.



Wedding Studio Product Booklet - Cover

01 梦游仙境

INTO THE WONDERLAND

Tags:

#童趣 playfulness

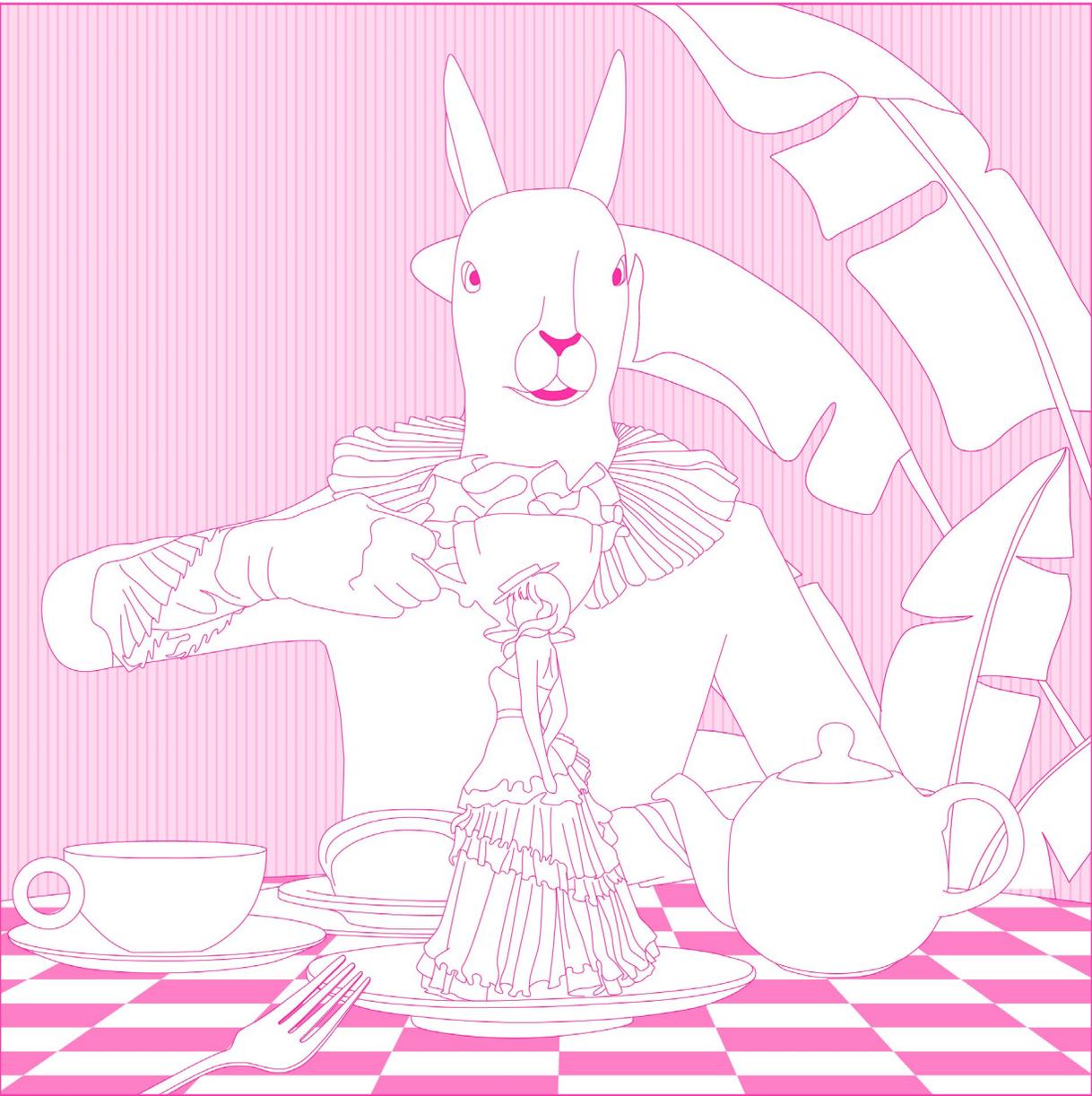
#惊艳 amazing

#电影感 cinematic

Location:

Best Time:

Price: ¥ 4999



In the Wonderland - 2

02 海洋之恋

L A M E R

Tags:

#浪漫 romantic

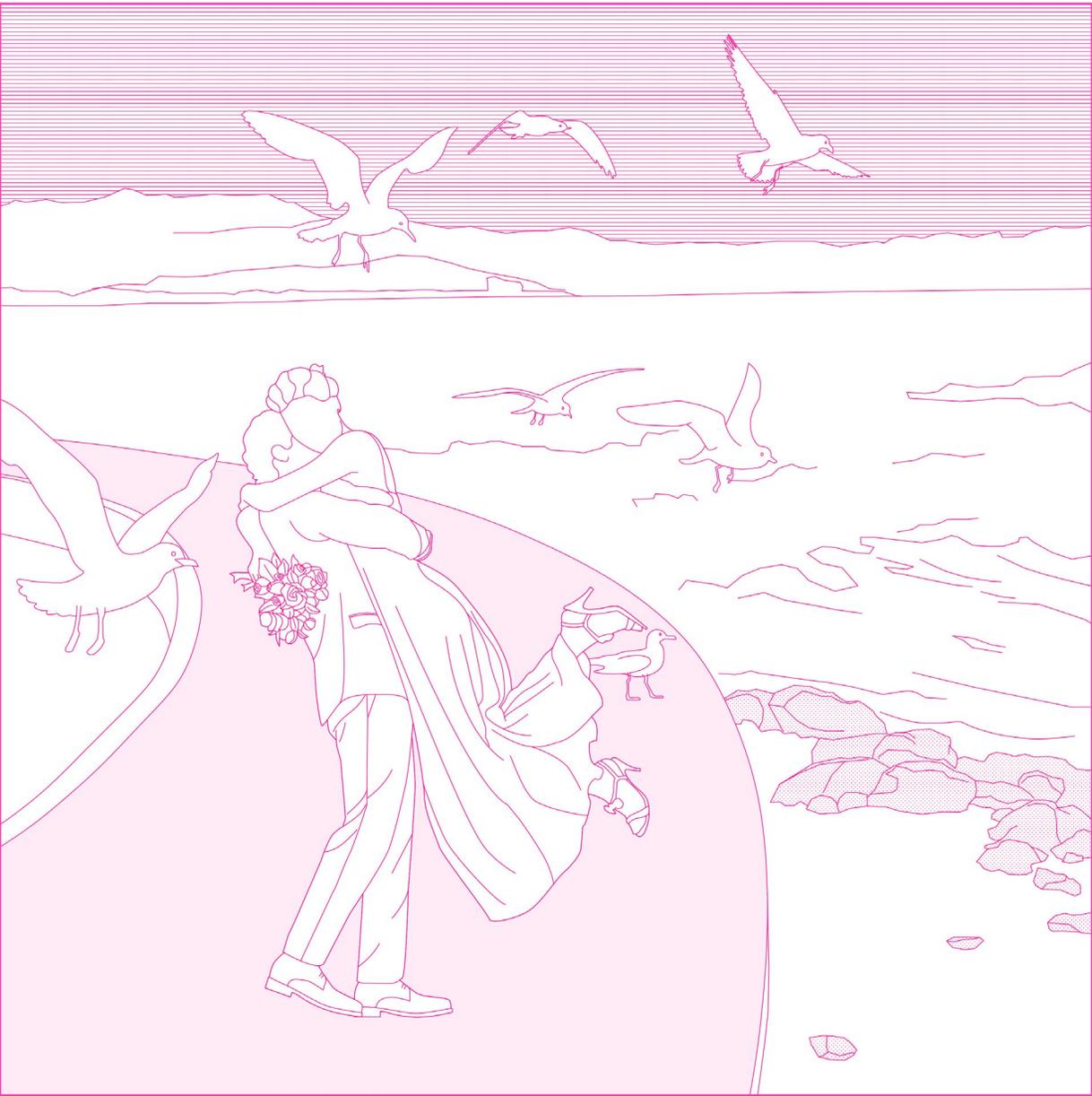
#纯净 pure

#深沉 deep

Location:

Best Time:

Price: ¥ 3999



La Mer - 2

03 市井生活

LA VIVA LE CITTA

Tags:

#文艺 artistic

#氛围感 atmosphere

#有情调 sentimental

Location:

Best Time:

Price: ¥ 2999



La Viva Le Citta - 2

04 森林童话

FOREST FAIRYTALE

Tags:

#瑞士 Switzerland

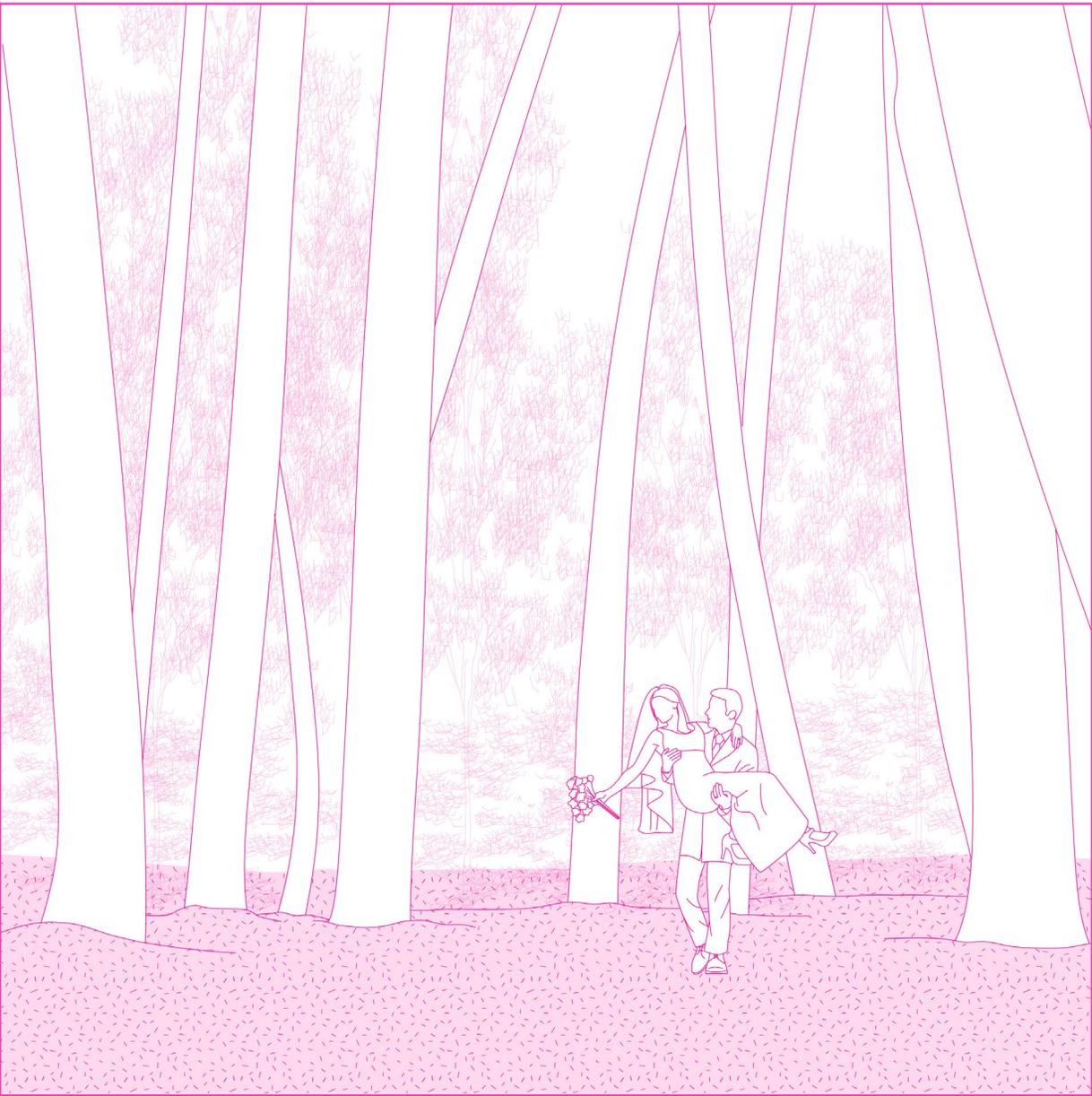
#精致 delicate

#自然 nature

Location:

Best Time:

Price: ¥ 2999



Forest Fairytale - 2

05 缤纷乐园

BACK TO CHILDHOOD

Tags:

#童趣 playfulness

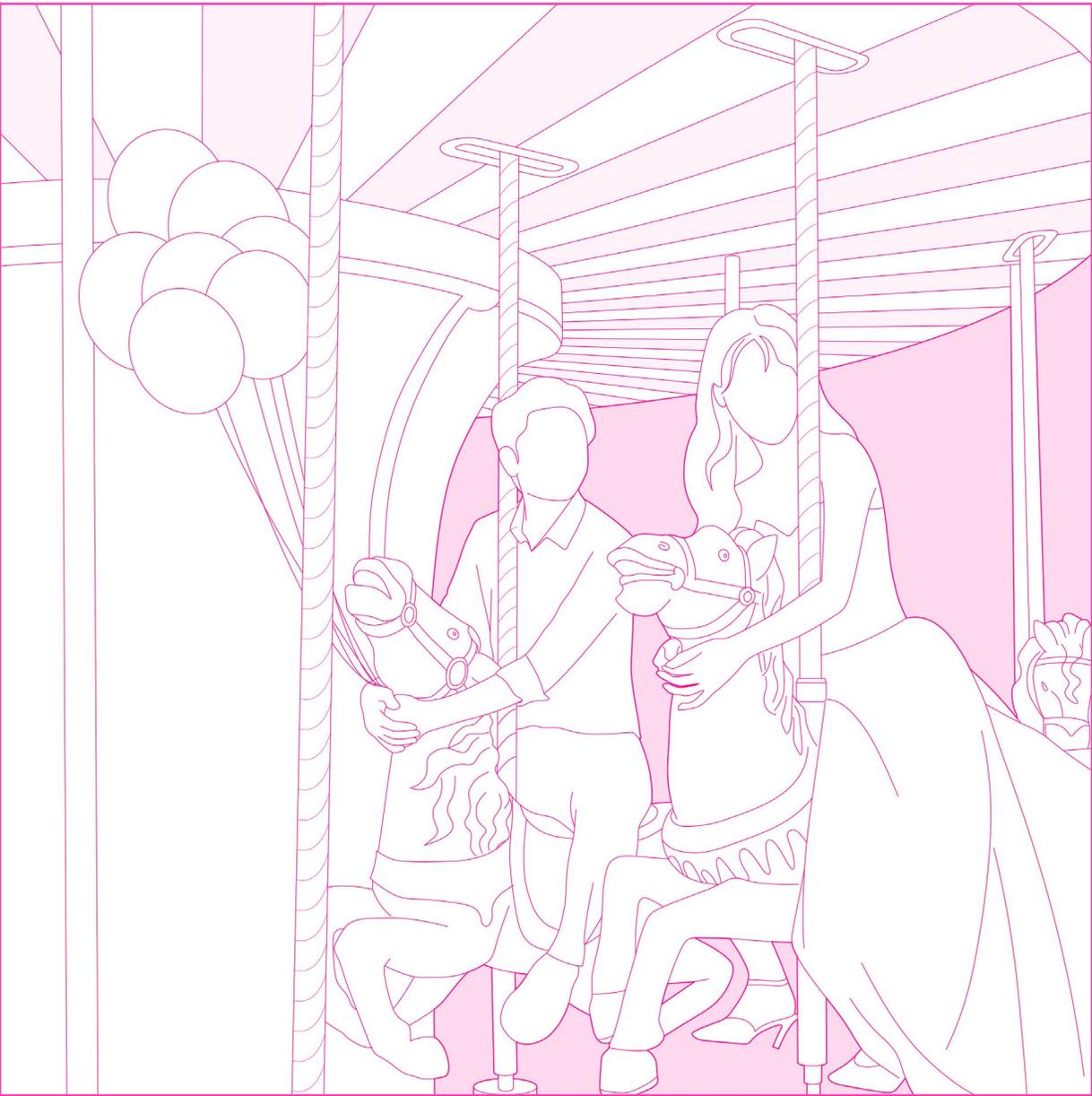
#活泼 lively

#多彩 colorful

Location:

Best Time:

Price: ¥ 3999



Back to Childhood - 2

06 远走高飞

ELOPEMENT

Tags:

#末日感 a sense of doom

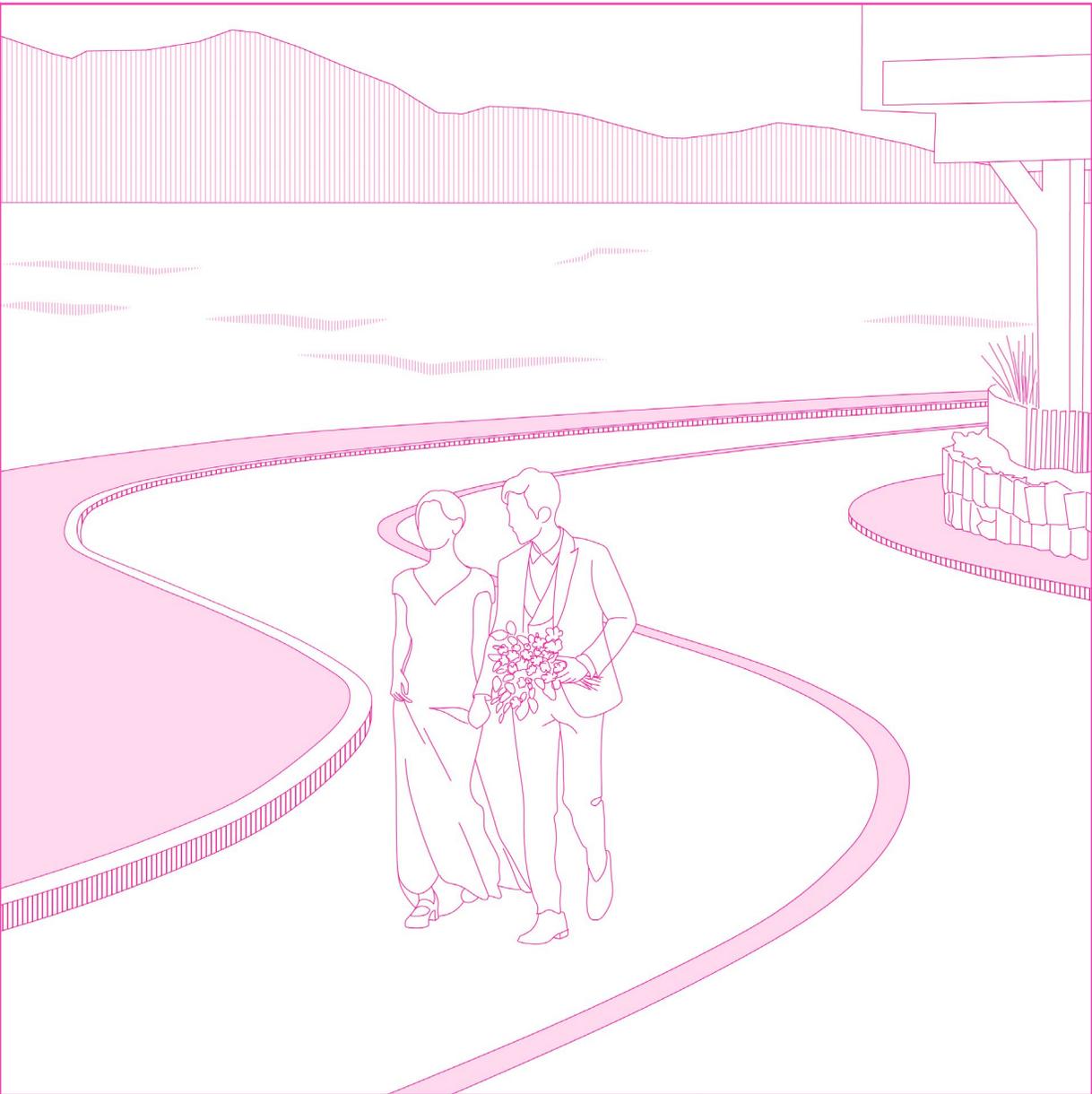
#恢弘 magnificent

#热烈 keen

Location:

Best Time:

Price: ¥ 3999



Elopement - 2

07 绿草如茵

AMOUR IN A MEADOW

Tags:

#小清新 partysu

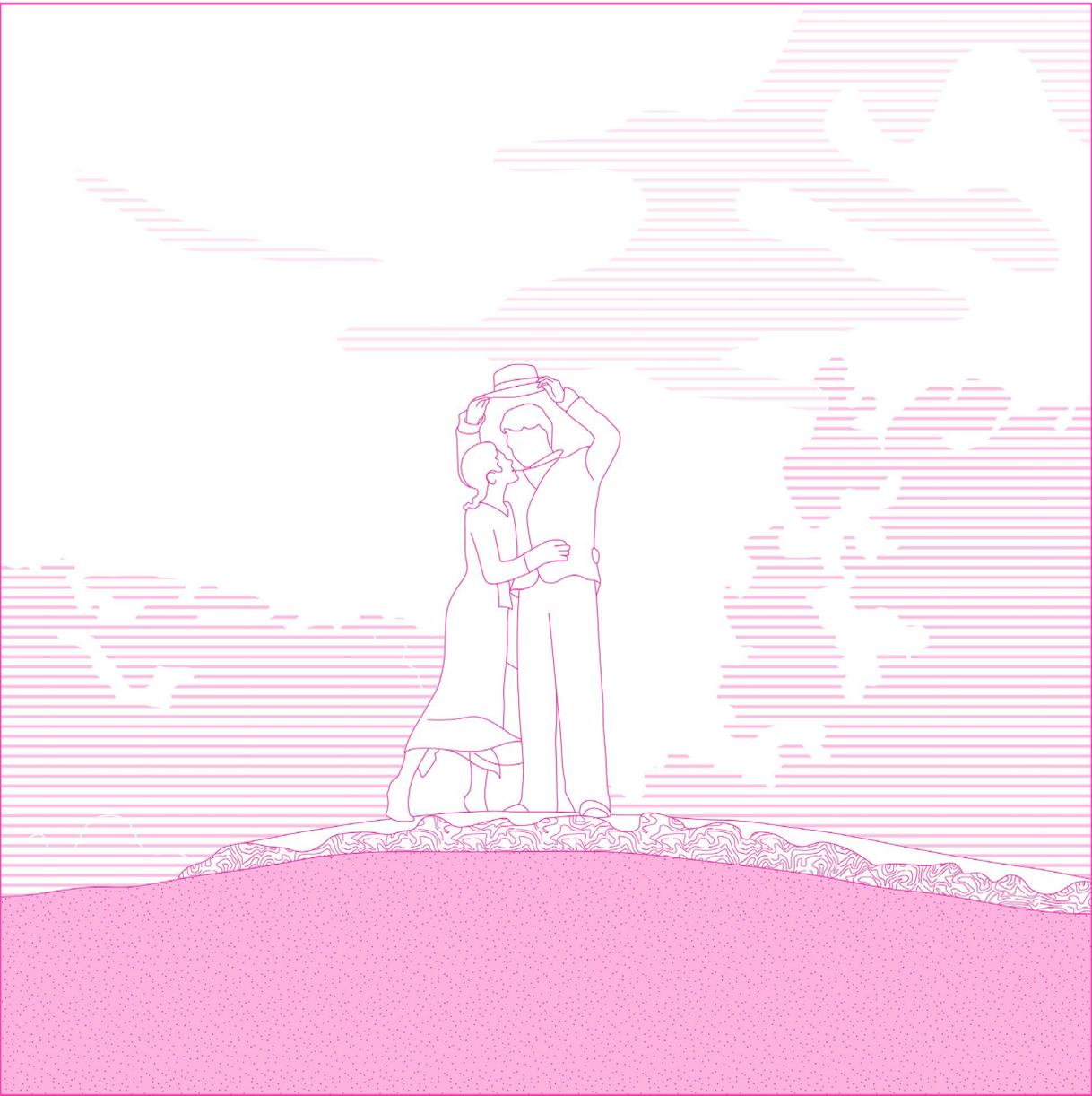
#纯净 pure

#明快 sprightly

Location:

Best Time:

Price: ¥ 2999



Amore in a Meadow - 2

08 田园牧歌

IDYLLIC PASTORAL

Tags:

#自然 natural

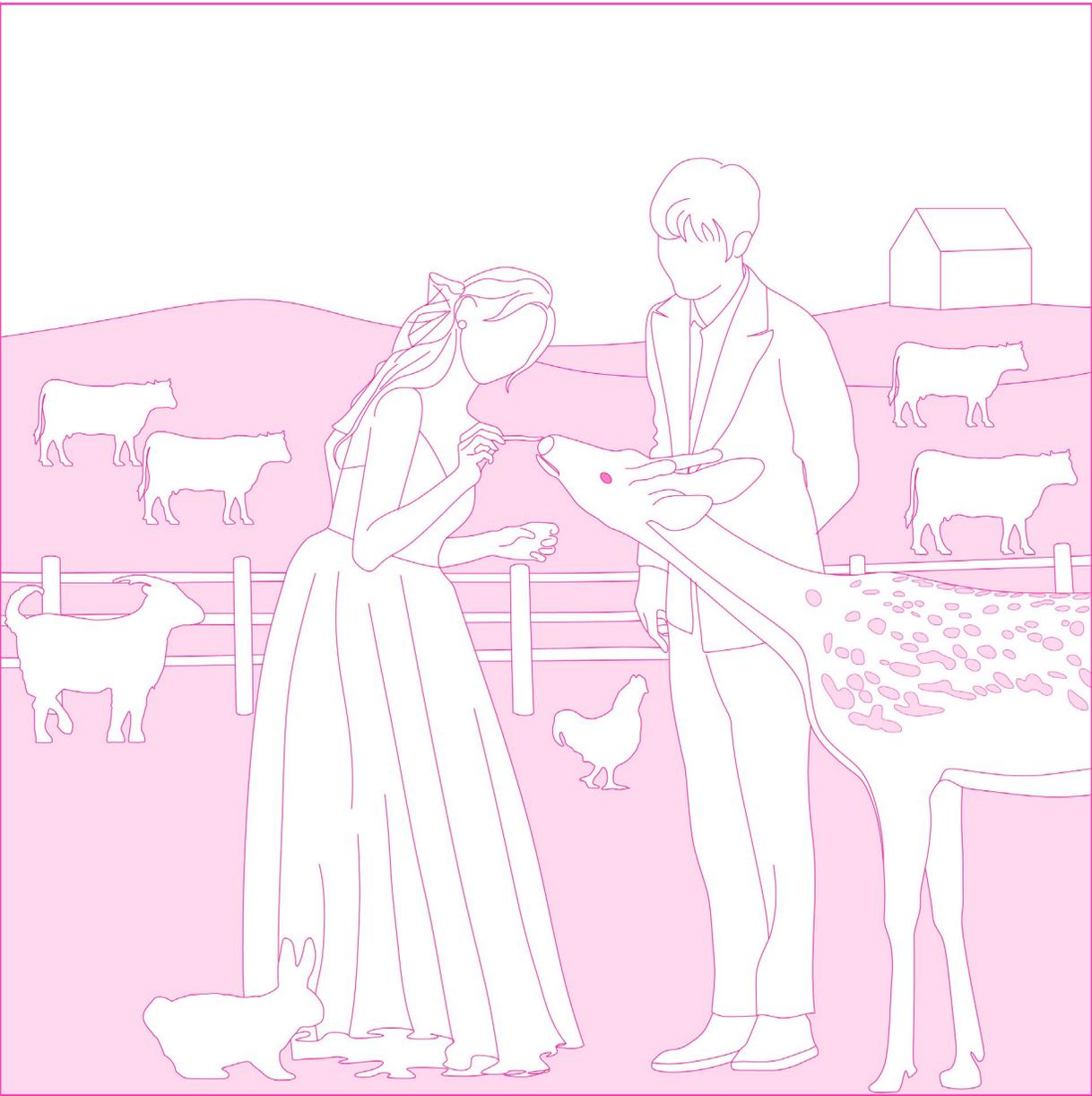
#森系 forest style

#小清新 partysu

Location:

Best Time:

Price: ¥ 4999



Idyllic Pastoral - 2

09 父母爱情

AMOUR IN THE 80S'

Tags:

#复古 retro

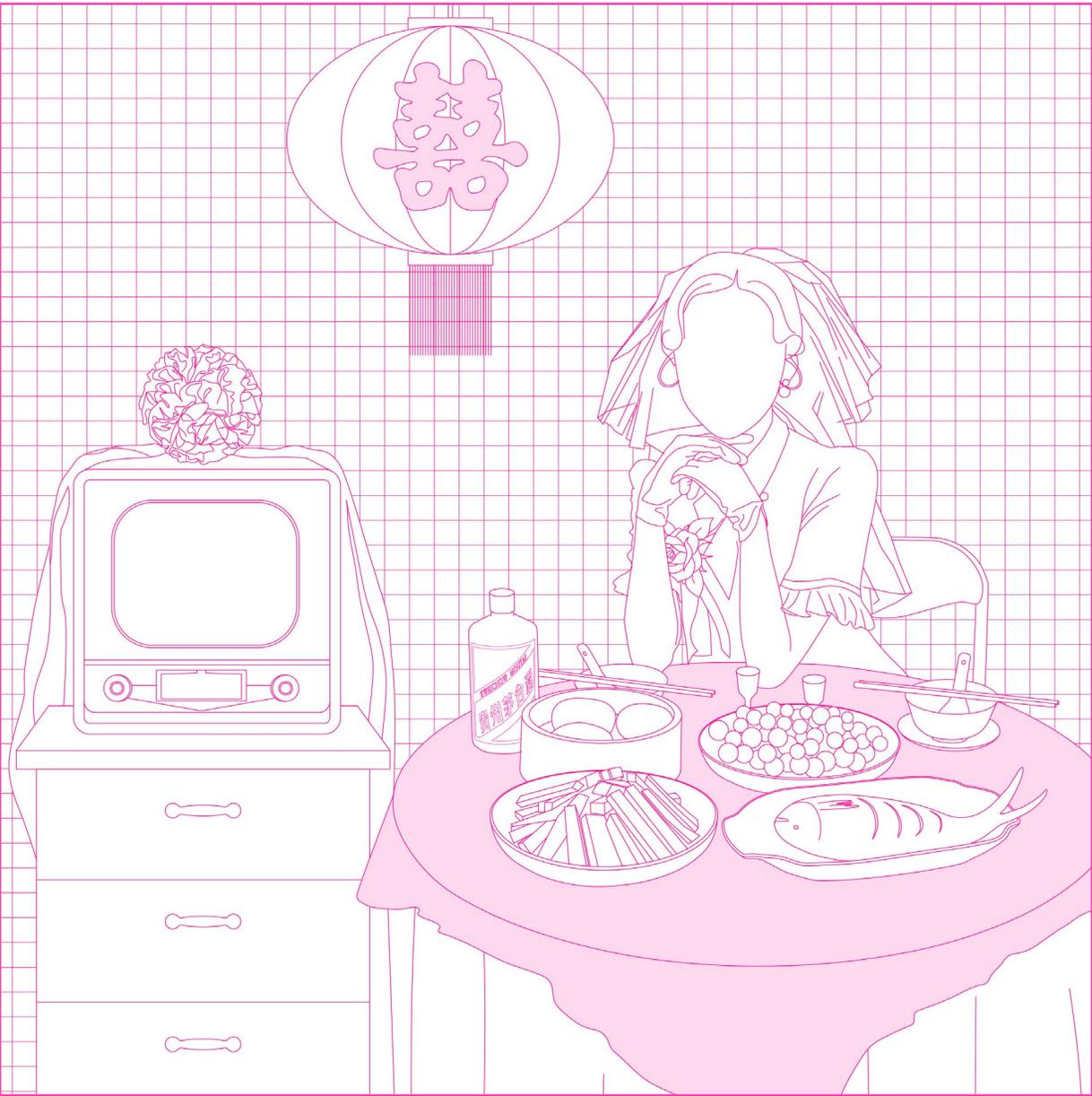
#怀旧 nostalgia

#喜庆 jubilant

Location:

Best Time:

Price: ¥ 1999



Amour in the 80s - 2

10 青葱校园

CAMPUS LOVE

Tags:

#校园 campus

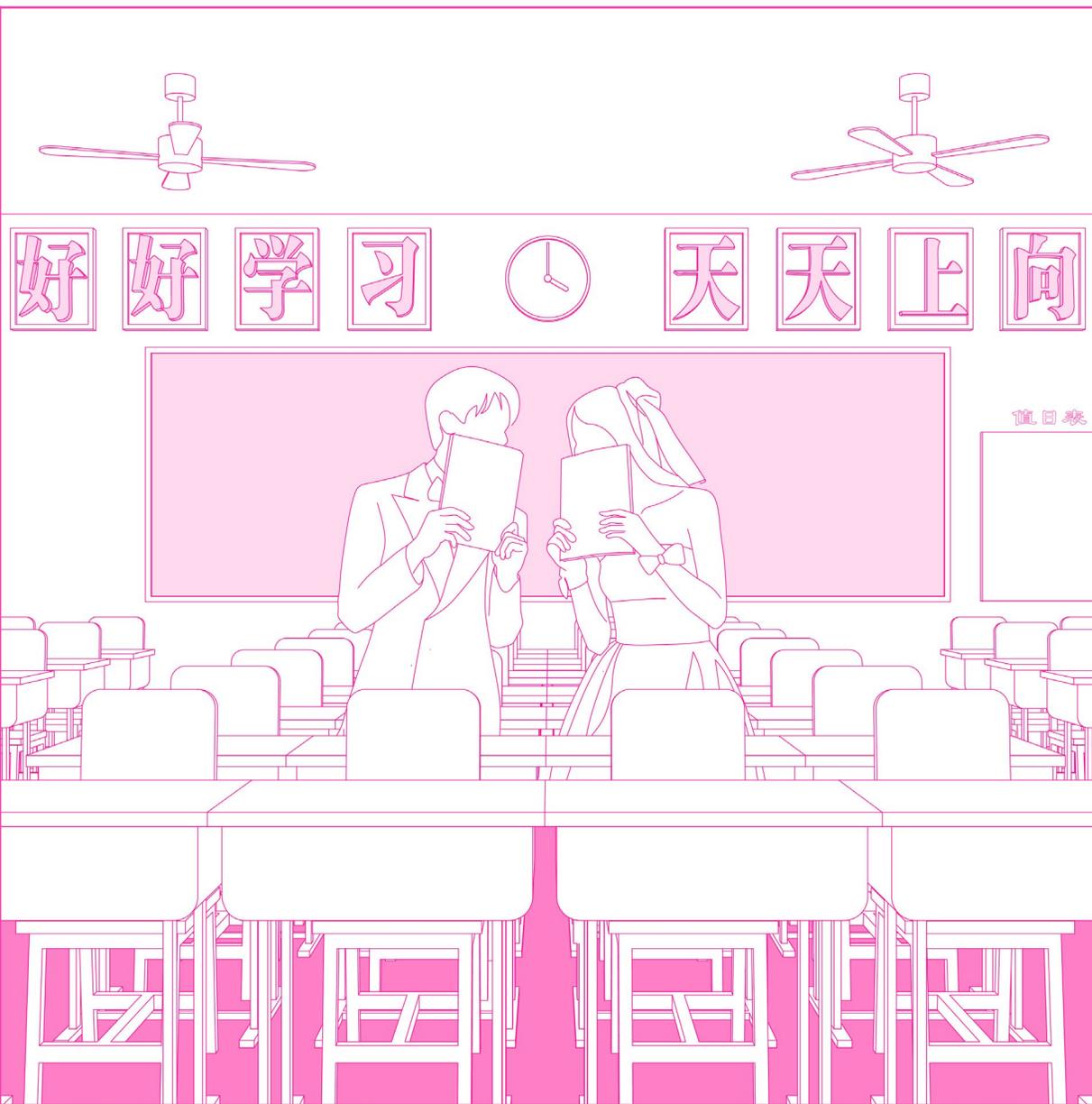
#日系 Japanese

#怦然心动 flipped

Location:

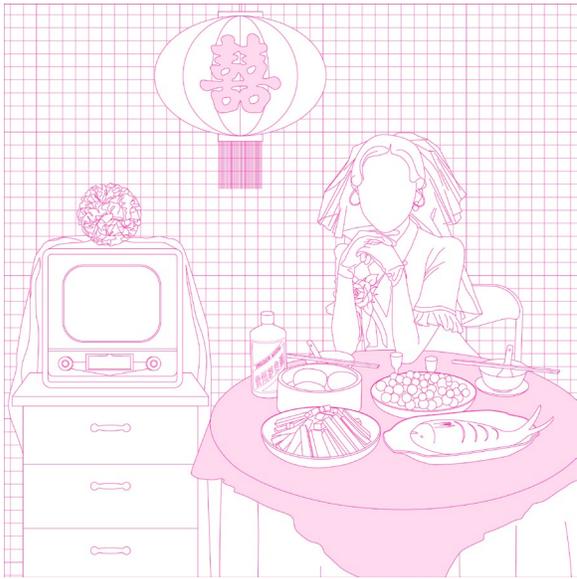
Best Time:

Price: ¥ 2999

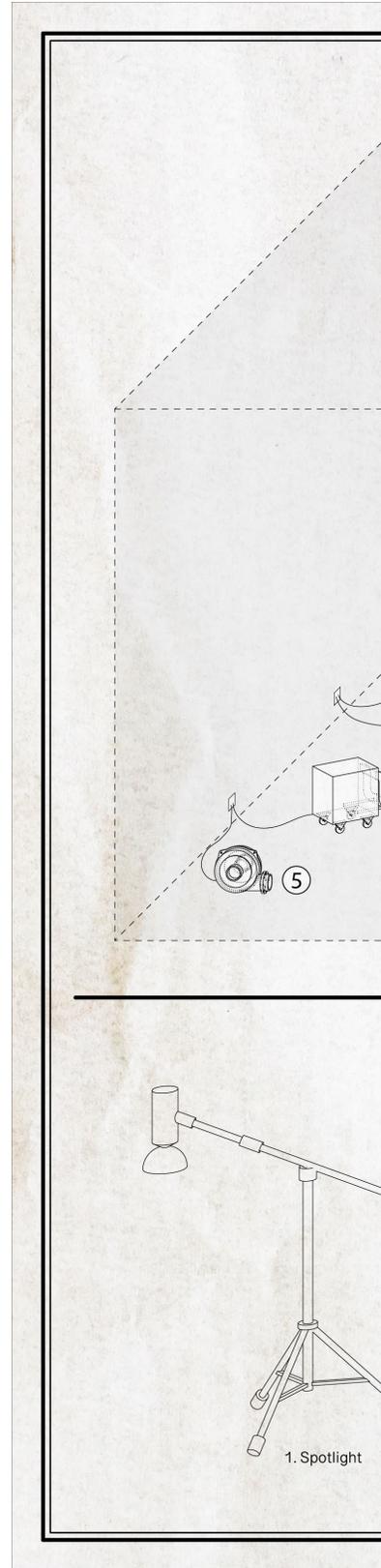


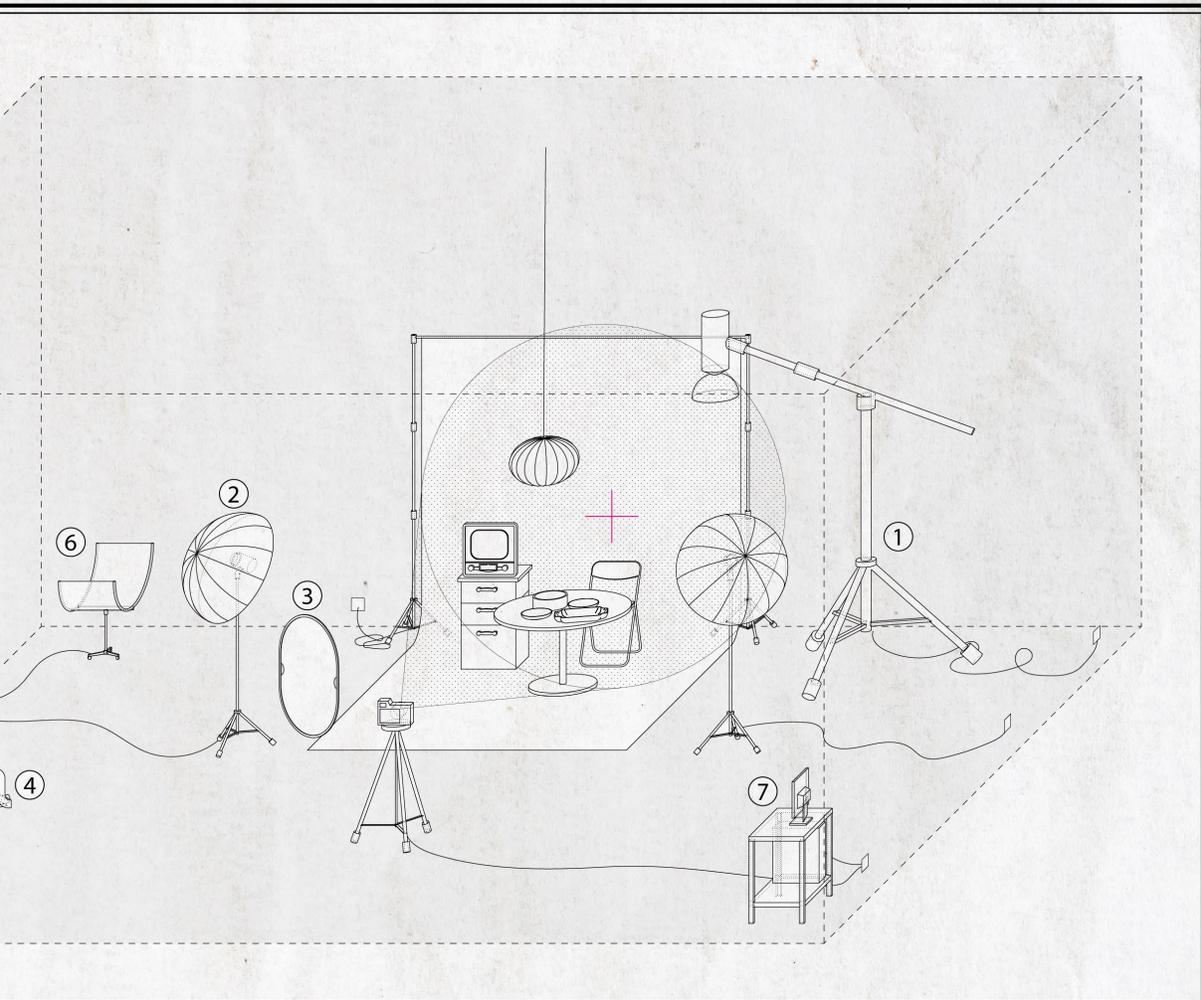
Reverse Engineer A Wedding Picture

A. Indoor Scene Setting

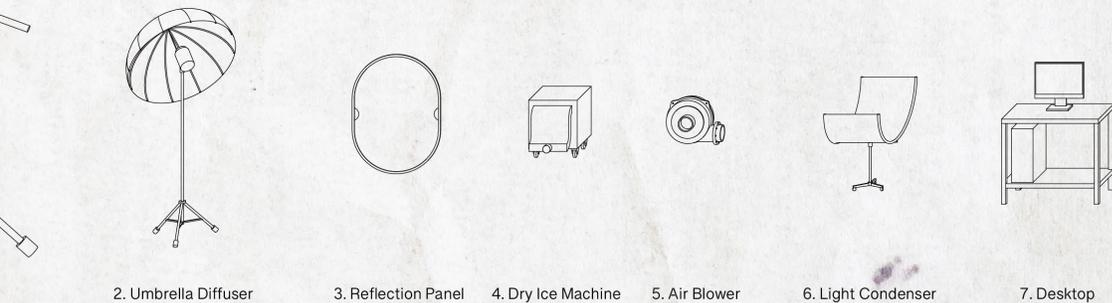


Wedding photo product - Love in the 80s





Love in the 80s



2. Umbrella Diffuser

3. Reflection Panel

4. Dry Ice Machine

5. Air Blower

6. Light Condenser

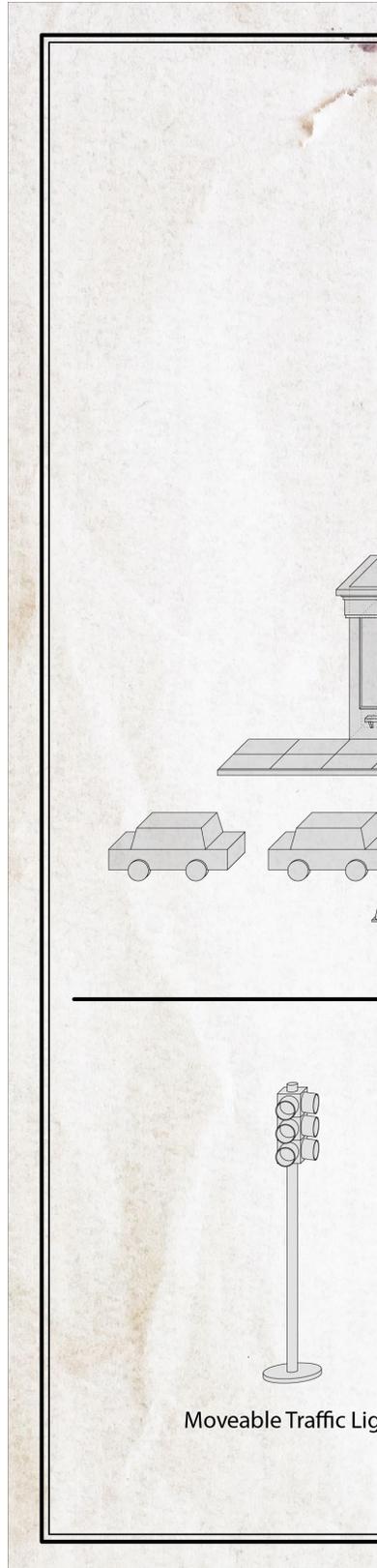
7. Desktop

Reverse Engineer A Wedding Picture

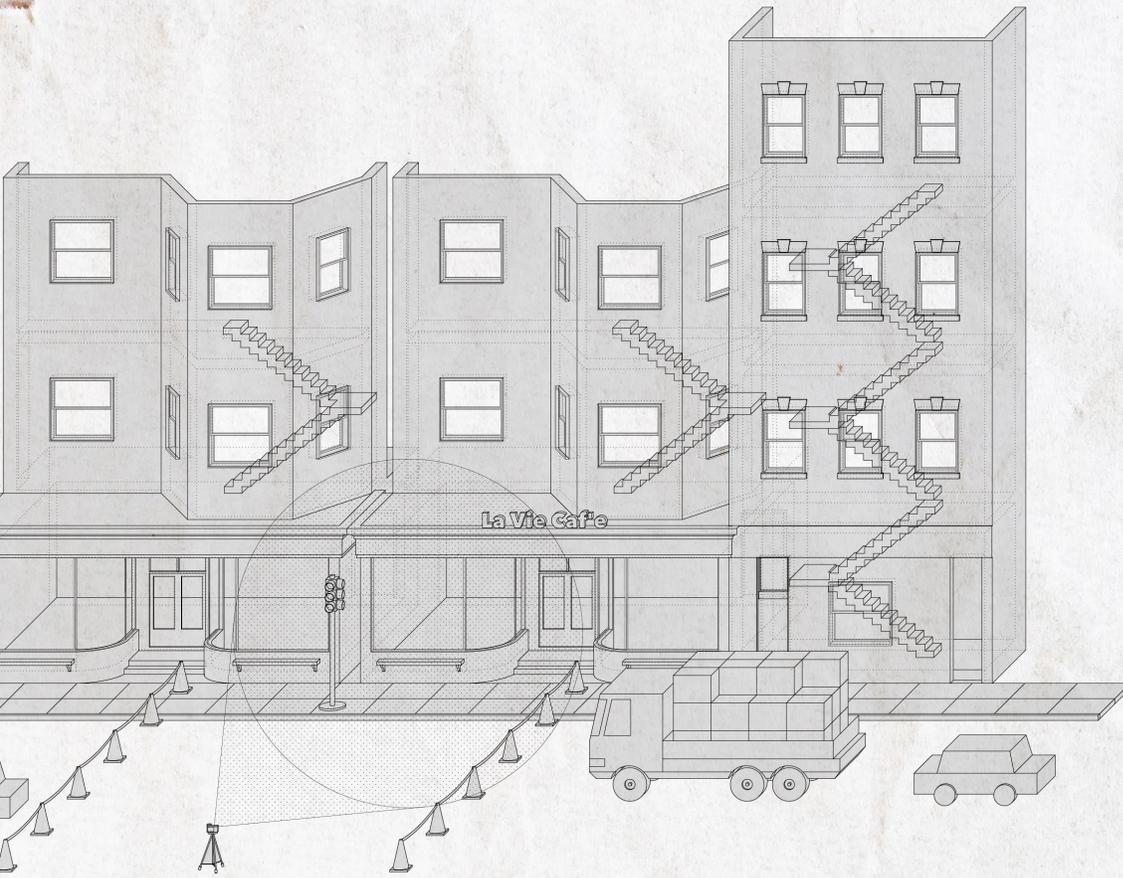
B. Outdoor Scene Setting



Wedding photo product - La viva le citta



Moveable Traffic Light



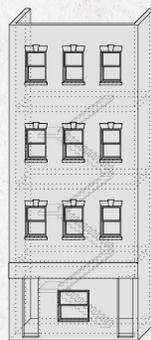
LA VIVA LE CITTA



Cones



Caution Stripe



Paper-thin Buildings

Dummy Cake

This real-fake dichotomy is also found in architecture's neighboring discipline, pastry, as seen in a dummy cake. A dummy cake is sometimes called a faux cake, and it usually appears as a tiered wedding cake at a wedding ceremony. A dummy cake's sponge has been wholly or partially replaced by polystyrene blocks but still seamlessly blends into a wedding with the real, edible, and lavishly decorated frosting. Compared to an actual wedding cake, a dummy cake is more affordable and has a much larger structural strength, adding height and drama to an eventful moment. Though highly customizable, a typical dummy cake has an edible top tier and faux lower tiers. Some Pâtissiers will hide a slice of real cake in the bottom tier of the cake sponge to enable a cake-cutting performance.

Both a wedding park and a dummy cake are responses to the image consumption fever in China. It significantly lowers the threshold for image production and thus provides a chance for the newlywed to satisfy their bourgeoisie lifestyle fantasies. In building or faking the identity of its consumers, a cake makes itself big, tall, and prominent by making itself hollow and less a cake.

A dummy cake is an epitome of the universal hollowed-ness in artifacts. An occasion where objects are predominantly rendered by their visual attributes, weddings, and the evolving images associated with them, fosters the transfer of significance from ontological purposes to an external presence in all evolved objects. Human bodies become hollowed out, too – multiple layers of fabric are piled up on our natural skin for a glamorous look, and our bones and skeletons become structures to bear those heavy layers in a most uncomfortable way.

We are all alienated from our primary identities. We all become dummy cakes.



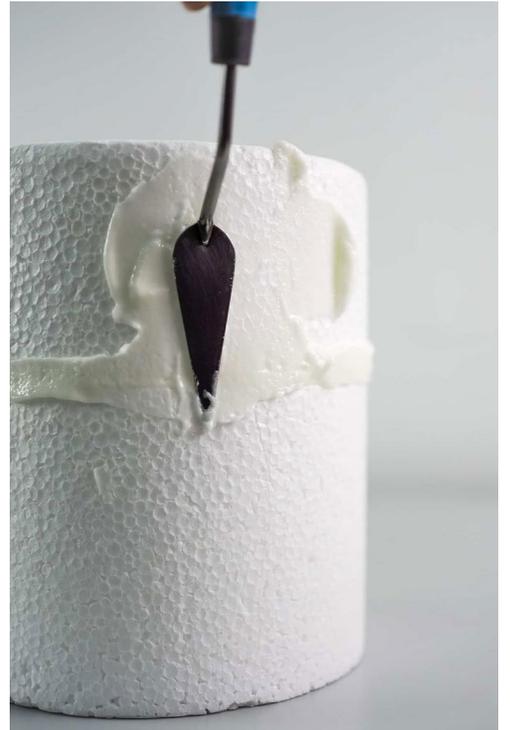
1. Prepare two cake dummies



2. Stack them with hot glue



4. Pipe cream on seams and dents



5. Smooth icing with a spatula



3. The seam condition we need to deal with



6. Seams and dents are still visible after first coat



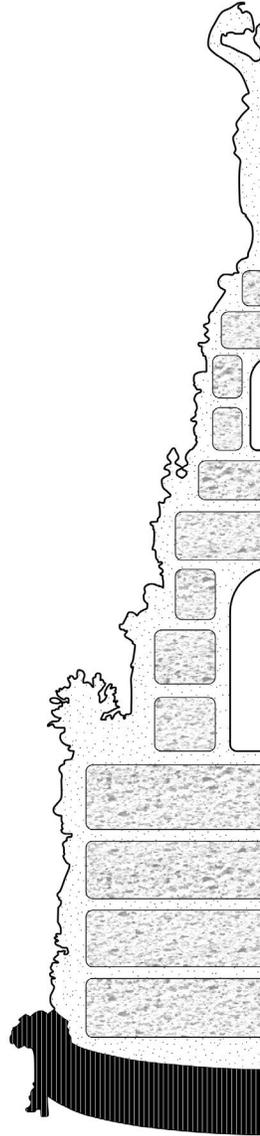
7. After second coat of icing



Hollowed Cake Dummy



Hollowed Cake Dummy



The section of a real cake and a dummy cake



'Interchangeable true romance bride and groom cake toppers', Wedding Collectibles, <https://weddingcollectibles.com/collections/interracial-wedding-cake-toppers/products/interchangeable-true-romance-bride-and-groom-cake-toppers>

INTERCHANGEABLE TRUE ROMANCE BRIDE AND GROOM CAKE TOPPERS

Interlocking Instructions

Always display your Bride and Groom figurines interlocked. Handle very carefully.

Step 1



Take out your Bride and Groom figurines.

Step 2



Hold the Groom down firmly with one hand. Bring the Bride up at an angle until their foreheads gently meet.

Step 3



Carefully lower the Bride until her dress sits on the stand with the Groom.

Step 4



Reposition the Bride until she feels most stable.

* Once in position, secure the Bride using glue or two sided tape on the underside of the dress. This will help to ensure there are no accidental separations of the "Happy Couple".

Cake Topper Assembly Manual, Wedding Collectibles, <https://weddingcollectibles.com/collections/interracial-wedding-cake-toppers/products/interchangeable-true-romance-bride-and-groom-cake-toppers>

This wedding cake topper is a perfect metaphor for commercialized weddings in a banquet. People getting married are the easiest components to be replaced. A wedding becomes a commodity, erasing the humanity in this supposedly touching moment.



*Newlyweds cutting cakes, New York, US, 1997, Google Arts & Culture,
<https://artsandculture.google.com/entity/cite/gufmzowi?hl=en>*



A New Wedding Park Typology

Just like a couple can only cut the cake within a thin slice, in a wedding park, a camera can only operate within the designated safe zone to avoid any visual element that might deconstruct the fantasy. This fact has greatly impacted the location of a wedding park. In order to diminish the disturbance of existing urban context and retain a sense of elsewhere, the construction of a wedding park is usually far away from the city center. Its precarious isolation removes the fakeness from the scope of the majority of the population, and erases many probabilities of triggering new dynamics in urban evolution.

This thesis aims to challenge the unseen fakeness by forcing the harsh and uncanny collision of existing urban context and the construction of a wedding park, and speculates a scenario where wedding photography activities neighbor the everyday life.

Xiamen, as known as Amoy, a southeastern coastal city in China, becomes an ideal context to examine a new form of a wedding park. Xiamen is of the first four special economic zones in mainland China to implement the opening up policy, and has long been an important coastal economic center. Particularly, this city has highly developed tourism, as tourism and culture is listed in Xiamen's five major industries, parallel to electronic information, equipment manufacturing, modern logistics and financial services.

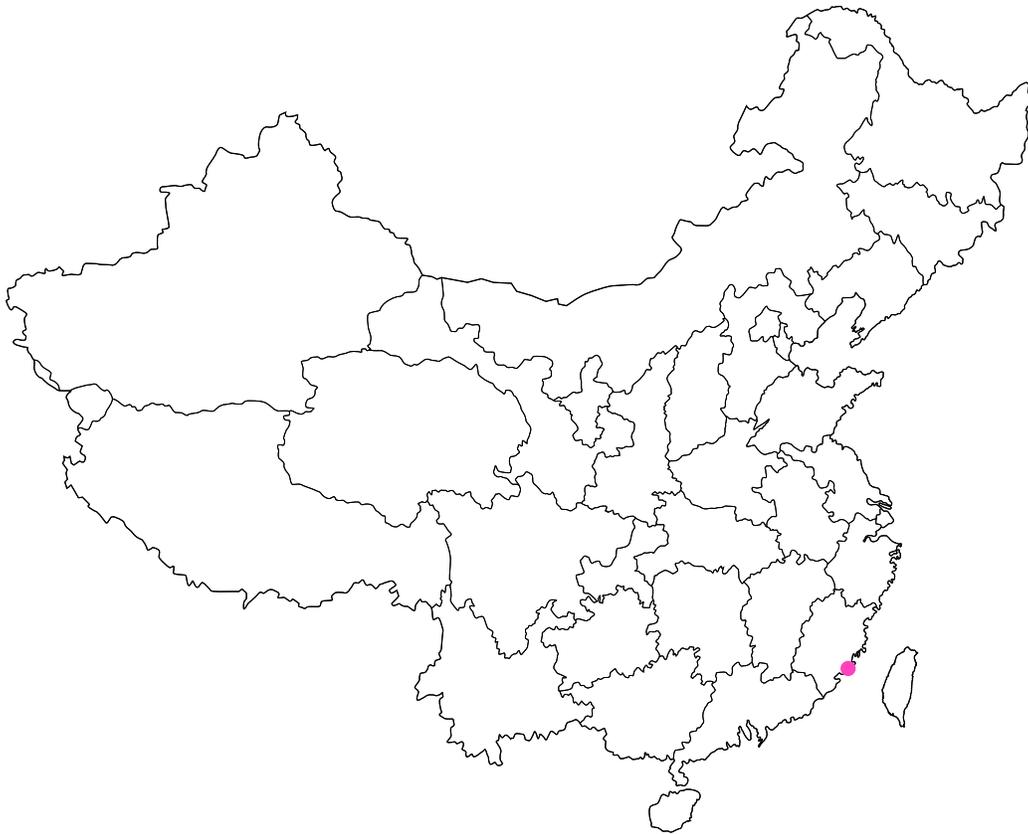
Xiamen is home to Kuslangsu, one of the most popular wedding photography destinations in China. Kulangsu is nicknamed 'Building Expo', for it was one of the two international settlements in the 20th century, and its building styles have been greatly influenced by former colonizers. Additionally, a large number of Phillipino, Malaysian and Indonesian Chinese returned to their hometown in Xiamen in the early 20th century, bringing the Southeast Asian styles to Xiamen.

Xiamen, with the compacted hybridity of diverse landscapes and cityscapes, is in a sense a naturally formed wedding park.

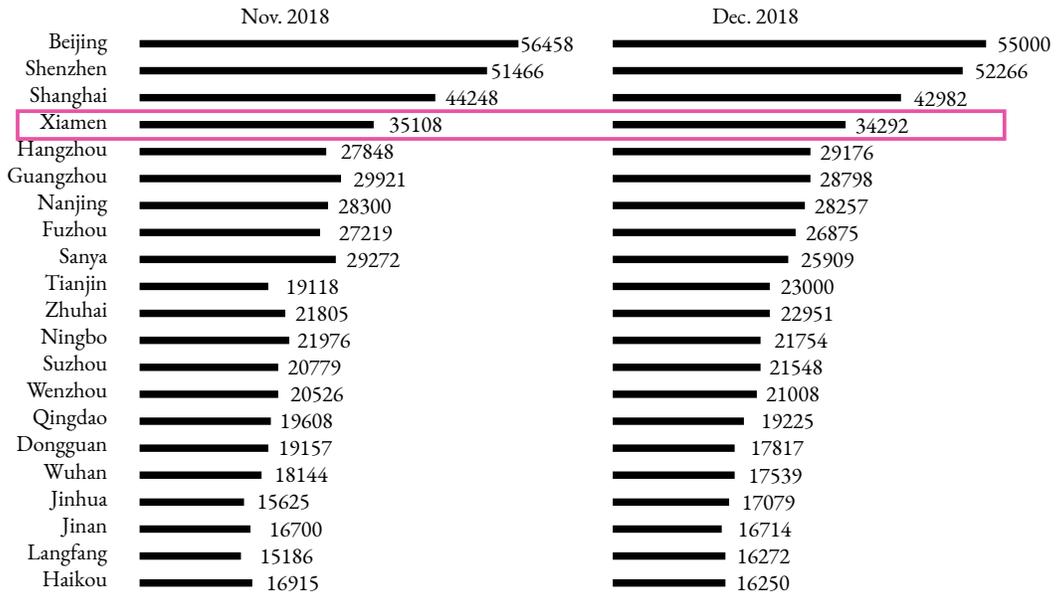
Xiamen General Info

The geographic property of Xiamen makes land utilization efficiency imperative. The city center of Xiamen is located on an island with only 158 square kilometers and a 1.15 million population. Xiamen has long been the city with the fourth-highest house price in China, only following Beijing, Shenzhen, and Shanghai, even higher than some first-tier cities. The average house price in Xiamen Island hit 10,000 dollars per square meter in 2020.

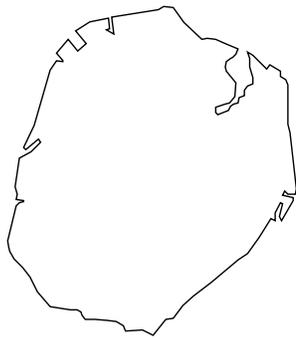
The existing wedding parks are usually horizontally developed and barely utilize vertical spaces. To fit into the urban fabric and economic backdrop in Xiamen, wedding parks need to find their vernacularized modification to improve the land utilization efficiency.



Xiamen's Location in China



Xiamen has the fourth highest house price in Mainland China



Xiamen Lu Island
Area: 158 km²

Population: 1.15 million



Boston
Area: 232.14 km²

Population: 0.68 million

Xiamen Island vs Boston



Kulangsu Municipal Police Badge with national flags of thirteen countries that set consulates in Kulangsu, Courtesy of UNESCO



Xiamen International Conference & Exhibition Center, ©Zhandaren

A Self-claimed Wedding Capital

Xiamen brands itself as a global wedding capital and holds an annual 'wedding Expo' and 'International Love and Culture Festival'. The event is held at Xiamen International Conference and Exhibition Center. Pavillions include 'theme pavillion', 'guest pavillion', 'wedding tradition and culture pavillion', 'honeymoon trip pavillion', 'wedding jewelry pavillion', 'wedding food & wine pavillion', 'wedding cosmetics & anime pavillion', 'wedding supply pavillion', 'wedding furniture facility pavillion', and 'wedding photography pavillion'. Entering the e-commerce era, the Expo committee invited over 100 KOLs to do webcasts to enlarge their influence in 2021.

The romanticized image of Xiamen is in tune with its positioning as a tourist and vacation city in China. Weddings are not at the center of Xiamen's city image, but more like a natural consequence of tourism construction and an adaptation to the new trend in the wedding industry.



Wedding Expo & International Love and Culture Festival, Image ©cnexpo



Couples lining up in a photo spot, 2019, @无谓无畏无念无求



Shapowei Urban Fabric



Shapowei is the oldest part of the city downtown and is the first fishing dock in Xiamen's history. In 2015, this fishing function of Shapowei was abolished and was later gradually transformed into an art and culture district. Nowadays, this place has been a symbol of pretty bourgeoisie lifestyles: cafes, boutiques, and galleries gathering here present a divergent picture of living. Most of the buildings here are two-to-three-tier self-built residences in poor conditions, resulting in a chaotic and irregular urban fabric. Looking from a bird's eye view, it appears as a slum area at the heart of Xiamen city, surrounded by some most iconic high-rise buildings, including the famous Twin Towers.



Service, 1:12,500, courtesy of the University of Texas at Austin.



New businesses are mainly located along the coastal line



Businesses that present new lifestyles are mainly aligning with the haven. Houses along the coast have been given an exterior makeover, often with bright wall paint and shop signs, attracting many tourists to take photos in this milieu. The street facade looking from across also becomes the most iconic picture of Shapowei: a great number of posts on Little Red Book tagged with 'Shapowei' have quite similar angles as if a camera has been fixed there.

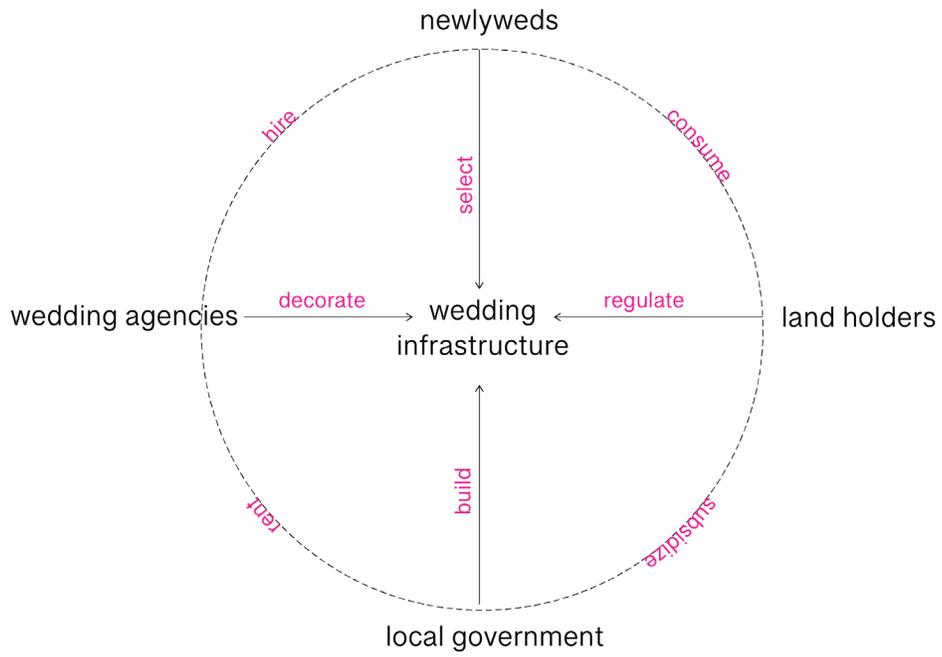
However, the renovation since 2015 does not touch the vast hinterland. The picture of living remains unchanged behind the very thin imageable layer. The physical proximity and pictorial disparity between the two areas echo the spirit of a dummy cake.



The bird eye's view of Shapowei, ©ArchCollege



The iconic view of Shapowei, courtesy see watermarks



How wedding infrastructure will be built

There is a chance for a wedding park to step in, revitalizing the vast area that was once outshined by the streetscape with a set of wedding infrastructure insertion.



What wedding infrastructure will bring to its stakeholders

These wedding infrastructures make full use of the existing context and aim at excavating the image potential of what is seemingly least favorable for wedding photos.

spatial relations

Hover

A broad spectrum of roofscapes

Merge

The boolean union of a cluster of houses

Align

Redefined street facades



spatial prototypes

115

5. Wedding-scape as City-scape

staircases
mazes
balconies
swimming pools
gingerbread house
tree houses
bridges
merry-go-rounds
gardens
LEGO architecture
fire escapes
arcade
skate park
playground

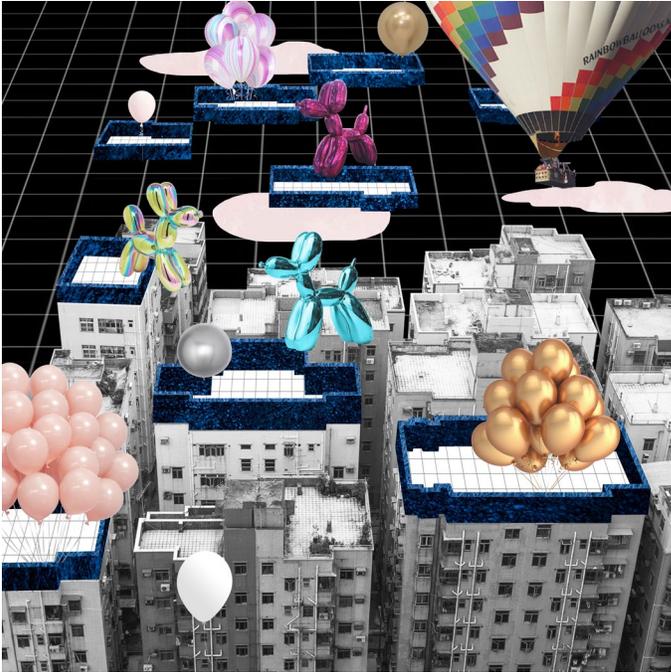




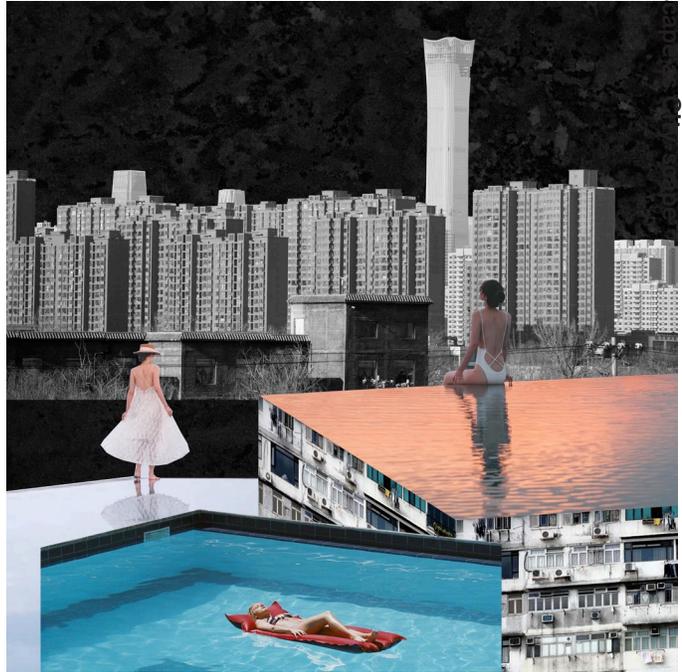
Bridges



Staircases



Roofscape

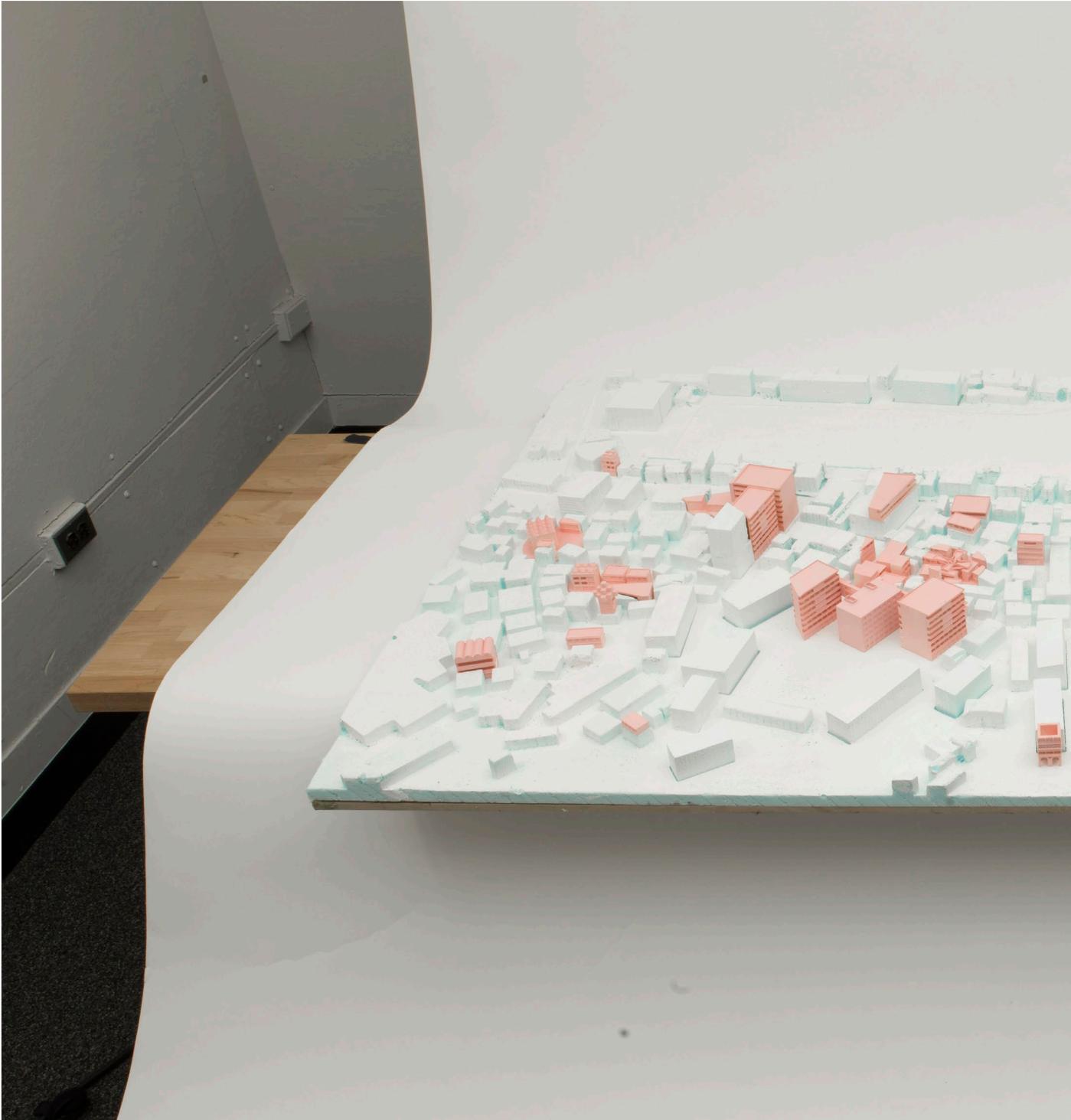


Infinity Swimming Pool

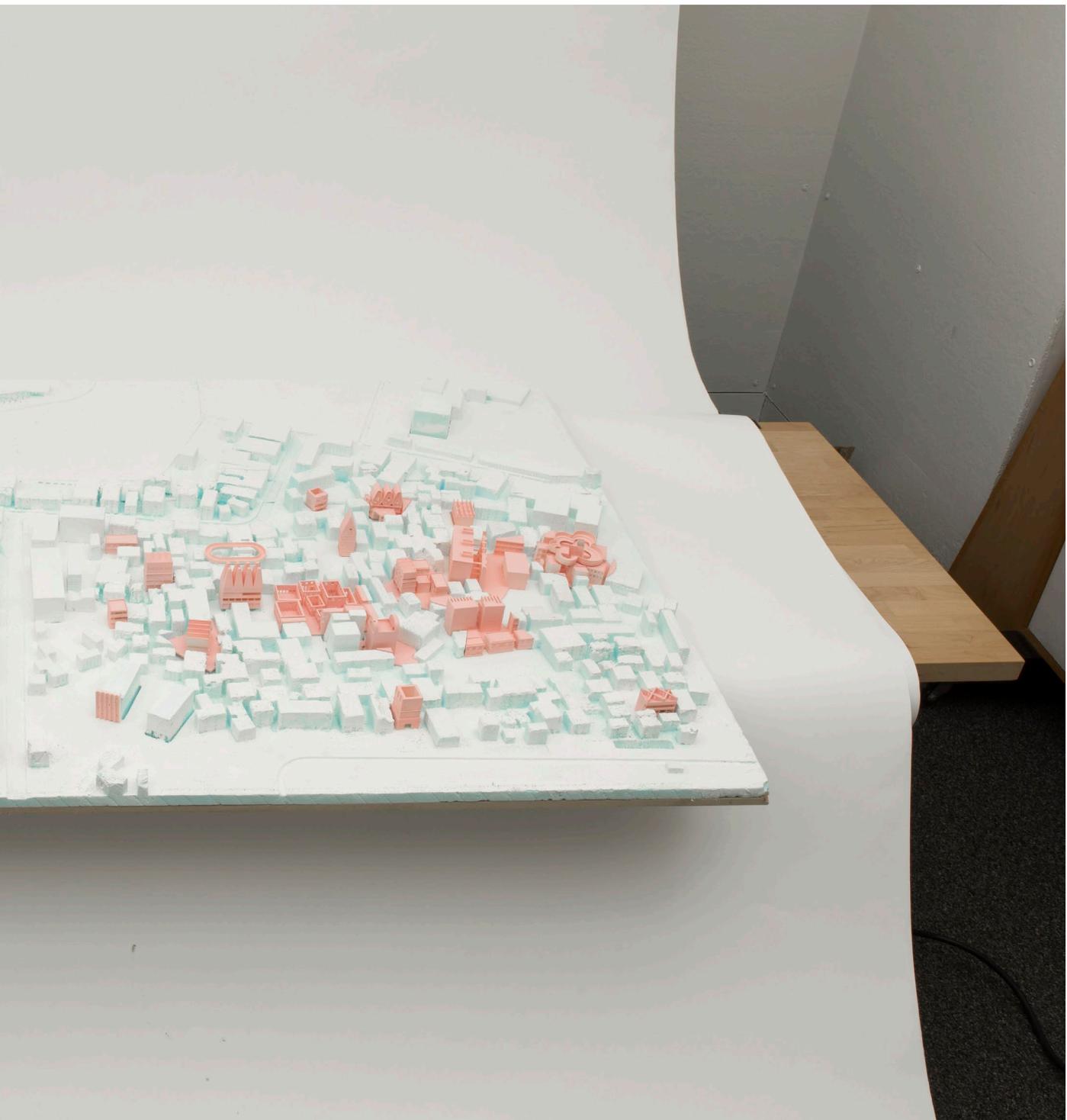
The inserted wedding infrastructure does not only serve image making, but also trigger new dynamics in the urban environment.

Wedding-scape C

Outside the Cone

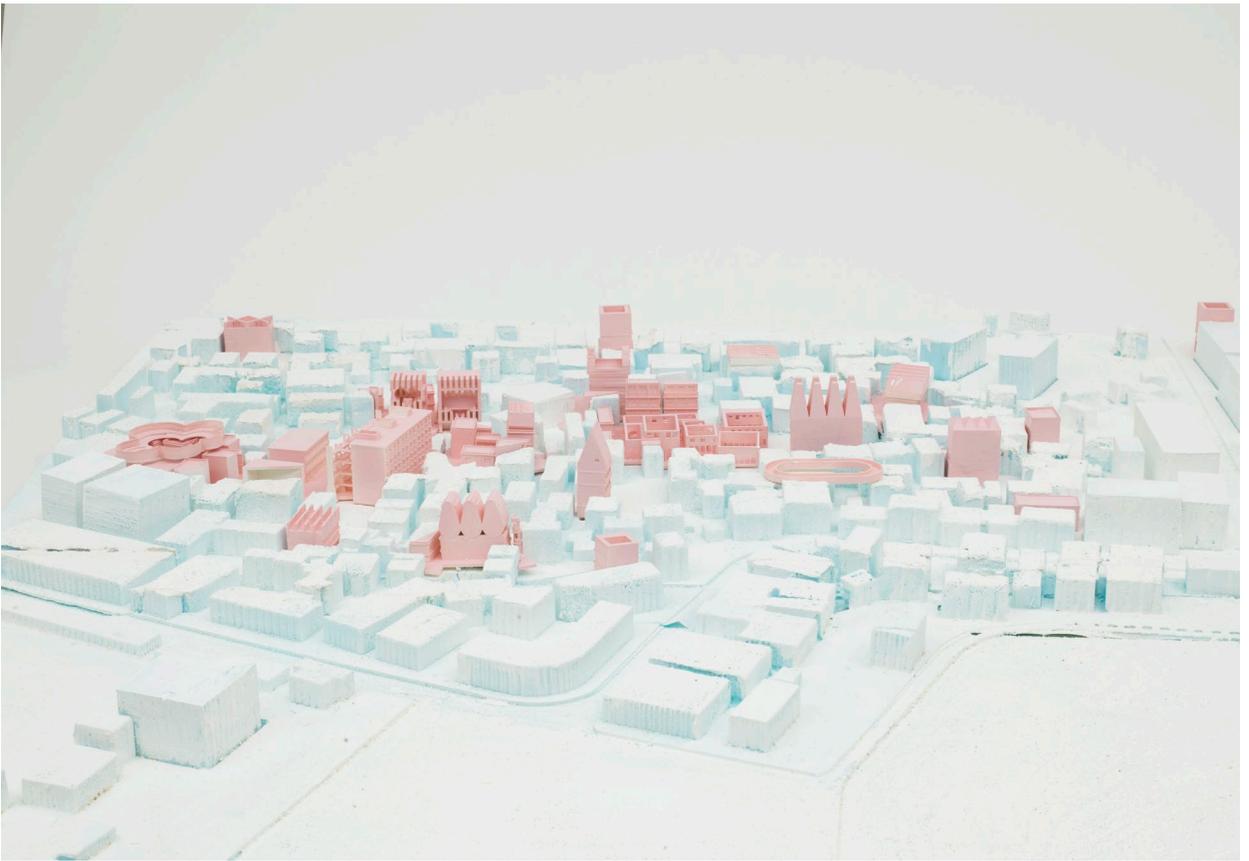


A Wedding Park at Shapowei, Image ©Andy Ryan





Wedding Infrastructures, Image ©Andy Ryan



Wedding Infrastructures, Image ©Andy Ryan



Wedding Infrastructures, Image ©Andy Ryan



Wedding Infrastructures, Image ©Andy Ryan

Uncanny Collison

The conical view field of a camera engenders a fine border condition between the occupancy of the wedding photo industry and the territory of residents. A wedding scene only requires curations within the field of view. It leaves great flexibility for the uncaptured world, which is an inviting gesture to the spontaneous occupancy of the local people. They might spot other usages of those infrastructures and transform those constructs for the sake of their convenience.

The most fantasized image is accompanied by the most everyday, chaotic, and least imageable activities. This tension constructs a pronounced absurdity in our cityscape and brings the fakeness of wedding parks to the scope of a larger population.

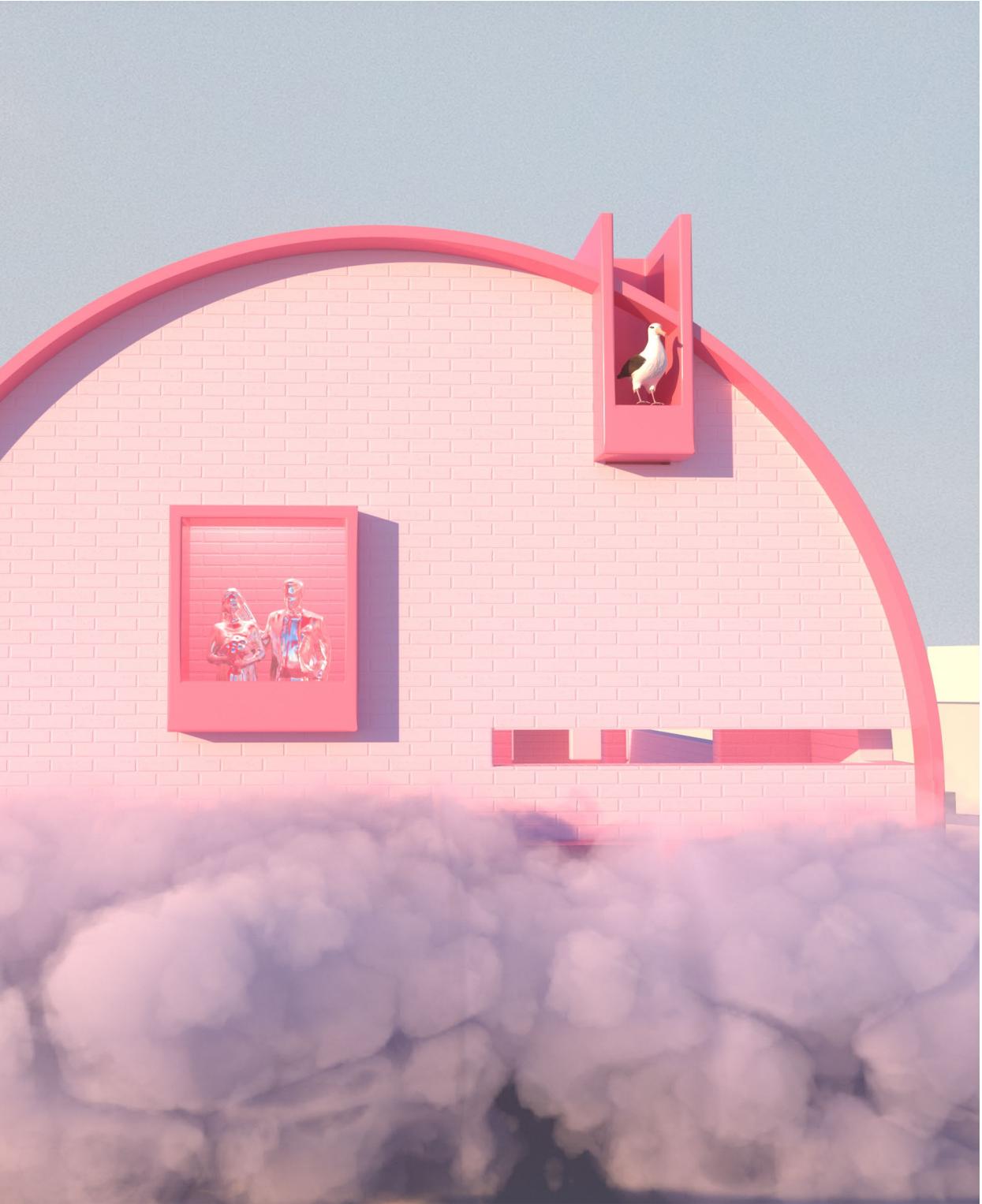
In some cases, two different space usage patterns can coexist. The backside of Juliet's balcony might be transformed into a center for sun-drying clothes and fish. Another possible scenario is that the wedding photography industry and local people have to compete for space. A suspended water sink, which will appear as an infinity swimming pool, might be used as a laundry sink.

This weird combination of activities foregrounds the absurdity of both the wedding infrastructure per se and their uncanny interaction with the urban context and ultimately becomes a critique of the consumption-driven image-making mechanism.

1. Roofscape

A. A Photographer's Lens

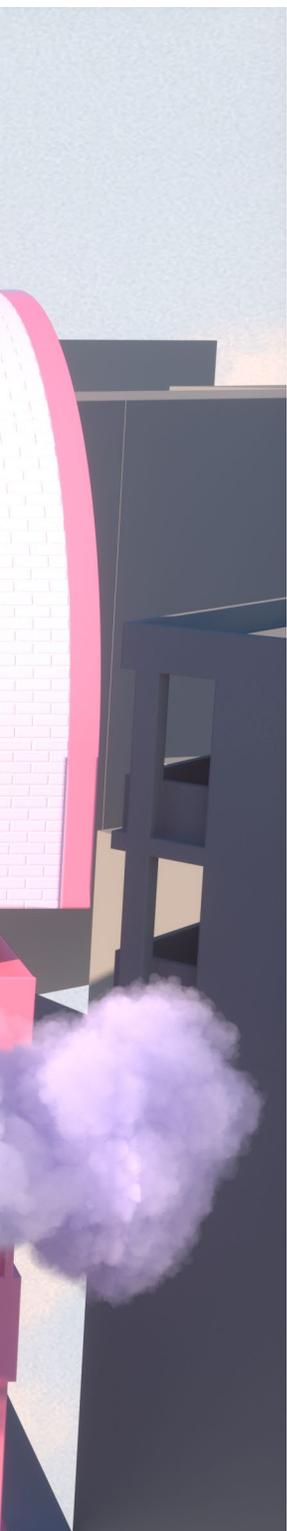






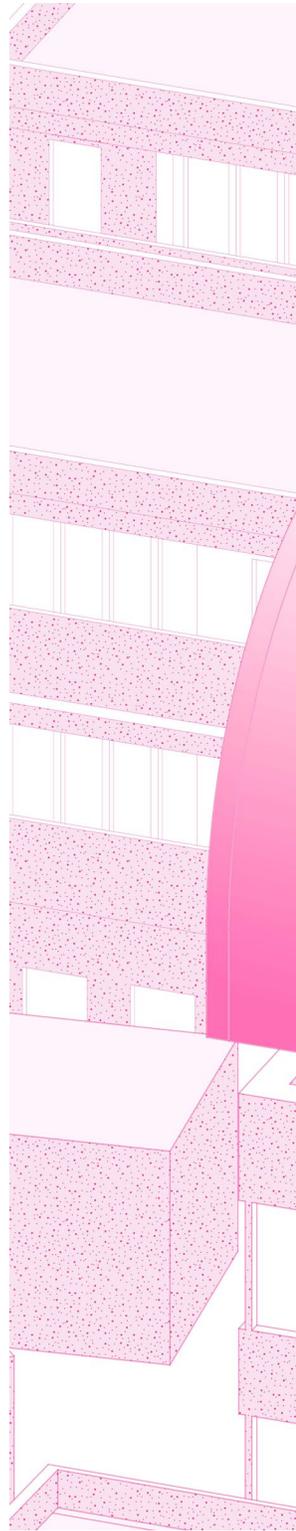
1. Rooftscape

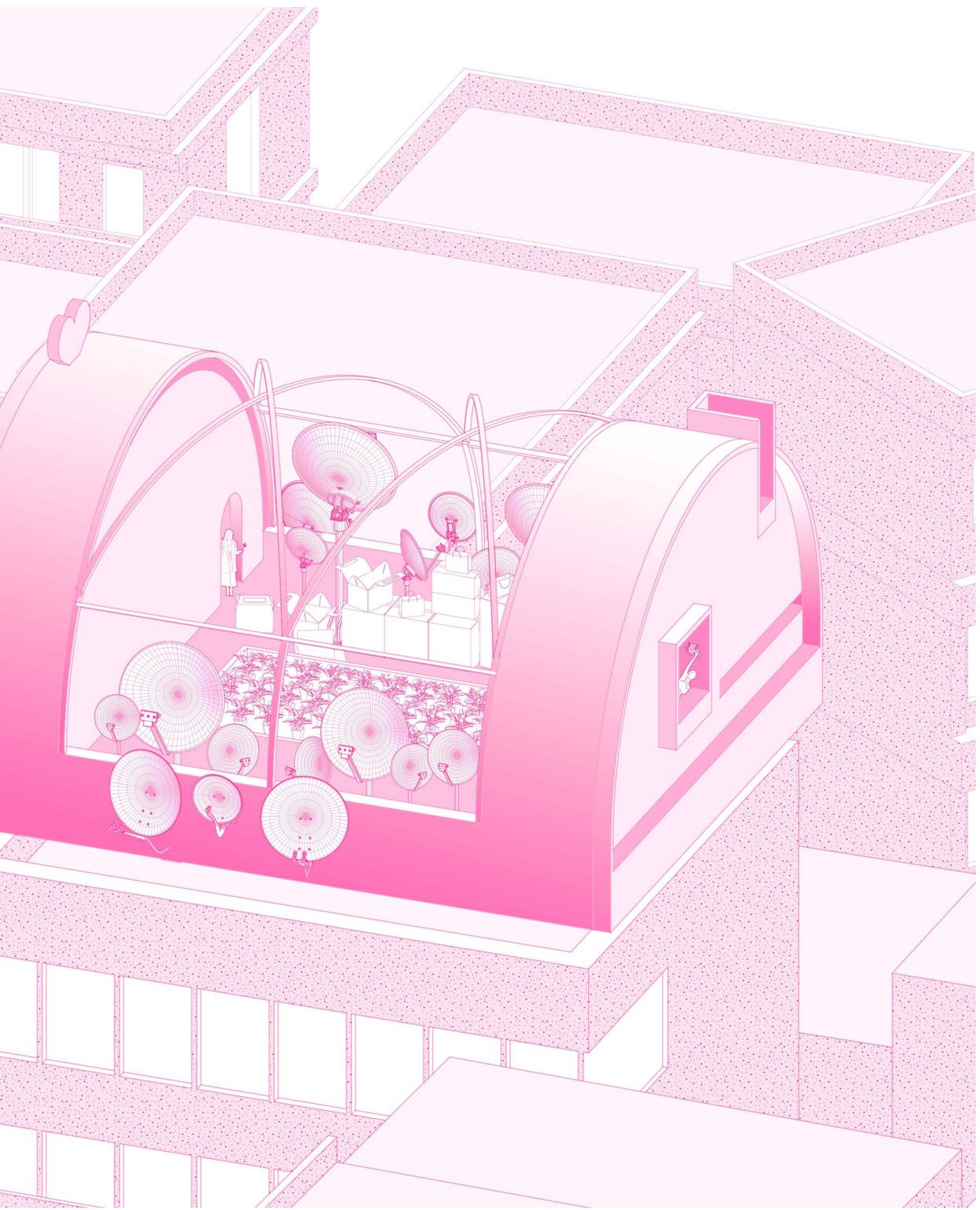
B. A Tilted Lens



1. Roofscape

C. A Misused Prospect



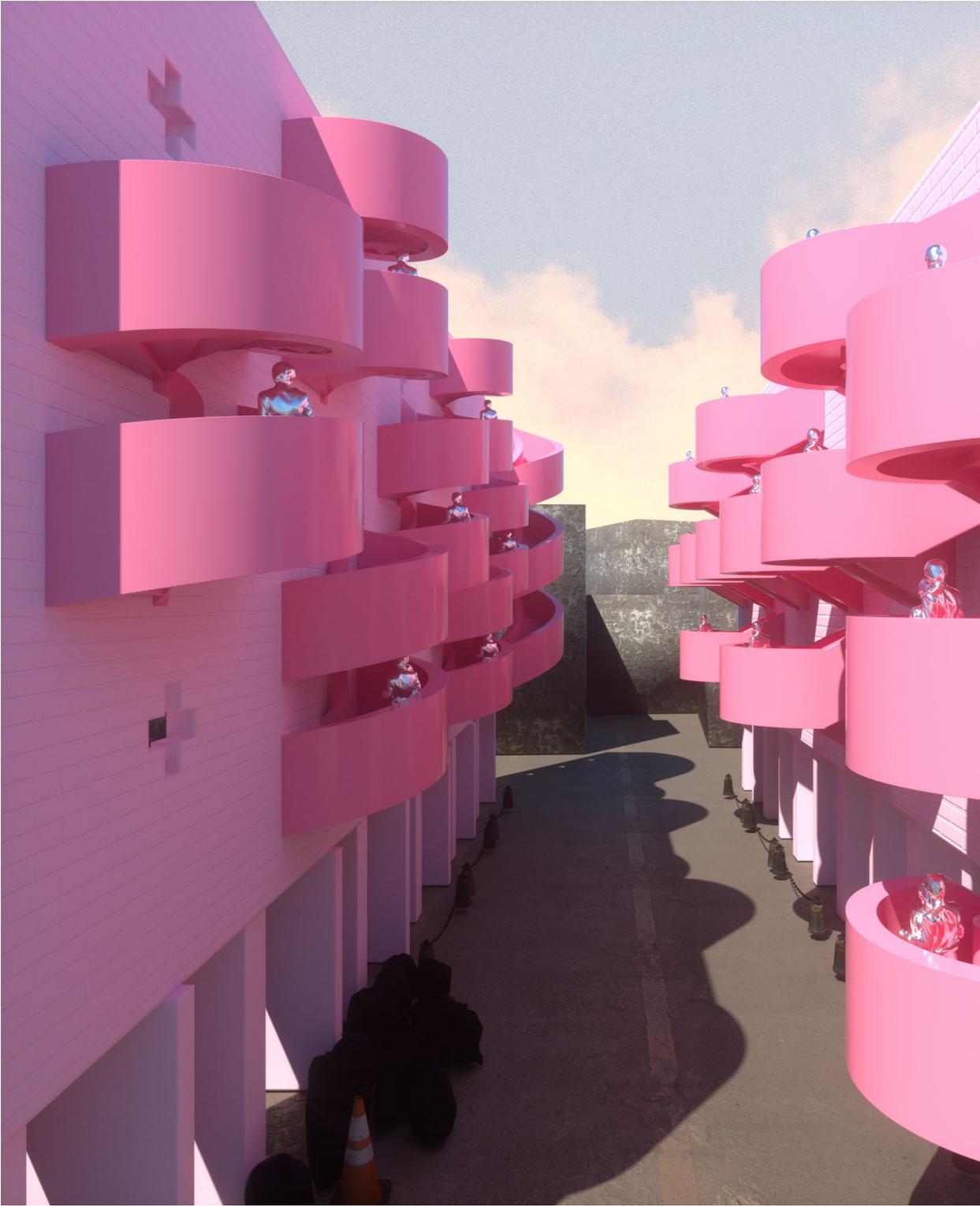


2. Staircase

A. A Photographer's Lens







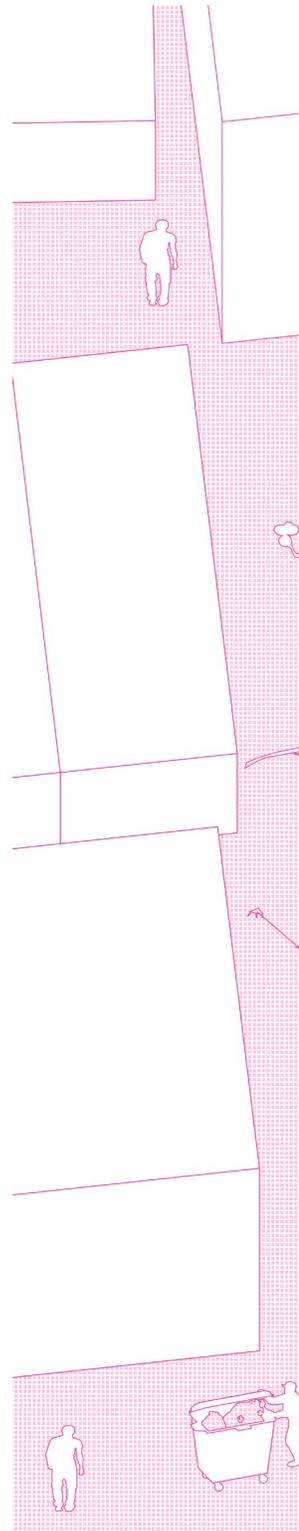
2. Staircase

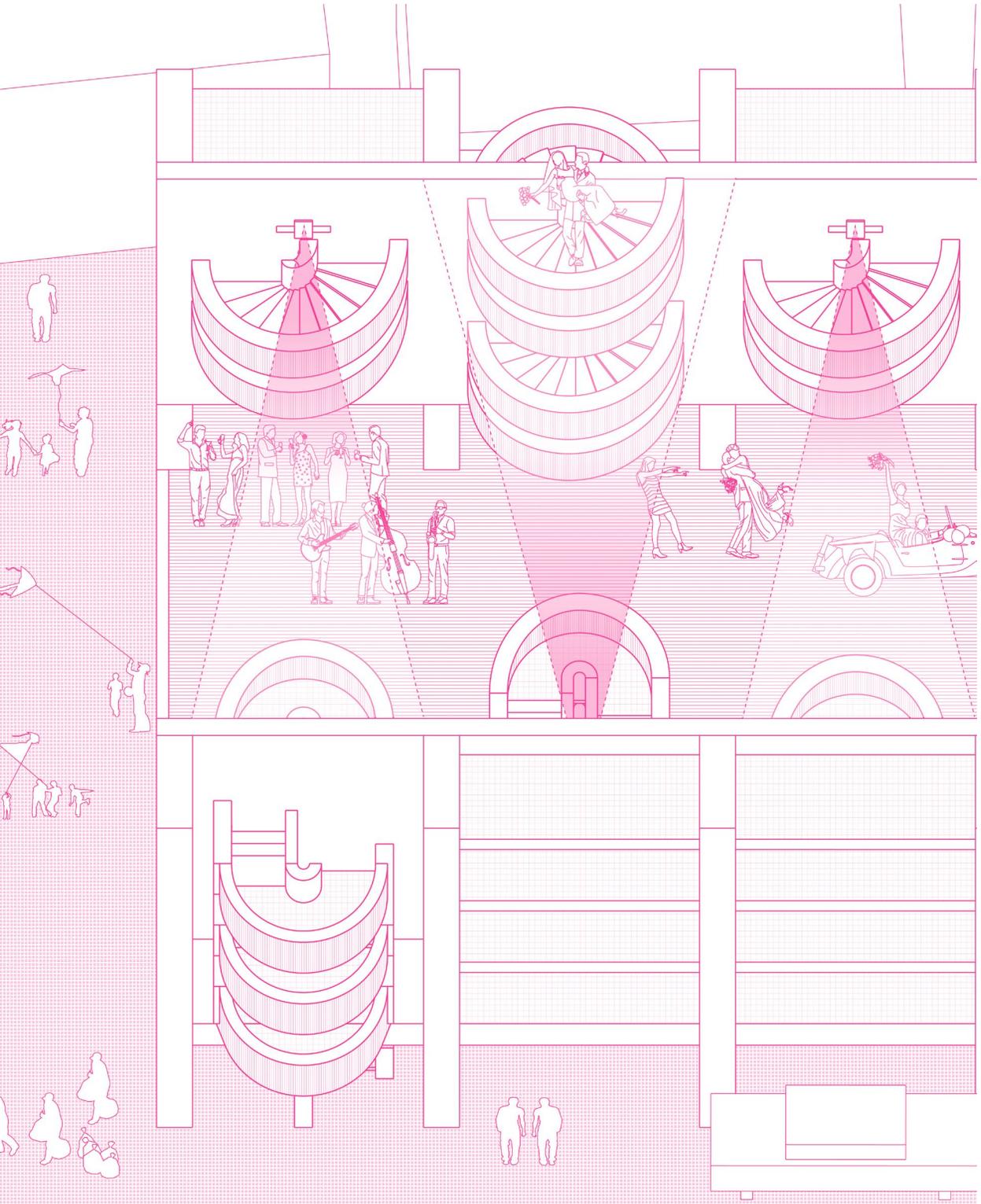
B. A Tilted Lens



2. Staircase

C. A Misused Prospect





3. Balconies

A. A Photographer's Lens







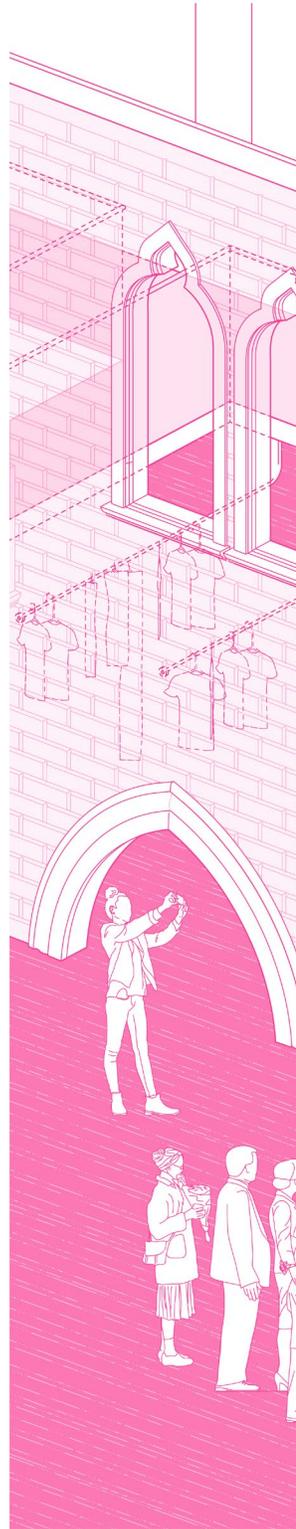
3. Balconies

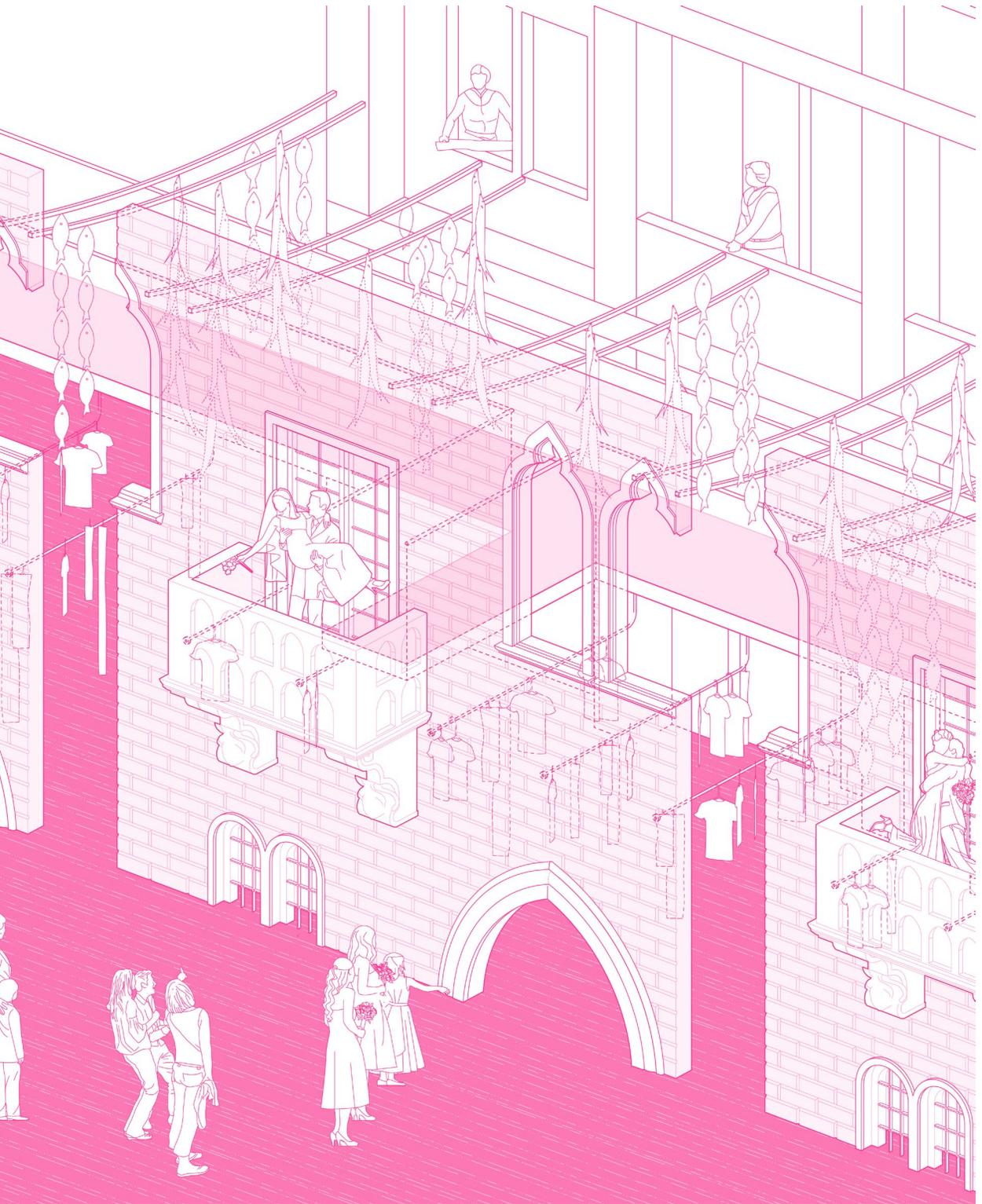
B. A Tilted Lens



3. Balconies

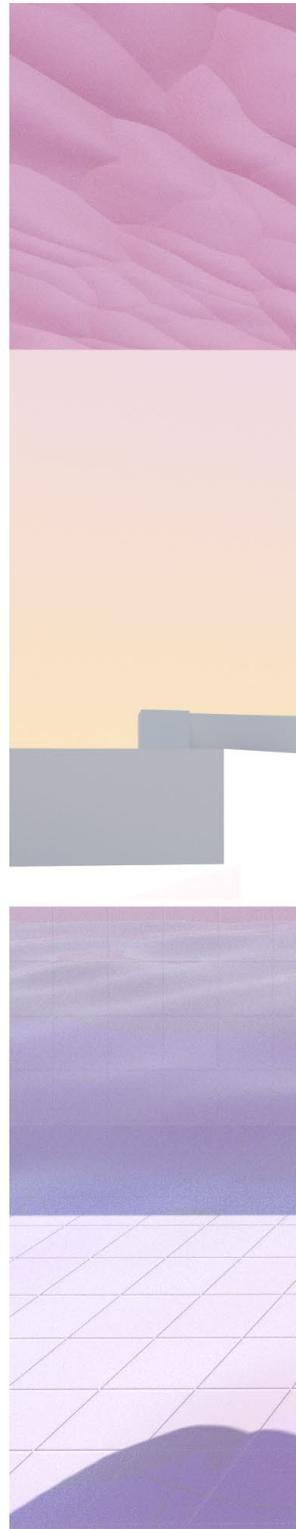
C. A Misused Prospect

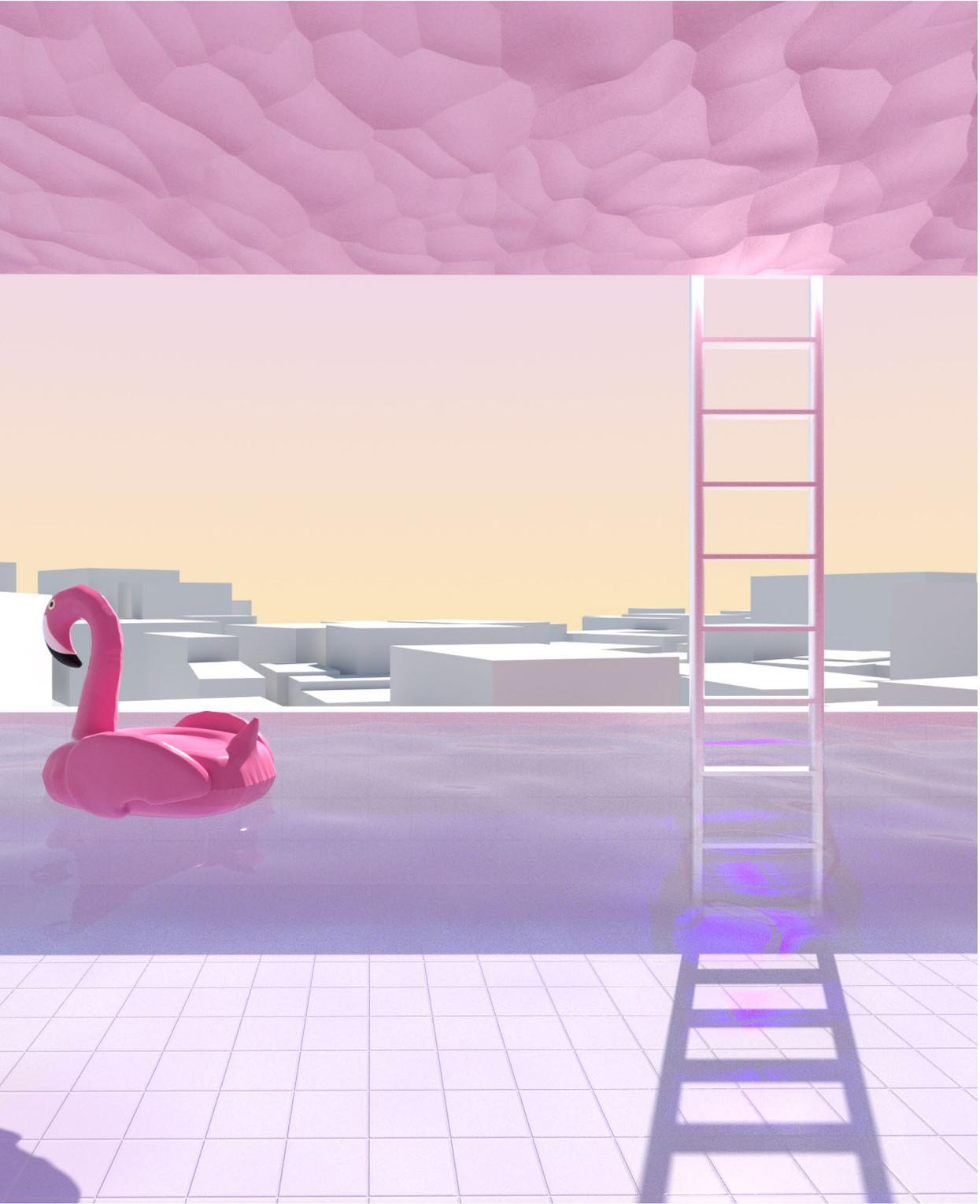




4. Infinity Swimming Pool

A. A Photographer's Lens







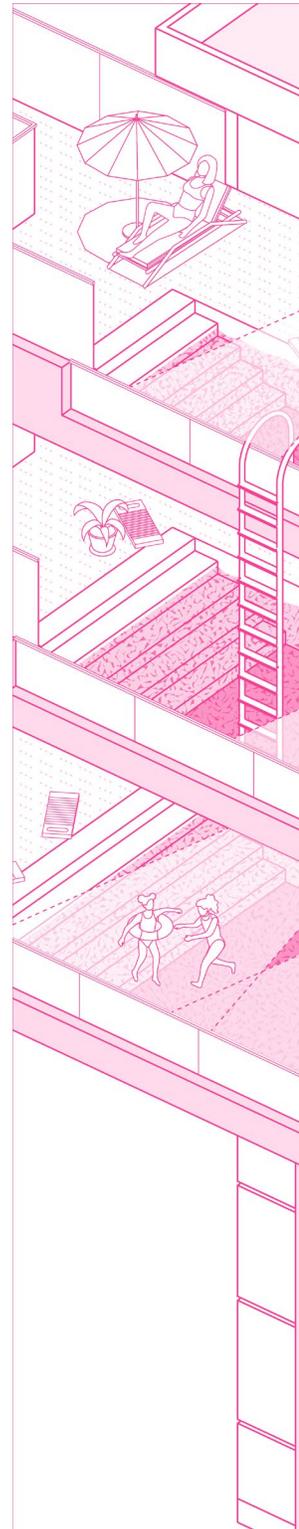
4. Infinity Swimming Pool

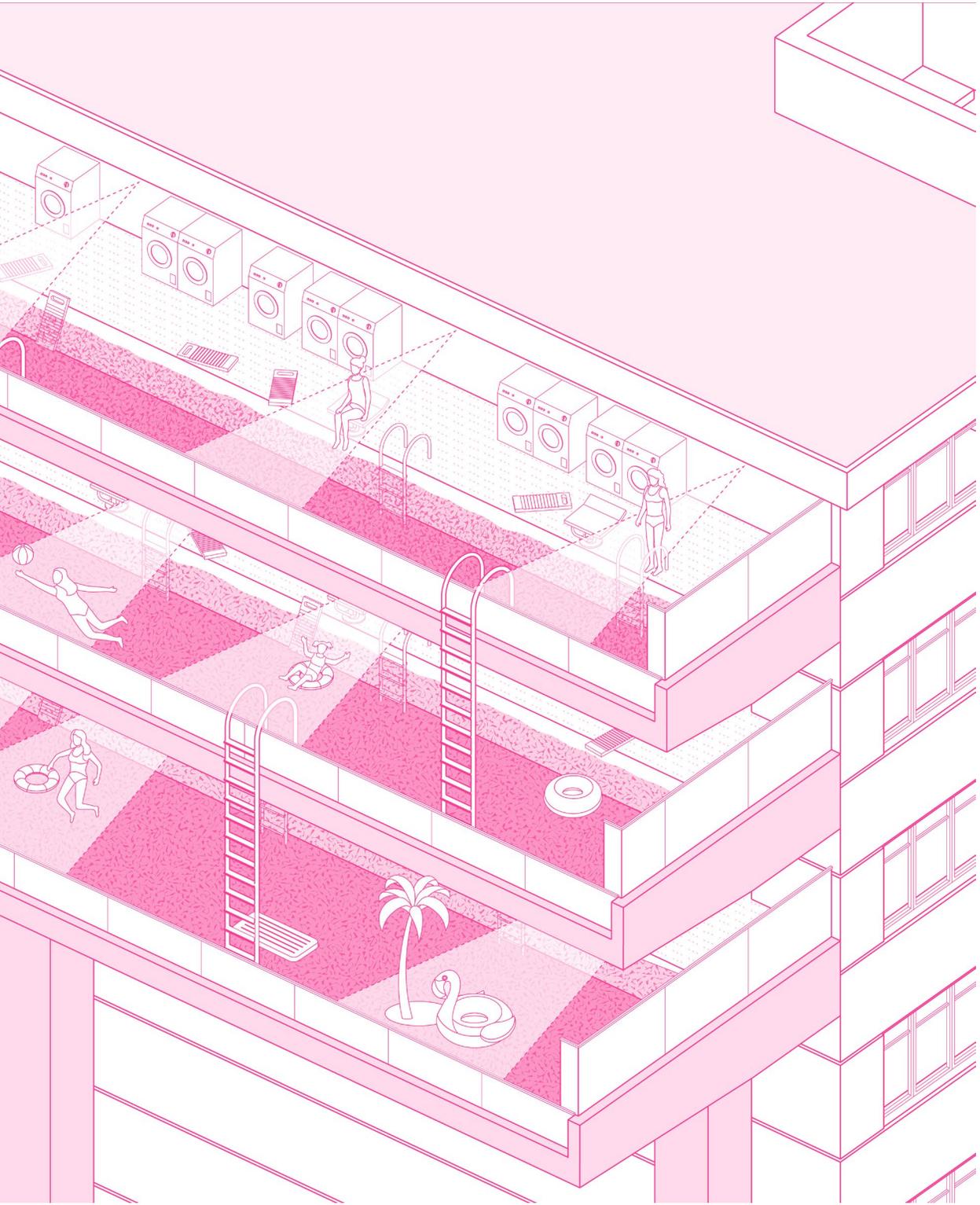
B. A Tilted Lens



4. Infinity Swimming Pool

C. A Misused Prospect





5. Merry-go-round

A. A Photographer's Lens







5. Merry-go-round

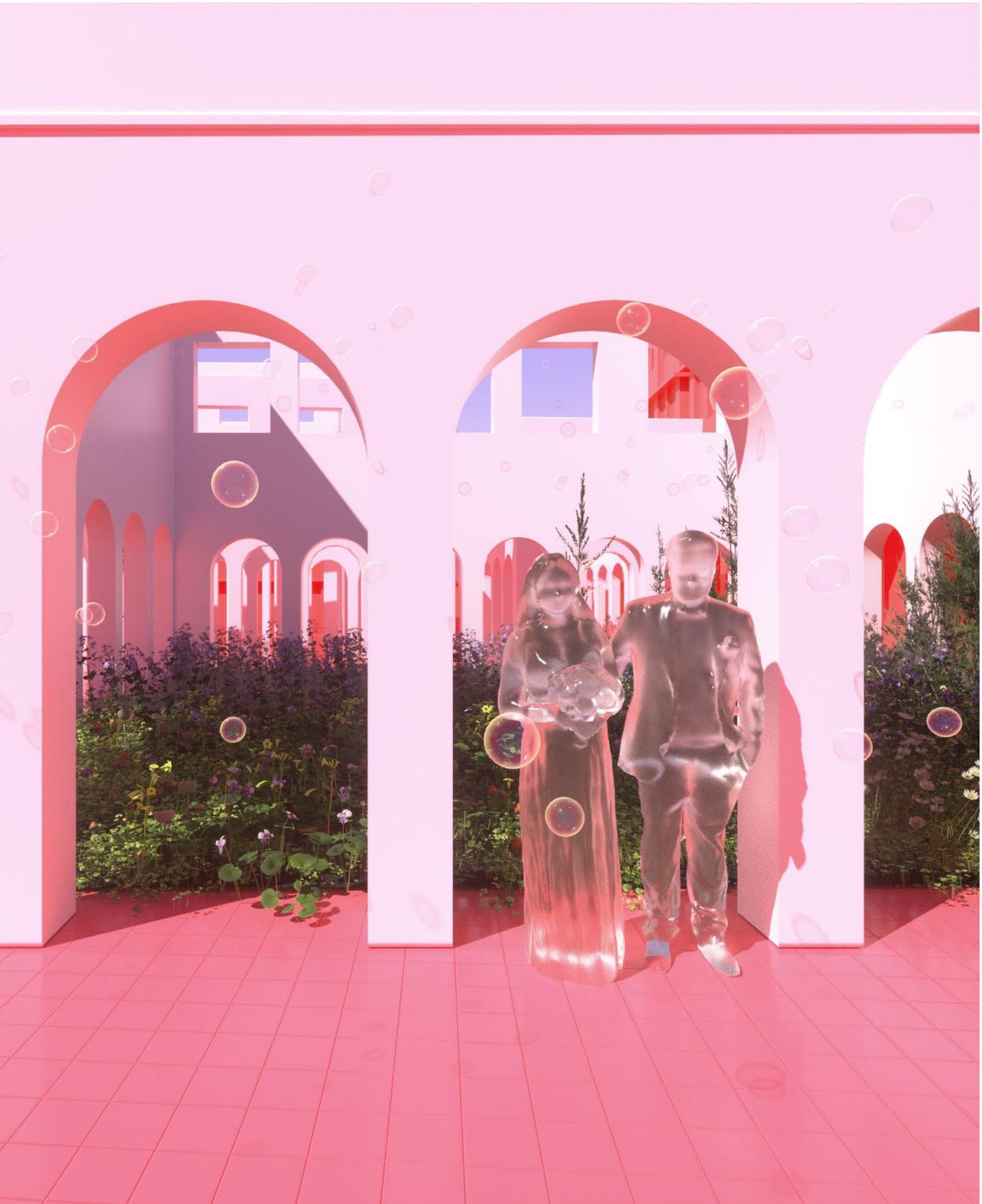
B. A Tilted Lens

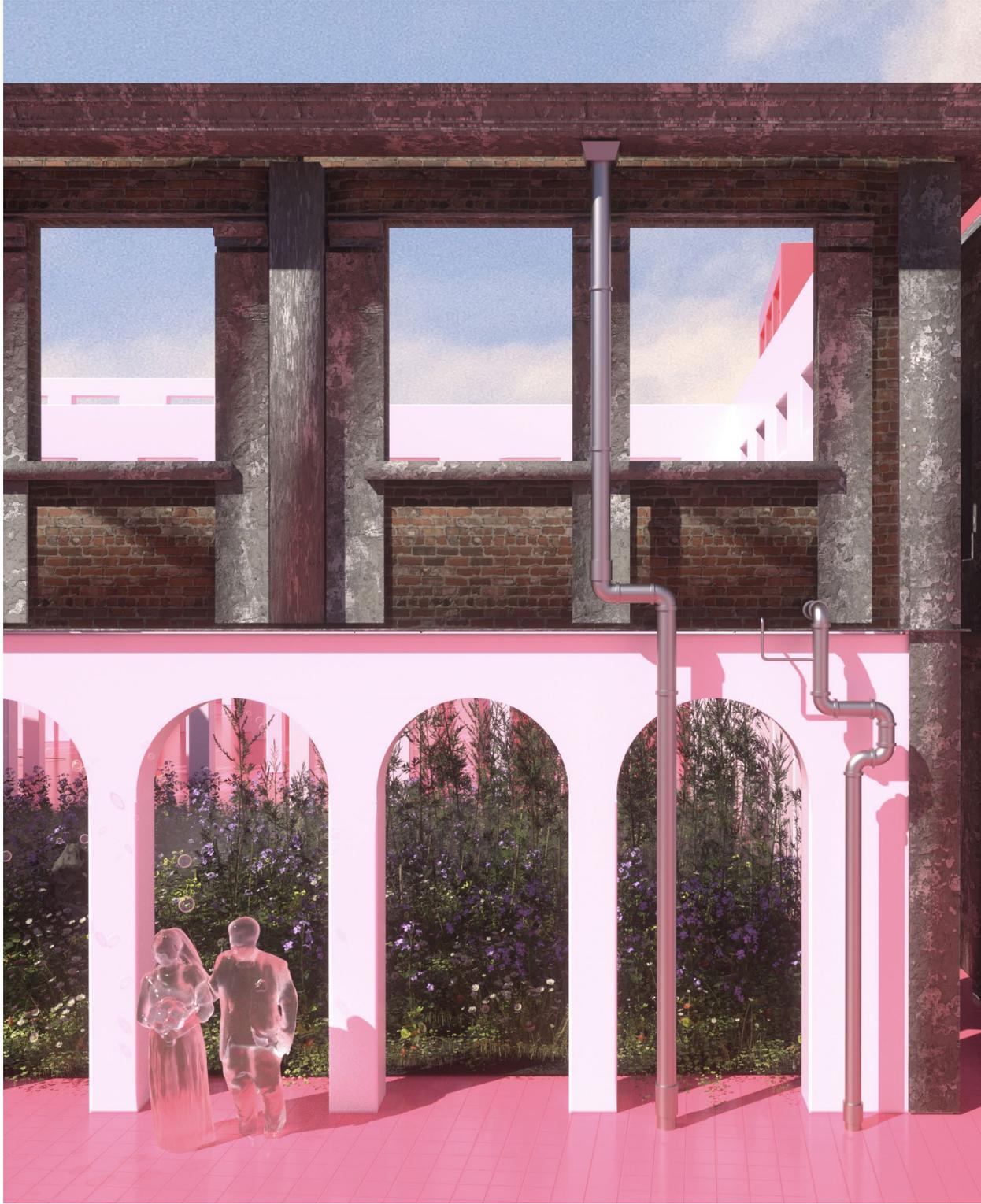


6. Garden

A. A Photographer's Lens







6. Merry-go-round

B. A Tilted Lens





Thesis Presentation, Image © Matthew Ledwidge



Thesis Presentation, Image © Carol-Anne Roddrigues



Thesis Presentation, Image © Feiyue Chen



Thesis Presentation, Image © Feiyue Chen

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