

Redescribing the Periphery

Oliver Forrest Frayne
Bachelor of Environmental Studies, BES in Planning, Honours Co-op
University of Waterloo, 2017

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Committee:
Tijana Vujosevic (Chair)
Joash Gambarage
Bella Knemeyer

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“At the limit, a “human’s specificity” is not to belong to any particular place, since this human, which is a compound of other living beings and other species, belongs to all places together.”¹

Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*

¹ Achille, Mbembe. “Ethics of the passerby,” in *Necropolitics* (Durham: Duke University Press), 2019, 187.

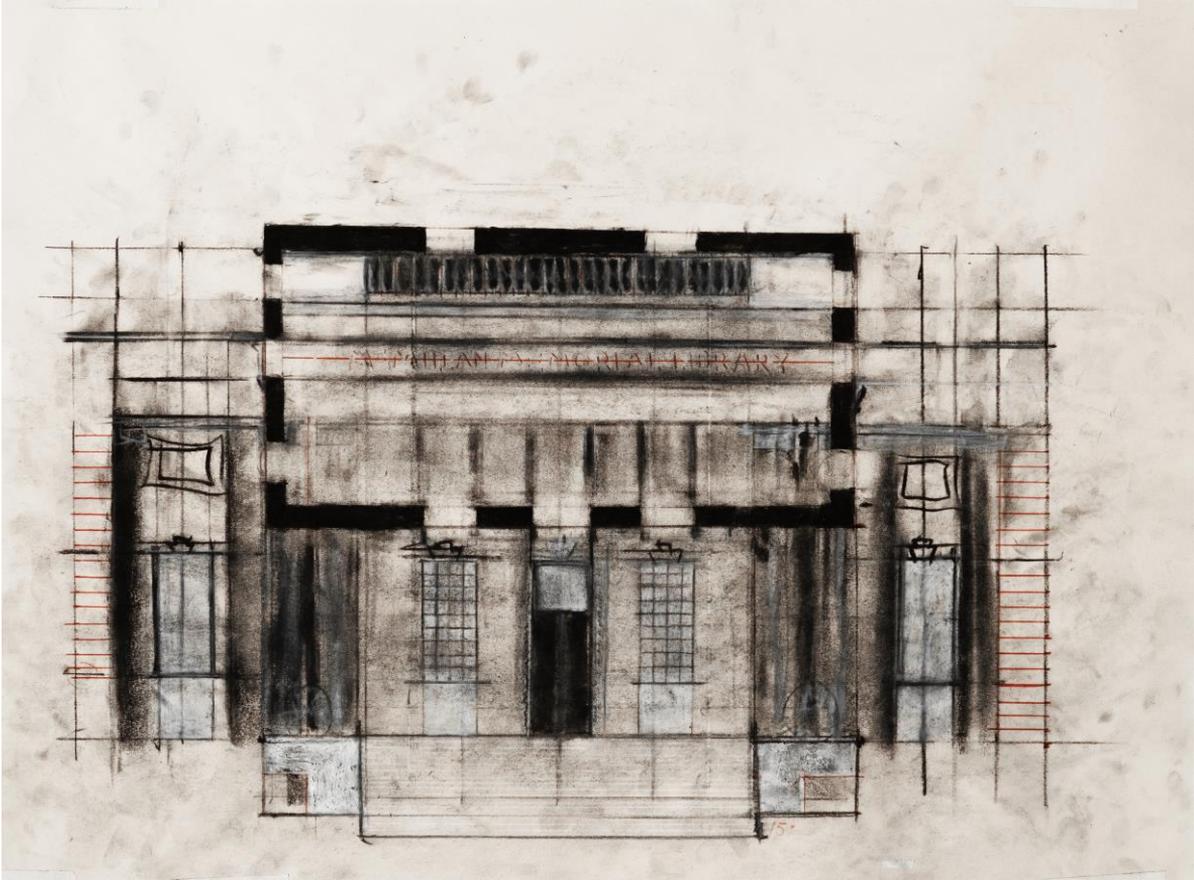


Figure 1: Understanding the public face of the McMillan Memorial Library, Nairobi, Kenya. Charcoal, red watercolour pencil, whiteout tape on newsprint. Drawing by author, 2020.

“We writers and scholars from all regions of Africa gathered in Asmara, Eritrea, from January 11 to 17, 2000, at the conference titled Against All Odds: African Languages and Literatures into the 21st Century. This is the first conference on African languages and literatures ever to be held on African soil, with participants from east, west, north, Southern Africa and from the diaspora and by writers and scholars from around the world. We examined the state of African languages in literature, scholarship, publishing, education, and administration in Africa and throughout the world. We celebrated the vitality of African languages and literatures and affirmed their potential. We noted with pride that despite all the odds against them, African languages as vehicles of communication and knowledge survive and have a written continuity of thousands of years. Colonialism created some of the most serious obstacles against African languages and literatures. We noted with concern the fact that these colonial obstacles still haunt independent Africa and continue to block the mind of the continent. We identified a profound incongruity in colonial languages speaking for the continent. At the start of a new century and millennium, Africa must firmly reject this incongruity and affirm a new beginning by returning to its languages and heritage.”²

² “The Asmara Declaration on African Languages and Literatures,” University of Pennsylvania African Studies Center, January 2000, https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Govern_Political/asmrlit.html

Abstract

African writers and academics ushered in the 21st century with a mandate for the new millennium: wholeheartedly embrace the languages of the continent to overcome the psychic, social, economic, and environmental dehumanization inflicted by Western – primarily European – imperialists. The Asmara Declaration was a reset for the continent, a proclamation to embrace the multitude of African languages, to rearticulate Africa's relationship with world history on Africa's terms.

Twenty years later, this thesis, backgrounded by the rapid urbanization of Africa's metropolises, explores the legacy of colonial architecture of the former British Empire as entangled in the ongoing challenges of polyglossic public space. Within this context, I ask how can architecture destabilize master-narratives that subsume the making, expression, and collection of stories?

I begin with a brief exploration into the master-narrative³ of a former colonial library in central Nairobi, framing the discussion through general core-periphery binaries. As framed by contemporary decolonial discourse of AbdouMalik Simone, Edgar Pieterse, Achille Mbembe, and Michel Foucault, the interrogation of these colonial binaries presents an opportunity to examine the continuation of these hierarchies of power in the modern African urban context. The assemblage of historical documentary material as pertaining to the library's ideological and architectural agendas pokes holes in the seemingly dichotomous metropole-colony relationship, calling into question how the library is defined looking to its future. I then follow with a section on the interlinks of memory, language, and identity through the work of one of Kenya's

³ Edward Said, "Permission to Narrate," in *The Selected Works of Edward Said, 1966-2006* (ed. Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin). (New York: Vintage Books, 2019), 268.

preeminent authors, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and the writings of the late Kenyan author and journalist Binyavanga Wainaina. In the final section of the thesis, I explore the future of African libraries as an integral part of the sustainable development of African cities, as put forward by the African Library & Information Associations and Institutions (AfLIA). Throughout the thesis I return to the role of architecture in these complex, diverse, and challenging discourses, advocating for a form of knowledge-making assembled from a diverse range of academic research, historical documents, first hand accounts, modern African literature, and art. Engaging and troubleshooting at multiple scales of inquiry, I argue for a new architectural datum which destabilizes a hegemonic master-narrative in favour of linguistically diverse improvisations and socialities: making space for celebrated differentiation and common ground.

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Thesis Statement

This thesis positions a former colonial library as an architecturally transfigurable terminus in ongoing core-periphery relationships of power. This investigation into the architecture assembles disparate documentary material to understand how space can destabilize master-narratives that subsume the making, expression, and collection of stories. From this understanding, I argue that architecture can enable the improvisational resilience-building socialities and networks that are vital to our urban futures.

Note on Structure

This thesis is grouped in two ‘folders’: one, Graduate Project I, loosely the research phase; two, Graduate Project II, loosely a corresponding demonstrative design exploration. The majority of the thesis framework is formulated in Folder One, connecting lines of inquiry to a core-periphery research superstructure, establishing the research purpose and significance. Folder Two contains a concise description of the final thesis presentation and rationale. The design is intended as one of many possibilities, a proof of concept of research thinking. Both folders should be read together. Research and design are synthetic. The outcome is both a product of the methodology and the methodology itself.

Folder One

Introduction

Though Kenya gained independence from Britain in 1963, there is evidence of new poli-economic power transactions at play, and this is not a situation unique to Kenya. In East Africa high profile projects include Africa's first electrified cross-border railway between Addis Ababa and Djibouti⁴, The Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport Corridor (LAPSSET) deep water harbor port and coal plant⁵, the Kenya Standard Gauge Railway project, part of Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative⁶, and the tenuous transformation of Bagamoyo into one of Africa's largest ports, also part of China's Maritime Silk Road initiative⁷. Literature frames these relationships as transfigurations of the historic metropole-colony manipulation and subjugation, a neocolonial enterprise with new cores yet same peripheries.⁸ With the intense urbanization of African metropolises already in motion, this thesis revisits the residual colonial architecture as sites of potential transformation enabling improvisational and resilience-building socialities and networks. This research paper hypothesizes that imperial debris⁹ is an opportune venue for a destabilization of power imbalances that appear to persist between Africa and various global state-sponsored agencies. The library as an architectural public anchor sits at a nexus of political, socio-economic, and cultural discussions and agendas. It is also a space that traditionally houses works of writing and languages, expression of identity and memory and, inversely, the control and amnesia of both. This research

⁴ Ismail Einashe. "Letter from Africa: 'I gave up on catching the train in Ethiopia'". BBC News, September 8, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-49580863>

⁵ Dana Ullman, "When Coal Comes to Paradise." Foreign Policy. June 9, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/06/09/when-coal-came-to-paradise-china-coal-kenya-lamu-pollution-africa-chinese-industry-bri/>

⁶ David Herbling and Dandan Li. "China's built a road to nowhere in Kenya". Bloomberg, July 18, 2019, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2019-07-19/china-s-belt-and-road-leaves-kenya-with-a-railroad-to-nowhere>

⁷ Nick Van Mead. "China in Africa: win-win development, or new colonialism?". The Guardian, 31 July, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2018/jul/31/china-in-africa-win-win-development-or-a-new-colonialism>

⁸ Dambisa Moyo, "Dead Aid: Why Aid Is Not Working and How There Is a Better Way for Africa," (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009).

⁹ Ann Laura Stoler, *Imperial Debris: On Ruins and Ruination* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

therefore examines architecture of power as relating to language, identity, and memory, connecting the library into a broader framework of new core-periphery relationships.

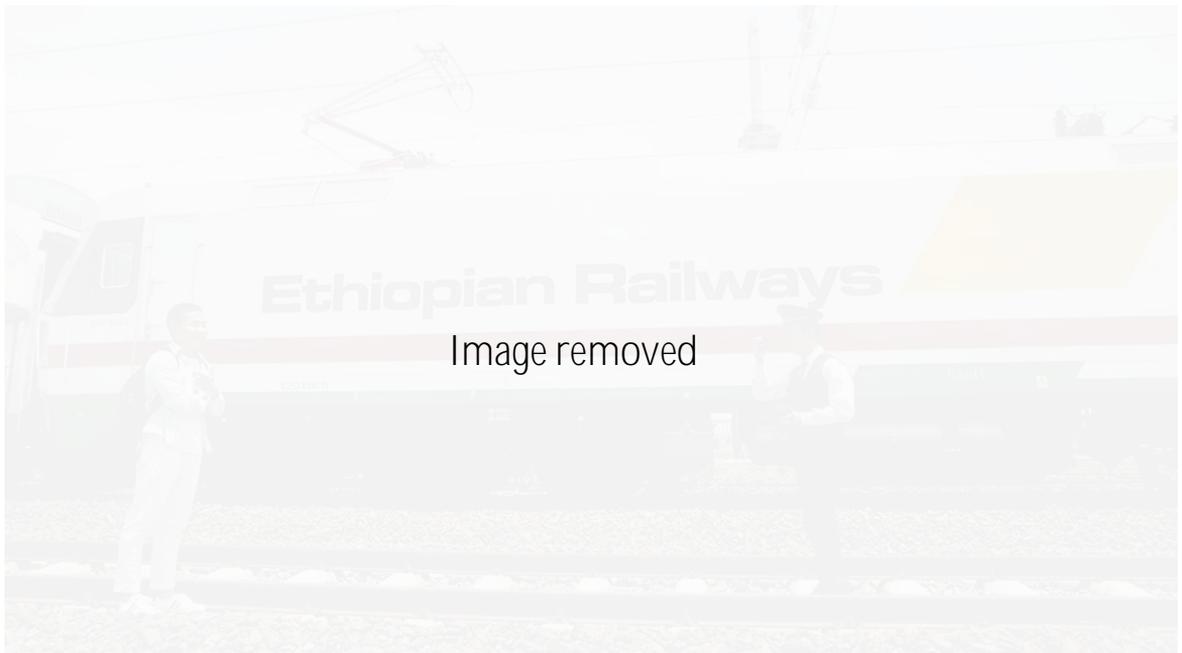


Figure 2: New Ethiopia-Djibouti standard gauge railway engine. Photograph by Zacharias Abubeker, AFP.

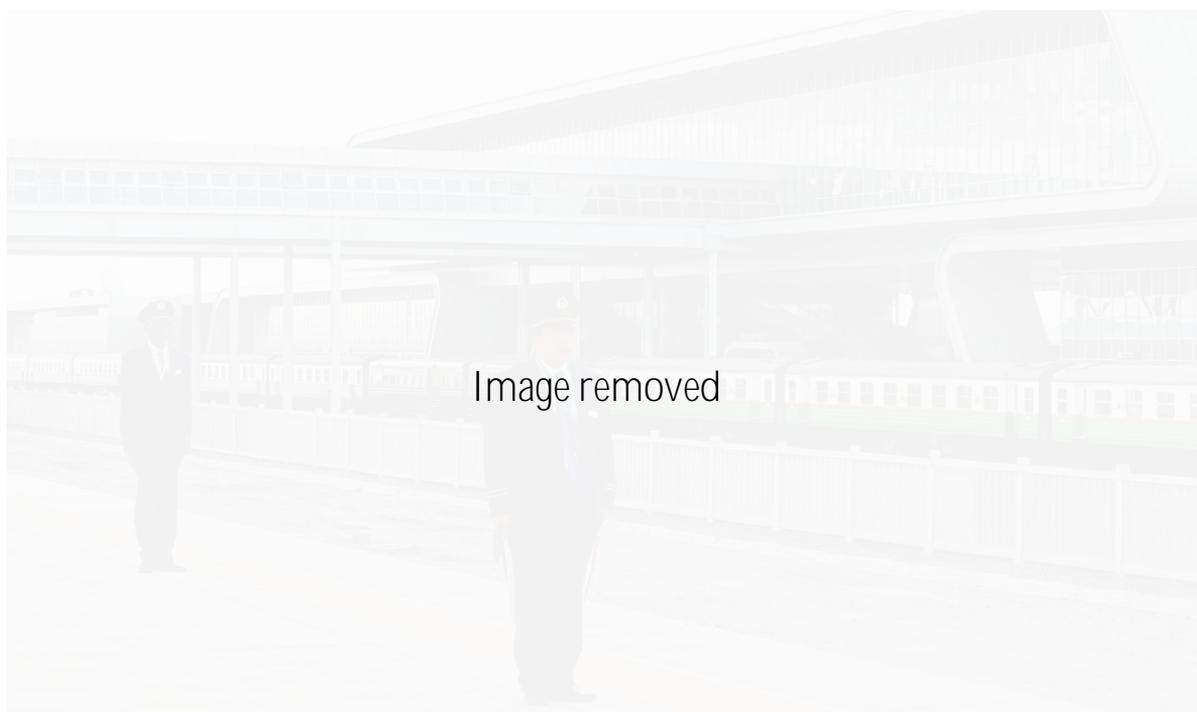


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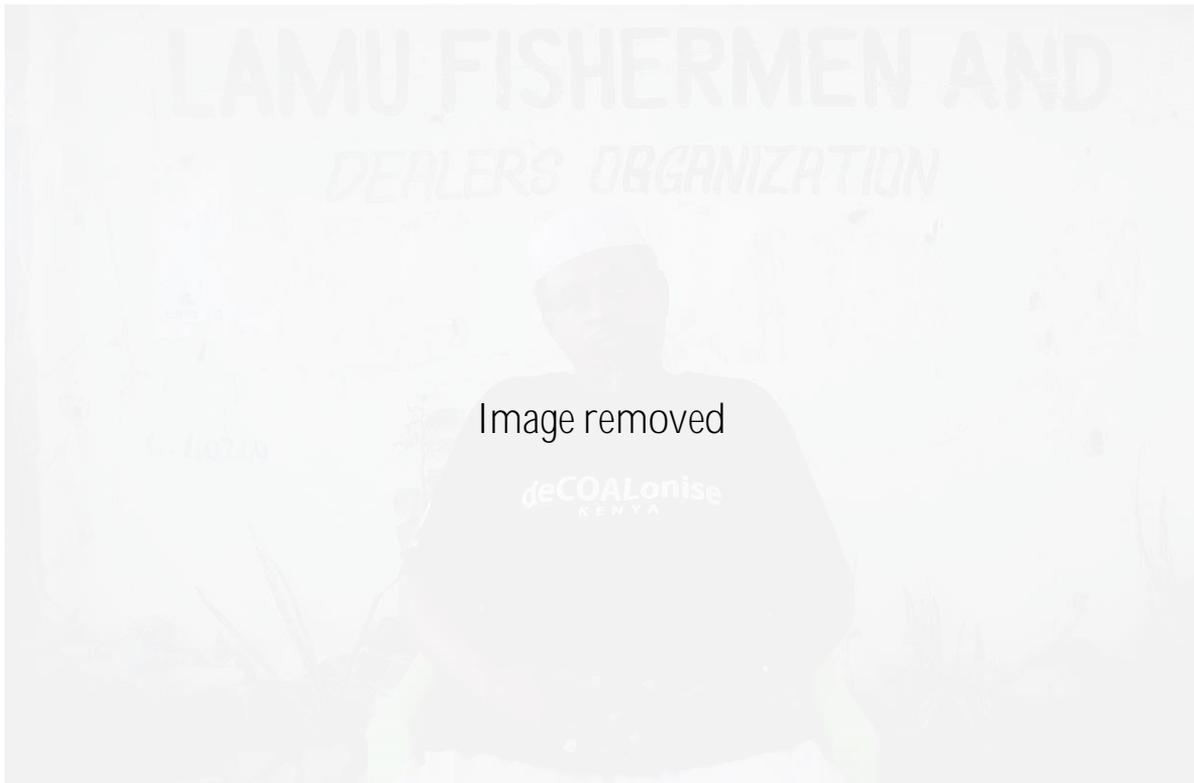


Figure 4: Mohamed Ali, chairman of the Lamu Beach Management Unit, photographed on Nov. 15, 2017, was part of a lawsuit brought by local fishermen against the coal project, claiming cultural and economic damages to their fishing rights. In April 2018, they won the lawsuit and more than \$17 million in compensation. Photograph by Dana Ullman for Foreign Policy.

SIGNPOSTING

Who

A thesis for anyone who desires to move beyond a surface reading of the world, anyone interested in the multiplicity of stories that exist in a given space and/or body.

What

The thesis centers a residual colonial product at the core of a prototypical experiment into the ideological, socio-cultural flows and exchanges that shape architecture. Inscribing stories and their telling into an architectural transformation. Inscribing socio-cultural latencies into an ideological artifact of colonial master-narrative.

How

Through archival assemblage multithread storytelling is foregrounded in a split screen reading and experience of a colonial master-narrative. The destabilization of a static given reveals and legitimizes the improvisational transactions and rhythms already in motion.

Where

The McMillan Memorial Library in Nairobi, Kenya, located in the Central Business District, serves as a proxy through which bigger questions are asked. It is the hope of the thesis that these questions prompt questioning of architecture, cities, spaces, stories, of anywhere not our apparently our own, revealing latent commonalities and affinities as opposed to driving division and othering.

Why

With the increasing urbanization of African metropolises, like Nairobi, former colonial library spaces are hotbeds for the debate around access to information and literacy and in turn an important aspect of development. The former colonial library is a spatio-temporal convergence of new identities, ideas, movement, and the architectural residue of Eurocentric colonial ideologies.

The thesis process is a reflexive endeavour, one in which I come to learn more about the world and in so doing learn more about myself. It is valuable and necessary to give some of myself to the process and to the subject matter I am investigating. This is not necessarily comfortable nor an easy task but, in a thesis searching for common ground and collaborating to shape a better world, how can my own identities not be prefaced? I, like many of my fellow citizens, am multiple identities. As celebrated Kenyan author and journalist Binyavanga Wainaina wrote in his short story “Discovering Home”,

“There is nothing wrong about being what you are not in Kenya – just be it successfully. Almost every Kenyan joke is about somebody who thought they had mastered a new persona and ended up ridiculous. For us, life is about having a fluid disposition. You can have as many as you want.”¹⁰

My position in and outlook on the world is an accumulation of encounters, stories, memories, and retellings: a set of relationalities both tangible and intangible. I have made a simple diagram tracing where I have considered home at various points in my life. South African and British through my parents, American according to my birth certificate, and Canadian through naturalization, my upbringing was very much a pattern of relocation across the Atlantic. My lived experiences of South Africa, Namibia, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Mozambique are always present and likely it is their presence that constitute a semblance of rootedness for me. These lived experiences also continue to press me to inquire about the world beyond my immediate surrounds and first readings. This is the motivation for undertaking a thesis exploration that asks

¹⁰ Binyavanga Wainaina. “Discovering Home”, in *Twenty Years of the Caine Prize for African Writing* (Northampton: Interlink, 2020), 66.

questions of an architecture that is part of stories of global exchange and flows of ideology.

I would also like to acknowledge that the thesis process is a privilege and an opportunity to contribute to making the world a better place for everything in it. This thesis ultimately stems from questions about my own position in the world, driven by memories and stories I have learnt throughout my life thus far. As such, this thesis does not attempt to posit finite solutions. Rather it aims to disrupt dominant narrative thinking and insert potential for expression of stories overwritten, erased, dislocated, and yet to be told.

Over the term I engaged with improvised writing as a method of exploring my own identity as related to this thesis. I have included some of this writing (see Figures 6-9), some of which is intentionally disorienting, obfuscating my own mother tongue (English). In so doing I elicit multiple readings of the writing, exploring incompleteness, a critical take on the familiar through narrative prose. These memories are personal and, as a citizen of two worlds, situate my own posture to redescribing the periphery.

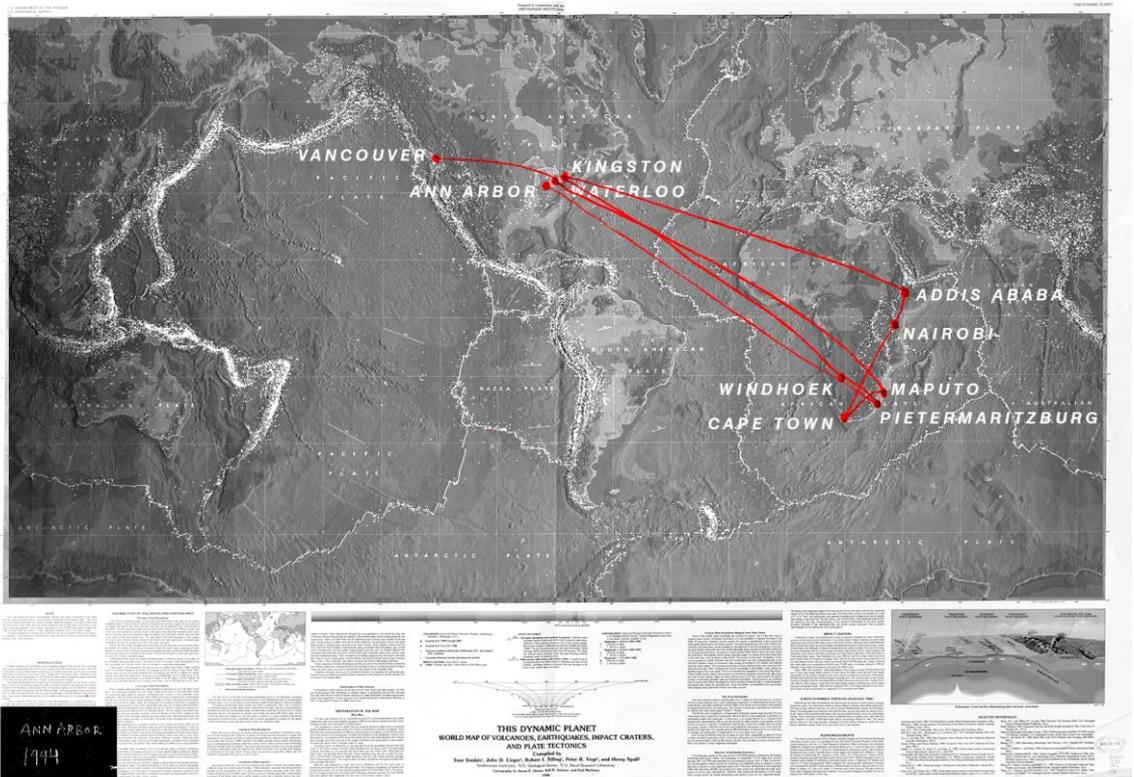


Figure 5: Relocation of the author, drawn over 1994 tectonic world map, 2020.

A y-fu-hg b-ty at a c-f-f-fusi-hg
time i-h his life,

A time

-f critical thi-hki-hg,

Aski-hg questi-h-hs,

F-f-rmi-hg -f-pi-hi-h-hs

He makes his -yay -f-ver t-f a

Black bicycle

A -f-the size fits all -y-f-rkh-f-rse

The kicksta-hd d-f-ny-h heavy duty

-h-f-ny Imm-f-vable

It has a j-f-b t-f d-f

Impr-f-vised H-f-cus, a ge-h-er-a-t-f-r, a-h

attract-f-r p-f-i-h-t

At the back, t-f the right,

A b-f-ny

-f s-f-rts

The ki-hd -y-e -y-ill take ac-f-f-ss the

b-f-rder,

Ma-pu-t-f - -f-elspruit - Ma-pu-t-f

Each m-f-f-hth, every m-f-f-hth

-f-r a vari-a-ti-h-h -f-h G-f-g-f-f's

padk-f-s b-f-ny,

A -f-necessity

Figure 6: Part I Loose iambic memory, International School of Kenya 2007. Drawing by author, 2020.

But this is — air-bi — the
— amib Desert

Curious, but — inquisitive
Distance
doesn't matter,
The ice creams are melting
I deliberate

Bahahaha, — raga,
Doesn't matter, they taste the same,
And doesn't cost a lot
I have a couple of — in my
pocket

There's a queue,
For the — soft serve machine
Vahilla, chocolate,
A —,
That's the stuff
The apparatus requires
Electricity
For —
Its motor buzzes loudly
An electricity —
— from the periphery,
Uhh —

Figure 7: Part II Loose iambic memory, International School of Kenya 2007. Drawing by author, 2020.

Barely a-th +perat+r

Su+h h+t, black bicycle,

Artificial flav+urs

C+agulate,

Ve+hd+r +verH+ked by the

Lu+hch rush P+lite decli+hati+H,

It's +h+ +r+blem, he'll pr+bably be
back

T+M+r+r+M Meri+gue like sti+ks

i+h my thr+at,

Rattli+g c+i+hs, cli+hk

He's still there

They H+g f+r shade +r t+ be

ete+h

Figure 8: Part III Loose iambic memory, International School of Kenya 2007. Drawing by author, 2020.

DICTIONARY OF A CHILD

THULA

I have never written it down before,
Nor has it been explicitly defined
To me. But I understand it.
A Zulu word to me:
Hush, quieten down,
Or Enough!
Never spoken in anger.
It was gentle, soothing.
Similar to when I think
Of calendula
But earthier, older.
Made of minerals,
But also unlatched from gravity.
Cold wispy cirrus clouds in need of holding.
A difficult thing at the best of times
But I've never been a parent.
Thula.

2

Figure 9: Dictionary of a child, by author. An exercise in free poetry of the meaning significant non-English words in my life. An exploration of my own identity through language. Words and their description according to an individual's memory.

The overarching story of the McMillan Memorial Library is fairly straightforward; the story that dominates news articles, expositions, and descriptions of the library. Established by Lady Lucie McMillan after the death of her husband Lord William Northrup McMillan, the library was opened in 1931. It was a whites-only library, located on today's Banda Street in the Nairobi Central Business District. Around the time of Kenya's independence from the United Kingdom some 30 years later, the library was opened to all. Since then, the library has slowly fallen into a state of dereliction, a result of funding difficulties and stretched resources. Today, the library is being restored by Book Bunk, a trust founded by two Kenyan women, Wanjiru Koinange and Angela Wachuka, an author and highly regarded publisher respectively.

Digging further, one learns that the McMillan Library was a reference library that acted as the lynchpin depot for a network of circulating libraries in East Africa, part of the Carnegie library scheme.¹¹ The McMillan Library sits at a curious confluence of correspondence of ideologies and financial soliciting, a colonial worldview and identifying of the colonial periphery deeply embedded in the story of its conception and operation. The neoclassical structure that sits in the Central Business District today is a product of this history. The library pre-independence, for example, was not free from fiscal challenges, nor did the internal politics of library administration run smoothly¹². Crucially, through diving into the past of the building, one learns that the relationship between the library as peripheral architecture of the British colonial and the core metropolitan administrative apparatus was not binary. Rather, **investigation of the library's history** reveals a multi-threaded web of

¹¹ Anthony, Olden. *Libraries in Africa: Pioneers, Policies, Problems* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 1995).

¹² *Ibid.*

transnational relationships: the colonial story has many accomplices and intriguing adjacencies and overlaps.

In its present state, many transnational actors still orbit the library, and Book Bunk is actively engaging with a diverse body of stakeholders. These include the British Council, Goethe Institut, Dubai Cares, Sigrid Rausing Trust and the Nairobi City Council, The Textbook Centre, and the National Bank of Kenya.¹³ Evidently, the McMillan Library is alive, and the conversations around this library and its future are active. Through an architectural lens I am interested in the opportunities that lie in this former colonial public building. In 2015, Wanjiru Koinange, one of the Book Bunk founders, wrote of the McMillan Memorial Library, “**The thing is, Nairobi has changed. The city has adjusted itself in the dynamic way that urban centres all do. Unfortunately, the city moved on and forgot to take McMillan with it.**”¹⁴

By reading through documents surrounding the McMillan Memorial Library and the future for libraries in Africa more generally, I position the colonial architecture of the library at the heart of discussions around the future development of Africa’s major cities.

¹³ “We Build Libraries – Home Page”. Book Bunk Trust, <https://www.bookbunk.org/>

¹⁴ Wanjiru Koinange. “Lady McMillan, the Library: The past, present and future of Nairobi’s McMillan Memorial Library”. *Commonwealth Writers*, 2015, <https://www.commonwealthwriters.org/lady-mcmillan-the-library/>



Figure 10: McMillan Memorial Library, Nairobi, East African Protectorate, 1936. From “Catalogue of photographs & lantern slides (1936)”, East Africa copyright photos by G. Eric Matson, American Colony Photo Dept. Monotone, Finlay colour, and Infra red photos, taken on a flight with Imperial Airways on a World Trunk route following the Nile from the Delta to the Victoria Nile and the Victoria Lake. Retrieved from Library of Congress.



Figure 11: McMillan Memorial Library, 2018, with street signage, people, and Land Cruiser in the foreground. From Google Earth by author, 2020.



Figure 12: Banda St looking east, library is off camera left. Taken 2018, from Google Earth by author, 2020.



Figure 13: Elevation, unrolled - Al Yusra Nanak Block. Drawn by author, 2020.



Figure 14: Looking across Kenyatta Ave, towards the Stanbic Bank Building. Taken 2018, from Google Earth by author, 2020.



Figure 15: Elevation, unrolled - Bank of India Mojo's. Drawn by author, 2020.



Figure 16: Banda St, in front of Jamia Mosque, **McMillan's neighbour**. Looking west. Taken 2018, from Google Earth by author, 2020.

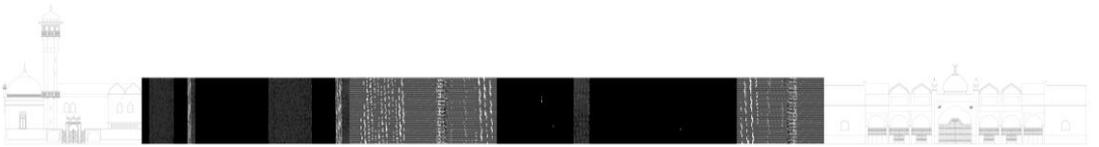


Figure 17: Elevation, unrolled - Jamia Mosque Block. Drawn by author, 2020.

Part I: Making stories

Underpinning this thesis is an exploration into the formation of stories and knowledge of space. I examine the positioning of the McMillan Memorial Library, as a product of colonial ideology, in the genealogy of British-Kenyan core-periphery flows and exchanges. My research has found that the library is triangulated between numerous transnational flows, since its formation as a whites-only library to **Book Bunk's** present-day renaissance. This section situates the library as one of the many European colonial projects that were backdated metropolitan architectural remixes of ideological dominance that proliferated the subjugated African continent. What is the story of this space that is told: what are the insistences, the protestations, the stories deliberately excluded? In assembling the documents that relate to the McMillan Memorial Library, what fragmented knowledge of the space emerges and how is architecture inscribed with these new knowledges?

CORE-PERIPHERY THEORY

Sociologist and economic historian Immanuel Wallerstein's *core-periphery* theory parses a world economy into three structural positions. The *core-periphery* is one form of identifying the relationship between the Global North (core) and Global South (periphery) connected by a bridge or flow (the semi-periphery) which is "essential to the smooth running of the world economy."¹⁵ Within the context of this thesis, the core-periphery relationship begins in earnest in Wallerstein's stage three of the world-market economy – industrial capitalist production of the mid-18th century which kicked off in Britain and quickly encompassed most of the globe in search of raw materials.¹⁶ At the end of the 19th century the African periphery is divided between major European core

¹⁵ Immanuel, Wallerstein. "The rise and future demise of the world capitalist system: concepts for comparative analysis", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 16, no. 4 (1974), 387-415.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 310.

powers, in the ‘Scramble for Africa’ at the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885. Newly drawn territories became European colonies, the periphery an ideological “playground for outsiders, its mineral wealth as a resource for the outside world not for Africans and its fate as a matter not to be left to Africans.”¹⁷ Conceptually, I relate Wallerstein’s core-periphery to Georg Simmel’s *bridge* from his essay “Bridge and Door”¹⁸.

Broadly, Simmel’s discussion of ‘separate’ presupposes a relationship, but in defining a connectedness one distinguishes the differences and separation, spatially as well as ontologically.¹⁹ The core and the periphery are intimately bound in a hierarchical relationship of power, which this thesis acknowledges. The periphery is also therefore separated, as a world map will illustrate. This thesis explores the essential reciprocal nature between the core and the periphery, defined by its connectedness.

Colonial architecture can be conceptualized as one of the termini or endpoints of Simmel’s bridge. Ideologies give form to and find a footing in their respective architecture in the periphery, a channel through which ideologies of the metropole can propagate. In this way, the residual architecture that this thesis examines is a tool of the oppressor but also the fabricated outcome, both the press and the propaganda, not clandestine but full frontal. Investigating the history of the colonial architectural projects reveals interesting and sometimes surprising global flows and exchanges.²⁰ Figure 18 begins to track the McMillan Memorial Library’s appearances in events, ideologies, financial tensions. This tabulation reads between relationships of relationships and stories of the core-periphery emerge from a new form of documentary material. An assemblage of stories is generated, operating at various scales, from

¹⁷ Patrick, Gathara. “Berlin 1884: Remembering the conference that divided Africa”, *Al Jazeera* online, November 15, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2019/11/15/berlin-1884-remembering-the-conference-that-divided-africa/>

¹⁸ Georg Simmel. “Bridge and Door”, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 11, (1994), 5-10.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Sarah Longair, “Visions of the Global: the Classical and the Eclectic in Colonial East African Architecture”, *Les Cahiers d’Afrique de l’Est / The East African Review*, 51 (2016).

the transnational to the dimensions of a writing pad. New links are made visible through such a document, and the library begins to take on fluid identities. These associative identities operate through the connection to **other spaces, or to continue Simmel's bridge metaphor**, in reciprocity with the other terminus. The architecture of the periphery exists between multiple spaces and times, and the documentary material is therefore a spatio-temporal assemblage. This thesis posits that this is the expansion of the terms by which we come to define the residual architecture, new names, and words, which, as demonstrated, fill in gaps and expand an understanding of a built space. The challenge of this thesis is to make this fluid, liminal reciprocity architectural – at the behest of existing documentary materials and interpretations. Incompleteness, bias, subjectivity, are inherent in this process, but the radiative incorporations of matrices of timelines, details, fragments, censorship, translations, non-translations is a multi-thread series of evolving and resolving pictures, always accepting of new inputs.



Figure 19: Title page of *Le Frondeur*, a Belgian satirical journal with a cartoon by François Maréchal, depicting European sovereigns having a feast with Congo as main course. This refers to the Berlin Conference (also named Congo Conference). The cartoon presents Leopold II prominently in the midst with the Russian and German sovereigns on his sides. There is no signature, but the author has been identified by Frédéric Paques: *Avant Hergé. Étude des premières apparitions de bande dessinée en Belgique francophone (1830–1914)*, pp. 138, 328.

A NEW WORLD.

There is no movement in our day more interesting or significant than that which draws the eyes of the nations toward Africa. Annexation and colonization are rapidly giving permanent political relations to all parts of the land and to all its inhabitants. Great trading companies have taken their posts on every unoccupied coast, on nearly every available river course, and are planting their factories far inland, to reach and develop the unknown resources of this mighty territory. Scientific forces are equally active and energetic. Exploration is going forward most systematically and persistently from many points on the eastern, western and southern shores; national societies and private corporations are thus engaged in tracing out physical features and accurately locating peoples, cities and towns, and the Christian world is alert in founding missionary stations among almost every tribe of the wonderful Continent.

GOVERNMENTAL.

A curious feature of the times is the disposition of the chief powers of Europe to "annex" African territory. Great Britain and Germany seem anxious to compete with each other in unfurling "protection" flags on the shores of the "Dark Continent."

A decree announcing that the British government had assumed the protectorate over the country lying north of Cape Colony—bounded on the north by the parallel of latitude 22 deg. south, on the west by 20 deg. east longitude, and on the east by the border line of the Transvaal territory—marks a new era in the history of South Africa. A more important order is that "the British protectorate of the Niger district comprises the territories on the line of coast between the British protectorate of Lagos and the right or western river bank of the mouth of the Rio del Rey. It further comprises the territories on both banks of the river Binue from the confluence up to and including Ibi." It will thus be seen that the whole of the Niger mouths are now under British protection, and that in the south the British possessions march with those of Germany. Ibi is about 230 miles up the Binue from its confluence with the Niger.

Figure 20: A New World, Sixth annual paper on Africa prepared by Mr. William Coppinger, secretary of the American Colonization Society, and published in the Baltimore Sun on November 28, 1885. Retrieved from Library of Congress.

This thesis looks to introduce a “ground rhythm” into the residual colonial architecture, a constant to which one can always return. Language and improvisational socialities work cut across the ground rhythm, sometimes dissonant, out of time, offbeat, sometimes meeting up, a constructive interference.

This section considers a musical structure in the breakdown of stories and their assemblage; a bassline (also beat) keeping time and providing the underpinning root note progression, with melodies, counter-rhythms, and improvised solos on top. In this metaphor, what is the role of the colonial architecture? Physically, it provides amplification, modulation, compression, expansion. This constant, is *potential*: “If the act is ‘now’, the potential is ‘always’: the former is evanescent, the latter is permanent.”²¹

Potential, this thesis argues, resides in the documentary materials of place, that is, the stories of space. From the process of knowledge-making of space, potential is revealed or made evident. These encompass a wide variety of document types and various scales and can be produced by various individuals. This position raises important questions therefore around subjectivity, cross-reading, and translation, or the interpretation and exchange of stories. What it means to be ‘grounded’ is also important to explore.

Returning to musical analogy, Wynton Marsalis expounds on music (specifically jazz) as a metaphor for collaboration and the balance between the individual and the collective. His title for his multi-part series on this topic is revealingly entitled: “Hidden in Plain View:

²¹ Paolo Virno. *Déjà Vu and the End of History*. (London: Verso, 2015), 70.

Meanings in American Music”. In “XIII. The Meaning of Swing”²² he states:

“We negotiate. The act of swinging is a metaphor for finding value in and nourishing common ground. To swing is to give individual interest less importance than the interests of the community...you choose not to have your way, so we can find our way...chasing the swing forces them to play together on every beat. The great rhythm sections teach us how to embrace the process of compromise, so that the only win is one that satisfies the deepest truths with absolute integrity...when a band is swinging a group feels the motion and is inspired to chase the direction of deepest coordination. Are becomes is...swing is a perfect moment of aggression and acceptance. It makes the most powerful seek communion with the weakest... Swing is about finding people and staying found.”²³

In “X: From the African 6:8 Rhythm to the American Shuffle”, Marsalis and the ensemble demonstrate two rhythms playing simultaneously on the drums: beat in two on the bass drum, and rhythm in six the cymbal, segueing into the American shuffle. A two-beat groove, the time of the human step, cut with a top rhythm syncing up intermittently. Simone speaks of the city, specifically those of the Global South, or even more precisely, the uninhabitable periphery, in similar terms:

“To endure conditions that require the rhythmic oscillations of contradictory orientations and needs, to navigate the relationships with those whose “surfaces” are always partial, always partly withdrawn, always proceeding in different

²² Wynton Marsalis. *Wynton at Harvard, Chapter 13: The Meaning of Swing*, Jazz at Lincoln Centre, 2017, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NmiRyRZDhQ0&list=RDxi27zn7YNFo&index=14>

²³ Wynton Marsalis. *Wynton at Harvard, Chapter 10: From the African 6:8 rhythm to the American shuffle*, Jazz at Lincoln Centre, 2017, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bkyOFkBAMdG>

directions simultaneously, amplifies that need for inscription. Or, they need at least the belief that inscription and legibility are possible."²⁴

This thesis attempts to understand or reveal these rhythms of endurance, or transactional relationalities, through an exemplar of residual colonial architecture of the so-called periphery. The thesis takes the position that the former colonial, but still present, architecture of the McMillan Memorial Library, remains, for the most part, unmoved in its recognition of these oscillations. A discussion of language, translation, interpretation, implied messaging, can be further read in Simone's "Improvised Lives" (2019). In "Ensemble Work" Simone writes about his early life in Freetown, Sierra Leone:

*"We lived in one of a series of apartments my mother's cousin had built for residents of nearby Congo Town, whose clapboard houses were beyond repair or who aspired to a more modern life beyond the patter of ghosts, heavy rains, constant rumors, and grueling local politics."*²⁵

As Sierra Leone moves closer to independence (from the British), Simone describes the jazz of Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane, music he has brought to West Africa from summer trips to Detroit, set to this ushering in of new Salonean era:

*"The summer of Salonean independence, I brought back Ornette Coleman's *The Shape of Jazz to Come*, which, along with Coltrane's *Giant Steps*, promised a sea change in music as eventful as the wave of new nations coming into being across West Africa. In Coleman's music there were no bars, no background. Melody wasn't overshadowed by harmony. Within the quartet –*

²⁴ AbdouMaliq Simone, *Improvised Lives*. (Cambridge: Polity, 2019), 31.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

Don Cherry on trumpet, Charlie Haden on bass, Billy Higgins on drums, there was a real democracy; each player could deliver the melody in his own configuration of rhythm and chord changes, make a claim to lead the way. As I mentioned earlier, Ornette would call this harmelodics, where the same notes were written in different clefs for the same or different instruments, thus modulating the sound. There didn't need to be an underpinning, a ground on which different ways of playing were based. You could play the game in your own way as long as you recognized the tune, as long as you charted out a path that everyone else could potentially follow – so, no disjuncture, antagonisms, just switches.”²⁶

From here, Simone recounts how he became a message runner of sorts for the neighborhood, a makeshift minister, ombudsman, bailiff, in which verbatim became embellished, emphasized, exaggerated, twisted, massaged, uncooperative, improvised but decipherable, the core remaining intact. These improvisations are a form of self-preservation, survival, insurance, a constant bargaining. These rhythms of push and pull, give and take, the balance of swinging socialities working in tandem with the built environment. Later, Simone further discusses these socialities of negotiation, in the context of the Haitian writings of Frankétienne, Jean-Claude Fignolé, and René Philoctète, founders of the literary movement *Spiralism*. In works such as Fignolé's *Les Possédés de la pleine lune* (1987) and *Aube tranquille* (1990), the residents of Les Abricots embody “the ongoing reiteration of events that could still go many different ways.”²⁷ The present is a collection or assemblage of potential readings and interpretations of multiple unresolved times.

²⁶ Ibid, 41.

²⁷ AbdouMaliq Simone, *Improvised Lives*. (Cambridge: Polity, 2019), 55.

I relate Simone's discussion on Spiralism and assemblage to the Foucauldian historical document. Foucault writes that history can no longer be thought of as continuous and that the document of history is no longer a reconstitution of an unbroken defining of positions of facts or events.²⁸ Rather, history is the disjointed organization and development of documentary material; reflexively, the construction of the document is a spontaneous or organized construction of history. The interrogation of how the document came to be concerns itself with ways of thinking and ways of making. Documentary material, as defined by Foucault, is, but not limited to, texts, maps, customs, traditions, techniques, laws, and architecture. This thesis takes the position that a building, as a documentary material, is not passive, but an active agent in the formation and influencing of world history epistemology, for good and bad; a world history taken to no longer be an unchallenged continuous serializing of facts, but a fractured individualized collection of materials that are "juxtaposed to one another, follow one another, overlap and intersect, without being able to reduce them to a linear schema".²⁹

Lisa Lowe, Samuel Knight Professor of American Studies and Professor of Ethnicity, Race, and Migration, Director of American Studies Graduate Studies at Yale University, uses similar language when describing the cross-referencing between the documentary material of the former British Empire, echoing Foucault's emphasis on relational differentiation. She consults and interrogates the papers of the British Colonial Office, Foreign Office, the Slave Trade and African Department, the War and Colonial Department, and the Records of the Treaty and Royal Letter Department and remarks:

²⁸ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), 7.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

“I notice the aporia in the archives, often belied by discrepant tone or insistent repetitions, and remark the rhetorical anomalies that obscure omissions, tensions, or outright illogic. While such reading materials deeply respect the primacy of material conditions, they often defy or disrupt accepted historical chronologies.”³⁰

This synthetic re-reading, an intimate reading, calls into question the widely propagated ideological underpinnings of the modern freedoms of liberalism in North America and Europe. This method of tracing and cross-examining genealogies of the ideologies of architecture is what I employ in this thesis, tracking the global and local prongs of the McMillan’s development from idea to built manifestation. As Lowe demonstrates in “The Intimacies of Four Continents”, what is captured in the documentary materials are as important as the absences revealed by such an interrogation.

Andreas Huyssen, professor of German and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, discusses in “Twilight Memories” the thread between remembrance of the past and the defining of the identities of the present and the future:

“Remembrance shapes our links to the past, and the ways we remember to define us in the present. As individuals and societies, we need the past to construct and anchor our identities and to nurture a vision of the future. In the wake of Freud and Nietzsche, however, we know how slippery and unreliable personal memory can be; always affected by forgetting and denial, repression and trauma, it, more often than not, serves as a need to rationalize and maintain power. But a society’s collective memory is no less

³⁰ Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 6.

*contingent, no less unstable, its shape by no means permanent. It is always subject to subtle and not so subtle reconstruction.*³¹

Architecture can be the spatial mechanism for this remembrance, and thus have an important role to play in acting as a mediator (at least) for discussions of a shared future. I argue that because of this the library is an opportune physical setting through which an individual is better empowered and equipped to contribute positive change for the benefit of the collective. The library operates in a literal and figurative sense in that it is a repository of written language – ink on paper or pixels on a screen – but also kitchen table, board room, *kinyozi* (barbershop), soap box – a space of discourse, debate, dissent, consensus. Thus far, much of the discussion around the future of the McMillan Memorial Library has been focused on the **cataloguing the ‘weeding’ of the existing collection** and with an eye on future acquisitions of material that better reflects the user group. However, this thesis takes the privileged opportunity to examine architectural potential that is latent in the existing residual colonial space aligning with the macrogoals of organizations such as the African Library & Information Associations and Institutions regarding the role of library infrastructure in the direction of development in **Africa’s urban centres**.

MULTISCALAR STORYTELLING

The genealogy of the McMillan Memorial Library exists at various scales, that is we can find traces of its presence at both a macrolevel and a microlevel. At the macrolevel, the library tells a story of ideologies, financial flows, transatlantic correspondences, and can even be read in relation to the repercussive change associated with megainfrastructure projects such as the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport

³¹ Andreas, Huyssen, “Chapter 12: Monuments and Holocaust Memory in a Media Age,” in *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*. (New York: Routledge, 1995), 249.

Corridor (LAPSSET) and the Thika Superhighway project between Nairobi and Thika, funded in part by the Export-Import Bank of China, itself subordinated to the State Council, the primary administrative apparatus of the Communist Party of China.³² The library's fiscal dependency on philanthropic organizations also has a global story, ever since its inception: from records of correspondence with the Carnegie Corporation of New York from 1927 to video messaging expressing the support of Sharjah UNESCO World Book Capital program³³ and Dubai Cares, the latter of which was founded in 2007 by Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates.³⁴ If McMillan Memorial is conceptualized as an anchor point or vessel through which these relationships find a footing in the architecture of the former colonial periphery, the library's story can reciprocally be understood in relation to the multiple other termini pulled into its associative orbit. This can be used to architecturally trace a genealogy of form and space, ideologies from which the library is a descendant. Through my research I have identified several examples of architecture which are distant forebears or more immediate members of the library's family tree. Other architecture is related to the library through programmatic affinity, physical adjacency, or some form of benefaction. In this way, the library sits at a confluence of relationships of relationships, imbued with a multiplicity of identities.

At a micro-scale, the library is a point in the city about which the lives of individuals converge, across space and time: from the memory of Northrup McMillan and Lucie McMillan in 1925; to trade unionist, founder of the Kenya African National Union (KANU) and statesman

³² "AfDB-Funded Thika Superhighway: A Masterpiece for East Africa "A National Pride" - President Mwai Kibaki", African Development Bank Group, November 12, 2012, <https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/afdb-funded-thika-superhighway-a-masterpiece-for-east-africa-a-national-pride-president-mwai-kibaki-9986>

³³ Porter Anderson, "Sharjah World Book Capital Program Backs Kenyan Library Restoration", Publishing Perspectives, 2019, <https://publishingperspectives.com/2019/12/sharjah-world-book-capital-program-backs-kenya-mcmillan-library-restoration/>

³⁴ "A Night at the Library", Book Bunk Trust, December 11, 2020. Vimeo video recording, private link.

Tom Mboya (assassinated at age 39, July 1969)³⁵; to Angela Wachuka and Wanjiru Koinange, founders of Book Bunk; to countless others, many unnamed. The library is revealed as a product of an emergent assemblage of stories: global core-periphery ideologies, collective oscillations of composition and refusal³⁶, and individual endeavours of persistence and endurance (for example the young girl selling bananas on the steps of the McMillan Library, or parking attendants using the portico for shade and storage of wheel clamps)³⁷. I contend that despite the McMillan Memorial Library sitting in central Nairobi as a monumental relic of colonial power, unchanged by the passage of time,³⁸ the prevalence of a master-narrative over other subsumed narratives, a theoretical transformation of its architecture is an opportunity to span all these stories, and those still to be told. An architectural transfiguration of the neoclassical Nairobi bluestone imperial residue³⁹ into a fluid space of storytelling.

³⁵ The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute. "Mboya, Thomas Joseph". Stanford University, n.d., <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/mboya-thomas-joseph>

³⁶ AbdouMaliq Simone, *Imvised Lives*. (Cambridge: Polity, 2019).

³⁷ Wanjiru Koinange, "Lady McMillan, the Library: The past, present and future of Nairobi's McMillan Memorial Library". *Commonwealth Writers*, 2015, <https://www.commonwealthwriters.org/lady-mcmillan-the-library/>

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Ann Laura Stoler, *Imperial Debris: On Ruins and Ruination* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).



Figure 21: Relational buildings, north to south. Drawing by author, digital, 2020.

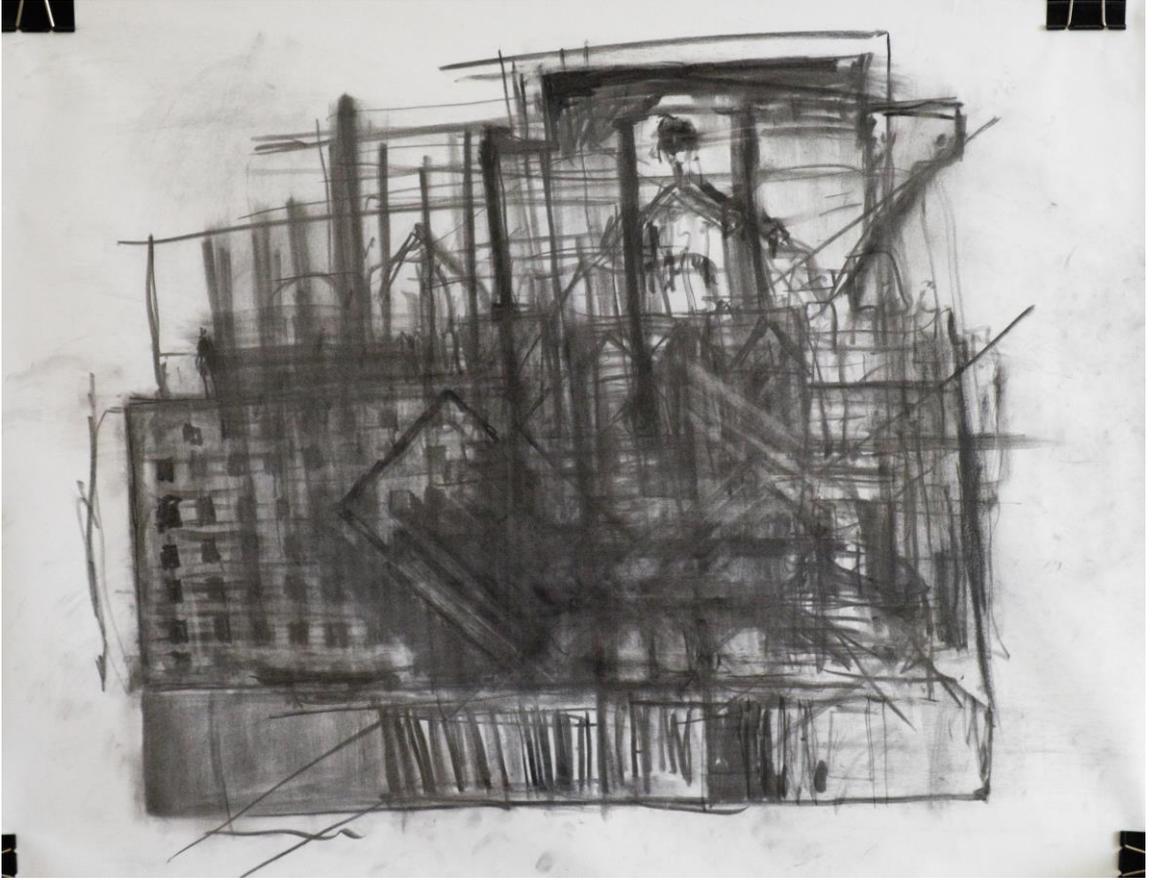


Figure 22: First reading of a video of the library, courtesy of Book Bunk. Charcoal drawing on vellum, video encounter of library space and people. Drawing by author, 2020.

Part of the initial conceptualization of the core-periphery relationship between the library as an ideological output of the Colonial Office was coupled the notion of what AbdouMaliq Simone, visiting professor of sociology at Goldsmiths College, University of London, terms as the *uninhabitable*, phraseology he credits to Katherine McKittrick, a leading Gender Studies professor at Queen's University with a research focus on black feminist geography. Simone defines the uninhabitable as the counter to the colonial metropole, "lands that embodied inferiority and, once appropriated and settled through colonization, were further specified as the exclusive purview of those whose emplacement was considered to be incongruous with humanness".⁴⁰ The core-periphery binary can also be framed as metropole-colony or the habitable-uninhabitable. It is in the grey zone between the habitable and uninhabitable that we find the McMillan Memorial Library; the library as an apparatus of empire sought to further accentuate the race-based laminations of colonial life in British Kenya.

In early correspondence with Dr. F.P. Keppel, president at the time of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, there is evidence of some support of a library open to all races, although it is not clear how widespread this support may have been. Carolyn Cox (also noted as Mrs. J. Raffles Cox), Mr. Orr, the Church of Scotland minister, and Mr. Shaw, the manager of the Standard Bank in Nairobi, expressed that "if Carnegie libraries were to be set up, every consideration must be given, not only to the European population, but also to the Asians and Africans."⁴¹ The Carnegie Corporation was swayed by the strong-willed Ailsa Turner, head of the East Africa Women's League. Ironically, this affiliate of the Society for Overseas Settlement of British Women was established to advocate the

⁴⁰ AbdouMaliq Simone, *Improvised Lives*. (Cambridge: Polity, 2019), 1.

⁴¹ Anthony Olden, *Libraries in Africa: Pioneers, Policies, Problems* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 1995), 33.

right to vote for women settlers in the British colonies. As a result, the first 30 years of the library's existence, its membership was reserved exclusively for white settlers.

The library delineated a space which was considered habitable, ideological walls that shut out the uninhabitable, a boundary that neutralized the creative improvisational acts of the 'they' for the sake of "security" and architectural talisman to reject the "sowing of the seeds of the downfall of the white races."⁴² The McMillan Memorial Library established a border, one that negated a possibility of a shared future and made a common humanity unconscionable.⁴³ I posit that the architecture of the library, as a public urban space with a important role to play in the future of the city, is in need of perforation or a transformation through which the resonances of 'the uninhabitable' can be discerned.⁴⁴ Through residual colonial architecture of the former periphery, I frame resonances – improvisational social transactions capable of innovation⁴⁵ – within spaces of polyglossic encounter and exchange, aligning with the Asmara Declaration and the development trajectory put forth by AfLIA.

⁴² Anthony Olden, *Libraries in Africa: Pioneers, Policies, Problems* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 1995), 34.

⁴³ Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 99.

⁴⁴ AbdouMaliq Simone and Edgar Pieterse, *New Urban Worlds: Inhabiting Dissonant Times*. (Cambridge: Polity, 2017).

⁴⁵ Ibid.

The Red Location Museum in the Eastern Cape is an example of public architecture that dissolves the delineation between its exterior and interior. Situated in the New Brighton township, Port Elizabeth, the Red Location Museum is an ongoing work by South African Noero Wolff Architects (since separated into Noero Architects and Wolff Architects) which challenges conventional museum design, specifically how it engages with history and memory. The site itself is one of multiple stories: barrack architecture of the Boer concentration camps became the dwellings of Port Elizabeth's first Black township, which then became a site of struggle against the Apartheid regime.⁴⁶ The museum threads together these periods of South African history, presenting the complicated multiplicity of South African identities and their struggles for freedom. Originally the winning scheme of a competition entry for a town center precinct, as part of a post-Apartheid effort to attract tourists and generate revenue, Noero Wolff's design operates in three ways: 1. Context sensitivity; 2. Material language of the architecture; and 3. Spatial strategy addressing challenges of memorialization as put forward by Andreas Huyssen, Jean Baudrillard, and Henri Bergson.⁴⁷

As part of a greater precinct development strategy, the museum programmatically facilitates the vital life of the surrounding township community: socializing, informal trade, and taxi and bus ranks. The architecture of the museum extends beyond interpretation of frozen historical events. Through scale (through repetition as can be read on the original competition boards⁴⁸), proportion, and programmatic consideration, learning about the turbulent past of modern South Africa is made more relevant and poignant while active, everyday adjacencies unfold about it. This acknowledgement of the improvisational socialities

⁴⁶ "Red Location Museum," Wolff Architects, <https://www.wolffarchitects.co.za/projects/all/inkwenkwenzi/>

⁴⁷ Lisa, Findlay, "Red and Gold: A tale of two apartheid museums," *Places Journal* (online), February 4, 2011, <https://placesjournal.org/article/red-and-gold-a-tale-of-two-apartheid-museums/>

⁴⁸ "Red Location – Competition Entry". Noero Architects, <https://www.noeroarchitects.com/project/red-location-competition-entry/>

and spaces that encircle the museum site extends to its material considerations. The name of the museum refers to the rusted red corrugated metal sheets of New Brighton, originally from the Boer concentration camps established by the British in the second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902)⁴⁹, a highly versatile modest building material reused in the establishment of the New Brighton Township in 1902, a racially segregated Black area of Port Elizabeth.⁵⁰ No stranger to materials such as cement board, breezeblocks, and corrugated tin (see House Nxumalo, 1988; House Nkwe, 1983; Alexandra Housing, 1985), the architects utilized a locally procured material palette resonates with the life and history of citizens of Red Location, a counterpoint to the language of the majority of South Africa's civic buildings.⁵¹

⁴⁹ "Red Location Museum," Wolff Architects, <https://www.wolffarchitects.co.za/projects/all/inkwenkwenzi/>

⁵⁰ "New Brighton Location," South African History Online (SAHO), 2011, <https://www.sahistory.org.za/place/new-brighton-location>

⁵¹ Lisa, Findlay, "Red and Gold: A tale of two apartheid museums," *Places Journal* (online), February 4, 2011, <https://placesjournal.org/article/red-and-gold-a-tale-of-two-apartheid-museums/>



Figure 23: A woman hanging up washing in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth. Red Location Museum by Noero Wolff Architects is just visible in the background. The documenting of the Red Location Museum is understood through its context – a reading of the building is positioned in changing environs. Photograph courtesy of Noero Architects.



Figure 24: Asymmetric pitch roof repetition at two scales, one of the strategies of contextual sensitivity. Photograph courtesy of Noero Architects.

The architects' intention for the museum was explicitly a critique of the single narrative (implied victim-victimized) retelling of South African history. Noero Wolff's strategy centres on memory boxes, 6 x 6 x 12 m tall, rusted spaces of prized possessions (stories) separated by spaces of reflection (Huysen's twilight of memory).⁵² Encountering the boxes through single entries, one learns of the plurality of experiences of South Africa's struggles for freedom, each distinct but with a unifying hope for the nation, spanning its varied history. In the words of the architects, "the lesson of the Museum is that freedom should never come at the expense of any other group of people."⁵³ Red Location Museum is not without serious contention and controversy, which should not be overlooked. The indefinite closure of the cultural precinct highlights the deeply entrenched legacies of Apartheid intertwined with competing interests of local community economy, adequate housing and service delivery, and the optics of such an internationally visible project.⁵⁴ Despite the museum winning the Royal Institute of British Architecture's Lubetkin Prize, and the Dedalo Minosse International Prize, the project continues to be at the centre of fraught negotiations around the development of the Red Location Cultural Precinct, a site of protestation and more recently vandalism.⁵⁵

⁵² "Red Location Museum," Wolff Architects, <https://www.wolffarchitects.co.za/projects/all/inkwenkwenzi/>

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Naomi Roux. "A house for dead people': memory and spatial transformation in Red Location, South Africa". *Social & Cultural Geography*, 19, no.4 (2018): 407-428, DOI: 10.1080/14649365.2017.

⁵⁵ Mkhuseleli Sizani. "PE's vandalised Red Location Museum could reopen soon". *Sowetan Live*, 2019, <https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/south-africa/2019-11-27-pes-vandalised-red-location-museum-could-reopen-soon/>



Figure 25: Red Location Museum, Port Elizabeth, Noero Wolff Architects, opened 2006. **'Twilight of memory' spaces of reflection** between memory boxes. Photograph courtesy of Noero Architects.



Figure 26: A section model of one of Red Location Museum's 12 Memory Boxes. Model photograph courtesy of Noero Architects.

Part II: Expressing Stories

CARTOGRAPHY OF RENAMING

An etymological hegemony defines the terms of the uncritical narrative, a vocabulary of power. Grammar underlies the articulation of a dominant world history. This thesis takes the position that language plays a critical role in the disjuncture of how the world is identified and differentiated, and inversely that the control of language homogenizes, others, and subjugates.⁵⁶

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o expresses colonial world mapping, hastened post-Berlin Conference of 1884, as an act of memory dislocation, destabilizing a foundation of identity, displacing of peoples:

“A European memory becomes the new marker of geographical identity, covering up an older memory, or more strictly speaking, burying the native memory of place.”⁵⁷

If a denial of language is an intentional method of forced amnesia, questioning how documentary material is communicated, the terms and syntax through which it does so is a valid exploration in how something comes to be known and understood but also erased. Taking architecture to be one of many documentary materials, a form of tectonic epistemological critique is valuable in interrogating identity and memory in the urban environment. The superimposition of colonial architecture was another means through which the European power subsumed and constructed an unreliable narrative of world history — an architecture still very much present in modern African city today. Through making and remaking, hierarchies can be revealed and dismantled, theoretically transforming architectures of power for a more improvisational and differentiated future. This process of critical re-

⁵⁶ AbdouMalik Simone and Edgar Pieterse, *New Urban Worlds: Inhabiting Dissonant Times* (Cambridge: Polity, 2017).

⁵⁷ Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, *Something Torn and New: An African Renaissance* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2009), 8.

seeing as a methodology of this thesis is somewhat of a mirroring of, as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o writes, “the use of language in the deconstruction of a sovereign African and his reconstruction as a colonial subject.”

The colonial object and colonial subject converge, Achille Mbembe describes, as an artificial second identity is imprinted (in many cases literally) on the individual; a fundamental psychic hollowing of memory^{58,59}, the dismemberment and control of a now branded commodity. This is the power structure that supported the architectural residue of empire, that underpins Western enlightenment⁶⁰, with which this thesis contends.

In “Discovering Home”, winner of the Caine Prize in 2002 by Kenyan author Binyavanga Wainaina, we witness a moment in which language is a means through which an individual’s many identities come into contact and link with people, place, materials, memories, identities, stories. Language relates the individual to collective resonances, enabling new relationalities and improvisations.

“We are quiet for a while. English was a mistake. Where I am fluent, she is stilted. I switch to Swahili and she pours herself into another person: talkative, aggressive, a person who must have a Tupac t-shirt stashed away somewhere.”⁶¹

In Wainaina’s short story, we encounter a mention of *Sheng*, a fluid linguistic phenomenon which emerged in Nairobi in the 1970s.⁶² A sophisticated form of code-switching, *Sheng* is a linguistic assemblage that bridges individual and collective identities of city dwellers. *Sheng* is

⁵⁸ Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019).

⁵⁹ Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, *Something Torn and New: An African Renaissance* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2009), 16.

⁶⁰ Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

⁶¹ Binyavanga Wainaina. “Discovering Home”, in *Twenty Years of the Caine Prize for African Writing* (Northampton: Interlink, 2020), 65.

⁶² Salomé Garnier, “Shaping New Identities: *Sheng*, Youth, and Ethnicity in Kenya,” *Harvard International Review*, 2020, <https://hir.harvard.edu/sheng-in-kenya/>

widely spoken throughout East Africa, especially among youth, and it is only gaining in popularity.⁶³ Sometimes considered a creole, a slang, or an argot, Sheng (Swahili-English) is more accurately a “new linguistic-cultural composite product,”⁶⁴ incorporating local Kenyan languages including Dholuo, Luhya, Kikuyu, and Kikamba, but also Hindi, Spanish, and American slang.^{65,66} There are also words that are specific to Sheng. This hybrid language is highly dynamic, differing regionally, not isolated to a single locale (Nairobi, for instance). As such, the language is constantly evolving and has the capacity to challenge ethnic, class, and linguistic inequalities that exist in Kenyan society.⁶⁷

I argue that Sheng is an active redescription of the ‘uninhabitable’, one that embraces the complexities, multiplicities, and oscillations that exist in the urban ‘periphery’. Long stigmatized as a language of the poor youth, thugs, and matatu touts, Sheng appears to have shaken its negative connotations and has entered political, telecommunications, and media parlance.⁶⁸ Scholars Annah Kariuki, Frida Kanana, and Hildah Kebeya from the Department of English and Linguistics at Kenyatta University identify operations of the Sheng code found in advertisements: *borrowing*, *truncation*, *compounding*, *reduplication*, *metathesis*, *nativisation*, and *coining*. Figure 27 highlights the characteristics of each operation. I suggest that these operations may be a productive starting point to begin architecturally deploying redescriptive acts of the McMillan Memorial Library. A new act of transformative architectural expression derived from a fluid hybridized linguistic code.

⁶³ Eric Gatobu, “Sheng: How a Kenyan urban vernacular is gaining national acceptance”. *Medium*, 2019, <https://medium.com/@ericgatobu/sheng-how-a-kenyan-urban-vernacular-is-gaining-national-acceptance-39683045ad94>

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Salomé Garnier, “Shaping New Identities: Sheng, Youth, and Ethnicity in Kenya,” *Harvard International Review*, 2020, <https://hir.harvard.edu/sheng-in-kenya/>

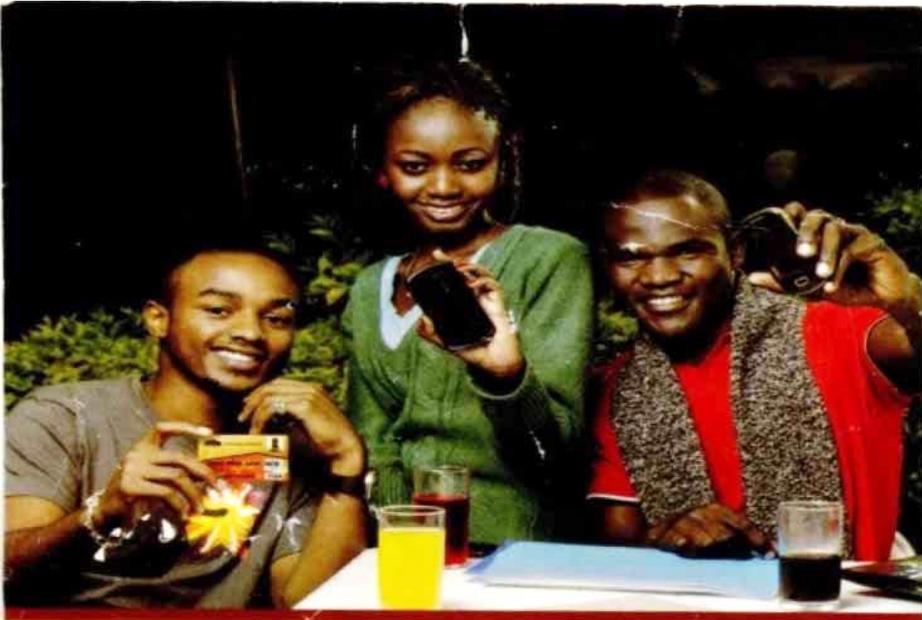
⁶⁶ Eric Gatobu, “Sheng: How a Kenyan urban vernacular is gaining national acceptance”. *Medium*, 2019, <https://medium.com/@ericgatobu/sheng-how-a-kenyan-urban-vernacular-is-gaining-national-acceptance-39683045ad94>

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Annah Kariuki, Fridah Erastus Kanana and Hildah Kebeya, “The growth and use of Sheng in advertisements in selected businesses in Kenya,” *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 27, no. 2 (2015): 229-246, doi: 10.1080/13696815.2015.1029879

<i>Operation</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Linguistic example</i>
borrowing	simple loaning, with minimal contextual manipulation	story (eng) > stori yangu (kisw) > yangu (<i>mine</i>)
truncation	word reduction, clipping (fore/back) of standard vocabulary (eng/kisw)	house (eng) > hao katizia (kisw) > katsia (<i>disrupt</i>)
compounding	combination of two free forms resulting in new word	mobile + kodi (eng/kisw) > M-kodi
reduplication	double occurrence of standard vocabulary w/ new derived meaning	chapu chapu (kisw) > chap chap (quickly)
metathesis	new derived word, with changed meaning dependent on context	chanuka (kisw, <i>to blossom, to become wise</i>) > kunacha (<i>to win</i>)
nativisation	modification according to sound	mdosi (sheng) > dosika (<i>get rich</i>) digital (eng) > digitika (<i>digitized</i>) uses a common Bantu language syllable structure: consonant-vowel-consonant-vowel (CVCV)
coining	new words not sourced from or based on another existing word	chapaa (<i>money</i>) mdosi (wealthy person)

Figure 27: Sheng linguistic operations found in advertisements. Based on research from Annah Kariuki, Fridah Erastus Kanana and Hildah Kebeya, "The growth and use of Sheng in advertisements in selected businesses in Kenya," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 27, no. 2 (2015): 229-246, doi: 10.1080/13696815.2015.1029879



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Figure 28: An advertisement in Sheng “I manage my account”. From *Shaping New Identities: Sheng, Youth, and Ethnicity in Kenya*, originally used in Annah Kariuki, Fridah Erastus Kanana and Hildah Kebeya, “The growth and use of Sheng in advertisements in selected businesses in Kenya,” *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 27, no. 2 (2015): 229-246, doi: 10.1080/13696815.2015.1029879

British-Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare examines colonialism and post-colonialism in his artwork, often situated in the context of globalization. His work, ranging from sculpture, to photography, painting, and film explores the entanglements between African and European history, examining the economic and political transactions and cultural exchanges between the two.⁶⁹ His 1998 work *Mr and Mrs Andrews without their heads* is a layered story of these Afro-Euro-relationships. In it we see two figures (the Andrews) headless, with their dog. The composition and the posing of the figures are recognizable as a staging of Thomas Gainsborough's painting of the same name (*Mr and Mrs Andrews*, 1750). This reference imbues Shonibare's sculpture with one level of reading; Shonibare's sculpture cannot be read without the association to Gainsborough, to the real-life Robert Andrews and Frances Carter, landed gentry. The headless nature of the couple (a common absence in Shonibare's work) obscures their racial identity⁷⁰. The sculpture is rendered in African Dutch wax fabrics, draping the mannequins in the brightly coloured print textiles, a hallmark of African fashion. The choice of fabric is intriguing: quintessentially African in many respects (similar fabrics can be found in Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, and many other countries), it has a global story. Originally batik from Indonesia, it makes its way to West Africa by way of reproductions in the mills of Amsterdam and Manchester. As a result, *Mr. and Mrs without their heads* is inscribed with a complicated lineage of colonial core-periphery relationships; life size fibreglass mannequins that synthesize multiple stories into a single artistic expression. The story of the original couple is modified, their assignment to a fixed point in a

⁶⁹ Rachel Cooke, "Yinka Shonibare: 'I wanted to do a work connected to Trafalgar Square'". Interview with Yinka Shonibare, *The Guardian*, 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2010/may/16/yinka-shonibare-fourth-plinth-traffic>

⁷⁰ Susan Stamberg, "Headless actors on a global playground," *NPR*, 2009, <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=120393449>

history of England is destabilized, and they are implicated in modern discourses around decolonialization and globalization. Through a manipulation of material language (one aspect), dichotomous identities are blurred, and I argue a spatio-temporal continuum is constructed, challenging presuppositions and singular narratives. This is one option for exploring the redescriptive potential of material transformations.



Figure 29: Thomas Gainsborough, Mr and Mrs Andrews, 1750. 69.8 cm × 119.4 cm (27.5 in × 47.0 in), National Gallery, London.



Figure 30: Yinka Shonibare, 1998, Mr. and Mrs. Andrews without their heads. Two mannequins, Dutch wax printed cotton textile, dog mannequin, painted metal bench, rifle. 165 x 635 x 254 cm with plinth

Edward Said rhetorically poses the following to Noam Chomsky of his book *The Fateful Triangle* (1983), which closely examines the pro-Zionist biases of American media and many Western intellectuals, specifically homing in on the 1982 Lebanon War. Chomsky presents a compendium of facts and analysis, using evidence of the pro-Zionist bias as expounded by the US media itself. He establishes the baseline master-narrative which defines discourse, action, and a future for the Palestinian people. Said questions the universality, ultimate truths of Chomsky's uncompromising criticism of the master-narrative, reconciling fact with the fact teller, and what the quest for truth entails. Said writes,

*“Answers to these questions must reside in a theory of perception, a theory of intellectual activity, and in an epistemological account of ideological structures as they pertain to specific problems as well as to concrete historical and geographic circumstances. None of these things is within the capacity of a solitary individual to produce, and none is possible without some sense of communal or collective commitment to assign them a more than personal validity.”*⁷¹

This thesis embraces subjectivity or the subjectivities of all. It does not curate the stories but rather sets up a forum of subjectivities, one in which multiple possibilities are potential presents and futures.⁷² What constitutes a potential is open to interpretation, hyperbole, negotiation, intonation, connotation, an individual's expression uncensored, even unsolicited, but not without recourse to challenge, debate, query. The documentary material, as set out by Foucault, is simultaneously retrospective and forward looking when read critically as a set.⁷³

⁷¹ Edward Said, “Permission to Narrate,” in *The Selected Works of Edward Said, 1966-2006* (ed. Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin). (New York: Vintage Books, 2019), 268.

⁷² Paolo Virno. *Déjà Vu and the End of History*. (London: Verso, 2015).

⁷³ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010).

Adjacencies, overlaps, and frictions between the documents present potentials. To put it another way, an active non-hierarchical multithread space reveals latent futures. This methodology of emergent relationalities is scalable and intrinsically engages with questions of autochthonous knowledge making and crowdfunded production of ideas.

In *New Urban Worlds*, by AbdouMaliq Simone and Edgar Pieterse, the uninhabitable is at odds with Western preconceptions of environmental requirements for human sustenance, normalizing spatial inequalities as a *fait accompli*.⁷⁴ As a residual colonial artifact, the McMillan Library is a product of definition and description, a form of knowledge-making, legitimated by ideological propaganda of empire. The story of the library is monolingual, spoken by an unreliable master narrator. Dismantling the ideological scaffolds that inscribe hegemonic definitions into the library's architecture is a process of redescription⁷⁵, an epistemological interrogation that erodes the borders between the habitable and the uninhabitable. Through a methodology of redescription, derived from the documentary materials, the distinction between the habitable and uninhabitable begins to be dissolved. A new space emerges, one in which we are all unreliable narrators with something to contribute.

The *Maisons Tropicales* by Jean Prouvé are ongoing examples of architecture with crises of identity, identities bought, dressed, and reconstituted to the highest bidder. D.J. Huppertz critiques Jean Prouvé's *Maison Tropicale* prototype projects of the mid-twentieth century, or rather, more specifically, critiques how the story of their 'rediscovery' has been told. In "The Poetics of the Colonial Object,"⁷⁶ Huppertz remarks that design history lacks a framework within which the merits of Prouvé's aluminium fabrication innovation do not obscure the fact that the

⁷⁴ AbdouMaliq Simone and Edgar Pieterse, *New Urban Worlds: Inhabiting Dissonant Times*. (Cambridge: Polity, 2017).

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ D.J. Huppertz, "Jean Prouvé's *Maison Tropicale*: The Poetics of the Colonial Object," *Design Issues* 26, no. 4 (2010): 32-44.

maisons were entirely metropolitan superimpositions of capitalist superiority and exploitation in today's Niger and Republic of Congo. I explore redrawing as a way of revealing present/absent forces of the concrete pad on which the prototypes were assembled. Malian filmmaker and professor in the Department of Cinema Studies at New York University Tisch School of the Arts, Manthia Diawara, states in *Maison Tropicale* (2008), “I dare dream of the Maison Tropicale returning to Brazzaville and Niamey one day”⁷⁷, and the concrete pad remains on standby for reconnection.

Mozambican-born artist and educator Ângela Ferreira uses sculpture and photography to tell a more complete story of the Maisons. In her work *Maison Tropicale* (2007) she deconstructs of Maison Tropicale's famed aluminium components and cages them in a shipping container skeleton. Using a modified shipping container provides a reference through which the structures' intercontinental displacement and deployment is communicated. The components of the building are remade in wood at 1:1 scale and flat packed into the space. The container frame then cuts through two rooms: a sequence in which the body moves through a space in which the components of Maison Tropicale are experientially ascribed new meaning through reorientation and scale, materially neutralizing the industrial fetish.

⁷⁷ “Maison Tropicale – Trailer [trailer for Maison Tropicale (2008), film]”. Third World Newsreel, Vimeo video recording, 2019, <https://vimeo.com/364323895>

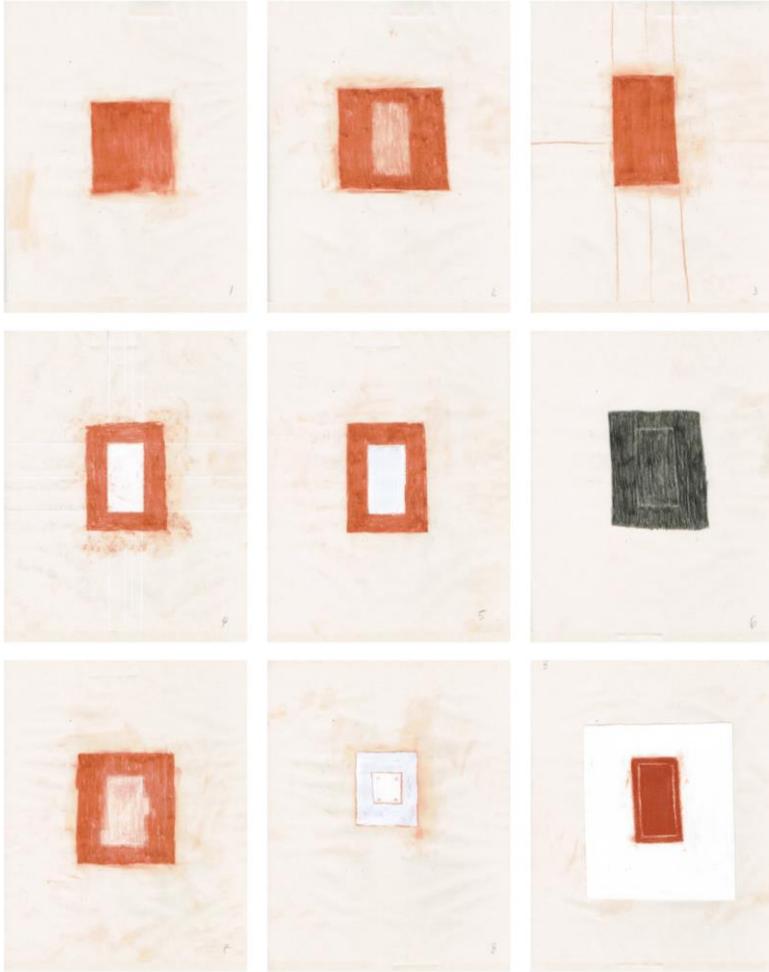


Figure 31: Insertion, removal, erasure, Maison Tropicale, Niamey, abandoned concrete pad construction re-drawings, by author, 2020. Conte, graphite, charcoal on vellum. 8.5x11 in.



Figure 32: Concrete pad left behind in Niamey, Niger, after the maison was removed. Photograph by Ângela Ferreira, 2007. Light jet print mounted on aluminium 120 x 150 cm.



Figure 33: Pilotis decapitated, Brazzaville, Republic of Congo, after the maison was removed. Photograph by Ângela Ferreira, 2007. Light jet print mounted on aluminium 120 x 150 cm.



Figure 34: Maison Tropicale, Ângela Ferreira, 2007. Sculpture, wood, aluminium, steel. 1000 x 217 x 257 cm.

This thesis thus far has concerned itself with the notion of multiplicity and fragmentation, incompleteness not as a definite error but an opportunity to be potentialized, work to be continued. Later in the thesis language and translation will be explored in relation to the bigger ideas. A key aspect of fragmentation, another way of framing it perhaps, is defining what it means to see or perceive. Pallasmaa in “The Eyes of the Skin” (2012), briefly compares what David Michael Levin defines as *assertoric gaze* and *aletheic gaze*:

*“In his view, the assertoric gaze is narrow, dogmatic, intolerant, rigid, fixed, inflexible, exclusionary and unmoved, whereas the aletheic gaze, associated with the hermeneutic theory of truth, tends to see from a multiplicity of standpoints and perspectives, and is multiple, pluralistic, democratic, contextual, inclusionary, horizontal and caring.”*⁷⁸

The term *aletheic* (or *alethic*) pertains to linguistic modalities of truth, primarily necessity, possibility, or impossibility.⁷⁹ Without delving too far into the realm of Relativism, suffice it to say that *aletheic* (in English largely interchangeable with *epistemic*) refers to the appearance of truth as predicated on multiple context-dependent reasons.⁸⁰ In this regard, embracing this interpretability or being elastic as to switch, improvise, empathize, beyond the surface reading, is intrinsic to an architecture of potential, that of *possible worlds*. While running messages and notes between community members, Simone touches on this idea of contextually dependent truths: the slants, sleights, phrasing, pacing, acts of empowerment in a challenging environment:

⁷⁸ Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 41.

⁷⁹ William Frawley (ed.), *The Expression of Modality*. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006).

⁸⁰ Boris Kment, "Varieties of Modality", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/modality-varieties/>.

*“I enjoyed the small remuneration and the structure it provided, going back and forth across different parts of the city equipped with a mission, a foreign courier that really could not be completely trusted but also someone who had no deep social connections, who didn’t really have a voice of their own, simply a capacity to rearrange what others said, a cipher on the move.”*⁸¹

Thinking of this alethic gaze in the context of space, we encounter a discussion around the senses. The privileging of the eyes, as has been the case in much of Western architecture (including that of the former colonies) is limiting and isolating, restricting our experience of the world⁸². In this thesis I take the position that the expression of stories might find a useful parallel in an exploration in the transformative potential of the material syntax of imperial debris, the texture of memory.⁸³

A positive plaster cast of the interior of a room of an abandoned Victorian North London home, Rachel Whiteread creates an object of an abandoned space; a new inverted reading of an everyday space.⁸⁴ *Ghost*, like many of Whiteread’s cast works, takes the unremarkable negative space and transfigures it into something seemingly extraordinary. Through the impressions inscribed on the object, *Ghost* is a continuum between interiority and exteriority, it is a threshold object in which both positive and negative space can be read simultaneously. Multiple perspectives – and apparently mutually exclusive – both held to be true. This *liminal fluidity* is made not only visible but tangible through Whiteread’s process of making. According to Whiteread, part of the

⁸¹ AbdouMaliq Simone, *Improvvised Lives* (Cambridge: Polity, 2019), 43.

⁸² Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2012).

⁸³ James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

⁸⁴ “About – Rachel Whiteread,” Gagosian, <https://gagosian.com/artists/rachel-whiteread/>

concept of *Ghost* was prompted by Virginia Woolf's "elusive concept of having a "room of one's own"". ⁸⁵ The cast object could be ascribed a resonant attitude, this "haunted husk of humanity"⁸⁶, upon which the viewer projects their own memories. I argue that this work also forms a link between the past – the old Victorian house (playing out life in this room pre-abandonment) to its moment of casting – and its contemporary viewing by gallery-goers. While *Ghost* could be simply read as a mummification of the air⁸⁷, I contend that the disorientation of the viewer is an (perhaps) involuntary act of redescription of the object by the viewer as one spatially and temporally relates it to one's own lived experiences. Whiteread's confident material transfiguration of a small room with a fireplace is both specific and universal, a 1:1 negative copy, and interpretative and imagination provoking.

⁸⁵ Christopher Correa, "Haunting Sculpture: 'Ghost' Sculptor Rachel Whiteread," Interview with Rachel Whiteread, *The Washington Post*, 2008,

https://www.washingtonpost.com/express/wp/2008/10/09/haunting_sculpture_ghosts_rachel_whiteread/

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ "Rachel Whiteread, *Ghost*, 1990 – Overview," *National Gallery of Art*, <https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.131285.html>



Figure 35: Fireplace view of *Ghost*, by Rachel Whiteread, 1990. Plaster on steel frame, 269 x 355.5 x 317.5 cm (105 7/8 x 139 15/16 x 125 in.).

Part III: Collecting stories

A DRIVER OF DEVELOPMENT

Thus far, the thesis has touched on establishing two different but related frameworks through which a specific example of residual colonial architecture will be evaluated. The first is an epistemological recalibration through seeing, thinking, and making. The second is a re/de-construction of the dominant homogenizing valence of Europhonism and its impact on memory and identity, through architecture. The third section of this thesis gathers possible visions of the future of the architectural typology in question - the library. The library as an architectural public anchor sits at a nexus of political, socio-economic, and cultural discussions and agendas, and the McMillan Memorial Library in Nairobi is not an exception.

The African Library & Information Associations and Institutions (AfLIA) outlines seven aspirations regarding the future of libraries in Africa which recognizes that, in an African context, libraries have a mandate that far exceeds housing collections of books. Rather, it states that libraries are key public institutions primed for driving development through access to information and knowledge.⁸⁸ The theme of the 2021 AfLIA Conference is Fourth Industrial Revolution, sustainable development, and African libraries, a hyperconnectivity between "people, machines, and locations." At the moment, AfLIA's Open Access Week, running from October 19–25, is about taking action to build structural equity and inclusion, with a specific focus on the mother tongue, and second languages. Outlined in the African Centre for Cities call for papers for Ecotones #7 Reconfiguring, Repurposing the City: Ecotones in the Global South, October 29–31, are ways cities can be

⁸⁸ "How African Libraries Contribute to the African Union 2063 Agenda: The Africa We Want," African Library & Information Associations and Institutions, 2019, <https://web.aflia.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/AfLIA-AU-agenda-2063-final.pdf>

framed. Not mutually exclusive, nor exhaustive, the following align with this thesis:

- *Cities as assemblages of environmental, historical and political forces shaping populations and social relations*
- *Cities as sites of cultural confluence and continuum in the context of global centre-periphery relationships*
- *Urban geographies as shaped by – and shaping – imagination, language, the arts and literature*
- Cities as generators of ideological formations, identity projects and conceptual tools (“Cosmopolis”, “Zéropolis”, “Afropolis”, etc.)*
- *Cities as “discursive matrices” for sociolinguistic dynamics and creativities, and/or sites of polyglossic encounters between native and non-native speakers⁸⁹*

Earlier in the thesis I framed the McMillan Memorial Library in terms of assemblages, continuum, confluence, through ideological flows and core-periphery relationships. In this section I examine the concept of *polyglossia*, as assemblage of language in space. I posit that spaces of polyglossic encounter begin to collect stories and make them readily accessible. This aligns with the Asmara Declaration seen previously and builds on my discussion around improvisational identities and socialities. This section repositions the library with a forward outlook, architecturally postured towards programmatic potential. As touched upon in the brief introduction to Sheng, I take a closer look at the multilingualism of Nairobi, and Kenya more broadly. As framed by the Asmara Declaration, I position this important aspect of Nairobi’s urban

⁸⁹ “Call for papers: Reconfiguring, Repurposing the City: Urban Ecotones in the Global South,” African Centre for Cities, last modified December 5, 2019, <https://www.africancentreforcities.net/call-for-papers-reconfiguring-repurposing-the-city-urban-ecotones-in-the-global-south/>

vitality as necessary to discussions of the emergent potential of colonial architectural debris.

POLYGLOSSIA

In the African continent there are an estimated 1000 to 2000 languages, of which 75 languages have more than one million speakers.⁹⁰ Kenya, a country of around 52 million has two national languages – English and Swahili. There are, however, another 67 spoken in Kenya approximately, although some of those languages are considered moribund, nearly extinct, dormant, or extinct. Encouragingly, ten Kenyan languages are classified as educational, and another 30 are developing, including Kenyan Sign Language.⁹¹ Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o discusses language in his book *Something Torn and New* (2009) as critical to the memory and identity of both the individual and the collective.⁹² Programmatically, the library, particularly a former colonial one, is an opportune venue to prototype architecture in relation to this concept of *polyglossia* as it relates to autonomy from the colonial master-narrative. In Chapter 3: *Memory, Restoration, and African Renaissance*, wa Thiong’o draws parallels between the European Renaissance and the African Renaissance currently underway though “yet to flower”.⁹³ One of the key parallels he discusses is throwing off the yoke of linguistic hegemony: the imposition of a dominant language, a tool of power which dictates the terms and paradigmatic frameworks of thinking and being; the struggle of the individual to self-identify and identify with a new collective:

‘The two salient features of the European Renaissance are discovery and recovery: By discovery I don’t mean the voyages of

⁹⁰ “Introduction to African Languages,” Department of African and African American Studies, Harvard University, <https://alp.fas.harvard.edu/introduction-african-languages>

⁹¹ David M. Eberhard, Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig (eds.), *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Twenty-third edition (Dallas, Texas: SIL International, 2020), <http://www.ethnologue.com>.

⁹² Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, *Something Torn and New* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2009).

⁹³ Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, *Something Torn and New* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2009), 72.

*exploration and conquests or the creation of colonial otherness but, rather, Europe's encounter with its own languages. Erich Auerbach describes the European Renaissance as "the movement through which the literary languages of the various European peoples finally shook off Latin." Before this, Latin had occupied a position not too dissimilar from that occupied by European languages in Africa today: [I]t was virtually the sole vehicle of intellectual life and written communication... a foreign language that had to be learned... cut off from the spoken language." Overwhelmed by the pervasive presence of Latin, the pioneers were at first apologetic, time and again finding it necessary (much like Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill in the case of her choice of Irish) to answer the question as to why they wrote in the vernacular. For Dante, writing in *Del Vulgari Eloquentia* about two kinds of speech, the foreign and the vernacular, "the vernacular is the nobler, both because it is enjoyed by the whole world (though it has been divided into [languages with] differing words and paradigms), and because it is natural to us, while the other is more an artificial product." He defends his choice of the Italian of Tuscany as the language of critical commentary, on the basis of it being the language of his primary experience. "And since the better known a route is, the more safely and quickly it may be traveled, I shall proceed only along that language which is my own, leaving aside the others."*⁹⁴

From this, one can take the position that freedom of language is the freedom to decipher one's own position in the world and relation to others. If a multitude of languages and mother tongues are to be encouraged and ultimately legislated, how does society remain

*Originally written as "point nine" of the Asmara Declaration, though point 4 refers to translation.

⁹⁴ Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Something Torn and New* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2009), 83.

intelligible and collaborative as opposed to further dividing and differentiated? The answer, according to wa Thiong'o, is the act of translation:

“The fear of exacerbating divisions along language lines is obviously genuine – but the solution is not to continue burying the languages and the means of African memory under a Europhonic paradise. On the contrary, as noted in point [four] of the Asmara Declaration, the solution lies in translation.”*⁹⁵

The library serves, in one of many respects, as a repository of documents, typically language based (of some description). These documents are accessible in two ways: physically, one's sense can encounter some perceptible manifestation of language; and also linguistically – is the document intelligible in some way, are the characters and their arrangement recognizable, comprehensible, and digestible. One can pull a book off a shelf, open it, yet still not be able to make sense of the symbols presented before them. The Asmara Declaration on African Languages and Literatures, January 2000, Asmara, Eritrea, recognizes this,⁹⁶ see Figure 38, framing the act of translation as an invaluable tool to promote and facilitate dialogue among languages and peoples. How can this be explored through architecture? How can architecture, specifically through residual colonial architecture, begin to empower this dialogue without diminishing the linguistic autonomy of the individual? Does architecture even have a part to play in this conversation? This thesis argues that architecture has already been complicit in colonial linguicide and that the library is a highly contestable space in which architecture does have a future responsibility and positive potential in this discussion. While the introduction of a whites-only library in Nairobi's Central

⁹⁵ Ibid, 95.

⁹⁶ “The Asmara Declaration on African Languages and Literatures,” University of Pennsylvania African Studies Center, January 2000, https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Govern_Political/asmrlit.html

Business District certainly was an ideological, racialized colonial project, it remains present in the city nearly 90 years later.



Figure 36: McMillan Memorial Library, digital assemblage, by author 2020.



Figure 37: Facade overlay, detail, 1. Digital collage, drawn by author, 2020.

Returning to Spiralism, Jean-Claude Fignolé illustrates some of the challenges of translation – between French and Haitian Creole, diglossically the high and low official languages of Haiti respectively. His first book *Les Possédés de la pleine lune* (1987), is a work of fiction that compiles several stories from Fignolé's village near Jérémie, Haiti. Originally written in French, Fignolé attempted to translate the work into Creole, to share it with the original tellers of the stories that made up the work. However, Fignolé could not write in Creole, only speak and read, and the people of his village could not read. Fignolé laments this:

“When I translate from French to Creole, the book should have become a medium between the people and me. But this has not been the case; it has moved us apart. When I translated some passages for the people of my village, I thought that the book, which was their story, was going to create a close communication between us, but, on the contrary, it has established a distance. They were listening to the story as if it was not theirs, simple because my Creole – which was translated from the French – was not their language, tinged with sensitivity and emotion. My Creole could not trigger their imagination and make them realize that I was talking about them and that they were themselves the creators of these stories. I was telling stories that I had heard from these people, but I had transformed them; I had created upon their own creation. This should have established a communication between us at the level of creation, but it did not. I think that if I had written the book directly in Creole and if they could have read it in Creole, they would have been able to identify themselves in the book, not only as actors of these stories, but also as creators,

*because it was the very story of their life that they had told me themselves.*⁹⁷

Language impacts how we relate to each other and position ourselves in the world, and there are challenges around facilitating a mutual intelligibility (as acknowledged in the Asmara Declaration). In “Discovering Home”, however, we read another story of language, one in which translation is not a predicate for sociality, commonality, or resonance. Wainaina beautifully describes a moment of a family reunion in Uganda in “Discovering Home”, offering an evocation toward a polyglossic common ground.

*“We hurtle on towards Christmas. Booze flows, we pray, we chat, and bond under the night rustle of banana leaves. I feel as if I am filled with magic and I succumb to the masses. In two days, we feel like a family. In French, Swahili, English, Kikuyu, Kinyarwanda, Kiganda and Ndebele we sing one song, a multitude of passports in our luggage.”*⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Marie-Agnès Sourieau, “Haitian Literature and Culture, Part 1,” *Callaloo* 15, no. 2, Johns Hopkins University Press, (1992): 436

⁹⁸ Binyavanga Wainaina, “Discovering Home”, in *Twenty Years of the Caine Prize for African Writing* (Northampton: Interlink, 2020), 74-75.

The Asmara Declaration on African Languages and Literatures

The Asmara Declaration on African Languages and Literatures
<<http://www.outreach.psu.edu/C&I/AllOdds/declaration.html>>

We writers and scholars from all regions of Africa gathered in Asmara, Eritrea, from January 11 to 17, 2000, at the conference titled Against All Odds: African Languages and Literatures into the 21st Century. This is the first conference on African languages and literatures ever to be held on African soil, with participants from east, west, north, Southern Africa and from the diaspora and by writers and scholars from around the world. We examined the state of African languages in literature, scholarship, publishing, education, and administration in Africa and throughout the world. We celebrated the vitality of African languages and literatures and affirmed their potential. We noted with pride that despite all the odds against them, African languages as vehicles of communication and knowledge survive and have a written continuity of thousands of years. Colonialism created some of the most serious obstacles against African languages and literatures. We noted with concern the fact that these colonial obstacles still haunt independent Africa and continue to block the mind of the continent. We identified a profound incongruity in colonial languages speaking for the continent. At the start of a new century and millennium, Africa must firmly reject this incongruity and affirm a new beginning by returning to its languages and heritage.

At this historic conference, we writers and scholars from all regions of Africa gathered in Asmara, Eritrea, declare that:

1. African languages must take on the duty, the responsibility, and the challenge of speaking for the continent.
2. The vitality and equality of African languages must be recognized as a basis for the future empowerment of African peoples.
3. The diversity of African languages reflects the rich cultural heritage of Africa and must be used as an instrument of African unity.
4. Dialogue among African languages is essential: African languages must use the instrument of translation to advance communication among all people, including the disabled.
5. All African children have the unalienable right to attend school and learn in their mother tongues. Every effort should be made to develop African languages at all levels of education.
6. Promoting research on African languages is vital for their development, while the advancement of African research and documentation will be best served by the use of African languages.
7. The effective and rapid development of science and technology in Africa depends on the use of African languages and modern technology must be used for the development of African languages.
8. Democracy is essential for the equal development of African languages and African languages are vital for the development of democracy based on equality and social justice.
9. African languages, like all languages, contain gender bias. The role of African languages in development must overcome this gender bias and achieve gender equality.
10. African languages are essential for the decolonization of African minds and for the African Renaissance.

The initiative which has materialized in the Against All Odds conference must be continued through biennial conferences in different parts of Africa. In order to organize future conferences in different parts of Africa, create a forum of dialogue and cooperation, and advance the principles of this declaration, a permanent Secretariat will be established, which will be initially based in Asmara, Eritrea.

Translated into as many African languages as possible and based on these principles, the Asmara Declaration is affirmed by all participants in Against All Odds. We call upon all African states, the OAU, the UN, and all international organizations that serve Africa to join this effort of recognition and support for African languages, with this declaration as a basis for new policies.

While we acknowledge with pride the retention of African languages in some parts of Africa and the diaspora and the role of African languages in the formation of new languages, we urge all people in Africa and the diaspora to join in the spirit of this declaration and become part of the efforts to realize its goals.

Asmara, 17th of January 2000
<<http://www.outreach.psu.edu/C&I/AllOdds/declaration.html>>

Subject: FYI: The Asmara Declaration on African Date: Wed, 01 Mar 2000
From: Peter Limb, University of Western Australia <plimb@library.uwa.edu.au>

Editor: [Ali B. Ali-Dinar](#)

Name	Code	Notes	Category
English	[eng]	Statutory national language (2010, Constitution, Article 7(2)). 4,360,000 in Kenya (2017), L2 users. Statutory national language (2010, Constitution, Article 7(2)). 16,611,000 in Kenya, all users. L1 users: 111,000 in Kenya (2009 census), increasing. 6,200 Amu, 69,000 Bajuni, 1,000 Chitundi, 2,600 Changamwe, 480 Faza, 5,200 Jomvu, 170 Katwa, 700 Kilifi, 700 Kilindini, 300 Mtwapa, 1,600 Ngare, 1,400 Pate, 290 Shaka, 3900 Siu, 650 Tangana, 2,000 Vumba (2009 census). L2 users:	1 (National)
Swahili	[swh]	16,500,000 (2013).	1 (National)
Bukusu	[bvx]	1,433,000 in Kenya (2009 census), increasing. Total users in all countries: 1,470,100.	4 (Educational)
Kamba	[kam]	4,493,000 in Kenya, all users. L1 users: 3,893,000 in Kenya (2009 census), increasing. L2 users: 600,000. Total users in all countries: 4,493,000 (as L1: 3,893,000;	4 (Educational)
Kimfiru	[mer]	as L2: 600,000).	4 (Educational)
Lulogooli	[rag]	1,660,000 (2009 census), increasing.	4 (Educational)
Olukhayo	[lko]	618,000 in Kenya (2009 census), increasing. Total users in all countries: 618,300.	4 (Educational)
Olumarachi	[lri]	125,000 (2009 census).	4 (Educational)
Olumarama	[lrm]	155,000 (2009 census).	4 (Educational)
Olusamia	[lsm]	152,500 (2009 census).	4 (Educational)
Olushisa	[lks]	125,000 in Kenya (2009 census).	4 (Educational)
Olutsotso	[lto]	137,000 (2009 census).	4 (Educational)
Oluwanga	[lwg]	122,000 (2009 census).	4 (Educational)
Gujarati	[guj]	309,000 (2009 census).	4 (Educational)
Punjabi, Eastern	[pan]	50,000 in Kenya (1995 SIL).	5 (Dispersed)
Somali	[som]	10,000 in Kenya	5 (Dispersed)
Konkani, Goan	[gom]	2,386,000 in Kenya (2009 census), increasing. Includes 58,200 Hawiyah; 516,000 Degodia; 622,000 Ogaden (2009 census).	5 (Dispersed)
Lukabaras	[lkb]	3,900 in Kenya (1987).	5 (Developing)
Lutachoni	[lts]	253,000 (2009 census).	5 (Developing)
Nandi	[niq]	118,000 (2009 census).	5 (Developing)
Borana	[gax]	949,000 (2009 census).	5 (Developing)
Chidigo	[dig]	278,000 in Kenya (2009 census), increasing. Borana: 161,000, Gabra: 89,500, Sakuye: 26,800.	5 (Developing)
Chiduruma	[dug]	313,000 in Kenya (2009 census), increasing. Total users	5 (Developing)
Dawida	[dav]	in all countries: 479,000.	5 (Developing)
Dholuo	[luo]	397,000 (2009 census), increasing.	5 (Developing)
Ekegusii	[guz]	274,000 (2009 census), increasing.	5 (Developing)
		4,044,000 in Kenya (2009 census), increasing. Total users in all countries: 4,229,000.	5 (Developing)
		2,705,000 in Kenya, all users. L1 users: 2,205,000 in Kenya (2009 census), increasing. L2 users: 500,000. Total users in all countries: 2,706,470 (as L1: 2,206,470;	5 (Developing)
		as L2: 500,000).	5 (Developing)

Figure 39: List of languages of Kenya, page 1. Excel document by author, data from SIL, retrieved 2020.

		Recognized language (2010, Constitution, Article 7(3b) National, official and other languages; and Article 120(1) Official Languages of Parliament). 150,000 (2019), increasing. Estimated 150,000 signing Deaf assuming 0.3% of the general population; other estimates: 340,000 (2007 DOOR); 600,000 (Wilson and Kakiri 2011).	
Kenyan Sign Language	[xki]		5 (Developing)
Kiembu	[ebu]	324,000 (2009 census), increasing. 944,000 (2009 census), increasing. 752,000 Giryama; 25,400 Kambe; 98,700 Rabai; 14,500 Ribe; 52,900	5 (Developing)
Kigiryama	[nyf]	Kauma.	5 (Developing)
Kipfokomo	[pkb]	95,000 (2009 census), increasing.	5 (Developing)
Kipsigis	[sgc]	1,916,000 (2009 census), increasing.	5 (Developing)
Kitharaka	[thk]	176,000 (2009 census), increasing. 61,600 monolinguals.	5 (Developing)
Kiwiwiana	[mlk]	16,800 (2009 census), increasing.	5 (Developing)
Kuria	[kuj]	260,000 in Kenya (2009 census), increasing. 598,000 (2009 census), increasing. Idakho 171,000;	5 (Developing)
Luidakho-Luisukha-Lutirichi	[ida]	Isukha 217,000; Tiriki 210,000 (2009 census). 842,000 in Kenya (2009 census), increasing. Total users	5 (Developing)
Maasai	[mas]	in all countries: 1,524,000.	5 (Developing)
Markweeta	[enb]	180,000 (2009 census).	5 (Developing)
Nyala	[nle]	273,000 (2009 census).	5 (Developing)
Olunyole	[nyd]	311,000 (2009 census), increasing. 633,000 in Kenya (2009 census), increasing. Total users	5 (Developing)
Pökoot	[pko]	in all countries: 738,000.	5 (Developing)
Sabaot	[spy]	241,000 (2009 census), increasing.	5 (Developing)
Sagalla	[tga]	100,000 (1992 UBS).	5 (Developing)
Suba	[sxb]	139,000 (2009 census), increasing.	5 (Developing)
Taveta	[tvs]	21,000 (2009 census), increasing.	5 (Developing)
Turkana	[tuv]	989,000 (2009 census). 593,000 monolinguals.	5 (Developing)
Arabic, Omani Spoken	[acx]	15,000 in Kenya (1995), increasing.	6a (Vigorous)
Aweer	[bob]	7,600 (2009 census), increasing. 1,600 monolinguals. 184,000 (2009 census), increasing. Chonyi 149,000,	6a (Vigorous)
Chichonyi-Chidzihana-Chikaum:	[coh]	Jibana 35,200. 12,500 in Kenya (2009 census), increasing. Population varies as people freely cross the Ethiopian border. 6,250 monolinguals.	6a (Vigorous)
Daasanach	[dsh]		6a (Vigorous)
Gichuka	[cuh]	70,000 (1980 SIL), increasing.	6a (Vigorous)
Keiyo	[eyo]	314,000 (2009 census), increasing.	6a (Vigorous)
Mwimbi-Muthambi	[mws]	70,000 (1980 SIL), increasing.	6a (Vigorous)
Nubi	[kcn]	15,500 in Kenya (2009 census). 3,000–6,000 in Kibera.	6a (Vigorous)
Orma	[orc]	66,300 (2009 census), increasing.	6a (Vigorous)
Rendille	[rel]	60,000 (2009 census), increasing. 237,000 (2009 census), increasing. Ilchamus 27,300,	6a (Vigorous)
Samburu	[saq]	Njemps 5,300 (2009 census).	6a (Vigorous)
Terik	[tec]	301,000 (2009 census), increasing.	6a (Vigorous)
Teso	[teo]	339,000 in Kenya (2009 census), increasing.	6a (Vigorous)
Tugen	[tuy]	140,000 (2009 census), increasing.	6a (Vigorous)
Waata	[ssn]	12,600 (2009 census), increasing.	6a (Vigorous)
Burji	[bji]	23,700 in Kenya (2009 census). 400 (1992 M. Brenzinger). Ethnic population: 2,400	7 (Shifting)
Dahalo	[dal]	(2009 census).	8a (Moribund)
Omotik	[omt]	50 (1980). Ethnic population: 200 (2000).	8a (Moribund)
Yaaku	[muu]	10 (2016 BBC). Ethnic population: 4,000 (2016 BBC).	8a (Moribund)

Figure 40: List of languages of Kenya, page 2. Excel document by author, data from SIL, retrieved 2020.

Okiek	[oki]	50 L1 speakers in Kenya and Tanzania (Austin 2008). Spoken by a small number of people (Dimmendaal and Voeltz 2007). Ethnic population: 79,000 (2009 census). Total users in all countries: 250. No known L1 speakers. Last fluent speaker, Kaayo, died in 1999 (2012 M. Tosco). Ethnic population: 2,840 (2009 census).	8b (Nearly extinct)
El Molo	[elo]	No known L1 speakers.	9 (Dormant)
Singa	[sgm]	No known L1 speakers.	10 (Extinct)
Arabic, Hadrami Spoken	[ayh]	10,000 in Kenya (1996).	Unestablished
Arabic, Ta'izzi-Adeni Spoken	[acq]	10,000 in Kenya (1995).	Unestablished
Hindi	[hin]	6,100 in Kenya (2017 JoshuaProject).	Unestablished

Figure 41: List of languages of Kenya, page 3. Excel document by author, data from SIL, retrieved 2020.

Conclusion: Towards spaces of storytelling

This thesis operates between scales: the macro global core-periphery exchange; the meso district-block patterns; and the micro building-body resonances. These relationships of power are fluid, liminal, and all (potentially) present in the colonial residual architecture. Each of these is informed by the site and context, as framed through contemporary discourse as discussed. Backgrounded by the rapid urbanization of **Africa's metropolises**, I explore the legacy of colonial architecture of the former British Empire as entangled in the ongoing challenges of polyglossic public space. Within this context, I ask how can architecture destabilize master-narratives that subsume the making, expression, and collection of stories? In Graduate Project II, 2021, I intend to explore three points of theoretical architecture transformation of the McMillan Memorial Library: the facade, material syntax, and the volumetric plan, drawn from the content of the thesis thus far. This Part IV will bring together making, expression, and collection of stories, through the generation of documentary material, towards spaces of storytelling.

I have explored the contemporary discourse around improvisational urban frameworks that perforate delineations between binaries that reinforce singular narratives of world history. I have discussed languages, memory, and identity of the 'periphery' in relation to the colonial residual library, a non-neutral tabula. By connecting to macro/micro relationalities of power, I advocate for a process of redescription of the McMillan Memorial Library, using the habitable/uninhabitable grey zone of the library as an opportunity to destabilize a hegemonic given to make space for celebrated differentiation and common ground.

Folder Two

Preamble

Graduate Project II is an opportunity to test the research hypothesis through design. As established at the end of the last section, I chose to investigate three points of architectural entry into the destabilization of the colonial library: the façade, the material syntax, and the volumetric plan. I utilized the linguistic operations found in the construction and evolution of Sheng lexicon, previously discussed. These modifiers were applied to the existing architecture and programmed according to various programs found in documentary material connecting to the McMillan Memorial Library. The communication of these design ideas took the form of an assemblage of documents, a virtual desktop, fully navigable by end users and publicly accessible via a stable internet connection. This platform engages the user or reader as an active participant in the navigation sequence, in effect enabling an improvised path through both the existing library documentary material and imagined design documents. Though only preliminarily explored, this visual navigation is accompanied by a backing track, an assemblage of sounds found in archival mp4 files and aural documentation of contemporary Nairobi. This design exploration raised important questions of orality and non-textual forms of storytelling. This connected me to architects, thinkers, designers, and artists that expanded my own thinking and modes of making, representation, and communication.

The work culminated in <http://graduatework.cargo.site>. By starting at the final assemblage, I will work backwards in scale, first describing website structure, then design logic, and conclude with a closer look at some of the most important drawings. Other supplementary drawings will be included in Appendix B.

Virtual Desktop

At the core of the final thesis work is the incomplete, the expanding, the improvisational, and the resonant. The homepage of the website is an assemblage of documents, both existing and created, that lie side-by-side, overlapped, obscured, and nested, unified their relation to the **McMillan Memorial Library**. The webpage's centre of gravity is the McMillan but not exclusively its colonial past. Its segregated beginnings exist in a more complex, varied, fragmentary matrix. The stories of the library operate in this expanded matrix, and subsequent design should, I argue, draw on the subjectivities, incongruities, frictions, the diversity that exists in these documentary relationships of relationships. Entries or uploads are draggable and therefore relationships subject to change or interpretation. The stories of the McMillan Memorial Library are reconfigurable or improvisational. The homepage operates like a visual wiki or portals to move between, the unfolding of the library beyond its physical walls. *Reading Zimbabwe* by visual artist and educator Nontsikelelo Mutiti and designer Corey Tegeler⁹⁹ served in part as an inspiration for thinking digitally about the thesis work and what opportunities exist in redescribing a physical space via the internet. The independent digital platform aims to collate the stories of Zimbabwe within a context of knowledge production and power through a digital catalogue of Zimbabwean literatures.

⁹⁹ "About". Reading Zimbabwe. Accessed May 4, 2021. Retrieved from: <https://readingzimbabwe.com/about>

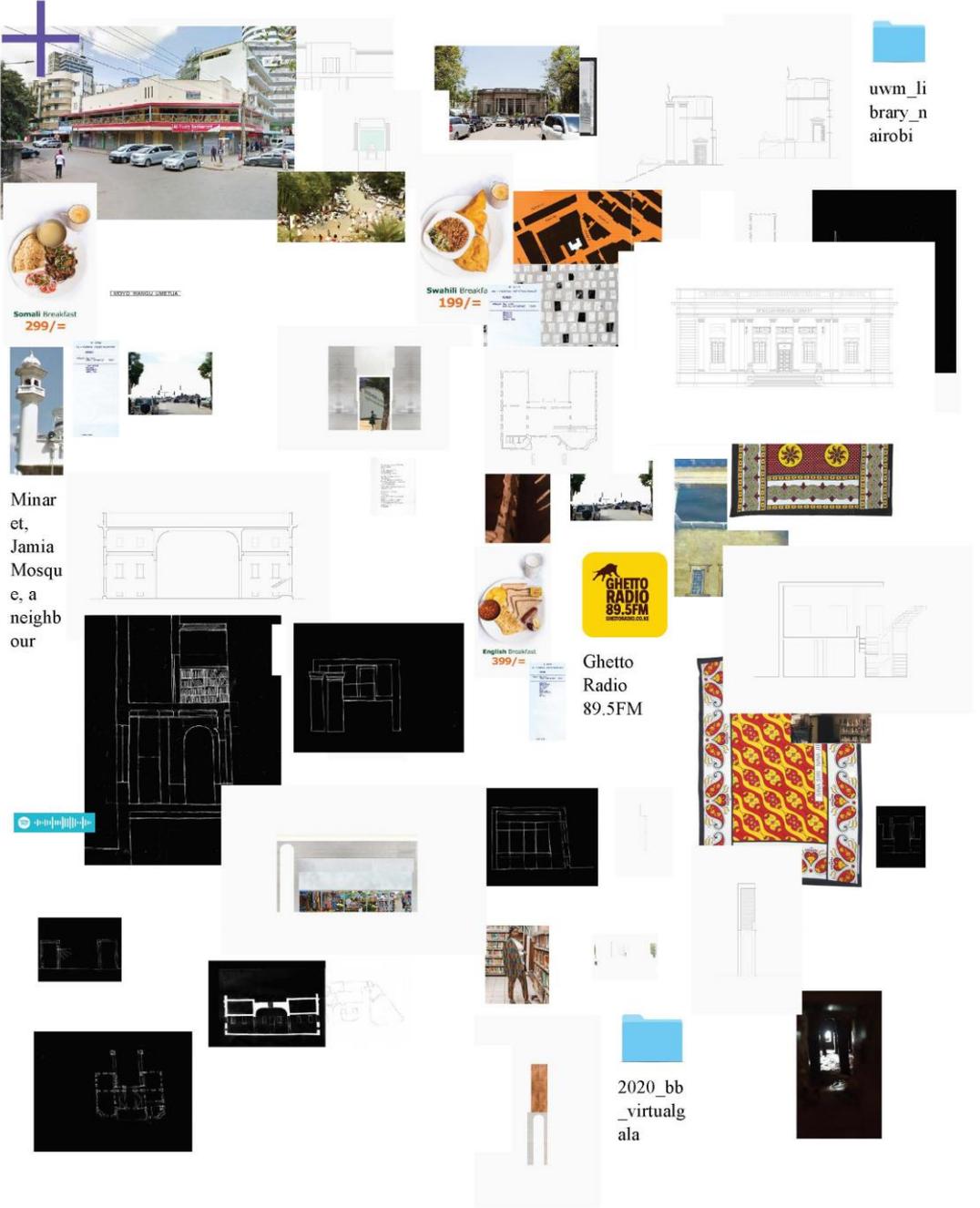
5/2/2021

Homepage - graduate work

Redescribing the Periphery

▶ naisounds-track-1 🎵

Info



Minaret, Jamia Mosque, a neighborhood

<https://graduatework.cargo.site/Homepage>

1/5

Figure 42: Homepage screen print. Author, 2021. Webpage.

Navigation

The website is not intended to prescribe a single route or sequence of navigation. As a redescription of the library itself, an assemblage of constituent fragments, the maneuverability through the documentary material must not be fixed and therefore is subject to modification. To clearly connect design imaginaries with a linguistic underpinning, however, I created a drawing that is an assemblage of drawings overlaid with the Sheng operations. This composite drawing can be read as multiple, simultaneous projections of the space: plan, section, elevation. It is arguably the most complete drawing of the redescribed library, but as no single fragment is weighted differently from the rest, the reading is flattened into a non-hierarchical composition. This emphasised the revisiting of the homepage for further elucidation on how a linguistic modifier might transform a colonial library redescribed.

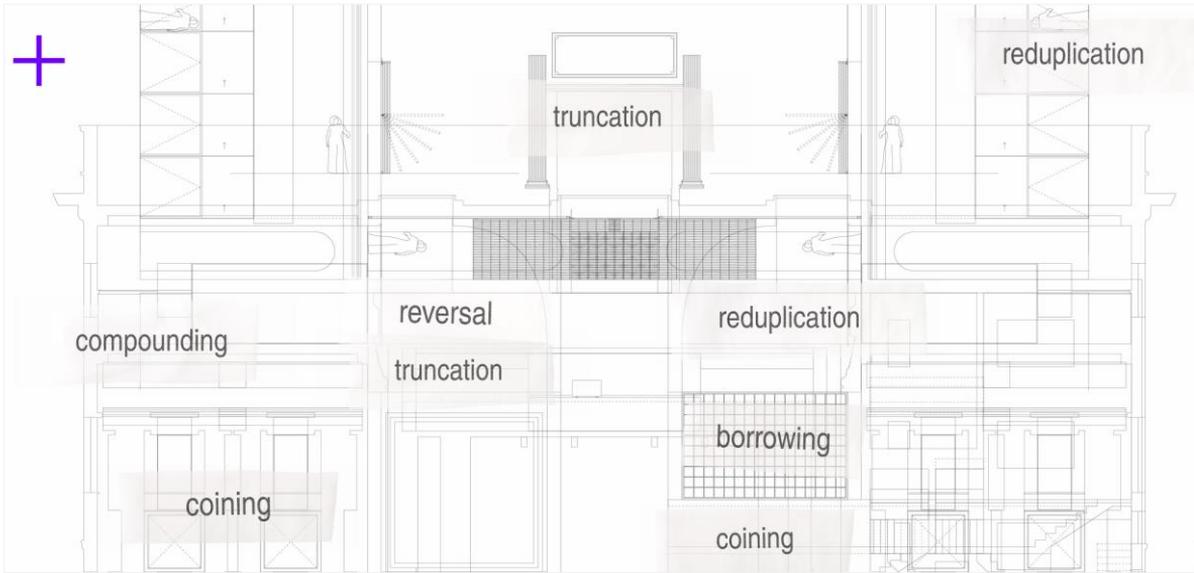


Figure 43: Navigation page, composite assemblage, screen capture. Author, 2021. Webpage.

Dethroning the piano nobile

I argue for a new architectural datum for the transformed McMillan Memorial Library, a reset, from which new improvisations can unfold. This thesis speculatively proposes a shift in the ground of the library. Elevated by fifteen marble stairs, the front doors to the library sit higher than many of the entrances in the immediate context of the library. I suggest the demolition of the neoclassical stairs as an initial but fundamental destabilization of the colonial ideology that is fused into its architecture and consequently the experience of that architecture. The marble is excavated, chipped, and becomes the texture of the newly poured ground. The primary level of the library now lies co-planar with the city and its life in totality. Interiorly, the relation between the body and existing elements of the neoclassical architecture are disrupted, making space for new openings in the **building's façade and new opportunities for spatial configuration**. Critically, the colonial piano nobile has been metaphorically dethroned and the architecturalized power hierarchy has been reduced. A simple Nolli plan describes the planar implications of this sectional shift, inviting the city into space. The new ground now connects the interior of the library with its exterior, a unification across a former ideological border. This begins to reverse the compartmentalization that defines the colonial segregation from the uninhabitable.

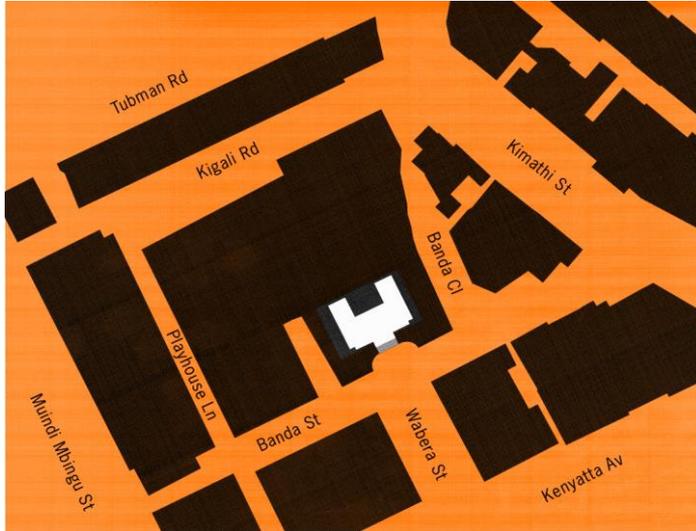


Figure 44: Nolli plan showing the library elevated piano nobile (white). The stairs are visible and separated the city from the interior.

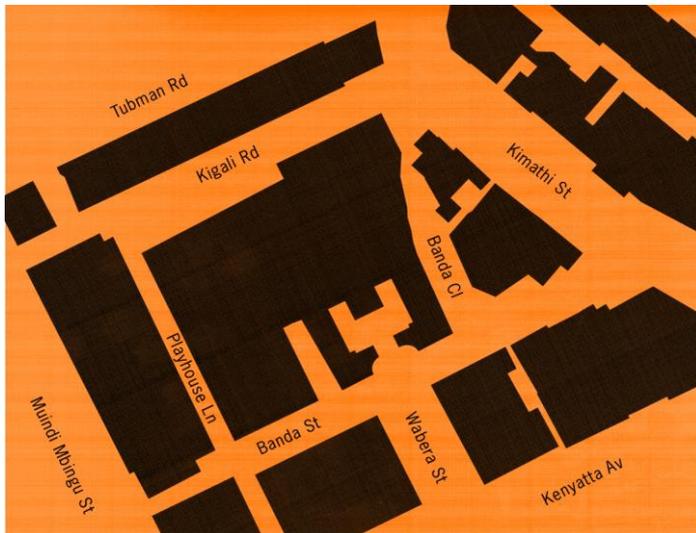


Figure 45: Nolli plan showing the city (orange) as indistinguishable from the interior of the library.

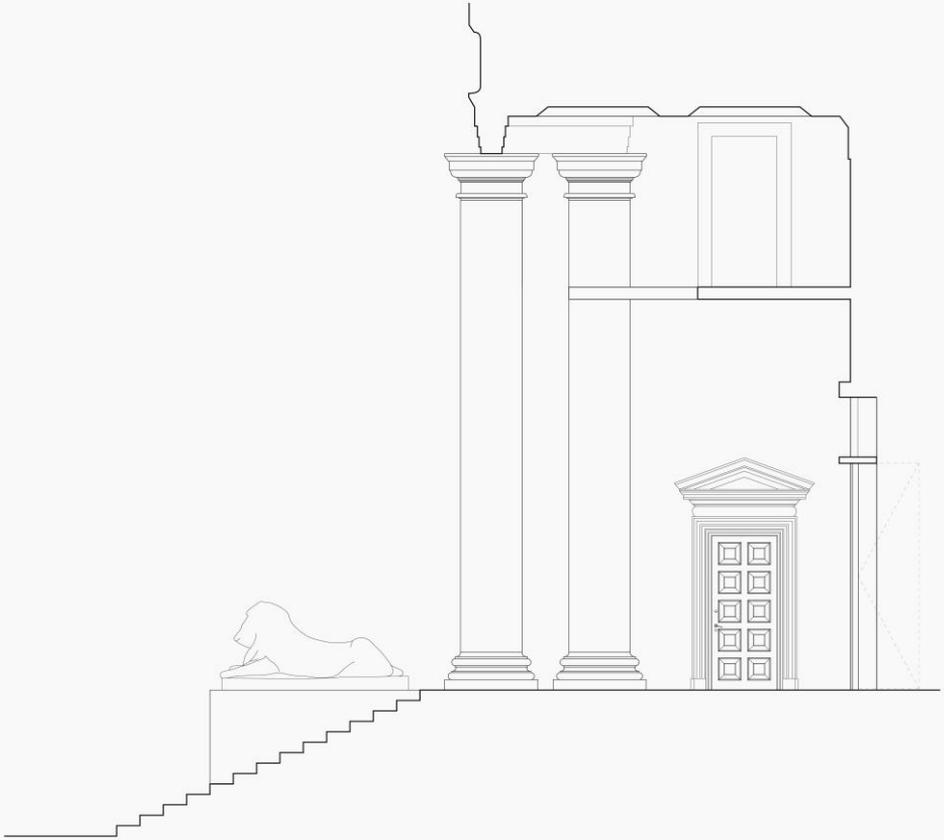


Figure 46: Portico, stairs intact. Author, 2021.



Figure 47: Portico, stairs removed, front doors shifted.

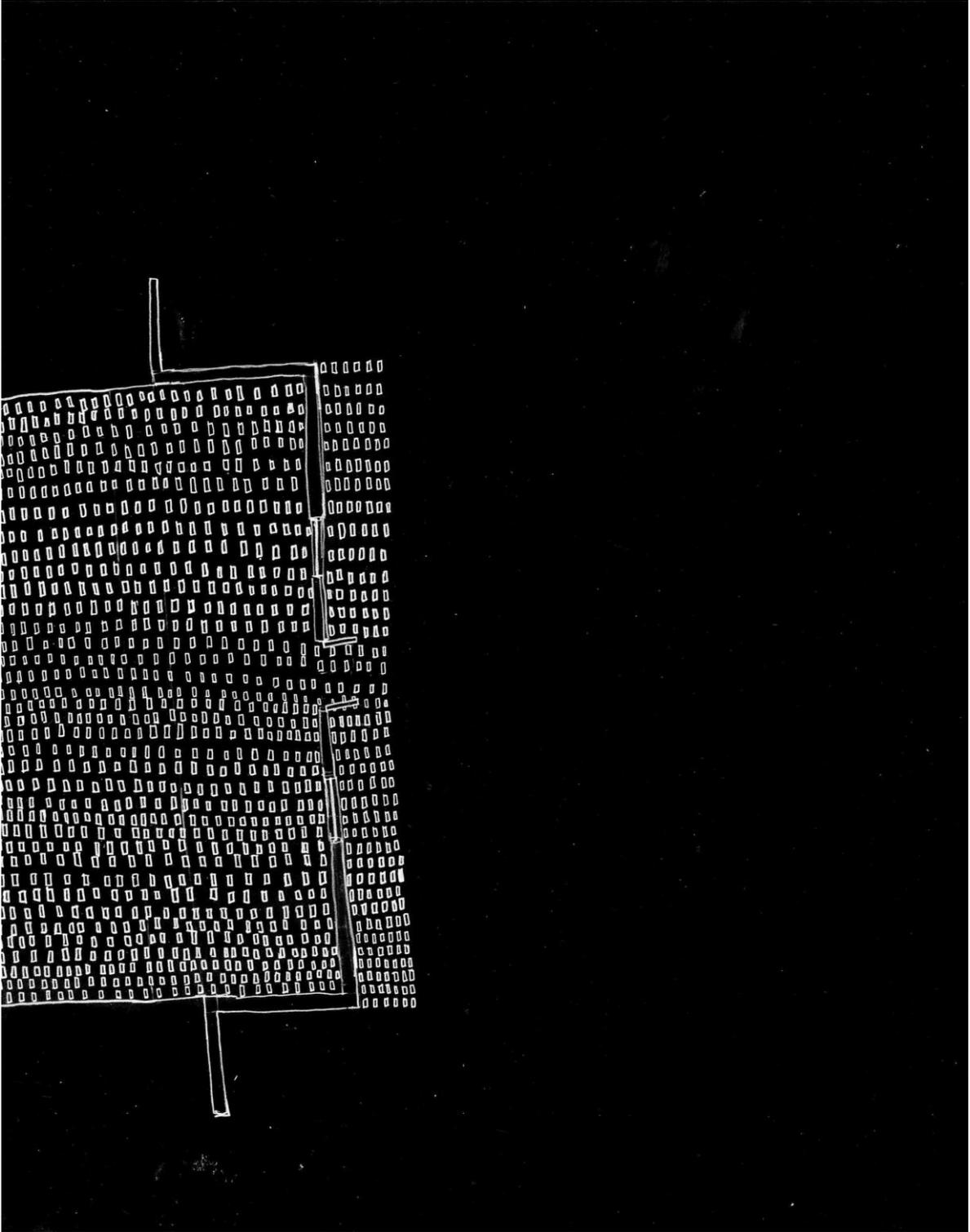


Figure 48: Marble chips in a continuous ground, graphite on paper. Author, 2021.

Linguistically motivated design transformations

The shift of the main floor of the library down to existing street level, recalibrated the relationship with the elements within the space: windows, stairs, ceilings- access to natural light, vertical circulation, head heights. This presents an opportunity to establish new resonances with the space, without the erasure of the realities of colonial Kenyan history. By using linguistic operations, the imagined design transformations co-opt the colonial residue into a new architectural vocabulary, through which the redescribed library might be articulated. In an interview with Balmoi Abe of Mambo Heritage, a collective partnered with Book Bunk for the transformation of the McMillan, he confirms the need to open the façade and roof to the city and environment. I originally discussed this as a necessary perforation of the colonial architecture. Each design idea is worked through in a fragmentary way, acknowledging that complete resolution in this thesis is not possible and would run counter to the thesis framework. The assemblage of fragments allows space for interpretation in the disjuncture or imagination that exists between fragments. The use of cadded linework is a conscious choice to emphasize a subversion of conventional representation of non-conventional design possibilities, further destabilizing hegemonic architectural articulation and communication.

Moving into the library one is confronted with a faux fireplace, Lord Northrup McMillan's bust sits on the mantelpiece. This alcove is non-functional, a colonial homely hearth. I propose removing this wall entirely, in effect punching an opening through the north wall of the library, neutralizing the court <> library axis of power. No longer terminating with the library's namesake, the library visitor is met with a view to the Syed Abdullah Shah Memorial Library. Not only does this create a sightline through the library, by framing the mosque's library connects the McMillan with an important neighbour and calls attention to the network of libraries and information that exists beyond the Nairobi blue stone walls.



Figure 49: The fireplace relocated according to the new ground plane. Photoshopped existing image, by author, 2021.

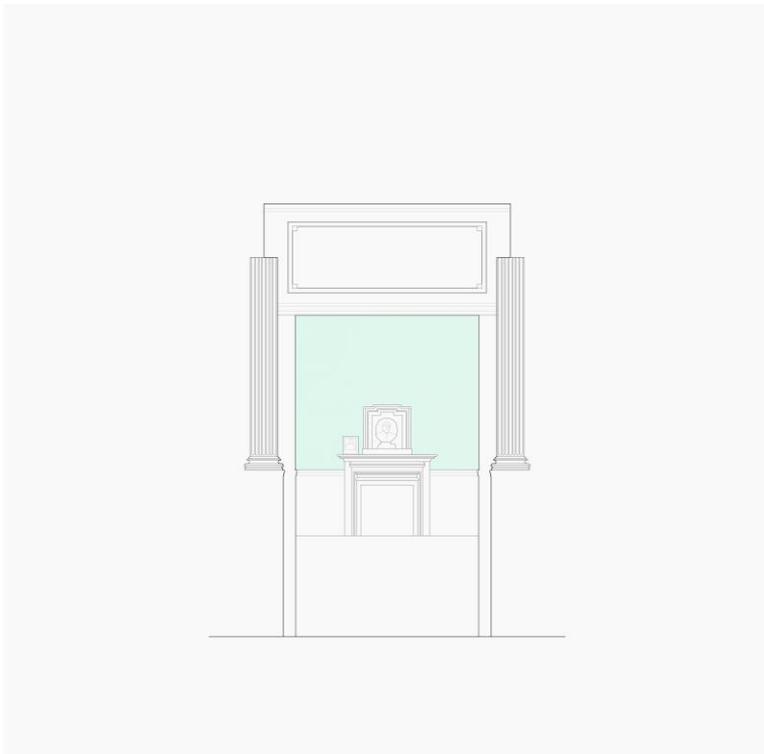


Figure 50: The fireplace, prior to removal. Author, 2021.

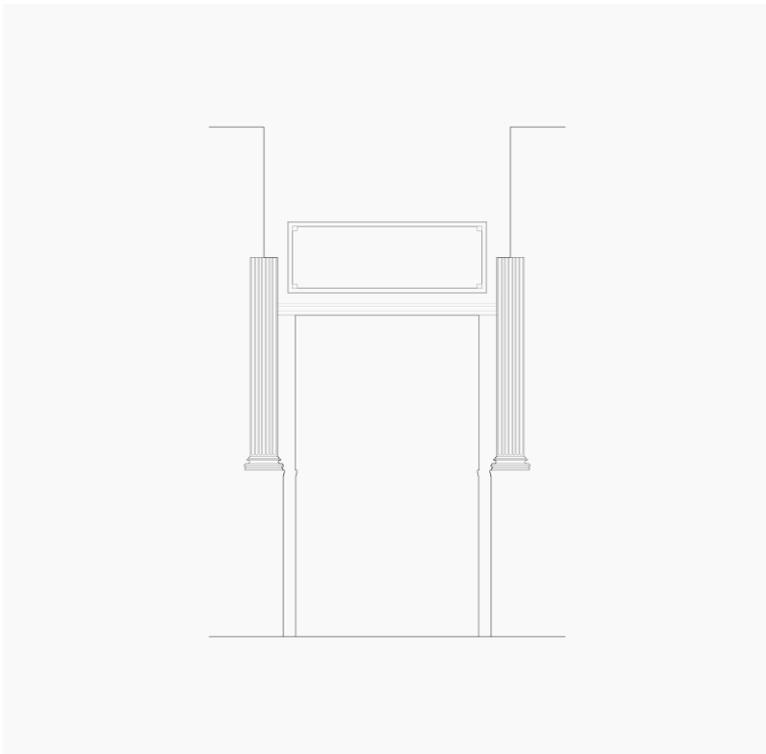


Figure 51: New opening, fireplace removed. Opening dimensions preserved. Author, 2021.

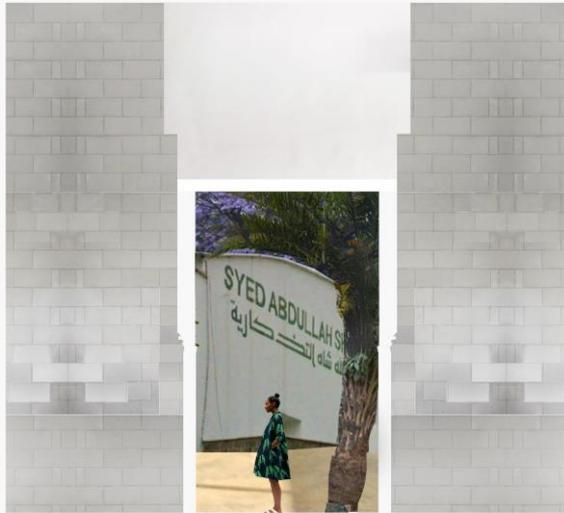


Figure 52: View to the Syed Abdullah Shah Memorial Library. Author, 2021.

REVERSAL

Sectionally, I propose the inversion of the central atrium's filleted ceiling corners. Currently, the library has no connection to the upper wings, one of which historically has housed the Africana collection. Establishing a visual and aural transparency between the upper and lower levels is intended to allow for the public and the less public spaces to synthesize and dialogue. The reversal of the corners links the two floors, brings in more daylight, and starts to differentiate the two symmetrical hemispheres of the library. The move flips the existing language to interface with the environment and improve socialities within the library.



Figure 53: Initial drawing of fillet reversal, creating light scoops and a generous central skylight. Drawing by author, 2021, graphite on paper.

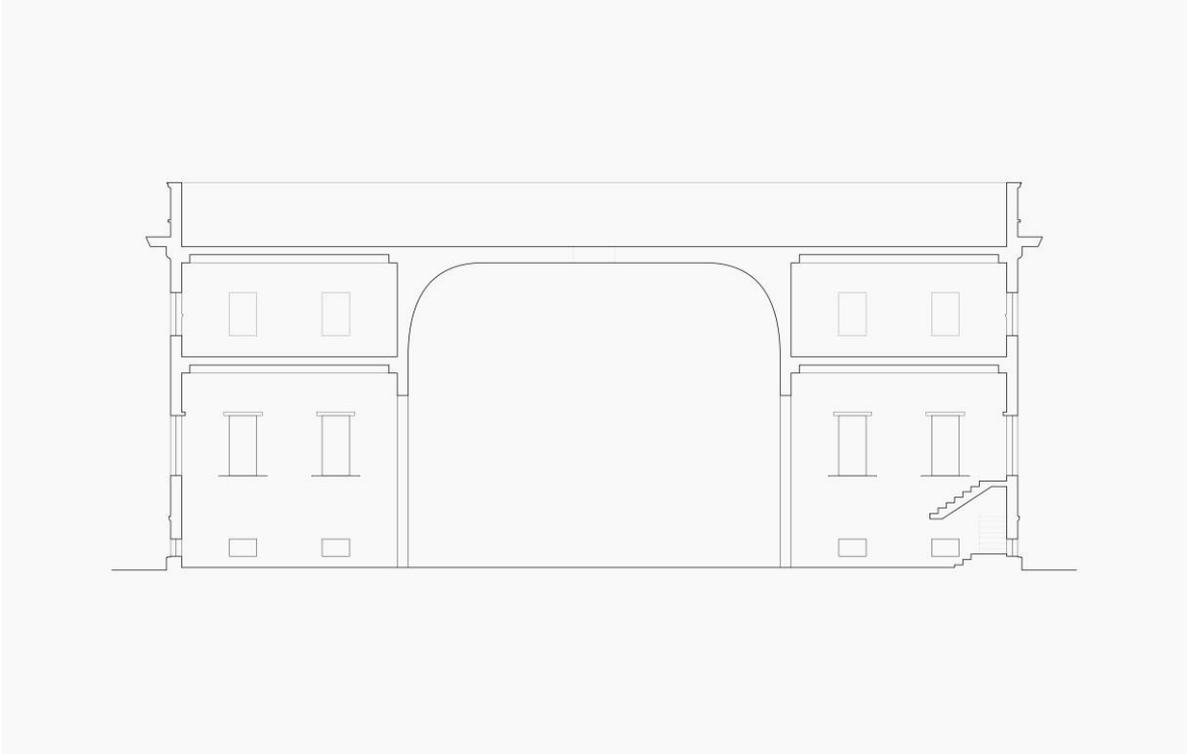


Figure 54: Original section, author, 2021.



Figure 55: Modified section, author, 2021.



Figure 56: Rendered section. New mezzanine is shown, and insertion of a new language. Author, 2021.

A NEW WINDOW

As the elevational relationship with the window changed with the shift of the ground plane to city level, the walls surface area increased, presenting an opportunity to rethink the formal language of the opening to the exterior. This fragment is an idea about subtracting ornamentation and inserting a new opening between the existing language of the windows. The inserted window, shown with a wooden frame, is operable. The view outside to the jacarandas and other trees and plants – the site is lush with vegetation – affords a more generous albeit fragmented framing. Throughout the fragments there was intent around material inscribing ghosts or shadows of other formal elements (sills, pediments, lintels, for example).

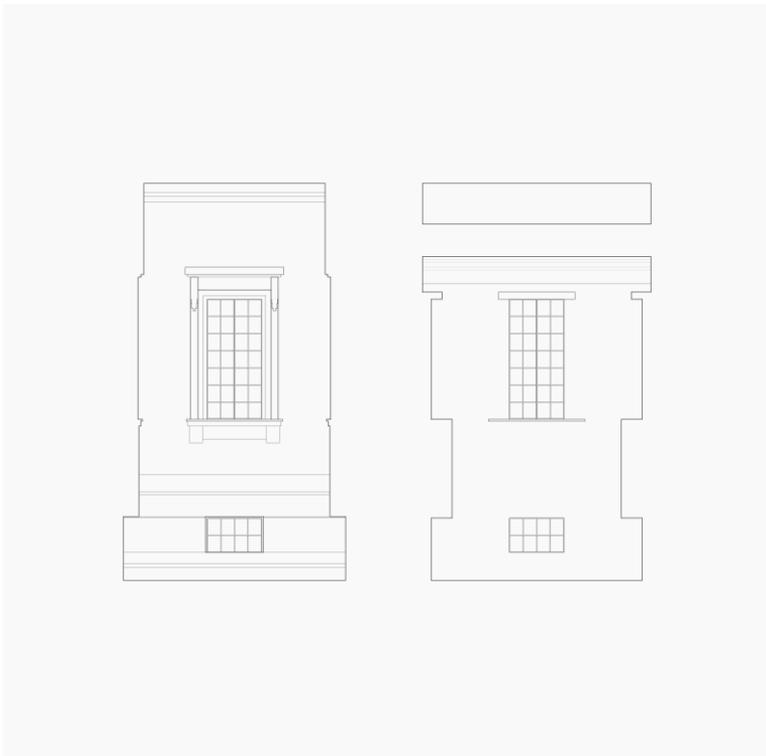


Figure 57: Current windows, exterior (left), interior (right). Author, 2021.

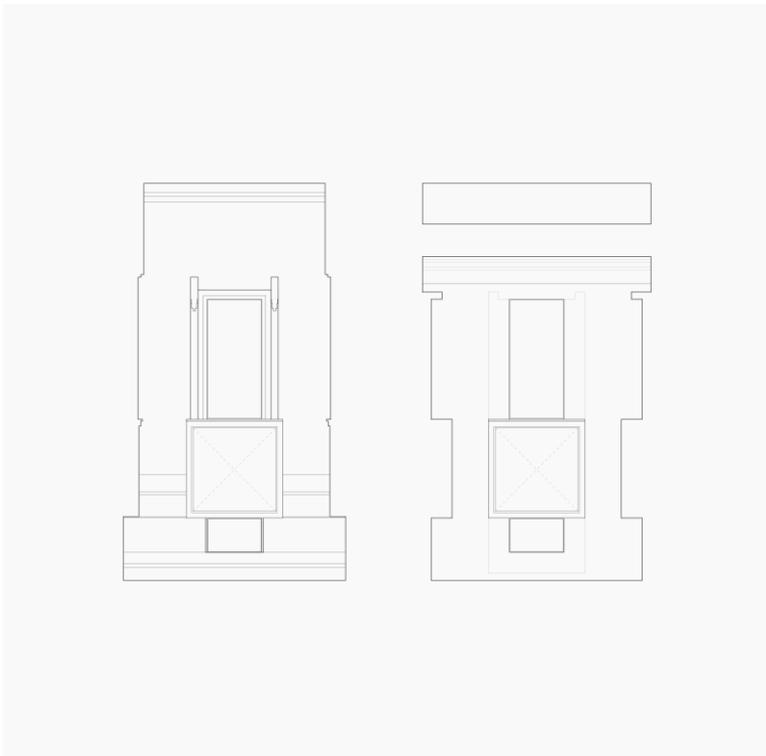


Figure 58: Modified windows, exterior (left), interior (right). Author, 2021.



Figure 59: Rendered modified window openings. Author, 2021.

This design imaginary began as an exploration of the new relationship a library user has with the staircase, the only vertical circulation core that takes a visitor to the second level. The final drawing is a combination of two spaces: the modified stairwell, and the subsequent mezzanine/archival space that emerged. The clipping of the stairs provided extra floor height, making a mezzanine possible. Under the mezzanine level is a relatively shorter, more intimate, and darker archival space, a prominent insertion into the building on ground level. These archival documents (multi-media) should be highly visible and persistent. Archive in this case does not necessarily mean – to borrow a Sheng term – oldskool, or outdated. Much like the website, an archive in this context is a collection of fragments of the world as it is or appears to be, embellished or banal. In an assemblage these pieces, residue, impressions, catalogues, cuttings, clips are forms of stories and storytelling, do be navigated and deciphered. The material of this space is rammed earth, red earth, that is strong is color and a smell of minerals. The idea of the land or earth is what unifies the collection. It can be programmed as well and inscribed upon. On the outside of the wall the stairs or ascension sequence is extended, also programmed, not simply a path of conveyance.

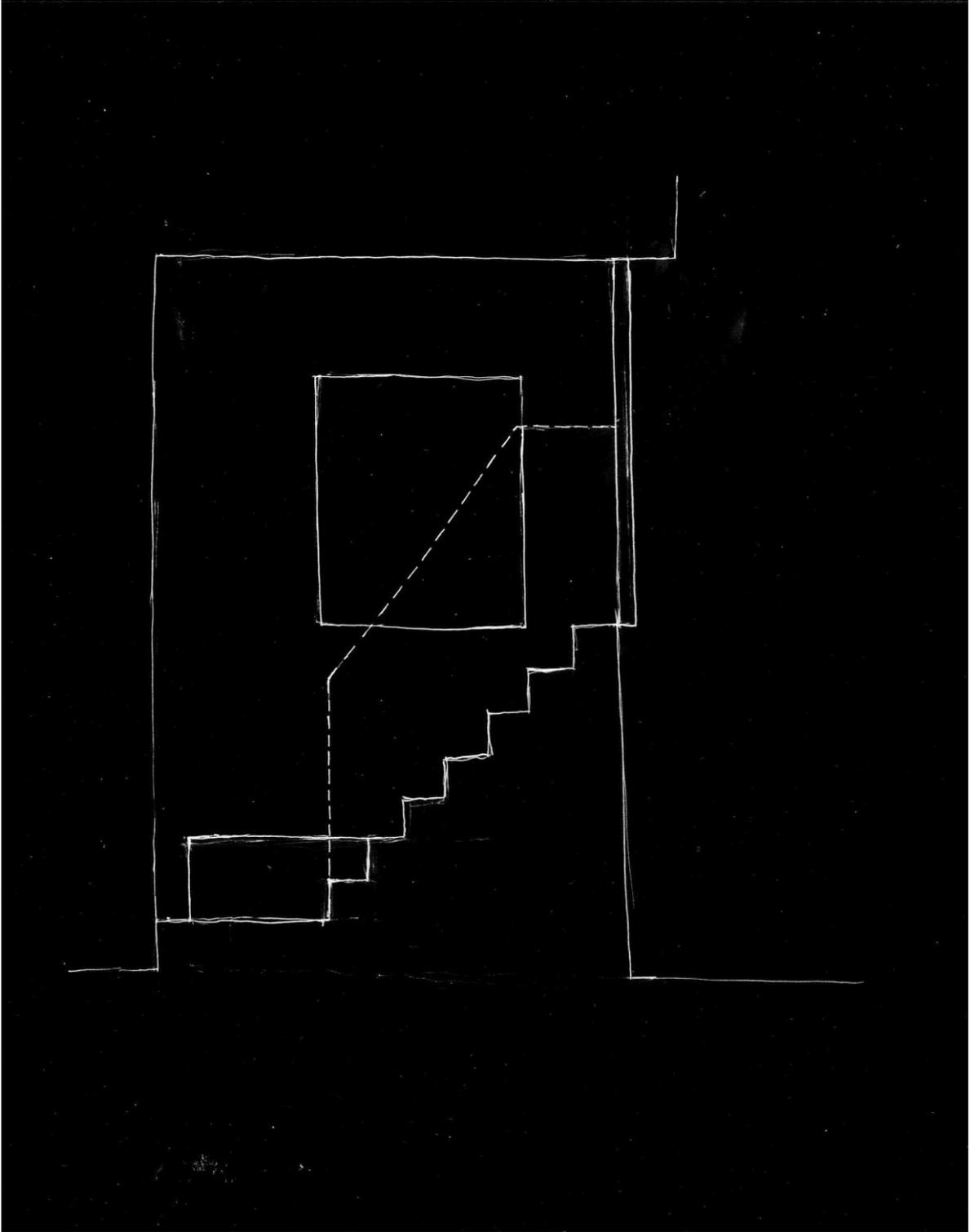


Figure 60: The stairwell, as a device for seating. Author, 2021, graphite on paper.

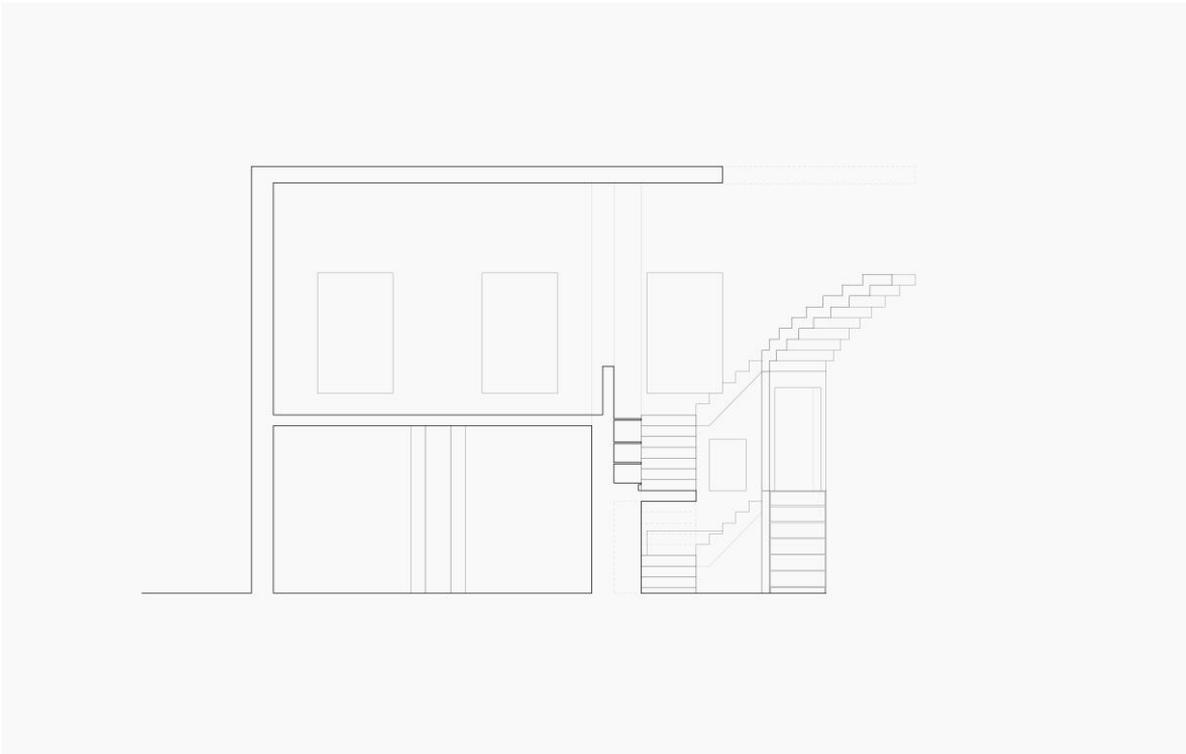


Figure 61: The mezzanine (left) and the stairwell (right) fragment. Author, 2021.

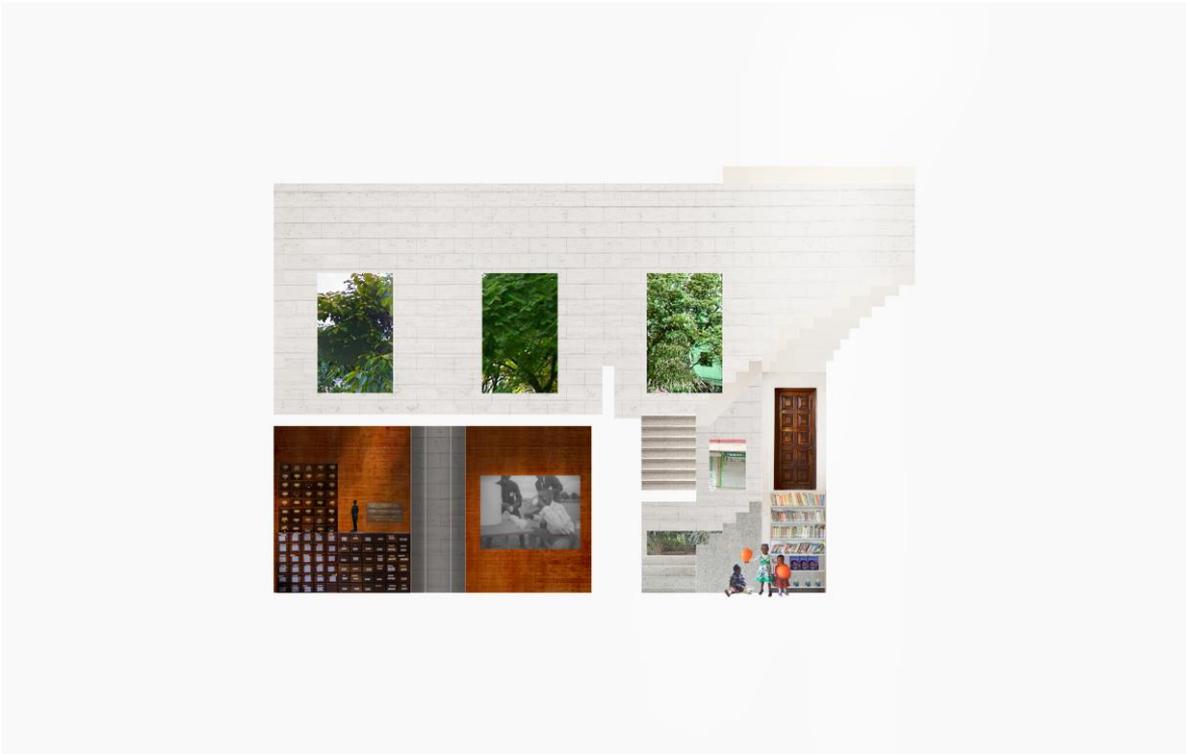


Figure 62: Archive (left) under mezzanine and stairwell (right). The circulation core becomes a childrens reading area, enclosed by the staircase. Author, 2021.

I propose transforming the parking space (the outdoor interior) into a flexible extension of the library, a market space. Documents show book selling, art auctions, community events, parties, taking place in today's library. To open the walls to the outside, the wings become fluid with the market space with the ability to act as stalls or one unified gathering place. This provides a lot of floor space to the library for programming and increases the amount of natural light into the interior.

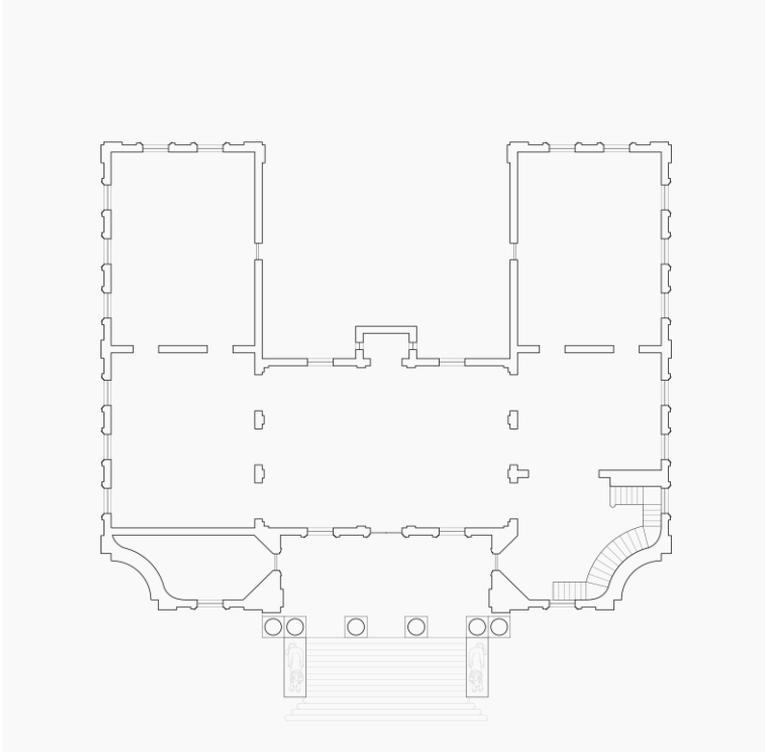


Figure 63: Original floor plan, stairs still present. The U-shaped plan is cut off from its central courtyard. Author, 2021.

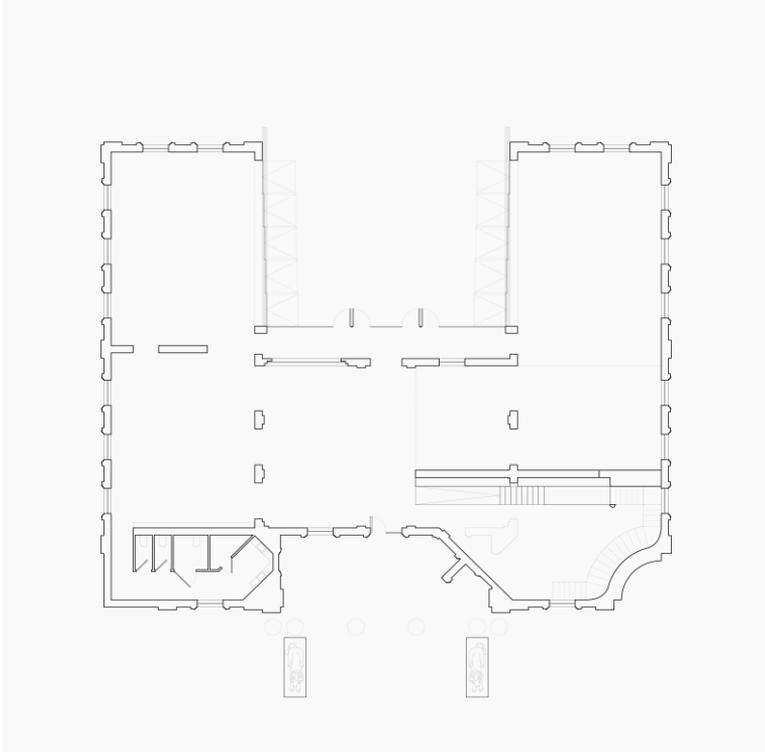


Figure 64: The wings now open on to the courtyard, the walls dissolved. Author, 2021.

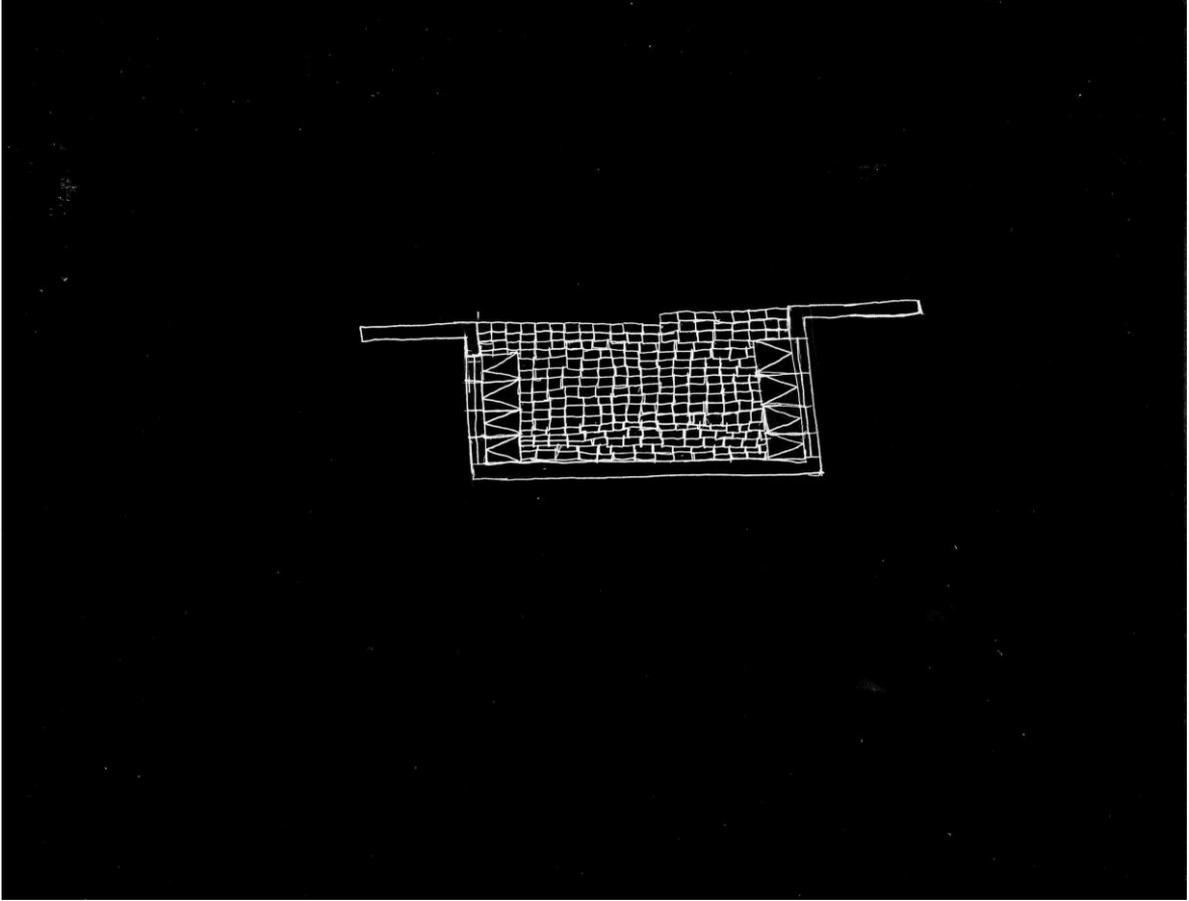


Figure 65: Market space, awning doors shown in plan. Author, 2021, graphite on paper.

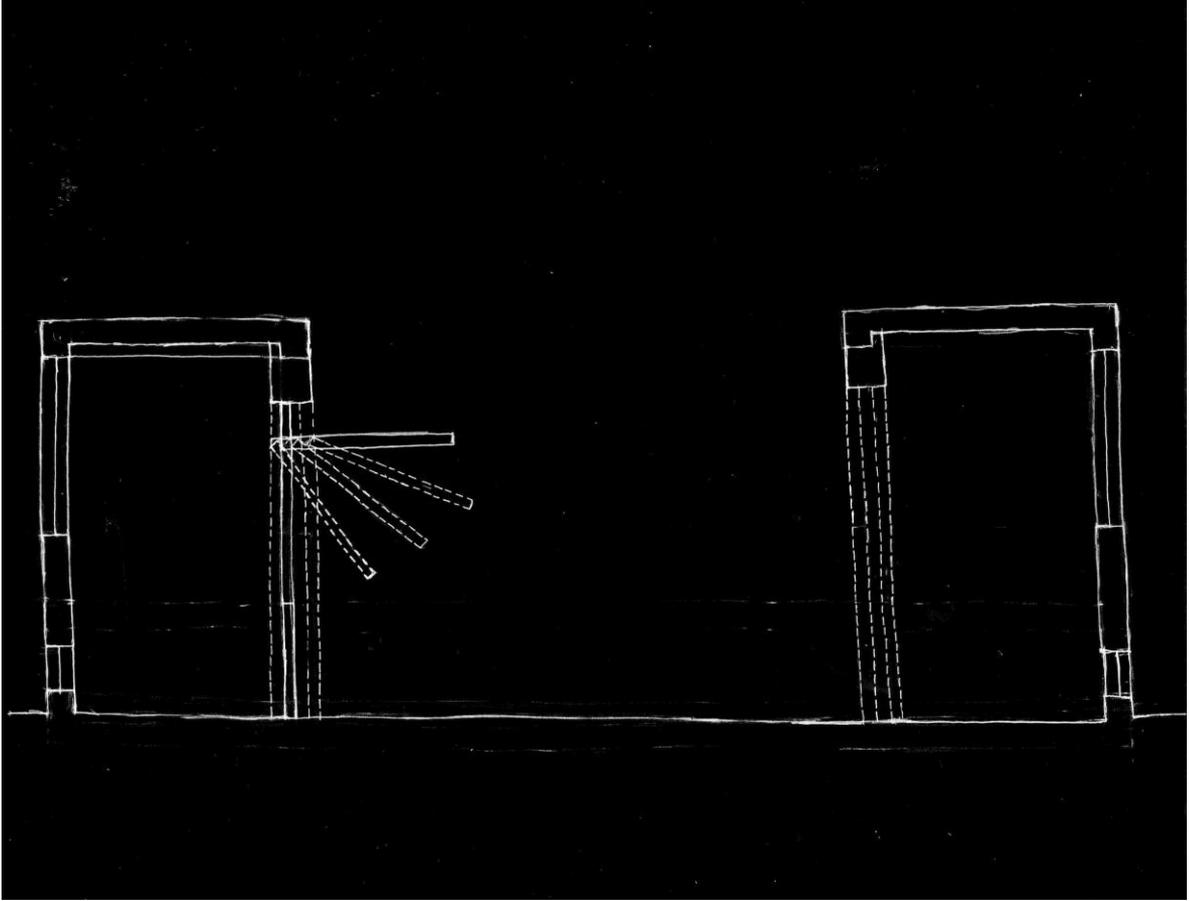


Figure 66: Section sketch showing awning swing and sliding door. Author, 2021, graphite on paper.

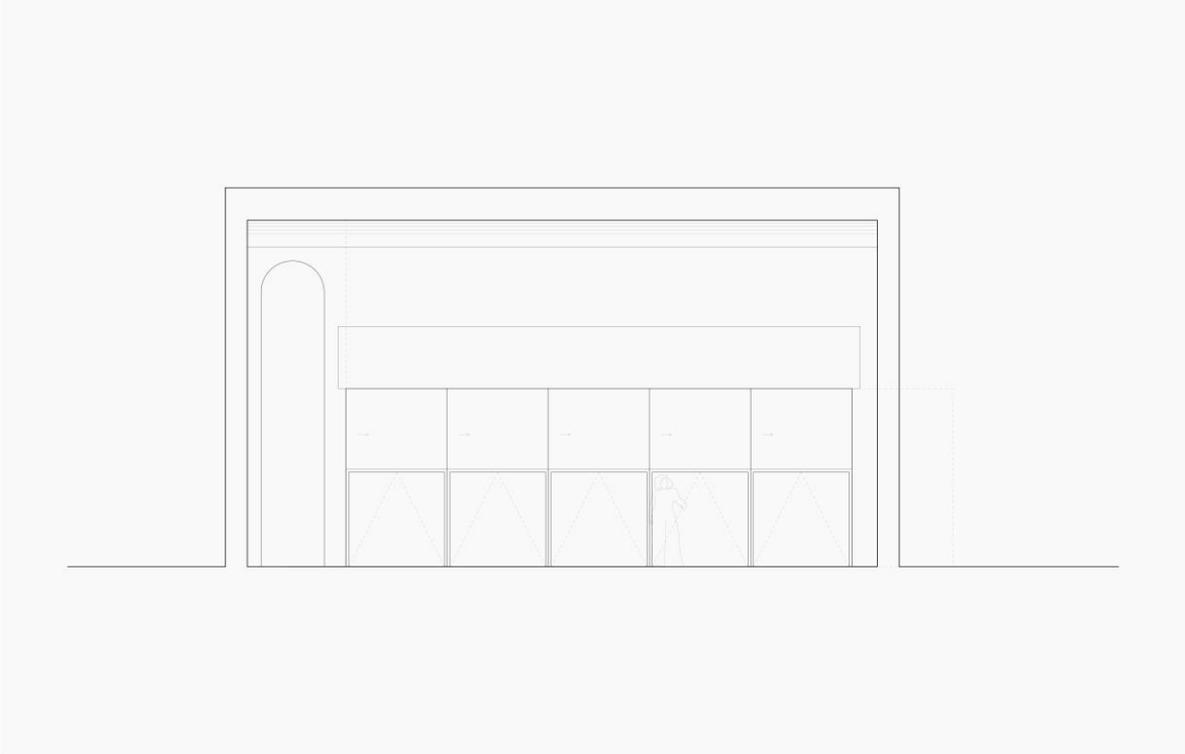


Figure 67: CAD drawing of interior wall that opens on to market space. Author, 2021.



Figure 68: Rendered market space, seen through the wall from the library interior. The market becomes materially part of the **library's** interior elevation. Author, 2021.

Finally, the last design idea exists in the transformation of the portico. Within the portico is a narrow balcony that serves as the passage between the two wings. It is a short, dark space, that is currently little more than an outdoor corridor. I propose widening this passage to form a new outdoor level that can be programmed as a bar/café. This space has one of the best views of the city from the library, looking down Wabera St to the law courts. It is a spot for people-watching. The Central Business District is home to many cafés and bars, much like other global cosmopolitan centres like London and New York (see Interview with Balmoi Abe in Appendix B). This is a program that Book Bunk specifically hopes to include in the new McMillan space. Though small, I frame this café as a counterpoint to the transience of its former life as a corridor. The extension of the space also requires a decapitation of the existing columns, which now support an entirely new program for the library. Rather than the best view of the city remaining as an architectural afterthought that connects the libraries upper floors, why not make this an intentional destination and spot of stasis to watch the life of the city unfold for a while?



Figure 69: Friday prayers, Wabera St. Video from Mambo Heritage Instagram, gif still by author, 2021.

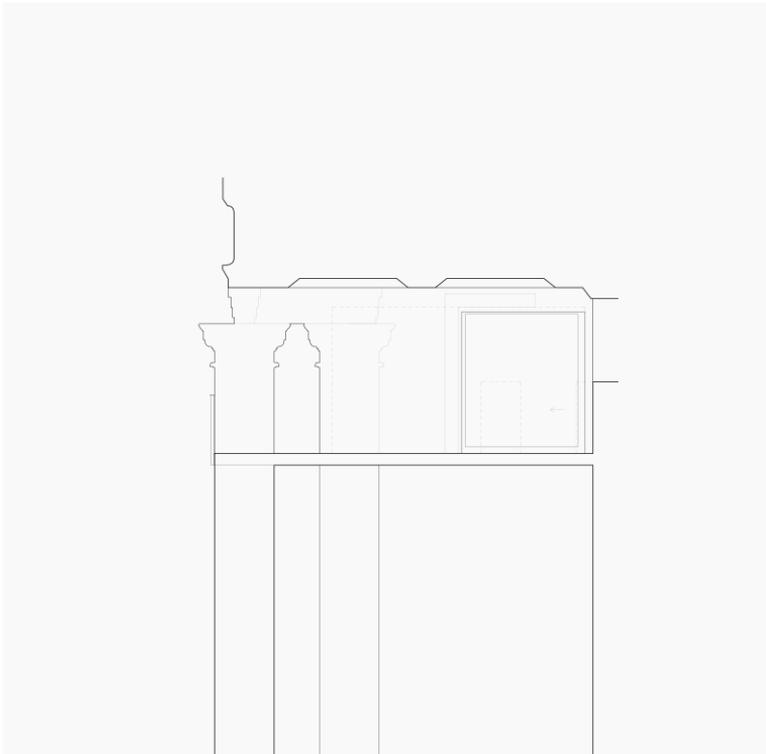


Figure 70: New cafe. Existing columns are synthesized into the extension. Author, 2021.



Figure 71: New cafe, front section. The cut line shows how the existing architectural elements are unified to support the new cafe program. Author, 2021.

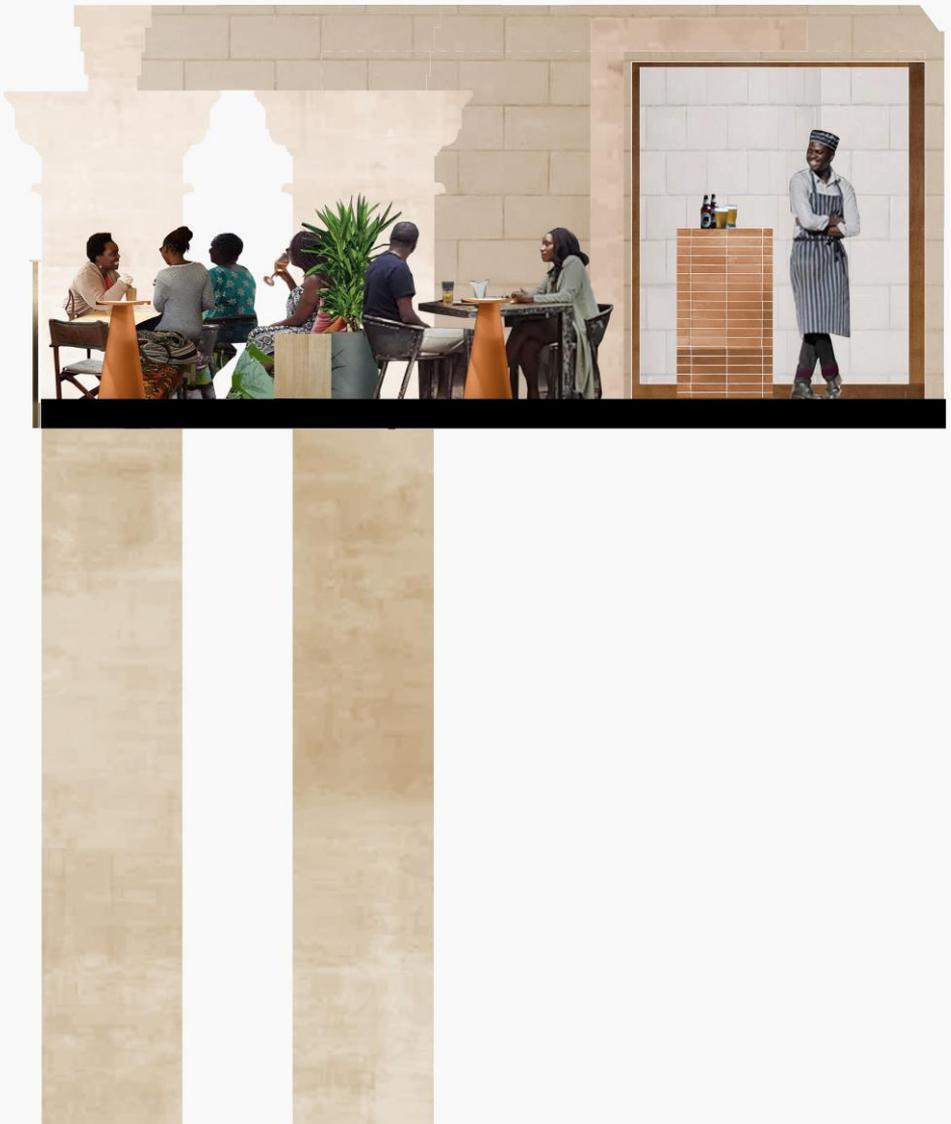


Figure 72: Cafe, section render. Author, 2021.



Figure 73: Cafe render, author, 2021.

Reflection

The design ideas presented are an extension of the research, in some respects an architectural gesture driven by the literature around assemblage and improvisation, and the richness that exists in a fragmentary architecture design methodology. It emphasizes relationality and interpretation, and the potentials that exist in the multiplicity of documentary materials that should inform the future design of the space. I have explored an architectural methodology from which assemblage is a process of working and designing and also a design outcome. A key focus was to centre the stories at the heart of any design proposals, starting with a deliberate move to reconstruct a ground plane co-planar with the diverse topography of tangible and intangible Nairobi city life. While it is difficult to track the direct correlation between a linguistic operation found in Sheng and a design intervention, this thesis shows that rules of architectural modification that embrace individual and collective identity can be found in disciplines outside of a Western definition of architecture. Indeed, collaboration and design logic can be found in all facets of urban life of the periphery, an important step in disrupting ideology of the colonial periphery and that perhaps is not peripheral after all. It is possible to look to the linguistic matrix of non-Europhonic languages, in this case East African, to inform and motivate design transformations that undo the singularity of the core-periphery narrative. This thesis demonstrates that a fragmentary, assemblage-based approach to architectural research and communication is a productive, and often unpredictable, design methodology, capable of generating meaningful resonances.

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Appendix A

Throughout the course of my research in Graduate Project I, I have created numerous documentary materials, an outcome of my engagement with the discourse but also an embodiment of the poetic thinking-making I write about in relation to the stories of the McMillan Memorial Library. In this way, my work blurs the end and the means, the relationalities can always be expanded, added to, layered: an incomplete assemblage. In this appendix I include output from the term which shows the development of my thesis, approximately in chronological order.



Figure 74: Sketch of McMillan Memorial Library, drawn by author, 2020. Red fineliner, pencil crayon, graphite, whiteout tape, oil pastel on newsprint. An anachronism dialoguing with a grid.



Figure 75: Orthoimagery of Nairobi's Central Business District. Maxar/ESRI/Open Street Map. GIS compiled by author, 2020.



Figure 76: City figure ground, Central Business District. McMillan shown in red. Maxar/ESRI/Open Street Map. Drawing by author, 2020.

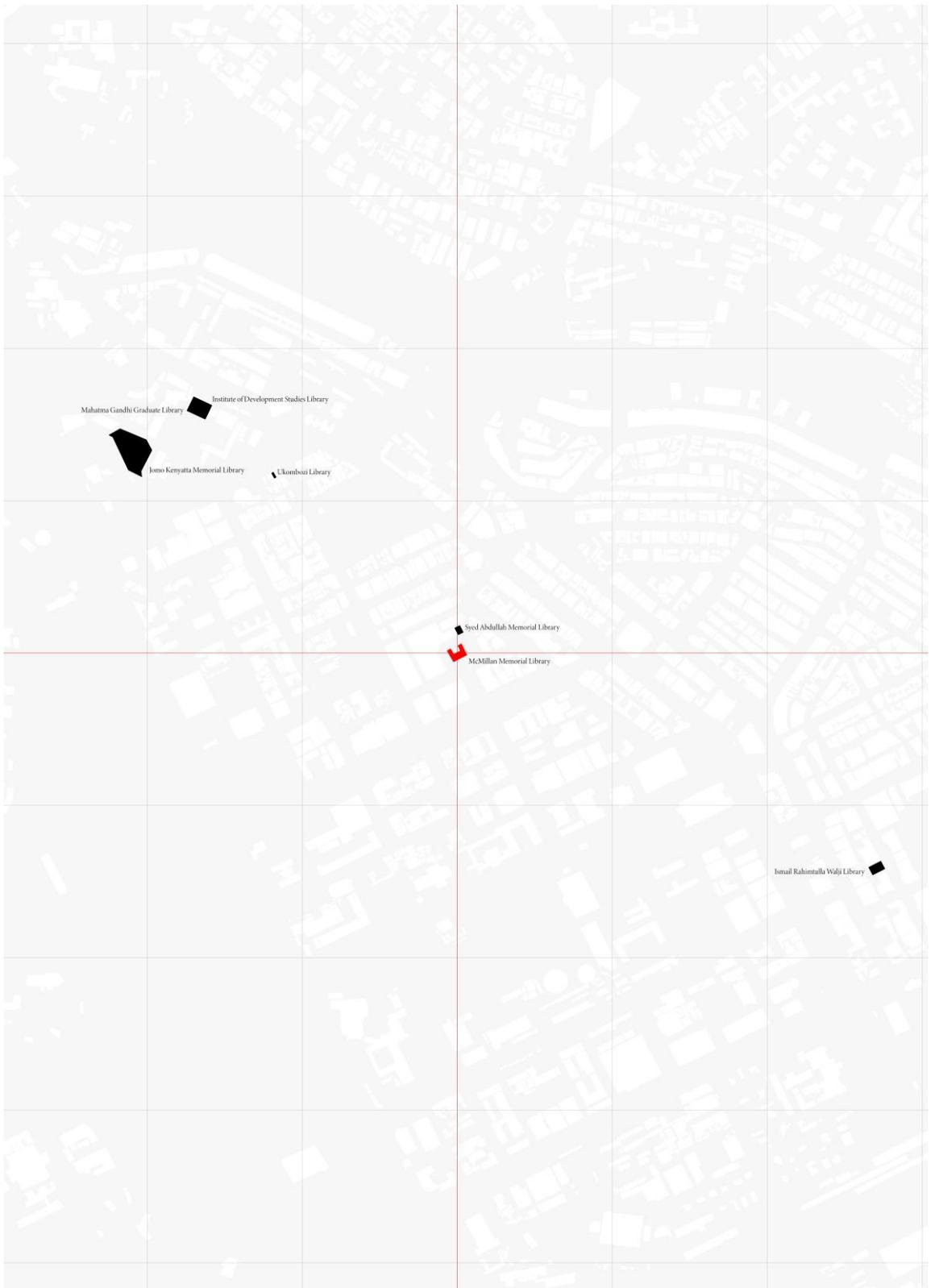


Figure 77: Position in relation to other libraries in the CBD. Maxar/ESRI/Open Street Map. Drawing by author, 2020.



Figure 78: **Compiling the city centre's cyber cafes.** Cyber café names are listed. Maxar/ESRI/Open Street Map. Drawing by author, 2020.

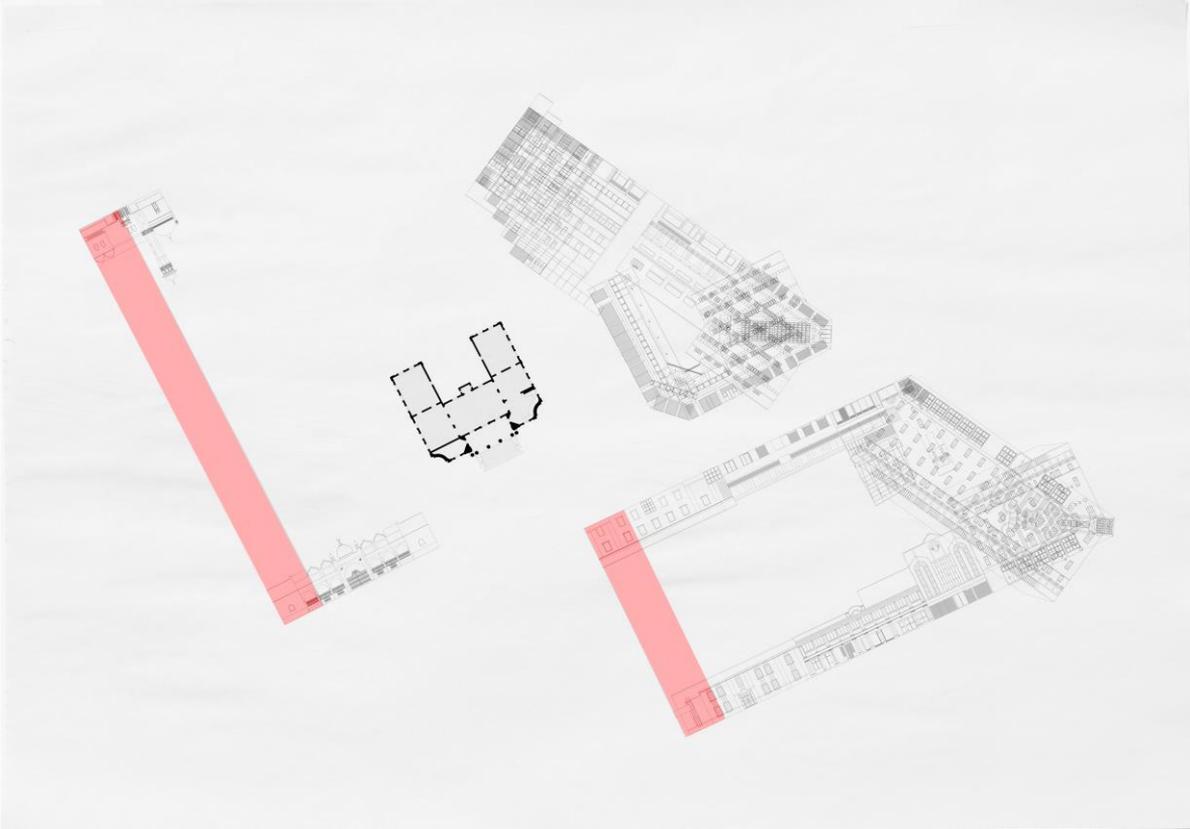


Figure 79: City blocks as seen through elevation. Digital drawing by author , 2020.

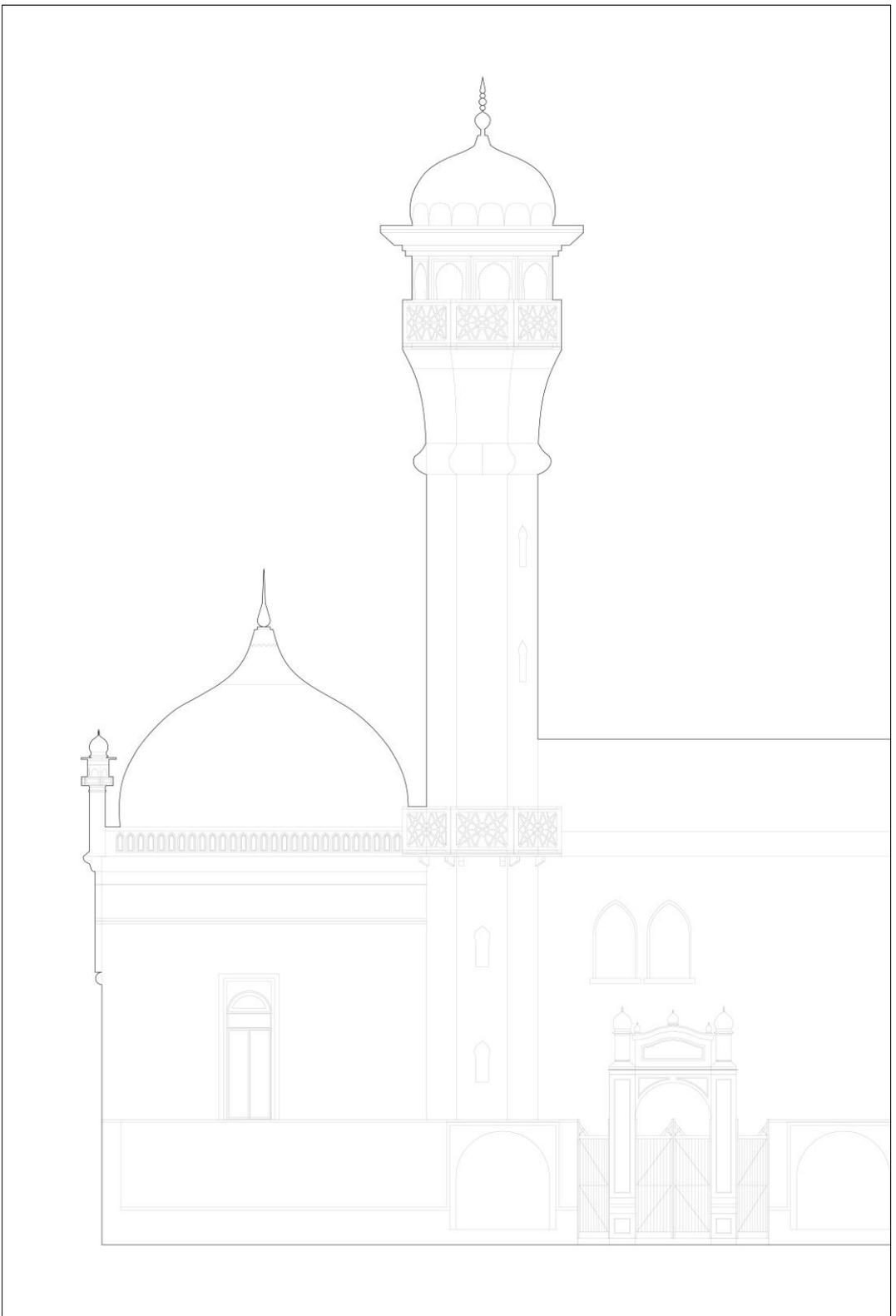


Figure 80: Detail of mosque entrance off Kigali Road. Drawing by author, 2020.

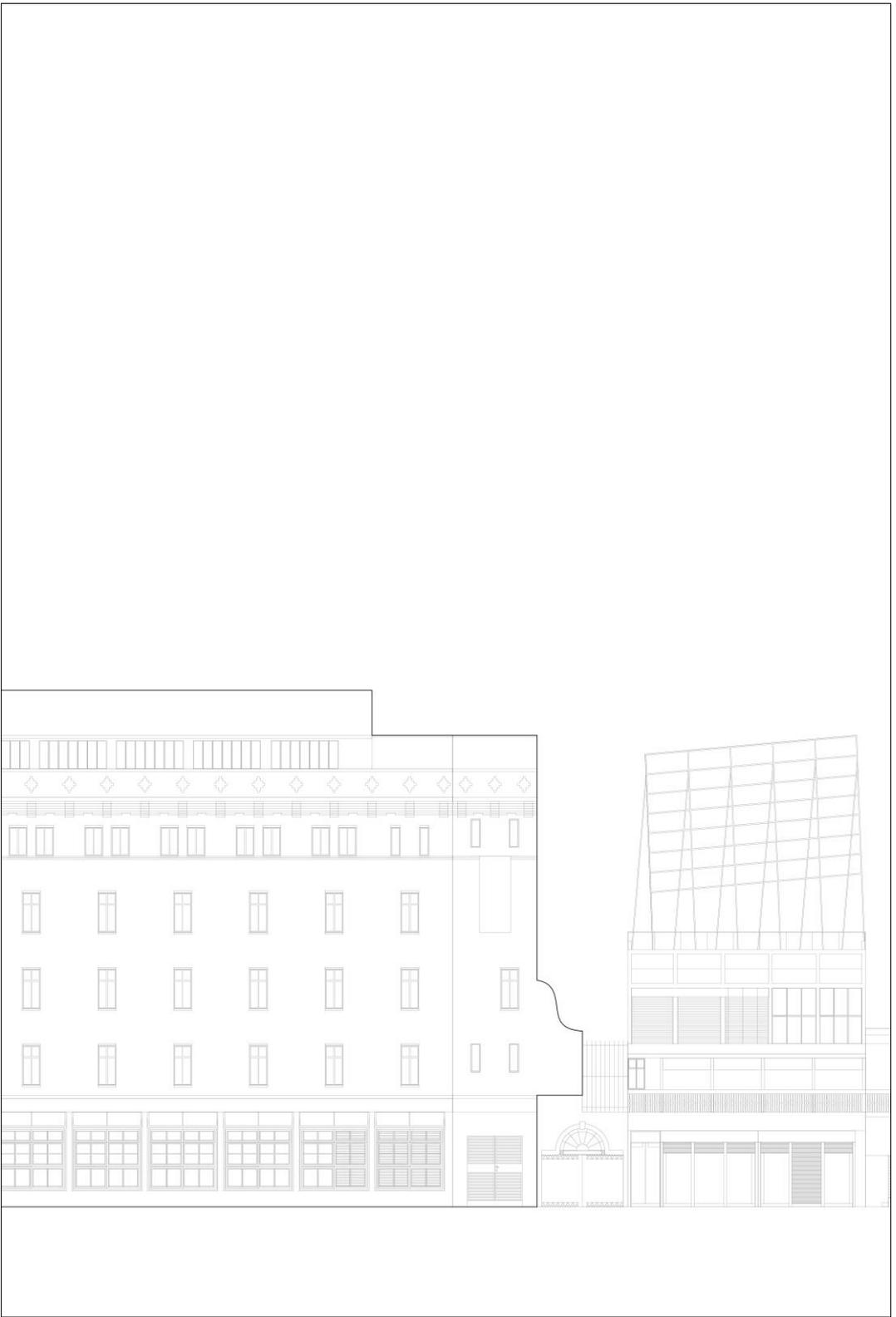


Figure 81: Detail of the space between Stanbic Bank and Mojo's on Banda St. Drawing by author, 2020.

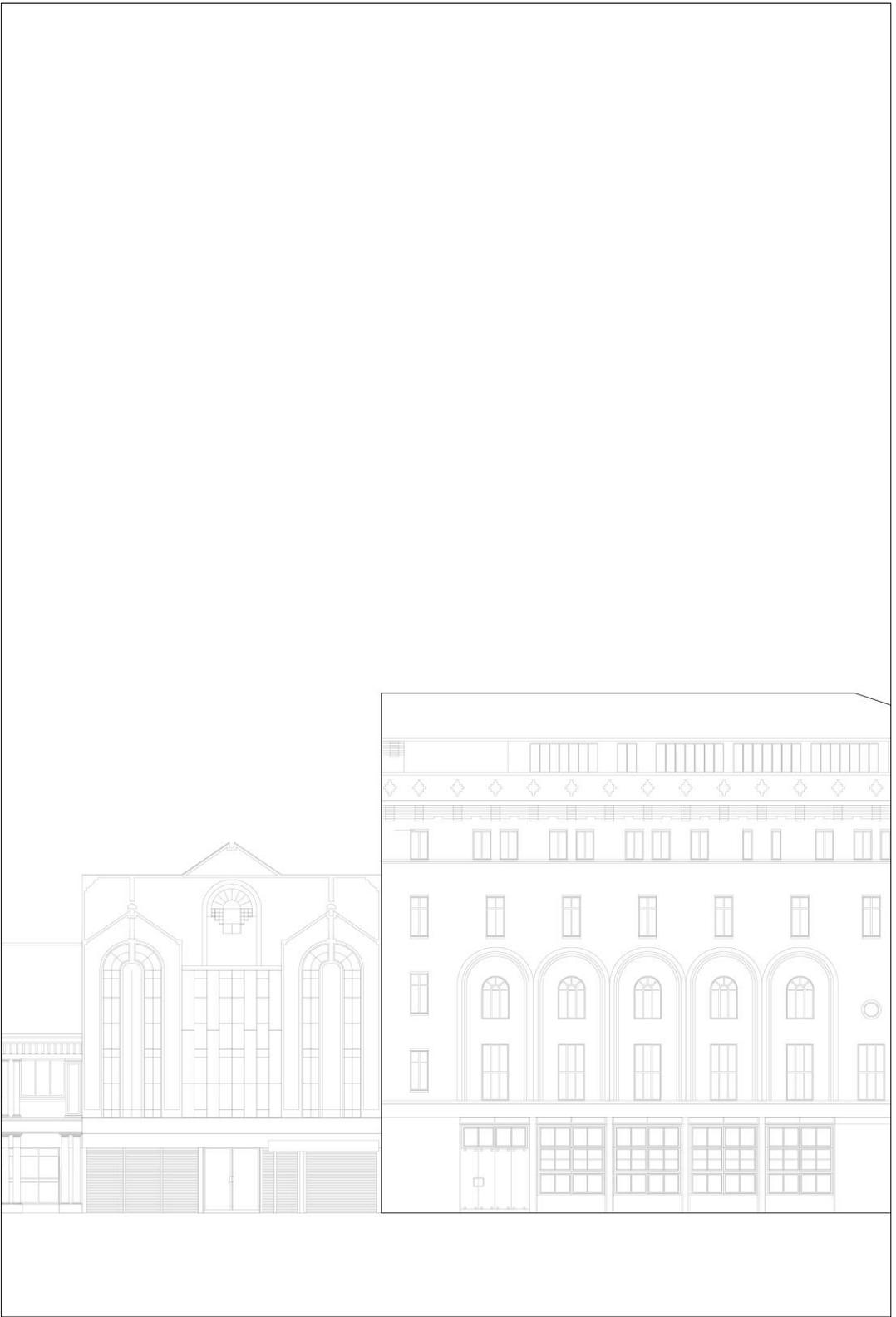


Figure 82: Closeup of Stanbic Bank Building on Kenyatta Ave and Avenue House. Drawing by author, 2020.



Figure 83: McMillan Memorial Library, digital assemblage, by author 2020.



Figure 84: Photographic assemblage of interior space of the McMillan Memorial Library, digital collage by author, 2020.

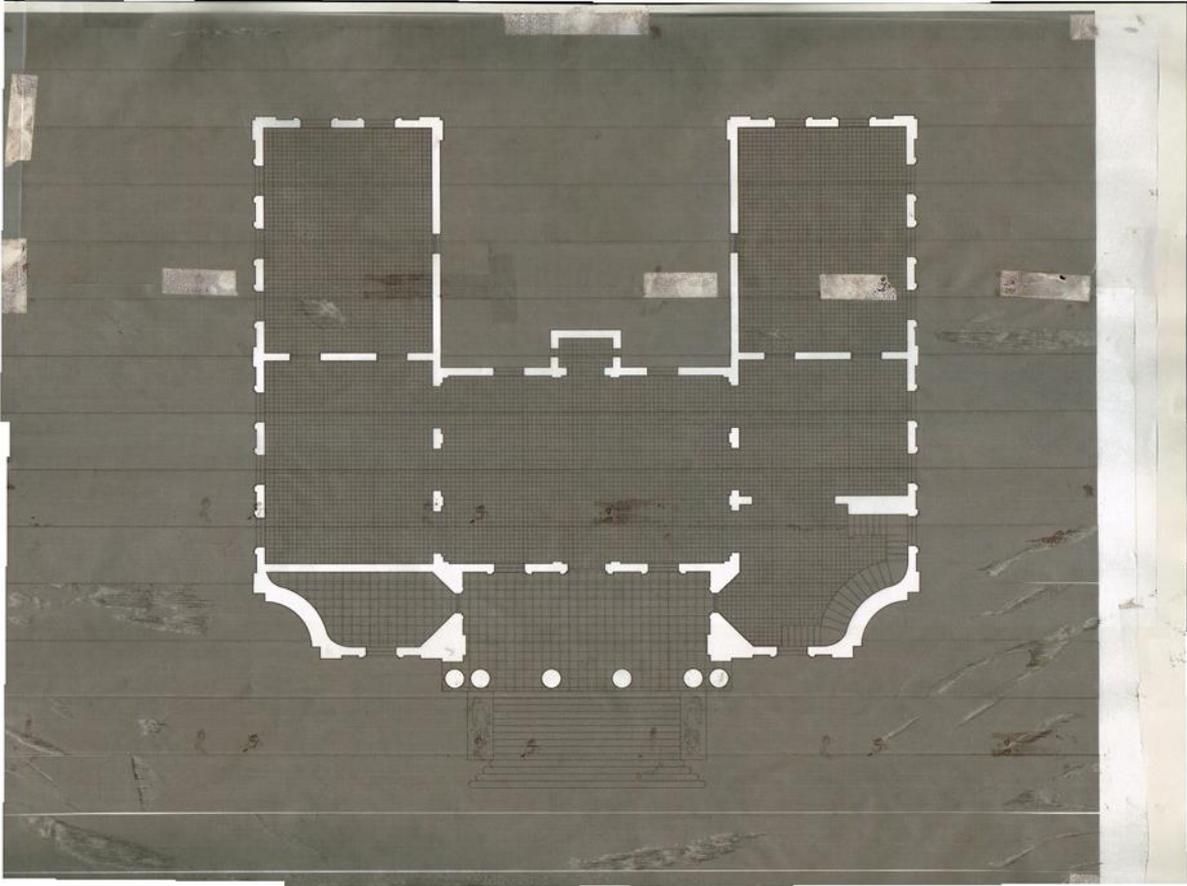


Figure 85: Plan of McMillan Memorial Library, ground floor. Drawn by author and scanned, 2020. Digital drawing on newsprint and trace paper.



Figure 86: Facade of the McMillan Memorial Library. Digital drawing printed on newsprint and tracing paper. Scanned drawing by author, 2020. (Misprints prime the printing surface, rotated plan drawing underlay).

Appendix B

The following drawings relate to Folder Two (Graduate Project II) and loosely are iterations of design-thinking, an extension of the research. These can be found on <http://graduatework.cargo.site>.

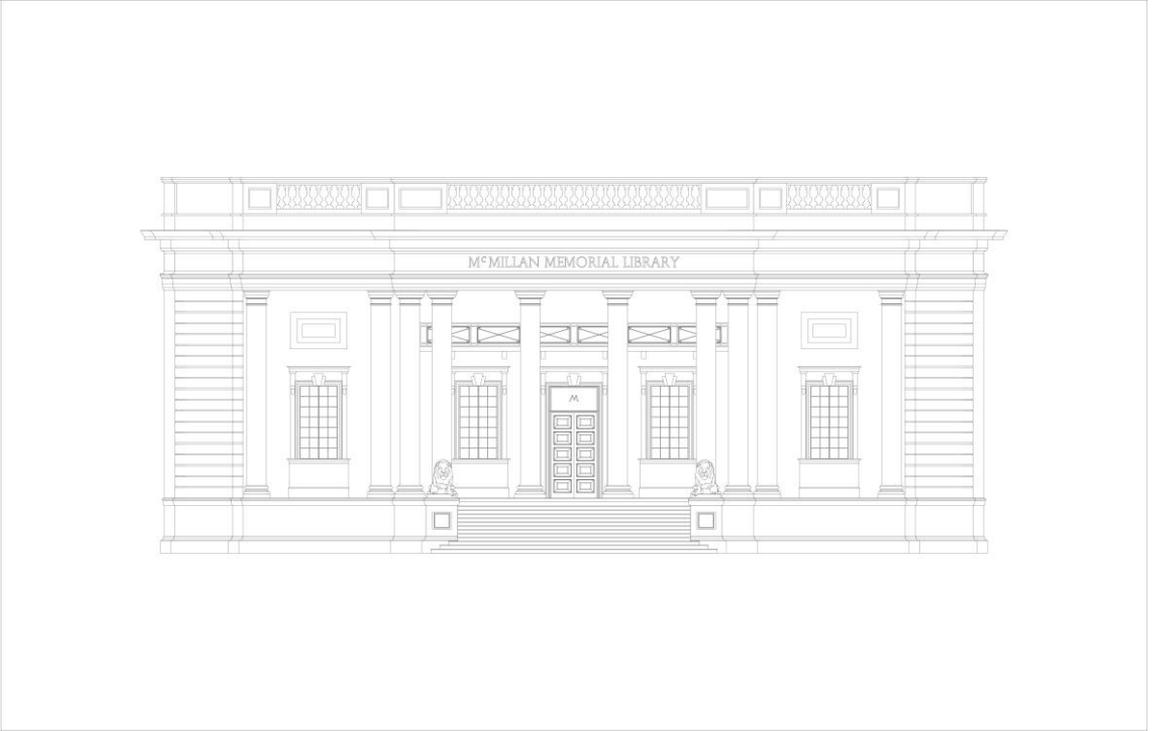


Figure 87: Facade original, stairs shown. Author, 2021.

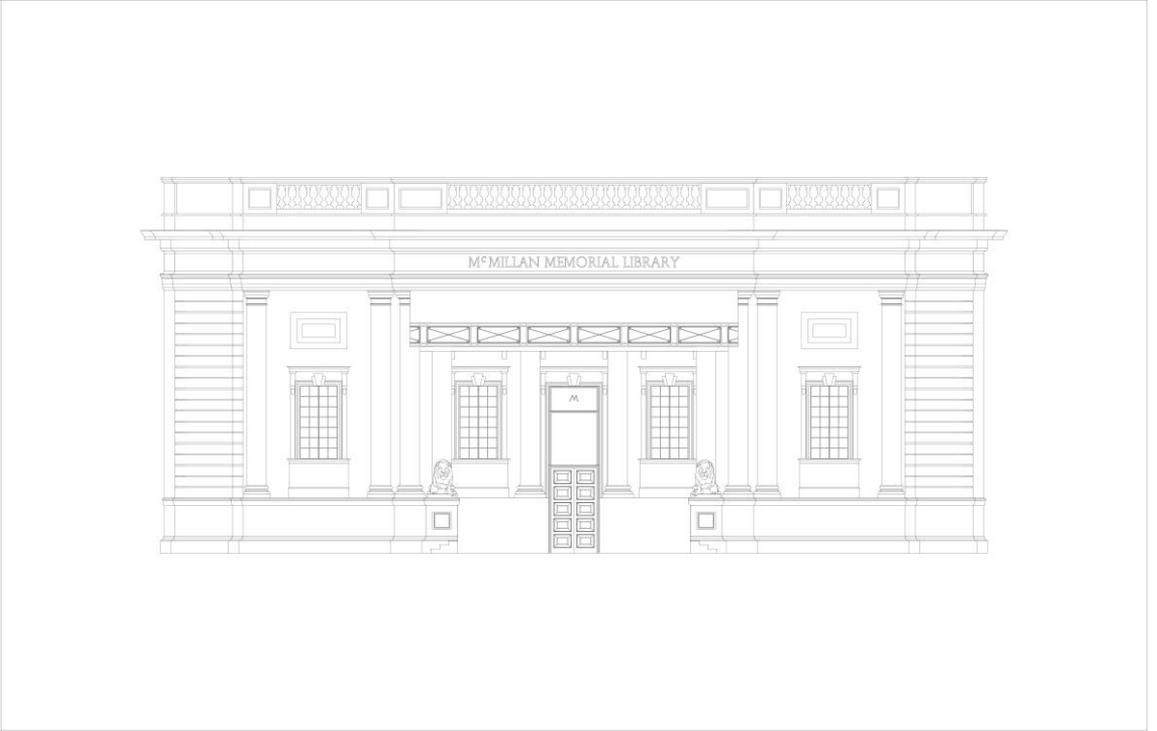


Figure 88: Facade, stairs removed. Front door now lies co-planar with the city topography.

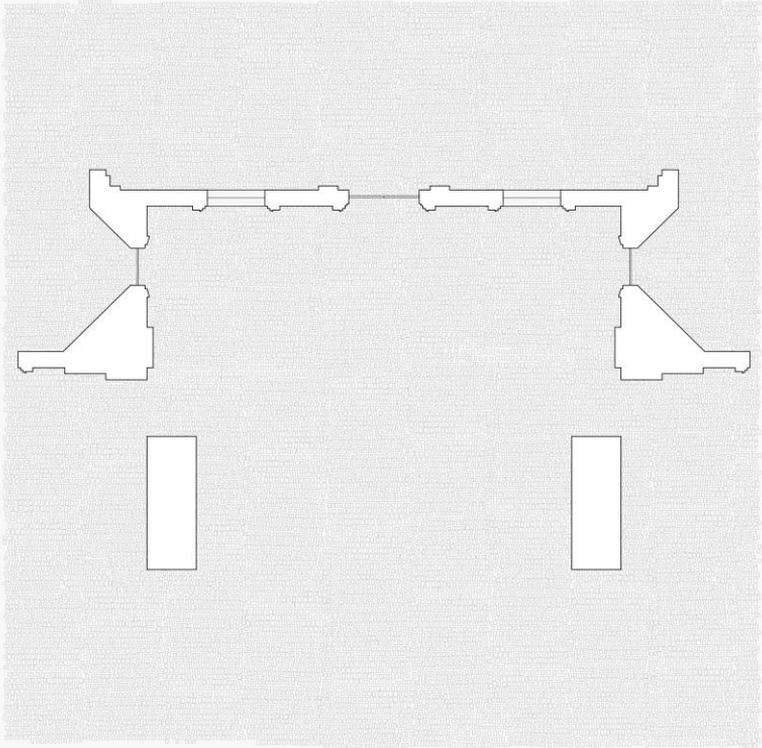


Figure 89: CAD drawing of continuous ground, interior and exterior. Plan view. Author, 2021.

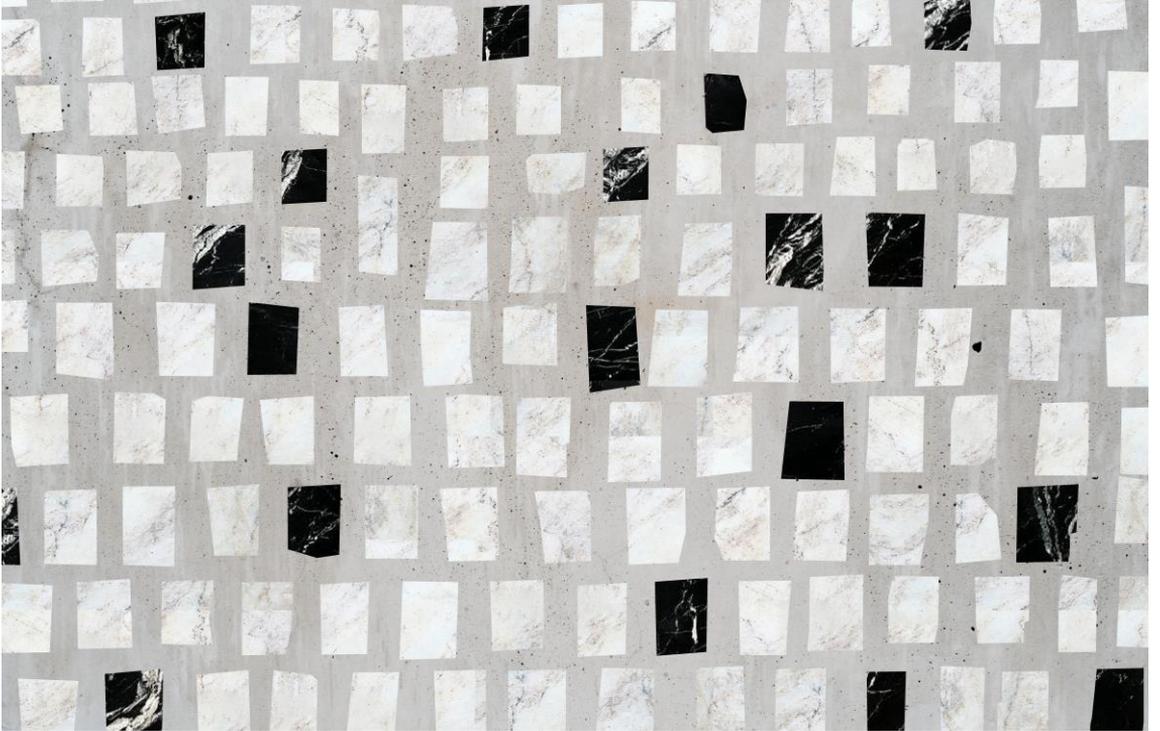


Figure 90: Collage of concrete floor with marble chips inset. Black and white marble from original portico stairs and landing. Author, 2021.

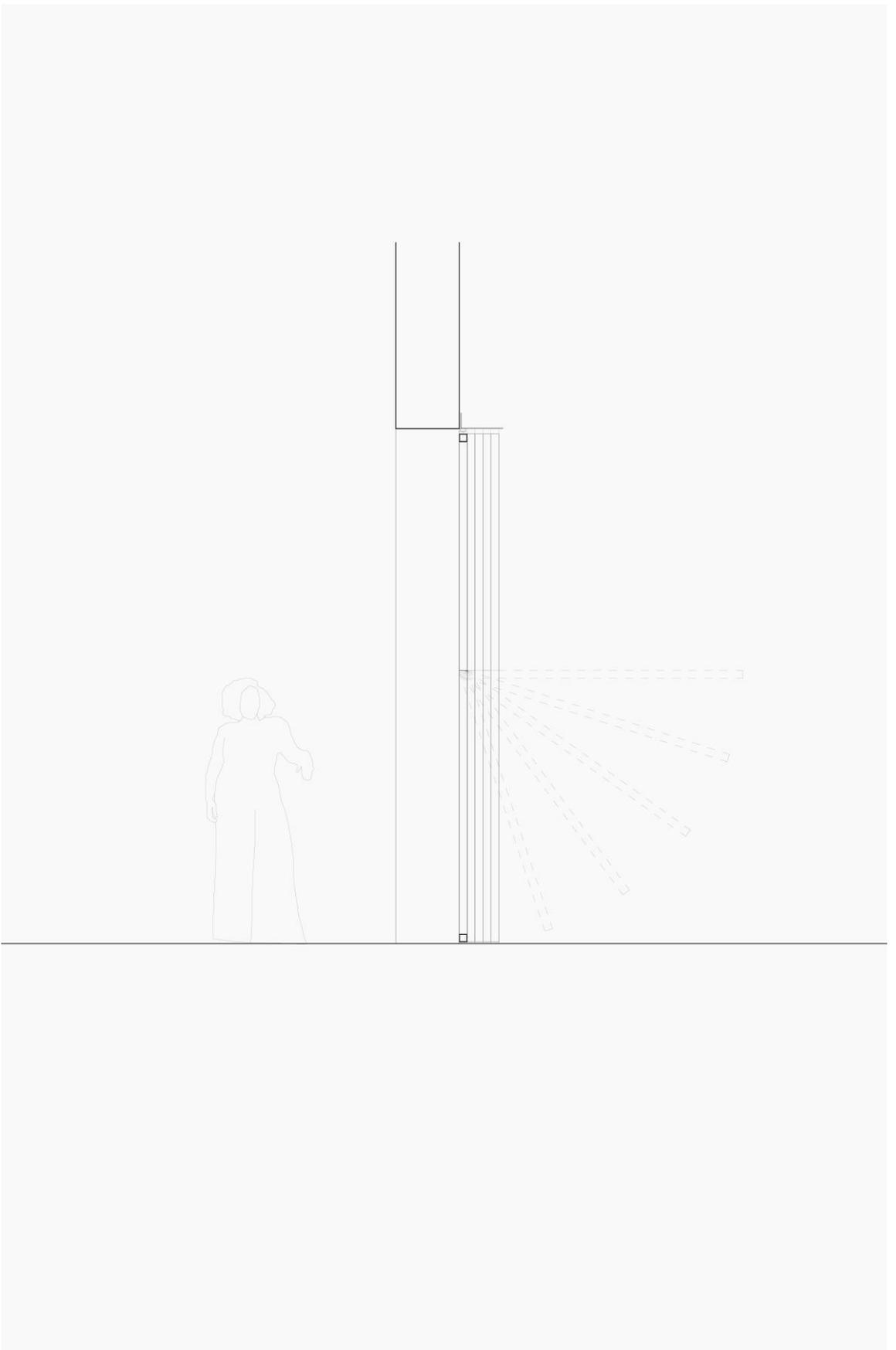


Figure 91: Door section, between interior wing and market. Author, 2021.

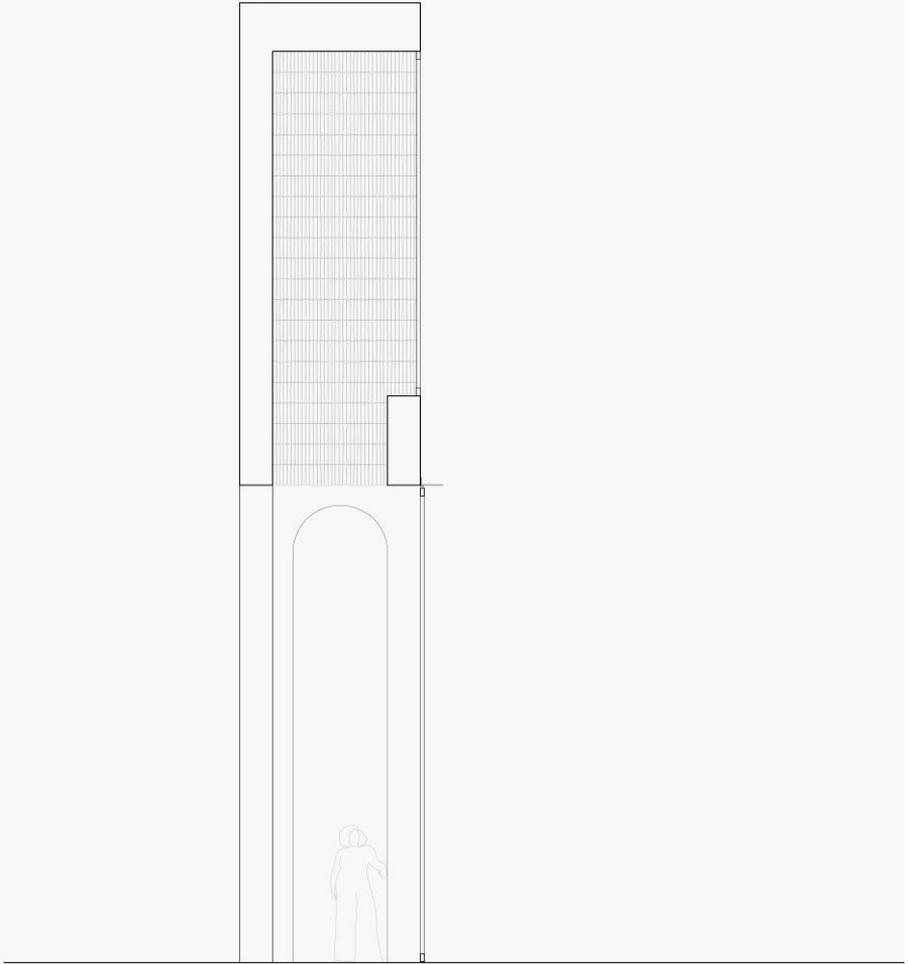


Figure 92: Glazed passage between two wings, author 2021.

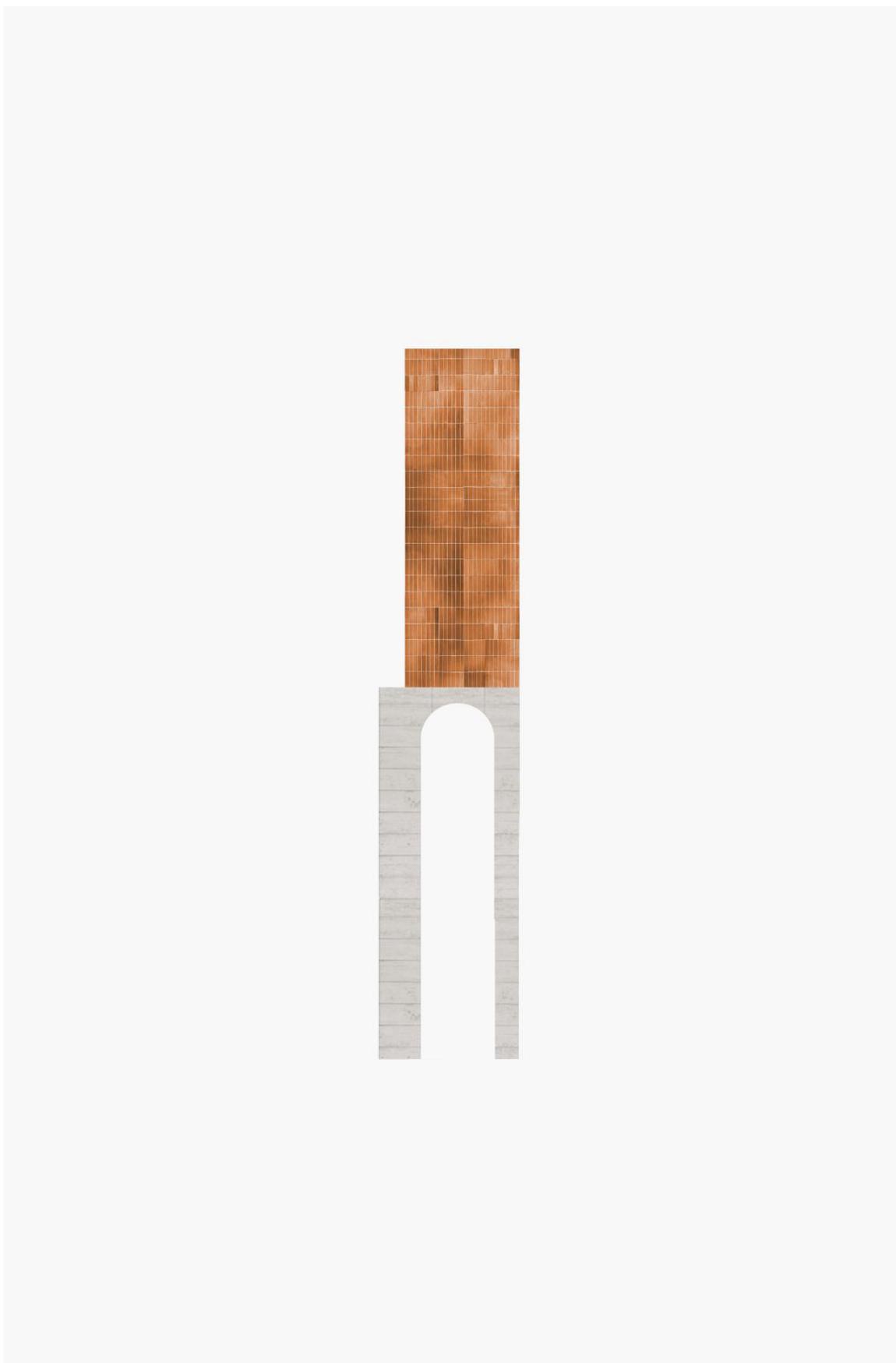


Figure 93: Passage material collage, author, 2021.



Figure 94: Digitally edited archival photograph, showing stairs removed and openings shifted to ground level. Author, 2021.

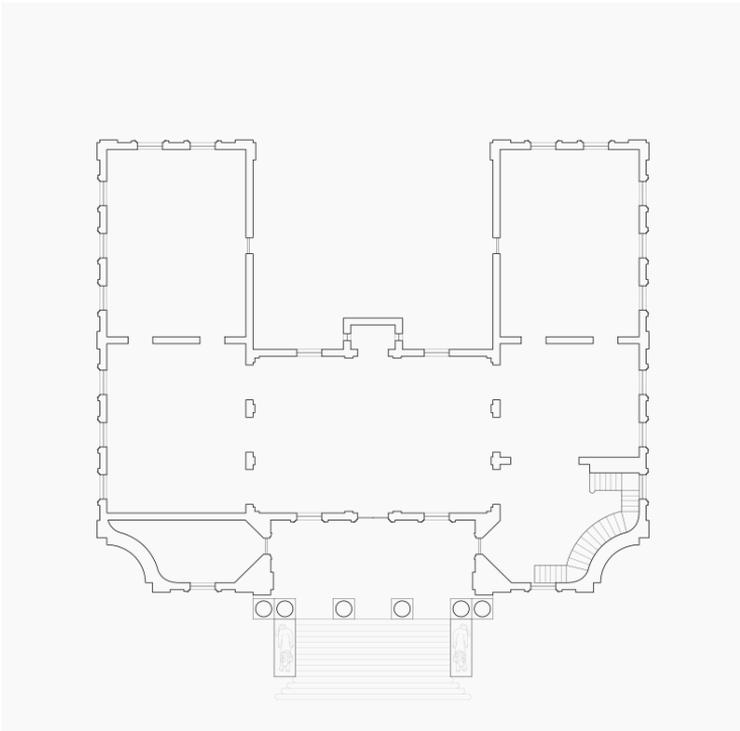


Figure 95: Original floor plan. Author, 2021.

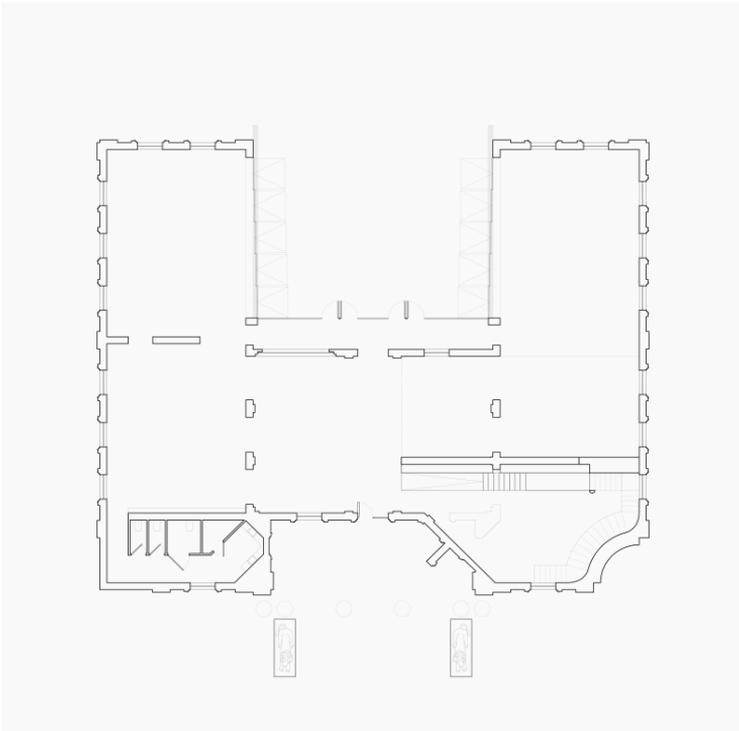


Figure 96: Ground floor, proposed. Author, 2021.

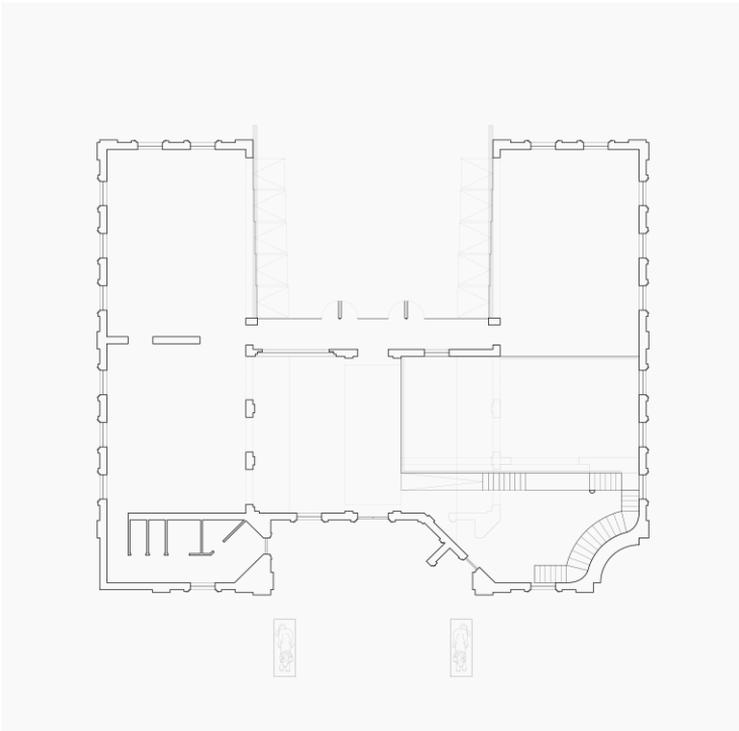


Figure 97: Mezzanine level, proposed. Author, 2021.

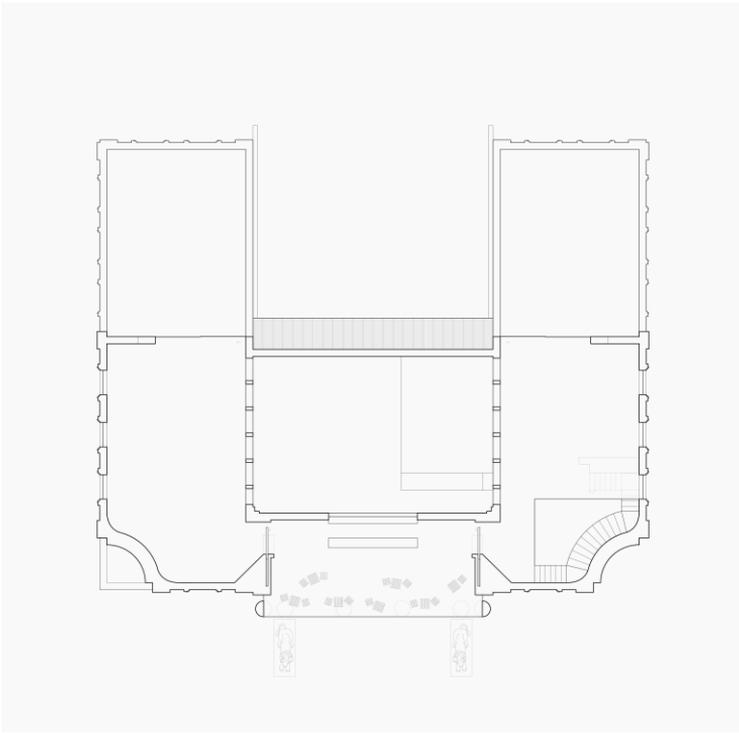


Figure 98: Second floor, proposed. Author, 2021.



English Breakfast
399/=

Figure 99: English Breakfast, Al-Yusra, author, 2021.

528
AL-YUSRA RESTAURANT
MEMBER

**Begin Day with
ENGLISH BREAKFAST 399/=

OMLETTE
BAKED BEANS
CHIPOLATA
WW TOAST
HONEY
MILK GLAS
POTATO FRIED
JAM
BUTTER

ASANTE SANA!

Figure 100: Receipt for English Breakfast, author, 2021.



Figure 101: Swahili Breakfast, Al-Yusra, author, 2021.

011
AL-YUSRA RESTAURANT
MEMBER

**Begin Day with
SWAHILI BREAKFAST 199/=

MANDAZI
MANDAZI
GITHERI
CAMEL TEA

ASANTE SANA!

Figure 102: Receipt for Swahili Breakfast, author, 2021.



Figure 103: Somali Breakfast, Al-Yusra, author, 2021.

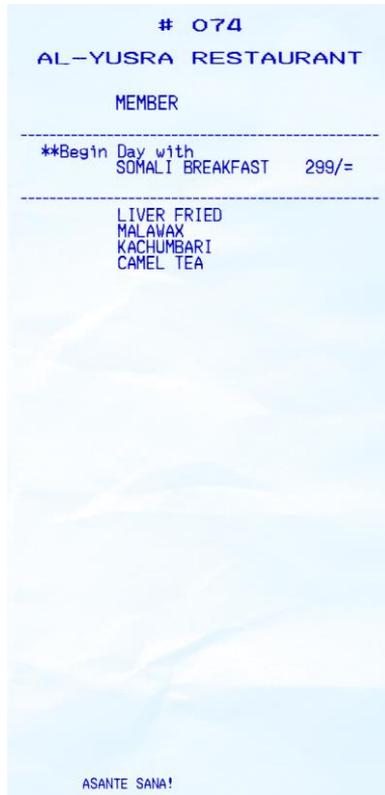


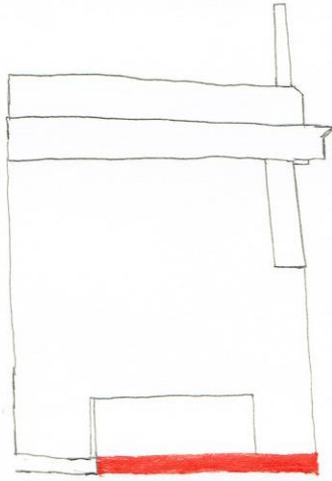
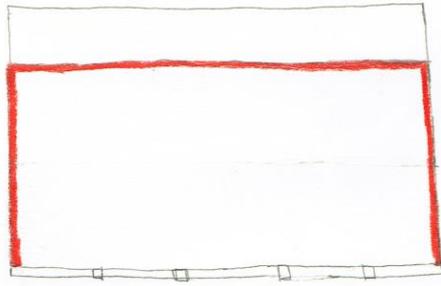
Figure 104: Receipt for Somali Breakfast, author, 2021.



Figure 105: Early collage, digital and hand drawing. Author, 2021.



Figure 106: Early collage, digital and hand drawing. Author, 2021.



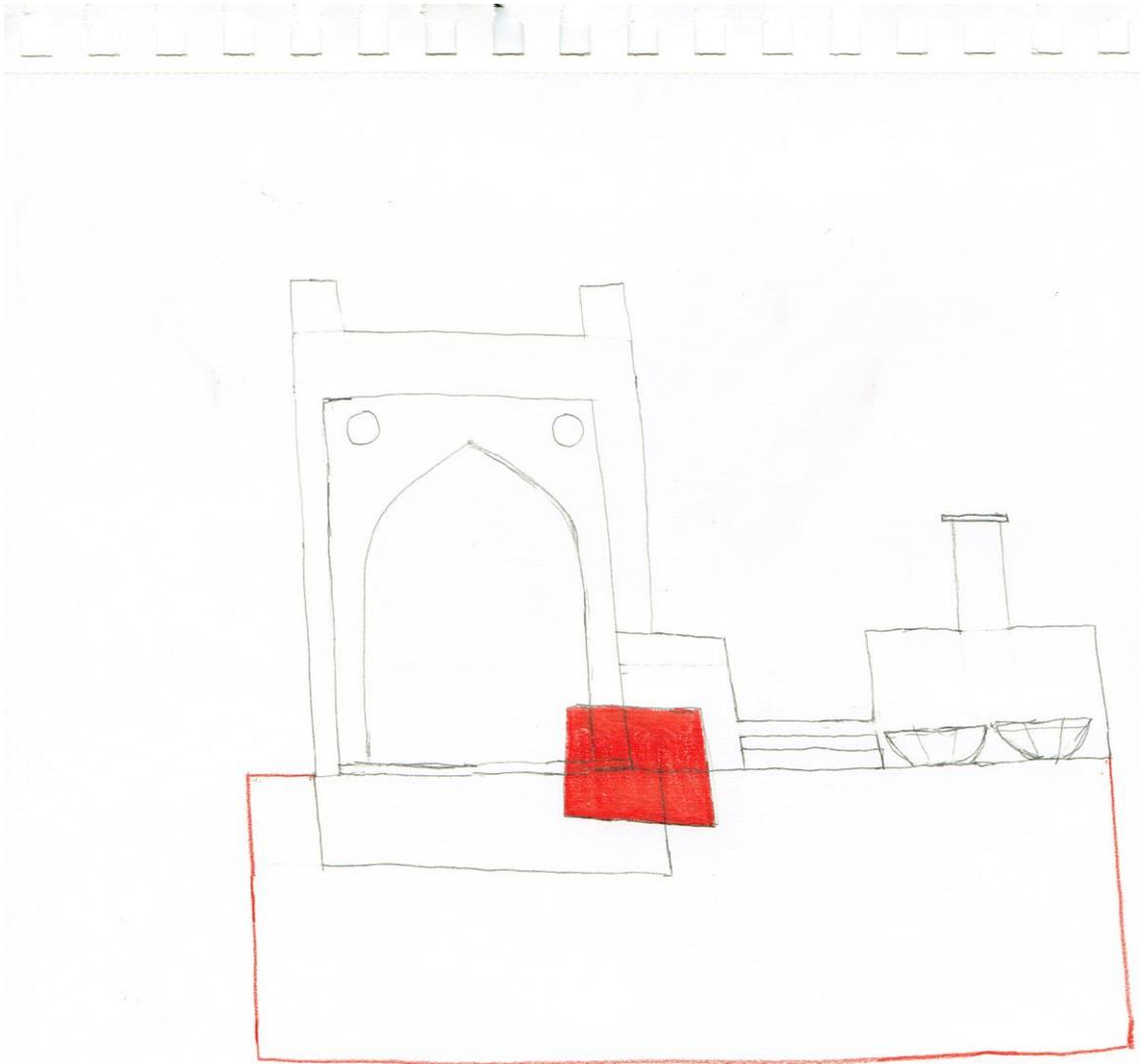
compounding

Figure 107: Early sketch exploring linguistic operations. Portico cafe. Author, 2021.



truncation

Figure 108: Early sketch exploring linguistic operations. Decapitated column. Author, 2021.



borrowing

Figure 109: Early sketch exploring linguistic operations. Spatial programming borrowed from Al-Yusra active frontage. Author, 2021.

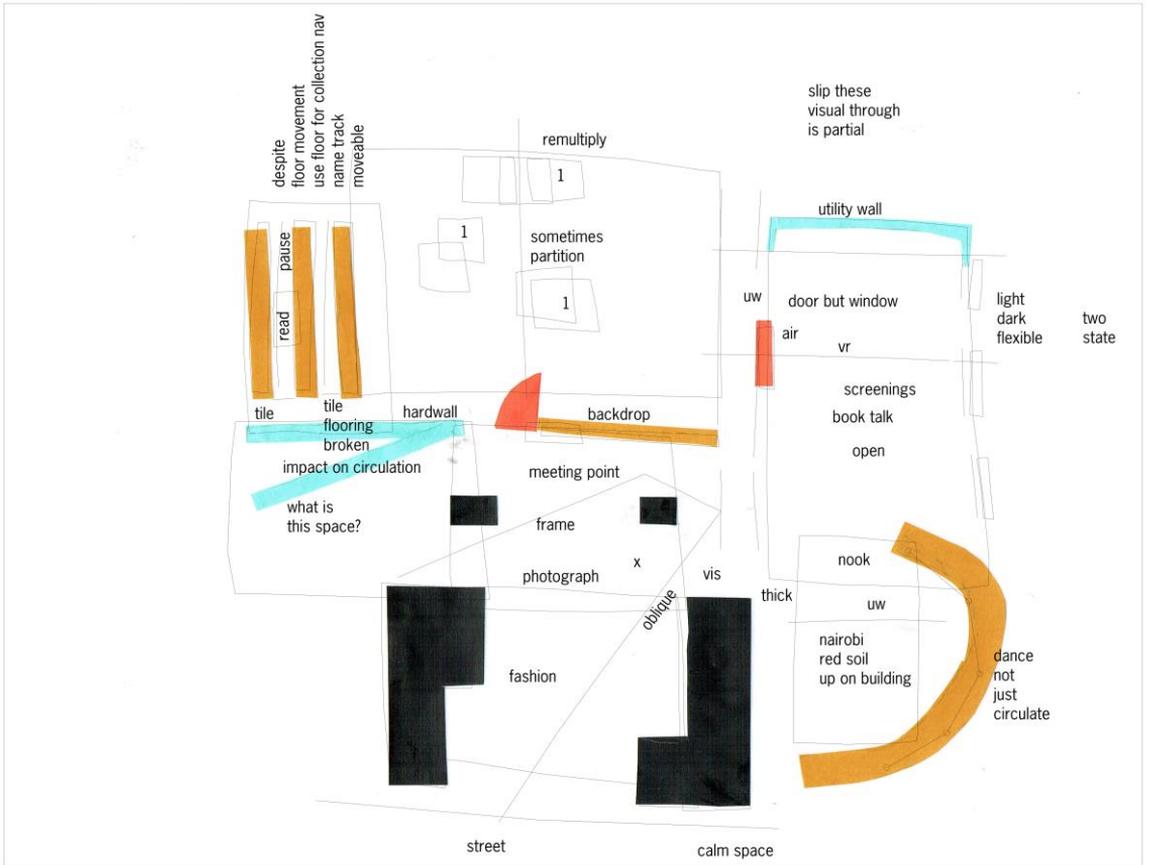


Figure 110: Early programmatic diagram for library. Collage and text, drawn from Instagram tags. Digital CAD drawing and hand paper collage. Author, 2021.

