



# *Paradise East*

Find surfing's lost soul in a  
paradise of pure invention

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Fig. 1 Paradise East model, sunrise



ABSTRACT When you imagine paradise, what do you see? A palm tree? An island? A beach? Do you see bright blues? Surfers riding the horizon? Do you feel humidity and heat? Hear sounds of birds, breezes, and the crashing of waves? As a Western audience, our sense of paradise is largely shared. We could all point to a few places on a map, but paradise is inherently placeless, caught somewhere between the cognitive and the real.

Aloha from Paradise East. Like the paradise in your head, Paradise East boasts warm water, healthy palm trees, surfing, and relaxation. Unlike the paradise in your head, Paradise East is free from the colonial ties and misogyny that sadly poisons our oceans everyday. It is a counter landscape, challenging placelessness with place, the future with nostalgia, and nature with artifice. Find surfing's lost soul in a Paradise of pure invention.

KEY WORDS surf, place/placelessness, futurism, nostalgia, alienation, artifice



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## INTRODUCTION: The social ritual of surf

Surfing is a transportive and transformative experience. Surfers enter an environment completely different from the one they inhabit, and bring nothing with them but a surfboard and their body. Waves are shaped by the geography of reefs, rocks, jetties, and the ocean floor. Their forces come from the sun in the form of wind, and the moon in the form of tides. To ride a wave, the surfer's time scale as a human must match the time scale of all those overlapping, global variables. A true synchronicity between the human and natural worlds. Surfing clears the mind, engages the whole body, and cosmically connects the surfer to the ocean, the earth, the sun, the moon, and a global culture.

Immediately in tandem with surfing's magic is its challenges. The conditions that create powerful, surfable waves are also very dangerous. Surfers face freezing water, monster waves, powerful riptides, sharp coral, rocky shores, and dangerous marine life. The most common injuries, however, come from colliding with one's own board or with someone else's. These injuries grow more common as surfing gains popularity and surf breaks get more crowded. Even if you are not injured, these crowded breaks are extremely stressful and detriment the magic of surfing. The politics of taking turns are riddled with racism, sexism, homophobia, and localism, as is the culture surrounding it.

This report details how these attitudes of exclusion play out in the water and in the culture. It traces the origin story of surf and reveals where it became conditioned by colonialism. It then critically analyzes surf media as it shaped and continues to shape the culture through this conditioned view. The fiction of surf was broadcasted and its globalization followed. I track its globalization to the far east reaches of Seoul, South Korea, where paradise was translated and staged. Finally, I will discuss the design methodology of Speculative Fiction and propose it as a means of spatial

activism.

The result is Paradise East, a counter landscape to the traditional surf break and the home of a renewed surf culture designed for the othered surfer. It utilizes a toolkit of semiotics, colour, form, program, vernacularity, and technology to create a fantasy paradise that is much more plausible than its alien expression may suggest. Seoul is a city of high tech, high spectacle, futuristic marvels. Paradise East is a dreamscape, but it fits right into its context.

This project engages the architect as an activist, bearing great extra-disciplinary relevance to the ongoing social, cultural, and political movement for racial justice and gender equality. Systemic racism and misogyny operate upon a foundation of colonialism and imperialism, both of which are at the heart of surfing's origin story and contemporary culture. I am taking on the responsibility of telling that story and testing the limits of the architectural discipline. As world builders, architects bear a great social and ecological responsibility that is often overlooked in favour of artistry or profit. This thesis intends to reconfigure this relationship, suggesting that spaces of resistance can be beautiful and beneficial for all.



Fig. 3 Gold Coast during a cyclone swell, 2016



Fig. 4 Paradise East (Planet Her)



Surf etiquette

Surfing is governed by a set of self-regulated rules intended to prevent collisions and encourage fairness at busy surf breaks. Surfers inherit the rules through the person that taught them to surf or through the signage posted in parking lots and entrances. This social structure is known as surf etiquette. Surf etiquette differs slightly from country to country and surf break to surf break, but there are two main systems: the American and the Australian.

In the more common American system, surfers lineup in order of arrival (fig. 5). The start of the lineup is at the peak of the wave: where the white water is beginning to break. This is the position where the surfer will have the longest possible ride, so it is the ideal launching point. The surfer closest to the peak of the wave has the right of way. When they catch their wave and surf it in, the next surfer in the lineup takes their place.

The ocean is a fluid environment, both literally and figuratively. The simple structure of this etiquette system may not be so easily perceived from the water. There are two common ways these rules get broken: ‘dropping in’ or ‘snaking’. When a surfer cuts off another surfer that had the right of way, it is called ‘dropping in’. When a surfer paddles around the surfer that had the right of way, stealing their favourable position, it is called ‘snaking’. It is mildly possible for someone to drop in accidentally but snaking is always done with intention.

In the Australian system, surfers lineup parallel to the waves (fig. 6). When a wave arrives, any and all surfers can paddle for it. The first surfer to stand up wins the wave and all others must pull back, giving the rider their space. This brings a different energy and spirit of competition to the sport that can sometimes result in conflict. Physical fights known as “surf rage” are most common in Australia.



Fig. 5 American Surf Etiquette



Fig. 6 Australian Surf Etiquette



## The conflict

As a female surfer non-local to anywhere with surf, I was beginning to notice that these rules did not apply equally to all surfers. Last summer in Tofino, I was dropped in on then resultantly hit with the other surfer's board and left with a bad bruise. After the crash, I stood in the water a bit stunned. The surfer that hit me didn't say anything to me so instinctively, I apologized. He accepted my apology and we both moved on with our day. As I paddled away, I had to ask myself why I had just apologized to a man for both cutting me off and injuring me. The only answer I could come up with was that because as a tourist, I felt I had to be respectful of the local's space. In reality, he was very likely a tourist as well.

It does not take long to find more stories from female, BIPOC, queer, and non-local surfers being dropped in on, snaked, or experiencing verbal or physical abuse in the context of surf. Danielle Lyons, a BIPOC woman, was surfing at Venice Pier beach on a winter day with a fairly low swell, only 1-2ft waves. As Danielle got to her feet on a wave she was in perfect position for, she passed by a man who tried and failed to drop in on her. As soon as she passed, she felt a sudden jerk backwards from her ankle. She turned back to see the surfer, Wagner Lima, was pulling her leash back, hard. She instantly fell down, fortunately landing in the water rather than on her board or his.

She received no apology from Lima who ironically and unfortunately is a surf instructor local to that area. She did not know if the assault "was localism, racism or sexism" as all three are systemic problems both in and out of the surf world<sup>1</sup>. The size of the wave barely seemed worthy of a response, but this white male surfers felt that he had the right to this wave because of some assumed level of skill or seniority.

# "I'm not sure if this was localism, racism, or sexism."

- DANIELLE LYONS



Fig. 7 Danielle Lyons Assaulted by Wagner Lima, 2018

<sup>1</sup> Danielle Lyons via Dylan Heyden, "Venice Surf School Owner Pulls Woman's Leash," *The Inertia*, December 5, 2018.



CONTEXT:  
Stolen surf;  
alienation

While acts of localism, racism, and sexism are part of larger societal systems, this thesis isolates the cause and effect found within surf culture. Surfing cannot deny its politics but no cultural fixture can. The Western world operates upon a foundation of colonialism. Unless specifically and intentionally countered, colonialism renews itself over and over again, continuously perpetuating its hierarchies.

The great irony of territorial white male surfers is that they act on stolen territory. The contemporary practice, culture, and industry of surfing was taken from Hawai'i, cultivated in California, and exported to the world. Hawai'i is thus assumed to be surfing's birthplace, but the exact origins are unknown. There is no denying the practice or cultural significance of surfing in ancient Polynesia and by extension Hawai'i, but evidence of wave riding for pleasure can be found in ancient Peru and Ghana, some even predating Polynesian settlement in Hawai'i. Hawai'i, Peru, and Ghana would seem to be on different planets in the ancient world, but they share choice waves, a deep connection to the sea, and the experience of exploitation by way of colonial powers.

Hawai'i

Surfing and Hawai'i are inseparable entities. Hawai'i is the heart of surfing culture, language, style, and competition. When the Polynesians settled in Hawai'i around 400 CE, surfing immediately flourished from a pastime to a way of life. It was interwoven with social, economic, and spiritual rituals, connecting it to all aspects of Hawaiian life. Everyone surfed, no matter age, gender, or economic class. It connected its people to each other, to their islands, their gods, the ocean, and its inhabitants. Surfing came to define what it meant to be Hawaiian.

Among the rituals were competitions with categories like longest ride and biggest wave. Competitions acted as a mode of combat training and conflict resolution. Those

# An all too familiar story of colonialism...



Fig. 8 Hawaiian Surfers, 17th c.

who showed prowess in the water gained instant social and economic status. The water was a site of sexual courtship, so they also enjoyed romantic success. Certain waves and board types were reserved for royalty and the elite. Board making was part of a spiritual ceremony led by a priest known as a Kahuna. The Kahuna would select a Wili Wili, Koa, or Ula tree, present an offering of fruit, fish, and flowers, then carve the board from its trunk. Kahunas also led ceremonies to pray for waves and safety from injury. The culture of surfing was complex, collective, and inclusive.

In a far too familiar story of colonialism, James Cook and his ship of Westerners arrived in Hawai'i in 1777 and sought to claim and shape the 'primitive' society they found there. Surfers were nude or near nude so Christian missionaries deemed it a licentious and sinful act, particularly for women. Women were removed from the sport completely and did not return for nearly a century. The social disdain instilled by the missionaries along with the decimation of the native population through disease and the introduction of a Western labour system caused the near complete decline of surfing. By the end of the 19th century, Hawai'i was colonized by the United States and it was "hard to find a surf-board outside of museums and private collections"<sup>2</sup>.

At the turn of the 20th century, the diminished native population sought to revive their cultural core, but like the islands themselves, surfing was quickly exploited and claimed by the American colonizers. As an American cultural export, surfing was introduced to California and Australia in the early 20th century then branched out globally from there (fig). Over the course of the 20th century, surfing grew into the competitive sport and multi-billion dollar industry it is today. The singularity of this lineage in the collective consciousness reinforces America's ownership of surfing, but in reality

this story is far more plural. With so many incredible surf spots around the planet, the Polynesians could not have been the only ones drawn to the waves for play.

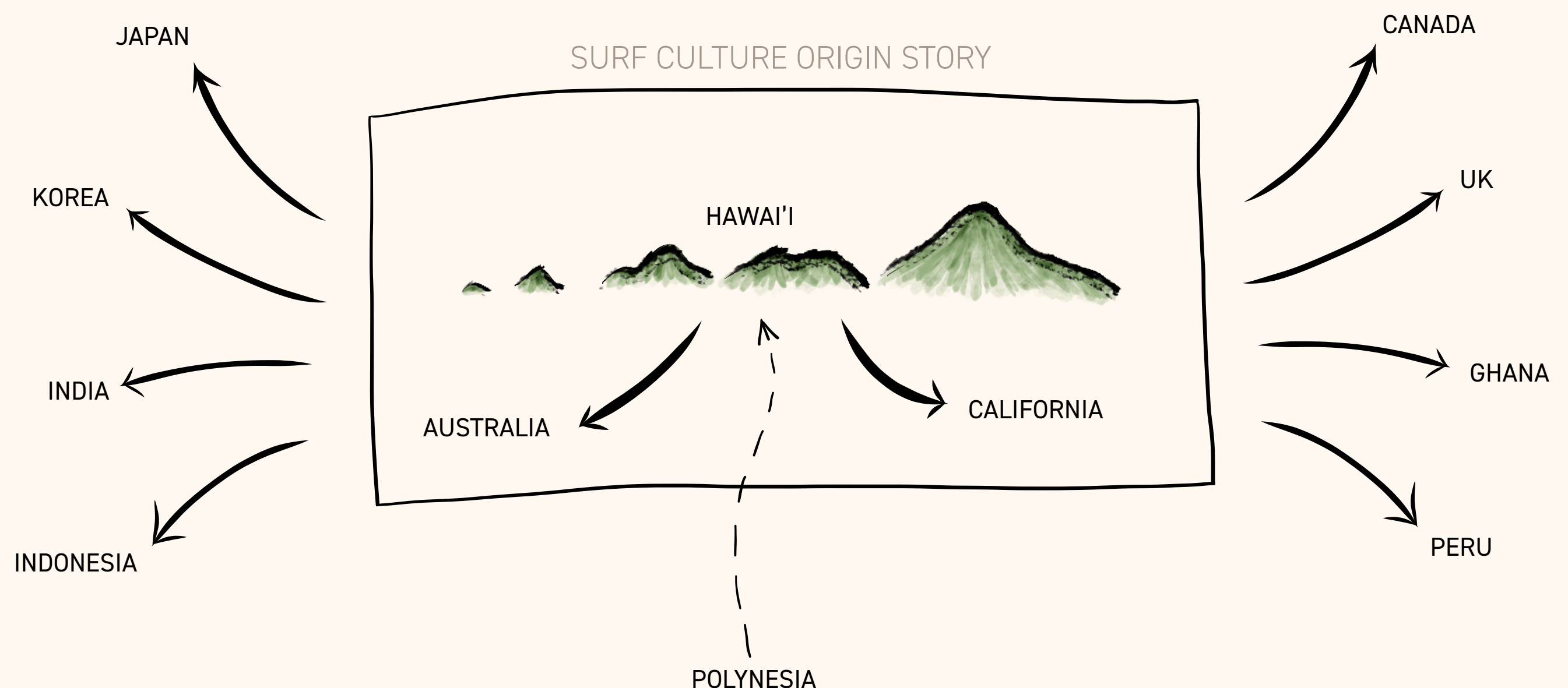


Fig. 9 Hawaiian Surf Lineage Map

2 Nathaniel B. Emerson, "Causes of Decline of Ancient Hawaiian Sports," *The Friend* 50, no. 8 (August 1892): 57.



## Peru

In Peru, ceramic works from 200 CE depict wave riders on reed kayaks known as ‘caballitos de totora’ or ‘little reed horses’. Like contemporary longboarders or paddle boarders, riders can sit, kneel, or stand and use a piece of bamboo to paddle and steer. The caballitos were originally crafted for the fishing communities of the Moche civilization on the northwest coast of Peru; surfing became a leisure activity in between expeditions. The caballitos are still used for both fishing and surfing today.

Despite the longevity of the practice, this history is not common knowledge in the surf industry. It gained somewhat temporary prevalence in the 1980s, when the 1965 world champion surfer Felipe Pomar, a Peruvian, was interviewed for *Surfer* magazine, a California publication then known as the “bible” of surfing. Pomar presented this history as his theory of the true origins of surfing, suggesting that wave riding was passed from Peru to Polynesia, then through to Hawai’i and the US. The article had little impact on American surf culture, but holds significance for Peruvian surfers.

When Americans (re)introduced surfing to Peru in 1937, it was reserved for the elite. Imported American equipment was expensive and working people did not have the time for recreation. The political and economic stabilization of Peru in the late 20th century opened up the possibility for Peruvians of all economic classes to surf. Several indigenous surfers have risen to the top of national competition. Miluska Tello, Anali Gomez, Jose ‘Jarita’ Gomez, and Juninho Urcia are all children of fishermen and descendants of the Moche civilization. They surf on modern boards in competition but surf on caballito de totora to embrace their indigenous identities and present that history for the media to inspire young indigenous Peruvians to surf.



Fig. 10 Caballitos de Totor Ceramica, 200 CE



Fig. 11 Felipe Pomar surfing a caballitos de totora, 2016



## Ghana

In *Endless Summer* (1966), the surf documentary that stands as a pinnacle piece of surf culture and its media depiction, Californian surfers Robert August and Mike Hynson visited Labadi Beach in Ghana on their surf trip around the world. A vibrant community full of friendly faces were eager and curious about the two white men with longboards. August and Hynson found exactly what they were looking for in the film's mission: an untouched surf break in the warmth of an endless summer.

They surfed the break as the locals gathered, cheered them on, and took turns playing on their boards. Despite the language barrier, August and Hynson taught some of the young boys to stand up on small waves. As they departed their newfound paradise, the narrator, Bruce Brown, muses: "These men were so excited about surfing that we felt sure after we left that they'd shape their own surfboard from some jungle tree and are probably out there surfing right now"<sup>3</sup>. In his narration, Brown had also called Ghanaian people "primitive" and used pseudo babble to imitate their language. This was the midcentury American outlook on Africa.

The scene represented a coveted fantasy for white American surfers: to enjoy surfing in an untouched paradise without competition for waves. To shape a 'primitive' society and lay claim to a place, knowing that the future of surfing there has you to thank. This fantasy is no different from the one James Cook had when he landed in Hawai'i. This act of 'founding' is equally unfounded.

Despite Brown's claims that no Ghanaian had ever seen or even dreamed of surfing, it actually has a millennia of history there and throughout Africa unknown to the *Endless Summer* filmmakers. In the documentary, the Ghanaian men demonstrate their own surfing abilities in a large dugout canoe and on small wooden planks (fig. 12). Brown and the filmmakers

assumed this to be an act of imitation, stating that the wooden planks had just been pulled off of their houses. These are, in fact, the traditional surfboards of the area.

Surfing was developed independently in several countries along the west coast of Africa. According to University of California history professor Kevin Dawson, Africans may have even been the first to surf in the continental United States. In his words: "accounts indicate that, by the 1700s, enslaved Africans were surfing and surf-canoeing from South Carolina down to Brazil"<sup>4</sup>.

This African counter history of surf culture is only just being told in its entirety by Dawson and Selema Masekela, owner of the African surf brand, Mami Wata. Their book, *AFROSURF*, aims to empower black surfers and inspire African youth to surf, much like the indigenous Peruvian group. These projects demonstrate the ability of surf media to inspire and empower, but they are in the extreme minority next to the cultural hegemony of mainstream surf media.



Fig. 12 *Endless Summer* Film Still, 1966

3 *Endless Summer* (Cinema V, 1966).

4 Kevin Dawson, *AFROSURF* (S.I.: TEN SPEED, 2021).



Depicting surf;  
hyperfeminization

Surf media is a dominating force in the culture. Its audience extends far beyond those who actually surf, so it makes up the bulk of the industry and controls its perception. Surf media strategically celebrates its Hawaiian roots, concealing the colonial violence that goes with it, as well as any Peruvian or Ghanaian stories. The industry distills its history into a marketable myth that reinforces the American ownership of surfing, contributing to its cultural and economic capital.

As a genre of music and film, surfing was popularized into mainstream culture during its Californian 'golden age' of the 1960s. The Beach Boys headed the surf rock genre with albums *Surfin' Safari* (1962) and *Surfer Girl* (1963). *Endless Summer* (1966) is often regarded as the most important surf movie of all time. The documentary follows the Californian surfers Michael Hynson and Robert August on a surf trip around the world, mainly Oceania and Africa, as they escape winter in search of an endless summer and the perfect wave. Once found, the film's narrator described the South African waves as looking "like they've been made by some kind of machine".

The film solidified surf culture's sound, tone, and aesthetic as encapsulated in its famous poster. It is a relic of the enduring sense of nostalgia that still surrounds the culture (fig. 14). The 'golden age' represented the surfer as a blond, blue eyed, clean cut white man. In his heteronormative world, he was playful with his buddies, charming with the girls, a hero to his spectators, and an explorer of new worlds.

Surf culture was the ultimate boys club. Women were typically depicted watching from the beach. When they were depicted as surfers, they were hypersexualized and hyperfeminized. From *Gidget* (1959) to *Blue Crush* (2002) to brands Billabong and Roxy, the female surfer was painted as thin, feminine, bikini clad, and white. This model is only beginning to shift to include BIPOC

# “These waves look like they’ve been made by some kind of machine.”

- BRUCE BROWN, *ENDLESS SUMMER*, 1965



Fig. 13 The Beach Boys, *Surfin' Safari*, 1962

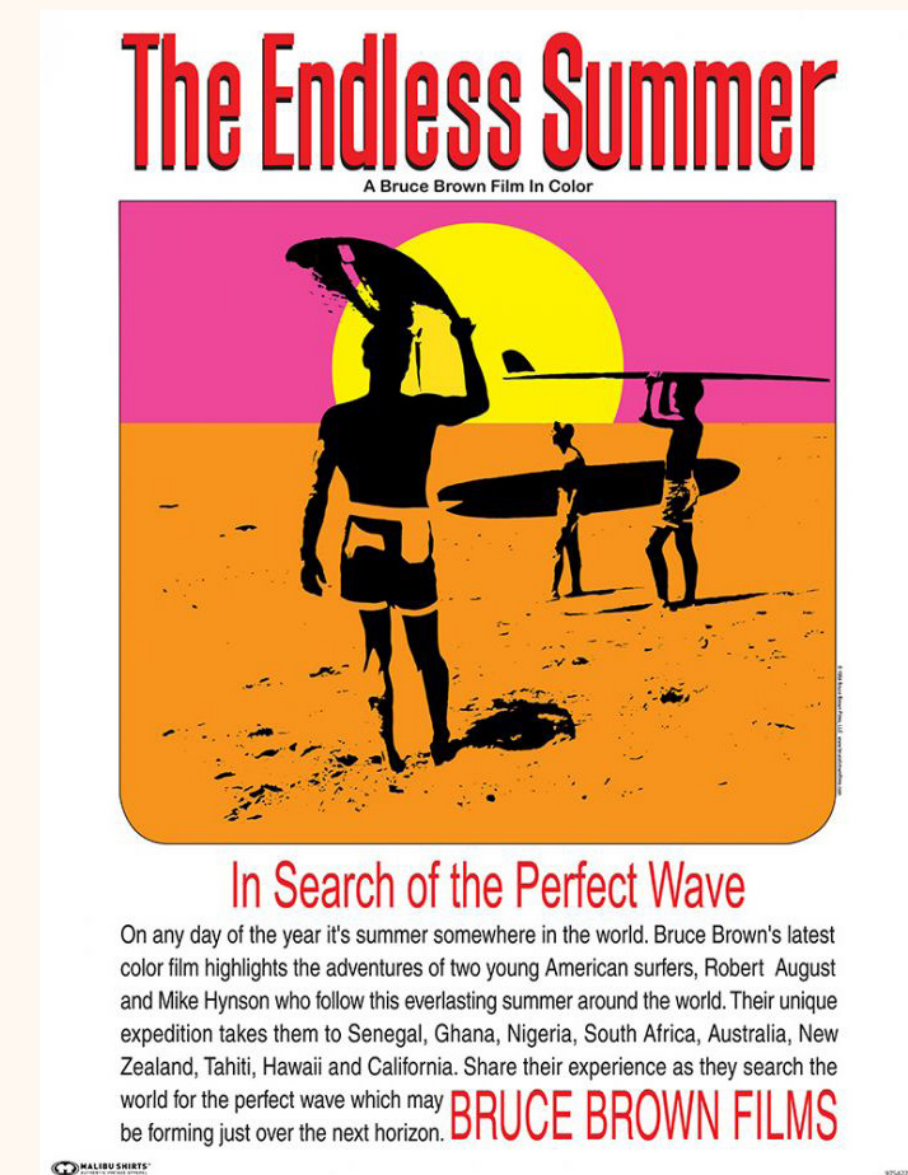


Fig. 14 *Endless Summer* Poster, 1965



women in light of the recent demand for equal representation, but there is a long way to go and a lot to make up for.

Social media has become a critical tool for surfers. It is how they connect with their audience and brands; their follower count is often telling of their income. This puts pressure on surfers to get the perfect image, and a lot of them. Many bring photographers, drones, and other photography equipment to the already crowded lineups. Social media is known for its negative impact on mental health through body dysmorphia and the strive for perfection. Instagram has simply become the platform for the hypersexualized and hyperfeminized female surfer to be portrayed.

Surf culture is full of inspiring women, but many have been ostracized and excluded when they do not fit the accepted image. Cori Schumacher, a three-time Women's World Longboard champion, left the competitive world for this reason<sup>5</sup>. She did not fit into the Billabong or Roxy image of the female surfer and was therefore devalued in terms of sponsorship. Schumacher preferred to wear board shorts and loose fit rash guards over bikinis. The criticism and pressure was negatively impacting her mental health. After her second world title she left competition for 8 years. She returned in 2010 without sponsorship and took the world title for a third time.

Schumacher openly discusses her experiences with the toxic masculinity in competitive surfing to try and encourage a safer space for young surfers. In a 2020 video, Schumacher discusses the homophobic comments she heard from her friends and family in the competitive surf world that caused her to suppress her sexual identity. The public comments that respond to that video ranges from "no one cares get this off my feed" to "Pretty naive to expect lineups to be some sort of friendly inclusive space" to "Just surf and leave this

shit out of it" <sup>6</sup>. Homophobia is alive and well in the surf community.

There is a paranoia against any expression of femininity for male surfers. There is an artistic quality to surfing. Surfers make fluid movements in a fluid environment, a dance between body and sea. Like a dance, surfers work to develop personal styles to elevate their performance. It is a far cry from the overt masculinity assigned to sports like football or hockey. Hyperfemininity was applied to surfing women in order to foil the femininity in surfing men.

Skate culture is known to be a much more inclusive environment<sup>7</sup>. It has always been more attuned to a counter culture than a mainstream golden age, but its relationship to surf is intimate. In the 1970s, a skateboard team known as the Z-Boys revived what was a dying fad by infusing skate style with surf style. They started as surf shop owners in Venice Beach, a low income neighbourhood at the time. They adapted their urban environment into a skatepark, notably by draining swimming pools. The area became known as Dogtown, captured in the massively popular documentary, *Dogtown and Z-Boys* (2001).

The counter culture has since been formalized by construction of the Venice Beach Skatepark, built in 2009 (fig. 16). The nature of a skatepark lends itself better to mutual encouragement and teaching than the open ocean as skaters can better see and hear one another. Places to congregate and spectate are designed into the park as well as park features that are open to interpretation and creativity. It is my goal in this thesis to infuse surf culture with some of these benefits. Paradise East is a skatepark for surfers.



Fig. 15 Cori Schumacher, 2000



Fig. 16 Skater and spectators at Venice Beach Skate Park, 2015

<sup>5</sup> Cori Schumacher, (London, United Kingdom: BBC, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> *How LGBTQ+ Surfers Are Creating a More Inclusive Surf Culture*, YouTube (YouTube, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.



## Depicting surf; paradise

The golden age narrative not only perpetuates a hierarchy among surfers, but a similarly hierachical view on place. Endless Summer created a narrative where an endless supply of uncrowded surf breaks with perfect waves are out there just waiting to be discovered by their golden boy hero. This made an industry of surf tourism. Inspired ‘golden’ boys sought out their own private paradise when their home breaks got too cold. As Endless Summer’s Hynson and August demonstrated in Ghana, the search for paradise came with complete disdain and a sense of superiority over the local populations. It did not really matter where they went, as long as the place offered a key set of resources: waves, warmth, seclusion, and natural beauty. This echoes the precise colonialist attitude that brought Captain James Cook to the Hawaiian islands two centuries earlier. Paradise was a place to be founded.

A particular targetted paradise directly in the wake of surfing’s golden age was Indonesia. Indonesia is an archipelago often compared to Hawai’i for its wealth of world class surf breaks and tropical climate (fig. 17). While surfing’s golden age was playing out on Californian beaches, Indonesia was enduring violent political unrest. The US-backed Major General Suharto ruled an authoritarian regime that came to power in 1965. He called for the extermination of his predecessor: the entire Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and with it, every innocent life ever associated. By 1968, one million people had been killed, another half a million imprisoned. None of this, of course, was ever discussed by the Americans, much less the surfers that “discovered” the islands as a surfers paradise in the 1970s and 80s.

The “discovery” was the talk of the surf world. An untouched treasure trove of Hawai’i quality waves, ripe for the taking. The photograph above accompanied one of many articles in *Surfer Magazine* on the breaking story:

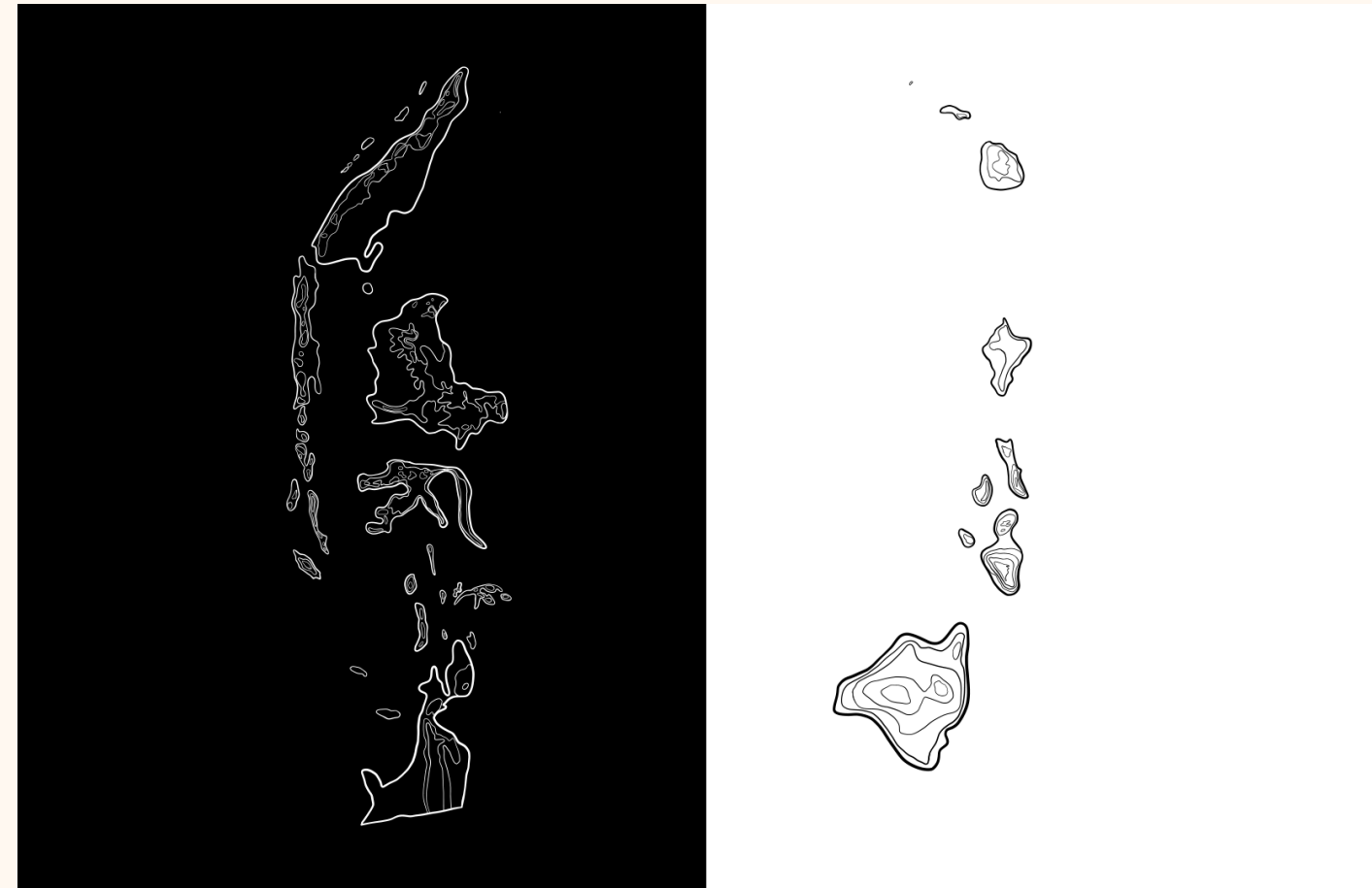


Fig. 17 Mirrored Archipelagos: Hawai’i and Indonesia

“the most exotic of exotic locations, a fantasy of all the splendors of the Orient and the beauties of the Pacific. [...] The native people are small in stature” and “very attractive ... as a whole.” The “bush people went partially undressed, but there was a hint of social awareness and a tendency not to want to be photographed topless.” Other parts of the island, meanwhile, were “rumored to have full-on primitives, like warriors and cannibals”<sup>8</sup> (fig. 18).

At this point nearly half a million people are still imprisoned, most without charge or trial. The survivors live under authoritarian rule. Human rights are being violated all while blissfully ignorant white men ogle at their ‘exoticism’. Similar language is used to describe both people and place as both are seen as object.

Paradise is inherently placeless. It is not geography but a list of geographical features: palm trees, beach, clear blue water, peeling waves. Once a place is given this title, all sense of placeness becomes unimportant. Its connotation is insistently positive but in reality it may be

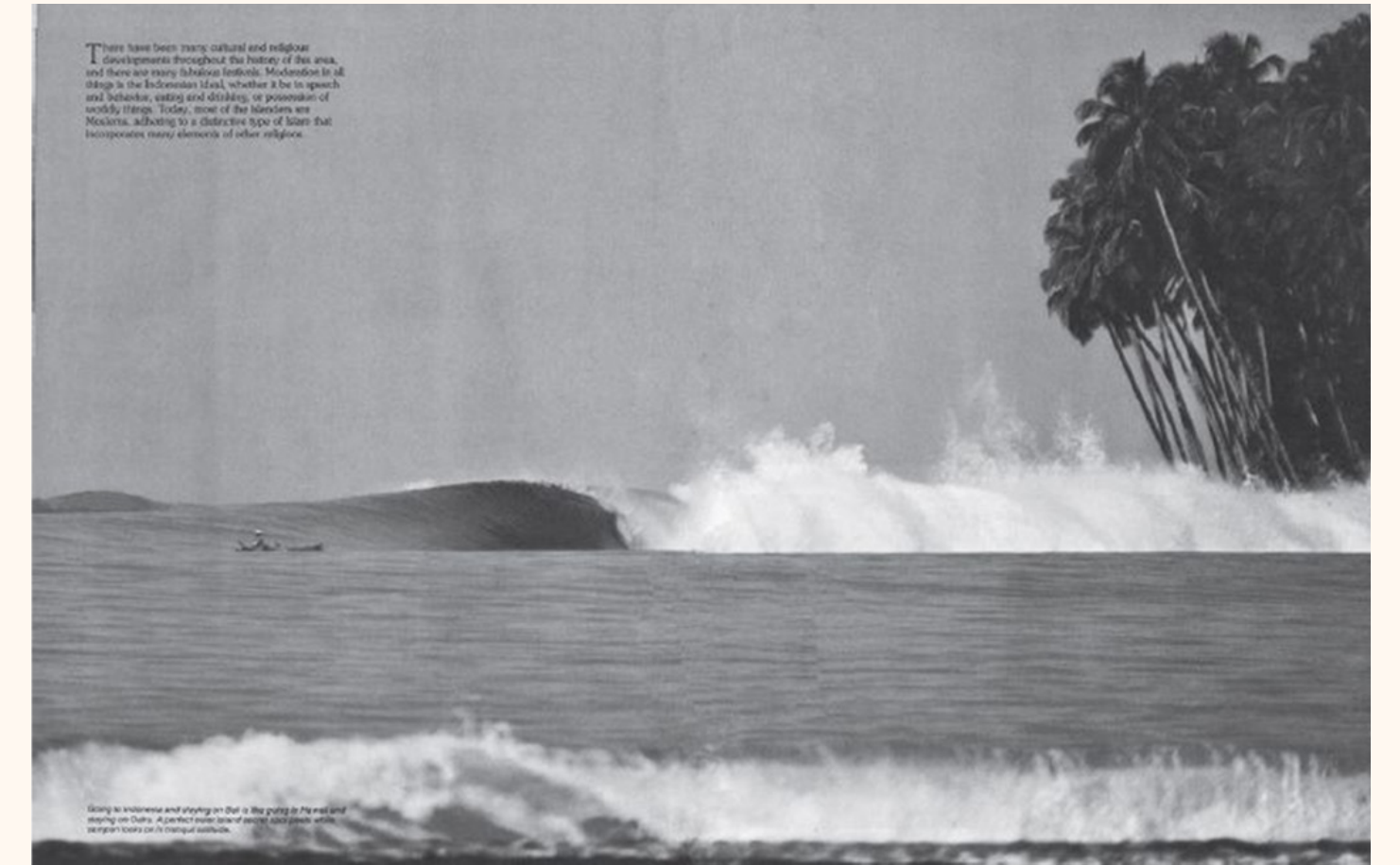


Fig. 18 unnamed Lagundri Bay, *Surfer magazine*, 1975

something of a curse. The surfers saw Indonesia as a paradise, not as a place. The local people were a backdrop, not suffering individuals. When the advertising campaign, like that of *Surfer Magazine*, was successful in bringing surfers in, the bubble of new discovery burst. The surf explorers would have to start anew.

The word paradise comes from the Iranian parāдайjah meaning “enclosed park”. Paradise is not to be found but designed. Paradise East stands against feigned discovery and instead for creation. It designs a paradise that infuses its placelessness with place.



Korea;  
globalization of  
paradise

A country that curiously celebrates paradise as an invention is Korea. Surfing is relatively new in Korea and growing in popularity. It is centered at Surfyy beach, a surf dedicated beach on the east coast, about a 4 hour trip from Seoul. It opened in 2015 and boasts fine grain sand, tiki huts, Hawaiian shirts, Corona beers... the full paradise experience (fig. 19).

Paradise East brings surfing into the city of Seoul. It is situated in the Han River and nestled beside the Dongjak Bridge (fig. 20). The Banpo bridge to the east is a vibrant centre of spectacle and activity. It features the longest bridge fountain in the world, running 4-6 times a day and lit up in rainbow colours. It hosts community groups, namely a surf skate crew that meets up every Sunday to skate under the bridge and eat fried chicken. The cluster of buildings between the bridges include a wedding chapel, restaurants, and a children's playhouse. Along the shoreline is a park with walking and biking paths, as well as activities such as swimming, paddling, and fishing. Underneath the Dongjak bridge is established rest area with benches, picnic tables, and public exercise equipment. Group activities that require specialized equipment are also hugely popular in Korea.

Bridges themselves are an important public space throughout the country. In the city, they are more established with seating, exercise equipment, or skate parks. In the country, they are informal with old office furniture and board games set up by the community. It is my hypothesis that it is the protection from the sun that makes them so popular.



Fig. 19 Surfyy Beach, 2016

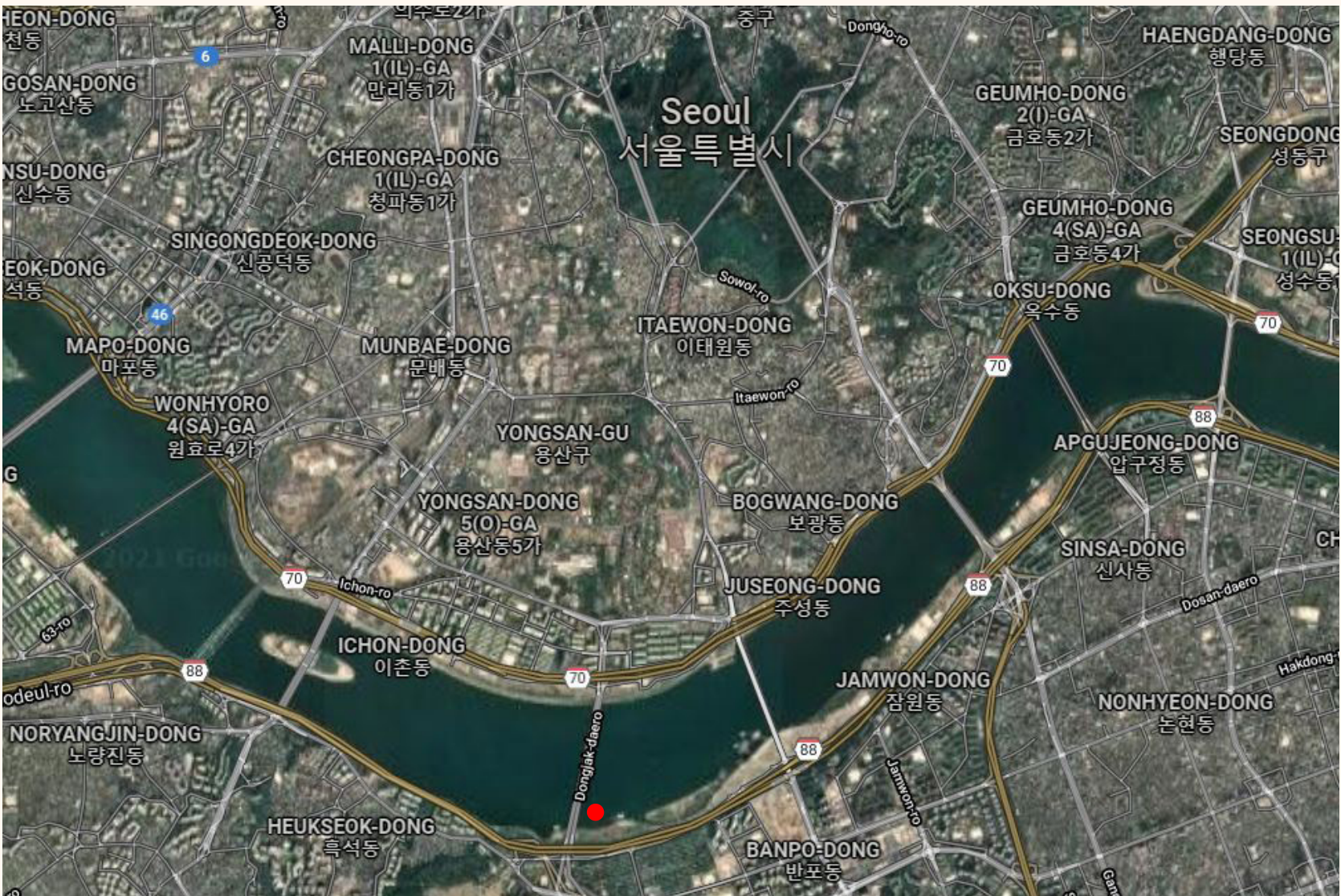


Fig. 20 Site location, Seoul, South Korea



One such group activity that uses specialized equipment is the Jimjilbang: a Korean spa. Jimjilbangs are community gathering spaces, open 24 hours a day and cost under \$20 to enter. They are widely accessible and attended by people of all ages, a quality reflective of pre-colonial Hawaiian surf culture. The Jimjilbang is a place to bathe, relax, socialize, even a place to sleep. There are often multiple cafes and restaurants. Staple snacks are boiled eggs and Sikhye, a rice based cold beverage.

Jimjilbangs embrace uniformity as an equalizer. Participants are either nude in the bathing areas or dressed in the common areas in a provided t-shirt and pants, matching other guests of their gender. It is also popular to tie your towel on your head with two coils on each ear. This is affectionately known as “lamb head” (fig. 21).

Jimjilbangs embrace nostalgia and artifice. They will use particular architectural styles or elements to call upon ancient traditions. In the case of the round saunas, the styling is also functional.

It is important to distinguish the Korea jimjilbang from the Japanese onsen. Japan colonized Korea from 1910-1945, effectively ending the country’s last dynasty and leading to the split of North and South Korea and the subsequent Korean War (1950-53). In most cases, when a country decolonizes, the cultural hegemony of the colonizer is so deep rooted that it cannot be shaken. The previously colonized state is culturally linked to its past colonizer in perpetuity.

Korea is a curious anomaly. This may be because the colonized period was comparatively short. I surmise that it was the survival of the Korean War and the loss of half the country and the destruction of most cultural landmarks that motivated South Korea to rise out of the ashes both financially and culturally. In the decades

following the Korean War, South Korea had one of the fastest growing economies in human history led by companies like LG, Samsung, and Hyundai. In the desolate state Korea was left in in 1953, it would have been impossible to imagine that a few decades later, these tech and transportation giants would rival their Japanese counterparts.

Similarly, Korean culture has risen to the forefront of global consciousness. K-pop, K-dramas, Korean cinema, and design are mainstream. Each distinctly Korean, better connected to the Korean vernacular than any Japanese influence. It is one of the largest, most globally reaching decolonial success stories.

The jimjilbang is a place to celebrate that success story. Where the Japanese onsen is pristine, quiet, and in service to its ancient appearance, the jimjilbang is lively, loud, and in service to its contemporary people. It is an ancient cultural practice but unafraid to be contemporary in its architectural style or its program. New jimjilbangs include movie theatres, swimming pools, and golf simulators. Paradise East appropriately extends this offering of contemporary experiences to artificial surfing.



Fig. 21 Snack hall at jimjilbang, 2015



Fig. 22 Spa Land, Busan, 2017



## Wave pools

Surfing itself is at a critical moment of change. Consequences of climate change such as sea level rise, erosion, and the increase in weather and seismic events threaten long standing and beloved surf breaks yet the popularity of the sport has never been higher. The industry is setting its sights on the future of artificial wave technology.

Wave pools for swimming and surfing have been around since 1928, but have only been able to produce ocean quality waves for about a decade. This creates an opportunity not only to design the waves themselves, but the socio-cultural framework within which they are surfed. We are amidst a global race to develop the best and most efficient version of this technology.

The most popular, publicly accessible site is in Waco, Texas. The controlled waves and limited capacity allows surfers to practice the same move on the same wave over and over again, giving it the same trial and error feeling as skating in a skatepark. As a result, younger surfers are able to master tricks like aerials and tube rides that would take years longer to learn in the unpredictable environment of the ocean. Waco hosts several competitions, including an aerial competition for female surfers aged 13 and under (fig. 23). Spectators are able to get a much closer look and surfers are able to hear and interact with them more. This interaction brings a really unique energy to competition and more leisurely sessions.

Waco's wind powered technology is currently the most affordable option. A renovated wave pool using this method is near completion in the desert of Palm Springs. A master plan for a development in Squamish includes a wave pool planned for completion in 2023. Alternative methods are being tested in Australia, the US, and elsewhere.

The highest quality artificial wave at this time

# “The sport now has only two eras, Before Kelly’s Wave and After.”

- MATT WARSHAW, 2018



Fig. 23 Samantha Sibley at the BSR Surf Resort, Waco, Texas, 2018



belongs to world champion surfer, Kelly Slater. His surf ranch in rural California serves as my technical precedent. Surf ranch is known as the best and most exclusive artificial wave in the world, costing around \$50k to rent out for the day. It works by running a large hydrofoil along the length of the pool via a 500m track and contouring the bottom of the pool to shape the wave (fig. 24). Kelly's wave certainly changes the game but has in turn, amplified conversations on exclusivity in surf culture, especially in competitive circles. Ironically, Kelly has said that his wave will "democratise surf culture" by freeing it from its geographical constraints and levelling the competitive playing field. While I do not think Kelly's wave is successful in this just yet, I do believe his technology has this potential.

At Paradise East, the hydrofoil is fixed to the subway train that passes over the bridge every 4 minutes. The force of the moving hydrofoil would push a pulse of energy over site then underwater topography would shape it into peeling, surfable waves. This is the extent of borrowing from Slater's precedent as his and most wave parks are quite sterile and soulless. This project looks beyond the still experimental phase of this technology and projects a future where it can be integrated with other programmatic and design elements.

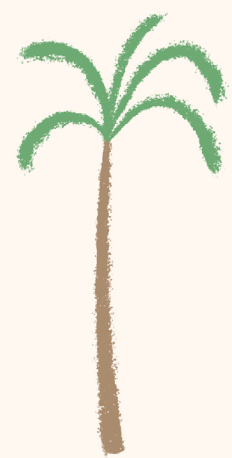
# “Watching it felt like falling in love with a robot.”

- BILL FINNEGAN, 2018



Fig. 24 Surf Ranch by Kelly Slater, California, completed 2015





palm tree



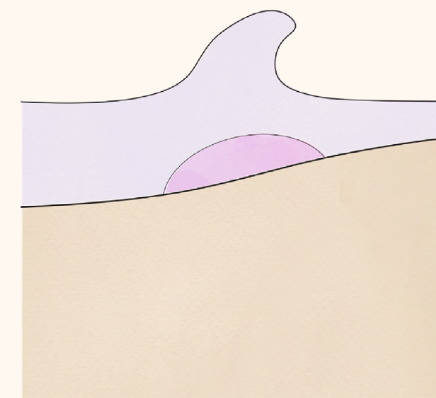
ocean



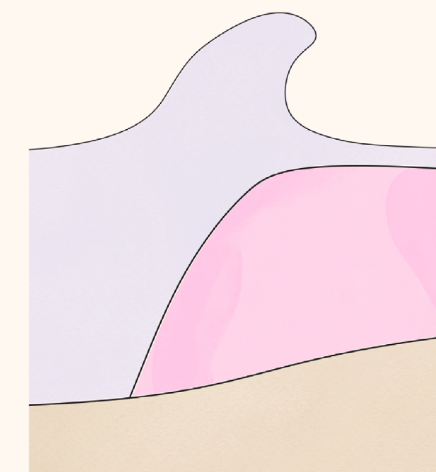
sand



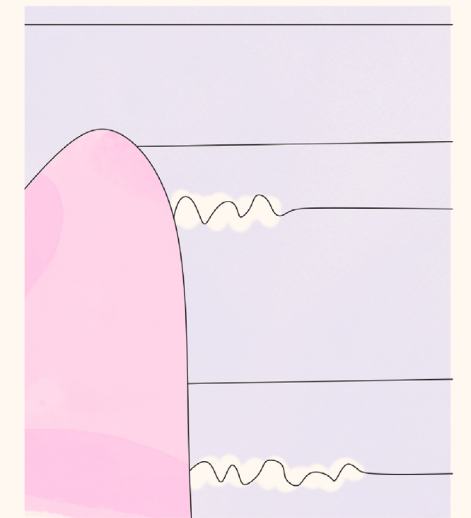
saturated colours



beach break



reef break



point break

parts of paradise

making waves

Fig. 25 Parts of paradise

Fig. 26 Wave making forms



Science Fiction,  
SF, and the  
activism  
embedded in  
speculation

Speculative Fiction belongs to a broader category Donna Haraway has named SF to include Science Fiction, Speculative Fabulation, String Figures, and ‘So Far’. Haraway describes it as a “mode of attention, a theory of history and a practice of worlding”<sup>9</sup>. It reveals scientific fact as a constructed discourse, not with the intent to dismantle its truth but to elevate fiction as its immanent companion. Haraway leans into projective storytelling as a mode of reflection and revelation of the present. Science Fiction, a subset of SF, demonstrates this in its popular depictions of utopias and dystopias that reveal our collective hopes and fears. Projection is inherently a means of critique. It is what we do as architects and architecture students everyday: imagine what space could be. Whether that future is months, years, or millenia away, architects are always curating elements of the past in order to look into the future.

Where Donna Haraway and Ursula Le Guin would utilize Speculative Fabulation in creative writing, Sarah Whiting utilizes it in the field of architecture. Whiting praises the communicative power and creative freedom of Science Fiction: “Fictions let architects say what they want to say. They allow one to get to the moral of the story without being too weighed down by fact or footnote”<sup>10</sup>. Architecture students often get caught in vicious cycles of hypercriticism and that only leads to bland work. Science Fiction is still grounded and informed but it need not worry about what is acceptable, realistic, or even possible. It is a way to criticize and create in one action. Be here on earth, but also have one’s head in the clouds. Hypercriticism is the death of creativity, SF is an architect’s ticket out.

To employ SF as a design methodology, the speculator, me, will take a set of parameters from the existing world and restructure them into something fictitious. The fictitious world calls attention to the

# “A mode of attention, a theory of history and a practice of worlding.”

- DONNA HARAWAY ON SPECULATIVE FABULATION (SF)

limitations of the real, but by distorting and reframing those limitations, it is liberated from them. Colonialism and its consequences are not something that can be ignored or erased; the healing can only start from acknowledgement. I plan to confront colonialism in surf culture and subvert the mechanisms that perpetuate its legacies, resulting in a fantasy world that is safe, fun, and connective for female, queer, BIPOC, and displaced surfers.

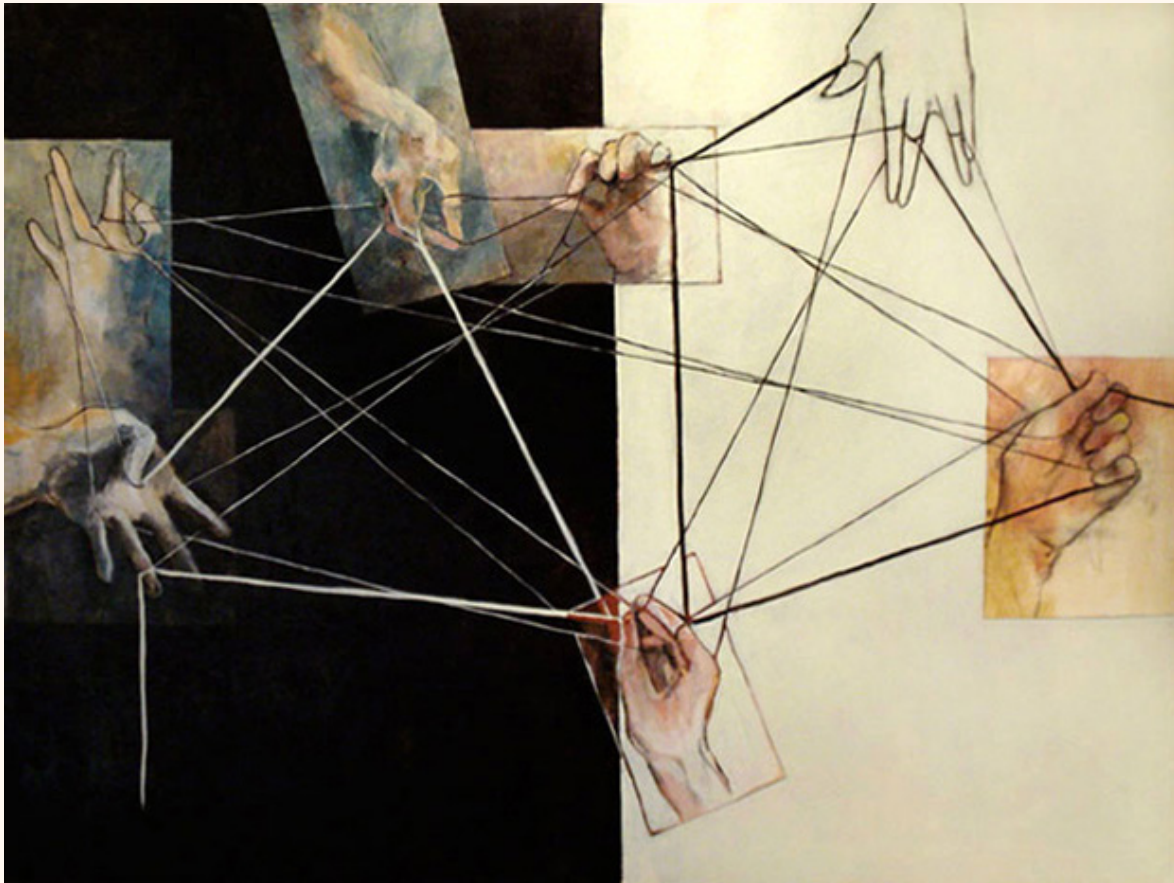


Fig. 27 Cat's Cradle/String Theory, 2008

9 Donna Jeanne Haraway, *SF: Speculative Fabulation and String Figures* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2011).

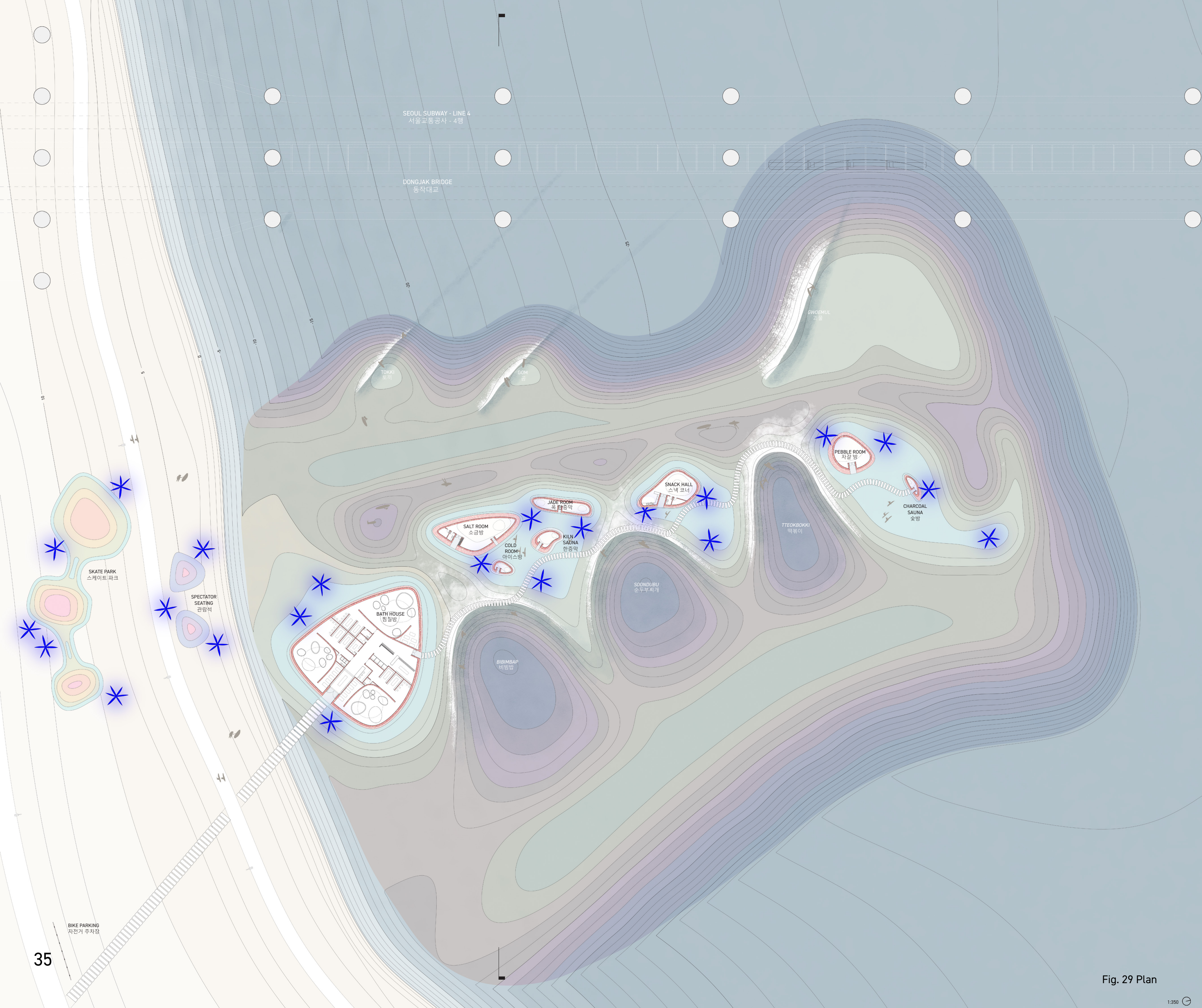
10 Sarah Whiting. "Pursuing Fictions." *Scapes*, no. 2 (2003).





Fig. 28 Aloha from Paradise East





The site features three parallel programmatic series. From west to east: the train powered waves, the traditional jimjilbang, and the surfing bowls.

To the west, the breaks Tokki, Gom, and Gwoemul take precedence from Kelly Slater's surf ranch. The wave's power comes from a hydrofoil attached to the passing subway train and their shape is formed by peaks in the underwater topography. Tokki translates to bunny, Gom to bear, and Gwoemul is the infamous Han River sea monster from the 2006 movie, The Host. The creatures and waves grow larger and more ferocious as they go along.

The central programmatic sequence is the typical jimjilbang — shoe lockers, reception, change rooms for men, women, and non binary folx (not so typical), bath houses, and scrubbing rooms. It is familiar to its audience but far more queer in its expression.

The rest of the buildings are saunas with particular attributes traditional to the jimjilbang sequence. They parallel the growing wave size by get hotter from south to north, warming the water that surrounds it. Their form comes from vernacular kiln saunas in section, and the Hawaiian islands abstracted in plan.

To the east of the islands, three dips in the topography shape surfable bowls from the westward river flow. These forms are inspired by half pipes and bowls in skate parks. The bowls are named after popular Korean bowl meals: Bibimbap, Soondubu, and Ttekbokki. They grow more spicy as they grow more challenging.

The concentrated flow of the bowls turns away from the west breaks by way depression in the topography, creating a lazy river flowing north. Surfers can ride this flow through the site.

Fig. 29 Plan

1:350



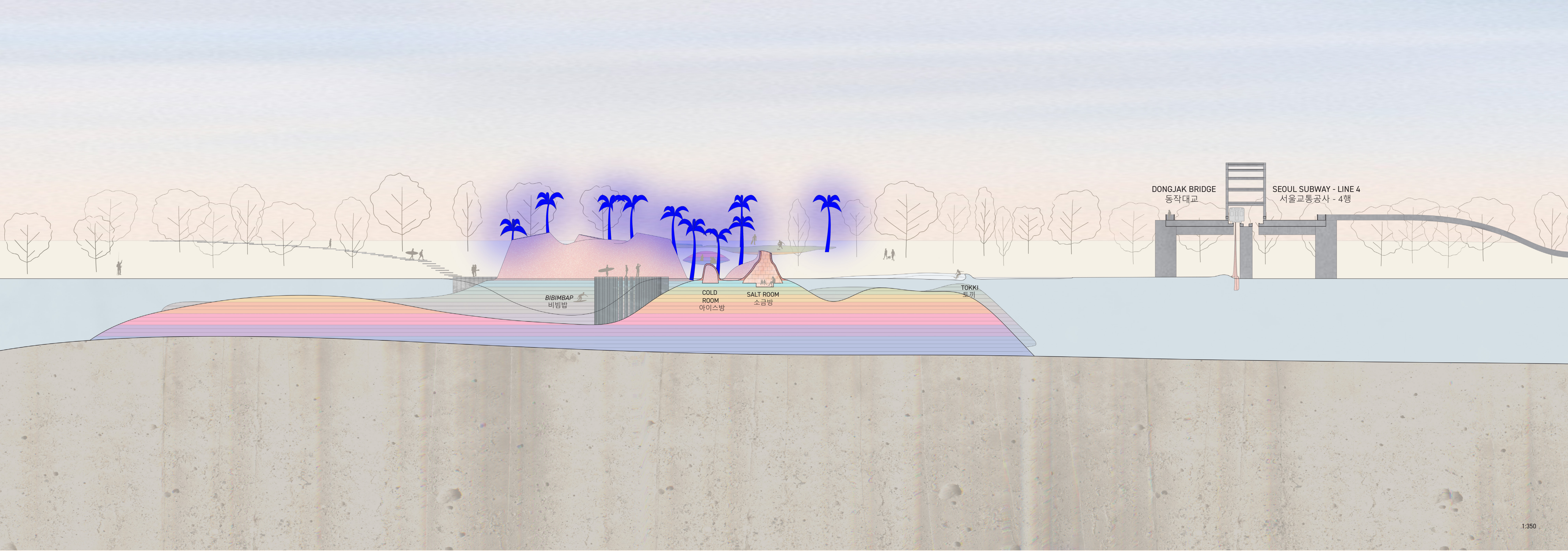


Fig. 30 Section



What follows is my rendered vision of Paradise East.  
Described in the form of Sijo, a poem from the Joseon age,  
The last dynasty before colonization split the country.





The site is presented in parallel projection,  
Calling back to the style's place in ancient East Asian art.  
Aloha from Paradise East, a dreamscape in the city.

Fig. 31 Aloha from Paradise East, axo postcard





The jimjilbang baths acts as an equalizer.  
 Participants shed all that linked them to the outside world,  
 Free from shame, they find their peace in the collective exhale.

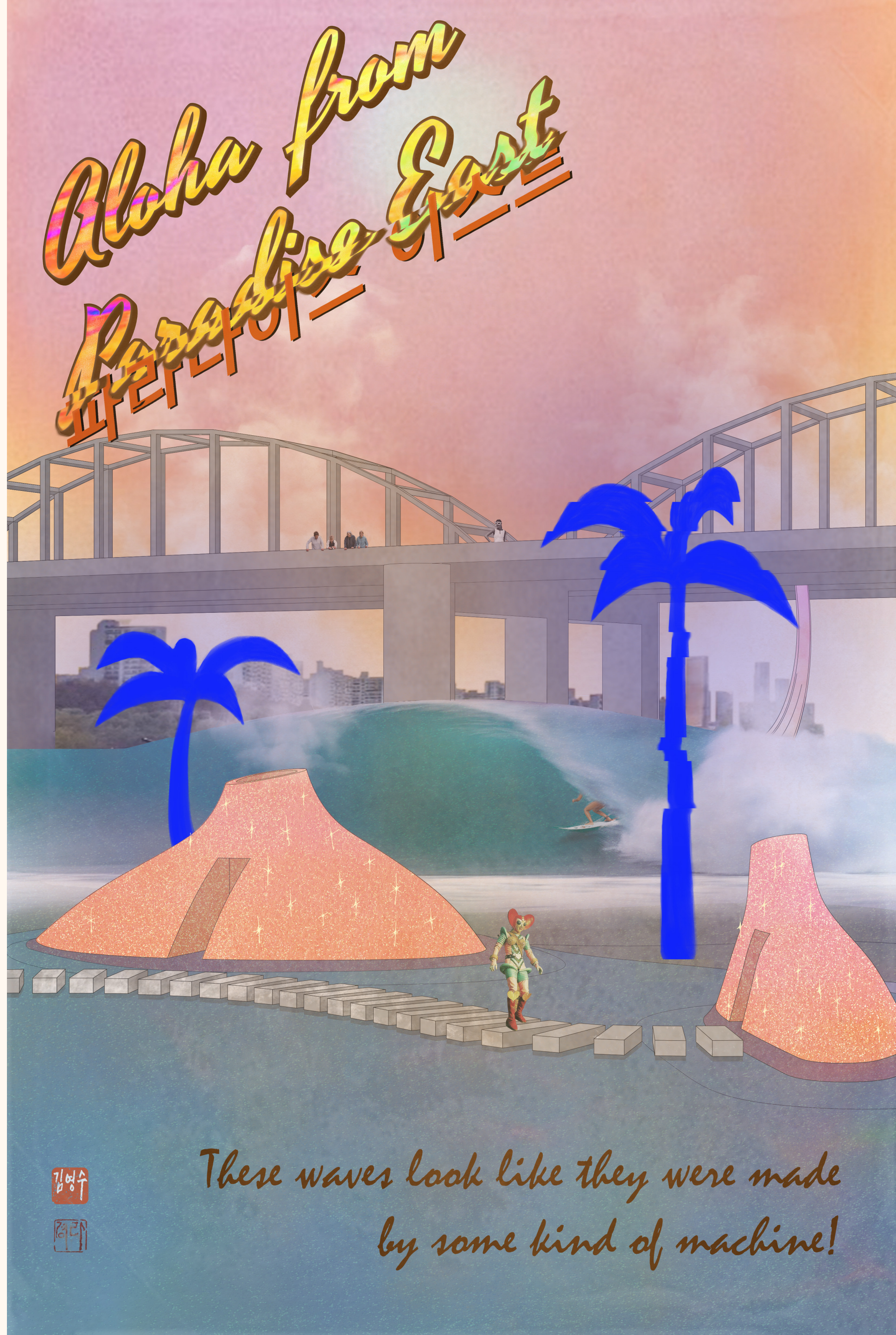
Fig. 32 Aloha from Paradise East, bathhouse postcard





The everyday pulse of the city beats on all around her.  
Seoul undulates seamlessly between the mundane and spectacle.  
Eerie ultramarine and fleshy pink find a place.





*These waves look like they were made  
by some kind of machine!*

These waves look like they were made by some kind of machine!  
That looks eight feet! Shakin' out of her mind! Totally tubular!  
Am I losing my mind or is that tree glitching out?



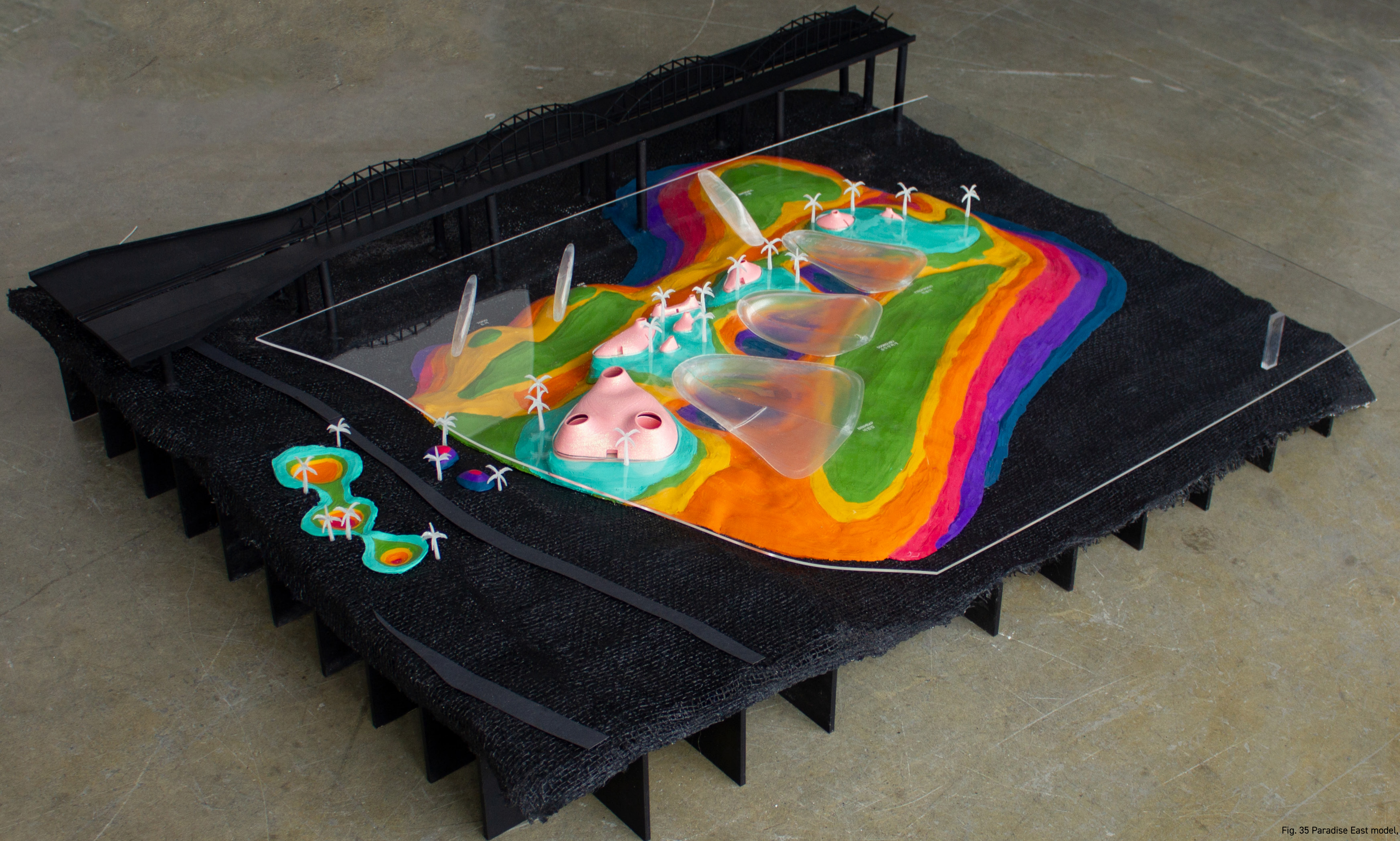


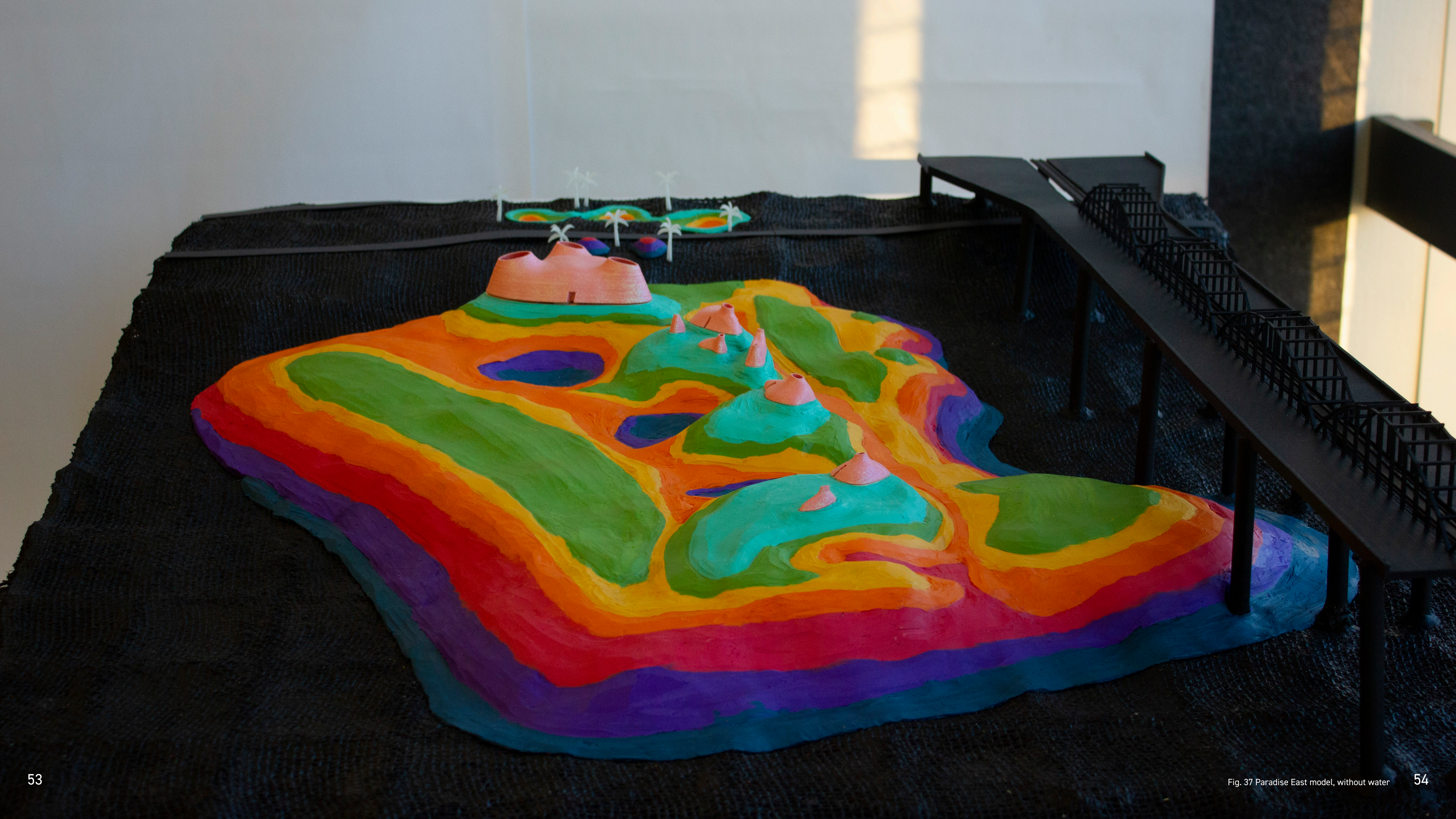




Fig. 36 Paradise East model, top view













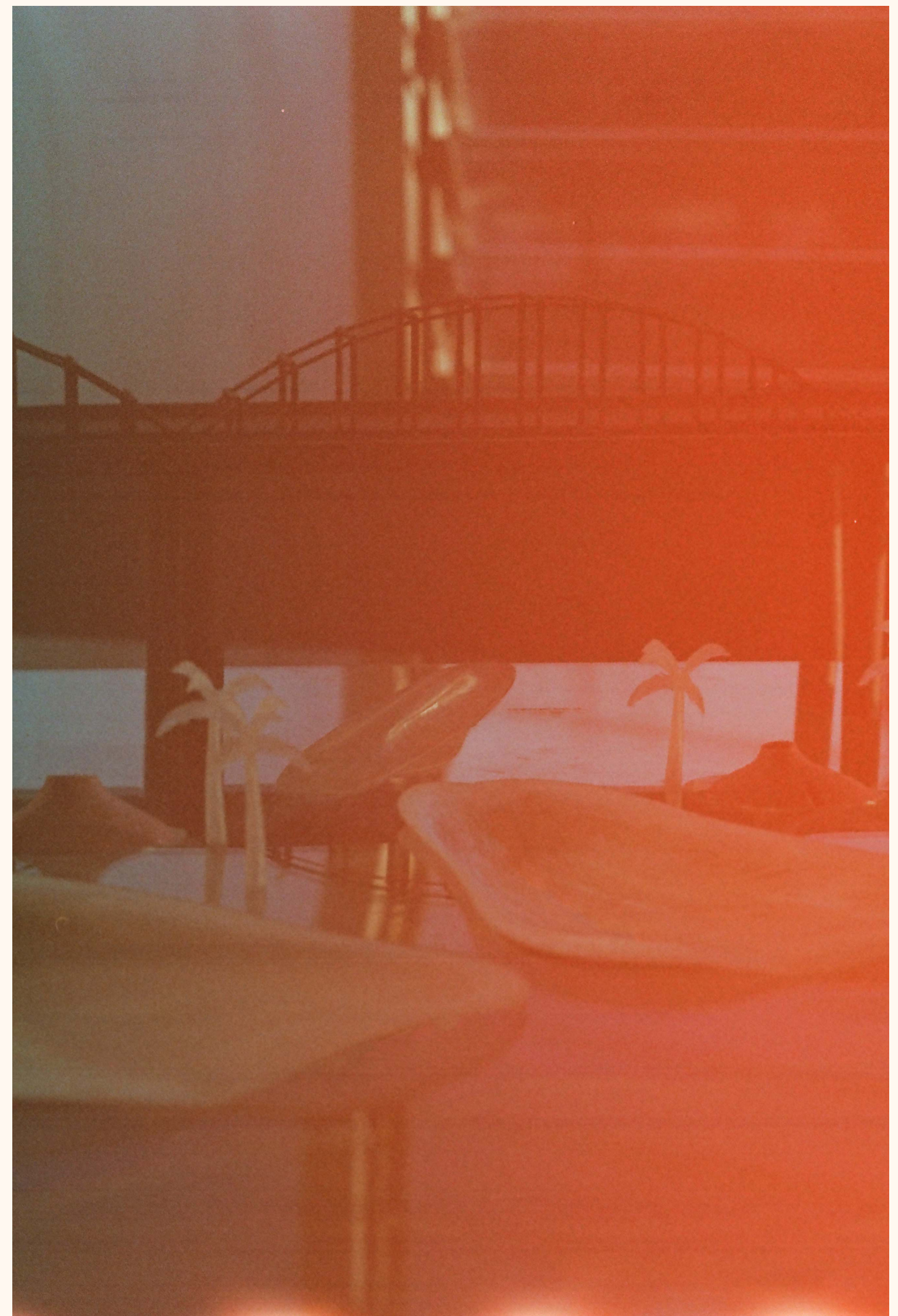


Fig. 1 Paradise East model, sunrise





Fig. 40 Paradise East model, detail



Fig. 41 Paradise East model, detail





Fig. 42 Paradise East model, sunset

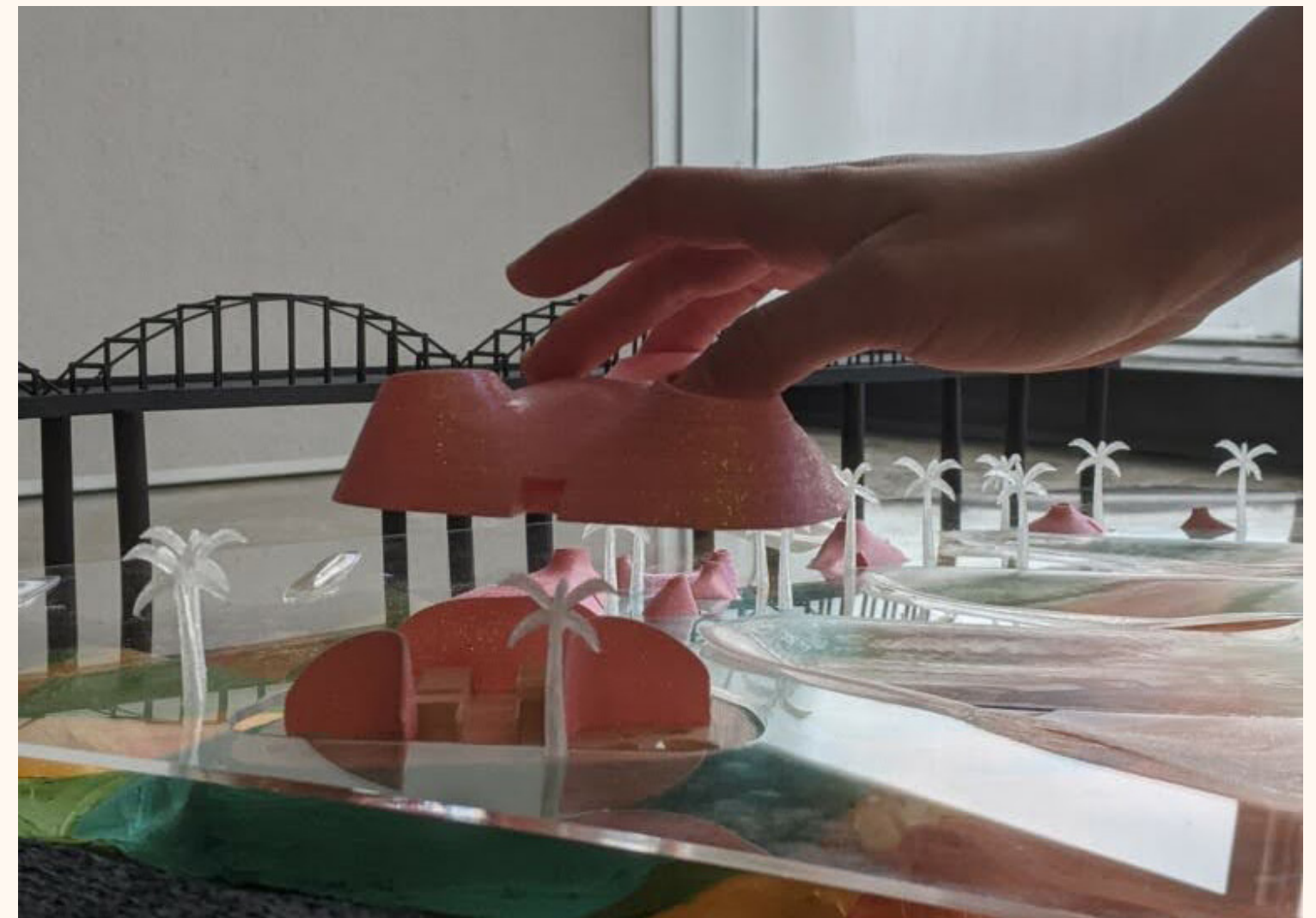


Fig. 43 Paradise East model, interaction



Fig. 44 Paradise East model, Polly's pocket



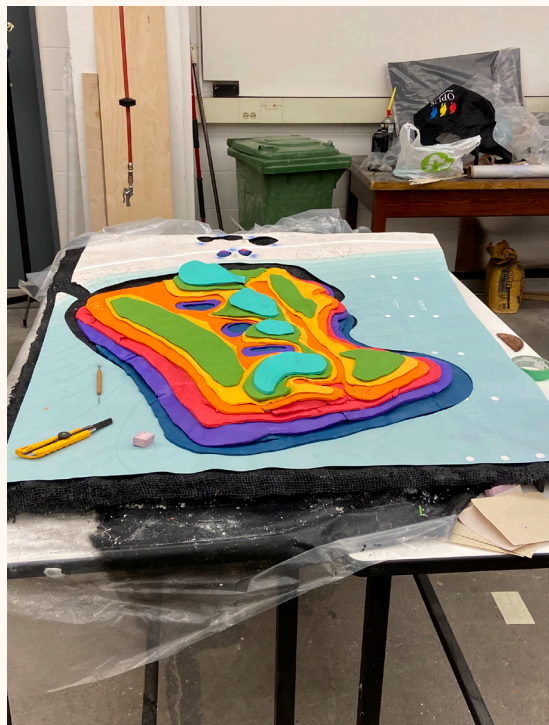


Fig. 45-52 Paradise East model, process

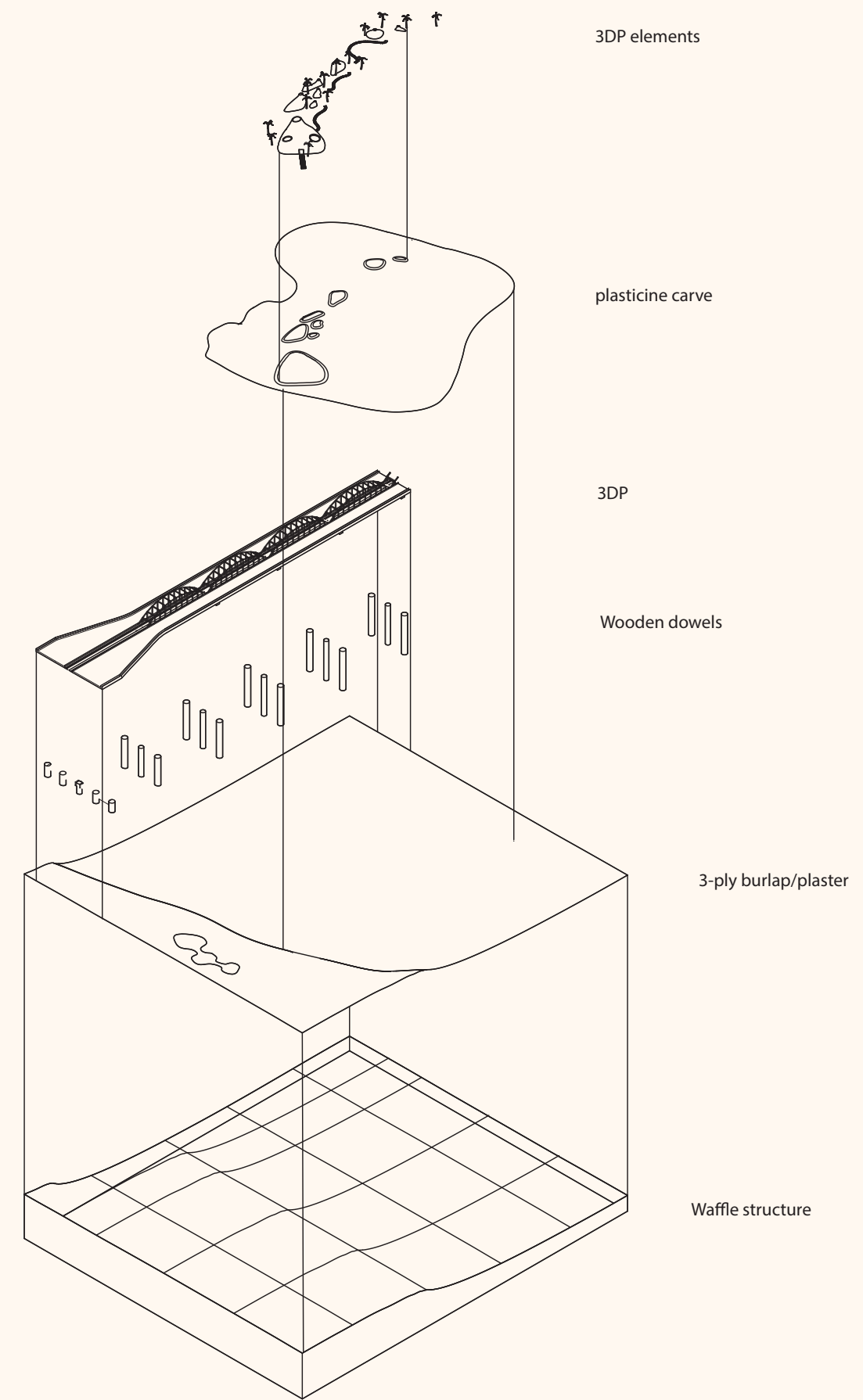


Fig. 53 Paradise East model, process diagram



This is Paradise East. My love letter to the othered surfer,  
to femininity, artifice, and spectacle.  
My celebration of the hand of the designer.

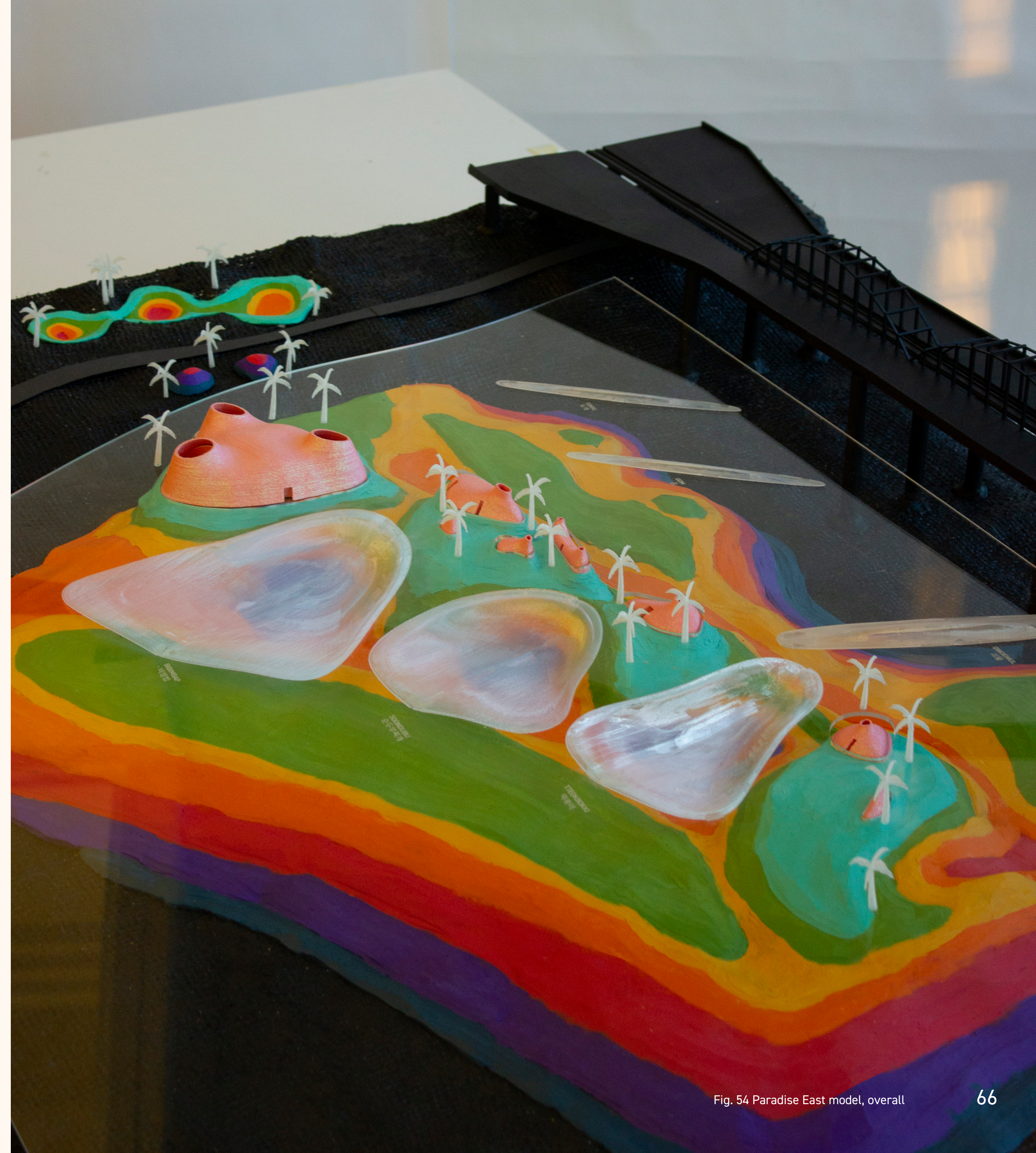


Fig. 54 Paradise East model, overall



## Precedents

A precedent that I referred back to throughout the year is Amid Cero9's Gay Vatican (fig. 55 and 56). The Gay Vatican is a queer counter-city set in the tradition of Salton Lake communities like Salvation Mountain and Slab City, art communes made by and for societal outsiders to live and create freely in the Californian desert.

The program includes short and long term housing, workshops, saunas, gyms, stages, discos, and wedding chapels. All the necessities for queer people to create, live, and love. The spaces are housed in bulbous, pink, silicon, flamboyantly queer forms (fig. 56). With the methodology of Science Fiction, the Gay Vatican takes the parameters of queerness and makes it into a fully formed, liberated world. It is blatant fantasy at every turn but acutely descriptive of a history of utopias, queer perceptions, and queer spaces.

One of the internal theses I reviewed early in the process was Jeremy Schipper's Beach Bodies. Schipper proposes a narrative where a series of events triggered by climate change result in an island of plastic being formed adjacent to Wreck Beach (fig. 57). The island is then occupied by a local nudist community, as well as bird and marine populations. These actors reform the land to accommodate their needs. The site and way of life there grows more and more alien over time, eventually resembling an extraterrestrial landscape (fig. 58). This fantasy world uses the consequences of climate change as parameters and imagines them as a home for the populations that are the most severely impacted: naturalists and non-humans.

A precedent from pop culture that visualizes this intention is Doja Cat and SZA's music video for Kiss Me More (fig. 59). The two women rule "Planet Her" as pastel toned aliens in a pastel toned desert world. Their bodies make up the geography of the planet with colossally scaled lips and hips creating distractions and obstacles for their astronaut prey. Science Fiction is

utilized in this case to critique perceptions on female and BIPOC sexuality.



Fig. 55 Vaticano Gay Rendering, 2011



Fig. 56 Vaticano Gay Models, 2011





Fig. 57 Schipper, New Island, 2019



Fig. 58 Schipper, Plastic Miners, 2019





Fig. 59 Kiss Me More Video Still, 2021

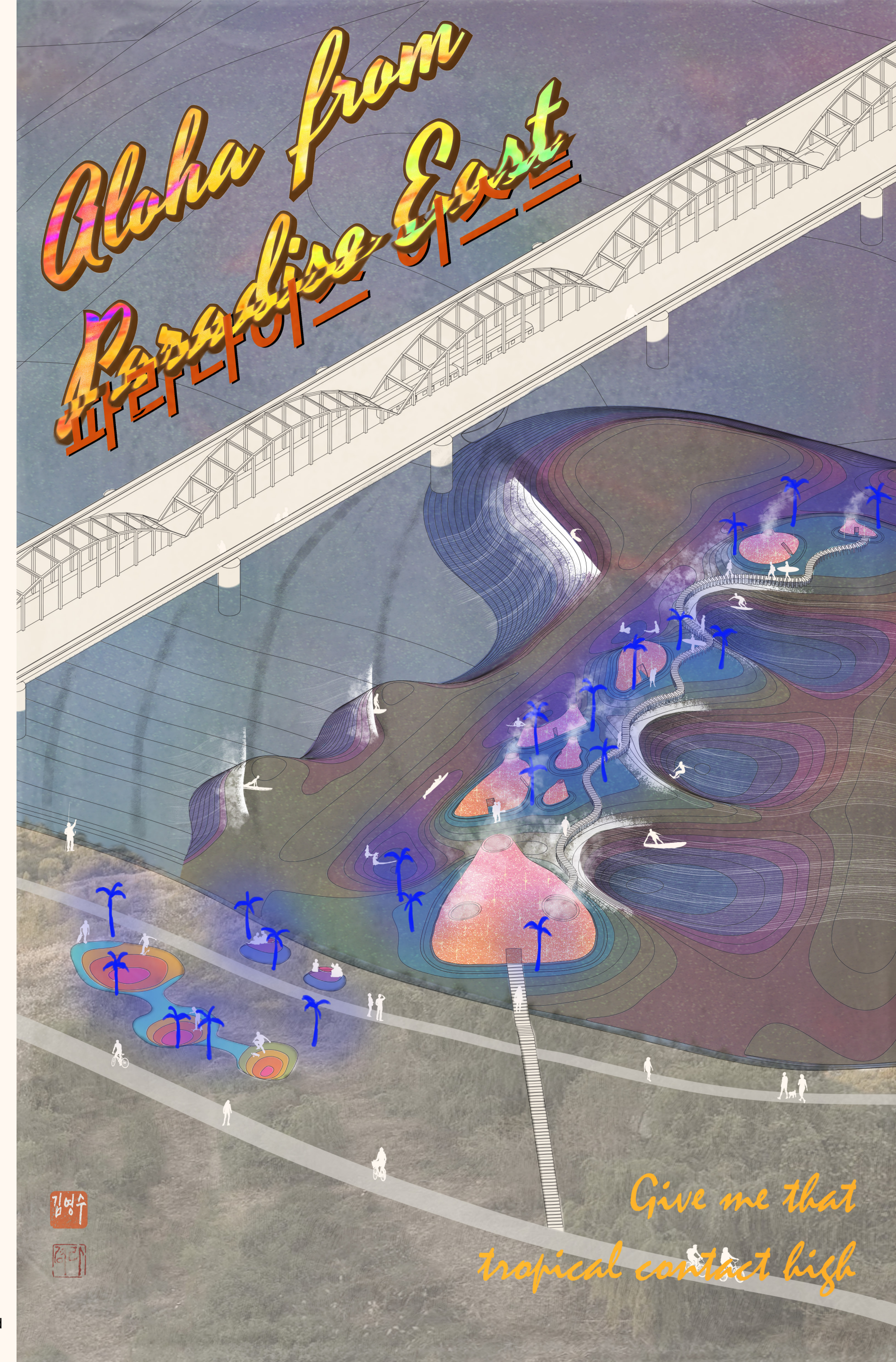


CONCLUSION:  
Feedback and  
final thoughts

This thesis took on a set of socio-historical parameters and converted them into a toolbox for speculative and imaginative design. Alienation, hyperfeminization, and a fantasy narrative of paradise embedded toxicity into surf culture. Paradise East subverted them into formal tools for world building. By proposing Paradise as a shared, public, and urban space, I critiqued the deeply colonial notion of ‘founding’ place.

Surfing started as a shared and inclusive cultural activity. This spirit was lost to colonialism. Paradise East attempts to recapture this lost spirit by finding it in Korea’s contemporary jimjilbang culture. This program is woven into a surf park where waves are produced by the pulse of the city and shaped by the hand of the designer. Surfing is no longer a synchronicity of nature, but a synchronicity of humanness.

A critical piece of feedback that Paradise East received was the question: did this do enough to decolonize surf? In a word, my answer is no. No single site, single project, or single piece of work can decolonize a multi century, multi billion dollar industry. It can reveal what is largely invisible to those both inside and outside of surf culture. It can recognize that surf safe spaces are needed and fantasize on what that could look like. The goal is not to resolve colonialism (a wholly impossible task), but to shine a light on the extent of its damages and call upon you to act and design in its opposition.





ANNOTATED  
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chakanetsa, Kim. *Surfers: Cori Schumacher and Ishita Malaviya*. London, United Kingdom: BBC, 2015.

This interview includes the stories of surfers Cori Schumacher and Ishita Malaviya. Schumacher's experiences with hyperfeminization pushed her away from the sport of surfing. Ishita Malaviya is India's first female professional surfer and is working to teach and encourage more women in India to learn to surf. Both of these women have very different stories that are telling of different aspects of exclusion in surf culture.

Foucault, Michael. "Subject and Power." *Critical Inquiry* 8.4 (1982): 777-795. Web. Accessed 22 August 2013.

Foucault is known as the father of discourse theory and this writing is where he defines discourse as constructed fiction. This writing is a canon touchstone for the thesis, positioning my theoretical thinking in the camp of postmodernism.

Haraway, Donna Jeanne. *Staying with the Trouble*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

*Staying with the Trouble* offers a mode of "making kin" with species outside of our own. This, along with others of Donna Haraway's writings, position the thesis' methodology of speculative fiction.

Haraway, Donna Jeanne. *SF: Speculative Fabulation and String Figures*. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2011.

Haraway's earlier writing for an exhibition catalogue speaks to speculative fiction specifically. It is the theoretical backbone of my methodological approach.

Heyden, Dylan. "Venice Surf School Owner Pulls Woman's Leash." *The Inertia*, December 5, 2018. <https://www.theinertia.com/surf/leash-pull-venice-localism-california-surfing-aggressive/?fbclid=IwAR1pP72v3nhZVoHnmjpfEx8OuWp1yCQ31SScDBI1QtkbGM00UC7580KjZHI>.

This article quotes Danielle Lyons after her assault by Wagner Lima. It is the introductory example of a male surfer inflicting violence against a female surfer.

How LGBTQ+ Surfers Are Creating a More Inclusive Surf Culture. YouTube. YouTube, 2020. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0wM0cmp6I0&t=839s&ab\\_channel=SURFER](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0wM0cmp6I0&t=839s&ab_channel=SURFER).

This short film features many queer surfers in the competitive circles and in the industry. Many describe experiences with violence, harrassment, and exclusion in the water. The comment section is filled with the same homophobic and aggressive behaiviour. I have included it to illustrate this side of surf culture's toxicity.

Laderman, Scott, and UPSO eCollections (University Press Scholarship Online). *Empire in Waves: A Political History of Surfing*. vol. 1, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2014, doi:10.1525/j.ctt5hjh72.

Laderman's book surveys the political history of surfing. He focuses on the stories of Hawai'i and Indonesia, speaking to the colonial violence and delusions of paradise. It is the backbone of the contextual story.

Le Guin, Ursula K. *The Left Hand of Darkness*. New York: Ace Books, 1976.

In a groundbreaking work of Science Fiction, Le Guin creates a world where gender is irrelevant. It is the perfect example of speculation that is grounded in challenges of the present.

Martinez, Kiko. "Was Surfing Actually Invented in Peru?" *Remezcla*, August 4, 2015. <https://remezcla.com/features/sports/was-surfing-actually-invented-in-peru/>.

This article details the Peruvian roots of the caballitos de totora and the modern history of indigenous and non-indigenous Peruvian surfers. This article supports the section on Peru, included to reveal that which surf mythologies conceal.

Vans Shoes, director. *Weird Waves Season 2: Wave Pools | Surf | VANS*. YouTube, YouTube, 18 Mar. 2020, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=GCHLt0NDkdY&ab\\_channel=Vans](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GCHLt0NDkdY&ab_channel=Vans).

This docu-series highlights an unusual wave or surf spot in each episode. This episode is on wave pools, a potential direction for the program of this thesis.



Vaughan-Lee, Adam Loftin & Emmanuel, et al. “Counter Mapping.” Emergence Magazine, [emergencemagazine.org/story/counter-mapping/](http://emergencemagazine.org/story/counter-mapping/).

Counter mapping tells the story of Zuni people who painted their cultural history into “counter maps” to preserve it against the violence of modern mapping. This reading is serving as a methodological precedent for the visual representation of stories in this thesis.

WATA, MAMI. AFROSURF. S.L.: TEN SPEED, 2021.

AFROSURF tells the largely untold history of surfing in Africa. It is included in my thesis to tell this story and to demonstrate the positive power media can have.

Whiting, Sarah. “Pursuing Fictions.” Scapes, no. 2 (2003).

Sarah Whiting discusses non-anecdotal or science fiction as a way for the architect to communicate a single moral without being weighed down by fact or footnote. This reading applies some of Haraway’s thinking in a specifically architectural context, delineating the path for this thesis to act within the discipline.



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IMAGE  
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The following image appendix contains drawings from throughout the GP1 and GP2 process. They landed outside of the critical narrative so I present them here as musings on the themes presented.

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Fig. 60 Aloha from Hawai'i





We lose the sun behind a wash of clouds  
But its changing colours indicate the ending day  
As the colour of the water comes to match the colour of the sky  
The horizon line blurs into blankness  
We occupy a void

The incoming waves provide the only sense of space  
Each one sending a sparkling ripple across the surface  
Nothing has ever felt more surreal yet real  
Louder or more silent  
We are held in the simultaneous presence and absence of everything  
A blank canvas on which to carve lines with our bodies and boards

And just when we think we have settled into this otherworldly waterscape  
A manta ray leaps across the sky  
Reminding us that we are not alone here  
And we never are  
We are outsiders in an alien world







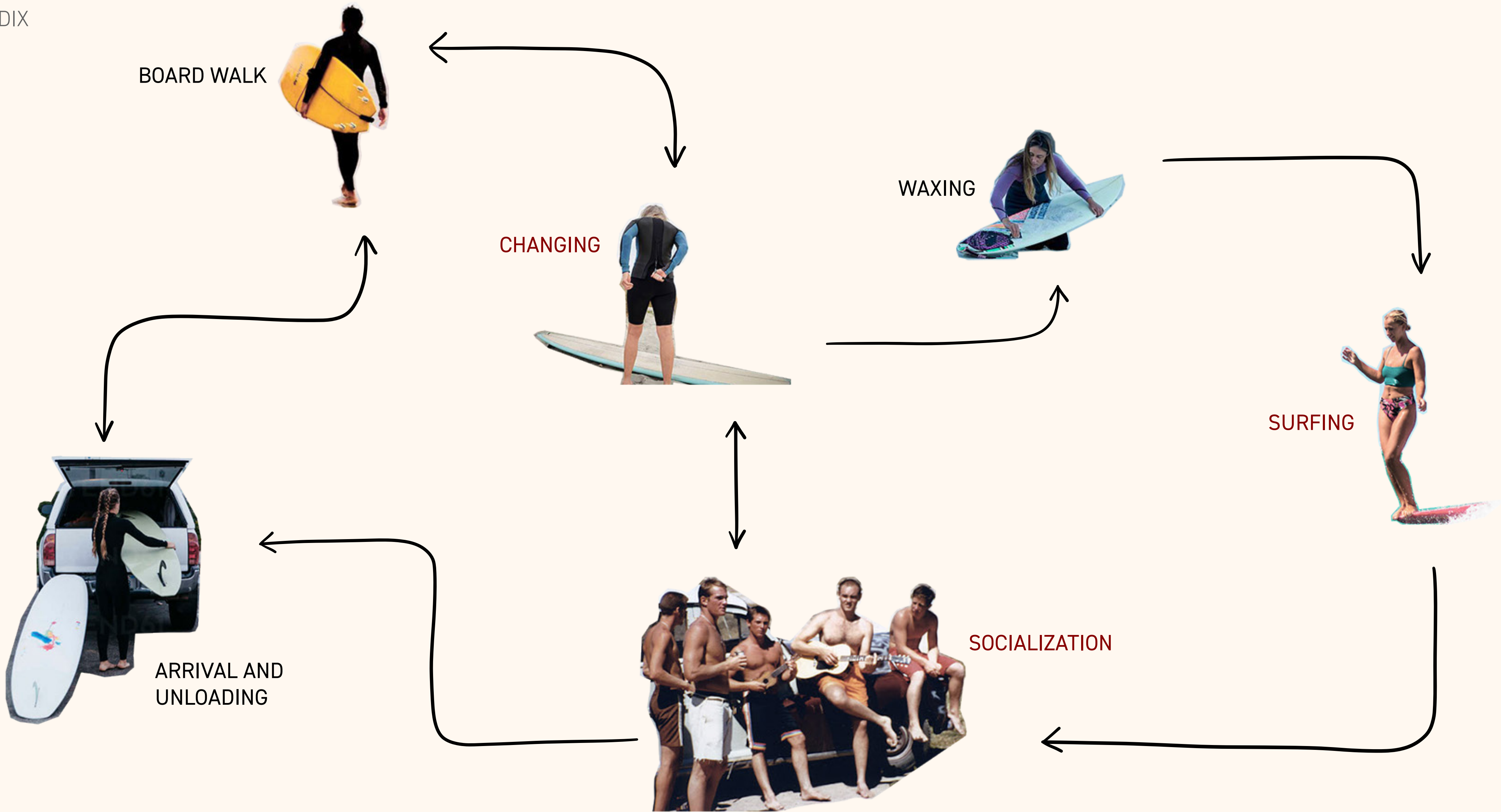
Fig. 62 Surf Fantasy





Fig. 63 Mungyeong Bridge, South Korea







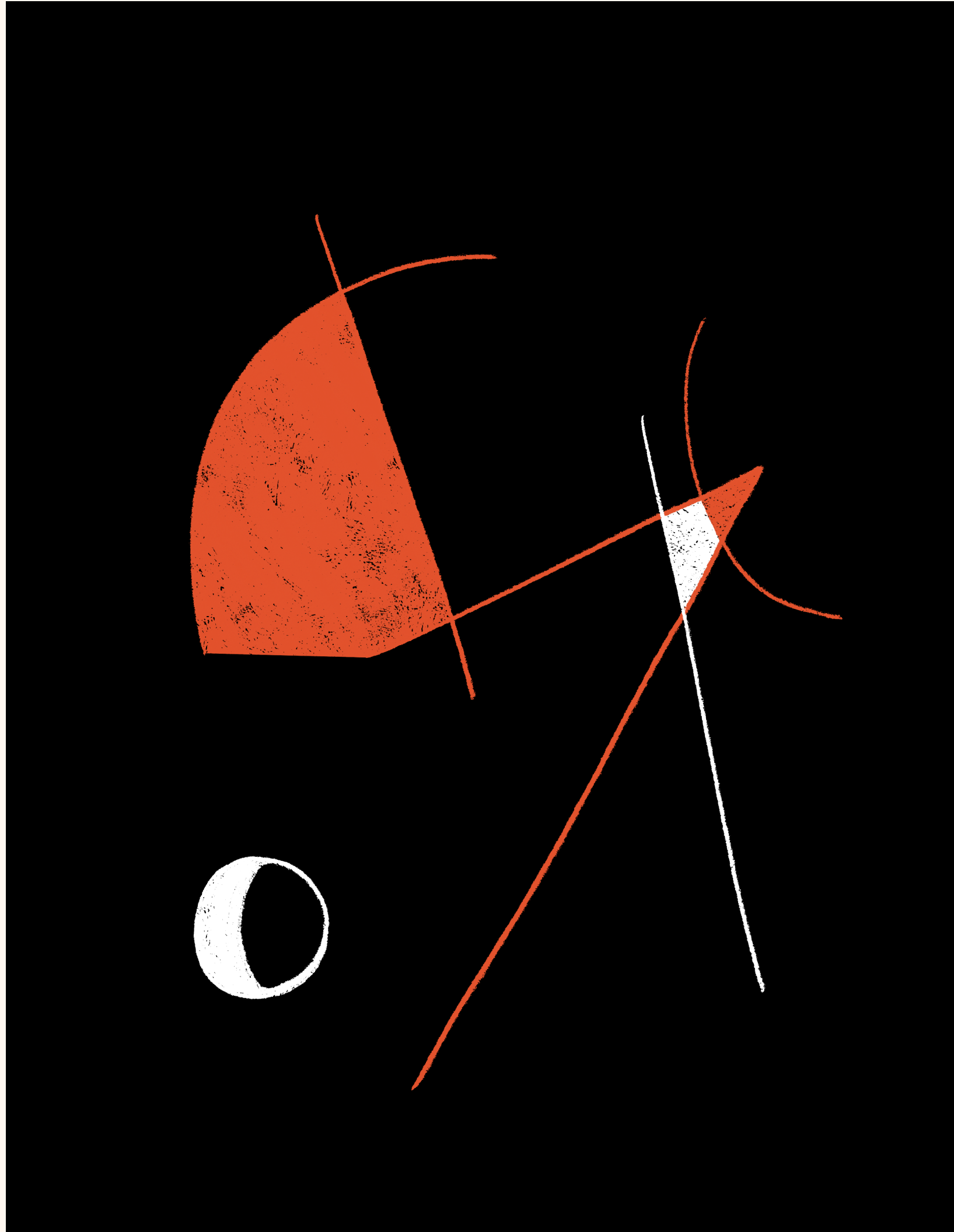


Fig. 65 Lines and Elements

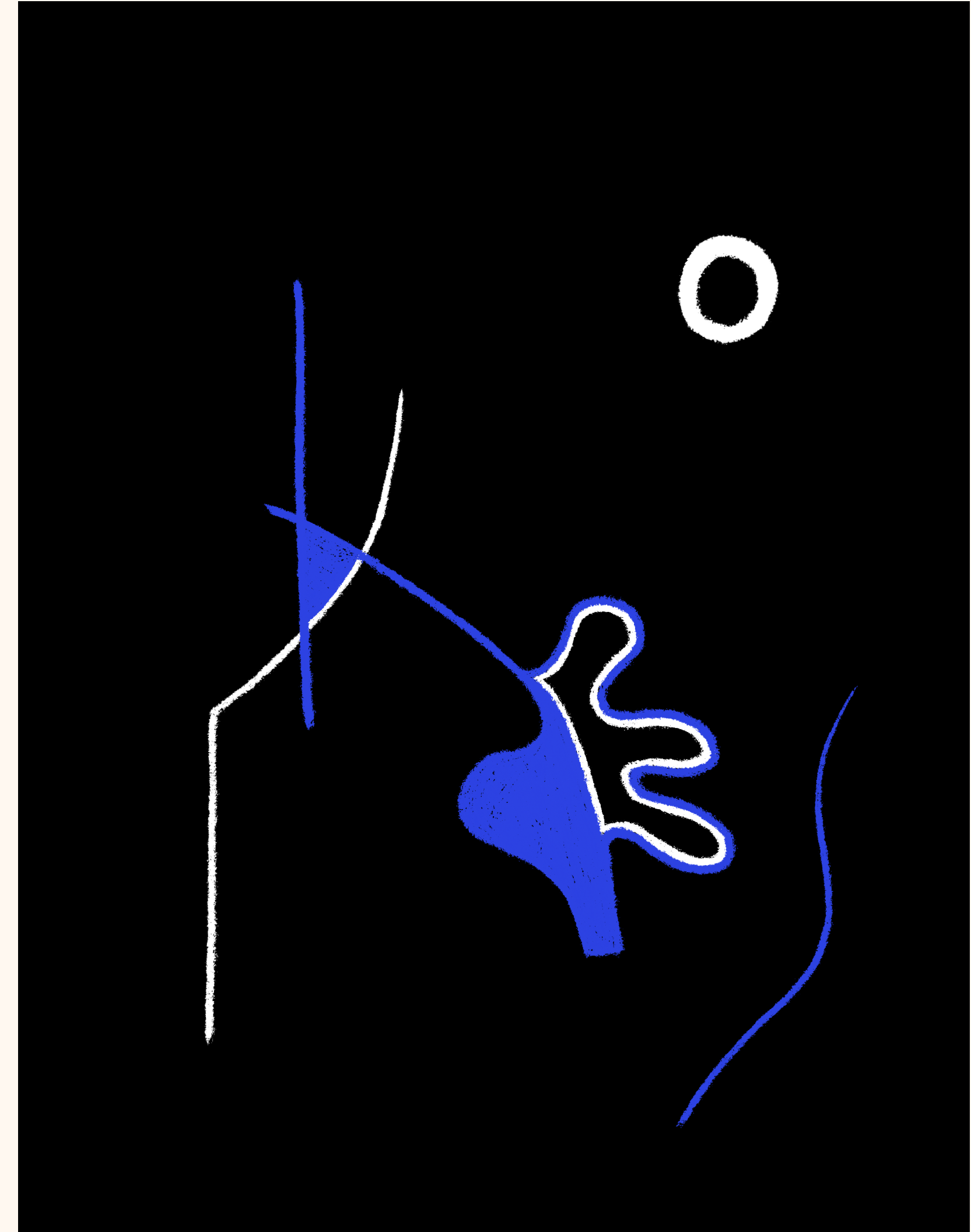


Fig. 66 Waves and Figure





Fig. 67 Waves



