



Semester: 9th Semester

Title: Lighting Design, Public Space and Existential Sincerity

Project Period: February – May 2018

Semester Theme: Lighting Design

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Abstract:

Juhani Pallasma asserts that the architecture of our contemporary society favours vision to the detriment of the other senses, creating a sense of detachment, and that “buildings have turned into image products detached from existential depth and sincerity.”¹ How does this detachment influence how people operate in public space? Can lighting design begin to repair this detachment in favour of a built environment that encourages recognition and identification with public space?

Through conducting research in different areas of urban planning, sociology and reference to design projects and the changing face of the modern city, this paper seeks to study the intricacies of people in public spaces and determine how lighting design can contribute to enhancing how we experience it. Research is paired with a case study of a public space in Brooklyn, New York and a design is proposed that has been informed by a theoretical background and observations of the space.

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Chapter I: Introduction

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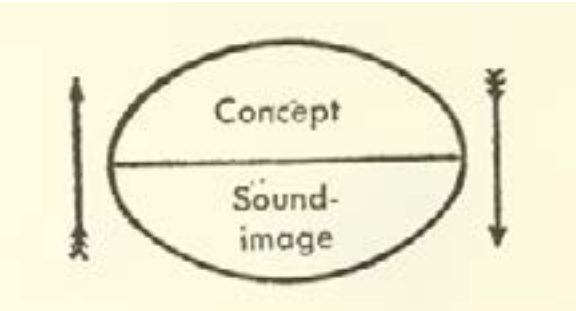
Chapter II: Theoretical Background

Semiotics in Public Space

This section will discuss the role of semiotics within public spaces. In order to better understand public space and public life, we must acknowledge a language of symbols that has been built around objects in our cities, and how this language influences the behaviour of citizens. We can use teachings from semiotics within other fields, such as linguistics, to help us to examine and discuss the role that objects in our society have. This, in turn, can generate an insight and understanding into how humans and objects will interact. For this section, there are a few things to keep in mind; every object carries with it, a meaning. This meaning can be broken down into signifier, and signified. Every individual object exists within a larger network. Objects have the power to perform functions within our society, and these carry with them a weight of significance.

Signifier, Signified

In his work *Course in General Linguistics* Ferdinand de Saussure outlines the idea of semiotics, or the study of signs. He breaks down language as a set of signifiers and signified concepts. He differentiates between the signifier and the signified in the context of language. For example, the word ‘tree,’ is separate from the concept of tree, or the picture one may get in their minds’ eye that tells them what a tree is. The word tree is part of a network of codes, it serves the purpose of signifying the concept of a tree. Together, the signifier and signified are joined together in language to create a linguistic sign. “The



linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound-image.”¹ The linguistic sign binds a concept and a ‘sound image,’ or a spoken phrase together. It is the binding of these concepts and sound images that enables humans to communicate with one another. As Saussure outlines, “The bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary.”² In other words, there is no inherent relationship between the signifier and signified, but rather, they are united in the linguistic sign. This begs the question; if the relationship between the signifier and signified is arbitrary, what is it that binds a concept to a sound image? How has society arrived at a place where language connotes concepts? As Saussure classifies, the arbitrary nature of this relationship is to say that there is no natural, inherent link between concepts and sound-images, but rather these linguistic links have been established and agreed upon in society over time. “In fact, every means of expression used in society is based, in principle, on collective behaviour or – what amounts to the same thing – on convention.”³ It is linguistic convention that marries signifier and signified to one another.

1 Saussure, Ferdinand de Course in General Linguistics Philosophical Library: New York, 1959. 66.

2 Ibid, 67

3Ibid, 68.

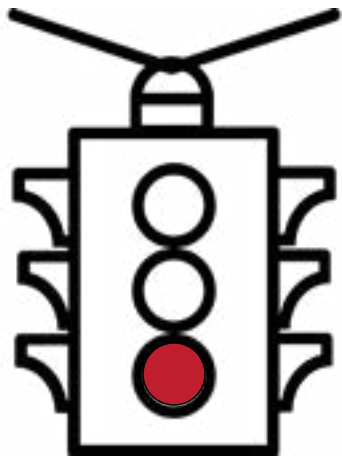
This network of signs can be used as a lens to consider objects in public space. For example, there is no inherent, natural relationship between a red, illuminated light and the act of stopping a car. The action of the light turning red is a signifier that relates to the concept of stopping a car. The relationship between the signifier and signified here is arbitrary, but has been established throughout society as an agreed upon convention. This object in public space, the traffic light, carries with it the weight of significance and meaning.

Performative Statements

Studies in linguistics can continue to enlighten us on how humans relate to objects. Take for example JL Austin’s lecture series *How to Do Things with Words*. In it he discusses the function of a statement. Where in the past,

linguistics had classified a statement as a way of describing a fact or a state of affairs, statements can also perform actions if the correct conditions are present. ‘Performative statements,’ exist outside those statements or utterances that describe or report. This term refers to types of utterances that not only describe the action of doing, but they themselves perform the action. For example, “When I say, before the registrar or alter &c., ‘I do’, I am not reporting on a marriage: I am indulging in it.”⁴ These statements have a place of significance in Austin’s work, because they perform an action, and in so doing, carry with them a weight of significance beyond a statement of description. Performative statements require appropriate circumstances in order to act. As in the example of marriage, it is the act of saying ‘I do,’ within a specific context; for example a registrar that performs the task. To separate the utterance from the

⁴ Austin, JL. *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford University Press: London, ¹⁹⁶². ⁶



The act of stopping is a result of...



circumstances strips the utterance of power and fails to perform an action.

Within public space, performative statements are present all around. To return to the example of a traffic light, a red light being illuminated carries different meanings within different contexts. Within the interior space the illumination does not have an effect that is agreed upon within society. At an intersection however, this action makes a performative statement, ‘Now it is illegal to continue driving.’ The context, and the ‘statement,’ carry a special significance as well as legal consequences. Taking the work of Saussure and Austin into consideration can enable us to gain insight into why people in public spaces behave the way they do, and indeed help us to predict the ways in which objects will influence people around them.

Anthropomorphic Objects

Describing the act of a light turning red as a ‘performative statement,’ assigns some human characteristics to the inanimate object of a traffic light. In a way, the traffic light acts as a police officer and by extension, a representation of law, order and government. To defy a traffic light is to defy the law. This links in with the work of Bruno Latour, within Actor Network Theory, and the analysis of the interaction between human and non-human objects. In his work Latour outlines the idea of anthropomorphic objects. He describes objects as being anthropomorphic if they fulfil specific criteria regarding how they relate to humans; they are those that have been either made by humans, perform actions that substitute for humans, or shape human action. While the traffic light is a prime example of an object that fulfils all of the criteria. However it is also worth noting, the criteria is so inclusive that it is difficult to find objects that do not fit into them.

Not only do objects have the power to act as humans within public space, they also have the

power to discriminate against people. Latour discusses the sociology of a door closer and details the difficulty that is involved in operating a hydraulic closing door. “Neither my nephews nor my grand-mother could get in unaided because our groom needed the force of an able-bodied person to accumulate enough energy to close the door.”⁵ The mechanics of a door can be, not solely inconvenient, but also dictate who may and may not enter a given area. In this way, the objects that designers and urban planners choose to place in public spaces have the power to be inclusive to exclusive, active or passive.

Conclusion

Semiotics can be described as the study of signs. Semiotics is the reason why specific objects are associated with specific types of places. They have the power to determine whether or not someone will identify with a space. The study of signs, as well as how those signs perform and interact with the people around them can give an important insight when analysing behaviour in public spaces. These insights can enable us to anticipate how people in a public space will respond to objects around them. It is critical to consider theory and already existing knowledge when working with elements of design in public spaces. As designers, we must continue to ask ourselves, how will the objects we place influence human action and access?

⁵ Latour, Bruno *Mixing Humans and Non-Humans Together*, *The Sociology of a Door Closer* *Social Problems* Vol 35, No.3. 302

Key Point:

Objects in Public Space
Influence Behaviour

Light, Height and Intimacy

This section explores the question; How do light, height and intimacy interact to influence the experience of being in a public space?

In his work on public housing, Oscar Newman ushered in a new way of considering the design of public housing as a means towards preventing crime, and increasing community ties and contentment. In his influential work *Creating Defensible Space*, discusses the various ways that occupants and tenants of social housing respond to their surroundings. His finding illustrate, in a broad sense, the idea that the more ownership tenants have over their space, the more likely they are to maintain a vested interest in the upkeep of that space. He discusses the differences between contrasting set-ups for social housing; high rise apartments, versus ‘walk up,’ buildings that have separate designated entrances for different sections of the building. The less families that share common space, the more that individual families may feel a sense of ownership over that place, and it becomes easier to establish routines towards maintenance of the space. He notes that in high rise apartment buildings, ‘landings,’ or hallways on a level of the building, shared by two families were far more well maintained than those shared by more families. Separated entrances also makes it easier to decipher a neighbour from a stranger within a common space. This increases the sense of individual ownership over a building. The more ownership felt, the more likely occupants are to hold a vested interest in the wellbeing of a place. In his words, “The larger the number of people who share a territory, the less each individual feels rights to it.”⁶

⁶ Newman, Oscar. *Creating Defensible Space*, Center for Urban Policy Research, Rutgers University 1996. 17.

Newman also outlines building heights as a physical factor that influence crime statistics, illustrating that in large tower block buildings residence do not feel a sense of ownership over their space. Newman’s observation point to a larger concept; the identification with a space. As he illustrates, “The more complex and anonymous the housing environment, the more difficult it is for a code of behavior following societal norms to become established among residents.”⁷

The correlation between building height and a sense of identification is especially interesting to consider when discussing Herve Descotte’s six visual principles of light, outlined in *Architectural Lighting, Designing with Light and Space*. In it, he outlines height as one of the factors that can visually distinguish between public and private space. The closer the light is to the body, the more intimate a space will feel. “Inside the most private spaces of the house (the bedroom, the study, the wardrobe, and so on) the height of a light source is kept at arm’s length, as if to reinforce our eminent control and possession of this light as a means of reassurance”⁸ Descottes illustrates a correlation between a feeling of reassurance within a space, and an occupant’s ability to exert control within that space. Both Newman and Descottes acknowledge a correlation between reinforcing control and a sense of ownership and reassurance. Parallels can be seen between the physical factors influencing crime that Newman outlines, and the feeling of intimacy that Descottes cites when light comes closer to the body. With this in mind, is it reasonable to say that a resident/member of the public will feel that lighting is more within their ‘sphere

⁷Ibid, 2.

⁸ Descottes, Herve. *Architectural Lighting, Designing with Light and Space* Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 2011. 54

of influence,’ when it is closer to the body thereby connoting a sense of ownership? Would members of the public feel more engaged with a space if lighting was placed in an intimate level? If lighting design is to work towards the goal of making members of the public more engaged with public space, ownership and intimacy must be considered as design criteria.

Pallasma also discusses the concept of identification with spaces in his text. When architecture focuses solely on vision and forgoes the other senses, identification with a space becomes more difficult. There are several allusions to this detachment from modern architecture in his essay *The Eyes of the Skin*. “The dominance of the eye and the suppression of other senses tends to push us into detachment, isolation and exteriority.”⁹ Pallasma refers to this isolation and exteriority occurring within institutional places such as hospitals and airports; spaces that are large, impersonal and anonymous. Parallels can be drawn here with Newman’s assertions that large high rise buildings are difficult for residents to identify with, due to the large common areas being shared by many and outside of any one individual’s ‘sphere of influence.’ In fixating architecture in the visual, architecture has “adopted the psychological strategy of advertising and instant persuasion; buildings have turned into image products detached from existential depth and sincerity.”¹⁰ By pushing architecture further into the realm of the solely visual, modern architecture denies us an experience that speaks to the other senses, leading to isolation and detachment.

Isolation and detachment also lead to a loss of intimacy and plasticity, as Pallasma illustrates in his work. He discusses the move into the modern age of architecture involved the neglect of the other senses in favour of

⁹ Pallasma, Juhai. *The Eyes of the Skin, Architecture and the Senses*. Wiley- Academy: Chichester, 2005. 19.

¹⁰ Ibid, 30.

the visual:

“The eye conquers its hegemonic role in architectural practice, both consciously and unconsciously, only gradually with the emergence of the idea of a bodiless observer. The observer becomes detached from an incarnate relation with the environment through the suppression of the other senses, in particular by means of technological extensions of the eye, and the proliferation of images.”¹¹

Pallasma illustrates here, that the ocularcentricism of modern architecture has emerged as part of a network. Humans are not inherently biased towards experiencing the visual, but have evolved that way as the idea of a bodiless observer came into being. In other words, the ocularcentric tendencies in modern architecture do not develop in a vacuum, but instead, gradually responded to neglecting the other senses. In this way, he illustrates that the less that modern architecture designs for the body, the more the observer will neglect the body, becoming the ‘bodiless observer,’ and vice-versa. A case can be made here that when we begin to design for the body and the senses, observers will begin to respond, and indeed to demand design that is conceptualized with all of the senses in mind to facilitate identification and attachment to the places around us. Manmade materials that do not show their age further prevent us from identifying with a space in relation to the body and the senses. “We have a mental need to grasp that we are rooted in the continuity of time, and in the man-made world it is the task of architecture to facilitate this experience.”¹² Using materials that show their age can appeal to the senses of an observer and lead to a sense of identification with a space.

¹¹ Ibid, 27.

¹² Ibid, 32.

The loss of plasticity as Pallasma illustrates, happens when spaces are made from materials that observers cannot identify with, especially in relation to the body and the continuum of time. Just as Descottes illustrates that light within our control connotes a sense of reassurance, Pallasma argues that the plasticity, and tactile qualities of materials lead to identification with an observer. While height of lighting can generate a sense of intimacy, intimacy is a key part of identification within an observer, and so light, height and intimacy must be considered when designing places for observers to identify with.

Key Point:

We identify more with materials that show their age

Light within our 'sphere of influence,' can create a sense of reassurance

Third Spaces and the Commodification of Public Life

In his text ‘The Future of Public Space,’ Banjeree describes the existence of a ‘third space,’ and its role in the privatization of public life.

“There is another concept of public life that is derived from our desire for relaxation, social contact, entertainment, leisure, and simply having a good time. Individual orbits of this public life are shaped by a consumer culture and the opportunities offered by the new “experience economy.” The settings for such public life are not necessarily public spaces. According to Ray Oldenburg, such settings can be called “third spaces,” as opposed to the first place of home or the second place of work or school.”¹³

Published in 2001, this article is ever relevant to today’s public spaces. Let us consider the popularity of the concept of ‘coworking spaces,’ in New York City. Companies such as WeWork and Crossaint have quickly gained in popularity. With the growing ‘gig economy,’ and the increasing popularity of working independently on a freelance basis, coworking spaces address a need for social contact in the public realm.

The idea is simple, members pay a monthly subscription fee to use a workspace within the city. Workspaces vary from desks within private offices, or space at communal tables. The service provides various things needed to facilitate work; furniture, outlets for personal laptops, WiFi, coffee and perhaps the most difficult to describe, ‘atmosphere.’ (Merleu-Ponty: Study of essences?)

“WeWork alone has more than 100 locations and is valued at some a number of billion dollars that seems to grow so fast that I can’t even mention it here without dating this

story.”¹⁴ These companies are capitalizing on the need for human contact and atmospheres, and are creating ‘third spaces,’ throughout cities. This further privatizes public life, as the spaces are indeed semi-public. Coworking spaces are third spaces in a similar way to bars and cafes in that they grant a ‘semi-public access.’ In theory, any member of the public is welcome to use the space – provided that they purchase goods for consumption. Whereas in bars and cafes this refers to beverages or snacks, the commodity offered by coworking spaces is a subscription that grants room to work in an environment where other people are. The product is simply being granted access.

George Orwell in his novel “Down and Out in Paris in London,” makes apt descriptions of public life in the two named cities as he describes life as a beggar. “I had been in London innumerable times, and yet till this day I had never noticed one of the worst things about London – the fact that it costs money even to sit down.”¹⁵ This observation serves as both a commentary about vagrancy laws in London at the time, and about the privatization of public space. Contrary to Paris, London citizens risk arrest and possible jail time if they do not have money to spend.

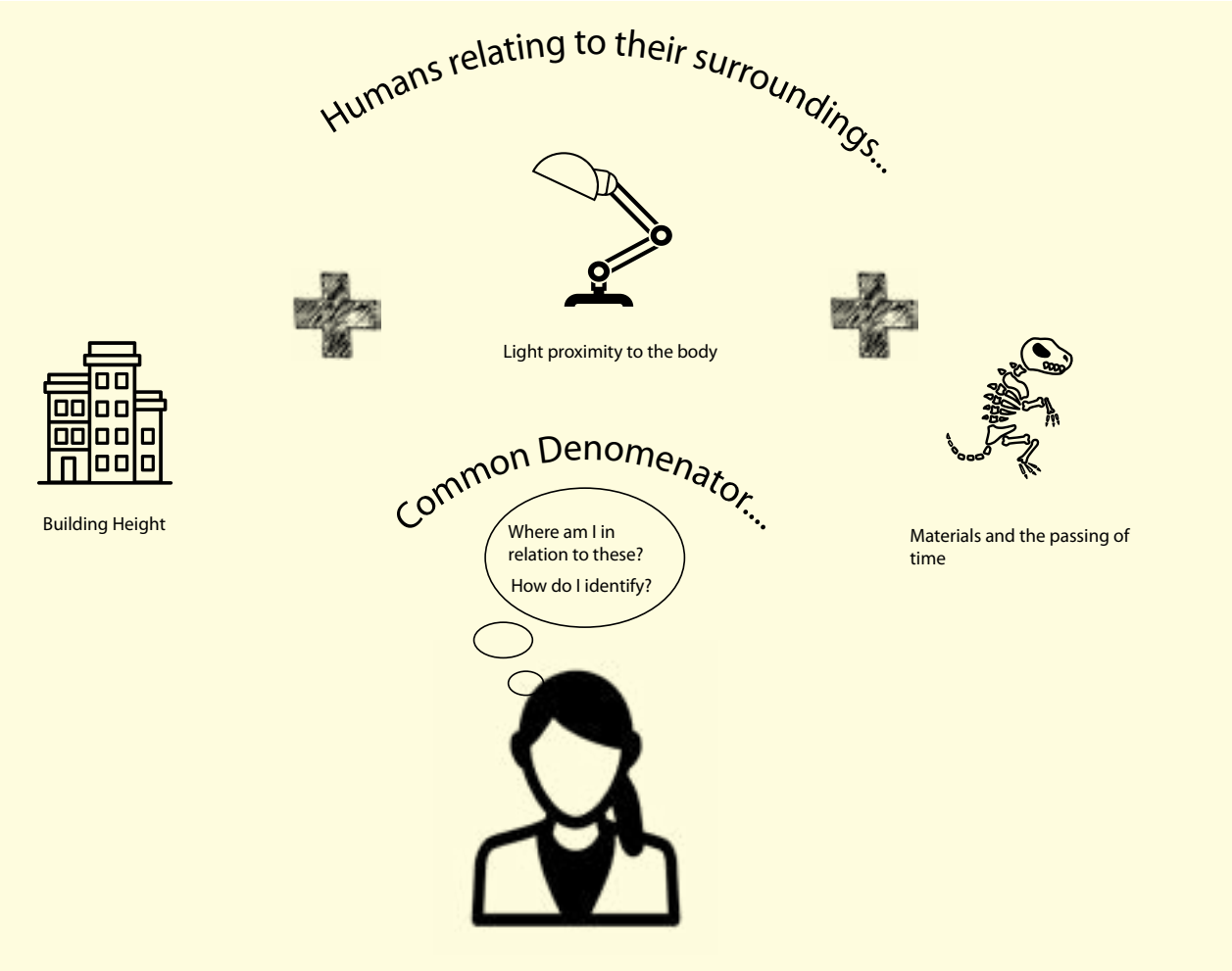
Conclusion:

How are cities affected by the commodification of public life? When existing in a public space requires a subscription do citizens identify more or less with semi-public spaces? The success of both Croissant and

13 Banjeree, Tridib 2001. “The Future of Public Spaces, Beyond Invented Streets and Reinvented Places,” *APA Journal* Vol 67, No.1 (Winter), 9-21.

14 Porgers, Seth. “A Review of Croissant: Can the ClassPass for For Coworking Spaces Change the Way We Work?” Last modified September 21, 2017. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/sethporgers/2017/09/21/a-review-of-croissant-can-the-classpass-for-coworking-spaces-change-the-way-we-work/#5bf1c00d30fb>

15 Orwell, George. *Down and Out in Paris and London* Chapter 29



WeWork show the value that is held in being in a place where other people are.

Key Point:

There is an inherent value in being in a public or semi-public space, the value of which is so recognized, that it has become a commodity to buy and sell

Aura of Public Spaces

In order to consider the design of contemporary public spaces, we must first acknowledge the place where we are as a society, and the role that public space has. Public space carries with it a special meaning when it is considered in the context of the information age. With the growing expansions of technology, life exists more in the virtual than in the physical world of the real. Walter Benjamin, in his postmodernist work “Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” details the significance of an original work of art in an era where art can be mass produced and reproduced. He argues that the aura of artwork is devalued by its mechanical reproduction. “Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place it happens to be.”¹⁶ When applied to public spaces, we can consider this a guideline within our design process. Like a work of art, the public space’s unique existence in space and time must be considered. In an age where art can be reproduced, photographed and shared in a matter of seconds, unique existences become even more rare and

16 Benjamin, Walter. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*.

Illuminations. Trans. Harry Zohn. Ed. Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken, 1968. 220.

valuable.

The idea of an aura existing within time and space is also present in the work of Pallasma. In “The Eyes of the Skin,” he details an exchange that occurs when viewing art. “In the experience of art, a peculiar exchange takes place; I lend my emotions and associations to the space and the space lends me its aura, which entices and emancipates my perceptions and thoughts.”¹⁷ Pallasma acknowledges the potential of auras within spaces to free perceptions and thoughts, and in turn to inspire. How can we support the auras that naturally exist within our cities? First we must ask ourselves, what are the elements that contribute to the aura of a space. While Benjamin outlines that it is caused by a ‘presence in time and space,’ Pallasma illustrates the importance that materiality has to play. “All matter exists in the continuum of time; the patina of wear adds the enriching experience of time to the materials of construction.”¹⁸ Benjamin makes a similar comment about aging material and auras, “that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of a work of art.”¹⁹

How can we begin to define and analyze this elusive ‘aura? If it is broken down to its simplest form, perhaps it can be said, that it is what makes a space special and unique. In the age of ever constant sharing of information and mechanical reprocdution, we may classify a space with an aura as somewhere that enables a truly unique experience, one that cannot be reproduced or shared, something that there is no substitute for.

Using these authors as reference points, a

17 Pallasma, Juhai. *The Eyes of the Skin, Architecture and the Senses*. Wiley- Academy:

Chichester, 2005. 12

18 Ibid, 31.

19 Benjamin, Walter. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical*

Reproduction. Illuminations. Trans. Harry Zohn. Ed. Hannah Arendt. New York:

Schocken, 1968. 221

case can be made for using materials within the design of public space that appear to have aged and withered with time.

Key Point:

Spaces become special because of their unique aura

Chapter III: Research Question

The most compelling findings in my theoretical background were those that discuss how human beings relate to architectural materials and to public space. It has been determined that there is an inherent value to being in a space where other people are, and that people are willing to pay for that need. So how can lighting design add to that value? How can it respond to the need of human beings to feel comforted and reassured? It is these questions that have led towards the research question for this project:

How can lighting design help people to identify with a public or semi public space?

Chapter IV: Approach to Lighting Design

Layers of Light

An approach towards design can be determined through theories of lighting design I will employ a design approach that tackles different ‘layers of light,’ as the project moves forward. To put simply, this means breaking down the lighting design into separate sections, or layers, and using each to tackle a specific problem. Light can be categorized in different ways, and used to solve various problems.

One example that elaborates on this idea is Richard Kelly’s *Lighting as an Integral Part of Architecture*. In it, he describes three distinct types of light; focal glow or highlight, ambient luminescence or graded washes and play of brilliants or sharp detail. Below is a brief explanation of these different types of light.

**Focal Glow/
Highlight**



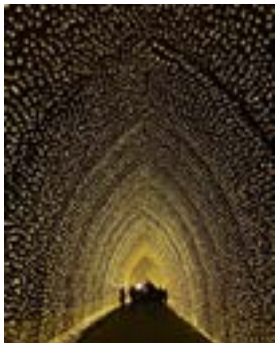
“Focal glow is the campfire of all time... the follow spot on the modern stage... the pool of light at your favourite chair.” As illustrated, focal glow refers to light that draws the attention of the observer towards a specific point. The Rembrandt painting *Rest on the Flight to Egypt* shows an apt example of this.

**Ambient Luminescence/
Graded Washes**



“Ambient luminescence is the uninterrupted light of a snowy morning... It is usually reassuring and can suggest infinity.” This sense of vast expanse can be seen in the image of a James Turrell piece entitled *Dhatu* (2009).

**Plays of Brilliance/
Sharp Detail**

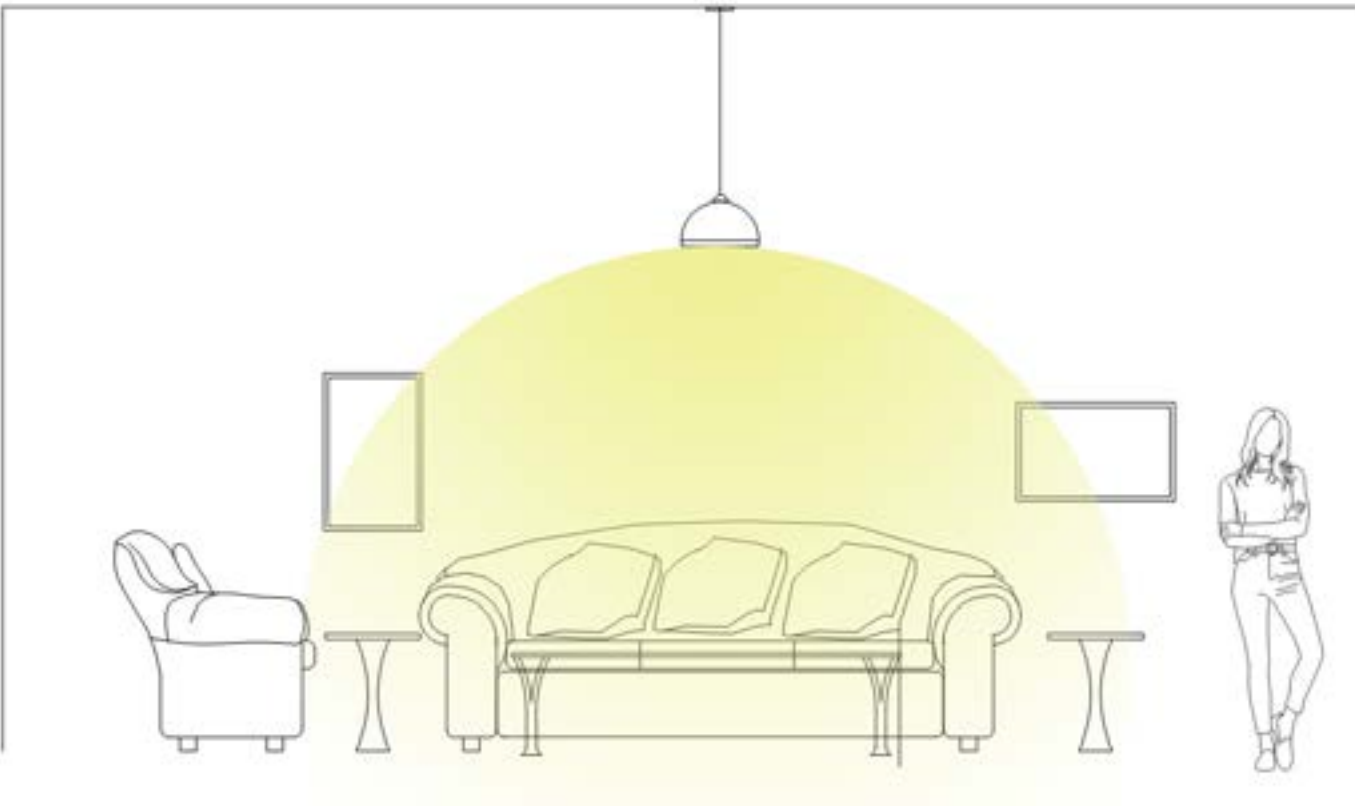


“Play of brilliants is Times Square at night. It is the eighteenth century ballroom of crystal chandeliers and many candle flames.” This image of *Light Tunnel* in Sydney provides a useful visual reference to what Kelly is discussing.

What do we have to gain from considering these three distinct types of light that Kelly describes, and how can they relate to an approach of design in public and semi public spaces? By exploring different ways to describe and categorize light, we can begin to understand how different types of lighting can influence a space in different ways, and each give distinct impressions. When we can understand how different types of lighting may function, we can design better spaces. Using an approach of designing with ‘layers of light,’ in mind we can begin to design better spaces. Designing in stages can produce work that is sensitive to the needs of a space. When looking at the problems that a space presents, we must remember that in most cases, a space presents itself with multiple small problems that lead to a larger problem, and they must all be addressed individually within the whole.

Using an approach of ‘layers of light,’ means approaching specific problems with specific lighting solutions. It means applying delicate brushstrokes to a setting, rather than using one sweeping motion to solve every problem.

Take for example the two distinct ways a designer could approach lighting a living room. In the first example, there is one overarching problem that is dealt with; the room needs more light. It is possible to solve the problem with a pendant coming from overhead, as illustrated below.

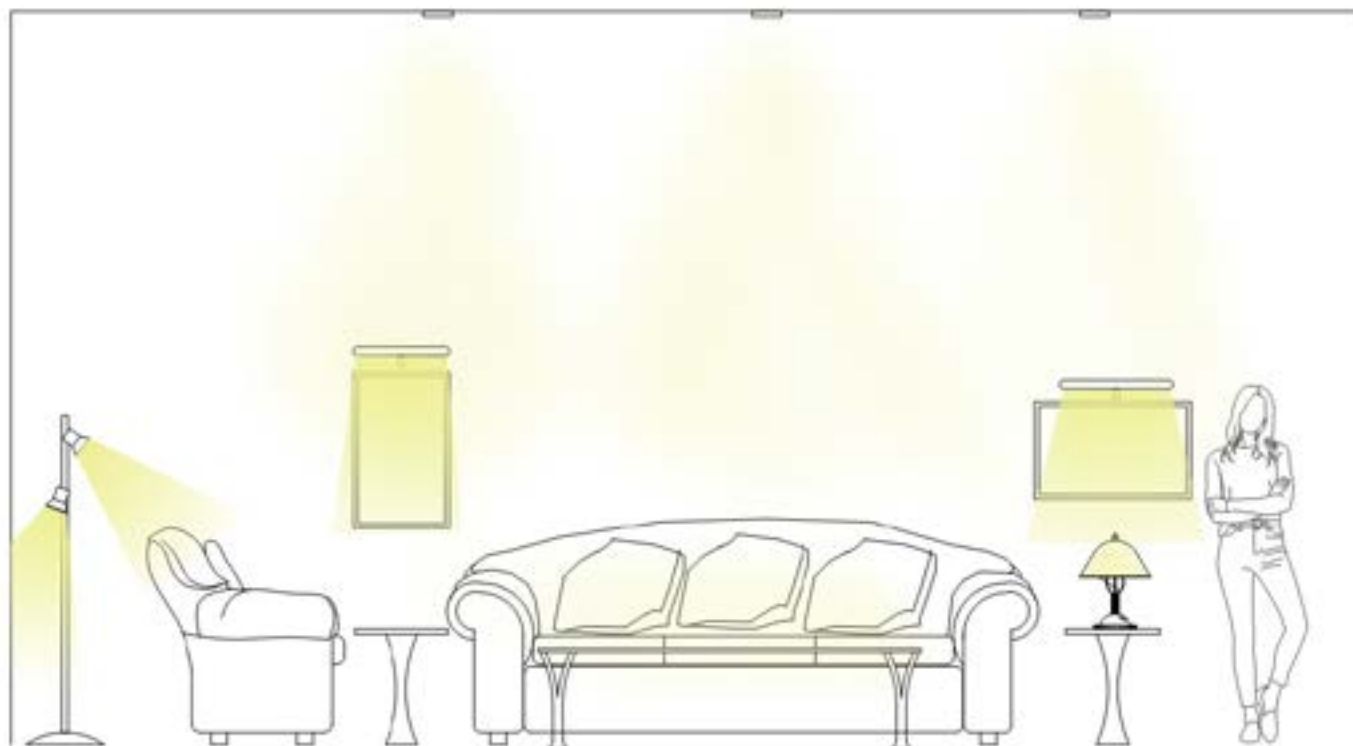


By employing a different approach, one where the individual needs and problems of the space are addressed, we can identify more specific problems. For example, the living room needs more light, but more specifically the artwork needs to be illuminated, the coffee table must have some task light available, reading light must be provided and fill light should be provided at a comfortable height by a table lamp.

Designing with a more specific approach to problems will help to create spaces that are more human centric and dynamic, as can be seen in the example below.

Key Point:

To create light that is unobtrusive in a space, we must approach design solutions one by one



Layers of Light

Reference Projects and Design Background

One of the questions that I have asked myself, is what is it that I can give to a space, that no one else can? Just like each public space has its own specific aura that makes it unique, every designer is influenced by past experience and brings a vision that cannot be replicated by anyone else. The experience that I am most influenced by, is my exposure to the art world. Before embarking on this masters, I was a lighting designer for the performing arts. I have been fortunate enough to work on many different theatre and music shows, and some of the most interesting to me, were installation pieces. These included pieces where the play was set 'in the round,' ie where the audience were surrounding the piece from all sides, and audiences became active members of the space.

This past experience has helped me to gain a sensitivity to lighting design, but also to look to other artistic works for inspiration. Light art has been something that I have been looking to for inspiration, and there are a couple of reference projects in particular that have continued to fascinate me.

Voz Alta

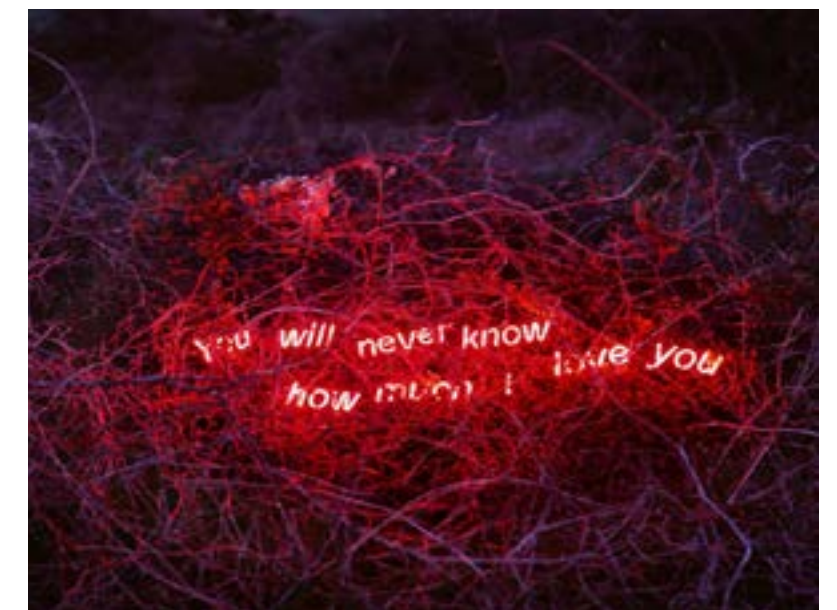
A piece by Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Voz Alta took place in Mexico City to commemorate the student massacre that took place there. Members of the public were free to speak into a megaphone, uncensored. The sound of their voices triggered a search light, shining on the site of the massacre. The louder the sound of their voice, the brighter the light. I am inspired by the poetic nature of this piece and how inclusive it is.



Jung Lee

To me, the work of the artist Jung Lee is both ingeniously simple, and hauntingly melancholy. She chooses phrases to craft into neon writing, brings them to a remote location and photographs them. The combination of the solitary spaces, and the language used leave the viewer with a sense of unreconciled longing.

I have chosen to highlight these two pieces because they use lighting to give a voice to people and to emotions.



Chapter V: Introduction to Case Study

In order to apply the theories that I have been studying into practice, I will take a case study of a semi public space in New York City and create a design concept for that space. During this design process, I am hoping to generate design criteria, and to test the relevant theories.



To give a brief overview, New York City is composed into 5 boroughs, as illustrated here. They are; Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island and The Bronx.

Manhattan is what is considered by many as the 'main' borough. This is the heart of the city, where businesses operate and is the location to many quintessential New York tourist destinations such as the Empire State Building and the World Trade Center. Approximately 1.61 million people commute into Manhattan every day, many of them living in one of the other 5 boroughs.

The case study I will be working with is located in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

Williamsburg, Brooklyn



Williamsburg, Brooklyn is only a short commute to Manhattan, making it a popular place to live for young professionals and families alike. Because of the low rents, artists began to move in the area, giving it a unique atmosphere. It has been nicknamed "Little Berlin." Since the mid 1990's, the area has been gentrifying rapidly. Though rents have skyrocketed, the area maintains its "DIY" identity, and is home to many independent businesses run by its artistic community. It is also home to a vibrant music scene where venues such as Rough Trade and Baby's All Right, which offer concerts by independent artists.

A perfect example of this DIY, artistic identity of the place exists in a small, independently run area called The Lot. Located in North Williamsburg, between two major subway stations, this area is a slice of Brooklyn, and a perfect place for our case study.

The Lot

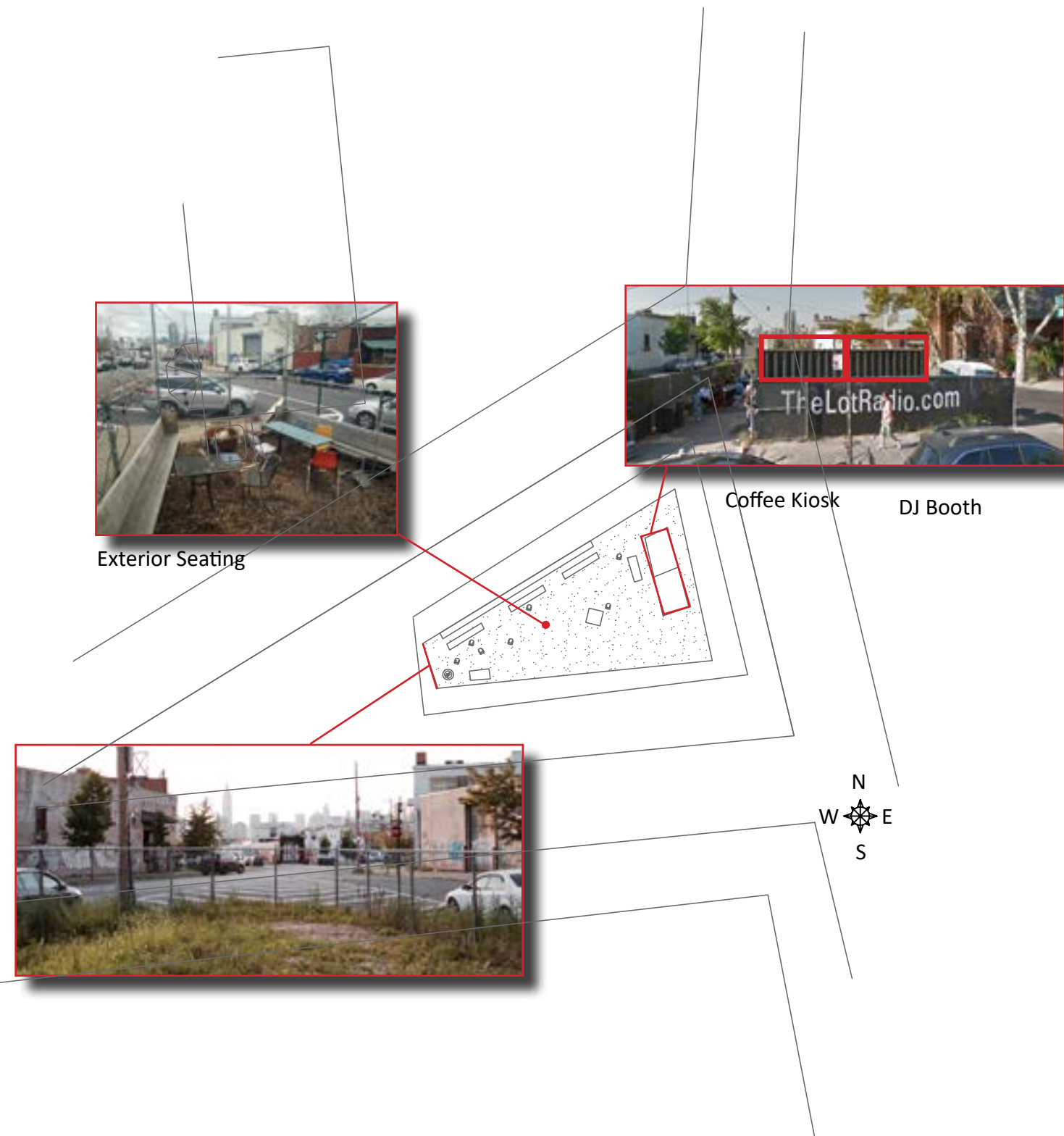


In an area of rapidly expanding gentrification there sits a small, triangular shaped lot. A tiny island within an industrial sea, meters away from a public park, a metro station and many cafes and restaurants. Though the space is within ‘the thick of it,’ it has the characteristic of an unassuming, abandoned or ‘found’ space. The space has a permanent shipping container on it, where there operates a bar/café, and an independent radio station. Revenue from the bar/café funds the radio station, which streams local DJs from 8am – 12am.

In a discussion with the founder Francios Vaxelaire, I learned how the space came to be. After sitting abandoned for over 40 years, a ‘for lease’ sign appeared on the lot. While the sign suggested it would be perfect

for a food truck, Francios had other ideas, and The Lot Radio was born. He described a certain ‘magic’ to the space, citing that the concept for the radio station and the space are intrinsically linked, there is no other place where something like this could exist. He is quoted in the New York Times website saying, “we didn’t want a place that was that impressive.” In a sense, this has been achieved. When viewed in its environment, The Lot blends in with its industrial neighbours, seemingly nestled perfectly in its place. If you didn’t know it was there, you could almost miss it. With a wondrous view of Manhattan, “the location has some sort of magical aura in the neighbourhood.”

The Lot: An Overview



The Shipping Container



Coffee Kiosk

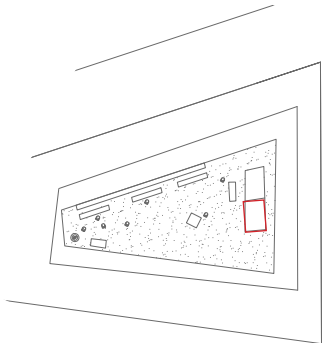


DJ Booth/Live streaming

The Coffee Kiosk



The coffee kiosk, unassuming as it may appear, plays a crucial role in the existence of The Lot. Not only is it the first thing an observer can see when approaching from the South side, but the revenue generated by the kiosk funds the independent radio station operating on the other side of the shipping container.

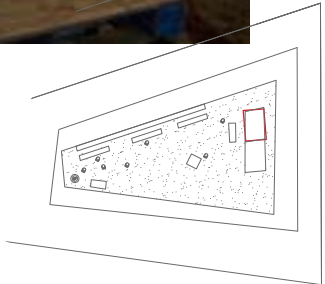


The DJ Booth

The DJ booth in many ways is the heart of the project that The Lot set out to complete. From here, local musicians and DJs live stream music from an independant radio station. There is a constant livefeed being broadcast through The Lot’s website , showing what is going on in the DJ booth, so viewers can constantly be tuned in.

The space comes alive at night, when the

inside of the booth is clearly visible to occupants within the seating area. Philip’s Hue LED tape light is installed within the booth, and DJs are free to personalize it within their set.

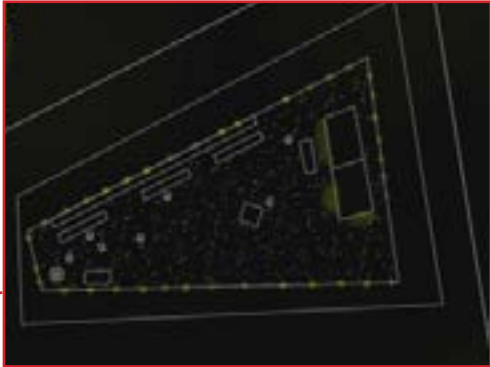


The Lot at Night

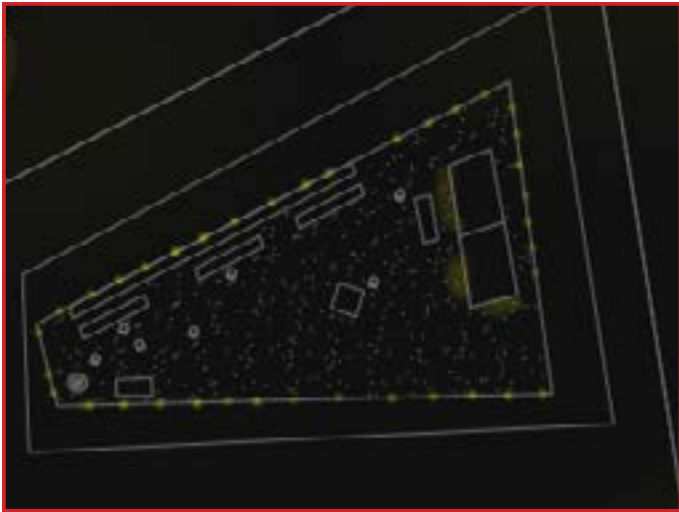
The light that is visible in the Lot can be roughly separated into the following categories:

- Light within seating area, festoon light and ambient light from shipping container
- Ambient light from the street
- View of the New York City Skyline

The night map below shows a general overview of different light levels within the area, while the image shows the most dominant sources of light visible from the seating area



Introduction to The Lot



Shipping Container



Warm Festoon Light

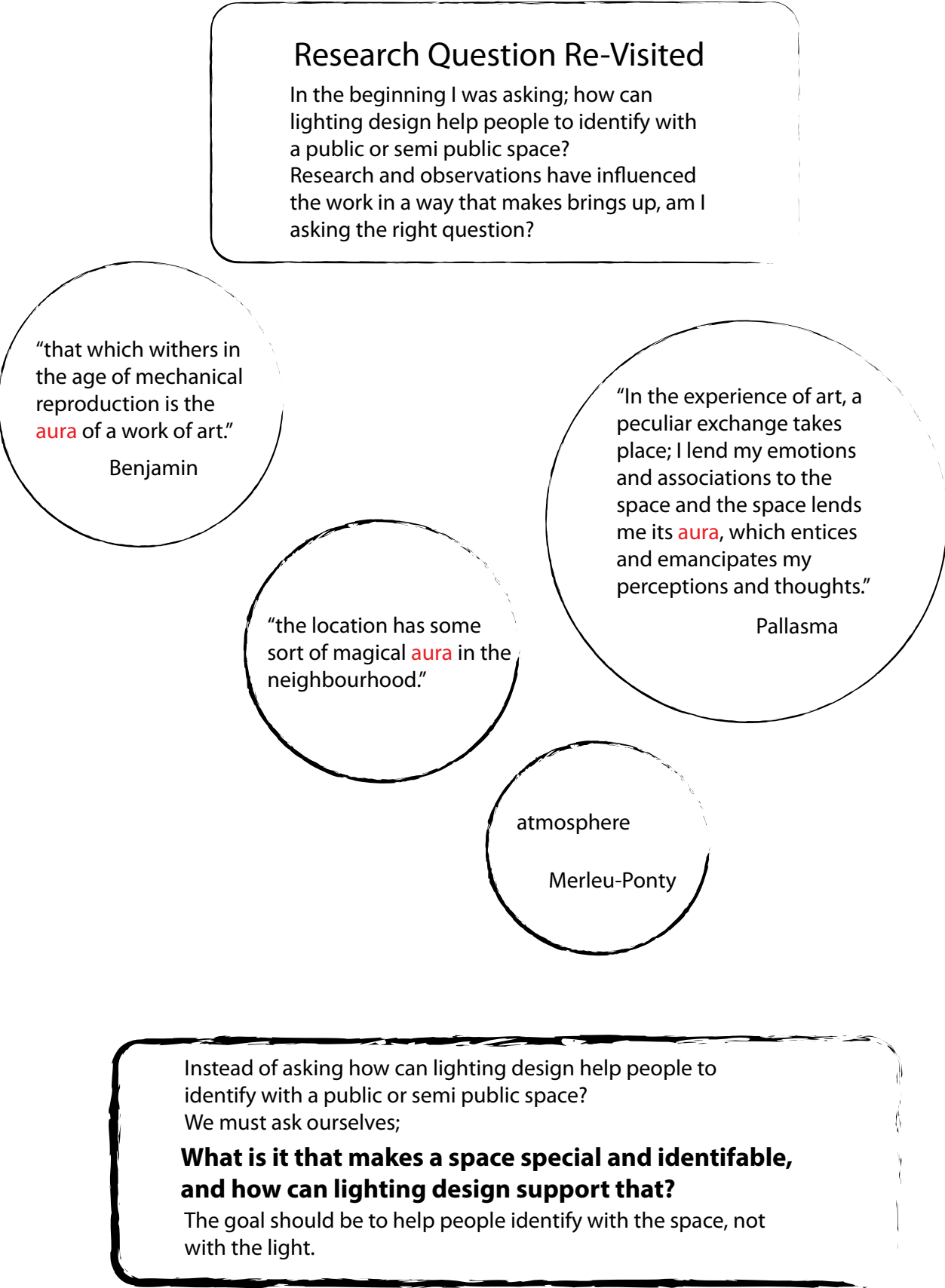


Ambient street lighting

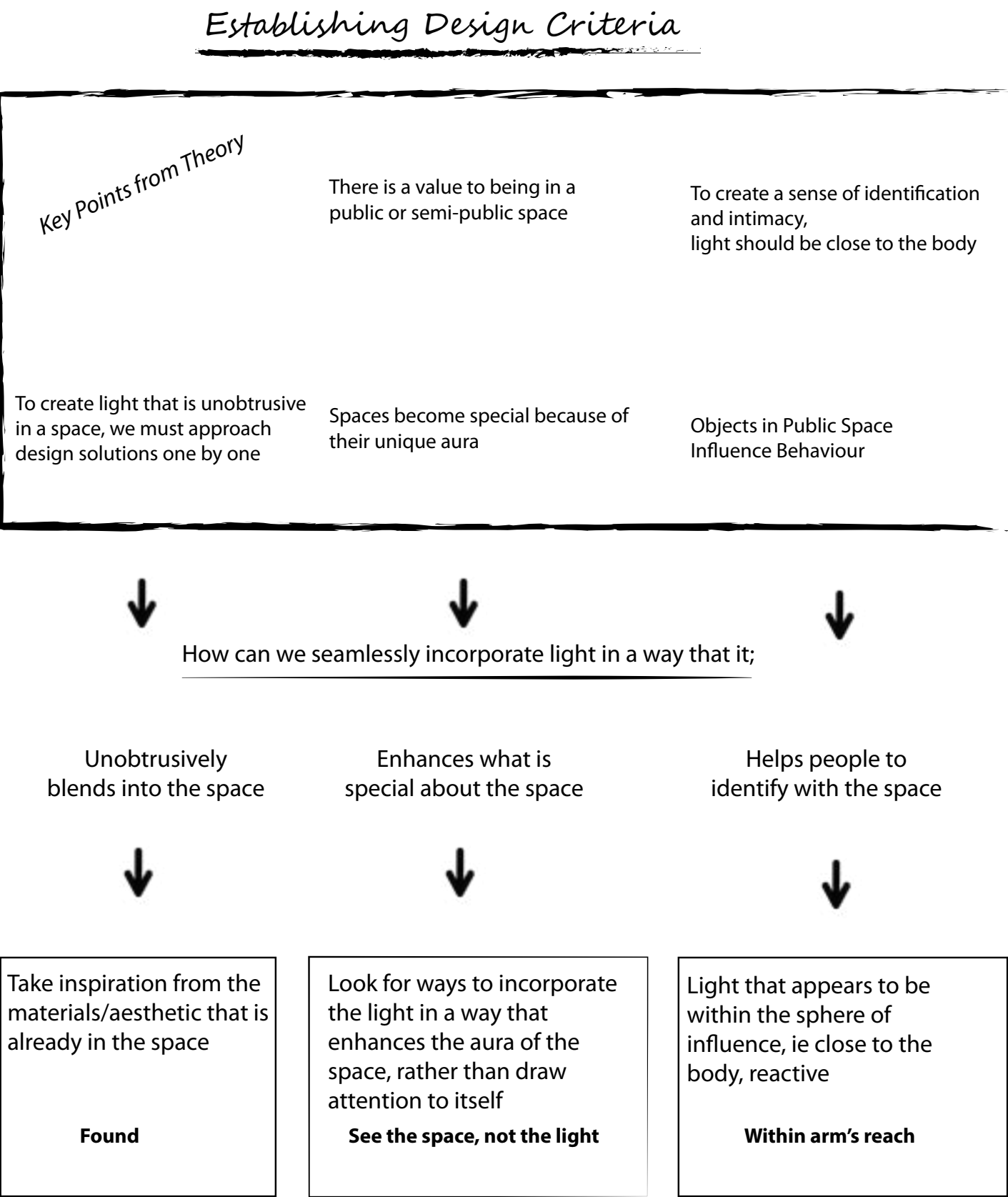


View of New York City Skyline

Chapter VI: Research Question Re-Visited



Chapter VII: Design Phase



Expanding on Design Criteria

Take inspiration from the materials/aesthetic that is already in the space



What is in the space already?



Gravel
Festoon Light
Art Installation
Chain link fence
View of Manhattan



Pallets
Shipping Container
Mis-matched chairs

Look for ways to incorporate the light in a way that enhances the aura of the space, rather than draw attention to itself



What makes this place special?

Found
DIY
Independent
Inclusive
View of the city
Unique



Are there places where we can 'hide' lighting fixtures?

Light that appears to be withing the sphere of influence, ie close to the body, reactive



Light close to the body



What's it All About?

"There is no other place where I would want to do this."

In this section, the vision for the space will be established and elaborated on.

First, a brief explanation as to why the research question was revisited. When I approached this project, before I had a space in mind, my goal was to engage in a thought experiment to determine how lighting design can help to make better cities. So how can lighting design do that? Within my theoretical background, I began to embark on researching how people exist within public space and identify with their surroundings. I used texts from different forms of philosophy, sociology and urban planning to establish a foundation of knowledge within the area. I came across an essay in *The Future of Public Space*, a collection of essays concerning public space. One example of people coexisting in public space gave me pause. In an essay entitled *Just Enough* Allison Arieff takes an example from Alemany farmers market in San Francisco. She illustrates:

"I'm always struck by how radically undesigned the place is... Its plainness is what attracts – there's just enough to make it work. Were the city to undertake significant upgrades, it seems likely the market would lose much of its appeal"¹

As Arieff alludes to here, there is something unique and special about the place, that design has not necessarily played a role in shaping. Just as Benjamin said that each artwork has its unique aura, Arieff cements the idea that the uniqueness of a space can help to form its identity. If the space were upgraded, this uniqueness would be lost. This idea was curious to me, the idea that the lack of design present in a space became part of

1 Arieff, Alison. Introduction: *Just Enough The Future of Public Space* New York: SOM, 2017. 8.



its charm.

Is this idea true for all design in urban spaces? Take for example, the Highline, in New York City. Taking over a disused railway to create a public walking path has been one of the most successful urban design projects of its time. It is similar to Alemany in the way that it takes over space that is already there, occupying an already carved out urban 'footprint.' It differs in the way that design has been an instrumental part of its success. The concrete pathways, surrounding greenery and public artworks all contribute to making it a pleasant place to be, and a popular tourist attraction. The lighting in the Highline, completed by Herve Descotte's company 'L'Observatoire,' has won awards and is largely praised within the lighting community. However, we would be naïve to assume that the lighting is why the highline is so largely embraced by the public. It's a

beautiful way to move through the city. Its height in relation to the city, its location and the other elements of the design are huge factors to consider. Lighting design is just one part of that equation, and as lighting designers, we need to recognize our role within these projects. Good lighting design alone, is not enough. Knowing this, how can we, as lighting designers contribute?

We can begin by asking the right questions. Instead of asking ‘how can lighting design help people to identify with a public, or semi public space?’ we should be asking, ‘what is it about a place that makes it identifiable? And how is it that lighting design can support that?’ The first step in examining this question, is understanding the spaces we are working with. Establishing what is appealing about a space is much more complex and ephemeral than previously thought. It is not enough to establish rules to good lighting design and then put them into practice in every public space we encounter. Design must be approached with a much more individualized method.

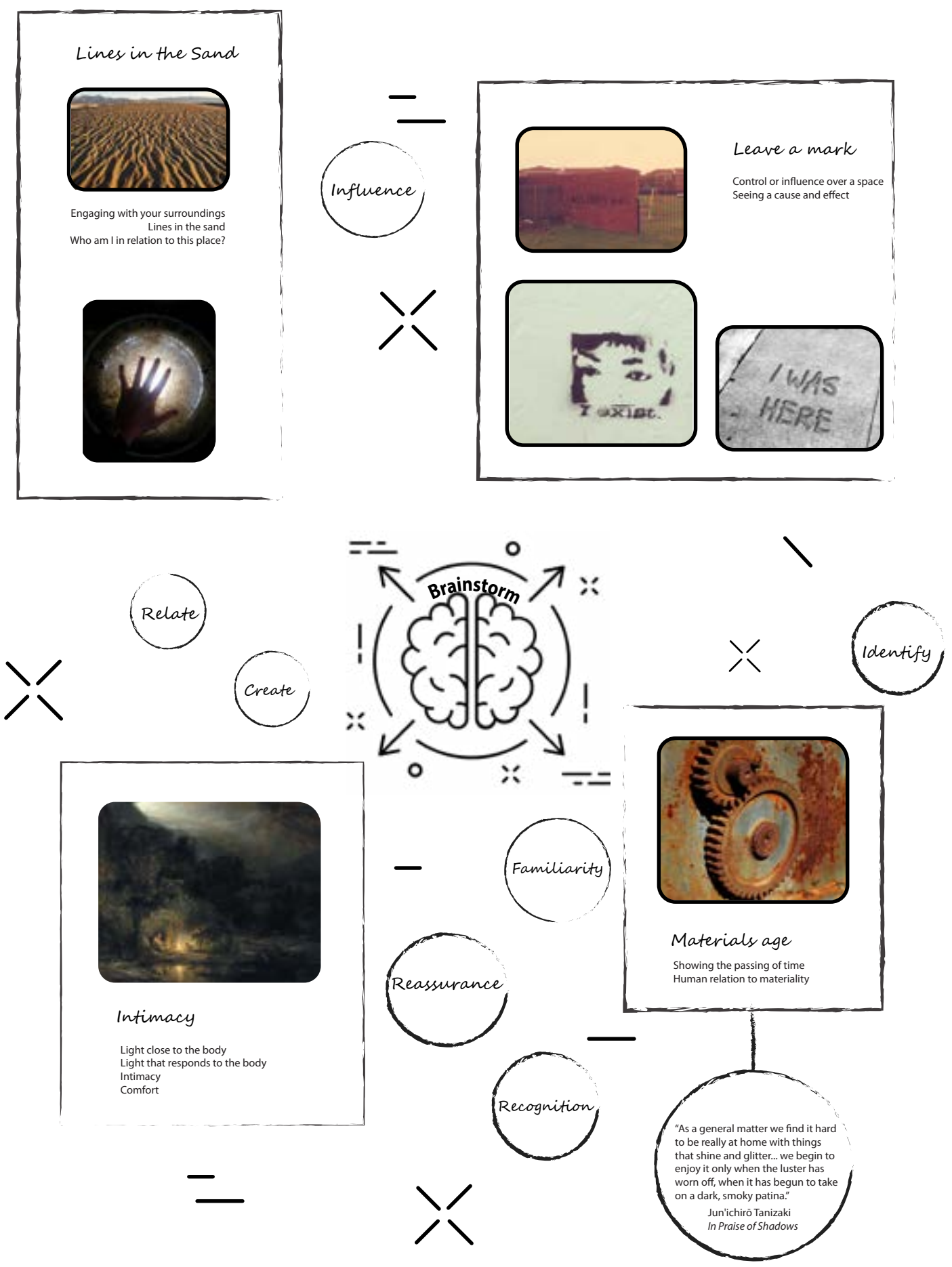
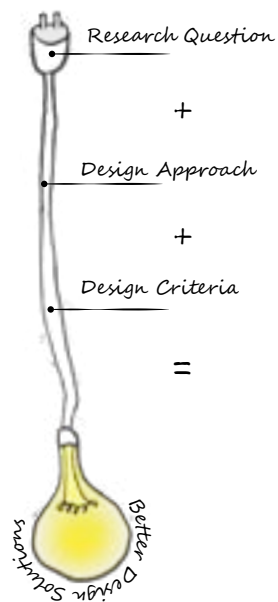
Good lighting design does not exist in a vacuum. It responds to real life problems, places and people, and comes alive in context. After selecting a space, and considering ‘how can lighting design in this space make it easier for the public to engage with it?’ the space was analysed in different ways. I spent time experiencing the space and learning more about it. So what exactly is The Lot, and why is it, as the owner describes, a place that couldn’t exist anywhere else? As illustrated in previous chapters, it is easy to describe what it is, where it is, and what it does. What is more elusive, is the question of, how can we describe the atmosphere in the space? What do people experience in the space? What does the space make people feel?

The space presents itself as a quirky oasis nestled within blocks of industrial

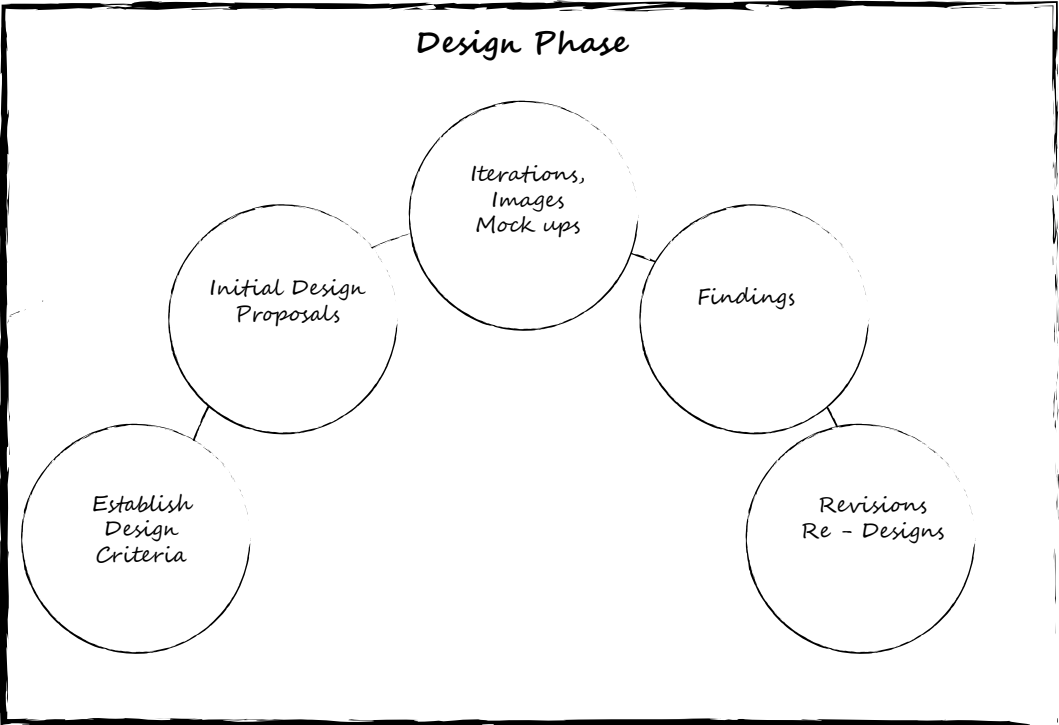
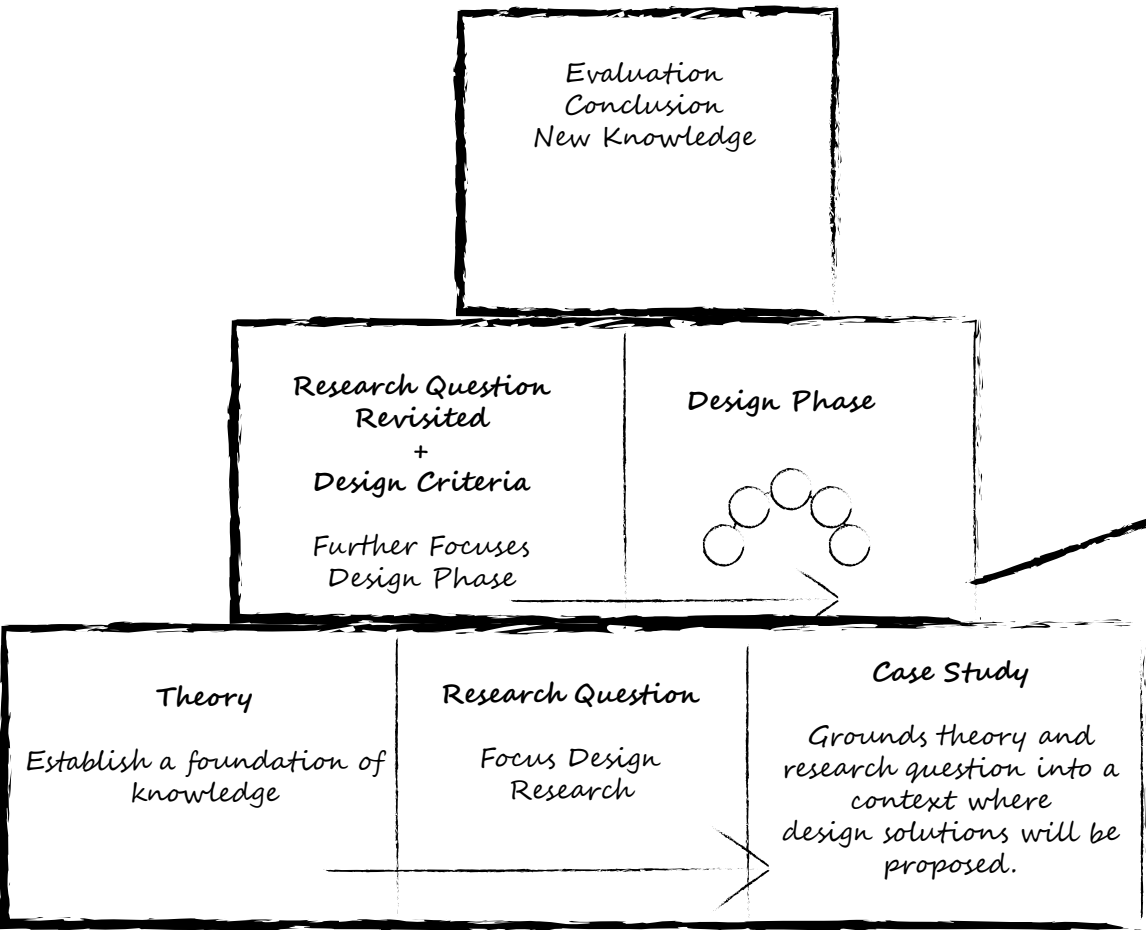
wasteland. It exists in a different scale to its surroundings. It is the David, within a sea of Goliaths, complete with a view of the New York City Skyline. The ethos of The Lot begins to show itself very early on. It is friendly and inclusive, and encourages engagement and self expression. The radio itself constantly hosts local talent, giving independently signed musicians and DJs a platform through which they can be heard. There is a piece of artwork present on the west side of the site, commissioned by a local artist. So with a place like this, that encourages expression through artwork, how can lighting design support that? The goal of the lighting design is not to impose a new vision onto the space, but rather to appreciate the environment for what it is now, identify its strenghts and to use lighting design to help elevate them.

When Moving from the research phase into the design phase, there are a couple of things that have helped to keep the idea generation on track, and one of them is establishing design criteria.

This, coupled with the approach to design and the research question can lead to more productive and relevant brainstorming of ideas.



Chapter VIII: Initial Design Proposals



Each chapter until this point has been developed with the goal of creating a foundation of knowledge and understanding of space in order to create guidelines for lighting design in public space and establish new knowledge. The theoretical background, research question, case study, research question revisited have all attempted to serve as building blocks for the next steps of the design phase.

The following chapter is informed and guided by the knowledge gained from previous chapters, and details proposed design solutions for my case study. The

design solutions are broken into two layers; a dynamic layer and a static layer. Each of these layers are explored and workshopped using different methods of iterations.

Iterations lead to findings, and from there revisions are made and re-designs implemented for a final design proposal.

Each layer has specific aims to aid in the overarching design.

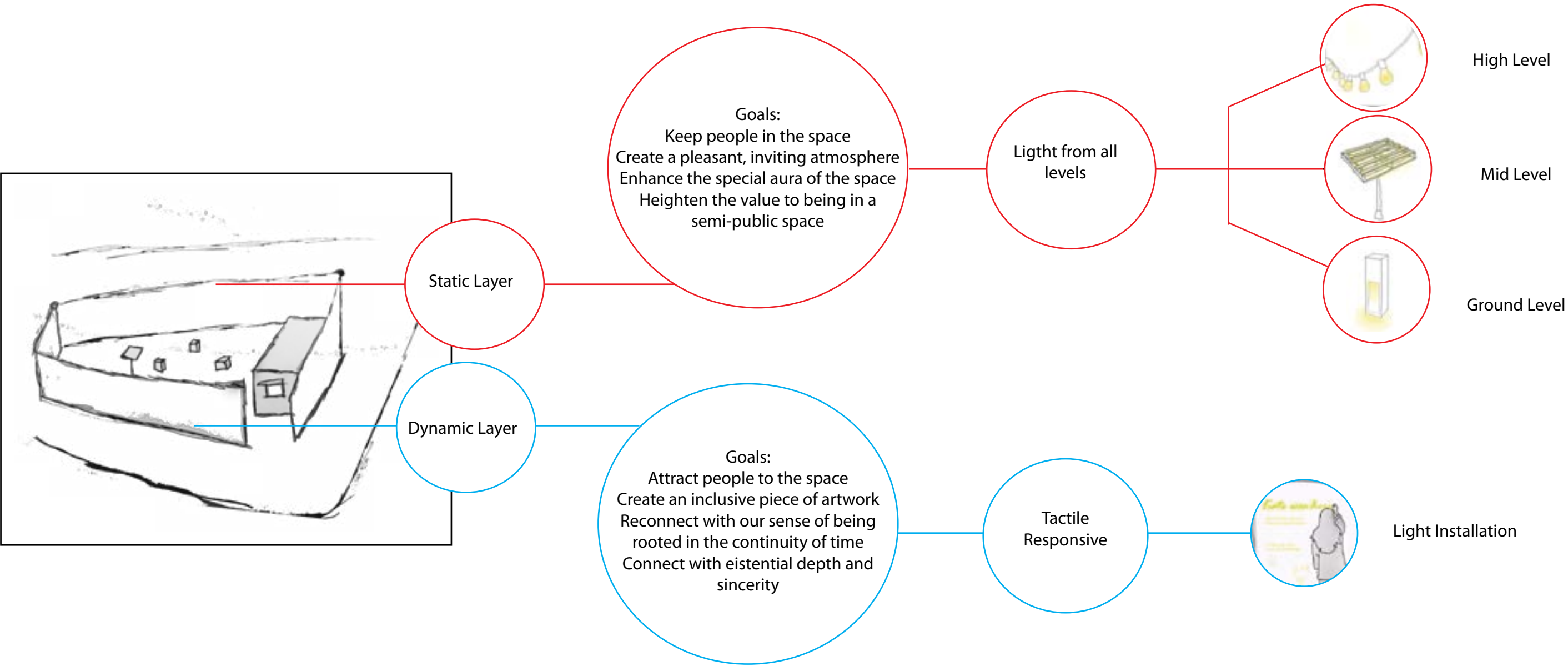
The dynamic layer seeks to attract people to the space, while the static layer seeks to keep people in the space by providing a pleasant

and comfortable environment and enhancing the space's natural aura.

After I present my initial ideas of how to approach lighting this space, I show a summary of the initial lighting ideas. The aim of this is to track a sense of progress throughout the design process, and show how iterations influenced the design process.

The Dynamic Lighting layer should be seen as the more dominant feature of the design process. It is also more conceptually dense, and for that reason, the dynamic section will be discussed second.

Design Heirarchy



Static Layer: Light from All Levels



The goal of the static layer is to use the knowledge gained from the theoretical background to provide a comforting, reassuring space for people to be in. Using what has been established from the chapters Light, Height and Intimacy, Auras of Public Space, and Third Spaces. The commodification of public life, how can we improve the interior space of The Lot? The design has been approached with the goal of analysing what it is that makes this space special, improving the inherent value of spending in a third space, one that is away from home and school.

So what do we know about these two chapters? We know that a place is appealing because of its unique character, and that there is an inherent value of spending time in a place where other people are. How can lighting design enhance that? In order to make a space where people feel comfortable and reassured, light must be placed in such a

way that it appears to be within the inhabitants sphere of influence.

For the sake of brevity, this layer has been named 'light from all levels.' But it should be noted that, the light is being employed at all human centric levels. The highest level of light is still within a human scale, at head height.

As illustrated in the chapter 'An approach to design, layers of light,' more effective design solutions can be made when the approach is sensitive to the needs of a space, and breaks down large problems into their smallest possible segments. This is why the segments of this layer have been broken down into their simplest forms; ground level, mid level and high level.

Ground Level

While the goal of the static layer is to light from all levels of the space, it is crucial to approach this with a cautious and deliberate intention. When introducing new elements into the space we must be mindful of the charm that it has now, and only bring in things that can be incorporated seamlessly in, and use materials that can show their age.

The rusty bollard, as pictured here was a fixture I became familiar with during my seventh semester internship. The rusty finish gives it a look that appears to have weathered and aged and would be an appropriate addition to The Lot.



High Level

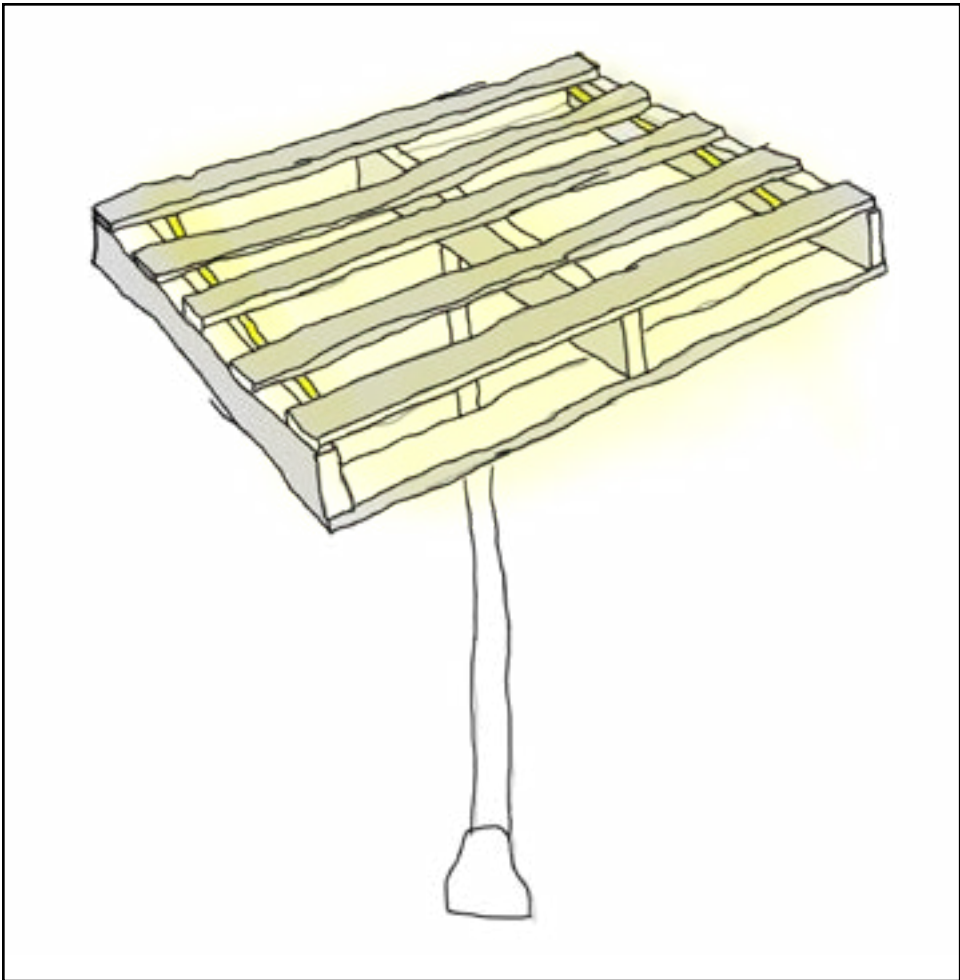


Lighting from a human centric head height layer will help to give the space a three dimensional depth while still maintaining the sense of comfort and reassurance gained from using light from within arm's reach. The space, as it is now, is equipped with warm festoon lighting. As the design advocates for using things that appear to belong in the space, there is a value in using what is already there. For that reason, I will not propose a new design solution for lighting from head height.

The aesthetic of The Lot came about through both accident and necessity. Because of its roots as an independent project, resources to furnish the space were extremely limited.

Most of the things that exist in the space were salvaged from being discarded. For example the benches came from the local church next door. Other pieces of furniture that were left on the side of the road, or are building materials that were discarded and repurposed, such as milk crates, cinder blocks and pallets. Just as Alison Areiff illustrates

(as quoted in a previous chapter), “Were the city to undertake significant upgrades, it seems likely the market would lose much of its appeal,” This adds to the unimpressive charm of the space. I want to avoid bringing new elements into the space in a way that is imposing to what is already there. From here, using my design criteria and approach, and taking inspiration from what is already in the space, I developed the idea to create a table out of a pallet, and light it internally.



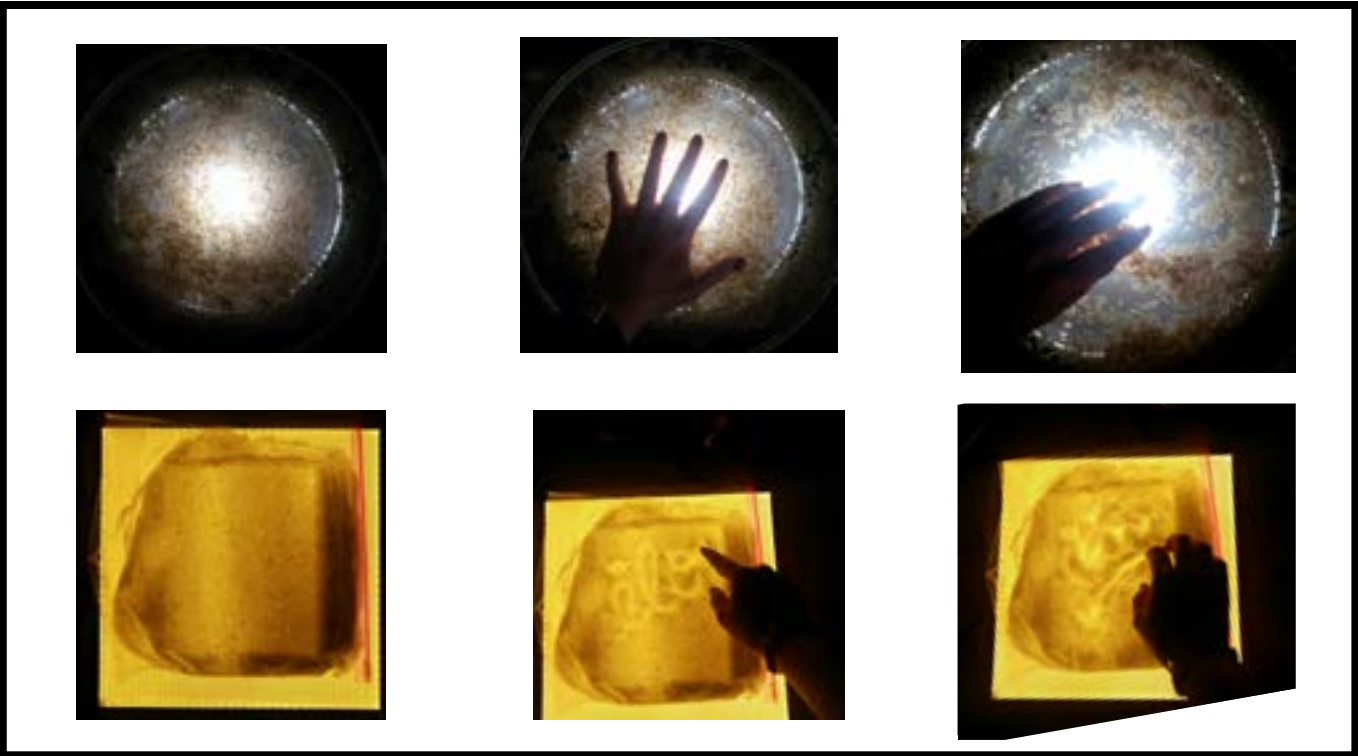
Dynamic Layer: Lighting Installation

My background, and some of the projects that have inspired me make me want to use art and lighting to do something magical with this space.

The idea of this lighting installation germinated from all of my theoretical and design research, but in particular the findings from the chapter ‘Light, Height and Intimacy’ such as Pallasma’s assertion that “buildings have turned into image products detached from existential depth and sincerity”. The key things that I have gotten from my research is the idea that people will feel a sense of reassurance and identification with a space, when the elements within the space appear to be within their sphere of influence. Also, that we feel more of a sense of identification with materials that show their age. I think one of the reasons that we identify more with natural materials that wither and age is that there is a sense that they are alive,

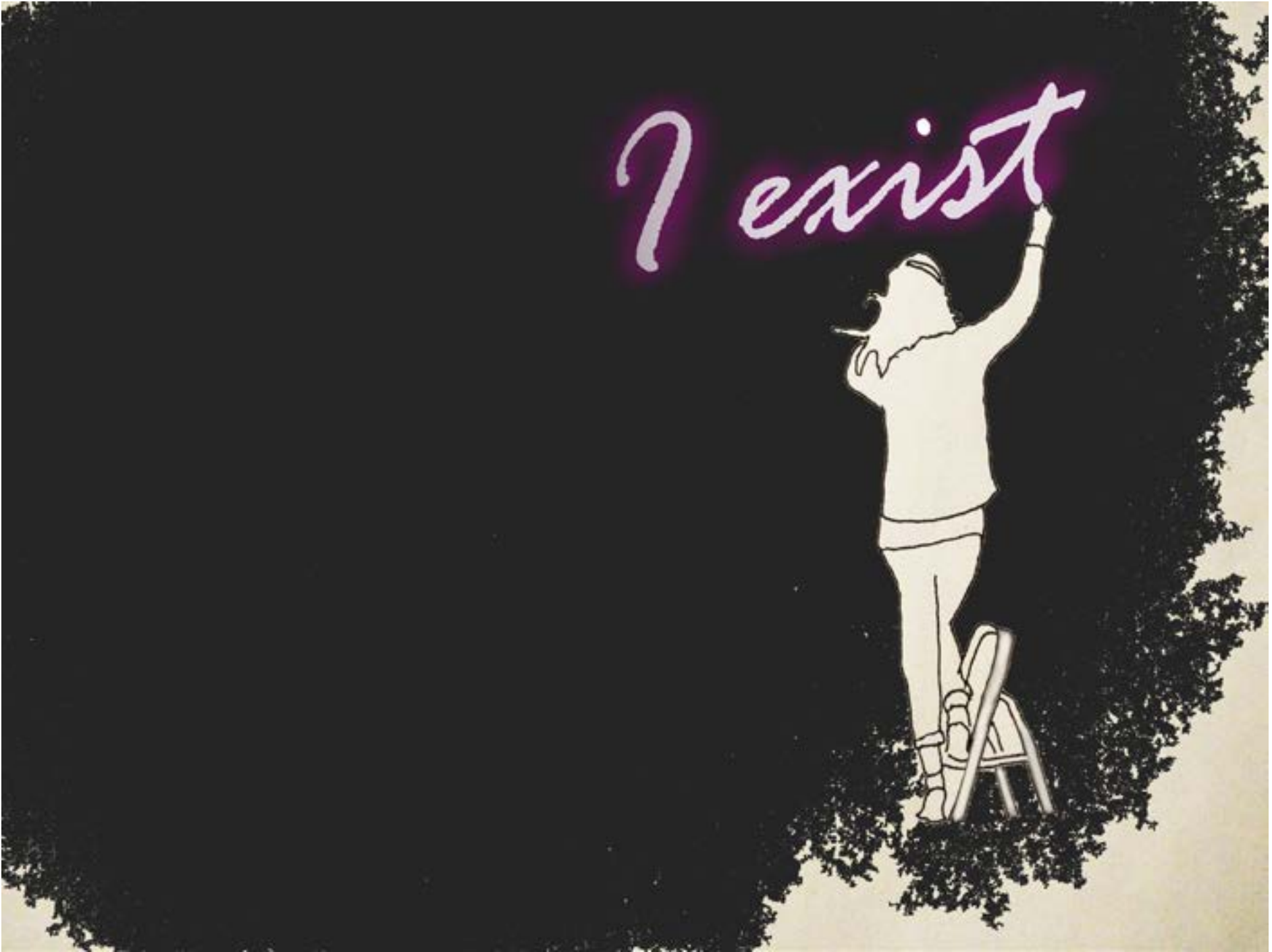
we can see their life cycle happening in front of our eyes and it reminds us of our place in the world. They show their scars from time and weather, ever enduring, until they are returned to the earth from which they emerged, just as one day we will. All of this got me thinking about the possibility of creating something that allows people to have a tactile experience with the light, and then watch the light ‘wither and fade.’ Imagine if there was a way to use light art to give people a sense of identification with a space, and help people to “grasp that we are rooted in the continuity of time?”

Below are some early mock up experiments of this idea, the first used with a small light source, a glass plate, rice and water. The second is using a square light source and salt in a plastic bag, both inspired by the idea of creating ‘lines in the sand.’

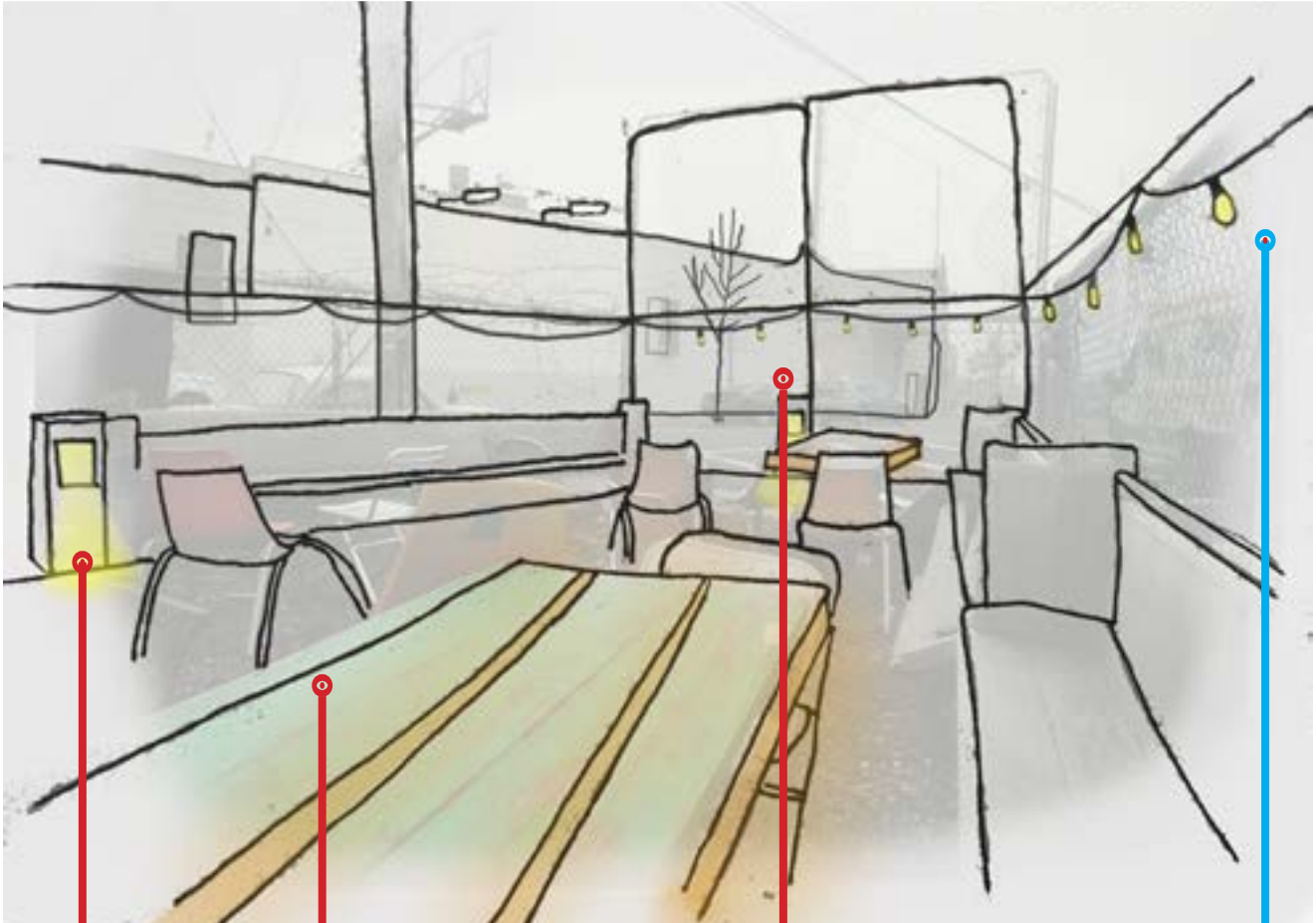


The surrounding neighbourhood an area supportive of street art that conveys artistic expression and even political leanings. The Lot itself is a perfect example of a space that encourages and enables expression, both through its radio waves and its encouragement of art within its space.

This got me thinking, imagine if we could use light to make our mark on the world around us.. to tell it 'I exist.' I want to create a concept for a lighting installation that allows people to make their mark on a screen installed on the fence of The Lot, and then watch it gradually fade over a period of three days.



Summary of Initial Ideas



Ground Level



Mid Level



High Level



Installation

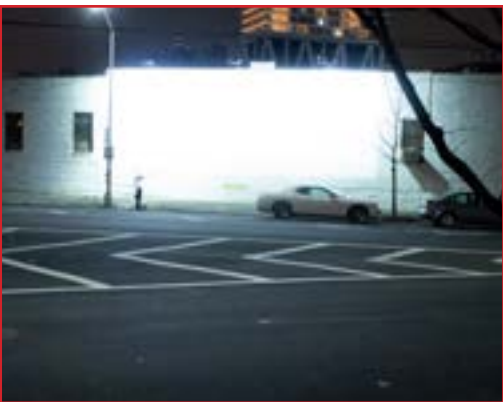
Dynamic Layer

Static Layer

Chapter IX: Iteration Static Layer

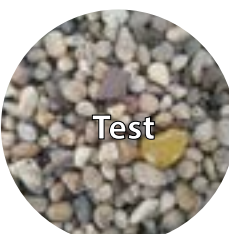
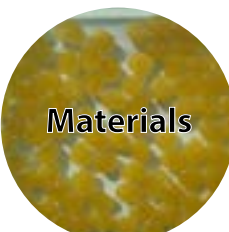
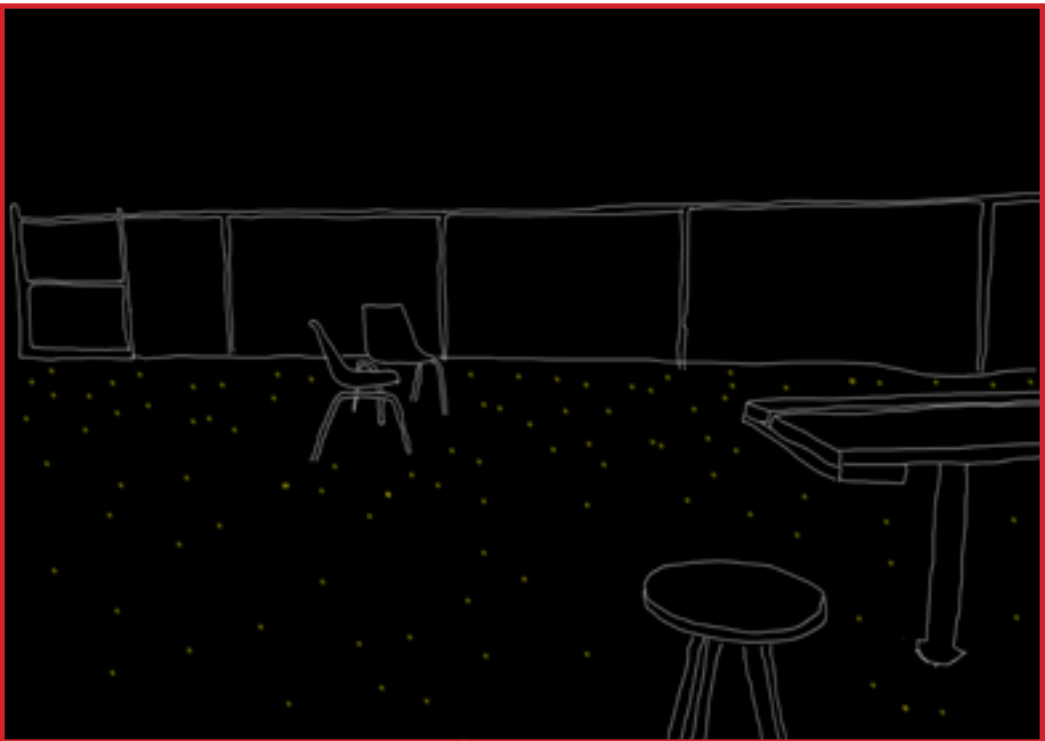
Ground Level

This naturally evolved upon further observation and experience of the space. After spending more time in the space it became clear precisely how much the ambient street lighting influences the space, especially from the white façade on the south side of the street, pictured below. Experiencing this first-hand led me to the conclusion that placing bollard lights in the space would make it 'over-lit,' or too bright, and deter from the cozy atmosphere that the design attempts to enhance. Though the bollard now seemed inappropriate, omitting any light source coming from below would weaken the impact that the layers of light are being used to achieve, ie to light from different levels using delicate brush strokes.



So now I know that I want something at ground level, but what? I went back to my design criteria to brainstorm. Using the guidelines of enhancing the unique character of the space by looking to what is already there for inspiration, I began to look at the gravel covering the site. I was interested to see if the design could enhance the 'magical aura,' of the lot by making the ground shimmer and glow ever so slightly.

I painted pieces of gravel with shimmering, reflective nail polish, and looked at it under electric light. Moving a torch over the painted gravel produced a nice effect as it subtly it sparkled in the light. I wanted to try painting more gravel with something that would react with the light, so I tried glow in the dark paint. I did it with multiple coats and left it on a window sill to 'charge,' in the natural light. The latex based paint never glowed, despite attempting it on multiple surfaces. To experiment with the same effect, I tried using glow in the dark pebbles.



Mid Level: Simplicity is Complicated

Why?

I wanted to build a mock up of this idea so that I could see for myself how the design would hold up. I wanted to look at how light within a pallet would look and feel to an observer, so that I could make edits to the iteration and make it a better design element.

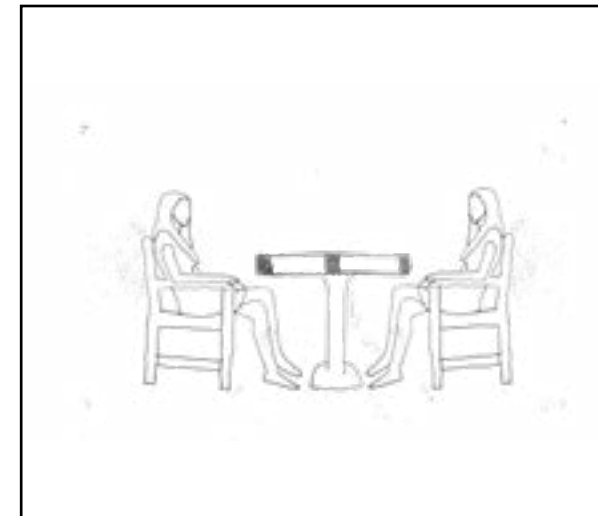
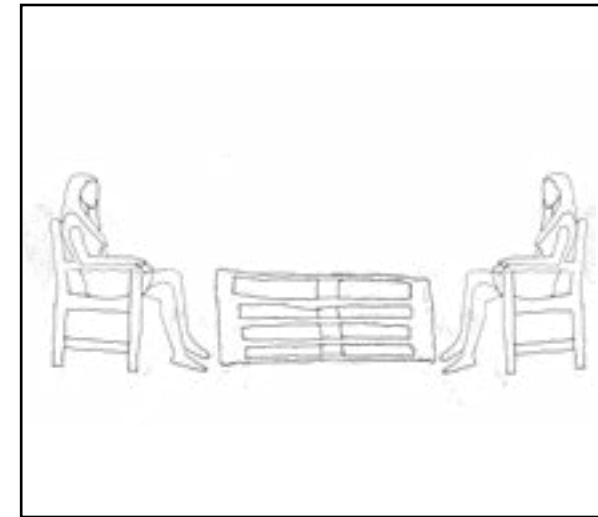
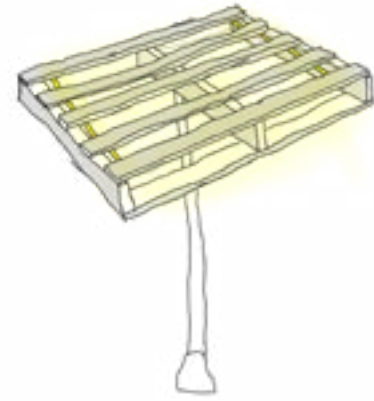
Drawing from the knowledge gained in the chapter Semiotics in Public Space, objects in public space have the power to shape human behaviour, to include or to exclude. This, coupled with my experience of designing for people and spaces has taught me that the best way to evaluate and mitigate this is to experiment with an object in real time and space, and ask the question, as Latour puts forward “how will this object shape human action?”

How I came to my decisions..

All of the design decisions that were made were done with the goal of trying to make the piece blend into its surroundings. From the design criteria, I took inspiration from what was already in the environment, looked for ways to use light to enhance the aura of the space, and tried to make something where the light would appear to be in the occupants’ sphere of influence. I knew from my discussions with the owner that the space was in desperate need of more tables. I wanted to see if I could address this problem and incorporate lighting within it. Detailed below is an explanation as to how I decided on the material, size, and configuration.

Material:

The first task with deciding on material for the table. There were pallets in the space



and I was interested to see if I could make them into a feature. The idea of an internally lit pallet that served as a table came to mind, and seemed like a simple solution to one of the problems of the space. It was only when I began to build a mock-up that I realized how complicated it could be. Initially, I wanted to use a pallet that had already been in the space, but those were far too large to comfortably seat a small group of people. Introducing a table into the space that appeared out of scale with the rest of the space would be a jarring addition. The next step was to source a pallet that was small enough to comfortably serve as a bistro table. I visited a pallet wholesalers, and the smallest pallet available was 24” x 24”. The size was right, but the surface had large gaps in it, and could never serve as a functional

table, even to merely place cans of drinks on. I ruled out the idea of filling in the gaps with plywood, in fear that it would make the table appear too polished to fit into the DIY aesthetic of the space. Instead, extra wood planks were taken from another pallet so they would appear to blend in.

The pallet as table top..

There would be two potential ways to make a pallet table, one of them is to simply stack pallets together and use the top as a surface, and the other is to use the pallet as a table top and bring it to an appropriate height with a stand and base. Though a stack of pallets is structurally sound, it doesn’t make for ideal tables. The Lot currently has a stack of pallets, but it is rarely used by groups of people. My hypothesis as to why that is, is because it is not ergonomic. In order to be comfortably seated you have to sit slightly away from the table, positioning people far away from one another, making conversation difficult. It was for this reason, that I decided to use a pallet as a table top, while having a pole underneath for it to stand on.

The Construction

There was much more involved in this than I originally thought. First of all, it meant finding suitable steel flanges to mount on to the pallet. Two plates had to be drilled with holes for bolts to fit through, and then welded to the edge of the flange. Once this was complete, the pole had to be fastened into another shackle. The other shackle alone would not have been enough to keep the table upright, so we had to make a base for the table out of four, right angled steel pieces, welded to the bottom of the shackle. At this point, we had a table that would stand upright.

The structure of the pallet meant that the table was solid in the direction of the wooden slats, but wobbly perpendicular to them. This meant that we had to add two pieces of

wood to go in the other direction to make it more solid. To make the table blend into the rest of the space, I made it to fit at 30" high, the same height as the tables currently in the space.

It was learning about all of these variables that would make a difference in the table where I learned that simplicity is complicated. There was so much more to take into account than I ever thought possible.

The Light

The iteration of the table was completed with options for two different types of light. Both were flexible LED tape light, one with more capabilities than the other. The first light that was tried was a 4000 Kelvin LED tape light. This was useful for mock-up purposes, as it helped to gain an insight as to how to position the light within the table. Originally, I

thought the light should be face up, however this produced a lot of glare. The other problem with it was that it was too bright. I would hypothesize that the level of light within the table would discourage people from sitting at it, and that it would be jarring within the space. At 4000 Kelvin, it also would have been the coldest source of light within the space, creating more of a jarring effect. The second type of light attempted was much more appropriate. It was 2200 Kelvin, and dimmable. The light this produced within the table was much more of a soft glow, so seemed as if it would be more fitting within the space.

Findings:

Does it 'fit'? The table blends in to the space for the most part, but the surface of the material still looks very new. In a sense, this is a good thing, because the material will age the longer it is in the space.

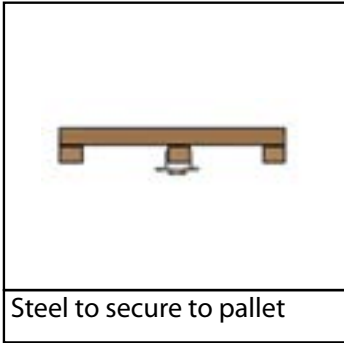
The Light: It is imperative that the light inside the table is equipped with a dimmer. When the light is on at its full brightness, it causes glare and produces a jarring effect within the space. It is also difficult to eliminate glare coming from the sides of the table, so further iterations would be done with a translucent cover over the sides of the pallet.W
The table feels very intimate, and produces a warm, flattering glow on the face when seated in it. In this way it successfully allows people to engage and identify with the space.



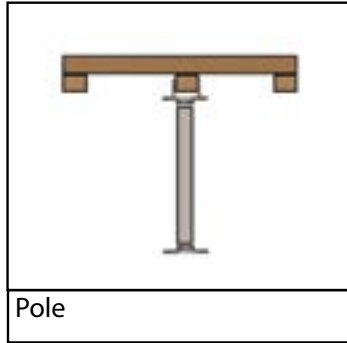
Flange



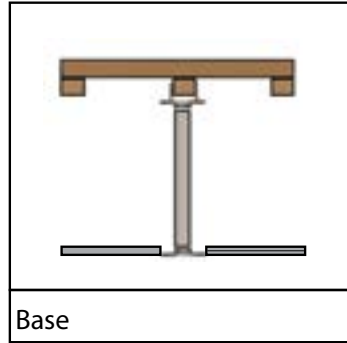
Flange with plate welded on



Steel to secure to pallet



Pole

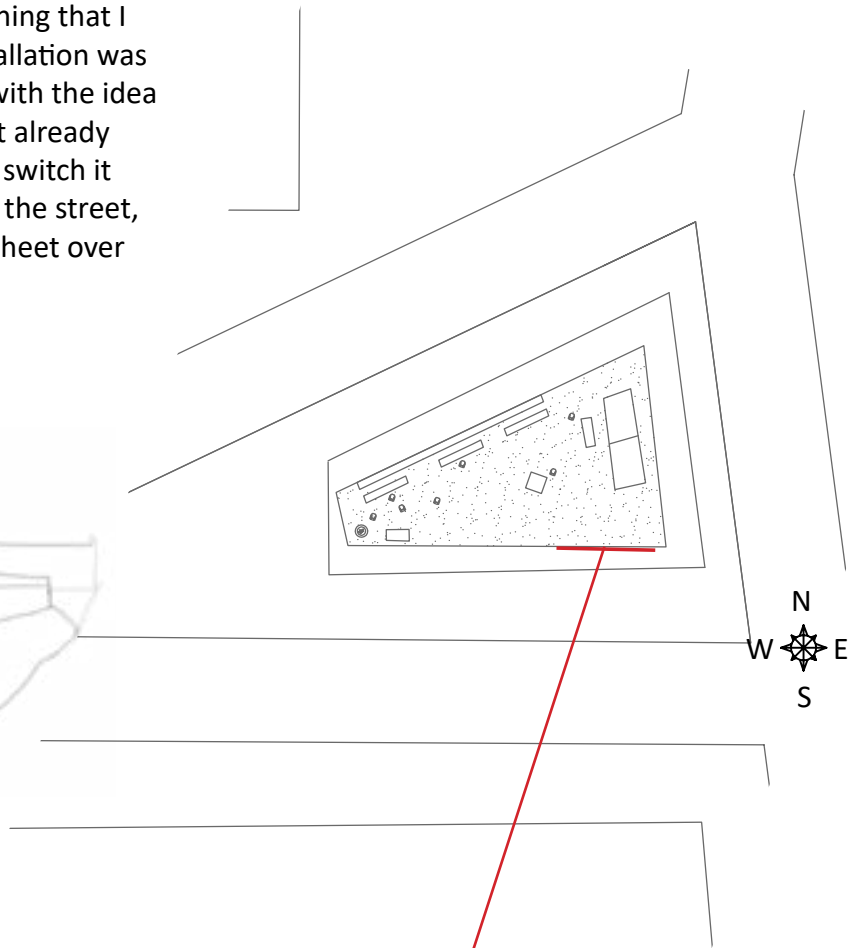


Base



Chapter X: Iteration Dynamic Layer

As the idea developed, the first thing that I wanted to change about the installation was where it was placed. In keeping with the idea of only filling in a 'foot print,' that already existed in the space, I decided to switch it to the fence on the South side of the street, where there is currently a black sheet over the fence.



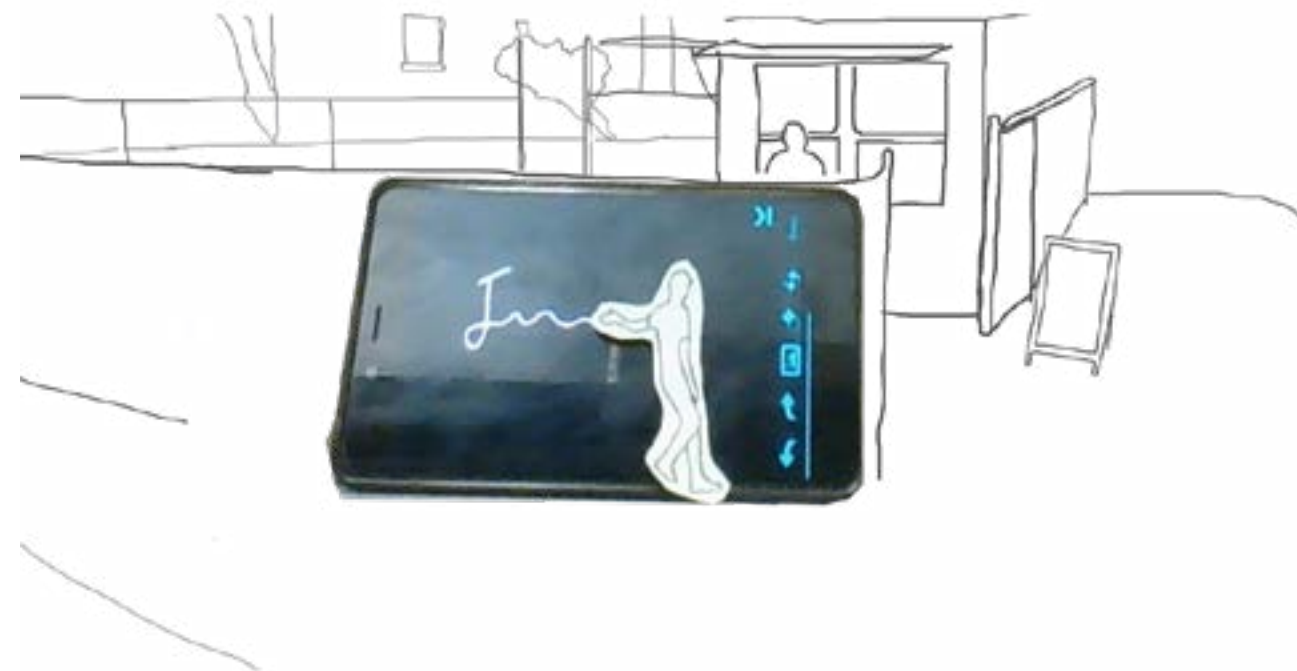
Touch Screen

Through coincidence, I discovered an app made for smartphone called Glow Draw. The app allows users to make pictures that appear as if they are made of neon light, on their smartphone screens. The concept, enabling people to use their hands to 'draw in light,' is strikingly similar to the concept proposed in my initial ideas phase. Using the app gave me the chance to experience the interaction that I was proposing, and also allowed me to try a tiny mock up of the idea that I was proposing. Through this exercise, I concluded that using a touch screen did not achieve the effect I had hoped for. The problem was one of aesthetics. The feeling it produced felt too 'literal,' and led me to the finding that the installation would have to produce images that were more abstract to achieve the ephemeral look and experience that I was hoping for.



Abstract Pixel Mapping

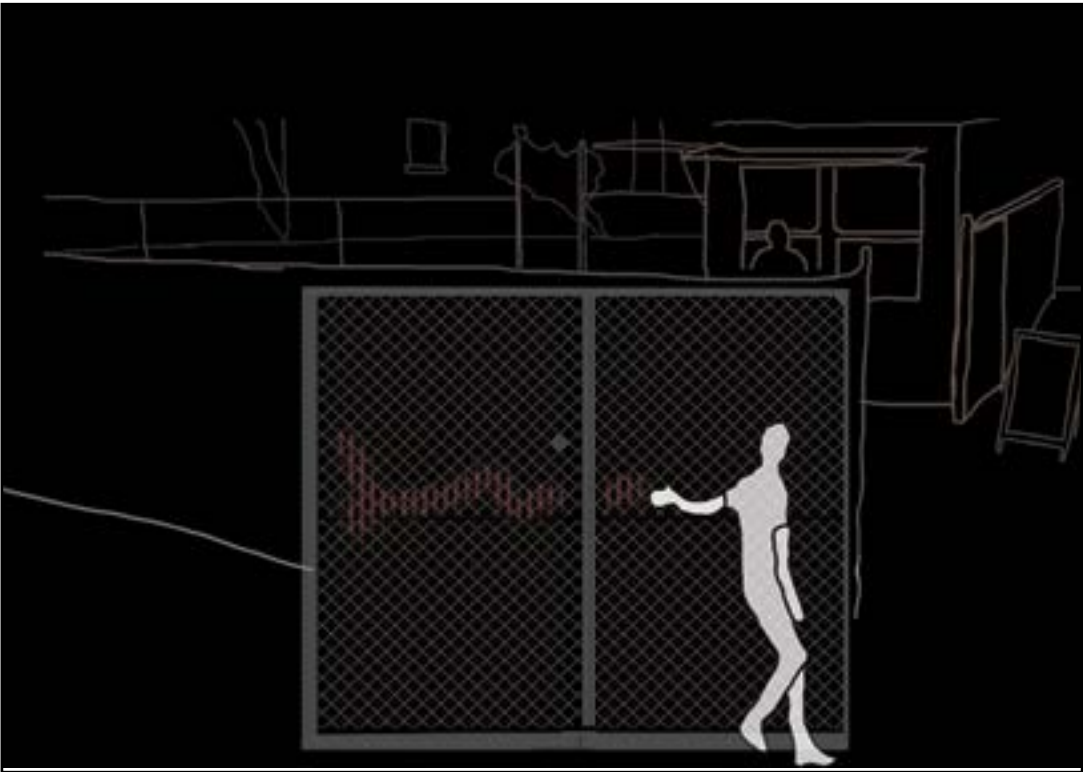
After attending a talk given by a supplier from Saco, a company that specializes in LED screens and media façade technology, I became inspired by one of the technologies in their product line. The panel pictured is attached to a camera that is focused on a crowd of people. The camera detects the colours that people are dressed in, and relays the information to the screens, while the screens follow the person's movement and traces the colour along the screen. Their products were also used in the Stack Retail Building in Cincinnati. These were exactly in keeping with the more abstracted version of the idea that I wanted to develop. With a combination of AutoCAD and photoshop, I made an image of what it may look like to use a panel of LEDs, and instead of having a literal version of a mark, creating a more abstracted one using the camera and pixel mapping to show where users had made their mark.



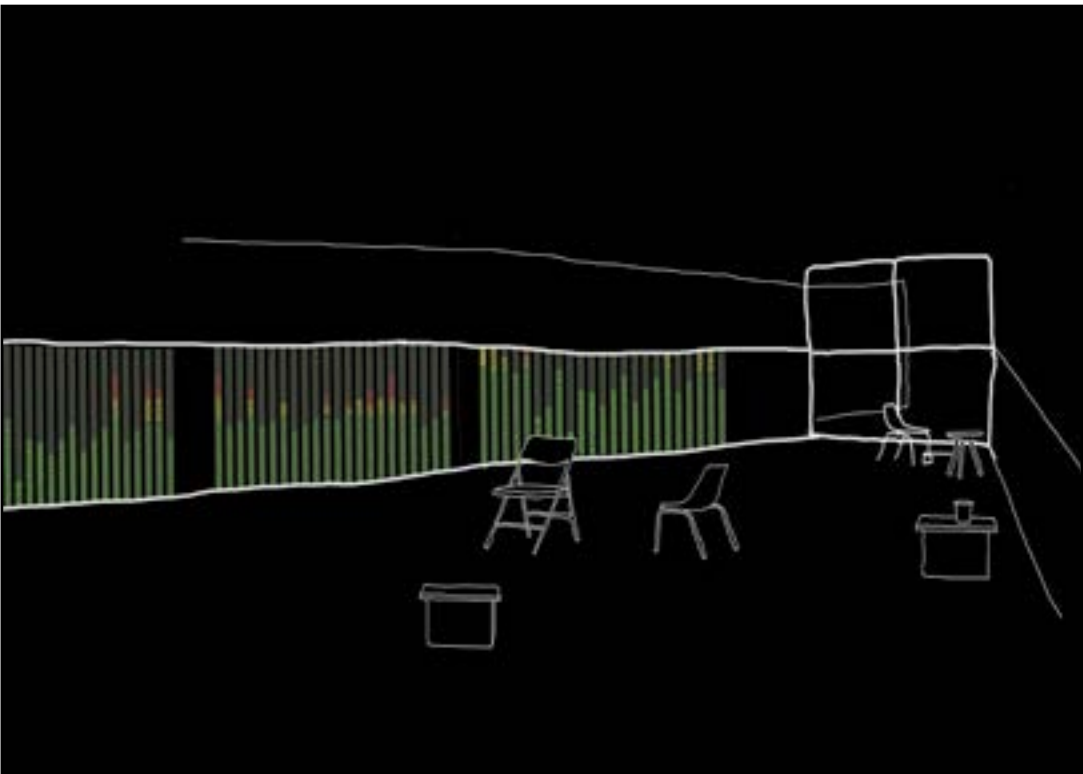
Integrated Fence Pixel Mapping

While in the neighbourhood, I stumbled upon a material that inspired me towards the final iteration of my lighting installation. The chain link fence pictured below is typical of the area. The plastic strips weaved through are commonly used to obfuscate the view inside. I got the idea of using this material as a blueprint for the 'write with light' installation. LED Strips would be weaved through the chain link fence and connected to one another. The camera attached would get the information needed to react to touch, so that when users come into contact with it, the light will appear.

Why?
I think this is more in keeping with the idea of taking inspiration from what is already in the space and in the surrounding neighbourhood. Because of the way the LED Strips are weaved through the fence, they become camaflouged in a way that is unassuming. The installation does not shout to announce its presence, but rather, it whispers, gradually revealing itself to observers. It is in keeping with the spirit of the space, as its owner expressed "we didn't want a place that was that impressive."

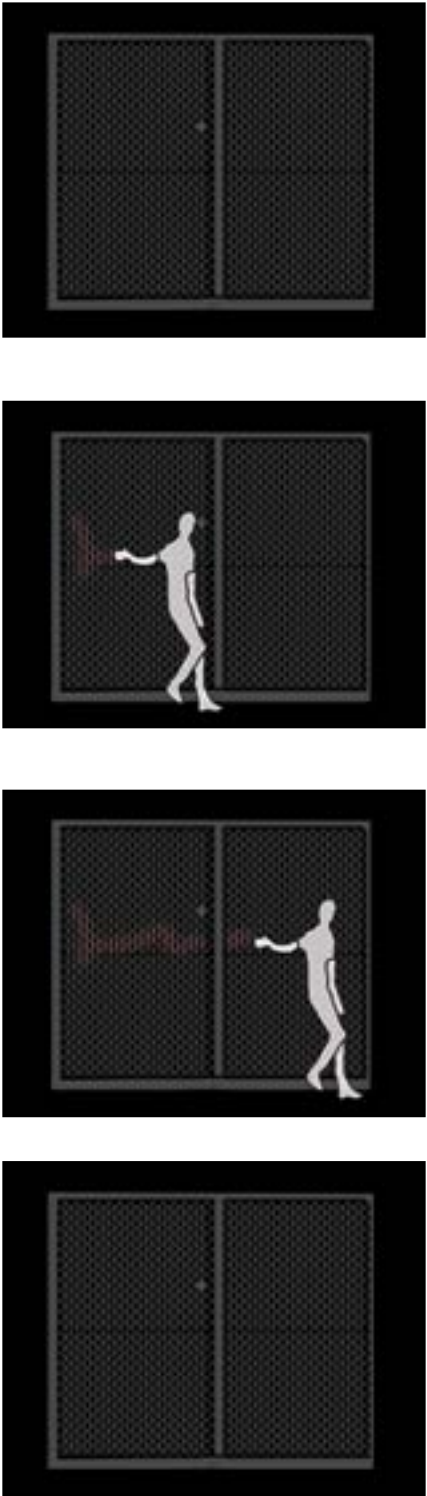
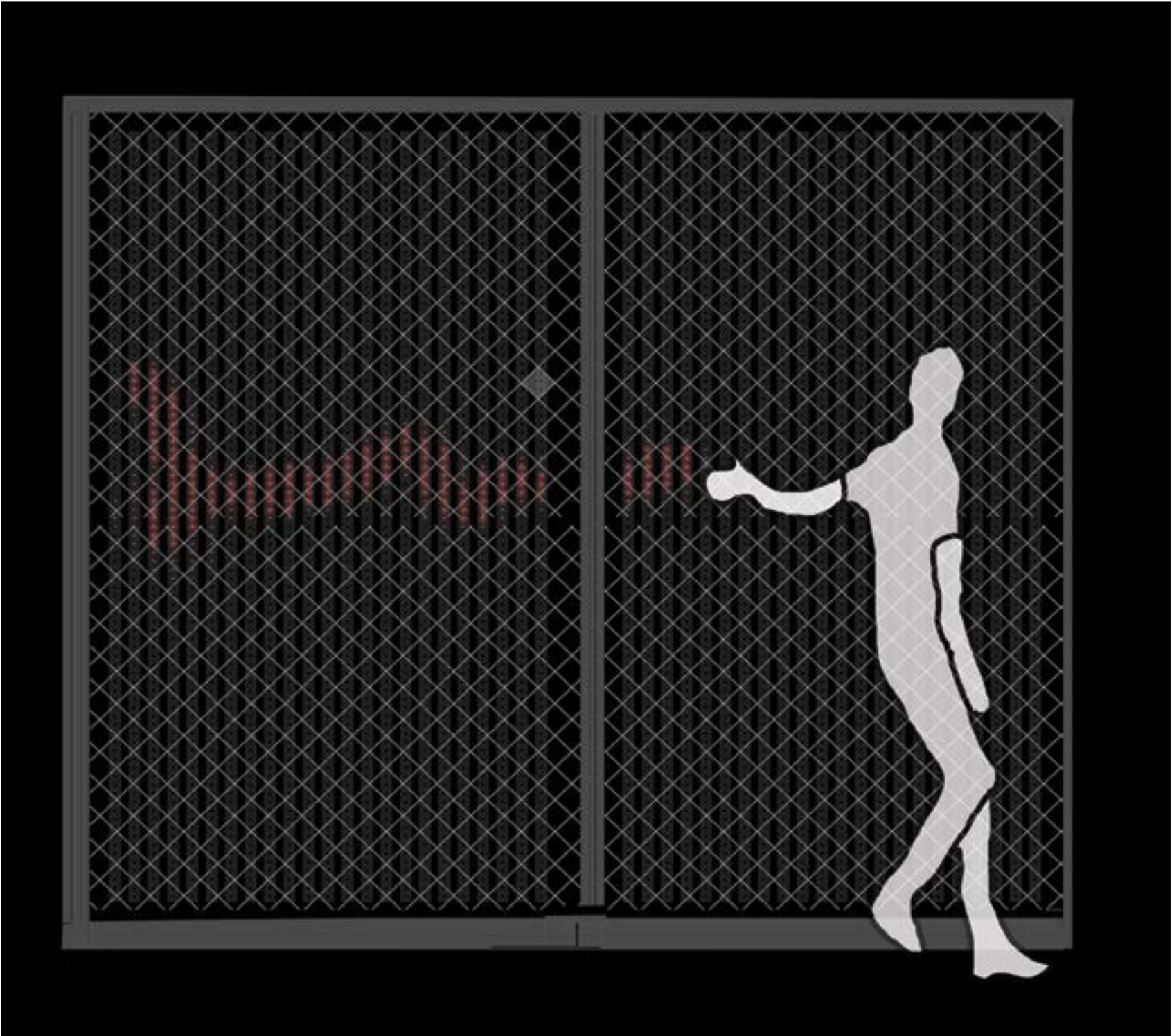


Exterior

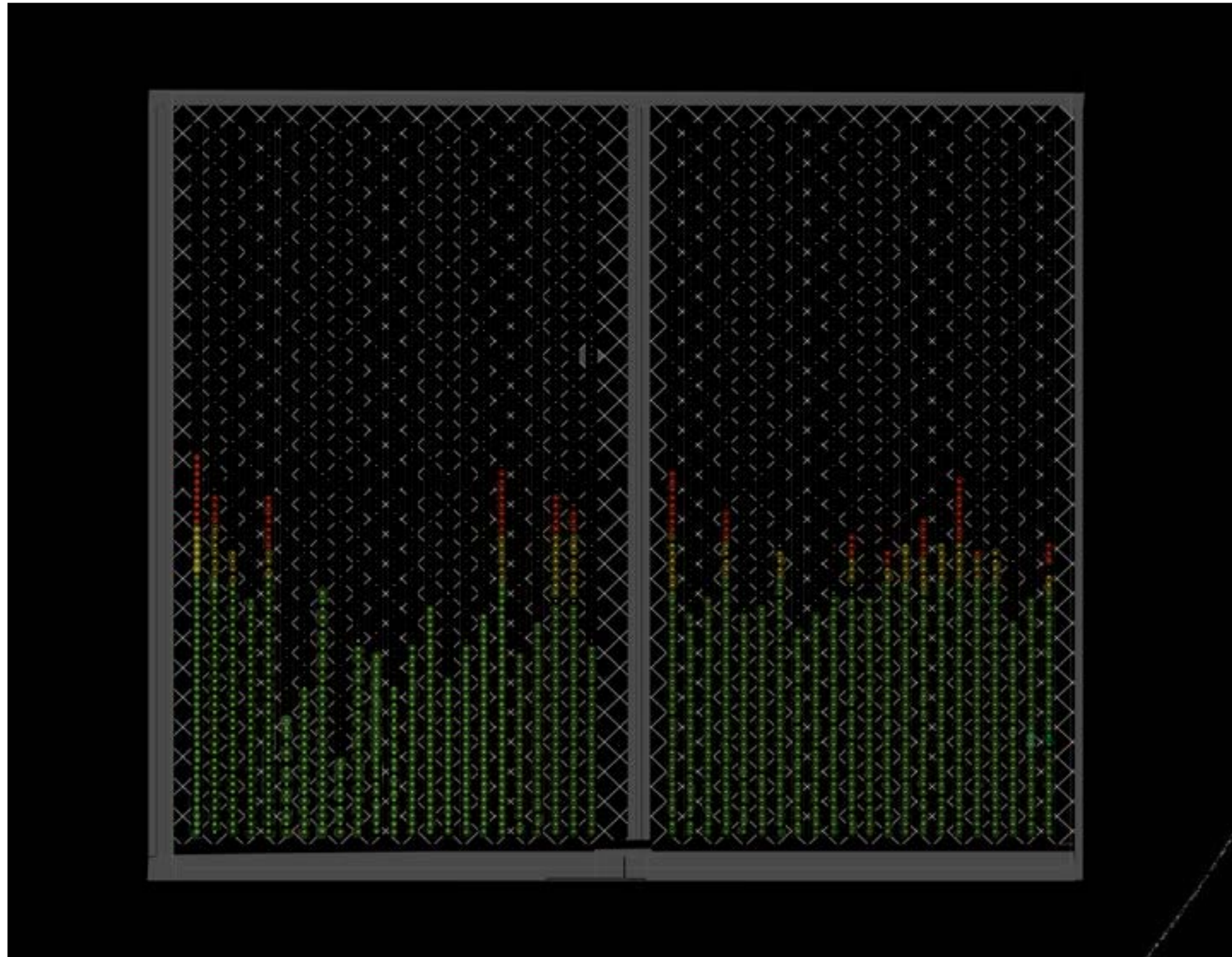


Interior

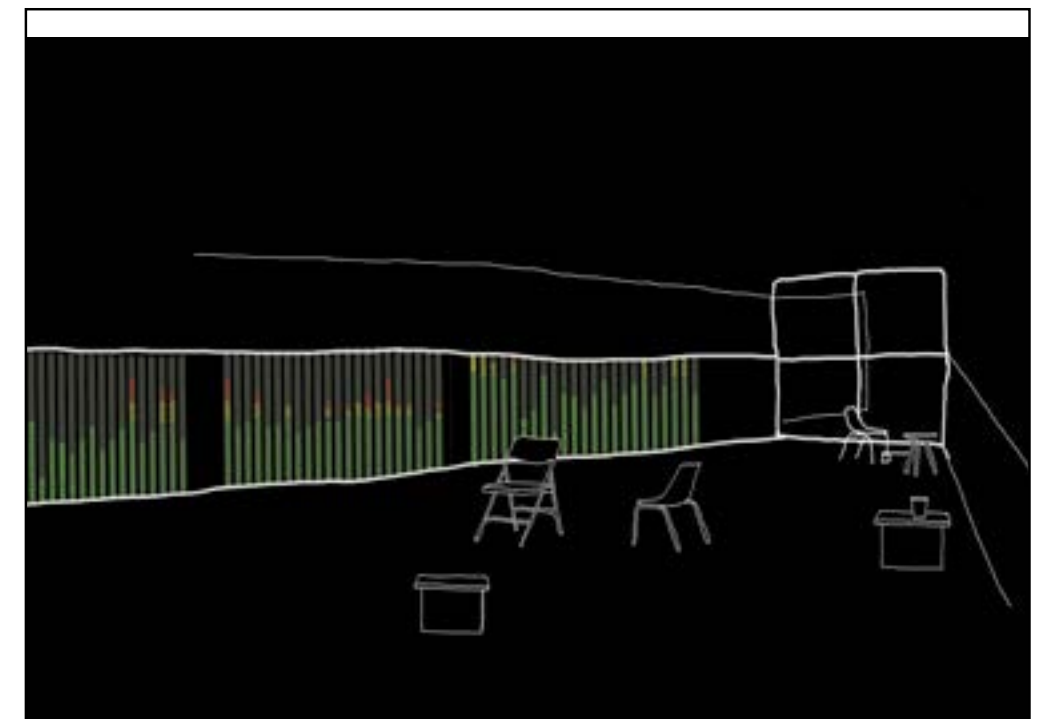
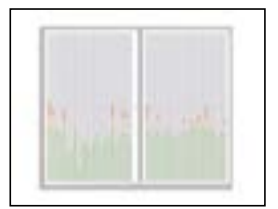
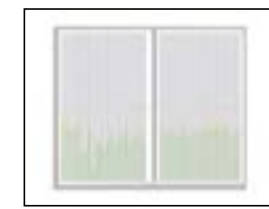
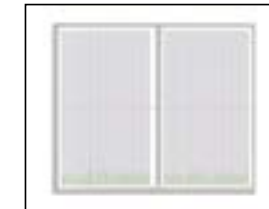
Exterior

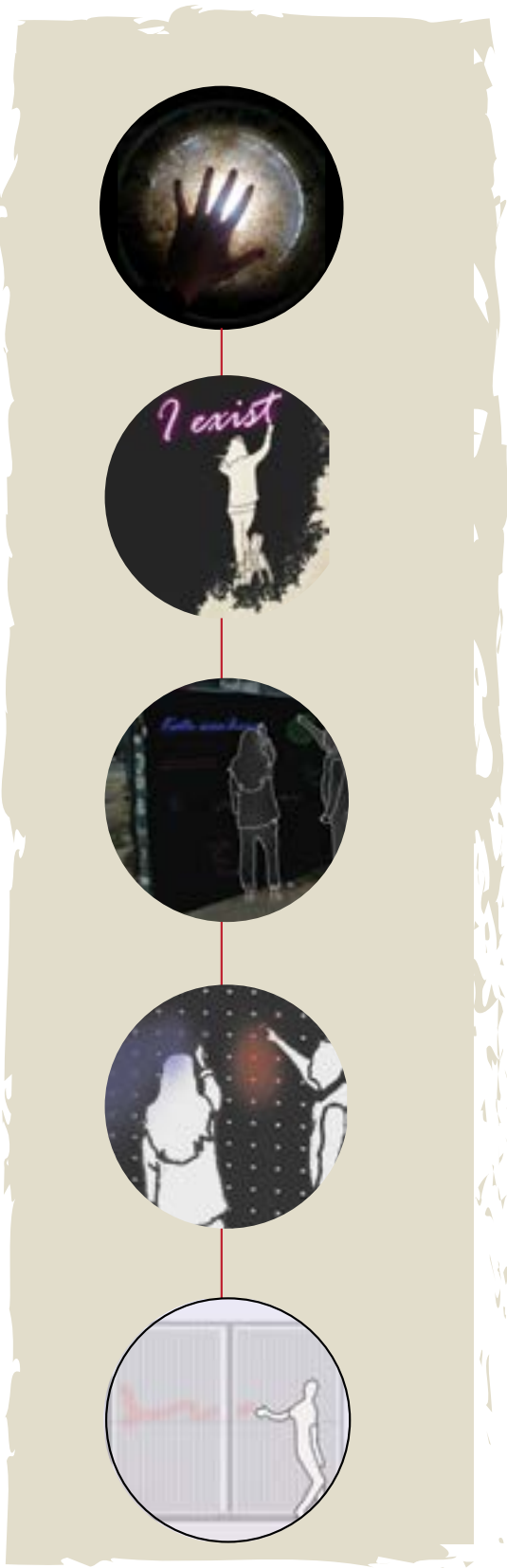


Interior



The integrated fence pixel mapping provides a unique opportunity to perform separate functions on the interior and exterior of the space. While The exterior serves the function of drawing people in, the interior can provide other functions. Depicted here, is pixel mapping inspired by a sound mixing console. Light reacts to different beats, frequencies and volumes of the music being played. When connected with the DJs of The Lot Radio, the fence is an interactive art piece that responds and changes to stimuli in its environment.





Touch

Express

Iteration

Revision

Final Idea

Chapter XI: Evaluation and Conclusion

Evaluation

Static Layer:An Exercise in Restraint

The approach taken with this space was an exercise in restraint. It would have been possible to take a large sweeping brushstroke and introduce design elements that were completely new, making the space unrecognizable. But would that have benefited the space and those who inhabit it? Both research and evaluation of the space indicate the contrary. This is not a space that was built, but rather emerged, in a natural and organic way. That is indeed the key part of its charm. If we are to ignore these elements of charm in the space and what makes it appealing to the human beings that inhabit it, then we fail to have human centric design at the core of the work. This project is about more than creating an impressive light scape, it is about understanding people in space. No matter how aesthetically pleasing a design we make, it would be arrogant for us as lighting designers to presume that it may compete with the New York City skyline at night. So why compete? Why attempt to drown out the naturally appealing surroundings of the space? Why not compliment it instead?

An allusion is made to this in Tanizaki’s In Praise of Shadows. “I remember another ruined moon-viewing, the year we sailed out over the lake of the Suma Temple. We put together a party, we had our refreshments in lacquered boxes, we set bravely out. But the margin of the lake was decorated brilliantly with electric lights in five colors. There was indeed a moon if one strained one’s eyes for it.” Just as it would be a mistake to use electric floodlights to drown out the sight of the harvest moon, it would be

misguided to create a lighting design that obfuscates the plays of brilliance established by the sight of the New York City Skyline. Instead, a lighting design must be made that can compliment the surroundings of the area, rather than compete with it. In this way, the static layer that covers the interior of the Lot has lots of small elements that make up a greater whole, in a nod to the collage made by the New York City skyline. Inhabitants are enveloped in many layers of soft light coming from different heights to make a pleasant atmosphere that enables them to enjoy the interactions taking place within the space, as well as its surroundings.

Dynamic Layer: Light Installation

This is the best way that I know how to help people to identify with their environment. It combines the need for the feeling of having control over their space, while reminding us of our place in the continuity of time. The installation responds to the need for attachment and existential depth and sincerity.

Conclusion

There is no ‘one size fits all,’ approach to lighting design that can make people engage more with public spaces, and at the very least, designers must begin with asking the right questions. It is not enough to ask ‘how can lighting design help people to identify with public space?’ The question must be broken down into its simplest form. First we must ask, what is it that helps people to identify with public space, and how is it that people feel a sense of identification with lighting in any space?

Each problem has to be broken down into a smaller set of problems. We can’t just assume that ‘more light will make people feel better,’ we have to ask, ‘what light is better for people, where should it go, and how?’ what is it that people want when they’re in a public space?

We know that as designers, we are not alone when we examine how people interact with public space. We must employ knowledge that is already existing from many different fields, from sociology and urban planning, to light art and design. We have to use this knowledge to ask ourselves, how is it that people will react to objects in public spaces, and how can our knowledge of semiotics, or the study of signs, help to inform us of this? What is it that makes people identify with a space, and identify with lighting? What is it that makes a public space special, and how can we as lighting designers help to enhance that specific aura?

Allow the parameters of your questions respond to the environment that you’re working in. Don’t be strangled by the initial research question to the detriment of the project. In a case study location like this,

where the environment is rare and unique, take inspiration from what gives the place its special aura.

When moving forward, it was important to have design criteria to guide the process, and to continue to question what it is that the project is trying to set out to achieve. It is easy to get bogged down by the limitations you may come up against, so it’s helpful in the middle of a project to ask ourselves, what is this all about? How can I contribute to this space in the best way I know how? Once the initial design proposal is done, the best way to learn if your ideas are going to work, is to test them, by any means available. Design iterations can be done in many different ways, from illustrations, to models to mock ups, and each of these methods have their own unique advantages.

The most important conclusion to draw from this project, is the idea of being sensitive to the unique needs and qualities of a public space, and to break down the problems that it presents into its smallest sections possible. It is only through understanding the intricacies of public space and human identification with that space, that we can begin to produce design solutions that really matter.

