

SURROGATE INFRASTRUCTURES

Human Consciousness in the Information Age

Cayce Davis

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*We knew the stories – that they will gas us and throw us in the ovens.
This was 1944 ... we knew everything. And here we were.*

-Art Spiegelman, The Complete Maus



[00] INTENT

This project is a study of collective memory in a place and time of intense change, intending to facilitate a conversation about the complexities of remembering and the challenges of humanizing the past in an increasingly fast-paced and consumption-driven world. As it critiques the architectural and anti-spatial precedents of newly suburban Poland, it imagines and exploits alternate narratives for a site that has been heretofore saturated by the singularity of its Holocaust past.

Grappling with the absurdities of history and historiography in Kraków and across the globe, the program takes on a series of infrastructures, imbued with temporal potentials, to convey tourists into and out of their vicarious treks through the city and to proselytize an architecture of decision which urges engagement and understanding of the present.



Wawel Dragon in Sebastian Münster's Cosmographie Universalis, 1544.

[01] HAPPENSTANCE

I remember it was night when we pulled in; straight away, there was a weird sound that we heard, and strange smells that I noticed. Through the bars of our cattle car I could see immense fires on the distant horizon and an enormous amount of smoke.

-Bernard Offen, *My Hometown Concentration Camp*



We were masters of nature, masters of the world. We had forgotten everything—death, fatigue, our natural needs. Stronger than cold or hunger, stronger than the shots and the desire to die, condemned and wandering, mere numbers, we were the only men on earth.

- Elie Wiesel, *Night*

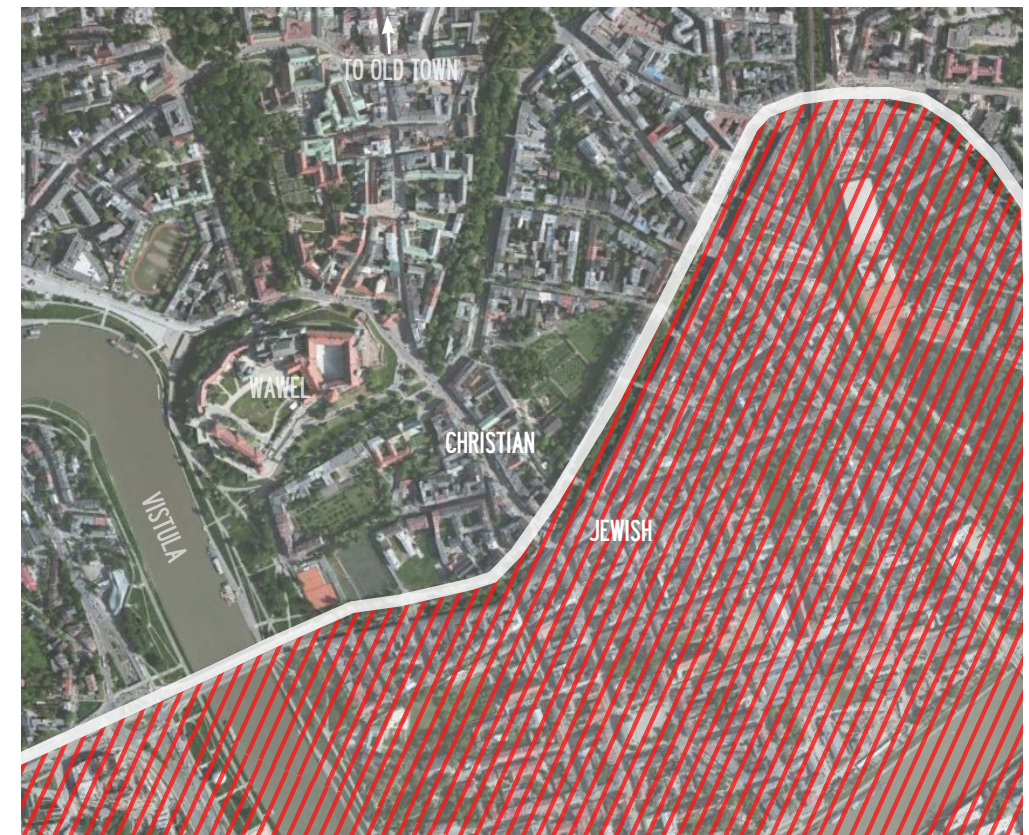
Social media was upheaved in late July 2014 over an Alabama teen’s “selfie” posted to her Twitter account while on the site of the Nazi extermination camp Auschwitz in Poland.¹ Following outcries of alleged disrespect and indecency, the girl was interviewed on several news platforms defending her actions and testifying to her interest in Holocaust history and inspiration for the visit from her deceased father. The episode brought light to questions concerning the way global society deals with the shared memories, specifically the difficult memory that is the Holocaust in Poland: questions about means of representation, the availability of historical information and access to sites of trauma, and the behaviors that are socially acceptable vis-à-vis the largest genocide in human history.

This project, attempting to move Poland and the entire world forward, studies the evolution of memory following the Holocaust and implements a narrative of situational relationships that foster decision and empathy.

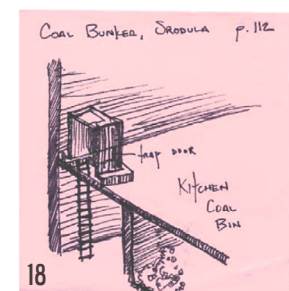
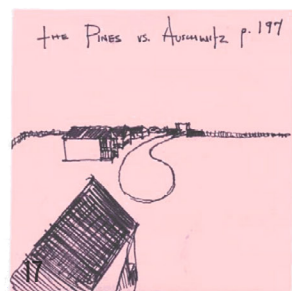
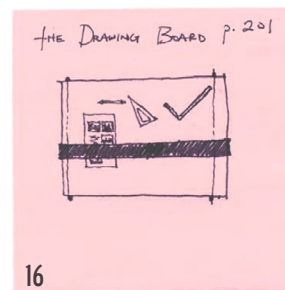
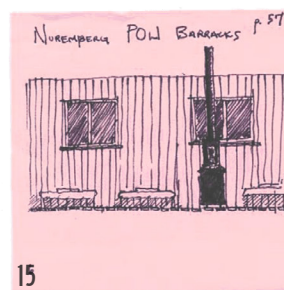
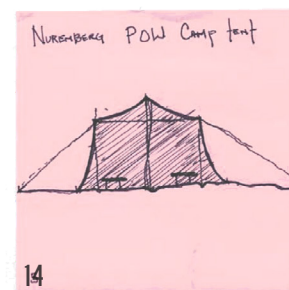
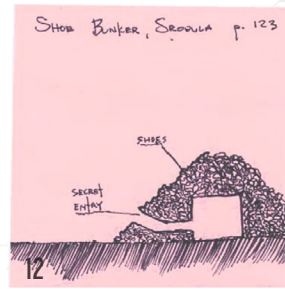
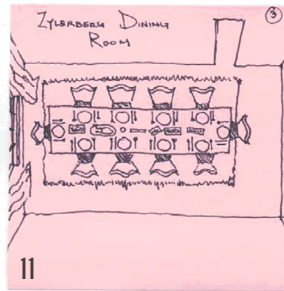
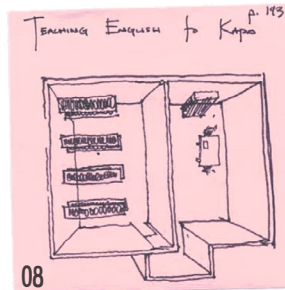
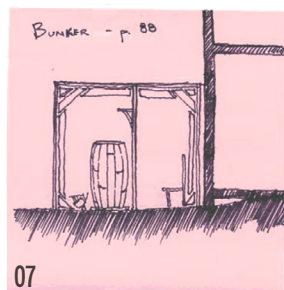
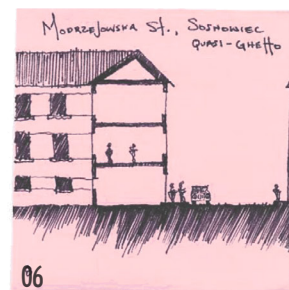
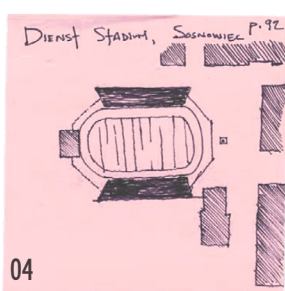
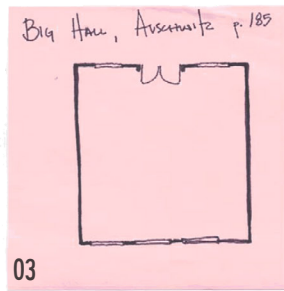
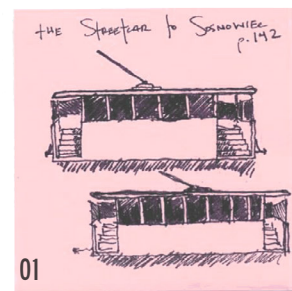
¹ *The Washington Post*, 2014. The American teen, hailing from Alabama, was interviewed by several news outlets with regard to her seemingly flippant selfie, with one iPod earbud in and a blushing emoji.



Dietla Street was a 19th-century ideal: Old City, Stradom, Kazimierz, and Podgórze becoming one. A river filled in, a new surface paved, and people freely crossed into each other's territory. But the Holocaust made Kazimierz an empty Jewish quarter. Poles thereafter occupied the homes and the streets, but the district's identity was lost. Dietla Street was once the transition from Polish Kraków to Jewish Kraków; after the war it became a flat threshold, a place to move from one block of an empty city to another. 1989 saw no change here. The flatness is still there; the unity is not. The Jewishness of Kazimierz will not be reinvented without Jews.



Kazimierz sits at the South of Dietla, while Stradom district, the Wawel Castle complex, and the Okol portion of the city center area can be seen to the north. Dietla provides a façade for each of the two sides.



MAUS

01 Tram

02 Train to Czechoslovakia

03 Big Hall at Auschwitz

04 Dienst Stadium, Sosnowiec

05 Back to Poland

06 Modzejowska Street & the Black Market

07 Grandma and Grandpa

08 Kapo

09 Ameryka

10 Vladek's First Apartment

11 The Zylerberg Dining Room

12 Shoe Bunker

13 Honeymooning

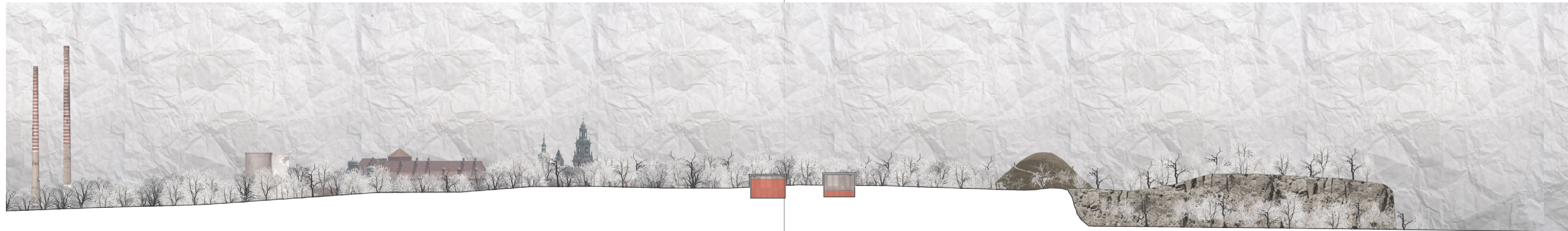
14 Nuremberg

15 Nuremberg Part II

16 Time Flies

17 Enclosure

18 Coal Bunker, Srodula



BACKSTORY

While individual memory is understood through corporeal sense and experience — scar tissue, collective memory is increasingly held as a belief: something that relies on historical perception, personal opinion, and oral or visual representation. In the rapidly urbanizing and changing world of today, shared memory of the Holocaust involves a collection of actual and imagined narratives that parallel and subvert one another through interactions with material culture.

Historically, collective memories were passed down through generations via material and non-material cultures: architectural and physical artifacts, the written word, and oral storytelling have always been venues through which culture — local, regional, and now global — develops memory. During and after the Industrial Revolution, this dynamic process was accelerated and transformed by new media of representation and circulation: and at this point in time was the Holocaust.

The memoirs of important Holocaust figures like Anne Frank, Elie Wiesel, and Primo Levi frame our early, first-hand views of the events that actually took place — their prose and literary imagination created the images and atmospheres that people now see in history books, stories, documentary films and Hollywood movies. The notion that Wiesel (1960) and Levi (1958) walked the streets of Auschwitz-Birkenau creates a moral platform to visit the site as a tourist: it creates a sort of historical pilgrimage of

imagination and wonderment, imbued with sadness and horror. Later writers and artists like Art Spiegelman acknowledge the effect of time in their work. In *Maus*, Spiegelman (1973) illustrates the morphology of stories over time and through generations, as the son of a Holocaust survivor who increasingly feels the trauma of his parents' experiences as his life goes by.

Vis-à-vis advents in communication technologies, transportation infrastructures and representation techniques, the post-WWII proliferation of suburban and digital landscapes has altered the means and meanings of engaging with the Holocaust. How groups of people at varying scales and structures understand themselves within historical trajectories is evolving: the development of modern cities has rendered a matrix of widely available information, unprecedented international travel, and increased socialization through the Internet.

The way that world cities — including those most affected by the Holocaust — negotiate with their respective histories is a complex and intersectional process that involves a collective process of memorialization, selective erasure, and societal ambivalence.



CONQUERING THE DRAGON

This city's history, prosperity predicated by centuries of prosperity, invasion, pillaging and occupation, deduces to the story of the Wawel dragon. Before Kraków was even founded, the villages that surrounded the Wawel (the future of the Polish monarchy) feared and hated the terrible smoke that lived in a cave beneath it. The dragon made a ritual of stealing local livestock, children, and virgins for its meals, and it took heroic Prince Krakus to kill it and end the Polish people's misery.

After the dragon's death and Krakus' assumption of the Polish crown, the lizard's carcass was hung at the entrance of the cave; today the bones remind us of Poland's longevity and power. If the bones ever fall to the ground or leave this resting place, the world will surely end.

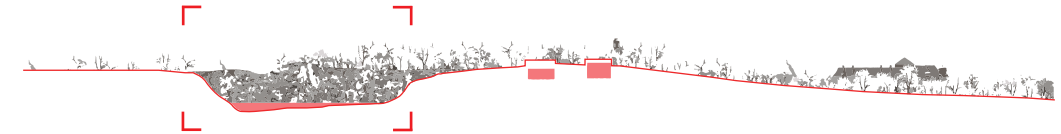
THE QAHAL

Around 1825, the Qahal realized that the cemetery (the New one) on Miodowa was getting full, barely 25 years after its inception. They purchased a new plot from some monks, and it became the new New Jewish Cemetery, beside the centuries-old Christian one.

The new cemetery was expansive, sitting in a forested district on the outskirts of Kraków called Podgórze, not far from the mound Kopiec Krakusa, which serves as the resting place of pagan King Krakus, who founded Kraków back in the day. It was the city's burial ground, and it was a process in the 19th century in which the Jews joined that city and earned the right to die and inter alongside their Catholic and Polish brethren.



Plaszów in 1943 or 1944. Courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.



SITE

The city of Kraków, Poland is noted for its association with Holocaust and WWII histories, its oppression by the Soviets during Communist Poland, and for the reintegration of those physical and non-material artifacts for public knowledge and tourism since 1989.

Directed by American-Jewish producer Steven Spielberg, the film *Schindler's List* (1993) thrust post-communist Kraków and its troubling Jewish heritage to the global spotlight. Since the film's commercial success in North America and Western Europe, as well as a drastic increase in international involvement in Central and Eastern Europe, the tourism industry has expanded in the city. The focus of the film, however, the abandoned and overgrown Plaszów concentration camp, has largely been eclipsed by an interest in the more accessible attractions of the old Jewish quarter, the Schindler factory museum in nearby Zablocie, and the wartime Jewish ghetto, Podgórze.

The site of this project, the southern edge of the municipal quarry at the former edge of Plaszów, has a long history leading up to its cultural upheaval by the Nazis. Before it was a camp, it was the location of multiple cemeteries, one Christian and two Jewish, as well as an adjacent land to the Krakus Mound, a prehistoric tumulus believed to be the burial place of Poland's first monarch, King Krakus. These narratives and the multiplicity of their origins were displaced by the singularity and size of the Holocaust and World War II, only to be mostly neglected and built-over during the communist period. What was once a place of harshness now exists as a suburban district of the city, densely covered with undergrowth and increasingly invaded by urban sprawl.

NOWA HUTA: REVISIONIST INTERVENTIONS

Once Lenin’s monument stood here,
gazing at the greyness of Nowa Huta,
at the workers’ exhaustion, at this sluggishness,
at the strange brown colour of the walls.

This is the city of the struggling proletariat
against the ruthlessness of steel, of sorrow,
the inexorability of history, of blood,
the ever-falling leaves, and of tears.
Today our comrade Lenin stands no more;
but the grey is still here, the brown is here,

the proletariat is still here, swilling beer,
this city is still hunting for its soul.

The monstrous streets, like beasts, are here still.
The hunger that has always been still craves its fill.

-Immanuel Mifsud, KM 2005



Plaszów central barracks, 1944. Courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

This parcel of land was never Jewish. This place was born after the War. But Nowa Huta has always been about the Jews. Equality, brotherhood, work, we say. Their struggle lives on here: domestic peace in the face of terror, apartments of belittled dreams, streets full of displaced ambition.

Concrete blocks, chock full of sitting ducks, tread on and on with vacant horizons and faces downcast. The past is gone, but so is the future. Let us live in the now and not think about anyone else. What is ahead is someone else’s job, anyway.



SOVIET MILK BAR

A bit of damp dough, a few gnawed-off clippings from a pork carcass, and bucket of salt. With that, we get a taste of the post-war Polish culinary experience: cheap broth, thawed pierogis, a small bottle of cola. It is in these moments at the Milk Bar that we open up and discover who we really are. We are not tourists, we are pilgrims.

Sooner or later in life everyone discovers that perfect happiness is unrealizable, but there are few who pause to consider the antithesis: that perfect unhappiness is equally unattainable. The obstacles preventing the realization of both these extreme states are of the same nature: they derive from our human condition which is opposed to everything infinite. Our ever-insufficient knowledge of the future opposes it: and this is called, in the one instance, hope, and in the other, uncertainty of the following day. The certainty of death opposes it: for it places a limit on every joy, but also on every grief.

-Primo Levi, Survival in Auschwitz (1947)

EVERYDAY VOYEURISM

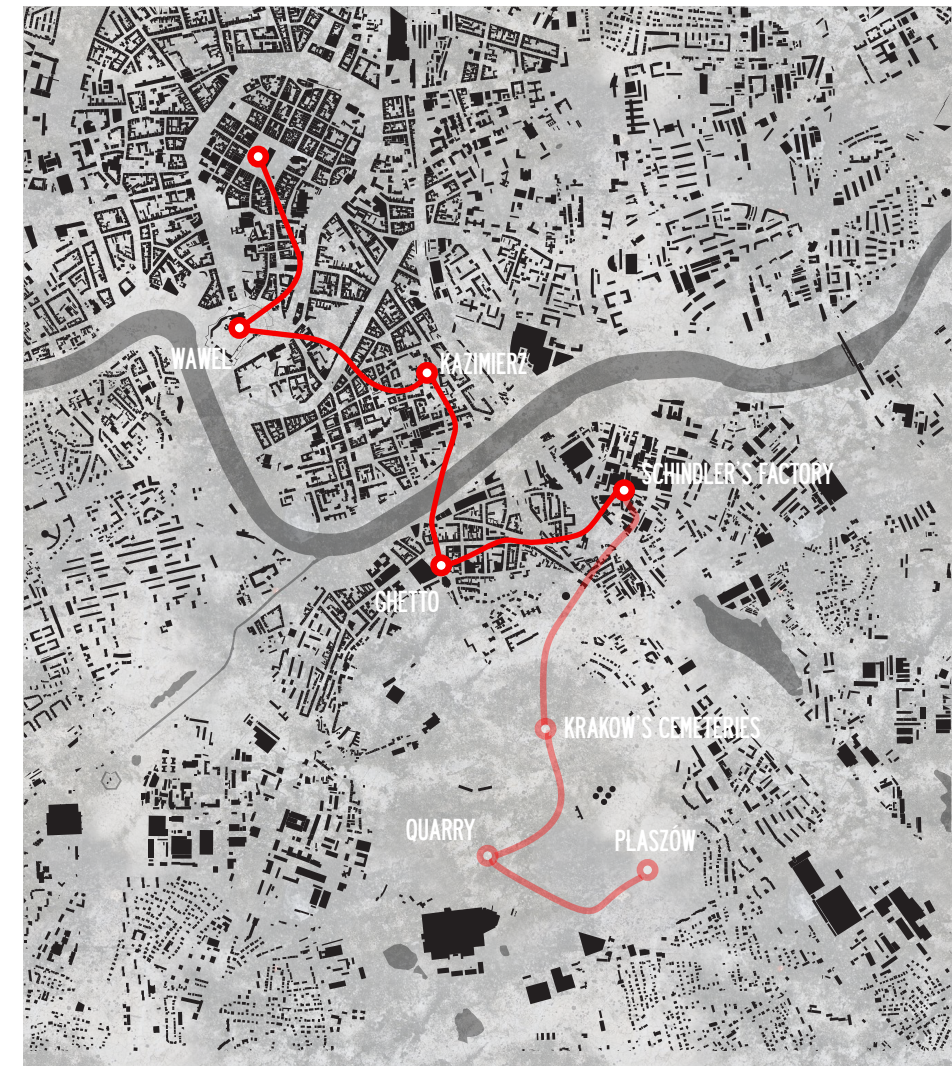
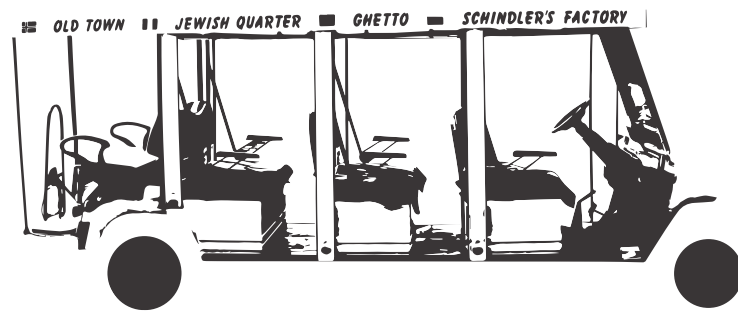
The tram passed through the ghetto everyday. In this way, the Gentiles interfaced with the Stricken. This procession and viewing prism persists today, but the roles have been reversed. Today, Foreigners watch Poles go about their lives and imagine 1940.



THE AUTO RICKSHAW

A processional route through the city is explained in the brochure. Eyes glancing from dot to dot, the callouts explaining the significance of each site, we whet our appetites for the onslaught of information we are about to experience. The sites are translatable to the vinyl veneer: OLD TOWN - JEWISH QUARTER - GHETTO - SCHINDLER FACTORY.

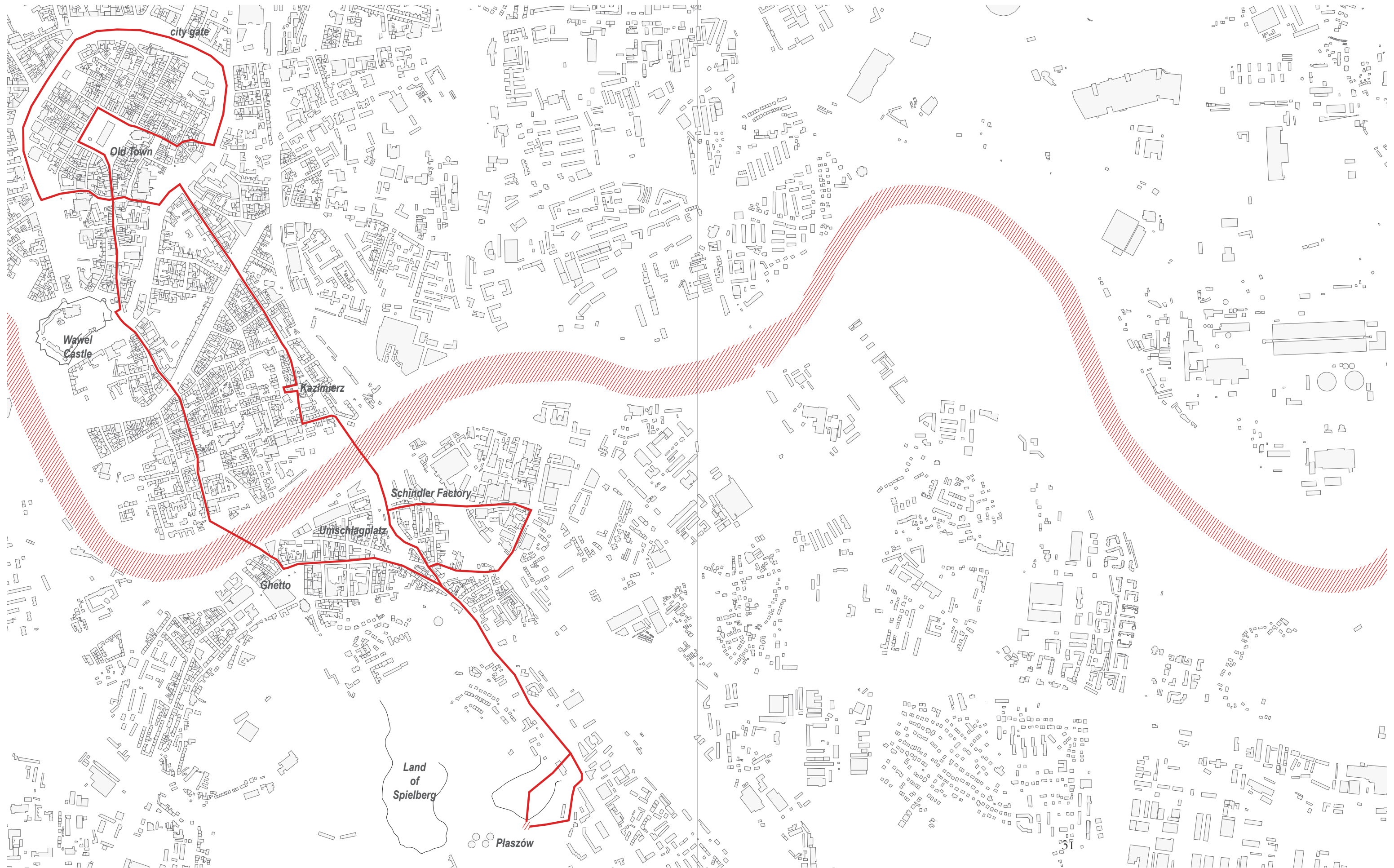
Although seated together, we individually enter our retrospective realms - or maybe it is the past itself - on a set of 16" wheels. The artificial wind flows through the plastic sheets as the driver bounces us along. Some face forward, some prefer backward: we each have a way of facing the solemnity of memory.

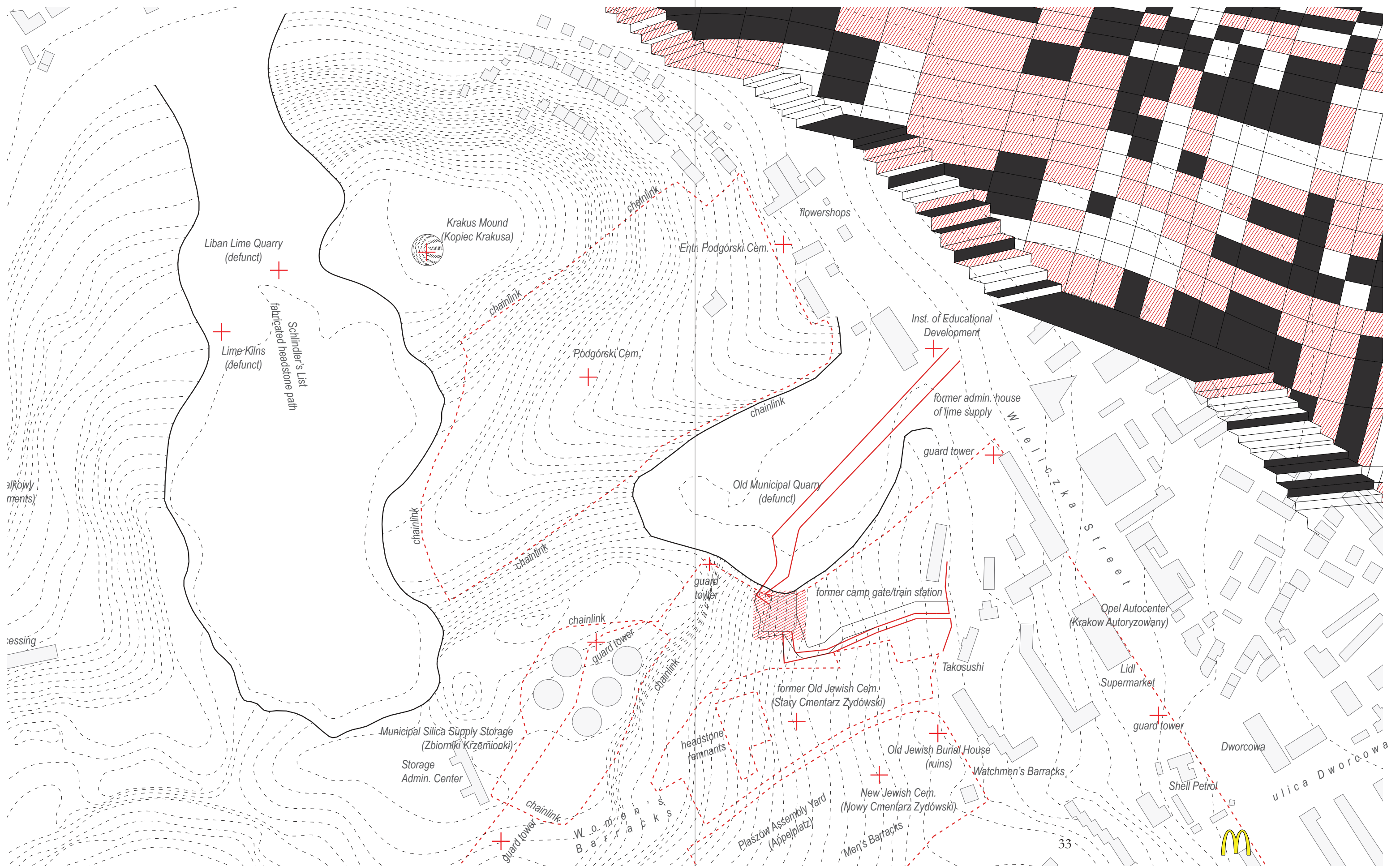




Plaszów central barracks, 1944. Courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

[02] RESPONSE

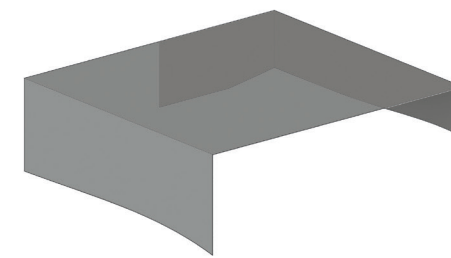




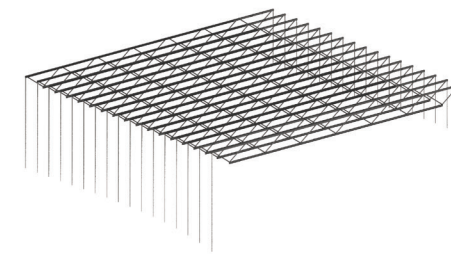


Plaszów central barracks, 1944. Courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

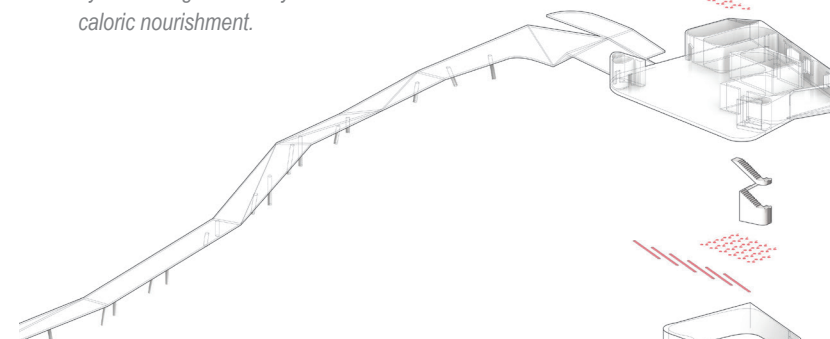
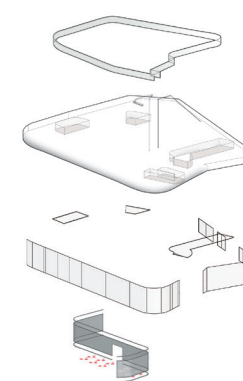
The suburban form of the mechanic shop becomes part of the formal vocabulary of the terminal, while providing a shade structure for outdoor spaces and resistance to summertime solar heat gain.



The roof form extends the rolling landscape of the area into occupied space for viewing out over the quarry, current and former cemeteries, and the WWII-era Plaszów labor camp.

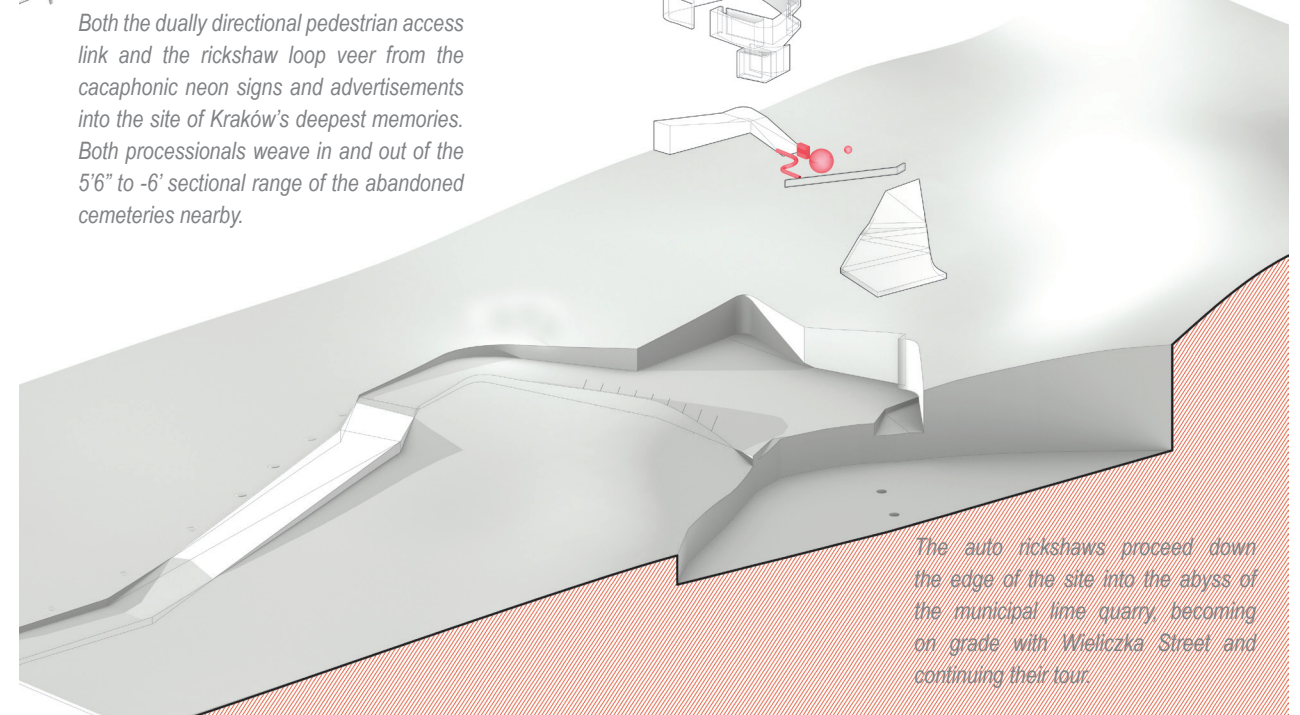
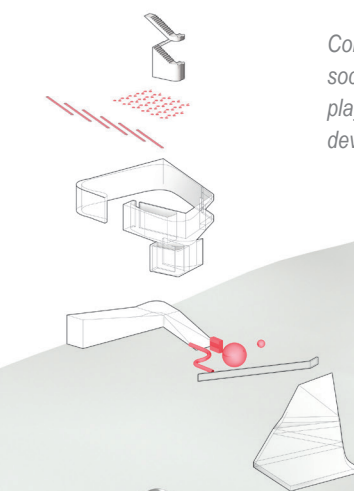


Food as well as information is distributed via a snack bar café and LED screen wall, respectively. In a relaxed environment, constituents can prepare for their instructional video experience and city tour by absorbing necessary historical data and caloric nourishment.

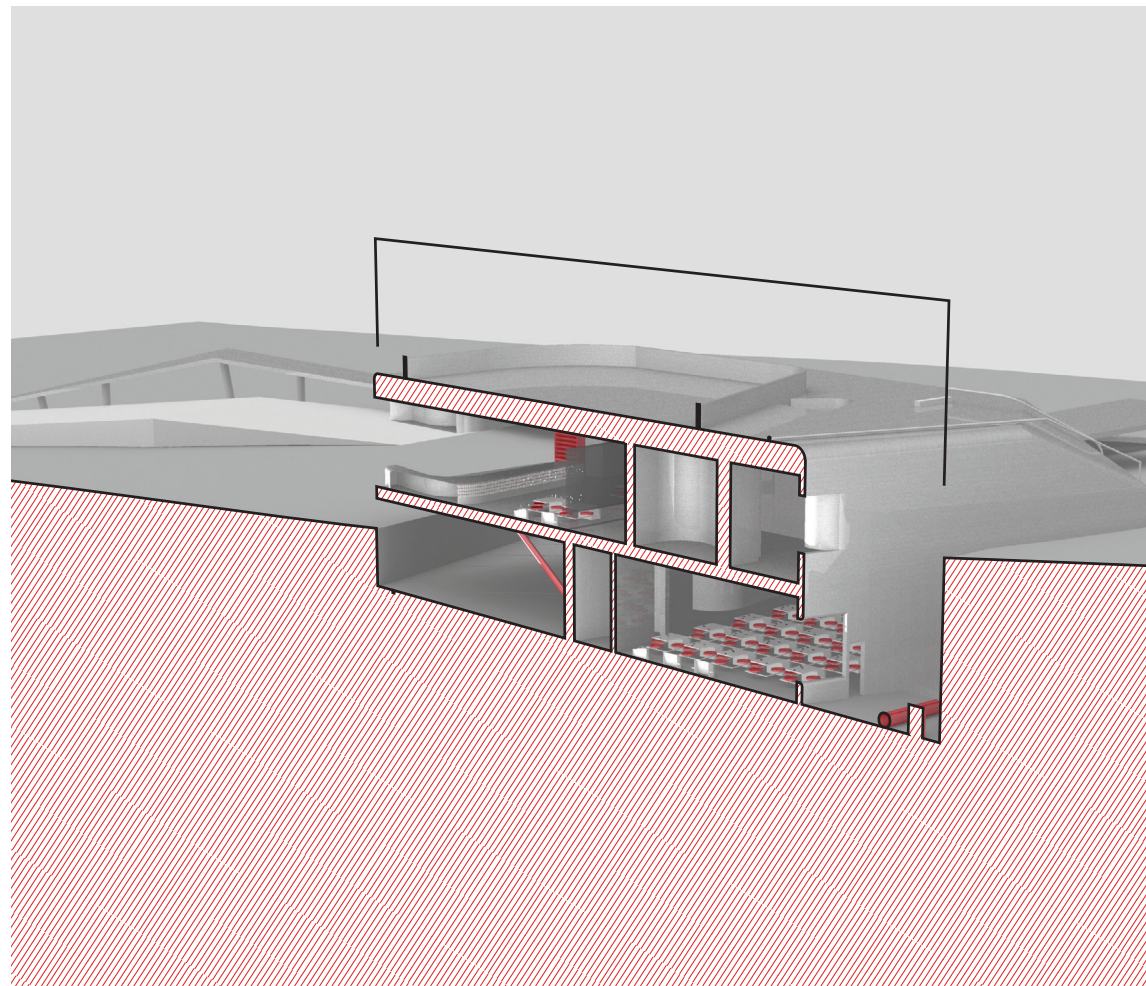


Both the dually directional pedestrian access link and the rickshaw loop veer from the cacaphonic neon signs and advertisements into the site of Kraków's deepest memories. Both processions weave in and out of the 5'6" to -6' sectional range of the abandoned cemeteries nearby.

Constituents can play board games, update social media and watch their children on the playground while charging their electronic devices and socializing with each other.

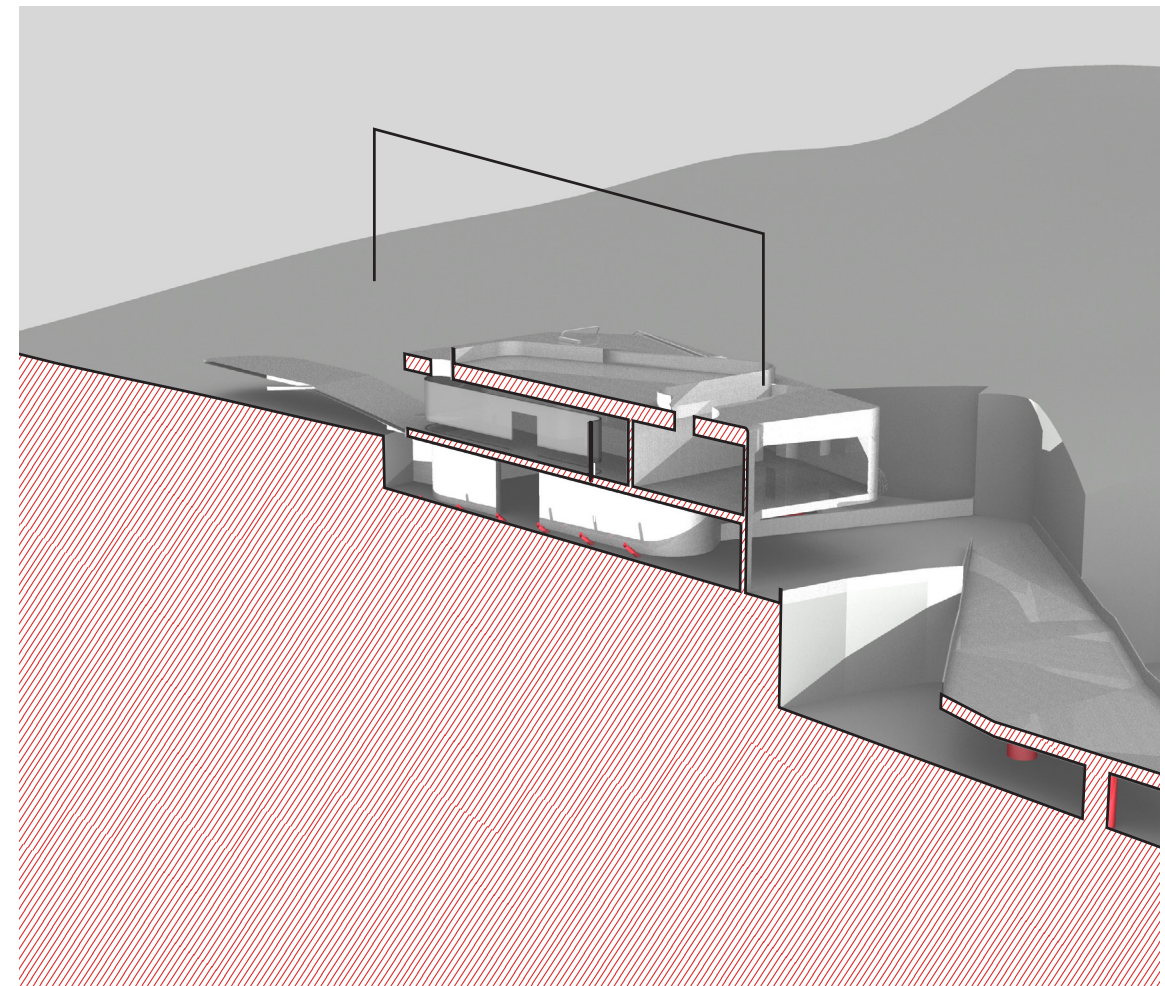


The auto rickshaws proceed down the edge of the site into the abyss of the municipal lime quarry, becoming on grade with Wieliczka Street and continuing their tour.



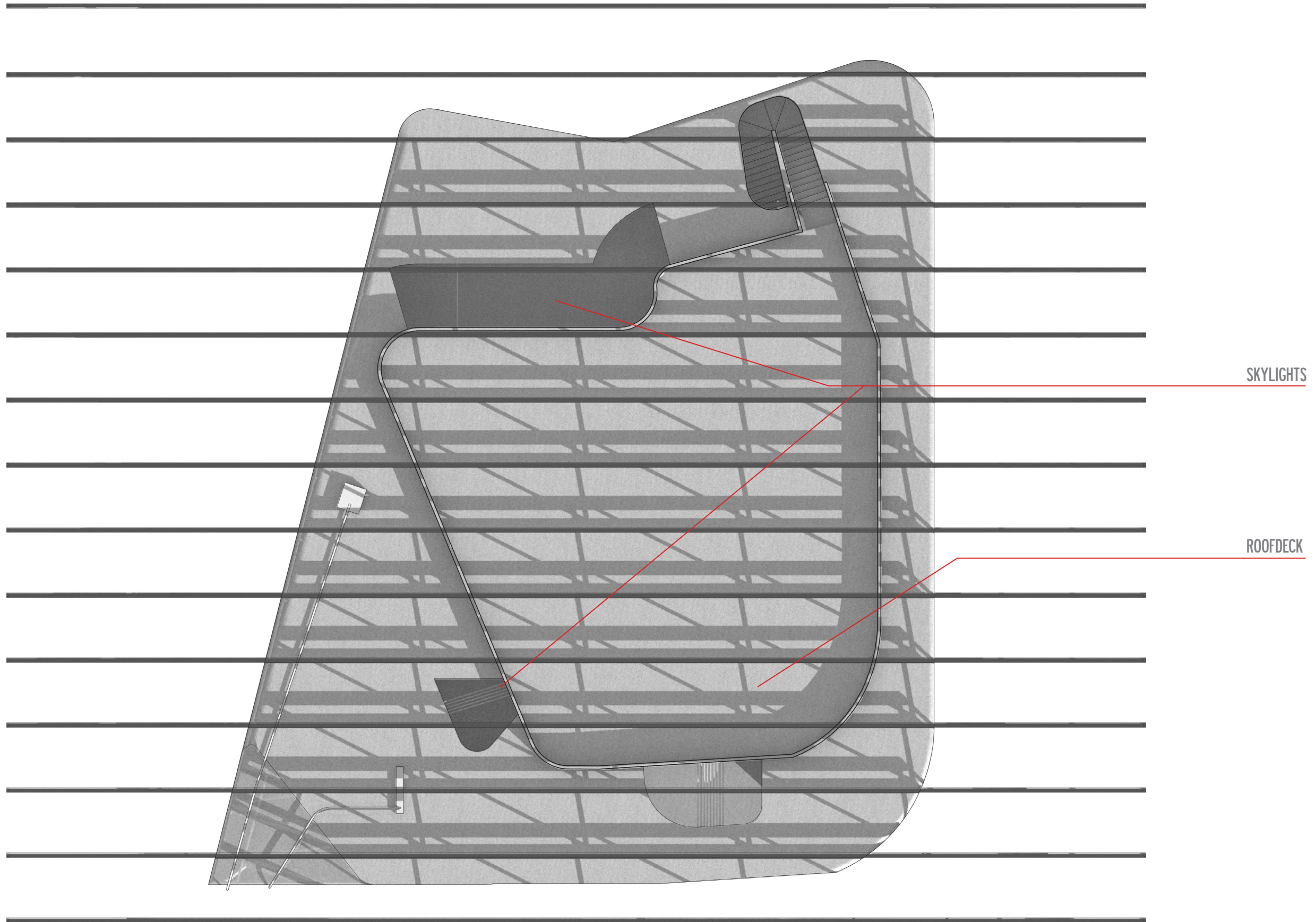
BUS TERMINAL

Carved into the quarry edge, a new landscape extends above and below the surface.



DUAL CIRCULATIONS

Pedestrian access is linear, while the vehicular process is a loop.



RESTROOMS

INSTRUCTIONAL ROOM

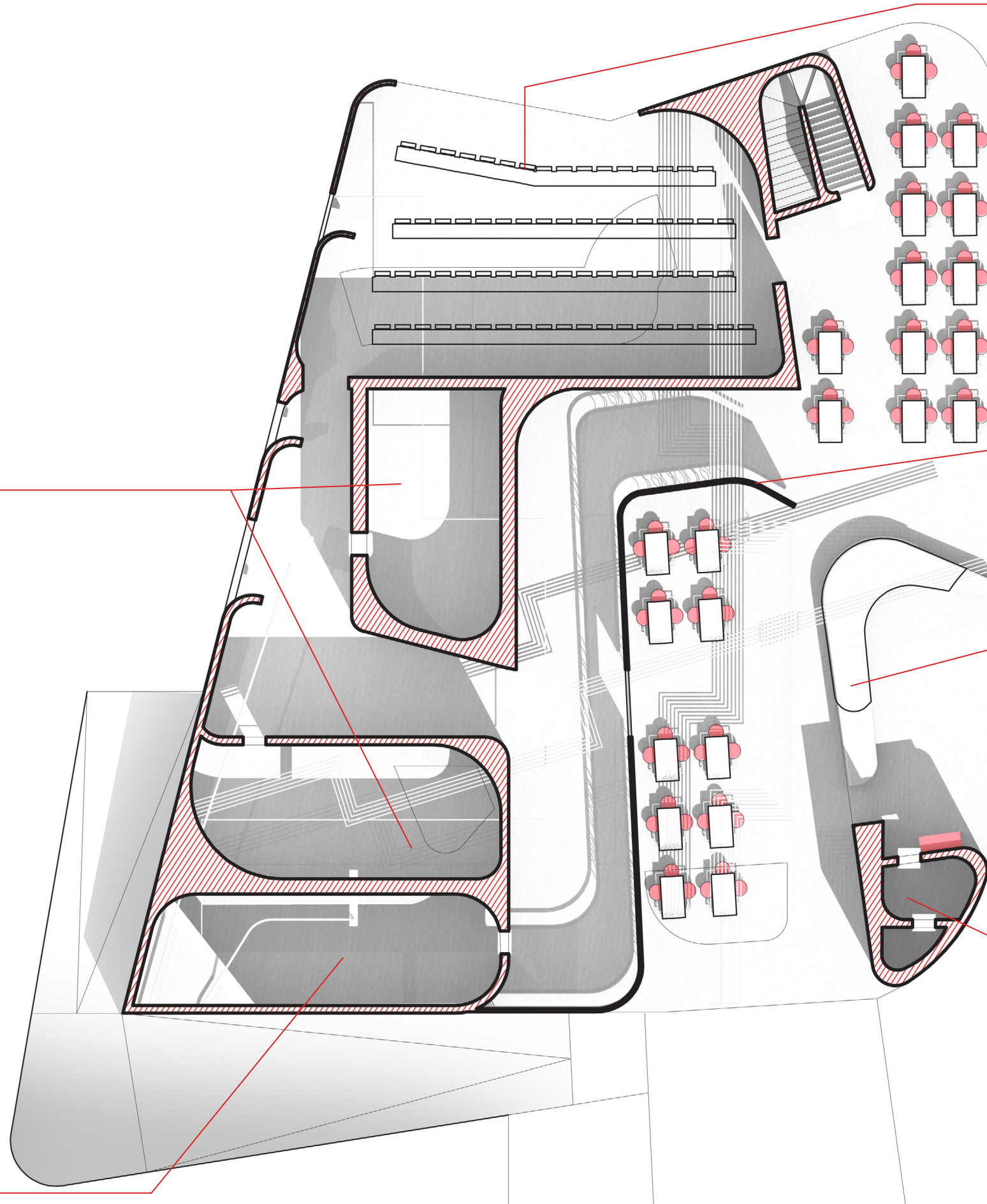
TRANSLUCENT LED SCREEN

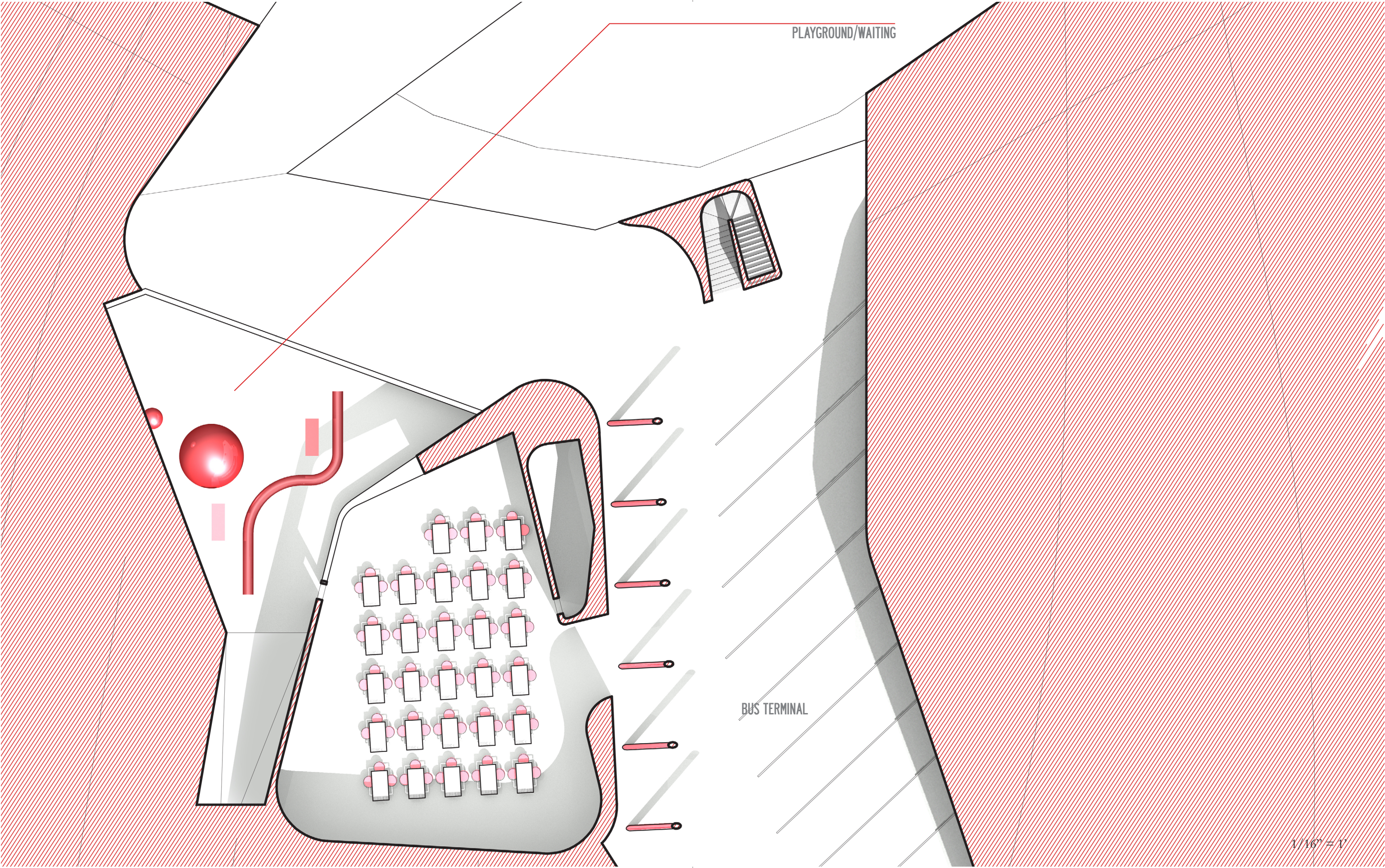
INFORMATION DESK/ORDERING BAR

OFFICE SPACE

STORAGE & MECHANICAL

1/16" = 1'





PLAYGROUND/WAITING

BUS TERMINAL

1/16" = 1'

CATHARSIS



The cusp of the visitation experience introduces constituents to a world of dual plasticity and stasis. The form straddles the boundaries of the former Stary Zydowski cemetery, the infamous Plaszów labor camp fence, and the abandoned Municipal lime quarry.

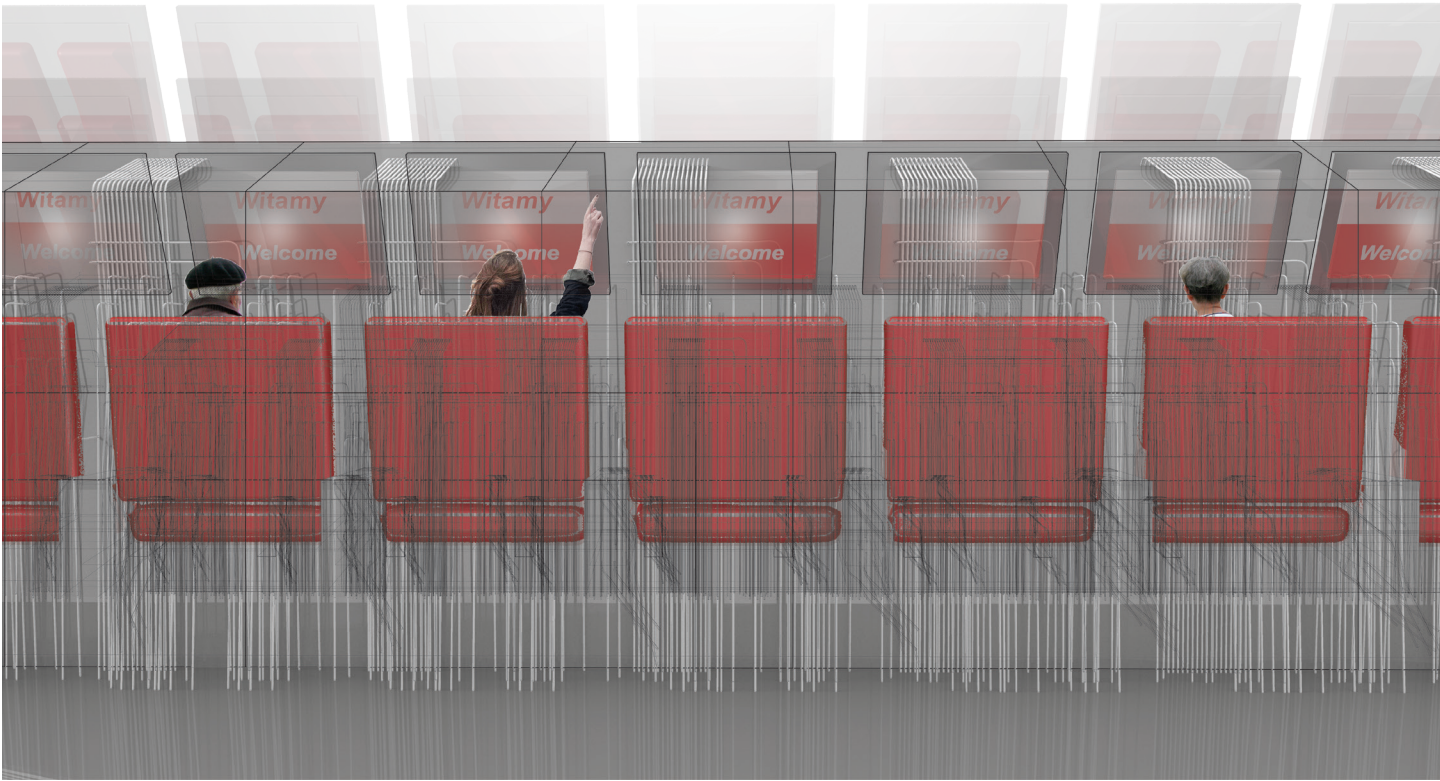
An information kiosk, complete with a massive, translucent screen and a brochure wall, interacts and shares the entry space with a cafeteria-style food hall. Consumption and accessibility are tenets of the catharsis zone.

"Time flies"

- Art Spiegelman, *The Complete Maus*



CONSCIOUSNESS

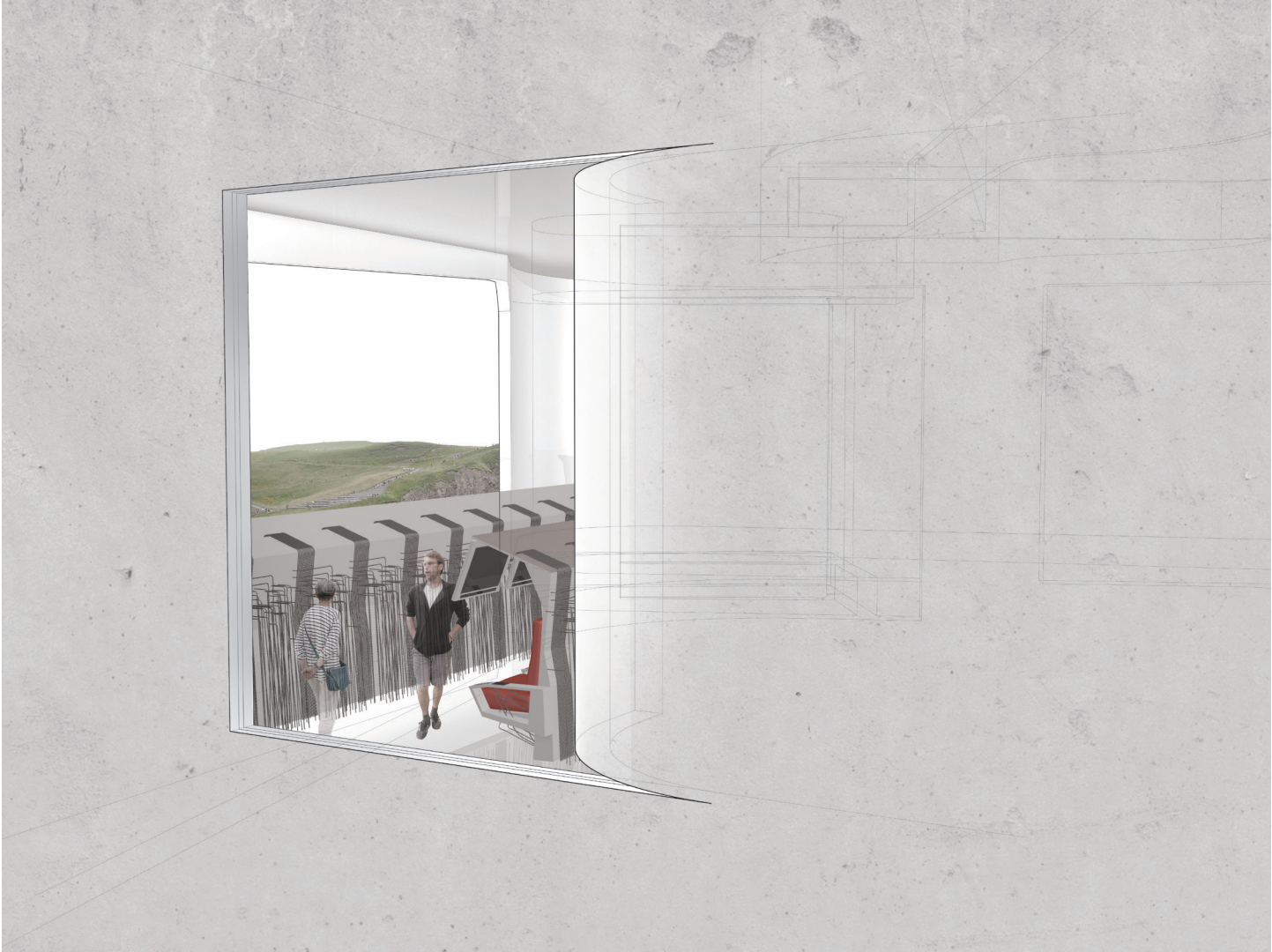


The melee of touristic experiences and paradoxical information eliminates empathy. Finding consciousness requires a choice to regard or disregard, to encounter or avoid. In this spatial sequence, the visitor sees the city in semi-panoramic—in duality to the instructional safety video that warrants the infrastructure of the space.

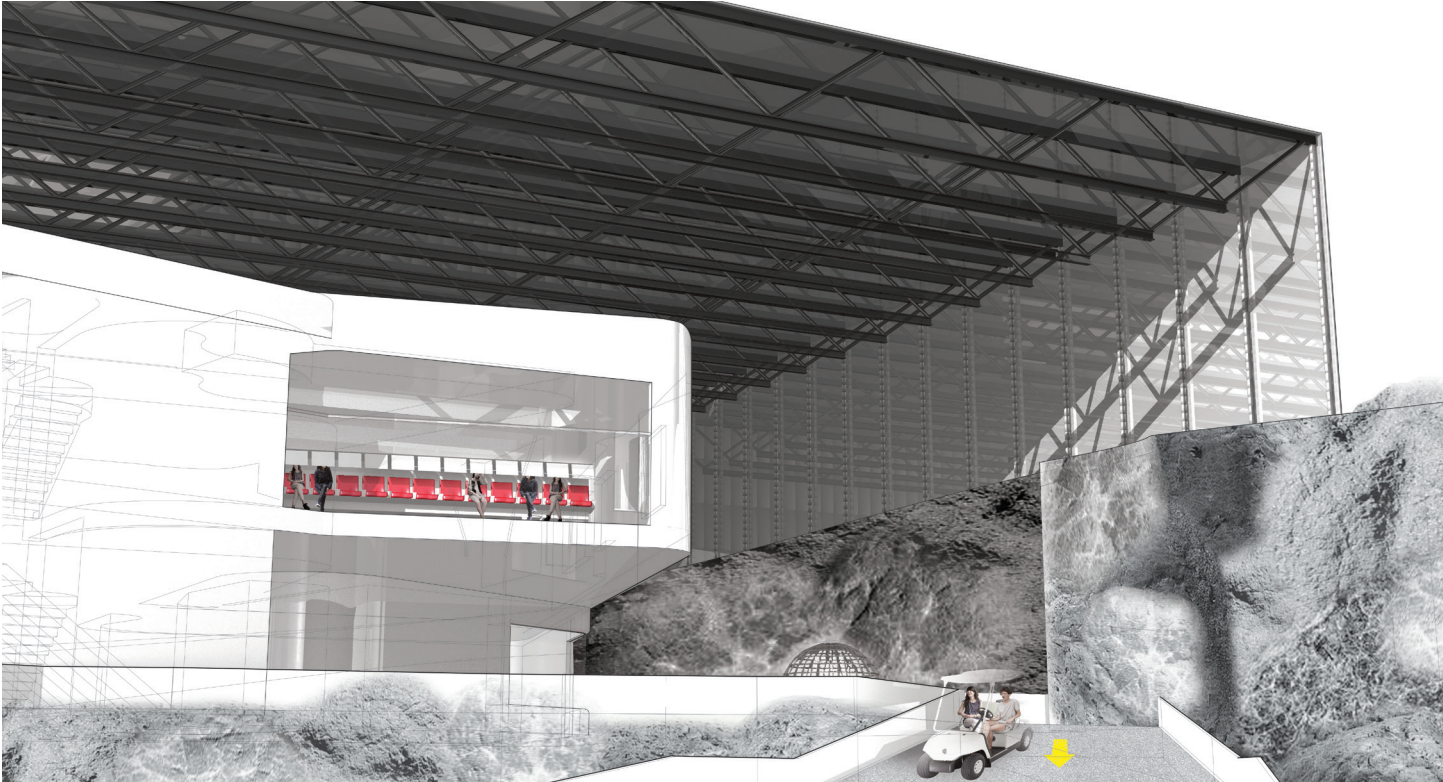
This creates a binary, a situation in which a decision must be made to see or ignore reality over a comfortable synthetic.

“It would be but a care to you, a matter of more worry than you suspect, if you knew what responsibility we are carrying here. If it is mere curiosity, be assured that knowledge will bring nothing...”

- The Trumpeter of Kraków



PRECIPICE

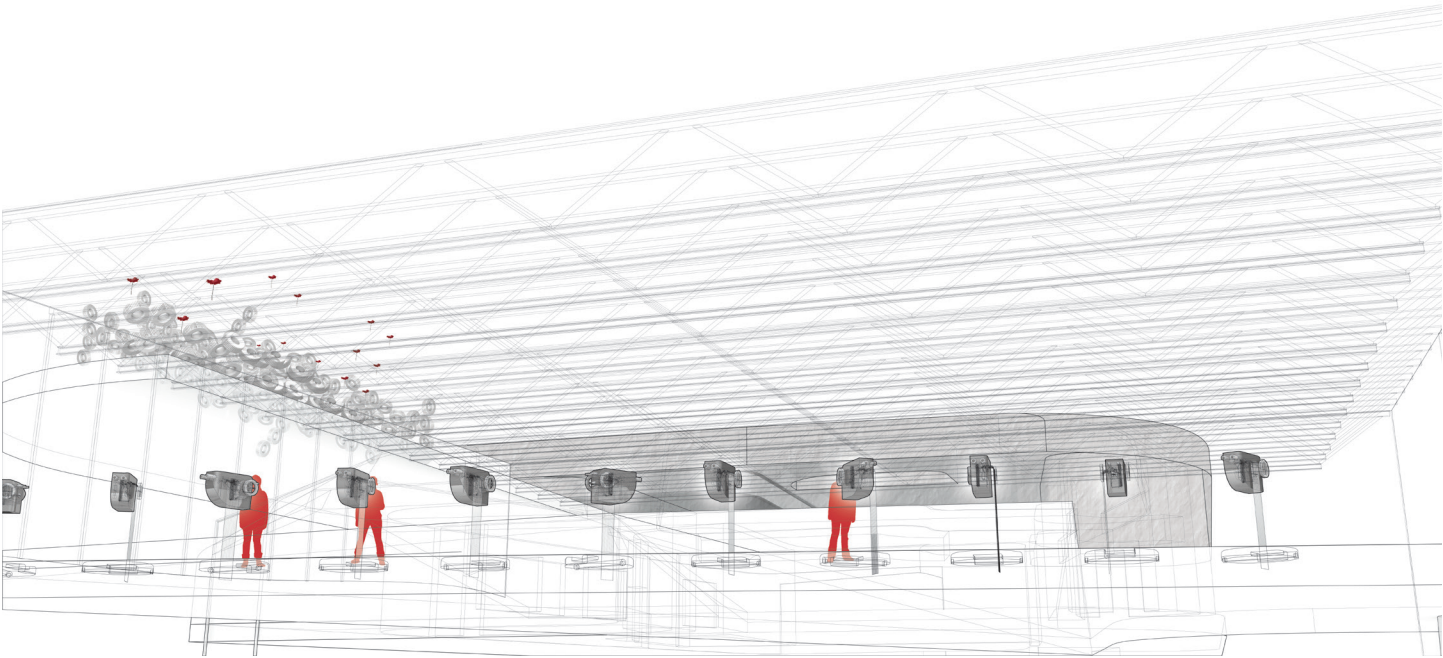


It is at the precipice moments, at the quarry edges, the elevated platform—in the midst of uncomfortable imagination and speculation of potentials—that the visitor can delve into another realm of communicative and retrospective existence.

The landscape peels into the form of the building to make a sloped surface for seating. At the terminus of this slope, a proscenium frames the view out toward the Podgórski cemetery, the tumulus of Krakus, and the skyline. The interfacing process between humans, as well as the realization of the visual environment, is found in theatrics. The quarry edge acts as both a purveyor of visitors from the pedestrian to automated zones of the site sequence and a metaphor of relationship between the earth’s surface and the secrets of the cemeteries and Plaszów site.

“I know you have received orders from our commandant, which he has received from his superiors, to dispose of the population of this camp. Now would be the time to do it. Here they are; they’re all here. This is your opportunity. Or, you could leave, and return to your families as men instead of murderers.”

- Oscar Schindler, *Schindler’s List* (1993)



INTERSECT

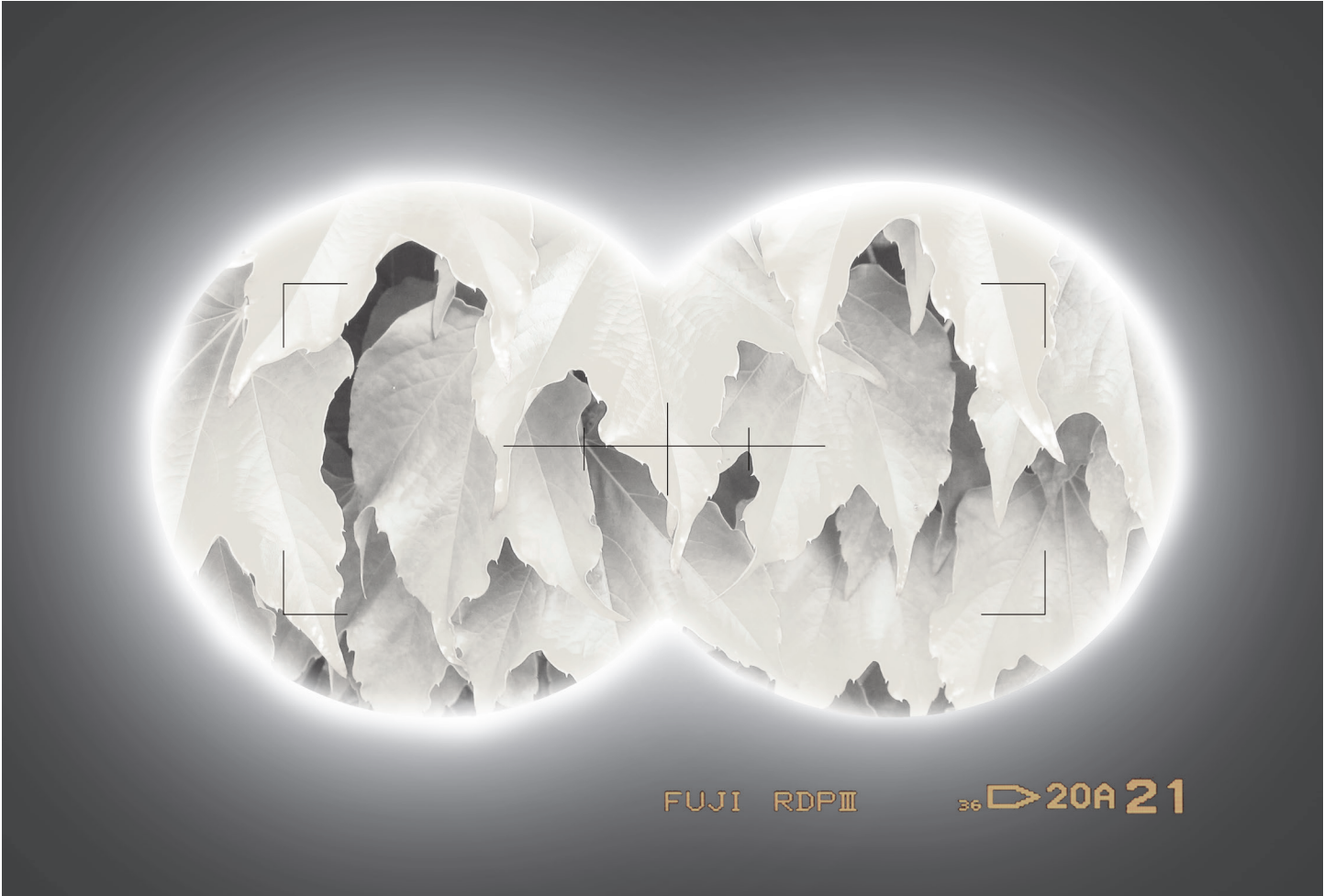


This embodies one of the most defining features of modern life: waiting. As experiencers-to-be traverse the giddy self-awareness of time, the infrastructure emerges for accommodating this inactivity. A playground, a series of wifi hotspots and charging stations for wireless devices, and a digitally updated monitor keep tourists aware of the autorickshaw schedule.

"You've no idea of the effect you have, do you?"

-Lis, *Ida* (2013)





Between the flashing hyperrealities of the LED and the fabricated formlessness of the suburban evolution beyond the glass, visitors find themselves at a juncture of collapsing scales and realities: a context that is polygeographic, information-saturated, vicariously available, and experientially ambiguous.

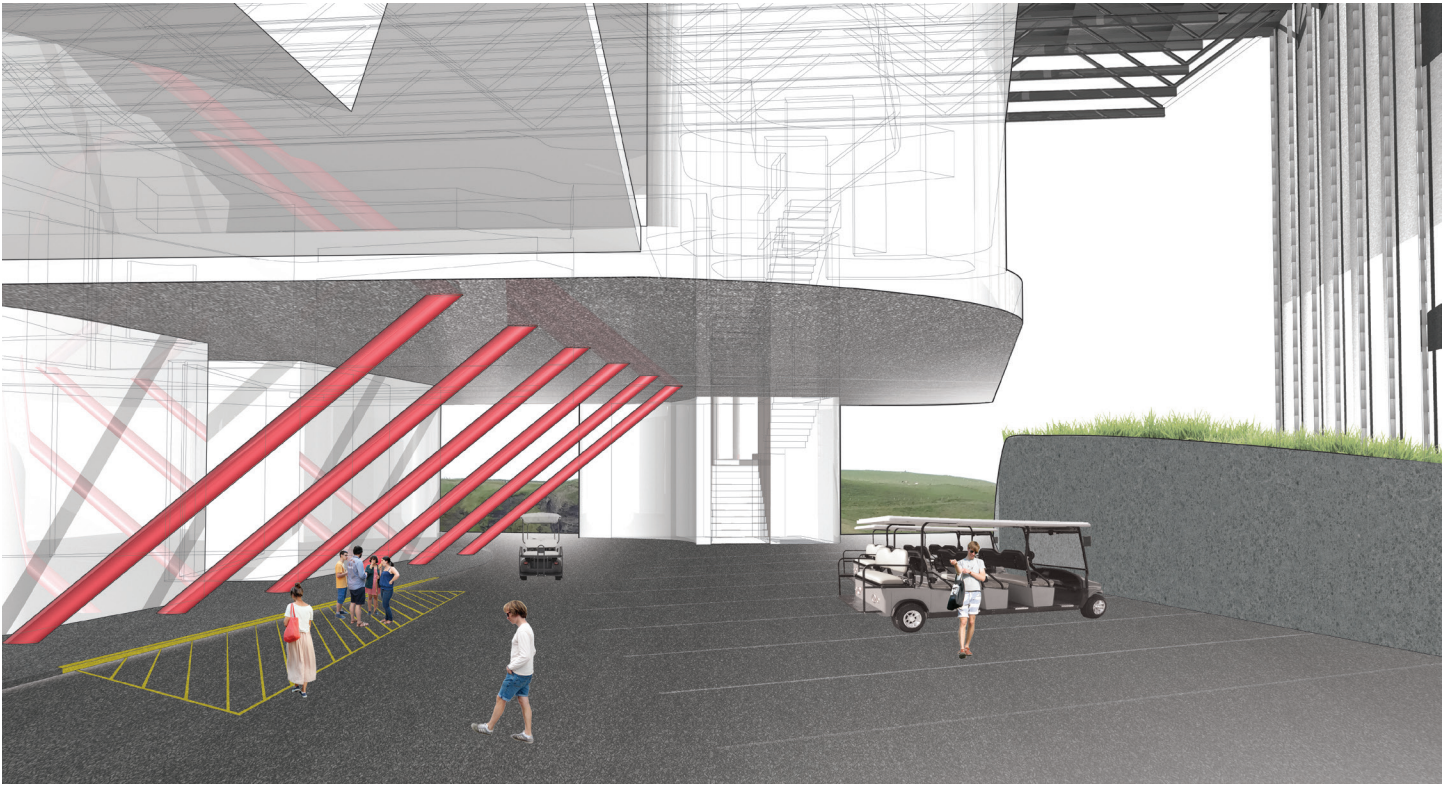
The pay-per-view binocular system is linked to a digital network of cameras across the site and the city, giving binocular operators a diffusive understanding of their view. Images projected within the viewport may or may not be related to the direction or the urban district toward which the mechanism is oriented.

“Everyone knows that Krakow is, culturally, one of the richest cities in Europe.”

- welcome page, *kraków-tours.com* (2015)



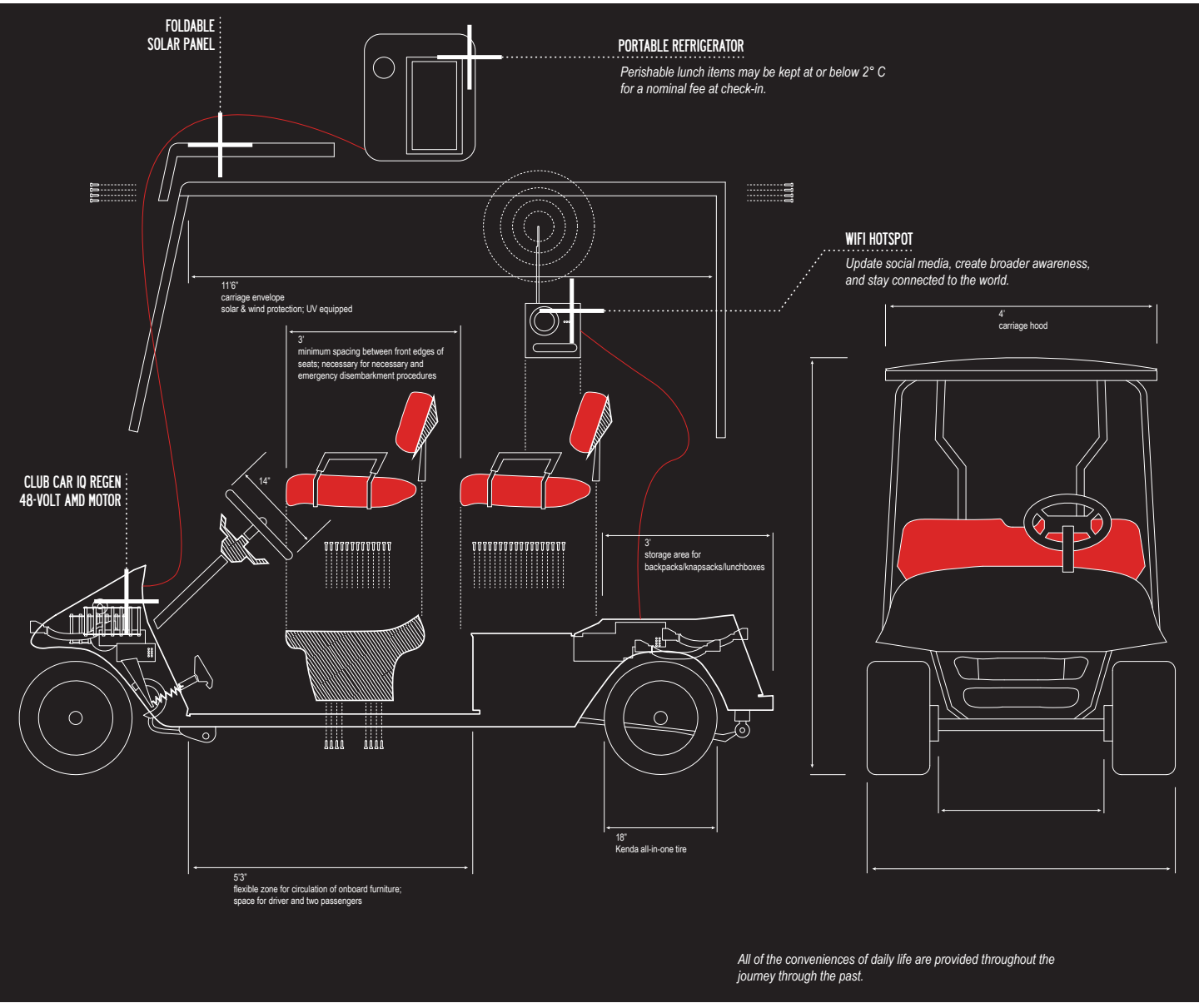
DISTORTION



The collusion of experiences in this vicarious environment serves as an asset to the tourists’ understanding of this place. The autorickshaw gives the choice to interact with fellow consumers and engage with the site, or eat and update social media, via onboard technologies like a portable refrigerator and wifi router.

“The obstacles preventing the realization of both these extreme states are of the same nature: they derive from our human condition which is opposed to everything infinite.”

- Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*



All of the conveniences of daily life are provided throughout the journey through the past.

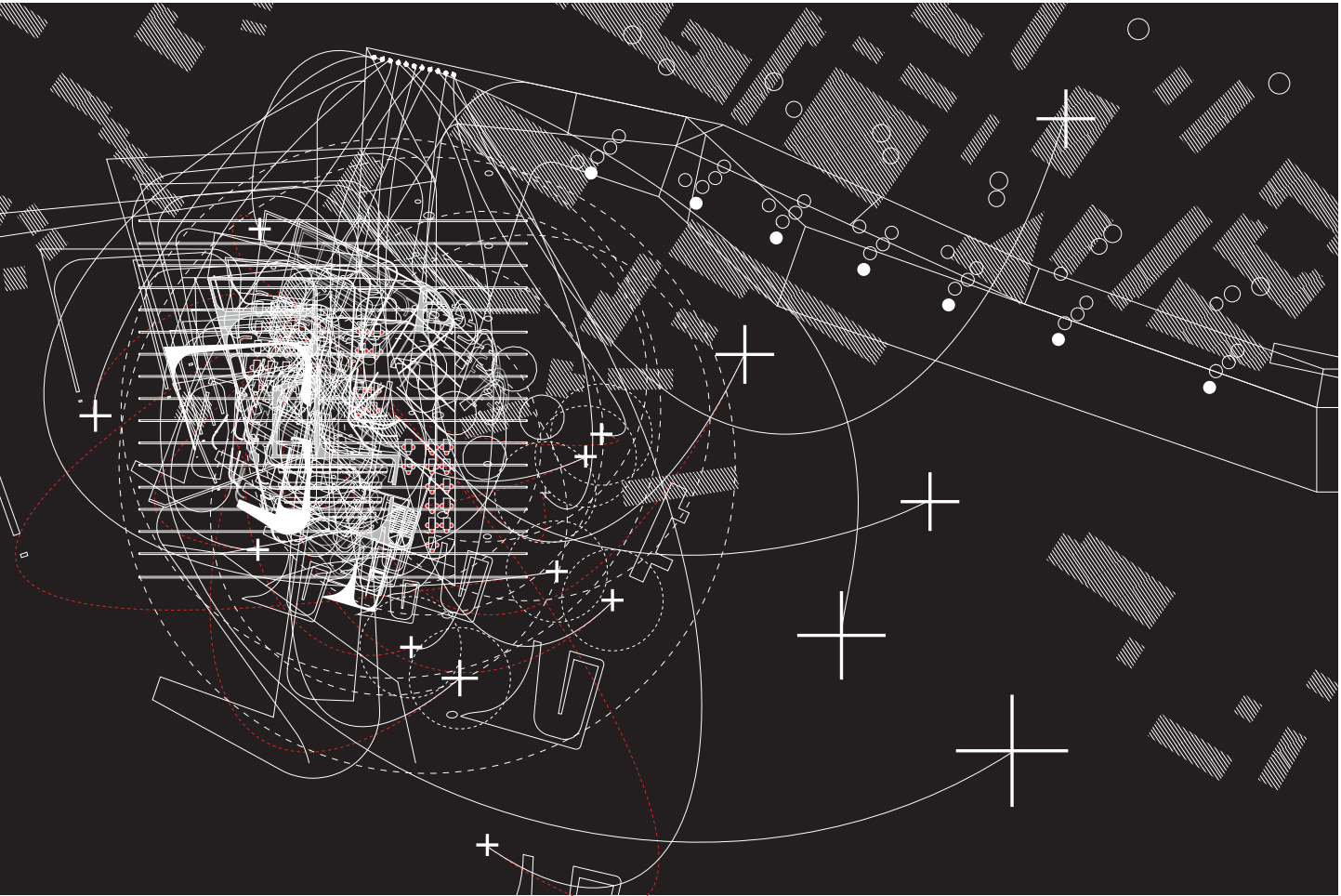
EXHUMATION



As the upward gravitation of will and light pulls the visitor through folds of time and reality, disorienting framed views and consecutive déjà vu moments unleash a new sense of place and spatial law. Along the spatial entry sequence, a storage field allows for the retention of used autorickshaw tires. Converted to planters, a natural growth of native plant species can thrive and the garden can serve as a source of natural flowers.

“And if those dragon bones were to fall, surely the world would come to an end, or so the story goes. We know from science that they are from dinosaurs.”

- random tour guide, *Story of Krakus and the Wawel Dragon*



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