

EARTH FIELD STUDIES

nicol yamin

**EARTH
FIELD
STUDIES**

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American University of Beirut

MSFEA

Maroun Semaan Faculty of Engineering and Architecture

ArD

Department of Architecture & Design

Earth Field Studies

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Ba. Arch

Beirut. May 28th, 2020

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

UNDERGRADUATE DESIGN THESIS
IN
ARCHITECTURE

SUBMITTAL FORM

EARTH FIELD STUDIES

by
NICOL YAMIN

ARCH 508/509– FINAL YEAR THESIS I & II
FALL/SPRING 2019-2020

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Date of Thesis final presentation: May 19th, 2020

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

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acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisor and friend, Rafaat Majzoub, for his utmost support and guidance throughout the entire process of making this thesis. I am extremely grateful and indebted to him for sharing his insights and expertise that were invaluable in the production of this body of work. His sincere encouragement pushed me to take intellectual risks, to follow my passion and to grow as an architect. I am forever grateful for the infinite inspiration he imparted on me.

I would also like to thank professor Rana Haddad for her constant support and attention, whose influence helped shape my growth not only in the process of making this thesis but also in my architectural academic practice.

abstract

This dissertation tries to understand processes of reality production, and embarks on an exercise of world building within a paradigm of Arabfuturism. It is a personal attempt at liberation from the cultural practices in the Arab World that continue to resonate within a framework of nostalgia, tragedy and westernization. One that is surpassed with the creation and manifestation of the Department of Earth Field Studies, a fictional institution fueled by the intuitions of the body. It is a de-colonizing agent that exists in the form of a generative instrument of architectural, artistic and literary production unable to exist in current contexts described as “real.” Breeding a momentum of work beyond oppressive narratives, leading to places of wander, experimentation, collaboration, beautiful mistakes and new futures to look forward to.

note

The text comes in parallel to the *e.f.s digital archive*. It is a key text that translates the architectural methodologies and thought-processes that went into the creation of the Department of Earth Field Studies, its faculty and effectively, its archive.

<https://prezi.com/view/cZkkKIQHiqZbWOI6TE8I/>

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arabness

what is the cause of this lack of agency?

introduction

a lack of agency

My life experiences have led me to discover the lack of space and agency I have in the reality I live in. As a young Arab woman living in Lebanon, soon to graduate from one of the top universities in the region, I felt creatively trapped. A vast majority of people seem to have lost hope for a future within the region, myself included. And so, as my future beyond AUB approached, I began to wonder about this lack of agency.

what is the cause of this lack of agency?

My instinct is that the cultural practices in the Arab World continue to resonate within a conceptual framework of nostalgia, identity politics,¹ tragedy, and westernization, which I believe has impeded the very needed cultural, social, economic, and political progress. Fairuz, one of Lebanon's greatest musical icons, performed music and songs that carried socio-political agendas that focused on westernizing Lebanon.² Cultural ambiguity has submissively manifested into a lack of identity, or at least into a reduced sense of belonging.

¹ Heyes, (2018). The term "identity politics" refers to a wide range of political activities and theoretical analysis rooted in experiences of injustice shared by different social groups. It aims to reclaim self-determination and political freedom for marginalized groups by challenging oppressive characterizations opposed to existing political party systems.

² Harb, Mohamad Khalil, and William Granara (2016). In 1957, President Chamoun along with his wife, Zalpha had a western vision of Lebanon. To demonstrate their vision, talent such as Fairuz, had to be curated along more European lines that would not make it appear too Arab to assert that Lebanon's cultural canon lies in Europe and not in the Arab World.

arabness

Arabness is and has been undeniably reduced to stereotypes, from both local and external perspectives. Orientalist³ theories elaborate on Western views of the East that illustrates for our colonized reflection as Arabs. It is the local consumption of hegemonic Western narratives that has rendered us orientalist upon ourselves.⁴ Arab society, in this post-apocalyptic age,⁵ is in dire need of an alternative, exciting conceptual framework to ignite progress beyond the existing reality.

The history of the Arab World induces endless theories on Arab identity, culture, genealogy, language and other, that allure a particular definition of Arabness. Essentially, my framework does not require any pragmatic data that proves a cultural relationship among the people of the twenty-two countries that form the Arab World. And though it carefully looks at geographic relationships, ethnic genealogies, political relationships, it does not aim to convince those that claim “we are not Arab, we are Phoenicians.”

Existing notions of Arabness subconsciously reduce Arab to a set of cultural practices that do not necessarily embody everyone that recognizes themselves as Arab.⁶ Since my position lies with the potency of Arab, any prejudice and nostalgic stigma of Arabness must be overcome by embracing the power of the contradictory diversity within the binding forces of Arabness.

3 Edward Said (1978) discusses Orientalism as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it settling it, ruling over it. “In short, Orientalism is a Western style for dominating restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.” p. 10

4 Majzoub (2017). Points to Arab literature i.e. The Perfumed Garden by Nefzoui that with translation have become icons of orientalist fetishes choreographing the Western gaze unto the East.

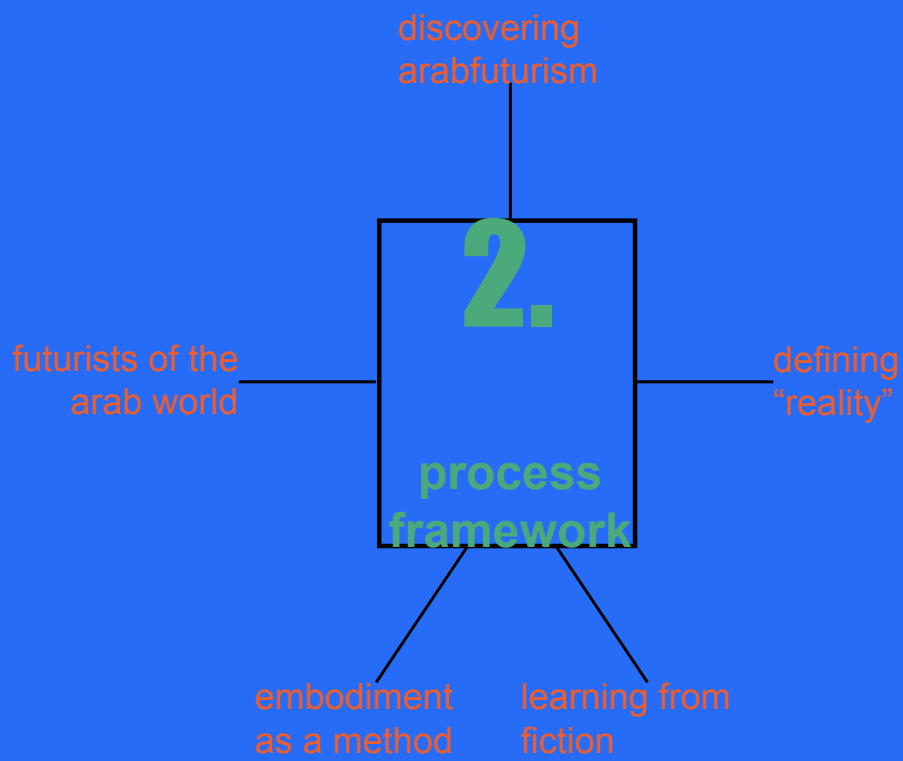
5 Post-apocalyptic age indicates time after catastrophe. In the context of the Arab World, it refers to post-colonial post-war present constituted by identity and cultural dilemma.

6 Smith (2019). Zadie Smith talks about containment or presenting a reductive assumption due to a fear of depicting incorrect presumptions or a want to depict such presumption. Nevertheless, they are “correct” with respect to the reader.

Essentially my discourse considers intersectionalities.⁷ Which means that in considering Arab discrimination and oppression it embraces its overlap to that of gender, class, sexuality etc. Otherwise, it would be falling into containment, presenting a reductive assumption. The aim of the framework is not to define Arabness (identity) but to explore an Arab rhetoric⁸ that is able to establish an experimental inquiry of Arab future, present and past. One that is constructed upon a school of thought that re-imagines futures and in such a way creates space for other production.

⁷Crenshaw (2016). The theory of intersectionality developed by Kimberly Crenshaw, describes that when thinking about how inequality persists, categories like gender, race, and class are best understood as overlapping and mutually constitutive rather than isolated and distinct.

⁸The Arab rhetoric refers to a deep exploration that revisits, re-contextualizes and revises the existing discourse on Arabness to raise inquiry. And to think about how cultural rhetorics might better accommodate the development of empowering rhetorics and ideologies.



discovering arabfuturism

Arabfuturism is a budding—but yet not completely defined—cultural movement that counters existing notions of Arab culture through speculative fiction, fantasy, art and other forms. It explores the region’s different political struggles linked to race, territory and contested histories.⁹ But more than that, Arabfuturism offers a reasoning that acknowledges relationships among systems, concepts and/or ideas that would not normally intersect.

As a mode, it learns from Afrofuturism, an “aesthetic and political mode of contemporary black expression”¹⁰ in speculative fiction that addresses themes and concerns of the African diaspora while proposing a technologically advanced black future. Making sense of a past that has been deliberately rubbed out makes it relevant to the political present¹¹ and empowers the community and creates a collective existence.¹² There is a lot to obtain from Afrofuturism and also from the individuals who embodied and enacted these futurist themes (Afrofuturists) in black cultural production. A kind of cultural production that crosses conventional aesthetic boundaries, particularly the hypothetical boundaries between canonical and popular culture¹³ to integrate itself into reality performing cultural agency.

Arabfuturism’s refusal to consume existing geopolitics produces new self-representation unanchored with memories of colonization. It harvests a culture of thought and action that constructs alternative states of becoming by upholding awareness of one’s agency over personal identity and self-representation.

⁹ Parikka, 2018

¹⁰ Barber, 2019 p.136

¹¹ *ibid*, p. 136-137

¹² Perwana, 2018

¹³ Yaszek, 2006 p. 42

defining reality

In the scope of this thesis, reality is defined as a social construct.¹⁴ Peter L. Berger's and Luckman's social constructionism theory¹⁵ explains that people and groups interacting in a social system create mental representations¹⁶ of each other's actions forming beliefs and notions of reality that become institutionalized¹⁷ in the fabric of that society. Individuals participate in the construction of their own perceived reality, which means that the things that are considered real may not exist without the existence of people to authenticate them.

“Social reality is lived social relations, our most important political construction, a world-changing fiction ... but the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion.”¹⁸ Reality is therefore a form of fiction. It “[...] is not the opposite of fiction. It is not non-fiction.”¹⁹ What differentiates the two is practice. Reality is real because it is active, an active fiction. A desire that has been performed and implemented by structures of power. Whereas fictions as we know them, remain dormant and subordinate to reality, not performed.²⁰

¹⁴ Berger and Luckmann (2011). A social construct concerns the meaning and connotation placed on an object or event by a society, and adopted by the inhabitants of that society with respect to how they view or deal with the object or event. As an idea it becomes widely accepted as natural by the society.

¹⁵ *ibid* (2011). Social Constructionism is a theory of knowledge in sociology that examines the development of jointly constructed understandings of the world that form the basis for shared assumptions about reality.

¹⁶ Sherpa (2019). Stuart Hall argues that representation is the production of the meaning of the concepts in our mind through language. The link between concepts and language enables us to refer to either the real world of objects, people or events, or to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people, events.

¹⁷ Habituated into natural reciprocal roles played by people in the relation to each other.

¹⁸ Harraway, 2016 p.6

¹⁹ Majzoub, 2017 p. 34

²⁰ *ibid* (2017) Fiction is categorized into two types: Active and Dormant Fiction. Active fictions are those that have been desired by a power structure able to perform them. While dormant fictions are a system of logic that has not yet been activated by a power structure, and remains subordinate to another Active Fiction.

learning from fiction

Futurist Sun Ra²¹ was an American composer and experimental musician whose mystical persona made him a pioneer of Afrofuturism. Sun Ra developed his own story: an alien from Saturn on a mission to preach peace. He is framed as a futurist because he embodied and enacted his own fiction through his musical performances, films,²² and costumes that preached his philosophies and performed agency over black consciousness in response to the psychological alienation caused by racism and the workings of a technocratic, capitalistic society. Sun Ra materializes a “mythic consciousness”²³ of an empowered racial identity that would enable the black community to recreate and invent technologies and construct a future on other landscapes.

Fiction, according to Donna Haraway,²⁴ is a tool that can “reverse and displace the hierarchical dualisms of naturalized identities” and “subvert the central myths of origin of Western culture” with their “longing for fulfillment in apocalypse.” Haraway describes Octavia Butler’s²⁵ fictions as “salvation history,” an imaginative site of experimentation where new notions of identity and community are under construction.²⁶

21 Herman Poole Blount , May 22, 1914 – May 30, 1993.

22 Newman (1978). *Space is the Place* a film in which Sun Ra (space-age prophet, pharaonic jester, shaman-philosopher and Avant-jazz keyboardist/bandleader) lands his spaceship in Oakland, where, with black power on the rise he proclaims himself “the alter-destiny.” He holds a myth vs. reality rap session with black inner-city youth threatening “to chain you up and take you with me, like they did you in Africa” if they resist his plea to go to outer space. He duels at cards with The Overseer, a satanic overlord, with the fate of the black race at stake. When Ra wins the right to a world concert, agents sent by the Overseer attempt to assassinate Ra, but he vanishes, rescues his people, and departs in his spaceship from the exploding planet Earth.

23 Kreiss, 2017 p.58

24 Donna J. Haraway is an American professor in the History of Consciousness Department and Feminist Studies Department at the University of California. She is a prominent scholar in the field of science, technology studies and feminist theory.

25 Octavia Butler was an African-American science fiction author whose works became influential to feminist theory.

26 James (1991). In “Reading in Buchi Emechta,” Haraway claims that Octavia Butler’s “post-holocaust reinvented ‘families’” serve “as tropes to guide us through the ravages of gender, class, imperialism, racism, and nuclear exterminist global culture” p. 121.

Reading fiction is a journey of exploration where the reader is able to try on new narratives about the future and consider various alternatives. Thus, rather than dismissing Butler's science fiction as a "low" genre or a form of escapist fantasy, we can more usefully read it as a site of extremely important political activity. Science fiction like Butler's uses conventions that "require readers radically to rewrite stories in the act of reading them to find an 'elsewhere' from which to envision a different and less hostile order and relationships among people, animals, technologies, and land."²⁷ Embodiment and performance are tools by which a fictional construct can transform conventional structures of reality.

²⁷ James (1991). In "Reading in Buchi Emechta" p. 15.



embodiment as a method

Embodiment is a term that has become increasingly popular in anthropological, performance and behavioral studies. It is a concept that cannot be overlooked in the process of transforming culture. Psychological anthropologist Thomas Csordas describes embodiment as a concept that bridges the gap between subject-object relations and mind-body relations. He saw the concept as providing the basis for understanding the existential grounds of culture as such.²⁸ Similarly, philosopher Gilles Deleuze, claims that the interior (self) is produced from a general exterior: “the intrinsic world of relations and interiority is not a product of its essence.”²⁹

Foucault in “Discipline and Punish” asserts that bodily practices are unable to oppose prevailing hegemonies – for even dissident acts are perceptually constructed within the terms of the prevailing episteme. Nevertheless, fact that it is constructed validates the existence of another construction to resist it. Oral narratives and rituals are examples of performances that can enact and reshape knowledges and modes of knowledge production in the here and now with a view to the future. Such are the oral and embodied traditions of the Naqab Bedouin women that challenge Israeli colonial-settler efforts of Bedouin erasure. Bedouin women’s poetry and songs contain valuable historical details and memories of the past (places, land, historical events, names) that proclaim their belonging to the land.³⁰ They require live presence and participation in its production, people are physically part of this performance.

²⁸ Csordas (1990) “The body is not an object to be studied in relation to culture, but is to be considered as the subject of culture, or in other words as the existential ground of culture.” p. 5

²⁹ Cartesian Dualism, in honor of Descartes, is a philosophical view that claims the mind and the body as two distinct and separate ontological beings that casually intersect. It gives rise to the subject-object and mind-body problem that the concept of embodiment, as defined by Csordas, reconciles.

³⁰ Richter-Devroe, Sophie. “Oral Traditions of Naqab Bedouin Women: Challenging Settler-Colonial Representations Through Embodied Performance.” *Journal of Holy Land and Palestine Studies*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2016, pp. 31–57., doi:10.3366/hlps.2016.0128.

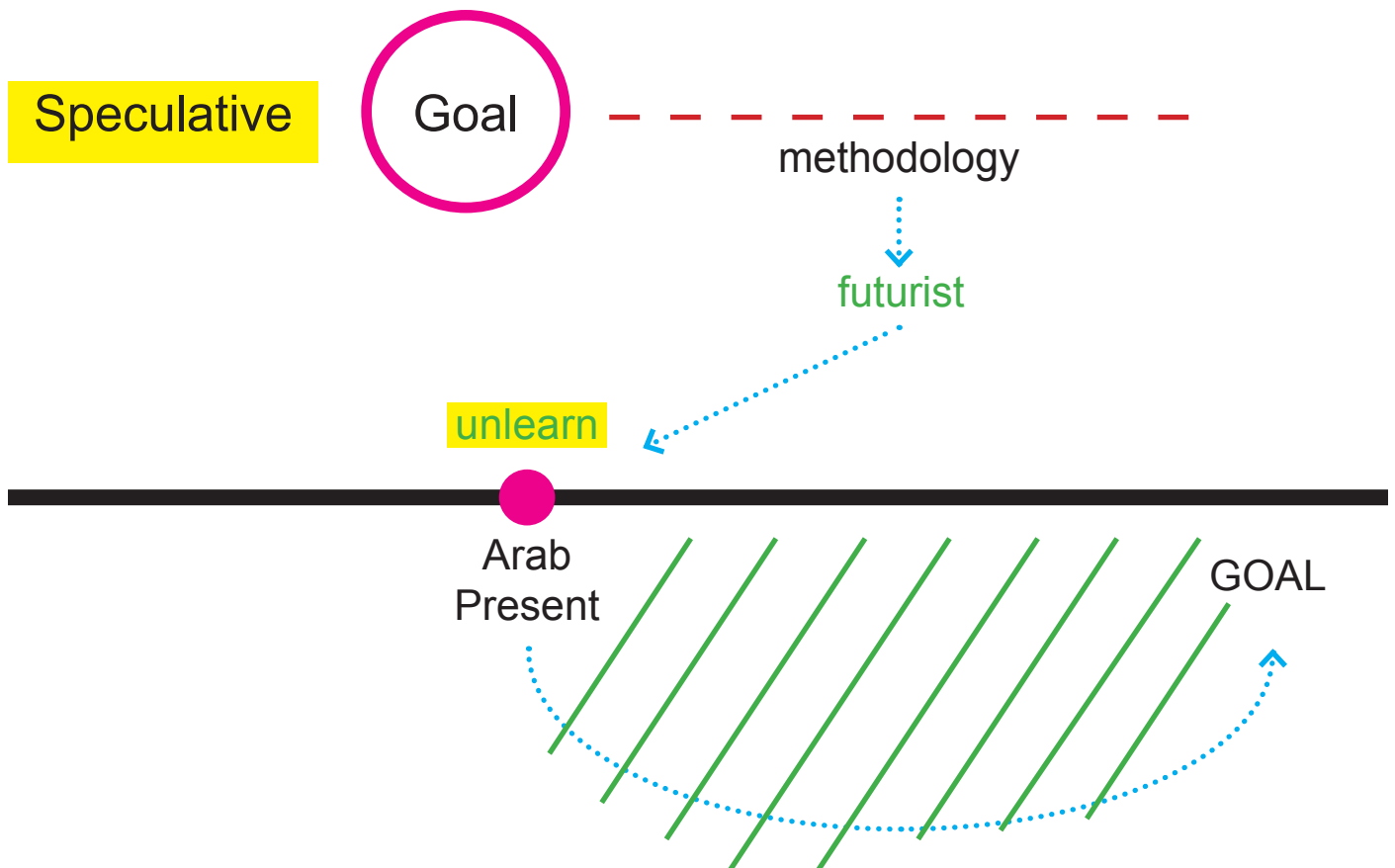
The repertoire maintains and also transforms compositions of meaning. It improvises according to the present.³¹ The performance is a resistance to colonization. Judith Butler, in *Gender Trouble*, binds performance and embodiment to gendered and sexual identity. She argues that gender is the product of somatic shaping, it is an identity founded through a “stylized repetitions of acts.”³² Referring to the ordinary way in which bodily gestures, movements and enactments constitute the illusion of an abiding gender. However, she explains that when embracing performances like drag that challenge stylized acts considers embodiment as a medium of conventional constructions of selfhood but also the grounds in which it can be contested.

31 Taylor, Diana. “The Archive and the Repertoire.” (2003): The repertoire enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing—in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, non-reproducible knowledge. It requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by ‘being there’, being a part of the transmission. As opposed to the supposedly stable objects in the archive, the actions that are the repertoire do not remain the same.

32 Butler, 1988 p. 519

futurists of the arab world

In light of Sun Ra and other former considerations, the site of construction of this alternative conceptual framework is speculative fiction. Because it is a proposal that looks to (and as it looks, creates) a future beyond the rules and constraints of the present to materialize another present.



Therefore, I define futurist individuals, ideologies, art, economies, politics enact realities theoretically impossible to exist in current contexts described as “real” ... and by this process of embodied speculation realize “impossible” truths. Communism, as envisioned by Marx, is a perfect example of a futurist ideology, it is a system that aims at creating a utopic mode of equality that would in no way sustain itself under humanity’s present social, political and economic systems. Yet so many individuals adopted and enacted the communist doctrine, one that came to define nations. It lives on through groups of people (communists) who continue to believe in its potency and thus fight for its reinstatement.

The Process of framing Arab ideologies, works and individuals—based on previous definitions—should consider any theory or proposal that predicts an “impossible” change irrespective of the author’s position towards existing politics, economy, art, culture and so on. It should also evaluate intersections to the real world. Assuming that the proposals are extreme and in so many ways distorting, their speculative possibility relies on their adherence to some real existing object, idea, memory etc. for their prospective realization. By this method “Futurists in Arab History” frames selected Arab individuals and works as potential futurists.³³

³³ Yamin (2019). Historical Map from an old bookstore in Amman, Jordan overlaid with names of potential futurist works and individuals.

In addition to collecting and critiquing the elements on the map as part of a learning process in the construction of my framework, assessing the genre of speculative fiction that exists in the context of the Arab World becomes also relevant. Such evaluation exposed relevant insights about the content of Arab Speculative Fiction writing. Usually writers of utopias in this genre decide to go back in time to erase any existence of colonialism, like in reaction to a traumatic event. Other times, writers decide to use war, holocaust, plagues etc. to eradicate the other as a form of revenge and to attest authenticity. Sometimes they exaggerate current conditions and circumstances to project a dystopic future as a critic to the present.

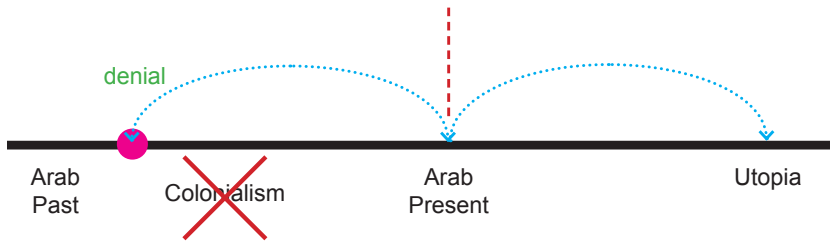
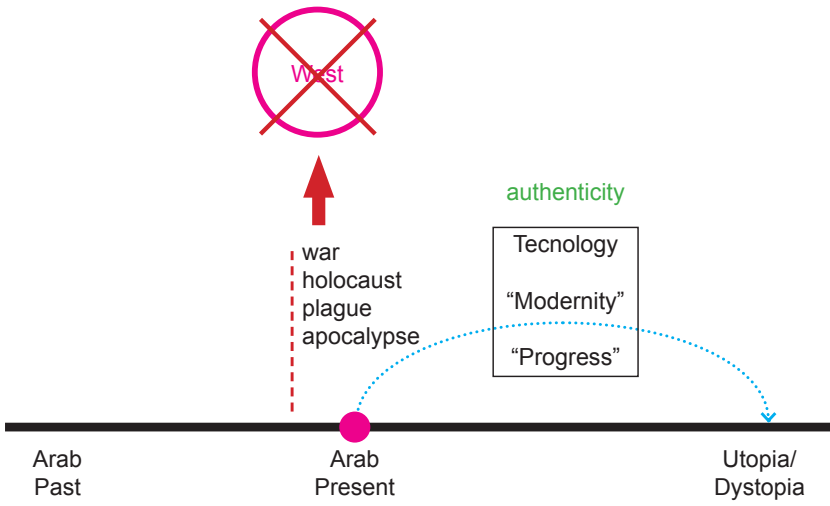
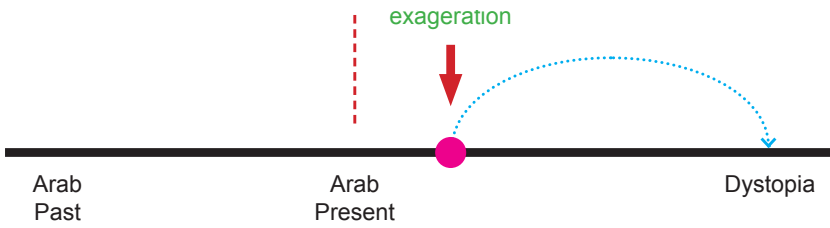
Arab tradition, culture, social framework and religion are constantly used as a shields and/or defense mechanism to technology, which is strongly associated to the West in mainstream imagination.³⁴ This not the aim. The previous understanding of futurism³⁵ removes this form of speculative fictional work from any futurist framework. The answer is not in the erasure of colonialism, it is not in the annihilation of the enemy nor in the identification of the west as the enemy, nor is it in the supremacy of culture as a shield to another. **It is in decolonizing³⁶ ourselves outside of the dominion of being oppressed and creating a framework, a landscape or something to reclaim the narrative.**

³⁴ Campbell, 2019 p. 1-10

³⁵ "I define futurist individuals, ideologies, art, economies, politics enact realities theoretically impossible to exist in current contexts described as "real"... and by this process of embodied speculation realize "impossible truths."

³⁶ The process of undoing colonialism through self-determination irrespective to the existence an Other.

fiction in the arab world



How could I, having little to no agency, influence a sort of cultural revolution?

Considering reality a form of fiction is an opportunity for transformation. The things that are determined real will change only if there exists another real (fiction) to overpower it. One that needs to be materialized and activated to perform agency over reality. Therefore, if I am to battle “existing systems” or the active fictions that have determined today’s narrative, it only makes sense to create a fictional narrative of my own. A new logic or world that exists to generate other narratives intended to dismantle, surpass and replace existing ones.

a new school
of thought



methodology

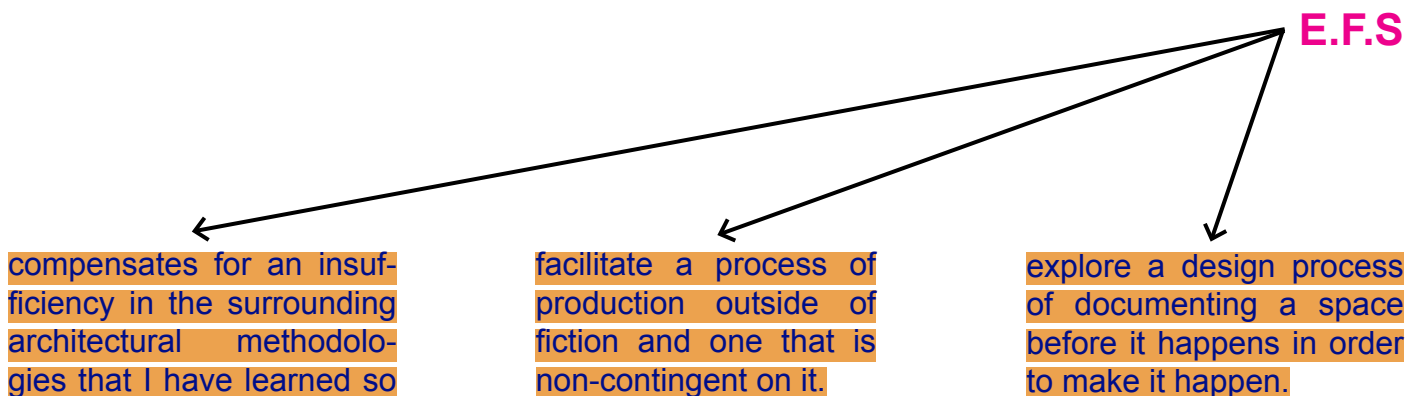
case
studies

logic and
structure

a new school of thought

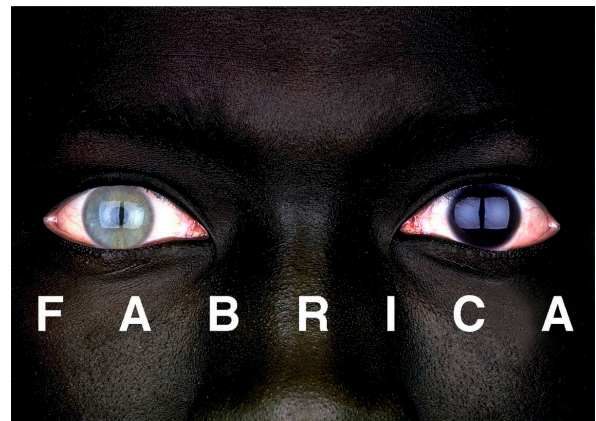
I design my own fiction, an educational model that I call the Department of Earth Field Studies and some of its projects and publications. The main concern is to use fiction in the design of a generative instrument that is able to create projects that fall within an expanded scope of (or narrative) architecture.

As a fictional institution, e.f.s follows a rhizomatic logic of production by which it escapes current narratives of oppression. It is a model that not only facilitates the process of production outside of fiction but also compensates for an insufficiency I find in the system and methodology of academic architectural practices. Here, architecture is a cross-disciplinary and speculative practice, that does not necessarily abide logical, objective or even real processes of production.



case studies

In constructing e.f.s, it is important to refer to other existing experimental institutions as a reference to the educational model I am creating. The following are some of the case studies I looked to in creating my institution.





MIT

ACT

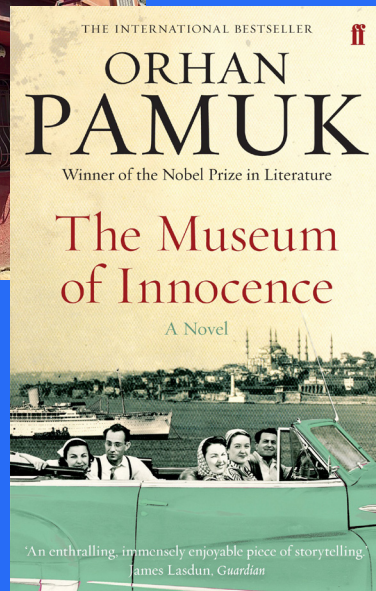
MIT program
in art, culture and
technology

School of Architecture + Planning

1. the museum of innocence



institution



fiction



real objects from fiction

2. mit media lab



Founded in 1985, the MIT Media Lab is one of the world's leading research and academic organizations. **Unconstrained by traditional disciplines**, Media Lab designers, engineers, artists, and scientists strive to create technologies and experiences that enable people to understand and transform their lives, communities, and environments.

The MIT Media Lab promotes an interdisciplinary research culture that brings together diverse areas of interest and inquiry. **Unique among other laboratories at MIT**, the Media Lab comprises both a broad research agenda and a graduate degree program in [Media Arts and Sciences](#). Faculty, students, and researchers work together on hundreds of projects across disciplines as diverse as social robotics, physical and cognitive prostheses, new models and tools for learning, community bioengineering, and models for sustainable cities. **Art, science, design, and technology build and play off one another** in an environment designed for collaboration and inspiration.

Research and projects developed at the Media Lab frequently grow and evolve out of the Lab, too—as spinoff companies, as exhibitions and performances, as tech transfer to member companies, and, perhaps most importantly, as the basis for continued research and exploration for others, both within Lab and all over the world.

The Terraforming

THE TERRAFORMING:

The term “terraforming” usually refers to transforming the ecosystems of other planets or moons to make them capable of supporting Earth-like life. However, the looming ecological consequences of human activity conducted as the planetary design initiative of the next century if true catastrophes are to be prevented, says Program Director Benjamin Bratton.

The researchers will explore the implications of this proposition for urbanism at planetary scale, and look at how the technologically-mediated shift away from anthropocentric perspectives is crucially necessary in both theory and practice.

STRELKA

ИНСТИТУТ

INSTITUTE

Core Research Themes

+	Geonomos	+	Automation as Ecology
+	Artificial Metabolisms	+	Planetarnost

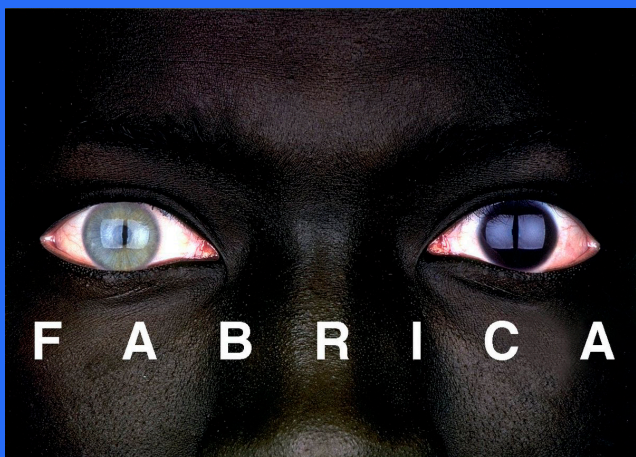
FABRICA IS A COMMUNICATION RESEARCH CENTRE

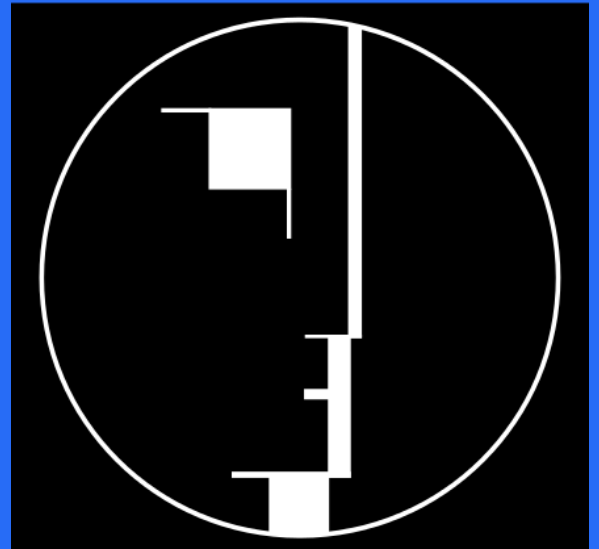
Established in 1994 from a vision of Luciano Benetton and Oliviero Toscani, it is based in Treviso, Italy, in a space of magical architecture restored and augmented by Tadao Ando.

A renaissance-inspired, *learning-by-doing* approach, where creative talents under 25 from all over the world experiment contemporary communication through a constant contamination between different disciplines, such as photography, video, graphics, design, music and digital.

Fabrica also organizes a program of workshops, lectures and training experiences where the worlds of art, culture and research meet to develop new ideas. Internationally renowned architects, musicians, historians, designers, artists, interaction designers, art directors and sociologists collaborate with Fabrica.

Among others, Fabrica has hosted the writer Roberto Saviano, the photographer Martin Parr, the designer Patricia Urquiola, the architect Michele De Lucchi, the astronaut Samantha Cristoforetti, the musician Michael Nyman, the artist Erik Kessels, the futurologist Bruce Sterling and the art critic Vittorio Sgarbi.





Visual Studies Special Collection

Works, People, About, Search



Welcome to the online repository of MIT's Center for Advanced Visual Studies (CAVS) Special Collection, part of the Program in Art, Culture and Technology (ACT) Archives and Special Collections. This site presents experimental ways in which to explore collection materials.

The CAVS Special Collection documents a nearly 45 year history of collaborative and time-based productions generated by over 200 internationally recognized artist-fellows. This digitized, virtual museum includes images, publications, posters, documents, portfolios, videos and other materials of historic importance documenting the process of creating art-science-technology projects at CAVS.

MIT program
in art, culture and
technology
School of Architecture + Planning

SOUNDSTAIR

TELE-SIX

"purposeful purposelessness"
J. CAGE

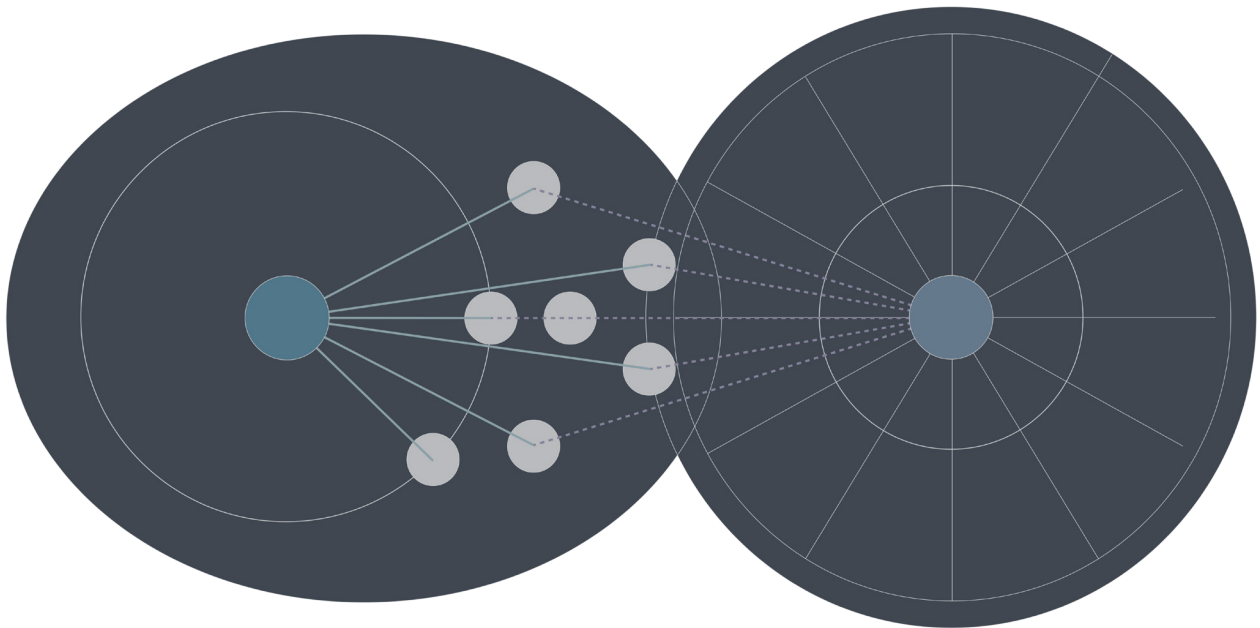
JOAN BRIGHAM
CHRISTOPHER JANNEY
Soundstar, Sunwheel,
Steamshuffle

THE ARTIST SPEAKS SERIES
8pm, Feb. 25
Center for Advanced Visual Studies
MIT

TELE-LOOKS

logic & structure

A department founded in Beirut in 1927 by George Henein following the logic of “**Surrounding Reality.**” A process of creating things and plugging them into reality to surround itself by another reality to create impact, power and agency. It takes inspiration from Venezuelan science-fiction short story written by Julio Garmendia in 1927, “La Realidad Circundante,” about a personality-adapting machine that changes the world.



founding logic

**surrounding
reality**

1927

**georges
henein**



Egyptian poet and journalist educated in Paris in the 1920's, who founded the Cairo surrealist group: Art et Liberté.

EARTH FIELD STUDIES

a department founded at the American University of Beirut in 1927.

The department focuses on an understanding of the diverse and contradictory binding forces among the existing physical, abstract and/or conceptual frameworks of human reality. Its speculative projects attempt to act upon these sometimes opposed, sometimes complementary systems in an effort to challenge or escape them.

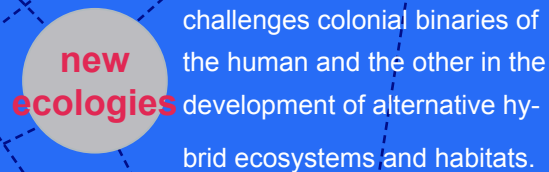
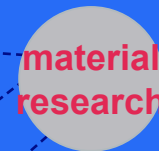
It performs under the structure of five interconnected research labs that behave like constellations. The arrangement of these constellations based on parameters and relevance is a reflection of the proximity of 'functions' or research labs based on the narrative of E.F.S. Each constellation is composed of six nodes: themes, mediums of production, its projects, publications and events and most importantly its people.

The structuring of this system resembles the construction of an animal from the ground up, starting with the skeleton to the organs and then the flesh. It exists in a digital space that perpetuates cross-disciplinary projects in architecture, art, literature and science that explore a shift from fixed definitions, modes, narratives and aesthetics. This space can be referred to as a rhizome.

explores the material and meta-physical conditions of decolonization to design tools that dismantle active colonial structures.



takes inspiration from biology and biological growth to focus on the fabrication of innovative versatile materials for multiple applications.

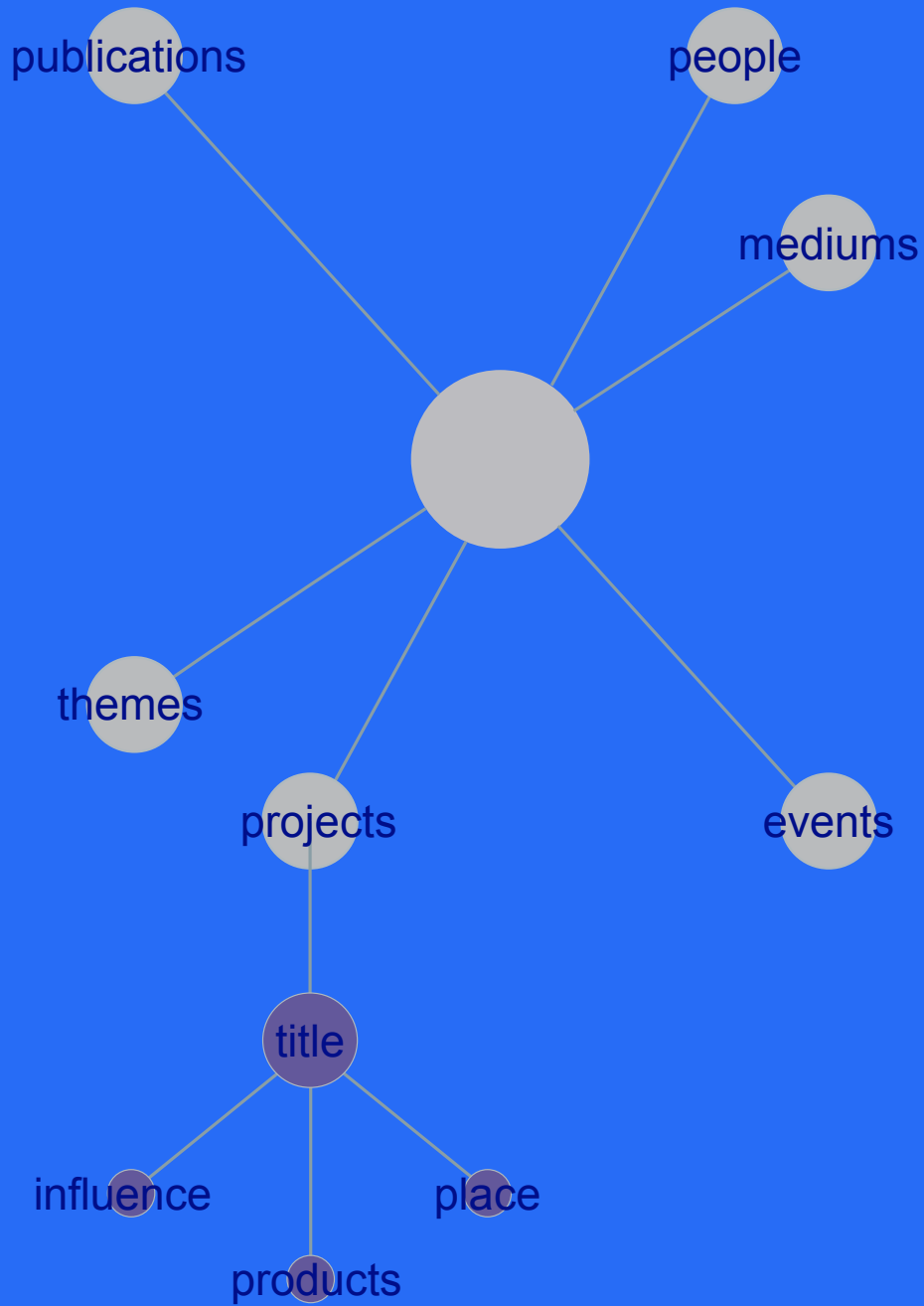


designs capitalist-disruptive strategies to acquire land and property for the interest of the community.



acknowledges globalization and urbanization as factors of cultural, social, sexual and political displacement among the younger population. It creates space, objects, technology that embrace the world's "abnormal" bodies.

constellation structure



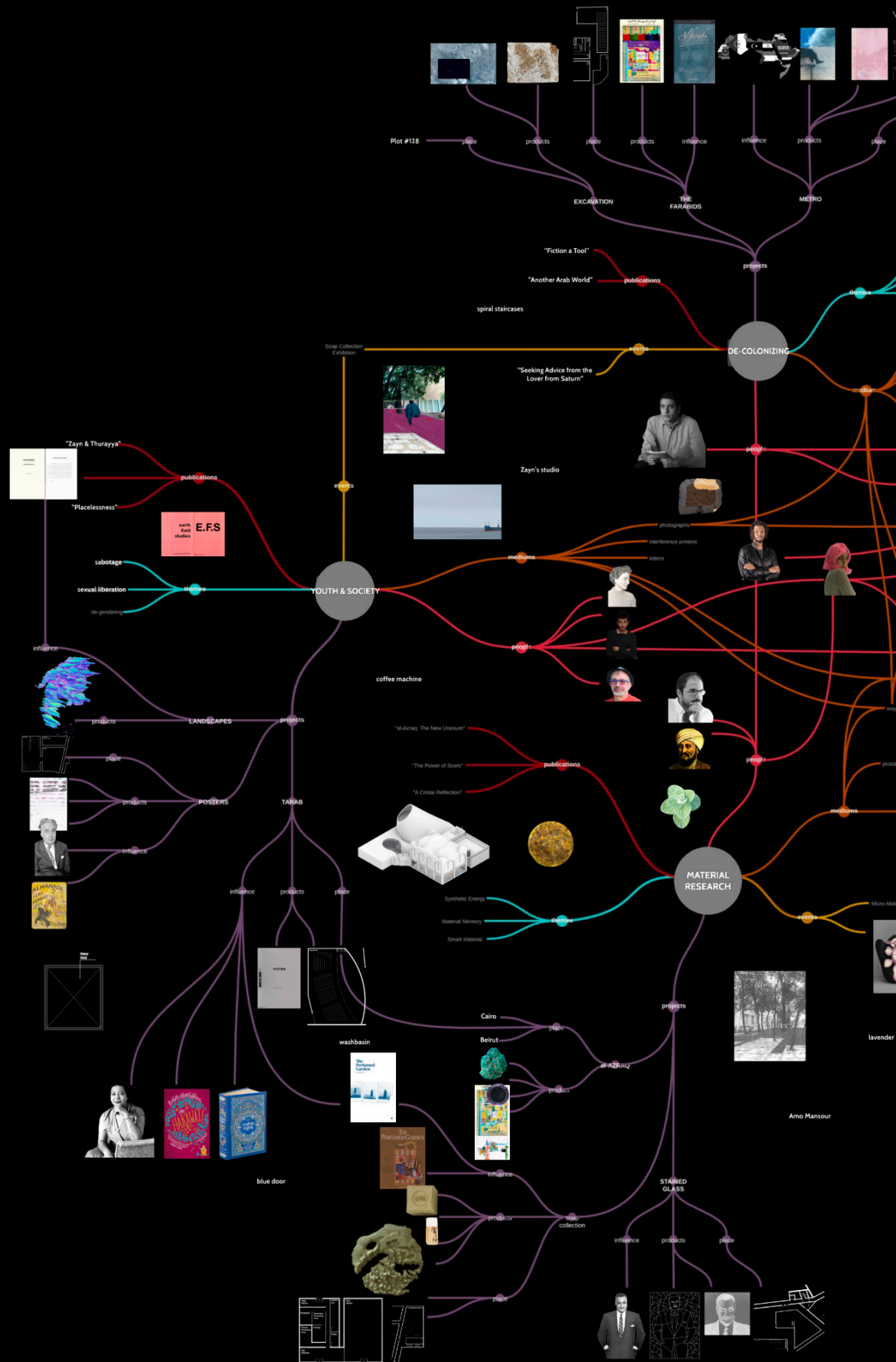
A rhizome, sometimes called a creeping rootstalk, is a stem of a plant that sends out roots and shoots as it spreads. It is a model used by Deleuze and Guattari in “A Thousand Plateaus”³⁷ to describe the way that ideas are multiple, interconnected and self-replicating.

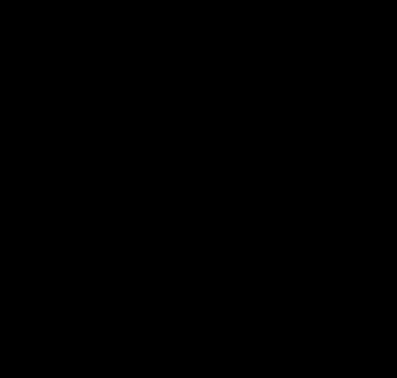
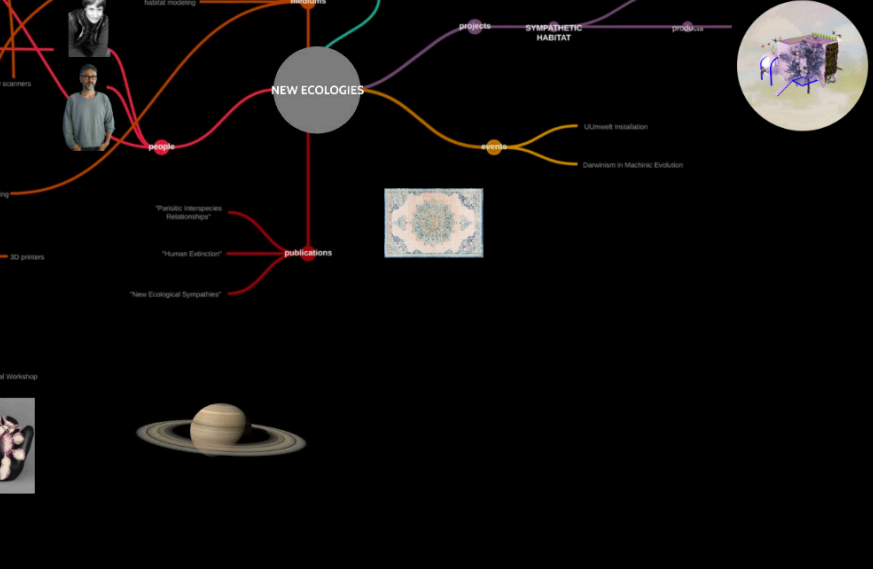
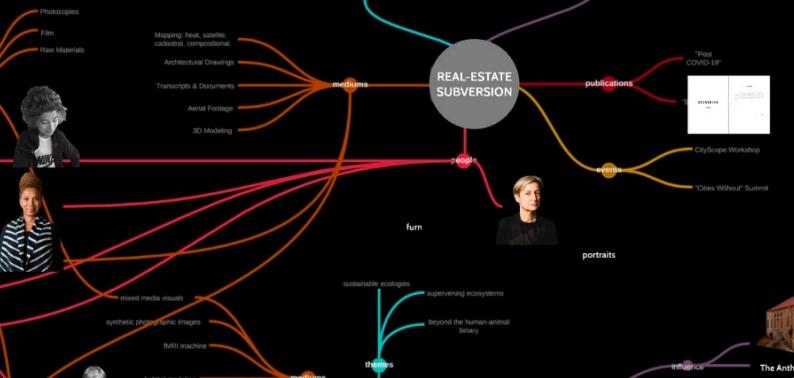
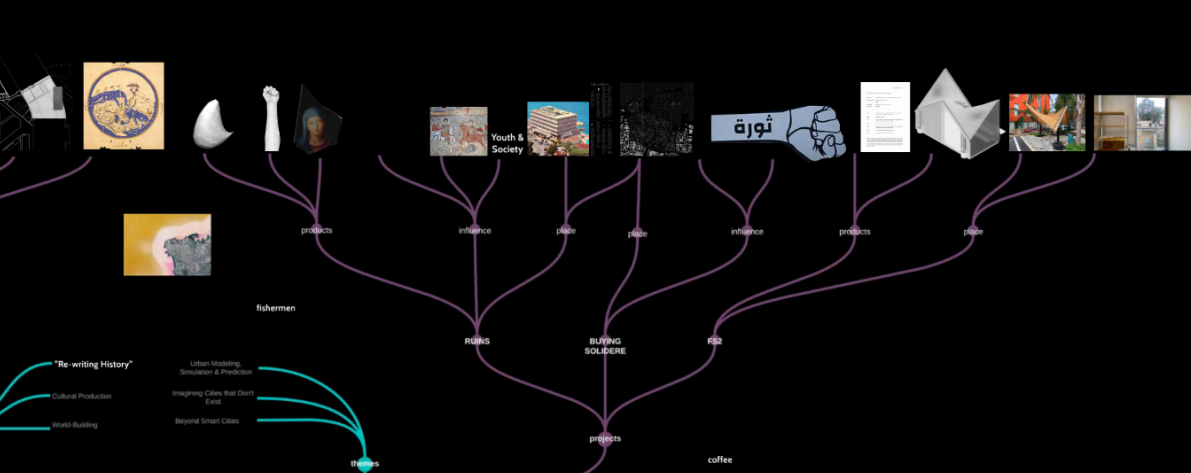
*“The rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectible, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight.”*³⁸

It is a very messy, unpredictable and unlimited network that grows and spreads in strange ways. Organizing a conversation, a framework, or anything to be rhizomatic requires the creation of a context with some boundaries within which a discourse can grow infinitely.

37 A Thousand Plateaus (1980) volume 2 of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, is characterized by a self-consciously disjointed style of philosophical inquiry, reflecting the authors' conviction that the “linear” organization of traditional philosophy represents an incipient form of social control. The work is presented as a study in what Deleuze and Guattari call “deterritorialization”—i.e., the effort to destabilize the predominant, repressive conceptions of identity, meaning, and truth. The authors conclude by dismissing Western metaphysics as an expression of “state philosophy.”

38 Deleuze and Guattari, 1987 p.21

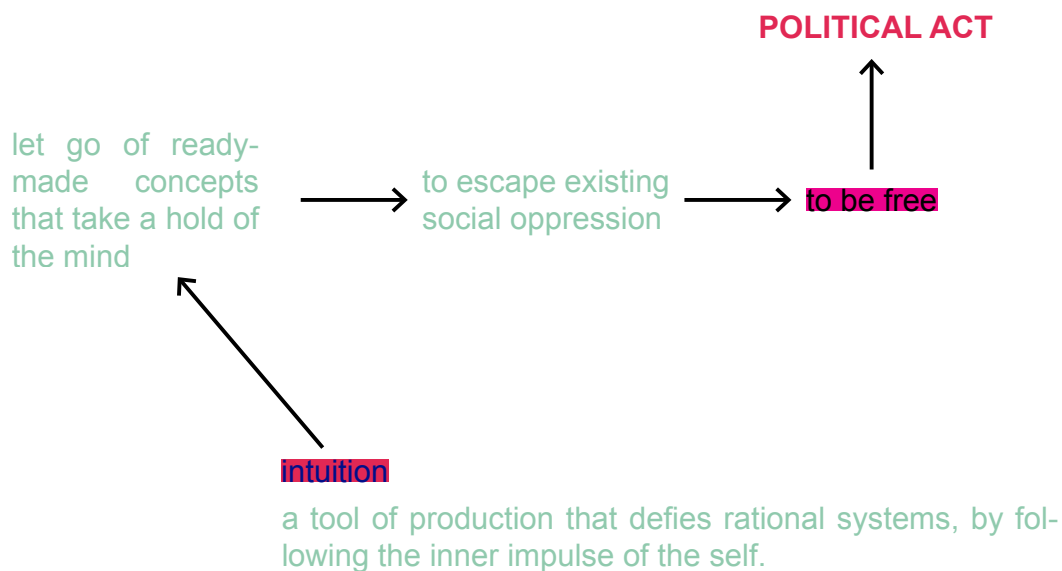




methodology

Structural anthropologist Lévi-Strauss conceives human action as always already culturally charged, drawing significance from inherited cognitive systems.³⁹ Therefore, instead of bureaucracy, logic and administrative friction the E.F.S. framework is fueled by intuition. It is a process similar to Levi-Strauss' bricolage theory,⁴⁰ the recombining a closed set of materials to come up with new ideas, generating from within the bounds of an object, in this case within the bounds of E.F.S.

Intuition is a tool of production that defies rational systems, by following the inner impulse of the self. It is to let go of ready-made concepts that take a hold of the mind, to escape existing social oppression, to be free. A political act in itself that is not to be defined but to be exercised.

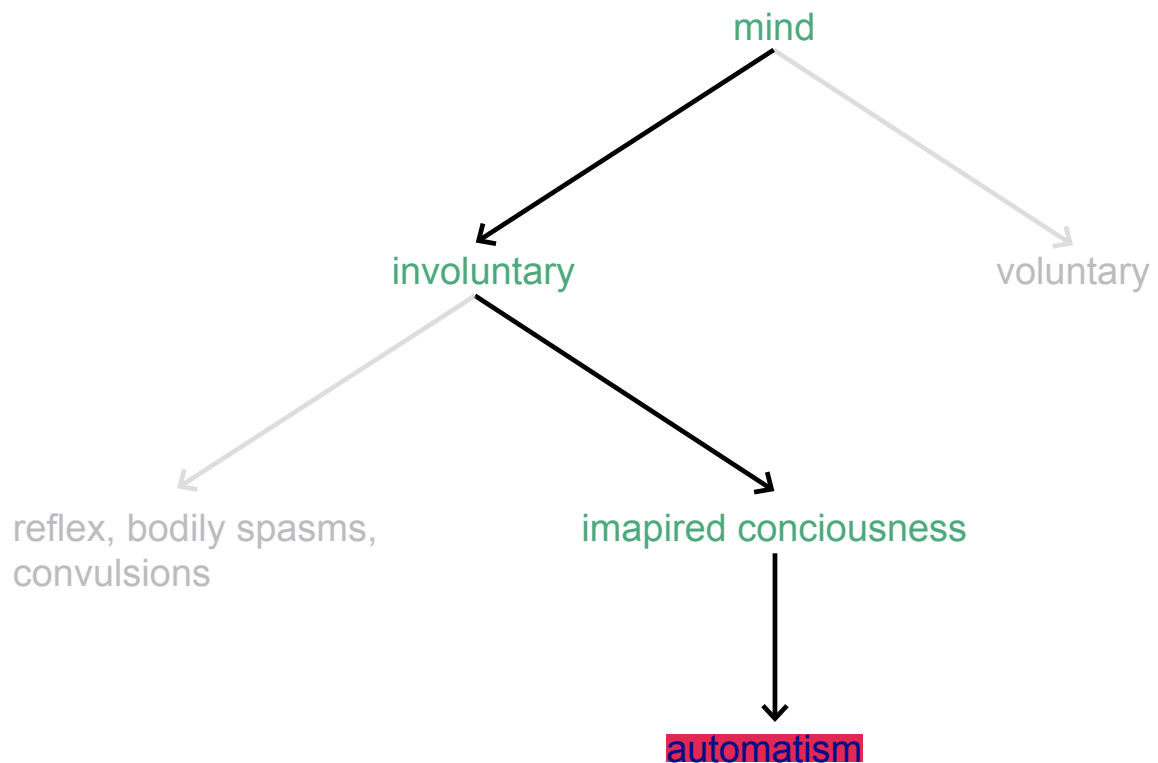


39 Colin and Mock 2009s

40 Turkle (2011). In *Evocative Objects*, Sherry Turkle speaks of anthropologist Levi-Strauss' bricolage theory and describes it as a method of recombining a closed set of materials to come up with new ideas. p. 4

Automatism takes intuition to be applied rigorously and generatively. Whose outcomes are post-rationalized to reveal the underlying subconscious motives of such actions.

The Design Process Within



scope and
layers

4.

final
words

zayn

design
process

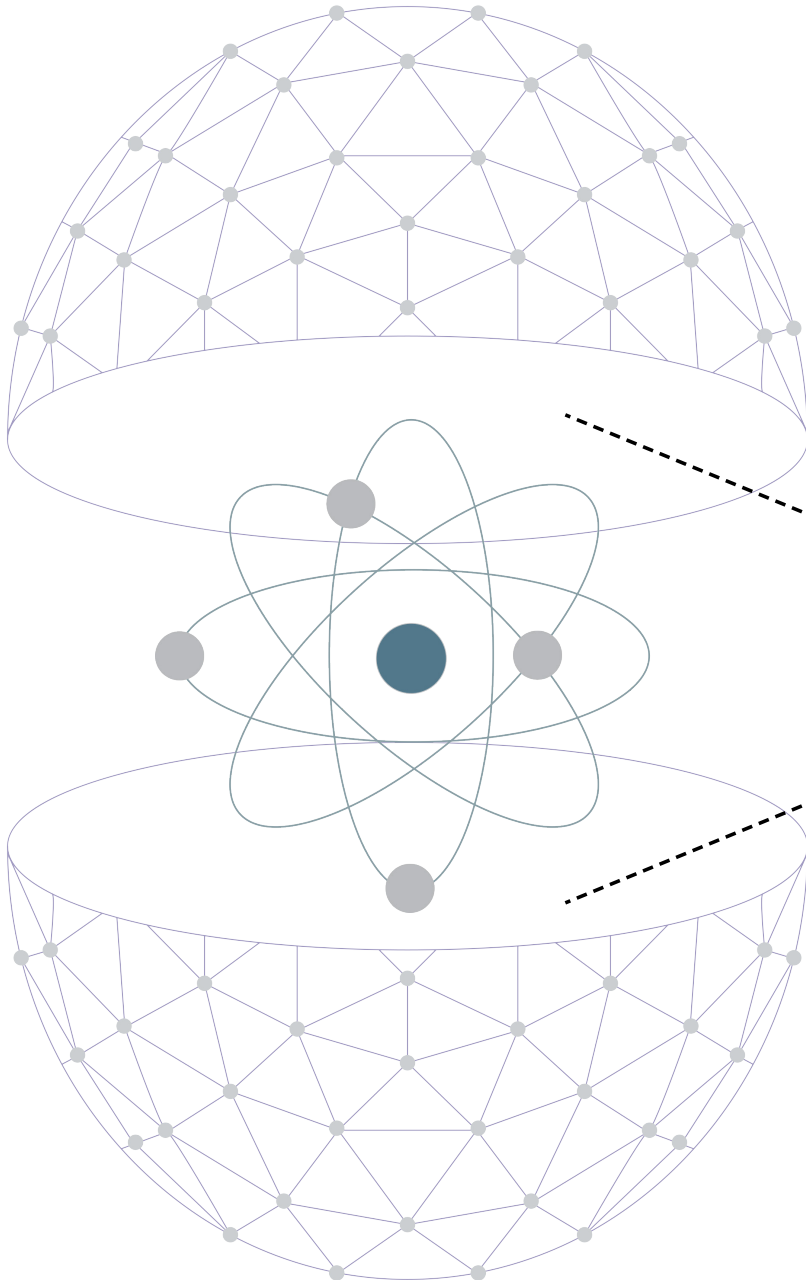
choreography
one



scope & layers

The project consists of two main layers a macro layer that develops and designs the system of E.F.S that and a micro layer that produces within this system. To access and insert myself within this system I write a fictional narrative about the life of Zayn a fictional (parallel) version of myself, a student at E.F.S, while I'm a student at ArD. This in itself is a design process that follows the experiential nature of narrative in architectural design and a process that enables the creation of a project from within fiction.





works and produces within this system

↑

zayn

↑

MICRO

I use this narrative to explore what a student in this department would be like? What her experiences are? What kind of facilities and labs does E.F.S have? How does she use them?

Zayn. Harf al zayn, meaning beautiful. Is one of the students at E.F.S. An intuitive character who follows and understands the wants of her body. She is in the right place here. The constellations equip her with tools that allow those wants to happen. She spends her time at the EFS archives exploring Arab thinkers that have been hidden away from her at home and at school. Ones that wanted to change everything. Those that were able to and those that failed. Like artist Inji Eflatoun and geographer Mohammad al-Idrissi. She learns about them by writing them letters, developing intimate relationships to debate her political concerns and understand her responsibilities as part of a young Arab generation that needs to break out of its world's systemic oppression.



choreography one



zayn

Department of Earth Field Studies
 (Nov 21st, 2019)

consider Arabism. You see, there exists a strong tie in Arabism. It is the unique bond of language, religion. I trust that this bond empowers us forces from outside the Arab World. I will continue to advocate the unification of the world and I will continue to fight for the cause of any unsuccessful efforts.

It is the key to universal potency. Envision a world without borders. A future of economic health and strength.

Gamal

Health Society Lab
 (Nov 21st, 2019)

Dear Professor Alameddine,
 Sunenings has led me to think that whatever I propose, whatever fiction I decide to speculate upon will destroy any existing notion of Arab. My head is telling me that if were to propose the Arab Future I envision, what is "Arab" about it will stop. As you have mentioned, that is a prejudice that I have been taught (that Arabs will not move to the future) that I must overcome.

I have been trying to understand where this must have come from, and in addition to my upbringing, I believe this nostalgic stigma of Arabness can be related to how I was conducting my research on Arabism. I realize that I have been subconsciously reducing Arab to a set of cultural practices that do not necessarily embody everyone that recognizes themselves as Arab. But then, what should I adhere to?

Best,

Z

Department of Earth Field Studies
 (Nov 19th, 2019)

Dear Huda,
 Apologies for the late response. As you may know the streets are intensely crowded, and most of the roads are barricaded, so I was not able to get to AUB. I have been using my cell phone for documentation. I will be sending you some photographs very soon.

Also, you would be happy to know that I have been conducting some interviews with random people in the downtown. I also recorded some of the music and sounds on the streets. Perhaps this could be a starting point to exploring the theater within the scope of my work.

Best,

Z

Arab Youth Society Lab
 (Nov 19th, 2019)

Dear Professor Abdelwahed,
 I have been recently exploring ideas about oral and embodied traditions as methods of preservation and resistance. I would like to share some of my thoughts.

My interest started the day I chanted and hummed along the voices of the million citizens in the streets of Beirut. I realized that hymns and hymns seduce crowds, but a liberating form of seduction. Coming to my mind are the different verses and choruses that would not have been spoken otherwise. Have chants destroyed the fear of the down (policemen)? As if curing in chant a less "frenzied" "Do not seem."

Musa's unremained character breaks political and social barriers. Rhyme and repetition appeal to the ear and thus become memorable to the mind. Like mnemonic. They are oral tactics that preserve knowledge in a form that cannot be physically eliminated or erased the memory.

This reminded me of "Saboteur". It came that comes from the word sabot (French for wooden clogs).

*Reference to the Tradition by David Fabes. Speaks of the importance of these oral traditions in the context of globalization. Some people argue that oral traditions are not as important as written ones. However, it is important to note that oral traditions have been used for centuries to preserve knowledge and culture. Oral traditions are a form of knowledge that cannot be physically eliminated or erased the memory.

Department of Earth Field Studies
 (Nov 19th, 2019)

Dear Zayn,
 How is your work progressing? I have not heard from you. Judging from your absence, you must be busy rallying the streets. Hopefully you are safe and sound. I am waiting to hear from you. Be sure to stay safe.

Huda Sharawi

De-Colonizing Lab
 (Nov 20th, 2019)

Dear Professor Abdel Nasser,
 The past weeks have been enlightening yet perplexing to my research and to life in general. In times like this, I cannot help but contemplate on notions of nationalism and identity.

I saw the Lebanese flag everywhere I turn, and it frightens me. So I contemplated on ideas related to Pan-Arabism. It envisions a future beyond current regional geopolitics, absolutely defying any current political, social and economic frameworks. By these terms, it is an ideology that speculates on impossible grounds.

Yes, I have come to consider Pan-Arabism as a somewhat nostalgic ideology. It is trying to replicate the past Golden Age of empires through the unification of Arab states as a method.

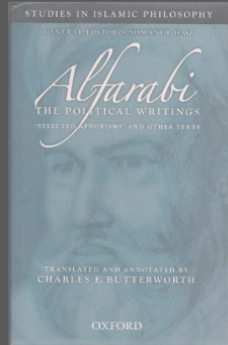
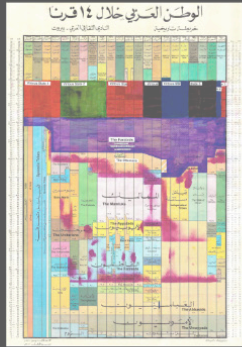
Could it be that Pan-Arabism's nostalgia has been restraining the Arab future? Envision?

Best,

Z

video format of choreography one: <https://youtu.be/EbR578rltKU>

3D scanners



place

products

influence

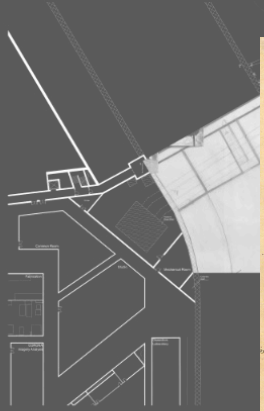
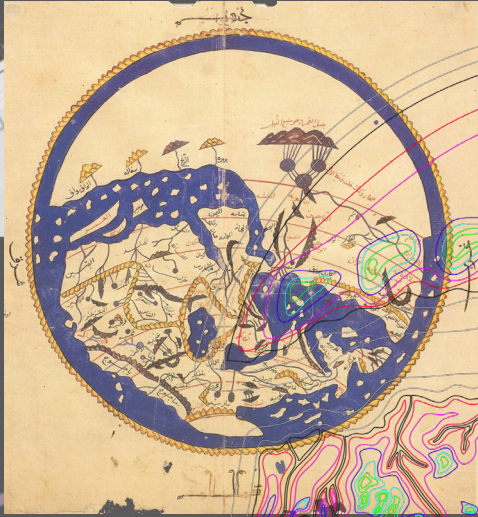
AVATION

THE
FARABIDS

Zayn is power. She reads systemic oppression against women in the Arab world as a discarded draft that she needs to fix. Every map she lays her hands on becomes her own. Fascinated by the landscapes she discovers. Ones that make her familiar with herself. Empowered with the wonders she comes across her land. the tree of waq waq. a woman-tree hybrid that has sustained the existence of an all-female population. Like Nabat al-Mirme. The sage plant, whose leaf is used by women to relieve the pains and disturbances caused by their natural bodily functions. A herb that when boiled with water, liberates women from the obligations that come with such functions.

publications

themes



products



fishermen

tory"

Urban Modeling,
Simulation & Prediction

Imagining Cities that Don't
Exist

Beyond Smart Cities

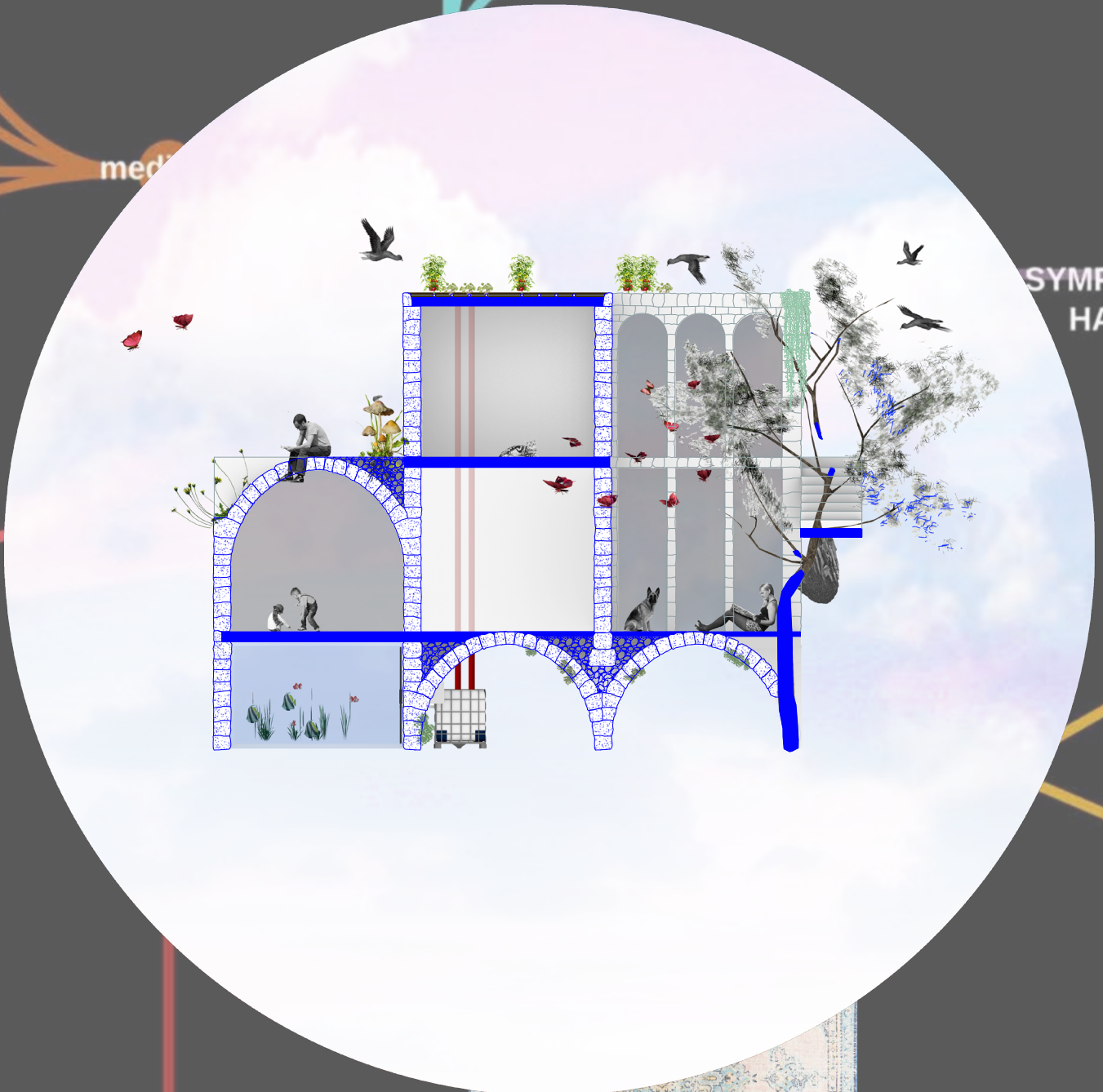
World-Building

supervening ecosystems

beyond the human-animal
binary

medi

SYMPATHE
HABITAT



publications

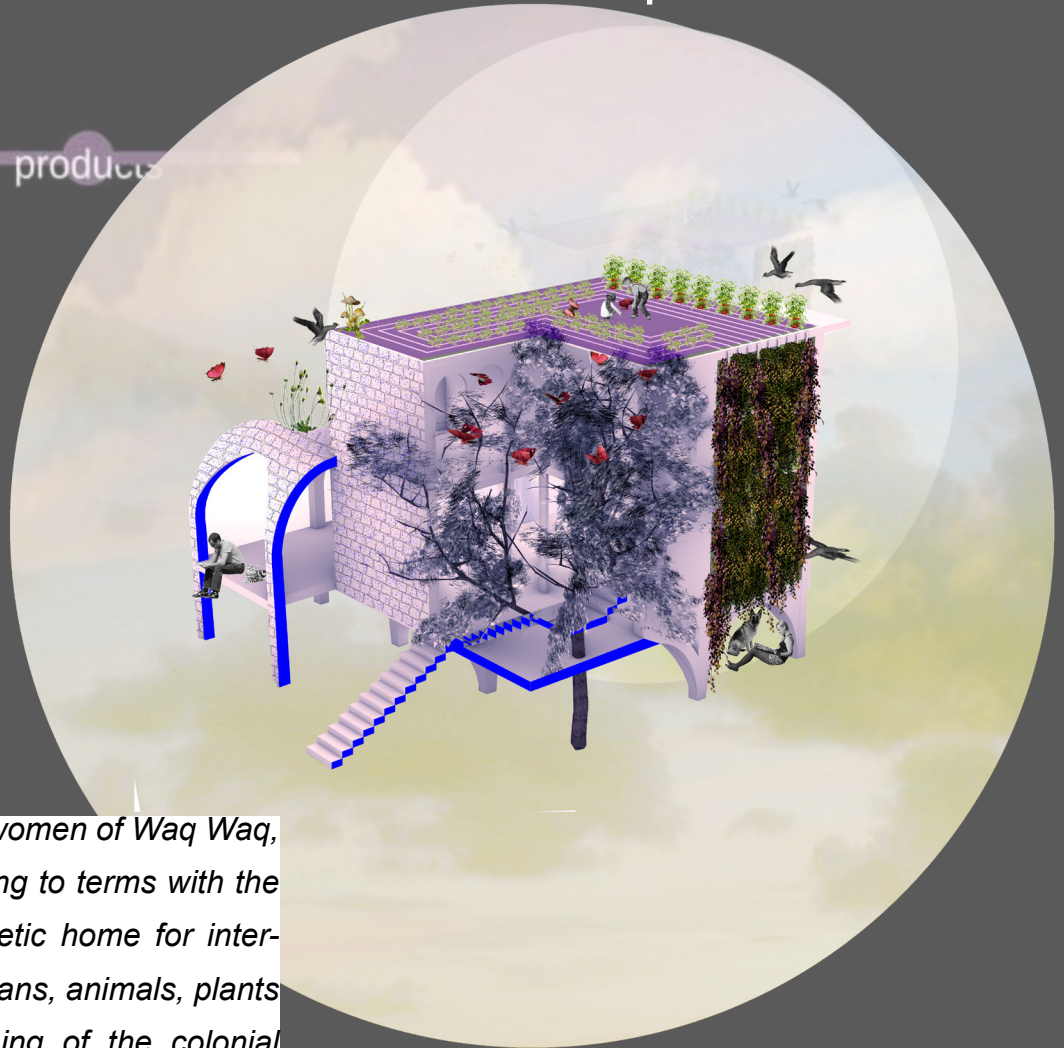




The Anthropocene

influence

produces



Umwelt Installation

Just as the tree holds the women of Waq Waq, it holds the house of coming to terms with the Anthropocene. A sympathetic home for inter-species co-existence: humans, animals, plants and machines. The undoing of the colonial idea of "the human as separate." a challenge to constructions of gender, race and sexuality imposed by colonialism. Inspired by the beauty and materiality of the Lebanese house, the entire structure is made from stone.

ot #128

place

products

place

EXCAVATION

THE FARABIDS

METRO

projects

themes

Limestone. An element of the natural landscape, deeply embedded within the earth's crust. It is extracted in an excavation at EFS.

events

"Seeking Advice from the Lover from Saturn"

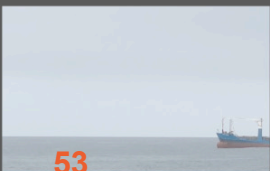
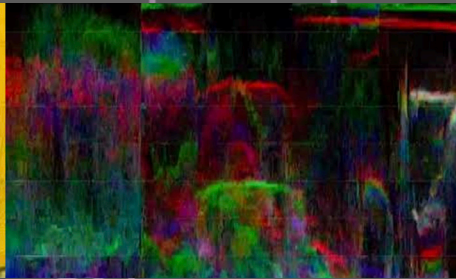
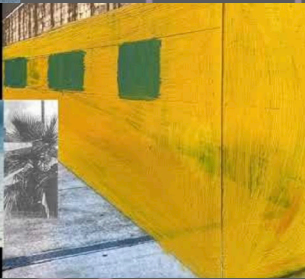
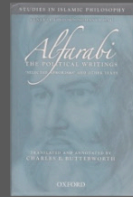
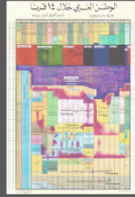
Zayn's studio

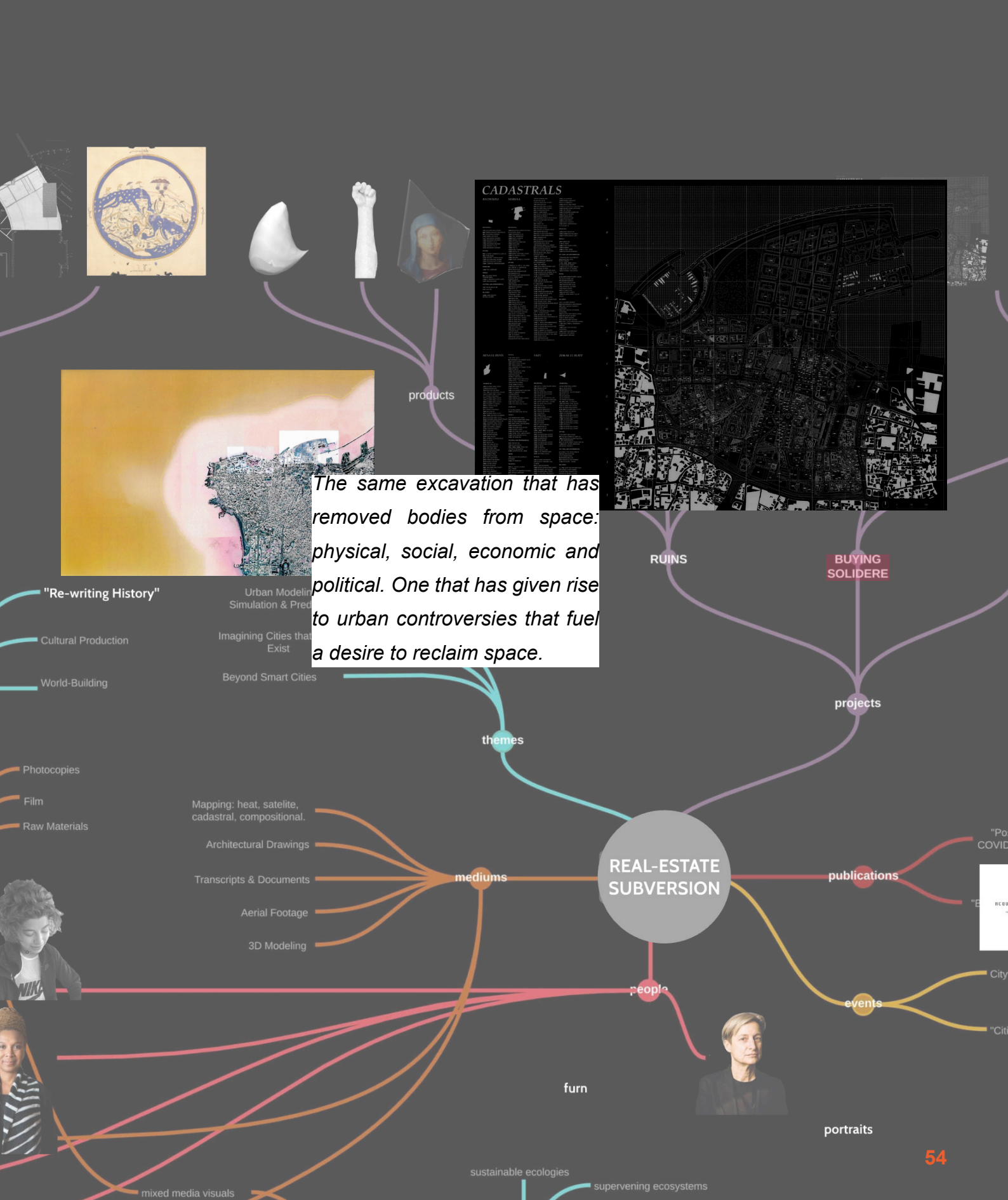
people

interference printers

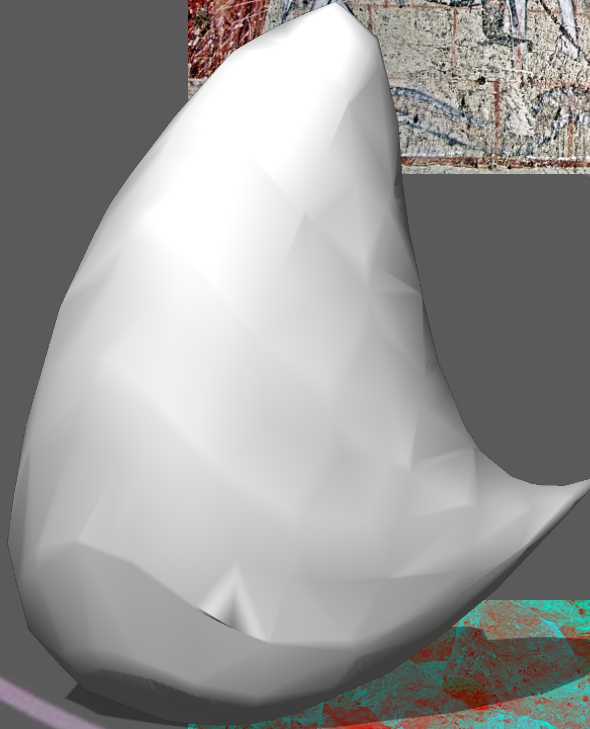
letters

mediums





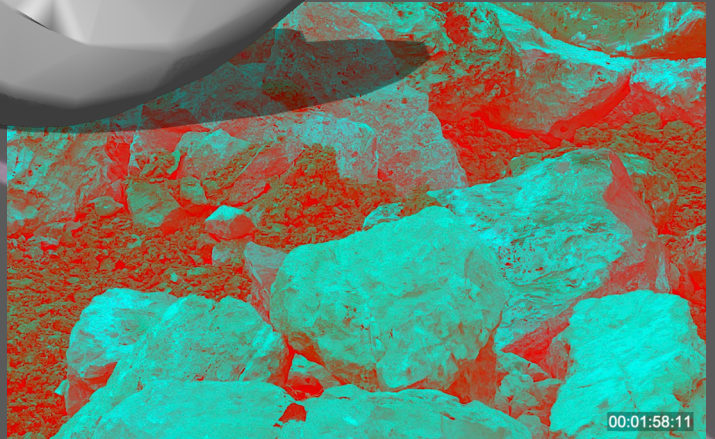
The same excavation that has removed bodies from space: physical, social, economic and political. One that has given rise to urban controversies that fuel a desire to reclaim space.



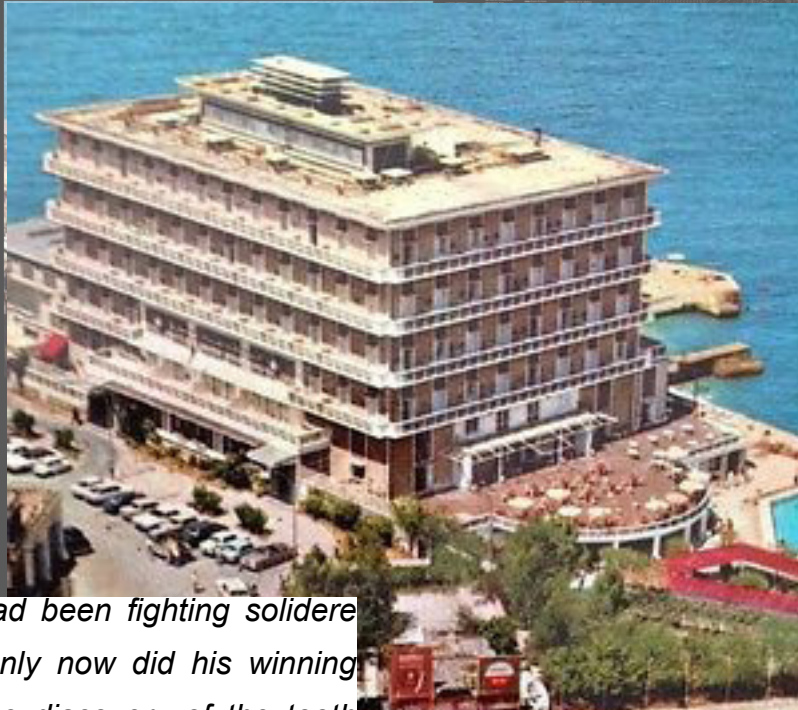
products

influe

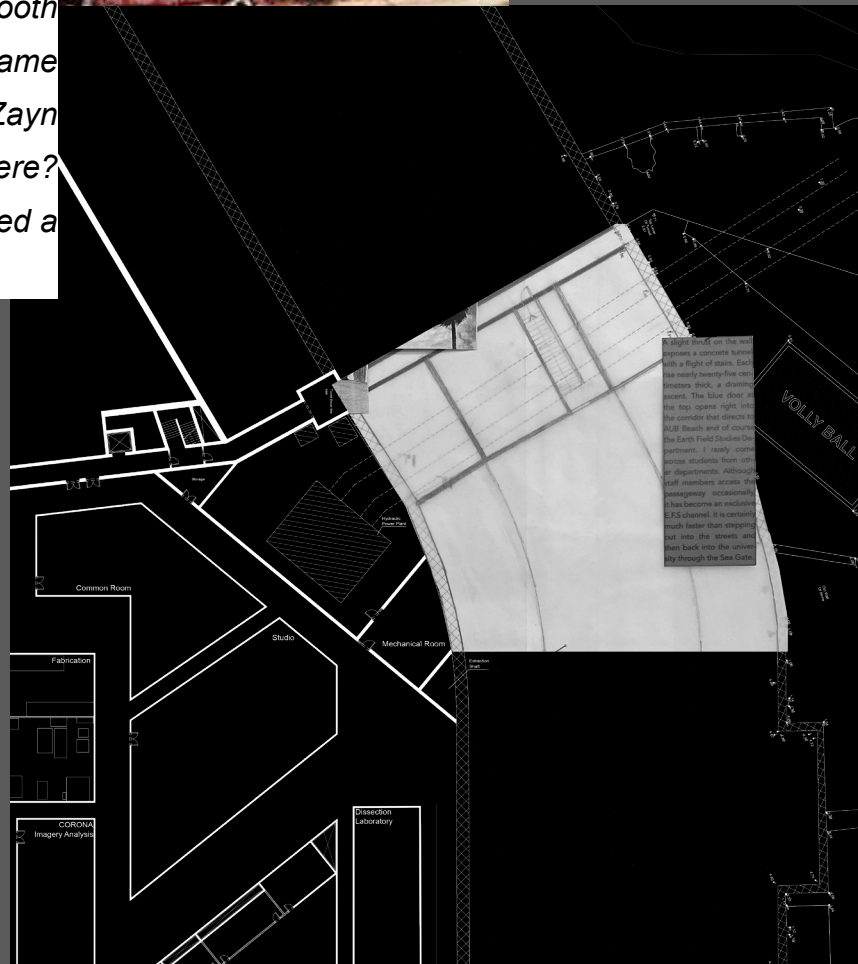
fishermen

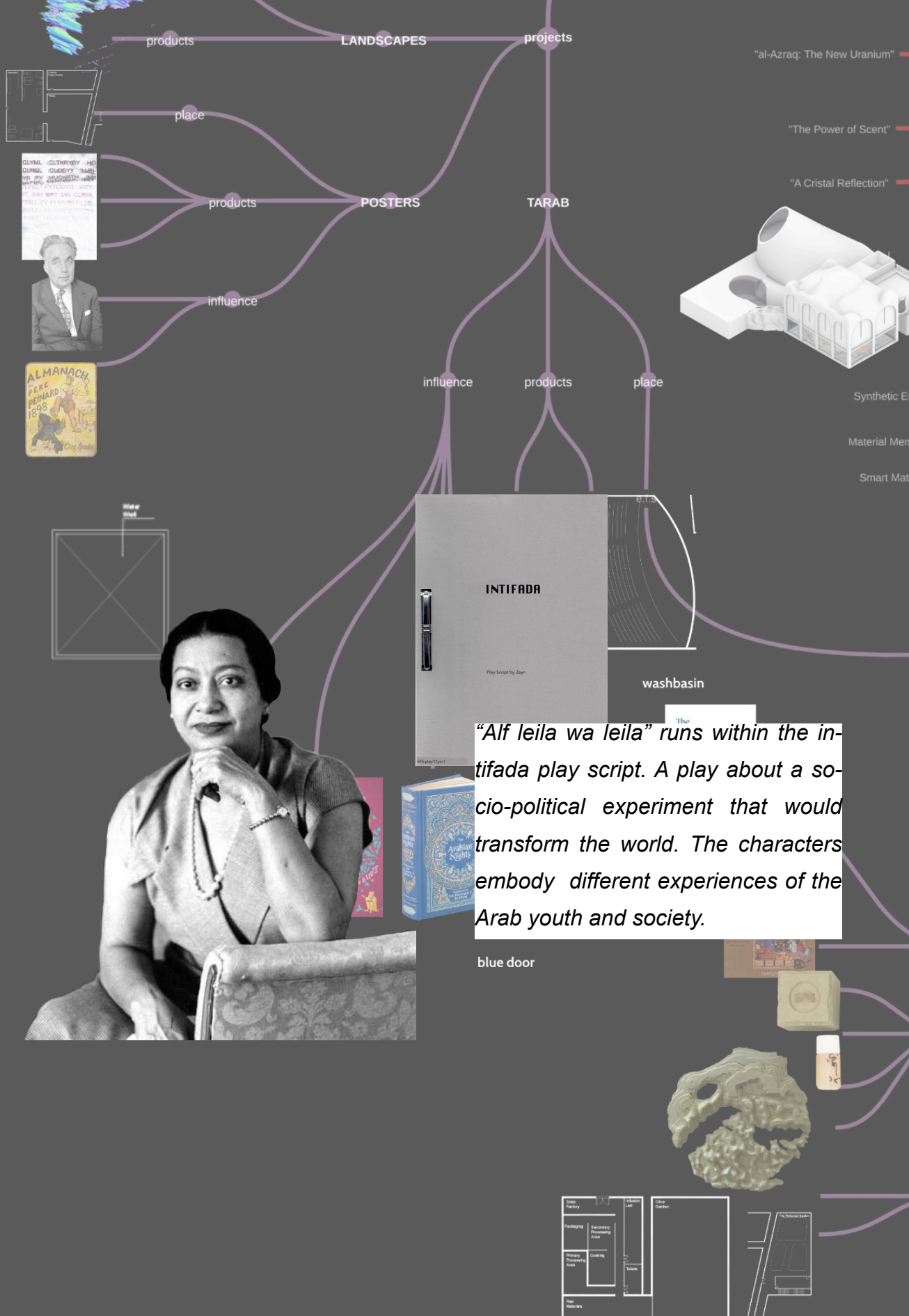


Youth & Society



Saint George had been fighting solidere for ages, and only now did his winning card appear. The discovery of the tooth changed everything. The tooth of the same dragon slayed by Saint Georges. Did Zayn and her team make it and plant it there? Has the site of discovery been rendered a sacred religious site?





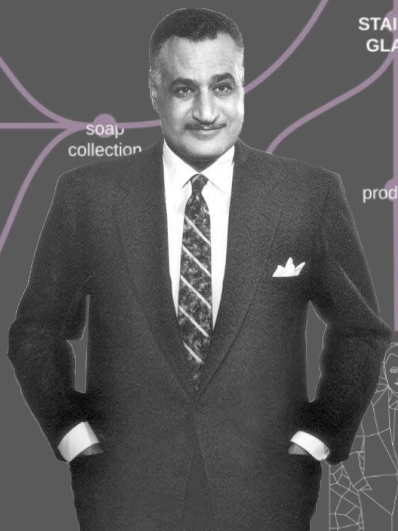
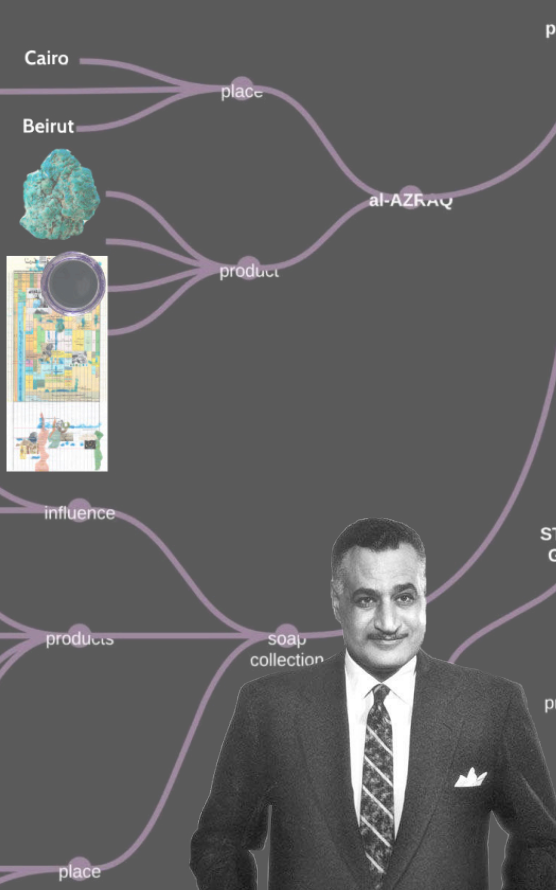
"Alf leila wa leila" runs within the intifada play script. A play about a socio-political experiment that would transform the world. The characters embody different experiences of the Arab youth and society.

The perpetuation of a sentiment of endless displacement (placelessness).

A site of pilgrimage that takes the shape of a train station. Home of the Pan-Arab Express, extending from Beirut to Morocco all the way to Yemen. Connecting Arab places and people. One can visit relatives in Tunis or spend a night in Cairo visiting the grave of Umm Kulthum, the queen of Tarab.



Amo Mansour

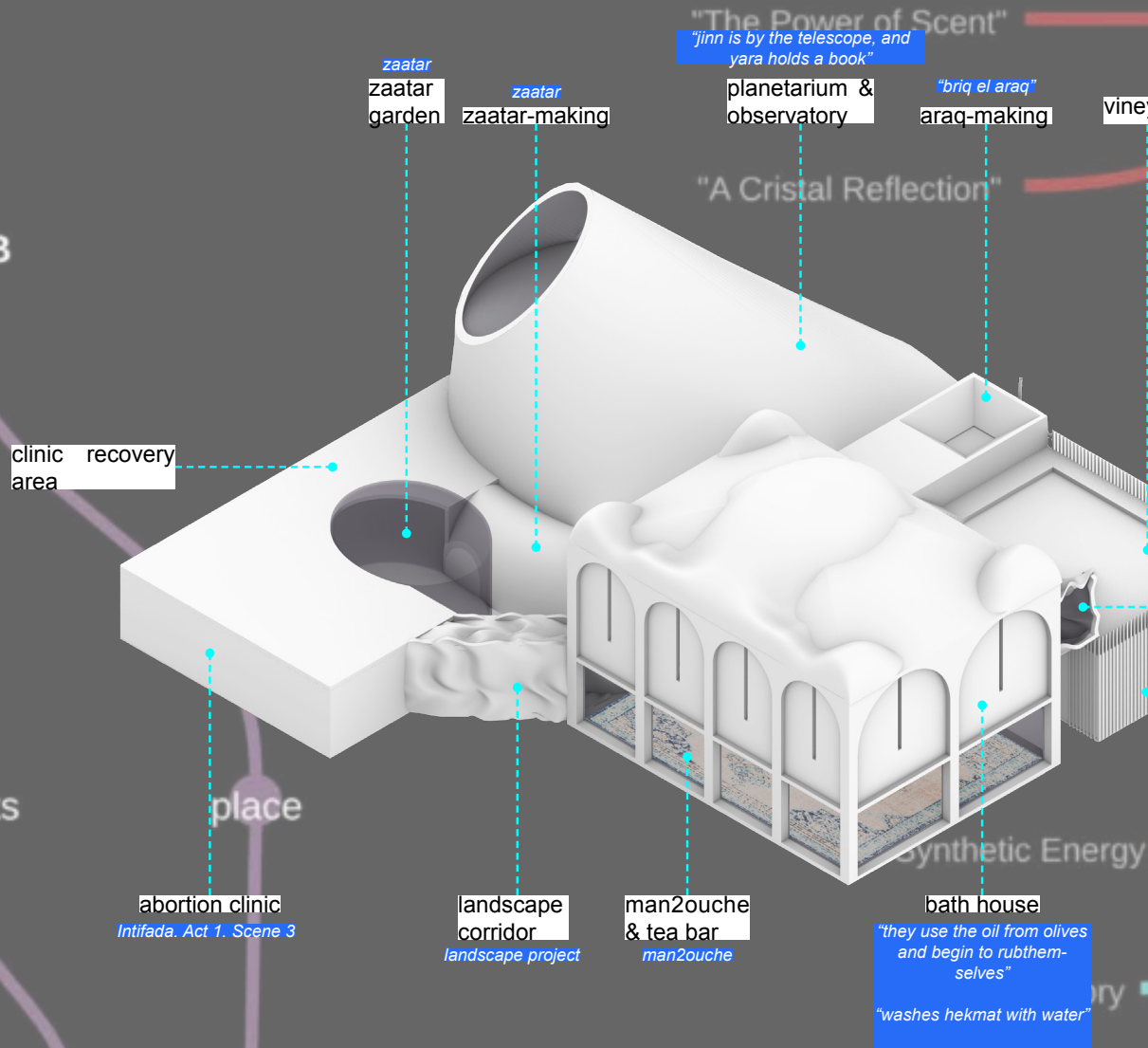


STAINED GLASS

facial recognition system



TARAB



"The Power of Scent"

"jinn is by the telescope, and yara holds a book"

zaatar
zaatar garden

zaatar
zaatar-making

planetarium &
observatory

"briq el araq"
araq-making

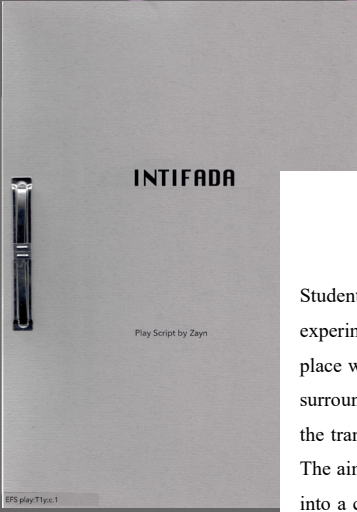
clinic recovery
area

abortion clinic
Intifada. Act 1. Scene 3

landscape
corridor
landscape project

man2ouche
& tea bar
man2ouche

bath house
*"they use the oil from olives
and begin to rub them-
selves"*
"washes hekmat with water"



SYNOPSIS

Students from the Department of Earth Field Studies have been working on a socio-political experiment that is supposed to transform the Arab World. Amar 7 at E.F.S is their new home, the place where they will live and conduct the *trance*. The five students are sitting on a Persian rug surrounded by the objects from the last five years of their lives, they engage in the *trance*. Through the *trance* students share experiences and stories that explore other realities of the Arab World. The aim is to discover the *trance* as a method by which separate individuals that exist transform into a community that co-exist. The characters themselves embody these possibilities, and their experiences enact them.



publications

yard



landscape stairs
landscape project

drag bar

"I've been wearing yara's heels while dancing to Umm Kuthum"

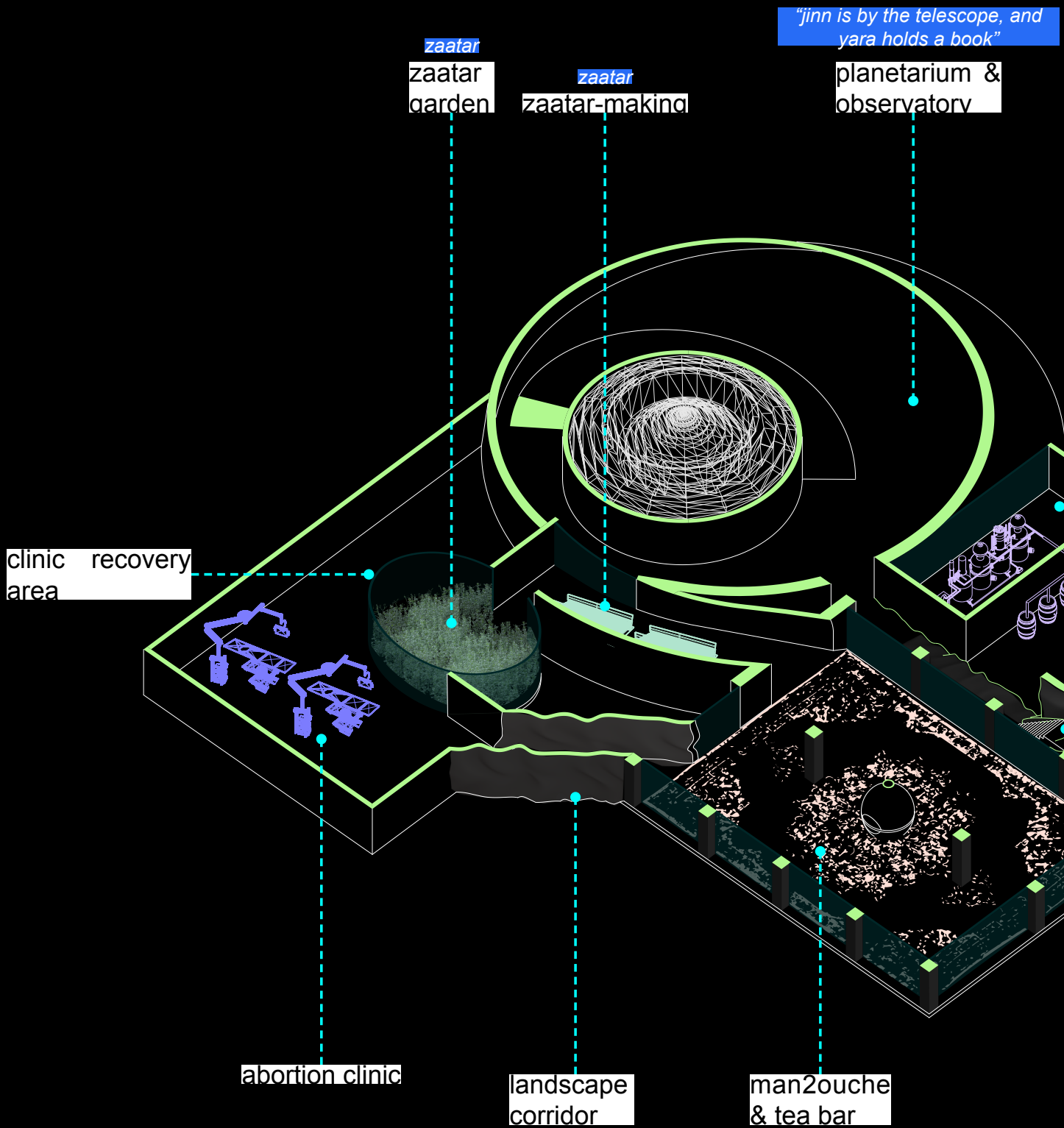
MATERIAL RESEARCH

Amar 7 is Saturn's seventh moon. It is the place where individuals gather to conduct the trans, an engaging storytelling ritual. A persian rug lies center stage, surrounded by the objects from the last five years of our lives: lavender, araq, zaatar and a telescope. A sink and toilet are somewhere around and cooking pot for everyone to use. Ma-n2ouche is the daily platter while Umm Kulthum plays is the background.

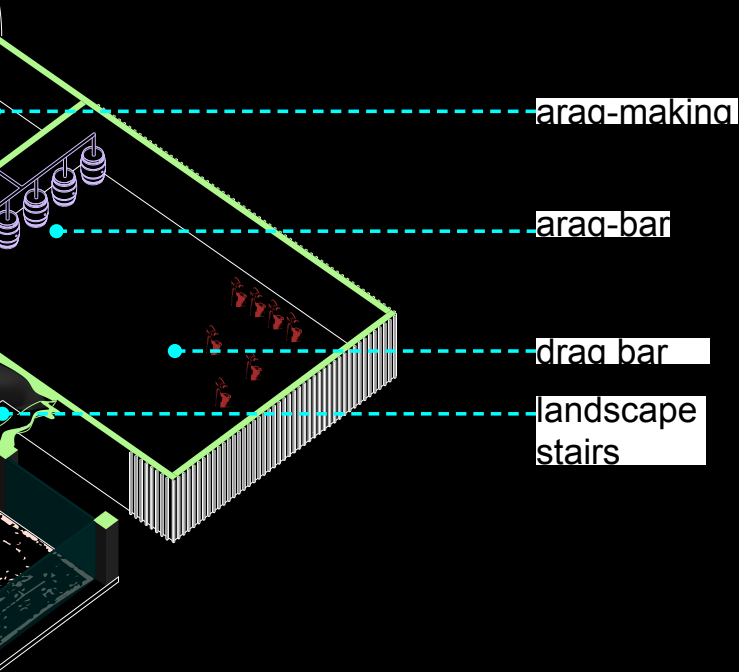
projects

airo

place



Here is a scene where the characters are gathered around drinking araq. The same araq that is produced at the distillery of Amar 7, Saturn's 7th moon.



araq-making

araq-bar

araq bar

landscape stairs

HEKMAT: Where do we put it?

JINN: On top of the soil.

FATIMA: We're not done yet!

YARA: Beftekir hek mnih. Aw men zid? ... Jinn?

FATIMA: We need more.

ZEIN: He's heavy! Yalla, sar3o shway.

HEKMAT: JINN! Is it enough?

JINN: A little more.

(Fatima and Yara continue to spreading soil all over the rug)

YARA: Okay. Khallas.

FATIMA: Eh. Yalla. Put him down.

(Hekmat and Zein put him down on the soil)

JINN: Follow my lead.

ZEIN: Nchalla tezbat.

FATIMA: I have hope.

JINN: Gather around the body. Hekmat! Where's the 3ara2?

(Hekmat hands Jinn briq el 3araq)

JINN: *(raising the briq)* I bless this drink *(drinks and hands it to Yara)* Drink.

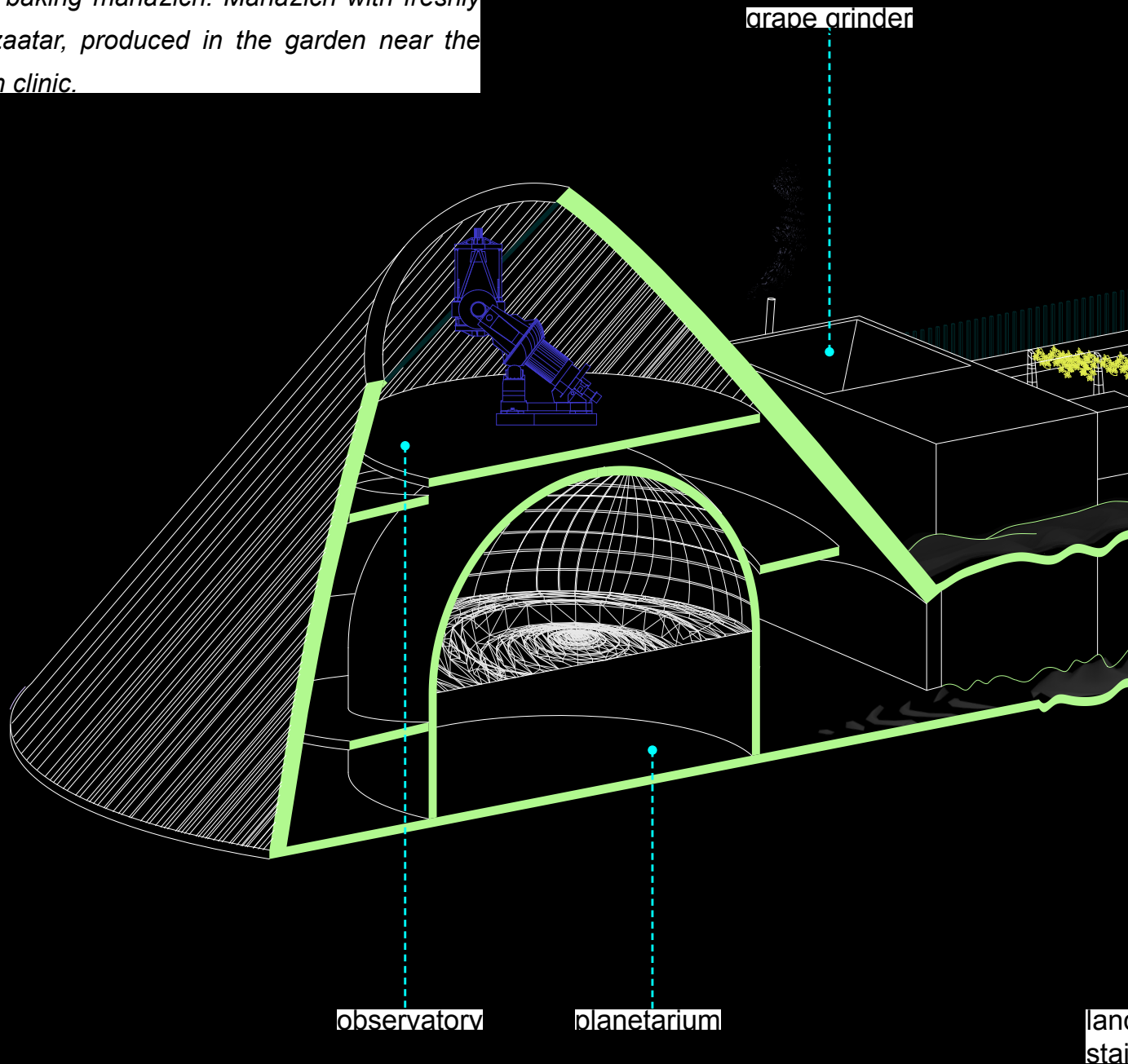
Each one drinks and pass along the briq until it's empty. They're drunk.

JINN: Now we make the offerings. I offer you my favorite book *(places the book close to the body)*

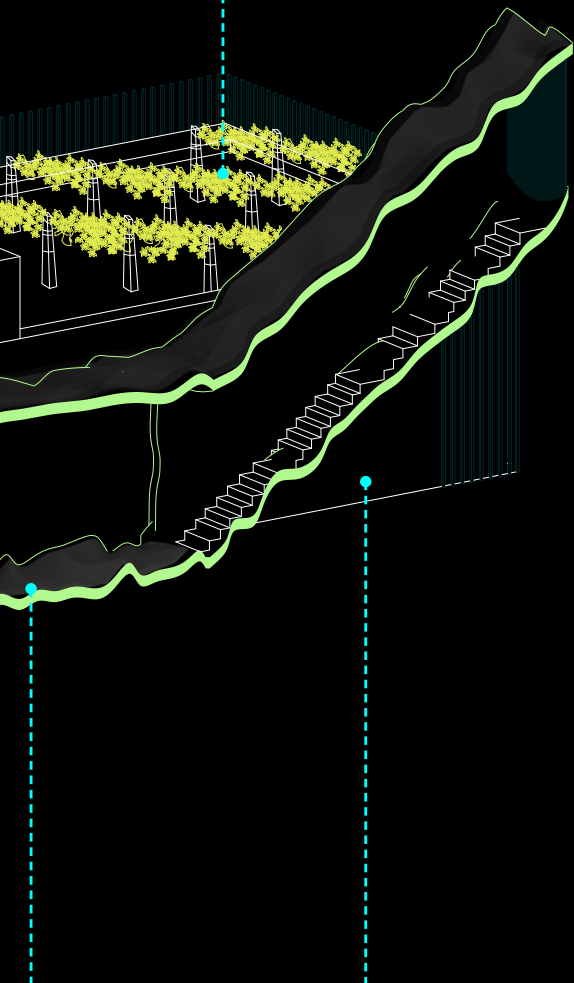
YARA: I offer you my mother's necklace. *(places the necklace close to the body)*

ZEIN: I offer you my guitar. *(places the guitar close to the body)*

Umm kulthum plays in the background in the form of a coded landscape that connects to the other spaces like the planetarium. A persian rug covers the floors of the central space, whose oven is busy baking mana2ich. Mana2ich with freshly made zaatar, produced in the garden near the abortion clinic.



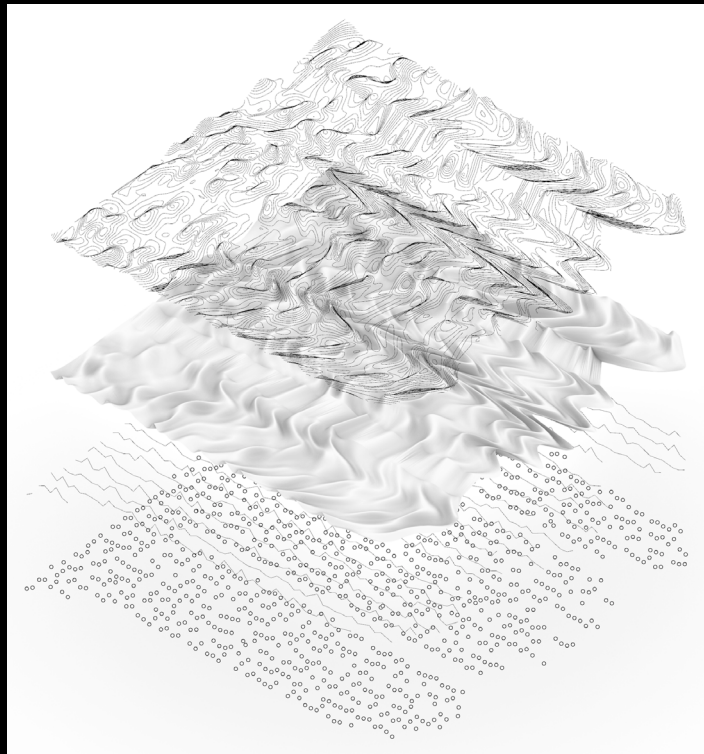
vineyard



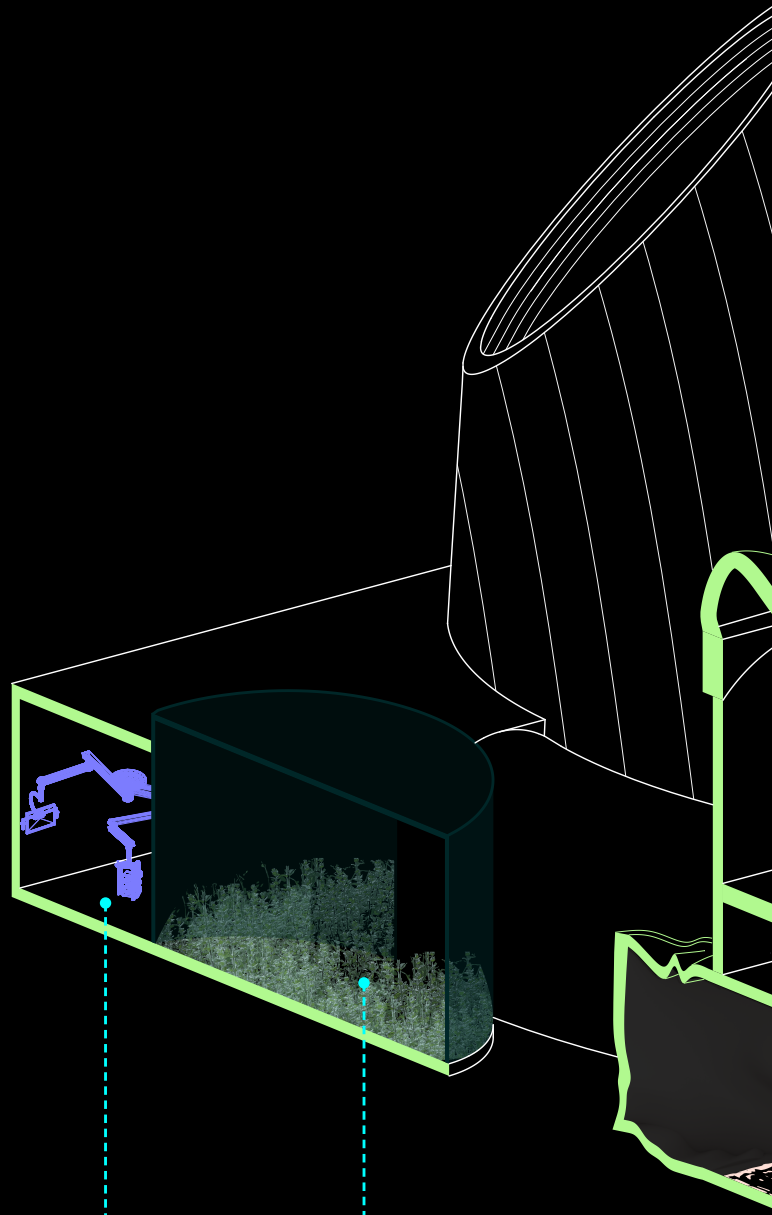
landscape
ers

drac bar

coding Umm Kulthum's lyrics into a landscape

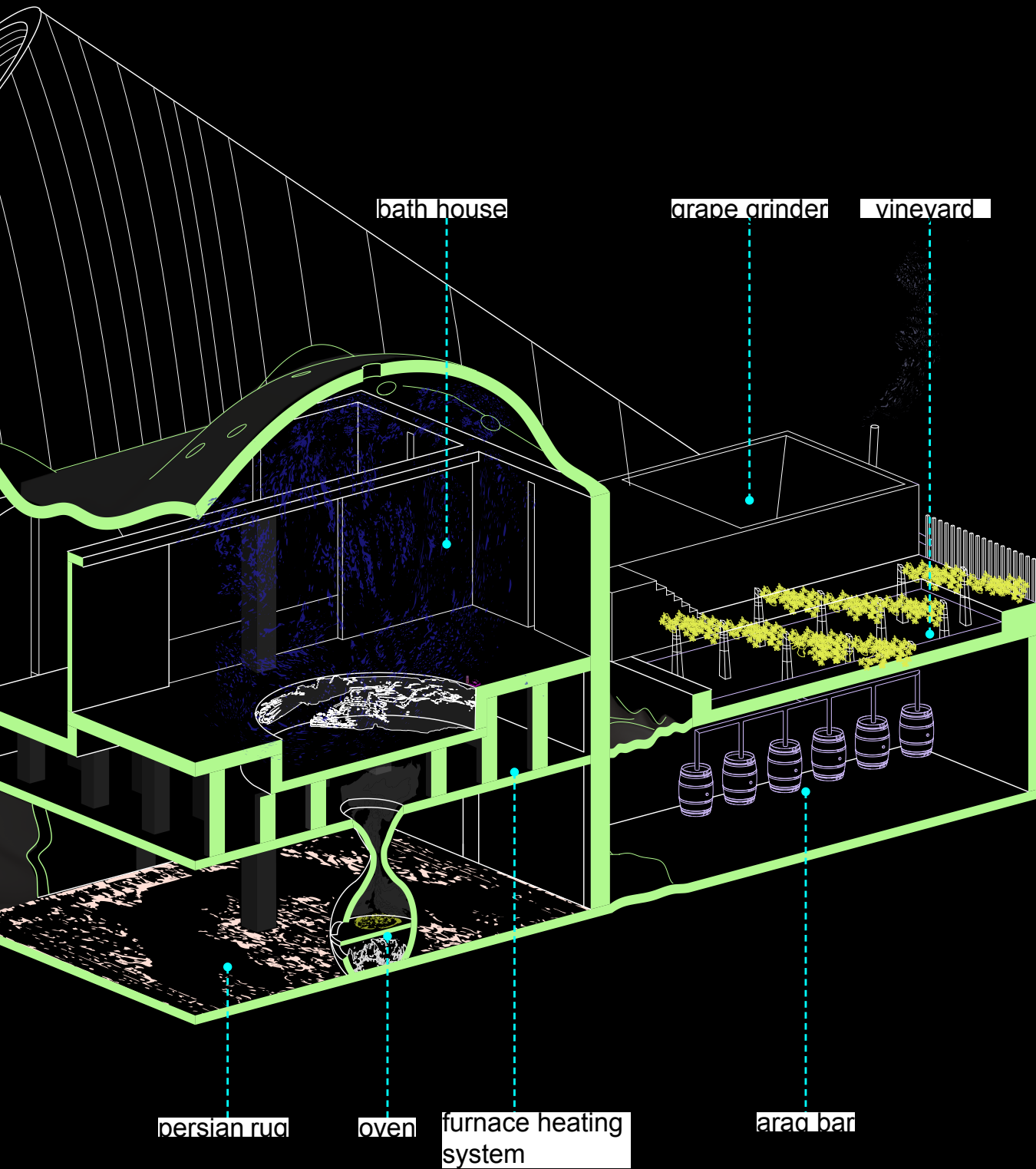


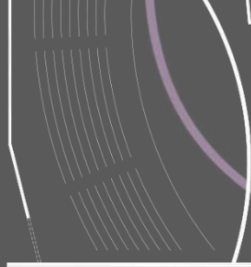
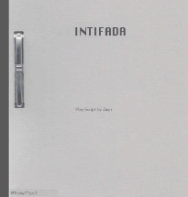
A persian rug covers the floors of the central space, whose oven is busy baking mana2ich. Mana2ich with freshly made zaatar, produced in the garden near the abortion clinic.



clinic recovery area

zaatar garden area

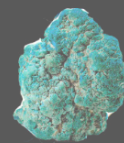




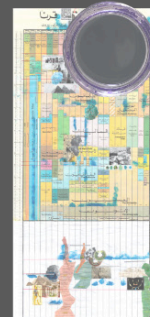
Cairo

place

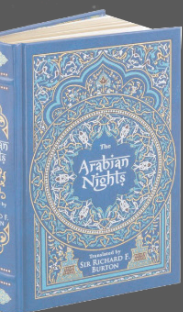
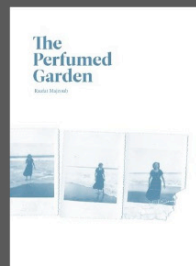
Beirut



product



washbasin



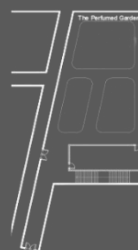
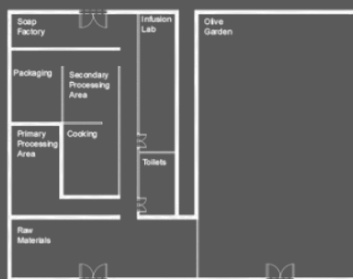
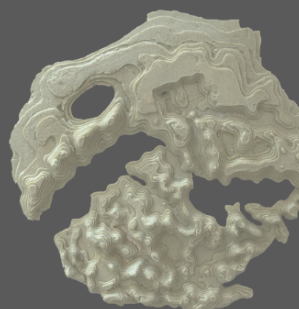
blue door



influence

product

soap collection



The oven's furnace heats the floors of the bath-house, covered with oils and soaps produced from the herbs extracted from the Perfumed Garden at EFS.





LAVENDER



Mansour

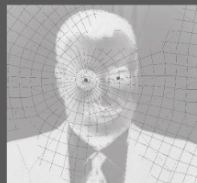
A garden with an ecology of its own. Where all kinds of shrubs, flowers, and trees grow. It smells of lavender. Words spoken to queer. Words that escape colonial binaries of sex and gender. Sex as a gift from god. The body as a perfumed garden.

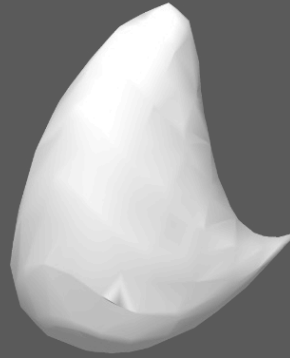
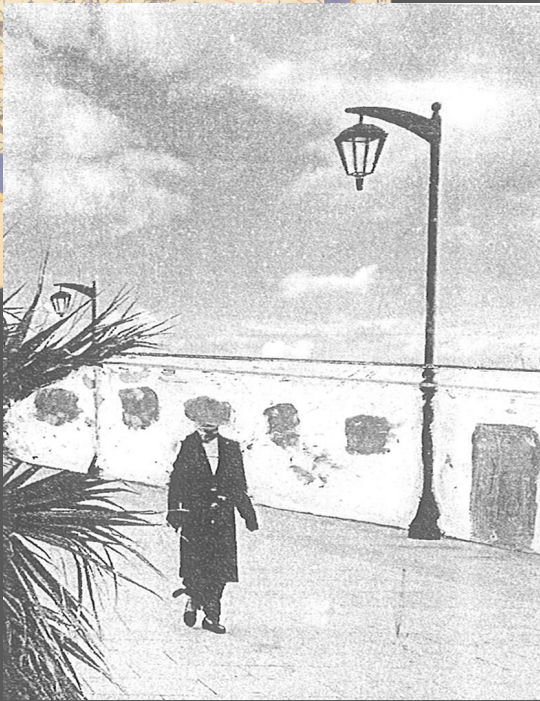
STAINED GLASS

influence

products

place





fishermen




Youth & Society

Lust for the smell of the sea, and the sound of waves that attract the fisherwoman in Ain Mraieh to the horizon. She takes solace in the sea. Her arm is said to be as strong as a thousand arms, and has been drawn by a thousand artists, and sculpted by never seen twice.

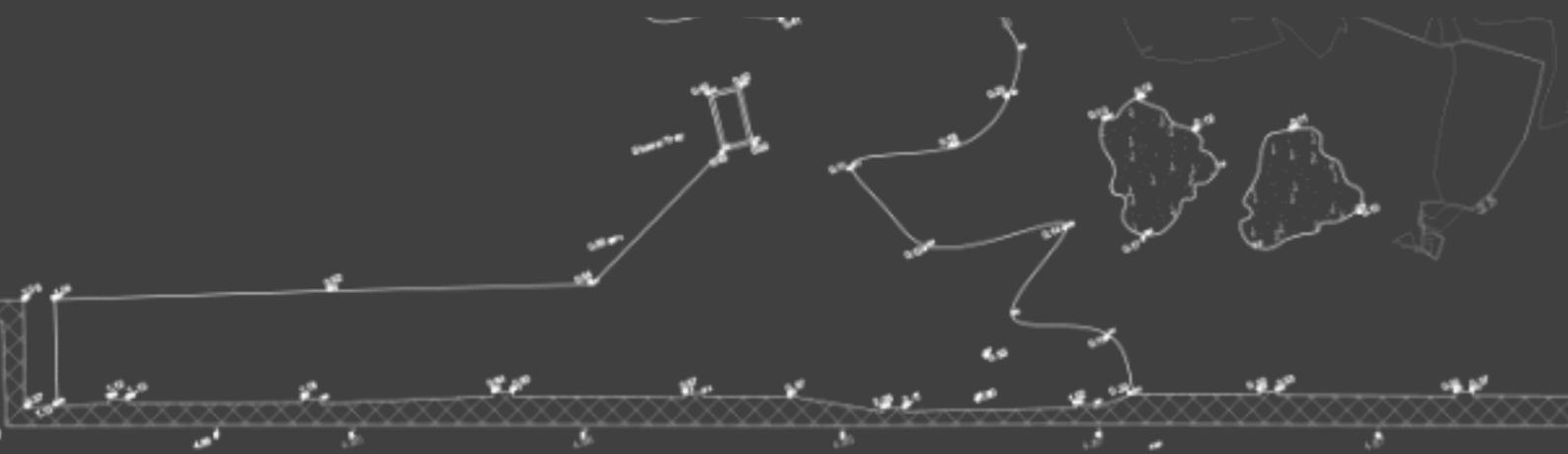
products

influence





Power. Power that is made, not born. Zayn looks at the horizon and considers power. The power of honesty and the power of lies. The power of a hunch. The difference between right and wrong. And who decides either. What if she were to decide? Would it be different? Better? She envisions that moment. She finds herself one step closer. It is in that moment. A moment of true liberation, where she finds peace, a space of her own and an undying momentum of work.



final words

The previous exercise is only one narrative choreography of the many that exist and that can be generated in the framework of e.f.s. It is an exercise that understands “the wants of the body.” Its vigorous application becomes an automatic design process that post-rationalizes its outcomes and transforms them to reveal the underlying motives of such processes. It is a politically fueled action- that uses fiction as a method to liberate itself from the oppressive notions that may exist in the mind.

What is generated from this form of architectural thought, is a narrative architectural space, where fiction plays an essential role in its production. The projects of e.f.s look into the future because they exist only for the perpetuation of other future narratives, and by this method they allow us to envision a future beyond existing structures of oppression and colonialism. Earth Field Studies becomes a tool for the decolonization of Arab bodies and minds.

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