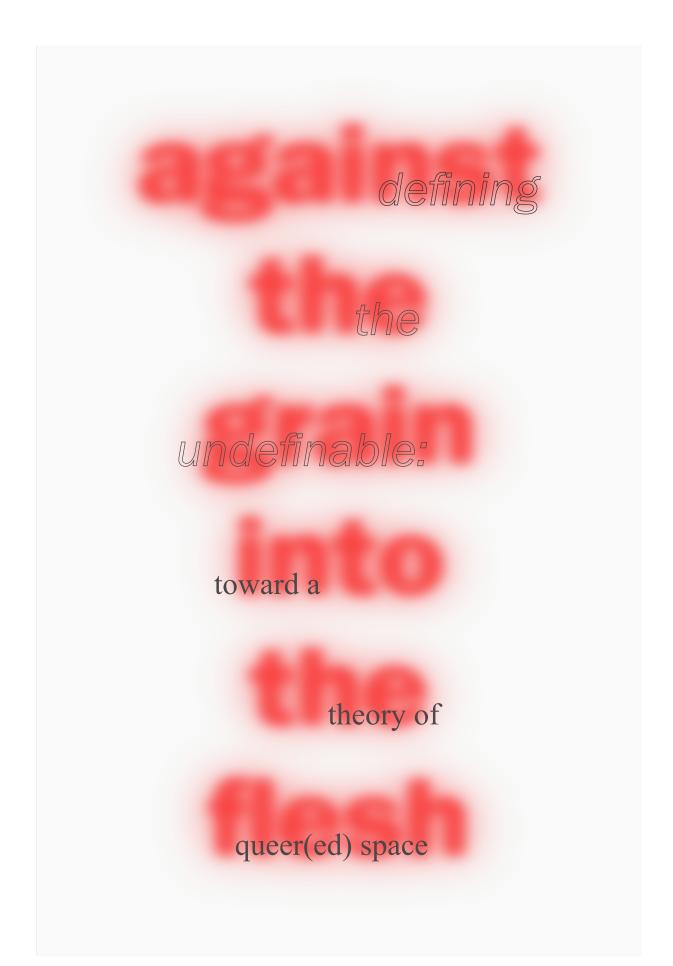


PROBLEMATISATION // INTRODUCTION



QUEER SPACE THEORY: FOUNDATIONS

Through the windows "TORAN FABRIC"





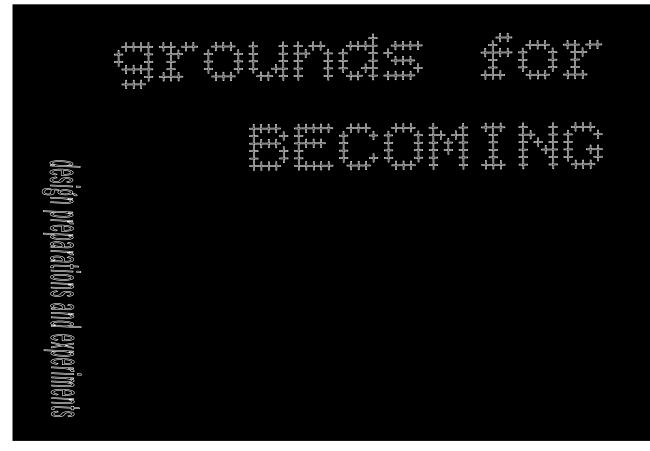
PROCESS // PRODUCT: TWO PARALLEL LINES



COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH: SHARED IMAGINATIVE DRAWINGS

**UNRULY FUTURES** 

INTO FAMILIAR FORMS

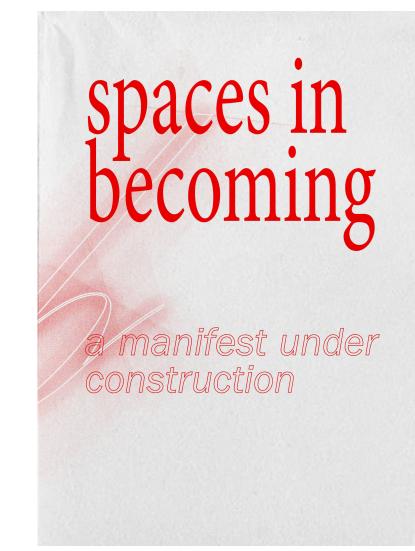


PRELIMINARY DESIGN

ISTANBUL THROUGH A QUEER LENS



REFLECTIONS // ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



QUEERING THE ARCHITECTURAL PROCESS

# ISTANBUL'S QUEER(ED) SPACE

# a process of collective building and celebration architecture master thesis

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beyond identity, it is a force in motion dising normativity. This thesis investigates how the queering of the architectural process can transform it from a site of oppression into one of empowerment. This is applied in the context of Istanbul, where urban renewal often serves as a tool of erasure, pushing marginalized communities to the edges of the city.

Accordingly, the project proposes an architecture that listens, brings together and resists fixity. Collaboration is engrained all throughout the project; during research, knowledge is not extracted from 'subjects' but constructed collectively: a process that's messy, embodied and always in flux. By break-

ing down traditional research and design hierarchies, it shifts authority away from the this is an inquiry of gathering and holding bracing transdisciplinarity and intersectionality as vital conditions, centralizing care and hospitality.

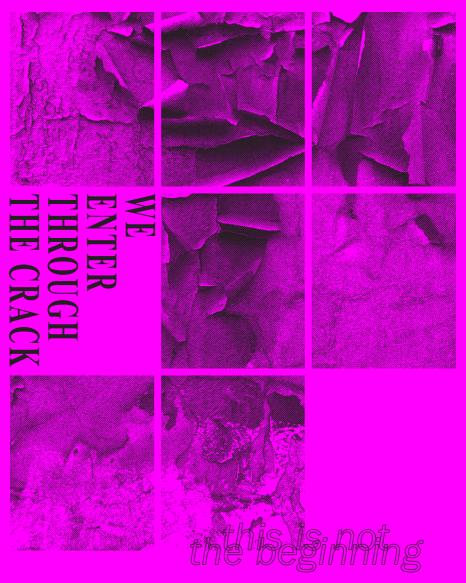
This approach unfolds through shared drawings, communal dinner nights, collective dreams and finally, a 1:1 scale spatial exploration in a queer nightclub in Istanbul. A space scavenged, assembled and transformed through improvisation and shared labor. The storyline reveals key anchor points for queering the architectural process: to value process over product, to embrace temporality, to reintroduce craft - through working hands-on, playfulness and solutions beyond cognition

are invited. Very much an unfinished product, tecture seen as part of a larger celebration.

None of the themes and practices should be seen as separate from one another; instead as interconnected facets, fragmented yet deeply intertwined. Hence the representation of the thesis through ten dispersed booklets, resisting a chronological or linear narrative. For the process is never directed as such; rather, multiple storylines unfold, diverge, overlap and trace back simultaneously. Ideas tangle, spill and repeat themselves as they're shaped by encounters, accidents and collective momentum.

As this is a digital version of the thesis, it is inevitably a document with a beginning and an end. Try to imagine how they are presented through separately printed booklets using different kinds of paper and handbinding methods to represent the multiplicity of the project. In physical form, they are housed in a box reminiscent of the structure built in the club at Istanbul – a collection illuminating how we built together.

Read the parts out of order, lay them side by side or revisit them individually. Each fragment holds a pulse of the project, together they form a kind of body - uneven and unfinished. A scattered archive resisting coherence or singularity: a queer(ed) architecture.



queerness has always been here

# At the crossroads of tradition and modernity, Istanbul and its ambiguity are perhaps most characterized by this state of in-betweenness. Having a long history of being capital of both the Byzantine and Ottoman empire, it reflects a rich cultural heritage and long history of celebration of diversity. However, Turkey's complicated geopolitical location involves regional and worldwide conflicts and economic instability puts pressure on its population, which is polarizing more and more. Conversely, political repression is aimed at homogenizing society, with the current regime driving people apart and asserting control over marginalized groups, including the LGBTQIA+ community. Over the past twenty years, the sociopolitical climate has become increasingly conservative and less tolerant towards deviations from the culturally constructed norm. The establishment of new laws as well as the appointment of loyalists of the current government to high-ranking positions amplify the totalitarianization of the country.1 The right to freedom of expression is being restricted as the government arrests journalists who express criticism and generally exerts control over the media<sup>2</sup> and every year, thousands of people are detained and prosecuted because of social media posts or other statements that insult the president or 'incite hatred and

enmity'.3

<sup>1.</sup> Yıldırım, Umut. (2024). Worsening Repression in Turkey: The Ongoing Crackdown on the LGBTI+ Community.

Akdeniz, Yaman & Kerem Altıparmak. (2018). Turkey: Freedom of Expression in Jeopardy.

<sup>3.</sup> Human Rights Watch. (2023). Turkey, Events of 2022.

Here's the controversy - whilst any form of political opposition is being suppressed, the government is accusing the LGBTQIA+ community of attacking the democracy, or whatever there's left of it. The gueer community is being demonized by politicians and the media and is portrayed as promoting 'genderlessness and individualism' and 'jeopardizing social norms and family values'.4 In doing so, AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi or 'Justice and Development Party') is diverting public attention from the country's ongoing problems such as economic crisis and gender inequality. By scapegoating the queer community, the government gains the support of conservative and religious voters in an increasingly less secular Turkey.5

<sup>5.</sup> Yıldırım, Umut. (2024). Worsening Repression in Turkey: The Ongoing Crackdown on the LGBTI+ Community.



Women's day, Karaköy pier, March 8 2022



Police violence during pride, Cihangir, June 26 2022 (source unknown)

The president, Recep Tayvip Erdogan (from now on referred to as Recep), is not alone in making these statements, some even more ridiculous than others. Head of Turkey's Directorate of Religious Affairs claimed LGBTQIA+ people and people living with HIV/ AIDS to be the cause of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, in 2022, a video on a state television broadcast showed an advertisement for an anti-LGBTQIA+ platform's event taking place in Istanbul, in which queerness was described as a virus and destructive of families.7 The persecution of the LGBTQIA+ rights movement is further emphasized by Recep depicting them as a terrorist organization during the 2023 campaign period.8 Even though visibility of the community has risen since the '80s and '90s, they have always been portrayed as sinners, outcasts and monsters.9

<sup>4.</sup> Koçak, Selma. (2023). According to the Development Plan LGBTI+s are "harmful"!.

<sup>6.</sup> Yıldırım, Umut. (2024). Worsening Repression in Turkey: The Ongoing Crackdown on the LGBTI+ Community.

<sup>7.</sup> Human Rights Watch. (2023). Turkey, Events of 2022.

<sup>8.</sup> Yıldırım, Umut. (2024). Worsening Repression in Turkey: The Ongoing Crackdown on the LGBTI+ Community.

Atalay, Özlem & Petra Doan. (2019). Reading the LGBT Movement Through Its Spatiality in Istanbul, Turkey.

The past year marks a worldwide witch hunt for transgenders as they are further exempt from legal systems. In Turkey too, new regulations have made it even more difficult for transgender people to access health care, especially trans-specific healthcare. The vital hormones they take in order to align their bodies align with their gender identity have become nearly impossible to obtain and leads to people having to access them in illegal and unsafe ways.<sup>10</sup>

These are but a few examples of an ongoing marginalization of the queer community in Turkey. As a counteract, there has been a long history of activism regarding their rights, which found momentum alongside the Gezi Park Resistance in 2013. At first, this movement was a reaction to the Taksim Project, an urban renewal project involving plans to build a shopping mall on the location of Gezi Park, one of the last green spaces in the center of the European side of Istanbul, Later, protests all around Turkey broke loose against the general decline of the country's democracy and continuous violation of human rights.11 People from all over the country with many different cultural backgrounds or political preferences joined in collective action and united under the name of capulcu or looter, initially a derogatory term given to them by Recep but then proudly adopted as a shared identity by the protesters, highlighting how social cohesion could emerge between different groups of people in Turkev. 12

This collective action was impactful for that year's Pride too: the parade held on İstiklal Street and Taksim Square attracted many diverse groups showing solidarity with the LGBTQIA+ community.<sup>13</sup> It became the largest Pride ever in Turkey, with over 100.000 individuals marching along.<sup>14</sup>

Although Pride 2013 celebration and he Gezi Park protests led to empowerment and solidarity for the queer community at first, in its aftermath this turned into in a general feeling of hopelessness due to the increase in authoritarianism that followed. 15 In the 2015 elections, the AKP lost its parliamentary majority as the pro-Kurdish HDP gained votes. In response to this loss, the AKP strengthened its anti-democratic policies and intensified efforts to suppress opposition groups, including the LGBTQIA+ community. That year, Pride was completely forbidden and led to the detainment of journalists and the use of water cannons, tear gas and rubber bullets against the marchers. 16 Since then, the situation has worsened and today, the gueer community in Istanbul faces violence and life-threatening situations. Local LGBTQIA+-rights organizations report an increase in attacks on the community<sup>17</sup> and the ILGA-Europe's Rainbow Index assessing LGBTOIA+-rights in Europe and Central Asia ranks Turkey second to last at 49 out of 50.18 The Trans Murder Project, tracking killings of transgender people worldwide, has recorded the highest number of cases amongst European countries in Turkev.19

<sup>10.</sup> ILGA Europe (2024). New regulations pose greater risks to trans people in Turkey.

Acar, Yasemin Gülsüm & Özden Melis Uluğ. (2023). Ten Years After the Gezi Park Protests: Looking Back on Their Legacy and Impact.

Uluğ, Özden Melis & Yasemin Gülsüm Acar. (2018). 'Names Will Never Hurt Us': A Qualitative Exploration of Çapulcu Identity Through the Eyes of Gezi Park Protesters.

Atalay, Özlem & Petra Doan. (2019). Reading the LGBT Movement Through Its Spatiality in Istanbul, Turkey.

<sup>14.</sup> Tar, Yıldız. (2022). A Step-by-Step Account of the Istanbul Pride: A Rebellion' Brief History.

Uluğ, Özden Melis & Yasemin Gülsüm Acar. (2018).
 What Happens After the Protests? Understanding Protest Outcomes Through Multi-level Social Change.

<sup>16.</sup> Yıldırım, Umut. (2024). Worsening Repression in Turkey: The Ongoing Crackdown on the LGBTI+ Community.

<sup>17.</sup> Dikmen, Kerem. (2023). Human Rights of LGBTI+ Persons 2022 Report.

<sup>18.</sup> ILGA Europe. (2023). Rainbow Europe Map and Index 2023.

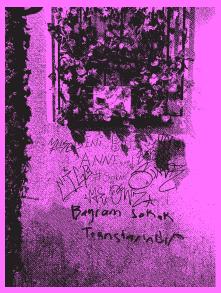
Trans Europe (TGEU). (2023). Trans Murder Monitoring Numbers.

Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention in 2021, a human rights treaty adopted by the Council of Europe ten years earlier, leads to more concerns. Established in order to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence, the withdrawal highlights gender inequalities and male supremacy in Turkish society. With a lack of legal protection and public support systems, women's rights, safety and representation are under threat.20 Recep claimed that the convention would encourage divorce and promote LGBTQIA+ rights and thus, undermine Turkish and Islamic family traditions and values. This motivation for the withdrawal reflects yet another embrace of anti-LGBTQIA+ policies.21

The repression of marginalized groups of people, which includes not only the LGBTQIA+ community but also ethnic minorities and women in general, is not only realized through policymaking but also translates into the urban environment through top-down decision-making processes that promote stateled gentrification and often destroy existing communities, creating inaccessible and exclusive urban areas. What's being built in Istanbul today is increasingly characterized by monotonous and generic spaces that erase all kinds of diversity and difference. This is done strategically in an attempt to 'cleanse' the city of things that are unregulated and turn it into a high-end cosmopolitan area.<sup>22</sup> Turkish scholar on transnational queer and feminist critique Evren Savcı writes about this extensively in her work Queer in Translation: Sexual Politics under Neoliberal Islam.

Hitherto widely tolerated informal housing markets and the casualities that were embedded in often disadvantaged neighborhoods have become unwanted elements in the city. An example is Ülker Street in Cihangir, Beyoğlu, the commercial and cultural center of Istanbul, where a large community of trans women used to live and work together as sex workers. In the '90s, the government started to loot and burn their houses, the local police told neighborhood shopkeepers to stop selling to transgenders and violently evicted them from their homes and workplaces.<sup>23</sup> <sup>24</sup> The problem is of course that by destroying the brothels, sex work does not disappear and continues being practiced under hazardous conditions. Further, as the trans community has been evicted, Cihangir has rapidly become a gentrified neighborhood where prices have risen disproportionately. The same has happened to Bayram street, highlighting the systemic repression. Though these places disappear from the map, they stay alive in the collective memory of the community.

Kaya, Efruz. (2022). Brief Past and Present of Transgender People in Turkey: Ülker Sokak, Esat and Eryaman, Bayram Sokak



"Bayram Street belongs to the trans community", Beyoğlu, December 26 2024

<sup>20.</sup> Al Jazeera. (2021). Turkey Pulls Out of Treaty Protecting Women from Violence.

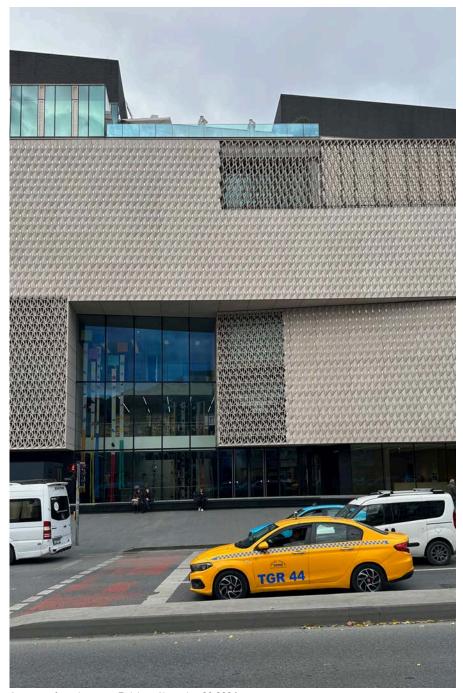
<sup>21.</sup> Yıldırım, Umut. (2024). Worsening Repression in Turkey: The Ongoing Crackdown on the LGBTI+ Community.

<sup>22.</sup> Savcı, Evren. (2021). Queer in Translation: Sexual Politics under Neoliberal Islam.

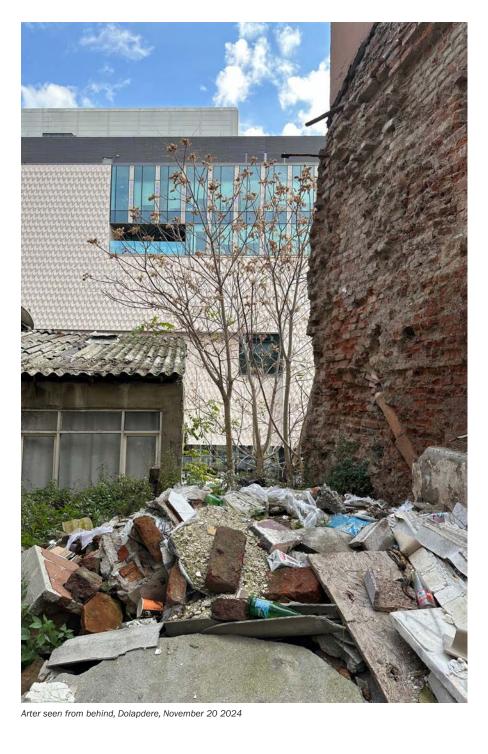
<sup>23.</sup> Babaoğlu, Eylem Çağdaş. (2022). Ülker Sokak.



Building shut off with corrugated sheets, Dolapdere Cadessi, November 26 2024



Arter seen from the street, Tarlabaşı, November 20 2024





























"Resist", Kurtuluş, May 18 2025

Another example is the urban renewal proiect of Tarlabaşı, next to Taksim Square, the modern city center of Istanbul which also lies in Beyoğlu district. It was originally home to many non-Muslim minorities, but Tarlabasi Boulevard was constructed in the '80s, running right through it and separating it from Taksim, many of them were forced to leave. The disparity between the immediate surroundings increased, especially with İstiklal Caddesi, the main commercial axis of the city. Tarlabası dilapidated and became the home of displaced communities, many of them stigmatized groups of people such as Kurdish refugees, sex workers and waste collectors or hurdacis.25 Exploiting the stigmatization of these people, the government started portraying Tarlabası as a 'criminal' or 'terrorist' neighborhood, and after eviction and demolition of old structures is now trying to recapitalize the area with the construction of hotels, luxurious residences and offices.26

Lastly there's the case of Sulukule, once a residential inner-city neighborhood along the Roman city walls in the district of Fatih on the Historic Peninsula. Dating back to Byzantine times, the area was historically inhabited by Romani communities who ran entertainment houses where customers were served food and drinks accompanied by Roma music and dance performances.27 In the late '80s however, these houses were forbidden because they were accused of being engaged in prostitution. With the entertainment houses gone and their main source of income lost, economic decline led to the physical deterioration of the neighborhood.28 After urban renewal plans emerged in the early 2000's, most of the inhabitants were forced to leave Sulukule and move to the margins of the city due to not having legal rights to stay or not being able to afford the new housing.29

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These three developments are but a few examples emphasizing how marginalized communities are actively being pushed out of the city center through urban development and systemic exclusion. In turn, this leads to an increased experience of not being part of the city and not being welcome in it. It's a vicious circle reinforcing feelings of disempowerment. Neoliberalist practices such as these are aimed at homogenizing the city, capitalizing and commodifying it. Also, the tabula rasa approach where urban renewal neglects what was formerly present on site shows a discontinuous perspective on the city and its inhabitants, directly targeting the places of community itself. Normativity is being enforced by the eradication of anything that doesn't fit in, illustrating the interrelatedness of marginalization, neoliberalism and totalitarianization. As the state is taking away the rights and feeling of empowerment and inclusivity of already marginalized people, they're increasing their power and control over them. Under the guise of 'protection of culture', claimed to be endangered by communities such as the LGBTQIA+ community, the government is actively destroying exactly that. On top of that, the resulting sterilized environments are far from the local architectural tradition of Istanbul, which is characterized by its irregularities.

Islam, Tolga, & Bahar Sakızlıoğlu. (2015). The Making of, and Resistance to, State-led Gentrification in Istanbul, Turkey.

Atalay, Özlem & Petra Doan. (2019). Reading the LGBT Movement Through Its Spatiality in Istanbul, Turkey.

Islam, Tolga, & Bahar Sakızlıoğlu. (2015). The Making of, and Resistance to, State-led Gentrification in Istanbul, Turkey

Karaman, Ozan & Tolga Islam. (2012). On the Dual Nature of Intra-Urban Borders: the Case of a Romani Neighborhood in Istanbul.

Islam, Tolga, & Bahar Sakızlıoğlu. (2015). The Making of, and Resistance to, State-led Gentrification in Istanbul, Turkev.

Contrasting to this practice disregarding citizens' right to the city, which is taking place not only in Istanbul but all over the world, thinkers like David Harvey emphasize that space is socially produced and constantly shaped and reshaped by its users. Inhabitants, especially those marginalized, should be given the power to alter the city to reflect their needs and aspirations.30 In Istanbul, where conservatism and rising authoritarianism is restricting the agency as well as visibility of minority groups and becoming increasingly hostile to expressions of diversity, identity and community, this is particularly important. Therefore, this thesis will go deeper into queer(ed) space as a counteract to these destructive tendencies in order to investigate how it could enable minority groups to not merely exist, but actively shape the city and create spaces of inclusivity, increasing spatial justice and urban democracy.

Despite or precisely because of their marginalization, the queer community shows ingenuity in how it navigates, claims and reclaims space. The sole act of being as you are in a place where that is not tolerated could be considered a form of activism on its own, and the artistry with which this creative self-expression goes hand in hand is beyond words. To enter a queer space in Istanbul can feel like entering another universe: underground yet colorful and radically different from the

often hostile city outside. Yet, these safe inner worlds remain entangled within the larger system of oppression, creating a field of tension between refuge and resistance. There is this disparity between community and the eviction of it, the friction between oppression and freedom of self-expression. By resisting the dominant heteronormativity and other structures of power, the queer community's narrative instead revolves around unique perspectives that challenge the mainstream, which is a strength: being distanced from the center, marginalized groups can have a clearer view of the contradictions and vulnerabilities within the system. The solidarity and adaptability of the community could be considered the power of the margin and their struggles for justice, freedom and equality is part of a global community network able to delegitimize the status quo. Relating queerness' resourcefulness to the problem statement moves into the research question:

How can queering the architectural process in the context of Istanbul turn it from a tool of oppression into a site of empowerment?

<sup>30.</sup> Harvey, David. (2008). The Right to the City.

As the queer community of Istanbul is pushed to the periphery of political, social and urban spaces, the dynamics within the majority of society are inclined to maintain the current situation and the capacity for resistance weakens. This leads to a city and society where only the values of dominant groups are being reflected and represented. Authoritarian control, social repression and exclusion from the urban fabric all reinforce one another; the interconnectedness of the political, the urban and the social leads into the themes that will be touched upon in the research and design. Oueer studies and queer

space theory provide a conceptual lens, ex-

ploring queer venues and investigating how

queerness is spatially manifested in the city

brings in the urban component and working

in collaboration with the community brings in

the social dimension.

None of the themes and practices should be seen as separate from one another, instead as interconnected facets part of a constellation of inquiry that is fragmented yet at the same time deeply interwoven. Hence the representation of the graduation project through these dispersed booklets – resisting a chronological or linear narrative. For the process is never directed as such; rather, multiple storylines unfold, diverge, overlap and trace back. Ideas tangle, spill and repeat themselves as they're shaped by encounters, accidents and collective momentum.

Housed in a box reminiscent of the structure built in Istanbul and still remaining there, this is a collection illuminating how we built together. Read the parts out of order, lay them side by side or revisit them out of sync. Each fragment holds a pulse of the project, together they form a kind of body – uneven and unfinished. A scattered archive resisting coherence or singularity: a queer(ed) architecture.



"Queers, resist" tagged at the seaside, Dolmabahçe Cadessi, May 11 2025

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defining

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q er(ed) space

'Queer' is both an adjective and a verb – to be queer vs. to queer. Thus, space could be both queer and queered. As an adjective, queer speaks of identity as an umbrella-term for those who don't conform to heterosexual and cisgender norms. The latter refers to people whose gender identity corresponds the sex registered for them at birth. When queer is interpreted as a verb, it is an action, something that affects: to queer means to go against the grain, to disrupt. That is the power of queerness, and thus, of queer and queered spaces. On top of spaces of coming together and community, queer(ed) spaces turn victimization into contention and resistance. In a society where oppressed groups of people are being driven apart and pushed out of the city, such spaces are paramount.

# alienated bodies

To start speaking of queer and queered space, it's necessary to understand gender and how not only our bodies are gendered, but the spaces they inhabit too. Judith Butler, a prominent American philosopher and gender theorist, was one of the groundbreaking thinkers to start vocalizing the idea that gender is an inherent trait or a stable identity. Rather than a static thing that is, gender is performative: something we do, a performance made up of a set of behaviors and actions. These performances follow social norms and expectations: gender is culturally constructed and reinforced through repetition. Society upholds this construct through strict regulatory expectations, creating a cultural framework assuming binary sex (male/female) and gender (masculine/feminine) and heterosexual desire as a naturally aligned product of that. This is what Butler calls the "heterosexual matrix". 1 Nevertheless, none of these traits are inherent to who we are. Instead, they are customs gendering and sexualizing our bodies and creating expectations on how to behave:

"The body, its size, shape, gestures, the very space it takes up, those masculine and feminine norms which mean that men sprawl and women don't; the differences in physicality that construct and reflect gender norms create ways of being in space."<sup>2</sup>

Heteronormativity entails society's normalization of heterosexuality and cisgenderness. Through this dominance, people are either privileged or disadvantaged. As our bodies and the spaces we inhabit are gendered, those who do not conform to the norm acquire a feeling of disorientation. In *Queer Phenomenology*, Sarah Ahmed, a British-Pakistani feminist scholar, examines how bodies are directed and positioned through social norms and how those orientations shape our experience of space, identity and desire. As gender norms are illusionary constructs, there are inevitably people falling outside of them, thus becoming disoriented. This leads into a feeling of loss of place, an inability to be fully part of our surroundings as we are authentically.<sup>3</sup> It unsettles, destroys one's self confidence and sense of belonging, makes one feel outcast, Othered.

<sup>1.</sup> Butler, Judith. (1999). Gender Trouble.

McDowell, Linda & Joanne Sharpe. (1997). Space, Gender, Knowledge: Feminist Readings, p. 203.

<sup>3.</sup> Ahmed, Sarah. (2005). Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others.

The estrangement and alienation from society often leads to feelings of melancholy, shame, resentment, escapism, withdrawal, self-hatred, loneliness and bitterness. Heather Love, an American scholar specialized in gender studies and queer theory, calls them 'backward feelings', haunting and all tied to the experience of social exclusion.4 Throughout history, queerness is marked with failure, impossibility oss. Whereas heterosexuality and cisgenderness are believed to be "rooted in a logic of achievement, fulfilment and success bodies and queer desires are deemed failure der theorist Jack/Judith Halberstam in a heteronormative society could be people to refuse the conver the ways upholding oppressive st mativity, capitalism, patriarchy failure, queers and other margin alternative ways of life and expectations. Not being most often, male) star nexpected pleasures - freedom of expression and sexuali and alternative way of being:

"Failure allows us that disc pline behavioral an develop ment with the goa of delivering is from unruly childhoods to orderly and predic able adulthoods.

Similarly, Love lings of isolati longing are signs of not conf ming to tems that impos These backward derstood as a e sensitivity to one's surr To be disorien portunity to discover and rea necessity to survive. settlements and communities. Forced evictions teach lessons of inventiveness and skill; by re-orienting oneself away from normative paths, possibilities for different ways of being open up. Further, solidarity with other oppressed groups can emerge from shared experiences of rejection and loss, leading to parallels between queer experiences and those of other marginalized groups.8

<sup>8.</sup> Love, Heather. (2007). Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History.



# fields of resistance

Thus, by being out of place, new fields of resistance open up, a creative potential informing new futures and possibilities for living otherwise. By existing beyond society's existing frameworks, queerness allows us to re-create and reconside norms and rules and create "magical worlds of transformation".9 As is done in alchemy, negati transformed ad turned into a strength. That is the perform tive value of queering having the power to disrupt a unruliness defying oppressive structures. For not only queerness a critique on essentialist approaches to gender, it also goes beyond dualist thinking in general, diffusi sions and culturally made up binaries in their entire beyond the rejection of exclusionary systems of dondgomor od transphobia, so are as racism, ablism classicism, sexsm and anthropocentrism.

It is exactly this focus on dif that often lead to clashing ident litical theorist, argues that the construction with the conflicts it generates, p ing political structures by integral systems. People shape and affind societal norms and by distinguishing th lation to others. Characterizing and labell ipevitably I ads to comparisons between them and for an order of superiority to appear. These iden ead to exclusion and ma ginalizatio queer politics, by dismissing the focus on diff lination to differentiate,

ret even as queer politics aim to resist rigid structures and offer a fluid, anti-essentialist alternative, in practice it often becomes entangled with the very dynamics it seeks to escape. sibility, legitimacy, and recognition within The turn paradox: queerness, normativity, is increasingly reshaped to reproduces the very logics it seeks to ove emphasizes that modern LGBTQIA+ us too much on pride, progress and nces central to many queer lives.11 Further, n can lead to gentrification and comasis on liberation, protection and inrce existing hierarchies and systemeer lives today are folded into proper behalf death and death-like conditions nto disposable bodies and populations". 12 The tance and inclusion can lead to stabilization of identities once imagined as open-ended.

07). Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer Histo-Savcı, Evren. (2021). Queer in Translation: Sexual Politics under Neoliberal Is-

<sup>4.</sup> Love, Heather, (2007), Feeling Backward; Loss and the Politics of Queer History,

<sup>5.</sup> Halberstam, Judith. (2011). The Queer Art of Failure, p. 94.

Halberstam, Judith. (2011). The Queer Art of Failure, p. 3.
 Love, Heather. (2007). Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History.

# disidentification

Therefore, it isn't necessarily about gaining the same rights such as equal marriage, being allowed to join the military or other ways of being fully taken into mainstream society. The aim isn't normalization, rather, it's about losing the sense of normativity altogether. Contemporary society is linked to countless of ruined lives and histories of hegemony, loss and injury. Rather than being taken into those oppressive systems, they need to be challenge them entirely. To confront the system. José Esteban Muñoz, a Cuban queer theorist, draws on French linguist Michel Pêcheux to outline three possible modes of engaging with dominant ideology. The first is identification, in which individuals align themselves with dominant norms and expectations, effectively becoming what he calls "Good Subjects". The second is counteridentification, where subjects resist by actively opposing these norms, often in ways that remain reactive and bound to the power structures they seek to reject. According to Muñoz, neither of these strategies offers a real way out. Instead, he proposes a third mode: disidentification — a more nuanced, transformative approach:

"Disidentification is the third mode of dealing with dominant ideology, that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather, disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology," 13 14

By neither fully rejecting nor fully conforming to the system, disidentification is a strategy trying to transform a cultural logic from within, reinterpreting and reworking it in order to make space for things previously rendered invisible or unthinkable. This negotiation makes room for subversive forms of identity and performance. Rather than counteridentification, which can unintentionally reinforce the systems it seeks to challenge, it creates a more nuanced form of resistance by navigating through the dominant structures, selectively appropriating elements, creating new modes of existence:

"Disidentification is a point of departure, a process, a building. Although it is a mode of reading and performing, it is ultimately a form of building. This building takes place in the future and in the present, which is to say that disidentificatory performance offers a utopian blueprint for a possible future while, at the same time, staging a new political formation in the present." 15

Even the reclamation of the word *queer* by the community in the 1980s, which started as a derogatory slur mostly used for homosexual men, could be considered a form of disidentifiction. The word was at the time still connotated with odd, unusual or haunting, <sup>16</sup> but amidst the AIDS epidemic it became a symbol of anarchy. Political activists and queer punks started using it for memorable slogans such as "we're here, we're queer, we will not live in fear". <sup>17</sup> Queer Nation, an LGBTQIA+rights organisation, passed out pamphlets during New York Pride 1990 explaining their intentions behind reclaiming the word:

"When a lot of lesbians and gay men wake up in the morning we feel angry and disgusted, not gay. So we've chosen to call ourselves queer. Using 'queer' is a way of reminding us how we are perceived by the rest of the world. It's a way of telling ourselves we don't have to be witty and charming people who keep our lives discreet and marginalized; we use queer as gay men loving lesbians and lesbians loving being queer. Queer, unlike GAY, doesn't mean MALE." 18

Despite the evocation of a long history of insult and abuse, the meaning of the word has been transformed and now connects people defying norms of gender and sexuality all over the world. 19 Tracing back the history of the word queer further, it's interesting how in its etymological root it was already connotated with spatiality. Likely it derives from the Indo-European root -twerkw, meaning 'across', a root also yielding the Germanic quer or 'transverse' and the Latin torquere, 'to twist'. 20 Queer, thus, is a spatial term, which later got into use for a 'twisted sexuality', a sexuality deduced as bent or crooked. 21 This spatiality is not coincidental, perhaps. As mentioned above, sexuality can be considered a spatial formation through bodies inhabiting gendered and sexualized spaces, and likewise, bodies are sexualized in the way in which they inhabit space. 22

temporality, hybridity, collectivity "space": do we mean physical space? Or do we mean the space of discursive practices, texts, codes of behaviour and regulatory norms that organize social life?"23 When moving into the field of space, it's important to under-stand space beyond its tangible attributes and dimensions. Space is inextricably linked to cultural, social and political eanings that shape how it is perceived and used, reflecting power dynamics, societal norms and collective memory.<sup>24</sup> The genealogy of queer spaces reveals a constant state of transformation and a ceaseless subjection to change. Throughout history and across cultures, queer communities have taken it upon themselves to provide their own sources of care, edumean the cation, safety, and pleasure. Queer spaces always come and go, sometimes persisting in one location for decades, and other times existing as a fleeting moment or brief meeting.<sup>25</sup> When forced to hide parts of yourself to fit in, or unable to belong due to visible differences, you seek spaces where you can be authentic and unconstrained. These spaces allow for self-expression without fear or shame, offering freedom and connection with others who share similar experiences. Such places are not just meaningful - they can be life-saving.26 26. Furman, Adam Nathaniel & Mardell, Joshua. (2022). Queer Spaces: an Atlas codes of behaviour and regulatory norms that organize social life?"

<sup>13.</sup> Pêcheux, Michel. (1982). Language, Semantics and Ideology.

Muñoz, José Esteban. (1999). Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics, p. 11.

Muñoz, José Esteban. (1999). Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics, p. 200

<sup>16.</sup> Betsky, Aaron. (1997). Queer Space: Architecture and Same Sex Desire.

<sup>17.</sup> Hall, Jake. (2016). Tracing the history of the word 'queer.'

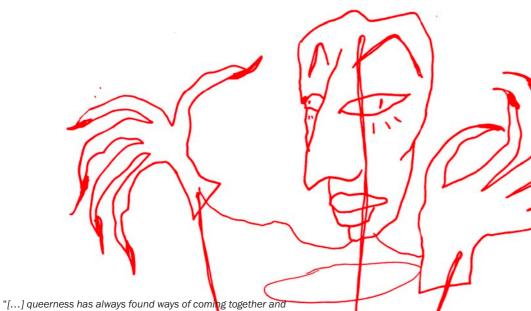
<sup>18.</sup> Queer Nations. (1990). Queers Read This.

<sup>19.</sup> Love, Heather. (2007). Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer Histo

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. (1993). Tendencies.

<sup>21.</sup> Cleto, Fabio. (2002). Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject.

<sup>22.</sup> Ahmed, Sarah. (2006). Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others.



occupying, transforming and creating spaces against the odds - and with undying vim."<sup>27</sup>

On the verge of invisibility and publicness, existing in fleeting moments, leaving enough trace for the right people to find it yet evaporating when those with bad intentions would. What may have been a survival strategy at first, ambiguity and ephemerality is now the major strengths of queer(ed) space.<sup>28</sup> The risks inherent to living a queer life beginstered an architecture born of necessity and ingenuity, one that thrives in the overlooked, liminal spaces at the margins of the heteronormative world. These 'non-places', a term introduced by French anthropologist Marc Augé to describe transient a anonymous spaces, are reimagined and effectively formed into 'places'.29 A non-lieu or non-place lacks inherent meaning, but its metamorphosis into a Place signifies its redefinition as meaningful and powerful. The appropriation of these invisible spaces and their reimagining constitute acts of transgression and resistance.30 As mentioned earlier, in more liberated environments, the ability to be openly queer sometimes is considered as a given and tends to be disconnected from its historical trajectory. However, queerness can only remain queer if its reactive nature is maintained.31

Drawing from this genealogy, temporality emerges as a first core characteristic of queer space. Reducing queer space to its 'defining principles' would be essentialist and defeat the purpose of this text. However, it is compelling that the principles recurring throughout the field of queer space are all particularly undefinable or ungraspable things. Key is the embrace of the fluid nature of time and a constant state of becoming, leading to disappearances, divisions, additions and other evolutions. Queer space resists not only spatial fixity but also temporal permanence; it thrives in the ephemeral, the momentary, the improvised — not despite its instability, but because of it. It's an interplay of disappearance and return rooted in the now but reaching toward the not-yet. Such transient spaces challenge the imposing rigidity of spatial permanence. Next to temporality, hybridity could therefore be considered as a second central element. Queer space often highlights its ability to deform, subvert and appropriate, 32 and this hybridity helps foster an understanding of space as something that keeps transforming, resisting categorization and adapting to changing needs and contexts in a way that is non-prescriptive.

freedom, formed and formless, in permanent metamorpho-

"Perhaps then to queer, to be queering is to be at this thresh-old between order and disorder, the liminal point-moment of freedom, formed, and family in the control of t sis. Against the architectural guardians of our lives, to follow George Bataille, a path opens towards 'bestial monstrosity'."<sup>33</sup>

transforming and creating spaces against the odds and with undying vim."

<sup>27.</sup> Furman, Adam Nathaniel & Mardell, Joshua. (2022). Queer Spaces: an Atlas of LGBTQIA+ Places and Stories, p. 53.
28. Muñoz, José Esteban. (1996). Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Note

<sup>29.</sup> Augé, Marc. (1995). Non-Places: Introduction to Anthropology of Supermoder-

<sup>30.</sup> Choquette, Elio. (2020). Queering Architecture: (Un)Making Places.
31. Munuera, Ivan. (2022). "Palladium". In Queer Spaces: an Atlas of LGBTQIA+

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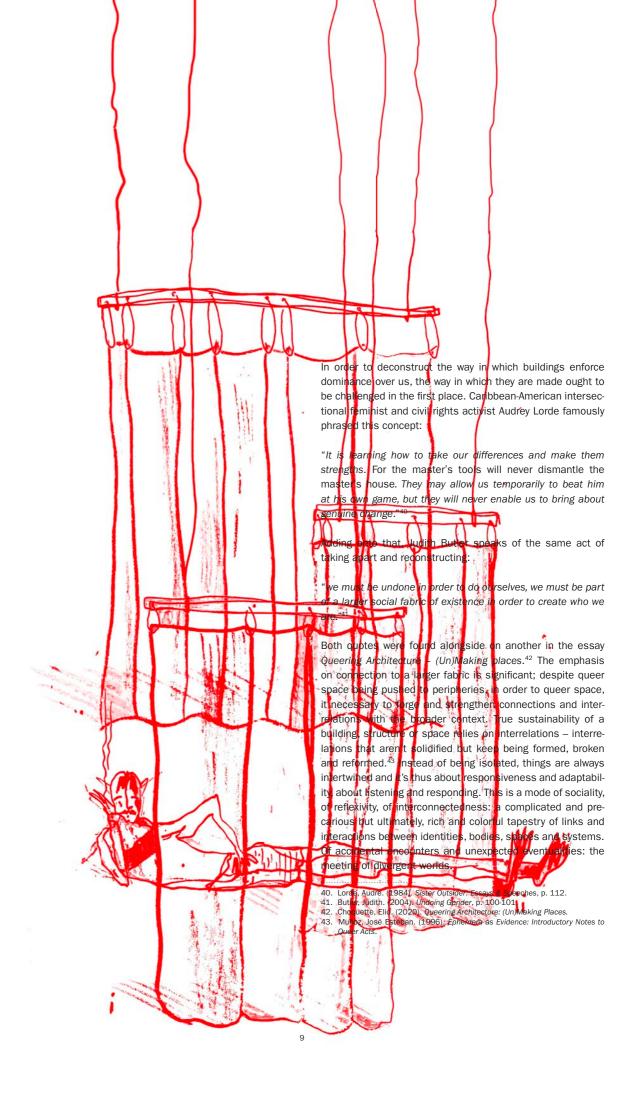
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33. Bataille, Georges. (1970). "Architecture". In Oeuvres Complètes I: Premiers écrits 1922-1940.

<sup>34.</sup> Jaques, Carlos. (2016). Queering straight space: Thinking towards a que

Queer space is associated with the monstrous because it challenges societal norms and boundaries, much like the concept of monstrosity represents what is Othered or deemed unnatural. Similar to how gueer individuals are turned into monsters by oppressive societies, so do the spaces they inhabit. In this vein, exploring the metaphor of the body as a representation of space can be insightful. Within the queer community, body modification is ubiquitous and holds profound significance beyond aesthetic transformation - the reshaping of flesh, the incorporation or removal of body parts, hacking the inner endocrine system through hormone therapy; the body becomes a site of agency, subversion and self-determination, a place of adjustment of the appearance in order to align it with identity, to make the outer reflect the inner. 35

In the same way, queer space embodies hybridity and fluidity, adapting and reshaping itself. Just as queer bodies are reclaimed through acts of agency and self-definition, so too can space be reimagined from the ground up - no longer designed and built for people, but with them. By losing the autonomy of the architect, people regain power over the spaces they use. In traditional architecture practice, this is often omitted; buildings are assumed to control the environment and its users, thus neglecting the transformative power of environments and people over architecture.36 By embracing this mutual relationship, the approach to the built environment becomes more horizontal, less hierarchical. It challenges the dominance it usually has over people. Community-based design and building emphasize inclusion and open-ended, participatory processes that allow people to shape space and fosters connection to their surroundings.37 Further, the informal social interactions at the foundation of this shaping of space create more socially cohesive communities.38 Co-creation involves playfulness, which is an essential element in bringing people together and reinforcing a sense of belonging.39 It also naturally leads to the acceptance and embrace of change - changes within the community as well as reactions to what's going on outside make the spaces gradually evolve or radically reconstruct over time.



<sup>35.</sup> Ribas, Ailo. (2022). "Train Journey". In Queer Spaces: an Atlas of LGBTQIA+

Places and Stories.
36. Lefebre, Henri. (1991). The Production of Space.

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<sup>39.</sup> Huizinga, Johan. (1949). Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture.

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# **shadows that hold us:** DWELLING IN



# i. the home

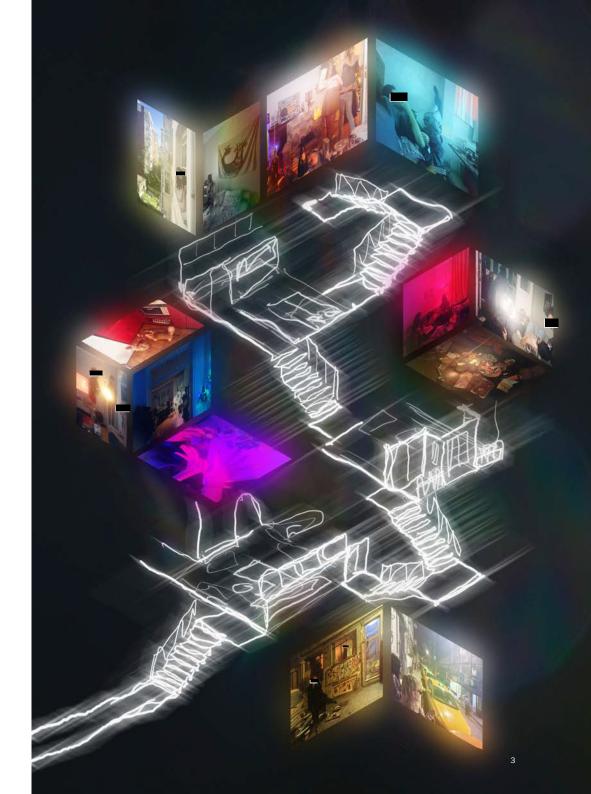
"These alternative domesticities were little queer worlds that catered for those whose lifestyles were disallowed in the public sphere, where memories could be accumulated, milestones in life be celebrated, and their value as humans to one another be affirmed and marked in physical form." 1

First, but perhaps the most important of all. The home is often the place where you can most freely express yourself, detached from society's gaze. It offers the opportunity to create spaces that reflect unique queer experiences and resist conventional norms of domesticity. This is the place where of meeting your chosen family and reinventing family structures. It's another example of the power of the margin; by failing the normative family structure, queers also get to reinvent the concept of family and therefore the concept of home, redefining community and intimacy.

"Far from viewing families we choose as imitations or derivatives of family ties created elsewhere in society, many lesbians and gay men alluded to the difficulty and excitement of constructing kinship in the absence of what they called 'models'."<sup>2</sup>

Growing up without full support from one's family or proper role models becomes something powerful: free from conventions, queers often have the ability to reconsider how they share, how they love. And it's palpable – the joy of spending time at friends' homes in Istanbul, the endless chats, the coffees, the preparties, and always the afterparties. Following a night out, it's rare to go home alone, even if it's just for the sake of a last drink, some more music. The regular sleep-overs and friends crashing on couches all exemplify a communal lifestyle.

Despite the beauty that the home can be, it's important to note that the privilege of having one that's safe is not available to all. Many queers struggle to find housing. Many landlords refuse to rent out to the community, preferring heteronormative family structures over alternative ones. Furthermore, because of hyperinflation and gentrification, prices skyrocket, making homes only available to those with supportive families or those with fairly paid jobs, both luxuries out of reach for many queer individuals.



<sup>1.</sup> Furman, Adam Nathaniel & Mardell, Joshua. (2022). Queer Spaces: an Atlas of LGBTQIA+ Places and Stories, p. 1.

<sup>2.</sup> Weston, Kath. (1991). Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship, p. 116.

# ii. zeynep yenge

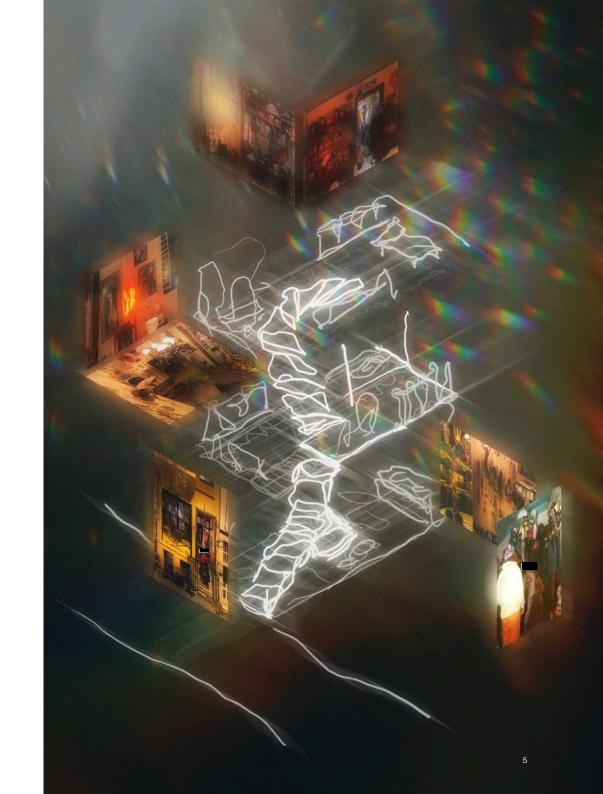
Upon entry to this gem of a shop, the owner cries out: "welcome to the electric world!". Perhaps it refers to the energetically charged nature of the space. Maybe it's a nod to the unconventionality, the futuristic otherworldliness that's hard to deny. Or it could be referring to the exhilaration, the playfulness, the never knowing what to expect. In any case, this shop full of vintage pieces is a world of its own, breathing creativity and vibrancy. The items on display are reminiscent of the most flamboyant scenes and makes one wonder who would have worn them previously and to which occasion – undoubtedly they carry fantastic stories.

When I came here first years ago, I called the owner, Öznür, *abla*, or 'sister' in Turkish. She seemed offended – perhaps it was too amicable. I asked her what to call her instead, *hanimefendi* or 'lady', perhaps? But it led to more frustration, so I wondered if she'd rather be referred to as *bey* or 'sir'. Annoying even more, we settled for something in between and I've been calling her *hanimbey* or 'ladysir' ever since. It was the start of an eccentric friendship.

Online reviews of the place online are often negative. People complain about the messiness, the unruliness, the attitude of the owner, whom they call mentally ill. I guess they don't get it. What makes this place special is exactly that: the unpredictability, the disorder, as well as the heart of Öznür invested in it. Once I asked her what this place meant to her, and she said it's her <code>aṣiğim</code>, 'my lover'. It's one of those places that are becoming more and more rare these days, when people are getting used to perfection and overly smooth surfaces, leaving less room for the nooks and crannies that give meaning to the city.

The yellow façade stands out from afar and already there's items hanging from the windows and doors, Turkish psychedelic rock artists like Barış Manço or Öznürs saxophone spilling from them onto the street. You take the stairs up and enter, finding walls covered in the most peculiar items, as well as Öznür's artworks drawn directly onto their surface. More often than not, the place changed in some ways and there's always room for suggestions. Inside, it's as though time doesn't exist and frequently, I'd leave hours later, after having drunk rose wine in the basement where a little sprout grew from a crack in the sink, having smoked cigarettes and joints upstairs and having tried on many outfits. Embellished in shiny dresses and jewels, we'd head out onto the streets to shoot pictures. These were the first occasions I had the courage to wear dresses in public again, after many years of hesitation. Inner demons are the worst of all and it's fascinating that it took a city like Istanbul to overcome them.

Last December I returned, and explained Öznür and her sister Gizem the project I was working on, describing the concept of queer space and all. After telling the story, Gizem was like "maybe what you're speaking of is exactly a space like this, no?". Quite true. That day, I met a new friend working in the shop, rocking long hair and an air of elegance people can only be only born with. I asked them what are their favorite queer spaces of Istanbul were. At first they answered that they didn't really visit any but after a minute, they changed their mind – this must be the place.



## iii. mecra

Kadıköy, one of the most liberal districts of Istanbul – lying on the Anatolian side of the city and next to the Bosphorus and the Sea of Marmara – always feels like an escape from the rest of the city. The area is full of bars and *tekels* selling tobacco and alcohol, gathering many people for street drinking. Amidst this bustle there's Mecra, a bar that hosts drag shows every Wednesday. Drag creates a space for alternative identities, especially powerful in an environment trying to erase them. Exposing gender as a performance through performance, it critiques heteronormativity by exposing the binary of masculinity and femininity as constructed and not innate:

"When such categories come into question, the reality of gender is also put into crisis: it becomes unclear how to distinguish the real from the unreal. And this is the occasion in which we come to understand that what we take to be "real," what we invoke as the naturalized knowledge of gender is, in fact, a changeable and revisable reality." 3

At the entrance, newcomers or strangers get asked the question whether they know what kind of event is taking place that night. Then come the stairs, typical for so many of Istanbul's venues – the emphasis always is on vertically connected spaces. On the way up, there's the closed room in which the performers dress up and hang out together around show time. This space is full of feathers, make-up palettes, hastily eaten plates of food and half-finished drinks. Finally, there's the terrace floor and again, it's this end station where most people gather.

Often there is Turkish pop playing, people chatting and smoking on the backside balcony. Around midnight, when the floor is full, a pathway from the stairs to the dj booth is cleared with retractble belts. There's an air of anticipation as the queens make their way up the stairs onto the make-shift runway and do their performances. Despite the lack of a proper stage, these talents make the crowd go wild.

\* At the time of writing, Mecra had to close its upper floor and therewith, the drag nights are no longer possible. After continuous raids by the police, they finally found a reason to prohibit the drag nights. Without the drag nights, the venue was forced to move and do it all over. Fortunately a new space under a new name was opened recently, offering new potential.

3. Butler, Judith. (1999). Gender Trouble, p. xxiii.



# iv. şahika

The typology of the nightclub always played an important role in the development and protection of queer culture. This is the ultimate space of transience where upon arrival, time stands still and exterior worries evaporate.

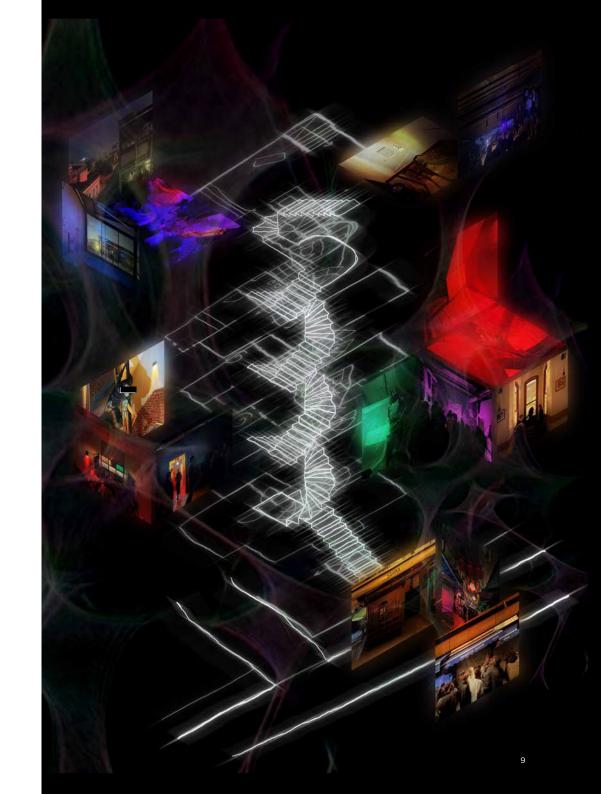
"Simultaneously being a place of refuge, release and rejuvenation, the nightclub is where many can go to feel safe, very often for the first time, and to be themselves as they explore not only who they are but also who they could be. A space of personal, social and sexual liberation."

Sheltered by darkness and protected from society's watchful eye, the club is like an alternate universe where many of the rules, prejudices and taboos of the 'real world' don't apply. This ambiguity is especially present at Şahika, on Nevizade Sokak, a street where many of Istanbul's population go to enjoy themselves. The area always being crowded and loud, the experience of moving from the publicness of street through the entrance of club is high-spirited. Upon entry, you immediately climb several wooden staircases, with each floor gaining a feeling of seclusion. The terrace floor is where most of the magic happens and the relation with the outside is almost completely lost.

The club lies at the heart of Beyoğlu and many of the places established on Nevizade Sokak used to be Greek taverns or *meyhanes*, more on them later. This strengthens the feeling of intimacy; with its many floors and separate rooms Şahika has a feeling of a cozy home, and on the top floor, 'Şahika upperground', it feels as if being on top of the city – especially when the roof retracts itself on summer nights or when climbing through the escape door onto the fire stairs (this is absolutely not allowed).

At the end of the night, it's hard to remember how many times you took those stairs up and down or the amount of people you ran into on the way. These stairs form the space where you encounter your friends, moments taking place under many states of consciousness – the queueing up in the line for the toilet, the challenge of seeing with how many people you can fit in a cubicle, never leaving the same as you entered.

The club's program goes beyond mere hedonism too, from markets where local artists sell their works to performances of Istanbul's stars and dolls. I recall one night, last December, which started with a screening of *Pink Flamingos*, a 1972 cult classic defying societal norms starring the legendary Divine. Initially hated for its shocking content, the film later gained acclaim as a sharp critique of hypocrisy and conformity. We watched the movie on a Sunday night, an intimate cinema setting, followed by some thrilling drag performances and later on some DJ-sets. One night, three entirely different experiences brought together under the same roof.



<sup>4.</sup> Summers, Andy. (2022). "Architecture Fringe". In Queer Spaces: an Atlas of LGBTQIA+ Places and Stories, p. 80.

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where queerness slips through the windows ALTERNATIVE USES OF THE URBAN FABRIC

The queered uses of space in Istanbul are omnipresent and go beyond the LGBTQIA+ community - the urban fabric is rich in informal appropriations that defy normativity. Temporal interventions using materials or space in a way initially not intended for, are a practice connecting many of its inhabitants. At first glance possibly unrelated or irrelevant, looking at them through a queer lens, they offer valuable lessons. Moreover, essential to queering space are the interconnections with the surroundings and what's present already and the local environment. Engrained in the urban fabric of Istanbul, these cases show how local habits and common traditions can be very different from neoliberalist approaches that are imposed from the outside and focus on continuity instead.

In his work *Kuir Mekân* or 'Queer Space', Levent Şentürk critiques the clean, ordered logic of modern architecture, calling it complicit with heteronormative, masculinist, and ableist ideologies. He uses the Turkish *kir* or 'dirt' both literally and metaphorically to describe that which is expelled from these spaces — much like queer bodies and desires. The similarity between *kuir* or 'queer' and *kir* or 'dirt' is not merely a phonetic coincidence – both are being expelled from the city. In terms of architecture, *queer is a dirty theory – it is the theory of dirt*:

"Kir, yaratıcı ve karmaşık bir yapaylıktır. Kültürün inkâr ettikleri ve günahlardır kir; gözden ırak tutulmak istenenlerdir. Kir temizliğin varlık koşulu ve kültürün yaslandığı zemindir. Kentleri, sürekli kir üreten ve üretilen kir üzerinde hakimiyet kurulan yerler olarak, kir imparatorlukları gibi görebiliriz. Kir çoğuldur, ölçülemezdir.

[...]

Nerede kir varsa, orada düzen ve denetim ortaya çıkar. Heterososyal düzen temizdir; kendi temizliğini üretebilmek için, karşıtı olan homoseksüelliği kirli sayması, kirletmesi gerekir. kir nedeniyle iç temiz dış kirli kabul edilir; bu mekânsal bir normdur; için kirli, dışın temiz olması ise ahlaksal bir normdur."

1. Şentürk, Levent. (2015). Kuir Mekân, p. 11.

"Dirt is a creative and complex artificiality. It is what culture denies and what it considers sinful; it is what is wanted to be kept out of sight. Dirt is the condition for the existence of cleanliness and the very ground upon which culture rests. We might view cities as empires of dirt – places that continuously produce dirt and assert dominance over the dirt produced. Dirt is plural, immeasurable.

[...]

Wherever there is dirt, order and control arise. The heterosocial order is clean; in order to reproduce its own cleanliness, it must deem its opposite – homosexuality – as dirty, and must make it dirty. Because of dirt, the inside is considered clean and the outside dirty; this is a spatial norm; to consider outside as clean is then a moral norm."



Forlorn red carpet, Haliç, May 26 2022

Just like dirt, queerness is something spatial and both of them have a disruptive role in common. The removal of dirt equals the removal of cultural expression, analogous to the removal of expressions of queerness. The following examples of queerd uses of the urban fabric highlight a similar sense of going against the grain, of not smoothening the messy, not ordering the chaotic. This extends from the scale of the material to bigger ones such as that of the use of a street or the functioning of an informal system resisting larger, more dominant ones.

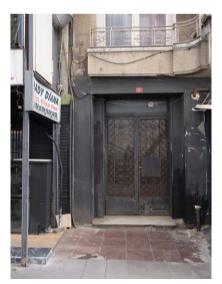


Gateway to the sea, Haliç, May 26 2022

# I. MATERIALS

Beginning with materiality, the streets of Istanbul highlight a layered and unpredictable nature that is in constant flux. Multiple textures and temporary fixes refuse a coherent image or final and determined urban form. Rather than hiding elements no longer in use or replacing them once damaged, the materials become a way to retrace these spaces' past and narrative. This improvisational and ad hoc way of building resonates with queerness through its non-normative embrace of multiplicity and messiness, rejecting a necessarily 'proper' outlook. The overlapping of different materials - old and new, smooth and rough, cared-for and discarded - creates a tactile and textured landscape.

Further, the perpetual act of reparations on those surfaces underscore the refusal of clear beginnings or endings. A cyclical patchwork that rejects linearity and a disposable or single-use culture. This is beyond an aesthetic choice: it speaks to care and echoes queer modes of existence that are resilient and in a constant state of becoming.



'Lady Diana Night Clup Bar'



Layered materials, Osmanbey, May 16 2025



Unyielding reparations, Tarlabaşı, May 14 2025

8

Throughout the city, objects are continually repurposed: a piece of scrap metal becomes a makeshift shelf, an old bucket a plant holder, a car tire filled with concrete the base for a traffic sign. Instead of discarding of dirt, it is an active component in shaping the city with it. These practices defy fixed functions and highlight the radical potential of re-use. Façades are hung with hooks, wires and other elements that allow them to hold yet more objects. This constant reimagining of function challenges the logic of purpose-built design and instead celebrates flexibility and spontaneity which is so engrained in queer space too. More than an element of separating space, walls become places of interaction as they are brimming with attachments, writings

and other left-overs. Nothing is static or final and thus, the cityscape reveals itself as alive and endlessly morphing, refusing to conform to strict boundaries. The city's surfaces aren't mere backgrounds for living but instead, are actively participating in the creation of possibility and adaptation.

#### II. ELEMENTS

Throughout the city, objects are continually repurposed: a piece of scrap metal becomes a makeshift shelf, an old bucket a plant holder, a car tire filled with concrete the base for a traffic sign. Instead of discarding of dirt, it is an active component in shaping the city with it. These practices defy fixed functions and highlight the radical potential of re-use. Façades are hung with hooks, wires and other elements that allow them to hold yet more objects.



The tiniest stairway, Tarlabaşı, May 9 2025



Washing drum turned fire pit, Karaköy, December 12 2025



Facade is for attachments, Karaköy, May 11 2025



Everything can hold plants, November 29 2024



Dead tree trunk becomes column, Karaköy, May 11 2025

12



Temporal çayhane, Dolapdere, April 9 2025

This constant reimagining of function challenges the logic of purpose-built design and instead celebrates flexibility and spontaneity which is so engrained in queer space too. More than an element of separating space, walls become places of interaction as they are brimming with attachments, writings and other left-overs. Nothing is static or final and thus, the city-scape reveals itself as alive and endlessly morphing, refusing to conform to strict boundaries. The city's surfaces aren't mere backgrounds for living but instead, are actively participating in the creation of possibility and adaptation.

#### III. MOBILITY

Elements of mobility are ubiquitous and defy the architectural norm of building something to last. Instead, these examples highlight how it can transcend fixity and become fluid entities moving through space and time. Seyyar are mobile street food peddlers moving around the city with carts, selling everything from quick takeaway simits and other pastries to cigköfte, freshly grilled kebab or hot salep in winter. Though mainly operating without recognition from the state, this trade system is intertwined with urban culture and daily life and shows an operation based on trust and transparency. As an informal economic model, it portrays a working order that's more friendly, social and sincere than other commercial systems.



Makeshift bridge across street, Çağlayan May 13 2025



Mobile element of play, Tarlabaşı, May 12 2025

#### iii.i. seyyar

The seyyar is something you don't go looking for, it appears on your way. This unexpectedness gives it a sense of being 'out of place', defying order and predictability within the otherwise mostly planned built environment. It's a place of social interaction between vendor and customer as well as between customers, creating an uninhibited atmosphere of open communication. All senses are stimulated, from the smell of roasted chestnuts to the sizzling of fish straight form the Golden Horn. There's other aspects of theatre involved too: the display of the food, the performative aspect of watching it being prepared.<sup>2</sup> Often, tiny

2. Küçükersen, Fırat. (2021). Mobile Food Vendors in Urban Culture: The Case of Turkey.

plastic chairs are scattered around, the construction of a scene resembling stage logic. After the play is over, the scene is deconstructed and reassembled elsewhere, as a continuous cycle.



Salep in winter, Kurtuluş, December 15 2024



Simit seller, Taksim, November 17 2022



Driving desserts, Cihangir, November 12 2022

#### iii.ii. pazar

Another example is the *pazar* or market, which often take over otherwise differently used spaces in the city. Exceptional is the Feriköy fleamarket, which takes place on Thursday nights inside a car park. More often than not, it is the last stop after a party and before heading home, an interesting and stimulating way to end the night – the place is huge, with hundreds of wooden tables arranged temporarily anything you can imagine sprawled out onto them.

The *pazar* is a reclaiming of urban space as it turns it into a site of negotiation, interaction and shared experiences. It also provides a dynamic community network – there's often recurring stands and vendors

and customers build relationships through repeated interaction. Moreover, the space of the parking lot, a huge concrete structure meant only for temporary stops and transitions, is a liminal space, in-between. The market subverts it entirely.



Fleamarket occupying carpark at night, Feriköy, December 30 2022

#### iii.iii. pasaj

Third, the pasaj or is a passageway connecting different streets through a semi-interior corridor. They are hives of activity filled with (work)shops and since they're all connected through the corridor, there's a sociable atmosphere where the shopkeepers know one another and are able to guide customers to the right vendor when looking for something.

The pasaj also serves as a shortcut or passageway that facilitates the flow of people between different streets, making it a space of mobility and movement. It functions as a connector, offering an alternative route through the city, where the usual order of streets and paths is disrupted and the publicness of the street is brought to an interior space.



Feriköy Pasaj from Kurtuluş Cadessi, December 19 2024



Feriköy Pasaj from Bozkurt Cadessi, December 19 2024

#### iii.iv. gecekondu

Lastly, gecekondu or 'landed overnight' is a type of dwelling that emerged during large migrations from rural to urban areas. As the needs for housing weren't met by the state, people started building shelters and homes on public land at what were the edges of the city back then. Though currently looked down upon, these informal settlement areas are examples or reclamation of urban space on squatted land. Self-built, they are a direct product of not only what was possible within the ranges, but also which spaces were supporting the habits and rituals best.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3.</sup> Alkan, Sevil. (2008). Globalization, Locality and the Struggle over a Living Space. The Case of Karanfilköy.



Old gecekondu slowly swallowed and abandoned, Dolapdere, November 29 2024



Continuous expansions and additions, November 29 2024

Unplanned, these settlements are created through gradual, improvised building practices, where homes grow and change over time. This fluidity in construction and adaptability of use of space of space mirrors the queering of spaces – rejecting permanence, turning margin lands into spaces of belonging.

#### IV. INFORMAL SYSTEMS

#### iv.i. hurdacı

The informal waste collection system of Istanbul is referred to with hurdacı, hurda meaning scrap or junk. Waste is collected from trash bins all throughout the city by people pulling huge plastic bags on wheels or pushing wooden carts. Others push wooden carts and collect things from old houses, shout through the streets to announce their presence - people also give them things they no longer need. At depots where everything is brought together the waste is meticulously taken apart and separated into different materials. Some pieces are sold in order for them to be reused, others are recycled into raw materials again.

This system of circularity that operates outside formal municipal waste management, an informal network that thrives on adaptability. Being decentralized, it also provides a transient economy resisting regulation and control. Often, the spaces occupied by *hurdacis* are vacant lots at the margins of the city or areas that are generally stigmatized, which is another marker of their value of transforming space.



Scrap collecting cart, Ortaköy, January 31 2023



Hacı Hurdacı, Tarlabaşı, November 29 2024

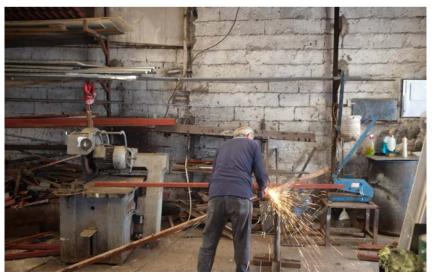


Sorting out materials, Mecidiyeköy, April 4 2025

#### iv.ii. workshops / ateliers

Moreover, the role of craftspeople and artisans is vital in sustaining the culture of repair, adaptation and improvisation. From terzi (tailor) to demirci (blacksmith) or kaynakçı (welder), these artisans embody a hands-on approach, again resisting the disposable economy as people keep bringing their broken things to them in order to extend their lifespan or turn them into something new. Persistence is valued over replacement, perhaps out of necessity, but in turn creating a direct relation between makers and users. When working on the project at Ali Usta's atelier, throughout the day many neighborhood residents would drop by to get something fixed, from a father's stroller with a broken wheel to a teenager delivering food whose bike's phone mount fell off. At other times, he'd get a call and we'd grab the tools and head out to the place in need of him. All these moments were beautifully exemplifying the value of local craftspeople.





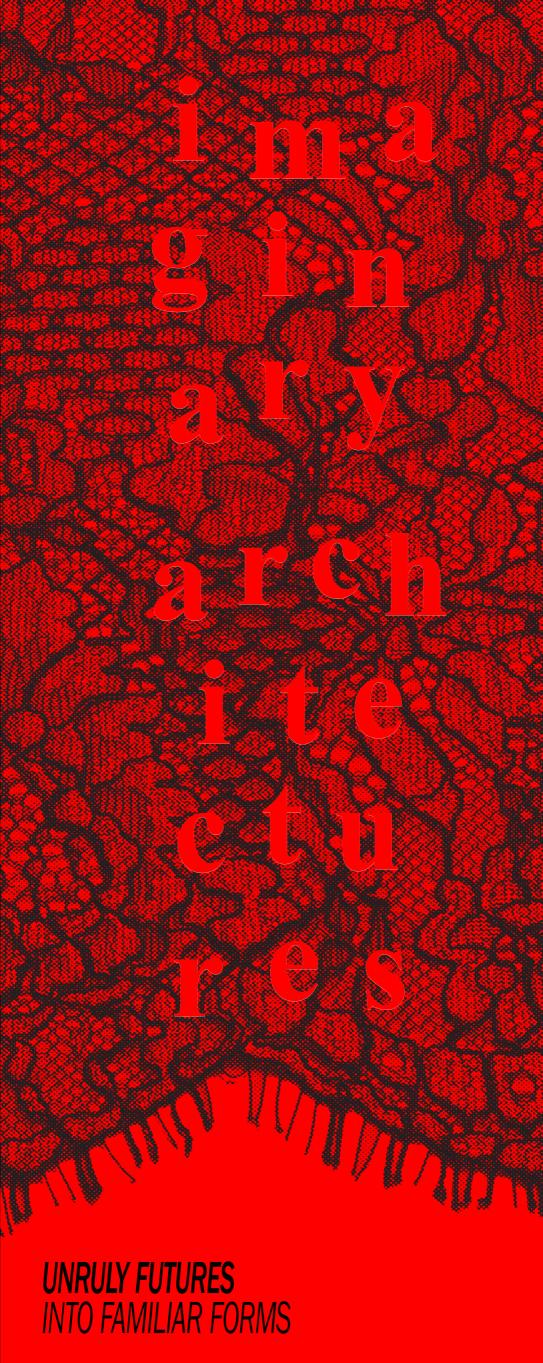
Ali Usta in his workshop, Tarlabaşı, May 8 2025

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# REFRAMING SPACE THROUGH COLLECTIVE DRAWING

#### COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH PRACTICES

#### queered ethnography

Developing connections and a deeper understanding of the queer community is essential in order to design for and with them. The aim of this section is to engage in conversation with the queer community in Istanbul, in order to get to know historical struggles, the present-day socio-political climate as well as future hopes and aspirations. It investigates how narratives manifest in daily life experiences, survival strategies and forms of resistance. It also goes deeper into how queer people navigate the urban landscape in a city where they face repression and marginalization.

Sociological criticism of queer theory has been directed to its conceptual abstraction and lack of engagement with the material dimension. In this section therefore, ethnographic tools will be employed to diffuse that dichotomy between the conceptual and the tangible and ground abstract queer theory in everyday experience.

A queer ethnography is more than ethnography used to research queer lives. It should make us fundamentally question the ways of research. In Queer in the Field: On Emotions, Temporality and Performativity in Ethnography, Alison Rooke writes:

"An ethnographic journey is one which requires that we embrace the queerness of the situations we often find ourselves in. This can lead to an ethnography that recognises experience as a nodal point of knowledge, providing useful information about the self, subjects, and the spaces they inform and are informed by." 1 2

It's necessary to remain critical of our own subjectivity and how that shapes the interactions and understanding of our studies. Dialogues never occur in a social vacuum, the way a researcher is perceived by informants and the way the researcher perceives them is not purely neutral and thus, the research is colored. Thus, we must continue to question the conditions of knowledge production and let go of any expectations or superior 'objective' sense of knowledge.<sup>3</sup>

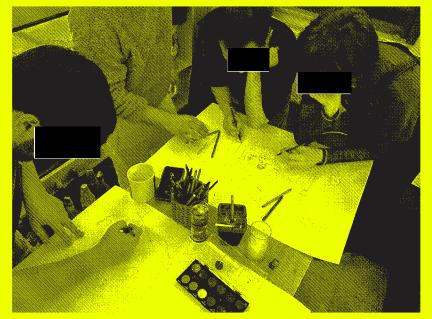
Rooke, Alison. (2010). Queer in the Field: On Emotions, Temporalty and Performativity in Ethnography, p. 39

Probyn, Elspeth. (1993). Sexing the Self: Gendered Positions in Cultural Studies.

<sup>3.</sup> Dowling, Robyn. (2005). Power, Subjectivity and Ethics in Qualitative Research.

#### diffusing categories

In this section, two collaborative research practices are introduced. These are aimed embracing knowledge as a collective process, something that isn't static but built together. This is part of a queer research methodology, being open-ended, unfixed, dynamic and avoidant of being reductive.4 It's thus about destabilizing traditional research hierarchies in critique of binary thinking based on fixed identities and continuing to be reflective of our position; categories like researcher vs. subject and outsider vs. insider become fluid.5 Only through engagement with the community as part of the research will it be grounded within that same community and can knowledge be exchanged at a horizontal level. Furthermore, working with the community is a way to empower them, make them feel included and give them agency over the information that's being gathered together, rather than extracted from them.6



Erinç, Süleyman, Gülşah & Berkay drawing the kahvehane and hamam

<sup>4.</sup> Jackman, Michael Connors. (2010). The Trouble with Fieldwork: Queering Methodologies.

Gorman-Murray, Andrew, Lynda Johnston & Gordon Waitt. (2010). Queer(ing) Communications in Research Relationships: A Conversation about Subjectivities, Methodologies and Ethics.

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Zülal & Bahar working on the meyhane

#### shared imaginative drawing

Queer space theory can be hard to grasp and therefore exclusive to a limited group of people. Translating these concepts into tangible spaces is quite difficult, therefore the first collaborative research practice is about fueling the imagination through visualization. The concepts of queer space theory are applied by reappropriating public places embedded in the urban fabric of Istanbul and Turkish society as a whole. Often, places like that are not the welcoming to different expressions of gender or sexuality, or other marginalized communities, for that matter. The pleasure of being yourself in public authentically and unapologetically is a privilege unavailable to many. Therefore, this collaborative drawing exercise is aimed at imagining how it could be otherwise: to effectively queer public places in order to make them more inclusive and accessible.



Sina drawing the çarşı

The practice of drawing together is engaging, relies on interpretations and associations and is responsive – by drawing side by side, you go into conversation in an alternative manner. It's an intimate process of making something together, a shared activity that allows for there to be verbal silences. The emphasis is on the narrative component that's inherent to illustration. The drawings are done with people from varying disciplines or people with no 'artistic skill' at all - it is not about the aesthetic result, the outcome is a part of a wider process under construction. The act of creation, especially shared creation, is research on its own and it's important not to see them as separate from one an-

#### spaces of potential

other.

The imaginative aspect is a powerful tool to create spaces that might seem utopic now, but can manifest into reality one day. This is particularly interesting when engaging in a participatory creative process: on the one hand, it is cognitive and relies on thoughts and memories, on the other it is intuitive and can bring things to the surface that we might not necessarily think of first. Through this creative and ambiguous investigation, these fictions become a way to better comprehend the current reality and possible futures. <sup>7</sup>

7. Gannon, Rachel, & Mireile Fauchon. (2021). Illustration Research Methods. In order to initiate the drawing process or make it more specific or informative, questions were asked to spur the imagination:

What are your memories of this place currently like?

How could the place be reappropriated?

Which characteristics would have to be there or not be there to make it more inclusive?

Which people would use this place upon its transformation?

How would you imagine this place in your dreams?

Just as gender is performed and connotated with societal expectations, so are specific spaces in society coded in ways they should be used, ways in which we should behave – it already starts at the distinction of who can enter and who cannot.<sup>8</sup> Through the alternative depictions of these gendered spaces we can deconstruct, subvert and challenge societal expectations.

<sup>8.</sup> Butler, Judith. (1999). Gender Trouble.



Hamam and kahvehane in Kurtuluş

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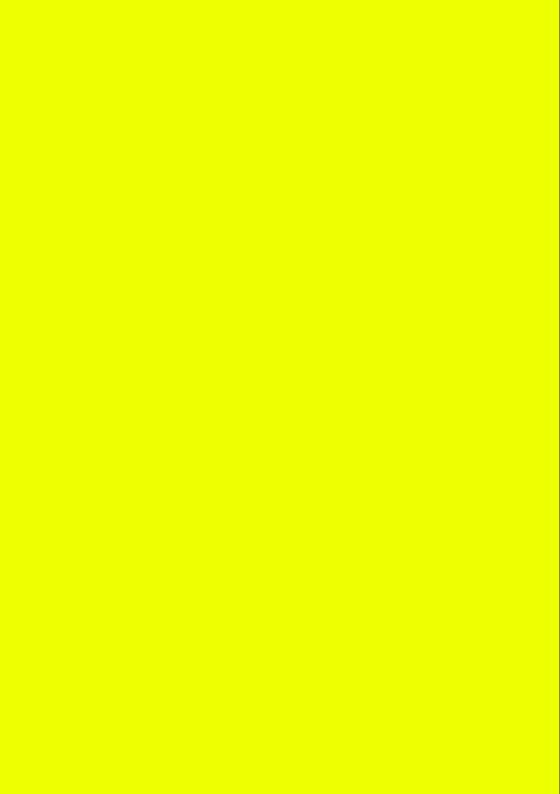
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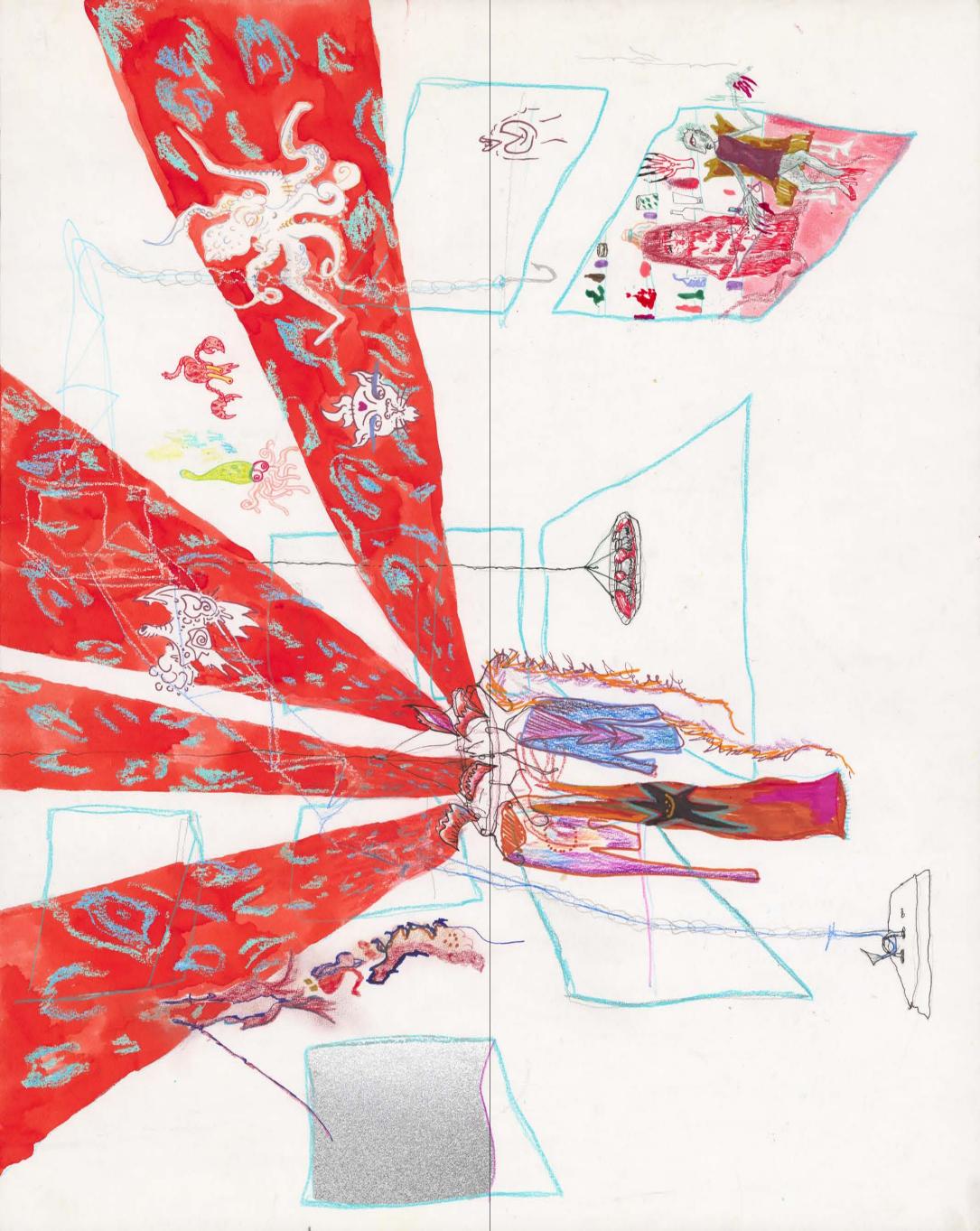
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Rooke, Alison, "Queer in the Field: On Emotions, Temporality, and Performativity in Ethnography," in Queer Methods and Methodologies - Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research, ed. Browne, Kath & Nash, Catherine, 25-40. Ashgate Publishing, 2010.













#### i. hamam

The *hamam* or bathhouse hosts a ritual of cleansing which can be meditative as well as social, but at the same time, upholds strict gender roles as well as body normativity. In the drawing, the *hamam* becomes a space where those taboos disappear and instead, turn into a space of liberation.

Drawing with Erinç, Süleyman, Gülşah, Betül, Berkay, Yağmur. December 26, 2024

#### ii. *çarşı*

Similar to the *pasaj* mentioned in the section on queered uses of the urban fabric, the  $\varphi ar s i$  hosts shops situated around a central space of mobility. In the conversations of the queered  $\varphi ar s i$ , we imagined these little shops being more temporary, interchangeable, favoring spontaneous interaction over long term establishment.

Drawing with Öznür, Sina. December 21, 2024

#### iii. kahvehane

The *kahvehane* or coffeehouse is typically visited by older men playing games. Though the concept is sweet, you'd often get many looks if you don't fit in here. In the drawing, the *kahvehane* hosts a more diverse arrange of spaces ranging from public to private. By diffusing them, queer space again shows its capacity to dissolve binaries.

Drawing with Erinç, Süleyman, Gülşah, Betül, Berkay, Yağmur. December 26, 2024

#### iv. meyhane

The space of the *meyhane* is an important part of the local culture of Istanbul and Turkey. They are tavern-like restaurants where people share small dishes or meze and drink rakı, an aniseed-flavored drink. Often, *meyhanes* host musicians that move around from table to table which brings a unique atmosphere. The queered visualization shows a central, rotating platform that not only gives space for performers but also changes the configuration of the tables throughout the night, leading to more transient interactions between the visitors.

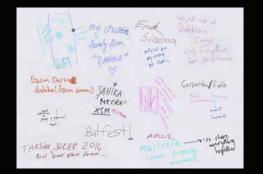
Drawing with Zülal, Bahar, Zineb. December 20, 2024



## TABLECLOTH ARCHIVES

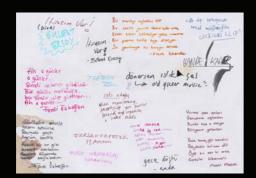
### research soaked in raki

notes from dinner conversations



#### i. safe spaces

Different groups of people spark different conversations and each of the tablecloths represents different topics and sentiments. Likely, doing the same experiment with the same people but in a different home or on a different day of the week would already have led to different outcomes and topics of conversation. During these different nights therefore the approach differed too, moving from asking specific questions to just letting the group dynamics take over the flow and seeing where that would take us. Most of the time, not much input was needed for people to start spilling onto the tablecloths. Many of the writings refer to safe spaces shared by the community.



#### ii. sense of community

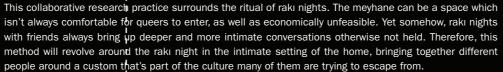
Despite the differences accross the nights, there are many common themes weaving the four nights together. The following are snippets categorizing them on those themes, the first showcasing the strong sense of community apparent through a common love for queer artists and icons. These are of references to poets, musicians, filmmakers and activists that establish a



#### iii. shared language

Asides from references to queer artists, there were many writings of slogans or chants sang or shouted collectively during demonstrations or pride marches. Other linguistic phrases and words derive from Lubunca, the language of Lubunyas, a nickname for gueers in Turkey. The word lubunya likely stems from the Romani word lubni or female prostitute and the language was invented mostly by trans sex workers as a way to communicate without outsiders understanding what was being said. The words derive from different minorities' languages, from Romani to Armenian, Greek, French, English, Ladino and Arabic and still represent a feeling of togetherness amongst lubunyas.1

1. Kontovas, Nicholas. "Lubunca, the Historical Development of Istanbul's Queer Slang and a Social-Functional Approach to Diachronic Processes in Language." MA Thesis, Indiana University Bloomington, 2012.



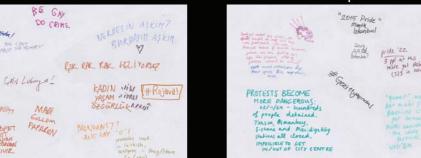
Further, it is a way of creating a space of research that's less formal and more empowering. Everybody is sitting around the same table, eradicating the hierarchical role of the researcher, who shifts from interrogator to listener and conversationalist. The emphasis is on the exchange and creation of knowledge as a collaborative and pleasurable process.

A huge sheet of paper was used as tablecloth and became the recording of the night. Pens, pencils and markers were scattered around so that participants could keep track of relevant information, new findings and things that should notibe neglected or forgotten. As the nights proceeded, the tablecloths filled up with scrabbles and notes alongside remnants of food and drink. This is also an acknowledgement of research being a messy process. Together, they create a patchwork archive that aligns with the temporality of queer









#### iv. shared memory

Moreover, connecting moments in history related to public moments of uprising, notable pride marches or other recent developments and happenings affecting the queer community.



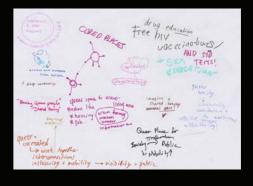
#### v. feeling of otherness

Evident is a shared feeling of totherness' and not belonging to mainstream society, which is turning queers into monsters or Türk Cinleri: Turkish djinns. There is obvious hardship in these writings, everyday reminders of the exhaustion of the community. Yet there is also some empowerment behind some of the words: ¢apulcu as a uniting nickname for the Gezi protesters in 2013, or the embrace of being monsters.



#### vi. criticism

These writings are less retrospective, nostalgic or melancholic and instead, more critical of the situation within the community. Outside forms of exclusion are sometimes so strong that they are reproduced within as well, manifesting through racism, competition or judgement. These remarks advocate for more awareness and inclusion within the community.



#### vii. dreams and aspirations

These notes are looking forward. They talk of dreams and aspirations, as well as things needed for survival such as shared queer housing, educative purposes, access to health care. What's inspiring is that despite the marginalization, there's also the hope to be able to contribute to the city and increase awareness amongst citizens through urban farming, public markets and mobility, aimed at constructing a new mindset: a modern Turkish gueer culture.



#### viii. a queer art space

Last is the desire for a space for artists to expose their works, a platform for performers to use. A cult queer art space used for workshops and displays, open and accessible.

This is the temporary kind of space that resonates through all of this thesis so far and will form the beginning of the design phase that follows: a space that creates a stage for the community, that can always morph into something new - though for now only able to exist safely at an interior space, could be taken apart and reassembled in a more public space one day.







Thus, the collaborative research concludes with a design brief: to create a communal art space that can be used for the exhibition and display of various expressions of queer artists. When freedom of expression is breached and, a space of coming together to exchange of ideas, showcase the talents within the scene, create collectively and learn from one another becomes all the more important. Community is the most powerful form of resistance, especially in a society that actively tries to evict that,

The research process is mostly characterized by embedment in the urban fabric and exchange and collaboration with the community. Therefore, this thesis continues along that line in the design and creation of space: a space where care, empathy and collectivity are engrained all the way, from the design to the building to the programming and aftercare. A place to perform and an archive to represent voices unheard

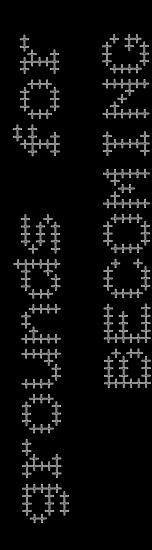
A temporary space that allows for experimentation, interactions and chance encounters and maintains open to unknown possibilities, upholding the ability to be taken down and set up elsewhere. Rather than designing for permanence, the embrace of ephemerality becomes the strongest asset and fortunately, it's a practice immanent to the LGBTQIA+ community.











design preparations and experiments

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#### i. first steps

The beginning of the design process entailed preparations necessary for realizing the project. This entailed lots of administrative work and getting in touch with the right people: the ones working at the club, friends willing to volunteer for the collaborative building, hurdacıs that met during the research trip to investigate whether they would be selling to individuals like me, possible workshops that could rent out some space for the construction phase, people with tools to rent or borrow, as well as foundations willing to finance the project. The latter cost a lot of time mostly - many foundations request different kinds of motivation letters, presentations, portfolios and other documents before they're even considering paying money. Interesting about this part of preparation was the varying kinds of communication, from more formal and professional to amicable and low-key.

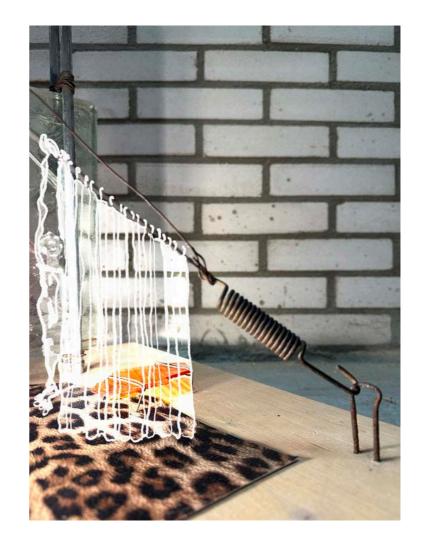
#### ii. concept model

This stage involved coming up with ideas that wouldn't define the project too much yet but would serve as inspiration for the months to follow and allow for ideas coming from the community being sparked to life more easily – the making of a fertile ground. This meant modelmaking, sketching, looking for references and experimenting with the materials I brought with me after the first trip - the ones that I was able to bring home with me, for that matter: when leaving Istanbul at the end of December, the security at the airport found all my rocks, metal scraps and other peculiar objects quite suspicious. After hours of interrogation, they made me miss my return flight, forcing me to spend the night in the airport, only able to bring back home some of the things collected. Still, these materials are tied to the local fabric and experimenting with them brought many ideas.

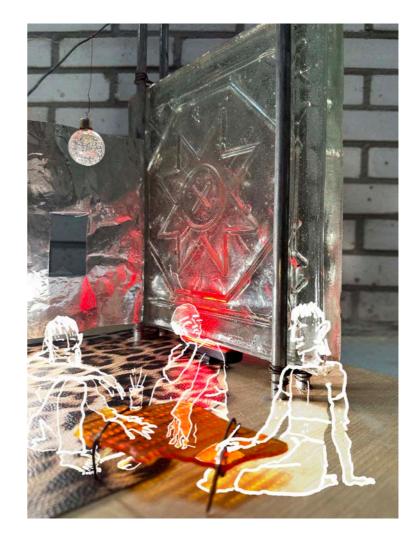


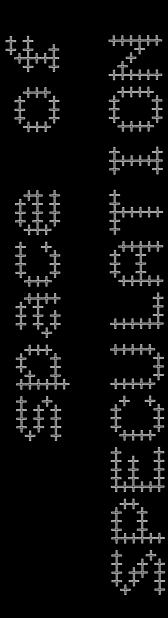












#### iii. sketchbook pages

The sketchbook serves as a space of speculation - a process of putting ideas on paper as well as a way to trigger the imagination. Mostly quick studies and experimental layouts, these serve as research into materiality and atmosphere, an inquiry rooted in how spatial elements shape experience and human interaction. They investigate how we gather or how a threshold can be (re)interpreted - the play between interior and exterior shines through all of them. The sketchbook as a tool to test relationships between objects and scale, not about fixed outcomes but rather tracing a sensibility, a spatial intention.

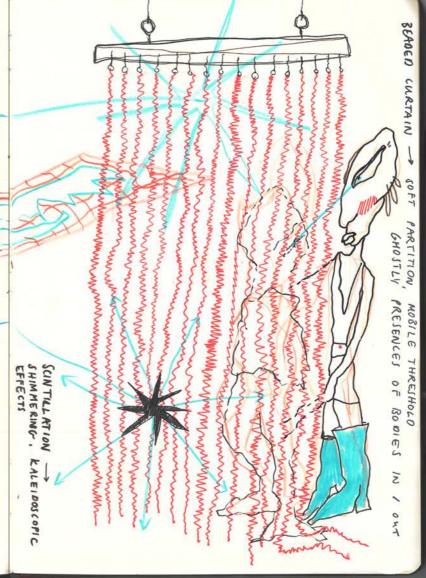
VISIBILITY / OBSCURITY -> SHIFT BETWEEN REVEALING / CONCEALING

PROJECTED LIGHT

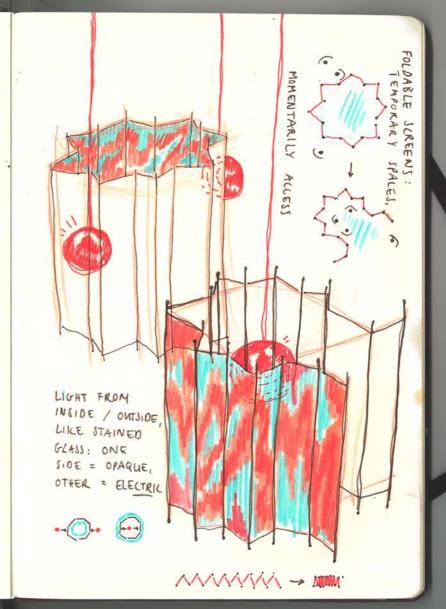
FRACMENTED REFLECTIONS /

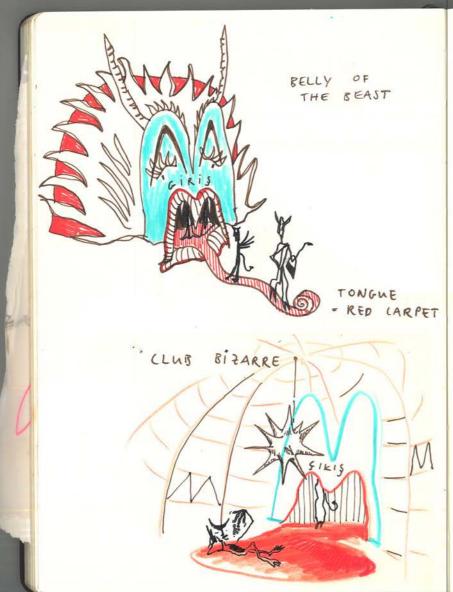
DISTORTED PROJECTIONS

SOME STUFF ON MATERIALITY

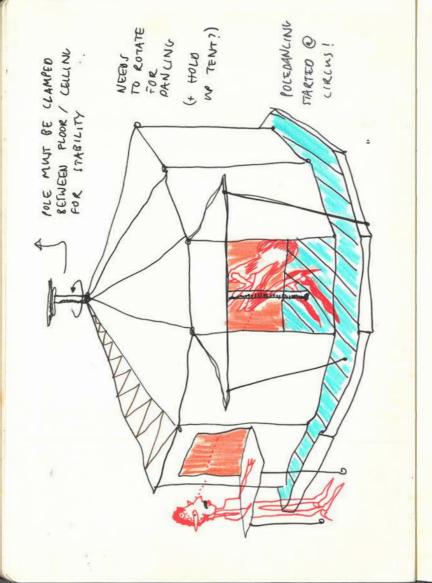


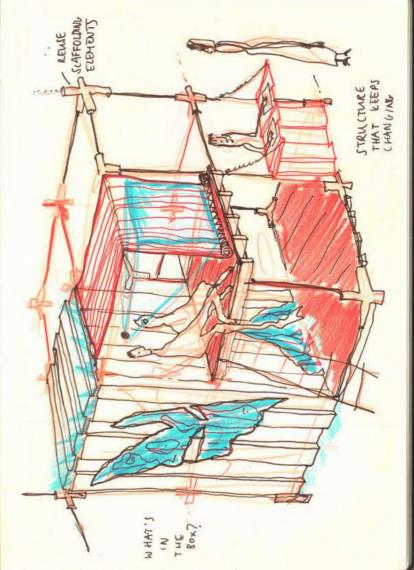


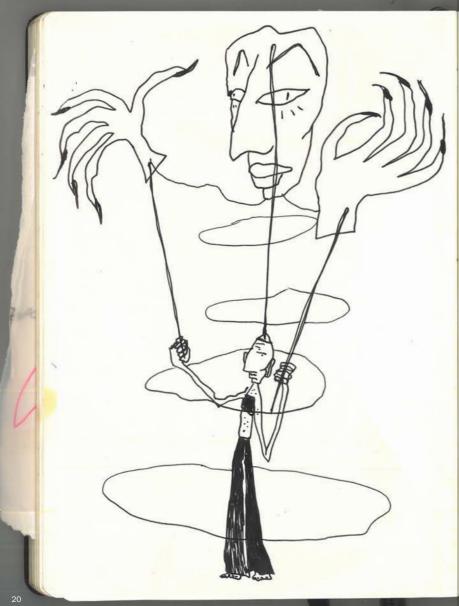






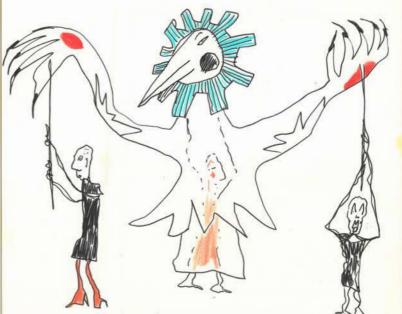


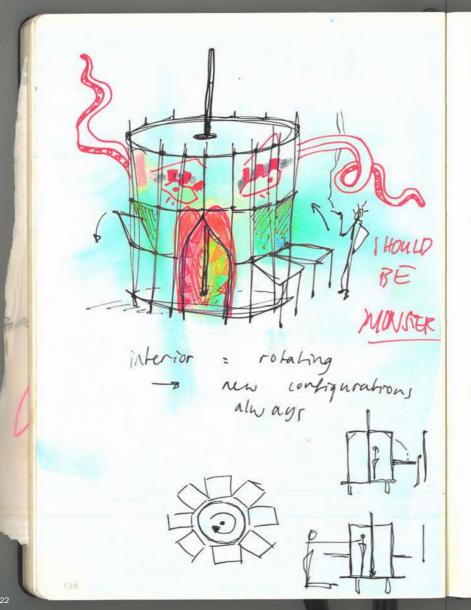


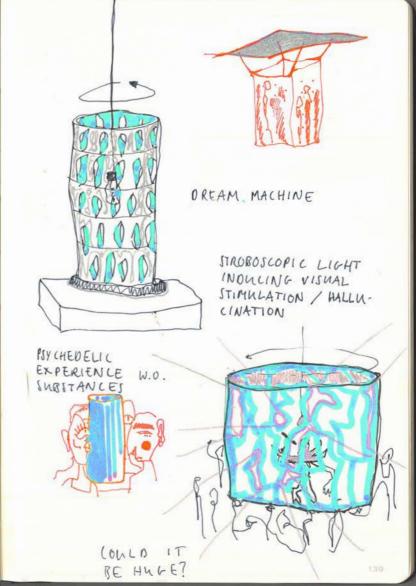


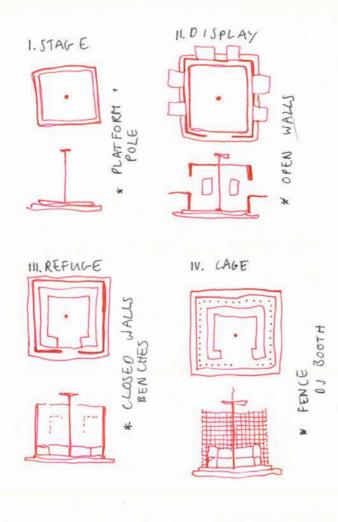
#### SPACE OF ENGAGEMENT

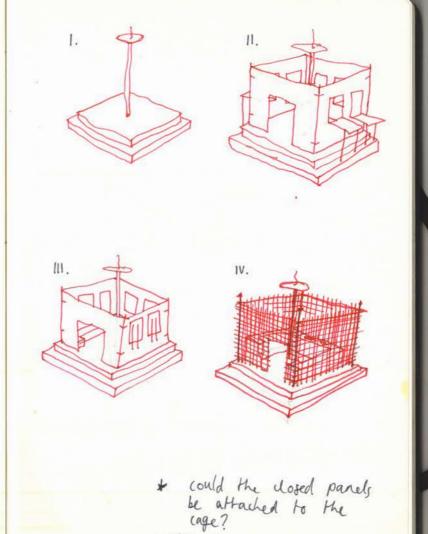
SCATTER TRACES AROUND
ENTIRE CLUB:
TOILETS, STAIRS, DANCEFLOOR,
HANGOUT



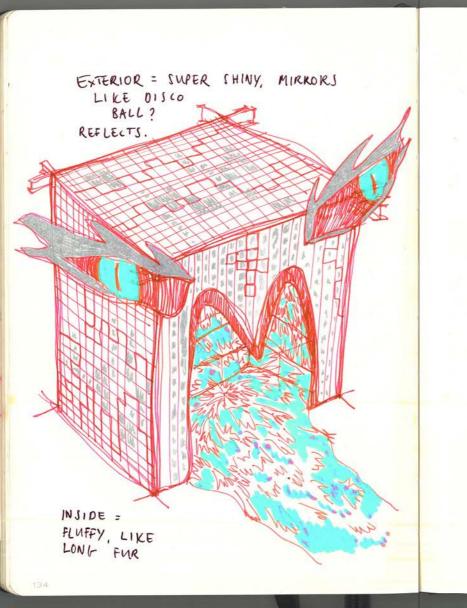


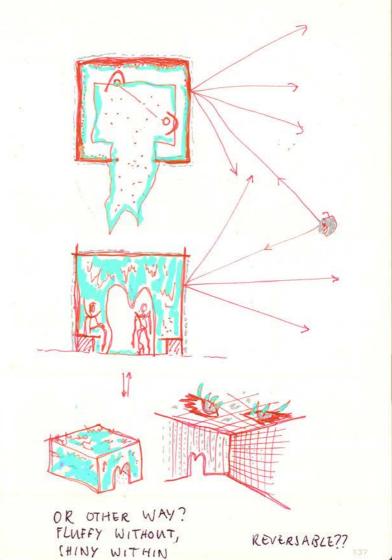




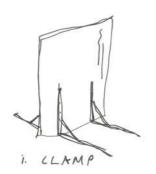


\* HOW TO CONSTRUCT A
POLE FOR DANCING ??!!

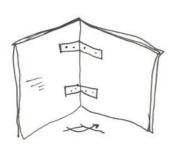




#### TEMPORARY ELEMENTS



ii. HANGING



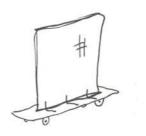
iii. HINGE



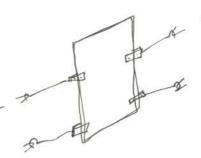
IV. BENT/FOLDED



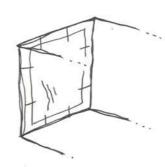
V. TENSION ROD



VI. LART

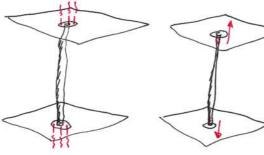


VII. TENSION LINES



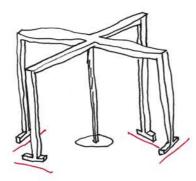
VIII. FRAME

### SPINNING POLE DANCE POLE



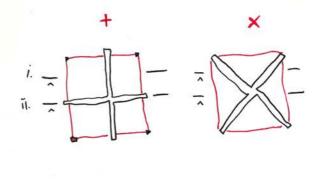
PLOOR - CEILING ORILLED

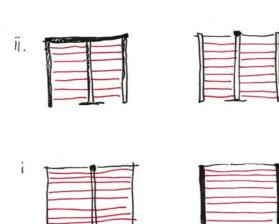




FREE - STANDING

could become frame for rest of the cage later?

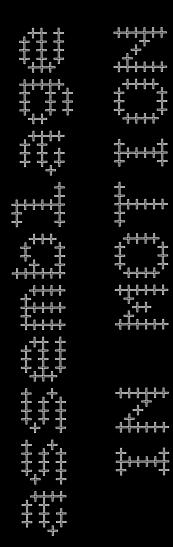












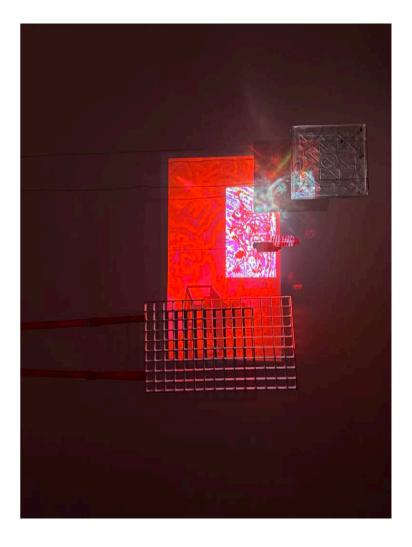
#### iv. light projections

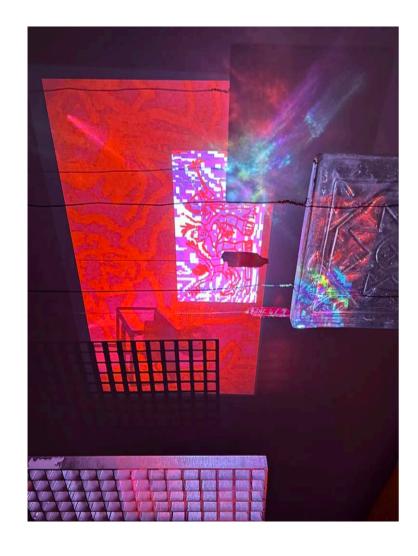
Working within the context of the nightclub, where movement, rhythm and music are central, it felt natural to begin experimenting with animated drawings and light projections. Small looped sketches create the illusion of motion and editing them together with videos from the city gave them a place. The suspended modular ceiling of my room in Amsterdam became unexpectedly useful; by hanging fragments from Istanbul's streets and projecting the videos through them onto the wall, it shifted into a surface of layered images and textures. A kind of virtual travel, creating worlds and reimaginations of their own, looking back and ahead to the city. The moving assemblage proposes space as something that moves and responds.

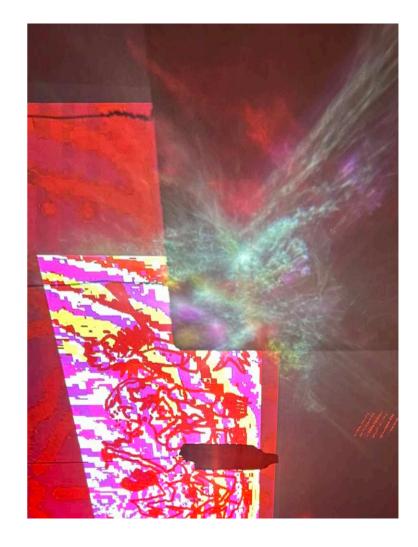


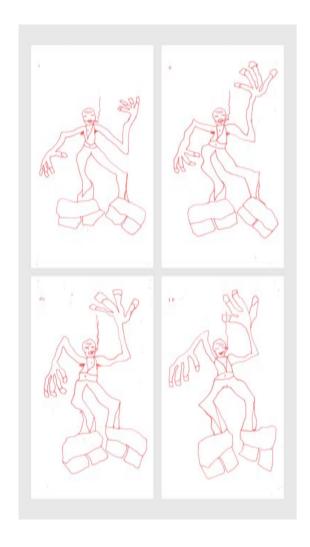




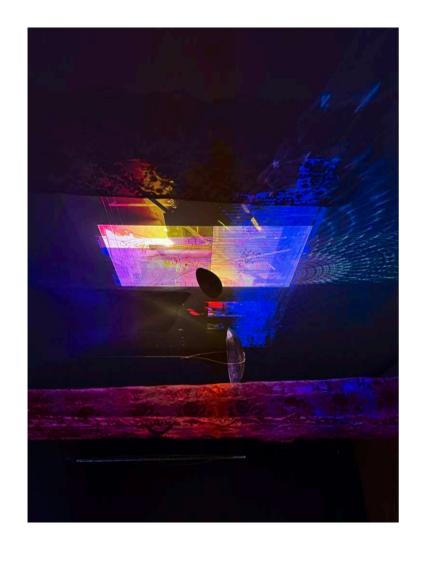






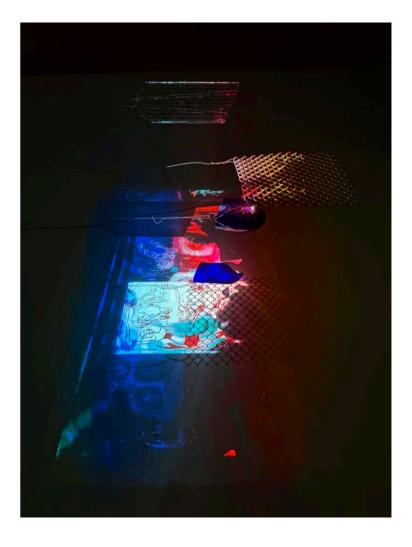


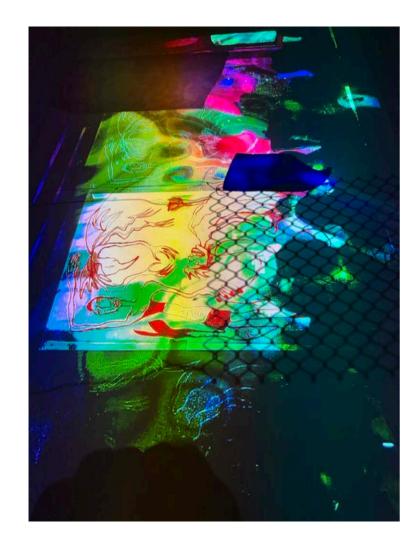


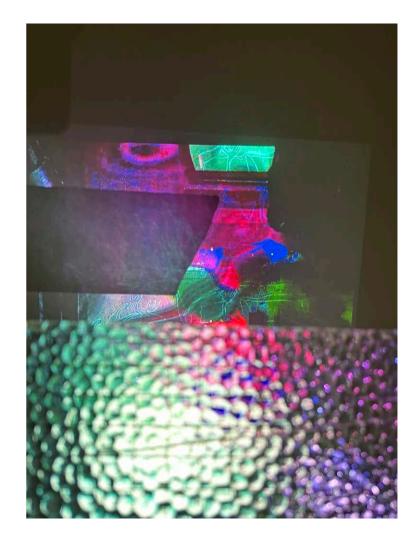












## scavenged and assembled:

building process

PRODUCT // PROCESS

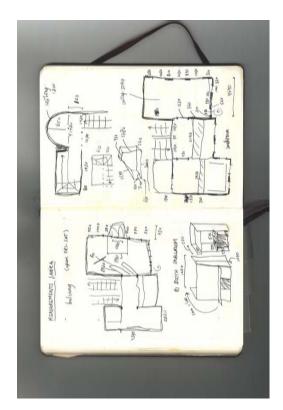
two parallel narratives

As the paper unfolds, a long, continuous strip emerges – an accordion of paper stretching across time and space. An invitation to engage with two parallel storylines playing b2b. This side highlights the building process: the origin of the materials, the sketches, the labour and transportation. Each scrap and gesture accumulate into something larger.

On the opposite side, the nighttime narratives come to life, representing the built product, though even that is always a structure in motion. It became a living presence in the space, a shifting atmosphere within the club, shaped by bodies, light and sound. The materials transform the space into one that invites to play and envision new possibilities - a space that breathes with the night.

By folding these two narratives onto different sides of the same strip of paper, the tendency of prioritization of result over process is rejected. Instead, this is an exclamation: the making and the made are inseparable, each side informs and redefines the other. This congruency mirrors the nonlinearity of queer spatial practice, where creation is ongoing, layered and col-

The accordion can be stretched out, folded away, read front to back or back to front: a material metaphor for the project's core – a constant movement between gathering and dwelling, between the ephemeral and the built, between process and presence. Process is celebrated not as a means to an end, but as a vital force animating the space.





measurements and limitations

Şahika's dimensions mostly determined the scale of the project, as well as the spaces we were able to use. The many stairs that create that vertical connection between spaces and a feeling of privacy as you ascend were an obstacle as well - we had to make sure all parts would be able to be carried through their narrow turns. But also, the existing space breathes an ambient atmosphere already, both through its physical qualities and intangible ones.

I. DJ BOOTH

Building a new DJ booth for the small room started with chrome shelves found, old and dirty but a perfect fit and already a modular system easy to adapt. The cleaning of the grease –leftover from a kebab place it was likely used at previously - was a tedious job but at the same time, an act of attention and care. The same goes for the plastic corrugated sheets found at a junkyard nearby – getting off the accumulated dirt and lichen from the days they were used as a roof took time and effort. Doing it at a local garage with a water hose outside led to loads of comments of passers-by wondering why I didn't just get new ones, if I didn't have any money, finding these too dirty.

B 4-6 #1





becoming of place:
site of arrival





B 1-3 #1

"Night is a path that travels to the unconscious of the humanity. It is a pitch black street, a bleak and daunting atmosphere, a luring tale, and indeed, a spell.

Nights belong to those left-out ones who cannot make it into the script; nights are about wild fragments that were not edited. You add them together, but they do not connect. It is as if the curtain has come down on the

The stage is gradually left to the marvelous freaks of the night. The puny, yellowish lights of street lamps flicker here and there, almost randomly. One by one the monsters of the night pass beneath them. Their shadows slowly lengthen, and then suddenly shorten."1

All throughout history, misfits and outcasts have been forced to meet under the cover of the night. In Istanbul too, it's during those dark hours when the public's prying eyes feel less piercing. Nightlife is a way of gathering that goes beyond entertainment: it's a vital form of togetherness and resistance.

1 Pınarlıgil, Yekhan. "2019". In 2019, edited by Ateş, Ece & Köker,

The process of building collectively inside the club adds another layer of meaning, transforming the space into more than just a venue. The club becomes a shared ground for making, connecting, claiming presence. Moreover, this collaborative process adds an interactive layer to the clubbing experience and gives people a say in what their night looks like. The act of partying becomes imbued with collective intention, care and authorship. More than just sheltering, the night also reclaims that shared celebration.

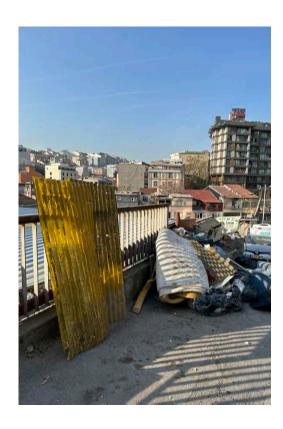
It also allowed us to meet in the club during daylight hours, times you'd normally never hang out around there. And with some of these people it's even quite rare to meet during the day at all - these are connections intrinsically shaped by the club's nocturnal energy. In the light of day however, the atmosphere felt gentler and offered a different perspective on the space that many of us return to every weekend.

At the same time, hosting shared activities such as the sewing and embroidering of tapestries during regular club nights bridges an intimate act of home with the dancefloor. The collaborative building process thus invites slowness into the night and daylight into the club, transcending the seeming boundaries between work and play, public and private, day and night. The club becomes not only a place to party, but also of care and creation.

B 4-6 #2

Ah, how much easier it would have been to just buy new sheets, and not that expensive, but there were several intentions behind doing it this way. Obviously there's advantage of repurposing materials from an environmental point of view. Found locally, there's no need to bring in materials from afar, create them from already limited resources and in factories emitting loads of harmful toxins and all. But also, instead of immediately discarding materials, working with leftovers increases awareness and is a message of love. These are materials with a story already, which is impossible to cover up and brings character to the final result.

Just like the chrome shelves were made for readjustment, the inherent nature of the corrugated sheets seems
to bend them and as we played with it we came to the cylindrical shape for holding lights. After transporting everything to
Şahika and setting things up, the club's crew joined and an air
of anticipation filled the air as everyone started helping out.
We put the tie wraps through the holes in the plastic sheets,
connecting them to the chrome and interestingly, there turn
out to be many ways to use them, especially when only one
isn't long enough. And then, the celebration when the lights
went on and the first tunes played, everyone who contributed
in the room – it was a blast. And especially because from
beginning till end it the DJ booth was created with Melie, my
dear friend with whom the exchange of ideas and act of making together was the most joyful and inspiring imaginable.



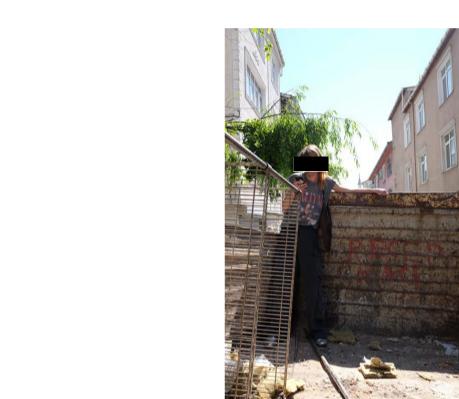


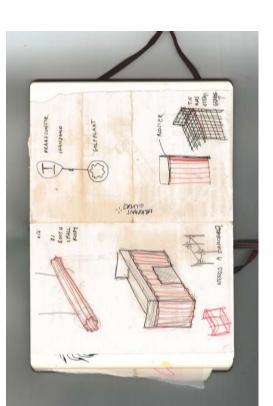






A 4-6 #2



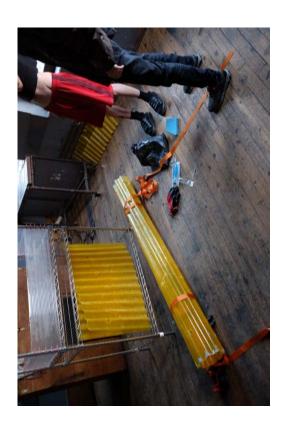


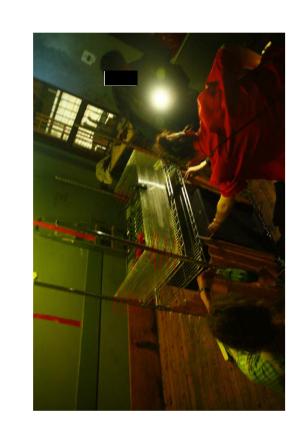






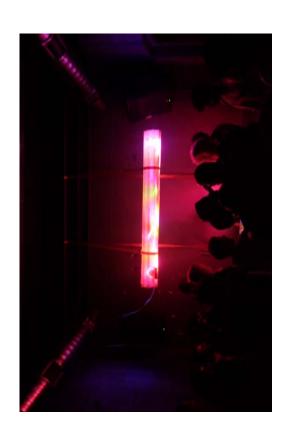














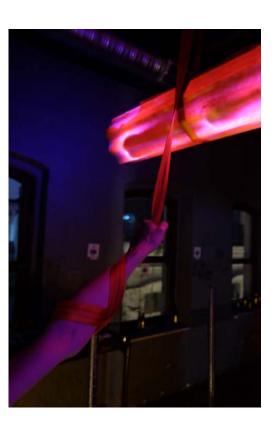
II. THE CAPSULE For the installation part of the project, we were invited to use the balcony room, one floor below the small room with the new DJ booth and two floors below the terrace floor. Exciting since that space had just opened up to the public, previously being used as a backstage mostly. Therefore, it still had full potential of being able to be turned into anything. At the same time, there were the limitations of not being able to make any last-

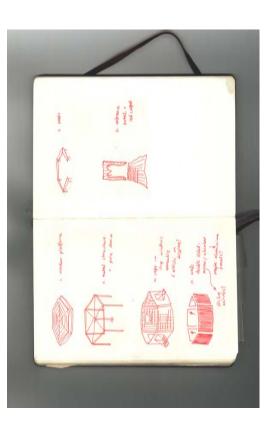
ing changes to the space itself. The initial idea of gathering a bunch of people and random materials and creating randomly, without a fixed plan, turned out to be too romantic, the idea of architecture without architects perhaps too naïve. Turkey's context at this specific time wasn't working in our favor (more on this in the reflection part) and without a precise idea, it was difficult to gather people to join. The initial ideas and sketches were too vague and if we were to build anything it seemed necessary to come up with a more defined structure – then fill in the gaps together. And thus, the process took off with more concrete drawings and visits to local hardware shops or nalburs to assess which materials were at hands, as well as investigating the available structural elements from the waste collectors.

At first, the drawings directed towards a solid platform with frames attached it. The idea of ditching the base and making the frames stand on themselves so they could be used apart as well as put together came firstly from the obstacle of having to climb the stairs up and down with the parts. But also, it aligns more closely with the theory on queer(ed) space, being temporal and hybrid, being able to change over time – being able to be taken apart and set up elsewhere like nomadic architecture does. They could be set up at the peripheries of the room or in the middle of it, creating an interior space within the existing interior. To be a backdrop vs. to envelop, to expose vs. to hide from sight; always the capsule as a membrane in between.

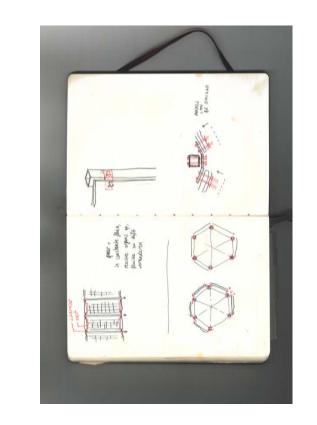


















A 4-0 #4

Broth for the first for the fi

To create that cult queer art space that was scribbled about on the *rakı night* tablecloths during the collaborative research practice, it would have to be an installation that could be used for infinite purposes. Paradoxically, the idea for making the separate frames emerged when walking around the city on May 1<sup>st</sup> or Workers' Day – or trying to: big areas of town were blocked by the cops. May 1<sup>st</sup> is already quite a charged day in Turkey but due to the current political climate in Turkey, it was a day on which the police enforced their power more. Central metro and bus stations were shut down and the busiest area of the city were made inaccessible by countless of fences.

inaccessible by countless of fences.

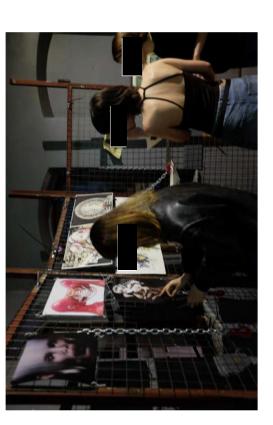
The tension on the streets was palpable, yet horrible as these expressions of oppression from the regime are, sometimes solutions lie in these most simple elements. The fences they use are all constructed separately, making them easy to carry and easy to stack and store. At the same time they're all connectable through hinges on the sides. This way, the configuration of these fences can change and morph into different shapes.



#### II. THE CAPSULE ii.i. thursday night: sanat pazarı / art fair

The three-day program started on Thursday with an exhibition of three artists that hung their works on metal fences and expanding windows held by hooks. These all came from the same area in Karaköy, where a beehive of shops sells supplies relating to the port activities at the city's waterfront. Thus, the materials are referring to the local context quite directly, yet now used for a different purpose. Setting up the frames with tie wraps and attaching the panels with the wingnuts proved to be a very accessible way of building and many people were helping out setting up the space for the art fair and exhibition night.

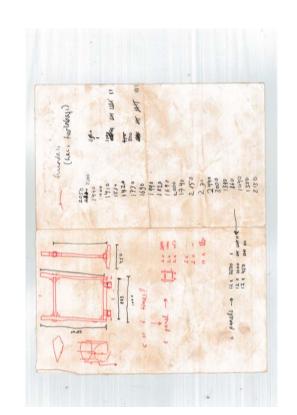




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Thus, the final design of the frames emerged and the building took off. We purchased the metal profiles from the hurdacı who helped a lot throughout the process of collecting materials. Working with small-scale and local places was another reminder of the value of that system of informal and mostly, human interconnections. When buying the metal, someone asked us if we wouldn't need a kaynakçı or welder for the project. Well, we did, so he took us to Ali Usta's workshop, a little treasure in the heart of Tarlabaşı, a neighborhood which has a somewhat notorious reputation and is under heavy pressure of neoliberalist redevelopment plans and marginalization of minority groups. Working here proved again that often these reputations are brought into the world by the same people who want to order it and are scapegoating others in order to justify that.

The other face of Tarlabaşı that we found was a neighborhood full of people living and working there for decades and many of them helping us to find the things we needed. The *hurdacı* knew the *kaynakçı* who knew a *nalbur* who told many histories of the area. And like that, the days of construction followed full of spontaneous interactions. Ali Usta let us work at his place, use is tools and after we cut the profiles to the right size and smoothened out the sharp edges, masterfully welded the frames together.











4-6 #5



Most details emerged on the go as we were building. All six frames finished, we set out coming up with the hinge parts connecting them. This was the tricky part, for most ready-made hinges only allow for the frames to be rotated until a 90°angle. Yet, for full mobility we wanted them to be able to rotate in all directions freely. Rather than buying existing ones, Ali Usta recommended making them custom, welding metal pipes on both sides of the frames on the middle of the profile, the one side having the same outer diameter as the inner diameter of the ones on the other, so they could slide into one another.





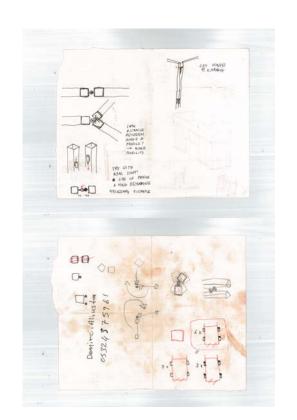
ii.ii. friday night: yankı odası / echo chamber

Friday is often a crowded night at the club and thus came the idea of making more enclosed area to shield off an area and turn it into a new space within the existing one. As soon as people found out the frames could be moved around, they started closing the open circle and using it for all things asking for some privacy: make-out sessions, gossip, getting high. At some point, someone pulled a microphone with a phony speaker from their bags and turned the capsule into an echo chamber, which worked perfectly with the metal sheets we used as the closing material.

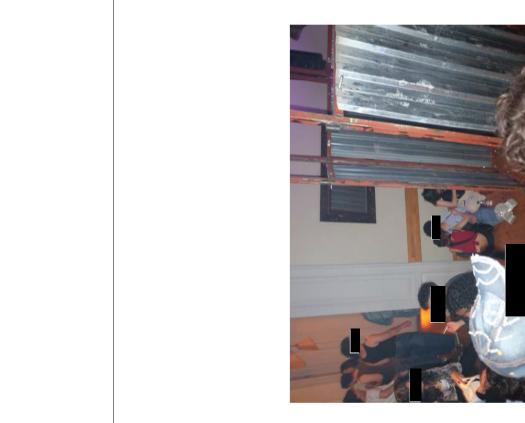
These sheets are omnipresent in the rest of the cities, where countless of old buildings are fenced off with them. With lacking resources to renovate or demolish them, these buildings continue to live a shadow life behind those sheets, protecting them from the weather and preventing people from being able to see or enter them. Thus, these metal sheets are vivid in people's imagination and an act of bringing the street into the club. As we couldn't have this experiment in public space (yet), at least we could bring some of the street's energy to the party.

Likely, they will be tagged on as they remain at Şahika. All throughout the city that act of rebellion is present, the metal sheets used for spreading messages trying to be silenced. A clean surface as an invitation to be besmirched.











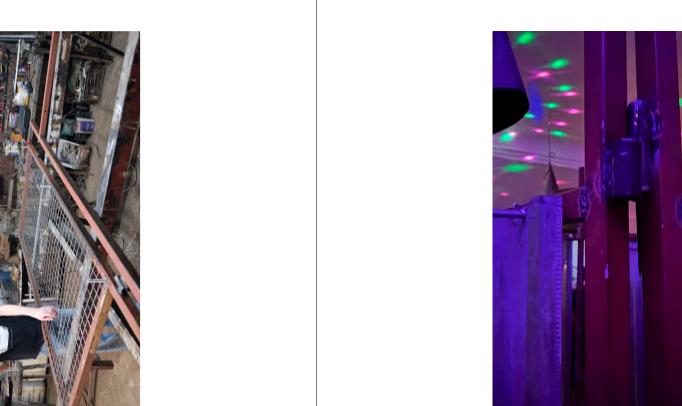


Then came the attachments that could secure panels of different materials to the frames. These materials would turn the structure to life: a shape-shifter dressing up in different ways, a living being putting on different outfits and in doing so, change identity. Through

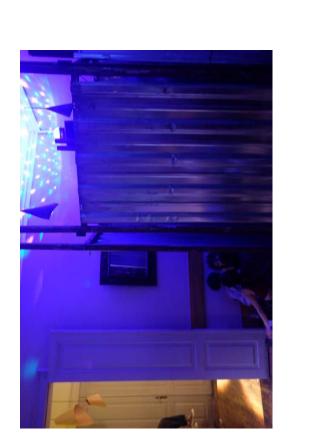
materiality, the entire atmosphere could change. The requirement for the attachments was therefore that they would have to not only be able to uphold the materials we were planning to use for the three nights we were organizing, but be flexible in the sense that in the future anything could be attached to it, and by anyone. Six bolts and wingnuts became the easiest solution we could find, each of the bolts protruding through the frame and the wingnuts tightening the panels made of materials of various widths onto it.













A few days before the opening, all elements were ready and a courier transported us and everything to Kamer Hatun Cadessi, the closest point to the entrance of Şahika. We gathered a crew and carried all the pieces onto Nevizade Sokak, then up the stairs. The procession was quite an event on its own, we were five people and walked up and down from the corner of the street to the entrance many times, attracting many curious

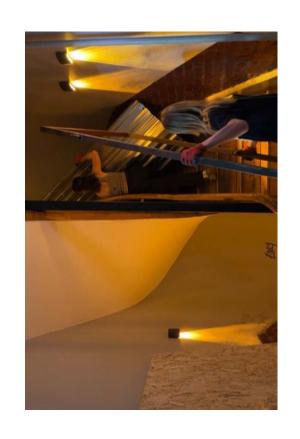
glances. Once everything was hoisted up, we celebrat-

ed with some rakı and returned the next day to put the

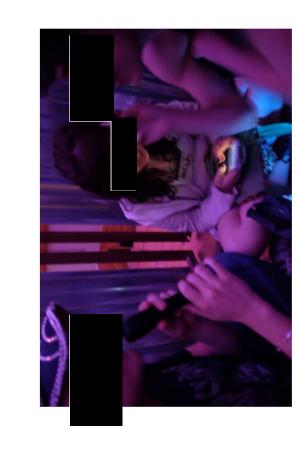
Building by hand and with materials that are not all identical means frequently having to come up with solutions to unforeseen scenarios. So when we found out on the opening day that none of the hinges seemed to fit anymore, we had to be creative. Maybe they were too tight or maybe all at just a slightly different height, making them unable to connect. Thankfully, tie wraps saved the day and ended up going through the hinge parts on the sides of two frames, functioning

almost the same.





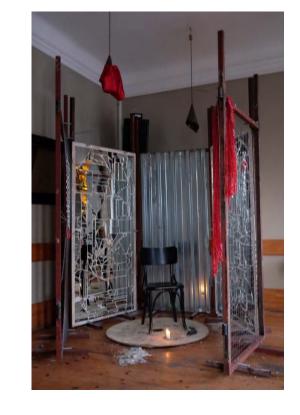
B 4-6



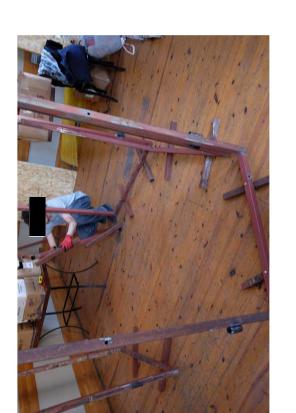
ii.iii. saturday night: ayna sarayı / mirror palace (pt. 1)

For Saturday night, there were performances planned and the installation would form the décor of those acts. The idea of one-sided mirrors emerged as a way to either reflect the interior of the capsule, creating the illusion of an endless mirror palace, multiplying the performers infinitely. When flipped, the mirrors would be reflecting what's exterior of the capsule and turn it into something similar to those mirroring boxes used by nature observers. Reflecting what's outside, they seem to blend into their surroundings, turning almost invisible.

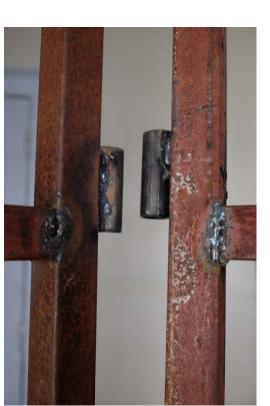
Mirrors of this size are pricey and way beyond the budget. Further, buying ready-made mirrors would not have suited the spirit of the project anyways. A dumpster diving trip to Çağlayan, a district of Istanbul where many glass and mirror makers work, turned out fruitful. All of their trash bins were full of discarded shards of mirror up for grabbing. We filled many boxes, drove them to Şahika and turned them into mosaics. The fragmented reflections actually created new worlds – more interesting than unbroken ones.

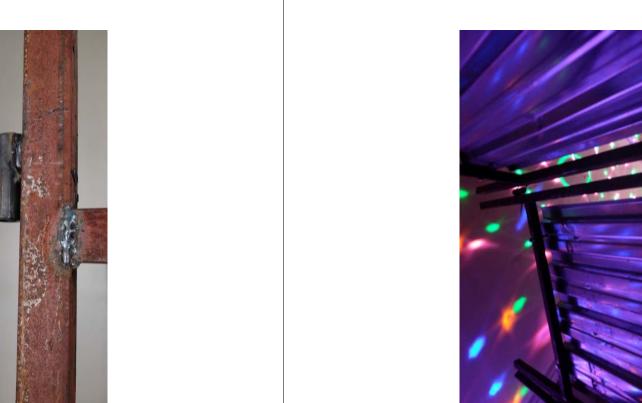


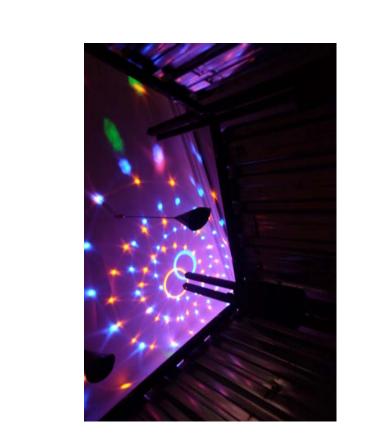
A 4-6 #7





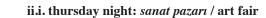


















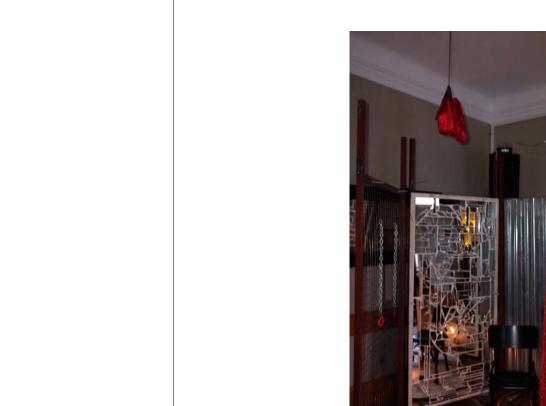










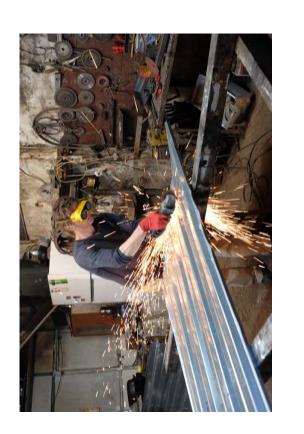


B 4-6 #8

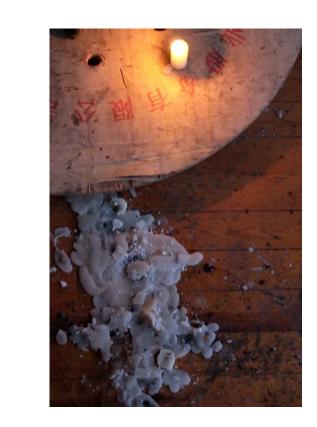
















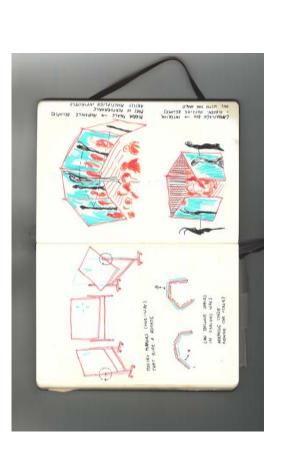
A 4-6 #9



ii.iii. saturday night: ayna sarayı / mirror palace (pt. 2)
The making of the mosaics was a fun project and many people contributed to it, some of the visitors on Thursday night peeking from behind the door into the coulis where we were working, asking if they could help. This was very gratifying to see and at the same time, made it clear that we cannot always let people just do their thing. Not wanting to shape the process too much, I didn't give guidelines on how to lay out the pattern. This turned out to be a mistake – after being away for a while, people had stuck mirrors on top of the holes drilled in the wooden boards so that they could be hoisted onto the bolts and tightened to the metal frames.

onto the bolts and tightened to the metal frames.

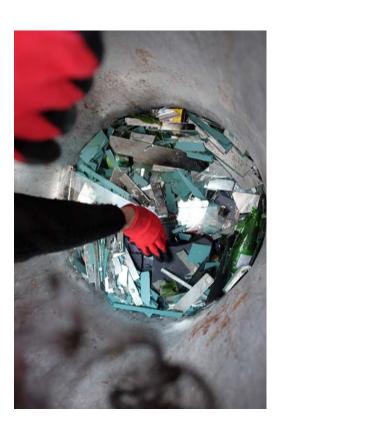
Thus, a drawn outline served as a guideline for people to hold on to, only sticking mirrors to the inside of those lines. Then, it was interesting to see some of them picking out all the rectangular shards and others preferring the more irregular shapes. Different patterns emerged and came together on the go, similar to looking to a city from above – some building blocks and streets being planned geometrically, others having emerged more organically. Yet somehow they turn into a whole. Saturday afternoon, we set up the space together with the performers and configured the frames and panels in a way to make their acts come to the front. Thus, the installation became like a theatre backdrop and magic unfolded as stories of beheadings and the becoming of a woman were told.



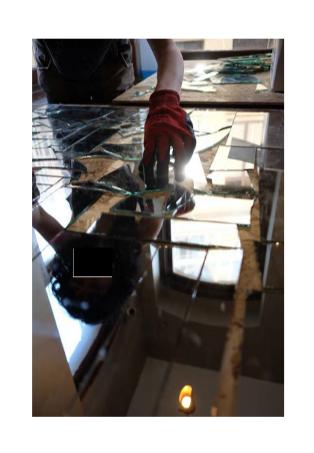










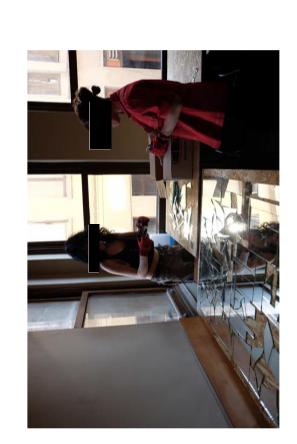


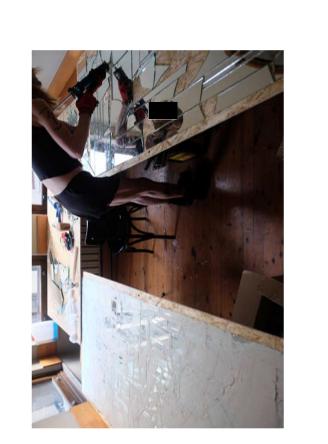






A 4-6 #10

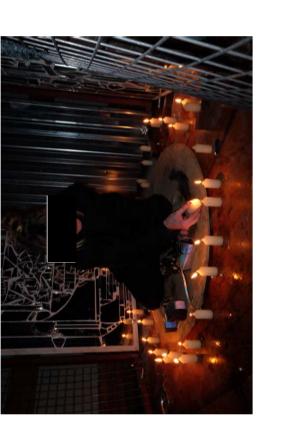














#### III. PATCHWORK

A profound sense of space can be shaped with minimal interventions; architecture doesn't necessarily entail big gestures and heavy materials. After the weekend, we gathered at the dancefloor one more time to wrap up everything. Working on tapestry-like curtains became the shared activity getting us the night as Turkish 90s pop was playing. They became a patchwork of different styles of stitching, everyone practicing their own way and learning from one another. At the same time, one that is local: all the leftover fabrics came from the make-shift markets temporarily taking over carparks (more on them the section on queered

At Şahika, there's a little leftover space under the last stairs leading towards the terrace floor which is next to a the narrow pathway always full of people moving up and down. Already, that leftover space is a beloved hangout spot for people taking a break on their way or escaping from the crowds. One of the curtains we made is shaped like that void under the steps and though mostly see-through, it offers a thin veil between the path and the shelter. The second is the size of the frames of the capsule and could be layered on top of the other panels or spun in between them to create a portal to walk through.

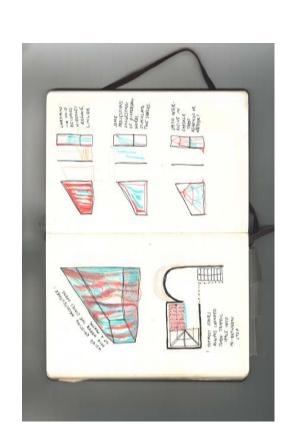
Both curtains depict the Shahmaran, a mythical creature - half-woman and half-snake - originating from pre-Islamic folklore from the Middle East. Being a female figure with agency, she's been a symbol for feminist movements but also turned into an emblem for the LGBTQIA+ community as a hybrid, shapeshifting body. The second curtain says 'diren lubunya' or 'resist, queers'. The fabrics become a the site of activism and underline once again the political significance of





















B 4-6 #12 A 1-3 #12

torm and become lived practice.

greatest transformative power - allowing architecture to exceed and often it's the simplest implementations that bring upon the accessible to all: making can be done through humble means It needs to be stressed that this is something (that should be) sipility for the materials we use and the spaces that hold us. thication with place and stimulates a feeling of shared responters a sense of community and social cohesion as well as idenin collaboration - becomes a social glue. Making together fosinto the ephemeral again; the process of making - when done

tion, the need for the reintegration of craft is underlined.

Reinforcing the tangible dimension in turn transcends and prescriptive, excluding personal interpretation or appropriaish. As environments are becoming overly ordered, sterilized no room for mess or dirt; the unplanned allowing for life to flouremerging everywhere, void of relation to the context and leaving generalization and aesthetic homogenization of glossy surfaces embedment in the immediate surroundings, challenging the Instead, vital to the creation of new worlds is their

the upheaval of entire communities. edge and the allenating effect this brings upon often leads to any relation to the environment is absent displaces local knowlof architecture, this is especially significant. A movement where situatedness within the context, in the face of the globalization from local materials and existing techniques, bringing upon a a sensibility to the surroundings. This is reinforced by learning relation with matter, scale and the world around us, stimulating tion alone. Intimacy, for the making entails entering a direct tactile process, creative solutions not available through cogniembodied knowledge not reachable when detached from the intimacy. Ingenuity, for working hands on opens up fields of technique - the act of making summons both ingenuity and We need to reintegrate the value of craft as more than mere

#### reclaim the act of making

#### value process over product

Embracing temporality and the act of making in architecture inevitably means prioritizing the process over the 'final product' and decentralizing result-oriented thinking. Rather than merely appreciating the outcome, the relationships and happenings fostered by the process are most valuable. This is in direct opposition with linear, production-driven and capitalist processes. Rather than sole form-making, architecture is a social chore-

In order to tackle the capitalist system and the perfectionism it reinforces, it's necessary to allow for playfulness, experimentation, accidents, failures and surprises. To allow for unplanned occurrences: failure and disobedience but also pleasure and joy. These are vital aspects of the process of architecture and reintroduce a sense of humanity in it. Rather than measuring time and labor through output, the importance of non-doing is underlined as a refusal of normative timelines, budgets and institutional standards.

Though prioritizing process, these concepts can still be applied to the physical aspects of architecture. When speaking of form, let's discuss how that form could be as approachable as it can be, how it can be easily (re)appropriated, how it can be versatile, unfixed and hybrid. When speaking of materiality, let's reject linearity and embrace continuity instead. Using discarded materials gets rid of the idea that the material lifecycle has a definite beginning and ending, resisting extractivism and single-use material culture. Additionally, working with such 'inappropriate' materials and their flaws directly stimulates thinking in a way that isn't striving for a preconceived picture but instead initiates working creatively within the available parameters. Again, this is a refusal of the fantasy of perfection-

in flux and morphing into infinite new shapes. a plea to embrace architecture as a place of interaction, always to the illusion of buildings or spaces as finalized objects, this is specific community in a specific context. Rather than holding on ually in the present and allows for attuning to the needs of a over permanence, softness over rigidity. This grounds it continmeans to introduce ephemerality in it - to value temporality about presentation. However, to queer the architectural process is a misconception easy to sell in an age when everything is iconic', for them to be visible, monumental and documented people. The desire for creating buildings that are 'out there' or to last, leave a legacy or make an ever-lasting impression on wey is the dismissal of the assumption that architecture is built open to the unplanned, the spontaneous and the improvised. of that. We must embrace this chaos and contingency and be sug the spaces they inhabit and share should be a reflection the dynamics between them will always be subject to change, letting go of fixed notions and systems of order. People and Working in collaboration with a community inevitably means

#### embrace the temporality of space

#### work transdisciplinarily and intersectionally

Uniting different people from varying disciplines and backgrounds transforms the role of the architect into one that is mediating and accommodating. Transdisciplinarity entails bringing together different kinds of knowledge and methods. Intersectionality introduces different lived realities and experiences and establishes their interconnection. Queering the process of architecture is a call for embedding in the world, which can only be done by working across disciplines and backgrounds and through acknowledging the interrelationality of it all. Everything is intertwined and in order to move forward, sustainability must be interpreted in its full extent: there can be no environmental sustainability while entire groups of people are oppressed, nor can we sustain ourselves economically when that is off of the backs of other beings or ecosystems. Queering the architectural process means rejecting the reductive tendency to see the world in binary and separate entities divided by borders.

In order to dismantle systems of oppression and move towards people's empowerment, a wide array of voices needs to be given space, including people with varying kinds of knowledge and different lived realities. Rather than extracting information from them as input for the architectural process, all of these voices should have an equal opportunity to sit around the table. Rather than designing prescriptively for them from the outside, it is about working in collaboration with them.

ongoing conversations. itize mutual listening, spatial decisions emerging from those down control. Dialogue and negotiation are central and prior ing process, taking place horizontally rather than through topco-creator. This should also shine through in the decision-makvoices. By deconstructing the traditional and binary role of 'arprocess encompasses getting rid of hierarchy and rather, seeing the architect as a collaborator who brings together many collaboration and communication. Queening the architectural ed. Instead, architecture is a collective effort centered around mantled, the myth of the solitary architectural genius rejectsbaces they use, the authority of the architect needs to be dis-In order to empower people and give them agency over the

#### challenge the authority of the architect

#### introduce hospitality and care

Rejecting perfectionism and embracing transdisciplinarity and intersectionality entails embracing anti-normativity - a refusal of systems that marginalize, dominate or erase. To queer entails not only rejecting homophobia or transphobia but also all other normative and exclusionary structures such as ableism, racism and misogyny or patriarchy. None of us are free until all of us are free. Queering the process embeds it with hospitality and care - radical care, for that should always be at the front when moving from oppression to empowerment. To welcome what's been made unwelcome, to shift from exclusion towards an open invitation: the architectural process is in itself a form of holding space - emotionally, physically, socially. It is affective and embodied and a performance in itself: it's an event, a ritual, a gathering. One that fosters belonging and builds community; a remembrance that coming together - especially when community is systemically evicted - is the most powerful form of resistance. Much more than a means to an end, the architectural process is a celebration!

and possibility. tecture from an instrument of control into a space of resistance manifesto - not definite but in motion - for transforming archi al process has meant in practice. Together, they form a working The following six principles distill what queering the architectur-

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tanbul turn it from a tool of oppression into a site of empower-How can queering the architectural process in the context of is-

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How can queering the architectural process in the context of Istanbul turn it from a tool of oppression into a site of empowerment?

This question has spurred a year-long collaborative experiment in researching, designing, building and gathering. The project itself has become a living answer: a temporary structure held up by care, an honoring of collectivity and self-expression in the face of structural expulsion.

The following six principles distill what queering the architectural process has meant in practice. Together, they form a working manifesto – not definite but in motion – for transforming architecture from an instrument of control into a space of resistance and possibility.

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In order to dismantle systems of oppression and move towards people's empowerment, a wide array of voices needs to be given space, including people with varying kinds of knowledge and different lived realities. Rather than extracting information from them as input for the architectural process, all of these voices should have an equal opportunity to all around the table. Rather than designing prescriptively for them from the table. Rather than designing prescriptively for them from the outside, it is about working in collaboration with them.

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work transdisciplinarily and intersectionally

#### embrace the temporality of space

Working in collaboration with a community inevitably means letting go of fixed notions and systems of order. People and the dynamics between them will always be subject to change, and the spaces they inhabit and share should be a reflection of that. We must embrace this chaos and contingency and be open to the unplanned, the spontaneous and the improvised. Key is the dismissal of the assumption that architecture is built to last, leave a legacy or make an ever-lasting impression on people. The desire for creating buildings that are 'out there' or 'iconic', for them to be visible, monumental and documented is a misconception easy to sell in an age when everything is about presentation. However, to queer the architectural process means to introduce ephemerality in it - to value temporality over permanence, softness over rigidity. This grounds it continually in the present and allows for attuning to the needs of a specific community in a specific context. Rather than holding on to the illusion of buildings or spaces as finalized objects, this is a plea to embrace architecture as a place of interaction, always in flux and morphing into infinite new shapes.

HIIO

Though prioritising process, these concepts can still be applied to the physical aspects of architecture. When speaking of form, let's discuss how that form could be as approachable as it can be, how it can be easily (re)appropriated, how it can be versatile, unfixed and hybrid. When speaking of material sality, let's reject linearity and embrace continuity instead. Using ality, let's reject linearity and embrace continuity instead. Using ality, let's reject linearity and embrace continuity instead. Using other as a definite beginning and ending, resisting extractivism cle has a definite beginning and chair, working with such and single-use material culture. Additionally, working with such thinking in a way that isn't striving for a preconceived picture but instead initiates working creatively within the available patimeters. Again, this is a refusal of the fantasy of perfection-rameters. Again, this is a refusal of the fantasy of perfection-

In order to tackle the capitalist system and the perfectionism it reinforces, it's necessary to allow for playfulness, experimentation, accidents, failures and surprises. To allow for unplanned occurrences: failure and disobedience but also pleasure and joy. These are vital aspects of the process of architecture and joy. These are vital aspects of the process of arthan measuring time and labor through output, the importance of non-doing is underlined as a refusal of normative timelines, budgets and institutional standards.

Embracing temporality and the act of making in architecture inevitably means prioritizing the process over the 'final product and decentralizing result-oriented thinking. Rather than merely appreciating the outcome, the relationships and happenings fostered by the process are most valuable. This is in direct opposition with linear, production-driven and capitalist processes. Rather than sole form-making, architecture is a social chore-position with linear, production-driven and capitalist processes.

value process over product

#### reclaim the act of making

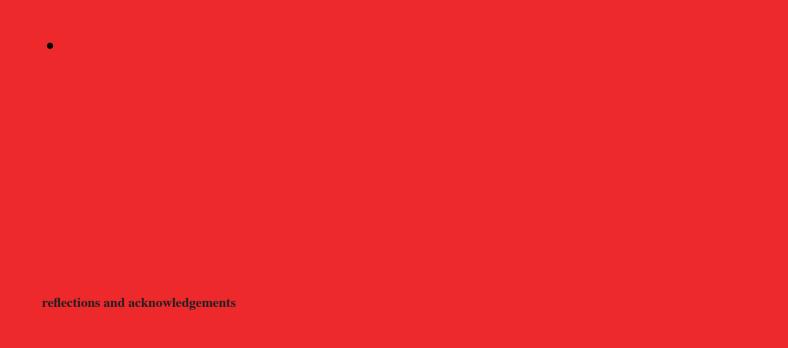
We need to reintegrate the value of craft as more than mere technique – the act of making summons both ingenuity and intimacy. Ingenuity, for working hands on opens up fields of embodied knowledge not reachable when detached from the tactile process, creative solutions not available through cognition alone. Intimacy, for the making entails entering a direct relation with matter, scale and the world around us, stimulating a sensibility to the surroundings. This is reinforced by learning from local materials and existing techniques, bringing upon a situatedness within the context. In the face of the globalization of architecture, this is especially significant. A movement where any relation to the environment is absent displaces local knowledge and the alienating effect this brings upon often leads to the upheaval of entire communities.

Instead, vital to the creation of new worlds is their embedment in the immediate surroundings, challenging the generalization and aesthetic homogenization of glossy surfaces emerging everywhere, void of relation to the context and leaving no room for mess or dirt; the unplanned allowing for life to flourish. As environments are becoming overly ordered, sterilized and prescriptive, excluding personal interpretation or appropriation, the need for the reintegration of craft is underlined.

Reinforcing the tangible dimension in turn transcends into the ephemeral again: the process of making – when done in collaboration – becomes a social glue. Making together fosters a sense of community and social cohesion as well as identification with place and stimulates a feeling of shared responsibility for the materials we use and the spaces that hold us. It needs to be stressed that this is something (that should be) accessible to all: making can be done through humble means and often it's the simplest implementations that bring upon the greatest transformative power – allowing architecture to exceed form and become lived practice.

traces, thanks &

THINGS STILL BURNING



## REFLECTION

Having returned from Istanbul after spending six weeks there building together with loved ones at my favorite nightclub out there, I don't know where to even begin writing this reflection. The past year has been full of lessons and I'm grateful to have been able to go through it in this somewhat unconventional way, allowing me to explore how architecture can be done in collaboration with a community. Also, this year was a perfect occasion to be able to give back to the people from whom I received so much in the time that I was living there. As with any place you visit temporarily, it is easy to fall into the trap of consuming more than you contribute.

The first months of the academic year were aimed at preparing for the first trip back to Istanbul. The queer community there is full of amazing individuals that have found genius ways to survive in a repressive environment. Thus, the research methodology was mostly aimed at finding ways in which to do it collaboratively – often absent in the world of architecture and it led to the search for ways in which to do research collectively. By losing the dichotomy between researcher and subject, knowledge is gathered in a more democratic and horizontal way. Rather than subtracting data from subjects, this was a way to give them agency over the data collected. Beyond the collective approach, maintaining a sense of informality was important. In order for creativity to flourish the process was to remain free from hierarchy or overly ordered plans. This made the process quite messy but also extremely fun and led to fascinating outcomes – from little notes to elaborate drawings, these tablecloths and drawings are full of story and life.

#### in between

After going back to the Netherlands and presenting the research findings, it suddenly seemed very irrelevant and out of line to start designing something all by myself. Asides from graduation and taking personal lessons from that, what was the point if it was detached from the people that enriched the research so much? Thus, I started playing with the idea of returning once again in order to collectively design and build an interior space at the night-club. How would that kind of process take place? How could architecture become a site of collectivity rather than a tool of oppression? Especially when nowadays, many of the new building projects in Istanbul are actively directed towards the eviction of community and taking power away from people.

Obviously, there was the coming up with initial design ideas. These were less focused on shaping a clear goal and more aimed at creating a fertile ground so that upon return, ideas could flourish. It helped greatly to have a vision, to tell a story and invite people to get along. On top of that, aspects of the project that I hadn't really thought of prior showed up, such as presenting my ideas to several foundations in order to gain funding to realize the project. Though a bit of a slur at the time, it helped me vocalize my motivations and learn how to make their relevance come across to others. And actually receiving the financial support from them was a huge encouragement to keep going.

Another important part of this in-between period was reconnecting to places in the city in order to start gathering materials, finding a place to execute the work at, reaching out to people that might be interested to contribute and getting in contact with the nightclub in order to assess the possibilities. Quite honestly, all of these only really started to take off after I actually went back to Istanbul in April, which emphasizes the importance of being physically present at the location of a project.

### unforeseen circumstances

Of course, things never turn out the way they are planned. In April, Istanbul's mayor and the current dictator's biggest rival was put in jail, the third person who underwent this injustice. Demonstrations broke loose all throughout Turkey and friends were badly hit by the violence of the police. On top of that, a major earthquake happened. Seismologists have been predicting a big one to take place and ruin large parts of the city – people feared this might be the start of it.

Long story short, spirits were at an all-time low and I was wondering how I could ever get this idea of designing and building collectively off the ground. Asides from not wanting to demand too much from people already under so much pressure, I realized that most of my friends have little to no knowledge of architecture and the ones that I discussed my ideas with seemed rather intimidated by the concept of building without a clear plan in mind. It seemed that the only way to include people and make them feel comfortable enough to participate was to guide them more clearly.

Meanwhile, time was running and the weekend in which we would take over the space of the nightclub was coming closer. At this point, it might have been wise to change the course of the project all together and switch to a different choice of material. The idea of building with metal came from the desire to create a space that matched the roughness of the night and underground culture and would not have turned out the same in wood. However, metal is challenging to work with, and I too was often wondering how to handle it.

# **building process**

I suppose I was stubborn and stuck with that decision. Letting go of it made me feel like a lot of the preparatory work would have been in vain, all the scavenging for old pieces of metal for nothing. And asides from having an aesthetic vision in mind, using the same metals used all around the city at construction sites and other temporary structures seemed fitting – if we couldn't take our queer space into the city, perhaps we could bring part of the city inside instead.

Thus, we stuck with it and I started drawing the outlines of the structure whilst continuing to lay it out to people and asking what they thought of it, what they would like to see. And so, within that kind of rigidity of the metal structure, we created ways in which it could still be altered, moved around, be dressed in different ways. A frame holding up different materials able to be set up in endless configurations and used for various purposes. This turned out to work quite well. After I worked on the supporting structure with a local craftsman and two friends, softer materials came into play and more people showed up to help. We worked with plastic sheets, fabrics and shards of mirrors and all of them had varying qualities, bringing new ideas and varying atmospheres.

# bringing together

The project brought together different people throughout the building phase, and was a joy to encounter friends whom you normally only would meet on the dancefloor in another environment. Likewise, it was interesting to be spending daytime at the club which you normally only see at night or at max during the first rays of sunlight. I'm grateful that the project brough people together in this way.

To be working on the topic of queer space within the field of architecture master track is relevant not only because of the LGBTQIA+ community being under more and more pressure worldwide these days and their spaces being taken away everywhere, but also because the queer community is in many ways defying social expectations – providing valuable knowledge to be applied to the field of architecture and the built environment as well. Queer individuals are often forced to discover and rediscover themselves and their identities continuously, which is in line with the natural state of the world. However, architecture and the built environment are frequently thought of as static and predictable things, built to last, built to impress. Instead, queer space offers a different view in which beginnings and endings fade and rather, communities and the spaces they inhabit grow alongside one another.

#### research

Though I believe all parts of the research to be interrelated, it could be roughly divided into three topics:

- i. Literature review going into the existing debate around queer space and queer theory.
- ii. Immersion into the urban fabric of Istanbul in order to assess the existing queer venues that are there, as well as an analysis of queered uses of space that are not necessarily related to the LGBTQIA+ community, but in their own ways challenging normativity.
- iii. Community-based research diving into the lived realities of queers in Istanbu

The first part of the research brought valuable lessons on the genealogy of queer space. Understanding the roots of anything is essential in order to work in a way that is grounded and enables working towards something that is yet to be. Moreover, the literature research pointed out three characteristics of queer space – temporality, hybridity and collectivity – which became anchor points to hold onto during the building process and shine through the outcome of the project as well.

The second part of the research gave insight into the reality of queer spaces already existing, what they stand for and mostly how they navigate themselves within the scope of the wider city. Paying attention to the city in general and assessing queered ways in which all of its inhabitants use and share the spaces around them was a huge inspiration as well. From materiality to architectural elements, examples of mobility and wider informal systems present throughout Istanbul, they gave a deeper understanding of the urban fabric and allowed for designing and building in a way that is aligned with the local context. This is especially important because of the queer community always being portrayed as outcasts. However, a queer(ed) space does not need to be completely alien and is always intertwined with the local context.

The third part of the research was fascinating not only because it taught lessons on the lived reality of the queer community in Istanbul, what binds them together, in which ways they feel othered or what they dream of. Mostly, this part was valuable because it opened up a way of working collectively. This became the most important thing to hold onto during the design and building phase. On top of that, the community's desire for a free space in which to share art basically became the design brief that sparked the project's outcome.

## learning from context

Working with local materials and systems connected the community with the city they're systemically estranged from. By collaborating with waste collectors, not only did the project take on a more economically and environmentally sustainable character but also did it make it rooted in its immediate surroundings. In the context of Istanbul, it's inspiring to see that the culture of repurposing and repairing is still alive, whereas in many other parts of the world the same objects would simply be discarded and replaced. The ingenuity of local craftsmen taught many lessons. Also, it was giving hope in other ways: during the building process, we visited many places and people that we would normally never get in contact with and Turkish friends were surprised with their friendliness. We mostly worked around Tarlabaşı, a neighborhood singularly represented as negative and dilapidated, but actually holds a local network in which everyone seemed to know one another and kindly pointed us into the right direction.

# collectivity

With people all over the world polarizing and a more individualistic lifestyle being enforced onto us, it's all the more important to find new ways in which to create and use space together, connecting different people and working towards spaces that are created in an inclusive way. This can only be done when collectivity is engrained all throughout the process, from research to design, building, use and aftercare. This not only leads to a feeling of connection to place but also to one another other. Further, it raises awareness of the importance of the spaces we inhabit and the materials we use. When everything is decided from a distance, no one feels inclined to take responsibility over taking care of a space. Creating spaces together thus not only makes them represent people's needs and wants better, but makes them more lasting. What was most valuable for me was how social interaction leads to ideas and developments that one could never come up with all alone. This underlines why it's good to let go of a finished picture in mind when embarking on a project – things won't ever turn out the way you imagine them so we might as well let go of expectations. Perfectionism too, is something to let go of. The unforeseen moments and accidents that happened in the end only enriched the process more.

#### role of the architect

Throughout the building process, three aspects of the role of the architect came to the front most clearly to me. The first is the *architect* as a *mediator*. Someone who is always in conversation, both asking questions and giving answers, realizing that those answers are never definite. It's about this ability to listen and respond.

Second is the role of the *architect* as a *collaborator*. I could have never done this by myself and it's actually quite ironic that we're being taught more individually, far off from working in the real world. This project made me love collaborating more; especially the moments in which people from different disciplines came together around the project – DJs, club managers, craftsmen, performers, party animals – were the most fruit-bearing.

Third is the *architect as craftsman*. Despite the countless drawings and models made during the last six years of studying architecture, this was the first experience of actually building something on a 1:1 scale. Gathering the right materials, using specific tools, trying our luck at welding, working with cement and fabrics as well as sound systems and lights; it only serves as a motivation to get away from the computer and continue to work more practically and hands-on.

# expanding

How could this process be applied on a bigger scale? This question doesn't entail that small scale projects like this aren't valuable or substantial enough. But which lessons could be taken to the scale of a building, a street, a neighborhood? And how could this approach lead to solutions for current problems we are facing as a whole? Housing crisis, exploitation of the earth's natural resources, drifting apart of people leading to conflicts all around the world?

Really, I am convinced that working together is the only way. On the one hand, collectivity is about quite deep and important topics such as social cohesion, shared responsibility, sense of belonging, equality, etc. These values are necessary for us to move forward together. But the collaborative process also shows the importance of having a good time—without those funny drawings we made at the beginning or all those liters of *raku* we drank, the project could have never happened. It's necessary to remain that sense playfulness, to chat about things that seem completely irrelevant but might spark new ideas later on, to interact with people you'd not come across normally and eventually realize that they're not that bad after all.

For now, this is a small-scale, under the radar space. That's what's possible under the current circumstances in Istanbul. However, as awareness grows, which is only a matter of time and perhaps is strengthened through these first stage smaller implementations and interventions, more is possible. A structure like this could take on many identities and doing so can host various functions, be assembled in different locations. It is all in the hands of the ones using and taking care for the space.

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