Slide 1 - Title

Slide 2
I will present the project in four parts Research, Process, Configuration and Reflections

Slide 3
At our first studio meeting a little over a year ago, I presented a book of sketches by architect and graphic designer Wajiro Kon, and a Japanese painting of the city showing fragments of building interiors and street scenes.

Together these set out the two themes of my graduation project - the observation of everyday life in an unfamiliar context, and an investigation into the relationship between the architectural interior and the city. My project uses observational drawings to reflect on this relationship, and modifies it using a system of simple, repeatable parts in fragmented, leftover sites of Bogota.

Slide 4 - Quote
In his book 'The Public Interior as Idea and Project’, Mark Pimlott defines the interior as "that space that architecture makes, which is all at once set apart from the world and in its midst … … informed and shaped by ideas."

Rather than defining the interior as a specific type of space, the quote defines it as a condition - not only a spatial condition but a social one, communicating sets of cultural values and behavioural norms. As such, the notion of the interior also implies and exterior - an otherness which is kept out. An investigation into the interior is also an investigation into control, exploring how this condition grants freedoms to some while removing it from others.

I will introduce this at an urban scale first, focusing on downtown Bogota before describing the fieldwork and design process.

Slide 5 - Eje Photo
This photo shows the research site for the project, Eje Ambiental - an urban route in Bogota's downtown that runs from the foot of the mountains cutting through the grid of the city.
Slide 6
The route is partially pedestrianised for almost a kilometre, winding through the downtown area from East to West. Tracing this route reveals a number of distinct urban conditions.

Slide 7
At its Eastern starting point is the Universidad Los Andes campus, one of the most prestigious universities in the country.

Slide 8
Moving West, the route passes along the top of La Candelaria - Bogota's oldest district. The Presidential Palace, Congress and Supreme Court are all found here, along with another affluent university and a number of cultural buildings.

Slide 9
To the North of this is the Carrera Septima, a major cultural route through the city that has recently been pedestrianised.

Slide 10
Further West is San Victorino, a chaotic commercial district filled with markets, shopping passages, malls and derelict warehouses. At this point the pedestrianised route ends and forms a major road further West through the city.

Slide 11
Just beyond this point is the Voto Nacional neighbourhood, a deprived part of the inner city almost entirely abandoned by its residents and plagued by crime, drug use and homelessness. This is the site of the Bronx slum, recently raided and demolished by police.

Slide 12
Together these districts tell a story of a fragmented inner city, revealing competing notions of the ideal and the chaotic, the static and the transient, and the powerful and the excluded.

Slide 13
To understand the development of these conditions I mapped the growth of the inner city, starting from Bogota's position between a network of small rivers and a mountain range to the East and identifying pivotal moments of change and development.
Slide 14
Bogota started as a Colonial settlement founded projectively with an urban grid in a defensive position between the rivers and mountains. Carved from the centre of this grid, the plaza became the first prominent urban interior. The city was formal, introverted and defensive, with the grid employed as a powerful spatial tool for interiorising a foreign terrain.

Slide 15
As routes to and from the city intensified, neighbourhoods developed along these peripheries and became spaces of exchange and services. This map shows an active market clearing at the current location of San Victorino.

Slide 16
The creation of a rail network and the terminal just North of Voto Nacional intensified this activity, making these periphery neighbourhoods spaces of exchange and industry, informal and rapidly changing.

Slide 17
Following the decline of industrial economy and the closure of the railway, the inner city was fragmented by the development of highways that created impermeable borders between districts. At the same time, wealthier residents abandoned these areas and moved out to the suburbs, leaving the historic centre in a condition of degradation and poverty.

Slide 18
In contrast to the idealised principles of the colonial city, periphery inner city neighbourhoods have operated as spaces of encounter and exchange. Today the deprivation of these neighbourhoods opposes pressure to revitalise and develop the city centre of an increasingly cosmopolitan city.

Most evident is the sharp divide between the severe depravation of Voto Nacional and the increasingly affluent political base only six blocks East.
Slide 19
In her book ‘Learning from Bogota’, Rachel Berney analyses the problematic relationship between these neighbourhoods using the Parque Tercer Milenio project as a case study.

Constructed in 2007 by Peñalosa, the park intended to radically alter the public landscape of the downtown, displacing established social practices, improving public behaviour and signifying a new future for the city centre.

Slide 20
In doing so Peñalosa sought to reform the highly problematic Cartucho neighbourhood. Formed in the 70s and 80s, Cartucho had become a centre of violence and deprivation, described as an area which ‘fed the progressive deterioration of the city centre’. Fragments of the demolished neighbourhood can be seen in the top left of the photograph.

Slide 21
But the destruction of the Cartucho neighbourhood didn’t end the impoverished conditions, instead shifting them to surrounding areas. Berney estimates that 4,000 people were evicted and over 600 buildings demolished. She describes the formation of ‘Cartuchitos’ in neighbourhoods close by - fragmented enclaves formed by those who were displaced, where social problems and poor living conditions continued.

The displacement inflicted on those who occupied the site of the Tercer Milenio park casts this approach in a sinister light. In his essay ‘Two Concepts of Liberty’, Isaiah Berlin discusses the tyranny that emerges when individuals or groups, such as leaders or states, impose notions of development on others.

The Parque Tercer Milenio is a clear example of the state implementing its ambitions and ideals spatially as a concrete project, attempting to replace a problematic instance of otherness with its own vision for the city.

I’ll use this as a backdrop to introduce and reflect on the fieldwork carried out on our field trip.

Slide 22
During our time in Bogota I worked with my group mate Zi Wei, creating quick drawings of the city. We were guided by a methodology developed by Wajiro Kon to record shifts in material culture in rapidly
changing urban environments. Trained as an architect and graphic designer, Kon referred to his method as Modernology. It encourages direct observation of the city and the recording of common types of buildings, objects and social practices as they are encountered.

**Slide 23**
We started by sketching recurring objects and spaces of informal appropriation, focusing on the vending kiosks found across the city streets.

**Slide 24**
We observed spaces of overlap, where this kind of appropriation interacted with interiors of buildings.

**Slide 25**
And identified interiors which had a connective function, linking streets together.

**Slide 26-30**
But the experience evoked by many of these interiors was one of seclusion and reduced interaction with the street. While elements closest to the perimeter engage passers-by, deep plans quickly detach themselves from the unpredictability of the outside.

**Slide 31 - Photos**
In his essay ‘The Rights of Retreat and the Rites of Exclusion’, Robin Evans discusses the role of architecture in excluding that which people wish to remove from their experience. He notes that while some architects treat buildings purely as climatic filters, in fact buildings also actively filter those social and ideological conditions considered undesirable.

For Evans the retreat is a terrain defined by the ideologies of those who make use of it, and its spatial form facilitates this. The notion of the retreat sheds light on both the city’s historical forms and its contemporary public interiors. In Bogotá, where security can be problematic, the opportunity to inhabit a controlled environment that works to exclude risk can be understood as a desirable quality. The interior affords comfortable freedoms to those within, but this occurs at the expense of those it shuts out.

Similar to the Parque Tercer Milenio project, these observations reveal a kind of paradox of the interior condition. At once a space intended to absorb and enrich the city, but also one that can reject its context and function as an autonomous retreat for those who can access it.
Slide 32 - Conclusions

The early form of the city established clear notions of the interior as a secure space protected from the unpredictability of its surroundings.

These relationships between the interior and its surroundings are traceable in contemporary forms of public interiors, which maintain a restricted relationship with the street.

The interior as urban and architectural project is used to secure land in the city and to homogenise and control social practices.

This approach has facilitated the spatial exclusion of people and social practices, and recent attempts to extend control have resulted in forceful displacement and conflict.

Slide 33

The design project challenges the enclosure and control of empty sites by reconsidering the relationship between the street, the urban block and the architectural interior. It seeks to reconcile paradoxical notions of connection and retreat, and in doing so aims to destabilise the homogeneity of the interior by introducing flexible and varied means of appropriation and access.

Slide 35

My project focuses on empty sites within the Voto Nacional neighbourhood. As a severely deprived neighbourhood only six blocks from Plaza Bolivar these sites have significant speculative value and are likely to be integrated into the city using the conventional means of enclosure identified in the research.

Slide 36

During our fieldwork we had encountered numerous empty plots used as carparks, which were being held speculatively so that they could be developed as land prices rise.
Slide 37
Considering how these leftover spaces could host a network of interventions, we mapped these plots out. Together they form a loose, irregular configuration superimposed on the regularity of the urban grid. Using Stan Allen’s ‘Field Conditions’ approach we identified these sites as an existing field. A configurative intervention within this field seeks to modify the relationship between these sites and the city, treating them as distinct phenomena rather than left-over spaces, and activating them within the existing urban fabric.

Slide 38 - Field Model
So what is a field? Stan Allen describes them as open-ended conditions created by the repetition and distribution of similar parts, and defined by the nature of the relationship between them.

Slide 39 - Field Variations
He defines field configurations as “loosely bound aggregates characterised by local interconnectivity. Overall shape and extent are highly fluid and less important than the internal relationships of parts, which determine the behaviour of the field”. Using these small models I explored how the same parts could create different conditions by modifying their relationship to one another.

Slide 40 - Complete Incomplete
A field configuration rejects the notion of an overall geometric composition, instead focusing on local relationships between parts. This means parts can be added or removed from the configuration without disrupting these relationships.

Slide 41
With this in mind I began investigating the relationship between these empty sites and the city. The most striking quality of these plots is the abrupt and heavily controlled threshold, concealing the extent of the void behind.

Slide 42
I used three techniques to develop a set of configurative parts in response to this. My first investigation was tectonic, using layering as a response to the shallowness of the threshold into these sites. In plan I used layering to thicken and multiply this threshold, with each layer acting as a transition to the next.
Slide 43
I applied the same principle in section to create a flowing condition on the ground and a defined circulation above. This introduced the notion of two different modes of moving through the site, one behaving as a garden and another which connected each end of the site via a defined route.

Slide 44
Secondly I investigated the threshold using a stereotomic language to achieve the same effect. Using displacement of parts I could generate interaction between layers, while also defining introverted and extroverted conditions.

Slide 45, 46
I combined these two techniques of layering and displacing to create a field of free-flowing and enclosed spaces. Both the tectonic and stereotomic elements work to move from a two-dimensional to a three-dimensional porosity. While the tectonic aspect maintains flow through spaces, the stereotomic elements create localised points of access and control.

Slide 47, 48, 49
Due to the irregularity and confined dimensions of each site, I started dimensioning the project in such a way that it could vary from part to part, aligning when needed but breaking free in other places.

Slide 50
I created quick plan sketches and populated them with simple furniture, not to dictate functions but to develop a sensitivity of scale. This helped me densify the site, reduce spans and move towards a slender and adaptive set of proportions.

Slide 51
Varying dimensions combined in different ways, results in a loosely woven, flexible constellation of open and enclosed rooms. Rhythm fluctuates as members fall in and out of line with one another.

Slide 52, 53
The same logic was applied in the section. A relational datum was set up along the bridge level to link each part the next, allowing other floor heights to vary in response to their immediate surroundings.
Configuration

Slide 55
Using this system of flexible relationships, interventions are introduced across two of the identified sites, each running through an entire urban block.

Slide 56
The implementation of parts is considered at three different scales - first, the interventions are framed within the wider terrain and the socio-political backdrop of evictions and enclosure.

Slide 57
Secondly, plan drawings show the arrangement of parts across both sites and their relationship with the existing urban condition.

Slide 58, 59, 60
The regular banding of structures are interspersed with modifications to the ground texture, bringing the irregular, empty spaces of each site into dialogue with new elements. On each site the intervention is pulled away from the street to create a widening of the pavement, left as open and uncontested public space.

Slide 61
Finally the fragment is related to the physicality of the ground.

Slide 62
Bricks taken from nearby demolition sites are crushed and used as ground fill, articulating the ground and improving drainage of water. This water is filtered and pumped through the concrete floor slabs to cool the building and recover heat, which is transferred to a hot water buffer tank. Excess water runoff is collected for use as grey water. In this way the intervention positions its relationship to the site not only in response to a socio-political reading but also engages with the physicality of the climate.

Slide 63
I will elaborate on the North-east site in more detail, explaining how it activates the site as both a connective space and a retreat.
Slide 64 - The Bridge
A configuration of bridges and stairs activate the connective potential of the site, operating along the first floor to string each structure together. An enclosed room meets the pavement at the ground to create a controlled point of entry.

Slide 65
A fragment shows the relation between this entry and the street, providing easy access for goods and services and a window framing a view into the courtyard behind. The fragment drawing suggests varied appropriation of each room, with further plan drawings exploring other scenarios to demonstrate the flexibility of the plan and dimensional variation.

Slide 66-71
These images show this as a sequence of spaces. The entrance threshold is level with the street. The first room is punctured by a window, revealing the full depth of the site beyond without giving direct access. The route is traversed via shaded corridors and transitional rooms. These rooms frame the movements of others as they inhabit different spaces.

Slide 72 - The Garden
Gates, courtyards and stairs activate the site as a retreat. A small enclosed room faces the street, used as a gatehouse for caretakers and guards. Part of the building is raised on pilots, allowing inhabitants to pass through covered spaces between collective courtyards, punctuated by the suspended bridges above.

Slide 73
This fragment shows the appropriation of the gatehouse, where control of access becomes an embedded social practice. The rooms of the top level, accessed via the courtyard, are subdivided, demonstrating how the stereotomic elements provide services to adjacent rooms. Other plan drawings show how these rooms can work as individual units with private verandas, or open up to work as part of a short circular route.

Slide 74-79 - Photo Sequence
These images show this as another sequence of spaces. First, stepping off the street onto a concrete plinth, moving through a covered space and stepping down onto a brick paved courtyard. Stairs are reached via an enclosed room, giving access to the top level.
Slide 80 - (Re)Configuring
My concluding drawings weave these two conditions together, applying the techniques used in my investigation: layering, displacement and loosening. Colour is used to layer the bridge route and the garden. Texture is used to superimpose scenes from the destruction of Cartucho and El Bronx. These past events are used to populate the site alongside imagined future scenarios, communicating a project which works to modify existing relations rather than simply replacing them.

Slide 81, 82, 83
Finally, loosening these drawings into fragments allows them to be recombined into different instances while maintaining the underlying relational principles, demonstrating the configurative nature of the design.

Slide 84 - Connections
The structural system is a simple steel composite frame with short spans, thin members and pin connections that are easy to assemble and take apart.

The frame uses a single column profile in four different lengths, and two beam profiles in two different lengths. This makes the system highly interchangeable, designed for fast lifecycles and anticipating the possibility of the structure being re-used across sites. It makes the intervention feasible as a short-term use of speculative sites, while still being robust enough to operate as a longer term fixture.

Slide 85, 86, 87, 88
It is constructed above an in-situ concrete foundation in layers. The first floor is bolted together and braced, and a steel deck fixed across the beams. This is repeated for the second and third levels, with the roof beams cantilevering out.

Slide 89, 90
Water pipes are laid out across steel decking and then concrete slabs are poured to complete the primary structure.

Slide 91
Outer structural bays are hung from the cantilevered roof beams and pinned back to the floor plates, and this assembly is braced horizontally.

Slide 92, 93
Finally light trusses are suspended between adjacent structures to connect them.
Slide 94
To summarise, by analysing the relationship between interior and city I identified a contested treatment of land characterised by enclosure and exclusion. Within this context I identified an existing field of empty spaces held speculatively for future development.

I developed a set of simple parts and relational principles, designed to reconfigure the relationship between these sites and the city, and applied these as configurations across two sites.

These interweave public, collective and private spaces by creating a condition of three-dimensional porosity, multiplying the potential for appropriation by different user groups.

Slide 96 - Field Configurations and Modules
Earlier in the year I analysed Le Corbusier's Venice Hospital project, presented as an example of a configurative building. As Allen writes, the project develops through repetition and accumulation as an open-ended scheme that has no overarching composition. The part from which the project develops is the individual cell, based on Corbusier's modulor man. Through developing from this abstracted ideal, the Venice Hospital project falls victim to Modernism's assumption that all individuals conform to a single definition, rejecting otherness and imposing a universal condition. The individual cell enforces the notion of the existenzminimum which preoccupied twentieth century modernism and underpinned functionalism. The project develops from the periphery of the city, extending it only as an abstracted notion. Within the project itself, the configuration is dominated by the totalising force of this deterministic module.

Slide 97 - Constellation
Reflecting on this, a configurative approach allows us to move beyond the totalising nature of such modularity by interweaving and superimposing the new with the existing. Rather than developing in isolation, my project is configured within a complex existing condition, responding to local irregularities rather than replacing them. I use the room as a neutral unit that varies locally in response to site constraints. It can be appropriated in isolation or in combination with others - the same room that can function as a large apartment could also be a temporary dormitory - a classroom, office or workshop. The relational principles are robust, but the formal articulation is relaxed and flexible.
Slide 98

For me these last points reveal the most powerful aspect of a configurative approach - that field configurations are especially interesting in the ways they interact with their surroundings and with other fields. They thrive in the in-between and the overlapping, leading to complex effects created by localised variations and unique interactions.

My project introduces complementary systems of parts designed to interact with and modify existing spatial and social relations. It seeks an informal and responsive replacement of the functionalist module, proposing a constellation of varied spaces loosely woven into dialogue with its surroundings.

This dialogue asserts the city itself as an ongoing project with no single author, to which each intervention makes a small contribution. It positions the city as a Commons, activated through multiple and varied acts of appropriation and modification over time.