



this
ain't
just
clothes

Alana Hopkins

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I also want to acknowledge my people past and present whose creativity, resilience, resistance, style, and culture made this project possible long before I ever began it. Thank you to the people who continuously created beauty, identity, and community in spaces that were never designed for them to thrive in. This thesis exists because of generations of Black expression, protest, survival, and reinvention.

mom I did it.

this ain't just clothes

It's how we show up, how we take up space, how we say who we are before we even speak. In Black communities, fashion has always been more than appearance, it's strategy, protection, expression, and resistance.

it's never just getting dressed

This project takes that same idea and asks what happens when architecture starts to move like that too. What if space could be styled, layered, and intentional the way we dress ourselves?

What if buildings knew how to show up?

This work sits between research and lived experience. It moves between academic language and AAVE, not as contrast, but as a way to hold multiple ways of knowing at the same time. The use of AAVE in this book is intentional. It shows how I think, how I speak, and how these ideas exist outside of academic spaces.

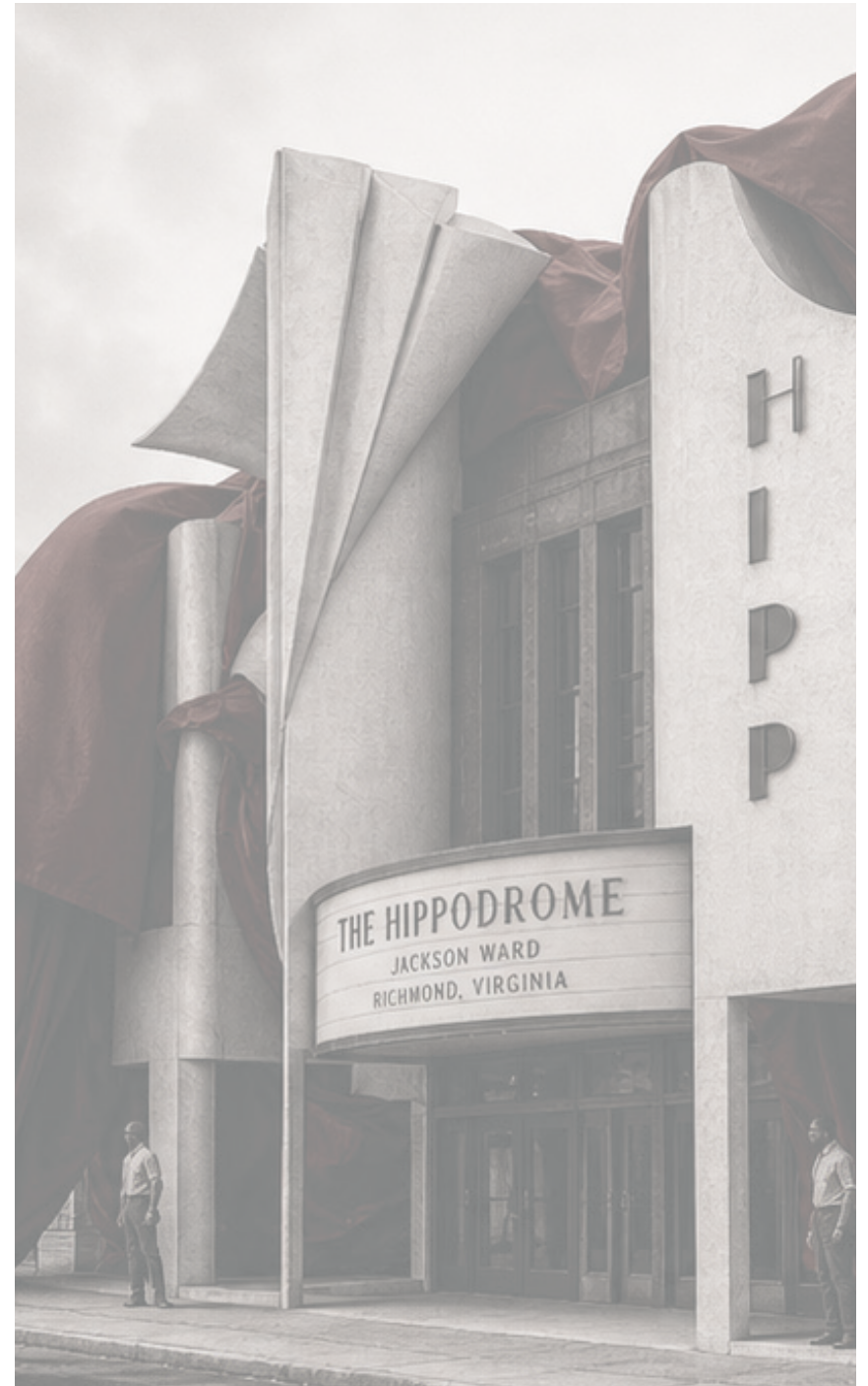
**I'm not
translating it,
I'm lettin it be what it is**

Centered on the Hippodrome Theatre, the design does not aim to recreate the past, but to build on it. The goal is to create a space that holds history while still supporting how the community lives, creates, and defines itself now.

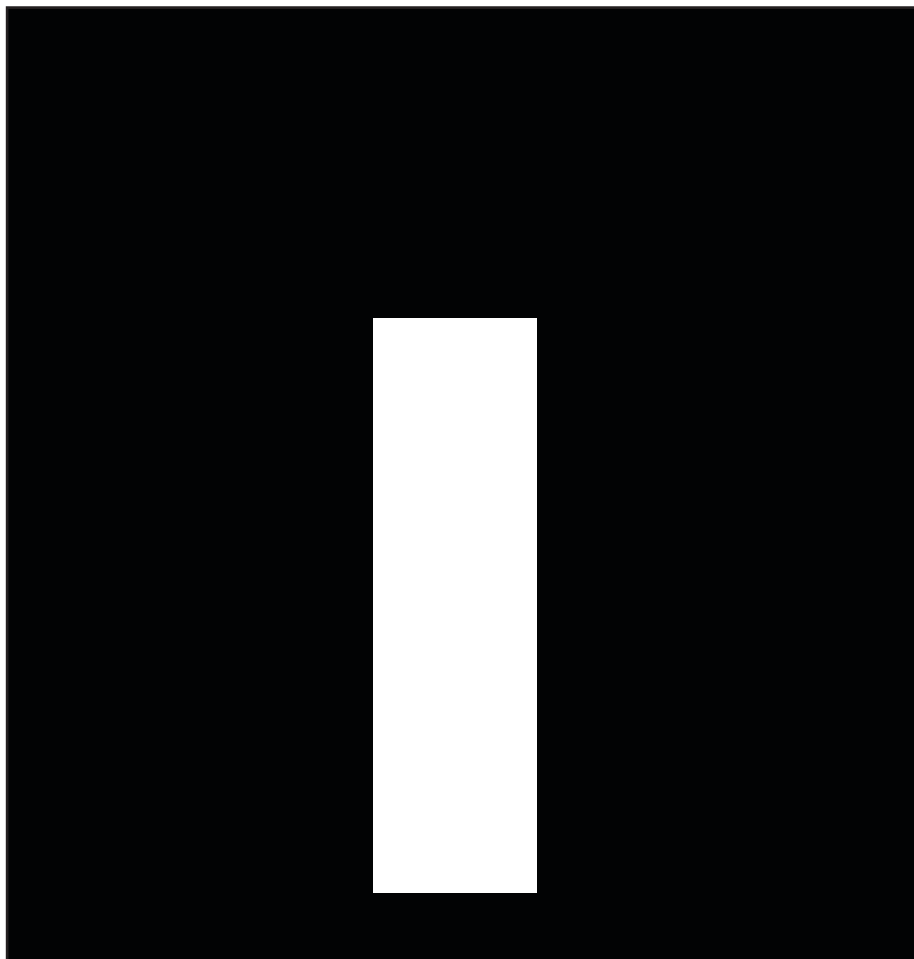
**The thing is, ya'll gonna learn we
was never just getting dressed.**

CONTENTS

01	INTRODUCTION <i>DRESSING ARCHITECTURE</i>	06
02	BLACK DANDYISM <i>STYLE AS POWER</i>	14
03	FASHION AS ARCHITECTURAL LOGIC	26
04	JACKSON WARD + THE HIPPODROME	34
05	DESIGN DEVELOPMENT	44
06	FINAL PROPOSAL	56
07	REFLECTION	72



this aint just surface



CHAPTER I

DRESSING OURSELVES

“

This project explores the relationship between fashion and architecture through the eyes of Black Dandyism, understanding style as more than just an appearance, *it's how we show up, how we take up space, how we decide to be seen before we even open our mouths*. Black Dandyism operates as a form of identity construction, resistance, and spatial practice, rooted in a history where Black self-presentation has always had to do more than just looking good, it had to communicate, protect, and assert presence.

The project investigates how the logics of fashion can be translated into architecture. Instead of treating architecture as something fixed and unchanging, this approach asks what it would mean for space to move differently, to shift, to act more like how we dress, adapting to the body and the moment.

The design is situated in Jackson Ward in Richmond, Virginia, a historically significant Black neighborhood that risks being preserved as static history rather than supported as a living, evolving culture. Focusing on the renovation of the Hippodrome Theatre, the project reimagines the building as a space of being, moving, and forever evolving, something that holds memory but *doesn't stay stuck in it*.

Through flexible spatial systems and performative elements such as fabric-based boundaries, the design allows space to transform over time. *It don't just sit still, it changes, it responds, it really shows up*. In doing so, the project challenges traditional ideas of preservation and proposes a different approach, where culture isn't frozen, but still gets expressed and performed, in space.

”

SHOW UP

What can architecture learn from

our fashion, and how we take up space?

N'T TAKE UP

What happens when it starts

to show up the way we have to?

SPACE



Black Dandyism is examined as a mode of identity construction expressed through precision, style, and presence, and as a framework through which architectural space can be understood and produced. As neighborhoods such as Jackson Ward, Virginia face the risk of being preserved as static representations of the past, Black fashion is approached as a living archive, one that continually evolves through practices of layering, tailoring, and exaggeration. These strategies are translated into spatial terms to explore how architecture can reflect ongoing cultural expression rather than fixed historical narratives. Centered on the Hippodrome Theater, the project proposes a space that acknowledges historical significance while supporting modern modes of community life, creativity, and self definition.



CHAPTER 2

BLACK DANDYISM: STYLE AS POWER



INTRODUCTION

Black Dandyism is often reduced to appearance, with the ideas of sharp tailoring, attention to detail, and a heightened sense of style. But, to understand it only through aesthetics is to overlook its deep cultural roots. Black Dandyism operates as a construction of identity, where style becomes a tool for self-definition, visibility, and control. It is not simply about dressing well, but about choosing how to be seen within social conditions that have historically imposed identity onto Black bodies. Scholars such as Monica L. Miller argue that Black Dandyism functions as a form of resistance, where fashion becomes a means of negotiating power and representation. In *Slaves to Fashion*, Miller describes Black style as a “performance of identity” that both engages with and disrupts dominant cultural expectations (Miller 13). This shows fashion not as surface level, but as cultural production. This chapter traces the historical evolution of Black Dandyism, seeing it within broader social and political contexts. From its relationship to European dandyism to its transformation within Black communities, it examines how style has been used to navigate power, assert identity, and resist limitation.

ORIGINS: EUROPEAN DANDYISM

Dandyism emerged in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Europe as a form of self-fashioning tied to refinement, discipline, and social performance. Figures such as Beau Brummell exemplified this practice, using dress to construct an image of control and superiority. Clothing functioned as a language through which identity and status were communicated. However, European dandyism was deeply tied to privilege. It relied on access to wealth, leisure, and **social** mobility, allowing individuals to prioritize appearance as a **central** mode of expression. As Miller notes, this version of dandyism was rooted in a system where identity could be performed without the same constraints placed on marginalized groups (Miller 21). Black Dandyism does not simply replicate this model. Instead, it reinterprets and transforms it, **shifting** its meaning from one of class-based performance to one of identity formation within systems of racial constraint.



ENSLAVEMENT AND THE POLITICS OF DRESS

During slavery, clothing operated as a mechanism of control and display. Enslaved individuals were often dressed in ways that reflected the wealth and status of enslavers, sometimes in refined garments that signaled power **but this was never** their own. In this context, dress was imposed, forced, never chosen. Yet even within these conditions, dress became a subtle site of resistance. As Tanisha C. Ford explains, Black individuals historically used style as a way to assert dignity and individuality, even when resources and autonomy were limited (Ford 45). Small acts, little alterations, combinations, or the way clothing was worn carried meaning beyond their imposed function. Clothing **begins to shift** from a tool of external definition to a medium of internal expression.



POST-EMANCIPATION: DRESSING FREEDOM

Following emancipation, clothing became a powerful marker of freedom and self-determination. Newly freed Black **individuals** used dress to assert identity, dignity, and presence within public space. Fashion became a way to **challenge** stereotypes and redefine how Black bodies were perceived. Practices such as "Sunday Best" show this shift, where dressing with care and intention was tied to respectability, pride, and community identity. As Ford argues in *Dressed in Dreams*, Black style has long functioned as a way of "making a way out of no way," using creativity and presentation to navigate structural limitations (Ford 3). In this context, Black Dandyism becomes more clearly defined. Style is no longer simply reactivity, it is an active way of showing identity. It becomes a way of constructing identity and claiming visibility on one's own terms.

HARLEM RENAISSANCE

The Harlem Renaissance represents a significant moment in the evolution of Black Dandyism, where fashion became intertwined with artistic, cultural, and intellectual expression. This period saw an expansion of Black visibility and creativity, reflected in literature, music, and visual culture. Fashion during this time became more expressive and experimental. The emergence of the zoot suit, characterized by exaggerated proportions and bold styling, challenged dominant norms of dress and "respectability". The zoot suit functioned as both a stylistic and political statement, asserting presence in a society that sought to marginalize Black and Brown bodies. Black Dandyism in this period shifts **toward** performance. It is no longer solely about refinement, but about visibility, creativity, and cultural assertion. Style becomes a way of occupying space **unapologetically**.



STYLE AS POLITICAL LANGUAGE

Throughout the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, fashion continued to function as a form of political expression. Dress operated in multiple ways, reflecting both strategies of assimilation and resistance. Tailored suits and polished presentation were often used to assert professionalism and equality, particularly within Civil Rights contexts. At the same time, more "radical" expressions of our naturally coily hair, African-inspired clothing, and bold styling rejected assimilation and emphasized cultural identity.

it's BIGGER than YOU
US
US

and ME

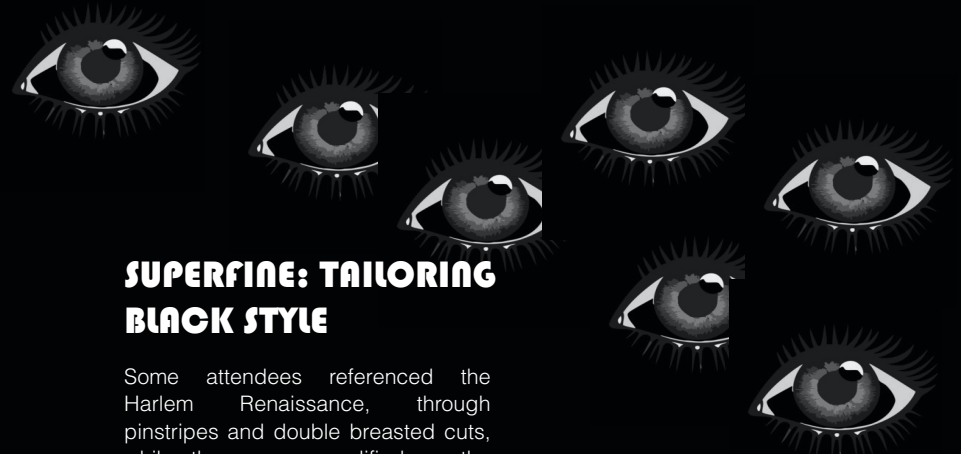
do you

2025 MET GALA

The 2025 Met Gala theme, "Superfine: Tailoring Black Style," marked one of the first times the Costume Institute formally centered Black dandyism as the subject of its exhibit. Organized by The Met (Metropolitan Museum of Art), the exhibit showed the evolution of Black tailoring from the 19th century through the Harlem Renaissance and into contemporary fashion culture. It showed how Black communities adopted, reinterpreted and transformed European suit traditions into a language of self definition. Rather than framing Black style as a trend the exhibit positioned it as design history. It highlighted the precision of tailoring, the politics of presentation, and the ways in which dress operated as both performance and protection. On the red carpet, this theme was interpreted through exaggerated zoot suit inspired silhouettes, structured tuxedos, velvet and brocade fabrics, wide labels, embellished gloves, canes, and layered jewelry.

SUPERFINE: TAILORING BLACK STYLE

Some attendees referenced the Harlem Renaissance, through pinstripes and double breasted cuts, while others amplified the theatrical nature of dandyism. Through extended trains, oversized proportions, and polished finishes. This moment is special not to show alone, but because it formalizes Black sartorial (tailoring) intelligence in institutional history. It demonstrates how a language born from resistance can still be relevant in today's world. It prompts a question, if tailoring can be elevated to museum archive and red carpet architecture, how can the built environment show this same sort of recognition?



us

NOW?



this aint just

fabric

it's coded

it's

memory

it's

who
we
are.



Black Dandyism operates as an ongoing act of self-definition, where identity is constructed and communicated through style. Rooted in a history of constraint, it evolves into a practice of agency, allowing individuals to reclaim control over their representation and presence. Understanding this history provides a critical foundation for examining how these principles might extend beyond the body and into other forms of spatial and cultural production.

this where it start to shift



CHAPTER 3

FASHION AS ARCHITECTURAL LOGIC



FASHIONS LOGIC IN ARCHITECTURE

Architecture has traditionally been understood as static, slow to change and a lot of times detached from the human experience. Fashion is different, it operates as a direct relationship with the body, responding to movement, environment, and identity in real time. It adapts, expresses, and constantly evolves. This difference brings up an opportunity to reconsider how architecture can function not as a permanent object but as a system that can change, respond, and express.

Fashion is not just an aesthetic. It is a spatial practice. The act of dressing involves layering, adjusting, revealing, concealing, and constructing identity through material and form. These actions shape how the body belongs in space and how it is perceived within it. When thinking of fashion in this way, it becomes possible to translate its rhythms to architecture not through literal replication, but through spatial strategies that reflect its behaviors.

This chapter establishes fashion as an architectural framework. It identifies key things within fashion such as tailoring, layering, draping, and styling and examines how these can be reinterpreted as spatial and material systems. Through this translation, architecture begins to shift from a static being to an active thing built in identity, movement, and experience.

Architecture often prioritizes permanence and control. While these qualities are necessary, they can also limit the ways in which space responds to the people who inhabit it. Fashion, on the other hand, operates with flexibility and nowness. It adapts to different bodies, contexts, and conditions, allowing for variation.

Using fashion as a framework introduces a different way of thinking about design, one that acknowledges change, and embraces expression. Rather than designing a singular, fixed condition, architecture can begin to accommodate multiple states, allowing spaces to shift and evolve.



Before it becomes architecture, fashion already operates as a form of space. Clothing exists at the scale of the body, but it extends outward, shaping how the body moves, how it is seen, and how it interacts with its surroundings. It creates boundaries, layers, and thresholds that are constantly adjusted.

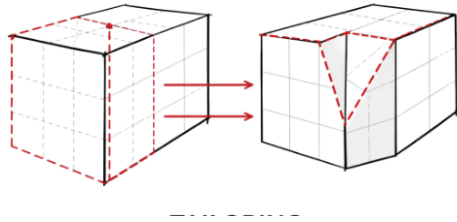
Getting dressed is, in itself, a spatial and theatrical act. It involves decisions about exposure, structure and flow, constraint and freedom. A tailored garment might define and control the body's form, while a draped fabric introduces softness, movement, and variability. These conditions parallel architectural elements such as walls, partitions, openings, and circulation paths.

By understanding clothing as a dynamic spatial system, architecture can begin to adopt similar strategies. Space can be layered rather than singular, flexible rather than fixed, and responsive rather than static. In this way, fashion provides a model for designing environments that are more closely aligned with lived experience.

KEY FASHION LOGICS AND THEIR ARCHITECTURAL TRANSLATIONS

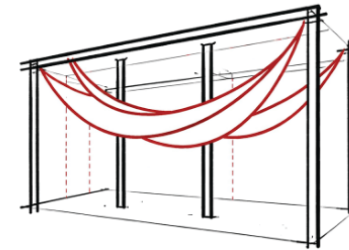
Tailoring → Precision and Control

Tailoring in fashion is about fit, structure, and intentional construction. Every seam, cut, and adjustment is made to shape the body in a specific way. Translating this into architecture emphasizes precision in form, detail, and spatial organization. Spaces become deliberate rather than generic, designed with clear intention in how they are experienced. But can this be mixed with the natural flow of fabric?



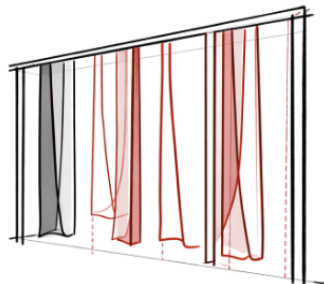
Draping → Flexibility and Movement

Draping introduces softness and variability. Fabric responds to gravity, movement, and interaction, creating forms that are not rigidly defined, but yet self defined. Architecturally, this translates into flexible boundaries elements that can shift, open, or reconfigure. This can be more literally conveyed by fabric.



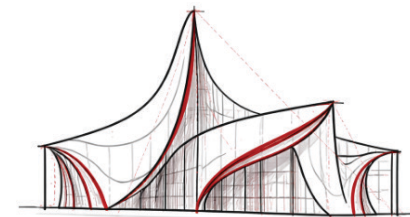
Layering → Overlapping Space and Identity

Layering allows multiple elements to exist simultaneously visually and conceptually. In architecture, this can show as overlapping programs, materials, or historical references. Spaces are no longer singular in meaning but hold multiple conditions at once, reflecting the complexity of identity and experience.



Exaggeration → Emphasis and Presence

Fashion often uses exaggeration to draw attention through volume, proportion, or detail. In architecture, this can be used to highlight specific moments within a space, creating areas of emphasis that guide experience and establish hierarchy.



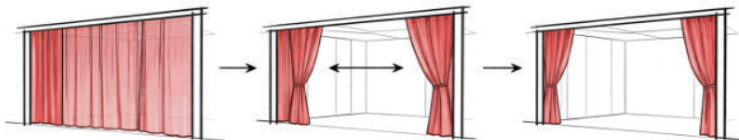
Styling—>Curation and Expression

Styling is the act of assembling elements to construct a cohesive expression. In architecture, this aligns with how materials, forms, and spaces are composed. It also introduces the idea that users participate in shaping the space, rather than simply occupying it.



Movement—> Space in Motion

Fashion exists in motion, it is activated by the user. Architecture can begin to reflect this by designing for movement not just as circulation, but as an active and visible component of space. Paths, transitions, and transformations become central to the experience.



FROM GARMENT TO BUILDING

The translation from fashion to architecture is not about scale alone, but about behavior. While clothing operates at the level of the user and architecture at the level of the building, both engage with questions of identity, presence, and interaction.

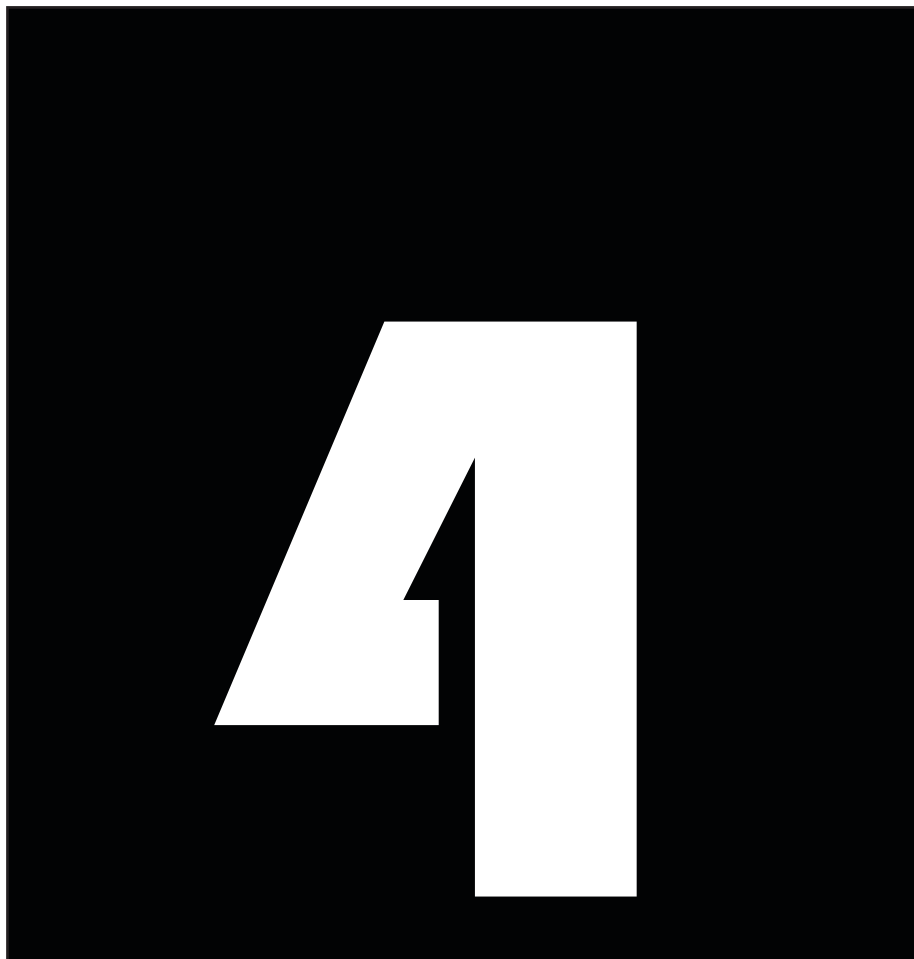
One of the most significant distinctions between fashion and architecture is their relationship to time. Fashion changes constantly across seasons, contexts, and individual choices. Architecture, however, is often designed to remain fixed for long periods. By incorporating strategies from fashion, architecture can begin to engage with time in a different way. Spaces can be designed to transform, whether that is through movement, reconfiguration, or shifts in use.

Fashion provides a set of operational logics that can be translated into architecture. Through tailoring, layering, draping, exaggeration, styling, and movement, space can be designed as a dynamic system rather than a static form. These principles establish a framework for creating architecture that is adaptable, expressive, and responsive to both the body and its cultural context.

This framework requires a context that is not only spatially complex, but culturally and historically layered one where identity, expression, and transformation are already embedded within the environment.

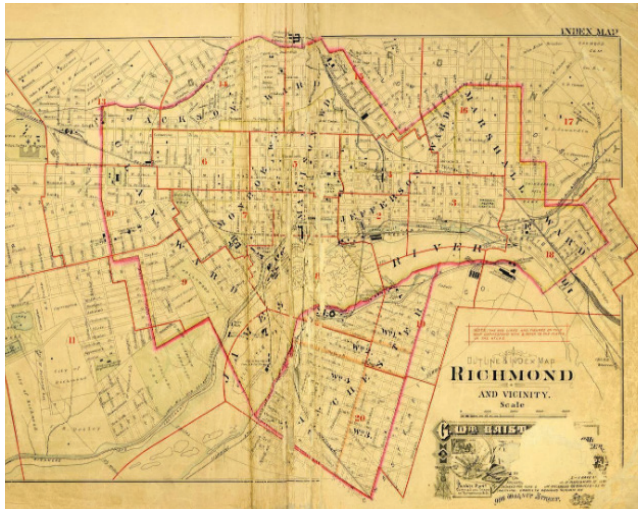
Jackson Ward is this.

we still here, still building



CHAPTER 4

JACKSON WARD TO THE HIPPODROME



HISTORICAL FORMATION OF JACKSON WARD

Jackson Ward, Virginia became one of the most significant African American neighborhoods in the United States. After the Civil War and Emancipation, formerly enslaved people and free Black residents began generating their own property ownership, businesses, churches, and institutions within this specific district of Richmond. By the early 20th century, the neighborhood had developed its own urban fabric of row houses, cornerstores, and multi use buildings that supported the self sustaining Black economy, ("Virginia Department of Historic Resources"). Jackson Ward's compact streets and tightly aligned building fronts reflected a culture of closeness, commerce, performance, worship, and home life layered within just walking distance of each other.

Often referred to as the "Harlem of the South", Jackson Ward became nationally recognized for its concentration of Black owned banks, insurance companies, theaters, and retail businesses (National Park Service). This reputation was not only symbolic, it was shown in the overall architecture of the district. Commercial areas like North 2nd Street were used as economic and cultural centers, where businesses operated out of the ground floors and homes were stacked above. The neighborhood's physical density mirrored the culture that was there, showing a built environment that was economically resilient and socially connected.

In the most significant architectural anchors of this corridor was the Hippodrome Theatre, opened in 1914 as a vaudeville and movie theater serving the Black communities of Richmond, VA. During segregation, the Hippodrome operated as an important cultural venue when many white owned theaters segregated against Black people. The Hippodrome hosted nationally recognized performers and contributed to the idea of what became known as "The Deuce", which was North 2nd Street's entertainment district (National Park Service). The theater was not alone in this urban area; businesses, banks, residences, and performance spaces reinforced the neighborhood structure in which architecture and cultural production were inseparable.





PRESERVATION AND THE RISK OF STAGNATION

In the decades following its economic peak, Jackson Ward underwent a significant physical and social change. While some of the neighborhood was disrupted by mid-twentieth century urban renewal and highway construction. The remaining historic fabric was later recognized for its national cultural importance. In 1976, Jackson Ward was designated a National Historic Landmark District, formally acknowledging its historical value ("Virginia Department of Historic Resources"). This recognition helped protect surviving buildings from demolition and secured the neighborhood's place within Richmond.

Although preservation presents its own tension. While facades remain intact, the intensity of economic and cultural production is no longer as visible. Buildings that formerly housed banks, or performance venues, and even Black owned businesses are now under new economic conditions or are just underutilized in general. The neighborhood is widely celebrated for what it was, and its legacy as "Harlem of the South". In this way, preservation risks stabilizing Jackson Ward as a historical artifact rather than letting it function in the evolving cultural system.

This condition creates a spatial condition, the architecture remains present visually, but the social aspect that once activated its space is worn thin. The result is a district that feels historically heavy but physically weakened. Urban preservation within historically Black neighborhoods must also be understood in relation to broader histories of displacement, this reshaped cultural districts across the US. It is within this tension between protection and stagnation that the Hippodrome Theatre is in today.





THE HIPPODROME IN THE PRESENT CONDITION

Today, the Hippodrome Theatre stands as one of Jackson Ward's most recognizable landmarks. Its facade has remained intact, its name is preserved in the local memory, and its historical significance is mentioned when speaking of the neighborhood's past. But despite all of this symbolic weight, the building operates within a much narrower program scope than it did in the past. Where it previously functioned as a daily thing, hosting performances, film screenings, and communal gathering the theater now operates every now and again, activated primarily through scheduled events rather than its previous everyday use (National Park Service).

This shift shows a broader condition in Jackson Ward, architectural preservation without thinking about and equalling out the reinvention of the program. The exterior communicates cultural importance, but the interior is no longer supporting that layered activity. The building exists as a preserved artifact, honored and protected, but spatially undermined.

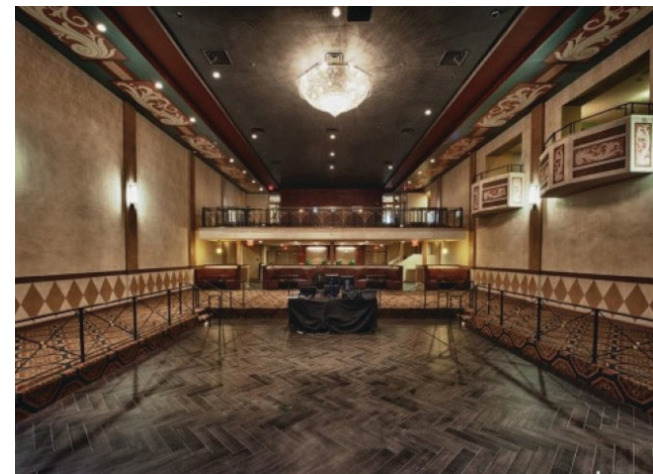
The Hippodrome therefore embodies the central tension of the district. It is not abandoned and not erased, it's maintained. But maintenance alone does not produce the life it once had. Without expanding, or adaptive programming, the structure is at risk of remaining a reference rather than still being an active anchor in the community. In this way, the building becomes my architectural case study in the limits of preservation.

How can culturally significant structure evolve without using its historical grounding? It is in this question that the proposed renovation comes to be, not a replacement, but a transformation.

Standing in front of the Hippodrome today, the weight of its history is undeniable, it is felt. The facade itself holds memory, the name is recognized. But the building's present condition is a much quieter reality, one where its symbolic presence exceeds what is actually happening. What once functioned as a dense cultural anchor now operates on a much narrower path.

It is this gap between history and present use that makes this building urgent. The Hippodrome is not a blank slate, nor is it a ruin. It is a structure embedded in cultural memory, positioned at the center of a neighborhood navigating things like preservation and change. To leave it untouched would preserve form but put it in the same position it is in already, stagnation. To replace it would erase its meaning. The challenge, then, is not whether it should remain, but how it can operate again as an active site of Black cultural production.

For me, the question becomes architectural rather than nostalgic, how can this building move from being remembered to being put to use? At a moment when Jackson Ward is both protected and constrained by its own history, the Hippodrome offers an opportunity to test this.



1790S-1830S
 European Dandyism:
 Beau Brummell: Tailored
 menswear, precision, style:
 control, discipline and status



1830S-1900S
 Early Black Dandyism:
 Reinterpretation under racial +
 colonial systems
 Style = dignity + resistance

1914
 Built in Jackson Ward
 Center for Black performance + nightlife
 Built in Harlem, NYC
 Initially segregated, later becomes Black
 cultural landmark



1920S-1930S
 Harlem Renaissance: Harlem, Zoot
 suits, exaggerated tailoring
 Music, fashion, performance
 intersect



1930S-1940S
 Hippodrome + Apollo thrive
 Touring circuits connect Black
 artist nationally
 Architecture = network of cultural

Decline + Disruption
 Segregation shifts, urban renewal
 impacts.

1940S-1960S



1945
 A massive fire gutted the original
 venue. It was rebuilt and reopened
 in 1947 with a modern Art Deco
 design

1980S
 Reopening: It reopened but eventually
 became "little used and mainly
 shuttered" for nearly two decades



2011
 Following a massive \$12 million, the
 Hippodrome officially reopened August
 2011 as an event venue

2025
 2025 Met Gala: Superfine, Black
 Dandyism centered as theme
 Global stage for Black fashion +
 identity

we figuring it out as we go



CHAPTER 5

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT



The development of this project does not follow a straight path, it's not like architecture. It moves through testing, adjustment, and redefinition. It moves like fabric. Instead of beginning with a fixed form, the project develops through a series of studies that explore how space can be shaped, layered, and performed over time. Each iteration becomes a way of understanding how architecture might move differently. Not as something static, but as something that responds, shifts, and adapts.



PROCESS MODELS

Initial studies focused on the existing Hippodrome as something that could be edited rather than preserved as-is. The building was approached as a system that could be cut, opened, and reassembled. These moves were not about removal alone, but about deciding what stayed, what went, and what became something new. These models test how space can shift through fabric systems. Rather than producing a single layout, each model explores multiple possible conditions spaces that open, close, overlap, and transform.

MATERIAL STUDIES

Material studies began to test the relationship between structure and softness. Hard lined systems were mixed with fabric, to show movement into otherwise stiff conditions. This created a tension between control and flexibility, between what is held in place and what is allowed to shift.

BROCADE

Thick, raised weave with metallic threads that catch light across the surface. It carries weight, physically and visually, turning the body into something ornamental and intentional.



VELVET

Dense pile that shifts tone with movement, absorbing and reflecting light at once. It softens edges while deepening color, giving form a quiet but undeniable presence. As fabric



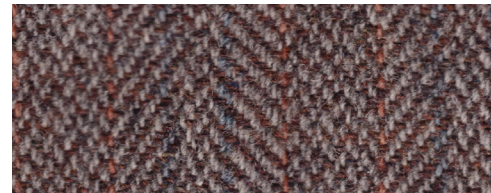
PLAID

Intersecting lines woven into a stable grid, built through repetition and variation. The pattern holds structure while allowing subtle shifts in scale, color, and rhythm. In fashion,



TWEED

Coarse, textured weave with visible fibers and irregularity. It feels grounded and durable, holding warmth while revealing the process of its making. When worn, tweed carries a sense of



PAISLEY FABRICS

Curved, teardrop motifs that flow across the fabric in continuous motion. The pattern resists rigidity, moving the eye rather than containing it. On the body, paisley activates the surface,

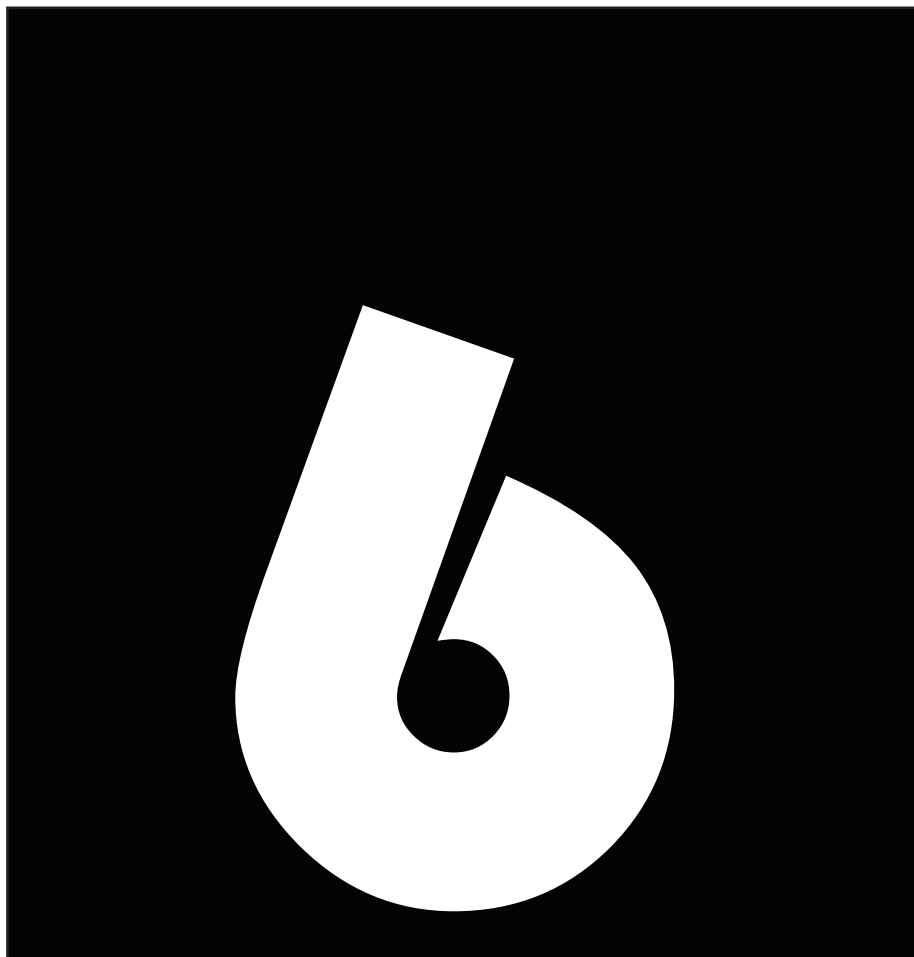


WOOL

Fibrous, insulating, and responsive to tension and heat. It can be structure or softened, shaped, and reshaped while maintaining its integrity. In clothing, wool adapts to tailoring and drape

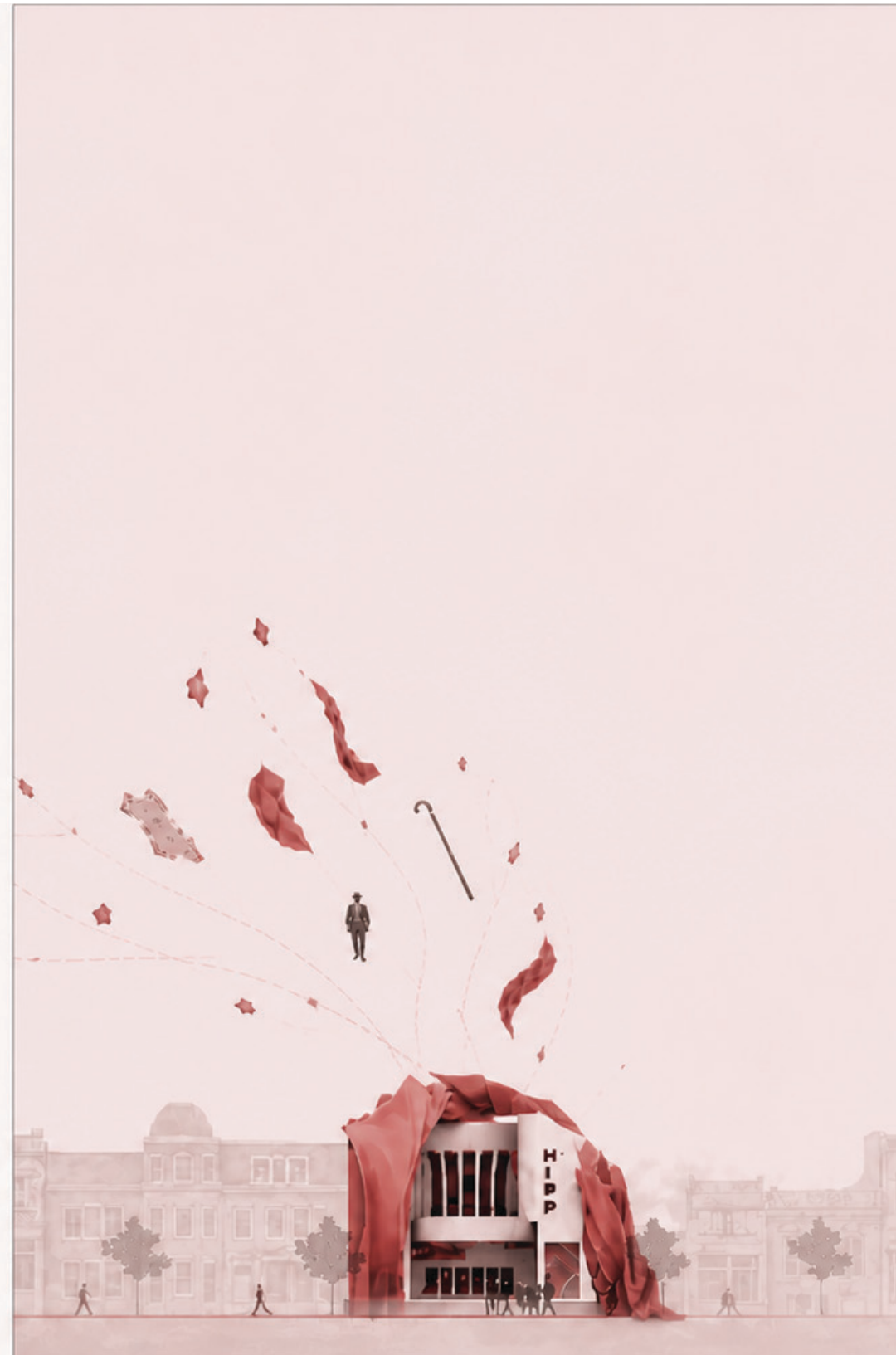


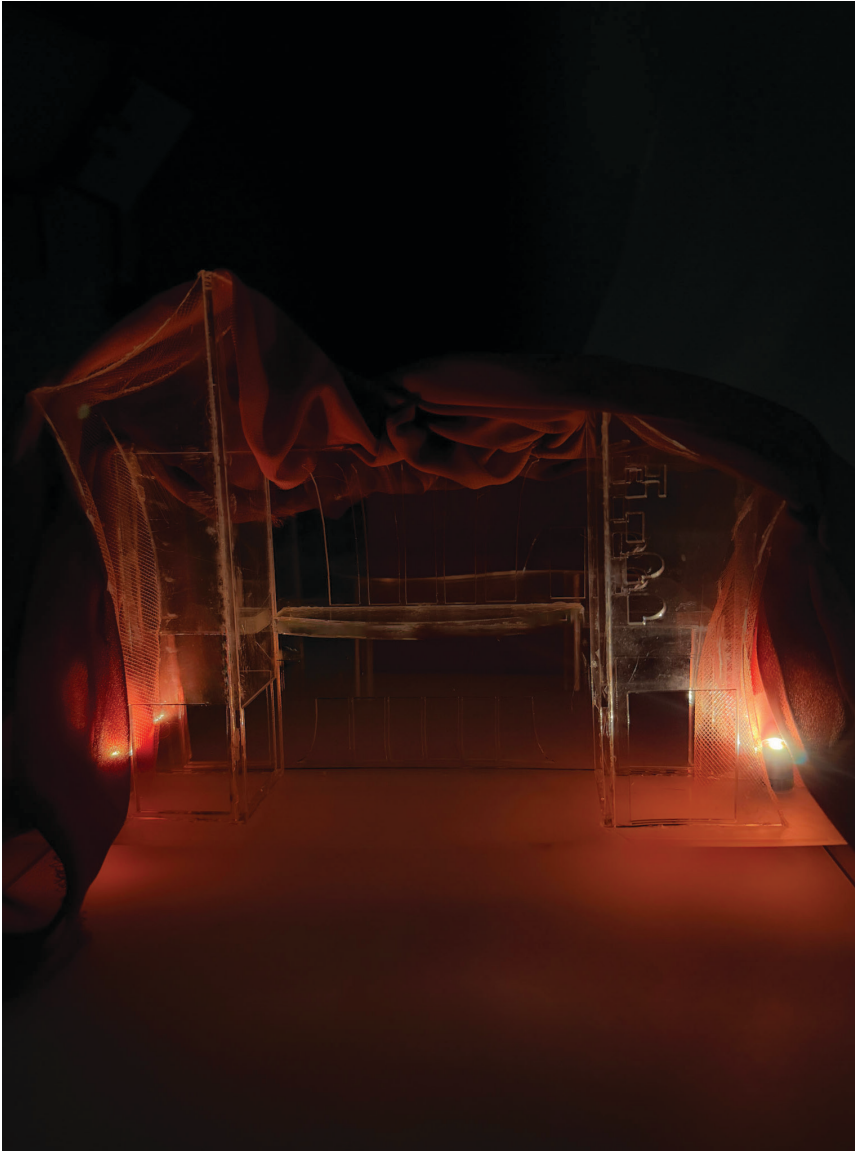
this how it lives now

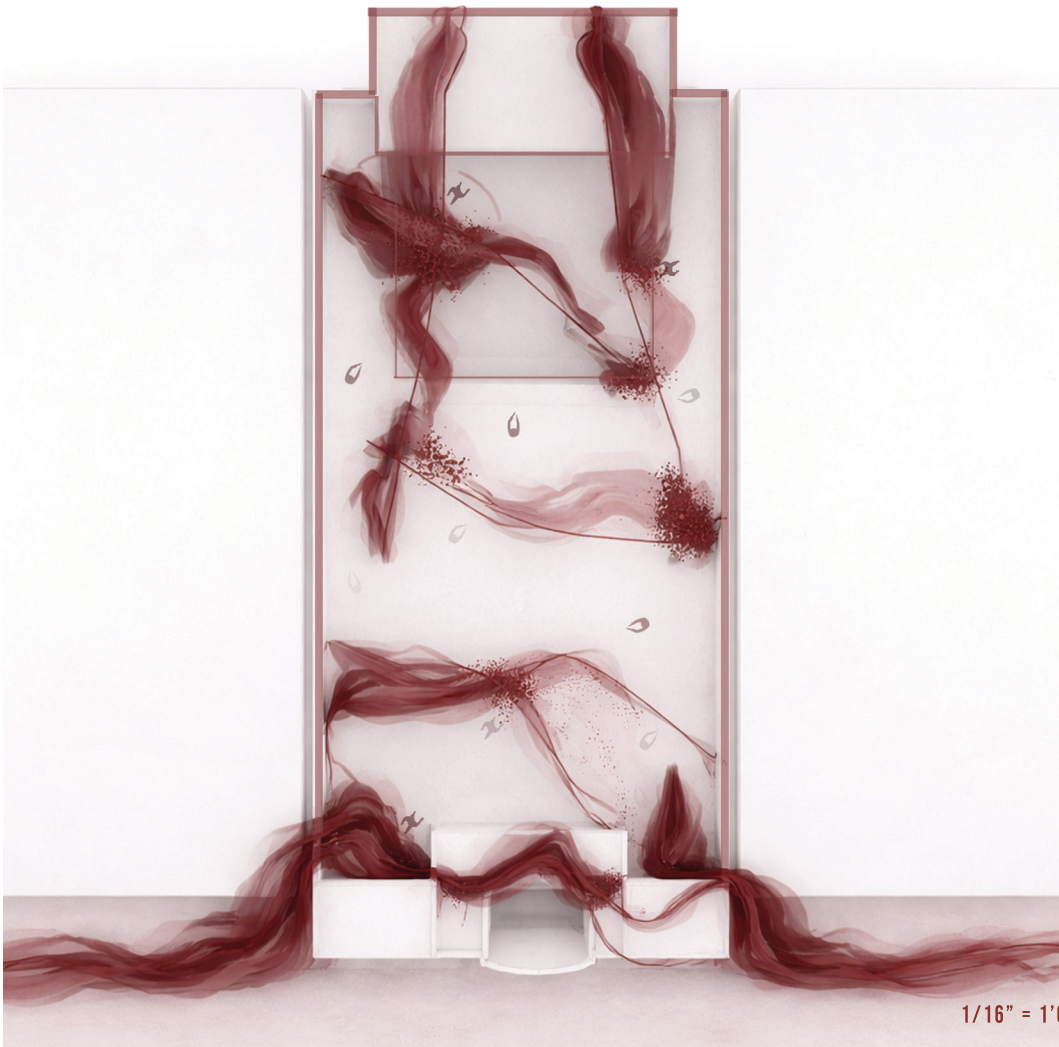


CHAPTER 6

FINAL PROPOSAL



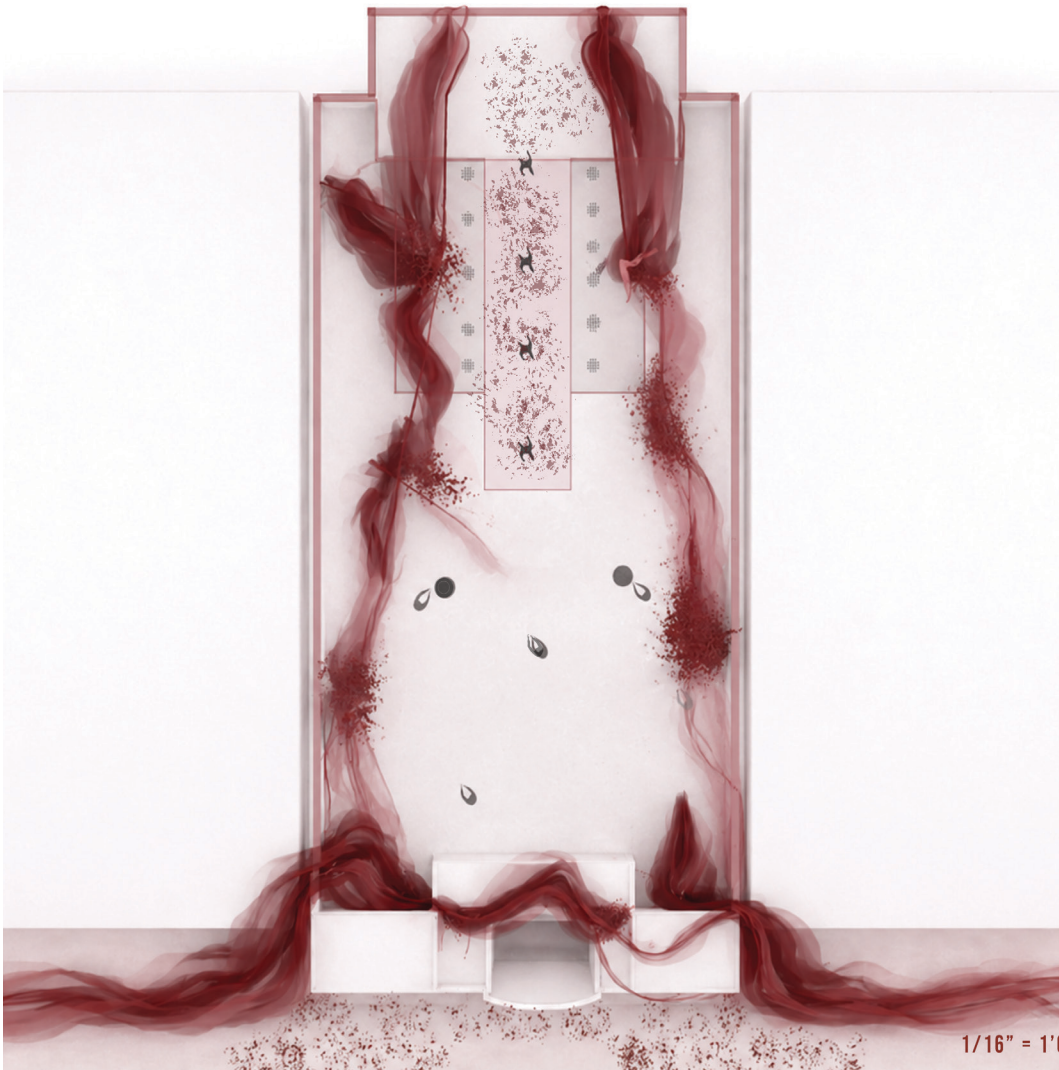




MOVEMENT PLAN

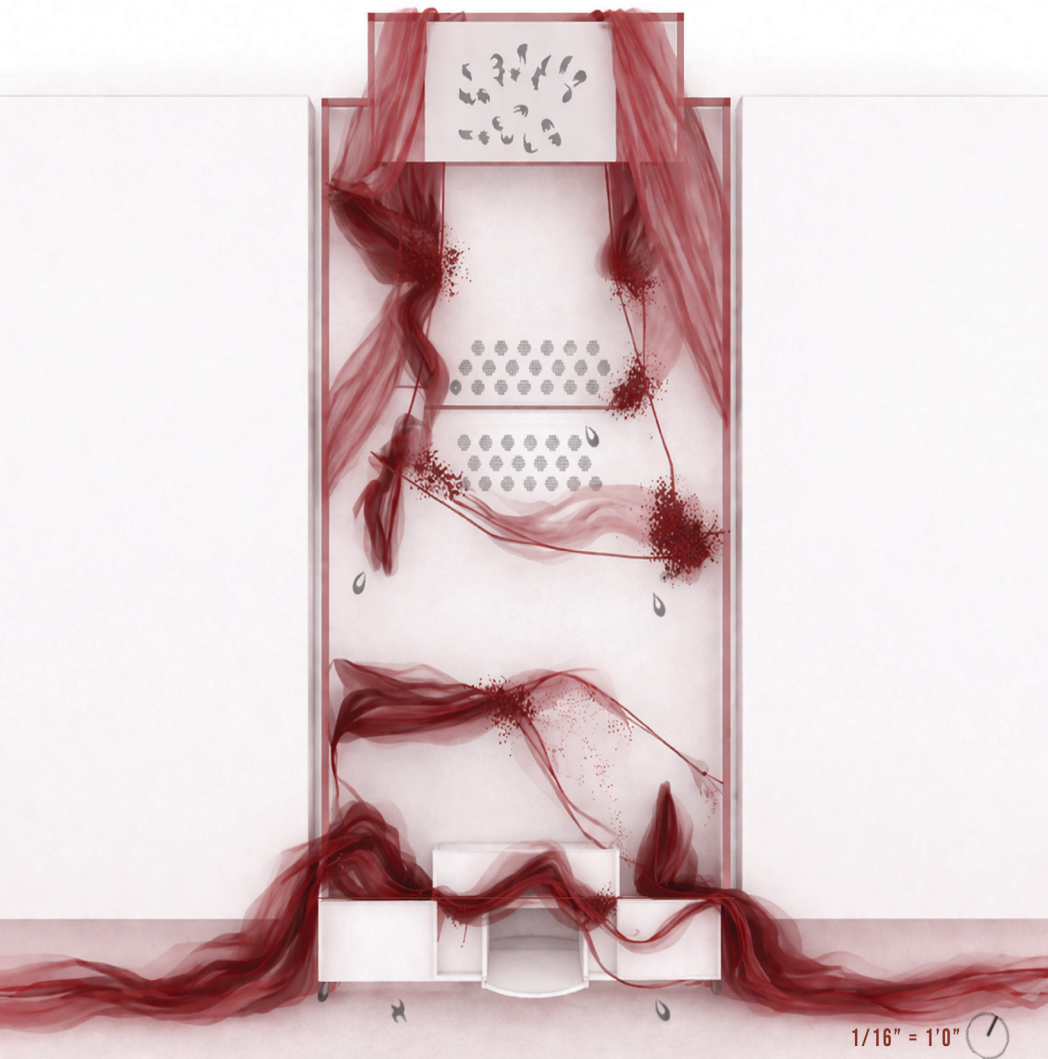
This plan shows the shifting positions and potential configurations of the curtain system over time. Rather than acting as fixed walls, the curtains slide, gather, and layer to produce a range of spatial conditions from open and continuous to enclosed and intimate. These movements allow the space to adapt, creating zones of overlap, separation, and transition. The plan emphasizes flexibility and transformation, showing how spatial boundaries are not permanent but instead constantly redefined through movement.

1/16" = 1'



RUNWAY PLAN

This plan reconfigures the space into a linear, immersive experience centered on movement through the site. Curtains guide circulation and frame the runway, shaping both the path of the model and the perspective of the viewer. Seating shifts to align along the runway edge, bringing the audience closer to the action and blurring the distinction between observer and participant. In this configuration, the space becomes performative in a different way focused on procession, visibility, and the expression of the body in motion.

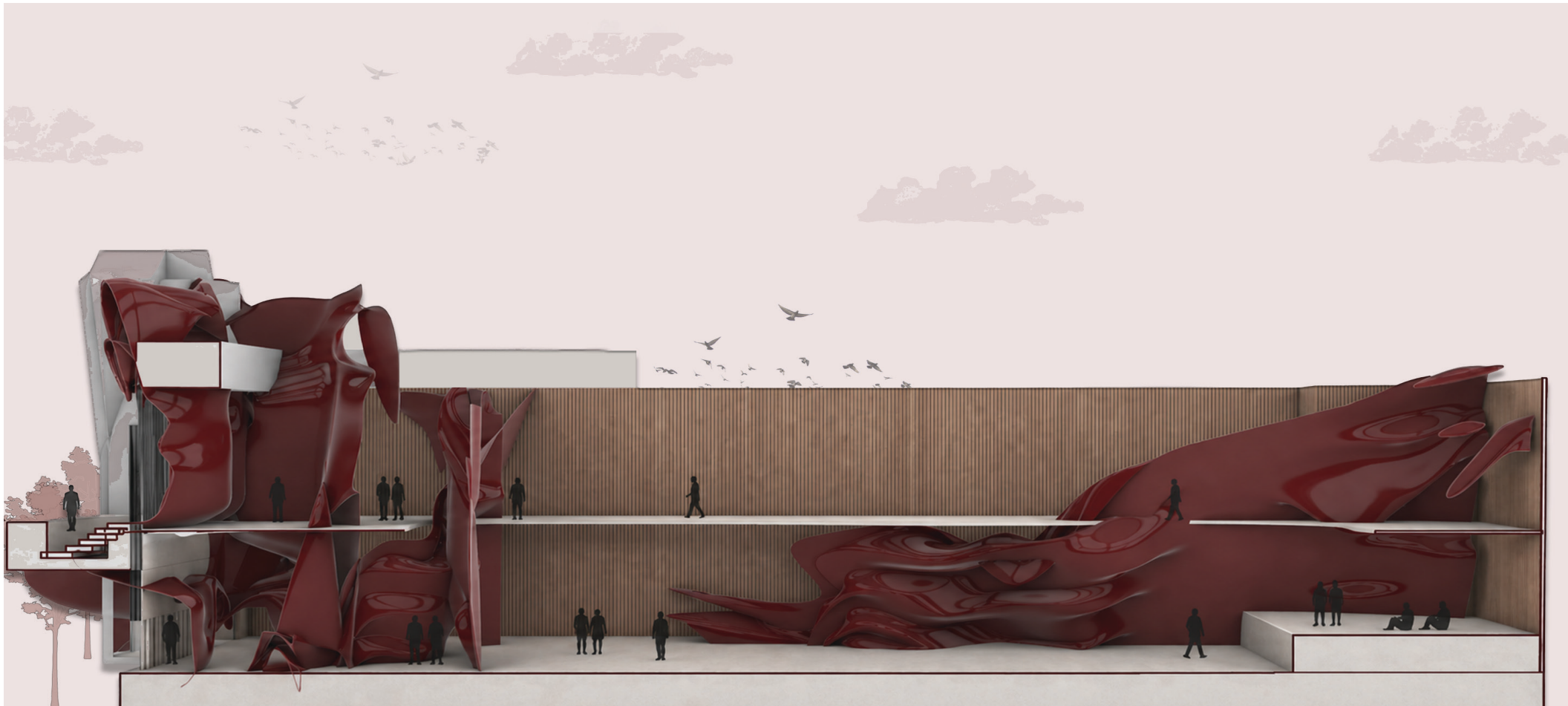


STAGE PLAN

This plan organizes the space around performance, establishing a clear relationship between stage, audience, and enclosure. Curtains act as adjustable boundaries, framing the stage while allowing it to expand or compress depending on the scale of the event. Seating is arranged to maintain direct visual connection, reinforcing the stage as a point of focus while still allowing for flexibility. Through this configuration, the space operates as a theater, defined, oriented, and grounded in moments of collective attention.

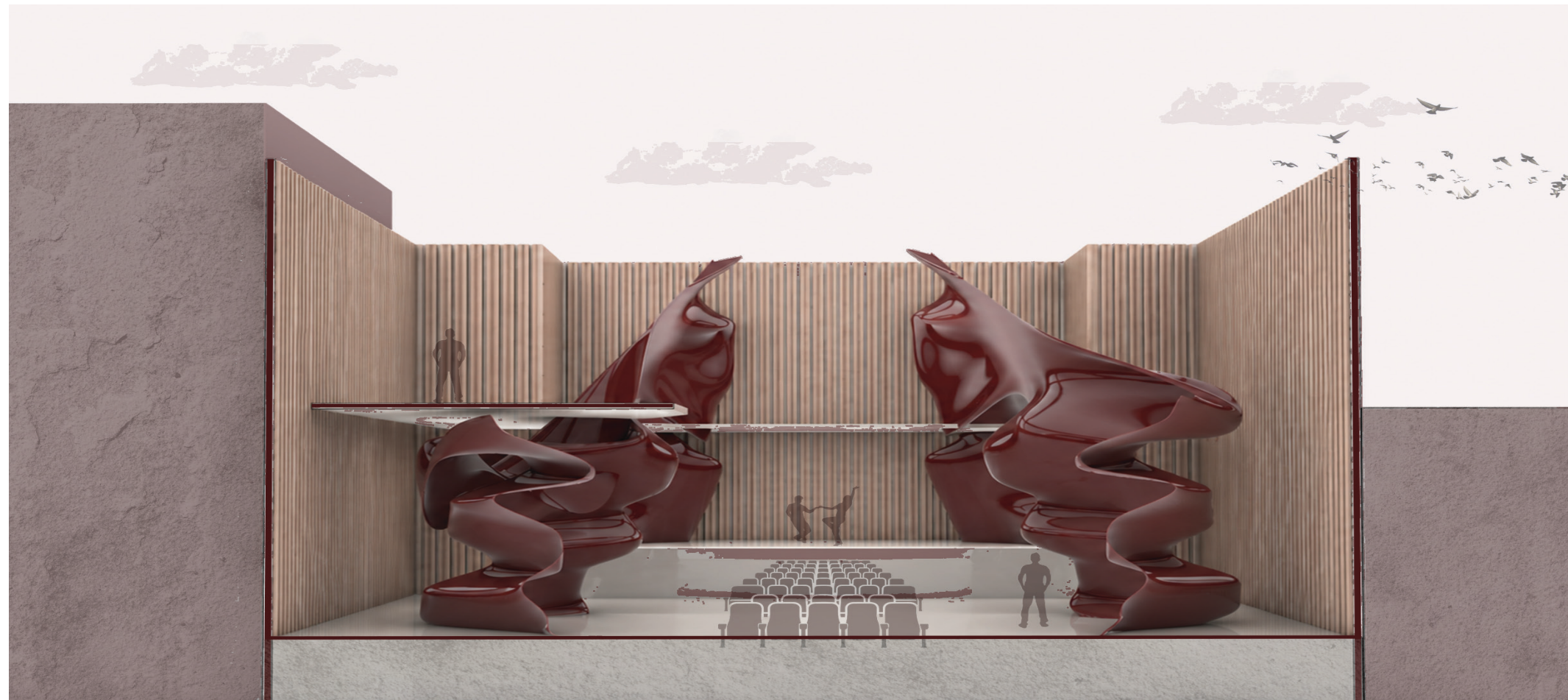
LONGITUDINAL SECTION

This section cuts through the length of the project, revealing the continuous relationship between performance, circulation, and enclosure. The curtain system extends across the space, shifting from compressed and dense at the stage to more elongated and fluid conditions along the length of the building. As it moves, it defines zones of gathering, transition, and pause, allowing the interior to operate as a sequence rather than a single fixed condition. The contrast between the soft, flowing curtain and the more rigid architectural shell highlights the project's balance between structure and adaptability.



TRANSVERSE SECTION

This section cuts across the space, focusing on the relationship between the stage, seating, and vertical enclosure. Curtains frame the performance zone while also extending upward, emphasizing height and drawing attention to the volume of the space. Seating is positioned to engage both the stage and the surrounding spatial conditions, reinforcing a sense of immersion. In this cut, the curtain reads less as a divider and more as a spatial element shaping experience through layering, depth, and enclosure.





Curtains define the interior as a soft, shifting enclosure. Rather than acting as walls, they gather, fold, and open creating spaces that feel layered, fluid, and continuously in motion.



The space compresses around performance, using curtains to frame the stage and focus attention. Layered edges create depth, allowing the audience to experience both enclosure and expansion at once.



The interior transforms into a runway, where movement becomes the primary experience. Curtains guide circulation and sight lines, blurring the line between audience and participant as the body moves through space.

we was never just getting dressed



CHAPTER 7

REFLECTION

“

This project didn't come together perfectly. For a while it felt like I was forcing an idea. Trying to make architecture act one way when I wanted and needed it to be another. At first I thought it was about architecture solely being visual. But that ain't it at all. It's about how things show up, shift and move.

Once I stopped trying to make a finished product and started thinking about space in the way people got dressed, it changed. You don't put something on and it's just done, you fix it, you layer it, you stare at it, and you work it until it feels complete. This became that. Not a building that just sits there but one that adjusts and based on who and when it is being used.

Learning about Black Dandyism, really stayed with me too. It made me realize how style has always been more about the way you look. It's how it makes you feel and how you're perceived. How we speak without saying a word. That idea pushed the whole project. It also introduced a new way of dress for my own personal life. The Hippodrome and Jackson Ward changed the way I think about preservation. Before this, preservation meant keeping it how it was, for histories sake. Now I see how that freezes a place in place. Spaces like this don't need to stay still they gotta move.

It's not all figured out, and I know that. It feels alive though. It's still moving. It's still breathing. It's still resisting. Same as we are.

But I know one thing now.
This ain't just clothes.
Architecture isn't gonna sit still.
It's gotta show up too.

”

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This work also draws from lived experience, observation, and cultural memory.



show up