

tales from the green line: unbuilt interiorities and the post-war imaginary

Rana Abudayyeh

University of Tennessee, Knoxville

[0000-0003-4160-6802](tel:0000-0003-4160-6802)

abstract

Beirut, Lebanon, is a city marked by a complex and often turbulent history, reflected in the resilience and endurance of its built environment. The intertwining narratives of destruction and recovery are vividly embodied in the city's architecture. This essay examines the adaptive reuse of Beirut's iconic Egg Building, located on the Green Line that divided the city during the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990). As both a war ruin and cultural landmark, the Egg Building symbolises Beirut's past turmoil and its aspirations for renewal. It encapsulates the multifaceted processes of post-war recovery and transformation.

Drawing from the visionary ideas of Lebbeus Woods and the critical theories of Paul Virilio, this essay presents the Egg Building as a catalyst for narrative reconstruction in Beirut. Virilio's analysis of war relics provides a framework for understanding the historical layers ingrained in the building, while Woods's focus on unbuilt architecture offers a theoretical basis for redesigning its interior spaces to facilitate healing and revitalisation. Through the work of Lebanese architects and a third-year interior architecture design studio at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, this essay explores how the Egg Building's scars and stories can be woven into the collective memory of a city recovering from conflict. These unbuilt proposals illustrate how speculative interiors can inspire new narratives and contribute to Beirut's ongoing regeneration by reframing the building as a domain of active engagement, where past traumas are negotiated rather than erased, and future aspirations are envisioned. Through experimental design approaches, these proposals empower communities to reimagine their urban landscape, turning a symbol of conflict into a living archive of resilience and possibility.

keywords

post-war, speculative interiors, adaptive reuse, narrative reconstruction, Beirut

cite as:

Rana Abudayyeh, 'Tales from the Green Line: Unbuilt Interiorities and the Post-war Imaginary', *idea journal*, 21.1 (2024), pp. 152–62, <https://doi.org/10.37113/ij.v21i01.567>.

introduction

Beirut, Lebanon, is a city marked by a complex and layered history of destruction and reconstruction.¹ Its built environment stands as a testament to its enduring resilience amid continual periods of civil war and political unrest. The city bears the marks of perilous and progressive narratives that intertwine: the old and the new, the ruined and the recovered, the local and the international, the forgotten and the memorialised, the temporary and the permanent. This essay positions itself at the intersection of unbuilt interiorities and the post-war imaginary, exploring the speculative recovery and reuse of the iconic Egg Building in Beirut [Fig. 01]. Situated on the Green Line—the demarcation line during the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990)—the Egg Building stands today as both a war ruin and a cultural landmark, embodying the duality of Beirut's turbulent past and its hopeful future.²

While physically unbuilt, efforts to reimagine the Egg Building reflect broader societal aspirations for change and equity, encapsulating the complexities of post-war recovery. Concurrently, such efforts are a testament to architecture's transformative power, transcending conflict and reshaping the civic milieu. Drawing inspiration from the critical perspectives of Paul Virilio and the visionary works of Lebbeus Woods, this essay explores unbuilt interiors as a catalyst for narrative reconstruction in the city. Virilio's reflections on war relics and the consequences of conflict, as illustrated in *Bunker Archaeology* and other works, provide a critical lens for interpreting the historical layers imprinted on the Egg Building. Meanwhile, Woods's emphasis on unbuilt architecture and post-war intervention offers a theoretical framework for reimagining its interiors. These perspectives unravel the imaginative dimensions latent within the building's spaces, probing how the unbuilt contributes to the city's recovery and renewal.

The regenerative potential of unbuilt interiors, focusing on the Egg Building, is illustrated through the work of Lebanese architects Bernard Khoury



Figure 01.

The Egg Building, Beirut, Lebanon, northern façade and underground parking. Photograph by Emmanuel Campos (Emmeca), [CC BY-SA 4.0](#).



Figure 02.

The Egg Building, Beirut, Lebanon, northeast corner. Photograph by Emmanuel Campos (Emmeca), [CC BY-SA 4.0](#).

and Anthony Saroufim, and tested in a third-year interior architecture design studio at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. The studio explored how the Egg Building's scars and stories become integral to the collective consciousness of a city emerging from conflict. Through the lens of narrative reconstruction, speculative reuse becomes not only a design exercise but also a means of rewriting the city's story—an opportunity to honour its past while inspiring new possibilities. In this process, the studio envisioned unbuilt interior architecture as a transformative force, breathing new narratives into dormant, war-scarred segments of Beirut's storied landscape.

By its nature, unbuilt architecture offers a realm of possibilities that extend beyond the constraints of traditional building practices. It is a conceptual and imaginative space where new ideas about everyday living, cultural identity, and community resilience can be explored and tested. Unbuilt projects allow for the preservation of collective memory and historical narratives while simultaneously providing a platform for new ideas to emerge—an essential balance for communities grappling with difficult histories.³ In the case of the Egg Building, its imagined futures bridge the gap between past traumas and future aspirations. By engaging in the redevelopment of the Egg Building through unbuilt proposals, the community can partake in a collective act of healing, transforming a site of pain into one of hope and possibility. Ultimately, unbuilt architecture is more experimental and conducive to envisioning progressive resolutions. More importantly, it democratizes the design process, empowering diverse voices to shape and reshape urban landscapes, fostering inclusive, community-driven progress.

the egg: a brief overview

The Egg Building, officially known as 'the Dome' but colloquially referred to as 'the Egg' due to its distinctive shape [Fig. 01 and Fig. 02], is an iconic structure.⁴ It was constructed during the 1960s as a modernist building designed to serve as a state-of-the-art cinema. It symbolised the city's futuristic aspirations, which was often referred to at that time as the 'Paris of the Middle East.'⁵ Designed by Lebanese architect Joseph Philippe Karam, the Egg was intended as part of a more extensive commercial and entertainment complex called the Beirut City Centre embodying the ideals of progress and sophistication of Beirut's golden age.⁶ However, the outbreak of civil war in 1975 placed the Egg on the frontline of the conflict.⁷ The once vibrant cinema quickly fell into disuse, its sleek surfaces scarred by bullets and shrapnel. During the fifteen years of civil war, the Egg transformed from a symbol of modernity to a stark reminder of the devastation wrought by conflict. Despite

its abandonment, the Egg retained a potent symbolic presence, standing as a silent witness to the atrocities of war and the resilience of Beirut's inhabitants. Following the end of the civil war in 1990, Beirut began a long process of reconstruction, but the Egg remained largely untouched, a relic of the past amid the burgeoning new city.⁸ In the post-war period, the Egg's significance evolved into a focal point for discussions about heritage, memory, political reform, and urban regeneration. Its dismantled interiors offered a unique opportunity for architects, designers, artists, and urban planners to reimagine its potential, highlighting the concept of unbuilt architecture as a design practice that holds significant value to sites of memory and trauma. The nature of these design responses sparked conceptualisation that allowed for the cultivation of shared civic visions for the Egg and Beirut.⁹ Unlike constructed works that present a final, fixed outcome, unbuilt architecture remains a fluid and adaptable framework, responsive and sensitive to the ever-changing needs of society. Though not materialised, it provides a space for intellectual exchange and creative expression. It also challenges conventional measures of architecture, revealing experiential conditions that exist not in its physical realisation but in its anticipation—conditions rooted in imagination rather than tangible structures.¹⁰

Today, efforts to reimagine and adaptively reuse the structure have been ongoing. Although yet to be realised, these efforts reflect broader societal aspirations for renewal, reformation, and equity. With these ideals, various proposals envision the Egg Building as a space for cultural events, artistic exhibitions, and community gatherings, transforming it from a symbol of destruction into a beacon of hope and resilience, from a symbol of division to a node of communal assembly. The Egg Building's unfinished state continues to inspire innovative ideas and projects, serving as a testament to the regenerative power of architecture and highlighting the potential for spaces marked by conflict to be repurposed for communal healing and cultural expression.¹¹ Its journey from a modernist

cinema to a war-torn relic and now a symbol of regeneration encapsulates the broader story of Beirut itself, reminding us of the city's capacity for change, and underscoring the vital role that unbuilt architecture can play in operating in a post-war context and shaping urban futures.

integrating post-war theory: the relevance of virilio and woods to beirut's egg building

Operating in a post-war context, the theoretical frameworks of Paul Virilio and Lebbeus Woods provide profound insights into the adaptive reuse and reimagining of architectural spaces such as Beirut's Egg Building. Both theorists delve into the complexities of post-conflict urban landscapes, proposing concepts beyond mere physical reconstruction to address the socio-political and speculative dimensions of architectural practice.

Virilio emphasises the interlaced nature of war, warfare, and the modern city, each being a product of the other.¹² Accordingly, integrating the historical scars of conflict into reconstruction is integral to urban advancement.¹³ Virilio argues that war and representation are closely connected, and this correlation extends to the post-war context.¹⁴ While resisting their disappearance, architectural projects should preserve and highlight the physical and emotional traumas inflicted by war, serving as potent reminders of the past and acknowledging the resilience and endurance of the affected communities.¹⁵ The city centre of Beirut, with structures reminiscent of Virilio's concept of the 'Monolith' that was introduced in his book *Bunker Archaeology* and refers to massive structures that survived multiple attacks and became de facto monuments, exemplifies this preservation approach.¹⁶ In this light, the Egg Building's bullet-ridden, decayed shell becomes a powerful testament to Beirut's turbulent history and the strength of its people.¹⁷

Likewise, in the book *Radical Reconstruction*, Lebbeus Woods calls for the preservation of the damages resulting from war as both a visual

reminder and a reification of a past that should not be forgotten.¹⁸ War ruins carry traces of memory that are integral to the narrative of the place and its successive evolutions. In his reflection on post-war architectural transformation, Woods uses the metaphor of a scab to describe the initial phase of rebuilding war-torn structures. A scab, though aesthetically unpleasing, serves an essential function in protecting and facilitating healing.¹⁹ Woods argues that true healing and reconstruction in architecture are not about cosmetic fixes but about embracing and transforming the scars of violence.²⁰ He asserts that architecture should confront and incorporate the evidence of past violence, transforming it through concentrated human effort into something meaningful.²¹ Woods further elaborates that scars represent a deeper level of reconstruction, merging the old and new without erasing the past. War scars honour both loss and growth, symbolising resilience and new beginnings. Accepting scars is crucial to civic existence and fostering a society that values individual experiences and stories over conformity. This approach to architecture promotes authenticity, resourcefulness, and innovation, creating a city that tells a unique, evolving tale marked by both hardship and recovery.

Between ruin and rebirth, the recovery and historic preservation of conflict-driven environments propagate socially conscious solutions that acknowledge the victims while reflecting a resolve toward collective healing. Yet, in many conflict-driven sites, past traumas are still too raw for actualised interventions, and present conditions too restrictive to mediate physically. Therein, speculative, unbuilt projects formulate robust roadmaps for future progress. Both Virilio and Woods advocated for speculative architecture and theoretical postulates, viewing unbuilt works and decayed buildings as opportunities for creative intervention and new narratives.²² These approaches encourage architects and designers to envision spaces not only as they were or are but as they could be—transforming ruins into sites of innovation and renewal and deploying

the speculative unbuilt as a call to action. In the case of the Egg Building, this perspective frames its unfinished, war-scarred architecture as a canvas for artistic and cultural reinvention, rather than merely an artefact of the past.

While the physical impact of war is often visible and thus recognisable (think rubble, bullet holes, decayed structures) the invisible scars are often harder to spot. Lebanese sociologist Samir Khalaf indicates that one of the most profound consequences of the war has been grievous erosion of the rudimentary social fabric of Lebanese society.²³ Hence, the Egg Building's transformation involves a dual approach. On one hand, the building's war-torn state should be preserved and commemorated, honouring the memories and experiences embedded within its walls. On the other hand, the building should be reimagined as a dynamic space for cultural and civic mending, employing its programmatic framework towards repairing the war-induced societal ruptures. This dual approach not only preserves Beirut's complex history but also leverages unbuilt architecture's fluidity, allowing it to symbolise perseverance and drive for progressive change. By embracing both the tangible scars of the past and the intangible possibilities of the future, the Egg Building can play a vital role in the city's ongoing narrative of recovery and renewal.



Figure 03. Exterior perspective of Bernard Khoury's proposal for the Egg Building, 2004. Rendering by 'Bernard Khoury / DW5' <www.bernardkhoury.com> [accessed 30 June 2024].

fragmented remains, design uprisings

a. *the egg building in the lebanese post-war imaginary*

The need for a post-war imaginary in Beirut is not merely an intellectual exercise but also a critical social imperative. This imaginary serves as a means to overcome the physical and psychological scars of conflict, nurturing a collective identity crucial for the city's development. Rather than preserving the remnants of war as static monuments, this approach actively reintegrates them into the city's fabric and daily life, reinterpreting spaces like the Egg Building as icons of resilience and creativity. Here, unbuilt proposals for adaptive reuse go beyond traditional interventions, offering a dynamic form of narrative reconstruction. They present imagined, transformative layers within the urban landscape, honouring Beirut's past while opening avenues for new possibilities—reinventing the city's story without altering its physical structure.

After the Lebanese Civil War ended, numerous Lebanese architects conceptualised unbuilt proposals for the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of Beirut's Egg Building. These proposals aimed to transform the war-scarred structure into a symbol of cultural memory and modern innovation. Seeking to balance the preservation of historical narratives with contemporary architectural practice,

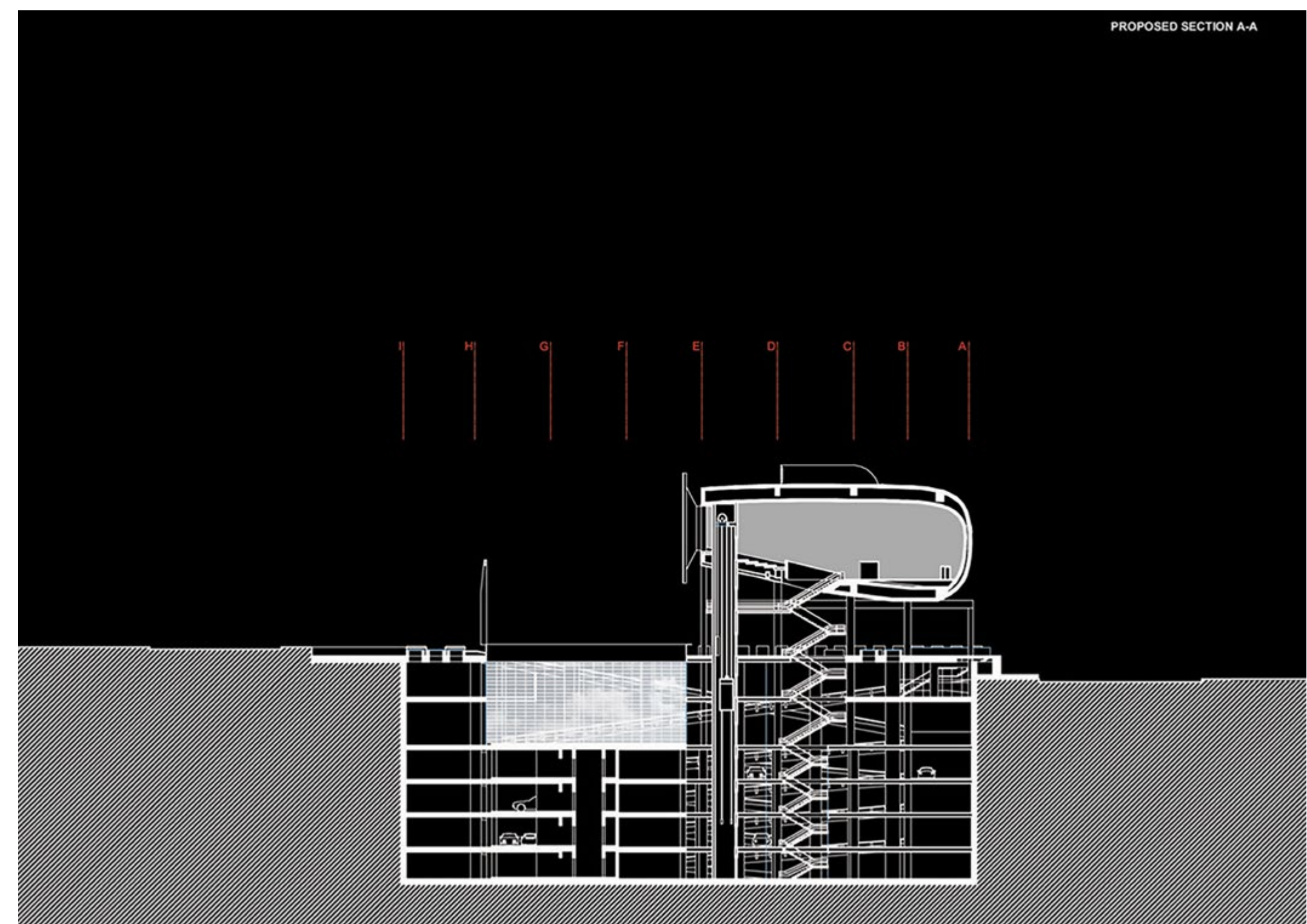


Figure 04. Section of Bernard Khoury's proposal for the Egg Building, 2004. Drawing by 'Bernard Khoury / DW5' <www.bernardkhoury.com> [accessed 30 June 2024].

Bernard Khoury, one of Lebanon's most prominent contemporary architects and a protégé of Lebbeus Woods, put forward one of several unbuilt proposals for the Egg Building in 2004.²⁴ The New City Centre, as Khoury referred to it, augments the existing Egg structure with a 16.8 by 11.3 metre screen prosthesis [Fig. 03], to be located on what Khoury describes as the amputated southern facade of the Egg theatre shell.²⁵ While paying homage to the Egg's programmatic cinema roots and its revolutionary evolution, this electronic space is designed to host exhibitions, performances, concerts, and interactive events, transforming the site into a vibrant information portal.²⁶ His approach involves significant structural changes, including the demolition of certain floors to create open, light-filled spaces, and a process of excavation [Fig. 04] that reveals lower slabs of the building.²⁷ As shown in the rendering in Figure 03, the exterior of the theatre volume is covered in a mosaic of mirrors, reflecting its surroundings and preserving its war-torn scars as part of a dynamic new facade.²⁸ Although unbuilt, Khoury's vision catalyses alternate ways of engaging with post-conflict urban spaces.

In more recent design iterations, Lebanese architect and photographer Anthony Saroufim encases the structure with dense scaffolding as part of a radical take on its preservation [Fig. 05]. The scaffolding fortifies the scarred shell and supports new circulation paths, as well as a series of curated large optical lenses that allow visitors to view and interact directly with the building and the city. By transforming the Egg Building into a massive camera obscura, Saroufim's design gives the building a dynamic new role as the bullet holes in the structure are converted into additional optical devices [Fig. 06], with magnifying lenses inserted into the voids.²⁹ This unpredictable transformation allows the holes to serve as unique visual connectors to the other side and project the city's image onto the interior.³⁰ Through this design approach, Saroufim creates an immersive experience that reflects the dynamic interplay between the past and the present. As such, the Egg

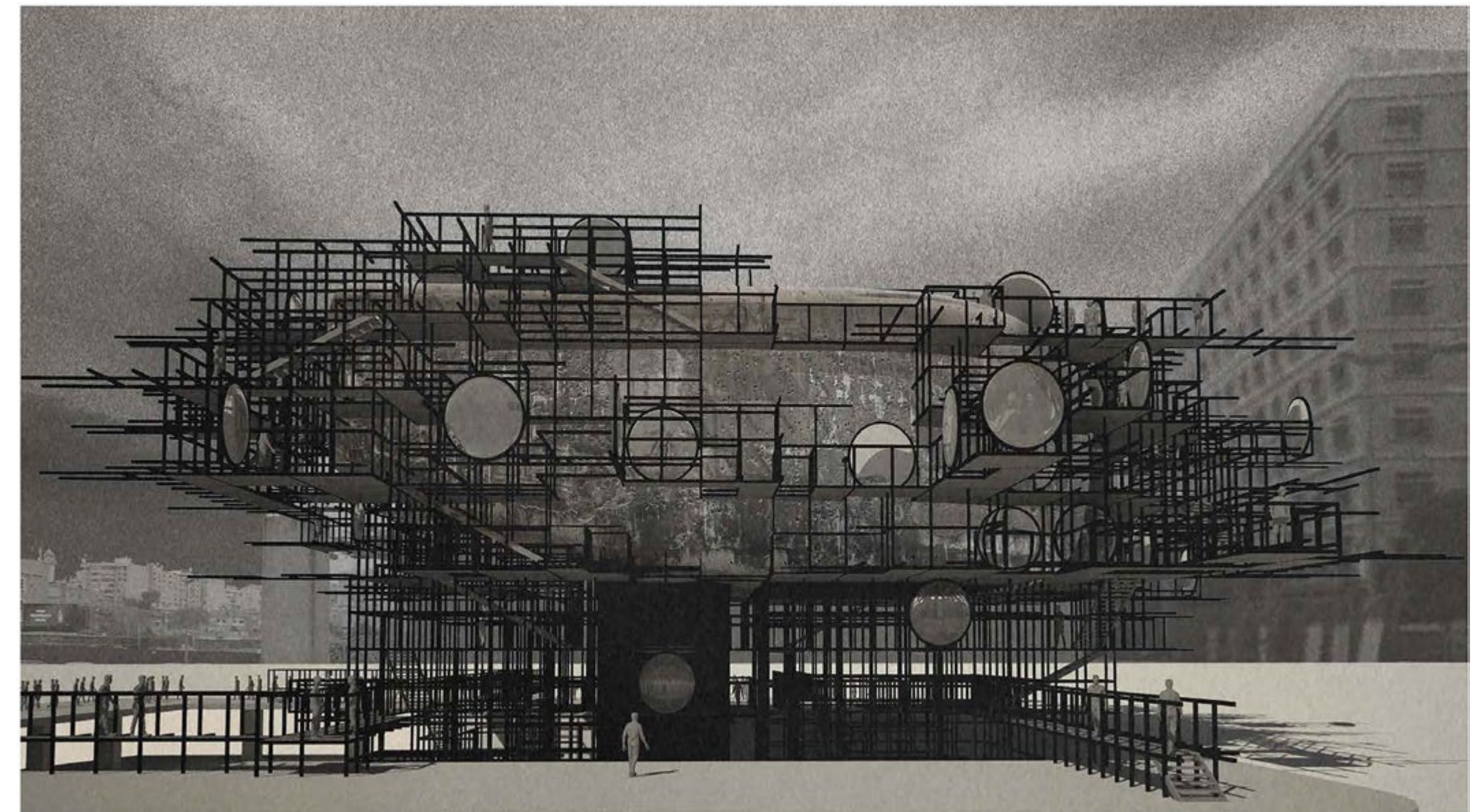


Figure 05.

Exterior view of Anthony Saroufim's proposal for the Egg Building, 2015. The density of added scaffolding corresponds to the war damage on the Egg. Image by Anthony Saroufim.

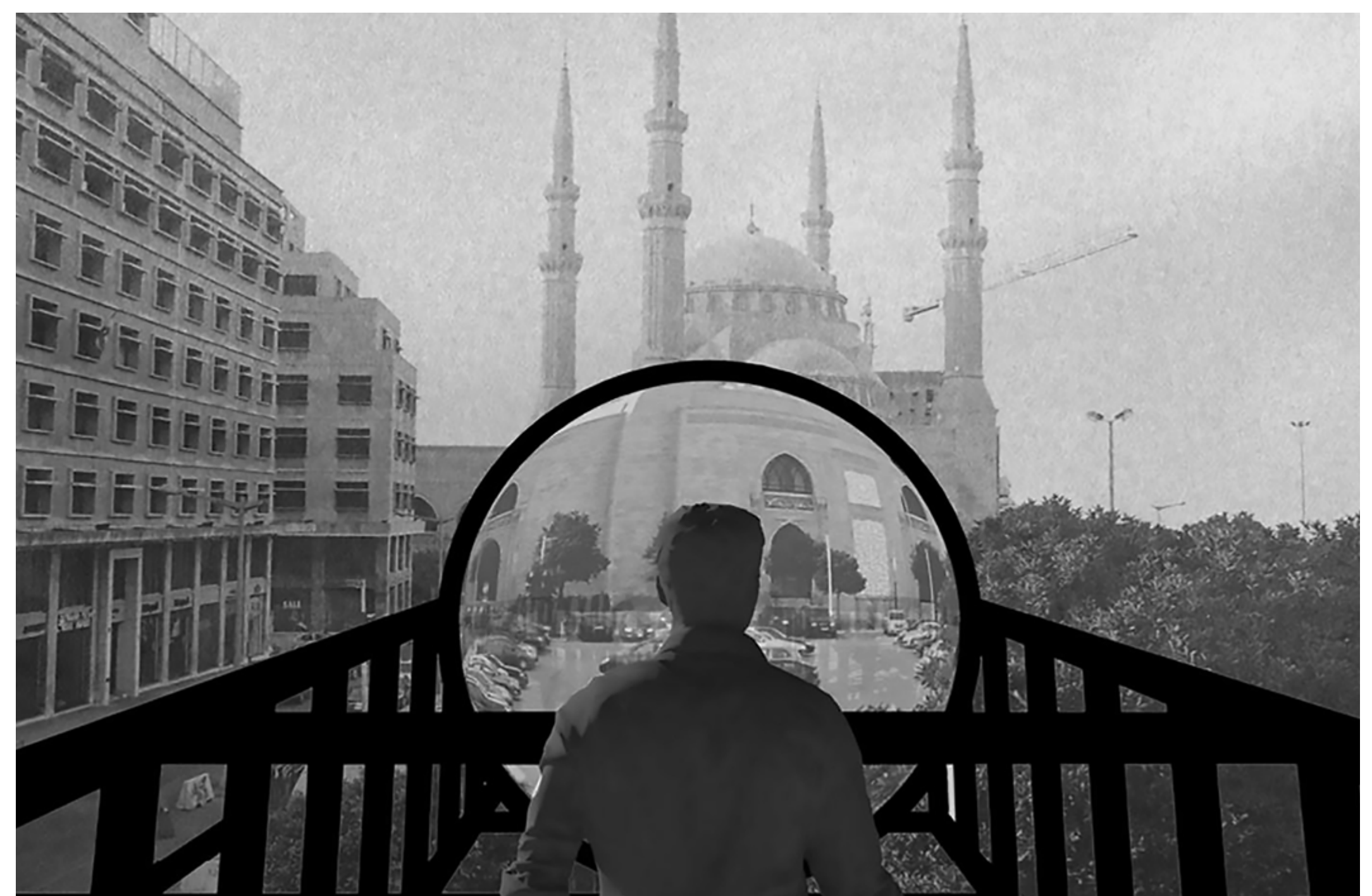


Figure 06.

View to the city from one of the lenses integrated in the scaffolding in Anthony Saroufim's proposal for the Egg Building, 2015. Image by Anthony Saroufim.

evolves from a passive witness to the city into an active participant, its scars turned into powerful tools for reflection and memory, bridging the past with the present and the future.

b. the egg building in the global imaginative: toward resonance and resilience

Thousands of miles away from Beirut, the stories of the Green Line and the Egg Building have captivated a global audience, resonating deeply with architects, designers, and scholars worldwide. The College of Architecture and Design at the University of Tennessee exemplifies this engagement, as a third-year interior architecture studio embraced the Egg Building and Beirut's narratives, using them as a foundation for exploring themes of resilience

and regeneration in a post-war context [Fig. 07 and Fig. 08]. The fascination with the Egg and Beirut's complex history reflects a broader, global imaginative effort to understand and engage with the transformative power of architecture in the wake of conflict. This endeavour echoes today's evolving and distressing realities of war and destruction that have erupted in the past year in the Middle East and elsewhere. Now more than ever, the exploration of sites like the Egg Building becomes a crucial exercise in empathy, empowerment, and global solidarity. By engaging with Beirut's past and present through unbuilt architectural discourse, students contribute to a broader and urgent dialogue on how design can serve as a prompt for healing, reconciliation, and the envisioning of more inclusive urban futures.

new tales from the green line: the design studio as a medium of storytelling

a. the studio process

Using the Egg Building as the primary focus, the studio explored the adaptive reuse and parallel preservation of war-generated urban ruins. As outlined in Woods's and Virilio's theories, preservation through adaptive reuse, particularly through unbuilt proposals, is a multifaceted mode of producing and reproducing spatial narratives. Aimed at fostering preservation and healing, the studio sought to employ this unbuilt design agenda while maintaining the history of the site and its role as a contextual rouser, addressing the politics and ethical commitments involved [example in Fig. 09].

An important consideration in the studio's premise was the students' status as outsiders to the regional and local contexts, with no direct access to the site. This distance challenged them to engage with the building's history and significance through research and imagination. The lack of physical presence required a deeper reflection on the monumentality of the site for the people of Beirut, adding another layer of complexity to the design process. However, this detachment also fuelled their speculative approach, allowing the students to envision possibilities that

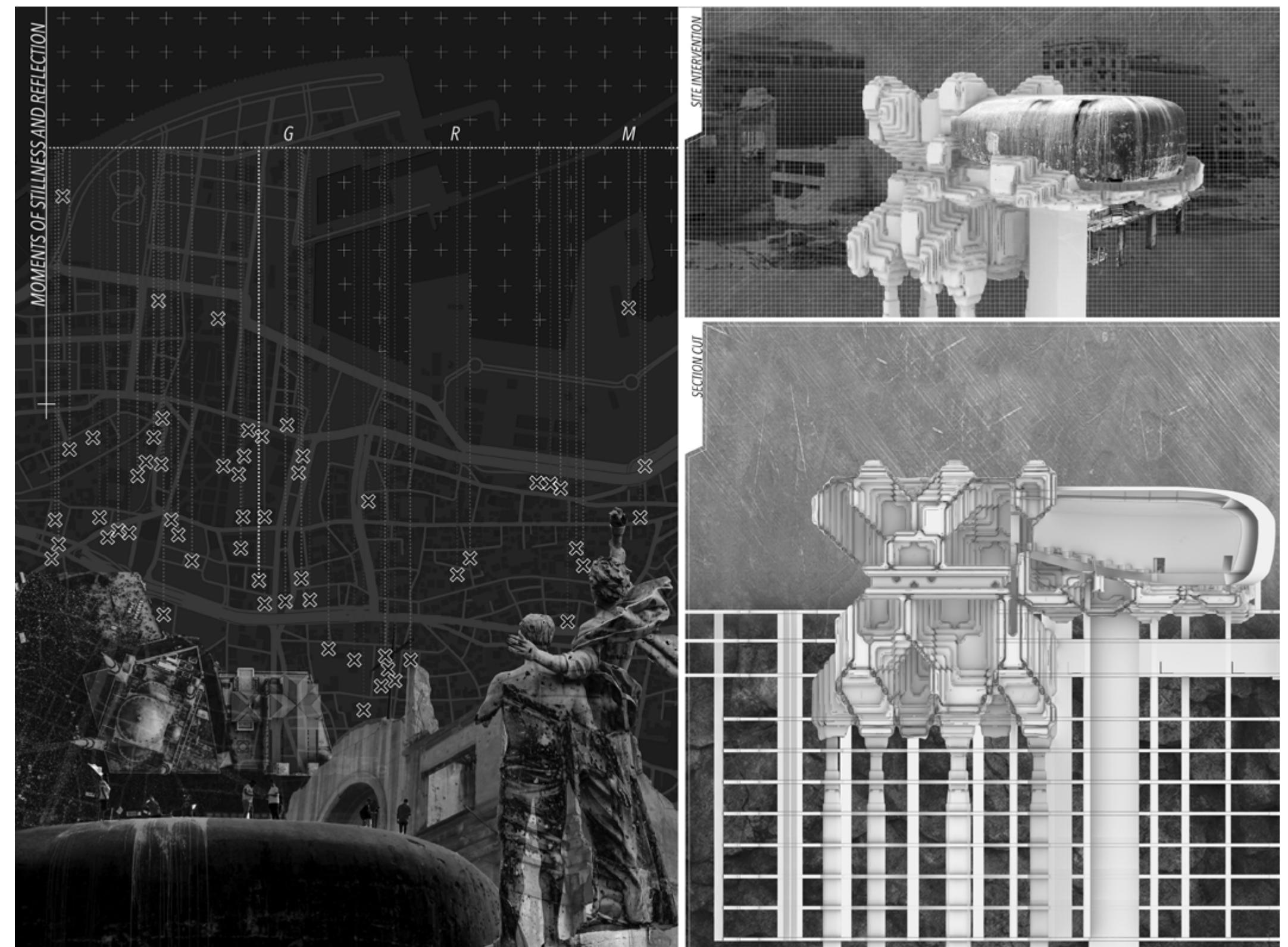


Figure 07.

Student work by Faith Stevenson, showcasing site analysis and a conceptual design proposal for the Egg Building. By integrating an archival library into the southern damaged façade, the proposal engages with Woods's concept of the scab/scar as a framework for spatial interventions and recovery. Images by the author, with the permission of the student.



Figure 08.

Student work by Faith Stevenson, featuring a section perspective, exterior perspective, and interior perspective of the archival library design proposal shown in Figure 07. Image by the author, with the permission of the student.

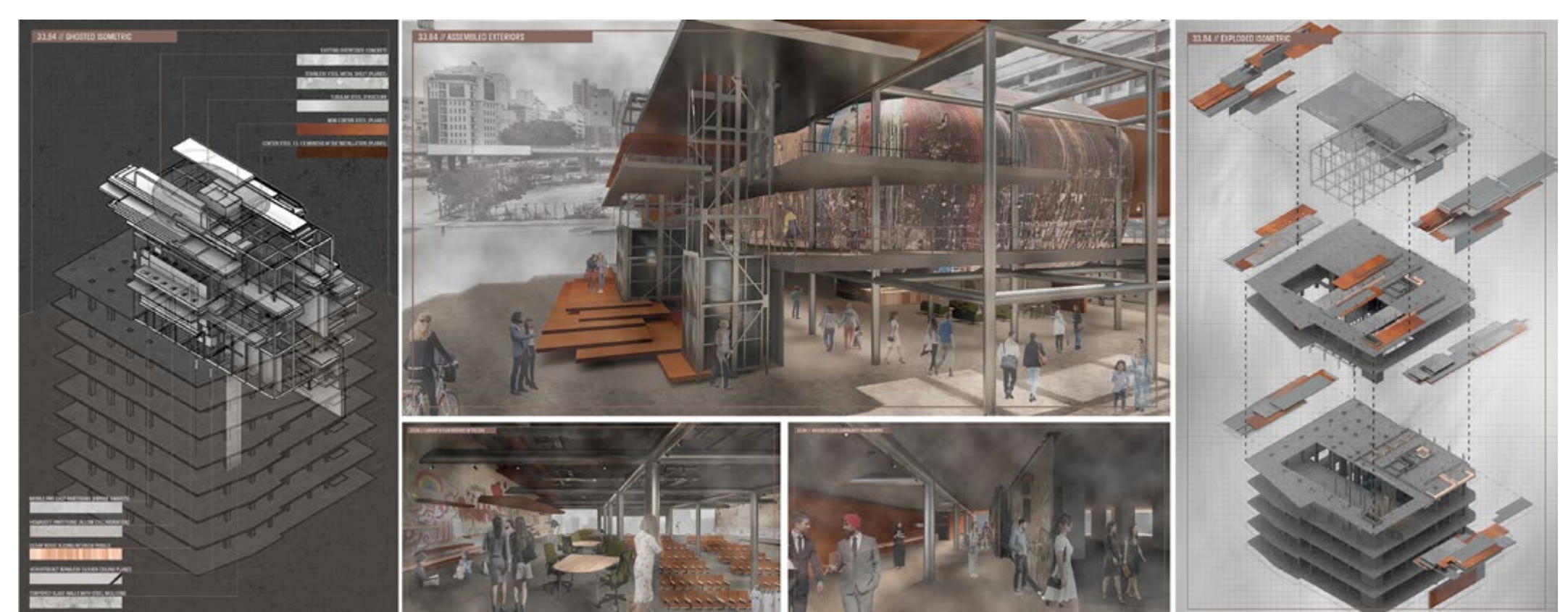


Figure 09.

Student work by Elisabeth Walker, presenting various images of her design proposal for a graffiti museum and community space in the Egg Building. Graffiti, a significant part of the Egg's present-day narrative and a powerful form of political expression, is preserved along with the building's bullet holes. The design showcases these elements through the addition of layered viewing and circulation balconies and platforms. Image by the author, with the permission of the student.

were unbound by the constraints of reality. The speculative nature of their work enabled them to engage with post-war imaginaries in ways that might not have been possible through traditional design practices. For this new generation of designers, this speculative process became a powerful tool for merging historical memory with forward-thinking interventions, giving their designs a new dimension of relevance and vision. This approach, coupled with their external standing, allowed them to propose engaging strategies centred on the unbuilt potential of the building, redefining its role in Beirut's cultural and urban landscape and offering fresh perspectives that extend beyond the immediate realities of the site.

To become more familiar with the site and the building, the studio collaborated with Lebanese architect and photographer Anthony Saroufim, who gave several virtual lectures and critiques to the students and took the studio on a virtual site visit through Zoom. This invaluable engagement allowed the studio to bridge cultural gaps and better understand the parameters and implications of practising within the complexities, opportunities, and contradictions of Beirut. Moreover, this pattern of translocational practice reflects a new era of design pedagogy beyond regional boundaries, facilitating new frontiers for design education and practice through rich global exchanges.

The studio process was carried out in three phases. To break away from preconceived stylistic notions about the region and its architecture, the first phase focused on deriving design strategies based on natural precedents. Organic systems and processes of armouring (sheltering), regeneration, and preservation that occur in nature were analysed for their ability to adapt and regenerate. Students examined the organic systems' exchanges with environmental stimuli, translating these processes into conceptual and formal tactics for resilient interior interventions [Fig. 10]. This conceptual phase, rooted in analysis, formal translations, experimentation, and digital tooling, provided the foundation for the formal ideas of the main project. In the second phase,

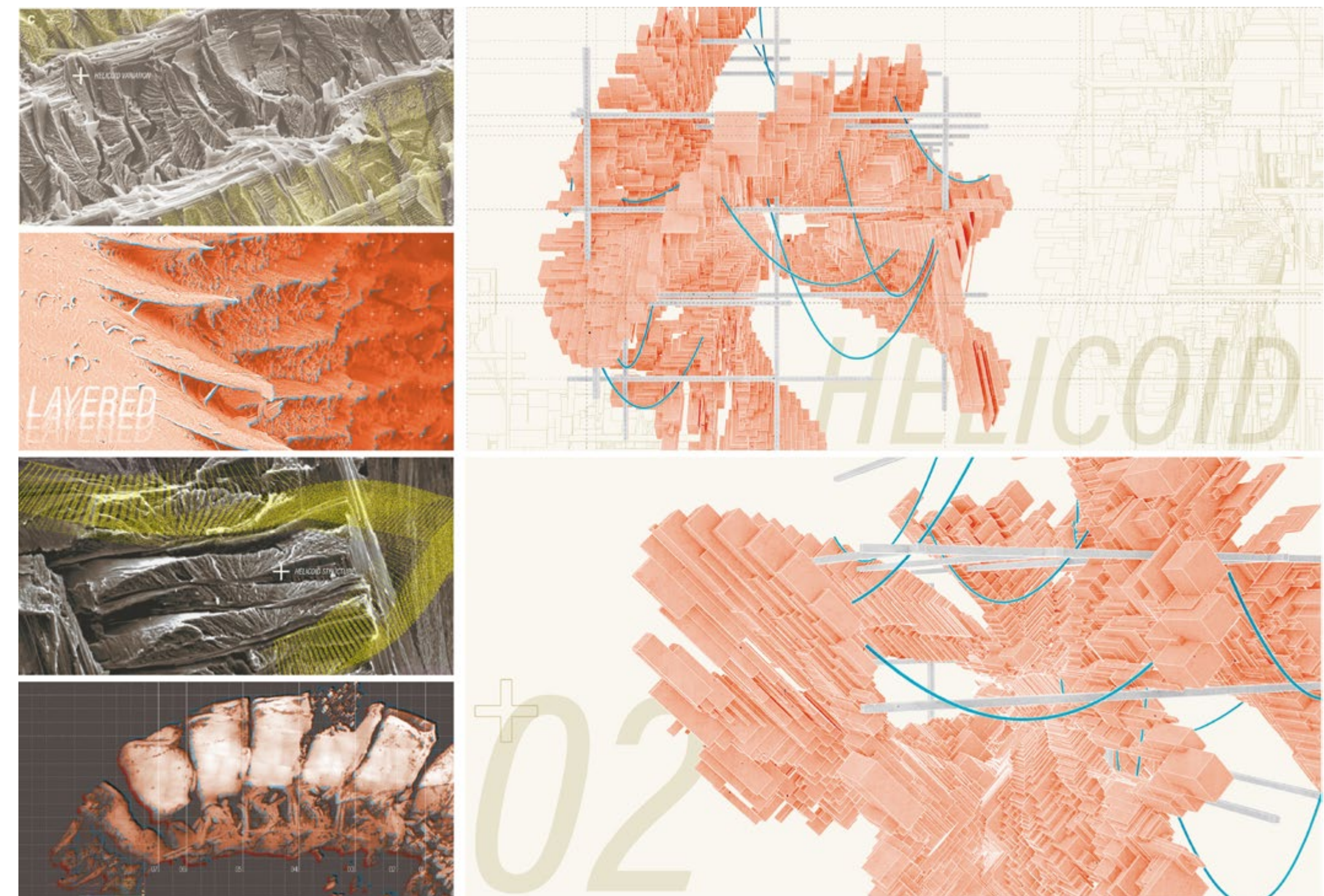


Figure 10.

Student work by Cecilia Torres-Panzer, showing phases 1 and 2 of the studio's design process. Phase 1 explores natural organisms for conceptual design strategies, while Phase 2 focuses on site analysis and conceptual development. Image by the author, with permission from the student.

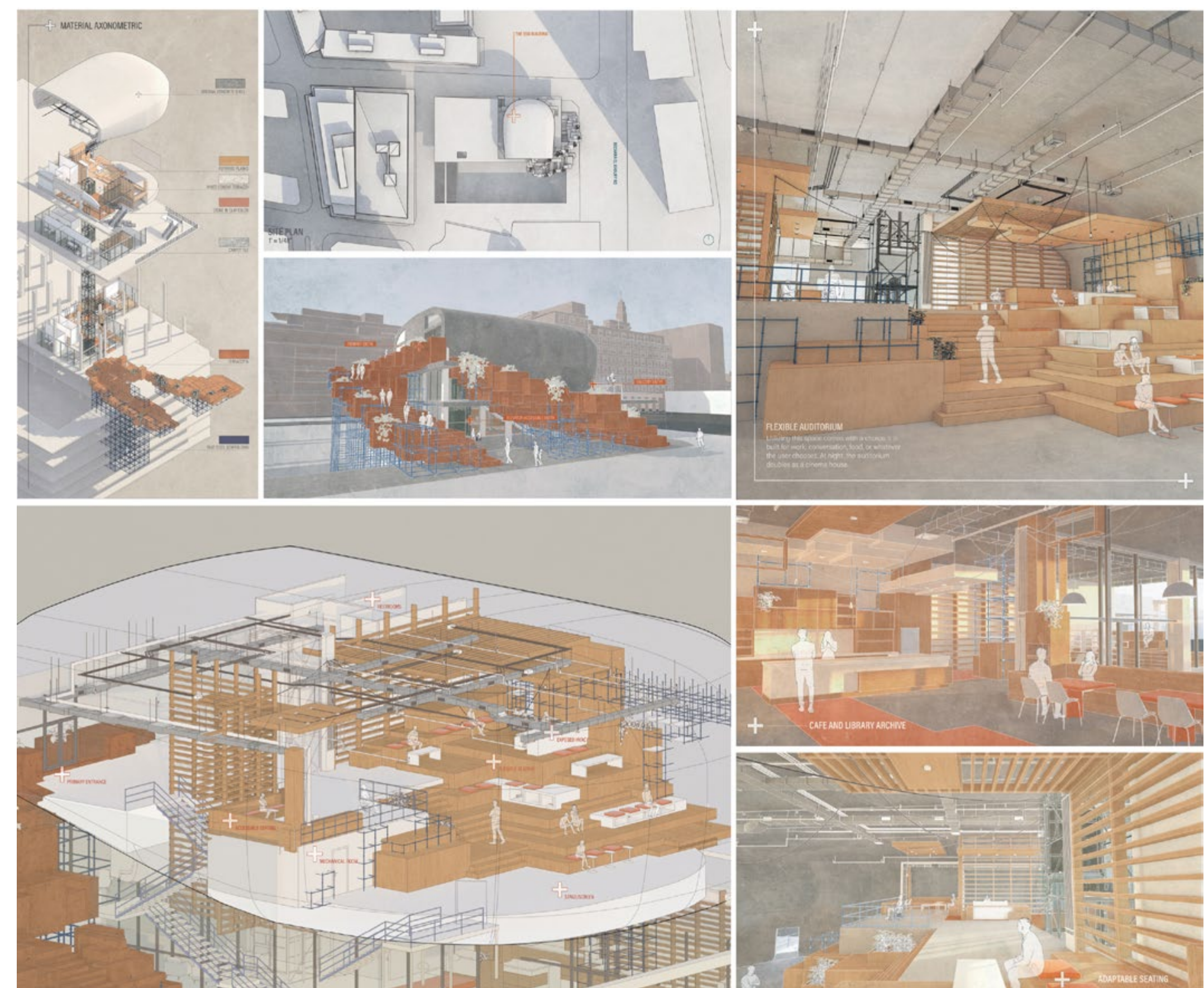


Figure 11.

Student work by Cecilia Torres-Panzer, showing various images of the final design proposal (Phase 3) for a collaborative community workspace in the Egg Building. The design builds on Phases 1 and 2, as shown in Figure 10. Image by the author, with the permission of the student.

students conducted intensive mapping of the site and devised conceptual diagrams from the findings of Phase 1, yielding innovative spatial possibilities and occupancy patterns for the design [Fig. 10].

In the third and final phase of the studio [Figs 08, 09, 11, 12, and 13], building on the previous phases and studies, students explored how interior architecture can contribute to planting seeds of peace and enabling prosperous and sustainable futures driven

by Beirut's residents. The main project involved redesigning the former cinema house and creating a healing community hub within Beirut's Egg Building. Each student determined the programmatic details of the community hub based on their analyses and reflections on the intricate realities of the site and city. The interventions aimed to recover the Egg Building through infusing community-based storylines into the space. Collectively, the work sought to understand local, regional, and global narratives, conveying new tales from Beirut's Green Line and other areas from the region and beyond. Throughout the design process, interiority's aptitude for reappropriating space and contextual conditions was emphasised, mobilising the power of unbuilt interiors to drive change.

b. studio proposals for the egg building

The studio proposal engaged with the Egg Building not as a static monument of the past but as a living space capable of fostering new forms of urban engagement. In this context, conflict was not merely something to be repaired or erased but rather a condition to be negotiated through design. By embracing the building's damaged and incomplete state, the studio encouraged students to consider how interior architecture can mediate between the past and future, allowing for a more nuanced and layered approach to post-conflict reconstruction.

A key aspect of this process was leaving the programmatic narrative of the design to the students themselves, who were tasked with utilising programming as a tool for narrative reconstruction. This approach invited students to engage critically with the historical and cultural layers of the Egg Building, allowing them to propose programmes that reflect both the unresolved history of the site and the future aspirations of Beirut's urban landscape. Some projects revolve around modern work environments, as seen in Figure 11, providing users with shared public workspaces that engage both the interior volumes and exterior streetscapes. Another project celebrates Beirut's robust nightlife by designing a nightclub that transforms into a coffee shop and

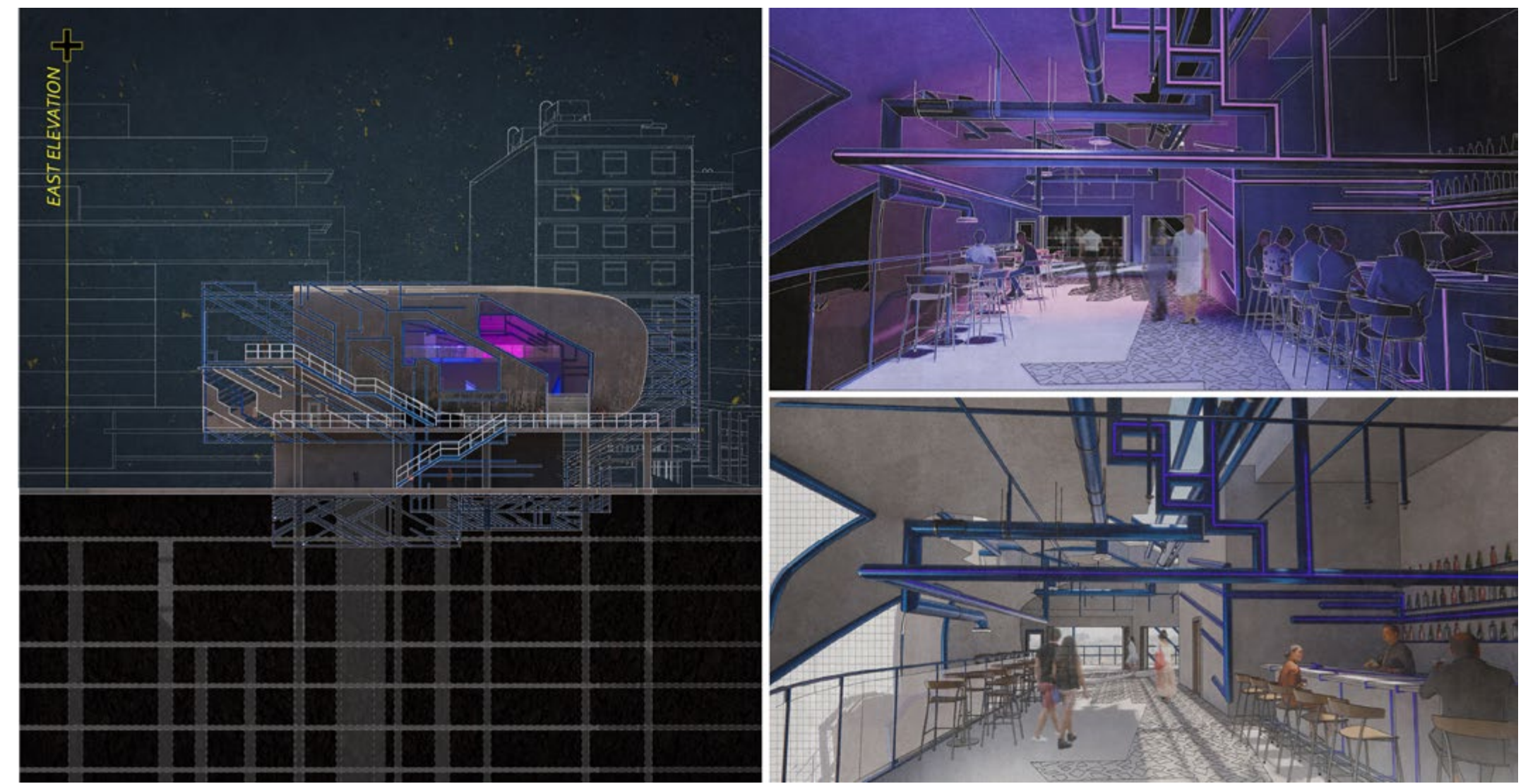


Figure 12.

Student work by Nancy Yang, featuring various images showing the final design proposal, which celebrates Beirut's robust nightlife by designing a nightclub that transforms into a coffee shop and parkour course during the day. Image by the author, with the permission of the student.

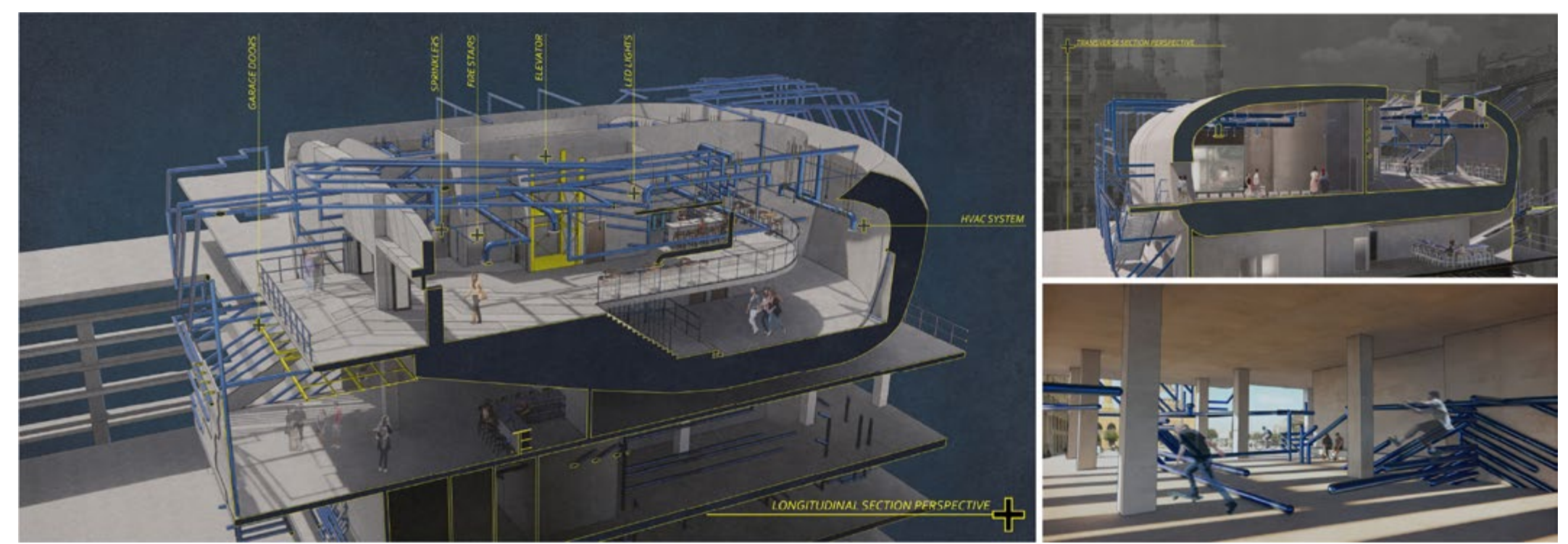


Figure 13.

Student work by Nancy Yang, featuring a section perspective and a perspective view showing the nightclub and parkour course proposal for the Egg Building. Image by the author, with the permission of the student.

parkour course during the day [Fig. 12 and Fig. 13]. Other projects celebrate graffiti as a form of protest and artistic expression [Fig. 09], while some focus on adding an archival library that preserves the city's body of knowledge from erasure [Fig. 07 and Fig. 08]. Collectively, the work of the studio emphasises interiority's aptitude for reappropriating space and contextual conditions, aiming to create more stable, just, and inclusive societies through design, mobilising the power of unbuilt interiors to drive change.

This act of reprogramming the Egg Building became a way of retelling new stories from the Green Line. Each intervention in the building carries with it a narrative of hope and renewal. In a city still marked by the scars of division, the speculative, unbuilt proposals serve as a bridge between past wounds and future healing. The students' interventions transform the building into a living space of reconciliation, where every corner speaks of survival, resilience, and the potential for

transformation. Yet, this transformation extended beyond the building and the city. It reshaped the students themselves, along with others who engaged with the studio, challenging stereotypes and dispelling misconceptions about a culture often misrepresented by mainstream channels. Through this work, the students not only reimagined the future of a city but also deepened their understanding of a place and its people, bridging divides with empathy and creative vision.

In this way, the Egg Building became more than just a relic of war—it transformed into a canvas for new narratives to emerge, some woven into the fabric of Beirut's future, others seeded within the students themselves. In this context, unbuilt interiors allow both the building and the designers to evolve, opening new avenues for dialogue and engagement. The Egg Building thus stands as a symbol of both the unresolved and the hopeful in Beirut's ongoing urban story, while also reflecting our shared humanity and collective potential for renewal.

conclusion

As Beirut faces the ongoing destruction of yet another war, the state of the Egg Building remains uncertain.³¹ Nonetheless, whether physically standing or not, the Egg Building continues to symbolise the resilience and endurance of Beirut and its people amid cycles of devastation and recovery. Its adaptive reuse, whether through real or imagined interventions, demonstrates how architectural spaces—both built and unbuilt—can facilitate dialogue, preserve history, and inspire new social narratives. Now more than ever, the unbuilt stands as a promise—a beacon of hope and possibility, reminding us that even in the darkest moments, there is potential for renewal and rebirth.

The third-year interior architecture studio at the University of Tennessee demonstrated the profound potential of unbuilt projects in reimagining the Egg Building. The students engaged deeply with Beirut's complex socio-political fabric, producing designs that dismantle cultural divisions and showcasing the

ability of unbuilt interiorities to inspire hope and foster resilience. These projects offer not only physical transformations but also new social narratives that promote inclusion, diversity, and peace. In the face of renewed conflict, these speculative designs and architectural imaginaries now take on even greater significance, acting as lifelines for the city. They remind us of architecture's enduring capacity to heal, resist, and rebuild. The Egg Building, and Beirut itself, remain powerful testaments to how unbuilt architecture can shape not only spaces but also the collective identity of a people. By harnessing the potential of unbuilt projects, designers can challenge existing paradigms and envision spaces that foster solidarity and inspire future possibilities. Ultimately, it is in this imaginative realm that the seeds of a more inclusive, resilient, and hopeful future are planted.

acknowledgements

The author would like to acknowledge and thank Anthony Saroufim for his collaboration with the studio, as well as for the guidance and resources he provided, which greatly aided the students in developing their projects. Additionally, sincere appreciation is extended to the students of IARC 375 for their dedication, investment, and sense of responsibility toward the communities represented in this project. Finally, special thanks to Bernard Khoury/DW5 for granting permission to use images from DW5's proposal for the Egg Building.

author biography

Rana Abudayyeh is an Associate Professor of Interior Architecture and holds the Robin Klehr Avia Professorship at the College of Architecture and Design, University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Her work examines design as a framework for placemaking and societal transformation. A licensed architect in her native Jordan, Abudayyeh focuses her research on interiority and displacement. Her scholarship has appeared in leading journals, including the *Journal of Interior Design*, as well as in book chapters and essays such as 'Pop-up Cities' in *Informality and the City* and 'On the Move' in *Speculative Coolness: Architecture, Media, the Real, and the Virtual*.

notes

- 1 Aseel Sawalha, *Reconstructing Beirut: Memory and Space in a Postwar Arab City*, 1st ed. (University of Texas Press, 2010), p. 13.
- 2 Inas Hajj Chehade, Mohamad Yahfouf and Zahi Adra, 'The Egg', *ReCon Heritage* <<https://www.reconheritage.co.uk/the-egg>> [accessed 30 June 2024].
- 3 Hanna Sepúlveda, 'Transcending War Trauma through Architecture', *Urbanogram Journal* (2024) <<https://www.urbanogram.com/transcendingwartraumathrougharchitecture>> [accessed 1 October 2024], p. 11.
- 4 'The Egg, Beirut', *Atlas Obscura* <<https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/the-egg-beirut>> [accessed 30 June 2024].
- 5 Michael J. Totten, 'Can Beirut Be Paris Again?' *City Journal* <<https://www.city-journal.org/article/can-beirut-be-paris-again>> [accessed 30 June 2024].
- 6 Sara Fregonese, *War and the City: Urban Geopolitics in Lebanon* (I. B. Tauris & Company, Limited, 2019), p. 69.
- 7 Fregonese, *War and the City*.
- 8 Dominic Perring, 'Archaeology and the Post-War Reconstruction of Beirut', *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites*, 11 (2009), pp. 296–314 (p. 298), doi:10.1179/175355210X12747818485529.
- 9 Amy Collins, 'The Importance of Unbuilt Architecture: 6 Ways Our Team Is Advancing Architectural Concepts through Design Exploration', *Gannett Fleming*, 28 September 2023 <<https://www.gannettfleming.com/blog/the-importance-of-unbuilt-architecture/>> [accessed 30 June 2024].
- 10 Bahar Avanoğlu, '[un]built: Notes on a Poetic "Compression"', *Daidalos: Magazine for Architecture, Art & Culture* (12 March 2023) <<https://www.daidalos.org/en/articles/unbuilt/>> [accessed 30 June 2024].
- 11 Stefano Corbo, 'The Interiors of a Revolution: Space, Design, and Politics at the Egg', *Architectural Research Quarterly*, 24 (2020), pp. 220–25 (p. 225), doi:10.1017/s135913552000038x.
- 12 Eamonn Carrabine, 'Traces of Violence: Representing the Atrocities of War', *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 18 (2018), pp. 631–46 (p. 634), doi:10.1177/1748895818789448; Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics* (Semiotexte, 2006), p. 135; Paul Virilio, *Desert Screen: War at the Speed of Light* (Continuum, 2002), p. 125.
- 13 Ian James, *Paul Virilio* (Routledge, 2007), doi:10.4324/9780203007631.
- 14 Virilio, *Desert Screen*, p. 125; Carrabine, 'Traces of Violence', p. 634.
- 15 Marina Yermakova-Feruz, 'Scars of War: How to Heal Cities and Souls', *PRAGMATIKA.MEDIA* (25 September 2022) <<https://pragmatika.media/en/shrami-vijni-jak-likuvati-mista-i-dushi/>> [accessed 30 June 2024].
- 16 Paul Virilio, *Bunker Archeology* (Princeton Architectural Press, 2009), p. 39.
- 17 Daniel Springer, 'The Value of a War-Scarred Ruin in Beirut', *Failed Architecture* (9 December 2013) <<https://failedarchitecture.com/the-value-of-a-war-scarred-ruin-in-beirut/>> [accessed 30 June 2024].
- 18 Lebbeus Woods, *Radical Reconstruction* (Princeton Architectural Press, 1997), p. 15.
- 19 Woods, *Radical Reconstruction*, p. 16.
- 20 Woods, *Radical Reconstruction*, p. 16.
- 21 Woods, *Radical Reconstruction*, p. 16.
- 22 BLDGBLOG, 'Without Walls: An Interview with Lebbeus Woods', *Future Plural* (3 October 2007) <<http://bldgblog.blogspot.com/2007/10/without-walls-interview-with-lebbeus.html>> [accessed 30 June 2024]; Jorge Otero-Pailos, 'Living or Leaving the Techno-Apocalypse: Paul Virilio's Critique of Technology and Its Contribution to Architecture', *Journal of Architectural Education*, 54 (2000), pp. 104–10 (p. 104), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1425597>.
- 23 Samir Khalaf, *Beirut Reclaimed: Reflections on Urban Design and the Restoration of Civility* (Dar an-Nahar Press, 1993), p. 17.
- 24 Bernard Khoury, 'Plan B', *e-Flux Journal*, 66 (October 2015) <<https://www.e-flux.com/journal/66/60761/plan-b/>> [accessed 01 October 2024].
- 25 Bernard Khoury, 'Bernard Khoury / DW5' <<https://www.bernardkhoury.com/project.php?id=102>> [accessed 30 June 2024].
- 26 Khoury, 'Bernard Khoury / DW5'.
- 27 Khoury, 'Bernard Khoury / DW5'.
- 28 Khoury, 'Bernard Khoury / DW5'.
- 29 Jasmina Neira, 'Anthony Saroufim Proposes to Transform Beirut's Egg into a Camera Obscura', *designboom* (22 February 2016) <<https://www.designboom.com/architecture/anthony-saroufim-the-egg-camera-obscura-beirut-02-16-2016/>> [accessed 30 June 2024].
- 30 Neira, 'Anthony Saroufim Proposes to Transform Beirut's Egg into a Camera Obscura'.
- 31 The Associated Press, 'Israel Expands Its Bombardment in Lebanon as Thousands Flee Widening War', *NPR* (6 October 2024) <<https://www.npr.org/2024/10/06/g-s1-26567/israel-expands-its-bombardment-in-lebanon-as-thousands-flee-widening-war>> [accessed 30 October 2024].