DESIGNING MEMORY

EXHIBITION STRATEGIES FOR AN EXPERIENTIAL MUSEUM

POLITECNICO
MILANO 1863

POLITECNICO DI MILANO
SCUOLA DEL DESIGN
CORSO DI LAUREA MAGISTRALE IN INTERIOR AND SPATIAL DESIGN

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This thesis stands as a collective effort shaped by guidance, support, and shared knowledge, for which I am deeply thankful.

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Space remembers. It holds weight, silence, conflict, and peace — and we feel it, whether we choose to or not

LOSS OF EMOTIONAL PRESENCE IN CONTEMPORARY INTERIOR SPACE

FIGURE : 1

WHY EMOTIONS MATTER IN SPATIAL DESIGN?

1.1 Background: Interiors and the loss of emotional presence

Interiors have historically operated as more than functional arrangements of rooms and furnishings. Through scale, enclosure, materiality, and atmosphere, interior spaces once carried emotional and cultural meaning. These environments were experienced through the body, felt through light, sound, texture, and movement, allowing interiors to shape memory, identity, and a sense of belonging.

In many contemporary interiors, this emotional dimension has gradually diminished. Standardization, commercial efficiency, and rapid construction processes have produced spaces that prioritize clarity, circulation, and visual order while neglecting sensory depth. As a result, interiors often feel complete yet emotionally neutral, encouraging movement rather than presence and consumption rather than reflection.

This shift has significant experiential consequences. Repetitive layouts, excessive visual information, and accelerated spatial sequencing leave little room for pause or emotional engagement. The body moves through space efficiently, but without forming attachment or memory. Such interiors are encountered briefly and forgotten quickly, contributing to a growing sense of spatial indifference.

This thesis begins from the position that interior space must be reclaimed as an emotional and sensory medium. Interior environments are not only seen; they are absorbed through the body and internalized through feeling. When designed with attention to atmosphere and perception, interiors can establish a silent dialogue between space and the human mind, one that is experiential rather than explanatory.

The interior appears visually complete yet emotionally distant, offering little sensory variation or opportunity for pause, reflection, or connection

Figure 2: Loss of Emotional Presence

1.2 Why Emotions Matter in Spatial Design

Emotion is not an added layer applied at the end of the design process; it is central to how interior space is experienced. Long before users interpret space intellectually, they respond to it bodily. Interior environments are first encountered through light, texture, sound, temperature, proportion, and movement, sensory conditions that immediately shape emotional response.

Phenomenological studies confirm that perception begins in the body rather than the mind (Merleau-Ponty, 1945). A narrow passage can induce tension, a sudden expansion can release it, and a shift in light can alter emotional awareness without conscious effort. These reactions occur instinctively, guiding how users move, pause, and engage with space.

Emotion also influences behavior within interiors. It determines whether a space invites lingering or encourages passage, whether it fosters reflection or detachment. Emotional cues quietly choreograph movement, shaping how long one stays and how deeply one connects. In this sense, emotion becomes the invisible structure organizing spatial experience.

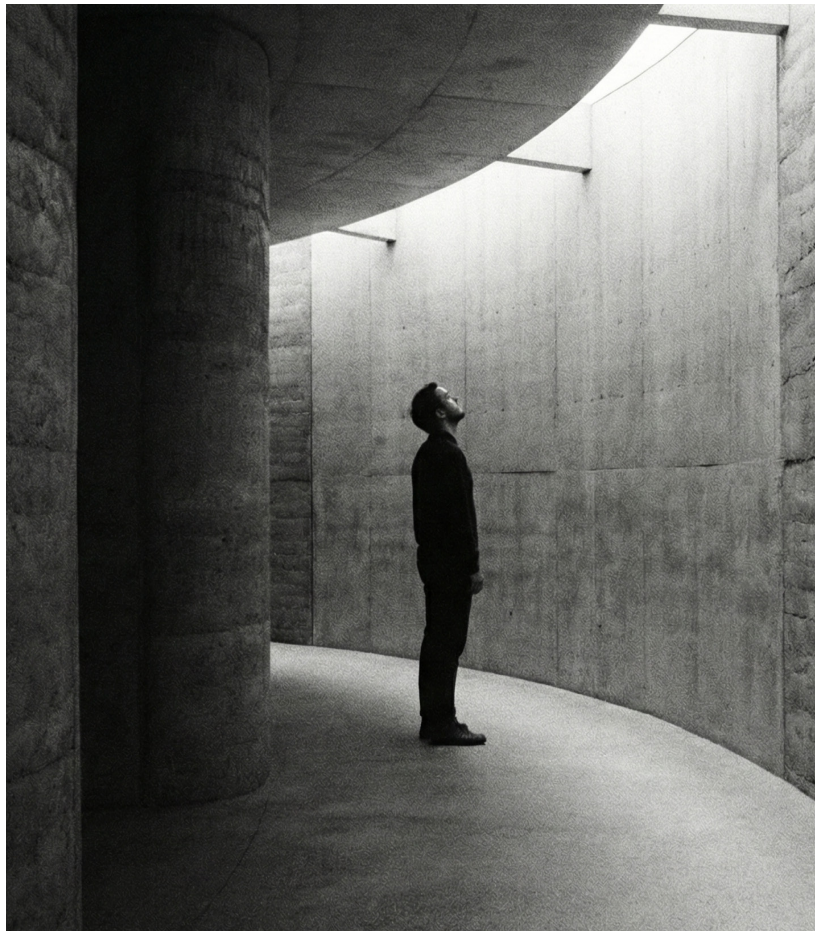
In cultural interiors such as museums and memorials, emotional engagement is particularly critical. When interiors rely solely on visual display or textual explanation, users remain spectators. In contrast, spaces that engage emotion through sensory and spatial conditions allow visitors to participate bodily, creating experiences that remain present in memory long after the space is left.

The image suggests how bodily presence influence emotional awareness, guiding how a person perceives and navigates space without conscious intention.

Figure 3: Emotion as an Experiential Guide

This spatial condition evokes confinement through rigid geometry, enclosure, and visual restriction. The body experiences pressure and isolation, demonstrating how monotonous and controlled interiors can produce emotional tension and discomfort.

Figure 4: Confinement as Emotional Extremity



The image represents reconciliation as a subsequent phase emerging after the experience of emotional extremes.

Figure 5: Reconciliation as Awareness

1.3 Problem Statement

Many contemporary museums and cultural interiors prioritize information delivery over spatial experience. Enclosed galleries, rigid circulation, and visually driven displays often position visitors as passive observers, limiting emotional participation. While content may be present, the spatial conditions through which it is experienced frequently lack sensory depth and emotional resonance.

This limitation becomes more pronounced in historically charged sites. When interiors are approached solely through preservation or representation, the emotional potential embedded within existing structures remains underutilized. Space becomes a backdrop rather than an active medium capable of evoking memory, tension, or reflection.

This study addresses the question of how interior design can move beyond visual representation to become an experiential and emotional medium, particularly within the context of adaptive reuse and historical sites.

1.4 Research Questions

How can interior design evoke emotional reactions through spatial and sensory design rather than visual representation?

How do opposing spatial conditions enable users to perceive and understand emotions more profoundly?

Can adaptive reuse transform a site of historical conflict into a contemporary experiential museum?

1.5 Research Aim and Objectives

Research Aim

To explore how interior and spatial design can operate as an emotional medium, transforming an existing historical site into a sequence of sensory and experiential conditions where emotion is felt through space rather than explained through display.

Objectives

- To study how bodily perception and sensory experience shape emotional responses in interior space

- To examine the role of spatial contrast in generating emotional awareness

- To explore adaptive reuse as a means of engaging historical memory through interior intervention

- To develop a spatial narrative structured around emotional sequencing rather than object display

1.6 Scope and Limitations

This study focuses on sensory and emotional design, spatial sequencing, and interior–architectural intervention within a historical ruin. It does not aim to reconstruct the original building nor to provide a detailed conservation strategy. Instead, it proposes light, reversible, and respectful interventions aligned with adaptive reuse principles.

The emotional experience is intentionally designed through spatial, sensory, and atmospheric means rather than through symbolic displays or conventional museum curation. While historical research informs the design, the primary objective is not factual narration but emotional and experiential engagement.

The scope of the thesis is therefore limited to design and spatial strategies capable of evoking emotion, awareness, and reflection, acknowledging that emotional responses are subjective and may vary among users.

1.7 Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative, design-driven methodology that integrates theory, spatial analysis, and design experimentation. The process begins with a literature study focusing on phenomenology, sensory perception, emotional theory, and adaptive reuse. These frameworks establish an understanding of how emotion is experienced through the body and space.

Case studies of emotionally resonant museums and memorials are analyzed to identify spatial strategies based on movement, contrast, and bodily engagement. These precedents inform the development of experiential design principles rather than formal imitation.

Site research at the British Residency, Lucknow, India includes documentation of spatial qualities, material conditions, light, and atmosphere. Emotionally charged zones within the site are identified through observation rather than mapping alone.

Design experimentation translates these findings into spatial sequences through sensory mapping, emotional zoning, and movement studies. The final proposal synthesizes theory and site conditions into an interior intervention where space itself becomes the exhibition.

The image reflects how space is perceived through movement, where awareness emerges gradually through overlapping moments rather than a single view.

Figure 6: Spatial Experience Over Time

THRESHOLDS OF PERCEPTION

FIGURE 7

SPACE IS UNDERSTOOD THROUGH MOVEMENT, NOT AT ONCE.

2.1.1 Spaces as a Storytelling Medium

Interior space is not merely a background for activity; it actively shapes how people perceive, feel, and remember their surroundings. Historically, interior environments communicated meaning through spatial hierarchy, material presence, and movement, allowing users to experience narrative through the body rather than explanation.

In contemporary practice, this narrative and emotional capacity is often overshadowed by efficiency and visual clarity. Interiors may function smoothly, yet remain emotionally flat, reducing space to an object of observation rather than lived experience.

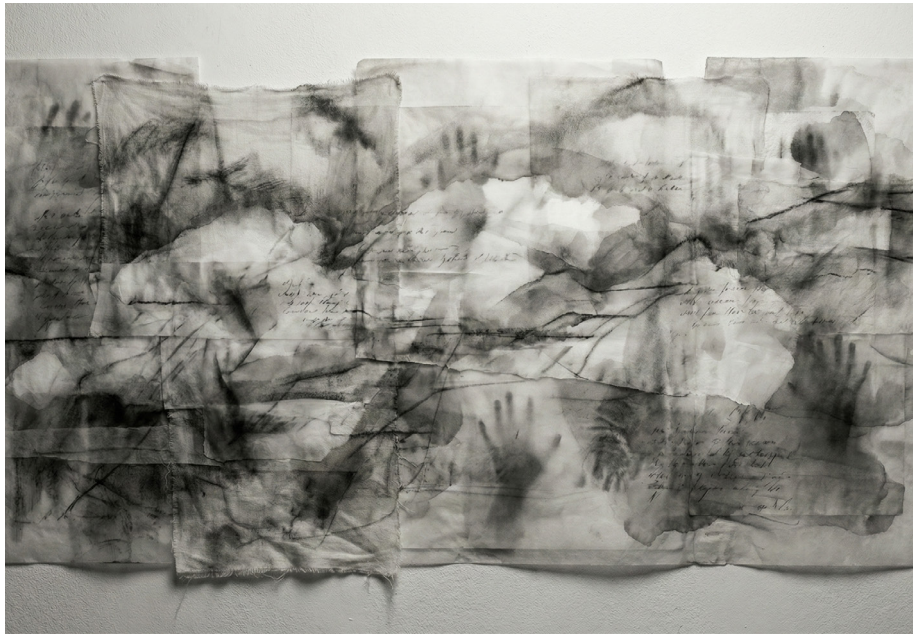
Within this thesis, interior design is approached as a storytelling medium where meaning unfolds through spatial sequence. Rather than narrating history through text or artifacts, emotional understanding emerges through movement, transition, and sensory contrast. The visitor becomes an active participant, experiencing space as a progression of emotional states rather than a static container.

The emotional experience of space is not fixed or universal. While spatial conditions can guide bodily response, emotional interpretation remains personal and subjective. The role of interior design in this thesis is therefore not to prescribe emotion, but to create conditions that allow individual interpretation to emerge.

2.1.2 Emotional Geographies and Memory

Every site carries an emotional geography shaped by history, materiality, and collective memory. In places marked by conflict or trauma, emotional traces persist beyond physical form. These traces are sensed through atmosphere, silence, and spatial tension rather than visible representation.

In this thesis, memory is approached as an embodied experience. By engaging with existing textures, voids, and spatial conditions, interior intervention allows visitors to sense the emotional weight of the past through bodily presence rather than narrative explanation.



The image represents emotional geographies as layered internal landscapes formed through accumulated experience rather than physical location alone.

Figure8 : Emotional Geographies as Internal Landscapes

2.2 Phenomenology: The Body as a Medium of Experience

Phenomenology helps explain how people experience space through their bodies rather than through detached observation. Rather than viewing perception as a detached intellectual process, phenomenology emphasizes the body as the primary medium through which the world is understood.

2.2.1 Merleau-Ponty and Embodied Perception

Maurice Merleau-Ponty argued that perception is fundamentally embodied. Humans do not first analyze space cognitively and then respond emotionally; instead, they feel space through their bodies before engaging in conscious interpretation (Merleau-Ponty, 1945). Sensory perceptions—such as light, sound, texture, temperature, and spatial proportion—directly influence emotional states and bodily reactions.

This perspective has direct implications for how interior spaces are designed and experienced. If perception is bodily, then architecture communicates primarily through sensory and spatial conditions rather than visual form alone. Movement through space, changes in scale, and variations in atmosphere become key design tools for shaping experience.

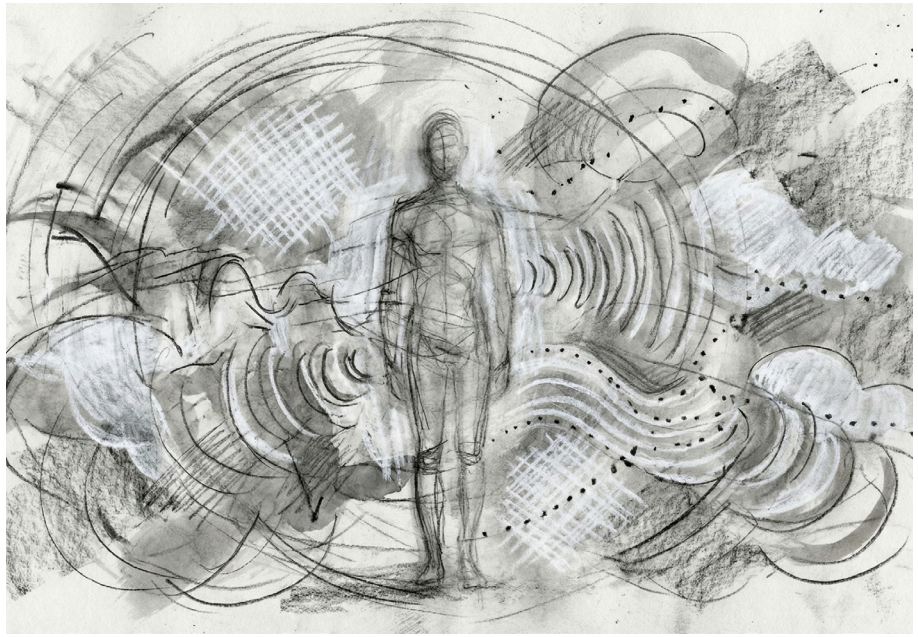
2.2.2 Sensing Space

Spatial experience emerges through the combined action of the senses. Light can generate feelings of safety or fear; sound can produce calmness or anxiety; material textures can communicate softness or violence; temperature can suggest comfort or discomfort; scale and proportion can create openness or pressure. Architecture is not perceived only through vision, but through the full engagement of the body.

Architectural theorist Juhani Pallasmaa argues that architecture is remembered not as images, but as atmospheres — the way a space feels on the skin, the sound of footsteps, or the weight of silence (Pallasmaa, 2005). Building on this embodied understanding, Harry Francis Mallgrave (2013) suggests that recent advances in neuroscience confirm that architectural experience is fundamentally biological and emotional, rooted in how the human body processes space.

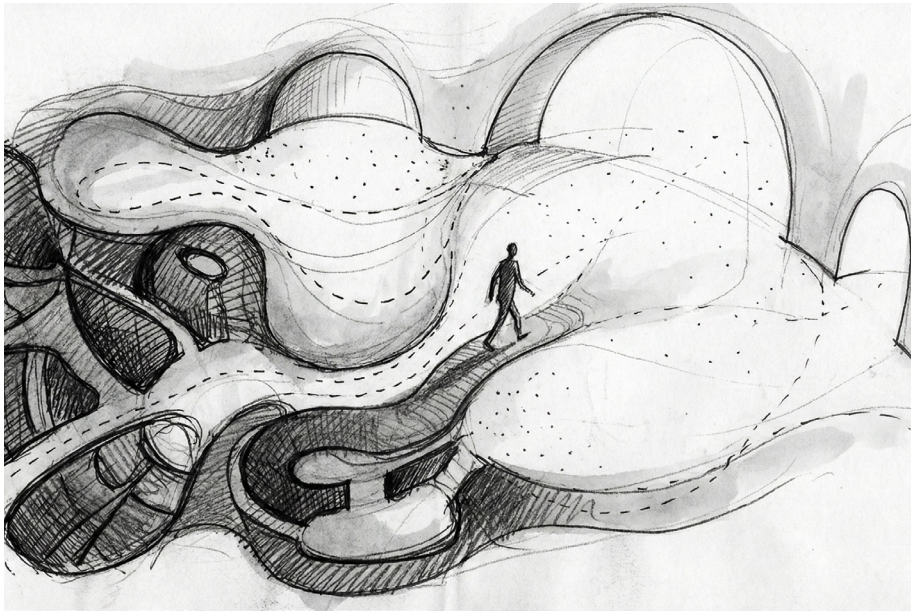
Similarly, Ruzzon (2022) explores how architectural design can be "tuned" to human perception, emphasizing that spatial qualities directly influence cognitive and emotional responses.

These perspectives reinforce the idea that sensory impressions shape emotional memory and influence how spaces are recalled long after they are left behind. In this thesis, sensing space becomes a deliberate design strategy. Emotional conditions are constructed by orchestrating sensory cues rather than relying solely on visual symbolism. The visitor's body becomes the primary site of interpretation, where meaning is not explained but felt.



The sketch represents phenomenology as the experience of space through the body, where perception is formed through overlapping sensory impressions rather than visual observation alone.

Figure 9: Experiencing Space Through the Body



The diagram illustrates emotional contrast as a sequence of experiential conditions, where awareness emerges through movement.

Figure10: Awareness Emerging Through Contrast

2.3 Emotional Contrast Theory

Psychologist Robert Plutchik proposed that emotions exist in opposing pairs, organized within a circular framework known as the Wheel of Emotions (Plutchik, 1980). According to this model, emotional clarity does not emerge from isolated states, but from the movement between emotional opposites. Awareness intensifies when one condition is experienced in relation to another.

This principle is highly relevant to interior and spatial design. Human bodies become more sensitive to emotional change when moving between contrasting spatial conditions. A shift from darkness to light, compression to openness, or silence to sound allows the body to register difference before conscious interpretation occurs.

Within interior environments, emotional contrast can be translated through spatial strategies rather than symbolism. Variations in enclosure, material texture, acoustics, and scale directly affect bodily response. Tension becomes perceptible after calm, and openness gains meaning after confinement. These transitions shape posture, pace, and breathing, allowing emotion to be felt through movement.

In this thesis, contrast is employed as a spatial design tool rather than a conceptual metaphor. Interior space is structured as a sequence of opposing experiential conditions, enabling emotional awareness to emerge gradually through bodily perception. Meaning is not explained; it is encountered.

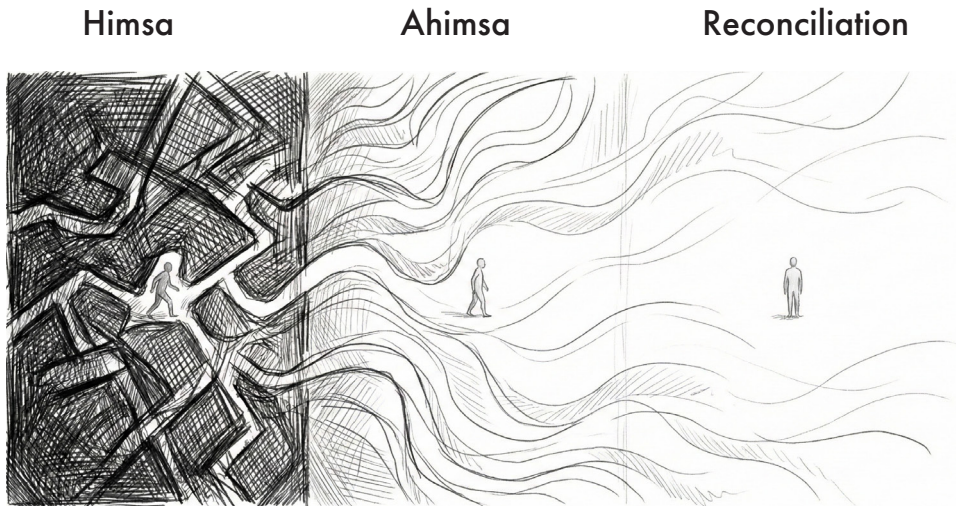
2.4 Himsa, Ahimsa, and Reconciliation

Emotional contrast in this thesis is articulated through the experiential opposition of Himsa and Ahimsa. These terms are not used symbolically or religiously, but as descriptors of emotional conditions felt through space and the body.

Himsa is expressed spatially through compression, harsh materiality, sharp light contrasts, and acoustic intensity. These interior conditions generate bodily tension, unease, and heightened alertness. Movement through such spaces is often restricted, deliberate, and physically demanding.

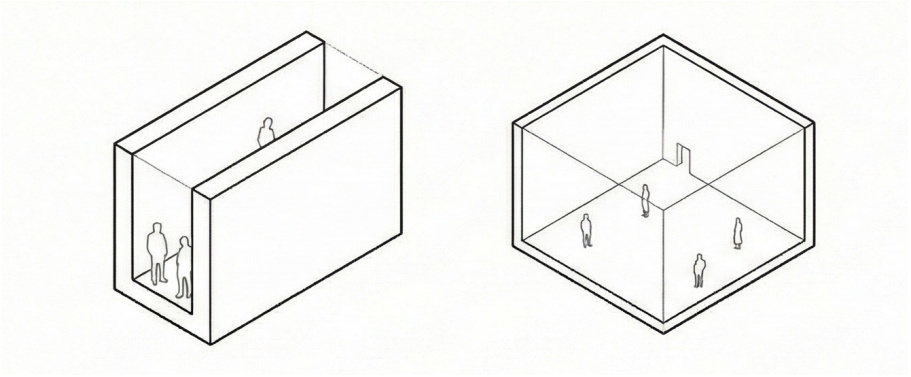
Ahimsa is experienced through openness, softened light, diffused acoustics, and tactile material transitions. These conditions allow the body to release tension, slow down, and enter a state of calm awareness. Spatial continuity and visual openness encourage reflection rather than resistance.

Reconciliation is introduced as a subsequent condition that emerges after experiencing both extremes. It is not a midpoint or transition, but an awareness produced through contrast. Interior space here becomes quiet, restrained, and unresolved, allowing emotional understanding to surface without instruction.



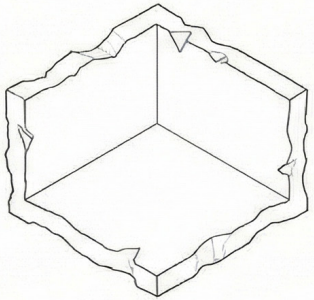
The diagram illustrates emotional contrast as a sequence of experiential spatial conditions rather than fixed emotional states.

Figure 11: Emotional Contrast and the Emergence of Reconciliation

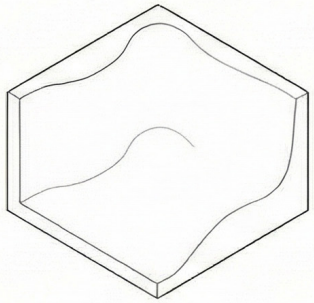


Compressed Spatial Condition

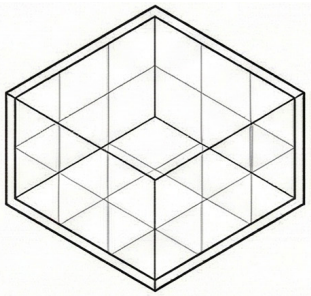
Open Spatial Condition



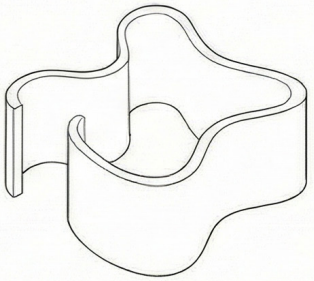
Irregular and Fragmented Form



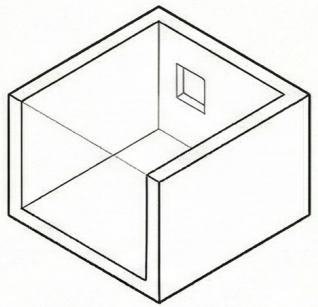
Continuous and Fluid Form



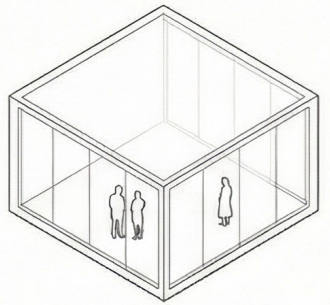
Rigid and Ordered Spatial Grid



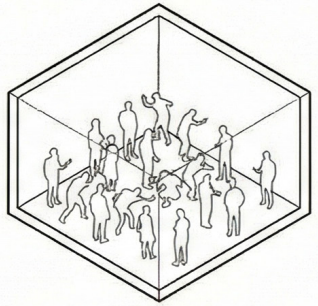
Organic and Non-Linear Form



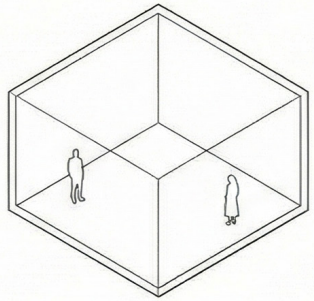
Restricted Visual Condition



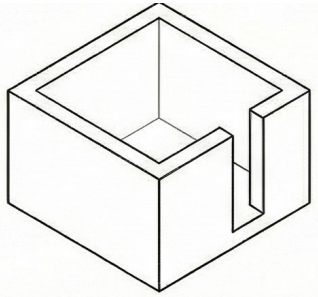
Transparent Spatial Condition



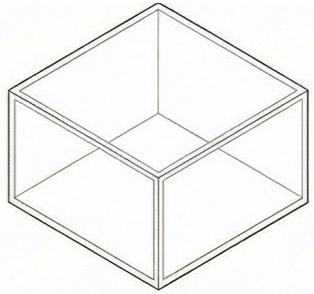
Dense Occupancy Condition



Sparse Occupancy Condition

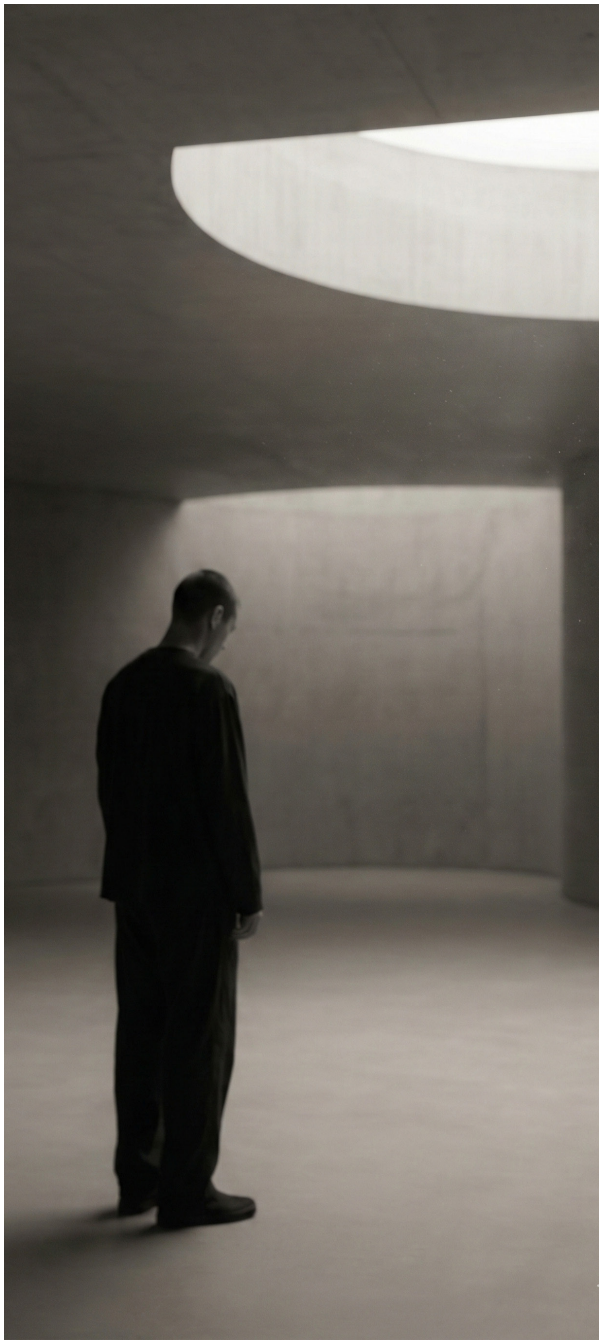


Controlled Threshold Condition



Uninterrupted Spatial Condition

Figure 12: Emotional Contrast Through Spatial Conditions



FROM EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE TO SPATIAL TRANSLATION

FIGURE 13

THIS PROJECT PROPOSES A SPACE WHERE EMOTION IS EXPERIENCED THROUGH MOVEMENT, ATMOSPHERE, AND SPATIAL CONTRAST.

3.1 The Need for Emotional Reconnection in the 21st Century

Contemporary environments are increasingly shaped by speed, efficiency, and visual saturation. Interiors are designed to perform, to manage movement, display information, and optimize use, often at the expense of sensory and emotional engagement. As a result, many spaces function effectively while remaining experientially shallow.

This condition has contributed to a growing emotional distance between people and the spaces they inhabit. Interiors are frequently encountered passively, without encouraging pause, reflection, or bodily awareness. Museums prioritize information delivery, public buildings regulate circulation, and historical sites focus on preservation, leaving little room for emotional connection.

At the same time, there is a growing desire for spaces that allow slowing down and introspection. People increasingly seek environments that engage the senses, invite stillness, and support emotional awareness. This shift presents an opportunity for interior design to reclaim its role as an experiential medium.

The Museum of Emotions responds to this condition by positioning emotional experience as the primary content. Rather than offering information to be consumed, it offers spatial encounters to be felt, encouraging visitors to reconnect with their bodies, senses, and inner emotional landscapes.

The image represents emotional reconnection emerging through stillness and spatial presence within an interior environment.

Figure 14: Emotional Reconnection Through Interior Stillness

3.2 Emotional Architecture as Cultural Practice

Across different cultures and historical periods, interior spaces have played a crucial role in shaping collective emotional experience. Spaces of gathering, waiting, remembrance, and transition, such as halls, chambers, corridors, and thresholds, have long been designed to evoke shared states of reverence, grief, calm, or reflection. These interiors demonstrate that emotion is not an added layer to space, but an inherent cultural function carried through atmosphere, material presence, and bodily experience.

In many contemporary interiors, however, emotional engagement has been reduced or displaced. Public interiors are often designed to facilitate movement, efficiency, and visibility rather than presence. Museums prioritize information display, civic interiors manage circulation, and everyday spaces function as neutral backdrops for activity. While functional, such environments often lack sensory depth, resulting in interiors that are emotionally flat and experientially passive.

Emotional interior architecture challenges this condition by asserting that interior space itself can act as a cultural medium. Through scale, enclosure, materiality, light, sound, and movement, interiors have the capacity to shape emotional states without relying on symbolism, imagery, or narrative explanation. Emotion is not represented within the space; it is produced through the way the body inhabits and moves through it.

In this sense, emotional interior architecture becomes a form of cultural practice, one that engages shared human experiences such as tension, calm, loss, and reconciliation through spatial experience rather than instruction. Meaning emerges through atmosphere and presence, allowing users to encounter emotion collectively while processing it individually.

The Museum of Emotions positions itself within this lineage of interior practice. It proposes the interior not as a container for cultural content, but as a cultural act in itself, a space where emotional awareness is shaped through experience, and where interior conditions enable reflection, connection, and understanding.

Historical interiors demonstrate how culture and collective emotion were once embedded directly into spatial atmosphere and material presence.

Figure 15: Culture Embedded in Interior Space

3.3 Global Examples of Emotional Architecture and Memorials

Certain architectural works demonstrate the ability of space to evoke strong emotional responses without relying on representation or didactic content. These projects operate through atmosphere, bodily engagement, and spatial sequencing, offering valuable precedents for this thesis.

3.3.1.1 Jewish Museum, Berlin

The Jewish Museum in Berlin, designed by Daniel Libeskind, is one of the most influential examples of emotional architecture in contemporary practice. Rather than functioning as a neutral container for exhibitions, the building itself becomes the primary narrative device. History, trauma, and memory are not explained through objects alone but are embedded within the spatial structure of the architecture.

Libeskind's approach is rooted in the idea that emotional understanding can precede intellectual comprehension. The museum communicates through disorientation, absence, and bodily unease, transforming the visitor's movement through space into an emotional journey.

3.3.1.1 Fragmented Geometry and Spatial Disorientation

The overall form of the Jewish Museum is defined by a jagged, zigzag geometry, often referred to as the "Blitz." This fragmented form reflects a history marked by rupture, violence, and discontinuity. Internally, the geometry produces irregular corridors, sharp angles, and unexpected intersections that disrupt conventional circulation.

Visitors are unable to move through the building in a linear or predictable manner. Instead, the spatial layout creates moments of confusion and instability, forcing users to slow down and become aware of their bodies in space. This spatial disorientation is not accidental; it is a deliberate strategy to evoke emotional unease and to mirror the fractured historical narrative the museum engages with.

3.3.1.2 The Axes: Direction, Choice, and Emotional Narrative

The museum is structured around three primary axes: the Axis of Continuity, the Axis of Exile, and the Axis of the Holocaust. These axes intersect and diverge, guiding visitors through different emotional and conceptual paths.

The Axis of Continuity represents the persistence of Jewish life, while the Axis of Exile leads toward the Garden of Exile, and the Axis of the Holocaust culminates in the Holocaust Tower. The act of choosing and moving along these axes introduces a narrative dimension to movement, where direction becomes an emotional decision rather than a purely functional one.

The image represents how fragmented geometry, sharp intersections, and directional movement generate emotional disorientation, using spatial structure.

Figure 16: Spatial Disorientation as Emotional Narrative

3.3.1.3 Voids and Architecture of Absence

One of the most powerful architectural elements of the Jewish Museum is the system of voids that cut vertically through the building. These tall, empty spaces are largely inaccessible, serving no functional purpose. Their presence represents absence, loss, and the irreparable gaps left in Jewish–German history.

The voids are characterized by raw concrete surfaces, silence, and emptiness. They resist occupation and explanation, confronting visitors with absence rather than representation. Emotion emerges through what is missing rather than what is shown, making absence itself an architectural language.

3.3.1.4 The Holocaust Tower: Isolation and Bodily Vulnerability

The Holocaust Tower is a tall, enclosed concrete space accessible from the Axis of the Holocaust. The interior is dimly lit by a narrow slit of light high above, which remains unreachable. The heavy concrete walls, cold temperature, and echoing acoustics create an atmosphere of extreme isolation.

Within this space, visitors often experience vulnerability, helplessness, and discomfort. The body reacts instinctively to the lack of visual connection, acoustic amplification, and vertical enclosure. Emotion is not suggested or narrated; it is physically induced through spatial condition.

3.3.1.5 Interactivity and Bodily Engagement

In several areas of the museum, visitors are required to physically engage with the space. Walking on uneven or metallic surfaces produces sound, making movement audible and unavoidable. These moments of interactivity transform the visitor from a passive observer into an active participant.

This bodily involvement reinforces phenomenological principles, emphasizing that emotional experience arises through movement, sound, and physical presence rather than visual interpretation alone. The architecture demands participation, making the body an essential component of meaning-making.

3.3.1.6 Relevance to the Thesis

The Jewish Museum demonstrates how architecture can act as an emotional mediator, guiding visitors through a sequence of spatial and emotional states. Its use of fragmentation, voids, bodily engagement, and controlled disorientation directly informs the design approach of the Museum of Emotions. The project confirms that emotional understanding can emerge through spatial experience before intellectual interpretation.

The image represents how voids, enclosure, and controlled light produce an architecture of absence, where emotional intensity emerges through isolation, bodily vulnerability, and physical engagement.

Figure 17: Architecture of Absence and Bodily Vulnerability

Figure18: Spatial Experience as Emotional Realization

My Takeaway

The Jewish Museum offers a profound lesson on how architecture and spatial sequencing can communicate emotion beyond words. One of the most impactful aspects of my experience was the way certain spaces evoked an immediate, almost involuntary emotional reaction. I experienced an immediate, involuntary sense of grief, an atmosphere that was not imposed through text or imagery, but emerged through proportion, materiality, silence, and spatial isolation. This moment forced me to slow down, to pause, and to become consciously present within the space. It was a spark that transformed the museum from a place of observation into a place of realization and emotional education. What is particularly powerful is that this feeling was not explained or narrated; instead, it was sensed. The space itself carried memory and loss, allowing the visitor to internalize history rather than merely consume information. This made me realize that architecture can act as an emotional mediator—preparing the mind and body to receive what comes next. Such moments of emotional disorientation and reflection are crucial, as they create a threshold between knowing and feeling. For my project, this becomes a key takeaway. I aim to design a museum where spatial experience precedes interpretation, where visitors encounter moments that subtly unsettle them, slow them down, and make them receptive. The intention is not to recreate grief, but to design for awareness, to create spaces that quietly educate through atmosphere, absence, and sensory cues. Just as I experienced that cold wave of grief in the Jewish Museum, I want my museum to offer a moment where visitors feel something deeply and personally, allowing space to become a vessel for memory, reflection, and understanding.

3.3.2 Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Berlin — Peter Eisenman

The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe in Berlin, designed by Peter Eisenman, represents a radically different yet equally powerful approach to emotional space. Rather than employing narrative complexity or fragmented form, the memorial relies on minimalism, repetition, and bodily destabilization.

The field of concrete stelae is arranged in a rigid orthogonal grid across an undulating ground plane. Meaning does not arise from symbolism or explanation, but through sustained movement within the space. As visitors progress inward, the stelae increase in height, peripheral vision is reduced, and orientation is gradually lost.

The narrow pathways restrict movement and mute external sound, producing isolation despite collective presence. There is no prescribed route or destination, encouraging wandering and uncertainty. Emotional response emerges through repetition, enclosure, and bodily adjustment rather than instruction.

This memorial demonstrates how interior and spatial design can communicate memory and trauma through minimal means. By engaging the body directly, the space allows emotional understanding to precede intellectual interpretation.

3.3.2.1 Narrow Pathways and Loss of Orientation

The pathways between the stelae are narrow, linear, and repetitive. As the blocks grow taller, peripheral vision is reduced, and the surrounding city disappears. Sound becomes muted, and orientation is gradually lost.

Movement through the memorial is slow and introspective. There is no prescribed route or destination, encouraging visitors to wander without direction. Although many people occupy the space simultaneously, visual separation produces a sense of isolation, intensifying emotional awareness.

3.3.2.2 Emotional Impact Through Minimal Means

The memorial's emotional strength lies in its refusal to explain or represent. With no text, images, or figurative symbols, emotional response arises solely from spatial condition. Visitors often report feelings of discomfort, vulnerability, silence, and reflection.

These emotions are not imposed; they emerge naturally through movement, repetition, and enclosure. The space does not dictate meaning but creates the conditions for personal emotional interpretation.

3.3.2.3 Relevance to the Thesis

Eisenman's memorial demonstrates that powerful emotional architecture can be achieved through extreme formal restraint. The use of repetition, gradual enclosure, and bodily destabilization directly informs the design strategies of the Museum of Emotions. It reinforces the thesis argument that emotional understanding is felt rather than taught, and that architecture can transform memory into embodied experience.

The image represents how repetition, scale, and spatial density generate a collective emotional experience, where movement through uniform elements produces disorientation, isolation, and heightened bodily awareness.

Figure 19: Collective Memory Through Repetition and Scale

My Takeaway

The Holocaust Memorial reveals the extraordinary power of architecture through the most minimal means. Using only a disciplined repetition of simple geometry, the space gradually induces a profound feeling of entrapment, disorientation, and isolation. As one walks deeper into the memorial, the ground subtly shifts, the stelae grow taller, and the surrounding city disappears, leaving the visitor physically and emotionally enclosed. What is most striking is that nothing is explicitly explained, there are no images, no words, no directions, yet the experience is unmistakable. The body understands before the mind does. This is what makes the memorial a marvel. It demonstrates how architecture, stripped to its essentials, can communicate trauma, absence, and memory with immense clarity and force. The space does not ask to be observed; it demands to be felt. By the time one exits, there is a heightened awareness of how geometry, scale, repetition, and movement can shape emotion and consciousness. Experiencing this place makes one truly understand the power of architecture, not as an object, but as an experience capable of leaving a lasting psychological imprint.

3.4 Translating Intangible Emotions into Spatial Form

Emotions are intangible, subjective, and often difficult to articulate. Nevertheless, architecture possesses the capacity to translate emotional states into physical and spatial conditions. This translation occurs through deliberate manipulation of spatial elements.

Key architectural tools for emotional expression include:

Spatial proportion: Compression can induce tension, while expansion can provide relief.

Light: Harsh contrasts may evoke chaos or unease, while diffused light can generate calmness and introspection.

Materiality: Rough or sharp textures can produce discomfort, whereas soft surfaces communicate safety and empathy.

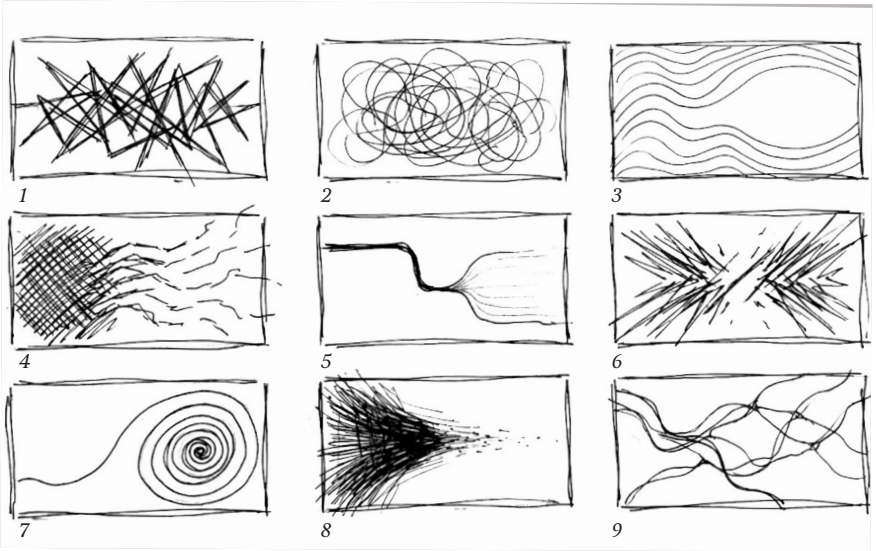
Sound: Echo and reverberation may heighten anxiety, while silence encourages reflection.

Temperature: Cool environments can suggest detachment, while warmth conveys comfort.

Movement pathways: Linear paths provide clarity, labyrinthine routes create uncertainty, and gradual transitions support transformation.

By consciously orchestrating these elements, architecture becomes a medium for emotional expression. In the Museum of Emotions, each emotional state is embodied as a spatial condition rather than represented symbolically.

These diagrams represent emotions not as symbols or narratives, but as spatial and sensory conditions. Each sketch abstracts a specific emotional quality through line density, direction, rhythm, and continuity, demonstrating how intangible emotions can be translated into architectural experience.



1. Jagged lines express tension and sensory overload through compression.

2. Entangled curves represent confusion and emotional complexity.

3. Flowing horizontal lines convey calm and spatial balance.

4. Contrasting textures show transition from tension to relief.

5. Directed lines indicate movement and emotional progression.

6. Radiating forms evoke rupture and sudden emotional impact.

7. Spirals suggest introspection and inward focus.

8. Converging and dispersing lines express release and reconciliation.

9. Interwoven flows represent emotional continuity and coexistence.

Figure 20: Abstract Diagrams Translating Emotional States into Spatial Conditions

3.5 Reinterpreting Museum Typologies

Conventional museum typologies are typically organized around objects, display cases, explanatory text, and linear circulation. This model privileges vision and cognition, positioning visitors as passive observers who consume information rather than engage spatially.

In response, contemporary cultural spaces have begun exploring immersive and experiential approaches. These environments emphasize atmosphere, sensory engagement, and narrative movement, shifting the role of the visitor from spectator to participant.

The Museum of Emotions advances this shift by removing dependence on artifacts altogether. Here, interior space itself becomes the primary medium of expression. Emotional states such as tension, release, anticipation, and reflection are generated through spatial sequencing, material transitions, and controlled sensory conditions.

By redefining the museum as an experiential interior rather than a container for objects, this project proposes a new typology—one where emotional awareness emerges through bodily movement and spatial encounter.

The image represents an immersive spatial condition that engages the body and senses through atmosphere.

Figure 21: Immersive Spatial Experience

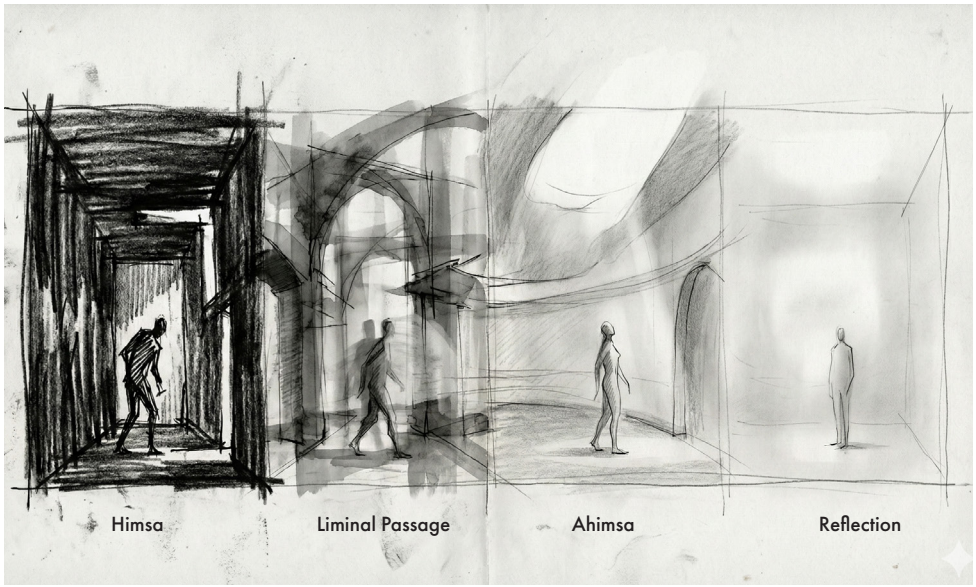
3.6 Spatial Storytelling Through Emotion

Storytelling within this thesis is not based on recounting historical events, but on structuring emotional transitions through space. Narrative is produced through movement, contrast, and sensory modulation rather than text or representation.

The proposed spatial sequence unfolds through four experiential phases. Himsa is expressed through compressed, intense interiors characterized by harsh materiality and heightened sensory conditions. This is followed by a liminal passage, where ambiguity and sensory recalibration prepare the body for emotional shift.

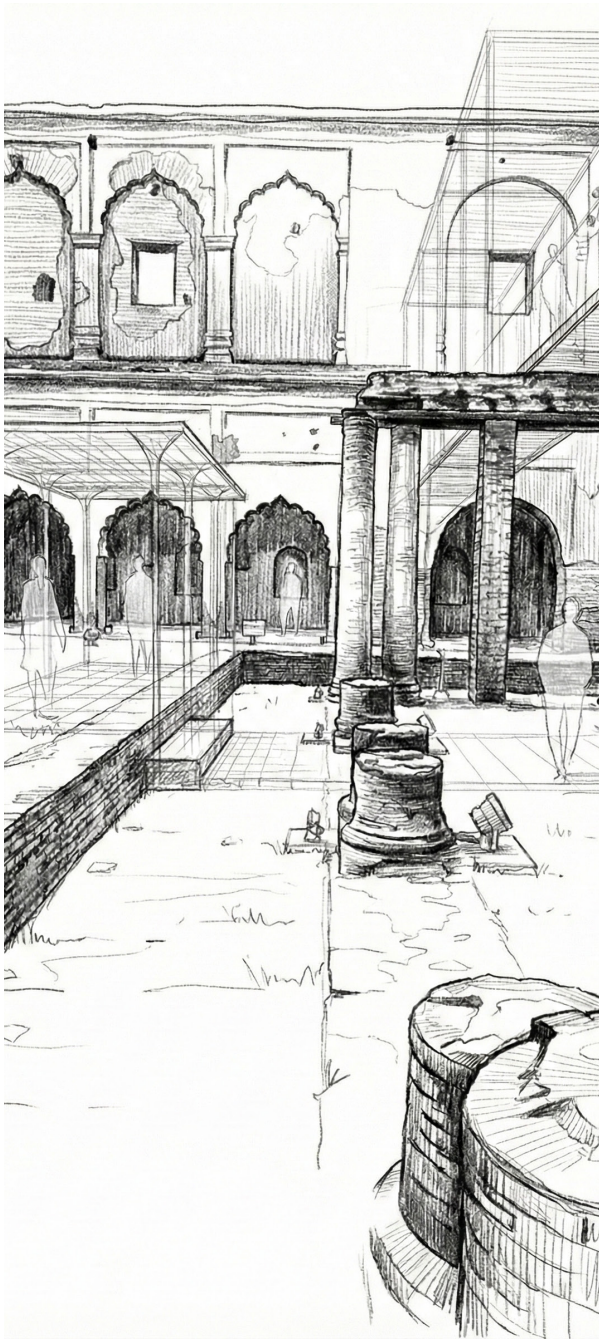
Ahimsa emerges through openness, softened light, and spatial continuity, allowing bodily release and calm awareness. The final condition of reconciliation and reflection is intentionally restrained, offering a quiet interior where emotional experience transforms into understanding.

Through this sequence, interior space functions as a living script. The visitor becomes both participant and witness, engaging emotion through bodily presence rather than interpretation. The Museum of Emotions thus positions spatial experience as a medium for emotional discovery and reflection.



The diagram illustrates emotional narrative as a continuous spatial sequence, moving from compression and intensity (Himsa) through ambiguity (Liminal Passage) toward openness and calm (Ahimsa), and finally into reflection and awareness.

Figure 22: Spatial Storytelling Through Emotional Transition



LAYERS OF TIME AND INTERIOR EXPERIENCE

FIGURE 23

BY WORKING WITH EXISTING STRUCTURES, INTERIOR DESIGN BECOMES A MEDIUM FOR EMOTIONAL CONTINUITY.

4.1 Introduction: Why Adaptive Reuse

Adaptive reuse is approached in this thesis not as a technical exercise, but as an emotional and spatial act. Working with an existing structure means engaging with memory, material presence, and time rather than starting from a neutral condition. These existing qualities become the foundation of design rather than constraints to overcome.

For a Museum of Emotions, adaptive reuse is particularly relevant. Emotions are not fixed or resolved; they accumulate through experience and change. Similarly, reused interiors remain layered, incomplete, and open to interpretation. Traces of decay, damage, and absence are not erased but allowed to remain visible.

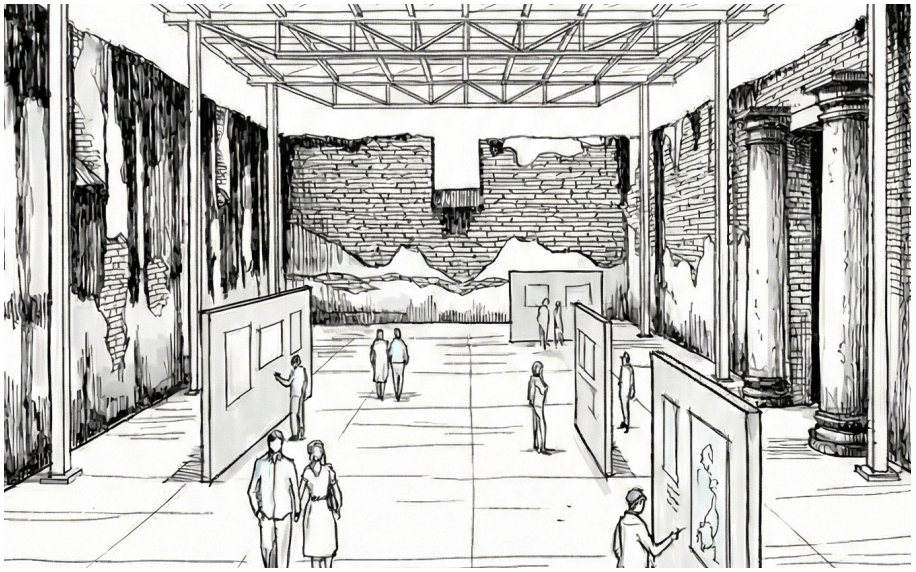
By preserving these conditions, interior space retains its emotional depth. Visitors are made aware that the building has existed before them and will continue after. This awareness supports slower movement, heightened perception, and emotional presence within the space.

4.2 Adaptive Reuse as an Emotional Act

Reusing an existing structure is never neutral. Decisions about what is preserved, altered, or left untouched carry emotional weight. In this project, adaptive reuse is understood as an emotional act that engages with loss, survival, and continuity.

Time is treated as a spatial presence rather than a background condition. Material erosion, uneven surfaces, and structural remnants allow the building to reveal its age through bodily encounter. These traces communicate history without relying on explanation or display.

New interior insertions introduce a contemporary layer, yet do not overwrite the past. Instead, moments are created where different temporal layers coexist. Visitors experience the present while remaining aware of accumulated memory, allowing emotional awareness to emerge gradually through space.



Conceptual site sketch exploring the potential of adaptive reuse through the layering of existing structure and new interior interventions.

Figure 24: Adaptive Reuse as Spatial Continuity

4.4 Principles Guiding the Adaptive Reuse Strategy

The adaptive reuse of the British Residency is guided by five core principles that align directly with the thesis intent of translating emotional experience into spatial form. Rather than treating reuse as a technical or conservation exercise alone, these principles position architecture as a medium for memory, atmosphere, and emotional continuity.

Integrity

Existing ruins, scars, and material traces are preserved without beautification. Cracks, erosion, and weathering remain visible, allowing the interior to communicate time and emotional depth through authenticity.

Memory

Historical significance is engaged through spatial presence rather than narration. Walls, voids, and remnants evoke memory emotionally, enabling visitors to sense the past through atmosphere and silence.

Authenticity

New interventions are clearly contemporary and restrained. Rather than imitating existing forms, they coexist honestly with the old, reinforcing emotional legibility between layers of time.

Flexibility

Spaces are not rigidly programmed, allowing multiple interpretations and future adaptation. This openness supports personal emotional engagement rather than fixed meaning.

Sustainability

Minimal intervention and reuse reduce material waste while extending the life of the structure. Sustainability is approached as both an ethical and emotional commitment to preservation.

Together, these principles frame adaptive reuse as an emotional and spatial act rather than a purely functional one. The British Residency becomes a vessel where past and present coexist, enabling the Museum of Emotions to emerge through restraint, continuity, and carefully calibrated transformation.

4.5 Emotional Contrast Between Existing and New Elements

Contrast plays a critical role in shaping emotional experience within the reused structure. The existing architecture is heavy, grounded, and enclosed. New interventions introduce moments of lightness, precision, and openness.

These contrasts are not concealed. Instead, they are intentionally revealed, allowing shifts in mood and bodily awareness to occur through movement. Emotional understanding emerges from these changes rather than from a single, uniform atmosphere.

Not all spaces are activated or filled. Some areas remain empty or minimally altered. Absence is treated as a deliberate design decision, creating moments of pause and stillness. In this restraint, interior design listens to the building rather than imposing meaning onto it.

4.6 Bodily Experience in Reused Space

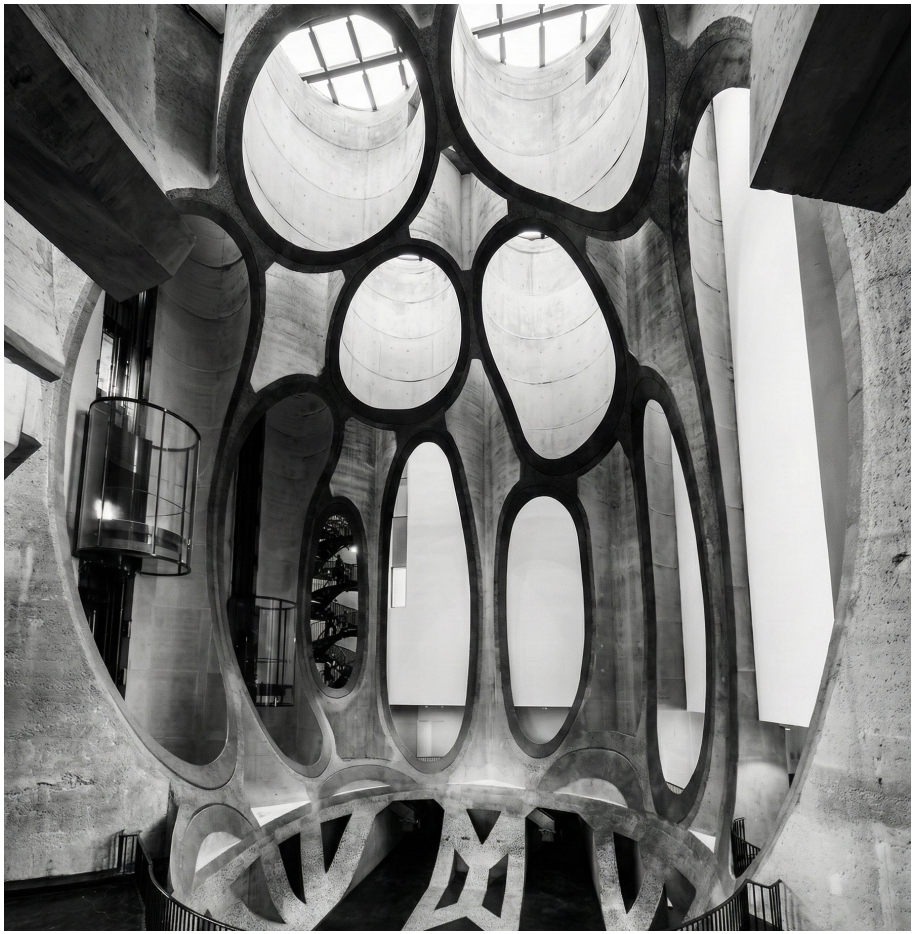
The reused structure engages the body directly. Changes in floor level, wall thickness, enclosure, light, and sound affect how visitors move and perceive the space. Experience begins before interpretation.

Movement through the building is not smooth or continuous. It involves moments of compression, resistance, and release. These spatial conditions slow the visitor down and heighten awareness of their own presence within the space.

This bodily engagement aligns with the aims of the Museum of Emotions, where emotional understanding is shaped through experience rather than observation.

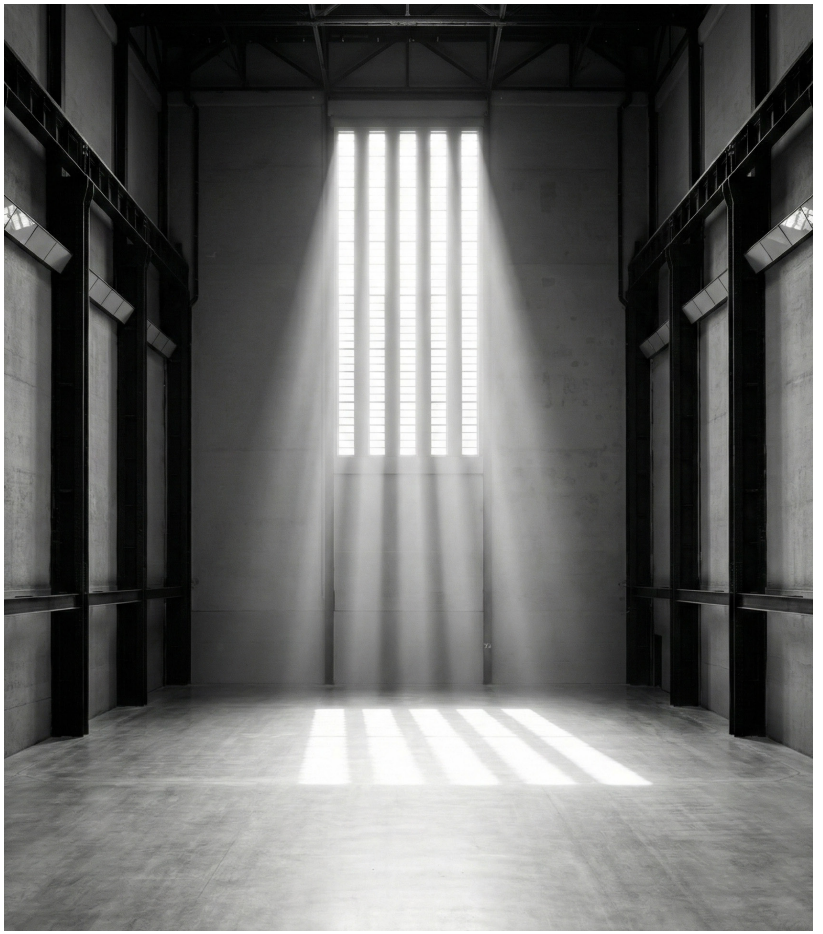
This work by Edoardo Tresoldi explores emotional contrast through transparency, repetition, and material lightness. Solid mass is replaced by outline and void, allowing absence to become perceptible. The spatial experience shifts between presence and disappearance.

Figure 25: Transparency, Void, and Emotional Contrast (Edoardo Tresoldi)



This image shows the interior transformation of the former grain silo at Zeitz MOCAA, where the original concrete structure has been carefully carved to create a monumental central void. The adaptive reuse strategy preserves the industrial memory of the building while introducing light, vertical openness, and spatial drama.

Figure 26: Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa



This interior of the Tate Modern demonstrates how adaptive reuse can transform an industrial structure into an emotionally resonant space. The former power station hall is defined by its monumental scale, raw materiality, and controlled natural light. Light entering from above creates moments of stillness and reflection, allowing the existing structure to remain dominant while shaping a contemplative spatial atmosphere.

Figure 27: Tate Modern, London (Adaptive Reuse Interior)

Fondazione Prada illustrates adaptive reuse as a deliberate dialogue between existing industrial structures and contemporary architectural intervention. Former distillery buildings are preserved and reactivated through the insertion of new volumes, finishes, and spatial sequences that clearly distinguish old from new.

Figure 28: Fondazione Prada, Milan (OMA)

The Kolumba Museum exemplifies adaptive reuse through careful integration of historical ruins within a contemporary architectural framework.Rather than reconstructing the past, the design preserves absence, material traces, and silence, enabling emotional engagement through restraint, atmosphere, and bodily movement within the space.

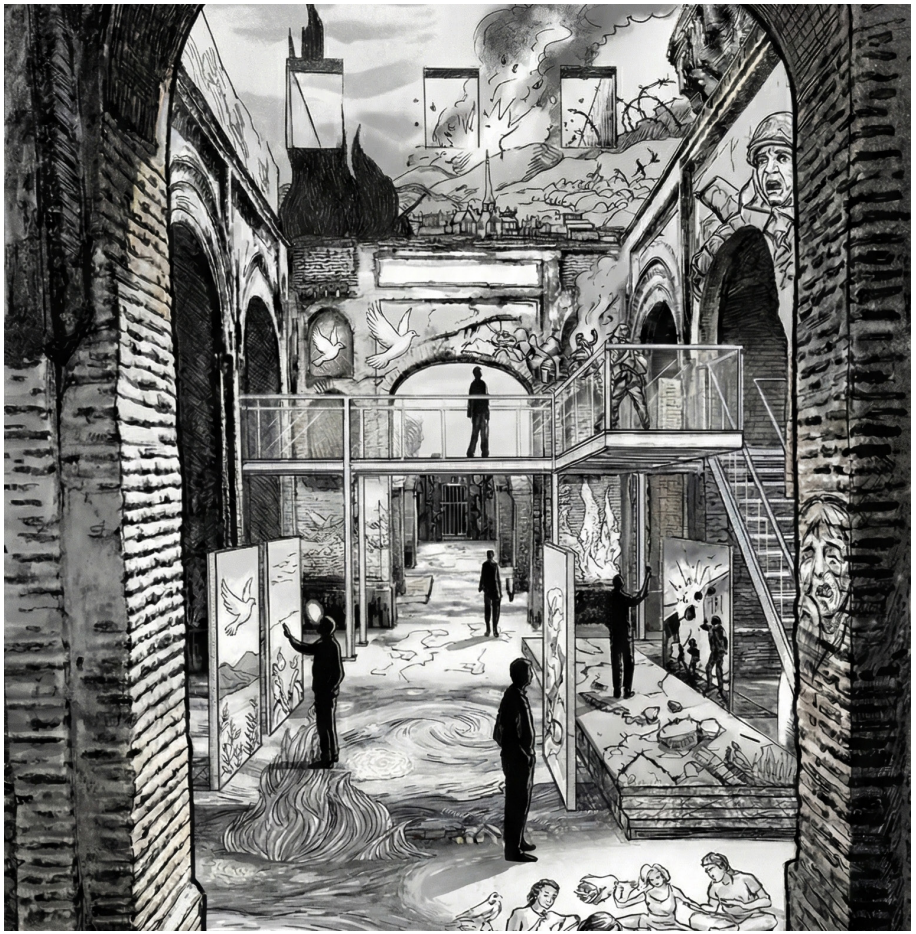
Figure 29 : Kolumba Museum, Cologne (Peter Zumthor)

4.7 Adaptive Reuse and the Museum of Emotions

Adaptive reuse forms the foundation of the Museum of Emotions. The existing structure already contains emotional depth through age, decay, and historical presence. The design intervention works with these qualities rather than replacing them.

By allowing the building to remain layered and incomplete, the project transforms architecture into an emotional medium. Memory, emotion, and awareness intersect through spatial experience, rather than narrative explanation.

Adaptive reuse, in this thesis, is not a supporting strategy. It is central to the idea that architecture can foster emotional reconnection by accepting imperfection, time, and lived experience.



This conceptual sketch illustrates adaptive reuse as a layered interior landscape, where old and new coexist. Movement, pause, and visual overlap generate emotional engagement, allowing the ruin to be experienced as an evolving spatial condition rather than a static artifact.

Figure 30 — Conceptual Visualization of Adaptive Reuse as an Emotional Landscape

FROM HISTORICAL PLACE TO EXPERIENTIAL INTERIOR POTENTIAL

FIGURE 31

THE SITE ACTS AS A FRAMEWORK WHERE EXISTING CONDITIONS BECOME CATALYSTS FOR EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE.

5.1 Site

The selection of the British Residency in Lucknow,India as the site for the Museum of Emotions is central to the conceptual and experiential intentions of this thesis. The Residency is not only a historically significant ensemble but also a deeply charged emotional landscape shaped by conflict, memory, loss, and resilience. Its current condition as a ruin, embedded within a landscaped precinct, offers a rare spatial context where architecture, nature, and memory coexist.

The British Residency before the Revolt of 1857, shown as a complete and orderly colonial complex, later transformed by conflict into a site of memory and loss.

Figure 32: British Residency, Lucknow,India — Pre-1857

5.2 Historical Background

5.2.1 The British Residency: Origin and Evolution

The British Residency in Lucknow was established in the late eighteenth century as the official residence of the British Resident, who acted as the diplomatic representative of the East India Company to the Nawab of Awadh. Conceived as a political and administrative complex rather than a single building, the Residency evolved over time into an enclosed enclave comprising residential buildings, administrative offices, military structures, churches, and landscaped gardens. Architecturally, the Residency reflected colonial planning principles, combining neoclassical elements with local construction techniques. The ensemble was designed to project authority and permanence while remaining functionally adapted to the climatic conditions of northern India. Over decades, the complex expanded organically, resulting in a fragmented spatial composition rather than a unified architectural language.

5.2.2 The 1857 Revolt and Collective Memory

The British Residency occupies a central place in the history of the Indian Rebellion of 1857. During the Siege of Lucknow, the Residency became the site of prolonged conflict, destruction, and loss of life. Buildings were heavily damaged by artillery fire, and the landscape itself became marked by trenches, debris, and makeshift defenses.

The aftermath of the revolt left the Residency in ruins, and it was never fully reconstructed. Instead, the site was preserved as a memorial to the events of 1857. These ruins have since become carriers of collective memory, embodying narratives of colonial conflict, resistance, suffering, and transformation.

For contemporary visitors, the Residency functions as a silent witness to history. The damaged walls, collapsed roofs, and scarred surfaces evoke emotional responses that are not mediated through text or exhibits alone but through direct spatial encounter.

The British Residency after the Revolt of 1857, revealing architectural ruin as a lasting marker of conflict, memory, and historical rupture.

Figure 33: British Residency, Lucknow — After the Revolt of 1857

5.2.3 Architectural and Landscape Characteristics

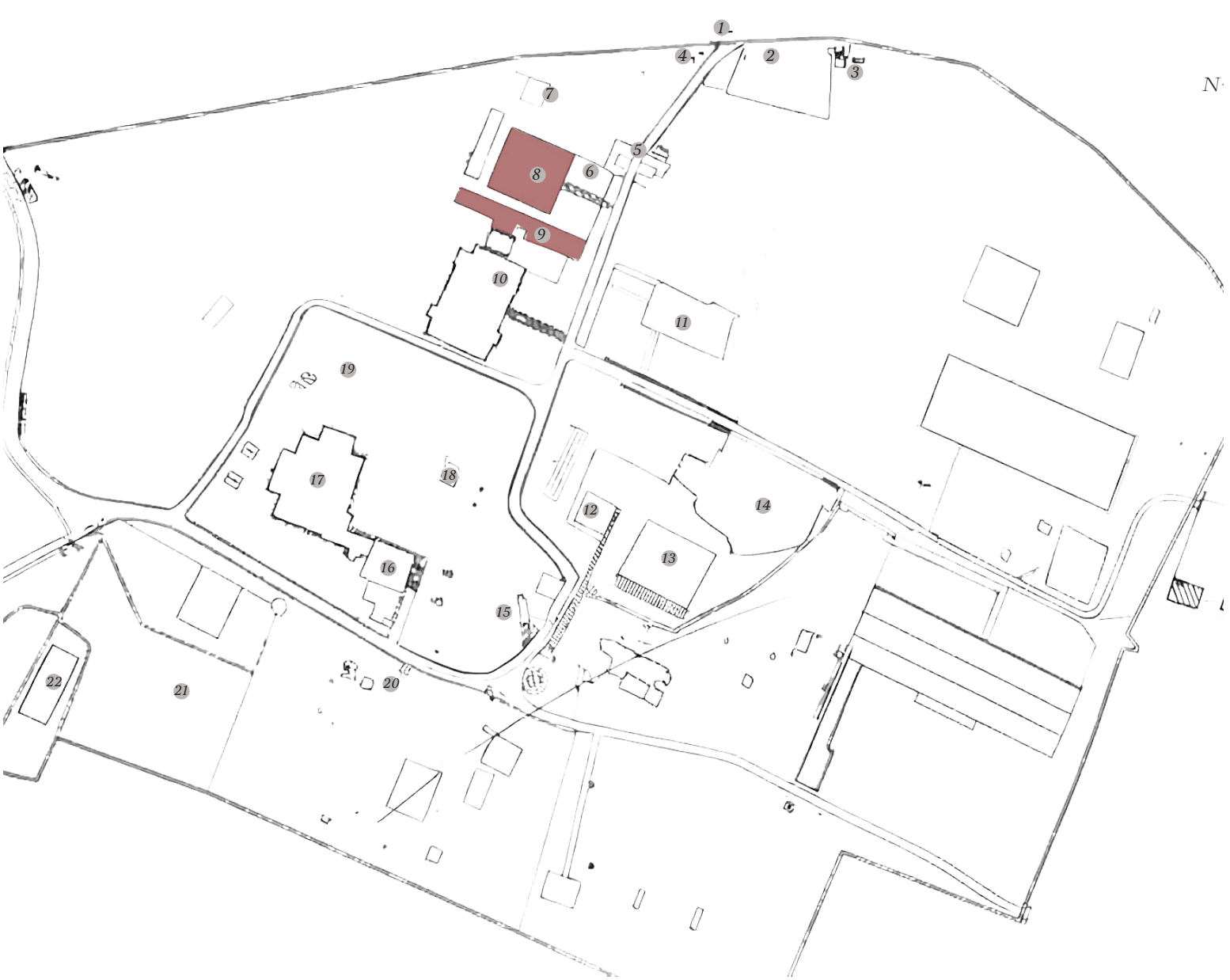
The Residency complex is characterized by a dispersed arrangement of buildings set within an expansive landscaped terrain. Structures such as the Residency Building, Baillie Guard Gate, Banqueting Hall, and various residential quarters are interspersed with open lawns, pathways, and remnants of defensive infrastructure.

Architecturally, the ruins exhibit thick masonry walls, arched openings, colonnades, and symmetrical facades typical of colonial-era construction. Over time, vegetation has encroached upon built forms, creating a layered relationship between architecture and landscape. Trees, grass, and climbers soften the rigidity of masonry, producing an atmosphere of quiet decay and introspection.

This interweaving of built and natural elements creates a spatial rhythm of enclosure and openness, light and shadow, solidity and erosion—qualities that are inherently experiential and emotionally resonant.

Ruins set within a layered landscape, where architecture, nature, and time merge to produce a space of stillness and introspection.

Figure 34: Landscape and Ruins of the British Residency, Lucknow



1. Main gate
2. Parking
3. Toilet
4. Booking counter
5. Baillie Guard Gate
6. Aitken's Font
7. Memorial of the Native Officers & Sepoys
8,.Memorial of the Devoted Native Officers & Sepoys
9. Treasury
10. Banquet Hall
11. Dr. Fayrer's House
12. Bungalow
13. Begum Koti
14. Mosque and Maqbara
15. Well
16. 1857 Memorial Museum
17. Residency (Main Building)
18. Memorial of Sir Henry Lawrence
19. Monument of Sir J. Inglis
20. Memorial of Non-Commissioned Officers
21. Cemetery
22. St. Martin's Church

Figure 35: Site Plan of British Residency, Lucknow

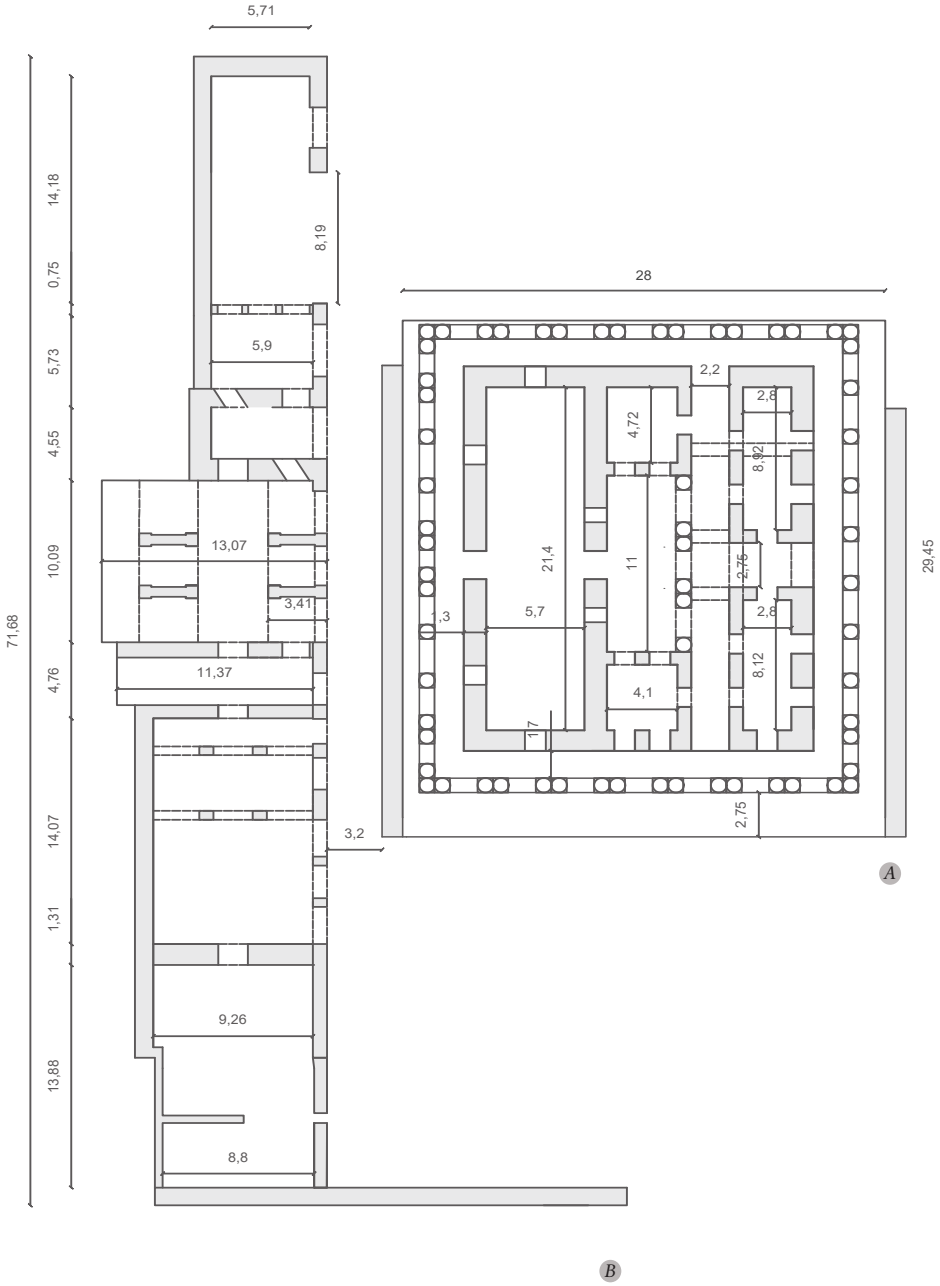
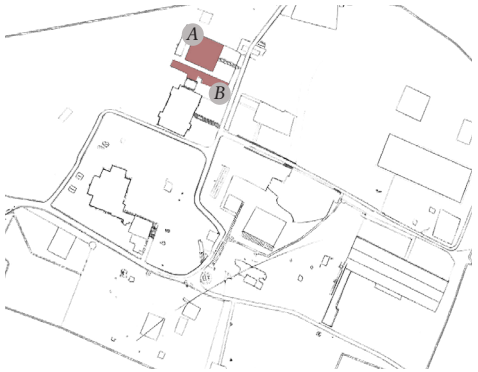


Figure 36: A) Layout of memorial of the devoted native officers & sepoys and B) treasury



5.3 Selected Spaces for Intervention

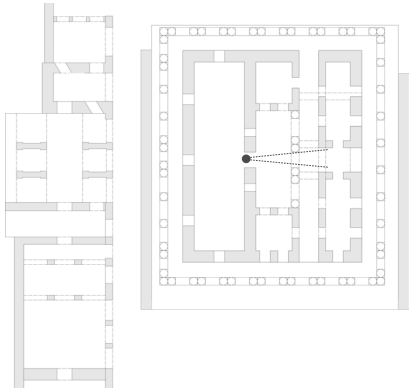
Based on spatial, historical, and emotional analysis, two structures within the Residency are identified for interior intervention. These spaces are selected for their strong material presence, experiential potential, and capacity to support an emotionally driven spatial narrative while respecting archaeological integrity.

5.3.1 Memorial of the Native Officers & Sepoys

The Memorial of the Native Officers and Sepoys possesses a strong sense of enclosure, rhythmic colonnades, and controlled light. Its spatial proportions encourage slow movement, pause, and reflection, making it well suited for immersive emotional experience related to memory, loss, and resilience.

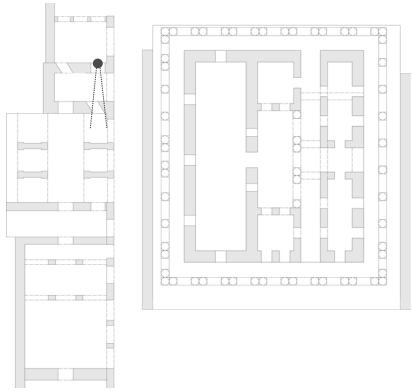
5.3.2 Treasury

The Treasury, in contrast, is linear and elongated, producing a more directional spatial condition. Its repetitive structural rhythm and narrow proportions guide movement and sequencing, supporting gradual emotional unfolding. The raw materiality and partial ruin intensify bodily awareness without overpowering the space.



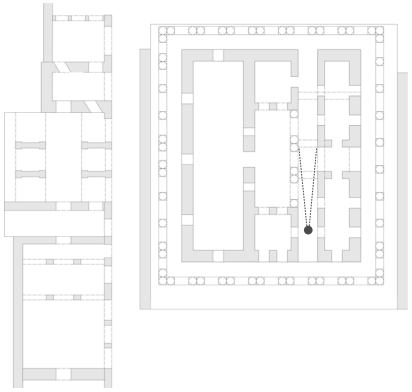
The ruined interior exposes layered masonry, fractured arches, and deep shadows. These conditions allow the violence and rupture of the past to remain legible through space rather than representation.

Figure 37: Interior of Memorial of Native Officers and Sepoys



The linear sequence of arches and columns guides movement through a restrained interior. Weathered surfaces and layered thresholds allow memory to be encountered through material presence and spatial rhythm.

Figure 38: Interior of Treasury



5.4 Present Condition

The existing structures of the British Residency remain largely stable despite their ruined condition. Primary load-bearing masonry walls continue to define enclosed spatial volumes, while collapsed roofs and missing elements introduce openness and light.

These fragmentations disrupt conventional circulation, creating spatial discontinuities that slow movement and heighten awareness. Rather than being treated as deficiencies, these conditions offer opportunities for interior reinterpretation—introducing pauses, transitions, and moments of sensory intensity.

The structural endurance of the masonry allows new interior interventions to remain minimal and reversible. Existing walls and enclosures continue to carry emotional and spatial presence, forming the foundation for experiential design.

The existing corridor reveals intact masonry walls and fragmented enclosures, highlighting both structural endurance and material decay. This condition demonstrates how the ruins retain stability while offering spatial discontinuities that can be reinterpreted through adaptive reuse.

Figure 39: Structural Remains of Memorial

5.4.1 Structural Analysis

Space 1

1.1 Structural System

The building is based on a load-bearing masonry system, typical of pre-industrial construction. Thick brick masonry walls and freestanding brick piers act as the primary structural elements, transferring loads vertically to the ground. The absence of reinforced concrete or steel framing indicates a gravity-driven structural behavior relying on mass and compression.

1.2 Walls and Arches

Arched openings play a key structural role by redistributing compressive forces and minimizing tensile stress within the masonry. The arches are formed using bricks laid in radial courses, functioning primarily in compression with mortar acting as a binding material.

1.3 Columns / Piers

The brick piers appear to be remnants of a colonnaded system, likely supporting horizontal timber or masonry members that are now missing. Their thick proportions and limited height provide sufficient compressive strength and stability without reinforcement.

1.4 Foundation System (Inferred)

The structure likely rests on shallow brick or stone strip foundations, designed to distribute the heavy masonry loads evenly into the ground.

1.5 Current Structural Condition

The building exists in a state of partial ruin, with missing roof and beam elements resulting in reduced lateral stability. However, the remaining masonry walls continue to stand due to their thickness and compressive structural logic.

1. Thick brick masonry walls in good structural condition

2. Arched openings distributing compressive forces

3. Brick piers supporting vertical loads

4. Remnants of horizontal beam structures

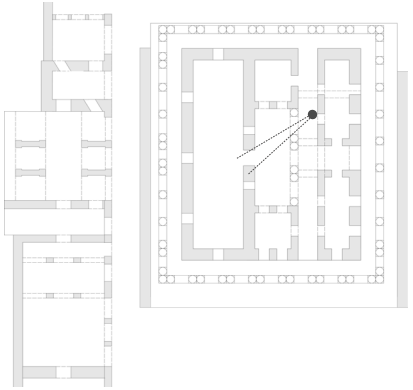


Figure 40: Structural Remains of Memorial (Annotated)

5.4.2 Structural Analysis

Space 2

1.1 Structural System

The structure follows a load-bearing masonry system, characteristic of pre-industrial architecture. Thick brick masonry walls act as the primary load-bearing elements, forming enclosed spatial volumes and transferring loads vertically to the ground.

1.2 Walls and Arches

A sequence of arched openings defines both the spatial and structural logic of the building. These arches redistribute compressive forces efficiently along the masonry walls, reducing tensile stresses within the structure. The arches are constructed using bricks laid in radial courses, allowing them to function almost entirely in compression, with mortar serving as a binding and leveling material.

1.3 Columns / Piers

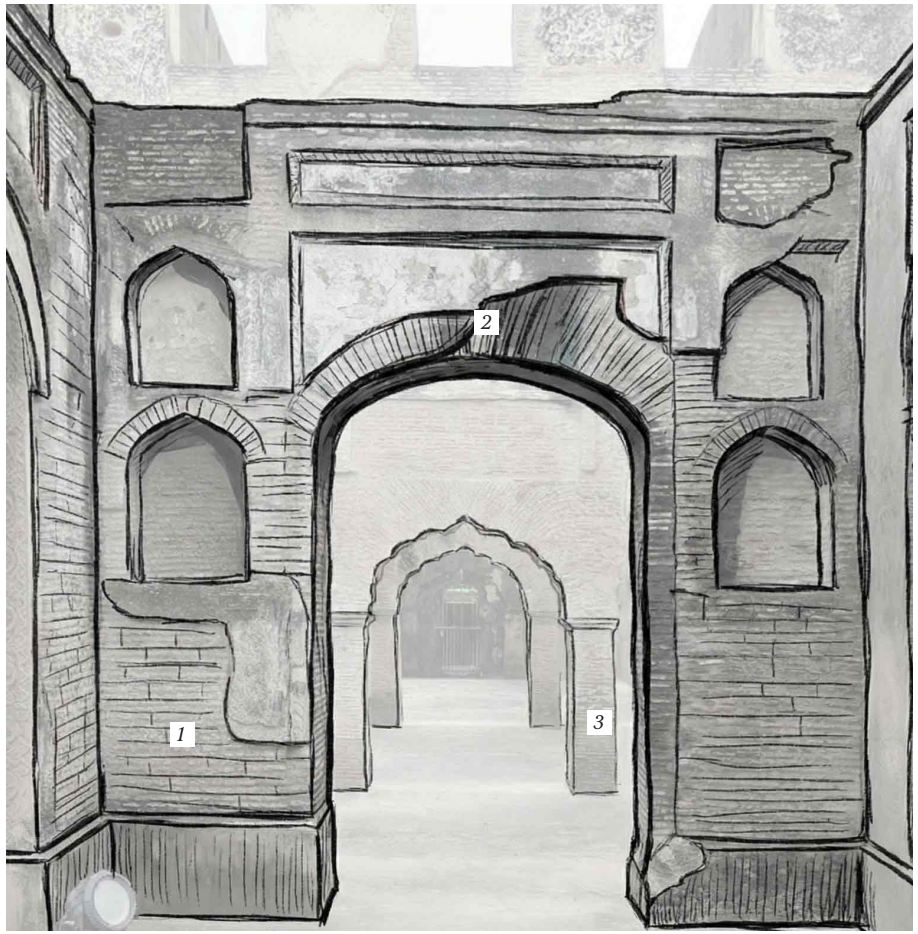
The vertical supports appear as thick masonry piers integrated into the walls, rather than freestanding columns. These piers articulate the rhythm of the interior spaces and likely supported vaulted or roofed elements that are now missing. Their robust proportions provide high compressive capacity and inherent stability without reinforcement.

1.4 Foundation System (Inferred)

The building likely rests on shallow brick or stone strip foundations, typical of heavy masonry structures. These foundations would have been designed to distribute the substantial load of the walls and arches evenly into the ground.

1.5 Current Structural Condition

The structure exists in a state of partial ruin, with the roof and upper floor elements largely missing, resulting in reduced lateral stability. Despite this, the masonry walls and arches remain standing due to their thickness, continuity, and compressive structural logic.



1. Thick brick masonry walls in good structural condition

2. Arched openings distributing compressive forces

3. Brick piers supporting vertical loads

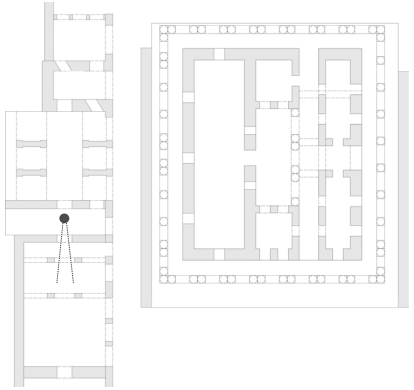
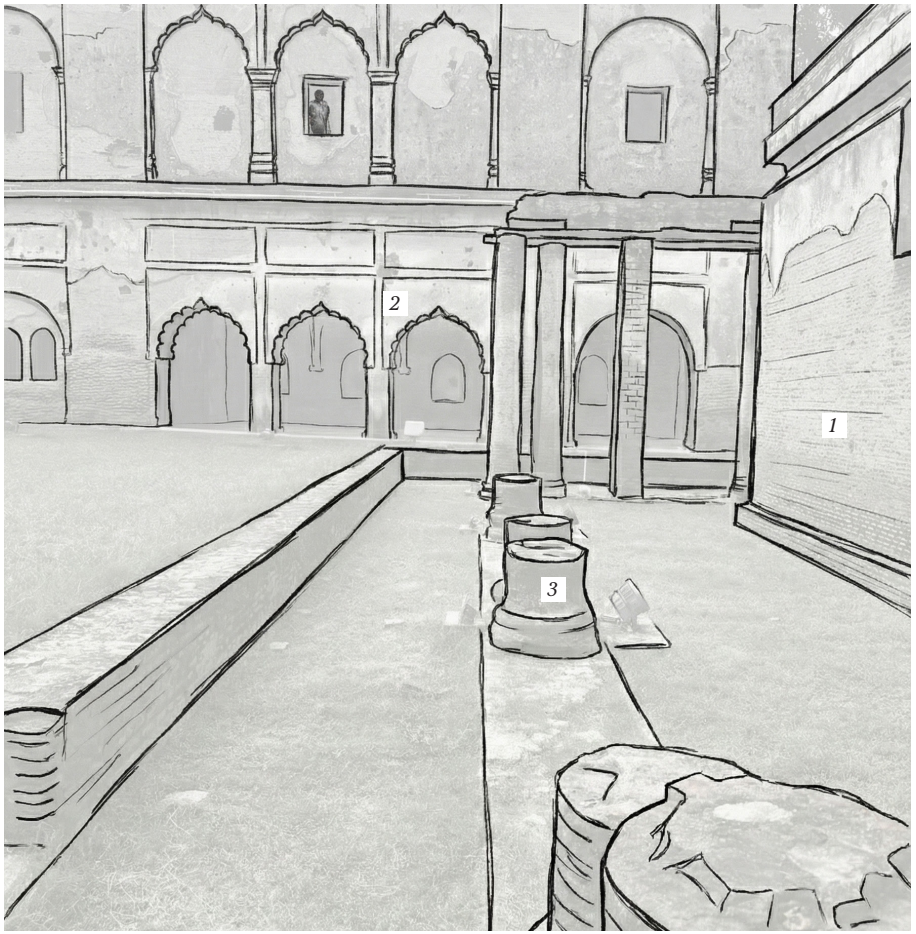


Figure 41: Structural Remains of Treasury



1. Thick brick masonry walls forming the primary load-bearing structure

2. Series of arched openings redistributing compressive forces and defining spatial rhythm

3. Brick piers and column remnants supporting vertical loads and indicating former structural bays

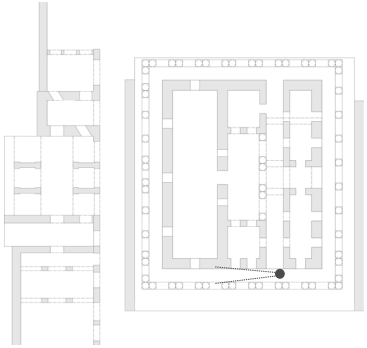


Figure 42: Structural Remains of Treasury

1. Thick brick masonry walls forming the primary load-bearing structure

2. Arched openings transferring loads through compression and defining the interior rhythm

3. Brick piers supporting vertical loads and marking structural bays

4. Remnants of upper-level walls and beam bands indicating loss of roof and floor structures

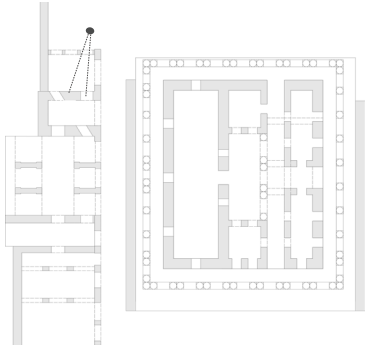


Figure 43: Structural Remains of Treasury

5.4.3 Materiality, Decay, and Ruins

The material palette of the Residency is dominated by brick masonry, lime plaster, stone detailing, and timber elements, many of which show clear signs of weathering and decay. Surface erosion, cracks, missing elements, and exposed construction layers reveal the passage of time.

Rather than being perceived as defects, these material conditions contribute significantly to the site's emotional atmosphere. Texture, roughness, and imperfection invite tactile engagement and close observation. The ruins communicate fragility, endurance, and transformation through material presence alone.

In the context of this thesis, such material authenticity is considered a critical asset rather than a limitation.

The image documents the exposed brick masonry of the British Residency, revealing layers of erosion, surface loss, and structural weathering over time.

Figure 44: Material Traces of Time

Existing Museum at the British Residency

5.4.4 Current Use as an Archaeological Site

At present, the British Residency functions primarily as a protected archaeological site, with visitor movement regulated through predefined paths and informational signage. The emphasis remains on preservation rather than spatial engagement, positioning visitors as observers within a controlled landscape.

An existing museum operates within the ruins to present historical information related to the events of 1857. However, the interior design relies heavily on static displays, text panels, and pictorial representation. The architectural space itself remains largely inactive, offering little sensory variation or emotional engagement.

As a result, the visitor experience is predominantly cognitive. While historical facts are communicated, the emotional and spatial potential of the ruins remains underutilized. The interior does not invite pause, reflection, or bodily awareness, limiting the capacity of the site to engage visitors experientially.

This condition highlights the opportunity to reimagine the Residency as an interior environment where emotion is generated through space itself rather than conveyed through information alone.

This image shows the present museum housed within the ruins of the British Residency, Lucknow, where the historic structure is preserved but minimally activated. The architecture remains largely static, with interpretation relying on signage and display panels rather than spatial or sensory engagement.

Figure 45: Existing Museum at the British Residency

This interior relies primarily on textual narration and visual representation to communicate history. Paintings and explanatory panels dominate the space, while the architectural enclosure remains passive and emotionally neutral.

Figure 46: Interior of the Existing Museum

This image highlights the reliance on pictorial representation and written narration to communicate history. Paintings and explanatory panels dominate the interior, placing emphasis on textual understanding while the architectural space itself remains largely inactive in shaping emotional experience.

Figure 47: Interior of the Existing Museum

5.5 Site Justification

5.5.1 Emotional Significance

The emotional significance of the Residency emerges through silence, absence, and material decay. The ruins do not explain history explicitly; instead, they allow visitors to sense its weight through atmosphere and spatial presence. Broken walls, scarred surfaces, and incomplete volumes evoke feelings of loss and reflection without relying on narrative devices.

These conditions make the site particularly suitable for an interior intervention where emotion is experienced through bodily perception. The space naturally slows movement, encourages pause, and heightens awareness—qualities essential for emotional engagement.

5.5.2 The Residency as a Spiritual and Reflective Landscape

Beyond its historical importance, the Residency functions as a contemplative landscape. The expansive lawns, mature trees, and dispersed ruins create moments of openness that contrast with enclosed, shadowed interiors. This rhythm of release and compression generates a calm, almost meditative atmosphere.

Movement through the site is unhurried and deliberate. Visitors are encouraged to wander, stop, and reflect. This spatial character supports the thesis objective of creating an interior journey where emotional awareness unfolds gradually rather than being imposed.

5.5.3 Why the Site Fits the Museum of Emotions

The British Residency offers a rare convergence of history, architecture, and landscape that aligns closely with the conceptual framework of the Museum of Emotions. Its layered past provides emotional depth, while its ruined condition allows space to function as an experiential medium rather than a backdrop for display.

Adaptive reuse within this context enables interior design to operate through restraint, contrast, and selective intervention. Instead of narrating history through objects or text, the project can allow emotion to emerge through spatial sequencing, material presence, and sensory engagement.

This image illustrates the violence and chaos of the 1857 Revolt, capturing the moment of confrontation between the East India Company forces and Indian rebels. The scene reflects rupture, conflict, and collective trauma

Figure 48: Depiction of the 1857 Revolt

5.6 Opportunities and Constraints

5.6.1 Spatial Opportunities

The dispersed layout of the Residency allows for a non-linear spatial narrative, supporting an experiential sequence rather than a fixed route. Open spaces enable moments of release, while enclosed ruins offer spaces of compression and introspection.

This spatial diversity aligns well with the emotional zoning strategy proposed in the thesis.

5.6.2 Conservation Limitations

As a protected heritage site, the Residency is subject to strict conservation regulations. Interventions must be reversible, minimal, and respectful of existing fabric. Structural reinforcement, material addition, and new construction must be carefully controlled.

These limitations demand a design approach that prioritizes subtlety and precision rather than overt architectural expression.

5.6.3 User Movement Patterns

Existing visitor movement is primarily linear and guided, focused on observation rather than engagement. The proposed intervention seeks to reinterpret movement as an emotional journey, encouraging exploration, pause, and bodily awareness while maintaining clear boundaries to protect fragile structures.

Understanding existing movement patterns allows the design to introduce new experiential layers without compromising site integrity.

5.7 Design Reflection from Site Analysis

Engaging with the British Residency revealed that emotion already exists within the site, independent of intervention. The silence, broken enclosures, and exposed material conditions actively shape bodily awareness. This confirmed that the design should not attempt to introduce emotion, but rather modulate and reveal what is already present. The site demands restraint, sequencing, and sensitivity rather than expressive form-making. These observations directly inform the spatial strategies adopted in the design phase.

This image shows contemporary interpretive projections over the ruined façade of the Residency, merging historical imagery of the 1857 Revolt with the present condition of the site.

Figure 49: Layered Memory and Interpretation

FROM RESEARCH TO SPATIAL STRATEGY

FIGURE 50

WHAT KIND OF SPATIAL DECISIONS WILL APPEAR, AND WHY

6.1 Design Position

The design approach of this thesis emerges directly from the understanding that emotion is experienced through space rather than representation. Instead of treating the British Residency as a container for exhibitions, the project positions interior space itself as the primary medium of emotional engagement.

The design does not aim to restore, reconstruct, or complete the existing ruins. Instead, it works with their incompleteness, material presence, and silence. Spatial decisions are guided by how the body moves, pauses, and senses changes in enclosure, light, and atmosphere

Rather than introducing fixed exhibition elements, the intervention focuses on spatial conditions—compression, openness, darkness, silence, and stillness. These conditions allow emotion to be felt through physical presence rather than explained through text or objects.

6.2 Spatial Strategy: Designing Through Movement

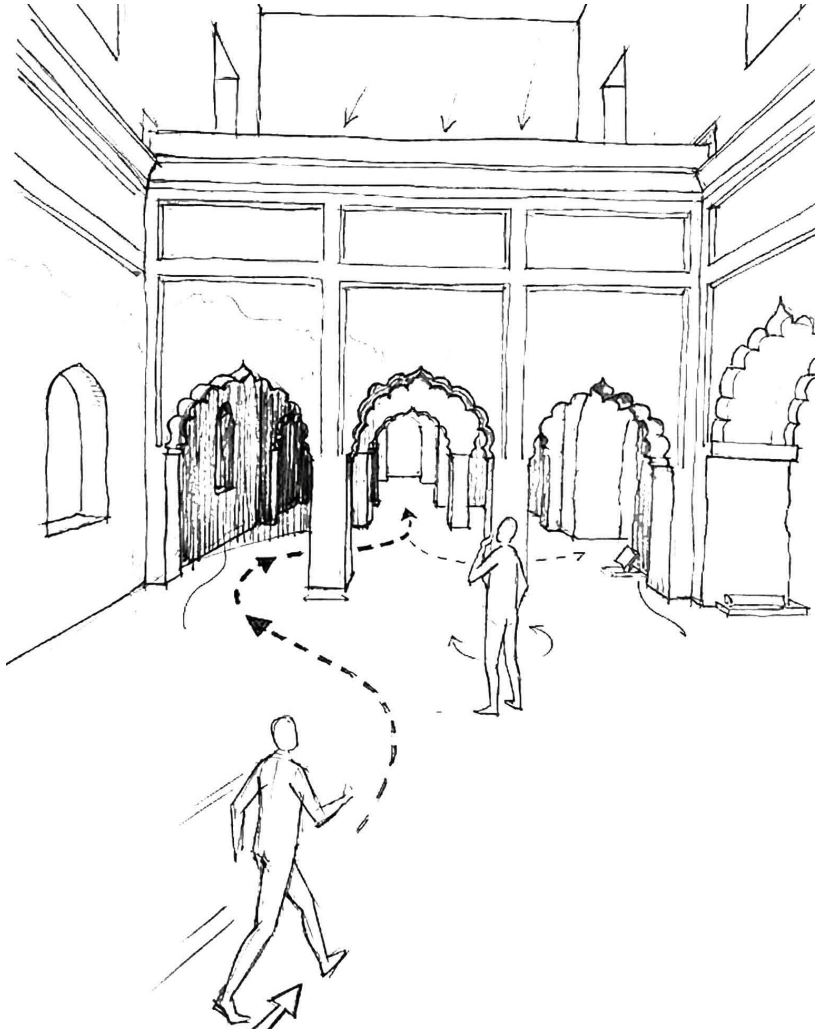
Movement forms the foundation of the spatial strategy. The interior is designed as a sequence of experiences rather than a collection of rooms. As visitors move through the space, emotional awareness emerges through changes in direction, enclosure, and sensory intensity.

Paths are intentionally indirect and non-linear. Movement slows down through compression and resistance, and releases through moments of openness and light. This sequencing encourages bodily engagement and prevents quick visual consumption of space.

6.3 Role of Thresholds and Transitions

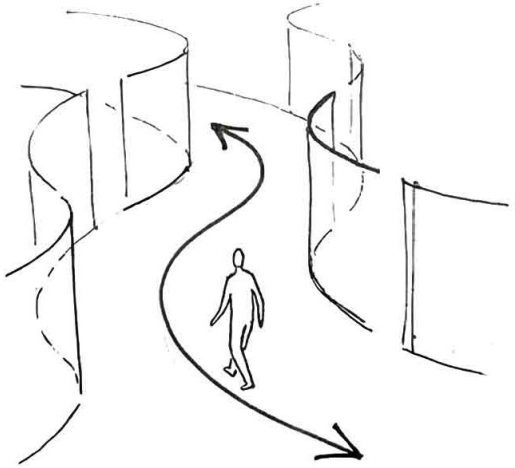
Thresholds play a critical role in shaping emotional transitions. Rather than acting as simple entrances or exits, thresholds are designed as moments of pause, adjustment, and recalibration.

Changes in floor level, ceiling height, light intensity, and material texture signal shifts between emotional conditions. These transitions prepare the body for what comes next, allowing awareness to emerge gradually.

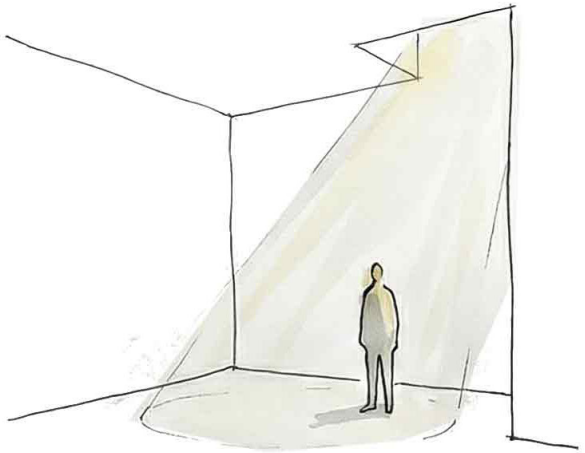


Movement is intentionally non-linear, shifting from a fast entry to slower, attentive circulation.

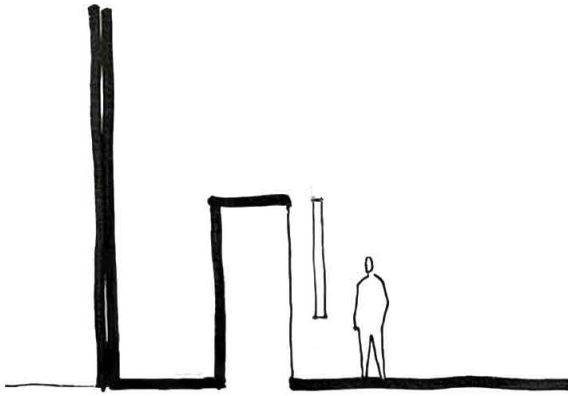
Figure 51: Spatial Sequencing Through Movement



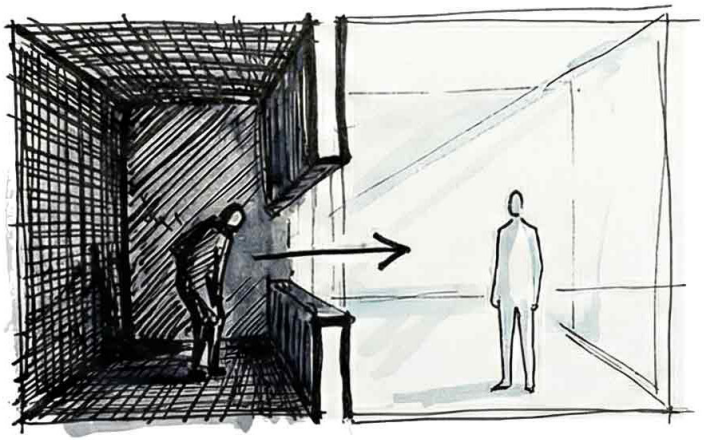
Movement Before Form



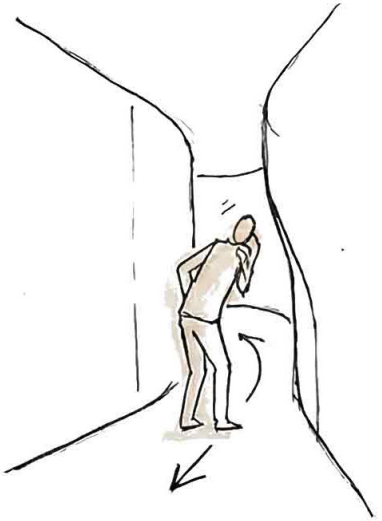
Experience Before Explanation



Restraint Over Expression



Contrast as Awareness



Body as Interpreter

The design approach is guided by a set of principles derived from research and site observation

Figure 52: Design Principles Derived from Research

6.4 Emotional Zoning Framework

The spatial narrative is structured through an emotional zoning framework derived from contrast theory. Rather than assigning conventional functions, the interior is divided into zones defined by emotional and sensory conditions.

Each zone is characterized by distinct spatial qualities such as enclosure, light, materiality, and acoustics. These zones do not operate independently; they are experienced sequentially, allowing emotion to be understood through comparison and transition.

The zoning framework ensures that emotional experience is not isolated within a single space, but develops progressively as visitors move through the interior.

6.6 Experiential Zoning: Spatial Sequence of Emotional States

The first spatial zone is conceived as an experiential sequence where emotion is encountered through bodily movement rather than information. Entry into this zone occurs through the fragmented remains of broken columns, marking an immediate departure from neutrality. This moment of entry slows the body and heightens awareness, preparing the visitor for an emotionally charged spatial journey.

The initial interior condition embodies Himsa, expressed through compression, resistance, and spatial tension. Narrow passages, reduced ceiling heights, sharp edges, and controlled light create a sense of discomfort and alertness. Movement here is deliberate and restrained, encouraging the body to register spatial pressure before understanding its cause.

This condition gradually transitions into a liminal zone, where emotional intensity begins to soften. Spatial ambiguity, filtered light, and partial openness allow the body to recalibrate. The architecture does not resolve immediately, but suspends the visitor between tension and release.

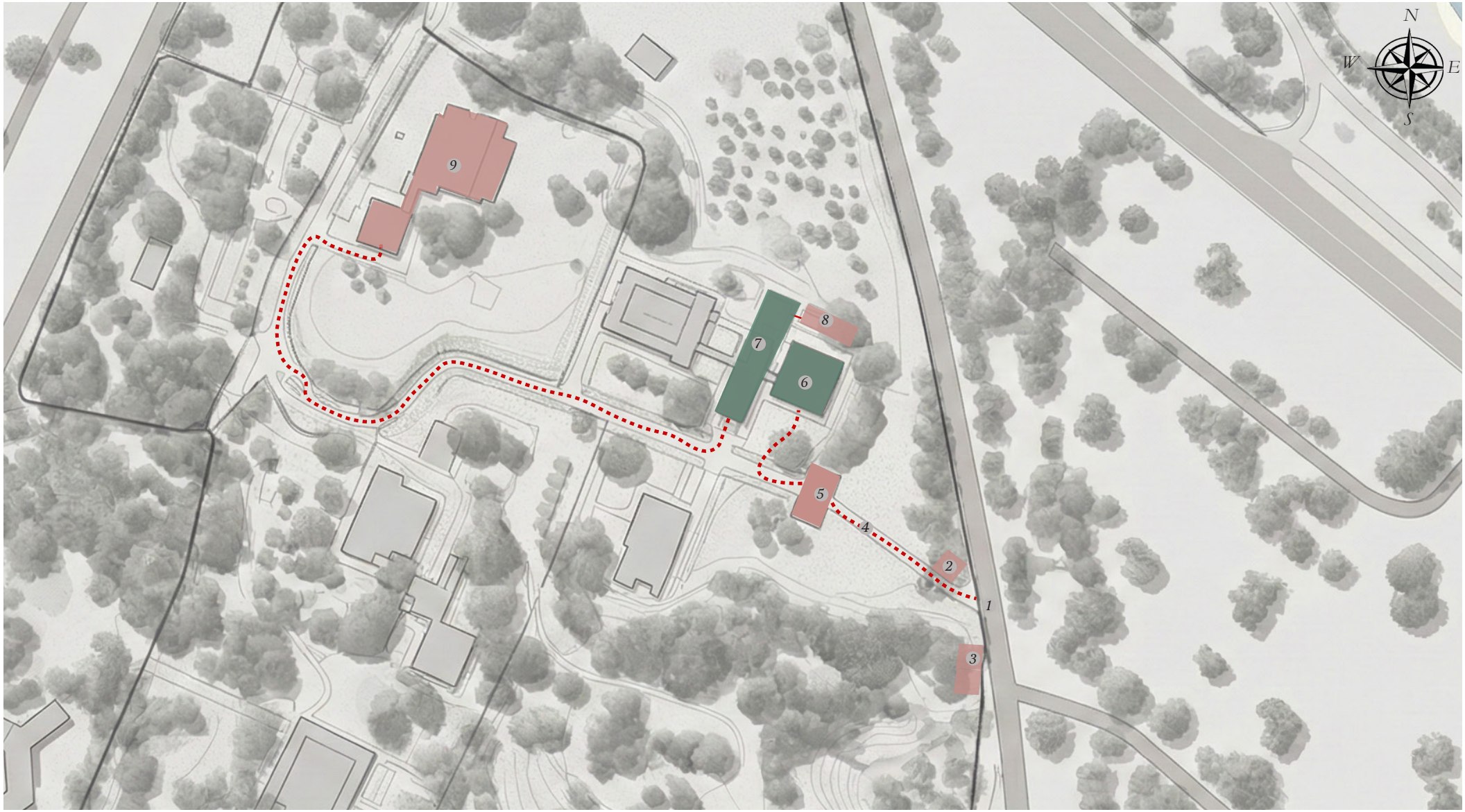
The sequence culminates in Ahimsa, characterized by openness, lightness, and spatial relief. Here, enclosure loosens, light becomes more diffused, and movement slows naturally. The final reflective zone is intentionally restrained and quiet, offering a space for emotional awareness to settle without interpretation or narration. This experiential sequence prioritizes feeling before knowing, allowing emotion to emerge through space itself.

6.5 Interpretive Zoning: Spaces for Understanding and Context

Parallel to the experiential sequence, a second spatial zone is introduced to support understanding and historical awareness. This zone is conceived as an interpretive environment where visitors can engage with the events of the site through spatially restrained exhibition spaces.

This interpretive sequence functions as a moment of grounding. After experiencing emotion through space, visitors are given the opportunity to contextualize what they have felt. By separating experiential and interpretive zones, the design avoids over-explanation while still acknowledging the importance of historical understanding.

Together, these two spatial conditions, experiential and interpretive, form a balanced interior narrative. Emotion is not replaced by information, nor is history reduced to abstraction. Instead, feeling and understanding coexist as parallel experiences, allowing visitors to engage with the site both bodily and intellectually.



1. *Main road*
2. *Booking counter*
3. *Toilet*
4. *Pathway*
5. *Baillie guard gate*
6. *Memorial of the native officers & sepoys*
7. *Treasury*
8. *Book store*
9. *1857 Memorial museum*

Figure 53: Proposed Site Plan Of British Residency, Lucknow

6.6 Relationship Between Experiential and Interpretive Zones

The experiential and interpretive zones are conceived as complementary spatial systems rather than opposing ones. While each serves a distinct purpose, their relationship is carefully calibrated to ensure continuity within the overall narrative of the site. The design avoids a rigid separation; instead, it allows moments of overlap, proximity, and transition where emotional experience and understanding subtly inform one another.

Experiential zones are prioritized along the primary movement sequence, guiding visitors through emotional states. Interpretive zones are positioned as secondary yet accessible paths, allowing visitors to step aside from the emotional sequence when they seek contextual clarity. This spatial arrangement respects individual agency, enabling visitors to choose when to engage cognitively without disrupting the embodied journey.

Transitions between these zones are intentionally understated. Rather than abrupt shifts, changes are mediated through spatial cues.

By maintaining this balance, the design ensures that emotion is not diminished by explanation, nor is history reduced to abstraction. Instead, emotional experience precedes interpretation, allowing understanding to emerge as a reflective response rather than a prerequisite. This relationship reinforces the thesis intent: that interior space can engage both body and mind, while allowing each to operate at its own pace.

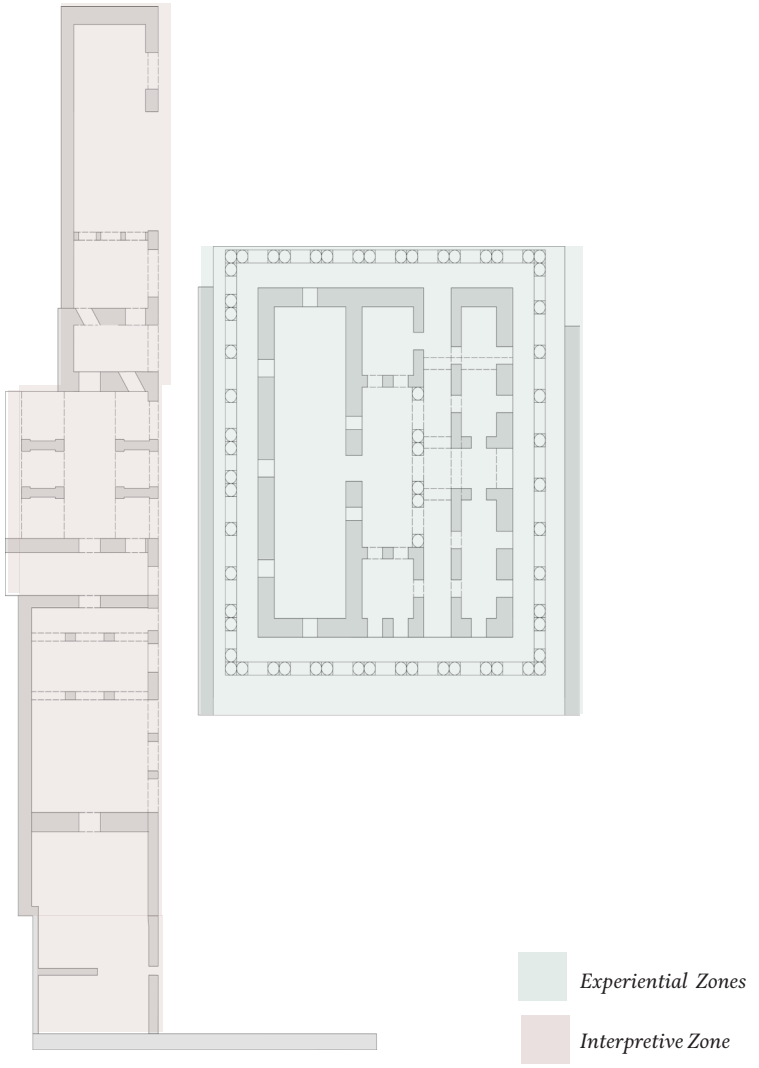


Figure 54:Spatial Zoning of Experiential and Interpretive Zones

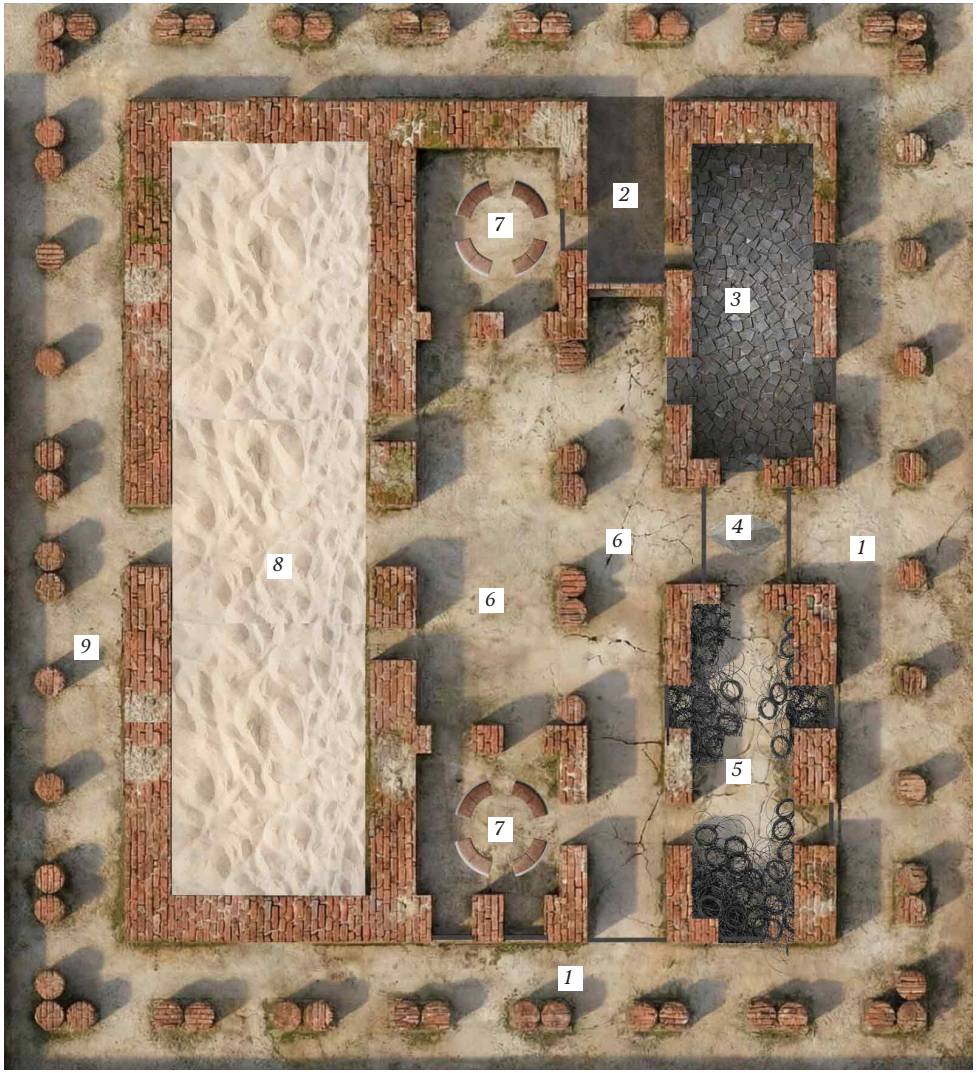
WHERE ARCHITECTURE IS FELT BEFORE IT IS UNDERSTOOD.

FIGURE 55

A SPATIAL SEQUENCE THAT ENGAGES THE BODY FIRST—ALLOWING EMOTION TO EMERGE THROUGH SCALE, MATERIAL, LIGHT, AND MOVEMENT.

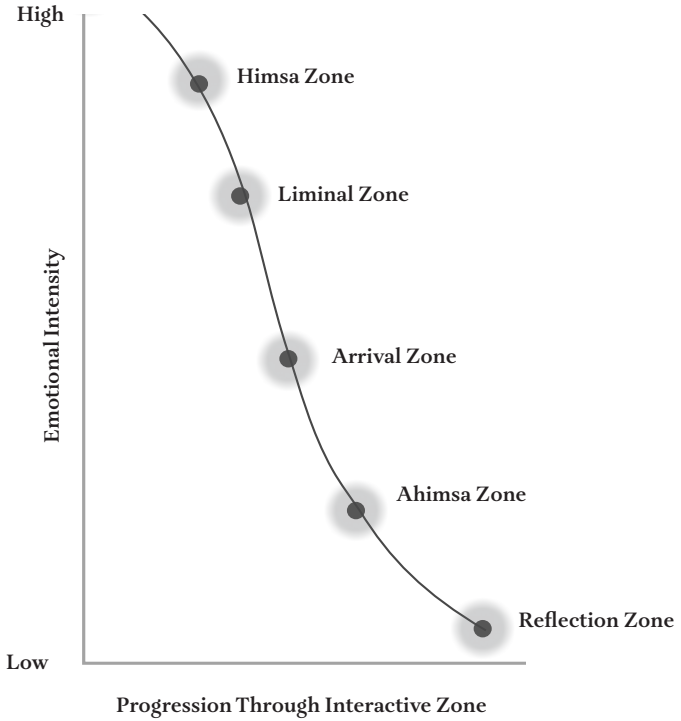
7.0 Experiential Zone

This chapter frames the museum as a bodily journey, where space does not explain emotion, it produces it. Movement slows through compression, resistance, and sensory intensity, allowing the visitor to register pressure, discomfort, and pause through scale, light, and material presence. The sequence is calibrated through thresholds and transitions, so feeling accumulates gradually, and awareness forms through contrast rather than narration.



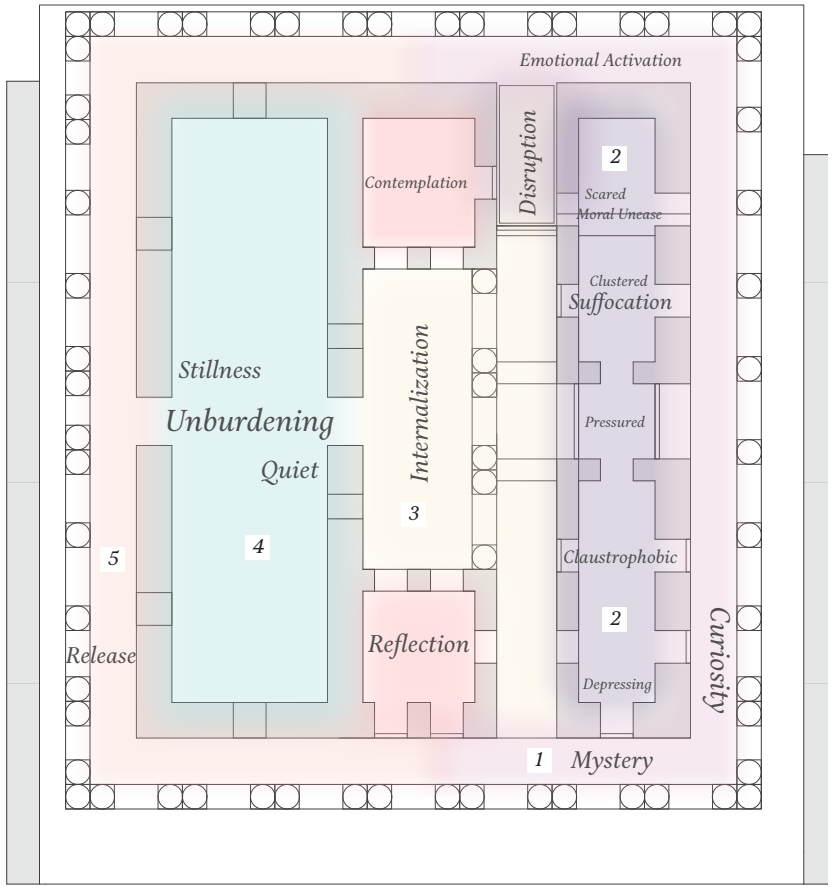
1. Arrival Threshold
2. Himsa Chamber :Arrival
3. Himsa Chamber :Compression Passage
4. Himsa Chamber :Zone of Suspension
5. Himsa Chamber :Terminal Chamber
6. Liminal Passage
7. Breathing Room
8. Ahimsa Court
9. Reflection Space

Figure 56: Textured Plan of the Experiential Zone



A graphic mapping of how each sense is intentionally modulated to construct emotional understanding within the space.

Figure 57: Emotion Mapping



1. **Arrival Zone**
2. **Himsa Zone**
3. **Liminal Zone**
4. **Ahimsa Zone**
5. **Reflection Zone**

Figure 58: Emotion Zoning

7.1 Walking into Awareness

The arrival sequence is conceived as a solitary and deliberate movement through fragments. The visitor enters alone, guided not by signage or instruction, but by the alignment of walls, columns, and the narrowing of space. The existing brick façade on one side and the reconstructed skeletal columns on the other create a linear corridor that immediately slows the body and focuses attention forward.

This space does not announce itself as a museum. Instead, it feels transitional, caught between ruin and intervention, enclosure and openness. The mesh-like columns echo the presence of what once stood here, without attempting reconstruction. Their transparency allows light and landscape to filter through, while their vertical repetition reinforces a sense of rhythm and inevitability. The visitor is aware of structure, yet never enclosed by it.

Movement through the arrival zone is uninterrupted and quiet. The ground remains largely unchanged, retaining its uneven texture and traces of grass, requiring careful footing and reinforcing bodily awareness. The absence of signage, display, or information ensures that the visitor remains attentive to spatial cues rather than intellectual content. The act of walking becomes intentional; pace slows naturally, posture adjusts, and perception sharpens.

This arrival functions as an emotional calibration. It prepares the visitor without explaining what is to come. The body senses that it is entering a different condition, one that demands presence rather than observation. By the time the visitor reaches the threshold into the Himsa zone, they have already detached. The arrival does not introduce emotion; it clears space for emotion to emerge.

The alignment of walls and columns guides a solitary movement, preparing the body through deceleration rather than instruction.

Figure 59: Arrival as Threshold

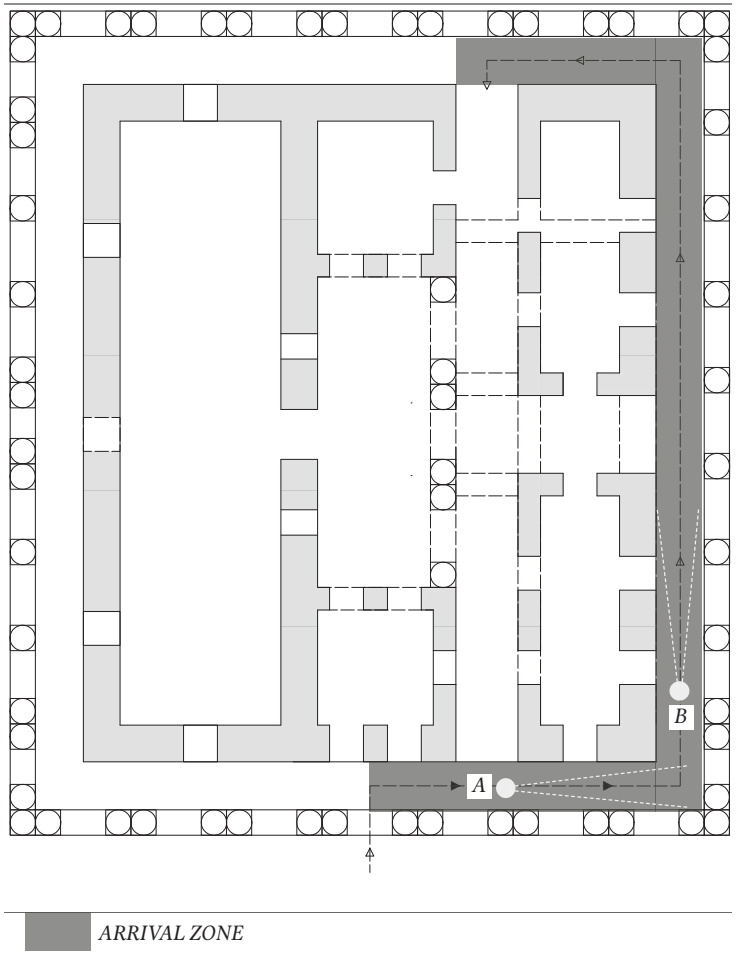


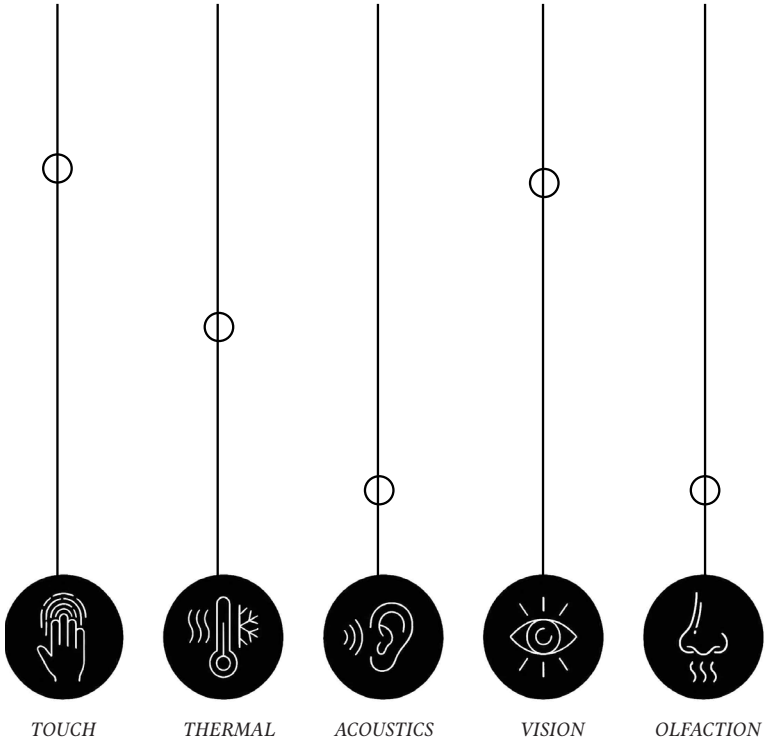
Figure 60: Plan of Arrival Zone

The visitor moves between existing brick walls and skeletal columns, where enclosure and alignment subtly shift the body from entry into attentive presence.

Figure 61: Arrival Entrance (Person Standing at Point A)

The narrow walkway between existing brick walls and skeletal columns slows movement, heightening sensory awareness through light, texture, and enclosure as the visitor advances deeper into the experiential zone.

Figure 62: Arrival Walkway (Person Standing at Point B)



Multiple sensory inputs operate simultaneously to shift perception from entry to experience.

Figure 63: Sensory Engagement in the Arrival Zone

7.2 Himsa :Experiencing Himsa Through the Body

As the visitor moves through this space, the body responds before the mind has time to interpret. Walking slows, steps become deliberate, and sound emerges with every movement, making presence impossible to ignore. The ground and enclosure demand attention, while suspended elements above and around create a constant psychological pressure, even without physical contact. Movement feels exposed and effortful. The space does not describe violence through form or narrative; it allows the visitor to sense how violence lingers in the body—through discomfort, tension, and the gradual loss of ease, silence, and escape.

The body feels surrounded, as if the space is closing in from all sides. Movement becomes internalized, and the pressure of the environment lingers even in stillness.

Figure 64: Himsa Zone – Mental State of Chaos

7.2 Himsa: Spatial Condition of Pressure

Himsa in this project is not explained for visitors or illustrated; it is encountered through movement. The architecture does not represent violence—it creates a condition where the body experiences pressure, resistance, and loss of ease. What begins as subtle hesitation gradually becomes sustained discomfort, unfolding as a continuous spatial sequence.

Entry into the Himsa zone is marked by resistance. Hanging elements descend into the path of movement, removing clear routes and forcing the visitor to slow down. Progress requires attention and physical negotiation. The body responds instinctively—posture tightens, breath becomes conscious, and movement turns cautious. There is no instruction here, only the sensation of being held back by space.

As the visitor moves further, the discomfort intensifies. The ground becomes unstable, producing sound with every step. Walking can no longer be quiet. Above, suspended elements fill the air, pressing psychologically without contact. The space feels heavy, not because it is enclosed, but because it occupies the body's awareness from all sides.

Between chambers, compression increases through narrowed proportions and suspended mass. This in-between zone does not offer relief; it holds tension, reinforcing violence as a continuous state rather than a moment.

The final chamber of Himsa shifts from compression to accumulation. Dense layers of suspended material blur boundaries and slow movement further. Here, violence is no longer confrontational—it lingers. The space holds the visitor in a condition of endurance, where clarity dissolves and release is delayed.

Himsa is not resolved within these spaces. It is carried forward through the body, shaping how the visitor enters the next zone.

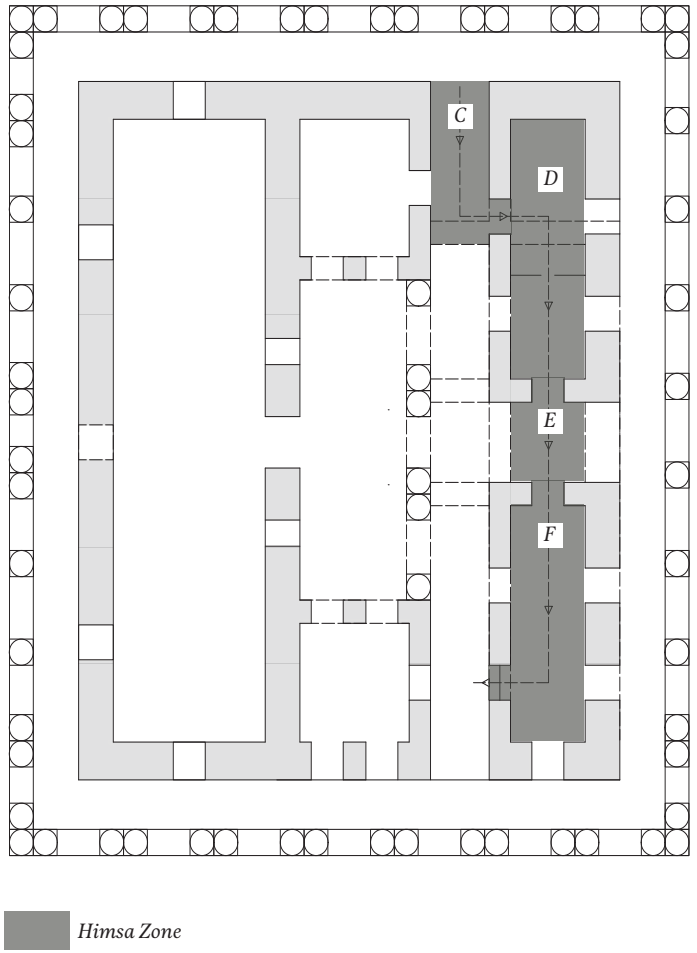
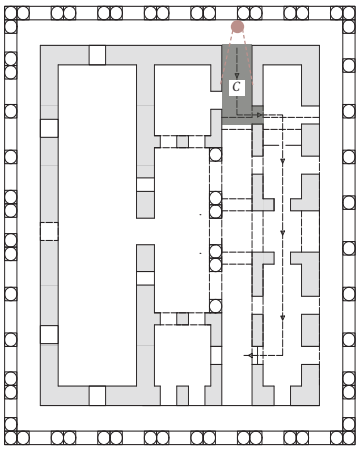


Figure 65: Plan of Himsa Zone



Key Plan

7.2.1 Entrance: First Confrontation

As you enter, your body slows without being asked. The ceiling feels low, not by height, but by weight. Hundreds of hanging elements descend in front of you, dense and uneven, leaving no obvious way through. You pause. The space does not open itself—it resists you.

Light breaks through in fragments, falling unevenly on the ground. Shadows shift as you move, making you aware of yourself inside the space. Sound feels closer. Even small movements seem loud. You notice your breathing. Your shoulders draw in slightly, as if preparing to pass through something narrow and uncertain.

Moving forward takes effort. You search for gaps, adjusting your body, brushing past the hanging elements. There is no explanation here, only resistance. The space does not show violence; it makes you feel entangled within it.

This is where Himsa begins. Not suddenly, not theatrically, but through slow pressure. As you pass beneath and through, the body understands confinement before the mind does. You are no longer arriving. You are already caught inside the experience.

Dense suspended elements and lowered enclosure initiate the first confrontation, where movement becomes effortful and the body registers resistance before interpretation.

Figure 66: Himsa Entrance (Person Walking Through Point C)

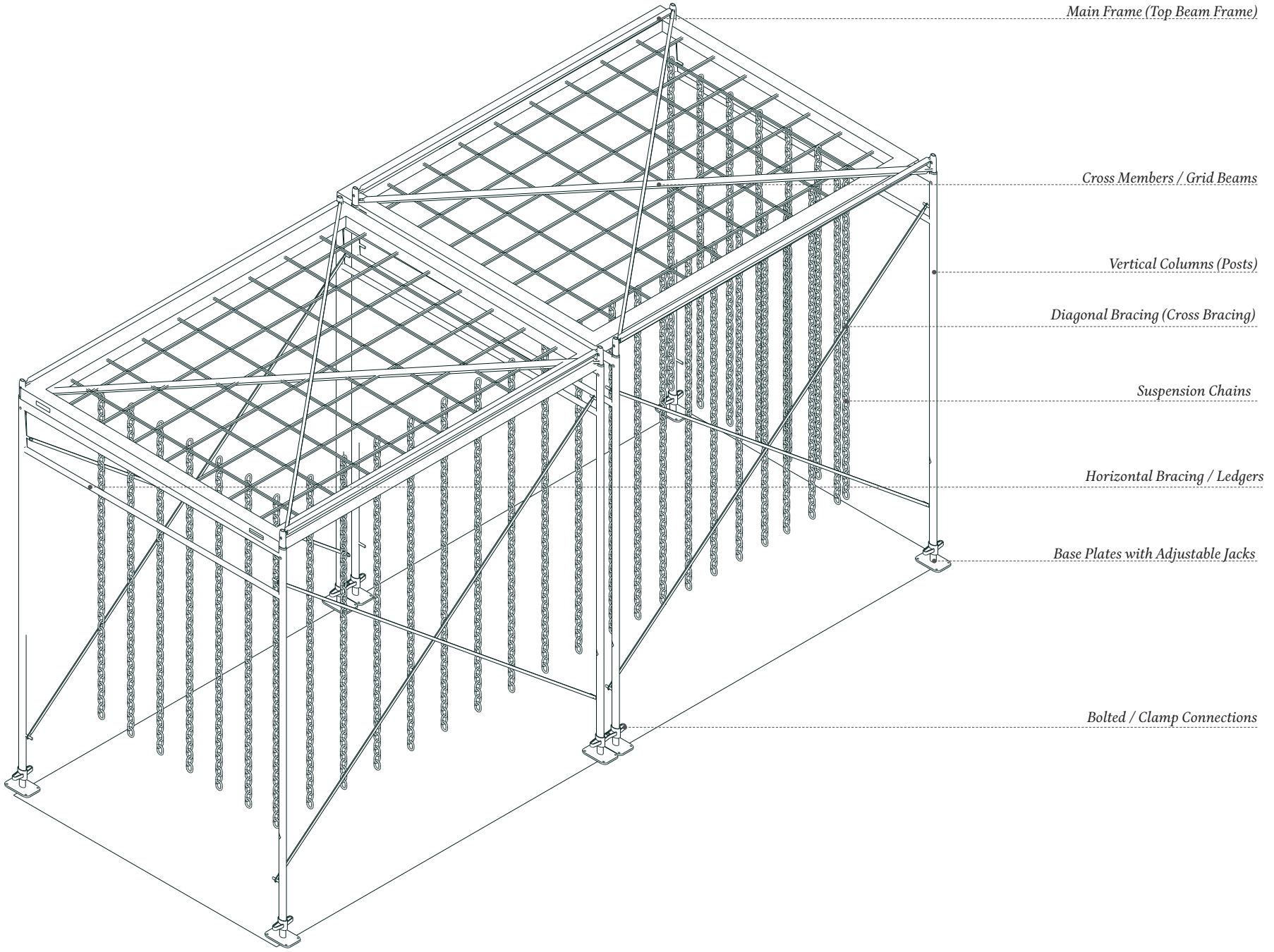
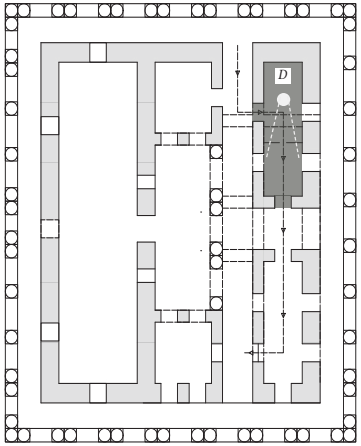


Figure 67: Metal Chain Suspension Connection Detail



Key Plan

7.2.2 Second Chamber: Sustained Discomfort

As you step further inside, the space tightens its grip. The ground beneath your feet is no longer stable. Loose metal plates shift and strike against one another with every step, producing sharp, unpredictable sounds. Walking becomes noisy and exposed. You are aware of yourself with each movement you make. There is no way to move quietly here.

Above, the ceiling lowers into a dense grid. From it, countless suspended elements hang down, uneven and heavy, occupying the air above your head. Their presence is constant. You feel watched by the ceiling, pressed by it, even though it never touches you. The vertical density makes the space feel heavier than its actual dimensions.

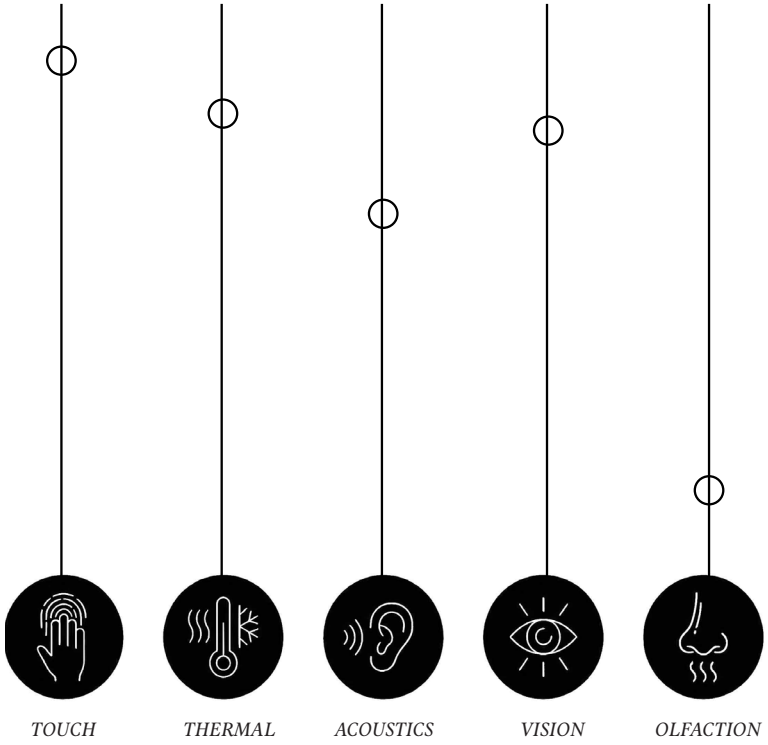
This zone holds you in a state of sustained discomfort. It is not violent in gesture, but oppressive in presence. Like a confined chamber, it limits movement, heightens awareness, and removes ease. You are made conscious of your body, your sound, your proximity to the walls. Himsa here is a condition you are forced to endure as you move through.

The body negotiates instability below and pressure above, experiencing Himsa as a continuous condition rather than a single moment.

Figure 68: Himsa Second Chamber (Person Walking Through Point D)

Controlled lighting compresses perception, making space feel heavier and more restrictive after dark.

Figure 69: Night Experience



Overlapping sensory inputs—sound, touch, temperature, and visual contrast—operate simultaneously to sustain discomfort and deepen the experiential intensity of Himsa.

Figure 70: Sensory Engagement in the Himsa Zone

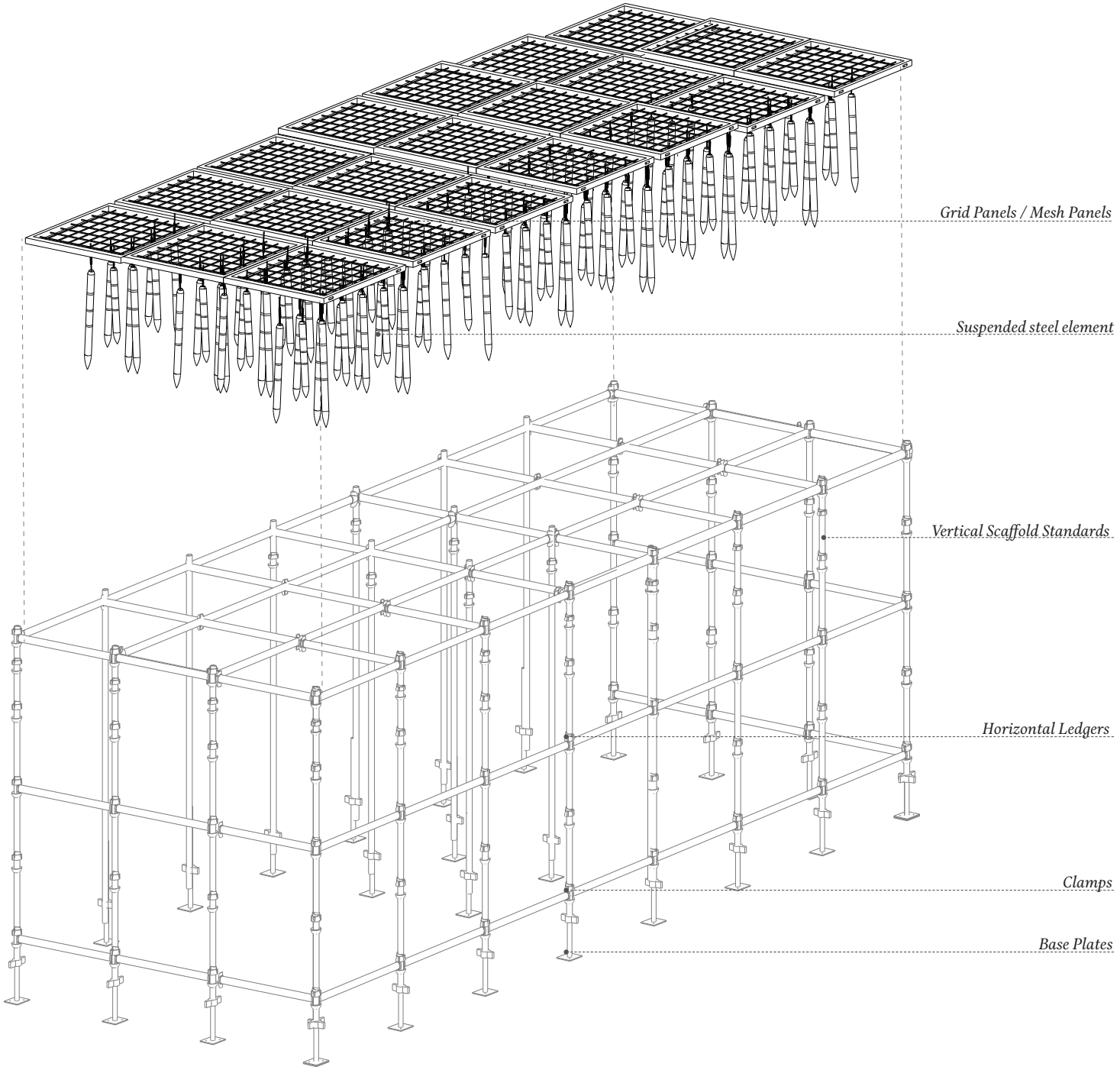
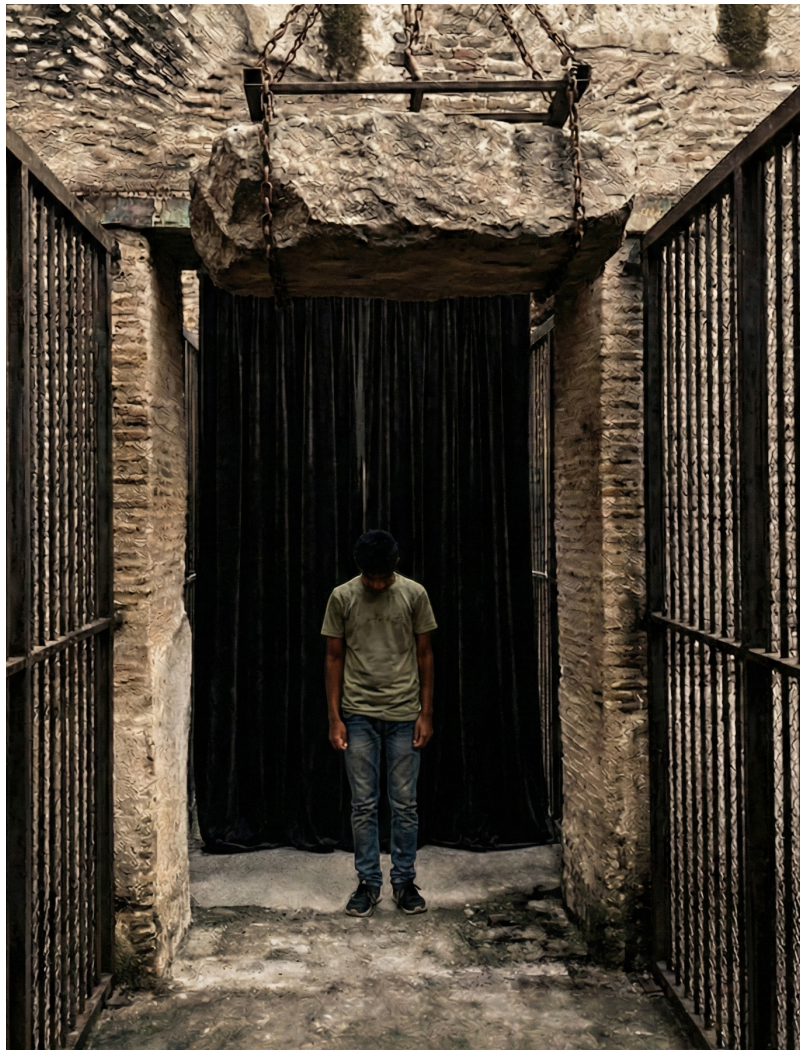
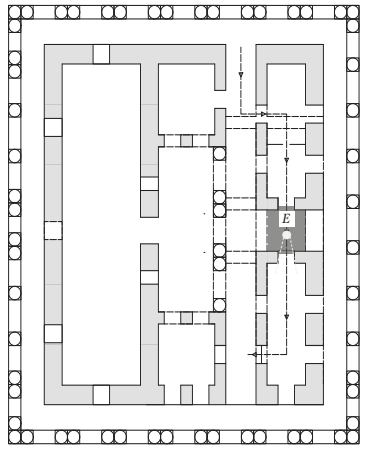


Figure 71: Connection details for suspended elements



A suspended stone mass and narrowed enclosure compress movement, holding the body in a moment of heightened pressure between two Himsa spaces.

Figure 72: Zone of Suspension (Between Himsa Chambers)



Key Plan

7.2.3 Zone of Suspension

Located between two Himsa chambers, the Zone of Suspension intensifies compression rather than offering relief. The space narrows and lowers, forcing the body to slow and adjust. A heavy stone element hangs overhead, its weight constantly present in the visitor's awareness. Though it never touches, it presses psychologically, creating a sense of vulnerability and imbalance.

Movement through this zone is cautious and tense. The proximity of walls and the suspended mass above heighten bodily awareness, holding the visitor in a moment of pressure before release is possible. This space does not pause the experience of Himsa; it concentrates it, reinforcing violence as a continuous condition rather than a singular event.

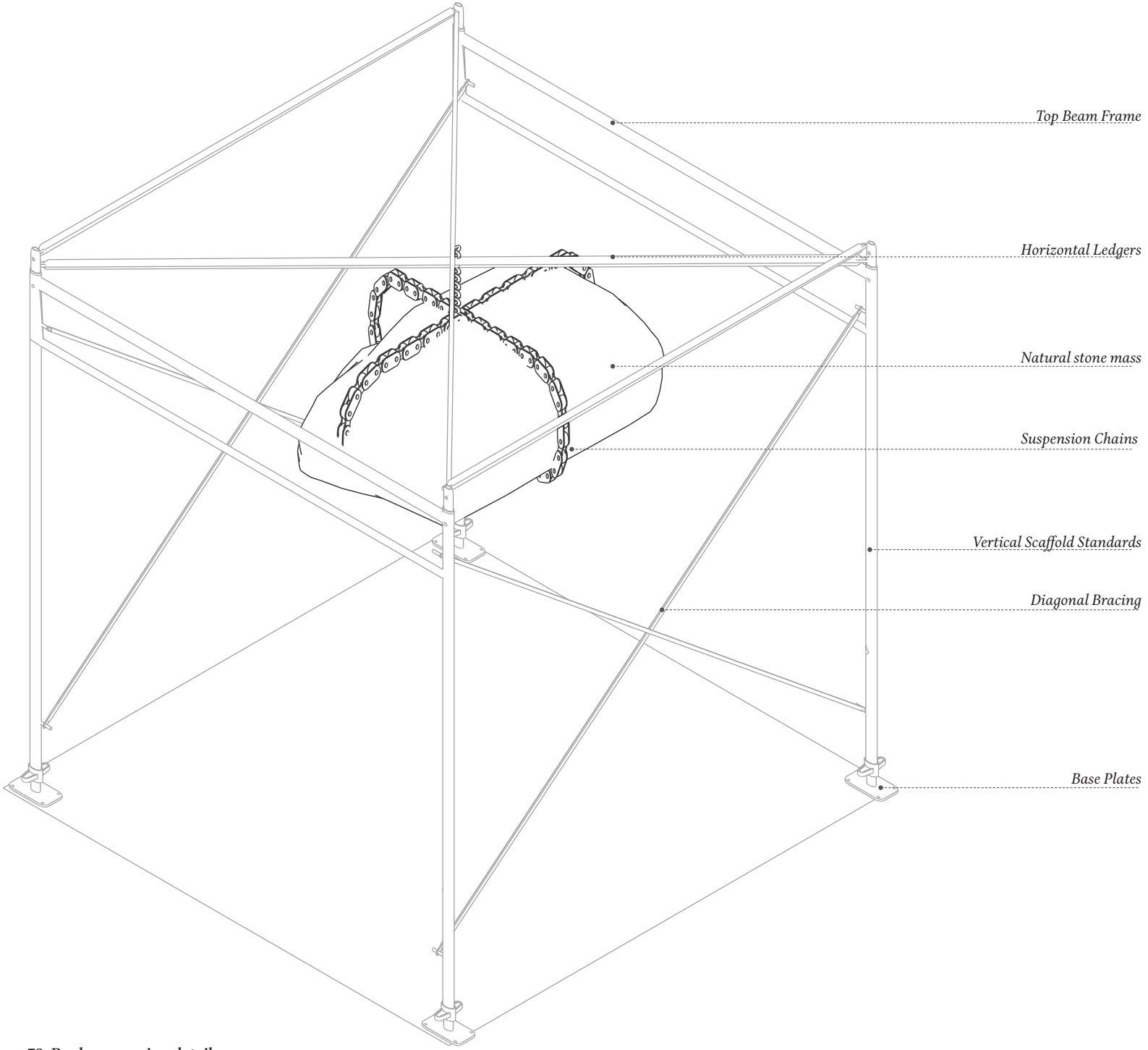
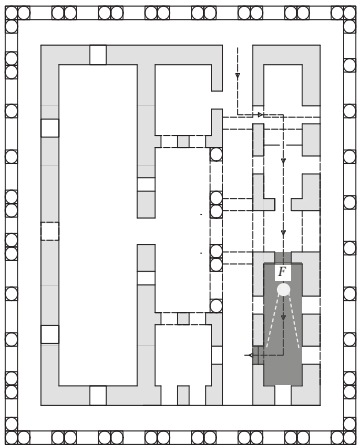


Figure 73: Rock suspension detail



Key Plan

7.2.4 Terminal Chamber: Residual Violence

This chamber marks the culmination of Himsa. The space no longer resists through compression alone; instead, it overwhelms through accumulation. Dense layers of suspended wire fill the volume, obscuring boundaries and dissolving clear spatial edges. Movement becomes uncertain, slowed but by entanglement.

The body is constantly aware of proximity, to the walls, to the ceiling, to the layered mass that surrounds it. Light struggles to penetrate the dense field, creating a muted, enclosed atmosphere. This is not a moment of confrontation, but of endurance. Violence here is no longer active; it lingers, saturating the space as a condition that cannot be escaped quickly.

Accumulated suspended elements thicken the space, blurring boundaries and holding the body in a state of entanglement.

Figure 74: Terminal Chamber – Residual Violence (Person Walking Through Point F)

7.3 Liminal Space: Suspension Between Pressure and Release

In this space, I want the visitor to feel the tension from earlier spaces begin to ease, without disappearing all at once. Movement should feel quieter and more measured, allowing the body to relax before the mind fully understands why. I want this zone to feel like a moment of suspension—where breath deepens, awareness widens, and the visitor is given time to recalibrate before moving forward.

A solitary figure stands within a shifting field, representing transition, uncertainty, and the gradual release of spatial tension.

Figure 75: Liminal Zone – Moment of Suspension

7.3 Liminal Zone: Transition and Recalibration

This zone marks a shift in the spatial experience. After the density and resistance of Himsa, the body enters a space that neither confronts nor comforts immediately. The enclosure opens slightly, light becomes filtered rather than obstructed, and movement begins to loosen without fully relaxing. The space feels held, not pressed.

Vertical elements remain present, but their character changes. Instead of rigid or threatening forms, lighter suspended surfaces soften the ceiling plane and diffuse light downward. Shadows become slower and more legible. The rhythm of columns guides movement without forcing it. Walking here feels measured, intentional, and quieter. The body is still alert, but no longer defensive.

This zone functions as a moment of recalibration. The visitor senses that something has shifted, even before consciously recognizing it. Sound settles, breath lengthens, and awareness widens. The architecture does not demand attention; it allows sensation to settle naturally. The liminal zone holds the visitor between conditions—carrying the weight of Himsa while gently preparing the body for the openness and stillness of what follows.

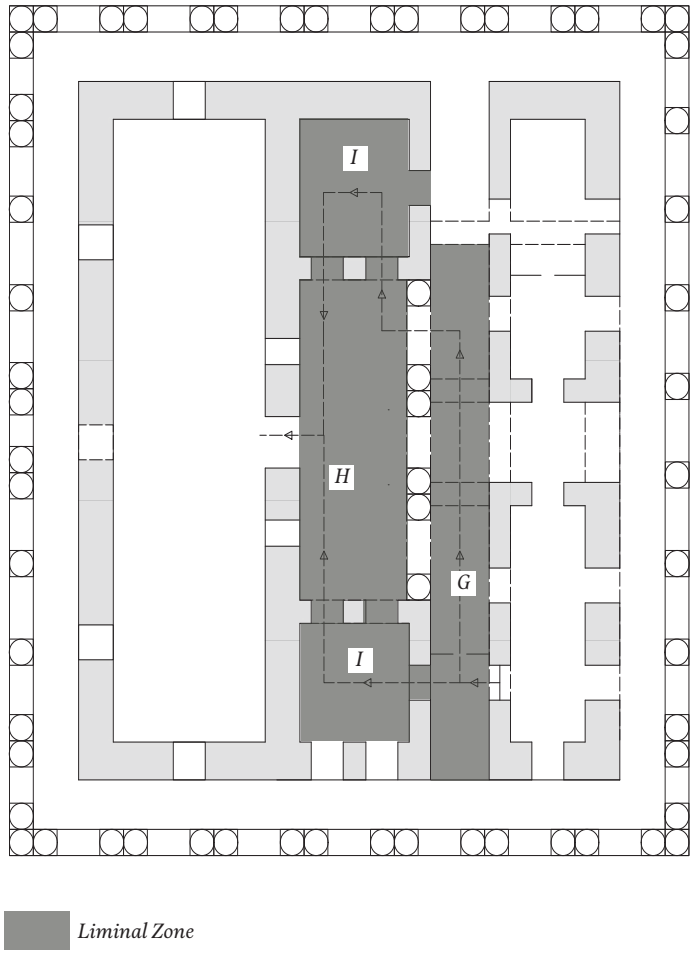
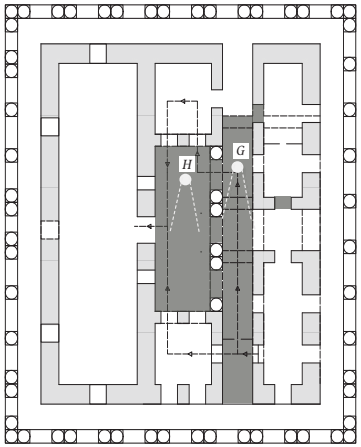


Figure 76: Plan of Liminal Zone



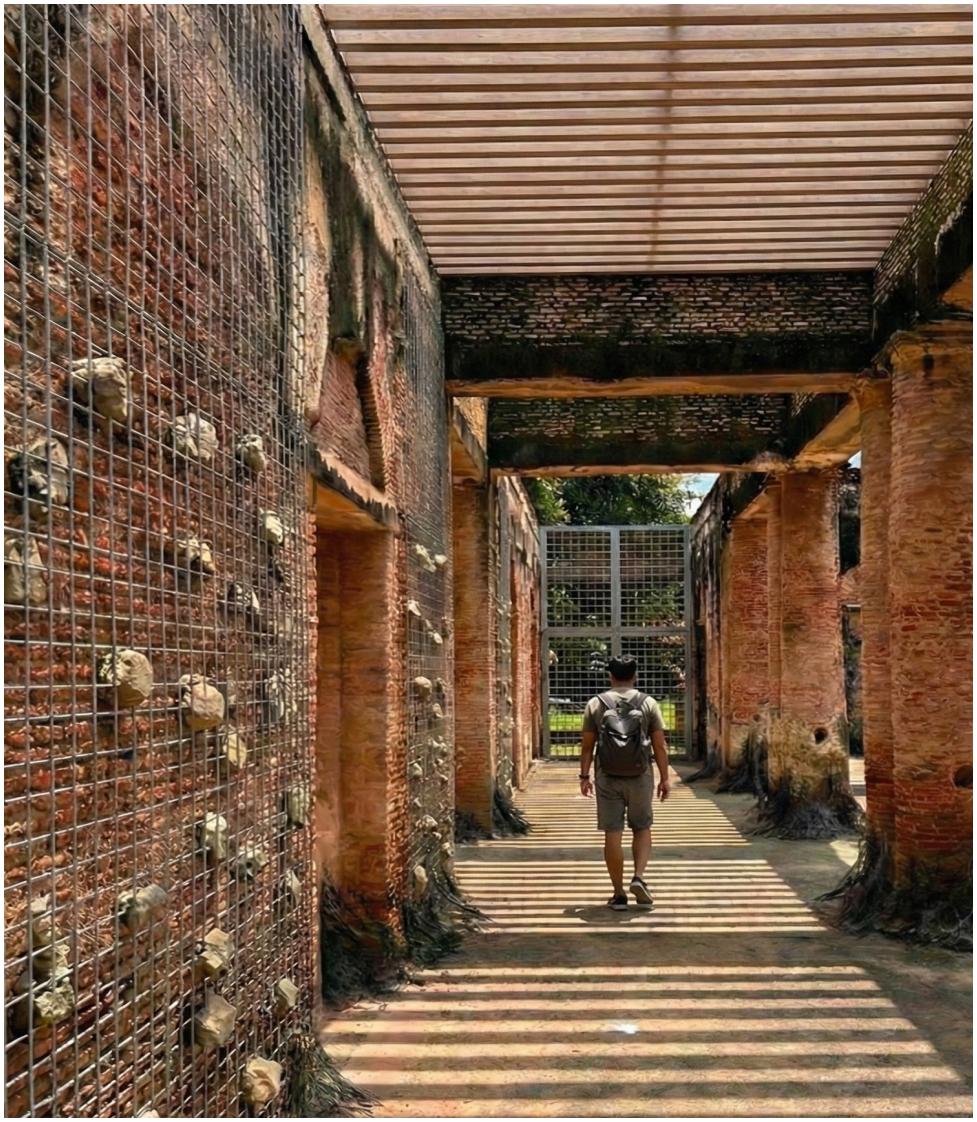
Key Plan

7.3.1 Design Interventions: Liminal Zone

The interventions in the liminal zone are deliberately subtle, operating through lightness, rhythm, and suspension rather than force. This space is designed to ease the body out of compression without offering immediate release.

The primary intervention is the lightweight suspended ceiling system, composed of semi-transparent panels arranged at varied heights. These elements soften the overhead plane, diffusing light and reducing the sense of pressure experienced in the previous zones. Unlike the dense suspensions in Himsa, these panels do not obstruct movement; they hover above, allowing air, light, and vision to pass through.

Existing columns are retained and emphasized, acting as a steady spatial rhythm. Their repetition guides movement forward without narrowing it. The columns no longer constrain the body but provide orientation and continuity through the transition.

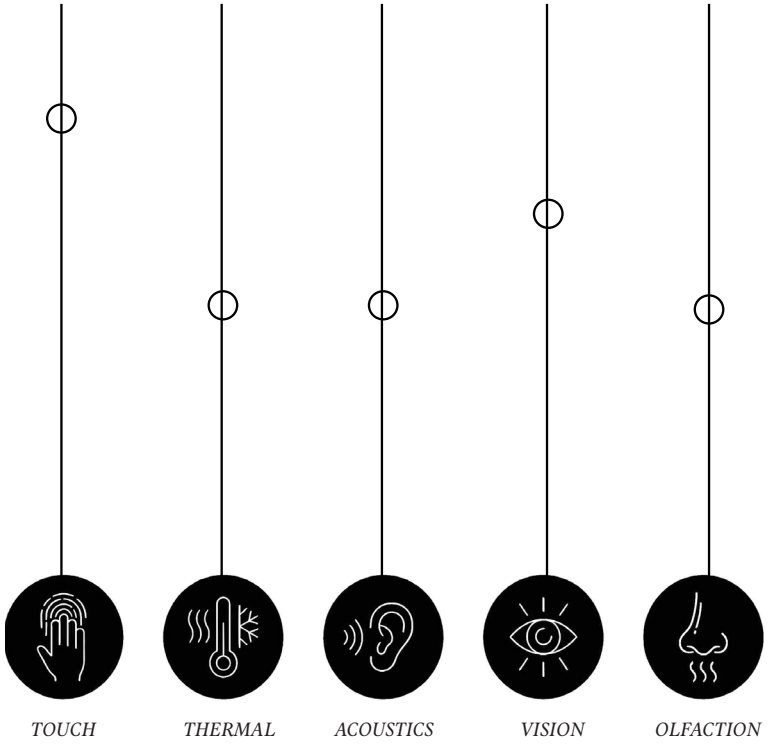


The space opens and light filters in bands, softening enclosure while maintaining direction. Movement becomes steadier and quieter, allowing the body to recalibrate between compression and release.

Figure 77: Liminal Zone (Person Walking Through Point G)

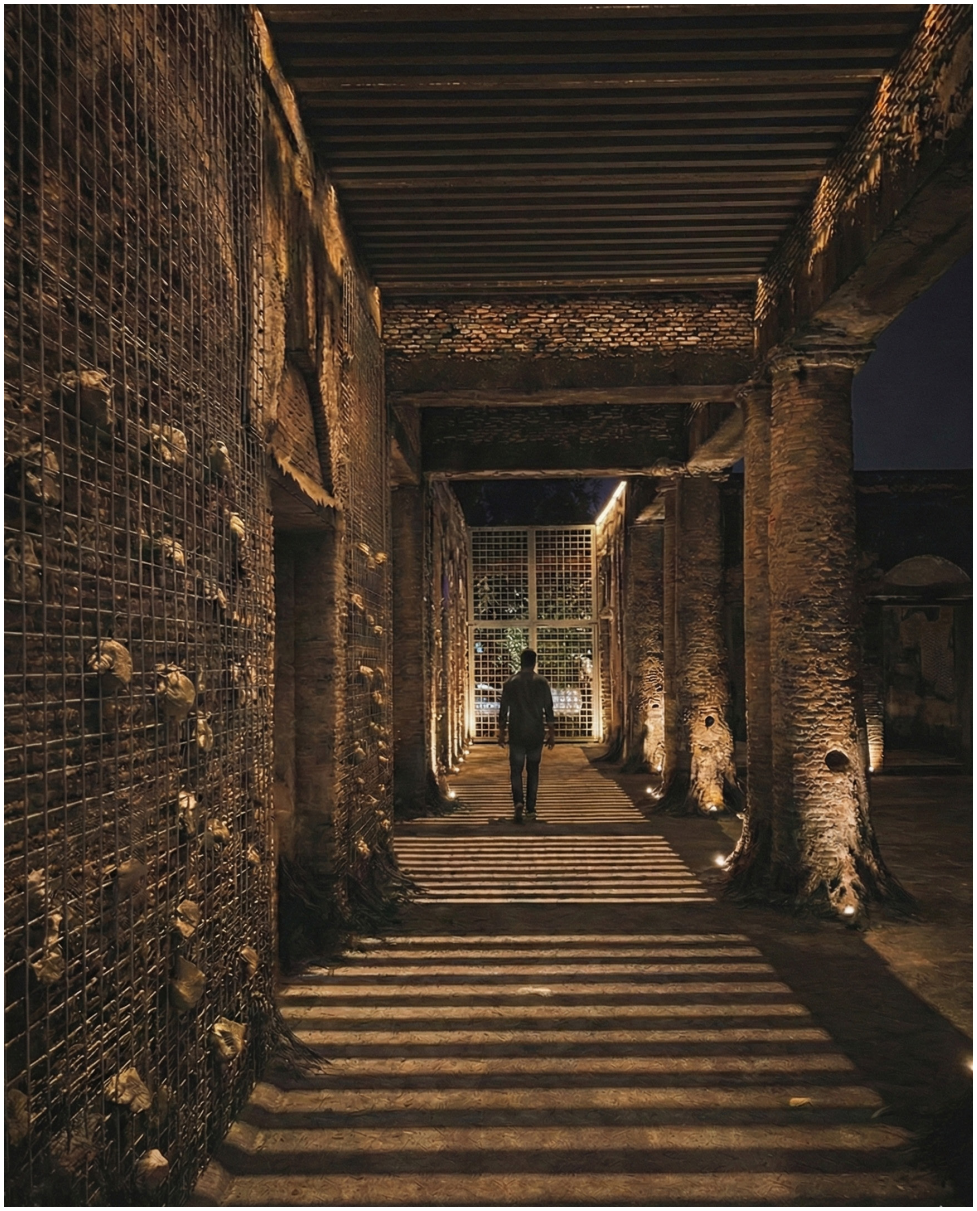
The space feels held but no longer restrictive, allowing the body to slow and recalibrate after sustained compression.

Figure 78: Liminal Zone (Person Walking Through Point H)



Sensory intensity begins to rebalance as touch, sound, and visual perception soften, while comfort gradually increases—marking the transition between pressure and release.

Figure 79 Sensory Engagement in the Liminal Zone

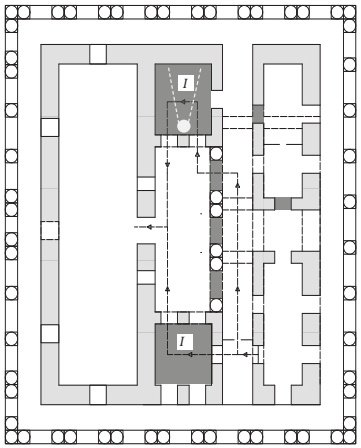


Suspended elements and filtered light introduce permeability and pause, holding the visitor in a state of transition rather than resolution.

Figure 80: Liminal Zone at Night – Filtered Light and Transition

The space neither resists nor releases fully, allowing tension to settle as movement continues forward.

Figure 81: Liminal Zone at Night – Suspension and Softened Enclosure



Key Plan

7.3.2 Breathing room:

This space marks the first moment where the body is allowed to pause without pressure. After sustained compression and controlled movement, the Breathing Room opens vertically, allowing light to enter from above in a focused, deliberate manner. The enclosure remains intact, but its intensity is reduced. The body senses relief, not through openness alone, but through stillness.

The Breathing Room allows the visitor to recalibrate, physically and emotionally, before moving forward. It holds a pause between tension and release, ensuring that the transition from Himsa is gradual and embodied rather than abrupt.

This space introduces a moment of pause, where vertical light and stillness allow the body to slow and recover after sustained compression. Movement quietens, posture relaxes, and the space offers relief without fully releasing the experience.

Figure 82: Breathing room(Person Walking Through Point I)

7.4 Ahimsa Zone: A Space of Quiet Release

In this space, the body begins to loosen what it has been holding. The sand beneath the feet shifts gently with each step, slowing movement and grounding the visitor in the present moment. Filtered light falls softly from above, diffused through layers that blur sharp edges and quiet the eye.

A solitary figure stands within open space, representing clarity, balance, and the release of accumulated tension.

Figure 83: Ahimsa Zone – Mental State of Stillness

7.4.1 Ahimsa Zone

The Ahimsa zone marks a clear shift in the spatial experience. After movement defined by pressure, resistance, and uncertainty, this space allows the body to release what it has been holding. The architecture no longer presses or restricts; instead, it creates conditions where ease can return gradually.

The space opens up both physically and perceptually. Movement becomes unforced, and the visitor is no longer required to negotiate the environment. Light feels more stable and evenly distributed, allowing the space to be read as a whole rather than in fragments. The body responds instinctively—posture relaxes, steps slow down, and attention softens.

This zone is not designed to feel empty or neutral. It carries the memory of what came before, but without reintroducing discomfort. Stillness becomes possible here. The visitor is allowed to stop, to sit, or to remain quiet without feeling watched or guided. Sound dissipates rather than accumulates, and the space feels held rather than controlled.

In the Ahimsa zone, violence is no longer active. What remains is awareness. The architecture does not explain or conclude the experience; it allows the visitor to inhabit calm without forgetting tension. This balance makes the transition meaningful, ensuring that release feels earned rather than abrupt.

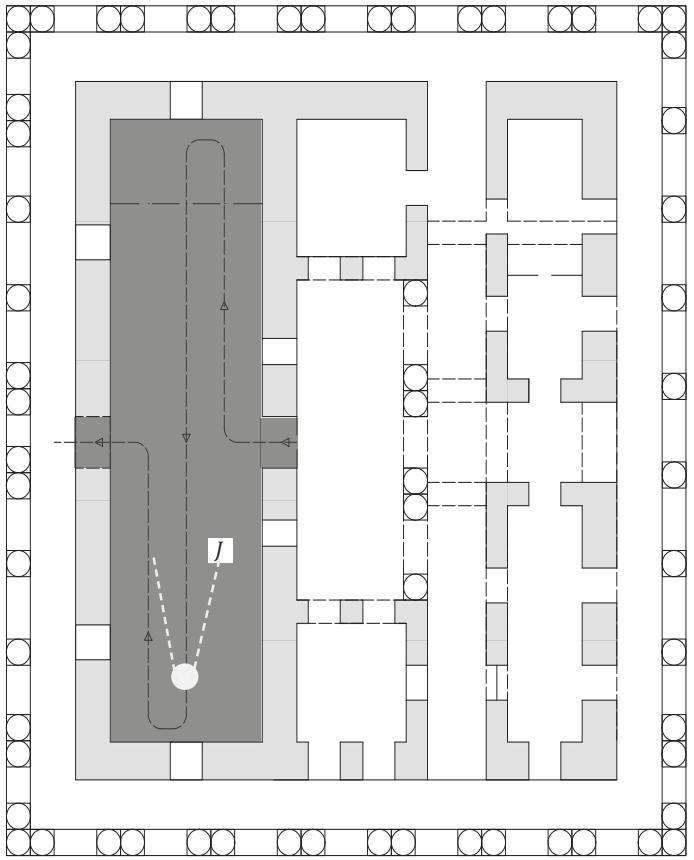
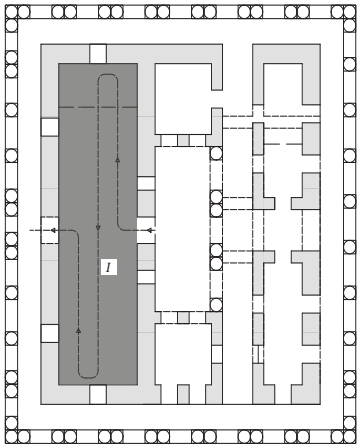


Figure 84: Plan of Ahimsa Zone



Key Plan

7.4.2 Ahimsa Zone – Space of Release and Stillness

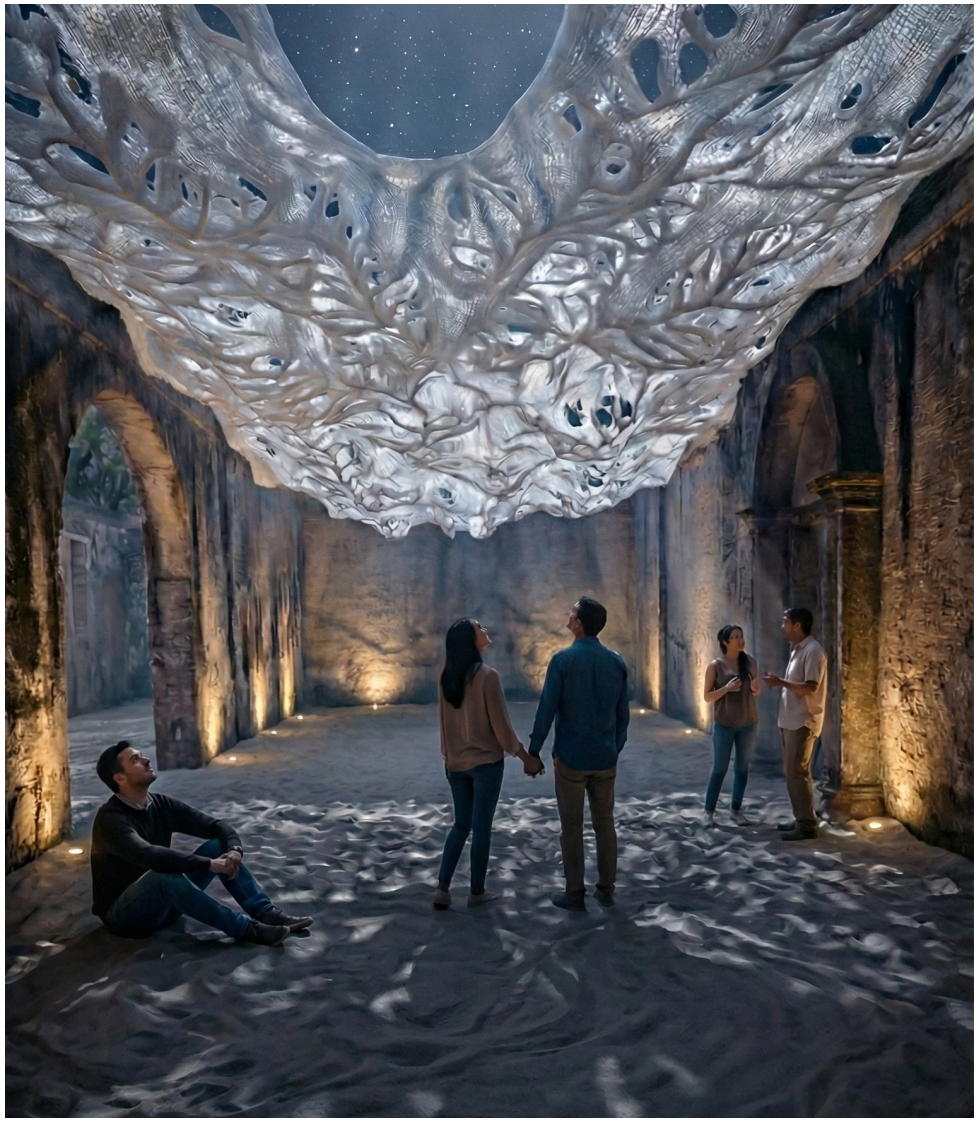
This space is conceived as a condition of release after sustained tension. The ground softens into sand, slowing movement and allowing the body to settle. Overhead, a layered ceiling of net and leaf-like forms filters light gently into the space, dissolving harsh contrast and creating a diffuse, enveloping atmosphere. The enclosure no longer presses inward; instead, it holds the visitor lightly.

Suspended luminous elements hover at varying heights, creating a quiet field of light rather than a focal object. These elements respond subtly to movement, reinforcing stillness rather than urgency. Sound dissipates, and visual boundaries soften. The space invites pause, grounding the body while allowing awareness to expand.

The Ahimsa zone is not an absence of experience, but a recalibration. What was once dense and confrontational is transformed into openness and balance. The visitor is no longer required to negotiate space; instead, the space supports presence, reflection, and calm.

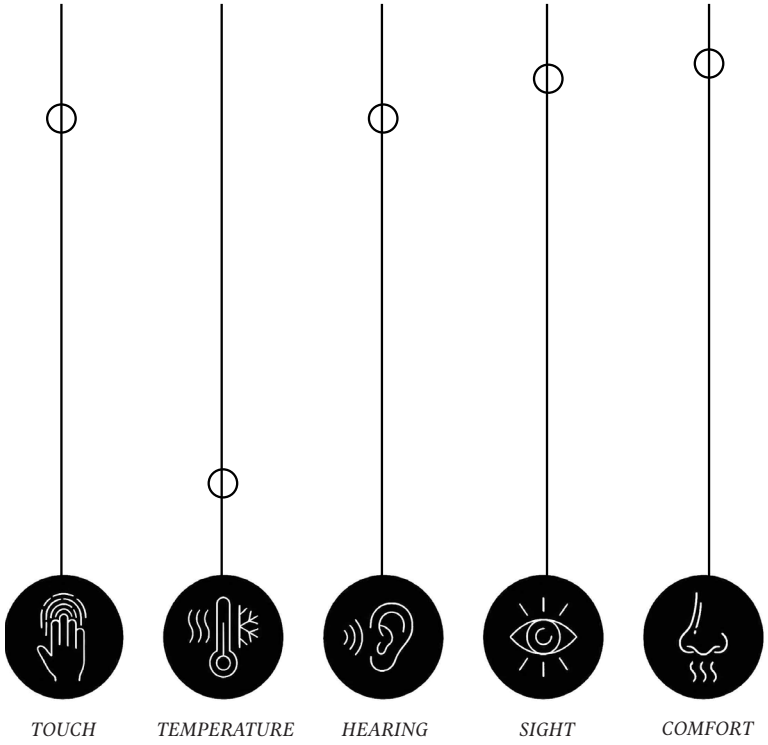
Soft ground, filtered light, and suspended luminous elements create a calm environment where tension dissolves into balance and awareness.

Figure 85: Ahima Zone (Person Walking Through Point I)



Soft light, sand underfoot, and a filtered ceiling create a calm, weightless atmosphere where movement slows and the body begins to rest.

Figure 86: Ahimsa Zone at Night



Reduced sensory intensity and balanced stimuli allow the body to transition from tension into comfort and reflection

Figure 87 Sensory Engagement in the Ahimsa Zone

7.5 Reflection Zone

The Reflection Zone is where movement finally gives way to stillness. After passing through compression, discomfort, and transition, the body arrives here already softened and quiet. This space does not demand action or awareness—it allows it. Light is gentle and diffused, surfaces are calm, and the space holds you without pressure. Sound fades, time feels suspended, and the body settles into a slower rhythm. This is not an ending, but a pause—an opportunity to sit with what has been felt, to let the experience sink in without explanation. The Reflection Zone offers no instruction; it simply provides room for thought, memory, and emotional release to surface naturally.

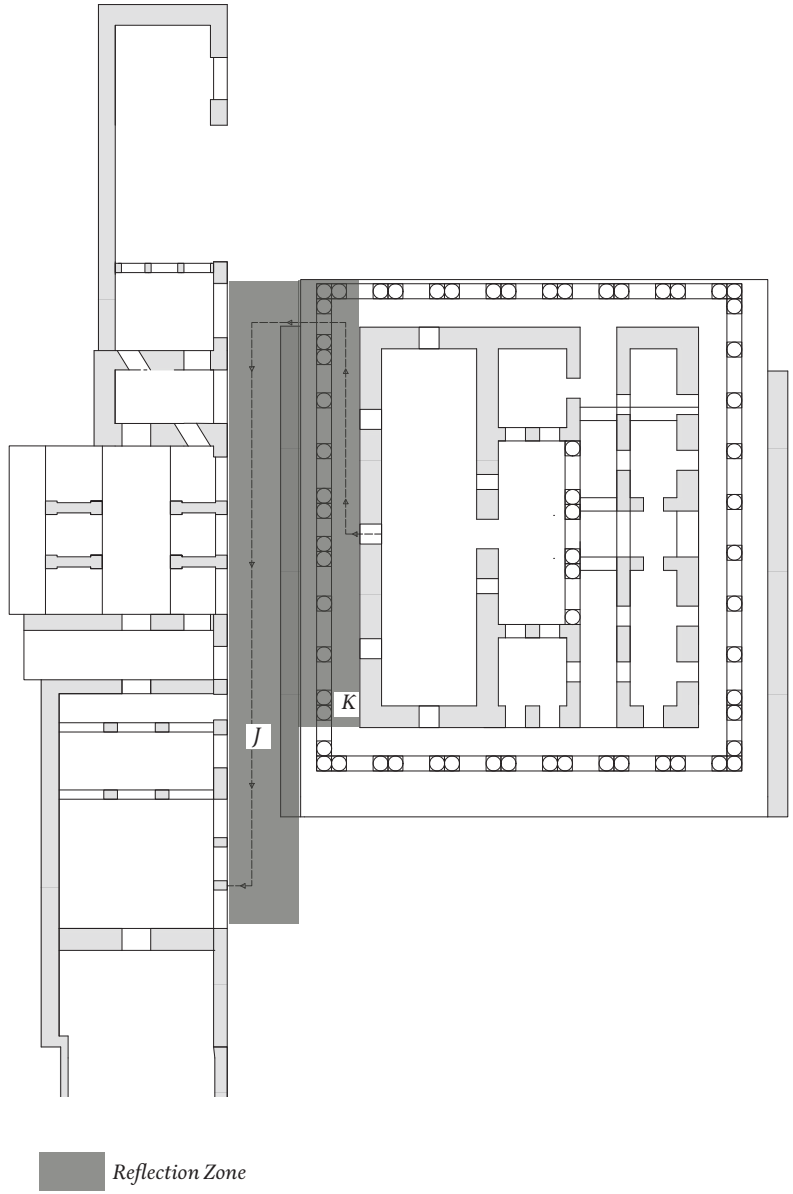
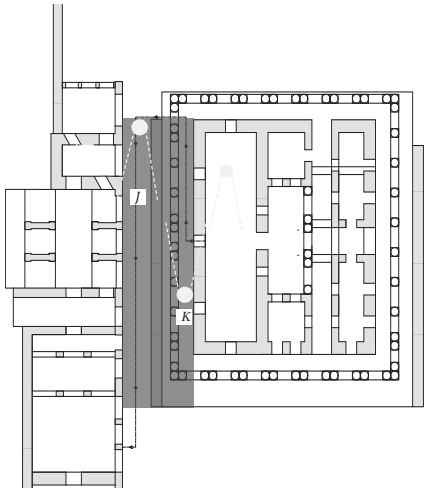


Figure 88: Plan of Reflection Zone



Key Plan

7.5.1 Reflection Zone: A Space to Pause and Unwind

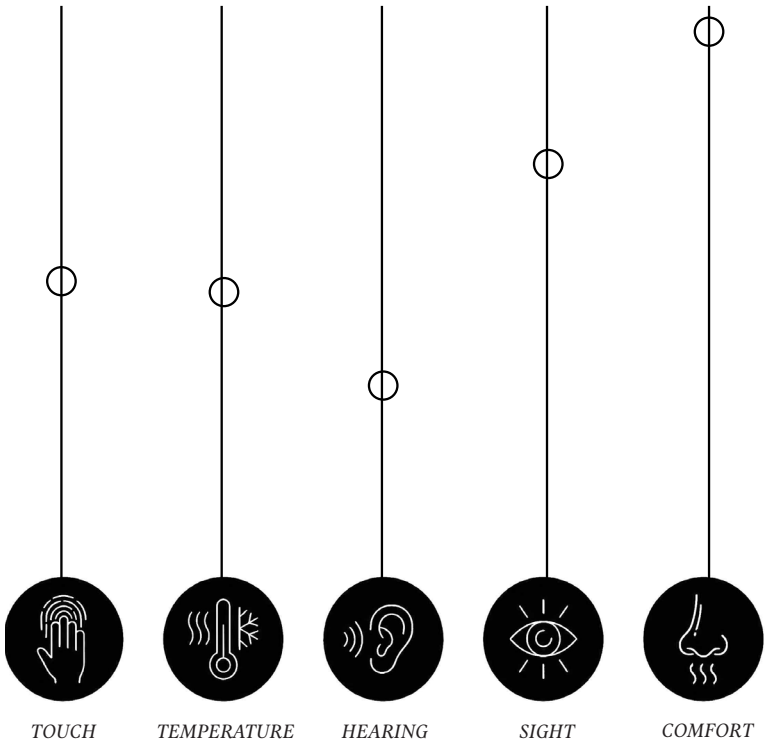
This zone opens the space both physically and emotionally. After moving through compression and intensity, the body arrives here with a need to slow down, sit, and simply exist. The overhead canopy filters light into soft, shifting patterns, breaking the harshness of the sky and creating a gentle rhythm on the ground. Movement is no longer directed; people choose where to stop, where to sit, where to look. The space supports quiet conversations, solitude, or shared stillness without demanding any response. Here, architecture steps back and allows reflection to take place naturally, offering relief, balance, and a moment to process everything that came before.

A calm, open clearing where light, structure, and pause come together to invite reflection.

Figure 89: Reflection Zone(Person Walking Through Point J)

Soft, warm light washes the space as the ceiling opens into a patterned canopy, slowing the body and inviting stillness. People sit, talk quietly, or remain alone—no longer navigating the space, but inhabiting it with ease.

Figure 89: Reflection Zone at Night — Settling After the Journey



Here, the senses soften rather than sharpen: touch becomes grounded, sound recedes, light calms the eye, and comfort takes precedence. The space allows the body to rest and the mind to reflect after sustained intensity.

Figure 90: Sensory Engagement in the Reflection Zone

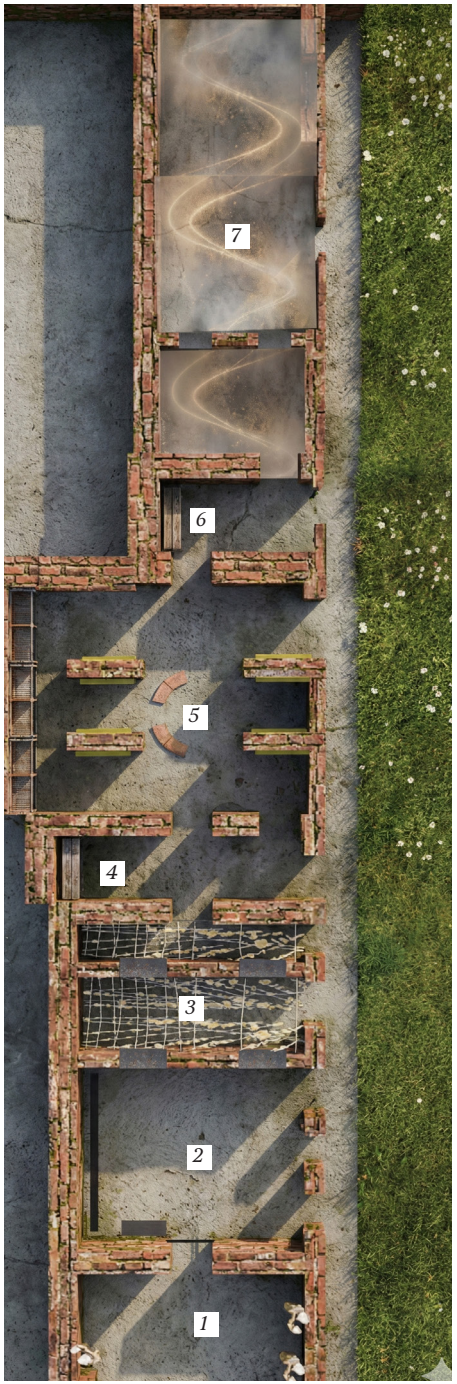
WHERE FEELING TRANSFORMS INTO AWARENESS.

FIGURE 91

A REFLECTIVE LAYER OF SPACE THAT INVITES VISITORS TO CONTEXTUALIZE, QUESTION, AND INTERNALIZE WHAT THEY HAVE ALREADY EXPERIENCED.

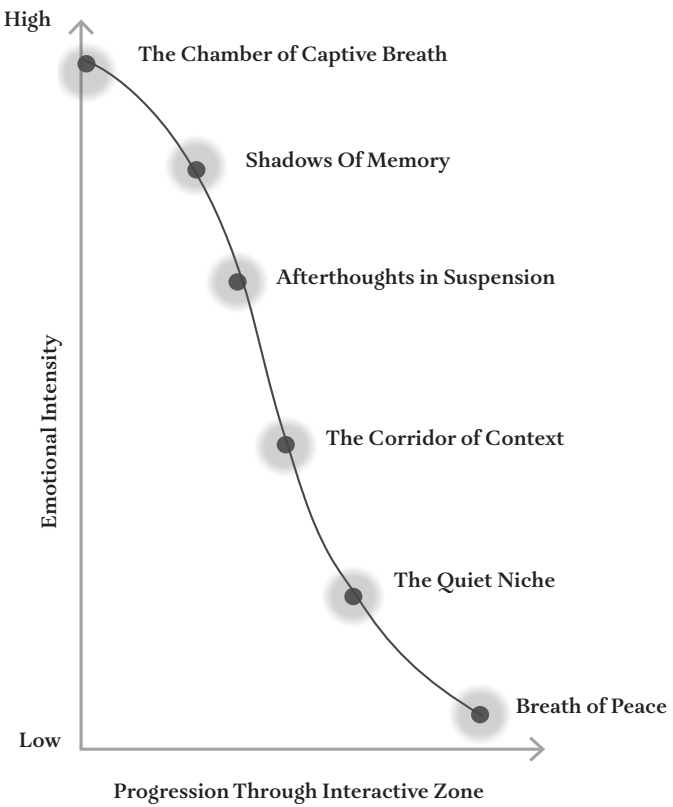
8.1 Interpretive Zone

The Interactive Zone brings the visitor from witnessing to participation, and finally to reflection. It begins with shared memory, moves through acknowledgment and understanding, and gradually opens into spaces of pause, conversation, and immersion. Here, history is not only observed but felt, spoken, written, and questioned. The body slows, the mind becomes aware, and emotion turns into dialogue. By the time one reaches the final immersive space of mist and light, the journey shifts inward—asking what violence leaves behind, what peace truly means, and how each person carries responsibility within that continuum. This zone does not instruct; it allows realization to emerge gently through space, presence, and human connection.



1. The Chamber of Captive Breath
2. Shadows Of Memoy
3. Afterthoughts in Suspension
4. Between Thought and Silence
5. The Corridor of Context
6. The Quiet Niche
7. Breath of Peace

Figure 92: Textured Plan of the Interpretive Zone



A graphic mapping of how each sense is intentionally modulated to construct emotional understanding within the space.

Figure 93: Emotion Mapping

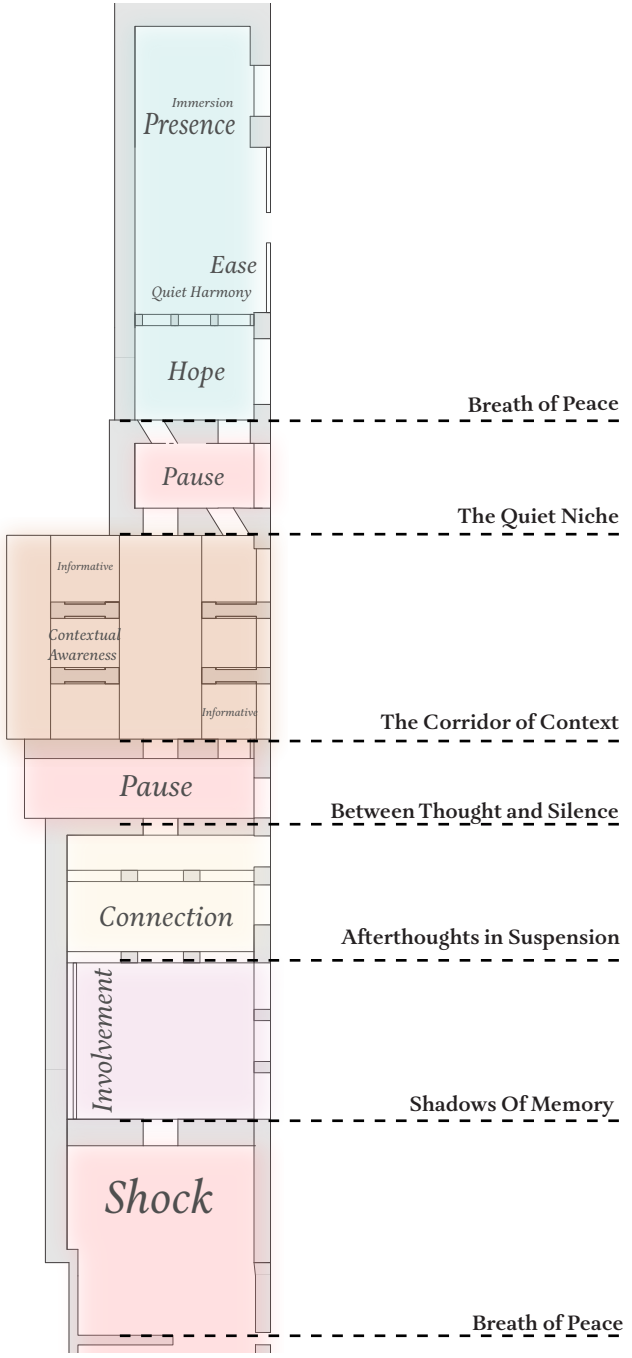
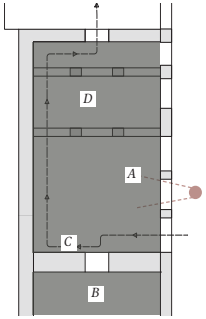


Figure 94: Emotion Zoning



Key Plan

8.2 Zone I: Shadows of Memory

As one steps into the interpretive zone, this is the first encounter, a dimly lit chamber where moving shadows stretch across the old arches. Figures appear in silhouette: moments of conflict, gestures of resistance, fragments of stories that once shaped this region. It is not a literal retelling, but a quiet re-enactment through light and absence. The shadows feel both distant and deeply personal, like memories surfacing without warning.

Faint sounds of unrest and distant echoes of war drift through the space, subtle yet persistent. They do not dominate the room; they stay in the background, creating an atmosphere that settles into the body. The visitor is free to walk, to stand still, to linger. As the shadows shift and dissolve, history no longer feels like something confined to books, it begins to feel human. There is fear, courage, loss, and endurance carried in those moving forms.

This space does not instruct the visitor on what to think. Instead, it opens a quiet doorway to understanding, allowing each person to absorb the weight of what happened, and to begin forming their own connection to it.

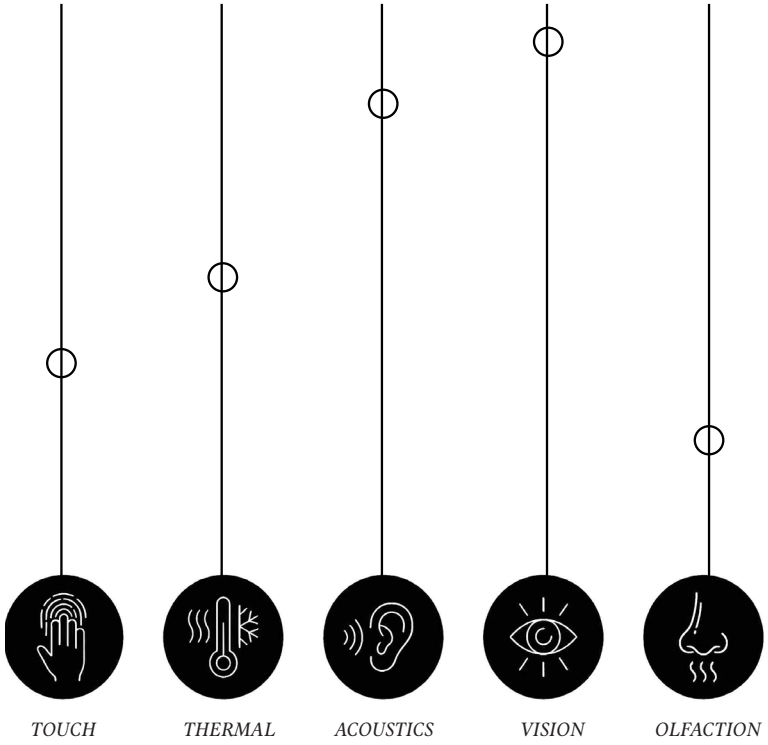
Chamber of Echoed Histories ,Where shadows retell the stories that walls still remember.

Figure 95: Zone 1 (Person Walking Through Point A)

An installation where suspended bodies confront the weight of conflict and the cost of violence.

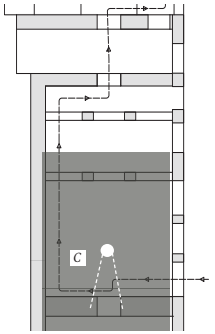
Figure 96: The Chamber of Captive Breath(Space B)

This space cannot be entered. You stand outside, looking in through a cage-like window. Inside, under a single dramatic beam of light, the suspended bodies hang in stillness. The distance is intentional — you are not part of the scene, only a witness. That separation creates discomfort. It reminds you that violence often happens behind walls, beyond reach, yet its presence lingers long after



A graphic mapping of how each sense is intentionally modulated to construct emotional understanding within the space.

Figure 97: Sensory Calibration Diagram-The Chamber of Captive Breath

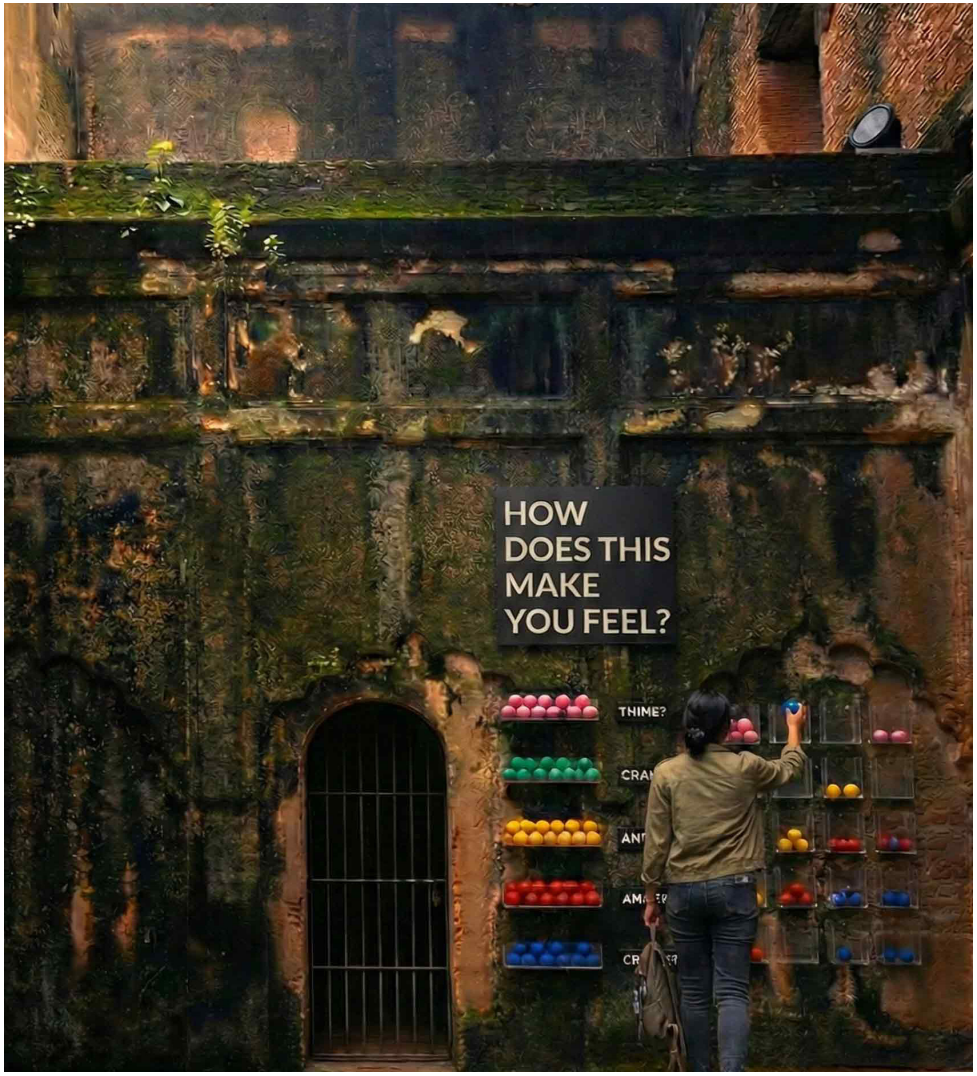


Key Plan

8.2.2 Captive Breath – The Emotional Register

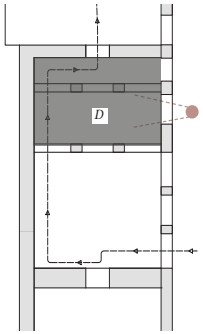
This installation sits just outside the Chamber of Captive Breath, asking visitors to pause for a moment and sit with whatever they are carrying after witnessing the space inside.

Against the worn, moss-covered wall, the question, "What does this makes you feel?" does not demand an answer. Colored balls represent different emotional states and instead of writing, visitors respond through a small physical action. By placing a ball into a container, they quietly release something they may not have had words for. The gesture is minimal, almost instinctive, yet it makes emotion visible. It transforms feeling into movement, and movement into self-awareness.



Before you leave, ask yourself what stayed.
An interactive installation that invites visitors to acknowledge and externalize their emotions through a simple, reflective act.

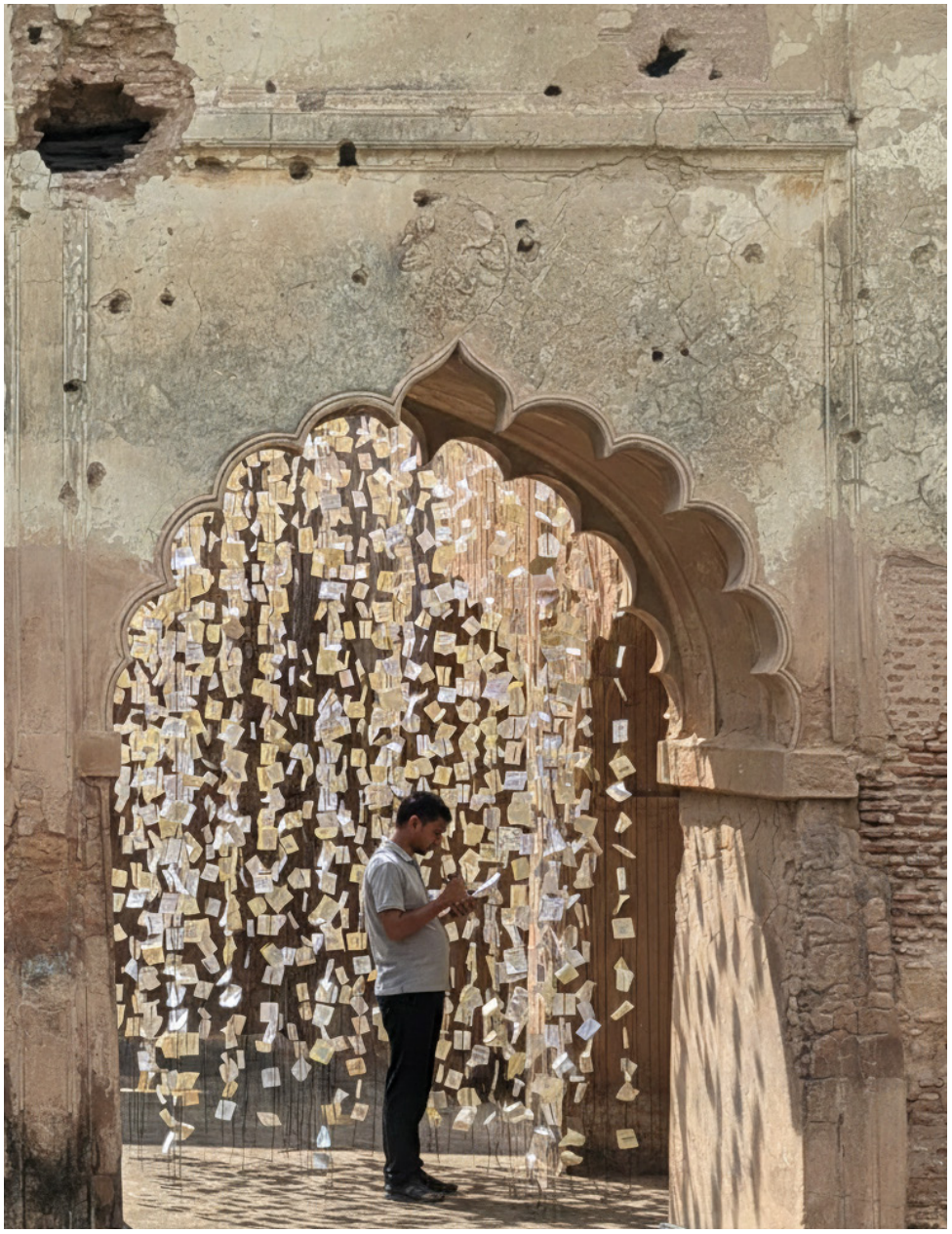
Figure 98: Zone 1 (View from Point C with Visitor Present)



Key Plan

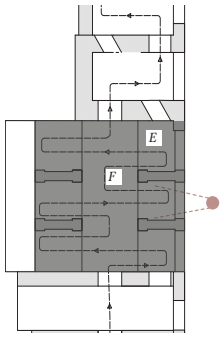
8.2.3 Afterthoughts in Suspension

After passing through intensity and restraint, this space offers presence. Beneath the scarred masonry and bullet-marked plaster, hundreds of handwritten notes hang lightly in the archway, shifting with air and movement. Visitors step into a field of quiet confessions—grief, confusion, faith, anger, gratitude—left by those who stood here before them. One pauses, reads a few words, perhaps finds something familiar, perhaps something unexpected. In that moment, the space becomes collective. Writing here is not an activity but a release; reading is not observation but recognition. The ruin holds every fragment gently, allowing the building to absorb what the body has carried, and to return it as shared human presence.



Space where silence turns into shared memory.

Figure 99: Zone 1 (Person Walking Through Point D)



Key Plan

8.3.1 Zone 2: The Corridor of Context

Beneath a sequence of carved arches, illuminated panels rise vertically against the textured masonry, their glow steady against the weathered surface of the ruin.

This space unfolds as a measured pause within the interactive sequence. After the intimacy of handwritten fragments and suspended thoughts, the visitor steps into a linear arcade where repetition creates rhythm and orientation. Six arched bays hold vertical screens, each embedded carefully within the historic fabric without overpowering it. The arches remain dominant,ornamented, eroded, and grounded in time, while the panels introduce a contemporary layer of light and voice. Some panels revisit the events that shaped this site, offering maps, archival photographs, and testimonies. Others extend beyond the Residency, tracing the ripple effects of conflict across regions and generations, drawing subtle connections between past and present.

The experience is deliberate and slow. One moves from arch to arch, not overwhelmed, but gradually informed. The body remains upright, attentive, almost still.

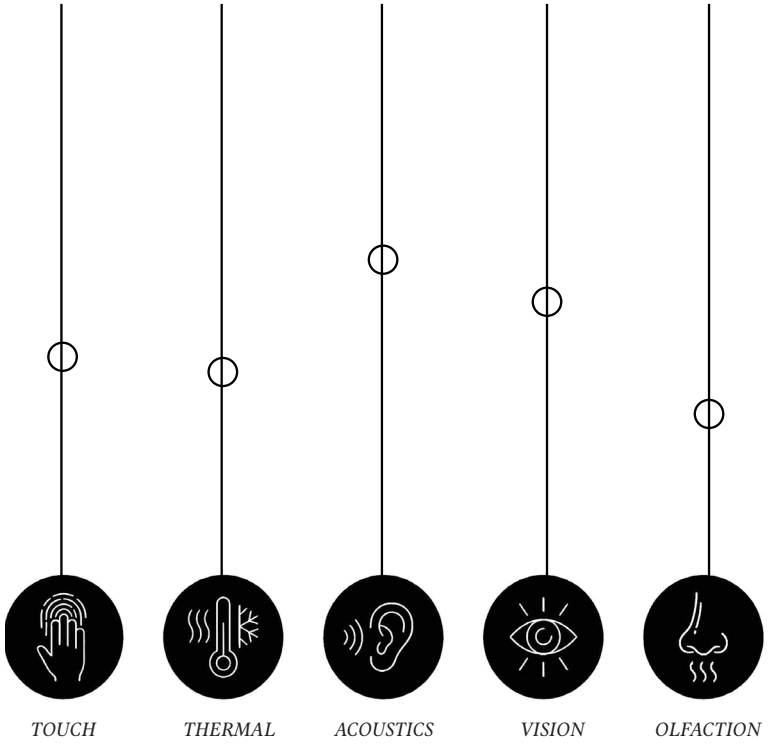
A rhythmic corridor of illuminated panels set within carved arches, where past and present are read in quiet succession.

Figure 100: Zone 2 — The Corridor of Context (Visitor Pausing at Point E)

A sheltered pause within the ruin where movement softens into rest and quiet exchange.

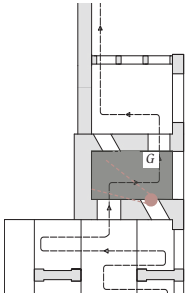
Figure 101: Zone 2 — The Corridor of Context (Visitor Pausing at Point F)

This is what I want the visitor to feel here , a quiet slowing down. After moving through images, voices, and weight, this space offers nothing to interpret and nothing to perform. Just the coolness of stone, the softness of filtered light, and the presence of the ruin holding you without demand. Here, one can sit, speak gently, or remain silent. The architecture does not guide or question; it simply allows stillness to exist.



A graphic mapping of how each sense is intentionally modulated to construct emotional understanding within the space.

Figure 102: Sensory Calibration Diagram-The Corridor of Context



Key Plan

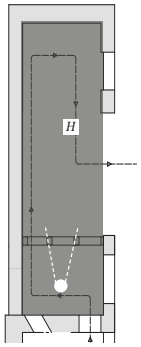
8.3.2 The Quiet Niche

This small alcove offers a more intimate pause. The bench rests directly against the masonry, allowing the body to lean into the cool texture of the ruin. Light enters softly, without drama. Here, one does not converse or respond—one simply sits, reads, or lets thoughts settle in solitude. The scale is contained, almost protective, creating a moment of inward reflection within the larger journey.

sheltered corner within the ruin where solitude places movement.

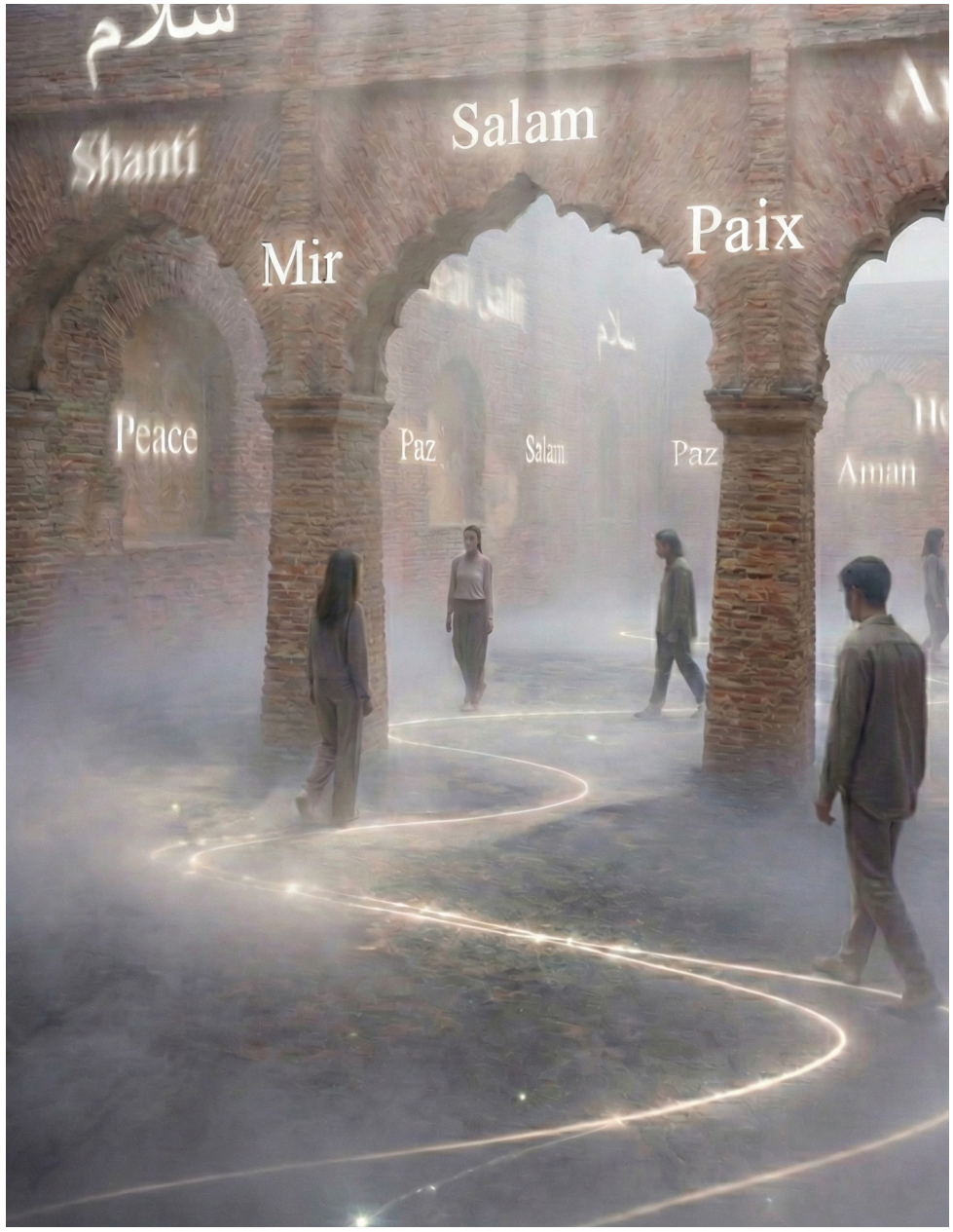
Figure 103: Zone 2 — Quiet Niche (Visitor Resting at Point G)

8.4 Zone 3:Breath of Peace



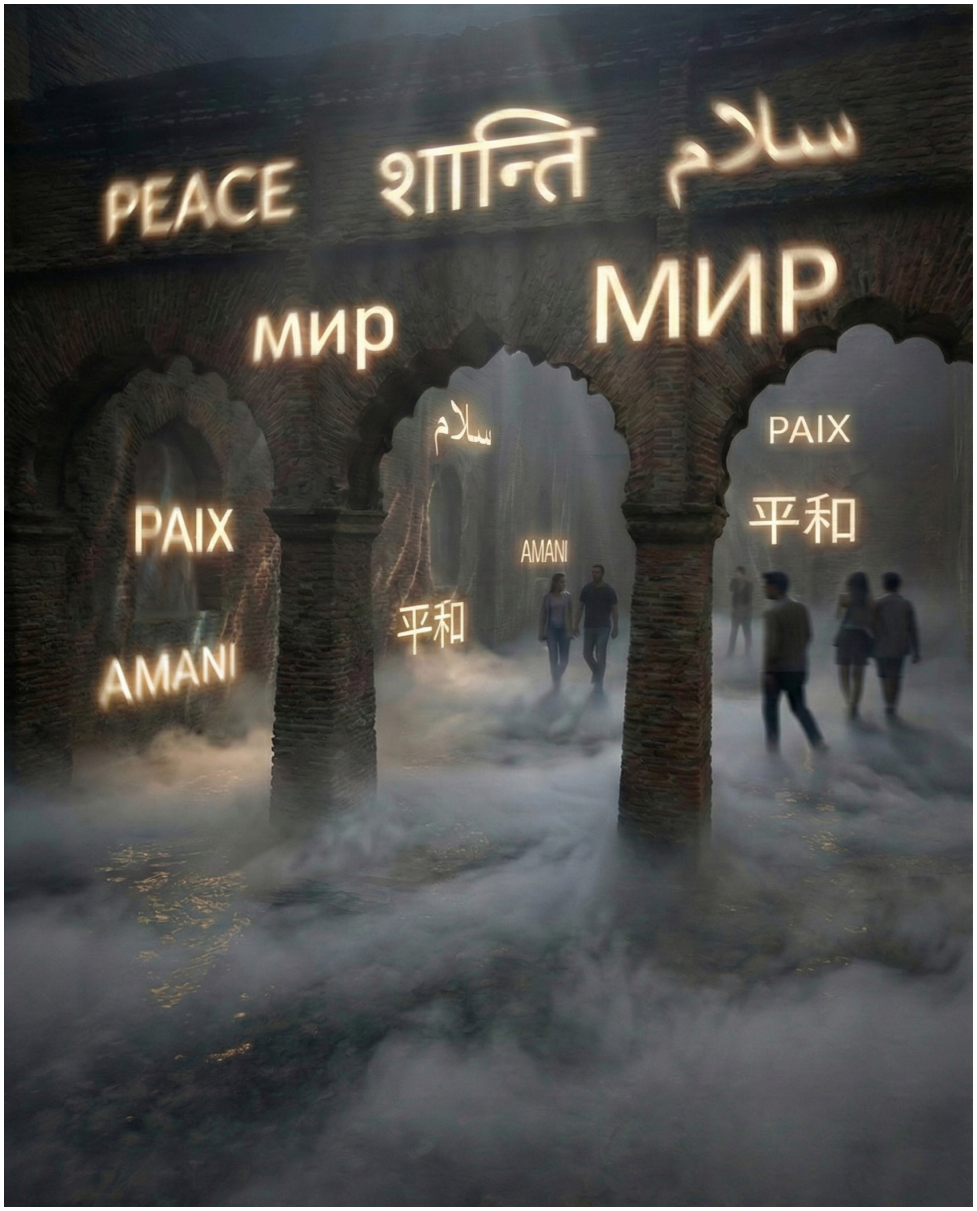
Key Plan

I want the visitor to enter this space and feel something shift inside them. The mist softens the ruin, blurring the brick and arches until the space feels weightless. A thin line of light moves across the ground, brightening and dimming like a pulse, almost syncing with the body's own rhythm. As you walk, it guides you gently, not toward a destination, but toward awareness. Around you, the word for peace appears in different languages, spoken softly, projected faintly, echoing through the fog. You begin to realize that peace is not one word, not one culture, not one moment. It belongs to everyone, and yet it depends on each person. The space does not teach peace. It asks you to feel your place within it—to slow down, to listen, and to recognize that peace is something fragile, shared, and carried forward by human presence.



A mist-filled arcade where light breathes slowly beneath your feet and the word peace surrounds you in many voices.

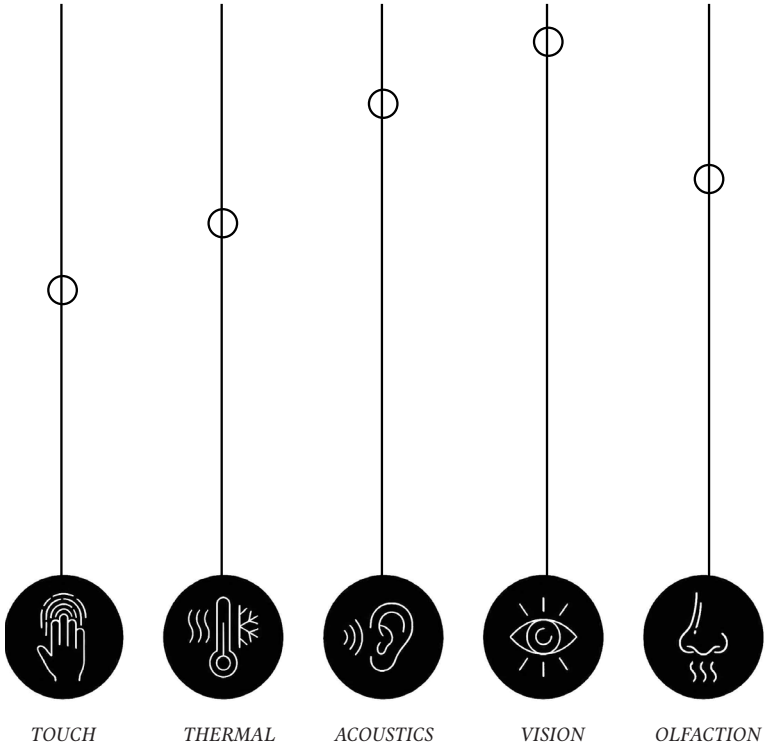
Figure 104: Zone 3 (Person Walking Through Point H)



Glowing words for peace drift through mist-filled arches, surrounding the body in a shared, universal quiet.

Figure 105: The Chamber of Captive Breath(Space B)

In this space, I want the visitor to begin questioning quietly—what does violence truly lead to, and what is ever gained from it? As they move through the mist and feel the light pulse beneath their steps, I want them to notice their own response: did the earlier spaces feel heavy, tense, restless? And how does this one feel now? The contrast is intentional. Through that shift, I hope they understand that peace is not abstract—it is the softness of breath, the ease in the body, the ability to stand without fear. Peace is the quiet beauty of simply being alive. Nothing we fight for holds more value than that.



A graphic mapping of how each sense is intentionally modulated to construct emotional understanding within the space.

Figure 106: Sensory Calibration Diagram-Breath Of Peace

WALKING INTO AWARENESS

FIGURE 91

SPACES THAT TOUCH THE BODY FIRST LEAVE MEANING THAT STAYS

9.1 Reflection on Emotional Interiors

This thesis began with the belief that interior space is never neutral. Even when minimal or unadorned, it carries atmosphere, memory, and emotional weight. In contemporary practice, interiors often prioritize efficiency, circulation, and visual order, sometimes at the cost of deeper sensory and emotional engagement. This research set out to question that shift and to reposition interior design as an emotional discipline.

Through theoretical study and spatial experimentation, it became clear that emotion in interiors does not arise from decoration or symbolism alone. It is constructed through spatial conditions like compression and openness, light and shadow, texture and temperature, silence and resonance. The body becomes the first interpreter. Before we analyze an interior intellectually, we respond to it physically.

The Museum of Emotions demonstrates how emotional awareness can be structured through interior sequencing. By moving through Himsa, transition, Ahimsa, and reflection, the project shows how contrast heightens perception. Tension makes calm meaningful. Discomfort allows relief to feel genuine. Emotional interiors are not about exaggeration, but about careful calibration.

This reflection reinforces the idea that interiors can shape internal states. When designed intentionally, they become more than functional environments , they become catalysts for awareness.

9.2 Interior as a Medium of Awareness

Interiors surround the body intimately. They shape how we walk, pause, gather, withdraw, and breathe. This thesis positions the interior not as a backdrop, but as an active medium capable of influencing perception and consciousness.

In the experiential zones, awareness emerges through movement. The visitor slows down, adjusts posture, negotiates thresholds, and senses shifts in enclosure and light. These changes are subtle, yet they alter internal states profoundly. The design does not dictate emotion; it creates conditions where emotion becomes present through bodily engagement.

The interpretive zones complement this journey by allowing feeling to transform into understanding. Writing, reading, listening, and collective reflection give space for internal experience to become shared dialogue. Emotion is not replaced by information; it is deepened by context.

Interior design, in this sense, becomes a practice of shaping awareness. It influences not only how space is occupied, but how the self is experienced within it. Interiors do not merely contain activity , they frame emotional presence.

9.3 Contribution to Adaptive Reuse Practice

Adaptive reuse is often discussed in terms of preservation, sustainability, or economic practicality. While these remain important, this thesis proposes an additional perspective: adaptive reuse as an emotional act.

The British Residency in Lucknow is not an empty structure; it is a site layered with conflict, memory, resilience, and time. Rather than restoring it to an idealized past or concealing its scars, the project works with its incompleteness. Weathered masonry, exposed decay, voids, and open skies remain visible and active within the experience.

New interior interventions are minimal, reversible, and clearly contemporary. The contrast between existing ruin and inserted elements becomes part of the emotional narrative. Old and new do not compete; they coexist. The past is not reconstructed, it is sensed through material presence and spatial atmosphere.

Through this approach, the thesis expands adaptive reuse beyond conservation. It demonstrates how interiors can engage memory without overwhelming it, and how reuse can foster reflection rather than simply preserve form. Adaptive reuse becomes a way of reconnecting people to time and place through embodied experience.

9.4 Final Reflection

Every interior carries something within it. Before we identify materials or proportions, we feel atmosphere. The weight of a ceiling, the softness of light, the echo of footsteps, these qualities shape emotional response quietly and continuously.

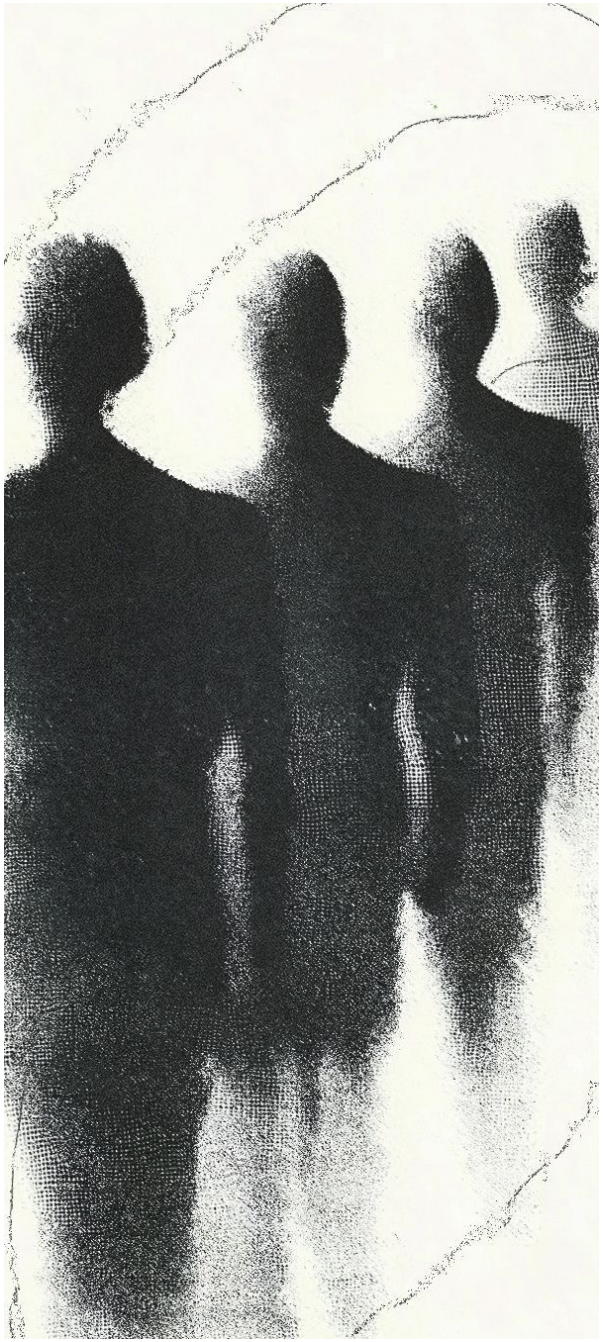
The Museum of Emotions does not attempt to define violence or peace. Instead, it creates spatial conditions where visitors can experience tension, transition, and stillness. It does not instruct; it invites. Through movement, contrast, and atmosphere, the project encourages awareness , of the body, of history, and of shared humanity.

If this thesis leaves a lasting insight, it is this: emotional presence should not be secondary in interior design. It is fundamental. Interiors have the capacity to slow us down in a culture defined by speed. They can hold memory without spectacle, and offer calm without excess.

When interiors are felt before they are understood, they become meaningful. And when interior design engages emotion with care and sensitivity, it does more than organize space , it deepens human experience.

Every space carries something within it. The moment we enter a room, we feel it, even if we cannot immediately explain what it is. Sometimes we call it atmosphere, sometimes mood, and often we ignore it. We walk through buildings as if they are only walls and floors, forgetting that they hold memory, time, and the marks of what has happened there. This thesis is a reminder that spaces are not empty containers; they have emotional depth, shaped by their history, their material, and the lives that have passed through them. They are connected to their place, their geography, their context. Design should never lose this emotional presence, because that is what gives a space meaning. The next time we step into any environment, perhaps we can pause and ask, not just what we see, but what we feel, and what that space has quietly carried before us.

This journey was never meant to explain history or label emotions. It was about creating space for feelings we usually push aside. As you move through moments of pressure, pause, reflection, and release, the architecture quietly stays with you, never forcing, never shouting, just allowing you to feel. If this work leaves anything behind, I hope it is a gentle awareness: that violence carries weight, that stillness has power, and that peace is not something far away or dramatic. It lives in a calm breath, in silence, and in the simple choices we make as we move ahead.



ACKNOWLEDGING THE THINKERS WHO INFORMED THIS JOURNEY.

FIGURE 91

10.1 Bibliography

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10.2 Image Credits

Author-Generated Work

Figure 8. Gupta, R. (2026). Emotional geographies composition. Digital collage created in Adobe Photoshop.

Figure 9. Gupta, R. (2026). Experiencing space through the body. Hand sketch.

Figure 10. Gupta, R. (2026). Awareness emerging through contrast. Hand-drawn conceptual diagram.

Figures 11–12. Gupta, R. (2026). Emotional contrast sketches. Hand-drawn conceptual studies.

Figure 14. Gupta, R. (2026). Emotional reconnection illustration. Digital composition, Adobe Photoshop.

Figure 20. Gupta, R. (2026). Abstract emotional diagrams. Hand sketches.

Figure 22. Gupta, R. (2026). Spatial storytelling diagram. Hand sketch.

Figure 23. Gupta, R. (2026). Adaptive reuse conceptual study. Hand sketch.

Figure 24. Gupta, R. (2026). Adaptive reuse collage. Digital montage created in Adobe Photoshop.

Figure 30. Gupta, R. (2026). Conceptual visualization of adaptive reuse as emotional landscape. Digital rendering.

Figure 35. Gupta, R. (2026). Site plan of British Residency. Drafted in AutoCAD.

Figure 36. Gupta, R. (2026). Layout drawings of selected intervention structures. Drafted in AutoCAD.

Figures 51–54. Gupta, R. (2026). Spatial sequencing and zoning diagrams. Hand sketches and digital compositions.

Figures 55–90. Gupta, R. (2026). Experiential and interpretive zone visualizations, plans, and renders. Digital renderings created for this thesis.

Figures 92–106. Gupta, R. (2026). Interpretive zone installations and sensory diagrams. Digital renderings and diagrams created for this thesis.

Author Photography

Figures 15, 17, 18. Gupta, R. (2025). Photographs taken at Jewish Museum Berlin and related site visits.

Figures 31, 34. Gupta, R. (2025). British Residency, Lucknow. Site documentation photographs.

Figures 37–47. Gupta, R. (2025). Memorial of Native Officers & Sepoys and Treasury interiors, British Residency, Lucknow.

Figures 49–50. Gupta, R. (2025). Site and spatial documentation photographs.

Museum-Sourced Historical Images

Figures 32–33. Residency Museum, Lucknow. Archival images of British Residency before and after the Revolt of 1857. Photograph of museum display by author.

Figure 48. Residency Museum, Lucknow. Historical depiction of the Siege of Lucknow (1857). Photograph of museum exhibit by author.

AI-Generated Images

Figures 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 13.
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External Reference Images (Internet / Archival Sources)

Figure 16

Jewish Museum Berlin interior.

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Figure 21

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Figure 91

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