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ABROAD

by

CONSTANZA LOUSTALET

Under the Direction of Ryan Henderson Crooks, MA

ABSTRACT

International students study abroad for many different reasons, which may include personal and professional growth, sometimes prompted by unfortunate political, social, or economic circumstances. A common struggle for international students is adapting to the new environment their host country offers. To address this, my thesis project entitled *Abroad* provides a structured campus space as an accessible entry point where international students can find needed emotional relief in the search for long-term solutions. The space will be designed to contribute to emotional well-being, with graphic content to create a sense of belonging, and printed information to encourage students to embrace the idea of contemplation with the ambition of fostering a supportive community.

INDEX WORDS: International students, Adaptation, Belonging, Community, Well-being, Reflection, Contemplation, Meditation, Cultural adjustment, Support.

ABROAD

by

CONSTANZA LOUSTALET

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in the College of the Arts

Georgia State University

2020

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2020

ABROAD

by

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Georgia State University

May 2020

DEDICATION

Para mis viejos.

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This project is for all you, my international friends.

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1 INTRODUCTION

In the early 1800s, the United States opened its doors to immigrants from many countries. Since then, the U.S. has become a welcoming country to countless foreigners providing opportunities, comfort, and growth. There are different reasons why people decide to come to this country. In this thesis, I will focus on international students studying abroad, the reasons they come to the U.S., and the challenges and experiences they have throughout their stay.

Moving is a critical time of change for those who experience it, whether it is across town, the country, or the world. International students know and understand this process as a period of adaptation related to culture, customs, weather and food, among other issues. These changes can have positive or negative impacts depending on the lived experience of the student. International offices in universities or colleges are required to provide a program with orientations, activities, and events to familiarize international students with the host country traditions. In some cases, trips around the U.S. are offered to introduce new cities and increase the school's popularity. The program also contributes to the opportunity to meet other people, but usually, the relationships international students build is with other foreigners and not with natives. Even though the program offers a great service, some aspects of adaptation are not covered.

Most international students experience moments of culture shock; this phenomenon can happen at the beginning of the student's arrival or can take months to develop. Culture shock refers to the feeling of disorientation in a new life. This concept is divided into four stages: honeymoon, frustration, adjustment, and acceptance. The stages can be experienced differently in each person, but a standard guide identifies the conventional concept of each. The honeymoon stage is when the person is excited about new surroundings and enthusiastic about the positive changes he or she made in his or her life. Some people stay in this stage for an extended period depending on their

estimated stay and opportunities of traveling back and forth to their home country. The frustration stage may be the most challenging since it affects the most minimal things, for instance, the fatigue of not understanding gestures and signs, miscommunications, missing the bus, or losing keys. Moments of depression, homesickness, or feelings of wishing to be home are frequent in this stage because of the familiarity students have at home. The adjustment stage starts once the person begins to feel comfortable and relates to the host culture. It also becomes easier to navigate new daily events, people have established a community of friends, and commodities of language are distinguishable. The acceptance stage is the person's consciousness that a complete understanding of a culture is not necessary to be able to succeed in the new surroundings. Usually, when students are at this stage, it is because they know how to deal with their emotions and feel at ease.¹

Besides these stages, there are common feelings international students also experience depending on their special status. Sometimes variations of doubt, fear, and guilt are present while they are trying to adjust to their new life. Doubts about language ability, of not belonging, or being hesitant about their study abroad. Fear of acceptance from natives and in some cases, guilt for leaving their loved ones and their home.

For these reasons, I find it necessary to create a space on campus where international students can find a sense of relief and peace. I aim to build a place of comfort where they can let go, release their feelings and worries and, if comfortable, talk to others who might be dealing with similar circumstances. Through this, relationships and a sense of community and belonging can be built.

¹ "The 4 Stages of Culture Shock." Medium. Global Perspectives, February 19, 2016. <https://medium.com/global-perspectives/the-4-stages-of-culture-shock-a79957726164>.

2 ADAPTATION AND BELONGING

Before addressing designing, it is essential to understand the reason for and research on international students' adaptive struggles and sense of belonging in their host countries. Additional research demonstrates in-depth the benefits international students bring to the US, the different environments they experience, and the necessity for the creation of this space.

According to Homeland Security data report from March 2019 there are 67,631 Active Students (AS) from North America, 64,751 AS from South America, 83,030 AS from Europe, 893,074 AS from Asia, 54,042 AS from Africa and 6,896 AS from Australia and Pacific Islands creating a total of 1,169,424 active students in the United States. The state of Georgia has only 2.14% for a total of 25,036 international students. Data also indicates that 47.7% are female, and 52.3% are male and majority of these AS are working toward their Bachelors, Masters, and Doctorates².

The latest data statistics from Georgia State University indicates that the enrollment of international students from Fall 2018 was a total of 3,309 students, ranged as 47% male, and 53% female. Statistics show that 70% of international students were from Asia, 12% from Africa, 6% from Europe, 6% from North America, 5% from South America and 1% from Oceania. Data also reveals as well that the top five countries of origin are India, China, South Korea, Vietnam, and Nigeria. Furthermore, the primary sources of income/funding are 45% personal or family savings, 44% current employment, and 3% of government funding. Academic enrollment ranges from Associates, Bachelors, Masters, and Doctoral degrees. Data on undergraduate enrollment by college shows Perimeter College, College of Arts and Sciences, and J. Mack Robinson College of Business as the top three selections. Similarly, for graduate studies, enrollment by college was

² "Mapping SEVIS by the Numbers." Study in the States, April 17, 2019.

College of Arts and Sciences, J. Mack Robinson College of Business, and Andrew Young School of Policy Studies as the top three choices³.

Furthermore, according to the International Student and Scholar Services at Georgia State University, international students contributed \$39 billion and supported 455,622 jobs in the U.S. economy, indicating that for every seven international students that are enrolled, three U.S. jobs are created and supported by expenses on higher education, lodging, food, retail, transportation, telecommunications, and health insurance. This statistic also demonstrates that international students in the state of Georgia contributed \$808.6 million by supporting 10,254 jobs to the local economy. Georgia State University's international students contributed \$94.5 million to the local economy, leading to the creation and support of 1,255 jobs⁴.

Previous data is essential to the design of a structure, since it demonstrates the benefits that international students provide to the US economy, describes their financial struggle, and notes their educational status (undergraduate or graduate). All of these factors can lead to levels of stress and anxiety that could affect the transition and adaptation to the host country. The country of origin and how culture plays its part is also a factor to consider since elements of design could have different meanings to each of them coming from another background.

International students at the beginning of their educational careers have to familiarize themselves with the host culture, their values, food, weather, customs, the academic system, as well as how to learn to approach others to build new relationships while maintaining old ones. But their sense of belonging is formed by the restrictions they are subject to, including legal, political,

³ "International Student Enrollment." Georgia State University, International Student and Scholar Services, Fall 2018, 2-4.

⁴ "International Student Enrollment." Georgia State University, International Student and Scholar Services, 5.

and social interaction⁵. Issues of racism and cultural discrimination, national origin, and the relationship between countries are unfortunate common exposures in the States, which an international student might have never dealt with before. Acknowledging these is a dynamic they have to familiarize with. By all means, these factors have an immense influence on international student social and educational adaptation as she or he advances through school. And since we can understand how these can be stressors, it is necessary to look in-depth at how to help them navigate and integrate to reach a positive outcome.

Dealing with these challenges can be hard for international students. Some factors that often affect them are language barriers, communication, lack of knowledge about the new culture, financial problems, and social skills. Offering financial assistance and scholarships as well as creating opportunities for interaction with natives provides aid adjustment and enhance comfort, leading to higher levels of satisfaction and a positive experience abroad.

Researcher and theorist, Young Yun Kim calls the process of adaptation to an unfamiliar culture a “stress-adaptation-growth dynamic,” explaining it as “a process that is deeply rooted in the natural human tendency to achieve an internal equilibrium in the face of adversarial environmental conditions.”⁶ Kim also mentions that “different reasons for crossing cultures accompany different degrees of commitment one feels toward the new environment”⁷. Kim focuses on four terms that describe cross-cultural adaptation: acculturation, coping and adjustment, integration and assimilation.

⁵ Glass, Chris R. “International Students’ Sense of Belonging-Locality, Relationships, and Power.” Association of American Colleges & Universities, April 30, 2018. <https://www.aacu.org/peerreview/2018/Winter/Glass>, 29.

⁶ Kim, Young Yun. “Cross-Cultural Adaptation.” Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication, August 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.21>, 1.

⁷ Kim, Young Yun. “Cross-Cultural Adaptation”, 2.

Acculturation is the process by which individuals adopt some aspects of the host culture. Coping and adjustment are psychological responses to cross-cultural challenges. Integration specifies an individual's social participation in the host community. Assimilation indicates a comprehensive psychological, social, and cultural change. The goal of this concept of cross-cultural adaptation is to achieve an overall equilibrium between the international student and the host country.

“Each adaptive change inevitably accompanies stress in the individual psyche”⁸ says Kim, explaining that trying to acculturate into the new culture while also resisting it is a common stressor because the process is an identity conflict for the international student. “The psychological disequilibrium created by such conflicting forces generate moments of “crisis”, which are manifested and revealed in emotional “lows” of uncertainty, confusion, and anxiety. Stress, as such, is an expression of the instinctive human desire to restore homeostasis, that is, to hold constant a range of variables in internal structure to achieve an integrated whole”⁹. As an international student, I have experienced this transnational identity issue. Because I am trying to be part of American traditions, I am losing parts of my old self and culture. Sometimes this is growth, but sometimes it feels like a battle I did not know I was not expecting.

Finding a sense of balance can be a difficult task for an international student. A study by Coordinator in the Minority Teacher Recruitment Program at Western Kentucky University (WKU) Julia Rivas, Study Abroad Advisor in the Office of Study Abroad & Global Learning at KWU Katherine Hale, and Associate Professor in the Department of Counseling and Student Affairs at KWU Monica Galloway Burke, Ph.D. on social connectedness to American college students and international students' social and cultural integration shows detailed information from

⁸ Kim, Young Yun, 5.

⁹ Kim, Young Yun, 5.

different international students about their lived experiences and transitions. Results indicated that most interviewed participants found a deeper connection with other international students rather than Americans. The level of social belonging also depended on the international student's personality. In the case of a person with an active social life, it would be easier for an international student to approach others, vice versa with a person who has a non-active social experience. These are the cases when people would feel loneliness, depression, or low self-esteem. Language barriers were a common factor in the results as well; in this scenario, some participants expressed how they had to mentally interpret sentences before stating what they meant to say, even when they did not find English to be a difficult language. The difference between the American educational system and that of other countries was also a common factor, explaining how in their countries of origin they would study each year with the same people. In the States, there is a diverse set of areas of study. Participants also claimed that they encountered situations of discrimination and prejudice on campus, not only from American students but from professors. This stressor negatively impacts the educational fulfillment international students were seeking.

“Ensuring that all students, domestic and international, are made to feel welcome and accepted into the campus community should be a priority for institutions of higher education.”¹⁰ Rivas, Hale, and Galloway mention institutions should pay close attention to the social and academic integration of international students to succeed at a school. They are also suggesting that it is essential to implement initiatives and programs to assist with the international student's social, academic, and cultural involvement. In addition, Rivas, Hale, and Galloway consider that it's

¹⁰ Rivas, Julia, Katherine Hale, and Monica Galloway Burke. “Seeking a Sense of Belonging: Social and Cultural Integration of International Students with American College Students.” *Journal of International Students* 9, no. 2 (2019): 682–704. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v9i2.943>, 697.

essential to be aware of international students' cultural backgrounds and to have a safe space where international students can talk about their concerns and address social and emotional issues.

There are strategies to help international students feel that they belong and to improve in their mental health. Most of the time, it is as simple as building relationships with others. These strategies can create awareness of the acculturation challenges the student is facing, the financial limitations they might be experiencing, or the fact that international students must enroll full-time to keep their visa status. Also, while welcoming and being mindful of the student's experience of racism and discrimination, understanding the methods of communication for each international student, and acknowledging inclusivity, one can find common ground.

Director of Faculty and Global Program Development and Affiliate Professor of Geography at Western Michigan University, Michelle Metro-Roland Ph.D. mentions that "one approach is to create communities organized around shared markers beyond national identity alone,"¹¹ which makes sense since related studies have shown that international students' sense of belonging and adaptation starts by being able to have relationships with natives. Even though this is a factor, most international students tend to befriend people from the same country or ethnicity because of the familiarity. Metro-Roland explains that getting used to other people will not just happen by having temporary approaches, but by engaging in acts of friendship. "One way to do this is to find a common ground on which to meet that transcends national identity."¹²

Most universities offer events for international students to meet people and make friends. The problem with these events is that the social interaction is temporary. Students who are new to the process of adaptation need more advisement and comfort to feel welcome in a new place than

¹¹ Metro-Roland, Michelle. 2018. "Community, Identity, and International Student Engagement." *Journal of International Students*, no. 3. doi:10.32674/jis.v8i3.63, 1408.

¹² Metro-Roland, Michelle. "Community, Identity, and International Student Engagement." 1413.

international students, that have been in the host country for an extended period. An example of ways to help international students with their journey is the Fulbright Program.

The Fulbright Program is a scholarship to increase mutual understanding, support, and a friendly relationship between people from the United States and other countries. Fulbright works through an annual appropriation from the US Congress and the US Department of State, who sponsor the program exchange with more than 155 other countries around the world. The State Department manages the overall program by setting priorities, allocating resources, and funds¹³. Funding is different for each awardee, but it often provides coverage of tuition waivers, student fees, insurance, and a monthly income in the US. Besides being an organization that helps international students economically, the Fulbright Program has events, organizations, meetings, trips, and more throughout the year. An organization like this one helps international students integrate and partner up with others. The following is a statement about the program from an international student, who was selected by this organization to come and study in the US, Nikolai Elneser:

I would say that the main advantage that Fulbright offers to us as international students in the US is the network of people that we can reach in case we need anything. Being part of a community with a specific brand name and trajectory helps make friends and open your way through discussions. It is about being part of a community that has to go through the same cultural shocks, homesickness, but most importantly, the same paperwork and processes. These shared experiences put us closer during our lives in the US. Now, this is only possible because of the platform of events, activities, and opportunities that Fulbright gives students and the scale of the organization. Having an organization that looks after you and continuously offers opportunities to connect and learn in semi-personalized fashion is very useful.¹⁴

¹³ “What Is The Fulbright Program?” What is Fulbright? | Fulbright Scholar Program. <https://www.cies.org/about-us/what-fulbright>.

¹⁴ Elneser, Nikolai. Interview by Constanza Loustalet. Written Interview. Georgia State University, November 19, 2019.

Each person has their way of dealing with adaptation. Some deal with their experiences and feelings through religion, music, art, or conversations with others. Even though events, workshops, and orientation programs provide a certain level of help with their acculturation process, international students need an integrational space. They need a physical space where they can enrich their journey in the host country. A space where they feel that there is somewhere, they belong outside of their rented rooms and are allowed as well as encouraged to relieve the feelings of stress, anxiety, culture shock, or other emotions that they are dealing with.

3 CASE STUDIES

Various research leads to the analysis of meditation rooms, reflection spaces and how universities are adopting different methods to help and try to improve students' well-being during their experience abroad. Dana Micucci, a writer from *The New York Times*, wrote about international education and how meditation provided this help, her article states "proponents say that students who meditate daily are calmer, less distracted and less stressed and less prone to violent behavior."¹⁵ In addition, a four-month study by the Medical College of Georgia found that transcendental meditation reduced high blood pressure if the student meditated twice a day. Furthermore, medical researcher Robert Keith Wallace, at the University of California, published a study on the positive physiological effects that meditation had on universities like Harvard, Stanford, and UCLA that started to do studies on transcendental meditation. The results showed how this exercise helped students cope with stress, anxiety, violence, and depression. Micucci quotes Gary Kaplan, a neurologist and clinical associate professor at NYU, who explains that meditation "produces a state of restful alertness that provides the body with deep, rejuvenating rest and allows the mind to reach higher levels of creativity, clarity and intelligence."¹⁶

¹⁵ Micucci, Dana. "International Education: Meditation Helps Students." *The New York Times*. *The New York Times*, February 15, 2005. <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/15/style/international-education-meditation-helps-students.html>

¹⁶ Micucci, Dana. "International Education: Meditation Helps Students."

3.1 Non-institutional

3.1.1 Salk Institute for Biological Studies

The Salk Institute for Biological Studies by Louis Kahn is a nonprofit research center that specializes in genetics, neuroscience, and molecular and plant biology. The institute is a facility lauded for its functionality and outstanding aesthetics, while accentuating how both features support the other. The laboratory spaces are open, spacious, and easy to update as new technologies arrive. The design of the structure was meant to be simple, bright, welcoming, and durable with minimal maintenance. It was important for researchers to be in an inspiring environment.

“Kahn’s scheme for the institute is spatially orchestrated in a similar way to a monastery: a secluded intellectual community.”¹⁷ The laboratories were initially designed as a pair of towers separated by a garden and later developed into two elongated masses that mirror each other across the covered plaza. The towers are connected to bridges and provide a passage across the rifts of the two sunken courts, allowing natural light into the research spaces below. This abundant daylight reaches the basement levels of the building. Tim Ball, senior director of facilities at the complex, says “the way the light penetrates it... you can turn off all the lights and still have daylight in the building.”¹⁸ (figure 1) These courts were added not only as light sources but as a reference to the cloisters of St. Francis of Assisi monastery.

¹⁷ Fiederer, Luke. “AD Classics: Salk Institute / Louis Kahn.” ArchDaily. ArchDaily, January 11, 2019. <https://www.archdaily.com/61288/ad-classics-salk-institute-louis-kahn>.

¹⁸ Miranda, Carolina A. “Louis Kahn’s Salk Institute, the Building That Guesses Tomorrow, Is Aging - Very, Very Gracefully.” Los Angeles Times. Los Angeles Times, November 22, 2016. <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/miranda/la-et-cam-salk-institute-louis-kahn-20161107-htlstory.html>.



Figure 1 Photo by J. Paul Getty Trust. Salk Institute. 2016.

Design decisions of the institute were influenced by lessons from a previous project, Richards Medical Research Laboratories at the University of Pennsylvania, which started with an open, unobstructed layout. The notion of separating research spaces from utility infrastructure is so maintenance can be done without disturbing science. As mentioned before, laboratories are designed to be easily updated by a support beam system restricted to the edges of each lab. This feature allows for greater flexibility in reconfiguring equipment. Offices are disconnected from studies on purpose, so researchers step out into fresh air, conversation areas are throughout the

buildings to encourage them to gather and exchange ideas. Those looking for privacy have to cross the bridge into one of the ten towers aligned in the central square where small studies are located. These towers have windows facing the west into the square and the ocean offering areas of intense contemplation.

The function of the building may be for science, but the structure feels like a temple of nature. The unfinished concrete at the walls of the institute correlate to the color in the travertine square forming a sublime monumentality, “composed of strong-willed yet sensuous materials - travertine and reinforced concrete- it possesses a hushed dignity that encourages contemplation.”¹⁹ Anabelle Selldorf says about the institute, “It reflects an understanding of science and the simultaneity of working together and working in solitude. It reflects our desire to be in contact with nature, but also a very refined thinking about tactility and materials. I find it so inspiring.”²⁰ (figure 2).

The square was meant to be a garden, but Luis Barragan convinced Kahn to leave the space as a void, by stating “I would put not a single tree in this area. I would make a plaza. If you make a plaza, you will have another façade to the sky.”²¹ (figure 3) This effect creates a connection to the ocean, of infinite feeling and admiration. Jim Olson, from Olson Kundig Architects, observed “bisecting it all is a channel of water that seems to pour into the Pacific below. The buildings, molded in concrete with an accentuated touch of teak, focus the person’s gaze on the horizon so “you are one with the ocean”.”²² Ariel Plotek, a curator who visited the institute said, “I felt I was

¹⁹ Stein, Karen. “Louis I. Kahn's Salk Institute Remains a Modernist Beacon.” *Architectural Digest*. *Architectural Digest*, September 2, 2015. <https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/louis-kahn-salk-institute-la-jolla-california-article>.

²⁰ Miranda, Carolina A. “Louis Kahn's Salk Institute, the Building That Guesses Tomorrow, Is Aging - Very, Very Gracefully.”

²¹ Miranda, Carolina A.

²² Stein, Karen. “Louis I. Kahn's Salk Institute Remains a Modernist Beacon.”

in the presence of something that was as perfectly designed and as sublime as the religious buildings I had studied... there is wholeness to it, a unity.”²³



Figure 2 Photo by Lee F. Mindel. Salk Institute. 2016.

²³ Miranda, Carolina A.



Figure 3 Photo by Liao Yusheng, Salk Institute. 2019.

3.1.2 House

Luis Barragan's House (1948) is located in the old Tacubaya neighborhood where nearly the entire façade conserves the natural roughness of the plastered concrete, to preserve the appearance of the community. The automobile entrance and window's ironwork are the only painted feature. Once you enter the house, the composition changes since the small entrance is composed as a sensorial, emotional filter. Sight, smell, touch, and hearing take place in a state of expectancy caused by the influence of a palette of materials, wood, stone, and whitewashed walls. (figure 4) The stone extends into a second door to the vestibule. The concept of the stones is to highlight the paradoxical sensation of being in a courtyard at the very center of the house. Composed as a reflection mechanism, the second door divides the golden penumbra of the entrance hall from the intense light of the vestibule, "from the outside yellow southern plane, light shines onto the golden surface of an abstract altarpiece, created by Mathias Goeritz, and bathes the intense pink of the walls. A faint pink shadow casts upon the white wall of the stairs, the essential color

where reflections and shadows always return.”²⁴ (figure 5) In Barragan’s architecture, colors are surfaces that dematerialize the faces of its volumes, while also being capable of owning volume and weight by themselves.



Figure 4 Luis Barragán Foundation Website. Casa Luis Barragán, Entrance. 1948.

²⁴ “CASA LUIS BARRAGÁN.” Fundación de Arquitectura Tapatía Luis Barragán A. C. http://www.casaluisbarragan.org/eng/en_lacasa.html.



Figure 5 Photo by David Wakely. Casa Luis Barragan. December 27th, 2017.

On the western façade of the house, the boundary of the street's façade differentiates by the proportion of its openings and its inner connection mechanism between the house and garden. Here nature accompanies the experience of the inside through the large window in the living room. In the workshop, the illumination comes from the eastern window in contact with the street. (figure

6) On the other side of the room this light is substituted by a series of white planes that illuminate the space through the slanted wood ceiling which ends up being the outstanding focus of the room. (figure 6) “This progressive volumetric arrangement directs the view towards the last plane, the blue sky that completes the composition.”²⁵ What is interesting in Barragán’s architecture is that throughout his design the windows in all rooms are not thought or constructed for the exterior façade but for the interiors. A result of the use of space and the relationship they keep with the occupied lived space, as organic architecture growing outwards from its core. Contemplation in the space is directed by color and the playfulness of lighting.



Figure 6 Luis Barragán Foundation Website. Casa Luis Barragán, Workshop. 1948.

²⁵ “CASA LUIS BARRAGÁN.” Fundación de Arquitectura Tapatía Luis Barragán A. C.



Figure 7 Luis Barragán Foundation Website. Casa Luis Barragán, Workshop. 1948.

3.1.3 Riondolo

Riondolo is a micro-structure located at the Stelvio National Park in Italy. The structure was designed by architect's Giovanni Wegher and Lorenza Piffer to lead visitors through moments of contemplation, meditation, and dialogue. It is a space to escape the everyday struggle. "...A place where one can experiment through the mind's eye the imagination, which lies in the deepest part of everyone's consciousness."²⁶ Wegher says. Since the location is in a natural environment, the wooden structure, explores the sensory perception of nature through frames of light. It is meant to be lived inside and outside as a place for reflection. (figure 8) It was created to be able to change

²⁶ Wegher, Giovanni. "Riondolo." giowe.com. May 2014. <https://giowe.com/riondolo>.

locations and aimed to be completed by the impressions and personal thoughts of its visitors. Wegher wanted to provide a sense of some live journal, hoping that this structure could be built by those in need of a place of personal intimacy. (figure 9, 10, 11, 12) "A creation originated by the unique experience of the sun, Luciferian greatness, meaningful experience in itself, a sort of symbol of human resistance, a primordial focal point, a real uncorrupted way of thinking about our place in the universe."²⁷



Figure 8 Photo by Giovanni Wegher. Riondolo. 2014.

Wegher's and Piffer's inspiration for Riondolo derives from different philosophical and architectural sources. Including Neruda's poetry, the natural philosophy of Nietzsche,

²⁷ Wegher, Giovanni. "Riondolo."

Schopenhauer's imagination, Jung's psychoanalysis, Louis Khan poetry of material, and the unparalleled organic fullness of Frank Lloyd Wright.



Figure 9 Photo by Giovanni Wegher. Riondolo. 2014.



Figure 10 Photo by Giovanni Wegher. Riondolo. 2014.



Figure 11 Photo by Giovanni Wegher. Riondolo. 2014.



Figure 12 Photo by Giovanni Wegher. Riondolo. 2014.

3.1.4 *Nina's Treehouse*

Camposaz is a design-build initiative that started in 2013 in association with the cultural associations Aguaz and Campomarzio. The self-constructed wood structures are created by workshop groups of architects, designers, and carpenters between the ages of 18 and 35 years old. The idea behind these workshops is to promote the interaction of practitioners who work in various disciplines within architecture and design. By aspiring to enrich the chosen landscape, this group of participants selects a theme and design in collaboration the wooden structures.

This initiative is where *Nina's Treehouse* became a reality. A group of eleven participants worked together to create a contemplation structure at Rotterdam in the Netherlands. This group believed that “People need individual, idyllic places outside of our busy world... It becomes more and more clear; we are full, we need quiet spaces and places to regain our energy and find balance in our busy existence.”²⁸

The concept is made to be a multi-experience space in play with the environment since the area is surrounded by a bamboo forest, grand trees, and the Maas river. By unifying the site and the theme, a solid conceptual tree level structure was developed. The central structure has a triangle

²⁸ Tagliabue, Davide, Eva Seijas, Jonian Silaj, Manon Stadler, Maria Giovanna Sabatino, Nolan Golgert, Paul Schrijen, et al. “6:6 Nina's Tree House.” camposaz. July 2016. <https://www.camposaz.com/portfolio/66-ninas-tree-house/>.

that connects with the concept of the earth, the forest, and the sky. (figure 13) The levels interconnect through hallways and stairs have an addition of a swing, and a bench to promote a sense of comfort. On the highest platform, the view over the river and the harbor achieve the feeling of contemplation, of allowing yourself to integrate into space. (figure 14).



Figure 13 Camposaz Website. Nina's Treehouse. July 2016.



Figure 14 Camposaz Website. Nina's Treehouse. July 2016.

3.2 Institutional

3.2.1 Meditation Corner and Prayer Room

Goldie Van Horn wrote an article for Penn State University News about a meditation corner and a prayer room. “The meditation corner was designed to help students relax and manage stress

while giving them the resources to do it. The prayer room is specifically meant to be more personal and private” director of student services and engagement Tracy Garnick describes.²⁹

The designated space for the meditation corner is located in Hazleton, Pennsylvania, and is designed as a place for quiet study, relaxation, and meditation. It features a calm, comfortable setting filled with items to enhance relaxation. Items added to the space are comfortable leather chairs, a variety of books ranging from topics on stress management to meditation, as well as humor (figure 15). The meditation corner also provides stress balls, ginger candy, and two iPods that provide meditation tunes. There is the addition of two computers with relaxation methods programs: emWave, and TestEdge. emWave is a program that connects a sensor to the student’s ear and measures the student’s heart rate variability. Through that, it provides tutorials to help manage stress based on the result of the relaxation response. TestEdge is a program/test for people who struggle with anxiety. It offers a selection of videos, information, and hints that help to ease the anxiety the student might be dealing with. The aforementioned resources aim to provide a variety of relaxation methods for students.

²⁹ Van Horn, Goldie. “Meditation Corner, Prayer Room Provide a Sense of Peace.” Penn State News. Penn State University, June 8, 2016. <https://news.psu.edu/story/384914/2016/05/02/campus-life/meditation-corner-prayer-room-provide-sense-peace>.



Figure 15 Photo by Michelle Bixby. Meditation Room, Penn State University. 2016.

Additionally, the prayer room, located in Chestnut College, can be used individually or by small groups of students. It is designed with chairs, cushions, and a prayer rug because it is meant to serve students of all faiths (figure 16). The decoration of the room is nature themed since Garnick believed the subject would run across all religions and would establish quietness from the outside in. Counselor Debra Jemo said, “the themes of nature provide a calming, centering feeling in this room.”³⁰ Another distinction between both rooms is that the prayer room is meant to disconnect the student from technology and captivate a contemplative spiritual setting. It is important to note the room can be accessed at all times.

³⁰ Van Horn, Goldie. “Meditation Corner, Prayer Room Provide a Sense of Peace.”



Figure 16 Photo by Michelle Bixby. Prayer Room, Penn State University. 2016.

The creation of the meditation corner and prayer room was funded through the student recreation facility fee since that capital is supposed to be invested in renovations or enhancement of areas outside of the classroom. Garnick said, “people make recommendations for certain projects at the campus. There were two of the proposal that were submitted. Our students are invested in the projects, believed in them and voted to approve them.”³¹ Van Horn mentions that the suggestion to create the prayer room also came from the campus Diversity Affairs Committee as they were thinking of religious needs, particularly from international students. Debra Jemo added, “we needed spaces for quiet areas on campus. The meditation corner and prayer room have met that need.”³²

³¹ Van Horn, Goldie.

³² Van Horn, Goldie.

Students have also spoken about the commodity of having these rooms. Student, Haley Deorio told the library staff, “Every time I have a serious test, hard homework, or just need to be alone and relax, I will go to the meditation corner. It’s secluded and I feel comfortable. It’s a great place to really get to focus on your work but also to relax. Even though I’m in the library, the furniture and setting reminds me of being home and comfortable.”³³

3.2.2 Windhover Contemplative Center

Stanford University also created a way to help students find time for reflection. Windhover Contemplative Center was designed by the architectural firm Aidlin Darling Architects and is located in the heart of Stanford’s campus. The center is considered a spiritual retreat to foster and stimulate personal renewal. Nathan Oliveira was an internationally acclaimed artist and professor at Stanford who created the *Windhover Series* of paintings. These paintings are the main character in the interior of the building, accompanied by Award-winning architecture (figure 17).

Aidlin Darling Architects used Oliveira’s paintings for inspiration. The concept was to provide a center for refuge from the intense daily life that students, faculty, and staff experience, and to restore balance through quiet reflection. The building is made out of steel, stone, glass, and water, and is brought together with the natural elements of its surroundings. As it is considered to be a sanctuary, the center’s natural surroundings are created to frame the phase of stepping out of the campus environment and incorporate the nature of contemplation. A stone path, a row of ginkgo trees, and a bamboo grove lead you through the landscaping designed by Andrea Cochran. *Windhover* is shaped to be an in and out contemplative space. The outdoor labyrinth, modeled by the Chartres Cathedral in France, promotes the concept of organic architecture (figure 18). The design of a followed path can help quiet the mind, reincorporate the balance, find comfort on a

³³ Van Horn, Goldie.

prayer or meditation. Through materials, the design stimulates these components by making the visitors understand and embrace the sensory experiences the center is providing.



Figure 17 Aidlin Darling Architects Website. Windhover Contemplative Center.



Figure 18 Stanford University Website. Windhover Contemplative Center Exterior.

The building's walls and thick glass windows block cellular and internet signals honoring the logic of nature. This is an accommodation that resonates with Elizabeth Woodson's speech on the dedication ceremony event held in the inauguration of the center. Woodson shared, "I was once

asked in a class what superpower I would choose if given unlimited power. It was to be able to send emails from my brain in the moments preceding sleep... I share is as a testament to the fact that it's the only time, besides in the shower perhaps, that we are forced to stop and think."³⁴

Woodson also mentions that over an ASSU Executive office campaign, a group spoke to hundreds of students about their experience. Woodson added, "we heard that being too busy for self-care means you are enviably strong, pulling an all-nighter means you are a super-human, and asking for help means you are weak. We even heard people say, "I'm stressed because I don't feel like I'm stressed enough"³⁵. These testimonies emphasize the need to promote and design spaces where students can have time to allow their feelings to be freed, as well as to disconnect from the internet, homework, stress, or any feeling the person is going through.

3.2.3 Wellness Center

Another case study is from the Wellness Center at Farmingdale State College in New York where faculty from the School of Nursing and Health Studies and Health Services designed a Stress Reduction Room (SRR) to implement and evaluate the decrease of stress on students and promote meditation and relaxation. The room, located at the Health Services building, is separated from areas that treated more delicate illnesses. As part of the design, art students decorated the walls with murals that would represent underwater scenes to create a tranquil and soft atmosphere. Objects added were two lounge chairs, a TV with a DVD system, relaxation tapes on a continuous loop, a CD player with headphones that provided quiet music and soothing sounds, magazines that described relaxation techniques, and printed health promotion literature.

³⁴ Boardman, Greg. "Dedication, Text from Windhover Dedication Ceremony Speeches." Windhover. Stanford University, October 8, 2014. <https://windhover.stanford.edu/dedication>.

³⁵ Boardman, Greg. "Dedication, Text from Windhover Dedication Ceremony Speeches."

This room allowed students to remove themselves for a short period from the circumstances that were contributing to their stress, establishing a space for them to regroup and find relief from their feelings. Areas for on-campus relaxation help with students' emotional and physical health by creating a sense of comfort and peace that is essential for them to succeed. The addition of tapes, music, and information on relaxation and meditation therapies offered experiential opportunities for students to learn how to experience these exercises, embrace their emotions, and reduce stress.

As part of the evaluation process, students' feedback was requested to complete and improve the needs of the room. Students commented that the space could be darker, have aromatherapy, and running water on rocks so the idea of the underwater mural would come alive in their imagination. Students also suggested an individual space for each person, since the room accommodated two people, and privacy can be a crucial element to a person who is shy and in need. The health department also noticed that graduate students used the room frequently and more than undergraduates, proving the different levels of stress as well.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, part of the research was to look into spaces for contemplation. Additional analysis on the interior and exterior spaces unrelated to the educational world are fundamental to expand needed experiences, gain knowledge, and expand design options for a beneficial result.

3.2.4 Counseling and Testing Center

The Counseling and Testing Center located in Georgia State University campus provides individual, group, and couples counseling. Previous services are offered as short-term sessions summed up to 15 sessions within the academic year. Besides these programs, Georgia State also provides the Mind-Body Clinic, which offers classes, workshops, and retreats and mindfulness

meditation to help improve student's well-being. Classes are accessible four times a week from Monday to Thursday at different times of the day with an hour duration. The practice sessions vary in three sections: "Chill Meditation" has a 20-minute duration and emphasizes for students to focus, be calm, and resilient. "Feel Good Meditation" focuses on care, compassion, and gratitude through 20-minute sessions as well. Lastly, "Moving Meditation" is a 45-minute meditation focused on gentle stretching for calm, emotional regulation, and grounded attention³⁶. The Counseling and Testing Center also has a relaxation room and biofeedback analysis, a tool that helps individuals visualize how their biological systems work.³⁷ The relaxation room works through reservation slots and has audio and video programs with a variety of topics such as relaxation and meditation, and a massage chair.³⁸

³⁶ "Mind-Body Clinic." Counseling and Testing Center. Georgia State University.
<https://counselingcenter.gsu.edu/services/mind-body-program/>.

³⁷ "Biofeedback." Counseling and Testing Center. Georgia State University.
<https://counselingcenter.gsu.edu/services/mind-body-program/biofeedback/>.

³⁸ "Relaxation Room." Counseling and Testing Center. Georgia State University.
<https://counselingcenter.gsu.edu/services/mind-body-program/the-relaxation-room/>.

4 DESIGN ELEMENTS

Four significant elements will be considered as a part of the final components of design for the future proposed structure. The elements of color, light, sound, and texture are connected mechanisms associated with the design goal, which is the creation of a space that pleases and supports international student's well-being while in the U.S.

4.1 Color

International students are the main focus of this thesis design. The way culture or traditions could play a part in the definition each individual coming from a different country has towards color is a difficulty with the decision making of the design. Fortunately, the origins of color are connected to our daily lives and nature is a common component that unifies human emotion. We see it everywhere: in the sky, the sun, the tonalities of trees, the variety on flowers, as well as the surface and depth of water. The comfort these colors produce coming from natural sources brings a sense of stability, understanding, and familiarity to the human. It does not matter where the individual is coming from; color in or from nature will always have the same relation.

A study of the effect of color meditation on relaxation states demonstrates how these natural aspects are connected to our human emotion as well as the benefits specific colors provide at the time of practicing meditation. The selection of colors former Foreign Student Facilitator Neville Rodrigues and Assistant Professor Megha Deuskar from the Department of Psychology at Fergusson College used were red, green, yellow, blue, white, violet, and orange. Through 30-minute sessions, participants explained that blue, green, yellow, and white increased their level of relaxation. Researchers clarified how these were successful while red, orange, and violet were not.

Red is considered to be a color of passion, energy, and linked to primitive human desires of survival and self-preservation. Still, participants described how red induced feelings of pain,

mystery, and fear, to which researchers explained that elevated amounts of red agitate the body producing a sense of loss of nerves were anger can be induced. Orange, associated with the sun, made participants feel energetic instead of relaxed, researchers explained that this color evokes enthusiasm for life, and that is the reason participants did not find relaxation. Similar to violet, where even though participants had positive thoughts stating that they felt blessed, romantic, and fragile, the color association to luxury, wealth, and extravagance showed the levels of relaxation to a minimum increment. These factors demonstrate how even when participants have positive associations with colors, it does not mean that that positive color will provide the needed impact to the design element.

Blue is a color associated with peace and tranquility. Participants explained how they felt refreshed, rested, and with a sense of infinity. Researchers demonstrate that the color blue promotes physical and mental relaxation, reduces stress, and increases calmness, relaxation, and the sense of order. Green, evoked participants to feel freshness, serenity, and a sparkle of life, to which researchers explained through the color relation to plants and the concept of growth. The most successful color, white, is connected to peace and cleanliness, which relates to inner cleansing, purifying thoughts, emotions, and the spirit of a person. Participants felt peace, grace, and soothed. In this case, researchers explained that the levels of relaxation with white were the highest because white refreshes and strengthens the entire energy system.

Research leads to the colors blue, green, and white as the most successful colors to implement in the design elements of the proposed structure since they provided the highest levels of relaxation. These colors and their relation to nature reinforce that the connection of a human to natural elements is the most effective route to reach the needed design goal.³⁹

³⁹ Rodrigues, Neville, and Megha Deuskar. 2016. "A Study of the Effect of Color Meditation on

4.2 Light

Lighting coming from a natural source, provides energy, time in space, and health benefits; for that reason, it is an essential component to add to the design. Humans have an intuitive understanding of the environment. We sense, process, and experience light because our bodies are designed to respond to the external stimuli transmitted through the environment. Frequently, humans compare interior lighting to their experience with exterior lighting, providing the main reasons why designs should be proposed with a natural lighting approach since it is what our visual system automatically does.

Consequently, when it comes to an interior covered space, designers must study the most beneficial way to approach lighting in the designated area, relating the space to its location and functionality. Cool light, depending on its use, can make a room feel unfriendly, tiring, or depressing. Warm lighting usually provides a more pleasant sensation, so the use of it in the structure should be preferred. The best way of studying light is by copying what nature does. Since designers have immense control to influence the visual perception and the emotional and physical experience of the built environment, natural sources should be a required element. This reasoning leads to the addition of windows, a vital feature to increase productivity and provide levels of comfort and contentment. Environments that bring these previously mentioned results seem to be natural and are physically and mentally good for humans. As beings, we want to perceive that external stimulus in our interior environment and have that sensation of being outside while inside.

Relaxation States.” *Journal of Psychosocial Research* 11 (1): 13–20.
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=a9h&AN=116399395&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

“Sunlight has illuminated the earth for millennia and as “the light of life” it is the light in which humans have evolved to operate best.”⁴⁰

When it comes to the use of light in the proposed structure, we must consider, as mentioned before, the function and purpose of the space. Since the idea is to create a gathering-meditation structure for international students to relieve their feelings, the incorporation of privacy is a priority. Sources of lighting coming into the space as clerestories, which is a section of windows above eye level, or ceiling windows offer that needed sense of privacy while providing the health benefits of natural sunlight. In addition to warm lighting coming from lamps, pendants, wall sconces, or others.

4.3 Sound

Sound is the unidentified element in the room that provides the most calming sense of comfort. When designing spaces to improve health, we have to consider some elements connected to sound that assist with people’s wellness. Sound wave therapy can be used to confront the daily outside noise as well as the closest, such as gossiping sounds in our surroundings. White noise, pink noise and sound bath sounds have been used to decrease levels of stress and anxiety and increase levels of relaxation. Nature noise and binaural beats are also meditative harmonies that stimulate feelings of calm, sense of ease, and tranquility, but these two are more semi-experimental. Still, these methods mentioned above are commonly used for meditation, relaxation, sleep, or concentration.

White noise and pink noise are closely related, but before getting into the description and benefits of each, we must understand how sound waves work in this scenario. Sound waves have

⁴⁰ Innes, Malcolm. 2012. *Lighting for Interior Design*. Portfolio Skills. Laurence King Publishing. <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=cat06552a&AN=gsu.9913737410702931&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

two main components, amplitude, and frequency. Amplitude determines how loud it sounds to us; frequency is how fast the waveform vibrates per second. Amplitude without frequency would not be considered white noise; it would just be a loud noise. White and pink noise help to improve sleep and reduce background noises coming from an exterior setting. For instance, cars in the streets, noisy neighbors, ambulance, or police warning sounds. The difference between each is that white noise sounds like a static or a hiss while pink noise is smoother, more balanced and natural because the intensity decreases as frequency increases, a combination of high and low frequencies. Another difference is that studies have found that listening to pink noise while sleeping can help with memory.⁴¹

Sound bath is an immersion in sound frequency that is meant to clean the soul. The ancient wellness practice started in Tibet approximately 2,000 years ago and has been popular around the U.S. for the benefits it provides to people's health. The reason to call it "bath" is for participants' responses towards the practice, explaining that they felt they were being submerged in sound and feeling cleansed or cleared after the experience. "Researchers have found that sound waves affect the human nervous system and decrease blood pressure more than traditional meditation."⁴² The goal of the practice is to confront personal and collective anxiety, depression, insomnia, among others. While practicing the individual should stay present through the frequencies, since some sounds can resonate positively and emerge as memory filters at a stressful moment. One of the specialists reflecting on students' reactions said, "We like to joke that there's mindful meditation and mind-emptying meditation; ours is the latter. You see, your brain is like a human computer.

⁴¹ MacMillan, Amanda. "The Sound of 'Pink Noise' Improves Sleep and Memory." Time. Time, March 8, 2017. <https://time.com/4694555/pink-noise-deep-sleep-improve-memory/>.

⁴² McDonough, Megan. "What to Know about 'Sound Baths,' an Ancient Wellness Practice Gaining Steam in the West." The Washington Post. WP Company, May 3, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/wellness/tune-in-and-chill-out-what-are-sound-baths-and-why-you-should-try-one/2017/05/02/e74c697c-2b7c-11e7-a616-d7c8a68c1a66_story.html.

You have all these tabs open and, over time, your system will remind you that it's time to reboot. When you finally allow your system to recalibrate, what happens? It comes back faster, fresher and clearer.”⁴³ The use of this practices in the structure could help international students open themselves to new methods to improve their health through contemplation.

4.4 Texture

Texture is the sensation caused by the external surface of objects received through the sense of touch that comes in two forms, visual and tactile texture. Visual texture perceived by the eye is a two-dimensional element which, in some cases, creates an illusion. The creation of such is to appear something that it is not, for instance, wallpaper of a pattern that seems to be rough feels completely smooth when in contact. On the other hand, tactile texture is three-dimensional, making the element realistic to the touch, differing from visual because of the physical quality it possesses. Texture is the element of design that completes the feeling in a room. It can come from furniture, accessories, fabrics or the materials used in the construction of the space.

⁴³ McDonough, Megan. “What to Know about 'Sound Baths,' an Ancient Wellness Practice Gaining Steam in the West.” The Washington Post.

5 THESIS WORK

The project is a structural space focused on Georgia State University and located at the new plaza which connects Sparks Hall, Art and Humanities, Langdale Hall, the Library and the Student Center. The location is ideal because of the closeness to the International Office, which is situated in Sparks Hall, and other main buildings, such as the Library and Student Center, where most students interact (figure 19, figure 20).

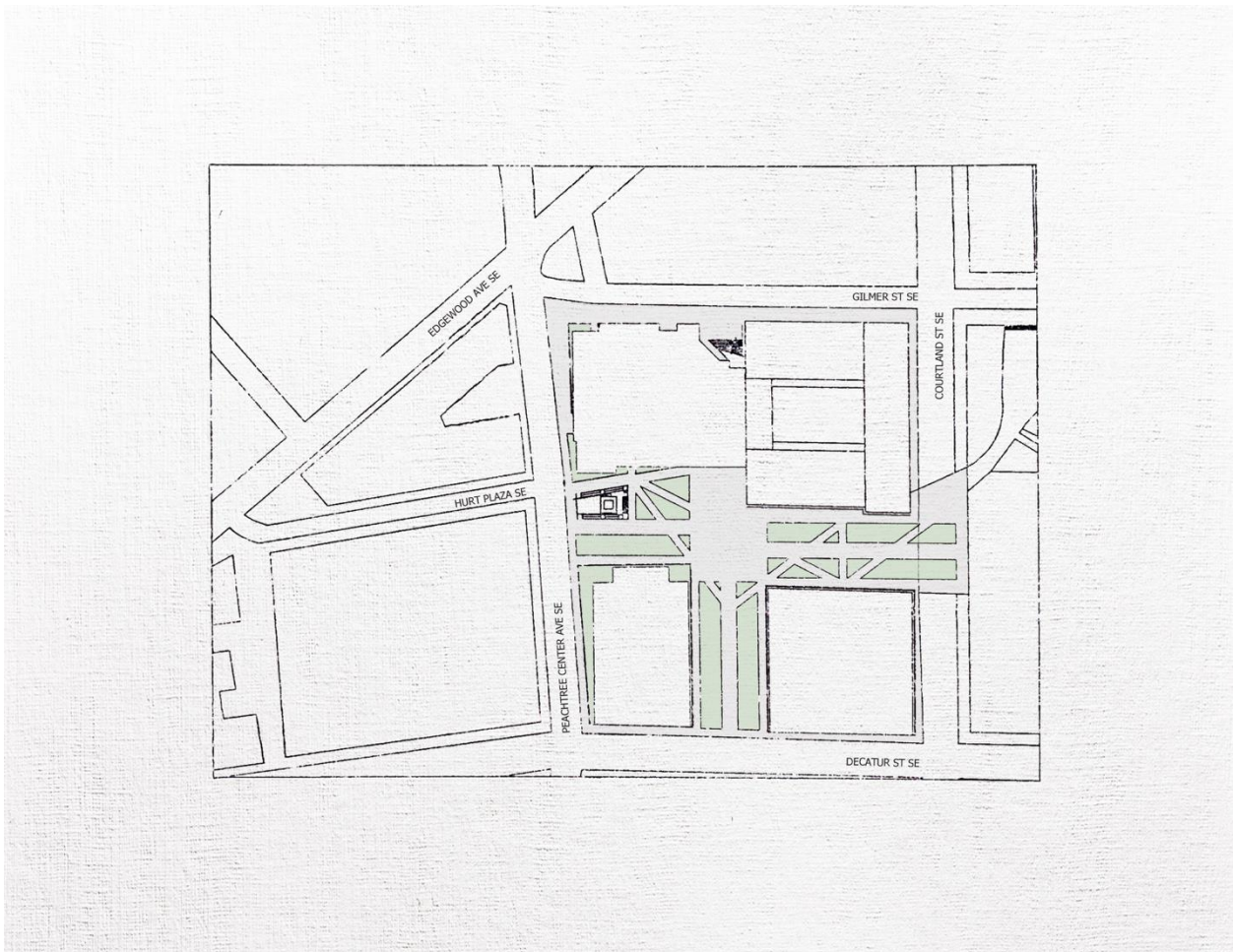


Figure 19. Image by Constanza Loustalet. Site Plan. 2020.

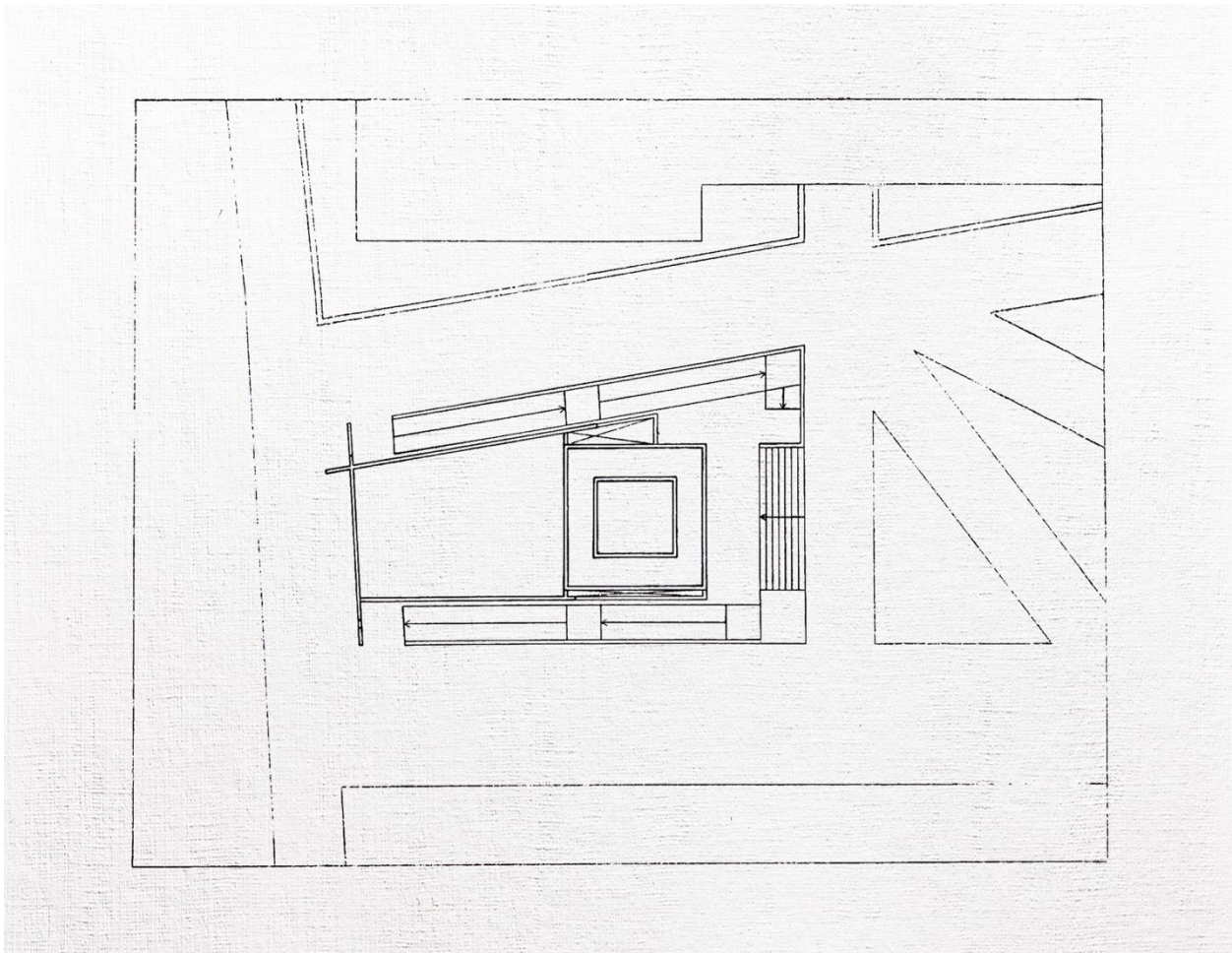


Figure 20 Image by Constanza Loustalet. Site Plan. 2020.

The structure is divided into two conceptual ideas formatted in three rooms; the relate room, the gallery room, and the reflect room. Each room designed by the specific interaction international students would have in each. The orange space on the diagram identified as “relate” has two objectives. The first one, on the first floor, with the concept of gathering people to create a sense of community. The second one, on the ground floor with the idea of making connections through “leave behind” objects from previous international students. These concepts make “relate” a space for interaction and communication with others. “Reflect,” marked on pink in the diagram, located on the second floor is made for moments of personal contemplation where internationals can practice activities of meditation and relaxation (figure 21).

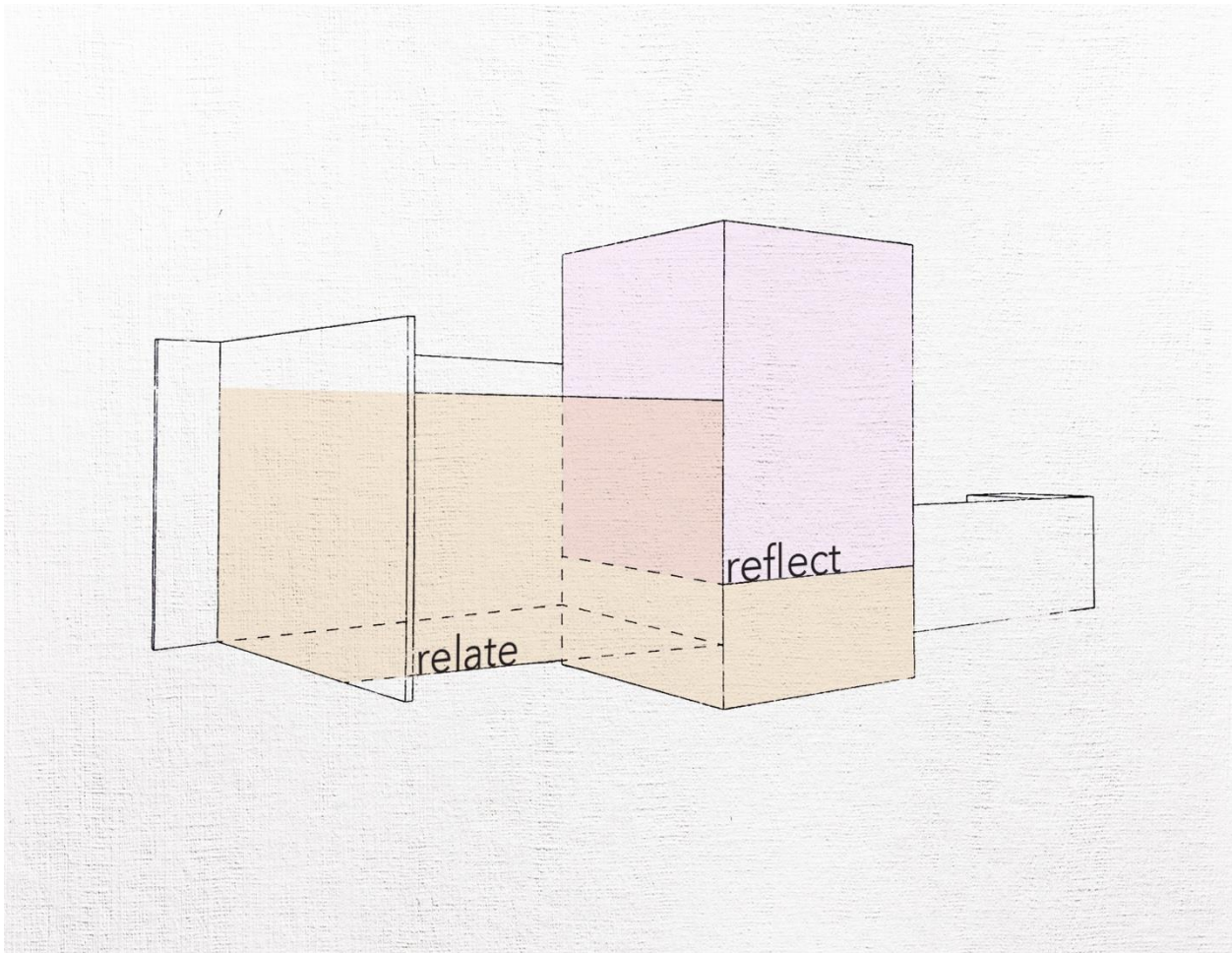


Figure 21 Image by Constanza Loustalet. Diagram. 2020.

Since the plaza designated the area where the structure would take place, the design of it followed the same linear directions. The room connections were made through ramps to provide a sense of freedom of movement around the structure (figure 22-24). All rooms are composed of elements of design such as natural light, and rough and soft finish materials, with the goal of providing a sense of nature to achieve the feeling of comfort into each space. The windows were purposely designed to be above eye level to give the needed privacy that is required in such spaces.

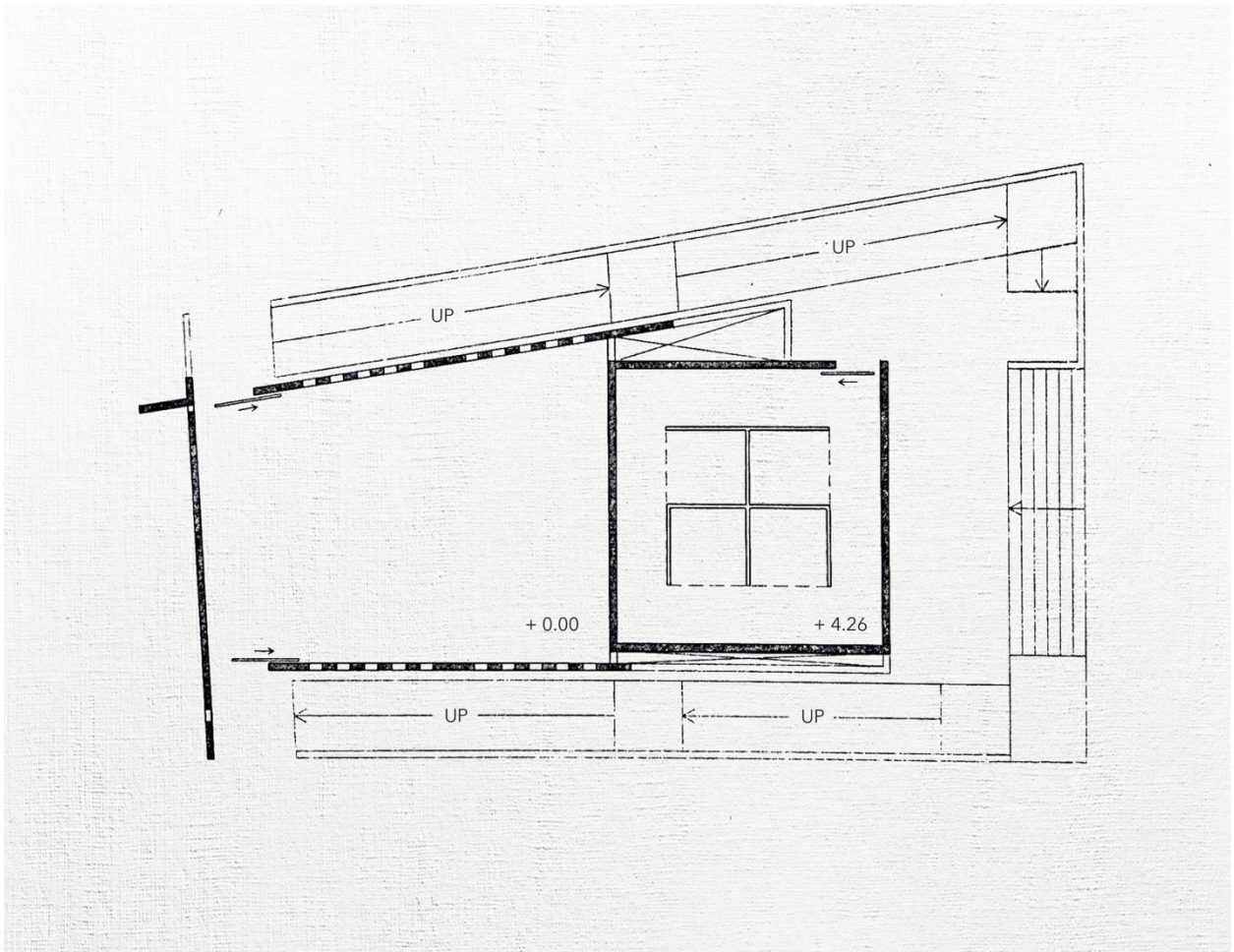


Figure 22 Image by Constanza Loustalet. First/Second Floor Plan. 2020.

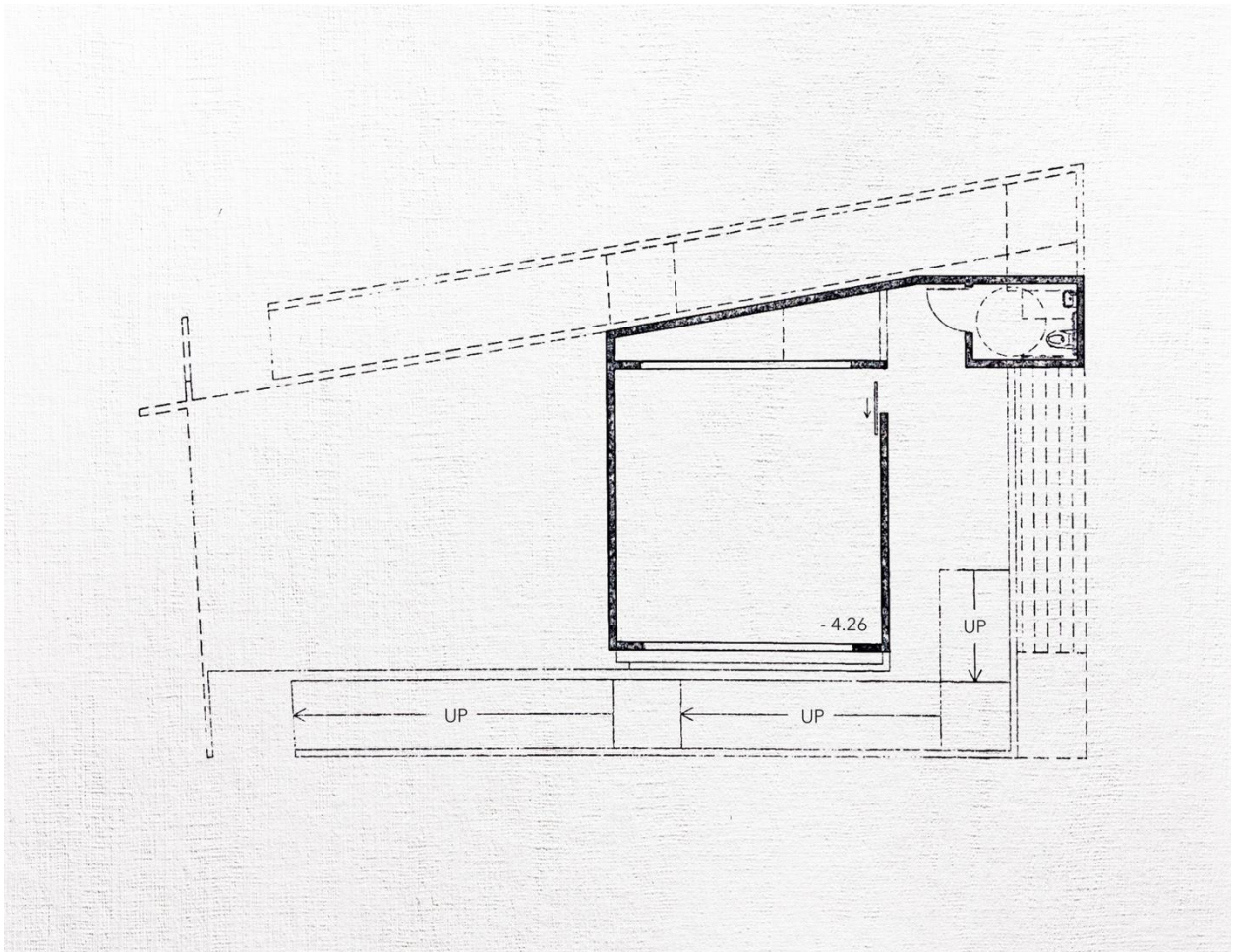


Figure 23 Image by Constanza Loustalet. Ground Floor Plan. 2020.

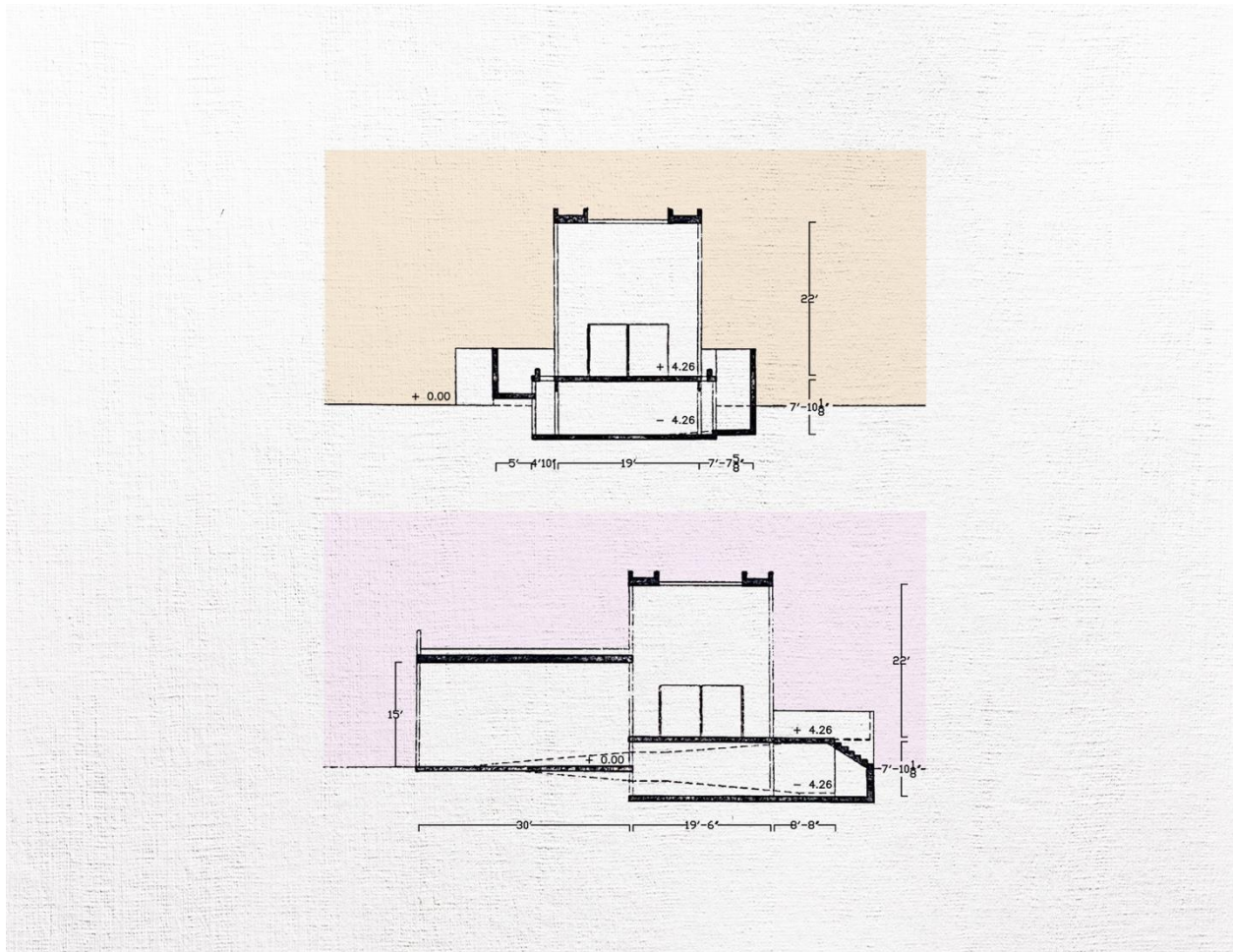


Figure 24 Image by Constanza Loustalet. Sections. 2020.

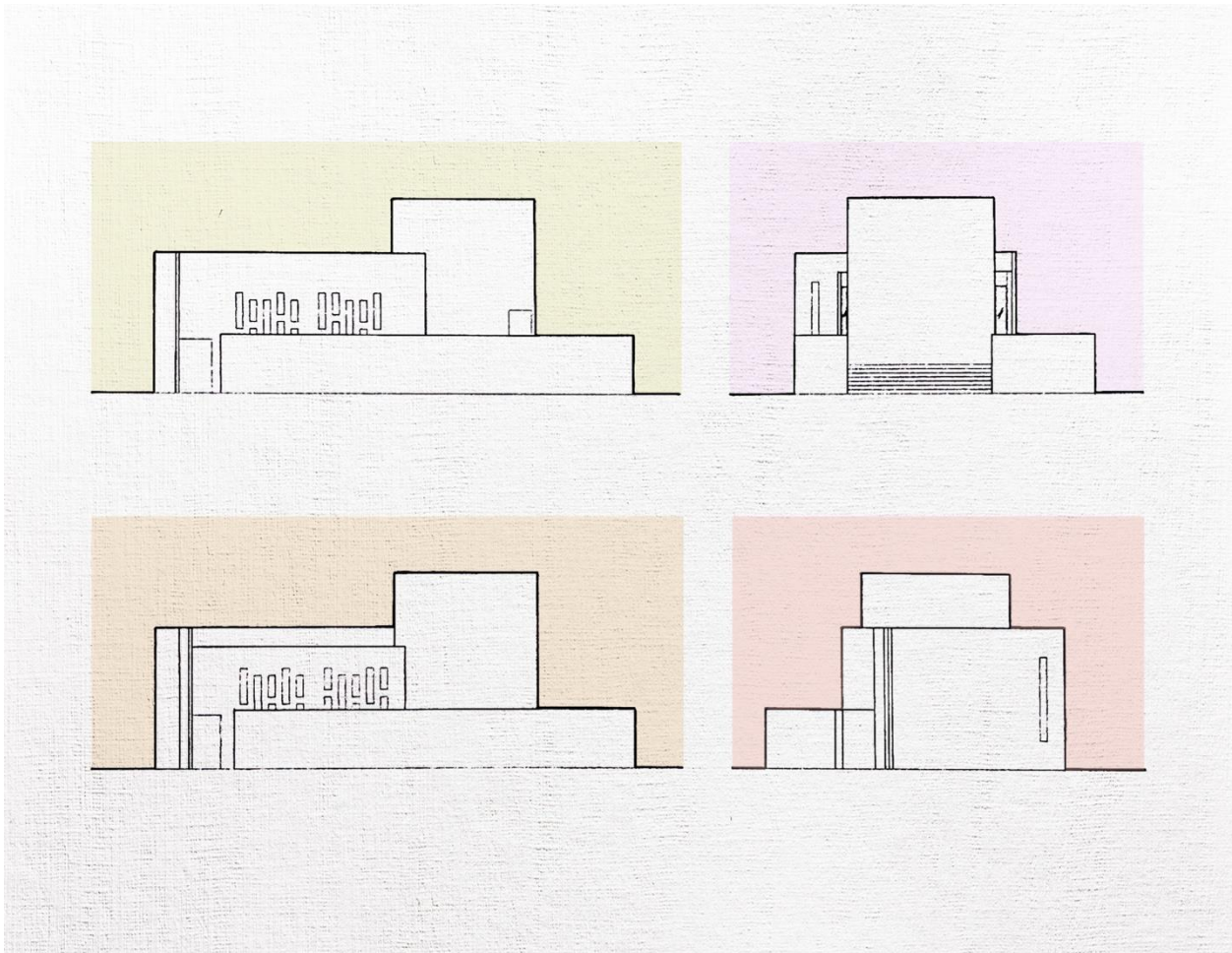


Figure 25 Image by Constanza Loustalet. *Facades*. 2020.

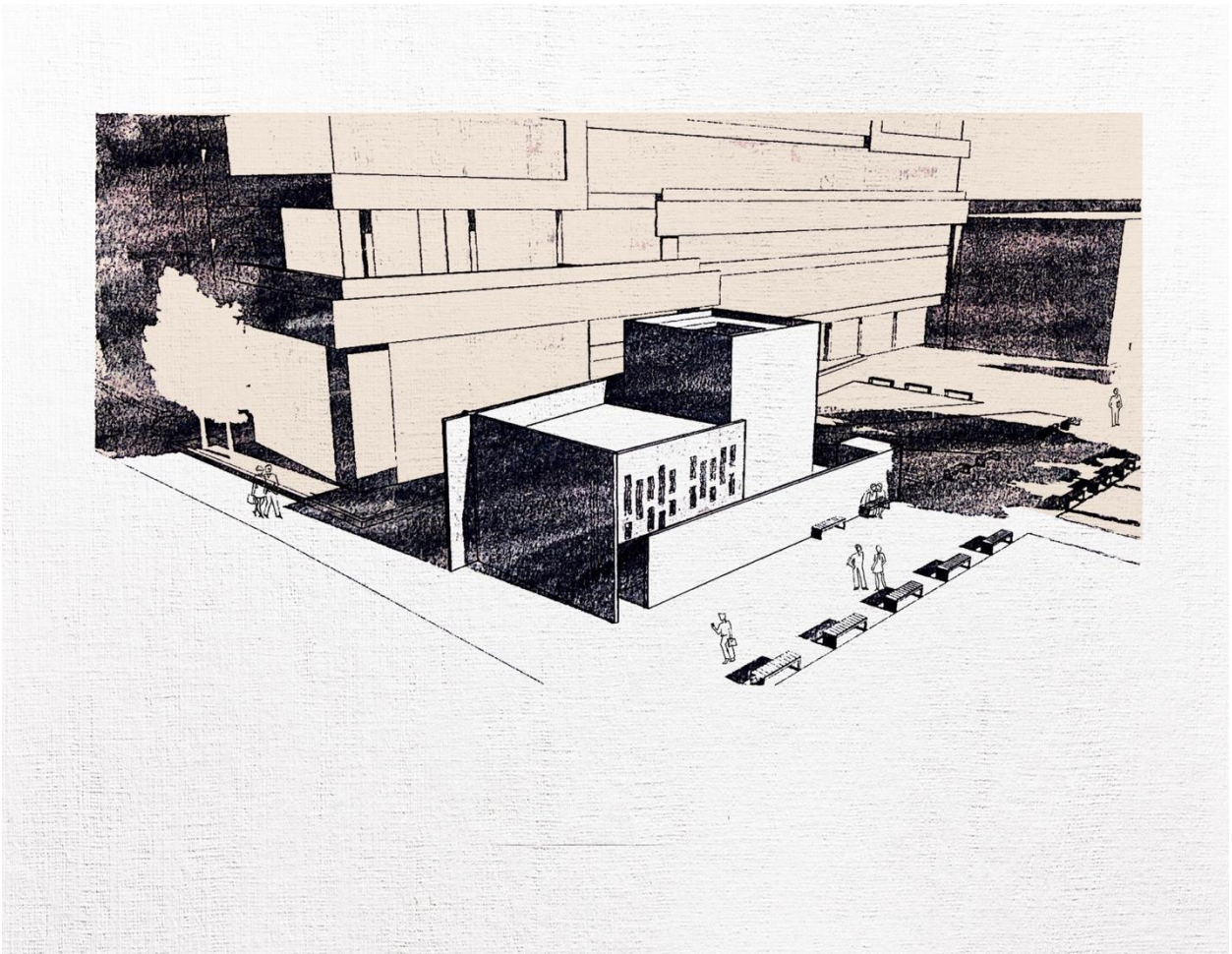


Figure 26 Image by Constanza Loustalet. Area View Perspective. 2020.

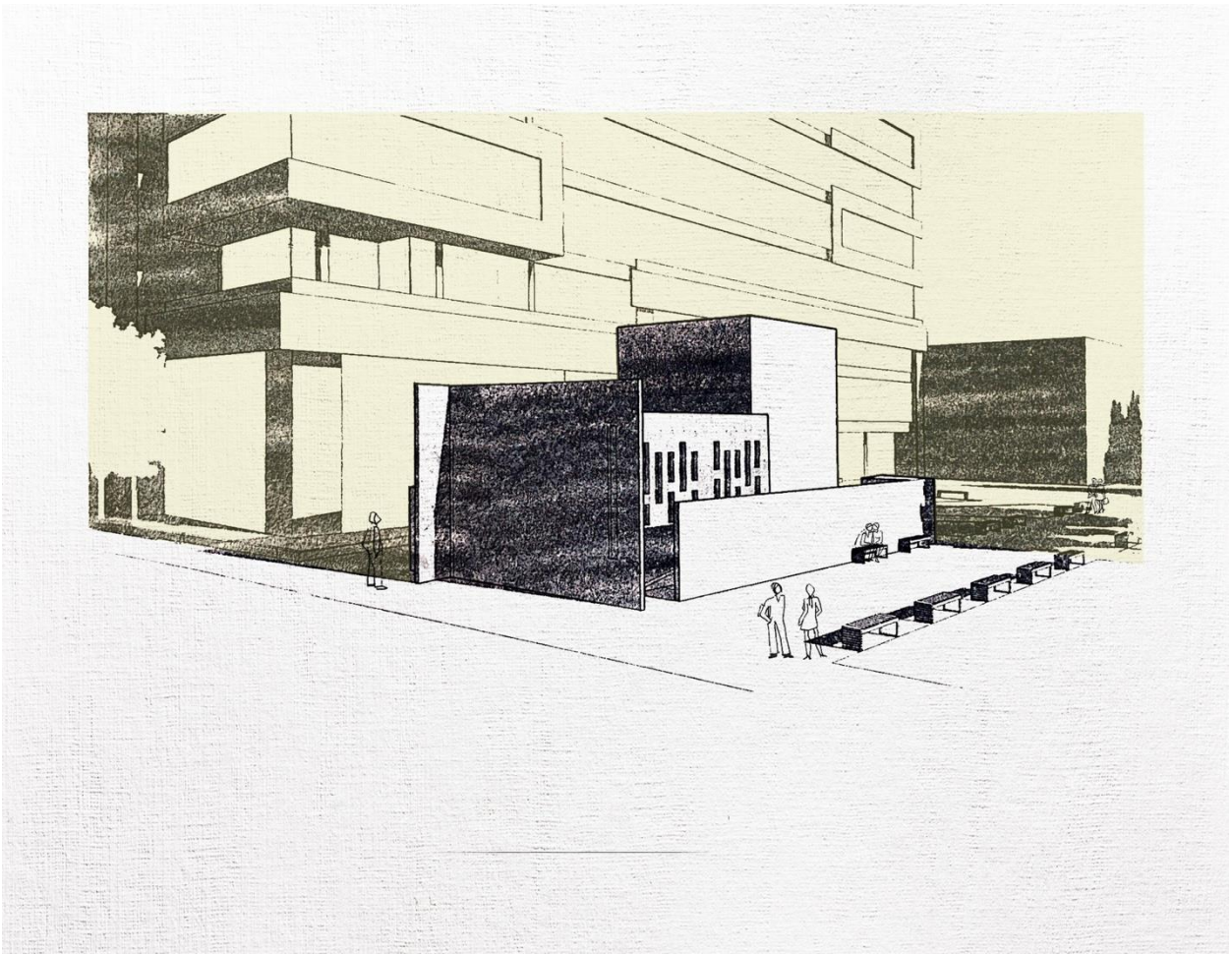


Figure 27 Image by Constanza Loustalet. East-West Perspective. 2020.

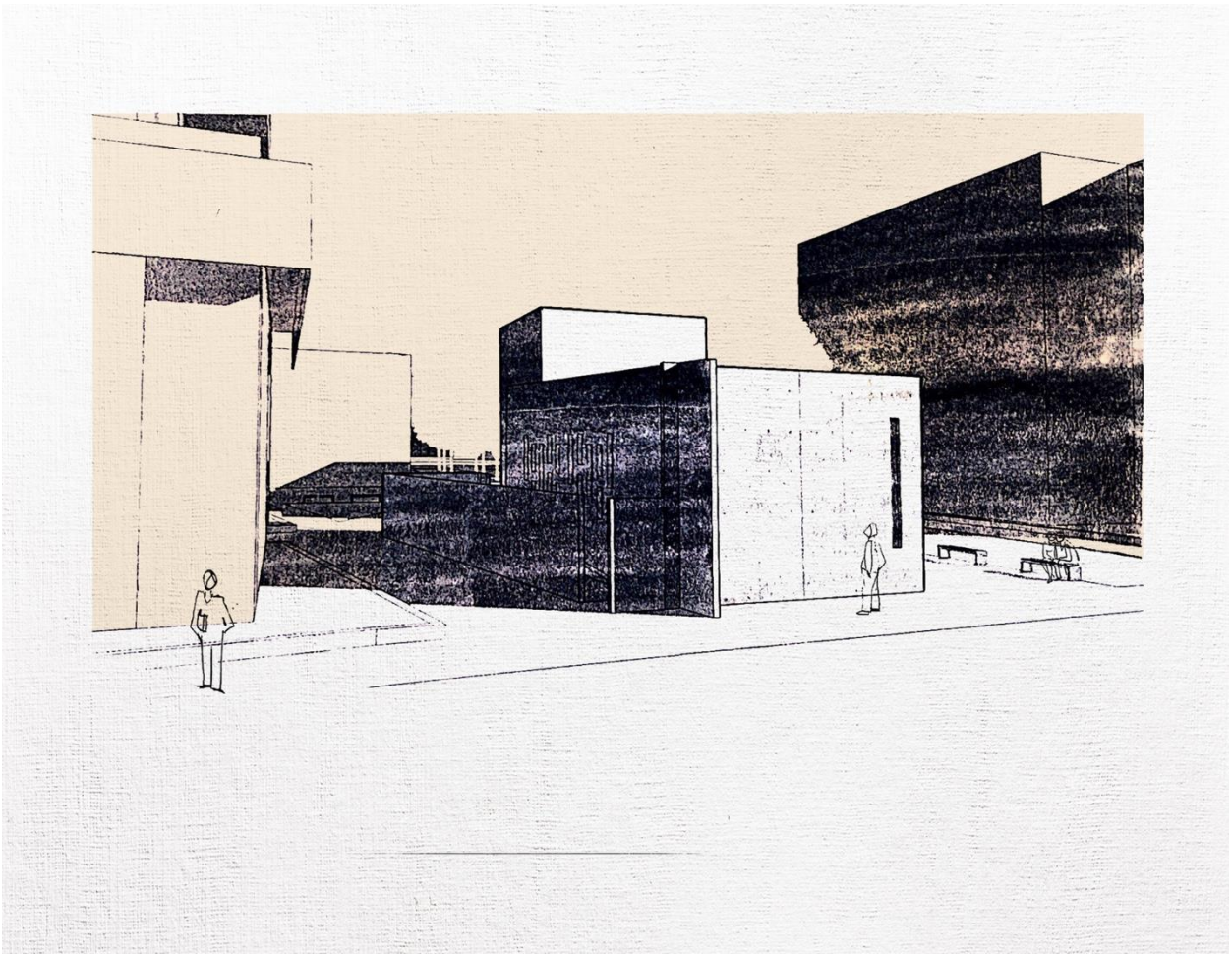


Figure 28 Image by Constanza Loustalet. North-South Perspective. 2020.

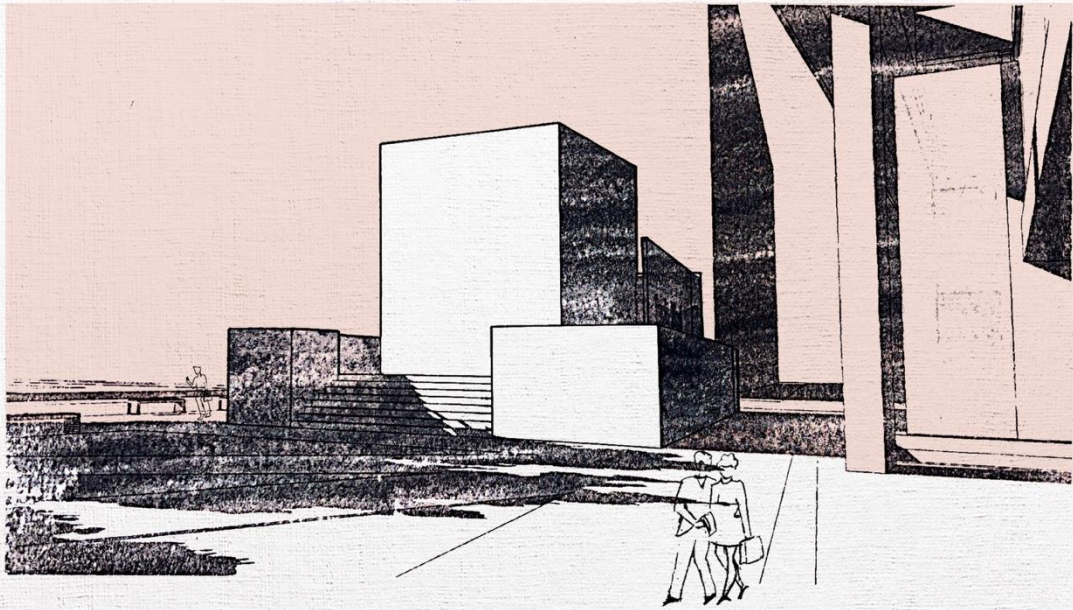


Figure 29 Image by Constanza Loustalet. West-East Perspective. 2020.

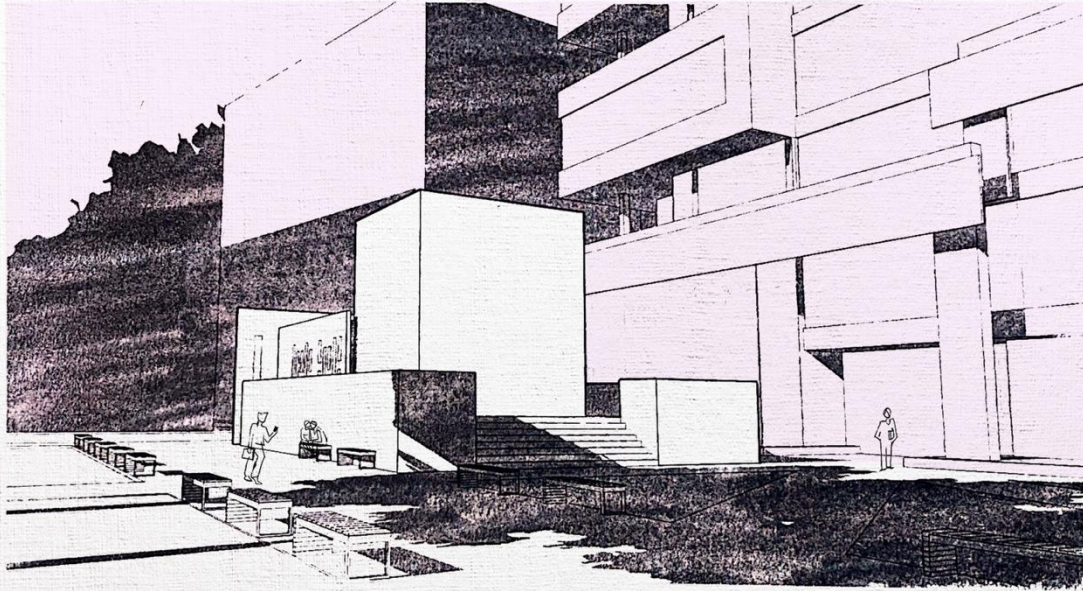


Figure 30 Image by Constanza Loustalet. South-North Perspective. 2020.

Since the structure is for international students to have a place for comfort, one goal was to involve interior and graphic elements into the space (figure 32). Comfortable furniture to invite people in and to feel as they can stay (figure 31-33). And as mentioned before, the concept of leaving something behind for future students to feel welcome and as an open invitation to use the space to their benefit (figure 32).

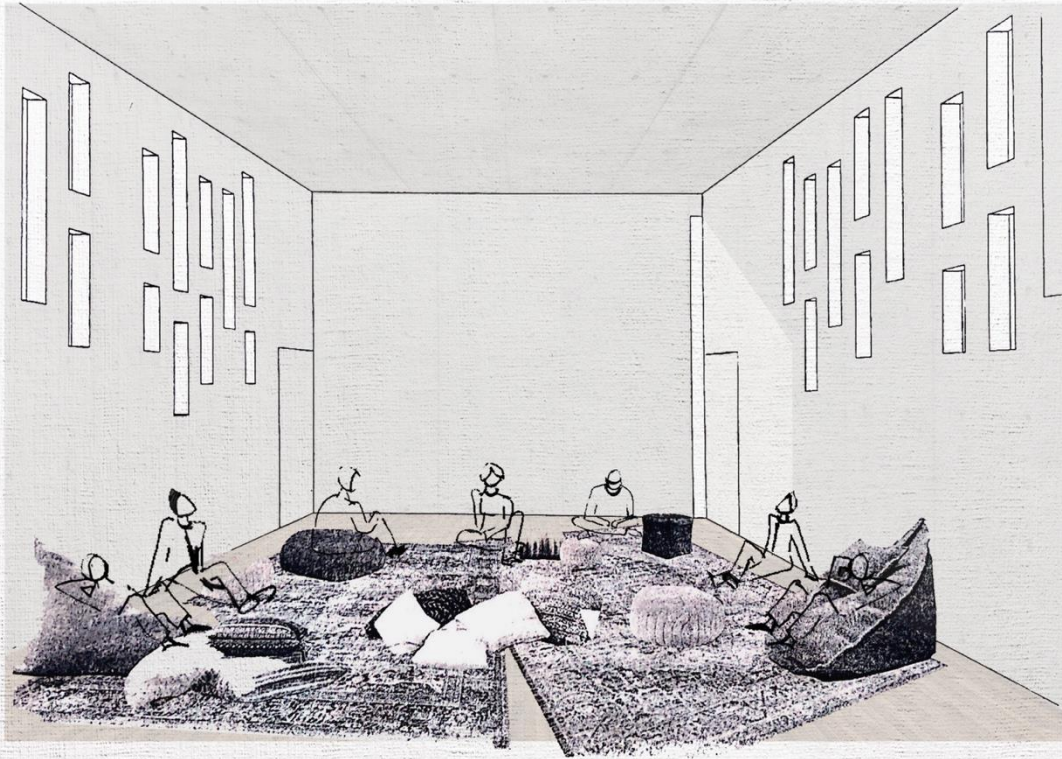


Figure 31 Image by Constanza Loustalet. *Relate Interior Perspective*. 2020.

The purpose of the “relate” room is to make connections. The addition of comfortable lounge seating was an important feature to give a sense of “hang out” space (figure 31). Most international students find it strange or uncomfortable to talk with a psychologist or therapist from a counseling center about the personal issues they are going through. For this reason, the “relate” room helps approaching others who might be going through similar situations, making it easier to for internationals to open up and deal with their problems.

The design shape of the windows on this room was made to emphasize the relation of ups and downs that international students face during their time abroad. The long but thin ceiling-to-floor windows were added to elevate the sense of being inside and outside, while still providing

privacy. The concrete walls, wood flooring, and the addition of natural sounds through speakers around the room stimulates an association with nature which achieves the common factor of finding common ground.

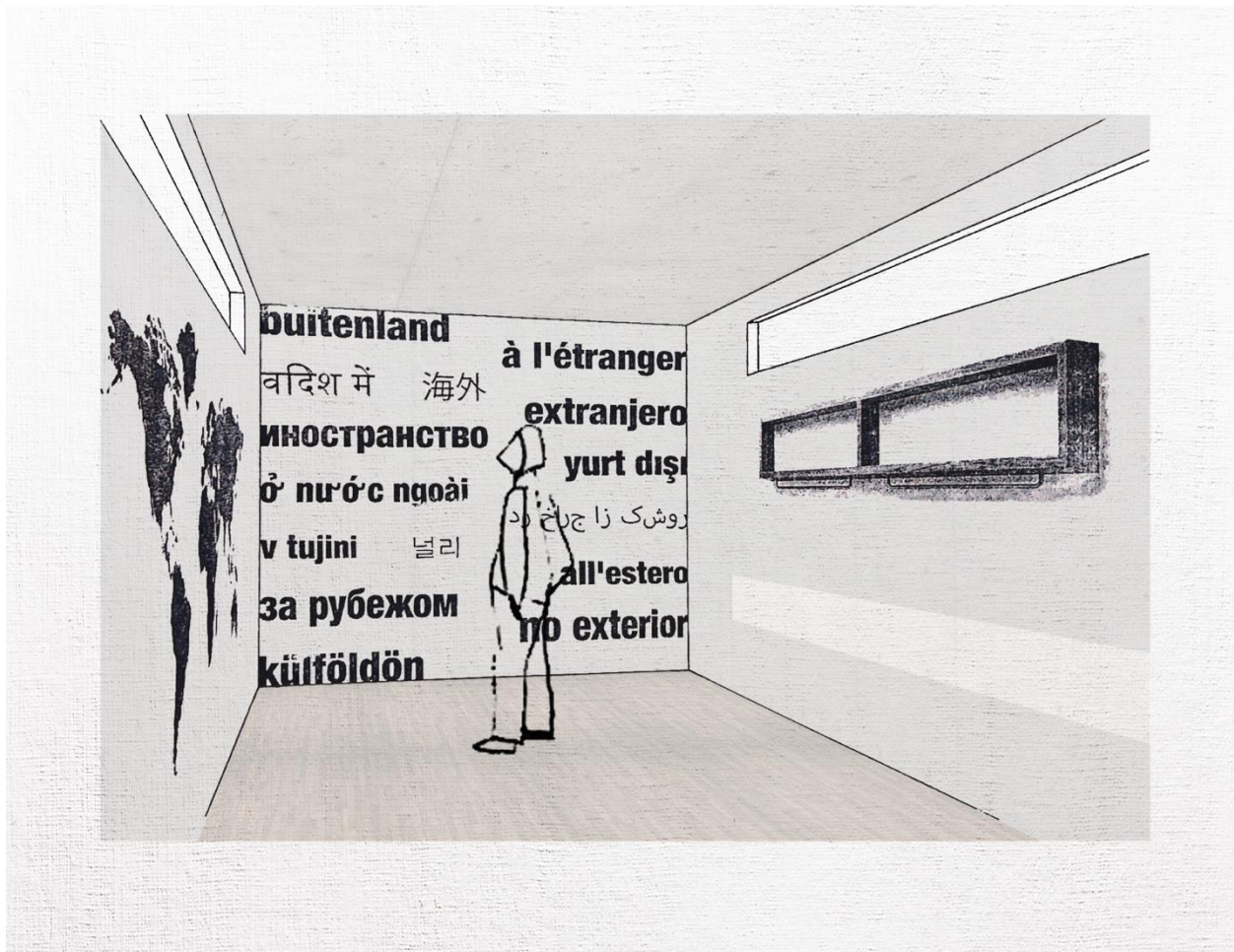


Figure 32 Image by Constanza Loustalet. *Gallery Interior Perspective*. 2020.

The “gallery” room performs the goal of “leaving something behind.” Connecting to the “relate” concept, but in this case, through memories from past students. Leaving an object which identifies their country can help international students feel that through a small gesture, they can support someone else during tough times. The thought of “there was someone else from my country here” makes it more special for incoming internationals to want to experience their time abroad with an optimistic view, as well as to promote to be there for one another. The addition of

graphic elements such as the word “abroad” in different languages, a shelf, and the map of the world provide intuitive guidance to participate and be a part of the community (figure 32).

The composition of materials and sound repeat throughout the rooms, wood flooring, concrete walls and nature related sounds creating a natural balance. The natural lighting in the “gallery” room comes as well from windows above eye level. In this case, the long horizontal windows are meant to provide a concept of looking out to the sky, the trees, and what is happening in the exterior reminding international students that there is more outside. A way of keeping themselves positive.

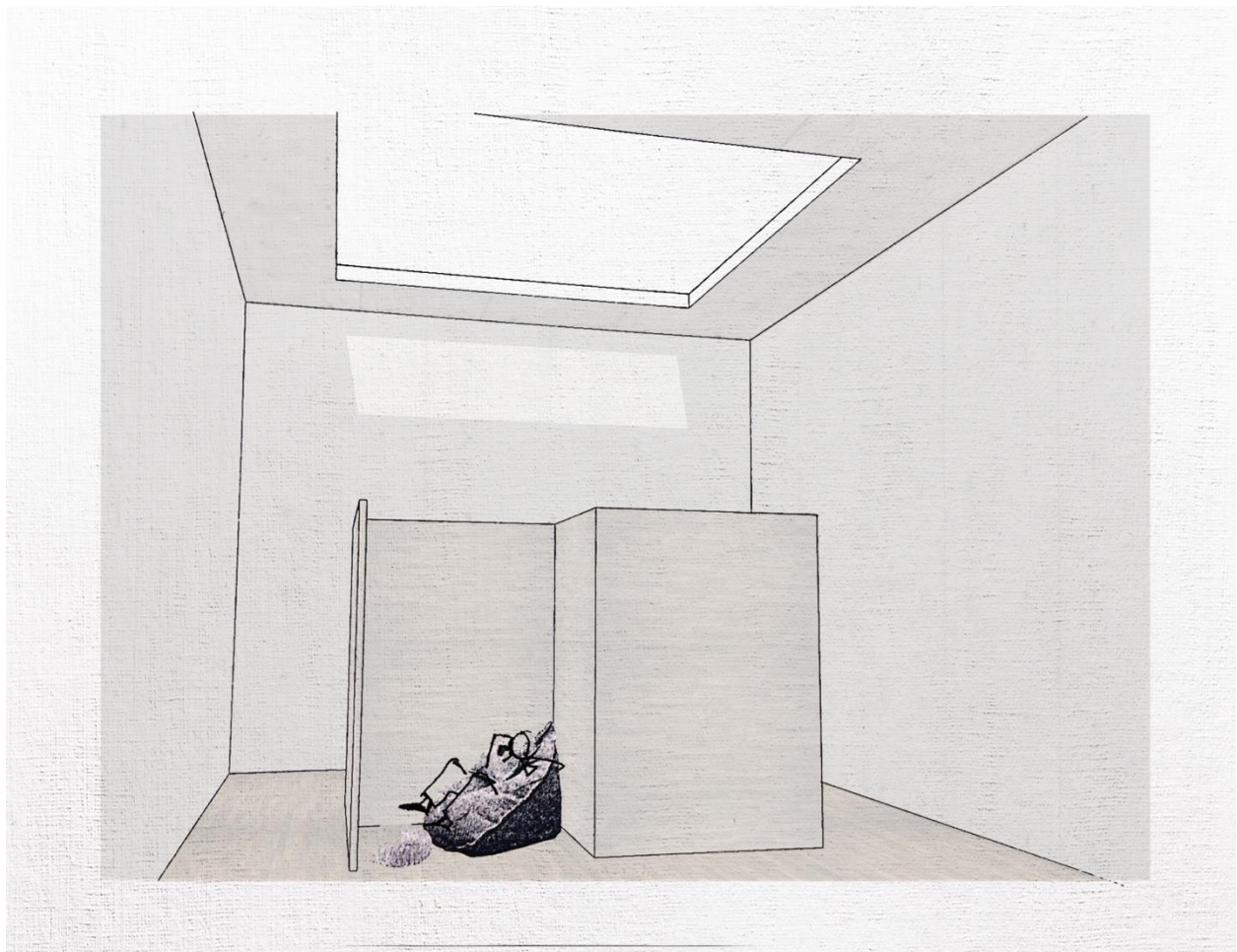


Figure 33 Image by Constanza Loustalet. *Reflect Interior Perspective*. 2020.

The “reflect” room, is designed for moments of self-contemplation (figure 33). As humans, we have different ways of dealing with circumstances; finding comfort in solitude was vital for the success of the structure. Meditation and relaxation exercises are encouraged in this environment, the furniture provided invites international students to do these activities. In this room, the objective of natural light was to come straight from the ceiling, providing a sense of infinity and completeness. The warmth from the sky presents a sense of calmness.

The research showed that a common factor that humans have is the relationship towards nature (figures 34-37). Interior design and its elements, such as texture, color, sound and lighting complete the essence of the structure to achieve the ideal space. A place designed from nature can help international students not only to feel better but, in some cases, feel as they are at home. The roughness from the concrete walls, the softness from the wood, the natural and pink noise sounds and the connection to the sky is limitless.

finishes and lighting

exterior flooring
concrete

interior flooring
engineered hardwood
shaw contract - resurgence
reminisce oak CA286

exterior accent wall
hardwood panels

interior and exterior walls
concrete

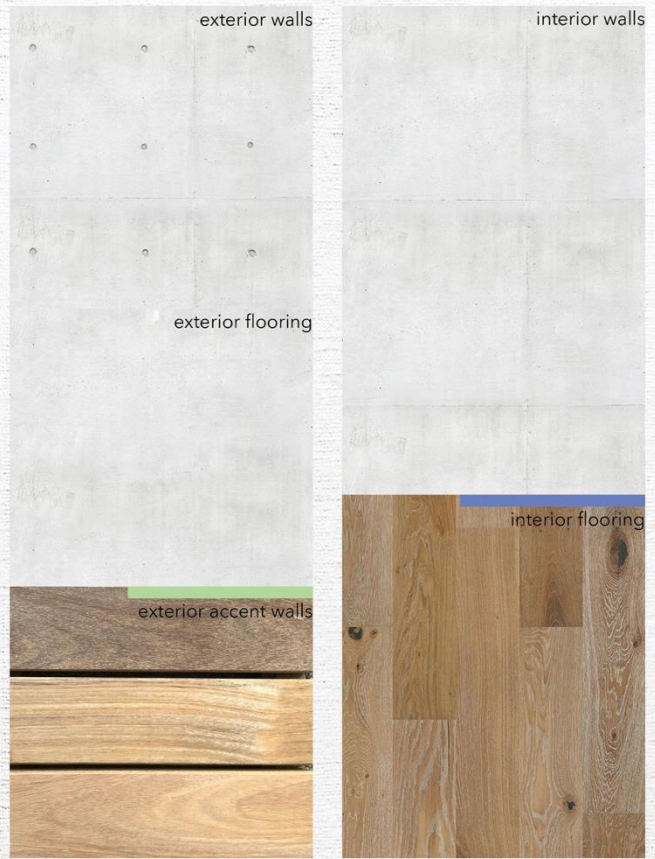
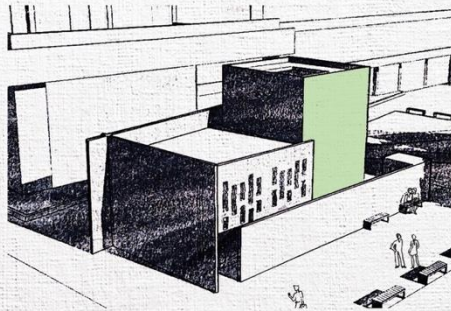


Figure 34 Image by Constanza Loustalet. Materials I. 2020.

restroom wall tile
trinity tile - cascata
white lines - glossy finish

accent restroom tile
porcelanosa - artis
white matt

restroom floor tile
daltile - avondale
castle rock AD03

restroom sconce
shades of light - wave pattern
SKU SC15095 oil rubbed bronze

interior ceiling mounted
shades of light - slim circular led
SKU FM19095 black

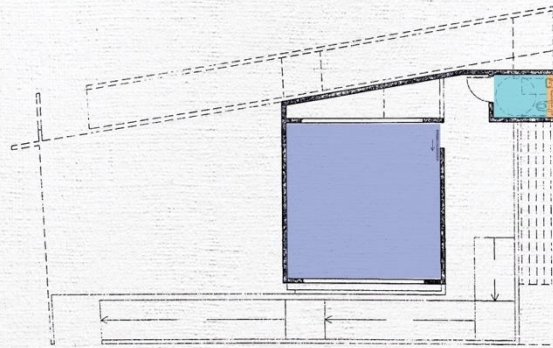


Figure 35 Image by Constanza Loustalet. *Materials II*. 2020.

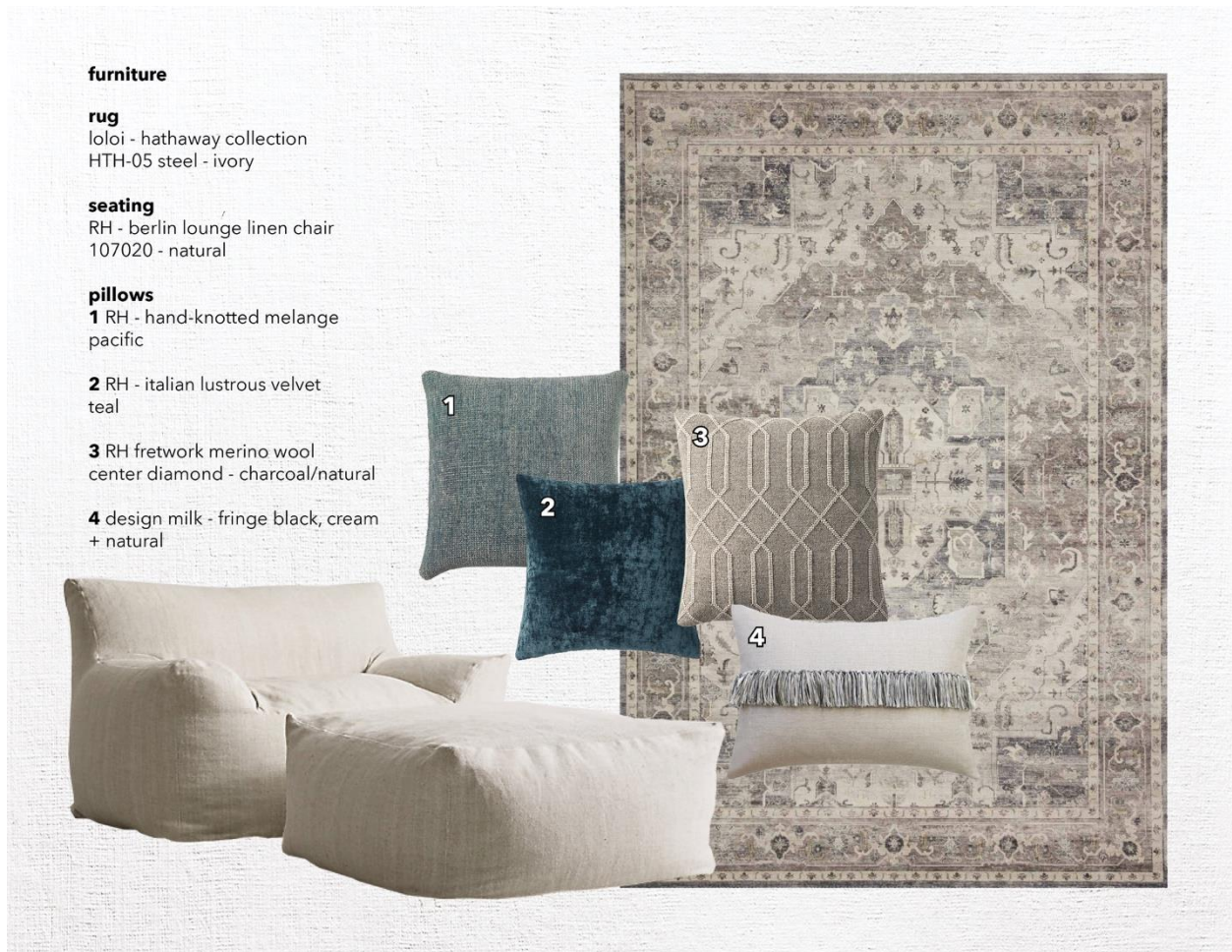


Figure 36 Image by Constanza Loustalet. Furniture I. 2020.



Figure 37 Image by Constanza Loustalet. Furniture II. 2020.

6 THESIS EXHIBITION

The thesis exhibition was planned at the Ernest G. Welch School of Art and Design gallery. The exhibition was intended to be located in the back of the large gallery, composed by three main walls and a divisionary wall. Upon entering from the left side of the gallery, people would have seen the design of the structure hanged alongside those the three main walls (figures 38-40). Diagram, site plans, plans, sections, facades, as well as interior and exterior perspectives as the completion of the project. The divisionary wall would have the title of the thesis, “abroad”, along with the information of the project, solutions, and goals (figure 40). The center of the space was meant for the model of the structure as an architectural feature located on top of a gallery pedestal (figures 41-46).



Figure 38 Image by Constanza Loustalet. *Gallery Perspective*. 2020.



Figure 39 Image by Constanza Loustalet. Gallery Perspective II. 2020.



Figure 40 Image by Constanza Loustalet. Gallery Perspective III. 2020.

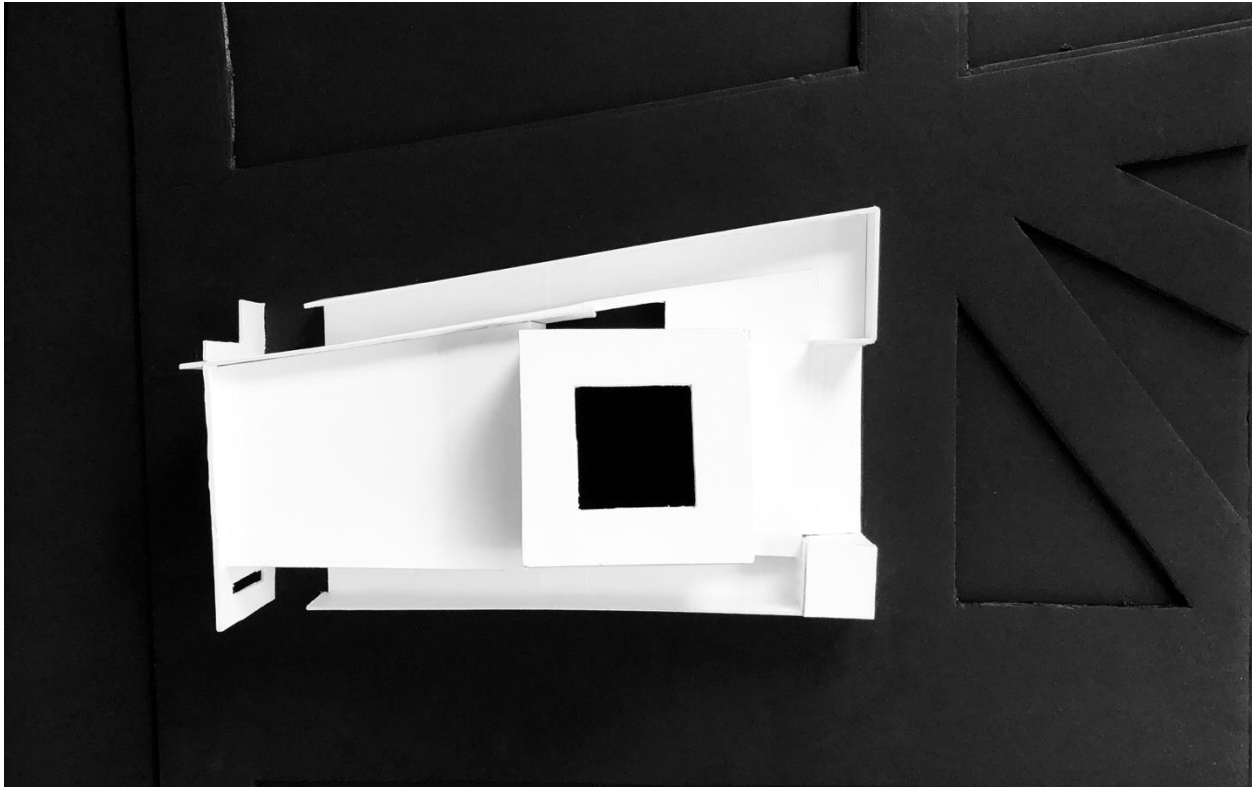


Figure 41 Photo by Constanza Loustalet. Model Site View. 2020.

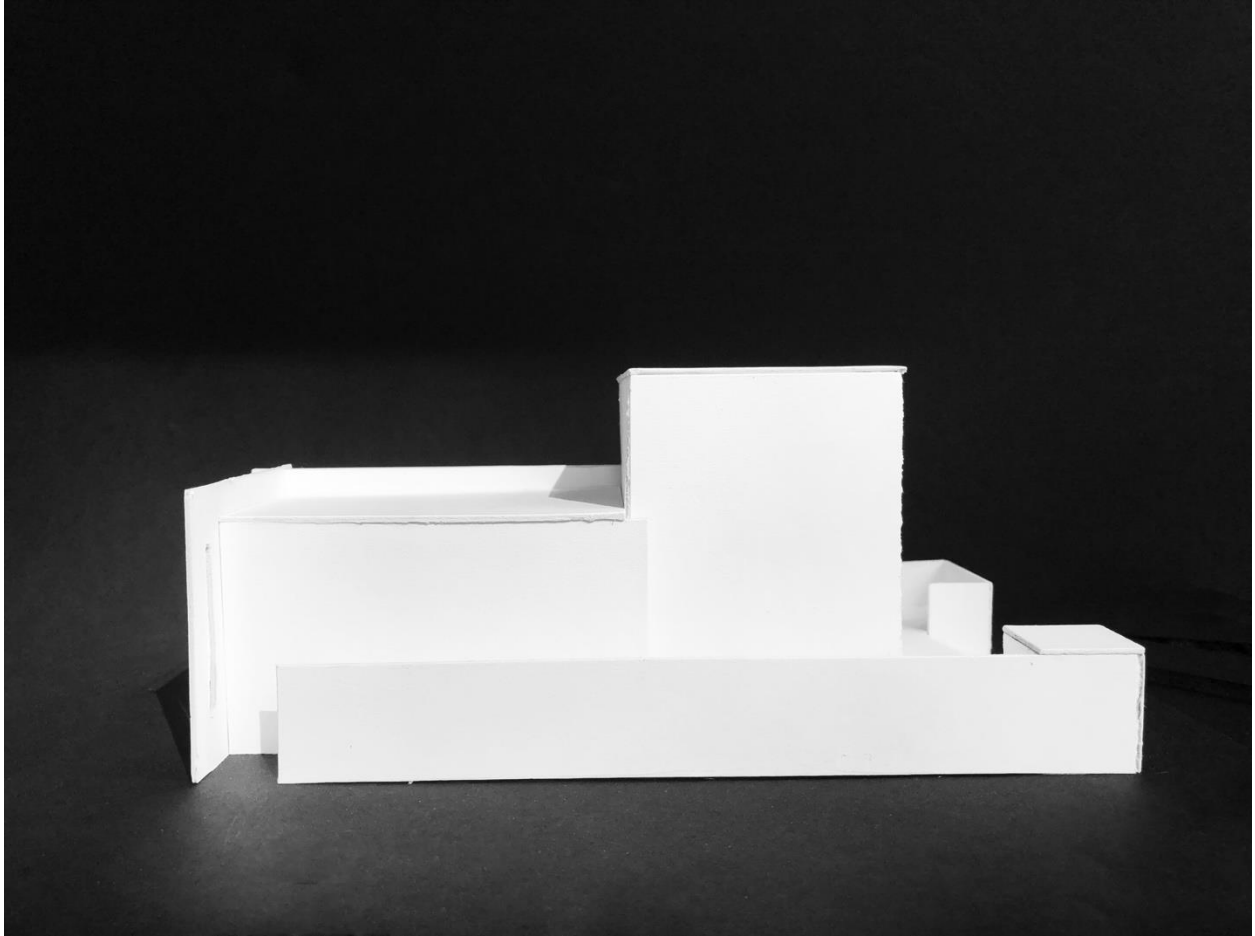


Figure 42 Photo by Constanza Loustalet. Model Facade View. 2020.

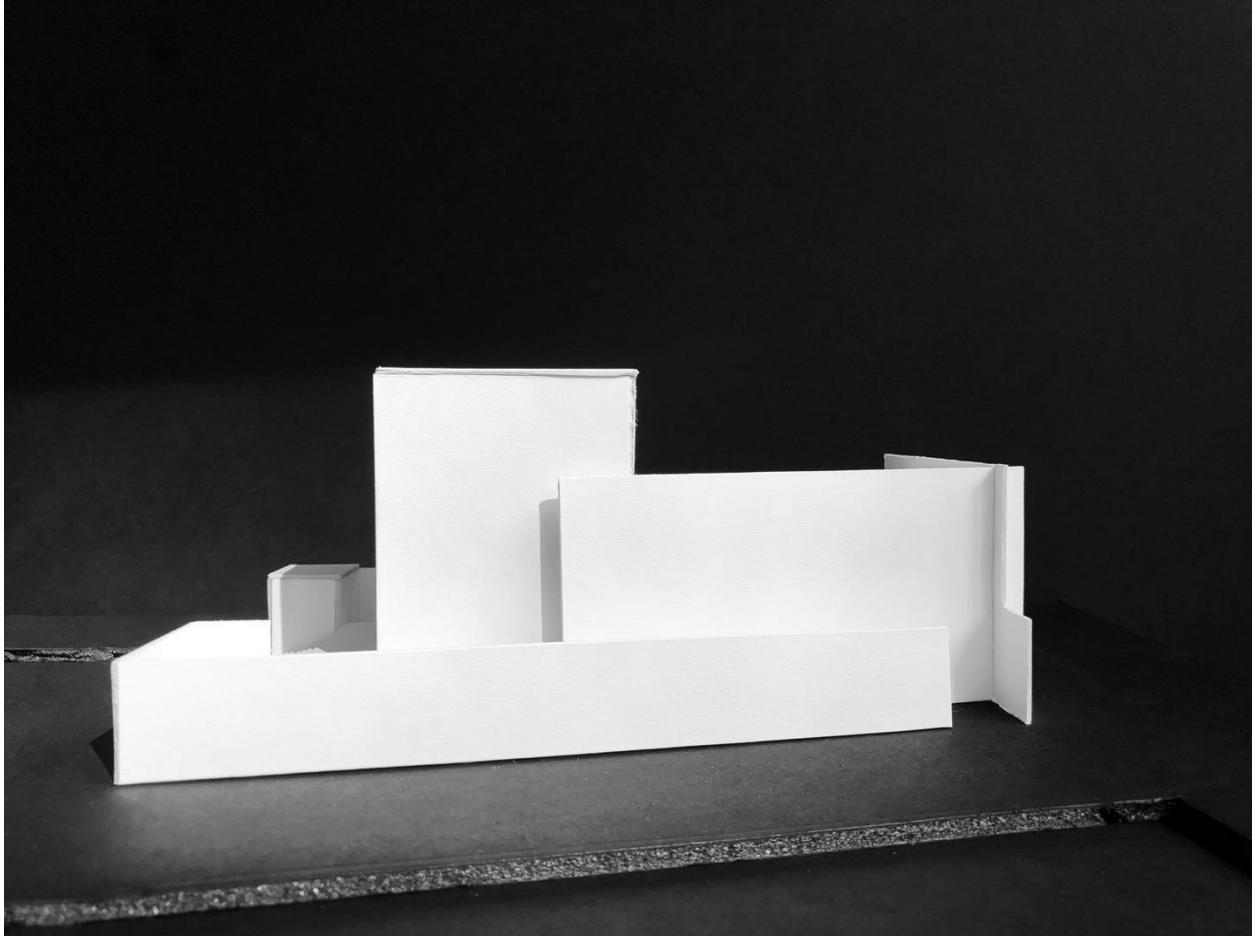


Figure 43 Photo by Constanza Loustalet. Model Facade View II. 2020.

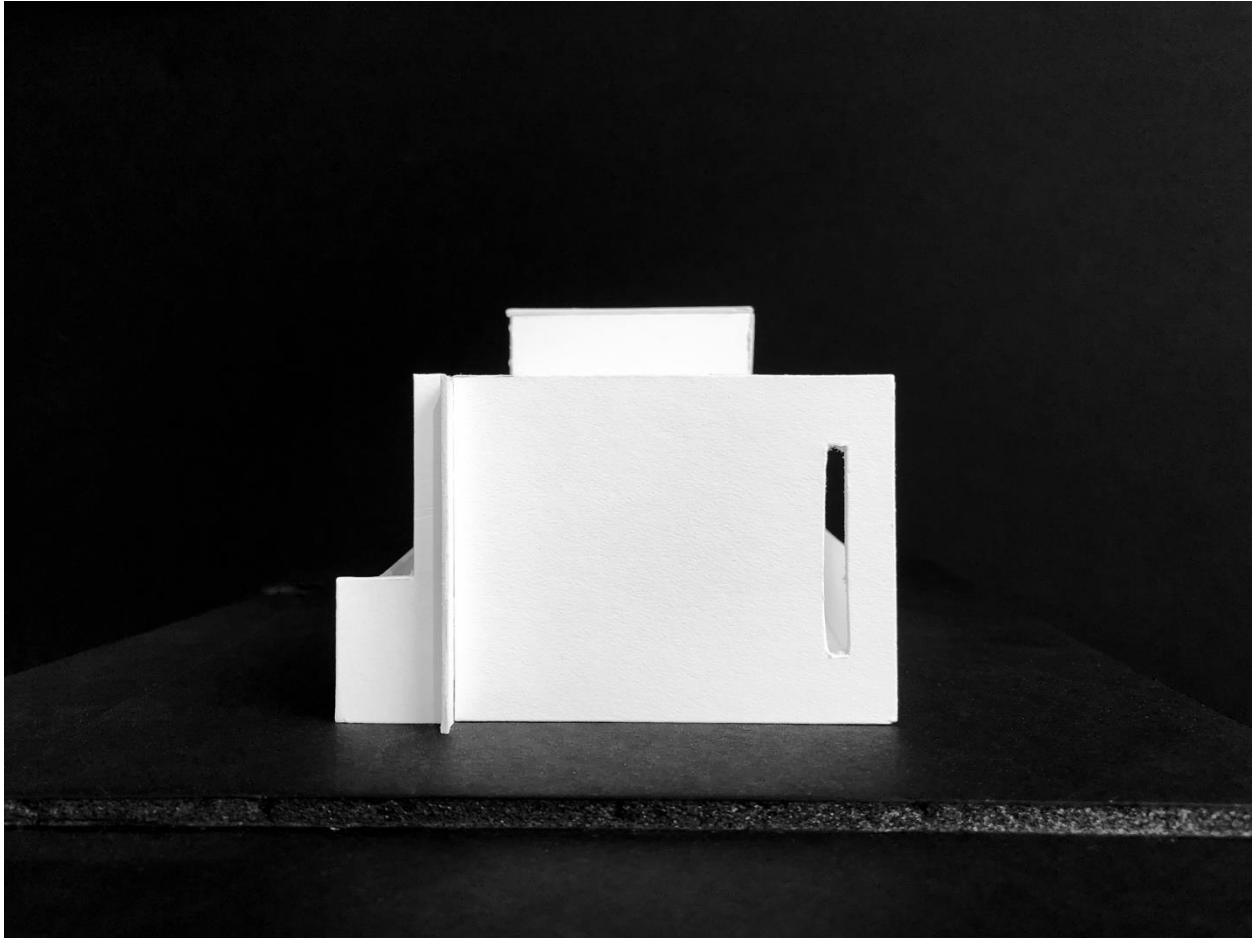


Figure 44 Photo by Constanza Loustalet. Model Facade View III. 2020.

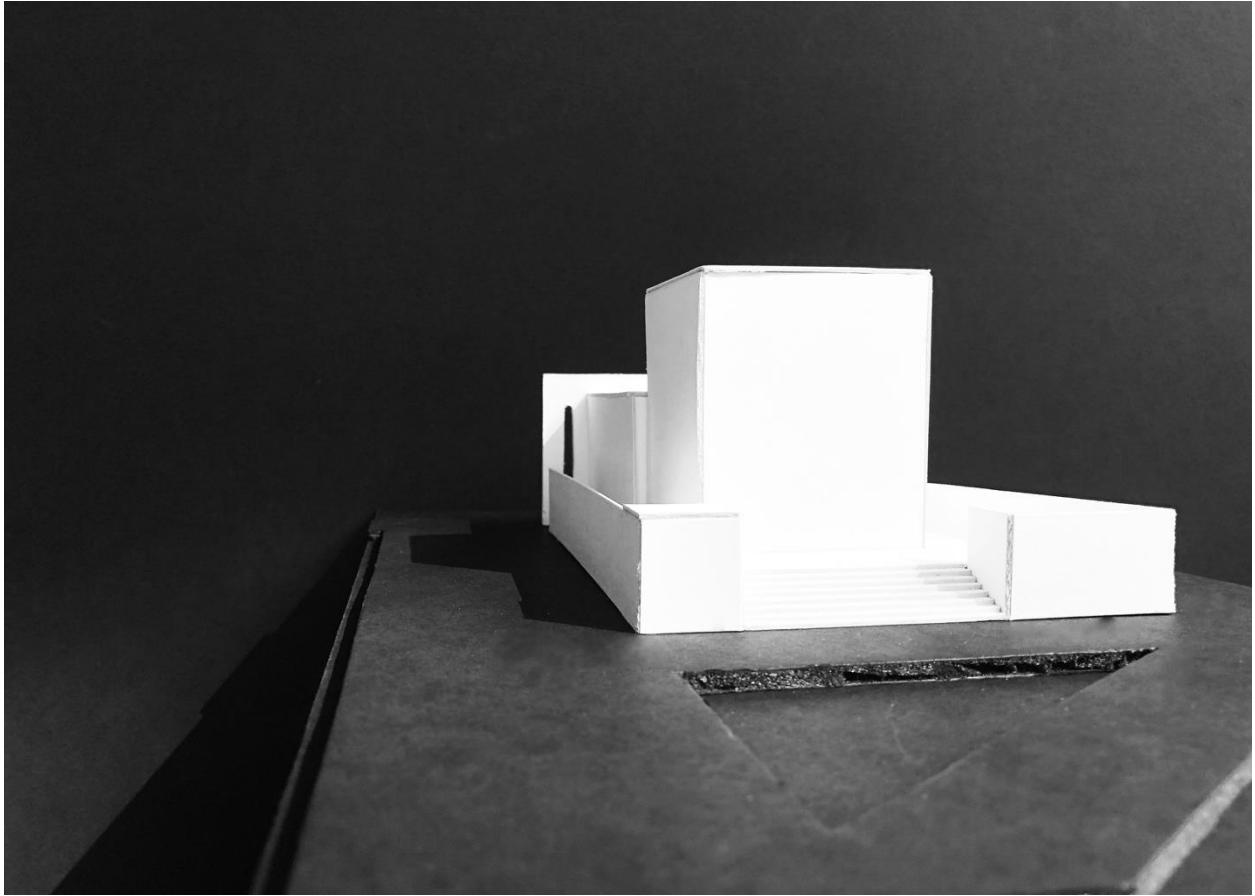


Figure 45 Photo by Constanza Loustalet. Model Perspective View. 2020.

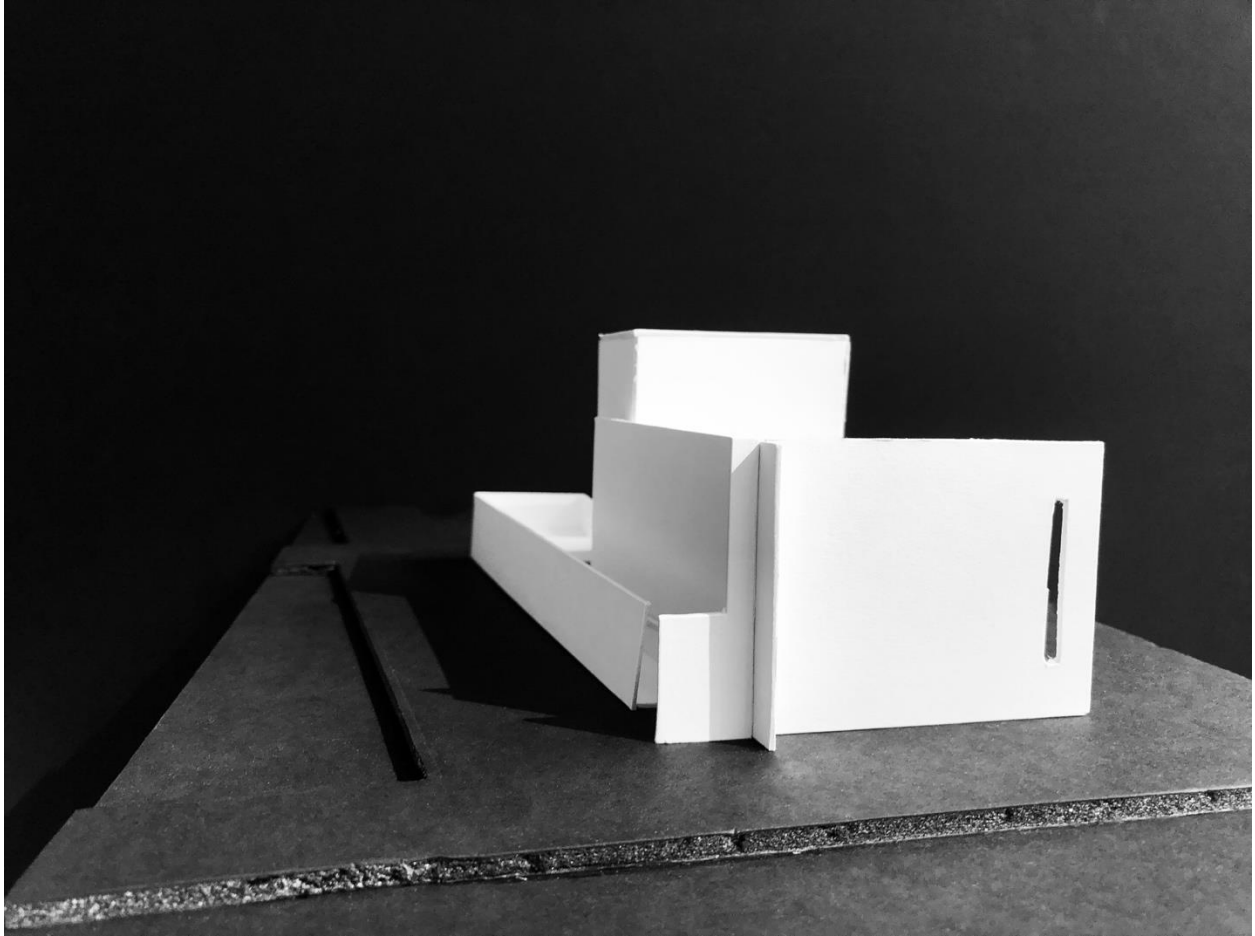


Figure 46 Photo by Constanza Loustalet. Model Perspective View II. 2020.

7 CONCLUSION

Most universities in the United States comply with having a place for counseling to help their students. As previous research showed, there is a difference when it comes to international students since it is not common for them to approach these facilities. Supporting the adaptation struggle and sense of belonging is vital for the success of the student's well-being as well as the university system.

My thesis project aims to improve the experience of international students abroad, by building a space where they can find comfort outside of their homes, allowing personal growth and providing a better outlook towards their problems. Having a space on campus that tackles these struggles helps international students know that they are not alone, that they are understood, and that they are just as important. Each individual decides to deal with their emotions their own way, but the importance of providing such space for them is a statement of attention and care. Acculturation is a process. Encouragement is the first step.

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