

STAGGER



FRIGHT

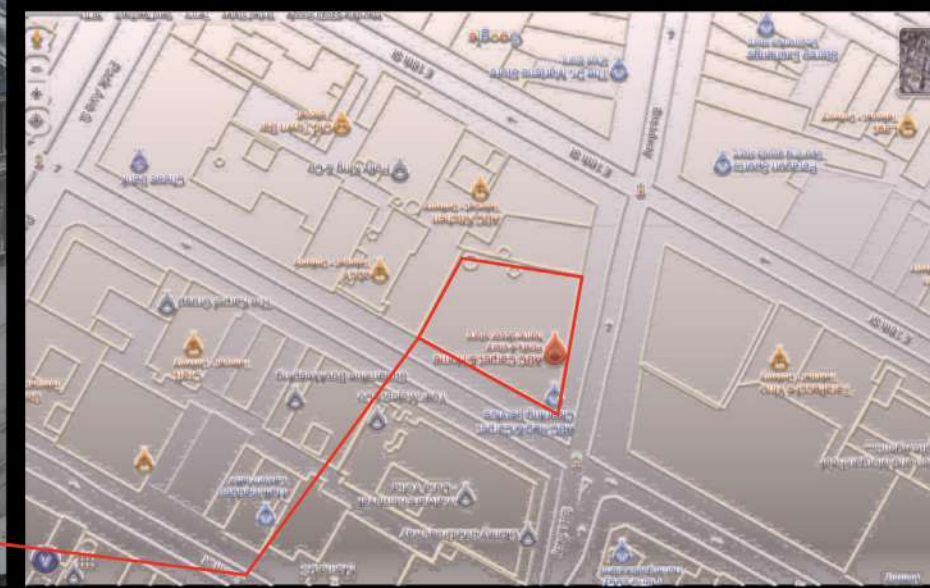
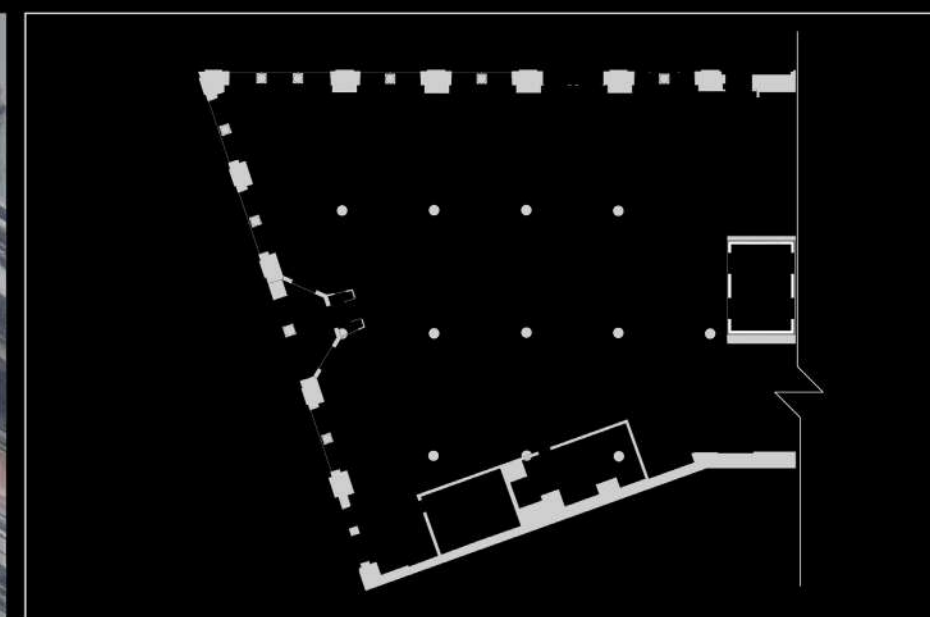
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“Stage Fright”
Pratt Institute,
Interior Design Thesis
21/SP-INT-402-04
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stage fright, noun
(common term for performance anxiety):
(oxford def): nervousness before or during an appearance
before an audience.



Thesis Statement:

Through the theory that performance exists in the everyday, stage fright occurs in domestic, banal settings. Customers in this retail furniture store become performers during their perusal of the staged vignettes. By subverting social thresholds and design standards, new social and physical relationships form, alleviating the stigma of stage fright.



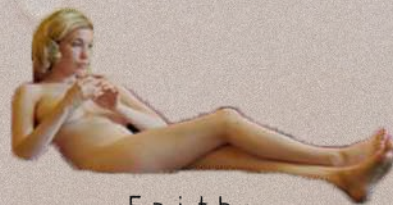
SITE

Program: Furniture Showroom as Home/Rehearsal Space



PROGRAM

USER PROFILES



Faith:
exhibitionist
depressed
broadway actress



Sarah:
loud
very clean
singer



Bob:
dirty
sleeps late
comedian



Nancy:
OCD
cooks
opera singer



Susie:
social
stays up late
ballet dancer



Benjamin:
acrobat
polyamorous
magician



Allison:
shopper
anxious



Jackie:
introvert
passive aggressive
modern dancer



Larry:
has PTSD
wakes up often
TV actor



Jordan:
caring
narcoleptic
puppeteer/clown

USER

PERFORMANCE

“... ‘performance’ refers to all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers,”

Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. 1956.

IMPOSTOR

someone or something that pretends to be something that they are not.

IMPOSTOR SYNDROME

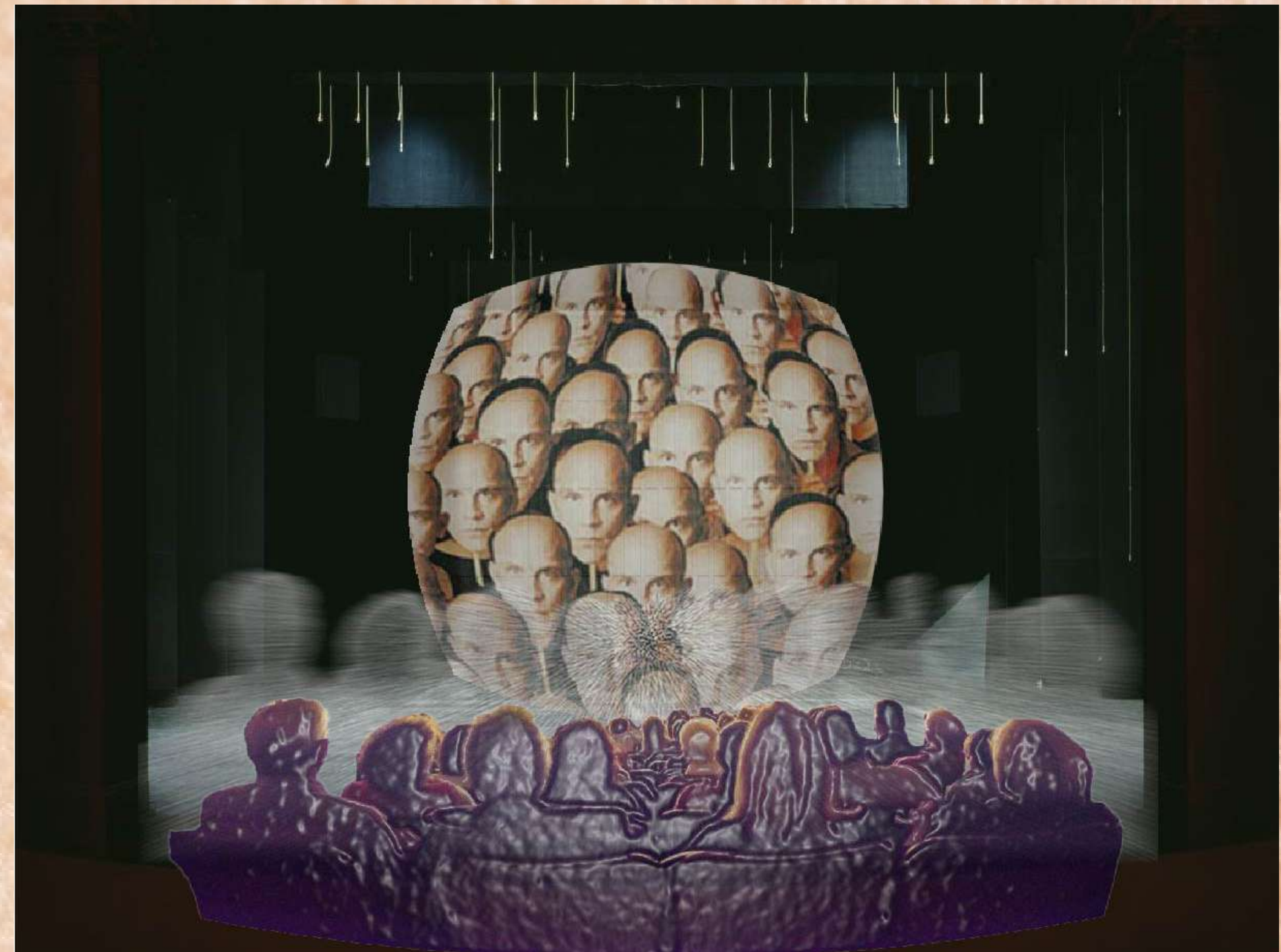
the inability to believe in one’s own abilities, chronic self doubt, anticipation of embarrassment in moments of performance.

STAGE FRIGHT

(common term for performance anxiety): (oxford def): nervousness before or during an appearance before an audience.

Scientific reasoning: “...on a neurological level, stressors in the brain cause your focus to shift away from whatever it is that you are doing. This explains why stage fright happens and we forget what we are talking about, because we lose focus when our brains are exposed to these stressors.”

Sivak, Nicholas, et al. “SiOWfa15: Science in Our World: Certainty and Controversy.”
SiOWfa15 Science in Our World Certainty and Controversy, 19 Oct. 2015,
sites.psu.edu/siowfa15/2015/10/19/stage-fright-why-does-it-happen/.



PERFORMANCE IN THE EVERYDAY

STAGED SETTING

“First, there is the “setting,” involving furniture, decor, physical layout, and other background items which supply the scenery and stage props for the spate of human action played out before, within, or upon it,” (Goffman, 22).

FRONT

“...the part of the individual’s performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation of those who observe the performance,” (Goffman, 22).

THE PART ONE IS PLAYING

“When an individual plays a part he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them... the individual offers his performance and puts on his show ‘for the benefit of other people,’” (Goffman, 17).

DAILY ROUTINE

“...a performance of a routine presents through its front some rather abstract claims upon the audience, claims that are likely to be presented to them during the performance of other routines. This constitutes one way in which a performance is ‘socialized,’ molded, and modified to fit into the understanding and expectations of the society in which it is presented,” (Goffman, 34, 35).



ANTICIPATION OF EMBARRASSMENT



The nature of the meaning of embarrassment is established more securely before theoretical considerations are allowed their head.

What is embarrassment?

Embarrassment as difficulty is the first key. Sharing origins with the word embargo, an embarrass is 'an obstacle', and 'embarrasser' is 'to block'.¹⁹ Barely used in English now, the noun 'embarras' includes among its meanings a number of particular instances of blockage or obstruction, including, for example, '1867 SMYTH *Sailor's Work-book*, *Embarras*, an American term for places where the navigation of rivers . . . is rendered difficult by the accumulation of driftwood.' As a verb, the first meaning offered for embarrass is:

1. *trans.* To encumber, hamper, impede (movements, actions, persons moving or acting).

Something that might easily happen to either an actor or to someone watching an actor, then, and also, and this is crucial:

b. *pass.* Of persons: To be 'in difficulties' from want of money; to be encumbered with debts.

The nature of the obstacle is found to be economic, but in this context the "difficulties" seem to have become 'difficulties'. The function of these inverted commas is not quite clear here (they seem to be an obstacle, themselves, of some kind, impeding or complicating access to the meaning behind the sign), although the recurrence of this stylistic choice, dealt with below, may clarify a little.

The second and third meanings are offered thus:

2. To perplex, throw into doubt or difficulty.
b. To make (a person) feel awkward or ashamed, esp. by one's speech or actions; to cause (someone) embarrassment.
3. To render difficult or intricate; to complicate (a question, etc.).

So to embarrass might be to do something to someone by speech or action, to act or speak in such a way as to introduce obstacles or complications. One might imagine, if one were given to imaginary theatres, that the kind of speech

AND THE AWFUL BLACK HOLE



Stage fright is the anticipation of being embarrassed by something you might do or say in front of observers who you believe to be judging you. Ridout's definition which is most relevant to my thesis is: "To make (a person) feel awkward or ashamed, esp. by one's own speech or actions; to cause (someone) embarrassment," (Ridout, 81).

Ridout, Nicholas Peter. *Stage Fright, Animals, and Other Theatrical Problems*. Cambridge University Press, 2006.

52 Stage Fright, Animals, and Other Theatrical Problems

for professional success. It is not just the actor's professional credibility or employment prospects that are at stake when he steps on stage, it is his or her self: a negative response from an audience is no longer just a comment on professional accomplishment, it has become a judgement upon the inner self. This judgement is exercised in darkness. The actor under scrutiny is initially blinded by the light, and even when this effect fades as the eyes adjust, the auditorium presents an undifferentiated darkness.

This is the full reality of the 'awful hole' into which Kostya is plunged when he steps on stage. As a professional actor in the modern world, he finds himself standing in bright electric light under the scrutiny of people he can't see in an 'awful' dark 'hole'. He has grown up in a world where he has learned to treat all strangers with hostility and to assume that they harbour a latent antipathy towards him. He is earning a precarious living which is substantially dependent upon whether the hostile people in the darkness like him. This is the only thing he knows how to do. He has spent a great deal of time looking into the depths of his soul. He has been through specialist training that taught him never to look at the audience because that might turn him into stone. No wonder he feels horrible. Fortunately, a new theoretical discipline has found a name for that horrible feeling. It's stage fright, and it's fearfully modern. But there's no cure. So we end up with something that has a name, that has a history, but what is it?

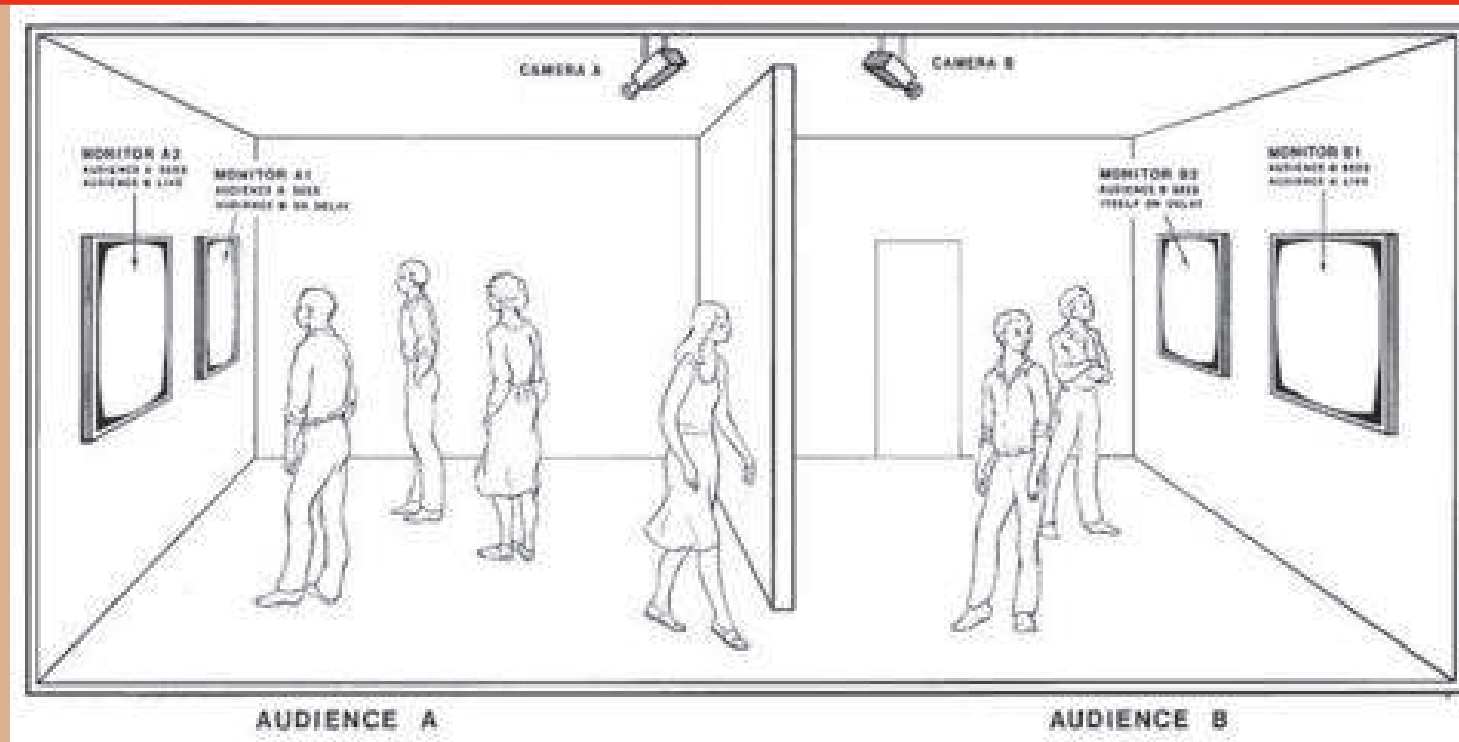
Into the hole and out: diagnosis and cure

Most writing on the subject of stage fright is in search of either cause or cure, or both. The title of Kato Havas's book is typical: *Stage Fright: its causes and cures, with special reference to violin playing*.³⁹ Studies of stage fright from a musical perspective are numerous. Theatrical literature tends to avoid the subject. Gabbard notes the existence of 'an unspoken subject. Glen silence . . . among performers'.⁴⁰ Havas suggests why this might be the case.

Nicholas Ridout describes the experience of stage-fright as entering the 'awful hole,' (Ridout, 52). When the performer steps into this new world, all of their familiarities are gone, and people become strangers. He talks about their "scrutiny," and how in the black hole, they can see him but he can't see them. He later encourages those dealing with stage fright to face their fears as this is the only way to get over it, (Ridout, 68).

Ridout, Nicholas Peter. *Stage Fright, Animals, and Other Theatrical Problems*. Cambridge University Press, 2006.

AUDIENCE AS PERFORMER PRECEDENT



In Dan Graham's, "Performer/Audience/Mirror", he takes the position of performer while performing in a pedestrian type of role. He walks out onto the stage or performance area and begins observing himself and the audience in real time vocally. I think this analysis and observation of the self is part of what happens when someone has performance anxiety. Also with the mirror in the background, the audience also becomes the performer.

Dan Graham "Performer/Audience/Mirror" (1975)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RjiLZ_A0t0A



In Dan Graham's, Time Delay Room, he creates a series of camera and monitor set ups in adjacent rooms which allow for the viewing of yourself and others depending on where you are in which room. The line becomes blurred between audience and performer and sometimes participants become both.

Media Art Net. "Media Art Net: Graham, Dan: Time Delay Room." Medien Kunst Netz, Media Art Net, 15 Sept. 2020, www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/time-delay-room/images/7/?desc=full.

RELATIONSHIP OF ADJACENT SPACES
PRECEDENT



1. Every apartment consists of a variable, but finite, number of rooms.
2. Each room has a particular function.

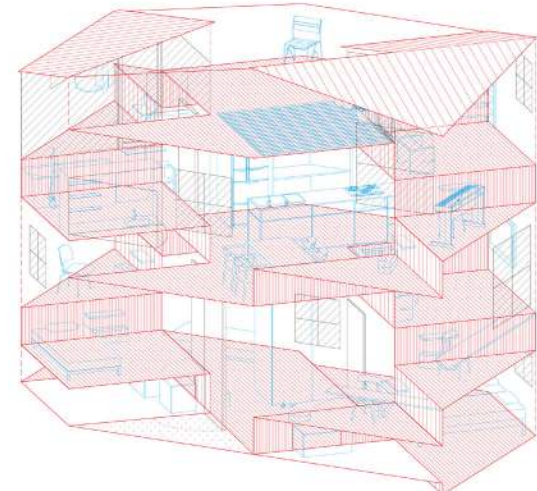
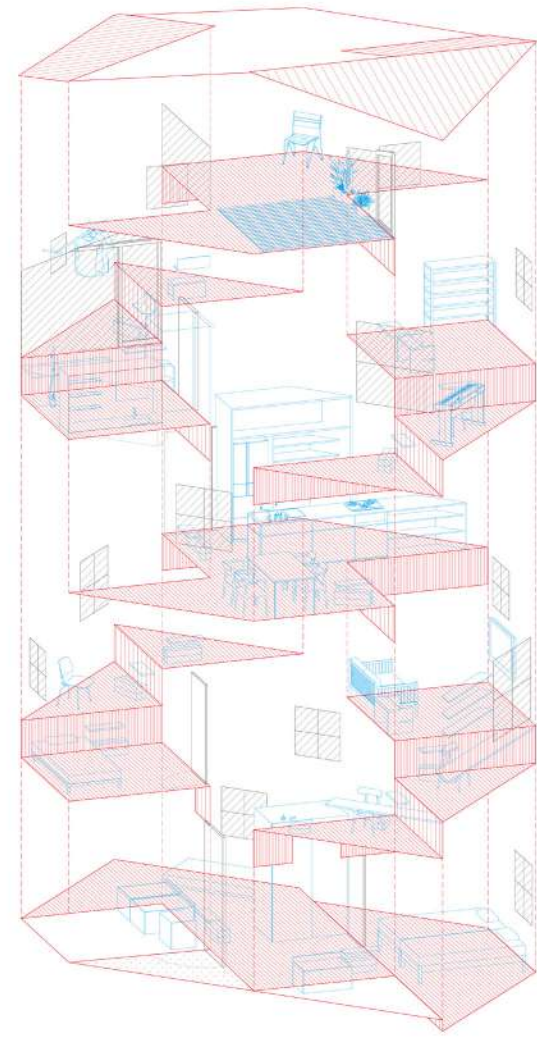
It would seem difficult, or rather it would seem derisory, to question these self-evident facts. Apartments are built by architects who have very precise ideas of what an entrance-hall, a sitting-room (living-room, reception room), a parents' bedroom, a child's room, a maid's room, a box-room, a kitchen, and a bathroom ought to be like. To start with, however, all rooms are alike, more or less, and it is no good their trying to impress us with stuff about modules and other nonsense: they're never anything more than a sort of cube, or let's say rectangular parallelepiped. They always have at least one door and also, quite often, a window. They're heated, let's say by a radiator, and fitted with one or two power points (very rarely more, but if I start in on the niggardliness of building contractors, I shall never stop). In sum, a room is a fairly malleable space.



I don't know, and don't want to know, where functionality begins or ends. It seems to me, in any case, that in the ideal dividing-up of today's apartments functionality functions in accordance with a procedure that is unequivocal, sequential and nycthemeral.¹ The activities of the day correspond to slices of time, and to each slice of time there corresponds one room of the apartment. The following model is hardly a caricature:

- | | | |
|-------|--|---------------|
| 07.00 | The mother gets up and goes to get breakfast in the | KITCHEN |
| 07.15 | The child gets up and goes into the | BATHROOM |
| 07.30 | The father gets up and goes into the | BATHROOM |
| 07.45 | The father and the child have their breakfast in the | KITCHEN |
| 08.00 | The child takes his coat from the | ENTRANCE-HALL |

1. This is the best phrase...



Inspired by "Species of Spaces and Other Pieces," and how Georges Perec explains that rooms don't have to be carved out for specific programs, but rather looking at the relationship of adjacent spaces, which aren't designated for a specific time of day, but rather more fluid movement through the day. "It's not hard to imagine an apartment whose layout would depend, no longer on the activities of the day, but on functional relationships in between the rooms," (Perec, 31).

The 16 different floor levels expresses my idea of programmatic hierarchy. It personifies the qualities of a stage, or audience and performer through high versus low.

Perec, Georges. Species of Spaces and Other Pieces: Georges Perec. W. Ross MacDonald School Resource Services Library, 2009.

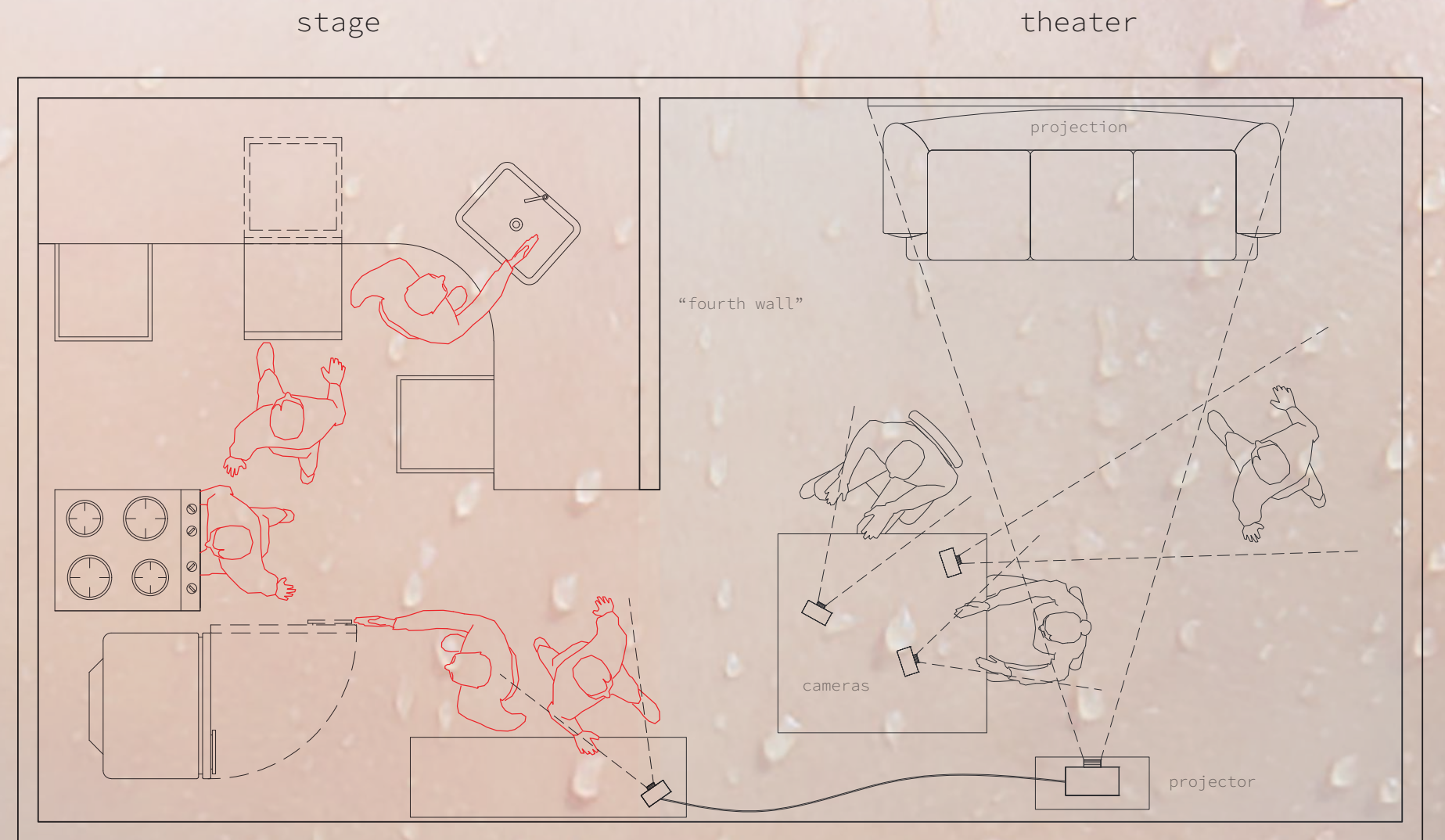


Tato Architects, House in Takatsuki, 2018

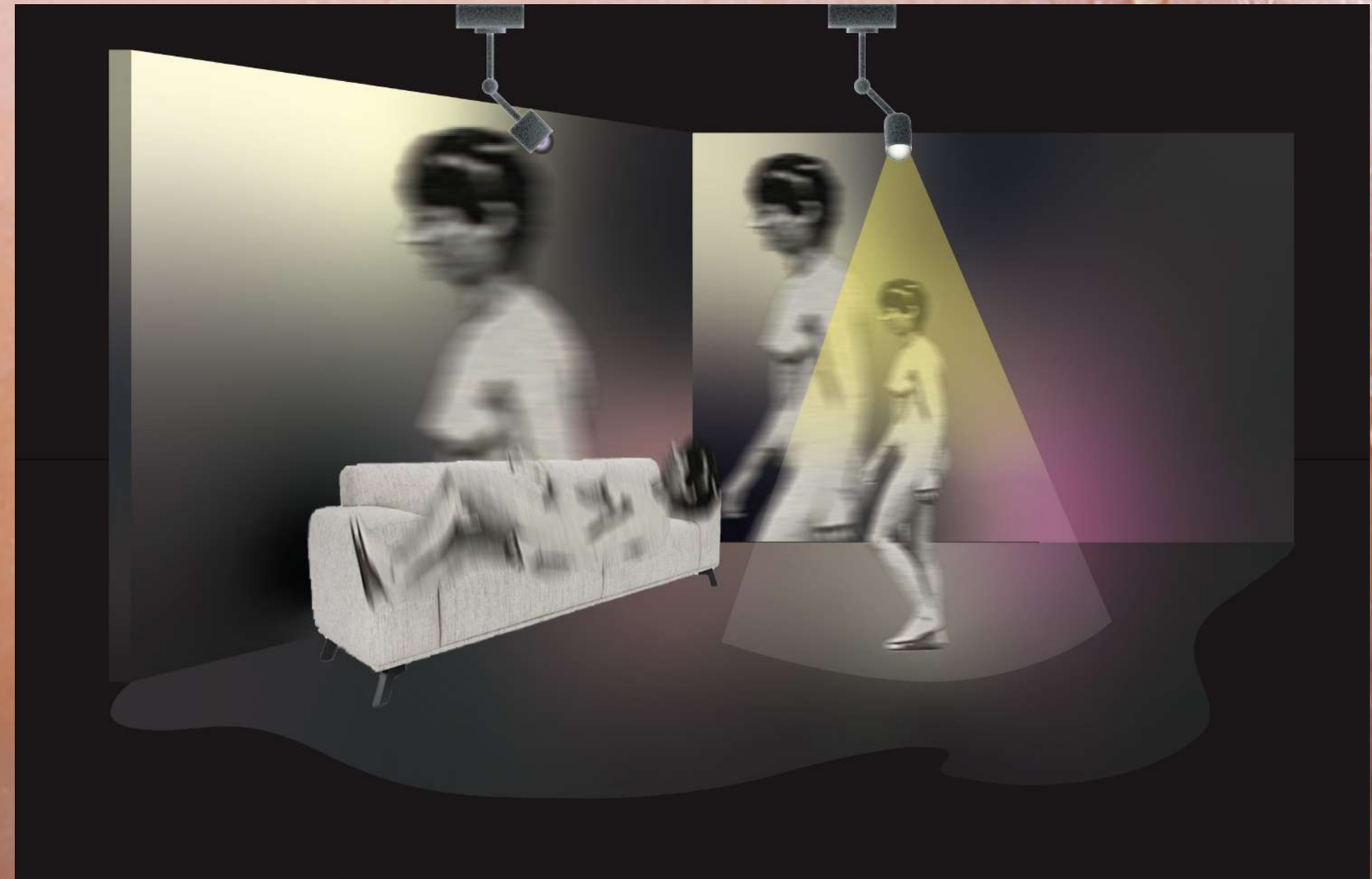


Film: *Threshold of Domestic Performance*

The goal of this film was to experience what it feels like to have stage fright. Through a series of attempts using cameras and projectors in different scenarios in my apartment, I experimented with staged and unstaged settings. I found that stage fright does occur in the banality of unstaged, domestic life. Spontaneity and the unexpected occur when we're living, which can lead to being put on the spot and feelings of anxiety.

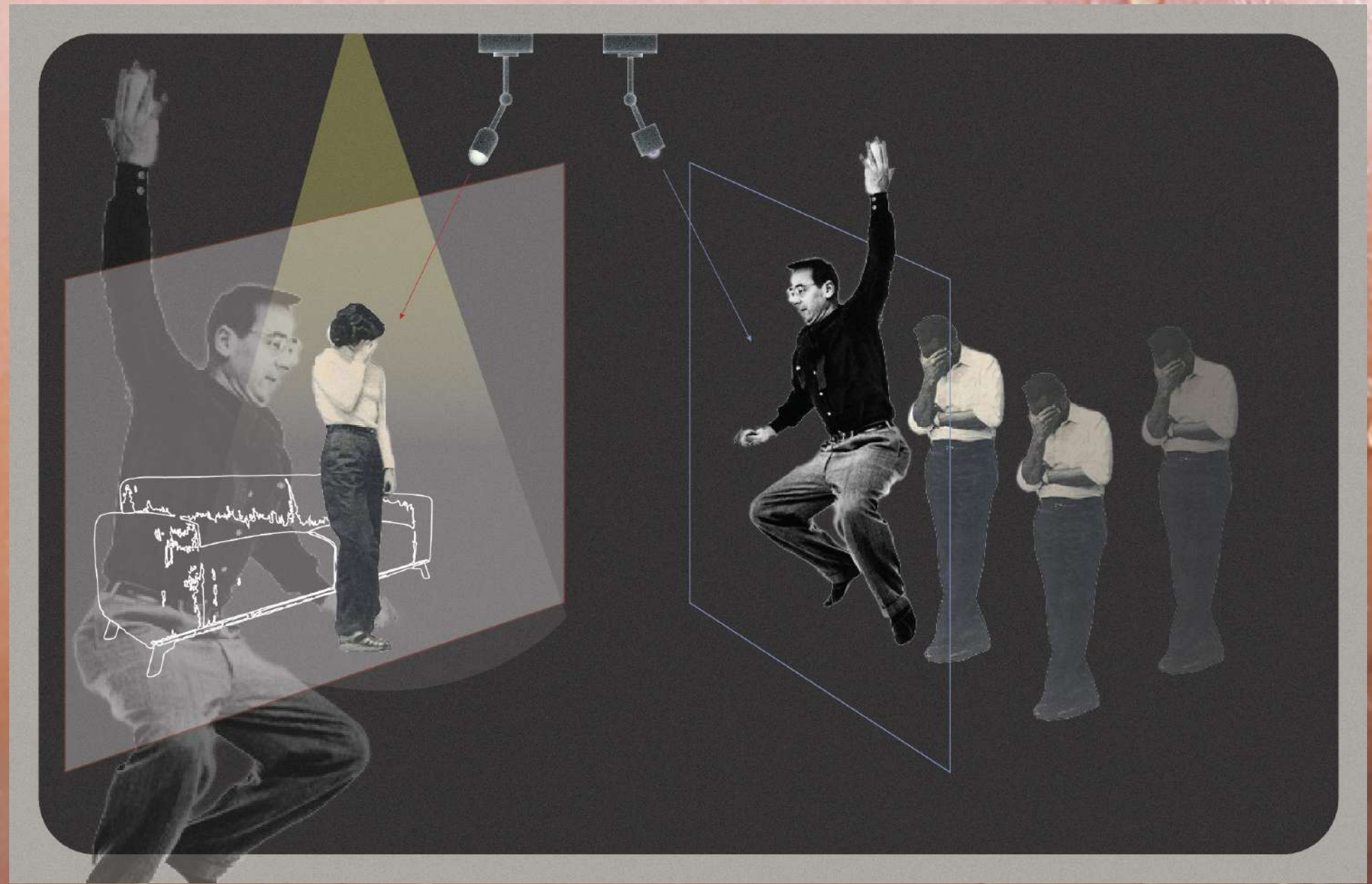


dinner party performance



FILM ONE... PROJECTED EMBARRASSMENT

Film #2

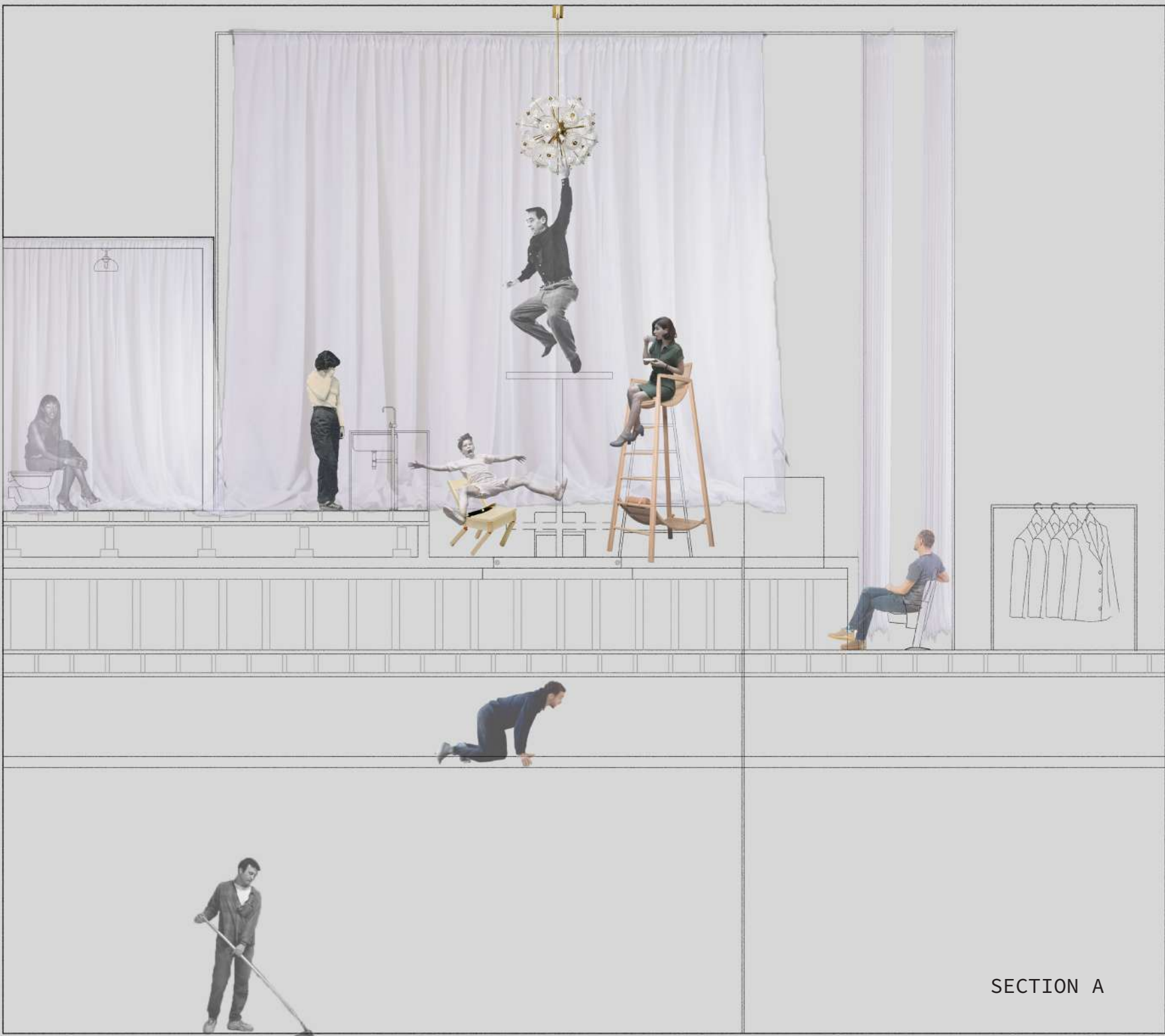


FILM TWO... AUDIENCE INTERPRETATION

Film #3



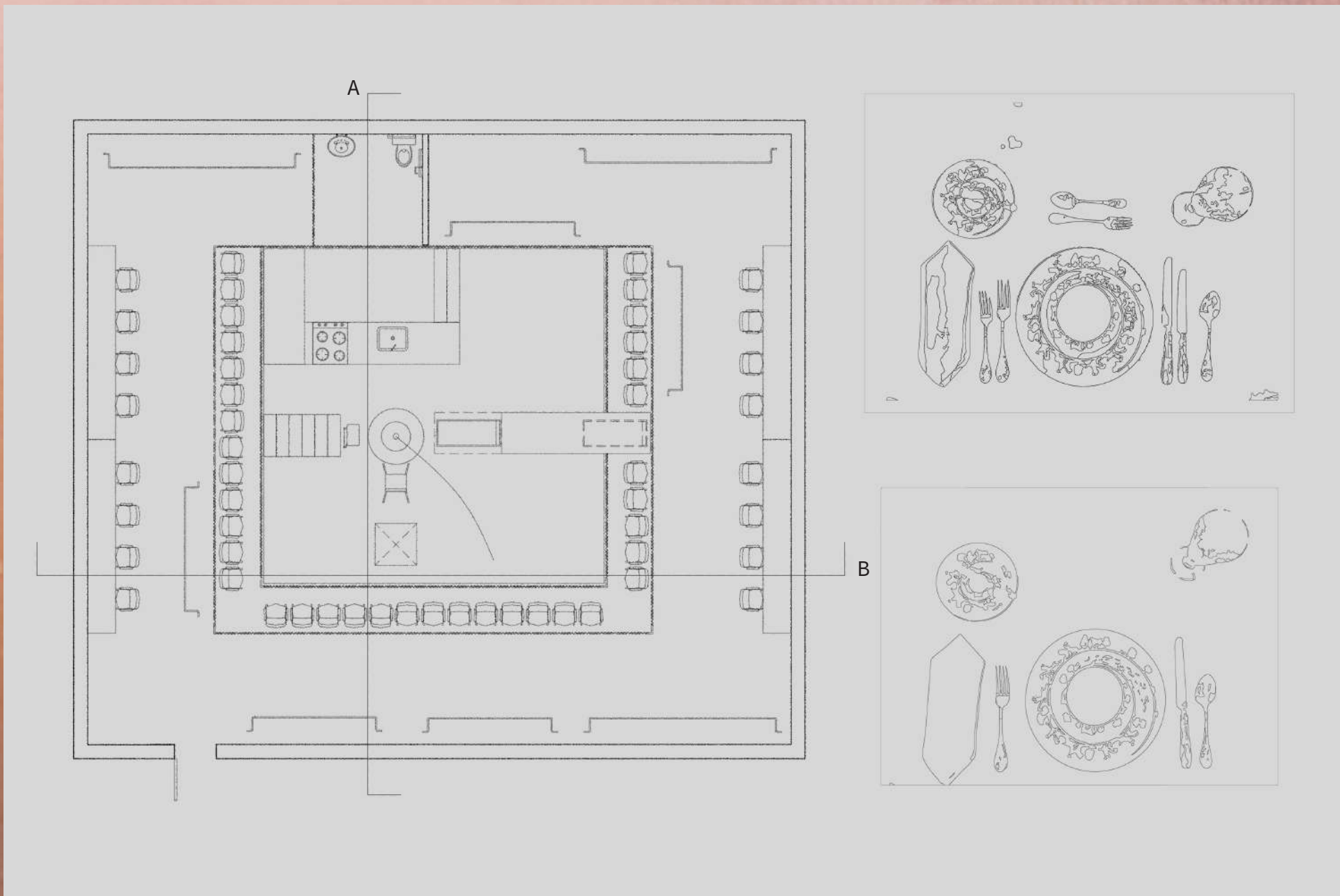
FILM THREE... DINNER PERFORMANCE



STAGED DINNER PARTY



AUDIENCE EXPERIENCING BACKSTAGE



STAGED DINNER PARTY

Model #1



*“We have back-stage
and on-stage behaviors,”*

-Richard Schechner

PHYSICAL MODEL



Network: *Threshold of Site Boundaries*

My network uses the thresholds of my site as a design strategy to experience stage fright. Passersby on the sidewalk have the choice to continue on or enter the store. Then, they have a series of decisions where they can become a passive viewer and observe, or pass through a series of thresholds which will lead them to back stage, ending up in unexpected social and architectural situations.

THRESHOLD NETWORK DIAGRAM





Inside/Out Performance: *Window Shopping*

Performances occur in the staged display window vignette. Passersby can stop and sit on the chairs on the sidewalk and watch the show from an outside perspective. It aims to draw people into the store to shop and become a part of the performance, breaking the wall between performer and audience.





TO OBSERVE OR
TO PARTICIPATE?



Design Strategy:

A furniture showroom aims to present a home through a staged set. This can be critiqued as a performative attempt at expressing a home setting. This makes it an ideal site for a performance of daily, banal domestic activities found in the home. As performers act out different domestic activities, shoppers find themselves crossing the threshold from audience to performer. In their attempt to peruse the furniture, test it out, and imagine it in their own homes, they become part of the performance. This puts them in the spotlight, as all of the performers turn to watch them. An open floor plan allows for programs to cross over and some fixtures have plumbing and some are for show. These factors allow for more potential embarrassing situations. The sets have spotlights, curtains and a fly system which allows for changing of scenes, adding a theatrical quality to the performance.



still from film, *The Phantom of Liberty*



FURNITURE SELECTIONS

Vignette 01:
Daunting Dinner Party

Vignette 02:
Interrupting A Lazy Sunday





Vignette One: Daunting Dinner Party

A shopper becomes a performer when they enter the dinner party vignette. She is looking to buy a new sofa, or a dining table, but gets wrapped up in party antics. On the one side of the room, people are congregating before the party, chatting on the couch or taking a bath before the dinner gets started. The shopper nervously attempts to test the couch. When the dinner party begins, the shopper is shocked to find a bed as part of the seating arrangement and becomes a part of the dinner in her examination of the table. Upon checking out at the kitchen island, she feels the eyes of the dinner party on her as she goes through the motions of paying for her new dining room table.

VIGNETTE ONE...
DAUNTING DINNER PARTY



THE ANTICIPATION
OF ASKING HER
TO SCOOT OVER



HEAD OF THE
TABLE OR DEER IN
HEADLIGHTS?

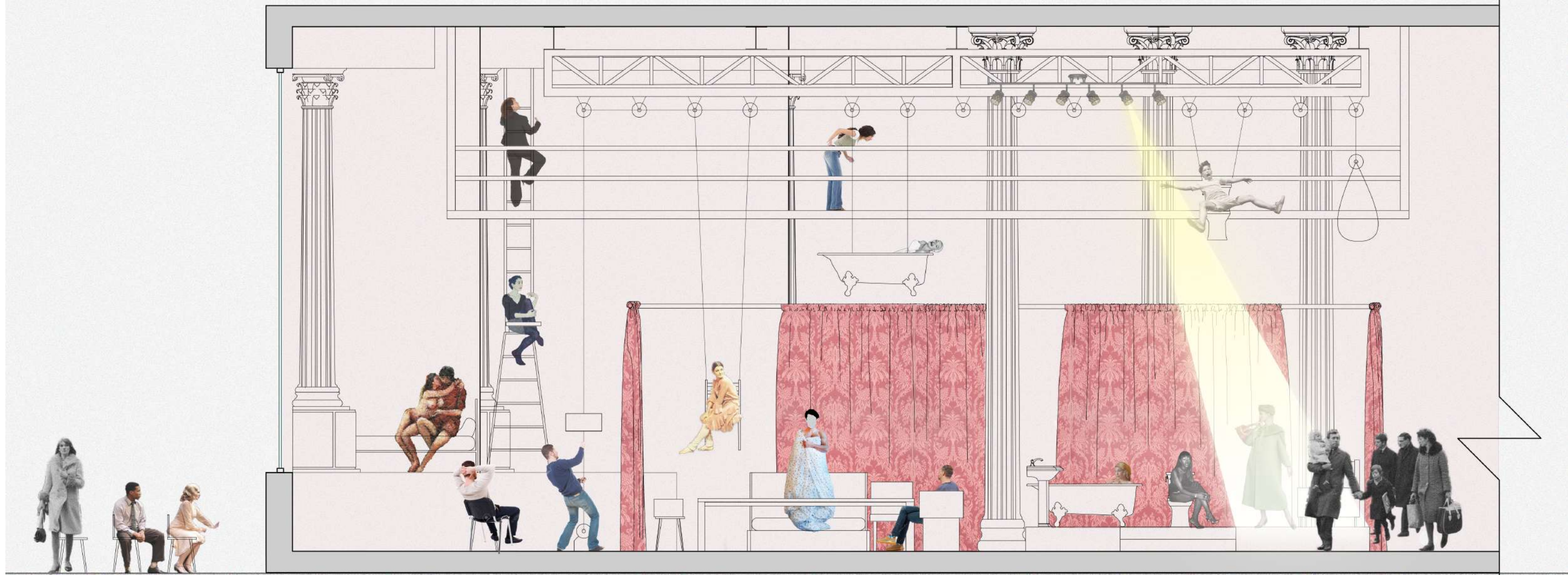


CHECKING OUT OR
PEOPLE CHECKING
YOU OUT?

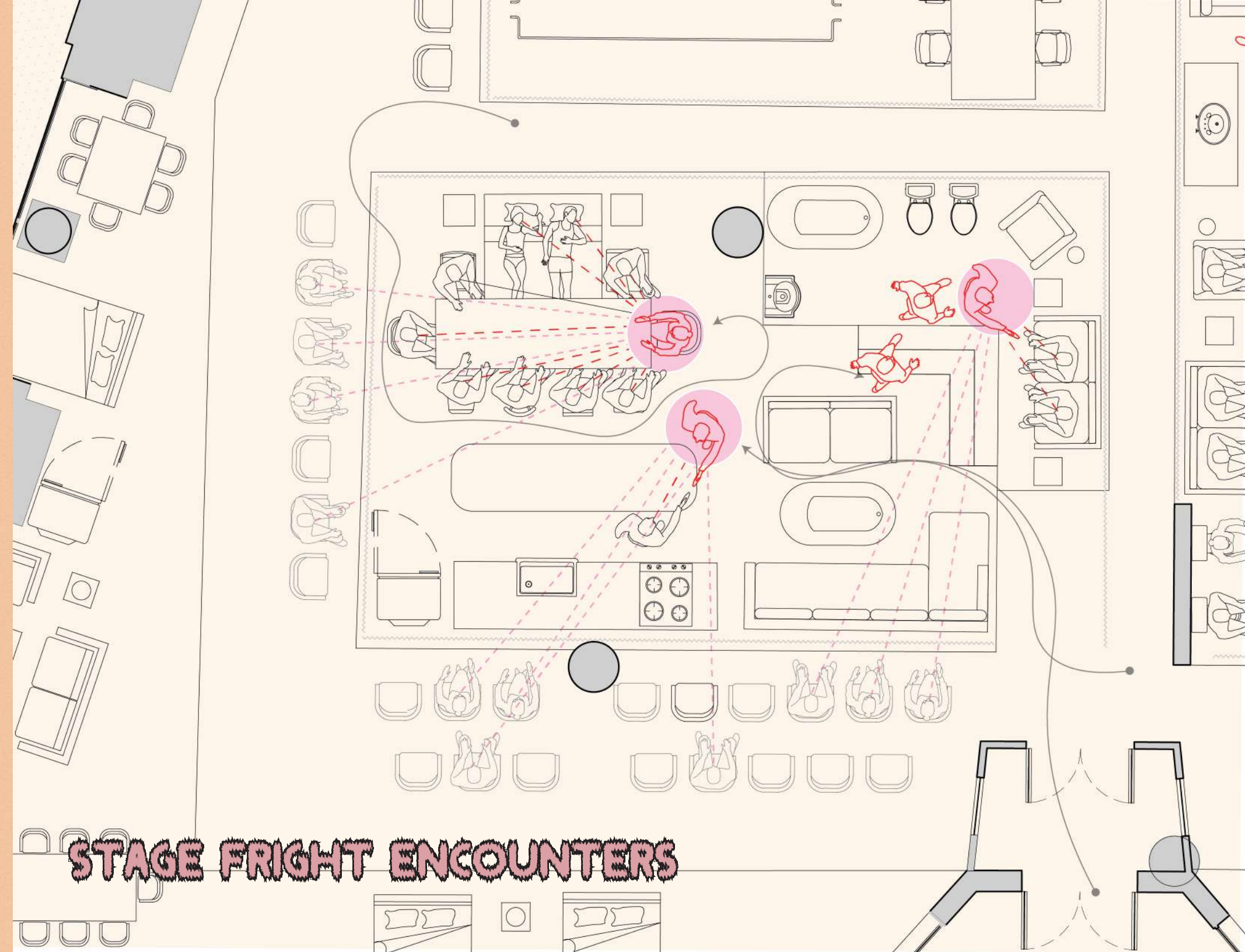


ON THE SPOT...
LOOKING FOR
THE EXIT?

SCENE CHANGE



SECTION A



STAGE FRIGHT ENCOUNTERS



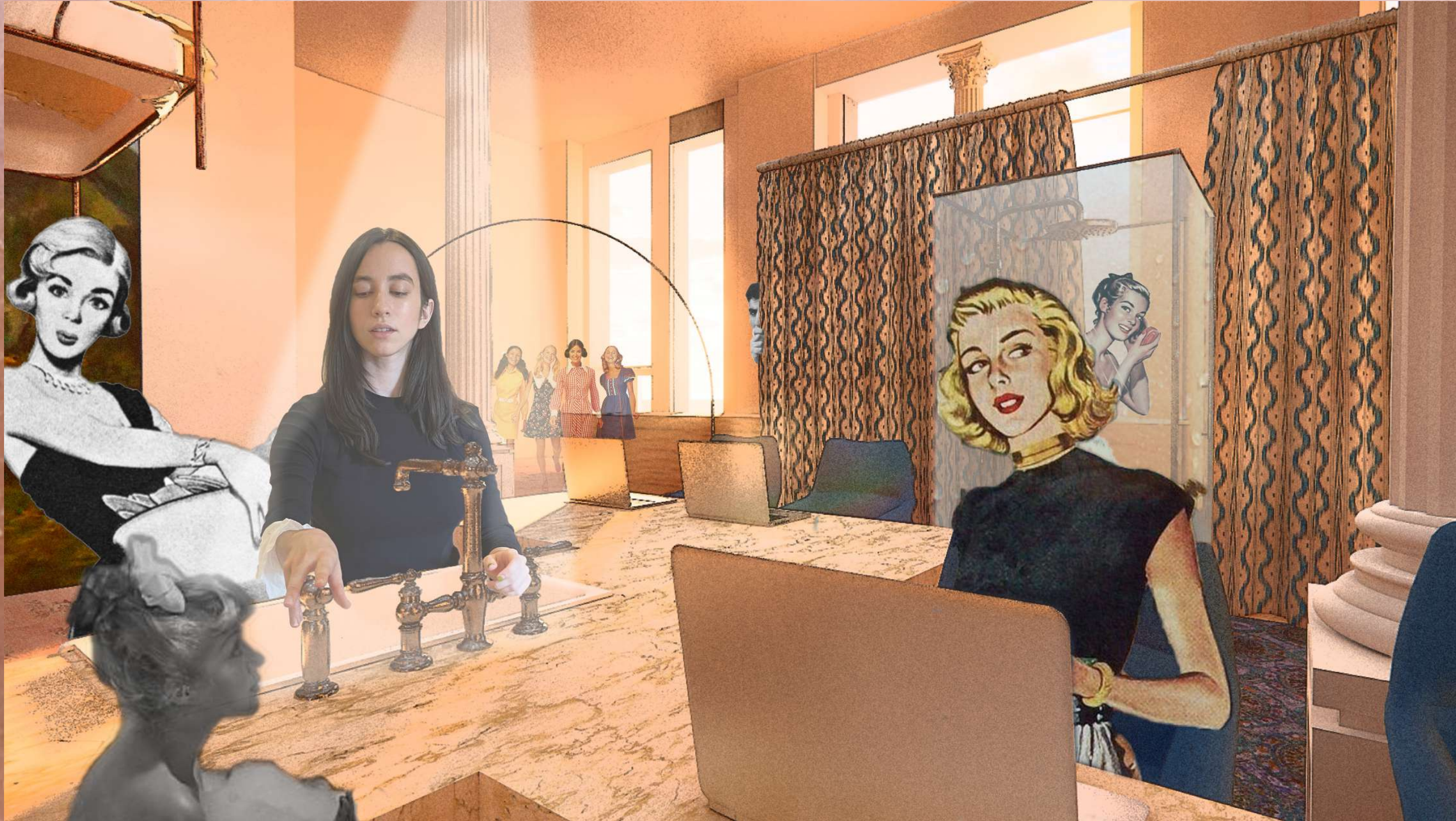
Vignette Two: *Interrupting a Lazy Sunday*

A shopper becomes a performer when they peruse through the staged vignette. They want to test out a particular couch, but find that a soccer game viewing is taking place. Afraid to interrupt, and become the center of attention, they look at the price tag instead. The shopper realizes they should wash their hands on the way out, and go to use the sink only to find it is a display sink. As the shopper exits the store, they are flooded with embarrassment, realizing that everyone saw them trying to use the fake sink. They imagine themselves up in the trusses, escaping the spotlight of embarrassment.

VIGNETTE TWO...
INTERRUPTING A LAZY SUNDAY



INTERRUPTING
THE GAME TO
CHECK THE PRICE



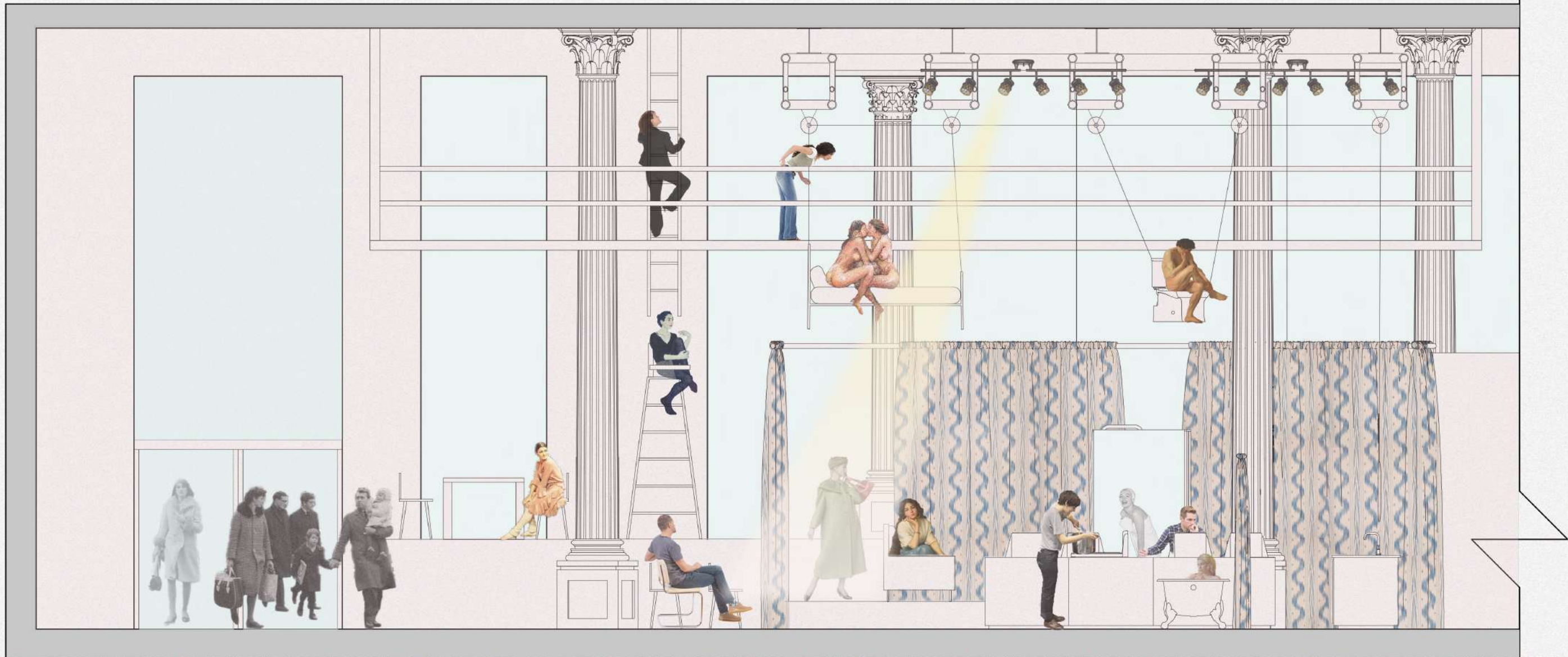
WASHING HANDS
IN FRONT OF
EVERYONE



ALL EYES ON YOU
LEAVING THE
STORE



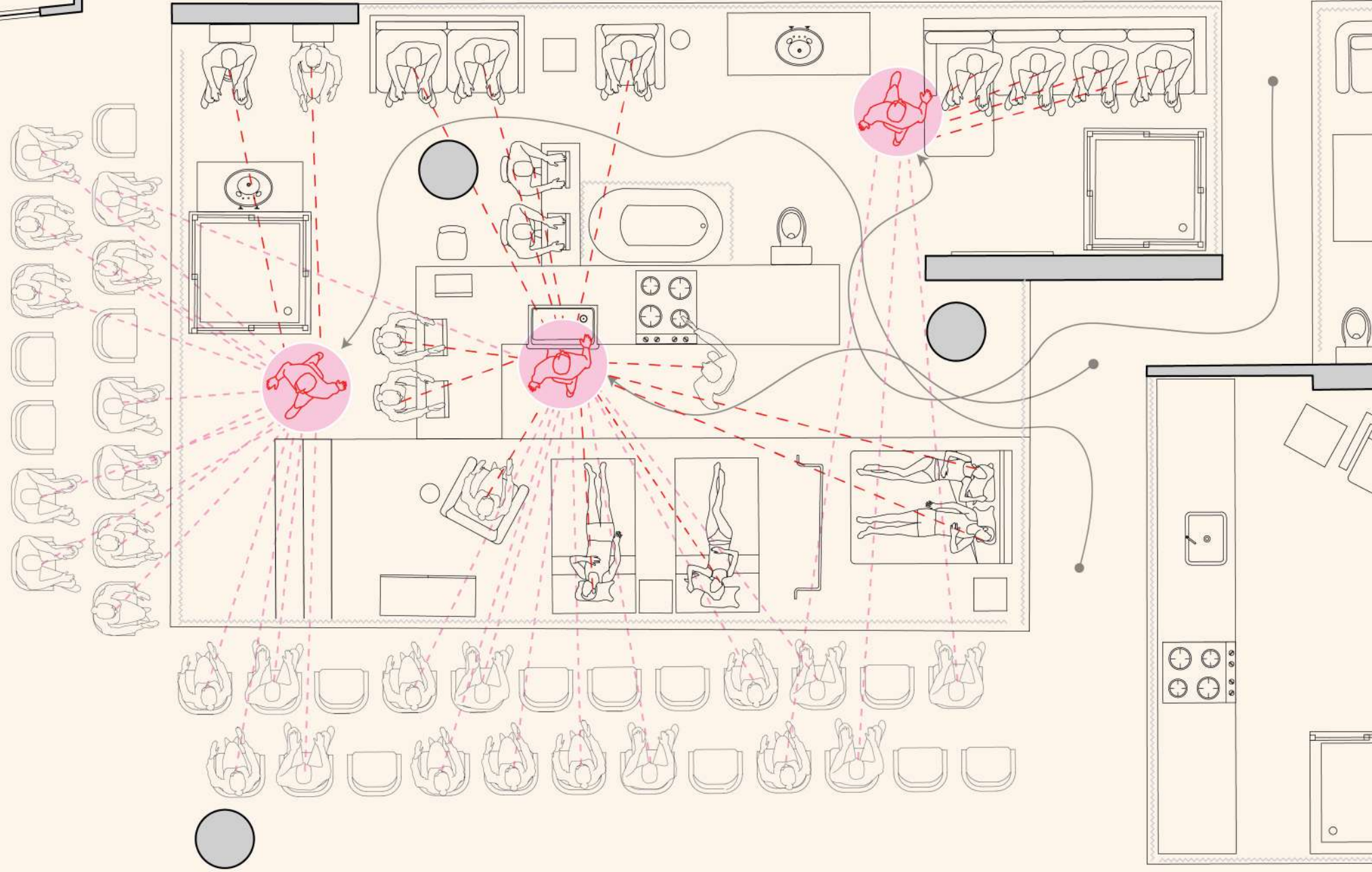
WISHING YOU
COULD ESCAPE IN
THE TRUSSES



SCENE CHANGE

SECTION B

STAGE FRIGHT ENCOUNTERS





Bringing Stage Fright Into Your Home

When a shopper brings the furniture item they bought from ABC Carpet & Home, back to their home, a transformation occurs. Old domestic habits and rituals are broken, and new social relationships are created as the private and public sphere are altered. Through the subversion of standard programmatic thresholds and design standards, new physical relationships to the space and one another will form. This new way of living exacerbates the feeling of performance at first, but once you realize everyone is performing, the stigma of anxiety is alleviated, and a common experience is shared.

STAGE FRIGHT IN
THE HOME



“In thinking about the scenic aspects of the front, we tend to think of the living room in a particular house and the small number of performers who can thoroughly identify themselves with it.”

-Erving Goffman