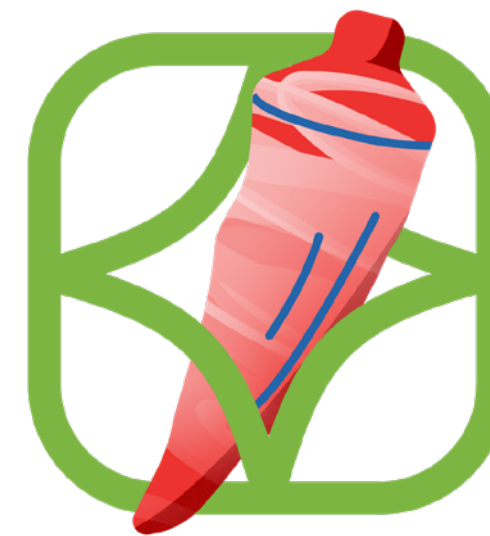


"Home is a double-barrelled word. It conveys a notion of all that is already given—the sedimented lives of those who have gone before—but it also conveys a notion of what is chosen—the open horizons of a person's life."

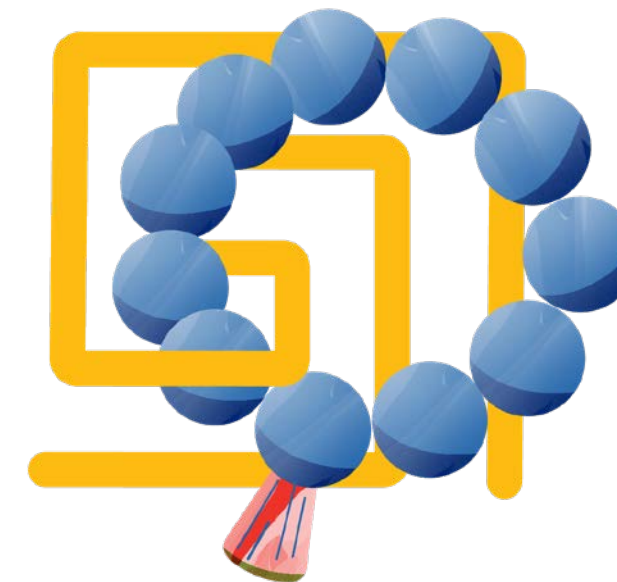
—At Home in the World
(Michael Jackson, 1999)



a place
to belong



sabrina tran bfa graphic design
thesis project
process book





a place to belong
an exhibition

designed by
sabrina tran

spring 2023
San José State University





disclaimer

while there are trends between similar demographics and those with similar life experiences, due to each individual's personalities and specific experiences, feelings of home and belonging may vary from person-to-person.

the thesis will always apply to the majority, but there will always be the 1% due to the variation of the human experience.

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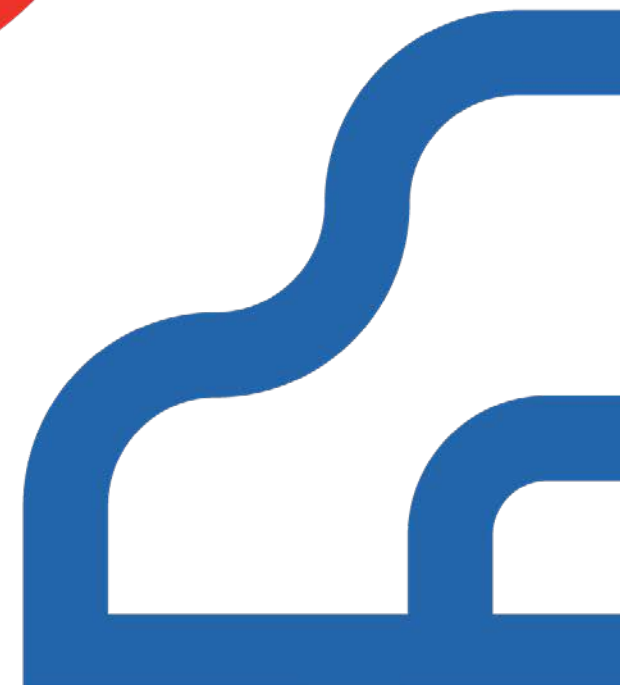
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abstract

home is a definition and place unique to everyone, just like their fingerprint. It could be their current home, a local spot, neighborhood, city, etc.

Regardless of the places, even if they aren't physical, the "home," should involve displays that bring back memories, comfort, "feel" right to be in, and have the "right" things in their place.

Homes bring pride; your life and memories are collected into a neat ball, no matter the size, but with all the importance. In a sense, the home has created who you are, in other words, your physical autobiography.

usually, a home is easily accessed. You're still able to feel at home in your local coffee shop, your bedroom, your favorite nook in the backyard. In unusual cases, someone's home can be in the digital realm, hotel rooms mirroring their mobile nature, a place in the past, or a place they wish to create in the future.

for those who are uprooted from their home, such as migrants or exiles, they can no longer access their home, and therefore recreate it in their present to create a comfortable space where they feel like they belong.

this thesis will focus on the newfound homes of Vietnamese immigrants, whose homes have been pulled from them, and forced to live in a foreign country.

Their home, sense of belonging, and their connection to their homeland manifest in different ways, most frequently through their local community, recreating Vietnam as best as they can where they can revisit their memories, and connect with other people just like them.



thesis **statement**

homes are a representation of us and our memories. It's easier to define the home of someone who has been around one thing for their life, but for people who've forcibly left them, they have to recreate a new place of belonging.

references

advisors

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readings

Duyvendak, Jan Willem. *The Politics of Home: Belonging and Nostalgia in Western Europe and the United States*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2011.

Hurdley, Rachel. *Home, Materiality, Memory and Belonging: Keeping Culture*. 1st ed. 2013. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2013.

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images



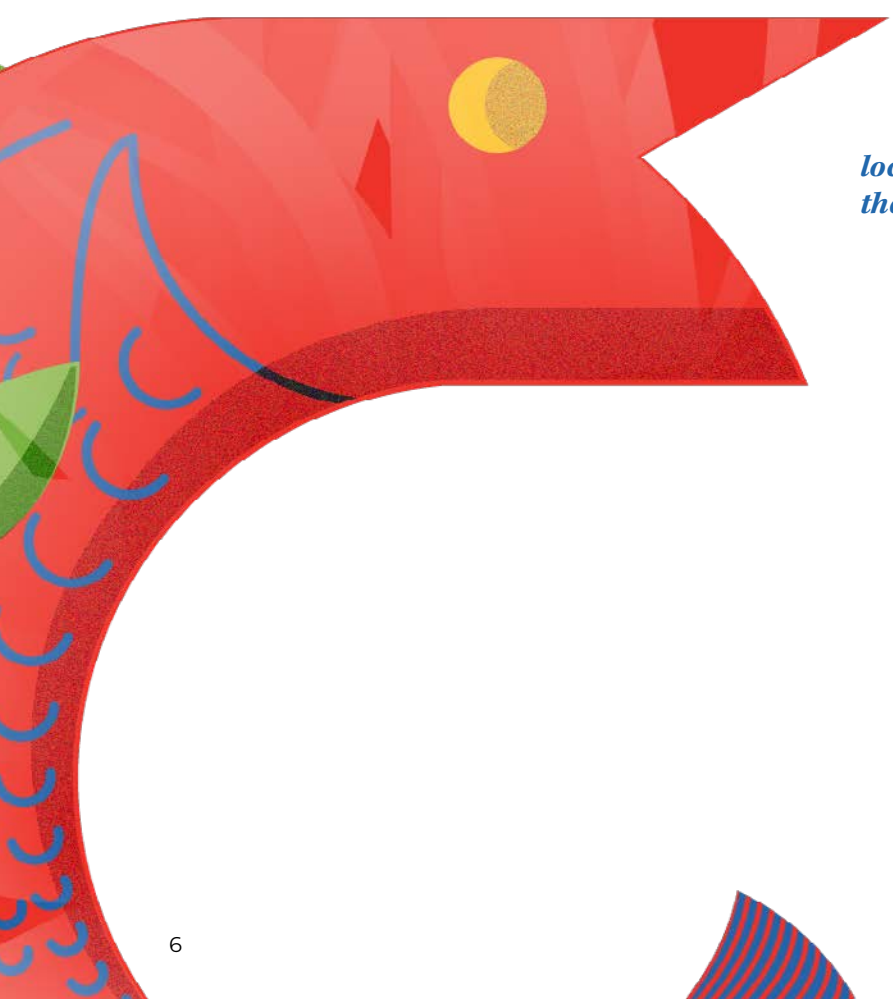
1. after the surge of immigrants, multiple Buddhist temples have been built to accommodate the followers.



2. in Vietnam, dining, while still a social act, uses easy-to-carry furniture for pop-up stalls.



3. grocery stores in America are a way to transport immigrants back into the memories of their home.



locating the thesis range

While I thought of the impact of the micro (e.g. objects in or around a home) versus the macro (the home), I was thinking about the micro supporting the micro, i.e. how the objects in our home impact our home.

But during the thesis proposal, it led me to think that their roles can be reversed, or how the micro can play a larger role. Instead of focusing on the similarities, differences, or types of homes, this led me to think about the things associated with a home, and the loss or acceptance of them when someone transfers homes.

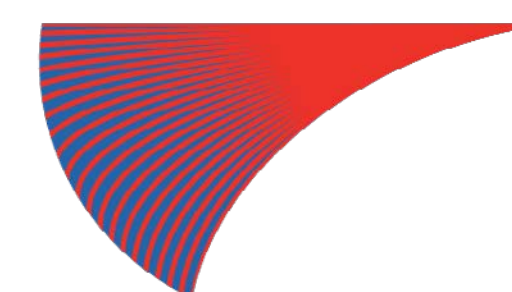
By adding this to my documentation, it'll lead to much more data than I was originally seeking, and thus, connect more dots.

During the proposal, I realized I also need to focus on the emotional output of the product as well.

How do I want to use my data/documentation to make the viewers feel something?

Since I want to focus on the impact of a home on creatives, I want the viewers to think about their past, acquire nostalgia, and spur them to create more based on that past, or inspire them to become a creative, turning their past into a visual.

I think to do this, my thesis will turn time-based, a series of homes from birth to the present, and the change reflected in it/them, and how this reflects in the inhabitant(s). Perhaps someone's creative expression will also reflect in a time-based manner, or turn into a summary of this reflection.



people,
places,
and things

Three designers who could give a workshop related to your thesis.

Susie Wise

Professor and social designer at Stanford. Author and creator of "Design for Belonging," on how to create communities for inclusion and belonging.

Lauren Leiss

An interior designer with a love for nature, her family, and the everyday. With a focus on the micro of a home, she'll create a beautiful macro living environment.

Nina Freedman

An architect, furniture, and interior designer focused on creating spaces to heal, belong, and be included.

Three foundations or organizations that commission your thesis.

SPUR

The San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association, a non-profit organization dedicated to addressing urban and civic problems. Addressing these problems on a city or neighborhood level will impact the literal and larger scale home.

St. Mary's Center

A nonprofit organization focused on helping housing problems of Seniors and Preschool Families in West Oakland. They help with literal homes, and bring together the community.

International Organization for Migration

On a larger scale, this inter-governmental organization supports migrants around the world and responds to migrant crisis.

Three physical places where your thesis thinking might be found.

Rooms in a home

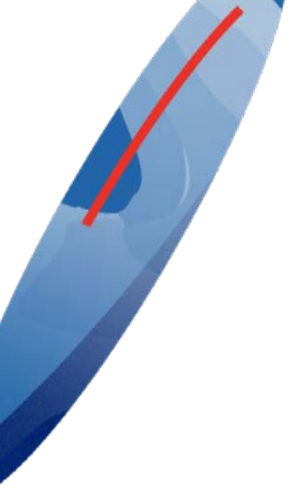
Self-explanatory, literally the physical home. E.g. kitchen, bathroom, living room, basement, etc.

Commonly visited places for communities

Can be a home and safe space for people, literally a refuge away from danger, comfort in community, nostalgia, culture, etc.

Nature

Our original home and a home for those more comfortable with it,, full of peace and wonder for the natural world and its inhabitants.



Three historical events that give your thesis context.

Syrian Refugees Crisis

Because of the Syrian Civil War, millions of refugees fled Syria, seeking asylum and taking away fragments of their home, along with much trauma.

Vietnamese refugees

Similarly, Vietnamese boat refugees were those who fled the Vietnam War, and their home, by plane and boat, often suffering and succumbing to the dangers of travel, never knowing if they would be able to arrive at a country that would accept them.

Internment of Japanese Americans

Japanese-Americans, some even second or third generation, were placed in concentration camps over fear after the Pearl Harbor attack during World War 2. Ripped from their homes, facing prejudice, and placed in poorly created camps, these places were not their homes, instead a symbolism of how their home, America, had rejected them.

Three huge objects related to your thinking.

The Statue of Liberty

Symbolism of the home immigrants and refugees have left behind for another life, and of the home, life, and success people have made in the US, lighting the way for everyone.

Telescope

Regardless of where you live, you'll always be able to see the sky, stars, sun, and moon. You'll see them in your original home, past homes, and future homes, reminding you of the place you can go back to, or never can again.

Garden

A home within a home, full of creatures and plants, flourishing under one's care. It can be representative of something you've taken care of, a reminder of an activity you do with your loved ones, a respite from your worries and problems, or anything that makes you feel at home.

Three tiny objects related to your thinking.

Plushie

Many people collect plushies to fill up their bed, and therefore their room, acting as decoration, comfort, and personalization. Some people find so much comfort in it that they cherish it as a home more than the physical location.

Cat

As pets, these creatures run around the home, adding a chaotic touch. Home wouldn't be home without them. These animals provide companionship and love, someone to work and come home for.

Food

Food is our nourishment, one of our sources of living. Because of this, our home is filled with home cooked meals from our loved ones, or maybe the opposite, a refrigerator cluttered with take-out meals. We can have fond memories of food in our home, or memories suffering because of it.

Three abstract qualities related to your thesis.

Warmth

A home, no matter what it is, is a place you yearn to go back to. It's a place naturally filled with warmth, comfort, and belonging. A cozy rest on the couch in front of the TV, eating a meal with your loved ones, or security on the toilet are all indicators of warmth in a home.

Comfort

Comfort is key in a home. Why would you want to come back to a home you don't feel secure in? Comfort manifests in various ways, in repetitive manners we do, your bed, telling your loved ones about your day, relaxing by enjoying your hobbies, etc.

Internment of Japanese Americans

Japanese-Americans, some even second or third generation, were placed in concentration camps over fear after the Pearl Harbor attack during World War 2. Ripped from their homes, facing prejudice, and placed in poorly created camps, these places were not their homes, instead a symbolism of how their home, America, had rejected them.

Three blue collar jobs that your thesis performs.

Cook

The creator of comforting food and smells.

Truck Driver

Frequently on the road, is there home a stationary place or their vehicle?

Carpenter

The creator of the home, and the furniture in it. How can they help you make a place feel like home?

Three physical qualities related to your thesis.

Embrace

A physical, metaphorical, or spiritual embrace of the soul at home.

Chatter

The routine background noise of people, things, or animals, reminding yourself that you are at home.

Enclosed

Four closed walls, representing safety, security, and privacy. It doesn't have to be literal, but a place you can squirrel away.

Three news items from the last two days where your thesis lives in the present.

Missouri: Flaws in the foster care system

Because of the Syrian Civil War, millions of refugees fled Syria, seeking asylum and taking away fragments of their home, along with much trauma.

Widener's Specialty Housing Fosters Community and Belonging

Widener University in Pennsylvania has created housing communities based on similar majors, interests, or themes, creating tight bonds between students.

Borders & Belonging: The migrants that the West doesn't talk about

A podcast story about the politics of migration within the global south (e.g. migration within Africa), as opposed to migration from the south to the north (e.g. the Middle East to Europe).

Three supermarket items related to your thesis.

Cereal

A breakfast staple, eaten in a rush, or saved as a snack for later.

Cake

A reminder of birthdays, celebrations, or just a hard-earned treat.

Frozen Pizza

A representative of hard times, frugal spending, or a cheat meal.

Three films that are the start of your curated thesis film series.

The Trip to Bountiful (1985)

Many people collect plushies to fill up their bed, and therefore their room, acting as decoration, comfort, and personalization. Some people find so much comfort in it that they cherish it as a home more than the physical location.

Lion (2016)

An Indian child's troubled childhood literally getting lost from his family, the process of adoption, and the travel back to find his family and home.

My Life as a Courgette (2016)

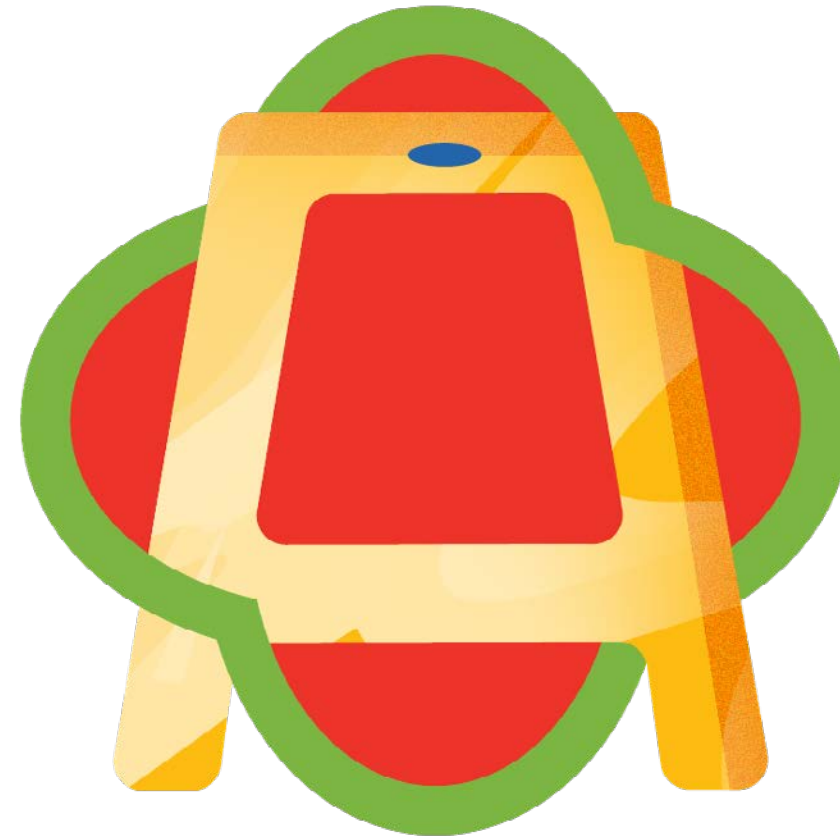
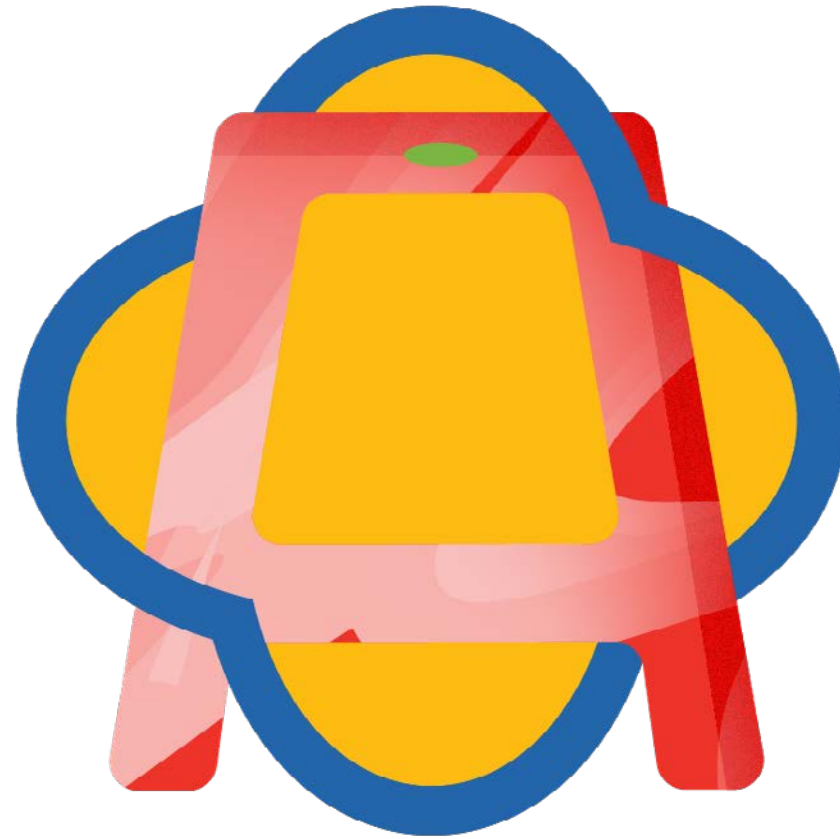
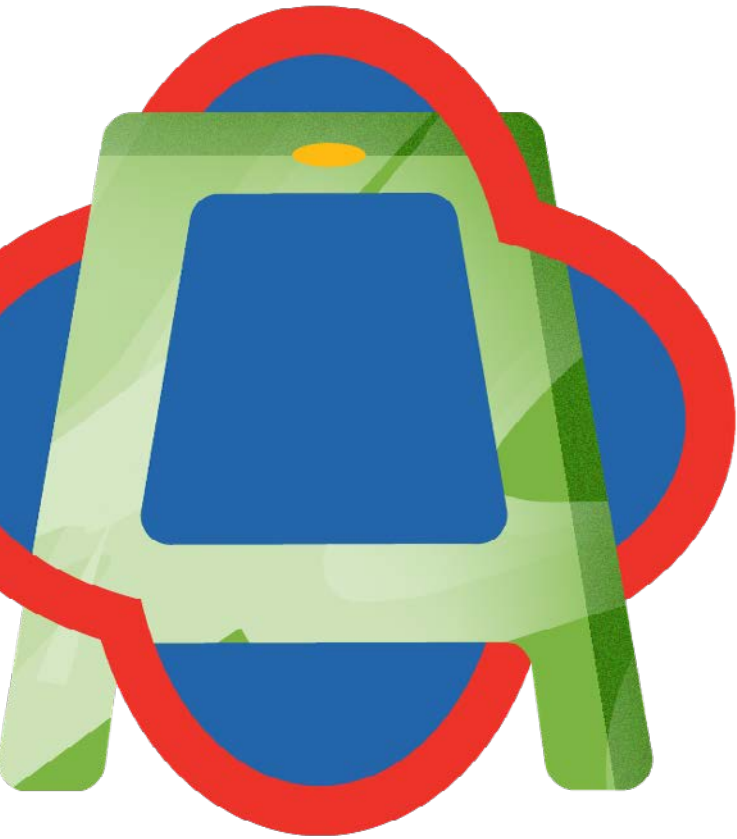
A boy, Courgette, suffers the death of his family, and finds a new one through an orphanage and a series of events in it.

manifesto

a public declaration of intentions, opinions, objectives, or motives.

1. *the process is part of the outcome.*
2. *don't overthink.*
3. *don't settle for less/persevere.*
4. *trust your instincts.*
5. *let passion guide you, not fear or obligation.*
6. *respect and listen to others.*
7. inhale.
8. exhale.

9. breathe.



research

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***narrowing
the scope***

initially, the topic of the thesis was on a broader scale, focusing on all the aspects of a home, the different types of people who use a home, the different types of things they have in it, etc., but I realized that doing this would create too broad of a thesis subject, since everyone approaches their home(s) differently, and instead of focusing on a multitude of big ideas, I can focus on the small things in a home.

i also had to consider about the emotions I wanted people to feel about homes. Grateful? Somber? Regretful? Contemplative? I settled on a peaceful, vibrant future.

objective

by categorizing different opinions on what a "home" is, I can then collect places that are important to Vietnamese immigrants that embody these aspects.

then, to create a space and exhibition that others can step into, and explore what makes them home.

audience

- white collar workers in their 20s–mid-30's
- natural-born Americans who are immigrant adjacent (i.e. children of immigrants) who see how their parents revive their home in the US

purpose

to appreciate the home, and how an immigrant culture reflects how we all need a home, and will create one no matter what.

research questions

1. What is the definition of a "home"?
2. How does our "home" affect our sense of belonging and attachment?
3. How do we make a space our "home," and create a space to belong?

framing reference

To help with my thesis, a series of interviews were conducted with an expert in the topic of "home," whose experience, knowledge, and expertise, offered insight into the project.

Interview Subject

Erin Riggs
anthropology professor at the University of Illinois

Timing
15–30 mins
Format: Zoom meeting

questions

How does the feeling of home change in relation to different country's cultures?

What are the different associations different cultures have with a home? Does this change with generations?

How does the function and feeling of a home change depending on its inhabitants?

How does the function and feeling of home change as we grow up?

How does our demographic change this?

What are the different things people cope with when they lose a home?

What kind of memories do people have to make to create a connection and a sense of belonging in their home?

In relation to your research paper: " Propinquity through dwelling: Living in evacuee properties after the Partition of India and Pakistan," was there trauma involved in the relocation of their home? How did it manifest? And was it ever "solved"?

Can people lose the ability to feel a home? How does this work?

What associations does each room in a home have?

How do multiple homes create a sense of belonging and identity?

Other than homelessness, people as homes, and a digital home, are there any other non-traditional forms of home?

advisor notes

The concept and feeling of home really depends on the person, their experiences, and life. There are general trends, but oftentimes it's a very different experience for each person.

But people really like making a space for themselves. They want privacy and personalization, sometimes by literally changing the house by creating divisions, changing its layout, or desiring to change it.

There can also be a disconnect between the younger and older generations, who may want to each shape the home to their preference and culture due to generational differences.

People can also change it because they were used to

something or needed something, but ended up not using it at all.

Trauma can also impact someone differently.

Some people can look fondly on their homeland, while others may find peace in their current residence.

People might use items differently from how it's "normally" used in their current residence, based on how they would do it in their homeland.

People use what they have to create a home, often they can't literally take everything from their homeland to create a one-to-one recreation of their old home.

Things associated with their identities might change over time. It might be more associated with another culture, or people start to identify with pieces from their culture less and less due to circumstances.

An important thing to think about the layout of the person's home. It guides people to different nooks and uses.

What are the uses of the different areas?

There are also power dynamics in the home. Things can be put to purpose and then become symbolic of their culture.

Things can be kind of scattered here and there instead of placed purposefully.

Communities can naturally appear out of their home by knowing people and trading to get what they want or are familiar with.

repository of

insight

a collection of the most resonant, salient quotations from readings and research.

contains quotes on

- home
- identity
- culture
- memory
- migrants

home *identity* *culture* *memory* *migrants*

"In other words, an understanding of the meaning of 'home' does not necessarily identify an actual geographical location or physical building; it is more likely represented by a cumulative effect of the psychological/spiritual immersion of the body within spaces/landscapes.

The timeless is therefore governed by the moments in which it is entered into, and 'home' becomes home when it is recognized to be so, rather than by being a specific place. The body becomes the sight of location, but its interaction (with others) and negotiation in space (the world) are carried within as markers (memories) of the self's existence."

—Gaal-Holmes, 2012

"Home is both an emotion and a place imbued with meaning generated through the everyday life routines enacted in it, the sense of protection and intimacy it emanates, and the largely positive memories of the past (and possibly future aspirations) it may elicit."

—Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020

"Home, then, is a process rather than a state of things; and ultimately, more existentially, a matter of hom-ing, or a life-long effort to reach this 'ideal' social condition that generates affect, longing and aspiration, while being very difficult to materialize in full."

—Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020



home *identity* *culture* *memory* *migrants*

"Therefore, instead of a sense of self as a culturally and geographically cohesive construction, the self is, rather, best articulated as a construction of what one remembers for certain and what one imagines oneself to be."

—Gaal-Holmes, 2012

"In establishing belonging, people make interpretive judgments about their personal fit within a given setting, whether it be a neighborhood, city, or country. These cognitive and emotional interpretations draw on, and align with, other life experiences and identities."

—Kusenbach, 2019

"One can even observe conflicting practices of integrating and segregating multiple belongings in a new place, as for instance among refugees who fled their home countries to escape poverty, political instability, and violence."

—Kusenbach, 2019



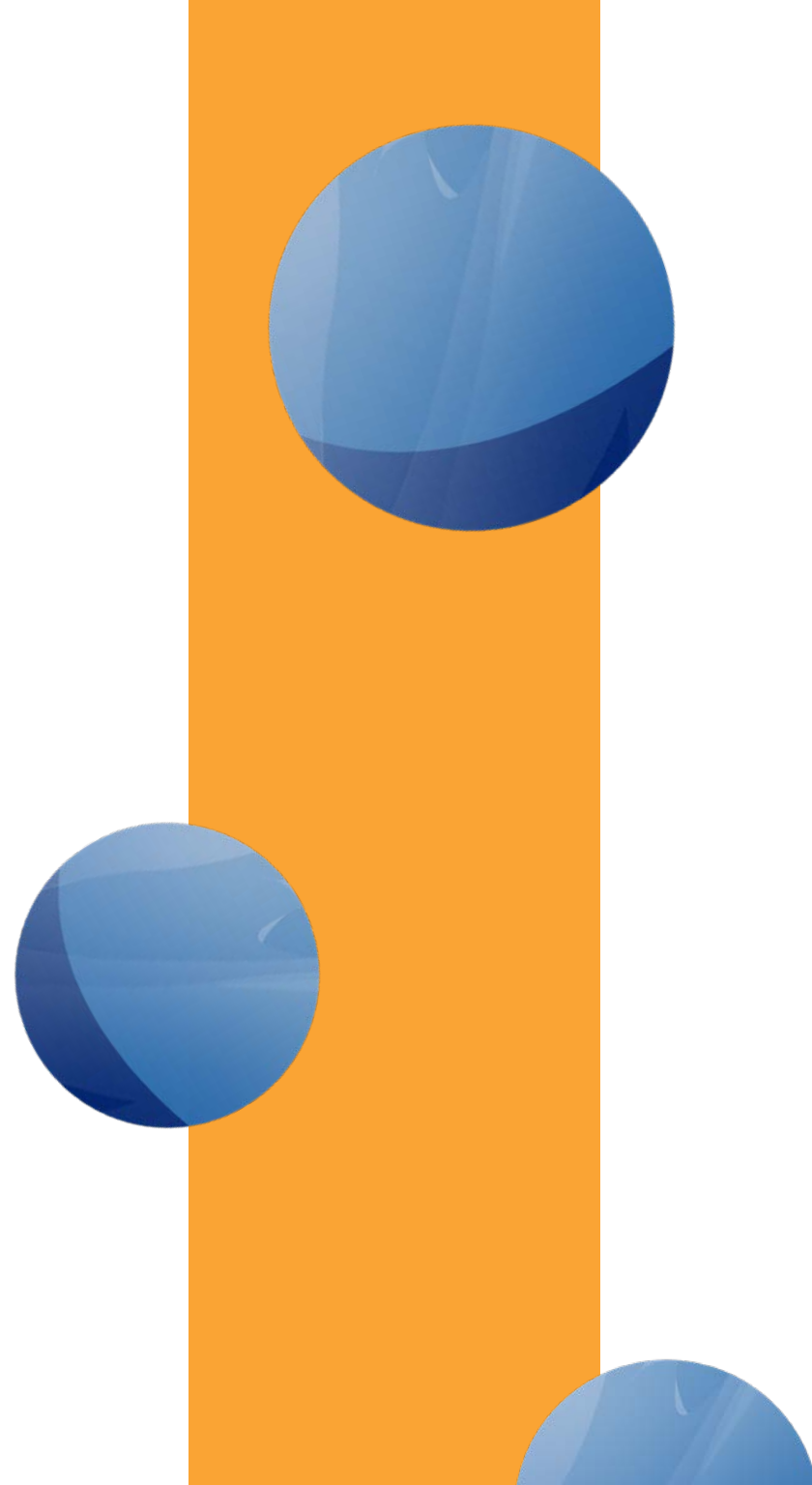
home *identity* *culture* *memory* *migrants*

"Changing home and family practices were visible in the shifting geographies of home, now seen in the rise of the flatscreen and the sidelining, storing or digitising of memorabilia."

—Hurdley, 2013

"Rather than normatively portraying home as something inherently desirable or good, the challenge for theoretically informed social research is to investigate, first, what home actually means to whom, under what circumstances, and why; and second, how far, if at all, the 'actual' home experience matches the 'aspired' one, given the unequal social distribution of opportunities, access and rights of people to make themselves at home, and the factors that account for this inequality."

—Bocagni & Kusenbach, 2020



home *identity* *culture* ***memory*** *migrants*

"These stories unfolded the extraordinary importance of everyday domestic display practices in the daily reworking of one's place in and beyond family and home, and the usually unspoken work of small things in the making of memory."

—Hurdley, 2013

"Even though the interpretations of that past may vary, the things themselves, like cultural memories and collective assumptions, are taken as unchanging, solid presences. Things, however fragmentary or partial, cannot disappear, can they?"

—Hurdley, 2013

home *identity* *culture* *memory* ***migrants***

"[A migrant's and displaced people's life experience] forces a researcher to look at home not from within its normatively positive core of domesticity – one made of inclusion, rootedness and stability –but rather, by defect: from the outside, from a distance, from the past, and on the move."

—Gaal-Holmes, 2012

"There is a promise, then, in discussing how migrants' endeavors to make themselves at home are affected by three possible forms of marginality: in place, in time, in terms of membership and belonging."

—Emerald Group Publishing, 2020

"What migrants understand, feel and invest in as home does not always overlap with the place they are in, or with an 'actually existing' place in the present moment. It may be predominantly anchored back into the past, through the cultivation of more or less idealized memories of a place that used to be home (possibly of a house being still there); and, parallel or alternative to this, projected ahead into some place (possibly the homeland itself) in the future, sometimes with limited possibility to check its actual 'homeliness'."

—Kusenbach, 2019

"There is, however, no doubt that this central resource (memory) plays an important role for the itinerant/immigrant in restructuring a sense of being at 'home' in the adopted environment.

Thus, the subtlest of fragmentary transmutations occur as geography, history, language (verbal, visual, auditory, etc.) and memory give shape to a sense of location, of being definitely in a 'fixed' place.

This fixed place is, however, only temporarily established, necessitating a continuous state of negotiation and renegotiation. Therefore, these are fragmentary transmutations that cohere momentarily, only to shift again and again, also eliciting a sense of loss and disorientation."

—Kusenbach, 2019

In researching and studying the home for the thesis, I've come to realize people feel comfortable in "homes" where they belong, and said feeling of belonging is created out of memories, nostalgia, and a connection to feelings of happiness, of better days, of a place where people can feel safe.

Anywhere that feels like home has a tie to these feelings, bringing back a sense of a reminder of who the person is, familiarity, and thus a sense of belonging. By knowing their surroundings, the inhabitant of the home can truly feel comfortable to let go.

But these feelings can be everchanging, as people move and shift homes, changing memories, feelings, familiarity, safety. These changes are not necessarily a result of the physical home itself, but could be of external factors, trauma, happiness, or a change in values and goals. And so, the place of belonging changes as well with the person.

Who are they? Where do they belong? These questions are amongst many that immigrants ask, and further muddled if they're displaced from the place they call home, the source of their memories. Vietnamese immigrants, who have been displaced from their home country, have these feelings of loss and disorientation magnified. In a country with an unfamiliar language, culture, customs, with people who might not accept them, can they ever call this place as it naturally is home?

They may not, but they can do their best to gather together, combine their memories, and recreate their home to have a place of comfort and familiarity.

In my thesis, I try to display this recreation, a story of Vietnamese immigrants adapting as best as they can to their surroundings. To talk through this recreation, is to be invited into their home, with hopes that the audience will find a new sense of respect, and awareness of displays of belonging.

annotated bibliography

home & belonging

Bocagni, Paolo, and Margarethe Kusenbach. "For a Comparative Sociology of Home: Relationships, Cultures, Structures." *Current sociology* 68, no. 5 (2020): 595–606.

Bocagni and Kusenbach directly discuss the meaning of home from a sociology perspective, splitting it into three different definitions: home as a heuristic notion, a set of practices, and a socio-material setting.

In their study, home is an educational concept, a set of interactions that vary depending on the demographic, and a literal space. This study gave me more insight to what a home could be.

Originally, in my thesis, I regarded the home as only the last definition, a space that changes depending on the inhabitant(s). By using a heuristic definition, it gives new perspective to the inhabitant of the home versus the outside world. And as a set of interactions reveals the culture of the home's inhabitants.

Bocagni, Paolo, Luis Eduardo Pérez Murcia, and Milena Belloni. *Thinking home on the move: A conversation across disciplines*. Emerald Group Publishing, 2020.

Bocagni, Murcia, and Belloni's work not only talks about the home, but its purpose in relation to migrants, immigrants, the displaced, tying to my topic of Vietnamese immigrants.

There is no one perspective for immigrants, as their memories and life experiences may impact their perspective of home on the move. Their sentiments on their new physical location may also affect their feelings and sense of home. These sentiments may also stretch to privileges they might have, prejudices, or discrimination done upon them.

This may also contribute to their sense of culture, identity, ethnicity, and relationships. Cultural practices may change, or be adjusted depending on their current environment. A future they may have envisioned in their old home may have changed as well.

Hurdley, Rachel. *Home, Materiality, Memory and Belonging: Keeping Culture*. 1st ed. 2013. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2013.

Hurdley focuses on the stories and uses of the mantleplace to reflect on the identity, sense of belonging, and culture of the inhabitant. The mantleplace is not simply a reflection of the inhabitant, but how its purpose changes depending on the background of its inhabitant.

Using the mantleplace as a centerpiece helped me see how different demographics interact with the home, and how they perceive their spaces. This affects how they interact with the mantleplace. No longer an object of decoration but one made to the taste of the inhabitant's culture—repurposed to truly feel like a home. A family might use it traditionally as a fireplace, or a home of roommates may not use it at all due to their lack of connection with each other.

Gaal-Holmes, Patti. "(Re)calling 'Home': An Artist's Negotiation and (re)negotiation Between Memory, Geography, History and Language." *Crossings (Bristol)* 3, no. 2 (2012): 201–212.

Gaal-Holmes uses the feeling of "home" and belonging to discuss exiles, their feelings of home, and the impact of it on their artwork.

They say that the home is always with a person's memories, regardless of the physical location itself. Those memories create a person's sense of self, and with exiles, or people who have been removed from their original home, the person has to negotiate with their memories and present location to recreate their sense of self and ground themselves. In other words, adapting to their new life.

The person creates new memories of their present life, and in reference to my thesis, Vietnamese immigrants, who either adapt and create a new home, or fail to orient themselves, creating trauma.

Kusenbach, Margarethe. "Belonging." In SAGE Research Methods Foundations, edited by Paul Atkinson, Sara Delamont, Alexandru Cernat, Joseph W. Sakshaug, and Richard A. Williams. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2019. <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781526421036849442>.

In Kusenbach's study, she focuses on a person's sense of belonging, with their home only as a supporting topic. Reading this study gave more insight into this topic, without the limitations of thinking about it in relation to a home, expanding it to a wider range, different ranges as well, and expanding the sense of belonging from the self, to the impact of a person's surroundings.

Instead of thinking of belonging as ties related to one person, it's more of a web, with various ties interconnecting and affecting multiple aspects. Regardless, people feel belonging in different ways, as a community, as an individual, in places of comfort, near similar people, and in their memories.

This isn't a concrete definition, as people prioritize different things to feel belonged.

vietnamese
refugees

Mazumdar, Sanjoy, Shampa Mazumdar, Faye Docuyan, and Colette Marie McLaughlin. "CREATING A SENSE OF PLACE: THE VIETNAMESE-AMERICANS AND LITTLE SAIGON." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 20, no. 4 (December 1, 2000): 319–33. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jevp.2000.0170>.

The article studies the community of Little Saigon in Westminster, California, and how it relates to the Vietnamese identity and sense of belonging. The trauma from fleeing from their hometown is alleviated by this community, or at the very least, pushed back by reminders of their home country. This community manifests through cultural practices, architecture, material objects, the language, food, clothing, businesses, and other refugees.

Little Saigon is not only a reminder and container of Vietnam, but is a place where they can focus on their new place in America, and who they are now. It acts as a half house for those unfamiliar with America, so they learn the customs and adjust, while staying comfortable with what they know in their past.

Hien Duc Do. "The Formation of a New Refugee Community: The Vietnamese Community in Orange County, California," 1961. https://oac.cdlib.org/view?docId=h-b8g500803&brand=oac4&doc.view=entire_text.

The journal goes in-depth into the history of the Vietnam War, their culture, and social practices. When South Vietnam surrendered to North Vietnam in 1975, many Southern Vietnamese people fled to other countries, including the United States.

A community is especially important for Vietnamese people, since Vietnamese culture is rooted in familial ties and centered around the family. This community is reflected in Vietnamese enclaves in the US, allowing for a haven from an unknown territory and hostility from native American citizens, and to find jobs to feed themselves and their families. And in an enclave, they can use their experience from their homeland to build new lives and businesses.

what is *a home?*

throughout the book, I've talked about how homes can be anywhere, but never have touched upon what exactly that means.

the traditional thought of a home is your literal house, the place you come back to rest, but for some, the house contains negative experiences, memories, or suffering. And even if the home life is perfectly fine, some people just can't connect to it, maybe because it is not in the location their true home is, doesn't have the people they love, they feel like they don't truly own it, or most importantly, they don't feel like they belong in their home.

maybe their true home is in the past, where they have happy memories, or one they want to create for themselves in the future, since they haven't had a home, or always on the go, or in the digital realm.

truthfully, the home is where you feel like you feel safe, comforted—it's a castle for your heart.

it can be anywhere, nowhere, but the most important thing is that **it feels like you.**



to narrow down on the feelings of home a survey was created with one question: "What is home to you?" and received 54 responses. While a few were joke answers, most were thoughtful answers, and even the joke ones revealed some insight into perceptions of what a home is.



survey responses

the responses were divided into four main categories:

- comfort
- loved ones
- safety
- haven

there are also seven more general categories:

- relaxation
- communal areas
- belonging
- aesthetic/control
- a literal location

and lastly two literal common categories:

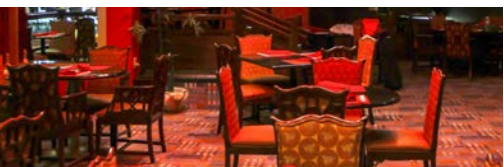
- physical items facilities (i.e. amenities and food)

using the answers from the four main categories, I decided to attach them to four "homes" of Vietnamese refugees, contained in an exhibition.



comfort: **a supermarket**

Vietnamese supermarkets in the United States are a way for refugees to experience ingredients and produce from Vietnam.



loved ones: **a restaurant**

using ingredients from the supermarket, refugees can then recreate nostalgic dishes from their homeland.



safety: **a cafe**

cafe's are a way to share Vietnamese coffee with friends and reminisce about their past and futures.



haven: **a temple**

recreating Buddhist temples from their home to practice traditions, meditations, and prayers.

these four groups will correspond to four rooms in the thesis exhibition.

photo credit
eater sf
westgate resorts
Marco Verch
Wikimedia Commons

types of houses
 - school
 - streets
 - mall
 - bars
 - office shop
 - people
 - busy
 - sound of stuff
 - library
 - silent
 - quiet steps
 - shuffling of books
 - scribbling
 - shopping
 - are long narrow
 - like a strip mall
 - like a strip mall

- Communal Areas → Home + Control → Comfort + Information → Local Area → Belonging + Safety
- office shops
 - library
 - museum / park
 - school
 - streets
 - mall
 - bars

- [Office shop]
- People
 - Busy
 - sound of stuff
- [Library]
- silent
 - quiet steps
 - shuffling of books
 - scribbling

- [Garden]
- plants that you want
 - keep to the plants that
 - people around later

- [Bathroom]
- bathtub/shower
 - toilet
 - toilet paper

- [Dining Room]
- plates/cups
 - food
 - talking

- [Bedroom]
- bed
 - desk/computer
 - personal
 - messy? car?

Filmmakers are personifying up
 → Local area (city) → Belonging + safety (area)
 → kitchen → bathroom → personalized

- [Shopping]
- Go through each room and see what is going on
 - can take things small
 - visually connect between rooms
 - compression - don't miss
 - open about doors
 - privacy?
 - needs coming from the communal area
 - like a strip mall

[20. Home Diff]
 NEED
 Incredibly change
 not a web
 or table?



Book is shaped like a house.
 The objects change throughout the page depending on the inhabitant.
 Same as other concept book with behind with color/die-cut at a page.
 Each page can represent rooms.
 Change per page depending on the resident or story.
 Can pull out cubes to see other networks (e.g. a dog, a friend, a house)

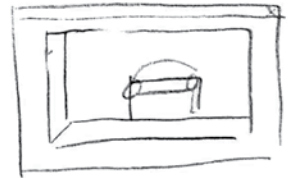


Board of "houses"
 - all different depending on the resident's story
 - can interact and see it
 - Use AR to see the story
 - things move and appear



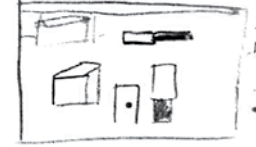
- instead of being on a board, figure out
 - look at connected rooms
 - still use AR technology to interact and see the change
 - it's moving?

Website
 - mobile version of this



- can move elements around to see how the "room changes"

CALX
 if (have are moved, my)



- literally pulling open drawers and doors to see the story of the room

Think about the story
 - Tone/mood

[Associated stuff]

- What is a home?
- Planet
- Continent
- Biome
- Country
- State/county
- City
- District

- 44 experimentation
- 46 building the story
- 48 branding

EVER REPRESENT — WHAT IS A HOME!!!

cross safety election trial

What do people do at home?

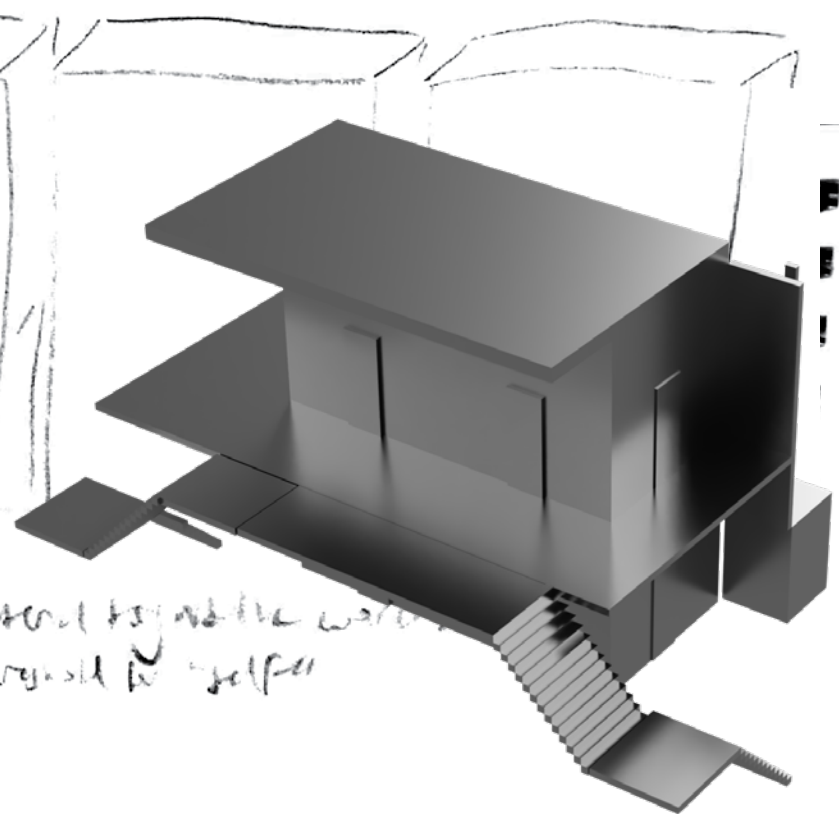
Control over → Habitat Control → Control Relation → Level over → Belonging safety

this thesis originally started out as a general exploration on home, belonging, and identity.

but through my research I found that these feelings have a broad spectrum, divided into demographics, further divided by the individual.

one can do a project on different types of homes and their inhabitants, but then the study becomes a list of random observations.

so, I chose to create an exhibition, reflecting on how the homes of Vietnamese refugees, like my parents and members of the community, manifest themselves.



material to find the world threshold to self

Memory → Metaphors

How do people remember their homes? (Media of memories)

[TARGET AUDIENCE]

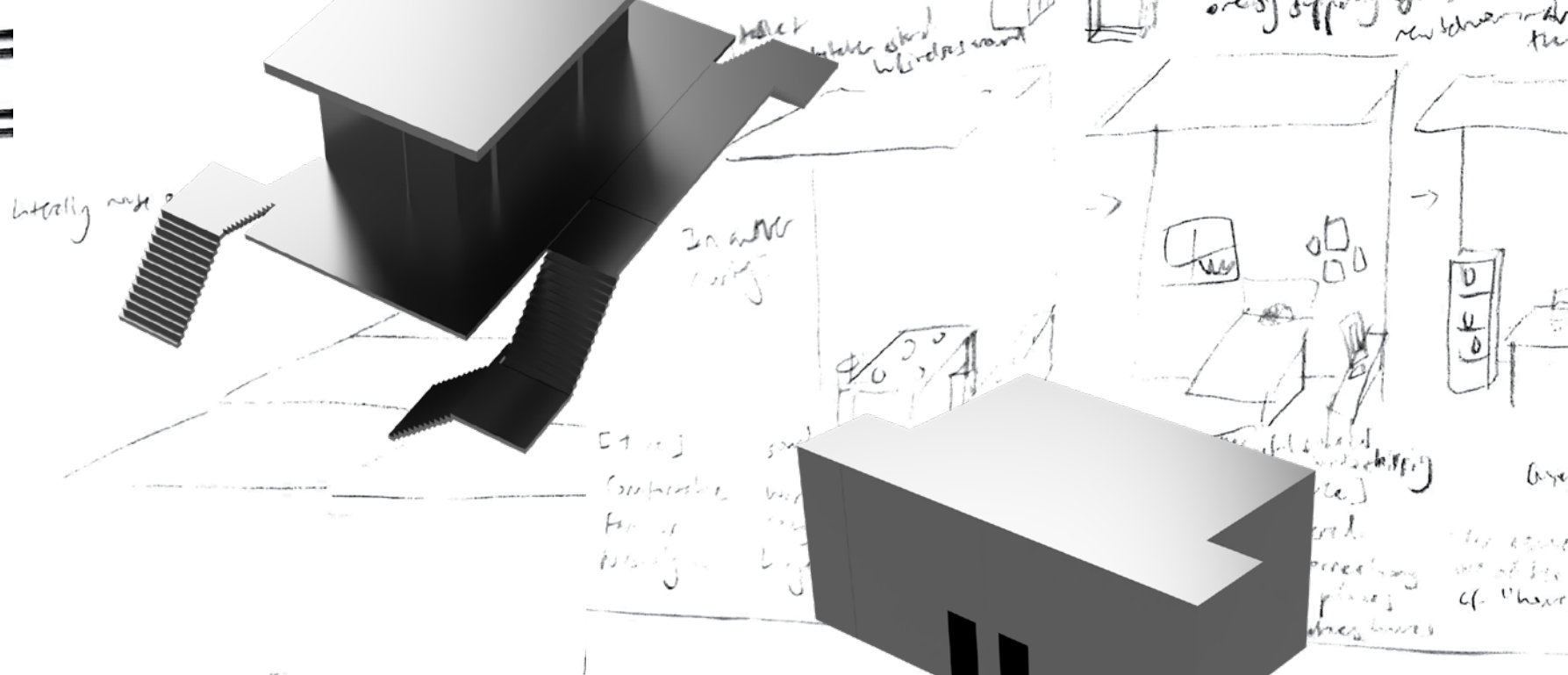
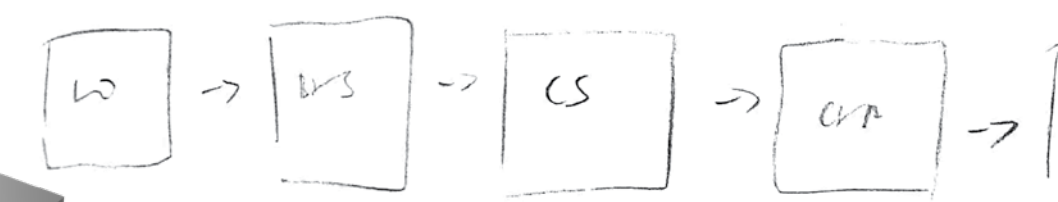
people with connections to multiple places

- This can be different countries, continents, cities, times

can connect with all of these many times.

[ACTIVITY]

People to make safe and low levels of... of...



literally not?

20 more things

[1st] Comparison...

are central object of... only by...

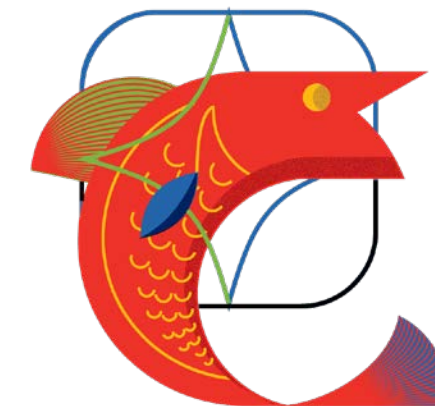
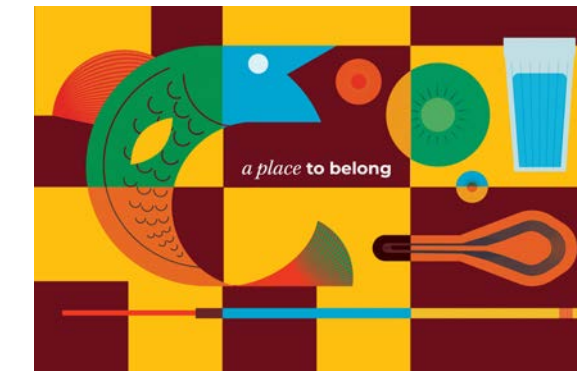
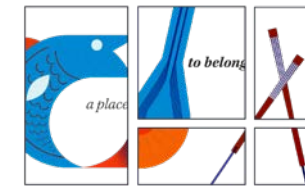
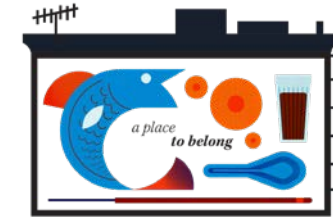
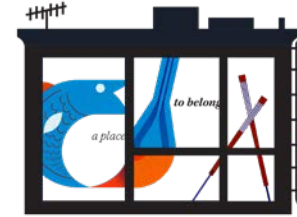
the aspect of... of 'home'



building the story

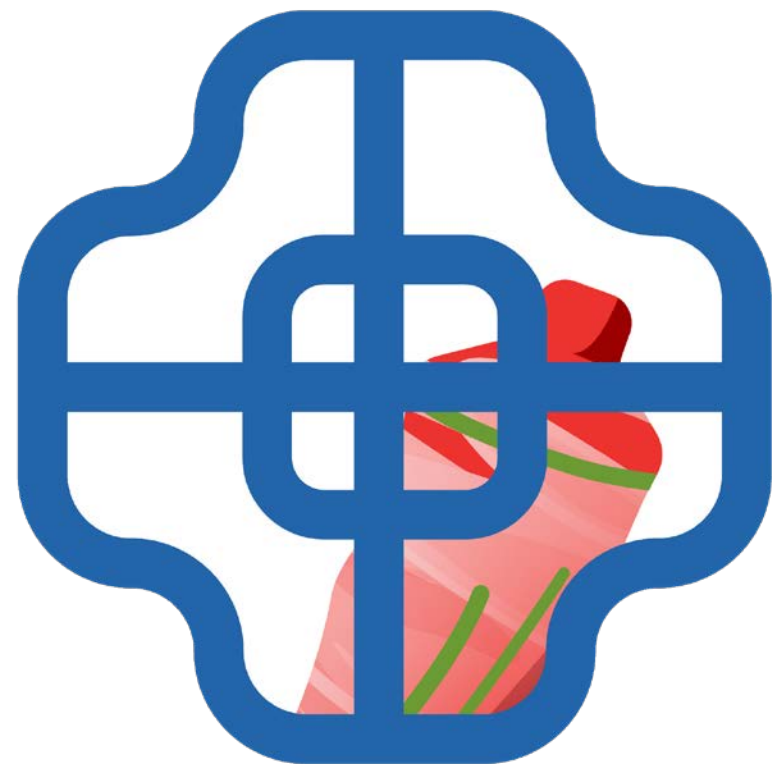
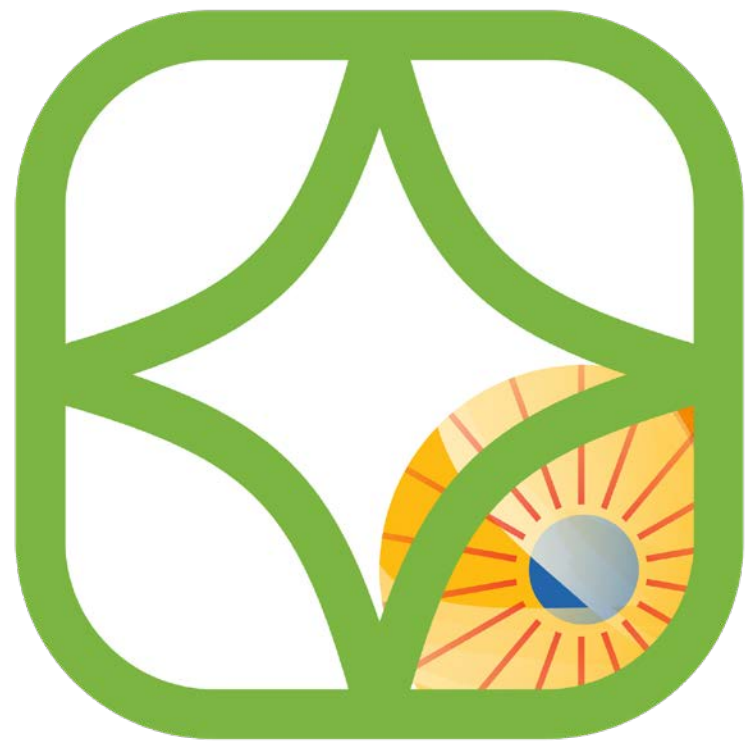
to test out how the rooms in my exhibition would look and feel, I created a real-life 1:24 model, along with various iterations of the exhibition.





branding explorations

initially, I struggled with making the exhibition too Vietnamese, or too little, focusing too much on abstract concepts of rooms and containing, rather than elements of Vietnamese culture and what I wanted to communicate—an intersection between Vietnamese and American culture.



outcome

- 52 branding
- 56 locations
- 58 visitor journey
- 60 elevation views
- 76 renderings

logo

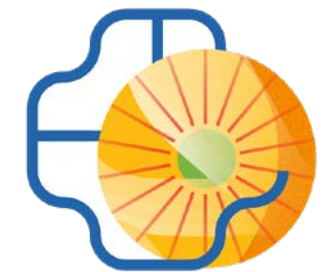
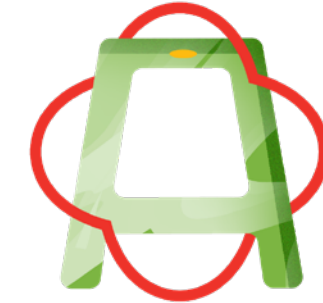
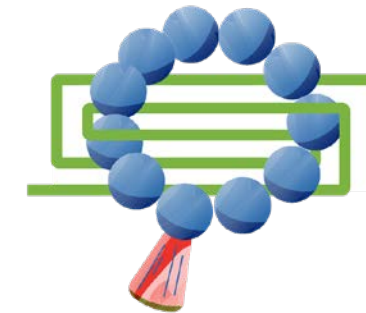
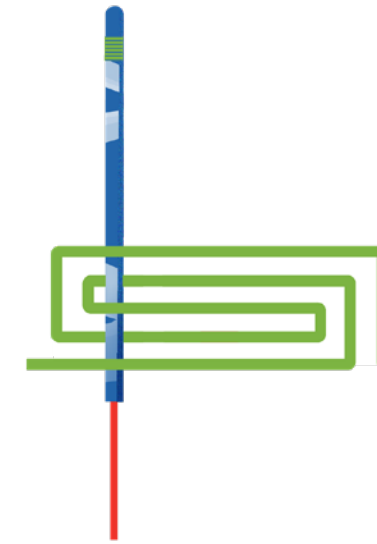
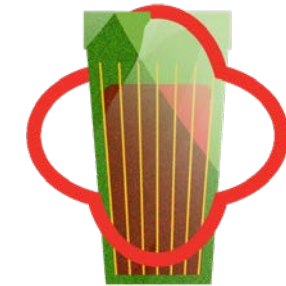
a place to belong

branding

to attract visitors to the exhibition, visuals mixed with the western world and the eastern world were created, using imagery, color, and texture from Vietnam, and a modern style from America.

the logo combines two typefaces, furthering the battle between the old home and the new one.

items + patterns



colors



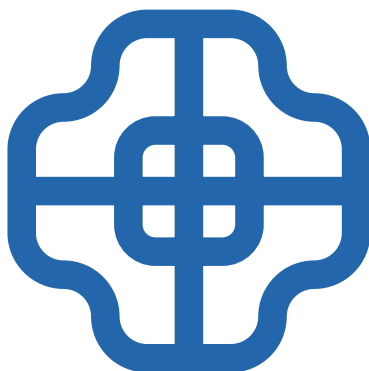
r237 g50 b41
c0 m94 y94 k0
#ED3229



r124 g181 b66
c57 m8 y100 k0
#7CB542



r253 g187 b17
c0 m29 y99 k0
#FDBB11



r35 g101 b170
c89 m62 y4 k0
#2365AA

a b c

d e

f

g

h

i

k

l

typography

Kepler

display type

Light Italic

Italic

Semibold Italic

Bold Italic

Montserrat

body type

Light

Regular

Semibold

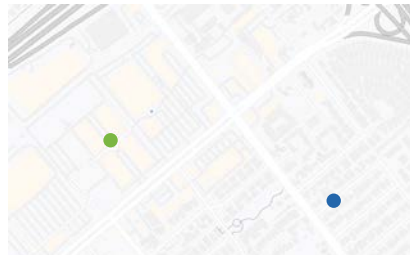
Bold

location

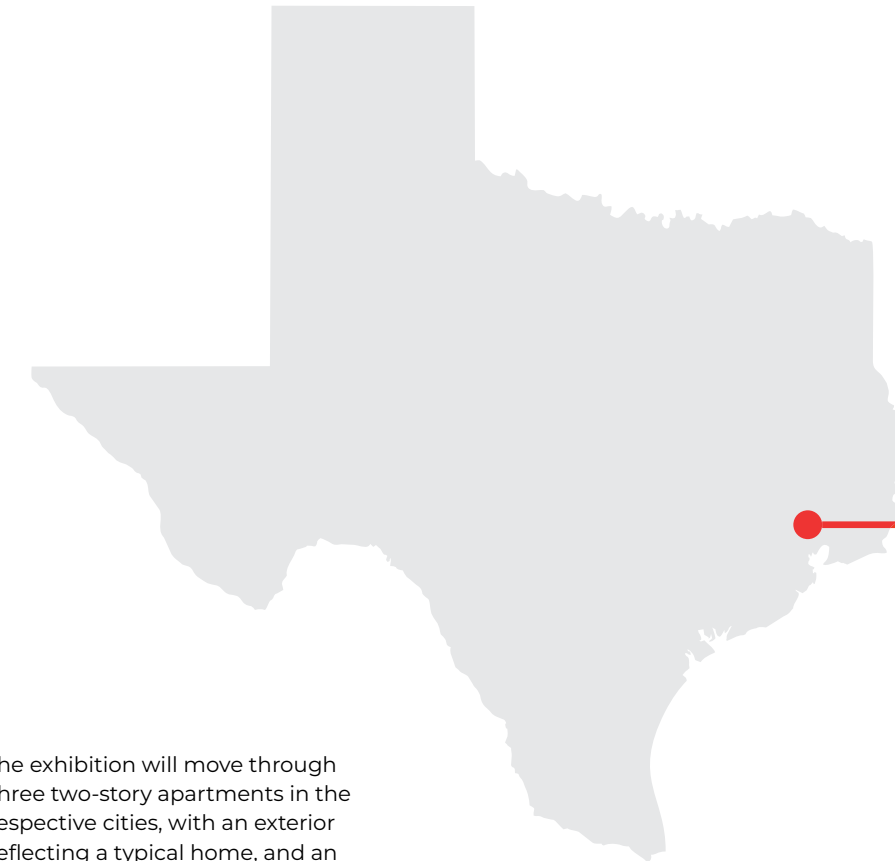
the exhibition will be traveling through three most Vietnamese-populated cities in the US:

- San José, CA
- Garden Grove, CA
- Houston, TX

San José, CA pop. 106,992



Garden Grove, CA pop. 52,894



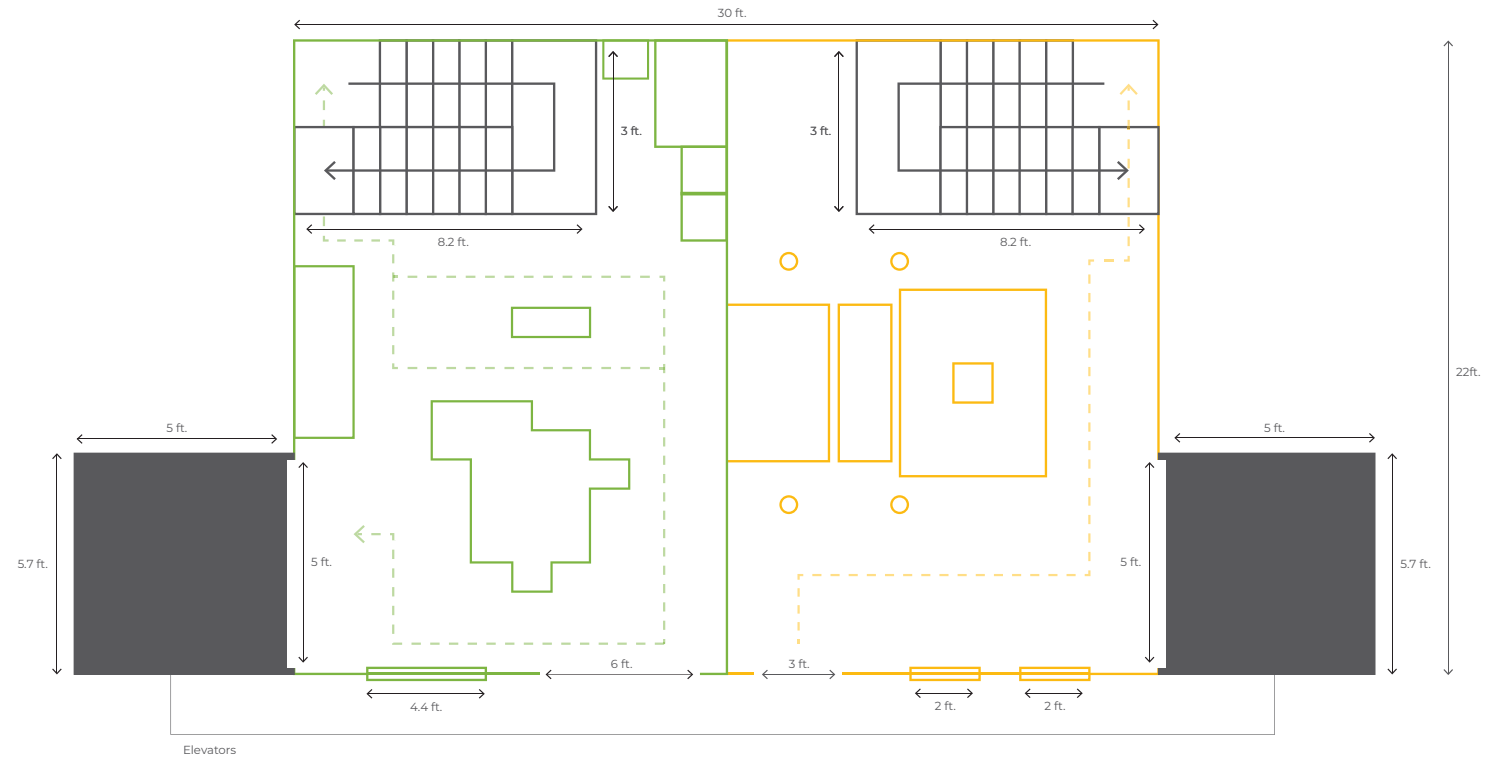
Houston, TX pop. 38,619



the exhibition will move through three two-story apartments in the respective cities, with an exterior reflecting a typical home, and an interior that surprises the visitor.

- **City's Vietnam Town**
- **Apartment Location**

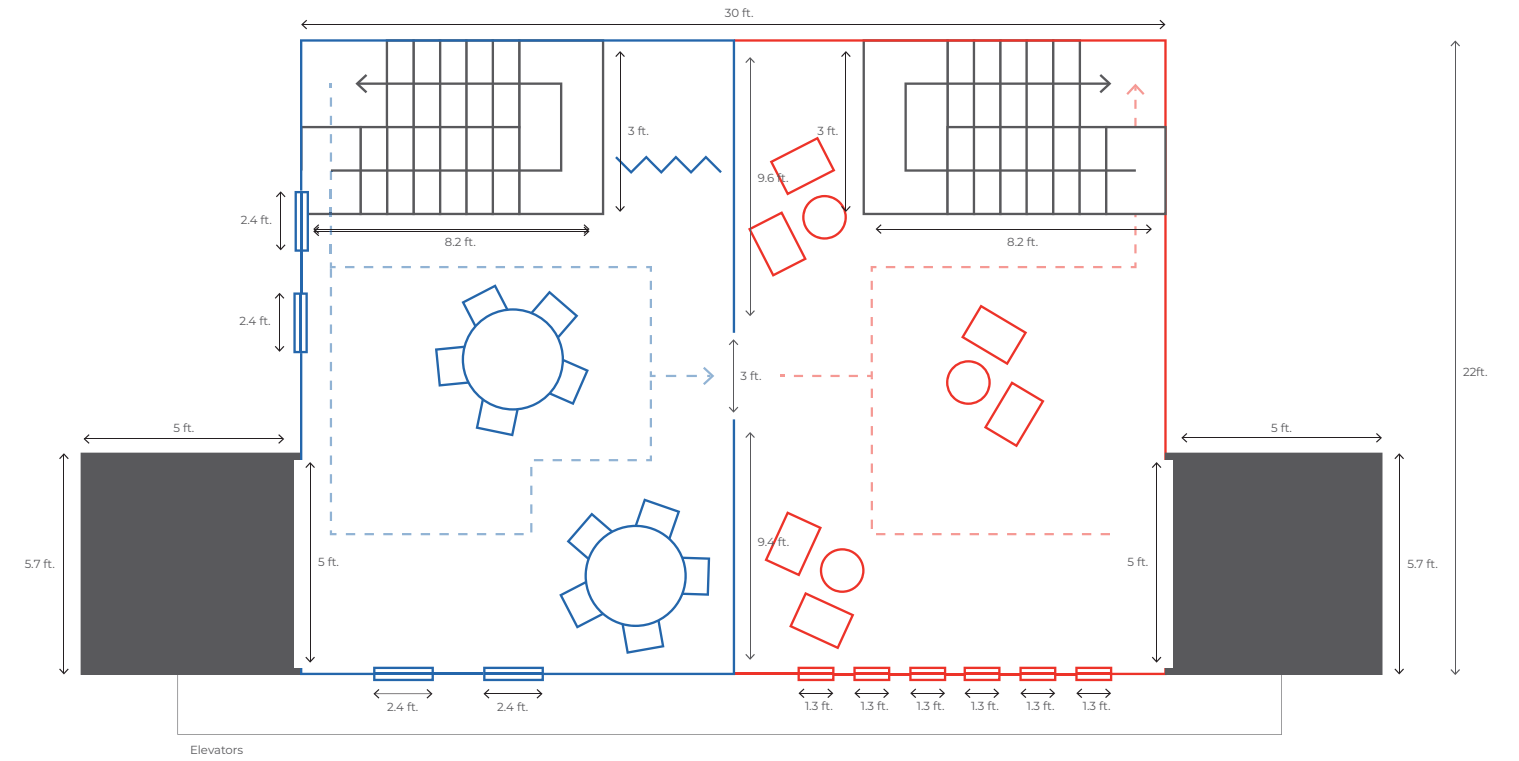
visitor journey



first floor: supermarket + temple

to communicate the feeling of "home," the visitor travels through the story.

a visit to the **supermarket** to buy familiar ingredients, a **restaurant** where they "eat" a homecooked meal from those ingredients, a **cafe** where they can relax after the meal with their friends, and finally a **temple** to peacefully pray.



second floor: restaurant + cafe

while the visitor must progress through each room, the visitor can have a loose view of each room.

elevation views

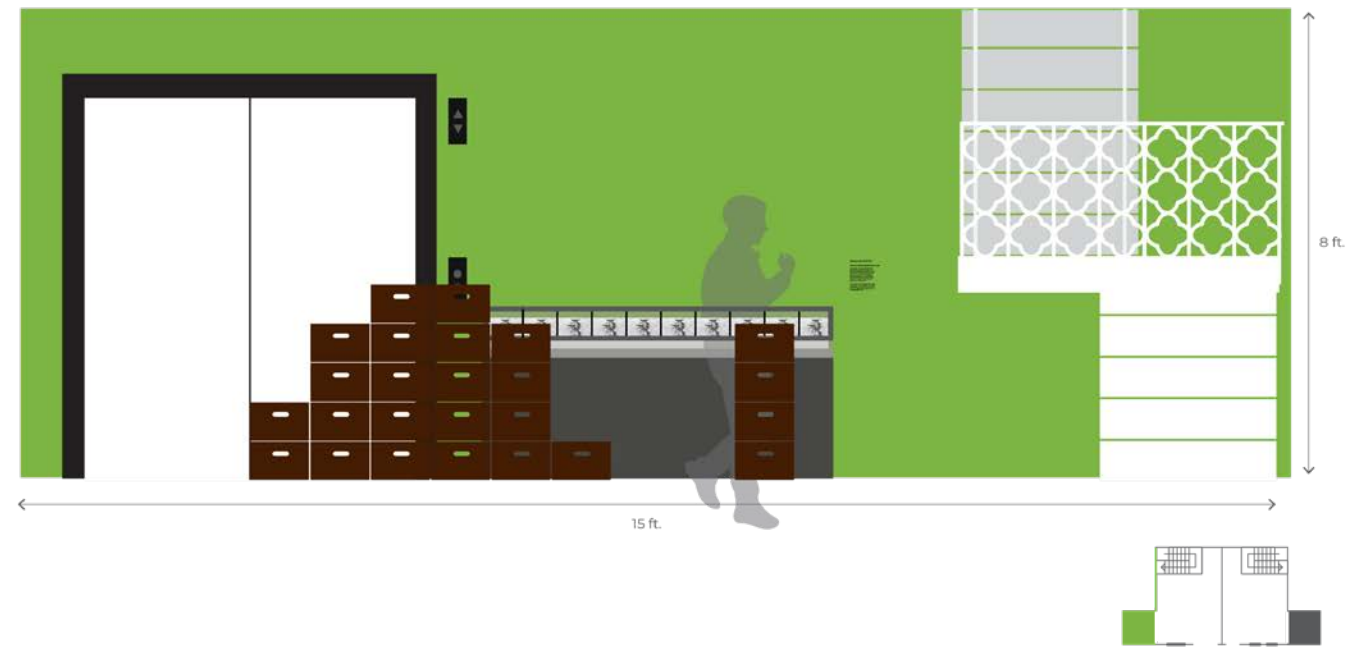
supermarket right side



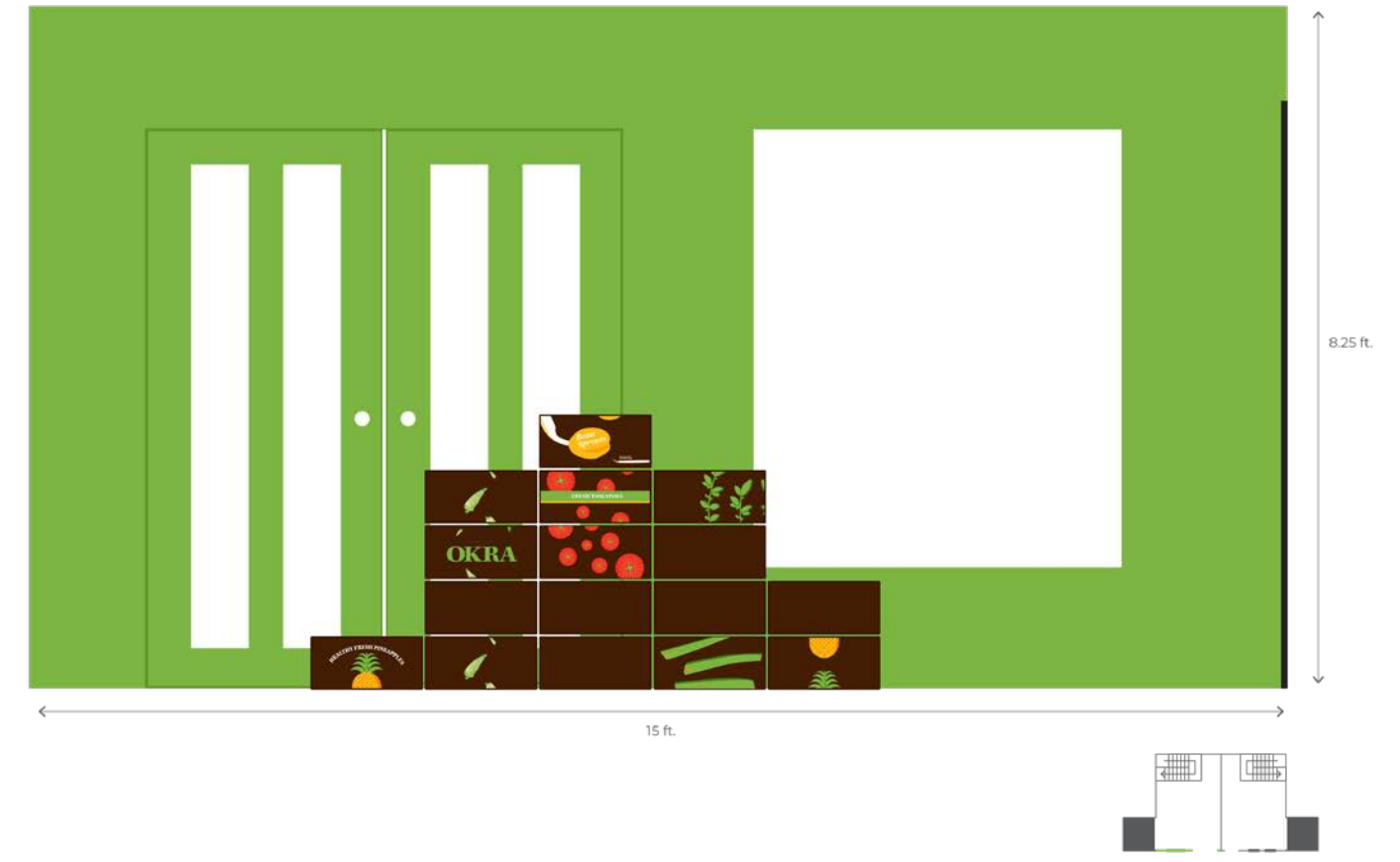
supermarket back



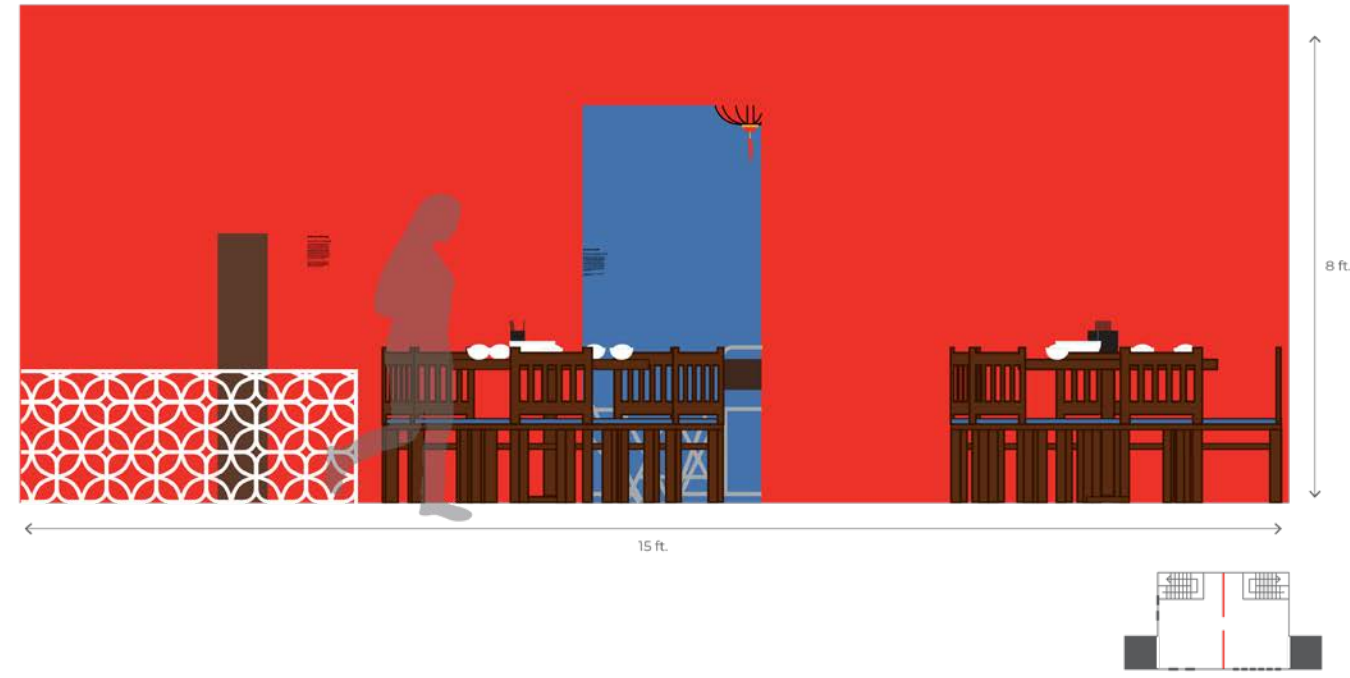
supermarket left side



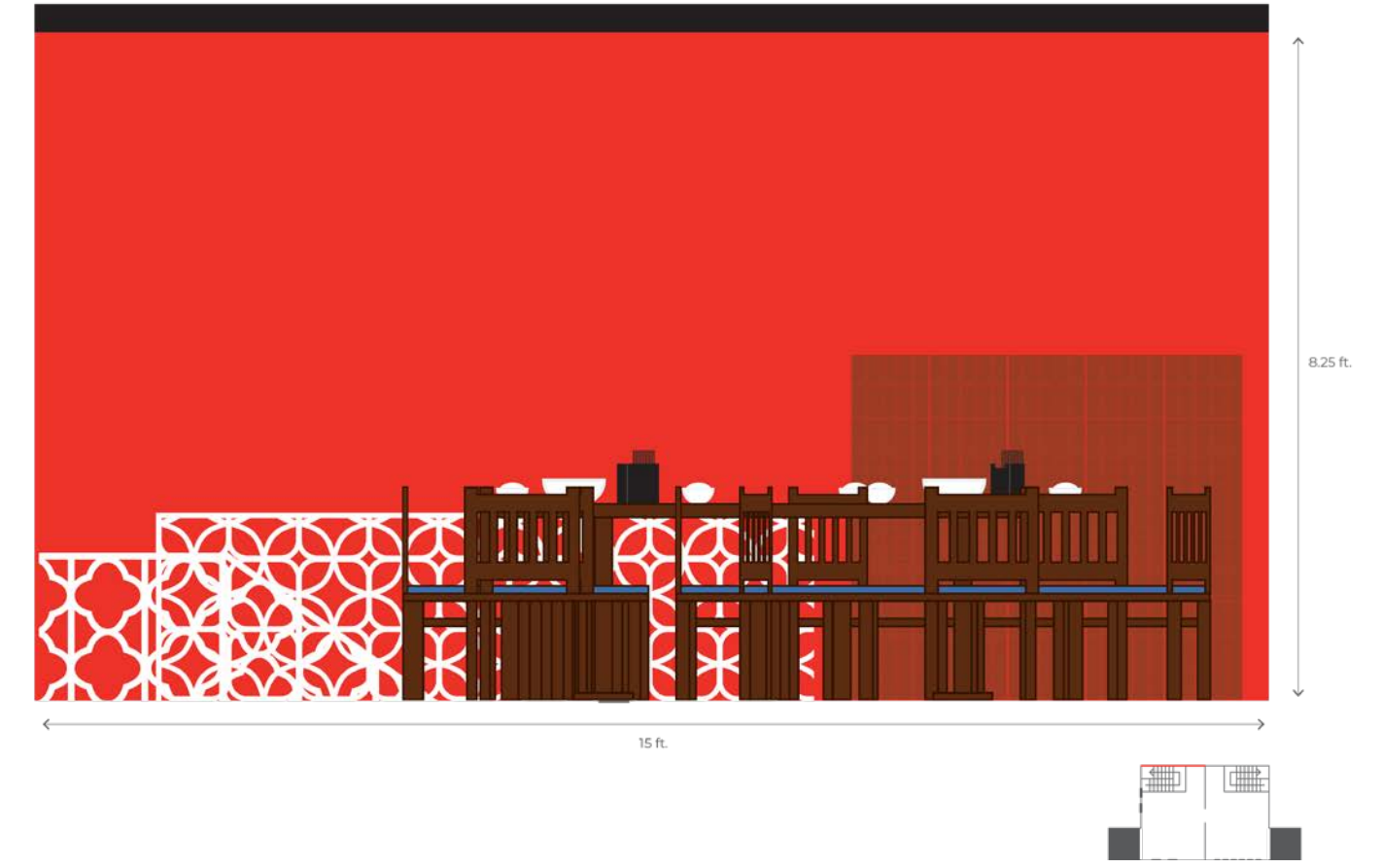
supermarket front side



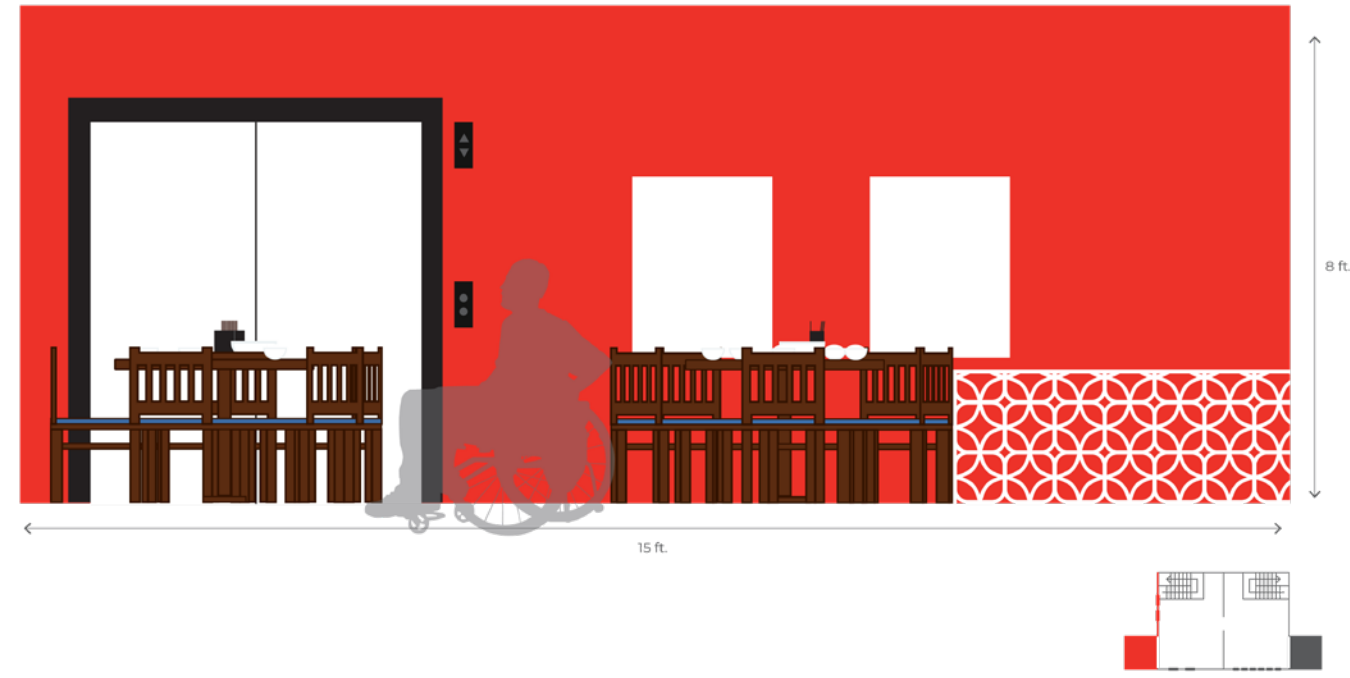
restaurant right side



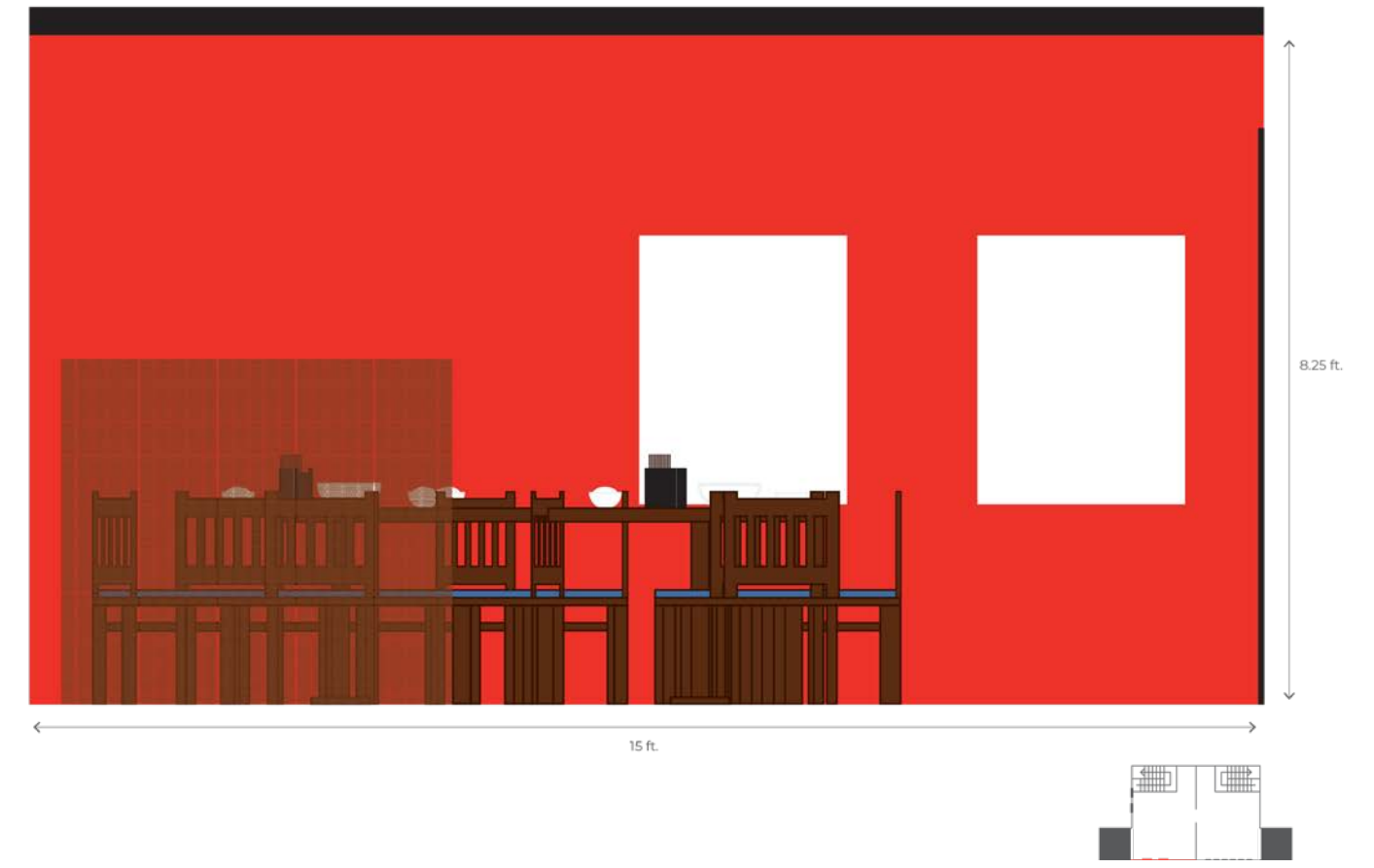
restaurant back



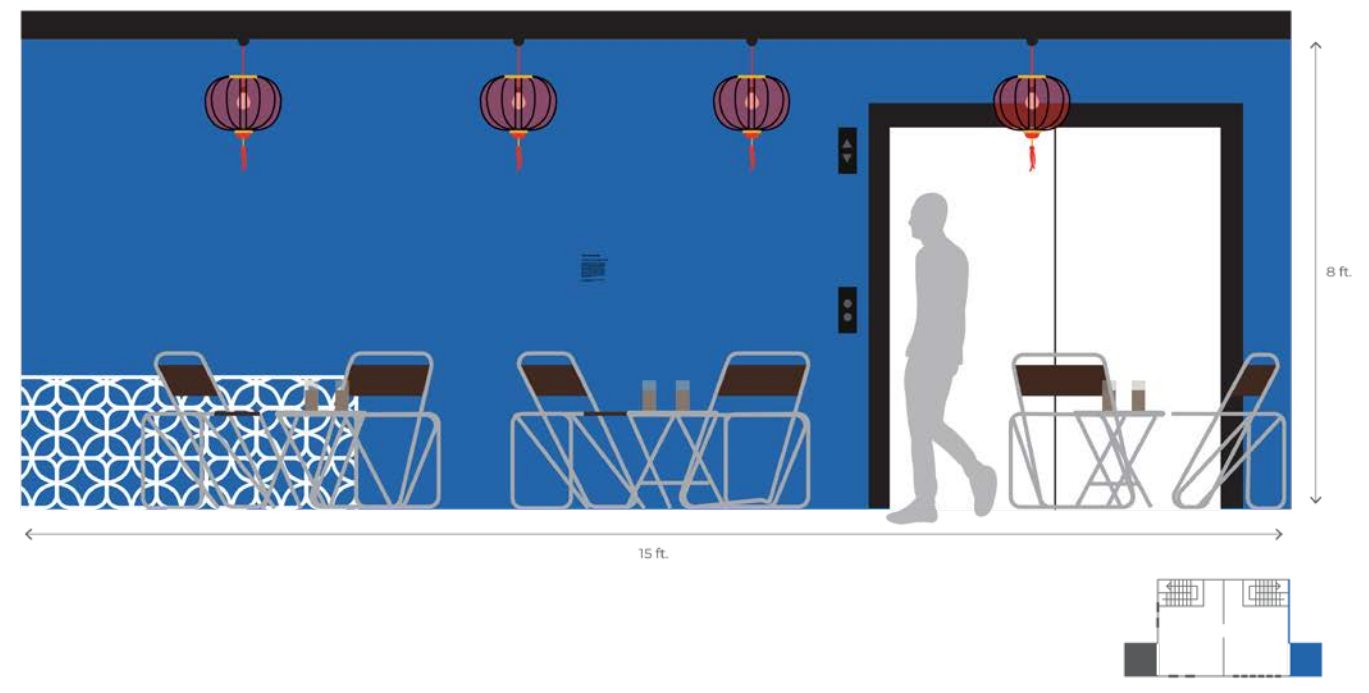
restaurant left side



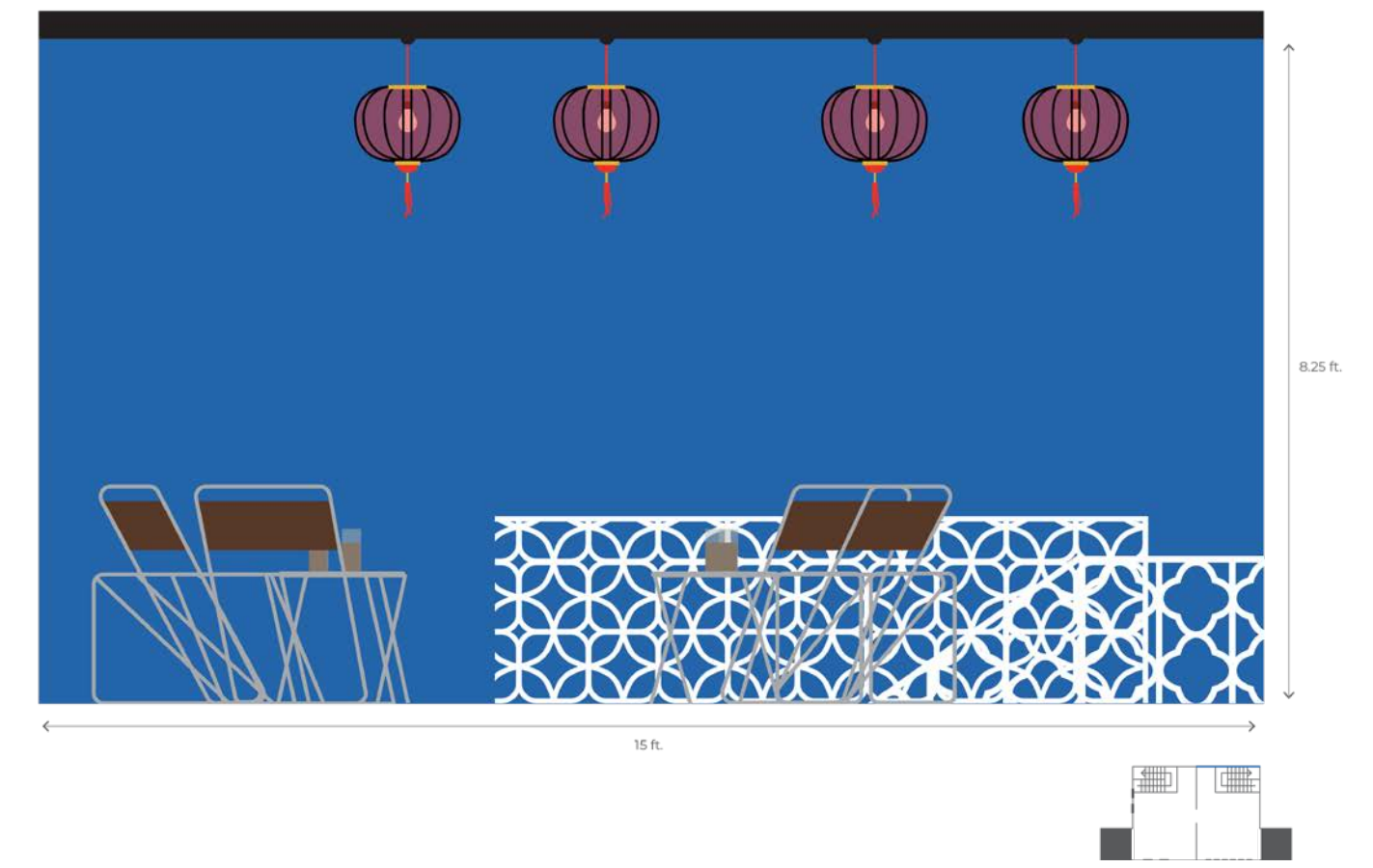
restaurant front



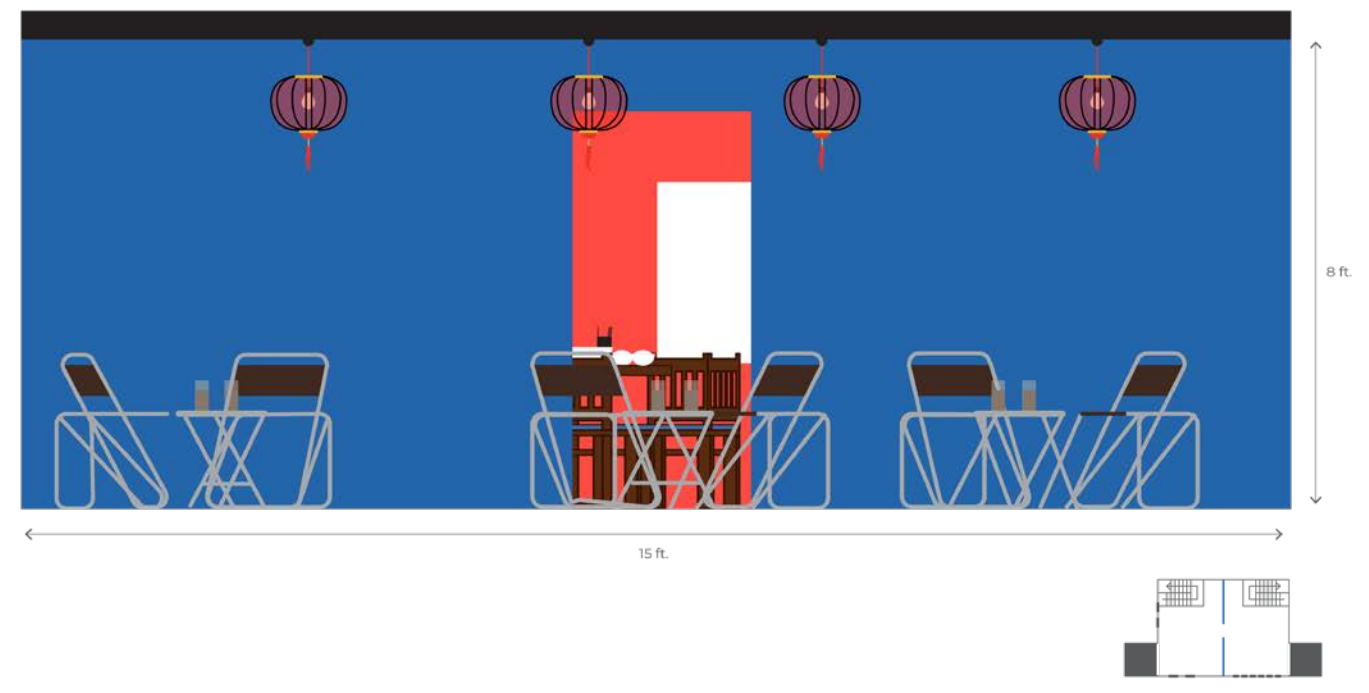
cafe right side



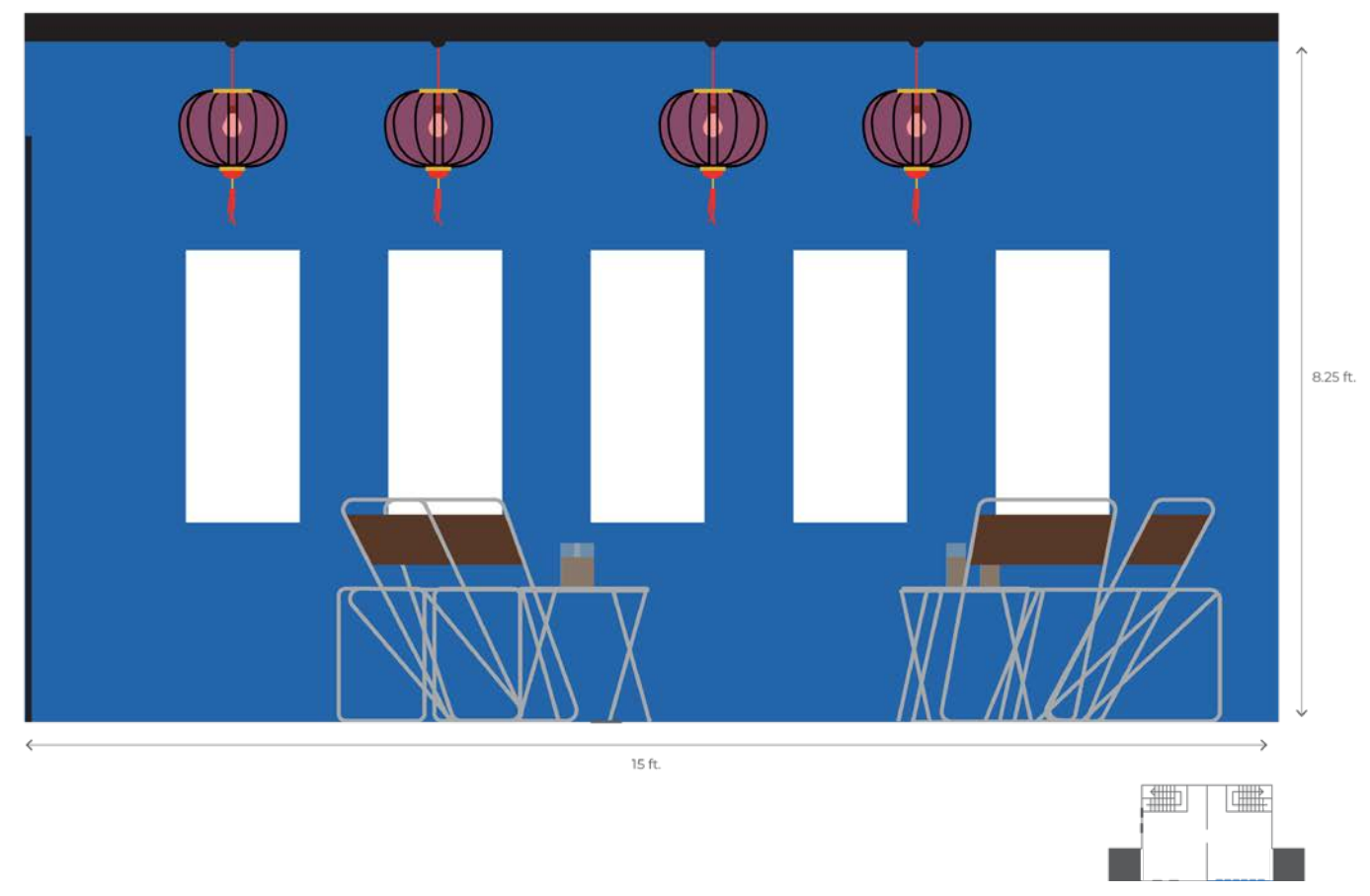
cafe back



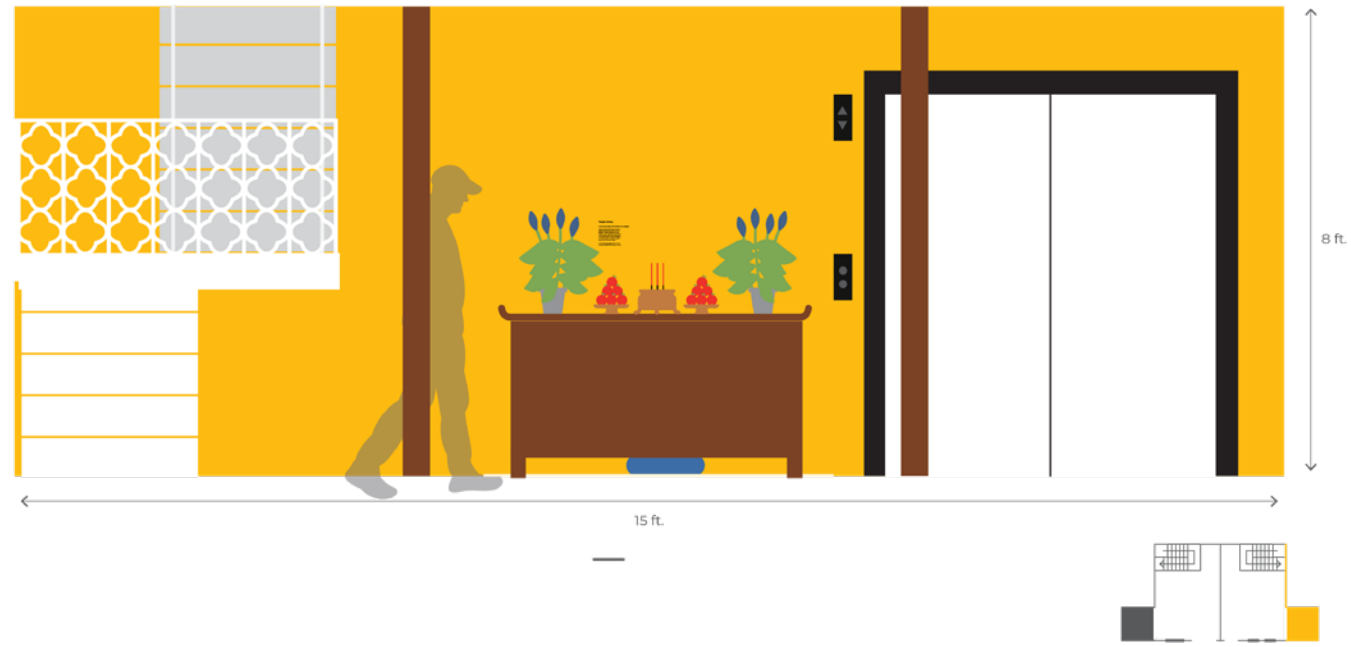
cafe left side



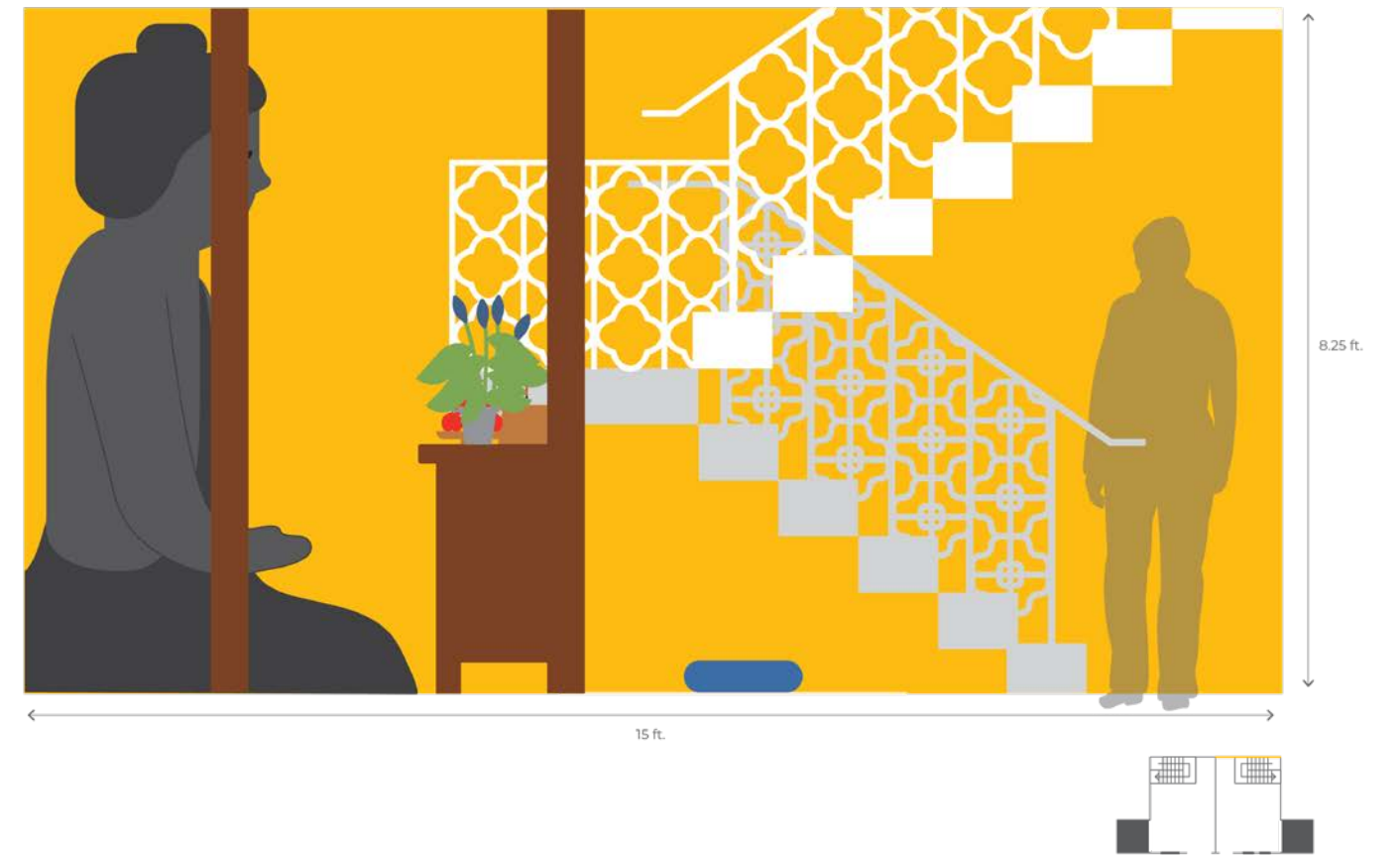
cafe front



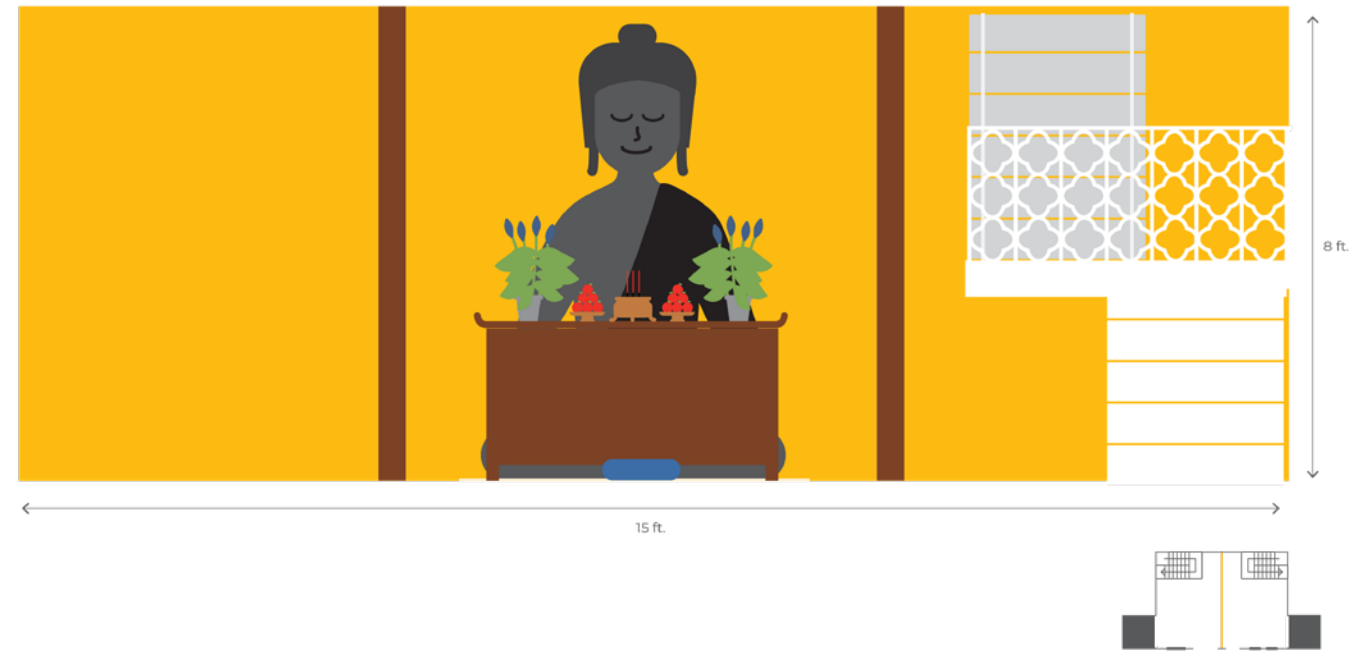
temple right side



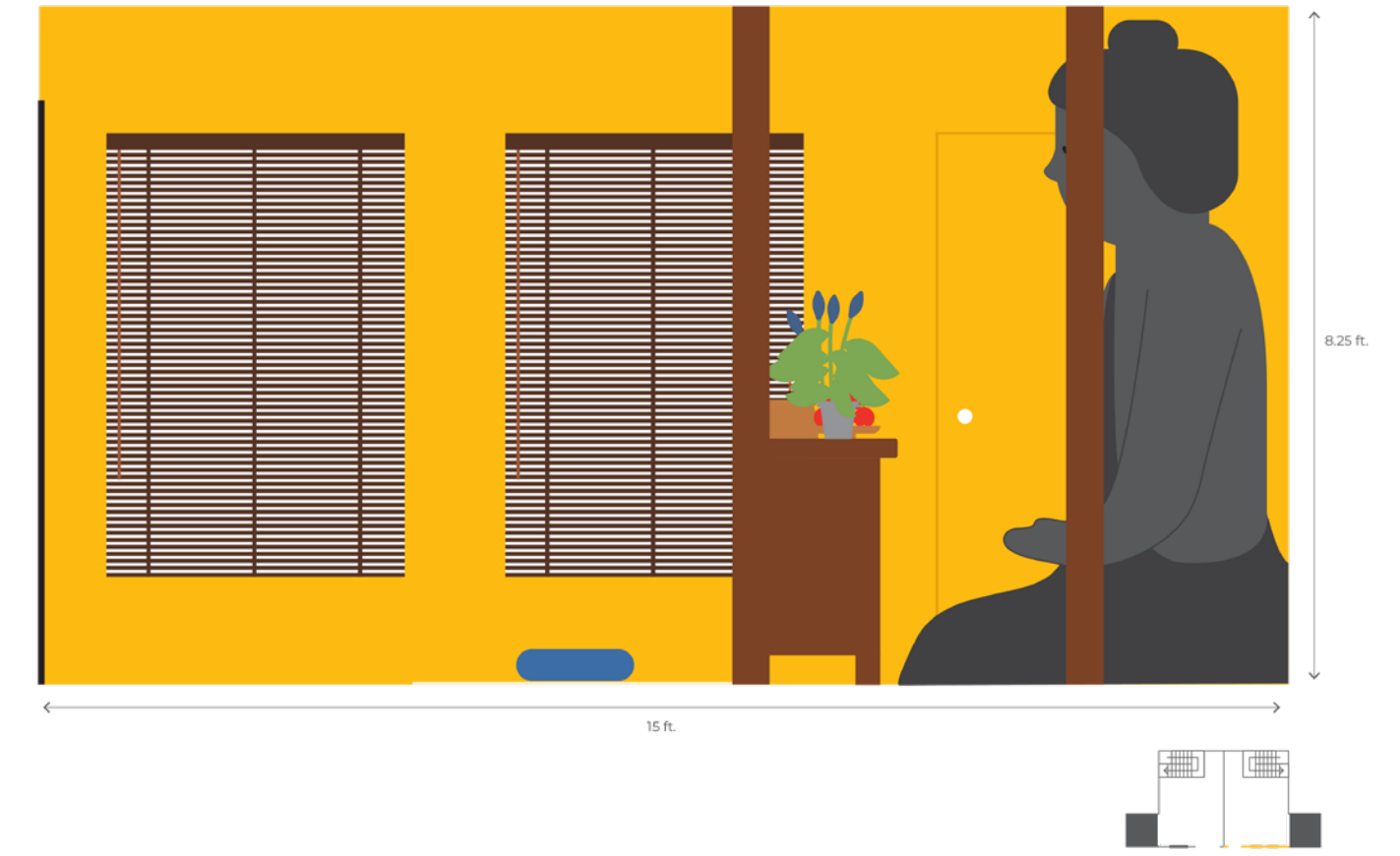
temple back



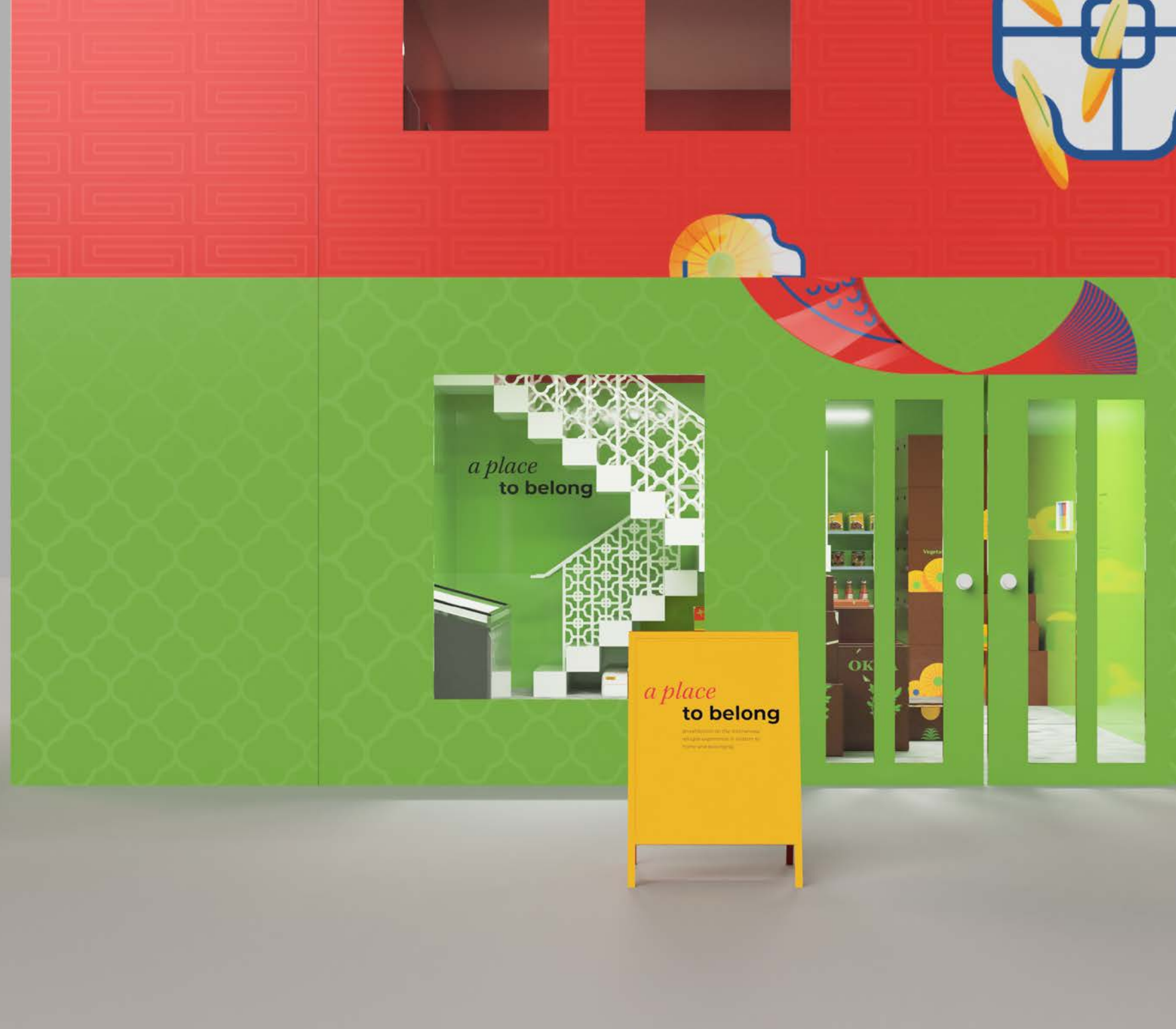
temple left side



temple front



renderings



a place
to belong



While on an individual level, home can manifest as anything based off of their personalities and experiences, on a broader scale, home is where:

- comfort is,
- their loved ones are,
- they feel safe,
- their haven is,



a place to belong

Home (Nhà)

For many Vietnamese refugees of the Vietnam War, Vietnam is a distant memory, yet their heart still aches for it. When they were forcibly ripped from their birth country, and placed in a country where the language, culture, places, and people are unfamiliar, America felt less like a home and more of a temporary placement until they could go back. But like the rebirth of a forest after a fire, Vietnamese refugees have found comfort, their loved ones, safety, as well as a haven in local spots, respectively in supermarkets, restaurants, cafes, and temples.

We invite you to follow the stories in these homes.



1 Supermarket (Siêu thị)

Gathering **comfort** ingredients for a meal.

When you step into a Vietnamese supermarket, you're instantly transported into another world, with crowded aisles of boxes and people, footprints of past visitors, marks of a daily routine, and traces of Vietnam. This world is a comforting sight for Vietnamese refugees, with a familiar language, food, and structure similar to that of Vietnamese markets. In a country full of unfamiliarity, this supermarket is a relief to step into.

In this room, you can gather ingredients for a regular Vietnamese dinner: okra, pineapple, tomatoes, bean sprouts, elephant's ear stalk, and tamarind soup mix for sour soup, fish for fried fish, and fish sauce and pickled vegetables for sides.

place
to belong





2 *Restaurant (Nhà hàng)*

Eating meals with your loved ones.

Upon their arrival in America, there weren't any spots to eat Vietnamese food, let alone gather the resources to create them. But with the new combination of the supermarket and then the arrival of the Vietnamese restaurants, suddenly refugees could experience home-cooked meals again. They could revisit Vietnam in their meals, and therefore their past. These places are a way to share their memories and feelings with their family, and know that they always have people to share life with, and to come back to.

Here they can use the ingredients gathered at the supermarket to create a meal of sour soup, fried fish, accompanied by pickled vegetables, and fish sauce with their loved ones.





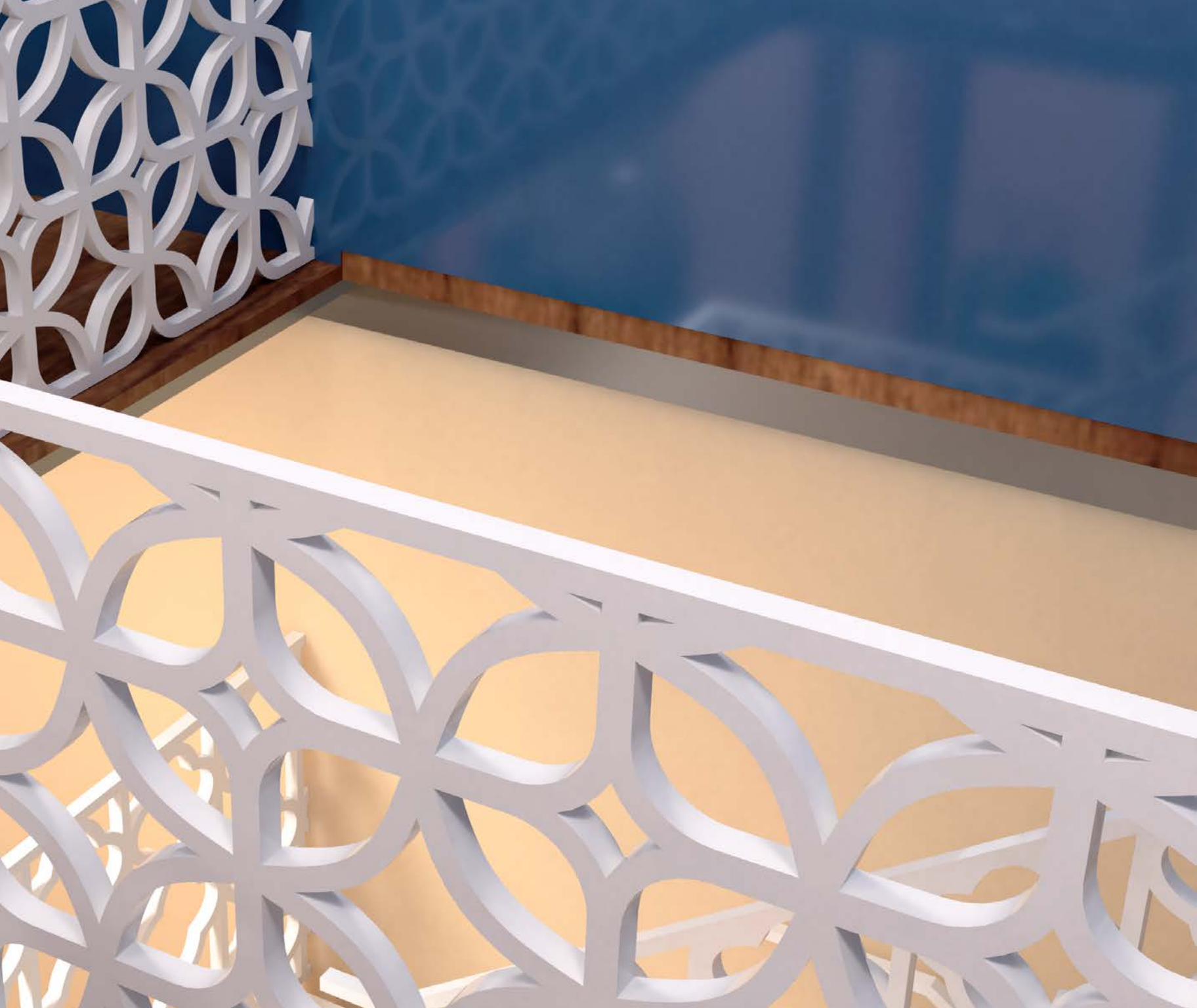


3 *Cafe (Quán cà phê)*

A **safe** space to converse with friends.

Gathering spots are hard to find for Vietnamese refugees, any American space would be unfamiliar in routine, culture, language, people, and general space. In cafes they can swap stories and news with friends and acquaintances, share a familiar drink and foods, enjoy songs and entertainment of their home country, and partake in games they played while young. In a sense, these cafes are little community centers where they can let their guard down, and relax.

In the cafe, they'll most commonly enjoy coffee as they talk with others.





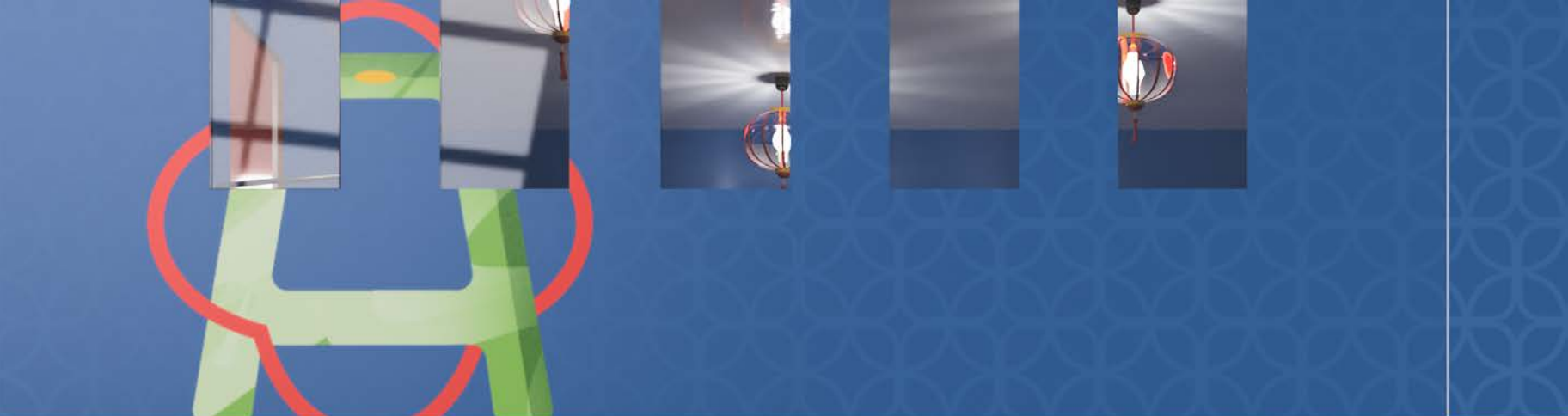
4 *Temple (Chùa)*

Practicing rituals and traditions in a **haven**.

When Vietnamese Buddhists came with the refugees, temples, if any, were few and far in-between. To create temples were to create refugees to practice their religion, fight for the country they lost, and find community again. It's an extension of the culture where refugees can practice traditions, holidays, and pray to have good fortune for another day.

In the temples, typically you'll hear murmurs of prayers to Buddha with offerings on an altar.







conclusion

100 final thoughts

101 acknowledgements

102 colophon

final thoughts

they say a designer's work is never over; while there may be a "final" product, there are always things to improve on, yet I'm happy that I took on the challenge to improve my skills, and explore my own culture, as difficult as it was.

in future reiterations, I hope to add sounds, semblances of smells in my exhibition, and tackle on ways to further explore the rooms, to create **a place to belong.**

acknowledgements

thank you to my parents, friends, partner for their support throughout this program.

special thanks to my advisors

professor connie hwang, for guiding me no matter how farfetched my ideas may seem.

professor joe miller, for sharing his anecdotes and steering me onto the right path.

doctor erin riggs, for taking the time to share her observations and love for the field.

thank you to the BFA C/O 2023

Renee Edelman, Sasina Eunirankul, Ying Gao, Grace Kusuma, Aram Magholi, Richa Marathe, Eilaria Maryousef, Thy Nguyen, Paula Piva, Ranelle Santiago, Maivi Tran, Jazmine Walker, Nicole Wei, Kaelyn Wraase, and Polina Zabrodskaja, for keeping me company through this program.

The memories of our time together will always stay with me, and I will be eternally grateful the stars aligned so that I could meet you all and embark on this journey together.

colophon

typefaces

Kepler by Robert Slimbach

Montserrat by Julieta Ulanovsky

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special thanks to **you** for
taking the time to read
through my work.

