

TOWARDS A KOSHER ARCHITECTURE

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Abstract

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This thesis explores the spatial and material evolution of the *Sukkah*, a ritual hut built and occupied by Jews throughout the diaspora every year during the harvest festival *Sukkot*. From its ancient, nomadic origins to its role in contemporary practice, the holiday celebrates fundamental issues of memory, connection, and community through a set of rigorously defined theological mandates.

In an effort to contribute to the ongoing *Talmudic* tradition of critique and analysis, the project proposes a series of allegorical *Sukkah* structures for a Jewish community in Tumwater, Washington. The eight reconfigurable huts seek to reinforce the sacred yet mundane cultural charge of the typology by extending their occupation beyond the festival into the remaining fifty-one weeks of the year.

To all of my mentors and studio-mates.

To my love, Dena, for her unrelenting support and patience.

Oh, and to my big, Jewish family. Obviously.

00 • TABLE OF CONTENTS

01 • PREFACE	8
02 • INTRODUCTION	10
03 • NOMAD	12
04 • SUKKOT	22
05 • PRECEDENTS	46
06 • SITE	54
07 • ALLEGORY	58
08 • INSTALLATION	76
09 • GREENHAUS	82
10 • NARRATIVE	90
11 • CONCLUSION	96
12 • BIBLIOGRAPHY	98
13 • APPENDIX	100



01 • PREFACE

This thesis explores the spatial and material evolution of *Sukkot*, the Jewish harvest festival. The word *Sukkot* has a variety of translations throughout the diaspora, the most common of which is the “*Festival of Tabernacles*”. Grammatically, *Sukkot* is also the plural for *Sukkah*, the ritual structure built and occupied by Jews throughout the world to celebrate the holiday. From its ancient, nomadic origins to its role in contemporary practice, *Sukkot* celebrates fundamental issues of memory, connection, and community through a set of rigorously defined theological mandates.

Growing up in an ethnically Jewish neighborhood in New York City, *Sukkot* was an integral part of community life. Across the street from my apartment building were five *Synagogues*, one after another. During the festival, almost every square foot of open outdoor space along the five-block stretch would be occupied by *Sukkot*. For the entire week, the neighborhood overflowed with public life along the main street. Friends and neighbors from nearby churches and temples would even join the celebrations to share meals, play games, and listen to our *Rabbis* tell stories.

When the holiday concluded, the ritual huts were taken apart. Their frames were broken down, the tarp walls folded up, and the roof panels bound and stored away in closets for the rest of the year. The once-bustling outdoor spaces were abruptly left unoccupied and dormant, waiting for the following year’s revelries.

Motivated by the radical potential for these ritual structures and their associated rituals to transform public life, this thesis challenges traditional notions of temporality in the practice of *Sukkot*. In an effort to contribute to the ongoing *Talmudic* tradition of critique and analysis, the project proposes a series of allegorical *Sukkah* structures for a Jewish community in Tumwater, Washington. The eight reconfigurable huts seek to reinforce the sacred yet mundane cultural charge of the typology by extending their occupation beyond the festival into the remaining fifty-one weeks of the year.

Fig. 2 *Sukkah Hopping in Jerusalem* (Retrieved from: <https://www.haaretz.com/anglos-bring-sukkah-hopping-to-israel-1.5169158>)

Fig. 3 *Shabbat in the Sukkah* (Retrieved from: <https://www.jweekly.com/2016/10/28/ecstasy-on-the-farm-wilderness-torahs-earth-based-sukkot/>)

Fig. 4 *Beacon Sukkah Project* (Retrieved from: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/on-beacon-nys-main-street-a-sukkah-turns-townhall/>)



02 • INTRODUCTION

Community is formed through shared experiences. Whether at the scale of the individual, the village, or the greater nation, communal bonds are often developed through overcoming a collective struggle or trauma. Over time, stories about the shaping of these bonds compose the common narrative retold from generation to generation through epic mythologies, elaborate ceremonies, and rigorously defined cultural practices. Often manifesting as highly choreographed performances of prayer, violence, celebration, sacrifice, consecration, or destruction, these ritual traditions are fundamentally designed to reinforce the historic, contemporary, and projected relationships that shape meaningful collective identities.

This system of ritualization is distinctly articulated and formalized in traditional *Judaism*. In the several thousand-year-old *Abrahamic* faith, almost “all aspects of life are ritualized... from the first thoughts and prayers in the morning through the final prayers upon one’s bed at night.”¹ Strict adherence to religious laws and guidelines outlined within the *halakhic* tradition² regulates everything from dietary practices to business dealings, prayer obligations, charitable contributions, holiday festivities, and personal mourning, among other daily pursuits. Within a religious community as widespread as the Jewish diaspora, these shared rituals provide a common language through which community can be sustainably fostered and nurtured, regardless of the practitioners’ position or circumstances.

While diasporic traditions are not often characterized by a clear sense of place or even space for that matter, the very notion of existing without a home is most clearly observed and spatialized during the Jewish harvest festival *Sukkot*.³ The annual holiday is celebrated by Jews throughout the world during the early weeks

¹ Fishbane, Michael A. *Judaism* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1987), p.83.

² Fishbane, Michael A., p.143. Defined as “any normative Jewish law, custom, or practice... *Halakha* is law established or custom ratified by authoritative rabbinic scholars... if something is deemed *halakhic*, it is proper behavior.”

³ Commonly translated as both the “*Feast of the Tabernacles*” and also the plural form of *Sukkah*, the ritual hut in which the festival is celebrated.

of autumn to mark the end of the agricultural year in the Land of Israel. The defining custom associated with the holiday is the building and occupation of the *Sukkah*,⁴ a temporary hut or booth carefully positioned with a clear unobstructed connection to the sky above. These simple religious dwellings harken back to the historical structures occupied by farmers and laborers working the fields throughout Palestine during late antiquity⁵ as well as the nomadic desert structures carried in the Sinai Peninsula during the forty-year period of *Exodus*.⁶ Thus, the yearly observation of *Sukkot* evokes a timeless celebration of the shifting seasons along with the collective memory of shared trauma to engage an enduring diasporic community.

From its ancient, nomadic origins to its role in the practice today, *Sukkot* celebrates memory, yearning, temporality, and communal bonds through a set of scrupulously defined theological laws. However, while a commitment to ritual structures is a crucial component of sustaining diasporic identities, it is also critical to challenge certain traditions so that communities can actively reflect upon the basic cultural charges being invoked by these rituals in the first place.⁷ This radical practice of critique and analysis is built into the faith through the Talmud,⁸ an ongoing commentary that judiciously examines Jewish civil and ceremonial laws. In an effort to further contribute to that tradition, this thesis seeks to reinforce the primary cultural charge of *Sukkot*. By fundamentally challenging certain built-in notions of temporality, a contemporary *Sukkah* can be repositioned to play a more impactful role in the daily practice of Jewish life for the rest of the year beyond the week of the festival.

⁴ *Sukkah* is translated as a booth or more specifically, the ritual hut in which *Sukkot* is celebrated.

⁵ Kraemer, David Charles. *Rabbinic Judaism: Space and Place* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), p. 85.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁷ The Jewish Museum New York. *Reinventing Ritual: Garden & Sukkah*. Youtube, April 8, 2011. Taken from interview with Arnold C. Eisen, then Chancellor at the Jewish Theological Seminary.

03 • NOMAD

The ways in which people choose to inhabit their immediate and distant surroundings are regularly impacted by their access to resources. Whether in search of food, water, shelter, community, or general fulfillment, human beings often migrate to preserve and sustain life as they've come to know it. Be it voluntarily or as a result of forceful circumstances, the act of traversing new environments is a fundamental part of the human condition. Focusing on the itinerant traditions of various nomadic groups, the initial focus of this thesis was to analyze the ways in which nomadic materials and methods have evolved and come to exist within contemporary models of architecture and migration.

Prior to identifying the *Sukkah* as the subject of a more critical investigation, the research focused on cataloging a broad survey of nomadic peoples and the structures they carried. These groups were strategically chosen to comprehensively examine how climate, access to resources, and attitudes regarding craft, theology, conflict, and community have impacted design and fabrication.⁸

After collecting and indexing several hundred examples of historic and contemporary nomadic structures from around the world, a series of patterns emerged, providing the basis for a more qualitative study. The catalog of nomadic structures (see *Figs. 5-9*) was organized into four distinct typologies: tents, huts, wagons, and boats. The fundamental assertion of the classification was that all nomadic structures fit into at least one of these categories, while the vast majority exist as hybrids that actively adapt to their surroundings.

As a result of the graphic analysis of the four typologies and their resultant hybrids, I began to focus on specific nomadic models with the ultimate goal of developing a design proposal that critically addresses issues of temporary dwelling in contemporary environments. With a rich cultural history and an active role in the faith today, the Jewish *Sukkah* was identified as the ideal nomadic typology for the project.

⁸ Echavarria, Pillar. *Portable Architecture -and unpredictable surroundings-* (Barcelona, Spain: Arian Mostaedi, 2006), p.8.

Fig. 5 *Catalog of Nomadic Architecture* (Digital Media Collage, 2019)



TENTS • Temporary dwellings generally wrapped or clad with textiles, animal skins, and/or other materials attached to supporting frames. Depending on their size, tents are often anchored down using tensioned ropes fixed to stakes. Historically, these structures were lightweight, portable, and didn't require a high level of technical skill to raise, making them ideal for nomadic peoples, particularly those living in areas without regular access to resilient or workable building materials. Nomadic groups moving across broad territories favored tents due to how quickly they could be pitched and struck, how easily the building materials could be harvested and reshaped, and how compact the enclosures could be bundled during excursions. Contemporary tents are similarly easy to transport and deploy, but are more often used for recreational camping and relief shelter.

Fig. 6 *Tents* (Digital Media Collage, 2019)



HUTS • Primitive dwellings that are constructed using local materials and building techniques. Huts are commonly built with readily available and easily workable materials such as wood, stone, grass, leaves, snow, mud, and/or fabrics. Generally associated with longer-term durability, the use of locally harvested building components provides greater resilience to regional weather conditions. While parts of huts can be packed and transported between camps, the practice relies heavily on having access to natural resources to shape structures and enclosures. Today, seasonal huts are often occupied by shepherds when moving livestock between grazing areas. Situated along well-traveled routes, these huts also provide shelter to backpackers and other travelers across a variety of landscapes.

Fig. 7 *Huts* (Digital Media Collage, 2019)



WAGONS • Mobile dwellings and carriages whose chief components allow for the movement of people and/or resources across extended routes. While the nomadic wagon has been well-represented for as long as humanity has had access to the wheel, its contemporary counterparts have benefited from more recent advancements in automotive technology. Integrated combustion engines and global commodification of the automobile has facilitated the production of faster, more durable, and more comfortable mobile dwellings for human travel and inhabitation.

Fig. 8 *Wagons* (Digital Media Collage, 2019)



BOATS • Similar to wagons, boats facilitate the movement of people and/or resources across extended distances, specifically those along rivers, lakes, canals, tributaries, shorelines, and open waters. The development of maritime technology has provided direct access to food, trade, and migratory routes for seafaring groups throughout history. While the contemporary boating industry has produced bigger, faster, and more resilient crafts for commercial and recreational applications, simple and time-tested methods of boat-building and operation are still actively deployed by groups throughout the world that rely on floating vessels for dwelling and movement.

Fig. 9 *Boats* (Digital Media Collage, 2019)



04 • SUKKOT

In order to effectively challenge ritual traditions, it is essential to first understand their narrative foundations in the cultural consciousness. The earliest mentions of *Sukkot* in scripture reference a specific place. The first involves Jacob, the grandson of Abraham and one of the principal patriarchs of the Israelites. In search of a station from which he could graze his livestock, “Jacob journeyed on to *Succoth*, and built a house for himself and made booths for his cattle; that is why the place was called *Succoth*.”⁹ He stayed there for a time before returning to his homeland in Canaan. Later, in response to severe droughts, Jacob, then given the name Israel, moved his family to *Mizraim*.¹⁰ It was there that he died and his descendants would make a place for themselves for generations to come before being enslaved by the pharaonic dynasty.

Following several hundred years in the lands of Egypt, the Israelites, led by the prophet Moses, mounted an uprising that resulted in their mass exodus from under the Pharaoh’s oppressive regime. In the moments following the great departure, *Succoth* is mentioned once again as the first place the Israelites set up camp upon leaving *Raamses*.¹¹ This pair of passing references introduce a critical association between *Succoth* as a place of temporary refuge at times of both personal and communal crisis. For Jacob, it provided a position from which he could raise his stock. For the 600,000 Israelite’s fleeing Egypt, it was the first in a series of shelters they would occupy during their forty years traversing the Sinai in search of the Promised Land.¹² This relationship between toil and sanctuary is the fundamental basis upon which *Sukkot* are built and occupied.

Characterized by more general notions of temporality, struggle, and refuge, the holiday is formally ritualized in Leviticus, the third book of the *Torah*.¹³ Taking

⁹ Genesis 33:17

¹⁰ The name generally given to biblical Egypt, its lands, and people.

¹¹ Exodus 12:37

¹² Exodus 3:17. “And I have said: I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanite... unto a land flowing with milk and honey.”

place within the narrative of the Israelites' *Exodus* from Egypt, a majority of the book consists of God's speeches to Moses from atop Mount Sinai, all of which were to be repeated to the Israelites awaiting Moses' return at the base of the mountain. The ritual is mandated to take place "on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you gather in the produce of the land, you shall celebrate the festival of the Lord for a seven day period; the first day shall be a rest day, and the eighth day shall be a rest day."¹⁴ Taking place at the end of the agriculture year around the time of the harvest in the middle east, the festival generally falls between late September and early October in the Gregorian calendar. The ritual mandate for two days of rest is in line with the regular observance of the *Sabbath*.¹⁵

The passage continues "...and you shall take for yourselves on the first day, the fruit of the Hadar tree (*etrog*), date palm fronds (*lulav*), a branch of a braided tree (*hadass*), and willows of the brook (*aravah*), and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for a seven day period."¹⁶ The identification of the four ceremonial objects in this portion serves to further choreograph the practice. In the *Talmudic* tradition, the four species are bound together and waved to bless the space and those occupying it. The question of why these particular species were chosen for the ritual speaks directly to the objects embodying Israel as both place and people. Various commentaries note that while all four are directly tied to the land as native plants, they also represent the four types of Jews living within the tribes.¹⁷ The *etrog* has both a good taste and a good smell, representing those who study the *Torah* and also perform good deeds.

¹³ Fishbane, Michael A., p.147. "The first five books of the Bible, also known as the Five Books of Moses, or the *Pentateuch*. The *Torah*, literally 'instruction,' is commonly used to refer to the entire range of Jewish teachings and practices"

¹⁴ Leviticus 23:39

¹⁵ Fishbane, Michael A., p.146. "The seventh day of the week, recalling the completion of the creation and the *Exodus* from Egypt. It is a symbolic day of new beginnings and one dedicated to God, a most holy day of rest."

¹⁶ Leviticus 23:40

¹⁷ Ibid.

The *lulav* has a taste but no smell, representing those who study the *Torah* but do not perform good deeds. The *hadass* has a good smell but no taste, representing those who perform good deeds but do not study the *Torah*. And the *aravah* has neither taste nor smell, representing those who do not study the *Torah* and perform no good deeds. Recognizing and binding devoted practitioners with the nonobservant speaks to a larger desire to bring the people of Israel together as a united community under a single roof. Another commentary alludes to the four species as symbols of various parts of the human body.¹⁸ The *etrog* as the heart, the *lulav* as the spine, the *hadass* as the eye, and the *aravah* as the mouth. Binding the four together to consecrate the ritual demonstrates a desire to devote one's whole being in the service of God and the larger community.

Following the identification of the four species, the passage continues "... and you shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord for seven days in the year. [It is] an eternal statute throughout your generations [that] you celebrate it in the seventh month."¹⁹ The seven-day duration of the holiday is further reinforced in its repetition, particularly through mandating its annual observation in perpetuity. The issue of collective memory is further ritualized as the passage continues "...for a seven day period, you shall live in booths. Every resident among the Israelites shall live in booths, in order that your [ensuing] generations should know that I had the children of Israel live in booths when I took them out of the land of Egypt. I am the Lord, your God."²⁰ It is in this particular verse that the practice is spatialized in the *Sukkah* to acknowledge the ephemeral experience of crossing the unknown in search of a homeland. These lines distinguish the spirit of the holiday along with its role in forging a communal identity.

Evoking the hardships faced by a shared ancestral lineage brings members of

¹⁸ Leviticus 23:40

¹⁹ Leviticus 23:41.

²⁰ Leviticus 23:42-43.

Fig. 10 *Leviticus 23:39-44 | Parsha Vayikra* (Retrieved from: <https://www.sefaria.org/Leviticus.23.39-44?lang=bi&aliyot=0>)

39 But on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you gather in the produce of the land, you shall celebrate the festival of the Lord for a seven day period; the first day shall be a rest day, and the eighth day shall be a rest day.

לֹט אַךְ בַּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי
בְּאַסְפְּכֶם אֶת־תְּבוּאֹת הָאָרֶץ תַּחֲגוּ
אֶת־חַג־יְהוָה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן
שִׁבְתֹּן וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁמִינִי שִׁבְתֹּן:

40 And you shall take for yourselves on the first day, the fruit of the hadar tree, date palm fronds, a branch of a braided tree, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for a seven day period.

מ וּלְקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן פְּרִי עֵץ הָדָר
כַּפַּת תְּמָרִים וְעֵנָף עֵץ־עֵבֶת וְעַרְבֵי־נַחַל
וּשְׂמַחְתֶּם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם שִׁבְעַת יָמִים:

41 And you shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord for seven days in the year. [It is] an eternal statute throughout your generations [that] you celebrate it in the seventh month.

מא וְחַגַּתֶּם אֹתוֹ חַג לַיהוָה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים
בַּשָּׁנָה חֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי
תַּחֲגוּ אֹתוֹ:

42 For a seven day period you shall live in booths. Every resident among the Israelites shall live in booths,

מב בַּסֻּכּוֹת תִּשְׁבּוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים כָּל־הָאֶזְרָח
בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל יֹשְׁבוּ בַסֻּכּוֹת:

43 in order that your [ensuing] generations should know that I had the children of Israel live in booths when I took them out of the land of Egypt. I am the Lord, your God.

מג לְמַעַן יֵדְעוּ דֹרֹתֵיכֶם כִּי בַסֻּכּוֹת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי
אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּהוֹצִיאִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם
אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

44 And Moses told the children of Israel [these laws] of the Lord's appointed [holy days].

מד וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶת־מִעֲדֵי יְהוָה אֶל־בְּנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל:

the community together to share meaningful experiences just as their forbears did. It provides a common narrative in which they are asked to gather materials, shape them into specific forms, and gather within the spaces they frame for a prescribed measure of time every year. This act of regularly constructing and occupying spaces that reflect specific moments in the collective memory becomes an incredibly powerful tool for fostering community. Leaving the conditioned space of contemporary dwellings to gather in humble, self-built outdoor shelters effectively spatializes the experience of memory. The passage concludes "...and Moses told the children of Israel [these laws] of the Lord's appointed [holy days]." ²¹ In simple terms, the ritual is meant to connect its practitioners to the lands they occupy, the resources available to them, and the people that share in their vision of community.

Mythology has a formidable ability to shape cultural identities. Whether received by its congregants as fact or fable, collective origin stories represent the formative histories upon which communities endure. According to *Rabbinic* scholar David Kraemer, "if the *Sukkah* represented the formative history of the people (the *Exodus* from Egypt, according to the *Torah's* own interpretation) then the commanded body would be oriented in a relation to that history." ²² This ritual commandment asserts a fundamental relationship between the Jewish body and the *Sukkah*.

Going a step further beyond the collective mythology, a *Sukkah* would have been a fairly common object and space in ancient Palestine.²³ Formally, it would have

²¹ Leviticus 23:44

²² Kraemer, David Charles. "Real Mythical Space" in *Rabbinic Judaism: Space and Place* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), p. 86.

²³ Kraemer, David Charles, p. 85.

Fig. 11 *Watering Hole near Kibbutz Gal-On* (Retrieved from: <https://www.israel21c.org/11-vintage-photos-of-desert-life-in-the-holy-land-for-sukkot/>)

Fig. 12 *Sukkot at the Sha'ar Menashe* (Retrieved from: <https://www.israel21c.org/sukkah-hopping-in-israel-through-the-decades/>)

Fig. 13 *Neot Kedumim* (Retrieved from: <https://modiinapp.com/en/page/3847/sukkot-celebration-at-neot-kedumim-park-chol-hamoed-sukkot-2019>)



been a seasonal hut built and occupied by farmers and laborers working the fields as a sanctuary from the intense summer sun during the day and a well-ventilated shelter at night.²⁴ While these were fairly mundane, utilitarian structures, they are representative of a direct connection to a specific time and place. One that is, in many ways, the theological basis of diasporic *Judaism*: a yearning to occupy one's homeland. By carefully regulating the ceremonial construction and occupation of *Sukkot* in their *Rabbinic* manifestation, the tradition enables its practitioners to better contextualize the celebration and the communal mandates they're bound to.

This begins to bring into question the role of memory in ritual traditions. In his essay entitled "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux Memoire," Pierre Nora asserts that "memory and history appear to be in fundamental opposition."²⁵ According to Nora, memory "remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting... vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation" while history, on the other hand, is "the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer."²⁶ This complex and contradictory dichotomy is a fundamental part of David Kraemer's assertions regarding *Real Mythical Space* in Judaism, specifically in the relationship between the *Sukkah* and the *Tabernacle*: the portable sanctuary carried by the Israelites through the Sinai wilderness.

According to Kraemer, while the two ritual spaces are occupied and activated in entirely different ways, "the first step toward imagining *Sukkah* space is to recall the

²⁴ Kraemer, David Charles, p. 85.

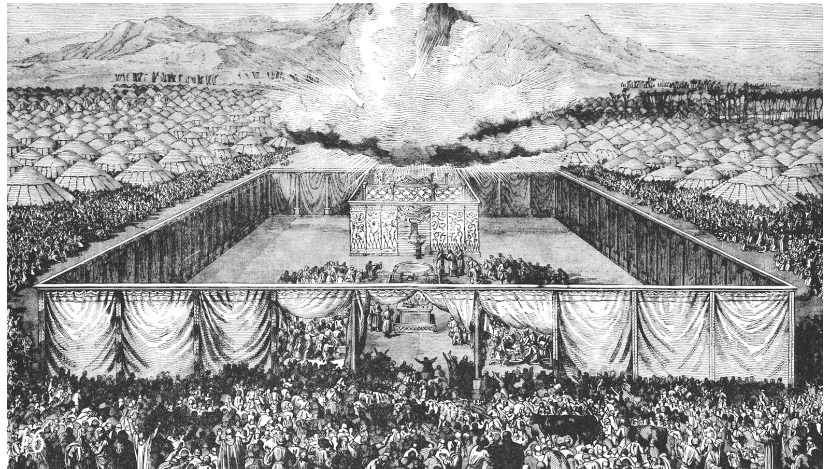
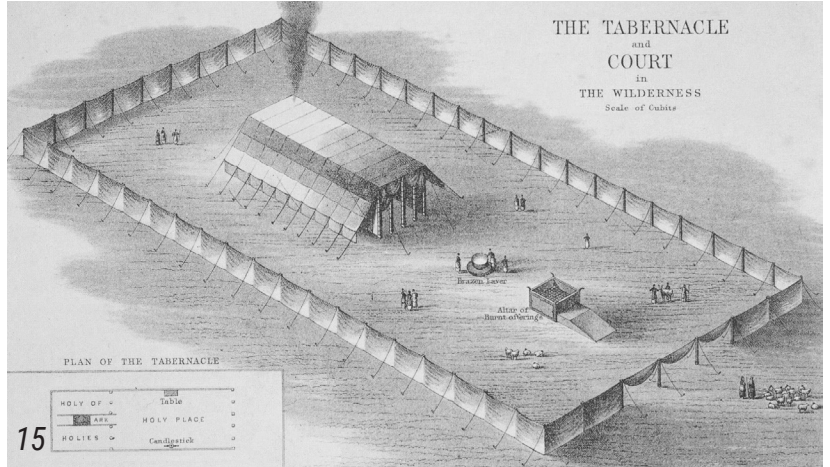
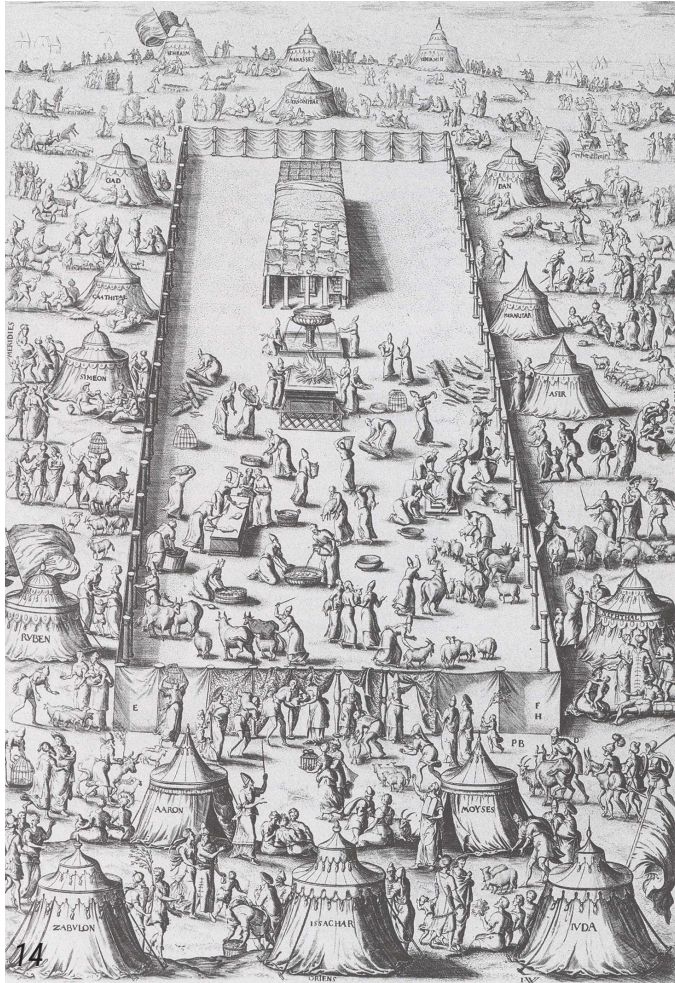
²⁵ Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux Memoire" from *Representations 26* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989), p. 8.

²⁶ Ibid.

Fig. 14 *The Twelve Tribes Camped Around the Tabernacle* (Retrieved from: Meek, Harold Alan. *The Synagogue* (London: Phaidon, 2005).)

Fig. 15 *The Tabernacle and Court in the Wilderness* (Retrieved from: <http://dixieyid.blogspot.com/2009/03/kol-brisk-on-parshas-vayakhel-pikudei.html>)

Fig. 16 *Tabernacle Cloud and Pillar of Fire* (Retrieved from: <https://www.learnreligions.com/cloud-and-pillar-of-fire-700107>)



Tabernacle."²⁷ In many ways, the *Tabernacle* is the spatial counterpoint to historic and biblical *Sukkot*. The *Sukkah* is, "for [its] durations... a space to be dwelled in by common people every day and night" while the *Tabernacle*, in stark contrast, "is set-off and sacred, a space controlled and restricted, accessible, at its innermost recesses, to the High Priest alone, only one day per year."²⁸

Breaking down these relationships to their embedded social hierarchies, "God's presence dwells in the *Holy of Holies*, and to be in the presence of [God] is not for the commoner."²⁹ While the *Sukkah* and the *Tabernacle* are conceptually positioned on distant ends of the spatial spectrum, in the wilderness of the Sinai, they were situated directly beside one another, both operating as shelters of a divine protective presence on the temporal, earthly plain.

Following the exile of the Jews from Israel by the Romans around 136 CE, the decentralized *Rabbinic* diaspora was forced to actively reconsider their customs and rituals so that they might survive in foreign dominions. In order to maintain their cultural identity, longstanding cultural ceremonies had to be reframed to endure in far-flung environments. Rituals like *Sukkot*, which were almost entirely dependent on local seasonal cycles, economic forces, and material languages, were formally structured in the burgeoning written-tradition. By inscribing flexibility into the practice

²⁷ Kraemer, David Charles, p. 92.

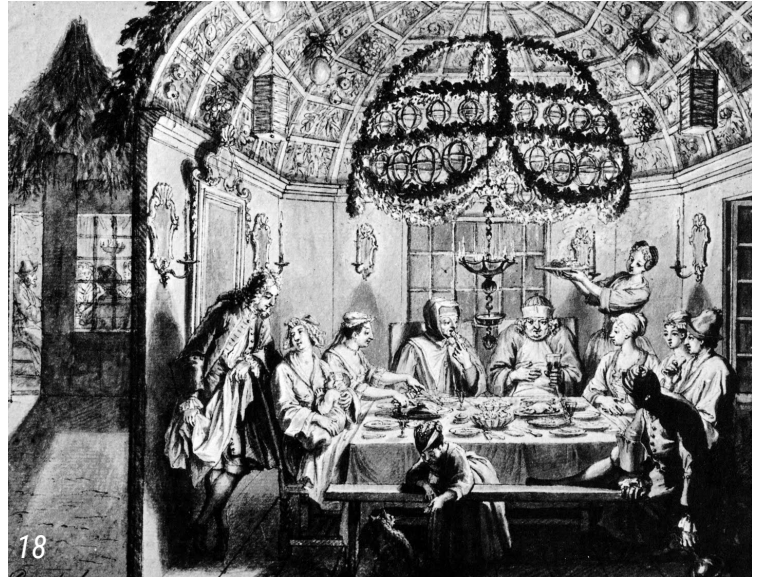
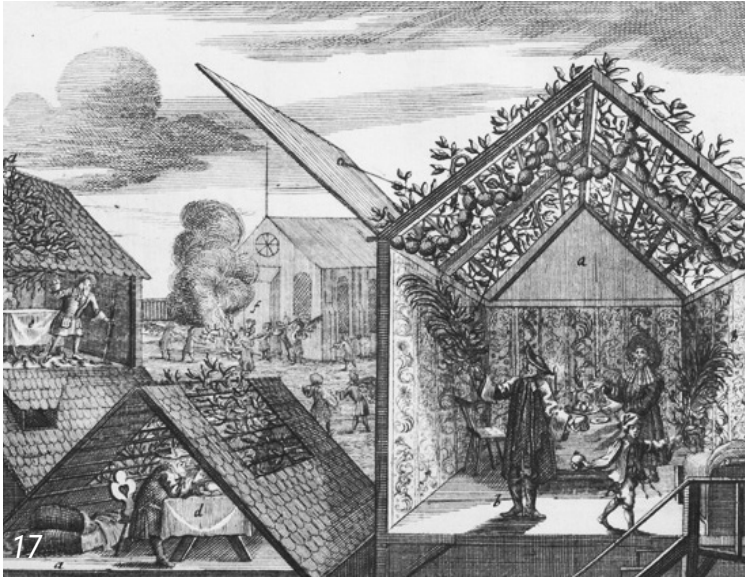
²⁸ Ibid, p.91.

²⁹ Ibid.

Fig. 17 *Sukkah Engraving by Paul Christian Kirchner, c. 1717* (Retrieved from: <https://thejewishnews.com/2016/10/14/look-back-history-gives-clues-todays-modern-sukkah/>)

Fig. 18 *Sukkah Engraving by Bernard Picart, c. 1724* (Retrieved from: <https://thejewishnews.com/2016/10/14/look-back-history-gives-clues-todays-modern-sukkah/>)

Fig. 19 *Medieval Jewish Sukkah* (Retrieved from: <https://www.medievalists.net/2014/03/dietary-laws-medieval-christian-jewish-polemics-survey/medieval-jewish-sukkah/>)



through idiosyncratic provisions and exceptions, a deeper sense of resilience was fostered, allowing Jews to practice their rituals and ceremonies in distant lands completely unlike the rugged deserts of their former kingdom.

Whether practiced by the exiled Israelites in neighboring regions or by their descendants in Renaissance Europe over a millennium later, *Sukkot* has remained a resilient symbol of domestic Jewish space. In her book entitled “Framing Sukkot,” Gabrielle Anne Berlinger posits that while the holiday is meant to recall “a period of longing and life without permanent shelter,” the observation of the festival itself “marks a journey toward home and homeland... and asserts a reconceptualized notion of ‘community’ in the face of prevailing uncertainty.”³⁰ *Sukkot* strikes a paradoxical balance between the ephemeral qualities of ritual architecture and a yearning for the permanence of place inscribed into its narratives.³¹ This duality speaks to the basic principles of diasporic identity. Without a central locus or physical place to consolidate and gather around, diasporic peoples must occupy the space of the moment. The moment of prayer, of procession, of ritual; moments that foster feelings of self-awareness for both the collective and the individual.

In his extensive treatise on ritual, Walter Berkert contends that societies seek self-awareness and unity through common actions maintained and confirmed at regular intervals.³² These ceremonial customs “are a means by which the sentiments in question are given collective expression on [an] appropriate occasion.”³³ Applying

³⁰ Berlinger, Gabrielle Anne. *Framing Sukkot* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2017), p. 4.

³¹ *Ibid*, p.6.

³² Berkert, Walter. *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), p. 24.

³³ *Ibid*, p.6.

Fig. 20 *Sukkot in Kfar Etzion* (Retrieved from: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sukkah>)

Fig. 21 *Urban Sukkot in Bnei Brak* (Retrieved from: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sukkah>)



this position to rituals based in a collective mythology or memory, Berkert suggests that while their origins might be different, the regular performance of rituals has the potential to confirm the reality of the myth. By embedding the memory of one within the practice of the other, rituals and myth become “a strong force in forming a cultural tradition.”³⁴

The construction and occupation of Sukkot today maintains a careful respect for the rigorously defined regulation defined in Rabbinic law; however, it has survived and continued to function as a meaningful tradition as a result of the flexibility built into the practice. This reinvention and extension of the ritual emerged in response to a devastating paradigm shift in which the Israelites were forced back out into the wilderness, to yearn for their homeland, to actively remember the shared traumas that shaped their collective identity. Fundamentally, the spirit of Sukkot encourages its practitioners to form communal bonds in the present through memories and aspirations. The sacred space of the Sukkah sets the stage for “divergent places [to] meet: the local and Jerusalem, the real and the mythical, the text and the territory, home and diaspora.”³⁵

³⁴ Berkert, Walter, p. 34.

³⁵ Berlinger, Gabrielle Anne, p.6.

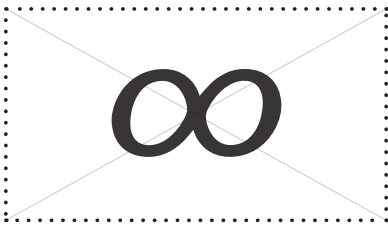
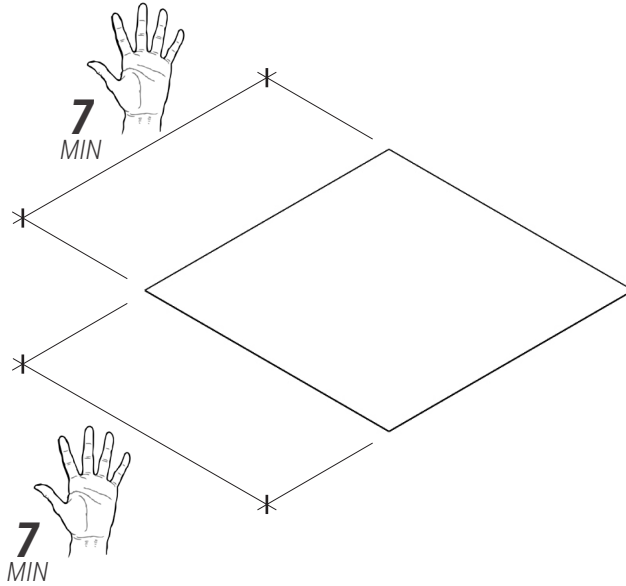
Fig. 22 *Sukkot in Jerusalem* (Retrieved from: <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/letters/letters-to-the-editor-alienation-from-the-sources-1.5454641>)

Fig. 23 *Sukkah* (Retrieved from: <https://safeguardingtheeternal.wordpress.com/2014/10/23/parasha-vayelech-a-beginning-at-the-end/>)



GROUND

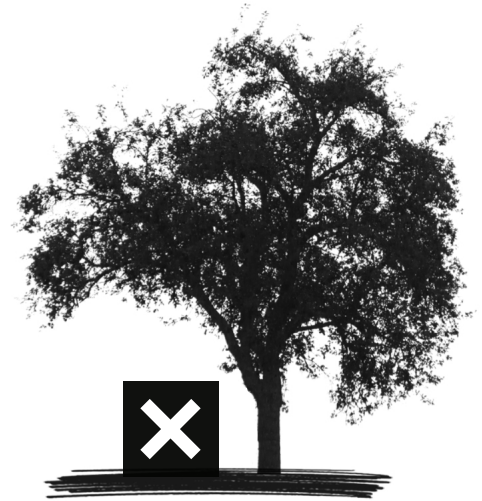
The Sukkah must enclose a minimum area equal to 7x7 square tefachim. Defined as a handsbreadth in length, one tefachim is equivalent to approximately three and a half inches.



There is no maximum area.



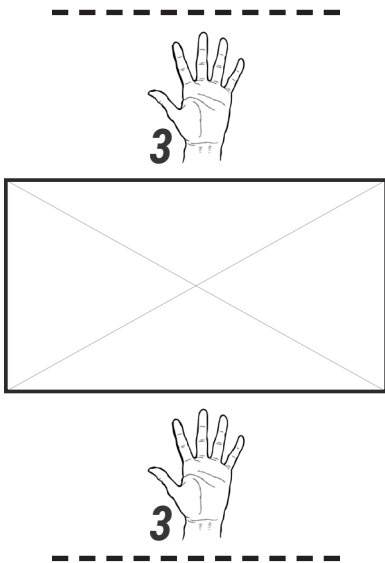
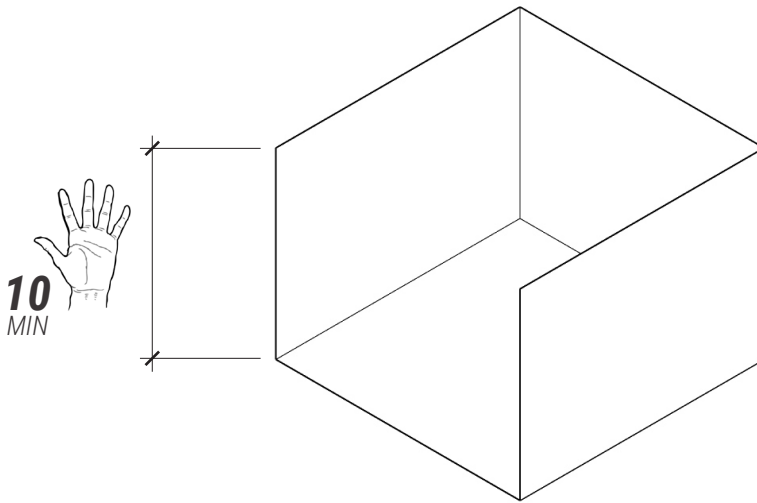
...except in the State of Washington where any structure occupying an area greater than 200 square feet is generally not considered temporary and would in turn require a building permit.



The Sukkah cannot reside under any overhanging surface, including any part of a tree. It must have an unobstructed connection to the sky to be considered a kosher structure.

ENCLOSURE

The Sukkah must have three walls at least ten tefachim tall, but no taller than twenty cubits (between 3'-6" and 30'-0").



The base of the walls must be within three tefachim (11.5") of the ground. The top of the walls must be within three tefachim (11.5") of the roof. They need not touch either directly.

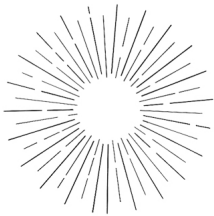
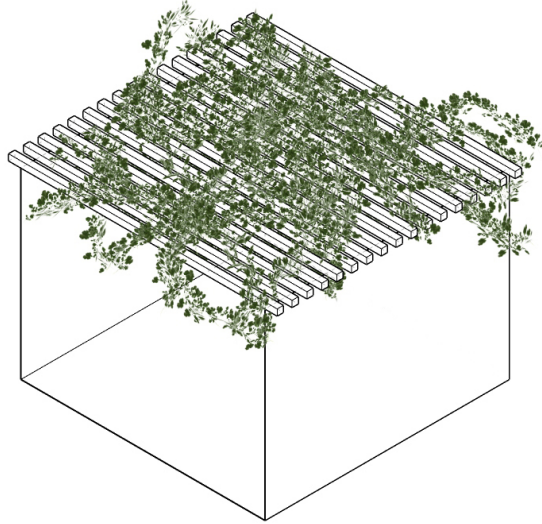
The Sukkah's walls must remain unshaken by a continuous gust of wind.

The walls can be made of any materials, so long as they are resilient enough to withstand the elements. The body of a whale may be used to make a Sukkah's walls.

CANOPY

The Sukkah's roof must be made of s'chach, any non-edible organic material that was grown and removed from the ground.

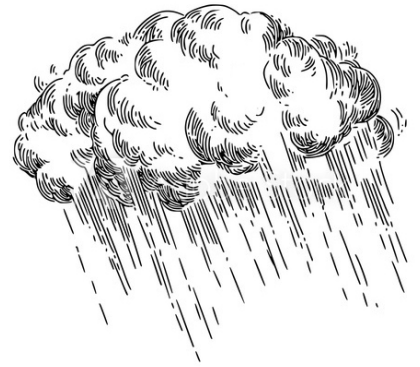
The structure must draw the eye up to its roof and to the unobstructed sky above.



When the late summer sun is shining, the s'chach must provide protective shade for those inside.



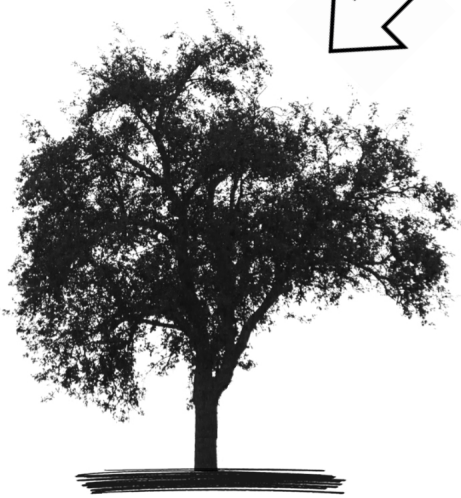
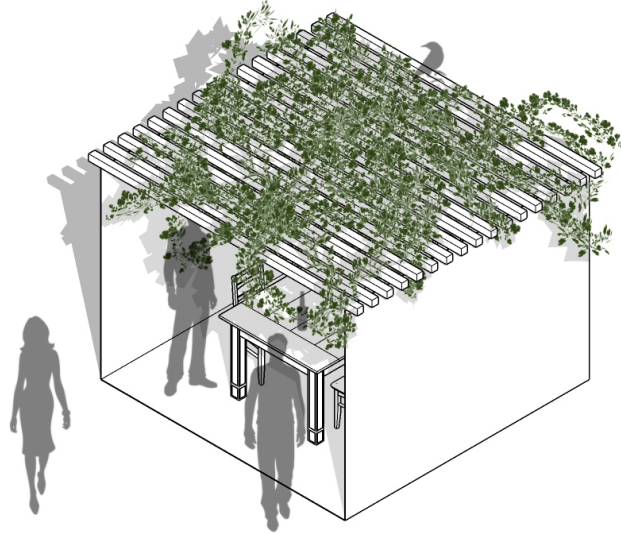
At night, one must be able to see the stars from within the Sukkah, through the roof.



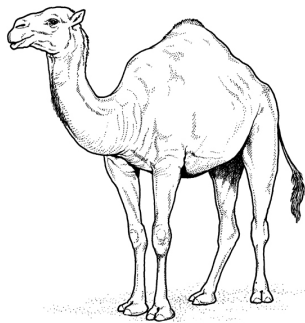
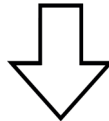
The roof structure must be porous enough to allow rain to penetrate into the Sukkah.

IDIOSYNCRASIES

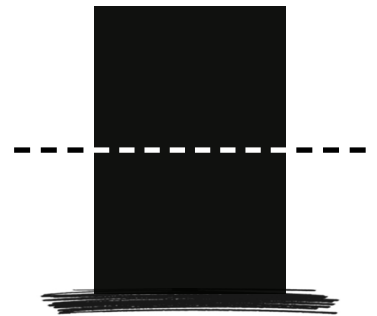
The Sukkah is as an ancient archetype in the Jewish tradition, recalling the exodus through the desert and festival of the harvest. It is a place to eat, sleep, study, think, feel, and be. The Sukkah embodies many special provisions and exceptions.



The Sukkah may be built in a tree, like a tree house.



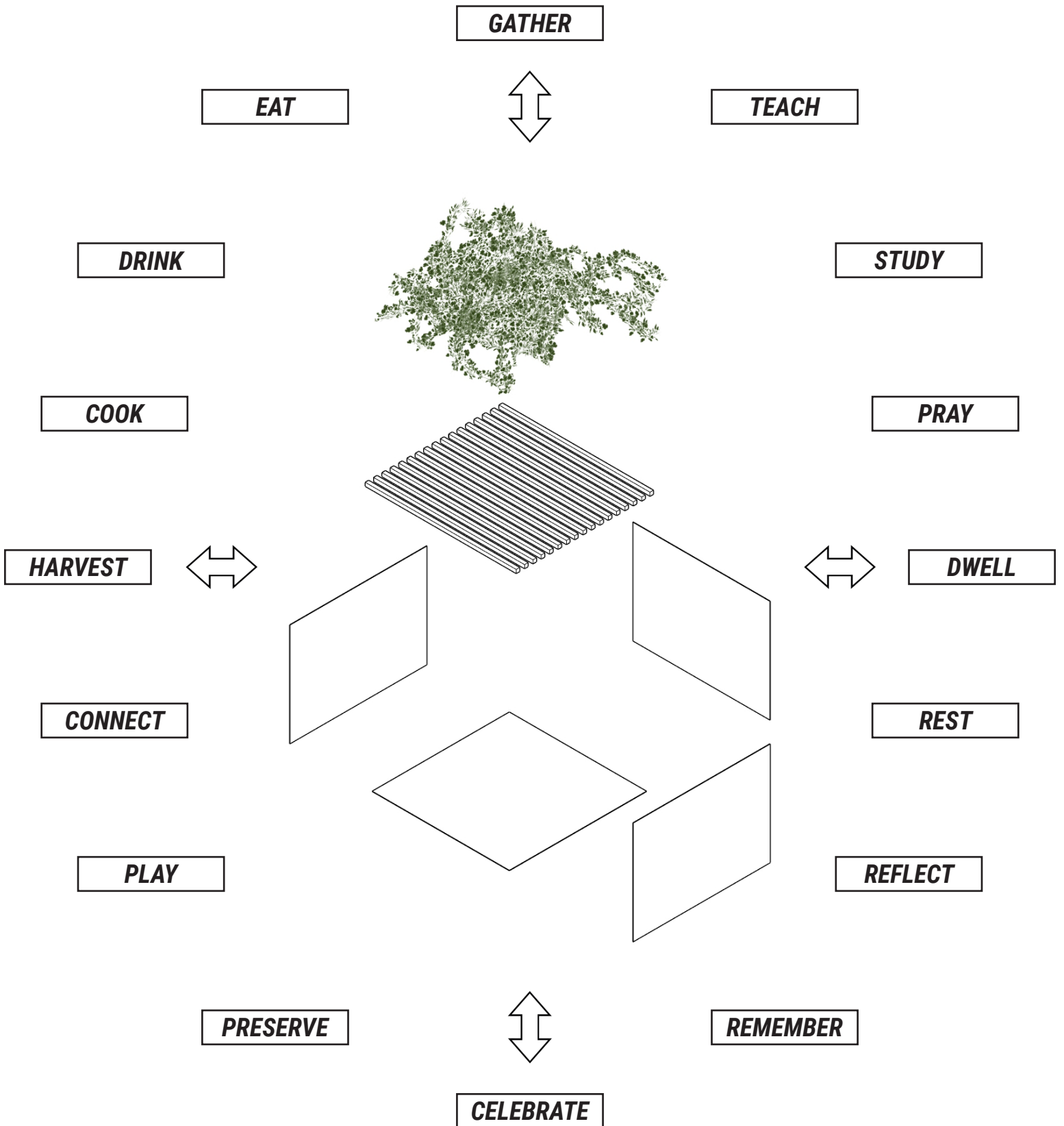
A Sukkah may be built atop a mobile carriage like a wagon or a camel.



A Sukkah may be built atop another Sukkah so long as the one above is covered by a s'chach roof and its floor is physically supported by the one below.

RECONFIGURATION

While they represent radically temporal architecture, this thesis seeks to design Sukkot that must also provide one or more complimentary uses that reinforce its primary cultural charge.



05 • PRECEDENTS

Contemporary *Sukkot* shaped by practicing Jews to celebrate the harvest are, like their ancestral counterparts, built using readily available components and labor. They are not generally conceived or fabricated by architects or craftspeople. They are inherently simple spaces made with modest, workable materials. While the nomadic qualities of this approach are certainly appropriate, *Sukkot* today, like many religious artifacts, have been commodified and made universal as part of a larger economy. The unintentional consequence of standardizing off-the-shelf *Sukkot* is that practitioners are much less likely to approach the holiday in the same ways that their ancestors did. The labor required to collect local materials and participate in shaping them into shelters is an integral part of the diasporic ritual. For ceremonial traditions to maintain cultural significance in the face of apathy, their associated rituals must be challenged and reinterpreted so that they can adapt and endure.

In 2010, an architectural design competition titled “*Sukkah City*” was planned and hosted in New York City’s Union Square Park to celebrate the holiday.³⁶ A committee of architects and critics selected twelve winners from a field of over six hundred entries.³⁷ With the design prompt composed to follow the fundamental rules found in scripture, the competition and ultimate installation aimed to re-imagine the ritual hut through a more critical design lens.

In an effort to better understand the radical potential of *Sukkot* to challenge existing paradigms, I took cues from the original competition prompt and carefully examined a series of *Sukkot* designed and built by a variety of artists and architects. From Alan Wexler’s reconfigurable *Gardening Sukkah* to Ronald Rael and Virginia San Fratello’s *Sukkah of the Signs*, these contemporary examples demonstrate how and why the ancient typology should actively challenge the role of ritual in daily life.

³⁶ Sukkah City. Retrieved from: <http://www.sukkahcity.com/>

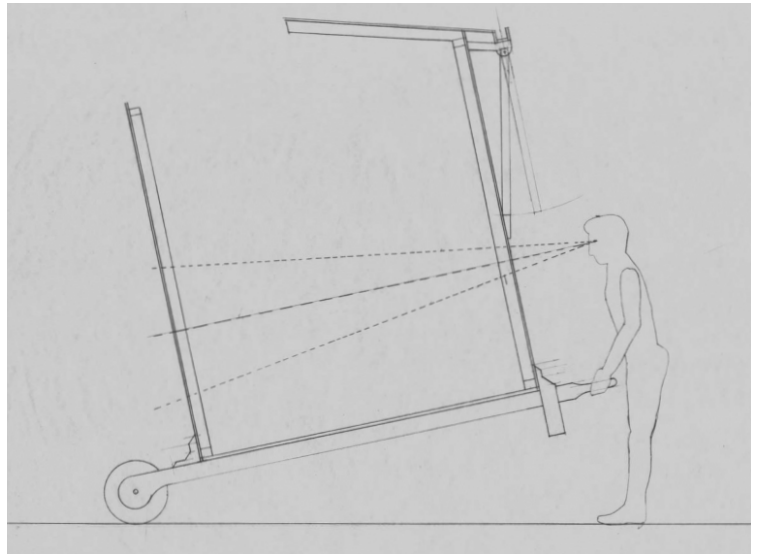
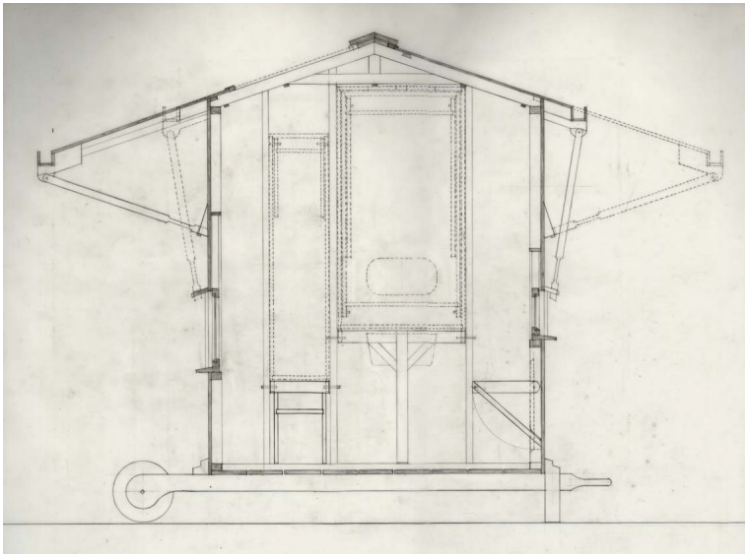
³⁷ Ibid.

Fig. 29 *Sukkah City as it Could Be* (Retrieved from: <http://www.bldgblog.com/2013/09/sukkah-city/>)



GARDENING SUKKAH • Commissioned by the Aldrich Museum of Art in Columbus, Ohio, Allan Wexler's *Gardening Sukkah* was designed and built as a structure with multiple identities. For fifty-one weeks of the year, the piece functions as a simple garden shed, storing all of the implements required to perform the harvest. For the holiday, the structure's gabled roof slides apart, exposing the rafters above the built-in dining space within to the sky above. In essence, framing the meal at the table with the instruments of the harvest. The act of transforming the *Sukkah* from a symbolic place of gathering into a structure that reinforces that celebration offers a yearly ritual that enriches the ancestral tradition.

Fig. 30-33 *Gardening Sukkah Photographs & Drawings* (Retrieved from: <http://www.allanwexlerstudio.com/projects/gardening-sukkah>)



SUKKAH OF THE SIGNS • One of twelve winning submissions for the 2010 *Sukkah City* competition in New York City, Ronald Rael and Virginia San Fratello's *Sukkah of The Signs* is clad entirely in signs collected from people experiencing homelessness throughout the United States. Recalling the biblical story in which the Israelites wandered the Sinai Wilderness for forty years in search of the land of milk and honey, the wood-framed structure calls attention to the contemporary state of homelessness. Its final design varied from the original as the New York Building Department only allowed for a 10'-0" tall structure (with the initial design at 18'-0" tall). To maintain the original intent of framing the sky, the design was turned on its side.

Fig. 34 *Sukkah of the Signs Competition Proposal* (Retrieved from: <https://www.rael-sanfratello.com/?p=1011>)

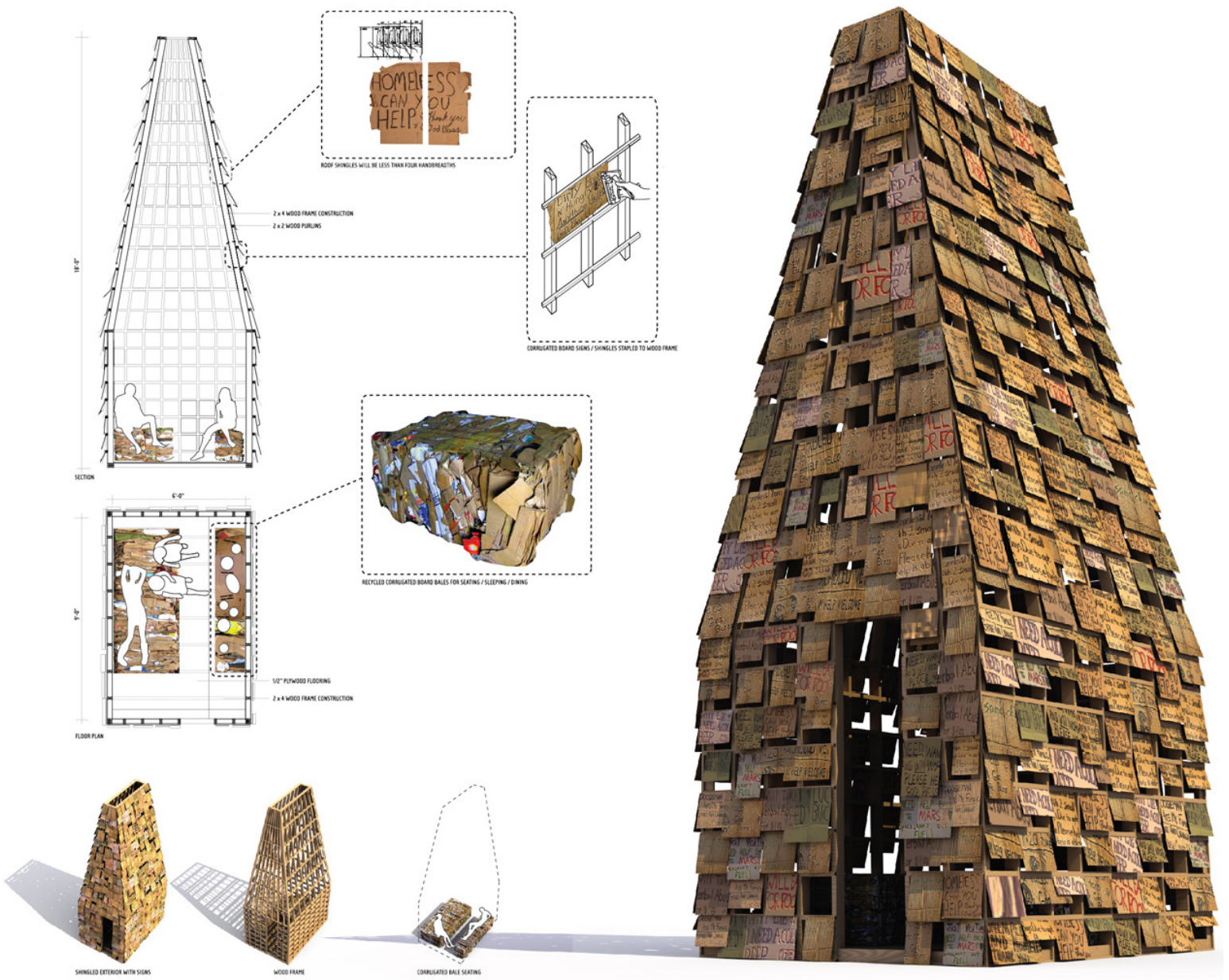


Fig. 5

WESSUKKAH • Designed and fabricated on Wesleyan University's campus in Middletown, Connecticut, *WesSukkah* was conceived as a contemporary take on the medieval rabbinic structure. Working with the university's diverse Jewish community, students in the Elijah Hume-led research-design-build studio developed a scheme that actively connects to the broader landscape through its permeable materiality. In addition to its primary program as an outdoor gathering space during the holiday, the pavilion was positioned to strike a balance between serving members of the Jewish community while encouraging visitors unfamiliar with the tradition to investigate, and hopefully participate in, the activities within.

Fig. 35-37 *WesSukkah Photographs* (Retrieved from: <https://newsletter.blogs.wesleyan.edu/2014/10/07/wessukkah2014/>)



06 • SITE

Early on in the process, while still narrowing down the project's scope, a studio-mate introduced me to the coordinators at Camp Solomon Schechter who were incidentally interested in developing a family *Sukkot* program for their extended community. After a series of initial conversations and meetings in which I presented my research, they invited me to visit the campgrounds in Tumwater, Washington.

Serving the Jewish community in the Pacific Northwest for over sixty-five years, Camp Solomon Schechter was founded by Rabbi Joshua Stampfer as “a fully immersive, welcoming, and spiritual Jewish environment... [emphasizing] integrity, *derech eretz* (respect), and *tikkun olam* (repairing the world).”³⁸ While the camp was based out of various locations for the first fifteen years of its operation, in 1968, they found a site in “Tumwater, a suburb of the state capital Olympia... located on the shores of a beautiful round lake.”³⁹ The site was ideal for their nonprofit camp program, offering “extensive grounds filled with magnificent evergreen trees, a jewel of a lake, and most importantly, a place where they could build a separate world.”⁴⁰

Over fifty years later, Camp Schechter still hosts its annual Jewish summer camp program on the stunning 180-acres they purchased in the late 1960s. Today, the site has been developed to include a well-equipped lake-front, recreational trails, a diverse system of ecological sites, and a variety of amenity spaces all bordered by a long stretch of the Deschutes River to the east. The camp itself is filled with beautiful, nostalgic moments and its facilities are well-positioned to facilitate programs that can continue into the rest of the year. For the purposes of this thesis, the camp and its grounds were engaged as the site for a potential family *Sukkot* program to take place in the fall after their summer programs conclude.

³⁸ Camp Solomon Schechter: Who We Are, Our Philosophy. Retrieved from: <https://www.campschechter.org/who-we-are/>

³⁹ Smith, David Michael. *Camp Solomon Schechter, The First 50 Years: Where Judaism and Joy are One* (Portland, OR: Personal Saga, 2005), p.75.

⁴⁰ Smith, David Michael, p.76.

Figs. 38-46 *Summer at Camp Solomon Schechter* (Digital Photographs, 2019)

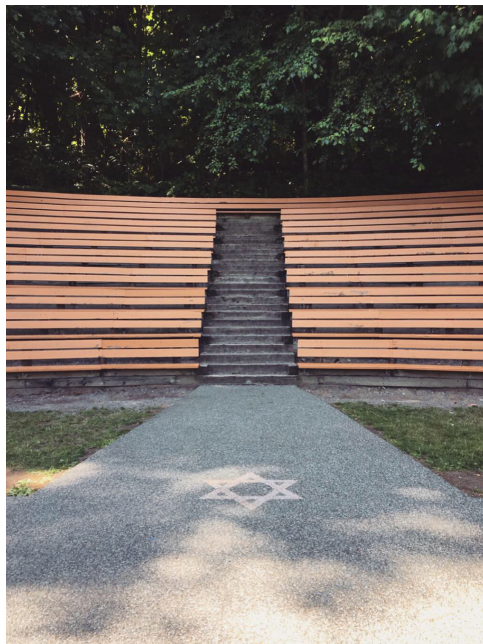
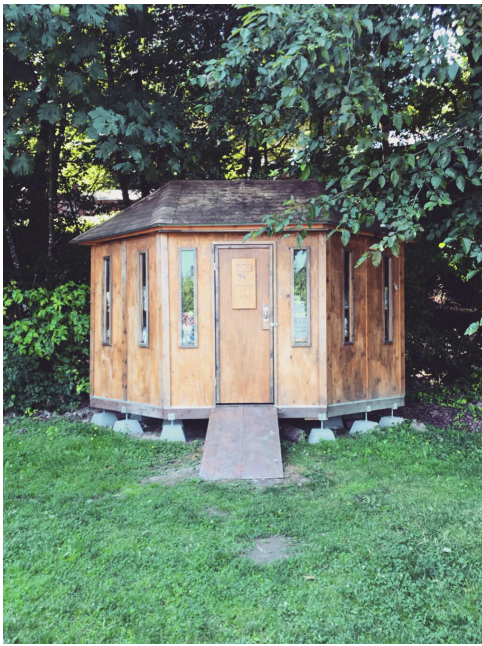




Fig. 47 *Camp Solomon Schechter: Site Map (Digital Media Map, 2019)*



- 1 PRIMARY ACCESS ROAD
- 2 ENTRY GATE + PARKING LOT
- 3 BIG LEAF MAPLE
- 4 BASKETBALL + TENNIS COURTS
- 5 OFFICES + INFIRMARY
- 6 CHADAR OCHEL [DINING HALL]
- 7 GARDEN + TEVA LEARNING CENTER
- 8 BEIT AM [HOTEL]
- 9 BOYS CABINS
- 10 AMPHITHEATER
- 11 BOAT HOUSE + ART SHED
- 12 LAKE STAMPFER
- 13 LAKE TRAIL
- 14 GIRL'S CABINS
- 15 YURT VILLAGE
- 16 CHALLENGE COURSE
- 17 FIRE PIT
- 18 ATHLETIC FIELDS
- 19 PLANT IDENTIFICATION TRAIL
- 20 BACK COUNTRY ACCESS ROAD
- 21 THE BOG
- 22 BOG TRAIL + MYSTERY TREES
- 23 ENCHANTED FOREST
- 24 CAMP SITE
- 25 RIVER OVERLOOK
- 26 CEDAR GROVE
- 27 DESCHUTES RIVER TRAIL
- 28 BEAVER POND

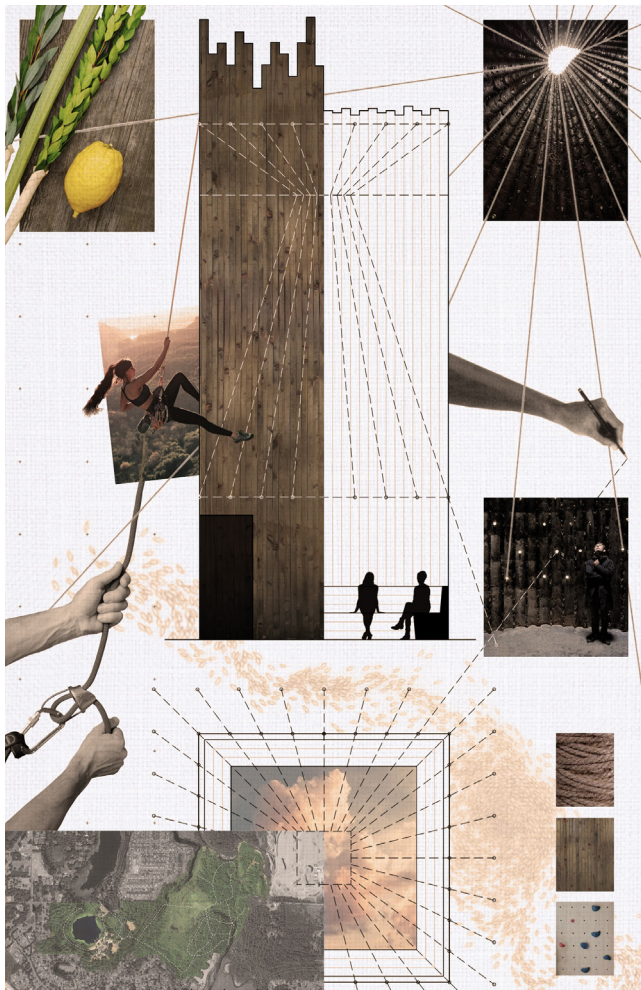


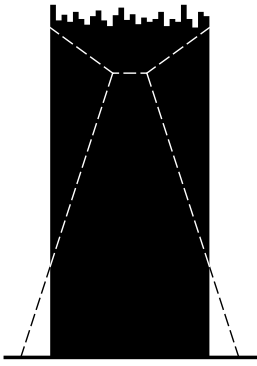
07 • ALLEGORY

After visiting the camp, the immediate goal for the project was to develop a scheme for a reconfigurable *Sukkah* that could be easily moved between sites throughout the camp. As we prepared to submit initial grant proposals to fund the design and construction of a schematic proposal, the camp's Board of Directors decided instead to move forward with a massive renovation effort they had been working towards for the past decade.

With time until the start of the autumn term running short, the original intention to pursue the project as a design/build thesis was put on hold and the trajectory shifted in favor of a more conceptual approach. Instead of rushing to build a structure during the short academic term, I decided to refocus my efforts on testing conceptual models on the camp's 180-acre site with the intention of using that exercise and the resultant investigations to potentially fund future built works for Camp Schechter and/or other Jewish communities in the region.

To that end, I developed a series of eight conceptual *Sukkot* on various sites throughout the camp, all meant to extend the rituals associated with the holiday as reconfigurable objects and spaces. These models employ collage as a methodological approach to express structures with distinct forms and programs that can be transformed into *kosher Sukkot* by the community during the harvest festival. Breaking down the site into a series of ceremonial territories, each model seeks to address various aspects of Jewish life within and beyond the boundaries of the camp in an effort to spatialize diasporic rituals and collective aspirations.

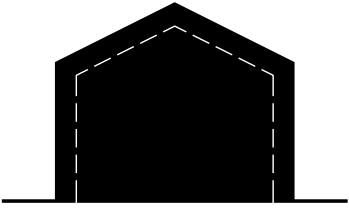




TOWER • An occupiable climbing structure designed to replace the existing climbing wall in the athletic fields. Responding to direct exposure to the elements during the summer months, the tower provides an enclosed gathering space with built-in seating and storage. During *Sukkot*, its organic hemp climbing ropes are repositioned by the community and fixed to the ground, forming a tapered canopy within the structure to refocus the relationship between the congregants and the sky above.

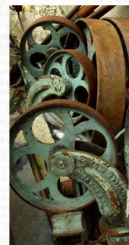
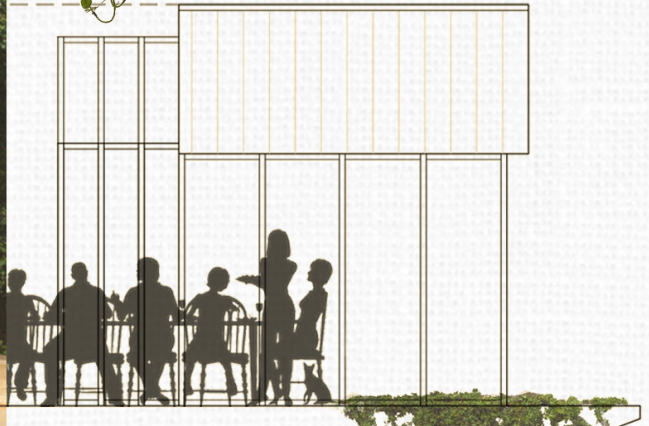
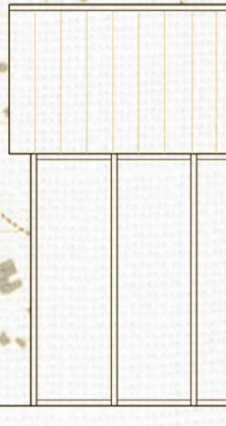
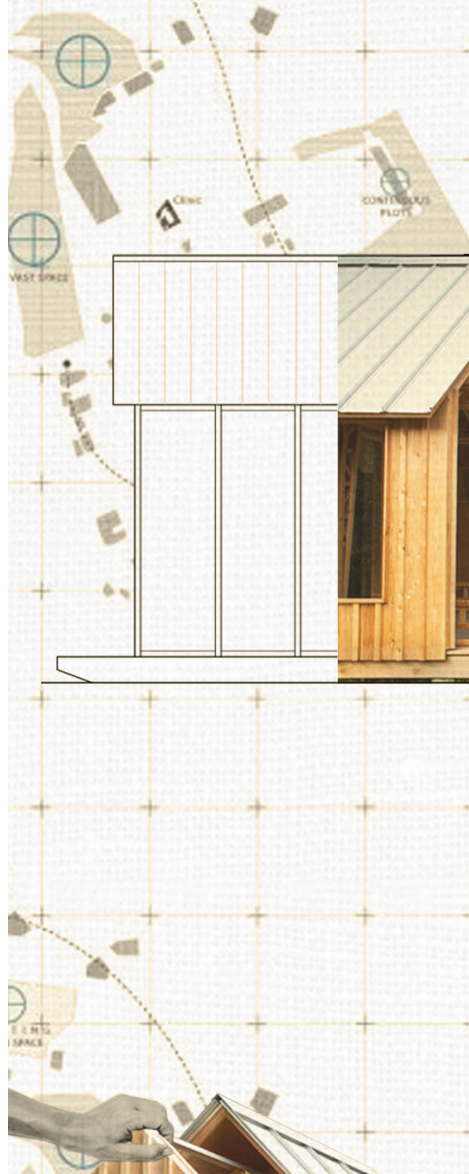
Fig. 49 *Tower* (Digital Media Collage, 2019)

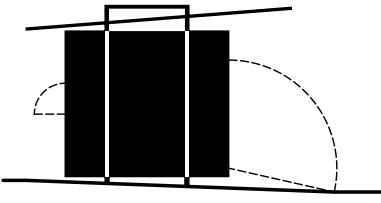




GREENHAUS • A layered garden structure to sit beside the camp's *Teva Learning Center*. Meant to facilitate the program's hands-on environmental education curriculum, the proposed edifice would provide a covered workspace for campers during the summer months. In preparation for the feast, the structure's outer shell slides out to reveal an open frame nested within that would provide an extended gathering space for congregants during the holiday.

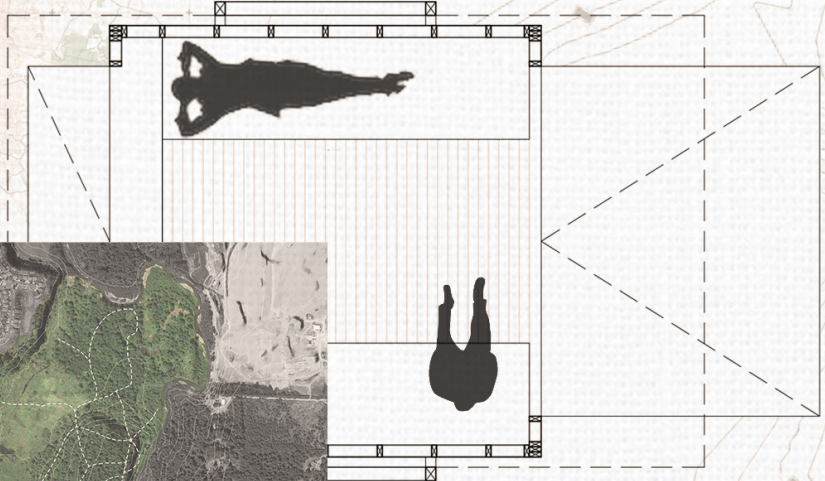
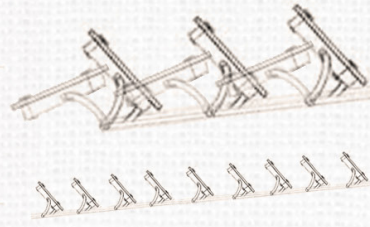
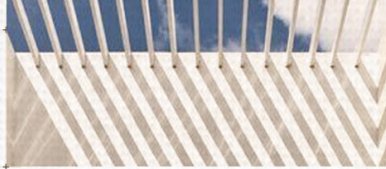
Fig. 50 *Greenhaus* (Digital Media Collage, 2019)

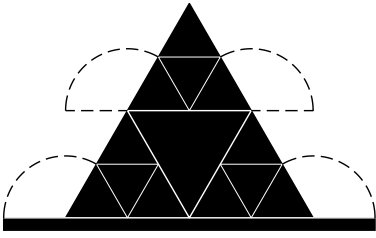




OUTPOST • Harkening back to the *Sukkah's* origin as a seasonal dwelling, the backcountry cabin(s) would be positioned near the *Beaver Pond* as a place for visiting instructors and/or artists-in-residence. Embedding dynamic components into the structure presents an opportunity to extend built-in surfaces and create meaningful connections to the outdoors. During the festival, louvered shingles in the suspended shed roof would rotate to create an open slatted canopy so that its occupants could comfortably sleep under the stars.

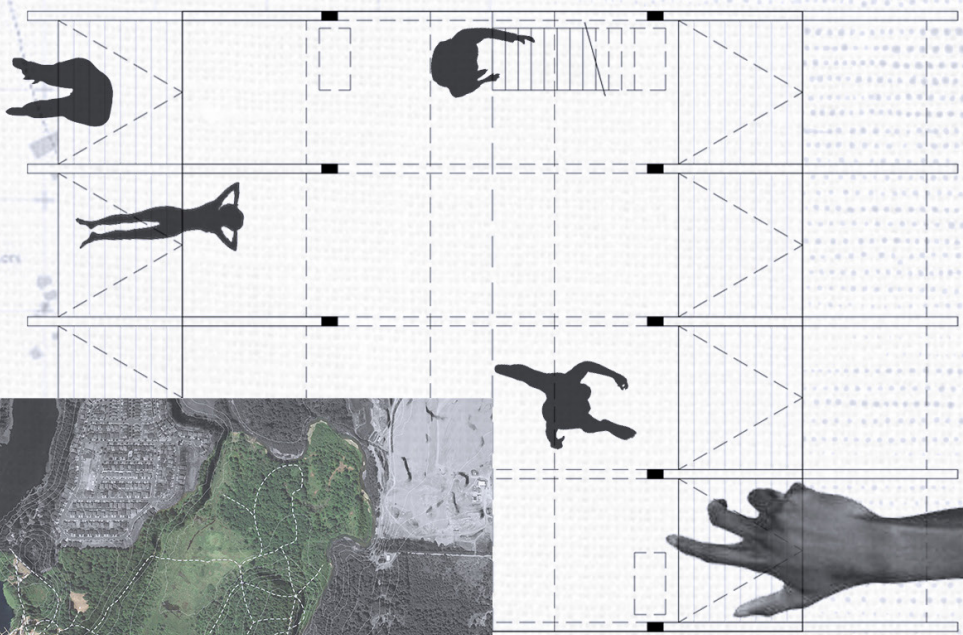
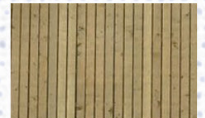
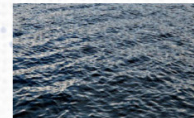
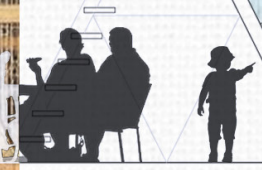
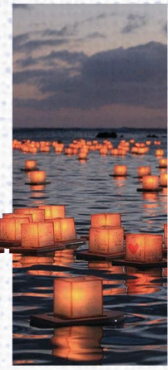
Fig. 51 *Outpost* (Digital Media Collage, 2019)

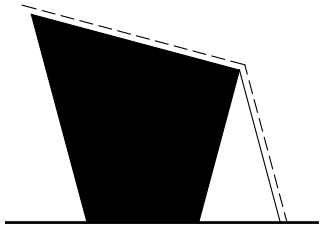




FLOATHAUS • A recreational diving platform to float in the middle of *Stampfer Lake*. The covered, multi-level A-frame features a variety of adjustable components that provide vertical circulation and elevated diving boards. Solar energy harnessed by strips along the sloped roof during the day would power lights installed within, allowing it to act as a beacon on the lake after the sun sets. During *Sukkot*, the structure would be pulled back to shore and tied to the pier as a floating gathering space.

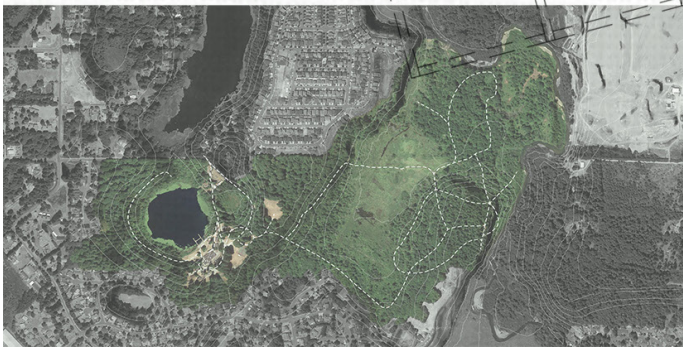
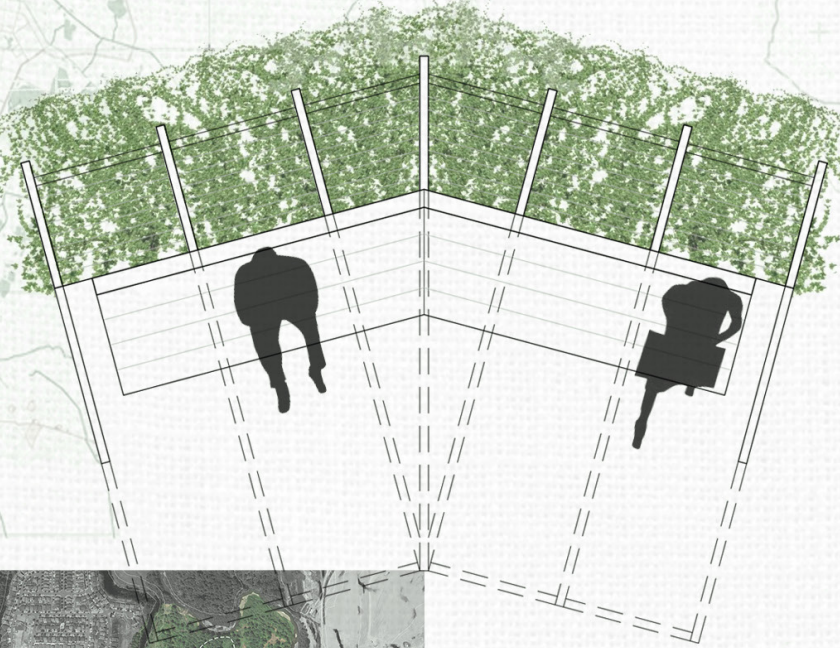
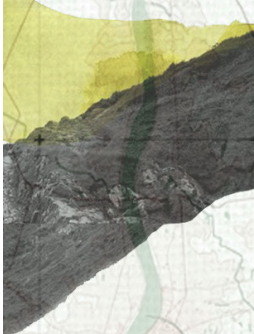
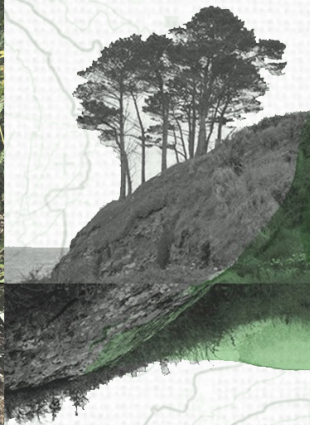
Fig. 52 *Floathaus* (Digital Media Collage, 2019)

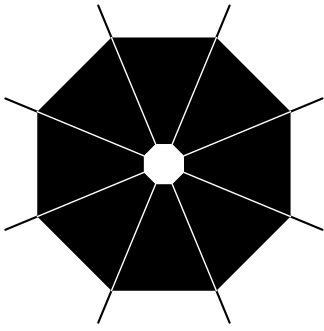




OVERLOOK • Taking advantage of a stunning cliff-side position overlooking the *Deschutes River*, the covered seating structure seeks to experiment with the notion of a self-building *Sukkah*. Meant to replace a pair of benches currently occupying the ledge near the overnight campsite, the covered gathering space would rely on deliberately planted perennials to grow up and around its frame during the summer months and shed their leaves in the winter. The concept seeks to question how natural elements can be employed to cyclically define *Sukkot*.

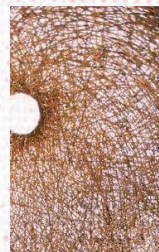
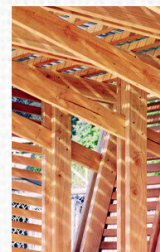
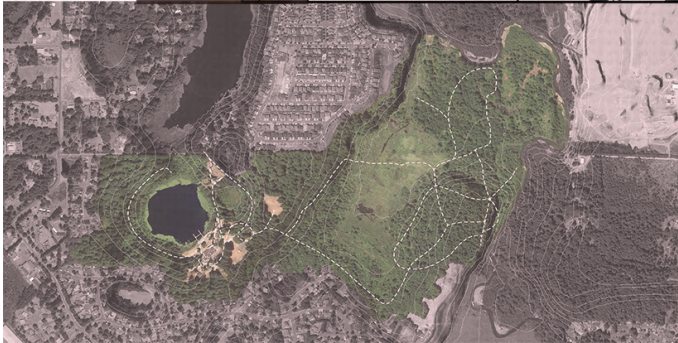
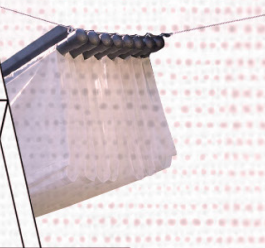
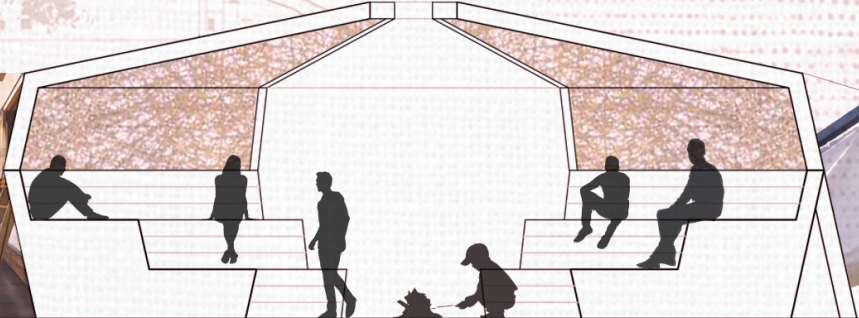
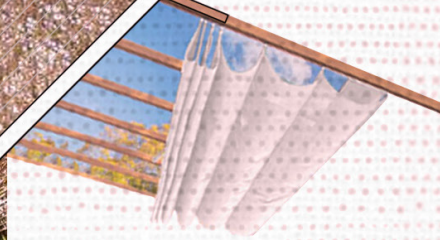
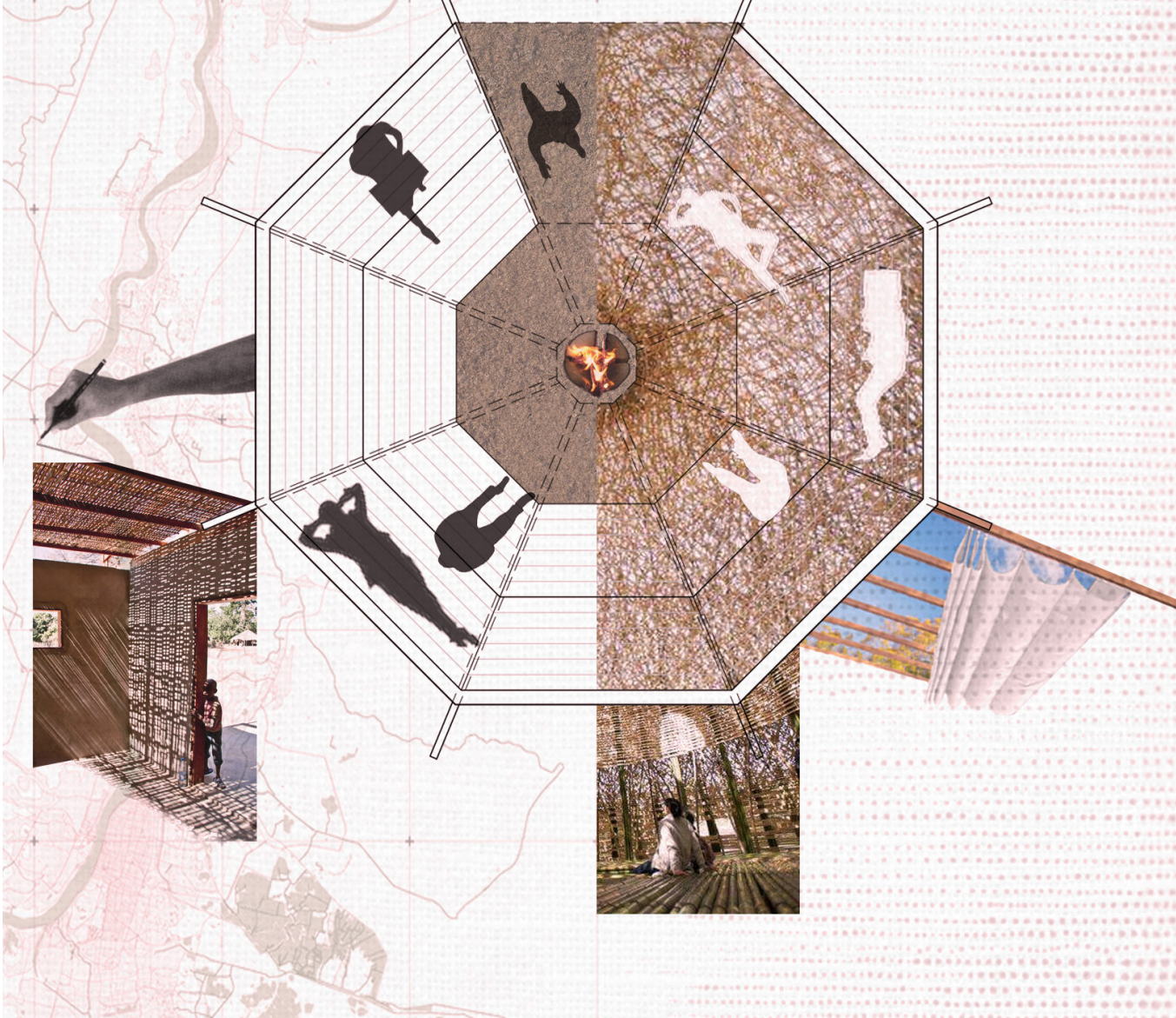
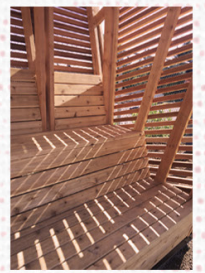
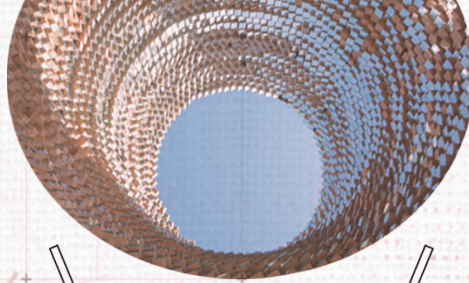
Fig. 53 *Overlook* (Digital Media Collage, 2019)





BUNKHAUS • Positioned atop the existing campsite deep in the backcountry, the multi-tiered structure provides a covered space with raised bunks around a central hearth for campers during the summer months. During the holiday, the built-in canvas overhead would be pulled back and slipped down to the walls to reveal an open, textured canopy, allowing visitors to gather and sleep as a caravan under the stars.

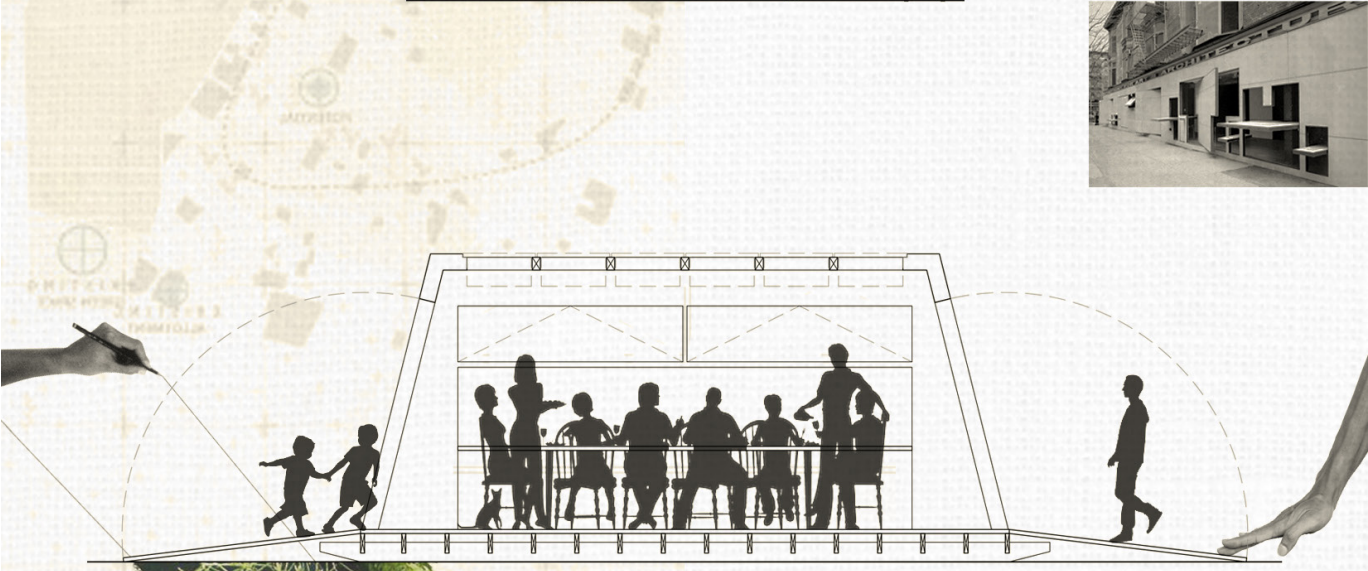
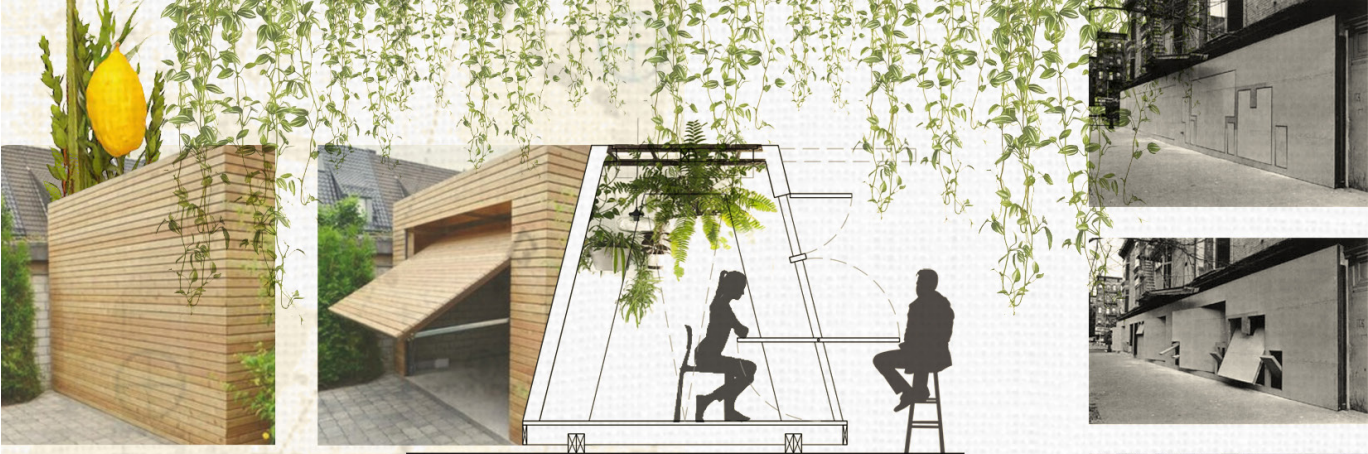
Fig. 54 *Bunkhaus* (Digital Media Collage, 2019)





BODEGA • The mobile commissary would provide a space for hands-on activities focused on Jewish dietary practices. It would also provide a place for campers to have snacks and drinks between larger group meals. Moveable parts throughout the structure create extended surfaces for circulation, dining, storage, prep, and ventilation. During the holiday, planter boxes along the walls would be repositioned to sit in open frames above to define the organic roof, providing additional space for outdoor cooking and dining.

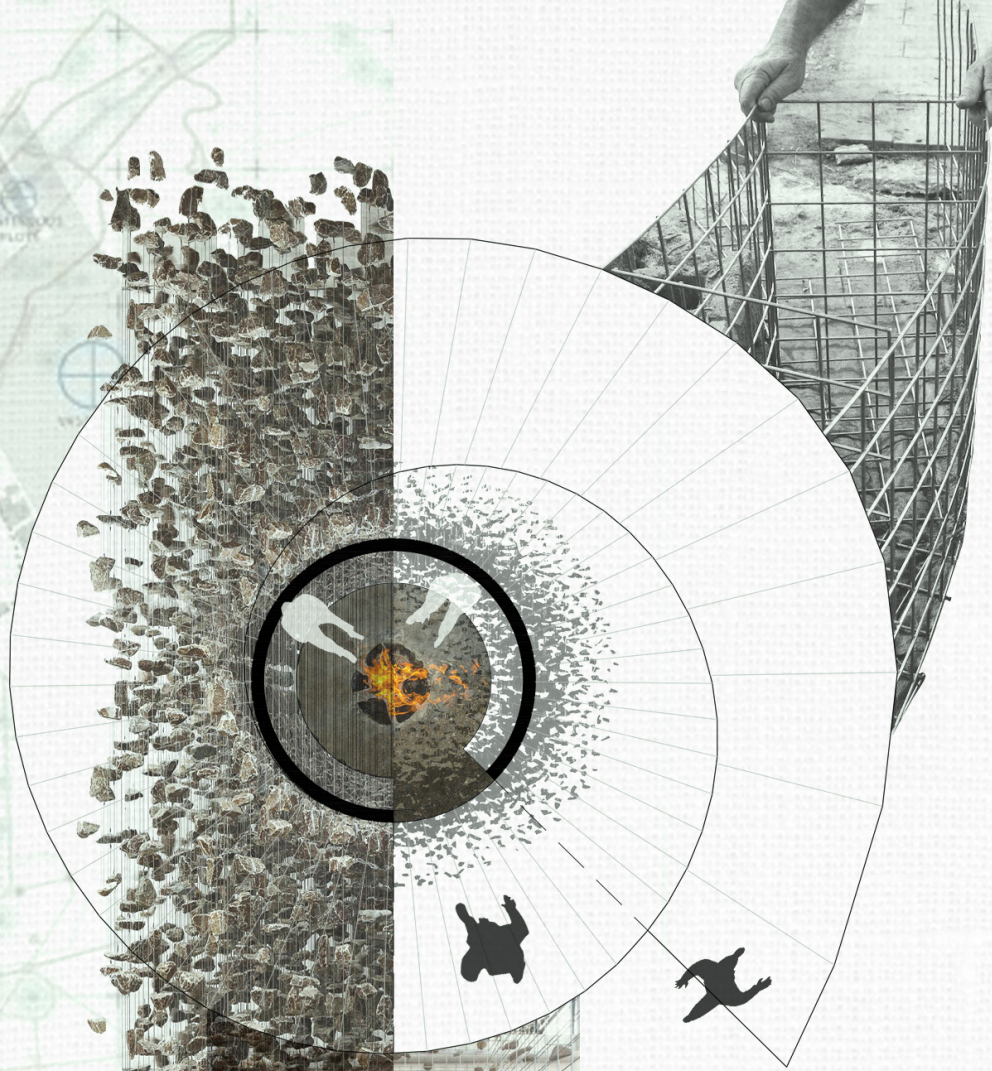
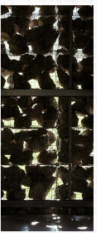
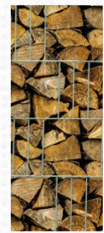
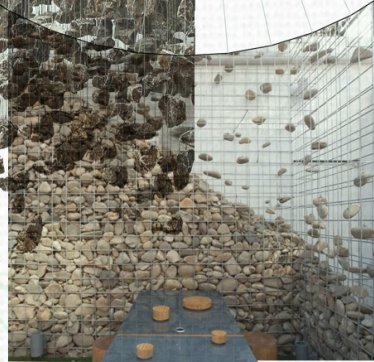
Fig. 55 *Bodega* (Digital Media Collage, 2019)





CAIRN • Situated in the middle of the backcountry *Bog*, this structure considers the issue of temporality and material form as a building that grows and evolves over time. In Jewish practice, rocks are placed at tombs and memorials to signify memory and presence. At first, the structure would be a simple hut that provides shade from the summer sun. Over time, the gabion frames would be filled with rocks from around the site by campers and staff to define an occupiable roof made of earthly materials. As the structure grows, it would bring into question the issue of temporality between a single body, a community, and the extended diaspora.

Fig. 56 *Cairn* (Digital Media Collage, 2019)



08 • INSTALLATION

During the holiday this past October, the eight allegorical *Sukkot* were presented at a mid-term review I hosted inside a *Sukkah* of my own making situated in Gould Hall. Full disclosure: this is not a *kosher Sukkah*. It isn't a *kosher Sukkah* for one simple reason, it was positioned indoors. This being the Pacific Northwest, a week of rain (a great or terrible omen, depending on which *Rabbi* you ask) forced a repositioning of the pavilion under the massive skylights in the atrium to protect the printed work and electrical equipment from the elements.

The eighty square foot structure was built with readily available Douglas fir 2x4 studs, cut to various lengths to support canvas clad walls and a porous bamboo roof. A modular frame was designed and fabricated with diagonal bracing to provide lateral stability, allowing me to frame and raise each wall by myself. Framing screws were methodically deployed as fasteners so that the structure could be easily taken apart after the festival and its parts repurposed in other ways throughout the project.

The simply framed *Sukkah* comfortably housed a group of six jurors and spread of lox and bagels for the presentation and the ensuing discussion. Beside satisfying a lingering desire to make building a part of my design process, the structure also provided an opportunity to occupy a simply detailed version of the hut, allowing us to compare the conceptual models to their more traditional, full-scale counterpart.

One of the big takeaways from that conversation was to move forward by thinking about the project less in terms of what I might get out of building *Sukkot* and more in terms of how their users might occupy, ritualize, and reconfigure them. By refocusing the intent of the work, the models, both built and conceptual, might foster a greater sense of community for the camp during the week of the festival and beyond.



W COLLEGE OF BUILT ENVIRONMENTS



Fig. 58-60 *This Is Not a Kosher Sukkah* (Douglas Fir, Canvas, Bamboo, 2019)





Fig. 61-63 *This Is Not a Kosher Sukkah* (Douglas Fir, Canvas, Bamboo, 2019)



09 • GREENHAUS

After discussing the eight concepts during the mid-term review, I decided to press forward with the *Greenhaus* as an experimental model. In order to develop the design of the building, I chose to approach it as a story; to think about its making, its detailing, its occupation, and its ritual transformation through the perspective of its occupants. This ritual-oriented methodology forced me to make technical and conceptual decisions based on how future narratives might unfold, how the users might react to qualities of light and texture, how their individual and collective experiences might be choreographed, and how the transition between forms might enrich their observation of the holiday itself.

For what was left of the term after *Sukkot*, I built a series of iterative physical models that grew in scale as the building and its details were conceived and developed. Using chipboard, basswood, and milled Douglas fir from the *Sukkah*, I built each model to explore specific forms, proportions, tectonic configurations, and spatial relationships. The evolution of these models provided the architectural basis for the written and graphic narrative that followed, framing a discussion of the design process and the resultant structure for the final presentation.

Fig. 64-68 *Greenhaus Massing Models* (Chipboard, 2019)

Fig. 69-70 *Greenhaus Framing Models* (Basswood, 2019)



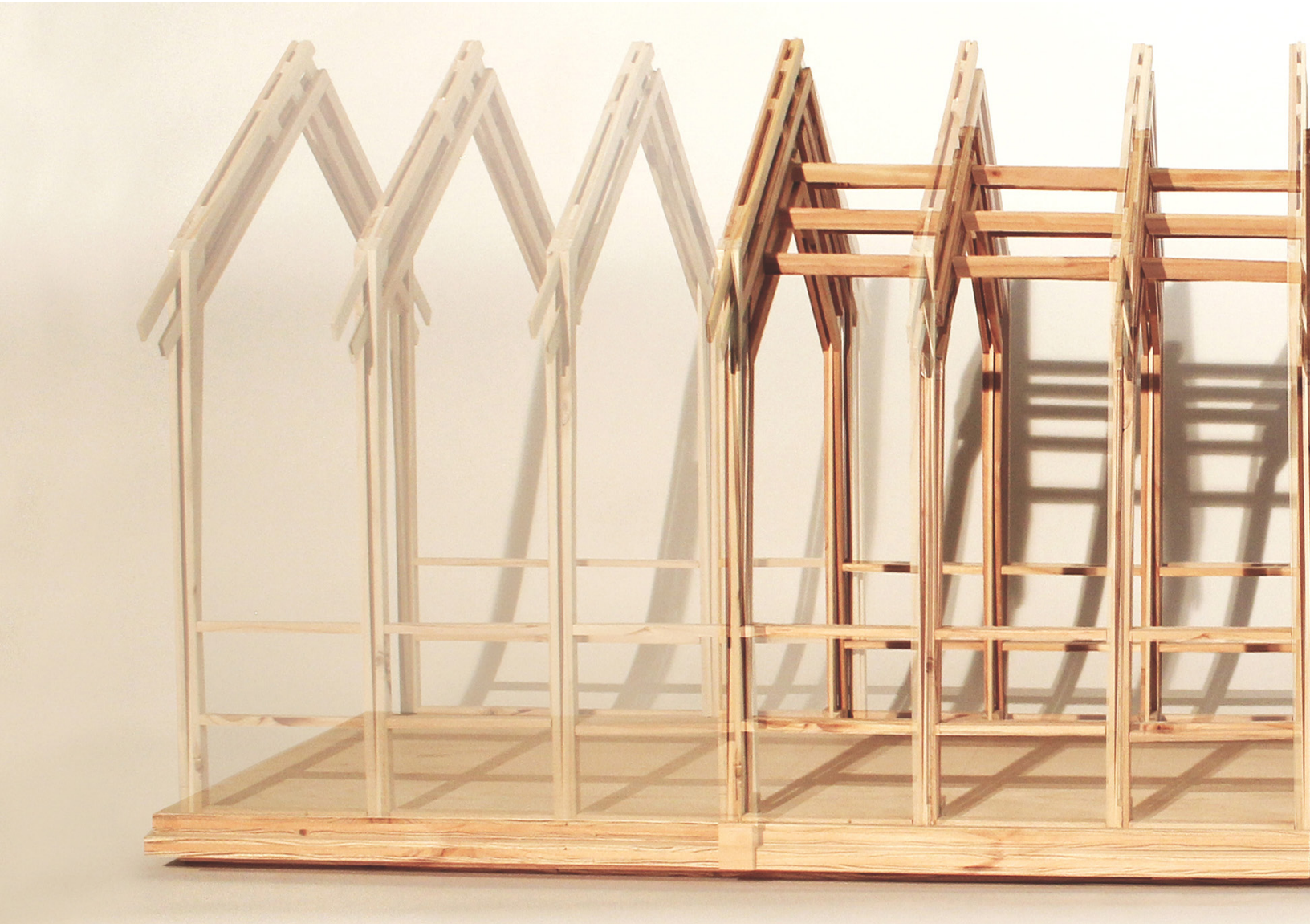


Fig. 71 *Greenhaus Framing Model* (Douglas Fir + Plywood, 2019)

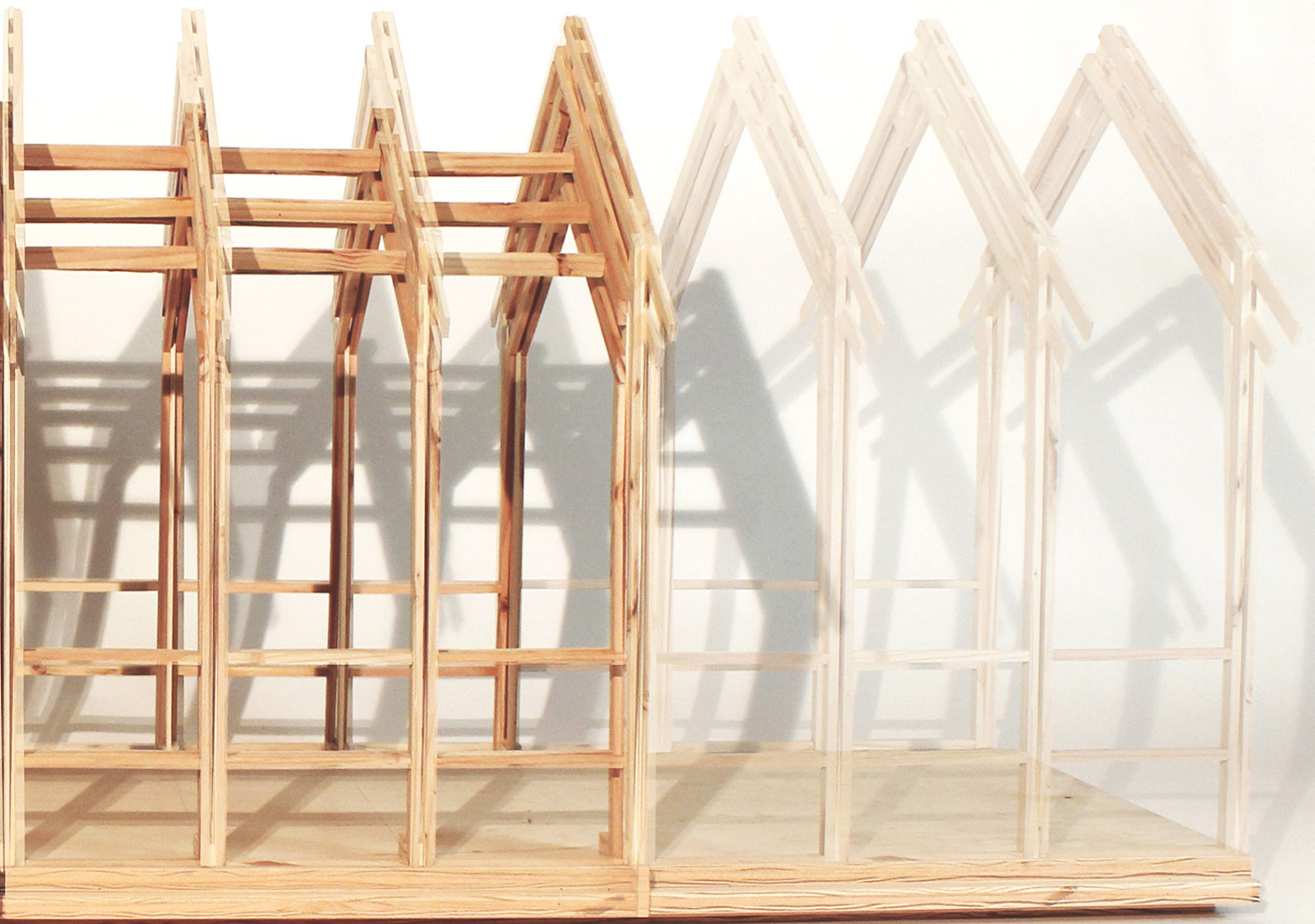




Fig. 72-74 *Greenhaus Framing Model* (Douglas Fir + Plywood, 2019)



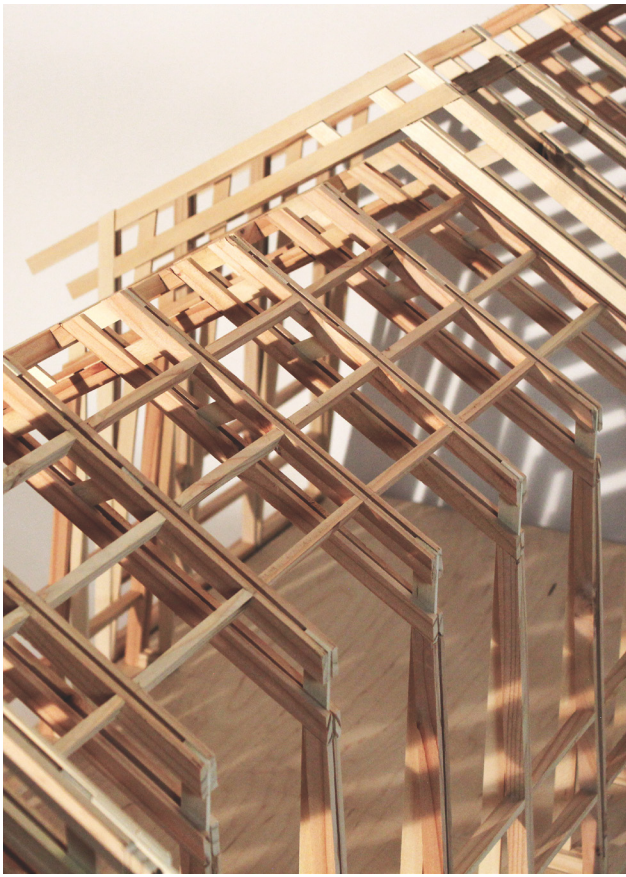


Fig. 75-77 *Greenhaus Framing Model* (Douglas Fir + Plywood, 2019)



10 • NARRATIVE

A steady line of traffic stretches down Trail's End Lane. Not a bad turnout this year. Feels like Shayna and I were just here picking the kids up from camp, but I suppose it has been a few months. They're buried in their phones in the backseat, mumbling barely discernible responses to our questions about tonight.

The coordinator directing cars waves us in as all of September comes rushing back to me. Avi and Rachel starting school, Shayna teaching another class of bright-eyed undergrads, and the contractor finally finishing the addition. A deep *shofar* blast from last week's *Yom Kippur* service cuts through my stroll down memory lane. Atonement and fasting and a full day of sitting and standing and sitting and standing in that stuffy old *synagogue*. A familiar hunger sets-in along with the thought of crisp apples and honey and warm bread from the *Rosh Hashana* table.

The cheery coordinator asks if we're excited to celebrate the first night of *Sukkot* at Camp Schechter. We reserved the Greenhaus this year with Shayna's sister's family, the Rosens, and our good friends the Altmans. The kids look up from their phones to shout hellos at him from the back. Must be one of the new counselors they were raving about. We pull into a spot by the main trail and the kids jump out to race past the Schechter Canoe hoisted above the entry gate. Shayna and I take our time catching up, making our way to the garden and the rest of our flock.

She starts *kvetching* about how Mendelbaum got the Floathaus again this year. The over-eager *schmuk* must have started lobbying for it the second we finished putting it back together last October. I look down towards the lake and there it is, the floating A-Frame slowly making its way to the pier. A small army of Mendelbaums pulling it in, ready to transform it into a *Sukkah*. I jokingly suggest we crash later, but *Hashem* knows the forty of them will already be packed in like sardines. Shayna laughs and suggests we hop over to the Tower again this year, but insists I don't try to climb it with Joe Altman after we drink all of the wine.

We both take a deep breath as we finish the climb up the hill towards the garden. It's quiet here. Tall trees filter in dappled light through the dense canopy overhead. In the middle of the clearing, Joe and Maya Altman sit on the deck extending out from the Greenhaus with Shayna's sister Angie and her husband Dan. The kids must all be inside with all the plants they tended over the summer.

We're fortunate to be the first group to welcome the holiday in the Greenhaus.

It's the eighth reconfigurable *Sukkah* they've built now. Seems like the program keeps growing every year. At first glance, the simple gabled structure just looks like another camp building, but there are subtle hints that give it away. It seems to fit in like the others until you notice its quirks. Strange details that tell a different story. The continuous seam down the middle. The second-row of rafters extending below the roofline. The long deck stretching past the full length of the building. Doesn't look like it's anchored to the ground either. The low band of shadows around its base makes it seem as though the whole thing is hovering just above the grassy clearing.

The barn door at the gable end is open. I can hear the kids gossiping about who didn't make JV this year as we step up to the low platform and make our way in, feeling the deep thud of our footsteps on the deck after each step. It's much brighter than expected inside. Diffuse natural light filters in through obscured windows and skylights; softly spread across the whitewashed wood surfaces.

The kids are gently handling long viney plants, moving them from shelves along the walls onto the two central islands. The built-in tabletops are almost fully covered with pots overflowing with greenery. While the moms help move the plants, Joe and Dan call me over to stow away the cleared shelves. I follow Joe, swinging the boards up against the walls, securing each one into position when flush.

When the last shelf is secured, Liz Altman, a recently enlisted Schechter counselor, positions us between the bays along the outer edge. She's been trained to guide us through the process of converting the building for the week of festivities. With everyone in place, she grabs hold of the benches locked in between the exposed framing. She unlatches the knobs at either edge and slides the bench smoothly away from the wall, setting it into a nook between the central islands. The building lets out a light creak as she directs all of us to follow suit.

The sounds of unlatching hardware and sliding wood boards fill the room. When the last bench is removed from its bay, the walls and roof shift just slightly. It feels like the building just breathed a sigh of relief. Liz unlocks the final set of joints along the central seam, catching me off guard as the walls slide a few inches in either direction.

We split into groups for the big move: two pulling the gable ends along the exterior and two pushing from inside. I step outside through the opposite barn door

and grab one of the handles built into the facade, bracing myself as Liz counts us off. We slowly pull the outer shell of the building apart, extending the seam in the middle to reveal a smaller frame nestled within. As the two halves glide out towards either end of the platform, I grab hold of a lower handle and hop down before we run out of deck below us, guiding the exterior shell to a gentle stop at the end of the built-in track.

We step back to admire our handiwork, thrilled to find what will shortly become our own kosher *Sukkah*. The bare cedar frame awaits its next treatment: a porous, organic *s'chach* roof meant to provide shade from the sun during the day and views of the stars at night.

The camp's director approaches from the main garden, greeting us with a lively "*Chag Sameach*". He rolls in a cart filled with various implements to complete the *Sukkah* ceremony. The kids grab a pair of stepladders from the cart as I welcome him. He hands me a basket of prayer books, *yarmulkes*, a *kiddush* cup for the wine, and the star of the show, the bound set of plant species bestowed upon the Israelites by God: the *etrog*, *lulav*, *hadass*, and *aravah*.

The symbolic purpose of the bound set is a never-ending topic of debate. Some say they're simply native plants from the middle east meant to recall the lands our ancestors occupied. Others claim they're symbolic of various body parts coming together to express one's devotion to God. I was taught from an early age that each represents different parts of the Jewish community itself, ranging from the devout to the nonobservant, binding them together to celebrate under one roof. As a child, my *Zeyde* would say that a *Sukkah* can be small enough to fit a single Jew or large enough to fit the whole of Israel.

I thank him for coordinating everything and extend an invitation to share our table later in the evening. Shayna and the kids are up on the ladders, hooking pots into the frame and delicately weaving long vines through the open canopy, slowly filling the roof. Maya and Angie turn levers by the barn doors, carefully swinging the skylights open, extending our connection to the sky.

I hook the basket onto the frame as Joe and Dan unlock adjustable panels at either end of the central islands, swinging them up and locking them into position, revealing a long farm table for us to gather around. I sweep away loose leaves and dust as the kids fix string lights to the frame above.

Shayna brings over a long table cloth and hands each of us a portion, directing us to lightly drape it across the full length. We pull the benches back out, setting them in position for the meal and look at each other, sweaty and smiling. Admiring the work we did to bring this together.

As staff from the commissary arrive to set the table, we go to the basins by the garden to wash up before the ceremony. Coldwater washes dust and dirt from our hands as staff light candles and switch the string lights on, illuminating the beautifully set seasonal feast.

I take the basket from the wall and adorn a *yarmulke*, handing one to every male in the group. Joe uncorks a bottle of wine, placing it by the *kiddush* cup at the head of the table. When everything is set, we step back outside to say the *Brachot*.

The garden is silent all but for the sound of crickets and rustling leaves as the sun sets beyond the tree line. I begin reciting the blessing that would allow us to enter the space, to dwell in it as a proper, kosher *Sukkah*. "*Baruch Atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech Haolam, Asher Kid'shanu B'mitzvotav V'tzivanu Leishev Basukkah.*"

We make our way into the hut, standing around the table under the lush *s'chach* roof. I take up the four plant species, the *etrog*, *lulav*, *hadass*, and *aravah* and recite the words. "*Baruch Atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech Haolam, Asher Kid'shanu B'mitzvotav V'tzivanu Al N'tilat Lulav.*" I raise the bound set, shaking it three times in every direction. Three to the north, three to the west, three to the south, and three to the east towards Jerusalem. All of Israel is in the *Sukkah* with us now.

We sit at the table to bless the wine, to break bread, and to share the summer's bounty. We eat, we drink, we tell stories, we welcome guests, we drink some more, we sing, and we recite the *Shehecheyanu* to thank God for the harvest, for sustaining us, our children, and our ancestors who dwelled in Sukkot. Now we gather in these huts, celebrating the here and now, but reciting the same words and sitting under the same stars as our predecessors.

After the final candle burns out and the plates are cleared, I reach for my prayer book to close the meal. I look around at the table full of family and friends, up through the lush roof to the starry sky, and off into the distance, hearing life emanating from *Sukkot* all over the camp. I think about our ancestors who shared similar meals under the same stars. Whatever their lot in life, they took the time to raise walls and shape *s'chach* roofs, to sit vulnerably under the sky and break bread as a community.



Fig. 78 *Greenhaus: Narrative Collage* (Digital Media Collage, 2019)

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ,
 אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
 אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו
 וְצִוָּנוּ לַיִּשֵׁב בְּסֻכָּה.



בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ,
 אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
 אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו
 עַל נְטִילַת לֵוֶלֶב.

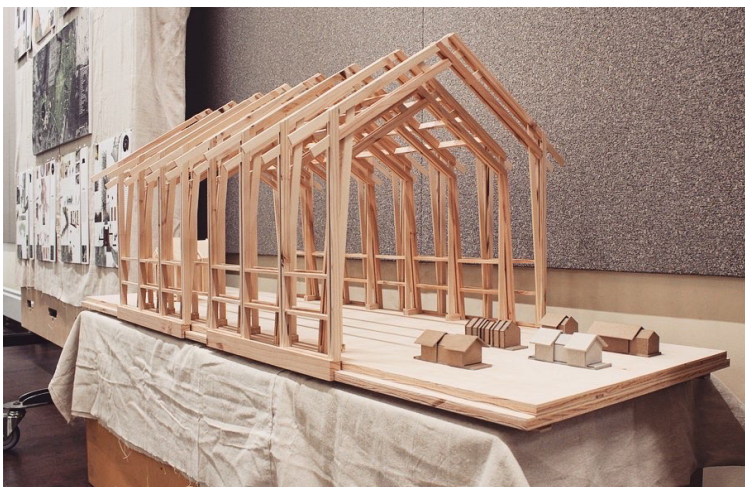


11 • CONCLUSION

During the final presentation, I told a number of stories. I told the story of *Sukkot*, its memory, and its history. I told the story of my project as a deeply personal, process-based investigation. And I told the story of the building itself, a spatialized extension of those memories, histories, and processes. A narrative as it might unfold at Camp Solomon Schechter if these allegorical structures were built and regularly transformed by their community. From the start, I viewed the project as a chance to explore how I might want to operate as a practitioner. I actively took on a range of responsibilities to test various approaches. From diving into theoretical research to developing relationships with potential clients, the process allowed me to experience the highs and lows of a comprehensive approach.

While the project did not unfold in the design/build structure I initially set up for myself, I found having to actively accommodate evolving circumstances a genuinely fulfilling part of the process. It became an opportunity to employ a variety of graphic techniques, building methods, and storytelling devices to progress the work. Moving forward, I plan to consolidate the content and narratives produced as part of this thesis into a fundraising package to help finance the potential design and construction of reconfigurable *Sukkot*. Whether for Camp Solomon Schechter or another Jewish Community, the ongoing endeavor will allow me to continue testing this approach to architectural practice. One where I can comprehensively research a topic and develop it into a built work that benefits a local community.

Sukkot and its associated rituals provided a tremendous platform to explore these ideas. As a several thousand-year-old tradition, *Sukkot* has withstood the test of time by actively encouraging the ceremonial shaping of communities. It is fundamentally about coming together to build and occupy simple structures to meaningfully remember a collective past, yearn for an enduring future, and cherish the bonds that define the space of the moment.



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Sukkah City. Directed by Jason Hut. Oxbow Lake Films, 2013. Film.

The Jewish Museum New York. Interview with Arnold C. Eisen taken from *Reinventing Ritual: Garden & Sukkah* (Youtube, April 2011).

Ushpizin. Directed by Gidi Dar. Eddie King Films, 2004. Film.

14 • APPENDIX

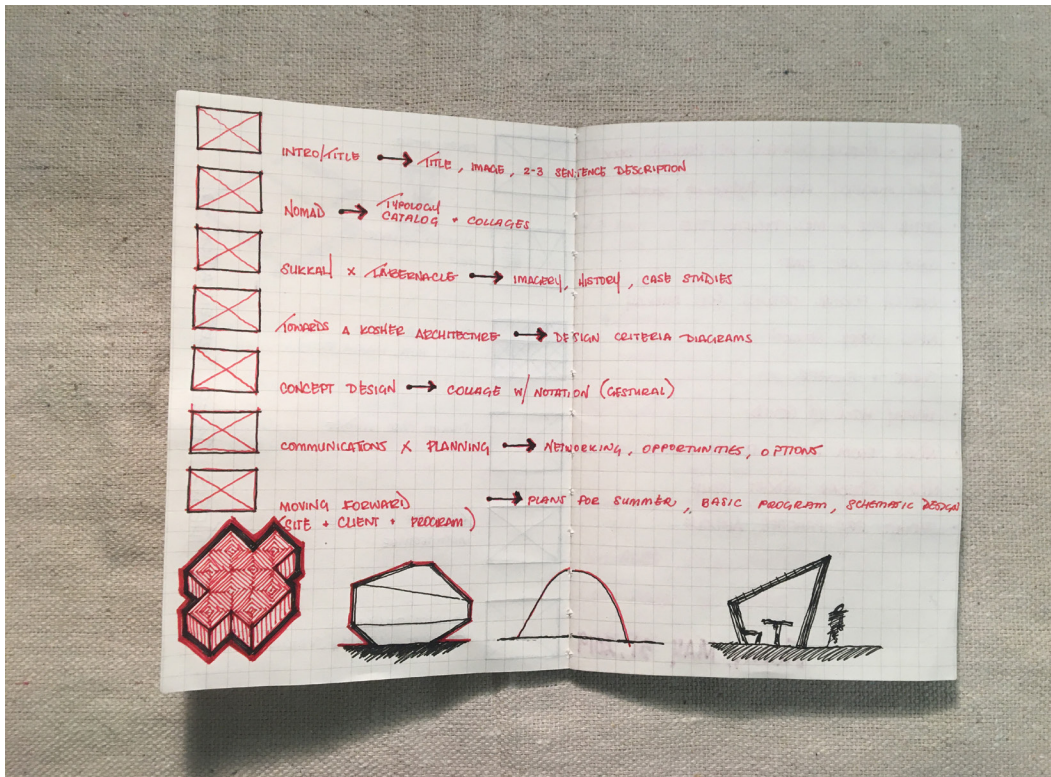
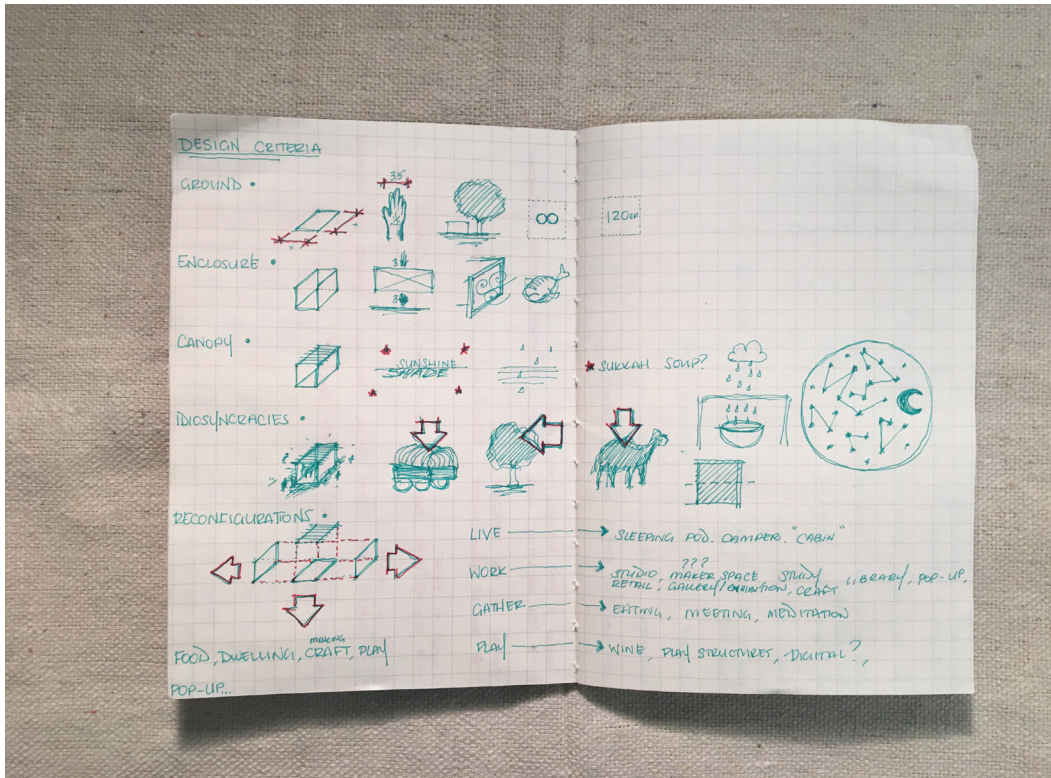
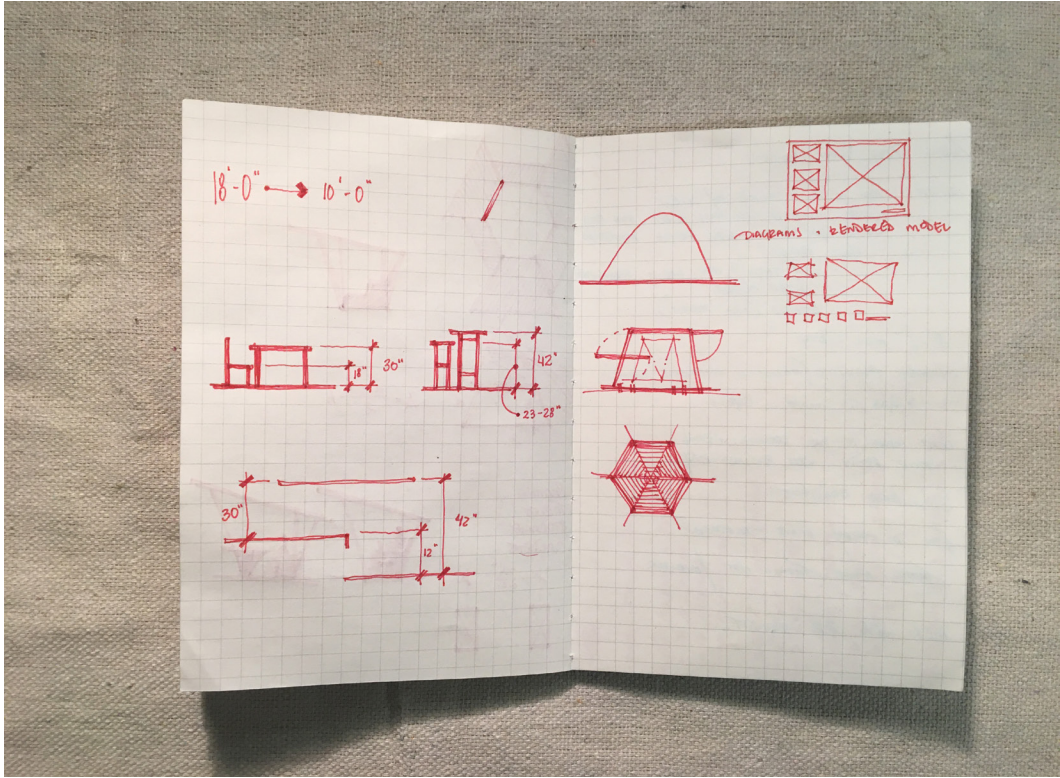
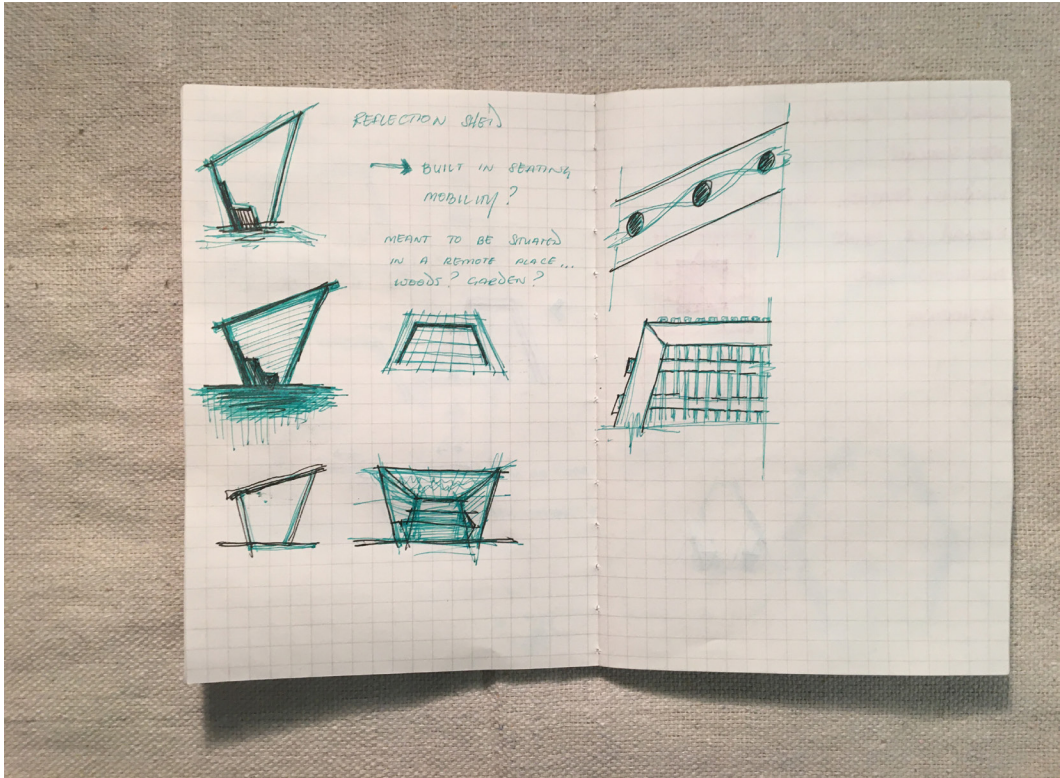


Fig. 82-85 Sketchbook Excerpts (Pen + Pencil on Paper, 2019)



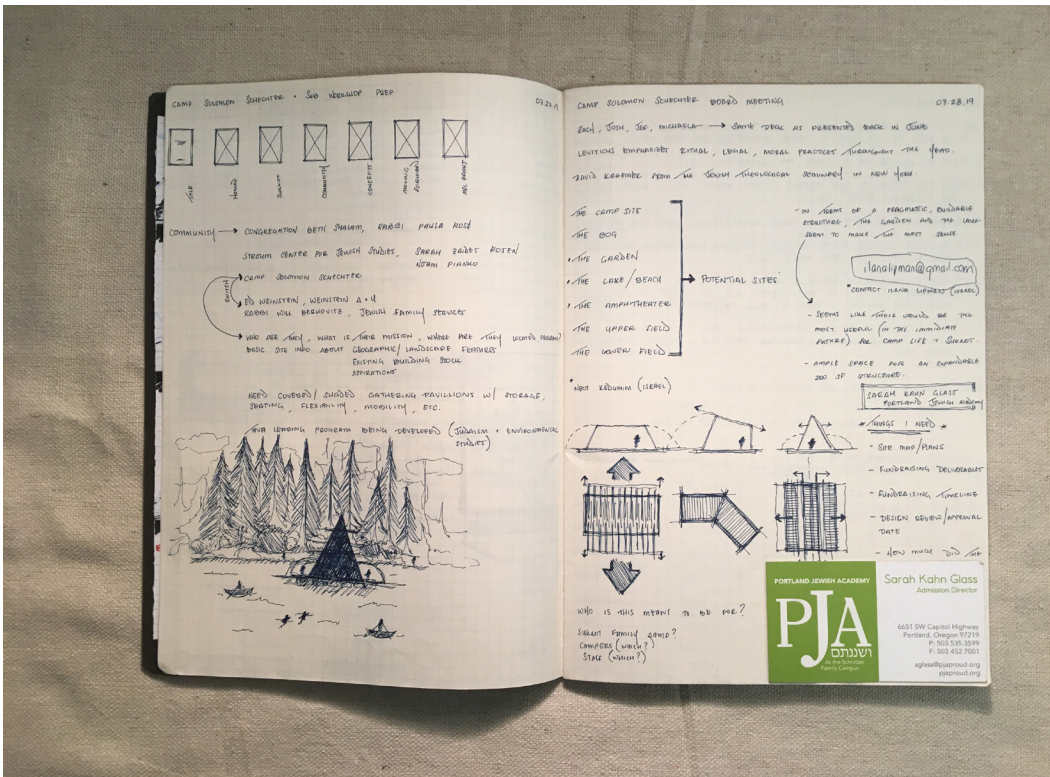
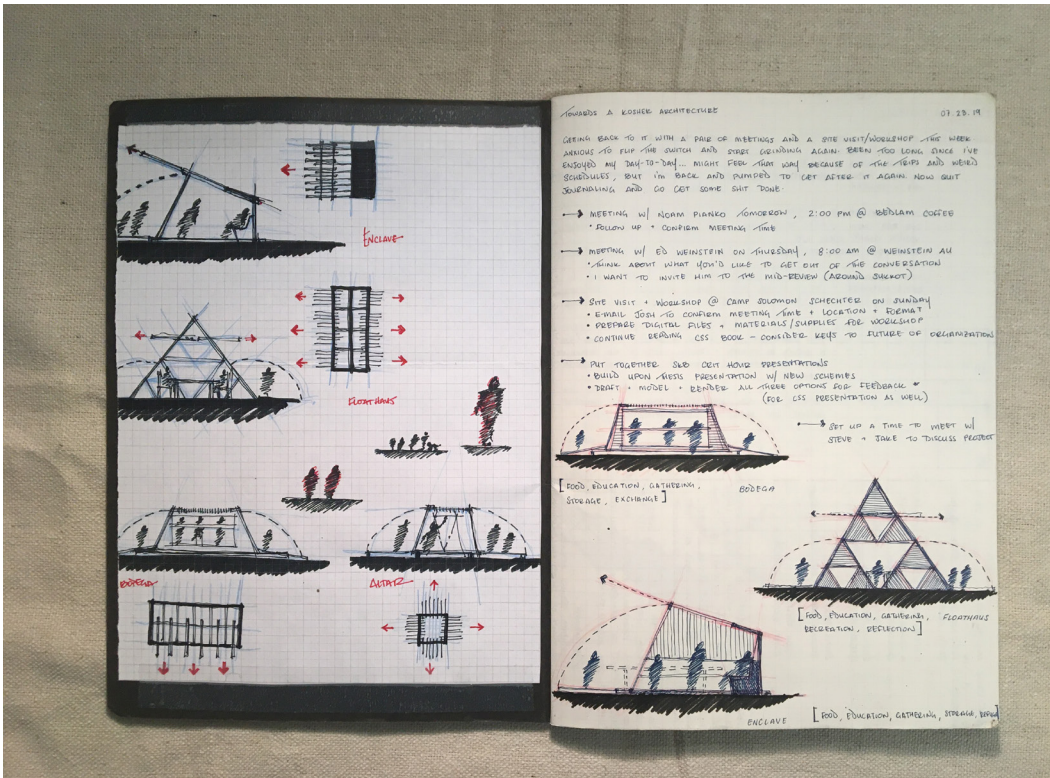


Fig. 86-89 Sketchbook Excerpts (Pen + Pencil on Paper, 2019)

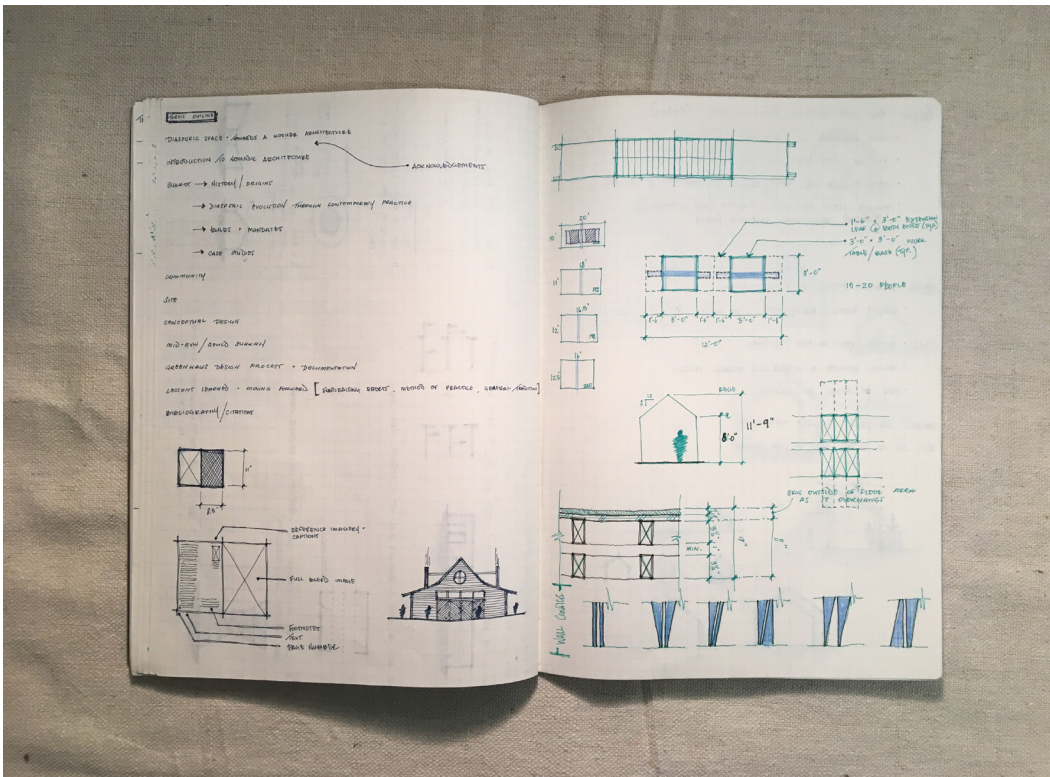
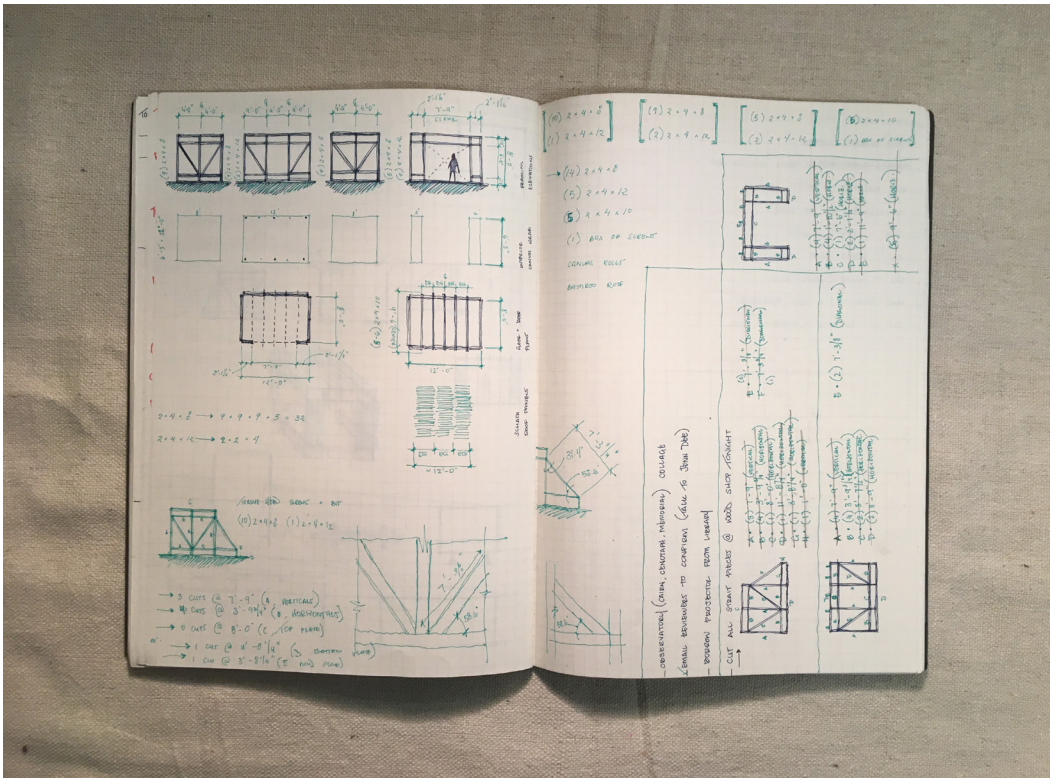
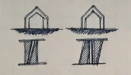


Fig. 94-97 Sketchbook Excerpts (Pen + Pencil on Paper, 2019)

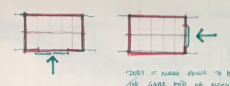
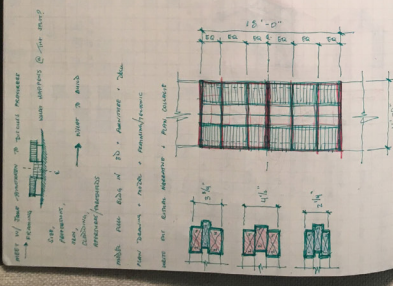
ARCH / ROOF DRAFT
 • SHOW 2 MORE PROPOSED ROOF MODELS



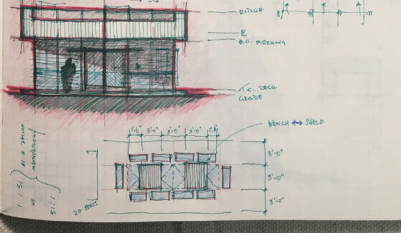
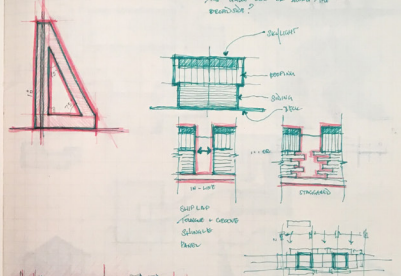
- EMAIL JOHN - STEVE ABOUT PROGRESS
- WRITE OUTLINE TO SCOTT
- WRITE PORTION OF NARRATIVE



• EMAIL JOHN - STEVE ABOUT HIGHLIGHTS - SKETCHES OUTLINE

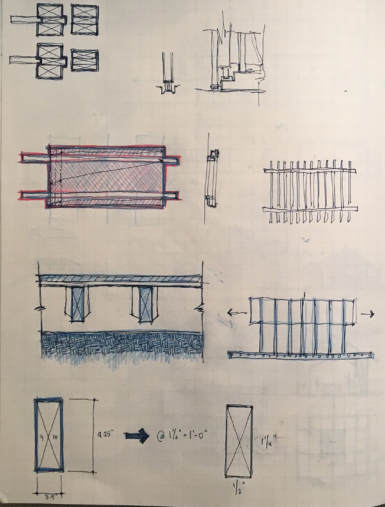


DOES IT MAKE SENSE TO HAVE @ 45° CORNER WITH THE OTHER TWO BEAMS?



ARCHITECT DRAFT THREE

THREE IS SHOWN UP TO JOHN LEE



2-6 @ 1 1/4" - 1'-0" → 1/4" - 1/4" → 11 @ 45°, 12 @ 15°, 2 @ 45°
 @ 15°, @ 15°, @ 45°
 2-4 @ 1 1/4" - 1'-0" → 1/4" - 1/2" → 11 @ 45°, 12 @ 15°, 2 @ 45°
 1-4 @ 1 1/4" - 1'-0" → 1/4" - 1/2" → 11 @ 45°, 12 @ 15°, 2 @ 45°
 1-10 @ 1 1/4" - 1'-0" → 1/4" - 1/4" → 2 @ 45°, 12 @ 15°, 2 @ 45°

