

A Cabin in the City
searching for refuge in the dense urban fabric

Lauren McWhorter

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David Miller
Gundula Proksch

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Lauren McWhorter

University of Washington

Abstract

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Lauren McWhorter

Co-Chairs of the Supervisory Committee:

Professor David Miller

Architecture

Associate Professor Gundula Proksch

Architecture

The pioneer cabin was originally a modest dwelling protecting its inhabitants from the wilderness in which they lived. Over the years it has evolved to become a symbol of simplicity and solitude in American culture. As the city becomes more dense and chaotic, the need of its inhabitants for solitude and refuge is increasing more than ever. This thesis argues that the architectural type of the cabin can be used as a means to create a physical refuge in the city, serving as a shelter and symbol in the urban wilderness. The design proposal for a series of cabins in the city of Seattle will address this need for a refuge within the city as an individual's resting place within the dense urban fabric.

A CABIN IN THE CITY

SEARCHING FOR REFUGE IN THE DENSE URBAN FABRIC

A THESIS BY
LAUREN MCWHORTER



Dedicated to my fellow
Washington adventurers



fig. 1 - A cabin in the city

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PROLOGUE

THIS THESIS STARTED WITH the question of “what is home?” As a transplant to the city of Seattle, the idea of home intrigues me. And as so many Americans now are picking up and moving so often, I wondered, what it is about the home that stays consistent, no matter what the physical space looks like. And what happened to the idea of home - as an isolated and protected realm - in the face of the rapidly desifying city?

As I narrowed in on a thesis, I explored what the home means physically, symbolically, emotionally, and culturally for many different people. After doing all of this research, I realized just how complex this question of home really is.

I decided to narrow in on the idea of the home as a refuge. I kept coming back to the image of the cabin alone

in the woods - the basic shelter that is quite literally a refuge from the wilderness in which it resides.

I wondered what it is about the cabin that is so sacred and intimate and if it was possible to let the cabin be the inspiration for this new meaning of home in the dense city.

Then I realized that maybe my thesis is not about home at all, but about finding this refuge, not in the natural wilderness where many typically go for solitude, but right in the place where we need it the most - in the heart of the dense city.



fig. 3 - A cabin in the woods - a symbol of refuge

A photograph of a dense forest of tall evergreen trees, likely spruce or fir, shrouded in a thick mist or fog. The trees are dark green and stand against a pale, hazy background. The overall mood is serene and quiet. A vertical line runs down the center of the image, separating the left and right halves.

WE NEED THE
TONIC OF
WILDNESS

- HENRY DAVID THOREAU

INTRODUCTION

THE CITY TODAY IS a wild place, the home of a diverse group of inhabitants living in close proximity to each other. The density and scale of the urban environment creates a feeling of constantly being surrounded and constrained, while at the same time feeling anonymous and alienated. The city is a difficult place to know and understand because of its complexity and chaos, resulting in unendingly uncertain situations. During the American Industrial Revolution, Henry David Thoreau wrote in 1854 about humanity's innate need for the wild:

We need the tonic of wildness...At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be indefinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by

us because unfathomable. We can never have enough of nature.¹

While Thoreau is arguing for the importance of the natural wilderness, his words can be applied to the urban wilderness that is similarly mysterious and impenetrable. However this persistent state of disorientation can have negative effects on those individuals who call the city home. As the city grows even denser and wilder, urban inhabitants continue to be bombarded with the sense of feeling lost and overwhelmed.

In American culture, the cabin has long served as a symbol of refuge and individuality. As a small dwelling unit for typically a single individual or small family, this basic form of shelter has historically had a direct connection to its surroundings. This cabin has the potential to be transformed into a new kind of dwelling place within the city, serving as a refuge from the wilderness. This thesis proposes the design of a series of cabins in the city that will help urban dwellers escape their daily routine and experience their surroundings in a new way. The methods for this investigation begin with a historical analysis of the cabin as a physical and symbolic structure. A series of related architectural precedents will then be examined in order to better understand the cabin as an architectural type. Finally the city of Seattle will be analyzed for sites identified as Mountain, Forest and Water that will serve as the locations for the new versions of the cabin in the city.

1 Henry David Thoreau. (2016/1854). *The Illustrated Walden*. New York: Penguin Random House. 333-4.

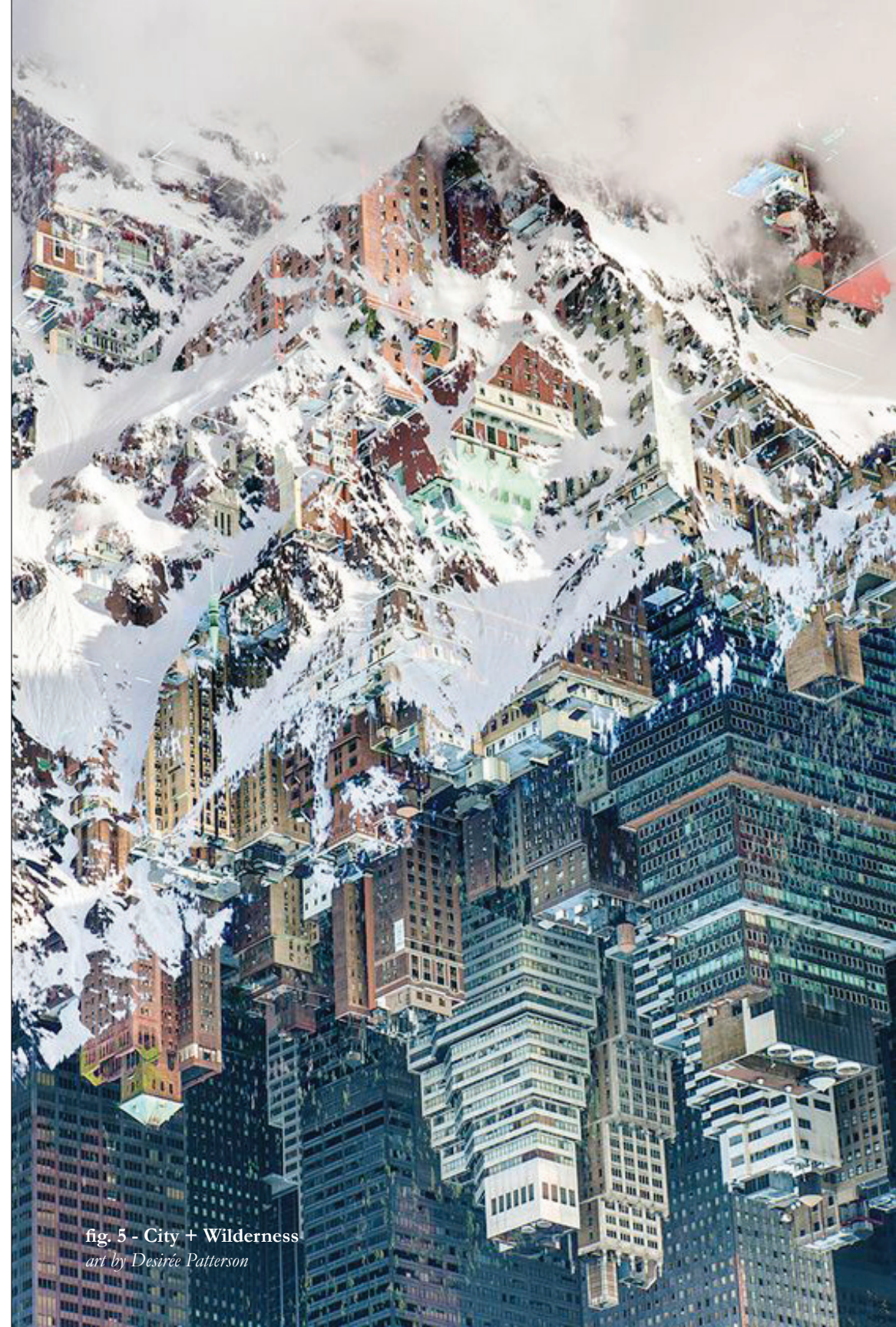


fig. 5 - City + Wilderness
art by Desirée Patterson



fig. 6 - "The Pioneer's Home: on the Western Frontier"
Lithograph, 1867

I. HISTORY

SURVIVAL

THE NORTH AMERICAN CABIN is a building type that is typically understood as a basic dwelling unit built by pioneers out of the simplest of materials and designed to be easily assembled. This simple structure was built as essential shelter for the first settlers, closely connected to its surroundings in its materials and form. As the pioneers moved west, America's abundance of trees enabled this type of wooden structure to become widespread. In his book *The Wilderness Cabin*, Calvin Rutstrum observes that the pioneer cabin was not by any means the product of a life of luxury; serving as protection from the unforgiving landscape and as defense against the original inhabitants of the land, the Native Americans who called the land home. These first settlers in the American

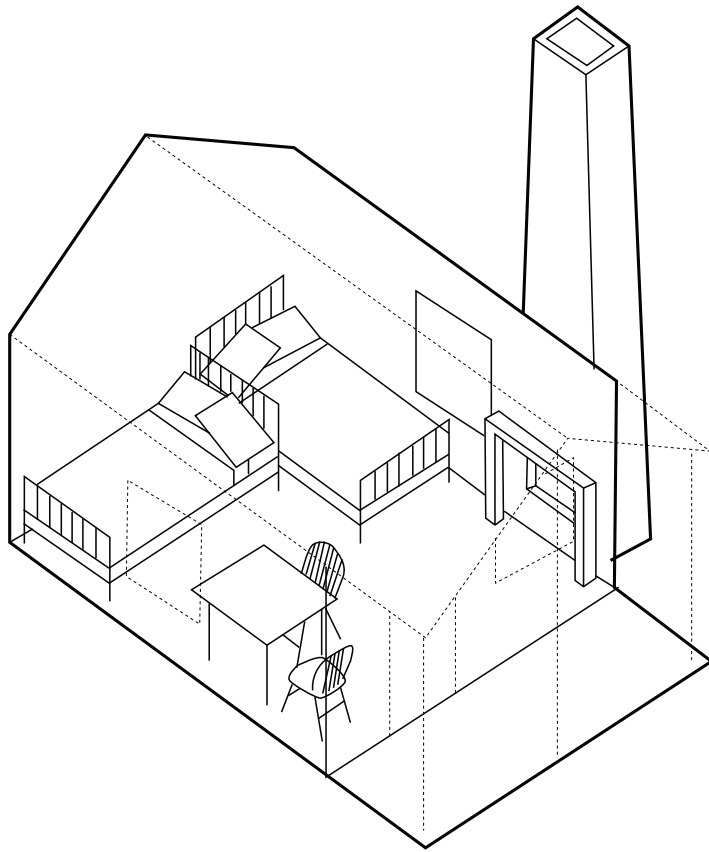


fig. 7 - Diagram of the pioneer's home

west built their cabins not for comfort but for survival.²

American historian, C. A. Weslager, writes that the only tool needed to build a well-made cabin was an ax for chopping wood, indicated both the simplicity of the structure and the craft required in building it. The cabin itself was made of hand split logs that were carefully fit together to keep out the elements, but nevertheless the joints often rotted. The earliest versions of these structures were often set directly on the earth without footings or even a finished floor with dirt being used in the roof as well. Nails were not commonplace until the late nineteenth century and were still so expensive that cabins continued to be built using only wood.³

Despite its modest beginning, the cabin has become an integral part of American history. Professor of folklore studies, Mac E. Barrick observes that the transition of the cabin from a meager pioneer shelter to a cultural icon began with the 1840 presidential election.⁴ Opposers of presidential nominee William Henry Harrison, who grew up on a farm, made fun of his modest upbringing. When Harrison ended up winning, "it started a movement that made the log cabin a symbol of honesty, wholesomeness and humility."⁵ Barrick goes on to credit William M. Thayer, an American historian and author, as playing a key role in the transformation of the cabin from a modest dwelling into cultural icon by writing

2 Calvin Rutstrum. (1972). *The Wilderness Cabin*. New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc. 2-3.

3 C. A. Weslager, (1969). *The Log Cabin in America: From Pioneer Days to the Present*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. 8.

4 Mac E. Barrick. (1986, Spring). *The Log House as a Cultural Symbol*. *Material Culture*, 18(1). 3.

5 *Ibid.*, 3.

about the log cabin as the birthplace of numerous early presidents.

...by raising the level of cultural appreciation of such buildings [cabins] as well as the level of self-satisfaction of the people who lived in them, the political campaigners of 1840 and later biographers like Thayer transformed the log cabin from a practical artifact, a cozy habitation, into a national icon with the same affecting power as the eagle, the Liberty Bell, and the covered wagon.⁶

Ironically, Barrick notes, as the cabin was rising in popularity from a cultural standpoint, it was declining in use as a type of dwelling unit.⁷ As technology increased and families grew larger, the need for the cabin dwindled and was replaced by the desire for larger, nicer homes with more space and amenities. Barrick states that in the process of becoming a cultural icon, the cabin lost its status as a functional dwelling.⁸

⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁷ Ibid., 3.

⁸ Ibid., 4.



fig. 8 - A House Near Walden Pond, Henry David Thoreau
Concord, Massachusetts, 1845

REFLECTION

AS THE UNITED STATES entered the period of industrialization, its cities began to grow in population and density. Observing these drastic changes on the American scene, Henry David Thoreau, a young man living in Concord, Massachusetts reacted by deciding to move away from society and into nature.⁹ On July 4, 1845, Thoreau moved to Walden Pond to live in a cabin, which he built for himself on the land owned by his good friend and fellow poet, Ralph Waldo Emerson. (fig. 8) Thoreau lived for two years in a 150 square foot, one-room cabin as an experiment into his ideas of minimal living. It is here where he wrote a great deal of his book *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*, published in 1854.¹⁰ As Bradford

⁹ Urs Peter Flueckiger. (2016). *How Much House? Thoreau, Le Corbusier, and the Sustainable Cabin*. Basel: Birkhäuser. 21.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 15, 25.

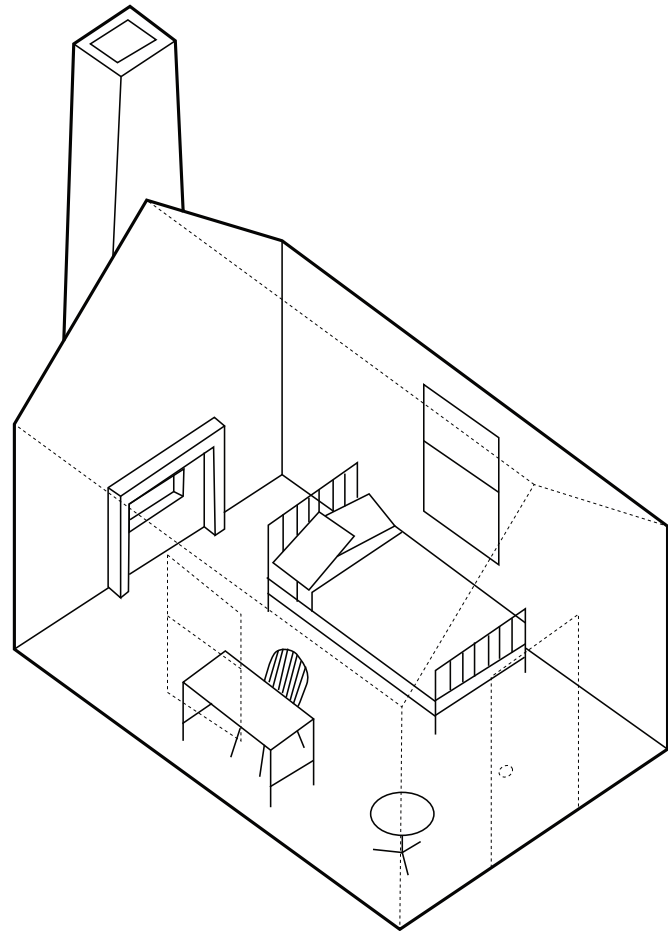


fig. 9 - Diagram of the Thoreau's cabin

Torrey argues in his introduction to *Walden*, Thoreau's deepest desire was to live close to the land and live an independent life. This type of lifestyle was becoming scarce as the Industrial Revolution brought new technology. Even though Thoreau sought a "middle ground" between the nature and civilization, his writings led to him becoming the father of environmentalism. He is linked to one of America's greatest ideals: the self-built man who lives on the land relies only on himself.¹¹

11 Henry David Thoreau. (2016/1854). *The Illustrated Walden*. New York: Penguin Random House. Introduction by Bradford Torrey. xiv.



fig. 10 - Le Cabanon “a shed” , Le Corbusier
Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, France, 1951

VACATION

ALMOST ONE HUNDRED YEARS after Thoreau builds his cabin in the woods, the image of the log cabin as a refuge persisted. In 1951, Le Corbusier built his wife a cabin called Le Cabanon (“the shed”) on the coast of the French Riviera as a summer holiday home. (fig. 10) The famed Swiss architect had decided to retire in a secluded small plot of land off of the Mediterranean Sea not far from the casinos of Monaco.¹² Even the man made famous by his Modernist ideas of houses as machines for living sought a place of solitude and quiet away from urban life. A single room lined with wood, the cabin has no kitchen or washing facilities. Today this seaside cabin still stands, designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage site.

12 Urs Peter Flueckiger. (2016). *How Much House? Thoreau, Le Corbusier, and the Sustainable Cabin*. Basel: Birkhäuser. 47.

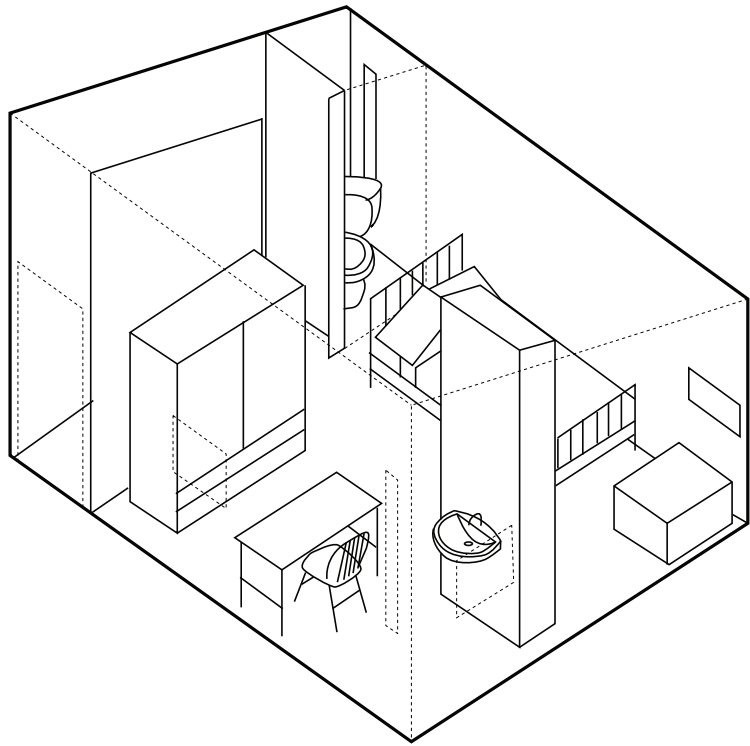




fig. 12 - The Cabin as Image - The image of the cabin is more iconic than the cabin itself, which is manifested through the hundreds of websites, such as the one pictured - cabinporn.com, and books devoted to cabin imagery.

IMAGE

THE CABIN TODAY CONTINUES to be generally understood as a physical object. If asked to draw one, many people would draw a simple square and a triangle with a chimney. Though few have actually lived in this kind of simple shelter, the cabin continues to serve as a retreat from civilization to the restorative realm of nature. In the US this structure stands as a recurring symbol of America's pioneer past, when life was believed to be simple and closer to nature.

Mac E. Barrick writes, "The log house may symbolize its creator's ability to transform raw nature into useful living space".¹³ The nature of symbols is that they transform and adapt to the population that holds them, constantly becoming more complex as they transform in meaning. The cabin

¹³ Mac E. Barrick. (1986, Spring). The Log House as a Cultural Symbol. *Material Culture*, 18(1). 15.

today not only represents independence from society, as it did for Thoreau, but it has become a symbol of refuge from the wilderness in which it resides.

The continuing power of the image of the cabin in the woods is evident in the many popular “coffee table books” and internet websites (fig. 12) that depict picturesque cabins in wilderness landscapes. As architect Sofia Borges writes in the introduction to *Rock the Shack*, “the popularity of the remote cabin and shack revival speaks to a need of being truly alone in order to come together”.¹⁴ As a collection of images of modern cabin dwellings, her book is one of the many that perpetuates the idea of the cabin as an image that has become more idealized than the physical structure itself.¹⁵

In his article “Why Look at Cabin Porn”, professor of environmental history Finn Arne Jørgensen looks at why the image of cabins, or “cabin porn” as it is called, is so popular today. He explains:

The images seem to say that we once lived in simpler conditions, in architecture closer to nature. We lived more productive and more honest lives... The images of cabin porn whisper to us of this lost state of grace, of an age of wood and earth and things that were real and true. The cabins of cabin porn are as much ideas as actual places; they are observation points outside of time

14 Sofia Borges. (2016). *Rock the Shack: The Architecture of Cabins, Cocoons and Hide-Outs*. Berlin: Gestalten. 6.

15 Other books of this nature include, but are not limited to, *Retreat: The Modern House in Nature* by Ron Broadhurst, *Hide and Seek: The Architecture of Cabins and Hide-Outs* by Sofia Borges, *Cabins* by Philip Jodidio and *Cabin Porn* by Zach Klein.

and space from which we can observe not just nature but also ourselves and the world we live in.¹⁶

Somehow the act of looking at images of cabins in their picturesque landscapes has temporarily fulfilled society’s longing for nature and solitude. As Jørgensen argues this longing for refuge is not simply about the desire to experience nature, but to understand ourselves.

The cabin then has the ability to adapt to become a place of refuge within the city, not just as an image, but as a physical dwelling place. Thoreau observed that humans yearn for the wilderness because its mysterious and unknowable nature. With over half of humans living in urban settings, the megacity has become even more incomprehensible and threatening.¹⁷ Arnold Berleant writes about the city as a wilderness: “We may, at times consider the city overwhelming and hostile, not a place for preserving and promoting human values. Its unfamiliarity makes the city appear confusing, threatening in its very strangeness.”¹⁸ The act of relocating the cabin into this urban wilderness is a natural progression in the evolution of its history.

16 Finn Arne Jørgensen. (2015). Why Look at Cabin Porn? *Public Culture* 27:3. Duke University Press. 559.

17 Somini Sengupta. (2014, July 10). U.N. Finds Most People Now Live in Cities. Retrieved August 9, 2017.

18 Arnold Berleant. (2000). The Wilderness City: An Essay on Metaphorical Experience [PDF]. 30.

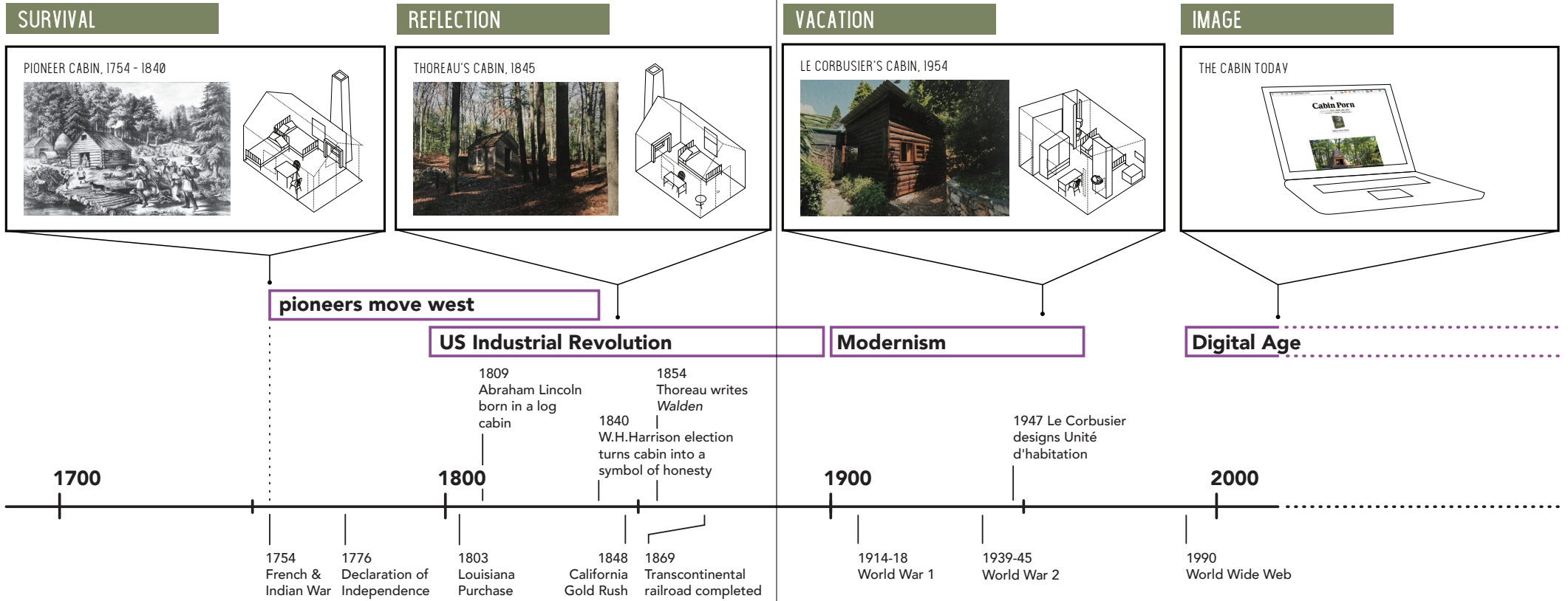


fig. 13 - Timeline of the cabin in American culture and beyond

...OUTSIDE
OF TIME AND
SPACE FROM
WHICH WE CAN
OBSERVE NOT
JUST NATURE
BUT ALSO
OURSELVES AND
THE WORLD WE
LIVE IN...

- FINN ARNE JORGENSEN



fig. 14 - The classic American cabin

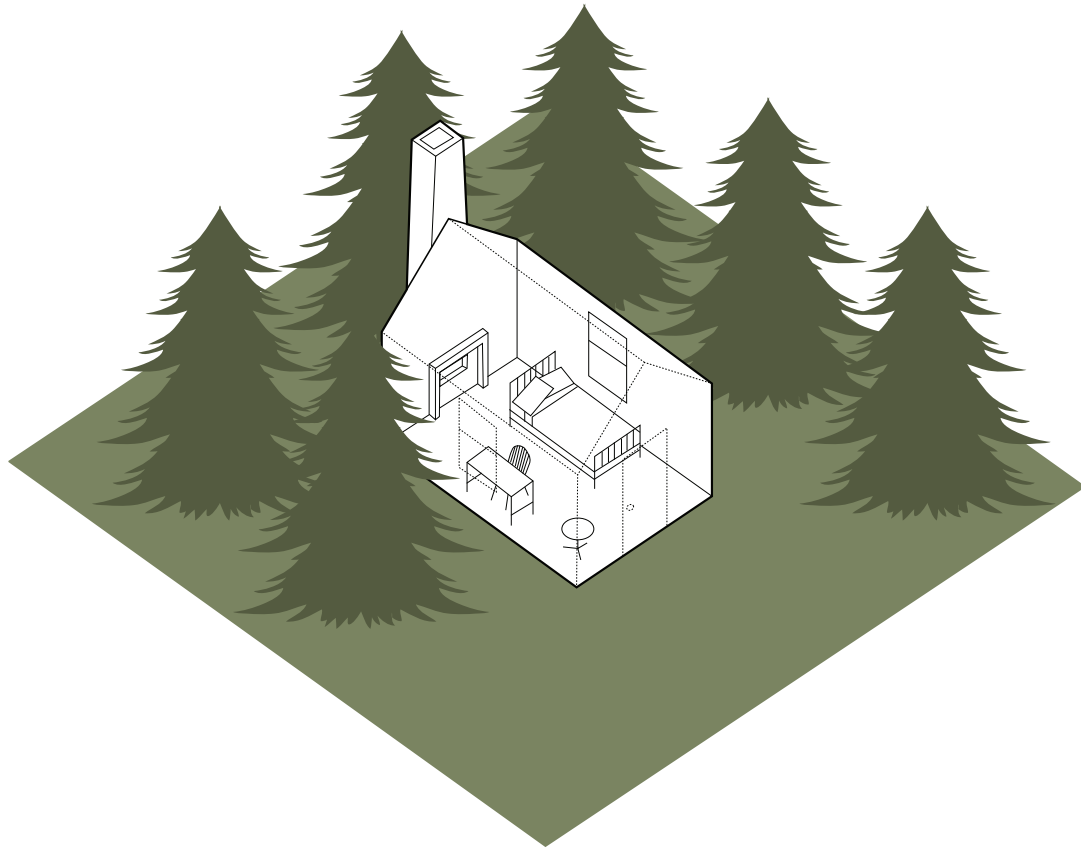


fig. 15 - Cabin + Site - For this thesis, the cabin is thought of as a small one-room shelter, disconnected from society in some way, serving as a refuge from its harsh environment – the wilderness.

2. FRAMEWORK

CABIN + SITE

A CABIN IS NOT just a physical object in space. It offers an experience that is directly related to the context in which it sits. As a retreat from its surroundings, this physical object must be understood in terms of the landscapes which it responds to. A cabin needs its surrounding wilderness in order to be understood as a place of refuge. (fig. 16) In natural environments, the cabin can be categorized into three types, reflecting the places in which they are built: forest, mountain, and water.

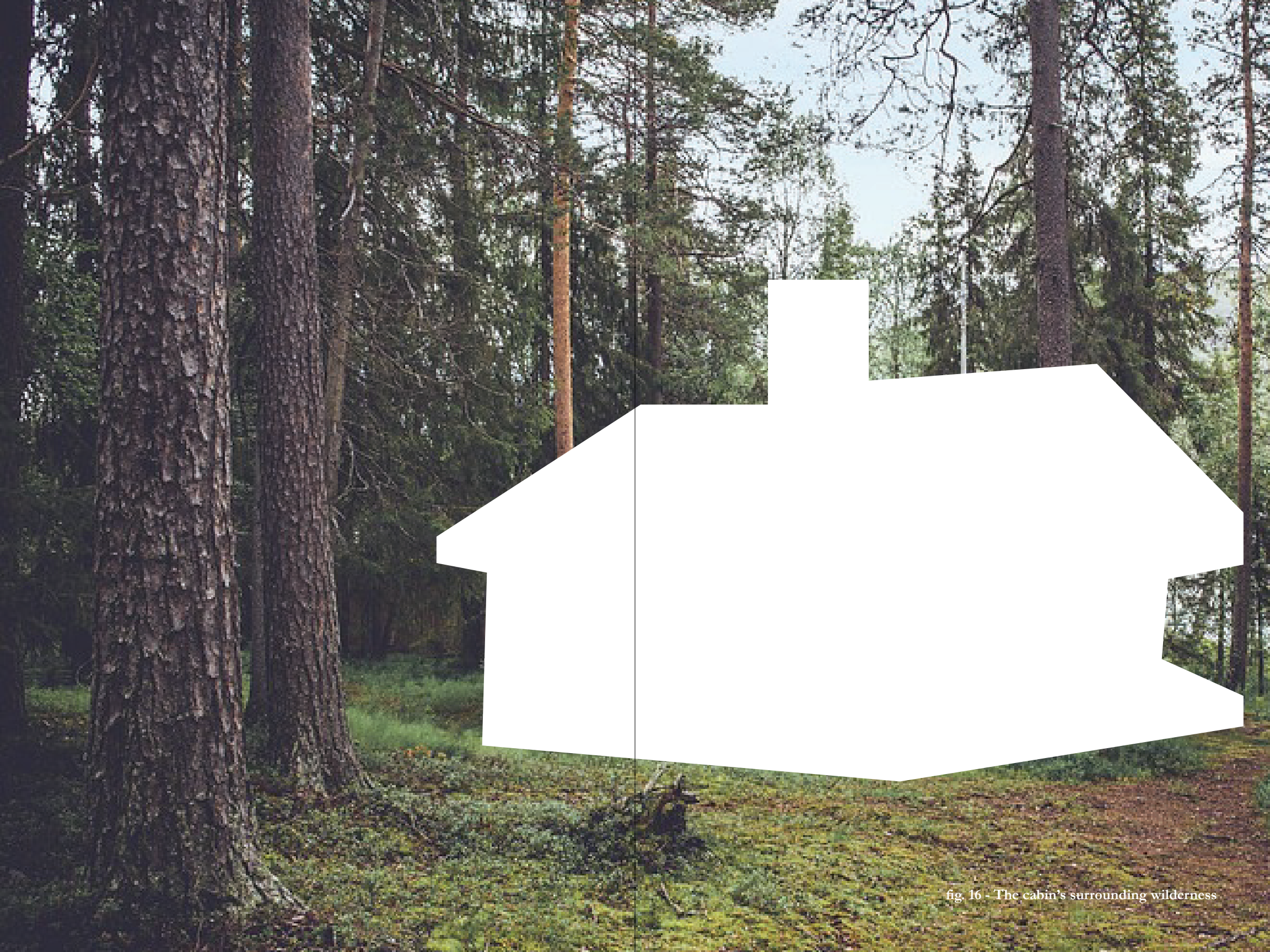


fig. 16 - The cabin's surrounding wilderness



fig. 17 - Cabin + Site Case Studies - a sampling of modern cabins to study types of wilderness



fig. 18 - Three Types of Site: Forest, Mountain, Water



fig. 19 - Three Types of Site - Understanding the different types of wilderness a cabin can occupy and how they respond to those surroundings is helpful in understanding the cabins themselves, whether it is about being surrounded by trees, or focused on the rhythmic movement of water or the far off views of being high up on a mountain.



fig. 20 - Forest as site



FOREST

THE CABIN IN THE forest describes the physical condition where the human built structure is surrounded by a grove of trees. This type is typically partially hidden, constructed from its surroundings but yet distinct from them. Views from the cabin interior serve as a constant reminder of its subservient status in relation to its natural context. It is a refuge place because it is only revealed upon discovery.

A classic example of a cabin in the forest is Thoreau's Cabin near Walden Pond, near Concord, Massachusetts. (fig. 8) As previously mentioned, the writer moved here in the mid 19th century to experiment with a simple lifestyle and write his famous book *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*. Although Thoreau's cabin (or "house" as he called it) resided next to

a pond, it was still in the forest: “It was a pleasant hillside where I worked, covered with pine woods through which I looked out on the pond and a small open field in the woods where pines and hickories were springing up,” writes Thoreau.¹⁹ The original cabin itself no longer sits on the original site (fig. 22) as it was taken back to Concord and dismantled soon after Thoreau lived there. A replica has been built in a different location near Walden Pond using the drawings and specifications the writer documented.²⁰

Today the site is a popular tourist destination in Concord, Massachusetts, reflecting the enduring power of Thoreau’s writings on nature. The reconstructed cabin sits firmly on the land in a small clearing in Walden forest. Despite being a few hundred feet away, the house has good sight lines to the pond. The cabin only has one room, aside from the attic space and the under floor “closet” space. Thoreau lived and worked in this same tiny space. As seen in fig. 21, there is only one door and two windows, which allowed him to have a view to his surroundings with working or in bed. Centrally located in the room, the fireplace not only provided him with warmth, but also was also used for cooking. The original cabin was made from logs, which Thoreau split himself taken from the surrounding trees. The author was proud of his house that he designed and built, referring to it as “architecture,” and to himself as the “architect.”²¹

19 Urs Peter Flueckiger. 2016. *How Much House? Thoreau, Le Corbusier, and the Sustainable Cabin*. Basel: Birkhäuser. 23.

20 Ibid., 25.

21 Ibid., 21-7.

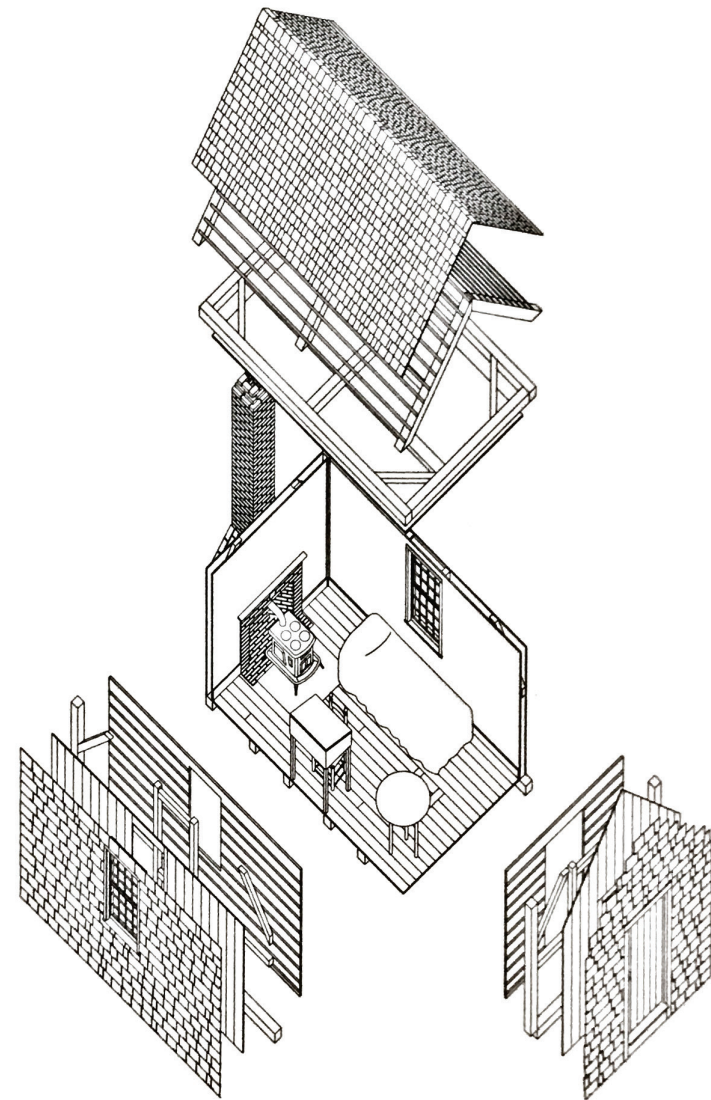


fig. 21 - Exploded Axon of Thoreau's cabin





fig. 23 - Mask House, WOJR Architects
Ithaca, New York, 2013 (proposed)

A modern example of a cabin in the forest is Mask House in Ithaca, New York proposed by WOJR Architects in 2013. (fig. 23) This project was designed by the architects as a refuge for a client who had lost his brother in the lake in which the cabin overlooks. From the most direct approach, the house is hidden by dark pieces of charred wood, which disappear into the land and sky, concealing the house's true form and creating a mask. As seen in the Site Plan (fig. 24), a secondary path meanders down the steep slope and leads to a walkway that separates the mask of the façade from the main body of the house. Sitting on piers, the house floats above the land, adding to its ethereal appearance as it disappears into the forest around it.

At 587 square feet, Mask House is much larger than Thoreau's one-room cabin of 150 square feet. The modern house contains three rooms: a large central room with living space and kitchen, a bedroom, and a bathroom. While Thoreau's cabin was much more simple and inwardly focused, Mask House has clear divisions between its role as a prospect and refuge. The mask of the main façade announces the role of the house as a refuge, protecting it from the outside realm. But once inside, the living room opens up with floor to ceiling windows allowing generous views of the forest and lake beyond. (fig. 25) In this main room the fireplace again dominates, hanging from the ceiling in the center. The more private spaces of the bedroom and bathroom have very small high windows for light. In contrast to the dark wood

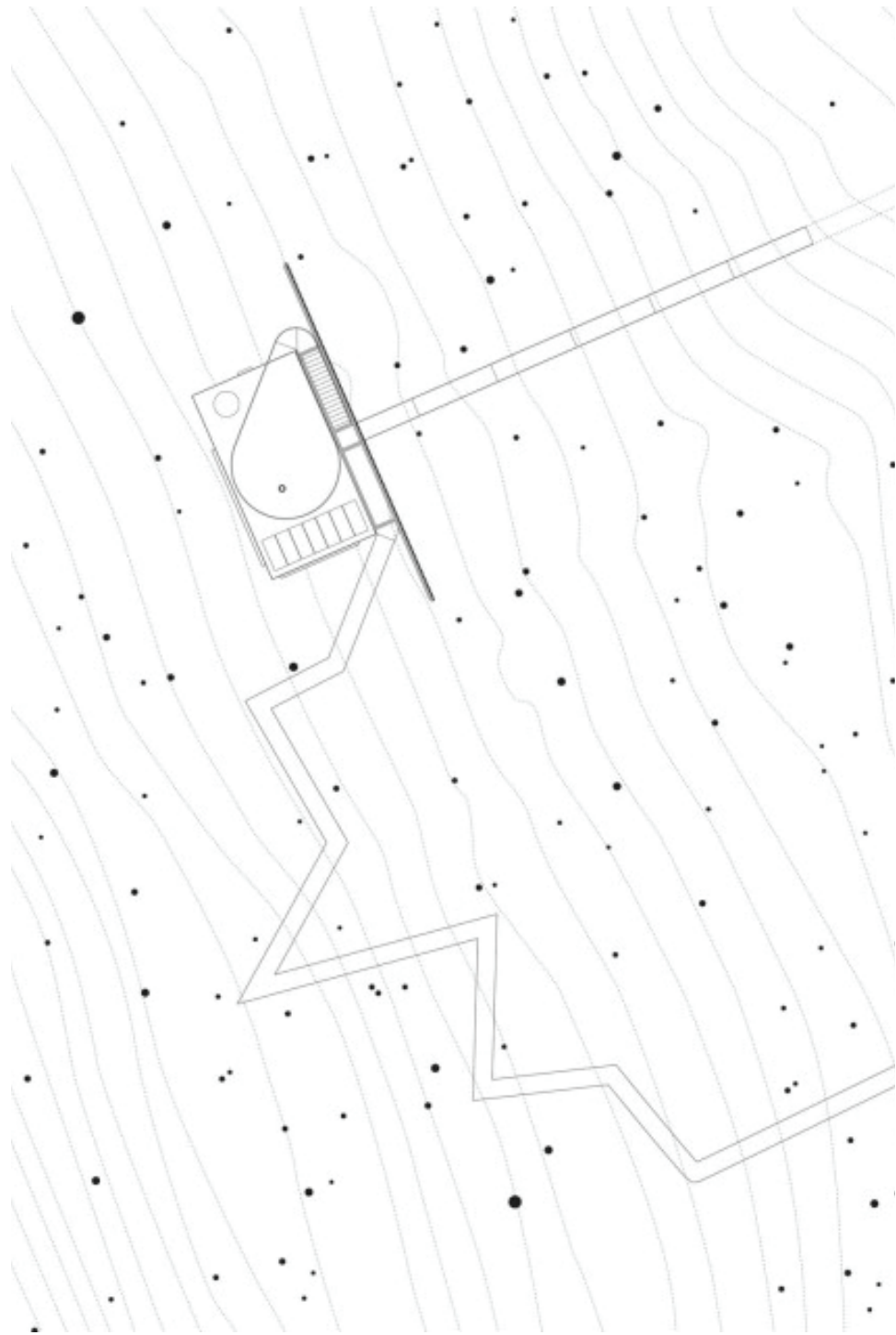


fig. 24 - Site Plan, Mask House



fig. 25 - Main interior space, Mask House

of the exterior, the interior is covered in light colored wood, amplifying the amount of light entering the space.²²

22 Clay Risen. (2016, Dec 5). Mask House: WOJR. Retrieved August 9, 2017.



fig. 26 - Mountain as site



MOUNTAIN

IN CONTRAST TO THE cabin in the forest, the cabin on the mountain is about being elevated up above its surroundings. This house acts as a refuge by being far above everything else and is often hard to get to. A classic example of the cabin on a mountain are lookout towers. (fig. 27) Fire lookouts became common in wilderness across the US after the devastating areas of 1910 when the Forest Service realized that the best form of defense was early detection. Building these small shelters atop high peaks became commonplace so that rangers could have the most expansive views of the land in order to pinpoint the location of potential wild fires. Sometimes on top of tall towers and sometimes sitting on elevated land forms, these cabins were designed so that a

person could live and work in one room and have a 360 degree view around him. After World War II when aerial surveillance became more prevalent, the use of fire lookout towers was discontinued.²³ A beloved part of Cascadia's history, many are still found in Washington State, serving as shelters for hikers. Typically located on high vantage points, the mountaintop cabins require an arduous pilgrimage to get to them. Only the most committed of hikers is rewarded with the view of these tall, vertical structures delicately touching the ground that makes possible their panoramic vantage point.

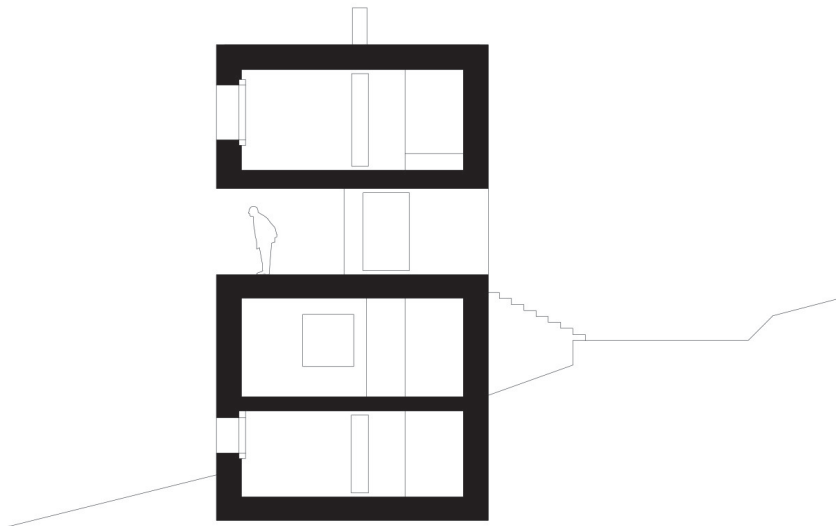




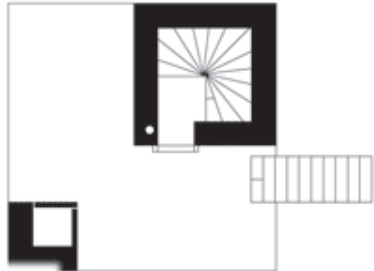
fig. 28 - Mountain Cabin, Marte.Marte Architects
Vorarlberge, Austria, 2011

The analysis of a more contemporary version of a mountain cabin reveals a similar overall form and siting. Mountain Cabin in Vorarlberg, Austria was designed and built as a holiday alpine home by Marte.Marte Architects.²⁴ (fig. 28) This four-story cabin is again a kind of tower itself, though rather than sitting on piers, all of its height is occupied. The rough concrete surfaces of the exterior blend in with the snow covered ground in winter, but remain modest in the summer. The structure sits next to a wooded ravine, but remains apart from it, allowing from views to the mountains in all directions through its generous entry veranda (fig. 30) and punched openings. Like the first lookout tower, the Mountain Cabin serves as both a refuge and lookout. The elevated entry veranda of the modern cabin provides panoramic views before entering the more intimate space of the interior.

24 Amy Frearson. (2013, June 26). Mountain Cabin by Marte.Marte Architects. Retrieved August 9, 2017.



+01



00



-01



-02



fig. 30 - Views of mountains from entry veranda, Mountain Cabin



fig. 31 - Water as site



WATER

THE CABIN BY THE water expresses the condition of being on the edge between land and water. This version of shelter highlights the connection to nature's most powerful and plentiful resource – water. A classic example of a cabin on the water is Le Corbusier's Le Cabanon located in a very secluded area of the French Riviera. (fig. 10) Though close to its popular neighbor, Monaco, even today this historic site is relatively unknown and rarely visited because of its remote location. Urs Peter Flueckiger writes on the long journey by foot from the nearest train station:

The ten minutes it takes to walk from the train station to Le Corbusier's Cabanon allows one's mind to readjust, to

create some distance, physical and mental, between one's self, everyday worries, and the stylish city of Monaco.²⁵

Aware of the site as early as the 1920s, Le Corbusier returned to the area after the war in the late 1940s to connect with the locals. In 1951 he drew up the plans for his holiday home. After years of traveling the world as a world famous architect and planner, he returned to the most minimalist of by designing his very own cabin.

Le Cabanon is a 144 square foot dwelling which sits firmly on a steep rocky hill above the water. It shares a wall with an adjoining restaurant, and in fact has a doorway connecting the two structures. As seen in the Figure 32, to get to the cabin, visitors must go down a series of steps from the steep walking path, then walk past the cabin through a well-hidden screen door, which leads to the private terrace, and then finally into the interior. Because the cabin is so well hidden with an intricate entry sequence, it has served well as a private holiday retreat. The trade off, of course, for this privacy was the difficulty encountered in its construction. It was prefabricated entirely off-site, disassembled, and brought in via the footpath in sections that were based on Le Corbusier's modular proportional systems. Because the cabin was connected to the restaurant, a kitchen in the home was not necessary. The small space houses two sleeping areas, a dressing area, and a working area, as well as a small room with a toilet. Le Corbusier also later built an unattached workspace further down the path from the cabin where he could work in solitude. While not situated directly on the

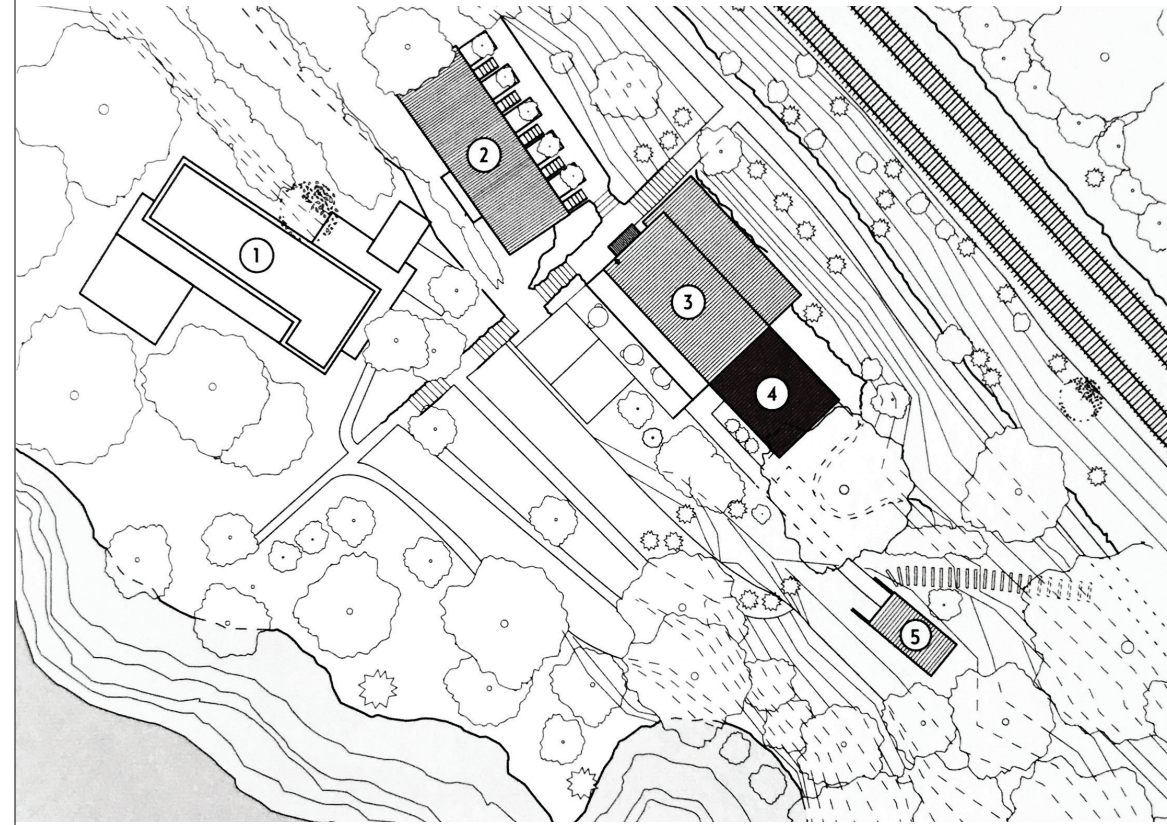


fig. 32 - Site plan, Le Cabanon
(3: Restuarant, 4: Le Cabanon, 5: Detached workspace)

25 Urs Peter Flueckiger. (2016). *How Much House? Thoreau, Le Corbusier, and the Sustainable Cabin*. Basel: Birkhäuser. 47.

water, the house is directly connected to the ocean nearby where Le Corbusier often swam, expanding the small 12 by 12 foot cabin beyond its walls.²⁶ (fig. 33)



fig. 33 - View to the Mediterranean Sea, Le Cabanon



fig. 34 - Squish Studio, Saunders Architecture
Fogo Island, Newfoundland, 2011

A modern example of a cabin on the water is Squish Studio by Saunders Architecture. (fig. 34) This project is an artist's studio on the remote Fogo Island, the largest of the rocky islands off the coast of Newfoundland in Canada.²⁷ The cabin is perched above the rocky site raised on piers doing as little damage as possible to the landscape on which it rests. The white angular form makes the structure stand out from its surroundings. The front entry porch rises up to welcome visitors who have crossed the rocky terrain. In contrast the lower back door dips down to meet the water which it faces. The sidewalls of white painted spruce planks wrap the building, allowing only a few vertical windows to penetrate this protective surface. The main interior space faces out toward the water, channeling all attention to its magnificent force. (fig. 36) The cabin itself is completely self-supporting, with a compost toilet, a stove for heat, and nearby solar panels supplying electricity. While acting as a protective refuge, the cabin also expresses the vulnerability of living in this remote location.

27 Squish Studio / Saunders Architecture. (2012, Apr 27). Retrieved August 18 2017.

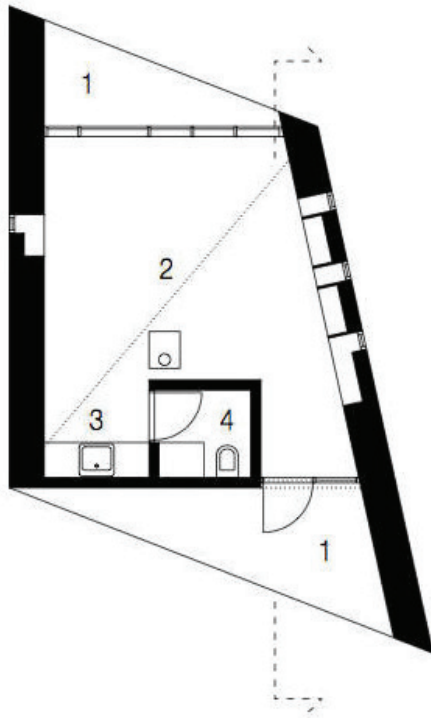


fig. 36 - View of water from interior, Squish Studio

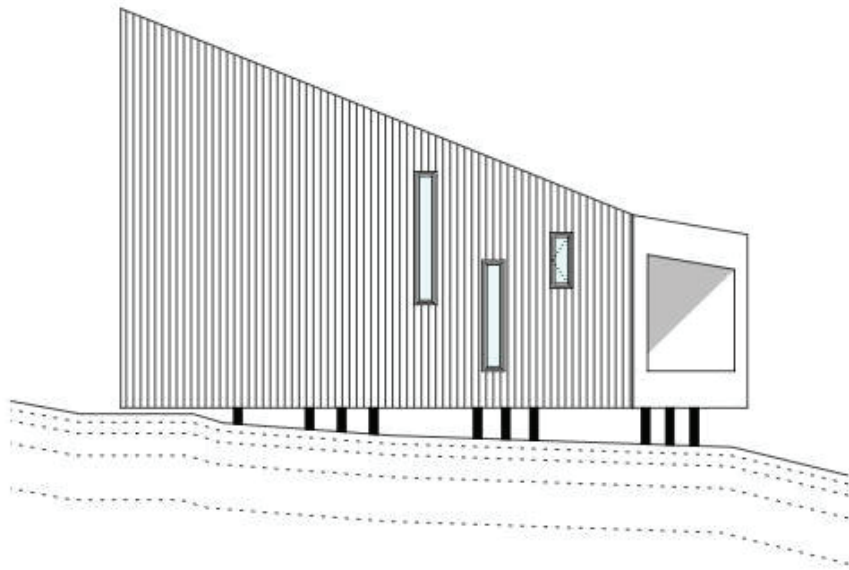
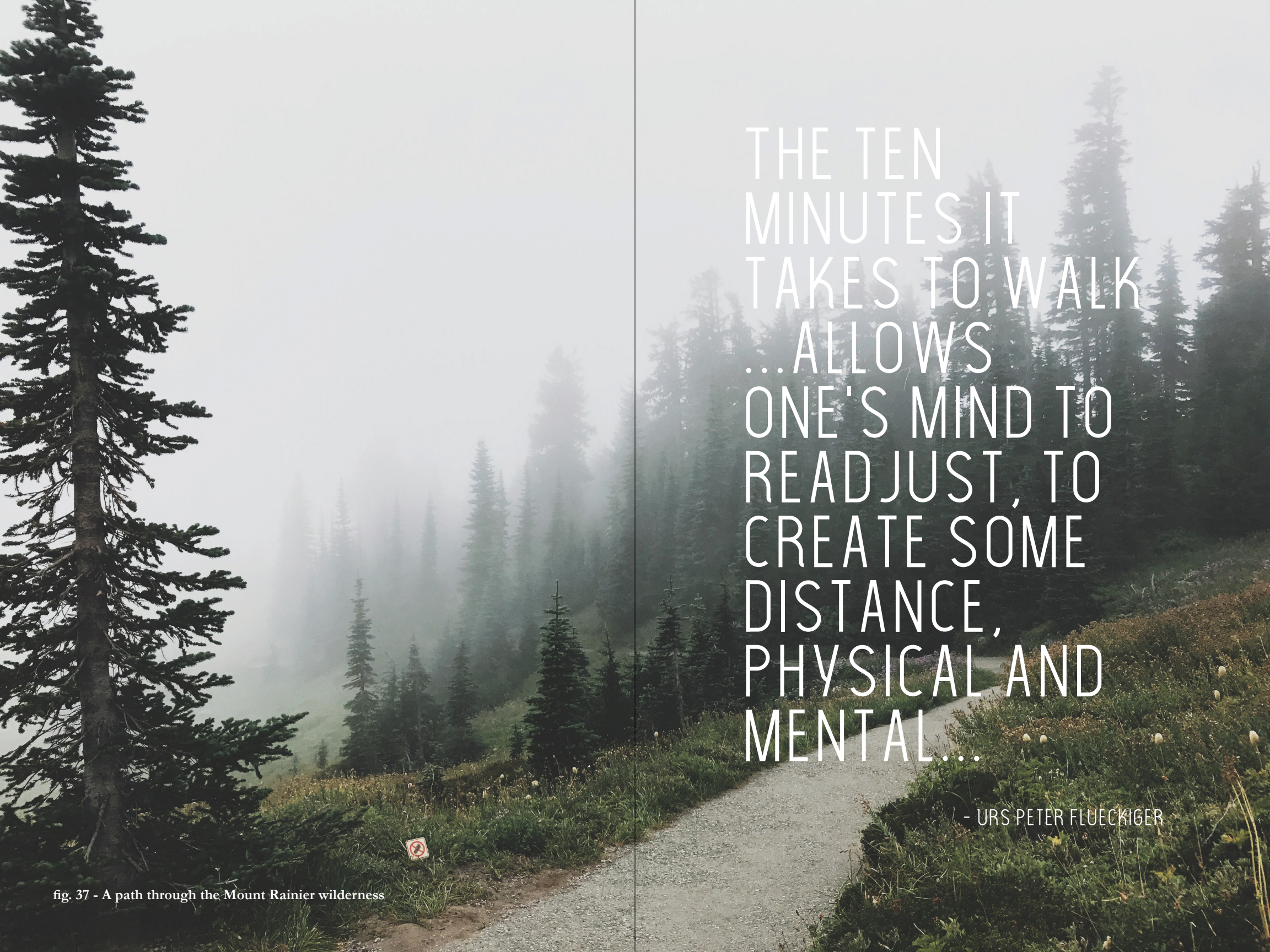


fig. 35 - Plan and Elevation, Squish Studio

A photograph of a gravel path winding through a dense forest of evergreen trees. The scene is shrouded in a thick mist or fog, creating a sense of depth and mystery. The path leads from the foreground into the distance, disappearing into the haze. The trees are tall and dark, their branches partially obscured by the mist. The overall atmosphere is serene and quiet.

THE TEN
MINUTES IT
TAKES TO WALK
...ALLOWS
ONE'S MIND TO
READJUST, TO
CREATE SOME
DISTANCE,
PHYSICAL AND
MENTAL....

- URS PETER FLUECKIGER

fig. 37 - A path through the Mount Rainier wilderness



CABIN + PATH

THE CABIN SHOULD BE realized as more than its physical space within a landscape. The journey to the cabin just as important as the physical object. The sense of solitude within the cabin is felt after the process of getting there.

When hiking, the hiker feels this sense of dedication, of quieting your mind as they focus on the rhythm of their steps moving further out of society toward the cabin, so that by the time you get there, you are mentally in the right place.

When thinking about the path, there are differing levels of difficulty when it comes to hiking, each requiring a different set of skills and preparedness before one leaves. These degrees of difficulty also change the length of time

one is expecting to spend at their final destination once they get there.

Three general lengths of time were determined which one might want to spend at a cabin, which corresponds to the difficulty and time required to get there. By reorganizing the three types of site previously defined (water, forest, and mountain) by their elevations and difficulty in access, the path can be thought of as a means to access each of these sites, and the cabins associated with them.

Just like moving up the mountain, water is typically the lowest in elevation and the easiest to access - corresponding to the Hour Cabin. Forest sits in the middle and a little more difficult to access - and upon arrival a visitor would want to stay for a time measured in days. And mountain is the most difficult to access, requiring the most preparedness, and this difficulty results in a cabin where one could stay for weeks.



fig. 39 - Path + Wilderness - The sites water, forest, and mountain create a landscape upon which an individual can travel through. With varying levels of difficulty, each cabin responds to how long a visitor may want to stay upon arrival.

This thesis argues that Seattle's Downtown Waterfront can also be thought of as a type of topography, a wilderness to be traversed and climbed. Elliot Bay is the lowest elevation. Moving up the slope from that, the lower elevation buildings can be thought of as the forest, with the interspersed skyscrapers as the mountains of the city. Because of the topography and density of the buildings, Downtown Seattle is the perfect siting for three cabins within the urban environment, inviting the individual to not only depart from the urban city, but to experience it in a different way.



fig. 40 - Path + City - Seattle Downtown Waterfront can also be thought of as a landscape where an individual can travel through, and the layers of water and building also reflects a natural topography.



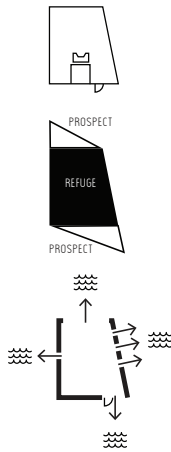
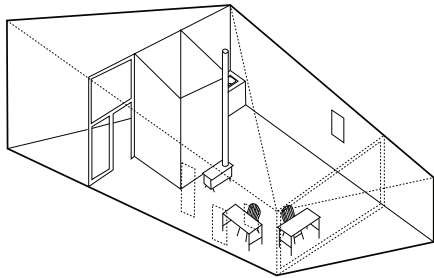
CABIN + PROGRAM

DESTIGUISHING THE PATH BY difficulty allows for this distinction between types of cabin based on how long someone is expected to stay. Case studies were again selected and studied for program and amenities. The three types of spaces that cabins typically provide, depending on their use, is a space for reflection, a space for sleeping, and a space for working. The case studies were also studied for amenities, such as a fireplace, a kitchen, a toilet, a shower, and a porch. The information found was synthesized to decide what types of spaces and amenities each cabin would include.

HOUR

SQUISH STUDIO, SAUNDERS ARCHITECTURE
FOGO ISLAND, NEWFOUNDLAND

323 SQ FT



CINEMA STUDIO SHED, LATIS
HACKNEY, EAST LONDON

215 SQ FT

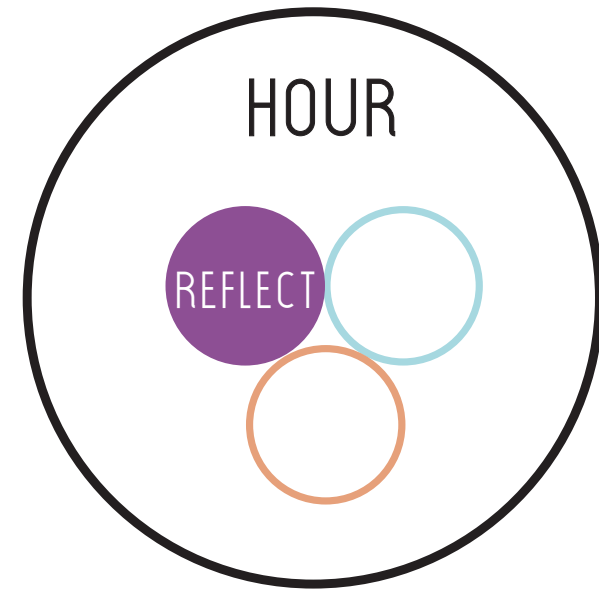
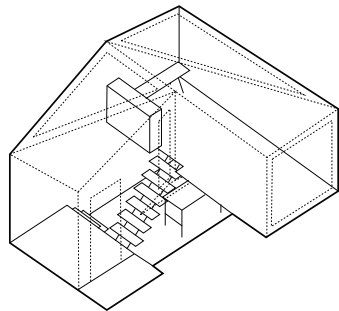
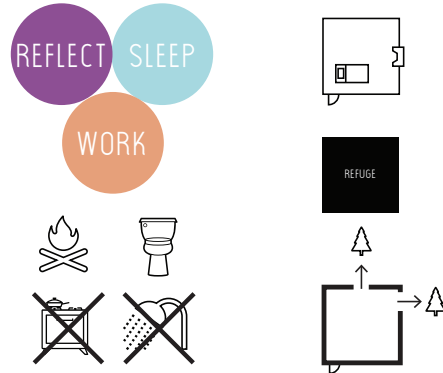
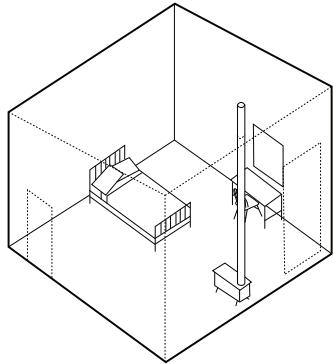


fig. 43 - The Hour Cabin Program - For this thesis, the hour cabin is purely a space of reflection, time there measured only in hours.

DAY

HEMMELOG ROM, STUDIO PADRON
UPSTATE NEW YORK

320 SQ FT



ENCHANTED CABIN, SUE ARCHITEKTEN
EICHGRABEN, LOWER AUSTRIA

322 SQ FT

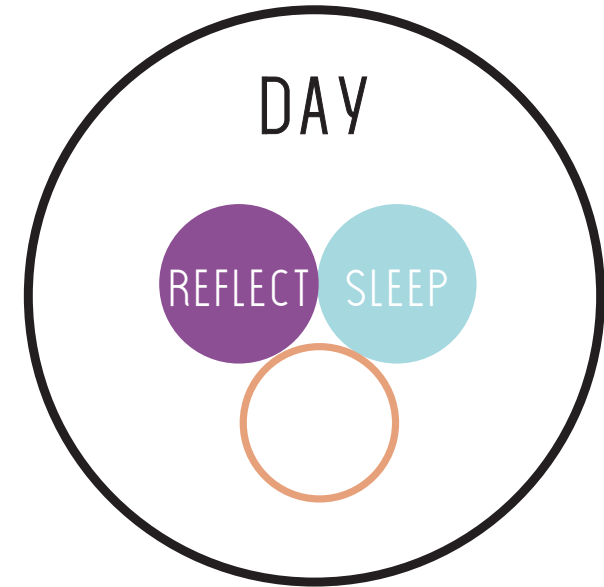
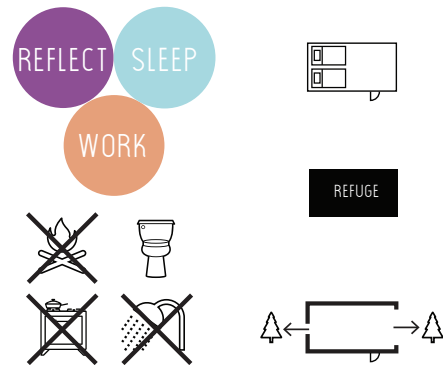
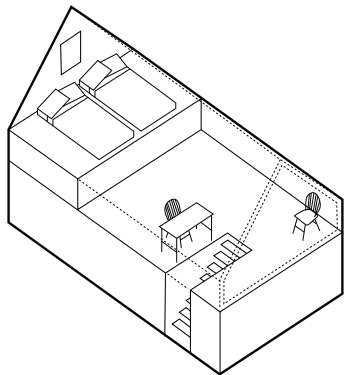


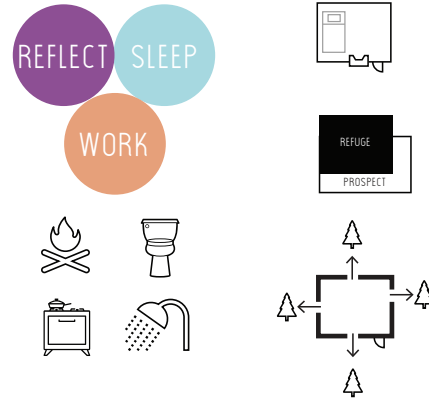
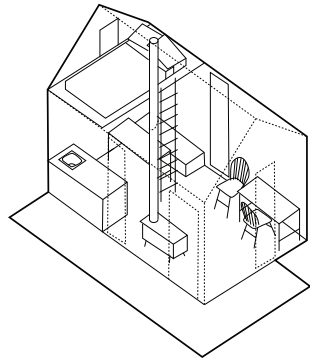
fig. 44 - The Day Cabin Case Studies

fig. 45 - The Day Cabin Program - For this thesis, the day cabin has a place to sleep in addition to a place to reflect, the key difference in that time here is measured on the 24 hour cycle

WEEK

INSHRIACH BOTHY, THE BOTHY PROJECT CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK, SCOTLAND

130 SQ FT



SWEENEY'S BOTHY, THE BOTHY PROJECT ISLE OF EIGG, SCOTLAND

155 SQ FT

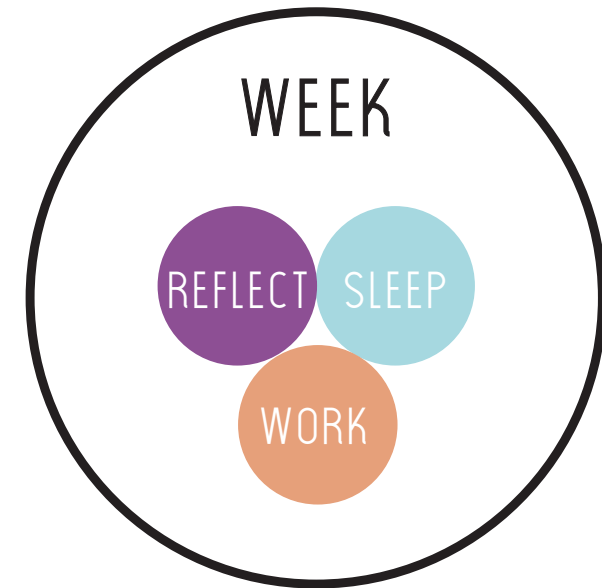
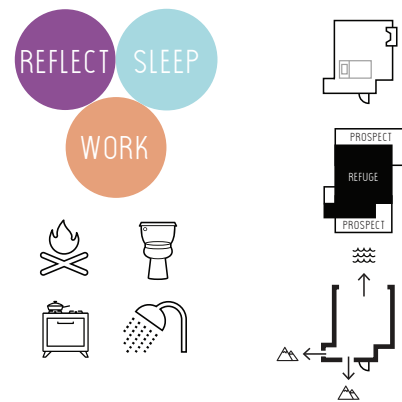
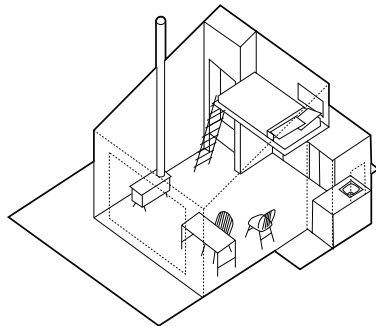
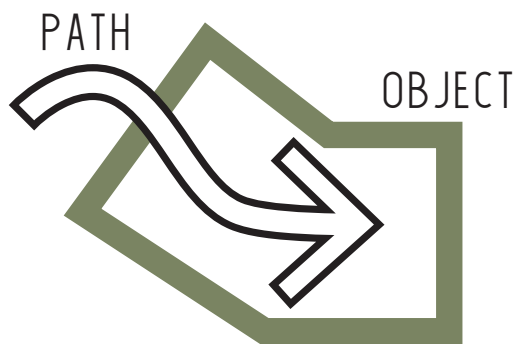
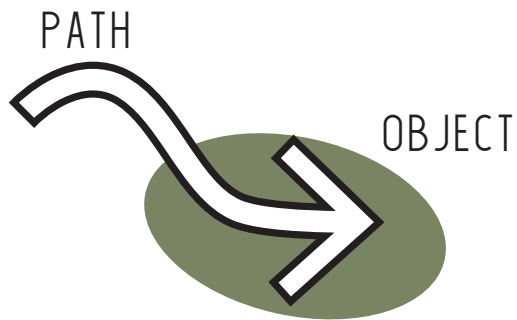
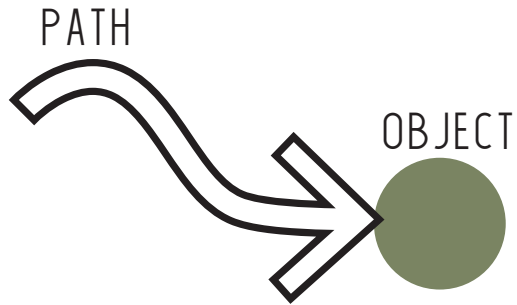
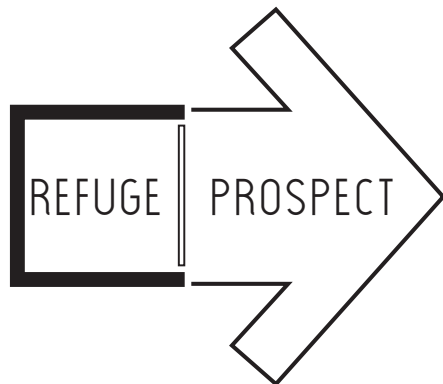
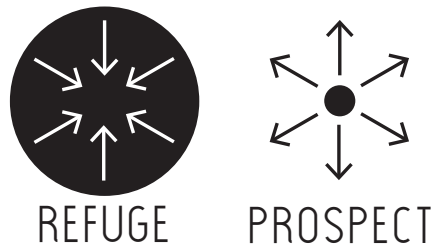


fig. 47 - The Week Cabin Program - For this thesis, the week cabin requires a space to work, as well as a dedicated cooking space because it is such a long period of time.



CABIN + CONCEPT

AFTER DEFINING PROGRAMMATICALLY WHAT the cabins (or objects) should include, the path is reconsulted to study dichotomy between the object and the path, both equally important in this project. Instead of being two separate pieces, the path, which is defined by the city, should influence or be brought into the cabin as an object, as a continuation of the path and as a clear stopping, or resting, point once one enters the space.



CABIN + REFUGE

THE IDEA OF THE cabin as a refuge or resting place brought up ideas about prospect and refuge, which in the instance of a cabin are not two separate spaces, but part of the same space. Professor Grant Hildebrand wrote of Frank Lloyd Wright's Falling Water, "We are invited to savor danger from a haven of safety."²⁸ This thesis argues that it is this idea of prospect and refuge that can be explored within the context of the cabin in the city. It is not about being fully cut off from the surrounding wilderness, but feeling safe and secure from it.

28 Kela Bogaard. (2017, May 17). Interior Habitats: The Theory of Prospect and Refuge. Retrieved December 12, 2017.



CABIN + INDIVIDUAL

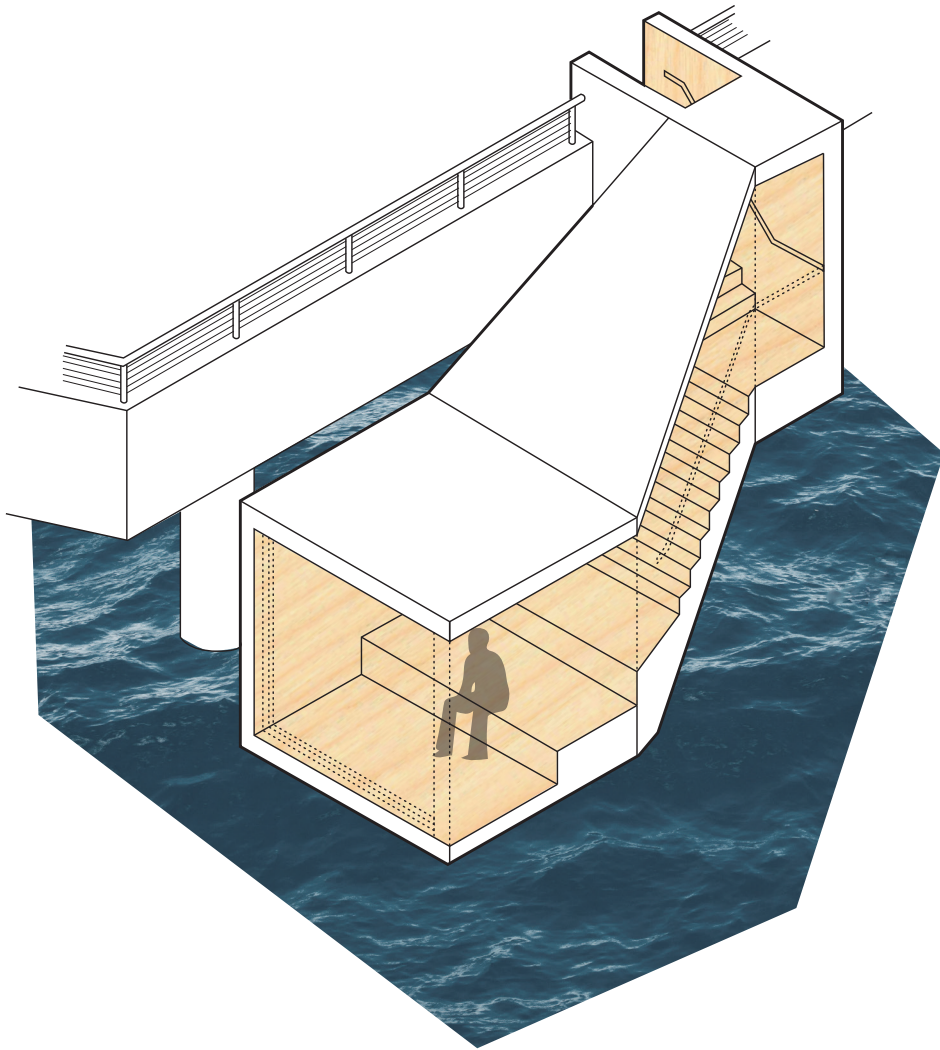
WHEN WORKING WITH SUCH an intimate idea of the cabin, there is the question of whom these cabins are for. And honestly these cabins are for me. And for the other people in Seattle who feel like they need the silence in order to feel any sort of mental clarity. This refuge is for the person who yearns to be in the mountains but doesn't have car to get out of the city. It is for the person who works 60 hours a week and just needs an hour to herself, or the person who sleeps best when she can look up to the darkness of the night sky. It is for the person who wants spend a night alone in the forest, but doesn't yet have enough confidence. It is for the person who has never truly experienced quietness or aloneness and does not realize how much he needs it.



WE ARE INVITED
TO SAVOR DANGER
FROM A HAVEN OF
SAFETY.

fig. 51 - Devil's Peak Fire Lookout Cabin

- GRANT HILDEBRAND



3. THE CABINS

THE HOUR CABIN

THE HOUR CABIN IS meant to serve a visitor for a very short amount of time. It is intended for someone who could use just an hour of quiet.

The journey officially starts at the waterfront park.



You follow Alaskan Way south to Pier 56 where you turn past Elliot's Oyster House.



fig. 53 - Waterfront Park
fig. 54 - Alaskan Way looking south

Walking past the outdoor seating, now closed for the winter,



You walk further and further out on the pier where finally the sounds of the Viaduct and the people falls away and



fig. 55 - Pier 56, Elliot's Oyster House

fig. 56 - Pier 56 looking west

all you can hear is the water. Not many people walk out this far.



You see a parking lot where employees park for the day, and it almost feels as though you aren't supposed to be here.



fig. 57 - Pier 56 looking west
fig. 58 - Pier 56, parking lot

But you keep going and at the end of the pier you see steps leading down.

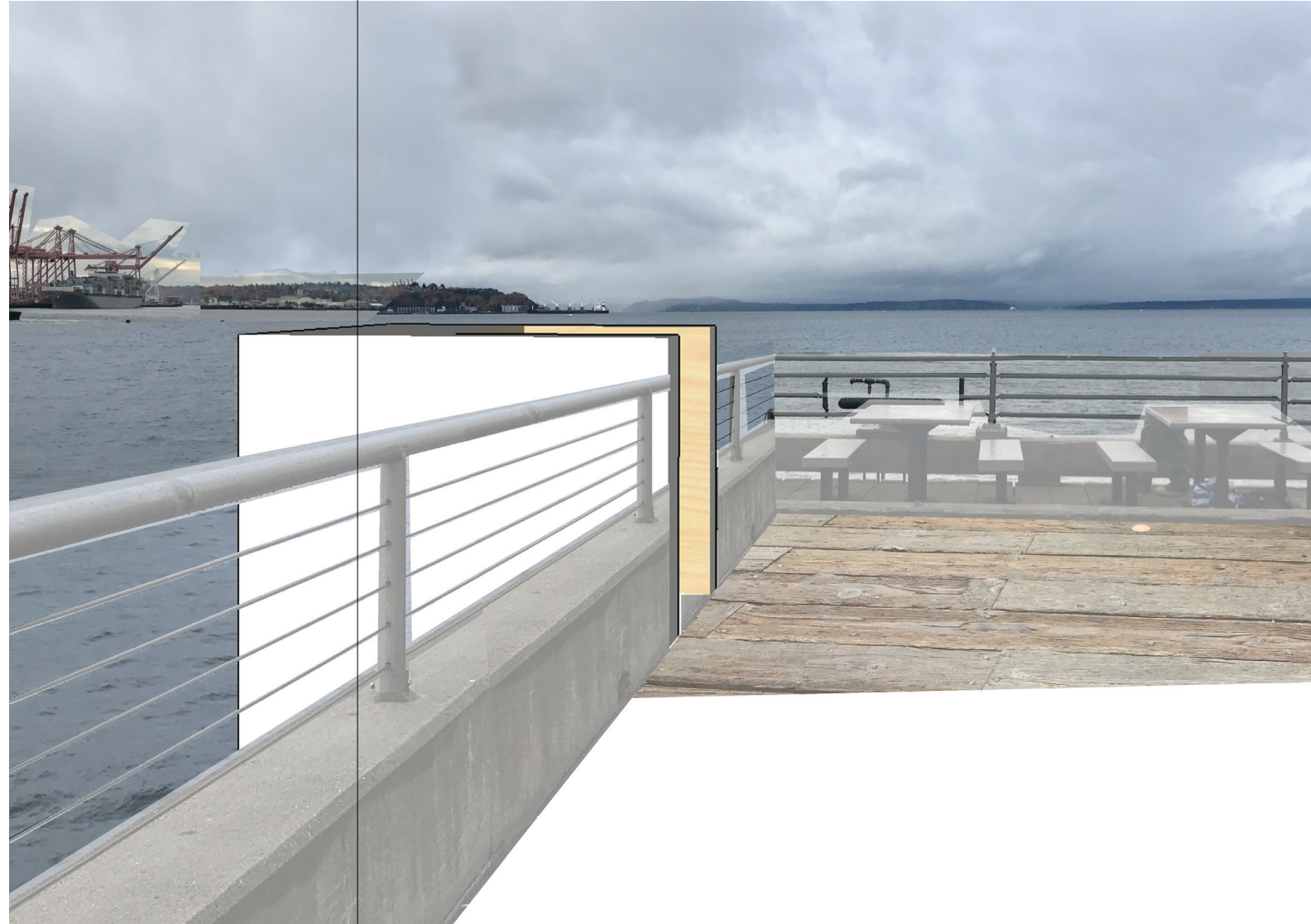


fig. 59 - End of Pier 56

You start to descend, and for a moment you
cannot see the water at all,

until all at once you are

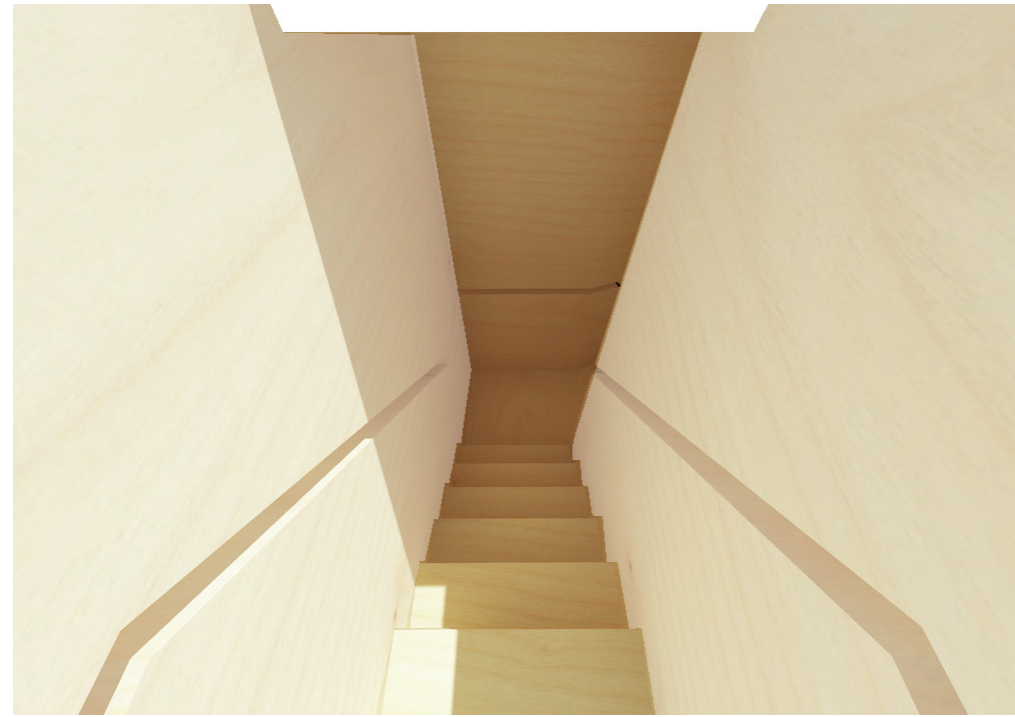


fig. 60 - Entering The Hour Cabin

fig. 61 - The Hour Cabin, descending toward the water

overwhelmed with its horizon. No longer any trace of the city is left, and for just a few moments you can quiet your mind and rest.



THE HOUR CABIN

THE PATH



THE CABIN



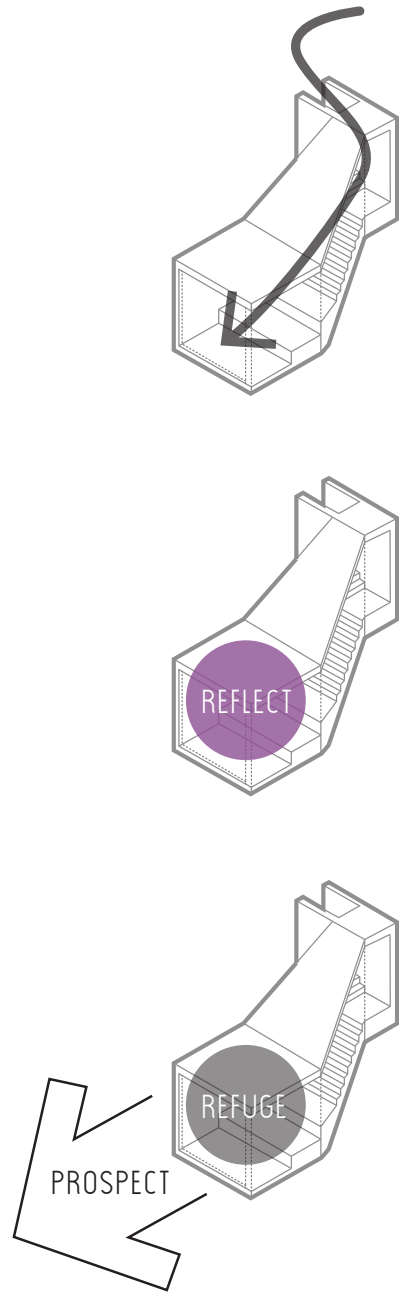


fig. 64 - The Hour Cabin Diagrams - its relationship to path, as a space of reflection, and a place of prospect and refuge.

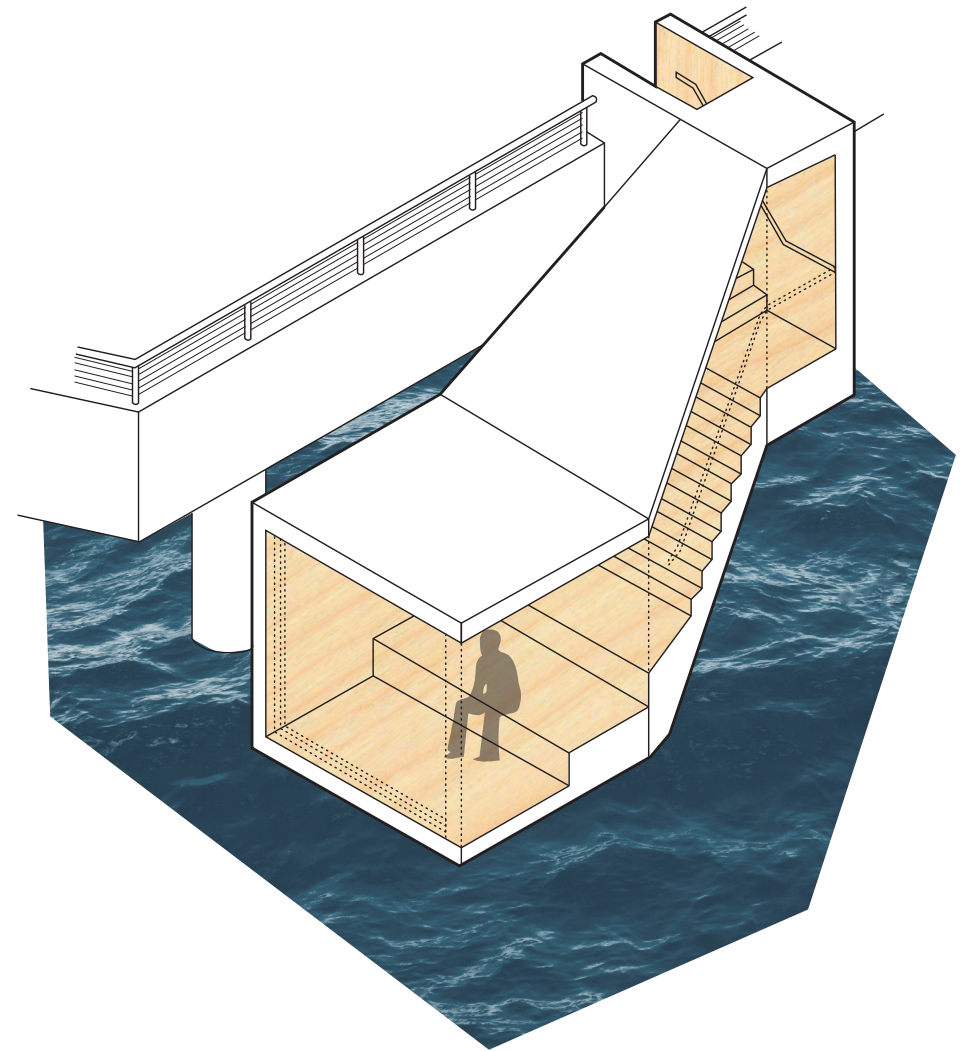
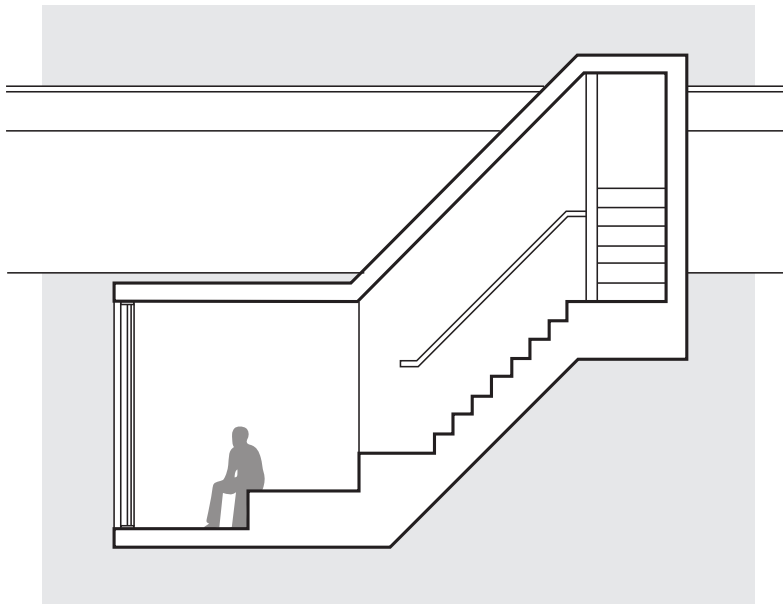
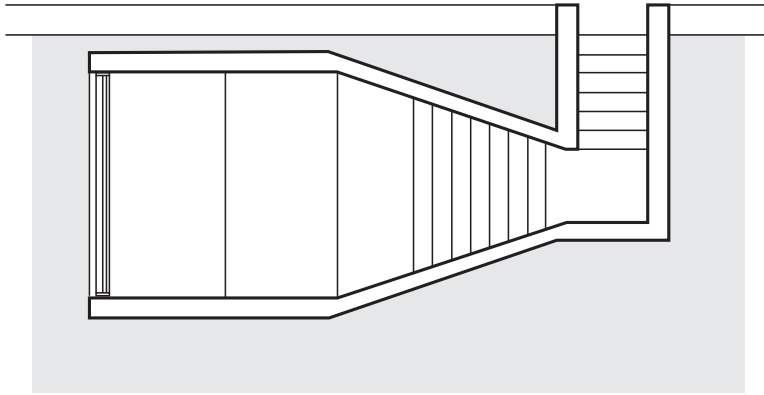
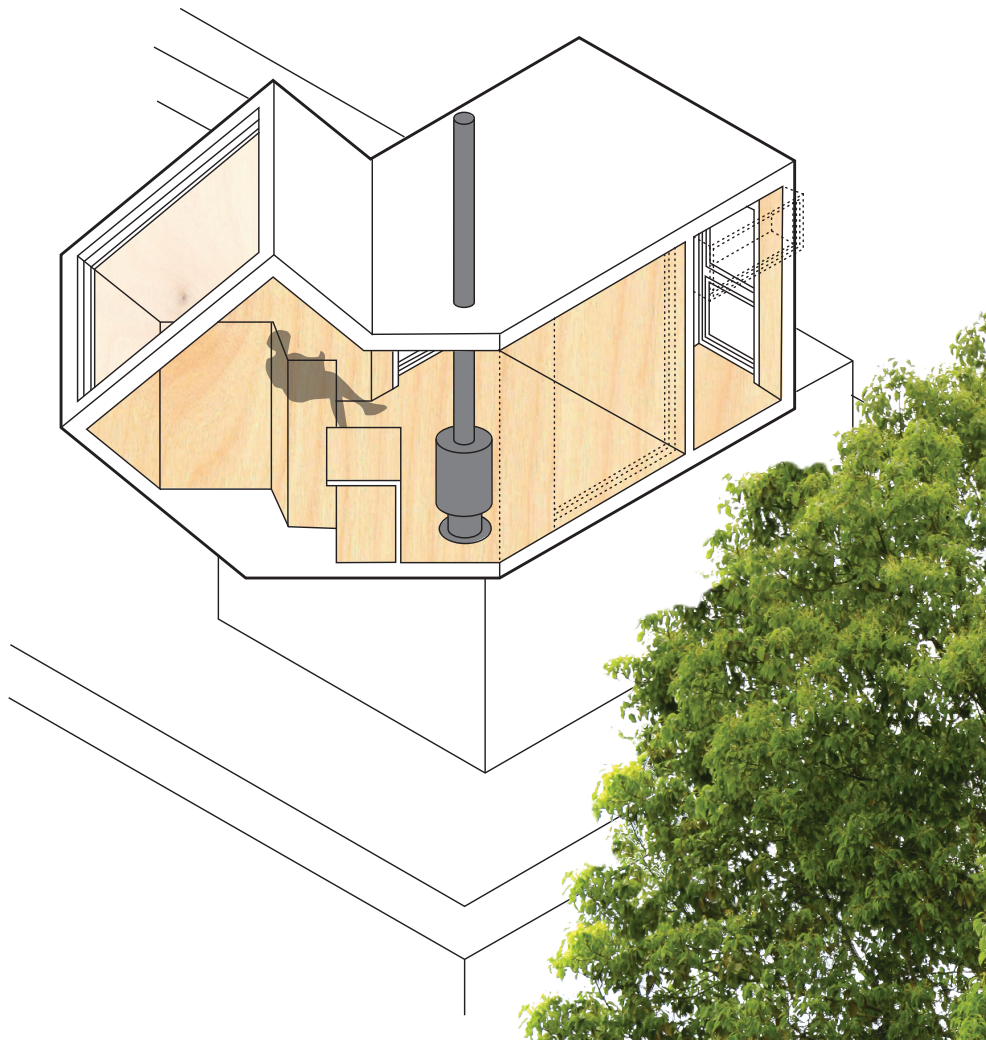


fig. 65 - Isometric of The Hour Cabin





THE DAY CABIN

THE DAY CABIN IS meant to serve a visitor for an overnight stay. It is intended for someone who could use a night to sleep with the sky overhead.

The journey starts at the waterfront park,



and it again follows Alaskan Way, north this time toward Pier 62.



fig. 68 - The Waterfront Park

fig. 69 - Alaskan Way looking north

You turn right toward the viaduct and spot a stair moving up the slope.

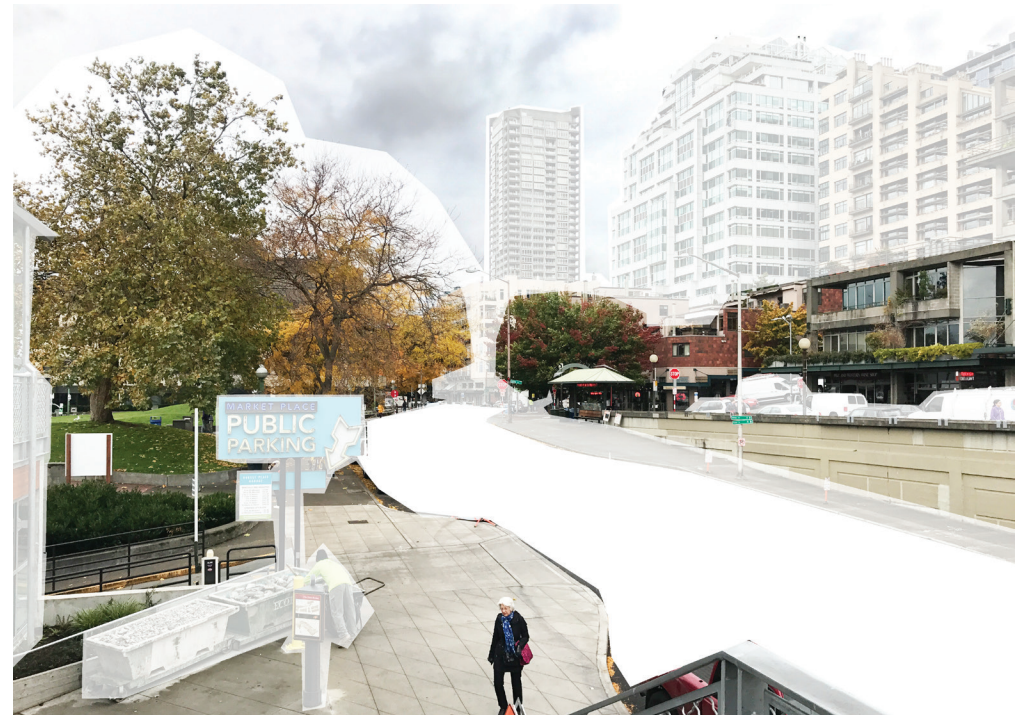


It brings you up to Pike Place, though you've never come up this way before.



fig. 70 - Stairway going underneath the Viaduct
fig. 71 - South of MarketFront, Pike Place Market

Trying to avoid large groups of people, you step up into the park and



start making your way up the steep slope of Virginia Street.



fig. 72 - Victor Steinbrueck Park, Pike Place Market
fig. 73 - Western Ave & Virginia St, Pike Place Market

You slip into the alleyway on your right side and recognize it as Post Alley. Trying to not bring any attention to yourself,

you hop on a fire escape that brings you up to the roof of the building. You wonder if you've almost made it to your home for the night when

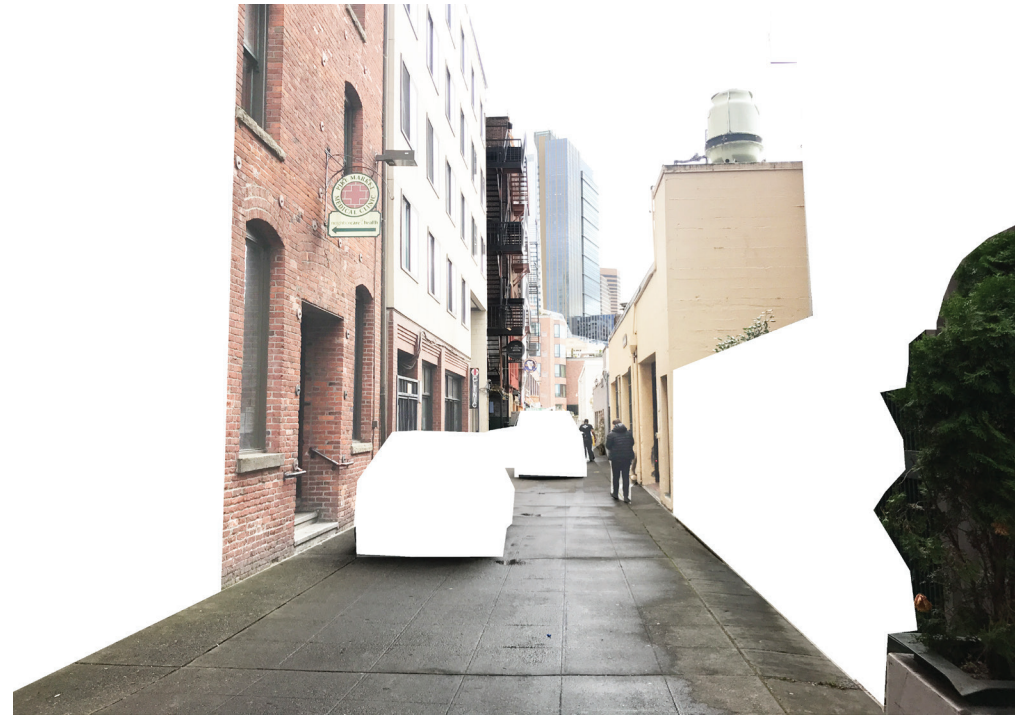
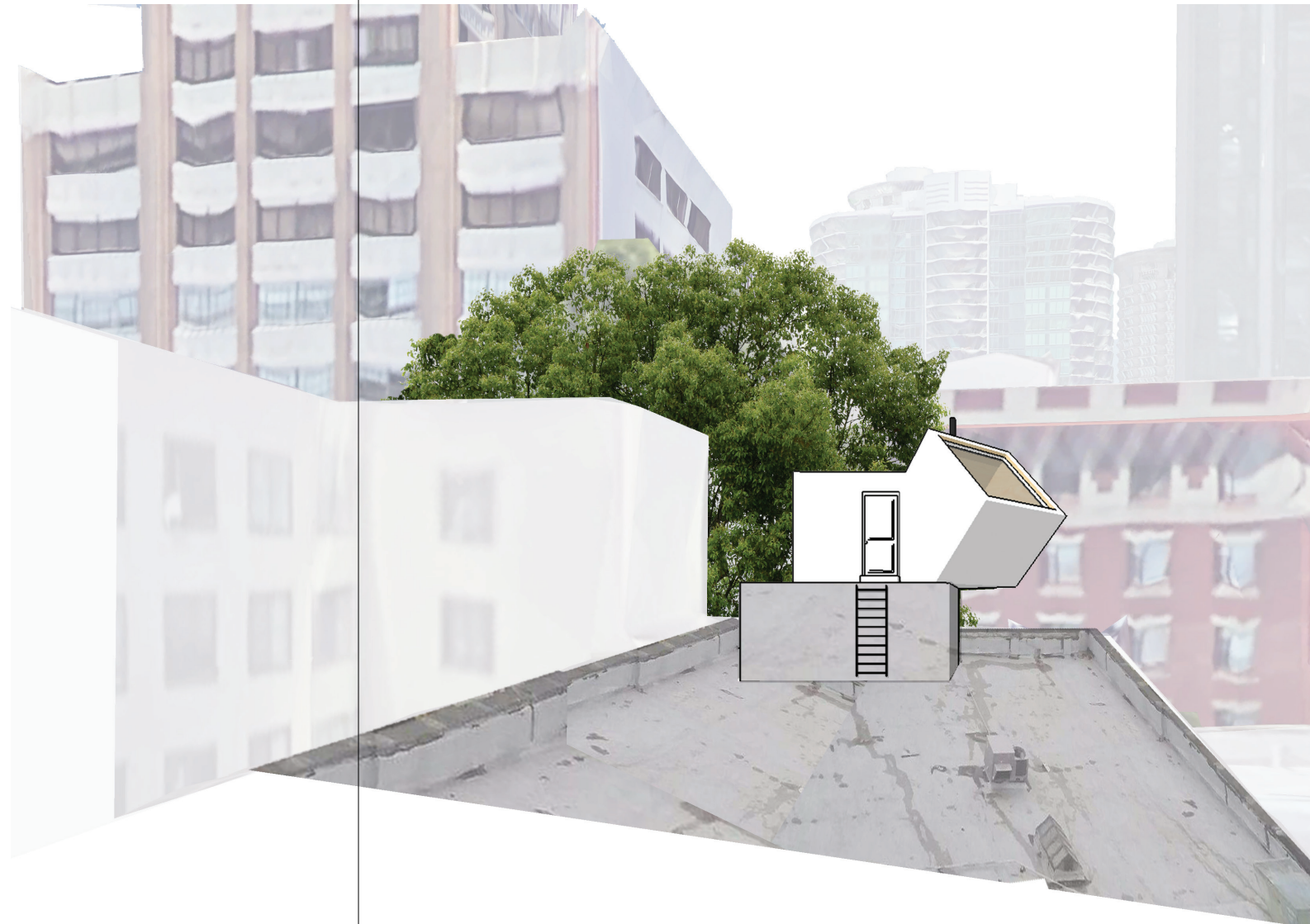


fig. 74 - Virginia St & Post Alley, Pike Place Market
fig. 75 - Fire escape in Post Alley

you see it. You walk the rest of the way, climb up the ladder



open the door. Before you is a full frame view of a tree. Wow, you think. I don't remember there being such large trees downtown.

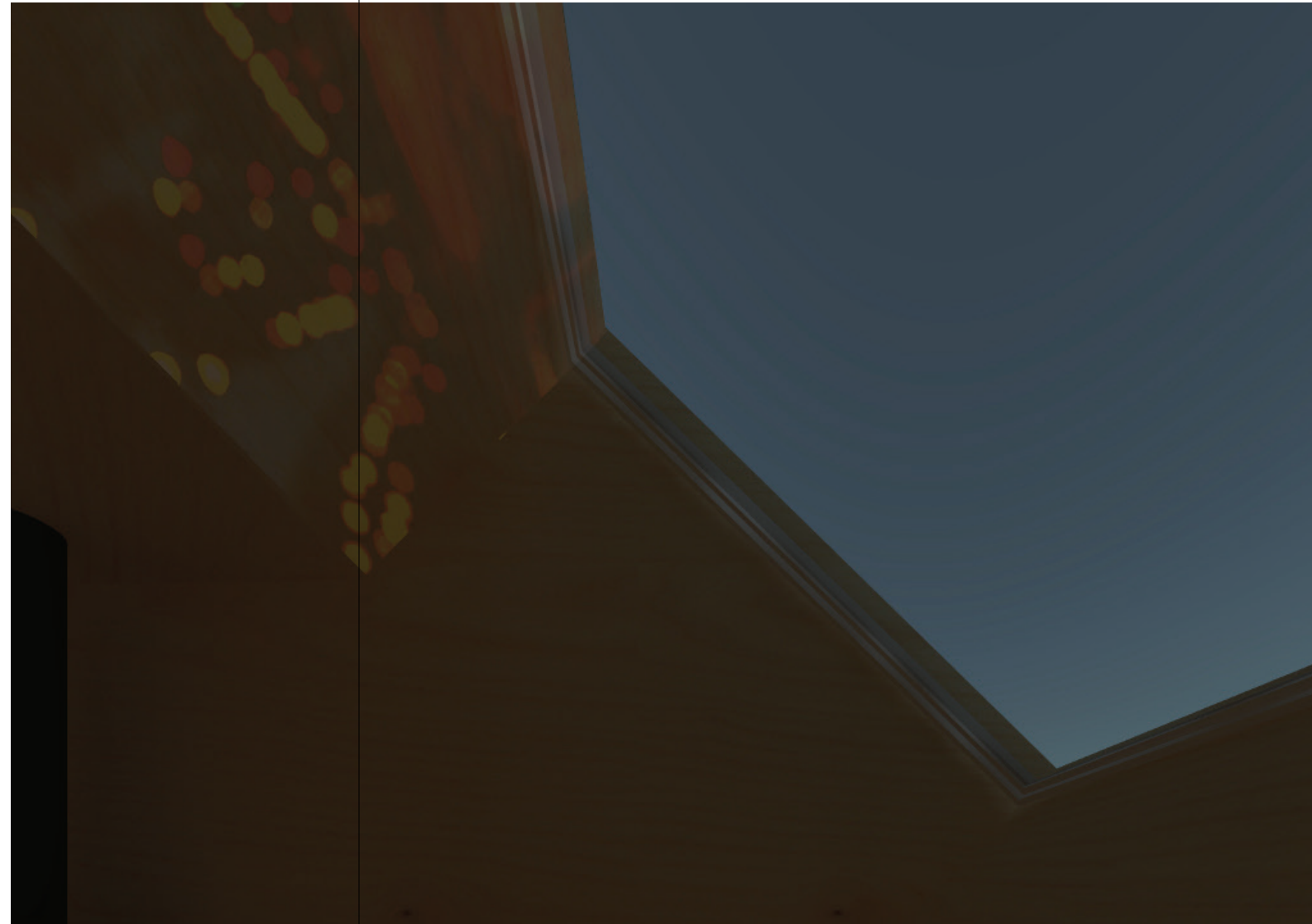
Around to your right is a platform to lay out your sleeping bag, and above it, a framed view of the sky. As the sun is starting to set, it is casting a warm glow inside the cabin, and you think you better start a fire in the stove and make dinner before daylight is gone.



fig. 77 - Entering The Day Cabin

fig. 78 - Sleeping platform, The Day Cabin

As you lay down for bed and look out to the night sky, you think this isn't the sky you remember from the wilderness, full of stars, but as the city lights dance across the ceiling, you think this could work just as well.



THE DAY CABIN

THE PATH



THE CABIN



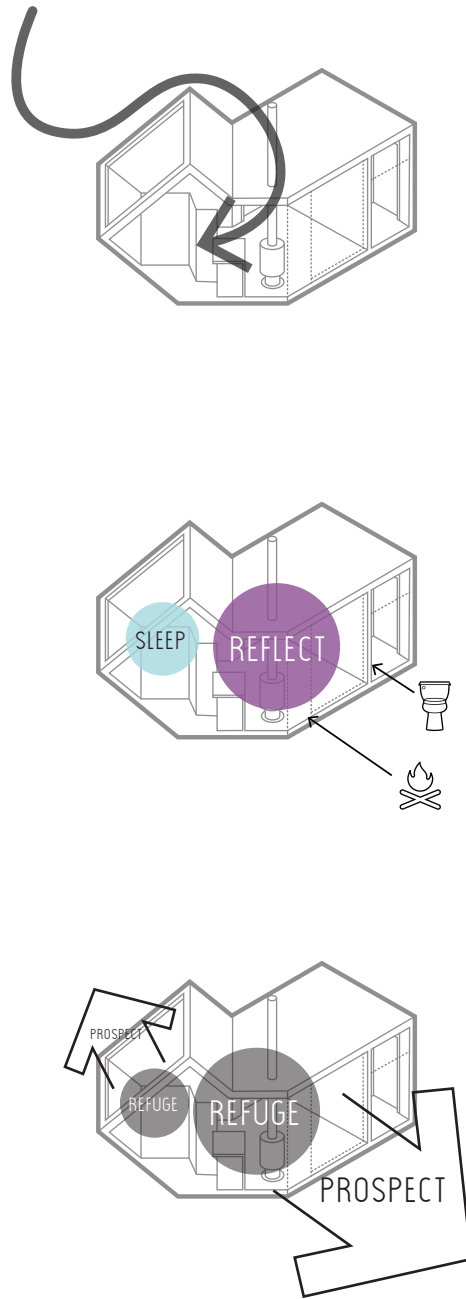


fig. 81 - The Day Cabin Diagrams - its relationship to path, as a space of reflection and sleep, and a place of prospect and refuge

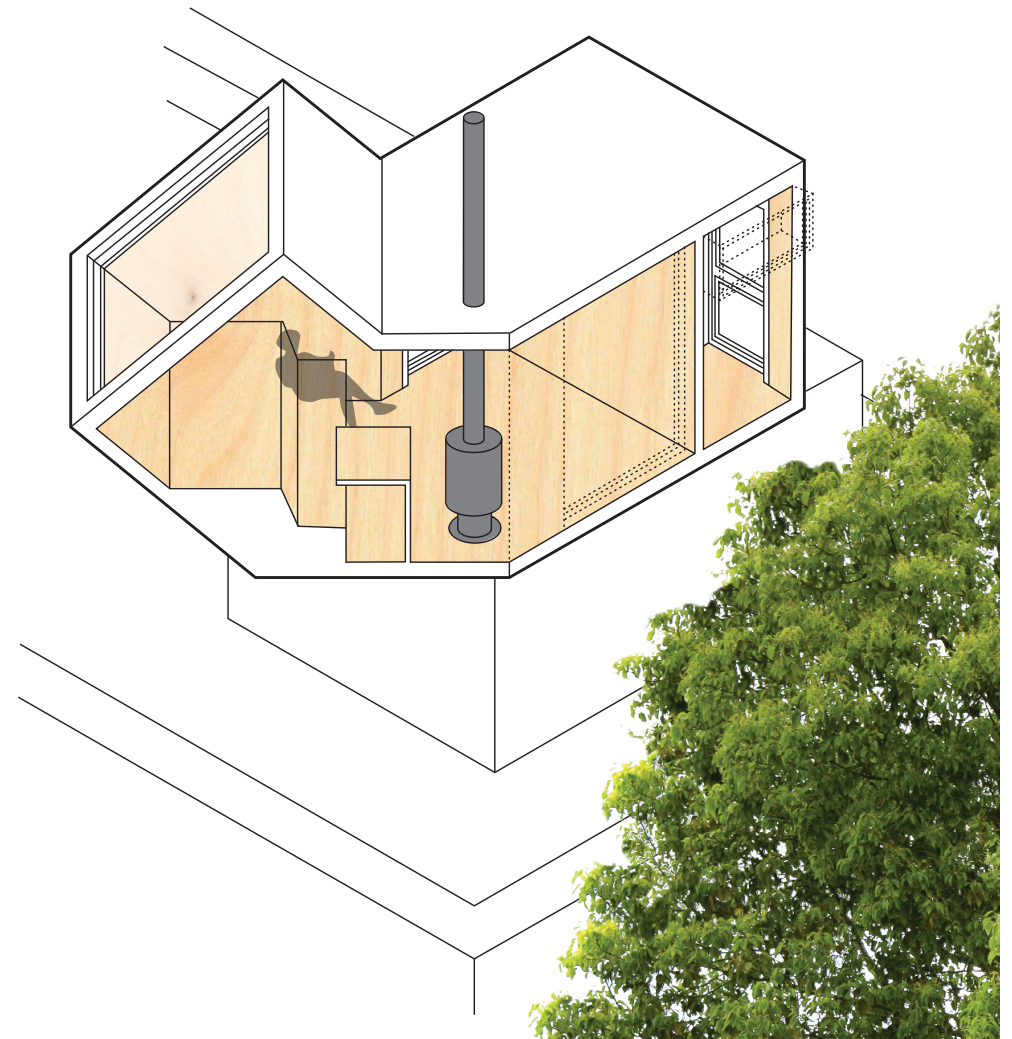
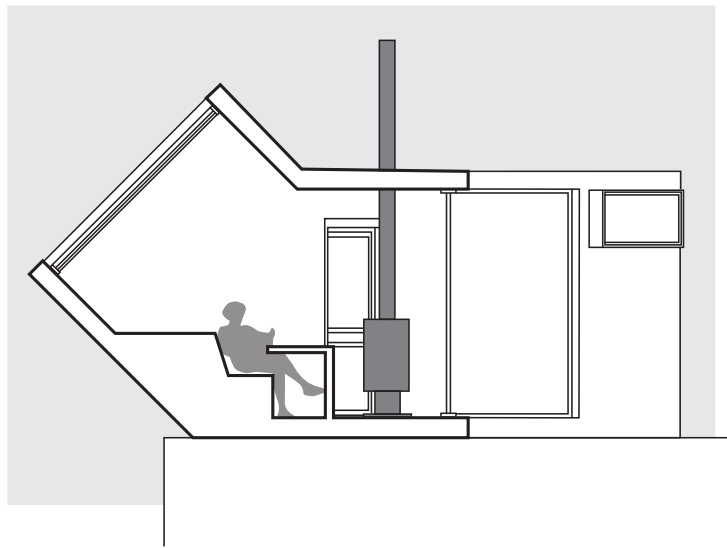
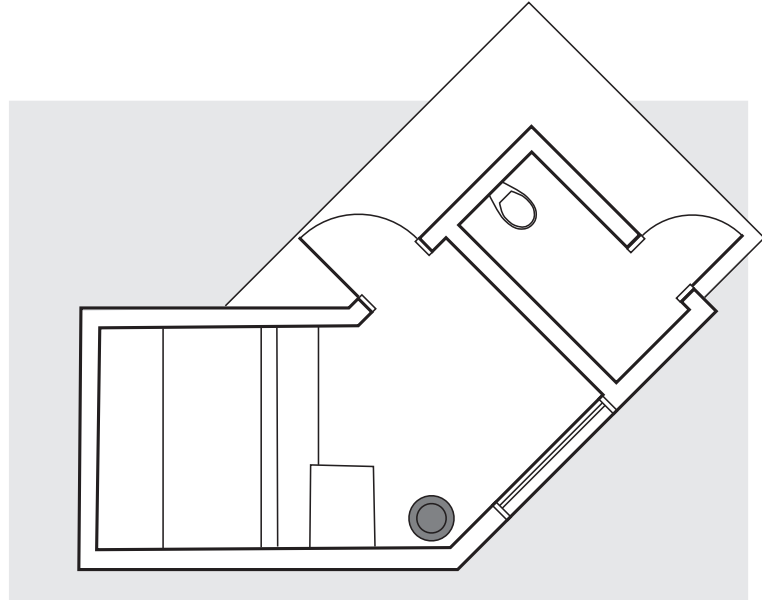
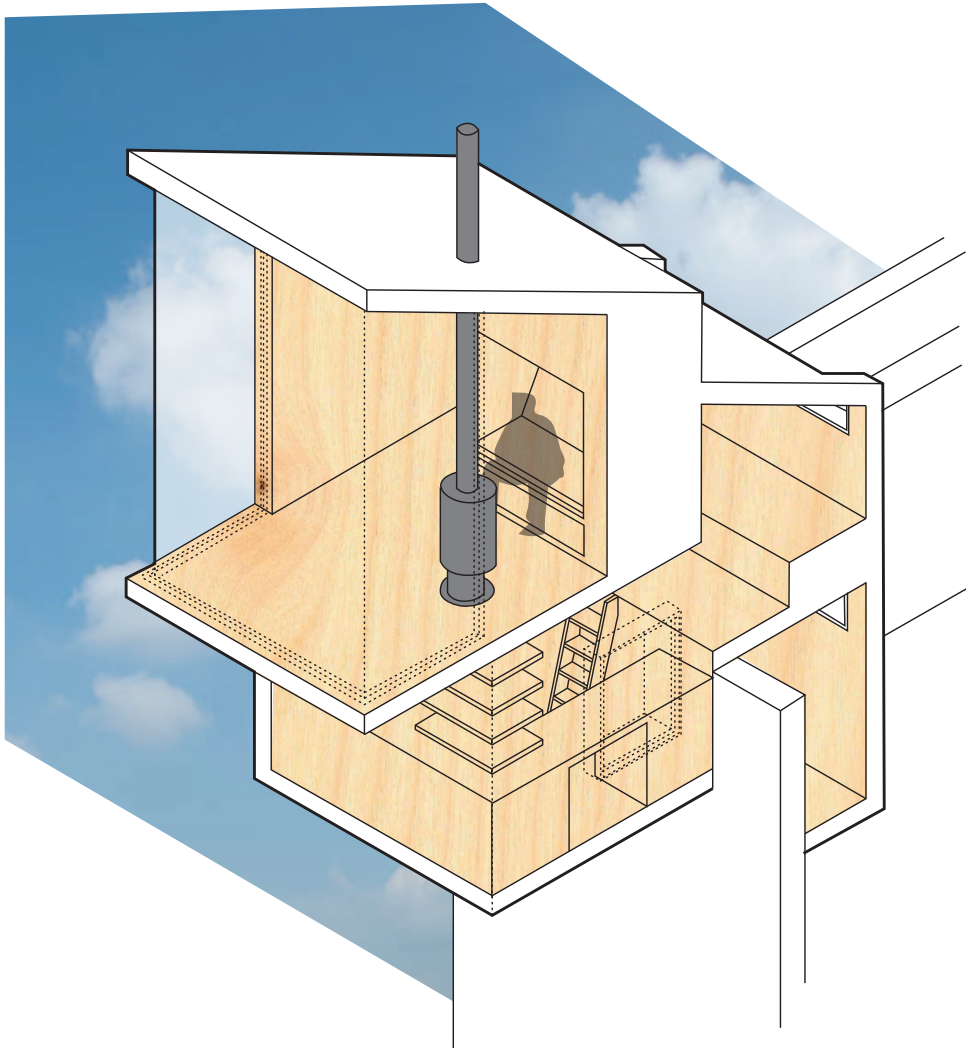


fig. 82 - Isometric of The Day Cabin





THE WEEK CABIN

THE WEEK CABIN IS meant to serve a visitor for a longer period of time. It is intended for someone who needs more than just one day away from the city, but who may not be able to physically leave, perhaps because she has a thesis to work on.

The journey starts at the waterfront park.



Before you leave, you look the Russell Investments building and try to see your home for the next week. You better start moving, you think, you have a lot of elevation to climb.



fig. 85 - Waterfront Park
fig. 86 - Alaskan Way looking east

The elevation starts as you already climb up the Pike Place Hillclimb.



You continue steadily up as you make your way



fig. 87 - Alaskan Way & Pike Place Hillclimb
fig. 88 - Ascending Pike Place Hillclimb

toward Pike Place. In Pike Place, you notice a stair that you've never seen before and it leads you up to the



roof of the building. You find a ladder that leads you up to the



fig. 89 - Looking up toward Pike Place Market
fig. 90 - Roof of Pike Place Market

roof of the building next door and look to see if you can see the cabin yet. You're only 4 stories up from the Market now, but already so much of the noise has died down. As you continue your way up, you hop from building roof to building roof, finding ladders and stairs along the way.

You come to the edge of the building and find a bridge that leads to the next building. That's interesting, you've never noticed this bridge from the ground, you think. Sure enough, once you cross over you see another bridge crossing over to the

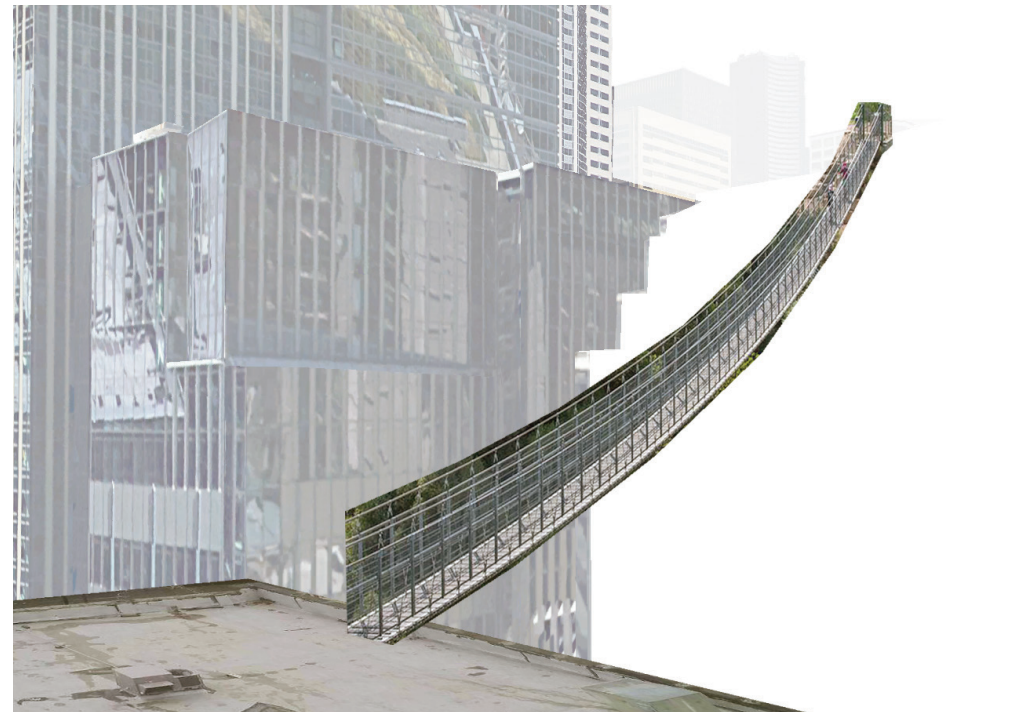
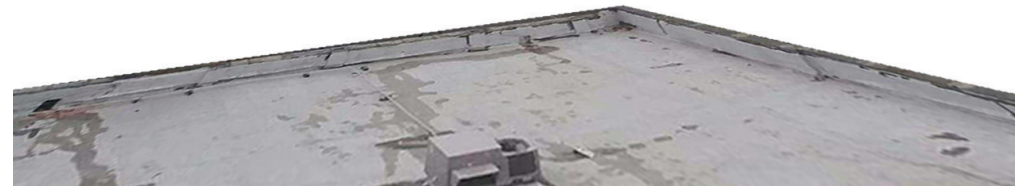
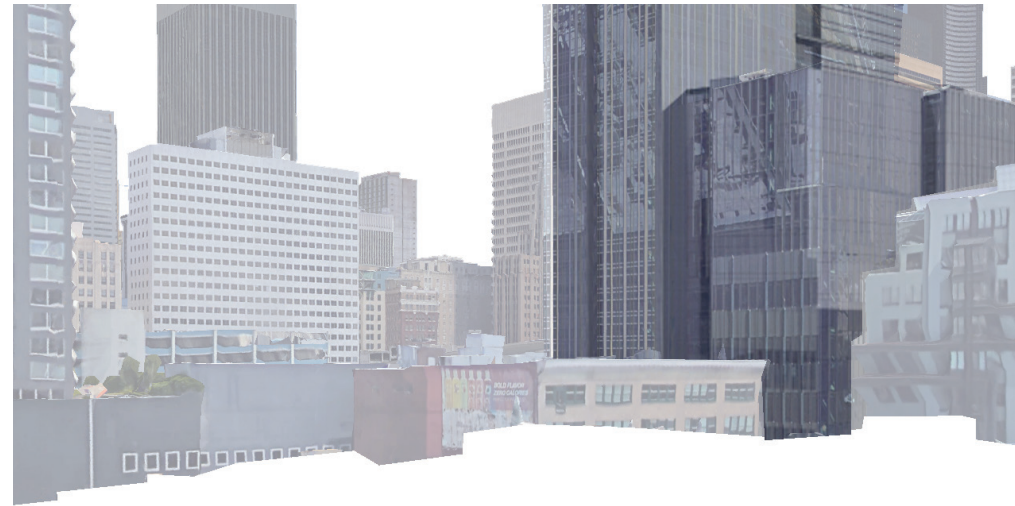
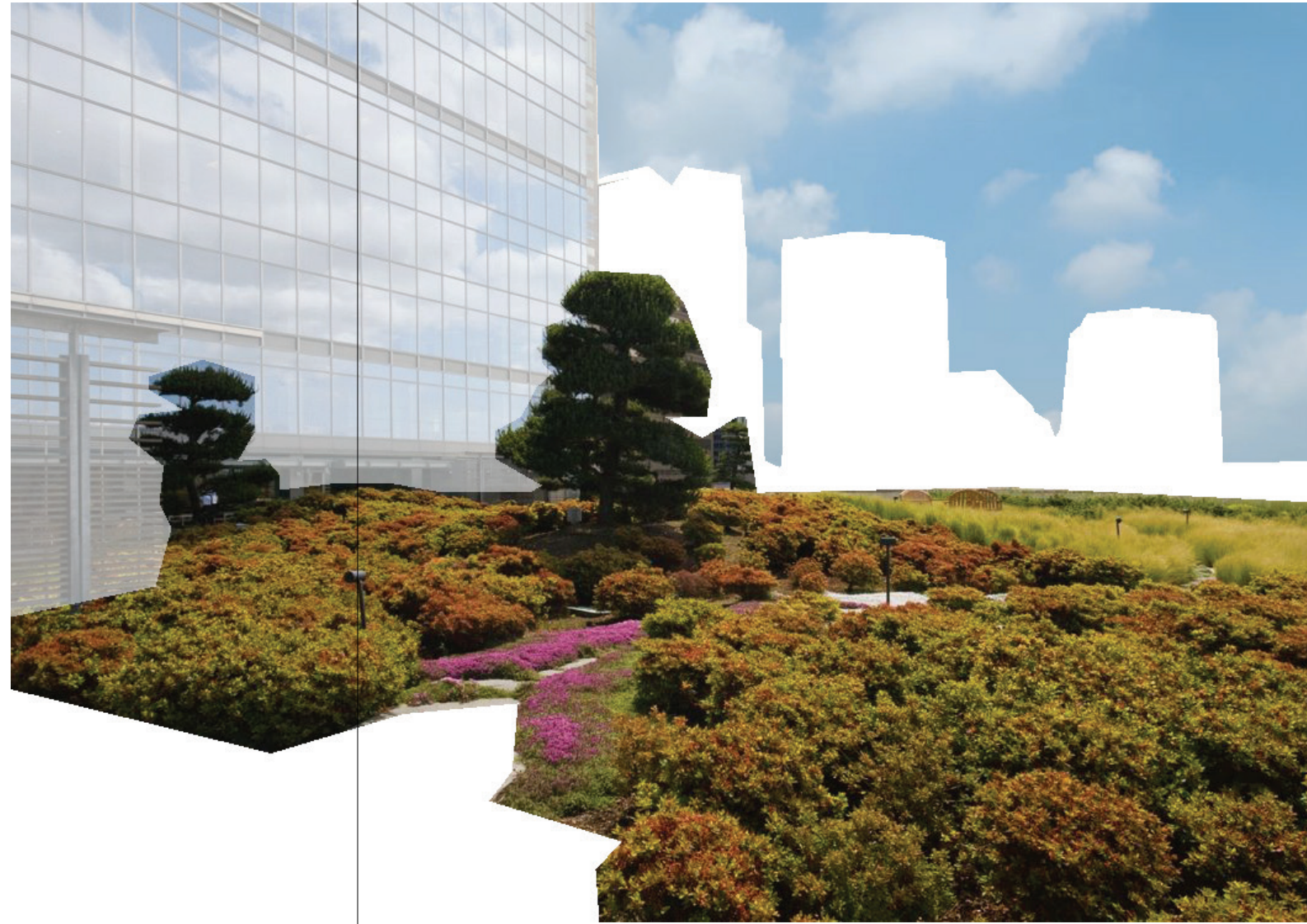


fig. 91 - Roof of building neighboring Pike Place Market

fig. 92 - Bridge linking rooftops

roof garden at the base of the Russell Investments Tower. Sitting for a moment to rehydrate and eat something you prepare for you final ascent up to the cabin. Looking around, you find a walkway that leads to the



exposed stair that will take you the rest of the way up. As you begin your final ascent you remind yourself to go slow and steady, endurance is key. Every few floors, you stop to look around and see how high you are. Finally you look up and there is only a few more flights of stairs left.

You make it onto the roof and you take a look behind you. You snap a photo of the Cascades, then continue up. Finally you make it to the last landing and

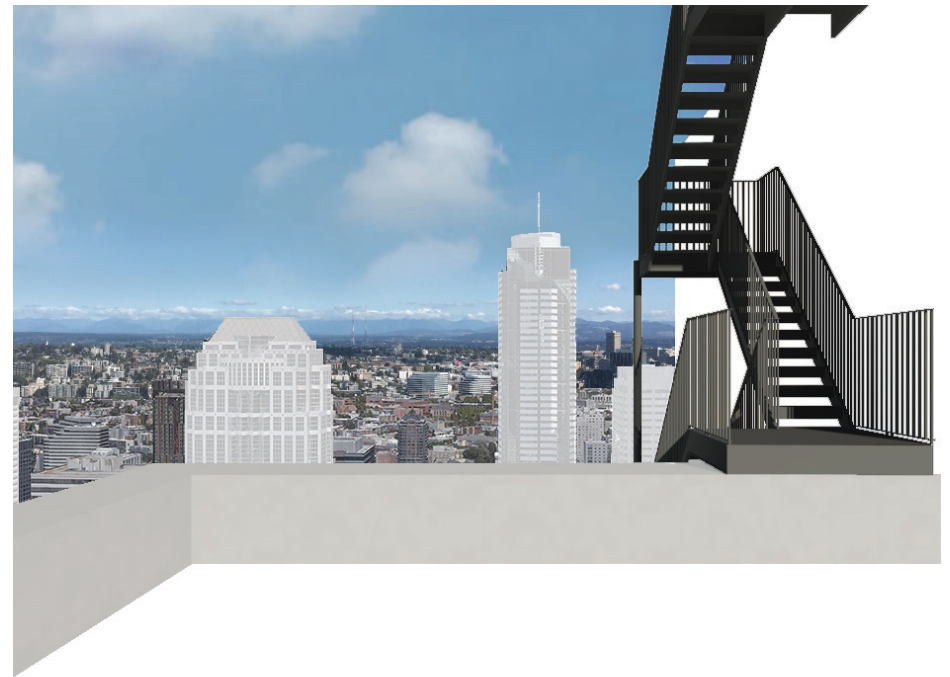
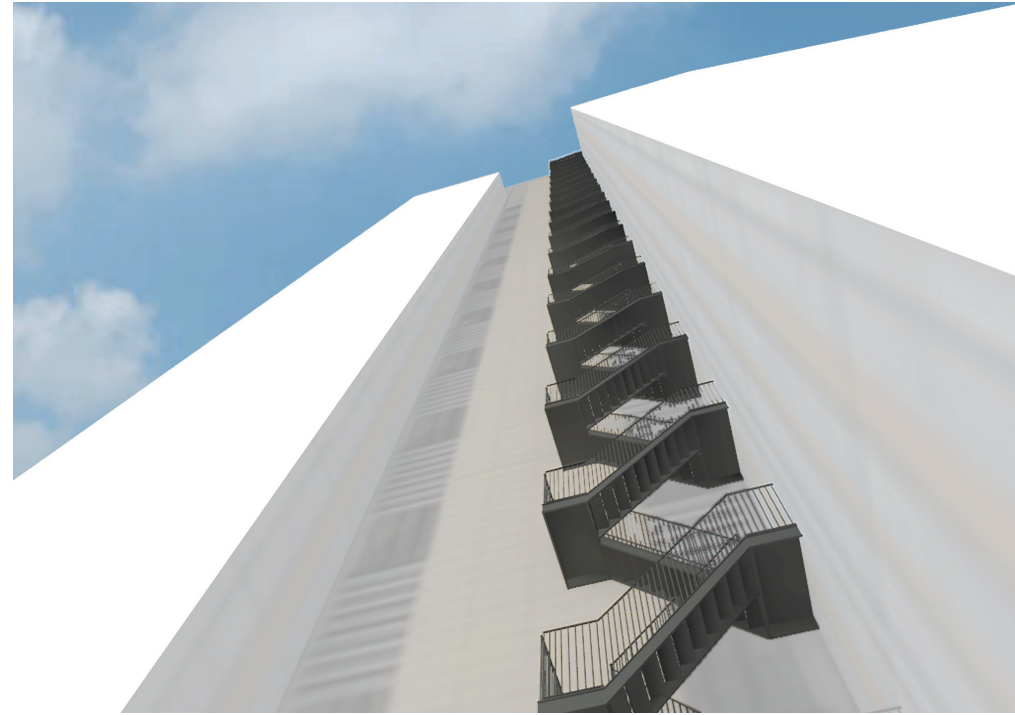


fig. 94 - Fire stair leading up Russell Investments Tower

fig. 95 - Roof of Russell Investments Tower looking east

open the door and see a small kitchen and a desk facing Mount Rainier. You drop your pack on the first floor.



You take the few steps up to see your sleeping platform with a window facing the Cascades.

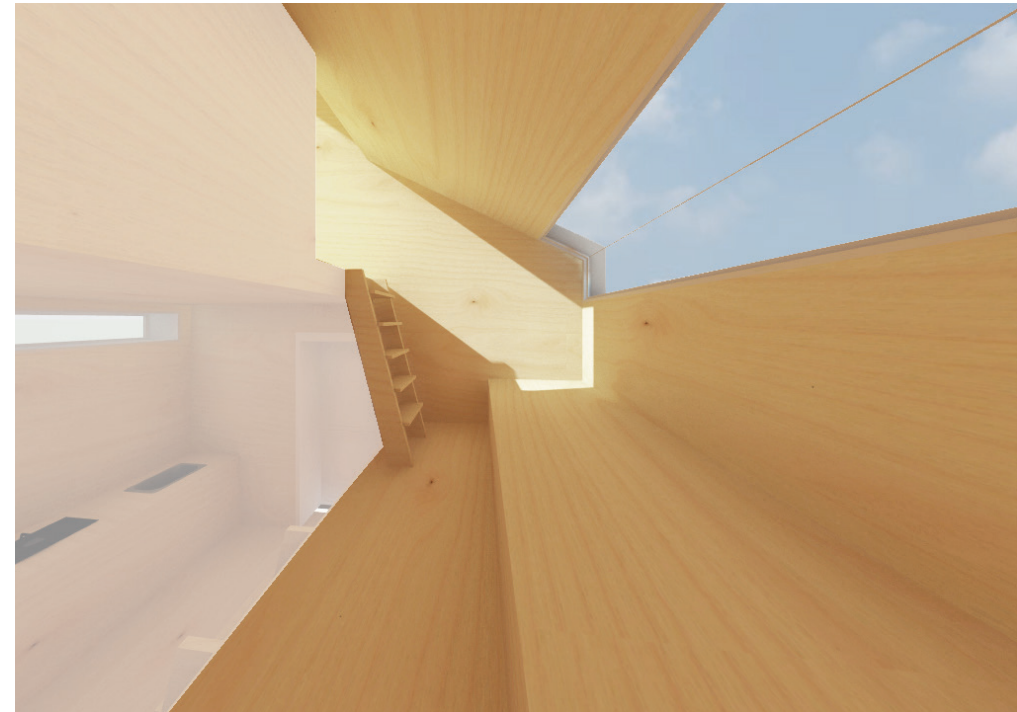


fig. 96 - Entering The Week Cabin

fig. 97 - Sleeping platform, The Week Cabin

You follow the beam of light up to the next level, and see a bench facing the Puget Sound and Olympic Mountains. You sit down, and watch the light change as the sun begins to set feeling thankful that you made it. You spend your time the next week alternating between working at the desk on the first floor, sleeping, and reflecting on the top level.

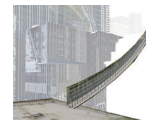
You've never had so much space to yourself to think and work on your thesis. This is just what you needed to reset and recharge before returning your busy life in the city.



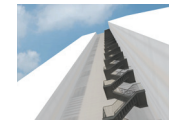
fig. 98 - Looking toward the Puget Sound and Olympic Mountains, The Week Cabin

THE WEEK CABIN

THE PATH



THE CABIN



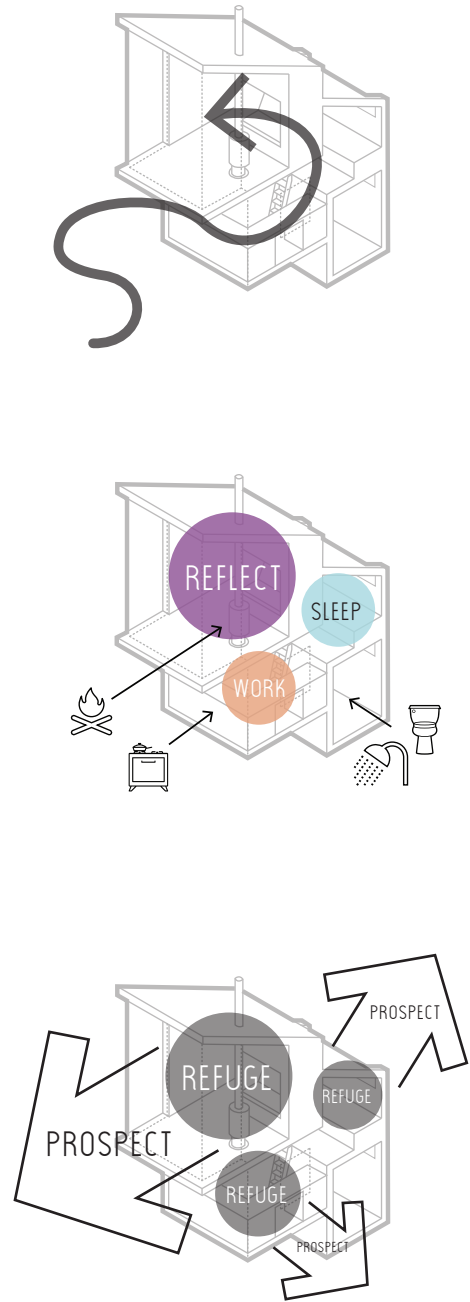


fig. 100 - The Week Cabin Diagrams, its relationship to path, as a space of reflection, sleep, and work, and a place of prospect and refuge.

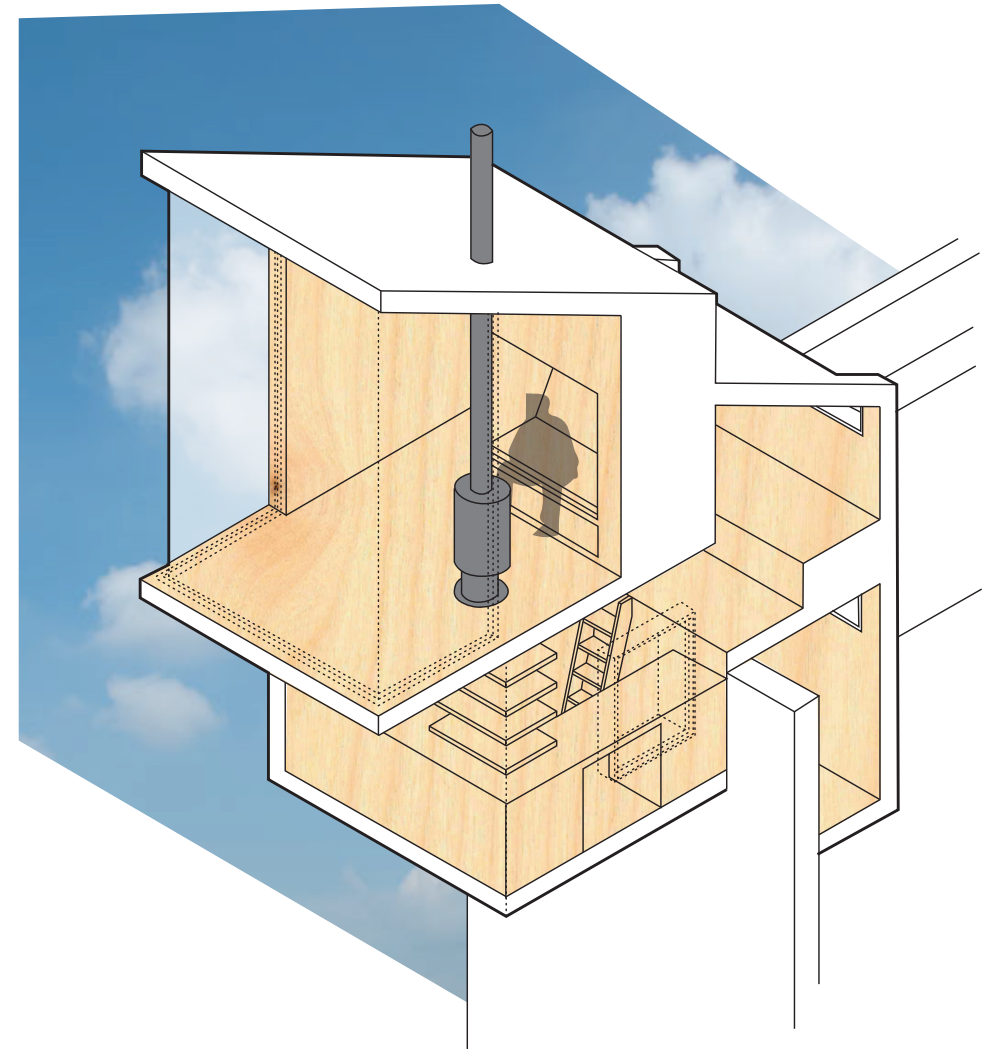
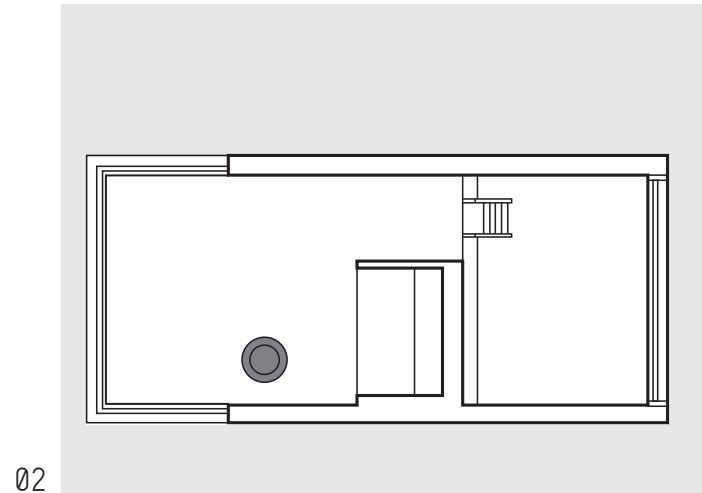
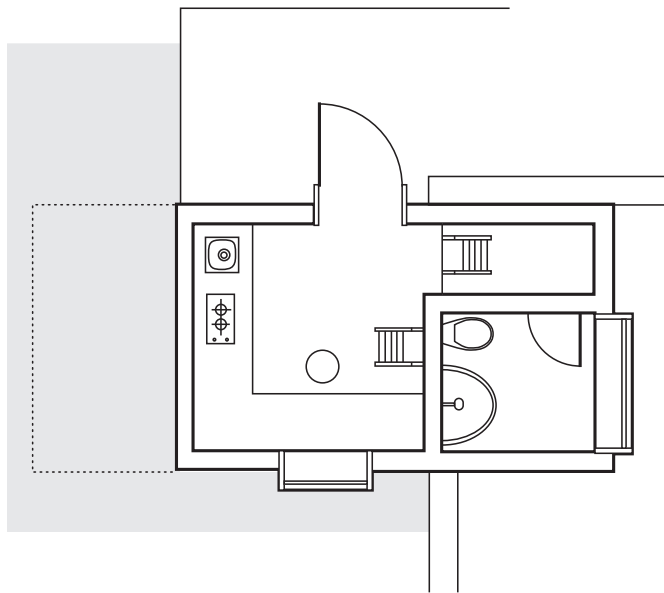


fig. 101 - Isometric of The Week Cabin



02



01

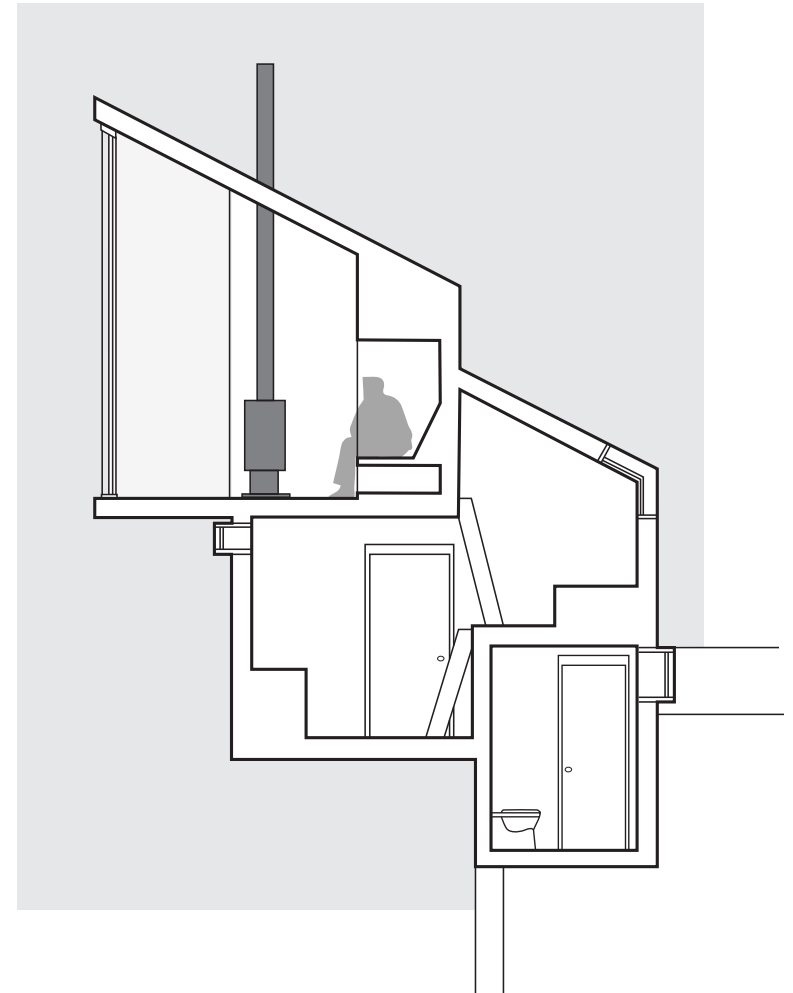


fig. 103 - Section of The Week Cabin

CONCLUSION

THIS THESIS HAS BEEN a journey of understanding. Starting with the idea of the home, it developed into an idea about how an individual might live and move within the city, using the cabin and the wilderness as a vehicle of exploration.

It was not until I was nearing the end of the project that I realized that I was the person at the beginning of the journey who came to this idea of the cabin as a solution to my own personal need for refuge in the city. Through this process of discovery, I have realized that simply the image of the cabin is not enough bring a space of refuge into the city. Just like the home is more than its physical space, the cabin is more than its image or an object within the landscape.

It is my hope that as an architect, I can propel these ideas about how an individual experiences refuge within

the urban fabric into projects in the future. Large cities today are an exciting place, full of color and diversity, but understanding that there is this need to be away is a powerful concept as our cities become more and more dense. This challenge of designing a private space in the city that seems counter-intuitive is difficult, but realizing that it not only is possible, but important, makes our cities a richer place to live.

By going on this journey and uncovering pieces of the cabin and the city, as Finn Arne Jorgenson points out, I have not only found these places outside of time and space, but have begun to understand myself and the city I call home better, which was the goal all along. The exciting part of this thesis is that there is no final destination. It is not hard to image how these three cabins could be multiplied throughout the city, maybe not as physical spaces, but as fragments of our imagination as we each continue to find our own refuge in the dense city.

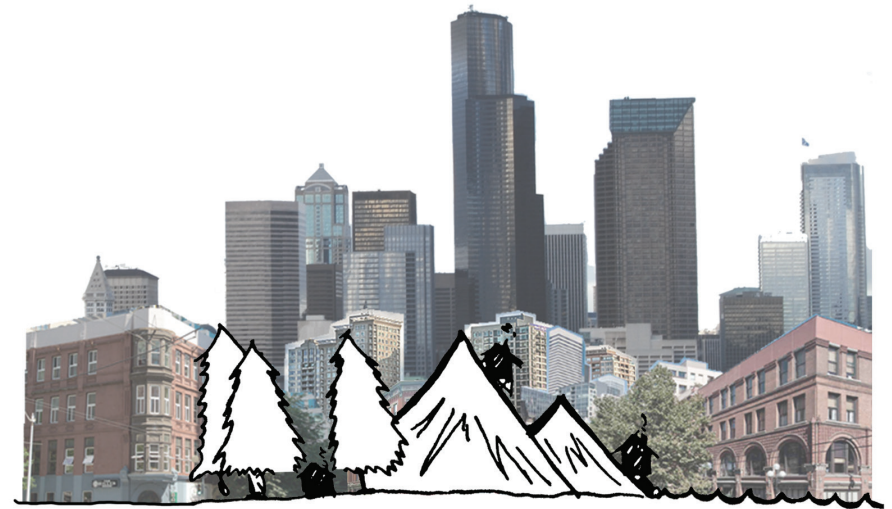


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