

INTEGRATION AS A CATALYST FOR CHANGE

SCHOOL FOR ROHINGYA REFUGEE GIRLS



NAEERA ALI

Contents:

3	Statement
4	Building History
5	User group analysis and context
6	Phasing - Master Plan
7	Intervention proccess
8	Design Intervention
9	Screen design
10	Floor Plan
11	Classroom Design&Details
13	Views

Statement

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has called the Rohingya refugee crisis the fastest growing human rights disaster in the world. The Rohingya are an ethnic group comprised primarily of Muslims who have historically lived in the Buddhist-majority country of Myanmar. Due to ongoing ethnic cleansing in Myanmar, the Rohingya have fled their homeland in search of safety, shelter and a better life. The children affected by this conflict have largely been forced out of school and have become homeless. This leaves them vulnerable to child labor, early marriage, exploitation and violence. In particular, Rohingya girls have less access to education than the boys do and are more vulnerable to sexual abuse and domestic violence.

The majority of the Rohingya currently reside in refugee camps in Cox's Bazaar in Chittagong, Bangladesh. There are few centers for secondary and higher education available in the vicinity of these camps. Repurposing old and abandoned structures in the neighborhood into schools can play an important part in addressing this problem. My master's thesis for the adaptive reuse program at the Rhode Island School of Design proposes the conversion of Ruplal House, a neglected and decaying grand nineteenth century mansion in old Dhaka near the refugee camps, into a center for education and local community integration focused exclusively on Rohingya women and young girls.

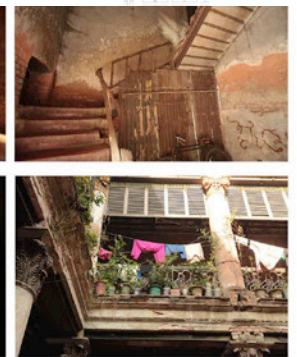
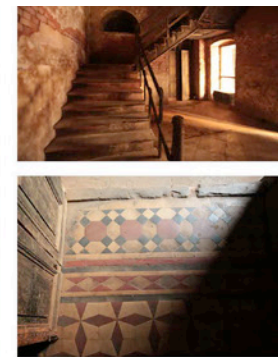
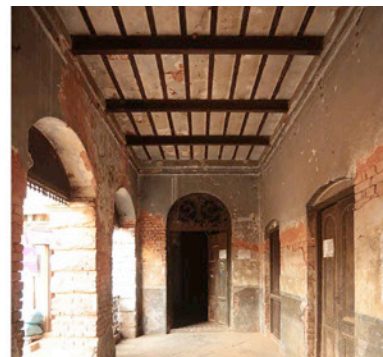
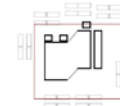
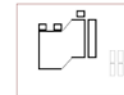
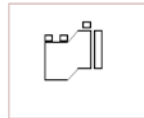
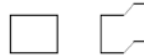
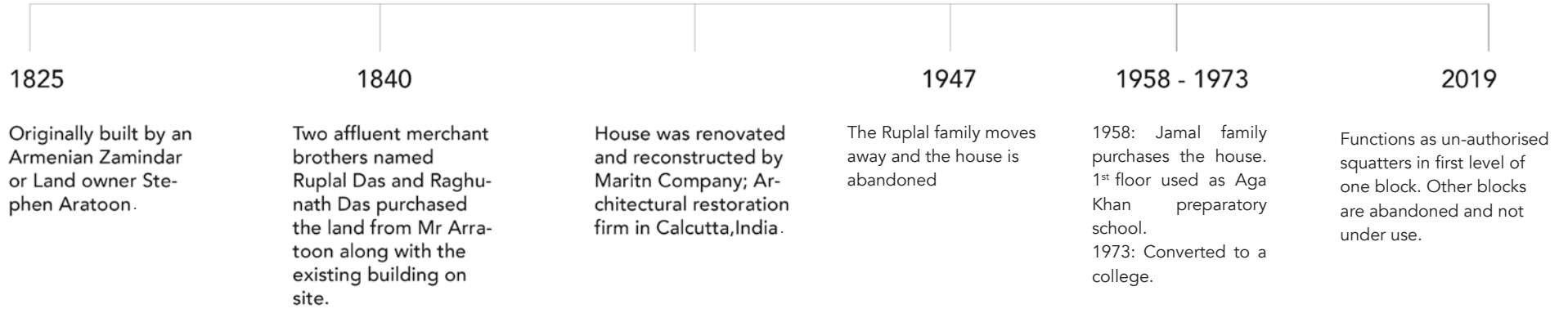
Understanding that integration with the local community requires time, I thought about the master plan of the design in three phases: a secondary school, vocational training centers and a community kitchen, and collaborative work spaces. Executing the design in phases will ensure that first, education strengthens the resilience of the girls and women, in turn motivating the community to tackle future challenges with the help of the second and third stages.

My design interventions, including creating inside-outside approaches with the help of moveable bifold openings and screens in the physical barriers, will give users the flexibility to choose between private spaces and an open environment. This will also ensure maximum day lighting and cross ventilation for the learning spaces. The screens were designed with a hybrid vocabulary inspired by local craftsmanship and materials from both Myanmar and Bangladesh. The thickness of the screens, as well as the sizes of the openings within them, was chosen with safety of the users as the top priority. The design of the classrooms integrates the choices of color and materials and the use of modular custom furniture with storage to enable a wide variety of teacher-student interactions.

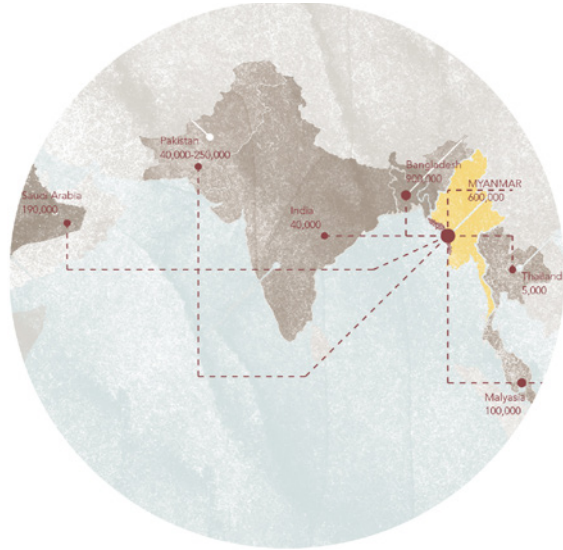
I believe that my design can be used as a prototype for reusing abandoned spaces to build long-term solutions to the problems arising from humanitarian crises. The inclusion of my work in the London festival of Architecture 2022 will inspire efforts to adaptively reuse spaces to improve the standard of living of vulnerable communities all over the world.

Building History and details

Location : Farashganj, Dhaka, Bangladesh
Area : 40,000 Sqft



Context - User Group Analysis

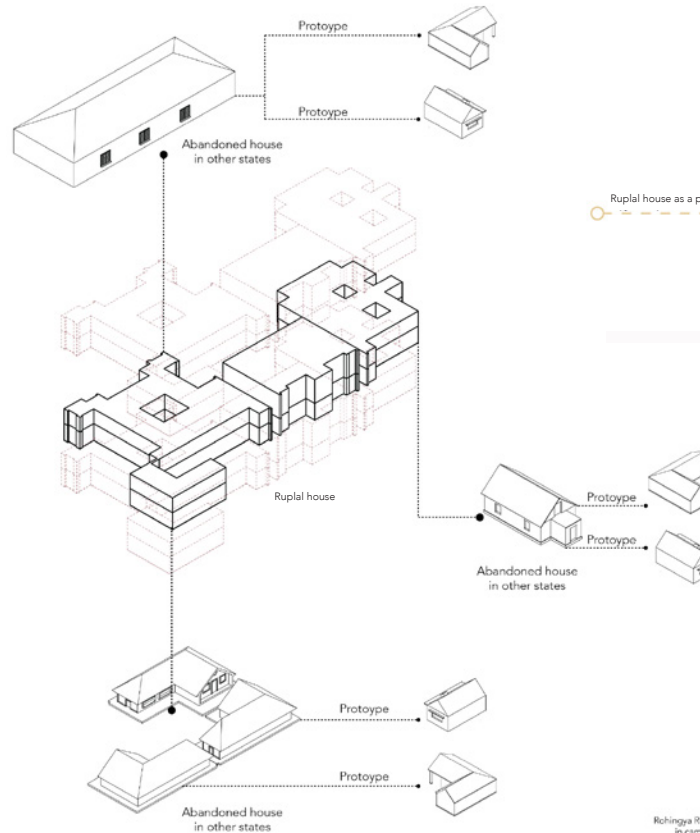


Map showing majority of the Rohingya refugee population around the world. 745,000 Rohingya people (as of January 2019) have taken refuge in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

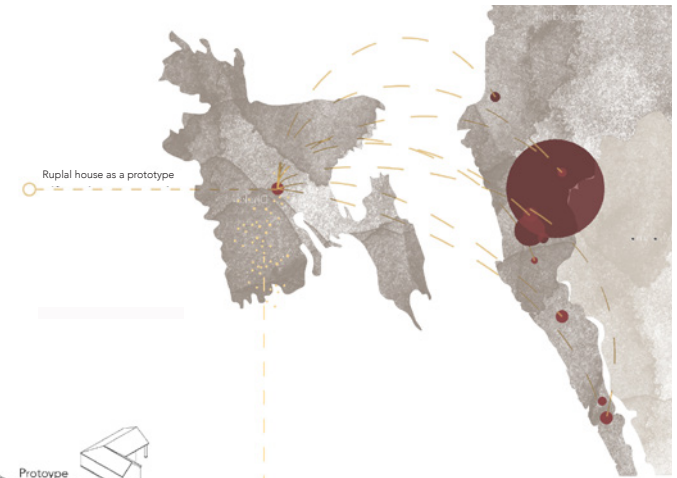
Source : Al Jazeera and agencies, UNHCR, IOM



Zoomed out Site map in Dhaka, Bangladesh

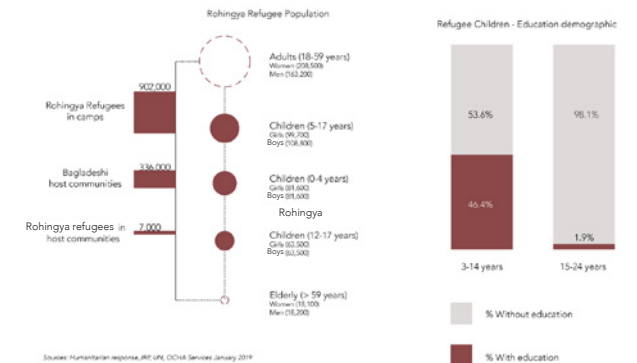


Host structure as a prototype which can be replicated



10,347 abandoned houses in Bangladesh and 4000 abandoned houses in Dhaka.

Source: Housing and Public Works ; Bangladesh

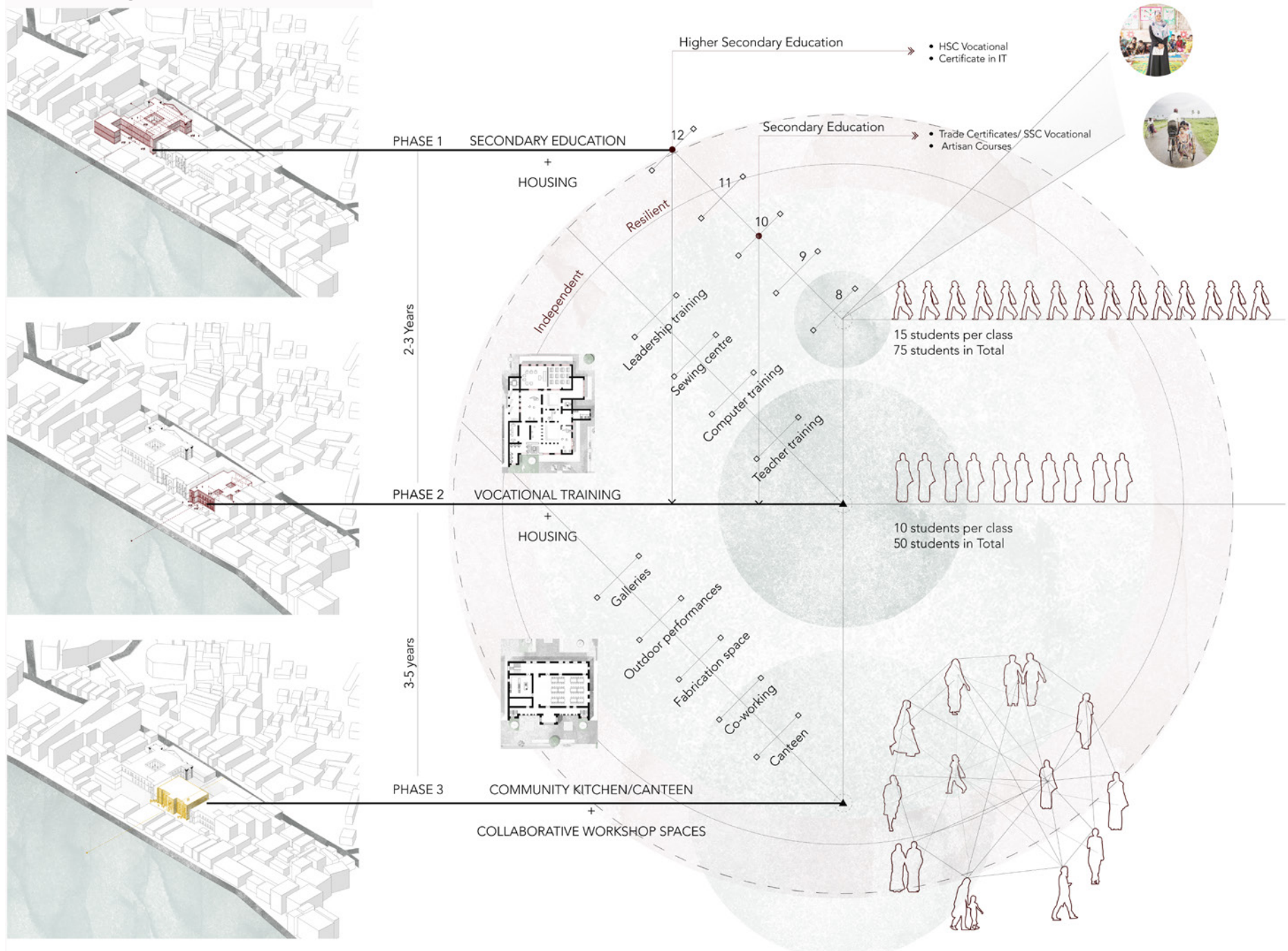


Sources: Humanitarian response, IOM, UN, OCHA Services January 2019

less than 2% of adolescent girls have access to secondary education.

Source: Relief web, UN Children's Fund, Save the Children

Phasing - Master Plan



Intervention Process

Step 1 - Decay Map

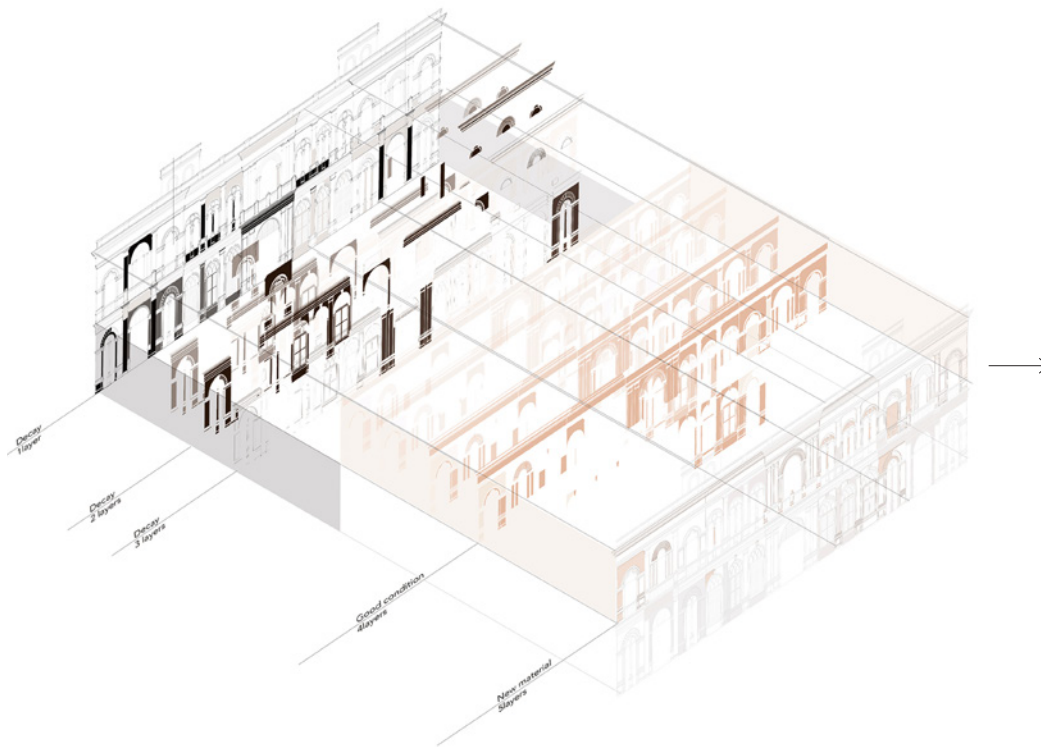


Fig 1.

Analysis map made using photographic documentation shows that the lower level of the back facade of the structure has maximum decay and needs structural support. (Shown in dark brown)

Step 2 - Mapping Courtyards and Enclosed spaces around it

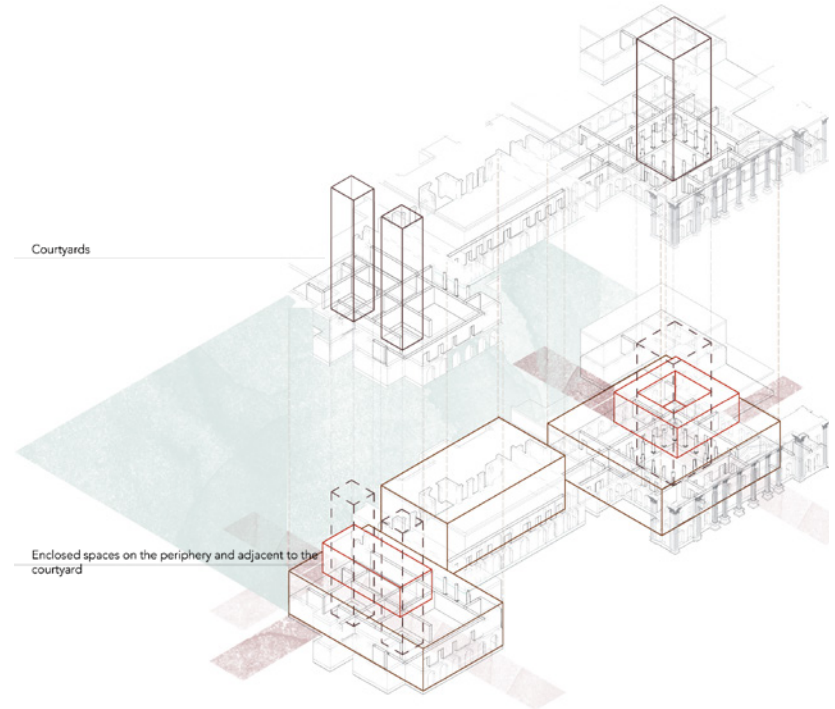


Fig 2.

Map used to identify where to provide learning spaces that has maximum day lighting, air flow and views to the river.

Design Intervention

My design interventions, includes creating inside-outside approaches with the help of moveable bifold openings and screens in the physical barriers, which will give users the flexibility to choose between private spaces and an open environment. (Fig 3)

The process consisted of an indepth analysis of the existing condition of the host structure and mapping out enclosed spaces situated around the courtyard with views extending towards the River. (Fig 1,2)

The intervention was carefully carried out in areas where the building was most prone to decay and required structural stability. (fig 3 shown in red)

Intervention Typology

Type 2 & Type 3 (screens that are part of the exterior walls of the building.) Consists of Thicker singular screens. The sizes of the openings within them, was chosen with safety of the users as the top priority.

Type 1 (screens that are part of the interior walls of the building.) Consists of slightly thinner screen which has more openings and flexible bifold screens that allow maximum daylight and airflow.

Type 5 : Expansion of classroom spaces to the exterior facing the river with landscaping features and outdoor seating.

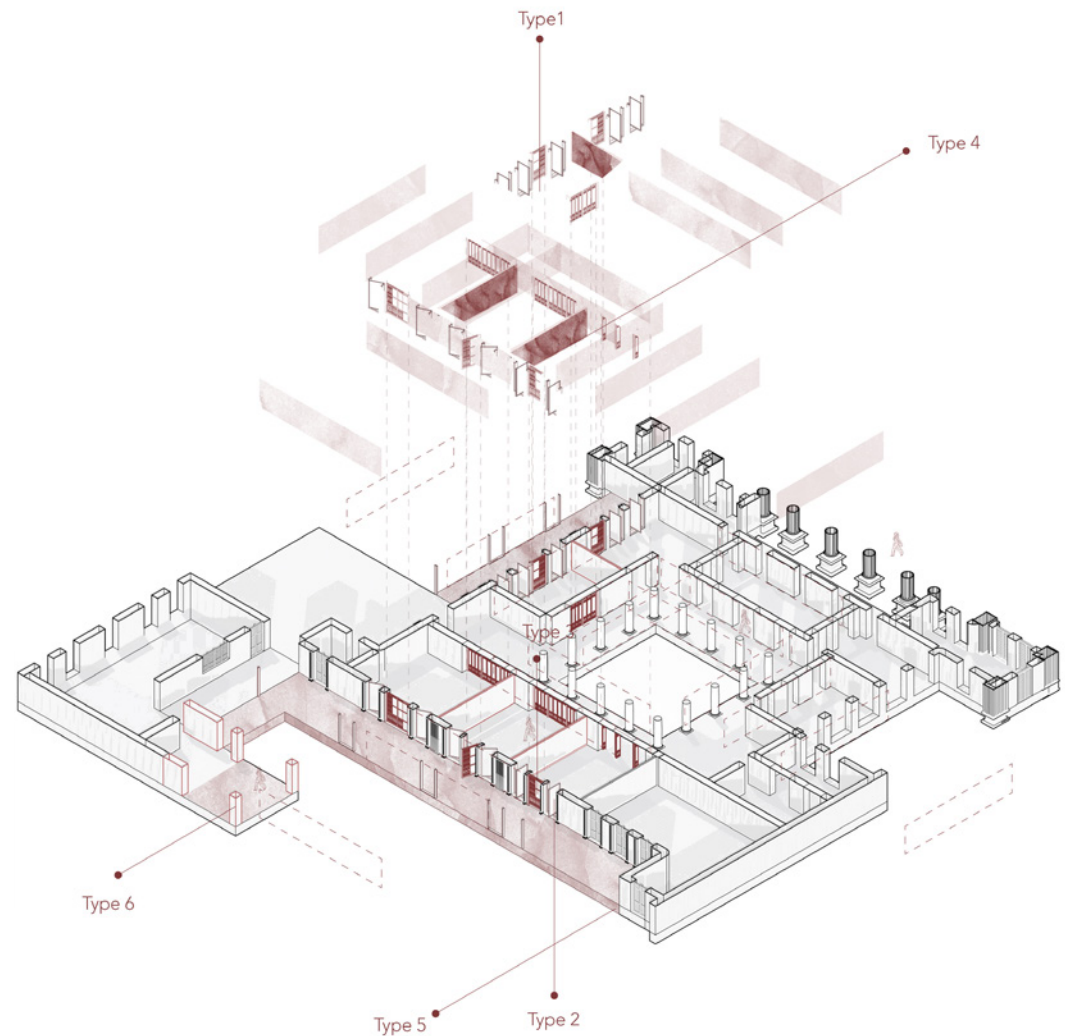
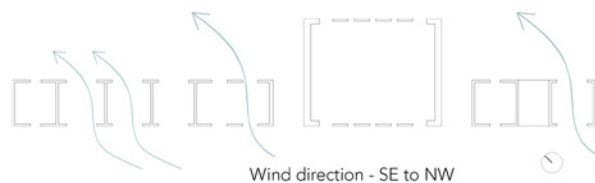
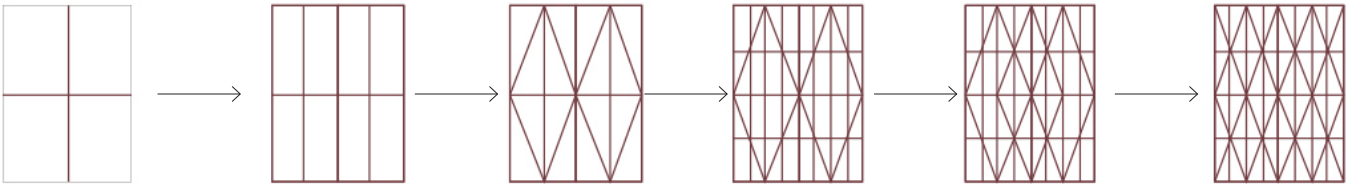
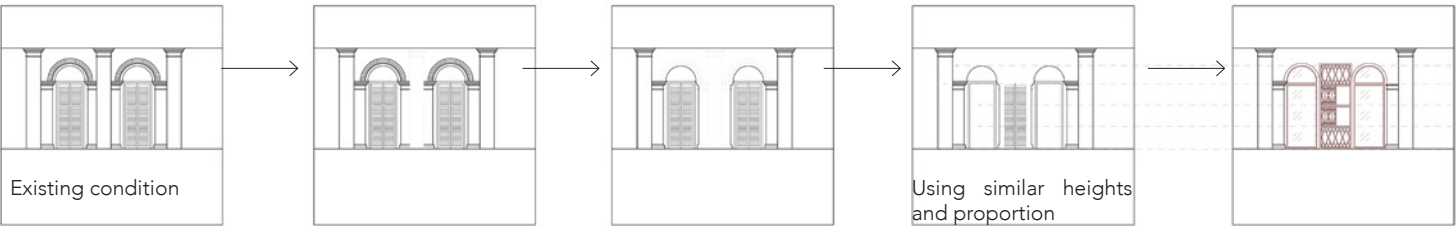


Fig 3.
Intervention Typology Map

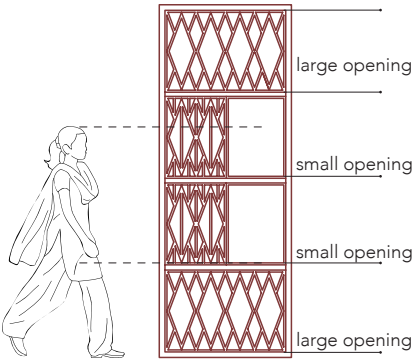
Screen Design and Evolution



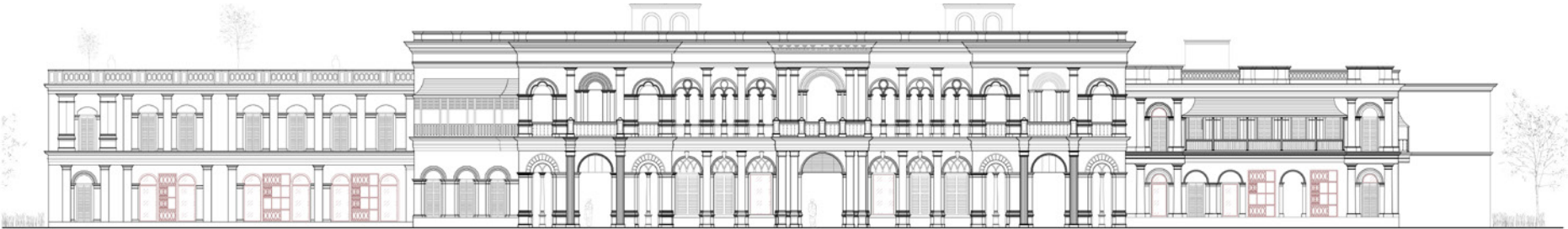
SCREEN DESIGN



INTERVENTION EVOLUTION

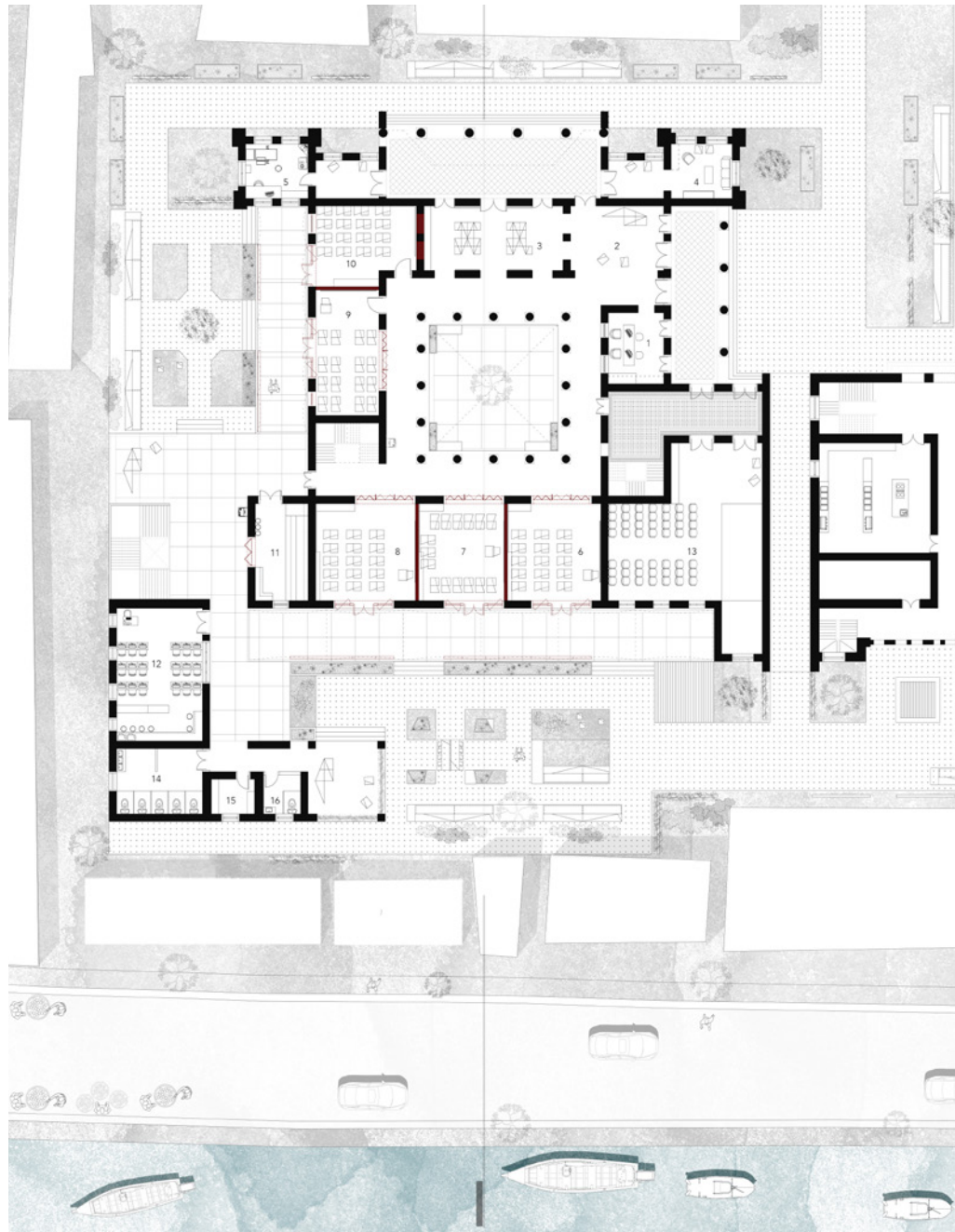


Size of openings based on human scale and visibility



South Elevation

First Floor Plan



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

Scale 1:150

Administration

- 1. Office
- 2. Lounge
- 4. Staff room/ lounge
- 3. Exhibit, gallery space

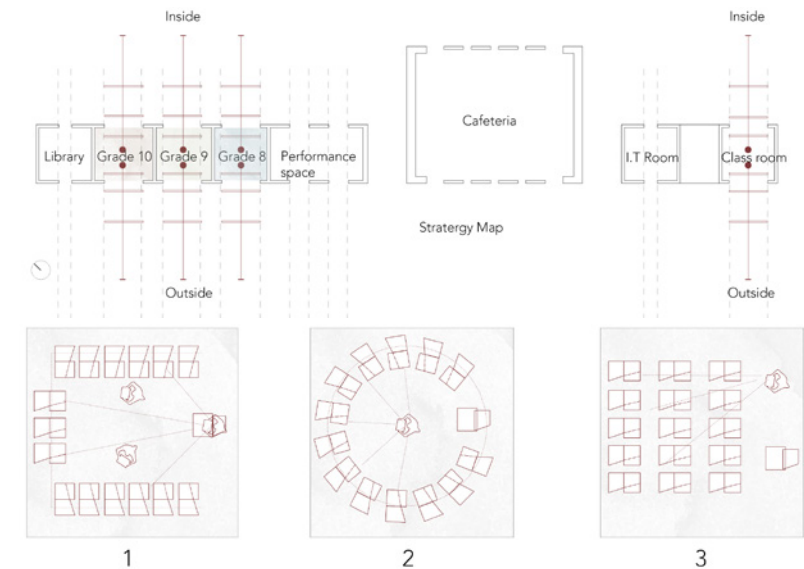
Class Rooms

- 6. Grade 8
- 7. Grade 9
- 8. Grade 10
- 9. Grade 11
- 10. Grade 12

- 11. Library
- 12. I.T Room

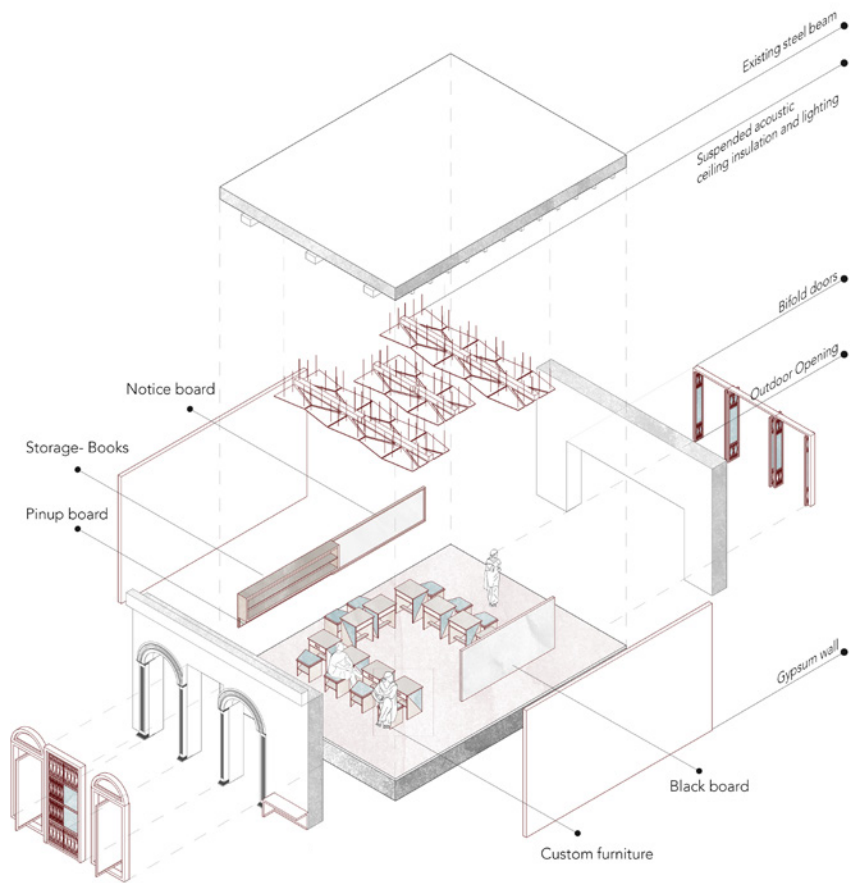
13. Performance space /

- 14. Toilets
- 15. Utility
- 16. Staff toilet
- 5. Medical room

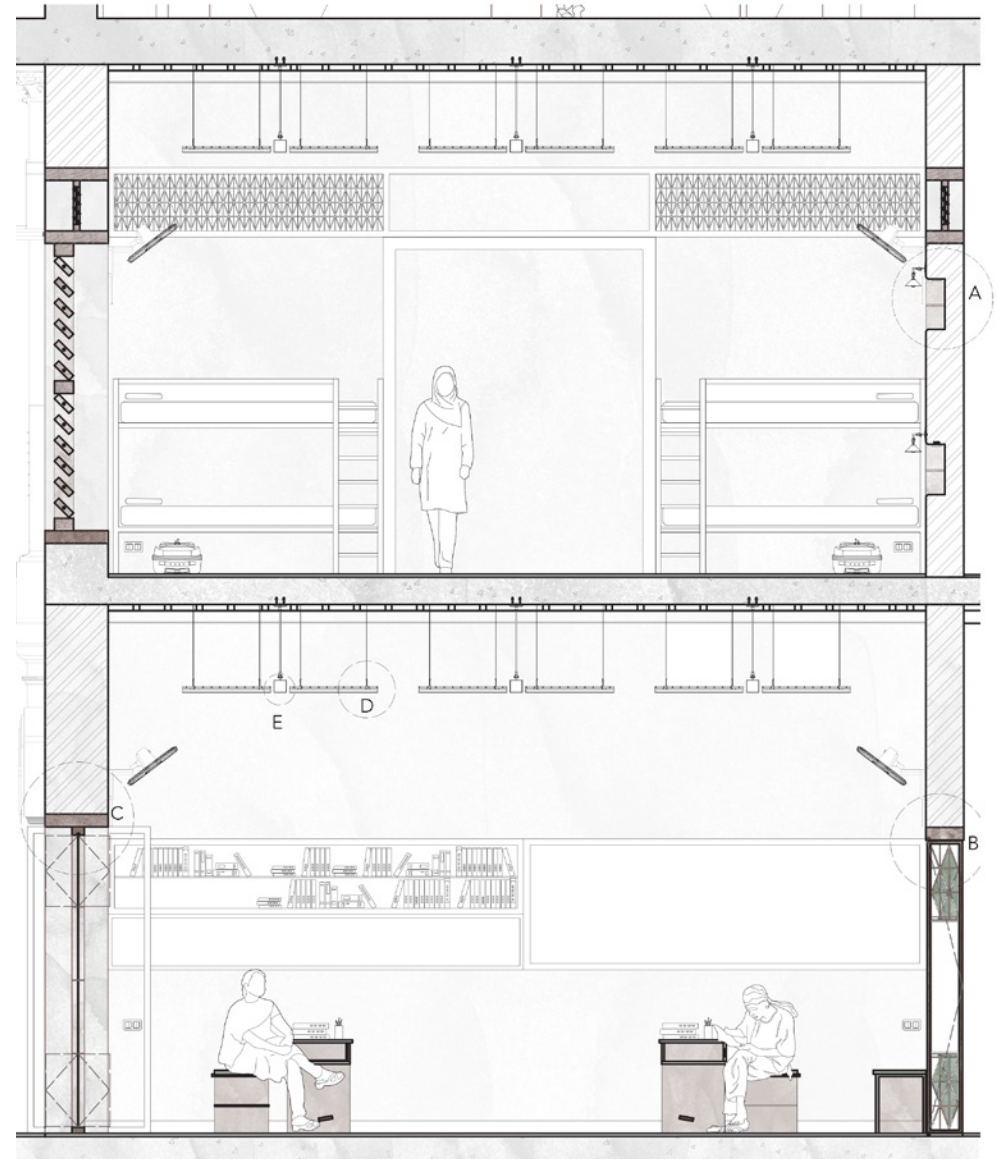


Teacher - Student interaction possibilities

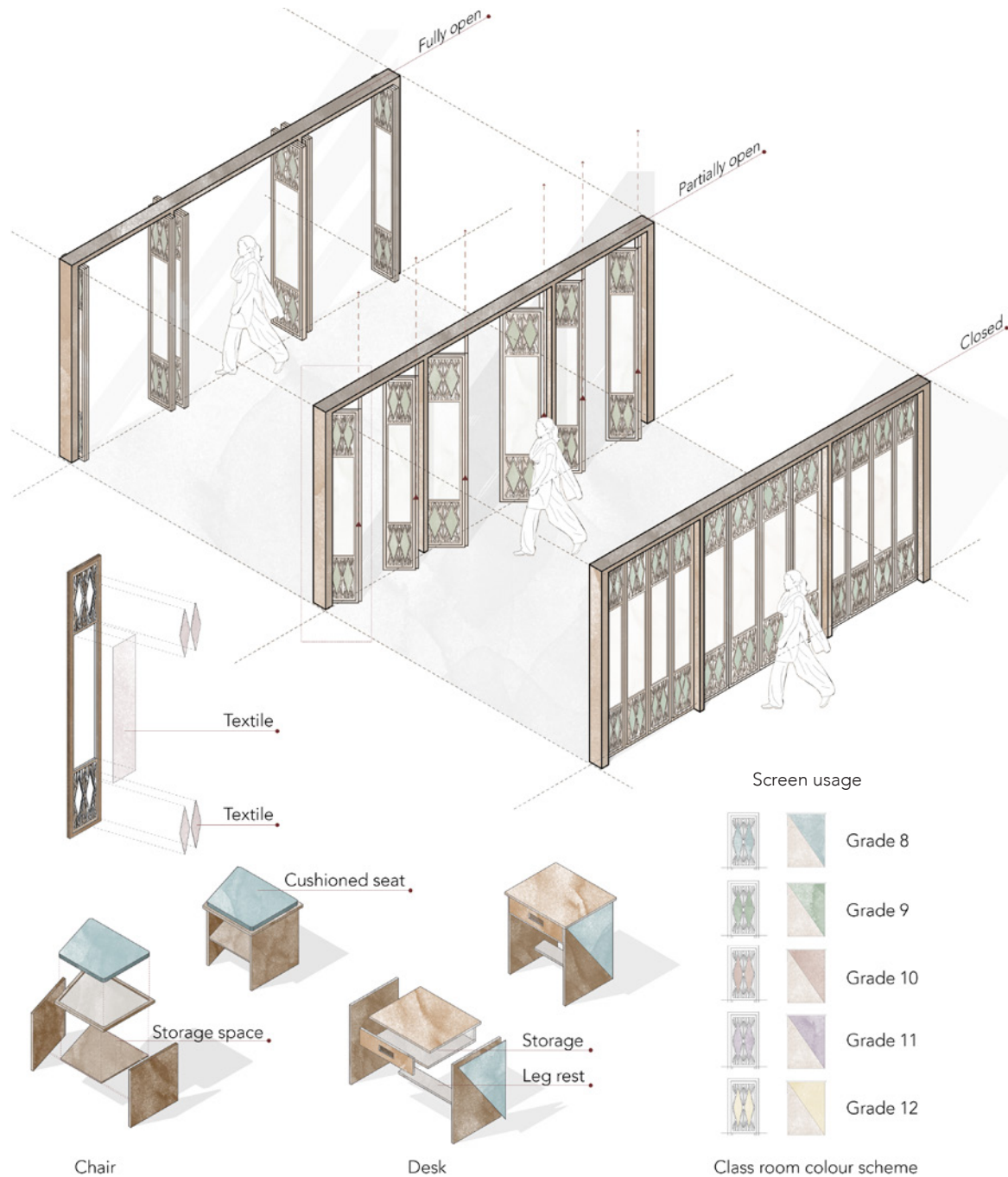
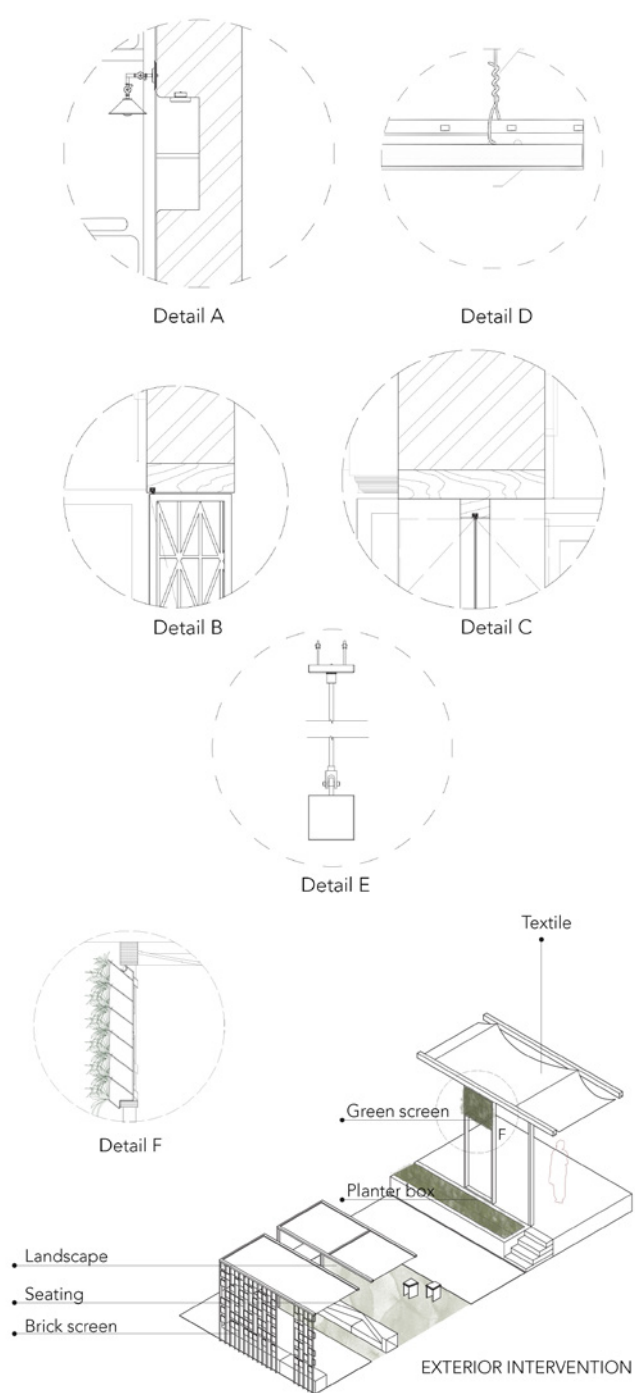
Class room design and Details



CLASS ROOM ELEMENTS



Part section showing classroom and dorm space



Views







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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

FLETCHER PRIEST ARCHITECTS London, UK

Interior Designer

January 2022 - present

MASS LAB Porto, Portugal

Architect

May 2021 - December 2021

FMS, Malta 43,000 sqft., Hospital

RIBA Stages 1,2,3,4,5

- Reported to the Principal Architect to resolve design issues with creative and practical solutions by developing multiple design options that meet the project budget for the project.

ODA New York, USA

Junior Interior Architect

September 2019 - March 2020

39 Lispenard, NYC 5,500 sqft., 1fl Condo

RIBA Stages 1,2,3,4,5

- Created finish plans, specifications, and material selections needed for construction.
- Collaborated with senior architect in the drafting of RCP & furniture plan for DOB, NYC.
- Used 3DS Max and V-Ray to render photorealistic visualizations for presentation and marketing purposes
- Worked with external consultants, product representatives, furniture dealers, and fabricators.

PERKINS EASTMAN New York, USA

Intern- Healthcare studio

June 2018 - August 2018

Mount Sinai Hospital, NYEE, NYC 500,000sq. ft., Hospital

RIBA Stages 3,4

- Assisted senior executives in the drafting of life safety plans for DOB, NYC.
- Provided design support and documentation during completion and execution of design concepts.

EDUCATION

2017- 2019 RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN, USA
Masters in Interior Architecture & Adaptive reuse

2011 - 2016 MIT, MANIPAL UNIVERSITY, INDIA
Bachelors of Architecture

AWARDS - Best thesis for commitment to social justice
Nominated for Emerging designer at the Dutch design week in Eindhoven
Redesign of Tea stall project shortlisted for Architecture in development 2021 competition

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Revit (2 years professional experience), Rhino, Grasshopper, Auto Cad, 3dsMax, Sketchup Vray, Lumion, Adobe CC, Microsoft Office, ARC Gis

LANGUAGES

English(proficient), Portuguese(basic), German(A1 level), Malayalam(native), Hindi(fluent)