

**‘Designed Archaeology:  
Thinking about Spiritual  
Space’**

# Content

I	Recap: Shrines	4
II	Situating Rituals in Modernity*	7
	// 5 Points	12
III	Designed Archaeology	15
IV	Narrative	20



*Wooden Joint*



*Close-Up*

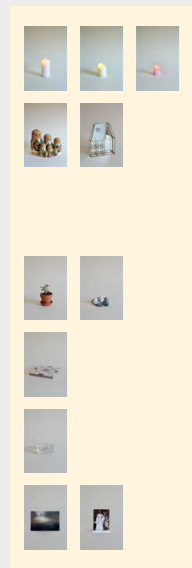
# I Recap: Shrines

In *'Shrines and the Commodification of Spirituality'* we were focused on what people need in times of crisis and how the market responds. We wanted to criticise working conditions in the Maag Areal which long for solutions for their unfulfilling work in spiritual industry. However, as spirituality has become a powerful industry in western culture, and thus its products and services commodified, it is also a luxury that only a few can afford. Nevertheless, the intervention showed that the spiritual industry is targeting something which society lacks.

In our society, experiences which one perceives

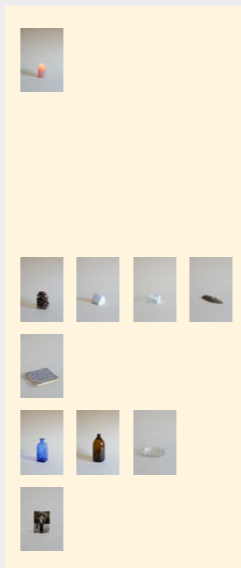
as external: Money, success, prestige are mostly present. Other valuable experiences, which have to do with meaning, and the search for meaning are neglected.

The value of spirituality doesn't lie in the commodified products and services offered but in **collective rituals** of the community.



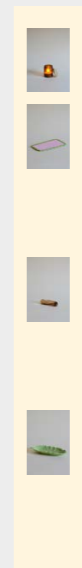
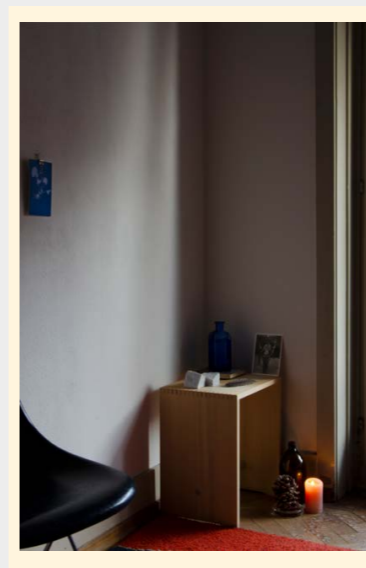
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Figurine	White	Porcelain	Human-like	Medium	Medium	None	Room Temp	Low	Normal	None	None	None	None	Smooth	None
Bottle	White	Plastic	Cylindrical	Small	Light	None	Room Temp	Low	Normal	None	None	None	None	Smooth	None
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Figurine	White	Porcelain	Human-like	Small	Light	None	Room Temp	Low	Normal	None	None	None	None	Smooth	None
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Figurine	White	Porcelain	Human-like	Small	Light	None	Room Temp	Low	Normal	None	None	None	None	Smooth	None
Bottle	White	Plastic	Cylindrical	Small	Light	None	Room Temp	Low	Normal	None	None	None	None	Smooth	None
Figurine	White	Porcelain	Human-like	Small	Light	None	Room Temp	Low	Normal	None	None	None	None	Smooth	None

Shrine I



Object	Color	Material	Shape	Size	Weight	Volume	Temperature	Humidity	Pressure	Light	Sound	Smell	Taste	Touch	Other
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Bottle	White	Plastic	Cylindrical	Small	Light	None	Room Temp	Low	Normal	None	None	None	None	Smooth	None
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Bottle	White	Plastic	Cylindrical	Small	Light	None	Room Temp	Low	Normal	None	None	None	None	Smooth	None
Figurine	White	Porcelain	Human-like	Small	Light	None	Room Temp	Low	Normal	None	None	None	None	Smooth	None

Shrine II



Object	Color	Material	Shape	Size	Weight	Volume	Temperature	Humidity	Pressure	Light	Sound	Smell	Taste	Touch	Other
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Bottle	White	Plastic	Cylindrical	Small	Light	None	Room Temp	Low	Normal	None	None	None	None	Smooth	None
Figurine	White	Porcelain	Human-like	Small	Light	None	Room Temp	Low	Normal	None	None	None	None	Smooth	None
Bottle	White	Plastic	Cylindrical	Small	Light	None	Room Temp	Low	Normal	None	None	None	None	Smooth	None
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Figurine	White	Porcelain	Human-like	Small	Light	None	Room Temp	Low	Normal	None	None	None	None	Smooth	None

Shrine III



Shrine I, II, III



*Cotton Fabric*



*Close-Up*

## II **Situating Rituals** in Modernity\*

Rituals can typically be found in connection with religion or spirituality and describe periodically recurring processes of a society, whose people are brought together by carrying them out (literally + figuratively). Critics of the capitalist economy - including Karl Marx - argue that people have lost their rituals in favor of making money. The loss of rituals goes hand in hand with the increasing secularization of society and the **shift from the community to the individual** and is based on various processes of the past four centuries. The Enlightenment, as well as the Industrial Revolution and the resulting

accelerated automation and capitalization of labour and its human force, gradually erased the time and importance for the performance of rituals. This can be illustrated particularly well with the **Bank of England**, which in 1834 reduced the number of bank holidays from 36 to 4 days a year, in prospects of increasing productivity. The practice and celebration of ritual occasions became an unpleasant burden in the eyes of the employers during the course of industrialisation. Rituals unnecessarily disturb the company's prosperity and thus, the collective purification of the soul in the form of

rituals is no longer considered interesting. From the employees' point of view, the private and working life thereby moved into focus and as such displaced valuable, meaningful [sinnstiftende] components of life. This process was favoured not only by the ideas of Romanticism and the Age of Enlightenment, but also by the French Revolution, during which the need for bourgeois individualism spread throughout society.

The focus on productive processes replaced rituals with so-called routines, which is why these terms are often used as synonyms today. However, such "rituals" must be understood in

the context of the commodification of religion and spirituality and have little to do with the original understanding of rituals. They are therefore not spiritually based processes for society, but recurring events in the everyday economic life to increase individual wealth and well-being.

With the age of modernity, accompanied by technological innovations, scientific findings and the beginnings of globalisation, the understanding of rituals is being reinterpreted as routines. Or in other words: "When we became modern, we lost our rituals". With the loss of



rituals, and the spiritual tradition of a society that has been ingrained with them, religion as a moral compass is increasingly being faded out. New socio-cultural standards serve as a moral remedy and replace the Bible and familiar symbols of Christian iconography. Within this process, art as a submissive, serving mediator develops into an **autonomous instance**. With secularization, art thus freed itself from the body of religion and rose from its oppression to independence. One could even go as far as to argue that art increasingly replaced religion in its meaningful, human and empathic power

at the beginning of the 20th century. As such, it is not surprising that art created countless new forms of expression: ready made, performances, happenings...

Taryn Simon's work can be considered as example in this regard. Her works often present themselves in fragments - similar to the iconographies of Christianity - which only create a higher meaning through their joint presentation. The subliminal narrative composed by Simon finally holds them together.

In architecture, besides the church, the monastery is an excellent example of architectural, ritual

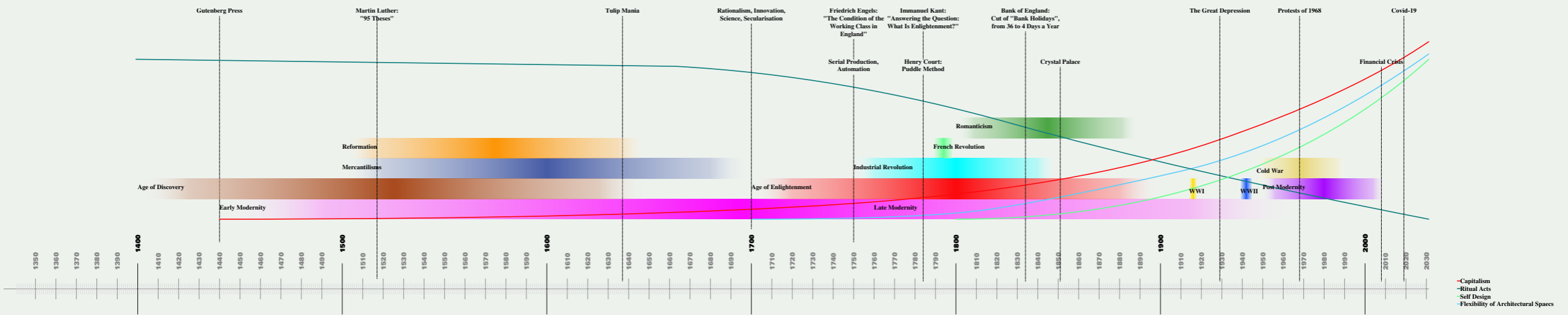
embodiment. The ritual is expressed here as the **structure giving tool** of a daily routine, which is reflected in the corresponding sequence of rooms. It is not about efficiency, but about brotherhood and sisterhood.

The developments of the modern age have led to an increasing rationalisation of the design of architecture. In public buildings, the dynamic adaptation of spaces is particularly appreciated today. At the same time, a strong increase in new typologies can be observed, which require a highly specific spatial design. This ambivalence between timeless flexibility and maximum

specificity leaves no room for ambiguity, as architecture must always subordinate itself to its economic provisions: The floor plans are predominantly arranged in a grid, the rooms are additive and the architectural form language is lacking in symbolic content. They offer hardly any **opportunities to linger.**

Rituals are linked to the way of life of a society and thus are also connected to architecture. How can rituals be understood spatially if they are detached from any economic value?

\* This text is situated in the Western, European context.



# Timeline: Situating Rituals in Modernity

## // 5 Points

- Rituals are important and good > the connection to spiritual rituals and the practice of the spiritual is a form of socially recurring processes of integration, empathy and humility. They contribute to the collective purification of the soul. Rituals are not routines. The human relationship to rituals goes hand in hand with the history of modernity.
- Since the modern globalised market economy, since man is supposed to be productive and is in competition with others, the time for social occasions is gradually dwindling. Strengthened by Romanticism, and consequently by the bourgeois-individualistic tendencies of the French Revolution, one refers to oneself and associates social-ritualistic reflections with superstition and stupidity.
- Individualism favours the formation of the modern market economy. People are productive all the time, holidays are cancelled, weekends and family celebrations are left out, giving themselves over to their own cultivation of

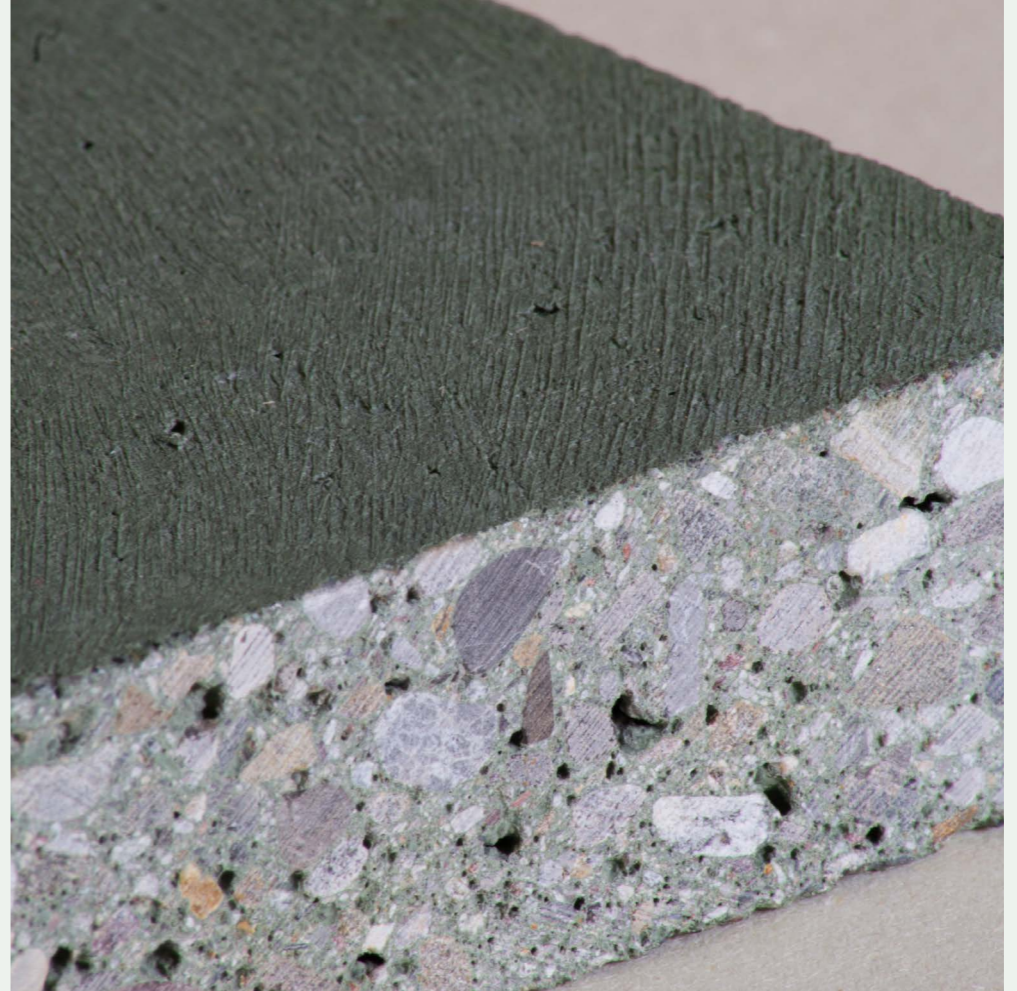
the self. The highest value is understood to be economic value.

- Question of value: The market recognises what people lack and sells it with the same arguments of efficiency and self-design (Shrines and the commodification of spirituality). Now, more than ever, people realise that they would be better they if they forgot about the over-cultivated individual and, beyond that, indulge in rites of passage.
- We recognise in spiritual, religious rituals

something that our society lacks. We are convinced to recycle something that already exists. Our question is now, what are the places where these rituals can be performed? What are the symbols, icons and attributes of such architecture? What are the rules, programs, events that could take place in such spaces? Do we have to design them?



*Terrazzo*



*Close-Up*

### III **Designed Archaeology**

One of the most important insights of the last work: “Shrines and the Commodification of Spirituality” was that spirituality, which qualities are important for our society, needs one thing above all else: The community. Consequently, this community can come together everywhere, although certain spaces favour this.

How do you design a spiritual space if you doubt that the architecture is both clear and flexible?

We talk about it.

By Designed Archaeology we mean describing a way of working that is quite similar to Taryn Simon's. You are fascinated by a subject, you

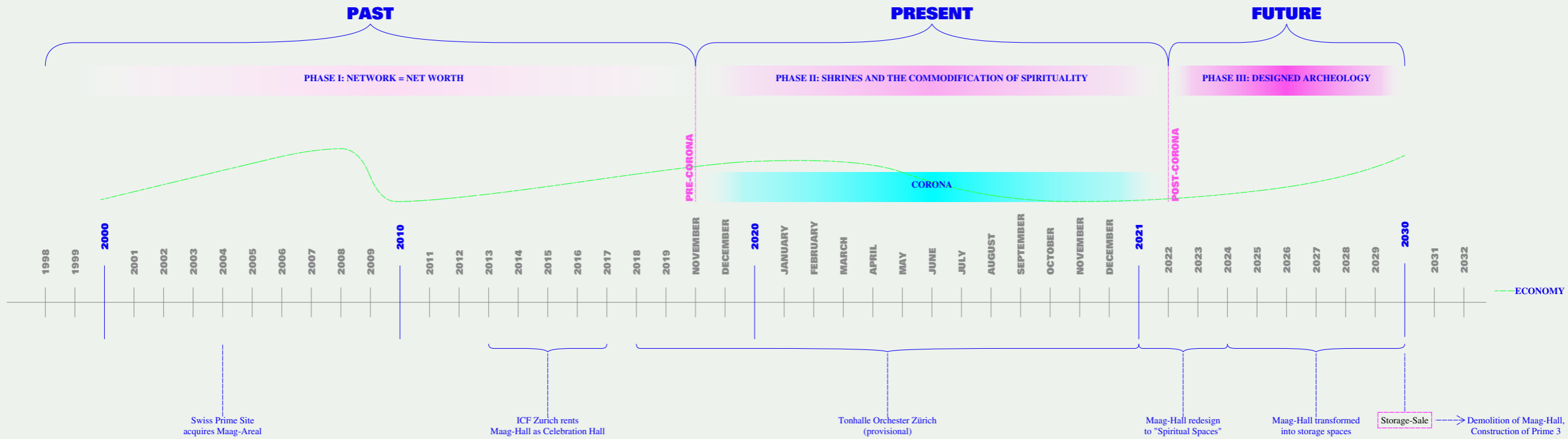
feel it out, but at the same time you have the power to decide how much you want to reveal by constructing it. Keeping a certain ambiguity is important in this subject.

Our goal is to generate a mixture between tangible archaeological finds and mythological narratives, similar to theology. Our working method is also related to the reproduction of rituals. Rituals are tied to objects or places, but are conveyed via a far more irrational entity - the **myth**. By placing the event in the past, we can decide to what extent we want to distance us from the planned architectural form. We create

a mythology. In that way, the narrative becomes the actual architecture.

This distance is reflected in the products we found in a warehouse, and partly alienated. We depict them by means of macro photography. This blurs their clear form and underlines their sensory qualities. Instead of our previous works, in which we depicted or critically questioned something, we now open the conversation and allow ourselves to make statements that are not necessarily architecturally clear but certainly sensorially precise. Only then they allow us to really redefine the meaning of worth.





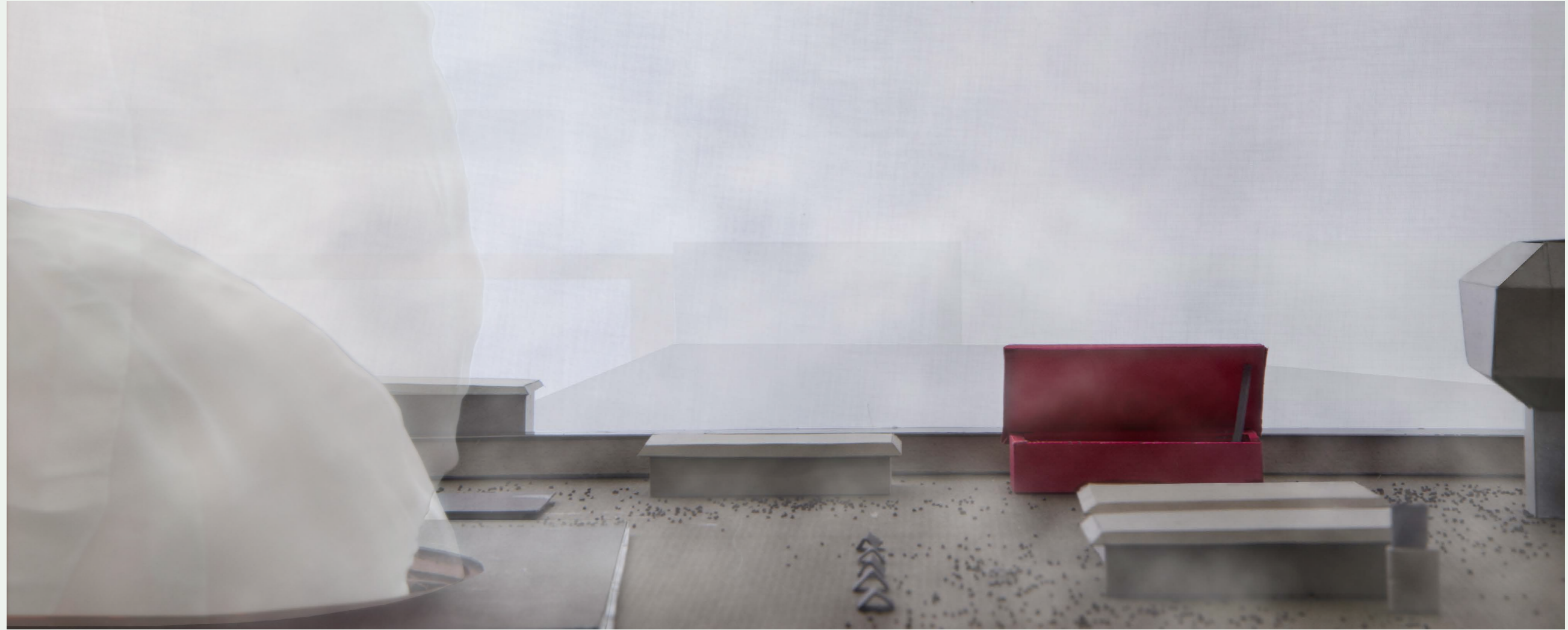
Timeline: Overview Phases



*Tiles*



*Close-Up*



The Roof / The Ritual

## IV Narrative

2030, 2 May, a rainy Sunday afternoon, it is the third day of the storage sale of the Maag Hall, event hall, former sound hall and most recently private city storage for businessmen and wealthy city dwellers. Now, the former industrial hall has to make way for a hybrid tower - Prime 3. According to the media spokesman of Swiss Prime Site, urban storage facilities have become less interesting, and a far less risky tenant mix must be achieved. In contrast to the time of the last global economic crisis after the Corona pandemic, the real estate market is holding up quite well. It is booming. The dispute over

building law lasted ten years, but now the Swiss Prime Site has beaten the Heritage Protection and Historical Monuments Authority.

Two architecture students take part in the stock sale of the old Maag-Hall. Costumes, building materials, furniture and also forgotten objects that have not been collected are being sold.

This former concert hall has already been through a lot. Our generation will not survive it, thinks E and lets his gaze wander over the advertised objects. The wind blows through the holes of the former industrial windows.

Many objects are already sold out, the only thing

they find is a nice piece of wood, possibly a remnant of a joint, old slightly yellowed fabrics, an old piece of terrazzo flooring and a ceramic tile, it's still pretty well preserved, although according to the date on the back it's ten years old, which isn't really old, says S.

On a rickety plastic table, covered with a red paper tarp, is a cash register, behind it a tipsy guy and a lady. He operates the cash register with his worker hands. They get into conversation.

“What have you got there?” -It sounded like he was saying that to anyone who brought anything by. He ought to know, S figures. He's

probably seen it all before.

“Ah, just a couple of things” - replies E

“No, let me see, yes, I remember that, it was pretty hard to clean. Imagine white curtains for outside. They hung in a beautiful courtyard. What's left of it.”

“A courtyard?”

“A courtyard? Yeah. A group of architects, they redesigned the a couple of rooms. After the Corona crisis, it's a wonder they let them.”

S who was visiting a studio where they talked about the value of things, listened carefully.

“They were allowed to use the hall. After two

years they cut them off, period, then they had to get out. Had a good time with these guys, cooked good food, was a great time. They always had such nice gatherings, they called them *rituals*. And a few times a year they rose a huge balloon, that of course didn't please the guys up there" - pointing towards Prime Tower.

Those stories didn't let go S: Who was there in the Maag Halle and what did they do? That evening, before falling asleep, she stared spellbound at this artefact, at the tile, which was painted white and shone in the candlelight. She had to tell E, she believed that they had a project.

The next day they met at a coffee in Affoltern. They both lived there, the city has become too expensive. She told him about the idea and he was convinced. She couldn't let go of these myths, these rites, the spirituality.

The subject is super-dangerous, E thought, I don't think anyone would care, let alone allow it.

A first internet research did not yield anything. Maybe they would have to talk to the janitor again. It was surely surprising that there were no records of it.

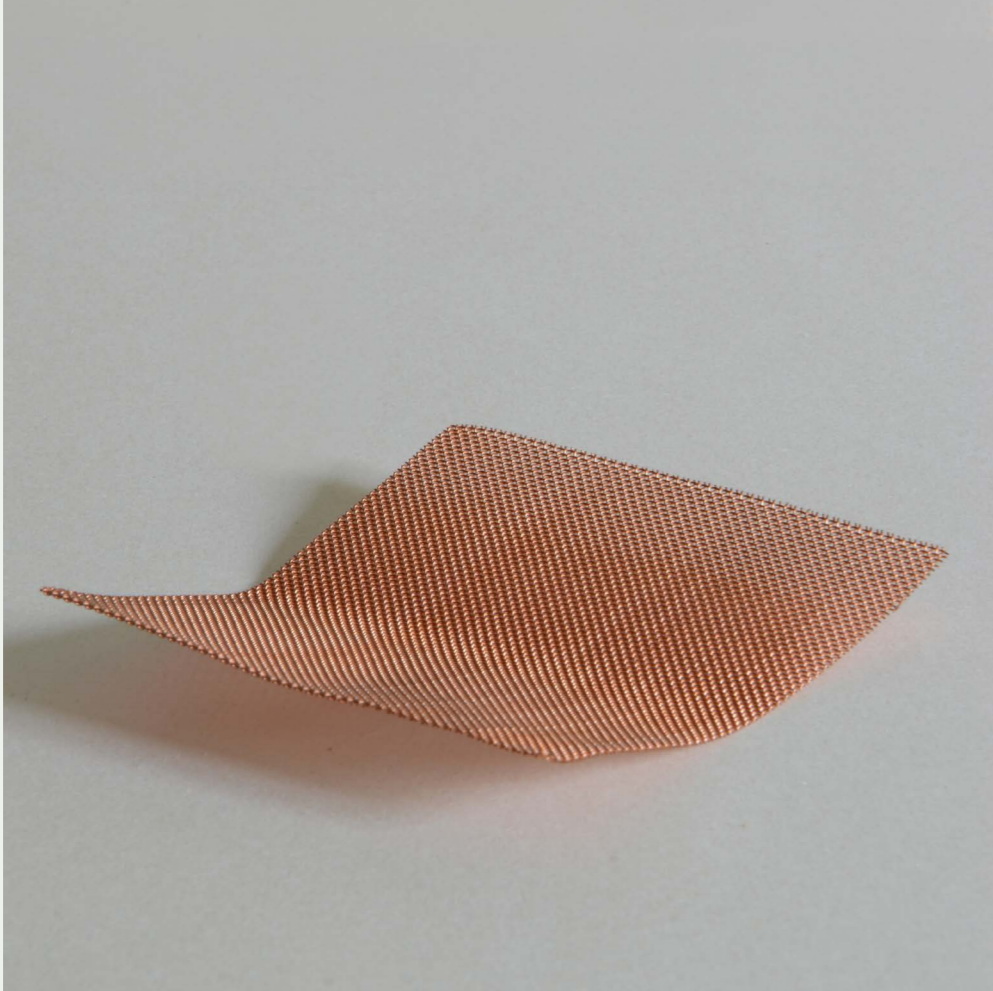
It occurred to E that he still had the findings at

home, maybe they could shed more light on it.

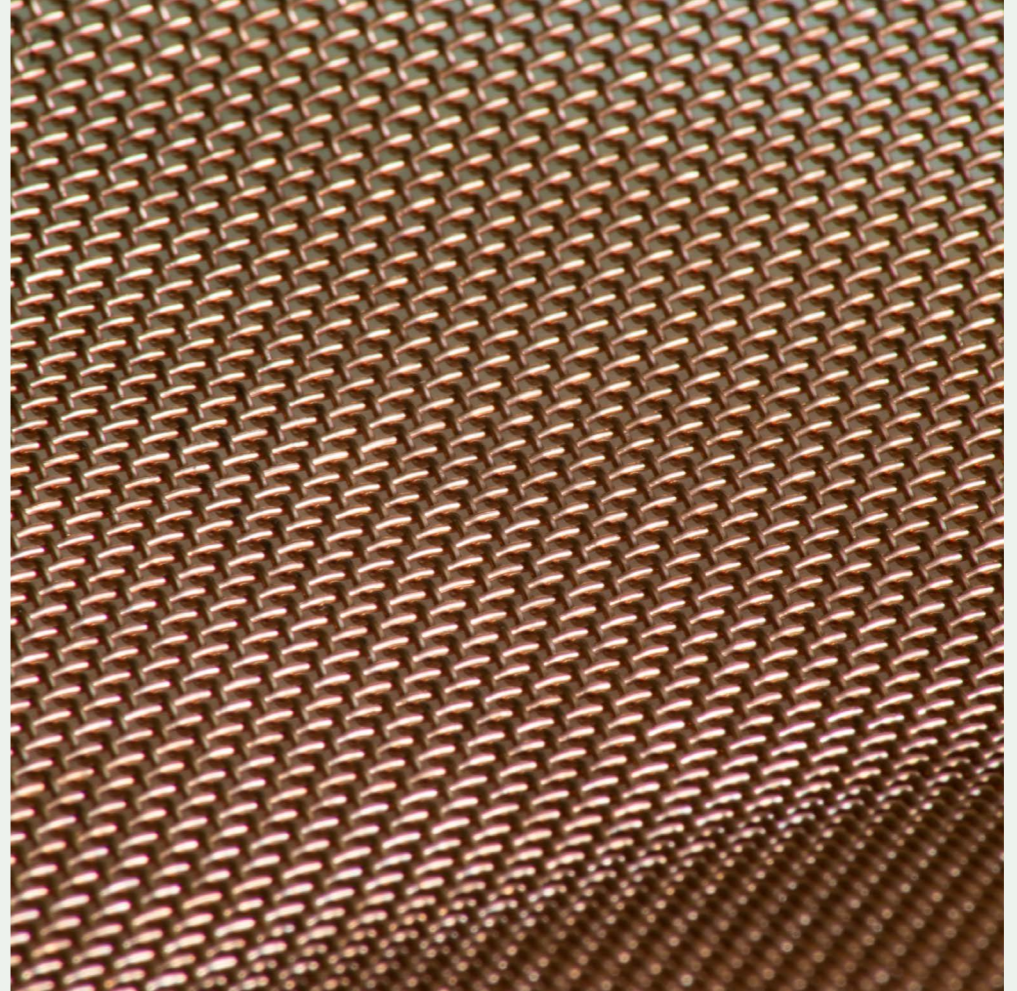
“It’s like an archaeological work” said S and remembered the tile that had an inscription on the back.

Once home, they laid out the bought materials, printed the floor plan of the Maag Hall on many A4 sheets, glued them together and tried to find out where these pieces belonged. They compared their speculations with what the caretaker had told them. And finally, she had almost forgotten, S looked at the back of the tile: Schwengler tiles, Hinwil. They had a name. They compared it to Google, they now had an address, a phone

number and an appointment. The search had just begun.



*Woven Copper*



*Close-Up*





*Tarpaulin*



Close-Up

*Designed Archaeology: Thinking About Spiritual Space*

FS20

book III

Samira Lenzin & Edoardo Signori