

04

# URBAN INTERIORS

Public space  
as the physical expression  
of connections, belonging, heritage, and identity.



- M A N E • A R I U M -

Building the collective memory of Camden Town  
through the power of objects.



*“The world,  
the man-made home  
erected on earth and made of the material  
which earthly nature delivers into human hands,  
consists not of things that are consumed  
but of things that are used.”*

## THE FUNCTION



As the philosopher Hannah Arendt writes in *The Human Condition* (1958), we live in a world of 'things that are used', which by their existence establish relations among people.

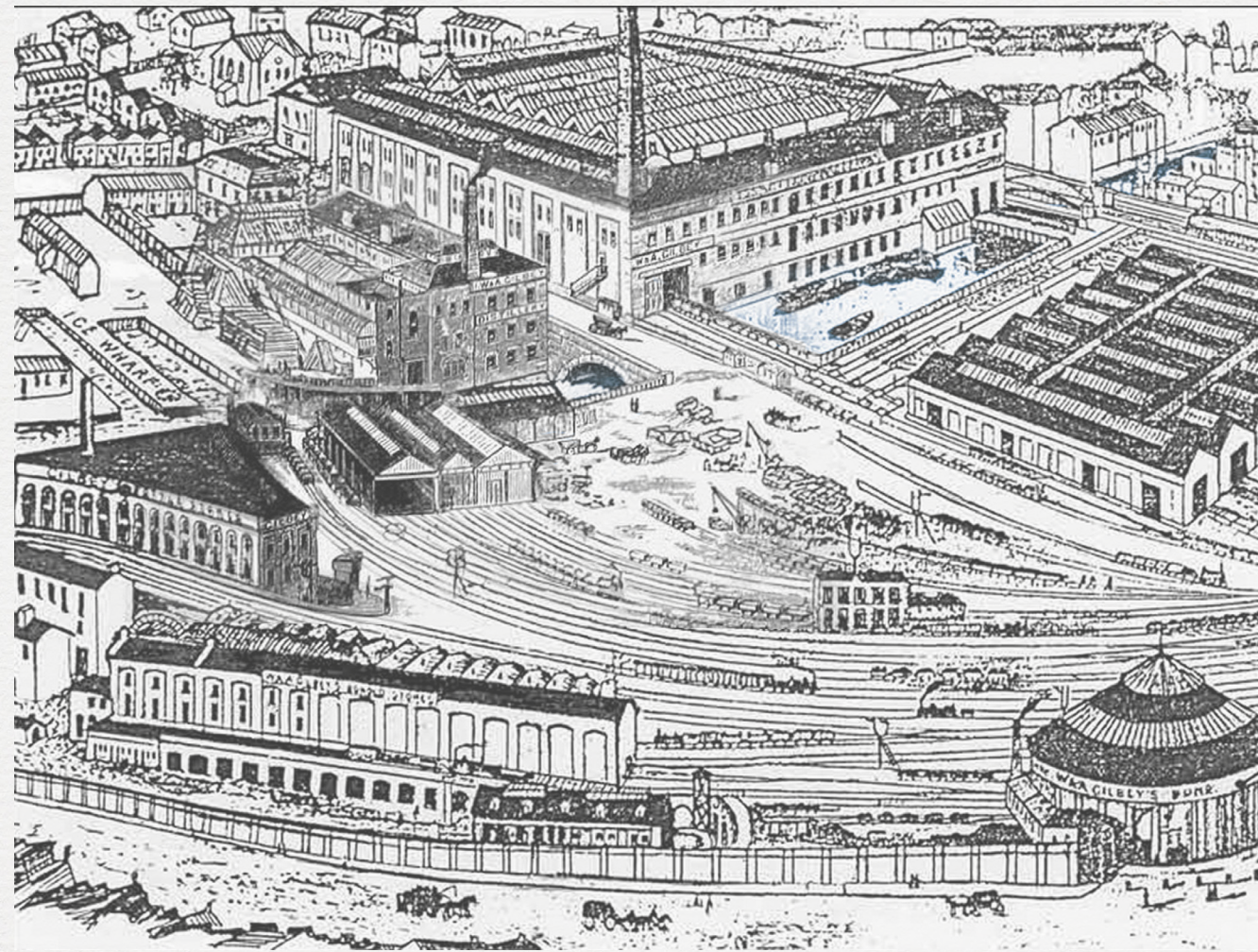
Household objects, that are so often discarded rather than repaired, tell stories and have the power to connect us even when no longer needed.

The project on Camden High Street draws on the

architectural and manufacturing heritage of Camden, offering a space to revive lost crafts and repair skills, to actively involve older generations and to exploit objects as means for sharing memories and knowledge. Instead of being discarded, household objects will be mended and be transferred from one person to another, from one house to another, maintaining local stories while creating social connections through a skills exchange and a new form of local collective memory.

## SITE ANALYSIS

### CAMDEN TOWN



1824

Camden Town was founded in the 18th century as a residential hamlet. A 100 years later, the construction of the Regent's canal and the railways brought a significant industrial development still marking the architectural face of the area.



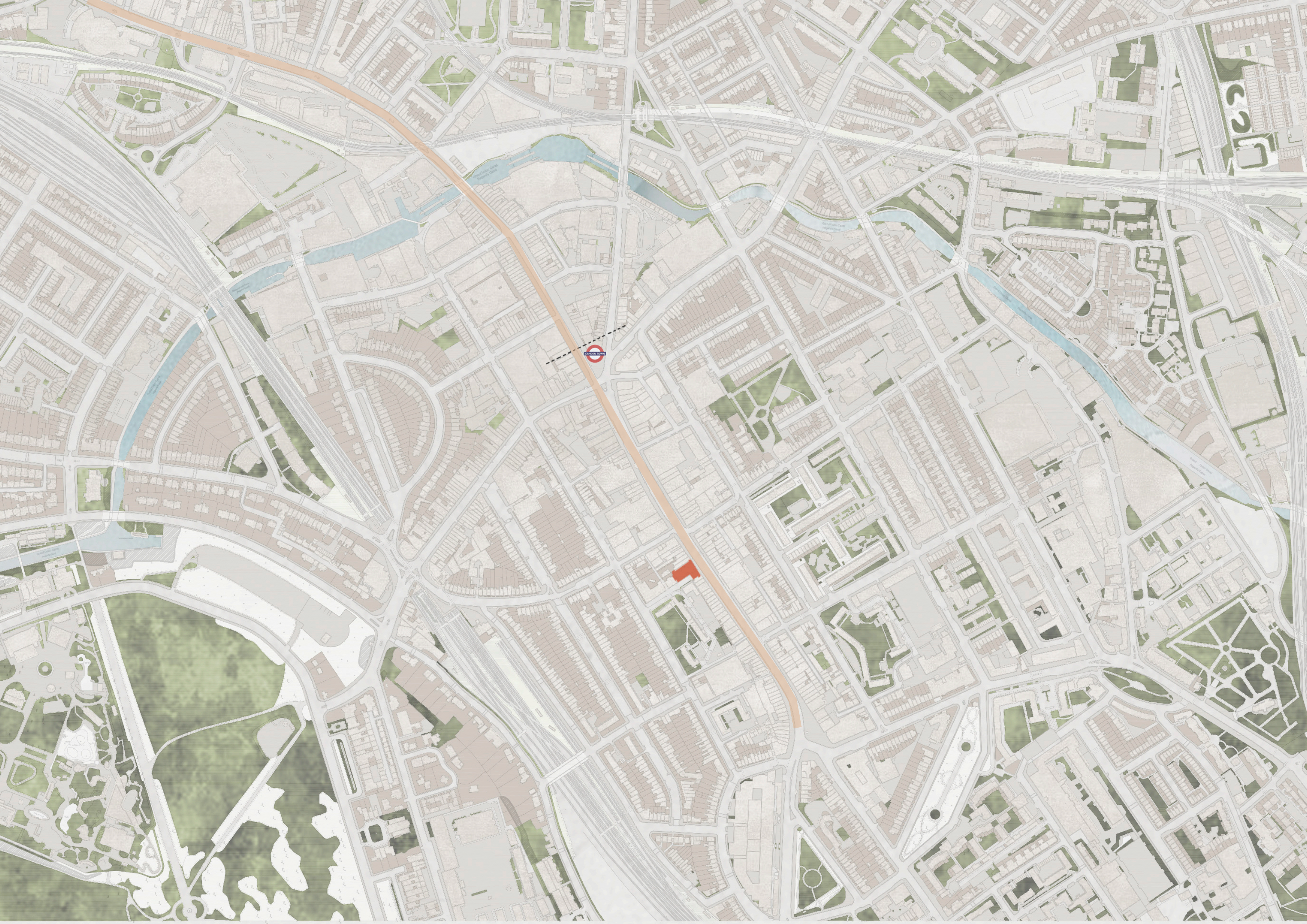
1960

Around the 1960s, it started hosting one of London's most famous markets, showcasing handcrafted and vintage artifacts and international food.

The new artistic vibe turned Camden into the cradle for creative professionals, rock music, and the home for the young rebel generation.



1980



The site welcoming the Manearium is located at the far right end of Camden High Street, in the calmer and more residential side of the borough. The building, currently vacant, offers retail spaces on the ground floor and office spaces on the three stories above. Several tenants moved in and out of such edifice, going from a job center to a Chinese tea shop and medical center, which still occupies the right portion of the ground floor. In addition, the alleyway beside the building has become the night destination for homeless people.





THE SITE  
View of Mary Terrace alleyway

THE SITE  
View of the building from Mary Terrace

99 CAMDEN HIGH STREET  
Site front view





THE NEW BEDFORD THEATRE  
Drawing by Lucas and Johnson  
architects, 1898

THE TEA GARDEN  
1909 drawing



THE NEW BEDFORD.

PROPRIETORS, MESSRS. LUCAS AND JOHNSON. ARCHITECT, MR. BERTIE CREWE, SAVOY MANSIONS, W.C.

The site has a fascinating hidden history, which been erased apart from a single column left standing. In 1807 it was a tavern and tea garden where customers would perform in exchange for a drink. By the middle of the 19th century the tavern was a fully-fledged theatre, the Old Bedford Music Hall and Palace of Varieties, which was completely rebuilt in 1898 and a French Renaissance -style facade on Camden High Street was added. In 1969 the theatre was demolished and by 1985 the current poor quality red-brick commercial building put up in its place.





A plaque on Arlington Road, part of the original Yorkstone flooring, and the remnants of one of the facade columns are what is left of the Bedford.

THE BEDFORD THEATRE  
Reconstruction of the interiors of the demolished building. College of old paintings and drawings.



## DESIGN STRATEGY

### *PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE*

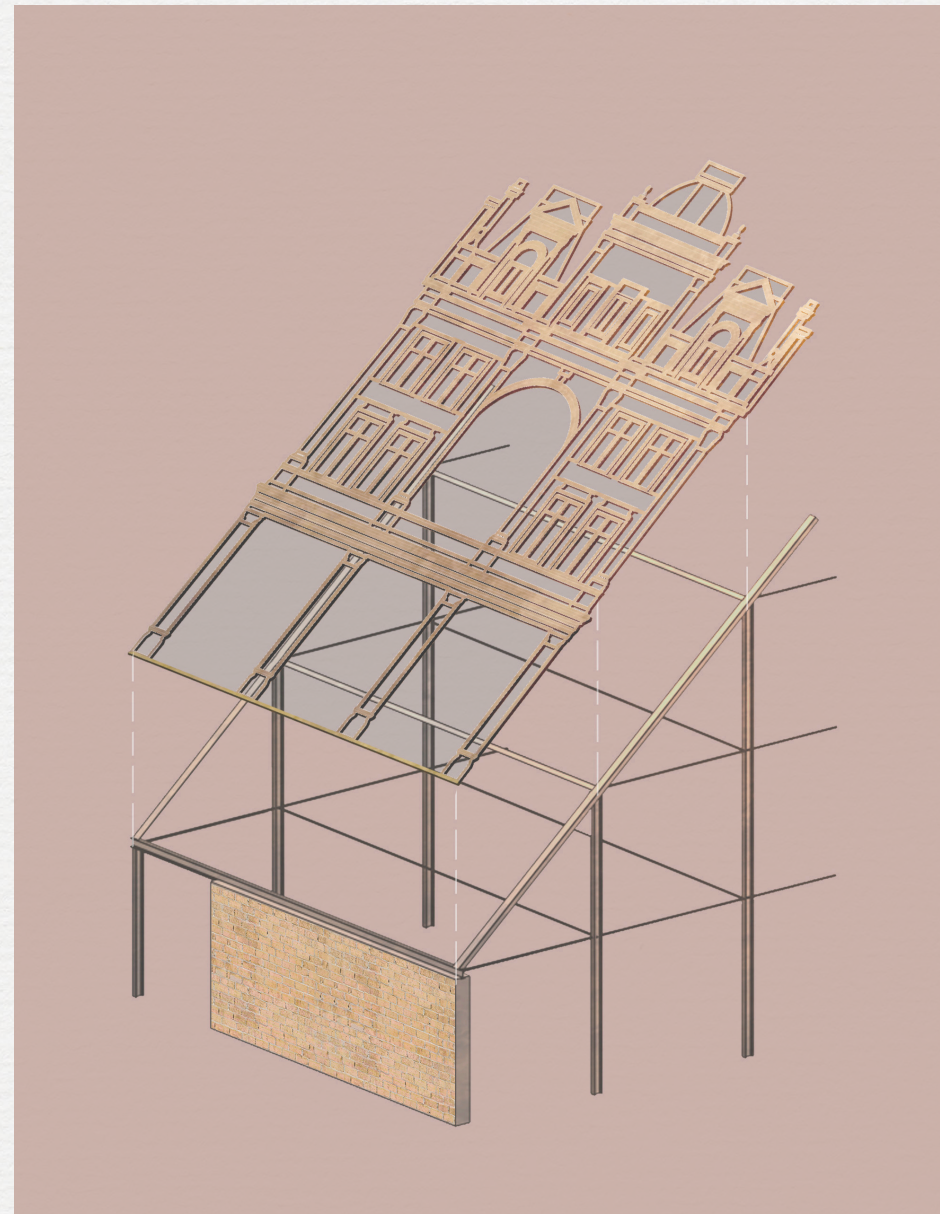
The design strategy is to bring together the past, present, and future of the site in a single building that is a composite of the existing brick, stitched together as if by handmade repair, with a new structure. The new building is a composition of three architectural groups :

1. PAST CLUSTER
2. ANTICIPATED FUTURE
3. PRESENT INSTANT



1. PAST CLUSTER:

1.1 THE GHOST FACADE



A 'ghost facade' creates a wide covered public space bearing a stylized reproduction of the demolished facade of the Bedford Theatre. Supported by a steel and brass frame, it projects a shadow of the Bedford above the alleyway, slowly moving with the path of the sun and marking the passing of time.

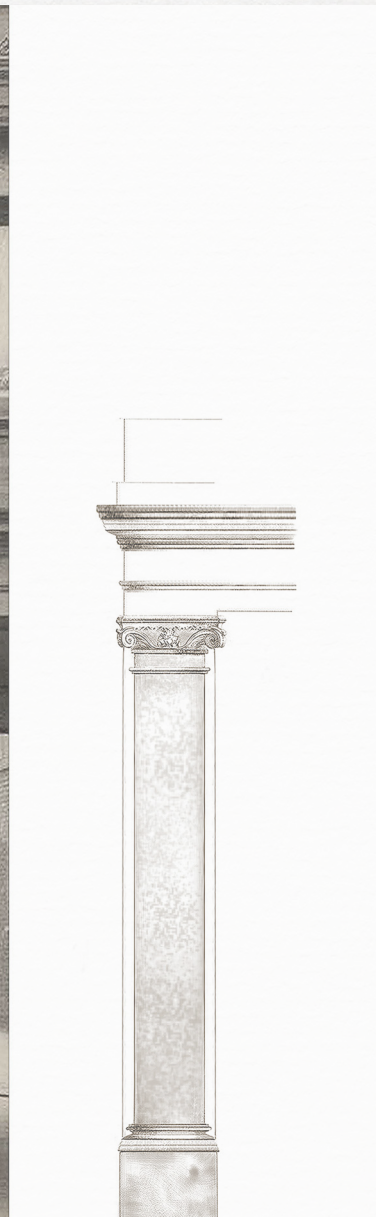
THE STRUCTURE  
Steel and brass frame

STUDY OF THE SHADOW  
PVC and balsa model



1. PAST CLUSTER:

1.2 THE COLUMN REMNANT



The remnant of the stone and labradorite column, is restored and kept in its place to mark the position of the original facade.

THE ORIGINAL COLUMN  
Picture and drawing of the 1898 column.

THE RESTORED COLUMN  
Douling stone and labradorite



1. PAST CLUSTER:  
1.3 THE CARYATID



The Douling stone caryatid from the Bedford theatre auditorium sits under the canopy as part of a fountain, a tribute to the Regent's Canal, the origin of Camden's commercial success.

THE ORIGINAL CARYATID  
Drawing by Walter Sickert

THE REPRODUCED CARYATID  
Douling stone



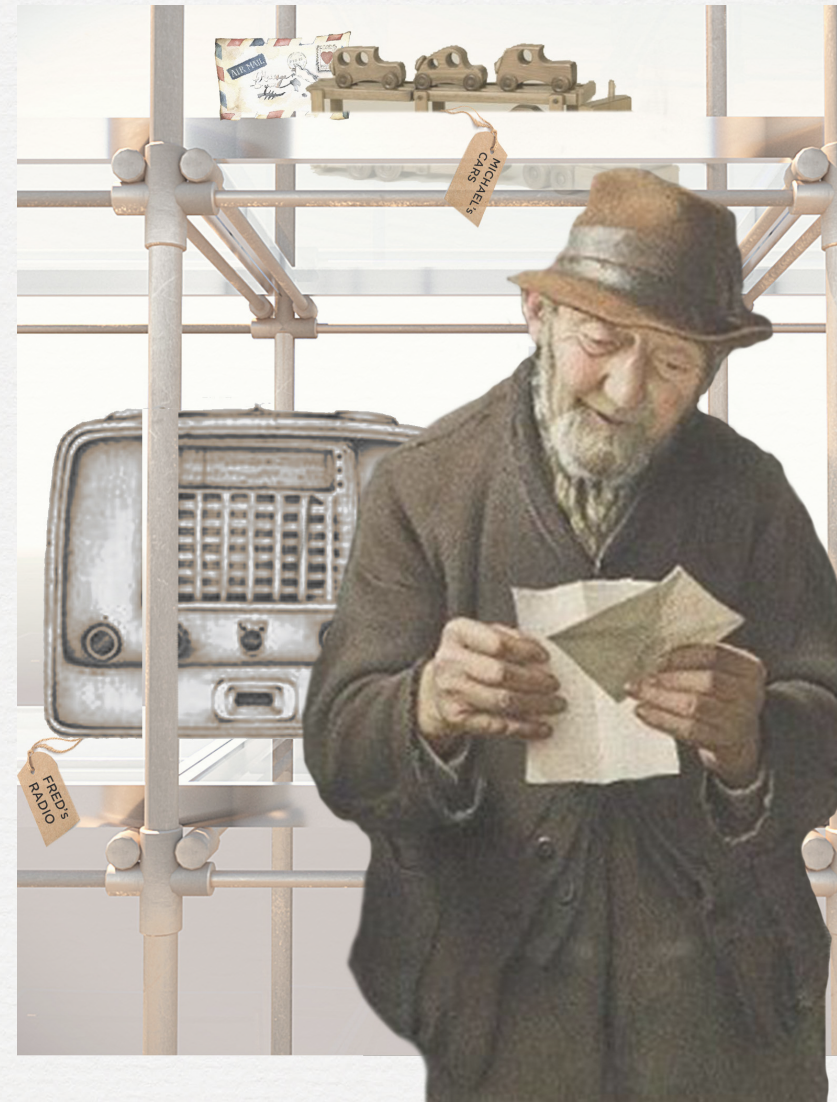
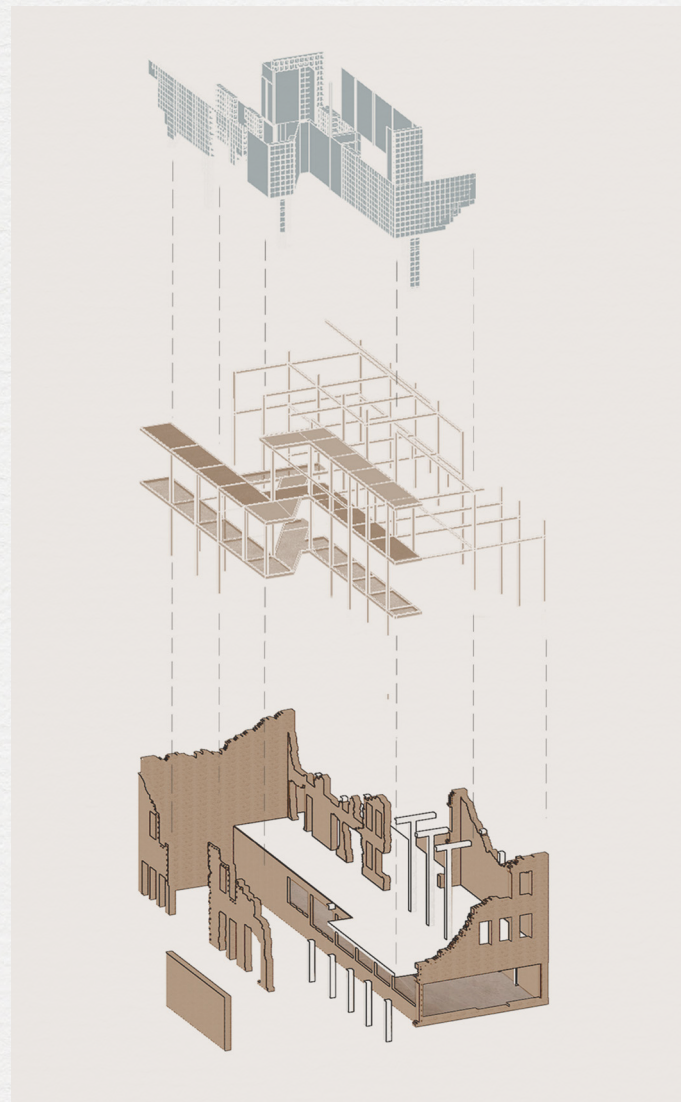
2. ANTICIPATED FUTURE:  
THE RUIN

The existing red-brick building is transformed into an anticipated ruin that describes the natural life cycle of the urban environment, the temporary character of buildings, anticipating the vision of a city where the death of High streets as commercial spaces and the triumph of smart-working and e-commerce will transform the modern featureless commercial buildings into empty boxes. As James Wines states, 'an empty building is in itself already a ruin.' The anticipated ruin is a future brought to the present, which keeps endlessly slipping in the past, moving fluidly through time. The appearance of nature introduces a spiritual up push that contrasts and balances the passive resistance of the inert matter against the pressure of the organic and inevitable process of decay.

THE ANTICIPATED RUIN  
Hyperbolic representation  
of the imagined decay of the  
building in the future



3. PRESENT INSTANT:  
THE ARCHIVE



Here the idea is to zoom-into the present moment, while separating and connecting past and future. A galvanized steel and glass structure bridges the ghost facade to the ruin while contributing to the mending of this last.

The system, hosts an archive displaying discarded household objects waiting to be exchanged and repaired, provisionally suspended on walkways as if frozen in time.

THE ARCHIVE STRUCTURE  
Exploded axonometry

MODULARITY  
The system is composed by a modular frame to accommodate objects of different sizes

THE 3 GROUPS TOGETHER  
The archive mends part of the ruin while connecting it to the ghost facade

# MANEARIUM

## WALKING THROUGH THE SPACE



On arrival at the Manearium visitors walk into a plaza, a green and quiet public that is space currently missing in this part of Camden. On the right side the red brick wall opens up to create new windows for the Chinese cafe, connecting it to the public space while allowing more natural light to enter the shop. The fountain coheres the two sides of the plaza, where



materials belonging to the past, such as York stone and Douling stone, blend with the materials of the present. The same material approach is used for the interior spaces.

MANEARIUM  
Ground floor plan

MANEARIUM  
The piazza

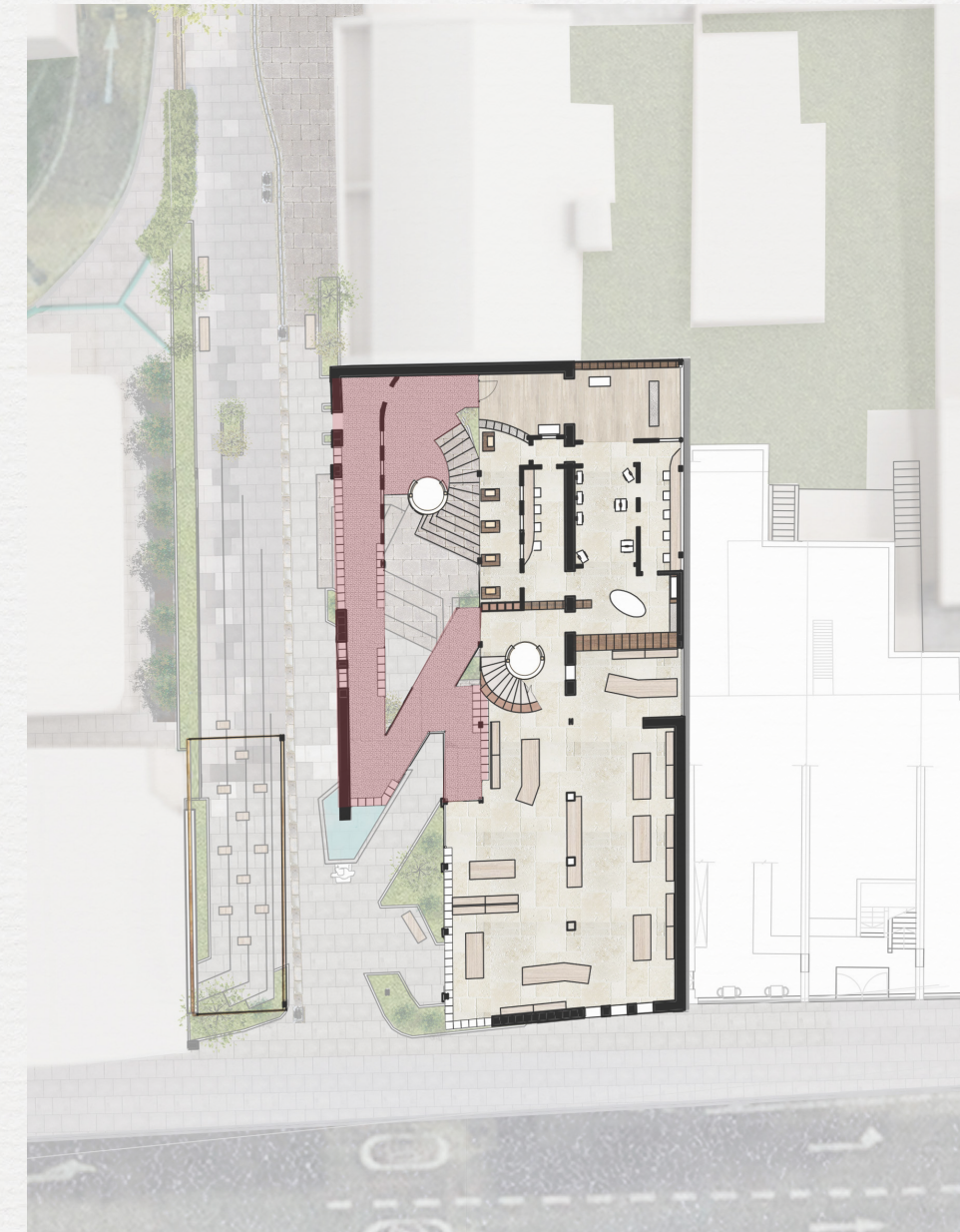




MANEARIUM  
The archive

MANEARIUM  
First floor plan

Indoor public areas are located on the first and second floors. Once upstairs visitors can either turn left or right.



Going left they will access the archive through a series of stone arches, which, together with other openings along the walkways, reinforce the idea of the archive as a temporary and transitional space, a threshold between outside and inside.



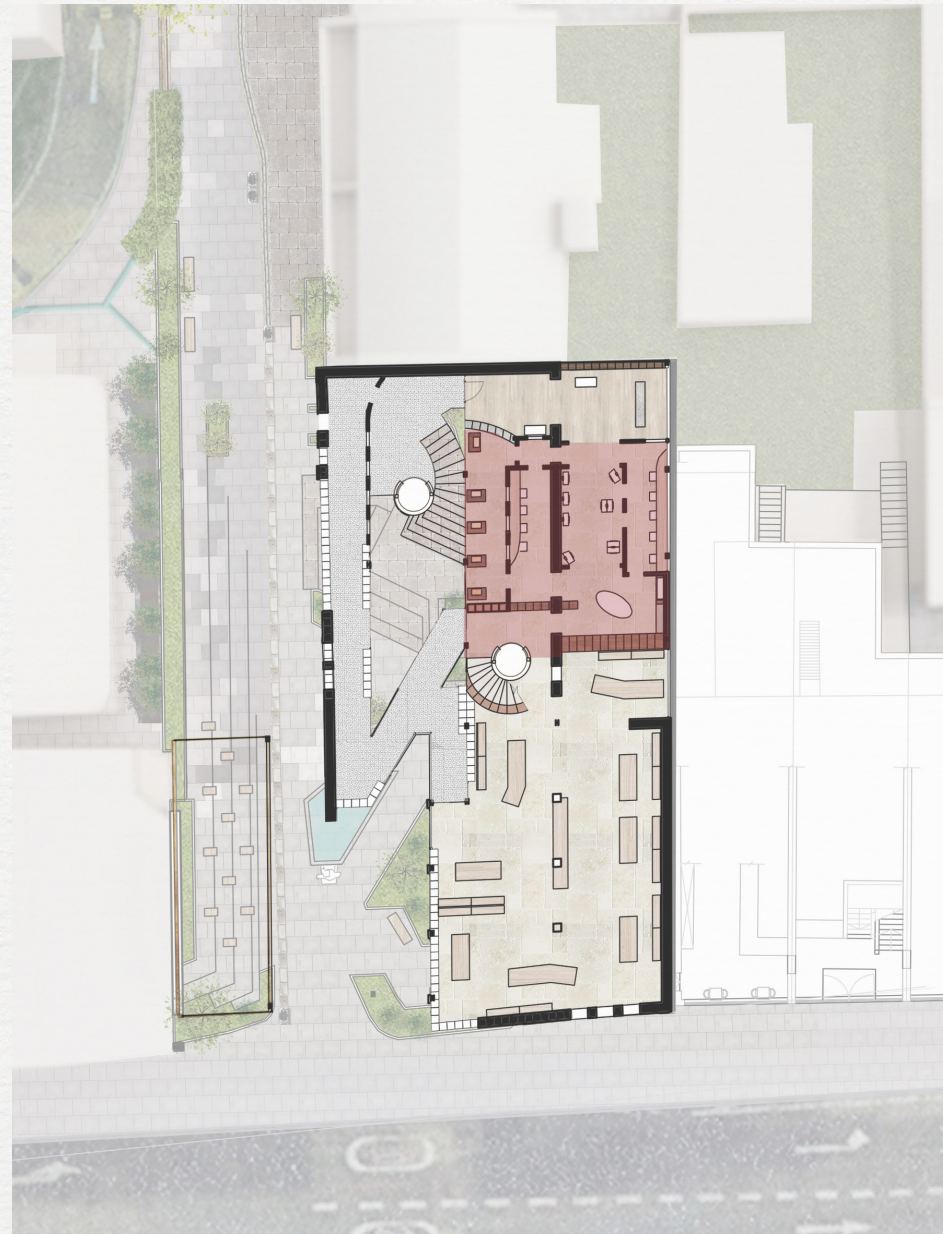
On the right of the staircase there is the reception hall. Together with an information contact point, this area hosts display spaces for objects sitting for a longer time in the archive. The fluted concrete tiles cladding the lower part of the walls reference a long drainage canal along the alleyway.



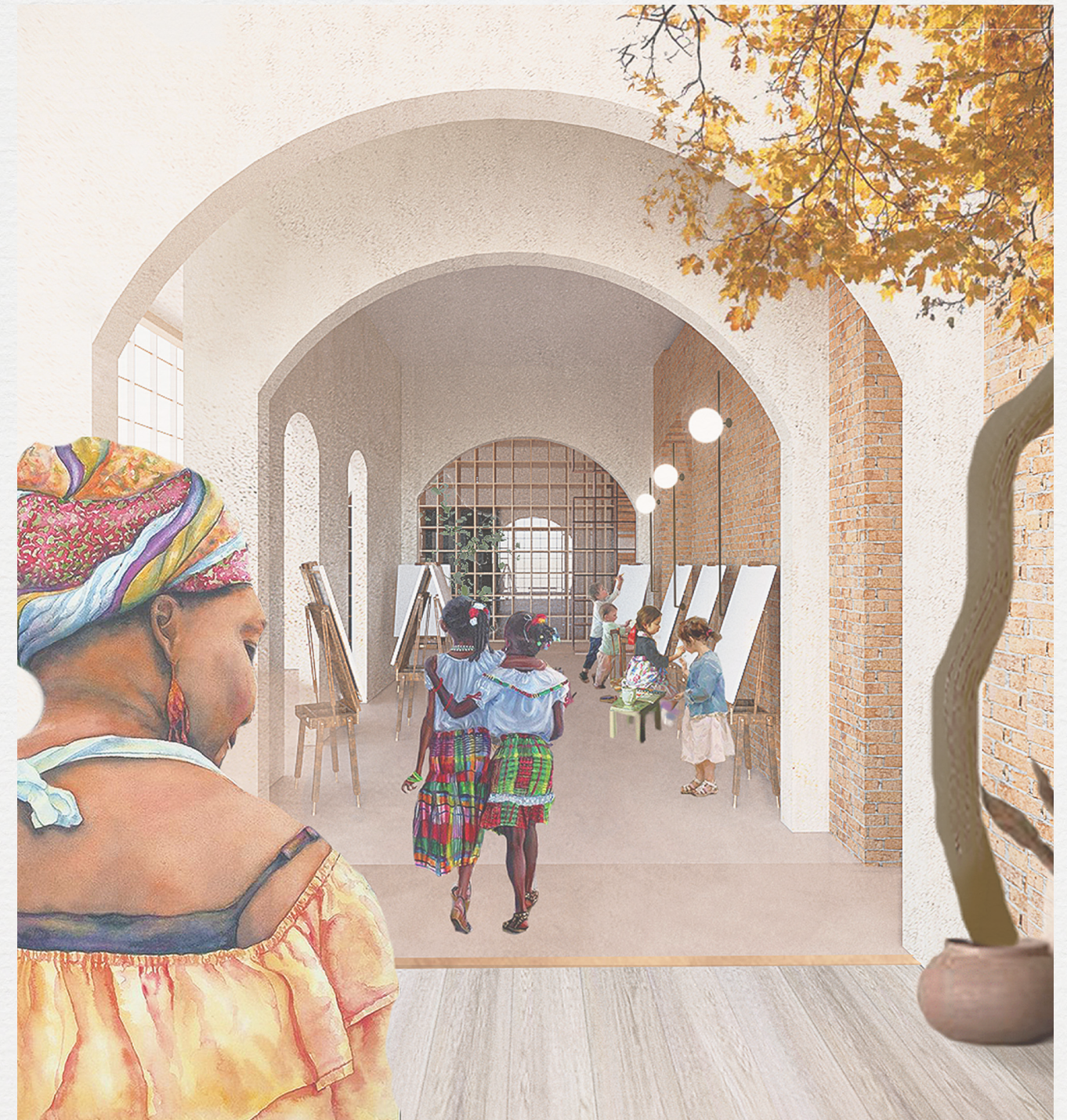
MANEARIUM  
First floor plan

MANEARIUM  
The hall

The Goodbye Room is a fluid space where people give details about the objects they leave behind. Freedom and creativity are encouraged, with the possibility to fill in a label, write a card or a letter, or make a drawing accompanying the objects to their new homes.



This space offers different configurations to allow people to choose the spots where they feel more comfortable writing or drawing. After the goodbye objects are left on wooden shelves to be cleaned and positioned in the archive. The ceiling is covered in papier maché as a reference to the decoration of the theatre interiors.



MANEARIUM  
First floor plan

MANEARIUM  
The goodbye room- easels area



MANEARIUM  
The goodbye room: long table area

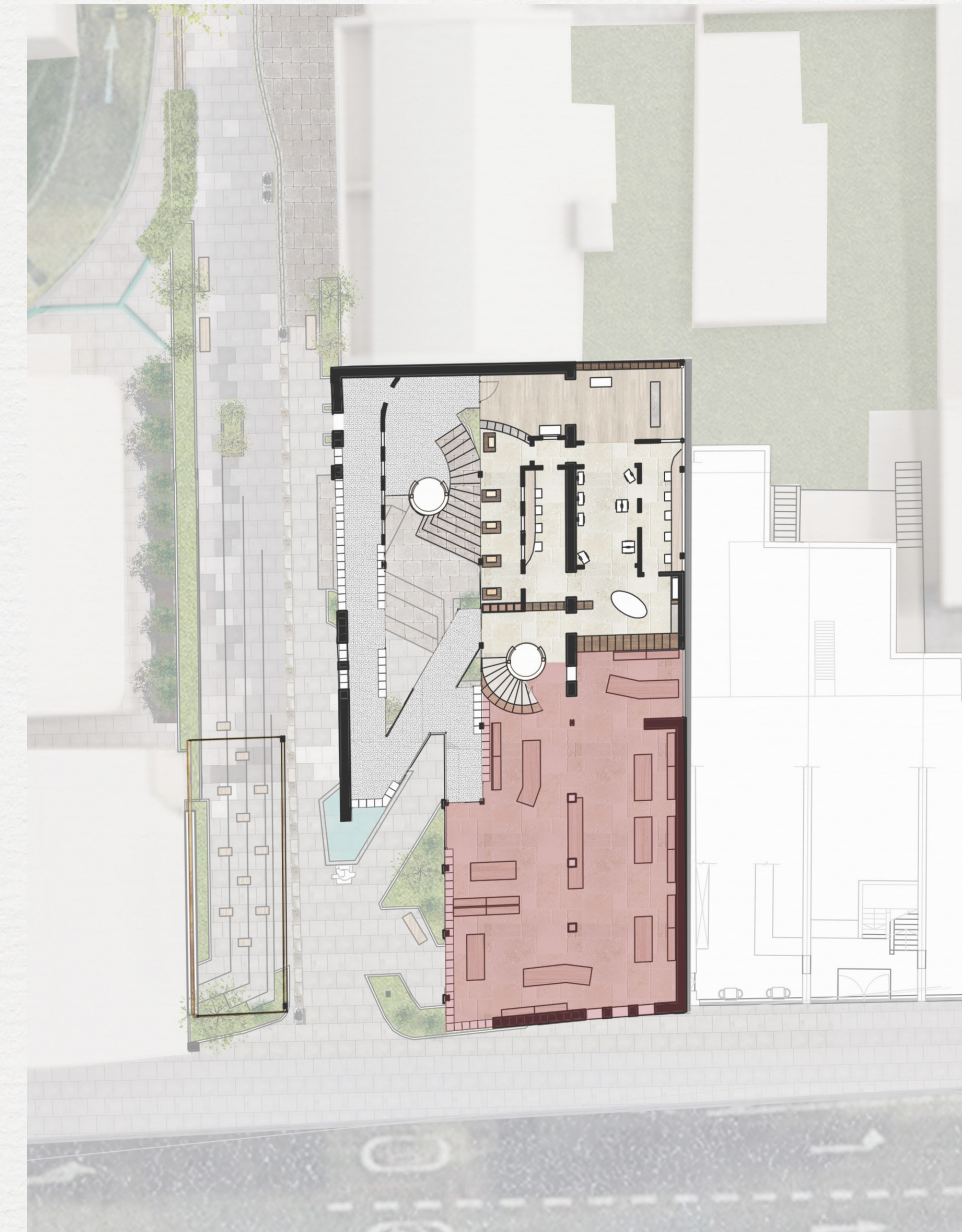


MANEARIUM  
The goodbye room: writing desks area



The Repair Workshop is run by a team of retired artisans, actively involving the older generation in the community as a resource and source of learning.

The Workshop hosts seven permanent workstations



dedicated to wood, metal, glass, electronics, ceramic, leather and fabrics, painting and printing, plus a sociable station for visiting experts. Every station is associated with a different colour and material language depending on its function.

A consultation table sits in the middle of the space among the stations.

MANEARIUM  
The workshop

MANEARIUM  
First floor plan

The Repair Café on the second floor is where people meet while waiting for their objects to be fixed or read articles about the art of repair while getting some refreshments.



Being one storey above the workshop, it offers a view on the whole community space and access to a terrace facing the plaza.

MANEARIUM  
Second floor plan

MANEARIUM  
The bar





URBAN INTERIORS  
Public space

Work by Lisa Breschi