

In Presence ATLAS

The UNIVERSITY of Universities (UOU) is an international network of academics from European schools of architecture, collaborating to provide online workshops throughout the academic year for students from different universities who work together remotely and in a collaborative way.

This section of the Atlas shows the work carried out by graduate and undergraduate students in a three-week workshop on the theme of the relationship between body and space. The proposed theme-summarised in the title "Acting/Acted Bodies in the Architectural and Urban Spaces"-asked students to develop an approach from the personal to the collective (or from the particular to the general), starting from their own body and the relationship it establishes with the spaces of their everyday life, to understand critical issues and opportunities and develop scenarios of design transformation at different scales.

The total number of students who participated in this workshop is about 50 and this Atlas is a selection of 7 projects among the 20 presented in the final session. The selected groups are:

- Alexia Ioana Popa, Dina Alloin (Universidad de Alicante).
- Zoia Dolgova, Eva Strobl (Universidad de Alicante).
- Anaís Asensio, Lola Mourenza, Martín López (Universidad de Alicante).
- Shivam Singh, Fathah Mohammed, Gachechiladze Daviti (Politecnico di Milano).
- Eda Altindağ, Kacper Arkadiusz Pietrzak (Politecnico di Milano).
- Diego Díaz Linares, Esther Molina Burguillos, María Sánchez González (Universidad de Alicante).
- Joan Briones, José González, Élia Montagud (Universidad de Alicante).

AIMS

Through an architectural and urban experiential journey, the workshop explored the evolving relationship between the body and space in public and private contexts. Its main objective was to envision design improvements that integrated urban and architectural perspectives, examining how the blend of in-person and digitally mediated reflections shaped the experience of architectural spaces and urban actions. The workshop encouraged participants to reflect on spatial perception critically and consider innovative approaches to enhancing the interaction between the human body and the surrounding environment.

METHOD

Participants were invited to undertake an architectural and urban journey involving both their private and public spaces. They mapped and highlighted the significant places within the body-space relationship and imagined

potential design improvements for each site. The workshop encouraged participants to critically assess the in-person and digital dimensions of the architectural space experience and urban-scale actions. The workshop aimed to foster a deep awareness of spatial dynamics through this method, stimulating a creative and responsible approach to urban and architectural design.

Moreover, the applied methodology proceeds from the particular to the general. Understanding the criticalities of one's home-university journey becomes the stimulus for researching similar issues at the scale of the urban compartment to which one belongs and for stimulating design strategies. Such actions, beginning with an attempt to solve local problems, are intended to address criticalities at a broader scale.

TECHNIQUE

Throughout the workshop, various practical and theoretical techniques enabled participants to interact directly with the explored spaces. Multimodal and layered descriptions and interpretations were used to raise awareness of the relationship between the acting body and the space that acts upon it. Participants were encouraged to reflect on critical issues and opportunities for improving this connection. The methodology promoted a creative and reflective approach to addressing everyday challenges related to spatial experience, considering the psychological, emotional, and sensory aspects of their interactions with the built environment.

STRENGTHS

The strengths of the workshop were many. First, it allowed rich cultural exchange among participants from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, the workshop promoted both analytical and synthetic introspection, allowing participants to develop site-specific architectural and urban micro-projects by applying

critical thinking to their design processes. Another key strength was the ability to document and present urban and architectural projects effectively, both orally and visually, using various techniques such as freehand drawing, sketches, physical models, virtual models, and renderings. This documentation process enabled participants to explore their projects in depth, adapting them to broader contexts and evaluating their replicability on a larger urban scale.

WORKSHOP STRUCTURE

Phase 1 – Trigger. The first phase involved a graphic-photographic analysis of each participant's personal home-university route. A critical-operational approach was adopted to highlight the limitations and challenges encountered during the journey, not only in physical and dimensional terms but also in psychological, emotional, and sensory aspects related to the body-space relationship. Participants identified a sequence of spaces characterised by specific deficiencies or disturbing elements to be addressed.

Phase 2 – Project. Participants developed a strategy for micro-architectural transformation projects in critical urban spaces in the second phase. The proposed interventions aimed to make substantial and lasting changes to the space, inspired by sustainability and sobriety principles. These interventions were designed to have a controlled yet significant technical-aesthetic impact, ensuring minimal resource use while creating lasting improvements. The approach was site-specific, ensuring that each design was practical and relevant to its context.

Phase 3 – Strategy. In the final phase, design actions were scaled up to the micro-urban level. Participants assessed the potential replicability of the micro-projects developed in Phase 2 if implemented on a larger scale, such as across streets, blocks, or neighbourhoods. These projects

underwent adaptations and integrations for broader urban applications.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of the projects developed in the workshop was continuous, weekly meetings were held in which the proposals and drawings were discussed between the students and the coordinating teachers.

Evaluation was based on the following criteria:

- Ability to describe and critically analyse the minimal spaces of everyday life.
- Ability to identify problems and develop strategic scenarios.
- Ability to develop and represent design proposals at different scales.

SCHEDULE

- Workshop Online Presentation / 14th March 2025.
- Classes online UOU / Fridays from 9:30 to 13:30 (CET): 21st March 2025 and 28th March 2025.
- Final Presentation, Face-to-face in Alicante and online / 04th April 2025 and 11th April 2025.

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Skin and Scent: softening the Urban Experience

Alexia Ioana Popa; Dina Alloin

Universidad de Alicante, Spain

As we walked through the streets of Alicante, we became increasingly aware of the city's olfactory landscape. Smell plays a crucial role in how we experience public space—some scents, like the aroma of fresh bread from a bakery, are comforting and familiar.

Others, such as the persistent odor of dog urine, especially in summer, can evoke discomfort and amplify urban stress. This sensory awareness became the starting point for our architectural investigation: how might we design with scent to improve well-being in the city?

We began to question how architecture could intentionally engage the sense of smell, rather than treat it as incidental. Could scent become a tool to shape emotion, reduce anxiety, and foster a more nurturing urban atmosphere? Our attention soon turned to a ubiquitous but overlooked element of the city's façade: the air conditioning unit. These machines are everywhere, protruding from building exteriors, humming in the background—and

often leaking water onto the street below. That small, persistent drip became a clue: could this excess water be harnessed rather than wasted?

Our proposal reimagines these devices as vehicles for atmospheric care. Encased in transparent, bubble-like PVC structures, these ephemeral micro-installations attach to existing AC units and transform them into sensory prosthetics. Within each enclosure, aromatic plants such as lavender, rosemary, or mint are cultivated, nourished by the condensation and leaked water produced by the units themselves. This creates a self-sustaining microclimate—a closed loop where machine byproducts support natural life, and in turn, scent the city air.

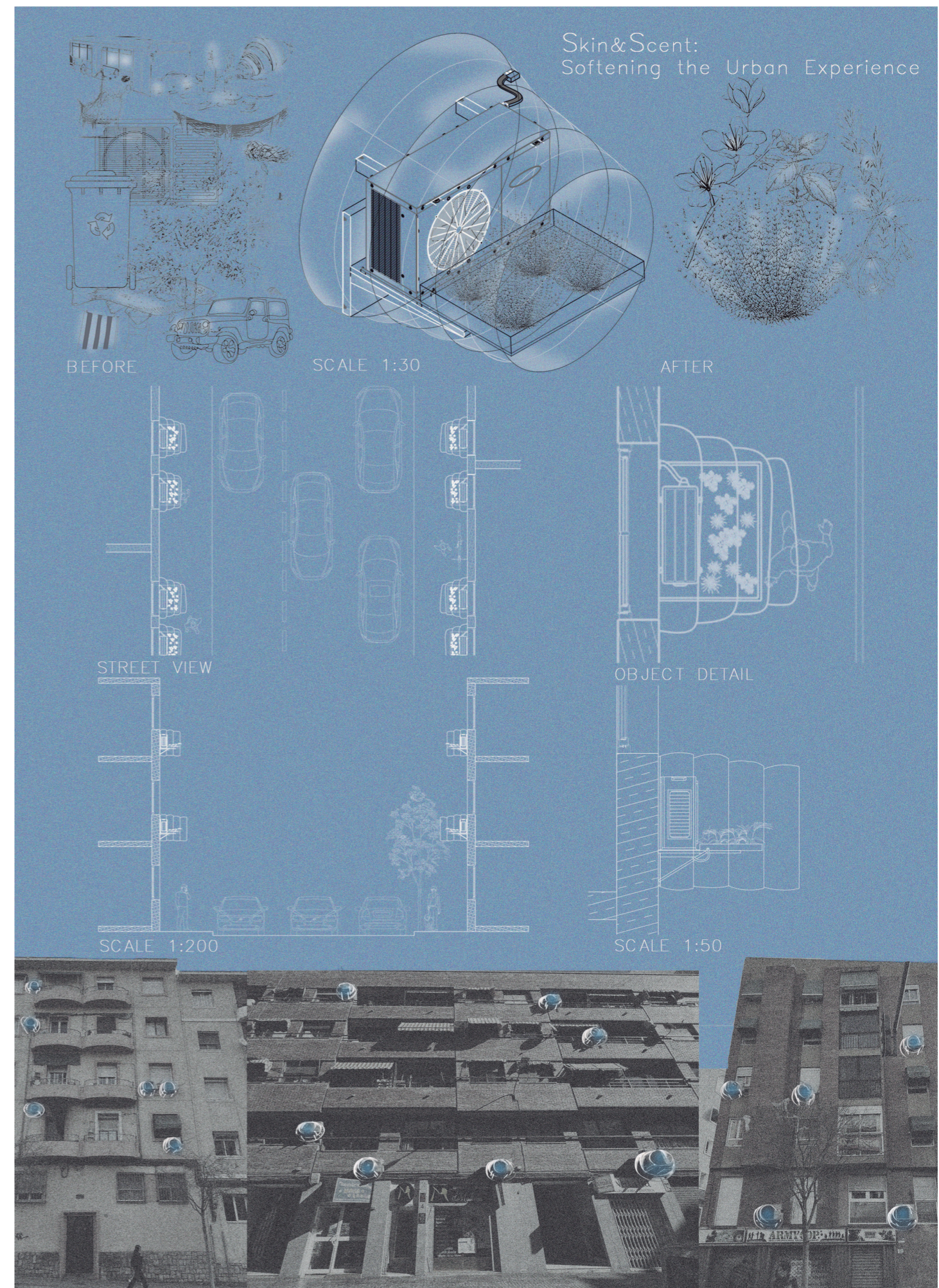
The installation softens both the visual and thermal impact of mechanical infrastructure while introducing a gentle olfactory presence into the urban streetscape. It offers brief, surprising moments of calm—inviting pedestrians to pause, inhale, and feel. Scent, after all, bypasses

rational thought and connects directly to the brain's emotional and memory centers, making it a subtle yet powerful design element

By diffusing botanical aromas and integrating greenery into the built environment, our system improves air quality and offers sensory relief. These moments of olfactory pause allow for a more harmonious relationship between body, technology, and city. The installation is lightweight, modular, and adaptable—capable of being implemented in various climates and urban contexts without invasive construction.

Ultimately, our project is a call to expand architectural thinking beyond the visual and structural. It asks us to design for the full range of human perception, to consider care and comfort as essential functions of the built environment.

By transforming overlooked infrastructure—into a source of multisensory engagement, we propose a new kind of urban intervention—one that softens, heals, and reconnects.



Acting/Acted Bodies in the Architectural and Urban Space

Zoia Dolgova; Eva Strobl

Universidad de Alicante, Spain

How does our built environment fuel the subconscious?

The body is us – and our built environment itself contains a dialogue and in that we must question what is being said?

Yet also, how can we use design to integrate people back into the living organism of our cities?

The project began with a simple, repeated experience: our daily tram commute from Alicante to the University. Though nearly identical, our journeys differ by just one stop—highlighting how even shared routines can be subtly personal. This mundane, everyday movement through the city became the lens through which we began to question how the built environment shapes not just our behaviour, but our subconscious experiences.

This point of departure prompted a broader inquiry: in what ways does the built environment engage

the body beyond functionality, and through putting our bodies into this space – we could also ask how we could reframe our environment in consideration of the body.

The first site is a tram station underground - enclosed, transitional, possibly isolating, whilst the second site is the restaurant of streets - open, social, possibly chaotic.

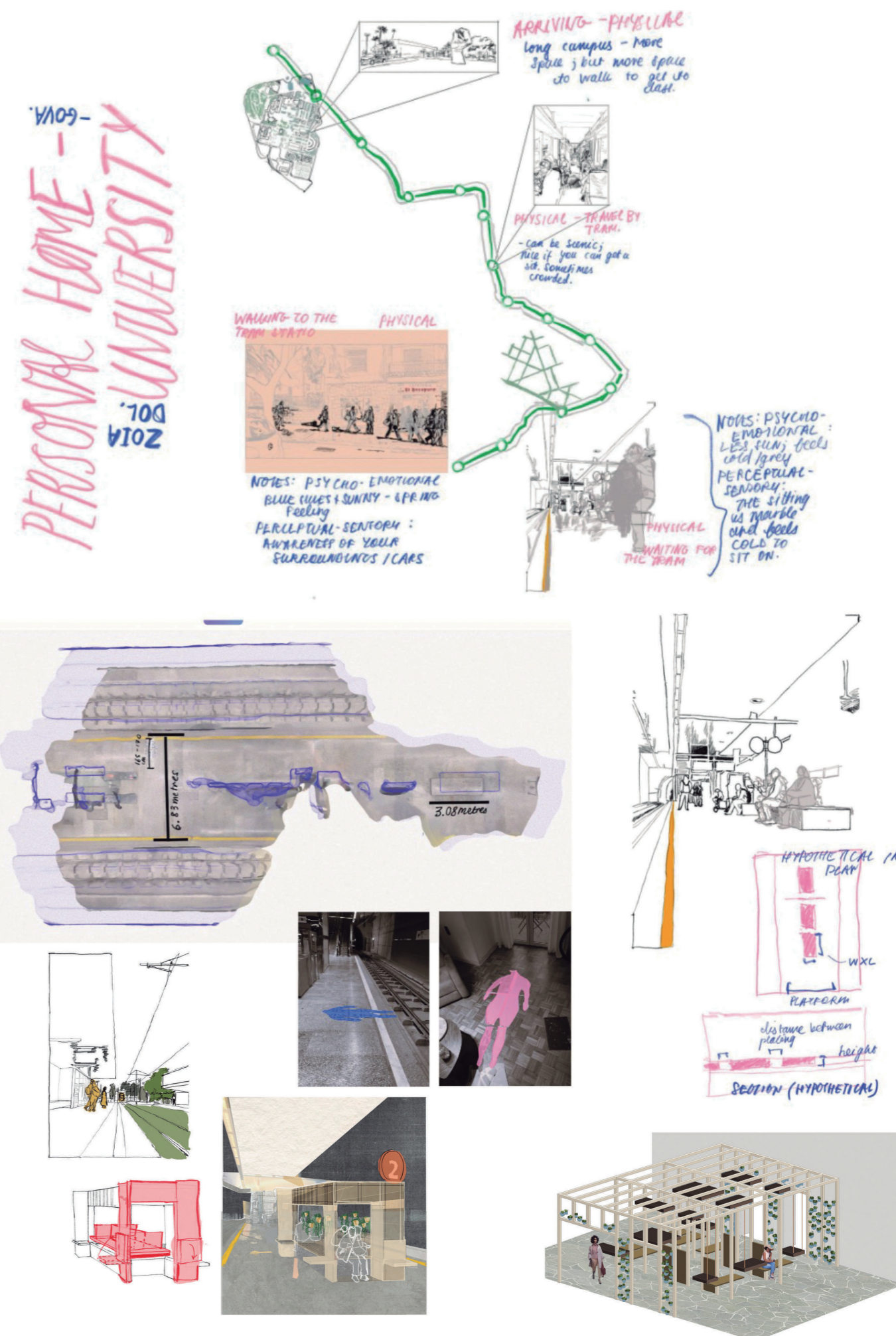
The intention was to explore whether it was possible to create common design strategies that could be used to respond to different body problems in different places in the city, and the need to pick different sites with different issues was to test whether it was possible to respond with mutually inclusive strategies, despite the differences.

The result of our investigations and response resulted in designing street furniture – our vision and belief that making our public spaces

comfortable also makes them feel safer. We firmly believe that the feeling of home and safety are possible in our public sphere - using small, tangible interventions like street furniture to foster broader urban integration and emotional safety.

Our common strategies identified to implement into the street furniture design:

- use of wooden structures to reframe the space and to create human scale
- reating flexible furniture to maximise use of space but creating more opportunities for comfortable seating
- use of greenery to create a sense of calm
- use of warm lighting to enhance a sense of safety in the body
- spaces that contain us.



WIND.that.sculptor

Anaís Asensio; Lola Mourenza; Martín López

Universidad de Alicante, Spain

This architectural intervention draws inspiration from Christo and Jeanne-Claude's iconic project The Gates, where fabric and movement engaged with the natural environment to create a dynamic, ephemeral experience. In this work, the wind becomes a central figure—no longer a passive, external force, but an active participant in shaping space. It animates the architecture, giving life to the fabric elements and transforming the perception of light, form, and atmosphere.

The result is a living, breathing landscape that changes with every gust of air.

The Concept: Fluid Boundaries Between Space and Nature. The project is composed of a series of semi-open pavilions defined by suspended, lightweight fabrics. These elements are not static; they move, bend, and respond to the surrounding environment. As people walk through, they are immersed in a space where boundaries dissolve and reconfigure with the rhythm of the wind. The fabric offers a sense of enclosure without isolation—allowing light and glimpses of the landscape to filter through its translucent surface.

On calm days, it drapes gently, creating a peaceful, contemplative environment. When the wind rises, the fabric comes to life, dancing and reshaping the space around it.

Wind as Sculptor of the Sky. Unlike conventional architecture, which resists change, this project embraces impermanence. The wind sculpts the air, creating waves, ripples, and shifting shadows. The result is not just a visual transformation but a multisensory one. Visitors feel the breeze on their skin, hear the gentle rustle of the fabric, and witness the sky become a canvas of movement. Each moment is unique—each experience shaped by nature's hand.

Interaction and Sensory Perception. The installation invites visitors not only to observe but to participate. As they move through the space, their presence affects how the fabric flows and shifts, creating a dialogue between body, material, and atmosphere. The project encourages:

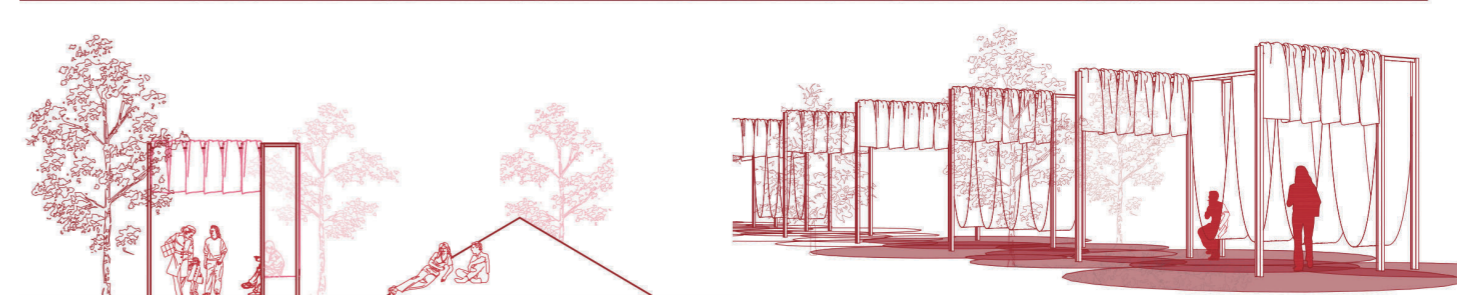
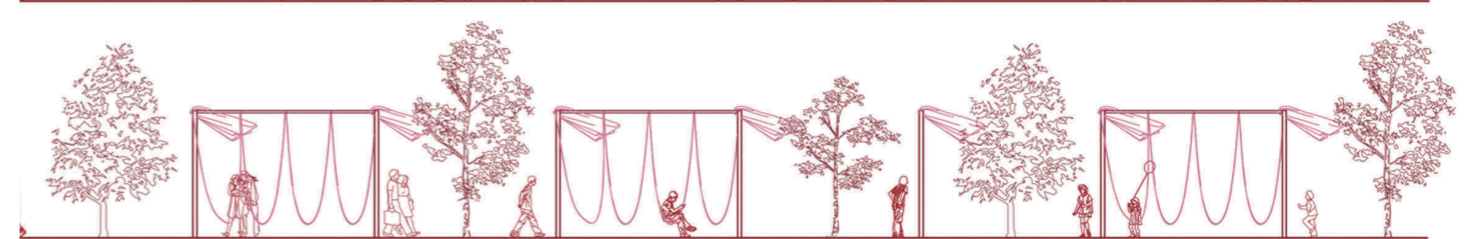
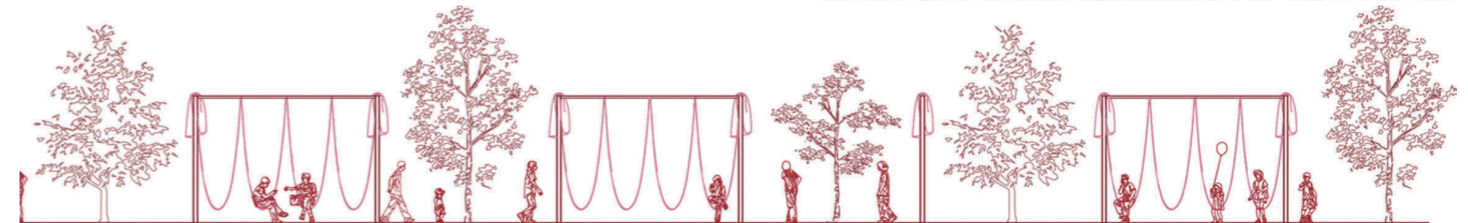
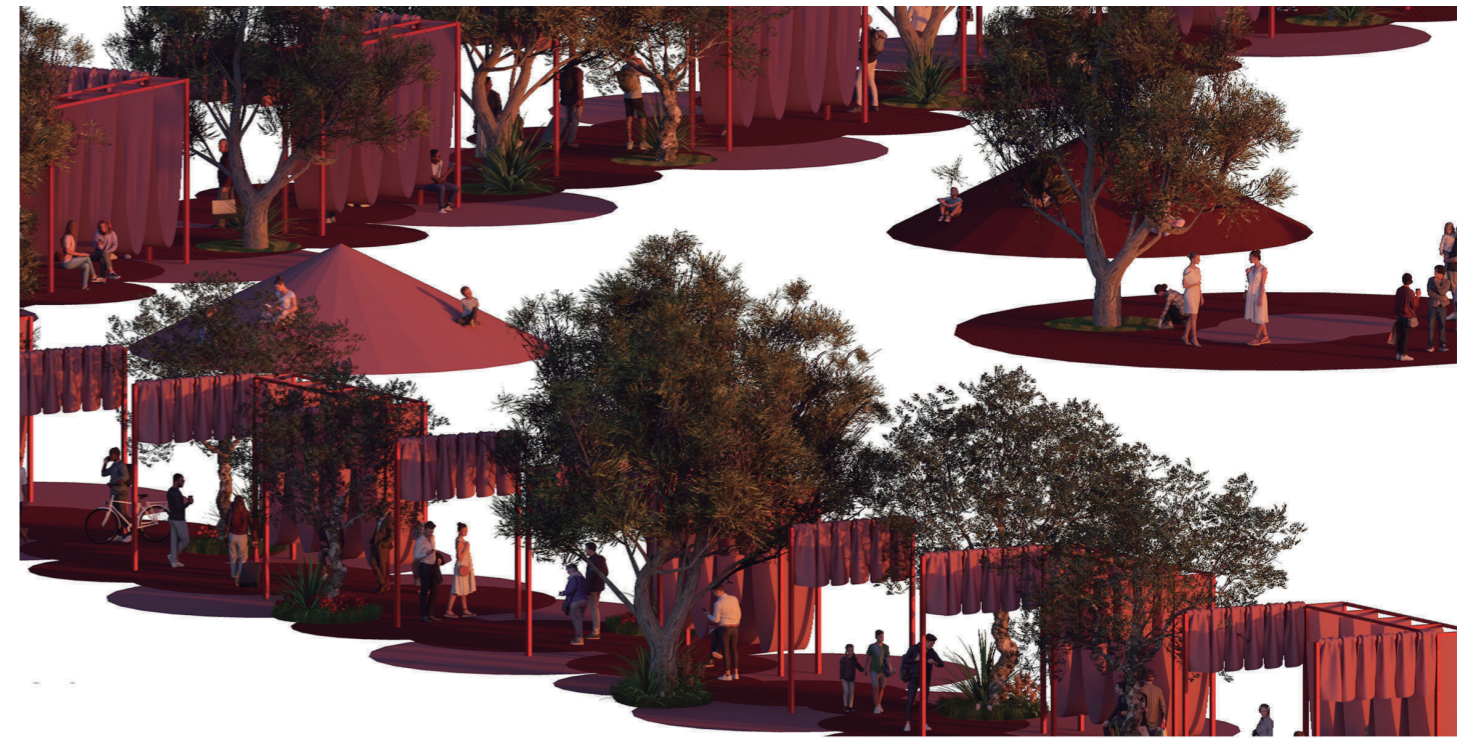
- A sense of rhythm, as the fabric moves like a natural choreography.
- An awareness of impermanence, where forms

are fleeting and constantly changing.

- A deeper connection with nature, by making the invisible forces of wind visible and tangible.
- A spirit of playfulness, as the unpredictability of movement brings surprise and delight.

Materiality and Light. The choice of material is essential: a lightweight, semi-transparent red fabric allows for the interplay of light and shadow, creating a warm, vibrant atmosphere. Red, traditionally associated with passion and vitality, contrasts with the surrounding greenery and accentuates the movement of the fabric. Throughout the day, the mood of the space shifts—from soft, glowing mornings to dramatic shadows at midday and warm, golden hues at sunset.

A Space to Gather and Reflect. More than a sculptural gesture, this is a social and reflective space. It invites people to gather, rest, and connect—not just with each other but with the landscape around them. By celebrating the wind, this project transforms architecture into a poetic medium, where nature becomes co-author and air becomes art.



Street as Artform

Shivam Singh; Fathah Mohammed;
Gachechiladze Daviti

Politecnico di Milano, Italy

Home is more than a place, it is a feeling. It evokes safety, freedom, and identity. Yet the moment we step outside, something shifts. The world grows louder, scents change, and the city pulses with movement. With each step, we too begin to transform, we listen with our hearts, see with our feet, and feel with our whole bodies. The daily journey from home to Politecnico di Milano becomes more than a commute; it is a passage through sensory and psychological thresholds. As we move through the urban landscape, it reshapes our perception in subtle, powerful ways.

Transition.

In the linear park, time slows bodies move gently, shadows play through the trees, and voices soften. But as we re-enter the street, the city surges back. Light fractures across glass and stone, the scent of fresh bread spills into the air, and rhythms quicken with footsteps and spinning wheels of cars. The street becomes more than a path, it is a living canvas of sound, scent, and motion. Near the university, this vibrant flow is interrupted. High, unresponsive stone walls and clusters of parked cars dominate the sidewalks. Behind the barriers, construction

looms, detached from the life around it. Inspired by the contrast, we reimagine this space, allowing the sidewalk to breathe, removing obstacles, and inviting people to shape the street with their presence.

Proposal.

We propose transforming these walls into responsive, interactive surfaces—architectural elements that engage both body and senses.

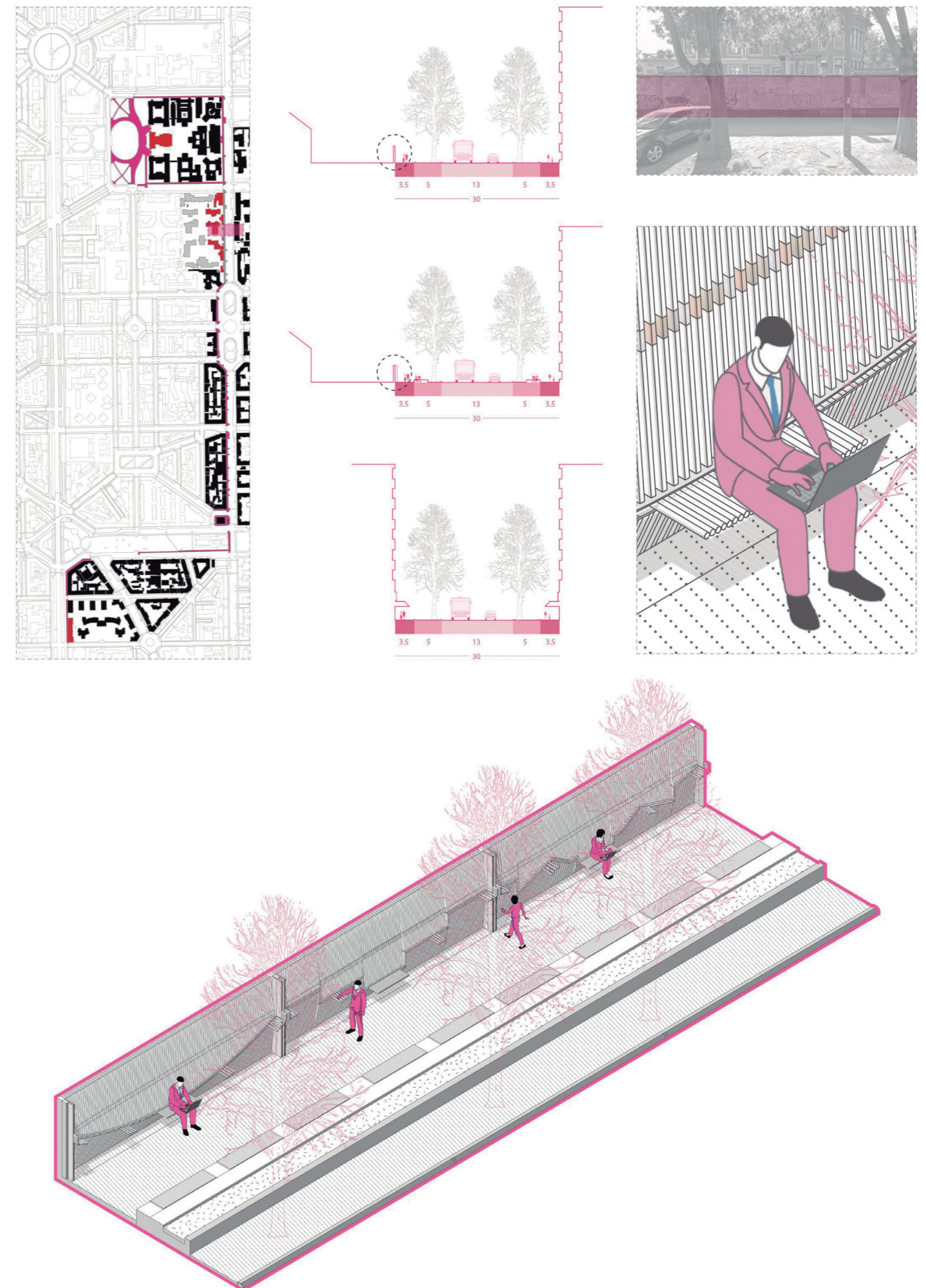
Sound. The walls, embedded with sound-responsive elements, come alive through touch and movement, composing a dynamic and ever-changing soundscape born from everyday gestures.

Visual Perception. Contrasting materials and shifting colors respond to light and perspective, captivating the eye and inviting moments of pause, reflection, and discovery.

Physical Activity. Varying wall heights encourage playful interaction across ages, transforming casual movement into a shared, spatial performance, where passersby become participants. To deepen this sensory dialogue, we designed a system of modular segments that host movable rods, slender

tools of “participation”. Carried by users and drawn across the walls, these rods animate the surfaces with rhythm and resonance, allowing each person to leave an ephemeral imprint of sound. In designated zones, the rods evolve into public furniture, benches, ledges, and platforms blurring the line between infrastructure and invitation. These elements offer students and local people to sit, gather, eat, or rest, reinforcing the street as a social landscape shaped by movement, memory, and shared presence. Our materials were chosen not only for their appearance, but for the voices they carry—everyday elements found in our homes, often overlooked, yet rich with expressive potential. Aluminum sings in bright, high-pitched tones, light, agile, and playful. Brass resonates with warmth, reflecting both sound and light in golden richness. Copper brings a mellow, grounding depth, a soft tone that invites calm. Bronze, speaks with a deep, ancient resonance.

In this vision, the street ceases to be a passive conduit. It becomes an active partner in urban life, a space that listens, speaks, and plays. A place where architecture transforms walking into a sensory dialogue and a human experience.



Mind:Body:Space

Eda Altındağ; Kacper Arkadiusz Pietrzak

Politecnico di Milano, Italy

When we think about our daily route, it's easy to fall into routine - walking mindlessly from one place to another, disconnected from the journey itself. But what if we could reclaim that connection? What if we imagined ourselves not as separate observers, but as part of the spaces we pass through - moving with them, not just within them?

This is where the relationship between mind, body, and space unfolds. It's not just about looking at our surroundings, but engaging with them - feeling the ground, the air, the movement - letting space affect us as much as we affect it.

This idea formed the core of our intervention along the route. Rather than ignoring the subtle disconnections we experience in daily movement, we highlighted them, not by drawing lines, but by softening them. Our project unfolds as moments that invite presence, slowing the pace and drawing attention to texture, rhythm, and silence. We do not aim to redefine the path, but to reawaken the senses within it - to suggest that the boundary between self and space is never fixed, but always in

motion, shaped by presence and perception.

Archetypes are central to this exploration. They are universal symbols and images in the collective unconscious that shape human experience. In our case, they emerged not from theory alone but through walking, observing, and sensing, shaped by emotional responses to the spaces we moved through. From our daily journey, we began to map five archetypes: Current, Transition, Tension, Time, and Gate.

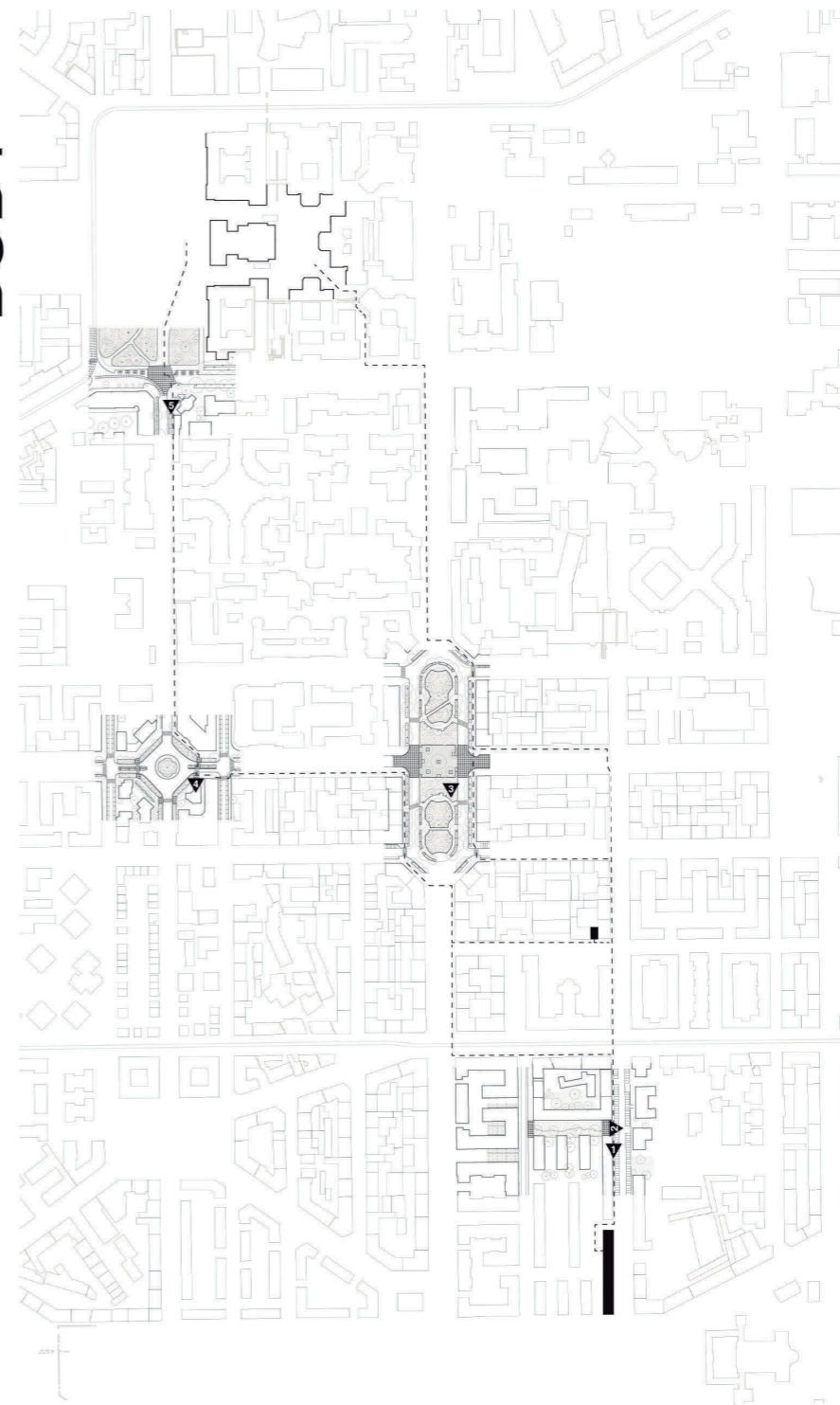
The Current is the boundary stretching along the path - a directional flow by which we are carried. Transition appears in elements like stairs or crossings, where boundaries shift and space moves with us. Tension is felt when movement is interrupted - blocked by views, obstacles, or rhythm. Time is sensed in the changing seasons and conditions - reminders of impermanence. The Gate is envisioned as an open boundary, a threshold signalling a shift in atmosphere or spatial character.

We propose a new archetype: the

bridge. More than just a structure, it symbolises connection and fluidity, encouraging a conscious journey that blurs the boundaries between different spatial states. In the context of Milan, this responds to overlooked urban spaces - fragments that fade into routine and lack sensory engagement. We see these moments as opportunities. We aim to awaken awareness through small, intentional interventions - creating points along the path that draw body and mind into presence.

Shifting pavement materials - stone, gravel, or partial depaving - creates a richer sensory experience. Improving road connections releases tension caused by restricted movement. Opening previously gated green spaces transforms barriers into open boundaries. Guided by our archetypes and the symbol of the bridge, these interventions invite a new reading of the route, not as a fixed boundary, but as a continuum of blurred thresholds. With the photomontage technique, we reimagined how the path becomes a site of awareness, where the principle of Mind:Body:Space can be felt, lived, and understood.

BODY



MIND



SPACE

Recycled Meeting Points

Diego Díaz Linares; Esther Molina Burguillos;
María Sánchez González

Universidad de Alicante, Spain

Urban routes are often seen as mere paths from one point to another. However, this project proposes viewing them as places in themselves, living spaces where pause, movement, and interaction coexist. Instead of focusing on a building, we began with a forgotten fragment of the city: a narrow stretch between the blank wall of a supermarket and a row of recycling containers. A space defined more by its neglect than by any architecture.

This area, previously associated with unpleasant smells, narrow sidewalks, and a monotonous atmosphere, becomes an opportunity to rethink the urban experience. What was once only a place of passage transforms into a space for connection, between people, species, and materials.

The intervention starts with a symbolic gesture: redesigning the recycling containers. Each one is inspired by the material it collects. The glass container is made of colorful recycled fragments. The paper bin adopts soft, curved forms reminiscent of egg cartons.

The organic waste container is covered in living vegetation, and the plastic one is built from repurposed cans. The waste, once invisible, now becomes expressive and present.

Between these containers, vaulted structures span the sidewalk, creating four distinct segments: a dome of glass, one of plants, another of cardboard, and one of aluminum cans. These are not just recycled forms, they transform the street. They offer shade, filter light, and invite moments of pause. The existing trees become structural columns, and a subtle substructure connects the whole, building a continuous narrative.

The supermarket wall, previously mute and indifferent, is now activated. Small service windows propose symbolic exchanges: bottles for bottles, newspapers for paper. The building, once passive, becomes an active agent, responding to civic actions outside.

This proposal is represented in an axonometric section that reveals the entire sequence:

containers, domes, vegetation, and a reimagined façade. The space, once fragmented and neglected, now gains coherence, rhythm, and meaning. No longer a leftover corridor, it becomes a piece of micro-urban architecture where recycling becomes a shared experience.

This project doesn't aim to impose fixed functions. Instead, it generates conditions for new uses to emerge organically. The sidewalk, once ignored, becomes a space to observe, to linger, and to interact.

Recycling shifts from an isolated act to a catalyst for social exchange. And most importantly: the pedestrian regains priority. Through this transformation, those who walk are placed at the center of the experience. The space is no longer a void to be crossed quickly, but a sequence to be explored, inhabited, and enjoyed. Function blends with feeling. Architecture no longer dictates, it invites.

What was once just a path is now a place.



UNISTOP is not just a stop

Joan Briones; José González; Élia Montagud

Universidad de Alicante, Spain

UNISTOP is not just a stop. It's an urban manifesto.

A crossroads of architecture, technology, desire, community, and functional madness. Instead of waiting for the TRAM, here you stop to live. Seriously. UNISTOP is a station where time dissolves, and new rules emerge. A capsule of expanded reality where you can train, cry, fall in love, get tutoring, plant a tree, or scream into the void. All at the same time. Or do absolutely nothing. It's your choice.

Feel like moving?

There are punching bags to release your rage, pull-up bars, and calisthenics stations—even weights for those who refuse to pause their physical progress, even at a tram stop.

Want to stop the world and step off?

We've got massage tables, hammocks, and a terrace-style chill zone where you can sip a beer with friends while waiting for... the tram? Life? Nothing?

For those in need of an emotional

space, there are capsules. But not just any capsules: The Love Capsule, for intimate or romantic encounters; The Stress Capsule, to let it all out and breathe; The Scream Capsule, to scream, unfiltered; The Read Capsule, to isolate yourself from the noise and read; The Sleep Capsule, if life has hit you too hard; The Weed Capsule, discreetly designed for disconnecting, and finally, the Orgy Mind Capsule – a radical exploration of pleasure, collectivity, and the body.

But UNISTOP is not just about body and emotions. It's about mind, action, and play. You can hold a meeting, study at shared tables, or give an impromptu speech on the stage. You can check out the interactive screen with memes, university news, quick polls, and daily events. Even check the TRAM lines, buy internet access, or book tutoring sessions from the touchscreen.

Want to express yourself?

There's a sticker wall—like a "wailing wall" for thoughts—a suggestion box, a student ephemeral art exhibit, and a giant

gong to announce something... or just to make noise for the sake of it. If you're into self-expression and aesthetics, you can use the mirrors, the photo booth, or the Instagram photo printer to capture the moment.

Need something practical?

We've got dispensers for tampons, condoms, toothbrushes, toothpaste, educational sex toys, a microwave, lockers, a smoking zone (not just for tobacco), arcade machines, vending machines, and even a clean, dignified, and actually usable restroom.

UNISTOP is all that and more. It's a space where the everyday mixes with the surreal. Where you can pause your routine and activate your life. It's architecture for desire, rest, excess, vulnerability, and connection. It's a living experiment. A station with its own identity, pulsing with the energy of those who use it.

Here, you don't just choose a destination. Here, you choose what kind of person you want to be today.

Which stop will be the next?

